

# A palace for those who have eyes to see: Preliminary remarks on the symbolic geography of Reting (Rwa-sgreng)

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*An important feature in Tibetan 'constructions of place' is the cult of mountain gods, in which a central mountain is venerated as the lord of the surrounding territory and the people living in his realm. In the present study, it is not a mountain god, but a newly founded Buddhist monastery that assumes the central position and thereby the notions of centrality and royal power: Rwa-sgreng, the first monastic seat of the bKa'-gdams-pa school. 'Brom-ston, the founder of the school, is described as the heir of a highly symbolical legacy, since he comes to be regarded as an incarnation of Tibet's first Buddhist king, Srong-btsan sgampo, and as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion. Through this literary construction of place in space and in time, the significance of the bKa'-gdams-pa school itself is re-assessed and amplified.*

*The sources discussed here exhibit slightly different attitudes: The earliest work, a biography of 'Brom-ston, describes the landscape as a natural maṇḍala with auspicious features. The slightly later 'Book of the bKa'-gdams [tradition]' shifts to a 'pure vision' of the place and identifies 'Brom-ston with King Srong-btsan sgampo and Avalokiteśvara. The last work is a pilgrimage guide that gives practical advice for visitors. An unexpected feature in this work is the notion of evil influences ascribed to certain places, slightly undermining the success of the appropriation of the site by the Buddhist tradition.*

## Introduction

Within the field of Tibetan Studies, the concept of sacred places and landscapes<sup>1</sup> has

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<sup>1</sup> The reader will find various designations like 'power places', 'sacred landscape', and 'sacred geography'. The merit of these expressions is that they imply the transforming power ascribed to these places by Tibetans. On the other hand, the expression 'sacred' is a problematic one because first of all it suggests a dichotomy of 'sacred' and 'profane' which is not altogether appropriate for this context, and secondly it does not capture the ambiguous nature of some of these places: as we will see later in this article, a religious site can have both auspicious and inauspicious aspects. Therefore the expression 'power places' may be more adequate than 'sacred landscape'. See also the discussion in Michaels 2003, 13–18. Dibyesh Anand has used the expression 'symbolic geography' for his

received more and more attention during the last 20 years, well documented in articles and conference volumes. Anthropologists and Tibetologists alike have dealt with the cult of mountain gods (*yul lha*, 'god of the territory'), with 'power-places' (*gnas*), and with pilgrimage (*gnas skor*) and pilgrimage guides of various kinds (*dkar chag*, *gnas bshad*, *lam yig*, *gnas yig*) to these empowered and empowering sites. These studies have delineated a typology of the concepts involved. Samten Karmay has emphasized a distinction between the cult of a local *yul lha*, with worldly aims and benefits, characterized by a relationship between a local mountain god and the clan that lives there, and the *gnas ri* which implies the appropriation of the place or mountain by Buddhist or Bon-po deities, invites pilgrims from a larger area, and aims at purifying one's *karman* or achieving spiritual goals (Karmay 2005, 31–51). In several places a transformation from *yul lha* to *gnas ri* can be observed; in this process, a local mountain deity is 'converted' or 'tamed' (*dul ba*) and turned into a 'protector of the doctrine' (*chos skyong*). This process in turn can lead to a further mythological expansion, e.g., by integrating other deities into the sphere of the sacred site. Pilgrimage guides can describe real as well as ideal views of the place. They contain both descriptions and prescriptions for the people who circumambulate the mountain, referring partly to the visible features of the site and partly to a superimposed 'pure' vision (*dag snang*) of the place as the abode of the resident deities.<sup>2</sup> This can also lead to overlapping concepts of the structure of the place: One and the same place can be viewed as the seat of a local *yul lha* with his retinue and at the same time as the *maṇḍala* of a prominent tantric deity like Cakrasaṃvara.<sup>3</sup> These two schemes can imply a tension or competition, but there is often a certain willingness to include as many auspicious and empowering features and deities as possible without necessarily making it an either-or decision as to which deity should be venerated. Attention has also been drawn to the double appropriation of sacred places: Typically there is an original conquest of the place by a Buddhist or Bon-po master of mythical times in which the 'lord of the territory' is 'tamed' and turned into a protector. In a second step, the place is 'opened' as a pilgrimage site by a master of more recent times; this can include actions like leaving hand- or footprints as visible marks of the appropriation, or the revelation of religious 'treasures' (*gter ma*) that were hidden there.<sup>4</sup>

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study on Dharamsala as 'Little Lhasa' (published in Klieger 2002), and I will use this expression for the case of Rwa-sgreng, although it has the disadvantage that it neglects the aspect of 'power' or auspiciousness, i.e., the effect of the place on the visitor.

<sup>2</sup> On this notion see Huber 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Such a double notion has been described for A-myes rma-chen in Buffetrille 1997.

<sup>4</sup> The importance of the 'event' for the sacredness of a place is described, e.g., in the 'Introduction' in Ramble 1997. Huber has used the expression 'geography written as theatre' in order to describe how a pilgrimage guide links the visible features of a place with the events or deeds that have made the place sacred, see Huber 1997, esp. p. 237.

All these cases are based on one presupposition: There *is* a pilgrimage site, typically a holy mountain. Theoretically a *gnas* is created by a significant act or feat, but in reality it often seems to be rather the other way round: the *gnas* is a mountain that is already a place of veneration, and then the act or feat is attached to this place later on.<sup>5</sup> Mythology can create a sacred site, but the sacred site can also attract a mythological narrative that becomes part of its story.

This article is concerned with a case that is fundamentally different from most case studies on ‘sacred landscapes’. The monastery of Reting (Rwa-sgreng), the first monastic seat of the bKa’-gdams-pa tradition, is understood as a sacred site charged with a high symbolic power, but the place had neither been the seat of a local *yul lha* nor had it been revered as the abode of a Buddhist tantric deity when it came to be regarded as a sacred space.<sup>6</sup> In fact, it was rather a simple act of local patronage that led to the foundation of a monastery in this valley of the region of dBu-ru Byang and not a pre-existing cult of any kind.<sup>7</sup> Why and how then does a monastery and its surroundings acquire the rank of a sacred place, a *gnas* with all its layers of symbolic meanings and powers?

The construction of Rwa-sgreng as a sacred site is closely linked with the construction of the identity of the bKa’-gdams-pa school. Its development can be traced in literary works that were composed or compiled in a period when the school began to gain significance beyond its original home regions. The earliest and most interesting of these literary sources (texts 1–3 below) date from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and belong to the genre of *rnam thar*, biography or hagiography, including elements of *lo rgyus*, history. They show how in biographical writing the life stories of religious teachers and the story of the place get interwoven and define the temporal and spatial network that was designed to constitute the identity of the school. Literature can be regarded as instrumental in this process of self-creation and self-definition.

To understand why Rwa-sgreng came to be regarded as a sacred site, it is necessary to have a brief look at its history and its political and religious significance. Rwa-sgreng was founded in 1056/57 by ‘Brom-ston rGyal-ba’i ‘byung-gnas (1005–1064). Atiśa, the Indian authority of the bKa’-gdams-pa tradition, had died in 1054 in

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<sup>5</sup> Ramble mentions the famous story of the self-sacrifice of the Bodhisattva to a hungry tigress as an example for the ‘mobility’ of a legend or story, see Ramble 1997, 134.

<sup>6</sup> As we will see, the *bKa’ gdams glegs bam* (texts 2 and 3 in this article) introduces the idea that Rwa-sgreng is the palace of Avalokiteśvara, but this is clearly an innovation. Moreover, the last of the texts introduced here, text 4, declares a rock at Pha-bong-thang below the monastery to be the seat of Cakrasaṃvara. Thus this important tantric deity is integrated, but in a marginal position.

<sup>7</sup> It should be mentioned though that the sources discussed below contain certain elements and ideas from the rNying-ma tradition which might indicate that Rwa-sgreng had been a place associated with the rNying-ma-pas before it became a bKa’-gdams-pa seat, but this point cannot be followed up here.

sNye-thang not far away from Lha-sa, and one of his Tibetan adherents, 'Phrang-kha Ber-chung from dBu-ru Byang renewed his invitation to the young bKa'-gdams-pa movement to found a monastic seat in his region. Atiśa's disciple 'Brom-ston accepted the invitation and together with a small group of Atiśa's students proceeded to found what became the first monastic seat of a distinct school of Tibetan Buddhism ever. Rwa-sgreng, as the first institution of this kind, was the cradle of a gradually growing tradition. In the early generations, the tradition was mainly located in Byang itself and in neighbouring regions like 'Phan-yul, but then it spread, and it finally acquired a larger significance when it was redefined as the dGe-lugs-pa school in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It seems that the early bKa'-gdams-pas never tried to combine religious and secular authority, as the Sa-skyas, bKa'-brgyud-pas, and later the dGe-lugs-pas did, and in that sense they remained politically marginal. Rwa-sgreng re-emerges as a place of religious significance when Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the reformist 'new bKa'-gdams-pas' or dGe-lugs-pas, stayed there and composed one of his most influential works, the famous *Lam rim chen mo* ('Great treatise on the stages of the path to enlightenment', written in 1402). In later times the head lamas of Rwa-sgreng played an important role as tutors of the Dalai Lamas. Ngag-dbang mchog-ldan (1677–1751), the tutor of the 7th Dalai Lama, became the first in a line of reincarnate lamas of Rwa-sgreng. The Rwa-sgreng Lama could become the regent of Tibet, and this actually happened twice in history, in 1855 and again during the minority of the fourteenth Dalai Lama from 1934 to 1941. Since the flight of the present Karmapa from Tibet into Indian exile, the Rwa-sgreng Lama is the highest ranking lama remaining in the Autonomous Region of Tibet, and the authorities keep a very strict eye on the boy whom they acknowledged to be the 7th Rwa-sgreng Lama. One day he may become an important figure when it comes to the task of finding the 15th incarnation of the Dalai Lama.

Thus Rwa-sgreng has high religious and political significance, especially for the dGe-lugs-pa tradition. On the one hand, it seems that in the early centuries of the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition other monasteries like gSang-phu and sNar-thang were much more prominent centres of scholarship and learning. Nevertheless, sources from the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries show that the monastery of Rwa-sgreng with its surrounding landscape was already perceived—or construed—as a sacred site with auspicious features charged with high symbolic significance and transformative power. These texts reveal several dimensions of defining the sacred site: The landscape around Rwa-sgreng has both a symbolic *meaning* and an auspicious (and partly even inauspicious) *effect*. It has both features that can be perceived by the human visitor and features that are only visible to beings with 'pure vision' or superhuman faculties. The texts reveal a spatial and a temporal dimension, as they describe both a spatial structure

with topographical features and a temporal structure that is established through an auspicious connection (*rten 'brel*) beginning with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who incarnates in Tibet as the 'Dharma King' (*chos rgyal*) Srong-btsan sgam-po, who in turn is eventually reborn as 'Brom-ston, the founder of Rwa-sgreng. Moreover, the *Bu chos* of the 'Book of the bKa'-gdams [tradition]' (*bKa' gdams glegs bam*) tells us about a long line of previous lives of 'Brom-ston before his incarnation as Srong-btsan sgam-po. So the story of the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition comes to be embedded in a longer narrative that links it with the times of the Tibetan empire and the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. 'Brom-ston rGyal-ba'i 'byung-gnas, the founder of Rwa-sgreng and of the bKa'-gdams-pas, thus becomes a true heir of the early Tibetan Buddhist kings, and at the same time is presented as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, who has come to convert the country of Tibet to the Buddhist faith.

In this way the texts about Rwa-sgreng achieve two tasks at the same time: They create the identity of a sacred place, and they create the identity of the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition. They are not based on the idea of a central deity who resides in the centre of the Rwa-sgreng *maṇḍala*, but rather on the temporal narrative of the history of the place related to the deeds of 'Brom-ston (including his previous lives). In the centre, where we would expect the deity, we find the monastery itself, embedded in a landscape of mountains and valley and the famous juniper grove of Rwa-sgreng. The temporal dimension is established by several literary devices: by the legends of 'Brom-ston's previous incarnations contained in the *Bu chos*, through prophecies that are projected back in time and foretell the great future of the place, and by visions and dreams of later personages in which teachers of former times appear and instruct the perceiver about the unique properties of the place. Thus the temporal link works both ways, from the past into the present, and from the present into the past.

### Sources for the symbolic geography of Rwa-sgreng

This article is a preliminary report about an ongoing research project. So far a number of textual sources ranging from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have been collected and analysed. An obvious question is how these sources relate to the place itself and the views and practices of visitors and pilgrims who come to Rwa-sgreng. It seems that the relationship between pilgrimage guides and the actual behaviour at the respective places can differ from case to case.<sup>8</sup> Previous studies have addressed the relationship

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<sup>8</sup> Whereas Buffetrille (1997, see esp. the 'Conclusion') has observed that pilgrims do not resort to guidebooks when they visit A-myes rma-chen, Huber has argued that in the cases studied by him guidebooks do play an important role and are read and used (Huber 1997, 235). One might hypothesise that a written guide becomes more important in cases where the living tradition has been interrupted so that pilgrims do not have access to existing customs or 'oral guides' to the place.

between written guides and ‘oral guides’, the latter sometimes being more relevant to the actions performed than what the texts say. Furthermore, most texts about Rwa-sgreng are descriptive rather than prescriptive, which makes us even more curious as to how much they are related to a tradition of pilgrimage at all. These questions about the relationship between texts and practices will be explored during an upcoming field trip funded by the British Academy and can therefore not be addressed here. The present article is merely intended to introduce the most important textual sources and discuss some of the more salient features of the construction of Rwa-sgreng as a sacred space as it is found in these works. The first source stems from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and belongs to the genre of religious biography or hagiography (*rnam thar*). The next two passages are from the *bKa’ gdams glegs bam*, the ‘Book of the bKa’-gdams [tradition]’ redacted in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The first of these passages (text 2) is from a chapter on the (historical and legendary) origins and developments of the school, and the second (text 3) are two legends from the ‘birth stories’ (*skyes rabs*) of the founder of the school contained in the same work. The last text is a pilgrimage guide (*gnas yig*) to Rwa-sgreng from the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The following overview will present these sources in chronological order and briefly describe their contents.

***1. mChims Nam-mkha’-grags (1210–1285),  
collection of biographies from the bKa’-gdams-pa tradition***<sup>9</sup>

This collection of biographies was known from quotations in later bKa’-gdams-pa biographies, but no copy of the text was known to have survived. Recently an *dbu can* manuscript of this text has become available and adds important information to our knowledge of the early bKa’-gdams-pa tradition.<sup>10</sup> The passage concerning Rwa-sgreng is found in the biography of ’Brom-ston rGyal-ba’i ’byung-gnas. It is presumably not only the oldest extant source which contains an extensive description of the symbolic geography of Rwa-sgreng, but also is an interesting source on geomancy.<sup>11</sup> For these reasons the respective part of the text (fols 182a5–185b6) will be translated here in full:

<sup>9</sup> The *rNam thar yongs grags* by the same author describes the foundation of Rwa-sgreng as well, but in a different way, cf. *bKa’ gdams glegs bam, Pha chos*, pp. 218ff. Cf. also the relevant passage from the *rNam thar rgyas pa*, nos 428–430 in Eimer 1979, 2: 369–71.

<sup>10</sup> I would like to thank Leonard van der Kuijp (Harvard) and Helmut Eimer (Bonn) for making relevant parts of this text available to me. The manuscript and its contents have been described by Helmut Eimer and by the present author in Almogi forthcoming.

<sup>11</sup> Similar geomantic or topomantic notions are attached to other important places in Tibet. The region around Lhasa, for instance, is described in similar terms; see Sørensen, Hazod 2007, Appendix IV, 2.

(fol. 182a5) ... and in the male fire monkey year (1066) they proceeded to Rwa-sgreng.<sup>12</sup> Because this was formerly the region of lDan-ma, it is called *ra sgyeng* in the language of lDan. In Tibetan this means 'perennial spring' (*chu mig ring mo*), thus it is said. At that time dGe-bshes sTon-pa (i.e., 'Brom-ston) beheld the ground of the solitary place (*dgon*) of Rwa-sgreng and understood that the ground was possessed of good qualities. These were arrived at through direct perception, (182b) inference, and the scriptures.

With regard to the first of these, there are three [topics]: the form of the ground, the deities of the ground, and the benefits of the ground. Again within the first of these, there are [the fact that] the directions are arranged in the right way, that mountain and valley are good to visit, and that it possesses natural splendour.

The directions were arranged in the right way: Because the upper end of the valley is directed towards the east, there descends a broad river. Because the lower end of the valley is directed towards the west, the path of planets and stars is clear. Because the north behind [the monastery] is sheltered, the access for the wind is blocked. Because the south in front [of the monastery] descends, it is struck by the sunshine, it is said.

Mountain and valley were good to visit: The mountain at the back with the peak of white felt<sup>13</sup> abounded in brightness and was high, like a king wearing a turban. His retinue are: in the north-east the peak of the tiger mountain like a king's general marching to battle, in the south-east a round mountain like a householder with a full treasury, in the south a mountain like a queen wearing ornaments and sitting cross-legged, in the south-west a mountain with a golden meadow like an elephant with its trunk stretched out, in the west a solitary bolder like a heap of precious stones, in the north-west (183a) a mountain like a saddle on a horse, in the north a boulder like a diamond,<sup>14</sup> in front there was the 'plain of the rocks' (Phabong-thang) like a wheel with eight spokes, the lake in front was like a curling *svastika*, the golden and the turquoise juniper as big as a goat and a sheep were like the pillars of sky and earth,<sup>15</sup> there were 108 springs, and because the whole valley broadens from the east

<sup>12</sup> The name is erroneously spelt *ra sgyeng* throughout the whole passage with the exception of a stanza quoted on fol. 184b of the manuscript.

<sup>13</sup> *rtse phyng dkar*. This may contain an allusion to the protective deity of Rwa-sgreng, Phying-dkar-ba (see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993, 158–65).

<sup>14</sup> The items mentioned here: the king, the general, the householder, the queen, the elephant, the jewel, the horse and the diamond are a variation of the Indian concept of the seven jewels of ideal kingship. In Indian and Tibetan Buddhist literature the 'seven jewels' of kingship are: the wheel or discus (*cakra*) of the universal monarch (*cakravartin*), the elephant, the horse, the wish granting jewel, the queen, the good minister, and the general. In Buddhist cosmology the scheme has been expanded to comprise eight items that are situated in the eight directions around the central mountain Sumeru (Tib. Ri-rab): the wheel in the east, the elephant in the south-east, the jewel in the south, the excellent horse in the south-west, the queen in the west, the general in the north-west, the minister in the north and, finally, a treasure pot in the north-east. A depiction of this structure is found in Jackson, Jackson 1984, 38. It should be noted that in this cosmological scheme the Ri-rab, the 'king of mountains' (*ri'i rgyal po*), is placed at the centre with the other items arranged around it, while in Rwa-sgreng the monastery is at the centre and the king belongs to the elements that surround it. Thus the monastery assumes the notions of centrality, kingship and power that are associated with this position.

<sup>15</sup> This is a remarkable statement, since it employs an old Tibetan metaphor. 'Pillars of the sky' and 'nails of the earth' were designations for the mountains of Tibet, for the royal tombs, for buildings, and even for the hero of the epic, and are part of the cosmological framework of pre-Buddhist and imperial times, see Stein 1972, chapter IV.

to the west and has six tributary valleys, the ground was like an eight-petalled lotus and the sky like a wheel with eight spokes, it is said.

It possessed natural splendour: the peak of the mountain has the splendour of slate, the middle part of the mountain has the splendour of the meadows, the side of the mountain has the splendour of the forest, the flat ground has the splendour of the plains, the declining part has the splendour of the river, the clear air has the splendour of the sky, and the rich food has the splendour of oil, it is said.

The deities of the ground (*sa'i lha*) are four: There was the pale tiger of the east, a rock of a cave like a tiger leaping into the sky; there was the blue dragon of the south, the golden stream like a blue dragon sliding downhill; there was the red bird of the west, the plain with the beak of a bird spreading its wings; there was the black tortoise of the north, the side of the white felt peak [of the mountain behind the monastery] which is like a tortoise turning its back towards the sun,<sup>16</sup> (183b) it is said.

With regard to the benefits of the ground, there are three [topics]: that the soil is excellent, that the primary causes (or: material possessions, *rgyu*) are there, and that all the conditions (*rkyen*) are there. With regard to the first of these, the earth was pure, the corn ripened, and gods (*lha*) and snake spirits (*klu*) were abiding there, pleased with the white peak that is the lord, and the other [features]. The juniper forest was full of omina (*snga ltas*). At that time there were only the golden and the turquoise juniper, but [then] there sprouted a juniper at a place where dGe-bshes sTon-pa had cut his hair off. Then, gradually, they spread, and nowadays there is the golden rooftop of the [temple with] two pillars in the middle of the juniper forest, like the tail of the peacock that is adorned with golden tips. For this reason it is said that the junipers of Rwa-sgreng are the hair of dGe-bshes sTon-pa, and to cut them off means to cut off his hair, and they are held in high esteem. All kinds of birds make their voices heard, as if they would admonish people to lead a virtuous life. Deer and other animals live there without fear. The village was neither too close nor too far away; so he recognized that it was not occupied by other people, it is said.

(184a) With regard to the good qualities of the primary causes (or material possessions), the gateways of the mountain passes (*la sgo*): He recognized that because it is the lower part of the Rom-pa valley, it has butter and gold; because there is an access over the pass of bGre-lung in the south, it has the barley from Klung-shod and southern goods; because there is an access over the Chag-la in the west, it has the barley from 'Phan-yul and goods from gTsang; because there is the access over the pass of 'Gre-smad in the north, it has the salt, wool, meat and butter from the north and goods from Khams, it is said.

With regard to the good qualities of the conditions, fire and water: He recognized that there was firewood in the forests of 'Gre-stod, 'Gre-smad etc., together with big rivers, tributary rivers and springs, and moreover he trusted in the place because the wise people of former times had seen it as being endowed with good qualities because it had been a burial site of the Cog-ro clan.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The manual *Gateway to the Temple* contains a very similar description; here the four *sa'i lha* are called the *phyogs kyi sa yi bsrung bzhi*. See Gyatsho 1979, 29. Petra Maurer (Munich) has drawn my attention to the fact that the concept of the four *sa'i lha* or *sa'i bsrung* is also found in the Chinese tradition. For its application to the Lhasa valley see Sørensen, Hazod 2007, 576.

<sup>17</sup> I owe this interpretation to Charles Ramble (Oxford). The text reads *co ro'i dur sa yin pas...* *co ro* occurs as a variant for (l)Cog-ro in other sources as well, see Diemberger, Wangdu 2000, end of fol. 15b of the Tibetan text.

As to arriving there by inference (*rjes dpag*): That the mountain at the back is high means that there is shelter against others. That the river is long means that the teachings will remain there for a long time. That the sun rises early<sup>18</sup> means that students will gather quickly. That the sun sets late means that the Buddhist teaching will remain for a long time. That the forest of junipers spreads means that the bKa'-gdams [tradition] will reach far. That it is at the centre of the snowy mountains means that an assembly of students will gather there. That (184b) all the seven treasures of kingship are there means that it will become the residence of the Buddhist teaching. That there is the palace of the snake spirits (*klu*) means that one will not be deprived of enjoyments. That there is a tortoise with its chest pressed down means that there will be no enemies. That the heart is attached to it means that it is a place where *siddhis* arise, thus he recognized, it is said.

With regard to arriving there from the scriptures, it is said in the '*Jam dpal brtan pa rol pa'i rgyud*:

“In the final period after 500 years  
The doctrine of the Buddha will spread:  
In the centre of the snowland in the north  
There is a temple with a large forest of fragrant trees  
On the flank of a mountain with all kinds of medicinal herbs.  
The first letter is *ra* and then follows *sgreng*”.<sup>19</sup>

And in a Sūtra it is said:

“The perfection of wisdom will become widespread in the north and the northern region”.

And in the *mDo sde rgyan* it is said:

“The place where the wise practise  
Is good for obtaining [the necessities of life] and good to live in,  
The ground is good and the friends are good,  
And it possesses the qualities for a wholesome yoga”.<sup>20</sup>

Thus knowing that all these were there, he was pleased with the solitary place (or: place for the monastery, *dgon sa*).<sup>21</sup>

On the same night, he stayed in a mountain cave (185a). In a dream he saw a golden chörten at the empty place of the dBu-rtse with two pillars, sending forth rays of light. On the tips of the rays, there appeared the golden roof of the dBu-rtse, glittering abundantly, and it illuminated the whole country of Tibet. Then [the rays] returned and united there, and amidst the juniper region of Rwa-sgreng was the temple with its roof. And Pha-bong-thang had turned into a heap of precious objects. The next morning Sum-pa mThu-chen, rNal-'byor-pa chen-po and dGon-pa-pa asked whether there had been good omens, and he said that there were. Then he decided to found the monastery. It was founded because he wanted

<sup>18</sup> Read *snga* for *lga*.

<sup>19</sup> This quote is found in several works, including the *rNam thar rgyas pa*. Eimer remarks that the source could not be identified (Eimer 1979, 1: 425).

<sup>20</sup> *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* XIII. 7.

<sup>21</sup> The following passage has a parallel in Eimer 1979, nos 429–430, 2: 369f. I translate the text as it is found in the manuscript of our biography collection, although it does contain several scribal errors. A comparison with the *rNam thar rgyas pa* passage gives the impression that in some cases the latter has the more plausible readings, while in other cases our text seems to be more reliable.

to fulfil the words and the intentions of the Jo-bo [Atiśa], and he himself had the intention of doing something useful for the continuity of the doctrine in future times.

As to how it was founded: In a bird year (1057), he recited the commentary of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* in order to tame the ground (*sa 'dul*). He asked the Paṇḍita Śrīdhara to perform the ritual of breaking the ground (*sa chog*), but he did not assent. Then he asked dGon-pa-pa, but he did not assent. He thought about asking Khu, but when they talked about it rNal-'byor-pa said: (185b) 'All people think that you possess all the qualities of the Jo-bo; you are like him!' Thereupon dGe-bshes sTon-pa replied modestly: "I know how to do it. [However], first of all I am a lowly person. Secondly, I feel ashamed because you are superior. Thirdly, [I] am not [like him].<sup>22</sup> [Nevertheless] I will act accordingly". In the middle of the meadow, above the palace of the snake spirits where there was a spring, on a boulder that looked like a tortoise lying on its back, they placed an image of the Jo-bo and summoned 'Jam-pa'i rdo-rje and uttered a prayer, and the spring was covered. He thought: "If the trunk of the barberry [there] is dug out completely, it will be cut off, and even if the snake sneaks out it will not listen [i.e., not be obedient]", and they built a throne on top of it.<sup>23</sup> They erected a canopy made of yak hair and kept the physical remains of the Jo-bo there. He said: "Because so many wonderful signs have appeared here, you should not spit or snot on the ground".

[The text then continues with a description of the buildings of the newly founded monastery.]

## **2. Pha chos of the bKa' gdams glegs bam, redacted in 1302**

The 16th section of the *Zhus lan gyi dngos gzhi nor bu'i phreng ba* at the end of the *Pha chos* contains a lengthy description of Rwa-sgreng (*bKa' gdams glegs bam* 1993, 812–29). In this passage Atiśa describes Rwa-sgreng to 'Brom-ston in a prophecy beginning with the interpretation of the visible features of the landscape around Rwa-sgreng. It then moves on to a more sublime view of the area as the palace of Avalokiteśvara with enormous dimensions which cannot be perceived by ordinary human beings. Part of this description is similar to a prophecy that Atiśa himself is said to have received from a goddess when he hesitated to go to Tibet,<sup>24</sup> but the whole passage is much more elaborate. It superimposes a *maṇḍala*-like geometrical structure on the place. The prophecy begins with mentioning the spiritual merits of Rwa-sgreng. Then it gives a very general description of Rwa-sgreng as an ideal place,

<sup>22</sup> *gsum du ma yin pas 'tsher bas lan*. The passage in the *rNam thar rgyas pa* has a different reading here: *gsum du mi ma yin 'tsher bas lan*.

<sup>23</sup> I am not sure that the reading of this passage is correct: *skyer phung rtsa ba nas bton na chad pa 'ong sbrul myug gis byung na yang mi nyan pa yin sems nas de'i steng du khri rtsigs*. The respective *rNam thar rgyas pa* passage reads *skyer phung rtsa ba nas bton nas chad pa la spos | sbrul nyog des byung yang ji snyam yang mi sems par rmang btings so*.

<sup>24</sup> *Rwa sgreng dgon pa'i dkar chag* 1994, 17–24.

in fact so general that it could easily be applied to many other places: It is marked by an eight-petalled lotus and a wheel with eight spokes; it has fragrant trees, springs, medicinal plants, birds, and the like.<sup>25</sup> More specifically it speaks about the two main junipers, a 'golden' and a 'turquoise' one, and equates them with lotus stalks, a point that will become clearer later on. Then the features of the landscape are interpreted in terms of the scheme of the 'seven jewels' (Skt. *saptaratna*), the items that in the Indian tradition characterize the perfect king, and the auspicious effect of each item is explained.<sup>26</sup> The mountain in the north at the back of the monastery stands for the king himself who protects the place and is equated with 'Brom-ston *rGyal-ba*'i 'byung-gnas as the king (*rgyal po*) and protector of the Buddhist doctrine. Similar to mChims' work, the *Zhus lan nor bu'i phreng ba* also lists the various kinds of 'splendour' (see above) and mentions the four animals of the four directions (tiger, dragon, bird, tortoise). Then follow several lists of four items related to the four quarters. The vision turns from a description of a discernable topography to the vision of a sublime palace of enormous dimensions. Whereas other passages speak about the 21,000 junipers of Rwa-sgreng, this vision describes them as 21,000 lotus stalks. There is a recurrent scheme related to the four quarters, four colours, and four precious materials: there is always a (white) crystal item in the east, a (yellow) golden item in the south, a (red) copper item in the west, and a (blue) turquoise item in the north.<sup>27</sup> This scheme is applied to the lotus flowers, to magic springs with eight 'limbs', and other similar items of this pure realm. In the centre of this palace are two lotus flowers, golden and turquoise, on which Prajñāpāramitā and Buddha Śākyamuni are seated. The *maṇḍala* structure gets more intricate through more

<sup>25</sup> This general description shares some features with text 1, fols 183a–b (see above). It is echoed in the description of Rwa-sgreng by the 25th dGa'-ldan khri-pa dPal-'byor rgya-mtsho (1526–1599), reproduced in the booklet *dPal gyi 'byung gnas rwa sgreng chos sde chen po'i lo rgyus* s.d., 12–14. Its tone is similar to the description of other ideal places like, e.g., hidden lands (*sbas yul*).

<sup>26</sup> Similar to mChims Nam-mkha'-grags' description (see above), the present text mentions the mountain in the north that is the king, the mountain in the east that is like the general marching to battle, the mountain in the south-east that is like the householder with a treasure, the mountain in the south that is like the queen, the mountain in the south-west that is like an elephant with his trunk stretched out, the boulder in the west that is like a heap of jewels, and the mountain in the north-west that is like the excellent horse.

<sup>27</sup> This arrangement of the colours corresponds approximately to the layout in the *maṇḍala* of the five Tathāgatas which has white in the east, yellow in the south, red in the west, and green in the north. This scheme can be transferred to other groups of beings too; an example are the five winged *Ḍākinīs* described in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993, 488. It should be noted though that it is not applied to cosmography in general. The colours of Mount[?] Sumeru (Ri-rab), e.g., are white silver in the east, blue lapis lazuli in the south, red crystal in the west, and yellow gold in the north. Moreover, the arrangement of the colours is not identical with the colours of the four *sa'i lha* in text 1, fol. 183a, where we have white (or 'pale' colour) in the east, blue in the south, red in the west, and black in the north.

sophisticated arrangements of magically created springs (*sprul pa'i chu mig*) and lotus flowers, again described as crystal, golden, copper and turquoise; this scheme of the four colours is then extended to the landscape in the four seasons. The description closes with the remark that these things can only be seen by the gods. Among human beings, those with a pure character can see what we perceive as the 'real' landscape: the valley with the river, the juniper forest, the mountains above the monastery, and the plain of Pha-bong-thang below. People with an impure character, the passage concludes, cannot see any of these things at all: they will never come to Rwa-sgreng.

### 3. *Bu chos of the bKa' gdams glegs bam, fifth and sixth birth story of 'Brom-ston-pa*<sup>28</sup>

The fifth birth story deals with 'Brom-ston's birth as Prince dKon-mchog-'bangs. Prince dKon-mchog-'bangs travels to the dwelling place of the Wisdom Ḍākinīs (Ye-shes mkha'-'gro-ma) in U-rgyan in order to find the Ḍākinī gSang-ba ye-shes<sup>29</sup> and take her home as his bride. He is sent to Lañkā where he has to perform several difficult feats and finally finds gSang-ba ye-shes in the company of Lama Dri-ma med-pa. Embedded in the story is a description of Rwa-sgreng, again in the garb of a prophecy. In the course of events, gSang-ba ye-shes utters a promise that she is going to be reborn as dKon-mchog-'bang's companion in all his future existences; in his existence as King Srong-btsan sgam-po she will be his Chinese wife, and in his existence as 'Brom-ston she is going to settle on the plain of Pha-bong-thang below the monastery of Rwa-sgreng, which is still revered as the abode of gSang-ba ye-shes to this day. An interesting aspect of this story lies in the fact that a Ḍākinī who otherwise does not seem to have a personal 'history' is provided with a personal story and thus called to life as an individual and important deity. Another spectacular aspect is the obvious link of this Ḍākinī with the rNying-ma tradition. But here, quite in line with the general tendency of the *bKa' gdams glegs bam*, her story is intimately

<sup>28</sup> A German summary of the birth stories from the *Bu chos* is given in Schuh 1981, nos 1–3.

<sup>29</sup> The Wisdom Ḍākinīs are classified as '*jig rten las 'das pa* 'supramundane'. gSang-ba ye-shes herself does not seem to play a prominent role in the Buddhist pantheon except in the rNying-ma tradition where she is regarded as a peaceful form of Siṃhamukhā. For her iconography see Chandra 1988, pl. 719. She figures in a *gter ma* cycle revealed by the rNying-ma master gTer-bdag gling-pa (1646–1714) and in two related texts by his disciples, see Schwieger 1990, nos 129–135 and 1999, nos 1382–1384; see also Schwieger 1985. Geoffrey Samuel (Cardiff) has kindly drawn my attention to an episode in the biography of Padmasambhava where gSang-ba ye-shes is identified with the nun Kun-dga'-mo who bestowed the outer, inner and secret empowerments on Padmasambhava by swallowing him and expelling him through her vagina. Already the *Zangs gling ma*, a biography of Padmasambhava revealed by Nyang-ral Nyi-ma 'od-zer (1124–1192), contains this episode in its third chapter, although the identification of the nun Kun-dga'-mo with gSang-ba ye-shes is not made explicit here.

linked with the person of 'Brom-ston and thus integrated into the history of the bKa'-gdams-pas.<sup>30</sup>

What follows is a brief version of the description of Rwa-sgreng as the palace of Avalokiteśvara, similar to the description of the *Zhus lan nor bu'i phreng ba*, including the interpretation of the landscape in terms of a king with his 'seven jewels'. The various forms of the boulders are described and interpreted, and they are identified as the palaces of the snake spirits (*klu*). In a long passage, Lama Dri-ma med-pa describes the 21,000 junipers of Rwa-sgreng. Their roots are interconnected. Two central junipers stand for Atiśa and 'Brom-ston-pa, the other junipers for the numerous members of the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition. The trees have seven layers of bark, a symbol of seven 'Victorious ones' (*rgyal ba*) who will teach mankind in the age of degeneration.<sup>31</sup> The text mentions a number of junipers in particular: the crystal, golden, copper and turquoise juniper that mark the four quarters, and many other trees with auspicious names such as *shug pa rin chen 'phel*, *bsod nams 'phel*, *klu'i dbang phyug*, and *dri ma med pa'i rgyan*. As in the passage from the *Zhus lan nor bu'i phreng ba*, they are associated with the four seasons, with respective springs, etc. Then we get an intricate pattern of the four main springs (crystal, golden, copper and turquoise) and many others which are named individually, numbering 108 or 113. Nowadays, we are informed, only two of these springs (*chu mig ring mo*, 'perennial springs') are left. The text closes with the explanation that the junipers have sprouted from Srong-btsan sgam-po's hair which he cut off and scattered at Rwa-sgreng.

The sixth birth story deals with 'Brom-ston's life as Prince Dad-pa brtan-pa. In this birth story, Prince Dad-pa brtan-pa has to perform a number of difficult feats, beginning with the task of bringing home Princess Ku-sha-na, the beautiful daughter of the king of the demons (*srin po*). During his adventures he is assisted not only by Ku-sha-na herself, but also by one white and one black snake spirit (*klu*) whom he had helped before. The story contains several solemn promises (*smon lam*) by these beings to be reborn at Rwa-sgreng and to protect the place. They become the *klu* and *sa bdag-s* of Rwa-sgreng who protect the Buddhist doctrine there 'as long as the perennial springs have not dried up'.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> A detailed analysis of the construction of school identity based on the person of 'Brom-ston in the *bKa' gdams glegs bam* can be found in Miller 2004.

<sup>31</sup> This came to be understood as a reference to the succession of seven Dalai Lamas, see Kar-may 2005, esp. p. 100.

<sup>32</sup> *chu mig ring mo ma skams bar*, or, in another stanza, *chu mig ring mo gnas kyi bar*. The relevant stanzas are reproduced in *Rwa sgreng dgon pa'i dkar chag* 1994, 177–9.

#### 4. A gnas yig by the second *Rwa-sgreng Rin-po-che bsTan-pa rab-rgyas (1759–1815)*<sup>33</sup>

Khri-chen bsTan-pa rab-rgyas describes a vision in which 'Brom-ston appears to him, equipped with the iconographic attributes of Avalokiteśvara, and instructs him. This text is particularly interesting because it contains concrete prescriptions for pilgrims, a topic that is not found in the above-mentioned sources from the early bKa'-gdams-pa tradition. Moreover, it attributes not only positive, but also negative effects to certain places near Rwa-sgreng monastery.

In this vision 'Brom-ston recommends 3,000 circumambulations of the temple with two pillars (*ka gnyis ma*). Pilgrims who circumambulate 'Brom-ston's teaching throne will be healed from diseases caused by the *klu*, the *sa bdag*, and the *gdon*. If the pilgrim circumambulates the juniper forest seventy times with full prostrations, diseases caused by *nad gdon* will be calmed and any harm done by the *sa bdag* will be prevented. This passage reveals a remarkably antagonistic view towards the powers of the territory: there is not even an attempt to propitiate the snake spirits (*klu*) and 'lords of the ground' (*sa bdag*) and turn them into protectors, they are only seen as threatening forces that the visitor needs to ward off.

Then it is recommended to circumambulate the plain that is the dancing ground of the Ḍākinīs (i.e., Pha-bong-thang) in order to avoid hindrances caused by the Ḍākinīs and the guardian deities (*bka' srung*). In the east there is a group of junipers that should be avoided because this is the dancing ground of the Māras (*bdud*). Moreover one should never circumambulate a certain boulder shaped like a yak because it is the meeting place of the *bdud*. Going there would cause anger and offences against one's vows. In the middle of the plane is the palace of gSang-ba ye-shes. By circumambulating it three hundred times one can atone for offences against the Lama and the Ḍākinīs. By circumambulating the mountain at the back that looks like a drum, one gets protection against the demons that cause diseases (*nad gdon*). In the west there is a boulder which is the palace of the magic horse dBang-chen ('Powerful'). By circumambulating it three hundred times, one gets protection against any harm done by the snake spirits (*klu*), against curses, and against magic daggers, and furthermore one will reach the age of 75. In front of a rock in the south is a juniper tree which looks like the face of Yama, the Lord of Death. If one offers milk and fragrances with medical herbs, cattle will prosper, diseases of the four limbs will be healed, and one will be reborn in Padma-'od.<sup>34</sup> In the west on the river bank, there is a boulder called

<sup>33</sup> This text has been reproduced in *Rwa sgreng dgon pa'i dkar chag* 1994, 179–83 and in *dPal gyi 'byung gnas rwa sgreng chos sde chen po'i lo rgyus skal ldan* s.d., 46–49.

<sup>34</sup> This is surprising, since the Buddha field Padma-'od is associated with Padmasambhava and therefore rather with the rNying-ma-pa than with the bKa'-gdams-pa or dGe-lugs-pa tradition. Another connection with the rNying-ma tradition was mentioned above in note 29.

Brag-rdog ('Solitary boulder') looking like a jewel. It is the palace of Cakrasaṃvara, and by circumambulating it with prostrations one can purify wrong views. In the east there is the boulder of Vaiśravaṇa where one can obtain the *siddhi* of wealth. If one offers milk and fragrances with medical herbs at the palace of gSang-ba ye-shes, the infants of the family will live and the whole family will thrive.

### Conclusion

The texts introduced above, particularly the passages from the *bKa' gdams glegs bam*, provide us with a dazzling number of junipers or lotuses, of springs in simple and in more intricate arrangements, with schemes of four applied to various objects and associated with the cardinal directions, with four colours and with precious materials (east-white-crystal, south-yellow-golden, west-red-copper, north-blue-turquoise). These overlapping structures can be understood as forming the Rwa-sgreng *maṅḍala* in which the buildings of the monastery are embedded. The descriptions shift between 'pure vision' accounts with a huge *maṅḍala* palace and realistic descriptions of features that can be perceived by the visitor. The landscape is imbued with power through several devices: by its character as a pure palace of Avalokiteśvara, by the symbolic meaning or the positive effects of certain features of the place, and finally in terms of a temporal order by the *rten 'brel* between 'Brom-ston and his previous existences, including Srong-btsan sgam-po. Thus the descriptions establish a link between the place and an individual biography and, mediated by the figure of 'Brom, with the history of Buddhism in Tibet in general and the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition in particular.

But do these descriptions by mChims Nam-mkha'-grags, from the *bKa' gdams glegs bam* and by the second Rwa-sgreng Rin-po-che form a homogenous narrative? One might expect that at least the first two of these sources are similar, because both of them were created at sNar-thang around the same time,<sup>35</sup> and both of them belong to a similar genre: biography (*rnam thar*) in the widest sense of the word. However, it seems to me that they are written in a different spirit, and although they share several ideas like the concept of the landscape representing the 'seven jewels' of the perfect king, the geometrical schemes with groups of four, the juniper grove, the mentioning of the springs and of Pha-bong-thang, the works seem to have different agendas. mChims Nam-mkha'-grags describes Rwa-sgreng in the context of an examination of the geomantic features of the place. The positive qualities he describes are, in part,

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<sup>35</sup> mChims Nam-mkha'-grags lived in the 13th century and was the seventh abbot of this monastery; the *bKa' gdams glegs bam* was redacted at sNar-thang in 1302 by its ninth abbot, mKhan-chen Nyi-ma rgyal-mtshan (1225–1305).

of a very practical and concrete nature, for example the orientation towards the south that guarantees enough sunshine, or the trade connections with neighbouring valleys. Other qualities are symbolic and auspicious at the same time, e.g., the symbolism of the 'seven jewels' of the king. However, the meaning or the effect of these features is barely made explicit in his text. Only in the final passage about the qualities which are understood through inference does the text contain an explicit explanation of the positive effects. 'Brom-ston figures in a much less legendary way than in the *bKa' gdams glegs bam*. This part of his biography presents him as an expert in geomancy who is able to identify the right place for the monastery and to 'tame' the lords of the territory (*gzhi bdag*), but not as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara or an incarnation of Srong-btsan sgam-po.

In contrast to this, the three *bKa' gdams glegs bam* passages play on a much more sublime level. All three of them create a temporal and spatial network, with 'Brom-ston as the incarnation of Avalokiteśvara and with many previous lives that prepare him, the place, and the deities residing there for the here and now: the main seat of the bKa'-gdams tradition.<sup>36</sup> Then, without much warning, the 'pure vision account' of a huge palace is projected on the landscape. We get a lengthy description of the Rwa-sgreng *maṇḍala*, and it is at the end of the text that the reader is informed that this palace is visible solely for the gods; human beings with good fortune, i.e., we as the visitors, can see the place and its landscape only in an ordinary way. Remarkable also is the creation of a narrative that is focused upon 'Brom-ston as the main figure, placed in the centre both in space and in time. Like the mountain at the back of the monastery, he is the king who protects the doctrine and territory. Thus he, together with his monastery, takes the place that would usually be occupied by the central mountain with its mountain god (*yul lha*) or the tantric deity of a sacred place (*gnas*). gSang-ba ye-she, a *Ḍākinī* who plays a role in the rNying-ma tradition, but whose worship is also an integral part of the pilgrimage to Rwa-sgreng, is elegantly integrated into the narrative about 'Brom-ston and his previous lifetimes and thus given a legitimate identity as part of the story of the bKa'-gdams-pas.

The second Rwa-sgreng Rin-po-che in his pilgrimage guide (*gnas yig*) does talk about the symbolism and the auspicious features of the landscape, but his description is related to perceptible features and not to the level of 'pure vision'. In addition

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<sup>36</sup> Van der Kuijp has observed that the identification of 'Brom-ston with Avalokiteśvara and with King Srong-btsan sgam-po is not attested in earlier sources. The *bKa' gdams glegs bam* seems to bear witness to an originally local development, namely, that the 'Brom family became associated with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The identification with Avalokiteśvara reminds us of another work that is related to the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition, the *bKa' chems ka bkol ma*, where Srong-btsan sgam-po appears as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara who has come to save the country of Tibet. The *bKa' gdams glegs bam* extends this identification to 'Brom-ston-pa, the founder of the bKa'-gdams-pa school. See van der Kuijp 2005, esp. pp. 24–8.

he provides information that is lacking in the two earlier sources: He describes the actions that a pilgrim might perform and explains the benefits. At the same time, his description exhibits a remarkable scepticism: the landscape is not just a pure realm imbued with beneficial powers, but certain parts of the ground and the landscape are the seats of malevolent spirits and negative effects that must be avoided. It seems that in practice the ‘taming’ of the place has not been altogether successful.

The three attitudes to the place outlined above contain elements that are expressly Buddhist, elements that are related to pre-Buddhist ideas, and actions that can be seen as ways of negotiating the problematic relationship between the Tibetan landscape and the Buddhist order imposed on it. Obvious Buddhist concepts are deities like the *Dākinīs* and *Cakrasaṃvara* and the idea of the palace of *Avalokiteśvara*, invisible to the human eye. Also the *maṇḍala* structure, oriented to the four cardinal and the four intermediate directions, is probably derived from a Buddhist cosmology. The importance attributed to the junipers stems from pre-Buddhist times; it is remarkable though that the texts do not mention the old Tibetan fumigation offering (*bsang*), but only the trees themselves, and relate their origin and their significance to the *bKa’-gdams-pa* school, thus appropriating the sacred trees as part of the identity of the *bKa’-gdams-pas*. A similar position ‘in between’ the worldviews has the metaphor of kingship. On the one hand, it is similar to the Tibetan idea of a mountain deity who is the lord of the surrounding territory and the people living there, and who has a wife (typically a lake) and subordinate mountains who are his ministers, generals, rivals, etc. On the other hand, these features are expressed here in the framework of the ‘seven jewels’, an idea that comes from India and has entered Tibet together with Buddhism (although it is presented in a modified form here). Another old Tibetan metaphor is the expression ‘pillars of heaven’, here applied to the junipers. The ritual of ‘breaking the ground’ and ‘taming’ the *klu* and *sa bdags* described by *mChims Nam-mkha’-grags* is something very well-known from Buddhist pilgrimage places. Although the conflict with the pre-Buddhist powers of the place should theoretically be resolved by this act, the *gnas yig* by the second *Rwa-sgreng* Lama expresses certain scepticism about the success of their pacification. How these aspects are seen by the people living at *Rwa-sgreng* and how all these attitudes are related to the practice of pilgrims visiting the place will be explored during an upcoming visit to *Rwa-sgreng*.

As this brief survey has shown, Tibetan biographies, histories, and pilgrimage guides have played an essential role in the construction of *Rwa-sgreng* Monastery not only as the main seat of the *bKa’-gdams-pa* tradition, a concrete material place with historical significance, but also as the centre of a much larger and symbolically charged spatial and temporal network. As the narrative variants show, certain motifs are both reiterated and modified in the different works, thus forming the coherent

texture of the master narrative that gradually emerged. Metaphors and narrative strands of different provenance are what this texture was made of.

APPENDIX:

**THE BIOGRAPHY OF 'BROM-STON-PA  
BY MCHIMS NAM-MKHA'-GRAGS (TEXT 1) IN TIBETAN**

The following passage is a diplomatic transcript of the manuscript without any conjectures or corrections, except for the spelling of the nominal particles *pa* and *ba* and the terminative particle *tu* and *du*, which have been standardized. Some notes on readings and spelling mistakes are found in the footnotes to the translation given above.

(182a5) ... *me pho spre'u'i lo ra sgyeng du chags phab bo | de yang dang po ldan ma'i yul yin pas ldan skad du ra sgyeng | bod skad du chu mig ring mo zhes bya ba yin skad | de'i dus su dge bshes ston pas ra sgyeng gi dgon sa la gzigs pas sa'i yon tan dang ldan par mkhyen te | mngon sum dang | (182b) rjes dpag dang | lung gis grub pa'o |*

*dang po la | sa'i dbyibs dang | sa'i lha dang | sa'i longs spyod gsum las | dang po la yang | phyogs ma nor ba dang | ri lung 'chags legs pa dang | rang bzhin gyis 'od yod pa'o |*

*de la phyogs ma nor te | phu shar du bstan pas rgya'i chu 'bab | mda' nub nub tu bstan pas gza' skar lam gsal | rgyab kyi byang skyabs pas rlung gi lam bgags | mdun gyi lho gzhol bas nyi ma'i 'od 'debs par 'dug skad |*

*ri lung 'chags legs te | rgyab ri rtse phyng dkar ni brjid la lhun chags shing rgya che la 'phang mtho ba rgyal po la thod gsol ba 'dra bar 'dug | de'i 'khor byang shar na stag ri rtse rgyal dmag dpon gyul du zhugs pa 'dra ba | lho shar na kheb ri zlum po khyim bdag bang mdzod khengs pa 'dra ba | lho na ri btsun mo rgyan gyis brgyan pa skyil krung byas pa 'dra ba | lho nub na spang ri ser po glang po che sna brgyang pa 'dra ba | nub na rdod phur gyi brag rin po che spungs pa 'dra ba | nub byang (183a) na ri ta sga rta la sgron pa 'dra ba | byang na brag rdo rje pha lam 'dra ba | mdun na pha bong thang 'khor lo rtsibs brgyad 'dra ba | mdun gyi mtsho ni gyung drung 'khyil pa 'dra ba | shugs pa gser ma dang gyu ma ra tsam lug tsam gnyis gnam sa'i ka ba 'dra ba | chu mig brgya rtsa brgyad yod pa | spyi lung shar nub du yangs la sgo lung kha drug yod pas sa pad ma 'dab brgyad dang gnam 'khor lo rtsibs brgyad du 'dug skad |*

*rang bzhin gyis 'od dang ldan te | ri rtse gya'i 'od | ri rkeng spang gi 'od | ri 'dabs nags kyi 'od | snyoms pa thang gi 'od | 'bab pa chu'i 'od | dangs pa nam mkha'i 'od | snum pa zhag gi 'od dang ldan par 'dug skad |*

*sa'i lha ni bzhil ste | shar gyi stag skya'o ri phug gi brag stag nam mkha' la mchong pa 'dra ba dang | lho'i 'brug sngon po chu klung gser ldan sbrug sngon thur la rgyu ba 'dra ba dang | nub kyi bya dmar mo bya mchu mo'i thang gshog pa brkyang pa 'dra ba dang | byang gi ru sbal nag po rtse phyng dkar gyi logs rus sbal nyi ma la brgyab (183b) bstan pa 'dra bar 'dug skad |*

*sa'i longs spyod la | gzhi phun sum tshogs pa dang | rgyu mod pa dang | rkyen tshang pa gsum las | dang po ni sa gtsang zhing 'bru smin pa rtse rje la sogs pa dkar po la dga' ba'i lha klu rnam gnas pa | shug pa'i nags tshal gyi snga ltas dang ldan pa ste | de dus na gser ma dang gyu ma gnyis las med kyang dge bshes ston pa'i dbu skra bsil ba'i sar shug pa phung po cig 'khrungs | de nas rim gyis 'phel nas da lta shug pa'i nags kyi dbus na ka gnyis ma'i gser*

tog bzhugs pas rma bya'i gdugs gser tog gis brgyan pa ltar bzhugs so || de na ra sgyeng pa dag shugs rnams dge bshes ston pa'i dbu skra yin pas bcad na dbu skra bcad par 'gro zhes gleng zhing rtsis che bar mdzad skad | bya'i rigs rnams sna tshogs skad 'byin pas dge sbyor la skul ba 'dra ba | ri dags la sogs pa 'jigs pa med par gnas pa | grong yul dang mi nye ming ring ba | sa phyogs de mi gzhan gyis bdag tu ma bzung bar mkhyen skad |

(184a) rgyu mod pa la sgo'i yon tan ni phu rom pa'i mda' yin pas mar dang gser mod | lho bgre lung gi la sgo mod pas klung shod kyi nas dang lho'i zong mod | nub chag la'i la sgo yod pa 'phan yul gyi nas dang gtsang zong mod | byang 'gre smad gyi la sgo yod pas byang gi tsha bal sha mar dang khams zong mod par mkhyen skad |

rkhen me chu'i yon tan ni bud shing 'gre stod 'gre smad la sogs pa'i nags yod la chu chu klung dang chu phran dang chu mig dang bcas par mkhyen cing | sa de ni co ro'i dur sa yin pas gna' mi 'dzangs pa rnams kyis yon tan dang ldan par mihong bas kyang yid ches pa yin no ||

rjes dpag gis grub pa ni rgyab ri mtho ba ni gzhan gyi skyabs su 'gyur ba | chu bo rgyun ring pa ni bstan pa yun du gnas pa | nyi ma 'char lnga ba ni slob ma myur du 'du ba | nyi ma nub 'phyi ba ni chos rgyun ring du gnas pa | shug pa'i nags 'phel ba ni bka' gdams mtha' rgyas pa | gangs ri'i dbus yin pa ni slob ma'i tshogs 'du ba | rgyal srid (184b) rin chen sna bdun tshang ba ni chos kyi rgyal sar 'gyur ba | klu'i pho brang yod pa ni longs spyod kyis mi phongs pa | ru sbal gyi brang kha mnan pa ni 'byung ba'i dgra mi 'byung ba | yid chags pa ni grub thob 'byung ba'i gnas su mkhyen skad |

lung gis grub pa ni 'jam dpal brtan pa rol pa'i rgyud las |

lnga brgya dus kyi tha ma la ||

sangs rgyas bstan pa gar rgyas pa ||

byang phyogs kha ba can gyi yul gyi dbus ||

sman rnam sna tshogs yod pa ri'i mgul

spos shing nags tshal rgyas pa'i gtsug lag khang ||

yi de dang po ra la de 'og sgren

zhes dang | mdo las |

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa ni byang dang byang gi phyogs su rgyas par 'gyur ro

zhes dang | mdo sde rgyan las |

blo ldan gang du sgrub pa'i yul ||

legs par rnyed dang gnas bzang dang ||

sa bzang pa dang grogs bzang dang ||

rnal 'byor bde ba'i yon tan ldan

zhes pa yang tshang par mkhyen pa dgon sa la mnyes nas | de'i mtshan mo brag phug tu bzhugs (185a) pa'i mnal lam du dbu rtse ka gnyis ma'i shul na gser gyi mchod rten 'dug zer sa 'od zer 'phros te | 'od zer gyi sna la dbu rtse gser gyi tog lhag ge ba mang po byung nas bod yul thams cad gsal bar byas te tshur 'dus pas | ra sgren shug pa'i gling du byas pa'i gseb thams cad gtsug lag khang tog dang bcas pas gang ba | pha bo thang rin po che'i phung por song bar rmis | nang par sum pa mthu chen dang rnal 'byor pa chen po dang dgon pa pa gsum gyis ltas bzang lags sam zhus pas bzang lags gsung | de nas dgon pa 'debs par thag bcad de jo bo'i gsung bsgrub cing thugs sgongs bskang pa dang nyid kyis bstan pa'i phyi rgyun la phan par dgongs nas bzhengs pa yin no ||

ji ltar bzhengs pa ni bya'i lo sa 'dul la brgyad stong pa mdo 'grel gsungs sa chog pañḍi ta shri dha ra la zhus pas ma gnang | dgon pa pa la zhus pas kyang ma gnang | khu la zhu'am snyam nas glengs pa la rnal 'byor pa'i zhal nas khyed la (185b) mi kun jo bo'i yon tan thams

*cad yod par byed | khyed 'di 'dra gsung bas | dge bshes ston pa'i zhal nas ngas shes pa yin te | gcig tu rten dman gnyis su khyed gong ma rnams kyis khrel du 'gro | gsum du ma yin pas 'sher bas lan | 'di bzhin du byed pa yin gsung nas ne'u bsing dbus na chu mig yod pa'i klü'i pho brang gi steng | ru sbal phyi rgan du bsgyel ba 'dra ba'i brang thog du sngon la jo bo'i sku 'bag dang 'jam pa'i rdo rje spyang drangs nas gsol ba btab ste chu mig bsubs | skyer phung rtsa ba nas bton na chad pa 'ong sbrul myug gis byung na yang mi nyan pa yin sems nas de'i steng du khri rtsigs | sbra phub thig btab nas 'dir jo bo'i gdung bzhugs pa yin | 'di la shin tu ngo mtshar ba'i rtags khyad par can mang po byung bas khyed rnams kyis 'dir mchil bsnabs la sogs pa gang yang ma dor cig gsung |*

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