

War Dance.

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The War-dance is a peculiar feature of Sikkim only among the northern Buddhist and is a testimony to the genius of one of its rulers. It is a festival to celebrate the Worship of the Spirit of the Kangchen-Dzod-Nga (Kinchinjunga), who is shortly called Dzod-nga, meaning Five Treasures. He is believed to be the God Kuvera (rNam-sras-mDung-dMar-chan Kuvera with the red spear). He is represented as being of red colour, armed and mounted on a white Mountain Lion. He is invoked as the War-God in Sikkim, and has to be worshipped periodically. He is believed to belong to that class of spirit called Yakashes by the Hindus Tib-gNop-sByins).

The display of warlike pomp and panoply is an adjunct to the worship of the War-God as a display pleasing to him, and is meant to foster the martial spirit of the nation.

But that the ceremony might not degenerate into mere demon-worship Maha-Kala, the Commander-in chief of all the guardians of the faith and Over-Lord of all spirits (e g., Devas, Yamas, Rakshas, Nagas Ghundharvas, Daityas and Danabs) is invoked by the Lamas to command Dzod-nga to guard the Faith and the State and to bring peace, prosperity and security to the people.

All the religious dances, and especially the War-dance, are physical exercises to counteract the effects of the sedentary life of the Lamas and of the gentry. But the War-dance, is not performed exclusively by Lamas but also by youths of the higher class, and the dance is meant to be a sword-exercise, where not so much the skill as the agility, training, discipline, energy, and the power of endurance are exhibited and cultivated.

The dancers are dressed as Warriors in helmet with sword and shield, and clad heavily to make up for the weight of the coat of the mail in which they should be clad. The silk sashes worn crosswise used to be worn even by the ancient warriors in battle. They were ornaments when setting forth and used as bandages if the warriors got wounded, and they were also distinguishing badges of certain bodies of troops under different leaders.

The periodical worship of the War-God was considered as contributive to the enchancement of one's luck, and the raising of the tone and the morals of the forces of troops, which the State possesses.

The War-dance is said to have been originated in Sikkim by the Maharaja Chagdor Namgyal, who also invented the Lepcha character.

It aimed at combining physical training with a feeling of religious zeal and exultation. So the dancers have to observe celibacy for the time that they are training and rehearsing and they are inspired with the thought that they are the objects of the War-God's delight, and the executors of his will which again is directed by those of the Maha-Kala whose wish is to protect the faith and realm.

So the whole ceremony is rendered impressive and dignified by religious rite which is proceeding during the whole time that the dance is being performed

The fancied victory and the triumphant cry "Ki-Kihuhu" is elicited not by any fight in the play but by the fancied victory of the "Executives" of the protector of the Dharma over the forces of "Maru".

There is in the dance a step called (rDorje-hGro-Dorjidros-Mystic step) by means of which the triumph of truth over evil is believed to be

accomplished. The herald's challenge evidently commemorates certain features of former events and is worked in here to keep up a memory.

The heralds then proclaim their victory etc.

Herald of the War-God with gun :—

"Fulfiller of Guru Padma's command".

"Destroyer of those enemies who are fully convicted of the ten sins. The All-Highest of the Guardians of this noble Rice country. Thou Lord of all the proud spiritual Beings known by the name of the Peak of the Dzod-nga (Kinchinjunga). Thou art the War-God of martial youths. Though invariably kind at heart as in the Dharmakaya. Thou flamest up in three fold righteous wrath with thy troops of Gods and demons and the eight races of beings mounted on the king of beasts the Lion, Rolling. Thy fierce and awefull three eyes in wrath, Thou sittest majestically on Thy throne. The Dzogchen and his saintly followers are my Guru. Who is victorious over the three lakos is my chief, My War-God is the Dzo-nGa.Tag-tse (the tiger peak of the five treasures). May my Chief triumph in all directions. May his throne stand as firm as a diamond for ever. "Ki-kihuhu".

"Herald of Maha-kala".

"The fierce proud and invincible Da-lha, victorious over all, rises today to perform His stern duty. Arrows, spears, swords, and martial-arms are turned towards the enemy flashing and glistening. Mountains of dead are consumed as food. Oceans of blood are drunk as draughts. The five senses, are used as guardians of followers. The organs of the senses are eaten as dessert. Should any love his life keep out of my way. Any wishing to die come into my presence. I will cut the red stream of life and offer it in worship. I am the blood-drinking, and destroying demon. Glory be to Maha-Kala the dead spirit, Ki-kihuhu".

The fight between the followers of the War-God and his enemies is supposed to have taken place and the Herald of the sword now comes forth to sing the praises of his weapon.

"Herald of the Sword".

"This blood dripping sword is the despatcher of lives. It is made of the material of the thunderbolt, welded into shape by a thousand wizard smiths. In summer it has been tempered in the white mountain tops. In winter it has been tempered in the ocean's bed. It has imbibed the burning heat of fire and the venom of the ocean. It has been dipped in the various poisons. Its edge has been ground sharp on the man-slaughtering boulder. It is more to be valued than the treasures of Jambudipa (The world). When waved over-head it emits sparks of fire. When lowered point down ward it drips blood and fat. When flourished around one's head it takes the foe's life. When struck against bodies it cuts them into bits. When used against spirits it subjugates them. It is an object of worship of the Guardian Deities. It is the terrible executioner's sword of all evildoers and foes. It is my dearest and most cherished friend. My name may be called the lightning-like life-taker. Ki-kihuhu"

The cry "Ki-kihuhu" and also "Yi-yihuhu" glorifies and delights
Maha-kala.

