

# BRIEF DISCRIPTION OF LAMAS' DANCE.



Originallay, the Lamas' Dance was a devil-dancing cult for exorcising malignant demons and human enemies. The Lamas altered the motive of the play to hang upon it their own sacerdotal story for their own glorification and priestly gain. Retaining the festival with its orgies for expelling the old year and ushering in good-luck for the new, they also retained the cutting-up of enemies in effigy; but they made the plot represent the triumph of the Indian missionary monks (Acharya) under St. Padma Shambhawa over the indigenous paganism in Tibet with its hosts of malignant fiends and the Black-hat devil-dancers and also over the Chinese heretics.

## ACHARYAS.

Now the Acharyas (male and female) act as jesters or clowns in "the Mystery Play".

## BLACK-HAT DANCE AND KING LANG DAR-MA.

In the ninth century, King Ral-pa-chen, the grandson of King Thi-srong De-tsen of Tibet, got the important Indian Buddhist sacred scriptures and commentaries translated into Tibetan by learned people—and he endowed most of the monasteries with State-lands and granted them great privileges devoted much of his time to Buddhism. His younger brother, Lang-Dar-ma (the incarnation of the elephant "Lang" who, after helping the three widows' sons in the construction of the great chai-tiya in Khatmandu, Nepal, malignantly offered a reverse prayer to harm the Buddhist religion), instigated and got his brother King Ral-pa-chen, murdered some time about 899 A. D. Lang Dar-ma then ascended the throne and at once commenced to persecute the Lamas and did his utmost to uproot the religion. He desecrated the temples and monasteries, burned many of their books and the Lamas with the grossest indignity, forcing many to become butchers etc.,

He was assassinated in the third year of his reign by LAMA PAL DOR-JE of Lha-lung, who has since been canonized by his grateful church, and this murderous incident forms a part of the modern Lamas' dance. This Lama, to effect his purpose, assumed the guise of a strolling Black-hat Devil Dancer, and hid in his ample sleeves a bow and arrow. His dancing below the King's palace, which stood near the north end of the cathedral of Lhasa, attracted the attention of the King, who summoned the dancer to his presence, when the disguised Lama seized an opportunity while near the King to shoot him with the arrow, which proved almost immediately fatal. In the resulting tumult, the Lama sped away on a black pony, which was tethered near at hand, and riding on, plunged through the Kyi-chu River on the outskirts of Lhasa, whence his pony emerged in its natural white colour, as it had been merely blackened by shoot, and he himself turned outside the white lining of his coat, and by this strategy escaped his persuers.

So the name of the Black-hat Dance is derived from this tragedy.

## SKELETON DANCE.

The enemy of Tibet and of Lamaism is now represented in effigy. An image of the enemy is made out of dough. Two cemetery ghouls bring out the effigy and lay it in the centre of the square,

## MASQUERADES.

The stag-headed Ogre, surrounded by his fiendish hordes dances and makes with dagger the gesture of "The Three" on the effigy. He stabs the heart, arms and legs, chops off the limbs and body of the effigy.

A troupe of monsters, with the heads of deer and yaks rush in and gore the remains and scatter the fragments with their horns and hands to the four directions.

And the King of Ogres (Ya-she Gon-po) as the God of Death; Mahakala with dark face and three eyes; Lha-mo Mag-zorma, consort of Mahakala with blue face Tsema-pa-red face; "Lung" the bull-head ogre; the tiger, the lion, the roc, the monkey and the stag, with the "Sa-dag" the earth master-demons join the monsters and throw the fragments of their dead enemy.

## A SACRIFICIAL IMAGE.

A three-sided image of dough representing the Mahakala (God of death) is placed in the centre the of square, to the top of which many threads and streamers are tied.

The remaining fragments of the dead enemy is placed in front of the above dough, which is taken in procession with monks, Black-hat dancers, brandishing weapons and firing guns and burnt it in a fire amid general shouts of joy an indication that their enemy has been vanquished and that all troubles and tribulations for the past year have vanished.

## HASHANG CHINESE PRIEST.

The Lamas return to the monastery for a celebration of worship. The Black-hat dancers again appear with drums and execute their manoeuvres, and the performance concludes with the appearance of the Chinese priest, Hashang or Hwasang (with two of his sons with similar masks Hashang was defeated in argument and expelled from Tibet by Kamalavila, an Indian monk. In China Hwasang is known as "the priest with the sack". He carries a rosary in his right hand and a peach in this left, while his sons play around him. He has a large belly and a laughing face, whose appearance is believed to be a sign of good omen, bringing in a new era of peace and prosperity and goodwill to all who happen to see him. for the coming year "and may this be so to all our kind friends and patrons". Tra-Shi-sho"

