

The Image of Buddha in the Jo-wo-Khang  
Temple at Lhasa.

BY  
E. H. C. WALSH.

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(PLATES VI AND VII)

THE image of the Buddha which is the most widely renowned and the most revered by Buddhists throughout Tibet and Central Asia is the image in the Jo-wo-Khang, the Great Temple at Lhasa.<sup>1</sup> This image has been mentioned by many writers. Sarat Chandra Das<sup>1</sup> says, "The image is exquisitely modelled and represents a handsome young prince. The Kunyer said that the image represented the Buddha when at the age of twelve, hence the princely apparel in which he is clothed and the dissimilarity of the image to those seen elsewhere."<sup>2</sup> The Japanese monk Ekai Kawaguchi<sup>3</sup> also refers to the image, but does not describe it. But, until Sir Francis Younghusband's Mission reached Lhasa in 1904, it had not been described in detail by anyone who had seen it. It was then seen by certain of the officers on the Expedition, and has been described by Colonel L. A. Waddell, who was with the Mission as Principal Medical Officer, in his Book *Lhasa and its Mysteries* (1905), and by the late Mr. Perceval Landon, who was with the Mission as the Correspondent of *The Times*, in his book *Lhasa* (1905). These two descriptions differ as regards every detail and cannot be reconciled.

Sir Charles Bell does not describe the image and only refers to it in reference to a bell which appears to have belonged to the former Jesuit or Capuchin Missions in Lhasa, which hangs in the passage leading to it.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Or the various celebrated images of Buddha, see *Land of the Lamas*, by W. W. Rockhill, p. 105, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*, by Sarat Chandra Das, C.I.E., 1902, pp. 151-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Three Years in Tibet*, by Sramana Ekai Kawaguchi, 1909, p. 228.

<sup>4</sup> *The Religion of Tibet*, by Sir Charles Bell, K.C.I.E., C.M.G., 1931, p. 152.

Sir Charles Bell has also told me that he saw the image several times during his year in Lhasa and stood close to it, and that the chain-curtain was up when he did so, but that he does not remember it well.

As the writer is the only person who has not only seen the image, but has also photographed it, it seems desirable that the photograph of the image should be placed on record.

The image was brought from China in the seventh century, when Srongtsan Gyempo, the King of Tibet, invaded Western China, and in the terms of peace, was given the daughter of the Emperor of China in marriage. She was a Buddhist, as Buddhism had already been introduced into China, and she brought the image with her from China (as well as the silkworm and the use of ink and the almanac). Srongtsan Gyempo also married a Nepalese princess who was a Buddhist. His two wives converted him to the Buddhist religion, and he introduced it into Tibet as the religion of the country, for which purpose he sent for Buddhist monks from India, who also gave Tibet its alphabet, based on the Northern Indian alphabet of that time, for the purpose of translating the Buddhist sacred books. He also built the Jo-wo-Khang ("The House of the Lord"), to enshrine the image, known as the "Jo-wo Rimpochke" ("The Precious Lord").

The image is in a shrine in the innermost part, "The Holy of Holies," of the Jo-wo-Khang Temple, and has an ambulatory round it, in which are a number of menacing guardian deities, guarding the shrine. The shrine is open on the front side only, and this is covered with a curtain of steel-mesh which is kept locked with several padlocks, the key of each of which is held by a different official, so that it can only be opened by them acting together. In front of it are a number of golden butter-lamps, the largest of which is about 2 feet in diameter. The light in the "Holy of Holies", and especially in the shrine itself, is dim, and the image only appears in the light of the butter-lamps, and, when the chain-curtain is down, can only be indistinctly made out behind it.



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The writer was taken over the Jo-wo-Khang by the Head Lama, and the chain-curtain was raised, as seen in the top right-hand corner of the photograph, for him to see the Image and to photograph it.

Colonel Waddell notes that the image is supposed to represent Buddha "when a youthful prince of sixteen in his home at Kapilavastu", and describes it as follows (op. cit., p. 369):—

"It is, however, a repellent image, about a man's size, seated with goggle eyes and coarse, sensual face, and is of very rude workmanship. So inferior is it to anything that I have seen in China, and so unlike in feature any type of Buddha's image there, that I doubt the story of its foreign origin. Nor does it resemble any Indian ones, nor have I seen anything so uncouth in Buddha's images in Burma, Ceylon, or Japan."

Colonel Waddell appends a footnote with reference to the image: "It is said by the Chinese to have been cast by a Chinaman from Tsolang (Rockhill, loc. cit., p. 263); but the first Dalai Lama ascribed to it an Indian origin, in his guide-book."

Colonel Waddell did not see the image with the chain-curtain raised, and nothing is seen behind the curtain in his photo of the shrine (p. 368).

As will be seen from the present photograph, Colonel Waddell's description of the details of the shrine are correct. The writer, however, who examined the image carefully, did not consider it to be "coarse" or "sensual" or "like a foul felon in its prison, or a glaring demon in its web of chains". The mouth, as will be seen, is wide open and the lips are consequently shown distinctly, which may have given Colonel Waddell the impression of its being sensual, especially if not clearly seen through the chain-curtain. The butter-lamps being directly between the image and the spectator make a glare in front of it.

The writer's photograph was taken with a magnesium light,

which burnt for some time and made the image perfectly clear and distinct.

The writer also does not agree with Colonel Waddell as to the coarseness of the work on the golden butter-lamps. The carving and workmanship on them are delicate and fine, though their detail, and that on the front of the altar, does not show in the reproduction of the photograph on Plate VI.

The image is more than life-size. There is a Tibetan ceremonial scarf (*kha-btags*) placed over the head-dress, which is seen hanging down on either side of it. The head-dress is said to have been given by the reformer Tsong-Khapa in the fifteenth century. The golden butter-lamps are on three shelves, each above and behind the other; the large one on the left in the top row is in the centre of the altar and is directly in front of the image. The two dragons, presented by an Emperor of China, which are curled round the pillars on either side supporting the canopy over the image, are of silver-gilt. They are about 10 feet in height. Gilded dragons of similar design are placed on either side of the images, as guardians, in the shrines of many other temples and in the private chapels in some houses in Tibet. The writer has taken a photograph of one such shrine in a private house at Sha-ri in the Chumbi Valley.

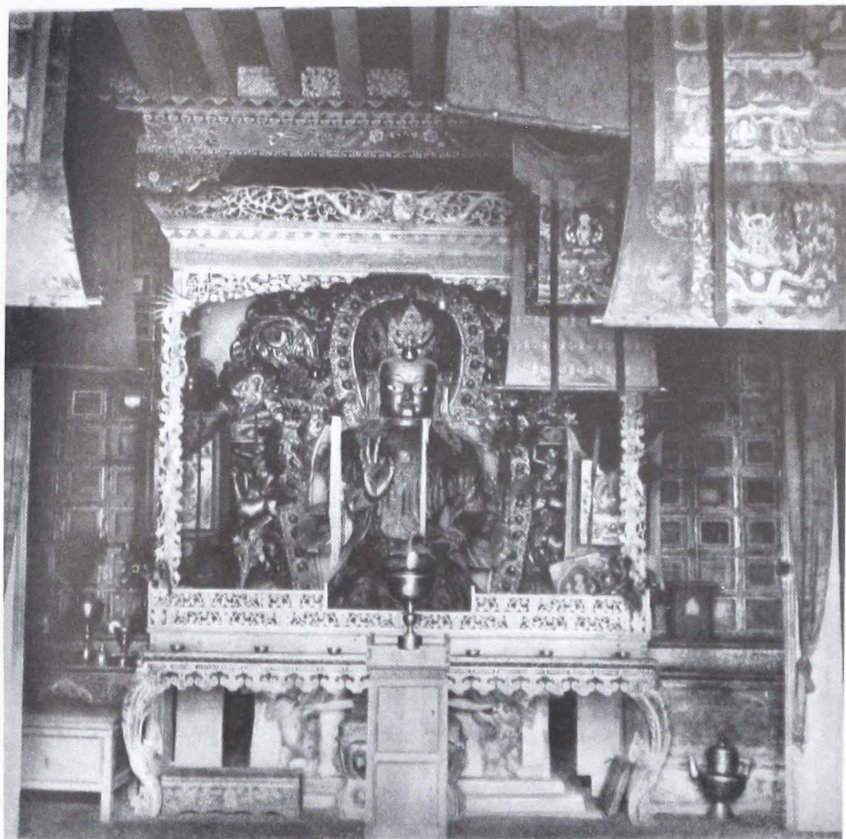
As mentioned by Colonel Waddell, Rockhill says of the image, "It was originally brought in the T'ang period, when the Imperial Princess came to Tibet. It represents the Buddha at the age of twelve. It is moreover said that it was cast by a Chinese from Tso-lang."<sup>1</sup> Sarat Chandra Das, however,<sup>2</sup> says (p. 151), "This famous image of Buddha, known as Jo-vo rinpoche, is said to have been made in Magadha during the lifetime of the great teacher."<sup>3</sup> Visvakarma is supposed to have made it, under the guidance of the god Indra, of an

<sup>1</sup> "Tibet. A Geographical, Ethnological, and Historical Sketch derived from Chinese Sources," by W. W. Rockhill, *JRAS.*, 1891, pp. 1-133, and 185-291, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*, by Sarat Chandra Das, C.I.E. Edited by W. W. Rockhill, 1902, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> See I. J. Schmidt, *Geschichte der Ost-Mongolen von Ssanang Ssetsen*.





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alloy of the five precious substances, gold, silver, zinc, iron, and copper, and the 'five precious celestial substances' probably diamonds, rubies, lapis-lazuli, emeralds, and *indranīla*. The legend goes on to say that the image was in the first place sent from India to the capital of China in return for the assistance the Emperor had given the King of Magadha against the Yavanas from the west. When the Princess Konjo, daughter of the Emperor Tai-tsung, was given in marriage to the King of Tibet, she brought the image to Lhasa as a portion of her dowry."

There can be no doubt from the photograph that the image is Indian. The features are entirely different from Chinese Images of Buddha of that or other periods. Only the head and shoulders of the image can be seen, the lower part being hidden by the butter-lamps in front of it, and consequently the position of the arms and hands cannot be seen. But, from the open mouth, it appears to be Buddha preaching or expounding the Law.

In the Dung-kar Monastery above Galing-kha, which is the only monastery of the Geluk-pa sect in the Chumbi Valley, there is an image of Buddha which the Lamas claim to be the same as the image in the Jo-wo-Khang at Lhasa. The writer has taken a photograph of that image, which is shown for comparison in Plate VII. The mouth is open and, excluding the different head-dress, which in either case is not part of the image, the resemblance of the face to that of the Jo-wo-Khang Image is very striking, and bears out the claim of the Lamas. The position of the hands and the attitude (*mudrā*) of the right hand, with the thumb and forefinger joined and the other fingers raised, confirms the conclusion that the Jo-wo-Khang Image, also, is Buddha preaching.

Mr. Perceval Landon's description of the image (op. cit., vol. ii, p. 309) is diametrically opposed to that of Colonel Waddell. Mr. Landon saw the image with the chain-curtain raised. He describes the features as "smooth and almost childish".

As will be seen from the photograph, there is no special indication of youthfulness in the face of the image. The face is square and thickset, the neck thick and strong, and the shoulders broad. As already stated, the writer considers the image to be Buddha preaching, in spite of the tradition of its being Buddha as a youth.

Mr. Landon has given (p. 310) a pencil drawing of "The Head of the Great Golden Idol of Lhasa, from a rough sketch made on the spot". The drawing is incorrect in every detail and bears no resemblance to the image. The mouth is wide and the lips are closed; the eyes are narrow slits and point very obliquely upwards; and the ears have long lobes reaching down and touching the shoulders. As will be seen from the photograph, the mouth of the image is wide open; the eyes are full and round, and are horizontal; the ears are normal and the lobes are not elongated. The head-dress is also incorrectly shown in the form of a modern coronet.

On all the above-mentioned points, *Fiat justitia ruat cælum*—let the photograph decide.