

Reprinted From

The Visva-Bharati Quarterly.

Vol. IV, Part IV, New Series,

February 1939—April 1939.



TWO LAMAIST PANTHEONS

BY

GEORGE ROERICH

TWO LAMAIST PANTHEONS

A NEW WORK ON TIBETAN ICONOGRAPHY

George Roerich

TIBETOLOGISTS and students of Buddhist Art and Iconography will be grateful to Professor Walter E. Clark for editing two most useful Tibetan Buddhist Pantheons, discovered in Peiping by the late Baron A. von Stael-Holstein, the eminent Russian indologist.* The work is an outstanding contribution in the field of Tibetan iconography and supplements the already well-known collections of *sNar-thañ* and the so-called Pantheon of the *lCañ-skyā Xutugtu Rol-pa'i rDo-rje* ((*Lalitavajra*) which was edited by Dr. S. d'Oldenburg in the *Bibliotheca Buddhica* (volume V of the Series, St. Petersburg, 1903), and described by E. Pander and Albert Gruenwedel in "Das Pantheon des Tschangtscha. Hutuktu" (*Veroeffentlichungen aus dem Kgl. Museum fuer Voelkerkunde in Berlin*, I, 1/2, 1890), and in "Das Lamaistische Pantheon" (*Zeitschrift fuer Ethnologie*, 1889).† The present publication gives a complete reproduction of 766 bronze images preserved in the *Pao-hsiang Lou* Temple, situated in the garden of the *Tz'u-ning* Palace (built in 1652/3) in the Forbidden City of Peiping, and of a series of 360 images of a manuscript entitled *Chu Fo P'u-sa Sheng Hsiang Tsan*, now in the National Library of Peiping. Baron A. von Stael-Holstein expressed the opinion that the Pantheon of the *Chu Fo P'u-sa Sheng Hsiang Tsan* was prepared for the Second *lCañ-skyā Rin-po-che Lalitavajra*, and indeed this Pantheon has many points in common with the Pantheon edited by Oldenburg (See A. von Stael-Holstein: "Remarks on the *Chu Fo P'u-sa Sheng Hsiang Tsan*", *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Library*, vol. I, Peiping, 1928). The Editor of the Pantheon has taken great care in restoring the Sanskrit names, and the Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan Indexes

* Walter Eugene Clark: *Two Lamaist Pantheons*, Vol. I—Introduction and Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan Indexes, pp. XXIV, 1-169; Vol. II—Plates, pp. 1-314. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1937.

† *lCañ-skyā thams-cad mkhyen-pa Rol-pa'i rDo-rje* or the Second *lCañ-skyā Rin-po-che Ye-śes bstan-pa'i sgron-me*, 1717-1786, who by order of the Emperor *Ch'ien-lung* supervised about 1742/3 a translation of the Tibetan *bsTan-'gyur* into Mongolian. The *lCañ-skyā* Lamas are considered to be reincarnations of *Śākya-Ye-śes* (born in 1354, died in Peiping in 1435), a disciple of *Tsoñ-kha-pa*. Their original seat (*gdan-sa*) was the *dGon-luñ* Monastery in North Amdo in the North East of Tibet. Until the present Sino-Japanese War, their usual residence was in Peiping.

form a useful appendix. A few of the names are doubtful and this has been noted by the Editor, but in general the reconstructions are very accurate.

The bronze images found in the *Pao-hsiang Lou* Temple bear on their pedestals inscriptions in Chinese, which greatly help the identification of the deities represented. These bronze images are the work of that school of craftsmen, which flourished in the XVII-XVIII-th centuries in Peiping, *Wu-T'ai Shan* (*Ri-bo rTse-lña* in the Shan-hsi Province), and *Dolön-nür* (or Lama Miao in Chakhar in Inner Mongolia), and which still produces bronze images of mediocre craftsmanship, so unlike the eighteenth century masterpieces.

The 360 images of the Lamaist Pantheon contained in the *Chu Fo P'u-sa Sheng Hsiang Tsan* are arranged into groups, as is usually the case in such collections. First come the *ñion-gyi mkhan-po-rnams* (*pūrva-upādhyāyāh*) or "Teachers of the Past", beginning with Nāgārjuna (*kLu-sgrub*) and ending with Śākyaprabha (*Śākya-'od*), the chief expounders of the Vijñānavāda and of the Mādhyamika-Prāsaṅgika school, whose dialectical method was adopted by the *dGe-lugs-pa* school of Tibet. The founder of the Prāsaṅgika school Buddhapālita (*Saṅs-rgyas-skyoñ . . . bskyañs*) is however not included among the "Teachers of the Past". Then come the principal *mahāsiddhas* (*grub-chen*), adepts of the Vajrayāna (*rDo-rje theg-pa*): Saraha, Tilopa, Nāropā and others. Next we find the founders of the *bKa'-gdams-pa* school Atiśa (982-1054) and his disciple 'Brom-ston-pa (1004-1065), the founder of the *dGe-lugs-pa* school *Tsoñ-kha-pa* (1357-1419) and his two chief disciples *rGyal-tshab-rje* (*Dar-ma Rin-chen*, 1364-1432) and *mKhas-grub-rje* (*dGe-legs dPal-bzañ*, 1385-1438), *dGe'dun-grub*, the First Dalai Lama (1391-1475), the First *Pañ-chen bLa-ma bLo-bzañ Chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan* (1571-1663), the Great Fifth Dalai Lama *ñag-dbañ bLo-bzañ rgya-mtsho* (*Kun-gzigs lña-pa chen-po*, 1617-1682), the Third *Pañ-chen bLa-ma bLo-bzañ dPal-Idan Ye-śes* (1740-1780), and the Seventh Dalai Lama *sKal-bzañ-rgya-mtsho* (1708-1758). The Tibetan teachers included in such Pantheons are usually those, who wrote most on the methods of invocation and meditation on various deities. Such were the First *Pañ-chen bLa-ma bLo-bzañ Chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan* and the Great Fifth Dalai Lama who was deeply interested in the *rñiñ-ma* Tantras and in whose time the various propitiating and invocation rites assumed an elaborate form.

The next group of the Pantheon consists of the *bla-med lha-rnams*, that is deities belonging to the *Anuttara-yoga-tantra* system in their *yab-yum* aspect, beginning with the presiding Tantric form of *Vajradhara* (*rDo-rje-'chañ*). The *Anuttara-yoga-tantra* system in its turn consists of several systems, connected with the worship of various *yi-dam* (*iṣṭa-devatā*), such

as *Kālacakra* (*Dus-'khor*), *Guhyasamāja* (*gSañ-'dus*), *Śrī-Cakrasaṃvara* (*dpal-'khor-lo sdom-pa*), *Hevajra* (*Kye-rDo-rje*), *Bhairava* (*'Jigs-byed*) and others. Deities, having as their attributes (*phyag-mtshan*) the trident (*triśūla*, *khatwaṅga*, *rtse-gsum*), the cup made of human skull (*kapāla*, *thod-khrag*) and a human head (*mi-mgo'i phyor-ba*), also belong to the *Anuttara-yoga* system. It is interesting to observe that images of deities of the *Anuttara-yoga* system are not to be found on frescoes dating back to the period preceding the persecution of Buddhism by *gLañ Dar-ma* (838/9-841). Throughout the so-called "early" period preceding to the IX-th century one finds only images of deities belonging to the "lower" Tantric systems (*rGyud-sde 'og-ma*), such as the *kriyā-tantra* (*bya-ba'i rgyud*), *caryā-tantra* (*spyod-rgyud*), and the *yoga-tantra* (*rnal-'byor rgyud*). This often helps to establish the date of Tibetan frescoes. The introduction of the *Anuttara-yoga* system into Tibet met with considerable opposition, thus we are told in the *Pad-ma'i dKar-po'i chos-'byun*, p. 103b (of the Bhutanese edition), that the translation of Tantras belonging to this system was forbidden by order of king *Khri-sroñ lde-btsan* (804/5-814).

The next group of the Pantheon is composed of the five Dhyāni-Buddhas (of the "lower" Tantra system), of the thirty-five Buddhas of Confession (*ltuñ-bśags-kyi sañs-rgyas*), of several Tathāgatas, of the Buddhas of the Past Ages, of *Bhaiṣajyaguru* (*sMan-bla*) and others. Then come the eight Bodhisattvas (*ñe-ba'i sras chen brgyad*) in their various aspects, the various forms of the goddess *Tārā* and other deities of the "lower" Tantric systems.

The next group consists of the sixteen great Arhats arranged according to the Tibetan List, supported by the the *Upāsaka Dharmatala* and the *Upāsaka Hwa-saṅ*, and the chief disciples *Ānanda* and *Mahākāśyapa*.

The last group of the Pantheon is formed of the various deities which are usually classified by the Tibetans into one large group of "Protectors of the Doctrine" (*bsTan-bsruñs*). This group includes the *dKar-po brgyad-bcu* of the *bKa'-gdams-pa* school, among whom we find the Four Guardian Kings of the Cardinal Points (*rGyal-po chen-po bz'i*), several of the female deities belonging to the *bKa'-gdams sgrol-ma bcu-gñis* class and other *dei minores* of the Lamaist Pantheon.

It would be most instructive to make a comparative iconographic study of the existing Lamaist Pantheons and to attempt to explain their symbology according to the various philosophical religious schools. The available material for such a study is considerable. The principal religious schools of Tibet (*dGe-lugs-pa*, *bKa'-gdams-pa*, *bKa'-brgyud-pa*, *Sa-skyā-pa*, *rñiñ-ma-pa*) each possess their rules of meditation on the various divinities or *sādhanas* (*sgrub-thabs*) which form the main source

of our knowledge. Some schools possess large collections of such *sādhanas*, for example the *sGrub-thabs rgya-mtsho* of the *Sa-skya-pa* school. To this must be added the numerous *khrid-yig* or commentaries composed by various authors and which often contain accurate iconographic descriptions, prayers or *smon-lam*, which frequently include descriptions of deities and their retinue or *parivāra* ('*khor*'), as well as the so-called *tshags-par* or "transfers" with the help of which the Tibetan artist draws the images (See G. Roerich: *Tibetan Paintings*, Paris, 1925, p. 17). It must be also added that there exist numerous methods or styles (*lugs* in Tibetan) of representing a particular deity. For example the *mGon-po Phyang-bzi-pa* (No. 306 of the Pantheon) is also often called *mGon-po sde-lña*, because of five different methods or *lugs* of representing this particular Protecting deity: *kLu-sgrub-lugs* (Nāgārjuna's method), *zi-ba sbas-pa'i lugs* (Śāntigupta's method), *Phag-gru lugs* (*Phag-me gru-pa* was the founder of the *gDan-sa mthil* Monastery), *zan-lugs* (*zan-rGyal-ba'i yon-tan's* method) and the *Yon-tan Phrin-las lugs* or method. The *mGon-po Phyang-bz'i-pa* (*Caturbhūja-Mahākāla*) is represented in No. 306 (p. 301) holding the curved knife or *kartrikā* (*gri-gug*), the *kapāla* (*thod-khrag*), the sword or *asi* (*ral-gri*), and the banner (*rgyal-mtshan*). There exists also another form of this deity in which the deity is represented holding instead of the curved knife or *gri-gug* the 'Be-ta fruit' ('*be-ta'i 'bras-bu*'), and instead of the banner the trident or *rtse-gsum* (No. 243 of the Pantheon edited by E. Pander is represented holding the 'Be-ta fruit, the cup (*thod-khrag*), the sword and the trident. This seems to be the correct form of representing this deity. No. 243 in the edition of Oldenburg holds the knife, the cup, the sword and what appears to be a combination of trident and banner. His *śakti* or *yum* is represented on p. 307 (No. 330—*Candikā-devī*) holding the bow and arrow (*mda'-gzu*) and the knife and trident. Sometimes she is also represented holding a human head (*mi-mgo*). (See Oldenburg, No. 244.) The goddess belongs to the *bKa'-gdams sgrol-ma bcu-gñis* class.

Gur-gyi mgon-po represented on No. 305 (p. 301) is not a form of *Mahākāla*. He is the *yi-dam* of the *Sa-skya-pa* school and is often called the "Leader of the Protectors of the Doctrine" (*bsTan-bsruñs rgya-mtsho'i sde-dpon*). His other name is *rDo-rje-gur*. According to some authors he has a *parivāra* or retinue of eight deities, according to others his retinue consists of twelve deities.

Each of the images in the Pantheon of the *Chu Fo-P'u-sa Sheng Hsiang Tzan* bears the name of the deity inscribed in Chinese, Manchu, Mongol and Tibetan. The spelling of the Tibetan names is not always correct, which shows that the images must have been the work of a Chinese artist not very familiar with the Tibetan script.

6219