

# A GNAS YIG TO THE HOLY PLACE OF PRETAPURĪ

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About fifteen years ago, in the collections of the photographic archives of the IsIAO Photographic archives, deposited at the Museo Nazionale di Arte Orientale (hereafter MNAO) a black and white film was retrieved which contained twenty-nine frames reproducing a Tibetan manuscript.<sup>1</sup> Successively, printed photographs of the same manuscript were found among the personal papers of Professor Luciano Petech after his death. The manuscript had been photographed during the Tucci expedition to Western Tibet in 1933, and contains a description and hagiographical history (*gnas yig*) of Pretapurī, a holy place on the pilgrimage route to Lake Manasarowar and mount Kailāsa. This article, including a translation of this unexpectedly recovered text, is written as a testimony to the legacy of the Rome school of Tibetan studies, initiated by Giuseppe Tucci, continued by Luciano Petech, and sustained by the latter's disciple, Elena De Rossi Filibeck, whose efforts as a teacher, researcher and mentor produced a fourth generation of scholars, many of whom, although now often scattered around the world, contributed to these pages.

Pretapurī, located in mNga' ris, along the banks of the upper Sutlej river at 31° 7' 34" N - 80° 45' 23" E, is about 70 km south-west of mount Kailāsa and is part of the circuit of holy places where pilgrims stop when on pilgrimage to Gangs Ti se. In the maps, in travel literature, and now also on internet websites where users upload travel photos, its name is variously spelled as Tirthapuri/Tirtapuri/Tirthapura,<sup>2</sup> or sometimes phonetically as Tretapuri and even Reta-puri.<sup>3</sup> The site includes a small monastic complex and a series of rock formations, caves and hot springs of sulphuric nature that are said to be connected with episodes in the life of Padmasambhava and rGod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje (1189-1258). The *gnas yig* focuses on the mythological history and descriptions of the natural features of the site, and does not mention the temples.

The name Pretapurī is well known as that of one of the twenty-four *pīṭha*, holy places considered to have both an external function, as geographical sites for cultic

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1 The photos of the manuscript are reproduced here with the kind permission of the late president of IsIAO Gherardo Gnoli.

2 See for example contemporary tourist handbooks such as Mayhew, Choy *et al.* 2002: 269; McCue 2010: 234; but also the one-hundred-seventy year-old travel diary of Strachey 1848: 144, 145, 156, 159, 336.

3 For example, see Dowman 1997: 246; Hedin 1913: 187; Tucci 1971: 376; Kawaguchi 1909: 162.

practice and pilgrimage, and an internal meaning, being associated with the organs of a practitioner's body as inner places on which to focus during meditation.<sup>4</sup> The *Yoginītantras* list twenty-four (but sometimes thirty-two), of these *pīṭha*, pairing together each geographical location with a corresponding internal site. However, since the Saṃvara and Hevajra tantric cycles do not provide the geographic whereabouts of the holy sites they list, their exact position has always been uncertain and prone to interpretation.<sup>5</sup> Thus, for example, in Arunachal Pradesh there is another site which is known as Pretapurī.<sup>6</sup>

In the Saṃvara tantra the twenty-four *pīṭha* are symbolically illustrated by a mandala divided into three levels, so that eight *pīṭha* are attributed to the celestial sphere, eight to the earthly realm, and eight more to the underworld.<sup>7</sup> Pretapurī is listed as the seventeenth of the twenty-four *pīṭha*, is marked as corresponding internally with the sex organs of the meditator's body, and belongs to the group of *pīṭha* located in the underworld, the "eight underground abodes" (*sa 'og gi gnas brgyad*). In fact, the name Pretapurī means "the town of the hungry ghosts", with reference to the *preta* (*yi dwags*), a class of supernatural beings in Indic and Buddhist mythology. In Tibetan Buddhism, the *preta* are believed to be harmful, monstrous beings who populate one of the lower realms of *saṃsāra*. They are generally depicted as grisly figures with sallow skin, an enormous belly and a minuscule throat, because they are believed to be always hungry and thirsty but never able to satiate their impelling desire.

The guide to Pretapurī is a manuscript of uncertain date, never before published or translated. As far as I can ascertain, the only copy in existence is the one I have

4 On the concept of *pīṭha* in Tibetan Buddhism and its Indian origins see Huber 2008: 87-103. On the *pīṭha* of Pretapurī in particular see also Huber 2008: 101-103. More on *pīṭha* can also be found in Snellgrove 1959: 69-70, n. 2, and Templeman 1999: 187-197.

5 In this regard, the following quote from Huber 2008: 96, may be useful: "the locations and nature of the *pīṭha* were the subject of a great amount of both confusion and creative interpretation on the part of the Tibetans... Not only do the Tantras of both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions contain different catalogues of *pīṭha*, but their later commentarial traditions, not to mention other independent religious developments, have generated a welter of different lists recording the names of *pīṭha* sites. The result is that often the same names appear on many different lists, and the simple assumption is that identical names must refer back to identical locations. No assumption could be more misleading when it comes to studying the *pīṭha*, the reason being that there were often multiple geographical sites identified as being the same *pīṭha* under the same name in different historical periods." Further discussion of this topic continues in Huber 2008: 86-97; and may be also found in Sugiki 2009: 515-516.

6 Its early-20<sup>th</sup> century *gnas yig* has been translated in McDougal 2016. McDougal also convincingly suggests that a number of sacred, but "hidden" sites (*sbas yul*), the exact location of which is generally discovered through the prophetic revelation of a visionary lama (*gter ston*), have gradually been revealed as being located on the Indian side of the border, where they would be more easily accessible to exile Tibetans (*ibid.*: 6).

7 See Huber 2008: 90 for a schematization of the Saṃvara mandala.

examined, a set of black and white film negatives, twenty-nine frames in total, preserved in the collection of the photographic archives of the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, Italy. The title of the text is *gNas Pre ta pu ri gyi gnas yig dkar chag gsal ba'i me long zhes bya ba bzhugs so*,<sup>8</sup> “The mirror of clarity, guide to the holy place of Pretapurī”, but the manuscript contains two texts: a longer one, from the beginning to frame 23, line 2, and a much shorter, abridged version of the first text, from frame 23, line 2, to frame 30, the end of the manuscript. The full manuscript is in *dbu can*, with the exception of the colophon, which is added interlinearly in *dbu med*, in the last frame, between ll. 4 and 5. The pages contain either seven or eight lines, and unfortunately some of the pages with eight lines were not entirely captured in the frame of the photographs, resulting in either the left and right margins or the full last line being cut out, so that only the superscripted letters remain visible. According to the colophon, this *gnas yig* is an edited version of an older one which contained a number of repetitions and omissions and which was unintelligible or difficult to read. The author of this newer version re-wrote the guidebook from the cave of accomplishment of Gling ras pa<sup>9</sup> (*Gling ras sgrub phug*), and was a lead cantor (*dbu mdzad*) by the name of Chos 'phel. Neither his lowly rank nor his all too common name allow us an even remote identification. The year of composition is an unspecified Female Water Bird year (*chu mo bya lo*), which, without the cycle number, is impossible to convert to a western style calendar date.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the writing style, it is fairly colloquial and inelegant, being at times choppy, with sudden changes of topic. The impression of inelegance is further amplified by the abundance of orthographic mistakes. Still, the author displays a certain familiarity with the contents of the Buddhist canon and with the general body of literature devoted to the famous saint Padmasambhava, and in particular with the *Padma bka' thang* and *Padma thang yig*, two texts often referred to in the manuscript.

8 This is the corrected version of the title. An idea of the abundance of orthographic mistakes in this text is given by the following unedited transliteration of the title: *Gnas tre bsta pu ri gyi gnas yigs dkar chabs gsal ba'i me long zhes bya ba bzhugs so*.

9 Only from this mention in the colophon it may be derived that Gling ras pa (1128-1188) meditated in a cave at Pretapurī, since the *gnas yig* does not make any mention of it. Incidentally, the *gnas yig* does not mention also two other figures whom we know sojourned in Pretapurī during their travels. One is O rgyan pa rin chen dpal (1229/1230-1309), a disciple of rGod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje, and the other is O rgyan ngag dbang rgya mtsho, also known as sTag tshang ras pa (1574-1651), a 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa cleric who departed from Pretapurī in search of other cradles of the Buddhist tradition in Guge and Oddiyana. The fact that neither of these two personages is mentioned in the text may be taken as a temporal indication concerning the redaction of the original *gnas yig*, but the absence of Gling ras pa, who *preceded* rGod tshang pa, makes the feasibility of this *terminus ante quem* very uncertain.

10 Given the dearth of time references in the text, the exact western date corresponding with this Tibetan year cannot be pinpointed. The text merely provides rGod tshang pa's lifetime (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century) as the latest *terminus post quem* for the composition of this guidebook. Thus the Water-Bird year could be 1273, 1333, 1393, 1453, 1513, 1573, 1633, 1693, 1753, 1813, 1873, or 1933.

For example, in the *Padma bka' thang* Pretapurī is mentioned in the chapter relating the narrative of the successive rebirths of Rudra and the story of its subjugation (chapter five). Here the twenty-four *pīṭha* are listed as the abodes of the hosts of Rudra, each presided over by a terrifying lord. In particular, Pretapurī, together with Gṛhadevatā, was seized by the *nāga*.<sup>11</sup>

However, Pretapurī is especially known and revered as a site blessed by the presence of Padmasambhava, the great 8<sup>th</sup> century tantric practitioner and tamer of local spirits, whose feats are also narrated in the *Padma bka' thang*. According to the *gnas yig*, Padmasambhava stayed at Pretapurī as he was leaving Tibet, and here subjugated an evil *srin mo*. Afterward he also tricked, with a miracle, a group of *asura* who were planning to trap him. Both of these achievements left visible marks in the local landscape, which the *gnas yig* duly enumerates among the signs of holiness of the site. Still, notwithstanding Padmasambhava's role, the discoverer of Pretapurī as a holy site was rGod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje, one of the most important figures in the 'Brug pa bKa' bgyud pa lineage, who visited the area of Tise at the age of twenty-five.<sup>12</sup>

The *gnas yig* covers three main topics, which develop in fairly linear chronological order. First, it endeavors to establish the pedigree of Pretapurī and its status as one of the twenty-four *pīṭha*. It mentions the major canonical sources on *pīṭha*, such as the class of Anuttaratantra and the Cakrasaṃvara tantra, and provides a brief history of the origins of the site. According to the *gnas yig*, in the intermediate period between the end of the doctrine of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara and the arrival of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, *preta* were living underneath the soil of Pretapurī, and the local deities (*gnas bdag*) were a group of female demons, including *srin mo* and *ma mo*. The *preta* were miraculously satiated by the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who produced an incessant stream of ambrosia from his fingertips. The excess of ambrosia whirled around Pretapurī, surrounding it, and *ḍākinī* gathered to bless it as a site consecrated to rDo rje phag mo (Vajravārāhī).

Also, in the same interval between the doctrine of Dīpaṅkara and that of Śākyamuni, the demon Rudra destroyed most of the world. However, as it is well known, he was subsequently subjugated by rTa mgrin (Hayagrīva) and rDo rje phag mo. As a result of Rudra's defeat, eight substances of liberation (*bsgral ba'i rdzas brgyad*) became manifest; these went on to bless eight sacred places, including Pretapurī, which consequently became even more sanctified.

The second major section of the *gnas yig* records and eulogizes Pretapurī as a setting for some of the miraculous acts performed by Padmasambhava at the end of his sojourn in Tibet. In particular, it relates that when Padmasambhava arrived here, he found that the local deity (*gnas bdag*) was an evil demoness (*srin mo*), the chief of

11 See *Padma bka' thang*, p. 30, l. 4: "Pre ta pu ri gri ha de ba ta / klu'i bzung bas 'du ba'i gnas su btags"; "Pretapurī and Grihadevata were seized by the *nāga* and were connected as places of gathering". The seizing of Pretapurī by the *nāga* is also mentioned in the *gnas yig*, cfr. ph. 4 below.

12 Thus, around the year 1213. See Martin 2008.

the *asura*. He subdued her with his exorcisms and she fled to the land of the subterranean *nāga*, while her consciousness was absorbed into a heart-shaped rock in the area of Pretapurī.

Subsequently Padmasambhava transformed this rock into a self-emptying meditation cave, where, dwelling in *samādhi*, he was able to summon the consciousness of the *srin mo*. However, the *asura* plunged a rock at the entrance of the cave to imprison him there. Through his powerful tantric skills, Padmasambhava raised his index finger and not only caused the boulder to fall into the plain below, but was also able to exit the cave flying through the top of the rock. The *gnas yig* notes all the visible markings of the miracle observable in and around the heart-shaped rock-cave, most notable among which are the self-generated imprints of Padmasambhava's feet and hand staff, as well as a self-generated image of Mañjuśrī.

Finally, the holy place of Pretapurī is linked to the figure of rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje, the saint and ascetic who is one of the major figures of the 'Brug pa sect, the main Buddhist sect in Bhutan, and who is known to have spent about three years in the region of Kailāsa.<sup>13</sup> According to the text, it was rGod Tshang pa who recognized and revealed the status of Pretapurī as a holy place. rGod tshang pa's arrival in Pretapurī was originally prophesized by Gling ras padma rdo rje (1128-1188) and Lo ras pa (1187-1250), respectively teacher and disciple of gTsang pa rgyas ras Ye shes rdo rje, the founder of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa school and also the principal teacher of rGod tshang pa. Thus, by explicitly outlining the prestigious early lineage of the 'Brug pa, the guidebook highlights the connection of Pretapurī with this sect.

The prophecies were fulfilled when rGod tshang pa was guided here by the twenty-one Tāra emanated as a wild yak, sheep, raven and other animals. Upon arrival, he was immediately able to visualize Pretapurī as a mandala.<sup>14</sup> He then selected a cave for meditating: here he had wonderful visions, and soon was able to disclose the sanctity concealed in a series of sites located in the area of Pretapurī. All these areas are listed in the portion of the guidebook which is the true catalogue (*dkar chag*) of the holy sites of Pretapurī (photograms 18-20). Unfortunately, they are reported simply with the name of the deity they simultaneously housed and symbolized and, sometimes, a very vague topographical indication (e.g. "on the mountain on the left"), rendering their recognition almost impossible without a knowledgeable local guide (*dgon gnyer*).<sup>15</sup>

13 See Vitali 1996: 404 and 408-409, esp. n. 671. Vitali shows that rGod tshang pa resided in the Kailāsa area between the years 1214 and 1216.

14 Visualizing a sacred space (or one's own body) as a mandala is a common mark of progress in the attainment of salvation. When a saint visually superimposes a mandala to the landscape, he or she simultaneously organizes the landscape within the cosmos and demonstrates the holiness and powers of the place. See Macdonald 1997. Notice also that a self-generated mandala appeared at Pretapurī after its blessing with the eight substances of liberation of Rudra (ph. 7).

15 The lack of specific topographic indications confirms the notion according to which the literary genre of *gnas yig* was not written for pilgrims but was meant to be internally consumed by the

The *gnas yig* also narrates how, on account of rGod tshang pa's splendor, all the demonesses of this place disappeared, and various extraordinary signs became manifest in his cave of accomplishment: the footprints of Vajravārāhī and Hayagrīva, a self-generated image of Tāra, a strong, incense-like odor, and a flow of *sindūra*, which "blazes with good warmth, and even ignites itself".<sup>16</sup> Thus, the story of Pretapurī is cyclical: after each subjugation and conversion of the demons, new ones would come out, or threaten to come out, from crevices in the rocks and sulphuric springs deposits. Moreover, even at times when the Buddhist doctrine prevailed and the demonic presences were quelled, the extraordinary features of the landscape were explained as miraculous marks indicating the sanctity of this place and the success of Buddhist deities and saints.

However, for those of us who have not been to Pretapurī, it is sometimes difficult to imagine the features of the landscape which the *gnas yig* links to the miracles and wondrous feats performed by Padmasambhava and rGod tshang pa. Fortunately, several early explorers visited and described Pretapurī, helping to supply wherever the account of the *gnas yig* is lacking. For example, the Japanese monk Ekai Kawaguchi travelled there at the end of August 1901.<sup>17</sup> He took note of the intertwined nature of the pilgrimage to Pretapurī with that to mount Kailāsa by mentioning a proverb stating that no pilgrimage to the former place was complete without a visit to the latter. He also asserted that the name Pretapurī was pronounced "Reta puri" by the Tibetans, who, aware of the Indian origins of the name, but wholly ignorant of its meaning, were under the impression that it had "some holy meaning" and were rather proud of it.<sup>18</sup> On the contrary, Kawaguchi, notoriously critical of the Tibetans' notion of cleanliness, speculated that Atiśa had thus named this place on account of its filthy appearance. He was also convinced that Atiśa founded the first temple there, which was eventually enlarged to a "most imposing Lamaserai"<sup>19</sup> by rGyal ba rGod tshang pa. However, it should be noticed that there is no mention of Atiśa in connection with Pretapurī in the *gnas yig*.

Kawaguchi reported that four or five monks were living at the monastery when he visited, and that its main hall, one storey high, measured about eight yards by ten. Its main holy objects were the statues of Śākyamuni and Padma 'byung gnas. Also, a self-manifested (*rang 'byung*) image of Padma 'byung gnas impressed on a stone could be seen after payment of a small amount, whereby the temple's caretaker (*dgon gnyer*) would lift the *thangka* protecting it from unworthy viewers. Tellingly, faithful Buddhists would not dare to look directly at the image, fearing they may become blind. While scandalized by what he considered superstitious behavior on the part of the common people and impious treachery on the part of the resident monks,

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monks living in a monastery or holy place. On this idea see Venturi 2013.

16 Frame 20: "bde drod 'bar kyang rang 'bar yod pa". On *sindūra*, see n. 51 below.

17 See Kawaguchi 1909: 159.

18 Kawaguchi 1909: 162.

19 Kawaguchi 1909: 162.

Kawaguchi was still impressed by the magnificence of the natural environment, which “was such as to inspire chaste thoughts and holy ideas”.<sup>20</sup> He depicted it in a lengthy paragraph:

Let me describe here a little of this enchanting sight. First there was the river Langchen Khabab, flowing towards the west, with the opposite bank steep and precipitous, and with rocks piled up here and there, some yellow, some crimson, other blue, still others green, and some others purple. The chequered coloring was beautiful, and looked like a rainbow or a tinted fog, if such a thing could exist. It was a splendid sight. And the rocks were highly fantastic, for some were sharp and angular, and others protruded over the river. The nearer bank was equally abrupt and was full of queerly shaped rocks, and each of those rocks bore a name given to it by the priests of the temple. There was a rock which was known by the name of the “Devil Surrender Rock;” another was called the “Twin Images of the saintly Prince and his Lady;” a third bore the name of “Tise Rock;” a fourth “Goddess of Mercy Rock;” and a fifth “Kāśyapa Buḍḍha Tower”. All these rocks were objects of veneration to the common people...

About two hundred and fifty yards down the bank, from a cavern known as the Divine Grotto, several hot springs were gushing out from between the rocks. Three of them were rather large, while the other three were smaller. The water of all the springs was warm, indeed some was so hot that I could hardly dip the tip of my finger into it. The temperature of that particular spring must have far exceeded 100° Fahrenheit. The water of the springs was quite transparent, and all about them there were many hard incrustations, some white, others red, still others green or blue. The visitors to the place are said to carry away pieces of this incrustation, which are believed to possess a highly medicinal value, and so they must have, if properly used.<sup>21</sup>

A few years later, Sven Hedin visited Pretapurī during his third expedition to Central Asia, and described it as a small monastic complex “surrounded by a guard of *chhortens*” on a terraced slope. A 100-yard long *mani* wall led to the monastery, where twenty-one monks resided and which included two halls, a main one dedicated to Śākyamuni, and one dedicated to rDo rje phag mo. The connection of Pretapurī with Padmasambhava seems to have escaped Svedin, who only noticed that in the main temple were kept different powerful objects, including “flat dark stones cut round, which may be diabase or porphyry” bearing “rather deep impressions of the hands and feet of holy men”, as well as “the imprint of a horse’s hoof”, likely related to the cult of Hayagrīva.<sup>22</sup> Surprisingly, he made no notable mention of the sulphuric terrain and thermal springs at the site.

20 Kawaguchi 1909: 164.

21 Kawaguchi, 1909: 164-165.

22 See Hedin 1913: 187.

On the contrary, another early traveller to the site, Giuseppe Tucci, lyrically dwelled on the landscape in *Santi e Briganti nel Tibet Ignoto*:<sup>23</sup>

Pretapuri is the gate of hell: a green rock with whitish cone-shaped spires which seem to warn of dark omens; columns of boiling sulphur springing out from the cavities of the earth, and smoke, and gurgles of hot water spraying out from each crevice, corner, or hollow. The fantasy of the pilgrims has given a name to each of these hellish watersprings; each rock is tied to a legend, each portion of land demands a prostration.<sup>24</sup>

He accounted for the existence of different names for the site in this way: “It is called Tirthapuri, that is ‘the holy city’ as a euphemism; its real name was Pretapurī, ‘the city of the dead’, but of evil dead, the Preta, i.e. Lemurs, always wandering to harm the living beings, eternally hungry, with a stomach that can never be filled and a mouth not bigger than the eye of a needle”.<sup>25</sup> His description of the area, similarly to the one by Kawaguchi, complements the *gnas yig* examined here and additionally explains how the manuscript was found:

Tirthapuri is not a village, but a group of temples and chapels: it belongs to the ‘Brug pa sect and is in care of the incarnate of Rub shu [...]. In the small temples on top, at the foot of the whitish rock, nothing noteworthy: the chapels have all been recently remade; however, I have admired a few skillfully made statues and especially a Padmapani of Nepalese art. All the rest is modern and in a state of great neglect: however, in a heap of liturgical books I discover a copy of the old guide of the gonpa, which contains, together with many legends, precious historical information; a confluence of aboriginal, Indian and Tibetan myths. The monastery is entrusted to the care of a custodian who, after having shown me the chapels, leads me through a tormented terrain with sulphur springs, and points out, one by one, the fantastic rocks erupted from the earth in fearful contortions. The pantheon of Tibetan Tantrism seems to have convened in these cones and monoliths, in which it has been placed, through connections not always clear to us, by the imagination of a people stirred and troubled by dark terrors. Here is the series of the gods, goddesses and demons whose dwellings are shown to the frightened pilgrims by the guides: the four armed protector (mGon po phyag bzhi), the miraculously born Garuda (Bya khyung rang ’byung), Samvara (bDe mchog), [...]”<sup>26</sup>

For Tucci, then, in this diary written for and addressed to the larger public, the legends of Pretapurī originated from the imagination of a people “stirred and troubled by dark

23 As mentioned above, Tucci visited Pretapurī in 1933. His description may be found in Tucci 1996: 98-100.

24 Tucci 1996: 98 (author’s translation).

25 Tucci 1996: 98 (author’s translation).

26 Tucci 1996: 99 (author’s translation).



terrors” who concocted a mixture of local, Indian and Tibetan lore. Indeed the explanations of the features of the local terrain in the *gnas yig* show that the environment did affect the people inhabiting it. In this case, a sulfurous terrain of fumaroles and thermal springs was more likely to inspire thoughts of hostile chthonian deities and demons than, for example, a tranquil, grassy meadow. Accordingly, the multicolored rocks, sulfuric springs, pestilential miasma, and columns of vapour were explained by positing the existence of *preta* living underneath. With the arrival of Buddhism, the *preta* and other subterranean demons were subdued in turn by Avalokiteśvara, Hayagrīva and Vajravārāhī, Padmasambhava, and finally rGod tsang pa. However, the miraculous conversions did not remove from the landscape either the bizarrely shaped rocks, or the odorous vapours. Therefore, these were accounted for as consequences of the miraculous feats of the gods and saints, as living proof of the newly acquired sanctity of this place. It is thus that in the descriptions of the guide the environment sometimes disappears completely. It becomes entirely subsumed and explained by religion, which superimposes its structures on it, thereby leaving only a glimpse of the actual physical scenery.

For this reason in the text the physical environment is described in lists of topographical features, rather than illustrated in detail. For example, Pretapurī is designated generically as “a formation of wonderful soil, rocks, mountains and cliffs, with the river possessing the eight qualities, the five kinds of hot springs and the one hundred water springs”,<sup>27</sup> an extremely generic description that makes it impossible to visually reconstruct the appearance of the sacred site. In fact, the site is illustrated in greater detail only when the author elects to disregard its physical features in order to concentrate on its religious significance. Thus, Pretapurī is, poetically, “The blessed place of Vajravārāhī, the realm of all the *ma mo* sky-goers assembled, where the sound of mantras goes ‘*di ri ri*’”.<sup>28</sup> The sanctity of the spot is better rendered by eliminating geographic description altogether and focusing on religious attributes instead.

Secondarily, when the text mentions geographical features, it always interpretes them in light of religious explanations. For example, because in Tibet the consciousness of a sentient being is said to be dwelling in the heart, the presence of a heart shaped rock in the area is explained through the legend of the consciousness of the demoness that entered in the rock and became absorbed by it. In another example, a draft of cold air inside the same cave is explained as “an unceasing evil wind of the subterranean *nāga* [blowing] from the bottom of a spiraling hole”.<sup>29</sup>

27 Frame 8: “*Chu yan lag brgyad ldan dang chu tshan rigs lnga chu mig brgya rtsa sogs las sa rdo ri brag sogs khyad mtshar chags pa mthong*”. “River by the eight qualities” is a standard metaphor for a perfect river, as well as a common epithet for the Ganges. The Ganges, however, does not originate in or flow by the area of Pretapurī; rather, the Sutlej flows nearby. On the mythical springs of the Ganges in the area of Lake Manasarovar, see Vitali 1996: 92, n. 6.

28 Frame 6: “*rDo rje phag mo'i byin gyi rlabs pa'i gnas l ma mo'i mkha' 'gro thams cad 'dus pa'i gling l gsang sngags rda'i rang sgra di ri ri l'*”.

29 Frame 15: “*bug pa dung gi kha phor nang nas 'og klu'i rlung ngan rgyun mi chad yod pa*”.

The last example of how topographic features are explained through religious elements concerns the wonders of the meditation cave of rGod tshang pa. The guide describes them as a consequence of the sanctifying presence of the famous ascetic, and points out that they include “a continuous incense-like smell of *ākāru* and *dhur ru ka*”,<sup>30</sup> and “a flow of *sindūra* that blazes with good warmth, and even catches fire by itself.”<sup>31</sup> Thanks to the descriptions of the modern travelers quoted above,<sup>32</sup> it is possible to connect the incense-like smells and the blazing flow of *sindūra* to the smell of the sulfuric springs and the glowing columns of sulfur present at this site.

This treatment of the physical environment is not a mere whim of the author; it is the concretization, on paper, of the relation of Tibetan culture with the environment. The environment both instigates the religious beliefs and is subsumed, almost swallowed, by them. Once it has inspired the religious ideas, it succumbs to their power and disappears not only from the text, but, ideally, also from the vision of the faithful pilgrims. In fact, in agreement with the Buddhist notion of skillful means (*upāya kauśalya*), the more the pilgrims perceive of the actual landscape, the less they have progressed on the Buddhist path; while the less they see of their surroundings, the closer they are to Buddhist enlightenment.

To say it along with the guide:

“Through [their] vision, gods and goddesses could see a multitude of sky-goers as a flow of nectar; through their vision, men and demonic beings could see marvelous formations of land, stones, mountains and rocks, such as the river possessing the eight qualities, the five kinds of hot springs and the one hundred watersprings; through their vision, the knowledge holders, who are holy *ṛṣi*, could see many self-manifested, particularly holy and wondrous things, such as the blessed heavenly sphere and the body of Vajravārāhī in the eastern spoke of the mandala of Cakrasamvara.”<sup>33</sup>

Consequently the cohabitation of physical features with a spiritually charged atmosphere, that the early travelers to Tibet detected and mentioned in their diaries, was well known to Tibetans who simply explained it as a consequence and indication of an observer’s growth on the Buddhist path. The more accomplished the Buddhist

30 “Akaru” and “dhuruka” seem to be the names of two scents. See Trizin Tsering Rinpoche 2007: 352-353.

31 Frame 20: “*phug pa 'di'i nang na rgyun du spos Ā kā ru dang 'dhur ru ka la sogs pa'i dri bzang thul pa / sidhur ra dpal dang ldan pa 'bab cing / bde drod 'bar kyang rang 'bar yod pa*”.

32 See Tucci 1996: 98-100.

33 Frame, 8, l. 2: “*Lha dang lha ma rnams kyi snang ngor du bdud rtse chur mkha' 'gro ma 'dus bar snang / mi dang bdud 'gro rnams kyi mthong lam du chu yan lag brgyad ldan dang / chu tshan rigs lnga chu mig brgya rtsam sogs las sa rdo ri brag sogs khyad tshar chags pa mthong / 'phags pa'i drang srong rig 'dzin rnams gyi gzigs lam du 'khor lo sdom pa'i dkyil 'khor shar rtsib su rdo rje 'i 'phag mo'i byin gyi rlabs pa'i sku dang zhings khams sogs rang ljon 'khyed 'phags ngo mtshar can mang bar gzigs*”.

practitioner, the better his or her ability to discern the spiritual powers at play in a sacred space.

Thus, the guide to Pretapurī illustrates how the process of sanctification of the area was inspired by the extraordinary features of the landscape. In addition, the guide offers an overview of how the permanence of outstanding geographic characteristics contributed to the endurance of religious ideas intended to explain the singularity of this place. Beliefs inspired by the physical environment perpetuated themselves and even became so preponderant as to obfuscate, within the text, the actual physical environment.

## TRANSLATION

(ph. 2) *The mirror of clarity, guide of the place Pretapurī.*

(ph. 3) On opening the door of the place. I salute with devotion the venerable lamas who guide the living beings. I salute with devotion and honour the actual practice. I rejoice in the reverend [lamas] through the confession of the accumulated sins. With an exhortation to turn the prayer wheel, I pray not to undergo sufferings. I exchange the love of the self with the great perfection, fundamental virtue.

*[Canonical sources which establish the sanctity of Pretapurī]*

The place called Pretapurī, principal place of pilgrimage, became one of the twenty-four great places, as I well wrote in the historical guide. In addition to that, formerly the Buddha made many prophecies, and in particular, (ph. 4) from the class of the *Anuttaratantra*, [Pretapurī is] the highest wondrous place of Cakrasaṃvara; from the three outer, inner, and secret, Pretapurī became part of the twenty-four places. Also, from the sixty-four tantras of Saṃvara, Pretapurī became the eastern spoke of the wheel [which symbolically represents] the twenty-four countries. From the tantra of the thirteen gods, Pretapurī became the actual place, just like the superior place which I clarified. From the *Pad ma bka'i thang yig* these two: Pretapurī and Gṛhadevatā<sup>34</sup> are said to be in a place which is held by the *nāga*.

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34 One of the most common geographical identifications of Gṛhadevatā is with the oasis of Khotan in current Xinjiang. However, Alexis Sanderson has demonstrated that Gṛhadevatā appeared in the lists of Buddhist *pīṭha* because of a copying error, whereby the household deities (*gradevatā*) inhabiting the *pīṭha* of Saurāṣṭra have been listed as if they were a place name (Sanderson 1994: 95). Starting with Bu ston, the Tibetans, at a loss to locate this non-existing –but seemingly important– site, tentatively placed it in Central Asia. Further details on this may be found in Huber 2008: 95-96.

[Origins of the twenty-four pīṭha]

Formerly, at the time when the doctrine of the former Buddha Dīpaṅkara had finished (ph. 5) and the doctrine of Śākyamuni had not commenced yet, i.e. when the empty doctrine was passing, the lords of the twenty-four countries were the grasping *ma mo*<sup>35</sup> of the eight classes of demons. At this time, *nāga* and *srin mo*<sup>36</sup> served as local deities (*gnas bdag*) of both this place and Gṛhadevatā. The name of this place depends on the arising of a town having hidden *preta* (*yi dwags*) straight underneath the earth, and it is known as Pretapurī in the Sanskrit language.

[Formation of Pretapurī from the streaming milk of Avalokiteśvara]

As for the manner in which it arose: the nature and the compassionate actions of all the Buddhas, Arya Avalokiteśvara [...]<sup>37</sup> (ph. 6) in order to remove the miseries of hunger and thirst of those towns having hidden *preta* underneath the twenty-four places, the fingers of the right hand streamed down with a flow of ambrosia milk, [which] well satiated the *preta*. The excess flow of ambrosia overflowed more and more, whirling around this place. All the *ma mo dākinī*, gathering like clouds, bestowed blessings on the secret place of rDo rje phag mo, excellent mother. From the saying of the precious O rgyan (Padmasambhava):

“The blessed place of rDo rje phag mo;  
the realm of all the *ma mo dākinī* assembled;  
the *di ri ri*<sup>38</sup> sound of mantra vajra;  
simply by going to this place you obtain the highest perfection;  
(ph. 7) the prayer for this extraordinary place of pilgrimage”.  
Thus said, it is similar to the light of the lotus.

35 Guardian goddesses of the Buddhist doctrine, generally described as ugly women with long, emaciated breasts and huge sexual organs. They were famously bound by Padmasambhava, and they are particularly worshipped by the rNying ma pa sect. See de Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1977: 6 and 269-273.

36 A class of demonesses who protect the Buddhist doctrine. These deities originally belonged to the pre-buddhist pantheon of Tibet, but since their identification with the indian *rākṣasī* they lost their original identity. See de Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1977: 280 ff.

37 This portion is missing in the manuscript: this line is not entirely legible because it was cut off from the frame of the picture.

38 Honomatopoeic sound.

[Subjugation of Matram Rudra at Pretapurī]

Earlier, when the doctrine was empty, the demon Matram Rudra<sup>39</sup> destroyed most of the world. The Buddhas of the ten directions, in one mass, through the nature of their united force emanated the two, horse (rTa mgrin) and pig (rDo rje phag mo), and gazed upon those who were destined for conversion. Having liberated both the male and female Rudra,<sup>40</sup> according to O rgyan, in the eight substances of liberation of Matram Rudra were present the blessings of the eight places which had received the secret mantras.<sup>41</sup> From the substances indicated in the speech, it was blessed as the secret place of the *ḍāka*. The eight among the great places of tantra greatly enjoyed [this blessing] and (ph. 8) were at the peak.

[Consequences of the subjugation of Rudra]

From the vast *yoni*-heaven of rDo rje phag mo, a natural mandala of the gods, completely self generated, [was produced]. In the vision of gods and goddesses could be seen a multitude of *ḍākinī* as the flow of nectar. In the vision of men and demonic beings could be seen the formation of wonderful things such as earth, stones, mountains and rocks from the river possessing the eight qualities; [and] the five kinds of hot springs, the one hundred springs, etc. In the vision of the *vidyādhara*, who are holy *ṛṣi*, could be seen many self-arisen, particularly holy wonderful things, such as the blessed heavenly sphere and the body of rDo rje phag mo in the eastern spoke of the mandala of Cakraṣaṃvara. Then, from the speech of the protector of the world (Avalokiteśvara):

(ph. 9) “In the vast heaven of rDo rje phag mo  
the river possessing the eight qualities descends ten full [measures];  
unconceivable natural miracles [occur].  
In this excellent place of assembled *ḍākinī*  
the three signs of suitability in the path of maturation during sleep [are present]  
[and] decorated with ornaments of good body signs.  
The mass of *ḍākinī*, without one language or body,  
[is] surrounded by a circle of offerings of saffron, tasty food.  
When this appears, the party of the assembled beggars  
[eat] only these: the eggs of the birds and the fruits of the trees;

39 On Matram Rudra, a terrifying demon who was vanquished and transformed into the Dharma protector Mahākāla by Hayagrīva/rTa mgrin and Vajravārāhī/rDo rje phag mo, see for example Dalton 2011; Mayer 1998; and Stein 1995.

40 That is, Matram Rudra and his consort.

41 The eight substances from the liberation of Matram Rudra are said to consecrate the sites where the secret mantra would arise. See Ngawang Zangpo 2002: 228.

the bodies which have eaten this, are filled by all that,  
[and] from this place the miracles are even greater.”  
Thus he said.

*[Arrival of Padmasambhava]*

In particular, the precious O rgyan made prostrations to the country of Tibet, (ph. 10) fulfilled the wish of the *dharmarāja* 'Khri srong lde btsan, [and] bestowed blessings on the regions of Tibet as places of perfection. The stories of the exorcisation of the demons are clear in the *Thang yig*. Also, when the Teacher went to the country of the demons of the southwest, from the Gung thang pass he went upwards to the sky. At this time and in this place, having the *asura* seized the teacher while on route, he showed wonders such as binding [them]. Because [they] saw his [act of] binding and because they were bound by an oath, today it is famous as the land of oath-binding. Namely, the vow was seen and the binding occurred. Today it is also known as “the vow cave”.

*[Subjugation of the srin mo and formation of the self-emptying cave of accomplishment]*

(ph. 11) Thereafter, the precious teacher went to this place, saw that there was an evil *srin mo*, chief of the *asura*, as lord of the place (*gnas bdag*) and subdued [her]. The consciousness of the *srin mo* was absorbed into a rock shaped like a heart and [she] fled to the land of the subterranean *nāga*. The teacher made a self-emptying cave out of this magically transformed rock, [and] having summoned the consciousness of the *srin mo*, [he] dwelled in *samādhi*. At that time the *asura* made an impediment. They thought: “Now the one called Padmasambhava is staying inside a narrow cave in a rock. We must close the door to this cave”. They brought down a large boulder, [but] the teacher, who was dwelling in contemplation, (ph. 12) pointed [his] index-finger and caused this heavenly stone to fall down in the plain in front of the cave of accomplishment. Concerning this, the precious teacher did not exit from the door, [but] exited on top of the rock flying up through it. Inside the self-emptying rock cave appeared clearly a self generated body of Mañjuśrī, about the size of a *khyud*, and a cloak of cloth. A footprint [appeared] in the stone and a self generated imprint of a cane was clearly set in the rock.

*[Prophetic ode on the opening of Pretapurī]*

Having blessed the place of accomplishment, the prophecy on the opening of the door of the place in the future [was uttered].

[He] bound the *asura* through an oath:  
 namely, when the oath holders were bound by an oath,  
 each thought of this excellent pure place is joyful.  
 On the border of India and Tibet,  
 the place where He went and that He blessed,  
 [where] the mountains have good smell, perfume and fragrance;  
 (ph. 13) [where] all the lotus flowers are in bloom,  
 [and where] as to the water, [it is] the water of *bodhiamṛta* (“the nectar of perfection”).

Thus it said. The meaning of such words having completed the discourse on this place, also the waters are particularly holy and wonderful, and amongst the earth, stones, mountains and rocks, etc. there are immeasurable things such as the residence of image and body of each of those who are fit for conversion.

*[Other prophecies of rGod tshang pa's opening]*

The former *siddha* Gling ras padma rdo rje<sup>42</sup> and his counterpart Lo ras,<sup>43</sup> etc. prophesied about the future opening of the door of the place by rGod tshang pa. Later the victorious rGod tshang pa, the great, went from rGyal gyi shri<sup>44</sup> to the snowy Kailāsa. He opened and cleared up the door of places such as the cave 'Bri thim<sup>45</sup> behind the Kailāsa mountain.

*[The twenty-one Tāra lead rGod tshang pa to Pretapurī]*

[As for] the opening of the door of the place Pretapurī, etc.: (ph. 14) [this] was prophesied by the twenty-one Tāra. [They] emanated as wild yak, sheep and raven-faced one, and, acting as a guide, led [rGod tshang pa]. [He] arrived in this place and saw many wondrous visions of interlinked connections. Not only, [but he] saw the earth as a palm of the hand, and the stones as a thumb, without [regard to their actual] existence or non existence.

42 A disciple of Phag mo 'gru pa Ye shes rgyal po and a yogin, he lived between 1128 and 1188. His main disciple was gTsang pa rgya ras Ye shes rdo rje (1161-1211), the founder of the 'Brug pa bKa' bryud pa school, and the principal teacher of rGod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje and of Lo ras pa dBang phyug brtson 'grus. The biography of Gling ras padma rdo rje can be found in Roerich 1996: 659-664.

43 Lo ras pa dBang phyug brtson 'grus (1187-1250) was, together with rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje one of the two main disciples of gTsang pa rgya ras Ye shes rdo rje. Thus, that rGod tshang pa would open Pretapurī was foretold both by his teacher and by his co-disciple. A short biography of Lo ras pa may be found in Roerich 1996: 672-676.

44 See De Rossi Filibeck 1988: 174, n. 70.

45 See De Rossi Filibeck, 1988: 83 and n. 95.

[A miracle and the opening of the doors of the pīṭha]

Not finding even a cooking stone for food, [he] magically brought down three heavenly stones. Then [he] opened four doors of places: on the east the striped tiger, on the south the blue dragon, (ph. 15) on the west the red bird, on the north the golden tortoise: all four were opened. Then he saw the way in which it arose: it became one of the twenty-four great places, Pretapurī, the marked place which appears similar to the shape of the eight auspicious signs, in between the eight-petalled lotus of the earth [and] resembling the eight spokes of the wheel of heaven; together with its parts of eight cemeteries, in all thirty-two places and the wondrous secret cave of the *ḍākinī*. There is an unceasing evil wind of the subterranean *nāga* [blowing] from within the bottom of the conchshell cave<sup>46</sup> into the empty place where the consciousness of the *srin mo* was drawn from the country of the *nāga* as far as the magically self-emptying cave of the precious teacher.

[List of the sacred and wondrous traits of Pretapurī]

(ph. 16) Regarding the image of Mañjuśrī, a cloak of cloth, the good exit and the heavenly rock, see above.<sup>47</sup> On the mountain on the back, which is like a white silk curtain, [is visible] the full set of a thousand inner Buddhas prophesied on the opening of the place in the future. On the mountain on the right is the palace of the Black Wrathful one (Khros ma nag mo);<sup>48</sup> on the mountain on the left the palace of the twenty-one Tāra; on the mountain on the front the palace of the ten thousand billions *ḍākinī* [and] the secret path of the *ḍākinī*; on the rocks [are] the dark gold Jambhala, the lion-faced *ḍākinī*,<sup>49</sup> the *dharmapāla* Jag pa me len, the place-lord Lha btsan chen po, the palace of the Buddha of medicine, the Kailāsa, the stūpa Bya rung kha shor (Boudhanath), the stūpa (ph. 17) 'Phags pa shing kun (Swayambunath), both self-generated; the palace of the four-armed Mahākāla; the palace of the *nāga*; a Garuḍa image and the effigies of the dead bodies of both Matram Rudra and the *srin mo*; the four gates of Saṃvara and his *śakti*; the eleven faced one (Avalokiteśvara) made of marble; a Mahākāla with a *beng* club; the triad Rigs gsum mgon po;<sup>50</sup> the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava [and] Amitāyus. On the crown of rTa mgrin and rDo rje 'phag mo as *śakti* are: a self-generated Indian stūpa which unravels the

46 On ph. 11 the cave where the consciousness of the *srin mo* is absorbed is said to be shaped like a heart, not like a conchshell.

47 This is the story of the miraculous exit of Padmasambhava from the cave, after which an image of Mañjuśrī and a cloak of cloth appeared in the cave. See above, ph. 11 and 12.

48 A wrathful form of Vajrayoginī.

49 Simhavaktra; see Lokesh Candra 1988: 647.

50 It includes Phyang na rdo rje (Vajrapāṇi), 'Jam dpal dbyangs (Mañjuśrī), and sPyan ras gzigs (Avalokiteśvara).



meaning at first sight; the eight auspicious signs; a self-generated [...] <sup>51</sup> elephant; the entourage of the Teacher; a pill of long life; the nectar of long life; (ph. 18) a medicinal stone and *sindūra* <sup>52</sup> derived from the *ḍāka* and *ḍākinī* bodhisattva; the self-generated, excellent blessed [river] which is ten measures [long] and with all its drops descends into the water having the eight qualities, one of the rivers of the four directions around Tī se; in the west it is called the source of the elephant (*Glang chen kha 'bab*) or Ha sti ga ga. In the center of the flow of the river is the Indian water source which liberates upon seeing. The self-generated river, the waters having the eight qualities, has a current of nectar which cures all kinds of diseases. The bath water of the *ḍākinī* has in it the hundred fold watersources.

*[rGod tshang pa's cave of accomplishment]*

As a support inside the cave of accomplishment of the precious rGod tshang pa himself, taken from among the treasures of lake Manasarovar (ph. 19) there was a treasure stone which realizes all sorts of prayers. rGod tshang pa saw a place beyond the river, [and] on a white boulder, above his cave of accomplishment, arose a vision of a white lion. Flying up in the sky, there appeared a mounting master who rode with bliss. Also, someone saw from a distance a lion-faced rock on the opposite side. In the lower forepart of the plain of the secret cave of the *ḍākinī* [he] saw the seven cities of the *ḍākinī* being bathed in the river Ganges and in the hundredfold water sources possessing the eight good qualities which liberate upon seeing.

*[Disappearance of the ḍākinī in the cave and its wonders]*

rGod tshang pa did the practice and went there. (ph. 20) All the *ḍākinī* could not bear his brilliance, became speechless and disappeared into that secret cave. rGod tshang pa thought: “The *ḍākinī* were immeasurable, but now there is not even one! Have they all been reabsorbed inside or some has been left?” These were his thoughts. Looking upward, in the rock of *dbu bde* also arose a merciful lama. <sup>53</sup> Inside this cave there was continuously a good smell of incense such as *Ā kā ru* <sup>54</sup> and *Dhur ru ka*. <sup>55</sup> There was also a flow of *śrī-sindūra*. Blazing well with warmth, they caught fire by themselves. Looking downward, (ph. 21) a white and blue Tāra, unimaginable, self

51 Illegible.

52 This is the name of a substance used in tantric rituals. In āyurvedic medicine *sindūra* is obtained from the mixture of mercury and sulphur in various proportions. Apparently, increasing the quantity of sulphur (of which in Pretapurī there is in abundance) renders the compound more powerful. See Dash 1986: 96-99. See also Pasang Yonten Arya 1998: 275.

53 Perhaps an epithet for Avalokiteśvara; in particular it might be the contracted form of Thugs rje chen po dbu rje.

54 Maybe for *A ga ru*, ‘agalloch eaglewood’ (*lignum aquilariae resinatum*), a fragrant tree.

55 I have been unable to identify the original Sanskrit.

generated and wondrous was visible. There were clearly the footprints of rDo rje 'phag mo, the footprints of the Teacher (Padmasambhava), the footprints of Lady Yeshe mtsho rgyal, [Sangs rgyas] glang gdong, rTa mgrin and the footprints of the mule riding goddess (dPal ldan lha mo). [There are also] the bowl for the *ḍākinī*'s ritual ablutions, the debate court, the wisdom court, etc.; besides, the eight classes of *asura* reside [there].

[Concluding eulogy]

However, words are not sufficient to describe [even] partially the self generated [objects]. Fearing that there are many words difficult to understand for those of mediocre intellect, I have not written [much]. Blessings.

*E ma ho!* This holy place of *yum* rDo rje phag mo, glorious [...] <sup>56</sup> (ph. 22) prayers to [this] famous place. Externally,<sup>57</sup> it possesses special self-generated [objects]; internally, gods and goddesses; secretly, the highest blessings. [I] pray to [this] blessed place, the solitary place filled with the ten virtues, field of offering for the worship of the faithful, wonderful place for the accomplishment of saints. I pray to this wonderful place! I [pray] with respect and devotion for the appeasement of obstacles and hindrances and [the realization of] propitious circumstances for this special place and men. May the attainment of *siddhi* be common and excellent! Happiness! Blessings!

(ph. 23) The clear mirror, intermediary guide book of Pretapurī.

[I] prostrate to the precious O rgyan, protector of all the sentient beings and the doctrine, known as mTsho skyes rdo rje (“Lake-born vajra”), born from the lotus, who has assembled in one the compassion of all the Buddhas.

The place called Pretapurī by name is clearly the dominating land among the twenty-four countries: with the greatly wonderful, blessed and secret cave of rDo rje phag mo, the thirty-two places and the eight cemeteries; in between [the two]: below the eight-spoked wheel of heaven [and] above the earth resembling an eight-petalled lotus; (ph. 24) placed in a similar shape to the eight auspicious signs, and possessing unimaginable self-generated objects indeed!

56 The first line of f. 22 is not comprised in the frame of the photograph, and only a portion of the underscribed letters is visible.

57 Compare this categorization: “externally,...internally..., secretly...” with ph. 4: ‘the three categories: outer, inner, secret’

## [Padmasambhava]

Also, the prophecy of the precious O rgyan on the conversion of unsuitable demons and *srin mo*, the method of blessing the place of accomplishment and making holy things like the magically self-emptying cave, the stories about the diffusion of the Buddha's doctrine in places like the holy country of India and in Tibet, Land of Snows, are made clear in the *bKa' thang*. Then, when the precious O rgyan went to this place, he saw an evil *srin mo* as lord of this place and put her in line. Concerning this, while the precious teacher was on route, he saw a red bear, and he bound it with an oath: (ph. 25) even now it is famous as the place of the bear binding. Regarding this, he saw a yellow bear, and he also bound [it]: now it is known as Dom Phug (the bear's cave).<sup>58</sup>

[His subjugation of the *srin mo*]

Then he subdued the *srin mo*. The consciousness of the *srin mo* reabsorbed into a heart-shaped rock and fled to the country of the subterranean *nāga*. The teacher made a self-emptying cave out of the magically transformed rock. Having summoned the consciousness of the *srin mo*, at the time when he was dwelling in *samādhi*, the *asura* made an impediment: "Since that one called Padmasambhava is staying in the rock cave, let's close the door of the cave!" So they thought, and they brought down a large boulder. The precious teacher pointed his index finger and a heavenly stone fell down in the plain in front of that [rock cave]. The precious teacher did not exit from the door of the cave, (ph. 26) but exited flying up through the rock. In the place left empty by the consciousness of the *srin mo* there was an unceasing cold wind of the subterranean *nāga*, and inside the cave [appeared] a cloth of cloak, the magically manifested eight apparitions of Padmasambhava and a self-generated body of Mañjuśrī about the size of a *'khyud*. In the stone [there were] the footprints of the Teacher (Padmasambhava) and Ye shes mtsho rgyal, Hayagrīva, Sangs rgyas glang gdong, [and] Tāra.

## [rGod tshang pa]

Later, the victorious rGod tshang pa the great went there and opened that place. On the east the grey tiger, on the south the blue dragon, on the west a red bird, on the north a golden tortoise. The palaces of the twenty-one Tāra, of the ten thousand billions *ḍākini*, of the four-armed Mahākāla, of the dark gold Jambhala, of the Buddha of medicine, of Jag man,<sup>59</sup> of [the place lord] lHa btsan [chen po], of the fierce black one (Mahākāla), of the lion faced *nāga*.

58 See De Rossi Filibeck 1988: 131 and 159; and Aufschnaiter 1976: 175-189.

59 Probably a contraction for Jag pa me len (see ph. 16, l. 6).

[Condensed list of revered objects]

(ph. 27) A Garuḍa, the Kailāsa, [the stūpa] Bya rung kha shor, [the stūpa] 'Phags pa shin kun, the four *sgo mo* of Saṃvara and his *śakti*, mGon po beng, the eight manifestations of the Guru (Padmasambhava), the eleven faced one (Avalokiteśvara), the triad Rig gsum mgon po, Amitāyus, Kilaya, [and] on the crown of rTa [mgrin] and [rDo rje] phag [mo] as *śakti*, the self-generated *stūpa* which is possessed of meaning at first sight; the effigies of the dead bodies of the two: Matram Rudra and the *srin mo*; the entourage of the Teacher; the self-generated pill and nectar of long life. The Ganges, ten measures long, etc., the watersource [of which] liberates upon seeing, cures all kinds of diseases, has a self-generated current of nectar.

[The cave of accomplishment of rGod tshang pa]

Above the cave of accomplishment, rGod tshang [pa] made a mount which was seen as a lion boulder. Inside the cave of accomplishment there was a treasure stone for the realization of each sort of prayer taken from lake Manasarovar. rGod tshang pa saw from the beginning the lion-faced rock on the opposite side. (ph. 28) From the lower forepart of the secret cave of the *ḍākinī* the seven cities of the *ḍākinī* were clearly bathed in the watersources having the eight good qualities, etc. The reverend rGod tshang pa went flying and did the practice [there]. All the *ḍākinī* became speechless and disappeared into the secret cave. In the thoughts of rGod tshang pa [this was said]: “Are there [any] left behind or were they [all] reabsorbed inside [the cave]?”. Looking at the rock of *dbu de*<sup>60</sup> arose a merciful lama (Avalokiteśvara). Inside the cave the blue and white Tāra blazed with warmth. A good perfume was spreading. In the current of *sidhura* there was forever a wondrous flow, etc. [There are] footprints of the eight year old rDo rje phag mo, the footprints of the mule riding goddess.

(ph. 29) It contains the assembled world prayers.

[Concluding eulogy and colophon]

*E ma ho!* [On] the side of the spoke of Cakrasaṃvara's mandala, excellent place among the twenty four great countries, the immeasurable Pretapurī, single among several. Prayer to the victorious mother rDo rje phag mo: [text effaced] the incarnation [holding] the compassion of the Buddha united in one; the blessing of this place converted unsuitable demons, made a wonderous self-emptying, magically-manifested cave of accomplishment.

60 Maybe “that head”; however in ph. 20, l. 4 the name of the rock is spelled *dbu bde*.

Prayer to the guru Padmasambhava: the omniscient all-seeing great lord of the Dharma, caused the opening of the door of the place and disclosed self-generated gods; such and such immeasurable wonders were uttered; the victorious protector of the sentient beings rGod tshang was disclosed; the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava; the triad Rig gsum mgon po; mGon po beng; the eleven-faced one, (ph. 30); the four gates of Saṃvara and his *śakti*; Amitāyus; Hayagrīva and his *śakti*; the four great victorious ones; the wondrous self-generated supreme deities, [all] were revealed. A Garuḍa, Kailāsa, Bya rung kha shor, 'Phags pa shing kun: [one obtains] liberation upon seeing the meritorious river which sees [these] *stūpa*; the cave of accomplishment of rGod tshang; the secret cave of the *ḍākinī*. [This] prayer has self-generated blessings.

Ten thousand billion *ḍākinī*; Tāra; the palaces of the *nāga*; the lion faced [one]; the fierce black one; Jag man; the dark gold Jambhala. There are eight pages [of this list]. Blessings! *Mangalam*! Happiness!

Since the old guidebook was not clear, it was not extensively circulated (*khod*). Well written from the cave of accomplishment of Gling ras by the lead cantor (*dbu mdzad*) Chos 'phel in the year Water Bird. All the repetitions and omissions [...]























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