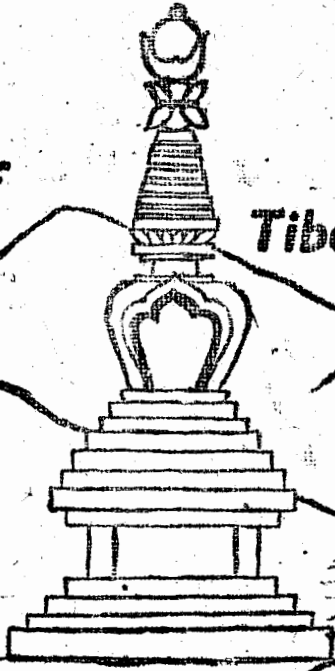


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The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the reader with an interest in this field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field.

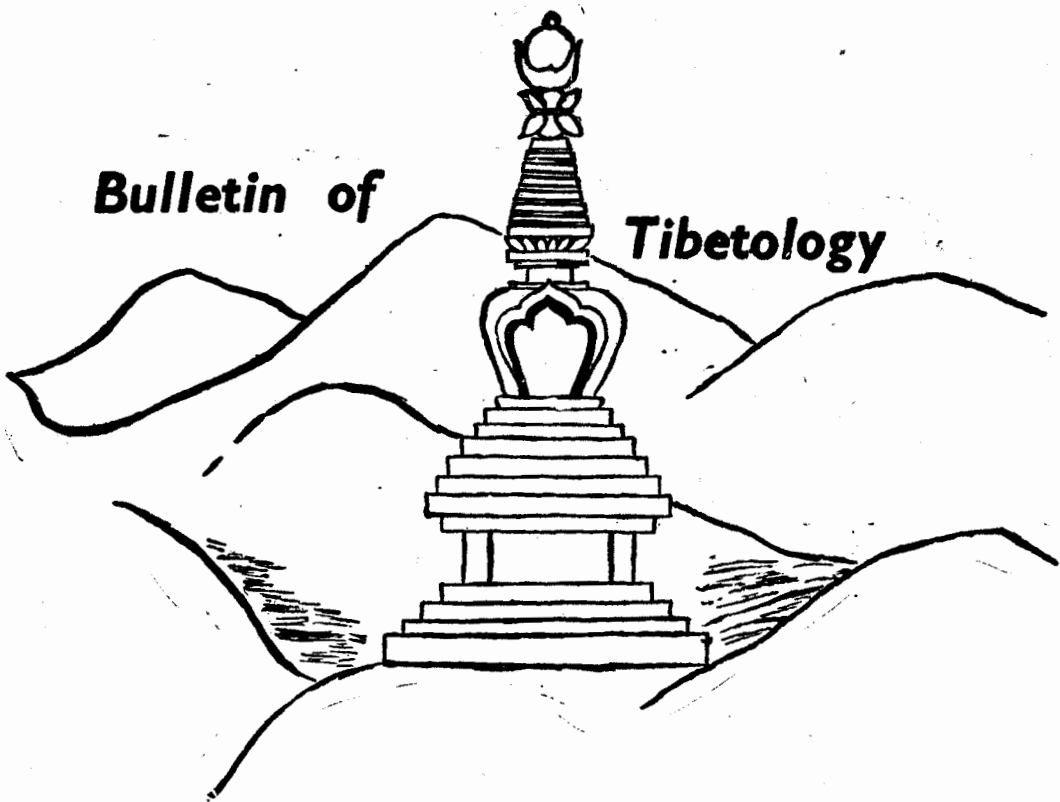
EDITORS

The Gyalmo of Sikkim

Yapa T.S. Gyaltshen

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Book Review by Lama Anagarika Govinda

(i) MYSTIC ART OF ANCIENT TIBET by Blanche Christine Olshhak in Collaboration with Geshe Thupten Wangyal. 224 pages, 142 illustrations in colour, 372 black-white illustrations. Price £ 10.50. Published by George Allen & Unwin, London, 1973.

(ii) BHUTAN: Land of the Peaceful Dragon by G.N. Mehra. XVI + 151 text pages and 93 colour photographs. 16 black and white photographs within the text. Price Rs 150/-. Vikas Publishing House Private Ltd., Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Kanpur 1974.

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THE THREE-SISTERS IN THE GE-SAR EPIC

—Siegbert Hummel

In its Mongolian version, as published by I. J. Schmidt in German translation¹, as well as in the Kalmuk fragments which were made known as early as 1804/05 by Benjamin Bergmann² the Ge-sar saga repeatedly mentions three sisters who prompt his actions during his life on earth, who urge him on or rebuke him³. Not only Ge-sar, but also the giant with whom he enters into combat and finally kills, has three maidens as sisters, and, as can be understood from the action, they are a kind of goddesses of fate who dwell in trees which are to be regarded as the seat of the vital-power (Tib. : bla) of the monster, i. e. as so-called bla-gnas or bla-shing. Consequently the giant is brought to the point of ruin by the killing of the maidens and the destruction of the trees⁴.

The three sisters are in all respects to be distinguished from the well-known genii of man who are born together with him and who appear in the Tibetan judgment of the dead where the good genius, a lha (Skt. : deva), enumerates the good deeds of the deceased by means of white pebbles, while the evil one, a demon (Tib. : dre), counts the evil actions with black pebbles⁵. Nor are the three sisters to be identified with the personal guardian deities of the Tibetans, the 'go-ba'i-lha, with whom they have certain traits in common. The group of 'go-ba'i-lha normally has five members. When only three of them, usually pho-, mo-, and dgra-lha, appear, only mo-lha, as is the case in the full set of five, is female⁶. Besides the sisters, Ge-sar occasionally (Schmidt, p. 125) invokes an indefinite number of guardian deities. The latter is not unusual for the Tibetans and the Mongolians. However, only three guardian deities are mentioned by name in the epic.

Concerning the names of these three guardian deities (cf. Schmidt, 1836, p. 83 : Sak'igulsun) who are born with Ge-sar from the same mother (Schmidt 1925, p. 11 ff.), a certain amount of information is provided by the East Tibetan, the so-called Gling version of the epic, while Ligeti still considered them to be inexplicable⁷. In Schmidt (p. 11 and p. 122), they are called Boa Dongtsong Garpo, Arjawalori Udgari, and Dschamtso Dari Udam. Stein (l.c.) gives the Tibetan spelling Dung-chung-dkar-po for the first, and Tha-le-'od-phra for the third. As a variant of Dung-chung-dkar-po is found Dung-khyung-dkar-po, and for Tha-le-'od-phra also Tha-le-'od-dkar. Arjawalori, however, is called Klu-sbrul 'od-chung. Only Tha-le-'od-phram is designated or invoked as sister. All three guardian

deities appear in the text published by Stein more or less as in Schmidt (p.11), where the entire passage, however, gives the impression of being hopelessly confused. Thus the three sisters are supposed (p.5) to have been simultaneously with Ge-sar and likewise of the same mother, viz. as metamorphoses of three of the thirty-three Tengri, no doubt an attempt to assimilate the idea of the three sisters to the popular religion of Mongolia⁸. On pp.85, 208, and 210 in Schmidt, (1925), the sisters are called Dschamtso Dari Udam, i.e. the third female guardian deity has been identified with the sisters. Again, on p.106 one of the three sisters are identified with Boa Dongtsong Garbo (cf. the Mongolian text, Schmidt 1836, p.72).

Of the three guardian deities, the first two are male; only the third, Dschamtso Dari Udam, is female. Thus Boa Dongtsong Garbo, in the story of the birth of the guardian deities (Schmidt, p.11), announces his appearance with the voice of a boy. Here there may certainly be hidden a reminiscence of the three Tibetan guardian deities, viz. pho-, mo-, and dgra-lha, perhaps also of the Tibetan version of the epic. In this connection it is thus extremely interesting that the first of the three tutelary deities in Schmidt comes forth from the top of the mother's head, the second from her right arm-pit, and the third from the navel; further that concerning to Tibetan beliefs the dgra-lha has its seat in the top of the head, the pho-lha in the right arm-pit, and the mo-lha in the abdomen. Certain variations in the localization of all these personal guardian deities will not be discussed here (cf.no.6). In a version of the epic from Ladakh⁹, Ge-sar invokes, not the aid of his sisters, but that of nine guardian deities who had been born together with him¹⁰.

The three sisters of the Mongolian Ge-sar epic thus present us with an entirely unique tradition which is not to be derived from the Mongolian concepts of the Onggot or the Sulde [-tengri]. Nor are we dealing with the Saki'gulsun in their capacity of spirits of the dead or dwelling in amulets. It would rather appear that we are dealing with a new creation, perhaps aided by the Mongolian concept of the Dayagaci-tengri. These Dayagaci-tengri, who are also invoked as K'esik' (=good fortune), are a kind of Masters of Fate, 'Those Whose Concern is Fate', so to speak¹¹. However, thereby we have not explained why there should be the question of three sisters. Here another tradition must have been assimilated, a tradition which in many respects (at least as a parallel development) reminds us of the three Parcae of the Romans. These likewise have the fate of the individual in their hands, and are called Parca, Nona, and Decuma, later Nona, Decuma, and Morta, the Three Spinning Sisters. The connection of fate with spinning (Gree: epiklothein) is also, as is well known, to be found among the Greeks

whose goddesses of fate — Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos — are present as Moirai at births and weddings. Correspondingly, three spinning fairies are present on the wedding day in the German fairy-tale of the three spinning women¹².

The concept of the spinning of fate is also known to the Tibetans. Presumably the binding of a rope at births and weddings also belongs here, even though in the mythology of the Tibetans the emphasis, as far as this rope is concerned, is rather on the importance of a living connection between the earthly and the heavenly, i.e. the original, spheres, and not so much on fate. For example, the binding of a rope took place at the wedding of the father of the half-legendary systematizer of the Bon religion, gShen-rab-mi-bo. Among the Na-khi, who are related to the Tibetans and inhabit the south-eastern Tibeto-Chinese border areas, the heavenly woman Muan-na-ssa-ma-mi spins the white thread of life, while at weddings the rope of life (Na-khi: ssu-ber) is bound between the couple and a basket (Na-khi:ssu-dtv), the dwelling of the life-god (Tib.: srog-lha; Na-khi:ssu). In any case, according to the beliefs of Bon, the dwellers of heaven also bind the rope of good fortune, in other words a kind of rope of fate, the cutting of which brings disaster¹³.

Certainly the three sisters of the Ge-sar epic are not in all respects similar to the Parcae or the Moirai. In connection with the giant it is clear that as opposed to the Parcae etc., they are connected with a single individual; that they are born together with him; and that under certain circumstances they may be destroyed either alone or together with their bearer by a superior antagonist¹⁴. In spite of this, a tradition seems to exist which, no matter how faded and distorted, nevertheless allows certain traits to be discerned with sufficient clarity to suggest relations between this idea, so unique and heterogeneous in the Tibetan and Mongolian concept of man, and the goddesses of fate, as transmitted to us from Antiquity. The variations and changes of emphasis may be explained by the difference in cosmology and anthropology, whereby motifs which had been accepted in new system of ideas could not be adopted without undergoing certain changes.

In any case, our study of the three sisters in the Mongolian version of the Ge-sar epic suggests that we are dealing with a heterogeneous tradition which has not been able fully to obliterate the old Tibetan concept of personal guardian deities; on the contrary, it was influenced by it and, in the Mongolian milieu, influenced by the Dayagaci-tengri as well. This tradition can only have been incorporated—not always equally convincingly—after the completion of the Tibetan version. This would seem to be indicated by the idea of the sisters as a metamorphose of the three guardian deities and by the unsuccessful attempt to

bring the three goddesses of fate, who evidently are somehow related to each other as sisters, into some kind of relationship with Ge-sar. In the Scheuter MS (ed. W. Heissig, cf. no. 2) they are once, as in Schmidt, the elder sister of Ge-sar and like him the offspring of Xormusta, but in the other instance they are the aunts of the hero, i.e. sisters of this god, who accordingly is called Ge-sar's uncle. The idea of the three mistresses of fate was also greatly changed in the process of adaptation. Their origin must for the time being in all probability be sought in late Antiquity if not even earlier, as has been considered in the case of other Greek-Inner Asian mythological parallellisms¹⁵. While one among the Greeks, however, again and again may witness the powerlessness even of the gods against the Morai, with whom may be in certain respects compared the self-created Dayagaci-tengri, the three sisters in the Mongolian Ge-sar epic are response to Xormusta, the highest of the thirty-three tengri, among whom they are reckoned after their entrance into the heaven of the gods (Schmidt 1925, p. 5), a fate which in this connection is shared with them by Ge-sar. For this reason their function as the sources of fate has faded away and has been replaced by that of urging on or of rebuking¹⁶.

NOTES

1. Die Thaten Bogda Gesser Chan's, St Petersburg 1839; 2nd ed. Berlin 1925. Beyond doubt this version, printed in Peking in 1716, is based on a Tibetan prototype (cf G.N. Roerich, The Epic of King Gesar of Ling in: JRAS VIII, 1942, p 277 ff.) In this connection see the remark "unser Tibet" in the version published by Schmidt in 1925, p 44—The Mongolian text had already been published by Schmidt in 1836 in St Peter sburg as "Erzählung von dem wolthatigen gottlichen chane Geser Mergen".
2. Benjamin Bergmann's Nomadische Streifereien unter den Kalmuken, Riga 1804-05; reprint with introduction by S. Hummel, Oosterhout 1969, III, p 252: Bokdo Gassarchan=8th chapter of the Mongolian manuscript version of which Schmidt only has seven chapters.—Cf. also the Mongolian manuscript from which W. Heissig published two songs (cf. "Helden=, Hollenfahrts- and Schelmenge schichten der Mongolen", Zurich 1962, p. 157: the three sisterso; p 148 conceived having yellow hair!).
3. Schmidt, passim, in particular chapt 1-5, ed 1925 i.a. p 85, 106 and 123.

4. Schmidt 1925, p 146. The nine trees correspond to mythological enumeration. As to bla-gnas, cf. S. Hummel, *Der Wunderbare Hirsch im Ge-sar-Epos* (in: *ethn. Zeit schrift* Zurich, 1973, 1).
5. Cf. Mong.: burzan and cidk'ur.—In the *Book of the Dead*, of the chapt Srid-Pa'i-bar-do,—P. Poucha, *Das tibetische Totenbuch* (in: *Archiv Orientalni* XX, Prague 1953, p 146) considers an Iranian-dualistic influence to be possible -Cf. also the K'uliyusun.
6. Cf. S. Hummel, *Die Gottheiten der Schulter in Tibet* (in: *Rivista degli Studi Orinetali* XXXIV, Rome 1959, p 183 ff). A connenction between the 'go-ba'i-lha with the two genii is probable, at least as far as the basic ideas are concerned. According to the studies of the shoulder-deities (l.c.) the 'go-ba'i-lha could represent a more recent development. Both genii dwell on the shoulders of man, which is also said to be the case with two of the five guardian deities. The lha resides on the left shoulder, the 'dre (Stein, l.c.: dbud) on the right; cf. R.A. Stein, *Le linga des Danses Masquees Lamaïques et la Theorie des Ames* (in; *Liebenthal Festschrift, Sino-Tibetan Studies*, V, 3-4, p. 1 ff.).- As for the 'go-ba'i-lha, see also D. Schuh in: *Serta Tibeto-Mongolica*, Wiesbaden 1973, p 315 (*Die Darlegungen des tibet. Enzyklopa-disten Kon-sprul Blo-gros Mtha'-yas uber osttibet. Hochzeits-brauche*).
7. Cf. L. Ligeti, *Un episode d'orgine chinoise du "Geser-quant"* (in: *Acta Orientalia Hung.* I, 2-3, Budapest 1951, p 354, no. 24). R.A. Stein, *L'Épopée Tibétaine de Gesar*, Paris 1956, p 51 ff., the so-called Gling-version (with Tibetan text) Schmidt 1836: Dschamtso=Irdamsno.
8. However, in fact only the three guardian deities come to the world together with Ge-sar from one mother (p 11); presumably it is then that Dschamtso Dari Udam is identified with the three sisters.
9. A.H. Fracke, *Der Fruhlings- und Wintermythus der Kesar sage* (*Memoires de la Societe Finno-Ougrienne*, XV, Helsingfors), reprint Osnabruck 1968 (review S. Hummel in; *ZMR*, 1971, 1): *Der Wintermythus*, p.46.
10. Concerning this group of guardian deities, the nine dgra-lha related to the Mongolian daicin (daisud-un)-tengri,

see at length S. Hummel, *Die lamaistische Melereien und Bilddrucke im Linden-Museum* (in: *Tribus*, 16, Stuttgart 1967, p. 86, no. 23757). Stein, l.c., p. 59, likewise mentions this group, which is invoked as a subsidiary group by Ge-sar.—A *dgra-lha* from the class of *wer-ma* with the name *Dung-khyung-dkar-po* is to be found in R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, 's-Gravenhage 1959, p. 334.—According to Rinchen, *En marge du culte de Gessar khan en Mongolie* (in: *Journal de la Societe Finno-Ourgienne*, 60, Helsinki 1958, p. 11), the three sisters also appear in a Mongolian cultic dance (Tib.: *Ge-sar-cham*). There will also be found material showing that the aversion of the reformed school of the *dGe-lugs-pa* against the Ge-sar epic (cf. the bibliography in: S. Hummel, *Anmerkungen zur Ge-sar-Sage*, in: *Anthropos*, 54, p. 520 no. 13) can only be accepted with certain reservations (e.g. *Ge-sar-grva-tshang*, exorcism in the name of the hero, identification with deities of the lamaist pantheon, prayer to Ge-sar etc. among the *dGe-lugs-pa*).

11. *Dayagaci* [-*tengri*], literally: those deities who are concerned with the bringing about of fate. Concerning these deities, see W. Heissing, *Die Religionen der Mongolei* (in: *Die Religionen Tibets und der Mongolei; Religionen der Menschheit*, vol. 20, Stuttgart 1970, p. 358 ff.); there (p. 353). In my *Anmerkungen zu Zentralasien und die Etruskerfrage* (in: *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, Rome 1974, p.) I have, dealing with the Etruscan *Tages*, pointed out parallels passing via *Zurvanism* with the *White Old Man* (Tib.: *rGan* [*sGam*] *po-dkar-po*, Mong.: *Cagan-ebugen*), and understood him, among other things, also as a god of time and as such also of fate. In a Mongolian text *Cagan-ebugen* says of himself: "I administer the length and shortness of the life of man" (cf. W. Heising, *Mongolische volksreligiose und folkloristische Texte*, Wiesbaden 1966, p. XX, XXI). I can also refer to my interpretation of the terms *Cak-un cagen arsalan* (= *The White Lion of Time*) and *Cak-i* [un] *cagan ebugen* (= *The White Old Man of Time*) in S. Summel, *Zervanistische Traditionen in der Ikonographie des Lamaismus* (in: *Etudes Tibetaines*, Paris 1971, p. 161, no. 5).
12. *Bruder Grimm, Kinder- und Hausmarchen*, vol. III (Note no. 14), *Universal-Bibliothek, Reclam, No. 3446-3450*.

13. Cf. S. Hummel, *Das Motiv der Haba. schur in Tibet* (in: *Antaios*, IV, 6, Stuttgart 1963, p. 572 ff.) See also R.A. Stein, *Les Tribus Anciennes des Marches Sino-Tibetaïnes*, Paris 1959 p. 61 J.F. Rock, *A Na-Khi-English Dictionary*, Vol. I, Rome 1963, p. 280 ff.; vol. II, Rome 1972, p. 43—In “Notes on Tibetan Temple Building” (in preparation).
- I have shown that the idea of a rope of heaven (Tib.: *dmu-thag*) and that of a ladder of heaven (Tib.: *dmu-skas*) represent two different traditions. In the concept of the rope of heaven there may be contained, besides the idea of the thread of life, i.e. the navel-string, also that of the rope bridge. Regarding the ladder, cf. also the opinion of the Lepchas of Sikkim, according to which the priestess (*mun*) enters the realm of the dead (*rum-lyang*) by means of a ladder (R.de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Ancient Funeral Ceremonies of the Lepchas*, in: *The Eastern Anthropologist*, V. 1, p. 36).—Cf. also Oknos, the rope-maker of classical Antiquity: Cf. J.J. Bachofen, *Versuch unter die Gräber symbolik der Alten* (Joh. Jacob Bachofens *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. IV, 3rd. ed., Basel 1954, p. 352 ff.)
14. To the extent that the three sisters are meant by *Dschamtso Dari Udam*, it may likewise be said of them that they were born together with their protege, for the three guardian deities were born together with *Ge-sar* (Schmidt, p. 11).
15. Kathe U. Kohalmi (*Griechisch-sibirische mythologische Parallelen*, in: *Acta Orientalia scient. Hungar.*, XXV, 1972, p. 137 ff) has in other connections pointed out mythological parallels between Greece and Inner Asia. She mentions Apollon *Smintheus* (cf. *Ge-sar* as the archer who drives away pestilence), *Heracles*, and *Orion*. A possible connecting link might be the Scythians. Regarding *Herakles*, cf. also O. Manchen-Helfen, *Herakles in China* (in: *Archiv Orientalni*, VII, 1935, p. 29 ff). Also cf. I. Trencsenyi-Waldapfel, *Apollon Smintheus in Innerasien ?* (in: *Acta Orientalia Hung.*, XV, 1-3, p. 343ff.): *Orion as hunter in Inner Asia*. *Manchen-Helfen* likewise regards the Scythians as conveying or possessing the *Herakles* myth. Thereby we would probably find ourselves in the area of the Pontic migration. Already B. Julg (*Über die griechische Heldensage im Wiederscheine bei den Mongolen*, in: *Verhandl. d. 26 vers. deutscher Philologen u. Schulmänner in Würzburg*, Leipzig 1869, p. 58 ff.) has brought to notice certain parallels to the *Ge-sar* epic in motifs from the

Herakles saga (certain parallel deeds as child and as man, descent to hell), the Odysseus (i.a. Polyphem, Kirke, Kalypso, the beggar's robes, Laertes and Eumios, Eurykleia, Nausikaa), and the Iliad (Helena, the battle of Troy).— In addition to the summing up in *Ethn. Zeitschrift* Zurich (*Der Wunderbare Hirsch im Ge-sar-Epos*, l.c.) of all mythological motifs dealt with by me up to then in the Ge-sar epic, one may in addition refer to the golden staff which runs about on the golden hill and which, like the golden mill which rotates there, points to the heroes gamos which takes place there; cf. the threshing-floor as place of wedding in Hauran, rich in megalithic traditions, or the woman Babylon as threshing-floor in *Jeremia* 51.33. — Concerning my interpretation of the consort of Ge-sar, Rogmo Goa, in *Anthropos* 60, p. 837 and no. 18, I would like to add that after he has freed her, Ge-sar gives his spouse to a limping and one-eyed figure (Schmidt 1925, p. 279); cf. regarding the limping figure S. Hummel, *Ekajata in Tibet* (in: *Asiatische Studien*, XXII, 1968, p. 110 ff. with bibliographical references): thunder-gods, solstice, divine smiths. To the one-legged the 'u-rang belongs occasionally also Pe-har as their leader, likewise with one leg (cf. S. Hummel, *Pe-har in: East and West*, 13, 1962, p. 316). - Regarding Co-tong as the moon (*Anthropos* 60, p. 838), cf. G.N. Roerich, *Le Parler de l'Amdo*, Rome 1958, p. 66: Co-tong wears his hair in three knots.

Concerning the motif of the "gold-digging ants" (Schmidt, 1925, p. 51) cf. B. Laufer, *Die Sage von den goldgrabenden Ameisen* (in: *T'oung Pao*, IX, 1908, p. 429 ff. - Concerning the myth of the lasso with which sun and moon are caught (Schmidt, 1925 p. 51), cf. A. Khun, *Sonne und Mond in den Mythen der Indochinesen* (in: *Artibus Asiae*, VI, 1—2, 1936, p. 73 ff).

16. Regarding the relationship between gods and fate, cf. the *Odysseus* III, 236, V, 41; *Iliad* VIII, 69, XX, 127, 300, XXII, 210, *Herodot* I, 91, even though Zeus on the other hand is considered to be *moiragetes*, wherein may be discerned an approximation to the relationship of the three sisters to *Xormsta*; cf. also the expressions *Moirai theon*, or *Hesiod*, *Theogony* 901-906: Zeus as father of the *Moirai*.

(Translated from German by Dr. Per Kvaerne of the University of Bergen)

THE VESSANTARA JATAKA FROM CENTRAL ASIA

—P. Banerjee

In the Stein Collection of Central Asian antiquities in the National Museum, New Delhi, there is an interesting fragment of wall-painting from Miran (m.III.002) which has not been identified as yet satisfactorily. Miran is situated on the southern of the two principal silk routes passing through Central Asia. 'It lies near the south-western edge of the loo-desert, at the foot of the northern slopes of the Altin-tagh; about five hundred and twenty miles E.N.E. of Khotan and two hundred and fifty miles S. of Turfan.

In style, the paintings of Miran are related to the art of Gandhara and are attributable to the fourth century A.D.

According to Stein, the painting in question occurred on frieze over the dado of the Stupa cella, No.III, in Miran. The shrine in question was square outside but circular inside. As Stein has observed, it was once surmounted by a dome and enclosed by a small Stupa in its centre¹.

The present panel (pl.1) which is in a fragmentary condition, shows in the centre a male figure, seated on a throne with an ornamental background. His feet rest on a foot-stool. The right foot points forward and the left is at 'right angles to it'. The left arm is akimbo, with hand resting on thigh. The right is extended, as if engaged in discussion or addressing some one. The expression of his eyes bears a deep anxiety on his part. He is dressed in a *dhoti* (lower garment) which reaches up to the ankles. The upper garment consists of a buff-coloured stole, which passes over the left shoulder leaving rest of the upper portion of the body bare.

At his feet, on the right, is shown seated a similar but smaller figure, with his hands joined in adoration. He wears a high conical cap or turban with two lunette-shaped upward flaps, betraying his princely status or lineage. This peculiar head-dress is met with again on the paintings of the rotunda of the Miran Temple V, where it certainly marks royal personages. The origin of this conical cap or turban, as Stein has noted, is uncertain. He, however, suggests the possibility of its being derived from or based on the princely insignia used in Bactria or Sogdiana 'through which the Central Asian adaptation of Graeco-Buddhist art passed into the Tarim Basin'².

Opposite, on the edge of the painting appears a part of another figure, with his drapery over the left knees and upraised fore-arm only visible.³



According to Stein and Andrews the main or central figure of the panel represents probably Gautama before his enlightenment⁴ and the figure at his feet, on the right, is a worshipper. I have studied the panel closely and find nothing in it to justify this probability. So far as the main or central figure is concerned, it is without a halo, which is invariably associated with the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures of

Central Asia. Again, in dress and appearance it bears no resemblance to any Buddha figures from Miran or any other part of Central Asia. In my opinion, the fragment depicts a part of the Vessantara Jataka, i.e. Vessantara meeting his father before going on exile. For the convenience of discussion the Vessantara Jataka (one of the most popular stories of the previous births of Gautama Buddha) can be narrated here briefly.

In the kingdom of Sivi, there was a king called Sanjaya and he had a son called Vessantara known for his generosity from his birth. When Vessantara was born, a divine elephant left its young one for the prince in the royal stable.

As Vessantara grew, his fame for generosity spread all over the country. Whatever was asked of him, he gave without hesitation. In the course of time, he married a virtuous lady called Maddi, who bore him two children, a son called Jali and a daughter called Kanhajina.

Now at that time, the country of Kalinga had a very bad drought which caused a great famine and hardship to the people. In order to bring rains to his land, the king of Kalinga, at the request of his people, sent four Brahmanas to the city of Jetuttara in the Sivi kingdom to fetch the auspicious elephant of Vessantara, which brought prosperity to the Sivi kingdom. When the Brahmanas asked Vessantara for his elephant, he gave it away. The loss of this auspicious elephant infuriated the people. In great number did they come to the king, Sanjaya, and complained against Vessantara's excessive generosity and demanded his banishment from the land. The king agreed to banish his noble son, thinking that otherwise the people would kill his son and rise in revolt against him. He commissioned an agent to convey the people's demand to Vessantara.

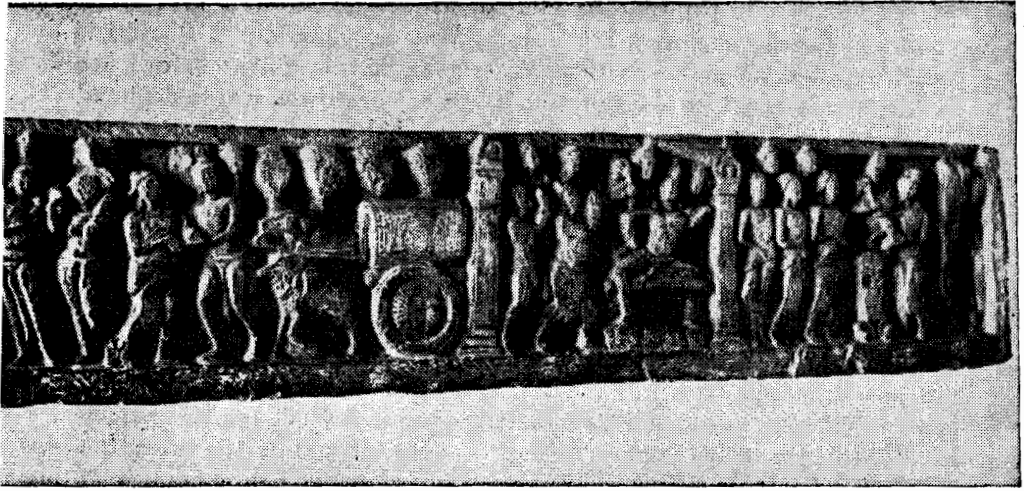
Receiving the king's tidings, Vessantara remained unperturbed. He, however, asked that his banishment might be delayed for a day to enable him to perform the gifts of seven hundreds; and then he came to take leave of his parents.

Next morning, Vessantara had performed various gifts before he left the city with his wife and children. On the way some Brahmanas asked for the horses of his chariot which he gave to them. As he proceeded, he gave his chariot to certain other Brahmanas. He then with his wife and children came walking to the Mount Vanka. His misfortunes still followed. A Barhmin came here from Kalinga to take his children to serve his wife as servants. Though he loved his children dearly, he gave them away. Then came Sakra in disguise and asked for his wife. Hesitatingly he gave his wife to Sakra. Pleased with this, Sakra revealed his self and gave boons to Vessantara. At the end he was happily reunited with his father and children.

In the light of the facts of the above story, it seems easy to identify the figures of the present panel from Miran. The Central figure, which Stein and Andrews feel inclined to identify as Gautama, is in my opinion Vessantara's father king Sanjaya. That he was a king is evident from his dignified bearing and also from the fact that he is shown seated on a throne, with his feet resting on a footstool. The smaller figure to the right is Vessantara, whose royal lineage is indicated by the conical cap or turban on his head. The other figure, now almost completely damaged, except a portion of his left knee and fore-arm represents probably one of the audience who came to complain to the king against Vessantara's indiscreet act of excessive charity. Thus the main scene intended to be portrayed here is the complaint of the subjects against Vessantara and the latter's meeting his parents before going on exile. Since the painting has been very much damaged the whole of the scene cannot be easily understood, though the part of the episode showing Vessantara, taking leave of his father with folded hand is very clear.

The identification which I suggest is supported partly by an Amaravati sculpture (pl.II) and largely by a painting in Cave XVII in Ajanta (Pl.III), depicting the Vessantara Jataka. The Amaravati sculpture very vividly shows the agitation of the people before the king Sanjaya.⁶ As is the case with the Central Asian panel, the king is seated on a throne with his right foot placed on the foot-stool. His left arm rests on the back of the throne and the right arm is shown akimbo with the hand placed on the thigh.

On the left of this scene is shown the gift of the elephant by Vessantara and on the right the gift by him of the cart and the bulls. But one significant thing to note is that the Amaravati panel omits to show Vessantara taking leave of his father - the scene, which is the main subject matter of the Central Asian painting in question. The Ajanta painting mentioned above depicts this particular theme very elaborately and has been of great help to me in identifying the Central Asian panel from Miran.

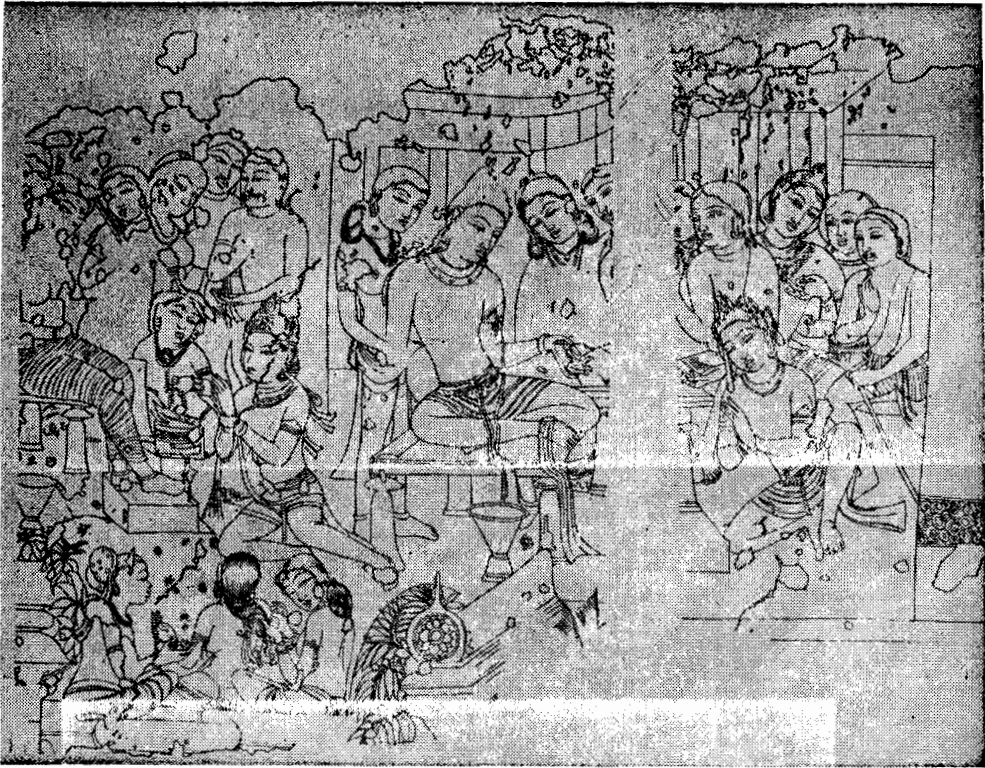


In Ajanta painting we find Vessantara taking leave first of his mother, Phusati and then his father , Sanjaya. The queen Phusati is shown seated on a throne, and Vessantara, kneels down before her with his hands joined in adoration⁷. There are three maids depicted in three different poses below the queen and the prince. By the side of the queen there are a female chauri bearer and two more maids, holding ornaments probably for the prince to enable him to offer gifts according to his heart's desire.⁸

Vessantara is shown again near the feet of his father seated on a throne. The face of the king shows anxiety. Here also Vessantara kneels down with folded hands.⁹ In both the places he is shown bedecked in jewellery and crown. The artist brings out very successfully the nobility of Vessantara's character, i.e. his respect for his parents and obedience to his father's wishes on one side and on the other the anxiety of his parents and an overspread gloom in the palace because of impending banishment of Vessantara.

When one compares the details of the Ajanta painting with those of the Central Asian fragment one hardly fails to recognise the identity of their subject matter. It is interesting to note that though the other parts of the story are found depicted in many sculptures and paintings this particular incident of Vessantara's taking leave of his father before going on exile survives now only in the Ajanta and Central Asian fragments under discussion.

The Vessantara Jataka seems to have been very popular in Central Asia as in India. Stein discovered a very elaborate depiction of this Jataka (pl. IV) also on a frieze of the south-east wall of the round passage of the Miran Temple V about sixty yards north-west from the Miran shrine No.III.¹⁰



Here also, the physical features, dress and crown of Vessantara (shown as gifting away the auspicious elephant to the Kalinga Brahmins) are the same as those of the Vessantara figure depicted in the Miran shrine III, described above. From Stein's description of the painting of the Miran V it appears that originally the incident of Vessantara's meeting his father before going on exile was depicted here also, but the particular portion was badly damaged when Stein visited the site., leaving only a bare outline of it, not admitting of a very easy identification.

The Dipankara, Ruru, Vessantara and many other Jatakas were depicted in Central Asian paintings. The popularity of this theme in Central Asia can be explained by the fact that in this region Hinayana Buddhism continued to flourish side by side with Mahayana Buddhism for a long time. Both Fa-hien and Hiuen-Tsang noticed many flourishing centres of Hinayana Buddhism in several regions of Central Asia. In fact, we find a great preponderance of the Hinayana theme in the Central Asian art as in Ajanta and Bamiyana.

NOTES:

1. Sri Aurel Stein, *Sirindia*, Vol. I, Text (Oxford, 1921), P.493.
2. Sir Aurel Stein, *op. cit.* pp. 504 and 505; F.H. Andrews, *Catalogue of Wall—Paintings from Ancient Shrines in Central Asia and Sistan* (Delhi, 1933), p. 67, *Wall—Paintings from Ancient Shrines in Central Asia.* (Oxford, 1948), p. 2 and 3.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Stein, *op-cit*, pp. 504 and 505.
5. E. B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse, the Jataka, Vol. VI (Vesantara Jataka, Jataka No. 547), p. 246 ff.
6. C. Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum* (Madras, 1956), pp. 260 and 261, pl. XLII, 5.
7. G. Yazdani, *Ajanta Text Part IV* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 44 and 45 pl. XXIa.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Sir Aurel Stein, *op. cit*, pp. 521 and 516, figs, 134-140.
11. Sir Aurel Stein, *op-cit*, pp. 517 and 518.

THE EIGHT FORMS OF GURU PADMASAMBHAVA

—By Lama Anagarika Govinda

Guru Padmasambhava was invited to Tibet by King Tisong Detsen (*Khri-srong-lde-btsan*) in the year 747 A.D., established the first Buddhist monastery at Samye (*bSam-yas*) in 787, and founded the oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism known as Nying-ma (*rNying-ma*). He was one of the greatest scholars and masters of yoga of his time. He acquitted the knowledge and practice of all the major sadhanas and yogic methods of tantric and pre-tantric times, and he received initiation into eight fundamental doctrines. The eight forms in which Padmasambhava is depicted, are therefore not different incarnations, as popularly believed, but the representations of his eight main initiations, in each of which he assumed a new personality, symbolized by a new name (as gained in higher forms of initiation) and a form of appearance, corresponding to that name. Because initiation is equivalent to entering a new life, it is a form of rebirth.

In his most important and characteristic form Padmasambhava appears in the royal robes of the King of Sahor, but holding the insignia of spiritual realization:

1. the *khatvanga*, a staff, surmounted by a double-vajra (*visva-vajra*), the symbol of universality and the "Wisdom that accomplishes all works",—a vessel, containing the elixir of immortality (*amrita-kalasa*), two human heads and a skull, symbolizing greed, hatred and ignorance, which have been overcome by the knowledge of the Three Worlds, and the Three Times, symbolized by a flaming trident (*trisul*). The staff itself represents the *sushumna* or the central current of psychic energy, which combines the solar and lunar forces (*pingala* & *ida*, respectively) in one mighty uprush of conscious realization. Thus, all these symbols constitute various aspects of insight into the nature of reality.

2. The skull-bowl (*kapala*), in which the vessel with the Water of Immortality (*mrita-kalasa*) is placed, rests in the left hand of the Guru, because the knowledge or conscious experience of death (as gained in the higher forms of initiation) leads to the realization of immortality, to the experience of the Greater Life. The *amrita-kalasa*, moreover, is the attribute of *Amitayus*, the Buddha of Infinite Life, the *Sambhogakaya* reflex of the *Dhyani-Buddha Amitabha*.

3. The Vajra in the Guru's right hand (raised in *abhaya-mudra*, the gesture of fearlessness and blessing), is the scepter of spiritual power,

the means through which wisdom is put into action. It may also be displayed in a threatening attitude, the hand above the right knee, in the act of subduing evil forces. In a devotional Tibetan text Padmasambhava is described in the following words:

“Being the end of confusion and the beginning of realization,
He wears the royal robes of the Three Vehicles (of liberation),
He holds the Vajra of Skilful Means in his right hand
And in his left the Skull-bowl of Wisdom with the Elixir of Life.
He cuts off the heads of hatred, greed and ignorance
And carries them like ornaments on his trident.”

His hat (known as the “lotus cap”) is adorned with the symbols of the crescent moon, the sun-disk and a small flame-like protuberance which signifies the union of lunar and solar forces (Tib. *thig-le*), the realization of the *Dharmachatu* Wisdom. The hat is surmounted by a Vajra and an eagle’s feather. The latter indicates the Guru’s soaring mind, penetrating the highest realm of reality.

Flanking the main figure of Padmasambhava are two female devotees, often described as his two consorts, a misconception that is being repeated in popular as well as in scholarly publications. Evans-Wentz identifies the two figures as Bhasadhara, the Queen of Sahor, and the Princess Mandarava. But since Padmasambhava left the royal palace and gave up his kingdom, like Buddha Sakyamuni before him, Bhasadhara, to whom he had been married, did not play any further role in his life. However, the two female devotees and disciples, who were of paramount importance, were the Indian Princess Mandarava and the Tibetan Khadoma Yeshe Ts’ho-rgyal. Both of them are looked upon as re-incarnations of divine origin. The latter, who was regarded as an incarnation of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, was gifted with such a perfect memory, that she was able to remember every word of the Guru. In this way she became Padmasambhava’s sole biographer. Iconographically she is shown in the garb of a heavenly being of white complexion, adorned with the traditional ornaments and flying scarves, while Mandarava is generally clad in the costume of an Indian hill-princess. Her face is of yellowish complexion. They both are offering *amrita* either from a skull-bowl or a vase-like vessel.

Over the head of Padmasambhava often appears the red Dhyani-Buddha Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light. He is the spiritual source of Padmasambhava, who thus may be called an embodied ray of Amitabha on the earthly plane.

Therefore, in the dedicatory verses at the beginning of the Bardo Thodol (*bar-dohi thos-grol*)—the Book of the Spontaneous Libe-

ration from the Intermediate State (between life and rebirth), known as "The Tibetan Book of the Dead", ascribed to Padmasambhava, it is said:

"To Amitabha, [the Buddha of] Infinite Light, as *Dharmakaya* (the Body of the Universal Law),
To the peaceful and wrathful forms [of the Dhyani-Buddhas] of the Lotus Order, as *Sambhogakaya* (the Body of Spiritual Enjoyment),
To Padmasambhava, the Protector of Sentient Beings, as human incarnation (*Nirmanakaya*: Body of Transformation):
Obeisance to them the Gurus of the Three Bodies."

Sun and moon, seen in the upper space of every *Thangka*, represent the spiritual forces of *Pingala* and *ida*, which move the universe and flow as two currents of energy through the human body.

Grouped around the main image of Padmasambhava, who forms the centre of the ninefold *mandala*, are his eight forms of appearance:

1. *Padma-hbyung-gnas* (the Tibetan version of "the Lotus-born") in his *vajrasattva* form, dark-blue, embraced by his *Prajna*, the embodiment of his Wisdom (generally light-blue) sometimes white), because — according to his symbolical biography — Padmasambhava took on the aspect of *Vajradhara*, when he was initiated into the doctrine of the Great Perfection (*rDzogs-chen*), in which the indestructible and transparent diamond-nature of our innermost being is realized.

2. *Guru Sakyaseng-ge*, "The Lion of the Sakyas". In this form Padmasambhava is identified with Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha, thus indicating Padmasambhava's initiation into the teachings of the earliest schools of Buddhism, as represented by the Small Vehicle (*Hinayana*).

3. *Guru Padmasambhava* as a *bhikshu* or *pandita* of the Great Vehicle, indicating his initiation into the teachings of the *Mahayana* School and his entering upon the *Bodhisattva* Path.

4. *Guru Lo-dan Chog-se* (*blo-IDan mChog-sred*); "the Guru Possessing Wisdom and the Highest Aspirations". He appears here in kingly robes, his right hand raised with a *damaru*, from which the eternal sound (*shabda*) of the Dharma rhythmically emerges and pervades the universe. The left hand holds a skull-bowl with *amrita*.

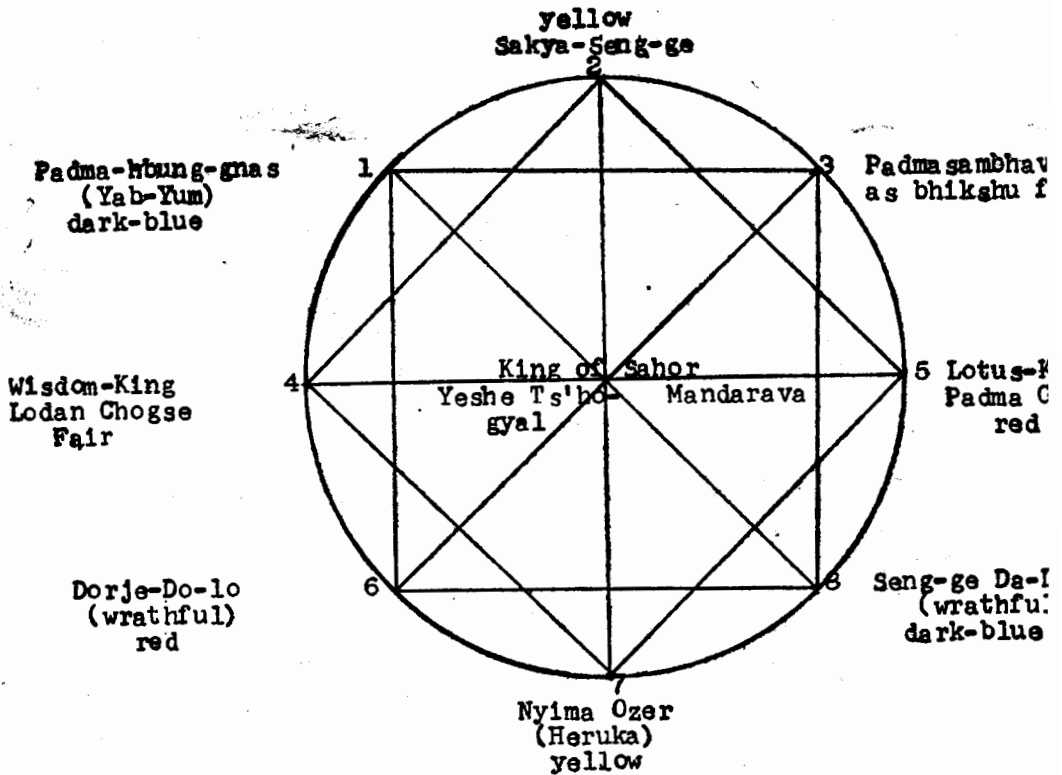
5. *Guru Padma Gyalpo*, "the Lotus King", is very similar to the previous figure and distinguishes himself mainly by holding the Mirror of Truth in his left hand. Sometimes he is also depicted with the mirror held up in his right hand, in which case the left hand holds the skull-

bowl. In some thangkas the emblems of these two kings are reversed, so that it seems that these two figures are more or less interchangeable.

6. Guru Dorji-Do-Lo (*rDo-rJe Gro-lod*), "the Diamond Comforter (?)" is a wrathful appearance (*krodha-bhairava*), red in colour, surrounded by flames (symbolizing knowledge in its 'terrible' illusion-devouring aspect), riding on a tiger, holding a vajra in his outstretched right hand, and in his left hand a *phur-bu*, a magical dagger, which destroys evil influences, exorcises demons and drives away the powers of darkness. The prostrate human form underneath the tiger represents a conquered demon.

7. Guru Nyima Ozer (*Nyi-ma-hOd-gzer*), "the Sun-ray Guru", appears as an ascetic of the Heruka (unclad) type. His left (some times his right) hand holds the sun by a ray, his right (sometimes his left) hand holds a three-pointed staff (*khatvanga*). He wears a crown of skulls and a tiger-skin around his loins. His colour is yellow.

8. Guru Seng-ge Da-dog (*Seng-ge sgra-sgrogs*), "the Guru with the Roaring Voice of a Lion", a dark blue demonical figure, clad in a lionskin, dangling from his shoulders, and a tiger-skin as a lion-colth he is surrounded by flames, in his right hand he wields a vajra in a menacing way, and the lefthand is either empty or holds a bell (*ghanta*) before his chest. He stands on bodies of two conquered demons.



BOOK REVIEW by Lama Anagarika Govinda

MYSTIC ART OF ANCIENT TIBET

by Blanche Christine Olschak in Collaboration with Geshe Thupten Wangyal. 224 pages, 142 illustrations in colour, 372 black-and-white illustrations.

Price £ 10.50. Published by George Allen & Unwin, London, 1973.

Since the Chinese invasion of Tibet, the complete destruction of its ancient culture and the subsequent exodus of a substantial part of its population—including thousands of monks and many of the most prominent spiritual leaders—Tibetan art has burst upon the world like a revelation from another planet: as something both strange and fascinating, mysterious and beautiful. It has captured the imagination of art-lovers and truth-seekers alike, though few of them had any knowledge of the deeper meaning or significance of Tibetan art. The few works of Tibetan iconography that existed before the Chinese invasion, were hardly more than dry catalogues of Tibetan art-collections or mere classifications of icons, written by scholars (and for scholars) who had no insight into the psychology or religious experience that was expressed in these works. Only in recent years attempts have been made to enter into the spirit of Tibetan art with the help of religious texts and meditative sadhanas, instead of merely regarding it from the point of view of an art-historian or from a purely aesthetic standpoint. One of the first pioneers in this direction was Prof. Tucci in his magnificent work on Tibetan Painted Scrolls' (Thankas) and Dr. Olschak follows closely in his footsteps. Her "Mystic Art of Ancient Tibet" is a real feast for the eyes and a gold-mine of information, in a clear and readable style. The reproductions are excellent, both in colour and in black- and -white. The latter are mainly reproduced from the publications of the International Academy of Indian Culture in New Delhi, founded by the late Prof. Raghu Vira and his son, Prof. Lokesh Chandra, who among them have collected and published an enormous amount of iconographical and scriptural material of Tibetan Buddhism, unequalled by any other individual scholar in the world. Without this source-material half of the present work would not have been possible. This, however, does not minimize our admiration for the excellent way, in which Dr. Olschak and Geshe Thupten Wangyal have used and interpreted this material in conjunction with the outstandingly beautiful colour-reproductions of rare Thankas, frescoes and bronze-images, etc., partly from the author's won collection (of which many items were

acquired during her travels in Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal) as well as from other private and public collections. Tibet is a country of strong, luminous colours and clear outlines. The mystic art of Tibet, therefore, does not favour vagueness of any kind, but demands clear definition of design and colour.

The backbone of Tibetan pictorial art is the mastery and refinement of its line-work, the accuracy of drawing and the highly developed technique of woodblock carving and printing. Though colour lends a new dimension and is never used in a naturalistic way, but to indicate spiritual qualities and even directions of an inner space-dimension, according to strict laws of traditional symbolism, even the mere line-work of uncoloured brush-drawings or woodcuts are capable of conveying a world of vivid reality without ever being realistic in the sense of merely imitating things or lands-capes in a naturalistic way. There are all the characteristic elements of our visual world, without distortion or exaggeration, and yet they depict more than the eye can see, namely the inner life of man and all that surrounds him, in a vision that shows the essential oneness of both, the seer and the seen, which become one in the artists or the creative visionary's experience. Mountains and clouds, waterfalls and trees, flowers and rocks are intimately related to the human and divine figures of which they seem to be emanations rather than something that merely surrounds them casually. Even the most phantastic or imaginative pictures breath a sense of reality that rightly could be called 'surrealistic'.

A good example are the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava (at the beginning of the book), which are so exquisit in execution and so rich in detail that the reader would have liked to know more of its contents and the mutual relationship of these pictures. They are conceived as a ninefold mandala with Padmasambhava in his best-known form in the centre and with his eight manifestations grouped around him. For some unknown reason only seven of them are given here besides the central image which shown Padmasambhava in the royal robes of the King of Sahor, combined with the emblems of spiritual power and accompanied by his two main disciples, the Princess Mandarava and the Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal. About his head are the Dhyani-buddhas who indicate the line of his spiritual descent: Samantabhadra, Amitabha and Avalokitesvara (in the note accompanying the picture, mistaken for the White Tara), while the lower part of the picture shows two of Padmasambhava's contemporaries and helpers in the foundation of the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery (Samye), namely the Tibetan King Tisong-detsan and the Indian monk-scholar Santarakshita, as well as two fearful protecting deities. The following pictures of the same set show a similar pattern of conception and composition; in the highest place the

spiritual teacher who initiated Padmasambhava into the sadhana which made him assume the particular form in which he appears as the main figure in each of these pictures, while below and around him his disciples perform various acts of miraculous powers or are seen immersed in meditation. Before each of the main figures of Padmasambhava's manifestation appear one by one the figures of the 'offering goddesses' with their respective emblems, the lamp, the incense-bowl, the perfumed conchshell, the mirror, the lute, etc. All these details, which combine his torical, mythological and symbolical elements, give these pictures their specific meaning — far beyond their aesthetic value. Probably the shortness of available space prevented the Author to go into a more detailed description. By the way, there is a small error in the note accompanying the first of these pictures: the feather on Padmasambhava's cap is not a "peacock feather" (as can be seen very clearly) but that of an eagle, symbolizing the "soaring mind" of the great guru. There is nothing in such pictures that is not significant in one way or another.

In contrast to the refinement of these pictures and to the rest of the paintings and woodcuts reproduced in this book, is the drawing purporting to represent the ideal proportions of the Buddha-image. That this is not the case, can be observed by anybody who compares this clumsy and stunted drawing with the noble proportions of the statues, thankas and frescoes reproduced in this book — nothing to say of the classical period of Tibetan art, as exemplified by the Western Tibetan style, introduced by the famous Lotsava Rinchenzangpo (967-1052 A.D.). A beautiful example of this style is shown on p.53, where the Dhyani-Buddhas Aksobhya and Ratnasambhava are depicted. The fact that they are shown with their respective throne-bearers, the elephant (indicating Aksobhya) and the horse (indicating Ratnasambhava) makes it unlikely that they represent "Shakyamuni's heavenly manifestations", as claimed in the explanatory note. Also the reproduction of a fresco-painting (belonging to the same tradition and probably the same century) does not portray "Buddha Shakyamuni sitting under the tree of enlightenment", but Prince Siddhartha, long before he became a Buddha, sitting under the Roseapple Tree, while his father, King Suddhodana, performed the plow ceremony. The figures in the branches of the tree are, therefore, not "Dhyani-Buddhas, who symbolize the fivefold sublime wisdom", but quite obviously five Hindu ascetics. And the "devotees", who surround the young Siddhartha, are the very self-same ascetics, who have descended from the tree in order to pay their respects to the meditating Bodhisattva, who by the power of his concentration arrested them in mid-air on their flight to the Himalayas. The note then goes on to explain the significance of "the black pig" (though the pig in this fresco fragment is a clear yellow!) as "the emblem of ignorance, symbolically struck by the arrow of highest comprehension that penetrates the matrix of all spiritual poisons, such

as envy, hatred and greed, which cause the endless repetition of earthly suffering." Here the author loses herself in private speculations, which have nothing to do with the story, which merely says that the Bodhisattva, contemplating the sufferings of the oxen cruelly forced under the yoke, while plowing, or of other animals, hunted and killed, finally fell into a state of deep absorption, which was so powerful that even the shadow of the tree under which he was seated, did not move and the above-mentioned ascetics were arrested in mid-air.—A beautiful fresco of the same scene existed in one of the ancient temples of Tsaparang, and a faithful copy of its (made by Li Gotami Govinda) is now in the possession of the Prince of Wales Museum of Bombay, where it is displayed in the centre of the Tibetan section of the museum.

On pages 18 and 19 the eight traditional types of Chortens, the Tibetan version of the ancient Buddhist Stupas of India, are depicted and described. It is said here that the tumuli of pre-Buddhist times had "Lingam erected on top of the [burial-] mound, symbolizing the saint's unification with the highest god"—and that the spire on the dome of a Chorten corresponds to this symbol and to the "enlightenment elevation on the heads of those who have reached Buddhahood. This seems to be a somewhat arbitrary view and all the more unconvincing, as it is in direct conflict with the historical evidence in regard to pre-historic tumuli as well as with the development of Buddhist Stupa Architecture.*

The idea of an "enlightenment elevation", besides, is of very late origin, and only shows that people had forgotten the original meaning of this iconographical peculiarity which distinguishes a Buddha from even his most enlightened disciples and followers.

It has nothing to do with the Buddha's enlightenment, but as the story of his life and the numerous pictorial representations of it unmistakably show, it records the very start of his religious career many long years *before* his enlightenment. The legend tells us that when he renounced the worldly life in search of truth—still far from enlightenment—he divested himself of his princely ornaments and with one stroke of the sword he cut off his long hair which he had gathered with his left hand above his head. Since that time, it is said, his hair remained in the same position and had never to be cut again.

From all this we can only assume that the Buddha never shaved his head, as it later became the custom among the monks and nuns

* Cfr. my monograph on "Some Aspects of Stupa Symbolism" Kitabistan, Allahabad & London, 1948. Also "Solar & Lunar Symbolism in the Development of Stupa Architecture", MARG, Bombay, 1950.

of his order, and it is most likely that he kept his hair in a knot on the top of his head, as it is even now-adays the custom among the Sikhs (who like the Buddha belong to the kshattriya caste) as well as many among the present-day yogis and sanyasis. This may be significant as an indication that whereas the Buddha represented the ideal of the homeless *sramana*, his successors became well-established and comfortably settled monastic communities, becoming more and more separated from normal human life and the contact with the people around them. As a reaction to this, the Siddhas took again to the homeless life of the yogin, and with them an entirely new religious movement, which greatly contributed to the Tantric form of Tibetan Buddhism, came into existence.

The Siddhas were held in such high esteem that the Mahasiddha Saraha was thought of being the guru of Nagarjuna, the famous philosopher of the Madhyamika School, who lived in the second century A.D. This, however, is not possible as none of the Siddhas is known to be earlier than the 7th century. According to Benoytosh Bhattacharyya (a recognized authority in this matter) Saraha was born around 633 A.D., and the Nagarjuna, who was said to be his pupil, was the Siddha and alchemist Nagarjuna. The claim that "Guru Saraha lived 2000 years ago" (p. 10) can, therefore, not be maintained.

The age of the Siddhas was the age of the unfoldment of the Tantric Path and the Diamond Vehicle, in which creative imagination became one of the most important tools of meditation, for which mandalas were of fundamental importance. The general patterns of these mandalas have been well described and illustrated in excellent colour as well as in black-and-white reproductions, which give an idea of the intricate nature of Tantric sadhanas and their profound symbolism. However, it is a pity that the most frequently used arrangement of the five Dhyani-Buddhas, on which the most typical Tibetan mandalas are based (as for instance those of the Bardo Thodol, "The Tibetan Book of the Dead"), is not even mentioned. The table in which the positions, colours, mudras, mantras, elements, faculties, throne-bearers and other symbols of the main figures of the mandala is shown, is exclusively based on one single sadhana (Guhyasamaja), without explaining that this is only one among other possible arrangements, depending on which of the Dhyani-Buddhas forms the key-figure of the mandala, comparable to the key note in a musical composition. In many of the most important mandalas, for instance, Vairocana is in the centre, while Aksobhya is in the east, representing the Mirror-like Wisdom & the element water, whose surface, if undisturbed, reflects like a mirror, and is in this capacity the symbol of the *alaya-vijnana*, the universal consciousness in a state of perfect transparency and tranquility. Aksobhya's throne-bearer or vehicle is the elephant. In relationship to the element water the elephant symbolizes the monsoon cloud, in relationship to Aksobhya's

gesture of touching the earth (bhūmisparśamudrā) the elephant symbolizes steadfastness, unshakeability and tranquility. This is significant, because it shows that the same symbol can have different meanings, according to different levels of understanding or consciousness (physical, sensual, mental, psychological, spiritual, etc), according to the context or in relationship to other symbols. In view of this multi-dimensionality of.

For the same reason, the chart (pp.20-21) which shows the relationship of the energy-spheres (Cakras) of the body and the corresponding Dhyani-Buddhas cannot be regarded as generally valid, because it does not take into consideration that it depends on the context of the particular sadhana which Dhyani-Buddha is associated with which Cakra. This kind of over-simplification can only lead to misunderstandings and does not do justice to the flexibility of Tibetan meditational systems and the psychological refinement of the Buddhist attitude, especially in its Tantric practices.

In view of the multi-dimensionality of symbols, as mentioned above, we also have to be careful in our definition of symbolical relationships or even in defining the character of individual symbols, because any rigidly systematized representation goes at the cost of their vitality and their inherent dynamism. For this reason it is also dangerous to take over outworn, stereotyped concepts of symbols, which do not reflect the particular meaning applied to them in a given tradition. It is, for instance, misleading and unjustified to speak of the Vajra as "thunderbolt" in the context of the Buddhist Vajrayana, unless we are prepared to call it the "Thunderbolt Vehicle" instead of the Diamond Vehicle.

Since Buddhists have been perfectly clear in what they mean by "vajra", as explained in one of the most important Mahayana texts, known as the "Diamond Sutra" (Vajracchedikā Sūtra) and since even the Tibetan translation of the term "vajra" reveals it as "the master or lord of stoness" (rDo = stone; rJe = master), i.e. the diamond, — there is no justification in perpetuating a misconception that had its origin in equating the meaning of this term with that of its vedic synonym which had quite different connotations and associations.

The Buddhist term "vajra" symbolizes the highest spiritual qualities, namely, luminosity, transparency, indestructability and firmness. In the latter capacity it is related to Aksobhya's steadfastness and immutability, symbolized by his elephant, while the first two qualities correspond to the liminosity of the 'mirror' (reflective and contemplative consciousness) and the transparency of the element water. Therefore, Aksobhya is often depicted with the Vajra as the emblem of his spiritual

'family', and as such it would be more correctly interpreted as the "diamond sceptre". Otherwise it would be better to leave this term untranslated, after having once explained its meaning.

In a similar way it would have been better to retain the term "Dakini" (Tib. : mKhah-hgro-ma), because Dakinis are far more than "Cloud-Fairies", since they can represent divine as well as demonical beings, associated not only with the heavenly regions, but just as much with the horrors of the cremation places. They are not sweet fairy-tale beings, but fierce powers of the knowledge of life and death, as well as of inspiration the leads us beyond both: inspiration in the sense of the Greek word "daimon".

However, these considerations should not deflect us from the value and the merits of this book, which by far outway its occasional shortcomings in the interpretation of so vast and complicated a material. The beautiful reproductions of rare and significant works of Tibetan art have been chosen with understanding and true appreciation of their artistic, spiritual and historical value. They have been explained and commented upon in a competent and lucid manner, so that even those who are not familiar with the subject, can understand and enjoy the rich fare offered in this magnificent volume. For the student of Tibetan Buddhist culture this book is a safe guide, especially as all technical terms and proper names have not only been given according to their pronunciation but also in their Tibetan spelling and with their Sanskrit equivalents. The publishers too have to be thanked for the excellent get-up and the great care they have taken in every detail. A volume like this will be a permanent asset to any library, because its contents will never be outdated.

- (ii) *BHUTAN : Land of the Peaceful Dargon* by G. N. Mehra. XVI—151 text pages and 93 colour photographs. 16 black and white photographs within the text. Price Rs.150/-. Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Kanpur, 1974.

In this time of violent changes, upheavels, environment pollution and general unrest all over the world, it comes as a relief to be introduced to a country, in which life is still in harmony with nature, religion still a source of culture and human happiness, and the rulers still in personal touch with their people. In fact, it was the late King of Bhutan who inspired this book and to whom it is, therefore, dedicated by the author.

Mr Mehra, who in his capacity as Financial Adviser to the Government of Bhutan, lived for many years in this country and had access to many places and sources of information which are inaccessible to most other visitors to Bhutan, is in the lucky position to give to the world a unique insight into the life and nature of one of the last "Shangri-las" of the world. And he does so not only by giving us a detailed account of the land and its people, of art and architecture, religious tradition and early history as well as the present administration and general economy of the country, but supports his description with magnificent full-page colour photographs which in themselves would make this volume the pride of any library, both from an artistic as well as from a documentary and historical point of view. In these pictures we admire the majesty of the mountains, the loveliness of the valleys, the monumentality of architecture, the lovable character of the people and the uniqueness of their religious art, in form of paintings and ritual dances, interiors of temples, adorned with frescoes, statues, richly carved altars and precious offerings. Without these pictures, which are a credit to the photographic skill and artistic sensitivity of the author, nobody could imagine the vital importance of colour in religious tradition as well as in the daily life of the people of Bhutan. The high standard of the colour reproductions does full justice to the excellence of the originals and corresponds to the high quality of the descriptive text, in which the author shows himself as a reliable guide to the understanding of the ancient culture and the present conditions of Bhutan. He writes with warmth and conviction, based on keen observation and practical knowledge of both, the common people and the administration of the country.

His book is all the more interesting as it depicts a country in transition from a medieval, more or less feudal society, to a modern state, under the courageous leadership of its late King Jigme Dorje Wangchuk, who tried to guide his people into the new age, without destroying the essential values of his country's ancient culture.

Here we have a fascinating example of an enlightened monarch, who had the farsightedness to divest himself voluntarily of his absolute powers, in order to share them with his people. The measure of his success may be gauged from the balanced account of this book which deals as much with the present problems and achievements as beauty of Bhutanese art. "The modern world", the author says, "with its penchant for materialistic values . . . might consider the creation of such 'useless' beauty a purile and wasteful effort. But ultimately the call of the spirit is what matters or should matter and by giving dynamic visual expression to their vast mythology, the Bhutanese artists have not only accomplished a difficult task but have created a lasting symbol of the triumph of their faith. This has fed the country's soul and made it possible for Bhutan to maintain its identity and not to be swallowed by the culture of its big neighbours".

This book will take its place as a historical document of the transitional period of Bhutan as well as of its living art and tradition, and as such I warmly recommend it to all who are interested in the unique culture of this beautiful country.

AN
ART BOOK
FROM
NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

༄༅ ། རྒྱལ་ལྷུག་མཚོག་གཉིས་ ། །

RGYAN-DRUG MCHOG-GNYIS (Six Ornaments and Two Excellents) reproduces ancient scrolls (1670 A.C.) depicting Buddha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dinnaga, Dharmakirti, Gunaprabha, and Sakyaprabha; reproductions are as per originals today after 300 years of display and worship with no attempts at restoration or retouching. The exposition in English presents the iconographical niceties and the theme of the paintings, namely, the Mahayana philosophy; the treatment is designed to meet also the needs of the general reader with an interest in Trans-Himalayan art or Mahayana. A glossary in Sanskrit-Tibetan, a key to place names and a note on source material are appended. Illustrated with five colour plates and thirteen monochromes.

April, 1962.

SOME PUBLICATIONS
FROM
NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

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PRAJNA or the famous Sanskrit-Tibetan Thesaurus-cum-Grammar was compiled by Tenzing Gyaltzen, a Khampa scholar educated in Nyingma and Sakya school of Derge, in 1771 A.C. Though this book was preserved in xylograph few copies of the block-prints are found outside Tibet. The lexicon portions are now presented in modern format with Tibetan words in Tibetan script and Sanskrit words in Sanskrit script with an elaborate foreword by Professor Nalinaksha Dutt.

October 1961.

ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་

The entire xylograph (637 pp: 21 inches x 4 inches) containing both lexicon and grammar parts is now presented by offset (photo-mechanic); most clear reproduction of any Tibetan xylograph ever made anywhere. A table of typographical errors etc., found in the original (xylograph), compiled by late lamented Gegan Palden Gyaltzen (Mentsikhang: Lhasa and Enchay: Gangtok) makes the present publication an improvement upon the original.

November 1961.



Price per copy Rupees Ten.

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