Dissertation submitted for the degree of Ph.D.
at the
University of Cambridge

THE CRYSTAL ROSARY

Insight and method in an anthropological study of Tibetan religion.

by

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The fieldwork upon which this study is based was carried out in Nepal and India between January 1971 and July 1972, with the support of a Social Science Research Council studentship. My dissertation is only to a limited degree a study of religion among the Tibetan refugees with whom I worked and studied during that period. It is an attempt rather to outline some of the basic components of the Tibetan religious system, as it is today among the refugees and the Tibetan populations of the Himalayas, and as it was in Tibet itself until the Chinese occupation. Why I have chosen to do this requires some explanation.

I arrived in Kathmandu in January 1971 intending to carry out fieldwork in north-western Nepal, among a settled population such as that of Dolpo or Lo. I soon learned that the political situation in these areas was problematic, and that to carry out fieldwork there was in any case well beyond my financial means. In addition, my language preparation was at that time far from adequate for such an undertaking, and I could not afford to pay interpreters or research assistants. I therefore decided to work among refugees instead. Since I wanted to study Buddhist ritual and the relationships between monasteries and laymen, I moved to India where many Tibetan refugees and several important monasteries had resettled.

In India further problems ensued. Tibetan refugee settlements in India are nowadays closed to foreigners so that I was restricted to Tibetans living in Indian towns rather than being able to study entire Tibetan communities. In these circumstances my linguistic competence improved only slowly. Surveys, formal interviews and other such controlled
techniques could not be used, both because of the language problem, and because the Tibetans were, with some justice, suspicious and afraid of the Indian government bureaucracy, and would be likely to misinterpret any such attempts. Most of my information came from informal discussion with Tibetans who could speak some English. I could study Buddhist doctrine fairly freely, and with Geshe Thubten Tshering, a monk from Gyuto Tantric College, Dalhousie, I gradually learnt the classical written Tibetan language and improved my colloquial Tibetan. I also attended classes given by lamas in Dalhousie and in Dharamsala. These classes were given by two lamas of the Geluk-pa order, Tara Rimpoche and Geshe Ngawang Thargay, and Mati Rimpoche of the Kagyu-pa order.

With the help of these classes, and of further reading since both in Western languages and in Tibetan, I now feel that I have a good knowledge of Tibetan Buddhist doctrine and, to a slightly lesser extent, ritual practice. In some other directions my information is more limited. I have little direct knowledge of lay religious practice, because most of my informants were monks and lamas; Tibetan laymen who can speak English are generally Westernised or Indianised enough not to want to discuss such subjects as the cult of the local deities. All these people, lamas and Westernised laymen, are by now aware that their religion is an asset which, if properly presented, can gain them considerable support in the West. They are correspondingly concerned at the dangers of misrepresentation, and tend to play down topics which might appear 'primitive' or 'uncivilized'. There is in any case a strong tendency to refer any problematical questions on religious matters to the lamas. Previous writers have already noted the difficulty of obtaining information on matters which the Tibetans do not want to discuss. And since I was not living in a Tibetan community, I had no way of knowing what kinds of things were happening when I was not around. Tantric ritual is also a subject on which Tibetans can be very unforthcoming, for reasons which
will become clear in the course of my study.

So my attention was driven away, in part, from the more conventional objects of anthropological attention, and I was led to find out much about areas which anthropologists studying religion in literate Asian societies have, on the whole, neglected as the province of orientalists and other specialists. This has, I think, enabled me to see connections of a type that previous workers have tended to miss, and to include in my analysis material which, through lack of knowledge, they have considered irrelevant. The picture I draw could usefully be supplemented through further fieldwork—in particular, to the extent that this becomes possible, among the settled Tibetan populations of Nepal, India, and Bhutan. The primary need here is for more information on matters such as the cult of the local deities, and the interactions between lamas, monks and laymen in practice. I think, however, that the general picture that I present is reliable.

As I said, much of the material I cover is within the purview of orientalists and historians of religion as much as of anthropologists. I have had to take a number of decisions concerning the kind of information and the degree of detail presented in my account. Generally speaking, I have included in the text proper all the information which I would consider relevant to an anthropological reader. The notes at the end of each chapter provide references, and a minimum of further discussion and qualification intended primarily for specialists in Tibetan studies. In addition I have provided a glossary which defines the most frequently used technical terms. It should be noted, however, that Buddhist technical terms form part of a complex system of ideas and practices, and that most of them cannot be fully understood except through understanding the system as a whole. Simple definitions are thus not always possible, and I refer back to the text for clarification where appropriate.
There is no ideal solution to the problem of the representation of Tibetan terminology, especially Buddhist technical terms, in a work not meant for Tibetan specialists. Much of this terminology is most familiar in Sanskrit or Pali, and to cite only in Tibetan transliteration makes comparison with other discussions of the same terms difficult. The use of phonetic transcriptions of Tibetan only — as in Fürer-Haimendorf, 1964, or Norbu and Turnbull, 1968 — can make it quite impossible to discover what terms are meant. My solution is eclectic, and a compromise. I use Sanskrit, Tibetan and standardised English translations freely, with primary regard to convenience of reading and comprehensibility, and I provide a glossary to enable full cross-referencing of all important terms between the languages. For most personal names in Tibetan, and some recurrent terms (e.g. lama) I use a phonetic transcription, since Tibetan in strict transliteration is unpronounceable to the non-initiate. All these words are given in the glossary with their correct Tibetan spelling. Other Tibetan terms are given in the text in their Tibetan spelling, indicated by underlining (dge_slong, 'phrin las). My transliteration conventions follow Wylie (1959). I generally capitalise the main consonant in the first syllable of a proper name in strict transliteration (e.g. mTshur phu). Sanskrit words are indicated on their first few appearances by a preceding asterisk (*bhikṣu, *karma) which I drop for repeated terms. For the spelling of Sanskrit I follow Edgerton (1972). Pali words are likewise given a preceding + sign (+bhikkhu, +kamma). Other languages (Thai, Burmese, Mongolian, Balinese) are underlined, as with Tibetan in strict transliteration.

Where I quote other authors I have silently altered the Tibetan transliteration conventions to agree with my own; thus I give 'Phrul sman in place of Obermiller's Hphrul-snañ (ch. 2, note 23). This seemed preferable to adding to the reader's confusion by retaining the various transliterations used in the quotations. Wylie's system is in any case
rapidly becoming standard usage, at least in England and the U.S.A. In a number of cases I have retranslated a quotation from Tibetan to give more consistency with my own terminology. Sometimes where it might have been desirable I was not able to do this because the Tibetan text was not available to me; examples are the prayer to Tsongkha-pa in Chapter Six (note 37), and perhaps the quotations from the Blue Annals in Chapter Seven (notes 21, 22, 23). However I do not think that in any of these cases the content would be significantly altered.

Access to books in general has been a serious problem, particularly since I have been far distant from any library with research facilities in Tibetan studies during the actual writing of this dissertation. Inevitably there have been works which I have not been able to consult, or for which I have had to rely upon my memories and notes of previous readings. As a result page citations are occasionally omitted, and a few references are given to works which I have not been able to consult but which I have reason to think are material to my discussion (see in particular Chapter One, notes 41 and 44, and Chapter Five, note 25.)

The tense of my account has also been a matter of some thought. I use the present tense for references to Tibetan religion in general—including Sikkim, Bhutan and the border regions in Nepal and India—and the past tense when referring specifically to the past situation in the area now under Chinese occupation. The Tibetan religious system is weakening under external influences even in the unoccupied areas, but it is still a living reality today. As the above indicates, I use 'Tibetans' to include Ladakhis, Bhutanese, Sherpas and other peoples of Tibetan language and culture, as well as the people of Tibet more narrowly defined. The adjective 'Tibetan' has a similar application. I generally avoid 'Tibet' except where its application is unambiguous. This question is further discussed in Chapter One.

I would know nothing about the Tibetans and their religion if it
were not for the help of many Tibetan teachers and friends. Among them I
would particularly mention T.S. Ato Rimpoche of Cambridge, my first
Tibetan teacher; Sonam, of the Karma-pa temple at Svayambhūnath, Nepal;
Lama Tenzin, of Junbesi; Nyima Ozer, Chamba Tshepa and Chamba Ngödrup,
of Tashiling Tibetan Camp, Pokhara; Chamba, of Kailash monastery, Dal-
housie; Tara Rimpoche and Matul Rimpoche, both of Dalhousie; Sönam Nyendra,
of Sarnath; Geshe Ngawang Thargay, Gyatsho Tshering, Tenzin Geyche,
Xhamlung Rimpoche, Sherpa Rimpoche and Serkhung Rimpoche, all of Dharam-
sala; and especially Geshe Thubten Tshering, with whom I studied in Dal-
housie. I offer my thanks to all these and many others. I hope they will
feel that I have presented a valid interpretation of their religion as
they know it and practice it.

Among Westerners whose help and friendship during my fieldwork cannot go unmentioned are the English monk Lodro Thaye, Barbara Aziz, Martin
Bradley, Richard Mueller, and Fr. Ludwig Stiller in Nepal; Linda Kemp,
Ricardo Canzio, Marion Archer, Bob Thurman, Alex Berzin, Linda Douma
and many others in India. I would also like to express my thanks to the
staff of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and the National Library of India,
both in Calcutta, for their assistance.

I would like to thank Philip Denwood for advice before I went to
Nepal, Lance Cousins for advice and assistance at several stages of my
work, and Martin Southwold for his comments on an earlier version of some
of the material presented here.

During the past two and a half years, work on my dissertation has
necessarily taken up much of my attention. I would like to express my
thanks to Professors Emrys Peters and Charles Higham for their encourage-
ment and understanding, and for allowing me to give so much time to this
work despite my teaching responsibilities.

I am most grateful to my supervisors, S.J. Tambiah, Edmund Leach
and Peter Wilson for their help and encouragement throughout my work.
Peter Wilson in particular has provided invaluable assistance during the period of formulating my ideas and writing this dissertation, even sacrificing part of his vacation to do so.

I would like to express my thanks to the staff of the University Library, Otago, especially the interloan department, for all their help over the past months. Without it the lack of availability of books in this remote outpost of civilization would have been far more damaging.

I am grateful to the Otago Museum, Dunedin, and especially to Lyndon Cowell, for allowing me to study and reproduce the Tibetan painting shown in Plate Five. I would also like to thank Morris Seden, who photographed this painting and produced the colour prints, as well as printing the other plates from my own negatives, and reproducing the maps and diagrams. Murray Webb, also of the technical staff of the Department of Anthropology, University of Otago, drew the maps and diagrams.

I would like to thank Patricia Sandle for typing an often difficult manuscript, for valuable editorial assistance, and for working hours only a friend would work. Finally, I express my gratitude to Lyn Nesbit, who has read and corrected the entire draft at every stage and without whom this dissertation might not have been written.

In accordance with the University of Cambridge's Regulation 15 for Research Students, I hereby state that apart from the assistance acknowledged above in general terms, and the use of source materials indicated specifically in the notes following each chapter, this dissertation is my own work.

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PART ONE
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction.

In my preface I have given an account of the circumstances of this work. Here I will attempt to place it in its context in anthropological research and Tibetan studies.

In the introduction to a collection of papers on literacy in traditional societies J. Goody observes that

concepts and approaches originally developed with specific reference to preliterate societies are being increasingly employed in the study of literate cultures.

He notes that the employment of such concepts and approaches may not be justified when studying literate societies:

We cannot expect to find the same close fit between religion and society that sociologists often perceive in non-literate cultures when the reference point is not some locally derived myth subject to the homeostatic processes of the oral tradition but a virtually indestructible document belonging to one of the great world (i.e. literate) religions.

Two recent studies of religion in Theravāda Buddhist societies by Spiro and Tambiah have, in different ways, begun to deal with the problems raised by Goody’s observations. I believe, however, that these studies still have serious weaknesses, which my thesis seeks to repair through a study of another Buddhist society.

Both Spiro and Tambiah include reference to Theravāda Buddhism beyond the village context in their studies, but these references are primarily illustrative and secondary to their main arguments. Thus Tambiah states in a concluding chapter that

wherever it was relevant, when I engaged in elucidating the symbolism of ritual acts and the message contents of ritual words, I referred back to cosmologies, myths and doctrinal texts of
the literary tradition of Pali Buddhism shared by such
countries as Ceylon, Thailand, Burma, Laos and Cambodia.
And referring to this domain of facts has contributed an
additional dimension of meaning to my presentation.

In itself this procedure is fair enough, but I shall show that it is far
from adequate, if the Tibetan comparison is of any relevance. It is not
enough to refer back to this material in an ad hoc manner. We need to
understand the rituals in their specifically Buddhist context, if we are
to see why they have the meanings that they do for the villagers. And
this involves a much more comprehensive understanding of Buddhism itself
than appears in either Spiro's or Tambiah's work.

In fact both authors' arguments are focussed on the village, and
on the way villagers understand religious activities. Even leaving
aside the methodological problems involved in discovering the villagers'
view of their rituals - and separating them, for example, from direct
borrowings from the instruction of monks, trained outside the village,
who teach the village children - such approaches cannot lead to an
adequate understanding of what is going on in communities like this.
Spiro and Tambiah indeed adopt considerably variant theoretical frame-
works, but both have it in common that their frameworks derive what
rationale they possess from the supposed integration of an isolated,
homeostatic community. In a society where this cannot conceivably hold,
Spiro's ad hoc 'functional' explanations of arbitrarily isolated relig-
ious systems and sub-systems ultimately explain nothing. Likewise the
coherence and elegance of Tambiah's structuralist analysis depends upon
its distortion of village realities. The oppositions and relationships
which he posits are simply not present in the villagers' minds, and
there is no good reason why they should be.

I elaborate these criticisms further in Chapter Ten. What then
do I suggest in the place of the methods employed by Spiro and Tambiah?
Primarily the slow, detailed analysis of religious concepts and practices
at all levels of understanding within the society concerned, and the
consideration of all relevant contexts. In such an analysis literary, doctrinal and historical material are as essential as the statements of lay and expert informants, and as the observed behaviour of people in the society; all may be relevant, and there is no a priori way of saying that any are not. A study of the relationship of the total religious system to comparable contemporary systems, and of the transformations of that religious system over time, may also help to decipher the practice of religion in these societies, as I suggest in Chapters Nine and Ten. I do not think that there are adequate theoretical grounds for short-cutting such a procedure. There is no reason to believe that village religion is explainable in its own terms alone, and there is much evidence to suggest that it is not. I am also fully in agreement with Tambiah, as I explain in Chapter Ten, that simplistic divisions between great and little traditions, Sanskritic and popular Hinduism, do not constitute adequate analytical frameworks either. ⁶ At best they may be the result of such an analysis; but they cannot precede it.

In the case of Tibetan society, with which my study is concerned, my analysis centres around a particular class of ritual officiants. These are the lamas - Buddhist teachers, incarnate deities, and political rulers, who have a central place in Tibetan society. I shall show that an understanding of these people, their place in history and in the teachings of Buddhism, in popular thought, and in the actual practice of Tibetan religion, is essential for a comprehension of the religious practices of Tibetans. I shall argue that this exposition indicates the necessity for a fuller consideration of the historical and doctrinal background of the complex societies and civilizations of Asia in future studies. I do not claim that this is the only viable orientation to a study of Tibetan religion. I think, however, that I show that an understanding of the relationship between the various religious traditions and practices of Tibet necessarily involves a detailed study of the key role of the lama.
I now turn to discuss the relevance of my work to Tibetan studies. Anthropological studies of Tibetans have been relatively few in number, and most of them have not been centrally concerned with religion. In addition, as I explain later in this chapter, all were made in areas which are peripheral to Tibetan civilization as a whole. Two works which do give extended treatment to religion are Führer-Haimendorf’s study of the Sherpas, and Ekvall’s *Religious Observances in Tibet*, which refers primarily to the region of Amdo in the extreme North-East. As discussions of Tibetan religion, both of these works leave much to be desired. Führer-Haimendorf’s acquaintance with the Sherpa dialect of Tibetan was clearly only superficial, and his use of an approximate Roman transcription for names of rituals, texts, etc. makes it impossible much of the time to identify what he is talking about. Those of the rituals which are not merely indecipherable names are given purely ‘external’ descriptions which reveal little attempt to understand what is supposed to be happening in them. In place of translations of texts Führer-Haimendorf offers summaries of the contents which make little or no sense in terms of what we know about Tibetan ritual. The work is valuable for its ethnographic description of Sherpa society, and of the place of the lamas and monks in that society, but it is not in any way an adequate account of Tibetan religion.

Ekvall’s study suffers from many of the same disadvantages. It seems, in addition, to have been seriously affected by the author’s anti-Buddhist bias, elsewhere revealed in an account of his activities as a missionary in this area. Buddhist concepts, and the Indian origins of much of Tibetan thought, are scarcely mentioned. Ekvall arbitrarily limits his discussion to religious observances ‘universally’ performed by all Tibetans, an approach which naturally excludes most monastic activities and many of the rituals performed by ritual specialists for laymen. Each item in his catalogue of lay religious observances is then
provided with equally arbitrary 'functional' explanations. Ekvall's approach bears some resemblance to Spiro's, but he lacks Spiro's relative comprehensiveness — Spiro for example includes extensive discussions of the roles of monastic and other ritual specialists — and Ekvall's functional explanations are even less convincing. For example, circumambulation provides - we are told - valuable exercise for Tibetan nomads during sedentary periods and thus aids their digestion. Indeed it may, but such explanations hardly account for the universal practice in Tibet of this ritual, which is in any case of Indian derivation. Unfortunately most of Ekvall's explanations are of this type. Ekvall's book does, however, contain useful information on Tibetan religious practice in Amdo, and his use of transliteration for Tibetan terms at least enables his terminology to be identified accurately. The information he gives, though, as with Fürer-Haimendorf, requires to be seen in a wider context.

The field of Tibetan studies is by now an academic specialization in its own right, with an extensive literature, of which I have made considerable use in this study. Most of this literature is concerned with specific texts, periods or problems, and so does not attempt to do what I am doing in this thesis. More general works are few in number. The importance of the lamas in Tibetan religion was noted in Waddell's pioneer work of 1899, but he did not take his analysis of their role beyond a somewhat simplistic historical account. For him the Buddhism of Tibet, or as he calls it Lāmaism, was

...a priestly mixture of Śivaite mysticism, magic and Indo-Tibetan demonolatry, overlaid by a thin varnish of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The rituals carried out by the lamas were scarcely worth trying to understand: he dismisses them as 'a charlatanism of a mean necromatic order' and 'contemptible mummeriy and posturing'. In fact our understanding of Tibetan ritual only made real progress with the work of Lessing and
of Snellgrove half a century later. Waddell also is largely responsible for the widespread confusion between monks and lamas; he regularly uses the word 'lama' to refer to any Tibetan Buddhist monk, and he has been followed in this by Western popular writing on Tibet. As I explain below, 'lama' is used in this study with its normal Tibetan meaning; that is, it refers to a relatively small number of people - most but not all of whom are monks - who are recognised religious teachers and performers of certain major rituals.

Waddell does not pay much attention either to the local deities and malevolent spirits, and I shall argue that the lama's role in relation to them is crucial for an understanding of the whole Tibetan religious system.

Weber discusses Tibetan religion ('Lamaism') at some length in his study of Indian religion, which was written during the last years of his life (around 1911-20). His analysis is remarkably penetrating, considering the inadequate sources which he had to go by. He notes the growth of the political role of the lamas in the period after the collapse of the Tibetan kingdom (10th-16th centuries). He mentions the incarnate lamas, whom he calls by the Mongolian term Khubilgan, and he discusses the incarnate-lama doctrine in terms of the transmission of magical charisma.

Weber's sources did not enable him to see the role of the aristocracy in this mediaeval period, and consequently he did not see either how the interaction of monastic and aristocratic power in this period constituted, as I discuss in Chapter Seven, the occasion for the initial growth of the incarnate-lama doctrine. More significantly, he could not see the importance of tantric ritual in monastic life, and particularly in the relationship between laymen and lamas, a theme central to my whole discussion. This may have been in part because the sources he relied upon gave a view of monasticism which was seriously unbalanced.
He believed that, following the reforms of Tsongkha-pa, tantric ritual was forbidden in the Geluk-pa order and much devalued in the older orders. As I shall show this is very far from being the case. Tantric meditation is in the Geluk-pa order generally reserved to those who have previously undergone a lengthy course of sutra-yana teachings, but it is for the Geluk-pas, quite as much as for the older orders, the primary means for the attainment of Enlightenment. Tantric ritual forms, in addition, as important a part of the activities of Geluk-pa lamas as it does for those of other orders, especially in the lamas' relationship to the lay population.

Weber was also, I think, wrong in his characterization of lay religion as

...pure hagiolatry, above all, deification of the Lamas themselves; magical therapeutics and divination occurred without the ethical rationalization of the conduct of the laity.¹⁸

Buddhism is as concerned with lay morality in Tibet as elsewhere, and lays down, through the concepts of karma and merit, very much the same guidelines.¹⁹ What is lacking in Weber's picture of lay religion is an understanding of the organic interrelationship between it and the monastic cult. He was right to centre on the role of the lamas, but he dismisses a survey of the 'Lamaistic pantheon' as 'of no special value in this context'.²⁰ I argue that, on the contrary, it is precisely here, in the relationship between the lamas and the deities - both the tantric gods and the indigenous Tibetan gods and spirits - that the key to an understanding of the 'magical therapeutics' of the lamas, and of the workings of Tibetan religion as a whole lies.

There would be little value in further point-by-point criticism of Weber's account. Given what he had to work from, his achievements are much more impressive than his failings. In the years since Waddell and Weber wrote, our knowledge of almost all aspects of Tibetan culture - ritual, philosophy, history, politics and social organization - has
advanced very greatly. With the gradual deciphering of the early manuscripts found in Tun-Huang, our information on the early Tibetan period has become much more complete, and a clearer picture is emerging of the relationships between Buddhism, Bon and early Tibetan religion.\textsuperscript{21} My indebtedness to the scholars who have done this work is very real. But while a number of general surveys have appeared in recent years, their authors have been content to take a more or less descriptive approach.\textsuperscript{22} In particular the lamas have been seen either as formulators of Buddhist doctrine, or as figures on the Tibetan political scene, or at most as a combination of the two. Perhaps an anthropologist can be of some use here in suggesting that a consideration of other aspects of the lama's role, such as his function as a performer of rituals for laymen, and his status as an object of ritual himself, can contribute toward a more coherent picture of these central figures and of Tibetan religion. In fact very little has appeared about the lama's role in the teaching process,\textsuperscript{23} and apart from Beyer's recent book\textsuperscript{24} there has been scant attention paid to his function as ritual performer. I think that I can show that these various aspects of the lama's life are not unrelated, and that one cannot understand any of them in isolation. I have also suggested that the local deities are not merely relics of early Tibetan religion, as they have generally been considered, but entities of importance in present-day religious practice. If Tibetan religion is to be seen as a whole, and related to its Asian context, they need to be given considerably more prominence in future studies.

\textbf{Theory and presentation.}

I have given some indication above of the line of approach I take in this work. Chapters Two to Eight consist of material of a basically descriptive nature. Here I am concerned primarily with setting out Tibetan ideas and practices and explaining them in their own terms. Chapters Nine to Eleven contain my analysis of this material, in which
I elaborate a model of the Tibetan religious system.

I had better say, in view of my comments on Spiro and Tambiah above, that I do not reject the application of structuralist, psychoanalytical or other modes of analysis to the descriptive material I give. Indeed such analyses may yield valuable insights. I maintain, however, that we must discover what the concepts and symbols mean to the members of a culture we are studying before going on to such methods of interpretation. If we fail to do this, and I shall suggest that their studies, among others, have failed in this regard, then the application of our analytical procedures will be speculative, often misleading, and at best insufficiently grounded in the ethnographic reality to which those concepts and symbols belong. The observer from another culture can give almost any meaning to what he observes, in accordance with whatever theoretical paradigm he hopes - consciously or not - to illustrate. It is only by first determining, as far as possible, the meanings in the terms of the culture studied that we can proceed to theoretical generalization with some confidence that what we are analyzing is really there on the ground.

So when I discuss Tibetan myths, symbols or ritual techniques my primary interest is in their meaning to the Tibetans. I explain the significance which the Tibetans give to these myths, and show what the Tibetans attempt to achieve through the symbols and rituals. Tibetan culture offers ample material for anthropological theorizing of all the current varieties, but such theorizing should come after, not before, determining the meanings of the material to the Tibetans themselves. In saying this I do not suggest that we should renounce the etic level of scientific truth for the emic level of ethnographic triviality. I would prefer, however, to establish as far as possible the value of the particular terms in Tibetan culture, before using them to prove anything outside that culture.

Of course cultural items of this kind do not have single meanings
or values for the members of the culture. This constitutes a problem
which is particularly significant in Buddhist and other literate socie-
ties because of the existence of an explicit body of doctrine which under-
lies, but is distinct from, ritual practice. The problem is nevertheless
not confined to those societies: Turner's studies of the Ndembu, a
people far removed from contact with literacy in traditional times,
demonstrate that even in such societies the ritual specialist's under-
standing may differ very much from that of an ordinary man. But for
Buddhism the doctrine exists in a written and relatively fixed form,
independent of the local village or even monastic context. Thus if the
anthropologist simply attempts to formulate a model of the 'doctrine'
from observations of ritual, participants' statements and other purely
local information, he is then faced with the problem of the relationship
between this model and 'official' Buddhist doctrine, which underlies
the texts and rituals used in the little community and determines their
form. To repeat the point made by Goody in the quotation at the start
of this chapter, it is no longer possible in such a situation to assume
a close fit between religion and society.

The lack of such a fit is not only a problem for the anthropolo-
gist. If the religion is to remain viable at the level of the little
community, the distance between religion and society can hardly be allowed
to grow too great. To anticipate my discussion somewhat, the Tibetan —
perhaps more generally, the tantric Buddhist — solution to this problem
is found in the doctrine of upāya, which sanctions the use of teaching
expedients or methods (= upāya) to satisfy the needs of the lay populace
and at the same time, ideally at least, to lead them progressively on
to more sophisticated formulations of the teachings. Thus the layman's
concern with living a good life in this world is both permitted and
given ritual expression in Tibetan Buddhism. A series of higher concerns —
with future rebirths, with escape from the cycle of rebirth as a whole,
and with the attainment of Buddhahood - is laid down, and the Buddhist
is in theory supposed to progress through them. I shall go into the
workings of this system in some detail in the following pages, especially
in Chapter Three. It is to be noted that the system implies a very
elitist view of the Buddhist Enlightenment, which lies at the end of this
long progress, and is evidently unobtainable in this life to more than
a tiny minority. This elitism is theoretically mitigated by the prospect
of endless future lives and the eventual attainment of Enlightenment by
everybody. But it acts as further justification for the status of the
monks and, especially, the lamas.

The complexities of these Buddhist doctrinal explanations are
certainly beyond most people in the little community. The less sophisti-
cated laymen and monks do know, however, that there are explanations
which they do not understand, and that the attainment of Enlightenment is
a long and gradual process, to which their present religious practices
make a contribution. Such a situation is itself significant for the
relationships between laymen, monks and lamas. It is also necessary to
explore Buddhist doctrinal explanations to understand why the villagers
use particular Buddhist practices to achieve their desired aims, and why
their rituals take the forms that they do. The ends desired by the
Tibetans need to be understood in terms of their own conscious thought-
processes, and for a lay villager these are not necessarily identical
with Buddhist doctrinal statements and explanations. But unless the
anthropologist understands this doctrinal level, he will be in danger of
explaining, in terms of the particular inclinations of contemporary
Tibetans, features which were established long before and in a very dif-
ferent context.

As an example I will mention the rituals directed towards local
deities and malevolent spirits. The aims of these rituals - achievement
of prosperity, protection against illness and misfortune - are aims
desired by the villagers who support and employ the lamas and monks. Yet the methods by which they are carried out are those of tantric Buddhism, and were essentially evolved in India during the sixth to eleventh centuries A.D. The specific form of these methods, in which the lama assumes the power of a deity in order to overcome the spirits and force them to do his will, allows and determines the particular place which the lama has in this kind of ritual. Buddhist monks in South-East Asia and Ceylon, whose form of Buddhism does not include such techniques, are by contrast restricted to a much more passive role, and the rituals directed towards the local equivalents of these deities and spirits are carried out by other ritual experts who are only indirectly connected with Buddhism.

This does not constitute a complete explanation, because that would involve also an understanding - primarily historical - of why tantric Buddhism and the Mahāyāna have always been dominant in Tibet, and why, despite their earlier importance in South-East Asia, they have now disappeared in favour of the Theravāda school. But we cannot understand why the very similar ends of Tibetan and Thai peasants are fulfilled in notably different ways without a detailed knowledge of the meaning of Buddhist practices in the two regions.

As I have indicated, my study will centre around the role of the lama. The term 'lama' has been much misused by some previous authors. It is still common in the West to refer to all Tibetan monks as 'lamas'. I shall use 'lama', as the Tibetans do, to refer to the incarnate lamas and those other monks - or occasionally laymen - who have acquired in their own lives a reputation for sanctity, spiritual power and learning. These lamas generally supervise monasteries, or they are high officials in such monasteries. In any case they control property, followers and power.

In Buddhist theory, these lamas are teachers. But for the Tibetan layman they are reserves of supernatural power which he can hope to use
for his own protection and benefit. The lamas are the supreme authorities in all matters concerned with religion and with the various classes of supernatural beings; they are also advisers in all kinds of mundane affairs and problems. The understanding of Tibetan religion involves first and foremost an understanding of the status and function of the lamas.

**Organization.**

My study is divided, after this introduction, into two main divisions, Parts Two and Three. Part Two (Chapters Two to Eight) is in the main descriptive; Part Three (Chapters Nine to Eleven) analytic, though including some further descriptive material of a comparative nature. The remainder of this introductory chapter (Part One) gives an outline of the Tibetan people, their history and social and political organization, and the nature of monastic life within Tibet.

In Chapter Two I describe the world of the Tibetans as they see it, and the gods and spirits with which it is populated. The Tibetan environment is full of features, natural and man-made, which have symbolic value for the Tibetans - mountains and lakes, temples and stone cairns, stupas and wayside inscriptions. The meaning of all these features arises from, and in turn conditions, the way in which the Tibetans see their world. The supernatural beings associated with these places are of great importance. They include the deities and spirits of localities, carried over from the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, and the more specifically Buddhist deities, including the tantric deities whose powers the lamas employ. The relations between these sets of deities, as I have already suggested, are crucial to an understanding of Tibetan religion.

The third chapter will explain the teachings of *Sūtrayāna* (non-tantric) Buddhism. Known in some measure to everyone, these teachings form the basis of the education provided in the monastic academies, and they underlie the practices of the lamas and monks, because whatever else
they are, the lamas are teachers of Buddhism. This teaching role provides the rationale for the techniques employed to cater to the needs of a lay clientele, through the above-mentioned doctrine of upāya, methods or expedients for purposes of teaching.

The fourth and fifth chapters deal with the tantras, the texts which teach the method accompanying the theory given in Chapter Three. After discussing the methodology of the tantras in general, I go on to the specific techniques employed by the lamas for their lay clientele. For the lamas these rituals are, theoretically, teaching expedients; for laymen they are the occasions for their own utilization of the lama's spiritual power.

Chapter Six is concerned with the lama as a teacher, his primary role according to Buddhist theory. The teachings in which the student's attitude to the lama are prescribed derive from Indian Buddhist sources. In Tibet they came to form the basis of the cult of the lama as a quasi-divine being. This cult is illustrated and inculcated by the ritual carried out by the student towards his personal lama.

The full development of the cult of the lama is described in Chapters Seven and Eight. In Chapter Seven I deal with the doctrine of incarnate lamas, which I show to be probably a Buddhist reworking of the earlier Tibetan theory of divine kingship. The implications of this doctrine for the Tibetan political system are also discussed. Through the incarnate-lama doctrine, the lamas are transformed from manipulators of divine power into direct manifestations of the deity. Here the exploitation of the 'teaching expedients' provided by tantric Buddhism reaches its logical conclusion in the traditional social and political system of Tibet. At the same time the divinity now openly ascribed to the lamas is limited and differentially distributed; some lamas are more divine than others. In Chapter Eight this picture of the lama is complemented by the representations of the lama in Tibetan religious
literature and art. These sources display the paradoxes of the lama's role. They form a kind of bridge between the teacher and meditator, which the lama is in Buddhist theory, and the tantric magician and divine manifestation which he becomes in Tibetan practice.

Chapters Nine to Eleven present my analysis. In Chapter Nine I use comparative material from three other Asian societies, Thailand, Burma and Bali, to clarify the structure of the Tibetan religious system. Chapter Ten opens with a discussion of the theoretical approaches of Spiro and Tambiah, with particular reference to the relationship between Buddhism and the spirit cults in the societies they studied. In these Theravadin Buddhist societies the spirit cults are, by and large, concerned with this-worldly prosperity and misfortune, whereas the hereafter is the special province of Buddhism. In Tibet Buddhism, through the lamas' employment of tantric ritual, encompasses the needs of the Tibetan people in this world as well as beyond it. I use historical material on early Tibetan religion to help clarify the underlying logic of this situation.

In the final chapter I indicate how the lama's role as a teacher is in fact intimately bound up with the control of knowledge and ritual power. In this way the teaching role secures the lama's special place with respect to the lay population. Tibet is typical, in this respect, of societies of restricted literacy. I then bring together the various strands of the work by looking at the transactions between laymen, monks and lamas, the three basic roles of the Tibetan religious system. In these transactions it can be seen how the lama is at the same time beyond social life in Buddhist theory yet within it in Tibetan practice. The paradoxes of his role are resolved for the Tibetans through the doctrine of upāya, the mythological charter for the lama's place in Tibetan religion and society.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter I will give some basic information about Tibet and its people.
Tibet and the Tibetans.

'Tibet' and 'Tibetans' are terms of varied application in the literature. For my purposes I shall count as 'Tibetans', unless I indicate otherwise, all those peoples who speak the various dialects of the Tibetan language as their mother tongue. With the minor exceptions of the Islamicised Baltis in the Far West, and a few Muslims in Lhasa and elsewhere, all these peoples are included within the Tibetan religious system as I describe it. There is, however, considerable variation on a basic identity in material culture, political and social organization, and language.

The widest Tibetan term of self-reference - nang pa, literally 'insider' - delimits much the same group as the dual criterion of language and religion. To be an 'insider', a true Tibetan, is to be a Tibetan Buddhist or an adherent of the closely related Bon religion.26 However, differences between those of various regional origins - and therefore of different and in extreme cases barely mutually-intelligible dialects - were and are very important to the Tibetans, as are the distinctions between settled agriculturalists, nomadic pastoralists and those communities of mixed economy (sa ma 'brog).27 Social stratification is also marked, with a primary distinction between those of aristocratic status (sku drag) and the rest (mi ser). That it makes sense to speak of the Tibetans as a whole at all is in large measure due to the unifying influences of trade and Buddhism. In the past, both of these were occasions for constant contact between people from different parts of Tibet. In the case of Buddhism, both pilgrimage and the custom of sending monks and lamas for training to Central Tibetan monasteries were among these unifying practices. The spoken dialect of Central Tibet and the Tibetan written language, closely interwoven with Buddhism in its origin and development, have thus become known throughout the entire region. Only in Islamic Baltistan has the classical Indian-derived Tibetan script been replaced by the Persian alphabet.
An outline of Tibetan history. 28

Tibet became a united kingdom early in the seventh century A.D., and the first introduction of Buddhism came about under a series of kings who were patrons of Buddhist missionaries. The Tibetans reckon three great religious kings in particular as the prime movers in this process: Songtsen Gampo, reigning around 620 to 649; Trhisong Detsen, around 755 to 797; and Röpachen, around 815 to 838. The most important among the missionaries were the monk-teacher *Śāntarakṣita and, especially, the semi-mythological tantric guru *Padmasambhava. The oldest of the Tibetan monastic orders, the Nyingma-pa ('old ones') traces back its origins to Padmasambhava, but it only became organised as an 'order' at a much later date.

The kingdom collapsed in the early ninth century, partly as a result of rivalries between supporters of Buddhism and supporters of the Tibetan Bon religion. Bon refers, or came to refer, to an amalgam of indigenous religious practices and the practices of a class of priests of foreign – perhaps Indian – origin who had come to occupy an important place in the court and popular ritual of Tibet. Buddhism went into a decline, but was restored in the 10th and 11th centuries by the work of Indian scholars visiting Tibet, and Tibetans journeying to India.

These men and their disciples founded monasteries at which their particular 'lineages' of teachings were continued; branch monasteries developed which were attached to the same lineages of teaching and religious practice, and these groups of monasteries gradually developed into monastic orders, taking on considerable political importance in the confused situation of early mediaeval Tibet. The larger monasteries and their rulers gradually became lords of estates similar in kind to the estates of the remaining aristocratic families, and in succeeding centuries small states were established, which were generally based on some combination of aristocratic and monastic political power.
Of these monastic orders the Kadam-pa carried on the teachings of the Indian scholar Atīśa (in Tibet 71042-1054). Disciples of two Tibetan 'translators', Drok-mi (992-1074) and Marpa (1012-1097) founded the orders of Sakya-pa and Kagyu-pa. Each of these subdivided, and the Kagyu-pa in particular spread rapidly in the form of a number of separate teaching lineages or sub-orders, such as the Druk-pa and the Karma-pa. At the same time the followers of the Padmasambhava teaching lineages gradually organised themselves as a monastic order which became known as the Nyingma-pa. The surviving Bon adherents also adopted the form of a Buddhist monastic order, along with many of the teachings and practices of the Buddhists, though they maintained their claim to represent a separate religious tradition. Other teaching lineages were also founded, but died out or became incorporated into the main orders over the centuries.

The abbots of the main Sakya monastery took advantage of the Mongol invasion to gain political control over Tibet, nominally as regents for the Mongol emperors of China29 (c.1260), but with the collapse of the Mongol dynasty in China a century later they lost most of their power. The various dynasties of princes who ruled or fought for control of Central Tibet over the next three centuries favoured different orders, particularly the various Kagyu sub-orders and the new and growing monastic order of the Geluk-pa ('system of virtue'), which grew from the monasteries founded by the great religious reformer Tsongkha-pa (1357-1419). This order represented a re-assertion of the importance of monastic ordination and discipline, and of intellectual study; it borrowed most from Atīśa's Kadam-pa order, and incorporated its surviving monasteries. Control of this order was gradually taken over by the men recognised as being the successive reincarnations of Gedun-drup, one of Tsongkha-pa's disciples; these reincarnations later became known as the Dalai Lamas. A series of further Chinese and Mongol interventions led to the Fifth
Dalai Lama and the Geluk-pa order gaining political ascendancy over a large part of Tibet. The non-Geluk-pa orders and the Bon religion generally retained more strength in the outlying areas, though they continued to be active in Central Tibet.

The Chinese retained a claim to ultimate authority over the Lhasa administration but were not often able to exercise it. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933) used the occasion of the 1912 Revolution in China to make a successful declaration of Tibetan independence, but in the years following 1949 the Chinese Communist government gradually established direct rule over the Dalai Lama's realms. This process culminated in the unsuccessful uprising against the Chinese in 1959, which resulted in the flight from Tibet of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama along with around 100,000 other refugees.30

The Tibetans in modern times.

As Figures 1 and 2 indicate, the Tibetan population is distributed within the boundaries of several modern nations; the land of the Tibetans is divided between China, India, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan.31 Of these only the last two are historically continuous with traditional 'Tibetan' polities of the type formerly predominant through all this area.

These polities, which developed in the centuries following the collapse of the united Tibetan kingdom after 842 A.D., were, as I have said, variations on the combination of two underlying patterns or sources of authority: the Tibetan aristocracy and the lamas. They were governed either by lay aristocratic rulers, supported by the local monasteries - examples are the princes of Derge and Sikkim - or by incarnate lamas with the collaboration of the aristocracy, as in Bhutan until 1907, and in the territory of the Lhasa government. This latter was much the largest of these polities, and was headed by the successive Dalai Lamas, who belong to the Geluk-pa monastic order. This area, indicated on Figure 2, and corresponding roughly to the present-day Tibet Autonomous
Figure 1: The Regions of Tibet

Distribution of Tibetans (approx.)

International Boundaries

Chinese Provinces
Figure 2: Tibet in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

--- Boundary of area ruled by Dalai Lama ---

--- 0 100 200 300 ---

Kilometres
Region of the Chinese People's Republic, was the 'Outer Tibet' of the 1914 Simla Convention. References to 'Tibet' generally refer either to this region, or to it along with 'Inner Tibet'; that is, Amdo and the eastern part of Kham, now parts of the Chinese provinces of Ch'inghai and Ssu-ch'uan. 'Inner Tibet' was composed of a large number of lay and monastic states of varying sizes, over which the Chinese Government exercised a control at times nominal and at other times more real.  

These traditional Tibetan polities were scarcely centralised states of the modern Western kind, and the area of the Lhasa administration in particular included subordinate units that were, apart from size, similar in many ways to the Lhasa administration itself. The largest of these were the two monastic estates of Sakya, ruled by the grand lama of the Sakya-pa order, and Tashilhunpo; and the lay estate of Lhagyari, ruled by the descendants of the ancient Tibetan kings. The incarnate lama of Tashilhunpo, the Panchen Lama, belonged, like the Dalai Lama, to the Geluk-pa order. A situation of rivalry and some antagonism existed between the administrations of Lhasa and Tashilhunpo, the Tashilhunpo government claiming equal status to that of Lhasa.

In fact most of the Dalai Lama's territory consisted of these subordinate lay and monastic units, though there were some areas under the direct control of Lhasa, and officials from Lhasa were posted at district headquarters (rdzong) throughout the territory. Men who were not of aristocratic status, whether villagers or nomads, were attached to one or other of the aristocratic or monastic estates, which were corporate units centred around the aristocratic family, monastery, or incarnate lama's household. The 'lords' (dpon po) were primarily concerned with the collection of taxes in kind and labour, and consequently in the maintenance of peace and order within their estates, but they had no police force, and their judicial powers could only be exercised when disputes were actually brought before them by the parties to a
case. The central government also imposed taxes, and its judicial powers were similar to those of the 'lords', but it maintained troops, primarily for external defence, and it acted as a final court of appeal. Certain offences, in particular murder, had to be investigated by its officials. The central government was also capable of imposing taxes and making laws, which held for all the subordinate units also.\textsuperscript{35} The central government's officials were supplied by aristocratic families and by the major Geluk-pa monasteries, and as such they were not likely to promote the Lhasa administration's interests too far at the expense of their own interest groups.

The hierarchical tendencies of this system, which were exhibited also in the relationships between the different 'serf' statuses discussed by Goldstein,\textsuperscript{36} co-existed with a marked emphasis on equality in the relationships between, for example, all the serfs of 'taxpayer' (khral pa) status in a single village, who were normally all attached to a single lord. Political and ritual offices within the village rotated throughout this group, and formed in many respects a corporate whole in relation to the outside world. Monastic organisation likewise seems to have combined hierarchical elements such as the status of the incarnate lamas, and the various monastic grades and degrees, with the principle of equality apparent in the rotation of monastic offices and duties among eligible persons, including the highest offices where these were not reserved for incarnate lamas.

No anthropological studies were carried out directly in the area of the Lhasa administration before 1959. Carrasco\textsuperscript{37} summarizes information from pre-1959 sources on social and political organization in this and other areas.

The refugees who fled from Tibet in and after 1959 were from the area of the Lhasa administration and from Eastern Tibet (Kham and Amdo). Most of them are now in India and Nepal. There are also small communities
in Switzerland and Canada and individual Tibetans in England, the U.S.A. and other Western countries. The refugee administration in India is situated at Dharamsala, now the residence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It is in many respects continuous in structure and personnel with the old Lhasa government. Of the refugees in India and Nepal a large minority have settled in Dharamsala, Dalhousie, Darjeeling, Kathmandu and other hill towns, where they make a living mostly through trading and through the refugee handicrafts organizations. The others are being re-settled, with the help of the Indian and Nepali authorities and foreign aid organizations, in a number of large agricultural settlements.

Several recent studies of Tibetan society and politics have made use of refugee informants. Among these Goldstein's work on the traditional Tibetan political system, using primarily informants from Samada, a village in Central Tibet (Figure 2), forms the basis for the account of the Lhasa administration given above. There is also a study of the political system of the Sakya monastic estate by Cassinelli and Ekvall. More recently Aziz has carried out work with refugees from Tingri in West-Central Tibet.

Aristocratic and monastic authority, hierarchical relationships linking corporate and in large measure egalitarian units, are features which seem to have been characteristic of the other traditional Tibetan polities as well, though we are poorly informed about most of them. In the case of the Sherpas, studied by Führer-Haimendorf in 1953 and 1957, the tendency to equality of status is very noticeable, and it extends to the relationship between men and women; marriage here is 'a freely entered and terminable association between two equal partners, each of whom retains the right over the property he or she contributed to this association.'

The Sherpa population emigrated from Eastern Tibet (Kham) some centuries ago and has not been subject to external Tibetan superordinate
authorities for a long time. Their relationship with the Nepali government has been, at least until recently, confined to the payment of taxes through hereditary Sherpa officials; these have, to a limited degree, some of the lord's responsibilities and powers, but the egalitarian emphases of Sherpa culture come out strongly in Fürer-Haimendorf's account.\(^{43}\)

I have not yet been able to consult some more recent studies of the Sherpas and of the apparently rather similar populations of Dolpo and Lo, further to the West.\(^{44}\)

The states of Bhutan and Sikkim also require special mention. Bhutan was in part Tibetanised at the time of the early Tibetan kings; Tibetan monastic orders, particularly the Druk-pa Yagyu-pa, were active there from the 12th century onwards. The Bhutanese state was founded in the early 17th century by a lama of this order; the circumstances are discussed in detail in Chapter Six. Bhutan continued to be ruled, nominally at least, by the successive reincarnations of this lama, along with a lay regent appointed by him, until one of the lay regents established himself in 1907 as hereditary ruler.\(^{45}\) I do not know of any anthropological studies of Bhutan.

The Tibetan element in Sikkim is likewise the result of emigration; in this case following the conquest of Central Tibet by the Geluk-pa order and its supporters in the 1640s. Unlike Bhutan, Sikkim has always been a lay principality. The Tibetans coexisted with an aboriginal population, the Lepchas, who retained their own rituals and priests as well as making use of Tibetan Buddhism. Extensive Nepali immigration during the 19th and 20th centuries resulted in the Nepalis forming an absolute majority in the country, a situation exploited by the Indian Government in its recent moves to incorporate Sikkim with India. Gorer carried out fieldwork in a Lepcha village in the 1930s\(^{46}\) and Nakane carried out a brief study of ethnic relations between the three population groups in 1955.\(^{47}\)
In the extreme north-east of Tibet, the region of Amdo, settled and nomadic Tibetans coexist with Mongol and Chinese populations. The main political authority in this area before 1949 was the Chinese administration at Hsi-nung. The monasteries, especially the two large Geluk-pa monasteries of Kumbum and Labrang, played an important role in the regulation of the affairs of the Tibetan population. It was in this area of culture contact that Ekvall\textsuperscript{48} and Hermanns\textsuperscript{49} worked as missionaries, and to which their studies refer. A short work by Stübel\textsuperscript{50} describes a Tibetan nomadic group in this area.

**Monastic life.**

The monastic orders and sub-orders each consist – or consisted – of hundreds of monasteries, centred on the large monastic academies of Central and Eastern Tibet, where the head lamas of the orders resided. Monks and lamas from even the most distant areas would go to these teaching monasteries for their training. In political terms the subdivisions of monastic orders, each based on one or two teaching monasteries of this kind, were more significant units than the orders as a whole. Thus Ganden, Drepung and Sera, the three Geluk-pa monastic universities near Lhasa, each had large numbers of affiliated monasteries attached to them. Often these monasteries were affiliated to specific colleges within the three universities. These three academies as a whole, with a total of over 20,000 monks, were an important pressure group on the Central Government; but there was also much rivalry and competition, and on occasion actual fighting, between them. Likewise the head monasteries of each sub-order within the Sakya-pa, Nyingma-pa and Kagyud-pa groups had their affiliated monasteries, that followed their ritual practices and sent monks and lamas to them for training. These links have in general been ended by the Chinese occupation, but some of the monasteries have been reconstituted in exile, and from them the head lamas of the monastic orders continue to some degree to supervise the remaining
monasteries of their orders. Group affiliation to a particular monastic sub-order was in the past generally permanent, excluding forcible conversion, but shifts of political allegiance at the sub-order level were quite common both before and during the period of Geluk-pa rule. The sub-orders were the basic monastic groupings in the Tibetan political system. 51

Some of the 'monasteries' of the three older orders - Sakya-pa, Kagyul-pa and Nyingma-pa - are in fact communities of married laymen, who perform rituals and practise meditation, although they have not of course taken the monastic vows of celibacy. The Kagyul-pa 'monastery' of Ralung in Tsang, visited by Tucci, 52 was of this type, as are some of the Nyingma-pa 'monasteries' of Dolpo, described by Snellgrove. 53 Lamas in these three orders are sometimes married though more usually celibate. The Geluk-pa order, in theory at least, insists on celibacy for its lamas, monks and nuns. In general I shall not distinguish between these communities and those of celibate monks and nuns, unless the context requires it; both are called in Tibetan by the same general term - dgon pa - which I render by 'monastery'. In fact dgon pa can be applied even to a small village temple with attached hereditary lamas such as one finds in Sherpa country. The defining characteristics of a dgon pa for the Tibetans are no more than a temple and some permanently associated religious personnel. Most Tibetan monasteries, however, especially in the Geluk-pa order, have at least twenty or thirty celibate monks and often many more, with one or more resident incarnate lamas.

While I use 'monastery' to include communities of married laymen, I restrict the word 'monk' to those who have taken religious vows of celibacy, whether the lesser dge tshul (śrāmāśrama) or the higher dge slong (bhikṣu) vows. 54 Some authors distinguish the first from the second as 'novices' and 'monks' but the distinction, though real, is not important in the contexts I shall be discussing. The most general Tibetan
term is grwa pa, literally 'scholar' or 'pupil', and this includes both of the above types.

There are relatively few Tibetan nuns, and the equivalent of the highest grade of monastic ordination (dge slong) is not open to them. From the point of view of the lay population, nuns can substitute for monks in the performance of some merit-making rituals; but with the exception of a single female incarnate lama in Central Tibet they are not lamas, and would not be called on for those rituals whose efficacy depends on the lama's spiritual power.

The lamas.

Who then are these lamas, and how does it come about that certain people acquire or are ascribed this status?

A modern Tibetan dictionary gives two principal meanings for the word 'lama' (bla ma): 'one's own religious teacher', and 'incarnate lama'. They are not of course independent.

The first sense corresponds to 'lama' as the standard Tibetan rendering for the Sanskrit term *guru, meaning teacher. The implications of this meaning will be discussed in Chapter Six. In Tibetan one refers to one's own religious teacher - whoever he may be - as 'lama'. By extension, anyone of sufficient learning and sanctity to be generally recognised as a spiritual teacher may be referred to as a lama and, out of politeness and honorific usage, the term may be extended to senior and important monks in general.

This meaning, however, is basically a situational meaning. Somebody is a teacher because he teaches; he is a lama to a particular person or group of people - those studying with him. The second meaning, 'incarnate lama', is not situational in this sense. One is discovered to be an incarnate lama, usually in early childhood, and retains that status for life. An incarnate lama is found to be the reincarnation of a previous lama, and also in some cases of a tantric deity; by virtue of
being so found he has ascribed to him a particular spiritual status, as 
well as a particular monastic office. This doctrine and its implications 
will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

The connection between the two meanings lies in the fact that the 
incarnate lama is the teacher par excellence; he exists, in theory, for 
the sake of teaching, and his existence is a mode of teaching in itself. 
He is also - by definition, since if he were not so he would not have 
been able to control his reincarnation - a master of tantric practice, 
and thus a source of spiritual power to be made use of by his lay and 
monastic following. One can achieve this kind of status through medi-
tation, study, and the gradual gathering of disciples, if one is not 
born to it - though, as with Tsongkha-pa, the person who does is likely 
to be considered some sort of an incarnation anyway56 - but the major 
exponents of tantric spiritual power and centres of popular attention 
and devotion are the incarnate lamas. Most monasteries have at least 
one such lama, often the reincarnation of the monastery's founder, and 
the larger ones may have several.

These then are the men about whom my account of Tibetan religion 
revolves: the incarnate lamas and those relatively few others who have 
managed to achieve similar status although they are not recognised 
incarnates. They are the spiritual teachers of the Tibetans, and the 
sources of the magical power upon which the Tibetans rely for their pro-
tection and prosperity. They were also the people who controlled the 
monasteries with their vast monastic estates; one of them, the Dalai Lama, 
ruled over most of Tibet itself until 1959 and still has supreme status 
among the refugees in India, Nepal and the West. In this study I shall 
show how the lamas are essential at all levels to the practice of Tibetan 
religion, and I will describe the complexes of ideas and values which 
centre around them and which find their resolution in them.
Notes to Chapter One.

2. ibid., 5.
5. ibid., 367.
6. ibid., 367-373.
9. cf. Snellgrove 1966. The list of rituals performed by a Sherpa village lama, in Furer-Haimendorf 1964:164-166, is a particularly frustrating example. Niti, doma, do-dzunma etc. could be almost anything.
10. e.g. Furer-Haimendorf 1964:193-196.
14. ibid., 30.
15. ibid., 129, 145.
16. e.g. Lessing, 1942; Snellgrove, 1957.
18. ibid., 289.
19. cf. the teachings for the 'first type of person', in Chapter Three below. Teachings of this kind are also given in religious writings for laymen, such as the kha che pha lu'i bstan bcos (Tibetan text 1), chu'i bstan bcos (Tibetan text 2), bya chos (translated excerpts in Conze 1973:86-93), pha dam pa kyi zhal gdam (Tibetan text 3; partial translation in Evans-Wentz, 1968, complete translation in Kaschewsky, 1973). Ekvall (1964a:72-77) and Furer-Haimendorf (1964: 272-281) confirm the importance of ideas of karma, merit and rebirth in lay Tibetan populations.
23. Guenther's article (1966-69) is the only work known to me specifically devoted to the subject. It presents a rather idealized picture of the lama as meditation teacher, particularly as seen by the KagyU-pa and Nyingma-pa. The KagyU-pa incarnate lama Trungpa Rimpoche expresses a similar view in Trungpa 1973, especially 31-52.
25. e.g. Turner 1967.
26. On the Bon religion see the next few pages, and also Chapter Ten. For most of the matters discussed in this study, there is as far as I am aware little difference between Bon and Buddhism. Bon now has lamas, monasteries, incarnations and tantric rituals, all on the Tibetan Buddhist model. My material almost all refers to Buddhism, and I have not made special mention of Bon except in the case of circumambulation (Chapter Two). The Bon religion, a complex syncretism of Tibetan pre-Buddhist religion with Buddhist and other foreign influences, nevertheless presents a fascinating field of enquiry in its own right; cf. Hoffman 1961, Snellgrove 1961 and 1967b, Stein 1972, Karmay 1972. The term nang-pa can also be applied in some contexts, to Mongolians, who adopted Tibetan-style Buddhism from the 13th century onwards, and even to other Buddhist peoples. Its primary reference is as given in the text.
29. cf. Richardson 1962, Kolmaš 1967, Shakabpa 1967, Cassinelli and Ekvall 1969. The 'lama - lay patron' relationship with the Chinese emperor provided the theory behind the rule over Tibet of first the Sakya abbots and later the Dalai Lamas. In recent years it has assumed importance because of its bearing on Chinese claims to Tibet.
30. Bureau 1969 gives an account of the refugee situation at that time.
31. The distribution of Tibetans shown on Figure 1 does not claim to be more than approximate. It is based on Herrmann 1966 and a number of other sources.
33. cf. Goldstein 1968, 1971d. Much of the following account is based upon Goldstein's work.
34. cf. Cassinelli and Ekvall 1969.
37. ibid., 1959.
40. Cassinelli and Ekvall 1969. As Goldstein suggests in 1971d:170-171, 177-178, this study, which is based on information supplied by two members of the Sakya ruling family, seriously distorts the nature of the Sakya polity and of its relationship to the Lhasa government.
41. cf. Azir 1974, which I have not yet been able to see.
43. e.g. in the description of village organization, ibid. 100-125. The term pomphu for the tax-collectors presumably represents the Tibetan dpon po 'lord'.
46. Gorer 1938.
47. Nakane 1966.
51. See the historical references in note 28 above, especially Snellgrove and Richardson 1968:131-137, 177-197. Smith 1970:16-22 discusses the relationship between the Geluk-pas and other monastic orders during the period of Geluk-pa rule.
52. Tucci 1956.
54. Thus I speak of 'monasteries' whether their inhabitants are monks or laymen, but I do not speak of the laymen living in these monasteries as 'monks', since they have not taken monastic vows.
55. Tibetan text 4, p. 455. bla ma/ rang rang gi dge ba'i bshes gnyen dang/ sprul sku/ steng ma/ gza' phur bu bcas la'ang/
56. For Tsongkha-pa, see Chapter Eight. Also cf. the case of Jamgon Kongtrul, Smith 1970:31. I discuss alternative ways in which the status of a lama can be acquired at the end of Chapter Seven.
PART TWO
CHAPTER TWO

The world of the Tibetans.

A country is given meaning by the people who live in it, and the Tibetan landscape maps out, for its inhabitants, many of their fundamental religious concepts. As such it is a good place to start, because in describing the setting for my account of Tibetan religion I need also to introduce some more of the principal actors.

The Tibetan landscape has been given at least two successive layers of significance by the Tibetans. First there is the ancient, pre-Buddhist landscape of Tibet, dangerous and unpredictable, and peopled by the Tibetans with spirits of like nature. The Tibetans entered into relations with these deities and gave them offerings in return for aid and protection, and they guarded themselves as well as they could from the lesser and more purely malevolent forces. But the coming of Buddhism remade the landscape, as it remade the lives of its inhabitants. The mountain deities were now demoted, and there were new weapons against the onslaught of malevolent spirits. In the new geography of Tibet, mountains and their deities gave way to temples and monasteries; lesser symbolic devices, like the stūpa and mani-wall, marked out the new way of life around the villages and along the paths of Tibet. Along with this new geography came the new gods of the tantric pantheon and their manipulators, the lamas.

The natural geography of Tibet varies much from one part to another; my personal experience of the Tibetans' interrelationship with their country is limited to refugees in India and Nepal, and to the fringes of culturally Tibetan indigenous populations in the
Himalayas. For the Tibetans, as for many peoples, the most basic contrast is between cultivated and wild. On the one hand there are the fertile and inhabited valleys; in Central Tibet they often spread out into sizeable plains. On the other, there are the wild uplands and mountains. The nomadic pastoralists venture into some of these wild areas, but are never completely out of contact with the settled valleys. In Tibet this area of uncultivated nature includes vast tracts of barren land in the north, little used even by the nomads. More significantly it also includes areas of upland that separate the inhabited valleys. Journeys between one place and another, even between neighbouring valleys, are usually slow and laborious, involving the crossing of high passes through this uninhabited country—passes which are exposed and dangerous in rough weather. Yet the Tibetans travel around extensively, for trading reasons and also from religious motives, since while pilgrimage is not an obligatory duty in Tibetan religion as it is in Islam, it is a major means of acquiring religious merit.

These wild areas are conceived of as the dwelling-places of the major gods of the different localities, along with a host of less exalted but equally ambivalent and dangerous spirits. The great mountains in particular are seats of important local deities. While these spirits and deities are not absent from the more settled valleys, here they are counterbalanced by the greater powers of the Buddhist monasteries and their occupants. Some monasteries, or at least hermitages, are in wild and remote areas like those in which the great Mila Rêpa preferred to meditate; but there seem to be few areas of settled occupation which do not have their temples and monasteries near at hand. Part of their function is to offer protection against the deities and spirits of the environment, just as their thick walls often store and protect the peasants' crops and valuables against
natural and human hazards. I shall first consider the local deities and spirits, who have been extensively studied by Nebesky-Wojkowitz.¹

Deities and spirits of the environment.

The supernatural beings who are described as occupying the Tibetan environment have much in common with those found throughout much of South and Southeast Asia. There are a host of spirits of various kinds, ranging from the major deities or lha - a term which is used to translate the Sanskrit term *deva - to the various minor spirits associated with disease and misfortune. The major gods are the presiding deities of localities, lum lha ('god of the region'), sa bdaq or gzhi bdaq ('master of the ground'); usually they are associated with mountains, sometimes with plains or other conspicuous environmental features. There are also klu, generally benevolent spirits of lakes and rivers, who have been assimilated to the Indian spirits called *nāgas. Deities of these types are referred to in our earliest sources, which date back to the seventh and eighth centuries A.D.²

In Bon po cosmology all these are ruled over by a supreme sky-deity, kun tu bzang po, but he probably represents a later importation. In other lists one or another of the mountain gods is given pre-eminent place, particularly yan lha sham po, god of a mountain near Yarlung and associated with the Tibetan royal dynasty. The Buddhists too imported the various great deities of the Hindu pantheon such as Śiva and Kāli (mgon po, lha mo), but their cult has generally remained unimportant outside the monasteries.³ They and the Tibetan deities were integrated into the Hindu-Buddhist cosmology of numerous 'heavens' or divine abodes, of increasingly rarefied nature as one ascends, and culminating in the gods without desire, form or sensation. The Hindu gods dwell in these heavens, but the structurally lower Tibetan gods,
the 'gods of this world', ('jig rten pa'i lha) are nearer at hand.
These 'gods of this world' can communicate with man through spirit-
mediums and can also bring protection or good fortune, while the
Hindu-derived gods are significant only in their monastic role of
guardians of the Buddha's teachings.

Although the 'gods of this world' are given offerings and their
aid is requested both by laymen and in monastic ritual, the attitudes
held towards them are decidedly ambiguous. This is particularly so
in monastic ritual. Snellgrove translates a monastic invocation to
one of these deities, Thang lha, the god of a great mountain chain
north of Lhasa, and comments on the way in which deities of this kind
'are treated alternately to threats and to offerings. In no way are
they permitted to interfere with the Buddhist doctrine, to which they
remain helplessly subject.' Here is part of the invocation:

Friend of us who now perform the ritual,
The command to action has now been given,
Subdue the raving fiends, cut down the hostile foe...
It is time for action, O king of obstructive foes.
Perform therefore your appointed task.
You are the country-god of the four regions of Ü and Tsang.
You are the god of Trhi-song-deu-tsen, the Divine Son, the
King who was Protector of the Doctrine.
You are bound to the bond of your word by Padmasambhava of
Urgyen.
So hearken now to what is required of you...
If you do not protect us living beings now in this last
world-age,
Will you not perhaps be mindful of these happenings:
Firstly how Vajrapāñi pressed the life from your heart on the
way to the north,
Secondly how Padma-Heruka forced you into subjection on
Mt. IIH-po by Sam-yH,
Thirdly how Vajra-kumara, having collected together all gods
and demons on the summit of the fair-formed king of mountains,
forced them to take the vow.
I now am Padmasambhava...
O God of the Plain, we beg you to come.
You yourself your following of nyen
We shall honour with the most splendid of excellent offerings...

In this temple service the officiating monks have taken on the
identity of Padmasambhava, treated here as a tantric deity, and are
thus able to exert over the god the same power which Padmasambhava
originally employed to overcome these deities and bind them to the protection of the Buddhist religion.

In lay ritual these local Tibetan gods seem to have more significance. An important part of their cult is connected with the laptse (lha rdzas, la rtse) or stone cairns found, among other places, at the highest points of passes (Plate 2.) Travellers carry stones up the ascent and throw them on to the cairn when they reach it, with a standard invocation "Kye kye so so...lha rgyal lo, lha rgyal lo" (there are minor variations). The first syllables are meaningless, though possibly war-cries; Stein links them with the warlike nature of the gods and the idea of passing through a dangerous and strategic place; the concluding phrase is usually taken to mean 'the gods are victorious.' Hummel suggests that the purpose of the cairns has as much to do with restraining and imprisoning the deities as with worshipping them; he compares them to the thread-crosses (mdos) in which spirits are trapped and which are then removed outside the village and destroyed. The Buddhist symbols involved in these cairns seem to be directed to this end; the coloured prayer-flags attached to poles sticking out of the cairn, and the stones with inscribed mantras sometimes added to the pile. The cairns are called 'castles of the warrior gods' (dpa' mkhar), but the gods are expected to stay there and give no trouble in return for being provided with their castle. Cairns like this are also, according to Stein, constructed on the roofs of houses.

In the bsangs ritual, the characteristic form of lay worship directed towards them, these deities seem to take on a more positive role. The central feature of this ritual is the burning of incense, particularly juniper-wood, accompanied often by the offering of prayer-flags. The texts which are recited during the bsangs ritual invoke lists of regional and local deities. An autobiography by the Amdo lama
Plate 2. Two laptsce on a pass in Sherpa country

Plate 3. A mani-wall in Sherpa country
T.J. Norbu, the Dalai Lama's elder brother, gives a picture of this cult in the village where he was born. The mountain of Kyeri was the seat of the local deity of Tengtser village:

It was towards Kyeri that our prayers were directed, because Kyeri was the throne of our protective deity and bore his name....

The temple which stood surrounded by shady trees on the outskirts of our village was dedicated to Kyeri out of a feeling of mingled love and gratitude. The temple precincts were quite roomy and offered plenty of space for the approximately one hundred and fifty inhabitants of our village, though the temple proper was quite small; and inside, because ours was not a rich village, it was a trifle austere. In the centre was a statue of our protective deity in the guise of a horseman. Like the other statues this equestrian one was made of clay....

Behind the temple was a small eminence on which a stone altar had been erected, and here the inhabitants of Tengtser would burn incense in honour of our protective deity and to beg him to grant peace and prosperity to our village. Before going to the altar you first entered the temple and placed a few flowers to the effigies of the gods, or fixed a prayer-flag. There was no monastery in Tengtser and therefore there was no monk to look after the temple and supervise the ceremonies, and this was done by one of the men of the village who was appointed caretaker.

There was a lapstse, which Norbu describes as 'a heap of stones dedicated to the protective deity of the village', on a small hill near Tengtser. "Here you offered up white quartz, coins, turquoises and corals, and prayed for rain, or for sun, or for a good harvest, or for protection from bad weather.' Once a year the whole village went there along with monks from neighbouring monasteries, and burnt incense and erected prayer-flags. A few days earlier the villagers had gone on a three-day journey to the foot of the mountain to burn incense up at the ice-limit. Though Norbu's account is not quite clear, it seems that his family also burnt incense daily to Kyeri in an earthenware vase in the centre of the house's courtyard, after making the offerings and lighting the butter-lamps in the house chapel and before a Buddha image in his parents' bedroom.

Stöbel gives a similar description for nomadic Tibetans in Amdo. The spirits dwelling in the lapstse guard against sickness, cattle
diseases, and war; for the settled Tibetans they make the fields fertile. Personal offerings may be made when there is illness in the family or other misfortune; they include greeting scarves, arrows, juniper wood, flour, butter and water. Incense is burned four times a month, on the ground or, for sedentary Tibetans, in a clay altar. Each laptse also has an annual festival. Sometimes animals are dedicated to the mountain deities.\textsuperscript{11}

These accounts suggest a more elaborate cult of the local deities than that among the Sherpas, where there seem to be no temples dedicated primarily to the local deities, and lay ritual is restricted, according to Fürer-Haimendorf's account, to three ceremonies in May, August and October. The August ceremony is in the summer pastures and includes the burning of incense, erecting of new prayer flags, and the dedicating of animals; the bsangs texts are recited as well. The other two ceremonies, performed in the villages, are evidently similar. In Sherpa country there are both general regional deities, like Khumbu yul lha in Khumbu, and lesser mountain deities associated with the various Sherpa patrilineal descent groups.\textsuperscript{12} There are also the klu spirits, here treated as house-deities and given regular offerings.\textsuperscript{13}

The whole subject of the local deities is difficult to untangle. Their importance has decreased very much since the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, as I shall discuss later, and concepts of their nature and responsibilities are not systematically worked out. They are certainly capable of bringing disease as well as prosperity. In the monastic cult and the bsangs rituals long lists of these deities are invoked and given offerings and this is enough for the Tibetans. As a result the catalogues of these deities and their various types are less informative than they might be; few of these typologies have any meaning for the Tibetans themselves. There is probably very much more regional variation here too than with the more specifically Buddhist
rituals and practices. But the local deities are a subject on which Tibetans, especially monks and lamas, are unwilling to be very informative. This is particularly so among the refugees, where their cult seems to be less important anyway than it once was in Tibet; there is a strong tendency to emphasise the more purely Buddhist aspects of Tibetan religion, and to avoid those subjects which they feel will lead to their being seen as primitive or backward.

I will discuss one other aspect of the protective role of these deities, because while as far as I know it has little present significance, it helps to explain some ideas which are significant today, especially those centering about the bla or life-essence, of which again there is more later. This is the role of these deities as personal protectors. A set of local deities, called the ḡo ba'i lha lnga, the five guiding gods, becomes associated with a child at the time of birth and protects it during its future life. The members of the set are generally listed as yul lha, god of the locality; pho lha, god of the father; mo lha, god of the mother; srog lha, god of life; dgra lha, enemy god or warrior god. Sometimes zhang lha, god of the mother's brother, appears in place of yul lha. These names suggest inheritance of the deities along kinship lines, and some descriptions indicate that this may have been the case, but ideas about them are obviously unclear. As well as presumably having external seats in their respective mountains or other homes, these gods are or were thought of as dwelling in different parts of the human body.¹⁴

The local deities, given offerings yet kept firmly in their place in the monastic cult, are the object then of a real if residual lay cult. The attitude towards lesser malevolent spirits is much less ambiguous; the Tibetans are not concerned with worshipping these demons, only with protecting themselves against them by propitiation or by employing more powerful forces to overcome them. Along with these
malevolent spirits can be classed the dangerous ghosts of the dead, identified with the *preta-s of the Buddhist scheme of rebirth.\(^{15}\)

The spirit-mediums and other minor village diviners can be consulted to diagnose and propitiate these ghosts and demons. More serious cases require the intervention of the lamas and monks. One of the major functions of monastic ritual is to protect against these spirits, and in addition regular village ceremonies are held with the participation of lamas and monks to keep the community free from these dangers.\(^{16}\)

Further, the power of Buddhism can be brought to bear through the erection of prayer-flags - pieces of coloured cloth printed with mantras and symbolic diagrams - on poles outside houses and monasteries, as on the summit cairns; through the wearing of amulet-cases (gā'yu) containing mantras and images blessed by a high lama; or through receiving the protective blessing of various kinds of monastic ritual such as the tshe dbang, 'acquiring of life', to be discussed in Chapter Five.\(^{17}\)

**Monasteries and Buddhist sacred places.**

The gods and spirits that I have mentioned date from before the Buddhist conversion of Tibet in the 7th century. Affected here and there by Indian ideas and myths and converted, if they were important enough, to act as protectors of the Dharma, they stayed on as a basic component of the Tibetans' view of the powers in the world around them. The lamas and their patrons, however, gradually superimposed onto this world a new Buddhist spiritual geography, in which temples and monasteries were to have more importance than the mountain seats of the gods.

The Buddhist geography of the world was, of course, initially centered on Northern India, and especially Magadha, the main centre of the historical Buddha's activity.\(^{18}\) Especially important were the
great pilgrimage centres associated with his birth, enlightenment, initial teaching and death. In later centuries they were augmented by sites associated with the Buddha's disciples and with later teachers, and the tantric gurus added a series of pilgrimage centres of their own of which lists survive in the tantras, albeit often given a metaphorical interpretation. Tibetans made pilgrimages to the holy sites of India and Nepal, but over the centuries following the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, the country developed its own pilgrimage centres and sacred sites. With the decline of Buddhism in North India, the sites there could in any case be little visited. As Dza Petrel, the 19th-century author of the Kun brang bla ma'i zhal lung, says:

After the Buddha, as long as the teaching existed in India, that country was both the physical and spiritual centre. Since nowadays it has been reported that Bodhgaya has been taken by the infidels and that the teaching is no more, India is spiritually a wild country. Tibet, the land of the snow mountains, on the other hand, was a wild country before The Buddha, because civilization was low and the teaching had not spread. Later with the spread of civilization many incarnate rulers came and during the reign of Lha tho ri gnyan bstan the spang skong phyag brgya ma and the sSatstsha'l brkos pho fell from Heaven and so Tibet attained the status of the spiritual centre.

Nowadays among the refugees, the old pilgrimage sites of India and Nepal have come to take on a new importance, and Bodhgaya, Sarnath, and the two Nepal Valley sites of Bodhnath and Svayambhumath have become the centres of sizeable refugee colonies.

The initial centres of this sacred geography were the temples in Lhasa where the two statues of Sakyamuni and Akṣobhya, brought by the Chinese and Nepalese wives of King Songtsen Campo, were housed. The first of these images, especially venerated since it was believed to date from the time of the Buddha himself, was housed in the 1Phrul snang (Jokhang) temple. This building is connected in the traditional histories with a series of small temples which marked out Tibet as a Buddhist country: they are described as holding down a female
spirit (srin mo) whose body was comprised by the ground (sa gzhi) of Tibet:

Thereupon Thri btsun [the Nepalese queen] had the desire of building a temple [to house the image she had brought, which was initially placed in the Phrul snang temple, according to Pu-tho], but had not the power of doing this. (The king) saw that the ground of Tibet was like (the body of) a she-devil (srin mo) that had fallen on her back, and that it was necessary to press (this she-devil) down.23

To hold down this 'she-devil' he built a series of temples, four on her shoulders and thighs, four on her elbows and knees, and four on the palms of her hands and on her feet, as well as many other temples. Then he was able to build the foundations and erect the Phrul snang temple at Lhasa in the centre.

Several of these small temples (gtsug lag khang) have survived, including the - later much enlarged - temple at Lhasa, which continues to be one of the main pilgrimage centres in Tibet, or was until the recent Chinese occupation. Although their attribution to Songtsen Gampo's time, the early 7th century, is unconfirmed, they are certainly very early.24

The first Tibetan monastery, Samye, was not built until the end of the eighth century,25 after the arrival in Tibet of the monk-teacher Santaraksita and the tantric guru Padmasambhava. According to the Tibetan historians, Samye could not be built until Padmasambhava had brought the local deities of Tibet under his control and bound them to serve and protect the Buddhist religion. There had been foreign monks in Tibet before this time, but no Tibetans had been ordained. Samye was at the centre of the empire of the Tibetan kings, now newly made safe for Buddhism, and, significantly, it was built in the form of a mandala, representing the structure of the Buddhist universe. The following description comes from one of the 'discovered' lives of Padmasambhava:

The Monastery of Samyeling, which means 'the Inconceivable', was modelled upon the universal scheme of things, and its
construction progressed like a child growing to manhood.
The great Central Temple with its three stories was designed
like Mount Meru and the Upper and Lower Yaksha Temples, in the
east and west, flanked the Central Temple, just as the sun and
moon flank Meru. Four large temples in the four directions
and eight smaller temples in the intermediate directions, rep-
resenting the four continents and the eight island continents,
adorned the area of the ocean within the circular wall, rep-
resenting the ring of mountains containing the cosmos...
Just as the palace of the gods crowns Mount Meru, so the great
Central Temple with three stories roofed in the three distinct
styles of India, China and Tibet formed the centre of Samyeling.
In the highest chamber of the temple rests the Buddha Saman-
tabhadra, the representation of the Dharmakaya; in the middle
of the Mandala are the emanations of Vairochana; in the central
chamber rests Vairochana, surrounded by the emanations of the
Vajradhatu Mandala; in the ground floor chamber rests Mahabodhi,
surrounded by the Buddha’s disciples and all the Bodhisattvas
of the ten directions.

With the restoration of Buddhist missionary activity in the 10th
and 11th centuries, the foundation of monasteries and temples proceeded
rapidly. A guide for pilgrims visiting Central Tibet written by
Khyen-tse, a 19th-century lama from Kham, describes the results of
this activity. These places are significant for the Tibetans because
of their holy images and symbols, but especially for their associations
with the great lamas of the past who founded, taught or meditated
there, whose relics are contained in the temples, and whose reincarna-
tions, in some cases, continue to dwell at the monasteries.

Going down from the upper part of Glo bo don steng, in the valleys of rDo and of 'On etc., there is bKa’ shis rDo Kha, a place of residence of rJe Rin po che /Tsongkha-pa/, and the chapel of 'On, called Ke ru, built in the times of Khri srong
Kings Trisong Detsen; the stupa dKar chung; Chos edings, the
residence of rGyal gras Rin po che /an important Geluk-pa
incarnation/; 'On phu sTag tsang, etc. Two or three days are
needed for visiting them.

Going downward from here, on the route there are mNga’ ris
Dwags po Grwa tshang /a Geluk-pa college/, and the great place
of widespread fame, residence of 'Gro mgon Phag mo rgyu pa
/a famous 12th-century lama/, called dbNam sa mthil. In general,
here are countless sacred symbols of the three planes /body,
speech and mind; i.e., images, books and stupa-s/; and in par-
ticular, the foremost of them is a statue called Byi sa ma,
which speaks and bestows blessings, and is found in the mud hut
of Phag mo rgyu.

Below it lies Zangs ri mkhar dmar, the residence of
Ma gcig lab sgron ma, a famous female tantric teacher and master of the gcod practice, who lived in the 10th-11th centuries, where a talking statue of Ma gcig with her sons is found.

Then, at two or three marching stages to the east, in the region of 'Ol kha slag rtse there is the Maitreya of rDzing phyi associated with Tsongkha-pa, 'Gal phug which was a meditation place of 0 rgyan Rin po che Padmasambhava, and very numerous places where rJe Rin po che Tsongkha-pa meditated.

Thus a few consecutive paragraphs from Khyen-tse's Guide, chosen more or less at random, draw the picture of the spiritual geography of modern Tibet. These places still have relevance for the present, because the activities of the great lamas associated with them in the past has, as it were, charged them with spiritual energy which can be used by present visitors; and because in many cases they continue to function as religious centres, often under the leadership of incarnate lamas who are held to be the same people as those original founders and builders.

A few of the geographical features of the Tibetan landscape are also drawn into this picture. Thus the three main hills of Lhasa are sacred to Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi and Mañjuśrī, the Three Family Protector Bodhisattvas. They are bla ri, hills which contain part of the life-essence or bla of those bodhisattvas. That of Avalokiteśvara is the hill on which the palace of his emanation, the Dalai Lama, is built. Many of the lakes of Tibet are likewise bla tsho, life-essence lakes. The Maksorma lake is connected with the life-essence of the Dalai Lamas, and high lamas look into this lake to see visions of the Dalai Lama's rebirth when a new incarnation is to be found. Other lakes which are important places of pilgrimage are the Yardok Tsho, Nam Tsho and Lake Kokonor. All these lakes and mountains are suitable places for pilgrimage.

The mountain of Kailāś (Kangri Tise in Tibetan), along with a nearby lake, is an important pilgrimage site not only for the Tibetans but also for the whole Indian sub-continent. This site was much
visited in the past by Hindus as well as by Tibetan Buddhists and Bon po. For the Hindus it is the seat of Śiva, and sometimes identified with Mount Meru, the central mountain of the universe; for the Tibetan Buddhists it is the palace of the tantric deity Demchog (Cañrasamvara). Mila Rêpa, who is described as having meditated frequently in this area, sings of Kailāś in one of his songs:

The fame of Ti se [Mt. Kailāś] of the white snow
Is great among those far away who have not seen it.
They say it is like a stupa of crystal.
If you come close to it, to see it
The head of the mountain is covered with snow.
This head of the mountain covered with snow
Was prophesied by the Buddhas [bde gsal gcigs, Sugata-ś] of former times.
The snowy mountain
Is the navel of the world
And the place where white snow-lions display their glory.
The part like a stupa of crystal
Is the palace of Śrī Cañrasamvara.
The snow mountains surrounding it
Are the dwelling-place of five hundred arhats,
A place for offerings for all the eight divisions [of deities].
The meadows and hills surrounding there
Are hills where the plants used for incense grow
And the source of death-healing medicines.
It is a great place of tantric masters [grub thob]
A place for acquiring uninterrupted samādhi.
There is nowhere more wonderful than this
There is nowhere more marvellous than this. 29

Mila Rêpa describes the nearby lake of Manasarowar (ma pham g.yu mtsho, 'the turquoise lake of Ma pham') in similar terms, as like a mandala of gems, the fountainhead of the four great rivers (Indus, Sutlej, Karnali, Brahmaputra), dwelling of the Nāgas, and the place where grows the Jambu tree after which the whole of our 'southern' continent (*Jambu-dvīpa) is named. Anagarika Govinda's account of his pilgrimage there, in 1948, mentions many of the same features; the four rivers flowing in the four directions are linked by their names with the supports of the four Buddhas of the directions in the basic tantric mandala. 30 Probably Kailāś was too important a feature of the pre-Buddhist mythology of India and Tibet to be left aside.
Generally speaking, though, the Buddhist geography of Tibet was centered around the monasteries. The great monasteries associated with the famous lamas of the past, places like Rumbum, the monastery at Tsongkha-pa's birthplace, or Atila's monastery of Reting became centres of pilgrimage. Head monasteries of monastic orders and other places of residence of important living lamas are also visited, and a visit to the monastery can be combined with a visit to the lama and a request for his blessing. A particularly important set of sites associated with a past lama is that related to Padmasambhava, to which the monastery of Samyê and a number of surrounding places belong; these Padmasambhava sites extend south of the Himalayas to include places in Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and India.

All these monasteries and temples, like the smaller monasteries and temples all over Tibet, contain images of 'deities' (lha), but while these include the Hindu-derived universal deities in their role of protectors of Buddhism, and occasionally include also, in a minor place, the local protective deities, most of the representations are of an entirely new class of beings. These include the standard Hinayana Buddhist subjects of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni (Gautama), and the coming Buddha Maitreya, and also the much larger array of deities which arose during the Mahayana and were developed and systematised in the tantras. Especially important among these are the Three Family Protectors, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapani, and some of the other tantric bodhisattvas; the goddess Tārā; and, especially in the Nyingma-pa order, Padmasambhava in his various manifestations.31

Unlike the more exclusively tantric patron deities such as Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara or Kālacakra, who on the whole are significant only for those involved in their specific meditational practices, these deities are all of general importance and are well-known to all Tibetans. They are found too in the chapels and altars of private houses.
It is usually the images of these deities, along with Śākyamuni and Maitreya, that occupy the main places on temple altars. Often the images of the founding lamas of particular monastic orders are found in this position. Tsongkha-pa in particular, always depicted as on plate 5 as an emanation of the bodhisattva Māñjuśrī, is usually the central figure on the altar of a Geluk-pa monastery. While all these figures are lha, 'deities', they are not quite deities in the sense of the local deities discussed above. Their nature will become clearer when I explain the techniques of tantric meditation in Chapter Four, and the important question of their relationship to the other deities will be considered there.

Symbolic markers of the spiritual geography of Tibet.

In addition to the monasteries and temples with their sacred and historical associations, there are minor symbolic devices scattered all over the Tibetan landscape, making even the shortest journey into a potentially religious act. These are mostly concerned with the important Buddhist rite of circumambulation.

In Tibet, as in India, one of the central acts during the performance of pilgrimage, as in religious devotion in general, is the act of clockwise circumambulation around the object worshipped. The clockwise sense is essential; anticlockwise circumambulation is reserved to the Bon po who, like European witches, do such things in reverse.32

These clockwise circumambulation circuits are marked out around temples, monasteries and other sacred sites. One is marked out around Kailāś, as Govinda describes; three concentric circuits circled the city of Lhasa, surrounding the Potala and its other sacred places. In India the refugees have constructed circuits of this kind in Dharamsala around the Dalai Lama's residence and the temple and monastery nearby. In Dalhousie, the circuit goes round the hill on
which most of the town is built. In the latter case the most important
monasteries in town, at least at the time I was there — they are now
in process of moving to Mysore and Assam — were the two Tantric
Colleges from Lhasa, and both were outside this circuit, though it
would have been impracticable to build the circuit so as to include
them. Paintings of Padmasambhava, Tārā, Avalokiteśvara and other
tantric deities, and mantras are carved and painted on the rocks on
the inside of these circuits. 33

Two of the most common features of the landscape of culturally
Tibetan areas, the mani wall and the stūpa, likewise mark out even a
straightforward journey as such an act of circumambulation.

Mani walls (mani gdong) are long, low walls down the centre of
paths, often near villages or along ridges near the summits of passes
between neighbouring valleys (Plate 3). Along each side are stones
inscribed with mantras, especially the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, Om
mani padme hūm, from which they get their name. This mantra is often
arranged in the form of a mandala, as on the photograph. 34 The
inscriptions are in fact of much the same kind as those placed on
natural features; as with the rock inscriptions, making them or having
them made is a meritorious act. The walls are passed by to their left,
so that they are in effect being half-circumambulated. Snelgrove
mentions Bon po walls in Dolpo, inscribed with Bon mantras, and passed
by to the right in accordance with the Bon po anticlockwise circumambu-
lation; in one village Buddhist and Bon po walls alternated and the
villagers switched sides accordingly as they went along. 35

The Tibetan for stūpa is mchod rten, literally 'support' or
'basis for offerings' (Plate 4). The Buddhist stūpa derives from the
structures in which the Buddha's remains were placed, and has spread
through all Buddhist countries as an object for reverence and around
which the rite of circumambulation can be performed. In Tibet the
Plate 4. A stūpa in Dharamsala, India
stress is less on the relics contained than on the stūpa as a support for religious activity in its own right. Nevertheless a stūpa will generally contain relics, along with mantras, clay images and other consecrated items. Stūpas are built as meritorious acts, near villages, as part of monastery complexes, or as independent structures; their most general symbolic meaning is as a representation of the mind aspect of the Buddha. The triadic set of body, speech and mind is represented by the respective sacred symbols of images, books and stūpas as objects of worship. In this sense a miniature stūpa or a representation of one may appear on a household or monastic altar along with a Buddha image and a sūtra text. 36

The symbolism of the stūpa has been analysed in part by Tucci. 37 He presents two levels of interpretation of its form. The first he refers to as the symbolism according to the Hinayāna; it might better be called the non-tantric level (Fig. 3). In this, various elements of the structure, working upwards, are correlated with a standard set of 37 elements of Enlightenment (*bodhi-pakṣa), which are given in the *Abhidharma-kośa in connection with the first four of the five paths traversed on the progress towards Enlightenment. The Abhidharma-kośa is a Hinayāna text of the Sastrāntika school, 38 but the scheme was later applied to the Mahāyāna also. The symbolism of the pinnacle above the main body of the stūpa with its 13 rings, and the parasol with its sun-moon-flame symbol above this, are not included in this set of 37, but Tucci equates the 13 rings to the ten powers of the Buddha and the three higher applications of mindfulness, two sets of qualities of the Buddha, which are appropriate because the fifth path is that of the Non-learner - or rather 'the one with no more to learn', that is, the Buddha. I have added to Tucci's scheme the parasol as protection for evil and the standard symbolism of sun-moon-flame, which is in fact mostly significant in tantric contexts.
Figure 3: The Non-Tantric Symbolism of the Stūpa

- Flame: seed of enlightenment / Bodhicitta
- Sun and Moon: two truths / Prajñā and Upāya
- Parasol: protection from harm

First Path: Path of the Accumulation of Merit
- First Ring: Four applications of mindfulness
- Second Ring: Four perfect renunciations
- Third Ring: Four bases of psychic powers
- Fourth Ring: Five cardinal virtues
- Support to Main Body: Five powers

Second Path: Path of Practice
- Main Body: Seven limbs of Enlightenment

Third Path: Path of Seeing
- Square Support: eight-fold noble path
- Central Support: (tree of life) ten knowledges of the Buddha
- Thirteen Rings: ten powers of the Buddha and three higher applications of mindfulness

Fourth Path: Path of Meditation
- Fifth Path: Path of the Non-Learner
The appropriateness of this symbolism to the stūpa's meaning as a representation of the "mind" aspect of Enlightenment is evident; as we progress up the stūpa, we progress towards the full accomplishment of the mind-aspect of the Buddha.

The tantric symbolism (Fig. 4) brings the parts of the structure into relation with the basic tantric scheme of the five-fold mandala, which I will discuss in Chapter Four. Here, the stūpa is regarded as being made up of the symbolic forms corresponding to the five elements of the material world, into which the body dissolves successively at the time of death. These correspond also to the five cakra-s or psychic centres believed to exist along the axis of the human body, and important in certain tantric meditations; and to the five Buddhas, the tantric deities who are the basic figures of the five-fold symbolism of the mandala.

The stupa in fact exemplifies the situation, very common in Tibetan Buddhism, of symbols being simultaneously interpretable at several levels: as a container for relics, a simple representation of the mind-aspect of Buddhahood, a depiction of the stages of non-tantric Buddhist practice, and a tantric cosmogram. In these cases most of the symbolism is generally known only to the lamas, but its existence is nevertheless very significant. The fact that Buddhist symbols, rituals and deities have different levels of meaning is well-known to all Tibetans. It is an aspect of one of the most fundamental doctrines of Tibetan Buddhism, as of the Mahāyāna generally; the doctrine of *upāya, of skilful means for the presentation of the teachings.

I will have more to say about upāya in the next chapter, which will include many examples of its application. Upāya implies that the teachings given by the lamas, and the actions they perform, are significant not in their own right but as techniques to lead men towards
Figure 4: The Tantric Symbolism of the Stūpa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENT</th>
<th>SYMBOLIC FORM (with colour)</th>
<th>CAKRA (with centre)</th>
<th>BUDDHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space (Ākāśa)</td>
<td>Flame</td>
<td>Sahasrāra (brain centre)</td>
<td>Vairocana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Black semi-circle</td>
<td>Visuddha (throat centre)</td>
<td>Amitābha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Red triangle</td>
<td>Anāhata (heart centre)</td>
<td>Akṣobhya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>White circle</td>
<td>Manipūra (navel-centre)</td>
<td>Ratnasambhava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Yellow square</td>
<td>Mūlādhāra (root-centre)</td>
<td>Amoghasiddhi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the primary Buddhist goal of Enlightenment. Since that goal cannot be expressed directly, these teachings and rituals are in fact benevolent deceptions intended to direct one to the truth behind them. And so religious symbols and acts can be interpreted at a whole succession of levels, referring to various degrees of understanding, and aiding in different types of practice.

As shall be seen, the lamas are thought of as repositories of mystical power. They are so, however, precisely because they are also repositories of secret knowledge. This knowledge is not secret in the sense of its being denied to others; to teach it is one of the lamas' primary functions. It is secret because most men are not yet ready to learn it. It can only be learnt through the gradual accumulation of merit through virtuous action, and the practice of study and meditation, and only a few are capable of going very far along this path. The implication of the lamas' control of this knowledge will be examined in the final chapter.

The lamas, then, are thought to act as the custodians of this knowledge, and to use the powers it gives them on behalf of mankind in general. From the point of view of the lamas and of the Buddhist teachings, the doctrine of upāya underlies much that I shall describe in the chapters to come. Virtually anything, including such extreme acts as the murder of the last king of all Tibet, Langdarma, because of his opposition to Buddhism, can be justified through upāya. It is also upāya that explains why the Buddhist missionaries did not attempt to eradicate the native deities of Tibet; instead they incorporated them, while at the same time taking over to themselves many of their functions. In Tibet the cult of the local deities and that of the Buddhist monasteries are not in opposition; instead the former survives in a doubtless much reduced form under the protection of the latter.
Later chapters will explain the techniques, in particular those of tantric ritual, through which the lamas were able to do this. Looking at this process of conversion from a more objective point of view, it is evident that the flexibility of tantric Buddhism and its ability to incorporate sundry practices within itself were important factors in the transformation of Tibetan religion and society brought about by the Buddhist missionaries. Correspondingly, as we shall see, much more of the ritual and religious practice of Tibet takes place under 'Buddhist' auspices than appears to be the case in the Theravāda Buddhist countries.
Notes to Chapter Two.


2. cf. Chapter Ten, where I discuss the place of these gods in early Tibetan religion.

3. cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:22-93, 145-153; Snellgrove 1957:242-244; Beyer 1973:47-54. I have slightly simplified matters here and later; the 'jig rten las 'das pa'i lha are not all Hindu-derived, cf. loCam sprin, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:88-93; and there is a form of Brahma who is considered as a 'jig rten pa'i lha (ibid. 145-153). For the Bon deities, cf. Snellgrove 1961, and the other references given in Chapter 1, note 26.


9. ibid., 53.

10. ibid., 31. Norbu does not actually state that the incense was directed to Kyeri, but he mentions the mountain immediately after.

11. Stübel 1958:34, 42. I do not understand Stübel's account of the relationship between mountain deities and the incarnate lamas of local monasteries. In view of his lack of knowledge of Tibetan and the confusion evident in other passages on Tibetan concepts, it would be unwise to trust his explanations too far, though his observations seem generally reliable.


13. ibid., 267-270.


15. For the preta-s, cf. Berzin 1972:166-170; Guenther 1970:62 (where they are called 'spirits').


17. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956 provides the most general discussion of all these techniques; cf. especially pp. 503-532.

18. Figuratively, India was at the centre of *Jambu-dvīpa, one of the four 'continents' in the great ocean surrounding Mount Meru, an idea reflected in the construction of the monastery at Sāmyā. From this point of view, India was 'off centre'; but Mount Meru and the other continents were far beyond possible human reach, so of only theoretical significance.

20. Guenther 1970:25. \textit{Lha tho ri} gyan bstan (more correctly btsan?) was an early king of Tibet, later considered to be an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara, in whose reign various Buddhist sacred objects and books fell from heaven.

21. On these see e.g. Kaschewsky 1969.


24. Snellgrove and Richardson 1968:73-74. Macdonald argues in a recent article, which I discuss at length in Chapter Ten, that gtsug lag, at least at the time of Songtsen Gampo, referred primarily to the royal cult of the mountain-gods, so if the gtsug lag khang (‘gtsug lag houses’) were really this early they may have had primarily reference to this cult. In later usage the word is applied to Buddhist temples, including those believed to date from this period. They were certainly not 'monasteries', as in Obermiller's translation.

25. The precise date is not known. cf. Démieville 1952.

26. Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center, 1973:87-88. There are several descriptions of Samyê in the literature, cf. Ferrari 1958:44, 113. For the emanations of Vairocana and the Vajradhātu mapagala, cf. below, Chapter Four. Samantabhādra takes the place of Vajradhara as the Dharma-Kāya representation in the Old Tantras of the Nyingma-pa order.

27. On the three family protector bodhisattvas (\textit{rigs gsum mo} \textit{po}) cf. Snellgrove 1957. Avalokiteśvara (on whom see Chapter Four, below) stands for compassion, Mahājñāna insight; Vajrapāṇi is a fierce protective deity.

28. The concept of bla is discussed in Chapter Five.


36. Notes from Geshe Ngawang Thargay's classes in Dharamsala (see Preface).

37. Tucci 1938. cf. also Waddell 1967:262-264; Govinda 1969:185-186; Olshack and Wangyal 1973:18-21. While the two schemes of interpretation I give appear to be correct in essentials, there are some problems. The Tibetan texts quoted by Tucci do not give the non-tantric scheme, and it is not clear where he got it from. The tantric scheme seems to be taken over by both Tucci and Govinda from Waddell 1967: 263-264. Waddell likewise gives no sources for his statement: "Many of the Lamaist Cātyāyas are, like those of the Japanese, symbolic of the five elements into which a body is resolved upon death..." (ibid., p. 263.) Govinda refers to two other works of his which I have not been able to consult. Certain features of the stūpa do not seem to be explained very well by either of these schemes; thus the four rings
at the base are split into two groups in the non-tantric scheme, and ignored altogether in the tantric scheme.

38. cf. Chapter Three.


40. D. and A. Matsunaga's discussion (1974) of the concept of upāya as it is interpreted in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism has many similarities with Tibetan doctrinal presentations.
CHAPTER THREE

The teachings of Tibetan Buddhism.

This chapter consists primarily of an outline of the Buddhist teachings as they exist among the Tibetans. These teachings do not ignore the way of life of the ordinary lay Tibetan. The prescribe for him a code of conduct, organized around the concepts of merit and demerit, of virtuous and non-virtuous actions and their consequences, which is much the same as that laid out for laymen in the Theravāda Buddhist countries. When we turn to the higher realms of Buddhist theory and practice, to philosophy and meditation, and to the rituals of Tibetan Buddhism, the differences between the tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism of Tibet, and the Theravāda Buddhism of Ceylon or Thailand, become more evident. Among these are the introduction of the bodhisattva ideal, the increased importance of the teacher or guru, and the procedures of tantric meditation and ritual. Underlying all these is the doctrine of upāya, which we met in the closing pages of Chapter Two. This doctrine is present in the early schools, including Theravāda, but with the introduction of the Mahāyāna scriptures and later of tantra it became of much greater importance.

The Theravāda school would be classified by the Tibetans as a 'Hinayāna' (lesser vehicle) school, but the classification is in many respects theoretical only. Until modern times, the Tibetans had no contact at all with the Buddhists of the Theravādin countries. The teachings of two of the Hinayāna schools, Sarvāstivāda and Saṃvatīntika, are studied in the Tibetan monastic academies, but purely as philosophical positions to be superseded by the Yogācāra and Mādhyamika
schools of the Mahāyāna. Otherwise, Hinayāna is used to refer to the lesser motivation of those Buddhists who desire to achieve freedom from suffering for themselves alone, as contrasted to the Mahāyāna Buddhist, the bodhisattva, who wishes to relieve all beings of their suffering.

In many respects the teachings discussed in this chapter, those of the *Sūtrayāna – the vehicle of the sutras preached by the Buddha – form the theory corresponding to the practice of tantric meditation, or Vajrayāna – the vehicle of the vajra. The sūtrayāna has, as I will describe, its own modes of practice and meditation, but in Tibet its study is mainly a preliminary – for the Geluk-pas a prolonged preliminary – to the tantras, and the study of the sūtrayāna is important precisely because it gives the philosophical basis for the tantras. This chapter will be concerned with what the lamas and other Tibetan Buddhists are supposed to be doing, and why they are doing it. Chapter Four, on tantra, will explain how they do it, and will lead me to explain the techniques of tantric ritual, the sources of the lamas' power.

The Scriptures.

The terms sūtra and tantra should themselves first be explained. The Sūtras and Tantras are, in the first place, two classes of scriptures. The sutras were supposed to have been taught by the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni (Gautama). They include the Hinayāna ('lesser vehicle') sutras which Śākyamuni taught to his human followers; these correspond to the sutras of the Pāli canon, the collection of scriptures of the Theravāda school to which the Buddhists of Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia belong. They also include the Mahāyāna ('greater vehicle') sutras, classified by the Tibetans into those containing the teachings of the Yogācāra school – in Tibetan usually called
sams tsam pa, 'mind only' - and those containing the teachings of the
Mādhyamika - dbu ma pa, 'middle way'. These make up the 'three turn-
ings of the wheel of the Dharma' spoken of by the Tibetans;² Hinayāna,
Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. The two latter classes of scripture, the
Mahāyāna sūtras, were not at first promulgated among human audiences,
according to the traditional accounts, because men were not ready to
receive them. They were only revealed some centuries later, in partic-
ular through the two greatest Buddhist teachers of India, in the
Tibetan tradition, Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna. They and their followers
developed the various philosophical schools or viewpoints (grub mtha')
of the Mahāyāna, just as the various Hinayāna schools³ had arisen as
interpretations of the Hinayāna sūtras. From the point of view of the
adherents of the Hinayāna, who include the present-day Buddhists of
Ceylon and South-East Asia, these Mahāyāna scriptures were forgeries
which were never preached by the historical Buddha.

The Tantras, like the Mahāyāna sūtras, were believed to have
been preserved in secret for many centuries before being revealed to
human audiences. They were revealed by the Buddha Śākyamuni in his
tantric form of Vajradhara, and were arranged by the Tibetans in various
classes according to the different kinds of practice contained in them.
The tantras include philosophical material, but differ little here
from the Mahāyāna sūtras;⁴ their primary purpose is to convey new
methods for realising the teachings. These include forms of meditation
in which the meditator transforms himself into a visualization of the
tantric deity and his surroundings into the form of his 'palace', the
maṇḍala. This 'palace' is a symbolic diagram in which the different
constituents of the personality and of the stream of experience are
ordered and given their places in a balanced and integrated whole.
Thus the unbalanced and self-defeating nature of the 'normal' personal-
ity is imagined as being what it 'should' be, and the imagined ideal
is then gradually realised. Under the form of the deity, too, the meditator is able to employ the powers of the deity for this-worldly aims as well as to help him to attain Enlightenment. Tantric meditation involves the entirety of the organism as it is at present, whether 'good' or 'bad'; body and speech are brought into the practice through symbolic hand-gestures (mudrā) and through the chanting of texts and short ritual formulae (mantra). These meditations - the developing or evoking stage, bkasyed rim - are followed by others in which the believed psychic structure of the organism is visualized and purified; this is the completing stage or rdzogs rim. 5

Tantric practice is regarded as more difficult, and more dangerous, than the practice of the Sūtra teachings, which have their own meditational techniques and modes of practice; it is also thought to be far more efficacious, being capable of bringing about much quicker results, and as such is especially appropriate to the present age of degeneration of the teachings. With the aid of tantric practice even the most evil karma can be annulled and the bearer of it can attain Enlightenment in a single lifetime, while the Sūtra path characteristically takes millions of lifetimes of consecutive effort. Mila Rōpa, the 11th-century poet-saint, is the most famous example, and his life-story (rnam thong), 6 along with others, forms a kind of mythological charter for tantric practice. The danger (both to oneself and others) is most present if tantric practice is carried out without adequate preparation, and in particular without the correct motivation. The only acceptable motivation is bodhicitta, the desire to attain Enlightenment in order to free all beings from their suffering; and bodhicitta vows are normally taken as a preliminary to tantric initiation, which is itself a prerequisite to all tantric practice. As I mentioned, the Geluk-pa are most strict about admission to tantric practice; in general they demand extensive study and practice of the Sūtra teachings.
before undertaking it. The three other orders generally give an extensive series of purificatory 'preliminary practices' (sngon 'gro), before tantric meditation, as do the Geluk-pas, but they usually demand less in the way of prolonged Sutra practice.

Despite these restrictions, the tantras are at the centre of Tibetan Buddhist practice, and most monastic ritual is tantric in nature. Tantric practice is the highest form of Tibetan Buddhist practice, and the other teachings are all regarded as essentially preliminary to it.

There is an important distinction between two classes of tantra, usually known as the 'Old' and 'New' tantras. The Old Tantras were said to have been brought to Tibet by Padmasambhava, the eighth-century apostle of Buddhism. They are the specialty of the Nyingma-pa order which claims to go back to him. They were added to by later 'hidden revelations' (gter ma, gter ma'i chos), texts said to have been concealed by Padmasambhava and his immediate disciples for later discovery, on the analogy of the Mahāyāna sutras preached by the Buddha but revealed only centuries later. These texts generally claim to be translations from Sanskrit originals, but the Sanskrit originals have not survived, and none of these tantras is found outside Tibet.

The New Tantras on the other hand certainly go back to Indian originals; many of them have survived in Sanskrit versions in India and Nepal, and some exist in Chinese translations. They are 'new' to the Tibetans because Atīśa, the Indian teacher who worked in Tibet in the early 11th century, and the Tibetan translators and Indian scholars who worked at about the same time, brought these texts to Tibet and recommended their use instead of the 'old' tantras. Some of them, for instance the Kalacakra, had at that time only recently appeared in India itself. Some Tibetan scholars, of the Geluk-pa order in particular, have claimed that the gter ma and the Old Tantras are forgeries and not to be followed; the general tendency, especially
outside the Geluk-pa order, is to regard them as authentic.

The Geluk-pa order dominated Tibet politically from the early 17th century until modern times. While with some exceptions they were fairly tolerant towards the other monastic orders after the first few years of their rule, the Sakya-pa, Nyingma-pa and Kagyu-pa orders, forming now an occasionally persecuted minority, moved closer together. They had in any case never been as exclusive as the new order of the Geluk-pa towards practices outside their own orders. This movement reached its apex in the eclectic or ris med - 'no walls' - approach of a number of great 19th-century lamas of the three older orders, mostly in East Tibet; they included Kongtrül, Khyen-tse, who was the author of the pilgrims' guide discussed above, Dza Petrül, who wrote the Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung, and Mi-pham. These lamas integrated the teachings of the different lineages into a systematic whole, culminating in the Mahāmudrā teachings of the Kagyu-pa and Geluk-pa orders, and the rdzogs chen tradition of the Old Tantras. Even before this synthesis, however, the Kagyu-pa and Sakya-pa lamas were more open towards the Old Tantras than most Geluk-pa teachers, and the practice of the Old Tantras and of rituals based upon them is widespread in the monasteries of these orders.

With the possible exception of these Old Tantras, all texts of the Sutra and Tantra teachings were regarded as equally authoritative within the Tibetan religious system. Their origins at different periods of the development of Buddhism in India are unimportant, though discussed by the Tibetan historians; all are the Buddha's word, and all are equally authentic, and all are included in the Kanjur, the canonical edition of the Tibetan translations of the scriptures. The collected commentaries and independent works of Indian scholars, classified in their collected version, the Tenjur, into works relating to Sutra and to Tantra, are also considered to be highly authoritative.
The final codification of these collections took place in the time of Pu-tönp'o (1290-1364); they were first printed in the fifteenth century, and the various modern printed editions differ from each other only in minor aspects. At the same time a relatively small number of works from these two vast collections are used extensively in modern times, and many of these are specialties of one or another teaching lineage. The texts which are studied and memorised, as well as those used for ritual and meditation, are largely summaries, commentaries or abridgments of texts in the Kanjur or Tenjur, or else independent works by Tibetan scholars.

Fundamentals of the Sutra Teachings.

The Buddha's First Noble Truth, that of suffering, of the unsatisfactoriness and pain implicit in our present way of life, is as fundamental in Tibet as in the Theravādin countries. Human life is full of suffering; even the occasional experiences of happiness are temporary and followed by further distress. The entire structure of Buddhism is concerned with finding a way out of this undesirable situation.

Buddhism in Tibet accepted the common Indian doctrine of reincarnation. This life is only one of an endless series of lives stretching into the limitless past and, unless men do something about it, the infinite future. Beings are born sometimes as men, sometimes as gods or demi-gods, sometimes as animals; and sometimes in the hells or among the hungry wandering ghosts (preta-s). Man's rebirth is determined by his actions (karma) which carry with them inevitable consequences to be worked out in future lives. The suffering of the hells and of animal and preta rebirths are more obvious than of the three 'good' rebirths as gods, demi-gods or men, but in fact all are characterised by suffering.
Only men are able to do anything about this unsatisfactory mode of existence. It is only from the precious opportunity of human rebirth, conceived of as being in itself an infinitely rare occurrence in the cycles of reincarnation, that there is any possibility of reaching *nirvāṇa or freedom from suffering and the cycle of rebirth (*samsāra).

This possibility is the attainment of Enlightenment or Buddhahood, a state in which suffering is absent. The Enlightened being is free from desires towards objects in this world, or aversions from them. He sees through these 'objects', including his own ego, and perceives their lack of permanence and of real separate individuality or existence. His thought-processes are not affected by previous karma, and do not in their turn have karmic consequences. Thus he is free to act in accordance with the demands of the situation in which he finds himself, and in accordance with the needs of other beings, because the desire to save other beings from their sufferings is essential for his attainment of Enlightenment, and his action to help them is the natural consequence of his having attained it.

Buddhahood is contrasted with another and lower state, that achieved by the *arhat, and, according to the Mahāyāna schools, that aimed at by the Hinayāna teachings taught by the historical Buddha to mankind as yet not ready for the higher teachings. This state is in Tibetan that of thar pa, which I translate as Liberation. The arhat too is free from suffering, but his attainment is motivated only by the desire to escape from his personal suffering, and it is therefore neither complete nor attended by the Buddha's ability to help other beings.

To attain the Buddha's full Enlightenment, however, one needs to possess the special motivational state, called *Bodhicitta, of desiring to achieve Enlightenment in order to save all beings from their sufferings. One of the primary components of the meaning of the very
important term bodhisattva (byang chub sems dpa') is that a bodhi-
sattva is someone who has developed Bodhicitta, and whose life and activ-
ity is therefore dedicated entirely to freeing all beings from their
sufferings through his present actions and his eventual attainment of
enlightenment. The bodhisattva concept is thus a part of the con-
ceptual support for the role of the lamas, who are seen in some cases
as emanations of particular bodhisattvas, and in all cases as per-
forming the conduct of a bodhisattva. 13

The possibility of Buddhahood (Enlightenment) is present in all
sentient beings, in however atrophied a state, and of course it is
present in all human beings. The historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, demon-
strated the attainment of enlightenment in his own life, and his
teachings, the Dharma, indicate how his example can be followed.

The Buddha, however, as we have seen, gave many different kinds
of teachings, to suit the different audiences to whom he was speaking;
without a competent living teacher to direct us to those teachings
which are in accord with our immediate weaknesses we are unlikely to
make much progress towards Buddhahood. Indeed the teacher or 'lama'
(bla ma translating Sanskrit *guru) has come to be seen, in the Tibetan
versions of the teachings, as essential to the Buddhist path to
enlightenment. In the words of a common refuge formula, the lama
encompasses all of the path; he is

...the condensed essence in one of all the qualities and
virtuous actions of the body, speech and mind of all the
Buddhas of the ten directions and the three times, the
place of origin of all the 84,000 collections of the Dharma,
and the ruling lord of all the noble Sangha. 14

The doctrine of the lama, who gives the appropriate teachings to
each of his students, implies that the teachings are not true in any
absolute sense; or at least that they are not all true. The justifica-
tion for a particular teaching is that it works: it helps lead the
person who practices it further along the path to Enlightenment.
Inevitably the teachings regarded as elementary, for example, the Abhidharma philosophy of the Hinayana schools, are subject to reinterpretation or replacement by more 'advanced' teachings when the student has mastered them. Many practices are designed so that they can be taken at a number of different levels; books may also be written so as to be subject to different levels of interpretation. These are all aspects of the doctrine of upaya, of means for the transmission of Enlightenment.

Various concepts were devised in order to resolve the problems implicit in this hierarchy of teachings. The contents of the Buddhist sutras can be classified as 'needing to be interpreted' or 'literally true', corresponding to two kinds of truth or levels of truth, conventional or provisional (*samvriti) and real or absolute (*paramartha). Different views on the relationship between the two levels also developed. Thus the Geluk-pas stressed the validity of 'conventional' truth at its own level, an attitude consonant with their emphasis on the Sutra practices, which in their earlier stages especially make sense primarily in terms of this level.

As a consequence of this doctrine of upaya, apparent conflicts between different teachings, or different levels of the same system, are of little importance. They can in any case be resolved by an appeal to the level of absolute truth. This can at times make it difficult to discuss Tibetan philosophy coherently or to provide a consistent interpretation of particular doctrines; for example, that of the incarnate lama, which I examine in Chapter Seven. This very inconsistency is, however, an important part of the system; it is only at the level of absolute truth, that is in the perception of an Enlightened being, that the inconsistencies are transcended, and this level of understanding cannot be expressed directly in words in any case.

As will be shown, the Tibetans are not lacking in systematic expositions
of the teachings, but each of these only charts a particular path towards the single goal of the system, Enlightenment. While each teaching may emphasise the need to keep straight ahead along its own particular path, it does not invalidate the possibility of other routes.

_Geluk-pa summaries of the Sūtra teachings._

I now intend to explore further the doctrine of upāya, and to give more substance to the points I have made, through an analysis of some Tibetan doctrinal texts from the Geluk-pa and Kagyu-pa orders. Firstly, I will take the Geluk-pa codification of the Sūtra teachings, as exemplified in texts by the founder of the Geluk-pa order, Tsongkha-pa, and a later scholar of this order, Yeshe Gyentsen (1713-1793), tutor of the Eighth Dalai Lama.

The 'Three Principles of the Path' is a short text of Tsongkha-pa's which states the primary emphases of the sūtra teachings for the Geluk-pas. The three principles or main points of the path are Renunciation (of saṃsāra), Bodhicitta and Prajñā ('insight'). Tsongkha-pa exhorts those 'fortunate ones' to listen who are not tied to the joys of saṃsāra, and who place reliance on the Buddha's path in striving to make use of 'leisure and opportunity'.

'Leisure and opportunity' (dal 'byor) is a reference to the 'eight aspects of leisure' and 'ten aspects of opportunity' which define the fully-endowed human being who is able to pursue the path to enlightenment. The first are negative conditions (not being born in the hells, as an animal, as a barbarian, etc.); the second positive (being born as a human being, in a civilized land, with access to the Buddha's teachings, etc.) The difficulty of obtaining such a rebirth is constantly stressed, in order to emphasise the importance of making use of it now that we are fortunate enough to possess it:
This favourable moment, so hard to obtain, has arrived, leading to the achievement of man's well-being. If it is not utilized advantageously now, will the opportunity ever come again? (Bodhicaryāvatāra I.4)  

The contemplation of the difficulty of acquiring this opportunity is the first of the four ordinary preliminary subjects for meditation. Tsongkha-pa gives them as the practice for developing Renunciation of Sāṃsāra; they occur frequently in preliminary practice texts and other contexts.  

Leisure and opportunity are hard to find, and this life may soon end; so train the mind, and turn from interest in this life. Think repeatedly of the infallible action of karma, and the sufferings of sāṃsāra, and turn from interest in future lives.  

The aim of this practice is to destroy all interest in and attachment to achieving pleasure within this life or attaining pleasant rebirths in future lives. In the fuller presentations of the Geluk-pa sūtra teachings these are taught as two successive stages.  

But Renunciation alone is not enough to lead to the achievement of complete Enlightenment; it is only the motivation of the Hinayāna path. The Maha-yāna practiser must add to it the development of Bodhicitta, the motivation to achieve enlightenment for the sake of other beings, and it is this which Tsongkha-pa next describes in condensed form:  

Carried away by the four mighty rivers, held by the firm bonds of karma, so hard to reverse, trapped in the iron net of ego-attachment, completely enveloped by the black fog of ignorance; born and born again endlessly into sāṃsāra to suffer without any break through its three sorrows; by thinking over this, our mothers' condition, generate Bodhicitta.  

All beings are 'our mothers' since in the endless sequence of rebirths of beginningless sāṃsāra, all of them will at one time or another have been born as our mother, cared for us as a mother, and such.  

Renunciation and Bodhicitta provide the motivation and preconditions, but the third essential to the attainment of Enlightenment on the Sūtra path is the development of understanding of the true nature of reality.
But if without having prajñā which sees things as they really are, you only practice Renunciation and the development of Bodhicitta, you cannot cut off the roots of Samsāra. So work at the method of understanding dependent origination.

The rest of the text explains the Geluk-pa epistemology.

'Dependent origination' (*pratītyasamutpāda), for the Mahāyāna, is the arising of all phenomena in mutual dependence, conditioned by each other, so that nothing can be said to have true independent existence. As such it is more or less synonymous with Prajñā, and with *Śūnyatā 'voidness'; that is, the perception of things as being without real independent existence. Tsongka-pa's particular insight, and the teaching of the Geluk-pa order, was, as mentioned previously, to do with the identity of karma and causation in the 'world of appearances' — that is, at the conventional level of truth — with Voidness, the absence of real independent existence at the 'absolute level' of truth. Thus we see the essentials of the Sūtra path as taught by the Geluk-pas; ascetic withdrawal from life, primarily through monasticism; the development of Bodhicitta and compassion for all beings; and the transformation of one's present view of the world into a radically different mode of seeing things in which phenomena are mutually dependent, void of independent reality, conditioned and so no longer potential objects of attachment or repulsion. These three factors are indeed basic to the Buddhist path as taught in all Tibetan monastic orders and schools; what might be regarded as characteristically Geluk-pa here are the great emphasis on withdrawal from life — implicitly, monastic withdrawal — and the stress on epistemology and the philosophical understanding of the nature of perception, knowledge and 'reality'. Characteristic forms of Geluk-pa meditation for the Sūtra teachings include, as well as the development of calmness of mind and one-pointed attention (*śamatha), the point-by-point contemplation of the logical arguments of the teachings, culminating in those for the
voidness of all phenomena, including of course the self (*vipāsyāna*). 28

The combination of Bodhicitta and the accompanying activity of
the bodhisattva with prajñā (discriminating insight) is an important
theme of Tibetan Buddhism; it appears repeatedly in the tantras as the
need for the bringing together of upāya (means, beneficial expedients
for conveying the teachings) and prajñā. Bodhicitta and upāya are
closely related, because the first motivates and causes the second.
Both prajñā and upāya are necessary for the attainment of Enlightenment.
This was a particularly important aspect of the teachings of Atīśa,
founder of the Kadam-pa order from which the Geluk-pas took much of
their teachings; he was said to have united in himself the two lineages
of teaching on prajñā and Bodhicitta, which had become separated over
the centuries. 29 Atīśa writes in his Bodhipathapradīpa:

Prajñā without upāya and upāya without prajñā are said
to be unfree /mable to act/. Therefore, do not ignore either
of them... As is said by the Conquerors, upāya is the collecting
of merit through the pāramī-s of giving etc., except for the
pāramī of prajñā... Prajñā is fully explained as that knowledge
which comes to see the skandha-s, dhātu-s and āyatana-s
as unoriginated and void in their true nature. 30

The gradual course to Enlightenment:

the lam rim teachings in the Geluk-pa order.

The details of the sūtra path were elaborated in each of the
traditions of the Tibetan monastic order; the Geluk-pa presentation of
these is in the texts known as lam rim ('Stages of the Path'). Atīśa's
Bodhipathapradīpa, with its autocommentary by Atīśa, is itself a text
of this sort, and several of the later Kadam-pa teachers also wrote
such texts, 31 but the Geluk-pa tradition of these texts in its present
form derives from Tsongkha-pa's three lam rim versions. The most
important of these is a lengthy work known as the lam rim chen mo
('large lam rim'); it has not as yet been translated from Tibetan in
full, 32 though an English version has been made of a set of oral
teachings on the lam rim which closely follow the main divisions of Tsongkha-pa's work. Tsongkha-pa himself composed two shorter versions, a medium-length work and a short verse text (the lam rim bedus 'don) suitable for memorising. In the discussion below I shall use also a summary of the Sutra and Tantra teachings by Yeshe Gyentsen, an 18th-century Geluk-pa teacher, which follows the lam rim scheme closely for the sutra section. Further details of the lam rim tradition in Tibetan literature are given by Berzin.

Tsongkha-pa derived the lam rim scheme from the first four verses of Atisa's Bodhipathapradyapa:

Know there to be three types of person, small, medium and best. The characteristics of each are very clear. I shall write of their various distinguishing features.

Know him to be the first type of person who, acting entirely for his own sake, pursues the pleasures of samsara. Know him to be the medium type of person who seeks peace for himself alone, having rejected the pleasures of samsara and turned away from non-virtuous actions. He is the best type of person who always desires to remove completely the sufferings of others through his own suffering.

The distinction between the second and third, or medium and best, types is familiar; it is the old distinction between the aim of the Hinayana teachings and that of the Mahayana teachings. The first type is the person whose practice is directed towards aims within the realms of samsara, specifically to the attainment of rebirth as a man or a god and the avoidance of the lower rebirths of animals, ghosts and hell-beings in his future lives.

This is the kind of Buddhist practice expected of the average lay follower, in Tibet as in the Theravadin countries. The 'ideology of merit' described in anthropological studies of these cultures refers essentially to this kind of Buddhist practice, which is concerned primarily with the performance of virtuous actions, actions with good karmic consequences, and thus the accumulation of merit (*puhya, Tibetan bsod nams), and the avoidance of non-virtuous actions
with bad karmic consequences. Spiro\(^39\) coined the term 'Kammatic' for it (from Pali +kamma = *karma) and contrasts it with 'normative', 'Nibbianic' Buddhism, of which the aim is the achievement of +nibbāṇa (*nirvāṇa), a type which corresponds closely to Atīśa's 'medium type' of person. What Atīśa in fact did, or what he was interpreted as having done, was to recognise explicitly the lesser motivation of the 'Kammatic' Buddhists and to give them a place within the overall scheme. I am not sure whether it makes much sense anyway to talk of this level of Buddhist practice as being a 'deviation' from normative Theravāda Buddhism; the Buddhists themselves do not seem to have seen it that way until Western interpreters of Buddhism suggested that they should. For the Tibetans at any rate it was not a deviation but an alternative, or rather a preliminary to the pursuit of Enlightenment proper.

Tsongkha-pa took over the scheme and ordered his stages of the teaching according to the three types. In his work and that of his successors the three types are clearly meant to be successive stages in the development of all people rather than different types as person. Thus Yeshe Gyentsen says,

The "three types of person" are not taught as the separate practices of three different individuals but as the stages in practice of a single individual; as, for example, with a man who is born and gradually ages, gradually achieving the stages of child, adult and old man; similarly with the "three types of person", one progressively becomes small, medium and best.\(^40\)

Of course in the case of an average lay Buddhist such a progression would have to be considered mainly in terms of future lives, no doubt. However, the lam rim texts present a progressive course of teachings going through the three stages.

**The first type of person.** The teachings for this stage begin with devotion to one's teacher,\(^41\) a subject which I will discuss at greater length in a later section because of its importance to my
argument. There follow the four subjects of ordinary preliminary practice, already mentioned: the difficulty of achieving human rebirth, the uncertainty of the time of one's death, the immutable action of karma, and the suffering of samsāra, though at this stage the suffering described is only that of the three lower states of rebirth (animals, ghosts and hell-beings), since the motivation of the first type is to avoid these rebirths in future lives and attain the relatively more pleasant higher states of men and gods. The contemplation of karma teaches the primary method of achieving these states, which is through the performance of virtuous action and the avoidance of non-virtuous action. The first type of person is also encouraged to 'go for refuge' to the Three Jewels, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, who alone can provide protection against rebirth in the lower states. At this level Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have much the same meaning as in Theravāda Buddhism: the Buddha, his teachings, and the community of followers of his teachings, which for the Geluk-pas is primarily the monastic community. If one nevertheless performs non-virtuous actions, they can be purified by the four opponent forces (gnyen po stobs bzhi); taking refuge in the Three Jewels, repentance, performing virtuous actions, and vowing not to repeat the non-virtuous actions.

When through so striving you see the doings of this world as being like a drunkard dancing on the edge of a precipice, and without ever being attached to this life, your mind is always, day and night, steadily concerned with your future life, the state of mind of the lowest type of person has arisen. 42

The second type of person. Here the teachings on the suffering of samsāra are extended to include the 'higher' states of rebirth, those of men and gods. Even their life is full of sufferings of various kinds and is not worth desiring. The force that holds us within this endless process of life and suffering is the action of the kleśa-s, mental and moral defilements or obscurations, which need to be eradicated to enable us to cease accumulating karma, good or bad — since both
good and bad karma lead to the continuation of the process of samsāra - and escape. The second type of person has completely destroyed all attraction to samsāra and is continually preoccupied with the desire to escape from samsāra and achieve 'Liberation'. The way to do this is through the triple training of *śīla (behaviour, conduct), *samādhi (mental concentration and calmness of mind) and *prajña (discriminating insight), but rather than practice these with the motivation of the second type of person the student is enjoined to progress to the third and highest stage.

The third and highest type of person (the bodhisattva). This section begins with the development of bodhicitta, the special motivation of this type. The lam rim texts include various sequences of contemplation or formal meditation which are designed to bring about this development of the desire to achieve Enlightenment in order to free all other beings from their sufferings. These mostly involve a combination of the contemplation of the suffering of beings in samsāra, and of our involvement with these beings - for example, through their all having been our 'mothers' in past lives - with the meditations on love and compassion which form a familiar part of both Theravāda and Tibetan practice. The teachings also explain the many advantages of the development of bodhicitta. Then they discuss the bodhicitta vows, which form the second (and specifically Mahāyāna) series of vows taken in Tibetan Buddhism, and a necessary prerequisite as mentioned earlier to the tantric vows required before tantric initiation. The actual practice of the third type of person, the bodhisattva, is described in terms of the bringing to perfection of the six paramitās: dāna (generosity), śīla (conduct), kṣanti (patience or forbearance), vīrya (energy, perseverance), dhyāna (śamādhi, mental concentration) and prajña. The perfecting of the last two in particular is explained as the practice of the two modes of meditation, śamatha and vipaśyāna,
which I mentioned briefly above; the development of calmness of mind and one-pointed attention on the one hand, and the development of insight into the voidness of phenomena on the other.\(^4^4\)

**The lam rim teachings in the Kagyü-pa order:**

**Gampo-pa's Jewel Ornament.**

The sutra teachings of the other orders are on the whole similar, but there are some significant differences. The standard version of the sutra teachings in the Kagyü-pa order is a text by Gampo-pa, the founder of the order (1079-1153).\(^4^5\) Like the Geluk-pa texts, it is an exposition of the progressive stages of the teaching, and there are close similarities between much of the material in each tradition; the basic structure of the four preliminary practices, the teacher as basis for the practice, taking refuge, the development of Bodhicitta and the practice of the six pāramitā-s follow in much the same order. Gampo-pa had in fact studied with Kadam-pa teachers before he came to Mila Repa, his lama in the Kagyü-pa tradition, so that this similarity is not surprising. He quotes extensively from Atīśa, the founder of the Kadam-pa school, in the *Jewel Ornament*, and the work is indeed regarded by the Tibetans as a 'merging of the two streams' of Kadam-pa and Mahāmudrā (the special meditational teaching of Mila Repa's tradition). The basic scheme of Gampo-pa's work is summarised below. Gampo-pa divides his text into twenty-one chapters, indicated in the list by Arabic numerals; this arrangement is followed in Guenther's translation.\(^4^6\)

I THE MOTIVE: the teaching on the Tathāgata-garbha, the 'Buddha-potentiality' for the attainment of Enlightenment present within all beings. (1)

II THE WORKING BASIS: the aspects of 'leisure and opportunity' of the human rebirth, and the difficulty of attaining it (2)

III THE CONTRIBUTORY CAUSE: 'spiritual friends' (teachers); how to find
them and follow their teachings (3)

IV THE METHOD: the instructions of the 'spiritual friends'

A. impermanence (including the inevitability of death and the uncertainty of its time) (4)
B. the suffering of samsāra (5), and karma which is the driving force behind it (6)
C. the development of love and compassion (7)
D. the development of Bodhicitta:
   i. taking refuge (8)
   ii. the actual generation of Bodhicitta (9)
   iii. preserving and strengthening Bodhicitta (10)
   iv. the practice of a bodhisattva: the six pāramitās in general (11) and individually (12–17)
   v. the five successive paths (18) and the ten spiritual levels (19) achieved by the bodhisattva

V THE RESULT: Perfect Buddhahood, including a discussion of the Ṛkṣa-s (20)

VI THE ACTIVITY OF THE BUDDHA: 'working for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas' (21)

The emphasis in this text on the Tathāgata-garbha, the Buddha-potentiality present within all beings, which is described in the opening chapter, seems in some measure to reflect the difference in attitude between the approaches of the two schools; for the Geluk-pa teachings, Enlightenment tends to be described as a state to be achieved, at least at the more elementary levels of the teachings, rather than as the uncovering of something already present within. The special emphases of the Kagyud-pa school also emerge in Gampo-pa's discussion of the pāramitā of Prajñā. In the Geluk-pa treatments, prajñā is discussed primarily in the context of śamatha and vipaśyanā meditation, in combination with dhyāna-pāramitā. Instead of discussing these two
forms of meditation, Gampo-pa refers to the meditational technique of Mahāmudrā, the specific teaching of Mila Rêpa's lineage. Mahāmudrā is a form of meditation which consists of an attempt to enter directly into an Enlightened mode of being.48

Place the mind free from strain, without any thoughts of existence or non-existence, accepting or rejecting. As Tilopa says: Don't think, don't contemplate, don't cognize; don't meditate, don't examine; leave the mind in its own place.

Gampo-pa also quotes the 700-verse Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra:

The meditation of the perfection of prajñā is not accepting, holding or rejecting any dharma. Not to stay with anything is the meditation of the perfection of prajñā. Not to think and not to conceptualize is the meditation of the perfection of prajñā.50

The possession of this awareness, which is the possession of Śūnyatā, is said by Gampo-pa to include all the other stages of religious practice; it encompasses taking refuge, the development of Bodhicitta, tantric practice and the six pāramitā-s; it is the making of offerings and the confession of non-virtuous actions; it is perfect conduct, and the contemplation of the Dharma.51 All this raises again the question which has been of recurrent importance in the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism. If everything is included in this ultimate meditation (or non-meditation), then why is there this whole variety of 'provisional' teachings and truths? As Gampo-pa puts it:

Now if everything is included in this meditation on reality and the nature of mind, why has there come about the description of so many varieties of method?52 The reason is to instruct those unfortunate beings who are deluded as to the true nature of reality. As it says in the Ye shes snang ba rgyan sūtra: "The exposition of dependent origination and the teaching of gradual stages are spoken as expedients for the deluded. How in this self-authenticated ultimate reality can one progress in stages?"53

Gampo-pa makes a related point in his chapter on Perfect Buddhahood, where he discusses various opinions about the 'transcending awareness' (*jhāna, gnosis) of the Buddha. The nature of Buddhahood is unborn and ineffable. The transcending awareness of the Buddha,
according to Gampo-pa's teacher, the Venerable Milā Rēpa, is 'beyond any predication such as existence or non-existence, eternalism or nihilism, and beyond the realm of intellect. Whatever name it is called does not alter its nature....' And Gampo-pa quotes the mDo sde rgyan, 'Liberation (is) merely the end of error.'

Thus for Gampo-pa the elaborate descriptions of the nature of reality and Enlightenment given in the sūtras are no more than teaching aids, or, in the Buddhist simile, rafts to be thrown aside once the river is crossed; they are not 'true', since there is simply nothing that can be said about the true nature of Enlightenment. All these practices are merely techniques (upāya) to lead beings towards that Enlightenment.

The *kāya-s or 'Bodies' of the Buddha.

One other doctrine of the sūtra teachings needs to be explained, since it is important for an understanding of both tantra and the incarnate lama doctrine. This is the teaching on the *kāya-s or 'bodies' of the Buddha, which seems to have first developed in Hīnayāna schools such as the Sarvāstivāda, but which became an important part of the Mahāyāna teachings and is basic both to the tantras and to the Tibetan view of the lama. The doctrine of the Kāya-s is an attempt to define the nature of Buddhahood and the various aspects of its manifestation.

The Kāya-s are normally reckoned as three, the Dharma-kāya, which is the true nature of the Buddha or Enlightenment, and the two Form Kāya-s (Kūpa-kāya) through which it is manifested. These are the Nirmāṇa-kāya, the form in which the Buddha appears to ordinary human beings, and the Sambhoga-kāya, the transfigured forms under which the Buddha can be perceived directly only by those who have developed insight and purified the kleśa-s to a very high degree. The divine forms involved in tantric meditation are primarily at the Sambhoga-kāya
level (though symbolic representations of the Dharma-kāya are also used; primarily Samantabhadra, in the Old Tantras, and Vajradhāra, in the New.) The historical Buddha, and the physical form of lamas insofar as they are seen as being the Buddha, are nirmāṇa-kāya (in Tibetan sprul sku, the usual term for 'incarnate lama').

Sometimes the Dharma-kāya is subdivided too, into the mode of cognition of the Buddha (*jñāna-dharma-kāya) and the ultimate nature of Buddhahood (*svabhāvika-kāya, 'self-existent body'); sometimes this latter term refers rather to the unity of the three primary kāya-s. The precise subdivision depends on the philosophical position of the writer concerned and on what he is writing about, but as with many of these formal schemes different arrangements may be stressed depending on what other aspects of the teachings they are be brought into relation with. Thus the six pāramitā-s may be expanded to ten, to enable them to correspond to the ten spiritual levels (*bhūmi) achieved by a bodhisattva; the set of five tantric Buddhas can be re-ordered, expanded to six, and so on, according to the nature of the total scheme. Yeshe Gyentse's text at one place makes the primary division of the kāya-s into two, in order to bring about a correspondence with the two levels of truth, and the complementarity of prajñā and upāya. Thus the two aspects at the 'starting point' of the practice are the two truths, conventional and absolute, and they correspond to the two aspects of the 'path', upāya and prajñā, and the two aspects of the 'goal', the Form kāya-s and the Dharma-kāya. Elsewhere Yeshe Gyentse uses the division into three, when discussing death, the intermediate state (between death and rebirth) and birth as the situations for the realisation of dharma-kāya, sambhogā-kāya and nirmāṇa-kāya.

The symbols of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy are best seen not as forming a single, comprehensive and self-consistent scheme, but as offering a repertoire which can be selected from and used variously by
the authors of particular texts, teachings and meditational procedures. But the total content of the teachings does not differ significantly between these different presentations, and it is taken for granted by the Tibetans, as by the authors of these texts, that ultimately there is only a single goal.

This will emerge more clearly in the discussion of tantric practice in the next chapter. The doctrine of upāya, means for the presentation of the teachings, which underlies all these presentations of the teachings and ritual techniques, is one of the principal points to emerge from the discussion in this chapter. Another is its converse, the role of the teacher. A third is the Mahāyāna philosophy in which the world of appearances is what it seems to be through our interpreting it in the way we do. This philosophy leaves open the possibility of viewing ourselves and the exterior world in a different way, and by doing so being able to produce changes within them. This is what happens in tantric practice, the basis of the lama's power and the subject of my next chapter.
Notes to Chapter Three.


3. For the Hinayāna schools see e.g. Conze 1962:119-191. Guenther 1972: 31-89 gives Tibetan discussions of the Vaibhāṣika (=Sarvāstivāda) and Saṃvatīraka, which were the only two of significance to the Tibetans.

4. Khê-trup-je states the Geluk-pa viewpoint that the philosophical school of all the tantras is Prāśangika-Mādhyamika (Lessing and Wayman 1968:92-93).

5. This is very much a summary description. See below, Chapter Four, where I go into more detail. Tantric practice is secret in that instructions for practice are given only to those who have received the appropriate initiation or empowerment from their lama (i.e., tantric teacher). The most informative and reliable Western studies are those of Guenther (1963, 1969, 1971, 1972), Tucci (1966a, and 1970:62-126), Wayman (1973) and Feyer (1973). A general discussion of the (New) Tantras by Khê-trup-je has been translated by Lessing and Wayman (1968).

6. On which see Chapter Eight.

7. Examples of such texts are the bar do thos grol or 'Tibetan Book of the Dead', translated by Kazi Dawa-Gampup (Evans-Wentz 1960) and Tucci(1949); the dkon mchog spyi 'dus ('Union of the Precious Ones') ritual cycle, discussed by Snellgrove in 1957:226-261; the Padma thang yig (translated by Toussaint 1933) and the two texts translated in Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center (1973). cf. also Snellgrove and Richardson 1968:170-172.

8. There is some evidence suggesting Sanskrit originals however for at least some of these texts; cf. Smith 1970:7-8 and note 17.


11. Except for the Old Tantras and gter ma, which were much later codified into separate canonical collections. Some Kanjur editions include a few of the Old Tantras in a separate section.


13. Thus the Srāvaka-s, the Hinayāna followers aiming to attain the state of arhat, are contrasted unfavourably with the bodhisattvas, who aim at Buddhahood. A third type, the Pratyekabuddha-s, is intermediate between the Srāvaka and the bodhisattva, but for the Tibetans as for other Mahayānists the distinction between them and the sravakas has no practical significance. The Pratyekabuddhas achieve their limited enlightenment in isolation from teaching, in an age unlike the present in which no Buddha has entered the world, so there are none of them now in existence. They do little or no teaching themselves.
14. Given in Tibetan text No.19, f.3v, and No. 7, p. 5. For Tibetan text see Appendix One. The translation is mine.

15. Frequently three levels are mentioned, 'outer', 'inner' and 'secret' (phyi nang gsang). Thus the taking of refuge can be made at each of these three levels, and the three objects of refuge, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, given corresponding interpretation at each level. For the multiple interpretation of texts, cf. Tibetan Nyingma Center, 1973:109-121, and also the levels of interpretation of Mila Kapa's biography (Govinda 1969:186, note 1) and songs (Trungpa 1973: 241-243).


17. *miərtha, nges don.


21. The more or less standard translation of prajña by 'wisdom' has been strongly criticised by Guenther (1970:xiii-xiv, 1969:61, note 1) among others. A convenient English gloss is hardly available; Guenther resorts to circumlocutions such as 'analytical appreciative understanding' and 'discriminating awareness born from wisdom'. I translate prajña by 'insight', or sometimes by 'discriminating insight', to maintain the distinction from jñāna or 'transcending insight', which results from the operation of prajña; however I repeat Guenther's warning that these Buddhist technical terms can only be understood as part of the entire system of Buddhist philosophy and practice.

22. For the complete list cf. for example Guenther 1970:14-16, under 'unique occasion' and 'right juncture'.


25. Tibetan text No. 8, p. 515.

26. Ibid., 515-516.

27. Ibid., 516. I would like to acknowledge the help of Bob Thurman, with whom I first studied this text in 1971, in these translations. For Tibetan see Appendix One.


30. This text is translated somewhat inadequately in Chattopadhyaya, 1967: 525-535. My translation corresponds to verses 42, 44, 46 of Chattopadhyaya's version. For Tibetan (from Tibetan text No. 10, f.276v.) see Appendix One.


32. There is a partial translation in Russian made from the Mongolian version (Tsybikov 1910-13). Wayman, who gave a description of the lam rim chen mo in Wayman, 1952, is reported to be working on a complete translation.

34. Translated in Berzin 1972, passim, and also by Lhalungpa (1968) and in Wangyal 1973:241-249.


36. My translation, = Chattopadhyaya’s verses 1-4, Tibetan text No. 10 f.274r. These verses are quoted in Gampo-pa’s Jewel Ornament (see below, note 45) and translated from there by Guenther (1970:17-18) who however renders the last definition as

He who seriously wants to dispel
All the misery of others
Because in the stream of his own being he has understood the nature of misery
Is an excellent man.

Possibly his text has rtags (‘perceived’) instead of rtags (‘attached’) though rtags is given in both my Bodhipathapradipa and Jewel Ornament texts (Tibetan texts Nos. 10, 11).

37. The first type is ambiguous in Atīśa’s text; Chattopadhyaya’s translation (‘acts in every way for the worldly pleasures only’) gives the impression of lack of interest in the Buddhist path. However the interpretation I give is that of all Tibetan commentators known to me, including Gampo-pa who wrote within a century of Atīśa’s death. The pleasures of samsāra of course include those of future lives as much as of the present life. The point is of some interest because of its bearing on the doctrine of upāya and the encouragement of lesser aims for laymen and beginners. Possibly Atīśa’s autocommentary on the text, which I have not seen, makes the meaning plain. In addition to men and gods, the ‘good’ rebirths also include the *asura*-s or demi-gods, but they are not of much importance in Tibetan thought.

38. The phrase is Tambiah’s, in Tambiah 1968. Also 1970:141-151.


41. Yeshe Gyentsen uses the term bshes gnyen dam pa ‘spiritual friend’ for teacher in this context, though Tsongkha-pa and others use bla ma ‘lama’ in this context too. See Chapter Six on the distinction between these terms. bshes gnyen dam pa and its equivalent dge bali bshes gnyen or dge bshes correspond to *Kalyāṇamitra, Pali kalyāṇamittta ‘spiritual friend’, the usual Theravādin term for the teacher. dge bshes was regularly used by the Kadam-pa order as a title for its teachers; in modern times it is used of possessors of the highest Geluk-pa academic degree (Berzin 1972:Appendix, 415-416.)


43. As the first two of the four ‘unlimited’ (tehad med) meditations, the four Brahmavihāra-s of Indian Buddhism. Cf. Conze 1962:80-91.

44. These two types of meditation exist in the Theravāda tradition too, where *vipassanā* is concerned with the development of insight into the ‘three marks’ of reality in early Buddhism: suffering, impermanence, and lack of self (e.g. Saddhatissa 1971:1-84). For the bodhisattva teachings and vows, the six perfections, śamatha and vipaśyanā, see Berzin 1972:422-464, Wayman 1952. Yeshe Gyentsen in fact adopts a somewhat different mode of exposition for the Bodhisattva path, no doubt to bring out the continuity with tantric practice. He uses
the triadic division into outlook, meditative practice and conduct (lta somg spryod) successively to describe the path of the bodhisattva, the three lower tantras, and the developing and completing stages of the Anuttarayoga tantra, making four levels: Guenther 1971:86-95.

45. Translated by Guenther, 1970.

46. My terminology differs from Guenther's in several places, mainly for the sake of consistency with my usage elsewhere in this study.

47. I speak only of the way in which the teachings are presented in these relatively elementary texts. There seems a marked tendency for the Geluk-pas to use the one kind of description, Kagyü-pa and Nyingma-pa the other. Geluk-pa authors, including Tsongkhapa-pa himself, wrote extensively about the concept of tathāgatagarbha in more advanced works, cf. Ruegg 1969.


52. Guenther (1970:224) has 'so many stages of discriminating awareness' which implies that his text reads shes rab kyi rim pa... Tibetan text No. 11,f.149a, gives the much more intelligible reading thabs kyi rim pa... The mistake would be a fairly easy one to make; the two terms are very closely connected.

53. Reference as previous note. Tibetan in Appendix One.

54. Guenther's translation, 1970:261. These passages are ordered somewhat differently in my text (Tibetan text No.11,f.170b). The mDo sde rgyan, Mahāyānasūtraśālākāra, is a classic Sanskrit treatise said to have been revealed to Asaṅga by the bodhisattva Maitreya. cf. Obermiller 1932-3:1,53; II,139-140.

55. Translating kāya as 'body' is unsatisfactory, especially with regard to the Dharma-kāya, although it has become a standard English rendering. Guenther speaks variously of 'patterns' (1971:97-98) and 'existential norms' (1973:5 note 4 etc.) or else leaves the term untranslated (1973:261-267, 1973:267) which is the solution I prefer.


57. e.g. Yeshe Gyentsen, Guenther 1971:97-98.

58. e.g. Guenther, 1970:270 note 18.

CHAPTER FOUR

The practice of the tantras.

I have already described the place of the tantras in Tibetan thought, and in this chapter I need to explain what the tantras consist of and how they work. The subject is difficult to discuss, both because of the secrecy with which it has been surrounded, and because of the nature of the methods involved. The terminology of the tantras refers to mental, emotional and physical states which occur in the course of tantric practice, and can only be entirely comprehensible to someone who has evoked in himself the experiences to which the terms refer, which I have not. Nevertheless I shall endeavour to discuss the meaning of these methods, because the symbolic structure of the tantras, and the processes they expound, are at the basis of Tibetan religion.

The tantras are not only the Tibetans' preferred techniques for the attainment of Enlightenment. In addition, it is through the methods of the tantras that the Tibetan lamas and monks carry out the 'magical' acts, such as protection from dangerous spirits or control of the weather, which they inherited from the pre-Buddhist religious practitioners of Tibet, and which take up a major part of their activities.

These magical rituals have been described frequently in the literature on Tibet, but with a few important, and mostly recent, exceptions, these descriptions have analysed only the external aspects. One can speak here of 'external aspects' because, as I have already indicated, there is a kind of hierarchy of levels of meaning taught by the lamas. Each act of ritual, and many of the words spoken and the symbols used in these rituals, have superficial, 'obvious' meanings,
but can also be taken at more complex levels, depending on the training and personal level of development along the Buddhist path of the person concerned. Thus a mantra may be a set of magical words to preserve one from the dangers of the spirit world; or a means of evoking the tantric deity associated with that mantra, or a means of developing within one - or realizing within one, because it is in fact already there and needs only to be uncovered - the quality, such as compassion, purity, or insight, associated with that deity. A monastic dance may depict the struggle between the forces of good and evil in the external world, or at a more significant level the integration of all aspects of the personality and their direction towards the achievement of Enlightenment.²

In tantric theory, this deepening of the level of practice can be equated with the progression through the successive classes of the tantras.³ I shall concentrate here on the fourth and most important of the classes of the tantras as described in the New Tantra tradition, the Anuttara-yoga-tantra. Anuttara-yoga-tantra practice is defined in terms of being able to practice the Four Purities (yongs dag bzhi) at the present moment; that is, being empowered and permitted to do this through receiving the appropriate teachings and initiations.⁴ These are the purities of body, wealth, action and place. In Geshe Ngawang Thargay's explanation, the purity of body involves transforming oneself into the tantric deity and eliminating one's ordinary form; the purity of wealth is the production (visualization) of goddesses bearing offerings from out of one's heart, for the presentation of offerings in the ritual; the purity of action consists of visualizing oneself as generating 'rays and nectars of blessing' which will reach and liberate countless beings; and the purity of place involves visualizing the place where one is as the celestial abode of the deity; that is, as the mandala. Guenther and Tucci give similar though slightly different explanations.
These four purities are all in a sense aspects of the first, the visualization of oneself as the tantric deity, and this is the central process of the Development Stage of the Anuttara-yoga-tantras. This process is primarily meaningful in terms of the achievement of Enlightenment; but it is while the tantric meditator has in this way taken on the identity and powers of the deity that he is able to carry out the various magical functions which are also characteristic of his role, if secondary in importance. As Stein comments, this process of the production of the deity within oneself

...underlies every ritual practice; for to have any effect a rite requires the presence of the appropriate deity, who thereby bestows a 'blessing' (byin rlung, *adhisthāna) - the power of action - on the officiant.®

The tantric deities are symbolic forms, hypostatized aspects of the path to Enlightenment.® These deities do not exist in isolation. Each is conceived of as part of a group of deities, numbering from five to five hundred or more, who form the entourage of the central figure. These deities are arranged in a symbolic diagram, the *maṇḍala, which is provided with elaborate sets of correspondences within the body and personality of the meditator and with the external world. These maṇḍalas vary from tantra to tantra, and each tantra constitutes a tradition of initiation and practice centered round a particular maṇḍala or group of maṇḍalas, and round a particular central figure. The basic texts are of Indian origin, or in the case of the Old Tantras at least claim to be translated from Sanskrit or other non-Tibetan languages, but numerous commentaries and ritual texts for specific purposes (*sādhana, *sgrub thabs) have been written by Tibetans into modern times. Within a particular tantra, too, different deities may be taken as the central figure with whom the meditator identifies himself, depending on the purpose of the ritual or the nature of the meditator. Here the lama as tantric teacher (rdo rje slob dpon) plays an important part, since it
is he who must decide what the primary obstacles are which his pupil must overcome (e.g., the *kleśa*-s of avarice, pride, desire, and so on, each of which corresponds to different figures in the maṇḍala) and so the precise form which his practice should take. But whoever the central figure with whom identification is made in a particular practice, the rest of the maṇḍala is usually present and visualized. No single quality or attribute is to be developed out of context or out of balance with the rest of the personality.

**The Mandala of the Five Tathāgatas (The Vajradhātu-Maṇḍala)**

This should all become clearer through an examination of the most basic and common of all these sets of deities: the set of the five tathāgata-s, which in one form or another underlies almost all of the more complex schemes, and corresponds to a set of five Families (*rīgas*) into which the other deities can be fitted. These five symbolic figures, represented in the form of tathāgata-s (Buddhas) are Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi; in the most usual arrangement these correspond to centre, east, south, west and north. As such the outer figures are frequently represented facing in the four directions around the sides of stupa-s in Nepal and Tibet. The corresponding families are Tathāgata (Buddha), Vajra, Ratna (Jewel), Padma (Lotus) and Karma. Iconographically, the five Buddha-figures are distinguished by their colours, hand-gestures (*mudrās*), supporting animals and symbols; they may also be represented by their mantra seed-syllables - Sanskrit syllables whose use will be further discussed below. These are given in Table 1. In a more elaborate maṇḍala these five Buddha-figures may be supplemented by female consorts, attendant bodhisattvas, protectors of the four directions, offering goddesses, etc. A representation of the Buddha as Dharma-kāya may be added outside the maṇḍala to represent the underlying unity, at the Dharma-kāya level, behind all these Sambhoga-kāya forms. But there are also
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY</th>
<th>TATHAGATA</th>
<th>HAND-GESTURE</th>
<th>SUPPORTER</th>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>SEED SYLLABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tathāgata</td>
<td>Vairocana</td>
<td>teaching</td>
<td>lion</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td>OṂ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vajra</td>
<td>Akṣobhya</td>
<td>earth-touching</td>
<td>elephant</td>
<td>vajra</td>
<td>HŪṂ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratna</td>
<td>Ratnasambhava</td>
<td>giving</td>
<td>horse</td>
<td>jewel</td>
<td>TRĀṂ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padma</td>
<td>Amitābha</td>
<td>meditation</td>
<td>peacock</td>
<td>lotus</td>
<td>HRĪṂ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma</td>
<td>Amoghasiddhi</td>
<td>fearlessness</td>
<td>*garuḍa</td>
<td>viśvavajra</td>
<td>ĀḤ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(bird-man)</td>
<td>(crossed vajra)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\text{TABLE 1.}\]
correspondences with, for example, the five elements from which the external world is built up; the five skandha-s or psycho-physical constituents of the apparent ego; the five kleśa-s or fundamental passions obstructing progress to Enlightenment; and the five aspects of Śāna (transcendent insight), into which the skandha-s and kleśa-s are transformed by the practice (Table 2). Again the various types of magical acts, the different psychic centres believed to be within the body (cakra-s) and so on can be brought into correspondence with these five-fold schemes.

These sets of correspondences are reminiscent of the Islamic tables of correspondences mentioned by J. Goody in his discussion of literacy in traditional societies. Like the Islamic diagrams, they are not simply classificatory devices. They are ordered groups of symbolic forms and quantities that enable the user to transform his own nature and, in consequence, to manipulate the outside world. If the meditator's practice is aimed at Enlightenment, the choice of symbol may be related to the particular obstacles he has to overcome. On the other hand if he is attempting to bring about changes in the external world, as when a lama performs a ritual for the destruction of malevolent spirits or for the increase of the life and health of his followers, the forms are chosen according to their appropriateness for the job to be performed. In a similar way modern European ritual magicians use tables of correspondences to choose the colours, times, types of incense or magical implements most appropriate for a particular undertaking.

In these tantric rituals the *mantra-s, verbal formulas associated with each tantric deity and with different kinds of magical aims, are of great importance. The seed-syllables of the five families and of other deities, given in Table 1, are components used in the construction of appropriate mantras, and are also visualized in the course of medi-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY</th>
<th>ELEMENT</th>
<th>STANDHA</th>
<th>KLESA</th>
<th>JNANA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tathagata</td>
<td>earth</td>
<td>*rūpa (form)</td>
<td>*moha (delusion)</td>
<td>pure absolute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*vijñāna (consciousness)</td>
<td>*krodha (wrath)</td>
<td>mirror-like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vajra</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>*vedana (feeling)</td>
<td>*abhimāna (pride)</td>
<td>equality, sameness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratna</td>
<td>space</td>
<td>*ṣaṃjñā (perception)</td>
<td>*lobha (desire)</td>
<td>discriminating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padma</td>
<td>fire</td>
<td>*ṣaṃskāra (impulse, volition)</td>
<td>*īrṣyā (jealousy)</td>
<td>all-accomplishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma</td>
<td>air</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2.**

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12
tation. In addition appropriate hand-gestures (*mudrās) accompany the various phases of the meditation. Thus through mudrā, the recitation of mantra, and visualization, body, speech and mind are integrated into the process of evocation of the tantric deity and transformation of oneself into him.

I do not have space for an extended discussion of these procedures. What I will do instead is to use one of the simplest and most common of Tibetan tantric practices to suggest something of the meaning of these techniques. I shall discuss the recitation of the six-syllable mantra of Avalokiteśvara. This mantra, the famous 

Oṃ MAṆI PĀDME HŪṂ that we have already met inscribed on the maṇi-walls and rock-inscriptions throughout the Tibetan landscape, is known to every Tibetan, layman or monk, and its recitation is a religious act which virtually all Tibetans carry out at one time or another. As we might expect it is another example of the Tibetan genius for creating practices which can be interpreted in the simplest and most sophisticated senses. My discussion of this mantra will also offer occasion for a closer examination of one of the best-known of Tibetan tantric deities, though as with many of these deities his origin doubtless precedes his adoption for tantric practice. This deity is the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara himself; the progenitor and continuing protector of the Tibetan people.

The story of Avalokiteśvara.

Avalokiteśvara is a bodhisattva, and as such an entity somewhat between the highly abstract tantric deities, such as the five tathāgatas, and the more material and less elevated worldly deities in nature. Along with some other such figures such as Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of prajñā or discriminating insight; Maitreya, who is the coming Buddha; and the principal forms of Tārā, Avalokiteśvara is a deity of much more human form and individuality than these former
beings. A semi-popular mythological literature has developed around him, as it has around his Chinese form of Kuan Yin. This literature is in large part concerned with the connection between Avalokiteśvara and the early Tibetan kings, and later the Dalai Lamas, and there is no doubt that it functions in some respects as a legitimating myth for the authority of the Dalai Lamas. Avalokiteśvara is also, however, a tantric deity, and thus a meditational device for the development of a particular aspect of the Buddhist path; in this case the quality of compassion (*karuṇā). The reconciliation of these levels of meaning is again a matter of the doctrine of teaching expedients and provisional truths, and this example should serve to make this whole doctrine of upāya clearer.

As a tantric deity, Avalokiteśvara is one of the bodhisattvas attendant upon the Buddha Amitābha, the tathāgata of the Padma (lotus) family, and his iconographical forms are generally depicted holding a lotus. The compassion which Avalokiteśvara symbolises can be regarded as the transformation of desire or passion, the klesa particularly associated with the Padma family. Amitābha himself is described in some Sanskrit texts as presiding over a heaven in the Western direction, known as Sukhāvatī, which he has created in order that beings who have faith in him can be reborn and achieve Enlightenment there. While the Sukhāvatī texts are translated in Tibetan, and Amitābha is, as will be seen, thought of as dwelling in this Western Paradise, the cult of Amitābha himself has not developed in Tibet, in marked contrast to China and Japan.

Avalokiteśvara's role as a compassionate saviour is already developed fully in Sanskrit Buddhist texts such as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (*Lotus sutra*) and the *Karāṇḍa-vyūha.* In addition to these, two primary Tibetan authorities are the gter ma or 'hidden texts' known as the bKa' chems ka khol ma and the Ma pi bka' 'bum. These
two texts deal extensively with the connection between Avalokiteśvara and the early Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo. The first was said to have been found by Atiśa, the famous Indian teacher who came to Tibet in the mid-11th century; Vostrikov suggests a somewhat later date for this text (13th to 14th centuries) and agrees with Rockhill's attribution of the Maṃ bka' 'bum to the 15th century. Here I will give a version of the myth taken from the Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long, a 15th century Tibetan history which borrows extensively from the gter ma texts, as translated under the supervision of a modern Geluk-pa teacher. I give a summary after this version:

Once, while the Buddha Śākyamuni was preaching to his disciples, a rainbow-coloured ray of light emanated from his forehead towards the north, and he smiled. He explained to his disciples that Tibet had never been subdued by any of the Buddhas of past, present or future, but that it would be subdued in the future by the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who had long ago vowed before the thousand buddhas that he would teach and liberate all the living beings in the land of Tibet.

Another ray of light, in the form of a white lotus, emanated from the Buddha's heart and radiated to the Buddha Amitābha in the Western Paradise of Sukhāvatī, whereupon it radiated again from Amitābha's heart and dissolved into a lake. Amitābha prophesied that an incarnation of the Buddha would subdue the beings of Tibet. Avalokiteśvara was miraculously born from a lotus in the lake in Sukhāvatī, and brought before Amitābha, who again prophesied that he would subdue the beings of the land of snow. Through seeing Avalokiteśvara's body and through hearing the six syllables of his mantra (om ma-bi pad-me hūṃ), the beings of Tibet would be freed from the three lower states of rebirth, the demons and devils in Tibet would be pacified, wild animals would be calmed, the hungry would be fed and the sick healed. He would be the protector of those without protection. In the six words of the mantra are found the intent of all the Buddhas, and the root of the 84,000 collections of the teachings.

A monkey king who was an emanation of Avalokiteśvara took the upāsaka vow and went to Tibet to meditate. A mountain demoness there fell in love with him, but he refused her. When she threatened to marry a demon and produce innumerable demon children who would devour all living beings in Tibet, he called on Avalokiteśvara, who advised him to break his vow and marry the demoness. They had six children. At first they ate wild fruit in the forest, but as their numbers increased they exhausted the supply of food. The monkey again called on Avalokiteśvara, and in response the earth was covered with an abundance of food crops. Eating these, the monkey-demon children gradually lost their fur. Eventually their tails fell off, and they stood erect like men. They were the first Tibetans.
Avalokiteśvara also vowed before his teacher Amitābha, that until he had relieved all living beings, he would never put his own happiness before that of other beings. If he should ever do so, he wished that his head would split into ten pieces, and his body into a thousand. He travelled through the six realms of samsāra, teaching all living beings through the six-syllable mantra, and freeing the beings of each realm from their particular miseries. Finally he went to Tibet. But he realised that despite all his efforts he had not helped even a hundredth of the beings in Tibet to liberation. He was seized by sorrow, and for a moment the thought arose that all his work was useless, and that he would be better off pursuing his own happiness. At that moment his head split into ten parts, and his body into a thousand pieces. In agony, he cried to Amitābha, who restored him and blessed him. Each of the pieces of his head was transfigured into a face, one for each of the ten pāramitās; and his body now had a thousand hands, each bearing the eye of wisdom. Amitābha placed himself on the crown of the ten-faced head.²⁴

This eleven-headed, thousand-armed form of Avalokiteśvara is one of his commonest iconographical forms.²⁵ An image of Avalokiteśvara in this form, said to have been built by his 7th-century emanation, the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo, was one of the most important objects of worship in the great temple at Lhasa (the jo khang). The temple built at the refugee centre of Dharamsala, under the present Dalai Lama's direction, contains a replica of this statue, said to contain three of the original heads from the Lhasa statue. The English translation of the short guidebook written by the Dalai Lama for visitors to the new temple has this to say about the image:

The idea of building a new image of Avalokiteśvara was conceived primarily because it would serve as an auspicious omen for the boundless patronising \textit{sic} thoughts of Lord Avalokiteśvara for the welfare of the people of Tibet, and that it would create meritorious conditions for the realisation of the present and future wishes of the Tibetan people...The consecrated formulas contained within the body of the image are strictly in accordance with the prescription detailed in the sacred literature...There is no difference between the one which was housed in the central cathedral of Lhasa and that of the new one built in India. So, faithful devotees can pay homage and make offerings to it, for it is the one and same image of Avalokiteśvara.²⁶

In addition to Songtsen Gampo, three other Tibetan kings are reckoned among the successive manifestations of Avalokiteśvara. One is an early king in whose reign the first Buddhist scriptures arrived in Tibet -
they fell from the skies, and included the *karanda-vyuha mentioned above as a principal canonical text for the Avalokitesvara cult. The two later kings are Trisong Detsen and Repachen, who are both regarded as great patrons of Buddhism. Several later Buddhist teachers are also Avalokitesvara manifestations. But the most important emanations in present-day terms are those of the Dalai Lamas, which I will discuss at greater length below. The Gyalwa Karma-pa, the head of the Karma Kagyu-pa order, is also regarded as an emanation of Avalokitesvara. 27

The mantra of Avalokitesvara.

Here I quote from a Tibetan text recently published among the refugees which cites the words of Songtsen Gampo, presumably from one of the gter ma texts mentioned above, on the usefulness of reciting the mantra of Avalokitesvara:

If you recite this mantra the six paramita-s will be fulfilled. By the OH (the first syllable) all the dharmas (or aspects) of the paramita of generosity will be completely fulfilled. Similarly by the MA that of moral conduct; by the NI that of patience; by the PAD that of energy; by the ME that of meditation; by the HUM all the dharmas of the paramita of prajna (discriminating insight) will be completely fulfilled.

Also by reciting this mantra you will close the door of rebirth of the six types of beings and be reborn in the world of Sukhavatii (Amitabha's western world). By the OH the door to rebirth as a god is cut and you free from the sufferings of the gods, that of falling and rebirth (in a lower state); by the MA the door to birth as an asura is cut and you free from the sufferings of fighting and dissention, etc....

Also by reciting the six syllables you will attain the six *siddhi-s (tantric accomplishments and magical powers)... by reciting the six syllables the six root klea-s are purified... through the OH Avalokitesvara's body is achieved, by MA his speech.... By OH the abilities of the Path of Accumulation, by MA the Path of Practice....

Thus by the recitation of the six syllables, at the time of death rebirth in Sukhavatii will be achieved; you will be born miraculously from a lotus and thereby achieve the state of a Non-returner. 25

These correspondences are best displayed in tabular form (see Table 3.) The emphasis in this text seems to be on the benefits to be
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paramita</th>
<th>Closing Door to Rebirth as Appropriate Sufferings</th>
<th>Acquiring Siddhi-s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OM</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Highest Siddhi (=enlightenment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Conduct</td>
<td>Ordinary Siddhi-s (magical powers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Pacifying Illness and Disease Spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAD</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Increasing Life and Merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>Dhyāna (meditation)</td>
<td>Acquiring Power Over Men, Wealth and Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hūṃ</td>
<td>Prajñā (discriminating insight)</td>
<td>Destroying Enemies, Obstacles, Those Who Cause Injury</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purifying the Root of the Kleśa-s</th>
<th>Achieving Avalokiteśvara's Abilities of the</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OM</td>
<td>Delusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Wrath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Avarice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAD</td>
<td>Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hūṃ</td>
<td>Pride</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.**
attained by the individual reciting the mantra. It is not unambiguous in Tibetan whether the doors of rebirth are being closed and rebirth in Sukhāvatī attained for oneself or for others, but the implication certainly seems to be that it is primarily for the person reciting the mantra. On the other hand another text, by the Karma Kagyu-pa incarnate lama Chögyam Trungpa Rimpoché, gives a rather different impression. Here the development of Avalokiteśvara’s bodhisattva motivation, and the freeing of other beings from their sufferings, are emphasized:

Faith is of great importance: if you recite the Mantra in this way, Avalokiteśvara will be, not something outside yourself to which you pray, he will be your compassion and will belong to you. This compassion is also the compassion of the Buddha himself.

Perfect concentration is all-important. The compassion that grows within you embraces friend and enemy alike. It will lead you to Nirvāṇa; it is the water that brings to fruit the good seeds of Karma within you.

The correspondences given by Trungpa are shown in Table 4. As will be seen, they differ from those given above, but more importantly Trungpa’s set brings the mantra into correspondence with the Vajradhatu mandala (cf. Table 1).

As Trungpa himself comments, ‘the words carry a plurality of meanings corresponding to different levels of awareness.’ For many an illiterate or barely literate Tibetan layman, reciting the mantra of Avalokiteśvara may approach in nature a prayer to a saviour god who will ensure present prosperity and future rebirth in the Western Paradise. But the recitation of the mantra can also be seen as relating to the process of inner purification and realization on the path towards Enlightenment; and it can be seen, as well, as the development within oneself of the compassion of the Enlightened being which is what Avalokiteśvara ‘ultimately’ means. Virtually every Tibetan knows at least something of the story of Avalokiteśvara in which that compassion is so emphasized, and knows that the Dalai Lama is Avalokiteśvara’s
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pāramitā</th>
<th>skandhas which are purified</th>
<th>six worlds whose suffering is destroyed</th>
<th>colours, directions and tathāgata-s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OM</td>
<td>patience</td>
<td>*rūpa (form)</td>
<td>gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>white, centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vairocana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>energy</td>
<td>*saṃskara (impulse)</td>
<td>*asura (demi-gods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>green, north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amoghasiddhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>conduct</td>
<td>*vedanā (feeling)</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yellow, south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ratnasambhava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAD</td>
<td>*prajñā</td>
<td>*vijñāna (consciousness)</td>
<td>animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>blue, east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aksobhya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>generosity</td>
<td>*saṃjñā (perception)</td>
<td>*preta (ghosts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>red, west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amitābha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUM</td>
<td>*smṛti</td>
<td>the totality of the skandhas; or the destroying of the skandhas</td>
<td>hell-beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(mindfulness)</td>
<td></td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Totality of Buddhas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4.**
(continued on following page)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddha families</th>
<th>(kleśa to be overcome)</th>
<th>six types of transcendent insight (*jñāna) to be experienced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OM Tathāgata</td>
<td>*abhimāna (pride)</td>
<td>chos dbvings ye shes (pure absolute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA Karma</td>
<td>*Trgyā (jealousy)</td>
<td>bya grub ye shes (all-accomplishing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI Ratna</td>
<td>*rāga (desire)</td>
<td>mnyam ngyid ye shes (equality, sameness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAD Vajra</td>
<td>*moha (delusion)</td>
<td>shes rab ye shes (prajña, discriminating insight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME Padma</td>
<td>*mātsarya (avarice)</td>
<td>sor rtogs ye shes (discriminating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUM Totality of Buddha families</td>
<td>*dveṣa (wrath)</td>
<td>me long ye shes (mirror-like)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4 (continued)
emanation. It will be noticed too that the development of compassion takes place within the balanced scheme of the mandala; the integration of the personality as a whole is as important as the development of particular qualities.

_Tantric liturgy: the sādhanā._

The recitation of the mantra of Avalokitesvara is one of the simplest and most basic of tantric ritual performances. This particular mantra is frequently recited on its own by ordinary laymen, but the recitation of mantras generally forms part of a larger ritual context. This is the _sādhanā_ (*sādhanā*), the 'means for realising' a particular tantric deity. Some of these _sādhana_ s are of Indian origin, but texts of this kind have been written by Tibetan lamas up to the present day, and form a major part of monastic ritual. Several of these tantric rituals are described in detail in Beyer's _The Cult of Tara_, and others by Lessing and Snellgrove. Their essential components are the detailed visualization of the form of the deity, which is created out of the perception of the voidness of all phenomena, followed by receiving of empowerment from the deity and by assuming identity with him. The actual ritual sequence can be very much more complicated than this. I do not have a text of this kind for Avalokitesvara, but as an example I give a short _sādhanā_ of the tantric goddess Tārā, composed by the early 20th century Phawonka Rimpoché. This is a _sādhanā_ for the attainment of long life, and the white form of Tārā is one of the principal deities of long life. This _sādhanā_ consists simply of the recitation of the refuge and Bodhicitta verse as a preliminary, a mantra recalling the intrinsic purity — that is, voidness — of all phenomena, then the actual visualization of Tara, followed by the empowerment (radiation of light) and recitation of Tara's mantras.
Say the refuge and Bodhicitta verse three times:

\[
\sqrt{\text{To Buddha, Dharma and the best of assemblies I go for refuge until I achieve Enlightenment. Through the merit of my performance of generosity etc. (i.e., the six paramita-s) may I attain Buddhahood for the sake of all beings.}}
\]

OM SVARHAVAŚUDDHOSARVADHARMA SVANHAVASAŚUDDONYAH. \(\sqrt{\text{Oṃ. Pure in true nature are all phenomena, pure in true nature am I.}}\)

Out of the essence of voidness, a white lotus, sun and moon above it. From my own mind, the syllable TĀM, a blue lotus marked with the letter TĀM; transformed in its essence into the form of a Life-giver, the Holy Lady. She has one face and two arms; her right arm is in the bestowing gesture, her left holding a blue lotus; she has the seven eyes of knowledge three on her head, four on her palms and the soles of her feet; she is youthful and has the major and minor marks of a Buddha; her back is curtained by the moon(?)

From the three seed-letters marked in the three places on her body light comes forth and invites the wisdom-beings and gods of empowerment the deities of the mandala, who become one with her; through the initiation of the gods of empowerment she is adorned on the head with Amitāyus Amitābha as the Buddha of Endless Life.

From the TĀM at her heart she radiates light, and all the essence of life of samsāra and nirvāṇa radiates from her and becomes one with my heart.

OM TARE TUTARE TURE MAMA YURPUÑEŚVARA PUŚTI KURUYE SVĀHĀ (repeat 21 times uninterruptedly) ... Increase my life, merit and transcendent insight! ... This is the mantra of Tara as giver of long life.

OM TARE TUTARE TURE SVĀHĀ (repeat as many times as possible) Afterwards repeat the vowel-and-consonant mantra, and the 100-syllable mantra of whichever family you invoke.

If time is lacking, when one sees the signs of death, if one sees them as not there and in their place the radiance of the body of Cintācakra (Tārā), the Lord of Death is overcome, and one quickly becomes an immortal Holder of Knowledge.

A much more detailed life-initiation of White Tārā is given by Beyer; I discuss it briefly below in Chapter Five.

Avalokiteśvara too has various forms used for different functions, and he and Tārā, in some respects regarded as his female counterpart, are only two of numerous tantric deities. The tantric deities are conventionally classified by the Tibetans into three basic types. These are the tantric forms of the lama, further discussed in Chapter Six, the yi dam or patron deities of tantric practice, such as Avalokiteśvara or Tārā, and the akha 'gro, 'sky-goers' (*dka, *dākinī), attendant carriers of spiritual inspiration who appear in the retinue
of the mandalas and are occasionally invoked in their own right. 38

Before I return, in the next chapter, to the lamas' employment of
tantric gods for the material ends desired by laymen, I need to clarify
the relationship between these numerous tantric deities, and the local
gods and spirits described in Chapter Two.

Tantric deities in the Tibetan Pantheon.

At first sight there is a radical difference between the tantric
deities and the local spirits. The tantric 'deities' are imagined
forms assumed by the meditator in a process of re-creation of himself
and of the world outside. Local deities are thought of as beings
existing in this world, at the level of conventional truth, in the same
way that men, animals or ghosts exist. Although these local deities
can possess a spirit medium and speak through him, what happens when
they do is of a quite different order from the tantric meditator's
assumption of divine nature. The spirit-mediums are not aware of what
is happening during their possession; they are merely vehicles through
whom an external god speaks.

However, I have already noted in Chapter Two that the same
term - lha, 'god' - is applied to both tantric deities and local gods, 39
and I have implied that for a lay Tibetan untrained in tantric philosophy
they may not be as distinct as all that. In fact even at the level
of tantric theory the distinctions between them are not always as clear
as I have stated.

First, the 'protective deities', derived from the universal
deities of the Hindus, form an intermediate category between local
gods and tantric deities. These deities dwell, in Buddhist theory, in
the 'heavens' (deva-loka), not on the earth; they are far more power-
ful than the local deities, and unlike them are for the Tibetans
specifically Buddhist in provenance. Like the local deities, however,
they are gods existent in the external world and are bound to the protection of the Buddhist doctrine. While the tantric meditator does not identify with these deities, they have a more significant and elevated role in tantric ritual than that of the local deities and spirits.

These protective deities are, in Buddhist theory, not so much individual gods as functions. Thus the god 'Brahmā' is not always the same god; when one Brahma dies as a god and falls to rebirth in the lower planes, another being is born in the world of the gods to act as 'Brahmā'. This is especially true of important monastic protective deities like Mahākāla and Lha mo (Śrī Devī), who appear in countless slightly varied forms in different monastic orders and temples. It is a particular form and function that is being invoked, rather than a specific deity. In this they are more like the tantric deities than the local gods, though in a more limited way this emphasis on function applies to the local gods too; all local gods are depicted in much the same way, and their names and individual histories are not matters of much consequence.

In addition, men can attain to the same state as the protective deities through the meditational practice of the *dhīna-s (Pali *jñāna-s) which date back to an early stage in the evolution of Buddhist practice. Thus the attainment of the state known as the first dhīna is equivalent to the state of being of the gods of the seventh to ninth heavens, which include that where Brahma dwells.

In fact, as pointed out at the end of Chapter Three, the gods and spirits of the external world are there only because we see the world in such a way as to recognise their existence. From this point of view they are no different from tantric deities - or human beings. The tantric master sees through this conventional reality to the true nature of things, and is so able to recreate them in another form.
He can transform himself into the shape of a god, a man or even an animal if he so desires, since these involve the same transmutation of reality as does the assumption of the identity of a tantric deity. But in general he does not do so, because those forms would be of little advantage to him, while that of a tantric deity is far more useful, both for the attainment of Enlightenment and for the exercise of the deity’s powers in the external world.

The local deities are part of the world created by ordinary men – by their collective karma. The tantric deities are created through the mental processes of those extraordinary men, the lamas and other tantric meditators. As subsequent chapters will explain, the lamas are as much manifestations of the tantric deities as the tantric deities are of the lamas, and both lamas and tantric deities are projections of the undivided nature of Enlightenment represented by the Dharma-kaya deity Vajradhara, which is indeed potentially present within all beings anyway.

Thus even at the level of Buddhist philosophy the distinction between these different classes of deities can be rather indefinite. It is blurred too in the monastic dances, where tantric and non-tantric deities appear side by side, as their images often do in the temples. In many respects the tantric deities, Hindu-derived protective deities and the local deities and spirits form a single continuum of supernatural entities of decreasing power. The relationship between the different classes of deities within this continuum is in part the theme of the next chapter, in which I describe how the lamas employ their tantric powers to control the behaviour of these lesser spirits for the benefit of their followers.
Notes to Chapter Four.


3. Four in the New Tantras, as arranged by Pu-t१n; for this arrangement see Lessing and Wayman 1968, 100 ff. For the six divisions of the Old Tantras, making nine along with the three स८त्रयाण divisions of शैवaka, प्रत्येकabuddha, महायान, cf. Guenther 1972:174-209,

4. I follow Geshe Ngawang Thargay's oral teachings in part for this exposition. The four purities are also discussed by Yeshe Gyentsen (Guenther 1971:194) and by Tucci 1970:68-69 in a similar manner. The Tibetan terms are sku yongs su dag pa/ madad pa yongs su dag pa/ longs spyod yongs su dag pa/ gnas yongs su dag pa.

5. There is some disagreement about the extent to which one identifies with the deity also in the lowest three tantra classes, cf. Lessing and Wayman 1968:163-171, Guenther 1971:187-190, for the contrasted views of गृह-त्रुप-जे and गृह-प्रत्येक-बुद्ध.


9. References as previous note. There are minor variations between these sources, e.g. Olschak and Wangyal place Aksobhya at the centre, and give the supporting animals differently.


14. Conway 1974:113-118. These correspondences also occur in the medi-

15. aeval magical grimoires. The relationship between the European
magical tradition and that of Islam, referred to by Goody in the previous reference, is doubtless close.

15. For which see Beyer 1973, who provides a much fuller account of the nature and function of these deities than I have space to provide here.


18. cf. A. Matsunaga 1969, which incidentally offers many Chinese and Japanese parallels for the whole process of assimilation of local deities into the Buddhist cult which I describe for Tibet.


21. cf. Regamey (1971, etc.)


24. Wangyal 1973:54-62. The account is attributed to the rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long on p. 62. On the history and dating of this text see Vostrikov, 1970:67-78. I have not been able to consult Kuznetsov's recent edition of it (1966).

25. For illustrations cf., e.g., Olschak and Wangyal 1973:22, 81, 134; Govinda 1969:212. Other common forms have one head and two or four arms.


27. For all these manifestations, cf. Chapter Seven. For the Dalai Lamas, cf. Lange 1967, 1969. The Gyalwa Karmapa incarnation line is described in Vajra Mukut, n.d., as beginning with the birth of Avalokiteśvara in Central Asia as the son of King Yung Khorsung. cf. Chapter Seven, note 30.


29. A Non-returner has no further rebirths within samsāra before achieving the status of arhat or Buddha. This text (Tibetan text No. 13) is given in a collection of texts concerned with the taking of one-day Upāsaka vows, which is a frequent lay observance in Tibet as in Theravāda countries, especially on major festivals such as the day of the Buddha's Enlightenment. Text No. 13, pp. 91-95.

30. Trungpa 1967. This article was printed in a Western Buddhist magazine, which may go some way to explaining the difference in emphasis.

31. Smṛti, mindfulness or awareness, is presumably equivalent to the more usual dhyāna, meditation (cf. glossary).

32. Trungpa 1967:13-14. I have substituted Sanskrit terms for Tibetan for the kleśa-s to agree with the terminology given above. Trungpa gives them as (reading down) ngagyal, tradok, dbchak, timuk, serna, shedang.


34. cf. references given in note 1, above.


37. In addition to the two-armed and four-armed forms mentioned above (note 25), Thugs rje chen po ('Great Compassion'), rGyal ba rgya mtsho ('Ocean-Lord'), and the fierce form rTa marin (Hayagrīva, 'Horse-throated') are among the forms of Avalokiteśvara important in Tibet.


39. It corresponds to Sanskrit *deva. cf. also lha khang 'god house' for temple.

40. cf. Cousins, 1973, on the nature of these states as given in Pali sources.

41. Thus the series of manifestations of Avalokiteśvara to which the Dalai Lamas belong begins with a monkey and later includes a hare, interspersed with human rebirths.

42. Geshe Ngawang Thargay used the notion of collective karma in this way in the Dharamsala classes I attended.

43. cf. the eight drag gshed (Pott 1966, 1967:96) who include the tantric deities proper, Hayagrīva, and Yamantaka along with protective deities such as Mahakala and Devi, and 1Cam sring, intermediate according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:88-93 between the protective deities and the 'gods of this world'.

CHAPTER FIVE

The tantric rituals performed by the lamas.

In the last two chapters I have examined the philosophy and the methods that lie behind the lama's ritual practice. In this chapter I shall look at the actual rituals the lama performs at the request of his lay clients.

As mentioned in the first chapter, most of our information about Tibetan religious practice comes from the border areas or from refugees. This is one of the sections which suffers most from this limitation. It is fairly easy to make out a typology of Tibetan rituals, but it is harder to estimate which types were most frequent and typical over Tibet as a whole, or who in general performed them. In most of this chapter I shall be concerned with two types of rituals, firstly the life-empowerment (tsho dbang), in which the life-giving power of the officiating lama is transferred to his followers, and secondly the rituals in which effigies of evil spirits are destroyed, of which the monastic dances are an example and special case. Both of these types of ritual demand for their effective performance that they be carried out or directed by a fully-qualified tantric exponent - in other words a lama - since his personal power, as accumulated through tantric practice, is essential to the success of the ceremony. These ritual performances are also significant in that they constitute major foci of interaction between the lay population and the lamas and monks.

Merit making and death rituals.

I do not propose to say any more here about purely monastic rituals, such as the regular worship of the protective deities, even
though this has as one of its aims the securing of prosperity and protection for laymen. Certain other kinds of rituals carried out for laymen should nevertheless be mentioned here, before I discuss those for which the lama’s presence is essential. The officiants for these rituals are sometimes lamas or ordinary monks, sometimes qualified laymen.

For the Sherpas, from Fürer-Haimendorf’s account, lay ritual specialists are more usual; these are the people to whom he refers as ‘village lamas’. He comments that

...a village lama is simply a person who has received religious instruction enabling him to perform certain rites and is resident in the village as a householder.¹

‘Lama’ here appears to be little more than a courtesy title, though he notes that such a lama is more highly valued as an officiant if he has performed a lengthy period of meditation in retreat (mtshams) and can therefore be assumed to have acquired the personal power that comes from the mastery of tantric meditation.² The main activities of the Sherpa ‘village lamas’ are the recitation of texts to accumulate merit, generally on behalf of a sick person, and the performance of the death rituals.³ Both of these can also be carried out by monks.

Ekvall also mentions laymen who have taken the upāsaka (dge snyen) vows and who assist in performing rituals – presumably in the Amdo region – and mentions similar practitioners in South Tibet.⁴ In Central Tibet it would seem that the merit-making functions were more usually carried out by monks, who are, as in other Buddhist countries, the primary agents through which laymen accumulate merit. Instead of calling monks to his house, a layman can give a donation to a monastery, and request the performance of a ritual to gain merit for him or a sick relative.

For the death rituals the major requirements are familiarity with the texts and procedures, and most monks or village lamas would be at least minimally competent. One would think that the lama’s tantric power
to guide the consciousness of the deceased to a good rebirth would make his employment here desirable. Probably the expense of the ceremony is a significant factor; a poor lay household might not normally be in a position to call in an incarnate lama even for a death ceremony, let alone to make merit for a sick person. The life-empowerment ceremony and similar rites on the other hand are of little value unless performed by a properly competent officiant, and since they are generally performed for a large number of people at once, the cost is not such a burden.

Weather-making and oracles.

Another class of rituals which I will mention here in passing are those connected with control over the weather, especially with protection against hail. Führer-Haimendorf does not seem to mention these rituals, and perhaps they are of less importance in the relatively kinder climate of Sherpa country. In Tibet these rituals were performed by a special class of tantric adepts (ṣngaṣ pa) who were traditionally associated with the Bon religion. Theṣngaṣ pa also specialised in exorcism, and in some cases in the causation of misfortune through tantric ritual; it was through these practices that Mila Röpa accumulated the bad karma that he had to purify in his first years with Marpa. Ekvall refers to these adepts as 'wizards' and associates them with the 'pre-Buddhist' cult of the mountain-gods. According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, who has written on the subject of Tibetan weather-making at length, most ordinary monks would know one or more simple ceremonies to influence the weather, but many among theṣngaṣ pa and the sorcerers of the 'black Bon' specialise in these practices. Even the central Tibetan government employed three weather-makers of this type to protect the Dalai Lama's palaces and the temple at Lhasa.

Nebesky-Wojkowitz's description indicates that whatever the original methodology of the rites for control of the weather, they are now carried
out through standard tantric techniques. Their officiants are, like
the lamas, persons who have acquired through training and tantric prac-
tice the personal power needed to undertake the rituals; but generally
speaking they are a separate class of people from the lamas proper.

The same goes for the spirit-mediums mentioned in Chapters Two
and Four. The major spirit mediums, or oracle-priests, are attached
to monasteries and are themselves monks, but their special status resides
in their being spirit mediums - they have no intrinsic spiritual powers.
On the other hand, lamas are credited with powers of clairvoyance, and
may be asked by laymen to perform divination for them.7

I shall now turn to the rituals performed by the lama himself.

The Life-Empowerment Ceremony (tshe dbang)
and the Life-essence (bla).

This ritual has been described by Waddell,8 Snellgrove,9 and
Beyer.10 Beyer gives the fullest account. All the ceremonies they
describe use the standard methods of Buddhist tantric practice; the
officiating lama transforms himself into the appropriate tantric deity
and then transfers his power into consecrated pills and liquids which
the members of the congregation eat and drink. The similarity with the
Christian Eucharist has incidentally been noted by Waddell and others,
and the influence of Nestorian Christianity mentioned as a possible
source. The likeness is, however, perhaps more apparent than real. The
eating of food consecrated through having been offered to the gods is
standard in Hinduism, and the tantric priests of Bali consecrate water
through a parallel procedure in which they take on the identity of
Śiva or a Buddhist tantric deity.11

Several different tantric deities can be employed. Waddell and
Snellgrove both describe Nyingma-pa rituals in which the central figure
is *Amitāyus ('Eternal Life'), a form of Amitābha and thus considered
as the sambhoga-kāya corresponding to Padmasambhava, who is treated
generally as an emanation of Amitābha. Beyer's description is of
the performance of a ritual by a Geluk-pa lama, and it is primarily
concerned with White Tara (*Cintācakra), the deity for whom I quoted a
short sadhana in Chapter Two. In the ritual described by Beyer, White
Tārā is herself considered as an emanation of Amitāyus.

Human life is regarded as important, in Buddhist theory, because
it is the essential basis for the attainment of Buddhahood, and this
motivation is emphasised in these rituals, especially that of the
Geluk-pa order. For most of the participants, though, the ritual is
evidently regarded straightforwardly as a ritual to obtain health and
long life. The 'life' (bla tshe) that is being restored seems, as
Smellgrove observes, to be that of the bla, the 'life-essence' which I
referred to in passing in Chapter Two, where its connection to external
objects such as trees, lakes and mountains was noted.

The bla is a spirit-essence or life-principle, residing in the
body, but connected also with one or more external objects. The
external object or resting-place of the bla may be a hill, a lake or a
grove of trees. In some parts of Tibet it is customary to plant a
tree – according to Jäschke a juniper, a tree particularly associated
with the local deities, or in the West of Tibet a willow – at the birth
of a child, and this tree is the bla shing, the tree of that child's
bla.12 The bla can leave the body, weakening one's life and exposing
one to harm; the bla can also be affected by damaging or destroying its
external resting place.

The concept of bla has been commented on by Nebesky-Wojkowitz,13
and by Smellgrove who suggests that it is a pre-Buddhist idea.14 Stein15
suggests that it is closely linked to the local gods in their role as
personal protective deities ('go ba'i lha), which I mentioned in Chapter
Two. He points out that bla and lha 'god', which are near-homophones
in Tibetan, are scarcely distinguishable concepts. His suggestion is
supported by recent work on early Tibetan texts which I refer to in
Chapter Ten, where the local deities appear under the name sku bla.
The concept, at least in earlier times, would then have been that the
protective deities of place and lineage took up residence in the child's
body, as well as having their own external homes. They were liable,
however, to abandon their place in the body and leave it without protec-
tion. In modern times, as with most of the concepts relating to the
local deities and the pre-Buddhist religion, only fragments of this
complex of ideas appear to have survived, and the relation between the
bla and the local deities is not in general remembered. This may well
be precisely because, as I suggest in Chapter Ten, the lamas have taken
over, through the tshe dbang and similar rituals, the functions of these
deities.

However this may be, the bla in current Tibetan usage is a kind
of life essence which can leave the body and weaken it; the tshe dbang
or life-empowerment is a ritual to recall this essence and strength-
it. The bla can be compared to the North-East Thai notion of khwan
reported by Tambiah; the khwan, like the bla, is a life-essence within
the body, connected with general prosperity and well-being, which can
be weakened and lost, and which needs to be recalled and strengthened
through the performance of ritual. The sukhwan ritual, in which the
life-essence that has 'wandered, strayed or disappeared' is called back
to its proper place, is performed by a lay ritual officiant, the paahm,
who is quite outside the Buddhist ritual tradition. The tshe dbang is
by contrast a typical Buddhist tantric ritual, and the officiant is a
lama.

The opposition which Tambiah draws between the term for this life-
essence, and the term derived from Pali *vihāra (=Sanskrit *vijñāna,
Tibetan rnam shes), which refers to the consciousness element which con-
tinues from one life to the next, seems forced in the Tibetan context;
these two concepts operate on quite different levels. Possibly this is less true in village Thailand. However, the 'life' which is being strengthened through the tshe dbang ritual is very much a this-worldly matter, and is of Buddhist significance only through the idea of human life as the occasion for attaining Enlightenment.

In the successive stages of the ritual as related by Beyer, the officiating lama first prepares himself in private. After the usual preliminaries of going for refuge and arousing Bodhicitta within himself, he assumes the identity of White Tārā, and makes offerings and recites praises to her — that is, to the goddess in his own person. Then he generates the goddess outside himself in a 'torma' or offering cake. These stages, like those that follow, are accompanied by the appropriate mantras and recitations.

The assembled followers then visualize the lama, who has now entered the room where the initiation is taking place, as White Tārā, and perform the maṇḍala offering to him as a 'fee' for the life-empowerment, requesting that he perform the ceremony. They are told to visualize the torma as well as the lama under the form of White Tārā, surrounded by the lamas, Buddhas, tantric deities and so on, and to visualize the place where they are as her divine mansion. Next they repeat the refuge and Bodhicitta verses and visualize themselves as White Tārā.

The scattered life-essence is recalled into the form of White Tārā, and then radiated in the form of a 'stream of nectar' into the bodies of the congregation. Similar streams of nectar restore their degenerated life, renew their weakened strength and merit, and repair their broken vows and pledges. All this acts as preparation for their own assumption of the identity of White Tārā, which is the centre of the ritual. They visualize the deity over their heads, and all the other deities as merging into her, and then imagine a second form of Tārā as
separating off from her form and merging into themselves. Here the torma is placed on the head of each of the disciples. The lama recites a prayer to the lamas of his own lineage, requesting each to join in the empowerment, and visualizes the deity dissolving into each of his disciples.

Finally the lama empowers the 'nectar of life', made from milk mixed with sugar, and the 'pills of life', made from herbs and potions, mixed with the relics of departed lamas, and gives them to the congregation. The ceremony ends with verses of good fortune for the increasing of life, and with the disciples offering up another mandala in thanksgiving for the empowerment. In the Nyingma-pa ritual reported by Snellgrove, more of the emphasis seems to be on the actual empowerment of the objects; in that case water, spirit, and pellets of cooked flour, corresponding respectively to the empowerment of body, speech and mind. Snellgrove comments that the 'conventional consecrations' which precede the distribution of the life-giving substance 'have little interest' to the Dolpo villagers and that the Buddhist technical terms involved in them are 'all but meaningless' to them. Beyer also observes that the congregation cannot be expected to have any skill in carrying out the visualizations and in performing the re-creation of reality that goes along with them; it is essentially upon the attainments of the lama conducting the ceremony that its success depends.

**The lama's power for life.**

Thus the major theme of the life-empowerment, for most of the lay congregation, is the conferral on them of the power of the lama; the transfer to them of his blessing (byin rlung = Sanskrit *adhisthāna*). While the *tshe dang* ritual is specifically designed for this end, it is not the only context in which the lama's power is thus transferred. In all tantric initiations a conferral of power of this kind is considered to take place. Formally this is only part of the preparations.
The real purpose of these initiations is to empower the recipients to perform a particular tantric practice. However, when a highly respected lama gives a tantric initiation, large numbers of laymen and monks who have no immediate intention of performing the appropriate practice may attend for the sake of the blessing obtained. Attendance at such a ritual is, anyway, a meritorious act in itself.

Thus when Serkhung Rimpöche, a respected Geluk-pa lama and assistant tutor to the Dalai Lama, gave the initiation of Hayagrīva (rta mgon) to some local monks in Dalhousie while I was there, several hundred lay Tibetans also attended. On two recent occasions when the Dalai Lama himself gave the initiation of the Kālacakra Tantra, tens of thousands of people are reported to have been present.

In addition to these great formal occasions, a Tibetan visiting a lama may request or be given pills like those consecrated in the ritual, amulets, small clay images, relics and other consecrated objects which convey something of the lama’s power and blessing. These may be carried around in the qa’yu, the metal amulet-case which most Tibetans wear and which can, as Ekvall reports, be taken off and used as a miniature shrine and an object for the performance of circumambulation and prostration. 20 Many of the amulets and devices contained within the qa’yu are however concerned with what is in a sense the converse of the lama’s ability to strengthen the life-essence of his followers. They are protective devices against the various kinds of dangerous spirits mentioned in Chapter Four. For the lama’s power can also be turned to protective use, and if necessary to destruction.

The lama in the fight against malevolent spirits.

In the major rituals concerned with defence against these spirits, the lama’s destructive power comes to the fore. I have already mentioned the use of thread crosses (mdos) for the imprisonment of these spirits. 21 Another way of dealing with them, which is also the basis of
one of the most spectacular Tibetan ritual performances, the monastic
dance or tshog, is to destroy them in the form of an effigy, or lingam.
Here the evil spirits are made to enter the effigy (made out of dough,
or occasionally wax or paper) and are then magically destroyed within it.
The dead bodies of the malevolent spirits are offered to the deities of
the mandala, and their consciousness is sent to rebirth in the heaven of
Padmasambhava.

This is the basic structure of the tshogs ('multitudes') ritual
discussed by Beyer22 and it also seems to be the basic core of most of
the monastic dance-sequences.23 These dances are performed once or twice
annually, before large lay audiences, by most major monasteries of all
the monastic orders, though they seem to be generally based on the
material belonging to the Old Tantras. Thus the central figures of the
mandala are usually the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava, or the
set of eight drag gshed, who also seem to be a characteristically
Nyingma-pa set.24 A large number of additional dances may represent
various local deities, dka'ga'i, or even present short comic interludes,
but are secondary to the main theme. The officiant dances in the form
of a black-hat priest (zhwa nag), though it seems from Stein that some-
times, rather than the principal lama taking over this role, he performs
the ceremony in duplicate along with its enactment in the dance.25

Often the black-hat priest is identified with Pegyi Dorje, the
Buddhist monk in disguise who killed King Langdarma, the persecutor of
Buddhism in the 9th century, and the dance is given a further superficial
meaning as a commemoration of this act. Pott suggests a third, though
mostly implicit, level of interpretation. The gradual domination of the
groups of dancers by the central performer in preparation for the
destruction refers to the gradual bringing under control of the different
aspects of the personality on the path to Enlightenment, and the final
destruction of the lingam is the destruction of the ego.26 This is
equivalent to viewing the demons and evil spirits as obstacles to one's own attainment of Enlightenment, which is ultimately how they must be viewed, since they, like everything else, have no real external existence. This is probably an over-sophisticated interpretation for most of the audience at these dances. It is nevertheless another interesting example of the constant tendency for Tibetan ceremonies to be constructed so as to be interpretable at several levels.

**Discussion**

Thus through these two types of ritual, the empowerment of life and the destruction of malevolent spirits, the lama turns his spiritual powers to the this-worldly benefit of his followers. It is not, I think, an exaggeration to look upon these rituals as typical of the lama's relationship with his lay patrons. The lama is of course concerned in these rituals to procure for his followers precisely that worldly happiness which, as they progress along the path, they should regard as deceptive and valueless. The theoretical justification for his performance of these rituals is as another form of upāya, as a teaching expedient, and the next chapter will examine the way in which the lama is expected to give his disciples material support and help as one part of his techniques for attracting and teaching them. The lama can also point to life, and freedom from too much illness and suffering, as being the necessary bases for being able to practice the teachings in the first place.

But we can also see that these ritual services are, from the point of view of the layman, the primary benefit which he obtains from the lama. Ultimately the lamas are dependent on lay support for their existence, and while from their own point of view the best return they can make for that support is to work to attain Enlightenment as quickly as possible, so as to be able best to help their lay followers, the lay followers can hardly be blamed for being interested in a more immediate
return. The nature of the transactions between lamas and laymen will be explored further in Part Three, where the implications of the lama's performance of rituals of this type will be brought out in a comparative context. For the present though I will return to the lama in his role as a teacher, and examine the way in which his students are trained to regard him. Just as the procedures of tantric ritual form the basis of the lama's role as a ritual officiant for laymen, so the nature of the lama as seen by his immediate disciples was the seed from which grew the doctrine of the incarnate lama. This doctrine, which I will discuss in Chapter Seven, is the ultimate expression of the lama's role in Tibet.
Notes to Chapter Five.

2. ibid., 169.
3. ibid., 164-167, 224-250.
5. ibid., 26, 28, 132.
6. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:469-470. The distinction between ‘sangags pa and ‘sorcerers of the black Bon’ is far from clear. The evil use of tantric magic is generally regarded by Tibetans as a Bon speciality. The views of the present-day Bon po, black or white, on the matter have not as far as I know been reported, though Snellgrove and Richardson quote a Bon history in which the Bon sage Gyer sponges employs such techniques against the Tibetan king Trhisong Detsen.
12. JNischke 1968:383. Also mentioned for East Tibet by Duncan 1964:249, where the tree is the bla shing of a family, not of an individual.
16. Tambiah 1970:57-79. For the sukhwa rituals cf. ibid., 223-251. One might also note the Burmese leikpya or ‘butterfly soul’ (Spiro 1967: 33-34, 69-70 and 1971:85) which Tambiah himself compares to Thai khwan. The leikpya seems to be important primarily in terms of its survival after death and reincarnation however, whereas bla and khwan are concerned with well-being during life, and are not thought of as reincarnating.
22. On the tshogs see Beyer 1973:312-318. This seems to be essentially the same ritual as the tshogs kyi 'khor lo (= *gapacakra) discussed by Lalou (1965). The participants in the tshogs ritual in India acted out the parts of the deities of the mandala, with the guru as the
central deity, and the offerings were made to them. Beyer's ritual falls into two main parts, the offering of ordinary tormas to the deities of the mandala, and the offering to them of the 'bodies' of the destroyed spirits in the lingam. The lingam is however here visualized rather than real, and superimposed upon another set of tormas. While this is the basic structure of the monastic dances (cham) too - see references in note 23 - the precise relationship between tshogs and cham has yet to be elucidated.

23. cf. especially Pott 1965, Stein 1972:190, Führer-Balmendorf 1964:220, Jerstad 1969:137-139. The Sherpa monastic dances ('Mani-Rimdu') to which the last two accounts refer, are preceded by a performance of the life-empowerment ceremony. I have not been able to refer to Filchner 1933 or Stein 1957. There are many other accounts of monastic dances in the literature, but most so far are superficial; the posthumous publication of Nebesky-Wojkowitz's work on Tibetan religious dances may fill some of the gaps in our knowledge.


26. Pott 1965:277-278. This interpretation is supported by Khamtrul n.d. 2:

What is characteristic of esoteric methods is that while these things which should be abandoned (the emotions of cupidity, malevolence and bewilderment, the five poisons, i.e. pride, lust, anger, jealousy and ignorance) are to be regarded as inimical to spiritual development, they are in their ultimate nature identical with the five forms of transcending awareness. In practice these worldly emotions can be used as realizations of the Ultimate.

In the dances you will see, you will find deities, gods and goddesses, peaceful and wrathful. These represent both vicious emotions that run rampant in one's psyche and the manifold illusions of Ultimate Awareness. The adornments and gestures represent the qualities that we normally (but incorrectly) attribute to our illusions. Try to see all as projections of your own psyche.

Khamtrul Rinpoche's incarnation line were among the main propagators of the dances in Eastern Tibet (cf. Khamtrul n.d. 1), and annual performances are still given at the monastery near Dharamsala where he and his followers now live.
CHAPTER SIX

The lama in the teachings.

As explained in Chapter Three, the lama, in his role as teacher, is essential if the student is to make any spiritual progress. Only the lama can see the student's specific weaknesses and provide the appropriate teachings to remedy them. It would be of no use simply to take up a book and go off to meditate and practise. In fact, generally speaking, one should not study even a religious text of the Sūtra teachings without the specific authorization of a teacher and before having the text read aloud as a whole to one by the teacher.¹ A collection of Kadampa teachings relates the following anecdote about the Indian guru Atiśa:

When Atiśa arrived in Tibet, his three disciples Ku, Ngoke and Drom asked him, "For attaining the high state of liberation and omniscience, which is more important, to follow the precept of the Lama or to follow the scriptures and commentaries?"

Atiśa replied, "The precept of the Lama is more important than scriptures and commentaries."

"Why is that?" they asked.

"Even if you know that the primary characteristic of all phenomena is Voidness, and can recite the Tripitaka as well, you and the teaching will be completely separate if you do not apply the precept of the Lama at the time of practice."

Thus the student has to see his lama as more important than the teachings themselves. The student's attitude to his lama is a frequent theme in Tibetan summaries of the teachings, and it is discussed at length in the Geluk-pa and Kagyü-pa lamrim texts.³ These Tibetan discussions are based on well-known Indian sources. This material is of considerable interest, because the Tibetan idea of the nature of the lama, as seen in the incarnate lama doctrine, is in an important way a
development of these teachings. This chapter will therefore consist of an examination of these teachings and of the rituals associated with them. My account of the teachings is based on the oral instruction of the Geluk-pa lama Geshe Ngawang Thargay, whose treatment of these topics derives, as usual for him, from the Geluk-pa lam-rim tradition.

The link between lama and student.

A student cannot simply take teachings from any lama at all. He can learn information from anyone, but to make real progress in his practice it is essential for him to find the particular guru with whom he has a close personal and spiritual affinity. Thus we read accounts of men going on long, difficult and costly journeys in order to come into contact with their lama, and making great sacrifices as they do so. A classic account, and one itself used in Tibetan oral teaching, is the story of Sadāprāraditī in the *Astasāhasrikā-prajñāparamitā-sūtra,4 but countless stories from the lives of Indian and Tibetan lamas can be given in this connection. Thus Atīśa travelled for thirteen months by sea from India to Suvarṇa-dvīpa (?Java) to find one of his principal gurus; and when he arrived he still tested the guru for a month, and the guru tested him, before they fully accepted each other. This, Geshe Ngawang Thargay commented, was done to show that future disciples should be careful about choosing their lamas. The qualities of the teacher are extensively described in the texts,5 frequently quoting and commenting on a verse from the *Sūtra-laṃkāra:

Rely upon the spiritual friend [*kalyāṇa-mitra] who is well-disciplined, self-controlled [in meditation] and able to calm [all passions], endowed with special knowledge, energetic [in teaching] and rich in [his knowledge of] the scriptures, having insight into śūnyatā, who is skilful in speech, compassionate in nature, and never tired or discouraged in teaching.

A frequently used text referring especially to the tantric teacher is the 'Fifty Stanzas in Praise of the Guru' (*Guru-paṇḍita) attributed to Aśvaghoṣa.6 But in fact it is hardly enough for the lama to have the
impressive lists of qualifications given in the texts. For a true lama-
student relationship to be set up, there usually has to be present some
connection between the two, as the karmic consequence of actions in a
previous lifetime. Normally this results from one helping or teaching
the other in a former life. To set up such a relationship with no such
basis is very difficult; and conversely, once the relationship has been
properly established, if the disciple fulfills all that is expected of
him he can be certain to meet the lama again in future lives. Thus the
teacher-student relationship between the Panchen and Dalai Lamas, once
set up, is ideally renewed with each reincarnation of the two.8

Again, Geshe Ngawang Thargay recounted that when Marpa first went
to India in the company of a friend, Nyö Lotsawa, he suggested that they
both go to see Nāropa, who was to become Marpa’s guru. Nyö wasn’t
interested; as far as he was concerned his own teacher in Nepal was the
greatest teacher there was. When Marpa found Nāropa, Nāropa asked after
the friend, and seeing him by psychic power told Marpa that there was
no karmic connection between Nyö and himself.9

The attitude which the student should have towards his lama, once
the relationship has been established, is detailed in the Geluk-pa
lam rim texts, where meditation for the development of this attitude
is specifically enjoined.10 First, one reflects on the eight advantages
of having a lama and devoting oneself to him properly: at every moment
the student comes closer to the attainment of Enlightenment, all the
Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions are pleased with him; he
cannot be affected by distracting forces or heretical teachers, etc.
Then there are the eight disadvantages of a breach of lama-devotion once
the relationship has been set up: if the student despises the guru, it’s
the same as despising all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; if he is angry
with the guru, all the good karma of his previous virtuous action is
destroyed, and he will be reborn in hell for as many ages (*kalpa) as
the number of moments he was angry with the guru; the student will never achieve anything, however much tantric practice he does, and so on.

One then contemplates the ways of devoting oneself to the lama by thought, which are to develop the belief that he is a Buddha, and to develop devotion (gus pa) to the lama through considering his kindness; and the ways of devoting oneself through actions. These are, in increasing order of importance, to give him material possessions, to offer services to him, and to do exactly what he says.

Together these ideas give fairly strong reinforcement to the central role of the lama in Tibetan religion and society. The most significant, however, is surely the belief that the lama is actually a Buddha.¹¹

The lama as Buddha.

It is held that one should maintain this attitude to all lamas, and not only towards one's personal guru in a lama-student relationship of the kind described above, though it is especially important for such a relationship, particularly when the lama is giving tantric teachings. Marpa was taught this particular lesson by his tantric guru Nāropa in a famous incident, which I quote in Guenther's version:

Nearly two months later when he had received the symbolic initiations and instructions in the Oral Transmission, Nāropa appeared to him in the sky in the shape of the [tantric] deity Hevajra with eight goddesses, and asked him whether he made obeisance to him or to the tutelary deity. Marpa answered, "To the tutelary deity". Nāropa said:

There where there is no Guru
Not even the name of Buddha is heard.
The Buddhas of a thousand aeons
Depend on the Guru for their appearance.

"The fact is that they are His manifestations." The tutelary deity then disappeared in the Guru Nāropa who declared: "Because of this your interpretation, your human line will not last long. Yet it is of an auspicious nature for sentient beings. Be happy that the line of the Dharma will continue as long as the Buddhist teaching lasts."¹²

'Guru' here is of course 'lama' in Tibetan.

According to the Geluk-pa teachings, the student should regard all his teachers, even the person who teaches him to read the alphabet,
as being Buddhas. Since the alphabet in Tibet was used primarily for religious purposes, and religious books are themselves treated as sacred objects, to be handled with great respect, placed on the highest shelf in a room or on an altar, circumambulated round in temples, and so on, this is not quite as extreme a statement as it might seem at first sight. I will return to the question of literacy in Tibet in Part Three. The lam rim texts expand on the question of seeing the lama as a Buddha under three headings: the reason for it being necessary to see the lama as a Buddha; why it is possible; and the specific arguments for the lama being a Buddha.

**Why is it necessary to see the lama as a Buddha?** It is only through the student's seeing the lama as a Buddha that the lama will be able to help him to attain Buddhahood. The lama's ability to help is dependent on the student's faith in him. In fact there are stories which suggest that faith can be as important as its object, or even more so. Thus one story tells of an old woman who worshipped a dog's tooth under the impression that it was a relic of the Buddha, and through her faith eventually caused the tooth to emit rays of light and have miraculous healing powers. Others describe people who repeat mantras 'incorrectly' but with such devotion that they can walk on the water. But in any case, without belief in the lama's Buddhahood, the student will not attain Buddhahood through following his instructions.

One reason for this is that once the lama is seen as a Buddha (or as the Buddha, because there is essentially no difference between one Buddha and another) then one can visualize all the deities of the tantric practice as being aspects of him, and relate all the teachings back to him. Otherwise the disciple may regard the practice as something separate from the teacher; and if he does this there are no benefits to be gained from the practice. We will see later how this identification of deity with lama is carried out in the rituals of lama-devotion.
Why can the student see the lama as a Buddha? It is possible to see the lama as a Buddha, according to the _lam rim_ teachings, because of his good qualities, which outweigh any of his actions which might be considered the actions of an unenlightened being. In any case, these apparently un-Buddha-like actions may be deliberately performed as means to teach the student. Thus the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, was supposed, according to the Mahāyāna schools, to have been enlightened before the beginning of his historical life; but he went through all the actions of growing up, marrying, leaving his family, practising austerities, meditating and achieving Enlightenment in order to teach the path that he was demonstrating to ordinary beings. Similarly it is often said in the biographies (_rnam thar_) of lamas that they presented the appearance of studying or meditating, rather than that they studied or meditated; what they were studying they knew from the beginning, and they were enlightened from the beginning, but in order to demonstrate the path it was necessary for them to act as if they did not.  

Specific arguments for lamas being Buddhas. First, the historical Buddha in the form of Vajradhara (under which he taught the tantras) stated that he would appear again in future times in the form of teachers. This is supported by various scriptural quotations. Another Geluk-pa _lam rim_ text, by the First Panchen Lama (1569-1662) summarizes this point:

> The Supremely Enlightened One has said in his precious Tantras and Sutras that in this degenerate age the Lord rDo rje 'chang ('Vajradhara) manifests himself in the form of spiritual friends and acts for the good of sentient beings. Accordingly, our spiritual friends, apart from merely exhibiting different aspects of being are the manifestation of the Lord rDo rje 'chang in their form in order to attract us who have the bad fortune of being unable to perceive Buddhahood directly.  

rDo rje 'chang ('Vajradhara) is sometimes used as a title after the name of incarnate lamas, as a reference to this 'Vajradhara doctrine.' Second, the only way in which the action of the Buddha's teaching can affect humans is through the agency of the lama. The lama is, in an
image used by Gampo-pa and Sakya Pandita, a magnifying glass concentrating the rays of the sun to light a fire; he is the agency through which the Buddha's speech is active today.17

Third, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past promised to continue to act to help all sentient beings until all were enlightened; the way in which this action is being carried out must be through the action of the lamas today.

Fourth, the student cannot trust his own ideas about the lama; his perceptions are faulty and uncertain, and his ability to perceive depends upon his past karma and present degree of insight. Geshe Ngawang Thargay quoted a story of a Tibetan bandit chief who went to see a famous statue in Lhasa, but because of his bad karma could only see the lotus seat upon which the figure sat. After many prostrations and offerings, he was able to see the legs, though he never got any further. Again, there is the story18 of Asanga who meditated on Maitreya in a cave for twelve years without success; on emerging from the cave he was overcome by compassion for a worm-ridden dog. He carefully cleaned away the worms, after cutting off a piece of his own flesh to put them on so that they would not die. The merit of this compassionate action was such that the dog vanished and Asanga was able to see Maitreya in its place. When he asked why he had not seen Maitreya through all his twelve years of meditation, Maitreya said, "I was there in the cave with you all the time but you could not see me." Asanga was so overcome with joy that he picked up Maitreya and carried him round the town on his shoulders, crying "Look at Maitreyal!" But they thought he was mad, because nobody could see anything, except for one old woman whose *klesa were few, who was able to see an old worm-ridden dog on Asanga's shoulders.

The true nature of the lama.

My account throughout is centred around the lamas as real people with specific roles within Tibetan religion and society, and the above
few pages are sufficient to describe the way in which the student of such a person is enjoined to regard him. It is not, however, an entirely adequate account of the meaning of the term 'lama' in the teachings, since it is not an account from the level of 'absolute truth'. Such an account would by definition be inexpressible, but it is worth trying to get a little closer.

The lama is a form of the Buddha; yet Buddhahood is present in all men, indeed in all living things and all phenomena, as Gampo-pa emphasises in the first chapter of the Jewel Ornament. We are all manifestations of Buddhahood. Thus Guenther argues that when the student regards his personal teacher as the Buddha, he is projecting onto someone outside himself that which is essentially within himself also. Through learning to perceive another being - the lama - in his true nature, he can gradually come to realise this same true nature within everyone and especially within himself. At this point the lama is no longer outside; he is as it were the student's own better self. The concept of the lama is a symbol which is used for the purpose of this transformation. This is the essence of the distinction between lama (bla ma) and the ordinary terms for teacher (dge rgyan, slob dpon), religious teacher (dge bai bshegs gsun = *kalyana-mitra) or tantric teacher (rdo rje slob dpon = *Vajracarya) which refer unambiguously to the external teacher. 'Lama' is frequently used in this external sense, in contexts where it could be substituted by one or more of these terms, as generally in my account. Yet in the context of the tantric rituals of lama devotion to which I now turn, 'lama' is the only word used. In these rituals, the student visualizes the lama outside himself in the form of Vajradhara or another tantric deity, and then visualizes that the lama becomes one with him. These meditational procedures make little sense unless an underlying process of the kind described above is postulated; they are rituals in which the student attempts to perceive the Buddha-nature within himself
through first visualizing it outside himself, as indeed he does in all the tantric rituals aimed at Enlightenment.

The lama as an object of ritual.

The behaviour which the student adopts to the lama is, even outside the context of the specific rituals I am going to discuss, highly formalised. The student's prostrations before the teacher, his asking the lama for teaching, his taking of various kinds of vows in front of the teacher, all have to be done in particular ways which emphasise the nature of the relationship. But all this is after all only a special case of the importance of etiquette and correct behaviour characteristic of all hierarchical relationships in Tibet, as in many other societies with a strong hierarchical structure; though it is certainly worth noting that the lama-student relationship is very much marked out by the behaviour appropriate to it as a hierarchical relationship, rather than as an exchange of teaching between equals or near-equals.

What I am specifically concerned with here is the student's private ritual to the lama: the *guru-yoga (bla ma'i rnal 'byor) ritual which forms, especially, a major part of preliminary tantric practice in all orders of Tibetan Buddhism, though it is not confined to that context. Before I look at these rituals in context, however, I will discuss one of the basic ritual sequences used in them, the yan lag bdun pa or seven-part sequence.

The seven-part offering sequence.

The basic text for this sequence is a Sanskrit prayer, the *Arya-bhadra-caryā-pranidhāna-rāja, of which the first 48 lines constitute the seven parts of the sequence.21 The Tibetan translation of these verses is itself a frequently used ritual text, but the seven parts of the sequence have been used as a basis for independent compositions by Tibetan writers. Another text sometimes used is a series of verses
adapted from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva, a Sanskrit work on the Bodhisattva's career of great popularity in Tibet. 22

The Ārya-bhadracaryā-praṇidhāna-rāja verses are addressed simply to the Buddhas of the Three Times and Ten Directions; in Tibetan ritual usage a preliminary visualization of the 'object of refuge' defines their object more specifically. The seven elements are:

1. *phyag tshal ba*: 'homage' or 'prostration'. This refers both to the physical act of prostrating oneself and to the mental giving of homage which should accompany it.

2. *mchod pa*: 'offering'. The text describes the offering of incense, perfume, music, light, etc., to the Buddhas. In the preliminary practice texts the offering of a mandala is made at this point. This is the symbolic offering of the universe; it is performed by making a representation of the universe from rice (or other grains, sometimes mixed with precious stones) on a specially prepared base plate. Piles of rice correspond to the visualization of the various parts of the universe in Buddhist cosmology; Mount Meru in the centre, the four main 'continents' with their eight accompanying sub-continents, the special wealths of the four continents, the seven royal symbols, eight goddesses presenting offerings, the parasol of protection, banner of victory, sun and moon. 23 All this is offered to the visualization of the lama as Buddha.

3. *bshags pa*: 'confession' of non-virtuous actions. This can be extended by, for example, the ritual of the 35 Buddhas of Confession. 24

4. *rjes su yi rang*: 'rejoicing' in virtuous actions, of oneself and of others.

5. *chos 'khor skor ba bskul ba*: 'requesting the lama to turn the wheel of the Dharma', that is to teach.

6. *mya ngan las mi 'da' gsol ba btab pa*: 'prayer that the lama does not enter nirvāṇa', i.e., does not die. As a manifestation of the
Buddha, a lama can live or die at his own volition, and as I shall explain in Chapter Seven he is sometimes thought of as having made the conscious choice not to 'enter nirvāṇa' and instead to have taken rebirth to help sentient beings.

(7) bongpo ba: 'dedication of merit' acquired by performing the ritual; the standard conclusion of Mahāyāna ritual sequences, in which the merit is dedicated for the attainment of enlightenment in order to help sentient beings, or for other equivalent formulations.

These seven elements are amplified in commentaries and oral teachings; thus each can be regarded as a way of fulfilling each of the six pāramitā-s, and each can be regarded as a specific opponent to a particular kleśa (prostrations against pride, offerings against avarice, etc.)

The student's guru-yoga ritual; the preliminary practices (Ngöndro).

As I have mentioned, the guru-yoga forms a basic part of tantric preliminary practice. Accounts of different versions of this preliminary practice have been given by Blofeld, Beyer and Chang. It consists generally of a fixed number of repetitions (normally 100,000) of four to six basic ritual acts. These are (1) going for refuge, with the generation of Bodhicitta, accompanied by the performance of (physical) prostrations: sometimes these are counted as three separate acts; (2) the Vajrasattva purificatory ritual, consisting of the recitation of the 100-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva before a visualization of this deity; (3) the maṇḍala offering; (4) the guru-yoga proper. These practices are described as building up the stocks of mental and physical merit of the meditator, and also as cleansing the impurities (kleśa-s) and bad karma of previous acts; thus he is prepared for tantric practice proper. They may be amplified, as Blofeld notes, by additional preliminaries depending on the monastic order or particular line of teachings
concerned. Thus the Drukpa Kagyü-pa ngöndro text which I consider below includes the meditation of the Mahamudra teachings which are a special feature of the Kagyü-pa order. This text is in fact in five parts:

1. Introductory prayer for the blessings of the lama, the continuation of the teachings, and the meditator's entry into the Mahāmudrā practice.

2. The four subjects for contemplation of 'ordinary' (i.e., non-tantric) preliminary practice, discussed in Chapter Three: human life is precious, so make use of it and turn to the Dharma; death can come at any time, so renounce the affairs of this world; karma is infallible, so turn to virtuous action; samsāra is characterised by suffering, so renounce it.

3. Non-ordinary (i.e., tantric) preliminary practice:
   I. Refuge and Bodhicitta, with the prostration verses.
   II. Vajrasattva meditation, with the recitation of his mantra.
   III. Offering the maṇḍala: the seven-part offering sequence.
   IV. The guru-yoga proper, and the receiving of blessings from the lama.

4. The Mahāmudrā meditation.

5. Dedication of merit.²⁷

Here I am concerned with Part 3, which in any case takes up much the largest part of the text. The basic visualization for sections I and III - it is given at the start of each, with different verses - is centred on the lama as Vajradhara, the symbolic form of the Dharma-kāya. He is visualized on a throne above sun, moon and a lotus rising out of an ocean of ambrosia. Above him are the lamas of the Mahāmudrā lineage, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa and so on; all around him are the teachers of all schools of Buddhism of India and Tibet. In front are the tutelary deities of the Old and New Tantras; to the right Śākyamuni and the Buddhas of the three times and ten directions; behind, the 100,000-verse Prajñā-pāramitā
śūtra surrounded by all the books of the Dharma; to the left Avalokiteśvara surrounded by all the Sangha. The hero-spirits (dpa' ho) of Padmasambhava's paradise, the dākiniṣ, the guardians of the Dharma and the gods of prosperity fill up the intermediate space; all look upon the meditator with pleasure (dgyes pa'i tshul). Thus the visualization process represents all these forms as being manifestations of the root lama (rtsa ba'i bla ma) himself, who is identical with Vajradhara.

It is in front of this visualization that the meditator takes refuge and performs his prostrations, visualizing that his father and mother and the six types of beings (gods, asura-s, men, animals, etc.) do so along with him:

\[ \sqrt{\text{I along with all sentient beings, my mothers have at some time in beginningless samsāra been the meditator's mother equal to the sky}} \]
\[ \sqrt{\text{in number go for refuge to the Buddha-Dharmakāya of the Lama.}} \]

\[ \sqrt{\text{I along with all sentient beings, my mothers, equal to the sky go for refuge to the perfect Sambhoga-kāya of the Lama.}} \]

\[ \sqrt{\text{I along with all sentient beings, my mothers, equal to the sky, go for refuge to the compassionate Nirmāṇa-kāya of the Lama.}} \]

\[ \sqrt{\text{I along with all sentient beings, my mothers, equal to the sky, go for refuge to the precious Lama-Buddha.}} \]

It is also to this visualization that the seven-part offering ritual and the mandala offering are performed in Section III. At the end of each of these sections the visualization is dissolved back into the lama and the lama into the meditator:

The offering-field and the surrounding figures merge into the all-pervading lama.

The lama radiates light and becomes one with me.

The offerings, the offerer and the receiver of offerings are the same;

I offer this offering of self-liberated great joy.

3.IV., the guru-yoga proper, begins with a different visualization being performed. In this the root lama in the form of Vajradhara is placed above the dākini and tutelary deity Prajñāvarāṇī. The deities of the Mahāmudrā lineage are again above the lama, but the com-
plex visualization given before is not evoked. Again all the visualized figures look upon the meditator with pleasure.

After visualizing the presentation of offerings, the prayer to the lineage of lamas follows, in shorter or longer form; the text gives both. In each form the 51 lamas of the lineage from Vajradhara, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Mila Repha and the first lamas of the Drukpa lineage right down to the present lama (here the Khamtrul Rimpoche, an incarnate lama from East Tibet\textsuperscript{31}) are invoked in turn and asked to bless (byin gyis rlob) the meditator to attain his goal; e.g.,

> You who reside in the pleasant land of the snow mountains of the meditation lineage, Within the snow walls of La phyi in the West, I pray to you, the mighty lord Mila Repa; bless me so that I recognise the innate nature of mind and without rejecting or accepting whatever occurs on the path, may I come to see the apparent world as the Three kāya-s.\textsuperscript{32}

The last three lines are repeated for each lama. Then the lamas of the lineage radiate light and merge into the root lama (rtsa ba'i bla ma).

Then follows the prayer to the root lama, in which he, now incorporating all the previous lamas of the lineage, is asked again for blessings for attainment in the practice. He is requested to remain long in this life, and then the meditator visualizes that he receives the empowerment (dbang bkur) of the lama's blessing. Finally the visualization of the lama is merged into the meditator's own body:

> Just as water falls into water may I and the non-dual become one and I attain to Lord of the Ten Stages Buddha.\textsuperscript{33}

The meaning of guru-yoga.

We can now see something of the meaning of these guru-yoga practices. They are in fact simple adaptations of standard tantric practice. Here, however, the deity who is visualized and given offerings, and with whom one then identifies, thus receiving empowerment, is the lama himself. More precisely, it is the lama in the form of Vajradhara, the tantric Buddha-Dharma-kāya who manifests himself through all
lamas. For the meditator he manifests particularly through his personal spiritual teacher, who is his 'root lama', and who is the present representative and summation of the past lineage of lamas of the teaching he is passing on to his student. The equivalent of the tantric mandala in these practices is the assembly-field of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Indian and Tibetan teachers, texts of the Dharma and tantric deities, all of whom are thus identified as manifestations of the lama Vajradhara. To quote my notes from Geshe Ngawang Thargay's classes:

Once you have decided in your own mind that your guru is a true Buddha, you can visualize all the many deities as different forms and manifestations but the same as the guru in essence. Otherwise if you visualize even the highest deity, and put your lama on one side as an ordinary being, there are no benefits to be gained from such a practice. 34

Guru-yoga in collective ritual.

Before I turn to the further development of the lama-as-Buddha theme in the doctrine of the incarnate lama, I will examine briefly two examples of the application of the guru-yoga procedures, and in particular the seven-part sequence, in monastic ritual.

The first is a guru-yoga text centred on the figure of Tsongkha-pa, and belonging to the Geluk-pa order. In some Geluk-pa meditation texts the personal lama is in fact visualized under the form of Tsongkha-pa, himself regarded as identical with Sākyamuni and Vajradhara. 35 Here Tsongkha-pa, along with his two principal disciples Gyaltsap-je and Khenrup-je, is addressed directly in a modified version of the seven-part sequence. Sumatikirti is the Sanskrit form of Tsongkha-pa's monastic name, Lobsang Trapa.

\[\text{\textit{Visualization}}\] NAMO GURUBHYAH! \textit{Homage to the guru}\[\textit{36} \]
You who emanate from the heart of the Lord of Tuṣita's deva host
On the summit of a cloud, which resembles a cluster of snow-white, fresh curd,
Omniscient Sumatikirti, the King of Dharma, with your spiritual sons,
We request you to descend to this abode!

\[\textit{Request to remain, corresponding to the 6th part of the sequence}\] 37
Upon a lion-throne with lotus and moon-disc in the heavens before us
The venerated Guru smiles radiantly with delight:
This supreme field for the merit of devotion of our mental activity
We request to abide for a hundred Kalpas for the dissemination of the Doctrine!

\[\text{Offerings, the 2nd part:}\]

The pleasing offerings of variegated flowers, Fragrant incense, lights, scented water and the like: This ocean of decorated real and imagined clouds of offerings We present to you, the Supreme field of merit!

\[\text{Confession, the 3rd part:}\]

Whatever harmful deeds, committed by body, speech and mind, We have stored since time immemorial, In particular the transgressions of the Three Vows: We fervently confess each one from all our heart!

\[\text{Rejoicing in virtuous actions, the 4th part:}\]

You who strove for learning and realization in this age of decline, Who elevated this favourable birth by renouncing the Eight Worldly Dharmas, O Lord, at your deeds, resembling great waves, We rejoice in the depth of our thought!

\[\text{Requesting the Dharma, the 5th part:}\]

You, the exalted and venerated Gurus Fill the space of the Dharmalaya with clouds of wisdom and love: Let the deep and vast Dharma thereby rain down Fittingly on the field of your disciples!

\[\text{Dedication of merit, the 7th part:}\]

Whatever collection of merit we have acquired, May it benefit the Doctrine and all beings: In particular, may the essence of the Doctrine Of the most venerated Sumatikirti be illumined forever!\[37\]

By way of contrast to the devotional ritualism of this Geluk-pa text, here is a short passage in the form of the seven-part sequence from one of the major Nyingma-pa ritual sequences, the Union of the Precious Ones (dkon mchog spyi 'dus), 'discovered' in the 17th century.\[38\] I give Snellgrove's translation:

All elements are of the nature of the three-fold Buddha body, And I bow before them in the vast expanse of non-duality, I worship them in the sameness which is non-created and limitless.
I confess to non-recognition of my own mind's buddhahood, I rejoice in existence, as a condition of self-knowledge. I will turn the wheel of the ineffable far-spreading doctrine. I pray that samsāra and nirvāṇa may rest undifferentiated. May all this be dedicated to the spontaneous manifestation of the mystery of the doctrine. May we gain the great and excellent all-pervading bliss of two-in-one.

This passage includes the usual Nyingma-pa emphases on the true or ultimate teacher being the Buddha-nature within oneself, as within all phenomena.

This ritual attempts to stress once more the real meaning of 'seeing the lama as a Buddha'. However by the time of the 'discovery' of this text, the Nyingma-pas, along with all the other orders, were deeply involved in the development of the doctrine which by contrast defined the presence of the Buddha-nature ever more closely within particular men. This was, of course, the incarnate-lama doctrine to which I turn in the next chapter. The incarnate lama is, as far as I know, a purely Tibetan development; it later spread to Mongolia along with Tibetan Buddhism as a whole. In some ways its origins are perhaps Tibetan rather than Indian, as I will suggest in Chapter Seven. It is hardly likely, however, that this doctrine would have taken the form it did if it had not been developed by teachers and monks who were trained in the attitudes and rituals described in this chapter. If all lamas were Buddhas, then it was neither inconceivable nor even very surprising that they might manifest their powers more openly to mankind, and reveal something of their real nature to their followers. As I describe the development of this doctrine in the next chapter, it will be worth bearing in mind this background of ideas and rituals.

**Four ways of accumulating disciples.**

We have seen how the student is supposed to view his lama; it is of interest too to see what the texts have to say about how the lama should view his own activities. I have already said something about the
lists of qualities and accomplishments possessed by the ideal teacher, but more to the point here is the set of four means of accumulating disciples taught by Tsongkha-pa and his followers in the Geluk-pa lam rim literature. These are prescriptions for the student when it is his own turn to teach rather than descriptions of the ideal teacher, and so of more interest here, though as often with these lists they are somewhat idealised and non-specific. The list itself is given in one of the Sanskrit treatises said to have been revealed by the bodhisattva Maitreya to Asaṅga, the Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra.\(^{41}\)

1. **Generosity**

Here the lama satisfies the demands of his students and followers by giving them material possessions. By giving things to people he makes them happy and attracts them to himself. Also, the lama should give his students material possessions when necessary so that they are free to practice the Dharma. For example, he should make sure they have enough food and clothing.

Thus Mila Rûpa says to Marpa when he offers himself as his disciple: "I, O Precious Guru, am a great sinner from the West Highlands, and I have come here to offer body, speech and mind to thee. I pray thee to provide me with food, clothing and spiritual instruction."\(^{42}\)

2. **Pleasing speech**

This means that the lama should speak to people in ordinary worldly language that they understand. He should not separate himself off and appear different from ordinary members of society, or else they will feel that he is unable to help them. Also he should give teaching in accordance with the specific interests and capacities of his students.

3. **Acting for the good of others**\(^{43}\)

This includes introducing students into the appropriate kinds of practice for each in the graded scheme of teachings (lam rim); it also includes the giving of the various grades of ordinations and vows and
the giving of refuge.

4. Being an example of the teachings

The lama must practise himself all that he teaches. Otherwise his students will not accept his teaching, and he will be of no use to others.

These 'four means of collecting disciples' recall the doctrine of upāya, whose importance I emphasised in Chapters Two and Three. The lama gives protection and material goods to his followers both so that they have leisure to practise the teachings, and in addition simply to attract them to him so that he will be able to teach them. Likewise he should talk to them at their own level, and give them teachings in accordance with their specific capacities and natures. Thus the performance of life-empowerments and rituals to destroy malevolent spirits, and the giving of teachings true only in a provisional sense, are valid and justified because they help lead people to higher things. No doubt the incarnate-lama doctrine to which I turn in the next chapter could be justified on similar grounds, though it is my impression that Tibetans, including lamas, accept it as simply true - or at least true on the conventional level of everyday reality. Tibetans may doubt whether a particular incarnate lama is really what he is meant to be, especially with the lesser incarnates; but they do not generally doubt that incarnate lamas exist. The incarnate-lama doctrine is not, however, merely a way of increasing the prestige and status of the lamas; it is also a mode of succession to high offices in the monastic hierarchy. This aspect of the incarnate-lama doctrine is of great consequence, as I shall show. The supreme ruler of the Lhasa government, the Dalai Lama, is chosen through this method, and most other lamas with high monastic and political office are also incarnates. The doctrine is in fact the key to the combining of religious and secular authority which the Tibetans themselves
see as one of the most notable features of the Dalai Lama's government. Through it the Dalai Lama is both god and king of the Tibetans.
Notes to Chapter Six.

7. cf. Lessing and Wayman 1968:272-273. Geshe Ngawang Thargay commenced an exposition of these 'Fifty Stanzas on the Guru' (bla ma lnga bcu pa) as I was leaving Dharamsala in July 1972.
8. cf. Norbu and Turnbull 1969:271-277, and Norbu and Ekvall 1969, which is a play arguing a particular view of the Dalai Lama-Panchen Lama relationship through a story about earlier rebirths of the two. The teaching relationship between them is however accepted by all parties to the dispute, on which see Chapter Seven. The Jātaka stories of the previous lives of the historical Buddha, with their identification of Śākyamuni, Devadatta, Ananda and so forth playing out similar relationships in succeeding rebirths may have provided the model for this idea of repeating karmic relationships which goes against the general emphasis on relationships not repeating in future lives. cf. for this Berzin 1972:288-289, giving the story of the girl eating the fish which had been her father, fondling the child that was her murderer reborn, and beating the dog that was her mother reborn to keep it from eating the fish, its husband in a previous life! The lama-student relationship is specifically viewed as an exception to this general condition of samsāra.

9. The story is told slightly differently in Marpa's biography (Bacot 1937:15, 80, where Nāropa says to Marpa:

> Even if he had plenty of gold, it wouldn't be sufficient for me to take him as my student. He needs merit, and las phre [karmic influence].

10. The subject is discussed in Berzin 1972:60-102 and was treated similarly by Geshe Ngawang Thargay in his Dharamsala classes. My discussion is based on these two sources. (Berzin's source was also Geshe Ngawang Thargay.)

11. 'Belief' here refers to yid ches kyi dad pa, which Berzin renders as 'confidence-based belief':

In general, there are three kinds of dad pa (*śraddhā): belief, which can be illustrated with respect to the example of the belief that your Guru is a Buddha: (1) yid ches pa (*pratayita): confidence that your Guru is a Buddha, having become convinced of this by sound reasons, (2) mgon dad pa (*abhiprasanna): trust that your Guru is a Buddha, having become reassured by his good
example that by following it you too will attain Buddhahood, and (3) \textit{dzangs la dad pa} or \textit{dang pa dad pa} (\textit{bhakti}): blind faith that your Guru is a Buddha, having regarded only his good qualities. Throughout the \textit{lam rim} course of study and practice, the emphasis is on the development of confidence-based beliefs... (Berzin 1972:64-65).

12. Guenther 1963:107. Presumably the last two lines mean that the line of Marpa's teaching of the Dharma will last as long as the Buddhist teachings exist. Trumpa discusses this episode in 1973:69; Guenther gives and discusses another version in 1966-9:234.

13. e.g. Pu-tün in his biography \textit{showed the modes} (\textit{tshul betan pa}) of illness and death (Ruegg 1966:163, 165). CN Lotsawa in the Blue Annals describes the 6th Gyalwa Karma-pa as 'manifesting the manner of studying' with his teachers (Roerich 1949-53:II, 516), etc.


15. Translated by Guenther, 1966-69:234-235. The quotation is from the \textit{lam rim bde lam} by the first Panchen Lama, \textit{blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan} (1569-1662).


24. Given in the \textit{Sikṣā-samuccaya}. This ritual is inserted at this place in the Druk-pa \textit{kagyū-pa} preliminary practice text which I discuss below.


26. Blofeld 1970:147-168 gives the practices according to the Nyingma-pa tradition; Beyer 1973:434-442 according to the \textit{kagyū-pa} tradition in which the lama is visualized under the form of Tārā. Chang 1970:xxi lists the four main practices as in the \textit{kagyū-pa} order. For the guru-yoga sequences in non-tantric preliminary practice see Berzin 1972:35-39, and Wangyal 1973:194-235. The latter is a text based upon the short work of Tsongkha-pa's which I discussed in Chapter Three, the \textit{Three Main Principles of the Path}.

27. Tibetan text No. 6.

28. ibid., f.4a. Tibetan in Appendix One.

29. ibid., f.13b. Tibetan in Appendix One.

30. ibid., ff.13b-14a. \textit{Shes rab pha mo} (Prajñāvārāhī) is perhaps equivalent.
to rdo rje phag mo (Vajraśrīśrī) who according to Beyer 1973:46 is a deity specially revered by the Druk-pa Kagyü-pa.


32. Tibetan text No. 6, f.17a. This is from the longer version. Tibetan in Appendix One.

33. ibid., f.16b. This is from the shorter version. Tibetan in Appendix One.

34. Class notes, 17 June 1972.

35. e.g. Wangyal 1973:197-198.

36. i.e. Maitreya.

37. Gomser and Lobsang Kalden, n.d.:10-11. The 'Eight Worldly Dharmas' (sixth verse) are gain and loss, fame and ill-fame, praise and slander, happiness and misery. I have made a number of minor changes to the translation.


39. For rang rig, which Snellgrove renders as 'self-knowledge', cf. Guenther 1969:272, 1970:227, note 17, 1972:91. These would suggest that the meaning of the line is nearer to 'I rejoice in existence, in its essence self-existing awareness.'


41. Tibetan text No. 16, f.300 (bsdu ba bzhi); Berzin 1972:551-554. I rely primarily on Geshe Ngawang Thargay's oral teachings.

42. Translation from Evans-Wentz 1969:91.

43. cf. Tibetan text No. 4, p. 316. don spyod/ sams can gyi don du spyod/ pa ste/ bsdu ba bzhi'i rang tshan/ 'don spyod = acting for the good of sentient beings, one of the four ways of accumulating disciples.'
CHAPTER SEVEN

Incarnate Lamas.

In Chapter Six I mentioned the Vajradhara doctrine according to which all lamas are manifestations of the Buddha. In this chapter I examine the less clearly formulated status of those lamas who are recognised as sprul sku or 'incarnate lamas'. While not all Tibetan lamas are incarnate lamas, almost all important monastic posts are occupied by such lamas.¹ The mode of succession to these posts through the finding of 'reincarnations' therefore has important consequences for the nature of Tibetan society. Immense prestige and great political power are attached to the more important lines of incarnate lamas. I will examine the implications of the incarnate-lama doctrine, and in so doing help to clarify the development and present status of the incarnates.

'Incarnate lama' is not a literal translation of the Tibetan term, sprul sku, which is in fact the Tibetan for nirmanakaṣa, the third of the three 'bodies' of the Buddha discussed in Chapter Three. Its lexical meaning would be something like 'body of artifice' or 'magically produced body'. As will be seen, the concept of a 'magically produced body' contributes to what is meant by the Tibetans when they designate certain persons as sprul sku, but it is far from a complete account.

'Incarnate lama', with its misleading associations with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, is a similarly incomplete term, but is adequate as long as it is not treated as more than a mere verbal tag. The meaning of sprul sku needs to be determined through examining its usage.

Briefly, there are two main components to the idea of the 'incarnate lama'. The incarnate lama can be the manifestation or
emanation of a tantric deity, or he can be the rebirth or reincarnation of a deceased lama. As I shall explain, these components are not entirely separate, since an emanation of a tantric deity can underlie a whole series of rebirths. Most 'emanation lamas' are also 'reincarnations', as in the case of the Dalai Lamas. I will begin, however, by discussing these ideas separately.

The incarnate lama as emanation.

Certain lamas, and a few other historical figures, are regarded as being emanations of various bodhisattvas, Buddhas and other tantric deities. That is, they are the nirmāṇa-kāya, the material body, corresponding to one of these various sambhoga-kāya forms, just as the historical Buddha himself was such a nirmāṇa-kāya. Since the sambhoga-kāya forms are themselves only aspects of the undivided Dharma-kāya, represented by the Buddha Vajradhara, this is in a sense to say no more than is implied by the Vajradhara doctrine that all lamas are emanations of Vajradhara. But some lamas are, as it were, more the Buddha than others; or, rather, they are officially recognised as being manifestations of one of his specific aspects.

Among these aspects the three Family Protector Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāni, representing the Buddha's compassion, discriminating insight, and action to overcome obstacles, are particularly prominent, though there are others: the Buddha Amitābha, the tantric goddesses Tārā and Vajravārāhi. It is likely that this emanation idea was first developed in the context of the early kings of Tibet, at some time after the end of their rule. In their own time these rulers were probably regarded as successive physical appearances of the divine founding-ancestor of their dynasty, who was son and brother of the mountain gods, somewhat in the style of the Reth of the Shilluk.² Ariane Macdonald suggests that this 'political myth' reached its fullest development in the reign of Songtsen Gampo (c.620-c.649), and I have
mentioned already that this king came later (by the 11th century?) to be regarded as an emanation rather of Avalokiteśvara. At a somewhat later date several other members of the royal dynasty were also regarded as emanations of Avalokiteśvara - or sometimes of Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi - though not all the kings were included. It would indeed have been difficult, for example, to include within this scheme Langdarma, the last king of Tibet and a notorious persecutor of Buddhism in later legend.

Now there are obvious similarities between the Shilluk-type myth and the Avalokiteśvara myth, which I will comment upon further in Chapter Ten, but if the Avalokiteśvara myth derives from the older doctrine the connections have yet to be traced and dated. There seems so far no definite occurrence of the identification of Songtsen Gampo with Avalokitesvara until well after the royal period. Indeed if the Tun-Huang material is anything to go by, the cult of Avalokiteśvara was not of much importance in the period of the kings; the famous six-syllable mantra does not occur even once. Nor do the several surviving royal inscriptions from this period make any mention of the king being a manifestation of the bodhisattva.

Nevertheless, even if the emanation doctrine for the early kings did not develop until the 11th century, this is still probably the earliest occurrence of such an idea in Tibet. The next development perhaps was the emanation doctrine which developed about the abbots of the monastery of Sakya (the Sakya khri chen), who were heads of the Sakya monastic order and rulers of Tibet in the late 13th and early 14th centuries as regents for the Mongol emperors. These lamas were regarded as being emanations of the three bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi. They were said to have been prophesied by the Indian teacher Atīśa, who passed the future site of the monastery of Sakya on his way to Tibet in 1042. I give this account from a recent publication of Sakya texts in English:
On the mountain's dark slope, a large mirror-like patch of white earth was visible. Near it, two black wild yaks stood grazing. Upon seeing them, Palden Atśa turned to his companion disciples and made the prediction that in the future two emanations of Māṇjuśrī, the vowed protector of the holy Buddhist Dharma, would appear in this place. The Guru then dismounted and made prostrations in the direction of the white disc, for on its circle he saw seven glowing images of the letter DHĪ, the mantric symbol of the Bodhisattva Māṇjuśrī. Shining radiantly there, too, were the letters HRĪ and HŪMI, the symbols of Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi. The vision of these letters, Palden Atśa explained, signified that seven emanations of Māṇjuśrī and one each of Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi would also appear for the benefit of all beings.  

This text identifies the emanations of the bodhisattvas with the early teachers of the Sakya family: Khön Yönchok Gyelpo, who founded the monastery in 1073, and his immediate successors. It seems from Cassinelli and Ekvall that the Sakya-pas regard all later abbots of Sakya from the Khön family as also partaking of the nature of one or other of these bodhisattvas. Since succession to the post of Sa skya khri chen is, like that of the early kings, by biological heredity and not by reincarnation, the idea of a continuing series of reincarnations of the same bodhisattva would hardly be possible.

Māṇjuśrī is said to have revealed to (or through) the teachers who were his emanations a tradition of teaching which has been preserved as one of the primary Sakya teaching lineages. The idea of a bodhisattva appearing in visions to his own emanation and giving him teachings does not seem to be perceived as contradictory and is indeed not uncommon. Māṇjuśrī appeared in the same way to Tsongkha-pa, also his emanation, and in the story of Avalokiteśvara's emanation, the monkey-progenitor of the Tibetan people, the same idea recurs. Any apparent inconsistency can always be explained as a teaching device. Thus, it could be argued that Tsongkha-pa 'displayed the appearance' of receiving teachings from Māṇjuśrī, although he was in fact Māṇjuśrī. Or one could simply refer to the ultimately void nature of all phenomena. As Pu-tōn's biographer and personal disciple said after recounting his teacher's previous rebirth,
Such amazing appearances it is difficult even for
great saints to understand; how much more difficult are they
to understand for one like me, a child, foolish with the
blindness of ignorance (*avidya*); Such are the deeds of the
body-of-artifice (*phrul shug*), the inconceivable appearances
(*rnam 'phrul*) in numberless places.

Unfortunately I do not have any information on the date at which
the Sakya lamas came to be considered as emanations of these bodhisattvas,
or of the earliest source for Atśa’s prophecy. If Songtsen Gampo and
the other ‘religious kings’ were widely accepted by the 11th century as
emanations of bodhisattvas, it is perhaps not surprising that the Sakya
lamas, rulers of Tibet themselves from around 1260 to 1350, might be
revealed as having similar status. As far as I know, however, none of
the ‘secular’ princes who ruled Tibet between the demise of the Sakya
regime and the beginning of the rule of the Dalai Lamas claimed to be
emanations of any kind, despite the somewhat self-conscious ‘revival’
of the old royal style which took place under the first of these princes,
Changchub Gyaltsen (1302-1373). The Dalai Lamas of course did make
such claims, as I will describe below, but they did not become rulers of
Tibet until the 17th century.

**Incarnate lamas as reincarnations.**

The second aspect of the idea of ‘incarnate’ lama is that of
reincarnation. All people are of course assumed to reincarnate after
death, at least in terms of the level of conventional truth. The precise
nature of the reincarnating entity has been the subject of much discus-
sion among the various Indian Buddhist schools, but does not seem to have
been a matter of doctrinal controversy in Tibet itself. The skandha
or personality-constituent of consciousness (*vijñāna*) is continuous
between one life and the next, and through it the effects of karma can
determine the rebirth and the nature of the future life. The Buddhist
doctrine of no ‘soul’ (*ātman*) does not conflict with this. It is
concerned with the lack of permanent identity of the self or ego, rather
than with the lack of continuity between one rebirth and the next. In other words - as usual, at the level of conventional truth - I today am the same as I yesterday in exactly the same sense as I today am the same as I was in my last rebirth or will be in my next rebirth. All these 'I'-s are successive aspects of an ever-changing stream (*santāna) of karmic continuity; they are not the 'same person' in any other sense.

In terms of popular ideas about reincarnation, however, this is doubtless too sophisticated an approach. Tibetans speak of the rebirth of a person as if he is essentially the same person.

It is a consequence of such a picture that physiological paternity and maternity are, in theory, relatively unimportant. Both parents are in Tibetan thought believed to contribute to the body of the child. The father contributes the 'bone', *rus, a word used also for the agnatic lineage groups which still retain some significance for the Tibetans,¹² and the mother the 'flesh'. These contributions are not in contradiction to the rebirth idea, but they take place at a different level. The rebirth refers to the continuity of consciousness. Thus in the Tibetan Book of the Dead and the Nā ro pa'i rnam thar it is explained how the wandering consciousness of the 'intermediate stage' sees its future father and mother in intercourse. It feels attraction to its mother, if it is to be male, or father, if it is to be female, and attempts to interpose itself between them at the moment of union of sperm and ovum - or more precisely of the white and red essences (*thig le dkar dmar), male semen and female blood - so dissolving into them at the moment of rebirth.¹³

In the case of the rebirth of a normal person this all takes place quite involuntarily and through the determinism of karma. There is no special reason why it should take place in the form of a human being, and as was seen in Chapter Three the sūtra teachings emphasise that this is unlikely. There is also normally no continuity of memory between one
life and the next. In the case of a reincarnating lama the rebirth is considered as voluntary and deliberate. When he sees his future parents he transforms his mother's womb mentally into a palace containing a deity and enters into the deity with full self-control through his father's body.\textsuperscript{14} As with any ordinary child, however, the parents are responsible for producing the physical body.

What happens in practice is that a child is recognised, through processes which I shall describe shortly, as being the reincarnation of a recently dead lama, and he is invested, as the rebirth, with the office and property of the dead lama. This method of deciding the succession to a monastic post appears to have originated in the 13th or 14th centuries, and at first it applied only to a few particularly important monastic posts. It gradually spread and in recent times has become the normal mode of succession for the heads of monasteries in all monastic orders. The earlier modes of heredity and election gradually went out of usage, though as I discuss at the end of this chapter neither has disappeared completely.\textsuperscript{15} The number of reincarnation lines in modern times can only be guessed at, but it certainly runs into thousands.\textsuperscript{16} Most of these lines are relatively shallow in generational depth, and scarcely go back more than a couple of centuries, a period during which the practice of finding incarnations must have come to have its present near-universal distribution. In recent times the prestige attached to incarnate lamas has evidently been such that monasteries which do not have them are at a serious disadvantage in seeking lay patronage.

The most powerful of all these incarnation lines is of course that of the Dalai Lamas. The Dalai Lama incarnations presumably go back to the finding of a rebirth for Gedün-trup, a disciple of Tsongkha-pa's who died in 1474 and is retrospectively considered the First Dalai Lama. By the end of the 16th century their prestige and power was already very great, and in 1642 they became rulers of a large part of Tibet.
Often these incarnations are identified, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, with the original founders of the monasteries they rule. In addition, many of them claim retrospective identity with famous Indian and Tibetan lamas of the past, who are said to have been previous members of the same series, although the rebirths were not recognised as such at the time and do not necessarily follow on in strict chronological sequence. Thus the Dalai Lamas count among their previous reincarnations (reincarnations?) three or four Tibetan kings, including the great Songtsen Gampo (reigned 7620-7649), the Kadam-pa teacher Dromtön (1008-1064) and the Sakya-pa teacher Kunga Nyingpo (1092-1158), but as a recognised series of reincarnating lamas they can hardly go back before 1474.17

I will now turn to what appears to have been the earliest line of reincarnations, the Gyalwa Karma-pa, head lamas of the Karma Kagyu order. The accounts of these lamas given in the Blue Annals, a general history of the Buddhist lineages in Tibet written by a Karma-pa historian circa 1478, are both representative of the way in which these lamas are seen, and of considerable interest in their own right.

**The earliest reincarnation line: the Gyalwa Karma-pa.**

Nowadays this line is normally reckoned back to Dusum Khyenpa (1110-1193), disciple of Mila Repa’s student Gampo-pa, who wrote a text discussed in Chapter Three. Gš Lotsawa, the author of the Blue Annals, describes Dusum Khyenpa as a Bodhisattva of the Bhadrakalpa, that is one of the thousand bodhisattvas destined to reach Buddhahood during the present world age, but he does not reckon Karma Pakshi (1204 or 1206-1283), who is now described as the second Gyalwa Karma-pa, as his reincarnation.18 Indeed the gap of 11 (or 13) years between these two lamas is somewhat anomalous by later standards; the scriptural period for rebirth would be 49 days, and most incarnate lamas are discovered among children born within a year or two of their predecessor’s death. Gš Lotsawa describes Karma Pakshi’s reincarnation after his death in Rangjung Dorje
(in 1284) in considerable detail, however, as with all the subsequent reincarnations up to his own time. These accounts form a section in the Blue Annals commencing with Dlun Sum Khyenpa and Karma Pakshi and concluded with the colophon 'The Chapter on the first Lineage of Incarnate bLa-mas'. Possibly the author, G8 Lotsawa, who is generally speaking a careful historian, did not want to commit himself on the historicity of this first reincarnation in the lineage of his own monastic sub-order, and so contented himself with merely placing it in the appropriate position for such a reincarnation.19 His descriptions of the subsequent reincarnations, however, are of considerable interest, and include many features fully typical of later accounts of reincarnations of lamas up to modern times. A special feature is the description of Karma Pakshi's attempt to apply the method of direct transfer of consciousness, before taking on normal rebirth; this was one of the particular teachings of the Kagy6-pa lineage.20 Here first is the account of Karma Pakshi's rebirth as Rangjung Dorje (1284-1339):

The Dharmasvamin Karma pa sI passed away on the 3rd day of the third month of the year Water-Female-Sheep (1283 A.D.). He performed the rite of transference of the conscious principle... at sTod lung 'Phar tshan (into the body of a boy who had died). The boy's parents thought that the boy having died, it was improper to return him to life again, therefore the parents pierced the boy's eye with a needle, and so the omens did not agree (i.e., he did not succeed to incarnate in this body). Then the Dharmasvamin in the form of a being of the Intermediate Stage (bar do ba) proceeded towards Tsa'li phu dangs zhur mo, the birth place of the Venerable Mid la /Mila Rgya/, and was initiated into the Mandala of the 62 deities of SrT-Samvara. After that, he perceived the womb of (his future) mother as a crystal palace. Recollected and controlled he settled in it and thoughts of distress did not arise in him. Then he was born on the 8th day of the first half of the month of the year Wood-Male-Ape (1284 A.D.) Though the child could speak, he pretended not to be able to speak...He learnt the alphabet by himself, without having studied it with anyone else....

When the Venerable scholar gSer khang pa respectfully questioned him, he related to him many stories about the Intermediate Stage (bar do), etc. At the age of five, the mahAsiddha U rgyan pa said: "Tomorrow my Teacher Karma pa will be coming", and he arranged for him a high seat. Then, when the boy came to the residence of the mahAsiddha, he at once without hesitation climbed on the seat, and sat on it. The mahasiddha said to him: "You child, why did you sit down on the seat of my Teacher?"
Next the reincarnation of this lama as Rolpey Dorje (1340-1383):

The Dharmasvāmin Rol pa'i rdo rje: The Dharmasvāmin Rang byung rdo rje himself incarnated in him. When Ta dbon Gu shri ... asked the Dharmasvāmin: "Your Holiness... I also wish to go to that place where Your Holiness will be reborn presently! Please confirm this to me". "If you are filled with such devotion, (I may tell you) I shall be coming to Kong po." In accordance with this he came to Kong po as a child. When his parents were staying at the lofty fort of Go chen sPam dkar... the Venerable One was residing in the Tushita Heaven. Having been properly instructed by the Blessed Maitreya who resides in that heaven, he entered (his) mother's womb. Now no question arises about the change of the (mother's) womb into a palace (because he had reached the Bodhisattva stage, in which one enters the mother's womb having transformed it into a palace, as in the case of the Buddha, related in the Lalitavistara). While the child was in the womb, he recited the Mani, ma pi padme hum, the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, and used to assume various postures which caused the mother's body to shake. (The Venerable one) was born on the 8th day of the third month of the year Iron-Małe-Dragon (1340 A.D.). On his birth, the child uttered the Mani formula and named letters of the Indian alphabet, so that his father felt doubtful, but the mother said, "You shouldn't doubt! Many auspicious dreams have been seen by me", and thus the father's doubts were removed. When he was three, they proceeded to Myang po. At that time, the child said to his mother: "I am Kar ma pa śī's reincarnation! I shall have numerous disciples in this Jambudvīpa, the southern continent of traditional Hindu-Buddhist geography, in which India, Tibet and China are situated. You just see!", and saying so, he assumed the posture of Amitābha. "Do not talk about it!" added the child....

"Your Holiness," said the mother, "if you are an incarnation of Kar ma pa śī, are you not the Dharmasvāmin Rang byung rdo rje?" "The two are not different, but do not tell of it to common people!" replied the child.

Later the child is described as giving descriptions of life in the Tushita heaven, and as accepting teachings, for purposes of demonstration of the path:

Though he was able to keep in his mind different kinds of doctrines, he, in order to demonstrate the link between teacher and disciple, heard from the ascetic mGon rgyal ba the "Six Doctrines" of mRo, the "Six practices"... and other texts, as well as numerous minor precepts of the Developing and Completing stages of Anuttarayoga tantric practice, and many rites of initiations.

G8 Lotsawa gives similar accounts of Rolpey Dorje's reincarnations as Deshin Shekpa (1384-1415) and Thongwa Dönden (1416-1453) and of the rebirths of the second lineage of incarnate lamas, the Karma-pa 'Red Hat' (zhwa dmar) lineage.
Reincarnations in modern times.

All this is much as it is in modern times, according to Tibetan accounts. The lama typically makes predictions before his death about where he will be born, sometimes including hints as to the parents' names or the kind of house; the mother-to-be sees visions and has prophetic dreams; the child has remarkable abilities at birth and remembers people, places and incidents from his past life. As the finding of reincarnations of lamas became more institutionalised, more systematic procedures developed. Oracle-priests and various forms of divination by high lamas were used to help find the incarnation, and various tests were applied to the child to confirm his identity. Thus the child would be offered a selection of objects which had belonged to the lama reincarnated in him, mixed with similar objects that did not; and he had to select those which had been his in his previous life.

A ngos 'dzin or letter of recognition, given by the 14th Gyalwa Karma-pa (1797-1867) and recognising the son of the ruler of Sikkim as reincarnation of a deceased lama of Kham is of interest in this connection:

Statement of the Lord Karma-pa Vānaparamavajra, Tshig pa mchog gi rdo rje, empowered by the action of the excellent Buddhas of all directions and times, and given the title gzhu la'i tâ pa'u ba wang zi then tsi tsa'u hu'o (Lord over the monasteries of the Western Country) by Manjusri, the Supreme Ruler /Emperor of China/.

May the public of Jambudvipa in general, and especially the Sangha, ruler, minister, officials, etc., monks and laymen, great and low, listen attentively.

This son of the ruler-Dharmarāja has been recognised, consecrated and enthroned by me as the incarnation /sprul (pa'i) sku/ of Karma Rin chen nges don bstan 'dzin, nephew of the Kun mkhyen Si tu Rin po che; he has been named Karma sGrub brgyud bstan 'dzin dar rgyas lhan grub nges don dbang po, acquired faultlessly the grades of Śrāmanera and bhikṣu, received many initiations of the New and Old Tantras, and has brought to ripening the profound oral teachings etc.; he has also been empowered as general controller and holy religious head of the monasteries of his own order /rang lugs/, Karma Rab brtan gling, Karma bKra shis chos 'khor gling, Karma 'Chi med yangs den, Karma sGrub brgyud bstan dar gling, etc.

I request the lama /bla ma/ to teach, dispute and write,
having studied through the three means of learning, thinking over and meditating, all the Buddha's teaching without partiality, using whatever means is appropriate for its propagation and expansion, and especially acting to spread the Karma Kagyu teaching /bstan pa/ like the increasing moon, developing bodhicitta energetically; (I request) the communities of the sangha to accept whatever the lama says, in accordance with their vows of discipline, and the faithful lay patrons to give their devotion, homage and acceptance.

This letter is sent forth from the great religious school of 'Og min mTshur phyun an auspicious date of the Water-Tiger year/1842 A.D./

As the choosing of objects from the previous life indicates, the child was expected to have some residual memories of it, as well as the special abilities and potentialities acquired during it. But he still, of course, needed teaching, and his memories rarely seem to have persisted into adult life. At least this is the picture given in biographies and autobiographies of modern incarnate lamas, though of them only T. J. Norbu, a Geluk-pa incarnate and brother of the Dalai Lama, doubts in print whether he actually is the incarnation of his predecessor. He concludes, incidentally, that even if he isn't, his rebirth as a child who was recognised as such a reincarnation must be the result of previous good karma, and it is up to him to fulfil the responsibilities of the role he has been given. Here there is a rather Zande-like demonstration of an 'inconsistency' in the system as we see it merely reinforcing the system as the Tibetans view it. Other reincarnate lamas may well have come to similar accommodations with their roles. An incarnate lama, at least in traditional Tibet, rarely contested his own status in later years, and was hardly likely to be old enough to do so at the time of his discovery. His family were also not likely to contest the claim seriously, though there are occasional reports of parents reluctant to give up their children to the monasteries. For a poor family, an incarnate lama as a son would later be a valuable source of financial support and aid. The families of the successive Dalai Lamas were raised to the nobility.

Other parties might well have reason to contest the status of a particular claimant, and I will come shortly to a discussion of the
politics of the incarnate lama concept. It was very rarely, though, that a recognised incarnate lama could be deprived of his status; most disputes are concerned with the actual recognition of the incarnation. In modern times at least this recognition was a matter for the Lhasa government as well as the authorities of the monastic order in question, and even incarnate lamas of the older monastic orders required Lhasa's authorisation. In some cases the existence of a number of plausible claimants might be reconciled by declaring them to be reincarnations of different aspects of the old lama; thus body, speech and mind, or body, speech, mind, yon tan (quality, virtue) and 'obrin las (karma) might reincarnate separately, giving rise to three or five reincarnations. This practice seems to have originated at an early date with the Drigung Kagyü-pa, an order that like the Karma Kagyü-pa early came to appoint their head lamas through finding reincarnations.

**Incarnate lamas as both emanations and reincarnations.**

The major lineages of incarnate lamas in Tibet are mostly considered to be both emanations and reincarnations. Thus the Dalai Lamas are both reincarnations of previous Dalai Lamas and emanations of Avalokiteśvara. Stein suggests that the idea here is not that each individual Dalai Lama is a personal emanation of Avalokiteśvara, but that they are continuations of a train of rebirths begun by Avalokiteśvara in 'mythical times'; he comments that 'the dogma is hard to explain.' Gedün-trup, the first Dalai Lama, was already the 51st rebirth in this series of reincarnations, according to one list. The Gyalwa Karma-pa line of reincarnations, discussed above, are also emanations of Avalokiteśvara, and the Panchen Lamas of the Buddha Amitābha, one of the five Buddhas of the basic tantric mandala discussed in Chapter Four.

The relationship between the Dalai and Panchen Lamas is often discussed in terms of the relationship between Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha, which is ambiguous enough to be open to different interpretations by
opposed parties. Amitābha, as the presiding Buddha of the Lotus-family, is of higher status than the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who is an attendant figure on him, and in some ways his emanation. Yet Amitābha is visualized as residing in his Western Paradise of Sukhāvatī, while Avalokiteśvara is active in our world for the good of all beings. Thus the interest group associated with the Panchen Lama could claim that he was of higher status than the Dalai Lama, and so support the claims for independent status of the Tashilhunpo territory over which he presided. Lhasa government circles could however suggest that the Panchen Lama, as Amitābha's emanation, should be a purely spiritual figure, while it was appropriate that the Dalai Lama should carry out Avalokiteśvara's role of active protection as the political ruler of all Tibet—including Tashilhunpo.

Historical and scriptural support for present authority.
The doctrine of incarnate lamas can be seen to provide support for the present role of the occupants of these posts in two ways. First, it provides historical support and legitimization, through identifying the incumbent of the present with previous occupants of his post, and with other prestigious figures of the past. Thus the Dalai Lama's authority is increased through his being the reincarnation of both great Tibetan teachers of the past like Dromtön and Kunga Nyingpo and of the early Tibetan religious kings. His right to be the ruler of Tibet, as the reincarnation of the three great religious kings, can hardly be questioned. In addition, he 'was' the Fifth Dalai Lama who was responsible for instituting Geluk-pa rule over Tibet and many of the basic organisational aspects of that rule. The Panchen Lama's lineage incorporates a number of famous Tibetan religious teachers, going back to Tsongkha-pa's great disciple Māṇḍūkya and beyond. These lineages can also include Indian teachers, and personages mentioned in Buddhist sūtras as disciples of the Buddha. Sometimes specific
predictions in the sūtras, such as Avalokiteśvara's promise to reincarnate again and again to help the Tibetan people, can be regarded as being fulfilled by a particular lama or reincarnation. One frequently used scheme is that of the thousand bodhisattvas of the Bhadrakalpa; the Gyalwa Karma-pas, the Dalai Lamas, the Kashmirian Pandit Śākyārtha, Pu-tōn and Tsongkha-pa all seem to have been included within this scheme. Second, the emanation concept connects certain of the more important incarnate lamas with specific tantric deities mentioned in the teachings. The reference here is more to spiritual forces operative in the present than to historical precedent. The link between the two comes about through the quasi-historical stories of these tantric deities, who are regarded as having intervened in past history to originate these lines of incarnations, and who continue to be active through them.

Further implications of the incarnate lama concept.

Incarnate lamas, as I have indicated, occupy most of the major posts in the Tibetan religious system. By consequence, as my discussion in Chapter One indicates, they are of great importance in the political system too. Yet it is curiously difficult to give a consistent account of the meaning of the concept of incarnate lama. Its precise usage scarcely seems to be defined unambiguously, and at this point in the Tibetan lamas' conceptual scheme the mists of 'conventional truths' and 'expedient teachings' seem to be thicker than anywhere else. It is hardly surprising that the biographers and historians of Tibet register their own inability to unravel the precise nature of all these rebirths and emanations. However the emanation and reincarnation doctrines do have certain implications within the total Tibetan system of ideas.

First, the lama as emanation. This is a logical extension of the teachings on the Three Kāyas discussed earlier; the lama as emanation is the sprul sku (nimmāpa-kāya) corresponding to a particular sambhoga-kāya form such as Amitābha or Avalokiteśvara. As such he is 'a' Buddha,
an emanation of the dharmakāya form which is the unchanging essence of all the Buddhas; and indeed the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, was a nirvāṇa-kāya of this kind. 36

It is a little more difficult to see why the term sprul sku is applied to the reincarnation who is not specifically an emanation. Here there does not seem to be an explicit doctrine, but there is a fairly standard line of argument reported by several Western interpreters. 37 The attainment of human rebirth by a dying lama indicates that his rebirth is not, like that of an ordinary man, simply at random. It implies that he retained sufficient awareness through the intermediate stage to be able to direct his consciousness to a suitable rebirth. Thus he is already something more than an ordinary man. David-Neel suggests that sprul sku is here applicable in its more literal meaning of 'magically produced body', in that the future rebirth is produced by the intention of the dying man, in the same way that a magically produced body can be produced during life.

Sometimes this argument is taken further, and it is said that the ability to achieve human rebirth in this way at will implies the ability to enter nirvāṇa, or at least to attain rebirth in one of the heavens. The reincarnating lama is then making the conscious choice of a bodhisattva, in returning to the state of suffering which is human existence, although he no longer needs to, in order to continue teaching and helping to liberate human beings from their sufferings. A version of this position was given by Geshe Ngawang Thargay in his Dharamsala classes. 38 Any sprul sku must be the reincarnation of an enlightened being, or at least a bodhisattva of some kind; he must have attained to at least the last stage of the tshogs lam; that is, the Path of the Collection of Merit, the first of the five paths traversed in sequence by the Bodhisattva, as also by Hinayāna practitioners. This is the stage on which the four bases of psychic power are acquired, which presumably imply the ability
to control subsequent rebirths. Thus from this point of view incarnate lamas are not necessarily all Buddhas, but they are necessarily bodhi-sattvas of a certain degree of attainment. Like the bodhisattva rebirths of the historical Buddha, the incarnate lama can continue to develop through his successive rebirths.39 But at the same time, all these lamas are by the Vajradhara doctrine to be seen as direct manifestations of the Buddha. The contradiction between this, and the picture of lamas as gradually progressing through a series of rebirths can only be reconciled, as it is for the historical Buddha himself, by regarding the series of rebirths as a teaching expedient on the level of conventional truth.

These complexities can hardly have affected lay views of the incarnate lamas very much, and the Vajradhara doctrine never meant that all incarnate lamas were really considered of equal status. Lamas vary in their prestige both among the lay population and among monks. In particular the incarnation lines of ancient standing, such as the Gyalwa Karma-pa, which are generally also at a senior level in the structure of the monastic orders - that is heads of monastic orders or of groups of monasteries rather than abbots of a single monastery or monastic college - all have great prestige. In addition, they control vast estates of land and large attached populations of men. But almost any officially recognised incarnate lama, however minor, was guaranteed in the traditional system a monastery or monastic sub-unit to preside over, and an 'inherited' group of lay-supporters and monks. Beyond that his personal qualities might enable him to build up support on a larger scale. The precise nature of a particular incarnation and the full list of his previous rebirths were matters more for monastic scholars and chroniclers than for the average Tibetan, lay or monk, though the religious biographies discussed in the next chapter gave some account of these matters, and were often widely distributed.
Politics and the incarnate lama.

Most of the above has been exegesis of Tibetan ideas about the incarnate lamas; it is time now to take a closer look at the political and sociological implications of the incarnate lama concept. Here my information is suggestive rather than conclusive, but it nevertheless points in a number of interesting directions.

Shen and Liu, Chinese officials in Lhasa in the 1940s whose account gives a sardonic but often illuminating view of Tibetan affairs, suggest that the institution of incarnate lamas came into being

...simply to perpetuate the various economic blocs which the incarnations serve as constitutional heads. Every incarnation lama represents certain vested interests from which a bloc derives its existence. A natural heir for a lama (at least for a Ge-Lu-Pa) being out of the question, the unique device of selecting a child as his successor is resorted to, in order to prevent internal dissension and preserve the legal body from breaking up.

The historical conjecture here is plausible, at least for the notion of reincarnation as distinct from emanation; biological inheritance was not used by the Karma Kagyu-pa order where this idea appears to have originated. For the emanation side of the incarnate lama, which first arose in the context of the Tibetan kings or the Sakya lamas, Shen and Liu's suggestion could hardly apply. A cynical view of the emanation doctrine might see its original function rather in the continuity with the early kings which the Sakya lamas and the later Dalai Lamas could claim through its use, as well as in its relation to the growing importance of the cult of Avalokiteśvara. Shen and Liu's suggestion, however, is doubtless not without significance for the widespread selection of monastic heads by the finding of reincarnations in modern times. Monastic interest groups needed a means of appointing successors with unambiguous title and long-term tenure, and the great prestige of the older lines of incarnate lamas must also have been a persuasive argument. An incarnate lama must have been an asset no sizeable monastery could do without, if only for his significance as a focus of lay devotion and
offerings. Thus when Tushi Rimpoché, the high-status Nyingma-pa incarnate lama depicted in Plate 1, came as a refugee to Sherpa country he became within a few years the central figure of what is now much the largest monastery among the Sherpas; the small Sherpa monasteries in the area suffered a corresponding loss in lay support.\textsuperscript{41}

There might well be other motives for recognising incarnate lamas; thus the great 19th-century scholar Jamgon Kongtrül was recognised as an incarnation by the Karma Kagyü-pa of dPal spungs monastery in order to avoid his being requisitioned into the service of the Government of Derge, a lay principality in Yham.\textsuperscript{42} In another and more famous episode, the reincarnation of the Third Dalai Lama was found as the great-grandson of the Tümet Mongol chieftain, Altan Khan, at a time when the Geluk-pa order was attempting to gain the support of that group. From this time, in the words of Shakabpa, 'a close spiritual relationship developed between Mongolia and Tibet, and the Ge-lug-pa sect emerged as the stronger group.'\textsuperscript{43} In cases such as this the Tibetans can recognise the practical value of the links formed through finding the incarnate lama in a particular family without necessarily disbelieving in the truth of the rebirth. The Third Dalai Lama knew as well as anyone the desirability of forming closer links with the Mongols, and it was of course for that reason that he chose to be reborn among them.

His doing so was even at that time (1589) not without precedent. Earlier incarnate lamas were frequently found among important local aristocratic families in Tibet, and the origins of the finding of reincarnations needs probably to be seen primarily in the context of the relationships at that time between aristocratic and monastic authority, and the growing strength and independence of the monasteries. Gene Smith suggests that the 15th and 16th centuries marked

\ldots the gradual acceptance of the priority of the rebirth (yang srid) lineage over familial claims in the transmission of
accumulated prestige and wealth. The previous pattern in Tibetan society had been one of a religious aristocracy passing both religious and secular power from father to son or from paternal uncle to nephew.\textsuperscript{44}

The Sakya lamas were an example of this previous pattern, descending in the aristocratic lineage of Khön; the Druk-pa abbots of Ralung likewise belonged to the rGya lineage. The series of rebirths of the leading Druk-pa incarnate lama, described by Smith, are a striking demonstration of the consequences of these choices.\textsuperscript{45}

This incarnation line began in the 10th generation from the Druk-pa founder, gTsang pa rGya ras (1161–1211), with his descendant rGyal dbang rje (1428–1476), who claimed also to be his reincarnation. He claimed, in addition, to be a reincarnation of Avalokiteśvara and Nāropa; Smith suggests this as the model on which the Dalai Lamas' later use of Avalokiteśvara was based. The intermediate rebirths were supposed to have taken place in the Ralung lineage but without their having been recognised. Unfortunately there were no male births in the house of Ralung for some years after rGyal dbang rje's death, and the family's political prestige was also falling; the abbots and important monks of the Druk-pa order eventually recognised the son of a prince of Bya as the immediate reincarnation. The Ralung family accepted this choice but refused to pass onto him his predecessor's monastic property. The princes of Bya therefore built him a monastery of his own.

After his death in 1523, the same situation arose again; the rebirth was found in neither the Ralung or Bya families, but in another minor aristocratic family. This lama, the great Druk-pa scholar Pema Karpo, founded a new monastery not far from Bhutan, where the earlier Druk-pa lamas of the house of Ralung had built up an extensive following. On his death in 1592 a dispute arose over the two claimants, one from the house of Ralung, the other the son of the prince of Chonggye. The dispute was submitted to the temporal ruler of Central Tibet at that time, the sDe gSrid gTsang pa, who decided in favour of the Chonggye candidate.
The other claimant fled to Bhutan, where his incarnation line continued to rule the Bhutanese state until the 20th century, but the house of Ralung apparently came to an end within a couple of generations. 46

As this example illustrates, the recognition of incarnations is a complex matter. Monastic orders had reason to acquire aristocratic support, and the aristocratic families on their side no doubt felt that links with influential monastic orders could be of value to them. In the highly fluid political situation of all Tibet in the 13th to 17th centuries, and of Eastern Tibet up to modern times, both parties could gain through these alliances. On the other hand it could also happen, as with the house of Ralung, that a family which had control of important monasteries and religious property might seek to maintain its control by having future incarnations found within the family. It would no doubt be in a good position to press the claims of one of its own children, especially if it also had aristocratic status and influence in Lhasa.

While there are recurring patterns, we do not have enough information as yet to make wide generalisations about the kinds of families in which incarnations are found and the probable reasons; in any case much depends on the individual circumstances. The incarnation method of succession to office, like the more familiar modes of biological inheritance and election, has possibilities for manipulation, competition and intrigue, and these have been fully exploited by the Tibetans; but it does not in itself determine that a particular class of people succeed to these offices.

One would certainly expect the parents of potential incarnates to support the claims of their children, and the Tibetans were well aware that this could happen. The mission which found the 14th Dalai Lama visited his house in disguise, and the monk who led the group pretended to be a mere servant, in order to avoid arousing the parents' suspicion of the purpose of their mission. 47 Norbu mentions the mother
of another claimant whose interest in her child's success was all too obvious.\(^4\) No doubt aristocratic families were in a better position to forward their children's claims than commoners, and this may help to explain the number of incarnations born in such families. In the case of the Dalai Lama, such a choice would give the family so much power that it became accepted, apparently under Chinese pressure, that his incarnations were to be found in commoner families only.\(^4\) However, the primary responsibility for the recognition of an incarnation fell on the lamas and monks of his own monastery and monastic order, and it was doubtless their interests that were paramount in any choices involved. The Lhasa authorities, in the area under their control, could at most refuse to recognise a particular incarnation, or, as in two cases discussed below, refuse to allow any incarnation to be found.

The crucial importance of the choice of incarnate lamas was noted by the Chinese emperor Ch'ien-lung (1735-1796) who attempted to assert imperial control over the finding of incarnations. He described his policy in an inscription from the year 1792 in the great Tibetan Buddhist temple in Peking, the Yung-ho-kung. In it he expresses his objections to the finding of reincarnations within the same families:

> The practice of inheriting, within the same clan (the rank of) khubilghans [Reincarnations] of Grand Lamas with ruling power in religious matters barely differs from hereditary rank and office...if the dignity of khubilghan were transmitted for generations within the same clan that would be egotism. What has the Buddha to do with egotism? This must therefore be terminated.

His objections particularly arose over the Gurkha invasion of Tibet in 1788. The Gurkhas had exploited a dispute arising from a claim by two incarnate lamas, brothers of the deceased Third Panchen Lama, to the latter's property, as an occasion for their attack, and the affair had eventually led to the intervention of a Chinese army.\(^5\)

In this inscription the Ch'ien-lung emperor also describes the system of selection he now intended to prevail for the selection of
major incarnations. Names of suitable candidates were to be placed in a golden urn which he had provided, and the Dalai or Panchen Lama, cooperating with the Chinese representative (amban) in Lhasa, would draw one out. A second golden urn in the Yung-ho-kung itself was to serve for the selection of the incarnate lamas of the Mongols.

This method appears to have been applied intermittently for the finding of succeeding Dalai Lama incarnations; I have no information about its use for other lines. If the lists of reincarnations of lamas given for four Eastern Tibetan lines in the 19th and 20th centuries by Smith are typical, it obviously did not succeed in preventing hereditary transmission of incarnate status. Within the multiple emanations of four major 19th-century lamas we read of a lama reincarnating as the first son of his daughter-in-law, and then after the death of this son in infancy, as the second son of the same woman; of the grandson of the famous Nyingma-pa incarnate lama Dudjom Rimpoche being recognised as an incarnate lama; of the son of the 15th Gyalwa Karma-pa also being so recognised; of two brother incarnate lamas; of a lama reincarnating in his great-grandson, himself the son of another incarnate lama; and of another reincarnating in his grand-nephew. All these lamas are in the three older orders (Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya), which have married lamas, but 'families' of incarnations are not unknown in the Geluk-pa order either; the 12th Dalai Lama came from the same family as the 8th, and two brothers of the present Dalai Lama are also incarnate lamas.

The Zhwa dmar lama, who was one of the two brothers of the Panchen Lama involved in the Gurkha affair, was the most senior Karma Kagyu incarnate lama apart from the Gyalwa Karma-pa. After his death in 1792 the Lhasa government refused to allow any incarnation to be recognised, and confiscated the monastery belonging to the incarnation line. This device was adopted by the Lhasa government on at least one subsequent occasion, in the case of the Reting Rimpoche, who acted as regent for the
14th Dalai Lama from 1934 to 1941. He died in unclear circumstances after being accused of involvement in a conspiracy to regain power, and an incarnation was again prohibited. 54

This particular incident brings out another aspect of the incarnation system which requires at least summary mention: the necessity for a regent during the period in which the new incarnate is too young to assume direct control. For the major monastic estates there were frequently other incarnation lines that regularly took on this post. Thus the Karma-pas had a rGyal tshab or regent incarnation that customarily fulfilled this function for the Gyalwa Karma-pa. The regent for the ruling incarnate of Bhutan was an alternative incarnation line arising from the same lama; the ruler represented the mind aspect, his regent the speech aspect. 55 In the case of the Dalai Lama, the incarnate abbots of four monasteries in Lhasa were primarily eligible for this role. During the 19th century these regents controlled the Lhasa government almost continuously, as a series of Dalai Lamas died young. The implication for the Tibetan political system of these regencies is not my present subject; 56 it may be noted, however, that whether the incarnate lama or his regent was the ruler, the power remained with the lamas.

Other modes of selection for lamas.

The incarnate lama system was the most important and the most typical mode of selection for important posts in the Tibetan religious system, and the lamas around whom my whole account centres in this study are, prototypically, incarnates. The incarnate lama system was not, however, the only mode of succession, as I have pointed out previously, and this point should be made again here.

First, the hereditary principle, which appears to have been of great importance in the early days of Tibetan Buddhism, never entirely died out. The most important example of this mode of succession in recent times is that of the grand lamas of Sakya, who as I explained above are
also considered as emanations. Many Nyingma-pa lamas are also hereditary; this applies particularly to those associated with the small village temples and monasteries of outlying areas such as Dolpo and the Sherpa country.

Second, the election of a successor by the other lamas and important monks of a monastery has always been an alternative mode to heredity and reincarnation, and even when not employed for the highest posts, which in general it has not been, lower monastic offices may be filled in this way. These offered non-incarnate monks channels for upward mobility; though, as in the case of Jangön Kongtrül, the most talented of these might well end up by being recognised as some kind of incarnation anyway. In the Geluk-pa order this mode of selection or election was maintained for some of the highest posts, including the college heads and abbots of the great Geluk-pa teaching monasteries, one of which, the abbot of Ganden, was also titular head of the whole order as successor to Tsongkha-pa. Early this century the 13th Dalai Lama combined this selection procedure with the elaborate examination system of these monastic universities, and only holders of the highest degree, dGe bshes lha ram pa, are now eligible to be appointed as bLa ma dbu mdzad (Master of Discipline and administrative head) of one of the two tantric colleges, from which the other high posts followed through an automatic system of rotation. Incarnate lamas are of course also eligible for appointment through this procedure, though their incarnate status gives them, in theory at least, no particular access to these posts. In practice, several recent occupants of this set of posts have been incarnate lamas, including Ling Rimpoché, present Abbot of Ganden as well as Senior Tutor to the Dalai Lama; and Pangaon and Tara Tulkus, who have both served as bLa ma dbu mdzad of Upper Tantric College. Others, however, have not been incarnate lamas, and these offices are certainly not reserved for members of particular incarnation lines.
While these particular posts are few in number, they were in the past of very great importance, particularly in terms of political influence. The three great teaching monasteries, Sera, Ganden and Drepung, as Goldstein has described,\textsuperscript{59} were much the most important monasteries in terms of influence on the Lhasa government, as well as supplying the majority of the monk officials in that government. Thus these abbots were in some ways more powerful than any other monks or incarnate lamas within the Dalai Lama's dominions except for the Dalai Lama himself, and the Regent, if there was one. The abbots, in fact, played a large part in appointing the Regent, through the General Assembly (\textit{tshogs tdu}) which they dominated. The incarnate lamas, by contrast, were in political terms primarily rulers of their own monastic estates; they had no direct influence on the Lhasa government.

This absence of incarnates from the highest political offices is at first sight rather surprising. However, once the Dalai Lama's rule had been established in the 17th century neither the Dalai Lamas themselves when ruling, nor their Regents, can have had much interest in allowing any of these posts to be taken over by a reincarnation. Such a reincarnation would have been structurally in too important a position in relation to themselves. Even the Dalai Lama is only the reincarnation of a relatively junior disciple of Tsongkha-pa, and in certain religious affairs has to acknowledge the higher status of the Abbot of Ganden, who is the successor of Tsongkha-pa himself.\textsuperscript{60} It was doubtless convenient enough that the abbot was an old man when appointed, and in any case served only for a seven-year term.

Working up through the Geluk-pa hierarchy is not the only way for a non-incarnate to attain to the status of a high lama. It is also possible to acquire a reputation for holiness and spiritual power through meditation, teaching and other religious activities, and so gradually build up a following. Most of the earliest lamas must have done something very like this. A recent example, Tomo Geshe Rimpoche, is
If he acquired enough disciples and followers, and enough support from the local lay population, such a lama could become in time the abbot of a large monastery, and the first in another sequence of incarnate lamas. Presumably such a series of events was most likely to happen in an area where there was not already a local incarnation, or where the local incarnation was not highly regarded by the population. New lines of incarnations were also frequently founded by those non-incarnates who worked themselves up to the top of the Geluk-pa hierarchy in the way described above. Thus while the Tibetan system allowed upward mobility in exceptional cases to those not chosen as incarnates at an early age, such mobility in itself led to further increase in the number of incarnate lines.

Discussion.

The monasteries of the Tibetans have gradually become dominated by the presence of incarnate lamas. Almost every monastery is run by one, or run in his name if he is too young to rule or not interested in doing so, and the largest monasteries are or were dominated by the households (bla brang) of their numerous incarnations, independent sub-units often holding extensive property in and beyond the monasteries. These large monasteries have mostly disappeared since the Chinese occupation, or survive in much reduced form in exile. Among the refugees, and in Sikkim, Bhutan and the Indian and Nepali border areas, the lamas continue to play an important role.

This chapter has included much discussion of politics, since the primary importance of the doctrine of the incarnate lama lies in its political usage, both within and beyond the monasteries. In pursuing these matters I have been led to give further information about the general role of lamas in politics and government, a subject which I introduced briefly in Chapter One. This political role of the lama must always be kept in mind when discussing his more purely 'religious'
functions. Lamas are not merely teachers, or sources of tantric power for lay use; they are owners of land, property and men. I will return to this secular role of the lamas in Part Three, where I will attempt to bring together the activities of the lamas in a single coherent picture.

In terms of Buddhist theory, the incarnate-lama doctrine did not represent a radically new development. The divine powers employed by the lama in a tantric ritual, which I discussed in Chapter Five, pre-date its origin, since they are present already in the Indian sources of Tibetan Buddhism. The doctrine of the lama as Buddha, which I discussed in Chapter Six, is also of Indian origin, and if the guru-yoga rituals represent a Tibetan development, it must have been an early one, since the worship of the guru is enjoined in Indian texts. The main contribution of the new doctrine, apart from the opportunities it offered for political manipulation and control of monastic succession, probably lay in the increased status and prestige of the lamas in the eyes of the lay population. At the same time, as I have noted, the distribution of this status was now more controlled and defined; it came to have a largely ascribed, rather than achieved, nature. For the further development of this new image of the lama, I turn now to descriptions in Tibetan literature, and to the lama in art.
Notes to Chapter Seven.

1. Although I cannot give an exact estimate, it is clear from the literature that apart from the great monastic universities, discussed at the end of this chapter, the abbots of most Geluk-pa monasteries were chosen by the recognition of reincarnations. Even within the teaching monasteries, the incarnations had great power. According to T. J. Norbu (Norbu and Harrer, 1960) Kumbum, which had more than 3000 monks, included around 200 incarnate lamas. Each of these incarnations had his own establishment (bla brang), to which smaller monasteries were attached, though presumably some of these incarnates were studying at Kumbum rather than permanent residents. It would seem that in the other orders an even higher proportion of the monasteries had incarnate lamas for abbots rather than elected or appointed heads, although some of the monasteries in these orders were still hereditary on the earlier pattern. These hereditary lamas could still be emanations, as with the Sakya abbots, but they could not be reincarnations, at least not in every generation.


5. Thutop and Ngawang, 1968:i-ii.


9. According to some versions, Songtsen Gampo, Trhisong Detsen and Repachen were emanations of the Three Family Protector bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi, cf. Chapter Two, note 27, rather than all being emanations of Avalokiteśvara. These are the same bodhisattvas as for the Sakya emanations.


11. The detailed descriptions given in Tibetan texts of the process of dying (e.g. Berzin 1972:302ff.) and of the intermediate state (Evans-Wentz 1968, Tucci 1949) are concerned with the experiential nature of death, the intermediate state and rebirth rather than their ontological status. They are also related to forms of meditation practised during life.


15. Some of the remaining 'elected' posts, those connected with the major Geluk-pa monasteries near Lhasa, are nevertheless of great importance, as is the hereditary post of abbot of Sakya.
16. A list of Nyingma-pa monasteries in Tibet gives around 640 incarnations for 600 monasteries in Central Tibet (U-Tsang) alone; Paltul, n.d. I-44. This figure may be somewhat exaggerated, but incarnate lamas were equally common in other orders and other parts of Tibet, and the total number was evidently very large.


18. Roerich 1949-53:II 473. On the Gyalwa Karma-pas, and the Karma-pa order, in general, cf. Richardson 1958-9 and Smith 1968b. Pu-tön discusses the thousand Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa in Obermiller 1932:3: 1,91-100. Sakyamuni was the fourth of these Buddhas; Maitreya will be the fifth. Pu-tön himself, and the Kashmirian pandit Sākya-Srī-bhadra, considered to be his previous incarnation, are described in Pu-tön's biography as belonging to the line of existences (sku 'phrong) which will form the seventh Buddha (Ruegg 1966:51, 43 note 1). Ruegg states that Tsonkha-pa's sku 'phrong is also identified with the seventh Buddha. GB Lotsawa states that Dusum Dhyenpa was to become the Buddha Śīhka, the sixth, but comments that even Bodhisattvas who have attained the tenth stage find it difficult to follow all these manifestations (Roerich 1949-53:II, 473-474.)

19. 'First lineage' does not necessarily indicate absolute temporal priority, though as I have said the Gyalwa Karma-pas are the earliest incarnate lamas known to us. GB Lotsawa follows his description of the 'First lineage' with accounts of the abbots of mtšur-phu, the main Karma-pa monastery, and of the 'Second lineage' of Karma-pa incarnate lamas, the Zha dmar ('Red Hat') lamas.

20. Marpa's son Dar ma rdo rje was said to have reincarnated in a pigeon through this technique after his death in an accident. The pigeon flew to India and there took over the body of a dead youth. cf. Bacot 1937:55-57.


24. For instance for the 13th Dalai Lama (Bell 1946), the 14th Dalai Lama (Bell 1946, Norbu and Harrer 1960, Dalai Lama 1962), the 24th Taktser Rimpoché (Norbu and Harrer 1960), the 11th Trungpa Tulku (Trungpa 1971a:25-30), or the 2nd Tomo Geshe Rimpoché (Govinda 1974:120-122).


30. cf. Chapter 4, note 27, and Vajra Mukt, n.d.

Actually the origin of this sacred crown of the Gyalwa Karma-pa goes back to very ancient times, almost to pre-history, when the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara took on human form and was born in Central Asia as the son of the King Yung Khorsung. . . .

The reference to Yung Khorsung, who must be yul 'khor srumg, *Dhrtarastra, suggests that this is a reference to the Thousand Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa, cf. above, note 18, and Obermiller 1932-33:1, 94-97.
Avalokitesvara is said to have vowed not to attain Buddhahood until he had assisted all the thousand to attain Buddhahood themselves (Trungpa 1967). This hardly agrees with G6 Lotsawa's identification of Diisum Kyenpa with the sixth of the thousand Buddhas, but I have no further information on this point.


33. Dudjom Rimpoché, the highest ranking Nyingma-pa lama in exile, is described as a reincarnation of the Buddha's foremost disciple Sāriputra (Paltul, n.d., after viii); the 17th-century Nyingma-pa lama dpal yang 'dzin rgyal brang skyes ras is described as a reincarnation of the Buddha's son Rāhula (ibid., after 120). Tsong-ka-pa, the founder of the Geluk-pa order, was also believed to have been one of Sakyamuni's disciples in a former life, as I discuss in Chapter Eight and as is depicted on Plate Five. Gampo-pa, according to the Blue Annals, was formerly Candraprabhakumāra, described in the Samādhirāja Sūtra as asking the Buddha to narrate the sūtra (Roerich 1949-53:II, 451-452.)

34. cf. notes 18 and 30, above.

35. cf. note 8, above. Most of the biographies discussed in the next chapter include similar passages.

36. Sometimes a distinction is made between a nirvāṇa-kāya appearing in the form of a Buddha (rdo-rje sprul), endowed with the 32 major and 80 minor physical marks of a Buddha or world-monarch, and one appearing as an ordinary person. Sakyamuni was of the former type, present-day emanations of the latter, e.g. in Geshe Ngawang Thargay's oral teaching; cf. also Berzin 1972:513, note 1; Guenther 1970:32-35, 266-267; Obermiller 1932-33:II, 127-133.


38. 'Any tulkū must be a reincarnation of an enlightened being, or at least a Bodhisattva of some kind...They must have reached the last stage of tshogs lam at least' (Class notes, 24 May 1972). cf. asking the lama not to enter nirvāṇa, as part of the seven-part offering sequence (Chapter Six).

39. This seems to be suggested by G6 Lotsawa in his account of the Gyalwa Karma-pa incarnations (cf. notes 21, 22 above). Thus he speaks of Karma Pakshi after death receiving the Sākyvara initiation, and then perceiving the womb of his future mother as a crystal palace, which is a sign of his being able to control his rebirth. In the case of his next rebirth he states that 'now no question arises about the change of the womb into a palace'. (Roerich 1949-53:II, 493-494)


41. Tusha Rimpoché's monastery also received support from the nearby Tibetan refugee settlement of Chalsā. For this monastery, cf. Kaschekovski 1969.


44. Smith 1968a:1.
45. ibid., 1-4.

46. Rahul 1971:19-28 gives an account of the Bhutanese incarnations, though it is somewhat confused, and also biased towards the Bhutanese side of the dispute. He refers to the other claimant as 'a bastard cousin of Dalai Lama V' (p. 22).


The parents had carefully coached the child for it was they who wanted preference for themselves, not the child. He had apparently learnt his lesson well, but when the mission began to ask him questions he burst into tears and ran away.... everyone laughed at the family for having made such fools of themselves.

49. e.g. Shen and Liu 1973:101.


52. There is some disagreement over this point, which has been considered as a test of Chinese control over the Lhasa administration. Thus Shen and Liu, giving a Chinese viewpoint, state flatly that one of the two Ambans, Chinese officials resident in Lhasa, draws the name out of the urn (1973:101). However they admit that if the correct candidate is obvious, the procedure is omitted. They state that this happened in the cases of the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas. Shakabpa denies that the lottery occurred in the cases of the 9th and 10th, and admits that it occurred for the 12th and perhaps also the 11th (1967:170, 174-175, 183, 176; see especially 175 and note 30.)


56. It has been discussed by Goldstein:1968, 1973.

57. cf. note 42, above.


60. It is perhaps significant that Lhasa circles did not apparently recognise the Panchen Lama's claim to be the reincarnation not merely of the 5th Dalai Lama's teacher, but of Khe-trup-je, one of Tsongkha-pa's two most famous disciples. Khe-trup-je was a much more important figure among Tsongkha-pa's disciples than the First Dalai Lama, Gedün-trup.


CHAPTER EIGHT

The doctrine of the lama in literature and art.

The evolved doctrine of the lama is expressed in the numerous biographies of eminent lamas that were written in Tibetan monasteries. Often these lives of the lamas consist in part of autobiographical material by the lama himself; they were frequently compiled by an immediate disciple, who took down the lama's words and placed them in his own framework. Only in the case of lamas like Tsongkha-pa who were of continuing importance to whole monastic orders or sub-orders does one meet with more literary productions produced many years after the lama's death, and even these biographies depend on accounts contemporary with the lama. Thus all biographies contain much factual material. But their purpose as a whole is hagiographic; to glorify the lama they describe, and through doing so to exalt the monastery and teaching lineage to which they also belong. They therefore present an idealised picture. In them the lama as a source of tantric power and as an emanation of the Buddha coexists with the lama as a human being studying, meditating and working to achieve his own Enlightenment. But in any conflict it is the picture of the lama as Buddha that is ultimately presented. Some early Kagyil-pa biographies go counter to this tendency, and will be discussed separately.

Depictions of lamas in art are closely linked to the guru-yoga rituals discussed in Chapter Six. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, many of the images in temples are of the previous lamas of the monastic order to which the temple belongs. Daily offering rituals are performed before these, as before the images of other deities in the temples. In the
painting I shall discuss, the central figure is a deified lama of this
type, his status as an emanation being indicated through iconographical
conventions. He is surrounded by scenes from his life, which follow
closely the pattern of the biographies.

The lama in literature.

The biographies of lamas occupy an important place in Tibetan
religious literature. Tibetan books, from around the 15th century on-
wards, have been printed from hand-carved wood-blocks. With large num-
bers of monks available for such work, monasteries of any size have
collections of wood blocks which can be printed out as needed. Collected
editions of the works of almost all important lamas exist, and often run
into many volumes. The lives of the lamas were printed in the same way,
and in fact often form part of a collected edition of the lama's works,
though they are frequently printed separately. The biographies of the
founders of monastic orders like Tsongkha-pa and the early Kagydl-pa
lamas, lamas who are significant for many different monasteries, exist
in several blockprint editions. On the other hand the biographies of
minor local lamas may exist only in manuscript.

The usual name for these lives, rNam thar, is short for rnam par
thar pa, 'complete liberation'. In Vostrikov's words,

any life-history [for the Tibetans] is eo ipso a description of
the movement of a person on the path of deliverance (rnam par
thar pa) from the present or future transitory life, for, from
the Buddhistic viewpoint, everything done in this life is
directly related to this ultimate deliverance.

Because of the historical interest of these biographies, and their
relatively popular nature, several have been translated into Western
languages. Among these are the biographies of Chak Lotsawa (1197-1264),
Pu-tôn (1290-1364), 3 Tsongkha-pa (1357-1419), 4 and of four 15th- to 17th-
century lamas from Dolpo, 5 as well as of the Mongolian lama, the First
Changchya Khutukhtu (1642-1714). 6
However factual the account, and however important or unimportant the lama described, almost all these biographies fall into a very standard pattern and are concerned to emphasise similar points about the lives of their subjects. There is a prologue in which reference is made to the Three Kāya-s of the Buddha, and to the Vajradhara doctrine by which spiritual teachers are held to be emanations of the Buddha in the form of Vajradhara, and it is stated that the subject of the biography is such an emanation:

Such a great and holy man is the essence of the buddha-bodies of past, present and future...It is explained at great length in the 'Sutra of the Brîny River' that all famous lamas are manifestations of buddhahood. This lord of ours in particular is a manifestation of Lotus-Born of Urgyan [Padmasambhava].

The previous reincarnations of the lama are recounted in brief, if anything is known of them. Then the birth is described, usually stated to have been preceded by prophetic dreams and omens, and accompanied by miraculous signs. The biography narrates its subject's precocious interest in spiritual matters as a child, his teachers and the lineages of teachings he received from them, his studies and meditational practices. His own religious activities follow, both in giving discourses and meditation instructions, and writing books, and also in building monasteries, stūpas, images, and works for the general good of sentient beings, such as bridges, or game reserves to protect wild animals. Finally his death, or 'manifesting of the Dharma-kāya', is described, again accompanied by miraculous omens and signs, and the production of relics from his ashes if he is cremated, as high lamas often are.

Historical events may be mentioned in the course of this narrative, but they are generally of secondary importance. Chinese emperors, Mongol chieftains, Tibetan princes enter the account as donors and patrons, and as causes for the lama to exhibit his teaching and compassion, rather than in their secular roles.

Here as an example are the subdivisions under which bSod nams blo gros, Lama of Margom, describes his life after the introduction from
which I quoted above:

The next part concerning the acts of my present body, has ten chapters:

I. This tells how I was born and how I was influenced by my mother's words and so left the world and entered the religious life, which I learned and practised.

II. This tells how I was influenced by my lama's words and went to the pure land of Central Tibet. There I sat at the feet of the great Powerbolt-Holder /Njarradhara/ Jewel Self-Created /dkon mchog lhun grub/, teacher at the monastery of Moor E-vam, head monastery of a Sakya-pa suborder, as well as of many like sages, and I took the 'three vows' /monastic vows, bodhicitta vows, tantric vows/ with a good disposition.

III. This tells how I returned to my own country and meditated and practised the teachings I had received.

IV. This tells how I experienced the sufferings of impermanence, and thus cleansed in this present life the evil effects of former lives.

V. This tells how the biographies of former lamas occurred to my mind, so that I did not repay evil for evil to my enemies, but rather the most noble thoughts arose in my mind of how I might benefit others with compassion, and so abandoning attachment to friends and aversion to enemies, I acted the same towards all.

VI. This tells how I adhered to (my teacher) Intellect Might, an incarnation of the Great Compassionate One /Avalokitesvara/, and to other lamas of the Old (rNying ma) Order of Secret Spells /i.e., the Old Tantras/.

VII. This tells how I adhered to the sage Good Deliverance and was filled with the Oral Tradition of Secret Spells like an overflowing vase.

VIII. This tells how I adhered to many holy sages such as the lordly lama of Ba lung, how I learned and practised the inspired teachings of the tantras as well as other treatises and instructions.

IX. This tells how I was mindful of the doctrine and of sentient beings and concentrated on gainful meditation.

X. This tells finally how I worked for the good of my 'flock', employing various actions that were the fruit of my gainful meditations.

The text Snellgrove translates would seem to have been completed before the lama's death, because there is no account of this.

Next, I give a translation of the chapter headings from a biography of Tsongkha-pa edited and summarised by Kaschewsky. This biography was written, in Tibetan and Mongolian versions, by a Mongolian lama of the 18th century, four centuries after the events described, and it uses materials from several earlier biographies. By this time the Geluk-pa
order founded by Tsongkha-pa was the most important religious order in Tibet and Mongolia, and in deference to the importance of its subject this biography is both much longer and more elaborate in form than that of the Dolpo lama. But the basic structure and emphases are exactly the same:

Book I: The Lord's previous lives as a Bodhisattva of great compassion; how he was the monk Peme Ngagden at the time of the Teacher the Buddha Śākyamuni, etc., as told in many prophecies.

II. His place of birth. The occasion of his birth, with a history of Kumbum the monastery later erected where he was born. His sramanera ordination etc., with a biography of his first teacher Chöje Töntrup Rinchen.

III. The way he performs the actions of studying and practising. His vision of the goddess Sarasvatī etc., with a life of his teacher Lord Red mda' pa.

IV. He receives the monastic ordination senyen rdzogs = śhikṣa ordination. He reads the Kanjur and Tenjur. He gives many teachings. He receives oral instructions from a vision of Manjusrī, etc., with a life of his teacher du na pa.

V. At Lhasa he receives a condensed teaching from Manjusrī. He goes to a hermitage along with eight followers. He sees many visions of deities and lamas. He receives the sword-nectar in a vision of Manjusrī. He goes to Lhotar, Tsearī, Nyel etc. He writes many verses of teaching. He gains insight into Šānyatā. He writes the lam rim chen mo etc.

VI. The story of the temple at Lhasa. He institutes the Great Prayer an annual ceremony at Lhasa. He founds the monastery of Ganden and gathers followers there. He writes many religious works. Through performing the sky rim and thugs dam rites he destroys the different kinds of kāla demons, personified obstructions to the practice of Dharma. He builds many 'supports' for religious practice: images, stupas, temples etc. His manner of teaching.

VII. His manner of manifesting the Dharma-kāya, i.e., his death in brief. How he was reborn in Tṣita the heaven of Maitreya as Manjusrīparādaya etc. Catalogue of his literary works. Catalogue of the 'supports' for religious practice at Ganden monastery. The account of his disciples. Biographies of his disciples the Mahāsiddha of Lhotar, the great abbot Chos skyabs bzang po, the great Vinaya-bearer, Jam dkar pa, the yogi, etc., told in brief.

VIII. Gyaltsānp-je and Khê-trup-je his two principal disciples etc. and the Seven Manjusrī Lineage. The Lord Nephew rje dgon bio bzang nyima etc. and the list of the names of the abbots of Ganden with short lives.

IX. Life of Jam dbyangs chos rje and catalogue of Drepung monastery. Life of Byams chen chos rje and catalogue of Sera monastery. Life of Lord Gedün-trup and catalogue of Trashilkhünpo monastery. mKhas grub shes rab seng ge and the origin of the Skrāng and Shes kyi tantra traditions. Origin of the sTod tantra tradition. Concluded with a note on usefulness and details of composition of the book.
What are the themes that are being stressed in these works? It seems to me that there are two recurrent themes or complexes of themes. First, there is the theme of the Vajradhara doctrine; the lama is seen as an emanation of the Buddha, as a more-than-human being who takes form on earth in order to benefit living beings. This is almost always stated explicitly at the beginning, and referred to throughout the lives in references to the lama 'pretending to study' or 'exhibiting the mode of illness' – whereas he is already omniscient, and beyond the sufferings of humanity. References to the great powers the lamas manifest to help other men too often make them appear super-human.

But on the other hand, the biographies are accounts of a human being moving along the path to Enlightenment; they are descriptions of an ideal pattern of life which everyone is supposed to emulate as far as possible, and to hope to emulate in full in some future life if they cannot now. Thus we have the lengthy descriptions of study and meditation, of initiations received, and of the lama's development and attainments.

The ambiguity is, for the Tibetans, present also in the life of the historical Buddha, and it is noticeable in some of these lives how the Buddha's life appears as a kind of background pattern, mostly unstated but occasionally referred to, as in the emphasis on the child's exalted birth and the premonitions and dreams preceding it, or in the descriptions of the lamas' deaths. For the Buddha, of course, the ambiguity is resolved by treating the whole life as a 'performance', as a display put on to demonstrate the path, and the same resolution applies in general to the lives of the incarnate lamas. Yet the second theme, the biographical and personal, is clearly enough stated in many of these lives that it is difficult to see it as an incidental epiphenomenon with no true relationship to what is happening underneath the surface. As I indicated in Chapter Six, the Vajradhara doctrine itself can be
taken at a more sophisticated level than as a simple statement of the divine nature. If the lamas were to be seen as wholly other than human, as really being no more than emanations of the transcendental saviour-gods that some authors in the West have described for Mahāyāna Buddhism,11 there would be little point in Buddhist practice, since there would be no possibility of attaining to their state. This is one of the real dilemmas of the 'mystical' traditions in all religions. Enlightenment is impossible without the teacher, and yet how can the teacher, even if he is an enlightened being himself, convey his Enlightenment to his disciple when it is by definition inexpressible? The concept of the Buddha-nature or potentiality within all beings is the Mahayana solution to this dilemma. It is combined with the concept of an external teacher who awakens this Buddha-nature within - which is ultimately the only true lama - by any possible method (i.e., upāya.) This path as the Tibetans describe it involves the total submission of student to teacher, which seems to lead naturally to the idea of the more-than-human nature of the teacher.

The early Kagyu-pa biographies.

A group of early biographies of the Kagyu-pa lamas gives a rather different slant on the divine nature of the lama. These texts are of great popularity in Tibet, and three of them have been translated into Western languages, the biographies of the Indian teacher Nāropa (1016-1100, according to Tibetan sources),12 his Tibetan student the translator Marpa (1012-1097),13 and Marpa's disciple Mila Rēpa (1040-1123).14 All probably date to the late twelfth century,15 which is considerably earlier than the other biographies I have been discussing.

The lamas in these texts are not simply emanations of the Buddha. While the texts have much to say about the lama as Buddha, this state is depicted as one achieved during the course of their subjects' lives, rather than as being present from the beginning. Indeed in the lives of
Marpa and Mila Röpa, which are attributed to the same author, the 'Mad Heruka of Tsang', the Vajradhara doctrine seems not to be mentioned at all. Racot omits the introductory verses to Marpa's biography, if there are any, but those to Mila Röpa's life emphasise instead his acquisition of Buddhahood and all its powers and aspects within a single lifetime, starting from the status of an ordinary human being. The biography as a whole emphasises this theme. It describes the misdeeds of Mila Röpa's youth, in which he killed a number of family enemies by tantric rituals, before it turns to the training he received from his lama Marpa, and the practices through which he was able to overcome the evil karma which he had accumulated and to attain Buddhahood. These two works are more literary than strictly biographical in nature; the life of Mila Röpa in particular is one of the best-known Tibetan literary works, along with the separate volume of his songs. Mila Röpa's name is familiar to most Tibetans.

The preface to the life of Nāropa mentions the Three Kāyas, and emphasises Nāropa's Buddhahood, but the verses refer to this Buddhahood again as something realised through Nāropa's life rather than as being his attribute from the beginning (except in the sense that the Buddha-nature is in all things.) This is particularly noteworthy in that this biography is nearer than any other that I have considered to the underlying pattern of the Buddha's life. Nāropa is even described as being born in the royal line of the Śākya clan, as the historical Buddha had been, and the description of his early life, marriage and renunciation of the world are also strongly reminiscent of the accounts of Śākyamuni's life. It would have been natural to emphasise in this context that he too, like Śākyamuni, was a nirmāṇa-līya of the Buddha, performing a teaching demonstration rather than living a real human life. But the biography does not do this.

The Kāgyü-pa order is, along with the Nyingma-pas, the order which
has given most attention to the actual practice of meditation, and it is perhaps significant that the lamas appear here as individual human beings struggling along their personal path to Enlightenment, rather than as divine emanations. They were meant to be imitated, not simply admired with reverence.

The transcendent nature of the lama does appear in these works. The context, however, is that of the subjects' teachers, and their own eventual teaching activity, rather than their birth and childhood. Nāropa's relationship to his guru Tilopa, and Mila Repa's to Marpa, are for the Tibetans classical examples of the relationship between student and lama. I have already quoted, in Chapter Six, the incident in which Nāropa, now a lama himself, teaches Marpa that without the lama there would be no Buddha.

The severity of the discipline undergone by tantric students, and the absolute submission expected of them are also much emphasised. Yet it is noteworthy that the events narrated, at any rate in the Nāropa and Mila Repa lives, and also in Mila Repa's book of songs, which includes a linking narrative, are interpretable at a metaphorical level as well as in their literal sense. In this they resemble the Nyingma-pa lives of Padmasambhava. Here again there is a kind of reconciliation of the dilemma mentioned above; exterior events described in these narratives are primarily significant in terms of the interior transformation they symbolise and help to bring about. Gods and lamas are symbols for meditative processes as well as occasions for undergoing them.

These books contrast markedly with the more usual type of rnam thar. Partly this is because their purpose was somewhat different; they were meant to convey certain aspects of the Kagyu-pa teachings, rather than to give historical accounts of the lives of lineage founders. This is particularly evident in the Nāropa biography translated by Guenther. The contrast may also reflect the fact that the standard rnam thar form
had not yet evolved, although it is clearly present in the life of Chak Lobsawa, which is in part contemporary with its author, and so dates from around a century only after the Kagyül-pa works. It seems best to consider these Kagyül-pa texts as forming a special category, along perhaps with some Nyingma-pa writings.

These lives are also remarkable for their depreciation of academic learning as part of the path to Enlightenment. In this they parallel many Zen stories. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration is the scene in which Nāropa, the successful and highly respected abbot of the great monastic university of Nalanda is sitting one day studying his books on 'grammar, epistemology, spiritual precepts and logic', when the shadow of a hideously ugly old woman falls onto them. She is a dākini who points out to Nāropa that he may know the words he is reading but he does not understand what they really mean. She sends him off to find the guru, Tilopa, who will bring him to understand their meaning. Nāropa gives up all his belongings and books, leaves his post at Nalanda and sets off to find Tilopa. Likewise Mila Rampa is portrayed as ridiculing the scholars who know all the words and arguments but know nothing of what is infinitely more important, the experiences to which they refer. All this has to be seen in the Tibetan context where the continuation of the academic tradition of Nalanda and the other great Buddhist universities of North India assumed great importance, most especially in later centuries with the rise of the Geluk-pa order.

The Kagyül-pas and Nyingma-pas never went in for academic study on the same scale as the Geluk-pas, and descriptions of their teaching methods in modern times indicate that meditation remains more important than scholastic training. The 19th-century lamas of the ris med movement, who came from this background, emphasised even in the teaching of philosophy the understanding of the texts rather than academic controversy and disputational skill. Mila Rampa, and later teachers of like
nature, such as Drukpa Kunlek\textsuperscript{26} and Dza Petrül\textsuperscript{27} retain great popularity with the Tibetan population. This fits perhaps with the layman's interest in lamas as a source of magical power. For laymen meditational accomplishment is more valuable in a lama than academic attainment.

The development of the cult of the lama was, however, as significant in these orders as in the Kadam-pa and their successors the Geluk-pa. In fact, the development of the reincarnation of lamas took place at first in the Kagyü-pa order,\textsuperscript{28} and as my discussion of a Kagyü-pa preliminary practice text in Chapter Six indicated, the guru-yoga practices are as important for them as they are for the Geluk-pa. The Kagyü-pa depreciation of academia never led them to a rejection of the lama's role as a spiritual teacher; they merely stressed the teaching of meditation rather than that of philosophy. And they were as ready as the Geluk-pas to turn the prestige of a spiritual teacher into the power of a performer of magical ritual, as their role in the political struggles of the 13th to 17th centuries demonstrated.

The lama in art: a scroll-painting of Tsongkha-pa.

Paintings of lamas for use in the guru-yoga cult, on the walls of temples and monasteries, or on portable scrolls, were often used as occasions for a pictorial representation of these biographies. A \textit{thang ka} (scroll-painting) of Tsongkha-pa in the Otago Museum\textsuperscript{29} (Plate 5 and Key) is typical of these works of art, and will serve to recapitulate some of the main points in the classical Tibetan view of the lama.

The \textit{thang ka} has Tsongkha-pa as its central figure, and he is surrounded by scenes from his life, reading clockwise from the top left corner. The sequence of scenes starts with his previous rebirths, and ends in his 19th year, which suggests that it was part of a sequence of two or more \textit{thang ka}-s, with the others continuing the story further. The mounting indicates an Eastern Tibetan origin,\textsuperscript{30} but no more is known of the provenance of the painting; it is quite badly worn and presumably
Plate 5. Tsongkha-pa, with scenes from his early life. Tibetan painting in the Otago Museum
dates from the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

The central figure of Tsongkha-pa (No. 1 on Key) wears the robes of a monk and the hat of an Indian pandit, reminding us, as do several of the surrounding scenes, of the stress placed on the academic study of Buddhist philosophy in Tsongkha-pa’s order. His hands are in the position known as the dharmaakra mudrā, the gesture symbolizing teaching. Two lotus flowers on either side support the sword of discriminating insight (prajñā) and the book containing the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras (2), the symbols of Mañjuśrī; they appear in the same way on images of Mañjuśrī. These indicate that Tsongkha-pa is considered to be an emanation of Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva symbolic of prajñā, and also of academic study.

Beneath Tsongkha-pa is a table bearing offerings (3), such as would be placed before his image above the main altar of a Geluk-pa temple. Inset at the top of the frame surrounding him is a tiny figure of Mañjuśrī himself (4). The representation of one or two figures of dharma-kāya and/or sambhoga-kāya forms directly above the central subject is a standard convention to indicate that the figure below is an emanation of that above.

The first scene (5) shows a Buddha, also in teaching posture, surrounded by disciples and goddesses. The Buddha is Indraketudhvaja, before whom, many ages ago, Tsongkha-pa made a vow to propagate the teachings of Tantra and Śūnyatā without regard to his own future welfare, and who then prophesied that the future Tsongkha-pa, now a bodhisattva, would in a future age become a Buddha. Tsongkha-pa must be one of the figures attendant on the Buddha.31

In the second scene (6), perhaps significantly placed directly above Tsongkha-pa so as to stress his identity with Śākyamuni, is the historical Buddha. Tsongkha-pa was reborn at the time of the Buddha as the son of a Brahmin, with the name of Peme Ngagden. Here he, again
among the figures surrounding the Buddha, presents a crystal rosary to him. The label mentions that he developed bodhicitta to perfection along with this gift. The episode is mentioned in Tsongkha-pa's life:

As was said above he offered to the Buddha Śākyamuni a white crystal rosary with a hundred and one beads. This has much significance. Thus by the number of a hundred, all the good qualities of the Precious Lord ĻTsongkha-pa]\(^{32}\) would be fully accomplished. By the extra one, his virtuous action would be without any equal. By the white colour, the Lord's teaching would be free from the stain of error. By the crystal, those who taught the Lord's doctrine would be free from harm by others. By its being in the form of a rosary, it would last long and spread in all directions. All this came about, from the prayer of the Lord and by the power of the compassionate blessing of the Teacher ĻŚākyamuni].\(^{32}\)

The third scene, top right (7), depicts the Tuṣita heaven, and the central figure must be the bodhisattva Maitreya who presides over it, awaiting his future rebirth as the next Buddha. Tsongkha-pa's sojourn there assimilates him further to the model of the Buddha's life; all Buddhhas, including Śākyamuni and of course Maitreya, spend their last life prior to that in which they achieve enlightenment in the Tuṣita heaven.\(^{33}\)

The fourth scene, beneath this (8), depicts Tsongkha-pa's birth. 'In Eastern Tibet, at Tsongkha, the form of the Venerable Māñjuśrī having come, he is born to the woman Achö of the Shing clan.'\(^{34}\)

Beneath this (9), Tsongkha-pa is offered to Chöje Töntrup Rinchen, who was to become his first teacher,\(^{35}\) and beneath this he is depicted (10) receiving the upāsaka ordination, at the age of three, from the Gyalwa Karma-pa incarnate lama Rolpe Dorje, who was passing through Eastern Tibet at the time on a visit to the Mongolian emperor. Rolpe Dorje prophesied that the child would become a second Buddha.\(^{36}\)

The next three scenes (bottom right, and the two succeeding scenes to the left: Nos. 11-13) indicate his further studies in East Tibet. The lama in all is probably still Chöje Töntrup Rinchen, with whom Tsongkha-pa studied until he was sixteen, and from whom he received the śrāmanera ordination as well as several tantric initiations. These are
probably depicted here.  

Beneath the second and third of these three scenes (14) we see Tsongkha-pa on horseback on his way to Central Tibet. He went first to Drigung, where he is shown (15) studying the teachings on the development of bodhicitta with the lama Chen-nga Chhökyi Gyelpo. In the succeeding scenes he visits further lamas and receives teachings from them (16, 20); is depicted twice in formal debate with other monks, using the stylized debating postures still employed by the Tibetans in academic debate (17, 21); and is also shown (19) circumambulating the temple at Sakya, head monastery of the Sakya order.  

This thang ka illustrates many of the points mentioned in my discussions of the lama's role in Tibetan religion. In it Tsongkha-pa is depicted as an emanation of Manjusri, but at the same time the former lives are shown in which he progressed towards his rebirth as the great Geluk-pa teacher. Various scenes bring to mind the importance of monastic ordination, of the teachings on bodhicitta (15), and of philosophical study (17, 21), which I described in Chapter Two as the main points of Tsongkha-pa's sutra-yana teaching. Other scenes represent tantric teachings and initiations. The stress that is placed on Tsongkha-pa's relationship to his own lamas is noteworthy. Of the seventeen scenes around the border of the thang ka, no fewer than eleven show him in attendance on one teacher or another. The famous founder of the Geluk-pa order, emanation of Manjusri though he was, is nevertheless depicted as showing in his own early life the devotion to the lama which is such a fundamental part of the Tibetan form of Buddhism.
Notes to Chapter Eight.

9. Kaschewsky 1971:1
11. No doubt with some justice for China and Japan, though my acquaintance with the religion of these countries is limited to the literature. However the doctrines of the two truths, upāya and provisional teaching, are as present there as in Tibet. cf. A. Matsunaga 1969; D. and A. Matsunaga 1974.
13. Bacot 1937. This translates only parts, summarising the remainder of the text.
14. Evans-Wentz 1969. There is also a complete translation of the songs by Chang, which I have consulted in an abridged version (Chang 1970). There are partial translations by several other authors (Gordon 1961, Hoffmann 1950).
15. Guenther 1963:xv. On the other hand a recent study by van Tuyl apparently dates the 'Mad Heruka of Tsang' to the late 15th century (1972 - I have seen only an abstract). The accounts of Marpa and Mila Rêpa in the Blue Annals are in some respects independent of these texts, which may argue for this later date.
16. cf. note 14, above.
19. Guenther 1963. e.g. the series of overtly symbolical adventures undergone by Naropa on his search for Tilopa, pp. 24-37, and the summaries of various aspects of the Vajrayāna tantric teachings in the later sections.
20. I would not place too much emphasis on this point. The biography of Chak Lotsawa appears to be contemporary with its subject, i.e. mid to late 13th century, yet includes most of the 'typical' rnam thar
features discussed above, and in any case the Mila Repa and Marpa biographies may not be as early as the twelfth century (cf. note 15 above). It seems better to regard them simply as alternative types of composition.


A monk told Joshu: 'I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me.'

Joshu asked: 'Have you eaten your rice porridge?'
The monk replied: 'I have eaten.'

Joshu said: 'Then you had better wash your bowl.'

At that moment the monk was enlightened.

... ...

A monk asked Tozan when he was weighing some flax: 'What is Buddha?'

Tozan said: 'This flax weighs three pounds.'


23. e.g. Chang 1970:154-175; Evans-Wentz 1969:244-247.

24. e.g. Chang 1961, Trungpa 1971a:57-93, as compared with the accounts of Geluk-pa monastic training given in Norbu and Harrer 1960, Berzin 1972:415-416 (Appendix). Kagyü-pas and Nyingma-pas did not neglect Sūtrayāna study altogether, as these accounts make clear, but they began tantric study and meditation at a much earlier stage in the student's career.


28. cf. Chapter Seven.

29. I would like to thank the authorities of the Otago Museum for allowing me to reproduce this painting. Kaschewsky 1971 is my principal source for Tsongkha-pa's life.


31. cf. Kaschewsky 1971:65. This interpretation is somewhat conjectural, since the label identifying this scene is worn and entirely illegible except for the letter ka, the first letter of the Tibetan alphabet, indicating that it is the first. The central figure might possibly be Śākyamuni as in the following scene.

32. The label (kha = II) is not entirely legible, but reads in part, 'He offers a crystal rosary to him and develops to perfection bodhicitta'. cf. Kaschewsky 1971:1, 65, and Tibetan text at II, 351. The translation is mine.

33. The label (kha 2 = IIa) is mostly illegible but dga' ldan (= Tuṣita) can be made out. Tsongkha-pa's stay in Tuṣita is mentioned in Kaschewsky 1971:1, 102.


35. Label (pga = IV): 'The son is first offered to Chöje Töntrup Rinchen.' cf. Kaschewsky 1971:1, 73.

36. The label is illegible, but the Gyalwa Karma-pa is clearly identified by his black hat, originally woven from the hair of dakiṇis (cf. Vajra Mukut, n.d.). cf. Kaschewsky 1971:II,75.

38. The legible labels are

**nya** (=VIII; No. 14 on key): 'He first comes to Central Tibet along with the minister summoned to 'Bri gung' (ibid.:I, 80-81)

**ta** (=IX; No. 15 on key): 'Having come to 'Bri gung he studies the teachings on bodhicitta etc. with ...' (ibid.:I, 81)

**da** (=XI; No. 16 on key): 'He asks for the Mahājālāpi initiation from the dpal ldan bla ma at the hermitage of Chos rdzong' (ibid.:I, 81)

**pa** (=XII; No. 18 on key): 'He hears the Cakrasāgara tantra and the 13 Maitri-pa teachings etc. from Zha lu Rin chen rgyal ba' (or Rin chen rnam rgyal; ibid.:I, 82.)

Above this, unnumbered: 'At Sakya, he circumambulates ...' (ibid.:I, 82). For the formal debating depicted in 17 and 21, cf. Sierksma 1964-5. The Tibetan text of the labels is given in Appendix One.
PART THREE
CHAPTER NINE

Comparisons and a synoptic view.

Chapters Two to Eight have presented many different facets of Tibetan religion. I have used the central figure of the lama to organize much of this material, but in this chapter I intend to widen the scope of my enquiry somewhat and to give a more synoptic view. If I am to do this, judgments must be made about which elements and relationships are most significant in the material I have presented, with its multiple levels of meaning to the actors themselves. I think that these judgments will emerge naturally through examining Tibet in its regional context. I shall do this through comparisons with several other Asian societies; the similarities and contrasts which appear will clarify the nature of Tibetan religion and of its individual elements.

The total religious system of Tibet has no close parallels in the religious systems of neighbouring societies, at least not in those that have been adequately studied by anthropologists. Yet it will be evident from the material I have presented that most of the individual features of Tibetan religion occur widely in slightly different forms elsewhere in Asia. Spirit-mediums and straying life-essences, malevolent spirits and local deities, Buddhist monks and tantric priests are not exclusive to Tibet; it is the specific nature of their interrelationships, the total Gestalt that they form in Tibet that does not occur elsewhere. So these comparisons will reveal similar concepts, aims and ritual techniques in different total religious and social contexts. Through them the underlying structure of the Tibetan religious system will become clearer. For the comparisons I shall take two Theravāda Buddhist societies, Thailand
and Burma, and a third society, Bali, in which tantric ritual still plays a leading role in the religious system. All these societies have been the subject of good recent anthropological studies, apart from their intrinsic suitability for my purpose. For Thailand and Burma I make use of the studies of Tambiah \(^1\) and Spiro.\(^2\) For Bali I use, in addition to the anthropological studies of Bateson and Geertz, writings on Balinese religion by Hooykaas and Korn, and a general account by Covarubbias.\(^3\) In Chapter Ten I shall discuss the theoretical frameworks which Spiro and Tambiah use for their material, but in this chapter I am primarily concerned with their descriptive material itself.

I shall show that the religious systems of all these societies can be seen as mutual transformations, or differing expressions of an underlying pattern. Such a view is necessarily a simplification; but it does not, I think, do undue violence to the ethnographic descriptions of these societies.

Thailand.

Tambiah isolates four main ritual complexes in his study of a village in North-East Thailand.

1. **Buddhist rites**, performed by, or involving, the monks in the village temple, and sometimes additional monks from outside the village. These rites fall into three categories: the performance of mortuary rites; participation in major village ceremonies, which are occasions for collective merit-making; and the performance of ceremonies in private houses. These last are also occasions for merit-making and for the employment of the protective powers of the recitation of the Buddhist scriptures and especially of certain protective verses (paritta). They include the rites for entering a new house, and merit-making ceremonies at the home, which are the most frequent of all the rites which the monks undertake.\(^4\) They also include recitations performed to cure illness and to grant long life, typically for an old man near death, which can be considered essen-
tially as threshold ceremonies before death. The monks may also be called on to recite in cases of illness caused by bad astrological influences or an imbalance of the elements in the body, but Tambiah notes that 'this kind of curative role of monks is marginal and infrequent, and there are elderly lay practitioners with their specialist ritual who monopolize this role.'

The monks in the village temple comprise a core group of the abbot and perhaps one or two other monks who have entered the monastic order permanently or semi-permanently; that is, for several years at least. Otherwise, ordination as monks (+bhikkhu) and novices (+sānāyera) alike is for a few months only, often over the rainy-season period of monastic retreat, and functions primarily as a rite of passage for the young men of the village. It is also the most significant occasion of merit-making for the parents of the monk and the sponsors of the ceremony.

Merit-making, that is the performance of acts with good karmic consequences, is indeed the primary way in which the villagers see themselves as operating within the ideals of Buddhism. There seems a general consensus with respect to meritorious acts. The most meritorious is to finance the building of a temple or monastery. Next in place is becoming a monk, or having a son become a monk; then giving offerings to monks, observing the uposadha days at the quarters of the moon at the monastery, and observing the five precepts. Tambiah suggests that the low status given to these last by the villagers 'is not because he devalues them but because they are not normally open to him.'

(?) Sukhwan rituals. I have already noted the similarity between the Thai concept of khwan, the wandering life-essence which can leave the body, exposing one to illness and misfortune, and the Tibetan bla, in Chapter Five. The rituals for calling back the wandering khwan are carried out on many occasions in the villagers' lives. They form a major part of the marriage ritual and of ordination ceremonies of monks and novices, and also mark other occasions of danger or risk; e.g.,
pregnancy or going for military service; and of reintegration into the village community after a long absence. They may also be recited on the occasion of prolonged illness, but are here again secondary to other rituals; 'the khwan rite is performed not so much to cure the patient as to reconstitute the morale of a dying or very sick person.' The officiants at the cukhwan rituals, known as paabh or mau kwhan, are village elders; generally former monks since they need to be literate, a skill generally acquired only in the monastic context; but always householders who have acquired their proficiency in the performance of the rituals through training with other paabh-s.

(3) The cult of the guardian spirits. Regular offerings are made to the guardian spirits of the village and the local monastery. These spirits can also cause illness when offended in various ways, primarily by the breach of norms concerning village citizenship, behaviour at the wat or the uposadha days. The causes of these afflictions are diagnosed by a village ritual expert, the mau song ('diviner') and offerings are made through another specialist, the priest or 'intermediary' of the spirits (cham). If this procedure is unsuccessful, or the situation more urgent, the spirit may be communicated with directly through the 'medium' (tiam), a villager who can be possessed by the deity. These guardian spirits also have power to grant fertility and rain, and offerings to them are related to the agricultural cycle. A guardian spirit of higher status is associated with a nearby swamp; several villages participate in the twice-yearly rites to this spirit. Both the swamp and the village guardians are requested to supply rain in a major festival preceding the annual paddy agricultural cycle. The monks also participate in this festival, but their actions form distinct sequences within it, and are not concerned directly with the spirit cult. The festival (Rumbangfai) is however a regular occasion for the ordination of novices and monks.

(4) The rites of the malevolent spirits. The guardian spirits can be distinguished from several other categories of capricious and generally
malevolent spirits, who are nevertheless subsumed under the same general
term, phi. They include the spirits of the dead, primarily the
'unincorporated' ghosts of those who died suddenly while still young.
Nature spirits, associated with fields, trees and streams, can also
cause misfortune. The afflictions of these kinds of spirits may be dealt
with by divination and offerings, as with the guardian spirits, but more
serious cases of affliction, interpreted as spirit possession, may re-
quire the services of another village ritual expert, the mau tham (exor-
cist). The malevolent spirits involved in cases of possession are pro-
duced by the misuse of their powers by village experts in protective
and love magic (mau wicha), or by the death of women during pregnancy.
The exorcist uses Buddhist sacred verses; during the course of the ritual
of exorcism the power of his teacher and of the thewada ('divine angels'
or protective deities) 'come into him' and enable him to overcome the
malevolent spirits. There is a similarity here with the procedures of
tantric practice in Tibet, which suggests that Tambiah's characteriza-
tion of the exorcist as 'both a caricature and an inversion of the
orthodox Buddhist monk' may be an expression of the situation in the
village or area he studied rather than a more generalizable statement.
The village exorcist, despite his Buddhist trappings, does not even un-
derstand the texts he recites, but elsewhere in Thailand there are
exorcists of much greater learning, and some of the most famous have been
monks regarded as using the spiritual powers gained through Buddhist
meditation for purposes of healing and exorcism. This is, however,
evidently an exceptional and atypical part of the monastic role in
present-day Thailand.

The environment, and the way of life, of these villagers of north-
east Thailand is of course much different to that of even the settled
agricultural population of the Tibetan plateau. But at the level of the
basic concerns of the villagers, and of the categories of supernatural
beings through which they interpret their experience, there are some very close similarities. Nevertheless I do not claim or suggest that these similarities are the result of common origins, though in part that is likely enough. I mean only to use the Thai example, like the others I shall quote, to help clarify the underlying structure of Tibetan religion. I will leave Tambiah's first category aside for the moment, though noting that mortuary rites, and the provision of occasion and means for public and individual merit-making, are equally part of the functions of Tibetan monks. The remaining categories — the recalling of the life-essence, the cult of the guardian spirits or local deities, their communication with men through spirit-mediums, and the performance of rituals to deal with malevolent spirits — are in essentials as characteristic of Tibetan village religion as of Thai. There are, though, some notable differences. These matters are, in Thailand, largely the concern of lay ritual specialists with no direct Buddhist sanctions, although they and their counterparts elsewhere in the Theravada Buddhist world often include at least a nominal obeisance to the Buddha in their ritual performances. In Tibet they are largely the province of the monks, and especially of the lamas.

The major exception to this generalization is the cult of the local deities, which is in Tibet an affair both of lamas and laymen. The lamas deal with them in the course of monastic ceremonies and public rituals, from above, in the security of their tantric assumption of powers far greater than those of the deities, while the ordinary people make offerings to them in the bsangs ritual of burning incense and juniper branches. It is the lamas, too, who are generally called on to act as diviners in the case of serious afflictions, and they generally train and superintend the activities of the mediums of the local deities. The most important of these spirit-mediums live in monasteries and are questioned only through the monastic authorities. The lesser local oracles, and in some
areas the village diviners or soothsayers whose function is rather similar, are the principal ritual experts other than the monks and lamas, and their structural inferiority to the lamas is evident. The deities who speak through these mediums were bound to the service of the Buddha's teachings through the same power that the lamas still employ, and the more serious the problem, the more likely it is that a lama will eventually be consulted.

On the other hand, the recalling of the life-essence and its empowerment is exclusively a ritual performed by the lamas and carried out, it should be noted, on occasions of primarily Buddhist concern rather than to fit in with the requirements of lay life, as in Thailand. The lamas too are the primary agents for the periodical cleansing of malevolent spirits from the village. Conversely, the wide range of ritual experts who employ skills of non-Buddhist provenance in the Thai village is largely eliminated in Tibet. The 'village lamas' Führer-Haimendorf mentions are no exception; they owe their ritual powers to the same source as the lamas, that is, to the practice of tantric meditation under Buddhist auspices. Even the engags pa magicians and weather-makers, who do seem to be conceptualised as in some respects 'outside' the Buddhist system, acquire their skills through the same tantric practices, merely choosing to direct them towards the 'lower' aims of supernormal powers rather than the pure aim of Enlightenment.

Thus, a much higher proportion of the total ritual field in Tibet is carried out under Buddhist auspices. Several of the other differences between the two systems evidently go along with this.

There are, in proportion, far more monks in Tibet than in Thailand, and the number of monks in the local monastery is generally much larger in proportion to a local community. The proportion of the male population in the monasteries in traditional Tibet is generally reckoned at around 10-20%, and higher in some areas. In Thailand, by contrast, it
is less than 2%. We have also seen that monastic ordination in Thailand is a permanent profession for only a small minority of those undertaking it; it is more typically a rite of passage lasting only a few months.

Second, the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism, as interpreted in Tibet, means that the meditating monk in his remote hermitage, withdrawn as far as possible from worldly life, is no longer the only, or the primary aim of Buddhist practice, as it is theoretically in Thailand. The image of the active bodhisattva, no longer necessarily even a celibate monk, and using all kinds of means and devices to convey the teachings, is much more to the fore. The related idea of the Buddha returning over and over again in the form of Buddhist teachers means that the status of those teachers can potentially be far higher than in present-day Theravāda countries, where it is generally accepted not only that there are no Buddhas around, and will not be any until Maitreya comes, but that even the lesser states of Arhat, 'never-returner', 'once-returner' and 'stream-winner' are far beyond the reach of present-day men.

Third, the methodology of the tantras gives the monks and lamas of Tibet the ability to intervene actively in the situations of everyday life in a way hardly open to the Theravāda monks. This methodology is at the basis of the incorporation within the lamas' ambit of the aspects of the ritual field which in Theravāda countries was no concern of the monks. Consequently the lama, who combines the powers of Buddhist monk and tantric magician, is in Tibet the central figure in the religious system.

Fourth, the incorporation into the popular pantheon of the tantric bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Tārā, and indeed of the lamas themselves, involves an implicit demotion of the status of the local and regional deities and even the major protective deities of the Hindu-Buddhist pantheon - though these latter, that is the theravada, seem to be
of relatively little importance even in Thailand. In the Theravāda countries only the Buddha is possessed of greater power and status than these deities, and the Buddha is no longer alive. In Tibet any lama can exercise powers higher than theirs, through the employment of any of a multitude of tantric forms.

I will also note in passing that merit-making has as central a place in the lay religious practice of Tibet as in Thailand; among forms important in Tibet but not mentioned by Tambiah for Thailand we might note the building of mani-walls and stūpa-s, essentially an extension of the building of temples; the sponsoring of monastic recitations of the scriptures or performances of rituals; and the performance of pilgrimage.

Exorcism, by the way, seems to be scarcely mentioned in the literature on Tibet, and it seems that spirit-possession is not considered as a cause of illness, except when the person concerned is called by a deity to be his medium. In these cases, as we have seen, it is the lama who is responsible for diagnosing the situation and if necessary training the medium for his role.17

**Burma**

Spiro's fieldwork in Burma was again mostly within a village setting ('Yeigyi' in Upper Burma), though his two books confine themselves less exclusively to a description of religious practice at the village level. As Spiro himself comments,18 there are close similarities between all Theravāda Buddhist societies, and Burma contrasts with Tibet on many of the same dimensions as does Thailand. In some respects, however, the contrast is less extreme. Thus there seem proportionately to be considerably more monks in Burma than in Thailand. Spiro notes the difficulty of obtaining accurate figures, but they seem to amount to between 5 and 10% of the male population.19 Spiro's village, with half the population of Tambiah's, had three monasteries, though all were small; there was a total of four resident 'permanent' monks.20 In Burma as in Thailand
monastic ordination is a near-universal rite of passage for village male children, but a substantially larger proportion remain in the order.

More significantly for my purposes, if the Thai exorcist seems a distant reflection of the Tibetan tantric expert, his Burmese counterpart, the ahtelan hsaya, offers a much closer comparison. I am not sure how far this is a reflection of Spiro's greater attention to these people, but they also appear to be of considerably more importance in Burma. These ahtelan hsaya all belong to one or another of over a hundred esoteric sects (gaing), with a total membership of several thousands, including both monks and laymen. Each sect is centred around a charismatic leader claiming supranormal powers; some of these also claim to be bodhisattvas, or future universal monarchs.

The would-be ahtelan hsaya studies as an apprentice with one of these masters, with the aim of himself gaining supranormal powers, of which the most stressed is immortality or, more precisely, the ability to live until the Buddha Maitreya comes. The primary technique employed is the practice of alchemy, which was also one of the primary methods used by the tantric experts of mediaeval India according to the Tibetan tradition. It has never, as far as I know, been of any importance in Tibet, but it was evidently from tantric circles in India that it came to Burma. As in Western alchemy, the alchemical process symbolises and accompanies the acquisition of spiritual powers by the practitioner, who also has to practice meditation, observe the Buddhist precepts and in other ways act in accordance with the ideals of Buddhism. Exorcism is one of the powers acquired through this practice and though not all gaing members are exorcists, all exorcists belong to a gaing. As in Thailand, the exorcist employs the power of his teacher and of the protective deities (samma deva-s, corresponding to Thai thewada) to defeat and drive out the malevolent spirit.

Spiro is probably right when he suggests, following Mendelson, that these sects are derived from the Hindu and Mahayanaist elements in Burmese
Here I am more concerned with the structural relationship between magical practitioners and Buddhist monks in Burma - categories of people who are here far from mutually exclusive or opposed, but also by no means identical. We are still a long way from Tibet where the leading religious figures specifically combine these two roles, though the strong Buddhist emphases of the Gaing in Burma are noteworthy. It is also interesting that the attainment of long life is a primary concern of these sects.

The pantheon of local deities and spirits in Upper Burma is, in detail, somewhat different from that in North-East Thailand, but the general form is much the same. Malevolent spirits are not so prominent. Major causes of misfortune include 'witches' and ahtel Hsaya, who are ahtel Hsaya gone to the bad. Attitudes to the ahtel Hsaya are markedly ambivalent in Burma, and they may be suspected of putting their powers to evil use. There are also ghosts (assimilated to the Buddhist preta class) and local spirits or deities (Nat). Most important are the '37 Nats', a class of deities who suffered violent deaths during previous human lives and are both mildly protective, if asked properly, and potentially dangerous. These '37 Nats' communicate through spirit mediums - Spiro calls them shamans - who dance for them at the festivals of the Nat cultus. They can be consulted to diagnose the Nat causing an illness and can make offerings on behalf of the patient to appease the Nat.

In Burma tantric-type experts, wielding the powers of major deities over the local gods and demons, are non-monastic village practitioners. They act under more or less Buddhist auspices, but their powers are notably ambivalent. Burmese monks, as in Thailand, restrict themselves to offering opportunities for merit-making and to performing mortuary rituals, though some of them involve themselves too in the esoteric cults. Burma can be taken as presenting an intermediate position between Thailand and Tibet in two senses: the importance of monasticism, especially as a permanent occupation rather than a rite of passage, and the status
of tantric-type ritual.

In both Burma and Thailand the equivalent of the tantric-priest aspect of the lama's role, that is the role of the exorcist, is nevertheless distinct from the monk's role. He has a relatively low or at least ambivalent status in the religious system, although he is capable of employing the powers of the higher protective deities. My third comparison reveals quite a different pattern, though Bali resembles Burma, Thailand and Tibet in having a religious system heavily influenced by Indian missionary activities.

_Bali._

In Bali there are no monks; but the tantric priests, Hindu and Buddhist, have the highest status in the hierarchy of ritual experts. This hierarchy is bound up with the social structure of Bali, in particular with their local adaptation of the Indian caste system. This consists of the use of the four classical Indian varṇa-s - Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra - to organise the Balinese population and to classify the elaborate Balinese title system. The Brāhmaṇas supply the tantric priests (nadanda); the kṣatriya and vaiśya 'castes' comprise, ideally at least, all the aristocratic land-owning families, including those of the ruling princes (raja) of the various Balinese 'kingdoms'. The remainder of the population, more than 90%, falls into the fourth category. There are no endogamous occupational sub-castes in the Indian manner, nor is the hierarchy bound up with ideas of purity and pollution. The primary distinction is between the three aristocratic or gentry groups - the Trivangsa ('three peoples'), who include the Brāhmaṇas - and the remainder. In the period following the Dutch conquest (late 19th and early 20th centuries) and the absorption of Bali into the independent republic of Indonesia (1950) the gentry monopolised most government and bureaucratic positions and acquired control of much of the economy, thus retaining their traditional position to a marked degree,
but I am concerned here with the system in its traditional form.

The padanda then are the court priests of the ruling class. They perform a daily ritual which is of standard tantric type, involving worship of the deity visualized externally followed by self-identification with him. For the padanda Siva, the Hindu padanda, the deity is Siva; for the padanda Baudhca it is the Buddha as Lord of Yogis (Yogisvara):

'The Lord Supreme Buddha concentrates on yogisvara-ship (i.e. acts as a yogisvara, as a padanda Baudhca) and prepares panlukanan [holy water].'

This preparation of holy water is performed by the padanda during his assumption of divine power: he visualizes the Supreme Buddha (Parama-Buddha, presumably equivalent to Dharma-kaya), the Five Tathagata-s of the Vajradhutu Mandalas and the Three Jewels as residing within it.

In this connection a definition of the Three Jewels which a padanda Baudhca gave to Hooykaas is of interest: the sangha is the community of Baudhca priests, the dharma is our ritual; I myself am the Buddha.

This holy water forms an essential part of most important Balinese rituals, being used to cure the state of impurity during which the individual or the community is open to the attacks of malevolent spirits (bhuta, kala); its production is the padanda's central function.

Apart from the daily ritual, they perform offerings to the bhuta and kala, rite-of-passage ceremonies for pregnancy, childhood, puberty and marriage, and especially death rituals, where they are responsible for guiding the consciousness of the deceased to rebirth as a god or, in the case of a brahman, to final liberation from the cycle of rebirth. They officiate at all ceremonies of the gentry. They have networks of hereditary clients among the peasantry also, who employ them primarily for the death ceremonies, though on other occasions as well if they can afford to: as Covarrubias remarks, 'to use the services of a padanda is a luxury that brings social prestige.'

The relationship with the teacher (here, as in Burma and Thailand,
the Sanskrit word "guru is used) is as important for the padanda as for our other tantric experts; a description of his training is given by Korn. Here again the priest apparently assumes his teacher's identity as well as that of the deity; Kooykaas translates his address to the malevolent spirits: 'Be careful not to ignore my message to thee, for MY PERSON is the embodiment of Bhatria Guru [God Teacher], endowed with great power....' A padanda is consecrated along with his wife, who is also a Brahmana, since although hypergamy is allowed, a non-Brahmana wife could not be consecrated. She can act as a padanda herself, normally after his death.

In marked contrast to the padanda are the pamangku, the priests of the village temples, who belong to the Sudra (peasant, non-Triwangsia) 'caste'. These village temples come mostly in sets of three, relating respectively to the founding of the settlement, the spirits of the local dead, and the fertility of the local rice fields. Their congregations are among the principal sets of groups according to which the Balinese peasantry divide and order their social world. The deities concerned are mostly deified ancestors of the community, in husband-wife pairs, but their names and identity are of little or no importance and may not even be known. They are not proper objects of worship for the padanda, and the services at their festivals are carried out by the pamangku. In addition he - always a man - acts as sweeper and caretaker of the village temple. The pamangku uses some rituals of Sanskrit derivation, and he may acquire a reputation as a medical practitioner or ritual expert at finding lost objects and exorcising bhuta and kala, in addition to his primary duties. Another village specialist, the balian, who is frequently a woman, may also act as medical expert or to find lost goods; she may act too as a trance-medium for the local gods, as apparently do some pamangku.

There are a number of other ritual experts in Bali who are...
less relevant to my argument, but I will mention in passing the senggudr or exorcist-priests, primarily concerned with offerings to the malevolent spirits and with exorcising them; usually regarded as degraded Brahmana priests, they share much of the padanda ritual procedure. Unlike the padanda they employ the Tibetan-style double-headed pellet-drum or damaru, which is used extensively in Tibetan tantric ritual, and the conch-shell trumpet, likewise used in Tibetan monasteries. The padanda Baudhā, like the Tibetan lamas, the Newari *vajriśārya-s of the Kathmandu valley and the Japanese tantric priests of the Shingon sect, use the vajra—the thunderbolt/diamond symbol of permanence and Buddha-nature—and the bell as their ritual objects.

Thus in Bali there are two main classes of ritual experts, with some overlapping of functions: the tantric priests who are able to assume the power of Śiva or the Buddha, and as such consecrate purifying water and lead the dead to safe rebirth or to liberation; and the spirit-mediums and priests of the local deities, of much lower status, who make offerings to these lesser deities and through whom the deities can communicate. Here again, there is a marked distinction between the tantric assumption of the nature of a deity, and the spirit-medium’s possession by a deity who speaks through him. This division is strongly correlated with the gentry-peasantry opposition in the indigenous social system.

This social system has some evident similarities with that of Tibet. In each there is a strong contrast between the local peasant community, with equality between all full members of the village in administrative and ritual contexts, and the hierarchical nature of the relationship between these communities and their aristocratic landowners. Tibet admittedly lacked the multiple sets of allegiances and divisions of Balinese village structures, though the Tibetan peasant could in some circumstances appeal to the central government or to its local officials against his lord; occasionally, too, a local incarnate or other
high-status lama might be in a position to intercede. The Tibetan
government was entirely a concern of aristocrats and high lamas, a
situation not dissimilar to that in Bali. But there are striking dif-
erences when we come to consider the classes of ritual experts and
their functions.

The balian corresponds in a rough way to the village spirit-
mediums in Tibet, though the Tibetan mediums are generally male; but the
pamangku has no real equivalents; all Tibetan ritual experts other than
the spirit-mediums are so by virtue of the techniques of tantric practice. And while the lama is, like the padanda, a tantric priest, he is also
generally if not always a monk. The monks themselves have no Balinese
equivalent.

The main function specific to the monks – as distinct from the
lamas – in lay religious observance in Tibet is to act as a 'field of
merit' to which offerings can be made, so acquiring the appropriate good
karmic consequences. Monks can be paid to perform rituals or scriptural
recitations on one's behalf, with the same end of karmic advantage.
Although the concept of karma is known in Bali it appears to have no ideal
or actual regulatory function with respect to behaviour. None of the
literature I have read on Bali describes the making of offerings or the
performance of other religious acts as being done to acquire merit; indeed
the literature on Bali emphasises the importance of the act in its own
right, as distinct from its consequences. There are ideas of existence
after death as a god, and also of subsequent rebirth as a human being,
ideally in the fourth descending generation as one's great-grandchild.
One also comes across the concept of a series of rebirths, culminating in
rebirth as a Brāhmaṇa, from which one attains liberation from the cycle
of rebirth. But the principles of virtuous action and the accumulation of
merit as guides to behaviour apparently do not exist for the Balinese, as
they do for the Tibetans and for the Buddhists of the Theravāda countries.
Monks in such a society would have no obvious function.

The main points of the comparisons made in the foregoing discussion are summarised in Table 5.

**Lords and priests in Bali and Tibet.**

The relationship between *padampa* and gentry in Bali leads me to recall some other aspects of the lama and monk roles in Tibet. What is the relationship in Tibet between the monastic and political hierarchies?

As I explained in Chapter One, the monastic orders formed an integral part of the traditional Tibetan political system. Within the Dalai Lama's territories, land and people belonged to monastic estates, aristocratic estates, or directly to the central Lhasa government. Similar conditions held also in the lay and monastic principalities in Eastern Tibet, but for the moment I shall confine discussion to the area under Lhasa's control. The Lhasa government itself was staffed by aristocratic officials, supplied by right and duty by the various aristocratic families; and by monastic officials. Some of the latter were themselves members of the aristocracy, which offered another means for aristocratic leverage within the central government; others were ordinary non-aristocrat monks requisitioned for the bureaucracy from the main Geluk-pa monasteries. With the exception of the Dalai Lama and his regent if any, at the very top, there were few incarnate lamas in the Lhasa government; their political sphere was confined to the monastic estates. The monk-officials were monastic bureaucrats, not teaching lamas, incarnate or otherwise. Through them, however, the monasteries supplied a substantial proportion of government officials. The major monasteries, and especially the three great Geluk-pa teaching monasteries of Sera, Ganden and Drepung were also major power blocs whose interests had to be taken into account by any Lhasa government.

While the aristocracy was to a large extent endogamous, the rulers of the monasteries were not a closed group in modern times, though as I
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>THAILAND</th>
<th>BURMA</th>
<th>TIBET</th>
<th>BALI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monks</td>
<td>less than 2% of population</td>
<td>25-10%</td>
<td>10-20%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high (but below lamas)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function</td>
<td>merit, death rituals, protection (minor); act as rite of passage, teaching.</td>
<td>merit, death rituals, protection (minor); act as rite of passage, teaching.</td>
<td>merit, death rituals, protection (minor)</td>
<td>(merit not significant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tantric-type ritual experts</td>
<td>mau than normally layman (?)</td>
<td>ahtelan hsaya normally layman, sometimes monks</td>
<td>lama(^a) usually monks</td>
<td>padanda(^b) layman of Brahmana caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low-medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functions</td>
<td>exorcism</td>
<td>exorcism</td>
<td>protection; merit; teaching.</td>
<td>death rituals; protection; all gentry rituals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other ritual experts</td>
<td>mau song diviner tiam, cham</td>
<td>shamans intermediaries with local gods</td>
<td>spirit-mediums intermediaries with local gods</td>
<td>pamangku balian intermediaries with local gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status</td>
<td>mausong. diviner tiam, cham intermediaries with local gods minor illness etc. regular worship</td>
<td>shaman intermediaries with local gods minor illness etc. regular worship</td>
<td>spirit-mediums intermediaries with local gods minor illness etc. regular worship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\) Also sngags pa weather control and other magical rituals

\(^{b}\) Also sengguhu exorcism and protection

TABLE 5
have noted this was less true of the earlier period, when monastic estates frequently descended in particular families. This situation still obtains to a significant extent among the Sherpas and in other outlying areas. Indeed mediaeval Tibet, with its network of competing alliances between aristocratic families and families endowed with religious prestige, bears a closer resemblance to the Balinese situation of the mutual support of padanda and ruling aristocrats than does the later period of Tibetan history. This situation gradually changed with the increase in importance of monastic estates and of non-hereditary modes of transmitting religious prestige, developments which did not take place in Bali, where the padanda do not seem ever to have become landowners on the same scale as the non-priestly families of the gentry, though like the Brahmins of India they did exercise some judicial functions. In Bali the relationship between padanda and the other two gentry castes was a complementary one, as in its ideal prototype in the political theories of the Indian Brahmins. In Tibet it doubtless began in that way in the days of the early kings, but it gradually became rather a competitive (symmetrical) relationship in which aristocratic families and monastic corporations were alternative sources of political authority, bidding for support from each other and the rest of the population. The modern political system of Tibet represented a state of balance between these two sets of interest groups. The Geluk-pa order, in the person of the Dalai Lama, had ultimate authority, but the aristocracy dominated much of the government bureaucracy, directly and through aristocrats who had become monastic officials.

The ambiguity between complementary and symmetrical relationships, to use Bateson’s terminology, is characteristic of some of the most important political relationships in Tibet. Thus the relationship between Dalai Lama and Chinese Emperor is sometimes described as a relationship between two sovereign monarchs, sometimes as that between a lama and his lay
The relationship between Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama was subject to the same ambiguity. The Panchen Lama was either the Dalai Lama's teacher, but temporal subject, or an independent ruler on the same footing as the Dalai Lama. Again, were the Chinese ambans in Lhasa ambassadors to an independent ruler or governors of a tributary province? The descriptions are political myths, charters for the view of the situation accepted by a particular party at a particular time. They are not themselves true statements about the relationships except to the extent that either side accepted them as such and was able to act on them. In the indigenous situation both Tibetans and Chinese seem to have preferred fluidity and ambiguity to clear definitions of relative status, a preference which led to considerable confusion when the British government in India attempted to demarcate sovereignty over Tibet in a series of conventions with the Tibetans and Chinese. This lack of clarity recalls the persistent ambiguity and presence of multiple levels of interpretation in the Tibetan Buddhist teachings.

**Synoptic view of Tibetan religion.**

I could draw other comparisons, with the Newars of Kathmandu valley, for example, or with the tantric priests of South India; my purpose, though, is not to trace tantric priests and monks throughout Asia but to make the Tibetan system clearer through discussing some transformations of its basic elements. The implied analogy with Levi-Straussian myth analyses is intended; I suggest that these comparisons enable us to determine a set of common structural elements or themes within these societies and hence to understand any one of them - in this case, Tibet - more clearly. However, I would not suggest that they determine a complete set, or the only set possible; they are merely comparisons which I find particularly useful and relevant. Having gone through them I now return to Tibet, and attempt to put together a more coherent picture of the various Tibetan social roles and their responsibilities.

The MONKS in Tibet, as in Burma and Thailand, have as one of their
primary (overt) functions the provision of opportunities for lay
people to 'make merit', along with the minor protective role this in-
volves, such as in making merit on behalf of a sick person. The monaster-
ies are also 'reserves' of tantric ritual expertise - primarily in the
person of their LAMAS, especially the incarnate lamas - and this expertise
can be employed by the community to deal with the threats of malevolent
spirits, both in collective ritual and through supplying amulets, images
and other protective devices. The incarnate lama, especially if he is
a monk, but in practice anyway, represents a kind of convergence of these
roles; he is the ideal object for offerings, and the most potent employer
of tantric techniques for the empowerment and protection of his following.
As such he has the primary responsibility for all kinds of interaction
with supernatural beings and forces, as well as generally providing
advice, help and of course teaching to his lay followers.

The other ritual experts are structurally either lamas-in-the-
making - as monks and hermit-yogis should be - or else residual practi-
tioners who deal with minor supernatural problems like protection from
hail (the sngags pa) or communication with lesser local deities (the
spirit mediums). In all these cases, serious problems will generally
involve calling in the lamas.

The tantric deities that take up all the higher ranks of the Tibetan
pantheon are the special province of the lamas. Their predominance among
the deities emphasises the lamas' pre-eminence in the ritual field. In
contrast, the Theravāda pantheons emphasise much more exclusively the
lower end of the scale, the local deities and malevolent spirits. Above
them are only the Hindu deities, now protectors of Buddhism but weakly
characterised and little stressed compared to, say, Avalokiteśvara or
Tārā, and the Buddha himself. For the Theravādins the Buddha is no longer
an active force except through the use of his relics and teachings, but
for the Mahāyānists of Tibet, he is represented through his present-day
emanations, the incarnate lamas.
The other side of the lama and his monastic community has been adequately described already; the monastic corporation is a basic unit in the Tibetan political system. The origin of this situation can be traced in the activities of monks and lamas during the time of the early kings and the succeeding periods of disorder and monastic development. In modern times the monasteries and lamas were political forces on a par with the aristocratic estates. Yet they were able to use their special religious status to derive support from all sections of Tibetan society, including the aristocracy itself. This status, with its built-in ambiguity between secular and religious roles, is justified by the doctrine of skilful means (upāya) for the presentation of the teachings, a doctrine which underlies all the activities of the lamas, and is the ultimate political myth of Tibet. Whether in fact particular lamas manipulated the teachings to acquire political power, or whether they intrigued for power to help put forward the teachings, is not really at issue; the exploitation by the lamas of the possibilities of their role, under the justification of the upāya doctrine, led to their eventual domination of the Tibetan political system through the Dalai Lama and the monastic estates. This doctrine permeates the teachings, rituals and religious literature of Tibet, as I have shown, and was the basis for the existence of the lama himself, since the lama was but a means adopted by the ultimate truth in revealing itself to man.
Notes to Chapter Nine.

5. ibid., 207.
6. ibid., 148.
7. ibid., 226.
8. ibid., 263-311. According to Donn Bayard (personal communication) the Bunbangfai festival is conceptualized in other parts of North-East Thailand as an announcement to the thewada, not to the guardian spirits, that it is time for rain. These thewada (Tambiah calls them 'divine angels') are the deities of the higher Buddhist heavens, and correspond to the Tibetan protective deities of Hindu derivation; they are uniformly benevolent.
9. These spirits of the dead are from Tambiah's description only partly integrated into the Buddhist scheme of rebirth.
10. ibid., 322. The deities normally identified with in tantric practice in Tibet are as described in Chapter Four not the 'protective deities', historically related to the thewada, but a separate class of tantric deities. However thewada derives from *deva, devata, equivalent to Tibetan lha, which as I have pointed out is used generally for tantric, protective and local deities. It is very possible that the exorcist's techniques derive from those of the tantras, Hindu and Buddhist, which were certainly known in Indo-China in earlier periods. For Burma (see below) the survival of tantric procedures is quite probable. I am however concerned primarily with the structural nature of these systems, and not with their historical origin. This structural nature derives from the various possibilities of relationship between man and supernatural beings which are formally available, or more precisely those which have been made use of by the societies I consider. So when I suggest that Thai and Burmese exorcists are ritual experts of the tantric type I am concerned with the nature of their methods, not with their historical relationship, although a historical relationship may well be present.
11. ibid., 324.
15. For Tibet, estimates in Carrasco 1959. For Thailand, Spiro 1971: 283 quotes a figure of 157,000 monks for a total population of 18 million ethnic Thais.
16. cf. Gombrich 1971:284-286. Despite this general opinion the occasional meditating monk even in modern Theravāda countries may gain a high enough reputation for sanctity that he is rumoured to have attained one or another of these states. (Never-returner' etc. are degrees of attainment short of becoming an arhat, cf. Spiro 1971:60.

17. cf. note 12, above. I restrict exorcism to the driving out of malevolent spirits from human beings possessed by them, and do not include the mere cleansing of houses or villages from such spirits. My sense is clearly that intended by Tambiah and Spiro. However some authors use the term more widely and in this sense lamas and mngags pa are occasionally spoken of as performing exorcistic ritual.


19. ibid., 283-284.


21. cf. the story of Pja lli pa, the last of the 84 Siddhas, Tibet House, 1965:61-63; Tibetan text No. 18, pp. 201-204. Alchemy is particularly associated with the name of the great Indian Buddhist philosopher and (in the Tibetan tradition) tantric teacher Nāgājuna.


25. For the spelling of the various Balinese ritual specialists I follow Hooykaas 1973b.


27. Hooykaas 1973a:183. For the similar ritual of the padanda Siva see Hooykaas 1966.

28. ibid., 83.

29. ibid., 21-22.


35. Bateson 1970 gives a vivid picture of the workings of spirit mediums in Bali. The medium in his mountain village was a balian, that in another nearby village a pumangku.


40. ch. Chapter One; Fürer-Haimendorf 1964:18-125; Goldstein 1968.


42. T. J. Norbu mentions a villager acting as caretaker of a temple to the local god, but implies that this was exceptional; usually monks resident in the neighbourhood would be responsible for the temple. cf. quotation in Chapter Two, at note 8.
44. Geertz 1966.
45. e.g. Bateson 1973b.
46. cf., e.g. Shakabpa 1967:202-259, Richardson 1962.
47. Allen 1973 and references given there; Rosser 1966. The Newars have Buddhist tantric priests, who live in communal settlements apparently derivative from earlier communities of monks. They are in some respects similar to the Tibetan monasteries of married lamas mentioned in Chapter One. I hope to write a paper on the whole question of tantric priests in Buddhism shortly. The general tendency in the literature seems to be to regard them as local degenerations of the status of monk rather than as a characteristic role in their own right, yet the married priests of Tibet, Bali and the Newars, in different social contexts, have many features in common. Allen is perhaps misled by this prevailing view when he accepts Regmi's misinterpretation of the biography of Chak Lotsawa ('Dharmagjñāmin') as demonstrating that 'monasticism in the Nepal valley' had almost disappeared in the thirteenth century (1973:4). In fact none of the words used by ChakLotsawa refer specifically to monasteries, or monks, though he mentions an upāsaka (and so presumably lay) guru named Ravindra. Altekar's introduction to Chak Lotsawa's biography misinterprets the text further in suggesting that Ravindra 'did not believe in tantric practices' (Roerich 1939:v). In fact he gave several tantric instructions to Chak Lotsawa (ibid., 54), and merely expressed his disapproval of 'evil mantras' (rgyan engags), that is destructive tantric ritual for evil purposes. Regmi and Allen take over this misunderstanding too: 'there were people who did not subscribe to esoteric cult and discouraged its practices' (Regmi quoted in Allen 1973:4). Altogether it is scarcely possible to use this kind of material without reference to the original texts and language.

As my own account implies, I would agree with Allen about the later forms of Buddhism offering more to a popular audience; but his 'significant correlation' with the progressive reduction of political patronage needs further historical evidence to be convincing. In any case I would argue that the decline of monasticism and the growth of tantric practice are separate issues; tantra is not simply a matter of 'sex in place of celibacy, long hair instead of shaven pates, indulgence instead of abstinence, drunkenness instead of sobriety' (Allen 1973:13) as its practice in Tibetan monasteries illustrates.

48. e.g. Diehl 1956 on South Indian Brahmin priests of the tantric kind.
CHAPTER TEN

Buddhism and the spirit cults in Tibet.

Chapter Nine has provided a general view of the actors in the Tibetan religious system and of their roles. In this chapter I will take my analysis further by considering more fully the relationship in Tibet between Buddhism and the cults of spirits and deities. This will involve me also in a discussion of the transformation that took place when Tibet was converted to Buddhism during the seventh to eleventh centuries, and will lead to a deeper understanding of the Tibetan religious system. Before I come to this, however, I shall consider the ways in which the relationship between Buddhism and the spirit cults has been treated in the studies of Spiro and Tambiah referred to in Chapter Nine.

The problem of Buddhism and the spirit cults.

The studies of Spiro and Tambiah are typical of recent anthropological studies of Theravāda Buddhism in giving considerable attention to this issue. For Spiro the problem is to explain the paradox of two separate 'religions', as he calls them, within a single society. Tambiah seeks rather to demonstrate the interrelationship of the two within a 'synchronic, ordered scheme of collective representations.' I have already described something of the ethnographic content of these studies, and I will now summarize their theoretical approaches, particularly with regard to this problem, which I wish to consider in the Tibetan context.

Spiro describes himself as an 'unregenerate functionalist';
his approach is nevertheless some way from that of the classical British functionalist school. The concept of function enters his studies as a series of more or less ad hoc explanations rather than as an organising principle. At the same time the clarity with which he has expounded his position is noteworthy, and admirable; it seems to me that any future functionalist explanations of religious behaviour must take his work into account. I am personally, though, more interested in the understanding of total systems than in formulating ad hoc functional explanations of the various aspects of Tibetan religion and society.

Spiro's two books on Burmese religion, the first on 'supernaturalism', the second on 'Buddhism', are organised around simple typologies of supernatural agents, supernatural practitioners, Buddhist ideologies, ritual systems and the like. Each item of belief or behaviour is described, and explanations are offered, where possible, in terms of the expressive, instrumental or other functions of the behaviour or belief. The emphasis is on the isolation of separate systems, not on their interrelationships; and the reader is never offered a coherent scheme in which to order the systems Spiro has catalogued. Even the interest in culture and personality theory occasionally evident in the books never takes on this role, though possibly the third book Spiro promises, on personality and social structure, is intended to bring together some of these disconnected threads.

So, for example, 'Nibbanic' and 'Kammatic' Buddhism, the 'ideologies' concerned respectively with ultimate liberation, and with karma and rebirth, are treated as two distinct ideologies, and a supposed shift from 'Nibbanic' to 'Kammatic' is explained through the psychological inadequacy of the 'Nibbanic' form. This is not unreasonable, but it is incomplete. Doctrinally for the Theravādins as for the Tibetans there is no difficulty in reconciling merit-making with ultimate salvation, and it is clear that many of Spiro's Burmese villagers were aware of
this. The coexistence of the two can be traced to the reported teachings of the Buddha, and it is exemplified by the accounts of his previous lives, the Jātaka stories, in which he accumulated the merit leading to his eventual enlightenment. I suspect that Weber's presentation of the soteriology of 'Ancient Buddhism' as concerned exclusively with the achievement of salvation through wisdom, and not at all with lay morality, is at the root of this particular opposition, as of much anthropological confusion. Weber's view itself depended on the attempts by early Western scholars and enthusiasts to establish a 'pure' Early Buddhist teaching based on a selective interpretation of the Pali canon.

The relationship between 'supernaturalism' and 'Buddhism' is treated by Spiro in a similar manner. The two are separate religions, opposed along several critical dimensions. Thus Buddhism is moral, the puruṣa cultus amoral; Buddhism ascetic, the puruṣa cultus libertarian; Buddhism rational, the puruṣa cultus non-rational, and so on. Spiro mentions the primacy of Buddhism and its practitioners over the puruṣa cults, and describes the gaina, the esoteric cults to which the exorcists belong, as representing a mediation between the two religious systems, but the relationship between the two systems remains outside his analysis.

Tambiah's analysis is by contrast concerned with these relationships more than with individual explanations of the separate religious systems - or as he significantly refers to them, ritual complexes:

In order to present a synchronic picture of village religion I have in this book tried to see how the four ritual complexes are differentiated and also linked together in a single total field....The focus is on the contrastive features of the four cults or complexes as collective representations, and in displaying these features I use four concepts: opposition, complementarity, linkage, and hierarchy.

In the section of the book in which he attempts to put together these ritual complexes we are presented with a scheme the formal elegance of which does not conceal its tenuous relationship to village religion. Here the four ritual complexes - those, that is, which I
described at the beginning of Chapter Nine - are diagrammatically represented as four sectors of a circle, opposed along the dimensions defined by two pairs of 'primary religious concepts' of the villagers, Khwan and Winjan, and merit and demerit. Yet even the diagram depicts the extensive overlap between the sectors. The Buddha and the Thuwada are invoked in all Sukhwan ceremonies, and are essential to the exorcist's role. The spirit-medium (Tian) and intermediary (Cham) are concerned with protection against malevolent spirits as well as with the cult of the guardian spirits, as is the diviner (Mau Song). Again, the rites of malevolent spirits are concerned more with curing live patients than with aiding the spirits of the dead, although their place on the Winjan side of the diagram should imply the latter, and so on. Indeed I have already suggested that the opposition between Khwan and Winjan is a little too neat; the terms are not really comparable.

All this may seem, and perhaps is, rather hard on a diagram which Tambiah describes as 'only a rough guide for making sense of the variety of religious phenomena'. However it is clear from the paragraphs following this disclaimer that Tambiah, while aware that the diagram does not represent a 'conscious model on the part of the villagers', does regard it as a valid analytical presentation of the relationships between 'separate collective representations within a single field'. I believe that formal schemes of this kind can hinder as much as help the understanding; ethnographic reality is forced into a mould which has perhaps more to do with structuralist dogma and the modishness of binary oppositions than with its own internal logic.

Tambiah's emphasis on relationships, however, is valid and valuable. What is required in addition to it is the awareness of relationships at the level of content as well as in form which Leach, for example, has shown in his analysis of a similar, but apparently much simpler, situation in Ceylon. Tambiah's description includes material relevant
to such an approach; for example, the overlapping of ritual specialists, and the use of Buddhist sacred symbols and words in the other three ritual complexes; but it is never integrated into his analysis.

I would also suggest that controlled comparisons of the kind I have made, in a preliminary way, above, may be more fruitful in sorting out the elements of a complex religious system than attempts to decipher its logic purely on internal evidence; it may at least give the solution arrived at a little more plausibility.

Tambiah's book makes another significant contribution, in his analysis of the relationship between 'traditional' and village Buddhism. He observes that 'Pali Buddhism', like 'Sanskrit Hinduism', is a 'fabrication of anthropologists' consisting of 'highly miscellaneous, varied and non-contemporaneous elements', and suggests that we substitute for these notions those of 'historical religion and contemporary religion without treating them as exclusive levels':

Historical Buddhism would comprise not only the range of religious texts written in the past, but also the changes in the institutional form of Buddhism over the ages. Contemporary religion would simply mean the religion as it is practised today and should include those texts written in the past that are used today and those customs sanctified in the past that persist today and are integral parts of the ongoing religion.

Tibetan Buddhism in all its aspects, philosophical, ritual, and political, has continued to change and develop well into modern times. It would scarcely be possible to isolate for the Tibetans an ideal type of literary or canonical Buddhism to oppose to village religion. Tambiah's categories of historical and contemporary, with their fluidity and freedom from assumptions of mutual exclusiveness, seem much preferable to any attempts to apply a Great and Little Tradition or Sanskritization kind of approach to this material. Yet I think that we can go a little further than merely to trace continuities and transformations between past and present in the somewhat unsystematic and ahistorical way that Tambiah suggests. This technique indeed seems almost to bring Pali Buddhism
in again by the back door; because the 'classical' concepts of monk, layman or mystical power mentioned by Tambiah relate to some abstraction of this kind rather than to a specific historical context.

This study is not the place to attempt a general historical treatment of the evolution of Tibetan religion. Such a task would indeed be quite premature at this stage of Tibetan studies, despite the pioneering work of Tucci, Hoffmann, Stein, Snellgrove and Richardson, among others. Such a treatment, however, must eventually form an essential part of the apparatus necessary for an understanding of the contemporary religious scene. The analysis of the transformations of the total system in time, like that of its transformations in space, is necessary to understand the present situation at a single point. At least, it is necessary to the extent that it is possible, and where it is not possible, as all too often in the study even of highly literate cultures, like Tibet, with a long historical tradition, then our understanding will be the less for it.

After all, the understanding of an act is primarily a matter of supplying a context. We could make little sense out of seeing a man eating an apple if we had never seen men, apples or eating before. Anthropologists cannot merely import their own contexts, like missionaries equating heathen gods with the Devil. They have to discover, as it were, the contexts native to a particular item of action or speech and make sense of those contexts in their own terms before the behaviour itself can be 'understood'.

I have included some reference to the historical dimension in parts of my descriptive account, as for example with the growth of the incarnate-lama system, which can scarcely be analysed in purely synchronic terms. I will now attempt to do something of this kind again for one of the most crucial periods for the understanding of the relationship between the components of the Tibetan religious system: the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism.
Early Tibetan religion and the Buddhist missionarics.

We are relatively fortunate in our knowledge of early Tibetan religion, in the survival of a quantity of eighth and ninth century manuscripts recovered early this century at the Central Asian oasis of Tun-Huang, in present-day Hsin-Chiang. These include state annals as well as legendary, mythological, and ritual material, but their interpretation is difficult. The vocabulary is archaic and the texts sometimes fragmentary, and many words evidently have meanings different from those they have in later texts. These differences are in fact of particular interest for my purpose; the transformation of the Tibetan language into a vehicle for the Buddha's teachings had not yet taken place. Early royal inscriptions also include some relevant material. Using these texts we can see that many early concepts survive in modified form in the bsangs ritual texts, in some Bon po ritual or in folk songs. But as yet this early material is still being deciphered. The following account is in large part summarized after a recent study of the Tun-Huang material by Ariane Macdonald.

One of the Tun-Huang manuscripts, P.T. 1047, which is dated by Macdonald in part at least to around 640 to 643, that is during the reign of Songtsen Gampo, serves as the basis for much of her picture of early Tibetan religion. The terms used in it can be traced in other later sources, but the document is of especial interest in that there appear to be no significant influences from Chinese, Indian or Buddhist sources on the contents. It is a text giving interpretations for various different divination techniques. These are concerned with the effects of certain classes of deities on the Tibetan king and his ministers, and on the people in general. It is also notable that bon, though mentioned in the text, is in no way represented as an organized religion. Bon refers here only to certain magico-religious techniques and to their practitioners. This accords well with Stein's suggestion,
following the Tibetan historians, that many of the bon practices of the
time of the later kings were themselves of foreign origin, perhaps
largely from India. 30 We are then dealing, provisionally, with Tibetan
religious beliefs and practices of the early 7th century.

Among the several classes of spirits or deities mentioned in
these texts, including 'gods of the localities' (yul lha), 'hearth gods'
(thab lha), the klu or water spirits who later became identified with
the *naga of Indian tradition, and various others, two overlapping cate-
gories seem to be particularly important. These are the sku bla and
the mu sman, both sometimes referred to also as gyen, a common title
of later gods. 31 There are many sku bla, headed by a Great sku bla;
they protect the king and ministers, as long as they are pleased (dgyes)
with them. Otherwise they convene the malevolent spirits (ya bsdud, sri,
etc.) and abandon their proteges to the illnesses and calamities caused
by these spirits. They cause good luck or illness to men in general
too, depending on whether they are pleased or displeased with them. The
mu sman are, as I have said, not an entirely distinct category. They
are made up of nine sisters, or brothers and sisters, headed by a Queen
of the Mu sman. They can speak through mediums and predict the future;
they can revive the dead, restore youth and give life; all, again,
provided that they are pleased (dgyes) by offerings. The sku bla and
mu sman are clearly mountain gods and goddesses, who became in later
times the local gods I described in Chapter Two, the objects of the
bsangc ritual and the cult of the laptse cairns. The mu sman in particu-
lar appear in Nebesky-Wojkowitz's work as the sman goddesses, a class who
include the Five Sisters of Long Life (tshen ring mched leng) associated
with the Mount Everest region. 32 The Five Sisters are still among the
deities invoked in long-life rituals.

The sku bla are equivalent to the personal protective deities,
sku lha ('gods of the body') or 'go ba'i lha, discussed in Chapters
Two and Five. Later texts speak of offerings to, for instance, the  \textit{\'khrungs lha} or \textit{skyva lha}, the god of the place of birth, perhaps equivalent to the \textit{yul lha} mentioned in the \textit{\'go ba'i lha} group. Thus a certain Tibetan prince born at \textit{Ding ri s\'Gang dkar} (Tingri) made offerings to the local deity there as his 'god of birth'. It seems, therefore, that major features of the early Tibetan religion were offerings and other rituals carried out to the mountain gods and intended to placate them so that they would preserve the lives of those dependent upon them and protect them from malevolent spirits. As in later times, these deities could communicate through spirit-mediums.

I have earlier said something about the way in which the early kings were seen as living gods, as reproducing the person of the first divine ancestor who descended from the heavens. This divine ancestor was son and brother to the \textit{phyva} gods, who are a particular group of these mountain deities. In fact a number of other accounts of the origin of the dynasty survive in fragmentary form. Macdonald suggests that the propagation, in official texts such as royal inscriptions, of the \textit{phyva}-god version of the status of the kings, was the result of a deliberate choice. It was indeed part of a 'political myth' formulated, very probably, in the reign of Songtsen Gampo, the king recorded in later history as Tibet's first Buddhist king. Along with the concept of the king as a \textit{phyva} god descended to earth went two supernatural attributes repeatedly mentioned in connection with the kings: \textit{'phrul} and \textit{byin}. Both of these are of great interest, because of their relationship to later Buddhist concepts.

\textit{'Phrul} formed part of the title of all the kinds; \textit{'phrul gyi lha} btsan po, the divine king who possesses \textit{'phrul}. \textit{'Phrul} denotes various supernatural powers of which the chief was initially the ability to travel at will between heaven and earth. In this way, through the use of a 'sky-cord', the first seven kings of the dynasty returned to the
heavens, leaving the throne to their sons. This 'sky-cord' was cut in
the reign of the eighth king, and subsequent monarchs did not have this
power. All these kings are legendary; the stories of the Tibetan kings
have little or no historicity until a couple of reigns before Songtsen
Gampo, the thirty-third king by Tibetan reckoning. In the case of these
later kings, 'phrub seems to imply primarily mental powers superior to
those of ordinary men: 'Parce qu'il possède le 'phrub dans son esprit,
sa pensée est vaste et étendue comme l'espace du ciel.' P'hyin refers
to the king's military powers; because of this other kings must submit
to him, and he cannot be defeated in battle.

The converse of the divine nature of the kings was the divine
nature of their system of government, which was that of the phywa gods,
and so corresponded to the order of the universe. This system, or
gtsug lag, a term later applied to the Indian sciences, to the Chinese
system of divination, and to religious systems in general, evidently
included the rituals of propitiation of the sky bla. It was because
of the constancy of the kings' gtsug (lag), which was also the gods'
gtsug lag, that all the kingdoms of the four directions submitted them-
selves to him. In the inscription commemorating the Chinese-Tibetan
treaty of 821/822 the Chinese, in contrast to other surrounding kingdoms,
are described as also having a good law, a great gtsug lag, and it is
possible that the administrative system of Songtsen Gampo was partly
borrowed from the Chinese. Chinese records speak of Tibetans coming to
China to study the Confucian classics, and of these books being sent to
Tibet at the request of the kings of Tibet.

Again we are told in the Tum-Huang Chronicle of Yolofeng (La bong),
the king of Nan-chao who submitted himself to the Tibetan king Trhide
Tsugtsen:

Il a cherché comme roi le fils des dieux;
au fils des dieux dont le grand gTsgug
est la bonne Loi, que tous revèrent.
dont les ordres sont justes, la parole sûre,
La bong a offert son royaume.
Du fait qu'un royaume d'hommes est gouverné par un dieu,
ce royaume est grand et ne changera jamais.38

The Great *gsugs lag is equivalent also to the 'good Law' (*chos bzang),
the 'Law of Heaven' (*nam gvi *chos). Here the word translated 'Law'
(*chos) is that which later came to be equated to Sanskrit *dharma, and to
refer above all to the Buddha's teaching. In the later royal inscrip-
tions the Buddha's teaching is already the 'Buddha's Law' (*sangs rgyas
lhi *chos), and 'the good Law which transcends the world' (ljang rten lag
'das pa'i *chos bzang po) in contrast to the *gsugs lag of the gods, which
is the law of this world, as it is the Law of the gods of this world.39

The funerary rites which we know to be of such importance in the
time of the early Tibetan kings were also evidently part of the *gsugs
lag.40 They involved sacrifices of animals who guided the spirits of
the dead to the lands of joy among the dead, and away from those of
misery.

As Macdonald points out, this whole system is, as it stands,
fundamentally irreconcilable with Buddhism. The animal sacrifices were
incompatible with the Buddha's teachings, but more importantly, the
ideas of karma, of the suffering of samsara and the need to escape from
it form no part of the *gsugs lag of the gods. The ideal of the system
is a life of happiness, and the stress is on justice in society, not on
individual morality. This system could be subordinated to Buddhism, as
it eventually was; but it could not coexist as a cult of equal status.
In a text in the canonical collection, the Tenjur, there is an account
of King Trisong Detsen's discussion with the Indian Buddhist teacher
Santaraksita. The king says that he has examined the words and behaviour
of those who follow the two systems, and he praises the Buddha's system
as superior to any other. His objection to the religion of the mountain-
gods is that they abandon those who do not please them, which he regards
as unjust; he intends to practice the Buddhist religion as well.41 The
Buddhist teachings of an immediate rebirth after death and thus of possible reunion with dead relatives and friends seem also to have been presented in such a way as to appeal to the Tibetans, although the moral usually drawn from the wheel of rebirth is almost the opposite of this, that there is no certainty of relationships continuing through future lives. The compromise between the two religions which the king arrived at did not last long. However, as we have already seen, the cult of the mountain-gods continued in reduced form within a Buddhist society.

Along with these basic differences, there are striking similarities between the pre-Buddhist system and Tibetan religion today. In the gtsug lag of the gods Tibet was ruled by a manifestation of the mountain-gods, the founder of the royal dynasty returned to earth. In the time of the Sakya Grand Lamas, manifestations of the great tantric bodhisattvas ruled Tibet. In the time of the Dalai Lamas, Tibet was ruled by a manifestation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who was now supposed to have manifested himself also as the great religious kings of early Tibet, and to have been the progenitor of the Tibetan people. Not surprisingly, sprul, in the word for incarnate lama, sprul sku, is from the same root as 'phrul, the power of divine manifestation of the early kings. In the old system when the deities were pleased by offerings, they gave long life and protection from the attacks of malevolent spirits. In the new system the lamas assume the status of tantric deities, who are claimed to be far more powerful than the mere gods of this world such as the mountain-deities; in this form the lamas are given offerings, and are visualized as being pleased with the worshipper - the same term, dgyes pa, is used in both cases - whereupon they give long life and protection. The byin, the blessing of military fortune of the king, becomes transformed into the byin rlabs or 'wave of byin', blessings, which the lama sends to his followers, so that they can realise his own
enlightenment. The lha khang (god house) and gtsug lag khang (religious system house), which must originally have had associations with the old mountain-deities, are now standard terms for Buddhist temples. And Songtsen Gampo, the king responsible for the organisation of the gtsug lag doctrine, has become in the Buddhist view of things the first of the great Buddhist religious kings of Tibet.

As Macdonald observes, this near-complete eradication of the official religion of the monarchy, and transformation of its key terms into Indian Buddhist concepts and their derivatives, did not happen by accident. It was the result of the deliberate and systematic work of the Indian and Tibetan propagators of Buddhism in Tibet. What was left of the old practices became organised from the 11th century onwards, along with the remains of the practices of the bon priests, into the pseudo-Buddhist monastic order of the Bon po, or left to the residual category of mi chos, 'religion of men' or 'law of men'. This mi chos, opposed to lha chos, 'law of the gods', that is Bon and Buddhism, came to include little more than proverbial sayings and moral teachings, and the legends of the origins of the world and especially of the different Tibetan clans. Though in a 14th-century chronicle we are still told that 'the "religion of men" was the sign of a king's good government', and there are other signs also of its earlier importance.

The details of the transformation of the old religion into Buddhism remain to be fully investigated, but we have enough here to lead to some significant conclusions.

New gods for old.

Let us look first at the transformation of the pre-Buddhist pantheon of Tibet. The early religion contained two main classes of supernatural beings: the mountain deities and other similar deities of localities, and the lesser malevolent spirits which these local deities could control. The king was a manifestation of one of the mountain-deities.
In the post-Buddhist pantheon both of these classes of spirits were retained. The local deities were now, however, bound to the protection of the Buddhist doctrine. This 'binding' was performed initially, according to Tibetan accounts, by the early Buddhist missionaries and above all by Padmasambhava. In addition there are now two sets of higher deities: the great Hindu-derived deities, forms of the Indian universal deities such as Śiva and Kālī, and the tantric deities.

The 'universal' deities, also now bound protectors of the Buddhist doctrine, owe their introduction in part at least, no doubt, to the Bon-po, for whom the deities of this class, and especially their supreme sky-god Kun tu bzang po, appear to have been of greater significance than they were for the Buddhists. But while superior to the local Tibetan deities they are, for the Buddhists at least, totally inferior to the tantric deities. The tantric deities are indeed in some respects hardly to be considered as gods at all; they are roles or personae endowed with supernatural powers that can be assumed by the tantric practitioner. Yet the dividing line between them and the other deities is not so strict — there are forms of non-tantric meditation, as I previously mentioned, which involve acquiring the status of the 'universal' deities, and from the point of view of Buddhist philosophy all the deities and spirits are not to be regarded as having real individual identity, any more than men are; from this outlook tantric deities are no more, but no less, real than anything else. More importantly, while some of these tantric deities are only weakly personified and are scarcely important figures in lay thought, others, such as Avalokiteśvara, Tārā, Mañjuśrī, and Padmasambhava in his deified form, are objects of much lay devotion and there is no doubt that they are conceived of as having real existence by much of the Tibetan population. Tantric deities, universal deities and local deities alike are referred to by the single term lha, 'god'. The lamas would explain the lay attitudes to these tantric deities as
the result of a teaching expedient, a point which I will have to refer to later; but from the point of view of most Tibetans, they can be described as a class of superior deities. Among them, of course, is the Buddha himself, of whom they are all manifestations. Thus we have a four-tier array:

1. BUDDHA AND TANTRIC DEITIES, e.g. Avalokiteśvara, Tārā, Padmasambhava

2. UNIVERSAL HINDU DEITIES, e.g. Mahākāla

3. MOUNTAIN-GODS AND LOCAL DEITIES

4. MALEVOLENT SPIRITS

in which each class controls the activities of those below it.

Now while the ordinary layman interacts with class 3, the mountain-gods, through the bsangs ritual and the spirit-mediums, and thus protects himself to some extent from class 4, the malevolent spirits, he does not interact with the first two classes. At least, he does not interact with them as deities; he meets them in the form of the lama, who, as we have seen, is or can assume the identity of the first class of deities, and especially of the Buddha himself. Through these deities the lama can control all the lesser classes of deities and can protect his followers from their harm. He can also transmit to them the power of life deriving now not primarily from the mountain-deities but from the much more exalted levels of the tantric Buddhas.

Here the structural logic of the claim that the lama is Buddha, and of the associated doctrine of the emanation-nature of incarnate lamas, is transparently clear. This claim gives the lama the highest status in the entire pantheon. Lamas are gods; and gods far higher than the mountain-deities of early Tibet or even the universal gods of India. As such, they are the pivotal figures of the Tibetan religious system.

We can see, too, the logic of the retrospective conversion of the early religious kings into emanations of Avalokiteśvara. The rulers of Tibet were now the divine lamas; and they remade the divine kings,
emanations of mountain-deities, who introduced Buddhism to Tibet after their own model. The claims of sovereignty built into the religious system of Songtsen Gampo, in which the king was the mountain-god, and the system of government that instituted by the mountain-gods, were now turned to the service of the lamas. The lamas' claim to sovereignty was based on their being emanations of the tantric deities, and the founders of the Tibetan state they ruled now became emanations of the same deities. However the various components of this system of ideas emerged, they make up an impressively consistent whole.

We can understand, too, the stress in many of the 'discovered texts', through which the evolution of these ideas mostly took place, on Padmasambhava's subjugation of the deities and malevolent spirits of Tibet. This subjugation is acted out in some of the monastic dances. It forms part of the mythical charter for the lamas' authority, through constituting the evidence that the lamas were stronger than the gods of Tibet, and that those gods had had to submit to them and to obey their commands. The gods are even described as paying homage and making offerings to Padmasambhava, reversing the relationship in which the Tibetans gave offerings to the mountain-deities. From now on the chief object of lay Tibetan offerings were to be the lamas and their monasteries. I shall have occasion to remark below on the multiple meaning of these offerings. It is hardly surprising that Padmasambhava is one of the two or three most important of the tantric deities, and is honoured even in temples of the Geluk-pa order, where the Old Tantras of his tradition are not practised. The Tibetan historians make it clear that this subjugation of the native deities had to take place before the first Tibetan monastery could be founded, or the Buddhist teachings effectively propagated in Tibet. While they speak in terms of overcoming the opposition of these deities to Buddhist activities, it is evident that to establish themselves securely in Tibet the Buddhist lamas
had to establish their structurally superior position to the local deities. We have no means of knowing how they did the job in practice, but I have shown how the theory and practice of the Buddhist tantras gave them a vocabulary in which to assert their conquest, and techniques through which to exercise their control.

It is also entirely logical that in the teachings on the taking of refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, which forms the basic profession of adherence to Buddhism, and in Tibet is also and above all a taking of refuge in the lama as their consummation and condensation, the unworthiness of the local deities as objects of refuge is often emphasised. They are weak and unreliable; sometimes they may protect you for a while, but you can never be sure. The Three Jewels, and the lama, are worthy and secure objects of refuge.

50

The etymology of 'lama'.

In the light of all this, it is interesting to speculate a little about the word 'lama' itself (bla ma). As far as I know, the word does not appear in pre-Buddhist contexts, and it was presumably coined initially to represent the Sanskrit word *guru. At any rate, the early translators felt that it was an appropriate term to use for guru. Yet it does not appear to be an etymological or pseudo-etymological translation of *guru; here as with some other key terms - sans rgyas for Buddha, and dkon mchog for *ratna, Jewel, in the special sense of the Three Jewels, are other examples - the Tibetan translators evidently preferred to create a new term with appropriate Tibetan connotations. The term they produced is a compound of bla with the particle ma.

The particle ma has two possibly relevant meanings. Ma can be used as an adjectival termination or nominal suffix; or it can be used as a negative particle.51 As a negative particle it normally precedes a verb, and this meaning would therefore seem unlikely. It cannot be ruled out entirely as contributing to the meaning of the compound term;
such an illustrious authority as the Ch'ien-lung emperor of China

etymologised the term in this way in his Yung-ho-kung inscription:

I have carefully pondered over its meaning and found that

la in Tibet means 'superior' and ma means 'none'. So la-ma

means 'without superior', just as in Chinese a priest is called

'superior' (shang-jen).52

I have not met this explanation in Tibetan sources but then, unlike

sangs rgyas for example, the etymology of bla ma is not a common subject

of Tibetan exegesis, and this etymology was doubtless given to the

Emperor by some Tibetan or Mongolian source. His conjecture is perhaps
given some support by the common expression bla ma med pa, 'highest',

'without higher', from bla ma 'above' + med 'there is not' + pa adjectival

suffix, abbreviated often to bla med. But we can I think leave it on

one side.

We are left then with ma as a nominal suffix or adjectival ter-

mination. As the former, ma usually forms feminine nouns; gar ma 'female
dancer'; from gar 'dance'; it is the feminine counterpart of pa, as in
gar pa 'male dancer', Tsong bka pa, 'the man from Tsong bka'. Ma as an
independent noun is 'mother'. As an adjectival termination it has no
connotations of gender or sex; nang ma 'inside', 'co ma 'below, subordin-
ate', gong ma 'superior'. Gong ma, derivative presumably from the last,
is also the term for the Chinese Emperor. Bacot assumes that ma in
bla ma is a nominal suffix of this kind, as evidently do most other
modern authorities, and I will follow him here.53

For bla we already have the closely-related meanings 'spirit-

essence' and 'protective deity'. Bla has also come, in compounds at
least, to have the meaning 'above'. I have already cited bla ma and
bla ma med pa. Bla gos for 'upper garment', bla gab 'roof' also belong
here. The verbal sense of bla as 'to be preferable' is doubtless related;
c.g., maas tshe 'phos byang bla'o 'I would rather die', cited by JMischke
and Das.54
This meaning of 'upper' can however in some contexts be scarcely distinguished from bla in the sense of 'spirit essence'/'protective deity'. Das quotes bla dar, a small prayer-flag on the roof, and presumably erected in honour of these deities. We have already met bla ri, 'mountain which is the seat of the life-essence', bla tsbo 'lake of the life-essence' and bla shing, the juniper or willow tree planted at a child's birth, and seat of his bla.

So I would suggest that while our standard dictionaries are no doubt correct in deriving bla ma from bla 'superior' + ma nominal suffix, there may be more to it than that. It is striking to say the least that the lama, who took over in his own person the role of the sku bla, protective deities, in protecting the bla, the life-essence of his followers, should also take over the word bla as part of his name. Perhaps Das's anonymous informant was not so far off the mark when he explained that bla meant soul or life and ma mother, hence bla ma = life-mother, the all-sustaining mother of the universe! would then imply the lama's sustaining and protective role rather than his role as a teacher. And for most of the Tibetan population, most of the time, this implication is not misleading. The lama is god first and teacher second.

_Are lamas men or gods?_

It is noteworthy that the incarnate-lama doctrine, which is one of the chief expressions of the divine nature of lamas, is also in some respects a restriction of it. All lamas, according to the Vajradhara teaching, are manifestations of the Dharmakāya of the Buddha. Yet among the recognised incarnate lamas there are clear differences in status, as I indicated in Chapter Seven. Only a few of the highest lamas are generally accepted as emanations of the great tantric deities. Most are primarily reincarnations of local lamas, and the historical depth of the incarnation line, the prestige of its founder and of its subsequent
members, and the size and importance of the monastic estate associated with it, allow for further differentiations among the reincarnation lamas.

This means that the divine status of lamas cannot entirely be taken for granted. Some lamas partake of it to a greater extent than others. Perhaps this is essential for the system as a whole. Without it the hierarchies of the monastic orders would lose much of their rationale. It also allows Tibetans, laymen, monks and lamas, room to admit differing degrees of sanctity among recognised incarnate lamas. Not all incarnate lamas can live the life of a manifestation of the Buddha. But their failings are not as worrying if they are only incarnates of lesser status, or even if there could be a question of the incarnation being incorrectly chosen. The incarnate-lama doctrine directs the prestige of divine status particularly towards the Dalai Lama and other major emanations in the highest positions within the system, and to that extent dilutes the 'divinity' of the lesser incarnates.

Yet even these lesser incarnates have the tantric powers that give them total superiority to the local deities. The transformation of men into gods, and gods of varying statuses, has its counterpart in the demotion of the gods over whom they rule. In the Buddhist hierarchy the local deities of Tibet are low enough in status, and have suffered a vast fall from their position in the early system, though they are still evidently respected enough by the Tibetans, especially laymen. The divine nature of the lamas, again, is to some extent qualified by the devaluing of divinity caused by their assumption of that status. The hordes of deities and spirits overcome by Padmasambhava are no longer quite the awe-inspiring powers they once were. And so the lamas, protected always by the concept of upāya, or teaching expedients, manage to be gods and men at once. I can, I think, resolve the ambiguities of their situation a little further before I finish.
Notes to Chapter Ten.

8. cf. Spiro 1971:94:

Even in my sample of sophisticated Buddhists only two respondents out of fifteen professed such an outlook /i.e., that merit is unnecessary for the attainment of nirvāṇa/. The vast majority of these knowledgeable Buddhists not only held the acquisition of merit to be their most important Buddhist activity, but viewed it as the indispensable means to the attainment of nirvāṇa.

The disagreement he reports is somewhat analogous to that between the Chinese and Indian schools in 8th-century Tibet (cf. Demirville 1952, Conze 1973:214-217), but the latter view, that of the 'vast majority' of Spiro's 'knowledgeable Buddhists', is accepted by all Buddhist schools except perhaps Ch'an (Zen). This is not to deny that the ultimate aim is liberation from karma. To quote a modern Sinhalese scholar:

The path of right action involves abstaining from unwholesome kamma and preferring only those actions which will lead to beneficial results. The goal of right action, however, is to transcend even kusala (wholesome) kamma, for once the enlightenment experience has arisen in life, actions will cease to produce any kammic results, harmful or beneficial. (Saddhatissa 1971:51)

9. Weber 1967:204-230. Weber's assertion that 'ancient Buddhism lacked almost all beginnings of a methodical lay morality' is on p. 218. That the Pali canon can be used to support a quite opposite view has been demonstrated by Ling's recent book (1973) in which the Buddha is portrayed as a social reformer with a special concern for lay morality. The texts can be used to support either interpretation by selective quotation, but an intermediate position would seem more reasonable. In any case few modern Western scholars would accept the Pali canon as representing a pure Ancient Buddhism.

10. Spiro 1967:258. Leach argues similarly for Ceylon (1962), but points out too that the local deity and his medium are subordinate to Buddha and the monk, and have complementary roles within a single system.

16. ibid., 328.
17. ibid., 339.
18. ibid., 339-340.
19. cf. note 10 above.
21. ibid., 374.
22. For example, Tsongkha-pa’s reforms in the 15th century; the ris med movement in the 19th and 20th centuries; the organizational changes introduced by the 13th Dalai Lama; the constant creation of new liturgical texts. This is not to deny the reliance on traditional authority which is so important in Tibet. But even the canonical collections, which are far more heterogenous than the Pali canon, contain precedents for all kinds of developments, and the discovery of gter ma texts, especially but not only in the Nyingma-pa order, enabled changes of a quite radical order to take place.
27. ibid., 272-309.
28. ibid., 281-286.
29. ibid., 299, note 375.
31. Macdonald 1971:291-309. gnyan also refers to the argali, native Tibetan wild sheep, through which these gods manifested themselves, cf. ibid., 355-356.
32. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:198-202, 177-181. The early role of the mu sman in granting long life would support those Tibetan sources who include the tshe ring mched luga among the sman goddesses (ibid., 198).
34. Macdonald 1971:337.
35. ibid., 335-339.
36. ibid., 339-342.
39. ibid., 354.
40. ibid., 365-367.
41. ibid., 367-368.
42. ibid., 370-371, note 609.
43. ibid., 388.
45. Macdonald (1971:388) mentions her intention of writing a study on this topic.

46. cf. Chapter Four.

47. e.g. the lha 'drol bka' thang (Blondeau 1971) or the o rgyan mnam thar (Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center 1973:72-107, especially 81-85.)

48. Thus the deity Thang lha ("God of the Plain", cf. Chapter Two), overcome by Padmasambhava, places himself under Padmasambhava's protection, and makes offerings to him, and Padmasambhava gives him treasures of hidden texts (gter ma) to guard:

Très effrayé, sous la forme d'un homme habillé de coton blanc, Thang lha salua l'Acarya Padmasambhava en en faisant le tour: 
"...Moi et mon entourage, nous nous plaçons sous ta protection: que dans une vie future, hommes repentants, nous puissions voir la face du Bouddha...Nous nous faisons tes sujets; nous faisons le voeu de protéger ta doctrine. Pour te vénérer en vérité, viens dans ma demeure". L'ayant invité, il lui fit des offrandes et lui offrit un festin. Il reçut comme nom secret celui de Do rje mchog rab gsal, et il obtint en garde vingt-et-un trésors. (Blondeau, 1971:82)

49. cf. Pu-tôn's history (Obermiller 1932-3:II, 188-189); the Blue Annals (Roerich 1948-53:1, 43-44).


51. Bacot 1948:II, 83. The distinction between adjectival termination and nominal suffix is not always clear (cf. gong ma) and I have preferred to treat them as a single class.

52. Lessing 1942:58. For this inscription, cf. Chapter Seven.


55. Das 1970:901 has obviously missed the point completely when he guesses 'the hill on which one's soul rests after death or in its passage to the Bardo' for bla srog gnas pa'i ri 'the hill where one's life-essence rests'. Compare mi'i bla srog gnas sa'i shing sdog as a definition of bla shing immediately below.


58. Some sources give the impression of recognised grades of incarnate lamas, e.g., T. J. Norbu describes himself as 'only one of the Middle Incarnations' (Norbu and Turnbull 1969:236). I have not come across an explicit account of this system of grades. In view of the grading system for aristocratic families, and lay and monastic officials, such a procedure would not be surprising.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Lamas as teachers, lamas as gods.

The comparisons with Thailand, Burma and Bali, followed by my excursion into early Tibetan religion, have brought the relationships between lamas, tantric deities and local gods, between Buddhism and the spirit cults, into much closer perspective. It is of course only one possible perspective, defined by a particular set of contexts, but it is a perspective that arises out of the nature of Tibetan religion itself rather than being externally imposed, and it makes sense of many apparently disparate facts. Incarnate lamas, tantric meditation, spirit mediums and deified rulers now appear as part of a single system of ideas, rather than as a succession of exotica. I would suggest that a similar approach might yield significant results too with the other complex societies of Asia, and might enable the formulation of more general models incorporating the principles underlying these societies.

I am not here advocating anything radically new; only that anthropologists take into account all possible contexts, including those of religious doctrine, regional comparison and history, and treat them as of equal status in their analyses. Once they have done this they may then be in a position to define the structural and sociological relationships between the elements of their descriptive models. I do not know how far the social anthropologist can be justified in leaving these contexts out of consideration when studying some 'primitive' societies. Often, it is true, there is little choice in the matter, since the information is simply not there. But in the study of the major Asian cultures such information is generally available, and to reject it is to do
without some of the most valuable aids for anthropological work. Needless to say few modern anthropologists have done this entirely, but even in the work of say Spiro and Tambiah these contexts enter for supplementary clarification rather than being incorporated as a whole into their analyses. I do not think either that we can use the structuralist apparatus to short-cut this procedure, though it can doubtless prove a valuable tool in its own right. Anthropologists studying Buddhist societies need to understand Buddhism in its own terms, they need to understand the historical evolution of the societies they study, and they cannot conceive their analyses in isolation of surrounding societies. Unfortunately such studies of Tibetan religion as have been made so far by anthropologists — I am thinking in particular of those of Führer-Haimendorf and Ekvall — display most or all of these failings.

But having defined the basic roles in my model of Tibetan religion through these various procedures, and having given some description of their content, I want in this final chapter to demonstrate the dynamic behind this system through considering the interactions between these roles. Before I come to this, however, I shall discuss one aspect of the lama's role which has received little mention in Chapters Nine and Ten, despite its importance in the Tibetan view of the lama. This is the lama as teacher.

The lama's control over knowledge.

Goody, relying primarily upon Ekvall's account, has characterized Tibet as a typical society of 'restricted literacy'. Ekvall overemphasises the purely ritualistic use of writing; despite his vivid descriptions of monks printing words on the waters and placing books in the tombs of dead lamas, the Tibetans do read books. But the characterization of 'restricted literacy' is certainly appropriate, as is Goody's earlier comment that in such societies 'the role of the teacher as the mediator of knowledge is given pre-eminent importance.'
While writing is used by the Tibetans for administrative purposes and for correspondence — mostly in official contexts — its primary use is for religious purposes.\(^4\) Lamas and monks are the teachers of reading and writing,\(^5\) and I have already noted that even the teacher of the alphabet is to be regarded as a Buddha. Even more significantly, one does not read a Tibetan religious text, in general, until given a formal textual transmission (lung) in which the lama reads out the text in full and so confers on the student the right to read and study it. Beyer notes that even the alphabet is first read out in this way before being taught.\(^6\) A further permission (khrid lung) may be given for a student to teach a text in his turn to others. These transmissions are parallel in nature to tantric initiations, which are primarily — in the monastic context — authorizations to undertake a particular meditational practice.

The pattern of study usually consists of the memorization of a basic text (rtse, ‘root’), concise in form and often in verse, followed by its detailed study with the aid of oral and written commentaries.\(^7\) The student thus learns to understand a particular text, rather than to read texts in general.\(^8\) Monastic debating is likewise a matter mostly of memorizing standard arguments and responses. The attitude towards this kind of study of the early Kagyü-pa lamas has already been remarked upon. The ris med lamas of the 19th century, inspired by the same ideas, attempted to move away from memorization to a fuller comprehension of the underlying teachings, as had earlier teachers,\(^9\) but the pattern of memorizing and interpreting specific texts is nevertheless characteristic of Tibetan literacy. It is aided doubtless by the nature of the Tibetan written language, which is far removed from any of the spoken dialects, and the relative difficulty of the script; even well-educated Tibetans frequently make mistakes in spelling. Books too are often written in such a form as not to be fully intelligible without oral explanations or
commentaries; this is particularly true of tantric texts. If a student wishes to understand the teachings of different schools or lineages, he goes to lamas of the different lineages for their teachings in turn rather than studying them with a single lama, or attempting to read the books on his own. The distance between spoken and written Tibetan also makes it common for a layman or monk to be able to read ritual texts - for which he needs to know only the sounds of the letters - without necessarily understanding much of what he reads. Though at the same time, Tibetan religious literature is written in Tibetan - except for the occasional Sanskrit mantra - and not, as in the Theravāda countries, in a totally foreign language; and there are some texts in more popular language, such as the biography and songs of Mila Rēpa, and texts dealing with lay morality and simple Buddhist teachings.10

In the practice of meditation, the lama is even more in control. It is he who supervises the student's progress and gives instructions as they are needed, and it is he who decides on his student's attainment. The lama controls both the acquisition of knowledge through study, and of insight and spiritual power through meditation. In these ways he stands between man and Enlightenment. More specifically, he stands between the layman and the acquisition of spiritual power; through these means the lamas control who becomes a lama. It is possible, as I mentioned in Chapter Seven, to gain a reputation for sanctity and spiritual power outside the official channels, but even a solitary hermit must have previously taken instruction from some lama, and he will need at least acceptance from the local monastic and secular authorities before he can gather a monastic community of his own. In general great importance is attached to the 'possession' of lineages of teaching, and especially of tantric initiation. Tibetan religious histories such as the Blue Annals11 are largely devoted to catalogues of the transmission of these lineages, and biographers record their lama's collection of initiations and instructions received from different teachers with loving care.
Most important lamas are incarnate lamas, chosen at an early age and given special training for their posts. I have already described the way in which the selection of these children is controlled by the head lamas of monastic orders and other high monastic authorities. Both ascribed status and achieved status are controlled by the lamas; they select who is to be given teachings, and authorize them to take on the teaching role in their own right. Since it is largely this officially-conferred status which confirms to the layman that a lama is an effective exponent of tantric power, one cannot in general take on the role of lama in relation to laymen without such authorization. Indeed to perform this role the lama needs to be able to carry out rituals which he must have learnt from other lamas. It is, then, virtually impossible to undertake the lama role effectively without the permission and training of other lamas.

All this is not to deny the ultimate orientation of the Tibetan religious system towards the attainment of Enlightenment. It is obvious from the writings of great lamas of the past, and from an acquaintance with present-day lamas, that there have always been people for whom this orientation is entirely real. For them, the whole system is predicated upon the goal of Enlightenment, and the actions performed by the lamas are methods, upāya, to convey that basic insight. The Tibetan religious system can be analysed at many levels, and this is as valid as any other. Yet from the point of view of the layman, concerned primarily with the health and prosperity of himself and his family, the lama's control of knowledge is significant because it is essential to his power to help. The lama has to be a person who is fit to employ tantric power for good, both through his nature and through his training. In fact the two are scarcely separate. The lama's training is designed to bring about a transformation of his nature, and his tantric powers are theoretically only by-products of that inner transformation. The lamas are people apart
within Tibetan society, and the circumstances in which their knowledge and abilities are passed on keep them a people apart.

So even for a layman who scarcely interacts with the lama in his teaching role, this teaching role is not merely a subsidiary adjunct of the lama's spiritual power. It is because the lamas are teachers, because they are custodians of restricted knowledge, that they are also custodians of the power conveyed by that knowledge. Thus teaching is a necessary and fundamental part of the ideology underlying the lama's role in the Tibetan religious system.

In my concluding pages, I wish to present an analysis of this system as a whole. I shall concentrate in particular upon the transactions which take place between the lama and the other central roles of the Tibetan religious system, the layman and the monk. What is it that the lama takes from and gives to the other members of his society?

Transactions between men and gods:

Relationships between the central roles of the Tibetan religious system.

I begin by considering the system from the point of view of a Tibetan layman of commoner status. I will take him as having an aristocratic lord. For commoners on monastic or government estates, two of the roles I consider below (2 and 3, or 2 and 8) will to some extent be combined in a single set of persons.

The layman is involved in transactions, actual or potential, with several kinds of human or non-human entities. They fall into eleven main categories (Table 6).
**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human entities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Other villagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Aristocratic lord and his officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Central government and its officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Villagers with some Buddhist ritual expertise (ex-monks etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Monks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Weather magicians and other minor ritual experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Spirit-mediums and other minor divinatory experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lamas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-human entities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Malevolent spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Local deities (directly and through 7, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Tantric deities (through 8, 6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

I shall now look at the transactions between the layman and each of these categories more closely. I omit categories 1-3, who are irrelevant for a consideration of the religious system, and the minor ritual experts of category 6, who are relatively insignificant.

The layman's interrelationship with monks (5) is two-fold. First they may be involved, along with trained laymen (4), as accessory ritual practitioners in the kinds of ritual directed by the lamas. They may even, in the absence of a fully-qualified lama, carry out some of these rituals, as may the trained laymen. But the second and essential part of the monk's role is, as in other Buddhist countries, that of allowing the layman to accumulate merit, directly through receiving offerings or indirectly through the monks' performing rituals in return for the offerings made to them. There are other ways in which laymen can accumulate merit, such as pilgrimage, recitation of mantras, or repairing or building mani-walls or stupas, but these do not involve the services of a
special class of experts. Laymen almost always have monks who are close relatives, and the giving of material support to them is a major part of their support of the monks.

The layman's relationship with the local spirit mediums (7) - he will not generally have access to the major monastic oracles - is mainly as a first line of defense against illness and misfortune, and for advice on how and when to perform various undertakings. Technically he is communicating through the oracle with the local deities, but this side of the relationship is not important unless, say, an illness is diagnosed as being due to his neglect of these deities.

The lamas (8) have been the main subject of my study. Offerings to the lamas are in a sense ambiguous; they are both religious offerings which gain merit, and offerings given in exchange for the lama's protection and blessing. The layman may also interact with the lama's teaching role, even if only in the context of the addresses given in the course of initiations, and he may ask the lama's advice as a divinatory expert and ritual practitioner in the case of serious illness or other misfortune.

Of the three classes of non-human entities - the Hindu-derived protective deities are significant only in the monastic cult - only the local deities (10) are addressed directly through the bsangs ritual, carried out in individual households and collectively during the annual cycle of rituals in the village. The tantric deities (11) are employed by the lamas on the layman's behalf, to defend him from the malevolent spirits (9); the amulets and other protective devices given to him by the lama serve the same end.

If we now look from the point of view of the monk we see a rather different set of interactions (Table 7).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human entities</th>
<th>Non-human entities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Monastic authorities, including lamas as such</td>
<td>6. Malevolent spirits, through the monastic cult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Central government, generally unimportant</td>
<td>7. Local deities, through the monastic cult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other monks, depending on relative status within the monastery</td>
<td>8. Hindu-derived protective deities, through the monastic cult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lamas, including the monk's personal teachers</td>
<td>9. Tantric deities, through the monastic cult and the lamas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The monks, like laymen, are involved in the accumulation of merit, but in their case it is acquired primarily through the performance of monastic ritual and ritual for laymen, and more particularly through meditation practices such as the guru-yoga and the associated mantra recitations, prostrations and mandala offerings. They also have to learn by rote ritual texts and the accompanying gestures, chants and modes of preparing offerings, and perhaps also study the monastic dances; in a teaching monastery they may also be involved in academic study. Some monks are active primarily in monastic administration. There are others, the lدب ldob, who act as private guards and policemen in some of the larger monasteries. But generally the rationale behind the monastic status is the pursuit of enlightenment, and lay support is primarily, from their point of view, supposed to be a means to this end. In return, monks perform ritual services for laymen and transfer merit to them. Being acquainted with monastic rituals, they can at least go through
the motions of the tantric assumption of divine power, though they may not be able to carry out much of the accompanying meditations and visualizations. Their relationship to the deities is therefore on the model of the lama’s relationship to them; both local and universal deities receive offerings, but are kept firmly in their place.

Monks, along with the hermit-yogis and some serious lay-meditators, interact most with the lama’s teaching role, and they receive tantric initiations as empowerments to do particular tantric practices rather than receiving them, as must laymen, as occasions to acquire some of the lama’s power and blessings.

The lama himself interacts with both monks and laymen from a superordinate position, but is subordinate to the higher lamas of his order, and in some respects to the Central Government also. His relations with other lamas are also generally hierarchical; most of his interaction with them is in the role of teacher or disciple.

Like the monk, he too is theoretically committed to the pursuit of enlightenment, and like the monk, he relies on the offerings of laymen, present or past – because he may have a large income from the monastic estate formed by past donations – to give him the opportunity to do this. He receives at least nominal offerings, and often very substantial ones, whenever he gives initiations or performs other services for laymen. As we saw, the Sakya lamas, in theory, received rule over Tibet as such an offering. But the lama is nevertheless supposed to carry out the benevolent action of a bodhisattva for the good of all beings without the expectation or desire of payment in return. Thus he may have bridges built across rivers to help travellers, or game reserves made to protect animals from hunting. His primary return to humanity, from his point of view at least, should be his work to attain enlightenment for the good of all beings. These various aims may conflict, since if the lama gives up all his time to satisfying the needs of his lay followers, he
will be able to pay little attention to his own meditation, a dilemma that comes out clearly in the biography of one of Snellgrove's Dolpo lamas. The lama may spend much of his time on the government of his own estate or even in involvement in the politics of the Lhasa govern-
ment or other superordinate authority; or he may choose to leave even the management of his estates to monastic officials and to concentrate on religious activities.

The lama in society.

Having pursued the transactions between laymen, monks and lamas this far, it is worth discussing the nature of the reciprocity involved in these exchanges. Do the lamas act out of a Maussian *quid pro quo*, or are they beyond the mundane world of social interaction in which gifts demand later return?

Here again we meet with a certain degree of paradox. Reciprocity is a constant theme in interactions with monks or lamas. You must make offerings to a lama before he gives you an initiation, even if the offering is only the symbolic offering of a mandala visualization. Mila Rap offered body, speech and mind to his lama Marpa in return for teaching, food and clothing; but Marpa for years refused to give him the initia-
tions he desired on the grounds that he had no material offerings to give him. Marpa and the other Tibetans who went to India to acquire teachings or bring back Indian teachers went laden with gold to give their teachers as fees for teaching or inducement to come to Tibet. And Beyer mentions how the idea of reciprocity is underlined when one pays a monastery to perform a ritual on one's behalf; it is considered important that the ritual give full value for the donor's money.

Yet while for the layman the reciprocal side of the transaction is emphasised, for the lama we meet with the reverse. As a bodhisattva he should act from the altruism of bodhicitta, not out of the expectation of return. Thus the bodhicitta vows include vows to avoid 'practising,
supporting or teaching the dharma for financial profit and fame, not to
gather disciples and followers 'because of wishing to obtain profit,
praise, love, security, etc., from them', and 'to abandon not giving
material aid to the poor and needy'. The lama is expected to support
poor disciples as well as teaching them, and this is what Marpa does
eventually for Mila Repa when his disciple has gone through his purifying
ordeal. In any case material offerings should mean little to him.

When Marpa offered his hard-earned gold to Naropa, Naropa gave it back
to him - or according to another version, threw it away - and when
Marpa objected, he touched the ground with his big toe and turned it all
into gold. Mila Repa went off after receiving Marpa’s teachings to
meditate in the mountains, living off nothing more than the wild nettles;
and while he attracted disciples and offerings in plenty in following
years, his songs repeatedly proclaim that he has no need of them; the
goods of this world are nothing compared to the treasures of the enlight-
ened mind. Even the teaching role of the lama, though it is the aspect
most prominent in the doctrine, is, theoretically, only incidental to
the activity of the enlightened being. As Gampo-pa says in the final
chapter of the Jewel Ornament:

When a man becomes a Buddha, habit-making thoughts and forced
effort cease for him. Therefore whatever is, or is thought to be, necessary for sentient beings happens all the time of its own accord, as is the case with Buddhas.

Or, to quote the incarnate lama Chögyam Trungpa Rimpoche,

Nirmanakaya is the fully awakened state of being in the world. Its action is like the moon reflecting in a hundred bowls of water. The moon has no desire to reflect, but that is its nature....You destroy whatever needs to be destroyed, you subdue whatever needs to be subdued, and you care for whatever needs your care.

The layman is involved in the reciprocal activities of social
relationships even in his interactions with the lama, and the lama -
insofar as he participates in social life - acts reciprocally towards
him. But the lama in his true, or ideal, nature is beyond all this.
He follows the forms and behaviour of this world; once more, merely as a teaching method, an upāya, for the sake of those he is here to help.

The doctrine of upāya is the final explanation, for the Tibetans, of all the paradoxes implicit in the concept of the lama; and it throws the final responsibility for upholding the contradictions on the lama himself. All the ambiguities and inconsistencies with which Tibetan Buddhism, like any other system in which holiness has come to be ascribed rather than achieved, is burdened, are centred, and resolved, in the person of the lama. He is man and god, within and yet at the same time beyond the mutual obligations of social life; a Buddha who, though he has no need to, performs the actions of studying and meditating, in order to teach the path to Enlightenment to the people of Tibet.
Notes to Chapter Eleven.

3. ibid., 13.
4. I use the present tense although with the introduction of a Western-style educational system among the refugees and no doubt also in Sikkim, Bhutan and Ladakh the association of literacy with religious contexts is becoming weaker. The textbooks designed for the refugee schools nevertheless contain a preponderance of religious material, including Jātaka stories, lives of Indian teachers and Tibetan religious history.
5. The Lhasa government had schools for training government officials, but these represented an exception.
8. Snellgrove (1961) remarks upon this in Nepal. Also see the next reference.
10. cf. Chapter Eight, note 14; Chapter One, note 19.
12. cf. the letter of recognition (ngos 'dzin) quoted in Chapter Eight.
15. ibid., I, 112-113. cf. also Trungpa Rinpoché's account of having to go on a lengthy tour round his district rather than being able to study with his lama (Trungpa 1971a:69).
16. The reference is to Nauss 1954.
18. Perrin 1972:501, 504, 506. There is also a vow 'to abandon not repaying the kindness others have shown you', ibid. 506.
APPENDIX ONE

Tibetan quotations.

Chapter Three

Page 71 (Note 14): phyogs bcu dus gsun gyi de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs yon tan 'phrin las thams cad gcig tu bs dus pa'i ngo bor gyur pa/ chos kyi phung po stong phrag brgyad cu rtsa bzhis 'byung gnas/ /'phags pa'i dge 'dun thams cad kyi mnga' bdag /'drin can rtsa ba dang brgyud par bcas pa'i dpal ldan bla ma dam pa rnam las la skyabs su mchi'o/

Page 74 (Note 25): dal 'byor rnyed dka' tshe la long med pa/ /yid la goms pas tshe 'di'i snang shas ldog /las 'bras mi bslu 'khor ba'i sdu bsgang rnam/ /yang yang bsam na phyi ma'i snang shas ldog

Page 74 (Note 26): shugs drag chu bo bzhis yi rgyun gyis khyer/ /bzlog dka' las kyi 'ching ba dam pos bsdam/ /bdag 'dzin lcags kyi dra ba'i shuhs su tshud/ /ma rig mna pa'i smag chen kun nas 'thibs/ /'mu med srid par skye zhiig skye ba ru/ /sdu bsgang gsun gyis rgyun chad med par mnar/ /gnas skabs 'di' drer gyur pa'i ma rnam kyis/ /ngang tshul bsams nas sms mchog bskyed par mdvod/

Page 75 (Note 27): gnas lugs rtogs pa'i shes rab mi ldan na/ /nges 'byung byang chub sms la goms byas kyang/ /srid pa'i rtsa ba bcad pa mi nus pas/ /de phyir rten 'brel rtoqs pa'i thabs la 'bad/

Page 76 (Note 30): thabs dang bral ba'i shes rab dang/ /shes rab bral ba'i thabs dag kyang/ /gang phyir 'ching ba zhes gsungs pa/ /de phyir gnyis ka spang mi bya/ ... shes rab pha rol phyin spangs pa'i/ /sbyin pa'i pha rol phyin la sogs/ /dge ba'i tshogs rnam thams cad dag /rgyal ba rnam kyi thabs su bshad/ ... 'phung po khams dang skye mched rnam/ /skye ba med par rtoqs rgyur pa'i/ /rang bzhin stong nying shes pa ni/ /shes rab ces mi yong su bshad/

Page 83 (Note 49): yod med blang dor ci la yang mi sms par 'bad rtsol dang bral bar bzhag go /de ltar yang tai los/ mi mno mi bsam mi shes shing/ mi sgm mi dpyad rang sar bzhag

Page 83 (Note 50): chos gang la yang blang ba'am/ gzung ba'am/ dor ba ma mchis pa de shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa sgm pa lags so/ /gang ci la yang mi gnas pa de nyyid shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa sgm pa lags so/ /gang la yang mi sms rnam par mi dmigs pa de shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa sgm pa lags so/

Page 83 (Note 53): 'o na ngo bo'am sms nyyid gcig pur sgm pa la de dag thams cad 'dus na/ thabs kyi rim pa mang du gsungs pa dag 'byung ba ci ltar yin zhe na/ gnas lugs la rmonas pa'i skal pa dman pa rnam khrid
pam phyir te/ ye shes snang pa rgyan gyi mdo las/ rgyu rkyen 'brel bar bshad pa dang/ /rim par 'jug pa bstan pa yang/ /rmongs pa rnams la thabs su gsungs/ /lshun gysis grub pa'i chos 'di la/ /rim gysis sbyong ba ci zhig yod/ ces gsungs so/

Chapter Six

Page 141 (Note 28): ma nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i sems can thams cad bla ma sangs rgyas chos kyi sku la skyabs su mchi'o/ /ma nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i sems can thams cad bla ma longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku la skyabs su mchi'o/ /ma nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i sems can thams cad bla ma thugs rje sprul pa'i sku la skyabs su mchi'o/ /ma nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i sems can thams cad bla ma sangs rgyas rin po che la skyabs su mchi'o/

Page 141 (Note 29): mchod zhing 'khor rnams khyab bdag bla mar thim/ /bla ma 'od zhu bdag dang gcig tu 'dres/ /mchod bya mchod byed mchod yul mnyam pa nyid/ /rang grol bde ba che 'di mchod pa'i phul/

Page 142 (Note 32): sgrub brgyud kyi gangs ri chags pa'i sa/ /nub la phyi gangs kyi ra ba ru/ /dbang phyug mi la ras pa la gsol ba 'debs/ /sens nyid lhan skyes kyi rang ngo 'phrod pa dang/ /lam gang shar la spang blang med pa ru/ /snang srid sku gsun du 'char bar byin gysis rlobs/

Page 142 (Note 33): ji ltar chu la chu bshag ltar/ /bdag dang gnyis med gcig gyur nas/ /sa bcu'i mgon po 'grub gyur cig

Pages 144-5 (Note 40): chos rnams thams cad sku gsun rang bzhiin la/ /gnyis med klong yangs chen por phyag 'tshal lo/ ma bcos mtha' bral mnyam pa nyid kyiis mchod/ rang sens sangs rgyas ma rtogs mthol lo bshags/ gnas langs rang rig ngan du yi rang ngo/ 'dzin med khyab brdal rol pa'i chos 'khor bskor/ 'khor 'das bdyer med bzhugs par gsal ba 'debs/ chos bdyings lhun grub chen por bongo bar bya/ zung 'jug kun khyab bde chen mchog thob shog/

Chapter Eight

Page 201 (Note 32): ...shel dkar gyi 'phreng ba phul byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed pa

Page 201 (Note 34): mdo smad btsong khor rje btsun 'jam dbyangs kyi rnam par byon te shing mo a chos su sku 'khrungs pa/

Page 201 (Note 35): chos rje don grub rin chen la sras thog mar phul ba/

Page 202 (Note 38): rnya: 'bri gung pa'i 'bul dpon dang sdebs nas dbus su thog mar byon pa/
   ta: 'bri gung du phebs nas rgya ngyer gnyis la (?) sogs la sems skyed sogs gsan/
   da: dben gnas chos rdzong du dpal ldan bla mar 'jam dbyangs kyi rjes gnang zhus pa/
   pa: zha lu rin chen rgyal ba la bde mchog maitri bcu gsum sogs gsan pa/ (no label): sa skya... skor mdzad
Chapter Eleven

Page 263 (Note 20): sangs rgyas pa'i tshe rnam rtog dang 'bad rtsol mi mnga' bar 'dug pas/ sens can gyi don cang 'byung ngam snyam na/ sangs rgyas la 'bad rtsol dang rnam rtog mi mnga' bzhin du/ 'gro don lhun grub dang rgyun mi chad par 'byung ngo/
APPENDIX TWO

Glossary.

*ABHIDHARMA  mgon pa
The philosophy of the Hinayāna schools, in which the apparent world
is seen as being composed of momentary point events of sensation,
form, colour, etc. cf. Conze 1962:92-194, Warder 1970:218-224,
299-319, etc.

ABSOLUTE TRUTH  *paramārtha-satya  don dam pa'i bden pa
Truth as seen by an Enlightened being or Buddha. cf Chapter Three,
pp. 72, 75.

*ADHIŚṬHĀNA  byin rlabs
Blessing or empowerment received from a lama or tantric deity.

AMBAN
Chinese representatives in Lhasa. cf. Chapter Seven, p. 174;
Chapter Nine, p. 223.

AMDO  a mdo
Region of Eastern Tibet. cf. Chapter One, p. 27.

*AMITĀBA  'od dpag med  (=Amida in China and Japan).
One of the five tattvāgata-s of the basic tantric mandala; dwells in
the Western Paradise of Sukhāvatī. cf. Chapter Four, pp. 94, 99-100.

*ANUTTARAYOGA TANTRA  bla med rnal 'byor gyi rgyud
Fourth and highest division of the 'New Tantras' as classified by

*ARHAT  dgra bcom pa  (=Pali arahant)
A being who has achieved a degree of liberation from saṃsāra, short of
the complete Enlightenment of a Buddha. cf. Chapter Three, p. 70.

*ASURA-S  lha ma vin
A class of demigods, at war with the gods. One of the six possible
forms of rebirth. cf. Chapter Three, note 37 (p. 89).

*ATĪṢA  (*Dīpaṃkara sūṭa-śrāma)  jo bo rie
Indian teacher, active in Tibet 1042-1054. His disciples founded the
Kadam-pa order.

ATO RIMPOCHE  Ab khrö rin po che

*AVALOKITESVARA  spyan ras gzigs
Bodhisattva and tantric deity, symbolic of compassion. cf. Chapter
Four, pp. 98-107.
*BHĪKṢU dge sloṅ
   The highest set of Buddhist monastic vows.

*BODHICITTA byang chub sems
   Special motivational state of desiring to achieve Enlightenment in
   order to free all beings from their sufferings. cf. Chapter Three,
   pp. 70-71, 74.

*BODHISATTVA byang chub sems dpal
   Someone who has developed BODHICITTA (q.v.) and is working to
   achieve Enlightenment in order to free all beings from their suf-
   ferings. In particular (1) the Buddha Sākāyamuni in previous rebirths;
   (2) certain tantric deities (e.g., Avalokiteśvara, Manjuśrī) described
   as being of this nature. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 70-71.

*BUDDHA sangs rgyas
   An enlightened being (see ENLIGHTENMENT). One of the Three Jewels.
   cf. Chapter Three, p. 70.

BUDDHАHOOD *bodhi byang chub
   =ENLIGHTENMENT, q.v.

*CAKRA-S 'khor lo
   A series of psychic centres visualized along the axis of the body.

*CAKRASĀVVARA bde mchog
   Tantric deity.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
   or LHASA GOVERNMENT. The former administration of the Dalai Lama

CHAK LOTSAVA Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal
   Tibetan lama (1197-1264) whose travels in Nepal and India are
   described in his largely autobiographical life story. (Roerich 1959).

CHANGCHYA KHUTUKTU lcang skya bla ma
   A series of Geluk-pa lamas at Peking. Sagaster (1967) translates
   a biography of the first of them. (1642-1714).

CHEN-NGA CHHÖKYI GYELPO sbyan snga chos kyi rgyal po

CHÖJE TÖNTRUP RINCHEN chos rje don grub rin chen

CHONGGYE 'phyongs rgyas

CONVENTIONAL TRUTH *sāmyṛti-satya kun rdzob pa'i bden pa
   The 'truth' of phenomena in the apparent world, e.g. the law of
   Karma. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 72-75.

*DĀKA, *DĀKINI mkha' 'gro (ma)
   Tantric deities (male and female) concerned with the transmission
   of insight to the meditator. cf. Snellgrove 1967:175, Guenther
   1963:8 note 2, etc.

DALAI LAMA tā la'i bla ma, skyabs mo glog rin po che
   Incarnate lama of the Geluk-pa order and until 1959 head of the
   Lhasa Government.
DEITIES  *deva  lha
LOCAL (sa bdag, rul lha etc.) Supernatural beings associated with
Tibetan regions and geographical features. cf. Chapter Two, pp. 37-44.
TANTRIC (vi dang, bla ma, mkha’ ‘gro) Symbolic forms involved in the
procedures of tantric meditation. cf. Chapter Four, pp. 93-111.
PROTECTIVE (chos skyong) Deities mostly deriving from the major
Hindu gods and invoked in monastic ritual as protectors of the
Buddhist religion. cf. Chapter Two, p. 37 and note 3 (p.60),
Chapter Four, pp. 109-110.

DEMCHOG  *Cakrasāːvara  bde mchog
Tantric deity.

*DHARMA  chos
(1) The teaching of the Buddha; one of the Three Jewels.
(2) Law, religion.
(3) One of the underlying elements or components of the phenomenal
world in the *Abhidharma philosophy of early Buddhism.

*DHARMA -kāya  chos sku
One of the three kāya-s of the Buddha; representation of the single
nature of Enlightenment which underlies its various material mani-
festations. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 84-86.

*DHARMASVĀMIN  chos riċe
Honorable title for a great teacher.

*DHYĀNA  bsam gtan
State of mental concentration and calmness of mind, developed through
*śamatha, meditation; especially a series of eight states parallel
to the heavens with and without form. =Pali +jhāna. One of the
pāramitā-s.

DREPUNG  ‘bras spungs
Large Geluk-pa teaching monastery near Lhasa.

DROK-MI  ‘brog mi lo tsā ba
Lama (992-1074) whose disciple ’Rhon dkon mchog rgyal po (1034-1102)
founded the Sakya monastic order.

Druk-(PA) (KAGYU-PA)  ‘brug pa (bka’ brgyud pa)
Sub-order of the Kagyü-pa, founded by gtsang pa rgya ras (1161-1211).

Drukpa KUNLEK  ‘Brug pa kun legs
16th-century teacher and yogin of the Kagyü-pa order.

DUSUM KHYENPA  dus gsum mkhyen pa
Kagyū-pa lama (1110-1193). Disciple of Gampo-pa and founder of the
Karma-pa sub-order. Nowadays reckoned as the first Gyalwa Karma-pa.

DZA PETRUL  rdza dpal sprul
Ris med lama of Kham, b. 1808. cf. Smith 1970: 27, note 53.

EMANATION  rnam sprul, sprul sku
Person who is a material manifestation (nirmāṇakāya) of a tantric
deity. cf. Chapter Seven, pp. 153-156.

ENLIGHTENMENT  *bodhi byang chub
=Enlightenment. A state of being characterized by the possession of
insight into the true nature of phenomena, and the ability to help all beings to freedom from suffering. cf. Chapter Three, p. 70.

GAMPO-PA sgam po pa dwags po lha rje
Early Kagyü-pa lama (1079-1153), disciple of Mila Röpa.

GANDEN ' thugs pa dga' lugs
(1) One of the 'heavens', presided over by the Future Buddha, Maitreya.
(2) A famous Geluk-pa teaching monastery near Lhasa, founded by Tsongkha-pa. Its abbot is the titular head of the Geluk-pa order.

GEDUN-TRÜP dge 'dun grub
Geluk-pa lama (1391-1475) and disciple of Tsongkha-pa. Nowadays reckoned as the first Dalai Lama.

GELUK-PA dge lugs pa
Monastic order founded by Tsongkha-pa, formerly politically dominant over a large part of Tibet in the person of the Dalai Lama. cf. Chapter One, pp. 19-20.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY tshogs 'du
Assembly of monastic and other representatives which could be summoned by the Lhasa government in certain circumstances, and which elected the Regent for the Dalai Lama. cf. Goldstein 1968: 188-193.

GESHE NGAMANG THARGAY dge bshes ngag dbang dar rgyas
GESHE THUBTEN TSHERING dge bshes thub bstan tshe ring

GÖ LOTSAWA ' gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal
Kagyü-pa lama (1392-1481) and author of the Blue Annals (translated as Roerich 1949-53)

GODS
cf. DEITIES: also one of the six kinds of rebirth (cf. HEAVENS).

GTER MA 'discovered' texts, cf. Chapter Three, p. 67.

*GURU bla ma
Religious teacher, especially of tantric practice. cf. Chapter One, p. 29, and Chapter Six, passim.

*GURU-YOGA bla ma rnal 'byor
Tantric practices in which the student meditates on his lama in the form of a tantric deity. cf. Chapter Six, pp. 137-145.

GYALWA KARMA-PA rgyal ba Karma pa
The leading incarnation of the Karma-pa sub-order. cf. Chapter Seven, pp. 159-161.

HEAVENS *deva-loka
A series of material and immaterial abodes in which the Hindu-derived deities dwell. Rebirth in one of these heavens is one of the six possible kinds of rebirth, and comes about as a result of good Karma. cf. Berzin 1972:316-324.
HELLS
There are hot and cold hells, conceived of as below India and Tibet. Rebirth in them is one of the six possible kinds of rebirth, and comes about as a result of bad karma. cf. Guenther 1970:57-62, Berzin 1972:150-165.

*HINAYANA theg pa dman pa
For the Tibetans, a term describing those Buddhist teachings which describe how to attain the liberation of the arhat, not the full enlightenment of the Buddha. The motivation for practising them is to attain personal freedom from suffering rather than to help other beings. The historical Buddha preached these teachings to his human disciples, and they formed the basis of the eighteen Hinayana philosophical schools, including Theravada, Sarvastivada, and Sautrantika. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 64-65.

INCARNATE LAMA, INCARNATION
(1) A lama (or other person) who is a recognised EMANATION (q.v.) of a tantric deity.
(2) A lama who is a recognised REINCARNATION of a previous lama.
(3) A lama who is both (1) and (2). cf. Chapter Seven.

INSIGHT
(DISCRIMINATING) *prajna, shes rab: Insight which sees all phenomena in their true nature (void of independent being). cf. Chapter Three pp. 75-76, note 21, p. 88.

(TRANSCEENDING) *jñana, ye shes: The state of direct awareness resulting from the development of discriminating insight.

INTERMEDIATE STAGE *antarā-bhava bar do
Intermediate state of existence between death and rebirth. According to the Theravadins rebirth follows immediately after death; the Sarvastivadins and some other schools taught of a 49-day intermediate period in which the consciousness wandered as a being of the intermediate stage, and the Tibetans adopted this point of view. cf. Evans-Wentz 1960; Tucci 1949.

JAMGON KONGTRUL
see KONGTRUL

*JĀTAKA-S skye rabs
Stories of the previous rebirths of the historical Buddha Sakyamuni.

*JÑANA ye shes
see INSIGHT, TRANSCEENDING

JO KHANG
Temple in Lhasa, said to have been built by King Songtsen Gampo. Also called ’Phurul snang. cf. Chapter Two, pp. 45-46.

KADAM-PA bka’ gdmis pa
Monastic order founded by Atisa’s disciples in the 11th century; later absorbed into the Geluk-pa.

KAGYU-(PA) bka’ brgyud pa
Monastic order founded by the disciples of Mila Rapa and Gampo-pa in the 11th and 12th centuries; has many sub-orders, including Druk-pa and Karma-pa.
**KAILAŚ** _gangs ri ti se_
Mountain in Western Tibet, sacred to Hindus, Buddhists and Bon po. cf. Chapter Two, pp. 48-49.

**KALYĀNA-MITRA** _dge ba'i bshes grвен_
'Spiritual friend', teacher, especially of the sūtra-yāna. cf. Chapter Three, note 41 (p. 89) For distinction between this term and lama, cf. Chapter Six, p. 136.

**KANGRI TISE** _gangs ri ti se_
= Mt. *KAILAŚ*, q.v.

**KANJUR** _bkā'gyur_
Canonical collection of scriptures. cf. Chapter Three, p. 68.

**KARMA** _las_
(1) _las, action.
(2) _las 'bras, law by which past actions determine one's present state of being, and present actions determine that in the future.

**KARMA-PA, KARMA KAGYU-PA** _karma-pa_
A sub-order of the Kagyü-pa founded by Dùsum Khyenpa (1110-1193).

**KHAM** _khams_
Region of Eastern Tibet.

**KHE-TRUP-JE** _mKhas grub rje_
Disciple of Tsongkha-pa and famous Geluk-pa lama (1365-1438). Reckoned by Tashihdunpo circles as the first Panchen Lama. Author of Lessing and Wayman: 1968.

**KHUBILGAN, KHUBILGHAN**
(Mongolian) = _sprul sku_, incarnate lama.

**KHYEN-TSE** _'jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po_
A _ris med_ lama (1820-1892), author of the pilgrim's guide quoted in Chapter Two (Ferrari 1958).

**KLEŚA** _Nyon mongš_
Moral and mental defilements or obscurations (Guenther: 'conflicting emotions' and 'primitive beliefs about reality') which hold beings within samsāra and cause them to accumulate karma.

**KHÖN** _'khon_
Ruling family of the Sakya monastic estate and order.

**KONGTRUL** _'jam mgon Yong sprul Blo gros mtha' vas_

**KUMBUM** _Sku’bum_
Geluk-pa monastery in Amdo at the site of Tsongkha-pa's birth. Described in Filchmter and Unkrig 1933.

**LAM RIM** ( _lam gyi rim du bstan pa_ )
Presentation of the sūtra teachings as a series of stages, especially in the _lam rim chen mo_, of Tsongkha-pa and derivative texts. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 76-84.
LAMA *guru bla ma
(1) religious teacher
(2) monk or layman recognized to have great spiritual power, e.g. incarnate lamas.
Cf. Chapter One, pp.29-30.
(3) symbol of the 'teacher within'. Cf. Chapter Six, pp.135-137.

LANGDARMA *glang dar ma
Tibetan king and persecutor of Buddhism, reigned circa 836-842. Assassinated by the Buddhist monk Pegyi Dorje.

LA PTSE *la rtse, lha rdzas
Stone cairn relating to the cult of the local deities. Cf. Chapter Two, pp.39-42.

LAYMAN
As opposed to MONK, q.v. Someone who has not taken vows of celibacy. Lamas can be laymen in this sense. Cf. Chapter One, pp.28-29.

LHAGYARI *lha gya ri
Aristocratic family descended from the Tibetan kings, with large estate east of Yarlung.

LHASA *lha sa
Capital of the Dalai Lama's administration.

LHASA GOVERNMENT
Also CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. The former administration of the Dalai Lama at Lhasa. Cf. Chapter One, pp.23-24, and map, p.22.

LIBERATION *vimokṣa thar pa
The state achieved by the ARHAT, q.v. Not the same as the full Enlightenment of the Buddha. Cf. Chapter Three, p.70.

LINEAGE *rgyud
generally = lineage of teachings

MAD HERUKA OF TSANG gTsang pa smyon pa'i He ru ka

*MADHYAMIKA dbu ma pa
The Mahāyāna philosophical school taken as authoritative by the Tibetans. Two positions are distinguished, Svātāntrika (rang rgyud pa) and Prāṣāntika (thal 'gur pa); these are the fourth and fifth of the five schools studied by the Tibetans, cf. Guenther 1972.

*MĀHĀMUDRĀ phyag rgya chen mo
In the Kagyü-pa order, a tradition of meditation in which the meditator attempts to enter directly into the way of thought and action of an enlightened being. Cf. Chapter Three, p.83 and note 48.

*MĀHĀYĀNA theg pa chen po
The sutra teachings on the attainment of Buddhahood, as contrasted with HINAYĀNA. The motivation for their practice is BODHICITTA, the desire to become a Buddha so as to free all beings from their sufferings. They were taught by the historical Buddha to gods and nāgas who preserved them until men were ready to receive them. Cf. Chapter Three, pp.64-65.
MAITREYA  _byams pa_
The future Buddha. At present he resides in the Tusita heaven.

MAKSORMA  _dmag zor ma_

MANDALA  _dkyiﾙ ’khor_
(1) Symbolical diagram used in tantric practice, representing the palace of the tantric deity and his retinue of attendant gods. Cf. Chapter Four, pp.94-98.
(2) Symbolical offering of the universe, usually made with grains of rice. Cf. Chapter Six, p.138.(In this sense, usually _mandala_ in Tibetan.)

MANTRA  _snags_

MARPA  _Mar pa lo tsa ba_
Early Kagyül-pa lama (1012-1097) and teacher of Mila Répa.

MATUL RIMPOCHE  _Ma sprul rin po che (?)_

METHOD  _*upāya thabs_
Means for realizing Enlightenment in oneself and for teaching it to others. The Hinayāna teachings, morality and tantric ritual are thus all kinds of _METHOD_ or _upāya_. Method and insight, _upāya_ and _prajñā_, must be brought together on the path to Enlightenment.

MILA RéPA  _rje btsun Mi la ras pa_
Early Kagyül-pa lama (1040-1123) and poet.

MI-PHAM  _’Ju Mi pham ’Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho_
Nyingma-pa and _ris med_ lama (1846-1912). Author of one of the texts translated in Guenther 1972.

MONASTERY  _*aranya(?) dgon pa_
Community of monks or religious laymen; any temple with permanently associated religious personnel, laymen or monks. Cf. Chapter One, pp.28-29.

MONASTIC ORDER  _chos lugs_
The four main orders, and their various sub-orders, to which Tibetan monasteries are affiliated. Cf. Chapter One, pp.18-19, 27-28.

MONK  _grva pa_
Someone who has taken monastic vows of celibacy, whether of the lower (_grāmaṇera_) or higher (_bhikṣu_) type. Cf. Chapter One, pp.28-29.

MUDRĀ  _phyag rgya_
Hand gesture in tantric ritual.

NĀGA-S  _klu_
Indian spirits associated with water; guardians of hidden texts. Identified with the Tibetan water spirits or _klu_.

NAM TSHO  _gnam mtsho_
Lake in Central Tibet.
NĀROPA
Indian tantric guru and teacher of Marpa.

NGÖNDRO engon 'gro
Preliminary practices for tantric meditation. cf. Chapter Six, pp. 139-142.

*NIRVĀṆA-KĀYA sprul sku
One of the Three kāya-s; the material form of the Buddha visible to ordinary people. cf. Chapter Two, 84-86.

*NIRVĀṆA mya ngan las 'das
Freedom from suffering and from the cycle of rebirth. cf. Chapter Three, p. 70.

NYINGMA-PĀ rnying ma pa
The monastic order claiming to go back to Padmasambhava, the 8th-century apostle of Buddhism in Tibet.

NYÖ LTSAWA gnyos lo tsa ba

PANCHEN LAMA pa chen rim po che
Geluk-pa incarnate lama and emanation of Amitabha. Abbot of Tashilhümpo.

*PRAMITĀ pha rol tu phyin pa, phar phyin
Six (occasionally, ten) qualities developed by the bodhisattva, cf. Chapter Three. Often translated 'perfection', e.g. Perfection of Wisdom (Conze) = Prajñā-paramitā.

PEGYI DORJE dpal sgyi rdo rje
Buddhist monk who killed King Langdarma in circa 842 A.D.

PHEME NGANGDEN padma'i ngang ldan

PERFECTION see *PRAMITĀ

PHAWONGKA RIMPOCHE pha bong kha rin po che (skyabs rje bDe chen snying po)
Geluk-pa lama (1878-1943).

*PRAJÑĀ see INSIGHT

*PRATYeka BUDDHA rang sgyal
A being who has attained to a state intermediate between arhat and Buddha. cf. Chapter Three, note 13.

*PRETA yi dwags
Wandering ghosts who suffer through hunger and thirst. One of the six possible kinds of rebirth.

PU-TÜN bu ston rin chen grub pa
Lama (1290-1364) and editor of the Yanjur and Tenjur. For biography, cf. Ruegg 1966.
RALUNG  rva lung
Name of Druk-pa monastery of married religious laymen.
RALUNG, HOUSE OF: The family of abbots of this monastery, formerly
the heads of the Druk-pa order.

REBIRTHS, SIX KINDS OF
Gods, asura-s, men, animals, preta-s, in hell.

REFUGE (TAKING OF) *saraa skyabs 'gro
Taking refuge in or going for protection to the Three Jewels (Buddha,
Dharma and Sangha) is a basic ritual act in Tibetan Buddhism. It
is regarded in the teachings as the foundation of the path to
Enlightenment, cf. Chapter Three.

REGENT royal tshab
Lama administering a monastic estate or government for a ruling in-
carnate lama during his minority, cf. Chapter Seven, p. 175.
cf. also sde pa: lay ruler or administrator, sometimes on behalf of
an incarnate lama.

REINCARNATION yang srid
I use 'reincarnation' as distinct from 'emanation' to refer to incar-
nate lamas who are recognised reincarnations of a dead lama.

RETING rva sgren
Monastery founded by Dromtön (*Brom ston), pupil of ATIṣA; in
1056, headquarters of the Kadam-pa order.
RETING RINPOCHE, incarnate-lama abbot of this monastery.

RIS MED 'no walls'
Eclectic approach which developed among the Nyingma-pa, Sakya-pa
and Kagyül-pa in the 19th century. cf. Chapter Three, p. 68.

ROSARY, CRYSTAL
As given by Tsongkha-pa to the Buddha Śakyamuni, Chapter Eight,
p. 198. Rosaries (*Phreng bu) are used in Tibet as in India to
count the numbers of mantras, prostrations and other repetitive
religious practices.

*SĀDHANA sgrub thabs
Liturgy for evoking and identifying with a tantric deity. cf.
Chapter Four, pp. 107-109.

*SĀKYAMUNI sākya thub pa
The historical Buddha Gautama (lived around 5th to 6th centuries B.C.)

SAKYA-PA sa skya pa
Tibetan monastic order, named after its head monastery of sa skya
('grey earth'). Also SAKYA, monastic estate associated with this

*SAMĀDHĪ ting nge 'dzin
State of mental concentration and calmness of mind, developed through
*śamathā meditation. More or less equivalent to *dhyāna, but of
more general application.

*SAMANTABHADRA kun tu bzang po
The representation of the Dharma-kaya in the Old Tantras. Kun tu
bzang po, 'all good', is also the name of the Bon po sky-deity, cf.
Chapter One, p. 37.
*SAMATHA  zhi gnas
Meditation for the development of calmness of mind and one-pointed concentration.

*SAMBHOGA-KAYA  longs spyod sku
One of the Three Kāyas of the Buddha; material manifestations of the Buddha as they can be perceived by people of great spiritual realization, and as they are evoked in most tantric ritual. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 84-88.

*SANŚĀRA  'khor ba
The cycle of rebirth; the ordinary mode of human existence. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 69-70.

SAMYÈ  bsam yas
The first Tibetan monastery. See Chapter Two, pp. 46-47.

SANGHA  *sangha  dge 'dun
The Buddhist monastic community; the Bodhisattvas. One of the Three Jewels.

*SARVĀSTIVĀDA

*SAUTRANTIKA  mdo sde pa

SERA  se ra
A large Geluk-pa teaching monastery near Lhasa.

*SILA  tshul khrims
Behaviour, conduct, moral discipline;
(1) as one of the pāramitā-s
(2) as part of the triple training, see Chapter Three, p. 80.

SNAGGS PA
Lay tantric ritual expert employed for weather-control and other minor rituals. cf. Chapter Five, p. 117.

SONGTSEN GAMPO  srong btsan sgam po

SPIRITS, MALEVOLENT
I distinguish between these and the local gods (or deities), who are unreliable but will generally help men if properly requested. By contrast these spirits are uniformly malevolent; the dividing line is not totally rigid, however.

*ŚRAMANERA  dge tshul
A set of Buddhist monastic vows taken before those of *bhikṣu and of lower status.

*ŚEĀVAKA  nyan thos
A Buddhist practising the Hinayana teachings, to attain the status of arhat.
*ŚRI-SAMVARA  
A tantric deity (= CAKRASAMVARA)

*STUPI  
mchod rten  
A symbolic representation of the mind of the Buddha. cf. Chapter Two, pp. 52-56.

*SUKHAVATTI  
bde ba can  
The 'Western Paradise' of Amitābha. cf. Chapter Four, pp. 99-100.

*SUNYATA  
ston pa nvid  
The absence of real existence of the phenomena of the apparent world. As such, equivalent to prajñā-paramitā. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 70-75.

*SUTRAYANA  
The 'vehicle' of the sūtra teachings. cf. Chapter Three, passim. Also called Pāramitā-yāna, the vehicle of the pāramitās, q.v.

*TANTRA  
rgyud  
A class of scriptures teaching special methods for the attainment of Enlightenment. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 64-68; Chapter Four.

*TĀRA  
sgrol ma  
Tantric goddess. cf. Chapters Four (pp. 107-109) and Five (pp.121-122), and Peyer, 1973.

TARA RINPOCHE  
tā ra rin po che

TASHILHUNPO  
bka' shis lhun po  
A large Geluk-pa teaching monastery near Shigatse.

TENJUR  
bstan 'gyur  
Canonical collection of Indian commentaries on the scriptures. cf. Chapter Three, p. 68.

*THERAVĀDA, *THERAVADIN (adjective)  
A Hinayāna school of Buddhism, now practised in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, etc.

THREE JEWELS  
*triratna  
dkon mchog gsum  
Collective term for Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the primary objects of REFUGE (q.v.) in Tibet, preceded by, and all represented within, the LAMA.

TORMA  
gtor ma  
Offering-cakes made of tsampa (roast barley-flour) and butter, offered to deities in some contexts visualized as the deity.

TRHIDE TSUGTSEN  
Khri lde gtsug brtsan

TRHITSONG DETSEN  
Khri srong lde'u brtsan

*TRIPITĀKA  
*bka' 'gyur/  
The Buddhist canon.

TRUTHS, TWO  
Conventional and absolute. cf. Chapter Three, pp. 72, 75.

TSANG  
gtseṅ  
Region of Central Tibet.
TSONGKHA-PA  Tsong kha pa  

TULKU  *nirmāpa-kāya  sprul sku  
'Incarnate lama'. cf. Chapter Seven.

TUN-HUANG  
Oasis in Hsin-chiang (Chinese Turkestan) occupied by Tibetans in 8th century, and where a large collection of early Tibetan literature was discovered.

TUSHI RINPOCHE  'khrul zhig rin po che (?)  

Ü  dbus  
Region of Central Tibet.

*UPASA  dge bsnyen  
In Theravāda Buddhism, a set of vows taken by pious laymen. In Tibet, more usually taken as the first set of monastic vows. Also taken for a day as a lay religious observance, on the four *upōśadha (gsos sbyong) days in each lunar month.

*UPĀYA  thabs  
METHOD. Techniques used by the Buddha, and so by the lamas, to bring beings to ENLIGHTENMENT.

*VAJRA  rdo rje  
An important tantric symbol and ritual object, with connotations of permanence, indestructibility and perfection. The vajra and bell, as used by a lama officiating in a ritual, represent method and insight.

*VAJRADHARA  rdo rje 'chang  
The representation of the Dharma-kāya in the New Tantras. The tantric form in which Śākyamuni preached the tantras. 
VAJRADHARA DOCTRINE, that lamas are emanations of Vajradhara, cf. Chapter Six.

*VAJRAYĀNA  rdo rje theg pa  
The vehicle of the Vajra = Tantra. Contrasted with Sūtrayāna.

*VIPĀSAÑĀ  lhag mthong  
Meditation for the development of insight into the voidness of the phenomenal world.

VOIDNESS  
see *SŪNYĀTA

YARDOK TSHO  yar 'bro g mtsho  
Lake in Central Tibet.

YARLING  yar lung  
Valley in Central Tibet; centre of the early Tibetan kingdom.

YESHE GYENTSEN  ye shes rgyal mtshan  
VI DAM  *iṣṭadevataṃ
Personal tantric deity. A tantric meditator takes a particular deity, such as Tārā or Cakrasaṃvara, as his VI dam and centres his practice about this deity.

*YOGĀČĀRA  sems tsam pa

Note: This glossary has two functions; to give short explanations and, where appropriate, references, for terms used frequently in the text, and to give correct Tibetan spellings for Tibetan words given in a rough phonetic transcription. As in the text (cf. Preface, page ix) Sanskrit is indicated by a preceding *, and Tibetan in strict transliteration is underlined. The Sanskrit equivalents are as accurate as possible, but I do not know Sanskrit so some errors are likely here, as in the main text.
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