

Sacred Spaces and Powerful Places
in
Tibetan Culture

A Collection of Essays

Edited by

Toni Huber

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Cover illustration: Painted clay sculpture depicting Mount Gaurishankar as the abode of the Tshe-ring mched-linga goddesses and meditation site of Mi-la ras-pa. Courtesy of the Ethnographic Museum of the University, Zürich.

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Taming the Earth, Controlling the Cosmos: Transformation of Space in Tibetan Buddhist and Bon-po Ritual Dance

Mona Schrempf

Introduction

The chief purpose [of this Vajrakīla 'cham] is expressly for the subjugation of Rudra by Badzra Heruka, who realized six advantages by singing six songs, liberated the six classes of beings by taking six steps, and did this by way of six or eight movements of his hands and feet. And Padmasambhava, the great meditation master who was a knowledge-holder, subdued the ground (*sa-'dul*) of glorious bSam-yas by performing a ritual dance (*gar-'cham*), which relied on this same great *maṇḍala* of action (*'phrin-las kyi dkyil-'khor chen-po*). With that he created excellent conditions, such as pacifying the malice of the gods and demons, and thus he bound them strongly on that occasion by carrying out the ritual of the earth (*sa-chog*) and supplementing it with efficacy (*'phrin-las kyi kha skong-ba*), and with the expulsion ritual (*bsgral-ba*), the thread-cross (*mdos*) and magical weapons (*zor*). [This 'cham] is associated with the source of Tantra and has a great deal of empowerment (*byin-rlabs*).¹

This short passage from the important dance manual (*'cham-yig*) for the Vajrakīla 'cham compiled by the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), describes what was, according to Tibetan religious historians, the first recorded *vajra* dance (*rdo-rje gar*) performed in Tibet by the Tantric master Padmasambhava. Similarly, Bon-po masters are said to have subjugated hostile forces through ritual dance.² This narrative is considered as a kind of prototype for Tibetan ritual dances and also generally reflects the essence regarding ritual space: the general creation of a purified and protected realm for a temple, a *stūpa* or a *maṇḍala* to be built upon.

The preparatory action of ritual dance initiates what we could call a temporary 'place-creation' in terms of a recreation of the cosmological spheres at a particular site. The performance of a publicly staged ritual dance ('*cham*') becomes itself a "great *maṇḍala* of action", where dancers acting as Black Hat figures (*zhwa-nag*) or masked wrathful protectors of religion (*chos-skyong*), empowered by their being, first "subjugate the earth" (*sa-'dul*)—a means of taking control of and transforming space—usually translated with more neutral phases, such as "cleansing the ground" or "preparing the site".³ Through the generation of and identification with higher Tantric deities, monk dancers also subjugate what is considered to be evil and disturbing on the way to enlightenment, i.e. different classes of evil spirits such as *dam-sri* and inner and outer hindrances including enemies of religion (*dgra-bgegs*, *bstan-dgra*). This is done by means of a complex ensemble of different rites—purifications, invocations of and offerings to various deities, specific dance movements, subjugating hand gestures and ritual implements (especially the *phur-bu*), wrathful accompanying music and mental as well as physical actions of subjugation and expulsion.⁴

Ritual dance subjugating the ground directly generates ritual space which is purified and protected on the microcosmic level of the body and local environment and analogically on the macrocosmic level. This process of taming, disciplining or civilizing the wild and uncontrolled, including the mind, is perceived to be one of the main tasks and functions of Tibetan lamas.⁵

In the Tibetan context the esoteric logic of ritual consists of the analogical relation between microcosmic body and macrocosmic environment, between mind and space, contents and container and the transformation of such dualities through their unification and transcendence. By creating a ritual space and divine powers inside their bodies and minds, the dancers inscribe and recreate their environment in turn with their body, speech and mind, transforming it thereby into an outer ritual space which then also becomes the centre of a public ritual performance. Further processes of purifications and expulsions aim at finally transforming all participants including the audience.

Scholars describing '*cham*' performances have analysed them mainly in terms of their religious symbolic and esoteric content and stressed the phases of the dance, the iconography of the deities and the symbolism of the ritual objects and actions.⁶ This paper is a preliminary attempt to focus on how the actual practice of dance movement contributes to the creation of a ritual space in both Tibetan Buddhist and Bon contexts and what kind of ritual actions and perceptions of space are involved. The public ritual dances ('*cham*'), secret initiation dances (*gar*) and other related Tibetan rituals will be briefly compared with regard to ritual space by using dance manuals, oral and written statements by Tibetan ritual dance experts and other literary accounts.

General Overview of '*Cham*'

'*Cham*' is commonly described as a public Tibetan ritual dance, performed for a lay audience by monks in colourful costumes mainly representing the protectors

of religion (*chos-skyong*) and their assistants with masks, or the "Black Hats", who are also called "Tantrists" (*zhwa-nag* or *sngags-pa*). They are part of the retinue of the central deity in question, the *yi-dam* and its *maṇḍala* abode. According to early Tibetan literature '*cham* originates in Indian Tantric dances (*gar*) and early Tibetan masked court dances.⁷ The main esoteric purpose of a '*cham* is said to be the expulsion of "evil forces" by which all participants and the local environment is purified. It is also believed to procure blessings or empowerment (*byin-rlabs*) for all participants, to generate faith in the lay audience and to be a Tantric method of realization for the monks. As in other Tantric rituals, the meditational practice of '*cham* is based on the transformation of body, speech and mind, but extends the body transformation through dance movements in the ritual space of a publicly performed '*cham* in the courtyard of a monastery.⁸ So '*cham* could be understood as a "spatialization" of Tantric rituals.⁹ Specific parts of '*cham* danced by the assistants of the represented principal protector deities can also directly create their mythical abodes, so that the process of the construction of ritual space by dance movements is itself a recurrent part of the performance.¹⁰ This is just another indication of the relationship between ritual dance and ritual space.

The space-time frame of a '*cham* ritual is usually divided into three sections: First, a phase of meditation and ritual actions within the temple (*'cham-khang*) according to the liturgy.¹¹ Second, the public performance of '*cham* in the courtyard during which monks dressed in colourful costumes and masks re-enact publicly the major ritual actions, especially the ritual killing of the *liṅga*, climaxing usually in an exorcistic rite (*gtor-rgyab*) outside the courtyard.¹² Third, a subsequent dissolution phase within the temple, where the visualizations are dissolved into emptiness. Each day of performance is usually also structured into preliminary, actual and concluding parts. We see that what is usually called '*cham* is actually the public part of an ensemble of a variety of rituals which are encompassed by a *sādhana*.

Besides being a Tantric ritual, '*cham* is a spectacular social event in Tibetan societies, often forming the culminating parts of festivals like New Year celebrations, for instance the common *dgu-gtor* '*cham* on the 29th day of the 12th Tibetan month. '*Cham* are also performed in connection with celebrations of famous Tantric masters like Padmasambhava or Mi-la ras-pa (1040-1123), whose emanations take part in those dances. The various dance forms are said to have originated in the dreams or pure visions (*dag-srang*) of famous Tibetan masters, such as the Bon-po *gter-ston* gShen-chen klu-'dga (996-1035), or of Guru Chos-dbang (1212-1273), Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub (1290-1364), Padma gling-pa (1450-1521) and the Fifth Dalai Lama, who were all inspired by their highest Tantric deities.¹³ In this respect the origin narratives of '*cham* as a cultural practice conform to the Tibetan system of cultural production through revelation. Written down in dance manuals, '*cham* became incorporated into specific monastic liturgies and were orally transmitted by dance masters (*'cham-dpon*).

A '*cham* form is always shaped by the performing monastery so that the affiliation to the religious school, the local deities, the monastery's principal protective deities and important historical figures or events become incorporated

with the central ritual cycle of the *yi-dam* in question. Additionally, the size and importance of the monastery, its connections with other performing monasteries as well as the financial resources of the 'cham sponsors were decisive for the size, staging and social relevance of 'cham performances ranging from little village festivals to bombastic state events, such as the pre-1959 Lhasa New Year celebrations. Concerning the different types of ritual dances, one can distinguish between offering dances, those of a narrative or didactic nature, and wrathful dances of subjugation and expulsion. Despite the great variety of 'cham forms, there are general features concerning their ritual structure and aims as well as some fundamental dance figures and movements.

Gar and 'Cham

In the context of Tantric ritual, dance and music are part of the "generation stage" (*bskyed-rim*) by which the internal and external presence of the deity is evoked. Also they actively help to accomplish the goals of the performance, the "ritual actions" (*'phrin-las*).¹⁴ Concerning the types of Tantric dance, the Fifth Dalai Lama defines their distinction as follows:

When chiefly the hands move (*lag stabs*), this is called *gar*, and when mainly the feet move (*rkang stabs*) this is known as '*chams*'.¹⁵

The dGe-lugs-pa dance master Nga-dbang Chos-'byor, former *gar-dpon* at rNam-rgyal monastery for many years, draws a distinction between '*cham* and *gar* in terms of the character of movement: a *gar* is meant to be peaceful and slowly danced while '*cham* belongs to wrathful actions.¹⁶ *Gar* usually denotes non-public ritual dances without masks, danced only by and in the presence of initiated persons, inside the *lha-khang*. They are performed as a preparatory rite, or "ritual of the site" (*sa'i cho-ga*), on the spot where later a *maṇḍala* will be outlined on the ground, as in the Kālacakra initiation where a *sa-gar*¹⁷ is danced before the sand *maṇḍala* is created. In the Mani Rimdu ceremonies at the rNying-ma-pa monastery of Chiwong (sPyi-dbang) in Nepal, a *gar* is danced inside the temple on the spot where the sand *maṇḍala* will be placed. All this is part of the preparatory rites done before the actual '*cham* performance which then takes place in the public courtyard.¹⁸ Here we have a combination of a *gar* and '*cham* as parts of the same ceremony, and I will return to this point later to look at how they are related to each other.

Scholars have stressed the difference between '*cham* as public ritual dance and *gar* as secret Tantric initiation dance.¹⁹ This issue of "secret" and appropriate versus "public" and inappropriate seems to be quite an old and important one. An historical dispute between the Sa-skya-pa and rNying-ma-pa is said to have centred on the question of the appropriateness of public performances of '*cham* dances of the Vajrakīla cycle as "shows in the market place".²⁰ Recent publications on Tantric initiation ceremonies nevertheless give a more detailed description of *gar*.²¹ Below I will compare '*cham* and *sa-gar* in terms of the transformation of space.

The Physical Setting of a 'Cham

Before examining the creation of ritual space I will first look at the physical setting of the public ritual dance, which is usually performed in the monastic or temple courtyard (*chos-ra*). Within the square-shaped courtyard the dancers move in a circle, generally called *do-ra* (also *rdo-ra* or '*cham-ra*'). Jäschke's *Tibetan-English Dictionary* translates *rdo-ra* among other things as a "circle of dancers" (p.288), as does Das' *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (p.640) where it is also cited as an abbreviated form of *rdo-rje ra-ba*, an "enclosure with a railing or wall made with pots or pillars with capitals of the shape of the dorje or with the dorje on their tops (such as the shape of the wall which surrounds the monastery of Sam-ye in Tibet)." But *rdo-rje ra-ba* is also a general technical term for the protective "circle of *vajra-s*" surrounding various *maṇḍala-s*, as reflected in the architecture of bSam-yas itself. This connection is perhaps important considering that the dance circle itself creates a *maṇḍala* by performance. The dance ground is often covered over by a large tent-like canopy.

In the centre of the courtyard are erected one or two flag poles (*phyar-dar* or *cha-dar*).²² They are adorned with flags in the colours of the highest ranking '*cham*' deities. Its quadrangular or rectangular base of stone or mud often serves as an altar for the offerings to the principal deities. Where this is not the case an altar will be placed right next to it. The centre is also the place where the ritual master (*rdo-rje slob-dpon*) and the highest ranking '*cham*' deity (often the dance leader, called '*cham-dpon*') are mostly situated or carry out their ritual activities. The *gtor-zor*, also called *zlog-pa*, the hurled offering to "turn back" or expel the "evil forces", is often placed here too (see figure 1) after a preparatory rite to "empower" (*byin-gyis-brlabs*) it as a weapon by visualizing it as a wrathful form of the central deity, the *yi-dam*.²³ So the centre of the dance ground often becomes the focus of the actual '*cham*' performance, while the dancers encircle it in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction.²⁴ The ritual musicians sit in a line, usually on the opposite side of the dance-ground facing the door, invoking and praising the deities, which appear in the form of the dancers coming out of the temple ('*chams-khang*').²⁵ The latter are usually guided by *rgya-gling* players and incense holders, who venerate and invite them to enter the dance-ground to participate in the ritual performance.

Sometimes there are concentric circles actually marked with chalk on the dance ground. According to Rakra sPrul-sku Thub-bstan chos-dar there are three circles which together frame an inner and an outer circle.²⁶ Often the Black Hat dancers dance in the outer circle. This is a position which suits their tasks as *sngags-pa*, as intermediaries between the audience sitting outside and around the dance ground and the deities in the inner dance circle (see figure 1). The dance manual of the Vajrakīla '*cham*' mentions a "'*chams-skor dang-po*" and a "'*chams-skor gnyis-pa*", translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz with "inner and outer dance circle".²⁷

These concentric circles, with their biggest concentration of power in the centre, correspond exactly to the form of a *maṇḍala*, a circular sacred three

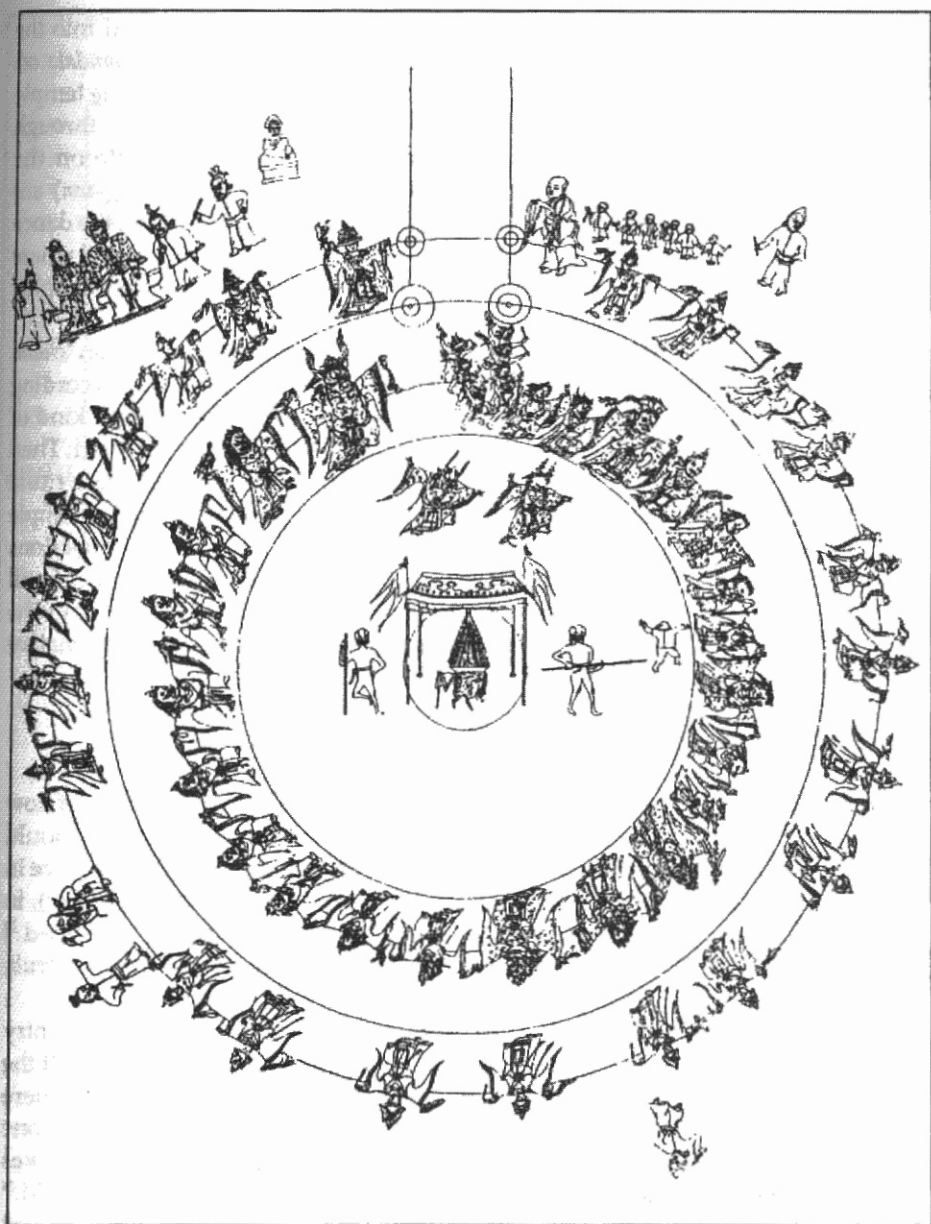


Figure 1: Schematic drawing of a 'cham (from Filchner 1933: plate 154)

dimensional space with the highest ranking deity in its centre and a surrounding retinue on the periphery whose distance from the centre reflects their specific hierarchical position—the closer in (and higher), the more important and powerful.²⁸ The dance also “echoes the formal structure of the painted one [inside the temple].”²⁹ Thubten Norbu states that “in the process, the courtyard of the

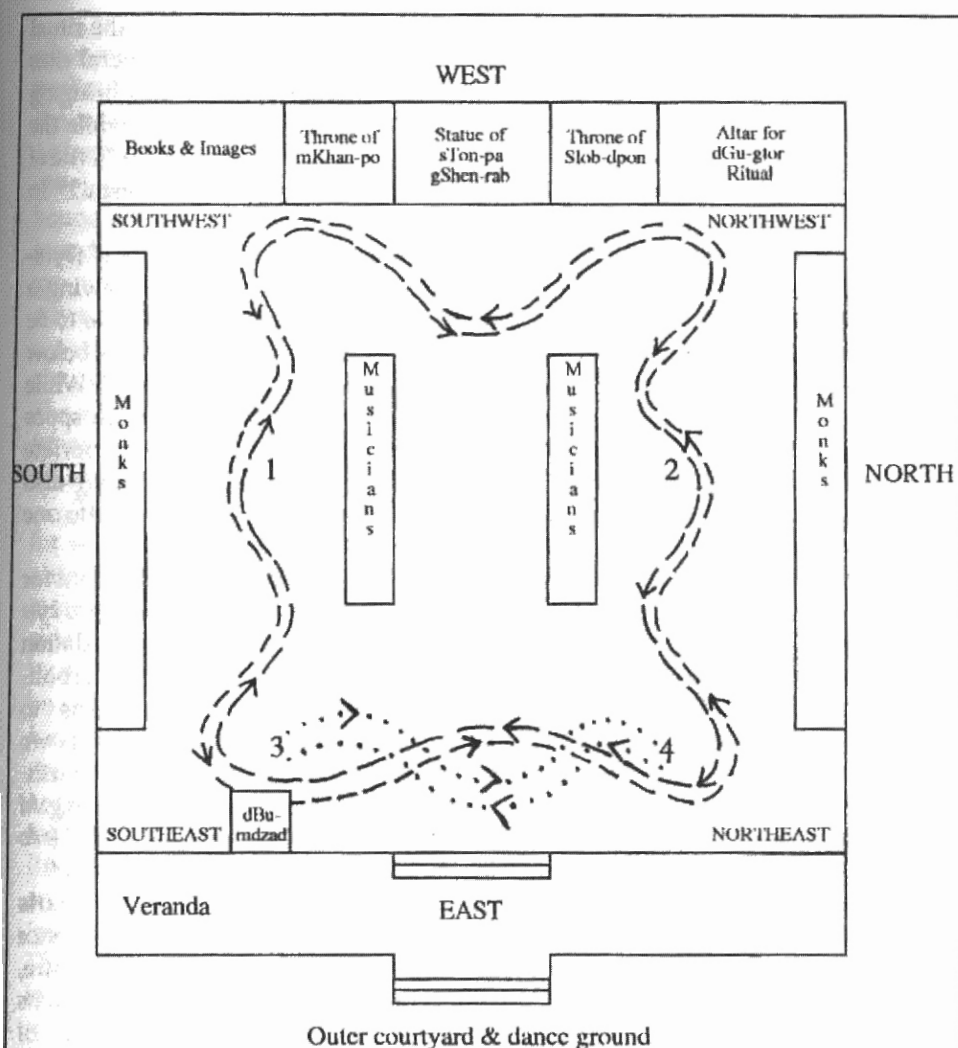
monastery becomes the *maṇḍala* and all the dancers are transformed into the deities of that particular *maṇḍala*.³⁰ Obviously there are several *maṇḍala* on different levels involved in a 'cham: first it is usually outlined inside the temple using sand.³¹ On the meditational and microcosmic level it is imagined through the body, speech and mind of the dancers and musicians; while on the macrocosmic level the three realms of the samsaric world (*kham-gsum*) are transformed into a *maṇḍala* form, as we will see later. The middle one, the dance ground itself, becomes visibly transformed into a "great *maṇḍala* of action" where "the dancers express with their movements nothing else than the iconographic details of [the] *maṇḍala*."³²

In the following I will examine the creation of ritual space in Tibetan 'cham. I will first summarize the initial phases of the "root dance" (*rtsa-'cham*) according to the detailed dance manual of the Vajrakīla 'cham in its function as a kind of prototype. It is danced by the Black Hat dancers publicly on the courtyard. Then I will give an example according to my own observation of an elaborate ritual dance based on a Bon-po form of Vajrakīla (Phur-pa), performed inside the temple in order to define the outer and inner boundaries and purify the ten directions of the ritual space, before the actual public 'cham is carried out. After that I will compare these actions and dances to the "ritual of the site" (*sa-chog*) and the "dance of the earth" (*sa-gar*) and discuss aspects of their actual performative practice and inherent themes.

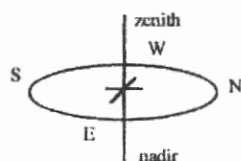
Creation of Ritual Space: Defining the Boundaries

The dance manual of the Vajrakīla 'cham gives a rare detailed description of how the dance circle should be outlined and how the ground for the *maṇḍala* should be prepared. The preparation of the ground for the 'cham *maṇḍala* takes place in the beginning of the section called "attaining bodhi" (*byang-chub bsgrub-pa*), in which the root dance performed by the Black Hats or Tantrists is explained.³³ The second section is called the "driving away evil" (*gdug-pa sgrol-ba*) or *brub-'cham*.

After the gold libation (*gser-skyems*) has been offered to the local country god (*yul-lha*) and to the eight classes of gods and spirits (*lha srin sde-brgyad*) the deities of the four world quarters are invited to gather at the dance place, where the dancers (i.e. the Black Hats) form a row and circumambulate the place one by one. Then the dance leader ('*cham-dpon*) dances into the centre where he takes a seat while the other dancers make an offering to the four quarters of the world.³⁴ Now the "deciding upon the earth-foundations" (*sa-gzhi 'khod snyom-pa*) is danced which "aims apparently at a metaphysical creation of the deepest foundations, upon which the *maṇḍala* is going to rest."³⁵ Then the *slob-dpon* proceeds towards the north-east dancing the "half thunderbolt step" (*rdo-rje phyed-'gros*), while to his right and left the "masters of the four cardinal points" (*phyogs-dpon bzhi*) position themselves.³⁶ Now the rite called *bsgral-mchod* is performed, "meaning a separation of a demon from the evil components which are the true cause of his malignant nature."³⁷ Then a hexagram is created and detailed instructions



Mental Cosmology:



1 + 2 --- Dancer's entry into the cardinal and intermediate directions

3 + 4 . . . : Going 'down' (nadir) and 'up' (zenith)

Figure 2: Phur-'dril 'cham at the ground floor of the assembly hall of sMan-ri

for specific dance figures, movements of the feet and hands holding the ritual dagger and skull-cup are given, called *yang-pad*, "wide lotus".³⁸ Several rites follow, aimed first at a "metaphysical subjugation of the spheres" by "bringing into one's power all worlds" (*snang-srid rnamis-du bsdu-bar bya-ba*),³⁹ while the hands should move in a circle above the head three times. Then there is "a rite of black magic carried out in order to destroy an adversary of Buddhism."⁴⁰ In between the *dharmapāla*-s are invoked and invited.

Now the three spheres of the world are "blessed" or "empowered" (*byin-gyis-brlab*) as follows:⁴¹ first the sphere above is empowered by drawing a heavenly wheel with eight spokes. Then the eight auspicious signs have to be outlined in order to empower the middle sphere⁴² and thirdly the sphere below is empowered by the outline of an eight-petalled lotus on the ground.⁴³ While the feet move in certain dance steps and figures the actual drawing in space seems to be done by moving or "inscribing" the ritual dagger in the appropriate way towards the spheres above, in the middle and below. The '*cham-yig* also gives an abbreviated form of this phase combining the three sequences into one dance where the ritual dagger is just pointed into the three directions.

Now the actual dance-ground is prepared. The dancers are "looking out for a suitable ground by dancing in the half-thunderbolt step (*rdo rje phyed 'gros kyis sa btul ba*)."⁴⁴ Then the ground is, according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz's translation "cleansed from harmful powers" through the performance of the "thunderbolt-single step (*rdo rje rkyang 'gros kyis sa btul ba*)."⁴⁴ But actually '*dul-ba* means "to subjugate" or "to discipline" in an active sense, an important difference as we will see. The next sequence concerns the "blessing [empowerment] of the earth-foundations by means of a pair of crossed thunderbolts (*sna tshogs rdo rjes sa gzhi byin gyis rlob pa*)" after the dance steps "the half of a thunderbolt's 'horn' (*rdo rje'i roa phyed 'gros*)" and the "central 'horn' (*dbus roa*)" have been outlined.⁴⁵

After these preparations of the sacred space the main part of the '*cham* starts with creating the spheres of sky, wind, water and fire for the divine residence (*rten*). On top of these is an ocean of blood with a skeleton mountain in its centre, upon which the *maṇḍala* palace of Vajrakīla stands. Then the chief deity with its consort is generated (*lha bskyed-pa*) and subsequently all the other deities of Vajrakīla's *maṇḍala*.⁴⁶ Among them are the "Ten Fierce Ones" (*khro-bcu*), guardians of the ten directions and emanations of the *yi-dam* Vajrakīla who are asked to remove inner and outer hindrances and who form an "inner circle" (*nang-'khor*).⁴⁷

The following description of how the boundaries of the ritual space are sealed through dance movements is based upon my observation of Bon-po ritual dances. The example given concerns the dGu-gtor ritual performed between the 27th and the 29th day of the 12th Tibetan month by the Bon-po monks of the exile monastery of sMan-ri in North India. The dGu-gtor ritual (meaning a "*gtor-mu* [casting ritual] on the [twenty-]ninth day") centres on the *yi-dam* Phur-pa, a form of Vajrakīla.⁴⁸ The dGu-gtor is performed by many Tibetan monasteries regardless to which sect they belong.⁴⁹ At sMan-ri monastery specific dances are used to seal off the boundaries and to recreate and purify the ten directions of the ritual space from evil forces which will be described below.⁵⁰

On the first of the three days of the ritual, before the public dances take place on the 29th day, the assembled monks of sMan-ri monastery start with the preliminary actions of purification, offerings to the local deities and securing the outer boundaries (*phyi-mtshams bcad-pa*) inside the assembly hall.⁵¹ These actions are part of the general preliminaries of the 'site ritual' or 'earth rite' (*sa-chog*) as a preparation for a *maṇḍala* structure. The securing of the outer boundaries is done through invocations, offerings to and visualizations of the guardian gods of the four directions (*phyi-tho*), thus protecting the monastic ground along the outer circumambulation path where their shrines are situated.⁵² After this the *maṇḍala* of Phur-pa is mentally outlined and the consecration of the vase (*bum-las*) is prepared. The vase (*bum-pa*) is placed in the middle of an altar inside the assembly hall and represents the body of the *yi-dam* Phur-pa. The altar⁵³ is the physical place for offerings (*mchod-pa*) to and representations (*rten*) of the deities of the *maṇḍala* in the form of a great variety of sacrificial cakes (*gtor-ma*) carried out during the ritual by an officiant (*mchod-dpon*).

Then while reciting their ritual texts the monks dance together the "dance for securing the inner boundaries" (*nang-mtshams bcad-pa'i 'cham*) inside the assembly hall (see figure 2).⁵⁴ It takes approximately three hours. Together the monks form a big circle, building on the left side⁵⁵ a Khro-bo and on the right side a Phur-pa line guided by two prayer leaders (*dbu-mdzad*).⁵⁶ Accompanied by drums (*rnga*) and cymbals (*rol-mo*) they pray to the deities Phur-pa and Khro-bo and to their multitude of protectors with animal heads. They also recite prayers for securing the inner, outer and secret boundaries (*nang-mtshams*, *phyi-mtshams*, *gsang-mtshams*). First they dance the "svastika chain pattern" step (*g.yung-drung lu-gu-rgyud*),⁵⁷ the *svastika* having the same indestructible and eternal qualities for the Bon practitioner as the diamond sceptre or *vajra* (*rdo-rje*) among the Tibetan Buddhists. In other words a protective circle (*srung- 'khor*) is created by outlining an uninterrupted *svastika* chain onto the ground. After the "guide step" (*lam- 'gros*) they dance "tiger steps" (*stag- 'gros*) and "lion leaps" (*seng-stabs*) alternately.⁵⁸ Then the abbot throws empowered white mustard seeds (*thun-zor* or *yungs-dkar*)⁵⁹ in order to expel the 'dre demons out of all three boundaries. The securing of a ritual boundary implies not only a spatial visualization in connection with specific dance steps and an expulsion of negativities but also a consequent protection from evil forces coming from the outside. At the same time all the accumulated positive properties encompassed in the place such as auspiciousness, wealth, paranormal powers and meditative attainments should be kept inside the protected space.⁶⁰

Then the ritual texts for the invocation of Phur-pa are recited with the appropriate music and *mudras* for the offerings, weapons and his retinue, mentally creating the *maṇḍala* of Phur-pa with all his helpers and protective deities (*bka'-skyong* or *srung-ma*). The deities are invited to come down and take part in the ritual.

Now the "dance of rolling the *phur-bu*" (*phur- 'dril 'cham*)⁶¹ takes place involving the creation and purification of the ten directions of the *maṇḍala* from evil spirits ('dre) which are then summoned into a *liṅga*. This ritual is called

Phur-pa'i phyag-rgya 'jigs-tshogs. Two monks embodying two main messenger deities (*gong-ma srung-ma*) of Phur-pa⁶² dance out what the assembled monks recite and request them to do according to specific drum beats. They act in a way like two army generals for their leader Phur-pa, having a multitude of minor helpers or "soldiers" underneath them, all with animal heads and human bodies. They deliver the requests of the monks to those and to the Deities of the Ten Directions (*phur-pa'i khro-bcu*), who in turn—bound by oath (*dam-can*)—have to obey the monks⁶³ embodying the highest deity, the *yi-dam* Phur-pa. It is in this way that the monks are able to control the strictly hierarchized, deified space and avert the evil spirits situated at the lowest point of the hierarchy.

One messenger represents the wolf (*spyang-ku*) with a blue ribbon wrapped around his arm, while the other represents the hawk (*khra*) draped with a red scarf. Spinning around themselves (see figure 2, positions 1 to 4) or circling in snake-like lines through the assembly hall in opposite directions, rolling a ritual dagger (*phur-bu*) in their hands, they symbolically search for and chase the malevolent spirits and hindrances hidden in the ten directions (i.e. of the assembly hall, and in analogy of the mental *maṇḍala* expanding symbolically to the three world spheres). The hawk makes tip-toeing steps, the wolf slouching ones. The dance starts with five drum beats in the centre of the *maṇḍala*. Then the musicians play "two beats" (*gnyis-rdung*, 1-2-2) indicating the four cardinal directions, two times "two beats" corresponding to each direction. First the two messengers are positioned opposite to each other near the centre of the assembly hall (figure 2, positions 1, 2) where for each direction they initially spin around themselves rolling the ritual dagger in their hands and then circle around the assembly hall twice (figure 2, broken lines). After that they change from this middle level of the mental cosmology to the "downside", the nadir, i.e. at the door side in the south-east corner (of the assembly hall and the mental *maṇḍala*) which is again marked by two "two beats" (figure 2, positions 3, 4).⁶⁴ Here they dance a specific step called "twisting the knotted cord in the south-east" (*lho-shar rgya-mdud 'khyil-ba*), a pattern which is danced out onto the ground at the door-side (figure 2, dotted lines).⁶⁵ After that the two messengers circle again through the assembly hall, coming back to the central positions (figure 2, position 1, 2) and perform their search in the four intermediate directions (south-east, south-west, north-west, north-east) on the middle level according to the rhythm of two "three beats" (*gsum-rdung*, i.e. 1-2-3-3). Then the dancers outline the step of "grasping the iron rope (at or around the) four doors" (*sgo-bzhi lcags-thags len*).⁶⁶ This is done again at the door-side (figure 2, position 3, 4, dotted lines) whereby they ascend to the imagined upper level, the zenith, again chasing the demonic forces and catching them with their weapons.

Those forces are finally summoned into a human effigy made out of dough—a man with a black beard laying on his back with his limbs bound, painted red (*linga* or *nya-bo*) which is then ritually killed with a *phur-bu* and his "soul" (*rnam-shes*) "liberated" (*ling-ga sgrol-ba*, *ling-ga bstabs-pa*).⁶⁷ Before this action a *tshog* offering to Phur-pa representing the negativities of the monk assembly is carried out. Further ritual actions such as a fire offering to the *yi-dam* complete this day.

All those actions described above, beginning with the securing of the inner boundaries, form the main part of the Bon-po dGu-gtor ritual at sMan-ri in Dolanji. They are repeated on the second day inside the assembly hall.⁶⁸

In the afternoon of the 3rd day of the dGu-gtor during the public dance performance dancers in colourful costumes and masks representing the nine protector deities of Bon religion carry out the ritual actions previously done inside the assembly hall, but now on the court-yard. All of three subsequent public dances (bsGral-bstabs 'cham, gShen-rab dgu-'cham⁶⁹, gTor-rgyab skabs) begin with the same dance steps as those for the securing of the inner boundary on the two previous days, i.e. *svastika* chain, tiger steps and lion leaps.⁷⁰ So we can summarize that ritual space creation through dance movements is neither just a preliminary of a whole ritual complex nor it is restricted to the rituals inside the assembly hall. It can also be repeatedly performed during the public performance of a 'cham as a preparatory act for the different kinds of ritual dances and actions involved.

It appears to be the prominent feature of the dGu-gtor ritual based on the *yi-dam* Phur-pa—the subduer *par excellence* of demons—that ritual space creation through dance movements and actions of purification/expulsion are closely interlinked and repeatedly performed throughout the ritual complex. However, ritual texts of different religious schools centring on Vajrakila or Phur-pa, as well as particular performance styles, do evoke differences in staging a 'cham. While at sMan-ri monastery the elaborate creation, purification and protection of ritual space centres on the two days inside the assembly hall, Combe, for example, described those actions as being publicly acted out on the courtyard. In the very beginning of the Phur-pa'i 'cham at a rNying-ma-pa monastery in Dar-tse-mdo (today Kanding) the "ten Wrathful Ones" ("Troju" i.e., *khro-bcu*) dance a slow dance thereby sweeping the courtyard with bamboo branches in order to expel the evil forces.⁷¹ The dancers, among other figures, also publicly represented the *yi-dam* Phur-pa together with his animal-headed door keepers and assistants, 23 all together—among them his "pet wulf (*sic.*)".⁷²

Another example of a 'cham centring on ritual space creation is the locally called "*khencham*" (oral transcription), probably either meaning the fact that it is danced only by one dancer or by a "Knowledgeable One" (*mkhas pa'i 'cham*).⁷³ It is performed as an opening dance of the public New Year dances at the end of the sMon-lam ritual, on the 15th day of the 1st Tibetan month, at the Bon-po monastery of dGa'-mal in A-mdo Shar-khog. One Black Hat dancer circles in slow majestic movements the arena with a ritual dagger and a skull-cup in his hands. Thereby he dances nine steps called the "nine necessary cuts" (*dgu-gcod dgos-pa*), which are supposed to press down or close the nine doors of hell.⁷⁴ The esoteric explanation is that the three worlds and the nine levels of cyclic existence (*khamis-gsum sa-dgu*) are then transformed into purified realms.⁷⁵

Another public dance performed by Bon-po monasteries in Shar-khog specifically purifies the earth—it is danced usually at the beginning of the public performance in order to chase the 'dre spirits out of the dance ground. The two dancers called "A-li ka-li" wearing white masks without any deity-like ornaments

whirl around the place with a ritual implement used by Bon-po called *phyag-zhing*, a "wooden sceptre (of the destiny of existence)", in order to tame or subjugate the earth (*sa-'dul*).⁷⁶ This dance is called *gar-'cham* denoting a similarity between *gar* and *'cham* and ritual space creation, a link which I want to examine in the following paragraphs.

The Ritual of the Site and the Dance of the Earth

The "ritual of the site" (*sa'i cho-ga* or *sa-chog*) is generally the first step in the construction of a *maṇḍala* in Indo-Tibetan Tantra.⁷⁷ It employs the "dance of the earth" (*sa-gar*), and is concerned with defining the borders (*mtshams*) of a ritual space by creating inner and outer, upper and lower protective circles (*srung-'khor*).⁷⁸ Its structure is basically the same as the Vajrakīla root dance (*rtsa-'cham*) already discussed.

In the ritual of the site, the *sa-gar* is danced after the use of ritual daggers, to define the space. For example, during the construction of a sand *maṇḍala* on a table first ten ritual daggers become deified and empowered in form of the Ten Wrathful Ones. They are hammered onto a *maṇḍala* table in the ten directions whereby the ritual space is purified.⁷⁹ Having invoked them the officiant, visualizing himself as the main *yi-dam*, dances on the surface of the *maṇḍala* table.⁸⁰ The ritual daggers, standing on triangular bases which symbolize their suppression of evil forces⁸¹ are imagined to seal with their blazing light the upper and lower boundaries, spreading above a diamond tent, below a diamond ground, filling the border with a diamond fence. This fence is "so dense that even air cannot enter."⁸² The ritual dagger of which Vajrakīla is a deified form⁸³ is symbolically used like a peg of the earth (*sa-yi phur-bu*),⁸⁴ implying the concept of Mount Meru pinning down the earth.⁸⁵

Following this, the *sa-gar* is performed around the *maṇḍala* site in form of a slow *vajra* dance. Five different dance steps (*rkang-stabs*) are used.⁸⁶ But how is the dance ground actually transformed into a *maṇḍala*? During the performance of the *sa-gar* the *vajra* master symbolically marks the emblems of the five Buddha families, e.g. *vajra*, sword, jewel, wheel and lotus, on the corresponding direction of the site. This process is of interest: first he blesses the ground by visualizing the emblems on the sole of his feet and in the relevant directions, using appropriate mudras and postures.⁸⁷ After that the ground is finally empowered: the participants visualize a *vajra* on their soles, from where wrathful deities emanate into the ground. These finally destroy the obstacles and transform the place into the diamond nature of the *vajra*.⁸⁸ Again a protective circle is visualized and the area is circumambulated with incense.

Transformation of Space: The Violence of Liberation

...and he must dance the divine dance of knowledge which treads under foot the four *Māras*.⁸⁹

If we compare now the above descriptions of ritual dances and steps it becomes evident that there are common perceptions of ritual space involved. A deified

cosmology (i.e. the earth goddess and the four masters of the cardinal directions) and spatialized gods (such as the Ten Wrathful Ones) are invoked and offered to so that space can be purified and protected and evil forces can be driven out as well.⁹⁰ Thereby, the shapes of dance movements used for the creation of ritual space refer to powerful symbols of control and transformation in the religious cosmologies—such as *svastika* chains, crossed *vajra*-s, the eight-petalled lotus, the eight-spoked wheel and the eight auspicious signs. Even aspects of the dancers' costumes, like the Black Hat itself which represents the cosmological spheres, seem to contribute to the same purpose.⁹¹ The symbols are outlined, or better, stamped directly on the ground and / or drawn in the air, thereby defining and at the same time protecting the ritual space. In public '*cham*' they seem to cover the whole area of the dance ground as well. This is also confirmed for the *vajra* dance as a preparatory action of a general *maṇḍala* initiation.⁹²

As we have seen ritual dance steps play a crucial active role in the construction of a ritual space for a *maṇḍala*. This corresponds to many of the preparations for the building of a temple where special ritual dances as well as specific rituals for the preparation of the ground are performed.⁹³ Circular dances by nature have to do with fundamental conceptions of space and are among the oldest of dance forms. Indian cosmogonies, which pervade the Tibetan Buddhist world view profoundly, narrate that movement creates time and space—the creation of the universe starts with the churning of the unmanifest whereby an immobile and inaccessible centre arises and becomes the concentration of the periphery. By circumambulation the contact with the centre and its transcendent principle is ensured.⁹⁴

Furthermore, the *maṇḍala*, a concentric circle cosmogram with the highest deity in the centre, is a means of taking control over a place, transforming it into a sacred sphere, as happens in the context of Tibetan pilgrimage sites as well.⁹⁵ As in '*cham*' there is a reversed transfer of power between human body and ritual space, where the physical touch of the whole body, e.g. a full-length prostration contact with a specific empowered ground (*gnas*) representing the *maṇḍala* of a powerful deity, actually transfers empowerment to the participant—the audience or the pilgrim.⁹⁶ It is also reported that lamas or monks who had visited powerful places are perceived and venerated as embodiments of such sacred space.⁹⁷ The transformation of a (potentially hostile) ground into a ritual space by means of a *maṇḍala*, created inside the body and later reconstituted by circumambulatory movements, appears to be a general mode of Tibetan "place creation".

Next to being a Tantric method⁹⁸ the "pressing down of the earth" is also practised in the Tibetan folk context. Thereby dance steps in connection with certain spatial patterns are employed for the expulsion of negative forces in a variety of Tibetan folk dances. For example the *Gling-bro*, a dance centring on the *maṇḍala* of Ge-sar, is danced by lay people on a circular floor pattern in order to destroy negativity.⁹⁹ Siiger, observing pilgrims from Khams, mentioned three lay group dances especially related to the "levelling of the ground" through stamping with the feet and dancing a circular floor pattern (*sa-cha-bro*, *sa-'dul-bro* and *sa-gzhi-khyon snoms-pa*).¹⁰⁰ Also, the Tibetan folk opera *lha-mo* generally begins with a consecration and purification of the opera ground which is danced

by a group of masked hunters (*rngon-pa*). They are said to cultivate (*bcag*) and tame ('*dul*) the ground.¹⁰¹ A recent innovation at Tibetan exile Great Kālacakra Initiations ('Dus-'khor dbang-chen) in India (e.g. at Bodhgaya 1985) was the performance of this same preliminary *lha-mo* dance by lay people before the ritual dance of the earth (*sa-gar*) was danced by the monks.

Similarly, certain spatial patterns are used in Tibetan exorcistic rituals in which dance steps are employed as subjugating methods. A *sku-rim* ceremony is performed in Dol-po to assure a good harvest and centres on a *glud*, a substitute offering, placed in the middle of an area which is circumambulated by dancers—partly masked *dharmapāla*-s, partly Black Hats—and ends as well like '*cham* with a *gtor-rgyab* ritual for the expulsion of evil forces.¹⁰² Also, the many methods for performing a *brgya-bzhi* ceremony in order to cure a patient from illness seem to centre on a *glud* placed in the middle of concentric circles or an eight-petalled lotus outlined on the floor.¹⁰³ Klaus mentions a subduing dance used by weather-makers in order to avert hail, and which centres on the image of the cosmic mountain Meru suppressing the evil.¹⁰⁴

I think it is necessary to look at the details of taking control over space in Tibetan rituals, because they show that the actions involved here are not mere symbolic representations of the religious order but powerful and physical means of transformation through subjugation. Dance movements not only create and inscribe ritual space, they simultaneously subjugate the ground physically. They seem perfect for this task. Already the Tantric narrative of the origins of '*cham* shows this clearly: Heruka subjugates Rudra by making six or eight movements with hands and feet. In direct connection with this, Tantric Buddhist icons show the deities trampling adversaries underfoot and their *sādhana* describe this action as "performing a clockwise dance" (*g.yas-brkyang-ba'-i gar mdzad-pa*).¹⁰⁵ So footsteps in Tantric Buddhist belief seem to be directly connected to the subjugation of the so-called "evil forces" as well. As a constant reminder of their supernatural power of subjugation Tantric masters are said to have left behind "magical" footprints still to be seen today on the rocks in many holy places of Tibet.

Also, a common Tibetan practice for destructive magic is to write the name of an enemy, together with harmful mantras, on a paper placed inside the boot, so that while walking the victim's name is constantly trampled underfoot.¹⁰⁶ This seems to have been practised until recently (and maybe still today?) even at the highest levels of Tibetan political office, and as Goldstein notes, "This is considered a very serious crime, as repulsive as an outright murder attempt."¹⁰⁷

In general the performance of '*cham* has quite a few features in common with other rites of destructive magic. Some '*cham* forms seem to have been performed even for the direct purpose of killing an enemy. In an "act of sympathetic magic" the Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang mam-rgyal (1594-?1651) tried to attack the enemies of the Bhutanese 'Brug-pa sect as part of the annual exorcism of evil during the performance of '*cham* by writing their names on a triangular cloth and placing it under the *liṅga* to be cut up in pieces.¹⁰⁸ The Mahāyāksha '*cham* of the dGe-lugs-pa monastery of rDzong-dkar [or: -dga'] Chos-sde which

formerly existed in Gung-thang (now rebuilt in India), is said to have been created because of continuous attacks by neighbouring peoples of the sTod-hor region who, after the abbot established the dance according to his vision, never attacked them again.¹⁰⁹ Then there is the well known Tibetan Buddhist historiographical narrative of the Buddhist hermit dPal-gyi rdo-rje who, disguised as a Black Hat magician, killed the purportedly anti-Buddhist king Glang-dar-ma (9th century) with an arrow hidden in his long sleeves while catching his attention through the performance of a ritual dance. Another wrathful Black Hat dance performed in order to kill an enemy is described in detail by Nebesky-Wojkowitz. Here the Black Hat "sorcerer" dances the so-called *Gying-'cham*, the "dance of the wrathful stretching", by performing the thunderbolt step: "While dancing the sorcerer should be of a wrathful disposition (*rngam stabs*) and should utter mantras with his teeth clenched (*sngags bzlas*)."¹¹⁰

Thus, there is ample evidence that at a fundamental level ritual dance and certain dance steps are directly related to violent subjugation in Tibetan tradition.¹¹¹ In order to reconcile this with the religious (Buddhist and Bon) soteriology and a morality of non-violence, such ritual actions are often represented as merciful steps to ensure the liberation of evil forces.

Conclusions

By drawing attention to the theme of violent subjugation in this article I do not want to deprive the '*cham* ritual of its undoubted Tantric meaning of releasing the mind of dancers and participants from inner obscurations, or of it being performed for the well-being of the whole community, giving the chance for increasing merit, health and long-life. But, apart from the actual construction of a *maṇḍala*, why is it annually necessary to violently tame or subdue the forces of the physical world? Day (1986) has pointed out that the lama's role in Tantric ritual is in general to demonstrate his power of taming and disciplining ('*dul-ba*) towards destructive aspects of reality as well as towards the gods, a view which also applies to the public ritual dance '*cham*. Thereby the reciprocal relationship between monks giving ritual service and the laity sponsoring them is regularly re-established.¹¹² Samuel counts '*cham* among the pragmatically oriented rituals of Tibetan Buddhism, where "the lama turns his spiritual powers to the this-worldly benefit of his followers."¹¹³ Ortnner argues, in congruence with the emic explanation of the Sherpas in regard to their greatest festivals, that there exists in fact a regular threat through "demons" in the Sherpa world, so that Buddhist specialists "must annually reassert its [i.e. Buddhism's] claims to people's allegiance and dependence, reconquer its 'foes', and re-establish its hegemony."¹¹⁴ So the old struggle between "gods" and "demons" is not just a mythical one but still a challenge of today. Underlying the ritual the narrative of the cosmic drama of the subjugation of Rudra by Heruka appears to be placed back on earth repeatedly in order to rebalance good and evil and re-establish the traditional cosmic order, because there is only a "temporary winner" and a "temporary loser".¹¹⁵

By way of ritual dance a certain balance among the powers of the universe is restored and the hegemonic position of the monks in terms of their superior morality and purity (as embodiments of the highest deities) is reasserted. Control over ritual space therefore also implies control of ritual and social power.¹¹⁶ Whether it is Padmasambhava, sTon-pa gShen-rab, sTag-la me-'bar or Heruka as subduers of evil forces who might be recalled in the temporary construction of *maṇḍala*-s—it is through the aid of powerful symbolic dance movements with the body in the local environment that actions of purification and blessing can take place on microcosmic and macrocosmic levels correspondingly.

Notes:

1. Translated by T. Huber, Tibetan text in Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:112). Thanks to Toni Huber and Geshe Namgyal Nyima for helpful discussions on the material presented in this article.
2. See for example the story of Mi-lus bsam-legs in the Bon Mother Tantras (Martin 1994:53).
3. For the subjugation of the ground (*sa-'dul*) as a preliminary for the construction of a *maṇḍala* in general, see Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche (1992). Concerning the phases of the earth rite (*sa-chog*) in a Bon-po text see Martin (1994:41, 42, n. 153). The first two phases containing *sa-'dul* and *sa bcags-pa* are performed as ferocious dances by 45 wrathful male and female deities.
4. What is generally perceived as the destruction of evil forces in a '*cham* is the central rite, called *liṅga bsgral-chog*, the cutting up of a human effigy made out of dough. Into this effigy all kinds of negativities are summoned and then ritually killed (*smad-las*, see Stein 1957:224f). The consciousness (*rnam-shes*) of evil spirits are liberated, and the remaining material parts of the *liṅga* are transformed into offerings to the Tantric deities. At the end of a '*cham* the evil forces are expelled in a final act (called *gtor-rgyab* or *bzlog-pa'i las*), through the casting of a ritual weapon (*gtor-zor*). These two important rites are not further discussed herein as I restrict myself to the creation of ritual space and the interrelated subjugation of the earth, a feature which has been neglected or played down in the literature on '*cham*.
5. Samuel (1993).
6. The most detailed descriptions of '*cham* are by Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976) and Kohn (1988a); cf. also Aris (1976), Cantwell (1989, 1992), Combe (1989), Filchner (1933), Helffer (1980), Khampagar (1985), Marko (1994), Hoetzlein (1991) and Shakya Dorje (1975). More general notes on '*cham* are found in Ellingson (1979, 1980) and Stein (1972); for notes on sociological aspects see Furer-Haimendorf (1964:214ff.) and Tucci (1980:144ff.). For further bibliography see Schrempf (1990).
7. See Ellingson (1979:166).
8. The dance manual for the Vajrakīla '*cham* calls it "a rite of the Vajrayāna *maṇḍala*" (*rdo-rje theg-pa'i dkyil-'khor gyi cho-ga*) (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:111). Present-day Tibetans characterize it rather as a rite of expulsion, "powerful" (*drag-po*) and an "act of protection" (*mgon-spyod*) (Lama Lodroe, interview). Ideally the Tantric principles of method and wisdom are spatially employed using dance steps and ritual implements (Trowo Tashi, personal interview).
9. Helffer (1981:661).
10. According to the dGe-lug-pa '*cham* dancer Tenzin Yangdak of rDzong-dkar Chos-

sde monastery, my informant concerning the Mahāyaksha 'Cham, see Schrempf (1990:52). For example the performance of the skeleton dancers (*dur-khrod bdag-po*) is supposed to create the space of a charnel ground.

11. The dancers have to put themselves in the proper state of mind (*yiḍ*) inside the temple: the understanding of the three principles of clearness (*gsal-ba*), emptiness (*stong*) and non-attachment (*'dzin-pa med-pa*). The meditation is aimed at the identification of the dancer with the deity he has to represent in the 'cham (*bdag-skyed*). During the whole ritual he should basically remain in the "divine pride of being the deity" (*lha'i rga-rgyal*) (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:100f).
12. This final expulsion starts with a procession of dancers and musicians carrying various offerings and the empowered ritual weapon (*gtor-zor* or *zlog-pa*), which had been placed in the courtyard during the dance performance. This expulsion rite is always performed outside the temple area, probably to avoid any kind of pollution (*grib*) associated with the final killing of evil. In the case of the Mahāyaksha 'Cham a "magical line" is drawn onto the ground with flour, from the centre leading outside the courtyard (i.e. of the *maṇḍala* of the *yi-dam*). This ensures that none of the wrathful energy accumulated in the empowered *gtor-zor* and by the dancers representing the deities during their performance is lost (Tenzin Yangdak, interview, see Schrempf 1990:58). In the *brgya-bzhi* ceremony, carried out to cure a patient from an illness or to avert some impending danger, the same procedure is used in order to cast out evil forces (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:524).
13. No written history of 'cham and its different forms exists. It is likely that monastic dance traditions and styles influenced each other, i.e. as is indicated by the dance manual of the Fifth Dalai Lama (Ellingson 1979:166-174).
14. Ellingson (1980:382).
15. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:113).
16. Hoetzlein (1991:315).
17. According to S.G. Karmay *sa-gar* is danced at "the opening part of the tracing of a *maṇḍala* on the floor, as with the *maṇḍalas* of 'Jig-byed or Samvara" (Stoddard 1986:130, n. 10). On other *gar* dances see the three works on *mchod-gar* by Bu-ston (1967-1968, vol. Tha, ff.359-373, vol. Na ff.355-359, vol. Pa ff.781-788).
18. See the dissertation by Kohn on the Mani Rimdu (1988a).
19. See Stoddard (1986), Fedotev (1986). This is also the point of view of the Tibetan scholars and 'cham experts Rakra sPrul-sku Thub-bstan chos-dar and Gonsar Tulku, the abbot of rDzong-dkar Chos-sde. They pointed out in interviews that 'cham could not be called a "*maṇḍala* dance" because this would be restricted to *gar*. Probably this is because, as we will see later, the main and most important *maṇḍala*—there are several ones on different levels—is outlined inside the temple (mostly with sand), while the dance is acted out in duplicate in the courtyard. Furthermore, other Tibetan scholars (see Shakya Dorje 1975 and Nga-dbang Chos-'byor in Hoetzlein 1992) and the 'cham-yig of the Fifth Dalai Lama make it explicit that 'cham is a *maṇḍala* rite centring on the *maṇḍala* of the *yi-dam* concerned (see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:111).
20. Ellingson (1979:167) citing the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, vol.3, 759-60. This issue needs to be further discussed and investigated.
21. See Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche (1992:56,57) and for the *sa-gar* of the Klacakra initiation see Brauen (1992:75-103).
22. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:67).
23. This is the case in the Mahāyaksha 'Cham as well as in the Vajrakila 'Cham at Tashijong (Shakya Dorje 1975:29) and in the Mani Rimdu, recorded by Kohn in his film *Lord of the Dance* (1988b).

24. Because there are many varieties of 'cham performances, it can occur that the main ritual weapons are not placed in the centre of the courtyard, a fact which was observed and pointed out to me by Prof. Kvaerne. While Bon-po traditionally circumambulate in the counter-clockwise direction during their 'cham performance, both directions are used for circling around the dance ground.
25. The temple (*lha-khang*) is used as a dressing room and as whereabouts during the dance pauses.
26. Personal interview. See also Pozdnejev cited in Filchner (1933:327 and plate 154); also Bleichsteiner (1937:207) and Lessing (1935:114).
27. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:67; 125). Explicitly mentioned also is a middle circle or *bar-skor* (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:123).
28. A textual reference for this can be found in the "Gar 'Cham" manuscript issued by the Khampagar monastery (1985:22): "The dance meditation converges on the dance ground, toward the dance fully developed Primal Awareness, toward Vajrakīlaya who stands in the centre of the Mandala."
29. Aris (1980:40).
30. T. Norbu (1982:130-1).
31. See the film *Lord of the Dance* by Kohn (1988b) and his dissertation on the Mani Rimdu (1988a); see also Thingo (1982:359).
32. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:88).
33. The *rtsa-'cham* can also be danced by other deities as well and is part of most 'cham forms; see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:93), Shakya Dorje (1975).
34. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:121).
35. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:102).
36. The north-east is supposed to be the direction from where the "hindrances" are coming (Brauen 1992:132, n.41). Compare to Kohn's description of the site ritual performed on the first day of Mani Rimdu, mainly inside the assembly hall (1988a:125f. and pp.875ff.).
37. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:102). The author wonders why this usually culminative action of separating the "demons" from their evil aspects and liberating their positive aspects as part of the *liṅga* ritual (Stein 1957) is already described as part of the preliminaries? However, if one compares this action with Kohn's description of the site ritual in the Mani Rimdu it becomes clear that the sacrifice of a *liṅga* can be part of the action of sealing off the inner boundaries (Kohn 1988a:128f.). For a general discussion on *sgrol-ba* rites in the rNying-ma-pa tradition see Cantwell (1997).
38. Dance manuals give—next to the iconography of the deities involved and the enumeration of several rites—just rough cues for the dance movements, i.e. counting of steps according to the drum beats, certain dance steps (to which we will come later in more detail) and bodily movements like "stretching to the right" (*g.yas-brkyang*), "pulling together to the left" (*g.yon-bskum*) and "happy spinning" (*dga'-ba'khyil-ba*) (Dorjee 1984:14). Dance masters receive their knowledge by oral transmission from other 'cham-dpon, so written manuals are just an aid to memory.
39. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:127).
40. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:102). This rite is called "to gather the life-essence of the oath-breakers (*dam nyam kyi bla 'gugs par bya ba*)" (*ibid*:129).
41. Nebesky-Wojkowitz gives for *byin-gyis-brlab* the usual translation "blessing", but it seems more appropriate to translate it as "to energize" or "to empower" because the spheres are actually transformed into an empowered space where ritual action can now be carried out; see Lessing & Wayman (1978:282). For a discussion of the concept and translation of *byin-gyis-brlab* see the chapter by Huber in this volume.

42. Sometimes on the dance ground the eight auspicious symbols are actually outlined with chalk. Concerning their meaning in this context my informants stated nevertheless that this is just an auspicious adornment.
43. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:131-133). This obviously refers to the Indian concept of the "perfect world", the ideal layout of a holy place (Stein 1990:250). Compare to the *brgya-bzhi* ritual carried out in order to cure a patient or to avert danger, where an eight-petalled lotus is drawn onto the ground (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:525). Further usages of sky and earth wheels for weather protection are mentioned in rNying-ma-pa texts from the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (Klaus 1985:154-157).
44. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:132, 134).
45. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:137). This description corresponds also to the "Gar 'Cham" manual of the Khampagar monastery (1985:22). It is added that the area is "prepared" with the full-*vajra* step and "consecrated" with the dance of the crossed-*vajra* step. Compare also to Kohn (1988a:130-1) where an overturned offering plate serves as a model of the universe with Mount Meru as the central "nail" pressing down the *liṅga* demons. It is blessed by a pair of crossed thunderbolts each day during the Mani Rimdu. The crossed *vajra* also symbolizes the foundation of the universe and of the *maṇḍala*.
46. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:147ff.).
47. A rough comparison of the 'cham-yig compiled by the Fifth Dalai Lama with the description given here of the Phur-dril 'cham as performed by the monks of the Bon-po monastery of sMan-ri in India shows the great similarities in structure, even though the names of the dance steps differ.
48. I would like to express here my deep gratitude to the abbot of sMan-ri, Sangye Tenzin Jongdong, and Geshe Namgyal Nyima to whom I owe most of the following information gathered during fieldwork in 1995 and personal interviews. For further explanations I am also grateful to Lopön Tenzin Namdak, Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Nyima Dakpa Rinpoche, Tenzin Namgyal Rinpoche, 'cham-dpon Mentrul Nyima Lodroe, Ake Nana and Trowo Tashi. According to Karmay (1975:199f.) the important *gter-ston* Khu-tsha zla-'od (b. 1024) introduced the Phur-pa rituals into Bon practice. As Vajrakīla he is also venerated by rNying-ma-pas and Sa-skyapa-s. "The central theme of the liturgical texts of Phur-pa is to bring one's own opponent into submission" (Karmay 1975:199).
49. While they can centre on different *yi-dam* they usually take place at the end of a month with the final expulsion through a *zlog-pa* or *gtor-zlog* ritual on the 29th day, but especially at the end of the year in order to expel the evil of the old and to welcome the new year. In Lhasa this inauspicious day was also used as a political tool in order to banish discredited people (Goldstein 1989:176).
50. The main text for the *dgu-gtor* ritual based on the *yi-dam* Phur-pa (*phur-pa'i gzhuṅ*) is found in *dBal phur nag po sgrub pa'i las tshogs skor* recovered by Khu-tsha zla-'od (1974, vol.1, ff.223-434). Traditionally the *dgu-gtor* was performed at the end of each month at sMan-ri.
51. For another Bon-po ritual with an almost identical structure see Kvaerne (1988).
52. Their shrines were first empowered through a specific ritual dance at the beginning of the construction of the monastery. Their images are also painted onto the outside wall of the assembly hall at the veranda, to the right and left of the main entrance door.
53. In the *dgu-gtor* ritual of sMan-ri monastery there is no sand *maṇḍala* outlined. This is done mentally, though.
54. Thereby the inner poisons of humans, such as ignorance, are expelled from the

monks and the ritual space.

55. Viewed from facing the main statue of sTon-pa gShen-rab inside the assembly hall (see figure 2 for the ground plan).
56. In the *dgu-gtor* ritual of sMan-ri monastery there are actually two main *yi-dam* involved: one is Phur-pa who originates from the Indian side and the other one is Khro-bo (gTso-mchog mkha'-'gying), whose provenance is said to be Zhang-zhung. The latter is of outstanding importance in Tantric rituals of Bon and, like Phur-pa, is expert in averting demons through his magic weapons (such as *zor*) and wrathful actions (for an iconographic description of the latter see Kvaerne 1995:75f). Nowadays at sMan-ri the *yi-dam* Khro-bo is only invoked now on the 27th day while Phur-pa is the main *yi-dam* during the whole ritual cycle. Both belong to the group of five important tutelary deities of the "Father Tantra" of the Bon religion (*gsas-mkhar mchog lnga*).
57. This step consists out of a long step followed by a half turn towards the left, then to the right, forming a circle of a "winding motion pattern" on the ground (Canzio 1986:50).
58. Lopön Tenzin Namdak, referring to the "tiger steps" and "lion leaps", pointed out that dance steps mentioned in ritual texts have to be visualized during meditation whether they are actually danced out in practice or not (personal interview). This seems to imply that also on a mental level dance steps are powerful means for spatial control. In the Nine Ways of Bon the same steps are described as the "playful dance of knowledge" (Snellgrove 1967:211).
59. In Buddhist and Bon rituals they are used as magical weapons thrown against demons; see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956:357).
60. According to Geshe Namgyal Nyima in a personal interview.
61. The rite of 'rolling of the *phur-bu*' is part of the *sgrol-ba* or *bsgral-ba* rites as practised in the Vajrakīla (rDo-rje Phur-ba) tradition of the rNying-ma-pa school (Mayer 1994:59ff.). It belongs to a general practice for a communal sacrifice offering (*tshogs*) or a *linga* sacrifice in the rNying-ma-pa tradition and is part of the lower activities (*smad-las*) for the "ritual killing" of evil forces (Cantwell 1997). Present day Bon-po themselves state that their tradition of Phur-pa originates in India. Iconographically the deity rDo-rje Phur-pa holds the ritual dagger, rolling it between his palms. According to Bayer this is a means of cursing the enemy (1978:45).
62. The third one, who does not appear as a dancer, is the Garuda (*khyung-sman*). To the "junior or lower protectors" (*'og-ma srung-ma*) belong the "masters of the earth" (*sabdag*), "the six care takers of Phur-pa's texts" (*bstan-srung drug*) and the "100 workers" of Phur-pa (*las-mkhan brgya-rtsa*). They are also represented by specific *gtor-ma*.
63. Many of these transformed protector deities and their helpers were previously demons themselves, so it seems also due to their original demonic nature that they know how to catch and imprison demonic forces. Interestingly—as it has been noted in the beginning of this chapter—they were converted through the method of ritual dance.
64. According to Stein, in old Chinese concepts the "gate of the earth" is situated in the south-east. Tibetans might have adapted this concept and changed it over time (1990:199).
65. I guess that this action is aimed at the sealing of the boundaries at the lowest point of all directions, the nadir, so more evil forces can penetrate the purified realm from there. Mayer and Cantwell (1994:57), translating a manuscript from Dunhuang on Vajrakīla, mentions "knotted cords" (*rgya-mdud*) as a basis for his *yi-dam* palace to be built upon. I have no confirmation yet for this in the Bon-po context. The *rgya-mdud*, perhaps better translated as "vast knot", also appears as part of the icono-

- graphical ornamentation on the ritual dagger. Klaus (1985) translates *rgya-mdud* as "sealing knot" in the context of weather-making rituals. Geshe Namgyal Nyima stated that *rgya-mdud* as a "knotted cord" is also represented as a *mudrā*, but generally it is thought of by Tibetan lay people as a knot to tie things tight.
66. I am not sure how to imagine this step in the microcosmos of the *maṇḍala*. The rope apparently indicates a vertical axis with its top, the zenith. According to Geshe Namgyal Nyima it could mean a fixation of the four doors (of the *maṇḍala*, i.e. also the four main directions).
 67. On the problem of translating the term *rnam-shes* in this context and related issues see Stein (1957:2051). On the 3rd day during the public '*cham* on the courtyard the *liṅga* is actually cut into pieces with a sword by the chief protector goddess Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo. On the Mahāyoga rite or *sgrol-ba*, its origins and connection with the deity Vajrakīla alias Phur-pa see Mayer (1996:122f).
 68. On the morning of the 3rd day of the *dgu-gtor* (the 29th day of the 12th month) the assembly recites the mythical story of the important Bon-po sage sTag-la me-'bar in which he was finally able to subdue his evil twin brother through the invocation of Phur-pa and the help of the goddess of compassion Thugs-rje byams-pa. Then the offering master performs the cutting of the *liṅga* (*sgrol-ba*) again, rolling his *phur-bu* and thereby "liberating" the evil forces.
 69. The *gShen-rab dgu 'cham* also contains specific steps which outline, among other things, a low and a high lotus flower circle. For a short description of this dance, see Karmay (1986:66-68).
 70. The performance ends with the *gtor-rgyab* ritual for the final expulsion of negativities.
 71. Combe (1989:191). It is not evident in Combe's description whether those actions were already performed inside the assembly hall before the actual public display as well.
 72. Combe (1989:195).
 73. He is the dance master (*'cham-dpon*) and is supposed to do a strict meditation on the main *yi-dam* dBal-gsas for 49 days. Comparing this dance with the Bon-po dances at the exile monastery of sMan-ri in Dolanji, India, there is Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo represented by the '*cham-dpon*, who dances it by herself when she enters the arena as the first in the beginning of the *dGu-gtor 'cham* on the 29th day of the 12th month (according to Geshe Nyima Dakpa, personal interview). That is when this leading protector goddess is praised and invited by the monks onto the courtyard. Thereby the earth and the land are "consecrated" outside on the dance ground.
 74. Compare this feature with the invocational text for the Bon-po *yi-dam* Khro-bo which describes him as pressing the nine doors of hell downwards and leading the universe upwards (Kvaerne 1995:75).
 75. *Dgu gcod dgos pa ni na rag sgo dgu thur du gcod pa dang / kham s gsum sa dgu dong nas sprugs ba'i brda ston pa'i rtags yin / 'dod kham s gzugs kham s gzugs med kham s*. These lines were quoted to me at dGa'-mal monastery (A-mdo Shar-khog) from a text by sLob-dpon sKal-bzang Dar-rgyas. The Tibetan cosmology is generally tripartite with the white *lha* on the upper level, the red *bstan* on the middle and the black or dark blue *klu* on the lower. This structure is reinterpreted esoterically in terms of the three worlds of desire, form and formlessness. Despite a great variety of cosmological features in the Tibetan context, both sky and subterranean worlds often consist of nine levels each, and can be accessed through a sky door and an earth door (Stein 1972:211f.).
 76. It was explained to me by my informants that the great teacher of the Bon doctrine sTon-pa gShen-rab himself used this sceptre for "taming the earth". The name of

- the dancers, A-li ka-li, does not have a specific meaning according to my informants, although in Tibetan *ā-li kā-li* normally refers to the vowels of the alphabet.
77. See mKhas-grub-rje's introduction to Tantra as a part of the general "method of drawing a *maṇḍala*", which is the first part of the "method of initiation in the *maṇḍala* of powdered colors" (Lessing & Wayman 1978:279ff.).
 78. For a detailed description of the *sa-gar* see Brauen (1992:76-103); and for general preparations of a *maṇḍala* initiation see Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche (1992).
 79. See Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche for the *sa-gar*, who adds that it is imagined that "the obstacles are placed into the hole and hammered into the ground by the wrathful deity represented on it [the *phur-bu*]. This deity, holding a vajra in its hand, beats the obstacle from its head to toe until it is left transfixed, speechless, and incapable of thought" (1992:56-7).
 80. See Kohn (1988a:138ff.). The officiant circles around himself in a clockwise and counter-clockwise direction, stopping at each of the ten directions where the corresponding dagger is placed on the according periphery of the *maṇḍala*.
 81. Generally evil forces are, also when summoned into an effigy (*linga*), enclosed within triangular shapes or in triangular boxes made out of iron. The triangular shape symbolizes wrathful activities, such as actions of suppression. Here there is also the question of *dharmodaya* (*chos-'byung*) symbolism which needs considering. Often ritual weapons thrown against the evil forces at the end of a '*cham* (*gtor-zor* or *gtor-rgyab*) also have triangular shapes. Here is an indication that certain shapes of ritual space are directly related to certain ritual actions, even effecting them possibly.
 82. Kohn (1988a:137-8).
 83. Karmay states that Vajrakīla originated as an Indian Tantric implement which became introduced into Buddhist Tantras and deified (1975:199).
 84. It is also used as a boundary marker in magic rites for weather control, i.e. against hail (Klaus [1985:161, 305]).
 85. Stein (1990:206).
 86. These are *ālīḍha* (*g.yas-brkyang*), *pratyālīḍha* (*g.yon-brkyang*), *vaisākha* (*sa-ga*), *maṇḍala* (*zlum-po*) and *samapāda* (*mnyam-pa*) (Lessing & Wayman 1978:282, n.16).
 87. Brauen (1992:78).
 88. Compare with the general description of the *maṇḍala* site: Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche states that a sacred dance is made by *vajra* steps "which trace out a crossed vajra. This dance is meant to prevent obstacles" (1992:57). If the master is present in the dance (which does not seem to be necessary?) one should imagine wisdom which eliminates all obstacles radiating from his feet (*ibid.*).
 89. Cited from Snellgrove, *bdud bzhi gnon ye shes lha bro brdung* (1967:212-3).
 90. What I have not further mentioned here are the purificatory and transforming properties of incense and the offering of *bsang*. The latter is annually done also during the public dance performances outside the courtyard. It is an offering to and a purification of the gods and spirits of the different local spheres (i.e. *yul-lha*, *klu*, *gnyan*, etc.). While the fumes do reach the upper levels of the sky it also has a purificatory effect on the local environment. For a description of this rite, see Karmay (1995).
 91. "The 'secret meaning' (*sbas don*) is that the various emblems of the hat seal the heaven (*sbas don nam mkhar rgyas btob thog ris bkod*)." Furthermore the Black Hat should be adorned by objects with "spiritual powers" (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:117). Thus it is perceived not only as a symbolic *maṇḍala* cosmogram but as an active tool for the transformation of the dancer and of space. For a detailed description of the Black Hat costume, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:93-98, 115-119) and Cantwell (1992).
 92. See Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche (1992:57).

93. See for example Brauen (1992:132; n.36-37).
94. Macdonald & Stahl (1979:61f.).
95. Macdonald (1990:202), Huber (1993).
96. See the chapter by Huber in this volume.
97. See the chapter by Epstein & Peng Wenbin in this volume.
98. Boord (1993:197) for example mentions three wrathful activities for the expulsion of negative forces concerning the *yi-dam* Vajrakīla: pressing down (*non-pa* or *nnan*), burning (*sreg*) and scattering (*zor*). Ritual space creation is connected with the first of these three actions.
99. Lerner (1983:56).
100. Siiger (1951:10, 11).
101. Snyder (1979:27).
102. Jest (1975:343).
103. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956:523ff.). Such symbols found in dance are obviously of Indian provenance: The *kṛṣṇa* play "Rasliḥa" also centres on a lotus pattern as stage ground (Awasthi 1974:39-40).
104. Klaus (1985:347), citing the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*.
105. Huber (1993:39).
106. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956:483).
107. Goldstein (1989:202).
108. Aris (1976:615).
109. See Schrempf (1990:18).
110. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976:4); cf. also a similar Tantric ritual for killing an enemy (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:488-490).
111. There is a quite striking similarity to a Japanese Nō performance called Nō Okina, which is danced at the beginning of a New Year or at an opening part of an exceptional event in order to bring prosperity and fortune: three actors—two among them wearing masks of gods—dance a "cosmic dance" on a triangular floor pattern, the three corners symbolize man (*jin*), heaven (*ten*) and the earth (*chi*). Thereby they trample heavily on the ground, destroying the evil spirits of the old year; see Gontard (1987:32). In general there are many masked dances in Asia related to the expulsion of negative forces.
112. See Beyer (1978:68).
113. Samuel (1993:268).
114. Ortner (1978:168-9).
115. Macdonald (1990:205-6).
116. On this theme see the interesting article by Gyatso (1989). For comparative purposes see for example Werbner (1996) on the ritual sacralization of space and the renewal of charismatic authority among British Muslims.

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