

Buddhist utopias in the cultural history of Tibet and Mongolia: the myth of Shambhala

Masaryk University Brno

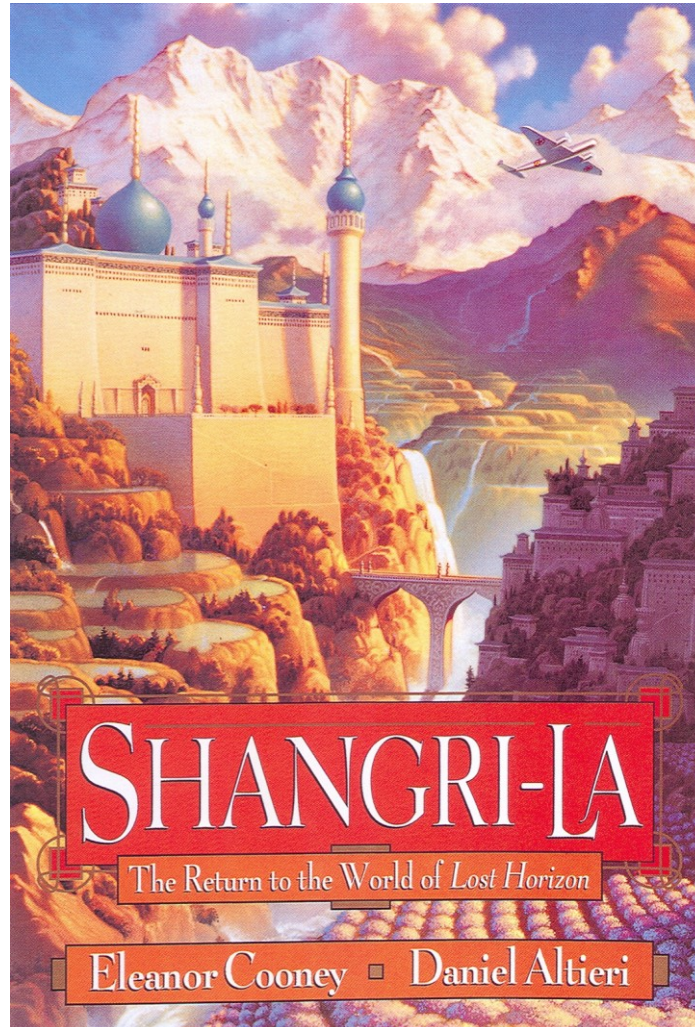
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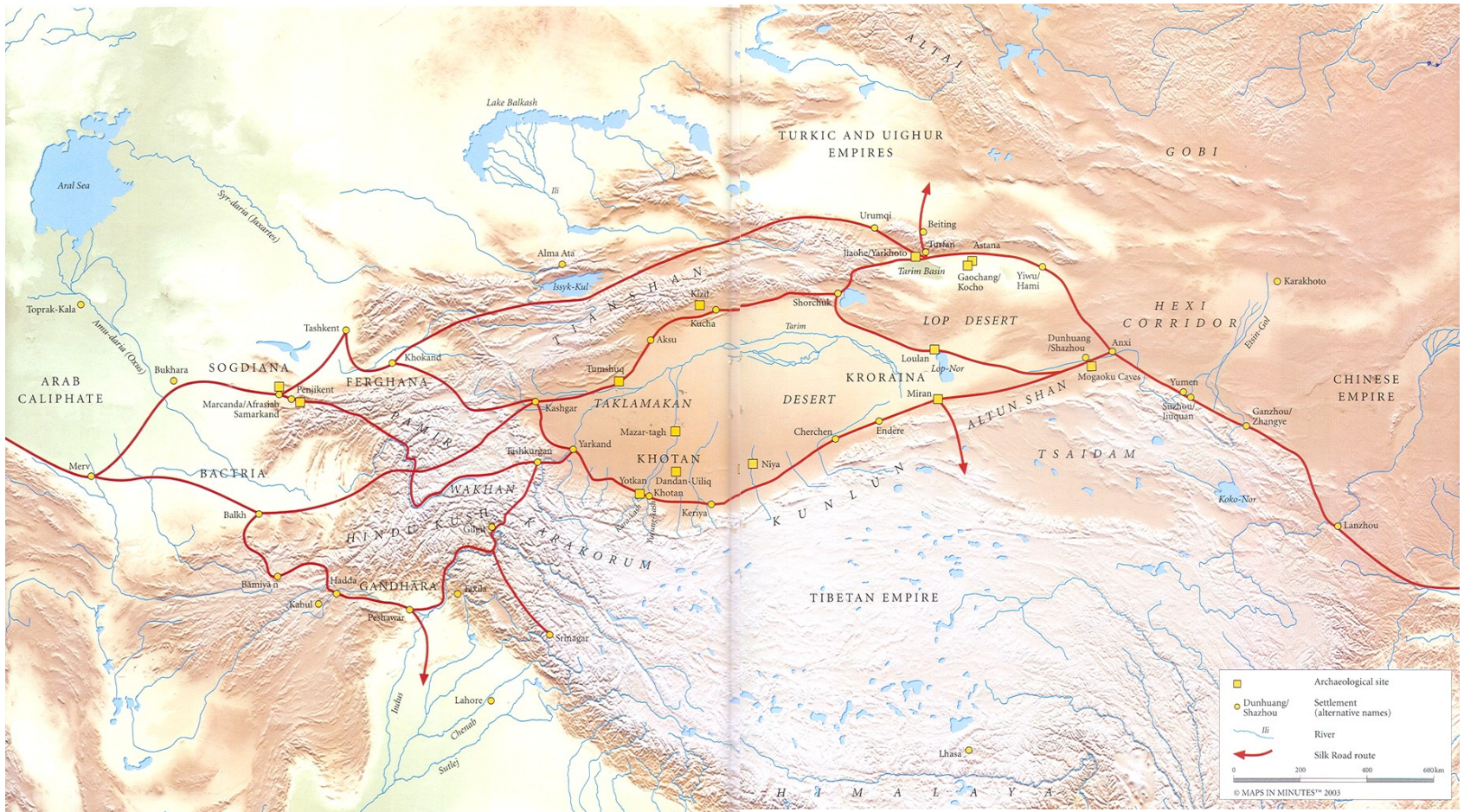
Shambhala



Shangri-la



The Memory of a bygone kingdom?



«Complete explanation of the world» (Dzamling gyeshe), 1820

- „That great scholar known as Me pa ra dza, or also as Ka lam pa tsha, „King of the boat“, who was born in the city of Tsi na ba of the country of the glorious Shambhala, on the occasion of going to the northern continent first arrived at that island named Sā kam.“

- Me pa ra dza
 - Me pa: ?
 - Ra dza = raja
- Ka lam pa tsha = Columbus
- Tsi na ba = Genoa

- Northern continent = Jambudvipa
- Sa kam = San Salvador?

- « Now, if someone should ask : According to you, Shambhala must be among the regions of Europa (O ru pa). Does this not contradict various basic texts, and also is not contrary to the answers to the questions you personally put to the precious Panchen ? »

- „Again, if someone should ask: According to your statements then, it is not proper for people of Tibet and India in the middle of our own `Dzam gling (= the southern continent) to go at their pleasure to Shambhala. Is that so?“

- „That is precisely so! Even though it is easier to go to such places as Vajrasana than to Shambhala, yet there are not many Tibetans who go there nowadays. It would be far better to make a prayer to be reborn in the future in Shambhala.“

The Kalacakra System



Kalachakra sand mandala
created in 1985 in Rikon, Switzerland

Kalacakra – The texts

- 1. Laghokalacakratantraraja
- 2. Vimalaprabha (commentary on [1])
- 3. Sekoddesha (text fragment containing part of the «root-tantra»)

Tantra

- Literal meaning: „thread “ (of a woven garment); Other meanings: „Teaching “, „teaching system “
- A system of practice and meditation focusing on visualisation techniques, symbols and ritual
- The root texts of this system are also called tantra

Tantrayana = the path of Tantra

- Hindu-Tantra and Buddhist Tantra: in India since the 7th century at the latest, in Tibet since the 8th/9th century
- The fastest and most dangerous path to attain enlightenment: it incorporates the energy of desire to attain liberation
- Tantra can only be practised under the close supervision of a spiritual teacher (Guru/Lama) : teacher and adept build a «father-son» relationship

Tantra in the context of Mahayana Buddhism

- Mahayana is divided into
- 1. the Sutra vehicle
- 2. the Perfection Vehicle

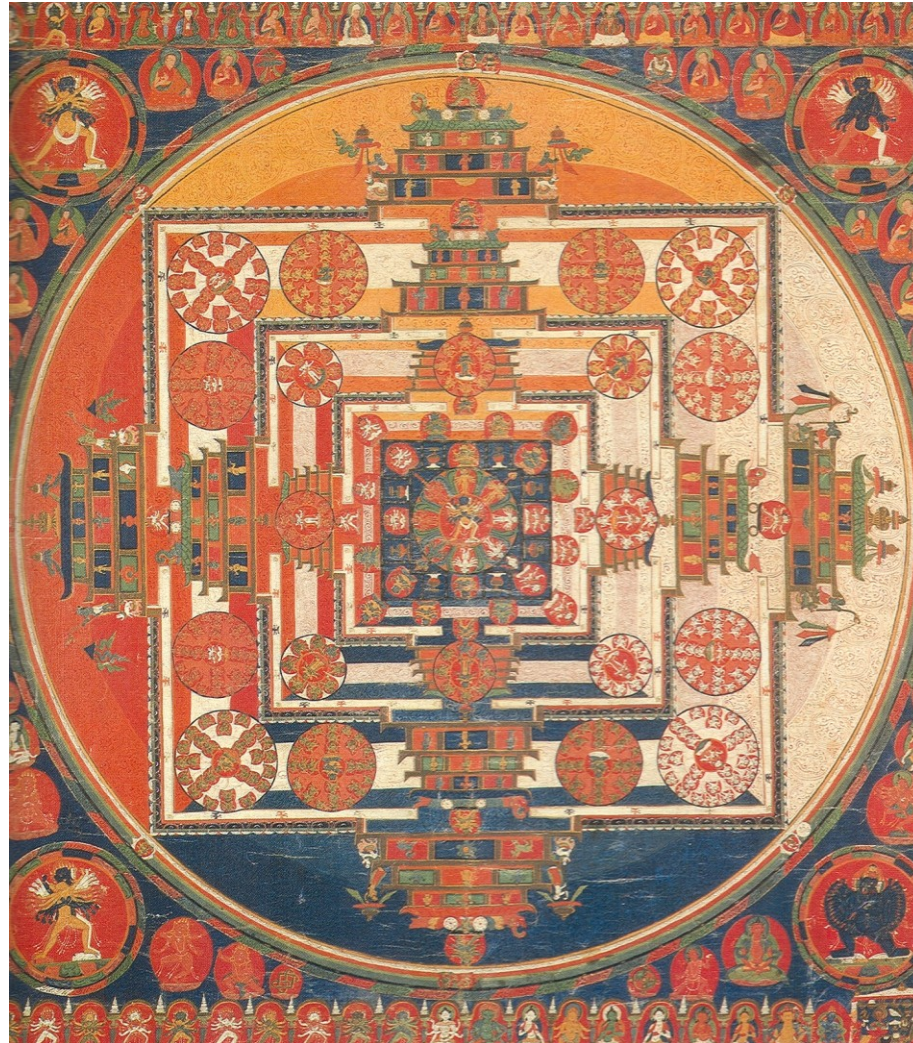
Vajrayana is either a separate vehicle or

- 3. Tantrayana

The Mandala

- mandala literally means “circle”. A mandala in Buddhist is a circular diagram that often incorporate depictions of deities and their surroundings. The mandala represents a sacred realm, often the celestial place of a Buddha, and contains symbols and images that illustrate aspects of the awakened psycho-physical personality of the Buddha. A mandala serves as a representation of an awakened mind free of all obstacles, and in the context of tantric practice it is a symbol of the state the meditators are trying to attain.
- Mandalas often consist of a series of concentric circles, enclosed by a square, surrounded by a circular boundary. The square has four gateways in the middle of each side, the entrances to the central palace of the main deity.
- The middle of the mandala represents the inner sanctum of the main deity.

Kalacakra Mandala



III. 4. Deity yoga and sadhanas



The four classes of Tantra

- 1. action tantra
- 2. performance tantra
- 3. yoga tantra
- 4. highest yoga tantra (Anuttarayoga-tantra)

Anuttarayoga-tantra

- The body is imagined as composed of subtle energies called winds (rlung/ prana) and drops (thig le/ bindu), which move through a network of seventy-two thousand channels (rtsa/ nadi). One generates oneself as a fully awakened Buddha composed of these subtle energies and possessing a buddha's wisdom consciousness.
- Highest yoga tantra is divided into two stages: the stage of generation (= creating an image of the deity) and the stage of completion (= transforming oneself into the deity possessing the exalted form and awakened mind of a Buddha).

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The body in Tantric practice

- In Tantra the body is used as instrument to attain buddhahood: Tantra teaches a spiritual physiology of the human body and uses the energy of sexual desire for mental transformation

