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STAG-TSHANG RAS-PA'S EXCEPTIONAL LIFE AS A PILGRIM

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Introduction

Like society in mediaeval Europe, society in old Tibet showed a considerable degree of horizontal mobility. This is astonishing enough for Europe in the Middle Ages when we see the inconvenient, wearisome and dangerous ways of travelling. But it is even more surprising to find a similar mobility in the inhospitable region of Transhimalaya.

The sources do not tell us a lot about the journeys of the craftsmen, especially the artisans from Nepal and traders, who were often travelling at the orders of a monastery, as well as ordinary pilgrims. For the most part we get to know of them when their activities are mentioned in passing in the biography of an important lama.

By contrast, we find much more about the journeys of the clergy which were undertaken for the purpose of studying or of pilgrimage and religious exercise. In the life of important ecclesiastical dignitaries there might also have been occasional long journeys with a religious-political function, for example to the court of the Chinese emperor. Over centuries most of the journeys of the Tibetan clergy took place within the same geographical frame which was fixed by tradition. But this frame had an enormous extension. Mostly there were journeys from the periphery of the Tibetan civilised region to the holy places and centres of Buddhist learning in central Tibet as well as pilgrimages to

mount Kailash and lake Manasarova in Western Tibet. Although these routes were more or less the same over the course of many centuries they were nevertheless full of dangers. We read about robbers, regional warlike riots, diseases and various natural hazards. It could even happen on a well known traditional route that a traveller lost his way during a heavy snowstorm. To reduce the dangers travellers often looked for company.

The situation was different regarding the journeys of secular or ecclesiastical dignities. Because they were always accompanied by a large entourage travelling was much safer for them. But on the other hand it took far more time to organise and to carry out the travel of a great party.

Such journeys very much furthered the union of the civilised region of Tibet and the development of common features. Pilgrimages within the traditional frame were so much part of the Tibetan life that their value was never seriously doubted.

While most of the pilgrimages were taken from the periphery to the centre we sometimes read in the sources as exceptional cases about journeys from the centre to the periphery and even further into areas of different language and culture. The present article is devoted to precisely such an exceptional case: the mobile life of an ecclesiastic which was unusual in its intensity even for the Tibetan society of his time. It is only to be expected that such journeys, which went beyond the traditional routes of pilgrimages, were subject to the criticism of contemporaries.

O-gyan Ngag-dbang rgya-mtsho, better known under his name sTag-tshang ras-pa, is together with Rin-chen bzang-po the most popular Buddhist ecclesiastic in the history of Ladakh. In the view of the present Ladakhi people he has a great significance; children learn at school which monasteries were founded by him. And even for totally uninformed tourists it is hard not to become aware of this outstanding figure in the history of the country because his appearance in paintings and sculptures differs very much from the usual way in which important ecclesiastics are shown in the Ladakhi monasteries - especially his beard, which is unusual for Tibetans, and his white turban-like hat.

That sTag-tshang ras-pa's significance for the history of Ladakh is so much present not only within the monastic communities of Hemis and the other 'Brug-pa monasteries but also in the view of the common people is to a

great extent the result of the studies of Ladakhi history written in Tibetan by Gergan (1976) and in more recent times by Tashi Rabgias (1984).

But even the Western literature drew attention early on to the singular position of sTag-tshang ras-pa. In his article 'Travels of Tibetan pilgrims in the Swat Valley', which was published in 1940, Tucci summarised sTag-tshang ras-pa's report on his pilgrimage to Uddiyāna, the present-day Swat Valley in Pakistan. For his fundamental book *The Kingdom of Ladakh* Petech took a great part of the biography of the lama to pieces for use as a quarry of relevant historical facts. Petech's prime source was the chronicle of Ladakh. After having introduced this source in the beginning of his book he continues:

The only other literary source from Ladakh is the biography of sTag-tshan-ras-pa, compiled in 1663. It is on the pattern of the traditional *rnam-thar*, but with a heavier emphasis than usual on secular matters, which renders it particularly useful (Petech 1977: 3).

In the light of these studies, what is still left to be done? I have looked once more through the biography of this lama. What I found neglected until now is on the one hand half a life, that is to say sTag-tshang ras-pa's life prior to his arrival in Ladakh, and on the other hand what might be called the glue we need to put together again the individual facets which might constitute something approaching a portrait of this outstanding person. Here I want to confine myself to the unknown side of sTag-tshang ras-pa's life. In this way we become aware of the antecedents which explain the particularity of this personality in the history of Ladakh. Tibetan biographies by their nature don't allow a profound psychological analysis. Nevertheless they can help us to gain insight into the career of a person as well as into the tasks this person had to perform during his life and whether he was equal to them or not. Reading the biographies of Tibetan ecclesiastics I find that the careers of the personalities who stand at the beginning of an incarnation line are often more individual than those of later incarnations. The lives of the latter often tend to follow a traced-out pattern.

The biography of sTag-tshang ras-pa was composed 1663, that is twelve years after his death, by a bKa'-brgyud-pa monk with the long name Ngag-dbang kun-dga' lhun-grub thub-bstan dge-legs 'byung-gnas bsod-nams rgyal-mtshan dpal bzang-po. It is printed in a block-print of 57 folios. The blocks are still preserved in Hemis monastery, and were still used for making prints up to very recent times.

Descent, birth, childhood and youth

sTag-tshang ras-pa belonged to the clan of 'Khon, the noble family from which the Sa-skyia hierarchs came. The 'Khon lineage split into different sublineages. The one from which our lama descended had already split off the main lineage before the foundation of Sa-skyia in the year 1073. It goes back to 'Khon mThu-bo che, a brother of Yon-tan 'byung-gnas from whom dKon-mchog rgyal-po, the founder of Sa-skyia, was descended. mThu-bo che settled in Myang-stod in the place where later, in 1365, 'Phags-pa dpal-bzang erected the fortress of rGyal-rtse (Gyangtse) as the centre of administration and government for his principality after his appointment as *nang-chen* (chief attendant) by the emperor Togan Temür (Tucci 1949: 664). sTag-tshang ras-pa's father, mGon-po tshe-ring, lived with his family close to the fortress where he served as an official (*drung-'khor*) of the governor Blo bde-ba. By that time rGyal-rtse had ceased to exist as an independent principality. According to Shakabpa it was conquered by the Rin-spungs-pa in 1488 after a period of administration by a sNe'u-gdong minister (Shakabpa 1984: 88). When sTag-tshang ras-pa was born Rin-spungs itself was probably already under the supremacy of the gTsang-pa, the ruler of gTsang. Ahmed states that this was definitely the case at least for 1575, one year after sTag-tshang ras-pa's birth (Ahmed 1970: 94). But rGyal-rtse was totally subsumed under the rule of the gTsang-pa only in 1612 (Tucci 1949: 654; Ahmed 1970: 101).

sTag-tshang ras-pa was born in the year 1574. At his birth he received the name Tshe-dbang lhun-grub. Not much is known about his early childhood. From the seventh year of his life he was able to read and to write. His biography mentions as a special event the visit of Padma dkar-po, the fourth 'Brug-chen rin-po che (1527-1592), to Myang on the invitation of the governor Blo bde-ba. This must have occurred between 1580 and 1583. It is said that Padma dkar-po so impressed the young boy that he at once wished to enter a monastery. But his parents didn't agree. The description of this episode obviously merely aims to attest an early inclination to the school of the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud-pa.

In the tenth year of sTag-tshang ras-pa's life, in 1583, his father mGon-po tshe-ring died. Before his death he looked back at his life. He had served as an official of the powerful governor and had held a respected position in life. But although he was descended from the famous family whose name is firmly connected to the glorious story of the Sa-skyia-pa he hadn't practised the religion, and resolved to make up for this deficiency. Because fearful dream

signs had already been a source of concern to him, he had promised the Sa-skyia monastery his son at the recommendation of the abbot. He left this promise to his son as his last will.

The fulfillment of this last will was postponed at first. The mother possibly also didn't want to do without the help of her young son after the death of her husband. But when he fell ill of smallpox in his fourteenth year, this was considered as a clear sign that it would be appropriate for him to enter the monastery. However he apparently didn't want to accept the wish of his father that he should go to Sa-skyia. The story goes that a fearful woman appeared to him in a dream and warned him again and again: 'Don't stay! Go to the east!' As is well known, seen from rGyal-rtse Sa-skyia is located exactly in the opposite direction, to the west. But as this episode indicates, there was in the life of the boy a will higher than that of the father to take into account. This higher will justifies the disdain of the paternal will and sTag-tshang ras-pa's later decision to turn to the school of the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud-pa. As usual in such a case of grave illness, divination and oracles were also consulted. Inevitably, the indications were that the boy should enter a monastic community. Otherwise he would be unlikely to enjoy a long life. The boy was ready to become a monk, but he didn't want to give way to the pressure of his relatives who thought that he should go to Sa-skyia according to the will of his father. Obviously he had his own mind. He asked his mother to accompany him up to lake gNam-mtsho. 'Then I will practise the religion at an adequate place,' he told her. The monasteries located immediately east of gTsang, in dBus, were certainly not in his mind as places of learning, or why would he have had the intention to travel to lake gNam-mtsho? It seems that he thought of travelling to Eastern Tibet by the northern route, though such an intention is most unusual. Generally one only reads about monks who go in the opposite direction from Eastern Tibet to Central Tibet for studies. Apparently he was still not thinking very seriously about entering a monastery. He rather wanted to escape the pressure which his relatives were exerting on him. However he didn't depart at all. It was later revealed to him that his smallpox was a manifestation of his tutelary deity and therefore had no long-term consequences.

In the meantime the old governor Blo bde-ba had died. Under his successor there arose internal disputes that are not explained in detail, primarily between the governor and his secretary. In connection with this it is clear that in the meantime sTag-tshang ras-pa had followed his father and entered into the service of the governor. Apparently he served not as an official

but as a soldier. In these internal disputes he behaved loyally to his lord, and in battle he distinguished himself by his bravery, showing little concern for his life. It is said that he was considered as unconquerable in the whole area. Regarding this development his mother and his relatives of course took a different view: they were annoyed at his wild way of life, fearing that in the end he would be killed. But we are told that he did still cherish the desire to turn to religion. When the fears of his relatives coincided with this wish, he took his first real steps in this direction.

Turning to religion

The first religious instructions and initiations he received were from the rNying-ma tradition. On the occasion of the visit of a lama from the East Tibetan monastery Kah-thog he was initiated into the cult of the bKa'-brgyad bde-gshegs 'dus-pa and received instructions about the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the *Bar-do thos-grol*. The teacher Zab-phu mkhan-po granted him teachings belonging to the tradition of the northern *gter-ma* of rGod-kyi ldem 'phru-can. These first steps still didn't mean that he took vows and entered the monastic life. They obviously also left no lasting impression, as a special relationship with the tradition of the rNying-ma-pa did not arise from them.

It was in 1593, in his twentieth year of life, that he definitely decided to leave his home and turn completely to religion. This is rather late for entering a monastic community. We may take this as a hint that the step really took place from his own decision. We don't know whether any other events at that time promoted the decision. The biography has it that it was the special reputation of a spiritual teacher which attracted him. This teacher was the 'Brug-pa ecclesiastic lHa-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang bzang-po (1546-1615). lHa-rtse-ba was at that time 47 years old. He enjoyed a high reputation in whole Tibet at that time, not only in dBus and gTsang, but also in Khams in the east. For example, at approximately the same time Karma bstan-'phel, the first Khams-sprul rin-po che, was also attracted by the reputation of this teacher. His biography¹ shows two interesting parallels: on the one hand he too deviated from a spiritual career that had been indicated in early life. On the other hand he also would become a *dbu-bla*, the chief spiritual teacher of a

¹ Karma-bstan-'phel, *dPal-ldan bla-ma dam-pa karma bstan-'phel-gyi rnam-par thar-pa grub-pa'i rol-rtsed*. In a forthcoming article I shall introduce this biography in more detail as a source for the history of Eastern Tibet.

king. The two of them met, and there was even a point in sTag-tshang ras-pa's life when he could just as well have gone to the east instead of to the west to start the career which his dharma brother Karma bstan-'phel later followed. As it happens, he turned down this invitation. A prophecy of lHa-rtse-ba, to the effect that there was already a karmic relationship between sTag-tshang ras-pa and the area of mNga'-ris, is mentioned as a reason for the refusal. But I anticipate. At that time lHa-rtse-ba held a decisive position within the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud-pa. After the death of Padma dkar-po one year earlier, in 1592, lHa-rtse-ba was the most outstanding figure among the 'Brug-pa. He had a decisive say in the internal discussions that were shortly to begin within this religious order.

When he left home he told his mother that he wanted to pay a visit to the shrines in lHa-sa. Apparently he had merely given the impression that he would go on an ordinary pilgrimage. He did in fact first go to dBus, where he paid a visit to the two famous Buddha statues in the Jo-khang and the Ramo-che in lHa-sa. He met many other pilgrims and travellers in lHa-sa, among them many Khams-pas. He also got to know a *dge-slong* of the Karma-pa, who of course recommended to him the Ninth Karma-pa dBang-phyug rdo-rje (1554-1603) as the most respected teacher - which at that time was probably true. Anyway his decision was already certain, although he hadn't yet met lHa-rtse-ba, his future teacher. sTag-tshang ras-pa continued his journey. Reading in the biography that the roads weren't comfortable at that time one has to smile - they still aren't today. However the dangers at that time were different. Not only in the wild east of Tibet, but also in central Tibet robbers lay in wait for travellers. So it was natural that travellers combined forces for their protection. sTag-tshang ras-pa was especially lucky: he happened on the party of the governor Yar-rgyab-pa who had come from gTsang and was on his way to the residence of the Phag-mo-gru princes of sNe-gdong rtse which was located close to rTse-thang, at the entrance of the Yar-klungs valley. In his entourage were about 200 people. At that time lHa-rtse-ba stayed in 'Phyongs-rgyas. So they could travel quite a great part of the journey together. After sTag-tshang ras-pa had left his fellow travellers in gNe-gdong rtse, he first paid a visit to the temple of Khra-'brug (see Ferrari 1958: 50, 124 n. 23), which goes back to the time of Srong-btsan sgam-po (620-49). He didn't proceed immediately to 'Phyongs-rgyas, but instead followed the Yar-klungs river upwards to Yar-stod Khrom-sa thang, where at that time the Karma-pa was staying. He paid him a visit and received his blessing. He made another stop at E-vam monastery before he finally arrived in 'Phyongs-rgyas.

lHa-rtse-ba was at that time staying with his disciples in sTag-rtse sgang,² the castle immediately above 'Phyongs-rgyas which was later to be the birthplace of the Fifth Dalai Lama. But now, in the year 1593, there was born in the same noble family of 'Phyongs-rgyas, the Za-hor family, in accordance with the vision of lHa-rtse-ba, the Fifth 'Brug-chen rin-po che dPag-bsam dbang-po (1593-1641).³ As is well known, bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma, son of the prince abbot of Rva-lung, which at that time was the leading 'Brug-pa monastery, refused to recognise him as the true reincarnation of Padma dkar-po (who had died in 1592) and instead favoured his own son Ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal, the later founder of the Bhutanese hierarchy. Nevertheless lHa-rtse-ba was able to gain the support of the g'Tsang sde-srid for his candidate (see Aris 1980: 205 ff., 223, 235). So it was the powerful position of lHa-rtse-ba which contributed decisively to the splitting of the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud-pa. These events aren't mentioned in the biography of sTag-tshang ras-pa at all. What is clear is that for sTag-tshang ras-pa dPag-bsam dbang-po alone was always the omniscient one.

When sTag-tshang ras-pa arrived in 'Phyongs-rgyas, the lama was staying in the castle in seclusion. Acting as patron, the noble family had apparently invited him and his monks for the performance of religious ceremonies. Five days later sTag-tshang ras-pa met the lama for the first time. He asked the teacher to care for him so that he could attain buddhahood in just one life. lHa-rtse-ba accepted him as his pupil and he entered the community of the monks. lHa-rtse-ba spoke to him: 'Because you are a *shar-chen-pa*' - an already grown up man (Das 1983: 1232) - 'I shall call you Shar-kha ras-pa'. Ras-pa, 'the one who only wears cotton clothing', is a typical name for the successors of Mi-la-ras-pa. However the real monk name which was given to him was Ngag-dbang rgya-mtsho. From this time on it is under this name that he is mentioned in his biography .

² Identical with 'Phying-ba sTag-rtse (see Ferrari 1958: 52, 130 n. 292; Wylie 1962: 170 n. 510).

³ See Khetsun Sangpo 1981, vol. viii: 534 ff. dPag-bsam dbang-po in general is regarded as the Fifth and not the Fourth 'Brug-chen rin-po che, as stated by Petech 1977: 35 and Schuh 1983: 3. Prior to him were g'Tsang-pa rGya-ras-pa (1161-1211), rJe Kun-dga' dpal-'byor (1428-76), 'Jam-dbyangs chos-kyi grags-pa (1478-1523) and Padma dkar-po (1527-1592).

sTag-tshang ras-pa studied at first more than three years in the monastery rNam-rgyal lhun-po in Gong-dkar.⁴ He also accompanied his teacher together with other monk pupils when he was invited by patrons of high standing to perform religious ceremonies.⁵ He also received instructions from the tradition of the bKa'-brgyud-pa in sTag-lung. lHa-rtse-ba had sent him to this monastery to ask dBon rin-po che Ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal (1571-1626) especially for the six yogas of Nāropa (*chos-drug*) as well as for instructions from the tradition of the bKa'-gdams-pa. From there he paid a visit to 'Bri-khung thil. In this context the biography tells us an interesting episode. It illustrates the extreme tantric methods which were performed at that time by some Tibetan yogins. At the cemetery of 'Bri-khung sTag-tshang ras-pa met a yogin who practised there, living in a thatched hut. Cemeteries were always popular places of meditation where the yogins primarily tried hard, by meditating on the fearful divinities, to recognise all phenomena as empty and as mere creations of the mind (see for instance Tucci and Heissig 1970: 108). Part of the exercise was to change unclean substances into pure substances in the imagination, with the resulting experience that the true reality is neither 'good' nor 'bad', neither 'beautiful' nor 'nasty' and so on but free of all qualities. The man on the cemetery of 'Bri-khung carried this exercise to extremes. sTag-tshang ras-pa saw many little pieces of meat lying around which had been dried in the air. 'What is this?' sTag-tshang ras-pa asked suspiciously. 'This is human flesh,' was the answer. 'Why are you doing this?' sTag-tshang ras-pa wanted to know. 'For food!' the yogin replied. sTag-tshang ras-pa wanted to find out what profit the strange way of life of this man had produced and he showered him with questions regarding his basic philosophical opinion (*lta-ba*): 'Are these phenomena mind or not? What is better, relative or absolute truth? Do you claim that all phenomena exist in truth or do you claim that they don't exist?' 'I claim that they exist,' was the answer. sTag-tshang ras-pa then taught him with reference to Mi-la-ras-pa and the Buddha, that from the point of view of the relative truth all phenomena exist, but that this is disproved from the point of view of the absolute truth, in other words, that sticking exclusively to one of the two points of view is just half of the truth. And then - as it is said - he explained in detail the right view with the help of

⁴ I assume that rNam-rgyal lhun-po is the precursor of the monastery bDe-chen chos-'khor in the proximity of Gong-dkar. lHa-rtse-ba is regarded as the first in the line of the *yongs-'dzin* incarnations of bDe-chen chos-'khor (Petech 1977: 35). Regarding the later *yongs-'dzin*, see Khetsun Sangpo 1981, vol. viii: 445 ff. lHa-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang bzang-po died in 1615.

⁵ Among those mentioned are sDe-pa Lum-pa-ba and sDe-pa lHa-yul-ba.

the sutras and tantras. These expositions must have had a shattering effect on this yogin. 'Since I have been here, about thirty years have passed. Never has anyone come who told me something like that,' he confessed. sTag-tshang ras-pa replied,

Well, because no one gave a crazy man anything to eat, there is nothing in his urine to examine. Till now for about thirty years you have cut off the roots of a life led for liberation. You have sat there beating your own head. Wouldn't it be suitable to turn away from this and follow a good teacher?

sTag-tshang ras-pa's criticism doesn't point against eating human flesh as such. Primarily it points out that this exercise, however extreme it may be, does not lead to the right view as long as guidance by a good spiritual teacher is absent. Later sTag-tshang ras-pa told his teacher the story. He was very interested to hear about the details. 'What kind of practice did he have?' he wanted to know. 'This exactly was his practice. There wasn't much there,' sTag-tshang ras-pa said to him. Thereupon lHa-rtse-ba gave the following explanation:

Although it is said that at the time of the yoga practice, of special necessity one eats the five kinds of meat as the five kinds of nectar,⁶ by eating human flesh without having a reliable view one creates a flesh-eating demon. [In so doing] one is a thief who only shows the outer appearance of someone who has such an understanding [of emptiness].

The first journey

Without the correct view all practice is in vain. But after the teacher has conveyed the right view to the pupil, practising meditation is for the bKa'-brgyud-pa the most important thing to do. This school therefore is also described by followers as sGrub-brgyud or sGrub-pa nyams-len-gyi brgyud-pa, the tradition of meditation practice. Accordingly for sTag-tshang ras-pa practice became now a matter of priority. The bKa'-brgyud-pa train themselves principally in areas and at places which are particularly connected with their tradition. These places have attained their power of blessing because

⁶ Regarding the five kinds of meat and the five kinds of nectar see for example Beyer 1973: 158.

important yogins from the history of the bKa'-brgyud order already practised there before, for example the famous Tibetan yogin Mi-la-ras-pa. These outstanding yogins have prepared the way for their successors by having conquered local spirits and demons. They have removed the obstacles for successful meditative practice at these places. These events are not confined to a particularly glorious age, but happened continuously throughout Tibetan history. We learn also in the biography of sTag-tshang ras-pa how such a location was established as a meditation place with particularly favourable qualities for later generations. Traditionally these preferred meditation places of the bKa'-brgyud-pa are located in Tsa-ri, La-phyi - the meditation place of Mi-la-ras-pa - and at mount Ti-se, alias Kailash. Phag-mo-gru-pa (1110-70) had already received the instruction from his teacher sGam-po-pa (1079-1153) to meditate at these sacred places, and he passed this word on to his pupils (compare Filibeck 1990: 1; Petech 1978: 315).

sTag-tshang ras-pa made his first journey, which was completely within the traditional frame, apparently from own decision. He went to his teacher and informed him that he intended to meditate at the sacred places in sTod, in the west. If he did not die, he would come back later to present to his teacher as a gift the insights he had gained through his practice. This sounds rather arbitrary, but it obviously corresponded completely to the expectations of the teacher. Without his formal permission such a step would have been unthinkable. Starting from Gong-dkar his route at first led via Yar-gzigs at the north-western edge of the lake Yar-'brog mtsho and via sGo-bzhi to Brag-gdong not far from rGyal-rtse. Travelling merchants whom he met on the road were astonished at his long day's marches. In a place called Brag-gdong he met for the first time since his departure from home some of those who had been close to him earlier. He told them that there was no reason to cry for him. He told them about his teacher and the new life which he led now. Especially he talked about the fact that he has given up worldly activities and now practised meditation in hermitages. In an allusion to his earlier life he added: 'These are the characteristics of the *pho-rgod*. Therefore you don't need to cry.' It was as a *pho-rgod* that he was earlier known in rGyal-rtse. A *pho-rgod* is a courageous man, but also one who is wild and untamed. His relatives asked him to remain since he had nothing but his clothes. But he replied that he had always received meals and clothing. In other words, what was given to him on his way satisfied him wholly.

He went on to rGyal-rtse. When he came to his parental home, he was immediately recognised by his younger brother. All his family members wanted

to see him and embraced him warmly. His mother of course claimed to have known already that he would come back as a monk. All of them were glad about his new way of life. But he also told them unequivocally that he was no longer tied to worldly duties. He now totally applied himself to following the instructions of his spiritual teacher. As is to be seen later, this was not always easy for his relatives. Family relationships also had a high value in Tibet.

sTag-tshang ras-pa then retired for nine months to a cemetery in rTse-chen, a place lying opposite to rGyal-rtse on the other side of the Nyang-chu. Here he practised guruyoga. Afterwards he didn't travel straight towards the west, but visited many holy places away from the road. All of them were in some way connected to the bKa'-brgyud tradition. Therefore he met many monks of the different branches of the bKa'-brgyud-pa: Karma-pa, 'Brug-pa, 'Bri-khung-pa and sTag-lung-pa. On special days they performed religious ceremonies together. Anyway for mediation everyone retired again in solitude. In this way sTag-tshang ras-pa passed the year 1597.

Finally in the first half of the summer of 1598, together with other yogins he travelled to mount Kailash. On the shore of Lake Manasarovar they met about forty robbers who had come from Mon. Mon describes the neighbouring regions on the southern side of the Himalayan ridge. For sTag-tshang ras-pa this was the opportunity to demonstrate the warlike skills acquired in his youth. He seized the leader of the robbers and forced him to swear that they would not do any harm to the travellers, then let him off again. After they had looked after their cost of living in sPu-rangs, which at that time was still the residence of a king (Petech 1977: 32), they started clockwise with the traditional circumambulation of mount Kailash and the holy lakes Rakas and Manasarovar.

While most companions returned to Gong-dkar, sTag-tshang ras-pa remained in the company of a monk, who had fallen ill so seriously that he was in danger of his life. After a month he recovered and both could start their journey home. This time they visited places of pilgrimage in sKyid-grong, but especially they went to see the famous statue of 'Phags-pa va-ti (Wylie 1962: 64; Tucci 1949: 70 ff.). During the winter they stayed in Chu-bar, the famous hermitage of Mi-la-ras-pa in La-phyi (Wylie 1962: 115 fn. 12), on the eastern side of Mount Everest.

In spring - it must have been the year 1599 - the two pilgrims returned to dBus-gtsang. In the meantime in rGyal-rtse sTag-tshang ras-pa's mother

had died. The bride of the elder brother was overcome by a serious illness. Urgently the brother asked sTag-tshang ras-pa to stay as long as the patient's life remained in the balance. 'I am in a hurry. I don't have any time to stay,' sTag-tshang ras-pa said. An interesting discussion developed between the brothers. The older spoke reproachfully to the younger: 'If for us normal people adverse circumstances arise, then we hope that all of you ecclesiastics help us. For what else are you of service?' sTag-tshang ras-pa replied: 'I haven't practised the religion with the thought in mind that I might keep off the adverse circumstances of the diverse karma which you have collected. If one fritters away the free leisure and the rich possibilities [of a life which grants favourable circumstances for the practise of religion], one has deceived oneself. Therefore one is beneficial for living beings by pulling out the circulation of births by the root. It is with this in mind that I have practised the religion. At present my sole aim is to follow the instruction of the spiritual teacher. The command of the king, the word of the queen, the delays for relatives and love and hatred of laymen - these are things that I have not taken into account in the past, nor shall take into account in the future. This is exactly [my behaviour].' These were harsh words among brothers. They demonstrate a glaring discrepancy regarding the attitude towards religious life and religious tasks between laymen and ecclesiastics. The laymen just try to improve their destiny within the cycle of births while the ecclesiastics consider this as more or less wasted cosmetic repairs which do not change the fact of basic evil at all. They want to extirpate basic evil, that is to say to destroy illusion and ignorance which imprison living beings on the wheel of lives.

But normally these two attitudes are not that much in contrast. One mustn't forget the simple fact that it has always been an essential source of income for the ecclesiastics to perform rituals with diverse profane aims by order of a patron. This contributed to securing the economic basis of a monastic community. In the case of sTag-tshang ras-pa the situation differs in that he as pupil had to stick firmly to the commands of his teacher. High-handed behaviour wasn't permitted to him. After all he at least performed the ceremonies on the occasion of the death of his mother: production of *tsha-tsha* from her bones together with a ritual for the elimination of the danger of falling into inferior existences. He then wandered further. "Via Gong-dkār" he slowly reached 'Phyong-rgyas sTag-rtse, where at that time his teacher was staying. 'It is good that you have come after making progress in meditation in mountain hermitages and sacred places,' lHa-rtse-ba welcomed him. 'As far as your mother is concerned I have taken her to heaven (i.e. into the sphere of the gods). Stay a couple of days!'

Second journey

He didn't remain for a long time. Soon his teacher sent him to She-la in Kong-po. There lived a man called Lo-chen Ratnabhadra. He had asked lHa-rtse-ba to send him an entire convention (*bsgrub-sde*). For sTag-tshang ras-pa this was the first opportunity to assume more responsibility. lHa-rtse-ba intended him for precentor (*dbu-mdzad*). 'Remain three years. After this you can do what you want,' lHa-rtse-ba said, before he sent the monks away.

On this journey too the monks ran into a band of some twenty robbers. This time however the event is not reported to us to describe the purely physical strength of sTag-tshang ras-pa, but to demonstrate his magic skills as proof of his advanced spiritual development. His companions had run off. He sat down alone in meditation and started to sing a religious song. Suddenly an intense hailstorm burst. This intimidated the robbers so much that they gave him back the patched gown and *kapāla* which they had stolen from him, and they swore an oath to do no more evil from then on.

The monks didn't follow the valley of the gTsang-po, but chose a more southward route via Tsa-ri and from there north to She-la in Kong-po. There they were greeted by Lo-chen sprul-sku Ratnabhadra. The situation in She-la soon became unpleasant. Quarrels among the monks arose. Ratnabhadra bluntly and brusquely invited them to leave: 'If you mendicants quarrel, scam!' The monks for their part said, 'If this is so, we shall return.' But sTag-tshang ras-pa was stable. By no means did he want to act contrary to the instruction of his teacher, even - as he said - if a lake would appear under his feet. So Lo-chen paid sTag-tshang ras-pa alone for his religious services.

It would be a rash verdict to judge sTag-tshang ras-pa's mission as a great failure. As becomes clear from the further description of the episode, the mission had an - as it were - magical purpose. By ritual and meditative exercises, restrictive divinities and demons should be conquered in order to achieve successful religious practice. These divinities and demons were also held responsible for the disputes among the monks. For nine months sTag-tshang ras-pa retired to a house without light in strict seclusion. Meanwhile he had visions of a *klu* causing him harm. This serpent-spirit had already worried him earlier on his first journey. Of course sTag-tshang ras-pa succeeded in subjugating the *klu* and obliging him to obedience by swearing an oath.

One doesn't conquer demons by the strength of the body but by the strength of the mind - to put it more exactly: by the strength of the imagination. The yogin evokes himself as a powerful deity placed over the demons. In this way he is able to put them in their proper place and even to destroy them if necessary.

After the three years stipulated by lHa-rtse-ba had passed, fifteen monks arrived to fetch sTag-tshang ras-pa. But then he received a letter from his teacher in which he told him, 'You still have to stay three more years acting as *dbu-mdzad*.' This clearly contradicted the promise given before, that sTag-tshang ras-pa at the end of the three years could do what he wished. An essential feature of the teacher-pupil connection becomes clear here: however arbitrary and contradictory the decisions of the teacher, it is his will alone that is important. The disciple, on the other hand, should abandon his own deceitful self and - especially by the exercise of the guruyoga - completely identify himself with his teacher who is the living Buddha for him.

sTag-tshang ras-pa finally stayed for another four years before returning to his teacher. This must have been in 1606 if I have understood the chronology of the events correctly.⁷

The third journey

sTag-tshang ras-pa asked lHa-rtse-ba for permission to travel once again to sTod. But instead the teacher sent him to the area of Tsa-ri, saying that he should stay in seclusion for one year in a place called sTag-tshang. As already mentioned above, since the time of Phag-mo-gru-pa (1110-70) Tsa-ri had been a special destination for bKa'-brgyud-pa monks. However since the time of gTsang-pa rGya-ras-pa (1161-1211) the hermits of the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud-pa prevailed among them (Filibeck 1990: 1; compare the biography, fol. 21a). When sTag-tshang ras-pa stayed in sTag-tshang rong, one of the four big valleys in Tsa-ri (Filibeck 1990: 3), he initially perceived numerous fearful phenomena, for example earthquakes, fire and disembodied hands. The hands reached out for him and their fingers were strewn with mouths and eyes. He knew that these perceptions were mere deceptions and did his best to evoke a magical protection circle. Then he had visions in which he was invited by many

⁷ Exact information about years is given only in the subsequent parts of the *Biography*.

people to come to an elevated throne. In particular, a man who had the face of a lion talked to him: 'I am the owner of this place.' He was speaking of the place which appeared in the dream. 'Using the vajra in your hand' - that is to say, acting as a teacher of the Vajrayāna - 'you have to care for all these people here!' He granted him the initiation of gSang-ba'i bdag-po and the five Garudas and fastened a sword amulet to his body. Then he flew up to the sky.

As will be noticed by experts of Ladakhi history, the representation of this visionary experience has a clear function. It interprets sTag-tshang ras-pa's later position as spiritual head teacher of the Ladakhi king, whose name starts with the Tibetan word for lion, as predestined for the welfare of living beings. Although sTag-tshang ras-pa's biography shows comparatively few features of the usual stereotyped fashion of Tibetan hagiographies, it is also nevertheless a construct based on ideology. It serves to legitimate the special relationship of priest and patron which later developed between sTag-tshang ras-pa and king Seng-ge rnam-rgyal, the relationship of the tiger and the lion as the Ladakhis use to say (Tashi Rabgias 1984: 192; Thub-bstan-dpal-ldan 1988: 99).

From now on all difficulties for practising spiritual exercises in sTag-tshang were overcome. The obstacles were removed and the harmful demons were subjugated. For more than a year he remained in seclusion. Then he went to further places of pilgrimage in Tsa-ri. At that time he met Zhva-dmar-pa Chos-kyi dbang-phyug, who also visited the holy places of Tsa-ri. Zhva-dmar-pa spoke to him: 'In general this Tsa-ri is more powerful than other holy places. But above all until now there has hardly been anyone who has finally stayed a whole year here in sTag-tshang. It is good that now there are no more obstacles left.' Gladly he added that they would meet again in dBus.

So it was sTag-tshang ras-pa who through his stay and his meditative exercises first and foremost established sTag-tshang as a sacred place for promising religious practice. It was for this reason that he received the epithet of sTag-tshang ras-pa.

Soon after he twice received letters from his teacher to let him know that he had remained long enough in Tsa-ri. Even if a prolonged stay should yield a profit it was time to come back. On his way back, among other places of pilgrimage he also visited the monastery gSang-sngags chos-gling to see dPag-bsam dbang-po, the Fifth 'Brug-chen rin-po che. Afterwards he went to lHa-

rtse-ba who was staying in the palace of Gong-dkar and listened to numerous instructions from the bKa'-brgyud tradition.

Fourth journey

sTag-tshang ras-pa's fourth journey was to be his first long-distance journey. As evident from one of his songs this journey took place in 1610 (*Biography* fol. 21b). lHa-rtse-ba gave him the order to travel for the establishing of a karmic relationship (*las-'brel*) to Mount Glang-chen 'gying-ri in China. Such a karmic relationship is regarded as having efficacy during different existences. This motive raises the journey beyond ordinary pilgrimages and shows it to be part of a very long-term strategy to spread the teachings of the tradition in question.

Mount Glang-chen 'gying-ri is identical with Emei Shan in Szechwan (Zhang Yisun 1985: 420). The mountain, which has an altitude of 3099 metres, is known as a place of pilgrimage for Chinese Buddhists. Why lHa-rtse-ba selected this destination in China and not the much better-known Wu-t'ai Shan we do not learn from the biography.

lHa-rtse-ba instructed his pupil to stay no longer than one month at one place and to return at the end. This strict injunction to sTag-tshang ras-pa was intended not only to protect him from being held backed somewhere for a long time but also to prevent him from settling down for the duration at a pleasant place. Here the correspondence between the outer pilgrimage and the inner mental development is evident. The aim of the development is to overcome every attachment to the objects of the mind and to let the stream of phenomena pass by like clouds in the sky which leave no trace behind.

sTag-tshang ras-pa must have felt that this journey would be quite different from his previous ones, which all led him into areas well known by a continuous stream of pilgrims. Therefore he asked his teacher to pray for a successful journey. Moreover, he didn't set off right away towards the east but first visited lHa-sa to pray for success in front of the two Buddha statues in the Jo-khang and the Ra-mo-che. At that time he also met Zhva-dmar-pa again, an encounter which inspired him to compose a prayer and auspicious verses.

From this time on his journey was not just a matter of walking. He constantly looked for places and opportunities to practise meditation. We

mustn't forget that this was the essential purpose of his journey. We therefore learn a little about the spiritual exercises and the visions that appeared to him during his journey. About the outer course of the journey however we learn hardly more than a couple of place-names - a fact that disappointed Tucci when he read sTag-tshang ras-pa's *O-rgyan-gyi lam-yig*.

sTag-tshang ras-pa travelled slowly via Kong-po and Tsha-ba sgang to 'Ba' or 'Ba'-thang. A mother who provided him with meals there also worried about his cost of living in China: 'No one will come to give you anything in China. You must buy the meals yourself. Therefore take some money from here!' With these words she gave him the money which he would need on his way.

The further course of the journey seems - as far as reconstructed from the scanty details - a little confused. Anyway via Mi-nyag he finally reached Dartse-mdo. From there he still had about five days to walk to Emei Shan. On the mountain he stayed a couple of days in a monastery.

Petech writes that sTag-tshang ras-pa also visited Wu-t'ai Shan.⁸ However, I am inclined to question this. In the biography it is merely written that, in a dream, sTag-tshang ras-pa had a vision of Wu-t'ai Shan during his stay on Emei Shan. As is well known, such visionary journeys are merely another manner of travelling for Tibetan yogins. In Tibetan biographies it is often hard to distinguish whether the protagonist actually made the journey or whether it merely took place in his imagination. The author of sTag-tshang ras-pa's biography therefore also formulates it very carefully. He writes that it isn't sure whether sTag-tshang ras-pa has really seen Wu-t'ai Shan apart from in his vision.

sTag-tshang ras-pa went to a couple of other places in China, probably all of them in the area of Szechwan. On his way home he made a pilgrimage through the area of Tsa-ri for four months. He found it so pleasant there that he would have enjoyed remaining for ever in this area. Anyway the instruction of his teacher was stronger than the temptation to stay, and he eventually returned to him. This is likely to have happened towards the end of the year

⁸ Petech 1977: 35. Tashi Rabgias does not mention sTag-tshang ras-pa's journey to Emei Shan. According to him sTag-tshang ras-pa wished to visit Wu-t'ai Shan, but some signs induced him to postpone this journey (Tashi Rabgias 1984: 187).

1611, but the dates in this section of the biography are scanty and inaccurate. In the source the chronology of the events is arranged as if sTag-tshang ras-pa was sent on his next journey, which started at the beginning of the year 1613, after just a short break, so there is also reason to believe that he returned from China only in the fall of the year 1612.

Fifth journey

In lHa-rtse-ba's opinion sTag-tshang ras-pa had practised in Tsa-ri long enough:

If one remains for a long time it will come out that one also becomes like the ordinary people of Tsa-ri. Your feet are swift and your intellectual faculty also isn't small. Therefore go now to the great places of pilgrimage in the area of sTod, especially to the crown of the twenty-four [holy] regions, Jālandhar, Kha-che Khri-brtan and Puspā-ha-ri, which are the meditation places of the venerable lord Nāropa, and [which are the places] where Tilopa granted Mar-pa prophecies, verbal traditions and so forth as if one fully pours a bottle, and where the blessing of the tradition began, because [Mar-pa] was appointed the representative for Tibet. Go by turning your thoughts exclusively towards Uddiyāna! Don't consider whether you will arrive this year or not. You may walk calmly.

And he further gave him the advice to follow the trace of O-rgyan-pa Rin-chen dpal (1230-1293) who had made this journey before.

O-rgyan-pa Rin-chen dpal's scanty description of his journey was known, but it dated back more than three hundred years earlier (Tucci 1971). There were no reports from more recent times. Uddiyāna was still a popular destination, but only within the imagination of Tibetan yogins, so it was a journey into the uncertain. As followed from lHa-rtse-ba's words, it was for him a journey to the roots of the bKa'-bgyud school and further to the roots of Tibetan Buddhism in general. Unlike the journey to China, the motive for this voyage was a backward-looking one. It is therefore difficult to recognise the order which Petech proposes, namely to spread the tradition of the 'Brug-pa in Western Tibet (Petech 1977: 35). This mission - or strictly speaking, the efforts for a refreshment of the 'Brug-pa tradition already existing in the west - were to be an incidental result of the journey. An early request in this direction which was put forward by the king of Ladakh during an interruption of sTag-

tshang ras-pa's voyage in Zangs-dkar even clashed with the real aim of the journey and was therefore brusquely refused by sTag-tshang ras-pa, as Petech himself has noted.

lHa-rtse-ba must really have been very convinced of sTag-tshang ras-pa's physical and mental strength, because we know of no other pupil whom he would have sent on such a long and dangerous journey. sTag-tshang ras-pa realised the risk of such an enterprise. 'Whether I come through or not - I go whilst death sets the limit. If I should reach Uddiyāna, there is no need to go on or to return; I'll stay there. Therefore look upon me in this existence and within all lives with the love for a son!' he said to his teacher. Indeed he would see him again only in his visions.

sTag-tshang ras-pa's conviction that, in the event of his arriving safely, he would stay for ever in this country glorified by Tibetan Buddhists, certainly arose on the one hand as a result of the information, taken from Rin-chen dpal's report, that Buddhism in some form had still been alive in the Swat valley at that time (Tucci 1971: 375, 390, 391). On the other hand this conviction was also presumably based on the image of the country which was transfigured into the paradise described in numerous reports of mystical experiences. At all events this conviction demonstrates a lack of concrete knowledge about the prevailing conditions in the Swat valley, which was part of the Moghul empire ruled at that time by Jahāngīr, the son of Akbar.

Before his departure he had conversations with his teacher and his friends and received initiations regarded as important for the journey. Even the Four-Armed mGon-po personally appeared in his dream and granted him three of the four required initiations into the cult of bDe-mchog 'khor-lo. The fourth one he received later during a vision in Uddiyāna. Characteristically this is the only way he received an initiation in Uddiyāna. There were no Buddhist teachers left who could have transmitted him their tradition.

Finally he took leave of his teacher. This was in the year 1613. First he revisited the particularly sacred places of central Tibet, namely lHa-sa and bSam-yas, as well as mKhar-chu and Gro-bo lung in lHo-brag. Then he went on to Myang-stod, his native country. This time too he was confronted with the expectations of his relatives. If one believes that there is an expert on certain problems within one's family, it is only too natural to ask him for help. The reticence which sTag-tshang ras-pa had demonstrated and explained before obviously hadn't left any lasting impression. On the contrary this time the

expectations even went further. Would he please stay a whole year to perform religious ceremonies? At present there was a demon threatening the elder brother. sTag-tshang ras-pa thought up a meager alternative solution. He set up a *gtor-ma* for dPal-ldan lha-mo and charged the deity to perform the required actions. 'This is the same as if I would stay here myself. We shall meet again later!' Then he hurried on.

He travelled from one place of pilgrimage to the next. Some of the highlights of his journey in Tibet were dPal-'khor-sde-chen, the big monastery in rGyal-rtse, Sa-skya, La-phyi Chu-bar, sKyid-rong rDzong-dkar, Glo-bo,⁹ the area of Gro-shod at the upper course of the gTsang-po in mNga'-ris (Wylie 1962: 124 fn. 83 and map), lake Manasarovar and Mt Kailash as well as the area of Gu-ge.

With the help of sTag-tshang ras-pa's guide to Uddiyana Tucci has gone over the route. Although he hasn't succeeded in identifying all place-names, the way sTag-tshang ras-pa had chosen is for the most part comprehensible anyway. There is no need to repeat Tucci's presentations in detail. Transferred to today's geographical and political conditions the course of the journey can be summarised as follows.

Following the Sulej he reached Kinnaur and the area around today's Shimla. He traveled on to Jalandhar and from there to Shrīnagar. Because three of his Tibetan travel companions who had joined him in Jalandhar fell ill he turned from Kashmir to Zangs-dkar. Two of them died on the road. He visited Lahul where he stayed one year. According to the biography he set off again at the first calendar day of the eighth month in the wood hare year. This corresponds to August 25, 1615 of our calendar. Together with a companion he travelled once more to Shrīnagar. After they had crossed the river Jhelum, information about the difficult way to Uddiyāna discouraged the companion so much that he turned around and sTag-tshang ras-pa had to go on by himself. His onward journey proceeded adventurously. He fell among robbers, and was even sold as slave, but on the other hand he again and again met people who saved him from difficult situations and helped him to find his way. In the company of a foreign yogin he finally went to the sacred places, or rather what was still left of them, in Swat. Apparently he didn't penetrate further north into the valley than Mingora. Without staying very long, he returned via

⁹ In the *Biography* written as Blo-bo.

Kashmir to Zangs-dkar. From there he visited Ladakh for the first time. According to Petech it was presumably towards the end of the year 1616.

Effects of the journeys

Reading sTag-tshang ras-pa's description of his journey to Uddiyāna Tucci was disappointed about the lack of historically interesting facts (Tucci 1971: 418). As the most remarkable fact Tucci noticed that sTag-tshang ras-pa found a population in the former Uddiyāna which still wasn't completely Islamic; remains of Buddhism and Hinduism had survived.

At the end of this paper I want to address another matter than that of the historical information contained the account of his journey to Uddiyāna, namely the question of the effects that his journeys - and above all his journey to Swat - had on his environment, himself, and his further career. To answer this we must look briefly at his return to Tibet.

sTag-tshang ras-pa travelled little by little from Ladakh to Gong-dkar. On his way he not only visited monasteries but was also invited by governors. So his travel experiences quickly came to be known. He came also to Rva-lung. He spent some months in Gong-dkar rNam-rgyal lhun-po, the residence of his deceased teacher lHa-rtse-ba. Meanwhile the news about his return from Uddiyāna spread in dBus. Throughout dBus he soon was known under the epithet O-rgyan-pa, the one from Uddiyāna. Among those who interestedly asked about the conditions especially in India and sTod was the g'Tsang sde-srid Karma phun-tshogs. He met sTag-tshang ras-pa on the occasion of his visit in Yar-klungs, and pressed him to come to g'Tsang. After being received respectfully in 'Phyongs-rgyas, sTag-tshang ras-pa paid his visit to 'Brug-chen dPag-bsam dbang-po in Byams-pa chos gling. The copious gifts brought from Ladakh alone already raised his prestige. He recounted his experiences in China, India and mNga'-ris and dPag-bsam dbang-po asked him to compose the guide to Uddiyāna.

After the death of lHa-rtse-ba his pupil Mi-pham blo-gros functioned as regent (*rgyal-tshab*) in Gong-dkar rNam-rgyal lhun-po.¹⁰ He called sTag-tshang

¹⁰ In sTag-tshang ras-pa's biography rNam-rgyal lhun-po is always the residence of lHa-rtse-ba. The name bDe-chen chos-'khor is mentioned for the first time in 1628 (fol. 32b). Petech (1977: 53) points to the autobiography of the second

ras-pa back to Gong-dkar. Apparently he was looking for support to construct a new temple in the residence of the deceased teacher. However after consideration Mi-pham blo-gros came to the conclusion that sTag-tshang ras-pa's future task lay in mNga'-ris, and advised him to go to the west again. The 'Brug-chen too gave him the order to return to Ladakh.

Since the rest of the story is more or less known thanks to Petech's study of the kingdom of Ladakh, we can stop here and try to present some conclusions. First we notice that sTag-tshang ras-pa's journey was not imitated. sTag-tshang ras-pa had traveled far and his knowledge and experience were widely known, and he was therefore an interesting interlocutor both for worldly as well as for spiritual persons of rank. His reports produced much interest and curiosity but obviously no stirring enthusiasm. The great dangers of his journey were probably partly responsible for this. More important, however, was the fact that the journey had not turned up any new sources of living Buddhist tradition and learning. The sources were dried up and what was still left amounted to a couple of isolated pools. As a country where the Mahāyāna Buddhism flourished Uddiyāna seemed lost and was therefore moved beyond the horizon. This perspective was already clearly expressed by king 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal, who had tried in vain to invite sTag-tshang ras-pa to Ladakh during his first stay in Zangs-dkar. sTag-tshang ras-pa had rejected the invitation with reference to the order of his teacher lHa-rtse-ba. However the king didn't appreciate this. He emphasised that he was a patron of the 'Brug-pa.¹¹ Therefore a visit to Ladakh would also be a way to consider the welfare of the doctrine. And he added: 'Why must you learned ones go on pilgrimages to remote areas?' The king didn't make sTag-tshang ras-pa change his mind, but sTag-tshang ras-pa had to promise to visit Ladakh on his way back.

From this resulted the tie with the royal family of Ladakh. Undoubtedly this was the most important effect of sTag-tshang ras-pa's journey to Uddiyāna. However, as emphasised above, the relationship wasn't the result of a strategy prepared beforehand, but happened by chance. The same applies

yongs-'dzin (born 1617) according to which a delegation was sent to bDe-chen chos-'khor in 1624. It is possible that bDe-chen chos-'khor was only founded after the death of lHa-rtse-ba as the residence of his reincarnations.

¹¹ 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal was a patron of the 'Brug-pa monastery Rva-lung. This is evident from a document which Schuh has published and translated (Schuh 1983: 22-24; compare *ibid.*: 9).

to the communication with the monastery 'Bar-gdan and the lama bDe-ba rgya-mtsho there, which by the way happened in 1614,¹² that is to say four years earlier than the foundation of the monastery as proposed by Gergan and Petech, and also two years earlier than the flight of the *zhabs-drung* to Bhutan. Therefore we cannot classify this lama at that time as a member of the Bhutanese branch of the 'Brug-pa order.¹³ sTag-tshang ras-pa hadn't planned at all to visit Zangs-dkar where the first communication took place. He made this excursion only because of the illness of his travelling companions; he had already been beyond Zangs-dkar. Furthermore: lHa-rtse-ba had particularly emphasised that he should follow the traces of O-rgyan-pa Rin-chen dpal. Even if sTag-tshang ras-pa didn't always succeed in this, he at least tried to do so. Rin-chen dpal however never visited Zangs-dkar and Ladakh. There were only two hints of sTag-tshang ras-pa's later determination in Ladakh - both rather early during his career: one was his vision in sTag-tshang; the other was the abovementioned vague prophecy of his teacher lHa-rtse-ba that he would possess a karmic relationship for the benefit of living beings in the area of mNga'-ris. Both hints appear as pious constructions to legitimate the outstanding position of this person in Ladakhi history as determined for the benefit of country.

sTag-tshang ras-pa's invitation didn't entail a conversion of the royal family of Ladakh to the Rva-lung branch of the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud-pa: due to his loyalty towards dPag-bsam dbang-po, sTag-tshang ras-pa didn't belong to this party, a fact that has already been pointed out by Schuh (1983). Generally he points to the fact that this invitation may not be seen against the background of the splitting of the 'Brug-pa order. Therefore it is certainly correct to see the firmly expressed interest of the rulers of Ladakh in inviting sTag-tshang ras-pa in the light of existing links between the 'Brug-pa order and the Ladakhi royal family (Schuh 1983: 4). As is obvious from the reaction, described above, of king 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal upon sTag-tshang ras-pa's demurrer, it was simply a matter of course for the king that, as a patron of the 'Brug-pa, he had to invite sTag-tshang ras-pa for the benefit of this tradition in Ladakh; and that from his point of view sTag-tshang ras-pa had to accept it for the same reason.

¹² This is to be concluded from the chronology of the events: after he had visited 'Bra-gdan sTag-tshang ras-pa went to Lahul, where he stayed one year. As mentioned above he left Lahul on August 25 1615 (*Biography* fols. 25a-25b). 'Bar-gdan was founded around 1570. Regarding this date see Schuh 1983: 31ff.

¹³ Compare the discussion in Schuh 1983: 6.

However there is still another aspect to the invitation of sTag-tshang ras-pa to Ladakh. Janet Rizvi mentions this aspect in her book (1983: 48ff.): the apparent efforts of 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal and Seng-ge rnam-rgyal to strengthen Buddhism in view of an increasing spread of Islam. 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal's defeat by Ali Mir, the ruler of Skardo, around the year 1600 as well as his following captivity must have served as a drastic demonstration of this threat.

An interesting fact worth mentioning in this context is that the first Ladakhi connections not only to the monastery of Rva-lung but - contrary to what Petech had emphasised - also to Lama lHa-rtse-ba, the first *yongs-'dzin* of bDe-chen chos-'khor, didn't result from sTag-tshang ras-pa's first visit to Ladakh on his way back from Uddiyāna probably towards the end of 1616. Connections to lHa-rtse-ba existed already before that time. sTag-tshang ras-pa spent some time in rGya, in Upper Ladakh, during his first visit at the insistence of rGya'i drung-pa Shes-rab bzang-po, a personal pupil of lHa-rtse-ba (*Biography* fol. 26b). This allows the following two conclusions: first, lHa-rtse-ba's connections to Ladakh had earlier origins. Secondly, these connections existed with the chiefs of rGya. Therefore it is not surprising that in Ladakh sTag-tshang ras-pa at first visited rGya and that he later regarded the *jo-bo* of rGya as his first patron. The chiefs of rGya already had relations, through Drung-pa bDe-ba, with Padma dkar-po, the Fourth 'Brug-chen rin-po che (*Biography* fols. 26a, 30b; Petech 1977: 38). After his death, lHa-rtse-ba was at first the most prominent 'Brug-pa ecclesiastic, and it is therefore obvious that he continued to cultivate connections with the house of rGya.

But after the death of lHa-rtse-ba in the year 1615 sTag-tshang ras-pa intensified the communication with Ladakh. When he left the country in 1620 at the end of his first visit, he took about twenty pupils to central Tibet. From that time on pupils and gifts were sent on a regular basis (see the list in Petech 1977: 53), the former especially to Khro-phu, which is located on the southern side of the gTsang-po and west of gZhis-ka rtse (Ferrari 1958: 67ff., 157 fn. 579 and map; Wylie 1962: 68, 135 fnn. 180, 181). Earlier lHa-rtse-ba had taken special care of the monastic community of Khro-phu, and sTag-tshang ras-pa therefore also felt a particular obligation to do so (*Biography* fol. 27a).

What effects did the journeys have on sTag-tshang ras-pa himself? He has left us no personal statement on the subject. We only can say what is obvious: he demonstrated his persistence and steadiness. While these were

qualities he might already have possessed in the beginning, they were brought to light by his teacher and the journeys. From childhood on he had such a strong will that he even opposed his father's last wish. Later he submitted only to his teacher and the religion. His confidence in his teacher seems unshakeable. He did not, however, submit to the will of the mighty. It was only when it was certain to him and the religious authorities of his milieu that the connection with the royal family of Ladakh was his choice, that he entered into it permanently. His pure confidence in the teacher and the conviction to follow his instructions alone made him go his way unwaveringly. The self-discipline he developed, his rich experiences and the consciousness that he had mastered so many difficulties, gave him self-assurance and confidence in his own abilities. It is no surprise that sTag-tshang ras-pa has proved to be such a major figure in the history of Ladakh.

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