

A REVIEW ARTICLE

The Gods of Northern Buddhism : their history, iconography, and progressive evolution through the northern Buddhist countries

by Alice Getty

*with a general introduction on Buddhism by J. Deniker
Illustrations from the collection of Henry H. Getty.
Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 3rd edition, 1962,
Bibliography, Index, 220pp., 67 plates, ¥ 4,500
(\$ 17.50).*

I

It was just fifty years ago that Alice Getty's "*The Gods of Northern Buddhism*" was first published by Oxford University Press. In 1928 a revised edition was issued by the same publisher, and in 1962 this reprint was produced by the Charles E. Tuttle Company. It is evident, then, that the book still holds its place as one of the primary sources of information on Buddhist lore and iconography.

The reason why this volume is still regarded highly is quite clear. As can be seen from the title, it is not only a guide to the gods of Northern Buddhism through iconography, but it also gives their history and evolution. In other words, this is a kind of encyclopedia on the gods of northern Buddhism. An additional reason, of course, is that there is no other book of its kind written in any Western language. Although the author lists 150 works of 102 English, American, German, French, Indian, and Japanese authors, not one of them is

similar to this. For example, Dr. Emile Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Tibet* (Leipzig, 1863) may deserve to be called the first work on Buddhist iconography. It includes 20 plates of so-called Lamaistic images, but it does not show the complete features of either Lamaistic or Buddhistic iconography. With regard to Lamaistic iconography, Prof. E. Pander's *Das Pantheon des Tshangtscha Hutktu* (*Ein Beitrage zur Iconography des Lamaismus*) which was published in Berlin in 1890, may be called the first academic work in Europe. It was based on the block-printed iconography published by the Tschangtscha Lama.

Dr. E. Pander of Peiking University explained 300 of these plates and this was published by Dr. A. Grünwedel, who later published many works on Tibetan Buddhism. After this Prof. S. F. Oldenburg published *Sborinik izobrajeniy 300 Burhanov*, etc., as the 5th volume of the *Bibliotheca Buddhica* in St. Petersburg in 1903, which was also based on the block-printed book mentioned above.

Among such books on iconography, Dr. W. E. Clark's *Two Lamaistic Pantheon* (1937) should be called the most comprehensive. He published 360 plates of Lamaistic images, which were probably engraved by the above-mentioned Tshangcha Lama, together with the photographs of the Lamaistic sculpture enshrined in the Pao-hsinglang temple in Peking. It is not necessary, I believe, to point out that these books, which deal only with Lamaistic images, are a part of the much broader Northern Buddhism. It is possible, of course, to find many more works written either in Western languages or in Japanese about Chinese and Japanese Buddhist fine arts, but

these can be said to be independent guide books on Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese Buddhistic arts.

Mrs. Getty's work tries to overcome the weakness of scholars of Buddhist fine arts. Her work not only gives many illustrations of other pictures and sculptures of all Northern Buddhist countries, but at the same time gives a most detailed explanation of the in buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other minor deities. Her book includes 67 plates with nearly 200 photographs which have been very carefully selected; but her main thesis is in the body of the book which consists of 202 pages.

II

The volume opens with a publisher's note, prefaces to the 1st., and 2nd., editions, the table of contents, and a list of illustrations which includes brief explanations of the 190 pictures of various deities which are to be found at the end of the book after the index. From this list we learn that one third of the illustrations are Japanese, one third are Tibetan, and the rest are of Chinese, Nepalese, Siamese, Singhalese, Korean, Khmer, Honan, and Bodh' Gaya origin. It seems very strange to find among these nearly 200 pictures only two (Plate XIII) from India: (c) a small stūpa from Bodh' Gaya and (d) a stone fragment of Buddha's Parinirvāna found in Bodh' Gaya. Obviously this is one of the rare weak points of this valuable book.

The Introduction entitled, "General Survey of Buddhism and its Evolution," is by Dr. J. Deniker, *Docteur es sciences*, and deserves to be regarded as an independent work both because of its length (36 pages) and its quality. We agree with

Mrs. Getty's statement in her preface to the 1st. edition (p. ix), that his general study of the vast and complicated doctrines of Buddhism in its various ramifications will form a sufficient introduction to the subject for the general reader, and will equip him with a fair degree of knowledge necessary for an understanding of the detailed discussion of the individual deities, their symbols, and characteristics as presented in the main section of the book.

Nevertheless, there are a few problems in regard to some relatively unimportant matters that must be mentioned. For example, it is well known that in Nepal or Tibet the Buddhists always chant a kind of "magical formula": *Ōṃ, maṇi padme, hūṃ*, which is translated by Dr. Deniker as "Oh, the jewel in the lotus!" (p. xix). This translation is used not only by him but is the one current among European scholars. However, the magnificent Japanese Sanskrit scholar, Dr. Yutaka Iwamoto of Kyōto University has recently suggested a new interpretation. According to him, although European scholars read *padme* as a locative ("on the lotus"), it is not clear why they read *maṇi* as a vocative in spite of its non-vocative form. If it is vocative, it must be *maṇe*. In brief, on the one hand, they follow the Sanskrit grammar and, on the other hand, they neglect it. Dr. Iwamoto* explains the expression as follows: *padma* must be *padmā* symbolizing the female *pubes* (*yoni*) or *Sakta's Durgā*. So *padme* must be *padmā's* vocative form. In the same way, *maṇi* must be the vocative form of *maṇī* which is derived from *maṇin*, meaning "What has *maṇi* (jewel)!" In this case

* Yutaka Iwamoto, *Bukkyō Nyūmon* (Tokyo: Chūkō Shnsho, 1964) pp. 186—7.

mani means the jewel part of the female or the clitoris; So it means, "Oh, the jewel part of the female organ!"

Also in the description of the introduction of Buddhism into Japan from Korea in the middle of 6th century, the author states that the starting point of Buddhist propaganda was the "introduction of an image of Buddha into the court of the emperor by a monk sent by the king of Hyakusai, one of the states into which Korea was at that time (552) divided"; but it is very difficult to imagine that Hyakusai means Kudara. I have never seen an historical manual in which Kudara is read Hyakusai. Moreover, Shōtoku Daishi should be read Shōtoku Taishi (p. xxxi).

With regard to Jōdo Shin-shū or Shin-shū, he indicates that the Shin means "a Protestant sect, so to speak" (p. xxxi), but the word *shin* mean "real" or "true," both in a literal and in deep sense.

It is always improper to use the old Catholic term "bonzes" in referring to Buddhist priests. As is well known, this term is derived from the Japanese vernacular term, *bozu*, which is the proper Japanese term for a Buddhist priest. At any rate, it is very strange to use this slang term to indicate an Annam priest (p. xxxii).

In spite of these slight mistakes, Dr. Deniker's introduction to Buddhist history in northeastern Asia is a very satisfactory guide for scholars interested in "The Gods of Northern Buddhism."

III

The sub-divisions of the main part of the volume are :

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I Ādi-Buddha	X Mañjuśrī
II Buddhas	XI Feminine Divinities
III Dhyāni-Buddhas	XII Yi-dam
IV Dhyāni-Bodhisattva	XIII Dharmapāla
V Vajrapāṇi	XIV God of Wealth
VI Avalokiteśvara	XV Minor Gods
VII Lokeśara	XVI Historical Personages
VIII Kuan-shih-yin	Deified
IX Kwan-non	

Then follow a section entitled “Tsogs-Sin — Nepalese painting offered to a Temple in 1809, “Explanations of the Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, and Japanese words used in the Text,” a bibliography, and the index.

Although there are sixteen chapters, it would be more appropriate to divide the book, according to their contents, as follows:

- I Ādi-Buddha, Dhyāni-Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas
 - 1) Ādi-Buddha
 - 2) Buddhas
 - 3) Dhyāni-Buddhas
 - 4) Dhyāni-Bodhisattvas
 - 5) Vajrapāṇi
- II Avalokiteśvara in various types in various countries
 - 1) Avalokiteśvara in its origin
 - 2) Lokeśvara, another form of the above
 - 3) Kuan-shin-yin, or Avalokiteśvara in China
 - 4) Kuan-non, or Avalokiteśvara in Japan
- III Mañjuśrī
- IV Feminine Divinities
- V Tutelary Gods, yidam and Dharmapāla

1) yi-dam

2) Dharmapāla

VI God of Wealth

VII Minor Gods

VIII Historical Personages Deified

This order follows the rank of the *maṇḍala* in esoteric Buddhism at the top of which is Ādi Buddha. Other buddhas are below him. After studying various forms of Ādi-Buddha, Dhyāni-Buddhas, and bodhisattvas, the author takes two characteristic bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī, as representatives of the Mahāyāna bodhisattvas. However, it is quite clear that, between the two the author takes a much more serious view of Avalokiteśvara than Mañjuśrī. This can be easily seen from the fact that among 177 pages of the text the author devotes 54 pages to Avalokiteśvara, which thus occupies one third of the whole.

The author's intention to reconstruct the hierarchy of later esoteric Buddhism should be said to be very proper, but it is rather difficult to understand why she does not bring related divinities together into one chapter such as I mentioned above. I regret that this improper division of the contents prevent the reader from understanding the author's quite proper intention.

IV

In regard to details we cannot help raising a few questions. Regarding Ādi-Buddha, I have a fundamental question. She always uses the term "originator" or "creation" in reference to the function of this supreme divinity (p. 2). However, the original term corresponding to this is *utpatti* in Sanskrit, which

means to "fly or jump up, fly upwards, ascend, rise, etc." In neither a literal nor fundamental sense does this term have the meaning of creation or origination. Ādi Buddha is certainly a buddha who has no predecessor, but this does not necessarily mean, then, that he is a kind of creator. If he is a creator, the comparative study of Buddhism and Christianity must undergo a big change from the present situation in this field, because one of the biggest difference between these two religions is that one has a creator of the universe and the other does not.

In regard to Ādi Buddha, Mrs. Getty's main sources are of Messrs, Grünwedel, Hodgson, Elliot, Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and others. These are, of course, notable, reliable scholars, but there have been a few more eminent scholars in this field since them, some of whom I mentioned in my short article on "Ādi Buddha thought as seen from the Bodhisattva concept" (Tōyō University, *Asian Studies*, No. 1, 1961).

But, like author herself, I must give further attention to Avalokiteśvara.

First, the author's table of the principal forms of Avalokiteśvara must be examined carefully. This is as follows:

One head.

I Human form.

I. Avalokiteśvara. Mudrā: *namaḥkāra* (devotional).

Symbol: rosary and pink lotus.

II. Padmapāṇi. Mudrā: *vara* (charity).

Symbols: vase and lotus.

Distinctive mark: Amitābha in the

crown.

III. Avalokita as Buddha.

IV. Avalokiteśvara. *Siṃhanāda* (on roaring lion).

Distinctive mark : crescent in the hair.

V. Nilakaṇṭhāryāvalokiteśvara.

VI. Trailokyavaśamkara-Lokeśvara.

VII. Hariharivarivāhanodbhava.

II Human form with emanations.

I. Avalokiteśvara with emanations of twelve “ crowned ”
Buddhas.

Symbol : lotus.

II. Siṃhanāda-Lokeśvara with emanations of five Buddhas.

III Four Arms.

I. Form incarnate in the Dalai Lama.

Mudrā : *namaḥkāra*

Symbols : lotus, vase, rosary

or *mudrās*.

II. Upper hands : *mudrā namaḥkāra*.

Lower hands : *mudrā dhyāna* (meditation) holding
pātra (begging-bowl).

III. Mudrā : *dharmacakra* (turning the Wheel of the Law).

IV. Rakta-Lokeśvara.

IV Ten to eighteen arms

I. Ten arms — *añjali mudrā* — holding *Tāra*

II. Padmanarteśvara.

V Dogmatic form of Avalokiteśvara — twelve arms.
(Nāmasaṅgiti)

VI Six to twenty arms. Amoghapāśa.

Mudrā : *namaḥkāra* or *dharmacakra*.

Special emblem : *pasa* (lasso).

Symbols : rosary, lotus, bow, & c.

Three heads.

I Third eye, four arms.

Mudrā : *vara*.

Symbols ; rosary, padma, bow and
arrow.

II Hālāhala-Lokeśvara.

Five heads.

I See Māyājālakramāryāvalokiteśvara.

Third eye — twelve arms.

II Third eye, twenty-four arms.

Mudrā : *añjali* (salutation).

namaḥkāra.

dhyāna.

Eleven heads

I Six to eight arms. Mudrā : *namaḥkāra*.

One pair of arms raised in *añjali mudrā*, holding
Amitābha image.

Others

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I 1,000 armed (if eyes in palms, 1,000 eyes).

Symbols : rosary lotus, *kalaśa*, & c.

Mudrā : *dharmacakra* or *namaḥkāra*.

II 1,000 armed—two upper hands hold sword and shield —
steps to right on serpent.

Lokeśvara in Indo-China.....	} Champa. Cambodia. Annam.
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Lokeśvara in Siam.

Kuan-shih-yin in China.

Kwan-non in Japan.

Before describing so many forms of Tantric and non-tantric Avalokiteśvara, the author gives us an introduction to these favoured divinities ; and she very properly explains that worship of this divinity still extends northwards to Lake Baikal and from the Caucasus eastward to Japan (p. 57). It is interesting to note, however, that she uses the pronoun “ his ” in reference to Avalokiteśvara without discussing the subject in detail. However, whether Avalokiteśvara is a male or a female divinity is still a debatable question.

Scholars of Buddhism and Buddhist arts have conducted much research on this question. Dr. Eberhard reported that he found a description of a female Avalokiteśvara in a text dated 817 A. D. Also he reported that this change of Avalokiteśvara's sex must have some connection with the Water-goddess-worship along the south east coast of China (*Bibliography Bouddhique* IX-XX, 1936 (5) — 1947 (5)).

Mrs. Getty also tells us, in describing the residence of

Avalokiteśvara or Potala, that “the island off Ningpo 寧波, dedicated to the worship of Avalokiteśvara, is called ‘P’u-t’o’ 補陀, which is believed to be a corruption of ‘Potala’.” But just why Avalokiteśvara is connected with a Mount Potala remains an unsolved problem (p. 58).

It does not seem impossible to imagine that this P’o-t’o and the Water-goddess-worship along the southeast coast of China are connected, but at this stage there is not sufficient evidence to settle the problem. Dr. E. Erkes also reported that in north China a statue of Avalokiteśvara in female hair style and dress dated 556 A. D. was found, which is different from the so-called “*kuan-yin anx enfants*” 子安觀音. (*Bibliography Boudhique* IX-XX, 1936 (5) — 1947 (5)).

Japanese scholars recently have published two books on Avalokiteśvara. One is Mr. Gotō’s “Research on Avalokiteśvara” (in Japanese, 後藤大用: 觀世音菩薩の研究, 1958) and the other is Dr. Mochizuki’s “Avalokiteśvara in Beauty” (in Japanese, 望月信成: 美の觀音, 1960). Both of these authors devote a chapter to the above-mentioned problem but neither of them appear to be satisfactory. They state that the character of this honourable deity, like all the other bodhisattvas, is beyond the distinction of male or female. But Mr. Gotō mentions as an exception, Cundiavalokitesvara, who is one of the seven avalokiteśvaras and the only a female one (pp. 94, 153—157) in his *Research on Avalokitesvara*.

Beside this, Mrs. Getty mentions various types of Avalokiteśvara in various areas of Asia, such as Lokeśvara in Indo-China (Champa, Cambodia, Annam), Lokeśvara in Siam, Kuan shih-yin in China, and Kwannon in Japan. We must show our

deep respect to this vast, well systematized knowledge, but, though it may be a slight matter, Lokanātha in Ceylon should be added to this in order to make the discussion more complete.

V

Among the minor deities, Mrs Getty mentions Brahma (Tib. Tshangs-pa) and states that very little is known about him. He may be represented as seated on a white horse, brandishing a sword, and sometimes carrying a banner. Like Beg-tshe, he is a warrior god, but not so ferocious in appearance.

To this a Japanese scholar, Dr. Henmi, in his "*Lamaistic fine-arts in Manchuria and Mongolia*" (in Japanese, 逸見梅栄 : 満蒙の喇嘛教美術, 1943, p. 95), raises a question as to whether this is not Mahākāla of Brāhmaṇa type (Brāhmaṇa-rūpa Mahākāla) and not Brahmā.

However, in another place (pp. 161—162) Mrs. Getty states that "mgon-po Bramzei is a special form taken by Mahākāla to manifest himself to the great lama Phags-pa in the thirteenth century, when he was called to the Imperial Court to convert the Emperor Khubilai, who was already conversant with the sutra, *Hevajra-tantra*."

This statement compelled Dr. Henmi on page 95 of his study to wonder whether Mrs. Getty renders the deity who has the above mentioned appearances as Brahmā or Mahākāla and I have the same question also.

However, these are technical questions, which really do not seriously detract from the value of this gigantic "Encyclopaedia on Northern Buddhism." This is far more than a guide book

to Lamaistic, Chinese, Japanese, and other South-East Asian Buddhism.

Recently in Japan there was published a very convenient and reliable dictionary of Buddhist iconography, "*Illustrations of Buddha's Image*" 佐和隆研: 仏像図典 (1962) written by the brilliant scholar on Buddhist fine arts, Dr. Ryūken Sawa. Needless to say this includes many more deities, principally those worshipped in China and Japan, but the material on each divinity is very brief. Therefore, we should know that Mrs. Getty's work is not a kind of dictionary, but represents comprehensive research on *The Gods of Northern Buddhism, their history, iconography, and progressive evolution through northern Buddhist countries*. Hence, she needs as many pages for each divinity as she used in her "Gaṇeśa" (a monograph on the "Elephant-Faced God," published by Clarendon Press, Oxford 103 p., 40 pl.).

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