

Greater Maṇḍala of the Chönyid Bardo

A VERY important phase of the Tibetan iconography is the study of the "Bardo Thödol"¹ (Liberation by Hearing on the After-Death Plane). The Bardo-Thödol is based on the Yoga doctrine and is believed to have been introduced into Tibet by Padmasambhava during the eighth century. The Bardo, which lasts forty-nine days, is divided into three parts. The first state called the "Chikha¹ Bardo" is the "Transitional State of the Moment of Death," and lasts from three to four days. When the deceased realizes that death has taken place he enters into the second state or "Chönyid¹ Bardo," the "Transitional State of the Experiencing of Reality," which lasts fourteen days and is the state in which symbolic visions occur. At the end of this state, the third state called the "Sidpa¹ Bardo" begins. The Sidpa Bardo is the "Transitional State of Seeking Rebirth." This ends when the deceased has found rebirth in one of the six regions, or Lokas.

The Greater Maṇḍala of the Chönyid Bardo concerns itself with the second state of the Bardo, in which the symbolic visions occur. To quote from Evans Wentz in his "Tibetan Book of the Dead"—"that which the percipient of the Bardo plane sees, is due entirely to his own mental content. There are no visions of gods or demons, of heavens or of hells, other than those born of the hallucinatory karmic thought-forms constituting his personality, which is an impermanent product arising from the thirst for existence and from the will to live and to believe." Each day during the fourteen days of the Chönyid Bardo other visions occur. The order is as follows:

First day—Vairocana and śakti; white

Second day—Vajrasattva or Akṣobhya and śakti; blue, accompanied by Dhyānibodhisattvas Kṣitigarbha and Maitreya and their śaktis

Third day—Ratnasambhava and śakti; yellow, accompanied by Dhyānibodhisattvas Ākāśagarbha and Samantabhadra and their śaktis

Fourth day—Amitābha and śakti; red, accompanied by Dhyānibodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī and their śaktis

Fifth day—Amoghasiddhi and śakti; green, accompanied by Dhyānibodhisattvas Vajrapāṇi and Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhīn and their śaktis

Sixth day—All the Dhyānibuddhas and śaktis and the Dhyānibodhisattvas and śaktis; the Four Doorkeepers and their śaktis; the six Buddhas of the six Lokas; and the Ādibuddha Samantabhadra and his śakti

¹ Tibetan terms.

Greater Maṇḍala of the Chönyid Bardo (*Continued*)

Seventh day—The Five Knowledge-holding Deities with their śaktis.

From the eighth day onward the Wrathful Deities appear. They are the Peaceful Ones in wrathful aspect.

Eighth day—Great Glorious Buddhaheruka and śakti

Ninth day—Vajraheruka and śakti

Tenth day—Ratnaheruka and śakti

Eleventh day—Padmaheruka and śakti

Twelfth day—Karmaheruka and śakti

Thirteenth day—The Eight Kerimas or Cemetery Goddesses and the Eight
Htamenmas

Fourteenth day—The Four Female Doorkeepers, and the Twenty-eight Various-headed Mighty Goddesses

They make in all the 110 principal deities of the Greater Maṇḍala of the Chönyid Bardo, who are all pictured on this thang-ka.

The Peaceful Deities who appear during the first six days of the Chönyid Bardo are emanations of the Heart Center, according to the Yoga doctrine. The Five Knowledge²-holding Deities with their śaktis who appear on the seventh day, are emanations of the Throat Center. The wrathful manifestations which appear from the eighth to the fourteenth day are emanations of the Brain Center.

1. Vairocana and śakti
2. Akṣobhya and śakti (in center); Dhyānibodhisattvas Kṣitigarbha and Maitreya and śaktis Puṣpā and Lāsyā
3. Ratnasambhava and śakti (in center); Dhyānibodhisattvas Ākāśagarbha and Samantabhadra and śaktis Dhūpā and Mālā
4. Amitābha and śakti (in center); Dhyānibodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī and śaktis Ālokā and Gitā
5. Amoghasiddhi and śakti (in center); Dhyānibodhisattvas Vajrapāṇi and Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin and śaktis Naivedyā and Gandhā
6. Yamāntaka and śakti (Doorkeeper of the South)
7. Amṛtadhara³ and śakti (Doorkeeper of the North)

² The Knowledge-holding Deities are forms of the Dhyānibuddhas. They are in ardhaparyāṅkāśana with their śaktis. The colors and symbols are generally the same as those of their Dhyānibuddhas.

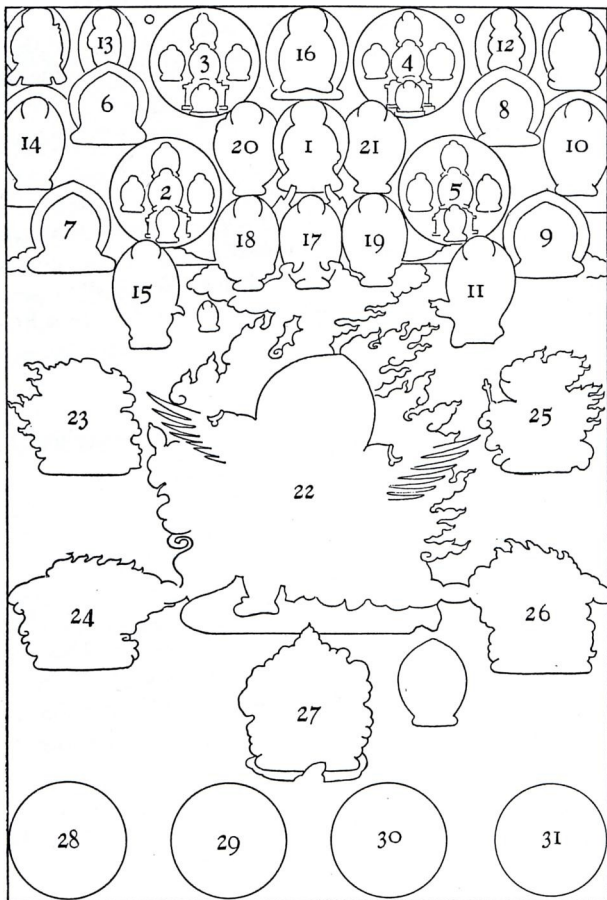
³ Amṛtadhara is a form of Amitābha.

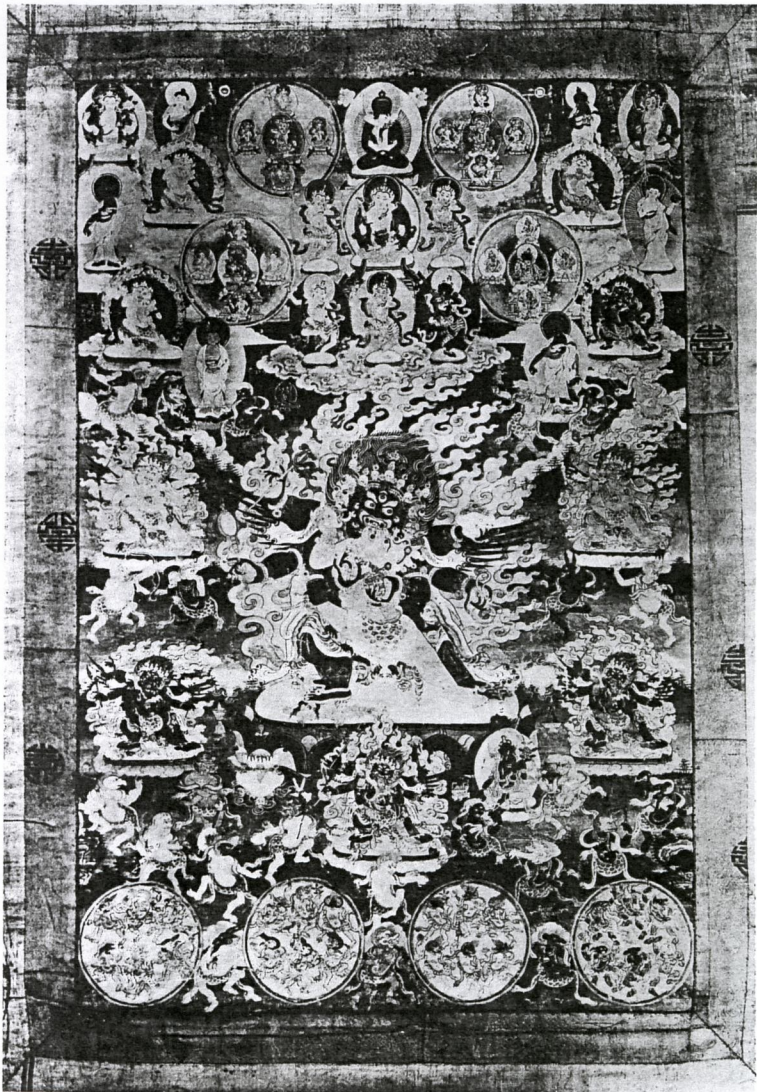
Greater Maṇḍala of the Chönyid Bardo (*Continued*)

8. Hayagrīva and śakti (Doorkeeper of the West)
9. Vijaya and śakti (Doorkeeper of the East)
10. Buddha of the Naraloka (Region of Humans)
11. Buddha of the Narakaloka (Hell Region)
12. Buddha of the Asuraloka (Region of the Demi-gods)
13. Buddha of the Devaloka (Region of the Gods)
14. Buddha of the Tiryagloka (Region of the Beasts)
15. Buddha of the Pretaloka (Region of the Tortured Spirits)
16. Samantabhadra and śakti
17. Lotus Lord of the Dance with śakti; one of the Five Knowledge-holding Deities (white)
18. Knowledge-holding Deity and śakti (blue)
19. Knowledge-holding Deity and śakti (green)
20. Knowledge-holding Deity and śakti (yellow)
21. Knowledge-holding Deity and śakti (red)
22. Samantabhadra and śakti in wrathful aspect
23. Ratnaheruka and śakti (yellow)
24. Vajraheruka and śakti (blue)
25. Padmaheruka and śakti (red)
26. Karmaheruka and śakti (green)
27. Buddhaheruka and śakti (reddish brown)
28. Six of the twenty-eight Wang-chüg-mas
29. Six of the twenty-eight Wang-chüg-mas
30. Six of the twenty-eight Wang-chüg-mas
31. Six of the twenty-eight Wang-chüg-mas

The other figures surrounding the circles and the Herukas are the Eight Kerimas (human form); the Eight *Htamenmas*, the Four Yoginīs of the Door who belong to the Wang-chüg-ma group and the Four Female Doorkeepers, all of whom are bird- or animal-headed.

Just below to the right of Samantabhadra and śakti (in wrathful attitude) is the Green Tārā (Savioress). In the extreme upper right is a figure of Vajrasattva and in the extreme upper left a figure of Śadaḥṣarī, a form of Avalokiteśvara, the patron saint of Tibet, of whom the Dalai Lamas are the incarnations.





Greater Mandala of the Chönyid Bardo

Greater Maṇḍala of the Chönyid Bardo (*Continued*)

GODDESSES OF THE BARDO⁴

The Bardo or After-Death State is the state of transition between death and rebirth. During the second part of the Bardo (Chönyid), the soul has symbolic visions. Some of these visions are in the form of goddesses. These are often shown on thang-kas depicting the Bardo or the Judgment scene. Among these are:

The Eight Kerimas or Cemetery Goddesses

They have human shape, are of different colors, and carry various symbols; for example: the Red Pukkasi⁵; she holds intestines in her left hand and with her right hand holds them to her mouth (illustrated facing p. 101); the Yellowish-White Caṇḍāli;⁵ her left hand holds a heart, and in her right hand she holds a part of a corpse (illustrated facing p. 101).

The Eight *Htamenmas*⁵

These are animal- or bird-headed goddesses holding corpses or skeletons, and so forth (illustrated facing p. 100).

The Four Female Doorkeepers

Animal-headed goddesses (illustrated facing p. 100).

The Wang-chüg-mas⁵

Twenty-eight Various-headed Mighty Goddesses. These are animal- or bird-headed goddesses holding various symbols; for example: the Brown Yak-Headed Rākṣasi Goddess holding a pointed stake (illustrated facing p. 100); the Red Makara-Headed Peaceful Goddess (illustrated facing p. 100).

The Four Yoginīs of the Door

They are also animal- or bird-headed goddesses and hold various symbols.

These four Yoginīs belong to the Wang-chüg-ma group.

⁴ According to Evans-Wentz, many of these deities are pre-Buddhistic or Pön.

⁵ Tibetan names.



Yellowish White Caṇḍāli



Red Pukkasi



Red Makara-Headed
Peaceful Goddess



Dark Brown
Yak-Headed
Rākṣasi

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