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SYNCRETISM IN A SANSKRITIC RELIGION

by

ROBERT CARTIER

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Thesis Director's Signature:

Edward Norbeck

Houston, Texas

May, 1975
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It is a pleasure to express my thanks to the many individuals and organizations who have provided aid in one or more phases of this dissertation. Within Rice University two groups of people have played significant roles in bringing this work into reality. The first of these groups is my dissertation committee which was comprised of Dr. Edward Norbeck, Dr. Stephen Tyler, Dr. William Martin and Dr. Sueo Oshima. I thank these scholars for their prompt reading of the dissertation and I especially thank the committee chairman, Dr. Edward Norbeck, for applying his extraordinary editorial skills to the entirety of the dissertation. I wish also to thank the Program of Development Studies at Rice University which financially supported the research for the dissertation, gave me additional assistance and support while I was in the field, awarded me a stipend for the period of time in which the dissertation was written, and provided secretarial assistance for the typing of the manuscript. Dr. James Land, Janet Puestow, and Lois Thomas were the persons in the Program of Development Studies who made these things a possibility as well as a pleasure. Those people in Nepal who were keys to the completing of the research included the staff of the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies at Tribhuvan University and the many villagers in the regions where the fieldwork was actually conducted. I thank the director of the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, Dr. P. Sharma, for supplying letters
of recommendation necessary for obtaining extended visas for our stay in Nepal. It is impossible to list by name all of the villagers who provided the data used in this work, but I would like to acknowledge the help of Chope Tsering, Peme Galtsen, and Tsering Dargey, and to express my thanks for the kindness of the other Tibetans in Dhorpatan. Last of all, I wish to express my gratitude to the person who worked the hardest in conjunction with the research project, suffered along with me in the more difficult days in Nepal, and who shared the overall joys of the fieldwork-- my wife, Sandra.
NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTION
AND PRONUNCIATION

Throughout the body of this work, a standard system of transcription is used for all Tibetan names and terms. Although this system is rather difficult for the non-specialist, it is the only means of representing Tibetan words so that they can be found in Tibetan-English dictionaries. In this method of transcription, the phonemic system of Tibetan is represented by a romanized script. However, a number of the romanized letters are prefixes which are silent. These prefixes are ʰ, ʲ, ʰ, ʰ, ʰ, ʰ, and ʰ. Many Tibetan words begin with one or more of these consonants, which usually denote features of tone or articulation but sometimes they have no significance in spoken Tibetan. For approximate pronunciation, the prefix letters should be disregarded. Following other works which use this transcription system, the first sounded letter of Tibetan words is written in upper case whenever capitalization is required by the rules of English grammar. For the reader who wishes to pronounce the Tibetan terms correctly or refer to these words in a dictionary, I suggest the works of Jaschke (1968), Snellgrove (1968:278-9), and Millier (1956).
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In cross cultural studies of religion many systems of supernaturalism are described as including the features of both magic and religion. These systems of supernaturalism are said to fall between the polar extremes of religion and magic on a continuum of supernaturalism. The pole of religion is explained as a conceptual type of supernaturalism characterized by a belief in personified gods who are approached by acts of propitiation and coercion. The contrasting pole of magic is distinguished by the existence of ideas of impersonal supernatural forces that are controlled with manipulative techniques. This division of religion and magic is a conceptual framework for purposes of description and interpretation, and most systems of supernaturalism display the features of both polar extremes. This study investigates the interaction of magical and religious elements within a single system of supernaturalism.

When this division between religion and magic is applied to the systems of supernaturalism in South Asia, it is spoken of as the concept of the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition. Studies which employ this concept of traditions equate religion with the Great Tradition and magic with the Little Tradition. The concept of the Great and the Little Traditions differs from
the earlier framework of religion and magic in that it was designed specifically for the study of South Asian cultures. A second difference between the two schemes is found in the rigid separation made between the Great and the Little Traditions. Contemporary scholars who use the concept of traditions in their writings explain the systems of supernaturalism in South Asia as a separation rather than as a combination of the Great and the Little Traditions. The works dealing with this subject assert that the traditions serve different kinds of functions or hold that the traditions are examples of binary opposition. Studies which treat the interrelationships between the Great and the Little Traditions continue to accept the view of an overall separation of the traditions. Not one study describes supernaturalism in this part of the world as a syncretism of traditions.

Although application of the Great and the Little Traditions model has been limited mostly to studies undertaken in India, the concept is held to be descriptive of all rural areas which have been influenced by a Sanskritic tradition. The two traditions are said to result from the contact and superimposition of a religious complex such as Buddhism or Hinduism upon a magical system exemplified by village shamanism. If this view is accurate, the Tibetan speaking peoples of Tibet and the Himalayan mountain countries, who were subjected to both Hindu and Buddhist influences for over a millennium, should maintain a religious complex which displays two traditions. However, a review of the literature which describes the culture in this region fails to show a division of traditions
and shows instead a syncretism. The absence of two distinct traditions in the supernaturalism of Tibetan speaking peoples thus indicates that the Great and the Little Traditions do not always exist as separate systems of supernaturalism.

Anthropological research has never been conducted within Tibet but an understanding of Tibetan religion can be gained from historical documents which provide a wealth of information on this subject. Translations from original Tibetan, Chinese, Indian, and Persian sources have enabled Tibetologists to study the religion of Tibet and to write a number of worthy volumes on Tibetan culture and history. However, these studies do not make use of the idea of the Great and the Little Traditions for the reasons that most of these works are purely descriptive and were written before the concept of the traditions was popularized. Although these works do not deal with the religion of this region in terms of the concept of traditions, they do provide information that possibly explains why two separate traditions do not exist in Tibet, and in the other Tibetan speaking areas of Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, and India.

Before Buddhism spread beyond the Himalayas in the thirteenth century, a folk religion prevailed in the land of Tibetan speaking peoples. This early religion, known as Bon, consisted of a set of beliefs and acts, most of which anthropologists would classify as forms of magic. Bon remained a distinctive religion until Buddhist rites and creeds diffused into Tibet from India. Between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, Buddhism was combined with Bon to form one syncretic religion. The outcome was Tibetan Buddhism as it exists
today -- the synthesis of a Sanskritic tradition and a folk tradition.

By examining Tibetan Buddhism diachronically, it is possible to demonstrate that the two traditions were combined, but the historical sources fail to explain the manner in which they enmesh. Tibetan history clearly shows that a Great Tradition and a Little Tradition were joined into a homogeneous system and it also provides information concerning the events which fostered this syncretism. However, historians fail to describe the actual beliefs and practices of the new syncretic system and they do not tell us how the syncretic religion serves the Tibetan people. To answer these questions it is necessary to examine Tibetan religion as it is actually practiced.

Tibetan Buddhist practices were studied in the field from October, 1972 to March, 1974. This research was done in two Tibetan Buddhist communities of northern Nepal. After extended visas and entrance permits were secured in Kathmandu, my wife and I flew to Baglung District and there hired porters to carry our supplies over the Dhaulagiri mountain range to Dolpa District, about 150 air miles from Kathmandu. Upon arriving in Dolpa District, we took up residence in the village called Shar-tara, in the valley commonly referred to as Tarakot. During the five months spent in Shar-tara, I conducted a survey of the other sixteen villages in Tarakot to determine if these communities were suitable for the study of religious syncretism. While conducting this survey I observed the rite discussed in Chapter Five. Our time within the village of Shar-tara was spent in gaining a knowledge of Nepali, studying the local culture, and in the daily domestic life in the village. My
wife carried our water from the village spring approximately 200 meters down the mountain from our house, and we shared most of the other domestic labor such as cooking and washing. The aggressiveness of the people in Tarakot made life difficult, and when we had the chance to continue the research in a more promising region we took the opportunity. In March, we left Tarakot for Kathmandu, walking about 250 miles from Tarakot, through Tibrikot, and to the nearest road at Pokhara.

After walking for almost a month, we managed to get to Kathmandu, and had our visas extended for six months. The new site chosen for the research was in the valley of Dhorpatan, about 130 air miles from Kathmandu, where two groups of Tibetan refugees live. Upon arriving in Dhorpatan by foot, we found that the only available house was 400 meters outside one of the two villages in the valley. With some cleaning, new mud on the walls, and the insertion of a plastic window in the shingle roof, we made this dwelling suitable for our simple needs. I engaged a Tibetan to make some simple wooden furniture and I made a cooking stove of mud and rock. Just as we settled into our new home a sequence of summer ceremonies began at the temple near our house, and I immediately started to collect data on religious syncretism. The Tibetans in Dhorpatan accepted us very well and were extremely cooperative whenever I asked about their religious practices and other matters. We made friends in the village and rarely did a day go by when we did not entertain someone at our house. With only some minor problems of health, the next six months were extremely pleasant and the research
progressed very well. However, it was soon October and time again to walk the many miles to the nearest road and take the bus into Kathmandu for our second renewal of visas. We returned to the village in November with our daughter, who was born in Kathmandu, and were warmly greeted by the Tibetans who had befriended us during our first six months in Dhorpatan. Many of the Tibetans left the area over the winter months but I found that the accumulation of data now proceeded even more rapidly than during the previous months for the Tibetans had more time to socialize, and they accepted us even more willingly because we had a child and were staying with the more permanent members of the community through the bitterly cold winter. When the fieldwork ended in March, it was difficult for our neighbors as well as ourselves to accept the fact that we were leaving the life that we had made in Dhorpatan.

The understandings which I gained of religious syncretism during the period of fieldwork are presented as an interpretation of four rites. Data on three of the rites were collected by observation and interviews whereas most of the data on the fourth rite was gathered by a lengthy process of translation of a Tibetan Buddhist text. All of the rites are practiced by people who maintain Tibetan Buddhism as their only system of supernaturalism. The rite discussed in Chapter Five was recorded in Dolpa District of Dhaulagiri Zone, and the other three rites were observed in Baglung District of the same zone. Descriptions of the cultures of these regions are provided in the fourth chapter.
The Tibetan Buddhist rites that were observed in Nepal are representative of the "greater" systems of supernaturalism in which they occur and each of the rites may be called a typical sample of the religious practices performed in the two regions. Chapter Four describes these rites and the ways in which they fit into the total complexes of supernaturalism. The rites are not only representative of the systems of supernaturalism in which they exist but I think that they are also representative of Tibetan Buddhism wherever it is found. Tibetan speaking peoples in Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Tibet, and northern India appear to maintain a uniform set of supernatural beliefs and practices, and by examining the four rites which I observed in Nepal we can gain a general understanding of Tibetan Buddhism at large. From an analysis of these rites I attempt to show that Tibetan Buddhism is a synthesis of Bon and Buddhism or, in the terms of our theory, a combination of a Little Tradition and a Great Tradition. All four of the rites display a consistent pattern of interaction between the two traditions, and in this interaction, the acts and beliefs of Bon may be seen to support the moral edicts of Buddhism and vice versa.

One rite is an exorcism of a spirit being by means of imitative magic and Buddhist symbolism. This rite shows how Buddhist ideas of transmigration are reinterpreted by villages to fit local supernatural beliefs. When a villager dies, his soul may be reborn into another animal form; however, if the deceased has behaved contrary to Buddhist ethical standards, his soul may be detained in the human world in the form of a malevolent spirit. The exorcism aims to rid
a household of such a malevolent spirit and also to free the soul
from its imprisonment as this spirit.

In a second rite, a Tibetan shaman is possessed by a Buddhist
deity, and the central tenets of Buddhist philosophy are then
expounded by the shaman. A client who enlists the shaman's
services of divination is told that the future will be favorable if
he lives by the moral code of Buddhism. The shaman states that the
client should act according to the rules of the "Eightfold Path"
and the "Four Noble Truths" to ensure that his desires will be
fulfilled.

The account of the third rite is, to a large extent, derived
from a document, a Tibetan book of divination which I have translated.
This writing is a book of predictions, containing a set of instruc-
tions for its use and a long list of fortunes of the future. In-
structions in the preface state that one may gain omniscience by
propitiating and meditating on a prominent Buddhist goddess. Each
of the individual predictions direct the consultant to perform
Buddhist ceremonies which will avert impending calamities.

In the fourth rite, sin is expiated by techniques of magic.
Tibetans expiate their accumulating sins with a special, annual rite.
Prayers are first recited which say that sin arises from the failure
to live by the ethical teachings of Buddhism. Later phases of the
rite are dedicated to cleansing the villagers of their sins.
Treated as a form of impersonal supernatural power, the sin is
transferred from the villagers to figurines and an elaborate
structure made of colored threads, and then the thread structure is destroyed to remove the sin.

Within this introduction I have noted that I work with data which are historical, synchronic, from religious texts, and observations of religious practices. I use historical data to investigate the processes of syncretism which occur over a broad period of time. A summary of Tibetan Buddhist history serves this purpose by revealing social situations which lead to religious syncretism. Synchronic data, compiled by observation and interviewing in the field, are analyzed to facilitate an understanding of how the traditions are combined in daily practice. Through an examination of the four religious ceremonies, I try to demonstrate that the two traditions are bonded by reciprocal reinforcements. Religious scriptures are the usual source of information on Great Traditions and I use religious documents and scriptures in both the diachronic and in the synchronic portions of this study. "Contextual" data on three of the rites were gathered through observations of behavior in Tibetan Buddhist communities. I have elected to incorporate these four approaches in the work in hopes that the study would benefit from the merits of each approach and avoid the shortcomings of a single approach.
CHAPTER II

THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF SOUTH ASIA

Anthropologists consistently divide the religions of South Asia into two categories known as the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition. The transcendental or other worldly aspects of supernaturalism are included in the Great Tradition whereas the Little Tradition takes in the mundane or pragmatic elements of South Asian religion. This concept of two traditions derives from the writings of early scholars who separated all supernaturalism into the categories of religion and magic. When this scheme was applied to the systems of supernaturalism in South Asia, practices previously classified as religious were designated as belonging to a Great Tradition and acts which were referred to as magical were assigned to the category of a Little Tradition. As they are currently used in studies of South Asia, the two traditions are portrayed as separate systems. This sharp dichotomy does not accord with the original design of the traditions concept and it is not congruent with anthropological views of supernaturalism. I consider this strict division between the traditions to be a shortcoming of the concept and a defect in our understanding of supernaturalism in South Asia.
Derivations of the traditions concept

In a series of lectures given between 1823 and 1827, Hegel described the coalescence of primitive religions with the religions of developed civilizations. He called primitive religions "natural religions" and depicted the religions of civilizations as transcendent in nature. According to Hegel, the two types of religion were reflections of two kinds of "spirit," which he defined as an idea or plan which is becoming conscious of itself. Natural religions were said to be subjective spirits whereas the transcendental religions were said to be objective spirits. The two kinds of religious systems, or spirits, were brought together and combined through Hegel's famous concept of the dialectic. He differentiates the two varieties of religion by a set of contrasting features which may be expressed in the following manner (Fuller, 1969):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSCENDENTAL RELIGIONS</th>
<th>NATURAL RELIGIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Objective Spirit)</td>
<td>(Subjective Spirit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man relates to gods on an equal level</td>
<td>Man is subservient to infinite forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion involves moral ideas</td>
<td>Religion is amoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion is a personification of the state</td>
<td>Religion has no direct affiliation with governing bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A social elite communicates with supernatural powers</td>
<td>Practitioners may be of any social status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriented toward society</td>
<td>Directed toward the individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hegel viewed these two forms of supernaturalism as stages in the evolution of spirit. The changes or "becoming" of religion and spirit were explained as being an essential aspect of reality.
According to the notion of the dialectic, all change must be a synthesis of ideas and objects or otherwise change would be merely a process of substitution in which one event is replaced by another without a history of interactions. This dialectical scheme of evolution further explained that the natural religions and the transcendental religions were sometimes unified into single systems of supernaturalism which were syntheses of the two. Hegel illustrated syntheses of religions with examples from different cultures but his religious bias and the poor quality of his ethnographic sources greatly detract from this part of his work.

Nineteenth century scholars of comparative religion divided all supernaturalism into two categories. Tylor (1971) separated religion, with its personified gods and rational philosophies, from magic which he described as the fallacious reasoning of primitive man. Later scholars adopted this division between religion and magic with only minor alterations. Frazer, in the Golden Bough, explained that magic was a pseudoscience which was replaced by religion when man realized its futility. These early dichotomies of the supernatural were constructed within the broader theories of cultural evolutionism. In the first half of the twentieth century, the general frameworks in these studies became unpopular due to criticisms leveled against cultural evolutionism, but the division between magic and religion has survived as a major distinction in later and current interpretations of supernaturalism.

Current studies of comparative religion describe religion and magic as two poles of a continuum of supernaturalism. Religion is
defined as personified supernatural power which can be approached through acts of propitiation and coercion, whereas magic is seen as a mechanical manipulation of supernatural powers and beings. Goode (1951:53-4) provides a list of eleven contrasting characteristics which are used to differentiate the concepts of religion and magic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELIGION</th>
<th>MAGIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used for the general welfare of the community</td>
<td>Used for a concrete specific goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural is coerced and propitiated</td>
<td>Manipulation of supernatural powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophet-follower relationship</td>
<td>Professional-client relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groupal ends</td>
<td>Individual ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonies are carried out by groups or representatives of groups</td>
<td>Rites are performed by individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A single technique is used to achieve a goal</td>
<td>Multiple techniques are available for a single goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal involvement and the expression of emotion</td>
<td>Impersonality and a lack of emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonies must be carried out</td>
<td>The practitioner decides if a rite is to be performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonies are performed at certain times</td>
<td>The practitioner decides when a rite is to begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural practices can not be directed against society</td>
<td>Behaviors are potentially anti-social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices are ends in themselves</td>
<td>Practices are used instrumentally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presented as ideal types of supernaturalism, magic and religion are meant to serve as conceptual distinctions. The polar continuum of supernaturalism does not draw a sharp line between religion and magic. Instead it assumes that many acts and entire systems of
supernaturalism fall near the midpoint between the two extremes (Benedict, 1938; Norbeck, 1961). Supernatural behavior which maintain the distinctive characteristics of both poles are thus included within this scheme.

This conceptual division between religion and magic was first applied to the supernaturalism of South Asia by a group of scholars who were interested in the ways in which simple societies develop into complex civilizations. These scholars began their investigations by selecting a criterion which would distinguish simple from complex societies. When referring to these two types of societies, they used the terms Great Tradition and Little Tradition. They found that Indian culture could be categorized readily into these two traditions when the traditions were defined with the distinguishing traits of religion and magic. By examining the writings of these scholars, we can see how the distinctions between religion and magic were integrated with the concept of traditions.

The concept of the Great and the Little Traditions was popularized through the writings of Robert Redfield who adopted the idea of two traditions from the work of Turner (1941). In *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*, Redfield uses the Great and the Little Traditions as two stages of social and technological development within a general theme of cultural evolution. Redfield deals with moral sanctions in this work, arguing that ethical values degenerate whenever Little Traditions evolve into Great Traditions. In his treatment of this problem, he enumerates and describes several periods of syncretism which occur sequentially as phases of
cultural evolution. Criteria for the differentiation of the traditions are offered by Redfield in an article entitled "The Social Organization of Traditions." He states that the presence of writing denotes a Great Tradition and its absence is indicative of a Little Tradition. When the two traditions interact, the elite of the Great Tradition are said to use writing as a means of keeping the peasants of the Little Tradition in a subordinate position. Redfield did not view the two traditions as a sharp dichotomy or even a continuum; he writes, "It would not have occurred to me to refer to these concepts as ideal-types. Nor as 'polarities'" (1956). His interest centered around the ways in which Great Traditions emerge from Little Traditions and on the interrelationships which exist between the traditions.

Under the initiative of Redfield, the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago conducted cross cultural studies which examined changes leading to the formation of civilizations. These studies implemented the use of the traditions concept in a number of geographical areas. In each geographical region, the concept was modified slightly to fit the specific culture to which it was applied. The concept was used in conjunction with peasant studies in Latin America and Africa (Wolf, 1955; Fallers, 1961), and in India the concept was combined with the continuum of supernaturalism (Singer, 1972).

When the model of traditions was brought to South Asia, the studies and the scholars of this area were divided into two specialized groups which paralleled the two traditions. Among the scholars who studied South Asia were Orientalists or Sanskritists, who
understood South Asian culture as it is found in native texts, and anthropologists, who were mainly concerned with observations of daily life. The former were knowledgeable of the Great Traditions whereas the latter maintained an understanding of the Little Traditions; unfortunately, the two branches of study were seldom combined. Such a synthesis of approaches and knowledge was Redfield's aim in applying the concept of traditions to South Asia, but producing scholars who were expert in both realms or teaming the two types of scholars proved to be tasks which met with little success. The anthropologists observed the Little Tradition in the field; the Sanskritists read of the Great Tradition in the libraries, and both became continually more dismayed at the thought of wading into the other's formidable body of knowledge. This division between "textual" and "context" approaches served to change the emphasis of the traditions concept from a study of transformations and interrelationships to a study of sharply divided categories. The earlier separation of anthropologists and Orientalists continued, and the theory of traditions was dichotomized to fit the limited interests of the scholars.

Using the presence or absence of writing as an index, anthropologists separate the supernaturalism of South Asia into the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition. All supernatural practices associated with Sanskritic literature are assigned to a Great Tradition and the remaining supernaturalism is delegated to a Little Tradition. These classifications follow the assumption that priests codify their complex ceremonies and record their Sanskritic
philosophies in scriptures whereas the village shamans lack a sacred literature. By using the criterion of writing to distinguish the traditions, anthropologists inadvertently perpetuate the earlier division between "contextual" and "textual" studies.

Current applications of the traditions concept

The studies of the Great and the Little Traditions in South Asia may be arranged into three groups. Some anthropologists have focused on the rationales for separating the two traditions, using functional and structural theories in their interpretations. Another group of studies deals with the distinctive characteristics of one or both of the traditions. A small minority of the works have noted processes of interaction which occur between the traditions. Almost all of the works which concern the concept of traditions fit into one of these groups, and by reviewing representative studies we may gain an overview of the greater body of this literature.

Mandelbaum (1964; 1966) divides the two types of supernaturalism according to whether acts have transcendental or pragmatic goals. He states that the two traditions serve different kinds of functions: Little Traditions are directed toward the specific or pragmatic needs of the individual whereas Great Traditions are built around the general or transcendental needs of the greater community. Mandelbaum views Sanskritic religions such as Hinduism or Buddhism as being very different and separate from South Asian systems of magic, which are exemplified by the shaman with his feats of healing and divination. Transcendental religions answer other worldly questions with
myths of origin and social and moral philosophies. Everyday problems such as toothache or a lost cow are solved with the aid of local supernatnormal practitioners who can exorcise the spirits who cause pain and reveal the unknown. From this division of goals and functions, Mandelbaum (1964:10) derives twelve distinguishing characteristics for each tradition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GREAT TRADITION</th>
<th>LITTLE TRADITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcendental Complex</td>
<td>Pragmatic Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Functions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term welfare</td>
<td>Personal or local exigencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems maintenance</td>
<td>Individual welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate goals</td>
<td>Proximate means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forms</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal gods</td>
<td>Local deities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskritic texts</td>
<td>Vernacular folklore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclical rites preponderate</td>
<td>Cyclical rites; ad hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioners</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests as ritual technicians</td>
<td>Shamans who become possessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(also caretaker-ritualists)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office hereditary in jati</td>
<td>Achieved role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High caste-rank</td>
<td>Usually lower caste-rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients in jajmani or other stable arrangement</td>
<td>Clients not bound in relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige adheres to calling and jati</td>
<td>Individual prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplars of ritual purity</td>
<td>Demonstrators of supernatural presence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The separation of traditions is also supported by studies which use structural interpretations. The scholars who fall into this group have been influenced by the writings of Levi-Strauss (1955; 1963),
who maintains that binary oppositions are common among many aspects of culture. Leach (1962) contrasts the shamans and monks of Ceylon to demonstrate a binary antithesis which he considers to exist within all religions. A similar position is taken by Yalman (1964) who cuts the entirety of Sinhalese religion into transcendental and pragmatic aspects. Seen as a binary opposition, the division between the Great and the Little Traditions is viewed by these authors as a natural dichotomy of culture.

Studies which distinguish the two traditions usually make some reservation regarding interaction between them. Possible overlaps are mentioned by Mandelbaum and he gives the example of an individual who may follow the two traditions at different times. He also notes that in some cultures outside of South Asia the two traditions may be undifferentiated because of their extremely primitive level of development. Structuralists state that, in the minds of villagers, the two traditions sometimes conjoin at certain points. One such example is astrology. However, none of these studies refutes or questions the strict distinction of the traditions.

The majority of studies concerned with supernaturalism in South Asia deal with one or several of the distinguishing characteristics of the traditions. The characteristics of the traditions are often used in conjunction with some aspect of the social structure to demonstrate how supernaturalism is connected with kin relationships and associational ties. Berreman (1964) notes that the religious practitioners of the Great Tradition are consistently taken from the high status castes and that the shamans of the Little Tradition are
drawn from the lower castes. Harper (1964) discusses the ways in which Sanskritic notions of pollution serve as a means to integrate castes. In Cohn's study (1959), untouchables were found to lack the philosophical ideas of the Great Traditions. Gough (1959) observed that high caste Indians used these philosophical ideas regarding karma, dharma, and transmigration to rationalize their superior status. Kolenda (1964) investigated the ways in which low caste peoples interpret philosophies of the Great Tradition in relation to their social position. Many of the works in Marriott (1955) and Srinivas (1955) deal with the supernaturalism of the Little Tradition, identifying the beliefs and practices as tribal or Dravidian in derivation instead of Sanskritic. Scores of additional articles and texts approach the traditions in the same manner, that is, assuming the accuracy of the division and using it as a framework.

Interrelationships between the traditions have been studied by a few scholars. Marriott (1955) describes two channels of interaction between the Great and the Little Traditions. "Universalization" is the process whereby elements from a Little Tradition are diffused into the systems of supernaturalism of a Great Tradition. In the opposite process of "parochialization," the beliefs and acts of the transcendental complex are transposed into a Little Tradition. Although Marriott states that the two traditions merge, he does not go so far as to eliminate the overall distinction between them. Ames (1963; 1964) discusses the mechanisms which integrate the "magical-animism" and the Theravada Buddhism of Ceylon. He finds
that the philosophical ideas and deities of the Great Tradition often are brought into conjunction with the Little Tradition in efforts to cure maladies. But even though Ames observes that the traditions are frequently fused in practice, he states that the two traditions are never confused by the Sinhalese themselves. Obeyesekere (1963) holds that the Great and the Little Traditions can be found in combination within holistic systems of supernaturalism. However, in his study of Sinhalese Buddhism, Obeyesekere does not describe a unified system of supernaturalism but only "links" between the two traditions in the form of astrological divination and a belief in salvation. The most influential work of all the writings which treat the interactions between the traditions is the study of "Sanskritization" by Srinivas (1952). Srinivas defines "Sanskritization" as the spreading of the Great Tradition from one group and region to another group and region. He explains "regional spread" as a diffusion of traits into new geographical areas. "Group spread" is seen as the diffusion of the Great Tradition among members of one social group or caste. Srinivas does not elaborate on "regional spread" and "group spread" from the Little Tradition to the Great Tradition but he feels that his model of "Sanskritization" accounts for it. Sinha (1959) has applied the original concept of traditions, as conceived by Redfield, to Hinduism in an attempt to discern the patterns of transformation which took place in the formation of Indian culture. This evolutionary approach has been criticized for its reliance on contemporary studies. All scholars who deal with the relationships between the traditions of South Asia
maintain the underlying assumption that the two traditions are separate and distinctive systems.

Conclusions

From our review of the literature on the Great and the Little Traditions, we see that the dichotomy of traditions is essentially an elaboration of the conceptual distinction made between religion and magic by nineteenth century scholars. Both the earlier division of supernaturalism and the separation of the Great and the Little Traditions classify supernatural elements and systems into similar categories with similar criteria. The concept of traditions differs from the original theoretical scheme, however, in rigidly separating the two traditions. All studies dealing with the concept of traditions assume that the traditions are individual systems. Works concerned specifically with a strict division support it with functional explanations, asserting that the two traditions are aimed at different goals, or by arguments that the two traditions exemplify the binary divisions in culture. Anthropologists who distinguish religion from magic continually state that the division is only a theoretical device for descriptive usage and that the two types of supernaturalism frequently coexist in individual rites and in ritual complexes. The sharp separation of the traditions reified the conceptual division between religion and magic, changing the theoretical distinction into a strict dichotomy.
The concept of traditions has changed vastly since Redfield and others designed it. Originally a framework for investigating the interactions between traditions or a model for studying the emergence of Great Traditions from Little Traditions, the concept appears to have become a justification for the absolute separation of religious systems in South Asia. Redfield's approach was diachronic and he viewed the traditions as stages in the evolution of culture. Contemporary exponents of the concept treat the supernaturalism of South Asia synchronically and they rarely deal with events or processes which extend beyond their periods of research.

None of the studies using the concept of traditions analyzes the supernaturalism of South Asia as a unified synthesis of traditions. The separation of the traditions sets the two aspects of supernaturalism apart and impedes investigations which might provide understandings of how religion and magic are synthesized in South Asia. As it is used currently, the concept of traditions conflicts with our present understandings of religion and magic and it ignores the questions which it was originally designed to answer. To produce a study which might possibly overcome these shortcomings, I will trace the historical events that led up to a syncretism of two systems of supernaturalism and then I will interpret this syncretic religion as it is currently practiced.
CHAPTER III

A HISTORY OF TIBETAN RELIGION

Scholars who study Tibet use many schemes to organize the religious history of this country. Common to all these schemes is a distinction of four general periods: the pre-Buddhist, early Buddhist, a period of religious conflict, and a final period characterized by a syncretic religion. The pages which follow summarize Tibetan religious history in accordance with this scheme. A brief conclusion is added which discusses two patterns of syncretism which I have drawn from the historical data. In keeping with this framework, a description of Tibet's indigenous system of supernaturalism serves as an introduction to this history of Tibetan religion.

Pre-Buddhist Bon

Early Tibet had a form of supernaturalism which is commonly found in cultures with non-technological economies, family oriented social structures, and harsh environments. The customs of supernaturalism were magical and lacked the high priests, sacred texts, and moralistic sanctions which religions of advanced societies often display. Religious practitioners performed rites for those individuals who were plagued by disease, desired knowledge of the future, or wanted the blessing of a local deity. While in states of trance,
these practitioners exorcized malevolent spirits, divined the future with the aid of a tutelary god, or propitiated supernatural beings to gain their aid. Supernatural forces were thought to be the sources of all phenomena which were in some way unusual or unexplainable. Natural objects were often thought of as the abodes of supernatural beings.

Living in a world of tremendous mountains, violent storms, and extreme temperatures, Tibetan people were faced with powers which could be confronted only by supernatural means. What appeared as ominous or unique in their world was thought to be endowed with supernatural qualities. Mountains, trees, rocks, and springs were dwelling places for the Tibetan gods. Religious practices were designed to secure the aid of these gods or to avert their wrath. The most common means of controlling these gods and forces was by sacrifices and mechanical acts such as the trapping and burning of the supernatural powers. The Tibetan deities, known as lha, were thought to be the main cause of trouble in the human world. To avert ailments and misfortune, Tibetans employed specialists to control the lha and to determine auspicious dates and places for important human activities. These religious specialists were called Bon-po as they were adept in the art of performing sacrifices and invoking the aid of the lha.

The term Bon, derived from the name of the early religious specialists, has been used by recent Tibetan and Western scholars as a generic reference for the entire system of supernaturalism of pre-Buddhist Tibet. Another term, lha-chos, has been offered by
Snellgrove (1968) for the early Tibetan beliefs with the rationale that this term was used by the Tibetans themselves, but convention has made Bon the usual name for this body of supernaturalism.

According to the beliefs of Bon, the world was divided into three regions, each having its own spiritual inhabitants (Norbu, 1971). In the uppermost region lived the most powerful gods, known as the bTsan-lha (Hoffmann, 1961). The bTsan-lha guarded the high mountain passes, and in their propitiation, travellers who entered their domain added stones or a prayer flag to a mound of rocks, lhato, which stood at the crest of the pass. Closer to the Tibetans were the spirits who lived in the human region of the world. These spirits included: a lha of the soil, Sa-bdag; the lha of the family hearth, Tab-lha; lha of the rocks and trees, gNyam-lha; the lha of water bodies, kLu; and other lha for the cattle and tents (Snellgrove, ibid.; de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1956). The third region, the underworld, was populated by malevolent spirits. Norbu (ibid.) states that this lower region is populated by spirits called Yid-tag and according to Tibetan informants, the kLu and the gNyam-lha also reside in this lower region in the cold winter months.

Tibetans controlled and made use of the lha through offerings, exorcism, and acts of divination. Corresponding with the three regions of the lha were three types of offerings. The ancestral mountain lha received a "high offering;" the lha of the earthly region were given a "middle offering;" and the lha of the lower region received a "low offering." The lha who were found on the middle region received the most numerous offerings as they governed many of
the activities of daily life. A messy hearth, dirty fuel, or spilt food angered the household lha (Tab-lha), who was placated by the offerings of butter and roasted barley flour or the purification of the hearth by a religious specialist. A pious layman began every day by making offerings of butter and tea at the roof altar of his home. Whenever construction projects or agricultural labors were undertaken, Tibetans first placated the lha of the home or the soil so that these spirit beings would not take offense when their domains were encroached upon.

Sacrifice and offerings by fire were central elements in Bon rites, serving to appease angry lha or to solicit their favor. Chinese observers have reported that several types of animals, including sheep, monkeys, horses, and human beings, were the victims of blood sacrifices. In these rites, the practitioner disembowels the animal and scatters its blood in the air. Blood sacrifices of this kind were performed for the lha of all three regions. Fire was used in Bon rites to carry offerings to the lha, to transmit other objects and ideas to them, and to destroy evil. Norbu (ibid.) describes an exorcism by fire in which symbols were written on a piece of paper. Evil forces were invoked and commanded to enter the paper and then the paper was burned, sending off the spirit. Exorcism by fire was later incorporated into the rites of tantric Buddhists who came into Tibet from India.

Juniper trees were often abodes of many of the lha and they played an important role in Bon rites. Small sprigs and branches of juniper were offered to the spirits by burning them. The berries and
wood of the juniper were also used as offering, and the berries served a second purpose of inducing a trance-like state when consumed. Tibetan deities were represented by means of a branch of juniper to which a piece of cloth was often tied.

Troublesome spirits could be apprehended and subdued with a "god's eye" or "sky," known as a mdos to Tibetans, which acted as a supernatural snare for malevolent lha. mDos are made with two crossed sticks and woven colored threads. The simplest and most common mdos are shaped like diamonds, but more complex ones are in three dimensional geometric forms. Spiritual beings are visualized as insects blown into the mdos by the wind where they are caught in the threads of the mdos and then propitiated with offerings or brought into submission by techniques of magic. After these rites are completed, the mdos is discarded outside of a village or in some way destroyed so that the supernatural powers which it contains will not cause harm to others.

Tibetans believe that spirits can enter the human body and take possession of it. Symptoms of spirit possession include pain, disease, and general malaise and, according to Bon beliefs, possession can be rectified by a traditional exorcism of sucking. A short pipe is placed on the afflicted area of the body and a Bon practitioner sucks out a foreign element or spirit, which often takes the form of black blood. Another method of exorcism uses ransoms to rid a possessed person of a spirit; if the offering is attractive enough, the spirit accepts the gift and leaves the body (Snellgrove, 1967).
The shamans of early Tibet were characterized by their costumes and by their means of communication with supernatural beings. Costumes of Tibetan shamans included a crown with five lobes and a polished metal plate, or mirror, worn on a necklace over the heart. Their headdresses were adorned with shells, pearls, and long ribbons of cloth. These ribbons hung down over the face so that the expressions of the shamans, when they were possessed by a deity, could not be seen. Tibetan shamans, who were often females, communicated with deities by means of a shiny object such as a mirror (de Nebesky-Wojokowitz, ibid.; Waddell, 1956).

When the royal kings of Lhasa came to wield power over an ever increasing area of Tibet, Bon practitioners were given positions as religious specialists in the royal court. Bon was acknowledged by an early Tibetan king as the national religion and soon it began to take on the features of an organized religious system. Bon priests performed elaborate ceremonies for the welfare of the court and the country. These royal priests are described as wearing girdles of tiger skin and feathered headdresses, beating drums and carrying human femurs (Stein, 1972). The functions which these religious practitioners performed were vastly different from their shamanistic predecessors. Bon shamans continued to work their acts of magic in the rural areas outside of Lhasa while Bon priests represented the state-religion of the emerging Tibetan civilization. This division between shamanistic Bon and nationalized Bon occurred in the sixth century, immediately before Buddhism was introduced into Tibet.
The background and characteristics of Buddhism

Historical records indicate that Buddhism diffused into Tibet between the seventh and the twelfth centuries. First from Kashmir and later from Nepal and China, the doctrines of Buddhism were brought into Tibet by missionary monks. Tibetan students quickly mastered both the exoteric and the esoteric aspects of Buddhism, combining the new ideas and practices of Buddhism with the religious beliefs and practices of Tibet. Before discussing this religious synthesis, I will briefly summarize the religious development of India, since Buddhist philosophy and symbolism are best understood within the context of Indian history.

Archaeological investigations in India have revealed ancient civilizations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa in the Indus Valley. The religion which was practiced in these urban centers emphasized concepts of fertility and sexuality. Excavations at Harappa unearthed images of male and female sexual organs and a figurine of a woman lying with her legs spread and a plant sprouting from her vagina (Basham, 1968). These early symbolisms of fertility and sexuality later became important elements in the formation of Indian and Tibetan religions.

From the Indo-Iranian highlands, Aryan peoples came into India, conquering the indigenous inhabitants and impressing their religion on the previous Indian beliefs (de Bary, 1958). The Aryan gods were strong, aggressive figures, congruous with the warring nature of the people themselves. Chief among these gods was Indra, who had powers
over war and victory and who carried a *vajra*, the sign of lightning. Other prominent gods of the Aryans included: Mitra and Varuna, who controlled the cosmic, moral, and social order; Agni, the god of fire; and Soma, the god of sacrificial liquor. Agni and Soma played a vital part in the Aryan world, for they were the gods with which one dealt in the daily offerings. These offerings, made by Brahman priests, ensured the maintenance of universal order by controlling the primordial force of the universe—*Brahma*.

The philosophy or mysticism of Vedic times stressed *Brahma* as the principal source of all existence. Vedic philosophers thought that a person could join aspects of nature which were otherwise separated by gaining an understanding of *Brahma*. In the Upanishads, this process was described as the ultimate union of the individual essence with the universal essence, resulting in a liberation from *karma*, or the personal destiny determined by one's past actions. This liberation from *karma*, in turn, promised a release from the cycle of reincarnations, freedom from any future pains in the *samsaraic* world, and an endless existence in the great extinguishment of *nirvana*. Striving to attain these goals by uniting one's own essence with the universal essence was the practice known as *yoga* (Eliade, 1958).

Techniques of yoga include several methods, all of which involve means of physical and mental self-control. Yoga techniques can be divided into two types: those which afford a transcendent state through their physical ramifications and those techniques which emphasize the use of symbolism to achieve transcendence. The former type can be exemplified by acts of fasting or a disciplined focusing
of consciousness. Common techniques of the symbolic type of yoga are mantras, yantras, and mudras. Mantras are spoken syllables or words, used alone or in combination, for the purposes of recalling a religious concept, communicating with a specific deity, or simply for the pious nature of the act. The most common of all mantras is probably the syllable om. Mantras are sometimes given to novitiates by their religious instructors and in such cases the mantra is selected to complement the personality, abilities, and the particular philosophical interests of the pupil who receives it (Govinda, 1969). Repeated thousands and tens of thousands of times during meditation, a mantra may serve as a vehicle in the quest for Brahma. Yantras and mudras are used in the same manner as mantras, but they are images and gestures rather than speech. Yantras are visual objects or images consisting of systematically arranged symbols which are designed to convey a mystical or philosophical idea. Frequently termed mandalas, yantras are often created in the shape of a lotus blossom with four, eight, or sixteen petals. Mudras are physical gestures which are made with the hands and the feet during the performance of a ritualistic dance. The gestures also symbolize specific concepts in the philosophy, and in combination they represent the greater themes of the religion. Mudras, yantras, and mantras were developed during Vedic times, but it was not until the post-Vedic period that they were systematized and performed in common religious practices.

In the sixth century B.C., social upheaval and religious revival took place in India, replacing many of the Vedic gods with pre-Aryan deities and adding a sentiment of anti-brahmanical asceticism. As
indicated in the epic of the *Mahabharata*, this upheaval was probably fostered by the poor treatment of the lower castes by the Aryan Brahmins. Religious traits of sexuality and fertility from pre-Aryan times again began to dominate the popular religious beliefs. Gods such as Shiva replaced the deities who reigned during the Aryan leadership. Shiva was characterized by both the sexuality of the Indus Valley civilization and the aggressivity of the Aryans. Devotees of Shiva including naked ascetics who practiced yoga and magic and the more intellectually oriented followers who studied Shaivite doctrine. In addition to Shaivism, several other religious sects appeared with anti-social dogmas and ascetic goals. One of these religious orders was Buddhism.

Gautama Buddha, or Sakyamuni, was born in northern India as the son of the Sakya king Suddhadana. It is said that Sakyamuni forsook his royal heritage after realizing the pains and evils of life and became a wandering ascetic, studying under various masters. Inspiring others by his virtuous image, Sakyamuni attracted a number of followers who, after his death, ardently promulgated his teachings. These teachings consisted of a central concept and other more erudite ideas. The central concept offered a way to escape the cycle of rebirths which was set forth in the doctrine of reincarnation. Expressed in the contents of the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Eight-fold Path" the message stated that suffering in life could be ended by a cession of desires and an avoidance of extremes. Sakyamuni's other teachings concerned the details of this central concept and philosophical questions which previously had been posed by Vedic
sages. These latter teachings were the points of contention which split Buddhism into different schools of thought.

Early Buddhism contained a conflict between its philosophy and its sources of support. Buddhist monks did not think that they should provide for their own requirements by agricultural or other labors, and felt that the Buddhist laymen should support them. Buddhist doctrine denied salvation to all but the ecclesiastical elite. This arrangement lacked the usual laity-practitioner reciprocity of organized religions. Buddhist monasteries were economically dependent upon a laity who were condemned to all of the damnations of Buddhist hells and excluded from any possible redemption. The conflicts and tensions which arose from this situation resulted in a reinterpretation of Buddhist philosophy.

Between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D., reinterpretations of Buddhist doctrine were made which extended the idea of salvation to the laity. This reinterpretation popularized Buddhism by offering the masses a means of escaping from the cycle of reincarnations. Shortly after this change in the doctrine, Buddhism spread to a large portion of the Indian population when the Maurya king Ashoka patronized Buddhism with royal alms and advocated its teaching throughout his realm. When Buddhism was disseminated to the masses, the philosophies were personified in the form of supernatural beings and these deities were worshiped so that salvation could be attained.

Buddhism gained a pantheon of supernatural beings by borrowing deities from other Indian religions and through the personification
of Buddhist ideals. Hindu gods were adopted by Buddhism and established as protectors of the doctrine. These gods were accepted into Buddhism in a position subordinate to that of Sakyamuni and his doctrine but, as Buddhist iconography shows, the Hindu gods later acquired a higher status and were placed on an equal level with Sakyamuni himself. A new group of deities formed around the new ideas in the Buddhist doctrine of universal salvation. Enlightened individuals who denied themselves freedom from the *samsaraic* world and remained among men to aid others attain salvation were known as *bodhisattvas*. These saintly figures were models to be imitated and propitiated. The *bodhisattva* had such boundless love and pervasive compassion for his fellowman that he dedicated his life to the lofty purpose of serving humanity. This philanthropic sentiment, expressed in the Sanskrit term *bhakti*, was personified and absorbed into Buddhism.

At this point in its development, Buddhism was represented by three sects. The original school of thought, with its teachings of worldly rejection and individual liberation, was termed Hinayana and the later teachings which advocated the renunciation of personal liberation for the more altruistic goal of universal salvation became known as the Mahayana. The Theravadin sect included a third group of Buddhists whose views contained the philosophy of both Hinayana and the Mahayana with an emphasis on the idea of universal liberation. A major debate took place in the first century A.D. between the leaders of Mahayana and the scholars of Hinayana at the council of King Kaniska. The proponents of Hinayana accused their adversaries of misconstruing the concept of *nirvana*. The Mahayanists retorted by stating that they were no longer concerned with the concept
of nirvana but instead were dealing with the new idea of "voidness." They explained "voidness" as a bridge between the ordinary world of samsaric rebirths and the extinguishment of nirvana. The Mahayanists exemplified "voidness" with the image of the bodhisattva who achieves enlightenment but rejects nirvana. The bodhisattva exists neither in samsara nor nirvana but in the higher state of "voidness." With this argument, the Mahayanists defeated the Hinayana advocates and won royal sanction from the council. In the Mahayana form, Buddhism spread widely over India, maintaining itself for nine hundred years until the Muslim invasions destroyed it in the eleventh century.

This historical sketch of Indian Buddhism shows that it is a lengthy accumulation of elements some of which go back four thousand years to the civilizations at Mohenjo-Dara and Harappa, and that it includes ancient but sophisticated moral philosophies and religious doctrines. The majority of Buddhist deities and ideas originated in the Hinduism of Vedic and post-Vedic India and thus Buddhism can be seen as a prime representation of Indian tradition. In the form of Buddhism, Indian religion spread to China, Japan, Indonesia, the mainland of southeast Asia, and Tibet. The Buddhism which diffused into Tibet was altered by the personal interests of prominent missionary monks and characterized by the sexual symbolism prevalent in seventh century India, but its dominant feature was still the central theme of moral behavior which Sakyamuni had preached.
The period of religious conflict

Buddhism was brought to Tibet by King Srong-brtsan-sgam-po (620-650) in an effort to further Tibet's national relationships with neighboring countries and to increase the status of his country. By promulgating the religion which was practiced by his Chinese and Nepalese wives, the king attempted to strengthen his alliances with the Buddhist countries which bordered Tibet. Under Srong-brtsan-sgam-po, Indian and Chinese monks taught Buddhist doctrine, translated a few sacred books, and conducted ceremonies, but the new religion never extended beyond the royal court during the king's reign. After his death, Buddhism was not afforded the same strong support by the royal court until Khri-srong-lde-brtsan (740-c.798) came to power.

Khri-srong-lde-brtsan brought Buddhist monks to his country and defended them against Tibetan opposition. Possibly in an attempt to counter-balance the Chinese powers to the north of Tibet, Khri-srong-lde-brtsan requested Indian Buddhists to teach their wisdom to his people. The Bon priests in Lhasa were threatened by Buddhism and they violently opposed it. In spite of this reaction, the king brought to Tibet the renowned Buddhist scholar Santarakshita. The Bon priests made Santarakshita's life so uncomfortable that he quickly returned to India. Padmasambhava replaced Santarakshita as the king's official representative of Buddhism. Padmasambhava came to Tibet as a master of tantric Buddhism and expert in magical techniques. With these abilities, he symbolically defeated the Bon priests in a contest
of supernatural powers. Impressing the Tibetans with his exorcisms and successful battles with the local demons, Padmasambhava won the respect of the people and established the beginnings of Tibetan Buddhism. Together with the other monks who followed him, Padmasambhava founded the first Tibetan monastery at bSam-yas in 787. The tantric practices which were performed by Padmasambhava and the other monks at bSam-yas provoked additional protests from the Bon priests, who criticized the support given to the Buddhists by the king. Making public the strange sexual symbolism and necromancy practiced in the tantric rites which were carried out at bSam-yas, they created suspicion in the mind of the populace about the activities of the monks (Hoffmann, 1961). These acts forced a decision upon the king, who turned against the Bon priests and demanded that they convert to Buddhism, become secular citizens, or leave Tibet.

The death of King Kri-srong-lde-brtsan marked the beginning of a period of military and political degeneration in Tibetan history. His immediate successors were weak men who, in spite of their attempts to promote Buddhism, were overcome by the forces of the Bon priests. In 815, Ral-pa-can inherited the crown and actively supported the Buddhist monks of Tibet. His patronage of Buddhism gave the Buddhists a high social position and this angered the Bon-po. Ral-pa-can was assassinated in 836 by his enemies. The Bon priest, Glang-dar-ma came to the throne and viciously suppressed the Buddhists until he was killed in 842 by a ceremonial arrow shot from the bow of a Buddhist monk. With the death of this last Tibetan king, Tibet fell into an era of social rebellion which divided the country into a territory of warring states.
Tibetan Buddhism as a syncretic religion

The basic features of later Tibetan Buddhism were formed between 842 and the beginning of the twelfth century. The old religious system of Bon was drastically changed in an attempt to put it on an equal basis with Buddhism. Bon-po combined their own rites with Buddhist ones to form the "Nine Vehicles," or theg-pa dgu. Deities were taken from the Buddhist pantheon, renamed, and then claimed as the original gods of Bon. A different Buddha than Sakyamuni was credited as the founder of Bon and his date of birth was established as being several thousand years before Sakyamuni's. Many philosophical ideas were re-written from Buddhist texts with new terminology by the Bon-po and claimed as original notions. Buddhist monks used similar techniques in their efforts to win the support of the Tibetan people. From the eighth century, indigenous supernatural practices of Tibet had been incorporated into Buddhism but the rate of this borrowing process did not come to its peak until the tenth and the eleventh centuries, when Buddhists tried to increase their following by infusing Bon supernaturalism into their literature (Snellgrove, 1968). By this process, acts of divination, exorcisms, and healing rites taken from Bon acquired an important position in Buddhism. Bon and Buddhism, through this mutual borrowing of each other's traits, became so similar that Bon was recognized as another order Buddhism. Buddhism was revived in Tibet during the first part of the eleventh century and by twelve hundred it had branched out into several orders. In 978, Buddhist teachers returned to Lhasa, and by
1012 they had re-established their prominence in Central Tibet and had built the famous Phan-yul monastery. As additional monasteries were founded and more Indian monks came to Tibet, different schools of thought emerged, giving rise to several religious orders. The oldest order, rNing-ma-pa, retained the tantric practices and the magical techniques of its founder Padmasambhava. The Tibetan scholar Brog-mi (992-1012) managed to learn enough Buddhism through diligent study in India to establish a separate order known as the Sa-skya-pa. Another Tibetan, Mar-pa (1012-1096), began the bKa-rgyud order which specialized in the practice of yoga. Atisa, the Indian credited with bringing Buddhism back to Tibet in 1042, was responsible for the founding of the order of bKa-gdams-pa, which was distinguished by its asceticism and total lack of tantrism. Bon was recognized by this time as another order of Tibetan Buddhism. During this period of history, these Buddhist orders, with their vast monasteries and large populations of monks, became the loci of power and wealth in Tibet. The monasteries were centers of agricultural production, land distribution, and taxation, and they carried on the functions of a penal system (Carrasco, 1959).

While the Buddhist orders were forming in Tibet, the Mongols had vanquished India and China. In 1207, the envoys of Genghis Khan arrived in Tibet and demanded submission under threat of extermination. The representatives of Tibet submitted, and the abbot of the Sa-skya sect was appointed as the Mongolian regent of Tibet. However, it was not always the Sa-skya-pa abbots who fulfilled this position, for in the fifteenth century a new Buddhist order, the dGe-lugs-pa (yellow
hats), came to surpass the power of the Sa-skya-pa. The senior abbot of the dGe-lugs-pa passed on his title to his reincarnation. The Mongol chieftain, Alta Khan, paid his respects to the third re-incarnation of the dGe-lugs-pa abbots in 1578. In 1642, the Mongols established the fifth reincarnated abbot as the sovereign of Tibet, referring to him as the "ocean of wisdom," or Dalai Lama. By this point in history, the religious formation of Tibet was completed and the reign of the Dalai Lamas was fixed.

Conclusions

This history of Tibetan Buddhism indicates that political interests and social conflicts often precipitated religious syncretism. The political maneuvers of Indian and Tibetan rulers frequently introduced religions into new geographic areas. These religions diffused into regions directly before or just after the outbreak of a social disturbance. When the conflicts were resolved and social stability had returned to these areas, the new religion had syncretized with the indigenous systems of supernaturalism. By reviewing the instances of religious syncretism that occurred in India and Tibet we may gain a more specific understanding of how these religious coalitions came about.

Throughout the course of Buddhist history we see that political interests often initiated the diffusion of Buddhism. King Ashoka patronized Buddhism, which in turn, functioned to consolidate and enlarge Asoka's empire. Srong-brtsan-sgam-po brought Buddhism to Tibet in order to develop his relations with neighboring countries.
Khri-srong-lde-brtsan used Buddhism to help repulse the advances of China while he simultaneously furthered his ties with India.

Several religious syncretisms originated from the social conflicts which took place in India. The Aryan invasions of the Indus Valley resulted in a synthesis of fertility concepts with the aggressive gods of the conquerors. At the end of the Brahmana period, the lower castes revolted against their Aryan masters; the pre-Aryan traits of fertility and sexuality were again emphasized, and a new anti-caste philosophy was introduced into the body of Indian religion. After Asoka's military conquests, new ideas and deities were brought into Buddhism.

The struggles that occurred in Tibet concluded in the syncretism of Bon and Buddhism. In his attempts to overcome the protests of the Bon-po, Padmasambhava combined techniques of magic with Buddhism. The sporadic conflicts which ensued up to the year 842 produced minor combinations of Bon and Buddhism. During the period of warring states, Bon was transmuted into another order of Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism absorbed Bon beliefs by making Tibetan gods protectors of its doctrine, assigning acts of divination and exorcism to the domain of Buddhist deities, and combining Bon practices of magic with Buddhist moral philosophies.

Two interacting processes of syncretism are evident in this overview of Buddhist history. Both of these processes involve causal factors which give rise to religious syncretism. Political interests such as alliances or new conquests often bring separate and distinctive religious systems together. These religious systems may be a
Little Tradition and a Great Tradition as in Tibet, or two Great Traditions, as in Vedic and post-Vedic India. The two religious systems come into contact just before or immediately following a social conflict. This conflict may be a direct result of antagonisms between the religious systems and when the antagonisms are resolved the religions are combined. However, the social conflicts are more often a symptom of underlying social, political, or military unrest, and in these cases the religious syncretism may be interpreted as a result of a political or social coalition.

This historical account of Tibetan religion uses documentary sources to present evidence of the existence of a syncretic religious system and to explain how this religion was formed. However, this historical summary fails to explain how the two traditions joined to form the beliefs and practices of the new religion. This shortcoming is not a reflection of the inadequacy of historians of the religions in question but is an inherent limitation of the diachronic perspective. To gain a more exacting knowledge of this syncretic system of supernaturalism, I will examine Tibetan Buddhism as it is actually practiced.
CHAPTER IV

THE CULTURAL SETTING OF THE FOUR RITES

To place into context the four rites discussed in the following chapters, brief general descriptions of the two cultures from which the rites are drawn are presented in the following pages. These descriptions are intended to provide background information that will allow understanding of the rites within the context of the greater cultural milieu in which they are found. The first rite to be discussed, for example, is an attempt to remove a spirit which is thought to cause problems such as conflict between the members of an extended family and disease among livestock. The ethnographic account of the community in which this rite was observed describes reasons for familial strife, the relative importance of livestock in the native economy, and the place that malevolent spirits have in the lives of the people. Each of the rites also contains similar references to many elements in the local culture which have important bearing on the rites. One of these rites was observed in a community of Magars, a Nepalese people, and three were observed in a community of Tibetan refugees who had settled in Nepal. In keeping with the fact that much more of the data was drawn from the Tibetan community, the following ethnographic description of the Tibetans contains greater detail than does the sketch of Magar culture.
The Magars of Tarakot

The rite of exorcism described in Chapter Five was observed in the village complex known as Tarakot, which lies in the southern sector of Dolpa District, Nepal. There are seventeen villages in Tarakot, varying in size from three to sixty-five individual dwellings. The total population of all of the villages is about 2,500 persons. Sixteen of the villages are inhabited by people who consider their caste or ethnic group to be Magar and one village is inhabited by people called Kami. In all of the larger Magar villages of Tarakot there are Tibetan Buddhist temples and, in some of the villages, prominent Tibetan Buddhist practitioners have established religious centers which serve the other villages. The Magars of Tarakot seem to have settled in their valley in northern Nepal long before Tibetan Buddhist missionaries brought their teachings to the area. Glottochronological analysis and archeological remains in Tarakot indicate that the Magars have lived there for nearly two thousand years. However, Tibetan Buddhist history and the age of the oldest Buddhist edifices in the valley lead one to think that Buddhism was introduced into the region about a millennium later by adherents of the rNing-ma and Bon sects. A linguistic study of Kai-ke, the local Tibeto-Burmese language, shows that the morphemes and phonemes of this language are structurally similar to those in western Tibet.

Magars eke out an existence by farming, raising livestock, producing products of simple handicraft, trade, and some use of wild
animals and plants. Some villages specialize in raising certain types of animals or the production of specific commodities, but all of the villages are economically self-sufficient in most respects except in the working of metals. For the mending and manufacturing of metal implements, the Magars depend upon a small number of low caste Nepalese in one of the villages. Most of the Magars' needs are obtained from plant and animal husbandry and the surrounding forests. Cut into the sides of the steep mountain slopes are rocky terraced fields which produce two varieties of buckwheat, a type of rye, barley, potatoes, hemp, and a few green vegetables, which make up part of the daily diet. Harvested in the late summer and early fall, the grains are processed throughout the fall and winter months by the women in the community. The chaff and the seeds are separated by beating the cereals with sticks and winnowing in the wind. Barley, rye, and hemp seeds are stored in dwellings and are eaten during the months following the harvest. Buckwheat is often buried in deep pits around the house, where it can be preserved for many years. Hemp seeds are sometimes roasted and eaten as a light meal but they are more often boiled into a doughy mass which is kneaded in wooden tubs in the midday sun to produce a cooking oil. A number of the wealthier families buy hashish, which is made in various parts of Dolpa District, and transport it to the bazaars in the south for cash sale.

Although agriculture is much more important economically than pastoralism, a number of important items are produced from the cows, goats, and sheep, which are common in the area. Goats and sheep provide meat, and the hair and the skins of these animals are used for
warm clothes and rugs that are necessary to insulate the people against the cold temperatures of the winter months. In accordance with Hindu belief and Nepalese law, the local cows are considered sacred and they are not eaten by the Magars. Cows are valuable as draft animals for plowing the fields; however, they also provide their owners with milk in the summer months when the grasses are abundant on the sides of the mountains. Most of the pastoral work is assigned to young boys, who follow the herds and see that their charges do not become the victims of predators or roam into dangerous places where they may slip on loose gravel and fall from the steep cliffs.

Many people of the Bhotia ethnic group come from the northwest of Tarakot to spend the winter months among the Magars. The Bhotias live in the Magar houses and perform manual labor for the Magars in exchange for lodging and food. If a Magar desires to make an addition to his house or to clear a new field, he may arrange for a number of Bhotias to do the work for a price such as three meals of bread, mountain rice, and potatoes per man per day. The labor provided by the Bhotias includes carrying heavy loads, harvesting, clearing and digging fields, butchering, weaving, work with manure, and making heavy stone mortars for the pounding and grinding of grains. Large numbers of Bhotias are employed in a Magar funeral or in the later wake, and, in this capacity, the Bhotias prepare great quantities of foods, which are consumed by the Magar villagers. This symbiotic relationship between the Bhotias and the Magars gives the Bhotias a chance to support themselves while they escape the colder climate of
their usual habitat, and it furnishes the Magars with a seasonal source of manual labor.

In the winter months, many of the Magar men go to the bazaars in the southern hill country where they buy supplies for their personal use and to sell to others in Tarakot. Often bringing musk and hashish to sell, the Magars who go to the large bazaars at or near the town of Tansen purchase rice, sugar, tea, kerosene, iron bars, cotton and velvet cloth, cigarettes, and other manufactured goods. If the purchase is small, the owner himself carries the goods back over the difficult trail to Tarakot in the company of a few friends, but many of the Magars invest heavily in these commodities and require several porters, a few horses and many goats to transport their merchandise. Once these men return to Tarakot with their goods, they may sell them at a price as high as two hundred percent above cost or barter the goods for food stuffs or property. These activities of trade are not a mainstay of the economy but allow the Magars to supplement their marginal economy with a few modest additions to their diet and daily life.

A number of foods, medicines, building materials, and fuel come from the forests of the Tarakot valley. Musk deer are shot by the men of the Kami villages, and the hide and meat is eaten or sold to others in the area. The musk sac from the male musk deer brings a high price when sold in Tarakot or in the southerly bazaars. Mountain sheep, bear, and leopards are also shot or trapped for the value of their flesh and hides. Frequent trips are made by the villagers to the forests in order to gather firewood or to cut trees for the construction of homes, and while in the forest the people gather berries
and greens to bring home and eat with their meals. Some of the plants that grow in the forest are used as medicines on wounds, for dermatological problems, or consumed for internal disturbances. The villagers do not linger very long in the forest or go individually in search of these things as the forest is considered to be the abode of dangerous spirits who might cause trouble for people or even possess them.

The Magars of Tarakot are all linked by elaborate patterns of marriage. Households generally consist of extended families. In keeping with the custom of patrilocality, these extended families may include an elderly mother and father, their married and unmarried sons, unmarried daughters, and the wives and children of the married sons. When examined over time, the extended families can be seen as continually changing clusters of Magars who are brought together and drawn apart by affinal relationships. The marriage of a son brings women into the extended family and this usually means that a series of new members are born into the household. In this way, marriage enlargens and perpetuates an extended family but marriage also serves to reduce the family by drawing away the daughters or encouraging sons to establish neolocal residences. Instances of neolocal residence often occur when a household is too small or poor to support more than one adult son and his family. Sons may elect to build homes of their own, thus initiating new households that may later develop into extended families. Extended families often fission when the household has numerous sons; the sons marry and must choose between the problems of sharing the household with their
brothers' families or building a house of their own. Customs of inheritance stipulate that, upon the death of the parents, the house is the property of the youngest son. For this reason it is usually the eldest sons who move out if an extended family breaks apart. If the son does move out, the new residence is constructed near, or directly adjoining, the original home.

Intra-village marriage is not very common because the marriage of patrilineally related persons is considered to be incestuous, and nuptial couples from the same village must be so distantly related that the relationship which probably exists is forgotten or dismissed. Although inter-village marriages are more common, the incidence of intra-village marriage is great enough to form bonds among families of the village and, together, with the patrilateral bonds previously described, they create solidarity within the village.

The Magar villages of Tarakot are connected through interlocking patterns of marriage. Matrilineal cross-cousin marriage is favored and residence is usually patrilocal; hence, men often marry the daughters of their mother's brothers, who live in households and, usually, in villages other than those of their husbands. Over the centuries this practice has created a network of family ties among the villages. Young boys frequently accompany their mothers on visits to the mothers' former homes in other villages and while in these villages they come into contact with the daughters of their mothers' brothers. These contacts during childhood are often the basis for later marriages. Although the larger villages of Tarakot have affinal bonds with almost all of the other Magar villages in
the region, patterns of marriage vary among the villages. Marriages may most frequently be among residents of two or three villages, or they may tend to be most common between two villages which have maintained affinal ties for successive generations. However, from an overall perspective, customs of marriage may be seen to form a cohesive network which joins all of the sixteen Magar villages into an integrated unit.

Beliefs and acts of supernaturalism which are held by the Magars combine elements of an indigenous religion with practices and beliefs of Buddhism into a unified whole. This combined system of supernaturalism is commonly referred to as Tibetan Buddhism. Although the entire complex of beliefs and rites is integrated, some of the indigenous ideas and rites are more closely united with Buddhism than others. The supernatural elements which exist most apart from Buddhism closely resemble Bon supernaturalism as it is described in historic accounts. These elements consist of a few supernaturalistic objects and one major rite, which persist as the last remnants of an indigenous and distinctive system of supernaturalism. Thus, it may be appropriate to state that the form of Tibetan Buddhism found in Tarakot is not completely syncretized in all of its aspects.

Almost all of the organized ceremonies and minor rites performed in Tarakot are conducted by religious practitioners called lamas. As a rule, lamas possess a small library of sacred texts and preach the basic doctrines of Buddhist philosophy. These religious specialists combine readings of their scriptures with various techniques of magic in rites of blessing and other ceremonies aimed at curing diseases,
exorcizing spirit beings, and divination. A lama may be requested to perform a rite of blessing at any time that a villager desires supernatural aid to cope with a problem or situation. Sickness and the erection of a new building are two events for which a rite of blessing may be conducted. In these rites, a lama propitiates the local mountain gods and the deities of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon by reading Tibetan Buddhist texts and offering butter, flour, juniper smoke, and other foods at a small altar that is located on the roof of most Magar homes. Making the offering takes only a few moments, but the reading of the text may be very time consuming, taking several days if the client desires a thorough blessing or if the text to be recited is lengthy. To cure an illness, a lama may use techniques of magic to drive out of a patient's body the spirit causing the sickness or to snare it in a trap. The first of these techniques involves the use of hot irons placed on the afflicted area; the second technique makes use of five diamond-shaped thread-crosses that are thought to ensnare the intrusive spirit so that it may be expelled. Tarakot lamas also conduct more elaborate rites of exorcism in order to rid an entire household of a spirit that is considered to be the cause of widespread problems in and about the home. For this kind of exorcism a lama of high repute and several assistant lamas are required, and the offerings, recitations of texts, capture and identification of the spirit, and its final destruction are done over a period of days at a sizeable cost to the family. Most of the lamas in Tarakot make a living by farming, but a few of these religious specialists manage solely on the earnings received for their professional services. Two
or three of the lamas have inherited their skills and their clientele from a long line of male ancestors and these lamas have a relatively prosperous life and large numbers of assistants.

The important autochthonous rite which is not fully integrated into the greater system of supernaturalism is conducted under the direction of a village elder who is not a lama. This rite is performed in a long sequence of days throughout the entire latter half of January and the first few days of February. It begins with a sacrificial offering to the local mountain gods some of which are the tutelary gods of the village. Blood from sacrificed chickens is sprinkled on lumps of popped buckwheat, and these blood stained lumps are then placed inside each of the Magar homes as a symbolic representation of the tutelary god of the village. In the remainder of the rite, the leader and his assistants extol the powers and virtues of the mountain gods by song and dance. These events take place in the afternoon for two weeks and include the consumption of large amounts of beer by the conductor and his assistants. The conductor is a man of the village whose role of leadership in religion is limited to this rite. His dress, and that of his assistants, is characteristic of the early religious practitioners of pre-Buddhist Tibet, and the rite which he directs highly resembles the offerings which early Tibetans made to the deities of the mountains.

Magar concepts and philosophies of life include folk beliefs as well as more complex cosmological ideas which have diffused into their culture from Tibet and India. The Magar's myth of origin varies widely in detail around a central theme of a pregnant woman who fled
to Tarakot from a region to the northwest to escape from a scene of conflict (the cause of which is unspecified). At the spot where the village named Gompa-gaun presently stands, this woman saw an angel who many Magars say was the goddess Tara. The angel told her to stay in the valley, and soon thereafter the woman bore a child and later other children, who formed the original populations of the region. A variation of the myth holds that the woman's children were sons who were provided with wives by the same angel, and that the sons and their wives conceived the offspring who later founded the different ethnic groups which exist in and around Tarakot today: the Magars, the metal workers or Kami, and the Bhotias.

Regulating the social interaction among the ethnic groups in Tarakot is the religious concept of dharma, the Hindu belief that people are naturally divided into social categories that are distinguished by occupation and ritual purity. This idea has been acquired by the Magars from fellow Nepalese in more southerly parts of Nepal who practice a form of Hinduism, and it has been utilized by the Magars as a means of establishing a relatively high social position among their neighbors in Tarakot. Metal working is a highly polluting occupation according to the doctrine of dharma, and thus the Kami ethnic group in Tarakot has a low social status in relation to the Magars. Kami people cannot share food or drink with the Magars and the Magars exclude them from most social activities, including the first portions of the rite of propitiating the mountain gods. A similar relationship exists between the Magars and their northern neighbors, the Bhotias. The Bhotias are also regarded as a defiled
group because they do not observe the Hindu customs concerned with pollution, such as abstinence from eating the flesh of cows. Bhotias, however, have a higher status than the Kamis. They are free to participate in social affairs of the community and to eat with the Magars, but marriage with a Bhotia is strongly disfavored according to Magar custom and it occurs very infrequently.

The beliefs which the Magars maintain about the afterlife are a combination of Sanskritic philosophy and local notions of spirit beings. Magars have accepted the doctrines of karma and reincarnation, interpreting karma as the good and bad deeds which are rewarded after death by different kinds of possible rebirths or reincarnations. In conjunction with these ideas about reincarnation and karma, local beliefs hold that the souls of the dead go to the forests which surround the Tarakot valley and reside there until they are reborn. The people explain that most souls remain in the forest only temporarily but that the spirits of especially wicked people make the forest their permanent abode. It seems that the villagers have changed the Sanskritic doctrines of karma and reincarnation to fit their concepts of spirits by viewing the fate of becoming a spirit as a punishment for collecting bad karma. The idea of the genesis of perennial spirits is congruent with the fact that spirits in the forests around Tarakot are always feared as potentially dangerous and that they are never thought to be beneficent.
The Tibetans of Dhorpatan

The latter three rites of this study were recorded in a Tibetan settlement which is six days by foot from Tarakot in the northern part of Baglung District. This settlement, known as Dhorpatan, consists of two small villages of Tibetans who fled into Nepal in 1959 to escape the military occupation of Tibet by the Chinese. There are approximately 325 Tibetans in Dhorpatan, who are situated in two villages which have distinctive populations. One village consists of people from eastern Tibet who refer to themselves as Khampas; the people of the second village, the Brog-pas, came from northern Tibet where they were highland pastoralists. The people of both groups made a long and difficult journey from Tibet into Nepal, fighting their way across the Tibetan plateau over a period of approximately one year, a flight which cost every family the death of some of its members and the loss of livestock and other properties as well as entailing extreme hardships of other kinds. When the refugees finally arrived in Nepal, much of their wealth was confiscated by Nepalese police and the adjustment to the new environment took its toll in death from diseases to which the Tibetans had no natural immunity. Weary from the strain of these hardships, the Tibetans were herded from one refugee camp to another by workers of the International Red Cross and other aid organizations who tried to help the Tibetans but were often hindered by corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. After a one-day survey of the Dhorpatan valley, the International Red Cross decided that a group of Tibetans should be re-located in this cold, high area, which greatly resembles the Tibetans' homeland.
Notification to this effect was given to the Tibetans in one of the refugee camps and leaflets were dropped to other Tibetans who were encamped near the Chinese border, instructing them to go to Dhorpatan. Attracted by the reports of the Tibetan-like climate in the valley, several hundred of the refugees made their way to Dhorpatan and settled down in yak-hair tents. Rapid progress was made on the construction of the Dhorpatan settlement and, with medical aid, technical advice, and financial support from Western organizations, by the early 1960s the Tibetans had built two small groups of rough wooden houses and developed a self-supporting economy. In spite of the abrupt exposures to new ways of life and the difficulties which were incurred during their sojourn in the refugee camps, the immigrants retained almost all of their old culture and adapted to their new home in Dhorpatan by making it a Tibetan village in Nepal.

With very few exceptions, the Tibetans in Dhorpatan maintain themselves by means of agriculture, trading, and a little pastoralism. Economic activities are seasonal. The agricultural phase extends from April through September; trading in southerly bazaars is done during the remainder of the year; and pastoral work goes on throughout the year. Potatoes are the only commercial crop grown in the Dhorpatan valley. Much of the crop is carried by horse to markets in the south, where it is sold for cash. Salt is bought at the market, brought back to Dhorpatan, and bartered with the Nepalese in the area for other foodstuffs. Dairy products, including butter, cheese, and milk, are produced from the yak, the cow, and the hybrids of these two animals.
The monsoon rains beginning around the end of May provide ample water for the plants which are sown during the months of April, May, and June. Each household raises a small garden adjoining the home which supplies the family with fresh greens, turnips, onions, cauliflower, and other vegetables in the late summer months. Although other domestic plants such as wheat, barley, and fruit trees have been experimented with, nothing but potatoes seems to grow well in the 3050 meter high valley with its cold climate, and late spring and early fall frosts. Potatoes, however, thrive in Dhorpatan, and the abundant crops of this tuber are said to be the best in the region and bring a good price in the Nepalese markets. The potato plants die in mid-summer and the potatoes are left in the ground until September or early October when they are removed and placed in deep pits around the village or sometimes under the floors of the houses. These potatoes are eaten by the Tibetans throughout the year and sold at the bazaars in the hill country to the south of Dhorpatan.

As the monsoon storms abate and the trails dry, the Tibetans begin to pack their heavy woolen saddlebags with potatoes for the twenty-day round-trip to the bazaars. Small groups of men or the people of an entire household walk with their laden horses over the low pass between the hills on the southern side of the Dhorpatan valley. It takes about nine days for a horse caravan to reach the bazaars and during this time the Tibetans camp off the side of the trail and graze their animals on the grassy slopes of the surrounding hills. Upon arrival at the Tansen market or at other markets a little farther south, the Tibetans sell the potatoes and purchase merchandise
to take back to Dhorpatan. People who wish to visit relatives in India or other parts of Nepal leave the bazaar at this time by means of buses, which come as far north as Tansen. Those who leave frequently remain away from Dhorpatan for the duration of the winter, returning when the snows melt and the days become longer in the spring. For the journey back to Dhorpatan, rock salt is bought in large quantities and packed into the empty saddlebags. Additional supplies are purchased for the forthcoming year, including rice, sugar, mustard-seed oil, kerosene, matches, cotton yardage, and other miscellaneous goods manufactured in Nepal or India. When a caravan is moving across the blowing sands and crossing the icy rivers of the Dhorpatan valley floor, friends and relatives in the village walk out to the valley floor to meet the weary travellers. After a few days rest, the more ambitious traders of the settlement begin another trip, exchanging the lame horses for fresh ones and walking out of the valley with a new load of potatoes. As many as four additional trips may be made later in the winter.

Most of the salt carried back from the Tansen bazaar is bartered throughout the rest of the year for cereals. The Nepalese villagers who live to the west, north, and east of Dhorpatan have surplus grains but lack salt. Rather than buy their salt for cash in the distant markets, the Nepalese prefer to exchange their excess wheat, barley, corn, and mountain rice for the salt which their Tibetan neighbors offer to them. The Tibetans of Dhorpatan can usually trade a given quantity of salt for twice that quantity of grain but the rate depends upon such factors as the winter rainfall on the Nepalese fields, the
availability and cost of the salt at its original source in India, and the conditions in the competitive salt market in Dolpa District. Carrying their salt in the same woolen saddlebags that they used when bringing it from Tansen, the Tibetans deliver the salt to a pre-arranged buyer in one of the Nepalese villages which may be as far as three days journey away from Dhorpatan. The Tibetan and his buyer may haggle over the rate of exchange if the rate was not firmly fixed beforehand or new fluctuations have occurred in the conditions of the salt market.

As a supplement to the foods which are grown in the village and the grains which are bartered for salt, the Tibetans have dairy products from the cows which are kept in the villages and the yak and the hybrids, which are tended in the high pastures around Dhorpatan. The yak herd is small, numbering only about forty-five animals, but these animals demand constant attention if their yield of milk is to be good. For this task, a small group of Tibetans stay with the yak herd throughout the year, living in tents in the warmer months and in permanent homes during the very cold winter. Small amounts of milk are obtained from the herd in the winter, thus demanding little work from the herdsmen. At the end of March or in the beginning of April the Tibetans drive the herd down to the villages, where spring grasses support the stock for about ten days. The yak and hybrids are then moved to another high pasture directly north of Dhorpatan. While living in this pasture, the Tibetans shelter themselves against the monsoon rains with tents made of yak-hair and cotton fabric, stacking all of their cooking utensils, food, clothes, saddles, and other gear
along the inside edges of the tent. A good deal of work is required at this time of the year for the grazing is at its best and the herd produces large amounts of milk. Some of the milk is made into butter by churning it in a cylindrical barrel with a wooden plunger. The making of butter is time consuming and tiresome, but the yak butter is highly prized by the Tibetans for its good taste and it sells for a high price. An additional dairy product is Tibetan cheese. To make Tibetan cheese, the herdsman simmer large pots of milk over a smoldering fire for a number of days, all the while stirring it carefully so that it will not be scalded. When most of the water has been boiled off, the thick, lumpy residue is spread out on cloths to dry in the sun. By working the cheese with the hands at intervals during this drying process, the substance separates into small pieces. When these pieces are so dehydrated that they no longer stick together, they are packed into bags and may be eaten anytime thereafter. That portion of the milk which is not used to make butter or cheese is consumed while fresh by the villagers and the herdsman. As the seasons change and the rains turn to snow in September, the yak are brought down from the high pasture by gradually moving the herd to lower elevations over a period of three or four weeks. In October, the herdsman are back in the villages for a short time before they return to the eastern grazing camp and begin another yearly cycle.

Lesser economic pursuits in Dhorpatan include the weaving of woolen carpets by the women of the community and the serving of food and drink to the Nepalese who travel through the valley.
In the traditional Tibetan fashion, the family organization of these refugees is based upon households of nuclear and extended families. Most households are nuclear families but some are polygamous both in polyandrous and polygynous forms. In polyandrous households, the children treat all of the mother's husbands with equal deference for often no one, including the mother, knows for certain who is the actual biological father of a particular child. Among mothers in a polygynous family, in contrast, there is often a hierarchy of status which reflects their sequence of marriage to a common husband; or, when co-wives are sisters, the hierarchial order depends upon seniority of age among them. Labor is divided by age and sex. Mothers do most of the work involving the preparation of food and care of children. Fathers tend the horses, work leather, do heavy labors around the house or in the fields, and undertake trade and other business transactions. Tibetan children are assigned the more menial tasks around the house such as carrying water from the springs, bringing the cows home at night and caring for their younger siblings. The household functions smoothly with this division of labor and the interdependence of the members creates an important bond of solidarity within the nuclear family.

Extended families often include three generations and sometimes four. Kin relationships in these families vary a great deal because residence after marriage may be either patrilocal or matrilocal. Grandparents may be matrilineally or patrilineally related to their descendants in a household, which may also include maternal or paternal aunts and uncles. In Dhorpatan there is a definite emphasis on
patrilocality, which is correlated with the custom of the eldest son remaining at home and providing for his parents in their old age. This tendency toward patrilocality has resulted in a predominance of patrilineally extended families. A typical household of this type may include the elderly mother and father, their eldest son and his wife and children, a younger son, and a daughter. In this household, the old father enjoys his last years of life, when his familial roles consist chiefly of pious acts and giving advice to the rest of the family; the aged mother supervises her daughter and daughter-in-law in the kitchen and passes on her knowledge of child rearing and Tibetan handicrafts to these women. Economic responsibility is placed on the elder son who works together with his younger brother in the fields, with the livestock, and in trade. The wife of the eldest son does not suffer at the hands of her mother-in-law and sister-in-law but instead is accepted into the family as an equal and is judged by her abilities around the house and the gracefulness of manner. Young, unmarried women in a household enjoy a special position, for, although they work hard in carrying fuel and water, they are frequently the showpieces of the family and are dressed in the best clothes that the family can afford. This seeming favoritism expressed toward young girls is due to the fact that they are being prepared by the adults in the house for an arranged marriage. At an appropriate time a daughter marries and, if her husband's home is not overly crowded, she settles in his parents' home. Growing up in an extended family like that described above means that the people of importance to any individual are much larger in number and social
position than the few in a nuclear family. The extended family functions with very little conflict among its members, and it operates with other extended families in community affairs.

Patri-clans are an important unit of kinship on the village level, serving to connect the extended families and to tie the Tibetans into the greater community. These patri-clans, each composed of people related genetically and consanguineally to a common but long forgotten ancestor, lost many members during the exodus from Tibet but, even so, the patri-clans which remain are still extremely important in the social organization of Dhorpatan. Leadership within the patri-clan is assigned to the oldest of a group of males who are all descended from a common ancestor. All of these males, their wives and their children belong to a single patri-clan. Membership in a patri-clan is ascribed by marriage and agnatic descent but membership can also be gained through other types of consanguineal ties and through fictive kinship. If a man's patri-clan is small and relatively inconsequential in village affairs and the patri-clan of his wife's brothers is powerful, he may choose to align himself with the patri-clan of his in-laws. Such an alliance may be accomplished by merely befriending the members of the wife's patri-clan and then working and socializing in all of their activities. Affiliation with a patri-clan through fictive kinship occurs whenever an individual is bound by a fictive kinship tie to someone of another patri-clan, and then, by logical extension, this individual may be included in the patri-clan if he chooses to participate in its functions. Patri-clans are exogamous groups, and a Tibetan is not supposed to marry a woman of his patri-clan or the patri-clan of his mother's father. One of the
most vital functions of the patri-clan is the role which it plays in
the political structure of the Dhorpatan villages. Whenever an issue
arises that concerns all of the people in a village or the entire
settlement, the members of each household first discuss the topic them-
selves and then with the members of the other extended families. The
patri-clan leader, who maintains continual contact with all of the
households in his patri-clan, attempts to resolve any conflicts which
arise within the clan and acts as representative of the group, express-
ing the sentiments of his patri-clan to the other patri-clan leaders
and to the greater governmental powers.

To aid in gaining an understanding of Tibetan tribal groupings
in Dhorpatan it is useful to compare the distinctive populations of
the settlement. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the
people in one of the two main villages in Dhorpatan are Khampas from
eastern Tibet and the Brog-pas in the other village are highland
pastoralists from northern Tibet. A small percentage of the Tibetans
in Dhorpatan do not fit into either of these categories but identify
themselves as being from the Tibetan capital at Lhasa or from other
parts of Tibet. The two major segments of the Dhorpatan population
distinguish themselves in several ways which include dress, dialect,
marriage patterns, and religious practices. These distinctions are
the standard criteria which are often used to define a body of people
as a tribe and, therefore, the Khampas and the Brog-pas of Dhorpatan
may be viewed as two different tribes. The religions of the two
groups differ, for the people of the Brog-pa village follow the Bon
sect of Tibetan Buddhism whereas the Khampas practice Tibetan Buddhism
in the Sa-skya form. The Brog-pas have built a house of worship, support a Bon clergy, and carry out the religious practices according to the manner prescribed in their Bon texts. Khampas, in contrast, conduct their religious practices in their own temple under the direction of a Sa-skya-pa lama. The two peoples are also distinctive in the dialect of Tibetan which they speak, the clothing worn by their women, the shape and design of their woolen boots, the jewelry which the women wear, and in still other ways. Perpetuating the differences between the two populations is a strong tendency towards endogamy within each group. Although some of the differences described may appear to be small, they are accompanied by intense in-group and out-group sentiments which have precipitated rivalry and conflict between the two tribes.

Pervasive in the lives of the Dhorpatan villagers is a highly integrated system of supernaturalism. This religion is referred to as Tibetan Buddhism and it contains much of the moralistic philosophy of Buddhism and a host of ideas and acts which are founded on notions of magic. Unlike the form of Tibetan Buddhism found in Tarakot, the supernatural beliefs and practices of Dhorpatan are fully syncretized into a unified system and there are no rites or beliefs which do not relate to the greater network of supernaturalism. For the purposes of exposition, the religious practices of Dhorpatan can be divided into a category of organized rites carried out during the summer months under the direction of lamas and a second category of ad hoc rites conducted in the private residences at any time of the year by non-specialists. The organized rites tend to be ascetic and focused
toward other worldly goals whereas the ad hoc rites may be as non-ascetic as the casting of dice while drinking intoxicating liquor and they generally have pragmatic goals. Both types of rites, however, contain the Tibetan Buddhist deities and moralistic philosophy which are characteristic of the overall system of Tibetan Buddhism.

The moralistic philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism, as it is found in Dhorpatan, centers around karma and reincarnation. Following the Sanskrit influence of reincarnation, a Tibetan visualizes his life as a brief point on a long and continuous sequence of rebirths. This idea of the soul or essence of a person being reborn time and time again in the worldly realm is expanded by the doctrine of karma, which holds that the successive reincarnations of an individual are influenced by the nature of his actions in each of his previous lives. According to the Tibetan interpretation of karma, a person's behavior can affect the future rebirths of other people and animals as well as his own rebirths. The interrelationships between a person's actions and his destiny in the afterlife is easy enough for the average Westerner to grasp but the relationship of one's behavior to the rebirth of other people and animals is more difficult to comprehend unless we understand that Tibetans think of all of the rebirths in the world as being greatly affected by a body of accumulative sin. Tibetans believe that this body of sin is an accumulation of all the sins ever committed and that this sin can be dispelled only by the continual good actions of individuals. The Tibetans look upon the problem of sin as if it were a master account book in which all the debits and credits for immoral and moral behavior of
all people are entered. Thus, the cycles of continual reincarnation can be escaped if human beings do enough good to bring the karmic account book out of the red. In striving to accomplish this feat, the villagers count their prayers, tally them, and send the total figure to their theocratic ruler, the Dalai Lama, once a year.

*Karma*, as it is conceived in Dhorpatan, has both personal and universal ramifications. Most Tibetans have personal interests at stake when they say prayers and do other acts to expiate the accumulation of sins of the world. In undertaking the practices that are overtly directed toward saving all beings, the Tibetans think that they are also receiving personal benefits such as protection or prosperity in return for their pious behavior. Beliefs regarding *karma* maintain both the early Buddhist doctrine that *karma* affects only the individual who creates it and also the later Buddhist teachings which hold that a person's behavior influences the collective body of all beings. From this dualistic interpretation of *karma*, we can see that Tibetan Buddhism has combined the essential teachings of the Mahayana and the Hinayana schools of Buddhism in a single religious system. This religion offers its followers a means of overcoming everyday anxieties through the performance of meritorious acts, which are supposed to bring all life closer to salvation and simultaneously provide supernatural help for immediate problems and desires.

Tibetans believe that the sin or immoral behavior which gives rise to negative *karma* is defined essentially by the "Eightfold Path." Right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration
are the eight main moral prescripts of the "Eightfold Path" and each of these is further broken down into sub-prescripts such as injunctions to refrain from swearing and loud talk under the category of right speech. Foremost of all possible sins is the act of killing men or other animals, as this goes against the fundamental Buddhist idea that all life is sacred. Tibetans are almost fanatical about this point, going so far as to pick up carefully small insects and remove them from a path during ceremonies so that other Tibetans will not inadvertently crush them as they perform circumambulations around some hallowed area. However, this regard for life is not carried out to the same extremes as is done by Jainists, for Tibetans are avid meat eaters. Tibetans remove most of the sin that is centered around meat eating by paying a non-Buddhist a small wage to kill and butcher animals which they eat. A second way that Tibetans deal with the problem of sin is by using supernatural techniques to channel it and then to dispose of it.

The common practices of Tibetan Buddhism in Dhorpatan consist of organized rites and ad hoc rites which are generally divided into two seasonal phases. In the warmer months of June, July, and September, practitioners of the Tibetan Buddhist clergy, known as lamas, conduct a series of scheduled ceremonies to instruct the villagers in the precepts of the doctrine, to bless the people and their animals, and to guide them in devotions that will work toward the salvation of all beings. At the beginning of the fall, the lamas leave Dhorpatan to escape the cold weather and until they return, ad hoc rites are performed by non-specialists. The ad hoc rites usually involve
offerings to supernatural beings or acts of divination and, although the practices and the functions of the ad hoc rites often overlap with those of the organized rites, the two types of rites can be differentiated according to the characteristics of the practitioner and the composition of the laity. Ad hoc rites are done by someone other than a lama and they are conducted in the interests of a specific individual or family. Organized rites are almost always directed by a lama, are carried out for the benefit of the greater community rather than a specific person or household, and are cyclic.

Common to all of the organized rites conducted in Dhorpatan, is a body of practices which includes entreaties, abstentions, prostrations, circumambulations, and other devout acts. These practices are performed during the rites in an attempt to overcome the negative powers of universal sin. Circumambulations conducted in conjunction with the organized rites are done around areas and objects such as a temple complex which are thought to be intrinsically sacred or around prayer flags and piles of stones that are printed and carved with prayers and mantras. By walking around these loci of supernatural power and chanting prayers, the Tibetans believe that they are sending off their thoughts to one or more of the Tibetan gods. Prostrations are done in front of the temple altars or in the direction of the rock walls and prayer flags in homage to the images and symbols on the altar, flags, and rocks. Both the circumambulations and the prostrations are performed by Tibetans of every age and sex; children are seen alongside their grandparents, walking around a holy ground or counting the times that their foreheads touch the turf in front of the
carved rocks. In spite of arthritis and rheumatism, the elderly fully partake in the devotional exercises and even surpass the younger worshipers in their acts of devotion. The most meritorious and demanding of the acts conducted within the context of the organized rites are abstention from speaking, eating, and drinking for specified periods of time. Observed every other day for a period of perhaps ten days, the abstentions are intended to conserve life by saving the food which the abstainers would otherwise eat and to promote a meditative state of mind. The members of the laity and the practitioners who do these abstentions are usually very conscientious about their acts and, when the vow of silence is being maintained, the villagers even use an elaborate system of hand-signs to express ideas. Those who excel in the practices of abstention are regarded by the other villagers as being extremely pious and they achieve high status among the villagers and are regarded as models for emulation. Throughout the periods of fasting, the devotees pray and chant mantras individually or in unison. Both kinds of supplication—the prayers and the mantras—are counted on rosaries and periodically tabulated so that the person can note his or her progress toward some particular number of prayers or mantras which have been set as a goal. The mantra most commonly said and carved on the rocks is om mani padme hum or, among members of the Bon sect, a variation of it. Om mani padme hum can be interpreted as an invocation of the Buddhist goddess who is a female counterpart of the Sanskritic deity Manipadma Lokesvara (Agehananda Bharati, 1965). Written on a paper and then sealed in a metal cylinder, mantras are sent to the gods
when the cylinder is rotated on a stick by whirling a weight which is tied to the cylinder. Of the many prayers which are said in the organized rites, the one called sGrol-ma is perhaps the most common. The sGrol-ma prayer is typical of Tibetan prayers in paying tribute to a Tibetan deity and requests that the deity aid the beseecher in solving daily problems and aid all living things in attaining universal salvation. Prayers, abstentions, and the other practices described above are found to some degree in all of the organized rites but the role which they play varies somewhat from rite to rite.

The organized religious practices conducted in Dhorpatan during the summer months consist of five major ceremonies. Some of these ceremonies are performed twice on the same day; once in the temple of the Sa-skya sect in the western village and again in the temple of the Bon sect which is located in the eastern end of the valley. In these instances of a double performance, the two rites are very similar, differing principally in the existence of more magic and less asceticism in the Bon performance. Since the two versions of the rites often occurred simultaneously, I chose to focus my observations upon the Sa-skya-pa versions and, for this reason, the description of these rites that follow concerns the version of this sect.

During the first days of June a lama and a small number of assistants congregate around a Tibetan house of worship, or gompa. These people vow that they will refrain from speech, food, and drink on alternate days throughout the month of June or the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar, to commemorate the birth of Gautama Buddha, who they believe was born on the fifteenth day of this month. These
activities are the simple beginning of the first summer rite. In the following week, the villagers begin to come to the gompa during the day and join the lama and his assistants in the fasting and silence, which are both referred to as "fasting" (bsnyen-gnas). By the tenth day, thirty-one people had vowed to observe the rules of fasting and many others attend the daily services, which now include sermons, prayers, and chanting on the non-fasting days, and prostrations, circumambulations, prayer-wheel turning, and inaudible mantra chanting every day. On the Buddha's birthday, new prayer flags are erected in the field in front of the gompa and offerings are made to the gods, circumambulations are performed, and scriptures are read. During the last days of bsnyen-gnas, the vow of silence is set aside for the repetition of many sGrol-ma prayers, but after the services the observers return to abstinence. As in all Tibetan abstentions, the manifest goal of bsnyen-gnas is the universal salvation of all beings.

Second in the succession of summer ceremonies is the celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday which, in 1973, occurred on the sixth of July. Although none of the local Tibetan Buddhist priests officiate or even attend the birthday celebration, the event is designed to commemorate the birth of the Dalai Lama, who is recognized by Tibetans as the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism as well as the ruler of the Tibetan state. This ceremony draws more of the population than any other rite held in Dhorpatan, bringing together all of the Tibetans in the valley and overriding partisan differences in religion. Approximately 300 Tibetans gather for the ceremony that is held at the
schoolhouse, which is situated midway between the two villages. On
the morning of the sixth of July, a new prayer flag is raised on a
long pole in front of the schoolhouse and the villagers then give
homage to an image of the Dalai Lama, prostrating themselves in
front of an altar upon which the image is placed. Families picnic
at noon on the grass in the vicinity, eating the foods prepared at
home on the preceding evening or purchased from a temporary inn
which is arranged at the school. In the afternoon many of the men
and a few of the more adventurous women drink alcoholic beverages
brought from home or purchased at the schoolhouse. Dancing is also
done in the afternoon to the accompaniment of songs sung by the
dancers and the onlookers. When the sun sets, the villagers gather
around the schoolhouse to watch a classical Tibetan dance performed
by the younger women of the village followed by a play enacted by
schoolchildren under the direction of the schoolmaster. The Dalai
Lama's birthday celebration comes to an end on the second day of the
festivities with another picnic, more drinking, and dancing.

Of all the summer rites, the most spectacular is an expiation
of sin that entails the offering of an elaborate thread-cross to the
goddess sGrol-ma. This rite, known to the Tibetans as sGrol-ma gyu-
mdos, is conducted in the latter part of the sixth Tibetan month
(August) in both the Sa-skya-pa and the Bon-po gompas. The sGrol-
ma gyu-mdos begins with several days of the bsnyen-gnas. A central
theme of the ceremony is the expiation of the sin which the villagers
have accumulated over the previous year, and this feat is achieved by
the manipulation of the sin through techniques of magic. Colorful
constructions of symmetrically woven threads and doll-like images of Tibetans are fabricated, both of which are created to serve as receptacles for the sin, which is transferred to them from the villagers.

When the monsoon rains subside and many of the villagers begin to anticipate their oncoming journeys to the south, two short rites are held: in the first rite, a lama blesses the horses which will carry the trade goods, and in the second rite, the community is brought together in a communal feast previous to the dispersion of the villagers. The first of these rites takes place in the middle of the seventh Tibetan month when the Tibetans' horses are herded into the villages from the pastures. To protect the horses from leopards, precarious trails, and the inevitable fatigue which the beasts suffer on the winter trade route, the owners bring their stock to their lama so that he may bless them. The lama distributes consecrated cakes to the owners, who feed them to their horses, and the lama then sprinkles each horse with holy water from a ritual teapot. Two weeks after the blessing of the horses, the villagers return to the gompa to take part in another rite which brings the people together for the last time in the summer and protects them against hardships they might have to face while they are away and the lama's supernatural aid is not available. Called Tug-spyo by the villagers, this rite covers the last days of September and includes mantras, prayers, prostrations, and sermons plus a communal feast and a distribution of supernatural medicine to the villagers. The feast, which occurs at the end of the ritual complex, Tug-spyo, consists of a meal of rice balls that have been mixed with butter. After the meal is finished, the
lama issues small colored pills of dough to a few select men, who are all heads of households. These dough pills are thought to be a powerful medicine which have the strength of millions of *mantras* behind them and can cure serious diseases. The villagers in 1973 wanted to end the summer services with dancing outside the *gompa*, as they had done in earlier years, but the lama decided that a final round of 108 sGrol-ma prayers would be a better investment for their souls and with these solemn supplications the season of organized rites came to an end.

Approximately half of the acts of supernaturalism that are observed in Dhorpatan do not exist in the form of organized rites in which all people participate but are *ad hoc* practices performed by non-specialists for particular households or individuals. This category of supernaturalism involves acts of propitiation and techniques of magic to give protection against various dangers or to divine the unknown. Propitiations are generally in the form of daily prayers or offerings to prominent Tibetan Buddhist deities. In these prayers and offerings, the supernatural power of the deity or deities is acknowledged and the deity is requested to give the beseecher supernatural aid in overcoming worldly problems. Techniques of magic are used to divine the future, or to manufacture magical devices which protect their owner from evil or dangerous forces. In addition to such propitiations and acts of magic, funerals and a new year rite may be assigned to this category of supernaturalism as these two rites are not included in the summer services and they are done for the benefit of specific persons or households.
In a Tibetan home, every morning begins with a short rite of worship conducted by one of the adults in the residence. The central act in this rite is known as the \textit{mchod-pa}, and it requires the replacing of water in seven little cups which rest on the lower level of the altar. At this time a small lamp, or \textit{mchod-me}, is lighted near the cups of water. This offering is made so that the Tibetan Buddhist deities will bless and watch over the house, its members, and any property that may be associated with the house such as horses and other livestock. After the water is renewed and the lamp is lit, prayers and mantras are said by the adults in the house as they go about their morning labors. In the more pious families, where scriptures are available and someone can read the sacred texts, readings are sometimes performed as part of the morning rite. Another practice which may be done in conjunction with the \textit{mchod-pa} is an offering of incense or smoke from a fire of juniper branches. Offerings of smoke are extremely common in all Tibetan Buddhist rites and they are frequently made at sunrise as an offering to the gods. Before retiring for the evening, another rite is performed at the house altar by lighting the \textit{mchod-me} and praying to the goddess sGrol-ma.

Almost all Tibetans wear on their bodies objects that are imbued with supernatural forces or store such objects in their homes to protect themselves from misfortune. The most common of these objects are small squares of folded cloth which are worn as neck pendants. The squares of cloth, \textit{srun-pa}, contain a wide variety of things such as pieces of paper with written mantras, small figurines of spirit
beings, and photographs of the Dalai Lama. *Srun-pa* are acquired from one's lama upon request and without charge. In addition to warding off disease, the *srun-pa* are thought to provide protection against the threat of a knife, a shot from a gun, and dangerous supernatural forces. Besides the *srun-pa*, other more specialized potions and charms are used for particular purposes. To guard against illness, for example, some of the villagers keep a bottle of holy water in their houses and, by taking a drop every day, they feel that they are protecting their health.

To know the future, the people use techniques of divination that provide general and specific predictions. Techniques of divination are numerous, but the most common are done with a string of rosary beads and dice. Divination with rosary beads is executed by choosing at random a bead near the middle of the rosary and then counting the beads by threes until the end of the string is reached. The remainder of the beads between the last set of three and the end are counted and judged as auspicious if their number is odd and inauspicious if the number is even. Odd and even numbers are similarly used in many forms of divination, which include the casting of dice, astrology, and manuals of divination. Another way to divine the future is through the services of a shaman who acts as a medium for supernatural beings. Tibetan shamans achieve a state of trance by directing repeated prayers and *mantras* toward their tutelary gods and when in this state they answer questions which their clients direct to them. Natural phenomena such as thunder are also interpreted as signs of future events and, like all other forms of Tibetan divination, they are used in decisions regarding future activities.
The most elaborate of the ad hoc rites is the celebration of the Tibetan new year, which occurs in the latter part of February or early March. At the turn of the year, or Lo-gsar, the villagers erect new prayer flags outside their houses, make offerings to the gods, and spend much time in socializing and feasting. Like other prayer flags, the Lo-gsar prayer flag is made from a long strip of thin cloth upon which Tibetan prayers have been printed in black ink by delicately carved wooden blocks. The cloth is fastened to a long pole, which is raised so that it stands just far enough above the roof to catch the wind. A special Lo-gsar offering, or Lo-gsar cho-pa, is made at the house altar by filling a cup with a small portion of all of the basic foods which are eaten at the new year's feasts. The altar is further decorated by marking it and the other rooms of the house with white spots made from a mixture of flour and butter. With the house so decorated, a series of meals is offered to relatives and friends who live in other households. The Lo-gsar meal differs from the daily meals of the people for it consists of small twisted breads called ka-zas and other dishes especially prepared for Lo-gsar guests. Guests at one of these meals must reciprocate by having their hosts to their houses for a Lo-gsar meal. People who dine together at Lo-gsar are considered to be close friends until the next Lo-gsar, when social relationships can be re-established by new invitations and another series of reciprocal dinners. The Lo-gsar meals of the two or three days before and after the turn of the year thus function as opportunities to establish new alliances within the village.
When a villager dies a funeral ceremony is required to remove the body and the spirit of the deceased from the world of men. Funerals sometimes are conducted by lamas, but deaths often take place in the winter months when the lamas are not available. In such instances, family members or friends of the deceased perform the necessary acts. The ideal Tibetan funeral requires enough lamas to keep a constant vigil on the corpse for several days. At the time of death, lamas are summoned to the house of the deceased, where they take up residence for an initial period of three days in which at least one of the lamas continually watches the body and says prayers and mantras over it. After this three-day portion of the funeral is completed, a text is read which is designed to guide the spirit of the deceased through the transitional period of forty-nine days between the time of death and the next reincarnation. When a lama or lamas are not available, the central acts of the rite may be performed by a non-specialist, who says simple prayers and generally keeps watch over the body until it is disposed of. During the autumn of 1973, a child in Dhorpatan died of whooping cough when lamas were not present to conduct the usual rites. The father of the child packed the body in a box lined with salt, sent word to a lama in Kathmandu to start the forty-nine day session of prayers, and had the child transported in the box to the lama so that he could complete the ceremony. Bodies are interred in graves in the earth, cremated on a funeral pyre, or thrown into the river. The choice between these alternatives is made by a rite of divination.
In addition to the ideas of *karma*, reincarnation, and accumulative sin, the cosmological motions of Tibetan culture include a myth of origin that explains the structure of the universe and the place of the major gods within it. Tibetans view the universe as being created in a series of concentric land masses, each of which is encircled by a body of water. Explanations of how these concentric islands were populated vary greatly but the most common idea holds that the god *sPyan-ras-gzigs* and his consort *sGrol-ma*, in the form of a monkey and a rock-demoness, went to live on the land mass that is presently inhabited by human beings. Soon thereafter, *sPyan-ras-gzigs* and *sGrol-ma* produced offspring in the forms of deities, demigods, human beings, ghosts, animals, and fiends. Each of these six types of offspring peopled one of the islands of the universe, which was pyramidal in shape with the most powerful beings at the center and others arranged in a hierarchy below them. Thus, the gods occupied the topmost and central island and the fiends lived on the lowest level on the island most distant from the center and peak. This explanation of the universe is the most complex of the versions known by the laity of Dhorpatan. In another version the universe has only three levels: a heavenly realm of gods, the human world, and an underworld of demons and hells.

Tibetan legends of origin merge with historical events in the character of *Srong-brtsan-sgam-po*, the first historical king of Tibet. *Srong-brtsan-sgam-po* is understood by Tibetans to be a reincarnation of the tutelary god of Tibet, *sPyan-ras-gzigs*, and as such he is revered as the god himself and the creator of the universe.
Successive kings and the chain of Dalai Lamas inherited the position of Srong-brtsan-sgam-po and perpetuated the image of the savior-leader. As the first of these rulers, Srong-brtsan-sgam-po built the first Buddhist temple in Tibet and thereby established the capital at Lhasa as a center of Tibetan religion. The later reincarnations of sPyan-ras-gzigs further developed Lhasa as a religious stronghold, and in ninth century mythology, Lhasa is portrayed as the heart of a demoness whose body covers all of Tibet. The goddess sGrol-ma also relates to an historical figure, and is thought to represent the two wives of Srong-brtsan-sgam-po. The Nepalese and the Chinese wives of the king were instrumental in bringing Buddhism to Tibet, and they are deified as sGrol-ma in her green and white forms. sGrol-ma's image as a benevolent saviouress is evident in the foregoing paragraphs where repeated mention is made of the many prayers addressed to her. The combination of mythological and historical roles of sPyan-ras-gzig and sGrol-ma allow understanding of the important part they play in the overall religious system of Dhorpatan.

In both Tarakot and Dhorpatan, diseases and economic uncertainties are factors that foster frequent recourse to supernaturalism. The greatest problem of health to the peoples in these two regions is probably parasites. Roundworms, tapeworms, hookworm, protozoa, amebic dysentery, and other gastrointestinal parasites physically drain the inhabitants of Tarakot and Dhorpatan. Some of the parasites make their presence known when they are passed from the host during the processes of elimination, and this visible evidence of
parasites within one's body gives rise to anxiety. Infections by these parasites are endemic and cause much physical discomfort. As a result of poor practices of sanitation, the use of night soil as fertilizer for vegetables, and the movement of herds and herders widely over the surrounding terrain, most bodies of water in both regions appear to harbor the parasites. The experience of my wife and myself are indicative of the prevalence of the parasites. After months of continual physical discomfort, we suspected that the entire surroundings were sources of infection. We thereupon began taking extraordinary precautions to protect our health. All of our food, with the exception of bread, was prepared in a pressure cooker and all dishes and utensils were carefully sterilized by placing them in boiling water immediately before use. We had from the beginning of the fieldwork boiled all water for drinking and household use, and we now began to follow the practice of washing our hands frequently in sterilized water. Other similar precautions were also taken, and our physical condition improved greatly. Our informants took none of these precautions and suffered obvious discomfort.

In addition to the parasitic infections, dermatological diseases are widespread in Tarakot, especially impetigo, which is almost endemic among young people. Many deaths occur annually from infectious diseases, which include cholera, smallpox, and whooping cough. Although not such a serious menace to their lives, the presence of venereal diseases, chickenpox, dental caries and abscesses, infectious hepatitis, bronchitis, and other illnesses are a threat to the villagers' well-being and a source of worry.
To treat these problems of health, the people have recourse to two types of practitioners, those who use supernaturalism and those who use chemical compounds. The Nepalese government has established a Nepalese para-medical technician in one of the villages of Tarakot. This man dispenses traditional South Asian medications of the kind called Ayur-vedic medicine to his patients, but he is not very successful in curing the sicknesses of the local people, and only his immediate neighbors bother to bring their maladies to his attention. A similar situation exists in Dhorpatan, where there is also a para-medical technician. This medical practitioner has been trained by Westerners who provided medical aid for the Tibetans in the early 1960s, but even with this Western training he has little success in solving the medical problems of the region. Most of the people in Tarakot and Dhorpatan take their problems of health to religious specialists who exorcise spirit beings that are thought to be the cause of the disorders or perform other rites to effect cures.

Uncertainties centered around economic matters in Tarakot and Dhorpatan give further reason for recourse to supernaturalism. The success of agriculture and pastoralism is never assured because of variations in the climate. Some years ago a drought in Tarakot resulted in a crop failure and the villagers were forced to consume their entire reserve of buckwheat. In Dhorpatan, an early snowfall once immobilized the yak herd in the high pasture, and all of the animals died as a result of starvation and freezing. Such caprices in the climate give rise to anxieties among the people and these are often dealt with by supernatural means. The rite of blessing
horses in Dhorpatan before the trading season begins is one of many examples of how supernaturalism is used to allay apprehensions about the local economy. In the four rites described in the following chapters, uncertainties of economy and health are specifically mentioned as problems which these supernatural acts are intended to overcome.
CHAPTER V

SOG SI-SNO, THE EXORCISM OF A SPIRIT

Tibetans believe in the existence of dangerous spirits who can cause illness or other problems for human beings. These spirits may take up residence in a villager's household, plaguing the members of the family until the spirit is exorcized from the house by supernatural means. To protect themselves against these spirits, Tibetans hire religious practitioners to conduct ceremonies which are designed to remove malevolent spirits from the human world. Malevolent spirits are first caught in ritual traps and then they are expelled by destroying their names in a fire. Exorcisms such as these are commonly performed by the more talented lamas of Tarakot.

When a household in Tarakot suffers from disease among the livestock, bad crops, illness, or other misfortune, religious ceremonies can be performed in an attempt to amend the problems. A local lama often is requested to conduct simple rites of blessing for the household. If, however, the problems are persistent, and a malevolent spirit is suspected as the source of the trouble, then a special ceremony, known as a Sog si-sno, may be conducted. Sog si-sno is a colloquial Tibetan term pronounced "shok shi-sno" and it can be translated loosely as "invitation to a cremation."

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A **Sog si-sno** is conducted late at night and early in the morning after extensive blessing rites. In the instance which I observed in Tarakot, these preparatory rites were conducted for four days previous to the exorcism. A black flag with a tantric design was raised on the roof pole of the house and a prominent Tibetan Buddhist lama of the **Bon** sect sat with his nine assistants in the main room in front of a temporary altar. The room was crowded with approximately 200 local villagers who had come to witness the events. As in the earlier blessing rites, the **Sog si-sno** began with the reading of Buddhist scriptures, the sounding of musical instruments, the burning of incense, offerings of food in a fire, and the drinking of large amounts of **chang** (an alcoholic beverage), but after two hours the announcement was made that no further entrances or exits could be made from the house and the door and the windows were barred.

Once the house was sealed and the malevolent spirit was incarcerated with everyone else inside of the house, the lama's assistants and the members of the household began to assemble the articles necessary for the capture and disposal of the spirit. Three "spirit traps" were placed in the house, one in front of the barred door and a second in the main room among the crowd. These traps were made with pieces of cloth which were covered first with a thin layer of black powder. The third trap was constructed by wrapping brightly colored cheesecloth around a square wooden frame. This trap enclosed a large kettle of mustard-seed oil which later was used to dispatch the spirit.
After two hours of scripture readings, mantra chanting, offerings, and musical renderings by the assistants, the senior lama covered his head with a heavy cloth and ordered that the lights in the house be extinguished. The villagers whistled shrilly and cymbals, horns, bells, and drums were sounded by the assistants; the lama had now entered the supernatural dimension in which the spirit existed and was pursuing it about the house. The lights were relit after a few moments and the head of the house and an assistant to the lama checked the powder traps. Examining each one carefully, they claimed to have found footprints (Tibetan-rkan-rjes) which the spirit had left in the fine powder. Each footprint appeared as a white dot that had come through the black powder overlay. The white dots were pointed out by the assistant with a Tibetan ritual dagger (phur-ba) and with extreme caution picked up with the tip of a knife and brought to the lama. This process of chasing the spirit and retrieving its footprints was repeated three times after which it was decided that no more footprints would appear. The footprints, or white dots, plainly stood out in the traps where no such dots could be distinguished before the lights were put out. Sitting with my knees crossed on the floor with the rest of the audience, the powder trap in the main room was no more than a few inches beyond my toes, but even at this proximity I failed to notice any mechanical act which might have caused the dots to appear. I can only surmise that their source was a masterly technique executed by the practitioners.

By counting and examining the spirit's footprints, the lama was able to determine if the spirit was of the regular variety or a
particularly powerful spirit and also its exact identity. The spirit left sixteen footprints, and this was a sign of a malevolent spirit of the regular type; if the footprints had numbered between twenty and thirty, this would have indicated that the spirit was a powerful one, capable of resisting the exorcizing potential of the Sog si-sno. Regular spirits are said to originate from people who have recently died, whereas particularly powerful ones are usually of greater antiquity. Identified as a regular spirit in this instance, the spirit was susceptible to the powers of the Sog si-sno. Regardless of the spirit's variety, supernatural aid is thought to be necessary for the removal of any spirit from one's house and the Sog si-sno ceremony is considered to be the most effective means at the villagers' disposal.

After studying the sixteen footprints, the lama announced that the spirit derived from a man who had died in the house several years before at the age of twenty-five. The deceased was the son of the present head of the house. The lama then divided the footprints into two equal portions and wrapped them inside two pieces of paper which were inscribed with Tibetan mantras and mandalas. With a long sword the lama tapped the two paper bundles and then repeated the act with a ceremonial hatchet. He began to chant with his assistants and after a few minutes he picked up the phur-ba and cut the strings which bound the bundles. The paper bundles were now folded into a black cloth and with a large red cloth the lama covered himself and the bundles containing the footprints. While covered in this manner, he said three sets of the mantra word "phat," each set containing
three utterances, and he did this with such heavy aspirations that the red cloth billowed out with his breath. After removing the red cloth, he transferred all of the footprints into one of the pieces of paper and sewed the paper inside a small square of black material. This parcel, which now contained the footprints, was to be buried by the lama at a later time. On the second paper, the lama wrote the name of the man who had died in the house and whose spirit now plagued the family. This paper, bearing the name of the deceased, was tied to a roof rafter so that it hung down a few inches above the center of the room where the cheesecloth trap and the mustard oil were positioned.

In front of the altar, an elderly assistant began a slow dance which symbolized the slaying of the spirit. The dance was done in a highly ritualistic fashion, characteristic of Tibetan Buddhist mudras. The mudra gestures and other more obvious symbolisms, dramatized the subduing of the troublesome spirit. With the same ceremonial hatchet and sword which were used earlier by the senior lama, the dancer pantomimed the slashing and chopping at an imaginary foe. The dancer repeated the mudra gestures with the phur-ba after the performance with the first two weapons. Once the dance had ended, the spirit's identification, capture, and sentencing were completed. Another session of scripture readings, offerings, mantra repetitions, and chang drinking marked the completion of the dance.

The climax of the Sog si-sno took place in the early hours of the morning. All of the villagers who had fallen asleep during the initial phases of the exorcism were aroused by their neighbors. One
could feel the anxiety mount as the senior lama moved toward the
center of the crowd and sat down facing the altar. Directly before
him stood the cauldron of mustard-seed oil. The cheesecloth trap
which previously had encircled the cauldron was now removed and a
large fire was kindled under the oil. Soon, the oil was boiling
vigorously and hanging straight above it was the paper containing
the name of the spirit's earthly embodiment. A vessel of chang was
brought to the lama. He took a long draught, bent over, and blew
strongly onto the surface of the fuming oil. He blew again and this
time the room seemed to be engulfed in fire, pressing many of the
villagers back against the walls. Paper, name, and spirit were dis-
integrated in the blast. The ceremony had concluded and the assem-
blage streamed out of the house into the falling snow.

The Sog si-sno is a combination of acts and beliefs from the
Great Tradition of Buddhism and the Little Tradition of Bon. An
identification of the elements present in the ceremony and an analysis
of their patterns of combination will help us to understand how Bud-
dhism and Bon are brought together in the Sog si-sno. To facilitate
the identification of elements, I divide the following analysis into
three portions: the first section deals with the artifacts, the
second with the behavior, and the last with the distinguishable phil-
osophies. Each of these categories is treated separately and the
interactions between the artifacts, behavior, and philosophies are,
for the most part, ignored for the sake of simplicity. It must be
kept in mind that I am now using the division of traditions only to
demonstrate that the actual cultural phenomenon, in this case the
Sog si-sno, is a single entity that has been synthesized from the two traditions.

A magical dagger, or phur-ba, was used on three occasions in the Sog si-sno: first, in pointing out the footprints in the powder traps; secondly, by the lama when he tapped the papers which were wrapped inside the black cloth; and third, in the dance which symbolized the slaying of the spirit. Mention of magical daggers can be found in any basic work on Tibetan Buddhism. An explanation of its use is given by Snellgrove (1968). Hoffman (1967) notes that magical daggers were used in Tibet during the death rites of the ancient Bon religion. Used in the indigenous religious practices of pre-Buddhist Tibet, the phur-ba is thus identified as originating from a Little Tradition.

The spirit traps of black and white powder and the third trap made from colored cheesecloth derive from a Little Tradition. A method used in old Tibet for the capturing and doing away with unwanted spirits involved the erection of a stick framework on which colored threads were strung. Known to Tibetans as mdo(s), these contraptions were thought to attract spirits by their bright colors and light structures (Stein, 1972). Built for the same function and almost in the same manner, the cheesecloth spirit trap of the Sog si-sno was a modified mdo(s). Specific mention of anything like a powder trap is lacking in the literature of either tradition but the practice of divining from footprints is an art performed by other Tibetan speaking peoples (David-Neel, 1971). The use of footprints
in this manner is definitely manipulative and, therefore, I assign
the powder traps to the Little Tradition.

Both of the traditions were represented by the objects on the
temporary altar and I have selected a few of these objects for
examples in our analysis. Several tankas (painted scrolls) with
depictions of Buddhist saints and fierce protectors of the doctrine
hung on the wall above the altar. Tanka images are known to be
Sanskritic in origin (Tucci, 1949). Many sacrificial cakes of barley
flour, or gtormas, were placed on the altar. Due to the Buddhist
pressures of the eighth century, gtormas were substituted for the
human and animal sacrifices which priests once carried out in the
autochthonous religion of Tibet. Juniper sprigs burnt on the altar
as incense, and this practice is definitely pre-Buddhist in origin.
A skull-cap containing a sacramental liquor rested on the altar and
these vessels probably diffused into Tibet from the tantric prac-
tices of sixth century India. Small butter lamps burned throughout
the night next to the other objects. The widespread usage of fire
for worship can be traced back through the Great Tradition to Vedic
times, and it also can be found in the practices of Bon.

Most of the musical instruments which were played in the Sog si-
sno are from the Little Tradition. Cymbals, bells, and horns are
known to have been used by the religious practitioners in Tibet during
pre-Buddhist days. The large drums which hung from the ceiling had
heads on both sides and this is a mark of a Sanskritic origin. Small-
er hand-drums which were played are characteristic of the shamans of
early Tibet (Stein, ibid.). Conch shells were used in ancient Tibet as well as in the Great Traditions of India.

Of the remaining objects little needs to be said to demonstrate the fact that syncretism is present in the collection of artifacts. The scriptures which were read are Buddhist in content. Drinking large quantities of alcohol might be a behavior condoned in the un-reformed sects of Buddhism, but in this case the beverage was chang and the consumption of this brew is known to have been practiced in pre-Buddhist rites (Snellgrove, ibid.). Brandishing a sword in a dance is reminiscent of the ceremonies performed in Tibet before the spread of Buddhism. A flag with a tantric design risen above the house is a good example of syncretism in itself; the design was Sanskritic, whereas the use of flags was a popular custom in old Tibet. When asked about the flag, the lamas said that it was a recent addition to their performance, and that the design had come from ideas found in their scriptures, whereas the flag itself was employed for its pleasant effect. The ceremonial hatchet which was used by the lama and also in the dance cannot be traced to the literature, but its pragmatic usage would suggest that it was from a Little Tradition. Having established the identity of the artifacts from the Sog si-sno, we find that the objects are divided disproportionately, with the majority coming from the Little Tradition.

Behavior observed in the Sog si-sno will now be classified in much the same manner as were the artifacts. Historical identifications of the acts are difficult to make due to the almost complete absence of such descriptions in the literature. Most of the assign-
ments, therefore, will be made according to the pragmatic or transcendental characteristics of the act.

Pragmatic behavior was aimed at the capture and dispatching of the spirit. The setting of spirit traps was instrumental to the acquisition of the footprints. Collecting and counting the white dots with the phur-ba facilitated the divination of the spirit's previous embodiment. The manipulative treatment of the dots with the various weapons enabled the lama to gain control over the spirit. By burning the paper which contained the spirit's name, the spirit was sent off to the hereafter. The means of all of these acts are highly manipulative and their goals are very concrete.

The manifest goals of the transcendental acts were entertainment and religious invocation rather than the manipulation of the spirit. The mudra dance functioned to entertain the audience and it lacked other specific goals. Throughout the night, Buddhist scriptures were read, not for manipulative purposes but as consecrations of the pragmatic acts. The villagers described the burning of the spirit's name as the time when the lama performed the feat of "breathing fire," and this was the important part of the evening for most of the crowd. This last act was a main highlight in the entertainment but it was also a significant act in the manipulation of the spirit, and thus the burning may be seen as being both transcendental and pragmatic.

An inquiry was made regarding the fate of the dispatched spirit, and from the explanations which were given by the villagers we may gain an understanding of the philosophies behind the Sog si-sno. When a villager dies, his spirit goes off to the forest and sometime
in the future the spirit is reborn into some animal form. The specific form of the next rebirth is determined by the villagers' behavior in his previous lives. Those who were questioned further on this point explained that a person who is pious is likely to be reborn into a higher animal form, and that the best people are reborn as lamas. However, an evil life increases the likelihood that a malevolent spirit will result and these spirits often remain in the former home to cause trouble. A spirit may also abide in the home if its funeral ceremonies are carried out improperly. Linger- ing in the human world as a spirit means that the individual cannot proceed to the next rebirth and this fate was seen by the villagers as much worse than a rebirth into the lowest animal form. The possibility of completely escaping the chain of reincarnation did not seem to exist in the villagers' minds.

Two belief systems are evident in the Tarakot conception of the afterlife. Reincarnation is the central idea in the villagers' explanation of a spirit's fate, and this concept can be traced back to the Upanishads of Brahmana India. Buddhist doctrine declares that negative behavior is recompensed in the hereafter by a low rebirth and a continuation of the cycle of rebirths in the samsa- raic world. However, the way in which the Tarakot villager perceives the notion of rebirth in relation to pious conduct, sinful behavior, and the rewards in the afterlife shows that another system of beliefs is present. The villagers believe that sinful conduct is punished by the inability to go on to the next rebirth; upon death the wayward person may be detained as a spirit in a transient
dimension between the previous life and the next. This idea goes against the philosophy of the Great Tradition. For the Tarakot villagers and other peoples, funeral ceremonies function to "open the door" for the deceased to the realm of the hereafter, and the mere thought of being stranded in a transient state is frightening (Van Gennep, 1909). This idea, found in conjunction with the concept of reincarnation, shows that a syncretism of beliefs is existent in the philosophy behind the Sog si-sno.

By examining the manner in which the artifacts, acts, and beliefs are combined in the Sog si-sno, we may perceive patterns which occur in this syncretism. I identify the majority of the artifacts in the ceremony as being from a Little Tradition. This skewed distribution reveals a tendency toward objectifying the abstract ideas in the Sog si-sno with the artifacts of Little Traditions. In the Sog si-sno, the objectification of religious beliefs is accomplished by the presence of objects which are seen, heard, smelt, and felt. The blast of heat and flame which occurred when the spirit was dispatched to the samsaraic realm of further rebirths was certainly effective in impressing everyone present. Through means such as this, syncretic religions use artifacts from Little Traditions when they popularize their abstract concepts and cast them into tangible forms.

In the Sog si-sno, both manipulative and non-manipulative behavior is performed. Manipulative acts such as the setting of spirit traps contain obvious cause and effect relationships for the
average villager who is steeped in magical beliefs. Non-manipulative
acts like the reading of scriptures and the performing of the mudra
dance play supporting roles by giving credence to the instrumental
behavior. These two sets of supernatural behaviors, one set from
each tradition, provide the laity and the practitioners of this
syncretic religion with a dual armoury of supernatural acts, thus
multiplying the possibilities of obtaining the footprints and rid-
ding the house of the spirit.

In the Great Tradition of Buddhism there exists a well developed
system of social sanctions which connects the ethical behavior of a
person with his fate after death; the key beliefs in this system are
karma, dharma, and the negative afterlife of samsaraic rebirths.
Wherever Buddhism is practiced, these beliefs give supernatural
sanction to the ethics which regulate human activities. Our example
of the Sog si-sno displays these beliefs but it also displays the
beliefs of a Little Tradition. When the two traditions dovetailed in
Tarakot, the concept of samsara was changed to a positive fate after
death and the lot of a transient spirit came to be thought of as a
negative realm for the deceased. This combination of beliefs allows
the villagers to maintain their ideas of spirits while they simul-
taneously embrace the doctrine of Buddhism. One of the main results
of this amalgamation is the transference of some of the ethical
sanctions from Buddhism to the Little Tradition. When the two tra-
ditions are brought together, the belief systems are synthesized and
the ethical sanctions which had previously surrounded only the Bud-
dhist beliefs now come into association with the people's concepts of
spirits. Presently operating as a single system of supernaturalism, the notion of spirits and the Buddhist ideals are both connected with the ethical sanctions which regulate the villager's life. This association of ethical sanctions with the beliefs of the Little Tradition may be exemplified by a situation in which a Tarakot man slaughters a cow, an act which would produce negative *karma*, and afterwards fears that he might become a malevolent spirit.
CHAPTER VI
THE ORACLE OF DPAL-LDAN LHA-VO

One of the ways which Tibetans divine the unknown is through the use of shamanistic mediums. Tibetans may gain a knowledge of some event in the future by employing the professional services of a Tibetan shaman, or lha-wa. A lha-wa communicates with supernatural powers by invoking deities through acts of propitiation. Once summoned, the deity possesses the lha-wa and uses him as a mouth-piece, answering questions asked by the lha-wa's clients and offering advice. I observed a lha-wa who went into a trance and predicted the future during my fieldwork in Dhorpatan. By describing and then discussing this ceremony, I will attempt to provide an understanding of this aspect of Tibetan Buddhism.

The lha-wa who resides in Dhorpatan is an elderly woman, who, because of her age and personal nature, is referred to by the fictive kinship term "An-e" which literally means paternal aunt. An-e can divine the unknown whenever she is possessed by the goddess dpal-ldan lha-mo. She first displayed this ability at the age of twelve when living in Tibet and ever since this time she has been able to achieve the same psychological state whenever she prays to this deity. Now, at the age of seventy, she is still capable of attaining these states of trance. She describes these states as periods of unconsciousness in which the goddess dpal-ldan lha-mo possesses
her and speaks from her mouth. When returning to consciousness, An-e claims to have no recollection of the events which transpired during the period of the trance. An-e, as other lha-wa, can obtain answers for all questions regarding the past, present, and the future, and she is especially proficient at divining the location of lost objects and promoting cures for certain types of illness. Although An-e is the only Tibetan in Dhorpatan who claims these powers, her neighbors do not see her activities as in any way unusual but they understand her behavior as typical of a lha-wa.

In order to witness the practices of a Tibetan shaman, I took the role of a potential client and asked An-e when she could assist me with her professional services. An-e replied that it was possible to invoke her tutelary goddess only at dawn, dusk, and at noon, as at other times of the day the goddess is either occupied with her daily business or at rest. We agreed on dawn of the following day as a mutually convenient time for the invocation.

I set out before dawn for An-e's residence, carrying the traditional gifts which are required of anyone who is seeking the services of a lha-wa. When I arrived at the renovated stable which serves as a home for An-e and her adult son, An-e was counting prayers on her rosary. Her son requested that I sit in the tiny room where the altar and the sleeping cots were located. I presented sticks of incense and a ceremonial scarf to An-e when she entered the room. She immediately placed these gifts on her altar.

In addition to the basic items which a Tibetan considers necessary for household worship, An-e's altar contains a metal disk
which she uses to communicate with her tutelary goddess. The shiny bronze disk stands in a bowl of uncooked rice on the altar. A disk such as this is known to Tibetans as a magical mirror, or me-lon. The me-lon is used by a lha-wa to predict the future or, when it is found in a Tibetan Buddhist house of worship, it is said to represent the philosophical concept of reflected consciousness. An-e sits in front of the me-lon and lights the sticks of incense.

While reciting mantras and prayers, An-e begins to dress herself in the costume of a lha-wa. She puts on a blouse of fine silk, a wine-red Tibetan dress, and an apron which covers her chest. A small metal plate is hung on a chain around her neck. Mumbling om mani padme hum over and over again, An-e wraps a long, white cloth around the top of her head. She takes a small hand-drum in her right hand and a brass bell in her left hand; both of these instruments have cloth streamers of the five Tibetan Buddhist colors handing from them and as she rings the bell and plays the drum the ribbons swirl around her arms. In time to the bell and the drum, An-e rhythmically chants two prayers several times in succession. These prayers are translated as follows:

To the north-west of Padmasambhava's country there is a tree in which there exists a pure and perfect jewel (Padmasambhava). He has many angelic companions there. I pray to you so that you may come here to purify me. (Repetitions of an esoteric mantra are said at this time.) I pray so that the beings of the six realms of the universe may be released from the bonds which tie them to their worlds.

I am offering incense to the lamas of the past, to the lamas of the present, and to the lamas of the future; to the perfect one who shows the path of reality, our Buddha
the savior; to the doctrine; and to the companions of this path—the clergy. (She now lists the names of the many Tibetan Buddhist deities and lamas to whom she is offering the incense. These deities include local gods of the earth and the mountains.)

These recitations continue for twenty minutes and throughout this period An-e has been working herself into a relatively emotional state. An-e plays the instruments to the utmost powers of her aged arms and shouts her prayers. Her son throws grains of rice in An-e's direction. By the end of these preparatory invocations An-e has achieved the necessary frame of mind for the summoning of the goddess dPal-idan lha-mo.

An-e dons an elaborate headdress, identical with those worn by other Tibetan lha-wa, which consists of many different objects. When worn, it extends about forty-five centimeters beyond the sides of her head, thirty centimeters above her, and its lower extremities hang down below her waist. Crowning the headdress are five cards in the form of a chaplet. On these cards, deities are painted to represent the Buddhas of the five directions. In front of the five cards are strings of beads, shells, and semi-precious stones. Brightly colored fans, painted to resemble rainbows, project from the sides of the headdress. Strips of cloth and old ceremonial scarfs hang down from the headdress, covering most of An-e's face. Once An-e secures and adjusts the headdress, she seems to become even more animated. Crying prayers and sounding the bell and drum, An-e rises to her knees. She requests a cup of tea from her son and, taking a few drops with her thumb and middle finger, she flicks the fluid into the air as a final offering to the gods.
Receding into a withdrawn mood, An-e is possessed by dPal-ldan lha-mo, and she enters a state of trance. An-e is still muttering prayers and mantras, but they are almost unintelligible at this point. The only thing which can be understood is a vague statement about the gods coming from different places to aid her in divining the future. Suddenly, she becomes excited and turning to face me she asks me in a sing-song voice why I have come to her. "Do you think that my powers are fraudulent or have you come to me in full faith? In the heavens the gods are well and here the human beings are well. Have you come to see if I truly am able to divine the future?" Her son convinces her that I have come to ask a specific question and he tells her that she should answer it to the best of her abilities. I confirm her son's comment and pose my question, "What is contained in my destiny?"

An-e looks into the me-lon to obtain the answers to my questions regarding the future. A butter lamp burns next to the me-lon and the shiny disk reflects this light as if the flame were in the me-lon itself. After gazing at the reflected light for only a few seconds, An-e turns away from the altar and sings the divination to me. The answers which An-e gives are positive, but they are conditioned upon my behaving in a proper Tibetan Buddhist manner. An-e stipulates that the prediction may not be accurate due to my improper behavior in Dhorpatan in the past. While in this state of trance, she offers advice for my self-conduct and assures me that if I follow her guides for ethical behavior I will be blessed with
a prosperous future. A translation of the prediction and sermon is given below.

It is difficult for the goddess dpal-ladan lha-mo to know anything about your life because you are not present when the community prayers are said to the Buddhist patron saint of Tibet, spyan-ras-gzigs. Do you have any interest in religion and do you wish to have a knowledge of your destiny and an ability to control it? (I reply in the affirmative.)

If you make offerings of butter lamps and the traditional seven cups of water, then your wife and child will be well. In these times, sons are desired and your wife now bears a son, but take care or your son may turn into a daughter. To prevent this you must avoid committing any sin. If your ways are good then you will have one son now and two daughters later. If you obey the laws of Buddhist doctrine then fortune will come to you as an ocean. You and your son will become as wealthy as if you received the milk of one thousand sheep. As your son grows older he will ask you to join him and the two of you will share your fortunes together.

A lama in Dhorpatan is conducting religious prayers and sermons from the beginning to the end of the summer, but you go fishing in the river instead of attending, and for the poor fish I say om mani padme hum.

I have a little advice for you. No one has lived in this world without passing away, and to collect masses of material possessions is a mistake. Remember that! You should use the material possessions for charity as the material things are, in themselves, empty. Remember that! Jealousy will block the path to reality. Remember that! Anger is like a rolling stone from a high, steep hill--one day the stone will fall on you. Remember that! One's fate is like a flag, you do not know which way it will go next. Remember that! Accumulating large amounts of sin is like throwing a stone into the deepest depths of the ocean--it will sink to the bottom. Remember that! Swearing is like lighting a fire in the forest--you will never be able to stop. Remember that! Being a thief is like being in the nude--you may suffer hot and cold at any time. Remember that! Your body is but blood and meal and it is like a borrowed material--one day you will have to go and leave it behind. Remember that! Family life is like people getting together at a fair, your paths are different. Remember that! Being a leader is like being lost in the darkness--one day you will have
to go alone. Remember that!

Now is the time to practice all of this. To be born into a human life is only today and if you always remember that death is coming then you will be on the right path. In remembering death say mani (Tibetan prayers) throughout every day. If you say mani as you walk, the prayers are multiplied 200,000 times. Lamas and gods have preached ever since the beginning. Son, be careful when you go. Look at your own mind, for that is the most beautiful of all things. It is the substance of the perfect reality—clear and unchanging.

An-e concludes the ceremony by giving homage to the leaders of the Kagyu-pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. She advocates the teachings of the present leader of this sect and recites the names of the previous fifteen reincarnated leaders. After requesting the gods, goddesses, and the angelic beings of the ten directions to bless her and to grant her perfect reality, she repeats Tibetan Buddhist and Sanskritic mantras and gradually begins to return to her normal state of mind. She informs me that the goddess dPal-lidan lha-mo has left her and that the me-lon has ceased giving visions of the future.

The common traits of shamanism are present throughout An-e's ceremony. Like many other shamans, An-e has chosen the role of a shaman in response to a "call" which she received from a supernatural being when she was a child. Ever since this time, An-e has been able to summon the same supernatural being who possesses her and speaks from her mouth. During these periods of possession, An-e can divine the unknown and cure illnesses for any individual who wishes to employ her services.
Shamans usually begin their careers after receiving a divine call and the call commonly comes in the form of an unusual psychological state. Frequently, the state occurs in the form of a trance in which a guardian or tutelary spirit comes to the individual in a vision (Norbeck, 1961). In her youth, An-e went into a state of unconsciousness for approximately one hour when praying to dPal-ladan lha-mo. While in this state, An-e visualized the goddess dPal-ladan lha-mo and then she performed acts of divination and healing. After the first trance, An-e was able to induce similar trances by vigorously praying to the goddess. Later in her shamanistic career, An-e began to use a magical mirror as an aid in receiving the visions from dPal-ladan lha-mo.

An-e's services extend within the realms of divination and healing. A client may gain a knowledge of events in the past, present, or future during her states of trance. The location of a lost object, the outcome of a crucial event, or the sex of a fetus can all be foretold with the help of An-e's tutelary goddess. An-e's techniques of healing involve the diagnosing of the underlying problem and then a suggestion for a cure. If the illness is seen to stem from the intrusion of some foreign object into the body, then its removal is accomplished through the traditional lha-wa fashion of sucking. An-e, like all other lha-wa, is said to be especially competent in curing the infectious virus Hydrophobia, Lyssa (rabies).

The shamanistic traits which are found in An-e's performance correspond with the features which distinguish magic and the Little
Tradition. Supernatural practitioners who deal with techniques of magic usually offer their professional services to individual clients rather than to groups. The professional-client relationship frequently exists between shamans and their consultants whereas priests of mass religions establish prophet-follower relationships with their laity. An-e's shamanistic ceremonies are directed toward specific goals such as the answer for a question or the cure for an illness. In the set of criteria which Mandelbaum (ibid.) uses to separate the Great and the Little Traditions, shamans and their states of possession are seen as indicators of the Little Tradition. A second criterion which Mandelbaum uses to distinguish Little Traditions is the use of supernatural practices as demonstrators of supernatural forces rather than as exemplars of ritual purity. An-e's rite serves to acknowledge the existence of deities and supernatural visions but it lacks Sanskritic ideas of pollution. The criterion of shamanism can thus be used to classify many aspects of An-e's rite as magical in nature and part of a Little Tradition.

I will now identify those elements in An-e's performance which derive from Buddhism. The portions of An-e's ceremony which are Buddhist include her moralistic diatribes and the Buddhist deities whom she mentions. I trace all of the moral points in An-e's divination to the philosophies of Buddhism. All of the deities whom she mentions can be found in the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism, and I trace each of these supernatural beings to its Indian predecessor.
An-e states that the prayers which are said during the organized religious ceremonies of the summer months are directed toward the god sPhyan-ras-gzigs and that I should also direct my worship toward this deity. sPhyan-ras-gzigs is a prominent deity in India, China, and Japan as well as in Tibet. This god originates from his Sanskritic predecessor, Avalokitesvara, who derives his existence from the Dhyani Buddha, Amitabha, and his Sakti, Pandara. Avalokitesvara is explained as being a bodhisattva who rules between the periods of the mortal Buddha Sakya and the future Buddha Maitreya. Reincarnations of Avalokitesvara include the first historical king of Tibet, Srong-brtsan-gam-po, and all of the reincarnated Dalai Lamas. sPhyan-ras-gzigs is considered to be the guardian deity of Tibet, and Tibetans address their prayers to him so that all human beings and other animals may one day obtain salvation (Gard, 1963).

An-e's tutelary goddess, dPal-ldan lha-mo, is a goddess of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon whose origin can be traced back to the deity Sri-Devī of pre-Buddhist India. dPal-ldan lha-mo resides on the highest of the ten levels of the Tibetan protective gods, known as the jik rten las das pa'i srung ma. Within this powerful group of elite deities, she is the chief guardian-goddess (de Nebsky-Wojkowitz, ibid.). Jaschke (ibid.) states that the term dpal, which appears in the goddess' name, is used in reference to deities of Tibetan shamans.

In the ceremony, An-e called upon Padmasambhava for his blessing. As we have already seen in the third chapter, historical
chronicals state that Padmasambhava came to Tibet from India in the latter part of the eighth century with the intention of converting the Tibetans to Buddhism. After Padmasambhava conquered the Tibetan demons with his magical powers, he was credited as the founder of Buddhism in Tibet. Padmasambhava's actual existence is uncertain but this figure's present importance lies in his status as a Buddhist saint.

The moral precepts which were expounded by An-e can be traced to the most basic tenets of Buddhist doctrine. Her harangue is broken down below into separate concepts and each of the concepts is referred to its source in Buddhist literature.

An-e condemned the collection of material possessions and this notion can be found in the Buddhist sermon known as the "Four Noble Truths." The "Four Noble Truths" declares that there is suffering in life and that the way to escape from the suffering is to reject worldly values such as material possessions. Rather than collecting material possessions, An-e suggested acts of charity as proper behavior. Acts of charity are commended as virtuous conduct in the early Buddhist sermon "The Diamond Sutra" (Wai-tao, 1970). An-e warned me against the emotion of jealousy, and this idea is stated as the eighth demeritorious action in the first step of the "Eightfold Path" (Nyanatiloka, 1970). Anger follows jealousy both in An-e's advice and in the list of Buddhist demerits; anger is the ninth demeritorious action in the first step of the "Eightfold Path." Comparing one's fate with the unpredictable flapping of a flag is symbolic of the central tenet of transience
in Mahayana Buddhism. The dangers of accumulative sin of which An-e spoke are recognizable as the concept of *karma* in India at the time Sakya Buddha established his religious order. This idea was later expressed in Tibetan Buddhism as the concept of *sdig-pa*. I was warned by An-e of the evils of swearing and this moralism is found in the "Eightfold Path," the third step, the third part—the avoidance of harsh language. The evils of stealing are condemned repeatedly in the "Eightfold Path." An-e's depiction of the impermanent body is similar to the description of the body in the Tibetan Buddhist scripture, *The Supreme Path*, "Our body being illusory and transitory, it is useless to give over-much attention to it" (Evans-Wentz, 1970). This same scripture also contains passages which reflect An-e's sentiments of family life, "One doeth good to oneself by departing from home and kindred..." In the ninth of the "Ten Grievous Mistakes," *The Supreme Path* cautions one against taking positions of leadership. The fear of death is used by An-e as an incentive for adhering to her moral edicts. In the "Four Noble Truths," death is portrayed as one of the major sufferings which can be avoided only by adopting proper Buddhist behavior.

The relationship between shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism in An-e's ceremony can be summarized briefly as four points of interaction. First, a *lha-wa* can offer more reliable services to a client who regularly attends the organized Tibetan Buddhist religious services. Second, the past actions of the client are judged according to the standards of Buddhist ethics and these judgments are taken
into account when a lha-wa divines the client's fate. Third, an individual who has been pious in the past can expect a favorable prediction from a lha-wa but these predictions may come to pass only if the client continues to live in a devout manner. Fourth, a lha-wa can provide a client with ethical guides for his self-conduct and such guides are the basic precepts of Buddhist philosophy.
CHAPTER VII

THE BOOK OF MO

Tibetan texts are, to a great extent, religious in nature, containing information on the rites, deities, and the beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism. Most of this literature originates from the Buddhist scriptures of India, which were written before the end of the tenth century. The majority of Tibetan texts were carefully translated from their Indian originals so that exact meanings would be preserved. However, some of the early translators deliberately added ideas and practices of Bon to the Tibetan texts in order to make them more acceptable to the Tibetan people. The Bon-po and the practitioners of the other Tibetan Buddhist orders continued to integrate Bon and Buddhism in texts for several centuries after the initial translations were completed. This gave rise to a body of literature which was highly syncretic in its nature.

Divination is one of the many forms of magic which is conjoined with Buddhism in Tibetan Buddhist texts. A book which is frequently found in Tibetan homes and in Tibetan houses of worship is the highly standardized text of divination known as the book of mo. Books of mo seem to be used in every sect of Tibetan Buddhism and mo divination is the most common way which Tibetans predict the unknown. The word "mo" means prediction in Tibetan and, following the use of
this term in Tibetan, I refer to the book and to the individual fortunes within the book as mo.

Books of mo generally are divided into two parts: at the beginning of the text, a short preface is provided and the remainder of the work consists of a number of predictions. In the preface, one finds instructions for the proper usage of the book. These instructions list the ritual practices which must be performed in order to obtain an accurate prediction. The individual predictions vary from very auspicious to very inauspicious with the odd number predictions being favorable and the even numbered predictions being unfavorable. Each prediction, or mo, contains a list of the acts which the consultant should or should not undertake in the immediate future. In the even numbered mo, rites are suggested for the prevention of the bad luck which these mo predict. Odd numbered mo describe one's future success and good fortune. The amount of detail contained in both the preface and in the predictions is determined by the length and quality of the particular copy of the mo.

Tibetans may use books of mo to foretell the success of a future act, to determine the outcome of an illness, to divine the location of a lost object, or to settle an argument. These divinations are done by two different methods. A small minority of mo texts contain a series of drawings. Each drawing has a number corresponding to one of the predictions in the book, and by randomly selecting one of these drawings, a prediction can be obtained. The more common variety of mo text uses three dice to choose a prediction.
inside a small box or can, the dice are always kept with the text itself inside the folds of a square piece of cloth.

The relative importance of the question at hand determines the amount of elaboration which is invested in the rite of divination. For questions of minor importance, the consultant might whisper a mantra into his closed fist containing the dice and, while looking upwards, drop them into their receptacle. If the dice roll to an unlucky even number then the individual, without bothering to read the prediction, may interpret this as an unfavorable sign and act accordingly. If, however, the dice turn up an odd number then the person would open the book of mo to the number appearing on the dice and delight in the particulars of the favorable prediction. Highly accurate predictions for the matters of great importance require the performance of complex rites, the repetition of prayers, meditations, and initiations into the art of mo divination by an adept. In such instances, the prediction is read carefully, regardless of the number, and any precautions which are suggested are carried out in detail.

Books of mo are similar to all other Tibetan religious texts in that the pages are rectangular with script on both sides of the page. Most books of mo are printed from wood-blocks whereas others are written by hand. Mo texts range in length from twenty pages to several hundred pages. Wooden panels are frequently used to cover the first and the last pages of the text, serving to protect the books from wear. The title of these books, and all sacred words appearing within the text are written in Sanskrit. Carefully folded
inside their cloth covers, books of mo are kept near the altar in
private households and in Tibetan houses of worship.

For a more intimate understanding of the book of mo, I will now
examine a portion of an individual text. Published translations of
Tibetan literature do not as yet include a book of mo and, therefore,
this translation has been made from a copy belonging to a household
of the Dhorpatan settlement. The book which I have used for the
following translation was brought out of Tibet in 1959 and it was
used frequently by the family before and after it was carried into
Nepal. This particular book of mo is representative of the more
common variety: the predictions are obtained by casting dice and the
text is a wood-block print which is sixty-five pages in length. I
have translated the preface and two consecutive predictions which
were selected at random from the body of this text. As in all Tibetan
literature, this book contains many esoteric allegories, and thus I
have translated figuratively so that the material can be clearly
understood.

How to See through dpal dmag-zor rgyal-mo:
and Its Descriptions
(Preface)

I give all of the perfect realities (dnos-grub) at
the thought of you, dpal dmag-zor rgyal-mo. You are the
boundless powered one. You are the store of all wisdom.
I receive you here as a guest. You astonish me by your
abilities of seeing cause, methods, and thoughts. You
see all by your constant watch in space with your wide
empty eyes. You pleasantly reveal everything and you
please all of the saints who watch you.

Those who wish to worship dpal-ltan lha-mo and to
perceive things by the mo should have an image of dpal-
ltan lha-mo in the form of a figurine or a tanka. In
front of this image you should place a plate full of black barley and on the barley you should put the dice. Any offerings which you have for the goddess should be put on the altar at this time. The following prayer must be said: 'I will become a fierce deity who is ruling and empowering the entire world. The Tibetan letter hum comes out of my heart after I have achieved this form, and from the letter hum a light issues out toward the five sisters of dPal-ldan lha-mo (Tse-rin moed-lha). This light requests their assistance in determining the past, the present, and the future, and it especially requests their aid in obtaining the difficultly achieved perfect reality, gnos-grub.'

Now you should meditate, during which time you should keep your thoughts in accordance with the following mantras. 'Please tell me the absolute truth about the subject which I have in mind.' This mantra is to be said twenty-one times. (Two additional prayers and one other Sanskritic mantra called the yi-ge brgya are suggested for repetitions at this point in the mo.) You are directed to continue these repetitions and meditations until you are absolutely sure of your purification.

Take the dice into your hand and while they are in your fist you should say the mantra of na-mo to the dice in the following manner: 'The truths of all the lamas in their successive lives, the truth of Buddha the enlightened one, the truth of the religion, the truth of the clergy, the truth of all of the male and female guardians, and especially the truth of dPal-ldan lha-mo, dMag-zor rgyal-mo and all of her angelic companions. By the blessing of this great truth show me the best solution to my question.' You should reflect on the question which you are asking as you carefully drop the dice into their receptacle with your eyes looking upward.

(Mo number twelve)

If you get mo number twelve, it is very unlucky. Getting this mo is, for example, like a tree falling or a monkey slipping from a branch. This mo indicates that there is impending danger for every member of your family. To avert this danger you must say a prayer which demonstrates your respect for the high clergy and you should also light butter lamps. If you get this mo you must say a specific prayer and perform the religious rite of a fire offering (sByin-sreg) and then you should make large contributions (sPon-dag) to a lama or to a monastery. A lama should be enlisted to do a rite of worship at a stupa with water and barley. This lama should recite many
prayers and he should concoct a mixture of minerals and foods in an earthenware pot. The pot and its contents (bum-ster) are to be placed in your house so that your family members will be blessed with well-being and prosperity.

The good luck may have gone out of your house, and to get it back you must recite certain prayers. The first entreaty which you should say is the prayer known as 'The Summoning of Blessings' or 'The Return of Fortune' (gyan-agugs). There may be, at this time, a little ill fortune in your house but if you repeat the necessary prayers then all will be well. For your wealth, the luck may also be bad, but if you say the prayers then the danger will pass and your wealth will be secure. The luck and the fortune may also have left your animals. A prayer said to the god of animals will remove the bad luck from them. Your lama will tell you the number of times that you should repeat these prayers.

If you are asking the mo for a decision regarding some business transaction which you are presently considering, then you should say a prayer; but even after you have said this prayer you are still not assured that the transaction will be successful.

If you are performing the mo to determine the fate of someone who is ill and this person was born in the year of the monkey or the cock, then this mo is an especially bad omen. You should take the sick person to a medical lama and if the lama’s medicine does not bring about a cure you should pray a great deal.

If you are using the mo to divine your destiny for the following year, then there is a danger of sickness. For example, sickness may come in the form of poisoning or in the form of a stroke caused by filth. Vomiting blood, heart disease, illness of the upper half of the body, or headache might also plague you and your house. To prevent these problems you should say prayers and perform religious ceremonies as the sGrol-ma gyu-mdos or the sByin-greg. A prayer should be said to prevent the evil actions of ghosts. The spirit of water bodies, klu, must also be placated with prayers. Such actions will help to ward off the threat of sickness which is imminent in the year to come.

If you are doing the mo to learn the outcome of a grave illness then there is danger of death. You may help to prevent the death by undertaking rites and reciting additional prayers. A prayer for long life should be said 100,000 times. Another prayer of a similar nature must be said by a lama, and this lama will give you consecrated pills which will prolong your life. The act of saving a
life will aid you in avoiding death. To buy an animal which would otherwise be slaughtered or in some other way to prevent a death will be beneficial to you at this time. An act of charity should also be done.

If the dice turn up the number twelve when you are trying to decide whether to begin a certain activity, then this mo is not especially good or bad. The activity being considered may, however, be thwarted by the presence of some unlucky object in your house. This unlucky object is probably a recent acquisition and its presence in the house should be detected and it should be removed. You must say two prayers out of a prayer book 100 times each day and perform a rite such as the sGrol-ma gyu mdos.

If a government official casts this mo it is very bad. There will be no sons but only daughters coming to him in the future.

If this mo is being done to determine the success of a future transaction then be watchful, for your business partner may cheat you. To remove the possibility of this happening you should erect prayer flags, offer a smoky fire of juniper branches to the gods, and say prayers which request the blessing of your business venture.

If you are consulting the mo to ascertain the date of the return of a friend or a family member, then the person may come quickly. If they do not return presently, then they will not return for a long time.

If you are using the mo to decide whether or not to do some trading, then the time is auspicious if the items to be traded are butter or cheese. You should be able to find a ready market for these goods. Any other type of trading will be like bubbles on the water.

If you are doing this mo for a decision regarding travel, then it is a very bad time to start a journey. Misfortunes such as the meeting of highway robbers or a fall from a horse may await you.

If you are asking the mo about the location of a missing object, then the object has been stolen. The thief is nearby among your family or neighbors and if you are clever there is a chance that you may recover your missing possession.

(Mo number thirteen)

The person who casts the number thirteen on the dice probably will see good fortune in his future. For those who hold positions of leadership, this mo is particularly
good if a little worship is performed.

If the mo is being consulted for the well-being of the family, then all of the members will have a long, happy and prosperous life. The ambitions and goals of the family will be achieved.

If you are coming to the mo in order to determine an auspicious location for the site for a new house, then the place that you have in mind is a good one.

If the mo is being done by a nomad who is pondering the suitability of a promising pasture, then the pasture is good and your animals will thrive there.

If you are performing the mo with the desire to know the destiny of your life, then getting this mo is like finding a gem in the ocean.

If you are asking the mo about the future state of your wealth, then you can be assured that your treasure will increase. Gold and cash will be coming to you shortly.

If you are consulting the mo due to a concern for your animals, then you should perform the ceremony of worship by fire so that their health will be ensured. This rite must be carried out for seven days. Do not take any new possessions into your house and do not give any of your possessions away during this seven day period or the good fortune may leave your house.

If you are doing this mo in regards to a legal matter, then the result of the court action will probably turn out in your favor, but you must pray to your family's tutelary god. A lama should be sought to perform the ceremonies which will aid you in court.

If this mo involves a person who is ill, then the person will recover. The disease will give way to a state of health like the blossoming of a flower bud. In illness characterized by external heat or in problems having to do with the appendix, the prediction is not as favorable, but the individual probably will recover.

If you are coming to the mo for a general knowledge of your immediate future, then by casting the number thirteen it is like sunlight shining on your pot of minerals ( bum-gter). Your manner of thought will be pleasant and your desires will be attained.

If you are performing the mo to find out about a present illness, then you are suffering due to the evil spirits who cause disease (gdon). However, the gdon may be exorcized by the burning of juniper and the saying of eight different prayers.
If you are using the mo to determine the effectiveness of a medical lama to whom you are thinking of bringing your problems of sickness, then go to this doctor right away. By delaying your visit to the doctor you are only making it more difficult for the doctor to cure you. You probably will be cured if you go immediately and if the doctor tries his utmost to help you. To aid the doctor in his attempts to cure you, you should say a prayer to the god of water bodies, the klu.

If you are a government official and are using the mo to predict the possibility of fulfilling your desires, then you can feel confident that your aspirations will come to pass.

If you are consulting the mo due to a fear of your enemies, then do not worry, for there will be no one who will try to harm you.

If you are coming to the mo to ascertain the date on which a friend or family member will return from a journey, then you can be assured that the person will come soon and be bearing good news.

If you are doing the mo in order to gain a knowledge of the outcome of some future business event, then consider yourself blessed for you will be receiving a profit.

If you are performing the mo because you are trying to recover a lost possession, then you will find it in the east. Someone may return the object to you, and if neither one of these things happens in a short time, then you can assume that there is little chance of recovering your possession.

From the preceding translations, we may see that elements from Buddhism play a major role in the preface and in the first prediction. In the preface, directions are given for the propitiation of the goddess dPal dma-gzor rgyal-mo by means of specific prayers. Prediction number twelve suggests prayers and rites for the prevention of the misfortunes which it foretells. Relatively little mention is made of Buddhist elements in prediction number thirteen and where they do occur in this prediction, they are suggested as means for ensuring good fortune.
In the title and the preface of the translation, we see that mo divination is placed within the domain of the Buddhist deity dPal dmag-zor rgyal-mo. This goddess, who is known as Sri-Devi in Sanskrit, is a form of dPal-ldan lha-mo and she is considered to be one of the highest ranking protective gods of Tibetan Buddhism. Her rank is expressed by the term rgyal-mo, which means queen. She is the chief guardian goddess of the Tibetan pantheon and the protectress of the dGe-lugs sect (Tucci, 1949). dPal dmag-zor rgyal-mo is differentiated from the other forms of dPal-ldan lha-mo by the word zor in her name. Zor, in Tibetan, means the sharp edge of a sword and in the goddess' name it denotes militancy, so that dPal dmag-zor rgyal-mo is the warlike form of dPal-ldan lha-mo.

The tutelary goddess of the book of mo is described at length by de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (ibid.). The first paragraph of his description gives an idea of her stunning appearance.

...the goddess is of a dark-blue hue, has one face, two hands, and rides on a mule. With her right hand she brandishes a large sandal-wood club adorned with a thunderbolt and with her left hand she holds in front of her breast the blood-filled skull of a child, born out of incestuous union (nal thod). She wears a flowing garment of black silk and a loin-cloth made of a rough material. Her ornaments are a diadem of skulls, a garland of freshly cut heads, a girdle of snakes, and bone ornaments, and her whole body is covered in the ashes of cremated corpses. She has three eyes, bares her fangs, and the hair on her head stands on end. A khram shing is stuck into her girdle and she carries a sack full of diseases (nad rkyal) and a pair of dice (gsho rde'u). Above her head is a panoply of peacock feathers. In her retinue appear countless bdud, black birds, black dogs, and black sheep.
dPal dmag-zor rgyal-mo presides over the realm of divination and only through propitiation of her can one gain omniscience. This goddess is described in our translation as a medium who can convey divine truths. Only by approaching her with the proper supplications and efforts of concentration demanded in the preface can an individual actuate the book of mo to its fullest potential and partake of its magical powers.

The book of mo which I have used for translation is not exceptional in its assignment of a Buddhist deity as a guardian over divination. An archeological excavation in Turkestan unearthed a book of mo in which the goddess dPal dmag rgyal-mo maintained a similar tutelary role (de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, ibid.). However, not all books of mo are overseen by this goddess, for Waddell (ibid.) states that he has observed a book of mo whose tutelary deity is Jam dpal dbyangs, or, in Sanskrit, the bodhisattva Manjusri. Some member of the Buddhist pantheon always reigns over Tibetan books of divination, but the specific deity who maintains this position may vary from text to text.

An act of tantric meditation is suggested in the preface as a means of gaining access to dPal dmag-zor rgyal-mo's powers of divination. The consultant is instructed to visualize himself as a fierce Tibetan Buddhist deity. Once the individual is completely convinced of this transformation, he then transmits a colored ray of light from a mantra letter in his heart to a form of dPal dmag-zor rgyal-mo. The deity, in turn, bestows supernatural capacities on the
meditator. These supernatural capacities are described in our translation as the achievement of dnos-grub and the ability to know the past, the present, and the future. A knowledge of the dimensions of time can be seen as the omniscient powers of divination, whereas the achievement of dnos-grub refers to the acquisition of transcendental understanding.

In the two predictions of the translation, Buddhist prayers and ceremonies are listed for the prevention of misfortune and the ensuring of good luck. To avoid the inauspicious events which are foretold in prediction number twelve, a sGrol-ma gyu mdos ceremony can be performed in which offerings are made to the goddess sGrol-ma as a means of expiating sin. The sPon-dag rite requires that substantial contributions be made to a lama or to a monastery if the impending disasters in the prediction are to be averted. The auspicious events which are described in prediction number thirteen can be secured with a little worship in the form of prayers, offerings through fire, and exorcisms with the smoke of juniper. This prediction contains only a few Buddhist elements in comparison with the many which are found in the preface and prediction number twelve.

The Buddhist elements which appear in the book of mo function to validate the mo predictions. The Buddhist worship which one performs before casting the dice acts as a confirmation of mo divination. An individual who receives an auspicious mo can secure his good fortune with additional worship. The faith of the consultant is bolstered by the omniscient powers which are conferred upon him through an act of tantric meditation. These Buddhist elements
sanctify the mo predictions by connecting the act of divination to the greater supernatural forces in the system of Tibetan Buddhism.

A second interaction between Buddhism and divination involves the support which divination gives to Buddhist practices. Mo divination promotes Buddhist practices by requiring Buddhist entreaties and other acts. These practices empower the consultant, the dice, and the book of mo with the ability to perceive the unknown. As we have noted earlier, the degree of accuracy desired in a mo divination determines the amount of Buddhist worship required; a very accurate prediction demands many prayers and sustained meditations whereas relatively unimportant matters can be divined with only a short mantra. When an inauspicious prediction is divined, the consultant may avert the predicted misfortune with additional Buddhist worship.

In the foregoing paragraphs we have seen how Buddhism and mo divination confirm each other and use one another for support. The book of mo is a coalescence of Buddhism and divination and it serves to alleviate anxieties regarding the unknown through the propitiation of Sanskritic gods. An understanding of the syncretic nature of the mo is gained by looking at the prayers, mantras, and the act of meditation which it suggests, but I have refrained from mentioning the ceremonies in this discussion of interrelationships. The ceremonies suggested in the book of mo are described so briefly that it is impossible to tell how the ceremonies relate to either Buddhism or to divination. To include these ceremonies in this analysis, it is necessary to examine one of these ceremonies in detail and I do this in the next chapter with a study of the sGrol-ma gyu mdom.
CHAPTER VIII

THE SGROL-MA GYU MDOS EXPIATION

In the preceding chapter, I noted several ceremonies which were suggested in the preface and in two predictions of the book of mo. These ceremonies were not described in detail in either the mo or in our last chapter and thus the relationship between the ceremonies and the art of mo divination is not revealed. One of the ceremonies suggested in the book of mo, the sGrol-ma gyu mDos, is an expiation of sin which is accomplished through propitiations and offerings made to the Tibetan goddess sGrol-ma. The sGrol-ma gyu mDos ceremony is performed as an organized rite by the Tibetans of Dhorpatan every summer. A description of this ceremony and a discussion of its underlying philosophy will facilitate an understanding of how the ceremonies in the mo are related to divination and to Buddhism.

Before we begin to deal with this ceremony, however, it is appropriate to re-state the function which the sGrol-ma gyu mDos serves in mo divination. A performance of this ceremony was suggested twice in our translation, both times in the inauspicious prediction number twelve. sGrol-ma gyu mDos was recommended, first, as a prevention for illness and, second, as a means of removing bad luck which may have been brought inadvertently into one's house. From
these applications, the ceremony can be understood as an act that
can remove undesirable supernatural forces. We will see in this
chapter how the sGrol-ma gyu mdo, by techniques of magic and
Buddhist concepts of sin, is able to purify a person who consults
the book of mo and allay anxieties about inauspicious mo predictions.

The Tibetans of Dhorpatan perform sGrol-ma gyu mdo in a
community rite at the end of the sixth Tibetan month (in 1973 this
 corresponded to the latter portion of August). In all of its phases,
the ceremony lasts for approximately two weeks and it is the most
demanding rite of the year for the participants in terms of time and
devotional exertions. The central theme of sGrol-ma gyu mdo is the
expiation of sin through propitiation, self-denial, and acts of
magic. At the climax of the ceremony, the sins of the villagers are
absolved by the symbolic destruction of figurines and a mdo.

sGrol-ma gyu mdo begins with the construction of a thread-
cross, or mdo. Made of delicate, symmetrical weavings of colored
threads, the mdo is assembled over a period of several days in the
house of worship, or gompa, of the Sa-skya sect. The mdo is built
upon a wooden base which is approximately one meter square. Six-
tiered levels representing the dimensions of the Tibetan universe
rise from the base. On each of these levels are numerous small figures
which are pressed out of clay from a multiple wooden mold called a
zan par. Images of demi-gods, human beings, and animals and other
inhabitants of the Tibetan universe, are pressed out and placed on
the tiers appropriate for them. In a small house at the top of this
miniature universe, a figurine in Tibetan dress is mounted on the stuffed image of a horse. The vertical axis of the main thread-cross is anchored into the center of the wooden base. Other wooden shafts come up from the outer margin of the base, and on these shafts, and on the vertical axis, horizontal sticks are secured to form crosses. On these crosses, brightly colored threads are carefully strung in diamond shapes. Dyed patches of wool are affixed to the tops of the thread-crosses which are located at the front of the base. Once completed, the entire mdos stands three and one-half meters high and consists of thirty separate thread-crosses.

The mdos serves two major functions in the sGrol-ma gyu mdos. The most important role which the mdos plays is that of a receptacle for the forces of sin which are subjugated during the ceremony. Once the evil powers are transferred to the mdos, they are contained there for later destruction. In the initial phases of the ceremony, the mdos provides a temporary abode for the goddess sGrol-ma. The colored patches of wool are supposed to represent clouds floating around the residence of the goddess. Offerings which are given to her on the last days of the ceremony are made in the hope that she will aid the Tibetans as they try to gain control over the evil powers of sin.

Once the mdos is constructed, the villagers come to the gompa and take part in religious services which last for several days. The villagers bring cloth and other materials to the lama's assistants so that they can make three figurines in the representation of a man,
a woman, and a lama—all in Tibetan dress. These figurines, like the mdos, serve as receptacles for sin but, in contrast with the mdos, the figurines are not completed until just before the climax of the ceremony. One of the main ways which the Tibetans transfer their sins to the dolls and the mdos is through numerous propitiations of the goddess sGrol-ma. Each day of the ceremony sees the villagers circumambulating the sacred mani wall in front of the gompa and performing prostrations in its direction as they recite om mani padme hum and count the mantras on their rosaries. Throughout most of the days of sGrol-ma gyu mdos, the villagers sit inside the gompa and chant the prayers, which are led by the reincarnated lama. Another means which they use to transfer their sins in the ceremony is through fasting, or bsnyen-gnas. bsNyen-gnas includes abstention from food, drink, and speech for twenty-four hours on alternate days. Although not all of the villagers observe bsnyen-gnas, this practice is considered to be the most effective means of transferring sin.

The prayers which are repeated during sGrol-ma gyu mdos are the same ones which are said whenever the goddess sGrol-ma is placated. Waddell (ibid.) provides us with a somewhat Christianized translation of these prayers and by quoting a portion of his work we may gain an idea of the content of the entreaties. The services begin at eight in the morning with two short prayers:

Hail! O! verdant Tara!  
The Saviour of all beings!  
Descend, we pray Thee, from Thy heavenly mansion, at Potala  
Together with all Thy retinue of gods, titans, and deliverers!  
We humbly prostrate ourselves at Thy lotus-feet!  
Deliver us from all distress! O Holy Mother!
We hail Thee! O rever'd and sublime Tara!
Who are adored by all the kings and princes
Of the ten directions and of the past, present and future.
We pray Thee to accept these offerings
Of flowers, incense, perfumed lamps,
Precious food, the music of cymbals,
And the other offerings!
We sincerely beg Thee in all Thy divine Forms
To partake of the food now offered!
On confessing to Thee penitently their sins
The most sinful hearts, yea! even the commiters of the
Ten vices and the five boundless sins
Will obtain forgiveness and reach
Perfection of soul--through Thee!
If we (human beings) have amassed any merit
In the three states,
We rejoice in this good fortune, when we consider
The unfortunate lot of the poor (lower) animals
Piteously engulfed in the ocean of misery.
On their behalf, we now turn the wheel of religion!
We implore Thee by whatever merit we have accumulated
To kindly regard all the animals.
And ourselves!
When our merit has reached perfection
Let us not, we pray Thee,
Linger longer in this world!

Offerings are made to sGrol-ma after the morning prayers
and again after the completion of the sGrol-ma prayer, which is
said until noon. The sGrol-ma prayer consists of twenty-one stanzas,
eight of which are translated in Waddell (Ibid.). I quote two of
these stanzas below as an example of the sGrol-ma prayer:

(stanza number three)
Hail! to Thee whose hand is decked
By the lotus, golden blue.
Eager Soother of our woe,
Ever tireless worker, Thou!

(stanza number seven)
Hail! with Thy dread "tre" and "phat"
Thou destroyest all Thy foes:
Striding out with Thy left foot
Belching forth devouring fire!
The villagers of Dhorpatan repeat this prayer until the lama who leads the prayers stops the repetitions and asks an older man sitting next to him how many sGrol-ma prayers have been said so far. Calculating the number on his rosary, the old man answers "100." The lama declares that one hundred will suffice and he reads two more short prayers which conclude the morning service. Except for the days which have been set aside for bsnyen-gnas, the congregation is dismissed at noon for lunch. Returning at one o'clock, the group intones a set of prayers similar to those of the morning. Assistants to the lama continue to assemble the dolls and they prepare buttered tea which is consumed in copious amounts throughout the afternoon by everyone present.

During the two weeks of the sGrol-ma gyu mdos, the villagers bring offerings from their homes and present them to the goddess sGrol-ma at the gompa. A wide variety of items are found among the offerings and not all of them are the usual Buddhist type. Joints of meat and cuttings of human hair are piled alongside several kinds of grain, clarified butter, potatoes, turnips, flour, tea, cloth, Nepalese currency and semi-precious jewels. These offerings are placed between the mdos and the figurines by the villagers with the belief that the making of offerings to sGrol-ma will help to remove the sins which they have accumulated throughout the last year.

On the final day of sGrol-ma gyu mdos, the villagers remove the last traces of their sins by rubbing them off with a piece of consecrated dough. These lumps of dough are called chang bu
(de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, ibid.) and they are used like scrubbing pads on the areas of the body which are particularly common loci for the accumulation of sin--around the neck and the inside of the elbows. The chang bu are either rolled into balls or squeezed in the fist to form a wavy-shaped mass. Tibetans explain the wavy shape as a representation of the different realms of the universe. After the chang bu has cleaned its owner of sin, it is placed in the pile of offerings between the mdos and the three figurines in Tibetan dress.

sGrol-ma gyu mdos is concluded on the twenty-ninth day of the sixth Tibetan month with a symbolic destruction of the collected sin. On this day, the figurines and the mdos which contain all of the villagers' sins are burned or thrown into a body of water. The choice of destruction by fire or water is made by the lama through astrological divination. In 1973, the lama predicted that disposal into water would be the most auspicious means of expiating the sin. After completing the morning prayers, the lama and his followers carry the mdos, the figurines, and the offerings to the main river of the Dhorpatan valley, which flows within a short distance of the gompa. Reading from a Tibetan Buddhist text, the lama calls on the goddess sGrol-ma to accept the offerings which are being made to her and to witness the destruction of the objects containing the villagers' sin. Musical instruments from the gompa are played at key points in this benediction. Once the reading is completed, the lama directs the villagers to destroy their sins. The offerings are dumped into a deep hole in the river; the dolls are cast out into the swiftest current; and the wooden base of the mdos is set on the surface of the
water and pushed out into the river so that the mdoṣ is carried away by the river, down the valley, and away from the Tibetan settlement.

The central theme of the sGrol-ma guy mdoṣ ceremony is the expiation of sin. All of the phases of the ceremony are directed toward the goal of transferring sins to the mdoṣ and to the figurines and expiating the sin on the final day of the rite. Sin is a core concept in the sGrol-ma guy mdoṣ and by further examining the ways in which it functions we may gain a clearer understanding of the underlying philosophy of the ceremony.

To Tibetans, sin, or sdig-pa, is a contagious supernatural force which is thought to have visible effects on the individual who comes into contact with it. Illness, economic problems, a lack of friends, or other misfortune are all attributable to the forces of sdig-pa. One may acquire sdig-pa by committing a sinful act which includes any of the behavior forbidden by Buddhism. An individual can also become contaminated with sdig-pa by being too close to a scene where sdig-pa is being generated. The fear of gaining sdig-pa through contamination is exemplified by a mother who drags her child away from the presence of profane language or by Tibetans who leave the scene of a fight. In the extreme sense, sdig-pa is created by the normal acts of everyday life, such as the eating of forms of life, and thus Tibetans acquire sdig-pa regardless of how pious and careful they try to be. The only way Tibetans can hope to remain free from sdig-pa and avoid the sufferings which it causes is to live according to the moral code of Buddhism and to perform expiatory rites such as sGrol-ma guy mdoṣ.
sDzig-pa has a dual nature for it displays the features of an impersonal supernatural force, and it is also a moral tenet of Buddhism. When a Tibetan commits an act contrary to the moral edicts of Buddhism he is considered to have sinned, and to have generated sDzigs-pa. Once sDzigs-pa is created, it is substantial and highly communicable, and it can be manipulated by practices of imitative and contagious magic. This dualistic nature of sDzigs-pa is readily seen in the different phases of sGrol-ma gyu mDogs. In the morning prayers, there is mention of the creation of sDzigs-pa through the committing of sins. Scrubbing off this sin with the chang bu and expiating it by destroying the images and the mDogs demonstrate how sDzigs-pa may be controlled with techniques of magic. Created out of the moral philosophies of Buddhism and then controlled according to laws of magic, sDzigs-pa is the major link between the two aspects of supernaturalism found in sGrol-ma gyu mDogs.

This examination of the sGrol-ma gyu mDogs ceremony enables us to gain a better understanding of the rites which were recommended in the book of mo. sGrol-ma gyu mDogs may serve as a way to cleanse oneself of sDzigs-pa before invoking the tutelary goddess of the mo, dPal dam-zor rgyal-mo. Approaching the goddess in a profane state of sDzigs-pa contamination would not win her favor. By performing sGrol-ma gyu mDogs, a person can prepare himself to receive the goddess' insight. Bad luck in the house can be interpreted as a result of sDzigs-pa contamination, and by ridding his house of this supernatural force through sGrol-ma gyu mDogs, an individual can regain his good fortune.
In the book of mo, the sGrol-ma gyu mdoCourier ceremony functions as a magical technique for dispatching sdig-pa, thus enabling a person to remove from his house any bad luck which is caused by sdig-pa and also to purify himself before using the mo.
CHAPTER IX

THE THEORY OF TRADITIONS REEXAMINED

In this conclusion, data are summarized that offer support for some aspects of the concepts of the Great and the Little Traditions as being valid or useful scholarly constructs. Other features of these concepts are reinterpreted and suggestions are offered regarding their use. I shall here first review data and interpretations presented in this study regarding syncretism in Tibetan Buddhism and then reexamine the theory of the Great and the Little Traditions in light of these interpretations. Conclusions which are drawn from the account of Buddhist history presented herein will be related to theories of religious change, and the themes of the four rites are then compared with similar themes in other anthropological studies of the Great and the Little Traditions. This study concludes with a definition of the concept of traditions which allows for instances of syncretism, and a discussion of the possible relationships between the two traditions and social organization.

The summary presented here of Tibetan Buddhist history demonstrates beyond doubt that Great Traditions and Little Traditions do join into syncretic systems of supernaturalism. A Little Tradition of pre-Buddhist Tibet was combined with a Great Tradition from India to form a single system of supernaturalism which is a homogeneous synthesis of
the two traditions. This syncretism was not a one-way process but rather a reciprocal borrowing of traits by both traditions. The Little Tradition absorbed the Sanskritic deities, the literature, and the philosophies of the Great Tradition whereas the Great Tradition incorporated the local supernatural beings, the Tibetan rites, and the Bon techniques of magic into its practices and doctrine. By this process, Tibetan Buddhism came to include both manipulative and non-manipulative acts of supernaturalism and, congruently, specific and non-specific goals. Thus, it displays the characteristics of the Little Tradition as well of the Great Tradition.

Two patterns of syncretism emerge from the overview of Buddhist history. In the first pattern, political interests are seen as the means of introducing religious systems into new geographical areas. The second pattern of syncretism involves social conflicts which accompany coalitions of the two systems of supernaturalism. Both of these patterns can be viewed within the context of evolutionary theories of culture change. Hegel and Redfield were two of the many scholars who expressed an interest in the evolution of magic, or the Little Tradition, into religion, or the Great Tradition. Hegel held that magic developed into religion as a result of the reconciliation of subjective and objective spirits. A synthesis of the two forms of spirit produced the absolute spirit, which was reflected in a syncretic religion. Central to Hegel's explanation of religious syncretism was the presence of conflict. Magic and religion were conceptualized as a thesis and an antithesis, which first clashed and then came
together in a synthesis. The pattern of social conflicts which I have noted in Buddhist history supports Hegel's dialectical theory of change.

Redfield used a scheme of cultural evolution to deal with the development of simple societies into complex civilizations. He described the Great and the Little Traditions as two developmental stages in the evolution of culture. Redfield devoted a great deal of attention to the interactions between the two traditions in an attempt to demonstrate that the moral order degenerates whenever Little Traditions rapidly change into Great Traditions. In his treatment of this subject, Redfield discusses the social mechanisms involved during interactions between the two traditions and he provides numerous ethnographic examples which sometimes touch upon the subjects of political manipulation and social conflict. Redfield (1953) repeatedly states that violent conflicts between the two traditions give rise to subsequent periods of syncretism. In the third period of his evolutionary scheme, the folk beliefs of the Little Tradition are joined with the religion of the Great Tradition to form a unified system of supernaturalism. Unlike Redfield's other periods of syncretism, the third period is marked by a relatively stable moral order. Redfield portrayed conflict as an important catalyst of religious syncretism and, in this respect, his work is very similar to the conclusions which I have drawn from the history of Buddhism.

Three of the several traits which have conventionally been used to distinguish the Great and the Little Traditions are found in
conjunction within Tibetan Buddhism. The existence or lack of exorcism, religious scriptures, and shamans and priests are frequently used by anthropologists as prime criteria in separating the two traditions of South Asia. When these criteria are applied to Tibetan Buddhism, two separate traditions cannot be distinguished since no dichotomy is evident in these traits.

Rites designed to exorcize malevolent spirits are classified as part of the Little Tradition. Opler (1958) holds that supernatural beliefs and practices which deal with spirits are pragmatic in nature as they revolve around anxieties about health and other social tensions. The exorcism of a ghost which the Freed's witnessed in a village near Delhi is described by them as highly magical and part of the Little Tradition (Freed and Freed, 1962). The association of exorcism with the Little Tradition is, in fact, typical of studies of South Asian supernaturalism. The Sog si-sno, however, is a rite of exorcism by a religious practitioner who is not a shaman, and many of the elements present in this rite originate from the Great Tradition rather than the Little Tradition. Scriptures and other Buddhist traits are used in the Sog si-sno in combination with techniques of magic, and thus this aspect of Tibetan Buddhism cannot be classified as part of the Little Tradition or as belonging to the Great Tradition.

Shamans and priests are contrasted as the practitioners of the two traditions. Shamanism is the most universal trait which is used to distinguish the Little Tradition. In the studies by Berreman (1964) and Mandelbaum (1966), shamans are defined as practitioners of pragmatic rites involving local deities and rites of healing and
divination. Priests act as links with the universal gods of Great Traditions, such as Hinduism or Buddhism, and they are exponents of Sanskritic philosophies. But the distinction between priests and shamans does not apply to Tibetan Buddhism. The characteristics of both the shaman and the priest are found in the practitioner of the rite of divination presented in Chapter Six. In the standard manner of a shaman, the Iha-wa of Dhorpatan invokes a deity who possesses her and speaks from her mouth, but the deity is Sanskritic and the message contained in the divination is philosophical and derives from the basic moral tenets of Buddhist doctrine. This shamanistic performance shows how pragmatic and transcendental aspects of supernaturalism were unified when the Little Tradition of Tibet was joined with Buddhism. The shamans of Tibet have become vehicles of Buddhist philosophy and they are an integral part of this syncretic religion.

The presence or absence of religious scriptures similarly fails to be useful as a criterion for separating the Great Tradition from the Little Tradition among Tibetans. In an earlier part of this work, I stated that one of the greatest factors which led to the sharp dichotomy of traditions was the division between "textual" and "contextual" approaches. Little Traditions are said to lack religious scriptures whereas textual sources play a vital role in the rites of Great Traditions. From a translation and an analysis of the book of mo, we have seen that both traditions are present in Tibetan Buddhist texts. The combination of magical formulae, Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan spirit beings and Sanskritic gods in Tibetan scriptures indicates that the textual-nontextual criterion does not always distinguish two separate traditions.
Although the criteria used to distinguish the two traditions which are discussed above do not accomplish this goal when they are applied to Tibetan Buddhism, they are useful for identifying the patterns of syncretism that occur in this religious system. By comparing the elements of the Sog si-sno rite with the criteria of the two traditions, I have shown how the artifacts, acts, and beliefs of a Great and a Little Tradition are combined. Of all these lines of investigation, the examination of beliefs appeared to be the most heuristic, and, therefore, I continued to focus on the synthesis of beliefs in the studies of the other three rites.

From this study of four Tibetan Buddhist rites, we see how the magical beliefs of the Little Tradition are joined with the moral philosophies of the Great Tradition. Any inconsistencies which arise between the belief systems of the two traditions can be resolved by an alteration in some part of the philosophies of the Great Tradition. When the two belief systems are enmeshed, the beliefs of the Little Traditions often serve as media and supports for the moral edicts of the Great Tradition. Supernatural beliefs regarding ethical behavior, such as samsara, nirvana, reincarnation, and karma, are spread and supported by the beliefs in spiritual beings and magical practices of the Little Tradition.

Tibetan shamans are one of the many vehicles for the dissemination and maintenance of Buddhist morality. Shamanistic practices serve, first, to allay a client's anxieties concerning the uncertain future and, second, to spread and support the philosophy of Buddhism. The Buddhist philosophy expounded by Tibetan shamans is the most
fundamental part of Buddhist doctrine and includes the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Eightfold Path." A shaman may give these moral codes to a client as guides for proper behavior to ensure well-being. If the client fails to live by these moral codes he understands that his future may be inauspicious.

Tibetan Buddhist texts are another means by which the magic of a Little Tradition promotes Buddhist behavior. A Tibetan Buddhist text may specifically deal with a magical technique such as divination and also include Buddhist gods and other Sanskritic elements in its directions for divining. Rites which are recommended in these texts are also compounds of religion and magic. From the example of sGrol-ma gyu mdo, we see how the Buddhist concept of sin is reinforced by the magical practices of a Little Tradition. The book of mo states that by absolving himself of sin, the individual will have a more auspicious future. Thus, this Tibetan Buddhist text seems also to state that bad luck results from sin, as it is defined by Buddhism. In these ways, Tibetan scriptures employ beliefs and techniques of magic to propagate and support the moral tenets of the Great Tradition.

The interpretation of synthesis presented in this study allows a restatement of the concept of traditions in a manner that takes into account instances of syncretism. To do this, the two traditions may be described in the same way that anthropologists view religion and magic: the Great and the Little Traditions are conceptual types of South Asian supernaturalism which are used only for descriptive purposes; the two traditions are extremes on a continuum of
supernaturalism and some of the supernaturalism found in Sanskritic religions falls somewhere between the two extremes. Supernatural elements and whole systems which contain the characteristics of the two traditions cannot be considered as being one or the other of the forms of South Asian supernaturalism but instead these elements and systems must be explained as syntheses of the two traditions and their processes of syncretism should be recognized.

I wish to conclude this work by proposing a problem which arises out of this examination of Great and Little Traditions. The high degree of syncretism which has been found in Tibetan Buddhism might possibly indicate that some element in Tibetan culture promotes syncretism of the two types of supernaturalism. Most of the works which deal with the religious traditions of South Asia report a definite separation between the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition and hold that this separation is often related to aspects of social structure. In a study by Gough (1959), it is shown that groups of high caste use the social philosophies of the Great Tradition to rationalize their superior positions. Low caste groups, in contrast, are found to reject the ideas of the Great Tradition and instead maintain a Little Tradition as a system of supernaturalism (Cohn, 1959; Kolenda, 1964). The Great and the Little Traditions are drawn apart by the high caste and low caste groups, and thus caste hierarchy may be seen as a prime factor in maintaining the separation of traditions. However, Tibetan culture does not display the elaborate social hierarchies which may give rise to separate traditions and,
instead, tends to be egalitarian. If the relative degree of 
syncretism in Sanskritic religions is related to the presence or 
absence of social hierarchies, then the high degree of syncretism 
which is found in Tibetan Buddhism might be due to the lack of a 
 hierarchic social structure in Tibetan culture. I qualify this 
 comment regarding syncretism and social hierarchy as being a tenta-
tive hypothesis that requires further investigation of the kind 
which goes beyond the scope of this study.
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