

JOURNEY TO THE HIDDEN VALLEY (SBAS-YUL)
OF GNAM-SGO ZLA-GAM:
PERSPECTIVES ON THE TIBETAN CONCEPT OF HIMALAYAN REFUGES

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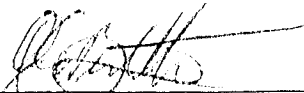
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"If you have full devotion to Guru Rinpoche, my son,
and always practice what Guru Rinpoche teaches,
then one day you will reach the *sbas-yul*."¹

Himalayan peaks dominate the fertile landscape of Nepal's northern border, protectively enshrouding lush valleys. Before human settlements were prevalent, access from Tibet was only attained by dedicated individuals, usually in search of remote meditation retreat sites. Contrasted with the arid plateau country of Tibet, the southern slope of the Himalayas is a virtual paradise abounding in a profusion of plants and animals. It was to these concealed and nearly inaccessible localities that Tibetans sought refuge during times of political and social upheaval.²

The concept of *sbas-yul*, or "hidden lands", dates back centuries in the Tibetan tradition. Although adherents of other Tibetan religious schools have acknowledged the notion of *sbas-yul*,³ it is predominantly a Rnying-ma-pa phenomenon. The tradition is linked to Padmasambhava, to whom the concealing of sacred lands is attributed. These lands are to be sought only in a time of crisis by those who are adept and possess the correct spiritual qualities. Severe consequences are incurred by people who illicitly enter a *sbas-yul* for

¹ Lhawang Thundup, a Tibetan refugee raised in Ladakh, stated that his father would encourage him as a child with the above quote (personal conversation).

² Tibetans still seek hidden lands, as shown by examples cited by Brauen-Dolma (1985) relating to the social disruption of recent political events in Tibet.

³ For example, the following quote is found in a 'Bri-gung text on sacred geography: *slob-dpon chen-po Padma kyang/ byang-phyogs zhes-su bya-ba-la/ mun-pa drag-po'i dur-khrod zhes/ dbyer-med rten-phyag nag-tshal spro/ gnas-der shing-ta'i lha-mo che/ sbas-yul kun-gyi mdzod kyang 'dzin/ ('Bri-gung:2r).*

Also, there is an enumeration of *sbas-yul* found in a Dge-lugs-pa text, *Byang-pa rig-'dzin chen-po Ngag-dbang-po'i rnam-par thar-pa ngo-mtshar bkod-pa rgya-mtsho*, written by Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang Rgya-mtsho, the 5th Dalai Lama (see Schuh 1985:xxx).

purposes of material gain or before the correct time for opening the land has arrived. For example:

"During a time of war, soldiers came [to the *sbas-yul* in Glang-'phrang] and rounded up the livestock of the place. Since wealth was their reason for coming, the treasure guardian (*gter-srung*) manifested himself and many of the soldiers died." (Ngag-dbang:73r).⁴

The *sbas-yul* tradition may be quite ancient. According to Aris, an early precedent for the practice dates to pre-imperial Tibet. Three lands of refuge (Nyang-po, Rkong-po and Dwags-po) were specified as places where the sons of Gri-gum Btsan-po fled (Aris 1979b:3). Although this allusion to sanctuaries may represent a nascent form of the *sbas-yul* concept, it is difficult to connect the data with more current beliefs. For one thing, in the enumerations of various *sbas-yul* found in texts discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem (1337-1409), none of the three lands mentioned above is specifically referred to (see Ga'u-bdun, 'Bras-ljongs, 2, and Macdonald 1973a). However, the lists include many minor concealed lands scattered across Tibet. Until we have toponyms connected with the vague references, the possibility that the three lands alluded to above are included in later enumerations cannot be ruled out. If they are connected, then we have an early precedent for the *sbas-yul* tradition as well as a connecting point between ancient beliefs and contemporary practices.

The purpose of this paper is first and foremost to provide a translation of the text entitled *Sbas-yul Padma'i-tshal-gyi gnas-yig kun-tu gsal-ba'i me-long*. The text will be placed in a historical context, the *sbas-yul* location will be discussed, Shambhala (Sham-bha-la) connections will be explored, and comparisons between the text and other *sbas-yul* literature will be made. Evidence for continuity of the *sbas-yul* beliefs will be discussed by examining recent ethnographic publications. Finally, the potential impacts of such a belief system on demographic features of Himalayan settlement patterns will be addressed. The possibility of linking a textual tradition with actual migratory practices can be a point of departure for future research.

⁴ *dmag-zer zhig-gi skabs dmag-mi-rnams-kyis phyin-nas/ gnas-de'i nor-phyugs-rnams ded-nas yong-la rtsar-byor-pa-na gter-srung-gi cho-'phrul mi-mang-po shi/*

History of *Sbas-yul* Research

Before introducing the text to be translated, a brief survey of scholarship on *sbas-yul* will be made. To date, many authors have alluded to the existence of various hidden valleys, and some have described specific lands in detail. However, no attempts have been made to place these in a comparative perspective.

Prior to the 1970s, the concept of *sbas-yul* received little attention. Bacot described the region of Padma-bkod, and cites as an example a time of political crisis when many Tibetans sought the concealed land located there (Bacot 1912). Despite this attention, no analysis of the *sbas-yul* in Padma-bkod was attempted. Also, Macdonald mentioned an early publication by F.W. Thomas wherein the *sbas-yul* Mkhan-pa-lung was mistakenly identified with the valley of Rongbuk Monastery (Macdonald 1973a:232,n.28). General Tibetologists, such as Tucci, although aware of the topic, never addressed it in detail.

In the 1970s the subject became more popular. First Aris (1975), and then Reinhard (1978) and Bernbaum (1980) attempted to find specific *sbas-yul* in the real world. Whereas Aris was able to locate the hidden valley of Skyid-mo-lung in central Nepal, Reinhard and Bernbaum met with less success in their attempts to locate Mkhan-pa-lung to the east of the Sherpa homeland of Khumbu.⁵ Aris followed up his research with references to other concealed lands located in Bhutan, including some comparative remarks about early *sbas-yul* concepts (1979a). In dealing with the history of Bhutan, Aris translated certain sections of a *sbas-yul* text (1979a). Reinhard, in addition to discussing local lore concerning the entrance to Mkhan-pa-lung, also commissioned the translation of a guide to the *sbas-yul* (Reinhard 1978). Furthermore, Reinhard stated that, at the time of his study, several other scholars were interested in the topic of *sbas-yul* and planned to combine their efforts into a joint publication (Reinhard 1978:6-7,n.9).⁶ Apparently, this venture never came to fruition, although in one publication Macdonald included an extended footnote

⁵ Bernbaum does claim to have found and entered Mkhan-pa-lung. Diemberger's location of the *sbas-yul* (1991), however, contradicts the location set forth by Bernbaum and Reinhard.

⁶ The interested scholars were Michael Aris, Alexander Macdonald, and Michael Oppitz. According to Reinhard, Oppitz visited Mkhan-pa-lung and collected data concerning the existence of *sbas-yul* concepts in Rai (a Tibeto-Burman speaking hill tribe of Nepal) religious beliefs (Reinhard 1978:6-7,n.9).

enumerating various *sbas-yul* with the promise that he would soon return to the topic (1973:232-233,n.28). Bernbaum described his search, with the aid of local Sherpas and a guide book, for Mkhan-pa-lung. Although Bernbaum's subsequent publication was primarily about Shambhala, he devoted an entire chapter to Mkhan-pa-lung. Yet in the final analysis, he failed to establish any convincing link between the two.

More recently, Brauen-Dolma published a paper which attempted to explain *sbas-yul* searches in the context of millenarian movements. His was the first and thus far only attempt to explain *sbas-yul* in a sociological context. Also, Dieter Schuh's study of Rnying-ma-pa texts contained a brief section on *sbas-yul* as they relate to texts discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem (Schuh 1985:xxxvii).

Mkhan-pa-lung currently receives much attention as a result of its proximity to the fieldwork area of Diemberger and Schicklegruber, who were recently engaged in research among the Khumbo, a group of Sherpas living in the upper Arun Valley. These scholars are presently publishing several papers on Mkhan-pa-lung from an anthropological perspective (see Diemberger 1991 for references to articles yet to be published).

Otherwise, inadequate research has been devoted to the topic of *sbas-yul*. Many anthropologists have noted the existence of hidden valleys in their fieldwork areas (see Clarke 1980, Holmberg 1980 and 1990, Jest 1975, Levine 1988, Mumford 1989, and Sacherer 1981), yet none have attempted more than a cursory examination of the subject. This is understandable in light of the fact that most Himalayan anthropologists who study Tibetan-speaking populations are illiterate in Tibetan, and therefore have no access to the indigenous literature wherein the concept of *sbas-yul* is elucidated. Thus, the topic of *sbas-yul* is still a relatively unexplored field of inquiry. The present paper, in addition to translating a guide to a *sbas-yul*, will draw together information published on the subject and formulate some conclusions from a comparative perspective. The paper will contribute to our understanding of *sbas-yul*, one derived both from literary traditions and from recent ethnographic accounts.

History and Enumerations of *Sbas-yul*

The term *sbas-yul* refers specifically to sanctuaries hidden by Padmasambhava, to be opened only in a time of crisis. As mentioned previously, Aris believes that the concept has a parallel with ancient Tibetan beliefs centering on political turmoil and the need for places of refuge. Other scholars maintain the opinion that *sbas-yul* literature first appeared in the 14th century, or shortly after the Mongol invasion of Tibet (Martin-Dolma 1985:251). However, there is evidence to suggest otherwise.

To begin with, if Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan is truly the author of *Sbas-yul Padma'i-tshal-gyi gnas-yig*, and his lifetime can be convincingly placed in the 12th-13th century (see Aris 1979a), then *sbas-yul* literature arose prior to the 14th century. Apparently, Martin-Dolma based his assertion on the famous discoveries of Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem (1337-1409) at Zang-zang Lha-brag, which included guides to the seven most prominent *sbas-yul* (Kong-sprul:123r, Dargyay 1977:131).⁷ However, Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem revealed only the "keys" (*lde'u-mig*) to the seven *sbas-yul*; therefore it can be inferred that the existence of concealed lands was already acknowledged by Tibetans prior to this discovery.

Regarding the enumeration of various *sbas-yul*, the seven associated with the discoveries of Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem are the following (Ga'u-bdun:6v-7r):

- 1: Bde-ldan Skyid-mo-lung
- 2: Sbas-pa Padma-tshal
- 3: Rol-pa Mkha'-'gro-gling
- 4: Rgyal-kyi Khan-pa-lung
- 5: Lha-yi Pho-brang Sdings
- 6: Sbas-yul 'Bras-mo-shong
- 7: Gro-mo Khud

Schuh gives a list of seven *sbas-yul* from the text *Byang-pa rig-'dzin chen po Ngag-gi Dbang-po'i rnam-pa thar-pa*, by the 5th Dalai Lama (Schuh 1985:xxxvii). They are the following:

⁷ *sbas-yul chen-po bdun gtso-bor gyur-pa'i gnas-yul mang-po'i them-byang lde'u-mig sogs bzhu-gs-pas . . .*

- 1: 'Bras-mo-ljongs
- 2: Bde-ldan Skyid-mo-lung
- 3: Sbas-pa Padma'i-tshal
- 4: Rol-pa Mkha'-'gro-gling
- 5: Rgyal-gyi Mkhan-pa-lung
- 6: Lha'i Pho-brang Sdings
- 7: Gro-mo Khud

The text further lists several other hidden lands, one of which is Yol-mo Gangs-kyi-ra-ba (Schuh 1985:xxxvii). The importance of this point will become more clear in the section of this paper dealing with the identification of Gnam-sgo Zla-gam.

Macdonald provides a list of four big and four small *sbas-yul* from a guide to Mkhan-pa-lung (1973a:232-233,n.28). They are as follows:

<u>Big</u>	<u>Small</u>
East: Tsa-ri	SE: Rgyal-gyi Mkhan-pa-lung
South: Bar-yul	SW: Dpal-gyi Gra-phu-lung
West: La-phyi	NW: Dpal-gyi 'Jag-ma-lung
North: Gnod-sbyin	NE: Skyid-kyi Gro-ma-lung

The "big" *sbas-yul* listed above are identical to an enumeration of the "Four Great Hidden Lands"⁸ found in another text ('Bras-ljongs.2:2v). It is possible that the two texts are identical, or that they used similar sources of information. The latter text further specifies the following six *sbas-yul* ('Bras-ljongs.2:4v):

- 1: 'Bras-mo-shogs
- 2: Gro-ma-lung
- 3: Mkhan-pa-lung
- 4: Rong-mo-stengs
- 5: Kha-bu-gling
- 6: Padma-gling

Finally, two other texts that I consulted (Ga'u-bdun and 'Bras-ljongs.2) contain references to various hidden lands. The first lists 4 exalted lands (*khyad-par 'phags-pa'i yul bzhi*), 4 great places (*gnas-chen bzhi*), 7 valleys (*rongs bdun*) and 12 small lands (*phran-po'i yul bcu-gnyis*) (Ga'u-bdun:6r). The same

⁸ *mchog-tu sbas-pa'i yul-chen bzhi*

text later specifies:

"In all of Mnga'-ris there are 2 minor hidden lands. In all of Gtsang there are 7 minor hidden lands. In all of Dbus there are 4 minor hidden lands... When the doors to all of those are opened, several years of happiness will arise. The heart of those hidden lands is the magnificent 'Bras-mo-bshongs." (Ga'u-bdun:54r).⁹

Returning to Aris' hypothesis concerning sanctuaries sought by members of Tibet's pre-imperial ruling clan, it is possible that the three lands mentioned (Nyang-po, Rkong-po and Dwags-po) could be included in the above list, and therefore could still have been considered as hidden valleys by Tibetans of a more recent age. However, until definite names are attached to the profusion of sanctuaries, any continuity with ancient Tibetan beliefs is merely speculative.

In essence, the vast array of hidden lands mentioned in these various sources demonstrates that Tibetan sacred geography, according to the Rnying-ma-pas, is filled with places of refuge. When comparing the names of the *sbas-yul*, there is some agreement between sources. For example, 'Bras-mo-shong/ljongs, Padma-tshal/gling, Mkhan-pa-lung and Gro-mo/ma-lung make most of the lists. On the other hand, differences between the lists could indicate scribal errors, divergent traditions, or general confusion through time. Whatever the case may be, the only concealed lands contained in the lists that can be identified with any certainty in the "real world" are Skyid-mo-lung near Kutang in Central Nepal (see Aris 1975), Mkhan-pa-lung located to the east of the Khumbu Valley in Eastern Nepal (see Diemberger 1991, 1975), Mkhan-pa-lung located to the east of the Khumbu Valley in Eastern Nepal (see Diemberger 1991, 1975), Bernbaum 1980, and Reinhard 1978) or possibly in Bhutan (see Aris 1979a), 'Bras-mo-ljongs in Sikkim, and Gro-mo Khud in or near the Chumbi Valley of Southern Tibet (see Schuh 1985). In addition to these, more hidden valleys exist throughout the Himalayas, some of which have associated literary sources (such as Padma-bkod), whereas some are only known through ethnographic accounts. For now, it is enough to say that, considering the number of texts dedicated to *sbas-yul*, and the variety of oral traditions associated with their discovery, the concept of "hidden lands" is a topic deserving more attention than it has received thus far.

⁹ Mnga'-ris-gyi thad-so-la sbas-pa'i yul-chung gnyis yod/ gtsang-gyi thad-so-la sbas-pa'i yul-chung bdun yod/
dbus-kyi thad-so-la sbas-pa'i yul-chung bzhi yod/ de-rnams gang-gi sgo phye-ba'i thad-so-la bde-skyid lo 'ga'
'byung/ sbas-yul de-rnams snying-po/ dpal 'Bras-mo-bshongs bya-ba/

Introduction to the Text

The text to be translated and discussed in this paper was discovered by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan. The date of composition is unknown, and much information regarding the author is lacking. What has been ascertained about Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan is that he probably lived sometime within the years 1147-1266 (Aris 1979a:157). Some general information about his life can be found in historical sources written by 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul and Rig-'dzin Kun-bzang.¹⁰

Kong-sprul supplies us with another name for the *gter-ston*, namely Chos-kyi Blo-gros (Kong-sprul:62v). Furthermore, we learn that he was one of two manifestations (*rnam-'phrul*) of Rgyal-ba Mchog-dbyangs (Kong-sprul:62v).¹¹ Thondup also mentions "Guru Tshe-Ten (13th cent.)" as one of Rgyal-ba Mchog-dbyangs' incarnations (1984:154).

In Rig-'dzin Kun-bzang's historical account, it is recorded that Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan was from Mon Lo-mo (Kun-bzang:69v). According to Kong-sprul, he was born at Snar-thang in the upper valley of La-mo in Mon (Kong-sprul:62v). Both texts specify Mon, so it is apparent that he was from southern Tibet, possibly even somewhere on the south slope of the Himalayas. Unfortunately, the identification of Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan's birthplace remains problematic. La-mo is a region situated to the northeast of Dga'-ldan monastery in Dbus province (Ferrari 1958:43,109), whereas Snar-thang is a monastery founded in 1153 and located to the southwest of Gzhi-ka-rtse in Gtsang (Ferrari 1958:145). Lo-mo could possibly be Lo-ro, a valley in the Lho-brag region (Ferrari 1958:127). Until further details come to light, his birthplace remains an enigma.

Regarding his work as a *gter-ston*, Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan made several revelations which are enumerated in Rig-'dzin Kun-bzang's history (Kun-bzang:69v). According to this source, the place of discovery was Spa-gro Chu-mo Cave (Kun-bzang:69v), whereas the text translated in this paper was

¹⁰ For statements relating to Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan in the works by these authors, refer to Appendix 2.

¹¹ Rgyal-ba Mchog-dbyangs was one of Tibet's traditional "seven original monks" and is included in the list of Padmasambhava's 25 main disciples (Thondup 1986:231).

discovered at Mon Chu-mo Cave (Tshe-brtan:20v). Due to the similarities in toponyms, it is possible that the two sites are identical. However, based on the following discussion, it is equally possible that some geographical inconsistencies have arisen over the centuries.

In the biography of the physician G.yu-thog Yon-tan Mgon-po, the story is related of how he opened the sacred land of La-phyi-gangs.¹² At the instigation of a Mon woman, G.yu-thog dug a cave which came to be known as Mon-mo Cave (Rechung 1973:262-263). Since G.yu-thog predates Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan, this could be the cave where the latter discovered some texts. On the other hand, Mon Spa-gro Skyer-chu refers to the river running through the Paro (Spa-gro) Valley in western Bhutan (Ferrari 1958:140), a region also referred to as Mon. Spa-gro Chu-mo Cave could thereby designate a location in Bhutan. Where lies the true location of Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan's discoveries?

Some light can be shed on this question by referring to the *Padma-bka'i thang-yig*. Contained therein is a prophecy concerning Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan. The text specifies Mon-kha Chu-phug as the place where he is to reveal treasures (Thang-yig:245v).¹³ This location must be distinct from the Paro Valley, as evidenced by a previous statement regarding Grub-thob Mkharr-nag, a *gter-ston* who revealed texts at Mon-kha Spa-gor (Thang-yig:245r).¹⁴ From these separate statements, it is possible to conclude that Rig-'dzin Kun-bzang was mistaken when attributing Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan's discoveries to Spa-gro Chu-mo Cave, since he apparently fused elements from the two toponyms. From the evidence at hand, it is reasonable to infer that the discoveries took place near La-phyi or some other site, and not in Bhutan. From the following statement, it is apparent that, at least at the time of O-rgyan Gling-pa (1323 -

¹² La-phyi is near Gnya'-nang on the Tibet-Nepal border. It later became a hermitage of Mi-la Ras-pa and one of the sacred lands of the 'Bri-gung-pas. For a translation of a guide to La-phyi, see Filibeck (1988).

¹³ *dam-sel brgyud-pas slob-'ga' gri-ru 'chi/ rdo-yi mchod-rten gdugs dang chos-'khor nyams/ Mon-kha chu-phug sbas-pa'i gter-ka 'di/ mi-bzhag 'don-pa'i rtags der bstan-nas byung/ gter-ston Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan zhes-bya 'byung/*

¹⁴ *Mon-kha Spa-gor (sic: gro?) sbas-pa'i gter-kha 'di/ mi-zhan 'don-pa'i rtags der bstan-nas byung/ gter-ston grub-thob mkhar-nag ces-bya 'byung/*

ca. 1360), Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan was highly esteemed.¹⁵

"Regarding the great Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem, according to the prophecies of O-rgyan Gling-pa, 'The body manifestation is Nyi-ma 'Od-zer, the speech manifestation is Chos-kyi Dbang-phyug, the heart manifestation is Rgod-kyi Ldem-phru, the wisdom manifestation is O-rgyan Gling-pa, the activity manifestation is Tshe-rtan Rgyal-mtshan. These five comprise the Lotus Born One (Padmasambhava).'" (Kun-bzang:78r-78v).¹⁶

Here, Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan is given distinction along with other notables such as Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem and Chos-kyi Dbang-phyug. However, this elevated status presents us with a dilemma. If Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan was such a prominent figure, why has so little information about him come to light thus far? Kong-sprul devotes only a short section to him, most of which comes directly from the *Padma-bka'i thang-yig* (see Appendix 1). In terms of other writings, thus far I have only been able to locate a few works by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan. They are, besides *Padma'i-tshal-gyi gnas-yig*, the following:

Two short sections in the text *'Byung-bzhi'i 'jigs-pa srung-ba'i ngag* were attributed to Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan (see Klaus 1985:24-30, 123-131).

1. *Chu'i 'jigs-pa srung-ba*
from Gu-ru Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan's *gter-ma*
in Klaus (1985:26-27)
2. *Me-yi 'jigs-pa srung-ba*
from Gu-ru Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan's *gter-ma*
in Klaus (1985:28)

Also, I have found the following reference to another *sbas-yul* text which, despite the different title, may be identical to the one translated in this paper. Until a comparative analysis is made, however, this cannot be determined.

3. *Gnam-sgo Zla-gam-gyi zhes-pa gsang-ba sbas-pa'i yul-gyi lam-byang*
by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan (see Appendix 2)

¹⁵ Thus far, I have been unable to locate the original quotation from O-rgyan Gling-pa. The following is also found in Schuh (1985:xxxii).

¹⁶ *Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem chen-po ni/ O-rgyan Gling-pa'i lung-bstan-las/ sku-sprul Nyi-ma 'Od-zer yin/ gsung-sprul Chos-kyi Dbang-phyug yin/ thugs-sprul Rgod-kyi Ldem-phru yin/ yon-tan O-rgyan Gling-pa yin/ 'phrin-las Tshe-rtan Rgyal-mtshan yin/ 'di-lnga Padma 'byung-gnas dngos/*

Finally, we have one other *sbas-yul* text by the same author.

4. *Sbas-yul Dkar-po-ljongs-kyi gnas-yig*
from Gu-ru Tshe-brtan-pa'i *gter-ma* (see Appendix 2)

Beyond these texts and bits of data, we know very little about Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan. However, I am confident that a more thorough search of Rnying-ma-pa literature as well as interviews with prominent Rnying-ma-pa scholars will yield far more information in the future.

The structure of the text *Sbas-yul Padma'i-tshal-gyi gnas-yig* is relatively straightforward. It begins with praises to Padmasambhava and Ye-shes Mtsho-rgyal, and then proceeds to relate the text in the form of instructions to King Khri-srong Lde-brtsan. In the first section (1v-5v), spiritual qualities of the *sbas-yul* are described along with an enumeration of names for the valley and general locational information. The next section (5r-7v) details various prophecies (*lung-bstan*) which are signs indicating the correct time for seeking the *sbas-yul*. This particular section is interesting since it is apparently related to prophecies detailing the decline of Buddhism. Such prophecies have Old Tibetan precedents, such as the *Li'i-yul lung-bstan-pa*, wherein parallels with the text *Sbas-yul Padma'i-tshal-gyi gnas-yig* can be found. Afterwards (8r-9r), a few more prophecies are related as well as a brief description of personal qualities necessary for reaching the *sbas-yul*. The final and longest section (9v-20v) details the journey to the *sbas-yul*, the rituals one must perform upon arrival, and the establishment of the valley as a sacred realm. The last page contains the colophon (20v).

Although the tentative dating of the author indicates that the text is quite old, it is apparent that this edition is not so ancient. The title of the text specifically mentions Padma'i-tshal, yet the work is actually about Gnam-sgo Zla-gam. To further confuse matters, the title page for the 1983 reprint states that it is "A guide to the hidden land of Helambu." As will be clear from the discussion following the translation, the text deals with the Langtang (Glang-'phrang) Valley and not Helambu (Yol-mo Gangs-ra).

A translation of the text will be presented in the following section. For a reproduction of the text, refer to Appendix 3. After an introduction to the Langtang region, the text will be discussed with comparative references to the sacred land of Shambhala as well as to other *sbas-yul* literature. In the final

section of this paper, recent ethnographic accounts will be surveyed for references to *sbas-yul*. These references will provide a modern analogy for how *sbas-yul* are construed by those Himalayan peoples who have maintained some continuity with their Tibetan heritage.

Translation of the Guide to Gnam-sgo Zla-gam

(1:recto)

It is the Mirror Which Shines Everywhere, a guide to the Lotus Forest Hidden Land.

(1:verso)

Praise to the teacher Padmasambhava and the Dākinī.¹⁷

The Victorious Lotus-Born One proclaimed: "Compared to those mighty secret lands which have been described before, it is even more so especially exalted; it is close to Tibet via the route [that leads to it]; and it is not explained extensively by other treasures. If one asks why, it is because of it's being a place which is secret and hidden." (2:recto) Thus he spoke, he who became the protector of all the secret concealed lands.

And as for the "road sign" [i.e. guidebook] that was extracted from what is called the Heaven-Door Half-Moon, chief of all the secret concealed lands, O-rgyan's Great Master, the Lotus Born One, said, (2:verso)

"Oh great ruler (Khri-srong Lde-brtsan),¹⁸ hear this well! As for the enumeration of the names of the country called Heaven-Door Half-Moon Palace, the wonderfully marvelous and victorious realm which has become foremost in secrecy, beyond the concealed secret lands of refuge there, when there arises at a future time such a suffering among the Tibetan subjects which is unable to be tolerated any

¹⁷ Ye-shes Mtsho-rgyal, the consort of Padmasambhava who is mentioned in the colophon.

¹⁸ The colophon notes that the text was spoken by Padmasambhava to Khri-srong Lde-brtsan, thus *mnga'-bdag rgyal-po* refers to the latter.

longer, it will be called Gsang-ba Kun-tu Bzang-mo¹⁹ and also the Heaven-Door to the Inseparable *Chos-'byung*.²⁰ **(3:recto)** Because it has the nature of a triangle, it is also called Triangle Heaven Door. It is also called Half-Moon Heaven-Door. It is also called Lotus Light Realm of Supreme Bliss.²¹ For the sake of future virtuous ones of Tibet, I, of Orgyan, have not taught [about this place] even in other profound treasures (*zab-gter*).²² It is concealed and hidden. This secret place, the valley of the concealed land, is in the form of the triangular genitals of 'Od-kyi Rdo-rje Btsun-mo. **(3:verso)** Moreover, in as much as there was manifested as a triangle in the far extent of the sky an ascendent display of great development, it is also called "Heaven-Door Half-Moon". Such a land of hidden and concealed secrets is the palace of the king of great bliss, its good qualities can't be measured by the mind; and because it surpasses speech, it is difficult to measure. As for the land of the attainment of the most excellent *siddhi* of the assemblages of Maheśvara of the life story of I, myself, Orgyan Padma, the male and female Bodhisattvas of the 10 levels, and the assemblages of Dpa'-bo Rdo-rje Rnal-'byor²³; and of the enjoyment of supreme bliss, **(4:recto)** the most excellent place of the *rig-'dzin* who wander through the sky²⁴, the land of concealed secrets called Heaven-Door Half-Moon, [which is] possessed of the sense of [having] a degree of separation

¹⁹ Skt: Samantabhadrī.

²⁰ *Chos-'byung* are triangles visualized in meditation containing red (feminine) and white (masculine) elements (Tucci 1980:99,265n.41). The symbolism can be interpreted as the union of means and wisdom. In rituals of protection, the term can refer to two superimposed triangles (Klaus 1985:298).

²¹ Bde-chen Padma 'Od-gling.

²² Although Gnam-sgo Zla-gam may not be mentioned in other works, Padma'i-tshal is referred to as a *sbas-yul* in another text discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem (see Ga'u-bdun:6v).

²³ *Dpa'-bo* refers to a male protective deity (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:8), whereas Rdo-rje Rnal-'byor-ma (Skt: Vajrayoginī) is an important female *yi-dam* for the Bka'-brgyud-pa and Sa-skyapa (Tucci 1980:97-98).

²⁴ *Rig-'dzin* connotes a tantric practitioner. Regarding the compound *mkha'-spyod rig-pa 'dzin-pa*, it has been translated in a general manner since I was unable to locate any specific reference for what the phrase may refer to. However, it could be a reference to *mkha'-'gros* (Skt: *ḍākīnīs*), who also roam through the sky. Among the Sa-skyapa, there are three *mkha'-spyod* mentioned (Tshig-mdzod:298), at least one of whom (Na-ro Mkha'-spyod) is a *mkha'-'gro* (Beyer 1973:47). On the other hand, Rigzin defines *mkha'-spyod* as (Skt: *khasarpaṇa*), "a type of Buddha field . . . which a yogi can reach, without abandoning his ordinary form or body, in one life-time through proper practices." (Rigzin 1986:35). Thus, the phrase could be a reference to yogis and spiritual attainments in the *sbas-yul*.

from [i.e. going beyond] seeing, hearing, recalling and considering: seeking in the southwest direction from this [the monastery] Bsam-yas, the great wheel of dharma, the tutelary²⁵ temple which was built by you, the mighty lord [King Khri-srong Lde-brtsan] yourself, when 13 *dpag-tshad*²⁶ have passed, you are there. Thus, the east door [is] facing Gnya-nang,²⁷ the west [is] facing Skyid-grong in Mang-yul, the south [is] facing Yol-mo Gangs-rwa in the land of Nepal, (4:verso) and the north [is] facing the great lake of Dpal-mo Dpal-thang in Gung-thang; the entire upper valley is cut off by glaciers, the lower part is cut off by a dense forest and by the play of crashing waves of water striking rock; the bottom also is a place similar to an open lotus [which is] seen from the sky as a half-moon triangle, and as it was easy to destroy the enemy's protection it [the land] was not destroyed by the wild soldiers from [beyond] the border: and [which] is a place of very great strength possessed of good qualities without measure, perfect wealth and happiness: such a wonderful and miraculous land of concealed secrets is there!"

(5:recto) "Oh great king, listen well!"²⁸

²⁵ *thugs-dam* is equivalent to *yi-dam* (Tshig-mdzod:1167).

²⁶ According to the Kālacakra: 4 *khru* = *gzhu-'dom*, 2000 *gzhu-'dom* = 1 *rgyang-grags*, 4 *rgyang-grags* = 1 *dpag-tshad* (Tshig-mdzod:1622). A *khru* is the measurement from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, or about 18 inches (Klaffkowski 1983:91). Using this as a base, we can calculate 1 *dpag-tshad* to be equivalent to 48,000 feet, or 9.09 miles. According to the Abhidharma system, 1 *dpag-tshad* is half this distance (Tshig-mdzod:1622). Thus, in the first case 13 *dpag-tshad* is about 118 miles, where in the later it is about 59 miles. However, as the crow flies the distance between Bsam-yas and Kathmandu is about 400 miles, so it is clear that the distance given was more of a symbolic number than an actual calculation.

²⁷ See map, page 44.

²⁸ The following section contains parallels with prophecies regarding the decline of Buddhism. To date, the best treatment of such prophecies are found in Nattier (1991). Through an examination of various versions of the Kauśāmbī story, Nattier has identified several "internal causes" for the disappearance of Buddhism which are listed below (Nattier 1991:120-126):

1. the admission of women into the monastic community;
2. lack of respect toward various elements of the Buddhist tradition;
3. lack of diligence in meditation practice;
4. carelessness in the transmission of teachings;
5. the emergence of divisions within the sangha;
6. the emergence of a false or "counterfeit" Dharma; and
7. excessive association with secular society.

Furthermore, the early prophecies also specify external causes, the most prominent being foreign invasions (Nattier 1991:126-128). Most of the above listed reasons can be found in the next several folia.

"Even at the time of the search [for] that land which is especially exalted above all others, in general the essence of the teachings of the Buddha will be exhausted. There will be practiced just a reflected image of Sakyamuni's teachings. The five impurities will become still more impure.²⁹ Having arrived at a 40 or 50 year life expectancy, one departs [i.e. dies]. In India, the heterodox religious tradition will spread. The king of Nepal will follow heterodox practices. Internal strife will occur again and again. The *mchod-rten* of 'Phags-pa Shing-kun³⁰ will tilt to the north. Bya-rung Kha-shor,³¹ the *mchod-rten* where the blessing of Sangs-rgyas 'Od-srung³² resides, will be destroyed and rebuilt again and again. (5:verso) On the stupa's near side a *bla-shing*³³ of Māra will grow. In particular, the lineage of the religious rulers of the realm of Tibet will in the end become barren. The Tibetan subjects will fragment. Many kings will appear suddenly. At that time, there will appear unbearable suffering among all the beings of Tibet which cannot be endured any longer, and subject will become king. The sinful butcher will act as councillor. The forces of life of the high nobles will shorten. To the sinful ones of the lower lineage, the 10 stages of perfection will be shamefully explained, and due to the harm of this offence there will come again and again to the fragmented land various illnesses. (6:recto) For a long time teachings will spread among the haughty sinners. Because of their lowliness, the lifetimes of the virtuous ones who hold the teachings will diminish. All those having good practices will be cast aside and go. Many mothers and sons of different garment colors will arise again and again.³⁴ Bad actions will suddenly arise. Many

²⁹ The five impurities (Skt: *pañcaksāya*) are those of life span, view, conflicting emotions, sentient beings, and the present age (Dorje 1990b:144). Rigzen uses a slightly different terminology and lists the "five degenerations" as those of lifespan, views, delusions, persons, and time (Rigzen 1986:140).

³⁰ Swayambunath in the Kathmandu Valley.

³¹ Bodhnath in the Kathmandu Valley.

³² The previous Buddha (Skt:Kāśyapa).

³³ *Bla-shing* is a tree considered to be a *bla-gnas*, or place where one's *bla* ("soul", or "life power") resides (Chos-grags:677, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:481).

³⁴ This seems to connote that there will be a profusion of illegitimate children, or children who wear garments of different colors than their mothers.

religious practices which do not come from the root [of teachings] will spread. Being dependent on individual sectarian prejudices coming from strong suffering, the teachings will damage one another in turn. Many such teaching destroyers will arise. Due to the damage of the monks' disciplinary laws more and more [Buddhist] places will be seized. (6:verso) The arrogant *siddha* among the great meditators, who are unable [to dwell] in hermitages, will wander in village country. Deceitful people who have knowledge with no measure of wisdom who practice at my retreats will accomplish nothing. The blessings of great places will deteriorate. There will arise children of the great meditators who are without instructions on *rtsa* and *rlung*.³⁵ Nuns will kill their own children. Peoples' heads will be done [i.e. cut off] by butchers and [there will be] the denunciation of compassionate friends as hateful enemies. Black defiling strife will be everywhere in the east and west. The modesty and shame of people will be unable [to cope]. [Men] will be unable [to keep their hands off] womens' bodies. Monks will be unable to follow rules of discipline. Tantric practitioners will be unable to keep their vows. (7:recto) All good practice will degenerate; all bad deeds will spread and appear. As for outer signs, inauspicious planets, stars and great lights will repeatedly appear in the sky. On the earth, at harvest time, [crops] won't be ripe and the rain will be great in the valley bottoms and tops. Earthquakes will strike again and again. The glacial water of Ti-se will be spoiled. On the surface of the Mi-chor rock,³⁶ the body of me, Orgyan, will manifest clearly as never before. The three blessed temples of Tibet will have the flaw of being unsuitable. At that time the armies of China, the Hor,³⁷ the Mon,³⁸ the Upper and Lower Sog-po,³⁹ and the Gar-log,⁴⁰ and rebellious troops from

³⁵ Literally, "channels and wind", the practice of Tantric yoga to purify the "subtle body."

³⁶ It is unclear what this refers to.

³⁷ This term was interpreted to mean Turks in Old Tibetan manuscripts by Thomas (1951:292), but by the 16th century it clearly connoted Mongols (see Tucci 1971). Both Hoffmann and Kvaerne have postulated that it originally meant Uighurs (Hoffmann 1950:193, Kvaerne 1980:88). According to Christopher Beckwith, this is almost certainly the origin (personal communication). See Bacot (1957); see however Moriyasu (1977).

³⁸ Mon refers to inhabitants of the regions to the south of Tibet.

³⁹ Roerich has interpreted *Sog* to designate Mongols (Roerich 1958:501), although originally it referred to Sogdians (Fang-kuei 1957:139). *Stod-smad-kyi Sog-po*, or "Eastern and Western *Sog-po*", could be a reference to divisions of the Mongol empire, yet the context is not clear. For a recent discussion of the term *Sog*, see Sperling

[beyond] the frontier will march and all the regions of Tibet will be reduced to ruin. When the armies of the Du-ru-ka⁴¹ march, (7:verso) the tutelary temples of the King himself at Lha-sa, Bsam-yas, the border-taming temples and those beyond the border will be made [places through which one] wanders in stealth. At that time, the right time for going to that place has arrived. At a time like that when those signs appear, although it is the time to flee to that land of concealed secrets, [people] will say 'Right now it is not the time', and then the orders of I, Orgyan, will be ignored, and because of many false words of the coming of happiness to Tibet, everyone, one's self and others, will be deceived. Because of that, by the power of their deeds, even though it is the correct time to go to that place, the one who knows the way will not come. In this way, all will be slaughtered by Māra's army." (8:recto)

"I prostrate to the lamas, meditational deities, and *ḍākinīs*. Furthermore [here is] the oral teachings of the Mahāguru. Oh great king, listen well."

"At the time of the arising of bad times like that, although it is the appropriate time to go to that land of concealed secrets, as for those having little merit, they lust after exemplary value, wealth, and riches. As for the laymen, having been diverted to worldly teachings, they are unable to arrive. When those of virtue dwell morally in the dharma striving for the bliss of reaching the end, desiring to benefit all, one's self and others: those who have listened to the teachings of Orgyan Padma and who are possessed of good fortune, go to that secret place! (8:verso) There will be benefit in accordance with the measure

(1992:744,n.9). By the 16th century, we find the following reference to *Stod-Hor: Hu-lar grags-pas Stod-Hor-gyi rgyal-po byas*: (Tucci 1971:178). According to Sperling, *Stod-Hor* and *Smad-Hor* were used to designate western (Iran, Central Asia, Turkestan) and eastern (China) Mongols at the time of their empire (1992:746,n.19), as is evident from the above reference to *Hu-lar* (Hulagu). Bearing this in mind, it seems that *Sog* and *Hor* were confused, or used interchangeably, in our text.

⁴⁰ This term, referring to Karluk Turks according to Hoffmann (1950:193), was used to designate the enemies of Ye-shes-'od, the Tibetan king who was captured and put to death by the *Gar-log* (Shakabpa 1988:57). What the above terms represent, more than an actual historical identification of enemies, is that in the prophecy Tibet is surrounded by invading armies who will come to ravage Tibet. Thus, there is no safe place to run but to a *sbas-yul*.

⁴¹ In early Tibetan sources, the term *Dru-gu* denoted Turks (see for example Beckwith 1977:206). Although Thomas postulated that *Dru-gu* referred specifically to Uighurs (1951:280), Hoffmann (1950:194) and Beckwith (1987:63-64,n.56) both regard the term as a general reference to Turkic peoples, including the Uighurs. *Du-ru-ka* is merely a variant form of *Dru-gu*.

of your accumulated merit. By opening the door of the wish fulfilling jewel, the concealed land, there will come to be three years of happiness relating to sentient beings of Tibet in general. The doctrine will again take root in that land of concealed secrets of joyous virtue. At that time, because the royal law has not arisen for a long time even in Tibet, it is important to go early. Because there will appear a little happiness from the female water hare year to the earth mouse year, it is important to go at that time. Then, in the future there will be no escape [to the *sbas-yul*]. In the iron dog year, from the east, all happiness in Tibet will be consumed. From all directions, armies from [beyond] the borders will appear like the crumbling of a mountain. All of Tibet will be conquered. **(9:recto)** At the time of the appearance of the signs previously taught, as one will go to search for the land of concealed secrets it will be found. With the exception of individual beings who have virtuous minds, if those babbling ones who act maliciously wander into the hands of [i.e. come under the power of] those with indecisive doubt, then the inner and outer *srung-ma*⁴² [who are] *gter-bdag*⁴³ will come into strife, and the door to the hidden land will be obstructed; thus it is very important that these clearly spoken road directions be kept a secret. The main point is not spreading other writings [since] it is not the time for really seeking the treasure door."

gu hyu sa ma kha tham: sa ma ya: gya gya gya: There is only this guide to the Heaven-Door Half-Moon, the land of concealed secrets.

(9:verso) "You must know that even someone going there who really has received the prophecy; if he is one who has the prophecy and is unrewarded, whosoever, may not obtain [access to the land]. Even if it is found by one having arrived under the power of hindrances, the country will not be attained. Disease and punishment of death, and so forth, will be let loose. It is certain that miraculous manifestations of *gter-srung*⁴⁴ and *gzhi-bdag*⁴⁵ will suddenly and instantaneously appear. Therefore, it is important that the

⁴² *Srung-ma* as a general term connotes protectors.

⁴³ *Gter-bdag* are "treasure masters," those who guard future revelations.

⁴⁴ *Gter-srung* are guardians appointed by Padmasambhava to protect *gter-mas* (Thondup 1986:233-234n.158). They come in a variety of forms, including spirits such as *btsan*, and can either be employed exclusively for protection or can function to bestow *gter-mas* to appropriate *gter-stons* (Thondup 1986:114).

sacred vows not be damaged. It is necessary to have a tantric practitioner of ability who is suitable for the rites of service and attainment (*bsnyen-bsgrub*)⁴⁶ of the *yi-dam*,⁴⁷ one who has unwavering faith and veneration to me, Guru Padmasambhava, one having the mind of enlightenment for benefitting others. A cleric without vows also becomes the cause of obstacles. **(10:recto)** Even friends, those with virtuous minds in accordance with religion and who have turned away from the attachments of worldly existence, those who have courage and dexterity and have entered together into a sacred vow, must go. If done according to the orders of me, O-rgyan, then the door of the land of concealed secrets, the Heaven-Door Half-Moon, will open."

"Then, from the east door you must enter in the autumn, from the west door in the spring. You must enter by means of the south door in the winter time, and by means of the north door in the summer. You must enter through the two great doors, north and south. Regarding the four great doors, the east door faces the Iron-Door of Gnya-nang. The south door faces Yol-mo Gangs-rwa of Nepal. The west door faces the glacier of Mang-yul which is like a victory banner. **(10:verso)** Going from any of those you will arrive."

"At the time of arrival in that land, three temples must be built. It is necessary to have a bodhisattva king and a tantric practitioner possessed of blessing. One must have a cleric of pure conduct; one must have a minister whose thoughts are unimpaired. In that country there is an abundance of natural crops and various good edible fruits. Many various disease-destroying medicinal herbs grow. In the upper part of the valley, the various grains of Tibet grow to the extent that they are sown. In the lower part of the valley winter grains and fruits grow. There is none more happy than this in the hidden land."

⁴⁵ *Gzhi-bdag* are local spirits who are known to perform benevolent deeds (Tucci 1980:154). Padmasambhava entrusted many *gzhi-bdag* with *gter-mas* and instructed them as to which *gter-ston* they were to be given to (Thondup 1986:112). Their actions, whether benevolent or malevolent, can influence the outcome of religious events (Beyer 1973:217). In some rituals, *gzhi-bdag* are offered *gtor-ma* in order to entice them to clear the way for the erection of *mdos* (Beyer 1973:325).

⁴⁶ The term *bsnyen-bsgrub* refers to meditation and the repetition of mantras associated with one's *yi-dam* (Tshig mdzod:1017). It is basically a retreat for meditation (Thubden Thandar, personal conversation).

⁴⁷ *Yi-dam* are meditation deities, or personal protectors (Rigzin 1986:379).

(11:recto) "If there is a desire to seek that land of concealed secrets which has the good fortune and prosperity, a particular being should perform the retreat practices (*bsnyen-pa*) of the manifestations of the guru in peaceful and wrathful forms, and perform the appropriate ritual service and attainment of the most excellent He-ru-ka,⁴⁸ Rta-mgrin,⁴⁹ Phyag-na Rdo-rje⁵⁰ and so forth, and then go. In order to seek the hidden land one should also gather the following items: the five jewels, a variety of grains, saffron, frankincense, the best *chang*, the three white substances from milk,⁵¹ the food types of the three sweets,⁵² the pure vulture arrow ornamented with silk of the five colors, the red silk arrow which is ornamented with the owl tail feather, the music of the drum, conch, cymbals, and so forth, for the purpose of expelling the dangerous beasts of prey, the white mustard and *gu-gul*⁵³ for the purpose of expelling demonic obstacles, and the substances of profound auspices (*rten-'brel zab-mo'i rdzas-rnams*)."⁵⁴

(11:verso) "As for the time of going via the north door, in general the time which is proper for weeding in Tibet, or the time when the autumn harvest is not complete, the time when the sky is clear, when the rain and snow are not falling, just at the time of the coming of the half moon, you should go. Because there is a meditation cave which has been blessed by O-rgyan Padma at the base of a rock near

⁴⁸ Skt: Samantabhadra. He is a form of the primordial Buddha, and is especially revered by the Rnying-ma-pas (Rhie 1991:198).

⁴⁹ Skt: Hayagrīva. He is a form of Avalokiteśvara favored by the Rnying-ma-pas (Rhie 1991:189).

⁵⁰ Skt: Vajrapāṇi, a powerful protector and remover of obstacles (Rhie 1991:68). For yogis, he represents determination and helps overcome negative influences (Rhie 1991:190).

⁵¹ Milk, curd, and butter (Tshig-mdzod:59).

⁵² Sugar, molasses, and honey (Tshig-mdzod:684).

⁵³ *Gu-gul* may be a corruption of *gu-klu-lu* which is an incense material (Chos-grags:141). According to Bontor, in a ritual context white mustard and *gu-gul* are "transformed into formidable entities by means of wrathful mantras." (1991:127).

⁵⁴ According to Michael Walter, the phrase literally means "Materials (representing) the profound *pratīyasamutpāda*", or secret materials taught by one's lama and used in Tantric rites in order to rescue one from cyclical existence in a single lifetime.

the north door, at that place give offerings to the assembly of the lamas of the three roots.⁵⁵ The request to O-rgyan, on the basis of strong hopes, will be forcefully realized. Do a *bden-pa-brdar*⁵⁶ to the *gzhi-bdag*. Repeatedly send golden libations and food *gtor-mas*,⁵⁷ and repeatedly perform the *bden-pa-brdar* to the precious jewels and *gzhi-bdag*. **(12:recto)** Tie on the bird of prey arrow, the five various silks, gold, turquoise, lapis and so forth, the five precious ones, the pure mirror and so forth, and carry them by hand. Do a *bden-pa-brdar* for the four monks who have maintained a pure practice.⁵⁸ The blessed tantric practitioners should expel the demons. Let an ecclesiastical official holding holy vows perform a ritual to the deities. Indra, a lord of the place should make a food offering to the *gzhi-bdags*. Do repeatedly the ritual of washing⁵⁹ the image of Rdo-rje-'joms⁶⁰ for the *ri-gnyen*,⁶¹ the *lha-gnyen* of the protectors.⁶² Leading companions possessed of physical skills, and making one holy vow for all the *ācārya*, make a prayer to me, Padma, and go on."

"When looking from the frontside of the previously mentioned cave, you will see on the eastern

⁵⁵ The three roots (*rtsa-ba-gsum*) are the three principle objects of devotion: *bla-ma* (teacher), *yi-dam* (meditational deity), and *mkha'-'gro* (Skt: *ḍākinīs*) (Rigzin 1986:328). According to Geshe Thubden Thandar, *rtsa-gsum bla-ma* can refer to the teacher (or teachers) from whom a practitioner receives initiations, teachings, and instructions (personal communication).

⁵⁶ "Calling the Deity by his Name" ritual is an invocation by local people, the intended result being the dismissal of afflictions (Tshig-mdzod:1371). According to Michael Walter, in this context the act of naming the spirit may take its power away.

⁵⁷ These are effigies made from dough which are used in a ritual context. According to Beyer, they can function as offerings presented to deities, evocations in which a deity becomes manifest, and substances consumed for spiritual benefits by participants at the conclusion of a ritual (1973:377). In the case of local protectors, they can be offered as a way of eliciting support for spiritual endeavors (Beyer 1973:324).

⁵⁸ Exactly who this refers to is unclear.

⁵⁹ For a detailed commentary of *khros-gsol* from a historical perspective, see Bentor (1991:171-183).

⁶⁰ Skt: Vajravidhāraṇa. The Tibetan form is probably a contraction of Rdo-rje Rnam-'joms.

⁶¹ The term *gnyen* must be a misspelling of *gnyan*, who are powerful beings resembling wild sheep (Chos-grags:370). *Ri-gnyen* are therefore *gnyan* who inhabit mountains. The generally malevolent *gnyan* are considered to be related to *sa-bdag* and *klu*, and reside between the earth and sky (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:288). Domiciles for *gnyan* include lakes, glaciers, rocks, and other natural features (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:289).

⁶² *Lha-gnyen* refers to the chief of the various protective *gnyan*, those who are "bound by oath" (*dam-tshigs*).

face something similar to a path which is lower than the other ravines. **(12:verso)** Turning upward from there, when you notice a pass above, examine it, and having gone there you will have gone to the peak of that pass, you have come onto the slope of [that mountain] which is like a child on the lap of the spotted noble lady. From there you can see the form and topography of the land of concealed secrets. It has the upper part of the valley facing north, the lower part of the valley facing Nepal, even great and small rivers flowing in its direction, all of its mountain peaks with glaciers, all mountain sides and lower reaches with meadows and forests in abundance, and a valley summit in the form of a half-moon. Because that is the place of a poisonous *klu-bdud*,⁶³ when looking there make offerings of the *klu-gtor*⁶⁴ and the three white dairy substances. **(13:recto)** There is a rock mountain which is like something rising into the sky. Upon that resides a fearsome *btsan-rgod*.⁶⁵ Make a food offering there to the *btsan*⁶⁶ and offer a flat old silk arrow ornamented with the old tail feathers of an owl. Establish as a support [for offerings] a red goat and dark colored lamb ornamented with various flags. If you can't get the real materials, then carefully prepare cooked rice, finely ground loaned earth, the five various jewels and so forth as a substitute for the body and sense organs, and at the same time ornament the threads and offer these, having blessed them with *mudrās* and *mantras*. Speak the ultimate words, the *bden-stobs* and *bden-brdar*. Furthermore, many arrogant *btsan-rgod*, *mtsho-sman-mo*,⁶⁷ *mo-rigs gdug-pa-can*,⁶⁸ and *srin-mo*⁶⁹ reside in all parts of that

⁶³ These are beings originating from a union between *klu* and *bdud* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:260). They are somewhat malevolent and can cause diseases (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:286).

⁶⁴ *Gtor-ma* offered for propitiating *klu*.

⁶⁵ Literally, "wild *btsan*."

⁶⁶ *Btsan*, who are spirits possessing somewhat martial characteristics, come in a vast variety of forms (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:166-176, Gibson 1991:181). They can inhabit natural features such as rocks, water, glaciers, and the sky (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:176). At times *btsan* are recognized as powerful protectors of the religion (*chos-skyong*) (Gibson 1991:184), and can even function as *gter-srung* who are responsible for actually dispensing *gter-mas* to *gter-stons* (Thondup 1986:114). In an interesting twist of the spirit world, the leaders of such spirit classes as *btsan* are used to protect treasures in order to prevent their own retinue from causing harm (Thondup 1986:114).

⁶⁷ *Sman-mo* seem to exist in some relationship to medicine as indicated by their name (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:199). They were originally subdued by Padmasambhava, and can reside in the sky, lakes, meadows and forests (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:199). *Mtsho-sman-mo* are thus those *smam-mo* who inhabit lakes.

valley. (13:verso) There exist many groups of arrogant bird-faced savage-humans (*mi rgod-bya'i gdong-ba-can*).⁷⁰ To those, perform a cleansing ritual and send saffron, white incense, aloe wood and the smoke of *klu-sman*.⁷¹ A powerful holder of *mantras* should then expel the demonic obstacles. While meditating in a circle of protection (*srung-'khor*)⁷² on one's own [spiritual] helpers, one overcomes the *lha* and *'dre*.⁷³ Make an offering to the precious jewels. Having created it in the mind, do the *yan-lag-bdun*.⁷⁴ Give the *klu-gtor*, the *klu-mdos*,⁷⁵ and the *klu* offering to the *mtsho-sman*. Because the deity of that country is the spiritual friend Rdo-rje Legs-pa,⁷⁶ give him food offerings. Make food offerings to the

⁶⁸ *Gdug-pa-can* are harmful agents, or ones who have wrathful inclinations (Tshig-mdzod:1345). *Mo-rigs* refers to feminine forms of such spirits.

⁶⁹ According to Tucci, *srin-mo* are a class of feminine demons (1980:333). They were originally subdued by Padmasambhava and, according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, were later associated with *rākṣasīs* (1956:280).

⁷⁰ These are beings inhabiting dense forests in barbarous lands who have human forms, long black hair similar to animals, and are considered to act in a stupid and rough manner (Tshig-mdzod:2066).

⁷¹ Medicine which benefits *klu* (Tshig-mdzod:45, Klaus 1985:268). For a *klu-sman* recipe from a Tibetan text, see Klaus (1985:226).

⁷² A *srung-'khor* is a circle of protectors created with materials, *mantras* or in the mind (Tshig-mdzod:2983). In some cases a *srung-'khor* can function to prevent the return of danger (Beyer 1973:357).

⁷³ *Lha* is a term for high spiritual beings, whereas *'dre* refers to a class of malevolent beings which can be responsible for drawing one's *bla*, or life-force, from their body (Tucci 1980:190). In the *Gcod* tradition of the Rnying-ma-pa School, a *rkang-gling* (thigh-bone trumpet) renders them submissive (Tucci 1980:91-92). *Lha* and *'dre* are often referred to in conjunction with each other (see, for example Klaus 1985:79), even among present inhabitants of the Himalayas such as the Tamangs who have fused the two terms into the word *lente* (see Höfer 1981:90).

⁷⁴ *Yan-lag-bdun*, or the 7-Limbed Practice, is a component of Guru Yoga which has been described by H.H. the Dalai Lama (Gyatso 1988:92-98). It involves prostrations to the guru, a series of offerings, confessions, rejoicing in the accumulation of virtues for self and others, a request to the guru for turning the wheel of *dharma*, an entreaty to not enter into *nirvāṇa*, and a dedication to all sentient beings.

⁷⁵ A *mdos* dedicated to the *klu*. It is described as having a blue-green center and rainbow-colored periphery (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:374). In general, *mdos* are "thread crosses" which serve as traps for malevolent spirits, houses for spirits during rituals, items to counteract the influence of negative forces, and as ritual substitutes for *gtor-mas* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1950:65-66). In the context of our text, they seem to be offered in an attempt to appease local spirits.

⁷⁶ Rdo-rje Legs-pa (Skt: Vajrasādhu), who is often referred to as a *btsan-rgod* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:157), became a protective force after being subdued by Padmasambhava (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:154). As one of the highest ranking Rnying-ma-pa protectors, he is a treasure guardian associated with the southern direction (Nebesky-

arrogant *btsan-rgod* and so forth. Make a divine offering in [the manner of] *lha-bon*⁷⁷ and go; it should also be made at the time of this sort of search for the road."

(14:recto) "Having arrived inside, do it again. Then, having examined the earth, investigate traverse paths and go. At each which is seen, construct an image the height of one *mtho*⁷⁸ and place it there. If you don't do that, there will be mental confusion due to the *myon-'dre bya-gdong-can*⁷⁹ of the land. Then, because you are examining the way as you go, you will arrive at the lowest part of the place, and according to what was explained before, make offerings, perform the *yan-lag-bdun*, and perform extensive offerings to the *gzhi-bdag* and *srung-ma*. In particular, immediately upon arrival, it is very important to offer a *ma-mo-mdos*.⁸⁰ Establish as a receptacle a *'brang-rgyas*⁸¹ of the *lha-bon* and an actual yak, lamb and goat, in red, yellow and so forth, or construct a substitute image for appearance's sake decorated with various silks. **(14:verso)** Offer a bathing ritual, incense and golden libation. Send the smoke of saffron, white incense, red and white sandal wood and so forth. Do not scorch the hearth. Strive in performing the wishing prayer of O-rgyan Padma. Do not speak words of misery or vulgarity. Don't cast semen on the mountain *gnyan*, pasture *gnyan*, place and area *gnyan*. If there arises the necessity of expelling dangerous beasts of prey, don't do anything except for making a violent clash of music."

"Because you are closely related to this land of concealed secrets, from the beginning start getting

Wojkowitz 1956:154-155).

⁷⁷ Thus far, the only other reference I have located for *lha-bon* is in Macdonald (1980:201), wherein the term seems to have some connection with clans.

⁷⁸ The span between the tips of the thumb and middle finger, or between the thumb and little finger (Klaffkowski 1983:90-91).

⁷⁹ *Myon* here should probably be read as *smyon*, so that *smyon-'dre bya-gdong-can* would be "insane bird-headed 'dre."

⁸⁰ *Ma-mo* are described as wrathful protective goddesses whose genitals are large and breasts are emaciated (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:6). They can be responsible for controlling diseases (Gibson 1991:183).

⁸¹ *'Brang-rgyas* is a spherical *gtor-ma* shaped like a human heart (Tshig-mdzod:1987).

acquainted with the *gzhi-bdag* in stages. Don't perform fierce [tantric] rites; do the *zhi-dul* [rite]⁸² in the manner of a bodhisattva. Don't create a mutual hatred with all your spiritual friends who are like relatives. **(15:recto)** Establish them in your vows. It is very important to be possessed of a pure practice. If you don't behave like that, there will come violently fog, snow and rain, and a whirling snow storm. There will come a variety of noises, the noise of a tempest, a violent sound. Various miraculous manifestations of the country's *smyo-'dre bya-gdong* will become manifest. Because the *gnas-bdag* and *gzhi-bdag* become angry, there will suddenly arise diseases and ravages by beasts of prey. From among the *gzhi-bdag* in the alpine pastures of the country, because it is the winter place of the *klu-sman*, do the bathing and feeding ritual, the *gzhi-bdag* food libation, the *klu-gtor*, *chab-gtor*,⁸³ the arrow silk, and so forth, just as they were explained before. **(15:verso)** Establish separate supports for each of the *gzhi-bdag* and *gnas-bdag* of that country. Repeatedly perform the *bden-brdar* to the precious jewels and the *yul-bdag*⁸⁴ [mentioned] in the words of me, O-rgyan Padma. If done like that, all of the miraculous manifestations and poisons will immediately subside."

"The necessary conditions for the *gzhi-bdag* will be realized according to their intentions.⁸⁵ Having seized that place, perfect happiness and blessings will appear. Teachings which make people virtuous will again be established. In particular, there will be an unceasing flow of the attainment of the profound secret *mantra*. It is important to perform respectful prayers of entreaty to me, Padmasambhava, who has taken the land of concealed secrets by means of having blessings and skillful powers, and to exert [oneself] in the ritual service and attainment of the lamas of the three roots. **(16:recto)** Because this land was previously an active region for Indra and other deities, always do everything with pure actions. Since the path is easy for people in that land, and since you have yet to free your animals, and since there has

⁸² A good teaching, or in this context a gentle path of ritual action (Tshig-mdzod:2384).

⁸³ A *gtor-ma* presented to water (Tshig-mdzod:787).

⁸⁴ A *yul-bdag* represents a *gzhi-bdag* who is a *yul-lha* (regional deity) as well as being a family and community protector (*srung-ma*) (Tshig-mdzod:2590).

⁸⁵ Meaning that the *gzhi-bdag* will provide for you.

appeared a path which naturally directs animals; thus, because there is the great *dge-bsnyen* Rdo-rje Legs-pa in that land, make an offering to him of sanctified food and appropriate materials. Don't offer the respiratory support of life, and flesh and blood. Because it was the place of Brahmā and Śiva at an earlier time, if you worship those two there will arise as a blessing an expansion of the attendants [the servants of Brahmā and Śiva] and pleasurable things. **(16:verso)** Because it is a place requiring ritual correctness, worship even those two with grains and precious things."

"At the summit of that valley there is a half-moon. The entire center of the valley is as if divided into eight lotus petals. Because it is easy to defend against the border people, extreme benefit will arise as well as place and opportunity [for pursuing enlightenment]. Because there are places for livestock in that country, although you examine it with understanding, make food offerings and *bden-brdar* to the *gnas-bdag* and *gzhi-bdag*, the livestock will go free along the prepared routes and later herdsmen will arise to the edge of the region."

"In Tibet there will be damage inflicted by the army of the Du-ru-ka and wherever one looks there will come to be misery and weariness. **(17:recto)** Because all of the temples and monasteries will be held by people in the grasp of passionate attachments: at that time all virtuous ones must go to that land of concealed secrets! Regarding all the other hidden lands, the search for them is distant, but for the nearby land of concealed secrets, the so-called Heaven Door Half-Moon, it is very close to Tibet and the search is easy. When the time has come, because there has descended the *dge-bsnyen* Rdo-rje Legs-pa⁸⁶ from the lineage of tantrics possessing vows, undiminished blessings, and pure thoughts, when one says 'Is there such a country, [one] in which the holy Rdo-rje Legs-pa has dwelled?', it will be shown. In that country, a tantric who has the blessings is important. **(17:verso)** I, Lama O-rgyan, and a second person will really come. A tantric who is from the unbroken lineage of Mnga'bdag Rgyal-po himself⁸⁷ and who has the blessing is necessary to possess that land. If you intend to be saved from the army of the Du-ru-ka and

⁸⁶ Literally, the "lay-disciple" Rdo-rje Legs-pa.

⁸⁷ King Khri-srong Lde-brtsan.

Hor-log,⁸⁸ establish yourself there. Those too striving for the sense of temporary and continual happiness, go to that land of concealed secrets! Those too having compassion and benevolence, go to that land! And when one has come to that land, the 70 *Siddhas* of the Secret Mantra Vehicle will also come, and 11 beings who have rainbow bodies with no contaminated aggregates remaining. There will be great happiness for a duration of 70 royal generations."

(18:recto) "As for this land of concealed secrets, because it is the land of activity for those dwelling in the ten levels of bodhisattvahood, it is no special feat to attain the 10th stage.⁸⁹ In that country there exists 900 towns. In the middle of that land of concealed secrets there is a pale blue clump of earth shaped like a frog. Under that, inside of a crystal vase is a hexagonal mind-expanding wish-fulfilling gem the height of one full span (*mtho*) of me, Padma. Because that [vessel] is the navel of the fluids and earth of that country, build a temple right on top of that. On the eastern petal, build a temple of Shakya Sengge to be a realm for those whose conduct is moral. On the southern petal build a temple of the *Sugatas*, wrathful and peaceful, to be a realm for the tantric practitioners. On the western petal build a temple of Kun-bzang Snang-ba Mtha'-yas⁹⁰ to be a realm for *Siddhas*. **(18:verso)** On the northern petal build a temple of 'Phags-pa Thugs-rje Chen-po to be a realm for all in general."

"At the southwest border there is a mirror-like plain. At that place there will be a town of many inhabitants which will come to support a large and spacious place of 100 households. Build a Bkra-shis Sgo-mang *mchod-rten* there. At the southeast border, because there is an iron rock in a circular valley, build a demon subduing *mchod-rten* to be a realm for blacksmiths. In the northeast, there is a vast empty valley with a river flowing in the direction of power. That place is filled with lake water, salt water,

⁸⁸ According to a personal communication with Elliot Sperling, this could either be a reference to rebellious Mongols or a mistaken form of Gar-log.

⁸⁹ The ten levels of a Bodhisattva are the Joyful, Immaculate, Illuminating, Flaming, Hard to Conquer, Manifest, Far-Reaching, Unmoving, Excellent Intelligence, and the Cloud of Doctrine (Dudjom 1990:166).

⁹⁰ Sangs-rgyas 'Od-dpag-med (Skt: Amitābha).

pigment minerals,⁹¹ and soda. There, on a rock, Mi-hreng Dmar-po⁹² is the caretaker of the individual treasure places."

(19:recto) "At the northwest border, inside of the pleasant valley there, a powerful state of meditation will arise at just seeing the blessed hermitage cave of the Lotus Born Lord. Inside of there, because an offering was given by Indra, and because an offering was given by a *nor-bu bsam-'phel*⁹³ and the *sde-brgyad dregs-'joms*,⁹⁴ there is a jewel image of me, Padma, the height of eight *sor*.⁹⁵ In all directions and intermediary points there are many hermitages and fortresses. The lower part of the valley is filled with various forests of fruit trees and birch trees. In the future, when a market place has been established by one possessing the customs of the Mon-pa, who is a heart-emanation of me, O-rgyan Padma, that country will come to be like a land of enjoyments of the gods."

(19:verso) "Between the upper and lower parts of the valley is the place of solitary men [for] one week. At that place, because it is a land which can support 500 cities on a place established on the lower parts of the gorges, a prince will arise for the overflow. He will be turned into a convert of the virtuous ones of that land of concealed secrets. Also, upon the pure hearted ones of the land of the great secret, because they are in that hidden land, if the wishing prayer is done with veneration to me, O-rgyan, the treasure will be bestowed in stages. Furthermore, many signs, *mudrās*, and treasures which have been blessed by me, Padma, exist in all the areas and valleys of this region. (20:recto) At the northwest border, in that especially wonderful valley, build a temple to the Vidyādhara Padmasambhava and a palace [mandala] of the most excellent He-ru-ka; make there [also] a great meditation center [which incorporates these two first

⁹¹ Read *mtshur*, instead of *mtshul*.

⁹² Exactly who Mi-hreng Dmar-po is remains unclear. Since *mi-hreng* connotes a person without a companion (Tshig-mdzod:2085), the name translates as "The Solitary Red One."

⁹³ Mind expanding, or wish fulfilling jewel (Dagyab 1977:117).

⁹⁴ The *sde-brgyad* have been enumerated as six groups of eight spirits (Dudjom 1990b:158-159). The full terms can be interpreted as the "*sde-brgyad* spirits who have subdued arrogance."

⁹⁵ The breadth of eight fingers (Klafkowski 1983:91).

elements]. I, Padma, will appear in person, and then there will be manifestations of my initiations and precepts. You will see the face of your meditational deity. Spiritual attainments will be bestowed by *dpa'-bo* and *mkha'-'gro*. Impediments will be removed by the *chos-skyong*,⁹⁶ protectors possessed of vows. Through the *yul-lha* and the *gzhi-bdag*, you will realize whatever you need as spiritual necessities. At the time when the duration of life is 50 or 40 years, that land of concealed secrets will be found. Immediately upon arrival at that place you will get all excellent and common spiritual attainments. **(20:verso)** The secret mantras which show the results will be like the rising sun of the dawn."

Thus it is said.

The instructions were given by the Master from Orgyan, the Lotus Born One possessed of great compassion, to the religious king Khri-srong Lde'u-btsan, the lady Ye-shes Mtsho-rgyal, the *rje-'bangs* Pa-gor Vai-ro-ci-na⁹⁷ and so forth. *Sa ma ya. Rgya rgya rgya*. It was invited [i.e. brought] by the *Sprul-pa Gter-ston Dge-slong* Tshc-brtan Rgyal-mtshan from the treasure place of Mon-chu-mo Cave.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Chos-skyong* are the protectors of the Buddhist religion. Originally they were antagonistic forces who were subdued and converted by Padmasambhava.

⁹⁷ The *rje-'bangs* were Padmasambhava's 25 original disciples in Tibet, including King Khri-srong Lde-brtsan and Pa-gor Vai-ro-ci-na (Tshig-mdzod:910).

⁹⁸ For a discussion of this location, see the preceding sections.

Identification of Gnam-sgo Zla-gam

Although the title of Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan's guide refers to Padma'i-tshal, not once in the actual text is this designation applied to the *sbas-yul*. In fact, despite what the title says, the text is actually about Gnam-sgo Zla-gam. In this section, I will attempt to sort out the conflicting claims of *sbas-yul* locations in and around Langtang. The discussion will be based upon the works of Mi-'gyur Rdo-rje, Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan, Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem, as well as on several texts concerning Yol-mo.

Without delving too deeply into the confusion surrounding the identity of the hidden lands, some brief remarks can be made. To begin with, Mi-'gyur Rdo-rje, who arrived in the Langtang Valley around the beginning of the 18th century, identified the locality with Gnam-sgo Zla-gam:

"This main point, that Glang-'phrang and Gnam-sgo Zla-gam are the same, and that Padma-tshal and Yol-mo are the same, was previously not understood by those people who are deprived of clear sight." (Mi-'gyur:3r).⁹⁹

To prove his point, Mi-'gyur Rdo-rje states:

"When examined well in that manner, if it is in the middle of Gnya'-nang to the east, Yol-mo to the south, Mang-yul to the west, and Dpal-thang to the north, there is no other valley which is a solitary place and where a town appears besides precisely Glang-'phrang. [I have] realized this from the manner of cutting the upper and lower parts of the valley." (Mi-'gyur:4r).¹⁰⁰

As he himself states, Mi-'gyur Rdo-rje was guided to Gnam-sgo Zla-gam with the aid of a text (*Gnam-sgo Zla-gam-gyi lam-byang*) by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan, as well as through information provided by Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem (Mi-'gyur:4v).¹⁰¹ With this in mind, his identification of Gnam-sgo Zla-gam's location must have been a reference to the directions of the four doors (see Tshe-brtan:4r-4v), and the fact

⁹⁹ *de-la mngon-shes-kyi 'phangs-ba'i skye-bo bdag dang 'dra-ba-rnams-kyis ni Glang-'phrang dang Gnam-sgo Zla-gam don gcig-pa/ Padma-tshal dang Yol-mo don gcig-pa'i gnad-ka chen-po 'di sngon-cad ma-go-ste/*

¹⁰⁰ *de-ltar legs-par dbyad-pas/ shar Gnya'-nang/ lho Yol-mo/ nub Mang-yul/ byang Dpal-thang-la gtad-pa'i khongs-na Glang-'phrang kho-na-las dgon-gnas grong-khyer chags-su btub-pa'i lung-pa gzhan-med-pa dang/ phugangs dang mda'-rong-gi chod-tshul-nas bzung:*

¹⁰¹ *yig-cha yang gter-ston Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan-gyi bton-pa'i Gnam-sgo Zla-gam-gyi lam-byang dang/ de-las cung-bsdus-pa rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem-gyi gter-byon de dang/ them-sbyang Ga'u-bdun-pa sogs dmigs-gsal dang/*

that the valley is "cut off" by glaciers at the upper end and forested ravines at the lower end (see Tshe-brtan:4v). Furthermore, some passages from Mi-'gyur Rdo-rje's text are identical with lines from Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan.¹⁰²

Another piece of evidence leading to the conclusion that Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan was writing about Langtang or an adjacent region and not Yol-mo is the fact that, when specifying the four doors, the southern door is referred to as leading to Yol-mo Gangs-ra (Tshe-brtan:4r). So the guide clearly directs one to a region situated north of Yol-mo.

Contained within a text attributed to the discoveries of Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem, there is a passage describing the *sbas-yul* Padma'i-tshal:

"To the north of the rock cave Yangs-le-shod¹⁰³ there is the mountain Dge-snyen Sle-ru. South of the victory banner raised to the sky is the so called Hidden Lotus Forest where a variety of various fruits and earth essences grow and, if strewn about, a multitude of grains will grow. There are four doors and space for 7000 towns. Just by having arrived at that place, the ninth level of a Bodhisattva, the uppermost excellent intelligence, will be obtained. (Ga'u-bdun:6v)¹⁰⁴

The most important feature connecting this description to Langtang is the reference to Dge-snyen Sle-ru, which happens to be the name of the sacred mountain located in the valley (Sadakane 1992:5). Yet the guide written by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan makes no mention of this mountain, so Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem may have been describing a different region than that illuminated by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan.

When examining the Yol-mo texts, similarities with the text attributed to Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem can be found. For example, one text mentions the existence of 7000 towns (Yol-mo.1:2v),¹⁰⁵ a statement identical to the description of Padma'i-tshal (Ga'u-bdun:6v). Another text detailing the *sbas-yul* of Yol-mo

¹⁰² Compare (Tshe-brtan:1v) with (Mi-'gyur:2v).

¹⁰³ Parping in the Kathmandu Valley.

¹⁰⁴ *brag-phug Yangs-le-shod-kyi byang-phyogs/ Dge-snyen Sle-ru'i gangs/ mkha'-la rgyal-mtshan phar-ba 'dra-ba'i lho-phyogs/ sbas-pa Pad-ma-tshal zhes-bya-ba'i shing-thog dang sa-yi bcud sna-tshogs skye-ba/ btab-na 'bru sna-tshogs skye'o/ sgo bzhi yod-pa/ grong-khyer stong-phrag-bdun shong-ba/ gnas der slebs-pa tsam-gyis/ sa-dgu-pa legs-pa'i blo-gros yan-tshad thob-pa/ sa-sgo 'dom-gang gru-bzhi bsrungs-pas chog(chug?)-pa yod/*

¹⁰⁵ *grong-khyer stong-phrag-bdun-gyi gnas-pa/*

bears the name Padma-tshal in its title and also contains a reference to 7000 towns (Padma-tshal:3r).¹⁰⁶ Correspondences with the account written by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan also exist in the Yol-mo literature. For example, one guide to Yol-mo specifies many of the same rituals to be performed upon arrival as those listed by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan (Yol-mo.1:3v-4r). Also, the center of the area is described as looking like a mirror (Yol-mo.1:4r).¹⁰⁷ Finally, one Yol-mo text specifies temples to be built in the directions which resemble (but are not identical) to the ones specified by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan (Yol-mo.1:4r-4v).¹⁰⁸

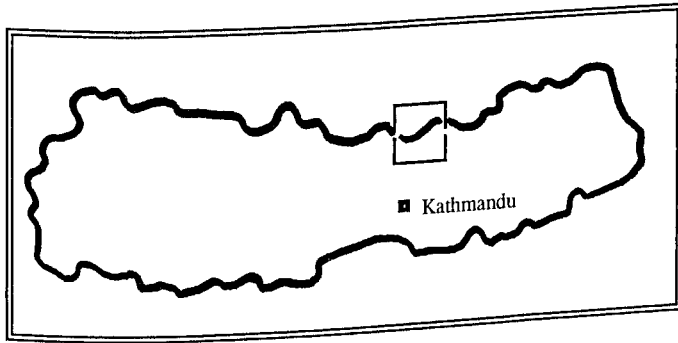
Despite the parallels indicating that the same source material was referenced by both Mi-'gyur Rdo-rje and the author/s of the Yol-mo texts, the two locations are not the same. There seems to be some confusion, persisting to this day, between the identification of Padma'i-tshal, a *sbas-yul* in Yol-mo, and Gnam-sgo Zla-gam. By the time of the 5th Dalai Lama (1617-1682), a clear distinction had been made between the *sbas-yul* in Yol-mo and Padma'i-tshal (see Schuh 1985:xxxvii). Yet how does this account for the confusion wherein a recent reprint of a guide to Gnam-sgo Zla-gam is labeled as a text dealing with Helambu? In my opinion, the three toponyms each represent distinct sites. Yol-mo can easily be identified with Helambu, and enough evidence exists to place Gnam-sgo Zla-gam in the Langtang Valley. This only leaves the location of Padma'i-tshal as a problem. Sadakane has advanced the hypothesis that it is situated somewhere between Langtang and Helambu (1992:4). This assumption seems reasonable considering the fact that, according to Rig-'dzin Rgod-Idem, it is near the mountain Dge-snyen Sle-ru. However, until further research is conducted, the whereabouts of this *sbas-yul* will probably remain unclear.

¹⁰⁶ *mdo-la grong-khyer bdun-stong chags-po/*

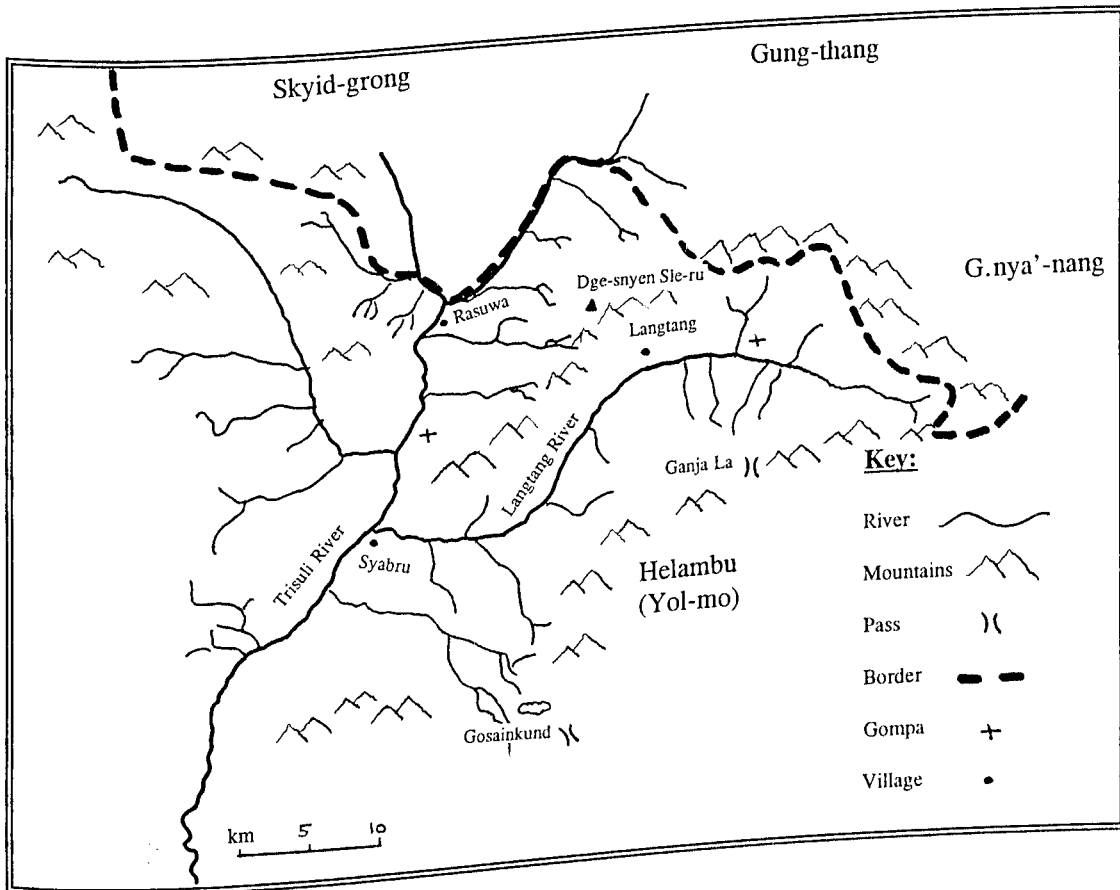
¹⁰⁷ *yul-de'i dbus () phyogs mtshams me-long-gi ngos ltar mihong-ba:*

¹⁰⁸ East: Shakya Sengge'i Lha-khang
South: 'Phags-pa Spyang-ras-gzigs Lha-khang
West: Sangs-rgyas 'Od-dpag-med Lha-khang
For a comparison with Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan, see (Tshe-brtan:18r-18v).

Maps



Map #1: Nepal



Map #2: Langtang and Neighboring Regions

The Langtang Valley of Nepal

Since Gnam-sgo Zla-gam has been identified with Langtang, some remarks can be made about this region. The Langtang (Glang-'phrang) Valley runs along the Tibetan border north of Kathmandu (see map). Situated in Rasua District, it is sealed off by high mountains to the north and northwest, and is connected with Helambu via two high passes to the southeast.¹⁰⁹ The Langtang River is a tributary of the Trisuli.

Estimates for the population of the valley vary. Frank first reported 219 residents living in Langtang village (1974:77). Hall, who cites the 1973 government census, accounts for 353 people living in 69 households (Hall 1978:52). Frank adopted these figures in his subsequent work (1982:255).

Regarding the ethnic composition of the valley, it has yet to be conclusively sorted out. Frank, who based his argument partially on the fact that his Sherpas could converse fluently with the residents, set forth the hypothesis that the people of Langtang are actually Sherpas despite the fact that they refer to themselves as "Lama-Tamang" (1982:274). His position is bolstered by clan names, some of which are held in common with the older Sherpa clans of Solu-Khumbu (1982:263), as well as by his earlier survey of Tamang settlements wherein any Tamang population inhabiting a high altitude region such as Langtang would be statistically anomalous (1974, 1982:262). Later authors preferred to designate the residents as "Tibetans" without exploring their origins in any depth (Hall 1978, Cox 1985), although Hall does call attention to a high correspondence of Langtang vocabulary with the Kyirong (Skyid-rong) Tibetan dialect (1978:60).¹¹⁰ Hall has separated the valley's dwellers into three groups: Tamangs who live near the confluence of the Langtang and Trisuli Rivers, the Tibetan speaking people of the upper valley, and several families of recent refugees from Kyirong (Hall 1978:51). Cox merely divides the people into Langtang Tibetans and Tamangs (1985:63). From an emic perspective, Langtang residents claim descent from a mixture of Helambu Tamangs and Tibetans from Kyirong (Frank 1982:261).

When Langtang clan names were compared by Frank with Solu-Khumbu Sherpa, Helambu Sherpa,

¹⁰⁹ Helambu is known in Tibetan as Yol-mo Gangs-ra. For a history of this region, see Clarke (1980).

¹¹⁰ A 75% correspondence was noted with regard to the Swadesh 100-word list.

Tamang and Tibetan clan designations, the following summary was made: Of the 17 clans listed (Frank 1982:263), only two (Dongba, Thogara/Thogare) are common among Tamangs. Seven are identical to Solu-Khumbu Sherpa clans (Lopchen, Thabo/Thawo, Chyawa, Nakpa, Gale, Gardza, Khyaba), two of which are also found in Helambu (Chyawa, Gale). Two other clans are found among Helambu Sherpas (Öba, Thomane), the latter of which is among four clans believed to have originated from Tibet (Thomane, Chuzanga/Chuzanja, Dzangba, Karmapa). Finally, three clans have no known correspondences with other groups (Thungba, Gole, Tsangnyömba), and may be splinter groups of recent composition. What these clan correspondences show is that migrations into the Langtang Valley probably came from several directions - just as the emic perspective suggests. Therefore, it seems unjust to call the people Sherpas, as Frank does, until we have better data regarding descent and lineages, as well as some basic linguistic evidence beyond a mere comparison of terminology. Suffice it to say for the purpose of this paper that the Langtang residents are people who have a mixed Tibetan ancestry, speak a Tibetan dialect and pursue a livelihood similar to that found in high altitude Tibet.

From a historical perspective, there is very little known about the region. Sadakane has identified several Tibetans who were invited to Langtang to give teachings, three of whom were 'Brug-pa lamas (1992:2).¹¹¹ Their presence indicates that, by the 17th century, a significant settlement existed in the valley. Before this time, however, we can only speculate about inhabitants. The first Rnying-ma-pa lama known to have visited the valley, Zil-gnon Dbang-rgyal Rdo-rje, reported that the houses were dilapidated (Sadakane 1992:3). According to Sadakane, Mi-'gyur Rdo-rje came to Langtang in 1692 (1992:2). If we accept his date of birth as 1675 (Mi-'gyur:preface), this would make him 17 years old upon arrival - hardly an age for making a major *sbas-yul* discovery. The source for the date only states that he reached Langtang on the 3rd day of the 8th month in the Monkey Year (Ngag-dbang:73r).¹¹² Since the corresponding element is not specified, I would suggest a more reasonable date for his arrival to be either 1704 (*shing-*

¹¹¹ The names of the three are Dpad-ma Ye-shes (1598-1667), Rang-rig Ras-chen (d.1683), and Mi-pham Phuntshogs Shes-rabs (1654-1715+).

¹¹² *sprel-lo zla-ba brgyad-pa'i tshes-gsum*

sprel-lo) when he was 29 years old, or 1716 (*me-sprel-lo*) when he was 41. These dates remain tentative until clearer evidence comes to light.

Otherwise, it is only possible to make inferences about Langtang through peripheral data. Helambu (Yol-mo Gangs-ra), situated to the southeast and connected by a high pass with Langtang, has a history of meditation retreats dating back to the time of Mi-la Ras-pa. Mar-pa specifically instructed the great yogi to meditate there (Mi-la:103).¹¹³ Tibetan sources maintain that the *sbas-yul* Yol-mo Gangs-ra was opened by Sngags-'chang Shakya-bzang-po who also built a temple there (Kun-bzang:134v, Kong-sprul:129r).¹¹⁴ Clarke tentatively dates the arrival of this figure to 1689 (1980:14), and identifies the temple as Churi-Ghyang (1980:11). Nepali documents show that the temple, as well as other temples in Helambu, were officially recognized with land grants by the Gurkha kings in the early 1800's (Clarke 1980:13-14). Since the documents are based on earlier claims, it is clear that Helambu was politically controlled by Nepal at some point during the 1700's.

Furthermore, other land grant records demonstrate that by 1741 the area immediately to the west of Langtang was under the political sway of Kathmandu (Macdonald 1973b:6).¹¹⁵ It is interesting to note that this date is prior to the Gurkha conquest of Kathmandu in 1769. Yet Hall speculates, without any firm evidence, that Langtang was ruled by minor chieftains before the unification of Nepal under the rule of Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769 (Hall 1978:52). Considering the great importance of the trade that flowed between Kathmandu and Tibet through Rasua, it seems hardly plausible that the region, except in politically unstable times, would not be at least minimally controlled by Kathmandu. Since access to the valley is easiest via the Trisuli River, control of the trade route would effectively mean domination over Langtang.

¹¹³ *bal-yul-gyi Yol-mo Gangs-ra mdo phal-po che-nas lung-bstan-pa'i gnas yin-pas de-la sgoms/*

¹¹⁴ *sbas-yul spyi-sgos-kyi kha-byang mang-po-rje 'di-par gnang-pa bzhin/ sbas-yul Yol-mo Gangs-rwa'i gnas-sgo phyi zhing dgon-pa btab/* (Kun-bzang:134v).

Yol-mo Gangs-kyi-ra-ba'i gnas-sgo phyas shing Thugs-rje chen-po 'khor-ba dbyings(?) -sgrol zhes-bya-ba'i gdams-pa gter-nas bton/ (Kong-sprul:129r).

¹¹⁵ Much gratitude is due to my friend Paramesh Adhikari for providing a translation and date for the text which was reproduced by Macdonald (1973b).

Evidence exists that as early as the reign of Yakṣamalla (1428-1482), Rasua was firmly in the grasp of Kathmandu rulers (Regmi 1965:477). In fact, Yakṣamalla made a pilgrimage during his reign to the sacred lake of Gosāinkund, situated between Helambu and Langtang (Regmi 1965:438). Despite these references, there is no evidence to suggest that Langtang was inhabited at this time, although villages in adjacent regions are specifically mentioned in connection with Yakṣamalla's pilgrimage. So control may have been irrelevant.

Reviewing the evidence from the two regions which control access to Langtang, it is reasonable to assume that by the Gurkha conquest, or shortly thereafter, Langtang owed allegiance to Kathmandu. There seems to have existed a pass connecting Langtang with Gnya-nang in earlier times,¹¹⁶ however it is presently not used. Combining the ethnographic and historical evidence, scant as it may be, permits the inference that Langtang was settled at an unknown date by Tibetan-speaking people whose presence was noted in texts when they invited 'Brug-pa and later Rnying-ma-pa lamas to the valley. Perhaps prior to the Gurkha conquest of Nepal, Langtang was at least nominally controlled by Kathmandu. Even after the Sino-Tibetan expeditionary force defeated the Gurkhas and pushed the Nepalese army to the south of Langtang in 1792, the region up to Rasua quickly reverted to Nepalese control - clear evidence that the upper Trisuli Valley was considered by regional powers to be Nepalese territory. Beyond this surface sketch, there is very little known about Langtang history. As with so many other Himalayan valleys, the time when significant settlements arose has not been determined.

Presently, the people of Langtang pursue a mixed economy of animal husbandry and farming, supplementing their income through a thriving mountaineering and tourism business. Despite the innovations, according to recent information the *sbas-yul* tradition is still alive in Langtang. Connecting the past with the present, Cox has described a livestock ritual wherein the presence of "Gonclerop" is

¹¹⁶ See Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan (4r) and Ngag-dbang (73r).

invoked (1985:72-74).¹¹⁷ Gonelerop can be none other than Dge-snyen-sle-ru, the mountain mentioned in the brief description of Padma'i-tshal discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem (Ga'u-bdun:6v). Furthermore, Sadakane mentions current beliefs centering on the *sbas-yul* Gnam-sgo Zla-gam (1992:4-6), a situation confirmed by Lhawang Thundup.¹¹⁸ Thus, a local tenet centering on the existence of a hidden land in their midst is a significant element representing continuity between the inhabitants of Langtang and an apparently ancient textual tradition.

Comparing *Sbas-yul* with Shambhala

Since the very nature of hidden lands is that they are to be sought in times of crisis, comparisons with the sacred realm of Shambhala (Sham-bha-la) come to mind. Knowledge of Shambhala entered the Tibetan world as part of the Kālacakra Tantra which was translated into Tibetan in 1027 C.E. (Shakabpa 1984:17).

When reading descriptions of Shambhala, several points of comparison with *sbas-yul* become evident. To start with, the internal structure of Shambhala resembles an open lotus with 8 petals (K'am-trül 1978:7, Laufer 1907:405, Bernbaum 1980:143). We find identical accounts in several *sbas-yul* descriptions (Tshe-brtan:16v, 'Bras-ljongs.2:7v).¹¹⁹ Similar to the Shambhala petals, each *sbas-yul* petal becomes a realm, or island (*gling*) for a specified class of beings (Tshe-brtan:18r-18v).

Regarding the people whose abode is the sacred land of Shambhala, descriptions depict health,

¹¹⁷ Cox, as so many other ethnographers, fails to even attempt an equation of oral terms with their written equivalents. Despite the fact that Snellgrove (1966), responding to Fürer-Haimendorf's Sherpa monograph (1965), issued a warning to anthropologists about such negligent methodological procedures, the practice of recording terminology in a phonetically imprecise manner without glossing the written equivalents is still common in anthropological studies of Tibetan-speaking peoples.

¹¹⁸ Personal communication.

¹¹⁹ *lung-pa padma kha-byed 'dra-ba yod/* ('Bras-ljongs.2:7v).

happiness, and religious morality among its inhabitants. In contemporary accounts of *sbas-yul* beliefs, the same portrayal is often encountered. Upon arrival in a hidden land, one immediately attains eternal life and happiness.¹²⁰ In one case, the intrusion of a hunter who accidentally discovered a *sbas-yul* was considered a polluting influence by the pure inhabitants (Mumford 1989:230). In *sbas-yul* texts, we find references to spiritual attainments achieved immediately upon arrival in sacred realms (Tshe-brtan:18r, Mkhan-pa-lung:21,¹²¹ Ga'u-bdun:6v).¹²² So in the cases of Shambhala and *sbas-yul*, residents are blessed with well-being once they have reached the paradise.

In terms of the prophetic nature of both concepts, predictions regarding chaos as a prelude to *sbas-yul* searches are similar to events connected with Shambhala. In the case of Shambhala, the adversaries are the Kla-klo forces who are anti-Buddhist destroyers of monasteries (K'am-trül 1978:9). When the Kla-klo power rises, the people of Shambhala will retrench and prepare for a final confrontation. In the end, the Buddhist religion will prevail. This is a concept similar to some *sbas-yul* descriptions wherein enemy armies are unable to penetrate the hidden land (Tshe-brtan:4v, 'Bras-ljongs.2:13r).¹²³ Furthermore, inhabitants of a *sbas-yul* can be considered as seeds for repopulating the earth after a period of destruction (Mumford 1989:231).

Of significant interest, Shambhala is a land where textual traditions arise (Laufer 1907:406). Not only do teachings come forth; they are preserved and disseminated from Shambhala (Hoffmann 1969:56, Roerich 1953:757). What is most intriguing when making comparisons with *sbas-yul* is the belief that some texts, including parts of the Kālacakra Root Tantra,¹²⁴ were never translated into Tibetan. Instead, they

¹²⁰ This is according to a personal conversation with Lhawang Thundup, whose father used to describe *sbas-yuls* to him as a child.

¹²¹ *gnas-der slebs-pa tsam-gyi byang-chub sems-dpa'i sa non/*

¹²² *gnas-der slebs-pa tsam-gyis/ sa-dgu-pa legs-pa'i blo-gros yan-tshad
thob-pa/*

¹²³ *Bod-'bangs Du-ru-khas bcom-dus/ gnas-der Du-ru-khas mi-slebs/*

¹²⁴ *Dpal dus-'khor rtsa-rgyud dang-po'i sangs-rgyas.*

are being held secretly in Shambhala and will only be revealed at a later time (Mullin 1991:152). Such an aspect of Shambhala bears a striking resemblance to *gter-ma* traditions which are intimately linked with *sbas-yul* descriptions. In each *sbas-yul* text examined thus far there are inevitable references to hidden treasures (*gter-ma*), including texts.¹²⁵ Consequently, both *sbas-yul* and Shambhala serve in a similar capacity regarding the preservation of Buddhist teachings.

Despite the similarities mentioned above, significant differences exist. For example, Shambhala in more recent times has assumed nearly mythical proportions. Mention of pilgrimages in search of the sacred realm are rare, although in earlier times it may have been a common practice.¹²⁶ By the time of the 3rd Panchen Lama Blo-bzang Dpal-Idan Ye-shes (1737-1780) who wrote a guide book to Shambhala,¹²⁷ the trail was described in vague terms - presumably to discourage people from undertaking the journey and thereby allowing enemies of the religion to follow and destroy the holy land (Wylie 1970:25). The various *sbas-yul*, to the contrary, lie closer to the center of Tibet and the trail directions contain references to identifiable geographic features.¹²⁸ This does not mean that discovering a *sbas-yul* is an easy task. Western scholars who attempted to follow a guidebook to the *sbas-yul* Mkhan-pa-lung in Nepal found the trail descriptions thoroughly confusing (Reinhard 1978, Bernbaum 1980). However, there does not seem to have been any systematic attempt to keep people from venturing into the hidden lands. One reason may be the belief that an inappropriate discoverer will suffer wrathful consequences at the

¹²⁵ The next section will deal with this topic in greater detail.

¹²⁶ The only reference in the Blue Annals to a pilgrim seeking Shambhala occurred in the 13th century. The text merely states that Bo-dung Rin-po-che Rin-chen Rtsa-mo went to Shambhala. No further details are given. Another pilgrim, O-rgyan-pa (13th century), almost undertook the journey to Shambhala. However, when his teacher Rgod-tshang-pa recognized that O-rgyan-pa had no karmic connection with the land, he suggested O-rgyan (Uḍḍiyāna) as an alternate destination (Tucci 1940:8, Roerich 1953:699).

¹²⁷ *Grub-pa'i gnas-chen-po Sham-bha-la'i rnam-bshad 'phags-yul-gyi rtogs-brjod dang bcas-pa*. This text was translated by Grünwedel (1915), but I was unable to obtain a copy in time to use it in this paper.

¹²⁸ For example, describing the approach to Mkhan-pa-lung from Khumbu, a text refers to a mountain shaped like the saddle of a horse (*ria-dga' 'dra-ba yod*) (Mkhan-pa-lung:27). This is an obvious allusion to Kang Taiga (National Geographic Map spelling) situated above Tengboche Monastery.

hands of the local spirit protectors (Tshe-brtan:9v).¹²⁹

Another divergence between the two concepts is that the dimensions of Shambhala create an image of vastness not commonly found among descriptions of *sbas-yul*. In one account of Shambhala, the land is surrounded by mountains with a circumference of 500 *dpag-tshad* (Laufer 1907:405). Using the previously calculated equivalent of 9.09 miles for 1 *dpag-tshad*, we arrive at a diameter of the region approximating 1450 miles. Nowhere in the *sbas-yul* literature do we find such dimensions. Also, from the perspective of the inhabitants, *sbas-yul* descriptions have a tendency to portray relatively small, agrarian populations, whereas Shambhala is the abode of millions (K'am-trül 1978:7). For example, in Gnam-sgo Zla-gam, the text specifies a place where a town of 100 households will arise (Tshe-brtan:18v), and mentions that the valley can support 900 towns (Tshe-brtan:19v). In 'Bras-mo-ljongs, a total of 7000 towns is specified ('Bras-ljongs:9r), whereas Mkhan-pa-lung is described as being able to support 500 people (Mkhan-pa-lung:23). None of these estimates approximates the population figures ascribed to Shambhala. Thus, judging by dimensions and population, there is a significant difference between Shambhala and *sbas-yul* descriptions.

According to a Shambhala guide referred to by Laufer, the holy land was situated in a region populated by Hor (1907:404). It is interesting to note, in the context of *sbas-yul*, that a Hor military invasion was one of the primary reasons for seeking a hidden land to the south.¹³⁰ This may be less a point of contrast than a reflection of actual geo-political contexts.

Finally, whereas the journey to a *sbas-yul* requires a physical excursion, it is possible to be spiritually reborn in Shambhala. For example, Dudjom Rinpoche related the tale of a monk who, following the instructions of his teacher, was reborn in Shambhala (Bernbaum 1980:158). Furthermore, Bernbaum

¹²⁹ Another factor which merits further investigation is the possibility that each guide book had a corresponding "key" to deciphering the symbolic codes on the trail. Lhawang Thundup mentioned this to me, but was not sure if these "keys" actually existed. As stated above (page 5), Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem was said to have discovered the "keys" (*lde'u-mig*) to the seven *sbas-yul*. Furthermore, Brauen-Dolma mentions that instructions from a spiritual leader were also a necessary requirement for commencing a *sbas-yul* search (1985:248).

¹³⁰ Military invasion prophecies will be explored in the next section.

describes other methods for reaching Shambhala that involve meditation and "consciousness transference" (1980:159-160).¹³¹ Finally, as recorded in the Blue Annals, Mthong-ba Don-ldan, the Sixth Karmapa Hierarch, mentions Shambhala on his deathbed. Referring to a dispute raging between Shambhala and Ma-kha (Mecca), he states "I must go and help Kulika (Rigs-ldan)." (Roerich 1953:516). These illustrations demonstrate the Tibetan notion that the journey to Shambhala can be undertaken on the mental level, and does not necessarily require a physical venture. As a point of contrast, in no instances yet uncovered do we find an example of people who enter a *sbas-yul* without making an actual journey. The sanctuaries cannot be reached through a meditative state, but require a search on foot. Reasons for the divergent traditions, in this case, may be due to proximity - both physical and cultural. Inhabitants of Nepal, especially those who traditionally dwell near the border and in most cases speak Tibeto-Burman languages, would be more receptive to Tibetan pilgrims entering their territory. As for Shambhala, if it was situated in Central Asia or near the Silk Route, a more hostile cultural climate may have been encountered by one undertaking the journey, especially following the Islamic conquest of the area.¹³² Furthermore, since *sbas-yul* are situated in the Himalayas, their geographical proximity permits far easier access than a journey into the heart of Central Asia.

Reviewing this section, many similarities as well as differences between Shambhala and *sbas-yul* have been demonstrated. Shambhala as a spiritual concept seems to be more powerful and evocative, as evidenced by its grandeur as well as the fact that religious adepts could not only make a mental excursion to the land, but in some cases could be reborn into the paradise. *Sbas-yul*, on the other hand, represent lands to which one flees only in a time of crisis. The dimensions are more on the scale of actual human communities, although like Shambhala the inhabitants of such lands enjoy health, prosperity, and longevity.

¹³¹ Unfortunately Bernbaum has not given us any textual sources for such journeys. At one point he states "In the secret autobiographies of yogis of the past, we can find records of mental journeys that some of them were supposed to have taken to Shambhala and other Pure Lands." (Bernbaum 1980:159). Without any reference, it is difficult to confirm this point.

¹³² The situation of the sacred land O-rgyan (Uḍḍiyāna) as a pilgrimage destination for Tibetans seems analogous. Tucci has noted that, after Islamic and Mongol conquests of the region, the journey for Tibetans became more hazardous and less frequent (Tucci 1940).

Do the similarities indicate that the two traditions are related? To speculate about this, let us take Aris' statements as a point of departure. As mentioned previously, Aris believes that the *sbas-yul* tradition had a precedent in imperial Tibet, namely the lands of refuge sought by the sons of Gri-gum Btsan-po (Aris 1979b:3).¹³³ If the concept of hidden sanctuaries can be traced back to the time of Tibet's imperial past, then the existence of *sbas-yul* in the Tibetan belief system predates the introduction of the Kālacakra and Shambhala by several centuries. On the other hand, if *sbas-yul* only became popular with the emergence of several *gter-stons*, namely Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan and Rig-'dzin Rgod-Idem in the 13th-14th centuries, then notions of Shambhala may have contributed to the rise of *sbas-yul* literature. Until Old Tibetan documents are scrutinized more pointedly for references to hidden sanctuaries, we can only speculate as to which tradition is the antecedent in Tibet.

Comparing *Sbas-yul* Textual Sources

Now that the Shambhala connections have been introduced, comparisons with other *sbas-yul* literature will be made. By doing so, it will be possible to arrive at some preliminary conclusions regarding the nature of *sbas-yul* as they are literally portrayed by Tibetans. The next section will deal with the following topics: a 50 year life expectancy as a sign for seeking a *sbas-yul*, prophecies regarding invasions of Tibet by foreign armies, *gter-ma* caches located within the *sbas-yul*, the presence of medicinal herbs in the *sbas-yul*, and the spiritual guardian Rdo-rje Legs-pa.

Before proceeding, it should be mentioned that these comparisons have been made at a surface level only. Several texts were scanned with the intention of finding similarities. Until a thorough survey of many more texts dealing with all of the major *sbas-yul* is undertaken, any findings contained within this section can only be considered preliminary. Hopefully, the results here will indicate fertile areas for future

¹³³ According to Christopher Beckwith, Aris' hypothesis is doubtful. Since Aris made the assertion without providing a specific reference, it is difficult to confirm his speculation.

research.

In the text by Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan, one sign of the degenerative period during which *sbas-yul* searches should be undertaken is that human life expectancy will have dwindled to 40-50 years (Tshe-brtan:5r). A similar statement reaffirming this characteristic is contained in a general text about *sbas-yul*, wherein it is stated: "When the life-expectancy of the people who will open the doors [to the *sbas-yul*] is between 50 and 60 years, the seven [major *sbas-yul*] will appear in succession." (Rgod-ldem:9v).¹³⁴ Two other texts, one dealing with Yol-mo Gangs-ra and the other with Mkhan-pa-lung, contain references to a 50 year life expectancy. The first states: "As for the proper time to search for that valley, it is in the last 500 [years], when the duration of life approaches 50 years." (Yol-mo.3:3v).¹³⁵ The quote from the Mkhan-pa-lung text is analogous: "If the time has arrived when, in the last 500 [years], the duration of life is 50 years, then it is the proper time to open [the *sbas-yul*]." (Mkhan-pa-lung:8).¹³⁶ These statements confirm that the correct time for seeking a concealed land is during the end of an era, when the life expectancy of humans has diminished to a minimal length. Therefore, in terms of Buddhist cosmological concepts, the hidden valley must be sought previous to the ultimate devolution of human life. This is interesting when we consider the *sbas-yul* as a land from which the earth will be repopulated, similar to the concept of Shambhala.

The next point to consider deals with the destruction of human life and society, specifically in Tibet. Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan's text stated that "all the regions of Tibet will be annihilated by the armies of China, the Hor, the Mon, the Western and Eastern Sog-po, and the Karluk . . ." (Tshe-brtan:7r). Furthermore, the text makes a reference to damage inflicted by the Turk army (Tshe-brtan:16v). Similar references are found in other texts. The Hor and Karluk are often the prime antagonists whose invasion

¹³⁴ *sgo byed-pa'i gang-zag tshe-lo drug-cu kha-ral-nas lnga-bcu kha-ral-gyi bar-du bdun rim-par 'byung/*

¹³⁵ *yul de btsal ran-pa'i dus ni/ lnga-brgya'i tha-ma-la tshe-tshad lnga-bcu-la nye-ba'i dus-su/*

¹³⁶ *lnga-brgya tha-ma tshe tshad lnga-bcu kha-ral sleb-na phyi rano/*

signals an opportune time to seek a *sbas-yul*.¹³⁷ In other instances, the Du-ru-ka (Turks) assume a prominent role as the adversaries. As one text states: "At the time when the Du-ru-kha conquer Tibet, they will not reach that place [Mkhan-pa-lung]." ('Bras-ljongs.1:13r).¹³⁸ Another text states: "After that, at the time when India and Tibet are deceived by the poisonous army, the Du-ru-ka . . ." (Yol-mo.3:2r).¹³⁹ Finally, in one instance we find a vague reference to the "six types of armies from the black direction" who will appear in Tibet (Yol-mo.1:2r).¹⁴⁰ Since Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan referred to 6 different types of armies, the author of this other text may have had the same in mind. The important point to ponder when viewing the invading armies together with the 50 year life expectancy is that Tibet, at the ideal time of searching for a *sbas-yul*, is in an extremely chaotic and degenerative condition. Disaster looms, and according to one statement it is only the strong who will be able to flee to the hidden lands (Ga'u-bdun:16v).¹⁴¹ All others must be content with seeking the minor hidden valleys within Tibet.

The *sbas-yul* as a place where medicinal herbs flourish is an important reference to the qualities of a sacred realm. Other areas in Tibet, such as Tsa-ri, are considered especially sanctified due to the special nature of the flora. Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan referred to the existence of "several types of disease-destroying herbs" in Gnam-sgo Zla-gam (Tshe-brtan:10v). Other texts contain similar statements, such as: "A variety of types of medicine grow [in the *sbas-yul*]." (Yol-mo.2:1v).¹⁴² Also, in Mkhan-pa-lung

¹³⁷ For example: *de-na Mu-gur Nag-po Hor-gyis 'dul/* (Rgod-ldem:2v). Also: *de-nas Bsam-yas lho-nub-du chu-po lta'i lo/ rme-ba-gnyis nag-gi dbus-na yod-pa'i/ byang-phyogs-su khral-shor mang-po byung/ 'Gar-log dang Hor yong zer-ba'i mi-dmag nad-gsum 'dug mgos/* (Mkhan-pa-lung:5). *Mu-gur*, according to Christopher Beckwith, is undoubtedly a mistake for *Yu-gur*, the Tibetanized form of the name Uighur.

¹³⁸ *Bod-'bangs Du-ru-khas bcom dus/ gnas der Du-ru-khas mi-slebs/*

¹³⁹ *de-nas Rgya-gar dang Bod Kha-ba-can-gyi yul bdud-dmag Du-ru-kas brdul(?)ba'i dus-na/ . . .*

¹⁴⁰ *nag-po'i phyogs-kyi dmag-rigs drug Bod-du 'byung ste/*

¹⁴¹ *stobs che-ba-rnams sbas-pa'i yul-du bros/ stobs chung-ba-rnams rong bzhi-la bros/*

¹⁴² *sman-gyi rigs-sna-tshogs skye-ba yod/*

various allusions are made to medicinal plants (Mkhan-pa-lung:13-14,56),¹⁴³ and in 'Bras-mo-ljongs one of the mountains is considered to contain an abundance of medicine ('Bras-ljongs.1:3v).¹⁴⁴

Finally, regarding Gnam-sgo Zla-gam and Mkhan-pa-lung, both *sbas-yul* are inhabited by Rdo-rje Legs-pa who seems to have a special relationship with livestock.¹⁴⁵ In Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan's writings we find inferences that, if livestock are permitted to roam at will, they will be taken care of (Tshe-brtan:16r-16v). Paths are well established, and shepherds will arise to care for the animals.

Regarding bovine spiritual presences, Mi-'gyur Rdo-rje relates the following story of how the Langtang region acquired its name:

"For the celebration feast in honor of a gold and silver *mchod-rten* erected by a householder, an ox was killed. That evening, the ox fled to this secret land [Gnam-sgo Zla-gam] by the strength of his own clear sight. Afterwards, although the householder gave chase, he only caught the dung." (Mi-'gyur:5v).¹⁴⁶

In the same text, we find an associated passage:

"The *gnas-bdag*, the Great Dge-bsnyen Rdo-rje Legs-pa, having manifested himself in the form of an ox and exhorted those involved in worldly deeds, was the opener of the door to the place [Gnam-sgo Zla-gam]." (Mi-'gyur:6v).¹⁴⁷

From the second quote, it is apparent that Rdo-rje Legs-pa has an intimate connection with

¹⁴³ *de-nas gzhas-pa'i kha lho-nub-du byas-na nang sman-gyi gros-ra 'dra-ba yod/* (Mkhan-pa-lung:13-14). *sman-sna brgya-rtsa skyes-pas sha-la dug mi-yod/* (Mkhan-pa-lung:56).

¹⁴⁴ *gangs-ri lnga-pa 'bru dang sman-gyi mdzod/*

¹⁴⁵ A reference to Rdo-rje Legs-pa is also found in conjunction with 'Bras-mo-ljongs ('Bras-ljongs.1:10r). Since no specific remarks are made about him, his position in 'Bra-mo-ljongs will not be considered here.

¹⁴⁶ *Lha-btshun Kun-bzang Rnam-rgyal-gyi ngos-'dzin mdzad-pa sogs 'di rigs-kyi lo-rgyus mang zhing/ Glang-phrang zer-ba'i khungs-kyang/ sngon 'bri-bstim-du yon-bdag gcig-gi gser-dngul-gyi mchod-rten bzhengs-pa'i rab-ston-la glang-zhig bsad-gyur/ do-nub glang des rang-gi mngon-par shes-pa'i stobs-kyi gsang-ba'i yul 'dir bros/de'i-rjes-su bdag-po des bsnyegs-pa-las lud-pa rnyed/ rgyu-mtshan de-la brten-nas Glang-phrang-du grags/*

¹⁴⁷ *gnas-bdag dge-bsnyen chen-po Rdo-rje Legs-pa nyid glang-gi gzugs-su sprul-nas las-can-gyi gang-zag de-rgyud bskul-te gnas-sgo phye-ba yin/*

livestock. Since it is possible that the ox who fled from the feast in which he was the prime attraction was Rdo-rje Legs-pa, who has the ability to manifest himself as an ox, then it is not surprising that he cares for the welfare of livestock in the *sbas-yul*.

When we compare these statements with references to Rdo-rje Legs-pa extracted from the Mkhan-pa-lung material, we see a similar role for the protector. For example: "By making offerings to the door guardians (*sgo-bsrung*) Zur-ra-skye and Rdo-rje-legs-pa, livestock will multiply." (Mkhan-pa-lung:22).¹⁴⁸

What the preceding passages indicate is that the protector of Gnam-sgo Zla-gam is not merely a regional deity. When we turn to the ethnographic literature, we learn that he is found in Tamang oral sources where he is a mountain centered deity (Höfer 1971:18). According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Rdo-rje Legs-pa had a wide appeal in Tibet. Originally, he attempted to obstruct Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet, but was subsequently converted into a protector of the religion (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1958:154).¹⁴⁹

In summary, literary accounts of different *sbas-yul* contain some consistent elements, especially regarding the prophecies of the degenerative period in Tibet prior to the proper time for seeking a hidden valley. Inevitably, the external cause for the decline of Buddhism in these prophecies is invasions by Chinese, Mongols, and Turkic peoples. Furthermore, there is some agreement on attributes of the various valleys, rituals to be performed while entering the sanctuaries, and benefits arising for those who enter the *sbas-yul*. Yet although similar features have been detected in the literary accounts, significant differences exist. Until a detailed comparison of several texts describing different valleys is undertaken, no further attempt to delineate unique features of each *sbas-yul* is justified.

¹⁴⁸ *sgo-bsrung Zur-ra-skyes dang Rdo-rje Legs-pa mchod-pa'i (sic: pas) nor-phyug phel/*

¹⁴⁹ According to *Padma-bka'i thang-yig: de-nas 'O-yug Bya'u-tshang rdzong-kar sleb/ dge-bsnyen chen-po Rdo-rje Legs-pa skyong/ mched-ni sum-rgya-drug-cus bsu-ba byung/ dam-la btags-nas gter-gyi gnyer-ka blad/* (Thang-yig:155r).

Contemporary *Sbas-yul* Beliefs in the Himalayas

At this point, we can bring the discussion into the present by examining current beliefs concerning various *sbas-yul*. Data for this section have been gathered from anthropological literature of recent composition. The purpose of this section is to investigate the nature of *sbas-yul* as they are perceived at present. Furthermore, it will be an opportunity to advance the hypothesis that the search for *sbas-yul* may have been a contributing factor in determining Himalayan migration and settlement patterns.

To begin with, Phurba Sonam of Tengboche Monastery in the Sherpa region of Khumbu related to me the following legend:

"At one time Khumbu was inhabited by people headed by an evil matriarch. When Guru Rinpoche arrived in the region, he discovered a depraved enclave suffering under the degenerative rule of its leader. Through his infinite wisdom of magic, the great yogi brought a plague to the children of the woman prompting her to seek assistance from Guru Rinpoche. The yogi then devised a ruse whereby he instructed her to escort the people to the summit of a nearby mountain so that he could effect a cure for her children. When the woman and her people reached the summit, Guru Rinpoche enshrouded the Khumbu region and proclaimed it to be a hidden valley (*sbas-yul*), only to be opened for settlement in a time of great need."¹⁵⁰

This accords with statements attributed to the incarnate abbot of Tengboche who stated that Khumbu was originally a *sbas-yul* (Brower 1991:38). His brother Kalsang claimed the same, and added that Khumbu was desanctified due to settlement and the commencement of routine subsistence activities (Bernbaum 1980:53). However, this interpretation seems to be of relatively recent origin. For one thing, in other oral sources we find an identical legend to the one related by Phurba Sonam, except that it refers to the hiding of the *sbas-yul* Mkhan-pa-lung (Bernbaum 1980:65-66). Furthermore, the earliest clan documents and oral legends of the Sherpas do not mention that Khumbu was considered as a *sbas-yul*, nor do they indicate that the search for a *sbas-yul* was a reason for migrating into Khumbu (Oppitz 1968, Ortner 1989). These sources do, however, mention a story regarding the accidental discovery of the region

¹⁵⁰ Since I have not heard other versions of the tale, at present I cannot confirm if it is a widespread belief. The informant, Phurba Sonam, was considered as one of the most talented young monks at Tengboche when I stayed there in 1987-88.

by a hunter pursuing game (Ortner 1989:26). So, at least in origin, Khumbu should not be considered a *sbas-yul*, especially since it is specified as such neither in older emic Sherpa sources nor in the enumerations of *sbas-yul* found in Tibetan documents. Regardless of the status of Khumbu, the Sherpas still maintain that the neighboring valley to the east is the *sbas-yul* Mkhan-pa-lung. In the 1970s two western scholars actually tried to enter the hidden valley, and on the way found that the legend is still intact and thriving (Reinhard 1978, Bernbaum 1980).

To the east of Khumbu live the Khumbo people, relatives of the Sherpas who maintain beliefs centering on Mkhan-pa-lung. According to local traditions, the *mka'-'gro-ma* residing in Mkhan-pa-lung were originally Tibetans "who decided to abandon their own society in search of mystical insight in the seclusion of the holy hidden valley." (Diemberger 1991:147). What is interesting to note is that various local mountain spirits (*yul-lha*, *btsan*, *gter-bdag*, *dpa'-bo* and *mkha'-'gro*) can communicate with Khumbo people through female oracles referred to as *lhakama* (*lha-bka'-ma*) (Diemberger 1991:141-142). A unique relationship is established whereby the spiritual forces within the *sbas-yul* are able to converse with and beneficially influence the residents of communities situated on the outside.

Turning further to the east, the Tarap and Barbung regions of Dolpo are both considered by local informants to be *sbas-yul* (Jest 1975:43,62). Unfortunately, Jest did not pursue the topic in any detail, so we do not know the names of the hidden valleys or their significance. Also, in a nearby region to the north of the Annapurna range, Mumford has identified a local *sbas-yul* tradition in Gyasumdo that is current among both Tibetans and Gurungs¹⁵¹ (1989:230). According to the oral tradition, a hunter once found the hidden valley while chasing a deer.¹⁵² This legend introduces an interesting parallel with the above mentioned discovery of Khumbu by the Sherpa's ancestors. In the Gyasumdo tradition, after spending a night with the residents of the *sbas-yul* the hunter was expelled due to his polluting influence. The residents claimed that he was "like a *bdud*, *btsan*, or *klu* to us, just as we are to you." (Mumford 1989:230). The

¹⁵¹ Gurungs are a Tibeto-Burman speaking population of Nepal.

¹⁵² Brauen-Dolma also recorded a similar legend in which a hunter, while stalking game, stumbled upon a *sbas-yul* (1985:250).

method of expulsion was remarkably similar to the means by which *bdud* or *btsan* are evicted from the human realm. In this case, residents of a *sbas-yul* represent, at least symbolically, local spirit protectors. Their status is similar to the Khumbo belief regarding the conversion of Mkhan-pa-lung dwellers into *mkha'-'gro*.

Further parallel features are found within Tamang¹⁵³ traditions, especially those studied by Holmberg and Höfer. Among the residents of Ankh Khola, a river valley to the west of Langtang, local *bombos*¹⁵⁴ often refer to *beyhul*, which are "secret heavens of the *bombos* to which they travel at times of revelation. Their spiritual ancestors are thought to reside there." (Holmberg 1989:237). Who exactly are these "spiritual ancestors"? According to Holmberg they are "spirits of deceased *bombos*," referred to as *lente* (1989:240). Höfer believes the term *lente*, also pronounced *lanthe*, is derived from the Tibetan term *lha-'dre* (1981:90). As evident in the textual tradition, *lha* and *'dre* are considered to inhabit Gnamsgo Zla-gam (Tshe-brtan:13v).

According to a *bombo* informant, a *beyhul* is "the place of your own lineal *bon*."¹⁵⁵ Some go to midspace, some to the north, some to the south, west, and east. You go to your own place. These are called *beyhul*. . . . [There] you reveal and tell [what you see]." (Holmberg 1980:290, 1989:148-149,n.10). The *beyhul* is thus a place where revelations occur. This is an interesting parallel to the Tibetan concept that *gter-ma* are concealed in *sbas-yul*. Therefore, in both traditions the hidden land (*sbas-yul/beyhul*) is a place where revelations take place.

Clearly, more work among Tamangs must be done in order to determine the connections between their concept of *beyhul* and the Tibetan notion of *sbas-yul*. Based on the evidence presented here, there can be no question that the two terms (and concepts) are related.

¹⁵³ Tamangs are another group of Tibeto-Burman speaking people.

¹⁵⁴ A *bombo* is considered by Holmberg to be a shaman due to his function as a healer. In the course of rituals, he often undertakes a symbolic journey in search of a lost "soul." (Holmberg 1989).

¹⁵⁵ According to Holmberg, *bon* "refers to a lineage associated with a primordial *bombo* who in turn is associated with the hidden heavens." (1989:149).

Evidence linking *sbas-yul* searches with migration patterns can be found in ethnographic literature. For example, Dobremez relates a brief story of how a valley in the Manaslu region of Nepal was settled by migrants from Khams. According to the legend, they came in search of a *sbas-yul* (Dobremez 1976:92). Since few other details are given, we can only speculate about the significance of this tale and whether the search for a sanctuary really was a motivating factor for settling the area. As demonstrated previously, the Sherpas of Khumbu have arrived at an *ex post facto* interpretation linking their arrival to Nepal with a *sbas-yul* search.

Moving nearer to the present, the Sherpa region of Rolwaling, situated to the west of Khumbu, was only settled about a century ago by people seeking to escape debt burdens or legal problems (Sacherer 1977:289, Sacherer 1981:157). Of significance is the fact that, to the locals, Rolwaling is considered to be a *sbas-yul* (Sacherer 1981:157), which accounts for a prohibition on animal slaughtering (Sacherer 1981:165).¹⁵⁶ In the case of this recently settled valley, local inhabitants regard the region as a sacred refuge. As a point of contrast with the way in which *sbas-yul* are described in texts, the Rolwaling Sherpas were escaping from their own social problems rather than from the invasion of a marauding army. The question bears asking: Was Rolwaling considered to be a *sbas-yul* before settlements arose? Or are we witnessing another retrospective local interpretation? From the textual sources there is no indication that Rolwaling was considered to be a *sbas-yul*. Yet to the current residents whose ancestors sought a refuge, it came to be considered as one - despite the relatively harsh landscape and unproductive soil. It is quite possible that the *sbas-yul* motif enjoyed immense popularity among Himalayan populations, and hence oral enumerations of hidden lands could be far more extensive than those found in texts.

In Humla, the far western district of Nepal, the Nyinba population studied by Levine maintains a *sbas-yul* tradition. In her discussion on recent immigration (1958-1983) into the region, 8 of the 34 new inhabitants came seeking a *sbas-yul* (1988:260). In terms of migration out of the area, Levine cites a 1967 scenario when 25 Nyinba, led by a refugee lama from Tibet, went in search of a *sbas-yul* to the east

¹⁵⁶ A similar prohibition due to the existence of a *sbas-yul* has been noted in Langtang (Sadakane 1992:5).

(1988:261). Also, a nearby valley was settled by *sbas-yul* seekers in the recent past (Levine 1988:263). What the above data indicates is that on the one hand the effects of a search for a *sbas-yul* can take some of the fittest individuals out of a community, thereby having a negative impact on economically marginal households (Levine 1988:263). On the other hand, the search has been a factor in bringing new settlers to the region, as well as a mechanism for settling a previously uninhabited area. These details raise provocative questions regarding demographic effects of *sbas-yul* expeditions. On a large scale, as when a country is ravaged by war, could the desire to seek a *sbas-yul* have prompted significant migrations of people who ended up settling remote Himalayan valleys? The possibility of such population shifts as a demographic feature of Himalayan settlement patterns is a topic worthy of further investigation.

Finally, there have been several recent accounts of *sbas-yul* searches by Tibetans fleeing the political turmoil arising from the Chinese occupation. According to Brauen-Dolma's informants, followers of Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che had hopes that their spiritual leader would guide them to a *sbas-yul* (1985:251-252). Furthermore, Brauen-Dolma reports an ill-fated venture led by Brtul-zhugs Gling-pa in the 1960's. His search for a hidden land in Sikkim ended with death and disillusionment for many followers (1985:252). Also, Bernbaum recorded an instance when, around the turn of the century, a lama named Sangye Thome led some disciples in search of the *sbas-yul* Padma-bkod. In the jungles of Assam, a suitable site for settlement was found and a temple erected. Several years later, a multitude of Tibetans established households there after fleeing from Tibet (Bernbaum 1980:69-70). What the above examples demonstrate is that, especially during a crisis situation, the concept of *sbas-yul* can become a prominent belief among dislocated Tibetans. In the Padma-bkod example, a valley settled as a result of a search for a sanctuary later became an actual refuge. In the other examples, even after finding political asylum in Nepal and India, groups of Tibetan refugees went in search of more promising lands.

What this discussion has shown is that beliefs centering on hidden sanctuaries can be considered as influences in determining contemporary regional demographics. A topic for future research would be to document migration patterns as specifically as possible, and determine what link exists, if any, between movements of people and the searches for hidden lands. We may find that *sbas-yul* expeditions contribute

only minimally to settlement patterns. On the other hand, if it is possible to identify a significant community whose migratory motivation was a *sbas-yul* search, then an interesting connection between a textual tradition, religious concepts, political events, and settlement patterns will be established.

Conclusions

At this point, the topic of *sbas-yul* contains much fertile ground for further inquiry. For each question answered in this paper, several others have arisen. Future research could take a variety of approaches. To begin with, it would be useful to establish more definite parallels between prophecies relating the decline of Buddhism found within Old Tibetan manuscripts with the prophecies contained within *sbas-yul* texts. Also, a historical analysis of the *gter-stons* and their respective discoveries relating to *sbas-yul* textual materials could help establish the context, both religious and political, within which the movement towards the periphery developed. Furthermore, a detailed comparative study of texts describing different *sbas-yuls* remains to be undertaken. Such an analysis would yield a better understanding of the different hidden valley traditions with regard to their common as well as unique features. Finally, fieldwork among the inhabitants of areas adjacent to, or even within, identifiable hidden valleys would yield modern ethnographic material for an analysis of existing traditions regarding the symbolic matrix surrounding these areas.

In conclusion, regardless of when and under what circumstances *sbas-yul* beliefs arose, the concept of hidden sanctuaries has exerted an influence over Tibetan concepts of sacred geography right up to the present. The actual impact which such beliefs have had on migratory trends remains to be seen. However, it is my opinion that *sbas-yul* searches have contributed to the populating of remote Himalayan valleys on the periphery of the Tibetan cultural world.

Appendix 1: Biographical Material on Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan

'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul Blo-gros Mtha'-yas

Zab-mo'i gter dang gter-ston grub-thob ji-ltar byon-pa'i lo-rgyus mdor-bsdus bkod-pa rin-chen
(Gter-ston brgya-rtsa'i rnam-thar)

in Rin-chen gter-mdzod chen-mo

Vol.1 Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay

Paro, 1976

The first part of the section on Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan is taken directly from the Padma-bka'i thang-yig (245v). Minor variations between the two are noted.

62v-63r

dam-sel brgyud-pas slob-'ga' gri-ru 'chi/ rdo-yi mchod-rten gdugs dang chos-'khor nyams/ Mon-kha chu-phug sbas-pa'i gter-kha'¹⁵⁷ 'di/ mi-bzhag 'don-pa'i rtags de'¹⁵⁸ bstan-nas 'byung/¹⁵⁹ gter-ston Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan zhes-bya 'byung/ zhes-pa'i gter-ston Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan-ni/ rgyal-ba Mchog-dbyangs-kyi rnam-'phrul gnyis-kyi ya-gyal-te/ Mon La-mo stod-pa'i Snar-thang-du 'khrungs/ mtshan-ru-tu Tshe-brtan Rgyal-mtshan nam Chos-kyi Blo-gros-su grags/ rten dge-slong Rdo-rje 'Dzin-pa/ mdo-sngags-la mkhyen-pa rgyas-pa'i dge-ba'i bshes-gnyen chen-por bzhugs/

Rig-'dzin Kun-bzang Nges-don Klong-yangs (Rdo-rje Gsang-ba-rtal)

Bod-du byung-ba'i gsang-sngags snga-'gyur-gyi bstan-'dzin skyes-mchog rim-byon-gyi rnam-thar
nor-bu'i do-shal

Damchoc Sangpo, Dalhousie 1976

69v

gu-ru Tshe-rtan Rgyal-mtshan-ni Mon Lo-mo stod-pa yin/ Spa-gro Chu-mo phug-nas gu-ru zhi-drag rdzogs-chen mnyam-nyid rang grol/ Tshe-dpag-med-kyi sgrub-skor/ Padma Dbang-chen skor/ Bde-mchog skor/ Khro-rgyal Rme-btsegs skor/ bcud-len brgya-tsa/ lung-bstan bka'-rgya-la sogs-pa rgya-cher bton no/

¹⁵⁷ Thang-yig: *ka*

¹⁵⁸ Thang-yig: *der*

¹⁵⁹ Thang-yig: *byung*

Appendix 2: Bibliography of *Sbas-yul* Texts

Skyid-mo-lung

- 1: *Skyid-mo-lung-gi kha-byang*
12 folia, dbu med
citation found in Aris, Michael
1975 "Report on the University of California Expedition to Kutang and Nubri in Northern Nepal"
Contributions to Nepalese Studies Vol.2, No.2 (p.85)
- 2: *Sbas-yul Skyid-mo-lung-gyis lam-byang*
7 folia, dbu med
citation found in Aris, Michael
1975 "Report on the University of California Expedition to Kutang and Nubri in Northern Nepal"
Contributions to Nepalese Studies Vol.2, No.2 (p.85)
- 3: *Sbas-yul Skyid-mo-lung-gi lam-byang*
extracted from *Ma-'ong lung-bstan*
ka + 8a - ka + 15b, dbu can
citation found in Aris, Michael
1975 "Report on the University of California Expedition to Kutang and Nubri in Northern Nepal"
Contributions to Nepalese Studies Vol.2, No.2 (p.85)
- 4: *Sbas-yul Skyid-mo-lung-gi lam-yig*
discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi-ldem-'phru-can
21 folia, dbu med
in Collected Biographies and Prophecies of the Byang gter Tradition
1983 Gangtok (pp.557-598)

Mkhan-pa-lung

- 1: *Mkha-lung gsang-ba'i lam-byang dang Gsang-chen sbas-phug snying-byang*
discovered by Gter-ston Sangs-rgyas-dbang-'dus from Mkhan-pa-lung in 1923
8 folia, dbu can
in Padma'i gsang-thig dgongs-'dus
1979 Lama Ngodrub and Sherab Demy, Paro (pp.533-548)
- 2: *Sbas-yul Mkhan-pa-ljongs-kyi gnas-yid Padma-gling-pa'i gter-ma*
discovered by Padma-gling-pa
12 folia, dbu can
in Collected gter-ma Rediscoveries of Padma-gling-pa
Vol.III, Klong-gsal Gsang-ba-snying-bcud
1976 Ngawang Topgay, New Delhi (pp. 525-549)
- 3: *Sbas-yul Mkhan-pa-lung-gi gnas-kyi lam-yig dang-po*
in Rig-'dzin Rgod-ldem-gyi gter-ma 9 pages
citation found in Macdonald, A.
1973 "The Lama and the General" Kailash Vol.1, No.3 (p.233,n.28)

- 4: *Sbas-yul Khan-pa-lung-gi nas-yig mthong-ba don-ldan*
citation found in Reinhard, Johan
1978 "Khembalung: The Hidden Valley" Kailash Vol.6, No.1 (pp.5-35)
text translated by Chopel Namgyal
Text is compilation of two texts, only translations of titles are given.
a. A Description of the Route to the Beyul (Hidden Valley) of Khembalung, Which is Called Thongwa Tunden (Meaningful to See) is Contained (herein) dbu can
b. The Key of Orgyan's (Guru Rinpoche's) Beyul Khembalung, Which is Called Thongwa Rekhpa (Seeing, Hearing and Touching) is Contained (herein) kha yig
- 5: *Sbas-yul Mkhan-pa-lung-gi gnas-yig dang lam-yig bcas*
in *Padma-gling-pa'i gter-ma*
37 pages
citation found in Macdonald, A.
1973 "The Lama and the General" Kailash Vol.1, No.3 (p.233,n.28)
- 6: *Sbas-yul 'Bras-mo-gshongs dang Mkhan-pa-lung-gi gnas-yig*
discovered by Padma-gling-pa, completed by Nyi-ma'i'od-zer
49 folia, dbu can
in Collected gter-ma Rediscoveries of Padma-gling-pa
Vol.III, Klong-gsal Gsang-ba-snying-bcud
1976 Ngawang Topgay, New Delhi (pp.427-524)
- 7: *Gsang-ba'i sbas-yul skyong-ba'i srung-ma gter-bdag Zur-rwa-ba'i 'phrin-las 'dod-pa'i dpal-ster*
discovered by Gter-ston Sangs-rgyas-dbang-'dus from Mkhan-pa-lung in 1923
edited by Rdza-sprul Ngag-dbang Bstan-'dzin-nor-bu
9 folia, dbu can
in *Padma'i gsang-thig dgongs-'dus*
1979 Lama Ngodrub and Sherab Demy, Paro (pp.200-217)

Gnam-sgo Zla-gam

- 1: *Gnam-sgo Zla-gam-gyi nges-pa brjod-pa sum-rtsen dga'-ma'i glu-dbyangs*
by Rdo-dmar Zhabs-drung Mi-'gyur-rdo-rje
5 folia, dbu can
in The Collected Works of Rdo-dmar Zhabs-drung Mi-'gyur-rdo-rje
1981 Ngawang Topgay, New Delhi (pp.373-381)
- 2: *Gnam-sgo Zla-gam-gyi ngos-'dzin phan-bde'i snying-po*
by Rdo-dmar Zhabs-drung Mi-'gyur-rdo-rje
9 folia, dbu can
in The Collected Works of Rdo-dmar Zhabs-drung Mi-'gyur-rdo-rje
1981 Ngawang Topgay, New Delhi (pp.355-371)
- 3: *Gnam-sgo Zla-gam-gyi zhes-pa gsang-ba sbas-pa'i yul-gyi lam-byang*
by Tshe-brtan-rgyal-mtshan
citation found in Sadakane (1992)

- 4: *Sbas-yul Padma'i-tshal-gyi gnas-yig kun-tu gsal-ba'i me-long*
by Sprul-pa'i Gter-ston Dge-slong Tshe-brtan-rgyal-mtshan
20 folia, dbu can
1983 Bla-ma Zla-ba and Sherab Gyaltzen, Gangtok

Padma-bkod

- 1: *Padma-bkod ces-bya-ba'i gnas-mchog*
8 folia, dbu med
in *Sbas-yul Padma-bkod-kyi lam-yig ma-'ongs lung-bstan sna-tshogs phyogs-gcig-tu bsdus-pa'i gsung-pod*
1974 Tseten Dorji, Tezu (pp.95-109)
- 2: *Sbas-gnas kun-gyi rgyal-po Padma-bkod-kyi gnas-srung-gi gsol-kha 'jug-bde-zhig 'di-nas yod*
discovered by Rdo-rje-thogs-med
6 folia, dbu med
in *Zab-chos bdun-pa sbas-yul sgo-'byed yid-bzhin 'od-'phro'i sgrub-skor-las tshogs dang bcas-pa*
1972 Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, New Thobgyal Vol.I (pp.429-439)
- 3: *Sbas-yul Padma-bkod-kyi lam-yig dang: sku-tshab Padma bshes-gnyen 'gro-'dul dang skye-bdun dkar-chags*
rediscovered by 'Ja'-tshon-snying-po
18 folia, dbu med
in *Sbas-yul Padma-bkod-kyi lam-yig ma-'ongs lung-bstan sna-tshogs phyogs-gcig-tu bsdus-pa'i gsung-pod*
1974 Tseten Dorji, Tezu (pp.1-35)
- 4: *Sbas-yul Padma-bkod-du bgrod-pa'i dus-rtag bstan-pa dang gnas-kyi bkod-pa lam-yig zhib-du bshad-pa thod-pa tshe-yi sprod*
From the discoveries of Mi-'gyur-tshe-dbang-gsangs-sngags-grags-pa,
or Gu-ru Bde-chen-gling-pa
23 folia, dbu med
in *Sbas-yul Padma-bkod-kyi lam-yig ma-'ongs lung-bstan sna-tshogs phyogs-gcig-tu bsdus-pa'i gsung-pod*
1974 Tseten Dorji, Tezu (pp.507-552)

'Bras-mo-ljongs

- 1: *Mkha'-spyod sprul-pa'i pho-brang 'Bras-mo-gshongs-su har-sangs sgyu-ma'i rol-rtsed-kyis nyul-ba'i lam-yig rab-gsal nyin-byed 'bar-ba'i 'od-stong*
by Lha-btsun Nam-mkha'-'jigs-med
151 folia, dbu can
in *Collected Works of Lha-btsun Nam-mkha'-'jigs-med*
1974 Jurme Drakpa, New Delhi Vol.III (pp.425-725)
- 2: *Sbas-yul 'Bras-mo-ljongs-kyi gnas-yig bsdus-pa ldeb*
discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi-ldem-'phru-can
17 folia, dbu can
in *Ritual Texts of the Dpal-spungs Tradition*
1981 Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, Gangtok (pp.357-390)

- 3: Sbas-yul 'Bras-mo-ljongs-kyi gnas-yig phan-yon dang bcas-pa ngo-mtshar gter-mdzod
citation found in Macdonald, A.
1973 "The Lama and the General" Kailash Vol.1, No.3 (p.232,n.28)
- 4: Sbas-yul 'Bras-mo-ljongs-kyi gnas-yig phan-yon dang bcas-pa ngo-mtshar gter-mdzod
no further information provided
citation found in Brauen-Dolma, Martin
1985 "Millenarianism in Tibetan Religion"
in Aziz, Barbara and Matthew Kapstein (eds.)
Soundings in Tibetan Civilization
Manohar, New Delhi (p.248,n.8)
- 5: Sbas-yul 'Bras-mo-gshongs dang Mkhan-pa-lung-gi gnas-yig
discovered by Padma-gling-pa, completed by Nyi-ma'i'od-zer
49 folia, dbu can
in Collected gter-ma Rediscoveries of Padma-gling-pa
Vol.III, Klong-gsal Gsang-ba-snying-bcud
1976 Ngawang Topgay, New Delhi (pp.427-524)
- 6: Rdo-rje Nyi-ma'i gnas-yig gsang-ba'i dkar-chag
by Rdo-rje Nyi-ma
discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi-lden-'phru-can
13 folia, dbu can
1983 Sonam Tobgyel, Tashigang
- 7: Rdo-rje Nyi-ma'i gnas-yig gsang-ba'i dkar-chag
by Rdo-rje Nyi-ma
discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi-lden-'phru-can
12 folia, dbu can
in Ritual Texts of the Dpal-spungs Tradition
1981 Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, Gangtok (pp.391-418)

Yol-mo Gangs-kyi-ra-ba

- 1: Sbas Padma-tshal-gyi lam-yig
4 folia, dbu med
in Collected Biographies and Prophecies of the Byang-gter Tradition
1983 Gangtok (pp.507-513)
- 2: Yol-mo Gangs-kyi-ra-ba'i gnad-yig
attributed to Padmasambhava
5 folia, dbu med
in Collected Biographies and Prophecies of the Byang-gter Tradition
1983 Gangtok (pp.515-524)
- 3: Yol-mo Gangs-kyi-ra-ba'i lung-byang snying-gi [] zhugs-so/ gter-bston Rigs-'dzin-chen-po'i phyi nang gsang-ba'i 'gro-don mdzad-tshul zur-bu gcig-gi gsal-byed 'di yin no/
10 folia, dbu med
in Collected Biographies and Prophecies of the Byang-gter Tradition
1983 Gangtok (pp.537-556)

- 4: *Yol-mo Gangs-ra'i gnad-byang*
discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi-ldem-'phru-can
4 folia, dbu med
in Collected Biographies and Prophecies of the Byang-gter Tradition
1983 Gangtok (pp.529-536)
- 5: *Yol-mo'i snying-byang*
discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi-ldem-'phru-can at Zang-zang-lha-brag
2 folia, dbu med
in Collected Biographies and Prophecies of the Byang-gter Tradition
1983 Gangtok (pp.525-528)

General Texts

- 1: *Gu-ru'i ga'u-bdun-ma*
revealed by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi-ldem-'phru-can
78 folia, dbu can
1983 Dorjee Tsering, Delhi
- 2: *Sbas-yul Dkar-po-ljongs-kyi gnas-yig*
from *Gu-ru Tshe-brtan-pa'i gter-ma*
7 folia, dbu med
in Tibetan Guides to Places of Pilgrimage
1985 T.D. Densaga, Dharamsala (pp.203-215)
- 3: *Sbas-yul bde-mchog 'khor-lo'i gnas-kyis gtso-mchog Budha tshe-phug sa phyi nang-gi gnas-yig mthong-ba rang-grol byin-rlabs myur-'jug*
written down by Bde-chen-gling-pa, 20 folia, dbu med
in *Sbas-yul Padma-bkod-kyi lam-yig ma-'ongs lung-bstan sna-tshogs phyogs-gcig-tu bsdus-pa'i gsung-pod*
1974 Tseten Dorji, Tezu (pp.553-592)
- 4: *Sbas-yul spyi'i thel-byang*
discovered by Rig-'dzin Rgod-kyi-ldem-'phru-can at Zang-zang-lha-brag
17 folia, dbu med
in Collected Biographies and Prophecies of the Byang-gter Tradition
1983 Gangtok (pp.463-495)

ཅན་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དྲེགས་པ་ཅན་གྱི་འཁོར་ལང་པོ་ཡོད་དོ། དེ་རྣམས་ལ་ལྷུས་གསོལ་དང་། དྲི་བཟང་སྤོལ་དཀར་ལ་གཏུ་
 དང་སྐྱེ་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་དྲུང་བཟང་དང་། རྒྱལ་ལ་འཆང་མཐུ་སྤོབས་སྤྱོད་གསལ་བཟུང་དང་། རང་གྲོགས་རྣམས་ལ་སྐྱེད་འཁོར་བསྐྱོར་
 ལྷ་འདྲེ་ཟེལ་གྱིས་མཐོང་། དཀོན་མཆོག་ལ་མཆོད་པ་འདྲུལ་། ཡིད་གྱིས་སྐྱེལ་ནས་ཉེད་མཐུལ་ཡན་ལས་གཏུ་རྒྱལ་
 ལྷ་མཆོད་སྤྱོད་ལ་སྐྱེ་གཏོར་སྐྱེ་མཐོང་གཏོར་། ཡུལ་དེའི་ལྷ་རྒྱ་དམི་བསྐྱོན་རྗེ་རྗེ་ལེགས་པ་ཡོད་པས་མཐོང་པོ་
 མཆོད་གཏོར་། བཅོམ་རྒྱུད་ལས་པ་ཅན་ལ་སོགས་པར་གསོལ་མཆོད་འདྲུལ་། ལྷ་ལོན་གྱི་ལྷ་གསོལ་གྲུ་ལ་ཉེ་བཟོ།

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ལོ། དེ་ལྷ་བུ་ལ་མ་འཆོལ་འདི་དྲེགས་སྐྱེ་ཡང་གུ་རྣམས་སྤོབས་མཐོང་གཏོར་། དེ་རྣམས་སར་བརྟུགས་ལོན་རྒྱལ་བས་དཔུང་
 ལ་སོང་། མིག་མཐོར་དེ་ལ་མཐོར་དེ་བཅུ་གསལ་ལ་བཞག དེ་ལྟར་མ་གུས་ན་ཡུལ་གྱི་སྤྱོད་འདྲེ་གཏོར་ཅན་གྱིས་མཐོང་པོ་འདྲུལ་
 ལྷ་བཟུགས་པ་ཡོད་དོ། དེ་རྣམས་ལ་མ་རྟགས་གྱི་མཐོང་བས་གཞས་ཀྱི་མཐོང་བུ་སྤོབས་ཡོད་ཉེ་སྐར་བཟང་པས་མཆོད་པ་
 དང་ཡན་ལས་བཟུང་བ་དང་། གཞི་བདག་སྐྱེད་མ་རྣམས་ལ་མཆོད་པ་རྒྱལ་པ་གུ། ལྷ་དང་བར་སྤོབས་མ་ཐག་མ་མོའི་མཐོང་པོ་
 གཏོར་བཟུགས་མཐོང་། ལྷ་ལོན་གྱི་འབྲང་རྒྱལ་དང་གཡག་སྐྱེག་ར་གསུམ་བཟང་མཐོང་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པ་དེས་སམ་གཟུང་།

ལོ་ལྷ་

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བརྟུགས་བཅོས་ལ་དར་སྐྱེས་བརྒྱུ་ཏེ་རྒྱ་དུ་འཛུགས་། ལུས་གསོལ་སྤོལ་བས་འགསེར་སྤྱེ་མས་འདྲུལ་། དྲི་བཟང་སྤོལ་དཀར་དང་
 ཅོན་དོན་དཀར་དམར་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དྲུང་བཟང་། མཐུ་མཐོང་མི་གུ། ལོ་རྒྱུ་བརྒྱའི་གསོལ་འདྲེ་བས་ལའབད། ཉེན་མོངས་དང་མི་
 མལ་གྱི་སྐད་མ་མི་ཉེད། དེ་གཉེན་ན་གཉེན་ས་ཡུལ་གཉེན་པོ་ལ་ལུ་མི་འདེབས། གཅན་གཟན་གཏུག་པ་ཅན་སྤྱོད་དཀོས་བཟུང་ན་
 མ་གཏོགས་པོ་མོའི་སྐྱེ་བྱུག་པོ་མི་ཉེད། གསལ་བ་སྐྱེས་པའི་ཡུལ་འདྲི་ཉེན་ལ་ཉེན་པོ་ལྷ་བས་དང་སོ་ནས་དེ་མ་གྱིས་གཞི་
 བདག་རྣམས་དང་འདྲིས་བརྟུགས། དམ་ལུལ་གྱི་ལས་མི་ཉེད། ཞི་དུལ་ཉེད་མེམས་ཀྱི་སྤོབས་ལྷ། མོགས་མཆོད་སྐྱེད་གྱི་མཐོང་།

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ལོ། འགས་མི་ཉེད། དམཆོག་ལ་གཞས་པར་གུ། ལུག་གཏོར་སྤྱོད་དང་ལྷན་པ་གསོལ་མོང་། དེ་ལྟར་མ་གུས་ན་ན་བུ་
 དང་འཆར་བུ་ལུག་འཆུབ་མ་བྱུག་ཏེ་རོ། ལྷ་སྐད་མི་གཅིག་པ་དང་ལུར་སྐྱེ་བུ་གཞོམ་བྱག་པོ་འོང་། ཡུལ་གྱི་སྤྱོད་
 འདྲེ་གཏོར་གཏོར་འཇུལ་སྤྱོད་མཐོང་པོ་སྤོབས། གནས་བདག་གཞི་བདག་རྣམས་ལྷོས་ནས་ཐོབ་སྤོབས་དང་གཅན་
 གཟན་གྱི་གཞོན་པ་འདྲེ་རོ། ཡུལ་གྱི་ཐོབ་སྤོབས་ལ་གཞི་བདག་གི་ནུ་ལ་སྐྱེད་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དཔུན་ས་ཡོན་
 བས་ལུས་གསོལ་གཞི་བདག་གསོལ་མཆོད་སྐྱེ་གཏོར་ཆབ་གཏོར་དང་མདའ་དར་ལ་སོགས་པའི་གོང་དུ་བཟང་།

ལོ་ལྷ་

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པ་ལྟར་གྱིས། ཡུལ་གྱི་གཞི་བདག་གཞས་བདག་རྣམས་རང་རང་གི་མ་རྒྱུ་པའི་རྗེན་འཛུགས། དཀོན་མཆོག་དང་ལོ་
 རྒྱུ་བཟུང་བདག་གི་བཀའི་ཡུལ་བདག་རྣམས་ལ་བདེན་བརྟུགས་ཡང་ཡང་གུ། དེ་ལྟར་ལྷས་ན་ཆོ་འདྲུལ་དང་གཏུག་
 རྒྱུ་བཟུངས་ཅན་འདྲུལ་དུ་ཞི། གཞི་བདག་རྣམས་ཀྱི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་བས་མ་དེན་འདྲུལ། ཡུལ་དེར་ཟེན་ནས་བཟུ་གིས་
 ཉིད་བདེ་སྤྱོད་ལུག་སྐྱེ་མཆོགས་པ་འདྲེ་རོ། དཀོན་ཉེད་ཀྱི་འཇུག་པ་ཡང་ཆུ་གསལ་སོ། ལྷ་དང་བར་དུ་གསལ་སྐྱེགས་
 ཟབ་མོའི་སྐྱེ་བ་བརྒྱུ་མི་འཆང་བར་གུ། མེན་སྤོབས་དང་མཐུ་རྒྱལ་ཡོད་པས་གསལ་བ་སྐྱེས་པའི་ཡུལ་དེར་ཟེན།

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