

The laity, through want of knowledge, seldom use with their rosaries other than the well known Lamaic formula '*Om! má-ñi pé-me hung'*, i. e., 'Hail! to the Jewel in the lotus! Hung.' This refers to the Bodhisatwa Chérési (Skt. *Padma-páni*), the patron-god of Tibet, who, like Buddha, is usually represented as seated or standing within a lotus-flower, and who is believed to have been born from such a flower. This formula is of comparatively modern origin, first appearing in the legendary history (*bkah bum*) of king Srong-tsan-gam-bo, which was one of the so-called 'hidden' treatises, and probably written about the twelfth or fourteenth century A. D. or later. With this formula, which is peculiar to Tibet, may be compared the Chinese and Japanese spells '*Námo Butsu*' (=Skt. *Namo Buddháya*, i. e., *Salutation to Buddha!*) and '*Námo O-mi-to Fu*' (=Skt. *Namo Amitábháya*, i. e., *Salutation to The Boundless Light*,—the fictitious Buddha of the Western Paradise.) The Burmese, so far as I have seen, seem to use their rosary merely for repeating the names of the Buddha Trinity viz., 'Phrá' or Buddha, 'Tara' or Dharma and Sangha. And the number of beads in their rosary is a multiple of 3×3 as with the Lamas. On completing the cycle the central bead is fingered with the pessimistic formula '*Anitsa, Dukha, Anátha.*'

In conclusion may be noted the frequent use of the terms '*Rinchen theng-wa*' and '*Norbu theng-wa*,' i. e., 'the Precious Rosary' and 'the Jewelled Rosary' as the titles of anthological books containing choice extracts, especially from sacred literature.

The 'Tsam-çhó-dung' (rtsa-mchhog-grong) of the Lamas, and their very erroneous identification of the site of Buddha's death.—By L. A. WADDELL, M. B.*

In conversations some years ago with Lamas and lay Buddhists at Darjiling, I was surprised to hear that Asam contained a most holy place of Buddhist pilgrimage called '*Tsam-çhó-dung*,' which, it was alleged, next to the great temple of *Dorje-dén†* (Sanskrit *Vajrásana*) at Bodh Gayá, was the most holy spot a Buddhist could visit. Asam is usually regarded as being far beyond the limits of the Buddhist Holy Land, and the Chinese pilgrims Fa Hian and Hiuen Tsiang in the fifth and seventh centuries of our era, to whom we are mainly indebted for our knowledge of ancient Buddhist geography, not only do not mention any

* རྩ་མཚོལ་གྲོང་།

† རྩ་མེ་འདུན་ rdo-rje-gdan.

holy site in Asam, but Hiuen Tsiang, who visited Gauhaṭī at the invitation of the king of Kámrúp, positively notes the absence of Buddhist buildings in Asam.* Sir W. Hunter also in his statistical account of Asam states† that ‘there are now no traces of Buddhism’ in Asam.

I therefore felt curious to learn further particulars of this important site in Asam, which had apparently been overlooked by geographers.

In Jäschke's Tibetan Dictionary‡ I found ‘*rtsa-mchhog-grong*’ defined as a “town in West Asam where Buddha died,” and this statement, it is noted, is given on the authority of the ‘Gyalrabs’, a vernacular history of Tibet. Csoma de Kőrös also notes§ that “the death of Shakya, as generally stated in the Tibetan books, happened in Asam near the city of Kusa or Cáma-rúpa (Kámrúp).”

Here then was a clue to the mystery. Buddha's death, it is well known, occurred between two *sál* trees near *Kuśinagara* or *Kuśanagara* in the North-West Provinces of India, thirty-five miles east of Gorakhpur and about one hundred and twenty miles N. N. E. of Benares; and the site has been fully identified by Sir A. Cunningham|| and others from the very full descriptions given by Hiuen Tsiang and Fa Hian. The name *Kuśanagara* means ‘the town of Kuśa grass¶’; and as the early Lama missionaries in their translation of the Bauddha Scriptures habitually translated all the Sanskrit and Páli names literally into Tibetan, *Kuśanagara* was rendered in the ‘*bKah-hgyur*’ (the Tibetan version) as ‘*rtsa-mchhog-grong*’, from ‘*rtsa-mchhog*’, *kuśa* grass + ‘*grong*’ a town (= Skt. *nagara*).

Now, near the north bank of the Brahmaputra, almost opposite Gauhaṭī, the ancient capital of Kámrúp, is, I find, an old village named *Sál-Kusa*, and it lies on the road between Gauhaṭī and Dewangiri, one of the most frequented passes into Bhotan and Tibet. With their extremely scanty knowledge of Indian geography the Lamas evidently concluded that this ‘town of *Sál-Kusa*’ was the ‘town of Kuśa,’ where Buddha entered into *nirváṇa* between the two *sál* trees—seeing that the word *sál* was also incorporated with the equivalent of ‘*Tsam-čhō-dung*’, and that in the neighbourhood was the holy hill of Hájo, where,

* *Si-yu-ki*, trans. by BEAL, II, p. 196.

† I. p. 39.

‡ p. 437.

§ *Asiatic Researches*, XX, p. 295.

|| *Arch. Surv. India Repts.*, I, 76; XVII, 55 &c.

¶ *Kuśa* grass (*Poa cynosuroides*), the sacrificial grass of the Hindús, is also prized by the Buddhists on account of its having formed the cushion on which the Bodhisattva sat under the Bodhi tree. It is also used as a broom in Lamaic temples and as an altar decoration associated with peacock's feathers in the *pumpa* or holy water vase.

as will be seen hereafter, there probably existed at that time some Buddhist remains.

No description of this Buddhist site seems to be on record, except a very brief note by Col. Dalton* on the modern Hindú temple of Hájo, which shrines a Buddhist image. As I have had an opportunity of visiting the site, and enjoyed the rare advantage of being conducted over it by a Khams-pa Lama, who chanced to be on the spot, and who had previously visited the site several times and possessed the traditional stories regarding it, I beg to present the following brief description of the site to the Society, in illustration of how the Lamas, originally misled by an identity of name, have subsequently clothed the neighbourhood with a legendary dress in keeping with the story of Buddha's death, and how this place, with its various associated holy spots is now implicitly believed by the pilgrims to be the real site of Buddha's *parinirvāna*. And in this belief, undeterred by the intemperate heat of the plains, Buddhist pilgrims from all parts of Bhotan, Tibet and even from Ladak and south-western China visit these spots and carry off scrapings of the rocks and the soil in the neighbourhood, treasuring up this precious dust in amulets, and for placing beside their dead body, as saving from dire calamities during life and from transmigration into lower animals hereafter. Authentic specimens of this dust, I was informed, commanded in Tibet high prices from the more wealthy residents, who had personally been unable to undertake the pilgrimage.

The Hájo hill, or rather group of hills, where is situated, according to the current tradition of the Lamas, the spot where Buddha 'was delivered from pain,' lies to the north (right) bank of the Brahmaputra about nine miles north-west from Gauhaṭi (Kámrúp), north latitude $26^{\circ} 11' 18''$ and east long. $91^{\circ} 47' 26''$, and four or five miles north of *Síl-Kusa*. The hill rises directly from the plain, forming a strikingly bold and picturesque mass; and it is a testimony to its natural beauty to find that the hill has attracted the veneration of people of all religious denominations. The semi-aboriginal Mech and Koch worship it as a deity under the name of Hájo, which means in their vernacular 'the hill.' The Buddhists formerly occupied one of the hillocks, but are now displaced by the Bráhmans who restored the temple, which is now one of the most frequented Hindú temples in Asam. The Muhammadans also have crowned the summit of the highest peak with a masjid.

The cluster of hills presents a very symmetrical appearance as seen from a distance, forming a bold swelling mass culminating in three trident-like peaks, the central one of which is pre-eminent and is regarded by the Buddhists as emblematic of Buddha. The high peaks on either

* J. A. S. B. 1855, LXXI, p. 6.

side of this are identified with Buddha's two chief disciples, *viz.*, Sári-putra and Maudgalaputra. This triad of peaks is seen from a great distance, and it is only on near approach that the smaller hillocks are observed. These latter number about sixteen and are called *Né-tén chu-đu** or 'the sixteen disciples' of Buddha.

The most holy site, according to the Buddhists, is a bare flattish shoulder of rock, about eight yards in diameter, situated at the north-west base of the hill. This is stated to be the *Sí-wa tsha-gi tur-dō†* or 'the pyre of the cool grove' where Buddha died, and where his body was cremated. The rock here bears several roughly cut inscriptions in Tibetan characters of the mystic sentences '*Om mani padme hung,*' '*Om ah hung,*' '*Om*' &c., and coloured rags torn from the vestments of the pilgrims are tied to the bushes in the neighbourhood. The Hindús have carved here on the rock a figure of the four-armed Vishṇu, which the Bráhmaṇ priests call *Dhúbi*, or 'the washerwoman of the gods', and the rock they call '*Letai dhupinir pá†.*'

It is worthy of note that the Lamas, for the benefit of the resident population of Tibet have made copies of this spot in at least four places in Tibet, *viz.*, at:—

- (I). *Ra-gyab*,‡ in the south-east outskirts of Lhasa city.
- (II). *Pha-pong kha*,§ in the north suburbs of Lhasa.
- (III). *Phur-mó chhe*,|| about twelve miles to the north-east of Tashilhunpo.
- (IV). *She-dag*.¶

These sites were consecrated by placing on them a piece of rock brought from this Asam site, now under report; but the latter spot bears the distinctive prefix of *Gyá-gar* or Indian, implying that it is the original and genuine site.

A high cliff, close to the west of this spot, is called 'the vulture's mound hill,'** as in Tibet vultures usually frequent the neighbourhood of the *tur-dō* cemeteries.

A short distance beyond this spot, in the jungle, is a roughly hewn stone basin, about six feet in diameter, called by the Lamas, *Sang-gydmá ko-ko*, or the pot in which the *Sin-je*—the death-demons—boil the heads of the damned. The Bráhmaṇs, on the other hand, assert that it is the bowl in which *S'wa* or *Adi-purusha* brewed his potion of lust-excit-

* བཞུགས་པ་རྩེན་པ་རྩེན་པ་རྩེན་པ་ །།

། ལྷ་མོ་ཚོ་ །།

† བསེལ་བ་ཚེལ་མི་རྩུ་འཛོལ་ །།

¶ རེལ་བྱས་ །།

‡ ར་རྩེལ་ །།

** བྱ་ཚེད་སྐང་པོའི་རི་ །།

§ ས་པོང་ཁར་ །།

ing Indian hemp, and they point to its green (confervoid) watery contents in proof of this. They also state that a snake inhabits the depths of the bowl; but it was certainly absent at the time of my visit.

Advancing along the pathway, leading up-hill, we pass a few columnar masses of rock lying near the path, which are pointed to as fragments of Buddha's staff*, with which he unearthed this monster bowl.

Climbing up the hill we reach the temple of Kedáranáth, which is approached by a very steep roughly paved causeway. At the entrance a long inscription in granite in old Bengálí characters, those being the characters adopted by the Asamese. Adjoining this temple is the shrine of Kamaleśvar or 'the Lord of the lotus.' Here is a tank called the Lamas 'Tshó mani bhadra' † or 'the lake of the notable'; and they state that many waters-sprites (Nágás, serpents or dragons) came out of this pond on the approach of Buddha and presented him with jewels. A small cell by the side of this pond is said to be the place where Buddha set down a mass of butter which had been brought him as a gift, and the stone *linga* and *yoni* (phallus and its counterpart), now shrined here by the Hindús, are pointed to as being their sanctified butter.

Crowning the summit of the hill is a large masjid built by Lutfláh, a native of Shiráz, in the reign of the emperor Sháh Jahán, in 1656 A. D. It contains the following Persian inscription:—

بعهد دولت سلطان عادل • شهنشاه جهان و خسرو دین
ابوالغازي شجاع الدين محمد * شه و شهزادگي فخرنده آئين
چو لطف الله شیرازي بنا کرد * همايون مسجدي چون خلد رنگين
بدارالامن مشهور ممالک * شجاع آباد † خط الله همين †
به هنگامی که رايات عزيمه * به صوب بنگ بود ازعز و تمکين
مدام اين خازنه دین باد معمور * بحق حرمت † جناب هبتين †
زفيض نعمت اللهی قوي باد * هميشه اين مهين بنياد سنگين
خورد چون سال تاريخ بقاجست * ندا آمد جلي شد خانگه دین

بدرضا
بدرضا
بدرضا
بدرضا
بدرضا
بدرضا

برضماير جوئندگان اخبار پوشيده نماند که اين مسجد اعظم در زمان حضرت
صاحبقران ثاني شاه جهان بادشاه غازي کمترين فدويان درگاه مرید و معتقد شاه
نعمت الله لطف الله به اتمام رسانيد في شهر رمضان المبارک سنه ۱۰۶۷ هجري

* 𑒧𑒻𑒟𑒱𑒪𑒫 ॥

† 𑒧𑒻𑒟𑒱𑒪𑒫 ॥

[† The text here is corrupt. Ed.]

*Translation,**

[In the time of the Governorship of the just Sultán, the monarch of the world and the prince of religion,

Abu-l-Ghází Shujá'u-d-dín Muḥammad, the sovereign and son of a sovereign, an auspicious ruler,

When Luṭfulláh of Shiráz founded a sacred Masjid, beautiful like Paradise,

In the peaceful town of Shujá'-ábád well known in all countries, ...

At the time when the standards were marching towards Bengal with glory and grandeur.

May this house of religion be ever crowded (*with worshippers*) for the sake of the sanctity of

May this august foundation in stone be ever firm by the blessings of Ni'amatulláh.

When Reason sought for the year of the date of that foundation, a voice came:—"Jalí Shud Khánah-i-dín" (the house of religion became resplendent).

Be it not concealed to the minds of the seekers of information that Luṭfullah, the humblest devotee of the threshold, the disciple and believer of Sháh Ni'amatullah, brought this grand Masjid to completion, in the reign of His Majesty the Second Şáhibqirán, Sháhjahán, the victorious emperor, in the month of the blessed Ramaẓán, in the year 1067 Hijrah.]

A detached conical hillock, about 300 feet above the plain, lying about half a mile to the north-east of the hill, and now crowned by the Hindú temple of Mádhava†, is identified with the great chaitya or *Chhóten chhen-bo*‡, which was erected over the cremated relics of the Tathá-gatha's body.

The present shrine of the temple seems to be the original shrine of an older Buddhist temple, which, according to both Buddhist and Asamese tradition, formerly existed here—the upper portion only is modern. Col. Dalton has described§ the general details of this building, and he states, "The Bráhmans call the object of worship Mádhav, "the Buddhists call it Mahámuni, the great sage. It is in fact simply a "colossal image of Buddha in stone. Its modern votaries have, to conceal

[* The translation has been supplied by Maulvi Abdul Hak Abid, B. A., of the Calcutta Madrasah. Ed.]

† মাধব দেবালয়.

‡ মজ্জিমা-সংগহা-খণ্ডে.

§ *loc. cit.*

“mutilation, given it a pair of silver goggle-eyes and a hooked gilt silver-ed nose and the form is concealed from view by cloths and chaplets of flowers; but remove these and there is no doubt of the image having been intended for the ‘ruler of all, the propitious, the asylum of clemency, the all-wise, the lotus-eyed comprehensive Buddha.’”

This large image of Buddha is called by the more learned Lama-visitors *Munir Muni Mahámuni*, i. e., ‘the Sage of Sages The Great Sage.’ It is the original image of the shrine, and is stated by the Bráhmánic priests, who call it *Mádhav*, to be of divine origin and an actual embodiment or *avatár* of the god, in contra-distinction to the other images which are called mere ‘*múrtis*’ or hand-fashioned copies of typical forms of the respective gods represented. This may merely mean that the Bráhmáns found this image here, while the others were brought from the neighbourhood or elsewhere. What seems to be the history of the mutilation of this image is found in the account of the invasion of the Koch kingdom of Lower Asam by the Musalmans under Mir Jumlah in 1661 A. D. This chief issued “directions to destroy all the idolatrous temples and to erect mosques in their stead..... To evince his zeal for religion, the General himself, with a battle-axe broke the celebrated image of Narain, the principal object of worship of the Hindus of that province.”* *Náráyana* is one of the names of *Mádhav* and a patronymic of the Koch *rájá*'s; and Hajo was a seat of the Koch *rájá*s. And it was at Hajo that Mir Jumla took the Koch king prisoner,†

The other images, not mentioned by Dalton, but which must have existed at the time of his visit, are also of stone and are placed on either side of the large image. They are four in number and are of considerable size. According to the Lama-pilgrims they are all Buddhist images; but the crypt was so dimly lit, and the images so enveloped in clothes and wreaths of flowers that I could not distinguish their specific characters, with the exception of the head and peculiar trident of the first, and the head of the second, which were characteristic and justified their recognized names, viz. :—

No. 1.—*Ogyen Guru* to the left of *Mahámuni*.

„ 2.—*Dorje Dolö*‡ to the right of „

„ 3.—*Shakya Thuba* „ „ „ No. 2.

„ 4.—‘*Sencha*’ *Muni*. „ „ „ „ 3.

Although Hindú priests, as a rule, are not very methodical in their bestowal of names upon the images which they have appropriated from

* STEWART'S *History of Bengal*, p. 289.

† BEVERIDGE, *Cal. Review* July 1890 p. 12.

‡ རྡོ་རྗེ་དོ་ལྷོ།

Buddhist ruins, still I here give the Brahmanical names as reported by the attendant priests, as, this being a wealthy temple, the priests were more learned than usual, and the names should give some idea of the nature of the images. After stating that the Buddhist pilgrims gave the above-noted names to the images, these priests said that the Brahmanical names were as follows, which I give in the order of the previous list :—

No. 1. Dwitīya Mádhaber múrti.

No. 2. Lál Kanaiyá Bankaṭ Bihárer múrti.

No. 3. Basu Deber múrti.

No. 4. Hayagrīber múrti.

In the vestibule are lotus ornamentations and several articles of the usual paraphernalia of a Buddhist temple including the following:—A pyramidal framework or wheelless car like the Tibetan *Ohhang-ga chutuk*, with lion figures at the corners of each tier, such as is used to seat the image of a demon which is to be carried beyond the precincts of the temple and there thrown away. The present frame is used by the priests of this temple to parade in the open air one of the smaller images of the shrine (? Hayagrīva), but the image is again returned to the shrine. Above this throne is stretched a canopy called by the Lamas *Nam-yul*. It contains the figure of an 8-petalled lotus flower and has, as is customary, a dependant red fringe. On either side is hung a huge closed umbrella. These articles have been in the temple from time immemorial.

Of the external decorations of the temple, the row of sculptured elephants along the basement, evidently a portion of the old Buddhist temple, has been figured by Col. Dalton in the paper above referred to; and is identical with the decorative style of the Kylas cave temple of Ellora figured by Fergusson in plate XV of his '*Cave Temples*'. The upper walls are covered with sculptured figures nearly life size. The ten *avatáras* of Vishṇu are represented with Buddha as the ninth. The remaining figures are of a rather nondescript character, but they are mostly male, and nearly every figure carries a trident (*triśula*)—the *khatam* of the Buddhists. The Lamas state that these figures were formerly inside the temple, but that Buddha ejected them. And it is stated that the temple was built in one night by *Jo-wo gyé-bó Bish-wa-Karma** the Vulcan of the Hindús and Buddhists.

Attached to the temple is a colony of *Naṭi* (नटि), or dancing girls,†

* यत्रैवै बुधायर्षीश्वरम् ।

† "Asam, or at least the north-east of Bengal (i. e., Kámrup) seems to have been in a great degree the source from which the Tantrica and Sakta corruptions

who are supported out of the funds of the temple, and who on the numerous feast days dance naked in a room adjoining the shrine. These orgies are part of the Shakti worship so peculiar to Kámrúp, but nowhere is it so grossly conducted as at this temple.* The *Natí* and the idol-car are also conspicuous at the degenerate Buddhist temple of Jagannáth at Puri.

At the eastern base of the hillock, on which this temple stands, is a fine large tank, called by the Lamas *Yün-chhab tshô†*, or 'the lake of excellent water.' This pond, it is said, was made by Buddha with one prod of his staff, when searching for the huge bowl already described which he unearthed here. This pond is also said to be tenanted by fearful monsters.

I have been unable to ascertain positively whether any Buddhist building existed here previous to the Lamas' fixing on the site as the Kúsanagara of Buddha's death. Certainly no monastery existed here at the time of Hiuen Tsiang's visit to the Kámrúp (Gauhañi) court in the seventh century A. D., for he says of this country that 'the people have "no faith in Buddha, hence from the time when Buddha appeared in the "world even down to the present time there never as yet has been built "one *Sangháráma* as a place for the priests to assemble."‡ The reference which Táránáth§ makes to the great stúpa of Kúsanagara as being situated here, in Kámrúp, was taken from report and thus would merely show that the present Lama-tradition was current during his time. Any chaitya or other Buddhist building would seem to have been subsequent to the seventh century; and in all probability marked a site visited by the great mediæval apostle of Lamaism, Guru Rimbochhe or Padma Sambhava. The different accounts of this great teacher's wanderings vary considerably, but he is generally credited in the *Padma Kahthang* and elsewhere with having traversed most of the country between Lower Asam and Tibet. There is no evidence of Buddha having visited Asam. And in this view it is to be noted that the Bhotan Lamas call the chief image of this shrine *Námo Guru* or 'The Teacher,' one of the epithets of Padma Sambhava. And the images on either side of it are also those of Padma Sambhava, *viz.*, '*Ogyén Guru*,' a mild form, and *Dorje Doló*, a demoniacal form of this saint. Further, the chief of 'the eight Sages' or *rig-dzin*|| (*i. e.*, receptacle of knowledge) of the Lamas is named Hungkara; and a common title

of the religion of the Vedas and Puráṇas proceeded."—H. H. WILSON, Preface to *Vishnu Puráṇa*.

* They have their counterpart in the *ιερόδουλοι* of the Greek STRABO VIII, 6 p. 20.

† ཡོན་ཆམ་མོ་ཚེ།

‡ *Op. cit.*

§ VASSILIER'S *Le Bouddhisme*, trad. du Russe par M. G. A. Comme, p. 44.

|| རྗེ་བཙུན་མོ།

for Padma Sambhava is 'the great Rig-dsin', while *Hung* is the usual symbolic term for him. And a very common Lamaic hymn connects Hungkara with this site, *viz.*,—"In the wondrous great shrine of 'the Eastern Pyre of the Cool-grove' dwells the rigdsin Hungkara (or Lô-pön Hungkara). Shower on us thy blessings! Come Guru! Come demigods! Come fairies! Come!" No local mention is made of the especial saint of Bhotan, *viz.*, Zhab t̄ung Ngâ-wang Nam-gyal,* which might have been expected, had he entered Bhotan by this route.

The form of Buddhism here represented is of the highly Tantrik and demoniacal kind, propagated by Padma Sambhava and now existing in the adjoining country of Bhotan. Even this mild form of the image of *Ogyén Guru* has decapitated human heads strung on to his trident. The second image is of a more demoniacal kind. The third image is, of course, Shakya Muni (Buddha). The fourth image, from its Bráhmānical name, is *Tam-din* (Skt. *Hayagrīva*), one of the fiercest forms of demigods and an especial protector of Lamaism. The trident is everywhere conspicuous in the hands of the sculptured figures on the walls, and Shakti rites are more pronounced here than in any other place in Northern India.† It seems therefore quite possible that a visit to Kámrúp, as well as Káshmir, and the mystic traditions of his own land—Udyána (*Tib.* *Ogyén*)—may have accounted for the excessively Tantrik form of Buddhism professed and taught by Padma Sambhava.

It is also remarkable to find that the high-priest of the Hajo temple, in common with the other high-priests in Kámrúp, is called *Dalai*‡,—a title which is usually stated to have been conferred on the fifth Grand Lama of Lhasa by a Mongolian emperor in the seventeenth century A. D.; but the Tibetan equivalent of this title, *viz.*, *Gyá-tshó* or 'ocean', is known to have been used by grand Lamas previously. As, however, the word is Mongolian, it is curious to find it naturalized here and spontaneously used by Bráhmans. It seems also to be the title of village-headman in the adjoining Garo hills. The *dalai* of this temple is a married man, but the office is not hereditary. He is elected by the local priests from amongst their number, and holds office till death. He resides at the foot of the hill, below the temple, in a large house, the exterior of which is profusely decorated with the skulls of wild buffalo, wild pig, deer, and other big game, &c., like the house of an Indo-Chinese chieftain.

* ཞབ་ཕུང་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་ །།

† Dancing girls appear to figure to some extent in certain Lamaic ceremonies in Bhotan, *vide* TURNER'S 'Embassy to Tibet', p. 32.

‡ He writes his title ལྷ་མོ་.