

WHERE EXACTLY ARE CĀRITRA, DEVIKOTĀ  
AND HIMAVAT?  
A SACRED GEOGRAPHY CONTROVERSY AND THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF TANTRIC BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE  
SITES IN TIBET\*

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"This snow mountain [Ti-se] and the holy lakes, all three, are a meditation place which was Prophesied by the Buddha. And, if one does not respond to those who criticise them, then not only will these slanderers heap up sins but the greatness on this meditation place will also be violated!"<sup>1</sup>

Mi-la Ras-pa (1040-1123)

### Introduction

Over the last millenium a major Buddhist pilgrimage network has developed in Tibet and Tibetan areas of the Himalaya. It is based upon the *pīṭha* traditions found in the influential *anuttarayoga-tantra* cycle of Cakrasaṃvara, and related traditions such as the Hevajra, Vajradāka, Ḍākārṇava, and so forth. Along with the pilgrimages developed more recently to the persons and places of leading incarnate Lamas of the dGe-lugs-pa school, especially the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas, and to sites associated with the Indian saint

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<sup>1</sup> Rus-pa'i rGyan-can (alias gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka) 1989:417)

Padmasambhava, the holy places dedicated to the cult of Saṃvara Tantrism in Tibet rank as one of the main pilgrimage networks patronised by Buddhists in the region. The three leading sacred mountain sites of Saṃvara and consort, namely Tise (i.e. Kailāsa), La-phyi and Tsa-ri are among some of the oldest systematised Buddhist sacred mountains in Tibet. Pilgrimages to them motivated by the status they were given in Tibetan interpretations of Indian Buddhist Tantric, and to a lesser extent 'sūtric', traditions date back at least to the beginning of the *phgi-dar* or 'later diffusion' of Buddhism to Tibet from about the 11th century on.

The study of these sites is of central importance for an understanding of Buddhist pilgrimages in Tibet. This is not only because of their long-standing popularity as pilgrimage venues and the large numbers of individual pilgrims involved in visits to them, but also because of what the Tibetan literary and oral sources concerning them can tell us about the processes which A.W. Macdonald has recently referred to as 'Buddha-isation' and 'Lama-isation'<sup>2</sup> that is, the 'conversion' of Tibetan culture to a Vajrayāna Buddhist one.

It is undoubted that the three holy mountains dedicated to Saṃvara, and other associated sacred places, were established at important pre-Buddhist sites which were the preserves of Tibetan autochthonous deities and their cults. What is poorly understood at present is how this conversion process operated and what its consequences were for Tibetan pilgrimages and religious culture in general. The primary narratives which account for the conversion of these Tibetan holy places are now becoming more familiar to us: i.) The Buddha-isation 'drama' of the subjugation of Rudra/Maheśvara by Vajradhara/Cakrasaṃvara at the twenty-four *pīṭha* sites of the vajrakāya, and ii.) the dramas of Lama-isation which followed depicting the contests of magic at individual Tibetan locations when yogins, such as Mi-la Ras-pa and gTsang-pa rGya-ras, 'opened' these regions as sites of Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage by conquering local spirit forces, 'binding them by oath' into the services of Buddhism. These two themes are widely employed in the Tibetan pilgrimage literature.

Both these types of narratives are of great importance for an understanding of the ideological schemata and their styles of presentation which members of the Tibetan Buddhist clerical elite invoked in their literary and oral efforts to bring about and account for this conversion. Some studies have now been directed towards this issue.<sup>3</sup> However, in the Tibetan literary sources on pilgrimage, both in the guide-books (*gnas-yig*, *dkar-chag*, etc.) and the commentaries on sacred geography, there is another set of prominent issues relating to the Buddhist conversion of Tibetan holy places which have never been analysed,

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<sup>2</sup> See in particular Macdonald (1991:198-202).

<sup>3</sup> See Macdonald (1991) and Huber (1991).

and which I would like to begin investigating in this paper. This alternative set of sources, which I refer to collectively as the materials on the 'sacred geography controversy', take the form of a polemical dialogue between leading Tibetan scholars belonging principally to the Sa-skya-pa and certain lineages of the bKa'-brgyud-pa, and also various other claims by Tibetan authors concerning the Tantric status and Buddhist identity of certain Tibetan holy places. By using this body of material we can begin to address such fundamental questions as: How was it that the original India-wide sacred geography of the *vajra-kāya* doctrine became relocated in the Himalaya, and by what mechanism did this Indian Buddhist pilgrimage cult of Tantric *pīṭha* sites become established in Tibet?; what were Tibetan reactions and responses to this process?; and what subsequent developments have resulted from this conversion, viz. were Buddha-isation and Lama-isation finite or on-going phenomena in the cultural history of Tibet? Herein, I will present relevant materials and make some tentative suggestions regarding these and other related questions. There is still much that could be said about this topic and I hope that the present offering will stimulate others to do so.

### The *Pīṭha* Tradition in India and its Beginnings in Tibet

Before introducing and analysing some of the principal Tibetan sources concerning the sacred geography controversy there are some preliminary remarks which need to be made about the Indian Buddhist traditions and the initial period of their establishment by the Tibetans in their own zone of cultural influence. The role of the twenty-four (or in some schemes thirty-six) Tantric sites classed as *pīṭha*, *kṣetra*, *chandoḥa*, and so forth, as fully developed in the *anuttarayoga-tantras* is now clearly understood as being related primarily to the internal practice of yoga. In this yoga the logic of the *vajra-kāya* and the 'body *maṇḍala*' systems is directed towards the experience of unity referred to as *dākiālasamvara* in the Tantras.<sup>4</sup> But the *pīṭha*, etc., were also sites in the external world considered to be presided over by certain deities in the 'geographical *vajra-kāya*', and as such were places of gathering for an exclusive coterie of yogins and yoginīs who followed specific Tantric practices. These were especially those who had reached the *carya* or 'action' phase of the Completion stage (*sampannakrama*) of the *anuttarayoga-tantras*.

During the religious 'feasts' that were performed at these sites the internal yogic practices of *dākinījāla* were performed as externalised rituals. The esoteric nature of these gatherings and the Tantric teachings and practices they involved meant that during the Pāla

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<sup>4</sup> For discussions of the sophisticated *pīṭha* practice and cult in Buddhism see: Tsuda (1974: 54-62 & 260-73) and Tsuda (1978:215-31); Snellgrove (1959: 66-72) and Snellgrove (1987:167-70); Chandra (1987:26-28); Das Gupta (1976: chapt.4).

period when these traditions enjoyed currency in certain Indian regions the true Tantric pilgrimages to them were the preserve of a relatively few initiated practitioners. And even they remained aloof from the 'public' by using a system of secret signs (*chomā*) through which to identify and meet each other at these sites. It is important to note here the original 'secret' and exclusive nature of the cult of these sites in Indian Buddhist Tantrism as it contrasts strongly with the way they were developed and promoted later in Tibet, as will become apparent below.

Another important sub-division of sites in the *pīṭha* cult is that of the eight cemeteries (*aṣṭa-śmaśāna*). These Indian charnel grounds, well known to Tantric ascetics, were sites frequented for the purpose of performing certain meditations and rites. Symbolically they are represented as part of the *vajrakāya* around the perimeter of the Saṃvara *maṇḍala*. In his earlier description of the symbolism of the eight cemeteries, G. Tucci has pointed out that there are eight mountains, such as Kailāsa, Himavat, Śrīparvata, etc., each related specifically to a cemetery and arranged in a cosmographic symmetry around the *maṇḍala*, and a set of tree species associated with them also.<sup>5</sup> As will be seen, the tradition of relating together sacred mountains and Tantric cemeteries, and to a lesser extent certain trees, became a significant one when these doctrines were introduced into the Tibetan geographical and cultural context, and certain Tibetan claims about Tantric sites to be investigated below may have been inspired to some extent by such symbolic relationships.

During the *phyi-dar*, particularly from the 11th century onward, the *anuttarayoga-tantras* and their cult were introduced systematically and became popular in Tibet. In this period Tibetan masters, such as 'Brog-mi (992-1074-), Mar-pa (1012-1096), Rwa Lo-tsa-ba (1016-1128) and others, visited and obtained the *annutarayoga* lineages from Indian yogins and scholars in Buddhist Bihar, Bengal and Nepal. By this time the main Indian area of influence for the diffusion of Buddhism to Tibet had shifted from the North-west to these Eastern Indian regions which were the chief centres of activity of the Indian Vajrayāna Siddhas and also the influential Śaiva Nāth yogins. It is in these regions and in the teachings of these groups of yogins that the *pīṭha* cult was developed into its sophisticated form. Although limited in number of individual practitioners, the traditions from which the Tibetans gained their knowledge of the *pīṭha* system were indeed a vital source at that time. The Tibetans also took up the cult which had developed around the most famous of the Indian Buddhist Siddhas whose life-stories abound with references to the important Tantric geography of India.<sup>6</sup> It is by way of pioneering figures such as 'Brog-mi and Mar-pa that the then fledgling Sa-skyapa and bKa'-brgyud-pa lineages respectively took up the

<sup>5</sup> See Tucci (1989: 52-3, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> See Dowman (1985), Templeman (1983) and (1989) as good sources of this material.

*annutarayoga-tantras* in Tibet, and it is in these same two schools that the sacred geography controversy over the development of the *pitha* cult in Tibet has its origins.

### The Tibetan Sacred Geography Controversy

The exact historical details of the conversion of the sites of Ti-se, La-phyi and Tsa-ri to places of Tibetan Vajrayāna pilgrimage in the 11th-12th century remain somewhat vague. bKa'-brgyud-pa sources and some early *chos-'byung* all claim that the development of these sites as meditation places with the status of Tantric *pīṭha* dedicated to Saṃvara was instigated by the founders of the so-called 'Hearing Lineage'. These include Mar-pa, Mi-la Ras-pa, sGam-po-pa and Phag-mo Gru-pa. It appears more certain that by the time of 'Bri-gung-pa' Jig-rten mGonpo (1143-1217) large and regular expeditions and pilgrimages were being undertaken to the three sacred mountain retreats.<sup>7</sup>

During the early period of this development of the three holy mountains as Saṃvara sites it was claimed, most probably by bKa'-brgyud-pa Lamas (although this is not precisely established), that each of these three sites on Tibetan soil were either *pīṭha* or Tantric cemeteries (depending on which classification one resorts to) of the *vajra-kāya* or Saṃvara *maṇḍala* listed in the Indian texts. Tsa-ri in Southern Tibet was said to be the site of Cāritra or Devikoṭa, Ti-se was taken to be Himavat or Himālaya (Gangs-can or Ri-bo Gangs-can in Tibetan) and La-phyi identified as Godāvarī. Also it was claimed that Ti-se was the mountain mentioned by the Buddha in other cosmographical references in important *sūtra* texts. In addition there were various other claims about famous Indian Tantric cemeteries existing in Tibet.<sup>8</sup> At the time these specific transpositions of Indian holy places, which often violated the existing sacred geographical traditions of India, appear to have been part of a more general relocation of the entire *vajra-kāya* to the Himalayan zone. This process is at present poorly understood, although Tucci has ventured that it was a result of the decline of Indian Buddhism in the late Pāla period due in large part to the stress of successive Muslim invasions.<sup>9</sup> I think it is fairly certain that both Indian and Tibetan

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<sup>7</sup> On these early developments see Petech (1978: 313-326); and Huber (1991).

<sup>8</sup> Although I do not deal with Tantric cemeteries specifically herein, it should be noted that sites claimed as Tantric *pīṭha* in Tibet are often locations of important cemeteries, such as the Saṃvāra cemetery at Pha-bong-kha, the 'Cemetery of the Siddhas' found on the circuit of Kailāsa and Durkhrod rNgam-pa sGra-sgrogs near Tsa-ri. On the Tibetan Sitavana (bSil-ba'i tshal) at 'Bri-gung see Dowman (1988: 116).

<sup>9</sup> See Tucci (1940: 21) and (1989: 42-3) who demonstrates that by the 13th century Tibetan pilgrims traveling through the western Himalaya and North-west India claim to have visited all 24 *vajra-kāya* sites.

Tantrists played a role in this relocation process as both stood to benefit from the continued access to their pilgrimage places as a result. But while the decline of Indian Buddhism was a factor I hope it will be clear from what follows in this paper that, from the Tibetan side, the intentional relocation of these sites to their own region was most importantly a part of the process of the Buddha-isation of Tibet that was taking place at the time.

### i. Sa-skya-pa Criticisms

That such a transfer of sacred geography and pilgrimage traditions was taking place and that such claims were being made in Tibet during the 12th-13th century did not go unnoticed by some of the great luminaries of the day. An important critical response to these events was produced by the Sa-skya Pandita Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan (Sa-pan) (1182-1251), who was one of the greatest Tibetan scholars to bridge both the Indian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions.<sup>10</sup> Sa-pan set down his criticisms of some of the then current traditions of Tibetan sacred geography and pilgrimage in c.1232 in his *sDom gsum rab dbye* (DS), a controversial text that ranks as one of the most important works of indigenous Tibetan Buddhist literature.<sup>11</sup> The DS, or 'Discrimination of the Three Vows' is, as characterised by D. Jackson "... a classic statement of the need to subject religion to rigorous examination for the sake of removing anything spurious and establishing that which is authentic."<sup>12</sup> In the section discussing topics relating to the *guhyantra* vow Sa-pan gives the following treatment of Tantric pilgrimage and sacred geography:<sup>13</sup>

[31b,5]...With all the four initiations [obtained] meditate initially in your own house. After obtaining a firmness [meditate] in the cemetery, and so on. After obtaining a great firmness, practise well the signs of body and speech [i.e. *mudrā* and *mantra* and realise suchness. In order to travel through the lands and gain mastery over the countries, wander in the thirty-seven great countries, beginning with the *pīṭha* and *upapīṭha*, for the sake of the *caryā* of

<sup>10</sup> For an excellent study of this figure and his works see Jackson (1987: esp. 1-104).

<sup>11</sup> See Jackson (1987: 47-8 & 64); Smith (1970:4).

<sup>12</sup> See Jackson (1983M 13).

<sup>13</sup> This translation covers ff. 31b, 5-34a, 1 of the DS in the SSBB, vol. 5. pp. 297. 1.1-320.45 (=Na, ff. 1a-48b, 5). I have only very occasionally resorted to what are said to be Sa-pan's own (although controversial, see Jackson (1983: 13)) 'annotations' (*rang-mchan*) in the *Sdom gsum rang mchan 'khrul med* version ff. 54a, 1-57b, 5, to assist with my readings. The material follows my own paragraphing.

'crazy wisdom'.<sup>14</sup> This method is propounded in the *Mahāyoga-tantras* [32a] and commentaries. Having understood practice such as this, one will become fully awakened in this very life.

Nowadays [here in Tibet] one observes [practitioners] feigning in the method of *mantra* without any knowledge of Secret *Mantra*. The Buddha did not teach of going to the thirty-seven great countries when one has not meditated on the two stages [of '*upattikrama* and *sampannakrama*]. Ascetics who do not cultivate the two stages, even good ones, will not surpass those ascetics who cultivate the *pāramitās* [and thus remain at the Māhayāna level]. There is no mention in the *sūtras* of the practice of going to those great countries. If those who have not cultivated Secret *Mantra*, and yet pride themselves on their understanding, go to those countries obstacles will arise for them. Also when visited by 'meditators on nothing whatsoever' [i.e. nihilists] there is no profit or loss whatever [for them]. Just because Oḍḍiyana, Jālandhara and Himavat (Gangs-can), Devikōṭa, and so on, are full of barbarians, fools, heretics and nomads, do they attain realisations? Those possessing an understanding of the cultivation of Secret *Mantra* and who have the fortune to understand the meaning of the signs, they are blessed by the *ḍākinīs* who abide in those countries. Consider well the truth of this in the *Mahāyoga-tantras*! Consequently, if one does not cultivate Secret *Mantra* going to those great countries is useless.

The snow mountain which is mentioned in the texts of the *Abhi[dharmakośa]* and the *Śrī-Kālacakra[-tantra]* as the place where the five hundred Arhats dwelt, which is encircled by the golden bird shelter, the Jambu tree, and Raivata and five hundred elephants; that Himavat is not the Ti-se [in present-day Tibet], and the Anavatapta ocean is not the Mapham [lake]. Neither are the elephants found in that place, and where are the Jambu tree and the golden bird shelter to be found?

The evidence for that is as follows: There are statements in the *Śrī-Kālacakra[-tantra]* [to the effect that] [32b] : It is said there is a Ri-bo Gangs-can to the north of the Sitā river. The nine hundred and sixty million towns of Śambhala are near there. The excellent palace of the King, which is

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<sup>14</sup> For *riigpai brtul-zhugs kyi spyod-pa*, Tsepak Rigzin, *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*, Dharamasala, 1986, p. 396 has 'vidyāvṛtcārya/Crazy Wisdom', to be understood here as a *caryā* phase of the *sampannakrama* stage in Tantric practice.



known as Kalāpa, is in that place. The kings who manifest there preach the Dharma for hundreds upon hundreds of years. There are various forests and many orchards in that place. In the Age of Degeneration the land of India will become filled with the doctrines of the Barbarians, then the Barbarians will lead an army by magical means to Śambhala. When that happens, after the conquest of all the Barbarians by the king known as Rudra[cakrin], a manifestation of Vajrapāni, the teachings of the Buddha will be spread once again in the midst of the land of India.

As a consequence, one will not be able to go to Ri-bo Gangs-can without magical powers.

In these words also from the *Abhi[dharmakośa]*, "North from here [i.e. Magadha], there is a snow mountain beyond the nine black mountains." And following that, [in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣa*], its characteristics are described extensively, such as, "A lake which has a length and breadth of fifty [*yojanas*] on the near side of the Gandhamādana mountain (sPos[-ri] Ngadldan)." [Also] it is said, "It is impossible to reach for those who do not possess magic powers." As for the present- :6j3 day Ti-se, it does not have any of these qualities.

Also according to a text of the Hindus, it is explained that Himavat occupies the space which is between the oceans that are both to the east and west, [and] they say the one small piece of the snow mountain which was propelled [through the air] by Hanuman [in the *Rāmāyana*] is Ti-se; so it is said by [the sage] Vālmīki. As a consequence, the dwelling of Māheśvara, the place where Raivata stayed and the abode of the five hundred Arhats is not this present-day Ti-se.

Also in the *Māhamayūri-sūtra* it states that Himavat and Ti-se are different. Also in the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* there are statements [to the effect that]: The dimensions of Anavatapta are fifty by fifty *yojanas*. Its bed is covered with jewel pebbles, [33a] and to the sides are walls of jewelled tiles. Four rivers flow from there: the Gaṅgā from an elephant's mouth, flowing and bearing silver sands; the Sitā from a lion's mouth, flowing and bearing diamond sands; the Sindhu from an ox's mouth, flowing and bearing golden sands; and the Pakṣī from a horse's mouth, flowing and bearing sands of blue Beryl. The breadth of each and every one is a *yojana*. Having each circled clockwise seven times around Anavatapta, the four rivers are said to descend in the four cardinal directions. As for all the areas between them, they have an abundance



of various species of flowers, such as the blue and the pink lotus, and various jewelled trees.

The detailed qualities such as these can be investigated in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*. As for the present-day Ma-pham [lake] it does not have any of these qualities.

With regard to that some people say even the hill of Vulture Peak is nowadays not as it is [described] in the *Ratnakūṭa*. And they say that by force of time all lands appear to have changed. This matter is analysed and explained [herein] therefore listen:

There are two types [of descriptions]; explanations of how things really are and, amplifications of virtues and defects. In accord with the style of poets, when they amplify the virtuous qualities and defects, even the hill of Vulture Peak is described as being lofty, rounded, and so forth, 'It is a great mountain of India, as high as the great plateau of Tibet'. No fault at all is attached to the poets in this type of description.

When exaggerations and distortions arise in explanations of how things really are, scholars regard that as a fault. For example, when praising an ox [as being like] a mass of snow mountains able to move or a chunk broken off a cloud, and [with] horn tips [33b] like diamonds, and hoofs like sapphire, and a tail like the wishing-fulfilling tree, and so on; alternatively, when praising people [as having] for a face the moon or sun, for teeth a range of snow mountains, and so on; for vastness the simile of the sky, for smallness applying the simile of a dust speck, and Sumeru as a simile of roughness, and for [the size of] rats the simile of elephants; Vaiśravaṇa [as a simile] for the rich, even for a princeling the simile of Indra, [and] praising as if they were the Buddha even an ordinary teacher (*kalyāṇamitra*). [All these examples] are unobjectionable for [use by] poets. [But] When explaining how things really are, or when defining their qualities, scholars could hardly be satisfied with descriptions that are not in accord with reality.

Therefore to praise Vulture Peak, and so on, is in accord with the way of poets. When explaining how things really are, such as [describing] Himavat, Anavatapta, and so on, if one is mistaken with regard to that, one is hardly omniscient.[!] Due to the strong force of the Age of Degeneration it is possible to be a little bit wrong, but can it be possible to be totally mistaken [like those who equate Himavat and Anavatapta with Ti-se and Ma-pham]?

The country known as Caritra (Tsa-ri-tra), is situated to the south [of India] on an ocean shore; Tsa-ri Tsa-gong [in Tibet] is not that. One other Place of Devikota is said by some to be Tsa-ri. According to the *Vajradaka-tantra*, "Bhadra abides in Devikota". Furthermore, according to that same [text], "The sahaja of Tibet lives and dwells in a stone cave. The goddess who abides in that country stays at the tree of Bhadra". [Therefore] if there is a tree of Bhadra in the direction of that [country, i.e. Tibet], there is no contradicting that country [is Devikota].

Even if Ti-se and Tsa-ri, and so on, were the great places [in the teachings of the Buddha], because the persons who go to those lands have obtained initiations and hold vows, know the [secret] signs and their responses, and firmly understand the two stages [of meditation] it is stated that they wander [there] for the sake of the *carya* [phase] [34a], and persons who are not like that are forbidden to travel to those countries according to the *tantras*.

I have quoted this section at length as not only is it the source that provoked the sacred geography controversy which has remained topical in Tibetan commentarial literature right up to the present century, but also much of the argumentation of later texts that I will only briefly mention relates closely to these passages by Sa-pan. It seems that Sa-pan is attacking these pilgrimage traditions on two fronts: One of doctrinal concern for the way that Buddhist Tantra is interpreted and practiced; and the other aimed at demonstrating the falsehood of the specific sacred geographical claims about these Tibetan holy places. Thus, I feel his conclusions are that while there is a need to be a legitimate Tantric practitioner who has reached the *carya* phase to visit and benefit from bona-fide Indian *piṭha* sites as a Buddhist, not only do Ti-se and Tsa-ri fail to qualify as such sites, but there is nothing whatever to be gained by Buddhists performing pilgrimage to them. Of course, from a 20th century Western point of view it is very difficult to make an exact interpretation of these passages. But, however one may view them today, as we shall see below it is clear from the responses written to them by Sa-pan's later Tibetan critics that they were interpreted in much the same way from within the tradition itself.

I will deal below with some of the details of Sa-pan's, at times, rather biting criticisms, but here I would like to comment briefly on his general motivation and concerns in writing this passage. It has been suggested by M. Broido in relation to Sa-pan's critique of the *dkar-po chig-thub* notion in the DS, which follows after the above quoted section, that his attacks may have been motivated by sectarian animosity towards certain masters of

the bKa'-brgyud-pa, such as Phag-mo Grupa and 'Jig-rten mGon-po.<sup>15</sup> It is tempting to speculate that as the same bKa'-brgyud-pa figures were prominent in developing the traditions at Ti-se, Tsa-ri and other sites this was also the case here, however I do not think this was Sa-pan's main motivation. This is apparent from his approach in the DS as a whole, and from certain of his other works that make clear his concern to 'explain the teachings in accord with proper scripture (*āgama*) and reasoning (*ytukti*)'.<sup>16</sup> Claiming a Tantric or cosmological identity for Tibetan holy mountains and performing pilgrimage to them was for him a violation of the criterion for a genuine Buddhism according to proper scripture and reason (*lung rigs rnam dag*). One can also conceive of Sa-pan's concern in this section about the coming together of a specialised and esoteric type of Indian pilgrimage practice with what we assume was essentially a 'public' and popular one to the ancient cult sites of the Tibetan mountain deities such as the bsTan-ma bcu-gnyis, Tshe-ring mChed-lnga, and others. With regard to this 'concern' we can consider other views about Sa-pan's 'project'; that he was making an effort to keep Tantric teachings restricted to the monastic context. This helps to explain his, Chag Lo-tsa-ba's and other's hostility towards systems like the *Ras chung snyan rgyud* and to lay religious movements in general. This did not necessarily mean that he denied the possibility for Tantric realisation outside of the monastic context, just that it was improbable and dangerous.<sup>17</sup>

Sa-pan's DS is also important in that it tells us something about the development of this cult of Buddhist pilgrimage in Tibet by the early 13th century. He probably would have been responding to claims and practices which must have already enjoyed fairly wide currency amongst Buddhists in Tibet at the time of his writing. Of particular interest is his reference to specific passages from the *Vajradāka-tantra* in relation to claims about Tsa-ri, which is an issue I will discuss the significance of later in the paper.

In terms of the dynamics of Tibetan cultural history I think we can consider these claims about sacred geography and Sa-pan's reaction to them as representing two very different forces which were in operation over the period of the second diffusion of Buddhism to Tibet. The intentions of Buddha-isation to introduce and to adapt Indian cult practices to existing Tibetan ones, and the concern to establish Buddhism following strict rational criteria were necessarily going to conflict with each other. If one follows through the later literature on Tibetan sacred geography, and in other areas as well, it is observed that these

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<sup>15</sup> See Broido (1987: 34 and notes). This may also be the case for 'Jig-rten mGonpo's successor dBon Shes-rab'Byung-gnas whom Sa-pan met, and who was active at the holy places.

<sup>16</sup> See the translation and comments on Sa-pan's short work *Lungs rigs rnam dag dang mthun par 'chad dgos tshul* in Schoening and Sørensen (1988: 35-49).

<sup>17</sup> Dan Martin, Personal communication, 23/9/90.

forces continued to operate in Tibetan cultural history and that there was a lasting tension between the intentions of Buddha-isation and the concerns of scripture and reason reflected in the works, and the minds, of later Tibetan scholars up to the Ris-med period.

The DS itself was a highly controversial work which inspired many commentaries amongst the Sa-skyapa,<sup>18</sup> and also replies from other Tibetan schools. But this short section alone on sacred geography and pilgrimage generated its own literature consisting of further Sa-skyapa commentaries elaborating the points initially raised by Sa-pan, and a series of critical responses from the pens of certain bKa'-brgyud-pa masters who sought to refute Sa-pan's statements by way of counter claims and scholarly argumentation.

The later Sa-skyapa works included specific commentaries on the DS, such as the *sDom gsum rnam bshad* (DSN)<sup>19</sup> by the influential writer Go-bo Rab-'byams-pa bSod-nams Seng-ge (Go-rams-pa) (14-29- 1489), which sought to clarify and augment in places the original passages by Sa-pan. Other commentators addressed their writings specifically to the arguments about the locations of either Ti-se or Tsari, such as the short text by Glo-bo mKhan-chen bSod-nams lHun-grub (14-56-1532) on Tsa-ri and Devikota.<sup>20</sup> While following Sa-pan's original criticisms such authors introduce new, but often minor, points of argumentation to add force to their cases. There is also a distinct tendency in them to dwell more on specific details of geography and cosmography than on the doctrinal concerns about the legitimacy of proper Tantric pilgrimages originally expressed by Sa-pan. Another related, although much less polemical, work has come down to us from the 'Great Reviser' Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims Rin-chen (1700-1769?) who composed a short treatise on the sacred geography of the Buddhist tantric *piṭha* sites.<sup>21</sup> This interesting little text is certainly worthy of further scholarly attention by those concerned with the subject. Apart from these brief observations, in the present context there is little to be gained from presenting in detail the contents of any of these works here.

<sup>18</sup> See Jackson (1983: 12-18).

<sup>19</sup> For the relevant section of Go-rams-pa's DSN (written in 1463) see ff. 135a, 6-138b, 2 in SSBB, vol. 14. pp. 119.1.1-199.3.6 (=Ta, 1a-161a).

<sup>20</sup> See Glo-bo mKhan-chen bSod-nams lHun-grub (n.d.). I am not aware of any published versions of this text.

<sup>21</sup> See Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims Rin-chen (1973), ff. 433-461. There is a work of similar content, with the title *Dpal sa skya pa'i yab chos kyi nying klu 'khor lo sdom pa'i dam pa'i chos 'byung ba'i tshul legs par bshad pa bde mchog chos kun dpal ba'i nyin byed* (Dehra Dun, 1985?), composed by sNgags-'chang Ngag-dbang Kun-dga' bSod-nams Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan (1597-1659), although I have to date been unable to obtain this.

## ii. bKa'-brgyud-pa Responses

There have been various bKa'-brgyud-pa replies to the issues raised by Sa-pan and his followers, with some written as recently as this century. The earlier works, such as those by the 4th Zhwa-dmar-pa Chos-grags Ye-shes (1453-1524)<sup>22</sup>, the 4th 'Brug-chen Padma dKar-po (1527-1592)<sup>23</sup> the 'Bri-gung Zhabs-drung Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1595-1661), 'Brug-pa mKhas-dbang Sangs-rgyas rDo-rje (1569-1645)<sup>24</sup> and Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las (17th cent.)<sup>25</sup> need to be considered at least partly in the context of a more general bKa'-brgyud-pa scholarly response to the contents of the DS and its later conunentors. This arose particularly in the 15th-16th centuries when the various bKa'-brgyud-pa lineages had established strong positions of temporal power in Tibet and begun to seek a greater doctrinal influence and maturity. While this is so, on another level the issues at stake in this debate were very sensitive ones for the bKa'-brgyud-pa schools from both a religious and a historico-political point of view. The different branches of the tradition, such as the 'Bri-gung-pa and the 'Brug-pa had not only established their interests at the holy mountain sites at a very early stage, but continued to develop them in these areas; the case of Padma dKar-po's activities concerning Tsa-ri and adjacent sites in Bya-yul being a typical example of this sustained interest.<sup>26</sup> There was, therefore, a very real need on the part of these scholars to counter the acute criticisms of the Sa-skyapa which seriously called into question the 'genuine' identity of and legitimacy of pilgrimage to their most important holy places.

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<sup>22</sup> See Chos-grags Ye-shes (1979), ff. 465-538. It is notable that this work was composed at the behest of Glo-bo Chos-mdzad Chos-dpal bZang-po (see the letter immediately following the text in the above cited work, fol. 528 ff.), a member of the royal house of Mustang, and close relative of the local Sa-skyapa scholar Glo-bo mKhan-chen who vigorously refuted the Tsa-ri/Devikōṭa traditions of the bKa'-brgyudpas (see n. 20 above).

<sup>23</sup> See PK = Padma dKar-po (1973a), ff. 207-74.

<sup>24</sup> 'Bri-gung Chos-kyi Grags-pa (n.d.), several cursive manuscript copies of the text by 'Bri-gung Dharmakīrti, rGol ngan 'jom pai legs bshad lung rigs smra ba'i mgul rgyan exist in India and Tibet in surviving versions of his Collected Works. I am grateful to the present 'Bri-gung Khyab-dgon Che-tshang Rin-po-che for supplying me with a copy of this work; see also Sangs-rgyas rDo-rje (1985), ff. 327-463. There may well be many more such sources still to be located.

<sup>25</sup> See Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las (1985), ff. 139-202. Interestingly, according to the colophon he composed his text at Kojarnāth, the well known Sa-skyapa monastery at sPu-rang near Mt. Kailāsa.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance his autobiography, Padma dKar-po (1982), ff. 435-6 & 596-7; and Martin (1988: 349-63).

While some of the replies were of the nature of more general defences against these criticisms in the DS and its commentaries, others, like the works by Padma dKar-po and later by the 34th 'Bri-gung gDan-rabs bsTan-'dzin Chos-kyi Blo-gros (1869-1906) addressed the criticisms related to individual holy places. Both of these authors included chapters of this material in their pilgrimage guide-books to Tsa-ri, and to Ti-se and Ma-pham-mtsho respectively, a fact which perhaps makes their contributions to the 'controversy' even more important due to the popularity and wider circulation of this genre of religious literature in Tibet.<sup>27</sup> I will now present extracts from these sources as examples of specific bKa'-brgyud-pa replies concerning each of these important holy places.

Firstly, following the order in which the sites are dealt with by Sa-pan in the DS, let us investigate the tract on Ti-se and Ma-pham-mtsho forming the 3rd chapter of the '*Bri-gung gDan-rabs Ti se gnas bshad* (TSN). I quote this source in full here as in summarising both important points from the previous Sa-skyapa criticisms and the replies of earlier bKa'-brgyud-pa scholars also it gives a good overview of the whole 'controversy' with regard to Ti-se, and the style and content of bKa'-brgyud-pa argumentation:<sup>28</sup>

[19b]...Chapter Three. How this place itself was identified as Ti-se.

Eulogies are frequently uttered in the *sūtras*, such as the *Avatāmsaka* and *Smṛtyupasthāna-sūtra*, that Ti-se has the shape of a five-pronged *vajra* mountain, with an altitude of five hundred *yojanas*, and so forth. [20a] And in the *Arya-Nandimitrāvadana* it states, "The *mahāsthavira* Aṅgaja stayed at the Ti-se snow mountain together with a retinue of one thousand three hundred Arhats".

But, if one wonders, 'In what quarter of India is there a snow mountain like that?', it states in the *Abhidharmakośa*, "Northward from this, [there is] a snow mountain beyond the nine black mountains",<sup>29</sup> The significance of that statement is glossed in the [*Abhidharma*]kośabhaṣa as,

Here in the north of this Jambudvīpa itself there is a snow mountain on the far side beyond the nine black mountains. On the far side of that snow

<sup>27</sup> See the comments in Huber (1991).

<sup>28</sup> This translation is based on my own edition of ff. 19b-29b of TSN. The material has been very briefly referred to by Karmay (1972: xxix, n.2); and carelessly edited with brief English summary of contents by Filibeck (1988b: 19-24 & 70-72).

<sup>29</sup> On this important cosmography see Macdonald (1962: 531-48); and Dietz (1988: 113-4).



mountain, (20b) and on the near side of the Gandhamādana mountain, there is a lake known as Anavatapta, from which flow four great rivers, the Gangā, the Sindhu, the Sita and the Paksu (=Vakṣu). That (lake) has a length of fifty *yojanas*, a breadth of fifty *yojanas*, and is filled with waters endowed with the eight good qualities. It is difficult to reach for those who do not possess magic powers. By the side of that very lake there grows a tree known as the jambu which has sweet fruits, and it is by virtue of that that this jambudvīpa is so known.<sup>30</sup>

(22b) ..... This (mountain) in Tibet has been identified with Ti-se by all the great scholars and sages of India, such as the glorious Lord Atīśa, whō, when proceeding to the plain in front of Ti-se, on the occasion of being invited to Gu-ge by the king of mNga-ris IHa-btsun Byang-chub-'od (23a) said, "O *sthaviras* from the snows of Ti-se, make your mid-day meal when the *ganṭi* sounds at noon".

In adherence with that, the Master Mar-pa said to Mi-la (Ras-pa), "Beuase Ti-se snow mountain is the Ri-bo Gangs-can prophesied by the Buddha, meditate there!" And by the Master (Mi-la) it was also said,

That one we all call Gangs-dkar Ti-se,  
Is known (in the scriptures) as Ri-bo Gangs-can,  
The abode of the five hundred Arhats.  
That one we call Ma-pham g. Yu-mtsho,  
Is known (in the scriptures) as Lake Anavatapta.

[23b] The 'Bri-gung *sPyan-snga* Shes-rab 'Byung-gnas and the *siddha* Seng-ge Ye-shes perceived this Ti-se snow mountain in the state of the clear light as the palace of the sixty two deities of the Samvara *maṇḍala* complete with gates. Also, the glorious, incomparable Lamp of the Doctrine of the Ri-bo dGa'-ldan-pas, the omniscient *Pan-chen* (Lama I) Blo-bzang Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan perceived this snow mountain as the palace of Cakrasaṃvara, and in this and many other instances it has been stated unanimously with one voice by all the competent scholars of India and Tibet that the snow mountain Ti-se is none other than this one in Tibet. But, the Master Sa-skya Paṇḍita said, "That Himavat is not Ti-se. The Anavatapta Ocean is not Ma-pham.'" (24a) This snow mountain which is identified as the Ri-bo Gangs-can by you bKa'-brgyud-pas is not the great snow (mountain of the *sūtras*), because this one does not possess the qualities of that one explained in the *sūtras*.' And,

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<sup>30</sup> On this important cosmography see Macdonald (1962: 531-48); and Dietz (1988: 113-4).



"Neither is this Ti-se, because this one in Tibet does not possess the qualities of the Ti-se which is mentioned in the *sūtras*, such as the statement that it has (a height of) five hundred *yojanas*." And, "Nor is Lake Ma-pham Anavatapta, because this (lake) does not possess the stated qualities of the Anavatapta mentioned in the *sūtras*, such as (a breadth of) fifty *yojanas*. And, "Neither is this Ti-se, because this one in Tibet does not possess the qualities of the Ti-se which is mentioned in the *sūtras*, such as the statement that it has [a height of] five hundred *yojanas*." "This is because the position of the mountain and lake which is asserted by you bKa'-brgyud-pas [24b] contradicts the explanations given in scriptural authorities, such as the (*Abhidharma*) *kośabhaṣa*."

And, certain dialecticians who were followers of the Sa-skyapa (master) said, "The (argument that this place in Tibet is the one mentioned in the scriptures) falls down because the subject, being that (river) named Gaṅgā which flows from Lake Ma-pham, is not the real Gaṅgā which is one of the 'four rivers', because it and the other three rivers which issue from the flowing waters of one lake cannot be seen. If the other three rivers, having become altered due to the force of time, do not flow from Ma-pham, then it follows that the Gaṅgā too, at this time, did not flow from that lake. And there is no apprehendable trace of the supposed flow of the other three rivers from former times."

So saying, they provided a persistent refutation (of the bKa'-brgyud-pa position).

In reply to that bKa'-brgyud-pa Lamas said (25a): "The significance of the statement,

That one we call Gangs-dkar Ti-se,  
Is the one known as Ri-bo Gangs-can  
Which was prophesied previously by the Blessed One.  
That one we call Ma-pham g. Yu-mtsho,  
Is the one known as the Anavatapta ocean.

by the Great Vehicle of Our Doctrine, the Glorious, Incomparable bZhad-pa rDo-rje (i.e. Mi-la RAs-pa), is that this mountain in Tibet called Ti-se became our meditation place. It is not simply designed so by ordinary people. The reason being that this is the one called Ti-se, the great snow mountain which was prophesied previously by the teacher Buddha." It is accepted as Ti-se, but is not accepted as the one mentioned as, "Also, the Ri-bo Gangs-can which arose is this," in the preface to Jīvakakumārabhaṣa's (story) in the section on robes in the *Vinaya*. (25b) The reason is on account

of Ti-se and Himavat being accepted as different according to the statement by the master Mi-la [Ras-pa],

Among the list of names for regal mountains,  
Enumerated in the *Sangs rgyas bka" yi tog bzungs*,  
There are both 'Himavat' and 'Ti-se'  
As for the Noble Ones who dwelt there,  
There are also two Arhats who are distinct.

You (sa-skyapas) don't talk nonsense! Those qualities of Ti-se and Anavatapta which are explained in the *sūtras* will not be refuted solely by your denial that "This is not Ti-se and Anavatapta", having taken as proof that they were just not seen by your Sa-skyapaṇḍita. The reason is, according to the *Abhidharmakośa*, "A single substance gives rise to different states of mind." For example, it says (26a) three different ways of seeing even a single mundane element (such as) water, arise for people who have or have not purified their obscurations. When seen by the gods this water is something known as 'The River of the Elixir of Life', having a taste like honey, and possessing properties, such as the ability to cure illness, the ability of reviving the dead and the ability of mending what is broken. When looked at by human beings it is seen as just water which performs the function of quenching thirst and washing off impurities. When looked at by hungry ghosts it is seen as pus, matter and blood, excrement and urine and so on, which performs the function of stinking and burning. And in a similar way, with regard to this snow mountain Ti-se as well: To the sight of [26b] tenth stage bodhisattvas who are purified of obscurations it exists at present in accordance with the explanations in the *sūtras* i.e., it is made of precious substances, and has a height of five hundred *yojanas*, and a heavenly mansion of the gods inside it, etc.. To the sight of mediocre people it appears as a splendoured, massive mountain and the self-created body of a deity, and so forth, and it has a covering of rainbows, etc.. To the sight of inferior people it appears as nothing but just ordinary earth and rock. Because this is the nature of all things, consequently the (kind of) refutation which states "It does not have those qualities" to others, having taken as its proof something not even observed by oneself, is one in which there cannot be seen even the slightest purpose except only to reveal clearly the 'insides' [i.e. predispositions] of the refuters themselves.

Furthermore, [27a] it is a laughable assertion of you (Sa-skyapas) that, excluding the Gaṅgā, not even the beds of the other three rivers which flow

out from lake Ma-pham can be seen. Therefore, the proof of this is that the eastward flowing river Gaṅgā originally was a spring named mThong-ba Rangrol which flowed out of a valley that lay in an easterly direction from the lake itself. And later, it flowed westward from a mountain called sDul-chu, which resembles the mouth of an elephant, in the upper Gu-ge region in the west, after cutting through the middle of the lake itself. This is the Glang-chen Kha-'bab, universally known as the Indian river Gaṅgā. And as for the southward flowing river Sindhu, it flowed to the south from the north of the lake itself [27b]. As a result it originates from the mouth of the Peacock or 'Khyu-mchog' mountain in the upper part of Lang-ka Pu-rang. Therefore it is known as the rMa-bya Kha-babs or Sindhu river that flows to the land of Sindhu (i.e. Pakistan), after cutting through towards western India, and some minor districts of Nepal. And as for the westward flowing river Pakṣū, it flowed to the east from the west of the lake itself. As a result it originates from the mouth of the horse mountain at gTsang Bye-ma g.Yung-drung. Therefore it is known (variously) as the rTa-mchog Kha-babs, the Lohita river, or the upper waters of the gTsang-po, or the Pakṣū river that flows to the region of Kamarupa in eastern India after cutting through the middle of Tibet including [the districts of] gTsang, dBus and Kong-po. As for the northward flowing river Sita, it flowed to the north from the south of the lake itself. As a result it originates from a mountain which resembles the mouth of a lion behind Ti-se. Therefore it is known as the river of Seng-ge Kha-'bab or the Sita river which flows into the northern ocean after crossing the region of Hor [i.e. Turkistan] to the north and both La-dwags and Bhal-ti (stan).

In accordance with the existence of this established proof which is obvious to all the world, you (Sa-skyapa) monks must be talking nonsense in saying, "The former riverbeds can not even be seen at all" or, in general, also the sense of the word 'flowing' (*kha-babs*) is that they flow from mountains resembling four wild beasts to the east, south, west and north of the lake, and therefore it is not saying they flow (exactly) from the lake's own edge. But, if they flowed from the lake's own edge, it is apparent there would be no necessity at all to explain [28b] the character of the wild beasts, such as the elephant and horse.

And in general, although you (Sa-skyapas) have made refutations from many positions, after boasting of being endowed with a vision of knowledge which is not to be compared to anyone else at all, at present not only just Tibetans, but all Buddhists from China in the east up to Indian Mon in the south talk incessantly of "Going to visit the snow mountain Ti-se". And keeping this

continuously in mind, as a result they travel for many months with immense difficulty, and their assembly is innumerable like the geese on a lake of lotuses. It is like this, and consequently you little children who hope to catch hold of the sun in the sky have replied to them, [29a] saying such things as "You should abandon that manner of behaving which (only) brings fatigue to yourselves."

And in summary, explanations have been made in reply to the refutations of Sa-skyia Paṅ-chen and his followers on this subject. They have been elucidated in the informative texts: the *mKhas pa'i rnam rgyan* by the omniscient 4th Zhwa-dmar [Chos-grags Ye-shes], the *rGol ngan jom pa'i legs bshad lung rigs smra ba'i mgul rgyan* by the 'Bri-gung Zhabs-drung Chos-kyi Grags-pa and the *gNas gsum gsal byed legs bshad nor bu'i me long* by the glorious 'Brug-pa Ngag-dbang Sangs-rgyas rDo-rje. Therefore, those of you who have acquired perplexing and false views due to the grace of the glorious Sa-skyia-pa [29b] read these elegant sayings and become cleansed totally of falsehoods.

To the non-Tibetan reader some of the arguments found in the TNS seem rather attenuated when compared with the more decisive criticisms of the Sa-skyia-pas. However, in the Tibetan tradition arguments such as those found here defending the claim of Ti-se and Lake Ma-pham's cosmographical qualities by invoking the ability of highly realised Buddhist practitioners to perceive an 'underlying' splendoured, divine reality were generally accepted in relation to the specific debate about these sites. Here we can compare similar material on Ti-se and Ma-pham in the well-known *Dzam gling rgyas bshad* of the bTsan-po Nom-unqan<sup>31</sup> reminding us of the relationship between karmic purity and the perception of geographical reality which Tibetan pilgrimage guides often refer to in relation to this type of holy place.<sup>32</sup>

What is also evident in the TNS is the general bKa'-brgyud-pa 'bias' one finds towards dealing only with the geographical and cosmographical details<sup>33</sup> and claims, thus avoiding the important doctrinal concerns of Sa-paṅ about who should, and could, legitimately pilgrimage to and benefit from a site claimed to be a *Samvara pīṭha*. However, Padma dKar-po was one bKa'-brgyud-pa critic who addressed this important issue using a

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<sup>31</sup> See Wylie (1962: 56-9).

<sup>32</sup> See Huber (1991).

<sup>33</sup> While these details are interesting they have been commented upon many times by other writers and they need not detain us here. For further material and references see Allen (1982), J.Snelling (1983), and Swami Pranavananda (1983), amongst others. For a recent Tibetan compilation on the area see Bod ljongs nang bstan vol. I, 1990.

rather different style of refutation of Sa-pan in his *Pad dkar legs bshad* (PK), a guide-book to the holy mountain of Tsa-ri in Southern Tibet<sup>34</sup>:

Some [i.e. Sa-skya Paṇḍita] say, "Even if [Ti-se and Tsa ri, and so on], were the great places [in the teachings of the Buddha], because the persons who go to those lands have obtained initiations and hold vows, know the [secret] signs and their responses, and firmly understand the two stages [of meditation] it is stated that they wander [there] for the sake of the *caryā* [phase] [34-a], and persons who are not like that are forbidden to travel to those countries according to the *tantras*. " and, "If those who have not cultivated Secret *Mantra*, and yet pride themselves on their understanding, go to those countries obstacles will arise for them. Also when visited by 'meditators on nothing whatsoever' [i.e. nihilists] there is no profit or loss whatever [for them]." But, these claims are self contradictory in that they are a direct violation or an approximation of the Sugata's words, as how can one possibly say that 'Others can go there without profit or loss' if the *tantras* forbid access to persons who are other than those ready for the *caryā* [phase] ?

Also, his saying "They are forbidden according to the *tantras*..." is confusing, in that the '*Phags-pa* sphyan-ras-gzigs kyi *dri-med-'od* states, "In this way the dual union of *dākīnjalāsamvara* is described in terms of mundane geography for the sake of liberating uninitiated persons.", and also, "Commonly, the *pīṭha*, such as Jālandhara, are named in order that ordinary persons may wander to the [twenty-four] countries."<sup>35</sup> And it also mentions 'wander' in the Nā-ro '*grel-chen* as, "Generally, the *pīṭha*, such as Jālandhara, are named in order that ordinary persons can perform circumambulation [at them]."

We have already briefly mentioned some of Sa-pan's possible motives for discouraging ordinary Buddhist pilgrims from visiting Tantric *pīṭha* sites, but why did Padma dKar-po here, and elsewhere in his PK, support the practice as being acceptable? Having noted that this bKa'-brgyud-pa heirarch and his school had established interests at sites like Ti-se and Tsa-ri (see n.26), we must consider that requirements for sponsorship and pilgrimage revenue may have played some part in sanctioning and maintaining non-

<sup>34</sup> See PK, ff. 33A, 1-33b, 1.

<sup>35</sup> On this same sentence in a more negative context see Snellgrove (1959: 69, n. 2).

Tantric Buddhist pilgrimage to these sites.<sup>36</sup> However, regarding this issue it is perhaps more to the point to consider the distinctions made between Tantric and non-Tantric visits to *pīṭha* sites by Buddhists and what this meant in the Indian, and later the Tibetan contexts. In the texts visits to *pīṭha* by Tantric yogins who have 'entered into the caryā' (*spyod-pa la gshegs-pa*) phase of practice are described as 'wandering' (*rgyu-ba*) there to perform meditation<sup>37</sup>, etc., whereas non-Tantric visits are described in terms of circumambulation (*skor-ba*) which is a common form of worship as Pilgrimage. In commenting on the *pīṭha* tradition on the basis of what he takes to be legitimate Indian Buddhism Sa-pan does not even mention circumambulatory visits. Padma dKar-po openly admits such visits, but his textual citations aside, I think his doing so reflects in part a collapsing together of the categories of Tantric 'wandering' and non-Tantric circumambulation in the Tibetan *pīṭha* tradition.

If we analyse the narratives describing the 'opening' of these holy places by the archetypal Tibetan yogins, such as Mi-la Ras-pa and gTsang-pa rGyas-ras, we find that while 'wandering' there during their own caryā phase they opened them up systematically in the form of circumambulation itineraries (if indeed they were not already in this form in the pre-Buddhist traditions, i.e. was there circumambulation in Tibet before Buddhism?). The individual 'power places' at which they performed their Tantric meditations and magical conquests are generally arranged around these circuits, which form the basis for the itineraries of visits by all later Tantric meditators and non-Tantric Pilgrims alike. In some instances, e.g. Mi-la Ras-pa at La-phyi<sup>38</sup>, these 'opening' scenarios are also explicitly related to allowing access for ordinary folk to these sites. This is how the texts presented these sites to Tibetans, and how they in fact were approached. In later times these narratives themselves served to popularise the sites widely among all sections of Tibetan Buddhists. There is no doubt that Tantric and non-Tantric visits to these sites have always been made for distinctly different purposes, but as yogins and uninitiated pilgrims came to share the same sites their different types of practice became interrelated in ways for which there appear to be no precedents in the Indian Buddhist *pīṭha* traditions. Ordinary Tibetans ('circumambulators') visit the spots, caves and so forth, where yogins performed their meditations in order to benefit from the sanctification (*byin-brlabs*) accumulated at those places by the activities of these elite Tantra practitioners ('wanderers'). They also support the

<sup>36</sup> In the case of the Bhutanese 'Brug-pa at Kailāsa, who controlled most of the religious estates and shrines in the area, Kawaguchi (1909: 168) gives us some more recent evidence indicating the importance of pilgrimage revenue at such a site. All this is not to say that the Sa-skyapas did not also have mundane motive that need to be considered.

<sup>37</sup> Stein (1988: 38-43) has recently made some interesting references to aspects of the practice of Tantic meditation at Tsa-ri using the PK and other Tibetan sources.

<sup>38</sup> See Huber (1991).

yogins and their communities through making offerings, another form of worship. The extent to which such interrelations between Tantric and non-Tantric visits to the Tibetan *pīṭha* had developed by Sa-pan's time cannot be known, but they must certainly be counted as a factor influencing later Tibetan sources on the tradition.

In the 2nd chapter of his PK, Padma dKar-po had this to say about the issue of sacred geography<sup>39</sup>:

[6b]...Consequently, with regard to the statement of others [i.e. Sa-skyā Paṇḍita],

That [country] which is called Cāritra,  
Is situated to the south on the shore of the ocean:  
Tsa-ri rTswa-gong is not that.

There is no fault in merely stating "It is situated to the south", because Kāñcī, which is like the Suvarṇadvīpa renowned as the country of Dharmakīrti to the south of India, and the best of the [places] near-by the city, with regard to that characteristic also it is said to be Tsa-ri. Therefore one knows there is no reason whatsoever in [Sa-pan] saying "It is situated on the shore of the ocean". And [concerning the statement] ,'

The saḥajā of the country of Tibet  
Lives and dwells in a stone cave.  
The goddess who abides in that country [7a]  
Stays at the tree of Bhadra.

The kṣetrapāla goddess dwelling in the rock cave and the one dwelling at the tree of Bhadra have different countries. It mentions Tibet as the first and Devīkota as the second in all [three texts of, the *Vajradāka* , *Dākārṇava* and *Mahākāla-siddhibhava* [tantras]. Therefore there is a contradiction with those. And because [Sa-pan] explains the location of Bhadra's tree as Devīkota with the words,

If there is a tree of Bhadra in the direction of that  
[country],  
There is no contradicting that country [is Devīkota].

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<sup>39</sup> See PK, ff. 6b, 1-7b, 1.



[then] the statement "There is no contradicting that country [is Devīkoṭa] " is confusing, and that tree needs to be designated by itself [with no other referent]. And consequently, because it is accepted as Devīkoṭa, and if that tree is not in this [place] his own proof is not established. Therefore he has fallen to a position of defeat.

If one thinks that we do not say it is Devīkota, since we take the first line [of the following verse of Śa-pan's] as our own position,

One other place of Devīkoṭa,  
Is said by some to be Tsa-ri.  
According to the *Vajradāka-tantra*,  
"Bhadra abides in Devīkoṭa."

one should consider what there is in the remainder of the verse to refute that [place] is Tsa-ri. However, having [previously] taken the position which describes it as Kāñcī if we say "This is not that Tsa-ri", we have understood a little ourselves [i.e. it is reasonable]. But refuting that it is Tsa-ri after speaking of it as Devīkoṭa [as Sa-pan has] [7b] is itself a gesture of insanity.

In that way, if we follow [the issue] through the logic of argument, in this position the attack of [Sa-pan's] dispute is quickly mitigated. Therefore the 'tongue-punishment'<sup>40</sup> of dialectics, called Cāritra, has been applied.

Curiously, in these passages Padma dKar-po, while quoting the DS to make his point, never refers to either that work or Sa-pan<sup>41</sup> Padma dKar-po is very careful not to undercut his own position that Cāritra and Devīkoṭa are both associated, and both located in Southern Tibet. His formal, and at times, rather opaque refutation restricts itself for the most part to seeking internal contradictions and inadequacies in Sa-pan's brief remarks on Tsa-ri. When considered in isolation, this material is indeed difficult to decipher. However, I hope that the substance of Padma dKar-po's refutation will be somewhat clarified below in an investigation of the details of the actual claims and counter-claims made. The role of

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<sup>40</sup> ICe-chad > Ice-chod = the old traditional practice of cutting out an offender's tongue, see Zhang Yisun, et al (eds.), *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, (Zang-Han Dacidian) vol. 1, Beijing, 1985, p. 768.

<sup>41</sup> This appears to have been a hall-mark of his deliveries against the Sa-skyapa master, c.f. Broido (1987:37).

such claims about Tsa-ri, Cāritra and Devīkoṭa was of fundamental importance to the process of development of a Tibetan Tantric geography.

### The Cāritra/Devīkoṭa Complex and the Further Development of a Tibetan Tantric Geography

In the ancient geography of India the sites of Cāritra, a southern port city on the Orissan (Uḍra) coast<sup>42</sup>, and Devīkoṭa, a place in the Dinājpur district of North Bengal<sup>43</sup> were real places which contained Tantric *pīṭha* sites patronised by Buddhist Siddhas, and most probably various sects of Hindu Tantrikas as well<sup>44</sup> Tibetan Buddhist scholars, at least since Sa-pan's time, have certainly been aware of the actual Indian locations of these places.<sup>45</sup> Their significance as points on the internal yogic and external geographic *vajra-kāya* was also well known to Tibetans from the lists of these sites found in the Tantras themselves.<sup>46</sup>

However, despite this knowledge of the traditional Indian locations and significances of these sites, certain sections of the Tibetan Buddhist clergy were determined that they be relocated on Tibetan soil. As a result of this determination to 'Buddha-ise' the Tibetan landscape since the *phyi-dar* two major Tibetan holy places were established as Cāritras and

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<sup>42</sup> See Beal (1969:Book X, 205-6).

<sup>43</sup> See Baruā (1969: 163) and Das Gupta (1976: 12) on it as a Buddhist temple site; and Sircar (1973: 83) on it as an important śākta pīṭha location.

<sup>44</sup> For instance see the many references of visits there by the Indian Siddha Kṛṣṇācārya and his disciples in Templeman (1989: 21, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 40, 46).

<sup>45</sup> For example see the above quoted lines in the DS referring to Tsa-ri; Tāranātha's writings on Kānha (note above); an interesting entry in Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims Rin-chen (1973), f. 447, 1: "Devīkoṭa is the citadel or fortress of the goddess. That is, due south of the reddish-gray (*gro-mo*) region of Nalendra in the east (of India) there is found a temple of Devīkoṭa in a place which is four calls distance outside of the town known as Vañcapa (?). And in the country, it is said that great place exists there."; and also in the TNS, f. 8b, 4, apparently quoting an earlier source on the submission of Maheśvara, "The place known as Devīkoṭa, which is the country of Varindra in Eastern India, was seized by the gandharva Vajraprabha." On Varindra/Varendra being an ancient kingdom situated in present-day Bangladesh, see Templeman (1989: n. 110).

<sup>46</sup> For a convenient collection of this material from the Hevajra, Saṃvarodaya and Vajradāka cycles see Tsuda (1978: 215-226).

four major sites were claimed as Devīkoṭas in Tibet. There may also be other minor, local Tibetan Cāritras and Devīkoṭas for which we do not yet have textual evidence.<sup>47</sup>

We are fortunate to have enough surviving literary sources to be able to discern the outline of the rather complicated process of assimilations which lead to the proliferation of these sites in Tibet and hence, the resultant development of a pilgrimage network dedicated to Samvara Tantrism. This is what I will now try to piece together by considering each of the major sites in the probable sequence of their historical development.

### i. The Cāritra and Devīkoṭa at Tsa-ri

It is clear from the DS that already by Sa-pan's time claims were being made for assimilating both Cāritra and Devīkoṭa to the holy mountain sanctuary of Tsa-ri (Tsa-ri Tswa-gong) in Southern Tibet, and that in the case of Devīkoṭa some passages from the text of the *Vajradāka-tantra* (VDT) were being invoked in order to justify this. Go-rams-pa's DSN commentary on this passage in the DS clarifies things somewhat,<sup>48</sup>

As for Cāritra, a division of *pīlava* site [in the *Hevajra-tantra*], because it is mentioned as "Situated to the south on the shore of the ocean" [by Sa-pan], the Tsā-ri Tsā-gong of Kongyul [in Tibet] is not that. As for the statement by some that, "For Devīkoṭa, a division of *kṣetra* site [in the *Hevajra-tantra*] there exist two, of which the principal exists in India to the south, and another minor one is the Tsa-ri of Kong-yul", if the tree of Bhadra is found in the direction of that [country], there is no fault in that country being Devīkoṭa [according to Sapaṇ's statement]. [As for the verses] beginning with "According to the *Vajradāka-tantra*", furthermore, in the *tantra* it states [etc]...

At this point Go-rams-pa, in order to show what Sa-pan was referring to somewhat obscurely (for the uninitiated reader) in his criticisms, quotes in full two short verse sections

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<sup>47</sup> In the present context we might note that some literary references to other Cāritras and Devīkoṭas appear to be hyperbolic, such as the title of a manuscript guide to the shrine of sTag-tshang in sPa-gro, *Tsa-ri-tra gnyis-pa gnas-chen stag-tshang-gyi gnas-yig ngo-mshar 'phrul-gyi sgo brgya-pa*, see Aris (1979: 278). See also the comments on Chu-mo-phug (Chumphu) at sPa-gro and Brag-dkar sPrel-rdzong in Amdo in Stein (1988: 13 & 29).

<sup>48</sup> See DSN, f. 138a-b.

relating to aspects of the *pīṭha* cult from the VDT<sup>49</sup> The first of these verses describes a violent (drag-chen-mo) kṣetrapāla goddess called 'rNa-mo-che' who dwells at Bhadra's tree<sup>50</sup> in Devikoṭa. The second describes another kṣetrāpla, known as 'rNa-chen', as a sahaṣā ('innate woman')<sup>51</sup> in Tibet (*body-yul*)<sup>52</sup> who dwells in a rock house or rock cave in that country. Some Tibetan commentators take these two kṣetrapāla goddesses to be one and the same. What the argument of Sa-pan and Go-rams-pa is leading to is that although Tibet is mentioned in the Tantra it is only Devikoṭa which has the tree of Bhadra as a dwelling, while Tibet has only a rock house or cave as the dwelling. Therefore the two places cannot be equated on the basis of what is stated in the scripture.

We have already seen how Padma dKar-po has rejected this argument as being self contradictory and invalid in his PK. Elsewhere in that same work he uses the second of these passages, and other short sections from the VDT, to claim how Tibet and the main holy mountain of Dag-pa Shel-ri at Tsa-ri are the sites mentioned in this Tantra. And furthermore, on the basis of these quotes he make a most important equation of these deities and their abodes from the *pīṭha* cult with those ones that are central to the autochthonic cult at Tsa-ri. For example he states<sup>53</sup>,

From amongst the twenty-four countries of Jambudvīpa this *upachandoha* Himālaya, called Kha-ba-can or Gangs-can in Tibetan, is that Tibet mentioned

<sup>49</sup> Because of their importance in all the subsequent guide-book literature on this subject I have provided the full texts here: For the first passage see Śrī-vajradāka-nāma-mahātantrarāja (Derge: 370), f. 49a, 1-2: /gyen du 'bar skra zhes bya ba // kṣe tra pāla gtsigs pa che // de bī ko ṭar rna mo che // stobs po che yi skye gnas 'byung // Iha mo lag na mdung can te // rnal 'byor dbang phyug kun gyi mchog // gnas der Iha mo drag chen mo // bha dra'i shing la brten to gnas /; and the second, f. 50a, 7: / bod yul du ni Ihan skyes te // rang byung gi ni skye gnas byung // cnu srin rgyal mtshan lag na thogs // zhizhing gsal ba'i gzugs can te // yul der gnas pa'i Iha mo te // brag gi khyim la brag gi khyim la brten te gnas /.

<sup>50</sup> For the story of Bhadra's tree in Devikoṭa see Templeman (1983: 44), and (1989: 30 & 46).

<sup>51</sup> Tib. = *Ihan-cig skyes-ma*; The 'innate women' are the ḍākinīs or yoginīs who reside at each of the 24 Tantric pīṭha and who are involved in the yoga performed at these palces, see Tsuda's *Saṃvarodaya-Tantra*, (1974: 9:12) In terms of the internal pīṭha they represent an internal psychic force at points in the yogin's meditational body, see Das Gupta (1976: 99-109).

<sup>52</sup> It would be interesting to know what the original Indian mss. of the VDT read where '*bod-yul*' is found in the Tibetan translations. What appears to be a Bengali or Nepali mss. of VDT is in the Tokyo University Library collection, cat. no. 343. The relevant section occurs on ff. 42b-43a. I am indebted to Shin'ichi Tsuda for helping me locate this reference.

<sup>53</sup> See PK, ff. 4b, 5-5b, 1.

in the *Vajradāka-tantra* as, "The land of Tibet, and such like, Mālava and Pulli[ramalaya], etc., are the twenty-four countries."

Furthermore, it is called Gangs-can if we take as primary [the mountain] Dag-pa Shel-ri, [5a] and it is called Tibet if we take as primary the place of abode of the kṣetrapāla. Therefore there are different names referring to one meaning. The kṣetrapāla in that (*Vajradāka-*) *tantra* mentioned as, "[She] is the sahaḥā in the country of Tibet." is the sahaḥā holding the name g-Yu'i-sgron-ma. She is visualised as, "Holding a makara banner in hand, and possessing a body which is calm and lucid." [And it further states:] "That goddess who abides in that country, lives and dwells in a rock house."

According to some translations [this last line reads], "[She] lives and dwells in a rock cave.", therefore her abodes or receptacles are the rDo'i-sNying-phug of upper Cig-car and the sMyug-ri sMyug-khang [both of which are at Tsa-ri]...

....It states that the male ('father') kṣetrapāla, "The *mahāvīra* known as Longs-spyod is the kṣetrapāla Thub-dka'."<sup>54</sup> This is Longs-spyod Thub-dka'. And it is the place where Sengge gDong-pa-can lives also because it mentions [5b] "A dwelling in the heaped-up rock mountains" in that *tantra*, it is dPal-ri Zlum-can in upper Cig-car, and thus is this [place] located on the great face of the Dag-pa Shel-ri [massif at Tsa-ri].

The goddess equated with the Tantric sahaḥā, g.Yu-sgron-ma ('Turquoise Lamp Lady'), is one of the leading brTan-ma (or bsTanma) bcu-gnyis deities associated with important mountains and lakes in Tibet. She has the titles 'Bod-skyong brtan-ma'i gtso-bo g.Yu-yi-sgron' and 'Zhing-skyong dbang-mo rDo-rje g.Yu-sgron-ma'<sup>55</sup> and is obviously a protective deity of 'national' significance for Tibetans. Also, the male deity from the Tantric cult is equated with Seng-ge'i gDong-can, a member of the retinue of the leading goddess of the cult of Tibetan protective deities dPal-ldan lHa-mo.<sup>56</sup> Not only are passages such as these of fundamental importance to our understanding of the pilgrimage cult at Tsa-ri, but they are also excellent examples of Buddhisation in action in the traditions of the Tibetan holy places.

<sup>54</sup> This verse, VDT, f. 50b, 1: *llongs spyod zhes bya'i dpa'bo che ll kṣe tra pāla thub dka' ba'o l*, follows immediately on from the second of the 2 above quoted passages in the Tantra (see n. 49 above).

<sup>55</sup> On this goddess see the numerous refs. in Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956: esp. 190-93).

<sup>56</sup> See Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956: 25, 29).

From amongst the impressive collection of materials Padma dKarmo brings together in the 2nd chapter of his PK to demonstrate that Tsa-ri is Cāritra, mention must be made of one other citation from the Tantras<sup>57</sup>,

In this [*Vajradāka*-] *tantra*, that which is mentioned as, "The place of the *karāñja*, Cāritra"<sup>58</sup> is Kāñcī which formerly was counted in the twenty-four [countries of the *vajra-kāya* ].

This equation allows us to better understand Padma dKar-po's mention of Kāñcī in his refutation of Sa-pan quoted previously. But, more importantly, by relating Kāñcī to Cāritra and Tsa-ri he makes it possible for Tibetans to postulate a correspondence between Tsāri/Cāritra and Devikoṭa<sup>59</sup> by way of the logic of the *vajra-kāya* doctrine, and this is a relationship they certainly have made as we shall see below in the case of Ts-'dra Rin-chen-brag. According to the theory of the internal *pīṭha* (*adhyātma-pīṭha*) of the *vajra-kāya* certain places correspond to certain parts of the body which are connected by a network of internal psychic channels or veins (*nāḍī*). The *Saṃvarodaya-tantra* lists, "A vein existing in Devikoṭa (that is,) the eyes flows through the liver."<sup>60</sup> and "In Kāñcī, the abode of the heart..."<sup>61</sup> Some Tibetan commentators considered that a *nāḍī* connected the eyes and the heart in the *vajra-kāya* during meditation, thus 'joining' the external Kāñcī/Cāritra with Devikoṭa as I will detail later.

## ii. The lHa-mo mKhar-chen Devikoṭa at mKhar-chu

The later Tibetan writers on sacred geography made use of the aspects of the internal *pīṭha* theory explained above in order to justify claims for, and relate together, the Tantric *pīṭha* they were establishing in Tibet. Padma dKar-po appears to have been an exponent of these Tantric geographical theories, as can be seen from his short guide-book entitled *Bod yul lho de wi ko ṭa'i gnas bshad*. As we have already noted, by the 15th century we find the Sa-skyapa scholar Go-rams-pa criticising a Tibetan tradition that there are two *kṣetra* sites of Devikoṭa, one in India and one at Tsa-ri in Tibet. In his little text Padma dKar-po uses

<sup>57</sup> See PK, f. 5b, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Note that VDT, f. 49, 7 here reads: //tsa ri tra yi yul di nil/ ka ran dza gnas zhes bya ba //.

<sup>59</sup> See Roerich (1979: 729, n.2): 'Present day Tibetan bla-mas maintain that Tsa-ri in S.E. Tibet is the ancient Devikoṭī.'

<sup>60</sup> See Tsuda (1974: 261), noting the confusion here between the Skt. 'bukka' for 'heart', and the Tib. 'mchin-pa' for 'liver'.

<sup>61</sup> Tsuda (1974: 262).

the Tantric theory of *pīṭha* correspondences to advance a claim that the site known as lHa-mo mKhar-chen (Skt.= 'Mahādevikota') at mKhar-chu in the lHo-brag district of Southern Tibet was one of these two Devikoṭas. For example he states<sup>62</sup>

According to reality, and in the infinite, incomparable Tantric texts, such as the *Vajradāka* and the *Dākārṇava*, the explanations state, "The eyes [of the *Vajrakāya*] are Devikoṭa." Because there are two internal eyes, there are two [external] places of Devikoṭa, of which that one connected with the right [eye] exists in that country of the *dharmarāja* Aśoka called Pāṭaliputra in Eastern India, and that place which is connected with the left [eye] is this one [in southern Tibet].

Whether Padma dKar-po was the first to claim this site as a Devikoṭa in Tibet is uncertain<sup>63</sup> although whatever the exact history of the claims the mKhar-chu Devikoṭa retained its fame as a Saṃvara site for many centuries in Tibet<sup>64</sup>

### iii. The 'Second Devikoṭa' at Pha-bong-kha

Considering all the Tibetan claims we have cited so far it might appear that the bKa'-brgyud-pa schools were the only major lineage tradition to engage in relocating and duplicating the *pīṭha* sites in Tibet. While this perhaps reflects the situation up to the time of Padma dKarmo, from then on the dGe-lugs-pa school, and later the Ris-med movement, were instrumental in establishing other Devikoṭas and Cāritras in Tibet.

Right from the beginning of its formation the 'reformed' dGelugs-pa order and its members took up the study and practice of the cult of Saṃvara Tantrism with zeal. Great practitioners of that school, such as Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419) himself and the 1st Paṅ-chen Blo bzang Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan (1567-1662) performed pilgrimages to Tsa-ri and Ti-

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<sup>62</sup> See Padma-dkar-po (1973b), f. 1a.

<sup>63</sup> In this context we should note the propensity of 'Brug-pa Lamas of the period for such activities. A disciple of Padma dKar-po's, a certain 'Bla-ma bKra-shi-dbang', was responsible for 'opening' the Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage to the 'false' Kuśinagara at the hajo temple near Gauhati in Assam to the south of Tsa-ri, see Aris (1986: 71-3, 77); Aris (1979: 112-14). This site was later assimilated to the Devikoṭa at Pha-bongkha, on which see n. 73 below.

<sup>64</sup> See mKhyen-brtse dBang-po's comments in Ferrari (1958: 57).



se"<sup>65</sup> in order to practice the Samvara meditations and rituals there, and in their wake various other 'dGe-lugs Siddhas' followed suit".<sup>66</sup>

In their devotion to the performance of Samvara tantrism certain dGe-lugs-pa Lamas established the so-called 'second Devikota' (de-d'iko-ta gnyis-pa)<sup>67</sup> at the site of the ancient holy place of Pha-bong-kha near Se-ra monastery on the out-skirts of Lhasa city. The earliest reference to Pha-bong-kha being claimed as Devikota is found in the 5th Dalai Lama's *Bod kyi deb ther*, written in 1643.<sup>68</sup> The guide-book for the 'second Devikota', probably written sometime during the 19th century<sup>69</sup> was composed by a little-known dGe-lugs-pa scholar associated with the rGyud-stod college in Lhasa and with Se-ra-smad. In setting out his claims this author uses what seems to have developed into a 'formula' for establishing Tibetan sites as Tantric *piṭha*. Firstly he invokes exactly the same passages from the VDT as used previously by Padma dKar-po to demonstrate that Tibet, and more specifically Pha-bong-kha, are the places of the *vajra-kāya* mentioned in the Tantras<sup>70</sup> As well as giving a brief account of the narrative of the submission of Rudra/Mahēśvara, he employs citations from Tsong-khapa and 'Jam-dbyangs bZhad-pa (1648-1721) amongst others, all of which are intended to demonstrate that,<sup>71</sup>

This very Pha-bong-kha is the Devikota from amongst the four [Tantric] *upapiṭha* because it was unanimously accepted [as such] by all those accomplished in wisdom who went there previously. Because it is established [as such] by way of those proofs above it is established as a place possessing empowerments.

In much the same way as the 'Bri-gung gDan-rabs claims about Ti-se use the 'scriptural authority' of the statements of great past masters of the bKa'-brgyud-pa, so too does this author place great emphasis throughout his text on the statements of the saints and

<sup>65</sup> On Tsong-kha-pa at Tsa-ri see Kaschwsky (1971: 131); and on the 1st Pañchen at Ti-se see Petech (1976: 322).

<sup>66</sup> See for example Filibeck (1988a: 96); and Willis (1985: 314-18).

<sup>67</sup> See for example Ferrari (1958: 42)

<sup>68</sup> See Roerich (1979: 79, n.2).

<sup>69</sup> See dByangs-can dGyes-pa'i-blo-gros (nd.). This approximate dating is likely since the author cites the Rwa-sgreng *sprul-sku* Blo-bzang Ye-shes bsTan-pa Rab-rgyas on f. 32a. Also, we find an author by this name who was the biographer of dByangs-can Grub-pa'i rDo-rje (1809-1887), the nephew of dNgul-chu Dharmabhadra (1772-1851).

<sup>70</sup> See dByangs-can dGyes-pa'i blo-gros (n.d.), ff. 9a, 4-10a, 1. noting that there is some confusion about the arrangement and attribution of the verses here.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, f. 11a, 4.

scholars of his own sect to establish the validity of his claims. By the 18th-19th century the *pīṭha* traditions had already gained enough 'momentum' in dGe-lugs circles for appropriate spiritual authority regarding them to have been generated. What seems important here is not just whether this is the 'true' location, but that it is possible to attain the proper benefits of pilgrimage and practice at Tibetan Saṃvara sites as other Worthy Ones have claimed to have done in the past. Later in the work, in a further claim the author's words reveal an aspect of the relocating of Indian meditation sites that practitioners of his day were conscious of, that is, that famous sites like Devikōṭa did exist in India, but this fact did not diminish the sanctity and the potency as places of practice of those claimed to exist in Tibet<sup>72</sup>:

[With regard] to this [place] which is established as the *pīṭha* of the two eyes when we relate it internally to the *nāḍī* ('spokes') of the body cakra of the Saṃvara [*maṇḍala*], even though there clearly exists a *mahāpīṭha* known as such in India as well, that does not mean that this [place] is not a place for practice, or is unfit to be Devikōṭa. [And] not only that, it need hardly be said that as regards Tibet itself it is certainly the case that this place has been repeatedly established through teachings by the many Wise Ones who performed meditation at that *mahāpīṭha*.

The Pha-bong-kha Devikōṭa has remained a well-known Cakrasaṃvara *pīṭha* for Tibetans up to the present day.<sup>73</sup> It is perhaps because of its already established sanctity as an 'equivalent' East Indian holy place that it also became one of the sites in Tibet to which the 'false' Kuśinagara in Assam was assimilated by Tibetans.<sup>74</sup>

#### iv. The 'Third Devikōṭa' at Tsā-'dra Rin-chen-brag

The Ris-med movement, that most important of developments in 19th century Tibet, was a testimony to the great vitality and creativity inherent in Tibetan religious culture. The

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, f, 33a, 6-33b, 1.

<sup>73</sup> When I visited Se-ra Pha-bong-kha in July 1987 the Devikōṭa identity of the site was well known to local Tibetans; see also Bärlocher (1982: 498); and the comments of a Western Buddhist who made a pilgrimage to the site with an exiled Tibetan Lama, "Rinpoche said this region has the eight auspicious signs and is one of the 24 places of Chakrasambhava (sic.). He told us that the mountains of Chakrasambhava (sic.) are similar in shape.", see Ani Thubten Dayton (1988: 8).

<sup>74</sup> On this matter see Waddell (1934: 307-14, esp. 310); and my n63 above. Ferrari (1958: 102, n. 87) also discusses this matter, identifying the site of Devikōṭa with Kāmākhyā, another important śākta *pīṭha*, in order to account for this double assimilation. See also Stein (1988: 18, n. 46).

most recent development of the Tantric *pīṭha* cult in Tibet was born out of this movement sometime during the 1850's and 1860's with the establishment of the so-called 'third Devikotā' at the site of Tsā-'dra Rin-chenbrag/Vajrakoṭi. This place was the location of the retreat centre of Kun-bzang bDe-chen 'Od-gsal-gling, connected with the dPal-spungs monastery in sDe-dge, and founded by the leading figure of Ris-med scholarship at the time, Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas (1813-1899) himself. Between 1842 and 1859 Kong-sprul composed a comprehensive and interesting guide-book for this place in which he claimed that it was not only the *pīṭha* site of Devikotā but of Cāritra as well.

The time of his writing this guide-book coincided with the early years of what was to be one of the most fertile intellectual and spiritual relationships of the era. It was then that he worked together with both the gTer-ston mChog-'gyur Gling-pa (1829-1870), whom he first met in 1855, and the great Ris-med master 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyenbrtse'i-dbang-po. In the claims about Tsā-'dra Rin-chen-brag being Devikotā and Cāritra the influences on Kong-sprul's formulations of both these other scholars is apparent,<sup>75</sup> and the whole 'third Devikotā' tradition has to be seen as part of a larger synthesizing and revitalizing effort that these three great minds applied at the time to the sacred geography of Khams and Amdo,<sup>76</sup> amongst a host of other subjects.

The following passages selected from this long guide of Kongsprul's to the 'third Devikotā' represent not only one further claim for the location of an Indian Tantric *pīṭha* in Tibet, but also reveal a developing sophistication in the manner in which the sacred geography and inter-relationships of these Saṃvara sites were presented by Tibetan authors:<sup>77</sup>

[7b]...Firstly, if we consider what the nature of this place is: From among the fields of the *tri-kāya* it is part of the field of *nirmāna-kāya*... From among

<sup>75</sup> In 1859 or 1860 mChog-'gyur Gling-pa 'revealed' his own short guide-book for the site to Kong-sprul, who acted as the recorder of the *gter-ma* while they were both residing at Tsā-'dra Rin-chen-brag, mChog-'gyur-gling-pa (1977c), ff. 109-116; see mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (1977), esp. ff. 103-6. who himself followed Padma dKar-po's line on Cāritra and Devikotā.

<sup>76</sup> Concerning this see the important collection of guide-books in the *gSung-*'bum of mChog-'gyur Gling-pa, vol. 30 (E), the 'revelation' of many of which were recorded by both Kong-sprul and mKhyen-brtse. The pilgrimage traditions and sacred geography of Eastern Tibet in these texts is an important research priority for Tibetologists.

<sup>77</sup> My translation covers ff. 7b, 2-9b, 3 of his text, found in Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas (1975), ff. 490-494. This text was originally part of the *Thun mong ma yin pa'i mdzod*, the 5th of the monumental 'Five Treasuries' (*mDzod-lnga*) which comprise the Collected Works of Kong-sprul.

the twenty-four places Vajrakotī is a division of Devikotī, an Upāpīṭha, the essence of which is the eye channel (*nāḍi*) [in the yogin's psychic body]. From among the thirty-two countries Tsā-'dra Rin-chen-brag is a branch of Cāritra, the essence of which is the [central] Avadhūtī channel. From among the three *cakras* of the pure triple-world [of the *maṇḍala*] it belongs to the *citta-cakra* [which is the sphere of] *ākāśa*. From among both great Places and minor places it is the supreme place of good quality mind among the twenty-five great places of mDo-khams<sup>78</sup>...Because it is a division of the great places and countries its essence was perfected from the beginning. And because it is the great place of Gangs-can (Himavat) which was empowered by the primal forms of all the Jinas, beginning with that which is endowed with a garland of *vajra* skulls, its qualities have arisen accordingly. It is the palace of great liberation [8a]. It is a great, divine mansion of all the Buddhas.

Secondly, if we consider the etymology of its names: It is stated that it is an *upāpīṭha* because, internally, the white part occasionally abides in the *sgam-pa-mo* channel which descends to the region of the liver, and externally also, because *dākinī* occasionally abide there. Because one drinks the *sahajānanda* which arises through the mixing of the red and white [*bindu*] in the Avadhūtī channel, and because all obscurations are cut off, externally also it is called a *pīlava* ('*thung-gcod*) through having a function which is like that. And Devikotī is a citadel of the goddess, that is, there are many citadels which are [shaped] like a heart, and *añjali* shaped [i.e. like female genitals] *yonī* in the rock mountains. Consequently in impure existences one is shown [these] magical deceptions by the *Iha-'dre* of the Mother Tantras and one's defiled attachments increase, but when one is at the path [stage], [seeing" the" after] having activated the four mudrās the cognition of blissful means and emptiness wisdom is generated, and during the fruition [stage] it is ensured that one establishes the emptiness which is endowed with the best of all modes as the foundation of all *dharmas*.

According to the *Gnas-yig gter-byon rtsa-ba*, "The one called Vajracittakotī is the citadel of *vajra* mind, a division of Devikotī, that is, it has become the palace which accommodates in particular the Blessed One whose mind is the essence of *vajra*, Vajrasattva, in beneficent and wrathful [manifestations], and the *Vajra* lineage of Herukas with their retinues, beginning with Śrī-Cakrasmvara. [8b] Because the one called Ts-'dra Rin chen-brag is included in

<sup>78</sup> On this scheme see mChog-'gyur Gling-pa (1977b), ff. 41-67.

the entire collection of Cāritras it is a branch of Śrī-Cāritra which is internally the central channel and externally the great southern place. Therefore it has an arrangement which is the same as that place...

.....That Devīkoṭī and Tsā'dra [Rin-chen-brag] are two is not contradicted. That is, because it is the central [Avadhūtī] channel which penetrates the twenty-four channels [of the Psychic body], Cāritra penetrates all the *pīṭha* as well. And because both of them are the pure ones whose channel is between the eye and the heart, consequently the heart and the eye also have a conjunction. Also that the Devīkoṭī which exists at mKhar-chu in IHo-brag is a branch of Cāritra is in accord with the former explanations of those with wisdom insight.

The statement by the 'Jam-mgon bla-ma mKhyen-brtse dBang-po that "This place is the essence of the middle eye of cognition" is also from the origination of insight. That is, the middle eye is the purity of the wisdom of emptiness which is [a spot] above the nose in the head. And therefore that very [spot] becomes a door which radiates the wisdom from the centre of the heart. [All this] agrees completely with the true instruction [of mChog-'gyur Gling-pa] which states, "Devīkoṭī is Tsā'dra Rin-chen-brag." <sup>79</sup>

[9a]... Fourthly, also the marks of credibility that it exists in this way: In a previous era it was seized by Rudra and Kalī [who] were subjugated by Heruka, and thus, as for its having all the marks of means and wisdom which were empowered into those *pīṭha*. which are the most excellent, they are like the generally known marks which are the particular characteristics of the [twenty-four] great places. As for possessing the symbols of the self-manifest *liṅga* and *yonī*,...[9b] and the Secret Cave like the heart-shaped, self-manifest citadel of stone [i.e. *dharmodaya*] which supports the Tibetan protector [goddess], the *sahajā* which is mentioned in the (*Vajradāka*)-*tantra* as, "The goddess who abides in that country lives and dwells in a rock house." These are the symbols which establish it as the place of Devīkoṭī. And as for the persons in Cāritra and the mighty mKhar-chu valley, and the persons in the centre of the 'trunkabode' of Bhadrā's tree which is exactly equal in colour and shape [to the one at Devīkoṭī], they are clear evidence of it being Cāritra. And the sacred marks of body, speech and mind visible in the sphere of activity of

<sup>79</sup> See mChog-'gyur Gling-pa (1977a), f. 14b, 6.

the Mighty One, such as hand and foot imprints, are proof of its manifest perfection.

In this remarkable example of sacred geographical literature we find the Tantric theory of the internal-psychic and external-physical geography of the *vajra-kāya* employed to establish a set of correspondences which are intended to validate the claims of identity and sanctity made for the site. But, rather than claim this site as the 'one-and-only' Devikota and Cāritra in Tibet, or even as the specific ones mentioned in the Tantras as earlier Tibetan authors did, Kongsprul is careful to make it clear that while Ts-'dra Rin-chen-brag/Vajrakoṭī is entirely equivalent in all details to these great *pīṭha* of the Tantras it has a type of derivative status by being a 'branch' (*yan-lag*) or 'division' (*bye-brag*) of them. In this we find an expression of the *modus operandi* of the Ris-med itself, that is, in establishing a 'second generation' of assimilated *pīṭha* site in Tibet while not directly violating the original Indian geographical schema, and also harmonizing its existence with those already 'founded' elsewhere by earlier generations of Tibetan clerics.

While Tsā-'dra Rin-chen-brag was a site of great importance to the Ris-med and the meditators of dPal-spungs,<sup>80</sup> we do not yet know whether it ever became a popular place of pilgrimage in the way that other Tantric *Pīṭha* sites of Samvara did in Tibet.

### Concluding Remarks

By the late 19th to early 20th century the sacred geography controversy appears to have come to a sort of ironic conclusion in the hands of the Ris-med. One can only be impressed by the 'impartial' and syntheicising forces at work in a movement in which, not long after they had established the 'third Devikoṭa', a leading *sprul-sku* of mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po himself can openly state that, "The Sa-skya Pandita who was the crown ornament of the world, is the only man renowned for having refuted the arguments of heretics in Tibet."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Aside from the Tibetan sources there are few references to this site near sDedge. A brief description is found in the life story of the late Kalu Rinpoche who acted as retreat director for the hermitages there before his exile, see MacLeod (1985: 40). However, one only has to scan through the colophons of the works of Kong-sprul, mKhyen-brtse, and other Ris-med masters to see just how much of the movements's prodigious literary output was composed in the caves and hermitages of this holy place.

<sup>81</sup> See Aris (1977:217).

If there was ever any contest between the influences of scripture and reason and Buddha-isation in the history of Tibetan Buddhist Pilgrimage traditions it would appear that the former was bound to loose out in the long run. Despite the continued duplication of Indian Tantric *piṭha* sites on Tibetan soil, Sa-pan's original criticisms and concerns did not go completely unheeded in Tibet. While tens of thousands of pious Tibetans, both Tantric yogins and lay people alike, traveled far and wide to visit 'their' Saṃvara sites the followers of the Sa-skyapa, especially the educated elite, would have nothing to do with such pilgrimages to Ti-se, Tsa-ri, and so on<sup>82</sup>

In the present context it is appropriate to recall a recent observation by anthropologist G. Bowman that, "An historical investigation of the evolution of pilgrimage networks would show that popular pilgrimages now closely integrated with the social practices of their cultural environments were not spontaneously generated out of those milieus but were imposed upon local populations through the agency of 'universal religions!'"<sup>83</sup> What is of interest about this process as it has occurred in Tibet and the Himalayas with the Saṃvara cult is the very long period of its on-going development, and the extent of its pervasion into local traditions, such as sacred geography.<sup>84</sup> It seems to me that the more one hears descriptions of local Tibetan environments while in the field, the more one encounters references to other 'minor' Saṃvara sites couched in the phraseology, and replete with the cliches now familiar to us from the Tibetan Buddhist guides to Ti-se, Tsa-ri, La-phyi, and other 'major' sites.

Textual and historical studies can inform us much about Pilgrimage and cult networks developed by way of the forces of 'universal religions'. However, it is now the further task of careful field investigations to elucidate the dynamics of the 'accommodations' which have operated in this development process between the indigenous Tibetan and the Buddhist elements at individual locations.

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<sup>82</sup> The Sa-skyapas did of course go on pilgrimages, esp. to places connected with the founders of their tradition, and other great saints. I am indebted to David Jackson for this information on Sa-skyapa pilgrimage trends. My informant, the former 'Brug-pa meditation master at Tsa-ri, Cig-car dBu-mdzad Shes-rab rGya-mtsho, states, "Sa-pan never experienced it [i.e. Tsa-ri] for himself, he just read about it. In my day, ordinary Sa-skyapas, lay people, they only came to Tsa-ri on pilgrimage occationally, but never the lineage holders and scholars. The only famous student of the Sa-skya lineage who visited Tsa-ri was Blo--bzang Grags-pa, Tsong-kha-pa, and look what happened to him (referring to a well known Tibetan anecdote about his visit, ess PK, fol. 19a.)"

<sup>83</sup> See Bowman (185: 6-7).

<sup>84</sup> For some published examples see Tsnoawa (1983: 45) on Yabphu; Aris (1975: 78) on Manaslu and Kailash; and Snellgrove (1979: 107) on Muktiñāth.



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### Abbreviations

- DNS Go-rams-pa bSod-nams Seng-ge, *Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i rnam bshad rgyal ba'i gsung rab kyi dgongs pa gsal ba.*
- DS Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan, *Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i bstan bcos.*
- PK Padma dKar-po, *Gnas chen tsa ri tra'i ngo mtshar snang pad dkar legs bshad.*
- SSBB *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, sDe-dge edition plus supplementary texts, (comp.) bSo-nams rGya-mtsho, 15 vols., Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko. 1968-1969.
- TNS bsTan-'dzin Chos-kyi Blo-gros, *Gangs ri chen po ti se dang mtsho chen ma dros pa bcas kyi sngon byung gi lo rgyus mdor bsdu su brjod pa'i rab byed shel dkar me long.*

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