The Temples of Western Tibet and their Artistic Symbolism

by
GIUSEPPE TUCCI

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INDO-TIBETICA III.1

The Monasteries of Spiti and Kunavar

edited by
LOKESH CHANDRA

Lumbi International Institute

from a first draft translation by
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ADITYA PRAKASHAN
NEW DELHI
This volume describes the ancient monasteries of Spiti and Kunavar, namely, those at Tabo, Lhalung, Chang and Nako. Prof. Tucci has identified the paintings of manadlas and individual deities in the temples and elucidated their symbolism at length. The abundance of mystic meanings of the deities and cycles represented is interpreted from Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. The first chapter details the main temple of the monastic complex of Tabo, dedicated to the Vajradhātu-mañḍala. The second describes the Gser-khaṅ or Golden Temple of Tabo. Its walls are covered with ancient frescoes that go back to the 16th century. The Dkyil-khaṅ or Maṇḍala Temple constitutes the third chapter. Its paintings are from the 17th century. Chapter IV is devoted to the minor temples at Tabo. The next three chapters V, VI and VII take up the temples at Lhalung, at Chang, and at Nako. The Nako temple has frescoes of the 14–15 century.

This volume is of unique importance to understand the fundamentals of Vajrayāna art as a concomitant of mysteriosophic realisation. Prof. Tucci has propounded the symbolic and esoteric meaning of the manadlas at length, and in depth which is unique to him. Two Kashmiri wooden sculptures of 10–11th century in the Tabo Gtsug-lag-khaṅ are valuable for the history of Indian art.

A detailed preface by Lokesh Chandra throws further light on the manadlas of Vairocana, which dominate the temples in this volume. He clarifies the various types of these manadlas which had posed problems to Tucci. The murals of Nor-bzaṅ had escaped identification by Tucci, but have now been concorded to Sudhana of the Gaṇḍavyūha. The role of photism in the evolution of Tantras is discussed.

This work calls for further field exploration and table research, on the extant sūtras and chronicles, and on the murals and sculptures in the ancient territories of Guge.

Prof. GIUSEPPE TUCCI (1894-1984) is the doyen of modern scientific studies of Tibetan art and thought, history and literature. He was for many years Professor of Religions and Philosophies of India and the Far East at the University of Rome. He also taught at universities in India. Professor Tucci made several visits to Nepal and has been on eight expeditions to Western and Central Tibet, collecting historical, artistic and literary material. His scientific expeditions resulted in many historical books, like the Tibetan Painted Scrolls and the seven volumes of Indo-Tibetica in Italian. Prof. Tucci gives word to the mute dialogue of the mind with the mysterious presences in the Land of Snows.

The General Editor of the series is Prof. LOKESH CHANDRA who is a renowned scholar of Tibetan, Mongolian and Sino-Japanese Buddhism. He has to his credit over 360 works and text editions. Among them are classics like his Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary, Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature, Buddhist Iconography of Tibet, and his ongoing Dictionary of Buddhist Art in about 20 volumes. Prof. Lokesh Chandra was nominated by the President of the Republic of India to the Parliament in 1974-80 and again in 1980-86. He has been a Vice-President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research. Presently: Director, International Academy of Indian Culture.
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This volume III.1 of the *Indo-Tibetica* describes the ancient monasteries of Spiti and Kunavar, namely, those at Tabo, Lhalung, Chang and Nako. Prof. Tucci has identified the paintings of maṇḍalas and individual deities in the temples and elucidated their symbolism at length. Usually he names the iconography of the central wall, then of the left wall and finally of the right wall. At times this scheme has to be discovered in the rich wealth of detail, and the bountiful abundance of mystic meanings of the deities and cycles represented. The introduction gives a synoptic view of the monastic centres in a threadbare clarity that can lead the reader to the overflowing poesy of Tucci’s interpretation.

The monastic complex at Tabo has eight temples enclosed by a boundary wall (p.24). Among them, three temples are important from the artistic and historical standpoint:

- Central temple or Gtsug-lag-khaṇ
- Golden temple or Gser-khaṇ
- Maṇḍala temple or Dkyil-khaṇ.

The Gtsug-lag-khaṇ has the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala of Vairocana, as was the preference for maṇḍalas of Vairocana in the school of Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po. Life-size stucco images of deities of the maṇḍala are set around the walls, with a central fourfold image of Vairocana. Beneath the stucco statues are the frescos of the life of Śākyamuni on the right wall and on the left wall of the pilgrimage of Sudhana which is dealt with at length in
the Gaṇḍavyūha, a sūtra of the Avatamsaka school.

Beyond the fourfold image of Vairocana and the stucco images of the Vajradhātu-manḍala, at the far end we enter a cella. The central statue in the cella is that of Amitābha (p.78). Tucci brings in the Five Buddhas. Here Amitābha is on his own and does not belong to the quinary system of the Five Buddhas. He is surrounded by four acolytes: Avalokita, Mahāsthāma-prāpta, Kṣitigarbha and Ākāśagarbha. There is a parallel to this scheme at the Horyūji monastery in Japan.

Chapter II describes the Gser-khaṅ or Golden Temple of Tabo. The walls are covered with ancient frescos that go back to the 16th century. The depictions on the walls are as follows:
Left wall: a) Bhaiṣajyaguru, b) Amitābha flanked by Avalokita and Mahāsthāma-prāpta, c) Vajradhara.
Central wall: a) Maitreya, b) Śākyamuni surrounded by Sixteen Arhats, c) Mañjuśrī.
Right wall: a) Sarvavid Vairocana encircled by the Thirtyseven Deities in medallions, b) Green Tārā, c) Vijayā.

Chapter III takes up the Dkyil-khaṅ or Maṇḍala Temple. It has been modernised. The paintings pertain to the 17th century. It was used for invitation rites/abhiṣeka. The central figure is of Sarvavid Vairocana surrounded by deities in medallions. On the left wall is a maṇḍala of Akṣobhya. The right wall has a maṇḍala whose central deity is erased. This temple has paintings of a historical character. To the left of the door are paintings of Byan-chub-hod, Zhi-ba-ḥod and Ye-śes-ḥod. The panoramic view of the monasteries of Tholing and Tabo is painted on the right of the central wall and also bears an inscription.

Chapter IV is devoted to the minor temples at Tabo. Among
them, the Byams-pa lha-khan “Maitreya temple” has a recent statue of Maitreya. The smaller Ḥbrom-ston temple has an ancient door of deodar wood of the 12th century. The larger Ḥbrom-ston temple is empty. It has paintings of the eight Bhaiṣajyaguru going back to the 17th century. The Lha-khan dkar-byun is insignificant.

Chapter V describes the temple at Lhalung. The left wall has a maṇḍala of eight-armed Vairocana attended by sixteen deities (four Tathāgatas and twelve goddesses). The central wall has Vagiśvara Mañjuśrī with four attendant deities to the left, and Maitreya with his parivāra of four deities to the right. The right wall shows Prajñāpāramitā.

Chapter VI takes up the Temple of Chang in Upper Kunavar. The central wall has a big figure of Śākyamuni, with deities of the Nāraka maṇḍala all around. Two small frescos to the left of the door may be connected with the foundation of the temple.

Chapter VII describes the monastery at Nako with four small temples enclosed by a boundary wall. Temple no. 1 is recent. Temple no. 2 has stucco images of the Pañca-tathāgata. Tucci gives the mystical meaning of the pentad at length. On the left wall is Prajñāpāramitā and on the right wall is the maṇḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana. The central figure of Temple no. 3 is Yellow Tārā with the images of Eight Bhaiṣajyaguru on the sides. The maṇḍala on the left wall has disappeared. The right wall has the maṇḍala of Vairocana. Besides the monastic complex, Nako has a temple of Padmasambhava. It had paintings of the 14-15th century, of whom only four are better preserved on the left wall, faint traces of a maṇḍala can be seen on the central wall, and the right wall has Amitāyus, Śākyamuni and Amitābha.
This volume is of unique importance to understand the fundamentals of Vajrayāna art as a concomitant of mysteriosophic realisation. Prof. Tucci has propounded the symbolic and esoteric meaning of the maṇḍala, or cycle as he terms it, not only at length, but in depth which is unique to him and inimitable. In the depth of visualisation the individual becomes a dynamised centre. As a new centrum, he envisions and creates, leading to new concatenations, to new maṇḍalas. The broad outlines remain, but new cycles emerge. Their manifestation is art, which baffles scholars who seek uniform systems. Naturally, symbolism dominates this perceptive work of Tucci. It imparts a living dimension to ancient statues in the round and to the two-dimensional frescos on the walls of monasteries.

The first chapter on historical geography corrects the identifications proposed in the foregoing second volume. Now we can map with greater precision the wanderings and working centres of Rin-chen-bzañ-po the great lotsava who ushered in the renaissance of Buddhism in Tibetan areas. Yet, another aspect are the diffused details of Tucci on the various maṇḍalas dedicated to Vairocana, who was central to Vajrayāna in China and Japan and later on in Tibet. The translation of the Mahāvairocana-sūtra (T848, K427) by Śubhākara-simha and I-hsing in 725 introduced the maṇḍalas of Vairocana to China. Two years earlier, already in 723, Vajrabodhi had translated the japa-sūtra of the Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha and introduced the cult of Vairocana. Śubhākara-simha drew the deities of the twin maṇḍalas of Vairocana: of Garbhadhātu Vairocana and Vajradhātu Vairocana. Both these drawing-manuals have come down to us in copies of the ninth century (around A.D. 855). The prevalent form of these twin maṇḍalas, as evolved at the T'ang metropolis and painted by artists of the Imperial Court, have continued down to our times in Japan.
They were transmitted by Kobo Daishi to Japan in 806. The Tibetan translations of the Tantras of Vairocana were done two centuries later, under the patronage of Rin-chen-bzañ-po in the 10-11th centuries.

Prof. Tucci, as a pioneer, had the inherent drawback of not having at his disposal the Sanskrit text of the Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-sāgraha (STTS) which is crucial to the interpretation of the intricate multiplicity of its maṇḍalas. While a complete manuscript of the very text lay before Tucci, he was misled by the subtitle of its first part Sarva-tathāgat-ābhisamaya-mahākal-parāja. He did realise that it coincides with the Chinese translation but he considered it a particular recension. This Tantra was particularly studied during the times of Rin-chen-bzañ-po and in his school in the following centuries. Its main commentary by Ānandagarbha was put into Tibetan by Rin-chen-bzañ-po. The ritual and graphic representation of its 37 deities became integral to the renaissance of Buddhism, and as such the monasteries of Spiti and Kunawar were embellished with their stuccos or frescos. It is crucial to understand the complex structure of the STTS before we can clarify the points raised by Tucci.

THE TWENTYFOUR MAṆḌALAS OF STTS

The four samayas. The Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-sāgraha represents the samaya school of yoga. Three prominent Tantric schools for awakening are kaula, miśra and samaya. The samaya school is the highest of all (Swami Rama 1982: 187). The STTS is divided into four samayas: abhisamaya, vajra-samaya, dharma-samaya, karma-samaya. These four samayas constitute four parts or mahākalparājas of the Tantra. This quaternary structure is reflected in their respective colo-
 phonons and at times they lead an unwary reader astray and the
four parts give the impression of being independent works.
This is precisely what put Tucci off the track when he consi-
dered the Sarva-tathāgatābhisamaya-mahākalparāja as another
redaction, and did not realize that it is just the first part of the
STTS.

The five families, pañca-kula, Tibetan rigs lña, Japanese gōbu
express the five sapiences/jñāna of the Five Tathāgatas of the
Vajradhatu. The five families are: Tathāgata/Buddha, vajra,
maṇi/ratna, padma, karma/khaṭga. In fact, the expression five
families is equivalent to Vajradhiitu, in contradistinction to the
three families (Buddha, padma, vajra) which mean the Gar-
bhadhātu. The correspondence of the five families to the Five
Tathāgatas is as follows:

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<th>Vairocana</th>
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<td>Akṣobhya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maṇi/ratna</td>
<td>Ratnasambhava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>padma</td>
<td>Amitābha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karma/khaṭga</td>
<td>Amoghasiddhi</td>
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Tucci (p.42) speaks of the five mystical families and the five
families and the five initiations connected with them. He does
not specify the five cycles but feels in a broad way that several
maṇḍalas are possible: “It must not be believed that the cycles
of Sarvavid/Kun-rig and the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala exhaust the
possible symbolic representations of the mystical experiences
connected with Vairocana and with the liturgy which the
schools derived from Tattva-saṅgraha or from similar Tantric
literature”.

In fact, the five families, as meant by Tucci in this passage,
are comprehended in the main Vajradhātu-maṇḍala which has
a quinary form, that is five circles in a larger inner circle:
Mahāvairocana 1 with Sattvavajrī 2, Ratnavajrī 3, Dharmavajrī 4, Karmavajrī 5.

Akṣobhya 6 with Vajrasattva 7, Vajrarāja 8, Vajrarāga 9, Vajrasādhu 10.

Ratnasambhava 11 with Vajraratna 12, Vajrāteja 13, Vajraketu 14, Vajrahāsa 15.

Aksobhya 6 with Vajrasattva 7, Vajraraja 8, Vajraraga 9, Vajrasadhu 10.

Ratnasambhava 11 with Vajraratna 12, Vajrāteja 13, Vajraketu 14, Vajrahāsa 15.

In the outer corridor running around the inner sanctum are the eight goddesses: Vajralasyā 26, Vajramālā 27, Vajragītā 28, Vajranṛtyā 29, Vajradhūpā 30, Vajrapuṣpā 31, Vajralokā 32 and Vajragāndhā 33, and the four doorkeepers: Vajrāṅkuśa 34, Vajrapāśa 35, Vajrasphota 36, Vajraveṣa 37.

The layout of this maṇḍala is shown on the following page.

This is the main maṇḍala of the Vajradhātu system. It is known as the mahāmaṇḍala in the STTS and is termed the dai-mandara "great maṇḍala" in Japan (Tajima 1959:145). Here mahā means 'great' in size, because it is the only maṇḍala in which all the Thousand Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa are illustrated, and hence it has the largest number of deities. Moreover, mahā signifies 'general' in the sense that it is the prototype of the maṇḍalas of the Vajradhātu system. It is, so to say, the prakṛti or model for other maṇḍalas of the STTS. The question follows: which are the other maṇḍalas? The STTS has four samayas, and each samaya has six maṇḍalas. Thus there are $4 \times 6$ or 24 maṇḍalas in this system. The six maṇḍalas of each samaya can be divided into two kramas: utpatti-krama and utpanna-krama/sampanna-krama. The first four maṇḍalas of the Vajradhātu are the process of emanation of deities (ut-
成身会（根本成身会）
The last two, the caturmudrā and ekamudrā, maṇḍalas represent their gradual reintegration into the central deity Vairocana; and thus they form the process of reabsorption (utpanna-krama or sampanna-krama) into the primordial unity of Vairocana. The two kramas are succinct in the Hevajra-tantra.

Thus we have the following 24 maṇḍalas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.</th>
<th>abhisamaya</th>
<th>I.1 mahā-maṇḍala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tathāgata-kula</td>
<td>I.2 samaya-maṇḍala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vajradhātu</td>
<td>I.3 sūkṣma-maṇḍala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I.4 pūjā-maṇḍala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I.5 caturmudrā-maṇḍala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I.6 ekamudrā-maṇḍala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In I.2 the deities are goddesses.
In I.5 the deities merge into Vairocana and the other four Tathāgatas.
In I.6 the deities finally consubstantiate into Vairocana.

II. vajra-samaya II.1 Trilokavijaya-mahāmaṇḍala
vajra-kula  
Trilokavijaya II.2 krodha-guhyamudrā-maṇḍala
(ch.7), krodha-guhya-vajra-
maṇḍala (p.72), vajrakula-
guhyā-maṇḍala (p.74)

II.3 vajrakula-dharma-jñāna-samaya-
maṇḍala (ch.8), vajrakula-
sūkṣma-jñāna-samaya-maṇḍala
(p.78)

II.4 Trilokavijaya-karma-maṇḍala
(ch.9), vajrakula-karma-maṇḍala
karma-maṇḍala (p.82,83)

II.5 caturmudrā-maṇḍala
II.6 no name
III. dharma-samaya padma-kula Jagadvinaya

| III.1 | Sakalajagadvinaya-mahā-maṇḍala (ch.15), dharma-maṇḍala (p.109). |
| III.2 | padma-guhya-mudrā-maṇḍala (ch.16), mudrā-maṇḍala...padma-guhyā (p.118). |
| III.3 | jñāna-maṇḍala (ch.17), dharma-maṇḍala (p.125), jñāna-maṇḍalāmi...dharmajñānam (p.125 st.1), padma-dharma-maṇḍala (p.126). |
| III.4 | karma-maṇḍala (ch.18a), padma-karma |
| III.5 | caturmudrā-maṇḍala (ch.18b) |
| III.6 | ekamudrā-maṇḍala (ch.18b) |

IV. karma-samaya ratna-kula Sarvārthaśiddhi

| IV.1 | Sarvārthaśiddhi-mahā-maṇḍala |
| IV.2 | ratna-guhyā-mudrā-maṇḍala (ch.20), sva(=ratna)kula-samayamudrā-maṇḍala, mudrā-maṇḍalāmi...ratna-guhyāmi, maṇi-guhyā-maṇḍala (p.149). |
| IV.3 | jñāna-maṇḍala (ch.21), ratnajñāna (p.154 st.1). |
| IV.4 | karma-maṇḍala (ch.22), ratna-karma |
| IV.5 | caturmudrā-maṇḍala (ch.22b, name at end), maṇikula-caturmudrā-maṇḍala |
| IV.6 | ekamudrā-maṇḍala |

From the above we see that ratna is added to the names of maṇḍalas IV.2, 3, 4, and maṇi to IV.5.
We have given above a complete enumeration of the maṇḍalas in the STTS. Thus far scholars have been puzzled as to the number of maṇḍalas in this Tantra. Ryujun Tajima, an eminent abbot of the Shingon sect and an erudite scholar, had said that the complete text of the STTS contains the mention of a large number of maṇḍalas (Tajima 1959: 148). Now, with the discovery of the complete Sanskrit text, whose entirety is attested to by its Tibetan translation, the precise number and individual names of the maṇḍalas in the STTS can, long last, be specified.

Prof. Tucci's heading 'the five mystical families and the five cycles' (p.42) leads one to expect five maṇḍalas corresponding to the five families. In fact only four families, namely Tathāgata-, vajra-, padma-, and ratna-kula, have not one but six maṇḍalas each. The karma-kula does not have any maṇḍala. The caption of Tucci needs to be changed.

Prof. Tucci (p.43-49) points out that Ānandagarbha describes the maṇḍalas of Vairocana according to padma-kula and ratna-kula, and they have deities which are already found in the Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala. Due to lack of an edited text of the STTS Tucci could not see the interrelation of the mahāmaṇḍala (I.1-6) and the maṇḍalas of the ratna-kula (IV.1-6) and of the padma-kula (III.1-6). All of them have the basic 37 deities but with change of names and attributes.

As rightly pointed out by Tucci (p.66) the plastic maṇḍala of Tabo derives from an atmosphere dominated by the mystic experiences expounded in the STTS. It is most likely that it was the basic maṇḍala of the STTS namely the Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala (I.1) as symbolising its root-text, as the prakṛti of its mūla-tantra. The question of representing subsidiary maṇḍalas of the vajrakula (II.1-6) or of the ratna-kula (IV.1.6) as plastic images does not arise. Tucci's concern that
there is no way of distinguishing between the cycle of the ‘family of the diamond’ and the ‘family of the gem’, may not bother us, for there is hardly any possibility of their depiction at Tabo.

THE EIGHTEEN SYSTEMS OF VAJRASEKHKARA-YOGA

Tajima is not clear about the separate identities of the Vajrašekhara-yoga-sūtras and the STTS which is just the first of its 18 assemblies/systems. The confusion about their relationship arises because of the Chinese title of the STTS, which is misleading in its prolixity: chin-kang-ting (vajrašekhara) i-ch’ieh (sarva) ju-lai (tathāgata) chen-shih (tattva) she’ (sangrahā) ta-ch’eng (mahāyāna) hsien cheng (abhisambodhi) ta-chiao (mahātantra) wang (rāja) ching (śūtra) (Nj 1020, T865, K1274).

Tajima (1953:148) says that according to Shih-pa hui chih-kuei, it appears that the complete text of STTS contains a large number of maṇḍalas. The Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch’ieh shih-pa hui chih-kuei (Nj 1448, T869, K1289) was translated by Amoghavajra during the year 746-774. The title means “an outline of eighteen assemblies in the Vajrašekhara-yoga-sūtra” (Nj 1448). I would like to correct the interpretation of the last character: “in the Vajrašekhara-yoga-sūtras” (plural), which means that in the school of Vajrašekhara-yoga there were seventeen other assemblies/systems beside that of the STTS. The maṇḍalas mentioned in Shih-pa... do not refer to the STTS alone, as mis-understood by Tajima. It would help future research to know the eighteen assemblies. Amoghavajra says (T18. 284c16): that the vajrašekhara-yoga-sūtras (plural) have ten myriads (one lakh) of gāthās and eighteen [celestial] assemblies. The first assembly is named STTS”. Thus it is clear that the Vajrašekhara system had a large extent which was calculated to be a hundred thousand or a lakh of stanzas, each stanza/gāthā having 32 syllables. The word gāthā/stanza is a
term of measurement and does not necessarily imply that the
eighteen texts of the eighteen assemblies were in metres. The
number 1,00,000 and 18 remind of the Mahābhārata which has
a hundred thousand stanzas (śatasāhasrīkī samhitā) and eighteen
parvans. Extensive works running to ten myriad gāthās and
divided into eighteen parts must have been a genre in vogue,
estimated as encyclopaedic, cherished and prized as highly
developed and organised corpora, and valued as comprehen-
sive systems of knowledge.

The eighteen assemblies are (T18.286a26-287c):

First assembly : Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-
saṅgраha-tantrarāja
Second assembly : Sarva-tathāgata-guhya-rāja-yoga
Third assembly : Sarva-śāsana-yoga
Fourth assembly : Trailokyavijaya-vajra-yoga
Fifth assembly : Loka-lokottara-vajra-yoga
Sixth assembly : Mahāsukha-amogha-samaya-tattva-
yoga
Seventh assembly : Samanta-yoga
Eighth assembly : Ādi-yoga
Ninth assembly : Sarva-buddha-pariṣad-
dākinī-samvara-jāla-yoga
Tenth assembly : Mahāsamaya-yoga
Eleventh assembly : Mahāyāna-abhisambodhi-yoga
Twelfth assembly : Samaya-anuttara-yoga
Thirteenth assembly : Mahasamaya-tattva-yoga
Fourteenth assembly : Tathāgata-samaya-tattva-yoga
Fifteenth assembly : Guhyasamāja-yoga
Sixteenth assembly : Advaya-samaya-yoga
Seventeenth assembly : Khasama-yoga
Eighteenth assembly : Vajra-ratn-ośniśa-yoga
The very opening sentence of Amoghavajra (T18.284c16) plunges directly into the subject: “In the Chin-kang-ting yü-ch’ieh ch’ing there are ten myriads of gāthās and eighteen [heavenly] assemblies. The first assembly is named Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-sangraha-mahāyāna-abhisambodhi-mahātantra-rāja-sūtra. It has four chapters that are: 1 Vajradhātu, 2 Trailokyavijaya, 3 Jagadvinaya, 4 Sarvarthasiddhi. They reveal the symbols of the four sapiences/jñāna. In the first chapter there are six maṇḍalas:

1. The Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala. It explains the sambhogakāya of Vairocana, who has obtained perfect illumination by passing through the meditation of the five representations. Having become Buddha he has caused to emanate with the vajra-samādhi the thirtyseven jñānas: he has divulged the rites of the maṇḍalas; he has given to his disciples the mode of rapidly attesting the Bodhisattva.

2. Dhāraṇi-maṇḍala. It contains thirtyseven divinities. All the divinities of this maṇḍala are in the form of pāramitā and divulge the rites of entry into the maṇḍala. It gives to the disciples four kinds of eyes. It explains the four rites: respect, love, victory, relief of pain.

3. Śūkṣmavajra-maṇḍala. It too has thirty-seven divinities. They are drawn amidst vajras. Each one is in dhyāna-mudrā.
He divulges the mode of entry into the maṇḍala for his disciples and gives to their heart the capacity, the toughness and the liberty. He explains the samādhi of 'subtile vajra'. He helps in practising the rules of the four dhyānas: he practises the “four infinite hearts” and the three disciplines of liberation.

4. Sarva-tathāgata-vistara-pūjā-karma-maṇḍala. It contains further thirty-seven divinities. Each of these divinities carries its own attribute and renders homage to others. It divulges the mode of entry into the maṇḍala. It explains for its disciples the manner of sixteen great offerings.

5. Caturmudrā maṇḍala. It explains to disciples the four kinds of rapid obtainments. By means of this maṇḍala, all can endeavour to obtain siddhi. They who seek siddhi by means of four maṇḍalas will obtain it before their graphic figuration.

6. Ekamudrā-maṇḍala. If one pronounces the mantra of Vairocana and that of Vajrasattva, it contains either seventeen or thirteen divinities; besides it explains the rites of entry into the maṇḍala; it gives to disciples the mode of progress in practices; it reunites the samādhis of the principal divinity.

In the [second] chapter of Trailokyavijaya, there are six maṇḍalas. Buddha having attained perfect illumination caused the wheel of vajra to revolve on the peak of Mount Sumeru, with all the Budhisattvas, having accomplished the rite of invocation. As there are beings difficult to convert, such as Mahēśvara, who cannot be made to submit to law by tranquil means, all the Tathāgatas who fill the heavens and the whole of Dharma-dhātu, in unanimity with one hundred and eight nominative eulogies, asked and rendered homage to Vajrasattva: [they told him] “All the devas of this kind are difficult to convert...”; ...Vajrapāṇi, having accepted the prayer of all the Tathāgatas, entered into samādhi of incensed Vajra, assumed the form of Great-majestic and vanquished the beings with the means of salvation”. ... ... (Tajima 1959:146-148).
Amoghavajra had at his disposal the complete text of the STTS with all its four parts and was equally clear about six maṇḍalas in each of the four parts. It is evident from the enumeration of 24 maṇḍalas in his "Outline of the 18 assemblies in the Vajraśekhara-yoga-sūtras" (T 869:18.284c16-286a26). The six maṇḍalas of the first part have been enumerated above, and the remaining maṇḍalas are cited from his "Outline":

II. Trailokyavijaya
1. mahāmaṇḍala
2. guhya-maṇḍala
3. dharma-maṇḍala
4. karma-maṇḍala
5. caturmudrā-maṇḍala
6. ekamudrā-maṇḍala

III. Jagadvinaya
1. mahāmaṇḍala
2. samaya-maṇḍala
3. dharma-maṇḍala
4. karma-maṇḍala
5. padmakula caturmudrā-maṇḍala
6. padmakula ekamudrā-maṇḍala.

IV. Sarvarthasiddhi
1. mahāmaṇḍala
2. guhya-samaya-maṇḍala
3. dharma-maṇḍala
4. karma-maṇḍala
5. caturmudrā-maṇḍala
6. ekamudrā-maṇḍala

Amoghavajra has outlined each assembly/system, for example: "the sixth assembly is called ‘amoghasamaya of great beatitude, veritable yoga’ (Mahāsukh-āmogha-samaya-tattva-yoga). It was explained in the palace of the gods Paranirmitavasavartin. In this sūtra is explained the maṇḍala of
bodhisattva Samantabhadra, then the maṇḍala of Vairocana. Likewise is explained the prajñāpāramitā-naya. To each of these divinities Buddha explains the four types of maṇḍalas. He explains to each the rites for making the disciples enter the maṇḍala. He gives them the Law of prajñāpāramitā-naya..." (Tajima 1959:148).

Amoghavajra presents three distinct statements:
(i) The Vajraśekhara-yoga-sūtras represent a school with eighteen distinct assemblies or systems.
(ii) The Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgrahā is the first of these 18 assemblies.
(iii) The STTS has 6 maṇḍalas in each of the four parts, that is 24 maṇḍalas. Amoghavajra actually enumerates the 24 maṇḍalas of the STTS.

TYPES OF MAṆḌALAS OF VAIROCANA

Prof. Tucci was faced with a confusing plethora of maṇḍalas of Vairocana, represented in frescos and stuccos in the temples as well as in the texts. He (p.30) lists some Sa-skya-pa texts on the maṇḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana. Further on (p.59) he points out other maṇḍalas of Vairocana from canonical and other texts. Thus there is a mass of literature and correspondingly several types of maṇḍalas of Vairocana. The interrelationship of the various types was not clear to Tucci. The prototype is provided by the first mahāmaṇḍala (I.1) of the STTS, which evolved into 24 variations. The five families are the basis of the extension of the prototype into 24 maṇḍalas. New Tantras dedicated to Vairocana were being evolved, whose intuitions gave rise to more new maṇḍalas. All the sources used by Tucci in this volume can be classified into six
types of Vairocana-maṇḍalas as follows:
1. Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala according to the STTS, as commented upon by Ānandagarbha in his Ālokakāri. It is the prototype of the remaining 23 maṇḍalas in the STTS.
2. Maṇḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana according to the Sa-skya school.
3. Basic maṇḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana according to the Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana-tantra (SDP). It has more deities that supplement those in the foregoing maṇḍala 2.
4. Maṇḍala of Vairocana according to the Paramādi-vṛtti.
5. Maṇḍala of Vairocana according to the Paramādi-tantra.

A conspectus of the six types of maṇḍalas of Vairocana follows:

1. Vajradhātu-maṇḍala according to Ānandagarbha’s Tattvālokakāri comm. on the STTS
   (described on p.39-42, scheme on p.60)
   Mahāvairocana + Vajrasattvī, Vajraratna, Vajradharma, Vajra-karma
   Akṣobhya + Vajrasattva, Vajrarāja, Vajrarāga, Vajrasādhu
   Ratnasambhava + Vajraratna, Vajrasūrya, Vajraketu, Vajrahāsa
   Amitābha + Vajradharma, Vajratīkṣṇa, Vajrāhetu, Vajrabhāsa
   Amoghasiddhi + Vajrakarma, Vajrarakṣa, Vajrayakṣa, Vajrasandhi
   Lāsyā, Mālā, Gītā, Nṛtyā, Dhūpā, Puṣpā, Dīpā, Gandhā
   Vajrāṅkuṣa, Vajrapāsa, Vajrasphoṭa, Vajrāveśa
2. Maṇḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana according to Sa-skya-pa
(described on p. 32f., scheme on p.59, Sa-skya-pa text no.1 on p.30)
Sarvavid Vairocana, Pariśodhana-rāja, Ratnaketu, Śākyamuni,
Vikasita-kusuma
Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, Tārā
Vajrasattva, Vajrarāja, Vajrarāga, Vajrasādhu
Vajraratna, Vajrateja, Vajraketu, Vajrahāsa
Vajradharma, Vajratīkṣṇa, Vajrahetu, Vajrabhāsa
Vajrakarma, Vajrarakṣa, Vajrayakṣa, Vajrasandhi
Vajralāsyā, Vajramālā, Vajragītā, Vajrāṇṭyā
Vajradhūpā, Vajrapuṣpā, Vajrālokā, Vajragandhā
Vajrāṇikuṣa, Vajrapāsa, Vajrasphota, Vajraghaṇṭa

3. Maṇḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana according to the Sarva-durgati-
pariśodhana-tantra (SDP)
The SDP adds the following to the Sa-skya-pa maṇḍala
(Skorupski 1983:311-313):
Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Bhadrakalpa:

East: Śūramigama, Samantabhadra, Candraprabha, Bhadrapāla
South: Jālināprabha, Gaganagañja, Vajragarbha, Amṛtaprabha
West: Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati, Jñānaketu, Akṣayamati, Pratibhānakūṭa
North: Maitreya, Sarvāpāyajaha, Gandhahastin, Amoghadarśin

In the outer circle there are thirtytwo:

East: 8 śrāvakas: Ānanda, Śāriputra, Kāśyapa, Mahākāśyapa, Ājñāta-kauṇḍinya, Upāli, Maudgalyāyana, Khakkhara.

Circle of 64 deities: 4 Great Kings, 8 dikpālas, 8 planets, 28 nakṣatras, 8 maharṣis, 8 yonis.

4. Maṇḍala of Vairocana according to Paramādi-vṛtti
(description and scheme on p.61)
Lāsyā, Mālā, Gītā, Nṛtyā
Vajrāṅkuśa, Vajrapāśa, Vajrasphota, Vajrāveśa

5. Maṇḍala of Vairocana according to Paramādi-tantra
(description and scheme on p.62)
Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amogha-siddhi
Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuśrī, Ākāśagarbha, Gaganagaṇja, Avalokiteśvara, Sahacittotpādita-dharmacakra-pravarttin, Vajramuṣṭi, Vajrayakṣa

Prof. Tucci speaks of a “completely different” maṇḍala of Vairocana at Nako (p.168), subdivided in five maṇḍalas. Its central deity is eight-armed Vairocana. It is the main maṇḍala 1.1 of the STTS namely, the Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala, whose central Vairocana has eight arms in the Nispanna-yogāvalī (text p.44). This is the prevalent form in the Shingon denomination of Japan, except for the fact that he has two arms in the bodhyagrī mudrā the second option provided for in the Nīspanna-yogāvalī. In China and Japan normal one-faced and two-armed forms were preferred to the many-faced and many-armed.

6. Maṇḍala of Bardo (42 + 10 + 58 = 110 deities)
   1st-7th days: dawning of 42 peaceful deities

1st day Vairocana
2nd day Akṣobhya as Vajrasattva
3rd day Ratnasambhava
4th day Amitābha
5th day Amoghasiddhi
6th day Five Tathāgatas in yab-yum (42 peaceful deities)
7th day Ten Vidyādharas

8th-14th days: dawning of 58 wrathful deities
(Evans-Wentz 1957: ill. p.136, described on xxix-xxx, 131-146, 217-220)
8th day          Buddha-Heruka
9th day          Vajra-Heruka
10th day         Ratna-Heruka
11th day         Padma-Heruka
12th day         Karma-Heruka
13th day         Eight Khro-mo-chen-mo and eight Phra-men-ma
14th day         Four Dvārapāli and 28 Yoginis

Tucci (texts: 123-125, described on p. 125-135) gives 48 deities:
Eight Khro-mo-chen-mo: Gaurī, etc.
Eight Phra-men-ma: Simhamukhī, etc.
Four Dvārapāli: Aṅkuśa, etc.
Twentyeight Yoginis: Yak-headed yoginī, etc.

LEGEND OF SUDHANA FROM THE AVATÂMSAKA
SŪTRA GAṆḌAVYŪHA
(from Rocana of the Avatamsaka to Vairocana of the STTS)

The story of dharmarāja Sudhana/Nor-bzaṅ and Manoharā is related by Tucci (p. 75-77) from the Divyāvadāna and other sources, but he was keen to observe that the frescos of Tabo are not inspired by this legend. He further stated: “from the few words which can be read in the plates, that the paintings illustrate the story no longer of dharmarāja Sudhana but of Śreṣṭhi-putra Sudhana/tshcn-dpon-gyi-bu Nor-bzaṅs that is son of the chief merchant. Which one the story is, I am not able to tell: but it is worthwhile not to forget that Nor-bzaṅ is a translation not only of the Sanskrit Sudhana, but can also correspond to an original Manibhadra”. Here we are not concerned with Manibhadra, but with Sudhana the son of the merchant (śreṣṭhi-dāraka) of the Gaṇḍavyūha 58.8 of the Avatamsaka-sūtras. The young Sudhana travels throughout India to 52 kalyāṇamitras
or ideal teachers in search of knowledge and enlightenment. These kalyāṇamitras are from all walks of life as well as gods and goddesses. Each of them lifts a corner of the veil and helps Sudhana to catch a glimpse of the resplendence of a buddha-kṣetra. The pilgrimage of Sudhana was the prime expression of the Avatāṃśaka school and enjoyed wide-spread popularity from Indonesia to Khotan in Central Asia, China and Japan. The earliest representations are the Indonesian sculptures of the Borobudur (about A.D. 800). There are several Chinese and Japanese illustrated scrolls of the way of Sudhana to enlightenment (Lokesh Chandra 1975:7). The murals of Tabo pertain to Sudhana’s pilgrimage as detailed in the Gaṇḍavyūha.

At Barabudur, an architectonic Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala, we find about 108 reliefs of the pilgrimage of Sudhana, as preparatory to transcending unto Vairocana. There are also the representations of Lalitavistara on the Barabudur. The life of historic Śākyamuni and the journey of Sudhana in the Avatāṃśaka lead to Vairocana’s Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. It was but natural that Tabo, as a sanctum dedicated to Vajradhātu Vairocana, should have the frescos of the life of Śākyamuni on the right wall and those of the pilgrimage of Sudhana along the left wall, in the main hall itself along with the plastic images of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. The two main representations in the Avatāṃśaka school were (i) the image of Rocana (wrongly Vairocana) as the central Buddha of the school, and (ii) the narrative paintings or sculptures of the pilgrimage of Sudhana. Kōbō Daishi has pointed out that Avatāṃśaka is the stage preceding Tantras. In his Ten Stages of spiritual development, Avatāṃśaka is the ninth and Tantras the tenth stage (Lokesh Chandra 1985:9). Thus there is an integral relationship between Rocana of the Avatāṃśaka and Vairocana of the STTS. This can be seen in the evolution: 1 Rocana $\rightarrow$ 2 Vairocana of the Garbhadhātu $\rightarrow$ 3 Mahāvairocana of the Vajradhātu.
1. The Gaṇḍavyūha (Suzuki and Idzumi 1949:441-443), has a long list of future Tathāgatas, beginning with Maitreya and Simha as the first two, and ending with Abhyuccadeva or Rocama (sic). ‘Rocama’ is an erroneous form, which was not recognized as such by the editors, Suzuki and Idzumi. The reading in Gaṇḍavyūha 443.16 is ‘Rocama Tathāgata’, where mम is an error for nन. The two may be easily be confused in the Nagari script. Edgerton (1953:457) has already pointed out that ‘we should expect in place of the impossible Rocama the last name of the list, which is Abhyucca-deva in the text, intending Atyucca-deva’. It escaped Edgerton that the name might be ‘Rocana’, designating the trans-historical, symbolical Supreme Being; ‘The Buddha shifts from an individual to a cosmic principle’. Thus he is the highest (abhyucca) divine being (deva). There is no semantic difference between abhyucca and atyucca. Abhi is the intensifying prefix as found in abhi-dhana, abhi-sambodhi, and is parallel to ‘meta’ in ‘meta-physical’. It denotes evolving transcendance. So it is desirable to retain abhyucca of the manuscripts in preference to the emended (and unattested) atyucca. The fact that Rocana and Abhyuccadeva are used synonymously points to an early stage when Rocana was evolving as the highest Tathāgata.

The English translation of the Avatamsaka sūtra by Thomas Cleary (Cleary 1984:254) has the term ‘Vairocana’. The word ‘Vairocana’ needs to be checked against the Chinese sūtra itself. The Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary (1965:242) makes it clear that Rocana (Rushana) and Vairocana are different: ‘Rushana-butsu. Also Roshana-butsu, Birushana-butsu. In the Tendai Sei, Rushana-butsu is differentiated from Vairocana (Birushana-butsu); the former is regarded as the sam-bhoga-kāya on the lotus-petal, whereas the latter is regarded as the dharma-kāya in the cosmic world. However, Rushana origi
nally was merely an abridgement of Birushana.’ The last sentence needs correction. The name of the consort Rocanā (Locanā) comes from ‘Rocana’. ‘Rocana’ is not an abbreviation of ‘Vairocana’, but an independent word reflecting the first stage in the evolution of the deity.

2. Vairocana (Mahāvairocana) of the caryā-tantras, with a crown and with both hands in the dhyāna-mudrā, and in Tibetan referred to as Abhisambodhi-Vairocana.

3. Mahāvairocana (Vairocana) with a crown of Five Tathāgatas and distinguished by his unique bodhyagrī mudrā.

AMITĀBHA AND AMITĀYUS

Prof. Tucci (p.82f.) distinguishes Amitābha and Amitāyus: Amitābha, dhyāna-mudra, alms-bowl
Amitāyus, dhyāna-mudra, amṛta-kalaśa/vase filled with ambrosia and topped by leaves of the aśoka tree, symbolising a long life of health, without (a) miseries (śoka) of disease.

In the north-west of India, the triad of Śakyamuni, Brahmā and Indra was replaced by Amitābha, Avalokitasvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. I have dealt with this transformation at length in my forthcoming book “The Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara” (in press). The conceptualisation of enlightenment as a flash of illumination led to the apotheosis of infinite light as Amitābha. The cult of Amitābha represents transcendental tendencies in Buddhism. Śakyamuni the Man was replaced by Amitābha. His historic Enlightenment was transcended into Supreme Enlightenment whose illumination become the new dynamised centre reflected in the new Tathāgata Amitābha. The distant corridors of etymology provide treasured links that are missing in explicit statements.
Amitābha strongly reminds us of the prominence of light in Iranian cosmology. “It was Ahura Mazda who in the beginning filled the blessed realms (xvāthra) with light (Yasna 31.7), and in the realms of light (raoçēbīś) beatitude will be beheld by him whose thought is right (Yasna 30.1), while the light of the sun is one of the things that glorify Ahura Mazda (Yasna 1.11).

The Larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha is set forth by Śākyamuni to a question by Ānanda. The Buddha relates that there was a line of 81 Tathāgatas beginning with Dīpankara and ending with Lokeśvararāja. In the period of Lokeśvararāja, Dharmākara a king turned monk resolves to become a Buddha. Dharmākara meditates and reappears before Lokeśvararāja. He describes at length the land of bliss or Sukhāvatī in his 48 vows. All the details are related by Śākyamuni to Ānanda who thereupon asks the present whereabouts of Dharmākara. Śākyamuni, replies that he is reigning in Sukhāvatī as Buddha Amitābha. “The Śākyamuni then proceeds to describe Sukhāvatī, as a place of unparalleled magnificence and splendour, in every way what Dharmākara had resolved it should be. Ānanda expresses a desire to see Amitābha, whereupon that Buddha sends a ray of light from the palm of his hand, so that not only Ānanda but every living being could see Amitābha and his retinue of bodhisattvas in Sukhāvatī.” (EBu. 1.434-5)

The Smaller Sukhāvatīvyūha is addressed by Śākyamuni to Śāriputra at Jetavana in Śrāvastī. It is a description of Sukhāvatī, the Buddha-kṣetra of Amitābha. G.P. Malalasekera (EBu. 1.435) says that the description of Sukhāvatī is reminiscent of the Mahāsudassana-sutta of the Dīgha-nikāya. This sutta describes the metropolis of a universal monarch as surrounded by seven enclosures made of gold, silver, beryl, crystal, ruby, coral and one of all jewels. It recalls Ecbatana with its seven ramparts of diverse colours: gold, silver, orange, blue, purple, black and white (Herodotus 1.98, Przyluski 1935:25).
The universal monarch was like the sovereign of the gods. The celestial city of Amitābha was patterned after the ideal metropolis known to the East Iranian monks of Uttarāpatha.

It was the Parthian prince An Shih-kao who translated the larger Sukhāvatīvyūha during A.D. 148-170 from Sanskrit into Chinese, and introduced the Amitābha cult into China. This translation is lost (Nj 23/5 n.1/II). The Amitābha cult must have been dominant in NW India and Eastern Iran (Parthia) at that time. Sukhāvatī is described as a vast land, the soil being composed of gold, silver, beryl, crystal, coral, red pearls and agate. There are audience halls, residential palaces, mansions and towers also decorated with seven kinds of gems (EBu. 1.451). These seven gems remind of the seven colours of the metropolis in Iranian history.

The cult of Bhaiṣajyaguru is another point of Buddhist contact with the Iranian *bozak. Bhaiṣajyaguru is the Buddha of Healing. He cures physical illness and dispels spiritual darkness. His sutra was translated into Chinese five times. The earliest translation by Śrīmitra dates to A.D. 317-322. In his paradise dwell innumerable bodhisattvas chief among whom are Sūrya-vairocana and Candra-vairocana. They are also known as Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. Bhaiṣajyaguru has Twelve Great Yakṣa Generals (*dvādaśa mahāyakṣa-senāpatayāḥ) Bhaiṣajyaguru developed in an age when an Iranian term like besaz ‘healing’ was correctly understood as bhaiṣajya ‘medicine, healing’. The two bodhisattvas Suryaprabha and Candraprabha are the counterparts of the Iranian Raśnu and Sraoṣa, companions of Mithra.

An important function of the Iranian deities was healing: Avesta baēsazya = Sanskrit bhaiṣajya. The goddess Drvāspā is healing (baēsazya) like Arādvī, Aši, Ahura Mazda, Tiśrya, the Fravašis, Vanant, Haoma and Haptō-iringa (Gray 1925:73). The drink haoma possesses healing remedies (Ys.10.7.9,
Vsp.9.1-2) which are associated with the bliss of Vohu Manah (Ys.10.12, Gray 83). The God of the Moon, Māh has the Avestan epithet baēṣazya/healing. Tiśrya, who grants happy homes, who overcomes constellations that bring drought, shares the epithet baēṣazya/healing with many other divinities (Gray 116). Vārāthragna one of the most important of the entire Iranian pantheon, brings glory, *healing* and strength (Gray 117). Airyaman descended to earth to heal the diseases at Ahura Mazda's bidding (Gray 131). The divine being Ćisti ('Religious Wisdom') is named in company with other abstract deities. Like Āsi and Ahura Mazda she possesses healing remedies (Vsp.9.1) and like several other divinities she has Axstī and Hamvainti as her two companions (Yt.11.16). The divinity of the constellation Ursa Major is Haptō-iringa ('Possessing Seven Marks'). The only Avestan epithet of the god is baēṣazya/healing, which he shares with other deities (Gray 149). The god Thrita is described as the first physician and as a healer of diseases (Vd.20.2), his Fravaši is involved against maladies (Yt.23.131), and he is full of healing (DD.37.35, Gray 161). In the Turfan Manichaean fragment he appears, together with Mihr and all the angels, as protecting the religion, while Pahlavi and Pazand charms conjure him against disease.

As Amitābha evolved in an area where Iranian photism played a major role, it cannot be ruled out that his healing aspect was apotheosised as Amitāyus. Amitāyus was invoked to cure a person in ill-health, but on death he went to the world of Amitābha. In a statue of Amitābha at the National Museum, New Delhi have been found the bones of a deceased person, pieces of his robes, jewelry, and so on. To this day in Thailand, the ashes of the dead are deposited in large-sized statues of Śākyamuni which can be purchased in the market. Amitāyus is the counterpart of Hindu mahāmṛtyuñjaya.
On the right wall of the Padmasambhava temple at Nako are Amitāyus, Śākyamuni and Amitābha. They point to the crystalisation of the separate identity of Amitāyus and Amitābha.

*PHOTISM* has been elaborated by Tucci in creative terms. The Tantras were dominated by the concept of light. Tucci says that five luminous elements, the *pañcaraśmi* of the Guhyasamāja, are at the basis of cosmic evolution (p.145). He says that “supreme reality is essential light/ḥod-gsal”. The luminous epiphany is the centre of the mystic process as described in the Samājottara chapter of the Guhyasamāja (p.148). Photism is at the ground of religious and mystic experiences of Vajrayāna (p.150). The central Tathāgatas of the four classes of Tantras are epiphanies of Light:

Amitābha  Kriyā-Tantras  Kriyā-Tantras
Vairocana in the mudrā of Caryā-Tantras  Caryā-Tantras
Amitābha  Vairocana in the bodhyagrī mudrā Yoga-Tantras  Yoga-Tantras
Heruka  Anuttara-yoga-Tantras

Amitābha is 'Infinite Light', Vairocana is 'Effulgence' (*rüc* 'to shine'), and Heruka is 'Oh (he) light (*ruka)*'.

In the course of the third turning of the Wheel of the Law, Śākyamuni gathered a chosen assembly of śrāvakas and bodhisattvas. Buddha entered into samādha and issued a ray of light from between his eyebrows. The śrāvakas got no wind of this teaching. This illumined the bodhisattvas and they were filled with compassion to benefit all beings with this Enlightenment (Beatrice Suzuki 1943:283-4). This shows that rays of enlightenment pertained to the Tantras, the third turning of the dharmacakra, and it is photism that contradistinguished the Tantric system from Śrāvakayāna or Theravāda. The role of photism in the evolution of Mantrayāna or Vajrayāna deserves a comprehensive study.
Tucci says that the pentad of Amitābha, well known in Japan, is found at Tabo. The Amidagoson ‘the pentad of Amida’ is: Amitābha flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and by two other personages identified by the Japanese tradition as Kṣitigarbha and Nāgārjuna the second patriarch of the Jōdo sect. There is no canonical text to support this identification. The pentad is illustrated at the Horyuji monastery (Hobogirin 1.28 p1.IV.2). In this illustration, I am tempted to identify the pair in the background as Ākāśagarbha and Kṣitigarbha, as representing Heaven and Earth. In Buddhist iconography several personages were in pairs: Indra and Brahmā, Vajrapāṇi and Padmapāṇi, Ākāśagarbha and Kṣitigarbha, Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokitasvara, recalling the dyāvā-prthivī of the ancient Vedic tradition.

BHAISAJYAGURU. Tucci says that the seven Bhaisajyaguru are supported by Chinese Buddhist literature “which in fact knows the seven Buddhas of Medicine listed and named with perfect correspondence with the Tibetan lists” (p.170). He cites three Chinese works, namely Taisho 927, 928, 451. Taisho 451 was translated by I-ching in A.D. 707 (K178). Taisho 927 is a work of the Fifth Dalai Lama translated by Mgon-po-skyabs, a Mongolian who worked around the middle of the 18th century at Peking. Taisho 928 is a work of Aōsatsuju, the abbot of Tsing-chou monastery at Peking around A.D. 1824. Being of Tibetan inspiration they are not Chinese. The individual Bhaisajyagurus depicted at Nako represent a Tibetan tradition.

MĀRA, according to Tucci, “is not the king of evil, but the king of love and life” (p.106). He is the inducer to temptation. Vimalaprabhā says that Māra is the conscience which attaches us to life, to passion. The word Māra is a variant of Smara ‘the God of Love’. Asvaghosa clearly says so in the Buddhacarita 13.2:
Him whom in the world they call the God of Love, 
him of the bright weapon and also the flower-arrowed, 
that some one, as the monarch of the activities of the passions 
and as the enemy of liberation, they style Māra.

Johnston 1936:188

Buddha’s victory over Māra reflects the burning of Cupid 
which is a prime event in the legend of Śiva. Smaradahana is a 
full-length kāvya in Old Javanese and it has been a favourite 
theme for illustrated palmleaf manuscripts in Bali to this day. 
It seems that Buddhism has been influenced by Śaivism. The 
eight goddesses Gaurī, Caurī, Vetalī, Ghasmarī, Pukkasī, 
Śabarī, Cāndālī and Dombī sit over candra/moon (hrdūparī 
candra, hrdayendusu) in the nine-deity maṇḍala of Heruka in 
the Niśpanna-yogāvalī (text p.20-21). Their moon-seats remind 
of Candraśekhara Śiva with the crescent in his crest of hair. 
These eight goddesses are in the inner circle of the Nāraka 
maṇḍala (p.125).

Finally, a few general observations. Tucci uses cycle for 
maṇḍala and Toling for Tholing. We have kept both the 
usages. High Kunavar can be translated as Upper Kunavar.

Tucci has pointed out (p.89-90) the existence of two 
Kashmiri wooden sculptures of 10-11th century in the Tabo 
Gtsug-lag-khaṅ. He feels that they could represent parts of the 
illustrations of the Buddhacarita.

This work of Tucci calls for further field exploration and 
table research on the extant manuscripts of sūtras and chroni-
cles, and on the murals and sculptures in the ancient territories 
of Guge.
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Tajima 1959
MAIN BOOK
INTRODUCTION

§1. The Historical Geography of Western Tibet. In the second volume of Indo-Tibetica, specially devoted to Rin-chen-bzañ-po (1), I believe I have thrown some light on the importance of the work developed around the year 1000 by this great missionary and apostle of Buddhism in Western Tibet and also to have established the role which in the Renaissance of Lamaism, is verified during that period of time in the Land of Snows, in the province of Guge and its kings. I have also shown that Rin-chen-bzañ-po was not only a great translator who introduced new texts of dogma and mysticism into Tibet and a master of spiritual experience until then unknown to the inhabitants of his land, but also that he wants to be remembered as one of the most tireless builders of temples and sacred buildings that Tibet has ever known. His name will remain forever connected to one of the most important periods in the history of Tibetan art.

His biography and other Tibetan historical works have preserved for us the list of monuments erected by his extremely noble figure of the newly-born Lamaism; but, as I said in the aforementioned volume, it was difficult, with our extremely

scarce geographical knowledge of Western Tibet, to identify exactly every place which tradition connected in some way with Rin-chen-bzañ-po and in which at one time an intellectual, religious and artistic life of such quality took place, in a region which has been today almost completely abandoned. It was necessary to go to the place, to inspect the site, to collect first-hand information from people, to verify my previous identifications and above all to explore the region archaeologically, to collect the artistic material, manuscript, iconographic and epigraphic material of the period and to visit one by one the temples attributed to Rin-chen-bzañ-po and erected by the Guge kings and to see how much light these and the documents preserved there could still throw on the great activity of thought and art which during the time of Ye-ses-hod and his successors developed in the Himalayas between Spiti and the Manasarovar lake. It was in fact with this purpose that the Accademia d’Italia entrusted to me, under the high patronage of the Duce, the command of a new expedition into Western Tibet, to the success of this the enlightened interest of the British authority in India also contributed, since they well understood the importance of my trip and were generous with their assistance and, for a start, managed to obtain for me the permit to cross the Tibetan frontier, a privilege, as is well-known, granted to very few.

In this manner I managed not only to verify the purely literary data preserved in these historical and biographical works, but to collect a vast amount of material which I will be publishing and illustrating regularly in this series. This is not only of interest to the political, religious and artistic history of Guge, but contributes to a better and more precise knowledge
of Lamaism and of its many aspects which are even now partially unknown. But all this has been said in the report on the trip already published by the Reale Accademia d'Italia (Royal Academy of Italy) and I ask those who are interested in further details about the itinerary followed and the happenings during our expedition to consult it. (1)

I should rather re-start the study of the list of temples attributed to Rin-chen-bzani-po published by me in Volume II of *Indo-Tibetica*. The first thing that I have been able to establish is that a geographical identification of many of them must be correct; many places, connected by means of oral and literary tradition with the great apostle, are completely unknown to Europeans and are not marked on the map, not even in that of the Survey which are doubtlessly the best. And in fact on the basis of the results of my trip of 1933, I re-examined the list of the chapels which the biography attributes to Rin-chen-bzani-po and I corrected, with the new and incontestable documentation, some of the identifications proposed by me beforehand.

The research is necessarily very technical, but it will seem all the more interesting when we think that Western Tibet is on the road to progressive depopulation and that the reconstruction of the historical geography of the region, difficult today, will in very little time be practically impossible.

Above all, Go Khar (i.e.: mgo mkhar?) is not in Spiti (*Indo-Tibetica* II.56 and 71). The sources speak of a series of places which must have all been near and in the vicinity of

(1) G. Tucci-E. Ghersi, *Cronaca della missione scientifica Tucci nel Tibet occidentale* (1933), Roma, Reale Accademia d'Italia 1933-XII.
Khva-tse, i.e. Khva-rtse; from the fact that, according to the biography, Rin-chin-bzañ-po had spent a great part of his life at Lha-Luñ, I had concluded that Lha-luñ was the village of the same name in Spiti and I had therefore assumed that Khva-rtse of the texts I used was Kaze or Kaje in Spiti. This identification is erroneous. Khva-rtse is a little village in Guge with few houses, a temple which has now passed on to the sect of Sa-skya-pa and the ruins of a large castle. There is still a family which has the title of King, Rgyal-po, of Khva-rtse, even if the title is completely honorary, a surviving tradition more than the recognition of a reality: a family of shepherds, poor like all the rest. But that in ancient times they must have had much more authority and riches, is shown by the fact that according to the tradition which is generally spread, the family dominated the castle of Khva-rtse with all its territory. The correct spelling of the name of the country has been preserved in a dedication at the beginning of a manuscript of a Prajñāpāramitā belonging to members of the royal family found by me at Puling.

The dedication says (see appendix text no. 1):

"Honour to the three never-fallacious gems, i.e. Buddha, the Master who has reached the perfection of the twofold benefice, to the supreme Dharma that protects and dispels the darkness of the twofold impediment and to the noble sangha, the stock which possesses the twofold liberation (1).

(1) The "twofold benefice" is the benefice to oneself and the benefice to others; the two determining motives, according to Mahāyāna, of spiritual ascent: parātma-hita. The "twofold impediment" are the darkening of moral (kleśāvaraṇa) and intellectual (jñeyāvaraṇa) origin, which in practice and in knowledge keep us away from the ideal norm of life preached by Buddhism. The "twofold liberation" consists in the deep and
"The physical cosmos is constituted by four material elements: and the creatures which form the spiritual world have been shaped from the five luminous elements (1).

"Between heaven and earth which combine as the two parts of gau, is Tibet, the country of Spu-rgyal, the pure earth of the high mount (2).

"It is the country over which the supreme Law is spread, a green plateau amongst snow-capped mountains, the place where the Arhat inhabits, the snowy shape of the Kailāśa.

"In this region, to the left of the current (3) of the Ganges, the offspring of Nh-mahi-dbaṅ-phyug-khri-lde the divine son, may reign above all the creatures.

"Here at Khva-rtse holy country where the ten merits (4) accumulate is the centre of Žan-žuñ, the territory submitted to experienced conviction that the nature of creatures is essentially pure and therefore free (bhāva-viśuddhi-vimukti) and that liberation is obtained as soon as the moral and intellectual infections which darken germinal brightness (āvaraṇa-vimukti), have been eliminated.

(1) The material elements are: water, earth, fire and wind. Buddhist cosmology divides the cosmos into two great categories, which are: the physical world (bhajana-loka) and the spiritual world, i.e. that of the beings (sattva-loka). The five luminous elements stand for the five colours which in the emanating process are formed out of the germinal brightness which is the source of all things, this principle was specially developed by the Rñin-ma-pa, dam-chos rdzogs-pa-chen-pohi sku-gsum no-sprod which we shall discuss later.

(2) Gau are the characteristic pendants made in silver, a sort of globe finely worked, which the women and the men occasionally hang round their necks and which have a small sacred book hanging on them with prayers and more often with talismans. See Tucci-Ghersi 1933:185, 186.

(3) Literally ‘cascata’ (waterfall) because the four great rivers fall from the mouth of four animals at the four sides of the Anavatapta lake. See Indo-Tibetica I.80.

(4) That is, the ten kuśala-mūla, the ten species of virtuous actions.
the king of the Law, the origin of the race stemming from the progeny of Khri-btsan (1).”

Whoever this king Ni-mahi-dbañ-phyug Khri-lde may have been I cannot say and far less establish the possible date in which he lived. There is no doubt however that he belongs to the second dynasty Lde (or Khri-lde) which succeeded the branch of Smal (Malla) (2).

The names of other princes of the same branch, who must have reigned from the second half of the fifteenth century to the first quarter of the seventeenth century, have been found on the dedication pages of several manuscripts. Thus in a volume of the Durgatī-pariśodhana found at Shipki, but originating from Bye-gar (Bekhar), a certain Pad-dkar-lde is remembered (appendix, no.2); in another manuscript (ibid. no.3) the name of Khri Grags-pa-lde is read and he is celebrated in another dedication as the master of 20,000 horsemen (ibid. no.4). It is convenient to add to the list the Khri Bkra-sis-grags-pa-lde of the inscription of Tabo read by Francke (3), which I have not been able to trace.

The castle which appears above Khva-rtse is called Go Khar, and it is convenient to put into the same vicinity the temple of Lha-lun where, according to tradition, Rin-chen-bzañ-po may have spent a great part of his life. It appears that the memory of the said place may have been lost and this is not strange, because the territory, which belonged at one time to Guge, is today a great ruin and specially in the area to the south of

(1) One of the legendary kings of Tibet, the son of Tho-thori-loñ-btsan; see Dpag-bsam ljon-bzañ, p.150, Francke, Chronicles of Ladakh, p.80.
(2) See Indo-Tibetica 2.17-95.
(3) Antiquities of Indian Tibet 1.36.
Sutlej, the traces of a progressive depopulation and great desertion are evident. Lha-lun was probably no more than a mtshams-khari, i.e. a place for meditation and solitude, a hermitage where, far from the noise of the world, the master saw to his translation in the company of his collaborators and completed this powerful evidence of his craft which even today astonishes us. There are many such hermitages in the whole region, anonymous remains of the past. To identify them is impossible.

In the same region, we should be able to find Veñ-gir where he died. But of this place too every trace is lost. The region and the castle of Khva-rtse are located in a sandy ravine between Puling and Ri, from which they are to be found respectively to the North-West and North-East. Another difficult path leads in two day's march to Khva-rtse from Toshang, a village with ancient castle and temple attributed to the Lotsava and certainly built in the style of the chapels of that time. Toshang, which does not yet appear in the list of the biography is a rather long march from Tsaparang; on the valley to the South of Toshang, just when the path diverts above by the edge towards the pass of Puling other ruins exist which people call Pur-khar (pur-mkhar); there arose the temple of the same name which the list published by me mentions, but which, owing to lack of information and precise documents I was not able to identify.

Stari-med is not the Stang or Thang which are found on the maps, next to the pass Pimikche, but a village which even today preserves the same name to the North-East of Tiak on the road which is now usually followed by the caravans during the summer season on their trip to and from Gartok. The said path runs more to the North of the Hindustan-Tibet trade route
indicated in the map and used by Young (1): it is a bit longer than the other but it avoids the difficult passage of the Op dopo Luk river, which is usually impossible to cross between June to September due to the water from the melting snow and ice. Sñe-hu is not on the map either: the ruins remain in a gorge to the North-West of Tiak. The place is today completely deserted, as it has happened to almost all the ancient centres of Guge.

Re-rhi is the Ri of Richoba on the map: a name evidently mistaken; in fact the name of the large region is only Ri; but it is practically under the feudal control of a famous family from rtis-pa which astrologers know under the name of jo-ba of Ri, i.e. riḥi jo-ba. This fact has evidently remained unknown to the officials of the Survey in charge of tracing the map of the region to the South of Sutlej.

Tsa-raṇi cannot be Charang in the vicinity of Bekhar, a little region entrusted by the Government of Lhasa to an independent family who governs there with royal privileges and with the licence of Lhasa of which I have been able to see a copy. In Sarang in fact there is not even a temple of Rin-chen-bzān-po and every trace of tradition in relation to this is non-existent. In a place where the great Buddhist apostle has been attributed much more than he actually accomplished, the silence would be strange if in fact the Lotsava had really built one of its chapels; Tsa-raṇi is instead Charang in the high Kunavar beyond Morang in the valley of the To-dung-gar.

Dril-chuṅ-re is to be identified, according to the notices collected, with the ruins of a temple and of many stūpas (mchod-

(1) A journey to Toling and Tsaparang in Western Tibet, Journal of the Punjab Historical Society III(2).177.
rten) to the South-West of Jangtang, some two miles distance from this village, the locality is called today Chags-mgo. The only remains are the lateral walls of a chapel of minor dimensions, known as the lha-khan gog-po, i.e. the "delapidated temple" (1). The treasures are still visible on the walls of the ancient medallions in gypsum which contained, as in a halo, the images in stucco of the divinity, of the same type as those which we admire at Tabo.

Dkar-dpag is a few miles from Chusu and from Sarang, from the said region we can still see the monastery in a wild and rough ravine; nowadays the locality is named Kapra, using metathesis which is common in the spoken dialects.

Gru-dpag is in Sangla on the valley of the Raspa, still at the height of Kunavar, while Ro-dpag (Indo-Tibetica II.12) is to the North of Shasu on the path between Shasu and Spiti; Shasu is to the right of the Hindustan-Tibet trade route seven miles from Poo.

Also ignored on the maps, as far as I know, is the temple of Rad-nis where, as established in our sources, Rin-chen-bzañ-po was born (II.56); nor is this place to the North-East of Shipki as I have affirmed, but to the South of Tiak on the left bank of the Sutlej, accessible only when the Sutlej is frozen, or so poor in water as to be without excessive peril, that is from the end of October to March. A rough path which goes through Kiuk and Serkung cannot be used by the caravans.

Khyuñ-veni which according to our sources should have been located in the territory of Rad-ni's, is the locality itself in which

(1) See Tucci-Ghersi 1933:228 and fig. 167.
Lotsava was born (1); to this date that is the name of all Ḫbrog (pronounced dok) or grassy plateau to the East of Rad-nis at a day’s march from this village, on the mountain which dominates it. The people of Rad-nis move there in summer with their herds and flocks. The pastures there are abundant, fed by the melting ice and the winds which dominate the region making the climate less hot than in the Rad-nis gorge. This habit is generalized in the whole of Western Tibet: during the hot months the masculine population goes into exile towards the fertile and green Ḫbrog, while in the villages and to work the land only the women, the children and the aged remain.

In the list of the biography (Indo-Tibetica II.73) two other localities appear, i.e. Śaṅ-raṅ and Rig-rtse. Evidently the text is badly punctuated; I proposed Śaṅ-raṅ and Rig-rtse, because raṅ is a very common ending in the toponomastics of Western Tibet. I was wrong. Rai-rig-rtse is a village near Charang in high Kunavar, in the valley of To-dung-gar: there is to this day a minor Lamaistic temple which tradition attributes to the Lotsava. Śaṅ remains which could very well be Shang, beyond Shangtze, on the road going to Gartok via Lao.

I must also recant my identification of Ho-bu-laṅka with Khapalu, after the news obtained during the last voyage: ho-bu is the name that even today is given to the whole region of Kunavar from Pangi to Chini, which represents, as in the times of Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po, the farthest boundary of Lamaistic expansion. The last modest lha-khaṅ was found by us in Chini,

(1) However, according to the chronicles of the Fifth Dalai Lama (Appendix V) the locality was called Sñuṅ-waṅ a word from the Guge dialect meaning : gem.
and the Buddhists of the area have almost completely been absorbed by dominating Hinduism.

These temples of high Kunavar have not got the superb proportions of those of Tabo or Toling nor the same artistic value. On the other hand, as always happens in the bordering areas, wars and historical events can also have destroyed them or violated them often. It is still noteworthy, to judge from the list contained in the biography, a great number of temples was built by Rin-chen-bzar-po in this very region. There is a reason. Even today, Lamaism has not managed, in these regions, to vanquish and overcome the local cults and the aboriginal deities; this is the country of the Bon, of the animistic magical and orgiastic beliefs, which are now centralized around sa-bdag, protecting the spirits of the soil which Buddhism has not managed to eradicate.

The work of Rin-chen-bzar-po, was one of religious propaganda which relied on the favour of kings, because said propaganda was to be accompanied by progressive political penetration, conversion of the souls which should prepare and render easy subjection of heterogenous tribes which the kings of Guge, recently come to establish themselves in the Western regions, wanted to annex. Not only with the ambition to conquer, but more probably due to vital necessity: Western Tibet so rocky and barren did not have trees and did not yield timber either to burn or to build; the soil, even after great sacrifice and effort was reluctant to yield. The valley of the Sutlej river in Kunu instead had abundant forests and the climate was more humid which made work in the fields easier and more fruitful. It is obvious that the new conquerors of Tibet had to make their aims converge towards this bordering region and sought
to make use of religious propaganda to destroy and vanquish the resistance of tribes inhabiting it.

Generally the monks of Western Tibet connect with Rin-chen-bzan-po another locality which is the village of Ser-kung that lies in a valley to the South of the valley of Sutlej between Kiuk and the Tiak bridge. In fact, however, there is nothing to bring back the memory of the Lotsava, beyond a private chapel, in a house half way up the slopes of the mount, called the pho-bran or the lha-bran, i.e. "the palace", a name which is given in all Western Tibet to the house of the mayor of the village. But it is a simple private chapel which shows no traces of great antiquity. The fame which this place enjoys in the region evidently depends on the fact that one of the incarnations of Rin-chen-bzan-po who, as it is well known, may have been born in this family and in this place.

Many of the places of which I have spoken are not pointed out on the map, we did not have the instruments required to make another map, nor would we have been capable of using the said instruments, so I asked Captain Ghersi to make, in view of the fact that he is a better cartographer than myself, a schematical plan of the region with said additions and even with the corrections which our voyage suggested to us. This plan cannot be taken as a true map, but only as an approximate localization of villages and regions or sites of archaeological value, which had not been identified previously or had been erroneously identified, which may be used as a suggestion and as a guide for new topographical surveys.

The majority of the temples of the tradition attributed to Rin-chen-bzan-po have been visited by me during my expedition of
1933 and from all these I have brought back a photographic documentation which is almost complete, entrusted by me to the care and competence of the medical Captain Eugenio Ghersi who was put at the disposal of the expedition by the Ministry of Royal Marine.

While I managed to obtain permission to photograph these treasures of Tibetan and Indo-Tibetan art, overcoming under different guises the natural diffidence of the monarchs, and I visited with full liberty the most sacred recesses, Captain Ghersi co-operated invaluably with me, by reproducing with his machines, often under the most difficult conditions, and in spite of this always in the most satisfying manner, inscriptions, statues and frescoes. It is not necessary for me to insist on the importance of this photographic material. The negligence with which these holy places have been treated, together with the passage of time, has brought about a deterioration of artistic monuments of inestimable iconographical and historical value. The roofs of the chapels deteriorate, water penetrates, washing away the paintings or disfiguring them in an irreparable manner. I do not have the slightest doubt that within a few years, of many of the temples and chapels of Western Tibet and of the frescoes that adorn them, there will only be the photographic documents brought back by us. And sometimes even we arrived too late.

§2. Diffusion of sects. It is only natural that I should specially stop to consider the temples of greater importance of those best preserved or which still contain precious documents of art and iconography; of the other minor ones, or of more recent ones, or of those without particular interest I will make brief summaries or will perhaps not mention them at all. It will be clear from the study which I will be developing, that the greater part of the most ancient Gompa has passed on to the sect of the Dge-
lugs-pa, spiritual heirs and followers of the sect of the Bkaḥ-gdams-pa to which Rin-chen-bzari-po belongs, only in some sporadical cases the temples erected by him have passed on to the hands of the Sa-skya-pa which at one time must have had a discreet diffusion in the region of Western Tibet, probably after the king Ḫḍzid-mal took the vows of that sect (1).

The mass of the laity as usual, even when paying unconditional homage to all the lamas and to all the temples, lives naturally under the spiritual sect and the monastery which is found in its territory; this is why even in Spiti and in Guge and in the high Kunavar we can speak of a real and true stratification of sects which contend against each other, the region and the people.

This geographical diffusion of the schools is reproduced on the map which we publish here: but has an approximate and relative value, more so because the good fortune of one school or another in a particular region often depends on occasional reasons, on the prestige of one or another lama who establishes himself there and spends a lot of time in meditation. This is the case of the sect of Rñiñ-ma-pa (subsect Rdzogs-chen) which through the preachings of a famous incarnate (sprul-sku) who had come from Khams and established himself at Lippa surrounded by the general veneration of the people (2) has contributed to spread the school in high Kunavar more than the said

(1) This is recorded by the Fifth Dalai Lama in his Gans-can-yul-gyi sa-la spyod-pahi mtho-ris-kyi rgyal blon gtso-bor brjod-pahi deb-ther. This text contains a summary of the story of Western Tibet, which completing the sources already included in the second volume of Indo-Tibetica, I have thought useful to publish in Appendix V.

(2) His name is Nam-mkhah-ḥjigs-med-rdo-rje (see Tucci-Ghersi 1933:281)
school had ever been in the past. Amongst them all, however, the sect of the Sa-skya-pa is the least spread and perhaps even today the one which enjoys least prestige even if its monasteries are amongst the most noteworthy ones of the region such as for instance, those of Kaze, of Rabgyeling, of Sisa and Dunkar.

The sect of the Ḫbrug-pa, a subsect of the Bkah-rgyud-pa, has instead numerous followers. Its stronghold is located at Tashigang in high Kunavar, where a sprul-sku or incarnate resides. Although its temples and its monasteries are quite poor and certainly not comparable to those of other schools the popularity which the sect enjoys amongst the lay people is note-worthy.

The Rñin-ma-pa are rare; their major centre is in the valley of the Pin, and even if they are propagating and becoming more and more important they are to be found, as we can see, in high Kunavar.

I am reserving for successive volumes, which will follow at brief intervals, the illustrations of those of Guge, but I shall begin to study the temples of Spiti, i.e. of the region which is rough and mountainous between Tibet and India, crossed along its length by the river of the same name which flows into the Sutlej approximately at the height of Namgia in high Kunavar, in the state of Bashahr. It is a region difficult of access, embedded in the Himalayan chain between Ladakh, Kulu, the Tibetan provinces of Chumurti and of Guge and the State of Bashahr; it is scarcely inhabited and subjected to the rule of a local prince under the control of an English commissar of the district of Kangra. Due to geographical proximity and to historical reasons the few Buddhist temples of high Kunavar worth recording will be included in this volume.

Unlike the monasteries of Western Tibet itself, those of Spiti were visited in 1909 by Francke; but he has not given us any-
but a description, and even this description is not very accurate, of the monuments to which he had access: the identification or the interpretation of the rich iconographical material of these temples was attempted by him in an inadequate manner. This volume and those to follow do not want to be a simple description of monuments visited but a special detailed study of artistic and iconographical documents contained in the said temples. When the series devoted to the monasteries of Western Tibet has been completed, we will be in possession of a sort of detailed manual of Lamaistic iconography, which is as good as saying, of Indo-Tibetan mahayanic inspiration as it was represented in these regions. This study will have, necessarily, taken us to the examination and the listing of a vast mystic literature, which under the name of Tantra or as an aid and glossary of the Tantra, describes that very world of visions and spiritual realizations which Tibetan art expresses in its symbolism.

Taking into account this fundamental character of Buddhist art, I have thought with the aid of the sources and with my direct knowledge of the best representatives of the spiritual traditions of Tibet and with my intimate relationship with the people, to go as far as the basic motivation of said Lamaistic art to its internal significance, to that bottom of pure experiences which underlies the complicated hieroglyphics of colours, lines, figures and to arrive then, beyond the veil of strange monstrous or frightful shapes, to the understanding of this secret, mysterious and profound mahayanic religiosity of which art is not more than the figurative and symbolic projection.
CHAPTER I

TABO. THE GTSUG-LAG-KHAN.

§1. General aspects of the Gompa. The most important monastery of all Spiti is that of Tabo (plate I). This is a well known fact.

It has already been studied, even from the point of view in which we are interested, by Francke during his archaeological expedition to Spiti and through Ladakh, which took place in 1909(1). But although credit for having been the first one to point out the great importance of the temple of Tabo must doubtless be given to Francke, we must also recognize that a lot of historical material was not accessible to him since it is the result of recent research, consequently, he was unable to understand the exact meaning of the symbolical figures which decorate the walls of the Gompa as also their religious and iconographical meaning.

The monastery of Tabo boasts, one finds out through the monks and the people throughout the region of Spiti, a strict connection with that of Toling, of which one hundred chapels and its eight sanctuaries would be the necessary complement to arrive to the sacred number of 108, but it seems certain to me that only one of its temples, and that is a central one, in fact called the Gtsug-lag-khan, can belong to the period of

(1) Antiquities of Indian Tibet I.37 ff.
Rin-chen-bzañ-po and his successors; I am speaking of its foundations because as we see it today it has undergone restoration at a later date.

The general aspect of the Gompa is that of ruin which is already greatly deteriorated. If the British authorities do not impose energetic pressure on the Nono of Spiti, I greatly fear that within a few years Tabo will be a pile of rubble. No more learned lamas deep in thought, no more ascetic men. The monastery is in the hands of two priests who recite their psalms mechanically without even stopping to think of the meaning of the legends which decorate the walls in the form of frescos or even to find out which deity the stucco images that ornament the great central temple may represent.

The winter seat of the monks, with their small cells dug into the rock which overhangs to the North over Tabo plateau, has been abandoned (plate IIa); the hermitages have been deserted and are beginning to crumble.

From the external point of view, the monastery of Tabo appears as a group of several buildings closed in by an enclosure which seems characteristic of all monasteries built on flat land (plate II b); it is enough to think of the monastery of Bsam-yas founded by Padmasambhava. This enclosure, which the Tibetans call lcags-ri, is composed of a wall, approximately two metres in height, made with big bricks of raw earth made into a paste with straw, to give it a certain consistency, and dried under the sun. That is the boundary, the témenos, which separates the sacred soil from the profane one, more or less like a maṇḍala or mystical diagram which the vajrāvali or vajra belt circumscribes the consecrated surface: in fact, as we will see later, the temple is, in its real significance, nothing other than a large maṇḍala; and even for its construction the same regulations which must be followed to draw a maṇḍala are valid.
regulations which must be followed to draw a maṇḍala are valid.

In the internal space of the enclosure temples are contained without a pre-established plan, together with numerous stūpas/ mchod-rten (*Indo-Tibetica I*); these too are of different proportions and aligned without following a special order or an evident criterion.

On comparing the layout of the buildings to the ground plan published by Francke, I realized that this was not accurate and consequently I asked Ghersi to prepare a new one. In the one we produce here, as you see, the temples are not seven as Francke says, but eight; it is probable that Francke did not see the large temple of Ḥbrom-ston which is to the left of the Gtsug-lag-khaṅ.

The entire Gompa is known by the name of Chos-hkhor; this is a name which I have found on many dedications of manuscripts (chos-ḥkhor Tas-po, Ta-po) and the meaning of which I studied in the previous volume of *Indo-Tibetica* 2. 72-73.

When studying the ground plan (fig. 1) one can see that the centre of the whole complex of buildings is constituted by the Gtsug-lag-khaṅ which, ideally liberated from the constructions which today burden it, consists of a rectangular chamber with a porch (entrance hall) and an apse around which there is a corridor which was used for the *pradaksīṇā*, that is for the ritual turning to the right of the central statue; a ground plan which perpetuates in Tibet that of Buddhist temples in India which are divided into three fundamental parts: vestibule, hall, and cella for the deities. This plan is repeated generally for the
MONASTERY OF TABO
with its eight temples

Fig. 1

1 Gtsug-lag-khañ 2 Dkyil-khañ 3 Gser-khañ
4 Ḫbrom-ston lha-khañ 5 Sgo-khañ 6 Byams-paḥi lha-khañ
7 Ḫbrom-ston lha-khañ (chuñ) 8 Dkar-lḥbyun
most part of the Tibetan sanctuaries which surely go back to Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po and to his temples: almost all of them are in fact built on this plan with the only exception of some special buildings such as the Gser-khan, or the great maṇḍala temple of Toling, which imitates, as you will see in the volume dedicated to Toling, famous Indian models.

§2. The interior of the Gtsug-lag-khaṇ. About the construction at the entry of the Gtsug-lag-khaṇ, to which the monks have given the generic name of sgo-khaṇ “entrance temple” (fig. 1 n.5), because it is in fact a vestibule to the real temple, I have not much to say. The whole building is quite recent and even the paintings do not offer anything special: we see there an image of Tson-kha-pa, one of Guhyasamāja in the posture yab-yum, that is the mystical embrace of the divine couple, Tārā, etc. These paintings are relatively modern and from the iconographic and artistic point of view they do not present anything particularly noteworthy. The case of the Gtsug-lag-khaṇ itself is totally different (fig. 1 n.1). Let us begin at the entrance hall. Unfortunately the ruin has already commenced here and the paintings which once decorated the walls are about to disappear; the painting here was a series of monks and of laymen in different costumes, and almost all the images were accompanied by inscriptions which commemorated the name. Evidently, these were the effigies of the yon-bdag who contributed to the foundation of the temple and the most remarkable monks by whom the monastery had been built.

Let us enter into the temple itself. All around we can see aligned according to the disposition reproduced in figure 2.
the thirty-two deities of stucco of almost life size, these represent, be it feminine deities, be it masculine deities, some a peaceful aspect (śānta/lśiva, Tib. zhi), others the terrific aspect (krodha, Tib. khro) coloured in red or in deep blue or in yellow or in green or simply recovered with white plaster (plates III-XIX). These statues are supported by beams nailed into the walls and are surrounded by a sort of halo of gypsum formed
by a relief fringe. This system of decoration of the walls of the temple and the same type of statues of stucco are found also in other sanctuaries related to the tradition of Rin-chen-bzang-po, and after an objective examination, if not absolutely contemporaneous with the great translator, they reveal themselves as monuments which are characteristic of the time of the first kings of Guge.

This halo, as the prabhāmanḍala is called, signifies the light which emanates from divine beings, and is generally formed by three small collars which are followed by a pearl necklace surrounded by a crown of flames.

It is, in other words, the circular halo characteristic of many statues in bronze of the Pāla type, as it has been recently noted by Kempers (1); in the art of Tibet this appears only in the most ancient period, as at Tabo or Toling, at Chaggo, etc., and is substituted during a later period by the simple nimbus around the head or by the nimbus and the halo superimposed together.

The temple of Tabo shows its antiquity because of this particular decoration as also its direct connection with the art of Kashmir, which is mentioned in the biography of Rin-chen-bzang-po, as also with the artistic schools of eastern India in which, when Tabo was built, the influence of the great Pāla traditions was predominant.

This does not imply, however, that the statues, as we see them now, belong to the first foundation of the temple. There are, as we will see, serious arguments which would lead us to believe the very opposite: but it is also true that, even if they were remade, this was done in a more or less approximative

(1) The Bronzes of Nalanda and Hindu-Javanese Art, p. 58. Other examples quoted in Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1928-29, plate LVII.
manner on the model of the ancient ones.

§3. The statues of the Gtsug-lag-khañ represent a Tantric cycle of Vairocana. But what do these statues represent? Francke (1.38) expressed the hypothesis that these could be the statues of the thirty-three gods of the Indian pantheon.

This theory seemed strange even to Vogel: it cannot be understood, above all, how in a Buddhist temple a position of honour would be given to Hindu deities which are admitted into Buddhist iconography only as followers or worshippers of Buddha, i.e. in a completely subordinate position.

And then the list of the thirty-three gods is more a literary listing, for which there is not even agreement on the sources than a live religious reality in the experience of the masses. Nor must we ignore the fact that the traditional symbols of the Hindu divinities are completely absent from the images of Tabo. And stranger still is the opinion expressed in a note to the study of Shuttleworth on Lhalung (1) in which Francke insists on his idea that the statues in question represent Hindu deities modified by Bonpo influence: this connection between Bonpo beliefs and the temples founded by Rin-chen-bzan-po cannot appear as anything but absurd when we think of the marvellous activity of this apostle of Buddhism in Western Tibet who was specially against Bonpo, and was intent upon elimination from the Buddhist community of every trace of...

(1) Lhalung Temple, Spyi-li, Memoirs of the Archeaological Survey of India, no. 39, p.4, no.2: “Dr. A.H. Francke observes that the 32 stucco wall figures in the main Rnam par snañ mzd hall at Ta-bo are called Kunrig lha tshogs “the all-suited company of gods” and that they represent deities of the Hindu pantheon, modified by Bon-po ideas.”
them and their beliefs.

To identify these images we must follow another road: we must take into account that when in Tibetan iconography, we find a series of figures evidently related to each other, as in this particular case, we are in front of a maṇḍala, that is to say we have a definite mystical cycle; this presupposes the presence of a central divinity whom the Tibetans call gtso-bo and of a group of secondary divinities which form the retinue or the acolytes, who in Tibetan are called hkhor, a word which is translated into Sanskrit as parivāra. In the present case the central divinity of the temple of Tabo is Vairocana, easily recognizable by his mudrā or position of the hand; thus we have here a mystical cycle connected with Vairocana, the divinity most popular and more often put as an image in the temples attributed to Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po. But the modes of mystical realization of the supreme truth imagined in the symbol of Vairocana are many. As it always happens in Tantra, one sole fund of experiences is realized through different methods called āmnāya or sam-pradāya, introduced in Tibet by one or another lotsava, who had brought the text from India as also the system for the interpretations and the liturgy which should change it into an internal vision. Which is the particular school inspired by Vairocana which the artists have wanted to represent on these walls? It is clear that the cycle of Tabo is analogous to that of Sarvavid Vairocana who in Tibetan is called Kun-rig Rnam-par-snān-mdzad. About this cycle there is in existence a vast technological and mystical literature, common both to the sect of Sa-skya-pa as to that of the Dge-lugs-pa, the only two schools,
to my knowledge,’ which have still preserved the system of
meditation and of mystical realisation of this particular series of
experiences.

§4. Some Tibetan sources on the cycle of Sarvavid Vairocana. The
literature on said argument is above all liturgical, and thus
related to preparatory ceremonies of the process which is more
specially meditative and mystic in which the Tantric experience
culminates: but as some texts contain the dhyāna or formula of
meditation under which the single deities must be symbolized
in the maṇḍala or reproduced from the paṭa (1), as the design
on material is called which serves as the basis for meditation, it
is evident that these are a precious source of information from
the iconographical point of view.

The prime sources on Sarvavid/Kun-rig found by me and all
belonging to the Sa-skya school are as follows:

1) Dpal kun-rig-gi cho-ga gzhan-phan mthah-yas daṅ de-la ņe-bar-
mkho-bahi cho-gahi yan-lag du-ma-bcas-pa phyogs gcig-tu-bgyis-pa
kun-rig-gi cho-ga gzhan-phan lhun-grub of Kun-dgah-bsod-nams-
grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzaṅ-po.

2) Dpal kun-rig-gi dkyil-hkhor yoṅs-rdzogs-kyi sgrub-thabs sgrib-pa
rnam-sel of Kun-dgah-bzaṅ-po.

3) Kun-rig-gi sgo-nas tshe-ḥdas rjes-su-ḥdzin tshul of Dge-ḥdun-
 rnam-rgyal.

(1) On paṭa see the beautiful memoir by Marcelle Lalou,
Iconographie des éttoffes peintes (paṭa) dans le Maṇjuśrīmūlakaṅpa
(Iconography of the painted materials in the Maṇjuś-
rīmūlakapla), Paris, 1930.

From these texts number 1 is the most important, because it contains all the particulars of the meditative process, it describes how this must develop during the different moments of the construction of the maṇḍala or the rite accomplished on it. According to that text the gods of the maṇḍala are thirty-seven, as in fact in the treatises preserved in the Chinese canon of which we shall speak later. In the *Gtisg-lag-khari* of Tabo, we have instead, as it will be seen from the plates which reproduce the images, only thirty-three statues including be it the eighteenth—which I have not been able to photograph and which is a modern copy of a dharmapāla or guardian—be it the quadruple figure in the middle of the temple which is there to indicate the centre of the whole iconographical theory. Before seeing how it will be possible to overcome the apparent discrepancy between the list of the text with which we are concerning ourselves and the number of statues in fact as images at Tabo, it would be the case to reproduce the list of the thirty-seven deities of the maṇḍala with the description of their dhyāna or formula of meditation and, whenever possible, even of the mantra. The mantra in fact is the expression, by means of sound, of the mystical plane of which a deity is the symbol; and because of that to know the mantra in its intimate significance means to possess the key to that spiritual world which the deity symbolizes. This implies that each plane of experience that is, each god, has his own mantra. Thus we derive the great importance of this even from the iconographical point of view; in fact the presence in a painting or in any symbolization would suffice to identify beyond any possibility of doubt the deity accompanied by it.
The identification of the images of Tabo will be done on the basis of these descriptions (1).

§5. The iconographical descriptions of the thirtyseven deities of Sarvavid/Kun-rig. 1. In the middle over a seat (lotus and moon) (2) seated in vajraparyanka (3) is the Holy Sarvavid Vairocana in white colour. He has four faces and the central face turns to the east, that is, according to the terminology of Tantric ritualistics towards the sādhaka, the person who fulfills the ceremony, or generically, towards him who guards the image. The two hands are in samādhi-mudrā, i.e., supine with the reverse of right on the palm of the left and at the height of stomach. Mantra: om sarvavid sarvāvarana viśodhaya hana hūṃ phat.


3. To the south: Rgyal-mchog-rin-chen (Ratnaketu), of deep blue colour; the right hand in the posture of giving (varada-mudrā) (5) and the left in samādhi-mudrā. Mantra: om sarvavid phat.

4. To the west: Sa-kya-rigs-dbañ (Śakyamuni), of yellow colour; in the mudrā of preaching (dharmacakra) (6). Mantra: om sarvavid aḥ.

(1) For the text see Appendix VI.
(2) See Indo-Tibetica I.92.
(3) See Indo-Tibetica I.79.
(4) But according to Tson-kha-pa (op. cit. p. 37, I) white and in the hands a white vajra with five points.
(5) i.e., open hand with the palm forward and the fingers stretched downwards.
(6) According to Tson-kha-pa, hands in samādhi-mudrā which hold a lotus marked with vajra.

[The Sanskrit names of nos. 2,3,4 have been taken from the Sarva-durgati-paraśodhana-tantra. ed. Tadeusz Skorupski, p. 311 – Lokesh Chandra]
5. To the north: Me-tog-cher-rgyas (Vikasita-kusuma), green in colour; the right hand in the posture of protection (abhaya-mudrā) (1) and the left hand in samādhi-mudrā. Mantra: om sarvavid tra tha.

6. To the south-east: Spyan-ma (Locanā), white in colour; the right hand has a wheel countersigned by an eye. Mantra: om Buddhallocani hum.

7. To the south-west: Māmakī of deep blue colour; the right hand carries a vajra (at the height of the chest according to Tsoṅ-kha-pa). Mantra: om vajramāmaki trām.

8. To the north-west: Gos-dkar-mo (Pāṇḍarā, Pāṇḍaravāsini) of red colour; in the right hand a lotus. Mantra: om vajrapāndare dehi-dehi siddhim bodhim lokitarampa svāhā (that is: lokottarim pā, thus Tsoṅ-kha-pa).

9. To the north-east: Sgrol-ma (Tārā), green; the right hand has a blue lotus flower (utpala). Mantra: om vajratāre tutāre turē hūm hūm hūm sva sva sva svāhā.

10. Rdo-rje-sems-dpah (Vajrasattva), white; the right hand has a vajra and the left hand a bell. Mantra: om vajrasattva hum.


(1) Open hand with the palm forward and the fingers stretched upwards. According to Tsoṅ-kha-pa right in abhaya-mudrā with viśva-vajra.
(2) According to Tsoṅ-kha-pa yellow.
13. Rdo-rje-legs-pa (Vajrasādhu), green; with the fingers in a position as if to snap (ācchoṭana). Mantra: om vajrasādhu dhu.

14. Rdo-rje-rin-chen (Vajaratna), yellow colour; with the right hand he puts a gem to his forehead and with the left he holds a bell against his side. Mantra: om vajaratna tram.

15. Rdo-rje-gzi-brjid (Vajrateja) or Ňi-ma (Sūrya) (1), red and yellow; the right hand holds a solar disc. Mantra: om vajrateja rya.

16. Rdo-rje-rgyal-mtshan (Vajraketu), colour of the sky and air (Tson-kha-pa: deep blue); he holds the standard which exhausts desires. Mantra: om vajraketu bhriḥ.

17. Rdo-rje-bzhad-pa (Vajrahāsa), white; wears an ivory necklace. Mantra: om vajrahāsa ha.

18. Rdo-rje-chos (Vajradharma), pink; the left hand has a lotus flower and the right one is opening it. Mantra: om vajradharmahriḥ.


20. Rdo-rje-rgyu (Vajrahetu), yellow; the middle finger of the right hand rotates wheel with eight rays. Mantra: om vajrahetu krum.


(1) See Bstan-hgyur, zi folio 122.
22. Rdo-rje-las (Vajrakarma), multicoloured; with right hand he holds a viśva-vajra(1) and with the left, leaning on the side, a bell. Mantra: om vajrakarma kam.


24. Rdo-rje-gnod-sbyin (Vajrayakṣa), black; with the two hands he holds the teeth protruding on both sides of the face. Mantra: om vajrayakṣa kṣam.

25. Rdo-rje-khu-tshur (2) (Vajrasandhi), yellow; has two vajras with five points. Mantra: om vajrasandhi sam.

26. Rdo-rje-sgeg-mo (Vajralāsyā), while; has two vajras. Mantra: om vajralāsyē hum.

27. Rdo-rje-hphreñ-ba (Vajramālā), yellow; with the two hands holds a garland. Mantra: om vajramalā tram.


29. Rdo-rje-gar-ma (Vajranṛtyā), green (3); holds a vajra with three points with both hands in the attitude of dance. Mantra: om vajranṛti ah.

30. Bdug-spos-ma (or Bdug-pa-ma) (Vajradhūpā), white; with a vase for incense. Mantra: om vajradhūpe hum

(1) The meaning of viśvavajra has been stated in Indo-Tibetica I.97.
(2) Or Vajramuṣṭi, Bstan-ḥgyur, šī folio 35.
(3) For Tsoñ-kha-pa: multicolour and with two vajras.
31. Rdo-rje-me-tog-ma (Vajrapuṣpā), yellow; holds a basket of flowers. Mantra: ōṃ vajrapuṣpe trām.

32. Rdo-rje-mar-me-ma (Vajrālokā), pale red; holds a lamp. Mantra: ōṃ vajrāloke hriḥ.

33. Dri-chab-ma (Vajragandhā), green (1); holds a conch full of perfume. Mantra: ōṃ vajragandhe ah.

34. Rdo-rje-lcags-kyu (Vajrāṅkuśa), white; holds with both hands a hook. Mantra: ōṃ vajrāṅkuśa jaẖ.

35. Rdo-rje-zhags-pa (Vajrapāśa), yellow; holds with both hands a noose. Mantra: ōṃ vajrapāśa hūṃ.

36. Rdo-rje-lcags-sgrog (Vajasphota), red (2); holds an iron chain. Mantra: ōṃ vajrasphotra (sic) baṁ.

37. Rdo-rje-dril-bu (Vajraghanta), green (3); holds a bell. Mantra: ōṃ vajraghanṭa ho.

§6. *Indian sources of the cycle of Sarvaṅgā/Kun-rig and related cycles.* Tibetan ritualistic is all inspired by Indian sources; the Tibetans, we must repeat, have not been anything but faithful followers and subtle interpreters of Buddhist experiences elaborated in the Land of Śākyamuni. It is consequently logical

(1) According to Tson-kha-pa: multicoloured.
(2) According to Tson-kha-pa: pink.
(3) However on p. 23 and also according to Tson-kha-pa, instead of Vajraghanta: Vajrāveṣa/Rdo-rje-ḥbebs-pa. For Tson-kha-pa: multicoloured. [The multicoloured of Tucci corresponds to viśva-varṇa in Sanskrit and it means green--Lokesh Chandra]
to expect that even the cycle of Sarvavid/Kun-rig derives from some Tantric school and that it is related to a particular Indian initiating revelation. The research made by me into the vast Tantric literature fully confirms this supposition.

One of the forces of the cycle of Sarvavid/Kun-rig is evidently that Tantric direction which is pivoted around a text in the Tibetan version barbarously entitled: Sarva-durgati-parsiṣodhana-tejorājāya (sic) arhate samyak-sambuddhasya kalpa nāma; to be found in the Bkah-ḥgyur: the translation made by Śāntigarbha and Jayarāṣṭita and revised by Rin-chen-mchog. The Sanskrit text is also accessible and it is kept both at Calcutta and Cambridge (1). The book, in view of its soteriological character, enjoys in Tibet a great popularity which appears to go back to the times of Tsöṅ-kha-pa who wrote a long commentary on it called: Nan-soṅ-sbyon-bahi rgyud rjeḥi gsun-gi mchan dan-bcas-pa (complete works, tha) and consequently (II) a treatise on the characteristic maṇḍala of the cycle Dpal rnam-par-snaṅ-mdzad-kyi sgo-nas nāṅ-soṅ thams-cad yoṅs-su-sbyon-bahi dkyil-hkhor-gyi cho-ga rgyud-don gsal-ba (complete works, dza).

These texts contain the description of the Durgati-parsiṣodhana-maṇḍala which on the whole and for every purpose corresponds to the list already studied, of which it is beyond any doubt the source. In it the same listing of names is found and the same disposition of the deities in the maṇḍala; only a few diversions are noted in the iconographical details on which ancient Indian commentators as Śmṛti, Ānandagarbha and Kāmadhenu already differed: Tsöṅ-kha-pa points them all out

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(1) See Bendall, Catalogue, 78, 79, 81, 94, 142; Haraprasāda Shāstri, Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit, Manuscripts in the Government Collection, Calcutta, p.42.
in his precious commentary and I have already mentioned the main ones.

The Indian tradition does not limit itself to this text; it is not isolated, but strictly connected with a noteworthy section of Tantric literature which also deals with the symbolism of the Vajradhātu-mandala and has a great advantage of also having been preserved in Chinese sources.

In fact the Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha, is one of the most ancient tantra, and most diffused in Buddhist schools, it contains a cycle of which the Tibetan text has given us first information. Of the Tattva-saṅgraha the translation remains, be it in the Bkaḥgyur(1) or in the Chinese canon(2); the original Sanskrit seemed however lost. But in Nepal I have found a collection called Sarva-tathāgat-ābhisamaya-mahākalparāja, which coincides with the Chinese translation of the Tattva-saṅgraha and must therefore be considered as a particular redaction of it.

The Tattva-saṅgraha, which is one of the fundamental texts of the sect of Vajrayāna in China, was in fact one of the works translated by Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po; that this Tantra was then particularly studied during his times and at his school is shown by the fact that, beyond the translation of the text itself, he put

(1) See Beck, Cat. p. 91.
(2) Taisho ed. no. 865 and 866; and compare Taisho no. 882 in vol. 18.
into Tibetan also one of its main commentaries, that is the Tattvālokakarī of Ānandagarbha and many of the treatises related to the ritualistics elaborated by this sect, a great part of which is given to the graphic representation of the thirty-seven deities of the cycle.

In the temple of Tabo we see thus, the plastic reflection, so to speak, of the mystical experiences predominant in western Tibet at the time of Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po; the Gtṣug-lag-khaṅ was almost the architectonic correlation of the translation of the sacred texts which the Lotsava had led to completion by transplanting in his own country and amongst his people some of the methods of realization of the deepest spiritual experiences of India; in other words the ideal and religious motive which inspired the foundation of the temple must be sought within the doctrines for initiation expressed and symbolized in the Tattva-saṅgraha and in the Tantric literature related to it.

§7. The maṇḍala of Vairocana according to Tattva-saṅgraha. The list contained in the commentary by Ānandagarbha coincides perfectly with that which we found in the Tibetan texts on Sarvavid/Kun-rig; it differs only on the name of the pentad and of the śakti; it changes that is, the name only, because the deities are evidently the same. As the description of the maṇḍala contained in the commentary to the Tattva-saṅgraha completes in a certain sense the previous one and that is why even from the iconographical point of view, it is of great interest, I summarize it again in its essential elements (zi 131) (1).

(1) On its configuration according to the Chinese-Japanese tradition see the Mikkyo Daijiten volume 2 under the name of the single deity of the cycle and also in the illustrated supplement to the Taishō edition of the Tripitaka.
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865 金剛頂一切如來真實攝大乘現證大教王經
866 金剛頂瑜伽中畳出念誦經
882 切如來真實攝大乘現證三昧大教王經
into Tibetan also one of its main commentaries, that is the Tattvälokakarî of Ânandagarbha and many of the treatises related to the ritualistics elaborated by this sect, a great part of which is given to the graphic representation of the thirtyseven deities of the cycle.

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After having described briefly the pentad according to the traditional scheme (quoted in note 1 on page 79) the list continues thus:

6. Vajrasattvī, symbol: vajra of five points; red.
7. Vajraratna, vajra of five points, on the crest of which is the cintāmani gem.
8. Vajradharma, lotus of sixteen petals: eight white petals and eight red ones, eight are folded downwards, eight point upwards. In the middle is the five-pointed vajra.
9. Vajrakarma, viśvavajra of twelve points and five colours.
10. Vajrasattva, white in colour; the left hand holds the bell leaning on the side; the right hand with the middle finger in khaṭvāṅga-mudrā holds the vajra of five points against the heart.
11. Vajrarāja, yellow, with the hook.
12. Vajrārāga, red, with a bow and arrow.
13. Vajrasādhu, green, in vajrasandhi and in sign of approval.
14. Vajraratna, yellow, in the left hand the bell and in the right a vajra on the crest of which is the cintāmani gem.
15. Vajrasūrya, of the colour of the sun, in the right hand holds the solar disc, the left hand leans on the seat.
16. Vajraketu, of the colour of ether, carries the standard marked with a cintāmani gem, the left hand leans on the seat.
17. Vajrāhasa, white, in the right hand carries a vajra with two garlands tied to it and the left hand leans on the seat.
18. Vajradharma, pink in colour, the left hand is close to the side holding a lotus of diamonds and with the right hand opens the petals at the height of the chest.
19. Vajratikṣṇa, blue, carries at the height of the chest a book of the prajñāpāramitā and the right hand holds a sword.
20. Vajrahetu, golden, in the middle of the right hand rotates a wheel of eight rays and the left hand leans on the seat.
21. Vajrabhāsa, of the colour of copper, in the right hand carries the vajra of five points, the left leans on the seat.
22. Vajrakarma, of varied colours, the face is white, blue down to the waist; blue also in the hands; in the left hand holds a viśvavajra supplied with a bell and in the right a viśvavajra at the height of the heart.
23. Vajrarakṣa, yellow, carries in between the hands a diamond talisman.
24. Vajrayakṣa, black, holds with the hands the teeth which protrude from the mouth.
25. Vajrasandhi, yellow, holds the vajra in hand in the position of the mudrā called samaya-muṣṭi.
26. Lāsyā, yellow and white, holds two vajra.
27. Mālā, yellow, garland.
28. Gītā, pale red, holds a lute.
29. Nṛtyā, as Vajrakarma. Holds a vajra of three points.
30. Dhūpā, holds a vase of perfume.
31. Puṣpā, in the left hand holds a basket of flowers and with the right in the act of scattering them over the Buddha.
32. Dīpā, pale red, holds a torch.
33. Gandhā, green, in the left hand holds a conch full of incense and with the right in the act of putting incense over the Buddha.
34. Vajrāṅkuṣa, white, holds the hook.
35. Vajrāpatra, yellow, holds the noose.
36. Vajraphoṭa, red, holds the chain.
37. Vajrāvēsa, varied, with the right hand holds the bell and the left leans on the seat.

§8. The five mystical families and the five cycles. It must not be believed that the cycles of Sarvavid/Kun-rig and the Vajradhātu-manḍala exhaust the possible symbolic representations of the mystical experiences connected with Vairocana and with the liturgy which the schools derived from Tattva-saṅgraha or from similar Tantric literature worked out with the purpose of almost uniting into one the adept with the truths revealed in the text.

These sects, originating from a quinary division, of which we will have the possibility of speaking in more detail later on, classified the different emanations of the cosmos from the indiscriminate primaeval conscience in five main categories called the five families: i.e. respectively: of the wheel, of the vajra, of the lotus, of the gem, of the sword (or of the action). Each one of these families acts as end of each one of the supreme pentad of Buddhas and all together they include the possible types of creatures or the different degrees of mystical preparation.

The initiation (abhiṣeka) must be given by the guru in charge of the family to which the disciple belongs by nature or ascends through the long apprenticeship which he undergoes or by means of which he is united having experienced one of the five knowledge corresponding to it. It is then possible to have five baptisms: generical, adamantine, in the gem, in the lotus, in the action (buddhābhiseka, vajrābhiseka, ratnābhiseka, padmābhiseka and karmābhiseka). Each of these is understood as elimi-
nion, as the antithesis of the five capital infections (see for example Zhi khro dgoṅs-par raṅ-grol-gyi cho-ga sdig-sgrīb rnam-par-sbyon-ba (1).

§9. The family of the gem/ratna-kula [compare STTS. IV.1 ch. 19 p.139]. As we know ritualistics and iconography which corresponds to the adamantine nature, there are also liturgies and maṇḍalas which refer to other families and which are used in the baptism related to these. Thus, for example, in Ālokakarī of Ānandagarbha (Bstan-hgyur hi fol. 36ff. and 127ff.) the maṇḍalas of Vairocana are described respectively according to the family of the lotus and the family of the gem.

These are in fact, in great part, the same deities which we have already found in the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, but they are differentiated in this case with the prefixes padma or ratna, i.e. lotus or the gem have the preponderant part in the symbolism of the characteristic attributions of the different deities:

1. Vairocana, surrounded by four mudrā.
2. In the place of Vajrasattvī (Rdo-rje-sems-ma), a vajra with five points made of gems.
3. In the place of Vajraratnā (Rdo-rje-rin-chen-ma), a rosary made with gems.
4. In the place of Vajradharmā (Rdo-rje-chos-ma), a cintāmanī gem over a lotus with sixteen petals.
5. In the place of Karmavajrī (Las-kyi-rdo-rje-ma), a vajra countersigned by gems, in the middle of a cross of gems.

(1) Thus also in Chinese sources: for reference see Mikkyō Daijiten, Tokyo, p.631, s.v. 五部灌頂
6. Sarvārtha-siddhi (Bcom-ldan-ḥdas Don-thams-cad-sgrub-pa); in the left a bell and in the right the attitude of giving (varada-mudrā).

7. Maṇiśastra (Nor-buḥi-mtshon-cha-ma); in the left hand a bell and in the right a vajra, marked with a gem, at the height of the heart.

8. Ratnadhvaja (Rin-chen-rgyal-mtshan); has the hook marked by a gem.

9. Maṇirāga (Nor-buḥi-chags); bow and arrow marked by a gem.

10. Ratnatuṣṭi (Rin-chen-legs-pa); in the attitude of approval with both hands.

11. Ratnadṛṣṭi (Rin-chen-lta-ba); in the act of tying a garland of gems with eyes round the head.

12. Ratnamāla (Rin-chen-phren-ba); as above, but the gems have no eyes.

13. Maṇīsūrya (Nor-buḥi-ṇi-ma); in the right hand the disc of the sun marked with a gem. Leaning with the left hand on the seat.

14. Maṇiśrī (Nor-buḥi-dpal); in the right hand it has a standard with the cintāmani gem; the left is leaning on the seat.

15. Ratnahāsa (Rin-chen-bzhad-pa); holds an ivory rosary with both hands, at the end of which are two vajras marked with gems.

16. Ratnapadma-samādhi (Rin-chen-pad-mahi-tiṅ-ṛe-ḥdzin); has a lotus of sixteen petals marked with a gem.

17. Samādhi-jñāna-garbha (Tiṅ-ṛe-ḥdzin-ye-śes-sniṅ-po); has a lotus of sixteen petals marked with the gem and opens it with the right hand at the height of the heart.

18. Ratnāgrya (Rin-chen-rnon-po); in the left hand a book of the prajñāpāramitā, marked with a gem, at the height of the heart and with the right hand holds a sword also marked with a gem.
19. Manicakra (Nor-buḥi-ḥkhor-lo); in the right hand a disc with eight rays marked with a gem, and leans with the left hand on the seat.

20. Maṇibhāṣa (Nor-buḥi-gsun-ba); in the right hand a tongue of gems, while the left leans on the seat.

21. Ratnavṛṣṭi (Rin-chen-char-ḥbebs); in the left holds a bell mounted with the double vajra marked with a gem and with the right hand in the act of producing a rain of gems.

22. Ratnapūjā (Rin-chen-mchod-pa); the left as above; in the right a double vajra marked with a gem.

23. Manibandha (Nor-buḥi-bsruṅ-ba); holds a talisman marked with a gem.

24. Maṇiyakṣa (Nor-buḥi-gnod-sbyin); black in colour, with two protruding teeth marked with a gem; holding them with both hands.

25. Maṇimuṣṭi (Nor-buḥi-khu-tshur); holds with two fists the vajra with five points marked by a gem.

26. Ratnarati (Rin-chen-sgeg-mo); holds two vajras marked with a gem; head tilted to the left.

27. Ratnamālā (Rin-chen-phreṅ-ba-ma); in the act of putting a garland of gems.

28. Ratnagītā (Rin-chen-glu-ma); in the act of sounding the lute covered with gems.

29. Ratnanṛtyā (Rin-chen-gar-ma); beats the rhythm of the dance with both hands marked with gems.

30. Ratnadānapā (Rin-chen-bdug-pa-ma); holds an incense-vase covered with gems.

31. Ratnapuṣpā (Rin-po-chehi-me-tog); with the left hand holds a vase of flowers covered with gems and with the right hand makes the gesture of spreading them over the Buddha.
32. Ratnālokā (Rin-po-chehi-mar-me-ma); has a torch covered by gems.
33. Ratnagandhā (Rin-po-chehi-byug-pa-ma); with the left hand holds a conch and with the right hand spreads perfume.
34. Ratnākarṣa (Rin-po-chehi-lcags-kyu); holds a hook decorated with gems.
35. Ratnapāśa (Rin-po-chehi-zhags); holds a noose covered with gems.
36. Ratnabandha (Rin-chen-lcags-sgrog); with a chain.
37. Ratnāveśa (Rin-chen-ḥbebs-pa); holds a bell marked with a gem.

§10. *The “family of the lotus” (padma-kula) (3).* 1. Vairocana, white, four faces, bodhyāṅgi-mudrā; symbol: vajra with five points.

   Four mudrās:
   2. Instead of Vajrasattvī, a vajra with five points marked with a lotus.
   3. Instead of Vajraratnā, cintāmaṇī gem with a lotus.
   4. Instead of Vajradharmā, a vajrapadma with eight petals.
   5. Instead of Vajrakarmā, a lotus with four petals, white in the centre; the four petals are respectively blue, yellow, red and green in colour.

   6. Jagadvinaya (Ḥgro-ḥdul-ba), pink (literally red-white); two hands: in the left hand holds a stem of lotus, with the right hand opens the flower at the height of the heart.

   7. Buddhapadma (Saṅs-rgyas-pad-ma), as Śākyamuni, yellow; in the left hand the pādamaghaṇṭā(1), in the right a khaṭvāṅga (2) marked with a lotus.

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(1) i.e., bell signed with a lotus.
(2) See *Indo-Tibetica* I.102.
(3) Sanskrit text in Lokesh Chandra, *STTS*, ch.15 p.110.
8. Padmarāja (Padmaḥi-rgyal-po), yellow; four arms; in the first right arm the vajra, in the second the sword; in the first left the hook, in the second the padma.

9. Padmapāśa (Padmaḥi-chags); red; places an arrow on the bow.

10. Padmasādhu (Padmaḥi-legs); position in padmāc-choṭana (1).

11. Amitābha (Ḥod-dpag-med); red; in the left hand a lotus, the right in samādhi-mudrā.

12. Padmabhṛkuṭi (Padmaḥi-khro-gñer); yellow; in the right hand holds the cintāmaṇi gem marked with a lotus and in the left hand the padmaghaṅṭā.

13. Padmasūrya (Padmaḥi-ṅi-ma); red; in the left hand a lotus and in the right hand the solar disc over a lotus.

14. Padmaśrī (Padmaḥi-dpal); white; in the left hand a cintāmaṇi-dhvaja marked with a lotus (2); the right hand in the position of varada-mudrā.

15. Padmahāsa (Padma-bzhad-pa); white-yellow; eleven faces and twelve arms; the first two hands in the attitude of preaching, the other two joined together in prayer holding a flower (puṣpāṅjali); the others, on the right an ivory rosary, a shell, the sword and the rosary; to the left a lotus, a book, the cintāmaṇi gem and the kamaṇḍalu.

16. Padmasamādhi (Padmaḥi-tiṅ-ṅe-ḥdzin); as Indra; red body with one thousand eyes, the left in samādhi-mudrā holds a vajrapadma.

17. Padmatārā (Padmaḥi-sgrol-ma); as Vajradharma.

18. Padmakumāra (Gzhon-nu); red; as Kārtikeya; four hands; in the left the book of prajñāpāramitā, in the right padmakhadga (1); in the other right hand a spear, in the other left

(1) See above p.34.
(2) i.e. magical flag on which a lotus flower is painted.
hand a lotus.

19. Padmahetu (Padmaḥi-rgyu), as Viṣṇu, blue neck and three eyes; on the two right hands the disc and the club, in the two left hands the lotus and the shell.

20. Padmabhāṣa (Padmaḥi-gsun), as Brahmā, pink; four arms: in the two right arms the rosary and stick (dbyug), in the two left arms the lotus and the kamanḍalu.

21. Padm-āmogheśvara (Padmaḥi-don-yod-pahi-dbañ-phyug), as Mahādeva; four arms, three eyes, blue neck, tiger-skin belt, the two right hands varada-mudrā (xylograph not very clear) and lotus; in the left trident and sword; four faces of the following colours: blue, yellow, red and green.

22. Padma-naṭṭeśvara (Padmaḥi-gar-gyi-dbañ-phyug), as Narṭeśvara; in the two hands on the right padma with hook and noose; in the two left hands trident chain and bell; white in colour, three eyes.

23. Padmakavaca (Padmaḥi-sruñ-ba), golden; first right hand in the attitude of protection (abhaya-mudrā), on the first left a lotus, the other two the talisman padmakavaca.

24. Padmayakṣa (Padmaḥi-gnod-sbyin), black; holds with the two hands the two teeth protruding from the mouth.

25. Padmamuṣṭi (Padmaḥi-khu-tshur), yellow in colour; holds a vajra marked with a lotus.

26. Padamalāṣyā (Padmaḥi-sgeg-mo), holds in the two hands two vajras with five points.

27. Padmamālā (Padmaḥi-phreñ-ba-ma), yellow; carries a rosary of lotus.

28. Padmagītā (Padmaḥi-glu-ma), pink; with a lute marked with a lotus.

(1) i.e. sword countersigned by a lotus.
29. Padmanṛtyā (Padmaḥi-gar-ma), multicoloured; has, in the attitude of dance, a vajra with three points marked with a lotus.

30. Padmadhūpā (Padmaḥi-bdug-ma), pink; holds an incense-vase marked with a lotus.

31. Padmapuṣpā (Padmaḥi-me-tog), yellow; in the left hand a garland of lotus flowers, the right in the act of adoring the Buddha with the garland of lotus flowers.

32. Padmadīpā (Padmaḥi-mar-me), red; with a torch.

33. Padmagandhā (Padmaḥi-dri-ma), multicoloured; in the left a vase with perfume and the right in the act of spreading perfume over the Buddha.

34. Hayagrīva (Rta-mgrin), pale red; holds the hook; the central face with protruding teeth; above, head of horse.

35. Amoghaṇāśa (Don-yod-pahi-zhags), three eyes and four hands; on the right hook and varada-mudrā, on the left stick and lotus.


37. Padmāvēṣa (Padmaḥi-ḥbebs), six faces; on the right: bell, spear, sword; on the left: lotus, chain, a hen (khyim-bya).

§11. The symbolic and esoteric meaning of the maṇḍala. Before going into the identification of the single statues of Tabo, it is convenient to note again that the deities of the cycle of Vairocana, as it is expressed in the school of Sarvavid Vairocana, are none other than symbols of special moments of the meditation process, in them the sādhaka re-lives, in his internal experiences, a particular system of cosmic evolution, as it is exposed by the Tantric theory, to them run backwards, for the purpose of liberation, the individual stages; this is called reabsorption (laya). During this reabsorption, experimenting and
almost acquiring the definitive possession of truth, transforming thus in psychological reality that which was in the first time pure intellective cognition, little by little we eliminate in a final manner the obstacles which derive from passions and from ignorance (kleśāvaraṇa and jñeyāvaraṇa) which have operated ab aeterno upon beings. In said guise one and the other having been annulled it will be possible to re-obtain that state of absolute initial purity which, when re-acquired after the work of contingent life and as the fruit of ascensions, is called Bodhi, i.e., illumination; that is the point of arrival of this purification and sublimation from error and from contingents and it is only possible when the bottom of being, beyond the perennial flow of things, is in fact that primigenous conscience which transcends each and every particular content, which is the spring or source and which lies ignored at the bottom of us and of things (1).

Only by virtue of this intimate essence of beings is our regeneration and our sublimation possible; it is the germinal luminosity such as is symbolized by Vairocana, “The Resplendent”, the centre of the maṇḍala, from which everything emanates detaching itself, more and more materialising itself and finally becoming dim.

The maṇḍala expresses all these truths in a symbolic language which is accessible to the initiated, that is, by those who have had the abhiṣeka or mysteriosophic baptism which the master gives the disciple after long years of apprenticeship, (1) As in fact Indrabhūti says in the Jñānasiddhi p.75.5: “The thought of illumination (bodhicitta) is without beginning and without end, beatitude, suppression (of every concept of) existence and non-existence (instead of bhāvabhāva-kṣayam we must read bhāvabhāva-kṣayam; Tibetan has the slight variation thog-ma tha-ma-med zhi-ba dños dañ dños-med rnam-par-šangs), synonym of insubstantiality and compassion".
years during which the disciple has become spiritually and intellectually mature to receive the mystical doctrine; this doctrine, experimented by him in its entirety, during the process of meditation, will make him a regenerate, raising him to superior spiritual levels and making him one with the divinity to whose mysteries he was initiated.

This esoterism is rather obvious in the manḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana in which several different deities preserve in their own name the character of symbols; equally as symbolic were those objects and those weapons which identified them and while making them immediately recognisable by the initiate also revealed particular connections or intensified certain spiritual attitudes.

"The vajra—says Indrabhūti (Jñānasiddhi p.80 verses 31ff.)--is the thought of illumination and the bell is wisdom; this very truth is called 'disc' because it symbolizes the cutting of ignorance, the 'gem' because of the difficulty to obtain it, 'lotus' because it is untouched by the faults of existence, 'sword' because it cuts out those enemies which are passions, 'floating lotus' (utpala) because it emerges."

Thus also according to the comment on Guhyasamāja by Tson-kha-pa the vajra with five points symbolizes the five species of mystical knowledge and the wheel with twelve rays of Vairocana represents the victory over the four Mara (Rgyud thams-cad-kyi rgbal gsan-ba-hdus-pa'i rgya-cher bsdad-pa sgron-ma gsal-bahi tshig don ji-bzhin hbyed-pa'i mtshan-gyi hgre, folios 71,72).

All the attributes that Mahāyānic iconography puts to such rich use are capable of this interpretation which was in fact
followed in the Tantric schools and which changed the images into symbolic figurations of the complex and obscure doctrines contained in literature from which it draws its inspiration.

From it the character of Mahāyānic art is born, which has not in fact a decorative value, but a purely mystical and symbolic one; the essence itself of the Mahāyānic religion does not consist so much of prayer, as of meditation and above all it requires concentration, through which it is re-lived and visualised therefore psychologically re-lived as a symbolic expression, the ādhāra, the sustenance, as the writers of Indian treatises say; the idea, even the most abstract one, had to be translated by these schools into a symbol, into a conventional visual image, which with the exegesis of the doctors was translated into initiated language and became the direct vehicle of immediate realizations. Here in fact these schools imagine plastic or pictorial figurations even for the philosophical truths or the most abstract metaphysical postulations. Even in our case the statues symbolize mystical states, as it is made even more evident by that common prefix of vajra, of ratna or of padma, the esoteric significance of which we have illustrated above. The very word vajra literally means diamond, but in fact indicates both the purely ideal and uncontaminated essence of one of the states or of an aspect of being, and is therefore as unfailling -- because one of the characters of the mystical state is the unalterability of its content -- as the germinal idea of the single category of things. Now, in fact, these divinities represent different moments of the meditation process and of that sūddhi or ideal purification through which each phenomenon or group of phenomena is recognized in its internal meaning and
consequently through this knowledge, it is eliminated in that spiritual ascent which is fulfilled through meditation: it consists in the reabsorbing of the various categories of the phenomenal appearance into the indiscriminate whole, that transcending all conditions.

Thus for example, according to a treatise of which I shall be giving further information later on, the Nā-ra-kā dön-sprugs, Locanā is there to symbolize the purification of the element earth, Māmakī the element water, Pāṇḍarā the element fire, Tārā the element wind, Vajrakarma the notion of the permanence of things, Vajrapāśa the theory of the annihilation of things, Vajrāspḥoṭa the theory that beings have an ego, Vajralāsyā the category of visible matter, Vajramālā the smell sensation, Vajragītā the hearing, Vajranṛtyā the taste, Vajradhūpā, Vajrapuṣpā, Vājralokā, Vajragandhā the notions of times past, present, future and indeterminate.

And even Indrabhūti in his Jñānasiddhi intends the five śakti of the supreme pentad as simple symbols of the different aspects under which the truth of mystical knowledge manifests itself or can be considered, fivefold reanimation of this resplendent reality that is at the bottom of all things.

This is the conclusion of a long process which slowly is determined in the Tantric schools of mediaeval India, and gives new value and new meaning to ritualistics, as these had been prepared and coded through centuries of religious experience of the masses. But the ritual act looses now its external character of pure religious ceremony; from external rite (bāhya-pūjā), as it always remains for us the profane and for the great mass, it rises to internal rite or spiritual purification, ādhyātmika-pūjā.
Each single moment of the cult is transfigured and assumes an intimate significance, it becomes a sort of symbolic drama in which the deep truths of the Mahāyānic school are almost visualized during that indefinite process of sublimation (śuddhi) which must in the end raise the sādhaka to a superior plane of experience.

And this is how moments or ingredients of the pūjā; as a sacred rite is called, become first symbolized as goddesses, these goddesses are Vajralāsyā, Vajramālā, Vajragitā, Vajranṛtyā, Vajradhūpā, Vajrapuṣpā, Vajrālokā, Vajragandhā, which appear often in temples alongside the main deity and having a very specific group which is usually independent of the one known as mchod-paṭi lha-mo “the adoring goddesses”. As such, these may also have different iconographical representation, partially at least from that identified in our text.

During a second period these are transformed into the symbol of the mystic pūjā, from internal adoration that does not use the traditional ritualistic, to which the non-illumined people may have access, but is a slow purification, rising to that indiscriminate luminosity of which Vairocana is in the maṇḍala the symbolic effigy.

Nor is the number of the deities of the cycle deprived of significance: excluding the central divinity which represents the ideal essence of the cycle and which has four faces or, as at Tabo, is doubled into four figures to indicate its presence in the four directions of space (Rnam-par-snaṅ-mdzad phyogs bzhir gzigs, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala-sarva-deva-vyavasthāna, Bstan-ḥgyur, zhi, fol. 235), the thirtysix deities of the entourage remain: thirtysix is a sacred number in Mahāyānic mystics, because
thirtysix are the dhātu or elementary categories and thirtysix are the letters of the mantra which express with the power of sound their symbol of creation and, divided into six vara or regroupings they represent the Vara-Kuliśadhara, another symbol of the origin of things, as ideal synthesis of the archetypes (1).

§12. The significance of the maṇḍala of Sarvavid/Kun-rig according to Tson-kha-pa. Tson-kha-pa understands our maṇḍala of Sarvavid Vairocana as none other but the symbolical diagram of the essential doctrines of Mahāyāna (2). Vairocana at the centre stands to mean the dharmatā-jñāna, the pure knowledge, not only as a cognizant act, but ontologically, as the substratum of being, knowledge of which is none other than a con-substantiation with itself (deprived of that shape with which any other object of knowledge appears, ḫdzin-pa-la-sogs-pahi ṇnam-pa dañ ḫbral, ibid. fol. 13 line 6).

This very knowledge considered as the immaculate light which causes and refracts time itself the other knowledge, (ādarśajñāna) is the second god of the maṇḍala, whilst the third, the fourth and the fifth symbolize the other knowledges, that which will be certitude of germinal identity of things eliminates the concept of an ego and of an alter ego (samatājñāna), that which gives us the exact idea of the object and of its nature (pratyavekṣaṇa-jñāna) and that through which the good of all creatures is operated (kriyāśādhana-jñāna). The four feminine deities or Sakti indicate the four vimokṣamukha, that is, the four superations that of the vacuum which liberates us from

(1) Vimalaprabhā, paṭala IV.
(2) Comment quoted on the Durgati-pariśodhana-tantra folios 13ff.
the erroneous conceptions that things are not void or vacuum, that of the indeterminate which opposes itself to the conception that things have their own essential character, that of renunciation to the opposition of the desire to fulfill a meritorious action with the purpose of a reward, that of inactivity by opposition to a false activity.

Vajrasattva and the other three Bodhisattvas who are to be found to the east, i.e., on the interior or lower side of the mandala symbolize instead the first four of the sixteen species of insubstantiality (śūnyatā) detailed and described in Mahāyāna: their meditation liberates us from the preconcept of the objective reality of external things and the psychological facts and from every intellectual attachment to theories and principles, even to those formulated within the Buddhist dogma; these must then be surpassed as points of view which are purely relative and the significance of which or their value, consists only of being moment of that progressive purification which represents the fundamental character of the whole of Mahāyānic mystics (1).

These first four śūnyatās or insubstantialities are: 1) that subjective one which eliminates the belief in the objectivity of one's own perceptions; 2) that objective which eliminates the belief in

(1) Not all the schools classify vacuum according to the scheme of sixteen groups accepted by Tson-kha-pa which probably follows Sthiramati in his commentary to Madhyāntavibhaṅga (see Madhyāntavibhāgasūtrabhāṣyaṭīkā of Sthiramati ed. V. Bhattacharyya and G. Tucci, Calcutta, 1932, p.41ff.). According to the other school, the śūnyata is of eighteen or even of twenty species, as in the Abhisamayālaṅkārāloka (p.39 of my edition). Obermiller, A study of the twenty aspects of śūnyatā, Indian Historical Quarterly 9(1).170.

Neither is there an absolute agreement on the definition of the different śūnyatā: in my summary I have adopted the interpretation of Tson-kha-pa, which on the other hand cannot be taken as final.
the objective existence of the objects of those; 3) that subjectivity and objectivity which eliminates the belief in the objective reality of the sensorial relationships in relation to an object; 4) that of the great insubstantiality which eliminates the belief in the objective reality of the physical world.

Vajrarāga and the other Bodhisattvas on the southern side of the maṇḍala are there to symbolise another four śūnyatā, that is; 5) the insubstantial matter of the insubstantiality that serves to eliminate the belief that makes us attribute a transcendental existence to the insubstantial matter thus obtained; 6) the insubstantial matter of the absolute which eliminates the belief that something which is absolute exists such as nirvāṇa, etc.: 7) the insubstantial matter of all that is the result of an activity, by elimination of attachment to works of merit which are not the cause for obtaining supreme illumination; 8) the insubstantial matter of all that which is not the effect of an activity, by elimination of the attachment to those works of merit which are the cause of supreme illumination, which being eternal cannot be created or derived.

The four Bodhisattvas on the western side of the maṇḍala are the symbols of other four śūnyatā, i.e.: 9) that of limitlessness, to eliminate the belief of objective existence of a limit; 10) of timelessness to eliminate the belief in objective existence of each temporal determination as a beginning and an end; 11) of the non-dispersion to eliminate the belief of non-dispersion of the works of merit in the state of Nirvāṇa; 12) of the nature to eliminate the belief in an essential nature.

The Bodhisattvas of the northern side symbolize other four insubstantialities, i.e.; 13) that of definition, to eliminate the
belief that things have a specific character; 14) of substance, which eliminates the belief in the existence of any substance; 15) that of the essence by means of which the belief that insubstantial matter of the person or of things is made up of something in existence is eliminated; 16) that of the non-essence by means of which the belief that essence, be it of persons or of things in existence, is eliminated.

Vajralāṣyā and the other three goddess represent the four perfections, that is: that of giving, that of morality, that of patience, and of energy which constitutes the antidote to the opposite faults.

Vajragandhā and the other three goddesses stand instead to symbolize the four remaining perfections, these are: meditation, mystical knowledge, convictions, knowledge of the adequate means.

Vajrāṇikuṣa and the other three: faith, energy, consciousness, concentration.

So that the diagram of the maṇḍala is almost cut into two perfectly corresponding planes, one superimposed on the other: under the maṇḍala represented and visible to the eyes of the profane, lies the other, no longer that of signs but of truth and experience in which the origins of the doctrine and of mystics of Mahāyāna are reabsorbed.

It was necessary to say all these things because we must not forget that we are dealing with iconography of Mahāyāna Buddhism, i.e., of an art which is above all symbolic, which cannot be understood in its ideal significance, if we do not approach, in as much as it is possible, in our living conditions, that atmosphere and that religious psychology which inspired it and which gives it to this day its raison d'être. We are not dealing, as I was saying above, with simple works of art, which can
also have; as such and according to our aesthetical criteria, an arguable value, but above all as plastic expressions of experience which help us to re-live.

Scheme of the mandala of Sarvavid/Kun-rig according to Saskya-pa text no.1

§13. The main mandala of Vairocana. As in ritualistics the deities are not listed arbitrarily, but arranged according to a pre-established and fixed order, because it is symbolic in that diagram which is called the mandala. Before going on, it would be good to reproduce as schemes the most popular regroupings
of the cycles connected with Vairocana. The manifold variety of the mandala is not due to caprice, but it is the expression, highly symbolical, of different modes and different methods of realising that truth and those visions which the Tantra, of which these are the mystical diagrams, overshadowed by the not always clear veil of words.

Maṇḍala of Vajradhātu according to Bstan-hgyur zi 120 (Tattvālokakāri) and 32 (Vajradhātu-mahamāṇḍal-opāyikā)
The design of a maṇḍala is in fact enough to make us realize the Tantric system followed by those who wanted to reproduce it or who studied it and practised in the temple in which it was painted.

Maṇḍala of Vairocana according to Paramādivṛtti (ri, fol.78)

Iconography:
- Rdo-rje-kilikili (Vajra-kilikili): vajra in both hands, at the height of the chest.
- Rdo-rje-dran-ma (*Vajrasmṛti): right: flag with makara, left: on the seat
- Rdo-rje-snih-po-ma (*Vajrāhrdayā): vajra with both hands.
- Rdo-rje-mi-byed-ma: flower.
- Rdo-rje-sprin-ma (*Vajrameghā): incense
- Rdo-rje-ston-ma: lamp

[The Sanskrit names are reconstructions which may change with the discovery of the original Sanskrit text of the Paramādivṛtti or an allied Tantra -- Lokesh Chandra]
§14. Which cycle of Vairocana is represented in Tabo. But let us go back to the iconographical figures of the cycle of Vairocana, as described in the sources studied by us. We are evidently dealing with an artistic type fixed in temples which are relatively old, because the same scheme already appears in the Maṇḍala of Vairocana according to the system of Paramāditantra (Bstan-ḥgyur, yi, folio 157b)

Centre of maṇḍala: Vairocana, yellow, in samādhi-mudrā (1)

(1) According to some texts it is called Rnam-par-snañ-mdzad mñon-byari-chub (see Bla-ma mchod-pahi khrid-yig gsañ-bahi gnad rnam-par-phye-ba snañ-rgyud man-nag-gi gter-mdzod p.51). Instead of Cittotpatti-mātra-dharmacakra-pravartaka, as I have reconstructed the Tibetan previously we must now read: Saha-cittotpatti-dharmacakra-pravarttin. The Bodhisattva Saha-cittotpatti-dharmacakra-pravarttin is included in the list of the Bodhisattvas quoted in the Tattvasangraha in the description of the cycle of Vajradhātu, p.380 (for the Chinese text see Taishō edition volume 18, p.346 last column), cf. Lalitavistara p.415.
sources preserved in the Chinese reappearances with the exception of occasional variations (1).

The first question which we will put to ourselves is if the deities described in the text correspond to those of the temple of Tabo. A first discrepancy can be noticed from the number of the statues. Evidently we are confronted with a plastic translation of the cycle of Vairocana which is slightly different from that described in the literary sources, which I have used. This must not surprise those who know the story of the Tibetan Tantric schools and who know that the mystical realisations connected with the same cycle can represent an infinite variety according to diverse methods, introduced in different periods to Tibet by the lotsava and the pandits who created the links of ideal conjunction between India and the Land of Snows. The same group of experiences concludes a determinate literary nucleus, represented by a Tantric text, was effected by the followers in different manners according to the various systems of meditation which were current in the schools. Each lotsava is the interpreter and the master of a chos-lugs or special method learnt in India. Having modified the method of interpretation, he then had to modify also his symbolic representation contained in the manḍala.

How can we explain the difference in the number of deities between the cycle represented in our temple and that which is described in the literary text of Ānandagarbha, of Tsoṅ-kha-pa or of Sa-skya-pa?

(1) It is however evident that this cycle does not exhaust the iconographical types of the deities from which it results; these can have in other cycles or according to new groupings or in accordance with different symbolisms a totally different representation. According to Nā-ra-ka don-sprugs for example the goddess Vajralāṣṭyā is in the mudrā rdo-rje-khu-tshur (vajrasandhi), Vajrāṇupśā has a hook and so on and so forth. Other different iconographies are pointed out by Tsoṅ-kha-pa in the afore-mentioned commentary to the Durgātipariṣodhana. [The mudrā vajrasandhi has to be corrected to vajra-muṣṭi -- Lokesh Chandra].
In fact Tabo retains only thirty-three statues, i.e., a central one and thirty-two representing its followers. Four would then be missing. I do not think that this difference must be attributed to a difference in school. In fact examining them closely, the statues give the impression of being rather modern; they do not seem as ancient as the paintings which go back to the first rebuilding of the temple. In the second place, the deities of Sarvavid/Kun-rig are marked by very precise symbols which must have been made of stucco also or of wood and these are now totally absent from Tabo. It is not the case to think in terms of a destruction brought about by men or by time because the statues would then show signs of ruin and decay which are not noticeable instead, nor even in the most delicate parts such as the hands.

A detailed examination of the photography fully confirms my supposition: it is enough to see plate VI (no.7), VII (no.9), VIII (no.12), XIII (no.22), XVI (no.28), to realize that the halo preserved traces of antique lines of stucco which are the fragments of the original figures which have not been obliterated. This in fact shows that these statues have been remade, we do not know how antique, from previous statues; and it seems that when these were remodelled, the traditional iconographical criteria were not very scrupulously taken into account. This fact is one of the most serious difficulties, together with the lack of every symbol for the precise identification of the deities represented. There are more arguments to convince us more and more that the plastic cycle of Tabo was subjected to great alterations.
In fact, from the cycle of Sarvavid/Kun-rig, “family of vajra” and “family of gem” by explicit testimonial of the texts the terrific deities are excluded; all of them are placid and serene. This description does not correspond to the plastic representation of the temple of Tabo, in which some statues are in fact terrific, such as those which are on both sides of the door or the other two gigantic ones on the walls of the passage which leads to the chapel of Amitabha/ Hod-dpag-med, on the apse of the temple.

Moreover, these two are of far greater proportions than the others and certainly of such a primitive and rough manufacture that we are led to believe that they have been modelled during a more recent period. It seems therefore that we must conclude that the temple of Tabo has been subjected in this section also to frequent alterations, may be due to fires, to partial destructions or to collapses. At which point this took place we do not know precisely; but certainly when the direct tradition of the Sarvavid/Kun-rig cycle had been lost, thus once the statues were mended like this the characteristic symbols were not put back into place, neither was the traditional number of 37 deities constituting the Sarvavid Vairocana cycle taken into account. The four missing statues could have been standing in the space occupied by the two dharmapāla/chos-skyon which are gigantic, or otherwise two in said place and the two others on the sides of the door, near the two more modest dharmapāla/chos-skyon surrounded by a halo which has nothing to do with the cornices usually used for other statues.

The deities which are missing for the completion of the cycle of Sarvavid/Kun-rig are four feminine deities, because instead of twelve Tabo contains only eight. And if we take away the two dvārapāla or chos-skyon on the sides of the entry door and
the other two gigantic ones on the part of the passage which leads to the little cella of Amitābha/Ḥod-dpag-med and which to be represented in their terrific attitude it does not seem, as I have said before, that we have a connection with the original cycle of Sarvavid/Kun-rig, we will be forced to admit that of the thirtyseven deities of the maṇḍala, only twentyeight remain, but that we are in fact confronted with a special plastic representation of a definite system connected with Vairocana, there is no doubt whatsoever, because, although many symbols have been lost and consequently identification of the different statues becomes more difficult, some of them can be identified with almost absolute certainty.

Are we confronted with a symbolic representation of the Tantric cycle which derives from the Durgati-pariśodhana, or rather from the other which was identified with the Tattvasaṅgraha? Because if it were possible to establish without further doubt that the builders of Tabo were inspired by the Durgati-pariśodhana or the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala every doubt would be eliminated: it would not be possible to think of anything but the series of Sarvavid/Kun-rig, that is to say, of the plastic representation of the series of the Vajra.

If on the other hand the chapel of Tabo is derived from a spiritual atmosphere dominated by the mystical experience exposed in the Tattvasaṅgraha, it would be, in view of the total lack of symbols, rather difficult to establish which of the cycles that the Tantra has inspired is represented here: that of the "family of the lotus" is out of the question because many of its deities, as we have already seen, were represented with many arms and many heads, whereas at Tabo, they are all of the normal type; but there is no way of distinguishing between the cycle of the "family of the diamond" and the "family of the
gem" because the only possibility of establishing one or the other depends on the symbol itself or on the diamond or the gem, which in the present case is no longer visible.

Only one argument would lean towards the cycle of the "family of the gem": in fact the name of Rin-chen-bzan-po, is a religious name, i.e., the name of an initiate, because it is typical of these schools to assume a name after abhiṣeka or baptism, when by means of special ceremonies the mystical family to which the beginner belonged had been clearly established (1). The name of Rin-chen-bzan-po, would however seem to indicate his proclaimed connection with the family of the gem. If the temple was built by him or by his will nothing is more probable then that he wished to see represented in the chapel the mystical family under the auspices of which he had received his initiation: the fact that also at Toling the chapel of Ratnasambhava is shown as that in which Rin-chen-bzan-po usually sat is characteristic and a tradition goes as far as saying that the said statue is his very effigy (2).

Another argument in favour of this supposition is represented by the fact that, as we have seen, four feminine deities are lacking from the represented cycle and in fact according to the scheme of the maṇḍala of the gem the four supreme sakti are represented in the mystical diagrams not by figures but by symbols.

Against the identification with this cycle and more in favour of that of the Durgatipariśodhana is figure no. 23, which seems

(2) Tucci-Ghersi 1933 : 312.
doubtlessly to be that of the Pariṣodhanarāja/Sbyoṅ-bahi-rgyal-po, represented in the traditional attitude of Amitābha, which is missing from the cycle of the family of the gem.

Anyway, as the cycle of the gem and that of the vajra have in many parts the same iconographical representation and at Tabo every symbol which might distinguish the statues is missing, we will limit ourselves to the identification according to the scheme of Sarvavid/Kun-rig, adding in brackets the name corresponding in the series of the “family of the gem”.

§15. Identification of the individual statues. I supply a list on pages 69 - 70 in which the progressive Arabic numeral on the left refers to the number of order of the statue within the plastic series which, following the course of the pradakṣiṇā ritual, starts from the left of the entrance door and runs along the left wall, the central wall and the right wall, then returning to the right hand side of the door (see fig. 2). The Roman number is there to indicate the order of the plate in which these statues have been reproduced following that of the original. The Arabic number in italics refers to the position which the said deity occupies in the description of the maṇḍala of Sarvavid/Kun-rig according to the scheme of the family of the vajra or of the family of the gem described in the sources studied by us.

§16. Iconographic types of Vairocana. Moreover even the central deity (vibhu, gtso-bo) of the temple is different from the iconographic type described in the literary sources (plates XXI, XXII).

In fact Vairocana is not represented with one body only and four heads, but by four single figures put back to back, the symbol of the mudrā is different, because while the statues of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial numbers of the images in the temple</th>
<th>Plate</th>
<th>Name of the deity</th>
<th>Corresponding number of the cycle of 37 deities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>Vajradhūpā</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Vajralāsyā (Maṇi-)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Vajrasattva</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Vajrarāgā                                            (Maṇi-) (1)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Vajraratna (Rin-chen-īta-ba)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>Gyal-mchog-rinchen (Don-thamspcad-sgrub-pa) 6)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>IX</td>
<td>Vajrahasa (Maṇi-)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Vajramālā (Maṇi-)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Vajragītā (Maṇi-)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>Candavajrapāni (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Vajrarāgā is represented in the small figure in bronze which formed part of a whole group of Sarvavid/Kun-rig in the temple of Rabgyeling (Plate XX a).

(2) Candavajrapāni or also Vajracanda is a terrific incarnation of Aksobhya. In Hlod la-tshogs-kyī sgrub-thabs of Blo-bzan-dpal-ldan-ye-ses he is described thus (complete works, vol.ca p.41):

> षृमितमाहावंधिनविद्यामाहित्याविनिदिष्टः।
> दुमाभित्रस्तिनिर्देशादेवानि अस्तिनस्।।
> श्रवणाद्वैत्योः श्रवणित्यां।
> निष्ठिविद्वानमति चामलिते।
> निष्ठिविद्वानमति चामलिते।
> निष्ठिविद्वानमति चामलिते।
> निष्ठिविद्वानमति चामलिते।
> निष्ठिविद्वानमति चामलिते।।

To the sādhaka the following appears: Śrīmat-Mahācanda himself with one face and two hands and in a frightening form; in the right hand he holds the golden vajra and in the left leaning against the side the bell. It is ornamented with
Tabo are in the attitude of preaching (dharmacakra-mudrā), Sarvavid Vairocana must be, according to the aforementioned description, in the attitude of meditation (dhyāna or samādhi-mudrā): this type is to be found in the figures of the maṇḍala of Vairocana at Tabo, at Toling and in other places, or we see reproductions of votive stūpas/tsha-tsha rather frequently in the vicinity of the ancient temples of Bkaḥ-gdams-pa be it of Ladakh or of Western Tibet (plate XXIII).

The god is represented in the bronze statue on plate XX c, whose iconographic type corresponds perfectly to the aforementioned sādhana. Over the head we can see a figure of Akṣobhya, one of the Buddhas of the supreme pentad, of whom Caṇḍa-vajrapāṇi is considered the emanation.

(1) Vajrasphoṭa is represented in a small statue, also originating from the group of Sarvavid/Kun-rig of Rabgyeling, reproduced on plate XX b.
This manner, however, of representing Sarvavid Vairocana is not only characteristic of Tabo, but it is to be found again in other places, for example in the temple of Lhalung and it is probably explained by the fact that the quadruple aspect of the god, symbolized by its four heads, is split into as many separate forms; these then are in the habitual mudrā of isolated Vairocana, i.e., in that of the dharmacakra and therefore they reproduce the type of Vairocana which appears in the series of the pañcakula the five Tathāgata or Buddha, erroneously called the five dhyāni-buddha, and which, as we shall soon see, signify, in the meditation process, the four lines of evolution of things or of experience of indiscriminate primaeval being.

This particularity of the symbols must not surprise us: the representations of Vairocana are also many and varied according to the Tantric cycle to which they refer: thus for example, according to a work already mentioned (1), beyond the most common type of the series of the supreme pentad that is, white colour, a face, hands in the gesture of preaching, other manifestations of him are also venerated: that of Kun-rig Rnam-par-snañ-mdzad/Sarvavid Vairocana as described in the Sa-skya-pa text or in the cycle of the Durgati-pariśodhana studied above, with the wheel with eight rays on the palm of the hand (hkhor-lo rtsibs brgyad); then Rnam-par-snañ-mdsad m yön-par-byan-chub with a face and two hands in samādhi-mudrā and yellow in colour; then, according to the

(1) Bla-ma mchod-paḥi khrid-yig gsan-bahi gnad rnam-par-phye-ba snañ-rgyud man-ñag-gi gter-mdzod, folio 51b.
Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍal-opāyikā (Bstan-ḥgyur śi 32) Rdo-rje Snāṇ-mdzad (Vajra-Vairocana) as Sarvavid/Kun-rig, with a vajra on the hands instead of the wheel.

According to the commentary of the Paramāditantra another of his shapes is white with the rdo-rje dril-bu bell marked by the vajra in the right hand and the vajra at the height of the breast in the left (Bstan-ḥgyur 78): and another one (ibid. p.283) is yellow, with one face: the hands are in bodhyaṅgī mudrā and in them he carries the vajra. According to the gloss of Tsoṅ-kha-pa to the commentary by Candrakīrti on Guhyasamāja (folio 217 b) he is also represented with one face and two arms, wheel and bell as symbols.

§17. Age of the paintings at Tabo. Before going on to the other chapels of Tabo, it would be convenient to return to the question of the age to which the Gtṣug-lag-khan probably dates back. The said temple is doubtlessly the most important and the most ancient of all the gompa. Tabo and Toling are not disassociated, as we can see, in tradition: both were founded by Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po under the patronage of Ye-śes-ḥod; but, whether the temple that we admire today is the same one which was built during the time of the great Lotsava is yet to be seen. What opposes this possibility is the inscription to be read at the entry of the apsidal chapel published and translated in appendix VIII on page 195.

The said theory then confirms the construction of the gompa as a work of Ye-śes-ḥod, but, it speaks of a rebuilding during the reign of Byaṅ-chub-ḥod which took place forty-six years later. But nothing indicates that the said rebuilding is contemporay with this prince. Moreover, as the author himself declares, and he seems to be the painter of the frescos too. the inscription is none other than a lo-rgyus, that is a retelling, a
tradition put into writing and very different, thus, from the
dedication itself. That (the dedication) is at the same time
glorification (*praśasti*) of the two greatest figures of Buddhist
renaissance in Western Tibet. Thus there is no reason to attrib-ute
the paintings, which nonetheless appear very ancient and
betray Indian influences beyond discussion, to the time of
Rin-chen-bzañ-po. But above the inscription with which I have
been concerning myself so far, we see a painting (plate XXIV),
evidently from the same hand as the previous one, which
reproduces an ascetic figure, with the right hand in bhūmi-
sparśa-mudrā; a Buddhist saint somewhat idealised and just as
difficult to establish who he is. Around the ascetic figure there
is a multitude of devotees, some of whom are laymen and
obviously personages of great importance.

It is in fact here, within a frame, that we found the little
inscription that Franck could not read and decipher com-
pletely. Because instead of only: GUGE SDE, as it seemed to
him, what is clearly written here is the following:

1) *Gzil-mal-la d[añ-phyug mgon/ mkhar rum gu-ge sde*

2) *Gnas-brtan-chen-po ḫďul-ba mdzad rta-po-yi dge-ḥdun-sde
chen-po.*

Thus: 1) “GZIH-MAL-LA the prince, the lord; Mkhar RUM,
district of Guge”.

2) “The great arhat converts; the great assembly of the
monks of Tabo”.

Gziḥ-mal-la is evidently the Ḣdzi-smal of the genealogy of
Rgyal-rabb and Rtse-lde takes us back to the last quarter (*twenty-
five year period*) of the XIth century (*Indo-Tibetica II*), taking
into account that between Rtse-lde and Gziḥ-mal-la there are
another fifteen kings, and we will arrive approximately to the end of the XIIIth century and to the beginning of the XIV century as probable dates of the prince remembered in the inscription and whose effigy appears in the paintings of Tabo. Consequently, all the paintings of the temple still in existence correspond to this same epoch.

The other inscriptions are almost all erased. But to the right of the apse, near the statues of personages who contributed to the foundation of the temple (yon-bdag, sbyin-bdag, plate XXV) I have been able to decipher the following:

Khrom-ḥu chu-nil-ma: the wife Khrom-ḥu (1).

Mag-pahi tsa za brten-ti dgeh (=dge) yon-bdag: the donator Brten-ti [h]-dgeh of Tsa, the stepson.

Rum za rtan-po-gsug: Rtan-po-gsug of Rum.


Sgron-nos(2) Ḫdiḥi yon-bdag rum za gñen-tiṅ: Gñen-tiṅ of Rum, a donator [of gods] of this [monastery] true and real lamp (of the faith).

The names preceding those of persons are probably the names of places, as Rum certainly is, which appears also in the inscription of Gziḥ-mal-la (3) cited above or of a clan.


(2) i.e. the monastery of Tabo which in the inscription is also called “light of the faith”; Ṯos for dīṅos.

(3) Judging from this inscription Rum was the name of the district of Spiti around Tabo. For the suffix za see F.W. Thomas, Journal of Royal Asiatic Society 1927:832.
§18. The frescos. In the central temple, under the statues, there is a long uninterrupted series of frescos, which although representing, as we shall see, well-known legends of Buddhism, is sufficiently important also for the history of ancient costumes of Western Tibet. It is evident in fact that these paintings are more or less inspired by local and contemporary visions, projected, so to speak, against the legendary and mythological background which it was intended to represent. Their technique and style are of the greatest interest to us.

These paintings have come out of a school which is totally independent from that developed in central Tibet, and generally better known; they reveal an indigenous art which must have been formed in Guge under the patronage of the kings of Western Tibet. Inspired and modelled directly on India, far away from that Chinese penetration which was established in other parts of Tibet, this mural painting is perhaps the most noteworthy remaining document of a school which could be called Indo-Tibetan; to its fundamental characteristics I propose to devote in the near future an exhaustive study on the basis of the ample material brought back by me from my travels.

The frescos which decorate the temple of Tabo can be divided into two series: one is to the left when one enters the temple and starts immediately at the side of the door, the other, runs parallel to the right with a similar development.

One and the other series are narrations, i.e., pictorial reproductions of legends well known within Buddhism.

That on the left contains in fact the legend of Sudhana/Nor-bzani. The story of Sudhana/Nor-bzani, king faithful to the precept of the Buddhist Law (*chos-rgyal*), is even to this date one of the most popular and wide spread in the whole

This book speaks of the rivalry between two kingdoms of India, one in the north and the other in the south, the latter heretical, the former extremely devoted to Buddhist Law. The lack of piety produces great calamities in the kingdom of the South, while the nāga, liberal givers of riches take up refuge in a lake of the southern kingdom making the treasures of their grace rain over this reign. The attempts of the princes of the northern kingdom and of their priests to make the nāga return to their seat are in vain; an extremely powerful wizard promises to bind with his formulii the serpents, but he is killed by a fisherman, who in close friendship with the nāga, is the object of great benefices because he has known how to save them from the wickedness of the magician and recives the gift of a precious gem. Thus this fisherman with the mediation of an ascetic obtains a half-goddess of great beauty (Kinnarī) whom he takes to king Sudhana/Nor-bzani as a wife, the latter giving him splendid recompense for the benefits brought to the country.

The legend describes the love of the royal couple and the envy which arises amongst the concubines and the women of the gynaecenum who, with different stratagems, manage that Sudhana/Nor-bzani be sent by his father into the regions of the north to convert the barbarians who inhabit that section of the region. While the prince easily carries out his dangerous enterprise, the rivals of the princess contrive a plot against her, although the princess helped by Sudhana/ Nor-bzani’s mother, can through hardship and suffering save herself taking refuge again amongst the Gandharva. The distress and anguish of
Sudhana/Nor-bzan is great when upon return he no longer sees his wife: without thinking of his kingdom and of the paternal rebuke he leaves with the firm purpose of finding her again; the book discovers his adventures, through strange countries and finally the joy of their meeting. It is then clear that this lengthy Tibetan story, rich in digressions and descriptions is none other but a remaking and an extension of the well-known story of Sudhana, contained in the Divyāvadāna (pages 441ff).

The frescos of Tabo, however, do not contain scenes which seem inspired by this legend. Evidently it is another story that they reproduce. Due to different reasons we had neither the way nor the time in which to photograph or to copy the inscriptions which are a commentary to the various scenes, but it is clear from my notes, and from the few words which can be read in the plates, that the paintings illustrate the story no longer of dharmarāja Sudhana/chos-rgyal Nor-bzan but of śreṣṭhi-putra Sudhana/tshoṅ-dpon-gyi-bu Nor-bzans (1) that is “Nor-bzan son of the chief merchant (śreṣṭhi-putra)”. Which one the story is, I am not able to tell: but it is worthwhile not to forget that Nor-bzan is a translation not only of the Sanskrit Sudhana, but can also correspond to an original Maṇibhadra.

The painting to the right, instead, reproduces the life of Buddha described in a series of pictures which correspond to the twelve fundamental moments of the life of Buddha (mdzad-pa bcu-gnis), which have become traditional in the iconography of Tibet. The frescos of Tabo do not contain anything special or new; as the other part of this legend of Buddha runs very frequently almost over all the temples of

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(1) It is thus in ancient spelling.
Western Tibet, I do not think it is the case to make a detailed description, moreover in view of the fact that the paintings of Tabo are already to a great extent cancelled and ruined by the water which has seeped in through the detached ceiling and in a state of conservation which does not warrant a detailed stylistic examination.

§19. The cella and iconographic types of the Five Buddhas. Behind the temple, that we have been discussing so far, is the cella (dri-gtsan-khañ) with a central statue and two acolytes on both sides. The little cella is surrounded by a narrow corridor, which used to serve for circumambulation of the faithful. The central figure represents a Buddha sitting on a throne (simhāsana), on the pedestal of which we can see in high relief two lions back to back (plate XXXIV).

Usually, the statue is covered by a ritual cloak, red in colour.

The deity is sitting down in the position of vajraparyāṇka and his hands are in the position of dhyāna-mudrā, that is supine, one on the other. It is thus possible to approach an identification of the statue which is more precise than the simple and generic seated figure of Buddha, as Francke says. There is no doubt that the figure represents Ḫod-dpag-med, that is Amitābha. In fact in the usual Tibetan iconography, the Five supreme Buddhas or Pañca-tathāgata can be represented with symbols or without symbols, wearing monk's robes or royal attire, according to a scheme which can be summarized in the following formula, and which allows for no doubts about the specific identification of the deity represented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>deity</th>
<th>colour</th>
<th>vehicle</th>
<th>mudrā</th>
<th>symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vairocana</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>lions (1)</td>
<td>dharma-cakra (2)</td>
<td>wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akṣobhya</td>
<td>blue</td>
<td>elephants</td>
<td>bhūmisparśa</td>
<td>vajra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratnasambhava</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>horses (3)</td>
<td>varada</td>
<td>gem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amitābha</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>peacocks</td>
<td>dhyāna</td>
<td>vase (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amoghasiddhi</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>garuḍa (5)</td>
<td>abhaya</td>
<td>sword (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrations of the sacred pentad and of its iconographical representations, I can reproduce a series of *rīgs lha* (five

(1) And not dragons as in B. Bhattacharyya, *Buddhist Iconography*, p.4. According to the Tattvālokakāri the symbol of Vairocana is the vajra with five points: Bstan-hgyur zi 131ff. For Five Buddhas and their iconography compare Bstan-hgyur zi 121; after having said that Vairocana is white, has four faces, his symbol is a vajra with five points (*rdo-rje rtse-lḥa*), his vehicle (vāhana) the lion, it is followed by:

(2) But according to Pañcākāra of Advayavajra (in Advayavajra-saṅgṛaha, p. 40) the mudrā is bodhyangi(byaṅ-chub-mchog.

(3) Not lions as said in *Buddhist Iconography* of B. Bhattacharyya p. 5.

(4) According to the same treatise of Advayavajra the symbol is the lotus: *padma-cīhna*.

(5) Or: sāṅ-sāṅ a fabulous bird of gigantic proportions and with a human face, see zab-chos zhi khro dgos-par grol-gyi las byaṅ-chub hṭshor-ba r.rx-grol-gyi sūn-po, folio 2.

(6) According to the same treatise the symbol would be the viśvavajra, as in the Tattvālokakāri, but the Tibetan translation of the same word has *ral-gri* i.e. *khadga*, sword, the one in fact that is seen in the figure reproduced on plate XXXIII.
families), as certain diadems are called which are used in Tibet in exorcising ceremonies or in funeral rites, or even in the baptism of an initiate.

These are composed of five small icons held together by a little cord or band; each of the icons represents one of the supreme Buddha: thus the name “the five families” with which they are usually referred to. The imposition of this mystical diadem means that the officiant has become one with that germinal cosmic force in which the five lines of evolution are differentiated, symbolically represented by the supreme pentad; now thus united with the whole he holds under domain the forces of the universe and can operate the miracle.

These rigs lña are now usually made of cardboard or papier maché; and carry painted on them, with greater or lesser skill, the images of the Five Buddhas framed in these traditional motifs which Tibetan art has inherited from India.

A good example, carried out with uncommon refinement is that which is reproduced in the plate and which corresponds perfectly to the iconographic schemes indicated above (plate XXXIII).

But the more antique rigs lña were made of wood, according perhaps to the Indian habit: substituted however by those of papier maché, these have today become rare beyond measure. I still managed to find some notable examples in Spiti, in high Kunavar and in Guge: some are very ancient, moreover almost certainly of Indian manufacture, or directly inspired by Indian
models. Those illustrated on plate XXXV nos. 1, 2, 3, can be considered as such.

No. 1 represents Amoghasiddhi, no. 2 Vairocana, no. 3 Amitābha. The Buddhas are characterised by their traditional vehicles on the base of the throne: and they are seated in vajraparyāṇa over a lotus supported by a carpet decorated with quadrangular motifs. Behind the figure, the throne, of a style which seems characteristic of the statues of the Pāla type, i.e., flanked by a small figure of an elephant which rests on the horned lion (vyālaka): in this case over the vyālaka there is a cavalier. Over the throne a marine monster (makara) from which develops in flower motifs of spherical curves going upwards, a garuḍa, of the usual Indian type, surmounted by the characteristic symbol of the deity represented: the sword for Amoghasiddhi, the wheel for Vairocana, the lotus for Amitābha.

Nos. 4-8 (plates XXXVI-XXXVII) reproduce the whole pentad: Sarvavid Vairocana (no. 6) is the central deity of the series with four heads and hands in dharmacakra-mudrā, a type which synthesises in only one figure the quadruple Vairocana of Tabo. Under each deity, apart from the usual vehicle, the figure of a dwarf in the position of Atlantis, a motif which we will find again reproduced in stucco in the temple of Lhalung: instead of the garuḍa at the top a head of lion (kirtimukha). On the vortex the traditional symbol: the lotus flower for Amitābha, the viśvavajra for Akṣobhya, (as in the treatise of Advayavajra) for Vairocana (no. 6) a flower instead of the wheel, for Amoghasiddhi (no. 7) the vajra (only the higher part is reproduced), for Ratnasambhava (no. 8) the gem. On both sides of the throne, instead of the motif of the elephant and the vyālaka, two deities, almost surely feminine ones, probably
the usual feminine deities in the act of adoration (mchod-paḥi lha-mo/pūjā-devi).

At the sides of Vairocana the attendants are four instead of two: at the top under the kīrtimukha, two small figures; one of Śākyamuni and the other of Amitābha.

Nos. 9 and 10 (plate XXXVIII) are of the same type although worked maybe with greater refinement: representing Amitābha and Ratnasambhava.

The symbols, as I have previously said are accessory; they can be present, but they can also be lacking; moreover, this is the most frequent case in the iconography of Western Tibet; on the other hand, we have already seen, studying the iconographical type of Vairocana, that these can also vary according to the schools. Thus identification of the deities can be done above all on the basis of two fundamental elements: the colour and the position of the hands.

§20. Amitābha and Amitāyus. In our case the red colour and the position of the hands in samādhi or dhyāna-mudrā shows beyond doubt that the statue represents Amitābha. What is missing is the vase, that is, the vase for alms, that which in Tibetan is called the lhun-bzed and in Sanskrit pindaṭapātra. We attribute a great deal of importance to this fact, because the figure of Amitābha of the same colour and of the same posture is sometimes represented with the lhun-bzed and many times with the kalaśa or kumbha (in Tibetan bum-pa). The difference in the form of the two vases is notable and thus also the difference in the significance.

Whilst the pindaṭapātra is, as we all know, the vase in which the monk collects the alms offered, the kalaśa is the traditional vase which contains the sacred water, the water that is transformed
by the blessings of the deity into ambrosia. Usually, the section of this vase is narrower on the base and wider towards the top, it has a thin neck and very thick and heavy lips. It is a type which goes back to very ancient times and which seems to have always had a ritual use: the vase from which the water of life gushes out (1).

It is in fact this water sprinkled on the initiate which consecrates his definite admission to the supreme mysteries and his coparticipation in the supreme truth, i.e. his rebirth to higher planes of existences, because the abhiṣeka or baptism implies identification of the sādhaka with that plane of experience which a certain deity stands to symbolize. In other words, to use the terminology of the mysteriosophic schools which move in an atmosphere similar to that of the Buddhist sects, with which we are dealing; the kālaśa is destined to contain the water of life, or as the texts say, the ambrosia of immortality (ḥchi-med tsheḥi bdud-rtsis gaṅ-pahi bum-pa) (2); the consecrated water which is used in baptism and which is transformed by the benediction of the guru and by divine grace (adhiṣṭhāna) into ambrosia and operates the indefectible palingenesis of the initiate, making him one with the deity. Now the Tibetans distinguish obviously between the two iconographical types, that which carries on the palm of the hand in dhyāna-mudrā the pīṇḍapātra and that which instead carries the kālaśa. The first

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(1) Heuzy, Origines orientales de l’art, p. 163. A. Coomaraswamy, Yakṣas, 2. 61.
(2) Hdoṅ lha-tshogs-kyi sgrub-thabs of Blo-bzaṅ-dpal-lDan-ye-ses (Vol. nā of his complete works, folio 78).
one is said to represent Hod-dpag-med, Amitābha, and the other Tshe-dpag-med, Amitāyus; that is the only type Amitābha-Amitāyus which (1) -- be it in India, in China or in Japan, seems to be confused with each other -- is rigorously divided into two different aspects. How this has taken place, we are not able to say; neither can we yet establish if the Tibetans continued a tradition already elaborated by some Indian schools or if they have been the first ones to formulate, perhaps under foreign influence, a theory which implied a contradiction with the traditional scheme of the sacred pentad and which infringed that quinary number on which it is pivoted. It seems to us, still, that we may notice from this division of a deity into two subspecies a religious atmosphere similar to that of the mysteriosophical schools of the Mediterranean Orient which, through initiations and ascents, wanted to ascend to a state of consubstantiation with the deity now considered as pure light and infinite light Amitābha, now as eternal life Amitāyus, mystical ideals to the realization of which so many initiates aspired during the centuries immediately preceding our era.

§21. Acolytes of Amitābha. Above the image of Amitābha there are four small figures in stucco with earrings and diadems. The two higher ones are dressed in the characteristic Indian costume (dhotī) and the two lower ones seem to come out of a cloud; they are probably deva and apsaras or vidyādhara in the act of homage. On the walls at the sides of the Buddha, traces

of paintings symbolising two feminine deities; the one on the left is white, the one on the right is dark and these must have had symbols which are no longer distinguishable; the one on the left seems to carry a parasol. Evidently, the usual goddesses in the act of veneration (mchod-pahi-lha-mo) usual accessory of Buddhist iconography.

On the side walls we find statues of two bodhisattvas; the one on the right is Amitābha/ Hod-dpag-med and white, the one on the left is blue. They are probably representations of different aspects of Avalokiteśvara. The statue on the right almost certainly represents Padmapāni and the one on the left Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Plates XXXIX, XL).

This connection is not purely casual, but it is an iconographic consecration of a tradition not unknown to Mahāyāna literature. We know in fact from the Karunāpuṇḍarīka (1) that Araṇemi, who reigned during past cosmic eras, became the Buddha Amitābha, while his two eldest sons, ascending in their spiritual ascent, became the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta: these, in the Kuan wu lian šou fu kǐn flank standing by an apparition of Amitābha (Taisho 365) and even in the Sukhāvatīvyūha they are named as the principal bodhisattvas in the paradise of Amitābha (2).

The other two statues also standing, which precede the apse, are part also of the parivāra or followers of Amitābha. They are

(1) Karunāpuṇḍarīka, edition of the Buddhist Text Society, p. 37, 38, 39.
(2) Sukhāvatī, translation mentioned before, p. 52 par. 34.

According to the greater part of literature with iconographic character or value, Avalokiteśvara must in fact be to the right of Amitābha and Mahāsthāmaprāpta to the left. See for example T'o-lo-ni-chi-ching Taisho 901 vol. XV. 800, where however, instead of Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi, it speaks of Avalokiteśvara “of eleven heads”
Ākāśagarbha to the left and Kṣitigarbha to the right of the central statue (plates XLI-XLI). Thus also at Tabo a tradition which is found in Japan and which existed in China would be documented: the pentad of Amitābha, in which the Japanese schools seems to substitute for Ākāśagarbha the patriarch Nāgārjuna (1).

On the walls of the circumambulation passage around the apse, in frescos, a thousand figurines of Buddhas sitting down, in dhyāna-mudrā (plate XLIII). The monks which we see are as many Amitābha/Ḥod-dpag-med, but we are dealing with the usual motif which is so frequent in the paintings of the temples of this epoch in Western Tibet, i.e., of the cycle of the Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa, the polyglot list of which has been published by Weller: the inscription of which we have spoken (line 7) clearly alluded to them.

§22. The library of Tabo. Unfortunately, of the library which was once under the custody of this temple, nothing is left but miserable remains. In a rough shelf along the length of the left wall, we find in no particular order loose folios of a Prajñāpāramitā in one hundred thousand verses, the importance of which has already been pointed out by Francke. It is probable that the temple was ravaged by the soldiers of Zoravar, during the tragic Tibetan expedition of this famous Dogra general. It seems to me almost certain that he went through Tabo, on his way to Kyi and to Kaze. Francke seems to deny this possibility, because the temple of Tabo is the only one which has remained standing in the midst of such general ruin. But we must bear in mind that the temple of Tabo rose in the plains and that it was

(1) See Hōbōgirin s.v. Amida,
not the case to dismantle it as it was necessary to do with the other monasteries built, as real fortresses, on top of hills, of difficult access, provided with bastions and vents and that in the case of war were used as an excellent refuge and a magnificent defense for the lama-warriors. Once the devastation of the temple of Tabo had been carried out the pious faithful recollected the remains of the ancient library which were scattered and put them back without following any order in the provisional shelving.

The manuscripts are all in the ancient script (plates XLIV-XLV): like the copies of Toling and of the other monasteries of Western Tibet. Moreover, the manuscripts contain more archaic forms than the very inscriptions on the inside of the temple of Tabo. It is difficult to establish whether we are always confronted with ancient originals, contemporaries of the foundation of the temple or with successive copies, because as it is well-known, the arid and dry climate of Tibet can preserve manuscripts perfectly for a period of many centuries, as in the plains of Central Asia. But on the other hand, the importance that Tabo must have had, favoured the continuous copying of sacred texts which not only were studied by monks, but which had to be recited during the religious service. And private persons also, according to a habit which is even today in force in Tibet, in order to procure for themselves religious merit, ordered copies, paying themselves for the service of the amanuenses, of the volumes of the “Great Mother” (yum chen-mo), i.e., of the Prajñāpāramitā in its different versions.

But whether these are ancient or not so ancient the different copies of the most sacred books of Buddhism deposited in the temple of Tabo (and what I am now saying for Tabo must be repeated for the other temples of Western Tibet, which I have visited) are of great importance for the critical edition of the Tibetan version of the Prajñāpāramitā, or of the other canoni-
cal books, because they have been handed down faithfully and with great care for detail, the text as it came out of the hands of the first translators. Thus, as I have demonstrated in the second volume of the *Indo-Tibetica*, some of these translations, of which ancient manuscript fragments remain, had been produced in Western Tibet and by lotsavas of Western Tibet, whether out of the hands of Rin-chen-bzani-po himself or of his collaborators. The great value of these manuscripts is then clear, they give us the original form of a literature which is extremely important for the study of Buddhism, of its dogma, and of its mystical experiences.

Folios of works translated in Western Tibet and consequently a product of the school of Rin-chen-bzani-po appear, frequently, lost in the midst of the thick pages of the Prajnāpāramitā fragments found at Tabo. I find this worthy of note. It seems that these monasteries of Spiti and Guge, even when they began to grow and the followers of the new sects which had slowly begun to assume their own characteristics in the rest of Tibet, preserved a certain orthodoxy of tradition, living more or less in that literary and religious atmosphere which had been drawn up by the school of Rin-chen-bzani-po and which was founded on canonical texts rather than on the exegesis of the Tibetan doctors.

These manuscripts follow the manner of Indian ones and have often two characteristic small circles in the middle of the forum through which the little cord which held the folios together passed. Many have circles of interlinear explanations
which are evidence of the detailed care with which these texts were once studied at the monastery of Tabo, where today intellectual life seems to have died forever.

I give below a list of the most noteworthy fragments which remain of the library, which was once so important, at Tabo:

Abhisamayālāṃkārāloka
Vinayasānigraha
Pañcasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā
Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā
Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā

Bodhicaryāvatāra
Saddharmapuṇḍarīka
Satyadvayāvatāra
Saṅkṣiptamaṇḍalasūtravṛtti.

§23. Two Kashmiri sculptures. Every other antique jewel has completely disappeared: there are however two wooden boards which deserve special attention. They have been reproduced by Francke: but it is worthwhile to republish them, because the German archaeologist may not have realized their importance. They represent Buddha in the position in which he is usually considered Dīpankara: the right hand in the attitude of protection (abhaya-mudrā) and the left hand holding up the robe.

But R.D. Banerji (1) has proved that this attitude is often attributed to Buddha Śākyamuni in the narrative sculptures of the artistic schools of Eastern India: the standing Buddha in this case represents the descent from heaven of the thirty-three gods.

It is then not improbable that the two panels of Tabo were once part of the illustration of the Buddha-carita: the larger one with four figures of deities in the act of homage or of

(1) Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture. p. 79.
offering probably represented the offering of the four vases for alms made to Buddha by the deities of the four cardinal points after he had achieved illumination (plate XLVI). The other one perhaps wishes to reproduce the descent from heaven, devāvatāra (plate XLVII). The two sculptures are very important from the artistic point of view: they have been made with great refinement and they take us back to the traditional types of Gupta or post-Gupta art but the cornices in which the figures are framed indicate clearly the school from which the sculptures derive. The three-leaved arch surmounted by a tympanus at acute angle and the type itself of the column remind us evidently of the architectural and ornamental motifs of Kashmir: there is no doubt whatsoever that the two panels sculpted are originally of the Kashmiri school of the Xth or of the XIth century.

These, thus, confirm in an irrefutable manner the tradition preserved in the biography, which speaks to us of Kashmiri artists who were asked to come by Rin-chen-bzān-po to the province of Guge so that they would help him with the construction of the temples which he had already designed.
CHAPTER II

TABO. THE GSER-KHAN.

§24. The Gser-khan and its paintings. The Gser-khan is a chapel of great interest because of the paintings which cover the walls almost completely. They are not as ancient as those of the Gtsug-lag-khan, because they go back almost surely to the sixteenth century, but they are nonetheless of great value. These in fact can be considered as a document of the second period of the art of Guge, which reached its summit at the time of king Sen-ge-rnam-rgyal. Then it began to decline. After the conquests of this king, which gave the fortune and power of Guge a fatal coup, with the sunset of political power, it seems that even artistic tradition slowly withered.

The figures of this chapel are bigger than natural size and arranged in a symmetrical order: three per wall. The iconographical identification presents no difficulty, because we are dealing with relatively well-known deities.

On the wall, to the left of one who enters, the order is as follows:

a) The God of Medicine, Sman-bla. Bhaisajyaguru: wearing the religious robe (chos-sgos): on the left he holds the vase for alms, pindapātra, while the right is in the position of giving
(varada-mudrā). It is therefore easy to recognize which one of the eight Buddhas of Medicine it is sought to represent here: the mudrā indicates him as Sgra-dbyans-rgyal-po/ Svara-ghoṣa-rāja.

b) The central figure is reproduced with greater richness of decoration; under the throne, between rings of stylised flowers two lions back to back, a very common motif in all the mural paintings of Guge (plate XLVIII). On the padmāsana sits Amitābha, the colour is red and he has the piṇḍapātra on his hands in the position of meditation; he wears the religious robe, while on both sides two deities are represented standing with diadems and royal dresses, that on the right is white in colour and is Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi, and that on the left is Mahāsthāmaprāpta Lokesvara, two traditional companions of Amitābha, as we have seen before.

The framing is amongst the richest: a complete series of minor deities, now in groups, now isolated, and enclosed within the usual circular motif; above the halo of the Buddha the leaves of a tree point outwards. Around the central deity a multitude of praying and kneeling monks are gathered, while, amongst the rings and the foliage, compartments and pavilions show that the artists wished to depict a certain story.

It is easy to recognise which one this is. The unknown writer wanted to reproduce Sukhāvatī, the Paradise of the West in which Amitābha reigns; in it the greater part of Tibetan faithful, who, by means of ascetic practice and renunciation imposed by yoga, have not reached that rare perfection, which forever eliminates sanisāra, desires to be reborn and to live in an indefinite beatitude, under the grace and light of Amitābha.
The tree which extends its branches above the figure of Amitābha is the tree of bodhi, which, according to the classical description of the Sukhāvatīvyūha (translation cited above, page 50 par. 32) "it is always in bloom, it always has leaves, it always has flowers, it always has fruit, of many hundreds of millions of colours, of different leaves, of different flowers, of different fruits, adorned by many splendid ornaments"...

The multitude of the adoring faithful around the figure of the god is perhaps there to represent the innumerable theory of Bodhisattva and of monks who, according to the same famous text, is gathered from every celestial region around Amitābha to pay homage to him (parr. 27 and 29–30), whilst the trees which appear here and in the painting, are there perhaps to symbolise those "trees with gems" which in the literary sources are described as a characteristic embellishment of Sukhāvatī (par. 16) together with the pavilions in which the multitude of the blessed rejoice (par. 19).

The fresco of Tabo is therefore inspired by the traditional description of Sukhāvatī, as it has been handed down in the canonical works of Mahāyāna and as it has then passed into the popular literature of Tibet, becoming almost the centre of those soteriological beliefs with which the Tibetans are so profoundly imbued.

The floral motifs of wide circular rings which adorn the base lead us back to models elaborated in the Indian schools (for example R.D. Banerji, Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture, plate XVIIc, XVIIIId, XXXIIIa, XLIVa, etc.)

c) The third fresco, always to the left, represents a deity dressed in the usual royal attire, with diadems, necklace and earrings (plate XLIX). The figure is of a deep blue colour and its
hands are crossed over the chest; it holds the bell in the left and the vajra in the right. It is then obvious that the painter wanted to symbolize Rdo-rje-lchas, i.e. Vajradhara, supreme revealer (ādiguru) of the school of the Bka-hrgyud-pa. Although we are dealing with the principal deity of this sect, which in Tibet draws his origin from Marpa, who was a disciple of Nāropā and the master of the supreme poet Milaraspa, this deity occupies also a great position in the mystical experience of the Dge-lugs-pa, i.e., of the yellow sect, under the probable inspiration of which these paintings were carried out.

On the other hand this is natural, because many Tantras of the Dge-lugs-pa also accepted as extremely reliable, believed to be a revelation of Vajradhara, which is in fact the symbolical representation of a plane of experience even higher than that expressed in the sacred pentad of the Pañca-Tathāgata, which we have already dealt with and which will be discussed in greater detail later on. In fact Vajradhara is the symbol of the indiscriminate state of being, prior to the ideal fivefold division, expressed in the pentad, and therefore of the Vajradhātu or “indefectible diamond” sphere, which is the incorruptible and indefectible end of the whole. As such he is called also Mahā-vajradhara/Rdo-rje-lcha-n-chen-po, the supreme god of the mystical maṇḍala described by the Guhyasamāja. That, then, in the very symbols it shows, expresses the quintessence of the Mahāyānic doctrine; in fact it is not by caprice that it is represented with the bell and the vajra.

The bell of Vajrayāna symbolises mystical knowledge (prajñā), and the vajra the means (upāya), i.e., compassion (karuṇā), the two elements, the intuitive and the practical
which represent two fundamental coefficients of illumination, the two essential moments, moreover, of the thought of illumination, from which the spark of the supreme truth will scintillate.

The god sits on a finely worked throne, under which we can see apart from the figures of two lions, also those of two elephants, the traditional vehicle of Akṣobhya; of this god Vajradhara is an ideal coupling, when from the pendad we wish to reach a higher plane, prior to every differentiation, the symbol of which is also called, especially in the mystical directions connected with the Kālacakra, the Ādi-Buddha or the primogenous Buddha.

All around we see a series of ascetic figures in different positions. Who they are it is easy to imagine. The artist has wanted to represent the eightyfour siddhas (1) grub-thob, who in fact continue in their experience the mystical revelation of Vajradhara/Rdo-rje-ḥčaṅ, or better still, they renew it in a continuity of teachings and experiences which have had, according to Indo-Tibetan tradition, these eightyfour interpreters. They are to be counted amongst figures which are most often represented and which belong to that mystic and syncretistic movement which in mediaeval India prepared the most complex methods for spiritual realizations.

On the central wall the figures follow the following order:

a) On a finely decorated throne the figure of a Bodhisattva sitting in European style (plate L): the right foot on a lotus flower and the left leg folded under the right knee, a position which in technical terms is called lalitākṣepa. The hands are in

(1) See Grünwedel, Die Geschichten der Vierundachtzig Zauberner, Bässler Archiv, 1916, and Tāranātha’s Edelsteinmine, Bibliotheca Buddhica XVIII.
the position called the mudrā of preaching (dharmacakra).

From the way in which he is sitting and from the position of his hands, the deity can be recognized as Byams-pa, i.e., Maitreya, the Buddha of the cosmic age immediately succeeding the one in which we live. To the left, on the lotus flower which opens up to the height of the shoulder, the vase of sacrificial water (called chab-ril or even chab-blungs or spyi-blugs). On the left and to the bottom a polychromous series of deities, amongst which the type usually characteristic of Amoghasiddhi in monk’s robe and abhaya-mudrā predominate.

b) The central figure represents instead Śākyamuni (Plate LI), the Buddha of the cosmic age in which we live, represented at the very moment in which, having attained supreme illumination and escaped the snares and temptations of Māra, invokes as a testimonial of the triumph achieved the earth: the hand thus is in the position of bhūmisparśa-mudrā, touching the earth whilst the left is still in the position of meditation. This is a traditional figure of Buddhist iconography which in the schools of the Great Vehicle has a special name, that of vajrāsana “seat of diamond”. Around him his two favourite disciples. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana.

All around are the Sixteen Arhat figures, arranged and carried out with great refinement, i.e. the repositories of the Law, who establish ideal connections between Śākyamuni and the future Buddha Maitreya. On high, the throne is surmounted by a figure of garuḍa between two images of praying nāgas.
c) To the right, and in the same position in which Maitreya is sitting and turning towards the Buddha is the figure of Mañjuśrī, also in lalitākṣepa (plate LII). Both to the right and to the left two lotus flowers rise to the height of the shoulders; that of the right carries a sword and that of the left a book, the two very symbols of Mañjuśrī, which are there to indicate the force and the significance of mystical knowledge. The book is none other than the contents of prajñā, i.e., supreme intuition of insubstantiality (śūnya) of all things and the sword instead is there to signify the active value of this knowledge in as much as, as soon as it is possessed and experimented it destroys and eliminates all the darkenings which derive from ignorance and which are, as we all know, of a two-fold character: intellectual and moral.

§25. Methods and meanings of Tantric evocations. But once we have identified the image as that of Mañjuśrī we have doubtlessly the need for greater precision. In Mahāyāna Buddhism the different deities are, as we have already pointed out, symbols of deeper spiritual experiences which, represented in this or that traditional manner, represent means of śuddhi, i.e., of progressive purification and point of departure and of sustainment (ālambana, as the texts say) of the meditations: to the initiate or to the faithful, this will, in the proportion of his greater or lesser penetration in the intimate sense of the doctrine, open the vision to higher spiritual planes and make him within these levels loose and vanish almost at the culmination of the meditative process which is represented in the samādhi. We are confronted with a varied and multiple nature, fluctuating as is that of internal life moved and guided by
mystical exultations and extended by beatific visions. Once the principle that a doctrine is not true if it is not re-lived in a direct experience has been admitted, it is natural that the said doctrine must refract into an infinite multiplicity, as were the religious personalities who made it into the vehicle of their salvation and the centre of all their spiritual life.

In a school which did not impose a dogma, which did not admit a stiffened church of an unalterable scheme, which to the doctrinal content preferred practical and intimate realization of the precepts and animated everything with the fire of mystical ascent which was prepotentially felt, it is evident that a plurality of directions would be determined, i.e. a plurality of methods which were expressed in a different symbol represented by this or that maṇḍala, by this or that figure. It is clear that many of these deities which, often without laws, at least apparent ones, populate the pantheon of Mahāyāna and above all of Vajrayāna and which are rarely and badly individualized, because they differ from each other only in minor details, but have however different names, are the spontaneous germination of a free process of mystical evocation which is at the basis of Tantric experience. Their origin is to be sought in the spiritual subsoil of unknown masters to whom when in ecstasy the deity appeared in those moments of visual exteriorisation which are always the first stage of the meditative process and which, once they were out of them and had returned to normal conscience, they sought to reproduce and to fix as flashes of divine planes, to which in the absorption of the samādhi or in the enrapture of the ecstasis to which they had been admitted. That this is the way of realization prescribed: to
retract therefore to reconcentrate in oneself, and, having almost chained the mind which wanders restless, giving rise in themselves an indefinable state in which thought seems to lose every consciousness; from the psychic void, which the writers of mystical Buddhist treatises understand as a look into the bottomless abyss of the indiscriminate universal void (stoñ-pa-ñid, in Sanskrit terms śūnya) a brightness surges which is conglomerated in some mystical syllable understood as the bija, or germ from which, becoming more and more precise, the figure of the deity is delineated – the deity which the sādhaka has taken as a point of departure for his meditation and the vehicle of his ascent; because, as it is known, during a second and higher moment, even the deity thus evoked appears to the sādhaka as a momentary and transient projection of the being and no longer as the supreme, final point of arrival. The matter is so common that I will limit myself to quote one of the hundreds of formulœ which in the treatises of mystics describe the method of realization (sgrub-thabs), of the many Maññayānic deities and which are repeated with constant monotony.

Here we have for example in the work already mentioned Ḥdod lha sna-tshogs-kyi sgrub-thabs the evocation of Caṇḍa-vajrapāṇi, of which we have previously recorded and translated the dhyāna, described as follows:

“(fol. 41) after having fulfilled (the rite) of introduction which consists: a) in the act of dedication (skHYabs-hgro) to the three gems; b) in the vow of wishing to attain supreme illumination; c) in the four moments of meditation which are called the “four incommensurables” and after the “purification of the insubstantiality” obtained through meditation by means of the formula: svabhāva-sūnyāh sarve dharmāh i.e. “all things are devoid of their own essence (things have no essence)”, in this insubstantiality thus realized, we see a lotus appearing and the
sun and the moon; above these is the syllable *hūm* (which repre-
sests the quintessence and the symbol) of the intelligent prin-
ciple itself (1) which is transformed (little by little) into a vajra
with nine points which is deep blue and black and counter-
signed by the (same) syllable *hūm* resplendent as fire: from the
syllable two senses arise (2) a luminous emanation from the con-
glomeration of which the god appears in person” (3).

Thus all this mystic ritualistic, really, a psychological process
of evocation and consequently also of revelation of the deity
who responds to the invitation of the sādhaka with pleasure,
because the formula and the schemes and the tradition act as
limit and vehicle, it is evident that the way is also open to the
free and often arbitrary play of individual visions, in which
only the doctrine and the theory could become true and the
reality of the religious experience was concreted. Thus we are
in the presence of a continuous multiplication of this Mahā-

(1) The intelligent principle itself is identical in its intimate
essence with the pramaeval and germinal intelligence from
which everything springs, because where this identity is missing
salvation would be impossible.

(2) i.e. *spharaṇa* and *samharaṇa*: originally the expansion, by
which all space seems covered by said luminosity, and during a
second time, concentration on one point. The whole of the
Sādhanamāla is full of these formulii.

(3) ॐ अः प्रति न्यायं या राजस्तील सर्वेख्यमपि पूर्वहाक्षयं ज्ञातिः ।

इत्यत: अः प्रति सम्बन्धं वा विद्यान्यायं या राजस्तील सर्वेख्यमपि

पूर्वहाक्षयं ज्ञातिः ॥ नमो नमः

अः प्रति न्यायं या राजस्तील सर्वेख्यमपि पूर्वहाक्षयं ज्ञातिः ॥ नमो नमः
yānic pantheon which not only receives and transforms, as symbol of the most secret truth, an anonymous multitude of living deities from immemorable times of the ethnic substratum of India and bordering countries, but also of life and value of such projections of the religious psyche of this or that master, who, being, according to the fundamental postulation of the Tantra, identical with the divine conscience, had the authority of giving value to his particular experiences. And it is thus that, although the original text of the Tantra remains unvaried, the majority of times it is simple formulii which are capable of the most different interpretations, and the literature describes the methods of individual realizations (sādhana, sgrub-thabs), grows beyond measure. This is expressed symbolically in pictorial representations or in diagrams of maṇḍala which are diverse and it therefore gives origin to artistic types which are new and which have as a point of departure the formula (dhyāna) in which a particular vision is fixed in definite terms.

To go back to our Mañjuśrī even this deity is manifested in multiple manners of which the Sādhanamālā contains the formulii of meditation (dhyāna). It is not difficult to identify with the aid of this collection our Mañjuśrī as a form of Vādirāṭ (Sādhanamālā, p. 101ff.).

But no matter how well-known, the collection of sādhanas contained in the Sādhanamālā and consequently the listing reproduced in the book of Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, based on it, these do not exhaust the many iconographic forms of Mañjuśrī, who seems to have enjoyed in the Buddhist schools of late Mahāyāna a great fortune inspiring a complex Tantric cycle which, as it is well-known, is met with in the Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa.
There is for example in Tibet another book, probably stemming from the school of Rñiñi-ma-pa (1), which centres around Mañjuśrī a complete system of emanations and cosmic reabsorption and therefore of salvation and which divides his figure into many aspects, each one of these symbolizing moments of the creative process or of the mystical ascent. The main forms of this list are the following:

1. Mañjukumāra, white; six arms, symbols: wheel, flower of utpala, prajñāpāramitā, bow and arrow; embraces Dharmanadhātvīśvarī, white, who carries a flower of utpala.

2. Prajñāsattva (ye-ses-sems-dpaḥ), deep blue; symbols: vajra, utpala, prajñāpāramitā, bow, arrow; embraces Vajradhātvīśvarī, deep blue, with flower of utpala.

3. Guñasattva (yon-tan-sems-dpaḥ), yellow; symbols: gem, utpala, prajñāpāramitā, bow and arrow; embraces Ratnadhatvīśvarī, pink, with utpala.

4. Vādisimha (smra-bahi-señ-ge), red; symbols: lotus, utpala, prajñāpāramitā; embraces Padmadhātvīśvarī, white, with lotus flower.

5. *Karmasiddhi (Śphrin-las-lhun-grub), green; symbols: sword, utpala, prajñāpāramitā, bow, arrow; embraces Karmadhātvīśvarī, green-yellow, with utpala flower.

Thus we have a pentad which corresponds to the pentad of the Five Supreme Buddhas and which attributed to each one of the aspects of the five Mañjuśrī the same symbolic and mystic meanings which are usually ascribed to the Five Buddhas.

6. Ma-rig-mun-sel, white; symbol: wheel; sakti: Lāsyā, white, with mirror.

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(1) Ḫjam-dpal śin-rjeḥi pad dkod (sic).
7. Ḫjām-dpal-rnon-po, yellow; symbol: sword; sakti: Mālā, yellow, with garland of gems.
8. Yid-bzhin-gyī-re-ba-skongs, red; symbol: vajra with five points; sakti: Kīrtī, red.
9. Sna-ba-dad-ṣel, green-deep blue; symbol: vajra with five points; sakti: Nrtyā, green, dancing.
10. Ḫgro-ba-hdul-ba, white-yellow; symbol: gem; sakti: Dhūpā, white and yellow.
12. Rnam-par-sprul-pa, red and green; symbol: ear of grain; sakti: Dīpā, red-yellow.
14. Lhaḥi-hjam-dpal, white with the lute.
15. Lha-ma-yin-hjam-dpal, deep blue, with arms and breast plate.
16. Dmyal-baḥi-hjam-dpal, with the conch.

The terrific manifestations of Maṇjuśrī follow as Rdo-rje-gtum-mo etc., and above all Vajrabhairava.

But let us go back to the frescos.

The first figure of the wall (plate LIII) to the right takes us back to the cycle which we have already dealt with in the description of the Gtṣug-lag-khaṇ; in fact it represents Vairocana, white in colour, with four heads, the hands in dhyāna-mudrā, i.e., as the revealer of the mystical cycle of Sarvavid/Kun-rig. In the small medallions which encircle the figure of the god, the thirtyseven deities of Sarvavid/Kun-rig are represented, forming the group of followers. It is easy to recognize many of the deities which are reproduced in the statues of the Gtṣug-lag-khaṇ. The painting has been executed with magnificent precision and a surprising richness of detail.
As central figure of the wall, follows the figure of Green Tārā (plate LIV); the right hand is in the position of varadamudrā, whilst the left hand holds the stem of a lotus, the flower of which can be seen to open up at the height of the shoulder. The minor figures all around are there to represent the deities of the cycle of Tārā, reproduced here according to the regular iconographic type which is described in the collections of sādhana, for example in the already-mentioned Ḥdod-lha sna-tshogs sgrub-thabs I fol.98 (compare Sādhanamāla I.176).

“The holy Tārā (Sgrol-ma), green in colour, has only one face and two arms; the right hand is in the position of giving, the left hand in the symbolic mudrā of the three gems and holds the green lotus, the petals of which open up in the direction of the left ear. It is seated in the position called bodhi-paryāśāka, covered in silk and ornaments filled with gems.” (1).

The third and last great figure represents Vijayā/Rnam-rgyal-ma, with her maṇḍala of inferior deities which are correlated and included in the usual medallions arranged all around; but the painting has suffered too much for us to be able to reproduce it.

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(1) སོགས་གཏོང་སྡེ་ལོ་བཤེས་སྒྲིག་མཆེད་གཅིག་ལས། ཐོ་བ་བཏབ་བསྒུན་བཤེས་སྒྲིག་མཆེད་གཅིག་ལས། དཔེ་གཞི་གཉིས་ཆོས་ཤིང་། འཕྲོག་བཞིན་བསྒྲུབ་བཤེས་སྒྲིག་མཆེད་གཅིག་ལས། རོ་བ་བཤེས་སྒྲིག་མཆེད་གཅིག་ལས། བོད་པར་བཤེས་སྒྲིག་མཆེད་གཅིག་ལས། སྤྱི་བཞི་བརྒྱད་པའི་སློབ་དུ་བཤེས་སྒྲིག་མཆེད་གཅིག་ལས། འཇིག་ཐུབ་བཤེས་སྒྲིག་མཆེད་གཅིག་ལས་
On the back wall where the door opens the usual terrific deities are superimposed and the habitual guardians: dharmapāla/chos-skyon, dvara-pāla. Their usual place is generally next to the doors of the temples, feared custodians hold at bay all the evil forces and even intentions (vighna-vināśārtham).

There is Rta-mgrin/Hayagrīva, of deep blue colour, there is Vaiśravaṇa, Saḍbhuja Mahākāla/Mgon-po phyag-drug, Vajrapāṇi. And together, in the middle of this terrific deity, there is also Tārā and Avalokiteśvara; and it can be understood. These terrific deities are usually the irate aspects (krodha) of placid and beatific deities (1).

The more merciful the god is the more terrible his irate aspect will be, these irate aspects are in fact intended to subdue and dispel the evil forces which pester in every circumstance the good and peaceful enforcement of the Law.

It is therefore a mistake to call them demons as many travellers do and have done in the past; in the Indo-Tibetan religious psychology we cannot talk of devils proper but only of daemons (spirits) i.e., of conscious forces which operate independently in the substratum of our conscience or in the physical world arousing passions or events which can harm crea-

(1) "By the artifice of the great internal compassion, the external body is ire, i.e., the manifestation in irate form."
tures; a spreading of disordered activity and often anonymous such as the sa-bdag, the klu, the yi-dags of mythology and folklore of Tibet, which do not obey anything but their own blind impulse.

Also in Tibet, following India in this, the figure of the god of evil conceived as a cosmic absolute force which is the antithesis of good, the negation of god, the darkness and the negation of light is not known. The elaboration of this duality which permeated Christianity and the gnostic systems is characteristic of Iran. Anhro Mainyu and his derivatives, the commanders, Satan etc., are in fact the creators of evil, physical and moral evil. It is a counter-creation which opposes that of god and which chains by necessity things and persons; they are two kingdoms which struggle against each other. The absolute triumph of good will be the end of the struggle for some schools, for others the evil will survive as the kingdom of damnation. In India, there is, it is true the figure of Māra, but of all the negative characteristics which counter-distinguish Anhro Mainyu, Satan, the commanders of evil, etc., Māra preserves only that of the inducer to temptation.

He is not the king of evil, but the king of love and life; the sphere in which he dominates as a sovereign is that of māyā, but even this māyā is not his own doing, has not been created by him as in the case of Anhro and the commanders of the creator, but the covering with which the supreme being, whoever that may be, by his will surrounds himself and hides in his desire to expand in life and his desire to make himself objective. As Māra, in Mahāyāna, unfolds himself often into a quadruple series which usually symbolizes the four passions: Māra, as the Vimalaprabhā says, is the conscience which has us attached to life and which drags us through life, the passion as
opposed to renunciation, his kingdom is inside us (1). As god of life and also as god of death, because one thing of necessity brings about the other and as the king of māyā he cannot appear to us as a tempter; māyā is samsāra and all that which puts us in the way of liberation must of necessity surpass it and deny it.

Māra symbolizes consequently the beginning of life which is always reaffirmed when we are nearer to denying it, the world which wishes to hold us back with its flattery, the fear of renunciation, the voice of flesh, of affection, of terrestrial links, which have trapped, pestered, put obstacles in the lives of all saints. More than being a god, remote heritage of Indo-Iranian mythology, Māra is above all a psychological reality; there is nothing in him to make out of him the creator of the Iranian conception and its derivatives. That is why Māra is not the god of trespassers or of the condemned either. And he cannot be because in Buddhism and in Hinduism there is no damnation, but only expiation more or less lengthy of the evil committed and subsequent purification.

As we have already seen, and it will always become clearer, the temples are the architectural and plastic projection of a mystical process or of a liturgy; the presence of the dharmapāla or the dvārapāla, the custodians of the law and of the gates, leads us back to an essential moment of every act of worship, be it in Hinduism be it in Buddhism. No ritual ceremony can have the desired result, if first the evil forces, if the vighna have not been sent away, since these are the impediments to the formation of that sacred aura in which the compliance with

(1) Tasmān māro nāma sattvānām samsāra-cittam...māra samulam cittam, end of the fifth paṭāla, Tibetan translation folio 22b.
the rite can only take place; the *vighna-vināśa* is consequently an indispensable introduction to the pūjā.

And thus also in the initiation ceremonies, the first moment of the lengthy and complex liturgy is represented by *krodhāveśa*, i.e., the invocation of the person to be initiated of the terrific deity so that the latter, penetrating and taking possession of the neophyte, will send away from him and from around him opposite forces (1). And consequently, in the temple, which is consecrated soil and the place in which the atmosphere of purity and sanctity must always be preserved, near the doors almost unfailingly the images of these dharmapāla/chos-skyon are arranged or depicted, the supreme mercifulness of whom becomes active and pugnacious to reject all that which is from outside.

(1) A description of this most interesting rite is contained in the Sekoddeśa-ṭīkā (p.47) of Nāropā which I have brought back from Nepal and which will soon be published and translated by my disciple Dr. M. Carelli. On the krodhāveśa as an introductory rite of the sādhanā see Sādhanamālā I.3. [The Sekoddeśa-ṭīkā has since been published in the Gaekwad Oriental Series -- Lokesh Chandra].
CHAPTER III

TABO, THE DKYIL-KHAN/MAṇḍALA HALL

§27. The initiation chapel. The dkyil-khan is one of the smallest chapels, one of the remotest and worst preserved. The paintings which cover it are not very ancient, may be they belong to the XVIIth century when, probably by the work of the kings of Ladakh, the whole of the monastery of Tabo was rebuilt or modernized. In any case, the dkyil-khan represents or should have represented amongst all the religious buildings of the monastery a sort of “sanctum sanctorum”. In fact the dkyil-khan is not open to the public of faithful, as is the habit with the other temples, but is the sacred place where the maṇḍalas are found, i.e., the mystical symbols which translate in initiated language of colour or lines or figures a certain level of mystical experience. The dkyil-khan is the hall of initiation, the shrine where the master reveals to his disciple the manner of realizing truth which in the lengthy years of apprenticeship he has been explaining to him; as for the dialectical study and the comprehension purely intellectually the culminating moment arises and the disciple can be admitted to final communion with the experience with he has had up to now which are glimmers and fragmentary visions but not the full possession, in the dkyil-khan a master confers to the neophyte the initiating
baptism (abhiśeka); from this shrine the disciple will leave renovated or born anew because the abhiśeka is the consecration of a definite possession of spiritual truth. Therefore, in the dkyil-khaṇ no image and no altar are to be found. There is no longer a reason for offering to the deity, the gods themselves vanish as mirages. God is in the master; and one of the complex rites of the initiating liturgy consists in meditating on the guru himself as the deity and during a second moment on oneself as transformed into the god or consubstantiated with the god. Therefore the dkyil-khaṇ cannot contain other decorations than the maṇḍala, that is the symbolical expression of that world in which the initiated must now be reborn. The maṇḍalas represented on the walls of this small temple are very important also because they give us an idea of the mystical cycles which prevailed in the ancient monastery of Tabo.

The central figure represents Vairocana according to the type, which we have already studied, of Sarvavid Vairocana; white in colour with four faces, sitting in vajra-paryāṇa and with the hands in the position of dhyāna-mudrā, i.e., in the position of meditation (plate LV). All around, in different medallions, various deities are reproduced. Evidently, the cycle is not the same one of which we have spoken illustrating the statues of the Gtsug-lag-khaṇ. Not even the number of deities matches apart from the six figures, beginning at the top, there does not seem to be any connection with the maṇḍala itself, as they are there to represent different Buddhas in ascetic robes. The painting is too worn out to enable a precise identification. It must be noted, in any case, that it cannot be said with absolute certainty that the said painting wishes to reproduce a
maṇḍala; in fact, the characteristic disposition in the form of a cross, which would be the particular sign of it is missing.

On the left wall, on the contrary, we have a real maṇḍala with its “mura”, its “doors”, its arches (torāṇa) and its “custodians” set up to defend the four doors. The arrangement of the deities symbolized is on a cross formation, that is the deity from which the maṇḍala takes its name, is in the centre, and the others are arranged in the direction of the four cardinal points and of the intermediate points. The identification of the maṇḍala offers serious difficulties, in view of the very poor state of preservation of the fresco. But the central painting represents a deity with the right hand in bhūmisparśa-mudrā; this would enable us to suppose that the deity represented is Akṣobhya (plate LVI).

The maṇḍala to the right, in its present condition, cannot be deciphered because the central figure is almost completely erased (plate LVII).

Many other paintings run along the walls of the dkyil-khari, but only some deserve our attention, not so much from the aesthetic point of view, because the value of all the frescos is rather scant but from the historical point of view.

§28. The paintings of historical character. To the left of the door on the lower part, in a painted panel, three figures of seated monks are reproduced in vajraparyāṅka under padmāsana. The central figure is higher than the other two and has the right shoulder uncovered, differing from the two acolytes both of whom have both shoulders covered by the monastic robe. The three of them have the halo (prabhāmaṇḍala). The two lateral figures are in dharmacakra-mudrā (plate LVIII).
The identification of these three monks has been possible from the inscription which accompanies the figure and which is: Pho raṅ gtsug-pa byaṅ-chu-hod/ bla-ma zhi-ba-hod/ lha-ma yi-šes-hodl.

The spellings are evidently erroneous: we must correct: pho-bran gtsug-pa Byan-chub-hod; bla-ma Zhi-ba-hod; Lha-bla-ma Ye-šes-hod. Of these three figures I have already said a lot in volume II of Indo-Tibetica (1).

That Zhi-ba-hod is given a special position in the fresco of Tabo is explained by the fact that his quality of Lotsava conferred upon him a dignity higher than that of the other two, during the period in which the works of an interpreter of Buddhist scriptures constituted one of the greatest achievements of religious life. And it is in fact because of this that Zhi-ba-hod gave the family of the king of Guge special prestige.

The painting on the right of the central wall is not less important, it represents a series of buildings; these buildings we are told by the inscriptions which accompany the frescos are a sort of panoramic view of the two monasteries indissolubly connected by tradition, i.e. that of Toling and that of Tabo (plate LIX). Many of the personages who animate the scene are also accompanied by inscriptions which preserve for us their names: monks who were perhaps then famous, if they have had the honour of being remembered on this painting, but completely unknown today. Further specification is impossible. The inscriptions which can be read are the following:

Tho-gliṅ gser-khan-gi dkod-pa (bkod-pa) “plan of the Gser-khaṅ of Toling”

(1) Pho-bran is the title given to Byaṅ-chub-ḥod even in noted literary sources.
ta-bo rgyan gtsug-lag-khaṅ-gi dkod-pa “ground plan of the temple, ornament of Tabo”.

byan-sems nam-kha (mkha’h)-ḥod “The Bodhisattva Nam-mkhaḥ-ḥod” (*Ākāśaprabha).

gnas-stan(brtan)-chen-po chos-hphags “The great arhat Chos-hphags”.

rgyal-po bsod-sde “The king Bsod-sde” (1).

jo-bo lham-hdzes maybe for: jo-bo (or jo-bohi) lham rjes “the imprint of the shoes of Atiśa”. The imprint (zhabs-rjes) of the saints are considered as a place of worship and of pilgrimage throughout Tibet.

blon-po rin-rgyan “The minister Rin-rgyan”.

blon-po graṅ-dkar spos-sna-khaṅ “The minister Spos-sna-khaṅ of Graṅ-dkar”.

As we can see, the inscription leaves a lot to be desired.

(1) This king Bsod-sde must be Bsod-nams-lde king of Purang to whom was transferred the kingdom of Guge when the Malla dynasty became extinct and who it appears assumed the name of Punya-smal. See Francke, Chronicles of Ladakh p.169 and 276.
CHAPTER IV

TABO. THE MINOR CHAPELS.

§29. Minor temples. The Byams-pa lha-khan does not contain anything special. It has evidently been remade during a recent epoch, and the paintings which cover the walls are also recent. On the central wall there remains a great image in stucco of Byams-pa i.e. of Maitreya seated in European fashion with the hands in dharmacakra-mudrā (plate LX). One of the mural paintings represents a lama Vajra-šes-rab shown in the same attitude as in the votive stūpa/tsha-tsha which I have already published in Indo-Tibetica I.104-105.

That the temple is however ancient is shown by a base of a column in stone which appears on the floor. On the four faces (of the column, presumably) there are lions. Their rough and primitive style can well be attributed to the first period of the art of Guge (plate LXI). Said art shows a singular analogy with the sculptures of the stūpa/mchod-rten of Lhalung. Probably the ancient temple was destroyed by fire.

In the little temple of Hbrom-ston, nothing remains of the original chapel beyond the door of deodar, already pointed out by Francke; this door is one of the few monuments, in sculpted wood, of the XIIth century, which is still preserved (plate LXII). The fine work leads us to believe that this too was the work of Indian artists and constitutes a reconfirmation of all
that the biography of Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po has clearly indicated to us. As I said with reference to the two bas reliefs in sculpted wood of the Gtsug-lag-khañ, we do not know if these artists were those whom the Lotsava himself brought back with him from his Indian pilgrimages from Kashmir or if on the other hand they came during a later period with the other squads of artists invited by the king of Guge or escaping from India because of the spread of the Muslim thunderstorm or the ill-government of the kings of Kashmir. In any case the door of this small temple shows a particular analogy to that of Alchi on the borders almost of Kashmir and makes us think of this region as the place of origin of that refined art, even if often overloaded, of which some other remains can still be admired at Toling.

The temple does not contain any other noteworthy thing, because even the paintings have been remade and do not offer, not even from the iconographic point of view, anything new or interesting. I have only noticed the images of Amitābha, Vairocana and Šyāmā Tārā.

The Ḫbrom-ston lha-khañ-chen-po is the largest one of all after the Gtsug-lag-khañ, but it is completely empty and desecrated: the mural paintings go back probably to the XVIIth century and reproduce the eight deities of medicine (Bhai-ṣajyaguru/Sman-bla). I am not going to make a complete description now because we shall have the possibility of returning, in the near future, to this cycle of deities represented with great frequency in the monasteries of Western Tibet and in paintings which are far more ancient than these and far more interesting from the artistic point of view. Amongst others there are many images of Tson-kha-pa and of Amitābha.

The small Lha-khañ dkar-byuṅ is insignificant.
CHAPTER V

LHALUNG.

§30. *New cycle of Vairocana represented at Lhalung.* The temple of Lhalung was studied by Shuttleworth. Throughout Spiti, it is attributed by tradition to the times of Rin-chen-bzan-po. Although the biography does not mention it, there is no reason to reject local tradition; moreover, the small Gompa is not only one of the most ancient ones, but one of the best preserved.

I am not going to stop over the general description of the temple, because I would then have to repeat a lot of what Shuttleworth has already said; I will instead make a thorough study of the images because the identification proposed by my predecessor is to a very large extent erroneous. There is no doubt that the greater responsibility of the inexactitudes which are found throughout his papers are the fault of his informers: unfortunately, the monks of Western Tibet are today very different with reference to doctrine and mystical impetus from their ancient masters; very often the news which they give are of no great value; when they are asked about the significance of a painting or of a mandala, they do not hesitate, to hide their ignorance, to supply information which is in fact erroneous and which renders it far more difficult for a conscientious investigator to carry out his task without being misled into
totally erroneous conceptions by these monks who are not properly informed.

Let us begin with wall to the left of one who enters (to the north according to Shuttleworth). It is occupied by a group composed by one central deity of natural proportions with three heads and eight arms, around sixteen other minor figures (plates LXIII-LXV). All the images are, as at Tabo, made of stucco.

Shuttleworth, basing his theory on information supplied to him, says that the central deity represents Rnam-rgyal-ma, i.e., Vijaya and the other sixteen figures other forms of Tārā. Such identification is to be excluded for extremely obvious reasons; the image does not represent a feminine deity, but a masculine one, as plate LXIV clearly shows; and in the same manner not. all the followers are feminine figures. We must therefore not allow the modern tradition to divert us but we must seek to identify the deity with the aid of more precise iconographic criteria.

Observing the group of seventeen statues we can easily see that of the sixteen minor ones, arranged eight on each side around the gtso-bo, as the Tibetans call the central god of a maṇḍala, the twelve external ones represent feminine deities and the four internal ones two per side masculine deities. The mudrā enables us to make a certain identification of the latter: to the right of the central god, on high, in varada-mudrā, Ratanasambhava; below in bhūmisparśa-mudrā, Akṣobhya; to the left, on high in dhyāna-mudrā. Amitābha; below in abhaya-mudrā, Amoghasiddhi, four Tathāgata, i.e., of the supreme group of five. Vairocana is missing: consequently, it would seem evident that the central deity cannot be anybody but a form of Vairocana or one of his emanations, because,
according to the school of the Tattva-saṅgraha, which shows its analogies with the Guhyasamāja, Vairocana appears under a double aspect; Mahāvairocana who is the personification of the Vajradhātu and Vairocana simply: Vajrasattva or even the Buddha Avalokiteśvara (1) are also considered parallel forms. This is also verified by the figure of Sarvavid which is on high above the statue thus identified.

The twelve feminine deities which remain do not show anything of special difficulty; evidently, they are four  śakti: Locana, Māmakī, Paṇḍaravāsinī, and Tārā and the eight pūjā-devi/mchod-pahi-lha-mo adoring deities of which we have already spoken at great length when dealing with the statues of Tabo.

§31. The central wall. On the central wall beyond the figure of Śākyamuni, described by Shuttleworth, we note immediately to left and right other groups of five deities.

Let us start with those on the left: the image on high is of greater dimensions; we must therefore consider it as the centre of the whole plastic maṇḍala. It represents the figure of a bodhisattva with the right hand on the left knee and the right leg forward, in an attitude which is quite rigid and which contrasts with the refinement and delicacy with which the other parts of the image have been carried out, it may give us the impression that the statue has been retouched. This manner of sitting is not the lalitāsana, it is not lalitākṣepa, nor the ardha-paryāṇa. The left hand is on the throne and it holds a

(1) Thus also in the commentary of Paramādi-tantra by Ānandagarbha (yi 188) Avalokiteśvara (Buddha) is in the centre of the maṇḍala, compare ri 343 and 350; in ri 36 the central deity instead is Vajrasattva.
while lotus flower which opens up at the height of the shoulder. It is almost certain that the figure represents Mañjuśrī Vāgīśvara, who according to the Śādhanamālā must be represented: “the colour of saffron, with a lotus flower on his left and the right hand in a playful attitude” (plate LXVI). The figure reminds us immediately of the reproduction of Benoytosh Bhattacharyya on plate XIVd.

Of the four statues which compose his parivāra, or followers, the second to the right probably represents Mañjuśrī Arapacana: in the right hand he should hold the sword and in the left hand he should carry the book of prajñā; the other cannot be identified.

Here, like at Tabo, the symbols have all disappeared and it is not improbable that the statues have been retouched, as they have been painted during an epoch which is not so remote, traces of these retouches are to be found not only in the image of Mañjuśrī, as I have already said, but also in the figure to the left, at the bottom, in plate LXIII in which the hand is far more rigid and imperfect than in all the other statues.

The identification of the figures to the right of Śākyamuni as a manifestation of Mañjuśrī would enable us to suppose that to the left Maitreya was represented; because the usual acolytes of Śākyamuni, when they are not his two disciples Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, are in fact Maitreya and Mañjuśrī (plate LXVII). However in spite of the fact that the symbols have been lost, there is no doubt that the higher figure represents Vajrasattva who has his left hand leaning on the thigh and holding the bell and in the right hand holds the vajra.

The feminine deity of the parivāra is Tārā, on the left hand she probably carried a lotus stem.
§32. *The Prajñāpāramitā.* The right hand side wall is of great interest too. According to Shuttleworth, the central figure with four arms represents Avalokiteśvara (plate LXVIII) and the eight figures around would be those of the eight Buddhas who hypothetically he proposes to identify with the eight Buddhas of medicine. There are reasons of fact to reject these identifications. As we can well see from the plates and even from the illustrations reproduced in the report by Shuttleworth, the central figure represents strictly a feminine deity and the other statues which surround it are alternatively one of a Buddha in monastic clothing and the other of a feminine deity.

The central deity has two hands in the attitude of predication (dhyāna-mudrā), the other two should carry symbols which have disappeared. Beyond any shadow of a doubt, the statue represents a variety of Prajñāparamitā, considered as an emanation of Amitābha who is represented in the higher niche of the celestial pavilion (vimāna) which holds the goddess.

The Sādhanamālā contains various descriptions of the Prajñāpāramitā, which can be represented in different manners: either with two arms (I. 310, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 319, 321 and 324) or with four (p.327); we know other varieties with six arms. Generally the characteristic attitude of two main hands is in dharmaçakra or vyākhyāna-mudrā; it is clear that the figure of Lhalung represents that variety of the Prajñāpāramitā known in the aforementioned collection as kanakavāraṇa-prajñāpāramitā. "Therefore, meditate on the Prajñāpāramitā which the ascetical lock of hair and the diadem, four arms, one face, the two (main) hands in dharma[cakra]-mudrā, adorned by
various ornaments with gems, resplendent with golden colour; in the left hand a blue lotus together with the book of Prajñāpāramitā, and with the other right hand in the attitude of protection; seated above a red lotus with a lunar seat, in vajraparyanka”.

As it can be seen the image of Lhalung corresponds with the aforementioned sādhana perfectly: with one exception perhaps, one detail: the right hand is in abhayamudrā, but the slightly folded finger would lead us to suppose that also in this hand it held a symbol which today is no longer there.

The masculine deities are: to the right, beginning from above, Ratnasambhava and Akṣobhya, to the left Amitābha and Śākyamuni (plates LXIX-LXX). But this last statue seems to have been placed there during a recent epoch; it is not improbable that his original mudrā was a different one and that instead it represented Amogasiddhi in the attitude of protection.

The feminine deities are the usual śakti.

In a closed chapel next to the Lha-khan we can see four great statues of stucco, one with the back to the other and seated in dhyāna-mudrā, on a throne supported at the angles by four lions: the workmanship is very primitive and by far inferior to that of the images of Tabo. It is clear that the deity represented is always Vairocana of the same type as we have seen at Tabo, even if local tradition calls this statue “the mchod-rten which holds the relics of Hod-srannis-chen-po/ Mahākāśyapa” (plate LXXI).
CHAPTER VI

THE TEMPLE OF CHANG (High Kunavar)

§33. The cycle of Nāraka or of the infernal deities. In Chang there are more things of archaeological interest than Francke has possibly seen. To begin with, the temples are two and not only one. The first is the one he hinted at but he could not see. It is on the top of a mountain spur to the north-west of the village and is the only thing remaining from the ancient castle. Today it is a confused mass of ruins, but in more ancient times it should have had huge dimensions and should have blocked the entire valley. The lha-khañ is preceded by a small porch and contains a modern image of Padmasambhava, a few cult objects and a copy of the yum or Śatasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā. No trace of paintings. Although it is built on the plan of a more ancient temple, the modest shrine remaining today does not present anything of interest.

Very different is the case of the small temple in the middle of the village; already from without it has all the appearance of a venerable monument. It leans against a big boulder and is all painted in red. The temple has lost its name and is known simply as the “lha-khañ”. But elderly people in the village call it Lha-mohi lha-khañ “the temple of the Goddess”, that is, of
Dpal-ldan Lha-mo/Śrīmatī-devī. The walls are literally covered with frescoes, but mostly so blackened by time that it is difficult to recognise what they represent.

On the central wall is seen a big figure of Śākyamuni in the usual attitude of the bhūmisparśa-mudrā and an effigy of Amitābha; all around many deities with animal heads. What these demonic figures intend to represent is not difficult to discover; we are faced by a well-determined religious cycle, namely that of the Na-rag. The Na-rag, that is Nārakas or infernal deities, have to be propitiated if one wants to find peace both in this life and in the beyond, and the propitiation occurs according to a liturgy exposed in a large literature of its own, especially in that of the Rñini-ma-pa and of the Ḫbrug-pa, sub-school of the Bkaḥ-rgyud-pa, who, as we have seen, are rather spread in high Kunavar.

This religious cycle, about which I think that we know very little as yet, reveals to scholars its great importance even in its strange and half-animal configurations, because it maintained, in a Buddhist garb, some curious survivals of beliefs and myths lost in the ethnical Indo-Tibetan underground. It is on this account that it is convenient to stop a little on this demoniac world as it is described in the literature accessible today.

The principal sources about these Nāraka (or as they are said in the more common popular form Narag) and the way to propitiate and beseech them are:

1) Na-rag doṅ-sprugs Ḫbyor tshai-s-kyi-rgyal-po. I have three manuscript copies of them; one that I call A and has served me as a basis for the text published in the appendix, has been
found in Li; the other one D, more ancient and generally more correct in spelling, is incomplete and was bought in Nako; the third one, B, has only a few folios and was found in a stūpa/mchod-rten, in the ruins of Shang in the province of Guge. Is written on folios colored in indigo in alternate lines in gold and silver. Evidently it is a copy of a more ancient text as it can be assumed by the fact that some words maintain archaic spellings; for instance: myed for med, ḡbyord for ḡbyor etc.

2) Na-rag doṅ-sprugs is a section of the preceding work; the manuscript has been found at Mani in Spiti on the right bank of the river of the same name to the south of Drangkhar. It is indicated by the letter C.

3) Bṣags ḡbum (D) a liturgy mostly for exorcisms and soteriology which may be considered as a larger redaction of the previous work which is contained in its entirety. I have one copy of it found in Sarang, rather ancient, but based on an even more ancient original; it is full of orthographic mistakes.

However, the literature on this cycle is not limited to these works only; various other treatises about the Nāraka doṅ-sprugs are preserved in the huge collection of the works of Rṇīn-ma-pa elaborated again by the Karmapö and edited in the monastery of Tsur-pu. It is entitled Rin-chen gter-mdzod. They often contain redactions parallel to these manuscript texts quoted above and, since they generally are edited with great care, are used to correct the readings of the manuscripts, which often are full of mistakes.

I quote the Zhi khro na-ra-ka doṅ-sprugs-gi skoṅ bṣags thugs-rjeḥi zla-ḥod (Rin-chen-gter-mdzod, vol.ṇa) = E.
According to these sources the fortyeight deities of the cycle of Nāraka, or popularly Narag, are:

1. The eight terrific goddesses (Khro-mo chen-mo)

1. Homage to Gauri-ma, the terrific goddess (1), blue in colour, clenching a corpse like a stick.

2. Homage to Cauri-ma, the terrific goddess, yellow in colour, holding the bow and the arrow (2).

3. Homage to Pramohā (3), the terrific goddess, red, holding (a standard distinguished by) a sea-monster (makara).

(1) In Tibetan the name is mdzod-ldan; the equivalence of bam = corpse is attested from the parallel texts zhiṅ-gi dbyug to.

(2) But according to F as stick (there is) a corpse and a skull: zhiṅ dbyug bhanḍa ḍzin. The name of the goddess in Tibetan is chom-rkun.

(3) Tibetan: rab-rmoṅs.
4. Homage to Vaitāli (1), the terrific goddess, dark-blue, holding the vajra.

5. Homage to Pukkasī, the terrific goddess, red-yellow, who tears away the bowels of a corpse (2).

6. Homage to Ghasmart (3), the terrific goddess, green, who drinks blood in a skull.

7. Homage to Śmaśānī (4), the terrific goddess, black, who eats the heart of a corpse (zhiṅ-chuṅ)

8. Homage to Caṇḍālī (5), the terrific goddess, pale-yellow, who severs the head from the body of a corpse.

2. The eight Phra-men-ma (6).

9. Homage to Simha[mukhī] the she-lion, the goddess having a lion’s head, yellow, holding a corpse in her mouth and with crossed hands (7).

10. Homage to Vyāghra[mukhī] the tigress, the goddess with a tiger’s head, red, with the aspect of one who starts a sprint, and with crossed hands (8).

(1) In Tibetan: ro-lanś; according to F she carries a vajra and a corpse (zhiṅ-chuṅ).

(2) The context and the parallel passage of the Bar-do thos-grol make it doubtless that the word byīś is used here in the sense of corpse. In F the name is sbos-mo.

(3) F, Tibetan: dred-mo.

(4) F, Tibetan: dur-khrod-ma.

(5) F, Tibetan: gtum-mo.

(6) The eight Phra-men-ma belong to the maṇḍala of Bcom-lidan-hdas Drag-po-chen-po/Mahācānda according to the system of the Paramādi-tantra. See Commentary by Ānandagarbha, Bstan-hgyur ri 156.

(7) F: ro za lag gnīs bsnol; K: phyag gnīs bsnol zhiṅ mi ro za.

(8) K: phyag gnīs bsnol-zhiṅ ḫbur tshugs blta; F: stag-gdoṅ dmar-mo lag gnīs mṭhor-du bsnol “with tiger’s head, red, with both hands joined below”
11. Homage to Śṛgāla[mukhi] the she-jackal, the goddess with the head of a jackal, black, licking a corpse.

12. Homage to Śva[mukhi], the goddess with the head of a wolf, blue in colour, in the act of tearing.

13. Homage to Grdhra[mukhi], the she-vulture, the goddess with the head of a vulture, red, in the act of pulling the bowels (of a corpse).

14. Homage to Kaṅka[mukhi], the goddess with a heron’s head, red, takes on her shoulder a corpse (zhiṅ, K: zhiṅ-chen) and has a long head.

15. Homage to Kāka[mukhi], the goddess with a crow’s head, black; in her mouth holds the head (ban for bhaṅḍa ?) of a corpse and (in her hand) a sword.

16. Homage to Ulūka[mukhi], the she-owl, the goddess having an owl’s head, carries an iron hook and is blue (1).

3. The Guardians of the four doors.

17. Homage to the goddess of hook, (the goddess) with a horse’s head, guardian of the door, blue in colour (2).

18. Homage to the goddess of noose, (the goddess) with a boar’s head, guardian of the door, black in colour.

19. Homage to the goddess with an iron chain, (the goddess) with a lion’s head, guardian of the door, red in colour.

20. Homage to the goddess of bell, (the goddess) with a wolf’s head, guardian of the door, green in colour.

(1) But F: mthiṅ-nag rje dbyug-pa phyar “dark-blue, shaking a vajra and a stick”.

(2) The indication of colour often differs according to sources.
4. The twentyeight Yogini (1)

21. Homage to the Yogini of the trident, the Yogini with the head of a yak, of red-yellow colour.
22. Homage to the Yogini with the vajra of five points, the Yogini with a serpent's head, of light red colour.
23. Homage to the Yogini who treads and holds the stick, the Yogini with leopard's head, of yellow-black colour.
24. Homage to the Yogini with a skull red (of blood), the Yogini with the head of a weasel, of white-red colour.
25. Homage to the Yogini with the wheel, the Yogini with the head of a bat, of yellow colour.
26. Homage to the Yogini who grasps a corpse as a stick, the Yogini with the head of a reddish bear, of pale-red colour.
27. Homage to the Yogini with a noose made of bowels, the Yogini with the head of a tawny bear, red in colour.
28. Homage to the Yogini with the vase, the Yogini with the head of makara, of blue colour.
29. Homage to the Yogini who carries the skull (2), the Yogini with the head of a scorpion, of pale-blue colour.
30. Homage to the Yogini who holds a human head recently cut, the Yogini with the head of a falcon, of black colour.
31. Homage to the Yogini holding a noose made of entrails, the Yogini with the head of a jackal, of red-black colour.

(1) The iconography of the first eight Yoginis in F is equal to that of the Bar-do quoted below.
(2) But E:bam-nil =corpse.
32. Homage to the Yoginī holding a corpse (1), the Yoginī with the head of a tiger, of black colour.
33. Homage to the Yoginī holding the trunk of a corpse, the Yoginī with the head of a vulture, of red colour.
34. Homage to the Yoginī holding a club marked with the vajra, the Yoginī with horse's head, of red-black colour.
35. Homage to the Yoginī holding a skull, the Yoginī with the head of garuḍa, of white-red colour (2).
36. Homage to the Yoginī holding a corpse (3), the Yoginī with the head of a dog, of red-yellow colour.
37. Homage to the Yoginī of the lotus, the Yoginī with the head of a hoopoe, of white-red colour.
38. Homage to the Yoginī of the standard (4), the Yoginī with the head of a deer, of pale-red colour.
39. Homage to the Yoginī of the little drum (5), the Yoginī with a she-wolf's head, of green-black colour.
40. Homage to the Yoginī of the lamp, the Yoginī with the head of an ibix, of red-yellow colour.
41. Homage to the Yoginī of the tusks, the Yoginī with a boar's head, of green-yellow colour.
42. Homage to the Yoginī holding a skull full of blood, the Yoginī with the head of a magpie, of green-blue colour.
43. Homage to the Yoginī holding a corpse, the Yoginī with the bull's head, of green-red colour.

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(1) Bam-chen. But F: bam snię ḥbyin “who tears the heart of a corpse”.
(2) According to F, the symbols of no. 33 disc; of nos. 34 and 35 vajra.
(3) byis bam another of the many expressions used by our texts to indicate the corpse: bam-chen, zhiṅ-chen, zhiṅ-chuṅ, bam-ril, zhiṅ, byis, bam-ro, ro-lanś.
(4) Instead of ba-dan K has bam-ro corpse.
(5) But F: gsal śiṅ, pole on which criminals are hanged.
44. Homage to the Yogini drinking ambrosia (1), the Yogini with a serpent’s head, of green-black colour.
45. Homage to the Yogini of the hook, the Yogini with the head of a cuckoo, of black colour.
46. Homage to the Yogini of the noose, the Yogini with the head of a goat, of blue colour.
47. Homage to the Yogini of the iron chain, the Yogini with the head of a lion, of red colour.
48. Homage to the Yogini of the bell, the Yogini with the head of a magpie, of green-black colour.

All these are actual litanies, connected with funeral rites with the intent of pacifying the infernal and terrific deities which at the moment of death may catch the conscient principle of the deceased and draw him in to the Buddhist hells. It is, therefore, logical to suppose that the cycle of these deities originally was connected with funeral ritual which has to provide, at the moment of death, protection from the danger of immediate infernal incarnation for one who dies. And in fact, we find again this line of divinities in the literary cycle of the Bar-do thos-grol and precisely in the Chos-âid bar-doñi gsol-ðdebs thos-grol chen-mo which is a chapter of a very famous work in Tibet, a gter-ma whose revelation is attributed to Padmasambhava and which can be said to dominate without rivals the soteriological Tibetan beliefs. I mean to say the Zab-chos zhi-khro dgoñs ran-grol which circulates through the Land of Snows in various redactions, some of which I could study in the monastery of Hemis. They are very voluminous.

(1) F: who holds a noose made of serpents.
In a rather ancient xylograph in my possession that, unfortunately has indication neither of the year nor of the place of publication, the list of the deities interesting us here is contained in section kha folio 39b (1). It presents itself as more elaborate and large, therefore from the iconographic point of view it is even more important than the litanies studied above.

To the east of his brain (that is of the brain of the dying person) appear (2):

1. Keurima (Gaurî), white; in her right hand she holds a corpse as a stick and in the left keeps a skull full of blood. Do not fear her.

2. To the south will appear Curima (Caurî), yellow; she puts the arrow on the bow.

3. To the west Pramohâ, red; grasps a standard marked by an effigy of makara.

4. To the north Vetâlî, black; she holds the vajra and a skull full of blood.

5. To the south-east Puskasî (Pukkasî), red-yellow; in her right hand holds some intestines and with the left brings them to the mouth to eat them.

6. To the south-west Ghasmarî, green-black; in her left hand holds a skull full of blood that she shakes with the vajra grasped in the right hand and avidly takes it to the mouth.

(1) A special redaction of this title has been translated in English by Lama Dawa-Samdup and by Evans-Wentz, in The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Oxford, 1927. I translate it here again in order to allow the comparison between the two redactions. For another more succinct redaction compare Zab-chos zhi-khrod-gonis-pa raṅ-grol-gyi las byaṅ-chub ḥtshor-ba raṅ-grol-gyi sñīṅ-po (Rin-chen gter-mdzod, vol. ga).

(2) I leave the names in the spellings of the text; the correct reading is contained in the list given above.
7. To the north-west Caṇḍālī, pale-yellow; cuts off the head from the body (of a corpse) with the right hand, keeps the heart and with the left one helps herself to bring the corpse to the mouth for eating.

8. To the north-east Smasali, black-red; after having severed the head from a corpse, she eats it.

9. To the east Simhamukhī (1), having the head of a lion, brown-black; with the hands interlocked at the breast catches a corpse with her mouth, shaking its mane.

10. To the south Vyakrimukhī, having the head of a tiger; with her two hands interlocked below, looks with angry eyes and gnashes her teeth.

11. To the west Śrīlāmukhī, having the head of a fox, black; in her right hand keeps a razor and in her left some entrails with blood dripping out of them.

12. To the north Sonamukhī, blue-black, having the head of a she-wolf; with both hands tears away a corpse and looks with an evil eye.

13. To the south-east Kritamukhī, white-yellow, having the head of a vulture; takes on her shoulder the skin of a corpse, and in her hand keeps a skeleton.

14. To the south-west, Kaṅkamukhī, red-black, with the head of a heron; brings on her shoulder the skin of a corpse.

15. To the north-west, Kākamukhī, black, having the head of a crow; in her left hand holds a cranium and in her right a sword. She eats the heart of a corpse.

16. To the north-east Hulumukhī, blue, with the head of an owl; in her right hand the vajra, and in her left a sword and she eats.

(1) Tibetan has the masculine form mukha transcribed and not translated.
17. On the right of his own brain, appears (the goddess) with the hook, (the goddess) with a horse's head (1); in the right hand takes the hook and in the left a skull full of blood.

18. On the south the goddess of the noose, with a boar's head, of yellow colour.

19. To the west the goddess of the chain, the goddess with the head of lion, of red colour.

20. To the north the goddess of the bell, (the goddess) with the head of a serpent, green in colour.

To the east.

21. Rākṣasī (Sriṅ-mo) with the head of a yak, brown-black; in the hand holds a vajra and a skull.

22. Brahmanī (Tshaṅs-pa), red-yellow, with the head of a serpent; the hand has a lotus [and a skull K).

23. Mahādevī (Lha-chen) (2), green-black, with the head of a leopard; in her hand holds a trident [and a skull K].

24. Vaiṣṇavī (Gtogs or Gtogs-ḥdod or Khyab-hjug), blue, with the head of a weasel; in her hand holds a wheel.

25. Kaumarī (Gzhon-nu), red, with the head of a brown bear; in the hand keeps a short spear.

26. Indrāṇī (Brgya-byin), red, with the head of a bear; in her hand holds a noose of entrails.

To the south.

27. Vajrī (Rdo-rje), yellow, with a bat's head (pha-waṅ); in her hand has a razor.

(1) In the text: "of a tiger"; the confusion between rta-gdon and stag-gdon is very easy.

(2) Or also ḫkhrs-mo, in the corresponding mantra Raudrī.
28. The “Pacific One” (Śivā, Zhi-ba), red, with the head of a makara/sea-monster; in her hand holds a vase.

29. Amṛtā (Bdud-rtsi), with the head of a scorpion; in her hand holds a lotus.

30. “She-moon” (Saumyā, Zla-ba), red, with the head of a falcon; in her hand holds a vajra.

31. The “Club” (Daṇḍā, Be-con), green-black, with the head of a fox; in her hand holds a club.

32. The “Ogress” (Rākṣasī, Sṛiṅ-mo), yellow-black, with the head of a tiger; in her hand holds a skull (full of) blood.

To the West

33. The “Devouress” (Bhakṣasī, Za-ba), green-black, with the head of a vulture; holds in her hand a club.

34. “The Joyful One” (Rāti, Dgah-ba), red, with a horse’s head; holds the trunk of a corpse.

35. The “Strong One” (Stobs-chen), white, with the head of garuḍā; holds in her hand a club.

36. The “Ogress” (Sṛiṅ), with the head of a bitch, yellow, she who cuts; holds in her hand a vajra and a razor, with which she is in the act of cutting.

37. “She with Lust” (Ḥdod-pa), red, with the head of a hoopoe, in her hand the bow on which she strings an arrow.

38. The “Guardian of Riches” (Nor-sruñ), green, with the head of a deer; in her hand holds a vase.

(1) According to the mantras quoted by K the original names would be: Vajrī, Śivā, Amṛtā, Saumyā, Daṇḍā, Rākṣasī: according to the same text in their left hand all of them hold a skull.

(2) Names according to K: Bhakṣasī, Rāti, Ekacāri, Manoharā, Siddhi.
To the north

39. The “Goddess of the Wind” (Vāyavī, Rluṅ-lha), blue, with the head of a she-wolf; she waves a standard in her hand.
40. Mahāmārī (Mi-mo), white, with the head of ibix, in her hand holds a pike.
41. The She-Boar (Vārāhī, Phag-mo), black, with the head of a boar; she holds a noose made of tusks.
42. Vajrī, with the head of a magpie; holds a corpse.
43. The She-Elephant (Glaṅ-chen) (1), green-black, with the head of an elephant; in her hand holds a corpse and drinks out of a skull full of blood.
44. Vārunī, the Goddess of Water, blue, with the head of a serpent; in her hand holds a noose made of serpents (2).
45. To the east, Vajrī, white, with the head of a cuckoo; in her hand holds the hook.
46. To the south, Vajrī, yellow, with the head of a goat; in her hand holds a noose.
47. To the west, Vajrī, red, with the head of a lion; holds a chain in her hand.
48. To the north, Vajrī, green, with the head of a serpent; in her hand holds a bell.

§34. The cycle of Nāraka on thāṅkas. Unfortunately the paintings of the small temple of Chang are, as I told, so blackened, cancelled and disfigured that any attempt at photographic reproduction is impossible. But in my travel I had the chance

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(1) But in the text quoted in the preceding footnote and K: sna-chen.
(2) Names according to K: Vāyavī, Mahāmārī, Vārāhī, Cāmuṇḍī (rgan-ḥred), Vārunī, Sutanvī (Sna-chen).
to find two pictures that are connected with the same cycle of Nārakas; one, the more deteriorated, comes indeed from Poo in high Kunavar, and the other instead from Sumur, a small village in Western Tibet to the north of the Hindustan-Tibet trade route. Both the regions are under the influence of the Ḥbrug-pa sect, in which, as said earlier, this cycle of the Nārakas seems to enjoy a special diffusion. It shall not be useless to reproduce the second half of these thankas since it can serve to give us an idea of the iconographic representation of this cycle, rather rare in Tibetan art, yet well spread among the crowds, because intimately connected with the moment of death and with the soteriological beliefs (frontispiece).

As it may be seen from this figure, the fortyeight goddesses of the cycle of Nārakas are not alone; they have a secondary position and represent the terrific entourage surrounding a monstrous deity in the centre of the picture. From it, it seems that other six emanations, equally fearsome, move in different directions. The very eight stūpas/mchod-rten and the eight trees that are placed at random in the free space among the figures are not arbitrary ornamental motifs, but have a symbolic meaning: they represent the eight famous cemeteries that are in fact the kingdoms of the Nārakas and the place where the ascetics take refuge in order to obtain, with their long meditations and prolonged exercises, their wondrous powers. On these cemeteries, their symbols and their pictorial representation, I shall speak more at length in the second volume of this series dedicated to the illustrations of the temples of the Western Tibet; therefore, I will not deal with them here. It is only necessary to identify the figures of the deities, all in the attitude yab yum, that is to say embracing their śaktis, painted
with a certain crudity on our thanka, which, though having a
great iconographic value, cannot certainly be considered as one
of the most fine and delicate examples of Tibetan painting.

These divinities are as many other forms of Heruka, imagined as the centre of the maṇḍala of the Nārakas, also
described with abundance in works dedicated to this cycle.

The central divinity is Che-mchog Heruka/Mahāśrīheruka (2), who must have three faces, six hands, four feet, and is
embraced by his śakti Krodheśvarī. Out of the three faces the
central one is black, the right one white, the left red. Symbols
in his hands, to the right: the vajra, the khaṭvāṅga, a small
drum; to the left: bell, kapāla full of blood, noose made of
intestines.

In the upper portion, above this central deity, (there is) Bud-
dhaheruka; three faces, six hands, four feet, embracing his
śakti Buddhakrodheśvarī; out of the three faces the central one
is black, the right one white, the left red. Symbols in his hands;
to the right: disc, sword, to the left: a plough (thoṅ-gśol) and a
hatchet. Below, to the right of the central deity, Vajraheruka
embracing his śakti Vajrakrodheśvarī; three faces, six arms,
four feet. Colour of the faces: the central blue, the other two
white and red. Symbols in his hands; to the right, vajra hatchet;

(1) For the identification of the images, besides the works
already quoted, Zhi-khro dgoṅs-pa raṅ-grol-gyi cho-ga sdig sgrīb
rnam-par-sbyon-ba is of great help. It is contained in the Rin-chen
gter-mdzod, vol. ga.

(2) The name is preserved in his mantra reproduced in Zhi-
kho na-ra-ka don-sprug-gi dbaṅ cho-ga bdud-rtsiṅi gaṅ-gā, folios
9-10.
to the left: bell, kapāla, plough.

Below to the left, Ratnaheruka embracing his śakti Ratnakrodheśvarī; three faces, six arms, and four feet; colour of the faces: the central one yellow, the other two white and red. Symbols in his hands; to the right: gem, khaṭvāṅga, club (1), to the left: bell, skull full of blood, trident.

Above, to the right, Padmaheruka embracing his śakti Padmakrodheśvarī; three faces, six arms, four feet; colour of the faces: red in the centre, the other two white and blue. Symbols in his hands; to the right: lotus, khaṭvāṅga, club (dbyug-to); to the left: bell, kapāla full of blood, small drum.

Above, to the left, Karmaheruka embracing his śakti Karma-krodheśvarī; three faces, six arms, four feet. Colour of the faces: the central one green, the other two white and red. Symbols in his hands; to the right: double vajra (rgya-gram), sword and khaṭvāṅga; to the left: bell, kapāla full of blood, plough.

The figure below the central image, also in yab yum, represents Samantabhadra of whom the entire cycle reproduced on this picture is believed to be an emanation.

§35. Minor paintings. Besides this cycle of Nāraka the paintings of the small temple of Chang do not present anything else of special interest with the exception of two small frescoes to the left of the door, which possibly refer to some event con-

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(1) But on the figure: sword, khaṭvāṅga and club.
nected with the foundation of the chapel. The first represents a personage seated on a throne and of much bigger proportions than the other figures. To his right and left, two persons in the act of offering him something that is not well distinguishable. In the second, a series of small seated figures. The turban and the dress point out that the fresco represents a dānapati, or, as it is possible in our case, the prince who erected the temple. And in effect, the scene is reproduced according to a scheme, which became traditional in the pictorial schools of Guge. They are used to paint in a corner of the thanka almost always the figures of the donors. Facing the seated personage, a series of vases which seem to me to be seven. One could consider them to be simply offerings, symbolizing in the fresco to the perpetual memory of the munificence of the donor; and actually there is no ceremony of consecration and dedication of a temple that is not concluded with large offerings to the community or to the monks. But the shape of the vases and their number seem rather to suggest another interpretation: the shape of the vase is that of the kalaśa, or bum-pa, that is of the vase used in initiatic ceremonies when the abhiśeka or baptism is imparted to the disciple, and seven are in fact the abhiśekas or initiations of the first stage according to the ritual of these mystic schools (1) (plate LXXII).

This interpretation finds its confirmation in the following fresco where is painted the same line of vases -- this time however five and not seven (2) -- in front of the figure of an ascetic

(1) Seven are in fact the inferior baptisms numbered and described for instance in the Sekoddeśāṭīkā.

(2) In fact in the Durgatiparīśodhana (folio 65) regarding the abhiśeka of baptism are named five kinds of vases vajrakālaśa, buddhakālaśa, ratnakālaśa, padmakālaśa, karmakālaśa.
who is represented with the thick plait knotted over the head, as it is still today customary among the sādhus in India and of the sgam-chen in Tibet. He has his right hand in abhaya-mudrā, or the attitude of protection, and the left one in dhyāna-mudrā, and he wears big earrings (plate LXXIII). These latter point out that he is one of those siddhas or grub-thob pertaining to the mystic line of Matsyendranātha and of Gorakṣa whose followers even today are not rare in Northern India and are called kanphat “those with pierced ears”; they have assumed an exclusively Śaiva character and have lost every connection with the Buddhist schools, of whom, however, they are an undeniable derivation.

Who this siddha represented on the fresco of Chang can be I could not say with precision; he, however, reminds the figure of Brgod-tshaṅ-pa, one of the most famous Ḫbrug-pa lamas, whose memory is still alive in the legends and traditions of Western Tibet (1).

(1) See the figure in xylograph 122 of my collection.
§36. *The gompa attributed to Rin-chen-bzan-po.* The temples of Nako were visited by Francke, who briefly described them in his oft-quoted book. But also in this case it is not useless to undertake its study again, so as to complete or to correct the information collected by the German archaeologist. The principal temples of the region are two: one is dedicated to Padmasambhava and the other consists of a series of chapels inside a closed fence, as in the Tabo monastery (plate LXXIV). This latter gompa, which is situated a little out of the village on a kind of a small plain, is by tradition attributed to Rin-chen-bzan-po and actually the style of the construction reminds very much of the temples erected by the great Lotsava (fig. 3 on p.143).

The fact that there is no mention in his biography of the temple of Nako has not great weight, because it is not improbable that Nako had in ancient times a different name than that with which it is known today. But it is also equally true that we lack absolute proofs for attributing his temples to the period of Rin-chen-bzan-po or not rather, generically, to the first dynasty of the kings of Guge. That the chapels of Nako were also subjected to re-shaping, as it had happened to the temple of Tabo,
is evident from the different finesse and artistic perfection of the images and of the pictures contained in them. It is enough to compare, for instance, the stucco statues of the Gtsug-lag-khan of Nako with those of Tabo to find out that we are faced with a very inferior technique. While those of Tabo are scrupulously shaped out of the schemes of Indo-Tibetan iconographic aesthetics, the images of the Gtsug-lag-khan of Nako are rather primitive and hardly distinguishable from the red statues which are drawn till today by local artists. In sharp contrast to it are only the figures, doubtlessly more ancient, of the temple of the Lotsava and especially one beautiful statue of a feminine deity, to the left of the group of the Five Tathāgatas, always in the same chapel. Therefore, it seems to me that I should conclude that the monastery of Nako, even if it cannot be attributed entirely to the age of Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po, is without doubt very ancient. This does not include, however, that it was subjected, like all the other monasteries of Western Tibet, to many adaptations and re-shapings, whose period cannot be made more precise due to the lack of chronicles or epigraphic documents.

The whole complex of buildings, surrounded by the usual lcags-ri, results to be four small temples placed according to the plan made by Captain Ghersi and published here.

The small temple no. 1 does not contain anything special; it has been built again in recent times and is covered with mural paintings of little artistic and iconographic interest: Śākyamuni in the centre, Amitābha on the left wall and Avalokiteśvara with eleven heads to the right. It is preceded by an entrance whose roof serves as a terrace. It seems that even the name of this small sacred place now entitled according to the name of
Fig. 3.

1. Shrine of Purgyul.  2. Entrance with terrace.
5. Rgya-dpag-paḥi lha-khan.
the god Purgyul (1) has been lost. Purgyul is the indigenous spirit of the homonymous mountain that with its immaculate peaks dominates and almost protects the whole of high Kunavar. But at the time of Francke (the people) called it Dkar-byun lha-khan.

Of much greater interest is temple no. 2, also anonymous, because Francke was told that its name was Lha-khain chen-mo or “the great temple” and to me they said Lotsaba lha-khan or “the temple of the Lotsava”, both names equally general and imprecise. It has been redone; on the altar are aligned very few images of Tārā, Padmasambhava, and Śākyamuni, all rather modern and without any artistic value; many are of stucco of primitive making and doubtlessly local. The walls were, long ago, covered with frescoes mostly erased and defaced because of the water fallen from the disconnected roof. Therefore, the more important reconstructions of this temple are the stucco images adorning the wall of the cella. Three on the central wall and two on the side walls. As Francke rightly saw, the statues represent the Five Tathāgatas put according to the usual order; to the centre Vairocana, white in colour, in dharmacakra-mudrā, to his right Ratnasambhava, yellow, in varada-mudrā, to the left Amitābha, red, in dhyāna-mudrā, to the right of Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi, green in colour, in abhaya-mudrā, to the left of Amitābha Akṣobhya, blue, in bhūmisparśa-mudrā (plates LXXV-LXXVI). All the statues are seated on a lotus flower and are adorned with regal cloaks; their traditional vehicles, namely the animals accompanying the five deities, and

(1) About the name of the mountain where it is believed that the god inhabits see Tucci-Ghersi 1933:144.
all symbols are missing. We should not marvel about it because, as we have already seen, the iconographic representation of the supreme pentad, called by a technical term the five families (pañcakula in Sanskrit, or rigs lugs in Tibetan), usually does not bother them. The attitude of the hands would be enough by itself to single them out, in the present case the colour also is added.

§37. Mystic meaning of the supreme pentad. The different colours of the Five Buddhas, in fact, do not have a decorative value but answer to a more profound motif. This motif is identified with the very essence of these five deities, who, as it has been seen already, are symbols of given moments of cosmic evolution from that ineffable that Buddhist dogmatics and mystics call sometimes the dharmakāya, sometimes the sahajakāya. As soon as in the indiscriminate principle of things the process of exteriorization starts in the complex of experiences and of contingency (prapaṇca), this exteriorization proceeds in parallel lines, which the philosophy of Mahāyānic Buddhism, following a fivefold division of very old origin, both in India and in general in the whole East, distinguishes in five classes.

The origin of this classification is possibly to be looked for in the theory of the five elements. There are considered the fundamental pattern under which can be listed facts, phenomena and aspects of the psychic as well as physical life, the material as well as the spiritual worlds (bhājanaloka and savitvaloka). The centres of irradiation of these five lines of development are indeed called the pañcakula, that is the five families, the five fundamental clusters from which the infinite variety of the cosmos derives.
In these schools, then, the Five Buddhas symbolize the fivefold archetype of the universe, and for this all things have to be thought of as consubstantial with this germinal splitting of being, svabhāvād eva sarvabhāvāh sarvabuddhamayāh: “by their own nature all things are consubstantial with the Buddhas” (Sekoddeśaṭīkā, XXXVIII).

This progressive emanation and realisation is imagined, in the mystic schools, in terms of light. The ground of being is pure shining of conscience, prakṛti-prabhāsvaram cittam “mind luminous by its own nature” (1); as soon as in it is determined the kṣobha or spanda, the trembling that is the initial moment of emanation, the uncolourful light, by transmuting from potency into act, becomes coloured in those five centres of development that mysticism symbolizes in the Five Tathāgatas. The central one among them is, in some schools, Vairocana that is “the Radiant” or, in others, Akṣobhya. We have, thus, actually five luminous elements (the pañcaraśmi of the Guhyasamāja), which, therefore, are at the basis of cosmic evolution (2). They, by realizing themselves little by little and by concretizing and spreading in the world of appearances become more and more obfuscated till they become the opposite of themselves, that is matter. This process is manifested in the scheme of the maṇḍala which graphically describes the emanation from a central point which will be either one or the other of the Five Buddhas, according to the more or less importance that one chooses to give to the various elements, that is to the various

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(1) Svācchām hi sarvasattvānām cittam śāntām prabhāsvaram, Jñānasiddhi, p.82.

(2) The equivalence of the Five Tathāgatas and of the five luminous elements has been discussed by me in a study: Some glosses upon the Guhyasamāja, in “Melanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, III”.

centres of cosmic conscience already coloured, that is to say already influenced, predisposed to expand themselves in one series of emanation rather than another (1).

“The fundamental allegories are three: the crystal, the sun and the image. The crystal means the mirror of Vajrasattva; in the mirror of Vajrasattva (2) by fixing one’s eyes without moving them, the body of the Buddha, an agglomerate of light with five colours, shines and glitters (3). The complete perception of light by five colours, which is a degeneration of the essential light (4), is a glimmer of pure conscience.

(1) The passage is taken from a gter-ma connected with the cycle of the Bardo, namely, Dam-chos rdzogs-pa-chen-po'i sku gsum no-sprod. The text is:

(2) Luminosity perceived in one’s own heart during the meditative process; in it is reflected the cosmic evolution, therefore it is called “mirror”.

(3) That is the Dharmakāya, synthesis of the five luminous elements representing its five constituents.

(4) Because the germinal or essential light is undiscriminated.
“In this way, in one’s own inner experience, there is the light of five colours; when one has known the light proper to one’s own experience one sees always that light of his own. This is the vision seen in the pure glimmer” (1).

This means that the supreme reality is “essential light” ḍod gsal, as it is called by the Tibetan mystics. It projects five luminous beams whose first and direct experience is felt in one’s self, in the meditating process (the internal Vājrasattva). As in fact, from the germinal light, identical with the supreme being, derives, through the fivefold emanation symbolized by the sacred pentad, the infinite variety of the created, thus, in meditation one performs the way backward, trying to climb back from its imprecise apparitions in matter to the more and more vivid manifestations of “light” which, as soon as it is recovered in its immaculate purity, makes us partake in the liberation.

The luminous epiphany is therefore the centre of the long mystic process as it is described in the Samājottara (2) and therefore also in the Sekoddeṣaṭṭikā of Nāropā. Both the texts distinguish, in the whole complex of spiritual ascension, six moments or constituents (āṅgā) out of which the first one is the pratyāhāra, namely the reduction of every sensorial activity to a pure physiological function without any receptivity being deter-

(1) Namely, the cosmic conscience that shines inside the heart: sūn-na ye-ses-chen-po gnas and that is symbolically expressed in the figure of Vajrasattva, whose meditation starts the long mystic process here described. See Chos-ñid bar-dohi khrid-yig mthoñ-ba rañ-grol-gyi ŋo-sprod (Rin-chen gter-mdzod, ga, folio 13): the “essential light” is the ḍod-gsal from which in a second time emanate the five lights, symbol of the pentad, that is of cosmic evolution.

(2) That is the XVIII chapter of the Guhyasamāja.
mined on the part of the organs (1); the second is dhyāna when the distinction between subject and object does not occur any longer (jñāna-jñeyodaya-kṣaya) (2), namely this is a state of absolute concentration (ekāgratā); the third is prāṇāyāma or the way to give back to breath its essential value of cosmic vitality through whose rhythm creation is manifested; in the three following moments by degrees, becomes true the possession or the union with the ground of being, manifesting itself as light. In effect, in dhāraṇā are determined the five, marks (nimitta) through which cosmic luminosity, manifesting itself with first indecisive glimmer, becomes little by little glaring and all-pervading. First it appears a smoking darkness (dhūma) in which, later, spring luminous lightnings (marīci); these cluster in a small mobile light (khadyota), which intensifies itself till it becomes almost the flame of a lamp (dīpa); this, at last blasts and spreads in a fixed shine as a sky without clouds (sudāloka, nirabhra-gaganopama); in the fifth moment (anusmṛtī) this shine pervades infinite space and in the sixth (samādhi) all things are globally dissolved in it.

This way to conceive the supreme God and the ultimate essence of all things as immaculate light and this doctrine of the five luminous elements presents noticeable analogies with


(2) In the list of Guhyasamāja the order of the first two "marks" is inverted to signify the necessity of a guru who explains the abstruse doctrine: prathama-dvitiya-nimitta-viloma-kathanam tu guruparādhīnatva-kathanārthaṁ, Sekoddeśāṭikā, folio XXXIX.
the Manichean system, as I had occasion to study it elsewhere.

But one has to be very cautious before drawing quick conclusions about possible interdependences between Iranian beliefs and some doctrines of Mahāyāna.

Photism is at the ground of religious and mystic experience of Vajrayāna and derives from certain common and well-known manifestations that are produced in those ecstatic raptures in which these schools culminate the meditative process. This shall be much clearer when I would have made known the “six laws” of Nāropā and the traditional interpretations of the Guhyasamājā, though already an attentive reader could have got some hints by reading the already quoted translation from the Bar-do thos-grol. The Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan epigones have founded their religion and its symbols on introspections and experience which directly introduce in that subliminal world of human conscience excited by a profound religious longing, in which luminous visions – whose nature is not my task to investigate – occupy a predominant place, as is known.

That religious types of other countries would have influenced or merge in, in these fundamental visions, cannot be excluded, but they are, according to me, contributions always extrinsic and formal which leave unchanged the intimate essence of the Mahāyānic pantheon; that is to say that they interest the form, not the psychological reality that these images represented for the mystics and the initiated. On the whole, if foreign influences have been there, these would have left a trace on the dogmatic formulation or on the classification of these experiences, but they have found a lively and concrete
content whose origin is to be looked for in the immediacy of ecstasis and of the mystic vision.

One has not to forget, in fact, that these Tantras, which have spoken to us of such experiences, do not expound speculative theories; these ones, when they are there, have a value only in so far as they can be transmuted in laws of life and vehicle of liberation. The figure of the manḍala or the image of the divinity evoked again, therefore, in the mind of the initiated, the whole spiritual plan corresponding to them, so that he could not only know it, but re-live it and in the process of meditation gradually work out the elimination of that series of cosmic manifestations corresponding to a given "family" or absorb them again in their centre of emanation. Then, in a second moment, he could mount to the still higher plane where every discrimination comes to be missed and he who meditates identifies himself with the sphere that transcends every determination, though being the source of every determination.

§38. Equivalences of the pentad. According to this mysticism, Vairocana is the symbol whose meditation works out the ideal elimination of the physical element in the human person (rūpaskandha), elimination that, as we have already said, is accomplished by recognizing this physical element in its essential nature. He is also, among the five mystic knowledges spoken of by Mahāyāna, the symbol of the knowledge of the insubstantiality (śūnya) of all possible appearances, of the lack of their own essence, but also of their being interdependent and relative to one another (1). His vehicle is the lion who is there

(1) See above p. 55.
to signify the virtue of courage, a virtue that is never dissociated from the profound comprehension of the void, according to Buddhist scriptures (1). Thus, it is symbol of another series of categories: winter, sweet taste, guttural letters in the theory of the mantra etc.

Ākṣobhya, instead, is the symbol of purification, in the meditative process, of another constituent of the human person, namely the visual perception, and corresponds to the second of the five mystic knowledges, that is to ādarśajñāna, to the knowledge that lets us see all things not as self-existent, but as a subjective reflection, almost as an image on the mirror (2); his vehicle is the elephant, symbol of strength.

Ratnasambhava is the symbol of elimination, in the meditative process, of yet another constituent of the human personality, namely of sensation, and corresponds to the third mystic knowledge, that is, that for which the creatures and the Buddha are considered as having the same nature (3). This condition is necessary in order to spur our spiritual ascension and to acquire the trust to realize in ourselves the status of a Buddha. The horses on the throne are there to symbolize the impetus.

Amitābha wants to signify the elimination of the fourth constitutive element of our personality, namely that of ideation, and corresponds to the fourth of the mystic wisdoms, that is to say the wisdom of discrimination; on his throne are the peacocks, symbol of grace.

(1) See Bṣags ḥbum, folio 35.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
# The Pentad and Its Correspondences

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<th>Akṣobhya</th>
<th>Ratnasambhava</th>
<th>Amitābha</th>
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<td>blue vijñānakandha [ether]; Śparśavajrī śakti</td>
<td>yellow vedanāskandha water; Māmakī śakti; Śādavajrī śakti.</td>
<td>red saṃjñāskandha fire; Pāṇḍarā śakti; Gandhavajrī śakti</td>
<td>green samskāraskandha wind; Tārā śakti; Rasavajrī śakti</td>
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<td>cintāmaṇi ahamkāra karanā</td>
<td>rāga</td>
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<td>dharmaḥtājñāna [autumn]</td>
<td>salyā taste</td>
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<tr>
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<td>third division of the day</td>
<td>summer</td>
<td>labials (pa-varga)</td>
<td>(equivalent partly different)</td>
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<td>dharmaḥtājñāna [autumn]</td>
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<td>tathāgatābhiseka cakrakula</td>
<td>dharmaḥtājñāna [autumn]</td>
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<td>eyes</td>
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<td>Kṣitigarbha</td>
<td>dharmaḥtājñāna [autumn]</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ākāśagarbha</td>
<td>Lokeśvara</td>
<td>Sarvavārana-viśkambhin</td>
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(2) That is purification of mohā etc. by the process of meditation: Cudul-bya-rnam-kyi ṅon-mons-pa zhe-sdal rnam-par-thyin-bahi phyir G.S.t. 69a.
Amoghasiddhi points out the elimination of the fifth constituent of human personality, namely of the sāṃskāras, and corresponds to the fifth mystic conscience, that of the perfection of work (1).

This theory is already implicit in many Tantras, but it is particularly developed in one of the more famous in the whole of Vajrayāna, that is in the Guhyasamāja, which, nevertheless, puts above the pentad the figure of Vajradhara, the symbol of the Sahajakāya or of the dharmadhātu (2), the ground of being. The Five Buddhas would, then, be his five vajraskandhas, that is the five components in their purely ideal form; that is to say the immanent power of the absolute to be divided in what appears to be the constituents of every being: the cosmos is but the body of Vajradhara and his symbol is the maṇḍala.

For other schools, instead of the equivalence Sahajakāya = Vajradhara, is added that of Vajradhara = Vajrasattva = Ādibuddha (3). In effect, the Vimalaprabhā, while explaining the mystic meanings implicit in the word evam “so” with which every Tantra or the revelation attributed to Buddha regularly begins, says: “the syllable e and the syllable vam mean that the essence of the thought of illumination (intended, as seen above, in its transcendent sense) is not distinguished by its two coefficients, namely the compassion not turned towards a specific object, and the void including the categories of the archetypes. The word evam is understood by ascetics as inseparable

(1) For other equivalences see the table on p. 153.
(2) In the Pañcakāra by Advayavajra (Advayavajra-saṅgṛaha, p. 41) Vajradhara is said to be a synonym of dharmadhātu; dharmadhātuparanāmā.
(3) About these monotheistic schools and their meaning see my article. Soine glosses upon the Guhyasamāja, in Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques vol. III.
synthesis, without beginning and end, of intuition and praxis, of knowable and knowledge, and is named with different terms: Vajrasattva, Bodhicitta, Kalacakra, Adibuddha, the pacified, Samāja, Śamvara” (1). Hence, indeed, Vajradhara exteriorizes the elements of existence in order, then, to absorb them again in himself, thus symbolizing by this not only the process of the cosmos, but also the method that the sādhaka must pursue with the aim of re-living those experiences that raised him to the sameness with the ground of Being.

§39. The ṣaktis of the pentad. At this point enters a conception, which is characteristic of the entire Tantric doctrine, that is to say the tendency to isolate, in every process of evolution, the very process in its elementary origin and the active force through which it is actuated. This is the ṣakti or power which, by virtue of that mystic symbolism dominating the whole Tantric theory and practice, is represented in feminine shape. Thus, in the maṇḍala, that, as we had already said, symbolizes the body of Vajradhara, namely the cosmos, we see a series of feminine divinities that mean the centre of irradiation of the potency of the material world as object of the subjective plane, symbolized by the divine pentad. We have the following scheme:

Vajradhātvīśvarī, element ether (2).
Locanā, element earth.
Pāṇḍaravāsinī, element fire.

(1) Vimalaprabhā, paṭala 4.
(2) Represented only as ṣakti coupled with the central deity in the maṇḍalas of the type yab yum.
Māmāki, element water.
Samaya-tārā, element wind (1);
or, according to the correlation that the Indian traditional philosophy had already established between the elements and their properties, in so far as perceptible by the subject and by its corresponding organs: vision, touch, sound, smell, taste (Guhyasamājā, pages 2, 3) namely: Rūpavajrī, Sparśavajrī, Śabdavajrī, Gandhavajrī, Rasavajrī.

But this symbolism does not stop here; by refining itself more and more it interprets the pentad of the Tathāgatas and the series of the śaktis as the various appearances of jñāna; of the supreme truth we ourselves would say. Jñāna, in effect, in this case means not knowledge – because this word implies a process in which one has to admit three elements: a known object, a knowing subject and the very act of knowing – but is instead a unique moment in which the truth is realized in its entirety, ineffable unity, in which being coincides with the revealing of itself.

This unique truth is manifested, to one who meditates, according to this or that aspect and, according to its various ways of revealing itself, it assumes or is called with different names, they too inadequate expressions of what, being only experienced by its nature (pratyātma-vedanīya), cannot be adumbrated by words. When it is its shine that strikes it shall be called Vairocana; when it is its unalterability Aksobhya; when it is understood as the source and the determinant of all perfections Ratnasambhava; when it appears as infinite perfection Amitābha; when instead it is the necessity with which it realizes

those perfections Amoghasiddhi; and when it is considered his possibility of appearing everywhere he becomes Locanā; Māmakī when he is thought of as revealing himself internally to ourselves; as purifying he is Pāṇḍaravāsinī; as able to work out salvation he is Tārā (1).

All this symbolism starts from some fundamental presuppositions, that are like the strongholds of entire Indo-Tibetan religiosity as it is expressed in Buddhism and in akin systems in Hinduism. First of all is the certitude that the world of experience is the contingent and transitory appearance, on the great ocean of cosmic conscience, of the flux of things and beings, the ephemeral concretization of ideas surfacing in that (2).

In effect there do not exist things, but visions or subsumptions of things, which, till they are not recognized in their true essence conditioning one another, they create that illusory net (māyā-jāla) called by us the world. To it we, in our ignorance, attribute a consistency of its own that does not allow us liberation from it. All this, therefore, must come out from a knowledge; and to know means to eliminate the causes which give appearance of being to what is only a becoming, and of substance to what is but a phantom. But this knowledge has to be transmuted, through a meditative process, into experience without which knowledge would create new and even more obnoxious and pernicious attachments because more difficult to eradicate and will perpetuate therefore the permanence in

(1) I summarize the theory expounded by Indrabhūti in the Jñānasiddhi, p. 79 ff. The Sanskrit text is incorrect: in verse 14 it needs to be read buddhāḍīṇī yato dhruvam; in v. 19 Pāṇḍaravāsinī instead of Maṇḍalavāsinī, etc.

(2) “As the waves of the ocean moved by the wind go dancing without end, so also the spirit agitated by that wind which are the objects of senses continuously dances with those fluxes that are the various thoughts”. Laṅkāvatāra, p. 46.
this turbid play that life is. For all the Tantras, in fact, one is identified with and is almost consubstantiated with what one believes and has faith in.

“After having abandoned the theory of being an existence, one has not to attach oneself to the theory that there is a non-existence, because, although the words “being” and “non-being” are different, the same is the intellectual operation that is subjected to them” (1) so says Anāṅgavajra echoing again the sayings of Nāgārjuna.

Therefore, logical knowledge may not work out the miracle and disintegrate that reality (which in its stainless brightness never becomes, and never is darkened by that illusory veil that is the world of forms), but a direct experience whose fire-ignorance is torn apart and truth appears in all its effulgent purity.

‘This is so’. This is a thing that not even the very Buddhas can say; truth cannot become object, because it is interior experience” (2). Experience, therefore, and thus introspection; and so the starting point of these complex Tantric theories is just the body, as physical aggregate and also seat of psychic faculties, the maṇḍala par excellence, the living symbol of the macro-cosmos in which that process of emanation and absorption that gives life to the worlds and destroys them is eternally renovated and which, when well meditated upon, gives the key to liberation: dehe viśvasya mānanam (3). Therefore, just this Mahāyānic symbolism serves as similies, expressions, localiza-

(2) Ibid. II. 3
tions, all having as their starting point our I (ego), that mysterious and arcane manḍala where, for him who knows how to read it, the supreme will has expressed in symbols its fateful spreading in what, though deriving from it, is its negation.

And now there it is how in the various schools of Vajrayāna as ground of the mystic ascension and as a starting point of meditation is put the identification of the Five Buddhas with the five skandhas, namely, the constituents of a human person already mentioned by me.

"The five skandhas are called the Five Buddhas because they have the same nature as the pentad" says Indrabhūti (1).

The statues and pictures covering the walls of these temples therefore, do not have a decorative character; aesthetic considerations are totally alien to this art. We have, in fact, seen that both paintings and sculptures are always chosen with a precise intent; and are all coordinated in plastic and pictorial cycles that take their inspiration from well-determined mystic currents. The merely decorative element is an accessory and is confined to the background to the more complex series that occupy the centre of the walls. Thus are the pictorial narrations of the life of the Buddha or of Sudhana/Nor-bzaṅ or of Sadāprarudita which, by maintaining their value of pious legends or narrations intended for the edification of the faithful, have never a principal place. This one is kept by the deities of a particular cycle.

§40. The temples as maṇḍalas. The temples of Western Tibet are inspired by Tantric ideas, which have given to them the

(1) Jñānasiddhi, p. 41
value of a proper maṇḍala, architectonic symbol (1), plastic and visible, of those psychological realities whose possession was the higher inspiration of the conceivers of this art. In it nothing is mere whim, but all is bound by liturgy and by the formulae of dhyāna. And if various maṇḍalas were represented in the temple, and therefore different cycles of different methods of experiences, that does not form a contradiction, because in the Tantric schools there is no exclusion, but coexistence and overimposition of experiences and of methods of realization. For this reason, therefore, all masters of India and Tibet, in their thirst for new spiritual conquests and of new visions, pass the best years of their lives to study and to practise, under different guidances, the most various systems of yoga and of ascesis, understood as different ways to enucleate from the individual supernal perfections.

Somebody will perhaps say that this interpretation of mine spiritualizes religious expressions actually more rough and less abstruse. It is not true. One has to distinguish between the motif which inspired the conceivers of these buildings and what they have become later on for the greatest part of the crowd. Those (ideators), by building their temples and so adorning them, did not want to spread idolatry, but to prepare the right mood, and converge the spirit towards supreme visions, so as to complete with the help of art the apostolate work undertaken. Also in India the temple is considered in two ways: as it is seen by the ascetic who is not even requested to attend the ceremonies of cult and to a respect towards the images of the

(1) We shall see in the following volumes that many temples have also the architectonic plan equal to that of a maṇḍala. See for instance Tucci-Ghersi 1933 : 312.
gods and in the way of bigoted veneration of immature faithfuls. Not otherwise in Tibet, one thing is the temple or the manḍala for the initiated and another one for the lay person; the first will see but the symbols whose meaning has been revealed to him by his guru; the second will perceive but images of forces that he needs to propitiate. Thus is perpetuated an attitude that has a long history in India that is at the ground of the religious experience both Hindu and Buddhist. But there is no opposition between the two ways of approaching the divine; they rather correspond to two different moments in that spiritual ascension that every religion proposes as ultimate goal to the faithful, and that consists actually, in a progressive purification (kramaśuddhi). The first way to approach the divine is to have glimmers of grace about it, which create ardours and renunciations, enkindle the desire of feeling its contact in an ever more intimate way through those visible forms that inspire dedication and élan of faith and tear us away from the tyranny of daily contingencies. In this way the cult of images is helpful in a first moment; because, later, the merit so acquired will bear fruits and the individual will be inclined to understand less material and sensory forms of the divine and could ascend to those experiences that, progressively refining themselves, will make him worthy, one day, to approach the doors of the greatest mystery (1). Truth, Buddhism as well as Hinduism teach, is not disclosed all of a sudden to all creatures in the same way, because they are not equals and do not have the same force of perception, the same

(1) Niśkāma-kṛtāṇy api hi yajñādīnī pratibandhaka-pāpa-nirāsa-dvārā sattva-śuddhi-mātram janayanti tena ca viśaya-doṣa-darśanām tato vairāgyam tena ca śreyasi jīvāsā tataḥ samnyāsa-pūrvakān manana-nidhyāsan-opākṛtāc chravaṇāt tattvajñānen-āpavargah (comm. of Madhvācārya on Śūtasamhitā 7.0.70).
mental, moral, spiritual preparation; hence the Buddhas teach their doctrine little by little in many revelations and always according to the capabilities of those that they want to convert. To preach truth to him who is not in a position to understand is labour lost. "According to the esoteric system – says the Vim-alaprabhā (1) – the Buddha, the blessed one, has explained in the different Tantras the things in a double manner; sometimes according to conventional truth, sometimes according to absolute truth; the first is the conventional meaning, the second the absolute meaning. The conventional meaning is for people who need to be perfected, the absolute one for the perfects. That which is said in conventional meaning is characterized by colour, arms, symbols, figures; that in absolute meaning is devoid of colour, arms, symbols and figures" (2).

§41. Ornamental motifs of the type of Tibetan garuḍa. But let us go back to the images of the temple of Nako. Noteworthy is the frame cornicing the figure of Vairocana (plate LXXV): it maintains very ancient Indian motifs which are found in Buddhist painted manuscripts and which are reproduced here plastically. It is the combination of elements well known in the decorative architecture of India: the garuḍa nipping with teeth at serpents which then develop themselves and intertwine in arabesques and volutes; the makara on the capitals of the throne’s pillars; on the sides small figures of deities in homage or praying attitudes. We are faced by a decoration very frequent in all the temples attributed by tradition to Rin-chen-bzan-po. We have seen traces of it in Tabo, above the figure of Amitābha, in the central cella of the Gtsug-lag-khaṇ; we find it again in Lha-

(1) paṭala V.  
(2) Cf. Indrabhūti, Jñānasiddhi, chapters 1, 2.
lung, in Miang and in Toling, according to an almost uniform scheme whose Indian prototype is indisputable and too well-known for me to lengthen the comparisons. I want, nevertheless, to note a detail that bears a certain interest and that to my thinking betrays purely Tibetan influences or reminiscences of ancient and never forgotten aboriginal motifs: I mean the way of representing the garuḍa. In India, to my knowledge, it is never represented with horns, while the horned garuḍa is an almost constant characteristic of popular Tibetan iconography. Possibly we are faced with a contamination of an Indian type with aboriginal survivals.

The Tibetan artists have taken from India the motif of the garuḍa, already largely used in the frames of images, often as a substitute of the stylized lion-head (kīrtimukha), but have partly modified it according to the religious and artistic traditions of their country. In fact it is well known that the garuḍa occupies a very noteworthy place in Bonpo mythology, and, as its derivation, in the names of places in the whole of Tibet, from its Western provinces to those of Khams.

This representation of the horned garuḍa is very ancient in Tibet; this is demonstrated by a bronze amulet found with other undoubtedly very ancient objects in Miang (fig. 4). It is not possible to say with absolute certainty if this image is Bonpo or Buddhist; but the fact that it has been found together with many other objects of bronze surely protohistoric or even prehistoric makes me think of the first alternative as the most probable (1).

(1) See Tucci-Ghersi 1933 : 182ff.
I may quote as an example of horned garuḍa a religious picture found in Serkung and of a sure Buddhist inspiration: it represents as a central figure a garuḍa surrounded on four sides by four garuḍas of various colours (plate LXXVII).

Fig. 4.

It is a thanka of the Guge school, but certainly not of the golden period; evidently it is issued from its last extensions when the kingdom of Guge had already lost its political independence. The figures of the represented garuḍas all have very visible horns; this type is in contrast with the ornamental garuḍa framing the central images in the paintings of the most ancient schools of Guge. In them the garuḍa is, generally, without horns as in India. That can be explained when one remembers that these pictures were issued from a school which is a direct derivation of the Indian and that has faithfully
continued on Tibetan soil the artistic traditions of India, maintaining unchanged its fundamental character.

The picture of Serkung represents a garuda of big proportions that treads upon the body of a nāga whose upper part is of human forms. Below is the family, who had the image painted, in the act of presenting the offering to a divinity on the right that is recognizable as Jambhala, the god of riches, with the gem in his right and the ichneumon in his left hand.

Above, in the centre, between two praying lamas representing perhaps two acāryas or masters, is Vajrasattva, with the vajra in the right (hand) at breast's height, and the small bell in his left leaning on the lap; at the four sides, four garudas of various colours, that is, beginning from below, to the right in the pradakṣiṇā direction, or turning to the right usually followed in iconography: blue, yellow, red and green. It is not difficult to identify the Tantric cycle which this scroll with its five garudas refers to; the five garudas are, in fact, the usual acolytes of Rdo-rje-gtum-mo, Vajracanḍa, about whom I had already spoken and whose maṇḍala is described, for instance, in a liturgical treatise entitled Rdo-rje-gtum-mo khyuṅ lṅahi grub-thabs gdug-pa-can hjoms-par-byed rdo-rje pha-lam.

The central figure of the maṇḍala described by the treatise is Rdo-rje-gtum-mo that is Vajracanḍa in his yab yum attitude:

“Rdo-rje-gtum-mo/Vajracanḍa with the blue colour of the body has one face, two hands, three eyes; in his right hand he holds and shakes in the air the five-pointed vajra and with his left clenches the bell and embraces the sakti; on his hips a band made of the skin of a tiger; with his left leg stretched he steps
on the body of Maheśvara of blue colour, with the right leg bent, steps on the body of Umā Devī of red colour; hair, beard, brows yellowish; standing; a white serpent bound around the diadem; earrings and neck ornaments yellow, green bracelets, neck ornaments and band red; necklace and arm-band on his feet black; he is surrounded in the upper part of the body by a blue religious robe adorned with gems and seals made out of human bones.

"On his breast the śakti Vajrasukhī green-red, naked, with open and agitated hair; one face and two hands, three eyes; in her right hand, in a threatening attitude, the knife marked by the vajra, in her left she holds a cup made of a human skull (kapāla) full of the blood of Māra and brings it to the mouth of the God. She is adorned with five seals, with a diadem made of five skulls and with a necklace of fifteen skulls; she keeps her bent right leg over Maheśvara, and her left one adhering to that of the God.

"Rdo-rje-khyuṅ-po/Vajragaruḍa of blue colour; in his right holds a vajra and in his left a blue serpent which he eats holding it in his beak.

"Ḥkhor-lo-khyuṅ-po/Cakragaruḍa white; in his right hand a disc and in his left a white serpent.

"Padmaḥi-khyuṅ-po/Padmagaruḍa red; in his right hand a lotus and in his left a red serpent.

"Rin-po-chehi-khyuṅ/Ratnagaruḍa yellow; in his right hand a gem and in his left a red serpent.

"Ral-ɡri-khyuṅ/Khadgagaruḍa green; in his right hand a green serpent" (plate LXXXII).

This shows that the figure of garuḍa has assumed five different aspects on the basis of the theory of the "five families" about which we have hinted above. It is, therefore, a duplica-
tion suggested by dogmatic presuppositions and by that numeric symmetry introduced by fivefold symbolism in the metaphysics and in the mystics of Mahāyāṇa; not of special forms of the gariḍa alive in the concrete experience of the people. In effect, though the gariḍa is sometimes considered a Bodhisattva, the gariḍa plays a secondary role in Buddhism. His cult is always connected with ceremonies of exorcism of serpents or with magical rites intended to produce rain (1).

On the left wall there is another image that has not been identified; it is the one reproduced by Francke in his plate XIII and in this book on plate LXXVIII. It is clear that Francke has confused the central figure of the pentad with this other image that he, in the explanation below his reproduction, identifies with Vairocana, while on p. 32 he says that it is another representation of Ratnasambhava. Now, it is evident that neither identification is admissible, for the simple reason that, by observing even superficially the figure, one can see that it represents a feminine deity. Her two hands in vyākhyāna or dharma-cakra-mudrā allow a sure identification; the statue represents one of the many forms of Prajñāpāramitā with two arms (2).

On the wall to the right there is a big maṇḍala that, from the central figure, white with four heads and the hands in samā-

(1) Just in this function the gariḍa enters in the rites described by Maṇjuśrī-mūlakalpa, ch. 41, or in the dhāraṇī for placating the rains and the wind (Taisho no. 1027). The chapter of the Maṇjuśrī-mūlatantra has been studied and translated by Marcelle Lalou, Une traité de magie bouddhique, in Études d'orientalisme à la mémoire de Raymonde Linossier, p. 303.

(2) Dhyāna with almost similar formulas in Sādhanamālā I. 312ff.
dhi-mudrā, can be immediately recognized as the maṇḍala of Sarvāvīd Vairocana already known to us (plate LXXIX).

On the left wall is painted another maṇḍala that also seems to be of Vairocana, but according to a completely different system of expression (plate LXXX). It is, in fact, subdivided in five maṇḍalas out of which the central one is the biggest and the others, smaller, respectively to the four directions with divinities not always discernible. The central deity of all this mystic world symbolically expressed by the maṇḍala is a form of Vairocana, with eight arms, similar to the central statue of the cycle found at Lhalung.

We see thus reproduced the multiplicity of the mystic experiences and of the possible mystic realizations that the never exhausted religious fervour of the Buddhist schools of mediaeval India were slowly tracing as different ways leading to the same goal in order to facilitate or to intensify the possession of Tantric doctrines and transmuting them in life.

§42. Bhaisajyaguru/Sman-bla or the gods of medicine. The chapel no. 3 is known by the generic name of Gtsug-lag-khaṅ; this means that here also the ancient denomination has been lost. It is among the most mishandled.

The central figure, corniced in the usual frame with garuḍa, makara, and elephants, is Tārā, yellow, one of the twentyone forms of the goddess so popular in Mahāyānic Buddhism and in Lamaism (plate LXXXI). On the same central wall on the sides of Tārā are seen, four on each side, the images of the eight Bhaisajyaguru/Sman-bla or “masters of medicine” whose representation is very frequent in all temples of Western Tibet (plates LXXXIII-LXXXIV). The execution of these images is
imperfect and rough; it is enough to compare them with those of the temple previously studied to be convinced that there is nothing in common between them. We are evidently faced by modern and local reproductions of ancient lost or destroyed statues and, according to me, it is not even certain that the modern statuary groups reproduce with fidelity the original iconographic series which must have adorned the temple at the moment of its building. In fact the connection between Māra and Bhaiṣajyaguru/Sman-bla does not appear to be confirmed by any figurative monument and by any literary tradition. The central figure of Tārā would rather lead us to suppose a series of secondary divinities or subsidiary manifestations of the cycle of the same goddess, while the eight gods of medicine would seem to indicate Amitāyus as the central deity, or Śākyamuni. In effect, the gods of medicine are seven (1) and they become eight only with their insertion in the cycle of Śākyamuni or of Amitāyus. This number seven which possibly derives from original planetary connections (2) is supported by Chinese Buddhist literature (3) which in fact knows the seven Buddhas

(1) Therefore it is not exact to say that: “die Zahl 8 der Begleiter des sMan la ist zudem keine feststehende” as R.F.G. Müller does in his very diligent study: Die Krankheits- und Heilgottheiten des Lamaismus, Anthropos, 1927: 987 n. 154.
(2) They are found in Central Asia in connection with the god of medicine. For references see Müller 1927 n. 144.
(3) See for instance Taisho 927, 928 and 451:

Taisho 927 藥師七佛供養儀軌如意王經
Taisho 928 修藥師儀軌布壇法
Taisho 451 藥師琉璃七佛本願功德經

See Pelliot, Le Bhaiṣajyaguru, BEFEO. 3 (1903): 33ff.
The list of the eight deities of medicine in Tibetan and Chinese is as follows:

1. 南無藥師琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光
善名稱吉祥．

2. 薬師琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光琉璃光
寶月智嚴光音自在王威音王．
of Medicine listed and named with perfect correspondence with the Tibetan lists. The identification of the individual Bhaisajyaguru/Sman-bla represented in Nako present some difficulties because it is enough to compare the iconographic types reproduced by Oldenburg with our statues in order to detect the difference in the attitudes of their hands or mudrās – in such cases the only means of identification – which is very great.

We do not want even to pass in silence the fact that there is no perfect accord in the pictorial sources at my disposal about the iconographic types of the cycle of Bhaisajyaguru/Sman-bla. Even the very description given by Waddell, I do not know on which source, is also rather different from the representations reproduced by Oldenburg in his already-quoted book. Therefore it is not impossible that the artists of Nako would have followed a different iconographic tradition (1). But the fact that the images are very rough and well far away from the finesse of execution which we have noted in the other chapel together with the too often repeated repetition of the bhūmi-sparśa mudrā leads us to suspect that the statues were made

3. अणिवर्णमिकीदिरिकिया 金色實光行成就.

4. भुवनेश्वरकालचयाम ब心最勝吉祥.

5. कोशशुभुवनकुशिका 法海雷音.

6. नेष्ठोतिकुमुर्य 法海勝慧遊戲神通.

7. नेष्ठोतिकुमुर्य 法師琉璃光.

Also according to Taisho no. 928 the figure of Mtshan-legs-dpal is different from that reproduced by Oldenburg.

(1) No. 4 is perhaps Mtshan-legs-dpal according to the Tibetan-Chinese scheme reproduced in Taisho, op. cit.; no. 2 Vaiḍūrya-ḥod, no. 3 Šākyamuni, no. 7 Sgra-dbyans-rgyal-po, no. 5 Mya-ṭhan-med-mchog-dpal.
anew in an epoch not far from our own, not always keeping into account the traditional rules; and this, though it represents a violation of the Indo-Tibetan iconographic precepts, is now not without examples in the general decadence which Lamaistic culture is passing through in these regions and in the diminishing orthodoxy that no longer shows much respect for the precepts of religion.

On the side walls are two maṇḍalas almost completely destroyed by time; the one on the left has indeed completely disappeared, and the one on the right presents as central divinity Vairocana in dharmacakra-mudrā (plate LXXXV); that is to say another maṇḍala representing a new method of mystic realization connected with Vairocana, the third met by us till now. According to the informants of Francke both chapel no. 4 and no. 5 are called lha-khaṅ-gon-ma, the "upper" or "ancient" temple. Nevertheless, the old people of the village accompanying me did affirm that the sacred little temple no. 5 is called rgya-dpag-pahi lha-khaṅ.

It does not contain anything noteworthy with the exception of some frescoes; on the left Vajradhara, in the middle Śākyamuni with his disciples, on the right Amitāyus with other gods of medicine.

Above the door the figure of Ge-sar the king of Gliṅ, the hero of the Tibetan epic (plate LXXXVI). He is represented riding a rkyan or wild ass, white, in a white dress and a dark mantle; in his right hand projected toward the thigh he seems to clasp an object that the bad statues of the fresco do not allow us to identify; in his left he holds a cup. All round other divinities, more or less terrific, all of whom belong to the series
of the chos-skyoṅ/dharmapāla or protectors of the law: very visible Rnam-thos-sras/Vaiśravaṇa and, between the legs of the mount of Ge-sar, Mgon-po with four arms.

§43. The temple of Padmasambhava. The temple of Padmasambhava is in the neighbourhood of the village and is built over a block of stone on which the piety of the faithful wants to see the imprints of the feet (zhabs-rje) of Padmasambhava (plate LXXXVII). The trail that the great thaumaturge has blazed in the religious life of Tibetans is so alive and so intense, also in those milieux where the Yellow School has triumphed, that there is almost no place of certain importance in Tibet that does not pride itself of some relics or of a mark of the passage of Padmasambhava in those lengthy peregrinations that tradition attributes him. Nearby are shown to the pilgrims some imprints of fingers that are said to be that of the god Purgyul, the protector of Nako (plate LXXXVIII), a god perhaps prior to the penetration of Buddhism, and that this religion has accepted in its pantheon as a sa-bdag, or a spirit of the soil.

On this block of stone has been built, in a not far away epoch, a stucco image of the master in his usual attitude with vajra, khaṭvāṅga and kapāla. Though the status of maintenance of the little temple is very unhappy, it is evident that the pictures that once covered the entire temple would not have been without worth. As they are now, they seem to go back to the XIV or XV centuries. We could reproduce only four samples among the best conserved; one represents Green Tārā (plate LXXXIX) inside a kind of pavilion, that signifies the vimāna or heavenly seat; the other the image of Lokanātha according to a
type rather frequent in Western Tibet and that I found again also on many votive stūpas/tsha-tsha. Other two frescoes represent Vairocana in dharmacakra-mudrā and monastic robes (plate XC) and Green Tārā with her manifestations and emanations all around (plate XCI).

On the central wall the traces of a maṇḍala almost totally erased; on the right Amitāyus, Śākyamuni, Amitābha. The rest is all in complete ruin.
APPENDICES
I. From a manuscript of Prajñāpāramitā.

(1) These dedications are usually in nine-syllabled verses.

II. From a manuscript of Durgati-pariṣodhana.

(1) These dedications are usually in nine-syllabled verses.
III. From a manuscript of Lokaprajñāpti.

...From a manuscript of Lokaprajñāpti.

(1) Mss.: nas.
(2) For: mi mjed.
(3) For: vri kṣās?

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(1) Mss.: nas.
(2) For: mi mjed.
(3) For: vri kṣās?
IV. From a fragmentary manuscript.

V. From the Chronicles of the Fifth Dalai Lama, dza 46.

(1) Mss.: bdan.
བསྟན་བྱེད་ལུག་བཅོད། དེ་ལན་བརྩེག་བྱ་བདེ་བྱེད་པར། དེ་ལ་
བསྟན་བྱེད་ལུག་བཅོད་བྱང་བར་དུ་མི་དེ་བརྩེག་བྱ་ལ། དེ་ལན་བརྩེག་བྱ་བདེ་
ལུག་བཅོད་མིན་སྤེལ་བའི་བྱེད་པར། དེ་ལན་བརྩེག་བྱ་བདེ་ལུག་བཅོད་
ེ་བོད་པར། འོར་རྡོ་རྗེ་བཙུག་ཆེན་པོ་བཞི་ལུག་བཅོད་ལུག་བཅོད་
ེ་བོད་པར། འོར་རྡོ་རྗེ་བཙུག་ཆེན་པོ་

ཌོག་མ་ཤིས་མ་བ་ཅེས་ནོ།
ཐོ་མི་ཤིས་བོམ་ཞི་ཞི་

སེམས་དབྱང་།
སྐབས་དྲེ་མེད་པའི་ཐུབ་དར

གཞན་ཕྲན་འབྲི་མདོར་ཐུབ་དར་

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་གཞན་དཀྱེར་རིགས་ཨོ་མཐུན་

དོན་ལུགས་བཟུང་དཔོན་བཞིན་དང་བཅོས་

ཀྱང་བར་མེད། དོན་ལུགས་བཟུང་དཔོན་

གཞན་དཀྱེར་པོ་ཆེ་བཟུང་དཔོན་ཅིང་

ཀྱང་བར་མེད། རིན་པོ་ཆེ་གཞན་དཀྱེར་

བཟུང་དཔོན་བཞིན་དང་བཅོས་ཀྱང་བར་

མེད། རིན་པོ་ཆེ་གཞན་དཀྱེར་པོ་ཆེ་བཟུང་

དཔོན་ཅིང་ཀྱང་བར་མེད། 

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣང་བཅུ་བཞིན་པ་མཉམ་

ཕན་དམིགས་ཐུབ་དར་བཞིན་

གཞན་དཀྱེར། 

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་གཞན་དཀྱེར་བཞིན་པ་མཉམ་

འཕྲོད་པས་བཞིན་

གཞན་དཀྱེར། 

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣང་བཅུ་བཞིན་པ་མཉམ་

ཕན་པའི་ཐུབ་དར

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣང་བཅུ་བཞིན་པ་མཉམ་

ཕན་དམིགས་ཐུབ་དར

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣང་བཅུ་བཞིན་པ་མཉམ་

ཕན་དམིགས་ཐུབ་དར

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣང་བཅུ་བཞིན་པ་མཉམ་
བོད་སྐད་ལ་བོད་དབང་བོད་ཀྱང་ཐོབ་པ་ཡིན། ཚེ་བོད་སྐད་ལ་བོད་དབང་བོད་ཀྱང་ཐོབ་པ་ཡིན། དེ་ཐོབ་པའི་ཕན་ཐོབ་ལ་བོད་སྐད་ལ་བོད་དབང་བོད་ཀྱང་ཐོབ་པ་ཡིན། སྐབས་ལ་བོད་སྐད་ལ་བོད་དབང་བོད་ཀྱང་ཐོབ་པ་ཡིན། བོད་སྐད་ལ་བོད་དབང་བོད་ཀྱང་ཐོབ་པ་ཡིན།
ཞི་བོད་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ིག་གི་གློག་མི་རྗེ་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ངོ་བོད་ཀྱི་ཐབས་དང་ལྷ་ནུ་དེ་དྲུང་པོ་དེ་དག་གིས་ཇེ་མོ་བཤད་པའི་
དང་བོད་ཀྱི་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
རང་སོན་ངོ་བོད་སྒོམ་སེམས་རྒྱས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་
ཐབས་དང་ལོ་ངོ་བོད་ཀྱིས་མེད་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།

ཡིད་བོད་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
དཔལ་པོ་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཚོགས་པ་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཞིང་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཉིད་པའི་ཐོན་ཞིག་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
དུས་དུས་གསར་སོགས་སོགས་ཅིག་ཡི་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་
དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
རང་སོན་ངོ་བོད་སྒོམ་སེམས་རྒྱས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་
དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།

ཉིད་བོད་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
དཔལ་པོ་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཞིང་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཉིད་པའི་ཐོན་ཞིག་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
དུས་དུས་གསར་སོགས་སོགས་ཅིག་ཡི་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་
དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
རང་སོན་ངོ་བོད་སྒོམ་སེམས་རྒྱས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་
དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།

ཉིད་བོད་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
དཔལ་པོ་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཞིང་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཉིད་པའི་ཐོན་ཞིག་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
དུས་དུས་གསར་སོགས་སོགས་ཅིག་ཡི་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་
དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
རང་སོན་ངོ་བོད་སྒོམ་སེམས་རྒྱས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་
དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།

ཉིད་བོད་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
དཔལ་པོ་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཞིང་ཐབས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
ཉིད་པའི་ཐོན་ཞིག་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
དུས་དུས་གསར་སོགས་སོགས་ཅིག་ཡི་བོད་ཀྱིς་མ་པ་
དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
རང་སོན་ངོ་བོད་སྒོམ་སེམས་རྒྱས་བོད་ཀྱིས་མ་པ་
དག་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་ན།
(1) This is in fact the Council of Tabo.
(2) Namely the Lotsava of Zaṅs-dkar, about whom see Indo-Tibetica II.
གསུམས་དཔེར། གངས་ལུངས་པའི་སྟེགས་བཤེས་བསྐུལ། དེ་རིང་བཞིན་།
སྐད་ལྕེས། དེ་ལ། ཡིན་ཐོབ་བོད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་སྐད་དུ་རིམ་པ་
དཔགས་ཞིང་། དབུས་ཆེན་བུ་་ཞི་ཤུགས་ཀྱིས་སྟེགས་བཤེས་བསྐུལ་པོར་ཏེ། དེ་ལ་སྟེགས
སྐ་མེན་པས་ཤེས། དབུས་ཆེན་བུ་་ཞི་ཤུགས་ཀྱིས་སྟེགས་བཤེས་བསྐུལ་
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VI. The maṇḍala of Sarvavid/Kun-rig.
(1) Gloss: ལོག་དང་ལེགས་ཐོག་བཅོས་བོད་པའི་
VII. The fortyeight goddesses of the cycle of nārakas.
(1) CEF
(2) ADC
(3) B
(4) A
(5) C
(6) B
(7) B
(8) ABD
(9) ABD
(10) ABD
(11) A
(12) B
(13) ACD
(14) AD
(15) ABD
(16) C
(17) ABD
(18) ABCD
(19) B
(20) A
(21) A
(22) A
(1) ABCD 
(2) E

(3) B conserves the ancient spellings.

(4) A
(5) E
(6) ABCD
(7) A B
(8) B

(9) B conserves the ancient spellings.

(10) E
(11) A B C
(12) B
(13) E
(14) A
(15) A
(16) B (sic) ciot A
(1) C रूप
(2) A C D रूप
(3) A देखिए, E कहिए, soltanto.
(4) A मादा.
(5) E वहुः
(6) A B C D रूप
(7) C तिना
VIII. Inscriptions of Tabo.

1. "(7) C नाचिन, (8) A रस्तान, C रस्तानां
(2) A B नाचिन, (3) C नाचिन, (4) A B C नाचिन
(5) A रस्तान, C रस्तान, (6) A रस्तान, C रस्तान।
(7) C रस्तान, A प्रशांत, C रस्तान।
(8) A प्रशांत, C रस्तान।

(7) Cioè: lo rgyus.
(8) Tutta la porzione che segue è in versi novenari.
Perhaps lion for moonis, imperative.

Defective verses, perhaps chos-kyi phyir or a word missing before.

Has to be corrected to hdus.
Thus in the copy of the inscriptions made by my lama:

(1) Thus in the copy of the inscriptions made by my lama: but it is clear that one has to read myan-ḥdas-pa, where myan must be disyllabic, that is an abbreviation of mya-nan.

(2) It is necessary to read ku-mud, white lotus.

(3) Rather than kyis one would expect kyi.

(4) Correct: ḡdulḍ.

(5) Probably missing: la o: na.

(6) From here onwards verses of eleven syllables.

(7) For ded dpon.

(8) In the copy of the lama drigs which makes no sense.
IX. Inscriptions of Tabo.

(Translation)

1. Before, in the monkey year, this temple was constructed by the grandfather the Bodhisattva(7); after fortysix years his

(1) Perhaps dam pañi.
(2) Evidently this has to be corrected to bsam gtan.
(3) In the copy phan lan with question mark.
(4) Namely, ḡdag grogs; but in the copy of the lama grogs.
(5) Again verses with nine syllables.
(6) One has to correct to bsgren.
(7) The Bodhisattva is Ye-ses-hod about whom I have spoken at length in Indo-Tibetica II. I repeat here that he has nothing
grandchild Lha-btsun-pa Byan-chub-ḥod, his guide being the thought of Illumination(1), this temple was built again. The stimulus of his precious teaching being our guide, we have been stimulated...

2. Therefore, on the completion of the paintings of the chapel, the monk Phes-kha-rgyu-bdag(2) feels the desire to make its narration and the transfer of merit (parināmanā)(3) and says:

For those who are tired because of the long walk and for all beings, spectators of misery who have been abandoned by friends and relatives this beautiful temple has been built...

... of a short narration

3. listen a little.

Born from a divine lineage the Bodhisattva, supreme prince(4) of men and lord of the people with black heads(5), for the perfect development of his innate intelligence(6)

to do with Byari-chub-sems-dpaḥ of the Ladakh chronicles. When built, Tabo was in full Guge territory. The relation between Ye-śes-ḥod and Byan-chub-ḥod is the same in all chronicles: their figures are indivisible and they are often remembered simply as mes dbon “the grandfather and the grandchild”

(1) Lit. :“the thought of illumination proceeding forward”.

(2) The first syllable of the name is not sure; the others are sure.

(3) The inscription, therefore, consists of two parts: a narration, namely, the one speaking about the edification of the temple and of its two royal founders. The second, instead, contains the parināmanā that is the transfer to other persons of the merit deriving from having done a good work (see Indo-Tibetica I.30-31).

(4) The formula is intensive and honorific; it corresponds to mi rje mdzad-pa.

(5) The expression “people with black heads” for “people” is characteristic of Chinese literary style.

(6) phul which in this case means “perfect, arrived at the extreme limit”, is also the surname of Atiśa and this is perhaps the cause of Francke’s affirmation that our inscription mentions such a doctor.
that is Ye-šes-ḥod (rightly so called because he was) light of wisdom for (i.e. he dispelled) the darkness of ignorance (1),
the kingdom that is (the cause of) connection with the cycle of births and deaths (samsāra)
having considered as a fatuous mirage (māyā)
like a faded garland of flowers he abandoned (2).

4. And therefore all those things (that he possessed), because of the Law, presented away
and all convertible peoples (3) in the provinces of Mṇah-ris turned themselves to good (4)
and this temple prosperous place, of good angury and of beatitude (5)
as torch (of the Law) for the entire kingdom here he founded.
Of this excellent creature the very direct grandchild (6)

(1) The verse has a double meaning, a literal and a figurative one: Ye-šes-ḥod means, in fact, “light of wisdom”, jñāna-prabhā whose ignorance (avidyā) and darkness are their reciprocal opponents.

(2) From his biography (Indo-Tibetica II) we know in fact that he left his kingdom, assumed monastic vows, though he continued to play, as we have seen, a great part in state affairs.

(3) According to the copy of the Lama in the inscription would be written: mṇah-ris gdu-ma-rnams; but this reading is not acceptable for metrical reasons; on the other hand gdum has no meaning. I propose, as it can be seen from the translation, to read gdul for gdul-byalvineya; the persons able to convert and ripen, by their karmic preparation, to accept and understand the word of the Buddha. Or one may propose Mṇah-ris gsum-rnams, the three Mṇah-ris, the provinces of Mṇah-ris (on which see also Indo-Tibetica II.15) but also grammatically this correction seems to me less probable than the one that I have accepted.

(4) Lit. they became white, namely partaking of the “white actions”; every action, as it is known, may be of two kinds: black i.e. immoral, or white that is to say moral.

(5) That may also be the name held by the temple.

(6) Because son of the son.
furnished with the triple religious education(1),
similar to the tree of mystic wisdom that plants (in the soil)
the roots of faith,

5. And has abundant fruits of those flowers that the three
sections of the Tripitaka are
the noble Lha-btsun Byan-chub-ḥod,
having seen that the temple made by the grandfather was
becoming old,
called together architects and craftsman and gave alms;
for (his) injunctions(2), having received the task of it we
after having well purified ourselves, started cultivating
ourselves(3);
having for our guide such a thought of good, by all of us
this work ....

6-7. For this perfect merit similar to a white lotus flower...
of the king Bla-ma-ḥod(4) at that time entered into nirvāṇa
by the excellent patron, by the king governing according
to the Law, that is by the noble Byan-chub-ḥod...accumulated...
[Looking] at these images of many figures(5)
of that protector of the world together with his sons...
who...after having practised in all births that method of life

(1) It hints at the triple education i.e. with respect to a) moral
conduct, b) meditation, c) mystic wisdom.
(2) Khal bkah perhaps order, precept of great importance.
Compare bkah-khol and gal che bkah
(3) bcos stands for the elaboration of what is rough, therefore
all that is the fruit of work and of art.
(4) Namely, the grandfather Lha bla-ma Ye-ṣes-ḥod.
(5) It refers evidently to the images painted on the walls of
the corridor for circumambulation around the chapel.
leading to illumination (bodhicaryā), (all) adorned with an excellent body furnished with auspicious characteristic marks(1) able to convert all the convertible creatures (vineya), in all the births of all beings, gradually they generate (in themselves) the supreme illumination, also the visitors gifted with sight and wisdom, after having had the apparition and listened to the highest teaching of the Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa(2) together with their sons, all the words ... together with ...

8. For the transfer on others of all such virtues ...chief of the caravan (sārthavāha) impartial and' for all the merit immense as the distension (?) of the sky that comes out of it we with our friends, all creatures dragged in samsāra, caught in karma since enternity, because of that erroneous imagining that lets us be attached to the things as being real(3),

9. (we find ourselves) in a house named cycle of existence and such that it is put together with that scalpel(4)

(1) Namely the thirtytwo characteristic marks of the Buddha (mahāpuruṣa-laksāṇa).
(2) Namely of the cosmic era in which we live.
(3) And it does not allow us to recognize the fundamental truths on which pivots Mahāyāna i.e. that everything is impermanent, devoid of self-essence and therefore “insubstantial” (śūnya).
(4) stṣag in ancient spelling used in the inscription is equal to sag like stṣogs = sogs etc.; sag dgra is not in the dictionary, but sag is oblique, obliquely cut, oblique edge; and dgra sta is hatchet; thoh is tho-ba
and that hammer that pride and arrogance are

.........................

and has as pillars and for well-planted roof greed and hatred;

from this (fem.), the hand of the great merciful lord of
that ship(1) that wisdom is

for a long way speedily guides us.

For (2) your [relief ?] ... the highest house of the thought
of illumination, that is the supreme end (may be: entrance).

10. Satisfied at his contentment by that food, by those vest-
ments, by those drinks that are [represented by] meditation,

may you always meet that companion that is the perfection
of wisdom (prajñāpāramitā).

In that (house) having rendered your slaves the passions
that enslave to their contentment

and the tank of liberation having filled with the water of
meditation,

in all the intermediary births.....

11. The good costume,

dressed (3) with those very good vestments that restraint
and modesty are,

well adorned with the principal and secondary characteri-

stic marks (4) [proper to Buddha],

on that excellent great chariot that is the Great Vehicle
(Mahāyāna) superior to all, and that has as horses mystic intui-
tions (abhijñā) (5).

(1) bśan for śan.

(2) These words till the last line of the inscription are attri-
buted to the Buddha.

(3) Yoṅ-gob from yoṅs-su-hgebs.

(4) I.e. the 32 lakṣaṇas and the 84 anuvyājanaṇas appearing
on the bodies of Buddhas.

(5) Here too the sentence has a double meaning. He who
of that charioteer that the thought of illumination is ... the eightfold (path) before he who is called ... (1) surrounded by Bodhisattvas may raise the standard of victory (2).

starts walking towards the supreme illumination is compared to a prince who goes out to the battlefield against his enemies. The Great Vehicle is superior to all because of the benefits deriving from it both for oneself and for others are much greater than those that can be extracted from the other two, namely the Small Vehicle and the Vehicle of the Pratyekabuddha.

(1) May be Māra is the enemy who has to be defeated. mgon stands perhaps for gon, a word not registered in the dictionaries that means “before”. See for instance Lamyig of Stag-tschaṅs-ras-pa, p. 12b gcig rgyab gcig gon na mi-byed-par hthab “they quarrelled because one would not remain behind and one ahead.”

(2) That is because I understand byaṅ-chub-sems as equal to byaṅ-chub-sems-dpal. The thought of illumination has already been compared to a charioteer.

SARVA-MAŅGALAM
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