



The Snow Lion's Attributes

An Introduction to the Essence of the
Drikung Vajra Dances

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This English Text is an adaptation of a Tibetan original by H.H. the Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche, and was prepared specially for the guests of the inauguration ceremonies of the Drikung Kagyu Institute Jangchubling, November 1992.

This reprinted and revised edition was created with the permission of His Holiness, Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche, and was produced by Core of Culture Dance Preservation, Chicago USA, 2014.

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1. Notes on the Historical and Cultural Background of the Drikung Kagyu School

Roughly two centuries after King Langdarma's murder, the struggles between followers of the ancient shamanic religion of Tibet and those fighting for the reintroduction of Buddhism to Tibet had come to an end. Different scholars and tantric masters, brought into the country by different rulers, had given origin to different schools in the course of ensuing attempts to bring back Buddhism to the populations of the Himalayan provinces so promisingly converted for the first time by King Songtsen Gampo (618-641) and his successors.

The most important of these first Buddhist kings was Thritsong Detsen (756-797). He invited the "adamantine master" (Vajraacharya, Dorje Lobpön) Padmasambhava (Pema Jungne, very often simply referred to as "Guru Rinpoche", jewellike teacher) from Udiyana (Urgyaen, today in Afghanistan) on a mission to Tibet. In spite of the fact that after he dissolved himself in light there was a violent anti-Buddhist reaction, the consequences of his work are enormous and long lasting. To him we owe the very fundamentals of what we today call (somewhat improperly) "Lamaism", i.e. the particular Tibetan form of Vajrayana Buddhism. To him we owe the erection of the first monastery in Tibet, Samye, and among many other things, the first performance of the famous sacred dances. The teachings which survived the first stage of Buddhist influence in Tibet and were carried on were called later the "Old Tantra", to distinguish them from the teachings whose spreading is normally identified with the activity of the great translator Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (958-1051), his contemporaries and successes referred to as "New Tantra".

A particular aspect of Padmasambhava's activity was that he, knowing that the times were not ripe yet for the ultimate victory of Buddhism in Tibet, and that the long period of heavy struggle would follow his leaving, concealed a number of his teachings with the intention of letting them be discovered much later, when the right time for disclosure of a particular teaching arrived. Such hidden teachings are called "Termas" (treasures), their discoverers, who either found physical pieces of writing or were receivers of enlightening dreams or visions induced by Padmasambhava himself, called "Tertöns" (Treasure Revealers). A number of the Drikung Vajra Dances go back to such teachings, as shall be seen later.

Towards the middle of the twelfth century, at the end of the long struggle between supporters of the new faith and reactionary forces, different traditions and the results of the lifelong quest of great saints became crystallized into what had then already been called the "eight great chariots of the lineage of the practice". These eight independent schools : the Nyingmapa (carrying the unbroken tradition of the primitive Tibetan monasticism installed by Padmasambhava), Kadampa, Sakyapa, Kagyupa, Shangpa, Jordruk, Nyendrup and Zhiched & Chö. Of these, four survive today as independent schools, Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kagyupa and Kadampa, though the last has been transmuted and absorbed into the Gelugpa school. Although these schools have very distinct characteristics and have remained faithful to the main aims of their founders, e.g. the Gelugpas to the monastic and communitarian tradition, already sanctioned by Atisha for the Kadampa school founded by him and later reformed by the founder of the Gelugpa school, Tsongkhapa; or the Kagyupa to their tradition based very much on meditation practice, it would be erroneous to think of them, in spite of temporary rivalries, as strictly separated or contradictory factions. Masters of different schools kept on inspiring each other through the centuries.

The history of the Kagyupa begins with the Bengali Brahmin Tilopa (988-1069), who, according to the tradition, should have received his initiations directly by Vajradhara (Dorje Chang), embodiment of the Dharmakaya Buddha in its tantric form. His foremost disciple was Naropa, a Bengali prince (1016-1100), whose "six Yogas" were to become not only one of the pillars of the Kagyupa schools, but also in general of all new tantric schools, i.e. all surviving schools with the exception of the Nyingmapa, the Old Tantric School by antonomasia. The first Tibetan of the KagyuLineage was Naropa's pupil Marpa, himself a great translator, his greatest disciple and last of the four considered the patriarchs of the Kagyu lineage the great saintpoet Milarepa (1040-1123), whose "Hundred Thousand Songs" are universally admired both for their spiritual content and poetic beauty, one of the great legacies of mankind.

However, it is not before the second generation of pupils after Milarepa that the Kagyupa school began to take shape in the form of the present day. A key role in the process was destined for Phagmodrupa, a pupil of Milarepa's pupil Gampopa (author of the fundamental treatise "Jewel Ornament of Liberation"). Eight of his pupils became the heads of different Kagyupa lineages, which added themselves to Phagmodrupa's own school and those of three of his codisciples, completing so the number of the 12 Kagyupa lineages. Only four are still flourishing today as independent lineages : Karmapa, Drugpa, Taglungpa and Drikungpa.

The Drikungpa took their origin from Phagmodrupa's foremost disciple, Kyobpa Jigten Sumgon ("the protector of the three worlds"), deemed to be an emanation of the Buddha of the Three Times and a reincarnation of Nagarjuna, the founder of the Mahayana School. Jigten Sumgon not only gained the highest respect from other heads of Kagyupalineages, but left a number of fundamental writings. The best known of these is the "GongChig", actually compiled in its transmitted version from his teachings by a pupil. This text can be considered the first compendium of speculative Buddhist philosophy within the Tibetan tradition. The Drikung lineage took its name from the monastery of Drikung Thel, founded by Jigten Sumgon himself (about 90 km NE of Lhasa). It spread quickly and did not fail to exert, during certain periods, a considerable political influence.

The leading of the lineage had been entrusted to one of Jigten's disciples, and remained thereafter for a few centuries within the princely clan of Kyura, a leading family from the Eastern province of Kham. The last heads of the lineage coming from that family were three brothers who flourished during the first half of the 17th century. As all were Gelongs and died issueless (a fourth brother of this remarkable generation had been recognised as the 6th Shamar Rinpoche, the Tulku second in rank of the Karma lineage), the leadership of the lineage has since been in the hands of the subsequent incarnations of them, who both assume the title of Drikung Kyabgon and the individual style of Chetsang, respectively, or Chungsang Rinpoche. The present Kyabgons are the 36th and 37th heads of the lineage, and the 7th incarnations of the last hereditary successors of Jigten Sumgons first successor. H.H. the 37th Drikung Kyabgon and 7th Chetsang Rinpoche, Konchog Tenzin Kunsang Thinley Lhundrup, resides in Dehra Dun, where he leads the main educational institution of the lineage which has been built thanks to his efforts. H.H. the 36th Drikung Kyabgon and 7th Chungsang Rinpoche, Tenzin Chokyi Nangwa resides in Lhasa, where he follows the patient work of reconstruction begun very few years ago in the climate of recent political uncertainty.

2. History of the Drikung Vajra Dances



The great Master from Udiyana, Padmasambhava, and the abbot Shantarakshita (Pemajungne and Shiwatso, respectively) were invited by King Trisong Detsen to come from India to Tibet. The first monastery founded by them, Samye Mi-gyur Tsug-lhakang, was the scene of the first Vajra Dances. They were performed by Padmasambhava himself, in order to consecrate the occasion and also as a powerful means of converting the local spirits and of purifying and blessing of the whole land.

The history of the specific Drikung Vajra Dances begins during the term of the tenth Drikung throne holder, Nyer-gyepa Dorje Gyalpo (1284-1350). On the occasion of the performance of a particular rite (Sostor Chenmo) at Tse-ü-khar Lhakang monastery, two dances, the four-armed Mahakala Dance and the Vajrakilaya (Dorje Phurba) Dance, were performed under the directorship of Vajraacharya (Dorje Lobpön) Tsamcheпа Dragpa Gyaltsen.

The sixteenth successor to the throne, Gyalwang Kunga Rinchen (1475-1527, a reincarnation of Kyobpa Jigten Sumgon) established the Vajra Dance known as Nyang-lug Kagyed Desheg Dupa. This is the ritual of the eight Yidam deities (of the Mandala of the nature of the awakened mind in its wrathful aspect). Vajraacharya Jamyang Rinchen supervised the production of these dances at the main monastery of Drikung Thel, Jangchubling.

The seventeenth head of the school, the great Tertön Gyalwang Rinchen Phuntsog (1509-1557), further spread the use of the dances to the monasteries of the school, after having reviewed the Kagyed Dances in a dreamvision together with Padmasambhava in Zang-dog Pal-ri (the "copper coloured mountains" of Padmasambhava, his heavenly abode after his dissolving into light) and ascertained all details. He initiated the Nyang-lug Desheg dance at Drikung Yang-rigar Thubstan Deshi Rabgye Ling monastery, the main monastic college of the order (25 km from Drikung Thel). He also originated the dances of "Mahakala Thrag thung Rol-wa" and the "Achi Ge-kar", among several others, at Drikung Thel.

Kunkhyen ("omniscient") Rigdzin Chökyi Dragpa (1595-1659), the 24th head, added three more dances, the "Drum Dance", the "Wrathful Masked Dance" and the "Black Hat Dance". These nearly completed the Kagyed dance series at the Drikung Yang-rigar monastery. In the late fall of the year 1669, the entire repertory of the Vajra Dances was performed before the great 5th Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang. On a merely factual level this can be considered a part of this great ruler's "appeasement" policy after the establishment of his own school, the Gelugpa, as the leading force in Tibet and himself as the not only spiritual, but also the temporal ruler of the country. However, it is beyond doubt that the performance impressed him deeply. He presented the players with rich robes.

On the occasion of this historical performance the then reigning Kyabgon, Konchog Thinlay Zangpo (the 25th head of the school and second Chetsang Rinpoche), had added one more dance according to the "Drat-le Tön-gyedma" text known as "the Dance of Destruction" (of the "Rudra"; (Rudra, Linga, image representing the Evil), thus completing the cycle of Kagyed dances.

The 26th Kyabgon and 2nd Chungsang, Thondrup Chögyal (1704-1754), made a complete and detailed instruction manual for the Kagyed Deshig Dupu Drubchen ritual, noting down all the intricate movements of these dances. He also enriched the series of new tantric dances, all dedicated to Dharmapalas or protectors, by the Mahakala (Gonpo Päng), the Tsering Ched-nga (part of the Achi dance series), the Nam-thö-se dances, etc. He was, as were many heads of the school before and after him, an outstanding scholar and spiritual teacher. It was said, that he "made the doctrine shine like the sun".

These dances were performed in a continuous tradition in the following larger Drikung monasteries in Central Tibet until 1959 : Driking Thel (main monastery of the order, "Jangchubling"), Yangrigar Deshi Rabgye Ling (main monastic college of the Drikung lineage), Tsewa Satän, Chökhör Jampa Ling Drongngur Gon. In what today is known as Ching Hai province in the monasteries of Kham-Gyok Gon, Drub Gyud Gon, Chödye Gon, Nyindzong Gon-chen, A-yang Gon, Lho Me-yel Gon, Gan Yangchen Jangchub Choe ling, in the province of Sichuan Dän Lü-guil Gon, Lho Lung-kar Gon, Tse-le Gon, and finally, in the Yunnan province, at Dang Rabgye Gon.

Happily, the tradition of dance performance could be carried on without interruption outside Tibet and today's Chinese Republic namely in the monasteries of Limi Watse Gon and Yang-Gon in Nepal and Gon Tashi Chöyang ("Phyang"), Yungdrung Tharpa Ling ("Lamayuru") and Shakhul Phuntsog Chafing ("Shachukhul") in Ladakh.

It is indeed an auspicious event, that on the occasion of the inauguration of the new Drikung Institute, named Jangchubling, after the old main monastery at Drikung Thel, these dances can be performed again before the Dalai Lama, H.H. Tenzin Gyatso. May this initiate a long and happy era for all sentient beings.

3. Purpose of the Vajra Dances



The religious Vajra Dance differs from ordinary dance spectacles in that they are a very exceptional method of Vajrayana realization practice. In the compilation known as the "Lama Gongdue" (collection of thoughts of different Lamas), we find the lines: "The play of meaningful musical dance leads to knowledge for various people who are introduced to the Mandala deities. For the beginners on the Path and for those excellent ones who have attained already higher realization, it is the summit of exercising skill and ascension on the Path".

This type of theatre introduces people to the practice of the Yidam (literally "to hold the mind"), with the Lama (teacher) and the Khadoma (Dakini, an inspiring divinity,) one of the three roots of the Path. To imagine oneself as being with the empty "Rainbow Body" of the Yidams as a non-ultimate view technique to diminish one's clinging to being "real" is the source for getting the ordinary and extraordinary accomplishments (the "ordinary" being in fact extraordinary powers, like flying or trespassing walls, called "ordinary" because still linked to the world of phenomena and without intrinsic meaning; the "extraordinary" being the realization of the ultimate Buddha-nature).

For those who are already on this Path (Lam), the dances help in stabilizing the two stages in the practice of meditation : the visualisation of the illusory appearance of the Yidam form, also called "development" (of the illusory image, Khye-rim) and the subsequent dissolution of the created image, also called "completion" (because penetrating through a preliminary stage to the ultimate essence, the void; Dzog-rim). These two basic stages are the deepest introduction to the actualization of the "Great Seal" (Mahamudra, Chag-ya chenpo) of the tradition of the new tantra (Sarma gyud) as well as the "Great Perfection" (Mahasandhi, Dzog-chen) of the old Tantra (Nyingma gyud).

For those who haven't yet any knowledge of Vajrayana (Dorje-Thegpa), the essence of which consists in taking the ultimate result as the main path of realization itself (i.e. assuming from the beginning that one possesses an enlightened essence or Buddhature but not realizing it), the Yidam dances are invoking the activity of spiritual beings (Pawo, heroes, and Khadro, Dakinis) and contribute to dispel the three kinds of obstacles encountered by the practitioners as well as the ordinary public. These are the "outer obstacles", which are no other than all the distractions which keep us away from meditation, the "inner" ones, or imbalance of the channels (tsa, nadi), wind energy (lung, prang) and essential drops (thig-le, bindu) which cause sickness and mental disturbance. The "secret ones", or discursive thoughts which hinder oneself from recognizing the nonconceptual wakefulness (nan par, mi-thog-pe yeshe) and cognizing its empty nature (sel-thong). The Yidam dances are also the opportunity to plant the seeds for a good future Karma and a cause of being empowered to and actually experience the blessing of the wisdom-mind essence (yeshe semngo) of the Yidam.

Because of this karmic imprint on the consciousness, one will get a special benefit during the successive intermediate states, or Bardo (Antasira-bhava). Particularly, at the end of the intermediate states of dying (Chikhai bardo), after the last three most subtle dissolutions of one's mind, ego and "ground of phenomena" (kun-zhi, alaya, the hypostatic perceptive faculty enabling one to grasp concrete and abstract phenomena). This "imprint" can be a cause of rebirth on a higher realm and high realization. The very core of the dances is to be a representation of the activity of the mind essence beyond conceptual thinking. Besides profiting unconsciously from the teachings implicit in the dances, the spectators share in the realization and merits of the dancers (whose principal roles are normally played by Lamas having attained already a high degree of realization).

According to the tantric texts, the mudras, or movements of the hands assuming subsequently well defined positions and gestures, express the union of "the great bliss" and "emptiness". This is a fundamental concept of Mahamudra practice - as liberation by touch (sense of feeling). The movements of the feet symbolize the beating of the "drum of the three times" (past, present, future). Both are completing the manifestations of the body of the Yidam. The recitation of mantras during the dance is, besides being an introduction to the "awakened speech", the generation of a sound representing the very nature of the Yidam.

The dancers try to keep themselves in a meditative state, throughout the whole performance, as they should experience the mind of the Yidam, free from ignorance and discursive thinking.

These three levels of performance, gestures of hands and feet, uttering of mantras and holding a meditative state, stand for the three "pure bodies" : (Ku-sum, Tri-kaya): absolute body (Choe-ku, Dharmakaya), perfect enjoyment body (Lung-ku, Samboghakaya) and emanation (physical) body (Tul-ku, Nirmanakaya). These are also identified with the triads: essence, nature, experience, or, on a higher level, nonthought clarity and bliss.

The dancers receive the necessary oral instructions and get personal training aimed at enabling them to accede to the "inner experience" (nyam) both in the Kagyupa meditation techniques of the "Six Yogas of Naropa" and the Nyingmapa secret techniques known as "direct crossing" (Thö-gal). The Thö-gal puts its emphasis on the realization of "spontaneous presence" (Lhun-drup) of the selfexisting wakefulness (Rangjung yeshe), free from all concepts. They use these techniques to improve their realization of the view of the ultimate truth.

One of the most important effects of these practices is to render soft and flexible the channels of energies (tsa), to purify the karmic windenergies (lung, prana), and to increase the arising manifestation of the wisdommind in the essential drop (thig-le, bindu). These represent preliminaries to becoming enlightened within one single lifetime through skillful diligent practice.

The formal embodiment of a Yidam by each dancer form the necessary condition through which they are enabled to invite into their midst the spiritual beings known as heroes (Pawo) and heroines (Khadro, Dakinis). Being in charge of generating the enlightened activity of an individual, they will manifest themselves internally to the dancer, but their effect will also be an external one as they will, by their presence, bless the country.

The protectors (Chö-kyong, Dharmapala) will recognise the spiritual essence of the Yidam as a master power to themselves and will become willing to serve as obedient helpers the "wealthy one" (the practitioner who succeeds in holding the Yidam).

The embodiment of Yidams serves as well as a means of subjugating all local spirits in the earth or in the air (Zhidag, Bhumi-patti) which can be turned, after their pacification, into protectors of the place.

The goodness and blessing induced by these powerful spiritual natures helps remove all negative influences of the karmic veil (Le-drib) both of dancers and spectators. The turning of harmful obstructors (Lha-dre, Bhuta) into beings of loving kindness goes hand in hand with the dispelling of dangers like war, floods, epidemics, famine, and bringing into the country the opposite phenomena of good fortune, peace, happiness and harmony.

Along with this, the Vajra dancer has the (rare) opportunity of accumulating both conceptual and nonconceptual merits by the special blessings of the Lamas of the lineage. These blessings accompany the practice of realizing the illusory body (Gyue-lue), speech and wisdommind of the Yidam.

During the time of the dances some very special Mandalas (Kyil-khor), "places of enlightened beings", are opened. This permits all Yidams invited, acting as personal deities or guides to enlightenment, to become manifest and having the Dharampalas submitted to their will in conformity with the requirements of the teachings expressed by the dancers.

The dances are, finally, an occasion to gather merits by making the "four types of offerings" (outer, inner, secret and most secret) and dedicating them to the welfare of all sentient beings.

For all these many reasons, the Vajra Dances, far from being entertainment or merely symbolical representation, are in fact a very skillful method (thab, upaya) of the "secret" (sang, guya) Vajrayana (Dorje thegpa). The spectator, be he human or not (!), who takes the opportunity and is able to realize the universe as the Mandala of the deities and their retinue and the display of their en-lighted nature, can share in all the marvelous effects of the dances, whilst for the less fortunate, they still represent the chance of obtain a particularly powerful blessing.

4.Preparation, Course and Symbolism of the dances

4.1 *Preparation for the Dances*



In preparation for the Vajra dance a sand mandala is made as part of the Yidam deity ritual. The mandala of the Kagyed Drubchen is known as the "Nine Sunrises Mandala", signifying that there are a total of nine mandalas, one within the other. Exquisite artistry creates the "Pure Land" through very skillful drawing. Delicate lines form highly detailed and intricate decorations.

Another part of the ritual preparation consists of making many different kinds of Tormas, colorfully decorated with elaborate butter designs called the Tse-Tra and placed on the top of the Tormas (offering cakes for religious rites).

There is a different Torma for each of the Yidam deities and Dharmapalas. For example, the Torma decoration for Achi, one of the many manifestations of Vajrayogini and the foremost protectress of the Drikung school, is called the "Khang-zang". Snow mountains form the background and in front is the Drikung Tedrom Dragkar, representing the cave in which Guru Rinpoche meditated for 7 years. In the center of this cave, is Achi's palace, called the "Sparkling Turquoise-blue Sky", adorned by a golden pagoda roof with spires, little bells on the corners, and many other ornate details. Within the palace stands the peaceful Achi. Beneath all this is a grassy field and a lake with two white cranes (birds sacred to Achi). Similar Tormas are made also for the other protectors.

Before the dances actually begin, the Kagyed meditation practice, ritual prayers and specific offerings must be performed for one week. Special attention is given to the Dharma protector, the Four-Armed Mahakala.

The dancers perform them for two days, without costumes and masks, but dressed in their best robes, vests and boots. The day before the dance the performers are given their masks, costumes and ritual instruments. It is their duty to make certain everything is in proper condition, as each dancer is responsible for his own set of costumes.

4.Preparation, Course and Symbolism of the dances

4.2 *Course and Symbolism of the Dances*

The dances last two days. The first day is filled by the performance of the "Old Tantric" dances. The series of the "New Tantric" dances is represented on the second day. "Old Tantric" dances are the dances which are based on texts transmitted from the times of Padmasambhava or seen as introspective or visionary "Termas" by Tertons. The "New Tantric" dances, all dances dedicated to and representing the activity of protectors, have been, on their hand, composed by masters of the lineage for specific purposes.

Common to both types are the detailed instructions for postures, gestures and movements of hands, feet and the body. Some describe faithfully the actual movements like "Withdrawing the foot and stumping on the ground", "Bending the upper part of the body backwards and kicking with one foot in the air", "Lifting an ankle" etc., other convey a general idea "like the flight of the Garuda (legendary primordial bird of pre-Buddhist origin)", "like a lion shaking a human victim", "like the graceful walking of the Indian tiger in the forest".

Common to both is also the division in "solo" dances and "general" dances. The solo dances are normally performed by monks of a high level of awareness chosen, as in the case of the Black Hat, Mahakala, Heruka and Drum dances, by the Kyabgon himself or his representative, as their performance is not merely a matter of artistic skills, but also has a profound spiritual effect, whilst the performers of the general dances are normally left to the choice of the senior and junior dance master.

On the actual day of dance they rise at 3 AM for a ritual blessing and empowering of the masks by the Kyabgon. The main purpose is to infuse the performer with the energy of the deity prior to the dance.



4. Preparation, Course and Symbolism of the dances

4.2.1 *First day, Old Tantric Dances*



On the first day the dances of the old tradition are performed in the following order: 1. Clown Dance 2. Drum Dance 3. Four Heads Dance 4. Deer Dance 5. Buffalo Dance 6. Dzam 7. Heruka 8. Drubchen 9. Zorcham 10. The Old Man and the Old Woman 11. Dral Cham 12. Storm Dance or Black Wind Dance.

1. *The Clown Dance:*

Two Clown dancers wear blue chubas (Tibetan dresses) and maroon masks decorated with goat hair and cowrie earrings, perform first the dance of an ancient Indian "pandita", Shri Ratnasara. In the right hand they hold a stick and in the left, a tsampa bag. When they dance they put tsampa on their backs. As the music grows louder and louder, they dance wildly and clouds of tsampa fill the air. This signifies wishes for good luck and auspiciousness. The audience watches this very closely, for great clouds of tsampa in the air mean bountiful rain and plentiful crops, an important sign to the villagers.

The Clown dance goes on with two more clowns joining in, four clowns performing now in the dance ground. Their function is to control the crowds, and entertain them by dancing, joking and playing. Their other duties include keeping spectators off the dance ground and assisting the masked dancers with costume adjustments during the performance.

2. *The Drum Dance:*

The Drum Dance is termed a "peaceful" dance of the Kagyed deities. The leader wears a round yellow hat with a flag and at the back of the head bone ornaments. Two small black dots decorate his cheeks and in his hands are small cymbals. The other dancers hold a golden drum in the left hand and a beater in the right. Their movements consist of twenty different dance steps. They are given here as an example of the description used in the original manuals : 1. Going through 2. Hitting the Mirror Once 3. Dutsi Menchu 4. Lopön Pema Jugne 5. Striking the Centre of the Palace Four Times 6. Striking the Drum Four Times Turning Around. 7. Striking the Drum Five Times and Taking Five Paces 8. Three Smooth Glides and Three Leaps 9. Giant Iron Chain Walk 10. Single Vajra Stride 11. Heaping the Fire Stride 12. Small Iron Chain Walk 13. Multi-vajra Stride

14. Dancing Like Ocean Waves 15. Dancing Like a Torma 16. Striking the Drum Three Times and and Bringing to the Waist 17. Two Times to the Waist 18. Circling and Reversing 19. One Drum Beat, then Damaru Play 20. Combination of All Vajras.

3. *Four Heads Dance:*

The four heads represent the owl, the tiger, the pig and a wolf. Each animal signifies the following: The owl signifies the "hook of loving kindness". The tiger is the "lasso of compassion"; the pig is the "iron chain of happiness"; and the wolf is the "bell of equanimity". These four animals drive out the evil image, represented by a small effigy of Rudra on a wooden plank. First they must conquer the protectress of that image, and dispel it. The negative image is then removed from the dance ground.

4. 5. 6. *Deer, Buffalo and Dzam Dances:*

The Four Head Dance is followed by three dances: The Deer, Buffalo and Dzam dances. These are preliminaries to the culminating part of the dances of the day. Their function is to drive out the evil spirit and negative forces gathered around the Rudra. The remarkable individual talents of the single dancers are energies generated during these performances, particularly with the deer and buffalo dances. These two dances are very demanding, requiring skill and stamina, and are speciality of the younger performers. The Dzam Cham dancers execute measured and very disciplined movements with great agility and coordination of head, waist and feet. The Deer and Buffalo dances are not so highly restricted in movement, but instead show lightness of the body. In the Deer dance for instance, the performers jump, twirl and stamp, turning and twisting their bodies. Only an extremely supple dancer is able to perform the difficult feat of touching the ground with his horns while bending over backward. This, if performed successfully, is a very good sign; it is, however, very rarely seen nowadays.

7. *Heruka, Solo and General Dances:*

Heruka is the central deity of the mandala and its dance movements are measured and deliberate. The actual dance of conquering the Rudra begins at this point. Raising his arms upward, Heruka draws in the air the eight auspicious Dharma Wheel signs. Moving his feet upon the earth, he draws forth the eight auspicious lotus signs. With this, the rest of the performers appear a second Heruka, Jampal, Pema, Yangdag, Phurba Thinley, Mamo Bod-tang, Rigzin Lupon, Jigten Chödo, Modpa Tragnag, and so on, all in yab-yum.

In describing these dances, the text say that they represent a special way of dancing: "When the dancers move, they shake their bodies like Garuda travelling in the sky, they toss their hair in the manner of a snow lion. Their

body moving as if there were no bones. The head and feet move unhindered and when proceeding to the right, the gaze is directed to the left and vice-versa; in forward movement the gaze is straight ahead". These movements are distinctive to tantric dancing.

This unique form of religious dance knows 31 dance positions of legs and feet and 15 of the head and arms, totaling 46 distinct movements. The movements of head and arms are: 1. Extending the left arm 2. Extending both arms 3. Brandishing the Phurba and scarf with the left hand 4. Wielding the knife and skullcup 5. Cutting and eating movement. 6. Sun and moon action 7. Displaying the knife and sword 8. Keeping the Torma on the chest 9. Wielding the knife and scarf 10. Moving the shoulders 11. Touching the ground with the scarf 12. Claspng the Phurba to the heart 13. Brandishing the axe 14. Looking outward 15. Looking outward and rotating the upper half of the body.

8. *Heruka Drubcham:*

The dance of the Heruka Mandala deities is the main part of Rudra's defeat. The objects to be dispelled are the five poisons afflicting the inhabitants of the six realms of Samsaric existence who are naturally overcome by the 10 activities of 1. Enemies of the Dharma 2. Those who harm sentient beings 3. Adversaries of the Triple Gem 4. Slanderers of the Dharma 5. Dividers of the Sangha 6. Destroyers of shrines 7. Disbelievers in Karma 8. Samaya breakers 9. Those who abandon the Dharma 10. Vow breakers.

The manner in which the evil image is dispelled is through loving kindness and compassion, thus delivering all from the realms of hell.

9. *Zorcham or Black Hat Dance:*

This dance refers to the famous murder, out of compassion, of King Langdarma, in the darkest times of the history of the Buddhist doctrine in Tibet. This was when the said king attempted to destroy all Dharma activities in the country which disintegrated into several small kingdoms.

At this time a very powerful monk by the name of Lhalung Pelkyi Dorje appeared in front of the Lhasa Jokang in the same dress as used in the Cham, and shot the king in the forehead with an arrow while he was reading the pillar scripture in front of the Lhasa Jokang. The Shanag (Black Hat Dance) is one of the most interesting and powerful dances, and is normally performed by the most skillful dancers, the dancer performing the ritual sacrifice being generally a Lama with a high degree of realization. The main dancer cuts the negative image (Rudra, Linga) and reveals it as non-existent. It symbolizes the killing of the ego and aims at freeing the soul from illusion.

Killer and victim merge into the ultimate reality, where distinctions are recognized as illusory. Other dancers appear as Yidams, each one holding different attributes. Several secret mantras are spoken during the sacrifice by the dancers. The dance represents a very powerful tantric way of purifying both performers and spectators from sins.

10. *The Old Man and the Old Woman:*
Dance of the parents of the Rudra.

11. *Dral Cham or Dance of Destruction (of the Evil Image):*

The main event of the whole series of old tantric dances is the dismemberment of the evil image (Linga, Rudra). The consciousness (symbolically) imprisoned in the image is freed by the pronunciation of the mantra "Phe", a mantra which has the power to interrupt conceptual thinking, and sent by its virtue into Buddhahood.

What remains, the corpse, is cut, following an extremely complex ritual, in the course of which flesh, bales, blood and the "five aggregates" (accidental qualities, namely form, feeling, perception, compositional factors and consciousness) are transmuted into nectar which is offered to the Yidams.

A long poem explaining in detail the symbolic act and the attitude of the killer, which is of course neither wrath nor revenge, but mere compassion, is recited during the dance. It culminates in the dedication of the "five aggregates" and the description of the blessings received in return from the five heavens of the Dhyani Buddhas and in the making the victim aware of its identity with the five goddesses.

12. *Black Wind Dance:*

This last dance of the first day's cycle bears the character of a well-wishing and blessing dismissal rite. Auspicious signs are drawn on the ground and the dancers dance according to these patterns.

4. Preparation, Course and Symbolism of the dances

4.2.2 *Second Day, New Tantric Dances*

All new tantric dances are dances representing the acts of protectors (except of course the dances of comic character) : 1. Monkey 2. Mahakala (Gonpo) 3. Achi 4. the Four Protectors 5. Nam-thö-se 6. Shin-kyong 7. the King and the Ministers 8. Joker 9. 1st Sortie 10. 2nd Sortie 11. 3rd Sortie 12. Tsiu-mar.

1. *Monkey Dance:*

This dance is danced to the same movements as the clown dance of the day before. The dancers wear monkey masks because the entourage of the protector Shin-kyong is made of monkeys. They do not utter any intelligible sound, but just whistle.

2. *Mahakala (Gonpo):*

Also called "Dance of the Drinking of Blood", Mahakala is, in its essence, an emanation of Chakrasambhava (Khorlo Dhonpa). The dance depicts his deeds throughout the ages. A "solo" dance is followed by dances of figures of the entourage of Mahakala. The texts bear records of the many deeds of this important protector:

At the times of the first Buddha (Dipankara, Mar-med-ze), he converted the four sons and daughters of Evil, and they, after having taken Bodhisattva vows from the Buddha, became protectors. At the times of Buddha Khor-wa-jig, eight demons of the earth had been unsuccessfully taught by the Buddha himself. Mahakala converted them. At the times of Buddha Serthup, all Nagas got covered by the bringing of Mahakala-texts through Vajrapani. At the times of Buddha Kasyapa (Ö-sung), eight goddesses were disturbing Sravakas and Pratekabuddhas (types of practitioners). Vajrapani sent some attendants of Mahakala who converted the goddesses. At Buddha Shakyamuni's times, when he, close to enlightenment, was converting devils in Bodhgaya, he was using Mahakala text brought again by Vajrapani. Since then, Mahakala is considered "Dharma-keeper" of all Buddhas. In Nalanda, near the Ganges, Nagarjuna once saw some black self arising rockcarvings of Mahakala. He brought them to Nalanda and declared Mahakala its protector. Finally, the text depict the translation of the Mahakala text into Tibetan and the election of Mahakala as the main protector of Tibet by scholars and yogis. Mahakala is venerated in the Phagmodrugpa and Drikung, and gener-



ally in all Kagyupa lineages, mainly in its fourarmed form.

3. *Achi Ger-Cham:*

Achi's dance expresses a feeling of joy. According to a sutra, Achi is, in her essence, an emanation of Tara, but also she is deemed by some to be an emanation of Re-ma-tsi (a protector) or, also, Palden Lhamo. According to Lord Jigten Sumgon. Achi is the protectress of the 1'000 Buddhas. Achi is thought to have been the Kyobpa's Grandmother.

After the "solo" dance, her "closer entourage" performs its dance. This "inner circle" of followers consists in four groups of dakinis of wisdom, of Samaya, of empowerment and of the eating of flesh.

They are followed on their turn by the performance of the "outer entourage", Tsering Ched-nga. These are the protectresses of Jetsun Milarepa, Tseringma and her four companions.

This Achi dance follows a quite different mood than all others. It is peaceful and extremely varied in respect to the body postures assumed by the dancers. The Röl-mo (cymbals) are beaten to a slow rhythm during the whole dance.

4. *Dance of the Four Protectors:*

After a reading at midnight before his Yums and his main followers, Padma-sambhava once hid a particular text connected with the four protectors. The text was the so-called "Yang-zab", and it was hidden as a Terma in a cave in Drikung Zho-Tö Tido Daki Tsog-kang, with the intention to have it found later by King Lhasa Mu-tig Tseng-po.

The four protectors kept this Terma protected from unworthy hands until it was discovered by one of the greatest Tertons of all times, the 17th head of the Drikung lineage, Gyalwang Rinchen Phuntsog, himself a reincarnation of Lhasa Mu-tig Tseng-po.

The four protectors are 1) Eka Za-ti (with only 1 eye and one tusklike big tooth, an emanation of Samantabhadra, Kun-du Zang-mo) 2) Rahula (Chat-rag Got-seg), an emanation of Heruka 3) Damchan, an emanation of Vajrapani 4) Hara, product of the conjunction between a planet and Evil. Buddha Mar-med-ze, Vajrapani and Padmasambhava declared Hara as one of the protectors.

The four dancers dance with completely different movements, but xcontemporarily to the same rhythm of the cymbals.

5. *Nam-thö-se (Vaishramana):*

Nam-thö-se is a form of the Dhyani Buddha Amongha-siddhi (Dön-yö Dub-pa), come into this world as a protector.

One attendant of Buddha Nyime Nying-po is Rinchen-ma, the "Bodhisattva of the eight Bhumis".

Rinchenma renounced entering Paranirvana in order to help all beings suffering from poverty in this world, as this blight had moved her to particular compassion. She chose therefore, to be incarnated as the son of Nam-thö, the god of wealth, and has been called therefore Nam-thö-se.

He presented the Buddha Shakyamuni, when he became a monk, a bowl of stone. At this occasion, he promised the Buddha to protect all monks.

Nam-thö-se had three sons : Phag-key-po, Chen-mi-sang (said to have seen "The Land of the Buddhas" paradise, and called thereafter) and Yul-khor-sung ("protector of country", i.e. protector of the six realms of gods).

Vajrapani (Chagna Dorje) installed Nam-thö-se and his sons as the four Lokapalas, the protectors of the four directions. Their image is seen at the entry of every Tibetan temple up to these days. All schools of Buddhism recognize the four Lokapalas as protectors, but since Kyobpa Jigten Sumgon built in Drikung Densa Thil the Tashi Gomang shaped as a mandala of five stores on four pillars (containing 2'550 gods) and was "sponsored" in this effort by Nam-thö-se, the Drikungpas have a particular veneration for him and acclaim him as a Dharmapala.

Nam-thö-se has a darkish yellow colour and holds as attributes the Gyaltzen (the typical round banner symbolising the triumph of Buddhism) and a mongoose spitting jewels (Nyu-le).

In his entourage, we find the four Genyen (Upasaka, practitioners) Par-lha-lha, white in colour, holding a bamboo stick, Sog-Ratsan, red in colour, wrathful, holding Phurbu and Shag-pa (lasso), Chu-phen-lu, light blue, with the head of a snake, and holding a banner, and Di-do-ma, a wisdom spirit assuming different kinds of bodies.

These dances are again danced simultaneously, but with different individual figures.

6. *Shin-kyong Dance:*

Originally the son of Mara (Dü, the Evil) and the demon Yaksha Shin-kyong became eventually a protector, especially of the 24 sacred places, and in the first place of Tsa-ri and the mount Kailash. He is represented holding a trident and the heart of an enemy. Like Mahakala's, his essence consists in an emanation of Chakrasambhava. He revealed himself to, amongst many others, Nagarjuna, the Lord Jigten Sumgon, the second Karma Pakshi, and placed himself as a protector over all Kagyu lineages in general.

7. *Dance of the King and the Minister (Gyalpo and Lhonpo Dance):*

Gyalpo Pehar, King Pehar, was initially a demon (and a figure of the Bön-cult). After his conversion, at the time of Padmasambhava, he was chosen by the Master from Udyana as the protector of his monastery of Sam-ye. Within the Drikung Lineage, the already quoted Kyabgon and Tertön Gyalwang Rinchen Phuntsog had a vision of him, in which he promised to watch over the Drikungpas. He is since considered one of the protectors of the order. In his essence he is identical to Ne-chung Chö-kyong, the protector of the government of Tibet.

8. *Dance of the Joker:*

Light intermezzo

9. *First Sortie:*

General dances

10. *Second Sortie:*

General dances

11. *Third Sortie:*

General dances

12. *Tsiumar:*

Tsiu-mar is in his essence identical with Tham-drin. In this world he was incarnated as son of Migyur Sangwa and U-gyaen. As a consequence of bad deeds, he was born again as a "Tsan" (type of protector inhabiting mountains, often an oracle deity).

From his body sprang the Tsan-gö Rol-wa Kya-dun (the seven appearing Tsanprotectors): from his head Düsän (evil), from his bones Lha-tsan (god), from the heat of his body Thag-tsan (rock), from his blood Thib-tsan (defilement, impurity), from his pus Lu-zen (serpent) and from his flesh Gang-zen.

Tsiu-mar was converted into a protector by this seven, who had taken his heart. He offered himself as a protector to Padmasambhava, and promised to watch his Termas. Appearing to leading monks of the Drikung lineage, he made a solemn vow to protect the Dharma. Many legends are transmitted in connection with the activities of Tsiu-mar.

