

THE ALTAR AND ITS OBJECTS.

The altar or *chhö-sham*¹ occupies the remote end of the nave of the temple. Above its middle is placed the chief image. A canopy, called *nam-yul* or "sky-country," on which are depicted the dragons of the sky, is stretched above the altar, and a large silken parasol, called *guk* or umbrella—the oriental symbol of royalty—is suspended over the head of the central image. This umbrella, slightly revolves in one or other direction by the ascending currents of warm air from the lamps.

The altar should have at least two tiers. On the lower and narrow outer ledge are placed the offerings of water, rice, cake, flowers, and lamps. On the higher platform extending up to the images are placed the musical instruments and certain other utensils for worship.

In front of the altar stands the spouted water-jug *chhab-pum*² for filling the smaller water vessels, a dish to hold grain for offerings *né-ze*,³ an incense-holder *pö-dsin*,⁴ and a pair of flower vases. And on the right (of the spectator) on a small stool or table is the rice *mandala* cone, with its three tiers, daily made up by the temple attendant, and symbolic of an offering of all the continents and associated islands of the world according to Hindu and Buddhist cosmography, with Mount Meru (Tibetan *Ri-rab*), the abode of the gods, as the culminating point: for detailed description, see Chapter V, page 320.

¹ mchhod sham.

| ² chhab-bum.

| ³ naş bzed.

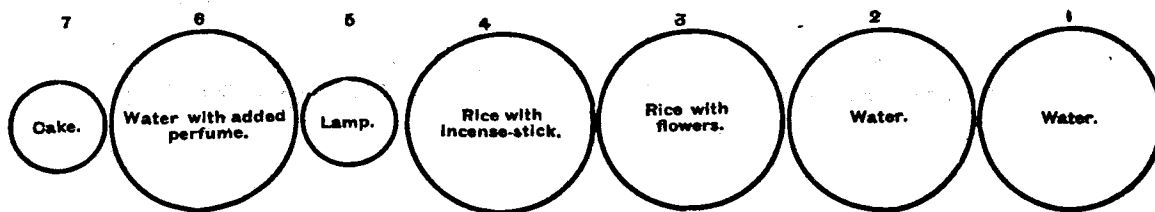
| ⁴ spoş-dsin.

The ordinary water and rice offerings are set in shallow brazen bowls, called *chhö-ting*,¹ composed of a brittle alloy of brass, silver, gold, and pounded precious stones. The offerings. Their number is five or seven, usually the former. Two out of the five bowls should be filled with rice heaped up into a small cone; but as this must be daily renewed by fresh rice, which in Sikhim is somewhat expensive, fresh water is usually employed instead.

Another food-offering is a high, conical cake of dough, butter, and sugar, variously coloured, named *tormā* or *zhal-ze*, that is, "holy food." It is placed on a metal tray supported by a tripod. To save expense a painted dummy cake is usually employed. Food offering.

The temple-lamp or *chhö-kong*² is a short pedestalled bowl, into a socket in the centre of which is thrust a cotton wick, and it is fed by melted butter. As the great mass of butter solidifies and remains mostly in this state, the lamp is practically a candle. Candles. The size varies according to the means and the number of the temple votaries, as it is an act of piety to add butter to the lamp. One is necessary, but two or more are desirable, and on special occasions 108 or 1,000 small lamps are offered.

The "essential offerings," or *Nyer-chö chhö-pa*,³ which are needed in every form of worship are seven in number, and must be placed in line and in a definite order, as shown in the following diagram:—



The cymbals are placed on the inner platform. On the top of the rice heaps of Nos. 3 and 4 should be placed respectively a flower, preferably the large-winged seed of the legume of the so-called *pag-sam shing* or "wish-granting tree," and a stick of incense. And in the bowl marked "No. 6" should be placed perfumed water; but these details are only observed on special occasions. Ordinarily the bowls are filled with plain water. Order of offerings.

These offerings have each received a special Sanskritic name descriptive of their nature, viz.—

1. *Ār-gam* (or *Ar-ganga*), in Tibetan *chhö-yön*,⁴ or excellent drinking river water.

¹ *mchhod ting*. | ² *mchhod skong*. | ³ *nyer-spyod mchhod-pa*. | ⁴ *mchhod yon*.

2. *Pā dyam*, in Tibetan *zhāb-sel*,¹ or the cool water for washing feet.
3. *Pukh-pe* (or Pushpe), in Tibetan *me-tok*,² flower.
4. *Dhu-pe*, in Tibetan *du-pö*,³ incense fumes.
5. *A-loke*, in Tibetan *mar-me*,⁴ lamp or light.
6. *Gan-dhe*, in Tibetan *ṭi-chhab*,⁵ perfumed water for anointing body.
7. *Nai-wi-dya*, in Tibetan *zhāl-zé*,⁶ sacred food.
8. *Shabta*, in Tibetan *rol-mo*,⁷ cymbals.

This order is reversed in *Kargyupa* and *Gelukpa* temples when doing a certain kind of *yidam* or tutelary deity's worship. These eight offerings appear to be symbolic of the eight *Matris* or Divine mothers, *vide* Chapter V, page 323. And with them may also be compared the 16 stages of the Hindu worship of a deity which I append in a footnote⁸ for reference.

On placing the above offerings in position in the order noted, the benefit of a full service of worship is obtained by merely chanting the following hymn:—

Accompanying wor- ship. *A-wa-tā-ya, A-wa-tā-ya. Om bajra! Ārgham, Pā-dyam, Pūkh-pe, Dhū-pe, A-loke, Gan-dhe, Nāi-wi-dya, Shab-ta, Prāti-dsa-yī Swāhā!* Which being interpreted is:—"Come! Come! *Om! Bajra* (the "thunderbolt)! Partake of these offerings! excellent drinking river "water, cool water for washing your feet, flowers for decking your "hair, pleasing incense fumes, lamp for lightening the darkness, "perfumed water for anointing your body, sacred food, the music of "cymbals! (here the cymbals are sounded.) Eat fully! *Swāhā!*"

A more elaborate arrangement of food offerings is seen in the banquet to the whole assembly of the gods and the demons, entitled *Kön-chhok chī dü*,⁹ or "sacrifice to the whole assembly of the Rare Ones," which is

¹ zhabs sél.

² me-tog.

³ pdug-spos.

⁴ mar-me.

⁵ dri-chhab.

⁶ zhal-zas.

⁷ rol-mo.

⁸ In the Hindu worship of a deity there are 16 stages of ceremonial adoration following the Invocation to come (*āvāhan*), and the Invitation to be seated (*āsan*), and in each stage *mantras* are chanted. I have italicised those stages which are found in the above lāmaic ritual:—

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Pādya</i>, washing the idol's feet. 2. <i>Azgha</i>, washing the idol's hands. 3. <i>Achmana</i>, offering water to rinse mouth. *4. <i>Snāna</i>, bathing the idol. *5. <i>Vastra</i>, dressing the idol. 6. <i>Chandan</i>, offering sandal wood, saffron, or holi powder. 7. <i>Akshat</i>, offering rice. 8. <i>Pushpa</i>, offering flowers. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. <i>Dhupa</i>, offering incense. 10. <i>Dipa</i>, offering lamp. 11. <i>Navedya</i>, offering food. 12. <i>Achmana</i>, second offering of water to rinse mouth. 13. <i>Tāmbula</i>, offering betel. 14. <i>Supāri</i> or <i>puga</i>, offering <i>Arcca</i> nuts. 15. <i>Dakshana</i>, offering money. 16. <i>Nizājan</i>, waving lights or camphor. |
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⁹ *dkon mchheg spyi ldus*.

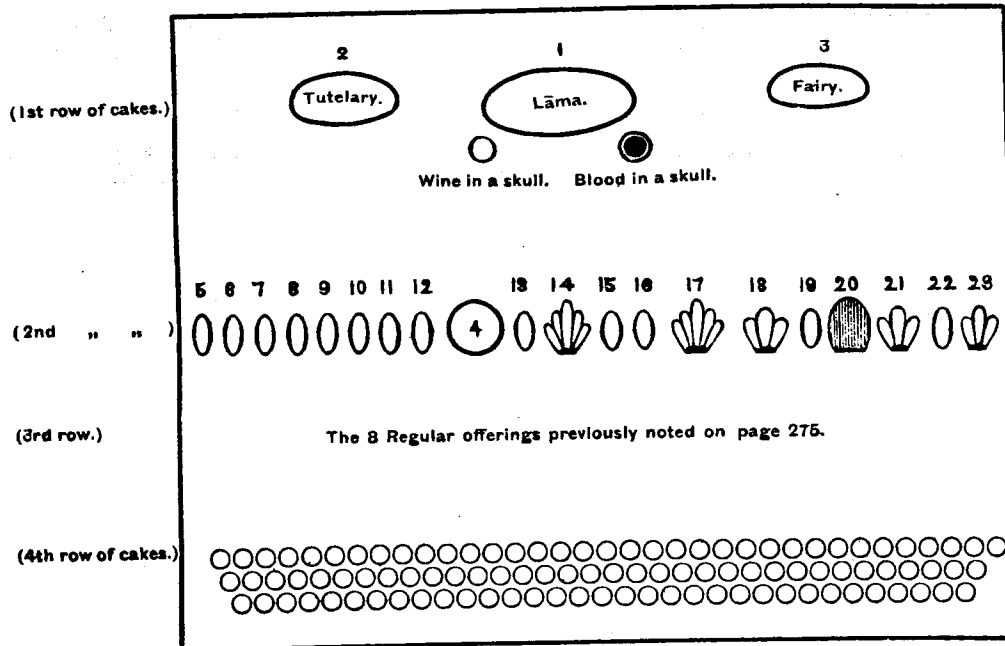
* The lāmas dress and bathe their idols only once or twice yearly.

frequently held in the temples. This feast is observed by all sects of lāmas, Nyingmapa, Gelukpa, &c., and is an interesting sample of devil-worship. The Nyingmapa fashion is here detailed, but it differs from the Gelukpa only in providing for a slightly larger party of demoniacal guests, the Gelukpa inviting only the following, viz., their chief Lāma, *i.e.*, Tsongkhapa, their tutelary deity Dorje-jik-che, Buddha, Chang-sem, the deified heroes, the fairies, the guardian demons of the Gelukpa creed, the god of wealth, the guardian demons of the caves where the *terma* (hidden revelations) are deposited, the five sister demons of Mount Everest, the twelve Tö-ma or aerial nymphs who sow disease, and the special "country" and "locality" gods.

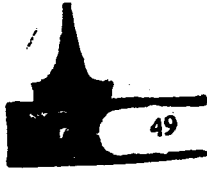
This sacrifice should be done in the temples for the benefit of the lāmas on the 10th and 15th of every month. On When given. behalf of laymen it must be done *once* annually at the expense of every individual layman who can afford it; and on extra occasions, as a thanksgiving for a successful undertaking, and as a propitiation in sickness, death, and disaster.

Its arrangement. The arrangement of the banquet is shown in the following diagram :—

ARRANGEMENT OF THE BANQUET TO THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY OF THE GODS AND DEMONS.



In the inmost row are the large coloured and ornamented *Baling* cakes for (1) the chief Lāma-Saint *Guru Rimbochhe*, (2) the tutelary



deity, in this case *Guru tak-po*, a fierce demoniacal form of the Guru, and (3) the fairy with the lion face. For the Guru there is also placed on either side of his cake a skull-cup, the one to his right containing country wine, here called *Amrita* or "nectar" (in Tibetan—literally "devils' juice"), and the contents of the other are called *Rakta* or blood—infused tea is usually offered instead of blood. In the second row are the cakes for the guardians and protector of Lāmaism, usually with Buddha's cake (No. 4) in centre. The order of the cakes for these guardian demons is as follows—the attached figures relate to the foregoing diagram:—

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| <p>No. 5. The Lion-faced demoness.
 " 6. The four-armed "Lord," a form of Mahakala.
 " 7. The god of wealth.
 " 8. The "Ruler" of Tibet's guardian (and in Sikkim the special guardian of the <i>Nga-dakpa</i> monasteries).
 " 9. The demon Blacksmith (red and black colour, rides a goat and carries an anvil and a bellows, was made a protector of lāmaism by Lō-pön).
 " 10. The Lord of the Makshas.
 " 11. The Locality protector.
 " 12. The <i>Naga</i> demi-gods, white and black.
 " 13. The female fiend-nun of Dikung monastery.</p> | <p>No. 14. The five everlasting Sisters of Mount Everest.
 " 15. The spirits of the Tank-drowned ones.
 " 16. The homestead demon-owner.
 " 17. The country god Kangehendsōnga (mountain).
 " 18. The black devil, red devil and <i>Naga</i> of Darjeeling or special locality of temple.
 " 19. The demons who cause disease.
 " 20. The twelve aerial nymphs who cause disease.
 " 21. The demon owners of the "Ter" caves where the hidden revelations are deposited.
 " 22. The black and red devils and <i>Naga</i> of parent monastery of the priests of this temple.</p> |
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In the third row are placed the "essential offerings" (*Nyer-chö chhö-pa*) already detailed on page 275, which are especially intended for the superior gods.

In the fourth and outmost row are an indefinite number of *tshok* (ཚལ་སྲོལ་) cakes which are especial dainties as an extra course for all. These cakes contain ordinary *torma* cake of cooked rice or barley, with the addition of some wine, and a mixture of cooked flesh and all sorts of eatables available.

The stages of the worship in this feast are as follows:—

- 1st.—Invitation to the deities and demons to come to the feast (Skt. *āvāhan*). This is accompanied by great clamour of drums, cymbals, horns and fifes, so as to attract the attention of the gods and demons.
- 2nd.—Requesting the guests to be seated (Skt. *āsan*).
- 3rd.—Begging them to partake of the food offered.
- 4th.—Praises the goodness and admirable qualities of the guests. This is done while the guests are partaking of the essence of the food.
- 5th.—Prayers for favours immediate and to come.

6th.—The especial delicacy *tshog* is then offered to all, on four plates, a plate for each row of guests, one plateful being reserved for the lāmas.

Then is done the ceremony of *Kang-so*,¹ or “expiation for religious duties left undone,” which wipes off all arrears of religious duty. Here the *ku-nyer* or novice appointed for the occasion throws skywards, amid great noise of instruments, several of the *tshok* cakes to all the demi-gods and demons not specially included in the feast. One *tshok* cake is then given to each lāma in order of rank, from the highest to the lowest, as the food has been consecrated by the gods having eaten of it. They must, however, leave a portion, which is collected carefully, in a plate, in order, from the lowest to the head lāma. Above these collected fragments is placed a whole *torma* cake, and a worship entitled *Hlak-dor* is done, when the whole of these crumbs—the leavings of the lāmas—are contemptuously thrown down to the earth outside the temple door to those evil-spirits who have not yet been subjected by Lō-pön or subsequent lāmas.

Other articles on altar. On the top of the altar are placed the following articles:—

- (i) A miniature *chhorten* (= *chaitya*).²
- (ii) One or more sacred books on each side of altar.
- (iii) A *dor-je*, the lāmaic sceptre and type of the thunderbolt of Indra (Jupiter), and a bell *filbu*.³ The *dorje* is the counterpart of the bell, and when applied to the shoulder of the latter should be of exactly the same length as the bell-handle.
- (iv) The holy-water vase—*thü-pum*⁴—and a metal mirror—*me-long*—hanging from its spout. The holy-water of the vase is tinged with saffron, and is sprinkled by means of a long stopper-rod, which is surmounted by a fan of peacock’s feathers and the holy *kusa* grass.
- (v) The divining arrow, bound with five coloured silks, called *dā-dar*.⁵
- (vi) A large metal mirror—*me-long*—to reflect the image of the spirits.
- (vii) Two pairs of cymbals. The pair used in the worship of Buddha and the higher divinities are called *sī-nyén*,⁶ and

¹ *bskang-gso*.

² In the room in which worship is done there must be present these three essential objects representing the *sku-gsum* (Skt. *Tri-kāya*): (a) an image, (b) a *chhorten*, and (c) a holy book, which are symbolic of “The Three Holy Ones.” In the early Indian Caves this Triad was represented by a *Chaitya* (= Buddha), *Wheel* (= Dharma), and a *LION* (= The Assembly).

³ *dril-bu*. | ⁴ *khru-s-bum*. | ⁵ *mdah-dar*. | ⁶ *ils-smyan*.

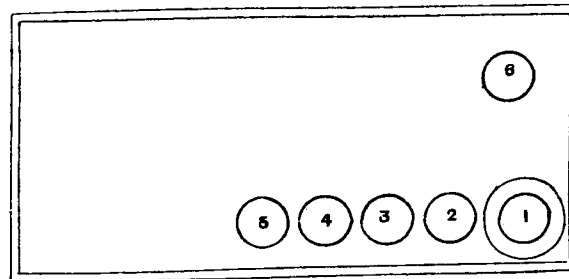
are of about 12 inches or more in diameter, with very small centre bosses. They are held vertically when in use, one above the other, and are manipulated gently. The pair of cymbals used in the worship of the inferior deities and demons are called *rol-mo*, and are of short diameter with very much broader bosses. They are held horizontally in the hands and forcibly clanged with great clamour.

- (viii) Conch-shell trumpet—*tung*¹—used with the *sī-nyén* cymbals.
- (ix) Pair of copper hautboy-fifes—*gye-ling*.²
- (x) Pair of long telescopic copper horns—*rā-dung*.³
- (xi) Pair of human thigh-bone trumpets—*khāng-ling*.⁴ These are sometimes encased in brass, with a wide copper flanged extremity on which are figured the three eyes and nose of the ogre-demon, the oval open extremity being the demon's mouth. In the preparation of these thigh-bone trumpets the bones of criminals or those who have died by violence are preferred, and an elaborate incantation is done, part of which consists in the lāma eating a portion of the skin of the bone, otherwise its blast would not be sufficiently powerful to summon the demons.
- (xii) Pair of tiger thigh-bone trumpets—*tā-dung*.⁵ These are not always present, and the last three instruments are only for the worship of the inferior gods and demons.
- (xiii) Drums—
- (a) A small hand-drum or *nga-chhung*⁶ or *damāru*, like a large double egg-cup. Between its two faces are attached a pair of pendant leather knobs and a long-beaded flap for handle. When the drum is held by the upper part of the cloth handle and jerked alternately to right and left the knobs strike the faces of the drum. It is used daily to mark the pauses between different forms of worship.
- (b) The big drum called *chhō-nga*,⁷ or religious drum. These are of two kinds, one of which is suspended in a frame and beaten only occasionally and in Buddha's worship. The other is carried in the hand by means of a stem thrust through its curved border. These are beaten by drumsticks with straight or curved handles.
- (c) The human skull-drum made of *skull-caps* and of same style as the smaller drum (a) above described.

¹ *dung*.² *rgye-gling*³ *rag-dung*.⁴ *rkang-gling*.⁵ *stag-dung*.⁶ *nga-chhung*.⁷ *chhoq-nga*.

THE LĀMA'S TABLE.

To the right front of the altar stands the lāma's table, called *dün-chog*,¹ about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length and one foot in height. A cushion is placed behind it, and on this is spread a tiger or leopard-skin rug as a seat. The table should contain the following articles in the order and position shown in the diagram:—



S E A T

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|---|------------------------|
| 1. <i>Mandala</i> —rice cone. | 4. Bell. |
| 2. <i>Chen-du</i> or <i>ne-sel</i> —saucer with loose rice for throwing in sacrifice. | 5. <i>Dorje</i> . |
| 3. Small <i>damāru</i> drum. | 6. <i>Lü-pum</i> vase. |

The extensive arrangement here figured is properly that of the Dorje Lō-pön's table. Only three monks are allowed tables in the temple, viz.—

The *Dorje Lō-pön*, or abbot.
 The *Um-dsé*, or chief celebrant.
 The *Chho-timba*, or provost-marshal.

The *Um-dsé's* table faces that of the Dorje Lō-pön, and contains only a *tü-bum* or holy-water vase, bell, dorje and the large *tsho-rol* cymbals.

The table of the *Chho-timba* stands in front of the latter's seat, near the door, and contains an incense goblet or *sang-bur*, bell and *dorje*.