

Tibetan Buddhism in  
**Nepal**



**Mani Rimdu:**  
A Dance Drama of  
Tengpoche Monastery

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**Mario Fantin**



**The English Book Store  
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**To**  
**The Jewels of the Buddhist Faith.,**  
**The Monks of the Monastery of Tengpoche**

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## PREFACE

Passing through the Khumbu region of Nepal in November 1969, I was disappointed to learn to my dismay that the famous Nepalese Mani Rimdu festival was due to be celebrated at the Monastery of Tengpoche six days later. Being member of a team of mountaineers, I was not free to alter or prolong my time-schedule at will, and so I was left with no choice but to plan another visit sometime later, exclusively to witness that sacred dance sequence which is one of the few noteworthy annual events in the land of the Sherpas. I had to wait till November 1972 before getting the opportunity to visit Tengpoche just for this purpose.

The spectacular dances far exceeded my expectations. The cold but bright post-monsoon period provided just the right natural setting to Mani Rimdu, and made it an unforgettable experience. The obligation to trek the distance to the monastery for a number of days lent this "great festival" the air of a hardwon, personal and privileged achievement. The feeling of being "a privileged person" was further enhanced when, on reaching the monastery, I found that only a few, perhaps not more than 25 or 30 visitors from the western world were present during the three days of this Buddhist festival. While it is not difficult to attend other dances of the gaily-clad Buddhist monks at Gangtok, Darjeeling, Kathmandu and Kalimpong on the occasion of the New Year celebrations, or at other times, to go to Tengpoche especially for this purpose is none too easy. It is for this very reason that I have thought of collecting pictures for those who are either incapable of going there or have no time to do so.

The earlier visits of the world-renowned scholars to Tengpoche and Thami, and the books published by David L. Snellgrove, Cristoph Von Furer-Haimendorf and Luther G. Jerstad, have helped me to compile a short, informative text illustrating the photographs. The ready acceptance of my plan by the publishers made it possible to bring out these pages in the shortest possible time. My sincere thanks are due to all these gentlemen. I am, of course, conscious that the photographs can never completely recapture the elusive and complex atmosphere of the monastery, situated at a height of nearly 4,000 metres, on the slopes of the "third pole," and enlivened by the colourful "tantric" masks and gaily-clad pilgrims wrapped in mystic admiration. However, the reader is invited to participate in the exhilarating experience through the pages of this book.

Bologna 18 March 1976

Mario Fantin

## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Mani Rimdu is not just another book on mountaineering by the Italian writer-cum-photographer, Mario Fantin, who is a noted expert on the subject. It is his voyage of discovery not only into the remote Khumbu region of the Nepalese Himalayas but also into the esoteric and ritualistic world of tantric Buddhism which animates the living faith of a cheerful and hardy people—the Sherpas of Nepal. The exotic title of the book notwithstanding, it is all about a Buddhist dance-drama performed annually at the monastery of Tengpoche by the Lamas or Buddhist monks in colourful costumes and masks for the edification and delight of the local population. It is a variation on the universal, epic theme of the victory of good over evil in the unfolding of which gods and demons of the Buddhist pantheon are pressed into service. Through a series of dance sequences spread over almost three days and employing delicate choreography and subtle symbolism of a religious type an attempt is made to bring alive the mystic faith of a simple people. More than a cultural event, it is, therefore, an act of faith, a confirmation and display of the devotional urges of the Sherpas for whom a visit to Tengpoche on this occasion takes on the character of a pilgrimage.

The copious explanatory notes at the end of the book on various aspects of Buddhism in general and the Tibetan or tantric variety of it in particular may be considered as a veritable mine of information on the subject. The superb quality of the photographic representation of the chiaroscuro of life and nature is only matched in the book with the author's warm sensibility

as reflected in the colourful imagery employed in the descriptive portion of the text. His love of the mountains is of course infectious.

In my translation from Italian into English an attempt has been made to capture the almost elusive mood, the poeticality of the Italian language and the conceptual veracity of the original. I would, however, deem myself amply compensated if my English rendering may kindle in some heart a sentiment of love and respect for the mighty Himalayas which I fully share with Mario Fantin or open a window on that exquisite and intellectually satisfying but not fully explored religion—Buddhism.

October 1976, Delhi

R. S. Ahluwalia

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## **NEPAL, A MOUNTAIN PARADISE**

### **General Information**

Nearly half the size of Italy, Nepal has almost one fifth of Italy's population. The two main religions professed by the Nepalese (apart from the peripheral ones like Islam, Bon, etc.) are Hinduism and Buddhism. Ruled by a hereditary constitutional monarchy, 92% of the country's population subsists on agriculture. Due to scanty road-communication the percentage of illiteracy is as high as 90%. That may as well be a matter of pride, since Nepal actually happens to be one of the few "happy countries" of the world. This joyous and serene land with a contented religious and agricultural set up, where the agricultural wealth is confined to a few fortunate valleys, where landed property is concentrated in the hands of a few nobles, seems to have no problems about the basic needs of the people. A walk through the pleasant mountains only a few kilometres away from the capital would convince anybody that Nepal, sublimely unconscious of its rare good fortune, is verily a "paradise on earth," Only very recently, about 20 years back, Nepal exploded on the international tourist map. Before 1950, the country was, in fact, firmly closed to foreigners.

Even today, only valleys in the vicinity of Kathmandu and Pokhara are accessible to tourists, who can fly to Chitawan (Tiger Tops) only after obtaining special permission. Visitors can reach other parts of the Himalayas, walking through splendid mountain ridges, villages and passes, on special restricted permits.

The country enjoys a very pleasant climate. In Kathmandu the temperature ranges between 10°C in January and 23°C in July, with an average annual rainfall of 1350 cms.

The possession of a 'trekking permit' issued by the Nepalese authorities entitles tourists and mountaineers from all over the world to have a close look at some famous Himalayan peaks in the class of 8,000 metres-high mountains. The big mountaineering expeditions, however, are required to obtain permission of another

type, with prior payment of a royalty whose amount varies according to the height of the mountain selected.

### **On To Khumbu**

It is, however, advisable for the individual tourists or mountaineering expeditions to arrive in Khumbu region of Nepal, the venue of our Mani Rimdu festival, a couple of days before the actual commencement of the function.

The route to the Khumbu valley from Kathmandu runs along the same track as has been followed since 1952 to approach Mount Everest. The successive stages on this route are Dolalghat, Chaubas, Risingo, Chitre, Kirantichhap, Yarsa, Those, Bhandar (Changma), Sete, Junbesi, Trakshindu Pass, Manidingma, Kharikhola, Puiyan, Phakding, Nauche (Namche Bazar), Tengpoche (monastery), Pheriche, Lobuche and Gorak Shep at which point the mountaineers find themselves on the right side of the Khumbu glacier and can cross it mountain-wise up to the traditional Base Camp sites of the big expeditions approximately 5,300 metres.

This is the route to be followed by those who intend to attend the Mani Rimdu festival.

The itinerary mentioned above for reaching Tengpoche takes 15 days of continuous walking in stages of 4 or 5, or, at the most, of 6 hours. This is the traditional route for those who have sufficient time at their disposal for proper acclimatization, which comes about as a result of physiological adaptation through continuous ascent and descent across ridges and valleys, and not by day-to-day scaling of higher and higher altitudes.

On the 11th day of the journey, the track descends again at Dudh kosi to 1,585 metres, a height not very different from the starting point, Kathmandu. From that point onward, till we reach Tengpoche the track again ascends progressively, notwithstanding two further descends in altitude: one between Puiyan and Chaunrikharka (in the valley of Phakding) and the other between Nauche and Phunki (in the valley of Tengpoche).

Those who want to reach Tengpoche more quickly, in only nine-days-and-a-half, will do well to cover the



Kathmandu-Jiri (1,860 m) stretch by air, and the remaining distance on foot. Jiri is a village only a short distance from Thosé.

For those who would like to reach Tengpoche in the shortest possible time (only 2 days walking), the better and more common proposition would be to fly from Kathmandu to Lhukla (2,900 m), from where Tengpoche is only two days journey (with only one night's stay at Bridge-Camp). But for better acclimatization, a three-day-journey is recommended. The selection of the exact places for two nights stay on the way depends on the arrival schedule of the flight at Lhukla. If the flight terminates at a late hour, one could have a night stop-over at Phakding or Nauche. In recent years, Lhukla has become a natural port of disembarkation for those who would like to reach Khumbu on foot, although there is hardly any saving in distance.

A further saving of trekking-time would be possible when the landing site at Sangpoche is ready. This aerodrome will be a short distance from Nauche village at a still higher altitude, by about 250 metres. When completed it would also be open for use by planes other than those having Everest View Hotel as their destination. From Sangpoche, one can reach Everest View Hotel in no time by a ramshackle car, or climb the distance upto the beautiful valley in which the two picturesque Sherpa villages of Khumde and Khumjung are situated. From Sangpoche one may also ascend to Nauche and from there take a flight and reach the monastery of Tengpoche the same day.

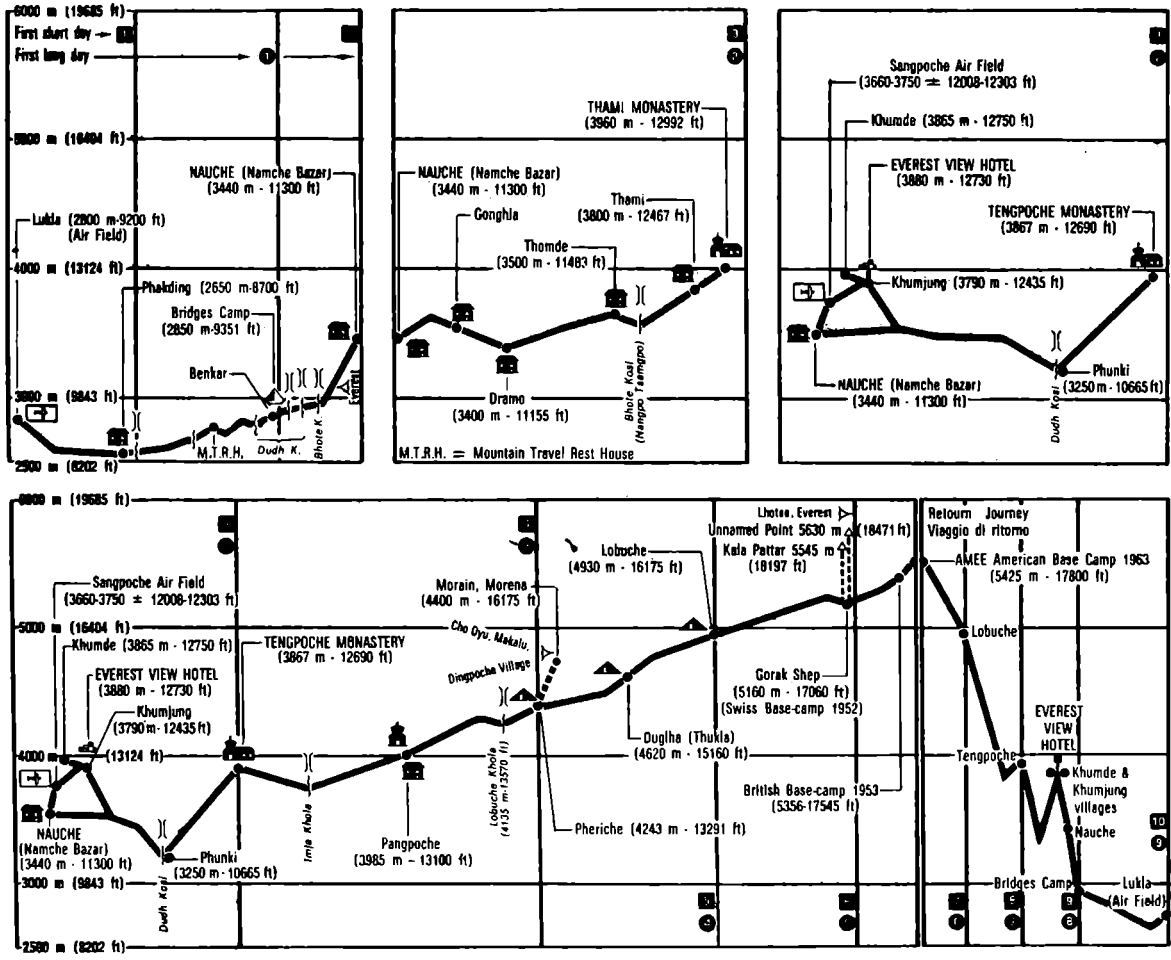
Khumde and Khumjung can also be visited on the return journey from the Mani Rimdu festival.

From Sangpoche it is possible to reach Thami (for the Spring festival of Mani Rimdu) in only one day, by the same route as the one from Nauche.

Whether one's aerial destination is Tengpoche or Thami, the time taken is the same because the routes bifurcate at Nauche.

Walking along the valley on a yak-track, from Tengpoche, one reaches Pheriche in the evening and Lobujye the next day. Anybody who can afford the five-day

trek, may reach Gorak Shep on the morning of the third day, and the return journey being a descent is more comfortable and takes less time. The availability of a continuous helicopter-service at regular intervals and at a reasonable fare will no-doubt further facilitate the access to Tengpoche, but one who reaches the monastery this easy way will never be able to look upon the Mani Rimdu festival as a well-earned "reward." Rather he might have the feeling that he is impinging on the sanctity of the place of pilgrimage to which devout pilgrims throng on foot from distant villages.



Another more fancied route, though not always without risk (there is the danger of being blocked by a snow storm at some high pass), is via the Rolwaling Khola (valley).

Leaving Kathmandu one takes the "China Road" upto Barabise. The other stages are: Jaliiale, Charikot, Picuti Manthale, Simigaum, Dongang, Beding, Nangaon, Chowuk, Trashi Labtsa (5,822 m), Thami, Nauche, Tengpoche. In favourable conditions this route permits of a comfortable walk past Gauri Shankar and a few days later one could enjoy from the pass the extraordinary view of the entire Khumbu basin.

### **Khumbu: The Land of The Sherpas**

The tourist coming from the south at the confluence of Bhote Kosi (Nangpo Tsangpo) and Dudh Kosi immediately to the South-east of Nauche would have left behind the "smaller door" to Khumbu, which is the big basin, constituted by the convergence of the four minor basins-Lunag-Nangpa, Ngozumpa, Khumbu and Imjya.

The main passes leading into the basin of Khumbu, inhabited exclusively by the Sherpas are: Trashi Labtsa (Tashi Lepcha) (5,822 m) in the South-west, Khumbu La (Nangpa La, 5,716, 5,806 m) in the north-west, Nup la (5,913 m) to the north, Amphu Labtsa and Mingbo La (5,817 m) in the South-east. The famous South Col (7,986 m) of Everest and the Lho La (6,006 m) at the end of the Western ridge should be considered cols in a class by themselves- most difficult to negotiate and most dangerous, and not real passes. They should be attempted only by competent mountaineering expeditions.

A chain of high passes situated on the Western ridge of the Khumbu basin to the north of Langmoche Col (5,890 m) connects the basin with other valleys of Nepal and Tibet. Other links with Tibet (Chinese), already mentioned, are the Khumbu La (Nangpa La) which in the past has been the scene of big two-way caravans, and the Nup La which in bygone days has served to connect the two monasteries—Tengpoche and Rongphu

(Rongbuk). In this spectacular world of snow-capped peaks, eternal snows, majestic mountains (Everest 8,848 m, Lhotse 8,511–8,501 m, Lhotse Sar 8,383 m, Cho Oyu 8,153 m) deep valleys and sprawling glaciers nestle the picturesque Sherpa Villages.

Living for about four centuries in that region which is now their exclusive Kingdom, the Sherpas have constructed and enlarged, at different times, numerous centres of habitation with houses of brick and wood which have served as indispensable lodgings for men and domestic animals. The houses always stand apart from each other—an ingenious device to avoid damage from possible fire.

The village of Khumjung is the most impressive and may be called the real capital of the Sherpas. Namche, however, remains for all practical purposes, a commercial centre of considerable importance as well as a busy place of transit. Khumjung has about 110 houses and Namche about 90. Khunde consists of 60 residences while Pangboche has 60 to 70 habitations. Phortse has more than 70 houses and the three villages called by the common name Thamichok (Thami, Thamote, Thami Teng) have about 220 houses in all.

The villages are generally situated at a height of 3,400 to 4,400 metres. The lowest one is Namche (3,440 m) while the highest one is Dingboche (4,421 m). Khumde and Khumjung have an average altitude of 3,800 metres and they can legitimately boast of superb surroundings. The monastery of Tengpoche sheltering the most devoted sons of the soil is situated on the same altitude. It is proposed to take the reader of this book on a photographic pilgrimage to this justly famous monastery.

## THE MONASTERY OF TENGPOCHE

### Natural Setting

The Tengpoche monastery (Tibetan: Steng-chen-dgon), known in maps and literature by the old names of Thyangboche, Tyangboche and Thangpoche, has perhaps the unique distinction of being the highest monastery in the world (3,867 m).

At the same time it happens to be an important, permanently inhabited monastery, functioning as a purely religious institution.

Its close rival, the monastery of Thami (3,960 m), situated two days march from it in the westerly direction, is slightly less important, less frequented and inhabited by a smaller number of monks.

For sheer height the monastery of Rongphu (4,970 m) in perhaps unrivalled. Its old name is Rongbuk and it is situated on the northern slopes of Everest. In recent decades, however, it has lost its prestige as a sacred place on account of internal events and due to Chinese occupation. The monasteries of Lhasa (3,680 m), \*Trashilumpo (3,870 m) Sa-Skya (between 4,000 and 5,000 metres) and of Ralung (4,900 m), to mention only a few, in Tibet and the Trans-Himalayan region, have met a similar fate.

\* *Foot Note:* Trashilumpo, derived from Tibetan bkra-Shis-lhum-po, signifies "full of benediction." The spellings of this word are not always the same in literature. Sometimes there is an 'r' and sometimes it is without 'r'. I have consulted six international atlases and three encyclopaedia—all of them quite authentic compilations but none of them have been able to provide original or even identical information. So I turned to the Tibetologists and famous travellers who have written latest books and have lived for a long time in Tibet: D. Snellgrove, G. Tucci, H. Harrer. The latter two in their latest works have consistently and clearly spelled it as Trashilumpo (Trashi Lhumpo)—with an 'r'. Snellgrove, however, while omitting the 'r' in the Tibetan transcription, makes it clear in his notes on pronunciation and spelling of place-names that 'tr' and 'dr' are pronounced and have a slightly weak 'r' sound, but the sound is not so weak as to justify its omission in the phonetical transcription. I have therefore used as in my earlier works (ISMM, AIMZ2) the spelling "Trans-

Confining ourselves to Nepal we note that the famous monasteries of Lo Mantang (Mustang 3,780 m) and Muktinath (3,815 m) are almost in the similar altitude range and never go beyond that limit. In the Khumbu region near Tengpoche buildings other than monasteries but functioning as places of worship (Gompa) are found in villages higher up. For example, we have Gompas at Pangpoche (3,985 m), Kerok (4,200 m), Dingpoche (4,600 m).

The monasteries of Bhutan and Sikkim rarely exceed a height of 3,000 metres.

The altitudinal supremacy of the Tengpoche monastery may be a matter of dispute and is after all of relative value but one has to acknowledge, without any reservations, the uniqueness of its setting. The mountains crowning the monastery are among the highest in the world. Some of them are most important and beautiful. The Everest and the Khumbu Yul Lha are taken to be simply divine.

Towards the North-east (distance 2,300 metres is Everest (8,848 m); In the North-east direction can also be seen Lhotse (8,511–8,501 m) and the Lhotse Shar (8,383 m) at a distance of about 22,000 metres; towards North-east rises the Amai Dablam (6,856 m) at a distance of 1,000 metres; towards the South-east the Kang Taiga (6,779 m), the visible point (6,685 m) makes its appearance at a distance of nearly 6,000 metres; towards South-east one can admire the Thamserku (6,608 m) at a distance of 5,500 metres. In almost South-westerly direction one can have a glimpse of the Kongde Ri (6,187 m) at a distance of 12,000 metres; towards West-south-west is clearly visible the Teng kangpoche (6,500 m) at a distance of 17,000 metres; towards North-west the modest Khumbu Yul Lha (5,761 m) raises its head at a distance of 5,500 metres. In the north is the Taboche (6,367 m) at a distance of nearly 7,000 metres. In the North-east the majestic Nuptse Wall (7,879 m) is visible at a distance of 19,000 metres. The Nuptse, Lhotse and

hilumpo" for the name of this monastery which is already known to be the Headquarters of Trashi Lama (Panchen Lama) in the Shigatse (Tibetan) city.

Amai Dablam constitute the most beautiful spectacle for a mountaineer; From that point Everest, almost totally shrouded in clouds, certainly does not give the impression of being the 'roof of the world', but it does make its presence felt in an unmistakable manner and one can hardly resist its extraordinary fascination.

Although these mountain-peaks wrapped in an aura of magical charm, bordering on the unreal, become, even after a day's stay at Tengpoche, all too familiar a sight, yet the eye loves to return and dwell upon them time and again. The sight of the peaks naturally evokes quite different emotions in the local Sherpas whose yardstick of beauty is certainly other than ours. Yet they too appear consciously proud of their rare good fortune in having such a magnificent backdrop of mountain scenery for their day-to-day living.

Other orographical regions like the Karakorum or the Hindu Kush, the Pamir or the Transalai, the parallel mountain ridges of the Andes or the tropical massifs, the mountains of Greenland or of the Antarctic may be able to boast of something similar, or even, in some exceptional cases, of something more beautiful. But they certainly do not present a charmed circle of cyclo-pian mountains rising above inhabited villages in which, throughout the year, the daily round of life goes on at a steady pace and where temples and monasteries hold aloft the flame of a living faith. These monasteries, more than once in the course of a year but particularly on one special occasion, burst out in a riot of sound and colour and movement, as the monks dressed in gay costumes dance to the tune of the croaking horns, vibrant bugles, ringing cymbals and muffled sound of drums before an amazed and delighted public which takes into their emotional sweep the rhythmic movement as well as the snow-covered mountains.

The Mani Rimdu, presented annually, is basically an open-air show minus scenario. It has to be so because nature herself provides the most beautiful and least costly background to the shifting scenes of the drama. The monastery of Tengpoche, built on the spur of a tri-angular mountain formed by the combined action

of water and glaciers, very much like a gigantic mixed moraine, is surrounded by a large plain which indeed is a rarity in these mountains. Its commanding position, which is also aesthetically satisfying, has been selected intentionally to conform to certain norms of place-designing for the sacred buildings of the Buddhists. According to some people the name 'Tengpoche' signifies 'the sacred bowl' while others hold that it means 'the big plain'. In either case, the basic concept of (a flat plain of a limited size) is quite evident and has been specially framed in an environment of soaring summits and craggy terrain. Of course, the most ancient temples (gompas) in the entire region of Khumbu are those of Pangpoche, Kerok and Thami, which were built after the settling down of Sherpas in that region about 400 years ago.

### **Historical Background**

The monasteries are a more recent phenomenon. The earliest one seems to have been built around 1920 A.D. at Thami and the second one was built at Tengpoche in the year 1923.

Both the places were indicated by a famous Lama—the Lama Sanga Dorje (Tibetan: Gsang-ba Rdo-rje). He selected the site for the monastery of Thami and pointed out the exact site on which the monastery of Tengpoche was to be erected. The Gulu Lama had the privilege of presiding over the foundation-laying ceremony and stayed there for about a decade. In 1933 two inauspicious events occurred—the death of Gulu Lama and the destruction of the monastery by an earthquake. The mortal remains of the "Master" were cremated at the place where once stood the main hall of the monastery which had been razed to the ground (According to a scholar, the corpse excluding certain parts such as the heart, the tongue and eyes which have been preserved till today, disappeared through spontaneous sublimation and the building was partially re-erected with the modest financial contribution and manual labour of all the Sherpas of the region). Thus, the monastery which we nowadays see is only forty years



old, risen on the ruins of the earlier one which was nearly fifty years old.

### **Buddhist Architecture**

The 'Gompa' or the temple of the monastery is constructed in the form of a Square, each inner side being 12 metres at the most. It has three storeys. The ground-floor has only one hall (duang) with wooden columns. It has chapels and altars and wooden niches for sacred books. Above the entrance of the main hall is a 'pronaos' where paintings on wood happily depict the official iconography of Tibetan Buddhism.

Then there is the inevitable 'wheel of life'—a 'mandala' having the main personages of the Buddhist pantheon: the figure of Padmasambhava, a painting depicting the 'King of the East' (one of the guardian kings of the five directions); certain scenes from the "Jataka" (or stories of the earlier births of the Buddha) and a sketch of the monastic city (which cannot be deciphered). There are also figures of Sron-tsam-gampo (Stron-sengampo). Tibetan: Sron-brsan-gam-po, the famous Tibetan king of the 7th century who introduced Buddhism in Tibet and founded Lhasa in 630 A.D.); of Atisha (a teacher of Mahayana Buddhism who in 1050 A.D. led a mission to Tibet to restore discipline and norms of life among the monks there); of Marpa (the founder of a monastic order, Nimpa, in which intermarriages between monks and nuns are quite common), and of Milarepa (mi-lare-ras-pa), a great white-robed saint. Above the main entrance of the gompa stand five statues of "Snow leopards," the protectors of the temple against evil forces.

On the upper storeys there is a collection of sacred books and wooden moulds for making engraven copies of the texts. Generally, in the main Buddhist monasteries, we find at least three fundamental works of Tibetan Buddhism: the Kanjur (Tibetan: bka-gyur) or (the Translation of the word of Lord Buddha) in 108 volumes, the Tanjur (Tibetan Tan-gyur) or (the translation of the treaties) in 225 volumes, the Laricemmo (Larichemmo;

Tibetan: Lam-rim-c'en-mo) or (the great theological system) which interprets Mahayana Buddhism (or the great vehicle) written by Tsong-Khappa—the great (Tibetan: Tson K'a pa), reformer of the yellow sect of the Buddhist church.

Even the followers of diverse branches of Buddhism acknowledge the authority of this manual of Buddhism.

Then there are 'Bar-do to-dol' texts (Tibetan 'Book of the Dead') which are read by a monk into the ear of the dying man, or soon after he has breathed his last, to guide him on to the right path during his 'bardo' or the stage between his death and rebirth.

Anyone who would like to copy an only existent text in a monastery has to procure suitable paper, and to stay in the monastery till he is able to transfer from the original moulds the imprint of the scriptures.

Moreover, in every monastery there is a special place (gon-kang) to safeguard and preserve the masks (Kingdzi-zhal-bag) intended for ritual dances. At Tengpoche monastery the masks are kept in the upper storey. It was not possible to see in the places visited by us any painting or statue (generally found in other monasteries or gompas) representing the "unity-in-duality" (yab-yum) or the psycho-sexual embrace between a deity and its Shakti.

The entrance of the gompa faces East. There we find the big courtyard paved with large flat stones surrounded by public balconies for the religious-minded who are supposed to attend the most important functions.

The courtyard (cham-ra) has three doors, the main one being on the eastern side. The smaller door is in the South wing and another one gives access to the Northern slope. The outer wall of the gompa on the North, West and South is equipped with a series of 'prayer wheels' which the pilgrims and the monks rotate during one or more circumambulations as demanded by custom. On the front wall of the courtyard rises a wooden tower from which the monks give the call to devotees to assemble, by striking on the metal instruments.

In the centre of the courtyard a "tarchen" (Tar-Shing) raises its head towards the sky; a long wooden

pole, about nine metres in height, holds aloft a banner on which are written prayers or magic formulae meant to be, "read by the wind or to be consumed by the Sun or rain"—the effect of the prayer in either case being the same.

The guard-room (Konjer) and a big kitchen lie on the north side of the courtyard while the cells for the monks, the dwelling places, the guest-rooms, the stables for the beasts of burden, are placed at random on the eastern and southern side of the great building and slightly away from it.

Ugly-looking piece of undulating iron-sheets have partially replaced the original roofs of natural wood, irregular in shape, commonly employed in local construction, which had fallen a victim to the ravages of time. It is to be hoped that the aesthetic aspects involved in this change will one day be examined by 'higher authorities' and sufficient funds will be found to restore the roof to its original design.

It is said that the courtyard can accommodate at various levels and angles well over 400 spectators for the annual show of Mani Rimdu. Many people prefer to be present at the spring festival held at Thami, to avoid the creeping chill of November-December months, in which this great festival is held at Tengpoche.

The Tengpoche monastery during the few decades of its existence has always derived inspiration from the monastery of Rongphu situated to the north of Everest which is about 1,000 metres higher. After the Chinese occupation of Tibet the Tengpoche monastery has not only become the northern-most advance post of a religion which the Chinese in Tibet have systematically tried to destroy in all its forms, but also a repository of precious manuscripts, a place of refuge for the enlightened Lamas of every rank and a focal point for the innermost feelings of thousands of Sherpas.

### **Religious Ethos**

If the ethos of Nepal (Kathmandu valley) can be defined by the twin adjective 'religio-agricultural' we

can coin with equal justification, the term 'religio-caravan-pastoral' for the Khumbu region, religion being the common denominator in either case. In Tibet as well as in Khumbu, it is religion which provides the all-embracing passion for the solitary individual, surrounded as he is in all sides by phantoms, Gods, demigods and other countless supernatural powers forming part of the Buddhist pantheon. Every nook and corner of the mountains, cliffs and lakes is inhabited by benevolent or malignant beings which turn hostile at the slightest provocation or are appeased by a paltry offering or a small prayer. At every place these simple men of the mountains find themselves at the mercy of invisible forces which hold them in mortal terror. That is why Tibetan Buddhism or tantric Buddhism (also improperly called "Lamaism" from the word 'Lama') has taken root so easily among these people—a religion with Mahayana doctrine professed by the people of the adjoining lands like Bhutan and Sikkim and also by the Sherpas of Nepal.

Mahayana is that branch of Buddhism which represents the path of 'golden mean' as against the absolute asceticism and atheism of Hinayana Buddhism. Mahayana is the popular path beckoning everybody towards final illumination and consequently towards 'Nirvana'. It is known by the significant name of "the great vehicle" (literal translation of Mahayana) because it can take in all and sundry.

For a long time now the Tengpoche monastery is being managed by a priest who comes from a family of Tibetan immigrants currently living at Namche. The priest is considered to be the re-incarnation of Gulu Lama—the great founder of the monastery. The priest in-charge of the monastery is given the name "Chen-Po" (Tibetan-mk'an po). The priest of Tengpoche has had his religious initiation mostly at the monastery of Rongphu in 1956, and then came to Khumbu to take charge of his present duties. He is considered to be a "Bodhisattva," "a Buddha-in-the making" as against a Buddha who has already attained freedom from the cycle of deaths and rebirth. A 'Bodhisattva' is one who voluntarily renounces 'Nirvana' for the sake of the

salvation of others and leads his earthly life for the last time before finally attaining Buddhahood.

Other priests of this monastery of Khumbu may also earn the title of Bodhisattva if through prayer and meditation they help Sherpas and others in accumulating collective "Karma" or in augmenting their 'stock of good actions' which will finally open to these mortals the gates of 'liberation'.

Buddhism denies the existence of soul and believes that even gods are subject to death and rebirth. To free one-self from this cycle of birth, death and rebirth is to attain 'liberation'. In fact, Buddhism has no need of gods as it lays stress on self-liberation. Thus Buddhism of the orthodox type is essentially atheistic. However, the particular brand of Buddhism practised by the Sherpas goes by the name of 'Mantrayana' (or the vehicle of magical words or 'mantras', or 'vajrayana' (the adamantine vehicle). "Mantrayana" is the way of salvation through the constant repetition of word-formulae ('mantras') the proper understanding and exact use of which ensures liberation.

It is well-known that the Shakyamuni (Buddha) who was born in the year 563 B.C. (and died in the year 480 B.C. approximately) did not write anything on the Buddhist doctrine. The task of collecting the rules of monastic life and Buddha's teaching was entrusted to his disciples. Thus arose a variety of interpretations and three main schools of thought: Theravad (Hinayana—the smaller vehicle) Yogachara (only thought and intelligence), Mahayana (the great vehicle). The last one, i.e. Mahayana, presumes that every man (and not the chosen one alone) can attain the ultimate enlightenment. The Sherpa variety of Buddhism is clearly 'tantric' in its religious overtones, in its mode of worship and in actual, daily practice. In almost all Sherpa houses there is a private Chapel (Lha-Khang—the house of God) situated in a well-marked corner, with paintings on parchment called "Thanka." Then there are 'Klu' or water goblins and goblins of habitations which are invoked and appeased quite often in Sherpa homes.

Quite a few monks and inhabitants of Khumbu follow a semi-reformed variety of Buddhism traceable

to the 12th century. From the day of its foundation till today, about 250 monks have entered the monastery of Tengpoche. Of these only 80 can be called residents of the monastery. Hundreds of others come only for short periods and return to their native villages or their families on completion of their period of initiation. Of the resident monks about 20 are said to have died of old age during their permanent stay in the monastery. Many have qualified themselves for the title of "Lama" (a monk can call himself Lama only when he is in a position to impart religious instruction to others). A brother, or permanent or temporary pupil, is simply called "tra-pa" (grva-pa). Some monks, after acquiring the rudimentary knowledge of some rules and principles of religion entitling them to perform religious rites in the "gompas" of their native village, get married and settle down in the village itself. Some monks at the Dingboche monastery have actually married the nuns there without earning anybody's disapproval. Thus the ease with which one can get admittance into the Buddhist Church can only be matched by the rapidity of one's exit out of it, without inviting any unfavourable criticism.

Some Lamas of Tengpoche are known to have acquired the great qualification of 'Bodhisattva' and these august personages are considered an infallible authority on all questions of faith. Rather, it is said that the only privilege allowed to them is to commit the mistake of turning apostatic (or renouncing their faith) but this they will never do whatever the school of thought to which they may belong.

### **Monastic Routine**

Life at the monastery is neither easy nor simple. It is a round of prayers, even at night, and work, which includes collecting food from distant villages and cutting fire-wood from perilous mountain-slopes. Even water, though not too distant, is not readily available to the inhabitants of the monastery. The impetuous Himalayan torrent rush down 500–600 metres below the monastery and one has to go to them to fetch water. On the northern

slope of the mountain-crest on which the Tengpoche monastery is situated, there is the Imja Khola river which collects water from all the glaciers to the South of Nuptse and Lhotse; on the South-west is the Phunki Khola—a stream which partially collects the waters of Kang Taiga and Tramserku.

On the South-west there is the wooded northwestern crest of Kang Taiga which supplies to the monks the precious water from the snows. To get this water, available only at irregular intervals, the monks have to make a round of the poor country-house of Makyong, saying a large number of prayers with their prayer wheels on the road to the convent of Dingboche. Row upon row of similar prayer wheels dot Phunki on the foot of the ascent leading to the Tengpoche monastery. These prayer wheels are in constant use, testifying to the intermingling of nature, and man's faith in the superiority of gods. Along these paths across dangerous torrents and snow-covered passes, the Sherpas of Khumbu merrily thread their way negotiating fragile, oscillating bridges on to the festival of Mani Rimdu in a spirit of devotion mixed with a sense of wonder and delight. Before undertaking the journey some Sherpas lucky enough to be in close touch with the Buddhist monks competent to perform the ceremony of Barche-Serwa (Barche-Selva)—(a ceremony intended to ward off danger and remove the difficulties on the way) go through this ritual.

## MANI RIMDU, THE BUDDHIST DANCE-DRAMA

### Origins

The first celebration of Mani Rimdu at the monastery of Tengpoche seems to have taken place sometime in 1930. No recorded evidence is available on the subject in the monastic archives. One could, however, speak with greater certitude about the first celebration of the same sacred drama-festival at the monastery of Thami taking place in the year 1940.

It is almost certain that after a few years of experimentation, adjustment and self-analysis, the present pattern was evolved and has been repeated without any change since 1950.

The monks do not have any written manuscript or notes as to the sequence of dances. Only oral tradition must have provided the basis for the earliest presentation. The monks of Tengpoche directly or through their colleagues seem to have got the necessary information regarding Mani Rimdu from the monks of the Rongphu

*\* Foot Note :* Those who want to attend the New Year Dances at Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Gangtok are advised to first make sure of the exact date of these functions, because the new year begins at different dates, between the beginning of December to the middle of February, in these areas. These ceremonies have a distinct relationship with Mani Rimdu, which has quite a few original characteristics, the common denomination being the "Costumed dances to exorcise the devils," or the celebration of the ultimate victory of good over evil, which is a distinguishing feature of all monastic ceremonies of Buddhism, with monks as heroes. However, it is an established fact that Mani Rimdu in its present form has never been witnessed in any monastery of central Tibet. Thus, although this sacred representation has something in common with the Bon religion or the earlier tantric Buddhism of Tibet in the matter of inspiration, content and divine protagonists, it is, in fact, a special product of the northern and southern monasteries of the Everest region. It is the Mahayana school of thought which provided inspiration to the majority of the Tengpoche monks and almost to the entire Sherpa population of Khumbu valley, for the dramatic and artistic representations as instruments of religious instruction.



(Rong buk) monastery situated on the northern slope of Everest. Many inhabitants of the Khumbu valley remember having crossed the mountain chains to witness the religious shows. As to how the dance-drama of Mani Rimdu came to Rongphu, how it developed, and how much of it underwent a change in form or content, will ever remain an enigma. It appears that the Mani Rimdu contained many popular elements associated with the Tibetan festival "cham," which itself was based on the temple-dances connected with exorcism. The few western visitors to Tibet in the last few centuries were all admiration for the festivals of the New Year, the Dance of the Devils or of the Demon—Red Tiger (S Tag-dmar-ch'm) in vogue in the pre-Buddhist 'Bon' religion.

### **Purpose**

Being essentially of a religious character (the monks put on masks representing divine personages and in fact become divine for the moment) Mani Rimdu easily achieves the purpose of initiating the faithful in the fundamentals of Buddhism as practised by Sherpas. Though the sacred dramas of the Sherpas do not have for their ultimate aim the conversion of a few superstitious followers of Bon religion to Buddhism, they try, in every possible manner to hold up before the spectators certain moral and ethical values. These dramas have not been written in a casual way. Somebody has compared the Mani Rimdu representations to the Catholic church-drama or mystery plays of the medieval time with their stock stage-characters of the Devil and the Angel, Virtue and Vice, the good and the evil, redemption and punishment.

### **Religious Significance**

The question whether the first Mani Rimdu festival occurred in 1930 or, as claimed by some people, in 1938 is of little importance to the westerners. Perhaps, they are more interested in knowing the significance of the name and the content of individual dance rhythms. Originally Mani Rimdu (pronounced Mani-Ril-drup)

was the official name given to the 'consecration of life' ceremony which forms the opening gambit of the celebration. As a result of the popular shift in pronunciation 'Mani Ril-Sgrub' (Mani Ril-drup) came to be called Mani Rimdu. Besides being the title of the opening scene of Mani Rimdu, Mani-Ril-Sgrub happens to be the name of certain special prayers offered on the occasion of the consecratory rites as also the name of a type of "Torma" used in that sacred function. The aforesaid prayer is not only recited during the inaugural ceremony of the Mani Rimdu festival, but is also repeated on diverse other occasions during the year to invoke the blessings of gods for the people of the Khumbu region and quite often to bring down rain for thirsty fields.

Mani Rimdu is thus a "prayer ceremony" and the dances, proper, are religiously symbolic. The spectators are invited to witness the close relationship between the monks and the divine beings through dance sequences. The significance of some doctrinal principles, otherwise beyond the popular mental grasp, is clarified through dramatic action. Those among the spectators who watch the drama with a pure heart acquire indulgences or 'sonam' (increase in the personal fund of 'Karma' or good actions).

Of the same type is the festival at the monastery of Thami. It follows the rules of Tengpoche monastery whose priest is considered to be an authority on such celebrations. Thus it so happens that at Junbesi and at other small villages similar dances are enacted, though in a minor key.

The Head priest of Tengpoche and some old monks see to it that the religious rituals are properly observed during these festivals. The younger and the most energetic among the monks are entrusted with the actual execution of these rituals. Three weeks before the commencement of this annual festival, costumes and masks are taken out of the store-houses (gon-Kang), systematically checked, mended and finishing touches given, so as to fit them to the persons who have to wear them.

### **Preliminary Preparations**

One day before the actual festival a dance rehearsal (tsam-ki-bulu) is arranged without the spectators, without masks and without costumes to synchronize the dance movements with the musical band.

The costumes are displayed on the benches in the "gompa" in a particular order known only to the monks but in such a way as to facilitate wearing or changing of the dress by the participants. In-fact a number of monks are called upon to rehearse the part of different deities in the course of thirteen 'pictures' or tableau enacted for seven hours at a stretch. The gompa (the temple of the monastery on the ground floor) becomes for all intents and purposes the actors' Green Room in a popular theatre. Since the dances are of a collective nature and there is no hierarchy among the monks it would be absurd to think of providing separate small rooms for make-up and recreation.

In the 'gompa' the monks refresh themselves in between the dance sequences with frugal food and quench their thirst with strong 'chang', which produces in them a momentary state of euphoria to be soon replaced by the fatigue of successive dances. Although the monks are used to high altitude living since childhood, the nearly 4,000 metres height on which the Tengpoche monastery is situated seems to tell on them as it is not uncommon to find them gasping for breath during very fast dance movements under the weight of their heavy clothing and masks which impede free respiration. This notwithstanding the fact that the monks selected for dancing are by far the healthiest of the lot.

### **Duration and Time**

Some decades ago the sacred drama entailed three days of effective dancing with the participation of dozens of actors. Nowadays, however, the dancing lasts only for a day with the maximum of 16 participants. The exact date of celebration of Mani Rimdu is fixed each year to coincide with the full-moon of November. At times the due date falls in the beginning of December.

This period coincides with the stoppage of work in the villages between the end of harvesting and the beginning of the local caravan expeditions. Till recently this was the general schedule. Changes in this time-schedule, however, are not ruled out in future. Alternatively, the visitors have an option to witness the same festival of Mani Rimdu at the monastery of Thami during May, just before the monsoons break.

From 1974 onwards Mani Rimdu is being celebrated at Tengpoche only in spring and the festival at Thami is held a few days later. The visitors, thus, have the rare opportunity of witnessing both the festivals in one and the same trip. The journey from one monastery to another takes only 2 days on foot.

### **The Inaugural Ceremony**

The first day or rather the first afternoon of the dance-festival of Mani Rimdu is devoted to the inaugural ceremony which lasts about three hours. It begins at about one or two o'clock and finishes with the sunset. Since early morning the monks start preparing for it. In the afternoon, or a little earlier, a small procession leaves the main gate of the "Gompa" to enter the stone paved courtyard down a somewhat steep flight of stairs. The advance party consists of standard-bearers carrying emblems of the Tibetan Buddhism and of monastic orders, the canopy-bearers of the Head priest, the blowers of horns (dung-chen-pa), two cymbol players (sbug-cham-pa), two drum beaters (chos-rnga-pa), the master of ceremonies equipped with a whip (ldab-ldob), two carriers of silver-studded bugles (clarinet) (rgya-gling-pa), two blowers of conch (dhung-pa; dhoong-pa), two players on the bugle made of human bones (rkang-gling-pa), two persons carrying incense (bsang-phor-pa) and a monk holding a metal vase containing holy water (tu) with a peacock feather stuck in it. The Head priest walks slowly towards the throne and occupies it. The throne is placed on a brick structure and is draped in Chinese brocade with multi-coloured ribbons. Nearby is an altar with customary votive offerings neatly placed in front of it, lending an air of sanctity to the whole setting. In front of the Head

priest is the sacred chair with ritual objects: the lightning sceptre (rdo-rje or Vajra), the silver bell (tril-bu-or ghanta), the double liturgical drum (damru or nga-chung), the prayer book and the holy water (tu). Two assistants help the priest in sorting out the offerings received, which generally consist of cone-shaped 'torma'.

On the drapery hanging down the chairs there are pictures of two lightning-sceptres in the form of a cross and two "Swastikas" drawn clockwise. Swastika is derived from the Sanskrit word "Swastha" meaning health. It has a symbolic value and the Indians generally use it as a magical symbol or as an omen of good fortune. The "Swastika" of the Jains is turned anti-clockwise while the Buddhist one is clock-wise. According to some scholars it represents the Sun in its orbit. The Swastika has also been adopted by the Yellow sect and other reformist sects among the Buddhists in its clockwise pattern. Among the Orthodox Buddhist sects and the pre-Buddhist Bon religion, the Swastika is turned to the left.

On the extreme right of the Head priest sits a monk in Chinese dress with his mask upturned. This monk will later on play a comic part in the drama to be staged the next day. His presence in the inaugural ceremony of consecration is obligatory. In addition, he represents long life. Seated on the carpet in front of the Head priest are the old monks, the nuns of Deboche, the instrument-players and two or three prominent village landlords who have had the honour of making lavish personal offerings at the ceremony. Then there is the heterogeneous public, either seated or standing, consisting of Sherpa women dressed in their very best brocades, Sherpa menfolk with their Tibetan caps and furlined overcoats, carefree children decked up Chinese-style in miniature costumes and finally visitors from the western hemisphere sporting dresses and hair-styles of all hues.

The main ceremony unfolds itself in four stages; first comes the blessing ceremony in which all present are wished a long spiritual life. This is followed by the acceptance of the ritual offerings from the monks and the laymen; then comes the mass distribution of

longevity pills and serving of holy water and finally personal benediction by the Head priest. The whole ceremony harks back to ideas and traditions of Bon religion because, as has been rightly noted by L. G. Jerstad, the idea of wishing long life is not fundamental to Buddhism as such. Thus it is the life of the spirit (bla-tshe) that is stressed. The pills given to the faithful as a 'food' for longevity are called tshe-ril (if made with tormas) and mani-rhil-bu (if made with red-coloured rice). During the ceremony cone-shaped figures are made out of tormas (photograph 49) symbolizing deities worthy to be invoked and also demons fit to be driven away. Special receptacles are used during the ceremony such as 'dbang-bum' the power-bestowing vase typical of the tantric functions, the 'las-bum', a ritual vase for water used in all the Buddhist ceremonies, the 'ti-bum'—a vase with a mirror, the tshe-bum—"the vase of life" containing holy water 'tu'. The simplest form of benediction with holy water is called chin-lab (Tibetan: sbyin-rlabs). The blessing is given by a monk by pouring holy water in the palm of the hand of 'the faithful' or of the pilgrim. A small quantity of this blessed water is tasted by the pilgrim and the rest is sprinkled on the head by him. "Chang", the Sherpa beer, is also used in performing certain rites. In such cases "chang" takes on the name of 'water of life' (tshe-chang). The spectators, however, drink occasionally their own 'chang' from beautiful wooden bottles (Kye-kal). At a certain stage during the ceremony the Head priest sprinkles the holy water with a peacock feather on all present. This significant rite appears to be borrowed from other religions. In the ancient Tibetan religion it was a common belief that the devil killed men after polluting their souls. Some traces of it seem to survive paradoxically in Tantric Buddhism, in as much as the opening ceremony of the Mani Rimdu—"the consecration of life"—is intended, among other things, to ward off the evil influence of the demons on things, persons, even divine beings themselves, mountains and geographical regions. For example, in the Khumbu region, a mountain itself is supposed to have a soul (bla) called Khumbu-Yul-Lha. If a devil were to destroy the soul of the mountain, all

inhabitants of that region would run the risk of losing their life. One of the purposes of Mani Rimdu is precisely to exorcise the evil forces and shield the people against the nefarious designs of demons.

It is believed that only on one particular day during the course of the entire year the devil has the power to attack the soul of the mountains and the people of the Khumbu region. It is, therefore, the duty of the priests to contrive something interesting so as to divert the attention of the devil and make him innocuous on that particular day.

The ceremony reaches its climax with an invocation to Padmasambhava, the apostle who is said to have come all the way from India to Tibet to make necessary changes in Buddhism to suit the genius of the northern people. It is followed by songs of exorcism typical of Bon religion. In the meanwhile, the younger among the monks continue to serve hot tea to their seniors, nuns, instrument players and to special invitees. The 'Chorumba' and the 'Chorpen' (the guardians and custodians of the gumpa) continue to keep watch over everybody from a hidden corner to ensure proper execution of tasks assigned. It is not an uncommon thing for someone to stand up during the course of the ceremony and start rotating his prayer wheel in full public view. The elderly wives of the Khumbu region, too, do not lag behind in making a public demonstration of their philanthropic instincts by distributing money among all the guests as a token of their happiness and goodwill. At the same time some devotees are seen offering symbolic gifts to the Head priest on traditional white cotton or silk shawls (Ka-ta, ka-gtags).

In the meantime the containers of holy water are brought and blessed. The blessed water is then received in the hand. Similarly, 'chang' containers or the containers of the 'water of life' (tshe-chang) receive official blessings. The devotees are given a few drops of the blessed "chang" to drink. Then the balls of 'torma' resting on the altar are distributed among the bystanders who swallow them with obvious relish. Their distribution is a signal for the monks and the lay devotees to get up and rush towards the High Priest for personal benedic-

tion as a final act of the ceremony. The crowd draws near the altar in a confused way and gets the blessings of the High Priest who places his hands on their bowed heads. Everybody seems satisfied and pleased with the benediction obtained.

Comes the evening. The shadows lengthen on the cool grass, as on polar ice in the land of Eskimos. There is already a numbing chill in the air. The procession with its “living god”—the Bodhisattva incarnate, prepares to wend its way back to the temple. It has an air of unreality as it moves slowly, wrapped in a halo of golden light which makes it appear distant, although it is so near. Even to a European or an agnostic, the scene is extremely charming and mystically fascinating. One can imagine the impact it makes on the unsophisticated, religious-minded Sherpas. The procession marches on, bathed in the absolute glory of the setting sun, towards the southern wall of the monastery, re-ascending a steep path. Then it turns round to the West and to the North before finally entering the courtyard of the temple and from there into the ‘gompa’. Thus ends successfully the first day.



## **GALA DAY, THE THIRTEEN STEPS**

### **Mystical Significance of the Dances**

The mystical significance of these dances, in the ultimate analysis, can be said to consist in the depiction of the triumph of Buddhism over the earlier 'Bon' religion. Before Buddhism came to Tibet, the old religion went by the name of 'Bon' (pronounced Po'on), the followers of this ancient religion are called Bon-Po and in some remote regions, it still survives. The Bon religion is animistic in character. It believes that the world is inhabited and controlled by spirits and other supernatural forces.

The priests are called upon to perform the rites of expiation and purification to guard against mischief by these evil spirits. There are reasons to believe that in the ancient Bon religion, human and animal sacrifice was practiced. One of the main purposes of the Mani Rimdu celebrations is to parade, on the stage, the minor and major gods and goddesses of Bon religion assimilated by Buddhism. Moreover, the show gives to the public a sense of local identity, as some of the divinities portrayed belong to the Khumbu region itself. It is through the language of gestures that the godly sentiments and passions are symbolically depicted.

However, the significance of many things is not very clear, even to the monks who participate in the dances. Only the High Priests of Tengpoche and Thami are supposed to know precisely, and in minute detail, the complete significance of the esoteric language of the dances.

Although the contents of Mani Rimdu appear to be adapted to some extent to the local needs of Mahayana Buddhism and more particularly to the religious outlook of the Sherpas, most of the traditional dances are Tibetan in inspiration, if not in origin. At the same time, all the objects used in rituals—the hilted weapons, the offerings for the gods and other symbols employed—belong to the old religious tradition and do not easily fit into theatrical moulds. Nothing in fact is left to the imagination or to improvisation.

## Prologue

The sacred drama essentially comprises of a prologue (prayers and announcements) and thirteen 'pictures' or Arts in quick succession. The pattern is almost identical every year, but there is no rigidly fixed form. The second day is evidently devoted to the avowed aim of teaching 'Dharma' (call of religious duty) to the people at large, who are somewhat innocent of it. However, one cannot fail to notice the spectacular aspect of the show and its entertainment value.

The prologue generally consists of: (a) Three different types of prayers and an invocation (b) introductory dance steps. The Thirteen 'pictures', which one could irreverently call 'numbers', but cannot exactly term 'acts' because they do not follow a regular and fixed sequence or logical order.

The sequence of the 13 steps which are normally followed, are as under:

1. Gser-Skyems: Dance of the 'Golden Libation'  
(8 Dancers)
2. Ging-pa: Dance of the four protecting Kings of  
'cardinal points' (4 Dancers).
3. Rdo-rje-gro-lod: Padmasambhava charges the  
demons. (One dancer)
4. Rnga-'cham: Dance of the 'celestial drums'  
(4 Dancers).
5. Dur-bdag: Dance of the 'lords of the cemetery'  
(4 Dancers)
6. Mi-tshe-ring: The aged scholar (2 Actors)
7. Chos-skyongs: The Dance of 'the Eight Furies'  
Dharmapal: The custodians of  
the Buddhist doctrine (8 Dancers)
8. Gnas-arung: Dance of 'the black men' and of  
'the regional God' (3 Dancers)
9. Mkha-gro-ma: Dance of 'the travellers of the sky'  
(4 or 5 Dancers)
10. Rtogs-ldan: The overconfident man (sarcastic)  
(2 Actors)
11. Lhag-ma-gnyis: Dance of the 'two assistants of  
Lha-mo' (2 Dancers)
12. Gri-'cham: The dance of the 'sabres' (4 Dancers).

13. Zor-'cham: The 'backward dance'. (Dance of the 'protectors of Khumbu'—The closing dance) (2 Dancers).

As has already been mentioned the dances do not follow a rigidly established sequence. For example, the books on the subject mention the following order of dance-sequences at the dance-drama held on 9th December, 1965, at Tengpoche: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5, 7, 10, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, and even this would be varied each year.

In the Mani Rimdu festival at Thami, usually celebrated in May or in the beginning of June, the costumes and the programme are almost the same as at Tengpoche but the order of dance sequences is slightly different, although it follows quite faithfully the general scheme indicated above.

The 6th and 10th dance sequences (Mi-tshe-ring and Rtogs-ldan) have a somewhat comic, satirical or humorous content without much stress on direct preaching, but the moral lesson is not quite lost on the local people who have on their finger-tips the names of the stock-characters and understand what they stand for. These two comic sequences may thus be treated as exceptions to the other eleven dances which have obvious moral overtones.

The Northern side of the balcony overlooking the courtyard is screened off in the morning, with a moveable brocade screen, possibly of Chinese origin, behind which sits the High Priest of the monastery, accompanied by his assistants and some singers and musicians. Suddenly, from behind the curtain a low humming is heard. It is the recitation of the opening prayers. The first of these prayers is addressed to Mount Everest, the second to Tengpoche monastery and the last to the Khumbu valley. The first prayer opens with the praise of the beauty and grandeur of Everest (Chomo Lungma) and concludes with the invocation: "O! Queen of the hills, Victory to you for ever and for ever!"

It is significant that Everest is hailed as a 'Queen' and not as a 'King'. In fact, the mountains are considered 'abodes of the Goddesses', or the abodes of five sisters (Tibetan: Tshe-ring mched-lnga). Tradition has it that these five goddesses were originally diabolical creatures

belonging to the Bon religion. Later on they were converted to Buddhism by Padmasambhava to whom they swore eternal fidelity. Other mountains over which these five sisters hold sway are supposed to be Kanchenjunga, Gauri Shankar, and the Menlungtse.

The second prayer glorifies the Tengpoche monastery 'born a few lustrums ago' in the vicinity of Everest. It concludes with the invocation: "Glory to this renowned monastery, whose fame has spread to the remotest corner of the earth!"

The third and the last prayer reminds us that the Buddhist cult of the khumbu valley is called 'Mahayana'. It recounts the beauty of the surrounding valleys with snow-covered peaks and ends with a wish: "the drum of religion may never cease to beat, for the good fortune of Khumbu valley nestled in the shining mountains under the sun and the moon."

During the prayers, quite unobtrusively and without marring the solemnity of the occasion, a well-fed yak is offered in symbolic sacrifice to the goddess of Mount Everest. Days before the symbolic sacrifice, the animal is besmeared with butter and bathed in milk. It is adorned with a small silk scarf and set free. No work is expected from this animal. Thus without spilling blood the animal gets consecrated, a living sacrifice to the tutelary goddess of 'The roof of the world'! Evidently, it is non-violent Buddhist version of the bloody sacrifice enjoined by the old Bon religion.

### **Preamble to the Play**

The brief appearance of the heralds, before the public, is a prelude to the beginning of the real show. The dance of the heralds is also called 'the opening dance' (Rol-cham). According to the American writer L. G. Jerstad the full name of the dance of the heralds is Rol-cham bkra-shis dgu-brding i.e. 'the dance of good fortune by the nine players'.

It cannot be called a dance in the real sense of the term. It consists of a few rounds of the altar, (top-kun) by the monks, in slow measured up and down kicking of the feet in all directions. This so-called dance is

performed after the heralds have gone in single file, down a flight of stone steps, on the eastern side of the courtyard. Then come the incense bearers (*bsang-Phor-pa*) who are supposed to purify the atmosphere for the ensuing drama by incense-smoke. Then appear the clarion players (*rgya-gling-pa*), the bearers of the cymbals (*sbug-cham-pa*) and the players of small symbols (*sil-snyan-pa*). These are followed by the blowers of bugles and the drummers of drum (*chos-rnga-pa*).

The blowers of long horns (*dung-chen-pa*) keep to the northwest corner of the courtyard, because of the extraordinary length of their instruments, (about three metres). Two deep hoarse notes on the horn signify the end of the dance.

As soon as the heralds disappear in the gompa, the red curtain (*yol-ba*) parts, revealing the High Priest on the throne, encircled by the other distinguished dignitaries beside a chair bearing two Buddhist emblems—the thunder-bolt and the swastika. From among the public, many people kneel thrice as a mark of respect to the High Priest.

1. *Dance of the 'Golden Libation' Gser-Skyems*  
(8 Dancers)

The commencement of the first 'act' of Mani Rimdu, is announced from within the gompa by blowing bugles made of human bones (*Ekang-gling*). The bugle-notes are then drowned by the sound of big horns blown from outside. As soon as the bugles stop blowing, the cymbals (*sbug-cham*) clash out their silvery notes, followed by the rhythmic beat of the ceremonial drums. The drum beats are matched by the striking of plates. Eight dancers in colourful costumes make their appearance on the flight of steps, as they descend in single file from the temple into the courtyard.

Although the costumes (*Phod-kha*) are not identical, they do bear a close resemblance to each other. Blue, yellow and red are the dominant colours of the brocades and silks which serve as tunics and aprons (*spang-gdan*). Besides these, the dancers wear a checked cloak (*Edor-gong*), open in the middle, to thrust the head in. A long

yellow or white piece of cloth hangs along the back of the dancers, pinned up with the end of a large black head dress (Zhwa-nag; shenok) in the form of a big helmet, sporting a coloured crest (tri-ratna) studded with a small skull or a big gem in the middle. The front side of the conical headgear is be-decked with a coloured mask, representing Mgon-Po god, the protector of Tantric Buddhism in Tibet; inside is a kind of wig with long hair, falling on the face of the dancer. The shoes are like the ceremonial footwear (Eas-zom) used by the Tibetans with raised tips and sole of quilted leather.

Each dancer holds in his right hand a small silver cup (small containers for the offerings—Phu-phor) or a chalice of the same metal. The dancers make some clock-wise circles around the altar. The cups and chalices in the meanwhile are refilled with 'chang' or 'Torma balls' (gtorma) by the master of the ceremonies.

During the dancing rounds, they sprinkle upwards, and in four directions, the 'torma' and the "chang" as a symbolic offering to the five meditating Buddhas, also called "Dhayan Buddha" or the five celestial 'Jinas'. This offering, signifies the tantric union of wisdom, preaching and action and is intended to expel diabolical forces. It also signifies the union of all the human faculties—sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell, which is necessary to reach the final stage of perfection and knowledge. The offering of "chang" is specially intended for Zur-ra Ra-rgyam, the protector of tantric Buddhism. The name 'golden libation' indicates that the offering is meant for the highest personages or the 'golden ones' in the Buddhist Pantheon.

The black headgear of a special shape worn by the dancer indicates the typical costume of the tantric priest. The hair falling on the face (from the wig-skra-tshab) symbolize the tantric ascetic very much similar to the Indian Yogi. The long-sleeved triangular tunic (phod-Kha) reminds us of the figure of an old protector of religion. The tantric priests are called (after the name of the headgear) Zhwa-nag (Shenok). They reappear in subsequent acts of Mani-Rimdu, with slight variations in costume but wearing the same head-dress.

The altar (tap-kun) is piled up with the sacred objects

such as the complete 'set' for the offerings including the Kapala (skull bowl with a silver base and lid), the Phu-dam (the jug for holy water), the Phu phor (cup and chalice with a long neck), the bap-shong (a place to put the offerings in) and nay-se (vase or recipient for rice or barley).

The purpose of the first act (tser-skyems) is to glorify the Buddhist gods who have scored victory over the enemies of religion. This act also reminds us that the religion of the Sherpas (and of the Khumbu region) is directly derived from tantric Buddhism of Tibetan variety.

The type of dance performed in the first act is not unknown in Tibet. It is a popular feature, though on a small scale, at the semestral religious ceremonies.

At the conclusion of the dance, the spectators and the dancers have a long sip of 'chang': the former, to face better, the rather low temperature and the latter to overcome the fatigue of the dance. Even when the blowing of horns indicate the end of the act, the spectators do not care to show any sign of approbation or admiration by cheering, etc. This type of reaction is not only unknown to them, but would also be considered quite out of place on such a solemn occasion.

It is quite likely that in course of time the performance of the first act of Mani Rimdu has undergone a few changes, resulting in maturity and diversification in its presentation. In fact many other writers call it by different names—surzi-ngawa, in which, instead of eight dancers, only six of them called 'dancers of the four directions' participate and perform the 'golden libation'. Thus, the one-time single act seems to have been split up in two, giving birth to the present day second act (ging-pa) with four dancers for the four directions, dressed in quite different costumes.

## 2. *Dance of the Four Protecting Kings of 'cardinal points'* *Ging-pa (4 Dancers)*

Four lively dancers come into the courtyard and take the audience by surprise with their costumes quite different from those used in the first act. The dominant

colours in this case too are blue, red, yellow and green. The tight-fitting pantaloons (spud-shub) have multi-coloured stripes spiralling upwards. The coat worn by the dancers comes upto the middle of the thigh and a red piece of cloth (order-gong) covers the shoulders. The four dancers represent two gods and two goddesses. Their masks are of four different colours: red and green for the male deities, yellow and white for the female ones. All the masks (Zhul-bag) wear a gay appearance and the public avidly follows every movements of the dancers. Two of them carry a small drum (chos-rnga) and the other two cymbals (sbug-cham). The faces of the dancers are covered by shining paper masks depicting a constant smile. The male deities represent the active principle which goads a person to seek enlightenment. The other two deities represent 'knowledge and wisdom'. The union of these two principles—one active and the other passive—makes one attain the supreme good.

The four dancers also represent the four kings who are supposed to defend the Buddhist faith against the attack from the demons. These four guardian-kings play an active role.

The four kings are also known as Loka-pala. In Tibet they are called Rgyal-chan-bzhi. The king representing the "North" is also called the 'the god of wealth'. The official Buddhist iconography follows set rules both in painting and sculpture. Generally the four kings are represented in the following manner. The king of the 'North' is called Rnam-thos-sras. He holds the flag of victory (dvaja) in his right hand and a mongoose in the left. The face-mask is painted yellow. He is also the lord of the 'Yakshas'—supernatural creatures which cause diseases. In Sanskrit the name of the king is Vaisravana (or Kuvera). Some of his images have a red halo around his head and another smaller one of grey colour just above it. His head dress is generally red. According to Maraini the residence of the God Kurvera is on the highest peaks of Kangchenjunga. The king of the East is called Yul-khor-bsrung. He holds a stringed instrument in one hand and wears a helmet with coloured ribbons and tassels. The face-mask is painted white. He is also called the king of Gandharva



demons. His Sanskrit name is Dhritarashtra. The instrument closely resembles a flute and is of eastern origin. The paintings on the walls of almost all the gompas of Khumbu portraying his character show him with black moustaches and beard. The head is covered with a kind of flowery helmet topped by a tuft of hair falling down in arcs and spirals. Sometimes instead of the helmet he wears an old fashioned bell-shaped “Chorten” on his head.

The king of the south is called Phags-skyes-po and is always found brandishing a sword. The face-mask is painted blue or green. He is also the king of big demons called Kumbhandas. His Sanskrit name is Virudhaka. Very often instead of the usual helmet he wears a piece of elephant hide reaching upto his head and held there with a jewel.

The king of the West is called Spyan-mig-bzang. He carries a serpent in his hand. The face-mask is painted red. He is also the ruler of the ‘Nagas’ or the serpent gods. His Sanskrit name is Virupaksha. His head-gear is also fixed with a jewel.

The skips of the dancers, rythmically, accompanied by the beating of cymbals or drums, immensely regale the spectators. Even when the dancers make sudden dashes towards the young spectators—small children—to frighten them mockingly, people do not panic but feel amused and participate in the fun.

Although the dances with their complex significance and esoteric contents do not aim at playing to the gallery, they invariably succeed in getting the public approbation.

### 3. *Padmasambhava charges the Demons Rdo-rje-gro-lod (One Dancer)*

Preceded by the furious beating of drums and muffled shrieks down of horns the solemn figure of a masked dancer slowly steps down the flight of stairs. This figure representing Padmasambhava (or better still one of his eight manifestations) at-once testifying and benign in his outer aspect like all the deities of the Mahayana Buddhism, advances into the courtyard. He is named

Rdo-rje-gro-lod, because he wields in his right hand “the thunderbolt of the gods” called rdo-rje or vajra which can also be translated as “diamond” because it cuts and destroys without being destroyed.

In the left hand the dancer holds a magical and sacred dagger (phur-bu, perhaps the correct word would be Phur-pa) having a triple blade in triangular form and an intricate red and green handle. This weapon is closely connected with the tantric ceremonies and has the power of holding back the demons, invoked at will, by the priest holding such a dagger.

In the fixed expression of the brown mask with two additional eyes above the usual ones, one can read the terror, which this character strikes in the hearts of the enemies of Buddhism. On the other hand the benign expression radiating from the sides, indicates the benevolence and compassion of this dynamic figure. The big tuft of dishevelled hair on his head points to the ascetic tradition of the Indian sages. In fact, Padmasambhava is believed to be a great ‘Yogi’. Padmasambhava is believed to have left India for Tibet presumably via Swat. Afterwards, he is supposed to have visited Nepal and Sikkim exorcising demons and destroying them or converting them to Buddhism.

Padmasambhava, who is considered, as a “second Buddha” in Tibet has been attributed divine qualities. He is shown to be divine in all tantric rituals under various names and diverse manifestations. Some of these personifications are as under:

- (a) The Gentle master (Guru Zhiba)
- (b) The Fierce Master (Guru Dragpa)
- (c) The Tiger God (Stag-lha)
- (d) Union of Precious ones (dkon-mkon-mchog Spryidus)
- (e) The Perfectioner of Thought (Thugs-sgrub).

The dancer who personifies Padmasambhava, wears a brocade dress mostly brown with a sprinkling of other colours in pleasing succession. Pink, green, blue, red and yellow are the dominant colours of the dress having triangular sleeves with an internal lining of many shades. Add to it a beautiful apron, with a silk-embroidered figure and the outfit is complete. A square

cloak (rdor-gong) of yellow brocade covers the shoulders and confirms that the person has accepted the dictates of the yellow robed sect of Tibetan Buddhism. After making three rounds of the altar he takes his seat on a chair placed in the southeast corner of the courtyard by the master of the ceremonies. "Chang" and "Torma" are offered to him, while the monks sitting near the High priest recite a prayer.

The third act concludes with the blaring of horns and the disappearing of the dancer in the gumpa in the same solemn way as in the beginning of the act.

#### 4. *Dance of the 'Celestial Drums' Rnga-'cham (4 Dancers)*

This dance is connected with the preceding one through its inner significance and therefore has to follow it immediately. The previous dance, had shown, the successful fight of Padmasambhava against the demons and finally their conversion. This dance of the celestial drums celebrates the already achieved total victory over them. With the drum-beats the victorious event and the message of truth enshrined in the words of Buddha is brought home to the demons.

The dancers wear a dress, very simple to the one worn by the eight heroes of the 'dance of the golden libation'. The black headgear is of the same form, but there is a double triangle painted on the upper part with a half triangular abstract figure at the top. The triangle is called "tri-Ratna" and stands for the three jewels of Buddhism—Buddha, Dharma (the law) and the Sangha (the monastic community). The abstract figure has the same significance and on closer examination is found to be a flaming trident.

The yellow colour dominates the dress, the cloak and the apron. A yellow piece of cloth hangs from the headgear along the back of the dancers right upto the ankles but lightly tied at the waist. Two of the four dancers beat rhythmically the small drum (clios-Enga) while the other two produce vibrations on the cymbals (sbug-cham). Their sound rises above the clarion-music (rgya-gling) in the very beginning of the act and afterwards above the notes of the bugles made of human bones (rkang-gling).

The beating of the celestial drums” held by two dancers announces Lord Buddha’s message of truth to the world.

The Tibetan Buddhists maintain that truth exists only on one universal wave length. It is only a question of singling it out and capturing it. Through the music of sacred drum the word of the Enlightened One is transmitted to the entire world in an occult way.

At the conclusion of the dance the monks in their colourful costumes enter the gompa in twos by scaling the ladder.

5. *Dance of the ‘Lords of the Cemetery’ Dur-bdag  
(4 Dancers)*

The beginning of the 5th act is heralded by the sound of bugles made of human bones, by the ringing of cymbals and the beating of drums.

Quite unexpectedly two dancers with light, but swift steps, appear on the stage wearing a strange dress and masked in a novel way so as to make known to the people immediately that the human skeletons have arrived. They are called Dur-bdag (Sanskrit: Chitipati). Their duty is to assist the Lord of Death (Yama). They act as benign protecting deities (Sa-bdag) although they play a minor part. The word “Sa-bdag” also stands for ‘the god of the territory’ (entire region) as against ‘gzhi-bdag’ which means ‘the god of the place’ (of the village).

This dance also goes by the name of “macabre dance.”

In the Tibetan iconography, the Chitipatis are always represented as skeletons dancing on human bodies, towards which, they show their feeling of reverence. They show themselves, however, against the demons and specially against those who deprive man of his prodigious capacity to live.

In ancient times, the ‘Chitipatis’ were always shown helping the Lord of Death in his nefarious acts. They were accidentally beheaded and from that time onwards their attitude towards human beings underwent a complete reversal. They became the enemies of all the ‘destroyers of life’ like the bandits, murders, demons etc., and pledged eternal war against all evil spirits.

The two dancers wear a tight shirt and close-fitting trousers which are offwhite in colour. Covering this dress is a red-bordered green gown. A stylized figure of a skeleton in red stripes extends over the main part of the body including the arms, the legs and the feet. The face-mask is made up of a cream-coloured skull with bold red lines. Five small skulls form a crown on the mask. The bare hands keep on dangling with arms raised high and the feet make quick short steps.

At a particular movement the master of the ceremonies holds out a puppet about 45 centimetres tall, which the dancers drag along the courtyard, by pulling at two small strings. The puppet is cast in human form to make it look like a devil (the enemy of Buddhism) and called *bskang-ba*. After roughly dragging it around in a clockwise manner the two dancers put it on the ground for a short while and restart rotating it around themselves in more and more rapid and narrow spirals. From above, the cymbals clash lazily. With menacing and offensive gestures the two 'living skeletons' end up by killing the small puppet which now lies inert. The music stops and from above the stone staircase, two new dancing figures descend attired in gorgeous costumes. The music strikes a monotonous number. The dancers are dressed like *Zhwa-nag* or the tantric priests (*Zhwa-nag-black cap*). Both have the same dress as was worn in the Third act by the single dancer who acted the part of one of the eight manifestations of *Padmasambhava*. Even the apron is the same with coloured-silk bands. A grotesque three-eyed figure in the centre symbolizes the 'all seeingness' of the *Bodhi-sattva*. The only variation in the costume consists in *rdor-gong*—the well-known small quadrangular cloak with a slit in the middle to push in the head. The cloak of the dancers with two ends turned up in front and the other two at the back has a beautiful yellow design of two crossed shining sceptres. The whole thing is hemmed in by a big line of bright red brocade.

The two dancers hold in their right hand the tantric dagger with triple triangular blade (*phurbu*) and a red handle at the end of which is a double knob of green colour. The "Phurbu" is a magical and liturgical object

mostly used in ceremonies. The dagger is sometimes fitted with a grip showing the head of a monster with the hair done in the form of a thunderbolt or a horse's head. As a rule the Phurbu should be made of wood, but most often it is of bronze or very rarely of a gold alloy. All the four dancers, make five energetic rounds of the altar, in diverse ways. The 'skeletons' go on with their short steps and the priests make violent gestures as if to rend the air with their daggers.

The tantric priests know all the rules of the ceremony and of exorcising the demons. In case they are unable to overcome the demons, they seek the help of Padma-sambhava to bring the whole thing to a successful conclusion.

It is interesting to note that the 'priests' 'destroy' the demons only when they are compelled by circumstances; otherwise they try to kill them in such a way that their souls are not prevented from going to heaven. Like a death-bed conversion it earns for the confessor a restful end. The phenomenal energies of the demons are diverted to good purposes after slaying the evil element in them. Once their cycle of 'Karma' is broken and they are freed from destructive propensities, the power of the converted demons for doing good is placed at the disposal of the Buddhist faith and they ultimately become useful protectors of the faith. The two "skeletons" and the two tantric priests close around the inert puppet and at last throw it up in the air as a last gesture of sacrifice to the god of death (Gshin-rje-chosrgyal).

A last round of dancing concludes the fifth act and with the two long and hoarse notes on the horns the dancers re-enter the gompa.

#### 6. *The Aged Scholar Mi-tshe-ring (2 Actors)*

Without any flourish of drums or bugles a character appears on the stage. He is the one whom we had found sitting near the High priest by the side of the altar during the inaugural ceremony of the 'consecration of life'. This masked monk called Mitshe-rng, the aged scholar, wears a long tunic of Chinese brocade with a lavish splashing of yellow colour. He may be taken to represent a 'heretical sage' practising the "right path"

of Buddhism. On the previous occasion we had seen his unmasked face and had noticed that he possessed a very human and smiling personality. Today, on the other hand, he is seen wearing a mask registering a sarcastic smile, and appears to be a man advanced in years moving with uncertain steps and showing no signs of great authority over his disciples. He has a round cap on his head which he soon discards.

It must be added at once that this aged character actually represents a Chinese Buddhist scholar who, due to his incapacity to act on the "right path," has fallen in public esteem. Historically this scholar is identified with Hwa-Shang, the founder of a Buddhist school of thought known as Ch'an which corresponds to the Zen school of Japanese Buddhism (son, in Korean language). In Tibet his school was known as 'ston-mun-pa'. His contemporary in Tibet was a king called 'Khri-srong-Lde-blan' who is said to have invited Indian saints and Chinese scholars to a public debate. The Indian side was represented by the scholar Kamashila. It so happened that Hwa-shang was defeated in this religious contest and suffered a permanent eclipse.

The actor playing the role of Hwa-shang is supposed to be an expert parodist, having achieved distinction in this line after years of training in histrionics. He is one of the sixteen most active monks participating in the Mani Rimdu dance-festival.

In the beginning of the sixth Act, the aged scholar comes limping down the staircase. Although he holds a cane to support him, he slips and stumbles many a time and just escapes tumbling down. He is a classic example of senility and dotage. At a certain point he wants to render homage to the High priest by presenting him the traditional white scarf (kha-da) in a halting manner. A monk immediately rushes to his help. This monk seems to be one of the audience but actually he is an actor planted in the audience for this purpose. His intervention, therefore, can be taken as a vicarious participation by the spectators. The man from the public adjusts a ladder against the balcony but the Chinese scholar is unable to ascend upto the point from where he can directly offer the scarf to the priest. Suddenly

an assistant appears on the stage and puts the scarf around the neck of the scholar himself. The public bursts into laughter. The comic scene continues. An assistant of the scholar, presumably his disciple too, is equally awkward in performing simple acts like preparing tea and pouring it in the cup of his 'master'. He fails even to prepare 'torma' meant for subsequent offerings and the whole thing is drowned in loud peals of laughter from the audience. There is lack of co-ordination between the master and the disciple who prepares a dough which he splashes on the ground and on the aged scholar himself. The shouts, the ringing of bells and the peals of laughter from the audience seem to distract the attention from the main actor who remains quite unconcerned. The funnily designed mask adds to the comic effect. Painted in skin-shade the mask lends the wearer an impression of a man advanced in years, but still smiling and alive. The disciple of the aged scholar who assumes airs of a man learning to do important things, commits blunders inviting roars of laughter from the public.

Annoyed by the show of awkwardness by this disciple the aged scholar gets up, supports himself on his cane and makes a last round of the altar spiritedly and with steps vaguely resembling the steps of a dance. Then he ascends the stone-stair-case and slowly disappears from the public gaze. There are whispers among the audience. Their mood changes and there is an air of expectancy. The next act is about to begin.

7. *The Dance of 'the Eight Furies' (Dharmapal: The Custodians of the Buddhist Doctrine) chos-skyongs (8 Dancers)*

A group of eight tantric divinities called 'Dharmapal' (protectors of the faith) in Sanskrit appears in the courtyard. In Tibet this group is commonly called chos-skyongs or 'protectors of the religious law'. Another quite common word to indicate these eight furies is 'Btsan-srung-ma' or custodians of the Buddhist doctrine. In Buddhist iconography 'the eight Furies' are also known as drag-gsed or a set of eight figures with demoniac look. Apart from being the protectors of



Faith, as already mentioned, they are considered by tantric scholars as special emanations of the eight Bodhisattvas (Krodha) who show to men the path of knowledge.

The dance is performed to the tune of diverse musical instruments. The eight characters go round-and-round clockwise and cut capers around themselves. After the completion of every rhythmic round, the group comes to a stop. Every time a different character steps out of the group in front of the High priest, who watches the show attentively from his throne in the upper balcony. The monks sitting beside him go on muttering prayers.

The Eight Furies (only one amongst them is a female) appear one after the other, two of them wearing blue masks, two red ones, one white mask and three chocolate brown ones, respectively. The first one with the blue mask is called Mgon po—protector of Buddhism. His Sanskrit name is 'Mahakala'. The mask has five small skulls arranged in a circle. There are three eyes in the mask. The third eye is placed vertically in the middle of the forehead. It is a symbol of the omniscience of the Bodhisattva. The costume is very similar to the one used in the first dance (the dance of the golden libation)—triangular sleeves, brocades of different shades, a face-mask and a black tantric cap. Mgon-po is supposed to hold a tantric dagger in the right hand and a trident (trishul—in Sanskrit) in the left. The dress is held tight at the waist by a chain of carved bone or ivory. A vertical breast band in front keeps the whole dress in position. Another dancer with a blue mask wears a similar dress and is supposed to act the part of a female deity—Lhamo, the personal protector of the Dalai Lama, a guardian of the Mahayana Buddhism and hence armed. This actor is supposed to carry a sword in the right and a mace in the left hand.

The mask of Lhamo is the same as that of the first actor, the only difference being a yellow string intersecting the five skulls and a big corvine crest which, during the dance, keeps on falling on the eyes and the forehead of the dancer.

His costume is mostly of brocade in subdued shades. The waist-band and the bands running across the body

are made of carved human bones held in position with a front semicircular breast-band.

Some finely knitted belts made of human bones are worn by the dancers. These belts and the intermingling necklaces made of the same material hark back to the ancient tantric rites associated with practice of the 'left path' (a mystical system which can be practised only by those who are already experts in the 'right path'). The priests of the 'left path' are supposed to display all the characteristics of a demoniac power from the moment they start communicating with the demons through solemn rites. Similarly bugles made of human bones, drums made of human skulls, drinking cups obtained from skull-caps, liturgical knives and swords are associated with the "left path" and are tantric in their origin. The third actor has a red mask. He is called Gahin-rje-gshed and his role is that of the subjugator of the God of Death. He is always smiling and possesses 'the third eye' but does not carry the semicircle of five skulls on his head. The Sanskrit name for him is "Yamantaka." There are no skulls on the two red masks, nor on the white one. Instead they have five big gems (of glass!) representing five Buddhas in meditation. 'Gshin-rje-gshed', often carries in official iconography a bull's head. But the actor here is seen holding in the right hand an axe-shaped knife of tantric variety with a long handle covered in red silk cloth. This weapon is called gri-gug and its use is strictly limited to the exorcising of demons. In the left hand he is supposed to carry a bowl (kapala) made of human skull but what we saw appeared to be only red twisted chords very much like coral wreaths. Gshin-rje-gshed is supposed to fight predators, turn their skulls into cups and drink their blood from these cups.

The fourth actor is the 'god of war' named Beg-tse. His red mask shows a closed mouth. The three eyes on the face are wide open. In his right hand he is supposed to be carrying a sword but in reality he is seen brandishing a small sword called 'khadga' meant for cutting impediments in the way of acquisition of sacred knowledge. In the left hand he holds a semi-cylindrical grey packet. On the top of the mask the actor wears somewhat red

hair whose colour is brought out boldly by a scarf which hangs down at the back almost touching the earth. The fifth actor wears a white mask and his dress too is made of brightly coloured brocade. He is called Rnam-thos-aras—the god of wealth (Kuver in Sanskrit). His delicate features are almost feminine and he is always smiling. The third eye is right in the middle of the forehead and five jewels decorate the head in a semicircle. The sleeves of his small striped tunic are green and red.

The 'God of Wealth' is supposed to be carrying the flag of Victory (Dhwaja) in one hand and in the other a bag made of mongoose skin (nakula). The mongoose is known to be traditionally inimical to serpents who are credited with guarding treasures of wealth. The present dancer, however, was soon carrying in his right hand only a small lightning sceptre (rdo-rje) fashioned in bronze.

The sixth actor named 'TS-hangs Pardhkarpo' is also called 'White Brahma'. His mask is dark brown. His other distinctive characteristics are black hair, three eyes, five skulls and a big belt of carved bones. His tunic is grape-coloured and he has the appearance of a warrior. In the right hand, he holds a circular metal disc with a handle which looks like a primitive mirror. In the left hand he carries a shining cylinder with a coned peak of a non-descript type. He is called "btanpo" (the powerful) or 'Srong-tsamgampo' which is almost identical to the name of the first King of Tibet.

The 7th dancer also has a chocolate-coloured mask with three eyes and a semicircle of five skulls. He goes by the name of 'Gshin-refechos-ryyal' and represents the God of Death, the same as Yama in the fifth act. He holds a small mongol-type bow in his left hand. In the right hand he holds tightly a small metallic spear which is supposed to serve him as an arrow. In the Tibetan official iconography the colour of the face instead of being brown is usually blue, red, white or yellow. The bow which is used only in Khumbu is an innovation of Mani Rimdu festival.

The 7th and the last dancer personifies 'Rta-mgrin', protector of the horses (and of animals in general). He is called Hayagriva in Sanskrit. His mask is chocolate

coloured. His hair style is in the form of a pony tail. Five skulls circumscribe his face. Unlike other "furies" he has only one eye in the centre of the forehead. He does not carry anything in his left hand while in his right hand there is a wooden sculpture representing the elongated and stylized figure of a human being.

At the end of the dance the 'eight Furies' ascend the stone staircase in pairs in the same manner in which they had made their appearance. Two shrill and long bugle-notes bring the Seventh Act to a close.

The spectators who had been watching the show in obvious admiration have a ten minutes' INTERVAL during which some monks are seen distributing among the audience biscuits, tea, yoghurt, orange slices and other popular snacks by way of spontaneous hospitality.

The monks and the nuns, however, are treated as honoured guests and receive every now and then boiling hot tea in their wooden bowls as is customary with the Tibetans. They also get offerings in cash as a token of fraternal greetings.

#### 8. *The Dance of 'the Blackmen' and of 'the Regional God Gnas-arung (3 Dancers)*

The fourth act is generally called "Gnas-srung" which simply means 'the deity'. It involves three characters appearing on the stage at short intervals. To begin with, two Mi-nag (or blackmen) descend into the courtyard. They represent two local deities subordinate to a third one called Zur-ra who appears on the scene after a lapse of ten minutes. He is the master and they have to be at his beck and call. He is a very important local deity associated with the Khumbu-Yul-Hia mountain. His importance is evident from the fact that his appearance on the stage must be preceded by seven standard bearers. The two blackmen rush into the courtyard flashing unsheathed sabres and start dancing furiously, tearing the air with their weapons. They are dressed in black trousers and black blouses. Their front is covered with a festooned apron with irregular coloured stripes meant to serve as a tiger skin. A yellow handkerchief is flung across the neck. Their black masks also display somewhat ferocious features with the nose tuned up like

the snout of a pig. As compared to other masks of the same type it has rather bold features.

The hind skullcap of the mask is painted orange-yellow and a white scarf fastened at the waist hangs down the back portion of the head. Their shoes are a combination of bright-coloured woollen footwear of the Sherpas and the ceremonial boots of the monks. They continue their mock-fight against the invisible demons amidst the sounding of bugles.

The singing of the monks by the side of the High priest is intended to push the demons in front of the footlights thus exposing them to the merciless knocking of the Blackmen. At every knock the blackmen go on narrowing the dance-circle thus putting a squeeze around the demons. After scoring a hit the blackmen pause for a moment and silence envelopes the scene. Finally the two blackmen re-enter the Gompa. Soon after emerge seven heralds with crested caps, two conch players, incense-bearers, two clarion players and a carrier of the sacred can wrapped in a white silk scarf. It is the magic wand (Khatvanga) of the apostle Padmasambhava, on whose knob there are three skulls and a small thunderbolt. It is a suitable weapons to subdue and convert the demons.

Then appears the much awaited character—"Zur-ra" amidst musical fanfare. He is the most beautifully dressed character in the entire Mani Rimdu performance. His dark brown tunic has bold stripes all over, even on the large sleeves. A big quadrangular cloak of yellow brocade and of uncommon pattern covers the shoulders. On top of the three-eyed mask, we find only one skull as against the usual five.

The mask is painted chocolate-brown. Its feline, protruding teeth are indeed terrifying. Three small flags in a semicircle adorn his head. They are in addition to the five main flags representing the five Buddhas in meditation. A deep blue scarf forms the border of the scarf. It is this majestic character who acts as the defender of the faith and protector of the Khumbu region. He comes brandishing in the right hand, a big lance almost the size of a javelin. In the left hand he holds a scarlet handkerchief and a dagger. Add to this his white and

red apron and we have before us 'Dgra-tha', the well-known symbol of cupidity-resembling the Indian deity-'Mara'—symbolizing desire, lust, evil-intention, ignorance—in short the great Tempter.

'Dgra-tha' was conquered by Padmasambhava along with other evil creatures who try to tempt and corrupt the faithful among the Buddhist. But the diabolical forces could raise their head again and claim new victims among the faithful. It was exactly to guard against this possibility that Zur-ra had to keep himself always in readiness. Being all powerful, he has to see that the life of the Sherpas is not endangered. He also has to make sure that other minor powers, including the two Mi-Nags, charged with the responsibility of protecting Khumbu region, discharge properly their duties and put up an effective fight against the forces of evil.

Zurra slowly comes down. He makes a round of the altar, his steps keeping time with the slow beating of the drum. Then he proceeds to take his seat in a corner to enable the Master of the ceremonies to make an offering of Torma to him on behalf of perhaps the entire Tengpoche monastery. Mount Khumbu is supposed to be his abode. As has already been mentioned, he is intimately associated with this mountain which in literature goes by the name of Khumbila. This mountain is directly visible above the head of the dancers in the north westerly direction.

The two 'Mi-nag' come to the stage once again just to present their offerings to Zurra, their spiritual master. Two minor divinities keep on pirouetting in the courtyard just to show that they are available at all times for the protection of the Sherpas. Zurra, in the meantime, throws the offerings in the air as a sign of homage to more powerful gods and joins others in dancing.

The Act comes to an end with the exit of the bugle-blowers and the heralds, followed by the three dancers in their characteristic costumes.

9. *Dance of 'the travellers of the sky' Mkha-gro-ma (4 or 5 Dancers)*

The ninth act called Mkha-grow or 'travellers of the sky' opens with almost imperceptible blowing of

the bugle. The epithet of 'travellers of the sky' is applied to certain minor female deities who always appear in a dancing pose. They are called 'Dakini' in Sanskrit. In this drama they are five in number. In exceptional cases, however, due to non-availability of dancers, even four of them will do. Their names are: Rinchen (Ratna Dakini), Padma (Padma Dakini), Snatshogs Rdo-rje (Visva Vajra Dakini) and Rdo-rje (Vajra Dakini). They are without masks and very modestly dressed. The dancers simply put on a short blue-green gown over their monastic tunic, a multi-coloured apron and a quadrangular red cloak with one end dangling in front. Their headgear consists of five vertical lobes to which are tied various objects with strings which they sway apart now and then during the dance due to centrifugal force. The five dancers carry in their right hand the magic drum (damaroo) and in the left hand a bronze bell (ghanta) with a handle in the shape of a miniature thunder-bolt (rdo-rje).

These two instruments keep time with the dance-steps of the actors. It is a slow motion dance with an occasional pirouette. The action of this scene is devoid of any dramatic fire-works. The Dakinis are supposed to portray certain emotions like mercy or compassion, so their acting is in a rather low key. The purpose of the introduction of the Dakinis in the drama seems to be to remind the Sherpas that apart from the most powerful and terrifying deities there are other minor ones who contribute to human happiness unobtrusively and therefore not to be forgotten. The Dakinis are supposed to help the meditating ascetics tide over some difficult moments in their life by intoning the mysterious voices into their ears. To ordinary mortals these voices are inaudible. The origin of thunderbolt as an emblem and as a liturgical instrument in tantric and Buddhist practice goes back to vedic religion (the ancient form of Brahmanism). Indra, the vedic god of the sky and rain is usually shown carrying a thunder-bolt. Thus, to begin with, the thunder-bolt in the form of a small sceptre, was the weapon usually encountered in Indian mythology to disperse the clouds from the sky and release rainwater from them. Subsequently, the priest-

hood employing figurative language to express religious experience spoke of “scattering the clouds of ignorance and doubt” as a means of attaining sacred knowledge. In Sanskrit, the word for thunder-bolt is ‘vajra’. It has a symmetrical shape. At both ends of a small cylinder there is a central nail. It is surrounded by four or eight other curved and converging nails like the curvature of the petals of a tulip. It can also be in the form of a cross as is the case with the base of some sacred Tibetan statues.

The “Damaru” or the double drum, employed as a magical or sacred instrument in the tantric ceremonies had originally two skull-caps, joined at the two ends with two suitably cut pieces of white skin. The magical drum is operated by alternate flourishes of the hand so as to set in motion two small knots attached to two strings. The stringed knots strike against the surface of skins and produce percussion.

The bell (ghanta) is one of the classical instruments used by the priest in liturgical services. It is as essential a part of the ceremonies as the thunderbolt, and they generally go together. The shape of the bell recalls the ancient stupa form. Generally it has a handle in the shape of a thunderbolt with the figure of a divinity in the middle. The handle is made separately and then joined to the bell. This is done through a special fusion of bronze to which is added a small quantity of silver to give it resonance.

It is said that the voice of a Dakini can only be heard by those who devote themselves to meditation. At first these voices are said to be harsh and strike fear in the heart of the listeners but gradually they tone down so as to synchronise with the contemplative mood of the ascetics and help them on the path of enlightenment. Mila-raspa, the famous mystic of the eleventh century (also known as Milarepa) is generally shown in the religious iconography with the palm of his hand shielding a part of the ear to hear better the mystic voices of the Dakini. As he was supposed to have acquired some special supernatural powers, he was entitled to wear a dress of white-cotton called “raspa.” He figures in this very dress in the sacred ‘thankas’ or the Tibetan



paintings on religious themes.

A tender clarion note sounds the conclusion of this short act, which is followed by serving of tea by monks and novices to their superiors who had been patiently watching the show for long hours.

10. *The overconfident man (sarcastic) Rtogs-Idan*  
(2 Actors)

The Tibetan word 'Rtogs-Idan' literally means 'he who has a correct vision'. In the context of this play, referring as it does to the so-called present day sadhus in India, it implies a dig at the ascetics of a religious fold (the Hindus) antagonistic to the Sherpa brand of Buddhism. Obviously the lampooning is for home consumption. Hinduism being the state religion of Nepal it was not possible to indulge in the luxury of satirising it there. So a remote corner of Nepal is selected to express before a limited audience the class-consciousness of Sherpas as people belonging to a different religious stock. Viewed from a different angle, this fact provides convincing evidence of the catholicity of outlook and spirit of religious toleration of the tiny Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal.

The 10th Act is keenly awaited by the spectators who know that although it may not be full of spectacular costumes and terrifying deities it can provide them with real fun. Moreover, they will understand every word and gesture and thus completely identify themselves with the action of the drama. In fact, this is the only Act in which the dialogue is crisp and crystal clear. Most of the time, the dialogue consists of improvised sentences fitting well in the general scheme of action. There are only two actors on the stage. The first one plays the part of an Indian Sadhu in tattered clothes. The Sadhu's jacket is hidden under a white tunic. He wears Sherpas shoes, perhaps second-hand. His face-mask betrays him to be a man from India, not very young, slightly eccentric and showy. Generally the Buddhists have a dig on the Hindu sadhus for their ostentatious living. The Buddhists affirm that the ascetics of their religion always have a neat and dignified bearing and retire in the distant mountains away from the public

gaze which is in sharp contrast with the ways of the Hindu sadhus who generally frequent the public highways and crowded cities to show themselves off in the act of 'meditation'. Thus the 10th Act is polemical in nature.

The first actor wears big silver ear-rings. His hair are gathered up in a tuft over his head (characteristic trait of the Hindu-sadhus) and he carries a netted sack in which he keeps stored all his belongings. In his right hand there is the magic drum and in the left a big closed knife which he will use to kill himself towards the conclusion of the Act.

The second actor is the assistant or follower of the great Indian sadhu. He is a frail youngman dressed like a poor sherpa. He is called 'Bkra-shis domgrub'.

The plot of the play consists of a series of "blunders" on the part of the great saint. This is highly embarrassing for the young Sherpa pupil who obviously had been taken in by the so-called 'sanctity' of the great man and wanted by faithfully imitating the master to acquire great spiritual powers for himself. Now the pupil finds himself in the unenviable position of having not only to defend the blunders of his master but also to carry on a distasteful profession.

Even as the master wants to make an offering to the High priest he fails to remember the name of the monastery to which this priest belongs. He looks for his assistant in every nook and corner and calls his name loudly. After having found him and learnt from him the name of the monastery he prepares to make the offering but fumbles again to the great delight of the Sherpas audience.

Then the Indian Sadhu takes out a doll from his sack which he means to use as an object of sacrifice (Buddhists are highly critical of the sacrifices offered to the goddess Kali and other gods by the Hindus) but the assistant remembering his passion for dolls in his childhood, entreats the master not to be cruel to the doll. The Sadhu thinks that the pupil has taken a fancy to his doll but the implied accusation of cruelty against Hindus is not missed by the Buddhist spectators. So to redeem himself and his religion in the eyes of the

spectators he talks of performing a yogic feat. He puts his knife on the ground with the blade upward and moves his body slowly towards the thin edge of the blade. It is a tense moment. People hold their breath. They know that the knife is a real one and hope that somehow something will go wrong and the life of the sadhu will be saved. The actor with full concentration and after a number of feined mistakes in judging the correct distance between the kife and his body ultimately falls dead on his back. The pupil, rather shaken, blurts out some words against certain pretentions of the Hindu sadhus and thoughtfully advances towards the doll and busies himself in ransacking the master's sack for eatables.

The spectators show visible approval of the ignominious end of the main actor. What a cruel end to a comic beginning. The tension dies down. The shadows lengthen on the stone-pavement of the courtyard. The setting sun casts a golden halo over the lookers-on who huddle in compact groups to catch the rays of the dying sun in an effort to warm their bodies. The long day is not yet over. Though the long-drawn programme has been enjoyable but there is a feeling of tiresomeness among the spectators as on the occasion of Spanish bull fights when one waits endlessly for the shadows to fall on the opposite side of the big open space where the strenuous struggle between man and the beast continues so that one may see the fatal end before the lengthening shadows completely devour the scene. At the Mani Rimdu, too, the falling darkness is like another unnamed goddess of the Buddhist pantheon which devours the light inch by inch. No doubt it is a goddess of Darkness. And now is the time for the conclusion of the 10th Act and the commencement of the next one. The blaring of horns and the beating of drums signify the end of the overconfident Indian Sadhu.

11. *Dance of the 'two Assistants of Lha-mo' Lhag-ma gnyis (2 Dancers)*

The two goddesses accompanying the goddess Lhamo, protector of the DALAI LAMA—belong to the lower but not omnipotent circle of minor goddesses. They

are of the same rank as the Dakinis whom we met in the 9th Act. They are called Makaravaktra and Simhavaktra and are charged with the duty of carrying out the orders of Lha-mo. The extremely realistic tradition of Tibetan iconography shows Mahaviktra and Sumhavaktra as two goddesses crossing a lake of blood on which float bones and skulls of human beings. Since a part of their duties is to attack and annihilate the enemies of Buddhism it can be safely presumed that the two actors of the 11th Act represent the two goddesses mentioned above. Strangely enough their dress is similar to that of the tantric priests—'Zhaw-nags'. They have a big black cap and colourful clothes consisting of a long-sleeved triangular tunic and an embroidered apron. Their faces are hidden by a mask of chocolate-brown colour as in the case of the 'Eight Furies'. The mask is crowned by five skulls which testifies to their role of protectors of the faith. It shows an upturned nose like the snout of a pig. It is a short scene. The spectators feel a nip in the evening cold and it is high time that the last two acts of Mani Rimdu were quickly performed.

#### 12. *Dance of the 'sabres' Gri-'cham (4 Dancers)*

The Sabre dance which has its origin in the ancient Bon religion is announced by a brief bugle-note. Four dancers rush into the courtyard brandishing the huge sabres which we have already seen unsheathed in the 8th Act in the hands of the 'black men'. The name of the dance (Gri cham) is derived from the name of the sabre (Sanskrit: Churi)—a weapon which was generally used by the epic heroes to fight the demons. The two dancers in their turn, represent two demons who have been converted by the tantric priests and now are charged with the duty of protecting Buddhist religion. They belong to the category of minor deities. Their original habitat was the air and it is believed that in the prehistoric times they were cave-dwelling hunters riding wild horses. Their dress is similar to the one worn by Mi-nag (or black men)—tight fitting black trousers, black jacket apron of tiger skin and a yellow band at the waist and neck. The mask is chocolate brown.

The four dancers rend the air with their blades and make rounds of the altar to the accompaniment of the deafening music of the cymbals. In their movements the dancing monks imitate the protective action of the minor deities for the defence of Sherpa population of the entire region and more particularly for the shepherds and solitary merchants going over ill-defined paths from one valley to another.

After a short invocatory song by monks sitting by the side of the High priest the dance comes to an end. The action moves towards a spectacular crescendo just before the end.

13. *The 'backward dance' (Dance of the 'protectors of Khumbu'—The closing dance) Zor-'cham, (2 Dancers)*

While the evening chill descends on the lazy audience, tired of sitting for eight to ten hours at a stretch, the two dancers appear on the stage to perform the last dance which could be more appropriately called the final and concluding ritual—an offering of torma to all the divinities.

The two actors dressed like tantric priests enter the courtyard and avail themselves of the small balls of Torma on the central altar to perform their last valedictory function. The balls of torma are thrown in five different directions and finally across the gate of the gompa through the main outer gate of the courtyard. Of all the means employed in the last 12 acts to fight the demons, the offering of the 'torma' in the last scene is perhaps the simplest and the most efficacious. It is a weapon which includes all other weapons because it represents the continuity of religious sense of daily devotion and the uninterrupted dialogue between man and his benign gods who are engaged in continuous struggle against the forces of evil. As the offering ceremony moves towards its climax indicating in unmistakable terms that the redemption of man from the omnipresent demons depends only on the ritual under way, the big horns blare out in full blast. The audience convinced of the success of the function go all out to concentrate on the main goal—defeat of the demons

through a ritual accompanied by persuasive noises.

The 13th act is also known as Log-cham which means "dance in the reverse" direction. It also signifies the end of the day for all the monks who have danced. It is also called "the closing dance" or "the exit dance."

Thus comes to an end a great day. The night is round the corner and the spectators gather round the fires, lit here and there, to warm themselves. Very soon the temple courtyard will go empty and silent. The small crowd consisting of monks and nuns in small groups and some Europeans will go in for the last refreshing cup of tea or of "chang" to reactivate the blood circulation in the numbed parts of their body.

### **The Silent Finale**

The Mani-Rimdu festival comes to an end in the late afternoon of the third day. It is a subdued end, without any audience, without any pomp and show, without any musical fanfare, in short an absolutely silent finale.

At about five in the evening when the sun is on the decline, the ceremony commences. The High Priest takes his seat in the North-west corner of the courtyard. Facing each other eight to ten monks sit in two rows on the carpet in front of the High Priest. Present only are one bugle blower, one cymbal player and two clarion players. The ritual called 'Zhi Dai skyin Sgreg'—the concluding act of a year of exorcism, is about to begin. The High priest is in yellow robes while the monks are in their usual red brown. Turn by turn all the holy people present chant the prayers, slowly swinging their bodies forwards and backwards. The High priest rings the small bell at regular intervals. In the middle of the ceremony he picks up small quantities of rice and of tormo from a copper receptacle and from the altar on his left and throws them in a bonfire in front of him. In his left hand he has, as usual, the small bell with the handle in the form of a ritual thunderbolt (rdo-rje).

Occasionally the monk in charge of throwing the offering in the fire approaches the bon-fire and at one time seems to throw out some dark sticks which in

reality are rolls of parchment on which are written magic formulae and ritual prayers.

The aim of this ceremony is to throw out, once for all, the evil forces operating in the Khumbu valley which had escaped earlier exorcism. There is a very close resemblance between this religious function and certain other ceremonies performed in the Buddhist world—in Tibet, Sikkim and Nepal—on different dates on the occasion of the New Year festival. The end of the ceremony signifies the end of all evil and with the marrow complete saintliness will reign over the entire Khumbu region of the Sherpa people.

## NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

### 1. **Tiger: Epithet for a strong Sherpa**

Those Sherpas who, during the mountaineering expeditions reach or go beyond a height of 8,000 metres are given the honorific of 'Tiger' by the Himalayan Club of Calcutta. So this name of a powerful animal—the biggest among the felines—originating in Siberia and commonly found in Central and South Asia, is here applied to intrepid mountain-men who conquer the snows. The photograph shows a tiger. It was taken in the Chitawan region of the Nepalese Terai (where the Jungle Lodge or Tiger Tops hotel is situated). This place can be reached in an hour's flight from Kathmandu. From here the tourists, at the right season, can see tigers and other rare animals while comfortably riding on elephant-back.

In the Rewa forests of India in the South of Allahabad and Banaras there are light-cream coloured tigers called 'white tigers' which represent a rare variety now established as a race.

Some writers have wrongly confused them with snow leopards which have whitish coats as natural camouflage. A male tiger can attain a length of even 300 cm (head and trunk plus 90 cm of tail). It may weigh almost 300 kilograms and attain a height of 90 cm measured from the mane.

### 2. **Votive offerings to the goddess Kali (Kathmandu)**

Nepal is a country of religious eclecticism. It is not common to find the same 'follower' owing allegiance to Hindu as well as Buddhist Gods. This reflects a spirit of great tolerance among the religious matters. However, numerically Hindus are in majority and Hinduism is the state-religion. At dif-



ferent times during the year but specially after the rains or the harvest, the Nepalese people make their offerings to Kali, the black goddess of human welfare.

3. **Propitiating Kali (Kathmandu)**

Following a centuries old custom, the offerings made to the goddess Kali may consist of small quantities of selected fruits, spices and flowers. Moreover, the offerings must include some sacrificial object. Therefore, animals of every kind are slaughtered in honour of the goddess and latter on their meat is cooked and distributed among the devotees.

Photographs number 2 & 3 show some views of a weekly ritual performed in the temple of Chobar (Dakshin Kali) near the gorge of the river Bagmati not very far from Kathmandu.

4. **In Contemplation (Kathmandu)**

The Sadhus or Hindu ascetics frequent the temples in large numbers. One can see their emaciated bodies due to privations willingly undergone to achieve saintliness. Their indifference to worldly affairs is also evident. It seems, however, strange that they prefer places like cities and crowded temples to display their renunciation of mundane values. The followers of other religions scoff at this behaviour of theirs and would rather prefer their 'ascetic withdrawal' in solitary places far from the maddening crowds.

5. **'Stupa' at Bodhnath**

This is one of the most respected and frequented Buddhist monuments. Pilgrims come here not only from Nepal but also from other distant places. The Bodhnath Stupa dates back to 5th Century A.D. Its architecture represents a 'mandala' or sym-

bolic representation of the universe. The stupa is a monument erected in the memory of Shakyamuni Buddha. It records his departure from the world of mortals. The significance remains unchanged even when the name of the monument is changed to 'chaitya' or 'chorten' in Tibet. The term chaitya which is roughly equivalent to chorten or "stupa" (or 'Thupa' in Pali language) means a grave of earth or a walled burial place erected to preserve sacred relics. To be more exact it would be better to call the entire monument as Chaitya, reserving the title of stupa or chorten to its most important part constituted by the curved hemispheric portion—a dwarfed dome in the form of a bell or a bulb. The first great builder of stupas to commemorate lord Buddha was Ashoka, one of the greatest Emperors of India and grandson of the Indian King who was contemporary of Alexander, the great. Ashoka ruled between 264 B.C. and 226–227 B.C. (or perhaps between 274 B.C. and 232 B.C.). He established a big empire covering almost the whole of India. After his conversion to Buddhism in about 250 B.C. his political activity was greatly influenced by the new faith. He may be considered the Constantine of Buddhism.

**6. Prayer Wheels (Bodhnath)**

The clockwise circumambulation around every sacred Buddhist monument is fundamental to Buddhist ritual. While going around these monuments the devotees rotate prayer wheels which is an ideal means of reciting the prayers of 'mantras' written on them or contained in the cylinders 'mani' in the form of writings on cloth or paper.

**7. An open-air School (Pokhara)**

In Nepal illiteracy is fought in diverse ways.

The biggest obstacle, however, is the lack of a good communication system and the mountainous nature of the whole region. The Pokhara village where this picture was taken happens to be situated along some urban roads which cross it and link it with green zones in its immediate vicinity. The shady Banyan trees dominate the scene and give a character to the place. In the surrounding mountainous areas, at lower heights, the rhododendrons are in flower even in the month of February. In April the whole area becomes a beautiful carpet of flowers. Some rhododendrons are more than 10 metres in height. As a tourist attraction with its beauty of lakes and mountains the valley of Pokhara can very well compare, though on a small scale, with the famous Kashmir valley in India.

**8. The Kathmandu Valley**

Once the valley in which Kathmandu is located went by the exclusive name of Nepal. This valley is specially beautiful at the time of autumnal harvest (October-November). The cultivated terraced fields, divided in compact geometrical blocks, lie like shining carpets in the post-monsoon limpid atmosphere under a bright sun. The joy of farm-work is written on every face.

**9. Linear beauty created by man**

Near Cheopori Lekh—the range which blocks the valley of Kathmandu in the North—the terraced cultivation at the foot of the village constitutes one of the major aesthetic elements of the landscape. For centuries, man has been practising assiduously this method of cultivation which admits of only partial irrigation. In this way the cultivable land is also saved from soil erosion.

#### 10. **Terraced fields**

Farmers engaged in traditional methods of agriculture form 92 % of the Nepalese population. The cultivated lands give one the impression of "homely gardens." The photograph shows the autumnal scene on a circumscribed piece of land near Kathmandu.

In Nepal the main agricultural production are—rice (25 million quintals per year), maize (10 million quintals), millet (1–1/2 million quintals), wheat (2–1/2 million quintals), sugar cane (2 million quintals), tobacco (50,000 quintals), Oilseeds (6,00,000 quintals), jute (4,50,000 quintals).

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 11. <b>Hard tilling</b>       | 12. <b>Preparing mid-day lunch</b> |
| 13. <b>Ploughing the land</b> | 14. <b>Helping Papa</b>            |

In Nepal there are two harvests a year, i.e. two different products can be obtained from the same land in the course of a year. The main harvest months are May and November. In the Kathmandu valley the grain crops are reaped in May when the sowing of potatoes commences. In June and July begins the transplanting of rice. The maize and soya are harvested in August. Rice, millet and mustard ripen in November. After harvesting these three crops the land is particularly reploughed.

The products are spread on the threshing floors in the public squares right on the metalled roads for drying up and winnowing. The farmers give a smile of satisfaction for the bounty of Gods invoked in the privacy of their houses or during rites in public. The frugal afternoon meal enjoyed in the fields or the thrashing done by the hooves of the animals have an air of gaiety of an annual mass festival.

15. **Beautiful Nepalese landscape (Panchkhat)**  
Setting out from Kathmandu on the road to Dhulikhel in the east one can admire spectacular scenery which gives a correct idea of the typical Nepalese landscape dominated by majestic snow-covered ranges of Himalayas. At Dhulikhel most people like to rest for a while to enjoy the excellent panoramic view of the mountains. Continuing on the path descending slowly towards Dolalghat one reaches the bed of the valley and comes across villages which lend charm to the ever changing picture. In the centre of the photograph the distant snow-covered Phurbi chyachu (6658 m) is visible.
  
16. **Local Beauty (Pokhara)**  
The Nepalese women whether engaged in house-hold chores or working in the fields or building houses or constructing roads, keep up their peculiar grace and dignity. They have a sober taste in dress and readily exchange a charming smile with their acquaintances and relations.  
Nepalese people are very cordial towards foreigners. Only a people proud of their centuries old freedom can exude such cordiality.
  
17. **Winnowing of Rice (Bhadgaon).**  
Soon after the harvest, village life in the months of November and December centres completely around preparations for conserving rice and millet for winter. Every inch of space on the roads, in the courtyards of houses and temples, is covered by mats over which the produce of the soil is spread to dry in the sun. Even the village squares temporarily get turned into happy threshing floors and the passers-by have to be very careful not to tread over the precarious seeds which women throw up in the air in the

light morning breeze.

18. **A Street Scene (Bhadgaon).**

The Nepalese are fond of putting a flower on the loads they have to carry. By this graceful gesture they seem to imply that the weight of the load is lessened by the flower. Skilled workmanship is quite a paying business for the majority of the people of Patan and of Bhadgaon (photo) but agriculture is also widely practised.

19. **Pals (Pokhara)**

21. **Carrying Water  
(Pokhara)**

20. **Returning from**

**the fountain  
(Pokhara)**

Pokhara, touched very rarely by the tourists, still preserves the freshness of a working village-centre. It has been connected with the capital very recently by a road. It is situated at a height of 900 metres at the confluence of beautiful valleys. Its famous lakes are surrounded by luxuriant vegetation. The inhabitants of Pokhara have a spirit of natural cordiality of a rustic type which characterises the entire country.

Pokhara is the base camp for the expeditions which set out for the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna group of mountains. Foreigners attempting the Mustang mountains must pass through Pokhara also.

Before the close of the Tibetan frontiers Pokhara was a flourishing commercial centre, connected with Tibet by the long Gandaki and Thakkhola road.

It is located near Setikhola 'Canyon' and is slightly warmer and more humid than Kathmandu. Its temperature in the hottest months (May & June) ranges approximately between 32–35°C and at night it touches 10–16°C. July and August are the most humid months while March and April are the most dusty. October and November can

be termed the “golden period” of the year with blue skies, pleasant temperature, dry air and dazzling colours.

The whole locality is dominated by the towering peaks of Annapurna I (8091 m; ‘Goddess of food’), Machapuchare (6,797 m; ‘Fish tail’) and Annapurna III. Annapurna was conquered in 1950 by a French expedition; in 1957 the English touched a height of 47 metres from the peak of Machapuchare; Annapurna III was conquered in 1961 by an Indian expedition.

22. **Snack time.**

23. **Caught gossiping**

24. **Persuasive talk (Pokhara)**

The population of Pokhara mainly consists of the Newaris. There are some Gurungs and Thakkhalis who are there to carry on trade (at one time flourishing between India and Tibet) which now is languishing due to the closure of the Indo-Tibetan frontiers. The people subscribe to both Buddhism and Hinduism. Although officially abolished, the caste system is still widely followed. It follows a social hierarchy at the head of which are the agriculturists, the merchants and the artisans. At the lowest rung of the social ladder are the butchers, the sweepers and other menials.

25. **Mount Everest—An aerial view**

The Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation daily operates the famous Everest flight. At times, there are even two morning flights depending upon the demand.

Perhaps there is hardly any tourist passing through Kathmandu who would miss the opportunity to fly by the side of the famous mountain which happens to be also the

highest in the world. In an hour's flight in the crisp morning air one can enjoy the sight of a magnificent chain of mountains each one of which boasts of some mountaineering feat of great courage, endurance and sacrifice.

Here we see from the South- SW. the famous trio—Everest Lhotse and Nuptse. On the left, in the first row are the Kang taiga and the Tramserku. In the whole of Nepal one can be sure of almost constantly good weather in the Post-monsoon period with clear atmosphere and warm sunshine which is ideal for photography.

**26. Lukla Airstrip (Dudh Kosi-valley).**

Lukla Airstrip is a long sloping field for landing and taking off small tourist aircraft. It is known by this name throughout the world.

This airfield was first used, many years ago, to transport some prefabricated houses meant for the childrens' schools in Sherpa villages. Afterwards, the efficiency of the Pilots was responsible for operational flights for the emergency evacuation of the sick, the wounded and the frost bitten personnel during the mountaineering expeditions.

Many daily flights now connect Lukla with the capital. Many mountaineers and tourists can now make direct landing at the mountain slopes of the Everest or at the mountains in Khumbu region inhabited by the Sherpas. Lukla is inaccessible by air only during the rainy season or during the short winter snowfalls.

**27. Helicopter service—anywhere!**

The Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation flying the Nepalese flag has a modern fleet of big aeroplanes for international flights and is equipped with various medium and small



aircraft for inland flights.

These planes can even land on small, sloping fields in the remote villages and valleys.

A modern and efficient helicopter service can reach almost anywhere to evacuate some seriously ill person to a hospital or to save a life.

Again, the tourists can choose from a number of interesting and inexpensive flights to have a more intimate feel of Nepal through a comfortable, fast and punctually running communication system. The distance covered in days in the past can now be covered in a matter of minutes by an aeroplane.

**28. Encounter with Sherpas at Lukla Airstrip**

On reaching Lukla (about 2900 metres altitude) from Kathmandu by Air, the tourists will invariably find sherpas waiting for them at the Lukla airstrip. Warm handshakes and smiles immediately establish a rapport between the sherpas and tourists which gradually develops into mutual respect and confidence. This warmth will mark their subsequent relationship during the journey together for the next ten or twelve days. This happy introduction in the midst of the incoming and outgoing passengers of a plane becomes a prelude to a healthy and co-operative camp-life in the high valleys of Khumbu during which the Sherpas act in various capacities as coolies, guides, cooks, assistants and rope-partners, apart from lending moral support in times of emergency and giving a friendly welcome to the foreigner on a visit to their native villages.

**29. Khumde (3865 m)—An important Sherpa village**

A part of the Khumjung habitat and nestled

in the valley of the same name the village of Khumde bears itself to the autumnal sun in the midst of a most delightful scenery. Under a blanket of clouds the Amai Dablam (to the left), the Kang Taiga and the Tramserku can be located on the bank of Dudh Kosi (the river of milk).

A small hospital (the only one in the entire region) built and run by the New Zealanders is situated at the highest point of the village on the outskirts of the forest. All the inhabitants of this village boast of a pure Sherpa lineage.

30. **Tengpoche (3867 m) and Amai Dablam (6856 m)**

One would hardly expect a monastery in such a spectacular landscape but sure enough there is one. At the top of the mountain (lower part of the picture) a path diagonally ascends till the culminating point of a steep. Immediately to the left where the path ends we find the building complex which constitutes the Tengpoche monastery. It rests cosily in the centre of a circle of mountains.

31. **A Weaver at the loom (Thami)**

Notwithstanding the fact that the Thami village lies on the road which in past decades connected Nepal with Tibet (the important trade route of the caravans of Khumbu La) home-made clothes are preferred to the ready made stuff imported from outside.

32. **Nauche bazar (Namche Bazar 3440 m)**

Nauche (the local name—Nange) has earned a name for itself in the annals of mountaineering during the last few decades. It is also known as Namche Bazar. It is so called because of the proximity of a forest lying between the village and the river Bhote Kosi (which joins Dudh Kosi not very far from

Nauche) there is a forest terrain covered with needle-like leaves. The population of Nauche is not very homogeneous. Though people of pure sherpa origin are in majority there are also many Tibetan immigrants and various other skilled workers from the lower valleys of Nepal and from India.

Nauche is a compulsory transit centre for all the mountaineering expeditions heading for Everest-zone and therefore a centre for recruitment of sherpas as high altitude porters. Nauche is the only place in this vast region which boasts of a post and telegraph office for the use of the local police post.

33. **Kang Taiga (6809 m) and Tramserku (6623 m) viewed from Thami**

These impressive mountains though not attaining a height of 7000 metres are visible from many surrounding valleys. From Thami they offer a somewhat unusual view.

34. **Prayers chiselled in stone**

The first six writing blocks (in the centre of the photograph) contain the famous invocation—"Om mani Padme hum" (Hail! thou jewel of the lotus flower)—the mystery formula recurring along the paths of Khumbu and in Buddhist temples. The devotees generally make a round of the stone-engravings and of walls with stone tablets bearing the prayers.

35. **Amai Dablam (6856 m) and Khumjung village (3790 m)**

Just over a hundred houses constitute the biggest village of the Khumbu region. The Khumjung village has given birth to a number of important personages in the hierarchy of the Buddhist church. Some of the respected heroes of the Himalayan

mountaineering conquests also come from this village.

Sherpas provide the human element in the saga of this great mountain which surrounds them from all sides, trains them and challenges them. They are the conquerors, the tigers of the high altitudes and of snow.

**36. A hawker at Tengpoche**

This merchant, very much Tibetan in appearance and dress, has come to Tengpoche with his small load of heterogeneous objects on the occasion of the Mani Rimdu ceremony. He is sure to attract customers. He seems to be admiring the snowy peaks which horizontally encircle the monastery.

**37. The Tengpoche monastery (3867 m) as seen from west south-west**

On the left (lower down) is the valley transversed by 'Imja Khola' which originates from the southern slope of the famous trio—Nuptse-Lhotse-Everest which can be seen on the left half of the picture.

In the centre is the Amai Dablam, the mountain which has already figured in the earlier pictures. On the right are the slopes of the North-east crest of Kang Taiga.

The cluster of trees by the side of the monastery is definitely a rare thing at this altitude of about 4000 metres. The monasteries of Khumbu are of a comparatively recent origin, something merely a few decades old. This is in direct contrast to the Tibetan monasteries some of which are centuries old. Buddhism was introduced in Tibet in the 7th century by the famous Tibetan King—Sron Tsam-gampo who was converted to this religion by one of his two wives (one of them Chinese and the other Nepalese). He came to the throne near about 630 A.D. and founded the city of Lhasa. Two cen-

turies later, to this sacred city—"the city of gods," came Atisha, a teacher of Mahayana Buddhism who is reputed to have brought discipline and efficiency to the Tibetan monasteries.

**38. The Tengpoche monastery (3867 m) as seen from east north-east**

This photograph was taken from a point diametrically opposite to the one from where photograph number 37 was taken. The two photos taken together give an overall impression of the monastery.

The Khumbu Yulha rises above Tengpoche separated by the deep valley at the confluence of Dudh Kosi and Imja Khola. This mountain is associated with the protective deity of Khumbu. The houses surrounding the monastery are meant to provide lodging for monks, novices, foreigners and pilgrims.

**39-40-41. The annual market at Tengpoche**

In the open space in front of the Tengpoche monastery the shopkeepers display their old merchandise including liturgical objects and strike interesting deals with the customers. They stay on for about two or three days more than other people connected with the religious festival of Mani Rimdu. Any object purchased there is not only of an intrinsic value on account of the quality of manual work but has also the additional advantage of being an unforgettable record of the special atmosphere of the Mani Rimdu festival.

In the centre one can see a bronze bell in the form of a thunderbolt which is an indispensable liturgical instrument in the Buddhist religious ceremonies. The thunderbolt is a symbol of incorruptibility.

**42. A charming spectator (Tengpoche)**

This photograph shows a small but true representative of the sherpa clan. The adolescent face of this sherpa girl can well provide inspiration for the epic deeds and heroic Himalayan conquests of the future. It may well be the typical profile of an unperturbed porter, a prolific future mother and a worthy perpetuator of the great sherpa clan. She will be a common figure at Mani Rimdu festival. By participating in the ceremony with a pure heart she will secure for herself religious indulgences and augmentation in her store of personal 'Karma'.

**43. Storm brewing on Everest, Nuptse and Lhotse**

These cushioned layers of white clouds beautifully sailing in the cold morning sky were found at an altitude of 8000 metres. The photograph was taken when a *terrific wind* was blowing which could easily freeze a person to the bone or slide him off his feet. In fact at that very moment a big and seasoned expeditionary party was planning to abandon its attempt at a new route to Everest because of the inhospitable meteorological conditions a clear sky notwithstanding.

**44. Tengpoche in its natural setting**

The western wall of the monastery, touched by the sun only in the afternoon, faces the big sherpa villages of Nauche, Khumjung and Khumde. This wall with closed glass windows to allow sufficient light to filter into the gompa is the first thing to be touched by the pilgrims who, during their usual circumambulations, rotate the prayer wheels attached to the boundary walls of the monastery.

**45. The “Chorten” of Tengpoche**

The earliest picture of this “Chorten” appeared in the western world in 1951. These pictures almost always showed the west-north-west wall of Kang Taiga in the background lightened by the rays of the Sun. A sacred symbol for the people from lower valleys it reminds them of the departure of the historical figure of Buddha Shakyamuni from this earth.

Originally the “Stupa” (or Chorten) was constructed to commemorate the demise of Buddha. Invariably it contained some relic of his. The stupas date from the 7th century A.D. onwards. For the Buddhists a stupa has almost the same significance as the cross for the Christians.

The dome of the stupa rests above the five traditional steps. The five elements—air, earth, water, fire and the cosmic space find their representation in it. At the top of the dome there is a kind of spiral with 13 rings one over the other and each ascending ring increasing in diameter. Actually these rings are stylised umbrellas which covered the sacred buildings in India in ancient times. In short, they represent the 13 stages which a Bodhisattva is required to pass before attaining the final state of “Buddhodom.” The solar disc which rests on top of the rings (also called “Bindu” in Sanskrit and “thig-Le” in Tibetan) stands for wisdom while the moon-crescent indicates compassion. Out of the union of wisdom and compassion come Enlightenment. This is the “Tantric” interpretation of the “Stupa” symbol or of the “Chorten.”

**46. Ordination ceremony—“dbang”**

During the Mani Rimdu festival, the afternoon of the first day is devoted to a ceremony

called 'Consecration of life'. This ceremony consists of the distribution of pills 'tshe-ril' and holy water ("tu") among the devotees present there. It is meant to ensure for them a long life on the spiritual plane.

The High Priest of the monastery of Tengpoche, sitting on a throne, is the central figure surrounded by Buddhist nuns and monks of the entire region of Khumbu.

**47. The nuns of Deboche (3820 m)**

The sister monastery of Deboche is about half an hour walk from Tengpoche; the nuns are the guest of honour during the Mani Rimdu ceremony.

Although in the hierarchy of the Buddhist church there are not many promotional prospects for nuns in their ecclesiastical career, they are never-the-less ready to lead their whole life in spiritual seclusion to practise meditation and perform difficult daily chores in the monastery.

**48. A priestly procession for the dedication ceremony (Tengpoche)**

Heralded by a group of players of horns, clarionets, drums, bugles and cymbals, the High Priest of Tengpoche protected by an umbrella comes to take his seat on a throne and grace with his holy presence the ceremony of the "Consecration of Life" (Tshe-dbang).

**49. Ritual offering of "tor-ma" for the "Great Master"**

Tor-ma (butter mixed with flour) plays a very important role in liturgical ceremonies of Buddhism. Rolled into colourful balls in the form of a pyramid or a cone, the torma always represents some deity of the Buddhist pantheon. Even when it is made to represent Buddha himself it need not resemble a



human or divine form. It is only a traditional symbol or an emblem of divinity. After receiving gifts and offerings the High Priest places them to his right and in exchange gives something symbolic of the same type. The High Priest of the monastery of Tengpoche is a Bodhisattva—the ideal figure of Mahayana Buddhism. By definition Bodhisattva is one who after acquiring all the qualifications needed to become a Buddha, voluntarily foregoes the opportunity to be so, till he has helped other fellowmen to attain liberation from the cycle of life and death.

After the requisite preparation anyone who takes the vow to become Buddha and work untiringly for the good of all the creatures on earth is entitled to adopt the nomenclature of 'Bodhisattva'. Thus there is no limit to the number of 'Bodhisattvas' in the world. They are the objects of worship and are actively involved in making calamities of ordinary mortals bearable. 'Bodhi' means 'knowledge or "Enlightenment."' The Pipal or the Banyan tree (*Ficus religiosa*) under which Lord Buddha received Enlightenment is also called the Bodhi tree.

**50. Community tea**

**51. Refreshing tea for all (Tshe-dbang)**

**52. Ceremonial tea (Tshe-dbang)**

The strong Tibetan tea, a concoction of boiling water, tea-leaves, soda and butter is served in generous measure to all present at the ceremony.

Beautiful tea pots 'Khoti' or 'Fhapta' belonging to the monastery are kept boiling on a fire inside the fire-pans made of copper and brass. The newly-initiated watchful monks keep on filling the wooden bowls as

soon as they get empty. The actual serving of tea is taken care of by the Lamas (blama) who are not yet consecrated. The name Lama signifies 'the master' equivalent to the Sanskrit word 'Guru'. Only he, who practises the ten commandments of Buddhism and is qualified to impart religious instruction to others is entitled to call himself a 'Lama'.

**53. Dressed for the festival (Tshe-dbang)**

Almost all the ladies at the festival of Mani Rimdu (and only a few males) come decked up to the festival of Mani Rimdu in traditional Sherpa style with multi-coloured Tibetan leather-lined peaked caps drooping on the ears. They wear silver bands around the hair and put on flowing robes of Chinese brocade. At times men wear prominent looking shoes. The fact that everybody comes to the festival beautifully dressed testifies to the high degree of esteem in which this festival is held by the local people.

**54. Ritual offering of money to the monks (Tshe-dbang)**

The offering of money is purely symbolic as the lowest denominational local coin is offered to monks. The wife of some important landlord or herdsman of the Khumbu region is usually entrusted with this delicate work.

**55. Head Priest of Tengpoche on the throne (Tshe-dbang)**

The High Priest changes his headgear at every significant phase of the ceremony and keeps on ringing the thunderbolt-shaped bell and beating the small magic drum (damru) at regular intervals.

In front of the sacred throne is spread out the cloth with Buddhist emblems—the double Swastika and two lightning flashes crossing

each other—a recurring motif in the Mahayana Buddhism. Lord Buddha, historically known as Shakyamuni, had left for his disciples only vague and undefined principles which formed the basis of the original Buddhist dogma. No wonder the parent religion branched off in a number of schools. From the very beginning, the dogma lacked cohesion and was exposed to divergent world-vision born of different set of circumstances in which it operated. Thus the two main branches of Buddhism—Hinayana (the small vehicle) and Mahayana (the big vehicle) differ quite significantly. These two paths, open to the disciples of Buddha, gave way to many off-shoots or sects, often contradictory, due to the multiplicity of needs, motives and ideals. This gave rise to the differences at spiritual levels too, ranging from simple magic (generally serving the immediate interests of human beings) to the sublime purity of the philosophical speculation and mystic contemplation. The Swastika which is seen in the photograph in front of the throne is a most ancient emblem. It was quite a recurrent motif in the art of the bronze and iron age both of the ancient oriental civilizations and those of Europe. It is widely held by scholars that it stands for the sun in its orbit.

In Bon religion, among Jains and among orthodox Buddhist sects, the Swastika is drawn from right to left. In the Tibetan Buddhism, it is drawn clockwise.

**56. Religious insignia of the monastery (Tshedbang)**

Sitting by the side of the instrument-playing monks are some distinguished people of Khumbu. They have earned this privilege by bountiful offerings to the monastery for the annual ceremony.

The flags of victory (dhvaja), the canopy and other insignia are fitted in the lawns for the entire duration of the function symbolising the tantric nature of this Buddhist ceremony. Tantrism is a religio-philosophical term applied to Hinduism as well as Mahayana Buddhism.

The word 'Tantra' is of Sanskrit origin and signifies 'warp and woof of a piece of cloth'. Its extended meaning is 'rule' or 'doctrine'. The term has been used in this sense to indicate a series of ritualistic texts and formulas of an initiatory nature.

Tantrism arose in the south and north-west India in 4th century A.D. and spread in various directions in the succeeding centuries. Scrupulously avoiding dogmatic formulations, tantrism has always provided impetus to spiritual intuitionistic tendencies through parables, paradoxical sayings, enigmatic observations and astrology. Tantrism aims at 'Enlightenment' or Revelation by means of magic or meditative practices involving the control of physiological functioning (yoga).

The cult of 'Shakti' (energizing principle in gods) presented in the form of carnally-joined partners is at the core of Tantrism. It is a legacy of aboriginal cultures of India.

57. **A woman-spectator at Mani Rimdu**

58. **The nun of Deboche at Mani Rimdu**

59. **Fascinated children at Mani Rimdu**

61-60. **A friendly smile**

The description of a ceremony should include a close look at the spectators too. The camera has been able to catch casually some of the typical profiles like that of an adult who seems to be participating in a religious

and public ceremony for the first time in festive clothes. He is obviously struck by the beauty of the costumes of the dancers. Again, we have been able to capture the face of a nun of Deboche who has been to such functions many a time. With every visit she experiences new emotions as well as adds to her spiritual knowledge. The wide-eyed children are caught staring in awe and wonder at a new world of religion with terrifying images which leave an indelible impression on the young minds. Then there is the laughing old man who perhaps knows so many secrets of life and religion. He is patiently preparing to meet his God in not too distant a future.

**62. Re-entering the monastery after the ordination ceremony**

The small but solemn procession, preceded by heralds and insignia, indicates the end of the ceremony. The crowd of devotees, after receiving blessings singly and collectively, disappears in the narrow lanes around the monastery. The shadows lengthen and the biting cold of the evening descends on the scene almost immediately. The memory of the great ceremony lingers in the mind of even the non-believers. Their thoughts drift to life after death, to the complexity of the soul-processes and to transmigration. According to the popular Buddhist belief all the living creatures are reborn in some other form, lower or higher, according to their actions in previous lives. Thus we ourselves are reincarnations of past beings of one type or the other including the animals.

**63. Heralds with cymbals (Mani Rimdu)**

The heralds appear in pairs at the head of a flight of steps. They stay there for a minute or two sounding rhythmically some far-off

musical airs with the cymbals. Then they descend together into the courtyard in a row, their faces turned towards the entrance of the 'gompa' or the monastery temple.

**64. Heralds dancing at the "Mani Rimdu" inauguration**

Although it is called a dance, the heralds appear only for a very short time and move off the stage in measured steps after cutting a circle as if broadcasting in all directions the announcement of the beginning of the drama.

The dance of the heralds (Rol-cham; Rul-tsam) is of brief duration. Together with the prayers and invocations to the local gods, it is in the nature of a prelude to the main show. During the action of the prelude the curtain of red silk (Yol-ba), behind which the High Priest and his retinue sit concealed from the public gaze, remains scrupulously drawn.

**65. Dance of the "Golden libation" ('Gser-skyems')**

After the disappearance of the heralds rises the red curtain on the stage and we have a glimpse of the High Priest on the throne. The spectators pay him a silent homage with a bow of the head after which appear on the stage the first eight dancers in colourful costumes holding aloft in their hands silver cups and chalices containing 'chang' and 'Torma' which they sprinkle during the dance in four directions and above themselves as ritual offering.

**66. Offering of 'chang' to Zur-ra Ra-rgyan ('Gser-skyems')**

All the eight dancers wear similar clothes which identify them as tantric priests (Zhwaneg). The "chang" offering (the golden liba-

tion) is for Zurra-Ra-rgyan—protector of tantric Buddhism and the patron saint of Khumbu region. The “Tri-ratna” (or the three gems of Buddhism—Buddha, the doctrine and the monastic order) are clearly visible at the top of their headgear.

**67. Offering to the patron-saint of tantric Buddhism (“Gser-skyems”)**

The front of the headgear is covered with a mask of Mgon-po—one of the protector of tantric Buddhism. The cup containing ‘chang’ is held aloft in the right hand signifies the ritual scattering of “chang” in the direction of four cardinal points and towards the zenith.

The main purpose of the Gser-Skyems is to glorify the Buddhist gods who have vanquished the enemies of religion. It also drives home to the spectators that the religion of the sherpas is directly derived from the tantric Buddhism of Tibet.

The dancers with stray locks of hair streaming down their faces are supposed to play the part of the tantric ascetics who believe in theory and practice of the principles and postulates of Indian Yoga.

**68. Guardian king of the West (“Ging-pa”)**

His name is Spyam-mig - bang (Sanskrit: Virupaksha). He is considered to be the king of the Serpents (Sanskrit: Naga). “Nagas” (serpents) are the genii of water with the bust of a human and the trunk of a serpent. The Naga-wives (Nagini) are thought to be extremely beautiful creatures.

**69. Guardian king of the East (“Ging-pa”)**

He is called Yul-Khor-borong (Sanskrit: Dhritarashtra) and is also supposed to be the king of demons of the Gandharva clan. In the official iconography he is always

depicted in the act of playing on a flute. His picture is generally found on the eastern wall of the porticos of Buddhist gompas.

70. **Guardian king of the South (“Ging-pa”)**  
Named Phags-Skyes (Sanskrit: Virudhake). He is also the lord of the big Khumbanda demons. He is always shown carrying a sword.
71. **Guardian king of the North (“Ging-pa”)**  
He goes by the name of Rnam-thos-sras (Sanskrit: Vaisravana) and is also considered lord of the Yakshas—supernatural creatures causing diseases. In the official iconography he is shown as carrying the flag of victory (dhvaja) in his right hand.
72. **In search of sacred knowledge (in green).  
Wisdom attained (in blue)**  
The guardian kings of the south and the north continue dancing to the rhythmic beat of a drum. The four guardian kings are supposed to defend principles of Buddhism against the attacks of the demons, who can strike from any one of the four directions.
73. **The serpent God (in red)**  
The green and red masks in this dance represent male deities. These deities are in possession of ‘thab’—the active principle guiding one to ‘Enlightenment’ and sacred knowledge. The four guardian kings of the four main directions are also known as Lokapala (Sanskrit) or Rgyal-chen-bzhi (Tibetan).
74. **Padmasambhava charging at the demons**  
To Padmasambhava, the apostle of tantric Buddhism, is attributed the power of a magician or a wizard. A Hindu sage of 18th century A.D. he reached Tibet via Swat and



afterwards visited Nepal and Sikkim. By the time he reached Nepal he had been completely converted to Buddhism. During his long travels Padmasambhava (literal meaning: born of lotus) subdued many devils by means of magic destroying some of them and converting others to Buddhism. In this particular dance this character wearing a beautiful mask with four eyes struts on the stage making gestures of a mock fight against the demons. In the left hand he wields a tantric three-edged, triangular sword and in the right hand a Buddhist thunderbolt ('vajra')—The word 'vajra' stands for a diamond because like a diamond it cuts and destroys anything with which it comes into contact, itself remaining indestructible. During short pauses in the dance, he receives offerings from the monks. The dancer carries two small flags one yellow and the other green symbolising the tantric union.

Padmasambhava was the real founder of Tibetan Buddhism. He got the first Tibetan monastery constructed at Samya and in that monastery established the first order of 'Lamas'. To him is also attributed the introduction of magical ceremonies and witchcraft in Buddhist religion. The Tibetan Buddhism has a very complex hierarchical organisation and a very elaborate ritual on account of which it has sometimes been compared to the Catholic church in Christianity.

There is a long list of deities in the Buddhist pantheon at the head of which are the five Dhyani Buddhas along with many Bodhisattvas followed by thousands of Buddhas who are supposed to have come after Shakyamuni at different epochs of our universe. Then there are the local deities, family gods and finally a great number of demons.

The Tibetan or tantric Buddhism or Lamaism spread from Tibet to Mongolia, China, Siberia reaching upto Kirghizes and Calanuchi.

75. **Dance of the celestial drums**

76. **Group dance of the celestial drums**

77–78. **The drum playing the song of Truth**

79. **Buddha's message of truth to the world**

80. **Tantric triad: Buddha-doctrine-monkhood (“Rnga-cham”)**

The dance of the celestial drums celebrates the total victory over the demons inimical to the Buddhist principles of life. It carries the message of truth contained in the word of Lord Buddha for the converted demons as well as for the entire world. It also glorifies the advent of the Lord.

The headgear of the Zhwa-nag (tantric priest) is a painted double cap with a triangular peak. He wears a painted mask depicting Magon-po (Protector of Tantric Buddhism) and a sort of trident encircled by flames called “tri-ratna” which in its symbolism of a triangle and three points stands for the emblem of ‘three gems of Buddhism’—the Buddha, the doctrine and the community of monks (Sangha).

The ‘tri-ratna’ (Photo 80) has been the basic symbol of Buddhism since the very beginning. It was derived from ancient Hinduism and Jainism which in turn got it from old Brahmanism of Vedic times.

During the first two centuries after the death of the historical Buddha (Shakyamuni) his image was never represented in human form as he himself was against the perpetuation of his physical features. So it was customary

to depict him symbolically in such forms as a vacant throne, foot-prints, the wheel of knowledge, the flaming pillar (the axis of the world), the trident (tri-ratna) etc. At times, all these symbols were shown enclosed in a stylized lotus.

**81. The dance of death**

**82. Macabre dance**

**83. A tantric priest**

**84–85. Fight against the demons and their conversion**

The two dancers with tight red dress represent a stylized version of human skull. They are called Dur-bdag or Chitipati. They are the 'assistants' of the lord of Death, otherwise known as 'Yamas'

The mask representing a somewhat bright human head is encircled by five skulls. The death dance of the two chitipatis is flanked by the dance of the tantric priests in their usual dress (Zha-nag).

A puppet resembling human figure (photo 82—note the shadow cast on the stone slab) goes dancing round and round. The two dancers cutting quick capers seize and throw it down on earth in a symbolic act of killing. The puppet is called "bskang-ba." Although it has human features, it is supposed to be a demon needing to be taught a wholesome lesson.

The 'phur-bu'—the tantric magic dagger with three-edged blade which should normally be of wood is here made of bronze. The small quadrangular cloak worn by the two dancers (Zhwa-nag) has some golden embroidery on it depicting a lightning cross (Vajra).

## 86–87. **The first comic interlude**

### 88. **Preparation for the ritual offerings**

The sixth tableau of Mani Rimdu has a comic content without any monologue or dialogue. It is pure mimicry. The action highly applauded by the public seeks to pillory a Chinese Buddhist scholar (Hwa-shang—a historical figure) who expounded the fundamentals of the Buddhist movement ‘ch’an’ (‘Zen’ in Japanese, ‘Son’ in Korean language) and was, therefore, charged with heresy. This happened in the 8th century. The scholar was defeated in a public debate on the principles of Buddhism and his works were banned. The Chinese scholar is here represented as a very old person incapable of following even the simplest things like the correct way of making offerings to the High Priest of the monastery in which he happened to be present. He does not even remember the name of the monastery. His disciple, the only one that he has, is also incapable of rendering the simplest service. Thus the two of them by their awkward movements arouse loud laughter among spectators. The mask made of papier machie is very impressive. It was designed by a Sherpa artist living in a nearby Khumbu village.

### 89. **The “two worlds” rubbing shoulders**

During the Mani Rimdu festival a dozen or so tourists visit the Tengpoche monastery. Their main aim, no-doubt, is to attend the festival, see things with their own eyes, make merry, take photographs and make a film of the festival. However, every visitor goes away from this festival with memories not to be forgotten for a long time. For full three days western visitors rub shoulders with Sherpas and Tibetans without even under-

standing each other's language. They communicate through the international language of gestures and smiles. After enriching their store of knowledge they go away wiser from Mani Rimdu.

90. **'The Big Black One' ("Chos-skyong")**

Mgon-po, the most important among the eight protectors of Buddhism, goes on tilting his small lance at random in the courtyard of the monastery. He is also called by another name i.e. Mahakala or the Big Black One or the great Lord of Death. His third eye, vertically placed in the forehead, represents the omniscience of the Bodhisattvas. Shiva, one of the great Hindu gods, is always shown with a third eye. Hence this Buddhist gods symbol seems to be derived like many others from Hinduism. In official iconography Mgon-po (who represents a character in the dance sequences also) carries a tantric dagger (phur-bu) in his right and the trident (trishul) in his left hand. A string of finely cut human bones covers the neck and chest of the dancer.

91. **The protectress of Dalai Lama and the subjugator of the god of death**

Lha-mo, the only goddess among the eight Furies is supposed to be the personal body-guard of the Dalai Lama. She is the protectress of the tantric doctrine and of Mahayana Buddhism. So she always goes armed. In the official iconography she is supposed to be carrying a sword in the right hand and a mace in the left hand. However, the dancer who acts the part of this goddess in the present play does not carry any of these two weapons. Lha-mo is also called "the glorious goddess" or Shridevi.

Among the 'eight Furies', Mgon-po and Lha-mo are the only two characters who

have the privilege of wearing the blue-coloured mask. They are the number one and number two dancers. The dancer on the right wearing red mask is number three. He is called Yamantaka in Sanskrit but at Mani Rimdu he goes by the name of Gshim-rje-gshed indicating his power of “subjugating the God of Death.” The five big symbolic gems around his mask represent the five Buddhas in meditation. The tantric knife in his right hand (gri-gug) is meant exclusively for exorcizing the demons. In the dance ‘chos-skyongs’ there are only two red masks.

92. **The merry-go-round of the “eight furies”**

In the courtyard of Tengpoche monastery dominated by splendid snow covered peaks, the shadow of the central “torchen” slowly shifts from one side to another as if it were a great sun dial.

Around mid-noon, the merry go-round of the “chos-skyongs” dance moves in a leisurely fashion. We are now face to face with the most important among the “furies”. Facing us from left to right, we see: Yamantaka (Subjugator of the God of Death, dancer number 3), Beg-tse (God of War with red mask and a small lance meant to cut the knots which hinder humanity from attaining sacred knowledge, dancer number 4), Kuvera (or Vaisravana, God of Wealth with white mask, dancer number 5). Sideways, we see from left to right: Mgon-po (the Big Black One—“Mahakala” with blue mask, dancer number 1), Havagriva (protector of houses with a wooden statue of a man in the right hand. He wears a chocolate brown mask with only one eye, dancer number 8).

93. **Blowers of the sacred horns**

The three-metre long horns called “dung-chen” which form a concomitant part of the Buddhist ceremonies in general and of Tibetan and tantric Himalayan Buddhism in particular are an essential accompaniment of the traditional choreography. The blowers of horns (dung-chen-pa) like the blowers of conches are selected from among the youngest as they need strong and sound lungs. One of the typical tasks assigned to the horn blowers is to announce the beginning and the end of the various phases of Mani Rimdu by sounding two deep notes.

By the side of the horn blowers can be seen some people of the lower valley (Dhud Kosi). They have come to attend the function out of understandable curiosity. Their clothes are not too suited to the rather cold climate of Tengpoche. Even the non-Buddhists among them are supposed to earn accumulated spiritual merit as a compensation for enduring this great physical hardship.

94. **Dance of the “eight deities”—protectors of the faith**

The cast is now complete. We can enumerate each actor beginning from the right and then counting upwards and finally back to the right. Actor number eight is partially eclipsed by number one (eight bottom).

95. **The God of wealth**

The God of wealth, the only one with a white mask, he is called Rnam-thos-Dras. He also has a Sanskritized name—“Kuvera” or “Vaisravana”. In the official iconography, he is shown carrying the flag of victory in the right hand. However, here he is seen holding a small bronze thunderbolt (rdo-rje). He is dancer number five.

**96. The subjugator of the God of Death**

The subjugator of the God of Death (chos-skyongs) has another Sanskrit name: Yamantaka. He carries in his right hand a tantric knife (grig-grug) formed like a spear which he uses for exorcizing the demons. It looks like a kind of a hatchet at one hand. The “Yamantakas” who waged a constant war against the Tibetan plunderers, at one time quite numerous, used to make cups of the skulls of the conquered enemies and drink blood of their enemies from these cups.

**97. The Big Black One (“Mgon-po”)**

Here we have the Big Black One called Mgon-po, the leading most figure among the “eight furies”. His mask bears the third eye which is an indication of his magical powers. These “furies” are also called “draggsed” or Dharampal i.e. the protectors of the Buddhist doctrine. They are considered by the initiated as important “emanations” of the eight great Bodhisattvas who help man in his efforts to acquire sacred knowledge.

As has already been mentioned the third eye is a symbol of the omniscience of the Bodhisattvas—the aspirants to the state of Buddhahood. The Bodhisattvas renounce “the Supreme good” to which they are entitled to stay on this earth for helping other human beings to attain liberation from the endless cycle of life and death.

**98. The God of Death (“Yama”)**

The God of Death is also called Gshin-rje chos-rgyal, Yama is his Sanskritized name. He is the dancer number seven. In his left hand he carries a small bow obviously to punish the sinners and in his right hand he has a metal tube containing arrows for shooting. We have already met him in the



fifth act of Mani Rimdu in the form of a living skeleton. The God of Death is assisted by two or more “Chiti patis” also known as lords of the cemetery.

99. **The mysterious “White Brahma”**
100. **The warrior God (“White Brahma”—one of the “eight furies”) (“chos-skyongs”)**  
This God shares with Beg-tse (War-God, dancer number four) the distinction of being a warrior, though one knows pretty little about his duties and other functions. He is also called Tshang-Pa dkar-po. He wears a chocolate brown mask (dancer number six) with a triple-eye on it. He has on him a string of human bones finely wrought and well perforated. We have not been able to identify exactly the other objects in his hand. The two photographs here show him gesticulating furiously.
101. **The protector God of Khumbu region (“Zurra”)**
102. **The protector God of the Sherpa valleys (“Gnas-srung”)**  
The 8th act of Mani Rimdu has three heroes. The most important of these (whom we will meet again) is the regional God Zur-ra. He is associated with the mountain above the Tengpoche monastery. In the usual Khumbu iconography he is usually depicted as a human being riding a white horse. The importance of Zur-ra is underlined by the fact that his entrance on the stage is preceded by seven standard-bearers. His dress too is very impressive. On his silken waist-band is embroidered the figure of Dgra-lha—the god and symbol of greed who was ultimately vanquished by the apostle Padmasambhava. Zurra has to be very

watchful so that the diabolical forces vanquished in the past do not raise their head again by infiltrating among the faithful. Armed with a javelin, Zurra continues dancing preceded by two black figures (photo No. 103).

**103. The Black men (protectors of the places of pilgrimage)**

In a slow-motion dance the two Mi-nag (Black men) come brandishing their weapons in all directions and making a whizzing sound with the blades in the act of tearing the air. Their appearance on the stage is preceded by a superior regional deity to whom they serve as a foil. These two men, separated from each other, keep on hitting the invisible demons with their daggers till at a certain moment they enter the "gompa" making way for the appearance of Zur-ra on the stage (photo number 101 & 102).

**104. A view of the fascinated foreign audience**

At least three continents and five different races constitute the audience at Mani Rimdu performances. Although they sit motionless for hours watching the entire show, every one of them seems to be enjoying himself. All feel amply compensated for the trouble taken in reaching the monastery on foot. A look at the smiling face of the child in the picture (above, to the right) is a sufficient indication of the pleasure derived from witnessing the sacred representation.

**105. A dakhini (Semi-Goddess) with a drum and a bell**

In the 9th act, four or five dancers take upon themselves the task of convincing the Sherpas that there exist other minor deities or semigods who equally contribute to the happiness of man and his 'liberation'. These

are Dakhinis—a kind of heavenly creatures whose number cannot be precisely specified. They like to be helpful to the practitioners of “Yoga” and according to the Tibetan iconography dress themselves in white. They are decked in jewels. The dancers, however, wear only a small quadrangular cloak with apron covering the usual tunic of a monk. They modestly go through important dance steps manipulating the magic drum (“damaro”) and the flashing bell (‘ghanta’).

106. **The second comic interlude**

107. **The standard-bearers preceding the  
“Khumbu Guardians”**

The clarinet players, two blowers of bugles, two blowers of conches, two holders of censor-pots and a carrier of the magic wand of Padmasambhava for the team of standard-bearers who descend into the courtyard in expectation of the entrance of Zur-ra (Khumbu Yul Lha) the guardian of the Khumbu region. After the appearance of the august personage the standard bearers and the players on instruments withdraw into the “gompa.”

108–109. **A farcical scene**

As the shadow of the southern balcony creeps over the court-yard to reach the central altar and beyond, the second interlude begins in a satirical vein. It is about a Hindu ascetic—an anonymous Sadhu who is a comic figure. This sadhu is as awkward and inexperienced as his assistant. The satirical title of the 10th act “the man with the exact vision and intuition”—is in keeping with his character. He commits a series of blunders while attempting to pay homage to the clergymen present. His assistant who hoped to learn many things from him

remains stunned. The final comic blunder concerns the drawing of a sacrificial doll from a sack by the Sadhu. His assistant sets about defending him and it suddenly dawns upon him that through his actions he is exposing the cruelty involved in the sacrificial rituals of the Hindus. In order to rehabilitate his own image and that of Hinduism in the eyes of his assistant the Sadhu starts performing some yogic feats involving the so-called thrusting of a knife blade in his stomach. In performing this exercise he loses his balance and falls flat on the ground seemingly dead. This final tragedy leaves the spectators aghast and a silence descends on the on-lookers. The credulous are impressed and the western visitors feel amused at this extraordinary epilogue to a comic scene.

**110. The concluding ceremony**

As in almost all ancient religions fire is taken to be the purifying agent at Mani Rimdu. On the closing day of the function, amidst chanting of prayers, fire assumes the character of a protagonist who receives and destroys all big and small things connected with the memory of yesterday—a day already gone and forgotten, ready to merge in a welcome and happy future.

At the end of the third day the High Priest of the Tengpoche monastery, dressed in yellow robes, presides over the concluding function. The whole ceremony is performed in a highly charged atmosphere of devotion. Meanwhile the few spectators present feel the chill creeping into their bones and prepare to leave.

**111. The altar with sacrificial offerings**

This is the same altar as was prepared and seen on the first day (the day of the con-

secration of life). One can see the bowls containing the holy water meant to be sprinkled on the heads of the pilgrims present. Then there are the balls of "Torma" for distribution among the devotees. These balls are an augury for a long spiritual life and attainment of "Nirvana" which is not the same thing as the idea of paradise among Christians. It is rather a state of bliss, an ecstatic condition of pure spiritual happiness, a negation of all objective reality. In Buddhism "Nirvana" connotes permanent bliss, the absence of any sensation and hence freedom from all pain. It is a Sanskrit word signifying "extinction." In Buddhism particularly and in other religious philosophies of India, this term signifies complete freedom from bondage or liberation from the cycle of life, death and rebirth. It means the end of transmigrations and reincarnations.

1. *Tiger* : *Epithet for a strong Sherpa*





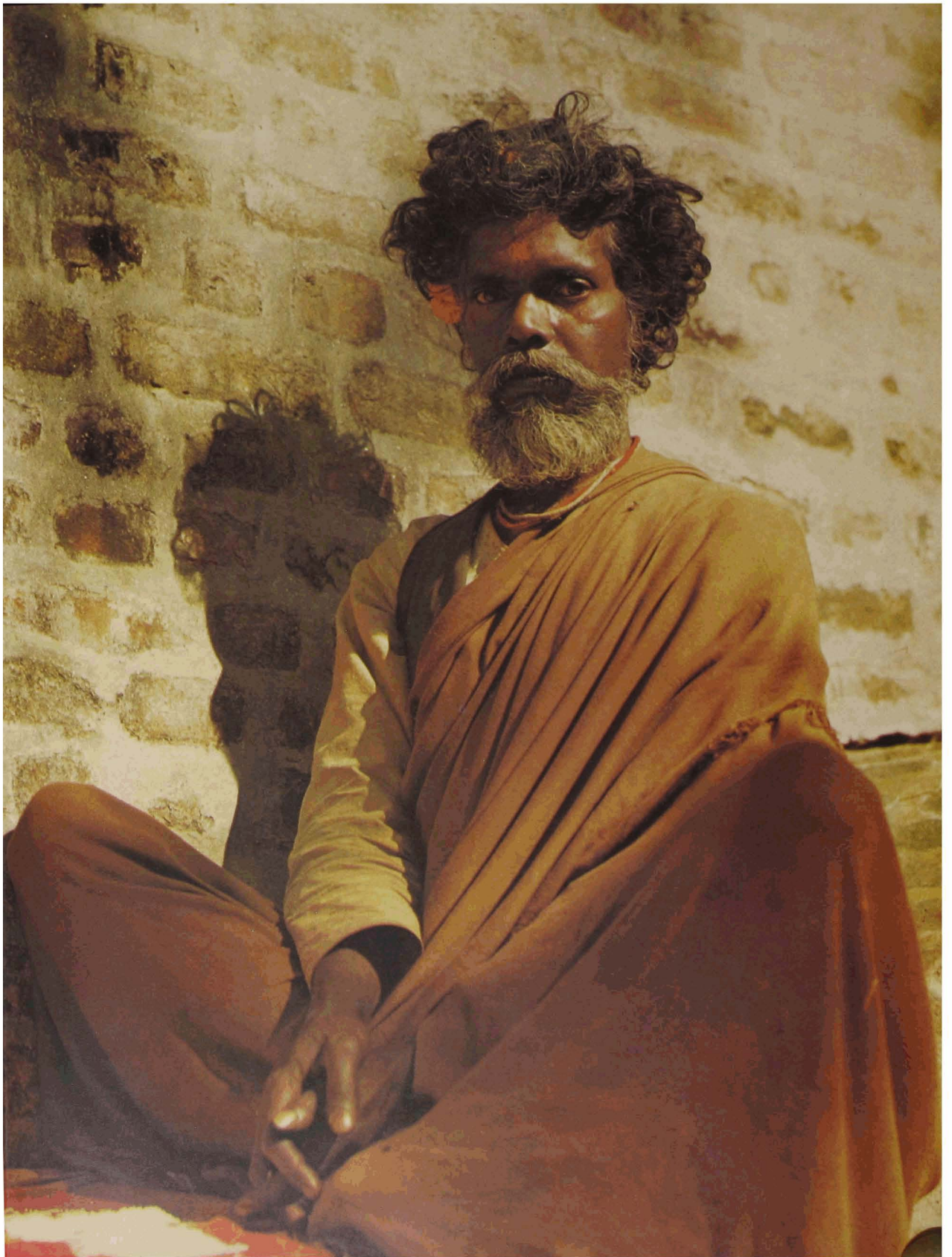
2. *Votive offerings to the Goddess Kali (Kathmandu)*

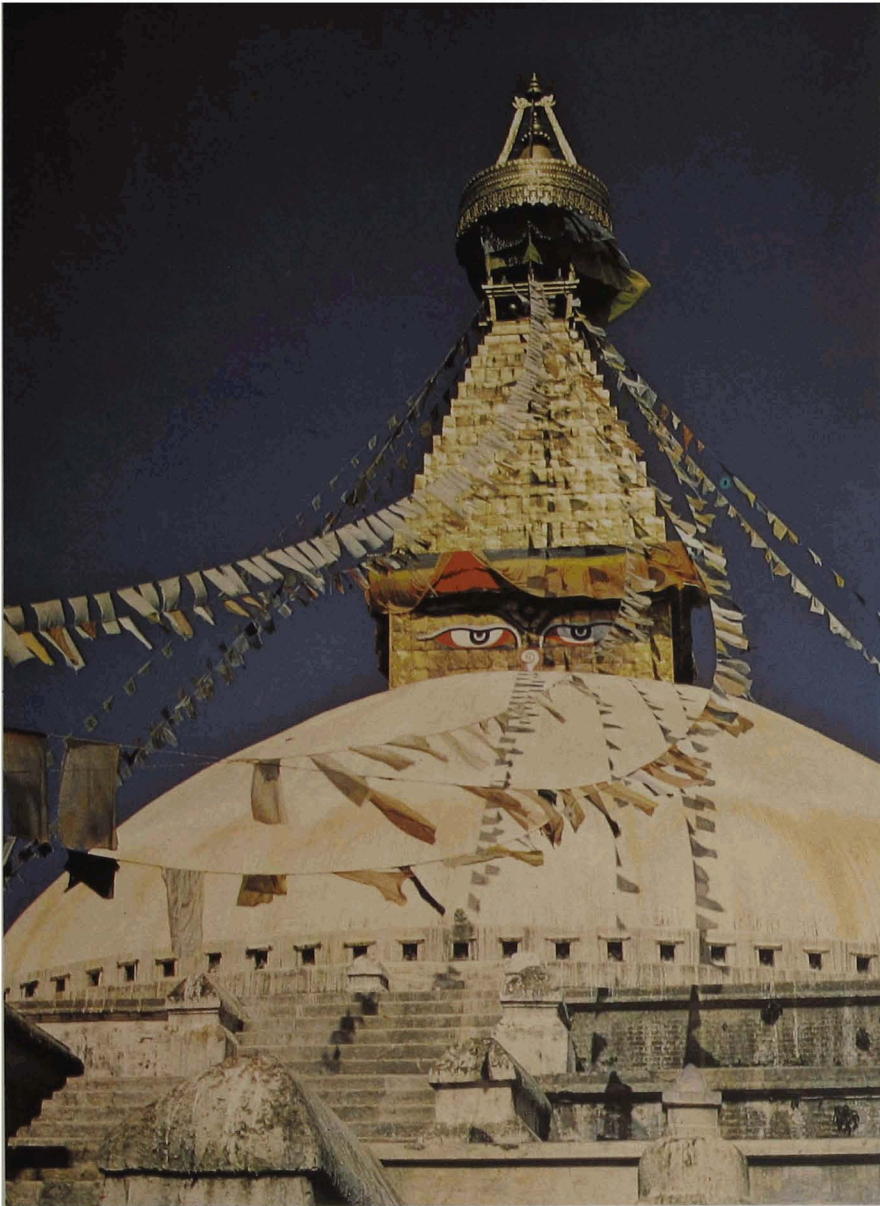


3. *Propitiating Kali (Kathmandu)*

4. *In contemplation (Kathmandu)*







5. 'Stupa' at Bodhnath



6. Prayer wheels  
(Bodhnath)



7. *An open-air school (Pokhara)*



8. *The Kathmandu valley*

9. *Linear beauty created  
by man*





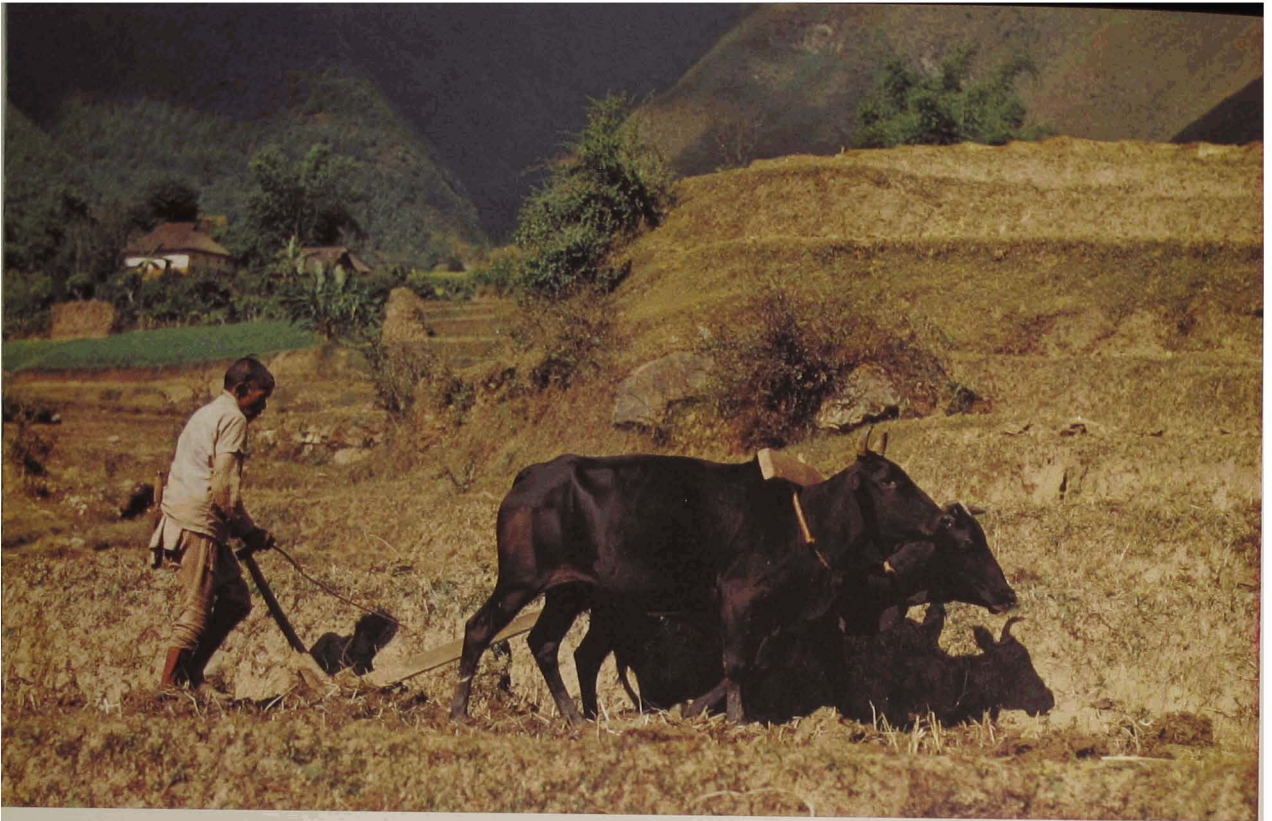
10. *Terraced fields*

11. *Hard tilling*

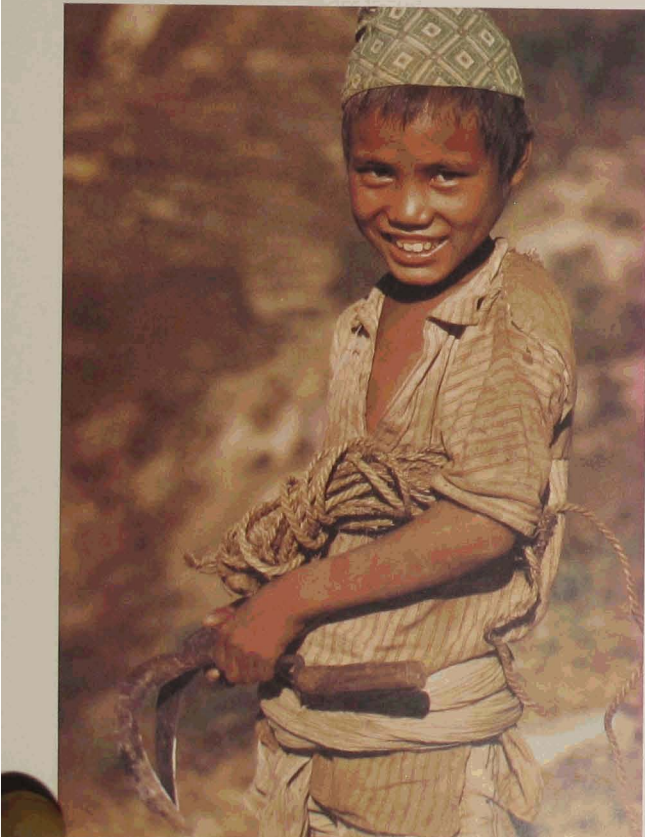


12. *Preparing mid-day lunch*





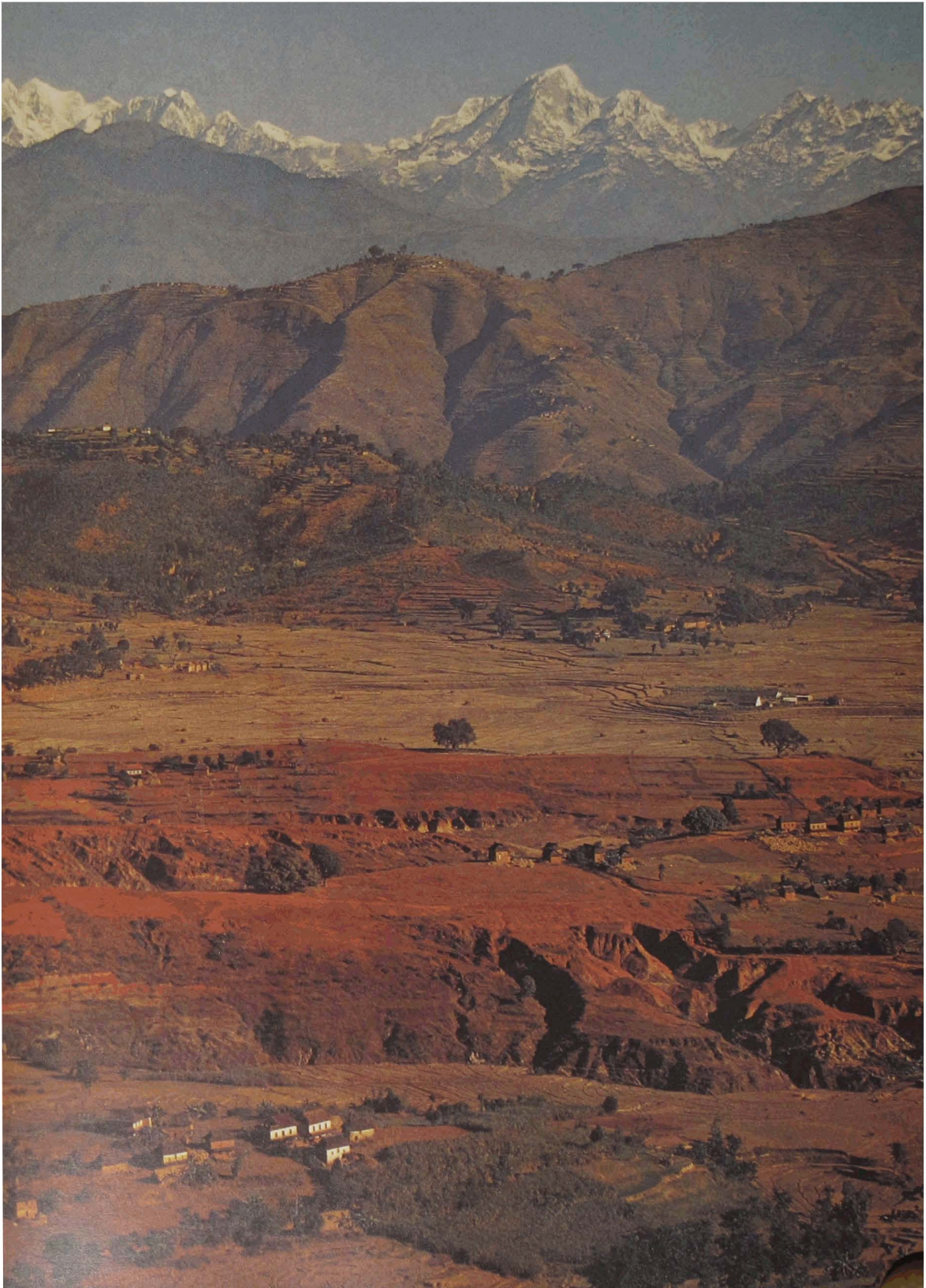
13. *Ploughing the land*



14. *Helping Papa*

15. *Beautiful Nepalese landscape (Panchkhat)*





16. *A local beauty*  
(Pokhara)

17. *Winnowing of  
rice* (Bhadgaon)

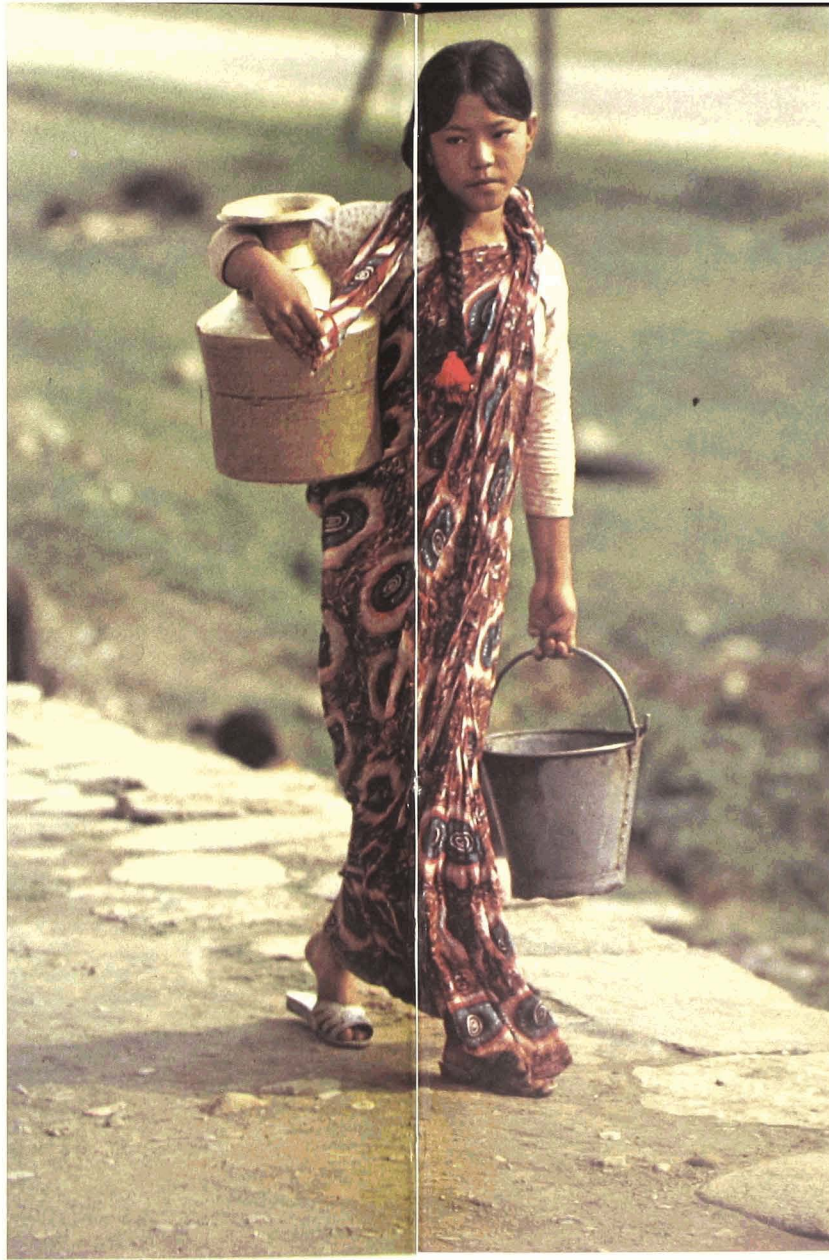
18. *A Street scene*  
(Bhadgaon)



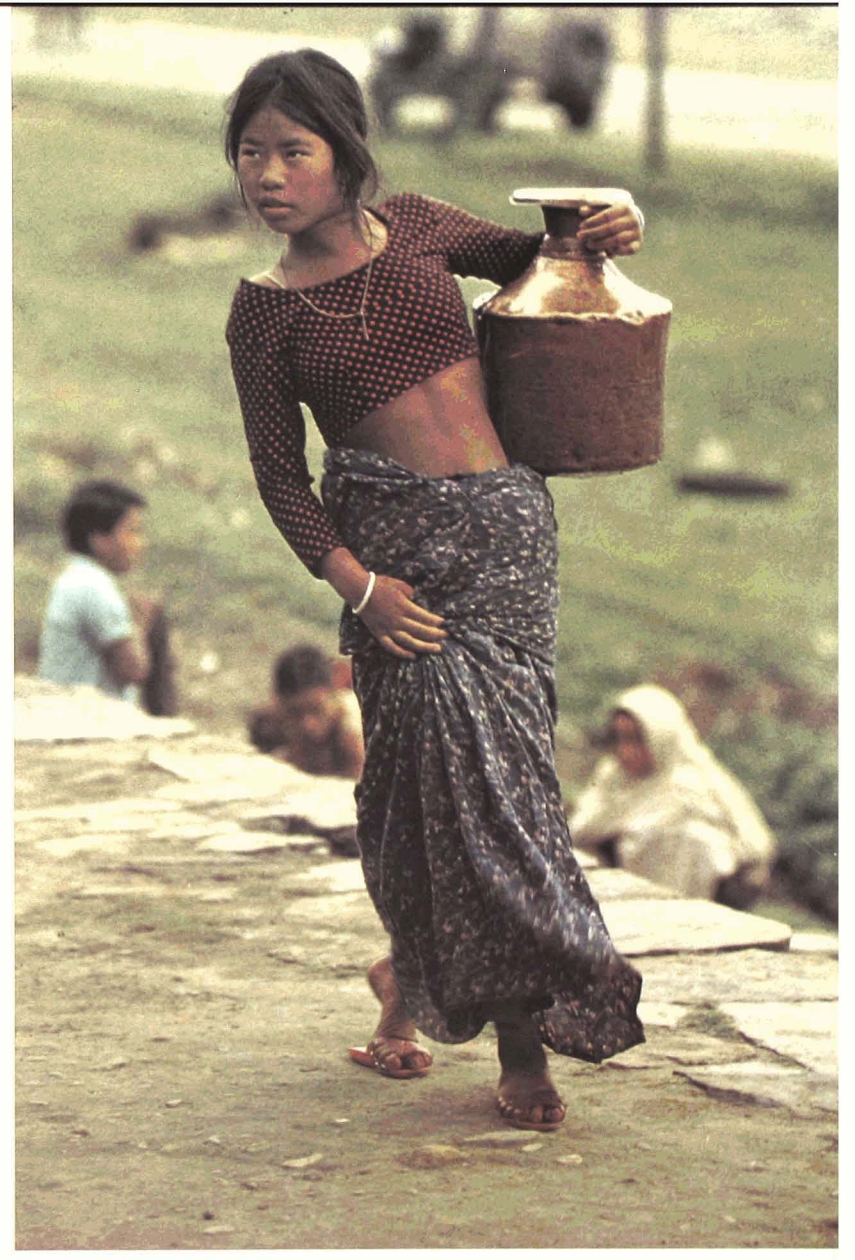




19. Pals (Pokhara)



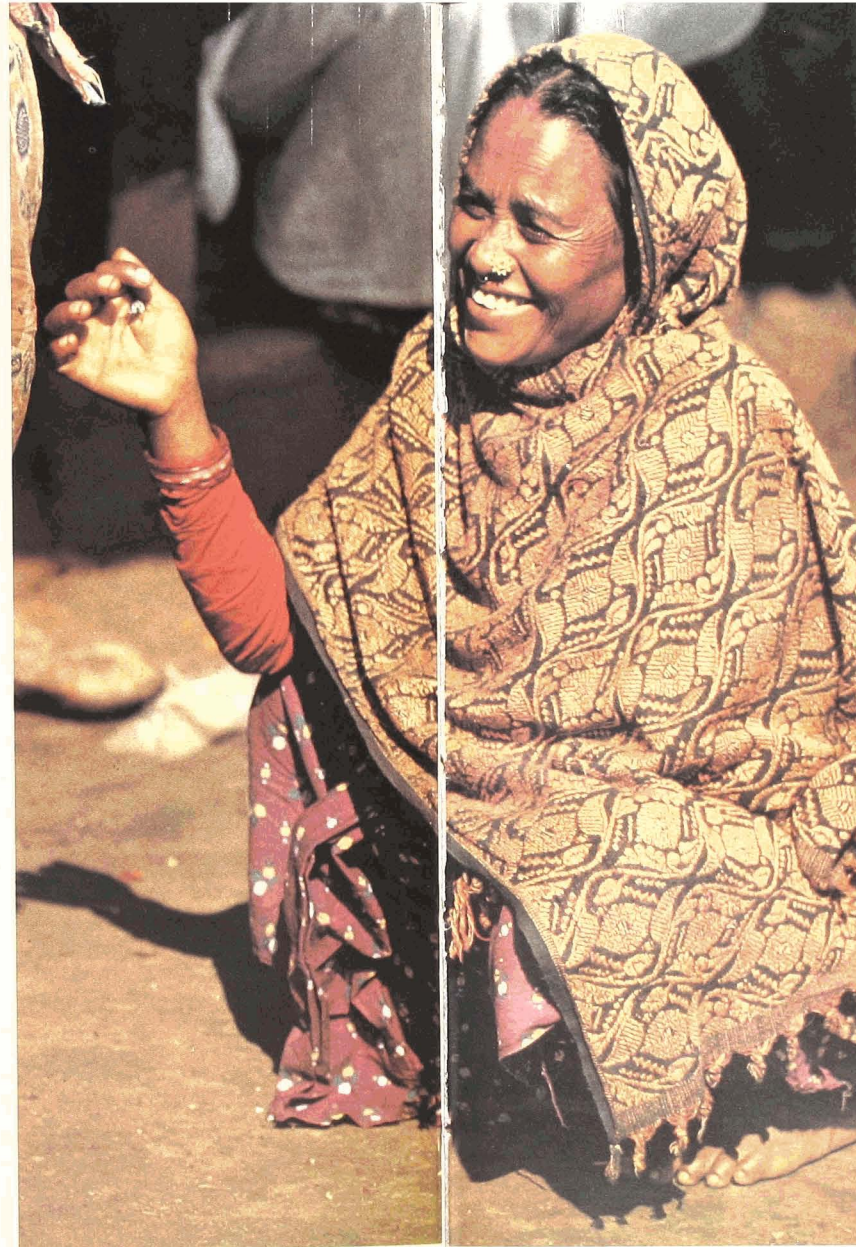
20. Returning from the fountain (Pokhara)



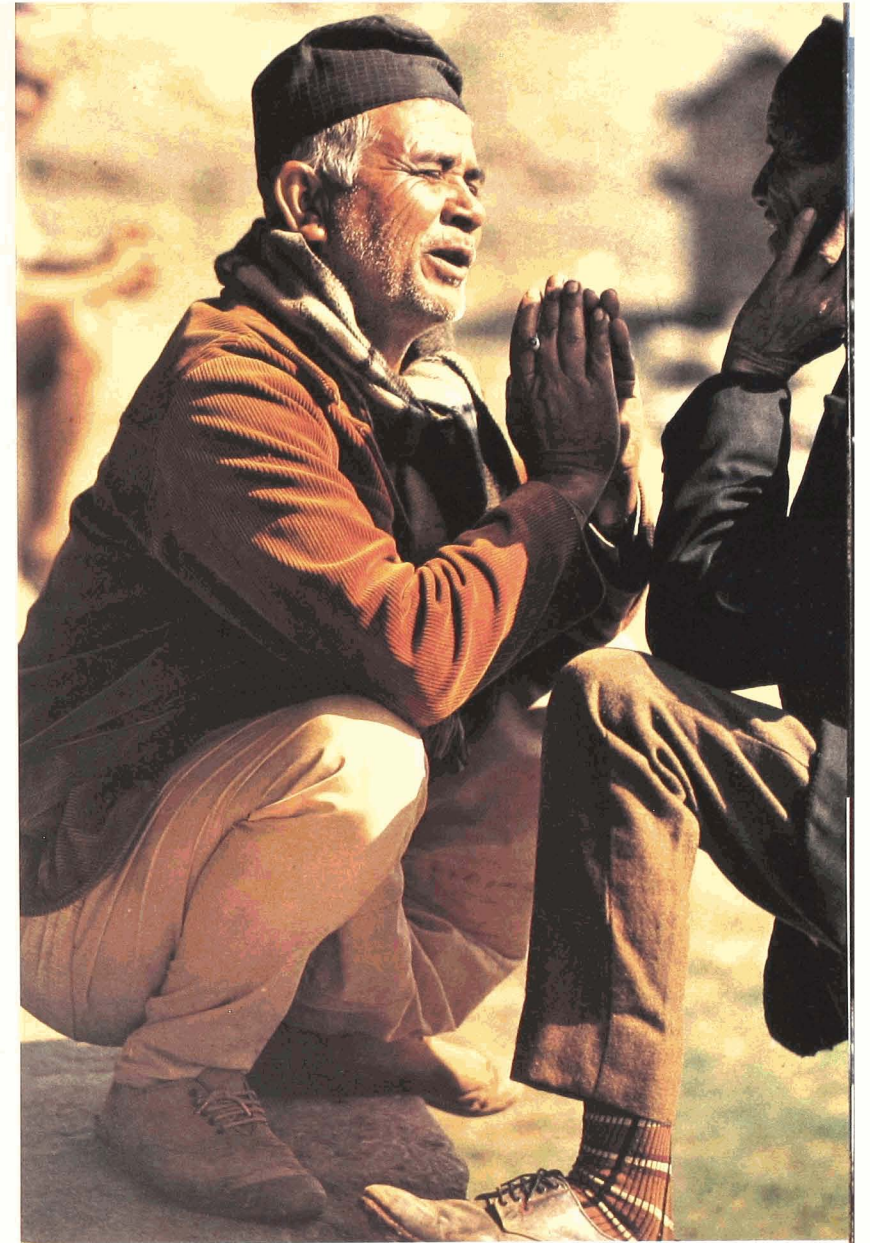
21. Carrying water (Pokhara)



22. *Snack time*



23. *Caught gossiping*



24. *Persuasive talk (Pokhara)*



25. *Mount Everest—An aerial view*

26. *Lukla Airstrip (Dudh Kosi-valley)*

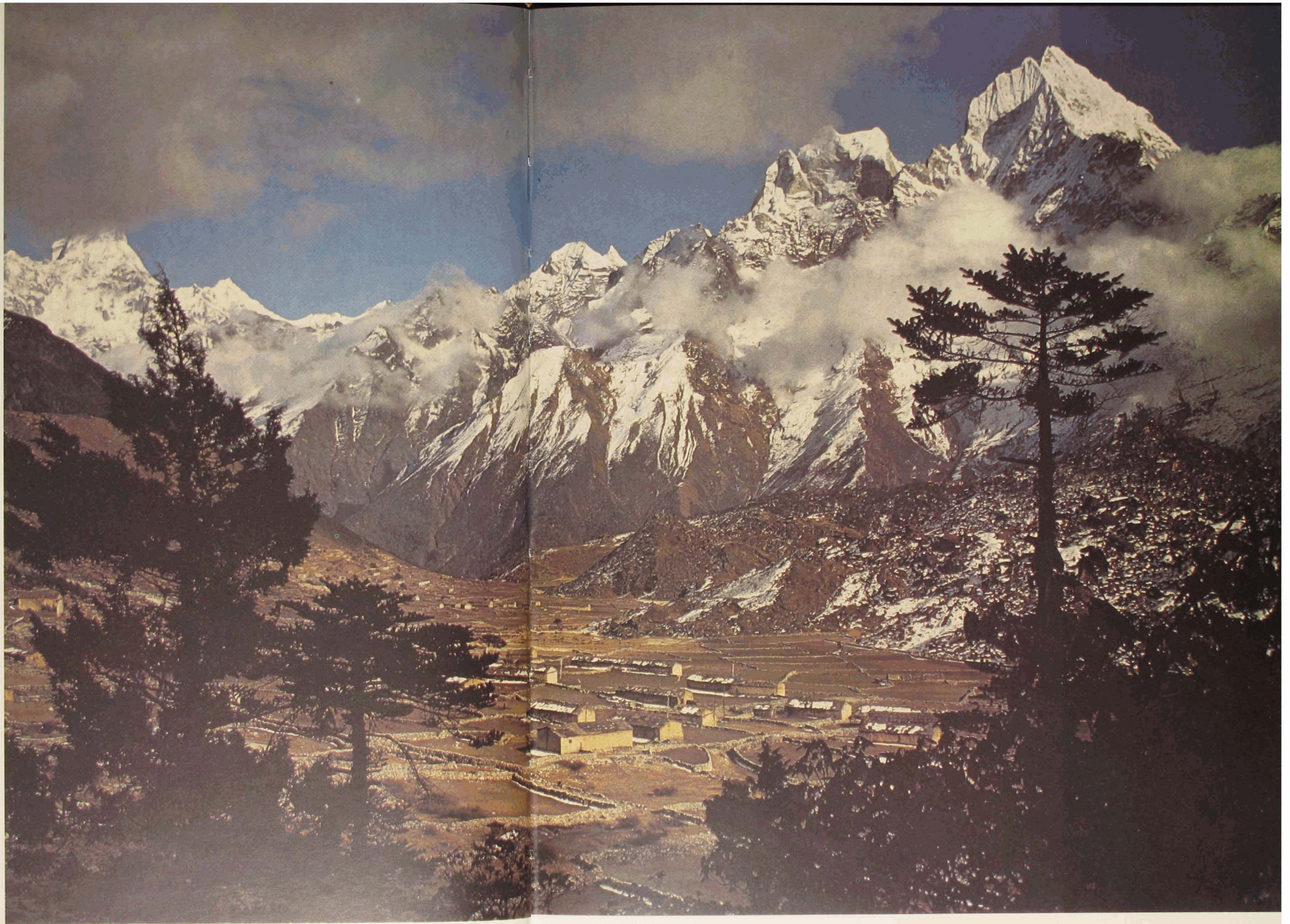




27. Helicopter service—anywhere!

28. Encounter with Sherpas at Lukla Airstrip





29. *Khumde (3865 m)—An important Sherpa village*





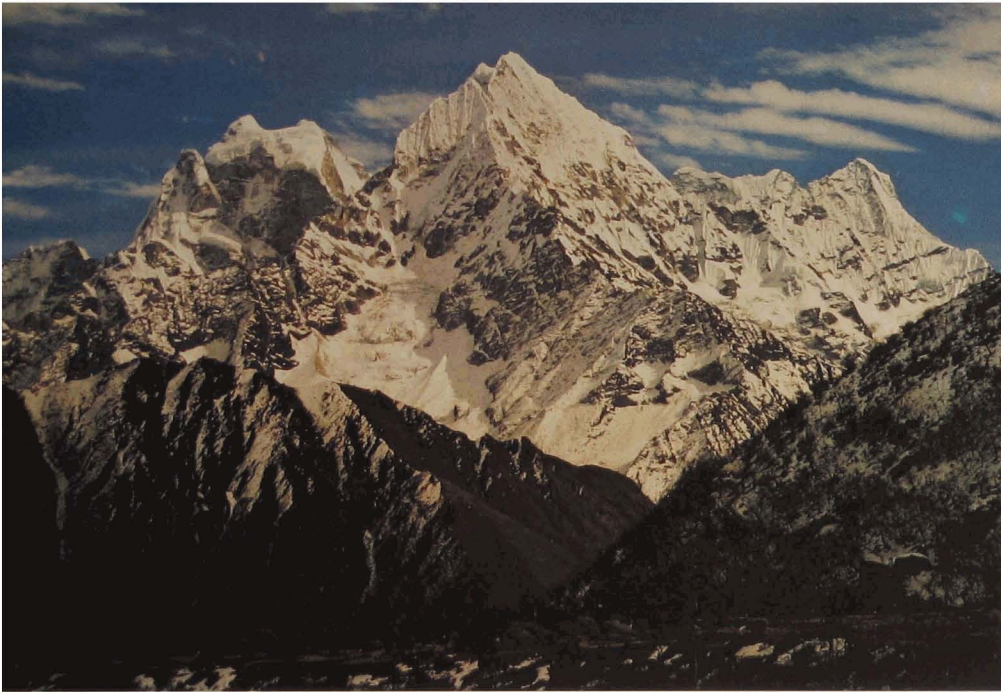
30. *Tengpoche (3867 m) and Amai Dablam (6856 m)*

32. *Nauche Bazar (Namche Bazar) (3440 m)*

31. *A weaver at the loom (Thami)*



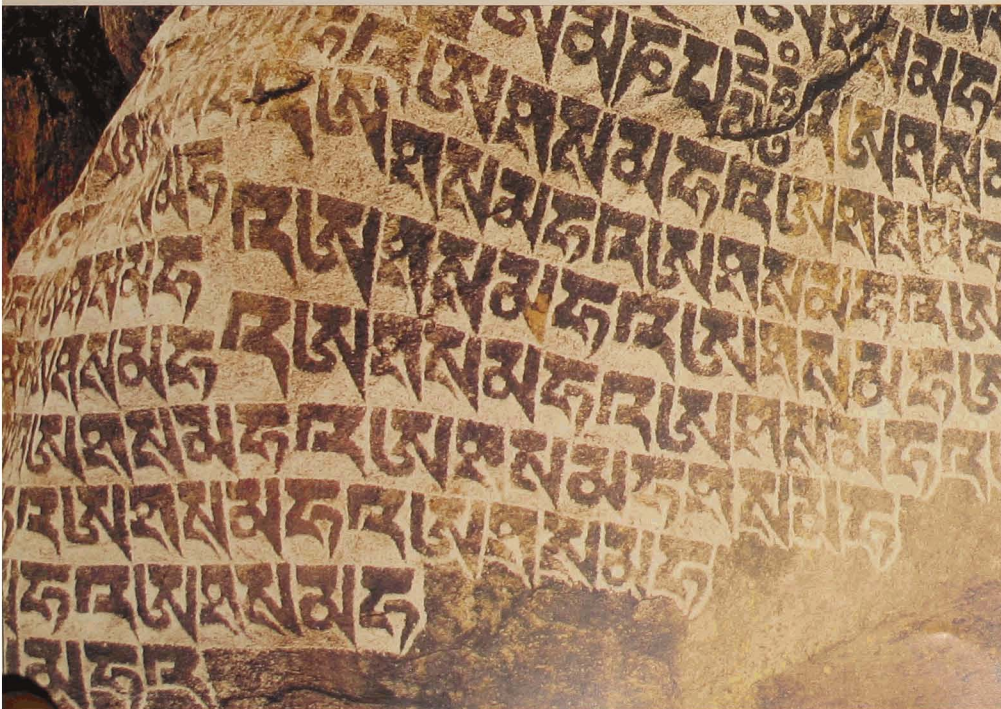


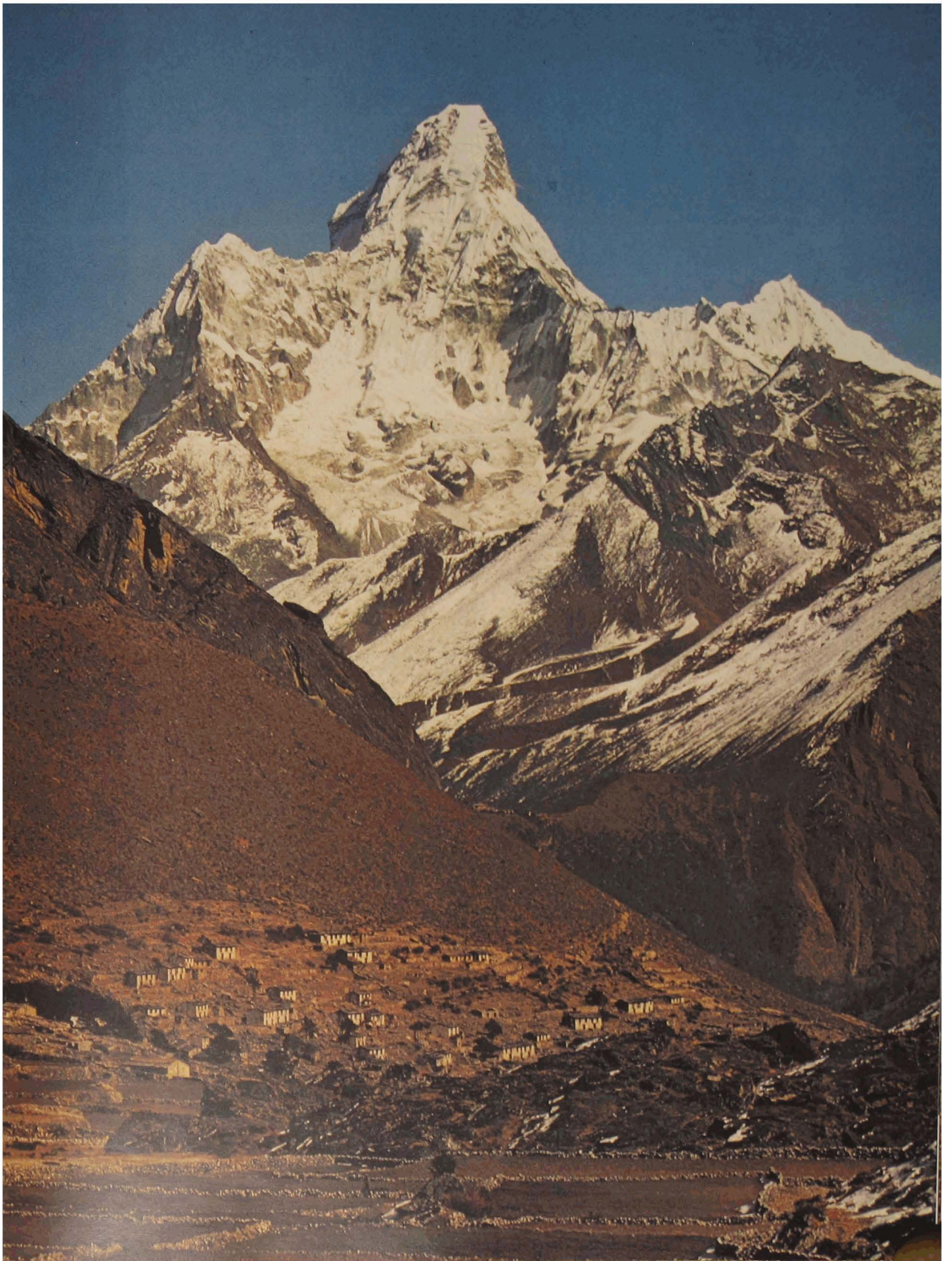


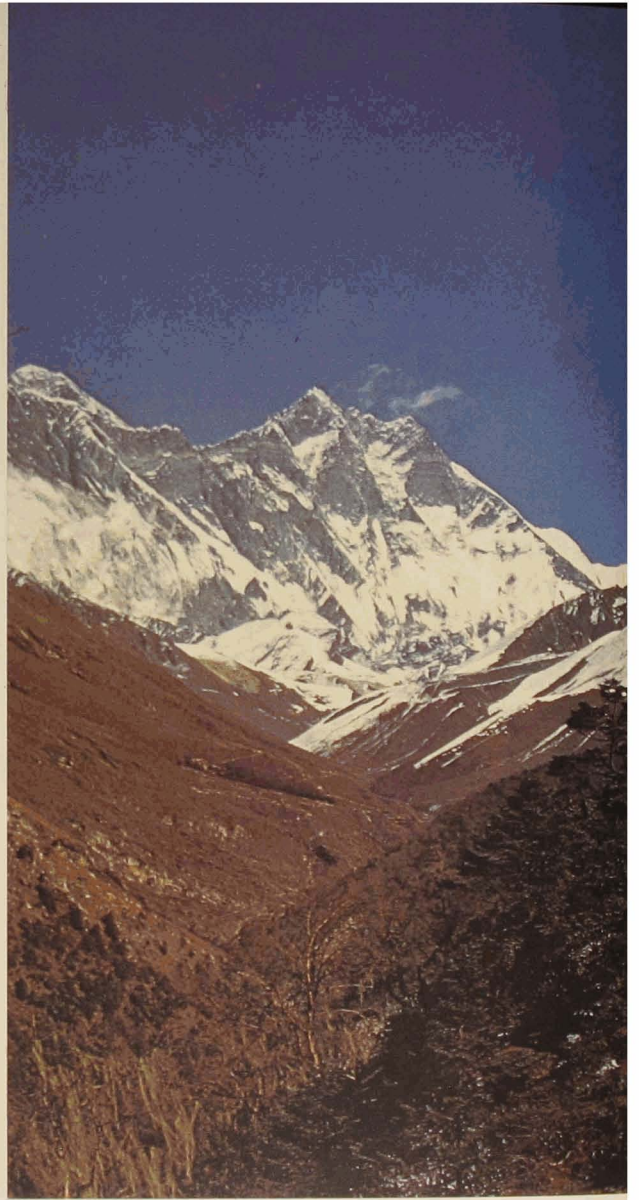
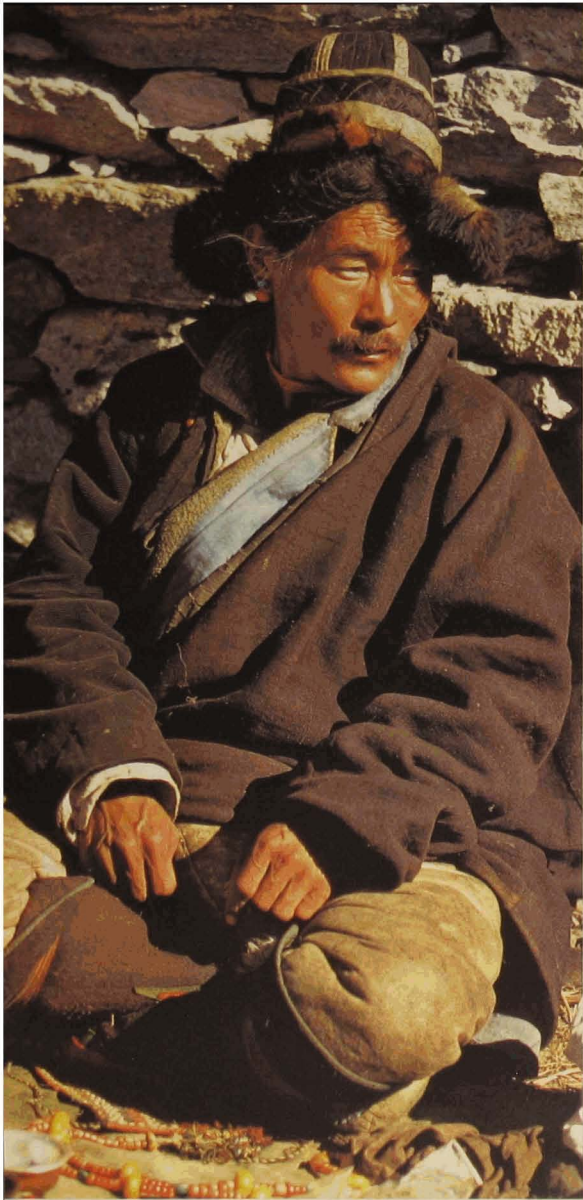
33. Kang Taiga (6809 m) and Tramserku (6623 m)  
viewed from Thami

35. Amai Dablam (6856 m)  
and Khumjung village  
(3790 m)

34. Prayers chiselled in stone



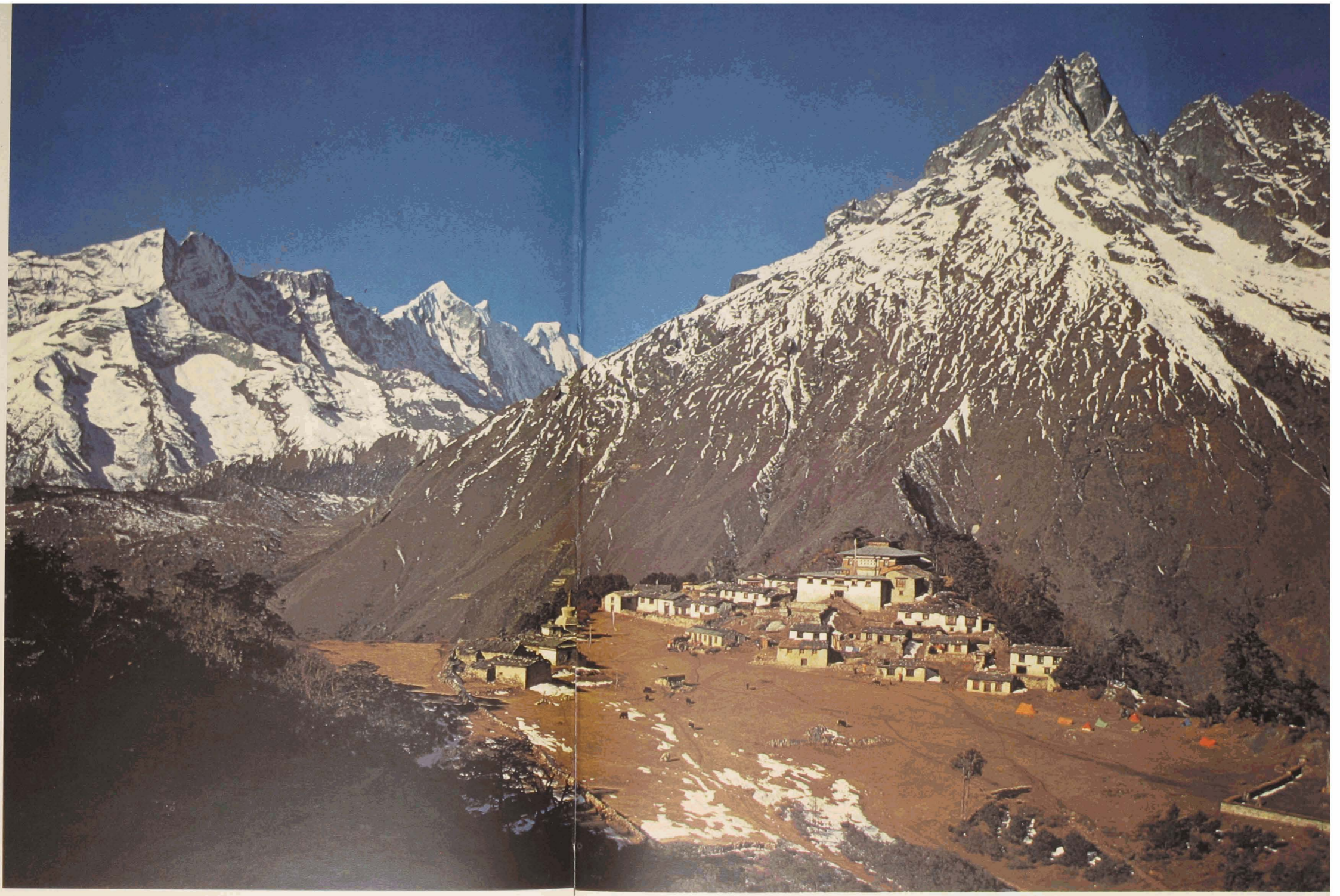




36. *A hawker at Tengpoche*



37. *The Tengpoche Monastery (3867 m) as seen from west south-west*



38. *The Tengpoche Monastery (3867 m) as seen from east north-east*

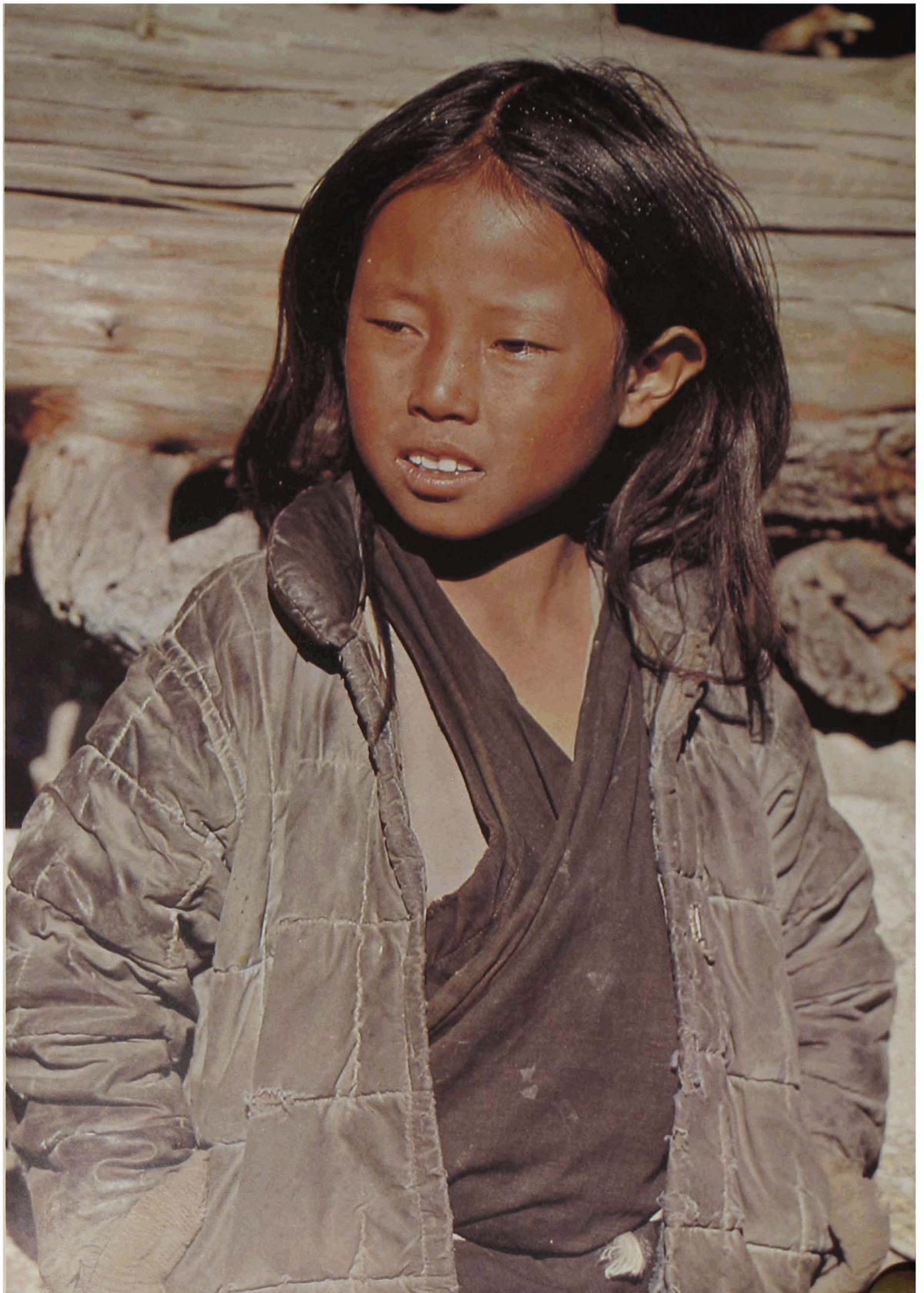


39-40-41. The annual market at Tengpoche



42. A charming spectator (Tengpoche)



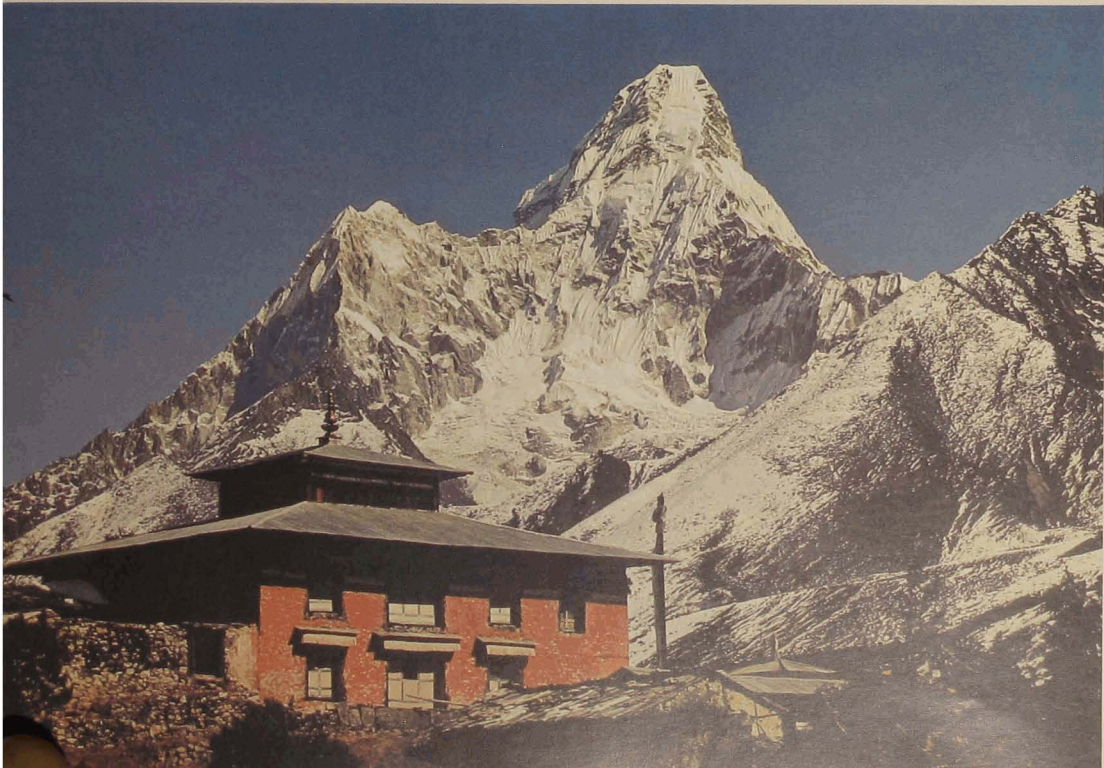


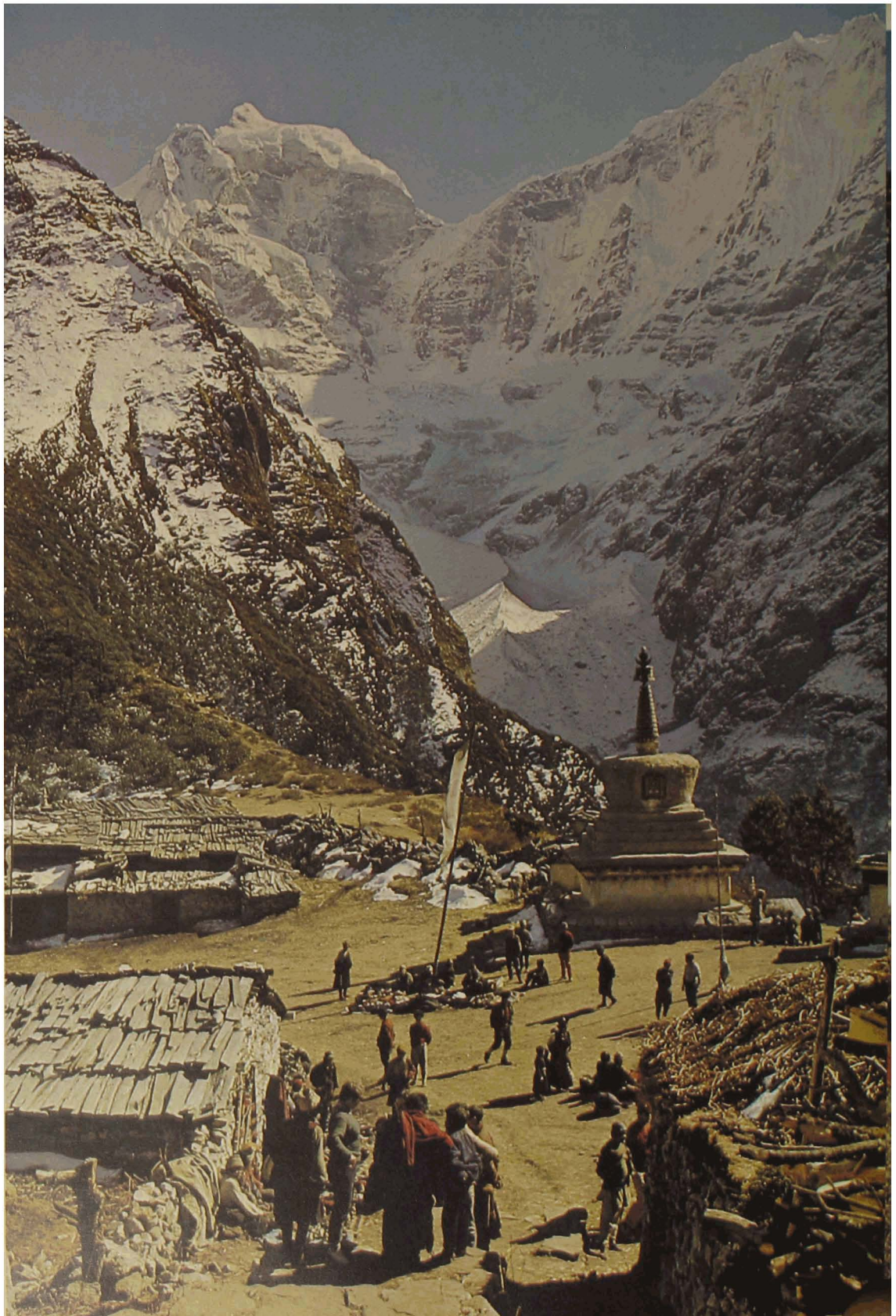


43. *Storm brewing on Everest,  
Nuptse and Lhotse*

45. *The "Chorten"  
of Tengpoche*

44. *Tengpoche in its natural setting*

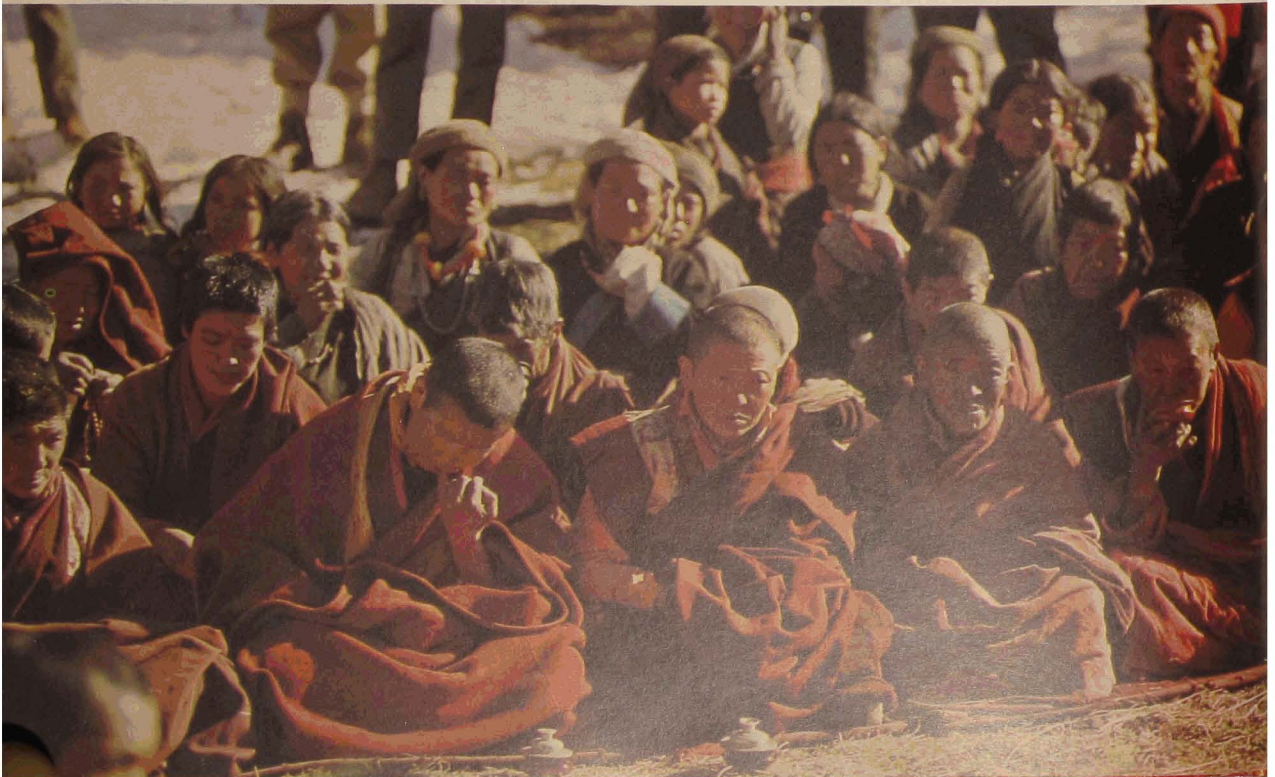






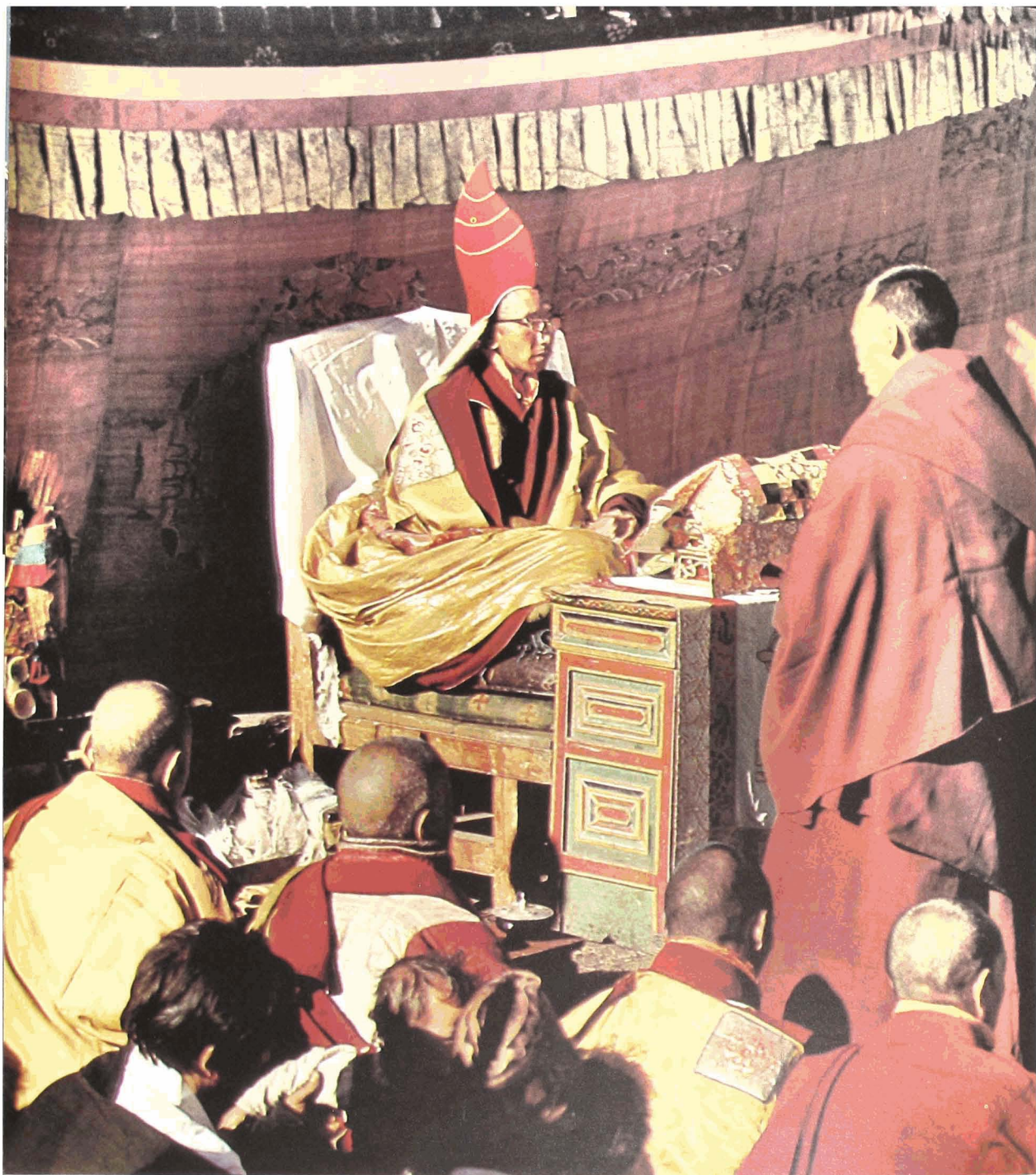
46. Ordination ceremony—"dbang"

47. The nuns of Deboche (3820 m)

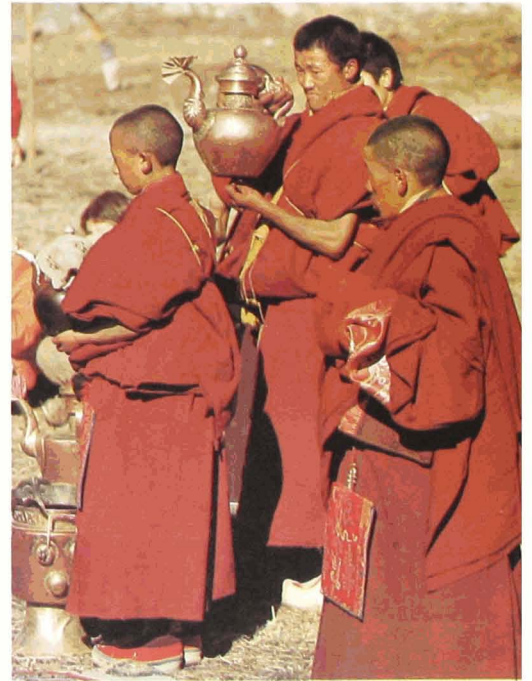
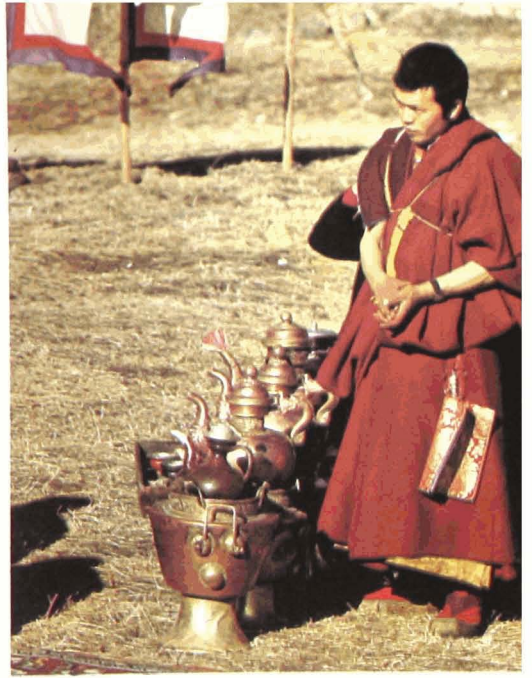
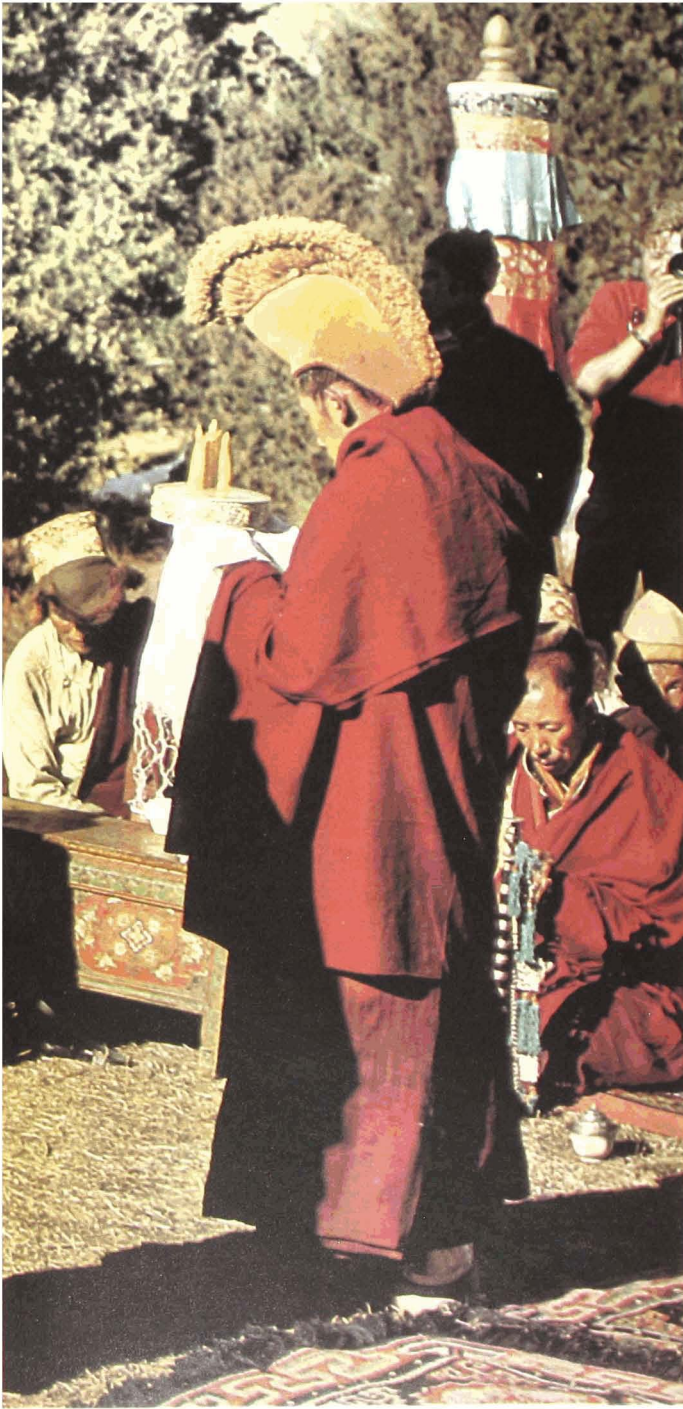




48. *A priestly procession  
for the dedication  
ceremony  
(Tengpoche)*



49. Ritual offering of "tor-ma" for the "Great Master"



50. Community tea

51. Refreshing tea for all  
(Tshe-dbang)



52. *Ceremonial  
tea (Tshe-dbang)*

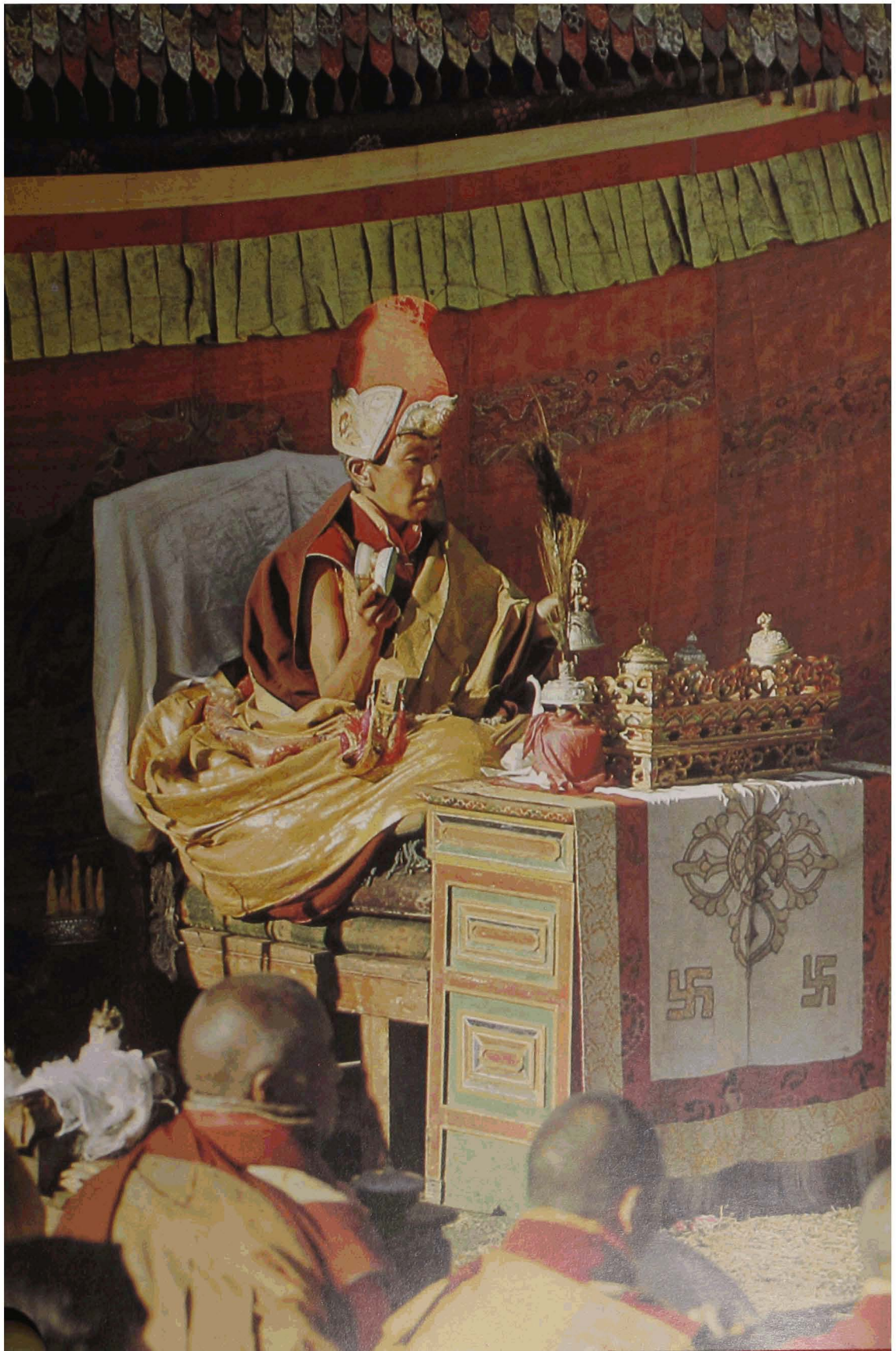


53. *Dressed for the  
festival (Tshe-  
dbang)*

54. *Ritual offering  
of money to the  
monks  
(Tshe-dbang)*









56. Religious insignia of the monastery (Tshe-dbang)

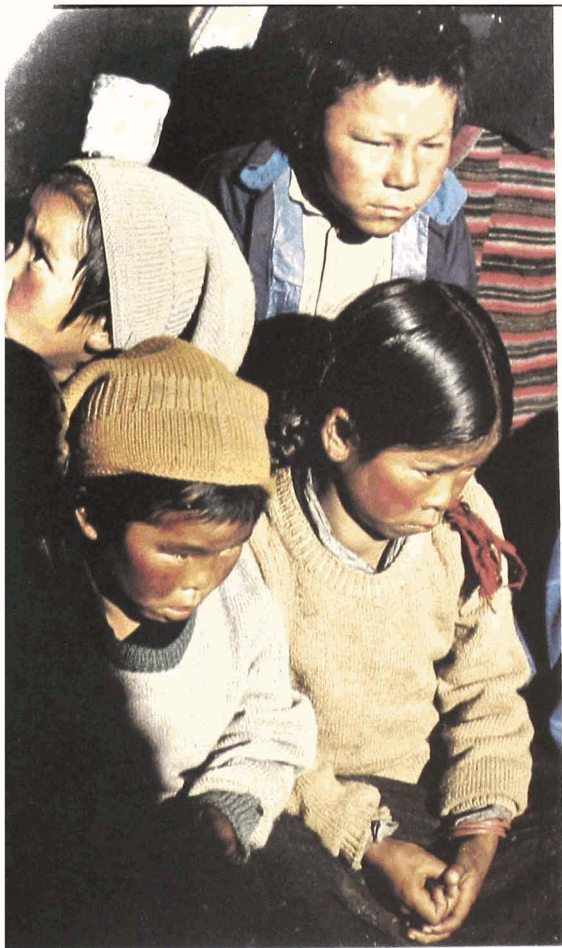
55. Head priest of Tengpoche on the throne (Tshe-dbang)



57. *A woman spectator  
at Mani Rimdu*



58. *The nun of Deboche  
at Mani Rimdu*



59. *Fascinated children  
at Mani Rimdu*



60. *A friendly smile*



61-62. *Re-entering the monastery  
after the ordination ceremony*



63. *Heralds with  
cymbals  
(Mani Rimdu*

64. *Heralds  
dancing  
at the "Mani  
Rimdu"  
inauguration*

65. *Dance of the  
"Golden  
libation"  
("Gser-skyems*







66. Offering of "chang"  
to Zur-ra Ra-rgyan  
("Gser-skyems")

67. Offerings to the  
patron-saint of  
tantric Buddhism  
("Gser-skyems")





68. *Guardian king of  
the West  
("Ging-pa")*

69. *Guardian king of  
the East ("Ging-pa")*

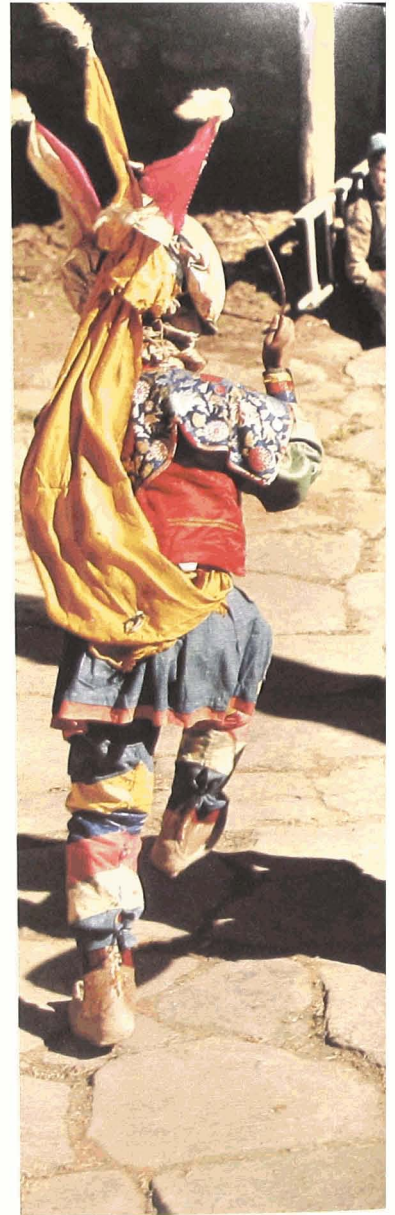


70. *Guardian king of  
the South ("Ging-pa")*





71. Guardian king of  
the North ("Ging-pa")



72. In search of sacred  
knowledge (in green)  
Wisdom attained (in blue)



73. *The serpent God (in red)*



74. *Padmasambhava charging at the demons*



75. *Dance of the celestial drums*





76. *Group dance of the celestial drums*



77-78. *The drum playing the song of Truth*



79. *Buddha's message  
of truth to the world*

80. *Tantric triad:  
Buddha—doctrine  
monkhood  
("Rnga-cham")*





79. *Buddha's message  
of truth to the world*

80. *Tantric triad:  
Buddha—doctrine  
monkhood  
("Rnga-cham")*





81. *The dance of death*



82. *Macabre dance*



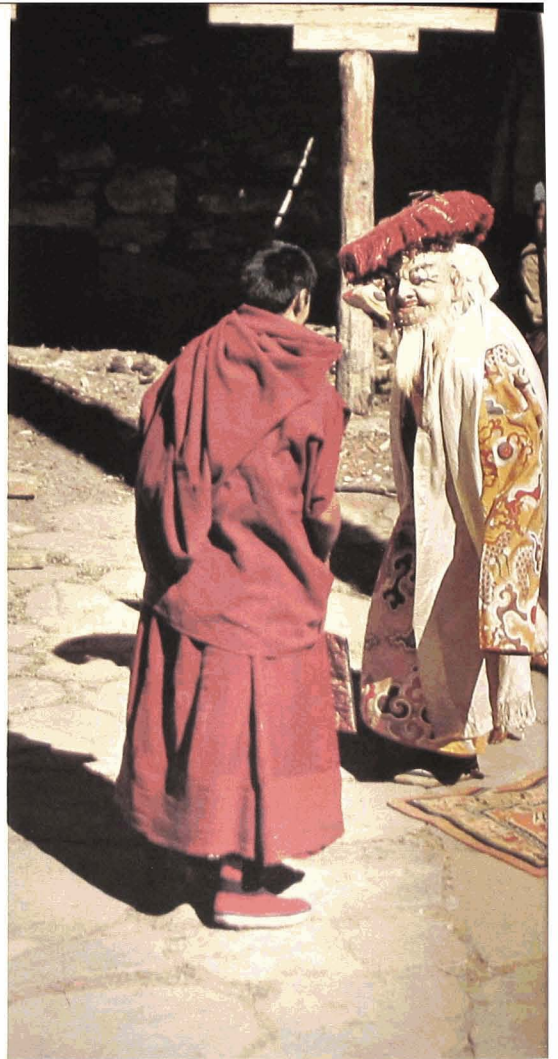
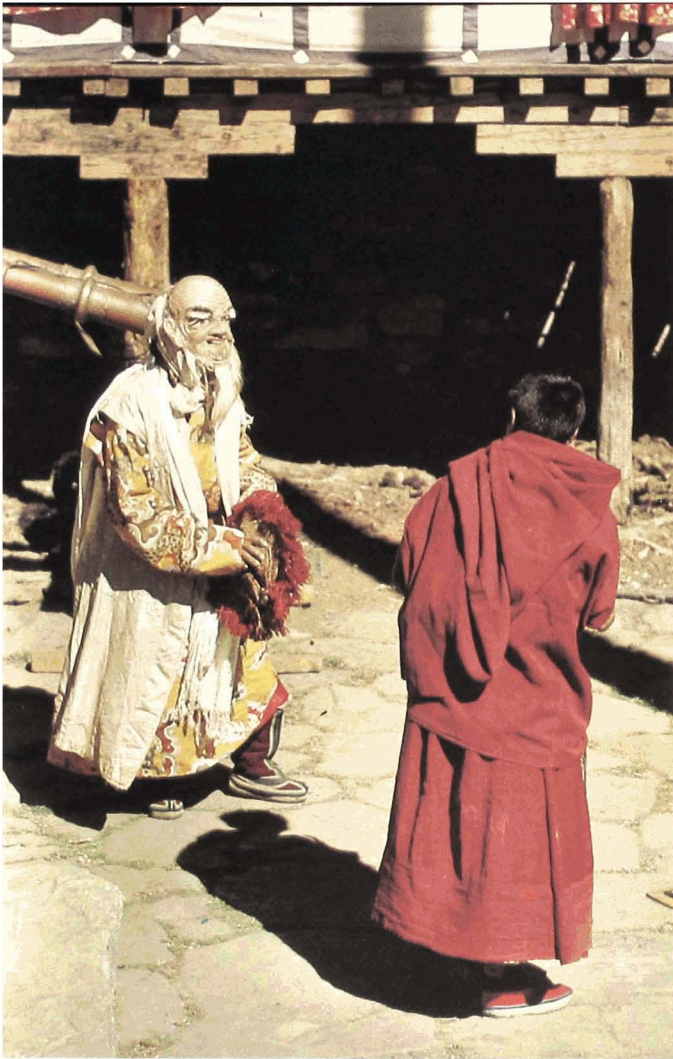
83. *A tantric priest*



84-85. *Fight against the demons and their conversion*



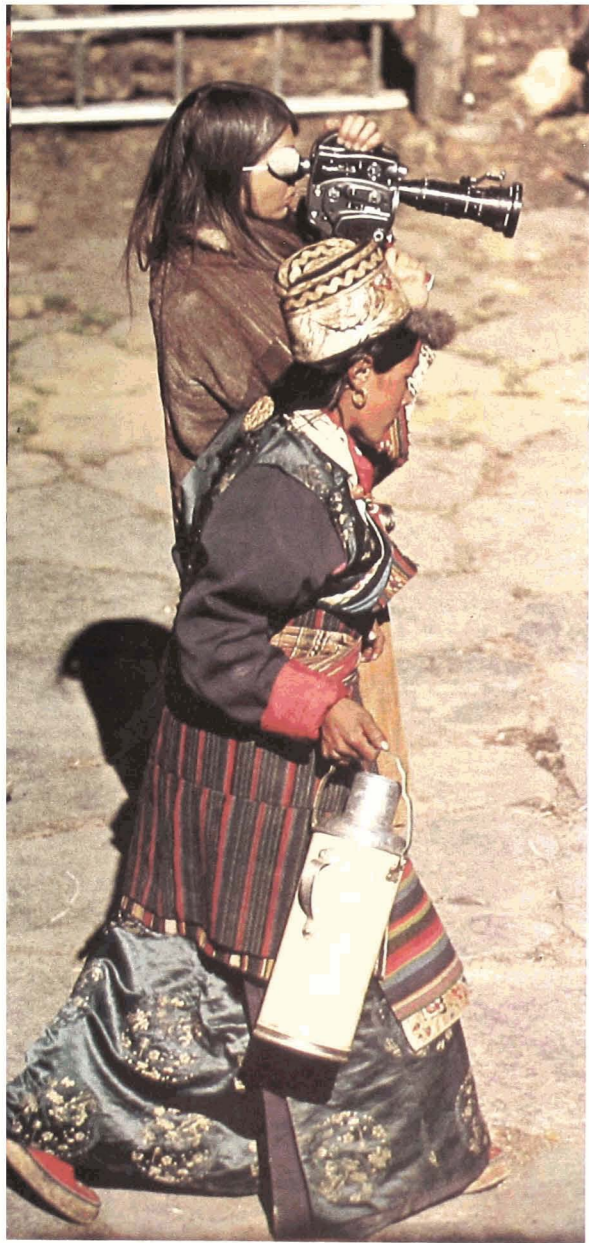




86–87. *The first comic interlude*



88. *Preparation for the ritual offerings*



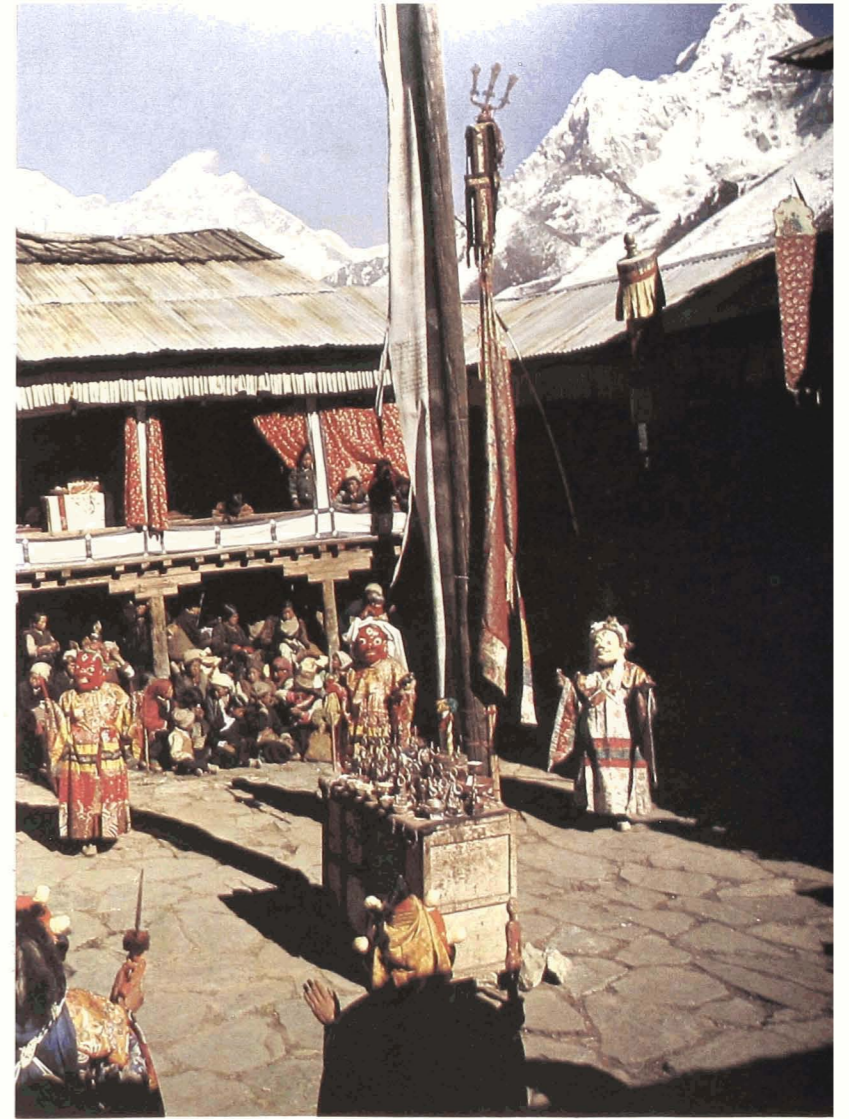
89. The "two worlds" rubbing shoulders



90. "The Big Black One" ("Chos-Skyong")



91. *The protectress of Dalai Lama and the subjugator of the God of death*



92. *The merry-go-round of the "eight furies"*



93. *Blowers of the sacred horns*

94. *Dance of the "eight deities"  
protectors of the faith*



95. *The God of wealth*



96. *The subjugator of the God of Death*





97. *The Big Black One ("Mgon-Po")*





98. *The God of death ("Yama")*



99. *The mysterious "White Brahma"*



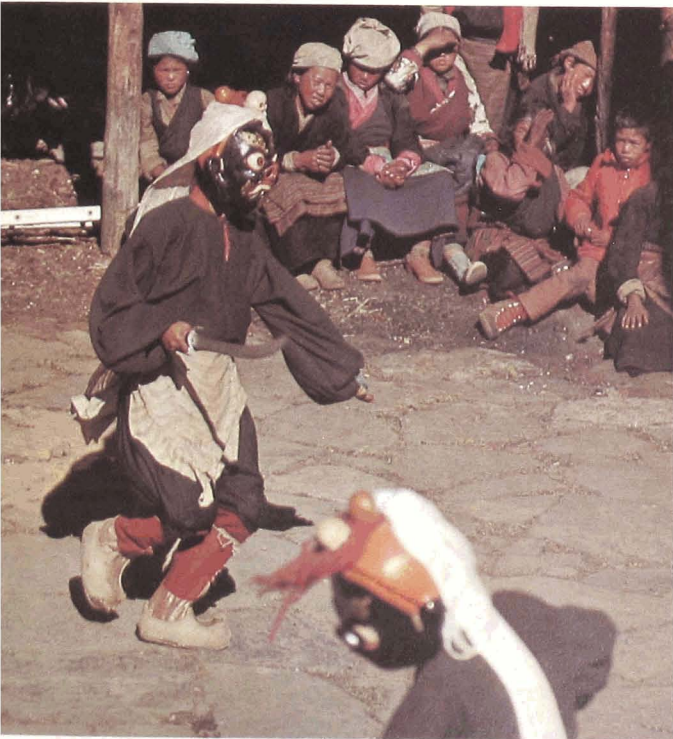
100. *The Warrior God ("White Brahma")—one of the "eight furies" ("chos-skyongs")*



101. *The protector God of Khumbu region ("Zurra")*



102. *The protector God of the Sherpa valleys ("Gnos-srung")*



103. *The Black men (protectors of the places of pilgrimage)*

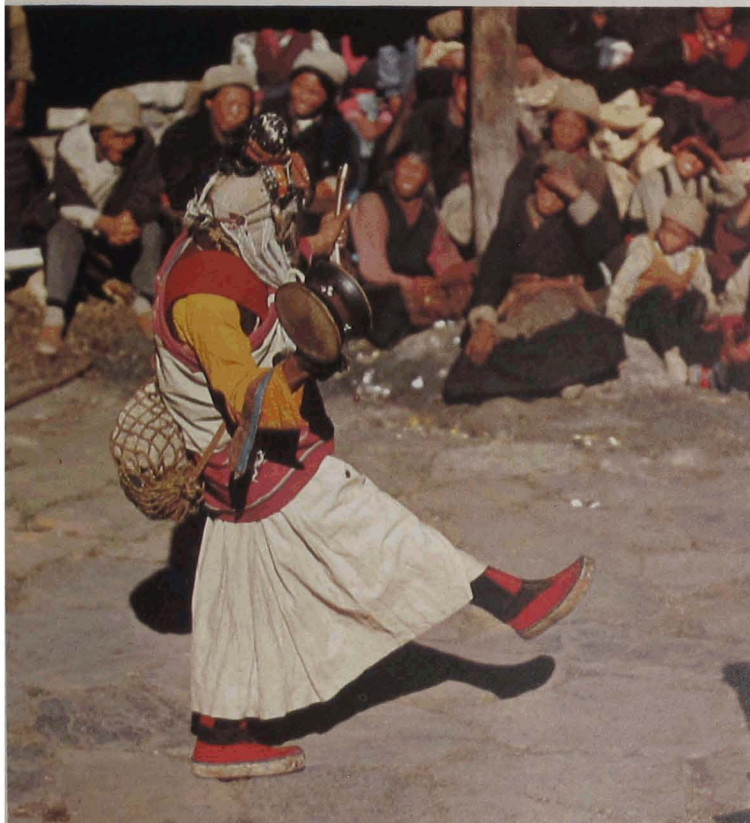
104. *A view of the fascinated foreign audience*





107. *The standard-bearers  
preceding the  
"Khumbu Guardians"*

105. *"A dakhini (Semi-Goddess)  
with a drum and a bell*



106. *The second comic interlude*

108-109. *A farcical scene*





110. *The concluding ceremony*



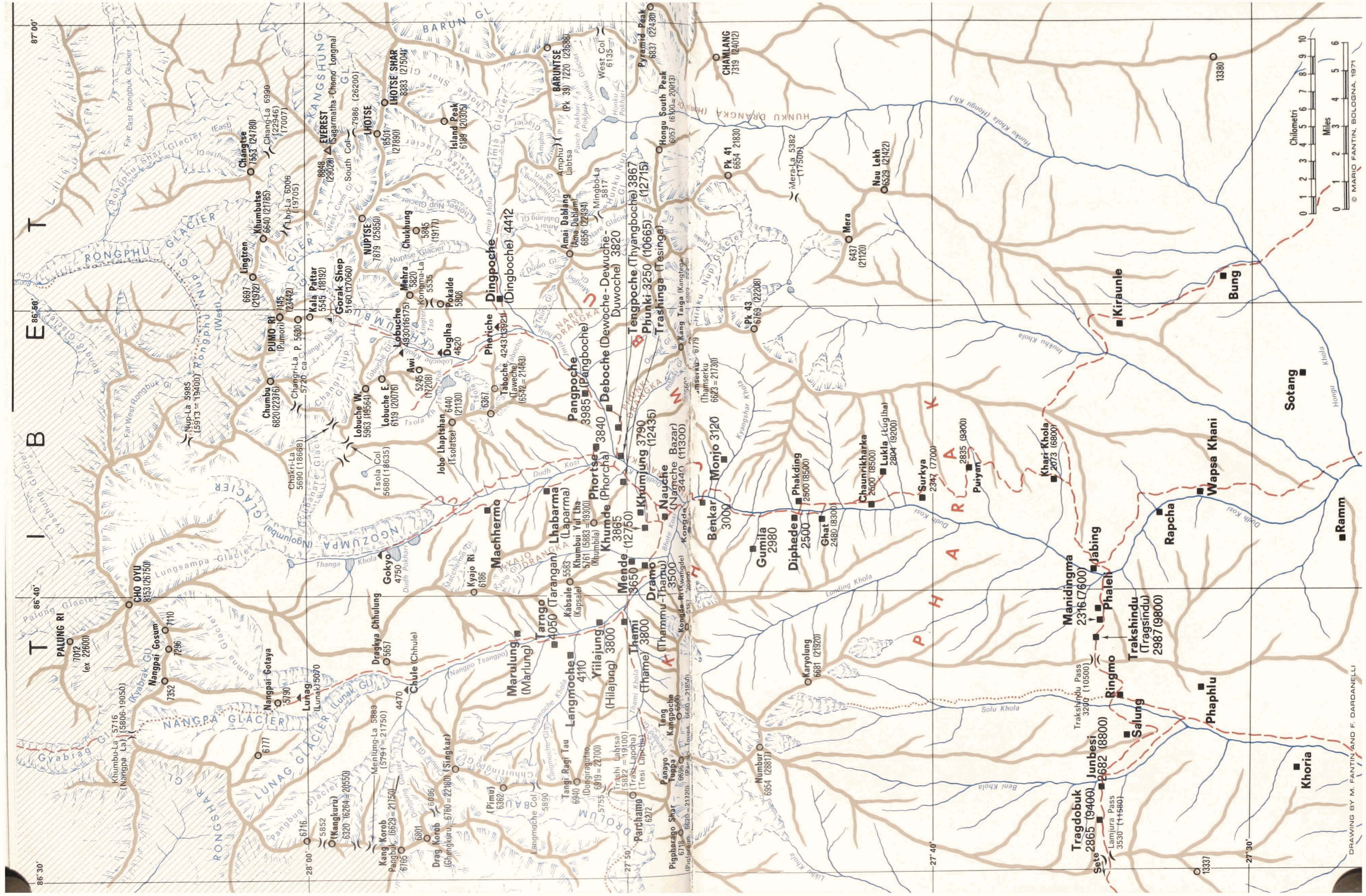
111. *The altar with sacrificial offerings*

CHOMO LUNGMA

KHUMBAKARNA HIMAL

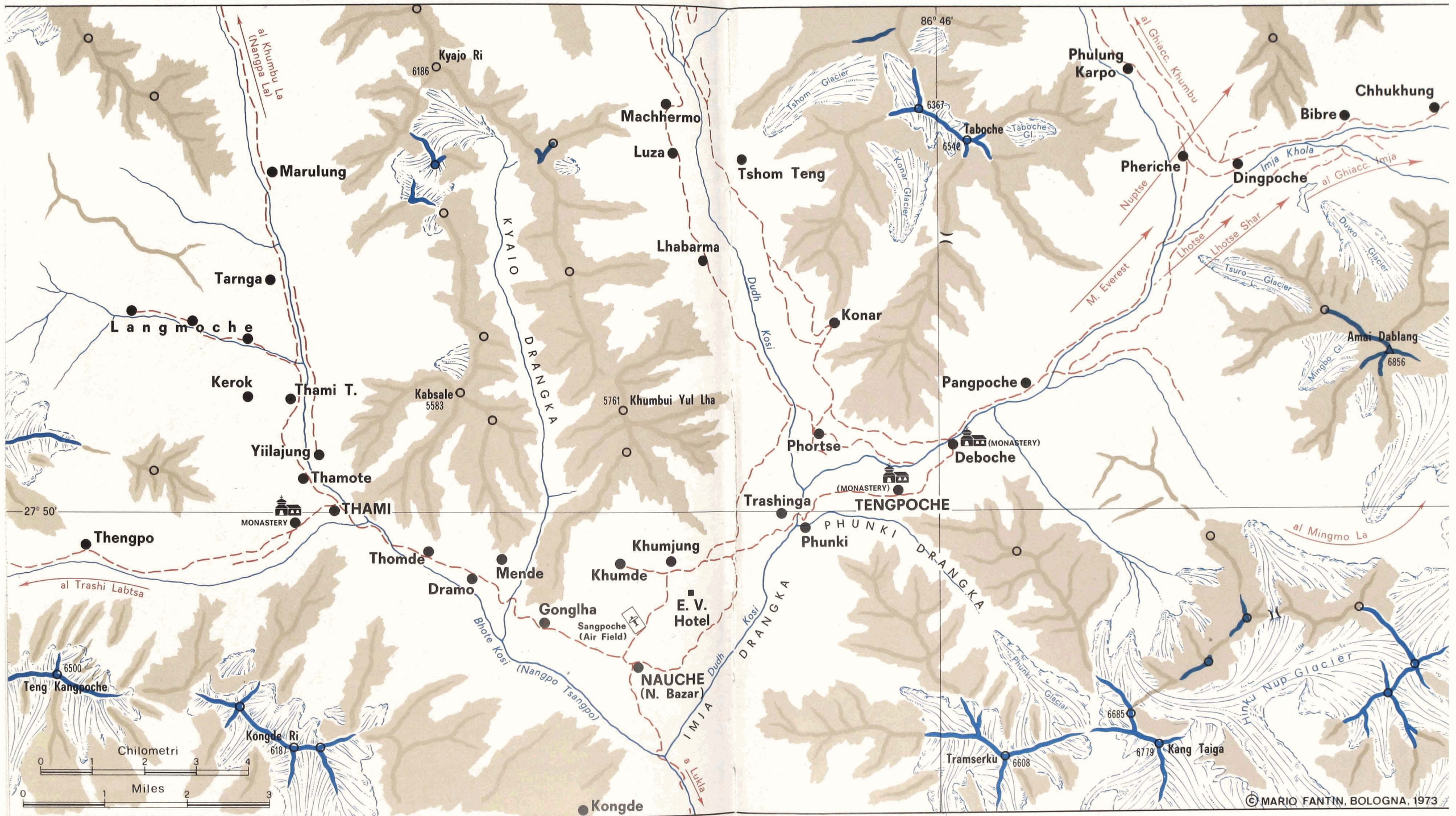






DRAWING BY M. FANTIN AND F. GARDANELLI

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# MAHALANGUR HIMAL

## ROLWALING HIMAL



## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND NOTES ON BUDDHISM**

*Ashoka*: One of the greatest Indian Kings, he was the grandson of the monarch Chandra Gupta Maurya—a contemporary of Alexander the Great. He ruled from 264 B.C. to 226/227 B.C., built an all-Indian Empire, got converted to Buddhism around 250 B.C.—a religion which greatly influenced his politics, so much so that he came to be called “the Constantine of Buddhism.” He was also responsible for spreading Buddhism in Ceylon and Afghanistan. He popularised Buddhist art in every part of his Empire. His conversion to Buddhism took place on the Dhauli hill not very far from the city of Bhuvaneshwar (South-eastern India).

*Atisha*: A Teacher of Mahayana Buddhism, he lived from 980 A.D. to about 1052 A.D. After mastering the principles of Buddhism he settled down on the island of Java around 1030 A.D. The King of Bengal entrusted with the task of directing a Tibetan mission (circa 1050 A.D.) with the specific aim of reforming Buddhist religion in Tibet. He did everything possible to root out every type of corruption from the life of Tibetan monks and to teach them strict monastic discipline, celibacy and abstinence. He belonged to the royal family of ‘Palas’ and thus introduced the so called ‘Pala’ art in Tibet.

*Avalokiteshvara*: was one of the greatest Bodhisattvas in the Buddhist pantheon.

*Barche-Serwa*: The ceremony for warding-off dangers during a journey.

*Bar-do*: The world between death and rebirth.

*Bar-do-to-dol*: It is the Tibetan “Book of the dead”

*Beg-tse*: He is the God of war and protector of horses.

*Bka-gyur*: Kanguir Tangiur: A Buddhist scripture containing the translation of the word of Lord Buddha.

*Bla-tshe*: Supernatural life.

*Bodhi*: Signifies sacred knowledge, wisdom, 'Enlightenment'. The Bodhi tree is the Banyan tree under which Lord Buddha got Enlightenment.

*Bodhisattva*: Bodhisattva is one who desires and has the power to become Buddha (the 'Enlighten One') in view of his requisite spiritual qualifications, but willingly renounces the chance to attain that spiritual state in order to help humanity in its quest for ultimate liberation.

*Bon*: (Bon religion or Bonism): It is the name given to the old religion of the Tibetan before they became Buddhists. Bon-po are the followers of Bon religion which has survived till today in some regions of Tibet. It is a kind of animistic religion involving the invocation of supernatural spirits. According to Bon religion the world is divided into three parts—earth, air, and paradise, each one of which is supposed to be inhabited by spirits responsible for every kind of human calamity and misery. The priests of this religion (or Shamani) are there to perform purificatory and expiatory rites to render the every-day life of man more peaceful and undisturbed. Animal and even human sacrifice was a characteristic feature of ancient Bon religion. Till the advent of Buddhism, the art of writing was unknown in Tibet. Subsequently, however, Bon religion came to have sacred texts which were partly plagiarized from Buddhism.

*Brahmanism*: It constitutes an important stage in the post-Vedic religious evolution in India emphasising the idea of the unity of Godhead. The term is derived from 'Brahman'—the priest who had the sole prerogative of conducting sacrifices and thus considered himself superior to others, almost a demigod. The identification of the individual soul with the universal paved the way for the concept of human soul merging into 'Brahman'. This idea clashed with the traditional concept of the transmigration of souls which itself was based upon the theory of personal and collective 'Karma'. We find,

however, on the authority of the upanishads that, more than the priestly class, it was the class of warriors which was responsible for the emergence of these new concepts.

*Bsang-phor*: The burning of incense in the religious ceremonies of Tibetan Buddhism.

*Bsodnams (Sonam)*: Accumulated spiritual merit entitling a Buddhist to be reborn in a higher form or leading him to 'Nirvana'.

*Btsan* ("Zen" in Japanese Language; "Son" in Korean and "Ch'an" in Chinese): Exorcisms against evil forces.

*Btsan; btsam*: Very powerful spirits of the air in Bon religion. After being defeated and converted to Buddhism, these spirits became the defenders of the new faith (Buddhism).

*Buddha*: Literally it means "Enlightened or "fully awake". It is a title applied to one who has attained final 'Enlightenment' or ultimate knowledge through renunciation of all desires. Such an "Enlightened One" is liberated for good from the bondage of life, death and rebirth. Given certain conditions everybody has a chance of attaining to this spiritual state or of becoming Buddha. It is equally true that this nomenclature is only applied to such historical or mythological personages who have been responsible for doctrinal or dogmatic changes or reinterpretation or innovation within the Buddhist fold.

It is a title which specifically belongs to the historical figure of Gautama (also called Shakyamuni—the sage of the Shakya clan) who was the founder of Buddhism (560–480 B.C.) His life story as we know it today is a mixture of history and legend. His own name was "Siddhartha" (family name "Gautam") and he belonged to the clan of Shakyas or the mighty ones. His father was called Shuddhodana and his mother Maya. He belonged to Kapilavastu a town near the present Indo-Nepal frontier. His mother gave birth to this child in the jungle of Lumbini when, according to prevalent

practice, she was on her way to her parents' house, and suddenly the labour pains started. As soon as he was born, legend has it that he took seven steps in the four directions, uttering, at the same time, mystic words which gave him power over the universe. From every step immediately sprang a lotus flower. On his body he bore certain marks of future greatness. Seeing these signs the old Asita predicted that the child will attain 'Enlightenment'. When he was presented at the temple the statures of Gods and Goddesses are said to have come down from their pedestals to do obeisance to him and when he was put under the charge of a preceptor, the small child, Shakyamuni, amazed him with extraordinary, precocious knowledge.

Towards the end of the last century, Furer, a German sanskrit-scholar, discovered a column near the Nepalese village of Bhavanpur with an inscription on it, saying that the Emperor Ashoka had got it erected at the place where Lord Buddha was born. A few kilometres to the North-west was found an urn with an inscription testifying that it contained relics of the Buddha of the Shakya clan.

From the historical point of view, very little is known of the adolescence of Lord Buddha. The only thing that can be said with certainty is that the name of his son was Rahul. Married at a very young age, he found no pleasure in the life of comfort and luxury that was provided for him till the age of 29, when he came face-to-face with some extremely tragic aspects of life. The sight of a decrepit old man, a sick person and a dead body set him thinking about the nature of human suffering and pain. The same evening he secretly left his palace in search of the most famous Brahmin philosophers who could initiate him into the ways of liberating humanity from the ills affecting it. So, at the age of 29 he put on the saffron robes of Indian ascetics and became a hermit. The evil tempter 'Mara' followed him with his daughters, to dissuade him from adopting a life of contemplation. Mara, the god of lust, is said to have tempted him with the kingdom of the entire world, but the future Buddha rejected all such offers. However, enlightenment still evaded him. He neither found it in



the company of the Brahmins, nor amidst forest solitude, nor through mortification of the flesh.

Only after seven years came the fateful night when light dawned on Buddha, as he sat in meditation under the Bodhi tree. Later this night came to be known the 'sacred night' among the Buddhists. This happened at Bodh Gaya and the Banyan tree bore witness to this great event. Buddha, the "Enlightened one", realized that pain and suffering were inseparable from human existence and that their root cause lay in passions and desires. The only way to bypass the inexorable law of transmigration is to annihilate all desire and ignorance through the understanding of the Law which exposes the unreality of worldly things. Moreover the feeling of charity should induce a consideration for the salvation not only of one's own self but of the other creatures as well. It was thus that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood. Having overcome the initial hesitation of sharing his spiritual experience with the world, he decided to show the path of Salvation to others, foregoing temporarily 'Nirvana' for himself in the process.

He went to Benaras and by delivering his sermon on the four noble truths in the Deer Park near the present Sarnath, set in motion his "wheel of Law" (Dharma Chakra). Five of his old disciples, pupils of the sage Rudraka, formed the nucleus of the new religion. Other disciples gathered around Shakyamuni and accompanied him to different parts of India converting kings and commoners to the new Faith. More and more people got converted. When he had gathered around him sixty pupils he sent them in different directions to preach his doctrine. There are no authentic records of his life and activities in the next forty-five years. We only possess exact information about the end of the terrestrial life of the Master. His speeches reflect a deep understanding of human nature. It appears that about 500 disciples followed him in his peregrinations.

His end gives us a more precise in-sight into his great personality. When he attained the age of about 80 years he felt that his end was near. Gathering around himself his disciples and addressing Ananda, one of his select pupils, he uttered words of comfort and wisdom, saying,

“All that is born is transient. Therefore one must carry on the struggle of life without pause.”

They laid him under a tree. He was seriously ill. The tree is said to have blossomed and a shower of petals fell on the dying Master. Sweet melodies descended from the heavens at the same time.

His body was cremated and the ashes were buried at different places, especially in the ‘stupas’ which in course of time became holy monuments. Though in the initial stages of Buddhism the title Buddha was exclusively used to indicate the historical founder of the faith, the situation underwent a change, especially with the advent of Mahayana, which made the historical Buddha an incarnation of the principle of the Universe, albeit not the only or the most important one. Thus we had a number of Buddhas, past and future, and the number multiplied into hundreds and thousands. At first the figure of Buddha did not appear in the religious iconography as he was only represented through symbols. It was only around the First Century A.D. that the first images of Buddha started appearing in the North of India (Mathura) and in the North-west (Gandhara). The images of Buddha are shown with hands positioned in particular gestures of fearlessness, charity, contemplation and wisdom. On his body are shown signs of saintliness: the protruberance of the head (Ushnisha), a drooping of the eye-lids (urna), the imprint of the sacred wheels (chakra) on the palm of his hands etc.

*Buddha in Iconography:* The statues of Buddha or any paintings depicting him are never represented in isolation but always as an integral part of the temple ‘architectonics’ i.e. they act as a ritual nucleus of the architectural milieu. Their ritualistic significance derives from the special relationship between them and the religious setting in which they are placed. Other elements such as the altar-piece, the throne pedestal, the halo around the figure, or the overhead, canopy generally symbolized by a gold-studded ceiling or a dome, provide the necessary relief to the whole set-up. Each statue or painting of Buddha can properly be appreciated only as an integral unit in the whole architectural design of

the temple in which it is found. This relationship usually reflects cultural, functional, iconographic or formal overtones.

In the beginning there were no religious or artistic compulsions to place the figure of Buddha among many other figures of the so called 'Buddhist landscape' in a painting or as an architectural or sculptural motif, for the simple reason that initially there existed only one Buddha—the historical Shakyamuni who founded this religion and the order of the Buddhist monks. The plurality of Buddhas is an after-thought of the Mahayana sect of Buddhism—a curious though understandable phenomenon in subsequent works of art, painting and sculpture. Very soon this concept of multiplicity found its expression in the images of the 'predecessors' or the Buddha or Shakyamuni, one of the most famous of these being the legendary figure "Prabhautaratna." It is said that there were as many as 500 to 1000 predecessors of the historic Buddha. The total number of Buddhas who are said to have preceded and followed him is variously put at one thousand, three thousand and even ten thousand. The one who immediately came after him was certainly 'Maitreya'. But if we were to take into account Buddhas of all the worlds and of all times, they are supposed to be as many as there are particles of sand in the bed of the sacred river Ganga.

The Buddhas who historically preceded Shakyamuni are considered to be seven in number and the only one who followed him is generally known to be 'Maitreya'. In Buddhist iconography however, Buddha is represented by two, three, five and nine figures. At the centre is always found the principal figure of Adi-Buddha or the Absolute One. The accompanying figures can either be other divinities or worshippers. At times, however, at least in the case of images prescribed by Mahayana-Buddhism, they are Bodhisattvas, the compassionate ones who are ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others. The usual trio-Buddha, Shakyamuni, with two other Bodhisattvas along with two disciples, Ananda and Kashyappa, constitutes the traditional group of five figures. The marginal group consists of the 4 kings of the sky or the protectors of the world (Lokapala) or

the 4 guardians of the main directions, and the two door-keepers (Dvarapala) who in the paintings and sculptures as well as in the halls and temples are grouped around the central figures of the holiest among the holy, in order to protect them from malicious inimical forces. This protection is meant not only for these august personages but for the entire "land of the Buddha" as shown iconographically. Other celestial creatures—the 'Apsaras' flying in the air and the figures of Bodhisattvas are generally shown in the act of offering flowers and incense. Many times the central figure of Buddha is encircled by 4 images set in the four main directions and are shown living in the paradise of their choosing; they are Shakyamuni, Maitreya, Bhaishajyaguru and Amitabha.

The picturesque representation of many Buddhas surrounded by the high personages of the Buddhist pantheon constitutes what is called a 'Mandai' or the psycho-cosmogram.

*(Adi) Buddha:* The primordial Buddha, the self-existent (Swayambhava), is shown in three different images representing different sects of Buddhists. Those belonging to the sect of Gelung-pa (Tibetan: dge-lugs-pa), the 'Victorious one', or the followers of the yellow sect call the Adi-Buddha "Vajradhara" (Tibetan: Dorje-chang) or the 'wielder of the thunderbolt'. He is generally shown in a sitting posture wearing princely robes and jewels, with a thunder-bolt and a ball. Mostly he is shown in conjunction with his 'Shakti'.

The followers of the sect of Kar-gya-Pa (those belonging to the oral tradition) call him "Vajrasattva" (Tibetan: Dorje-sempa) or the one whose essence is constituted by the thunder-bolt. The followers of the Nim-pa (Tibetan: Rnging-ma-pa) call the Adi-Buddha as 'Samant-abhadra' or 'the Universal bounty'. They also call him Kun-tun-brang-po or 'the best one'. He is generally shown naked, the complexion of his body being bluish. He too is shown in conjunction with his 'Shakti', who is herself naked but of white complexion.

*(Dhyani) Buddha:* The five contemplative Buddhas

are the five Dhyani Buddhas who are supposed to be emanations of the Adi-Buddha or the primordial Buddha. From each Dhyani Buddha originates a Dhyani Bodhisattva. The Manushi Buddha is an earthly Buddha who appears in every great epoch ('Kalpa') of the world or the universe. We happen to be in the fourth great epoch out of the total of five epochs. In this fourth epoch of ours the Dhyani Buddha (Sanskrit: Amitabha, Tibetan: o-pa-me) is supposed to incarnate himself in the person of Dalai Lama. The Dhyani Bodhisattva (Sanskrit: Avalokiteshvara, Tibetan: Chen-re-zi) on the other hand, appears in the form of Panchen Lama, and the Manushi Buddha Shakyamuni (Tibetan: Sakyathupa) is the historical Buddha who has already appeared about 2500 years ago. Dipankara Buddha is the important Buddha who lived before Gautam Buddha. An image of his is found at Bhadgaon, not very far from Kathmandu. The complexion of his face is red.

*Buddha Dakini*: The queen among goddesses, sometimes benevolent and sometimes demoniacal. (Dakinis constitute an important group in Tibetan Buddhism). She is considered to be the 'Shakti' of Lord Buddha or Vajrasattva (Adi Buddha) and thus partakes of his omnipotence. She has the reputation of being very generous in the granting of favours asked of her. Some schools of Buddhist thought consider the Dakinis as 'semi-goddesses' or 'assistant goddesses'.

*Buddha Kapala*: The demoniacal form given to Buddha Shakyamuni by the tantric school of Tibetan and Nepalese Buddhism, to make him fit into the circle of Buddha Yidam ('protectors') who are invoked at the time of magical sacrifices. While dancing on a corpse he is shown having four heads, and united with his 'Shakti'.

*Living Buddha*: It is a title accorded to some high dignitaries of the Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist churches. They are considered 'continuing incarnations' of Buddha and other Buddhist divinities.

They are also called 'Lamas Incarnated'. The Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama (Panchen Rimpoche) occupy the pride of place among the living Buddhas. Next in importance come the Khutuktu, i.e. the incarnations of minor Buddha or of Bodhisattvas or of Indian saints. Lastly we have a large crowd of Buddhas called 'Khubitghan' who are the incarnations of the local saints.

The concept of living Buddha is only peculiar to Tantric or Tibetan Buddhism. It is essentially a non-orthodox idea not found in the most important schools of ancient Buddhist thought. In fact, according to the orthodox view, a living Buddha would be a contradiction in terms.

*Buddhism*: The religious doctrine enunciated by Buddha Shakyamuni, and also the religious movement initiated by him. Again it denotes the Buddhist Church established subsequently. At the time of his death Lord Buddha did not appoint any successor. According to the Buddhist tradition he is said to have told his favourite disciple, Ananda, "The doctrine and the Law that I have announced and preached shall be your guide after I am gone from this earth." In the period which immediately followed the death of Buddha different interpretations came to be put on his religious dogma. The canons of religion were fixed by the convened councils of the 'learned one'. The worship of numerous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism was only a reaction against the atheism of the original doctrine and a proof that a religion cannot subsist for a long time by limiting itself only to the need of 'liberation' which each individual is supposed to attain in his own way. By taking on atheistic overtones, Buddhism was able to conquer vast territories in Asia. After the death (Parinirvana) of Buddha or his attainment of 'Nirvana', it was felt that various elements of his doctrine and discipline, his dogmas and laws and the metaphysical concepts, needed to be collected and systematized. To this end the councils, of Rajagriha (477 B.C.), of Vaishali (377 or 367 B.C.), of Pataliputra (249 or 242 B.C.), constituted important steps. Gradually more and

more sects arose out of the mother religion and with the conversion of the Emperor Ashoka (250 B.C.) Buddhism acquired the status of a state religion. Various missions were sent out to spread the new Faith in different parts of the country and abroad.

The gulf between the different sects widened more and more in course of time, so much so that around the end of the first century before Christ a real schism developed resulting in a transformed Buddhism known as Mahayana (the great vehicle), as against the traditional Buddhist set—Hinayana (the small vehicle) or Theravada.

Certain political factors favoured the march of Buddhism towards China across central Asia. In the reign of Kanishka a new council was convened in Kashmir in the 2nd century A.D. However, the glory of Buddhism touched its peak during the rule of the Gupta dynasty (IV–VI Century). Then came the decline, especially after the Hun invasion (Fifth century) and also because of severe persecutions suffered by the Buddhists. Other factors contributing to this decline were the ascendancy of Tantrism which emphasised the ritualistic, formalistic and magical aspects of Buddhism, rise of Brahmanism and the advent of Islam on the Indian scene after the Muslim invasions of the 12th and 13th centuries.

Buddhism even today ranks among the three most important religions of the world, with a following of about 350 millions.

The dogmas of Theravada Buddhism are mainly drawn from the Brahmanic philosophy. The Theravadic Buddhism believes in the indestructibility and everlasting nature of the basic matter which, following a mechanical, deterministic law unaffected by human will or divine intervention, arranges and combines its elements in such a way as to produce everything that exists in the universe. According to an eternal and immutable cycle, the worlds grow, decline and perish only to reform and go through the same cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth, each such cycle going by the name of a "Kapila." Similar laws govern human life and soul which undergoes a process of evolution. This explains successive incarnations from animal to human, and from human

to divine, through a chain of rise and fall, depending upon the ascendancy of virtue or vice, respectively.

Only when the soul has reached a stage when it is able to transcend virtue and vice is it said to have attained 'Nirvana'. It is this endless cycle of births and rebirths makes the idea of transmigration of souls so dreadful. The remedy suggested by Buddha is set out in the doctrine of four eternal truths—suffering, its cause, its cure and the means by which it can be cured: Suffering is an inseparable part of existence. In its own turn, it is a product of ignorance born of passions and desires and attachment to the material goods. The senses serve as instruments of desires resulting in existence.

*Said Buddha:* "This, O monks, is the first eternal truth about suffering and pain. Birth, old age and death involve suffering; to have to endure that which we do not love is to suffer; to be separated from the object of our love also results in suffering. Not to be able to acquire the object of our desire is to suffer, too. In short, it is the five-fold attachment to worldly things which involves suffering and pain."

Now about the second eternal truth regarding the cause of suffering: It is the thirst for existence which starts the cycle of births and rebirths. Add to this the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for 'becoming' and the thirst for power, and you have the complete genesis of suffering and pain."

The third eternal truth regarding the ending of suffering lies in the destruction of this manifold thirst itself by means of the complete renunciation of all desire, by detachment from all desire and by never yielding to any desire whatsoever."

The fourth divine truth regarding the extinction of suffering consists in the eight-fold path i.e. right faith, right decision, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought, and right contemplation."

If existence in itself is suffering then the simplest way to end suffering would be to cease to exist. But this is wrong thinking because death would lead to a new birth and would not free man from the inexorable clutches of transmigration.



It is the 'Karma' (action, good and bad) which makes one reborn. Action feeds the fire of human existence. The extinguishing of that fire (Nirvana) is the ultimate ideal implied in 'liberation' of the Buddhist type. It is this ideal which an 'Arhat' (the saint or a worthy person) seeks to realize.

It is the duty of a Buddhist to follow the "four noble paths"—(i) the path of wisdom which exposes the vanity, the emptiness, the instability and the reality of the external world of objects made up of transient elements and of the 'I', and the folly of attaching oneself to those objects.

(ii) The path of five-fold prohibition—prohibition to kill, to steal, to commit adultery, to lie and to indulge in drinking or intoxication.

(iii) The path of abstinence from the ten sins of suicide, fornication, robbery, falsehood, slander vituperation, gossip, jealousy, hatred and non-performance of religious duty.

(iv) Practising of the six transcendental virtues—charity, perfect moral behaviour, patience, energy, generosity love of one's neighbour.

Everyone is responsible for his actions and must face the consequences thereof (Karma or Samsara). The wise man will be reborn as a man of superior circumstances as a reward for his virtues and if he attains perfection he would become Bodhisattva and ultimately Buddha. The 'sinner' will be reborn as a creature of low circumstances such as an animal or a demon or an evil ghost or as an inhabitant of one of the eighteen 'Hells'.

The Buddhist Hell, however, is not ever-lasting. The punishment meted out to sinners is proportionate to the wrongs committed, and the erring soul can re-enter the domain of living creatures after his sins have been expiated.

The gods and goddesses in Buddhism are not all-powerful. They are subject to the limitations of rebirth from which only the Buddhas are free. In fact, these deities are supposed to function as divine agents for the protection of the universe for a limited period. There is, however, a Buddhist sect which believes in the rebirth of Buddhas also, but that is obviously in

antithesis to some of the more fundamental beliefs of Buddhism, including the theory of Nirvana, according to which a Buddha by virtue of his having reached the state of Nirvana is free from the obligation to take birth again.

The sacred Buddhist texts quote Buddha as saying,—  
“As the ocean savours of only one taste—the taste of salt, so this doctrine of mine and this Law is impregnated with only one import and one flavour, that of liberation or ‘Nirvana’”.

Buddhism has for its objective the liberation of man from ‘Samsara’ or the cycle of birth and existence and rebirth. The curse of existence lies in its transitoriness and frailty.

Buddhism, as has already been mentioned, not only denies the existence of an essential soul but also maintains that even gods are subject to the limitations of life and rebirth. This is the atheistic aspect of Buddhism which can be explained in the bigger context of the evolutionary ramifications of this religion as a whole. Brahminism had ascribed to gods special coercive powers. Buddhism reacted by eliminating the necessity of divine intervention of any sort and prescribed for man the self-trodden path of spontaneous liberation without the help of any outside agency. This intellectual element in Buddhist dogma is quite striking. The way to Nirvana or liberation is through a conscious effort on the part of the individual.

Buddhism aims at destroying the ignorance and to that end has elaborated exact techniques of meditation.

The desire of a Buddhist for liberation involves renunciation of, or escape from this world which explains why he becomes a monk. The same ideal colours his ethical thinking which is set out in five precepts enjoined on the monks. They are:—non acceptance of food except at the prescribed times, non attendance at musical shows and dances; non recourse to garlands, perfumes, etc.; non employment of high and big beds for sleeping; non acceptance of gold and silver. The monks, are more or less, totally forbidden sex relations.

Apart from these, there are five more precepts meant

for all Buddhists i.e., "thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not take intoxication."

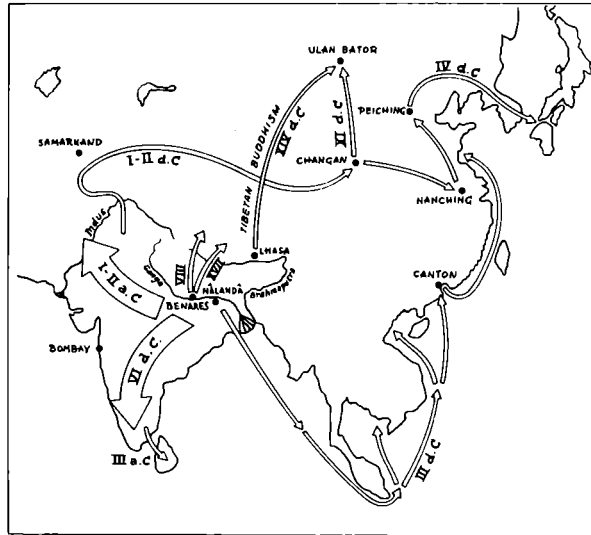
The correct Buddhist behaviour also excludes the practising of any profession involving pain to others. For instance, he cannot be a soldier, a fisherman or a butcher. Apart from a large number of monks, lay-men of both sexes in substantial numbers form part of Buddhism. In Tibet alone at least one fourth of the population comprises of monks. To be a Buddhist the lay-man has to simply repeat before a monk the following formula:

"I take refuge in Buddha, I take refuge in Dharma, (the divine Law), I take refuge in the Sangh (the Community)." Anyone embracing Buddhism can continue to lead his life without any ecclesiastical discipline. He has just to practise only those moral principles in daily life which are easy to follow. The five moral principles regarding non-killing etc. have already been mentioned above. One of the positive duties of a Buddhist is to help a monk with charity and donations. In Buddhism, however, acceptance of charity on the part of the monk bestows grace on the giver, for, if he were to refuse charity, it would be a moral condemnation of one who gives.

Monastic convents are open to both men and women. In most cases the two sexes are kept apart in different monasteries. All laymen with the sole exception of delinquents and sick persons are readily admitted into the convent. They have simply to present themselves with their hair and beard cut and in yellow robes and after explaining their intentions of becoming a monk, have just to repeat, before a Lama, the usual formula enjoined on all Buddhists (quoted above). There is a fixed period of initiation during which the new entrant has to act as a servant and a disciple to the Lama who is generally an elderly person.

The novice can only become a full-fledged member of the monastic community after he has attained the age of twenty. Only then is he entitled to be ordained. The solemn act of formally being ordained implies the complete severance of all family ties and the total

renunciation of all property, which may be donated to the monastery itself. For his food, he is either to go begging or accept invitations from the people. The only possessions permitted to him are: a robe, a belt, a begging bowl, a knife, a pair of scissors, a needle and a cloth-filter to avoid swallowing living things while drinking water.



**Buddhism** (In Tibet, China and Japan): Tibetan Buddhism is also loosely called 'Lamaism'. The introduction of Buddhism in Tibet goes back to the middle of the 7th century A.D. and is attributed to the king Srontsam-gampo who got converted to this religion through the influence of his two wives—one Chinese and the other Nepalese. However, the new religion struck roots in Tibet only after the apostle Padmasambhava presented it in a modified form to make it acceptable to the superstitious people of the land. Thus, magical practices of Tantrism came to be associated with Buddhist doctrine. The great Apostle also undertook and completed the task of translating sacred texts resulting in the creation of two fundamental works—The "Tangiur" and the "Kangiur" which together with liturgical principles constitute the canons of Tibetan Buddhism.

The first golden period of Buddhism was followed by some relaxation in religious discipline. But around 1050 A.D. an Indian Patriarch 'Atisha' brought Tibetan Buddhism back to its original discipline. Many new local sects arose within Buddhism, most important among them being the sect of Sa-Skya-Pa to which goes the credit of converting the Mongols of Kublai Khan to Buddhism. The subsequent fall of the Mongolian empire gave a severe blow to this religion.

Tsong-Khapa appeared on the scene (1357--1419 A.D.) as a new saviour of the faith and as a poet reformer. He initiated reforms in the Buddhist church and gave it the name of the "yellow" religion as against the original "red" religion. The words "yellow" and "red" indicate the colour of the respective caps of the monks. Since then, at the head of the monastic hierarchy there came two 'bosses' whose line of succession was regulated by astrological norms. The one who assumed political authority came to be known as the Dalai Lama (Lama: One who is as powerful as the ocean). He established himself in the Potala at Lhasa. The other one who wielded spiritual authority came to be called Panchen-Erdeni-Lama (Panchen Rimpoche or Panchen Lama, the jewel among saintly Lamas) with his seat at the monastery of Trashilumpo near the city of Shigatse. A sort of rivalry between these two supreme authorities of the Buddhist church cropped up inevitably. This rivalry, latent at first, came to the surface when, for political reasons, Panchen Lama openly sided with China and the Dalai Lama with India (then British India). At the vortex of the Pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism, there is the triple-divinity of Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and Vajrapani (the wielder of thunderbolt). These three among themselves constitute the patron saints of Tibet. Tara, the female Bodhisattva whose 21 manifestations are indicated by different colours, plays a notable part in the Tibetan Pantheon.

Buddhism is said to have reached China not earlier than the Christian era. Nothing precisely is known, however, in this connection. Legend has it that the Emperor Mig-Ti in 61 A.D. invited two Buddhist monks from India in consequence of a dream. These monks

are reported to have brought with them sacred writings and statues pertaining to Buddhism. Historical evidence, however, seems to point to quite different facts. Scholars believe that Indian philosophical ideas reached China via the two Turkistans. Thus in the second century after Christ, China felt the impact of Buddhism in the form of Taoism from which it borrowed all its terminology during the translations of Buddhist texts into Chinese. From these texts (some of which got mixed up with original Indian texts) came to be reconstructed later on, the missing Buddhist literature. The influence of Buddhism in China was contained by the existing Taoism and Confucianism.

The introduction of Buddhism to Japan dates back to the 6th century A.D. Some Korean monks brought the Chinese translations of Buddhist texts in 522 A.D. A few decades later a Korean king (552 A.D.) gifted a statue of Buddha and some Buddhist texts to the Emperor of Japan.

In the beginning the spread of the new religion met with great obstacles mainly due to the hostility of the two powerful priestly families at the court—the Nakatomis and the Monobes. Another rival family of Soga, however, received with open arms the new religion. Political factors also favoured the large scale adoption of the new faith and the reigning king belonging to the imperial family of Shotoku Taishi (who died in 621 A.D.) was quick to grasp the importance of the new religion. He may be called the 'Japanese Constantine'. It was he who established the superiority of Buddhism over the native religion, called Shinto and towards the end of the 6th century got many Buddhist temples constructed. At the time of his death, there were as many as 46 such temples among which the most famous was the temple of Horyuji at Nara.

Around the middle of the 7th century the gigantic statue of Buddha was installed at Nara. It was known as Daibatsu. It was at this time that Japan was developing cultural relations with China and Japanese Buddhism touched the peak of its glory. Earlier, Japan had been indebted to Korea in the cultural field. One of the salient features of Japanese Buddhism was the multiplicity of

sects due to the special trait of the Japanese temper.

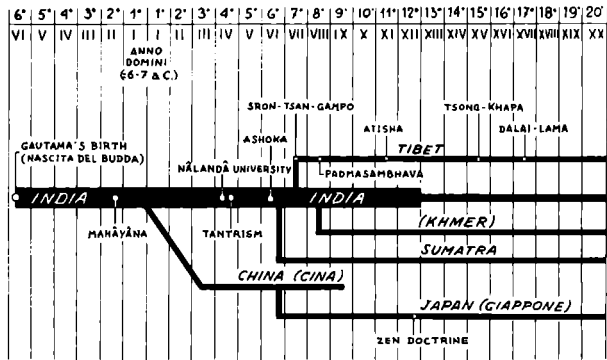
The most important sects of Japanese Buddhism are six in number about which we give some basic information below:

1. Tendai Shu—a sect founded by Dengyo Daish as a sub-branch of the Chinese sect, Tientai.
2. Shingon—a sect founded by Kobo Daishi which believes that as man's nature is the same as that of Buddha it is possible for him to attain the status of Buddha or enlightenment, in this very life.
3. Zen—a sect originating from the Chinese school of thought called C-ian-tsung has two sub-divisions: Rinzai and Soto. The focal point of its doctrine is constituted by its stress on meditation (Zen) practised according to a set of exact rules with a view to providing a special type of mystic experience called 'Satori'. This sect has within its fold a large number from a Japanese warrior class reputed to be absolutely fearless having for its slogan, "I don't wink my eyelids before a lance or a sword."
4. Jodo: a sect founded by Genku which claims to take its followers to paradise or 'Amida',—"land of the pure." To reach this land one has to face so much difficulty that one's own resources alone are not enough. One has to invoke Amida's aid, who comes to the rescue the moment his name is uttered.
5. Shin—a sect founded by Shinran. It is considered to be an improvement upon Jodo. Like Jodo, it also believes in the omnipotence of Amida.
6. Nichiren: a sect which takes after the name of its founder. It proposes to re-establish the primitive form of Buddhism.

The multiplicity of sects is matched in Japanese Buddhism by a great variety of festivals which draw large crowds to its temples. One of the main festivals occurring in mid-July is the festival of the dead. It also happens to be the most spectacular.

The critical year for Japanese Buddhism was 1868. In that year Shintoism, slowly but surely gathering momentum, reacted violently against Buddhism and the fall of the Tokugawa Shogun dynasty which patronised Buddhism, sealed the fate of Buddhism as a State

religion. In the next decade the situation improved a little and in 1889 the freedom of worship was restored which helped Buddhism to recover its lost ground to some extent.



*Evolution of Buddhism:* In the context of its fundamentals Buddhism, on the whole, has undergone a marked change quite contrary to the expectation of its founder. The inherent dynamism and the elasticity of this religion was responsible for its absorbing and assimilating all that was found useful and handy during its onward march. Buddhism, as we find it today, has thus acquired a form not very dissimilar to other important religions, in opposition to which it was born and conceived.

(a) *Early Buddhism:* Rooted firmly in atheism, it had a very small number of followers to begin with. It was without a church, without any hierarchical system and without a written dogma.

(b) *The initial appeal of Buddhism:* After the conversion of Ashoka, Buddhism spread to far flung territories and attracted a large number of followers. Although atheism still held its ground it gradually underwent a metamorphosis.

(c) *Appearance of polytheistic tendencies:* The death of Ashoka ushered in a new hierarchical system. There emerged a church, a written dogma and a division into warring sects. In short, a Buddhist pantheon of various gods and goddesses came into being and Gautam Buddha himself did not escape the inevitable process



of deification.

Buddhism got split into two main doctrinal offshoots, Hinayana and Mahayana. Hinayana (the small vehicle) represents the conservative elements in Buddhist religion. The followers of Hinayana swear by the original teachings of Buddha and are loyal to the concept of Arhat (deserving man). Since enlightenment is within the reach only of a few, 'Nirvana' too is reserved for the chosen few. Thus Hinayana or the small path is meant for a small number. Hence the nomenclature. Mahayana, on the other hand, is the great vehicle or the path meant for a great number. According to Mahayana, salvation or 'Nirvana' is within the reach of all and sundry. Enlightenment is the prerogative of each and every individual. Hence the great path. Under Mahayana, Bodhisattvas, who were unknown earlier, came to the help of humanity in the attainment of liberation. Thereafter pantheism and demonology forged ahead with an incredible speed in the Buddhist creed.

(d) *The final stage—Vajrayana (the hard vehicle):* Another name for Vajrayana is Tantric or Tibetan Buddhism as it rose and developed in Tibet. Being based on the interpretation of Tantras or the Sanskrit texts, this particular brand of Buddhism extols Indian philosophical systems. Thus, polytheistic monism came to be introduced in Buddhist thought according to which one God or better still, one vital energy, fills the entire universe—men and things—with its infinite manifestations and products, thesis and anti-thesis, multiplicity and diversity within a single unit. The concept of Shakti or the female element of active energy inherent in and co-existent with various divinities is fundamental to Tantric Buddhism, though it has emanated from traditional Hinduism. Another characteristic of Tantrism is the dreadful appearance of its gods and goddesses meant to frighten, subdue and convert the demons or the forces of evil. Many Tantric divinities, like their Hindu counterparts, present a dual aspect—beneficent and malignant.

*Tibetan or Tantric Buddhism:* This is the last and most

recent phase of Buddhism (7th and 8th century). This brand of Buddhism has prevailed for a long time in Tibet and was found even as late as the last two decades. It is practised by people of other neighbouring countries also, like Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal. By far and large sherpas, too, follow Tantric Buddhism but their doctrinaire premises are derived from Mahayana.

*Buddhist Art:* Asiatic art is definitely indebted to Buddhism for finding a solution to one of the major iconographic problems—the universally valid representation of saintliness in sublime human form.

For the Buddhist artist this was the most important, if not the only, function of art. Thus, Buddhism made it obligatory on figurative art to put across graphically multiple religious conceptions and ideas. In fact, there was no precise set of themes or ideas or well-defined artistic obligations enjoined by an orthodox doctrine which one could call Buddhistic, or belonging to Buddhism as such. The historical Shakyamuni Buddha had left for his disciples only vague and undefined norms. It was this early Buddhism which through an inevitable and uninterrupted process of development and transformation, unfolded itself very soon into a number of antithetical schools which reflected almost all kinds of pre-Buddhist concepts and diverse religious life styles. This happened because, from the very beginning, there was hardly any dogmatic unity and consequently no one-world vision amongst artists. The difference between Hinayana (the small vehicle) and Mahayana (the great vehicle) itself was quite significant. These two paths in their own turn, got divided into various subjects at times antithetical even at spiritual level, ranging from simple magic to the sublime purity of philosophical thought and mystical contemplation. Every form of experience and religious thought, thus, offered innumerable possibilities of symbiosis, synthesis and syncretism with the non-Buddhist patterns of life of regional or ethnic type. And it became the duty of art to interpret these patterns in such a way that everyone could immediately understand the correct significance of the images and symbols employed. Thus the theistic

and magico-mystic tendencies of Buddhism could easily lend themselves to traditional Hindu thought while its mystico-philosophical contents encountered no difficulty in blending with similar thought-content of Chinese Taoism giving rise to Zen-type of Buddhism.

A similar development took place in the field of art where various streams of Buddhist thought came to be reflected in figurative concepts. Already the artists had been able to discover in the sacred books quite a few poetic representations which could be pressed into service of graphic arts. Thus through the interaction of a number of Buddhist schools of thought and the art itself of the various Buddhist countries of Asia, a very rich iconographic repertory came into existence.

The long history of Buddhist art extending from 200 B.C. to 1500 A.D. is replete with the contributions of different peoples in every age, which through a process of assimilation and adaptation, enriched this art with original ideas drawn from the traditional patrimonies of each country and each people.

*Buddhist Art in Tibet:* Tibetan art that has come down to us deals almost exclusively with Buddhist iconography, liturgical objects and instruments, personal ornaments and jewels, certain things and weapons intended for the successful performance of rites. The religious Art of Tibet is hard to confine within the limits of time and space. Among other things, it cannot be considered as art at all, according to our western notions of art, because it is not the fruit of imagination, nor of free expression. It may rather be called a 'personal touch' within well-defined limits or strict rules of an official iconography. Even in the times of Egyptian Pharaohs or in the days of Aztecs in Mexico or of Incas in Peru, the artist as such practically did not exist. At best he could be called a more-or-less clever executor of official orders within well-defined limits in an immutable framework creating images of liturgical or commemorative value.

In fact, Tibetan art is above all and before anything else "a made-to-order handicraft." The commissioned object had to be functional rather than beautiful from

the liturgical point of view, and was expected to conform to certain external practices before such an object, image or statue could claim any artistic validity. An image of any Tibetan deity is above all a '*tological manual*' made visible graphically. It is a creation of intellect conforming perfectly to a set of rigid rules and immutable formulas and not a work of imagination or of free and spontaneous inspiration.

The minute attention to the textual details in the image of Buddha or Bodhisattvas while depicting one or ten heads, two or two thousand arms, was the main concern of the artist. After designing the image the artist has the least freedom in the choice of colours or tones to be employed as colours in most cases had already been prescribed by certain texts on the subject. He was not even allowed to bring out in his own way the dynamic and lively character of certain minute figures which generally surrounded the main figure. Free interpretation was, therefore, simply not tolerated. Originality, which is the soul of real art, would in such an artistic framework be nothing short of sacrilege.

If an artist were to indulge in 'freedom of imaginative interpretation', for example, of the image of a god or a goddess, the result may be disastrous because in that case the god himself may not be able to recognise his own image, so far removed will it be from the conventional portraiture prescribed by strict religious rules of Buddhism.

Tantric Buddhism, in fact, envisages the possibility of a divinity coming down to earth in real form temporarily just to perform some religious ceremony and then dissolve in the air or disappear in the infinite space from which it had descended to answer a specific call of the devotees. Even the endurability of the material of which these august personages are made suggests that the divinity concerned may one day leave because the magical formulas can no-doubt make them appear, but have no power to bind them down to earth for all times to come. Most of the statues are made of wood, plaster, papier machie or any such material which does not last very long. So, when these materials show signs of deterioration, the god is supposed to be in need of

restoration and the monk in charge of these statues has either to renovate them or to substitute them with new ones. If the god concerned has to be retained in the statue for a long time after the statue has been impaired the priest has to conduct long and complicated religious services called the 'Rab-gnas'.

Thus, the holy image is only a symbol put up in accordance with precise rules. If all the rules have been observed the aesthetic considerations of beauty and ugliness of the image are of no importance. If the image has been made strictly according to prescribed formulas, it is supposed to have the powers of invoking the God in whose likeness it has been made. This is the reason why the westerners when faced with a symbolic Buddhist idol of rough make and faded colours, feel lost and wonder how such a thing can be an object of worship for the followers of that religion. The western conception of art implies aesthetic values of beauty of expression, refinement in construction and the good quality of materials used. For instance, a statue constructed with cement even if well-coloured makes the westerner smile indulgently. Ordinarily loud colours applied in a cheap fashion meet their disapproval and even ridicule. Not so for the faithful who do not notice these things, nor understand why the westerners are puzzled. Another peculiarity of Tibetan or Buddhist art is its anonymity, which, again, is in marked contrast with the practice in the western world. The Buddhist artist never signs his work, be it a statue or a painting or a fresco. Neither does he feel any need to do so.

In olden days, in some of the monasteries, sheets of paper used to be distributed to the pilgrims which supplied them with the detailed information about the idols located in the monastery, their identity, the identity of the sculptor, the date of their execution, etc. These sheets called 'dkar-c'ag' are precious sources of information and comparison. These documentary sources have survived the impact of many wars, fires, revolutions and other destructive forces on the temples and monasteries through the ages and are consulted even now, though with understandable caution.

*Buddhist Literature:* Buddhist literature is quite rich. It can be divided in two groups depending on the language in which it is written: Pali or Sanskrit. Pali literature mostly reflects the Hinayana Buddhism. The canons of Buddhism are enshrined in Tripitake (the three baskets) which is divided in 3 parts: The Vinaya-Pitaka (the basket of monastic discipline), Sutta-Pitaka (the basket of doctrinal discourses) and Abhidhamma-Pitaka (the basket of scholasticism).

The core of 'Vinaya-Pitaka' is constituted of 227 articles of Patimokkha i.e. the general formula of confession. It is a catalogue of sins which is read to the monks in the sessions devoted to confessions at the time of the new moon and the full moon.

The Sutta-Pitaka is the principle source of our knowledge of the teachings of Buddha. It has five parts: (a) Dighanikaya (collection of long discourses in 34 chapters) which comprises of the Mahaparinirvana dealing in detail with the circumstances of Buddha's death; (b) Majjhimanikaya (discourses of average length in 152 chapters), (c) Samyuttanikaya (groupwise doctrinal discourses in 2,889 sutta = brief collections in 56 groups); (d) Anguttara-nikaya (collection of doctrinal discourses grouped in progressive numbers); (e) Khud-daka-nikaya (anthology of small discourses) which contains poetic works of various epochs and on different topics among which the most famous is the Dhamma-pada (the words of the law). In it are included 423 stanzas of moral maxims. Then there is the Udana (the collection of solemn sayings) in 8 chapters. The Sutta-nipata (the small anthology of small discourses) contains the most ancient texts of Buddhist poetry, dialogues on the teachings and some stories like Nalaka-Sutta, the Thera-gatha and the Theri-gathas (songs of the nuns and monks) having 107 and 73 poems respectively some of which are of great beauty. Finally, we have the 'Jatakas' (the stories concerning the previous births of Buddha) which narrate the 550 supposed previous lives of Buddha.

The Abhidhamma-Pitaka consists of 7 books, the last of which, Kathavatthu, deals with the confutation of 252 heresies.

The Buddhist literature in Sanskrit belongs almost entirely to the Mahayana school of Buddhism and has been reconstructed almost wholly from the Chinese Tibetan traditional texts.

A few of the fragments are in original Sanskrit. We can mention 13 among the most authoritative texts in Sanskrit dealing with the canons of Buddhism:

1. Mahavastu (Book of important events): describes mainly the story of Buddha apart from some other topics dealt briefly.
2. Lalitavistara (the detailed account of the playfulness of Buddha): gives the biographical informations about Buddha along with miracles associated with him.
3. Buddhacharita: An epic on Buddha written by Ashvagosa (2nd century A.D.) and also translated in Chinese and Tibetan languages.
4. Avadana (notable actions in ethical and religious field)
5. Saddharma—Pundarika (lotus of good religion): It happens to be the most important of the Mahayana Sutras: It exalts and glorifies Buddha, at times, too much.
6. Karanda Vijuha: The exaltation of the sublime and wonderful 'liberator'.
7. Sukhavati-Vyuha: It eulogizes Buddha Amitabh and his abode in Paradise.
8. Madhyamika-Karika (Om-Sutra): consists of verses to be committed to memory.
9. Prajna paramita (Mastery over knowledge): This is a book of worship in Nepal and is counted as one of the nine texts expounding the Law.
10. Lankavatara-sutra: It deals with replies given by Buddha to the questions put by a king who visited him and wanted clarifications on some doctrinal points.
11. Shiksamam-uccaya (a summary of the doctrine): It is an important book for those who would like strength, love of truth, firmness, benevolence, equanimity.
12. Bodhi-caryavatara (entrance to the path of Bodhi):

indicates the way to attain enlightenment.

13. **Buddhist virtues:** The principle virtues in Buddhism are:

Generosity, pure habits, renunciation, wisdom, strength, love of truth, firmness, benevolence, equanimity.

*Buddhology:* Study of Buddhist doctrine and Buddhism.

The interest of the western world in Buddhism was a part of its fascination for the exotic elements in Indian culture. To begin with, it was a linguistic and philological interest. Later on it extended to other sectors of Indian culture when some of the famous European philosophers felt its impact. In the first few years of the twentieth century Buddhist studies made rapid progress thanks to the combined efforts of Sinologists and Indologists. Japan, however, was the first to introduce Buddhist studies on a scientific basis and its contribution to the critical study of Buddhism is of fundamental importance.

*Bu-ston (Buston):* A Tibetan poet and writer (1290–1364 A.D.).

*Caitya:* Monument in memory of Lord Buddha (See also Chaitya, Chorten, Stupa).

*Chaitya:* Everything that serves to recall the historical Buddha or his doctrine goes by the name of Chaitya. (Literally, it means 'a mental recollection'. Its extended meaning includes Buddha's mortal remains, monuments to preserve these remains, his relics, the record of his speeches, paintings and the statues representing him and even the copies of all these things which recall his memory. This term is applied also to the architectural monuments like chorten or stupa (or thupa in Pali language) which



means a tomb made of earth or brickwork for preserving the sacred relics. It would be more exact to call the entire monument a 'chaitya' while using the name "chorten" or "stupa" for the most important part of the monument consisting of the hemisphere portion which may be in any other form like dome, bell-shaped or cylindrical.

*Chakra*: Wheel.

*Cham* (Ch-am): Original word in Tibetan for the sacred drama from which the word Mani Rimdu is remotely derived.

*Cham-ra*: A stone-paved courtyard in the Tengpoche monastery on which the Mani Rimdu dances are held.

*Ch-an*: Magical charms against malevolent forces. It is also a term applied to the form of Buddhism prevalent in many oriental countries of Asia (Zen in Japan, Ch'an in China and Son in Korea)

*Chang*: Beer made from fermented rice or from barley. It is used by Sherpas as a drink or for ritual offering in religious ceremonies.

*Cheng-po*: Priest of a Buddhist monastery. (see also mk' an-po).

*Chitipati*: Assistants of the god of death.

*Chomo-lungma*: It is supposed to be the indigenous name for Mount Everest (8,848 m). Other local variations of the name are: Jo-mo glang-ma, Chomo Longma, Tschomo-Lungmo, Tschoumou-lancma (Queen Mother of the Earth). Still other loose local variations of Everest are: (Peak (XV) erroneously called Gauri Shankar,

Chomo-Kanghar (Snow white Queen mother) Lhochha Molung (Lho-bya-molung) = valley of the southern birds. Mithi Guthi Longnga (the mountain visible from nine directions) Kangthonthing Gyalmo (Queen of the high mountain with light-blue snows); Ri-rgyal (Queen of the mountains); Jo-mo-gangs-dkar (Goddess of the white snows); Jo-mo-rlung-ma (goddess of the wind); Jo-mo-glang-ma (Goddess of the willows)

*Chorpen*: A functionary who along with Chorumsa looks after the 'Gompa' (village temple of the Buddhists) and keeps the public under control during religious festivals.

*Chorten* (ruchod-rten) (see also Chaitya, Stupa etc.): This type of monument has a number of forms some of which are the most typical and noted. The Tibetan "Chorten" stands for a funeral memorial, the same as Stupa in Indian languages. Originally, the Stupa or "Chorten" was a repository for the relics of Buddha Shakyamuni and was erected in memory of his death. It was only from 7th century onward that stupas came to be erected. For the Buddhists a stupa had the same value as the cross for the Christians. The dome which is the most sacred part of the building has undergone a change of form in the last few centuries. Enclosed in it are sacred writings, books, liturgical objects and sometimes even mummies of saintly persons. At times miniature stupas in metal (tsha-tsha) in turn containing a relic are also enclosed in the dome.

The dome stands above five conventional steps representing the five basic elements of life—earth, water, fire, air and the cosmic space. It is surmounted

by a sort of spiral composed of 13 rings each having a diameter in the ascending order towards the sky. These rings are counterparts of the stylised canopies which in ancient times were placed on the sacred monuments in India.

In a nutshell they represent 13 phases or stages which a Bodhisattva must cover before attaining 'Buddha-dom'. The solar disc which stands above the rings is a symbol of wisdom. The scythe in the form of crescent moon indicates compassion. Both wisdom and compassion merge at the time of enlightenment. This is the tantric interpretation of the stupa or chorten.

*Chorumba*: Keeper of the Gompa and master of ceremonies. Along with the Chorpen he is responsible for the upkeep of the gompa and at the time of religious festivals he is required to maintain order among the people. On special occasions like the Mani Rimdu festival of dance-drama anybody who is specially appointed for disciplinary duties is called Idab-Idob. 'Lawa', however, is the name given to him who collects funds and offerings for the festival.

*Chos-rnga*: A small drum with a whip-handle which the dancers beat during the unfolding of the drama. The drum is supposed to transmit Buddha's message of truth for both men and demons.

*Chos-rnga-pa*: The drum player.

*Chos-skyong*: They are the guardians of the Law of Buddha and constitute a group of important deities. In Sanskrit the word for them is "Dharampal." In Tibetan language

they are known as “Srung-ma” which is equivalent to ‘guardian’.

*Citipati:* The lords of the cemetery and the assistants of the God of death.

*Dadar:* The pole of the thunderbolt with multi-coloured strings.

*Dakini:* Semi-goddesses, also known as the travelers of sky (Tibetan: ‘Mkha’-’gro-ma). In India they have the popular Sanskrit name —Dakini. They love to help yogis in their yogic practices. According to Tibetan iconography they are always dressed in white and wear jewels.

*Dalai Lama:* The theory of reincarnation of the high priest of Buddhism is of recent origin. It was in 1474 that after the death of Gedundus (disciple and successor of Tsong-khapa) the first case of the successful search of the reincarnated Dalai Lama occurred. Since then there have been known hundreds of cases of reincarnation in other spheres of Buddhist church. The reincarnated Lama bears the name of Tul-ku-Lama (In Tibetan he is called sprul-sku-bla-ma). Consequently, it was decreed retrospectively that the previous kings were also reincarnations of Avalokiteshvara.

*Damaru:* The magic drum used during the function held by the tantric Buddhists. It consists of two skull-caps convexically joined having a covering of hide at each convex end. It is also called double drum.

*Dance of death or Macabre dance:* During the Mani Rimdu ceremonies this dance is done by two monks dressed as skeletons. They are

called 'Lords of the Cemetery' (Tibetan: Dur-khrod bdag-po).

*Dbang-bum*: The power-bestowing vase, used in the tantric functions in the Kumbhu region.

*Dge-Luge-pa*: Name of the yellow-robed sect of Buddhism, reformed by Tsong-Khapa.

*Dgon pa*: A Buddhist temple in Tibet and Nepal. See also Gompa.

*Dgra-lha*: Name of the God corresponding to "Mara" in Hinduism. He is the symbol of the 3 causes which lead to rebirth: ignorance, illwill, lust.

*Dharampal*: Its literal meaning is 'guardian of the law'. By this name goes an important group of deities.

*Dhvaja*: Flag of victory. In Tibetan language it is Rgyal-mtshan. One can see it in every monastery. During ceremonies it is carried aloft, generally made up of a series of coloured draperies in cylindrical shape having long fingers.

*Dorje*: *rdp-rje*: Thunderbolt or a sceptre in the form of a thunderbolt. During Buddhist ceremonies it serves liturgic functions. The Sanskrit word for it is 'Vajra'. When held by a priest it signifies active intelligence. It also stands for a diamond.

*Dung-chen*: 3 metres long horn made of copper and brass. It is a characteristic accompaniment of tantric ceremonies during Buddhist functions.

*Dung-chen-pa*: Blowers of the long horns.

*Dur-bdag*: Assistants of the God of Death.

- Dur-khrod bdag-po*: Its abbreviated form is Dur-bdag. It is a dance item in Mani Rimdu drama and corresponds to the Sanskrit term 'chitipati' (Assistants of the God of Death: Yama in Sanskrit). In Mani Rimdu the dancers of this item appear in a costume resembling a human skeleton.
- Dza-rong-phu*: Abbreviation Rong-phu. Name of a famous monastery on the northern slope of Everest. (Also Rongbuk).
- Everest*: Mount Everest (8,848 m), the highest mountain in the world. See also chomo Lungma.
- Ghanti*: A bronze bell used in the performance of tantric rites. See also "Tril-bu."
- Ging-pa*: The popular name of the second act of Mani Rimdu. In this act we witness the dance of the four guardian kings eulogising to the four directions. "Lokapala" is another epithet for it.
- Gnas-srung*: The name of the 8th dance in the Mani Rimdu drama. Also the "blackmen" and the "local God of Khumbu."
- Gri*: Magical sword with a curved blade used to vanquish demons and the enemies of tantric Buddhism.
- Gri-'cham*: 12th dance of the Mani Rimdu drama—the sabre dance. The dancers use weapons to overcome the invisible enemies of Buddhism and other evil forces.
- Gri-gug*: A tantric knife in the form of a small hatchet used by the 'Yamantaka' (the conqueror of the God of death in the 7th dance of Mani Rimdu festival).

- Grva-pa* (thawa): A novice, a temporary monk without the right of voting in a Buddhist monastery. Also a student Lama who is entrusted with ordinary jobs in the village.
- Gompa* (*dgon-pa*): A village temple or a temple in a monastery meant to perform liturgical functions of Tibetan or Tantric Buddhism.
- Gon-dzen*: The 12th dance of Mani Rimdu.
- Big Kalpa*: Signifies a long period of time of 4 million years according to Brahmnical calculations. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the big Kalpa is of 135 million years' duration.
- Gsang-ba rdo-rje*: The founder Lama of the monasteries in Khumbu region.
- Gser-skyems* (*Sir-kim*): The first act of Mani Rimdu including "the dance of golden libation."
- Gshen*: Tantric sacrificial priests.
- Gshin-rje chos-rgyal*: Name of the God of death. In Sanskrit: 'Yama'.
- Gshin-rji-gshed*: He is the protector of life in as much as his main functions is to conquer the God of death. He appears in the 7th act of Mani Rimdu drama. In Sanskrit he is called 'Yamantaka'.
- Gtor-ma* (*torma*): Flour and Butter concoction meant for liturgical offerings in the Buddhist ceremonies in Tibet.
- Guru Rimpoche*: Another epithet for the "precious Master" or Padma Sambhava which is applicable to other great lamas also. The epithet comprises of two words: Sanskrit word "Guru" (master) and Tibetan word,

Rimpoche (the highly prized one).

*G. Yung-drung*: It is a very old emblem in the form of a hooked cross. See also Swastika.

*Gzhi-bdag*: God of a village.

*Haya Griva*: A god with a head resembling a horse. Appears in the 7th dance sequence of Mani Rimdu.

*Hwa-Shang Mahayana*: A character who appears in the 6th act of Mani Rimdu under the name of Mi-tshe-ring. He is a caricature of a Chinese scholar of the 8th century who introduced Zen Buddhism but afterwards come to be known as a heretic.

*Hinayana*: Literal meaning = small vehicle or path. See also Theravada.

*Jataka*: It is a collection of stories relating to the previous births of Buddha Shakyamuni. It deals with 550 earlier lives of Buddha during which by practising the ten virtues of Buddhist religion he assured for himself a better rebirth progressively. These stories are fables based on legends from earlier oral tradition. The Jataka literature has been a rich source material for Buddhist art such as painting, sculpture and miniatures on the pages of holy books.

*Jo-mo glang ma*: One of the many names of Mount Everest (8,848 m) in the Khumbu region.

*Kada (Ka-da) (Ka-ta) (Ka-gtags)*: White ceremonial scarf used for exchanging gifts or as a symbol of hospitality. It is also the white scarf meant to cover the idols of holy personages or to be placed on their feet as a gesture of reverential offering. Special



types of scarfs are called Zo-she, e-shi, na-n-zho.

*Ka-gtags* : White ceremonial scarfs.

*Kailas* : A mountain situated in Tibet. Hindus also hold this mountain sacred as it is considered to be the abode of Shiva and his consort Shakti. Buddhists too hold it sacred. Geographically, it is known as Kailas, Mount Kailas or Kang Rimpoche (6,714/6, 713 metres). The pilgrims circumambulate or do their 'parikarma' around it clockwise in June/July.

*Kali* : Literally "Black". It is a Hindu goddess and is taken to be the consort of God Shiva.

*Kalpa* : Each one of the five cosmic epochs which govern life of man in all ages and at all places. We happen to be living in the 4th epoch. For every epoch there is a Buddha on this earth called Manushi Buddha. The Buddha for the century in which we are living is Gautam Buddha. Every Kalpa is divided into minor Kalpas each one of which lasts 1,680,000 years. According to the Buddhists, the biggest Kalpa is of 135,000,000 years duration. Brahmans, on the other hand, believe that every big Kalpa lasts 430,000,000 years.

*Kanguur (Kanjur. In Tibetan = bka'-'gyur)* : It is the Buddhist scripture in Tibet. Another name for it is 'the translated word'. It comprises of several texts like the Tripitaka, Sutta, Vinayaa, Abhidharma. In addition to these texts, it contains writings of every type including a vast literature on magic. The entire work is in 108 volumes which are actually translations of Sanskrit or

Pali works.

*Kapala:* A bowl made of human skull for ritual purposes during tantric ceremonies. It is the ceremonial cup of Tibetan Buddhism having a silver bottom and lid.

*Karma (Karman):* Followers of many religions believe that good and religious acts deserve high reward. It is also held that this reward can be transferred for the benefit of others. Such an idea of 'Karma' or merited action exists in Buddhism as it does in Christianity and Shintoism.

*Kuvera:* A God supposed to be living on top of Kanchenjunga.

*Kyekal:* It is a wooden bottle with brass fillets used by Sherpas.

*Lama (bla-ma):* In classical Tibetan language the word is bla-ma which is equivalent to 'the venerable master'. The Sanskrit equivalent for it is 'Guru'. In Tibet and in Mongolia the Buddhist monks and tantric priests go by this name. The lamas undergo a sort of consecration ceremony which confers on them a priestly career. When a monk is in a position to impart religious instruction to others he is entitled to call himself a Lama.

*Lamaism:* It is a common but not very appropriate name given to Tibetan or Tantric Buddhism. The word is coined from 'Lama' which signifies a learned old monk. It is better to use the term Tibetan Buddhism for Lamaism.

Lamaism is a special form of Buddhism prevalent in Tibet and in Central Asia. The same term is also used to convey the

hierarchical organisation of Tibetan Buddhism and of Buddhism in other regions under Tibetan influence which came into existence as a result of reforms introduced by Tsong-Khapa and through the confirmation of the temporal powers of Dalai Lama in the 17th century.

The main dogma of Lamaism is not very different from that of Mahayana Buddhism which itself was greatly influenced by mysticism and tantrism of Shivaite school of thought prevalent in Nepal and Kashmir in the 8th century.

Padmasambhava was the real founder of Lamaism who was himself influenced to a great degree by the earlier Bon religion. He is said to have arrived in Tibet in the middle of the 8th century and is credited with having created the first order of monks and having built the first monastery at Samya. This first apostle of Buddhism is also held responsible for bringing about relaxation in the Buddhist discipline and for introducing the magic ceremonies and witchcraft as a part of Buddhist religious worship. A few centuries later Tsong-Khapa (1355–1417) set about the task of bringing back the original purity to Tibetan Buddhism. The reformed sect with its headquarters at the monastery of Gahldan came to be known as Gelug-pa. The monastery of Gahldan was founded by Tsong-khapa in 1409 while the old unreformed sect—Nima-pa continued to follow its old traditions.

The Lamaist pantheon is very rich. At the top are the five Buddhas of Meditation (Dhyani Buddha) with their respective Bodhisattvas followed by hundreds of Buddhas who lived before and after the historical Buddha—Gautam Shakyamuni. Then there are numerous local and family

gods and goddesses as also a large number of demons to complete the Buddhist pantheon. From Tibet Lamaism spread to Mongolia, China and Siberia.

*Lamasery:* Monastery of Buddhist monks in Tibet or in Mongolia.

*Lam-rim-c'em-mo (Laricemmo):* 'Theological treatise' prepared by the great Tsong-Khapa, the reformer of the Buddhist church of the yellow sect. In this scriptural work is included a summary of the Mahayana (the greatest vehicle) Buddhism and the writer displays an uncommon refinement in the argumentation and absolute precision and appropriateness of language. The book is a subtle summary of the religious doctrine and at the same time an unflinching guide to overcome and sublimate the pain and suffering of earthly existence.

Every Buddhist school possesses a summary or manual of religious dogma but none of them is as famous as the Laricemmo which is held in respect even by divergent schools of Buddhist thought.

*Laricemmo:* A treatise on theology.

*Lasbum:* A ritual vase for water used in Buddhist ceremonies.

*Lawa:* The co-ordinating officer entrusted with the task of making preparations for functions.

*Ladab-ldob:* Co-ordinator at the Mani Rimdu ceremony and also entrusted with the task of maintaining public order.

*Lhag-ma Gnyis:* 11th act of Mani Rimdu drama in which two assistant goddesses appear on

the stage as the protectors of Dalai Lama.

*Lha-Kang (Lhakang)*: A private Chapel in Sherpa houses.

*Lha-mo*: Protector Goddess of Dalai Lama. In Sanskrit she is called 'Shridevi'. She appears in the 7th act of Mani Rimdu.

*Lha-mo*: A Tibetan theatre in which all the actors are lay-men and women.

*Liberation*: Buddhism denies the existence of soul and maintains that even gods are subject to the laws of rebirth. Thus all creatures are caught in the cycle of life, death and rebirth. Liberation, therefore, means the breaking of this vicious circle. Buddhism does not consider gods absolutely essential for liberation which has to come through self-discipline. In its most orthodox form Buddhism is, therefore, atheistic.

*Log-'cham*: 13th act of Mani Rimdu Lok-tsam: Same as Log-'cham.

*Lumbini*: A forest garden—near Kapilavastu in the present day Nepal. Now-a-days it is called Rummindei where Maya, mother of Buddha Shakyamuni overtaken by labour pains (while going to her father's house) gave birth to Buddha—the enlightened one (560 B.C.).

*Mahakala*: Literally 'the Big Black One', makes his appearance on the stage in the 7th act of Mani Rimdu.

*Mahayana*: A religious offshoot of Buddhism which represents the 'golden mean'. Severe ascetism and total atheism proclaimed by Buddha Shakyamuni would have brought

salvation within the reach of only a few highly disciplined individuals. But Mahayana, the great vehicle, was intended to bring Nirvana within the reach of virtually everybody. The Mahayana doctrine is so called exactly because it is meant for all.

Iconography of Mahayana was of a more simple type and its recurrent themes are: Buddha Shakyamuni, the Maitreya Buddha, the five Dhyani Buddhas (or contemplating Buddhas), the eight big Bodhisattvas.

By the side of the Big Bodhisattvas or the Buddhas in the making, occur female figures called "Tara" as companions and secondary figures.

*Makaravaktra:* One of the two 'Dakinis', assistants of Lha-mo, personal guardian of Dalai Lama.

*Mandala:* A composite figure constituted by a big conglomeration of figures and symbols. The mandala can be defined as a psychocosmographic representation surrounded by a wall. In Buddhist dogma the physical universe is conceived as a series of concentric circle of mountains which divide it from the non-material world beyond. In the centre is placed the main deity which is encircled by minor deities according to an order of precedence differing from one sect of Buddhism to another. The central axis of the mandala coincides with the zenith of the universe.

*mani:* A wall having stone tablets with mantras or Buddhist mystical formulas inscribed on them.

*Mani:* Individual prayer wheel. It is rotated clockwise. It is called 'Mani' because it

usually contains a 'mantra', dictated by the Avalokiteshvara (a noted Bodhisattva). It is a cylindrical object made of copper or bronze, generally richly wrought with prayers and symbols inscribed or put in bold relief. The upper and lower discs are perforated through which passes a metallic pivot generally attached to a handle of bamboo wood.

The upper disc is usually formed like a half cone at the top which is a metal boss attached to the handle which serves as a fastener, so that the body of the cylinder does not get detached from the handle. Inside, there is a long sheet of rolled paper on which are written the prayers and mystic formulas called 'mantras'. The cylinder is tied to a small chain from outside whose end has a small and cube-shaped weight attached to it. Holding in one hand the handle of the prayer wheel if one gives it a clockwise motion the eccentric mass of the chain describes a circle due to centrifugal force and thus the cylinder makes a rotatory motion. With every light push of the hand this motion can be kept up indefinitely. Every motion rotation means one recitation of the prayer written on the scroll of paper inside. The person rotating the cylinder must inwardly concentrate on the prayer for the duration of each rotation. The mechanical rotation of the 'wheel' has no value unless it is accompanied by the inner concentration. The term 'Prayer Mill' is more often applied to big cylinders sometimes 2 or 3 metres high mounted on the spoked wheel worked by a current of water.

*Mani Rimdu*: A sacred Buddhist drama accompanied by dances of monks which is enacted in

some monasteries of Khumbu region of Nepal. It is an annual feature in every monastery and is intended to celebrate the victory of Buddhism over the Bon religion. The drama lasts three days. In the afternoon of the first day, we have the inaugural ceremony. Throughout the second day 13 different scenes are enacted with dances in costumes which go on for seven consecutive hours. In the late afternoon of the third day, we have the concluding ceremony.

The expression “Mani Rimdu” is the popular distortion of the correct word—Mani Ril-Sgrub (pronounced Mani ri-drup).

*Mani-rhil-bu*: Small balls of ceremonial red-coloured rice

*Mani-Ril-Sgrub*: Stands for a special type of prayer and also for a kind of ‘torma’ used on the inaugural day during the ‘consecration of life’ ceremony of Mani Rimdu—an annual Buddhist festival of Khumbu region. Due to defective oral transmission of this name among ordinary people it undergoes a distortion in the form of Mani Rimdu.

*Manjushri*: One of the three great Bodhisattvas (Manjushri, Avalokiteshvar and Vajrapani) who are the patron-saints of Tibet. He is reputed to have a great power of speech, a great wisdom and a great mastery of sciences. He is symbolised by a lotus flower, a book and a sword. On his head he carries an image of Buddha. His hair are matted in five locks. Legend has it that he is the founder of the kingdom of Nepal and that he is widely worshipped in China. It appears that Tsong-khapa is in some way linked with or derived



from Manjushri (the future Buddha).

*Mantra:* A Sanskrit term standing for any mystical formula whether written, engraved, painted, drawn, inscribed or recited. One often comes across “Mantras” inscribed on erratic stone slabs of walls (mani walls) along the mountain paths in Tibet and Nepal—a clear testimony to the religious penchant of the people. The ‘mantras’ are also written on long scrolls of paper enclosed in the ‘mani’, i.e. in the portable prayer-wheels.

*Mara:* According to Hindus, he is the God of temptation and desire. He has four dancing daughters. In Tibet, he is known as Dgra-lha.

*Marpa (Mar-pa, 1012–1096):* He is considered to have been the greatest living yogi of Asia and is credited with the ability of affecting total psychic transfer of his personality into a corpse which means that he can achieve at will transmigration of soul without having to die physically. It is said that he passed on the secret of the so called transmigration to only one disciple of his, Darmadvde who also happens to be his son and since then he lost his psychic power and there is nobody who can do the same thing now. This psychic transfer is called “droughing” by the Tibetans.

Marpa is also credited with having founded an order of monks (bka-Egyud) who can marry nuns and the offspring of this marriage also have to take to monkhood in a monastic city, Ralung (4,900 m) in Tibet.

*mchod-rten:* This is how Tibetans spell chorten which in Sanskrit is the same as stupa. Both kinds

of monuments are erected in memory of the historical Buddha. (See also Chorten, Stupa, Chaitya).

*mda'-dar (dadar)*: A kind of arrow whose handle is decorated with a bunch of multi-coloured strings. It is generally used in the nuptial ceremonies and brandished by priests one by one.

*Mgon-po*: One of the greatest defenders of the Buddhist faith. He appears on the stage in the 7th act of Mani Rimdu. His Sanskritized name is Maha Kala (the Big Black One).

*Mi-la ras-pa (Mila-ras-pa)*: Mila dressed in white. The famous Tibetan mystic, a pupil of Marpa (11th century).

*Mila-repa*: This is how the above mentioned Mila-repa is usually pronounced.

*Mi-nag*: Name of the two dancers (Blackmen) in the 8th act of Mani Rimdu.

*Mi-tshe-ring*: The hero of the 6th act of Mani Rimdu, a caricature of the man of long life."

*mk'an po (chen-po)*: The priest of the Buddhist monastery.

*Mkha'-gro-ma*: Semi-goddesses popularly called 'travellers of the sky'. They appear in the 9th act of Mani Rimdu. Their Sanskritized name is 'Dakini'.

*Tibetan conception of death*: Tibetans do not cremate their dead because fuel-wood is not easily available and is very costly. In the case of some high Buddhist priests, however, they make an exception. Otherwise, the

dead are thrown in deserted places for ferocious animals like wolves or even dogs to eat them up completely. The bones which are left, are plastered with butter to attract animals to feed on them. Thus no trace is left of the corpse and in this way the Tibetans eliminate any chance of the dead using their abandoned body after the soul has left it. According to the Tibetans whatever we see is not actually true reality but only illusion. The quality of life of each one of us depends on our past actions or experiences in the past lives and when the body succumbs before inevitable old age or disease there is no eternal place like heaven or hell to which the vital soul can go. We just start living again carrying the burden of past experiences which will mould our future into something better or worse. Every now and then somebody may not return to this earth after death, or may not be reborn. Such a man has achieved perfection and has merged into the absolute. For him there are no more illusions which we call lives. Great wisdom or sacred knowledge can help in making everyone of us a Buddha unaffected by any subsequent rebirth because being a Buddha implies the attainment of Nirvana or liberation.

Some of these enlightened sages voluntarily give up the chance to become Buddha so that by returning to earth and by living among men they may help them in attaining liberation through example and preaching. These supermen are called Bodhisattvas in Sanskrit, and 'sprul-ku' (tulku) in Tibetan. It is the spirit of compassion for the ordinary sinners that moves the Bodhisattvas to put off their own liberation (Nirvana). We westerners

often talk of the transmigration of soul but we forget that for the Tibetans and especially for the Buddhists the soul simply does not exist. The thought of an individual is the centre of his moral ethos (the vital spirit). It is the thought which assures the individual's continuity because it is responsible for every action of ours. It creates our 'Karma' and adds to it. Consequently, it is the cause of our continual dying and taking birth again in other lives. The Buddhists, therefore, attach utmost importance to a man's thought at the moment of his death whereby an individual can make a concerted effort at concentrating at the ultimate good and push his psyche into the sphere of 'the absolute' which is the only reality in the flux of change. Tibetans do not let the seriously ill or dying persons go to sleep so that they may be able to discharge this essential duty of concentrating on the absolute in a conscious deliberate manner to avoid the inevitable rebirth. The Buddhist priests are always ready with set prayers to be recited by the side of the dying persons, extracted from the Tibetan 'Book of the Dead' called Bardo-to-doe. The prayers are supposed to put the dying individual on the right path who otherwise might go astray due to some quirks of 'karma' while lingering on the border-line of life and death. The bar-do prayers sometimes make one totally free from rebirth or in any case help the 'conscience' of the dying individual to be reborn in a better condition. It seems the Tibetans are haunted with a constant fear of being reborn as animals. Hence these efforts to avoid this possibility. The time-gap between death and rebirth is said to be of 49 days. Saints or holy persons can partially

eliminate this gap and pass from one life to another within a period of 3 to 4 days at the most.

If the dying person is of troubled 'conscience' either because of illness or because of his sins, the reading of passages from the Book of the Dead by the priest or by his friend or a member of his family can arouse it and guide it during that transitional stage or in the decisive moment for the new birth which awaits him. When it wakes up it becomes conscious of the lifeless body in which he has lived for years. He also sees the preparations for his funeral, the offerings etc. and becomes aware of the critical moment. He feels lost and assailed by lights and sounds, hallucinations and sudden blinding flashes which terrify him. If his friend or the Lama continues with his readings from the Book of the Dead his "conscience" is greatly benefitted by it because then it becomes clear to him that those lights and sounds are merely the vibrational reflexes of his conscience or projections of his thought dancing before his eyes by virtue of or due to the force of his 'karma'. He finds himself surrounded by phantasms, the terrifying images of demons and by the god of death himself. If at that time he remembers that they are only hallucinations due to his 'karma' he attains permanent liberation from the burden of life. If, on the other hand, he turns his head aside in fear, he finds himself facing the God of death who rains on him deadly blows. Then he enters a new cycle of life, good or bad, according to his 'karmas' accumulated in previous lives.

A man may be reborn as a man. He can also be reborn as an animal if he has killed or been cruel to animals during his

life or if he has been guilty of sins against his fellowmen which had hardened his conscience or made him brutish. Perhaps it is this fear of being reborn as an animal that makes the Buddhists so respectful to even the humblest forms of life. Every person's destiny is conditioned by his 'karma' which drives him inevitably to the new path which he must take.

*Mudra:* Female figure representing wisdom. See also Prajna.

*Neg-po chen-po:* Another name for Mgon-po (the great Black one). Appears in the 7th act of Mani Rimdu.

*Nakula:* Sanskrit word for mongoose, an emblematic animal in Buddhist iconography.

*Nga-chung:* By this name is sometimes called the double magical drum meant for liturgical use.

*Nima-pa (Tibetan: Rnying-ma-pa):* An orthodox Buddhist set which permits monks to get married.

*Nirvana:* It implies an ecstatic condition in which the spirit feels pure joy in the absence of the so called reality. In Buddhism, Nirvana can more appropriately be equated with bliss excluding every sensation and thus total absence of pain or suffering. It is a Sanskrit word meaning 'extinction'. In Indian philosophies and religions as also in Buddhism, Nirvana signifies the supreme condition of 'liberation' from the cycle of transmigrations or reincarnations.

Since life is suffering Buddhism aims at breaking the vicious circle of life and death by the extinction of all desire and

lust through the renunciation of all ties that bind us to the world. This renunciation can result in Nirvana—a condition in which all suffering ends along with its causes and effects including reincarnation. ‘Karma’ which strikes a balance between good and bad acts, between individual and collective virtue and evil, is responsible for reincarnation. Different Buddhist sects offer different interpretations of the theory of Nirvana and its attainment.

*Om mani Padme hum:* The famous and fundamental Buddhist “mantra” or mystic formula. It is a recurrent invocation in Buddhist religion. A rough and ready translation would be: “Hail, O jewel in the Lotus Flower.” or Honoured be the jewel in lotus flower! (Jewel stands for Buddha).

*Padma Dakini:* One of the five semi-goddesses who appear in the 9th act of Mani Rimdu.

*Padmasambhava* (literally: born from the lotus flower): An apostle of Tibetan Buddhism considered to be the second founder of Buddhist religion in Tibet. During the years 777–779 A.D. he founded in Tibet the first Buddhist monastery at Samya (bsam-yas) and ordained the first seven monks in the new faith. (The famous monastery of Sa-skya was founded much later in 1073).

In the countries of tantric Buddhism, Padmasambhava is straight away known as the second Buddha. His idol is worshipped in every monastery. For all practical purposes, he is considered divine. He figures in various manifestations in all tantric rites. For instance, he is variously shown as a gentle master, a fierce master, a Tiger god, union of the precious one, one of the groups constituting the five

Dhyani Buddhas, the perfecter of thought, and the detonator of lightning and thunder. See also Guru Rimpoche.

*Pan-chen Lama* (Panchen Lama): For about last four centuries he is considered one of the two highest authorities in the hierarchy of the Buddhist churches in Tibet. For a long time he has been living in the monastery of Trasilumpo near the city of Shigatse (Tibet). His spiritual authority is considered slightly higher than Dalai Lama's who enjoys supreme temporal power, although to distinguish between the two authorities is no more than splitting hair.

*Phags-skyes-po*: Appears in the 2nd act of Mani Rimdu as a guardian-king of the south, one of the four guardians of the four directions. His Sanskritized name is Virudhaka.

*Phod-kha*: A kind of long tunic with large triangular sleeves worn by many dancers in the Mani Rimdu festival.

*Phur-bu* (Phur-pa): A magic sword of tantric origin with a triple blade of triangular form. It is credited with the power of detaining demons once they have been caught by the priest who wields this weapon. This tantric sword is held in the left hand by tantric and Bon priests. In Buddhist ceremonies of tantric origin, however, it is held in the right hand. The handle is surmounted by the head of Rta-mgrin (Sanskrit Hayagriva), one of the eight furies figuring in the 7th act of Mani Rimdu.

*Po-phor*: Incense burner.

*Prajna* (mudra): The female figure personifying wisdom.



It is always accompanied or joined in flesh with its Buddha or Bodhisattva. The physical union is only meant to bring home to the uninitiated its symbolic significance which actually is of a mystical and spiritual type.

Its iconographic value is the same as that of Shakti but is limited to only a spiritual level. 'Shakti', apart from being a representation of wisdom, is the entire energy or power which emanates from the male deity and finally returns into him. While in Hinduism, energy is represented by the female element, in Buddhism this energy finds its representation in the male deity. Thus there is a reversal of symbols and values. Tantric Buddhism calls this psycho-sexual union father-mother complex (yab-yum). It is supposed to result in enlightenment.

- Rakshi:* Liquor used by Sherpas, made by distilling "chang" or obtained from rice, barley, potatoes and maize.
- Ras-zam:* Tibetan shoes with soles of felt, wool or skin, used by Sherpas also. Ceremonial shoes for Tibetan monks.
- Shakti:* Sanskrit word indicating the dynamic female force (Hinduism) and vital energy of the male deity in female form (Buddhism). In either case the male deities are shown joined physically with their Shakti iconographically.
- Shakya:* The family clan of 'the powerful'. The historical Buddha was born in one such family of Gautama.
- Shakyamuni:* The sage of the Shakya clan. This is a title given to the historical Buddha or

*Shiva:*

Shiva is one of the great Trinity of Hinduism. The name signifies 'the merciful' but in reality Shiva is the God of destruction. He is the same as "Rudra" of the vedic times. He is one of the Hindu Trinity of Gods—the two others being Brahma and Vishnu. Brahma is the creator of the universe, Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer. Shiva is also a model yogi capable of enduring privations and hardships. He is known to be the cruel dancer performing his cosmic dance of death on the pedestal of vanishing and rising worlds. He is an idol to be worshipped by the dancers and snake-charmers. The cult of Shiva has a terribly ascetic aspect and at the same time it admits of diabolical orgies. One of the symbols and emblems of his unlimited power is the 'lingam' which is a must in every temple dedicated to him. His vehicle called 'Nandi' (the sacred bull) is also an integral part of Shiva temples and is generally found outside in temple compounds.

The main epithets used for Shiva are: Mahadeva (the great god), Sadasiva (the creator), Jagesvara (Lord of the Universe), Yogesvara (the eternal yogi), Somanatha, Chandrashekhara (the ruler of the moon), Gangadhara (the protector of the sacred Ganga river), Nataraja (the divine dancer), Mahakala (the Big Black one Lord of death), Bhutanath (Lord of the demons)

*The Consort of Shiva:* is also remembered by different names such as Gauri (the glorious one), Parvati (the daughter of the mountains), Durga (the inaccessible), Uma (mother) and Kali (the black goddess).

The Shaivite iconography has a sinister

as well as glorious aspect. The glorious aspect is found in his representation as the lord of Mount Kailash (the abode of snows) surrounded by minor divinities in a pose of adoration.

However, when he is represented in the company of his consort, the iconography takes on a severe and sometimes terrible aspect. Both are shown dressed as ascetics, their bodies besmeared in ashes, trailing death and destruction in their wake, wearing a garland of human skulls and dancing on corpses, drinking human blood and so on.

*Sou:* Korean variety of Buddhism. It is called 'Zen' in Japan.

*Sonam* (bsod-nams): Sum total of indulgences and accumulated merits earned by a good Buddhist. A word of common use with the Sherpas. See also 'Karma'.

*Stupa:* Sanskrit word for a Buddhist monument erected in memory of Lord Buddha. It is called "chorten" in Tibetan language. The edifice consists of a five storied square base with flights of stairs. On the base is erected a dome of variable form surmounted by a top crown having 13 rings of a size in descending order. In olden times these rings could be seven or even less in number. Originally they were the stylized version of canopied umbrellas meant to provide a cover for important personages. More recently, they have served the functions of symbolising 13 stages through which one must pass to arrive at the stage of saintliness or enlightenment.

Stupas have been constructed on as many as 50 architectural schemes differing

from each other fundamentally, depending on the cultural and natural environment in which they happen to be located in India, China, Tibet, Japan and Korea. The forms range from the typical stupa to the multiple Pagoda which curiously enough is evolved from the former. At the top of the monument there is always a solar disc, a sythe in the form of crescent moon (which some people interpret as atmosphere upside-down) and a 'drop' or 'tear' which in Tibetan language is called 'thig-le' and in Sanskrit 'Bindu'. The solar disc stands for wisdom or knowledge, the crescent moon represents compassion. The highest point of the monument stands for the sublime moment of illumination in which the sun and moon (knowledge and compassion) merge to form the afore-said 'drop' which is the sum-total of all that is spiritually precious.

*Swastika:* A very old symbol in the shape of an *angular* cross. In Sanskrit the word is derived from 'Swastha' which means 'hale and hearty'. The symbol has come down to us from prehistoric times. It is like a cross with its arms inclining to the left. Both in the orient and the occident the symbol of Swastika was commonly employed in the artistic representations of the Iron and Bronze age. It is widely held that it is a symbol representing the sun and its motion. In India it is a welcome sign. In Bon religion, in Jainism and in orthodox Buddhism arms of the Swastika follow an anticlockwise direction while in the reformed Buddhist sects as well as according to the Nazi practice in Germany it is drawn clockwise. Sometimes one finds it drawn on Buddhist liturgical objects, on ceremonial appurtenances, on temple

walls and in monasteries. In Tibet Swastika is called 'gyung-drung'.

*Tantrism:* A term applied to a religious movement in Hinduism. This is the significance attached to a big series of ritualistic texts meant for initiation. Tantrism arose in South and North-west India in 4th century after Christ and spread in different directions in the succeeding centuries. Without hardening into a strict dogma, it provided stimulus to spiritual thought of an intuitive type through parables, paradoxical sayings, enigmas and astrological teaching. It aims at enlightenment by methods based on a technique of meditation which helps to control physiological activities and through magical practices. Tantrism through its links with many non-Indian influences of pre-existing aboriginal character, emphasises the cult of Shakti i.e. dynamic and generative principle of divine energy associated with gods and goddesses presented in forms of carnal union.

*Tara:* A female Bodhisattva in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon. She is always shown wearing princely clothes and accompanying as a secondary figure (in the iconography) the great Bodhisattvas and sometimes even the five meditating Buddhas (Dhyani Buddha). The name 'Tara' is used not for a single figure but for a number of figures having a similar function.

*Tarchen* (Tar-shing or tarco): A bamboo pole supporting a high flag with prayers written on it.

*Tangiur* (Tanjur or bstan-'gyur): It is the 'translated

doctrine' which together with Kanjur constitutes the canon of Tibetan Buddhism or the juridico-religious principles of faith. Tanjur contains commentaries on the Kanjur texts, treatises on astronomical, medical, archaeological, philological, philosophical subjects. In all there are 225 volumes of Tanjur many of which have been translated from Indian languages, a few from the Chinese and some portions are original.

Both Kanjur and Tanjur were composed in their essential parts near about 1300 A.D. The worship of these fundamental works is accompanied by incense offerings and lamps fed by butter.

After the death of the sixth Dalai Lama in Tibet, a regent was appointed in the person of bsod-nams-stobs rgyas (sonam-tobghie). He is known as a great patron of religion and it was due to him that 333 volumes of Tanjur and Kanju were printed in the monastery of Narthang in Trashilumpo.

*Trashilumpo*: Name of a famous monastery of Tibet founded in 1445–47 near the city of Shigatse. For four centuries, it has been the head-quarters of Trashi Lama i.e. Panchen Lama—See also Trashilumpo.

*Thanka* (Thang-ka or tanka): A typical Tibetan Buddhist painting on a scroll depicting scenes from the life of Buddha or of some Bodhi-sattva or depicting the “mandala”

*Thawa*: A novice in a monastery.

*Tharavada* (Theravada): Name of a Buddhist school of thought belonging to the South, also known as Hinayana or the small vehicle.

- Threngwa*: Buddhist rosary of big round beads.
- Thugs-rje-chen-po*: 'The Great Compassion', title given to Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva worshipped in Japan in female form named Kannon.
- Thupa*: Pali word for Stupa.
- Ti-bum*: Ceremonial vase with a small suspended mirror used in the 'consecration or dedication of life' ceremony which precedes Mani Rimdu representation.
- Torma* (gtor-ma): A mixture of flour and butter made into a paste. During ceremonies of Tibetan Buddhism cosmic figures are made out of this paste for votive offerings symbolising certain gods whose blessings have to be invoked or some demons intended for throwing out.
- Trapa*: A novice among Buddhist monks. See grva-pa.
- Tril-bu*: Loud sounding metal bell used in religious ceremonies. See also 'ghanta'.
- Tri-pataka*: Three baskets: Buddhist liturgy texts; see also Kanjur.
- Tri-ratna*: A kind of trident which can be inscribed in a triangle. It has three flashing points representing the three Buddhist jewel—Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (the brotherhood).
- Tsam-ki-bulu*: A dance rehearsal before Mani Rimdu drama, without costumes and without masks.
- Tshe-bdang*: Inaugural ceremony of Mani Rimdu in

the afternoon of the first day. It is also known as the "consecration of life" or 'ordination ceremony'. The same as Tshe-wang (Tshe-wong).

- Tsamna*: A collective dance. See also Zor-'cham.
- Tsampa*: Flour of roasted barley used as a food by Sherpas.
- bTsam-po*: 'The powerful one'. The first king of Tibet.
- Tsha-tsha*: A miniature stupa to preserve relics. It is generally made of precious metal.
- Tshe-bum*: 'pot of life' with holy water, used in rites.
- Tshe-chang*: 'Life-giving liquid', beer for ritual purposes.
- Tshe-ril*: Small balls made of Torma for ritual purposes to wish long 'life of the spirit' or a food of divine life.
- Tsong-khapa*: A reformer of the yellow sect of the Tibetan Buddhist church. Author of Laricemmo text and founder of the Dge-lugs-pa sect.
- Tu*: Holi water used in ceremonies.
- Tulka*: The incarnated Buddha. Bodhisattva in Sanskrit.
- Vajrapani*: Name of one of three great Bodhisattvas. see also Manjushri.
- Vishnu*: The name of an Indian god who along with Shiva and Brahma constitutes the Indian "Trimurti" (trio of gods). He belongs to the old Vedic religious tradition. He is known to have covered the entire



universe in three steps and was second of rank among the 330 million vedic deities. In Brahmanism and Hinduism he rose to the first rank of divinities and was called 'the god of gods'. According to the theory of 'Avtars' (different manifestations in human form of one god) he is conceived in many forms. He inherited from the vedic god 'Indra' many benevolent virtues as preserver of the universe, Shiva being the destroyer of the universe. He is the protector of the law and truth. It is believed that at the end of the present cosmic epoch Vishnu will appear in the form of Kalki riding a white horse to annihilate the wicked and to make the good triumph. According to certain books Christ is no other than an Avtar (re-carnation) of Vishnu. The favourite wife of Vishnu is Lakshmi or Shri (goddess of beauty, wealth and agriculture). Her symbol is a lotus flower and she holds the cow as sacred. The four-armed god Vishnu is also represented with a lotus flower disc, a club and conch shell in his four-hands. He rests on a serpent which uses a throne.

*Yama:* God of death.

*Yamantaka:* Subjugator of the god of death.

*Yab-yum:* It is the representation of the idea of 'duality in unity' or the 'unification of the two equals' in Buddhist iconography expressed through psycho-sexual embrace (see, Prajna, Shakti).

In tantrism energy is represented by male deity, in Hinduism it is represented by female deity. However, in tantrism it is the female deity which receives the energy and gives it back to the male god who

represents it. Yab-yum signifies "father-mother union" and is expected to result in the desired "enlightenment" or "extinction." The concept of Yab Yum which is always represented iconographically by two deities of different sexes joined casually is taken from Hinduism, where the female deity is called Shakti. In the ancient iconography, Shakti does not appear carefully joined to its god but simply rides by his side. The Tibetans, who need a strong and realistic impression of all things including religion and art, have expressed this concept in a way easy to grasp and in an enormous atmosphere.

The term Yab-yum is applied iconographically to symbols of the mystic and psycho-sexual union.

*Zen*: Japanese version of Buddhism. In Korea it is called "Son," in China Ch'an, in Tibet "btsan." The literal meaning of the term is "exorcisms against evil forces."

*Zhal-'bag* (king-dzi): A term for the masks used for dance of the monks.

*Zhi-ba'l* sbyiu-sreg: The concluding ceremony on the third day of Mani Rimdu festival which culminates with the burning of all the evil forces in Khumbu.

*Zhwa-nag* (sha-nag) (she-nok) (shenok): Black hat of the tantric priests who are also called Zhwa-nag.

*Zoukhapa*: See Tsong-khapa.

*Zor-'cham* (sur-dzem): This is the name given to the 13th dance of Mani Rimdu. It is also called Tsam-na (a collective dance) or Lok -tsam (concluding dance).

*Zurra:* See Zur-ra Ra-rgyan.

*Zur-ra-rgyan:* The protector of Khumbu, the same as Khumbu-yul-Lha, the regional god. He seems to be the manifestation of Adi Buddha to the followers of Nima-pa sect. On his apron is the emblematic figure of Dgra-lha god who represents three things which result in rebirth—lust, laziness and ignorance. Dgra-lha is the same as the Hindu god Mara.

*Zur-pa (surpa):* Retired Head of a Buddhist monastery with all the perquisites intact.



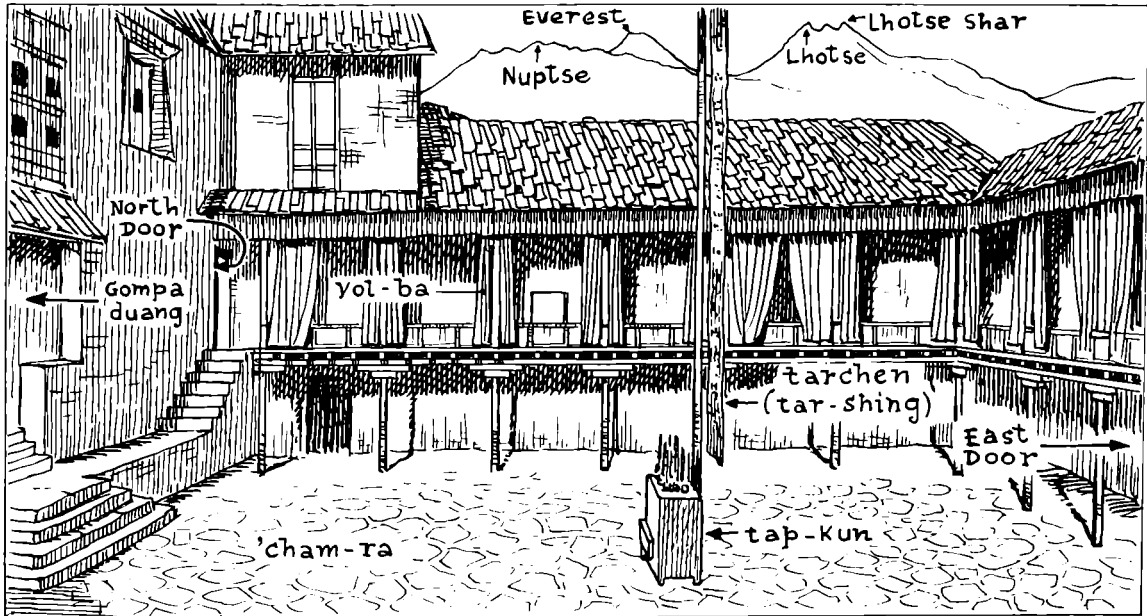
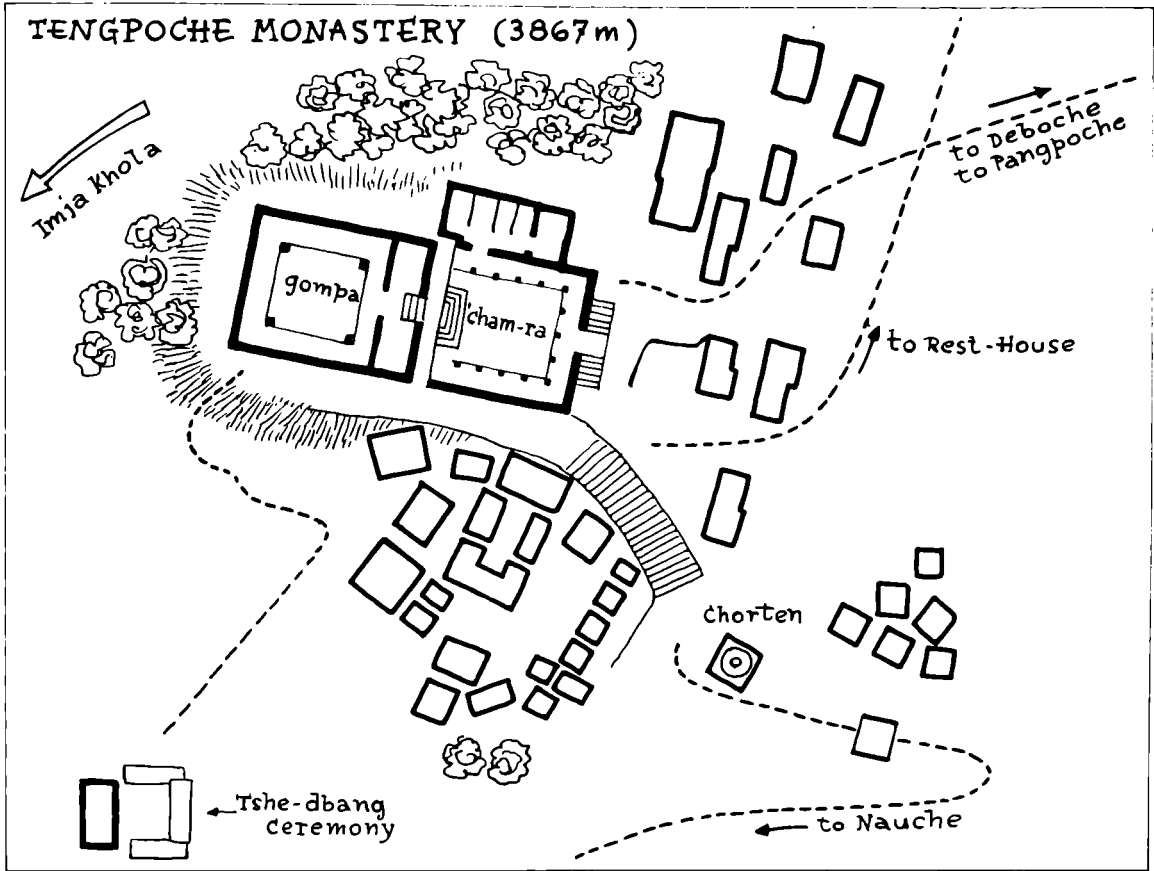
EXPLANATIONS OF DRAWINGS  
(on following pages)

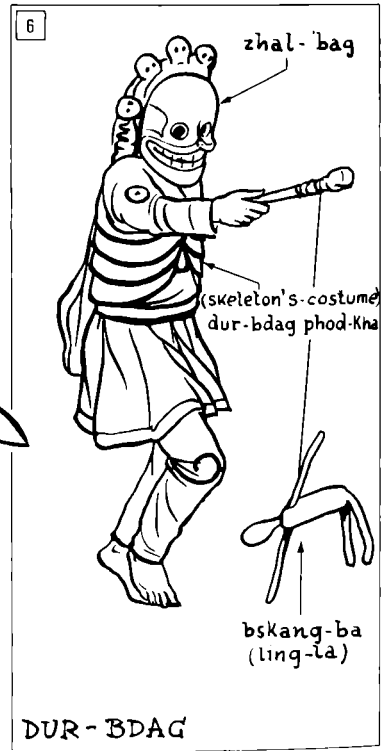
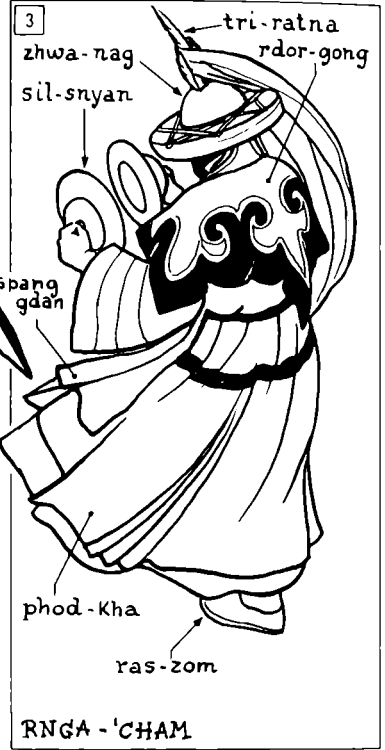
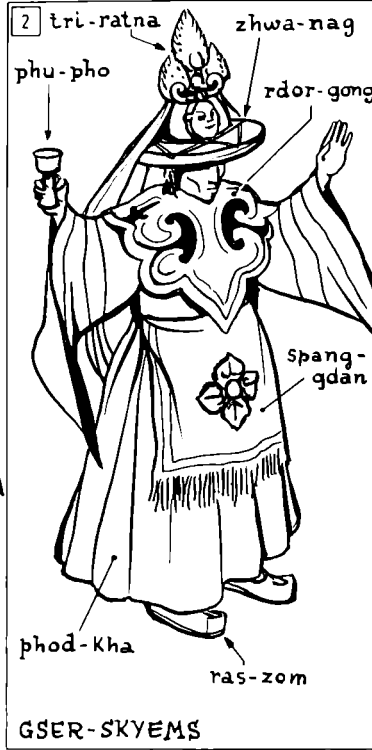
Tengpoche Monastery (3867 m), approximate map,  
from memory

Tengpoche Monastery: courtyard ('cham-ra) from  
south-west.

1. Zhwa-nag: Black Hat
2. Gser-skyems (Golden Drink)
3. Rnga-'cham (Drum Dancers)
4. Ging-pa (Guardian Kings)
5. Zur-ra Ra-rgyan (Gnas-srung dance)
6. Dur-bdag (Chitipati)
7. Dung-chen: Long sacred horns
8. Rgya-gling: Flageolet
9. Rgya-gling: Flageolet
10. Chos-rnga: Drum for dancers
11. Chos-rnga: Temple drum
12. Rgya-gling: Flageolet
13. Sgra-snyam: Tibetan guitar
14. Tcha-niem: Tibetan lute
15. Dhung (Dung, Doong): Conch-shell trumpets
16. Rkang-gling: Trumpet fashioned from human  
thigh bones
17. Dhvaja (Rgyal-mtshan): Banner of Victory
18. Dhvaja (Rgyal-mtshan): Banner of Victory
19. Chatra: Honorific sunshade
20. Sil-snyam: Small shallow cymbals
21. Sbug-'cham (Bub-chal): Cymbals for Buddhist  
worship
22. Si-nyel: Big cymbals for Buddhist worship
23. Rdo-rje (Vajra): Thunderbolt
24. Rdo-rje 'i gtun-theg: Thunderbolt
25. Tril-bu (ghanta): Bronze bell
26. Damaru: Small double-headed hand drum
27. Vajra (Double vajra)
28. Kapala- Bowl made from a human skull
29. Phur-bu (phur-pa): Magical tantric dagger
30. Gri-gug: Tantric knife

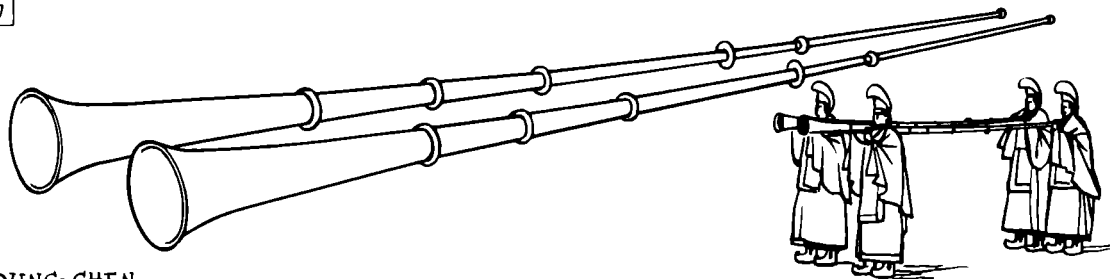
31. Sin-'phren: Buddhist rosary
32. Mani: Prayer wheel
33. Bsangs-phor (pho-phor): Incense burner
34. Poepjer: Incense burner
35. Brazier
36. Phu-pho: Container for offerings
37. Dru-pho (Ne-si): Container for grain offerings
38. Le-mo: Chang container
39. Le-mo: Chang container
40. Le-mo: Chang container
41. Kho-ti: Tea-pot
42. Kho-ti: Teapot
43. Kho-ti: Teapot
44. Kho-ti: Teapot
45. Bum-pa (tshe-bum): "Life-vase" with sacred water
46. Cho-kong: Butter-lamp
47. Cho-kong: Butter-lamp
48. Cho-kong: Butter-lamp
49. So-lag: Food container
50. Jhapta: Teapot
51. Jhapta: Teapot
52. Jhapta: Teapot
53. Jhapta: Teapot
54. Jhapta: Teapot
55. Jhapta: Teapot
56. Phu-po: Container for offerings
57. Ba-phshong: Container for offerings
58. Jon-dong: Vase for holy water
59. Nak-bum: Inkpot
60. Tsha-tsha: Miniature chorten





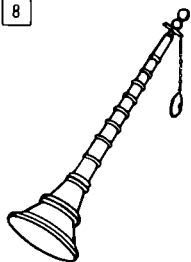


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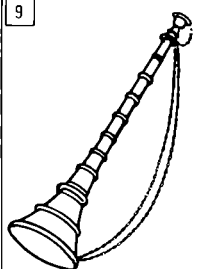
DUNG-CHEN

8



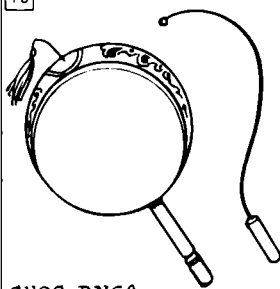
RGYA-GLING

9



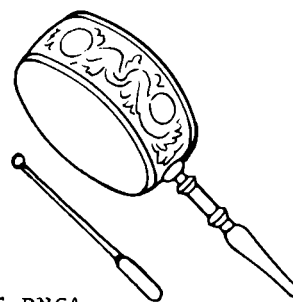
RGYA-GLING

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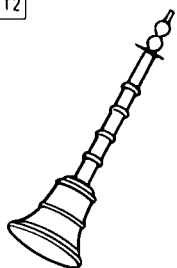
CHOS-RNGA

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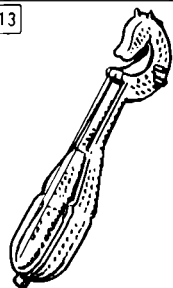
CHOS-RNGA

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RGYA-GLING

13



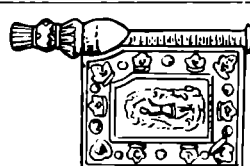
SGRA-SNYAM

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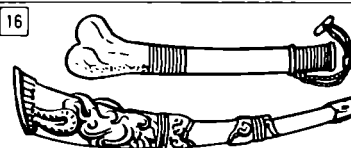
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DHUNG

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RKANG-GLING

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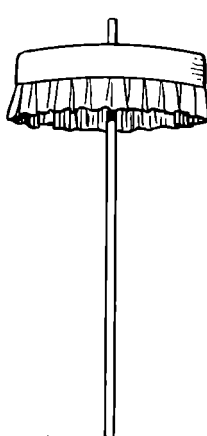
DHVAJA  
(RGYAL-MTSHAN)

18



DHVAJA  
(RGYAL-MTSHAN)

19



CHATRA

20



SIL-SNYAM

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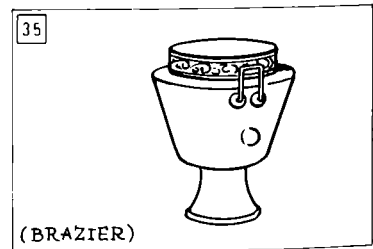
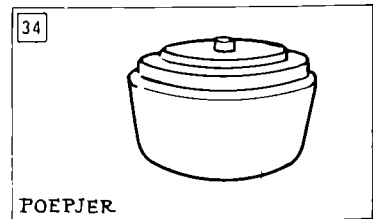
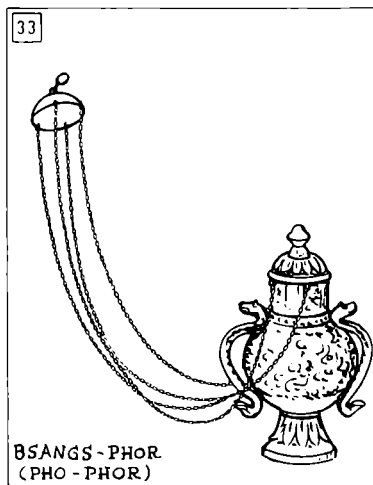
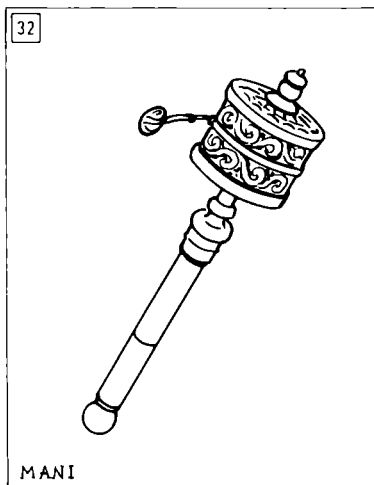
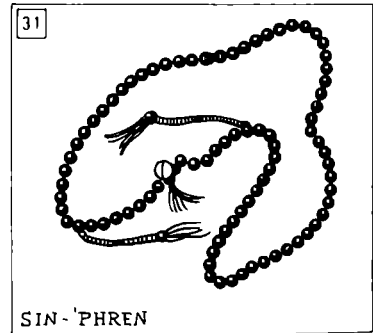
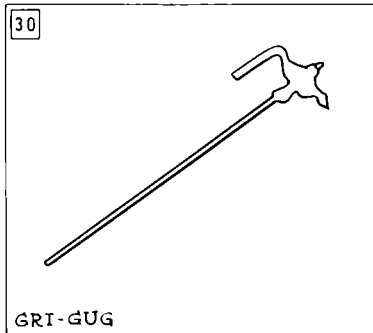
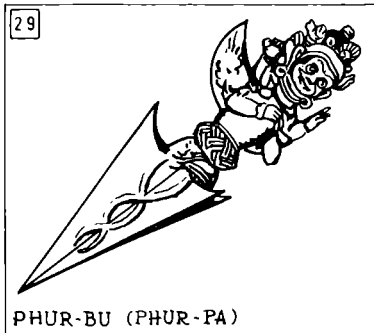
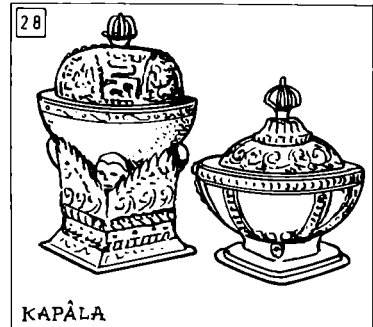
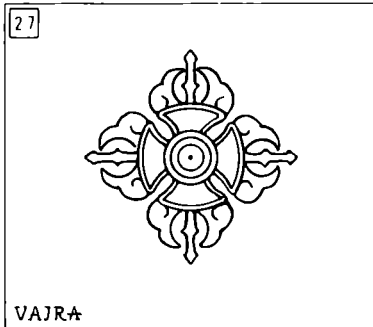
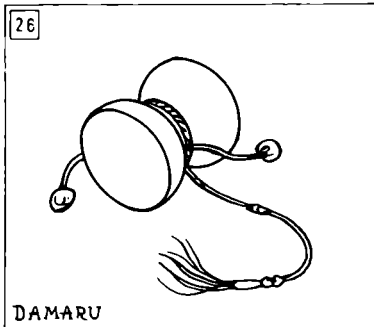
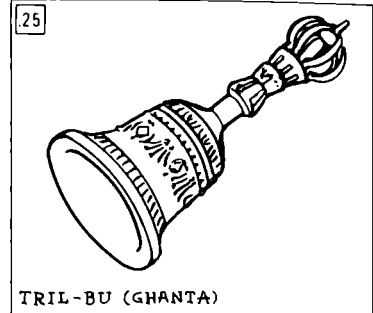
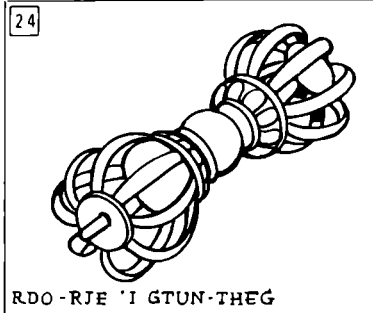
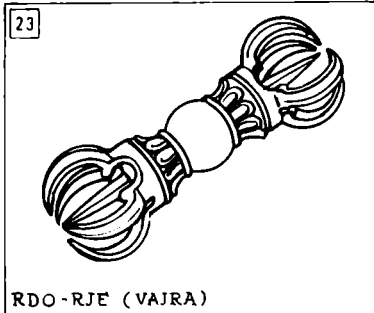


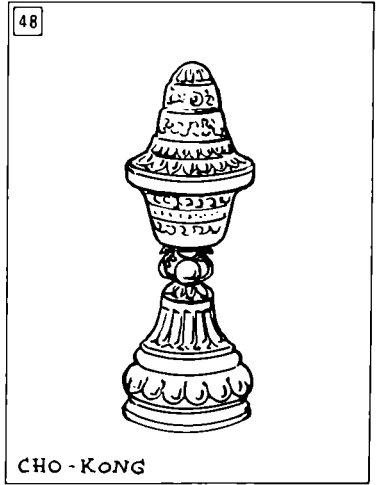
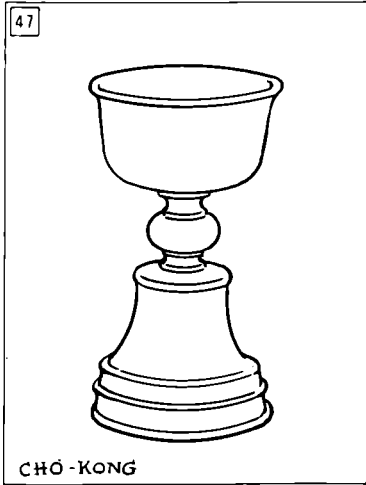
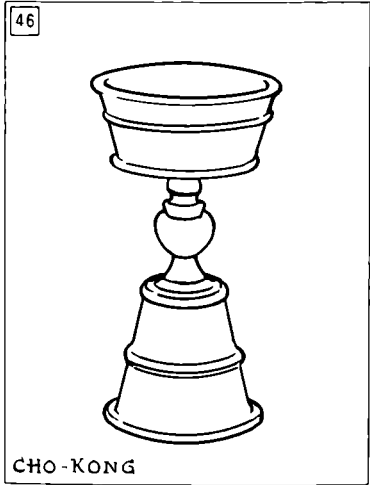
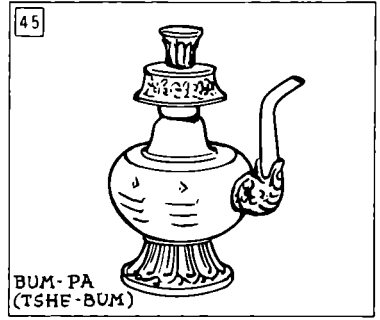
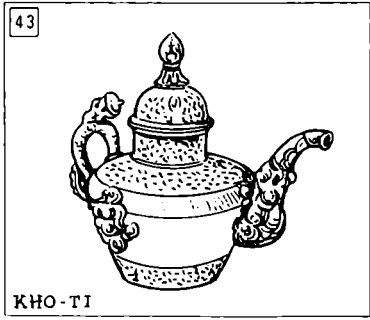
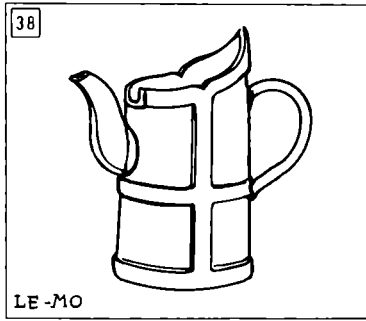
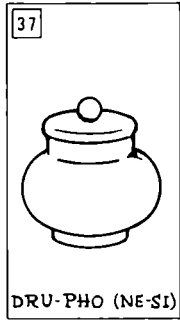
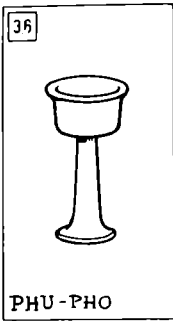
SBUG-CHAM

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SI-NYEL

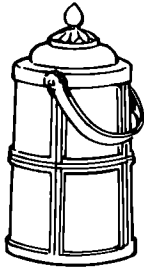




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SO - LAG

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JHAPTA

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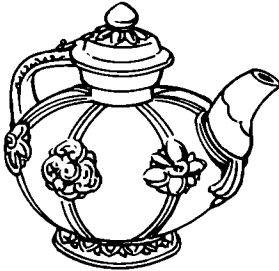


JHAPTA

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DAM

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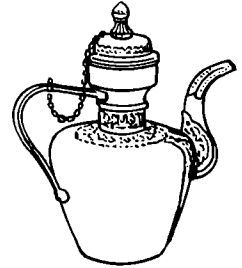
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JHAPTA

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JHAPTA

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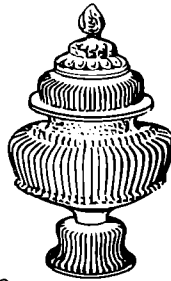
PHU

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JHAPTA

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PHU - PHO

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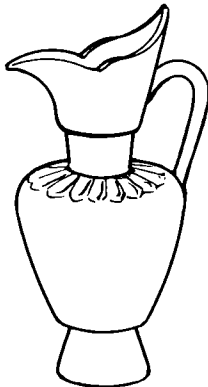


BA - PHSHONG

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MAN

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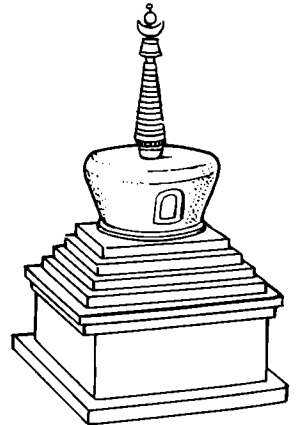
JON - DONG

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NAK - BUM

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TSHA - TSHA

