



## Dancing Pilgrims from Tibet.

From the 3rd. Danish Expedition to Central Asia.

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## Dancing Pilgrims from Tibet.

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By Halfdan Siiger.

*The author is happy to express his most sincere gratitude to Mr. David McDonald, Kalimpong, the well-known author on Tibetan problems, for extraordinarily kind assistance and help in contacting the Tibetans, conversing with them, writing down information, looking over the Tibetan texts and translation, and suggesting corrections. That it has been possible to collect material for this article is first and foremost due to Mr. McDonald and his never failing interest in Tibetan problems.*

*As for the editing of Tibetan words and texts the author is in great debt to Prof. Dr. Kaare Grønbech, head of The Central Asian Institute, University of Copenhagen, and his assistants Mr. Kåre Thomsen, M.A., and Mr. Erik Helge Haarh.*



From ancient times it seems that dancing has been an integral part of Tibetan religious life not separate from the other ways in which the people express their religious experiences and mythological views. Probably, this form of religious practice and expression has its roots in pre-buddhist Tibetan shamanism and influences of Indian origin. With Lamaism conquering the country (7th—9th Century A.D.) various forms of religious dances have been incorporated in Lamaistic institutions where they got their well-defined position and justified importance. These dances have obtained their frame within the monastic life and their highest elaboration in the well-known cham's, by Europeans commonly called the devil-dances, which have often been dealt with by explorers and religious investigators.

But besides these very official forms of religious dances, many both religious and secular dances are in practice in most parts of

Tibet. Explorers have often met with groups or single persons, performing dances more or less connected with religious life and dances of quite secular types.<sup>1)</sup> A peculiar sort of religious or semi-religious dances, representing a special type, can be found with small troupes of wandering dancers. Some observations concerning these dancers will be the subject of this article.



Fig. 1. Tibetan pilgrims, dancing with masks and kilts.

During several periods of the years 1948—50 I had the opportunity, as a member of the 3rd. Danish Expedition to Central Asia, of staying in Kalimpong and Sikkim, close to the southernmost Tibetan border. This area is often visited by Tibetan pilgrims, coming from Tibet and going to India, or returning. Some of these groups attracted my special attention, because it was evident that they were neither lay pilgrims, nor lamas. They usually consist of a team of some ten people, men, women, and children. They wander from place to place, earning their living by dancing in villages, and bazaars, in fact at any place where their performances may be able to attract the attention of the people.

In the beginning of January 1949 I came across a team in the bazaar of Kalimpong. In open places they performed their dances, and afterwards one of the team collected backshish from the spectators. On that occasion I observed that their dances were not merely of an accidental character. It was evident that they possessed a sort of repertoire. Moreover, some of the dances were accompanied by songs and others developed into small theatrical scenes, obviously illustrating incidents from Tibetan religion or poetry.

By kind assistance from Mr. McDonald I succeeded in persuading the leader of the team to come with his troupe to me and perform the whole series of dances, sing their songs, tell of their pilgrimage, etc.

#### The Team.

The team consisted of ten members, men, women and children, under the leadership of a tall and strong man. He seemed to exercise full authority on the other members, ordering the dances, intoning the songs, collecting the backshish afterwards, etc. It was he, too, who arranged for their living and housing.

His name was Pe-ma Gya-tso (*Padma rgya-mtsho*): Lotus-Ocean. He said he was 41 years old. He had two wives, both of them were accompanying him on the pilgrimage. The elder wife was called Sona Pedrön (*bsod-nams dpe-druñs*): Happiness and Clear Beauty(?). She had born him a son called Nam-gyal Tashi (*rnam-rgyal bkra-ñis*): All Victorious Glory, now 16 years old. His younger wife was called Yü-drön (*g'yu-druñs*): Clear Turquoise. She had born him a son called Karma (*skar-ma*): Star, who was 9 years old.

The other members of the team were a man called Tse-wang (*tshe-dbañ*): Power of Life, and his wife, called Nam-gyal chhe-mi (*rnam-rgyal che-mi*): All-victorious-adult (?), a man called Dorang and his wife, called Pu-trik (*bu-??*): Son(?), and finally a woman called Tse-wang jik-me (*tshe-dbañ hjig-med*): Imperishable Power of Life.

The leader stated that all the members of the team came from Riwoche (Riuchi) in Eastern Cham, where they lived as peasants on various farms.<sup>2</sup>) They kept yaks, sheep, cows, horses, mules and goats. They churned butter. Sometimes they went to Ta-chien-lu in order to sell their products and to buy Chinese goods, e.g. Chinese brick-tea.

Questioned on their marriages the leader explained that he was 25 years old when he married his first wife, and 26 years old when

he married his second wife. His first wife made no objections to his second marriage, and he asserted that there was no jealousy between the two women. His first wife was 21 years old when he married her, his second wife was 19 years old.

Furthermore he stated that in Cham five brothers may marry one woman in common, and four sisters may marry one man in common.



Fig. 2. Tibetan women from a team of dancing pilgrims.

When they lived in Riwoche they would dance on certain occasions, but they would never go begging. It would be shameful. But if a wedding was going to be celebrated, or if some religious ceremony was going to take place, the members of the team would be called together from their farms, and then they would dance. This dance was called *tro tap-pa* (*bro khrab* (or *thabs* — clever?) *pa*): ceremonial dance.

#### Dress and Equipment.

Concerning dress I obtained the following information. Their boots *lham* (*lham*) were from Cham, made from yak-hide, decorated

with coloured wool and silk. They were made by professional boot-makers, and the leader declared that he himself was unable to make boots. The material for the boots is bought here and there, and was not from any particular place, but the coloured upper part is bought in Lhasa. On the upper parts of the boots belonging to the leader you could see three crosses on each side. They had a slight resemblance to a Swastika, but the leader declared that they merely represented flowers.<sup>3)</sup> The garter for tying the boots he called lhamdrok. On each side of the crosses you could see two lines of coloured tapes. The leader said that these colours represented the rainbow. Their woollen trousers are wide and baggy.

The mens' shirts, no-la, were from Assam silk. The leader wore a woollen caftan, chu-pa (*chu-pa*) with long sleeves, covering the hands. The shirt and the caftan had been given to the leader by the Maharaja of Bhutan because the team had danced for a whole day for the Maharaja. Besides, the Maharaja had given them Rupees 35, rice, flour of barley, and meat.

Both men and women had long, coloured woven strings tied to their pigtails. They were called tungki-khalo (*rtuñ-gi sgra-lo?*): strings of plaits. It was the custom that the men wore three of such strings, the women only two. Sometimes the men wear a woollen blouse in varied colours with long sleeves.

On his left hand the leader wore a ring of silver with a turquoise, on his right hand a ring of gilt copper. He said that he had found the latter lying on the ground somewhere near his home. During a thunderstorm it had fallen down from Heaven, it was therefore a charm and would protect him against illness and accidents.

On the front of his breast the leader carried a metal charm box, hanging on a string around his neck. Inside was said to be a picture of a lama of the Karma-pa and some amulets. Fastened to a string around his waist the leader carried a circular brass sheet with simple circular lines as ornamentation. He had acquired it in Eastern Tibet not far from the big monastery Derge. It was a charm, but he could not tell its influence.

The dancers were in possession of some specimens of equipment, particular to dancers. Most important were the mask, the kilt of ropes, and the dancing staff. (The specimens reproduced in this article I obtained from another team I met in Kalimpong 1950).

The triangular black mask has openings for mouth and eyes. Cowries (or modern substitutes, buttons of mother-of-pearl) are

fastened to the face on the forehead, the cheeks and on the chin. On the acquired specimen a small silver ornament with some cheap turquoises can be seen over the nose. The eyebrows are made of strings sewn to the mask, just as are the moustaches. The silver-white crown has a top, wrapped in a khatak. During the dances

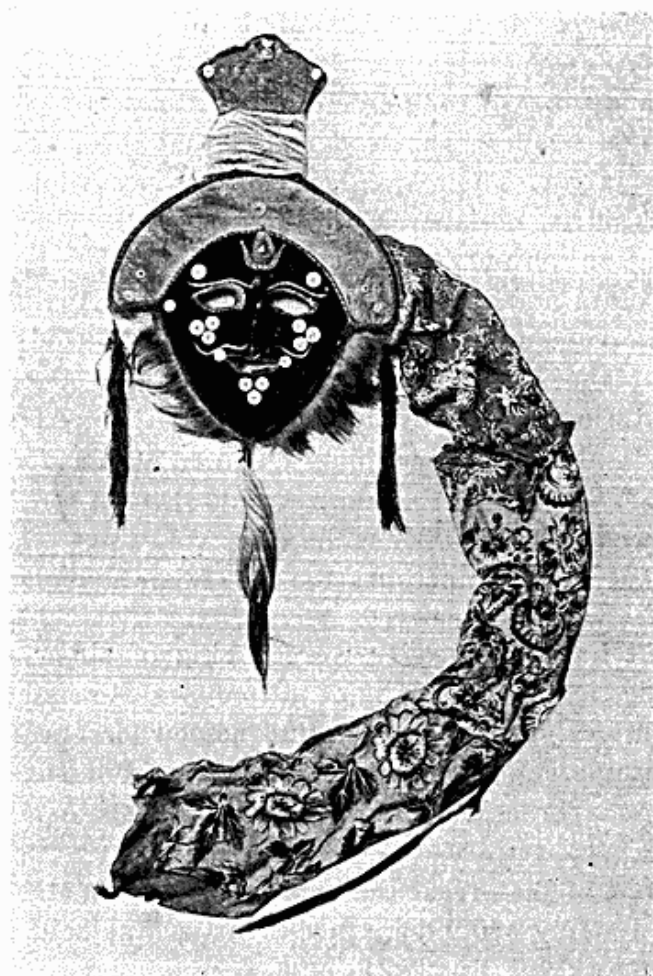


Fig. 3. Mask used by Tibetan dancing pilgrims. Ca. 1:15. (National Museum, Copenhagen).

this khatak is carried over the shoulders. On the specimen acquired a piece of modern coloured cotton hangs down the back to the waistline. The beard on the sides of the face is from the Markhor (*capra falconeri*). From the chin hangs a long tassel of animal hair which it has not been possible to identify. From each side of the crown hangs a tassel of coloured woollen strings. At the back are two ropes for tying or for keeping the mask in position by hand. The women usually wear a headdress with open paper fans over each ear.

The kilt consists of a belt of lilac wool from which hangs 39 ropes of goat hair ending in bigger tufts of animal hair. Most of the tufts are black, perhaps from the hair of the wild bear, but a few are white and from the yak. The leader said that such a kilt had been ordered by Milarepa himself and that the various parts of the kilt represented the intestines of the elephant.

The staff is a common stick (60 cm) bound in yellow, blue and green pieces of cotton.

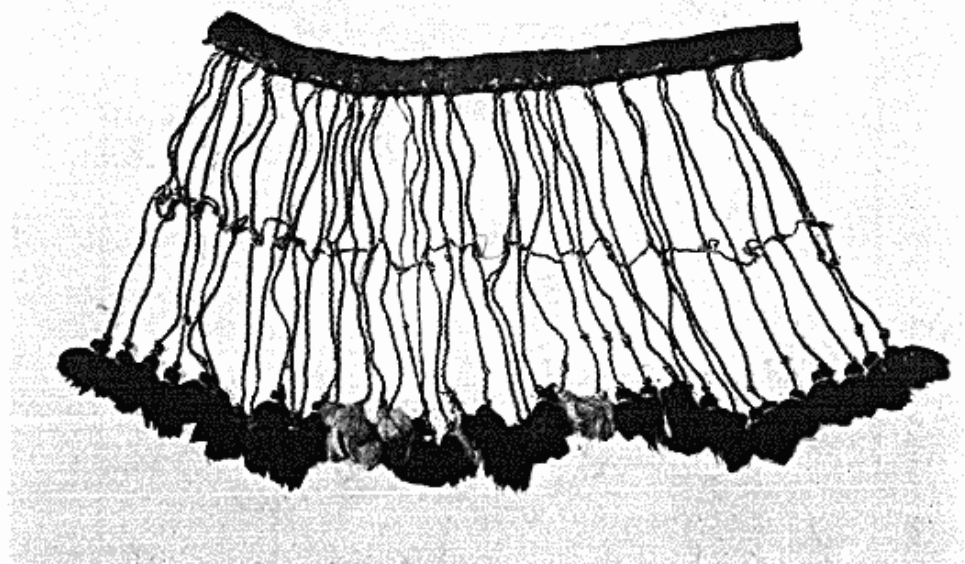


Fig. 4. Kilt used by Tibetan dancing pilgrims. Ca. 1:15.  
(National Museum, Copenhagen).

In the possession of the above-mentioned team was a drum *langden* (?), a tail *najam* (*rñā-ma*) from a yak-cow, and a horn *dzo-gi ro-jo* (*mdzohi rwa-co*): the horn(s) of the Dzo, a cross between the wild and the tame yak. The leader explained that he had acquired the horn from a hunter in Eastern Tibet in return for some woollen cloth which could be used for boots. On the surface of the horn some grooves could be seen. He said that they had been made by Guru Rimpoche (Padmasambhava) himself. The horn would protect him against illness and accidents, i.e. it would prevent its bearer from being killed by wild animals.

Finally they had an instrument of brass, *sil-nyen* (*sul-sñan*): cymbal. In some cases you may find that such teams are in possession of a cither.



### The Pilgrimage.

The leader related that he was a disciple of a certain lama, called Tashi-wang-dü (*bkra-sis dbaṅ ḥdus?*): Glorious Power Union, living in Cham, now at the age of 83. This lama had introduced him to the tradition going back to Milarepa (1040-1123 A. D.) whom he said was their tutelary deity (*yi-dam*). He said that they sing and dance according to the tradition given by Milarepa in his 100.000 songs. But they also followed the traditions given by Dilo, Naro, and Marpa, Milarepa's predecessors.

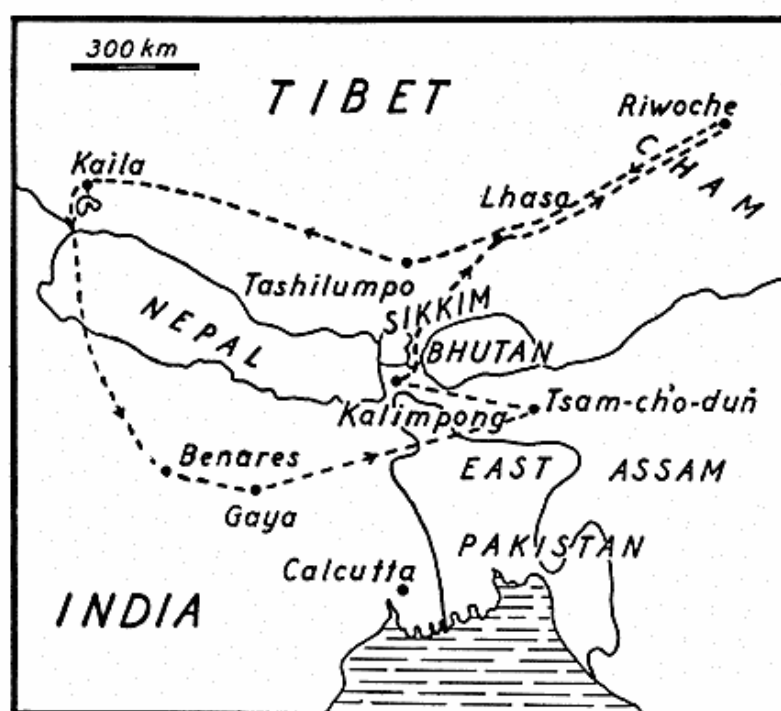


Fig. 5. Sketch-map of routes followed by the investigated team of Tibetan pilgrims.

The leader said that it was not the first time he himself was on pilgrimage. Twice before he had been to Nepal on pilgrimage but the present pilgrimage was the longest one he had ever tried.

Three years ago the team left their homestead in the neighbourhood of the river Che in Cham. During their pilgrimage they dance publicly in order to earn their living.

I tried to investigate the route they had followed, and I obtained enough information to make it possible to get a rough impression. On leaving home they went directly to Lhasa which city they reached in a month.<sup>4)</sup> From Lhasa they went to Tashi-lumpo. It seemed as if they spent quite a time here, and the leader was

very proud of relating that he had given all his money to the monastery, a sum which he declared would equal about Rupees 1000. Even if that amount might be an exaggeration, there seemed to be no doubt that they had given what they possessed. Several times he mentioned Tashi-lumpo, and always with sincere devotion. From Tashi-lumpo they went westwards to Mount Kaila, the holy mountain of Western Tibet.

From Kaila they went southwards, crossing Nepal, and arrived in India. Here they visited Benares, and the old Buddhist centre, Bodh Gaya, and from there they went to Assam and visited Tsam-ch'o-dun (*rTsa-mch'og-groñ*) in the neighbourhood of Gauhati. When we met in Kalimpong, they were on their return journey home. They intended to stay in Kalimpong for about a month, then they would go to Lhasa, and from there to Riwoche. The leader calculated that this route to Riwoche via Lhasa would take about 6 months. All the members of the team were very happy because it had been possible to visit so many holy places. The leader himself was sure that he would never again get the opportunity to undertake so long a pilgrimage.

On the inserted sketch-map the route of the team can be seen. Approximately, the route covers at least 4000 km, and presumably even that is an underestimation because the calculation has been made on the map without any reference to the actual tracks they have followed.

#### **Dances and Step-figures.**

On several occasions during my stay in Kalimpong and in Sikkim I had the opportunity of attending the performances of professional Tibetan dancers. And in Northern Sikkim I partook in private local parties where Tibetans danced for their own entertainment. Wherever I have seen Tibetans dancing, I had the impression that they were very fond of this practice. They join the dance with energy and enthusiasm, their legs and arms vividly following the proceeding.

The professional teams often possess great ability, and as for their acrobatic skill they are second to none among folkdancers. You can see them arrange themselves in a circle, stand immovable and wait for the leader's signal. No sooner has he announced the start by a shrill yell, than the whole circle is one mass of whirling bodies, turning here and there, spinning in rows after one another. Suddenly the leader will utter a new yell, and the whole team will stop dead.

The dances were accompanied by songs. Usually one member of the team did not take part in the dance, but stood a little aside, playing the instruments, and singing. The songs range from a slow and monotonous dirge to a wild shrieking. The dancers are possessed by the songs just as intensely as by the dances, and sometimes the whole team will sing.

The rhythm of the dances was announced by beating the drum with the palm of the hand. In this article I have tried to indicate the rhythm by figures, and the underlined figure indicates where the stress is put, e.g. 1-2-3, 1-2-3, etc.

The following account comprises 13 dances performed by the whole team — the musician excepted —, 5 solo dances, and one dance somewhat special. I could not find out if they had any special order of dances for their performances, but I got the impression that they choose the dances most appropriate to the situation, i.e. they select the dances that will attract most people and give best backskish.

In order to reproduce the dances one ought to be a choreographer, but I shall try to illustrate the most important combinations of steps and describe the dances in general lines.

The following 4 step-figures were constantly occurring and seem to be basic figures in their dances:

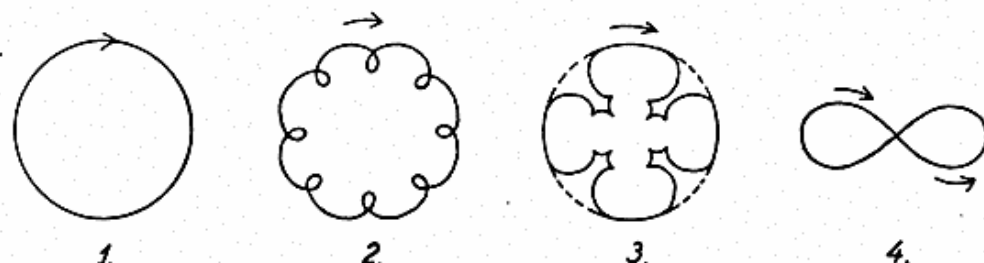


Fig. 6. Step-figures occurring in dances performed by investigated team of Tibetan pilgrims.

Step-figure 1. — They all of them walk round in a circle, one after the other, in such a way that they always keep the right side turned towards the centre of the circle.

Step-figure 2. — The circle from figure 1 seems to be the basis, but it has been supplemented by some smaller circular spinings towards the centre. It is usually performed very rapidly, the dancer spinning round himself with his arms stretched far out from the body, the whole person slanting towards the centre.

Step-figure 3. — The circle from figure 1 seems again to be the basis but on 4 points the periphery is left and the dancer will for a short moment stop his movements and turn towards the centre. He will put one leg forward towards the centre and lunge, almost falling forwards. For one moment he will remain in that position, then he rises again rapidly and goes on.

Step-figure 4. — They march along in a single file in the figure eight.

### Group Dances.

1. Dance called *sa-chha-tro* (*sa-cha-bro*). It was explained as: earth-ground dance, i.e. dance on the ground(?). At first they danced as in figure No. 1, then as in figure No. 4, and finally all of them whirled among one another obviously without any particular plan. The rhythm resembled a march, and was just: 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, etc.

2. Dance called *sa-dur-wa* (*sa dbur-ba?*). earth smoothing. It was explained to mean: To make the ground even, level. It was a quick dance, and the dancers stamped their feet. Rhythm: 1-2, 1-2 etc.

3. Dance called *sa-zhi-khyō-nyōm-pa* (*sa-gzi-khyon (?) snoms-pa*): earth-ground area levelling: to make the ground level. Meaning the same as in dance No. 2. The dancers first dance as in figure No. 1, then as in figure No. 2, and finally as in No. 3. Rhythm: 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, etc. The main stress was on 1, the stress on 3 somewhat weaker.

4. Dance called *dzok-chen-ki-nga-tro* (*rdzogs-chen-gyi-rha-bro*): drum dance of the Dzok-chen (great perfection). It was said to be a drum dance from the old Buddhist sect called dzok-chen<sup>5</sup>). The dance was like a march, and the rhythm was: 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, etc. In the beginning it was rather slow, but later on it became quicker and it ended in a terrific whirl without any rhythm. The dancers bent down in their knees, and then raised one foot towards the head. (Something similar to a »Cossack« dance).

5. Dance called: *gya-kar-ki tro* (*rgya-gar-gyi bro*). It was said to be of Indian origin. It was a sort of march. They walked along in a file and sometimes they turned around all of them as in step-figure No. 2.

6. Dance called: *arai gu-dung* (*a-rahi dgu rduñ*), which was explained as: nine beats by the whiskers (cfr. Dance 11). The rhythm was rather peculiar. It consisted of three common beats followed by a fourth which was very emphatic and on which they tarried. In fact, it seemed as if the fourth beat did not belong to the proper rhythm. I have therefore indicated it by an x. The rhythm will then be: 1-2-3-x, 1-2-3-x, etc. The dance was very artificial with steps forwards and backwards, whirling and jumping high in the air.

7. Dance called: *se-rai trap-dung* (*se-rahi khrab-rduñ*), which was explained as the dance of the hailstorm. It was performed in order to prevent the hailstorm from destroying the crops. The steps were march-like and the rhythm was 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause, 1-2-3-4, pause, — and then the whole period was repeated.

8. Dance called: *pu-ya-ra-ki ku-chham* (*pu-ya-rahi sku-hcham*),

which was explained as the disciple's religious dance. During this dance the men carried yak-tails on their backs for which reason the dance had an abbreviated name: The yak-dance. Rhythm was: 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause, etc. At first the steps were rather slow, and during the pauses the partaking men bent down on the knees. The women did not take part, and one of them beat the drum. Later on the rhythm became faster, and the choreography was rather complicated, but step-figure No. 2 was often recurring.

9. Dance called: me-tok kor-chhen ki tro (*me-tog hkhor-chen-gyi bro*), which was explained as: The dance for the big flower karchen. As information I was told that Milarepa never ate meat, but only plants (nettle) and vegetables. The dance was said to illustrate that the dancers walked round the big flower. The rhythm was march-like, at first slow, but later on fast. The rhythm was: 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, etc. The stress on 1 was very strong, on 3 somewhat weaker. In the beginning they walked around in a circle, thereafter some of the dancers performed smaller half-circles, and finally they all of them whirled as in step-figure No. 2.

10. Dance called: me-tok kor-chung ki tro (*me-tog hkhor-chun gi bro*), which was explained as: The dance of the small flower. This dance had the same rhythm as dance No. 9, but the movements were smaller. A certain choreographic combination was constantly recurring: 4 steps forwards, rotations to 4 beats on the drums, 4 steps backwards and rotations to 4 beats on the drum.

11. Dance called: arai tö-pa ki chham (*a-rahi stod-pa hi hcham*), which was explained as: The dance in honour of the whiskers. The rhythm was: 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, etc. The word whiskers was said to indicate a term of respect for the higher lamas. During the dance the leader carried the mask. Step-figure No. 2 was frequently recurring. The following stanzas (cfr. Appendix) were sung during the dance:

1. Three praises for the whiskers.
2. The hair is like the leaves of the Indian willow.
3. Praising the whiskers, it is like the moon with three prongs.
4. The star of the eye is like the great stars.
5. The upper part is like the form of a divine mountain.
6. The lower part of the body resembles the body of the serpent-mountain.
7. Great horses like large tents abound.
8. Ponies like small tents abound.
9. Oh whisker, come to India.

10. Before the Indian religious king.
11. Oh whisker, pray do come.
12. Oh whisker that you have come is ...
13. Now ... prosperity and good harvest being perfect are wished.

12. Dance called: *arai tre-tse (a-rahi spre-rtse)*, which was explained as the monkey-dance of the whiskers. The rhythm was: 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, etc. The men and the boys danced separately. The women handled the instruments.

One scene was conspicuously an imitation of a monkey. The leader took the horn and danced with it in his hands. He whirled around with it, and suddenly let it fall. He jumped about, whirled around and made faces just like a monkey. He turned his head to all sides, jumped again around and made faces. He made some movements with his legs, just like a monkey, jumped again, and performed some steps like tap-dancing, and danced on one leg. At last he turned cartwheels.

The combination of the steps performed by the other men were:

1. The men move forwards by steps resembling somewhat the "Scottish". Later on they turn round on one leg and on both legs.
2. Whirling rotations as step-figure No. 2.
3. They move their heads sideways, upwards and downwards.
4. Standing on the spot they make faces as a monkey and move their shoulders.
5. They kneel down on one leg with their arms stretched out to the sides.
6. Standing on the spot they move their hips and kneel down.
7. They stand on tiptoe.
8. They move their knees from side to side.
9. They rotate and stand with their arms stretched out to the sides, turning towards the spectators.
10. They turn cartwheels.

13. Dance called: *trashī lo-lek ki chham (bkra-sis lo-legs-kyi hcham)*: The dance for good luck, prosperity. The men wore masks. The rhythm was: 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause, and then like a march. Only the men danced, the women handled the instruments. Suddenly one of the boys jumped up on the head of one of the men who walked around with him while the boy made faces. The second boy whirled alone in circles, while the other man whirled alone

as in step-figure No. 2. At this moment the orchestra beat the drum a little faster. At last they all walked around and the leader acted alone. He rotated very fast from right to left, later on from left to right.

### Solo Dances.

These dances were performed by the men or the boys only, not by the women. They resembled acrobatic scenes put in among the common dances. They were rather monotonous and had very few step-combinations.

1. Dance called: phar-chen (*phar* = spar, lift up?, -*chen* = the great?). The meaning was something like the dance where you make big jumps. To a certain degree the steps resembled step-figure No. 2, but it was pointed out to me as a solo dance. The rhythm was: 4 common drum-beats, and then 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause etc. It ended with rotation first one way round, then the other way round and finally a big jump.

2. Dance called: sa-ne sa-kor (*sa-nas sa hkhor*), earth, circling from the ground. It was not possible to get the exact meaning, but sa-ne was said to indicate the movement you make when you bend down towards the ground. The choreographic figure was the same as in solo dance No. 1, only with the slight difference that the dancer at the same time made slow movements with his head. The rhythm was as in solo dance No. 1: First 4 common drum-beats while the dancer was walking forwards, then steps as in step-figure No. 2, and finally a big jump.

3. Dance called: kang-pa ya-chik-ki sa-kor (*rkañ-pa-ya-gcig-gi sa hkhor*), one leg's circling. It was explained as a dance where you walk round in a circle raising one leg very high. It looked somewhat like step-figure No. 2, performed on one leg. The rhythm was: First 4 common drum-beats, then 1-2, 1-2, 1-2, 1-2, etc. rather slowly.

4. Dance called: sa-dru sā-chī(?). It was explained as a dance where the dancer walked around raising in turn one leg very high. At first all walked around, then one of the team separated from the rest and performed his solo dance. On one leg he performed the steps known from step-figure No. 2. Then he turned towards the centre and performed some kicking movements towards the centre. During these steps the drum goes fast. At last he danced with steps somewhat like the steps we call "Cossack" dance. Finally he fell to the ground and rolled over at full length.

5. Dance called: map-ja chang-thung ki tro (*rma-bya chañ-thuñ-*

*gi bro*) which was explained as the dance illustrating the peacock drinking wine. The rhythm was: 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause etc.

At the opening of the dance a cup was put in the middle of the dancing-place, and the whole dance was going round that cup. The dance started at a slow speed, the dancer circling round the cup and approaching it in slow movements. Having reached it he stood before it making some wriggling movements with his hips, swaying his head from side to side, his long hair whirling round his head. Again he circled round the cup, but this time as in step-figure No. 2. Then he stopped, wriggling his hips he turned round on the spot and approached the cup again. Once more he whirled as in step-figure No. 2 and repeated the same movements with his hips, turning round on the spot, bending his knees a little while mowing them from side to side and turning round on the spot. Then he stood still, but several times he stretched his arms towards the cup, hastily drawing them back again. Then he whirled round quickly as in step-figure Nr. 2. He circled round the cup and began to sing. When he had finished the song, he again circled once more round the cup and bent his head three times to the ground in front of it.

Suddenly he jumped high in the air and walked towards the cup. He bent down and took the cup between his teeth without touching it with his hands. He now acted as if he was drinking at the same time throwing his head from side to side. At last he put the cup on the ground again.

Then he walked around, rotating a few times. He walked round the cup, and finally approached it again, but now from another direction. He bent down and took the cup between his teeth, raising it and walking around with it. He knelt down moving his head from side to side, and at last bending backwards he dropped the cup. He took it up again with his teeth and walked around with it, bending his head backwards. Then he whirled quickly as in step-figure No. 2 and finished by circling on one leg.

With this dance I have got the text of the song (cfr. Appendix) which was sung during the performance. It runs like this:

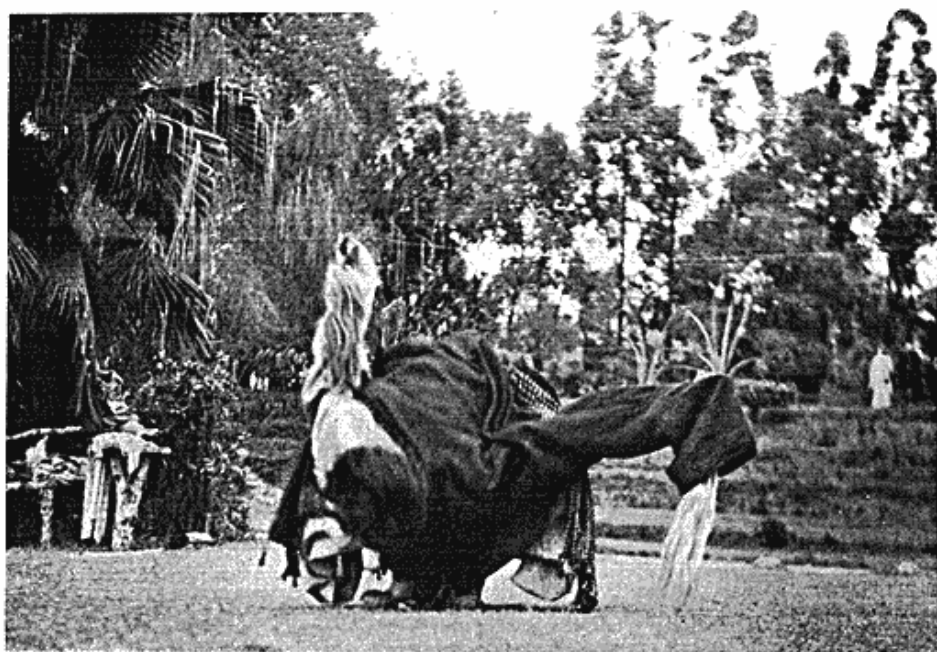
1. From where has the Indian peacock come?
2. The Indian peacock has come from the East.
3. This evening the peacock will leave. Where is he going?
4. This evening the peacock will leave. He is going to the West.
5. If the peacock is clever, he plays a game (commencing) from the head.



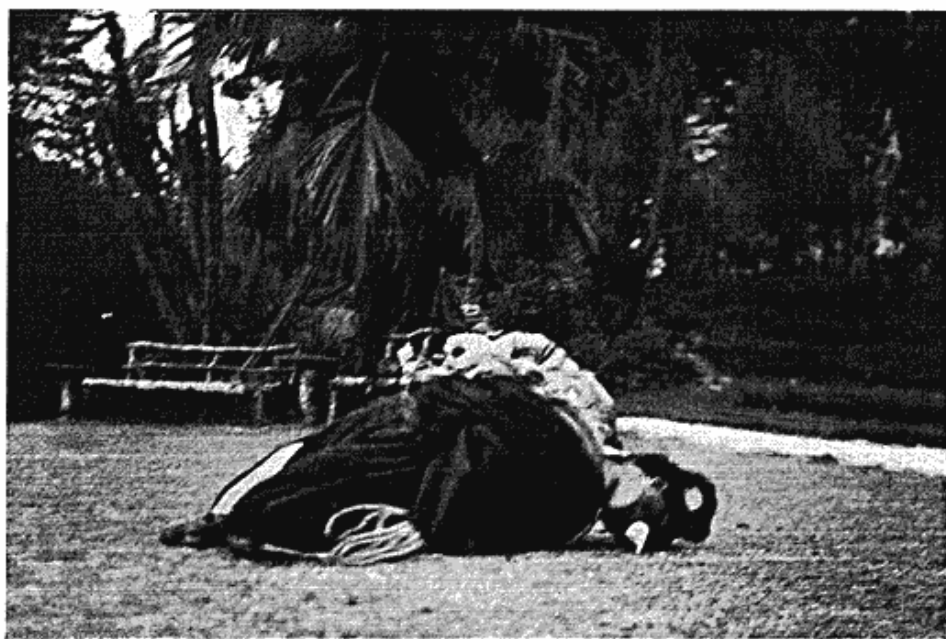
*a*

Fig. 7 a-d. Scenes from the peacock dance.

*b*



c



d

6. Then if the peacock is clever, he plays a game with the two wings.
7. Then if the peacock is clever, he shakes the waist.
8. Then if the peacock is clever, he plays a game with two knees.
9. If the peacock is clever, he turns in a circle to the right.
10. If the peacock is clever, he pitches the wings like a tent.
11. If the peacock is clever, he plays the game of the wings with the wings.
12. If the peacock is clever, he dances with the feet.
13. If the peacock is clever, he makes three graceful salutations.
14. If the peacock is clever, he makes offerings three times.
15. If the peacock is clever, he accepts a drink (as offering?).
16. If there is no wine or Arag, oh peacock, do not be angry.
17. If there is no wine or Arag, oh peacock, do not lose your temper.
18. Oh peacock, turn in a circle to the right to drink wine.
19. If it is the Head-Lama, bow three times.
20. If it is the Patron and Master, bow three times.
21. Now my happiness and prosperity be perfect.
22. May the mother ... enjoy good health.
23. May there always be obtainment of happiness. Virtue.

#### Separate Dance.

The following dance was a common dance, but something by itself, and the leader did not enumerate it among the 13 group dances. In this dance three men were acting, one representing a lama, one a hunter, and one a deer. The latter had a deer mask before his face. The rhythm of the dance varied with the different characters. The most common rhythm was: 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause, 1-2, pause, etc. When the lama was dancing the rhythm changed to: 1-2-3, pause, 1-2-3, pause, 1-2-3, pause, etc. On 3 the lama raised his leg in the air. This rhythm was very slow.

At first a dancer with the deer mask entered the scene, carrying cymbals in one hand and a horn in the other hand. The deer turned from side to side, bending its head to the ground as if it were eating grass. Then it went down on its knees, and in that position it turned the upper part of the body from side to side. It rose again and walked to and fro, sliding its antlers along the grass.

Then the hunter entered the scene, accompanied by the boys acting as his dogs. He was going to hunt the deer. As soon as the hunter discovered the deer, he bent his bow, and the dogs jumped

on the deer that was trying to gore them. Then the dogs ran back to the hunter.

The deer and the lama now began to sing. The hunter shot twice at the deer, but the arrows dropped to the ground. For a third time the hunter shot, but in vain. Meanwhile the lama intoned. The hunter constantly running about, tried to shoot the deer. At last he gave up his vain efforts, approached the lama, put down his bow and arrows in front of the lama, and bent down before him.

Then he rose again and danced slowly in circles. Now the deer began to dance moving its hips, and the dogs danced, too. At last the deer stopped dancing and began to graze peacefully, while the lama danced out on the lawn. He finished the performance with a low bow.

#### **Remarks and Discussion.**

From history it is well known that pilgrimages play an important rôle in many religions. The urge for visiting holy places seems to be universal, and as soon as a religion has spread beyond its original area, the visits can be extended to real journeys and will become pilgrimages. In this way pilgrimages have become an integral part of religious life in Catholic Christianity and Islam, in the latter to such an extent that it has become a religious duty. We will find that pilgrimages from early times have meant a lot to the Tibetan Buddhists and nowadays Tibetan pilgrims can be met with in many places within the Buddhist area.

The lamas often go and visit monasteries and holy places, not only in Tibet itself, but also beyond. In the beginning of 1949 I myself met in Kalimpong the Sakya Lama, head of the red sect of Tibet. He was on pilgrimage with his wife, son and suite. Coming from Tibet he proceeded to India, where he intended to visit the old Buddhist sanctuaries.

From the route followed by the team it can be seen that they visited the common and most important holy places: Lhasa, capital and residence of the Dalai Lama, incarnation of Chenresi (Avalokitesvara), — Tashi-lumpo, residence of the Tashi Lama, incarnation of Amitabha, — Mount Kaila, the terrestrial counterpart of Mount Meru, — Benares, in the neighbourhood of which Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon, — Bodh Gaya where Gautama attained his Buddha-hood, — and Tsam-ch'o-dun where Gautama according to a common Tibetan misinterpretation has died.<sup>6)</sup> It is worth noting that the pilgrimage itself demonstrates the great importance of the places where Gautama lived and died, a fact im-

plying that he has not been concealed completely behind the great theological system of Lamaism.<sup>7)</sup>

It was impossible to get any exact information concerning the spiritual importance of their pilgrimage. They could explain nothing beyond the fact that they were very happy because they had visited so many holy places. But they did not doubt that they had obtained great religious merit from their pious undertaking, in some way or other.<sup>8)</sup>

When I met the team, the leader said that he had already been on pilgrimages before and had spent several years of his life in this way. Twice he had come from Cham to Nepal, and now he was on a tour which would take about three years. That is to say that he had already spent at least 4-5 years on pilgrimages. And one did not get the impression that it was anything extraordinary. On the whole, it seems as if pilgrimages play an important rôle in Tibetan life and must be taken into consideration when the problems concerning the relations between the social and religious functions of Lamaism are investigated.

The leader explained nothing concerning the mask, but similar masks have been met with on other occasions<sup>9)</sup>. Waddell<sup>10)</sup> relates of lay actors called *rnon-pa*: hunters. They wear blue masks adorned with cowries. And Rockhill<sup>11)</sup> tells of itinerant mummers, mostly boys, who with hideous masks covering their heads perform a grotesque dance to the music of their songs. Sarat Chandra Das<sup>12)</sup> states that on New Year's day in Lhasa you can see beggars make their appearance in the streets and houses. They wear the mask of *dre-kar*. The mask generally represents a black-devil with a shaggy white beard with cowries on either cheek. The reference to the black devil is somewhat of a problem as *dre-kar* ought to mean white devil. Presumably Bell<sup>13)</sup> has got it in the right way when he tells of beggars who put on the mask of the white devil (*dre-kar*). An indication of the origin and meaning of this practise may be found with Das<sup>14)</sup> who states that *hdre-dkar* is »a class of demons whom the Bon worship with a view to keeping off other mischievous spirits.« But to this translation Hoffmann has put a question-mark<sup>15)</sup>, and he states that *hdre* is a quite ordinary designation of spirits and demons of all sorts, the term *lha-hdre* »Gods and Demons« being a comprehensive indication of all supernatural beings<sup>16)</sup>. This information seems to indicate a connection between this mask dance and the Bon religion, a connection agreeing rather well with the fact that Milarepa is the tutelary deity of the dancers.

The kilt used by the dancers seems to be an ordinary equipment for Tibetan itinerant actors. But it can also be found beyond Tibet proper. Recently kilts of similar appearance have been seen among the Grangmarangpa in the borderland of the Eastern Himalayas, close to Assam. There they are used by "spirit" dancers.<sup>17)</sup> Kilts of ropes equipped with small pieces of cloth can be found in India among the priests for Angal Amma (Kali). They are used at ceremonies in connection with cholera epidemics and for exorcising evil spirits.<sup>18)</sup> On the whole, one is reminded of various sorts of kilts, sashes, sash-bones, etc., used in the Indo-Tibetan area in so many ways for exorcising evil spirits or invoking tutelary deities. Certain relations between those specimens of dress and particular cultic phenomena may be at hand.

As for the dances I think it will not be possible to draw up principal lines for the performances. From the material here submitted you rather get the impression that it consists of fragments taken from a greater totality, or from different sources. Perhaps some of the fragments belong to the dramas mentioned by McDonald.<sup>19)</sup> That the repertoire is small is indicated by Bleichsteiner.<sup>20)</sup> But still it may be possible behind the fragments to find some hints of greater performances.

Concerning the group dances it seems most probable that the three first dances are merely introductory combinations of steps, performed in order to arrange the dancing ground.

Dances performed in honour of high lamas or other dignitaries can be found in dances Nos. 6, 11 and 12. It was explained by the leader that "whiskers" was a term of honour for high lamas. The beard, rather uncommon among people of the Mongol race is here used as a symbol of high religious or social standard.

Dance No. 7, performed in order to prevent hailstorm may have connection with ceremonies intending to influence the powers of the weather. It may refer to Lamaistic or Bon rituals. As for dance No. 9 it is certain from the leader's explanation that it has got some connection with Milarepa's ascetic life, as for dance No. 10 for the small flower nothing can be said.

In three dances animals are imitated. Dance No. 8 has got the yak-tails, No. 12 has got the monkey and the solo dance No. 5 has got the peacock. As for the monkey we find a reference in the Nan-sa play.<sup>21)</sup> There is a scene where Lama-S'akhyahi-rgyal-mts'an who has dressed himself in the guise of a poor beggar plays with

his monkey for the princess, and the monkey is making many wonderful and amusing tricks.

The peacock is a bird that has been very inspiring to Mahayana imagination, not only to mythology<sup>22)</sup> but also to the dances. In the dance here described the dancer himself is representing the peacock dancing round the cup. Another peacock's dance is described by McDonald<sup>23)</sup> ... "The most amusing is the peacock dance, this bird performing an acrobatic whirl, while his consort sedately walks about the place, laying illuminated eggs, the performance being accompanied by the shrill notes of a flute." Here two actors are partaking. In Ladakh<sup>24)</sup> is said to exist a common dance for both sexes, called the "Peacock Dance". It has got a song about that bird.

As for the dance of the deer and the hunter there can be no doubt that it illustrates the conversion of the hunter Mgon-Po Rdo-Rje by Milarepa. The accordance between the scenes of the dance and the paraphrase and translation of the legend as given by Hoffmann seems obvious.<sup>25)</sup> That the scene must be well-known is furthermore indicated by the fact that this episode has furnished material for the famous cham called Milarepa's cham.<sup>26)</sup>

## NOTES

1) Many examples might be given. I shall only pick out Charles Bell: *The People of Tibet*, 1928, p. 213, 214, 283. Cfr. Sarat Chandra Das: *Journey to Lhasa*, 1904, p. 155 note.

2) Cfr. Bell: *op. cit.*, 1928 p. 61: The theatrical troupes that often tour in Tibet, especially at certain seasons of the year, are mainly recruited from the tillers of the soil.

3) The Swastika seems, however, to be found as a symbol in Cham, cfr. Wilson: *Swastika*, p. 802 (Report of the Smithsonian Institution, 1894) and Rockhill: *Notes on the Ethnology of Tibet*, p. 686, plate 2 (*ibid.* 1893). On several occasions I myself have met Tibetans from Cham with the same symbol on their boots.

4) Cfr. the routes used by pilgrims in G. A. Combe: *A Tibetan on Tibet*, 1926, p. 155 ss, and 202 s.

5) Cfr. L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, 1939, p. 47: *Dzog-ch'n*, literally „The Great End“, being the technical name for the system of mystical insight of the *Nin-mapa* ...“

6) Cfr. Waddell, *op. cit.* p. 307 ss.

7) In Gangtok, capital of Sikkim, I once attended a great semi-religious, theatrical performance, illustrating the life of Gautama. The sincere devotion for Gautama himself was obvious.

8) Combe, *op. cit.* p. 157 ... the lama says, after having visited Budhgaya:



„If I die now, I am purified of all sins“ ... and p. 56 Combe states „To Lhasa all Tibetans, irrespective of sex and religious sect, make at least one pilgrimage in the course of their lives, for no Tibetan dies easy in mind if he has not seen the Jowo in the Jokang, and thus been purified of sin.“ — Francke relates from Ladakh (Tibetische Lieder, Mitt. d. Seminars f. Orient. Sprachen, Jahrg. XXXIV, 1931, p. 101) that most Tibetans set out on the journey with the prayer that they might obtain sons. — Waddell, op. cit. p. 306 states of pilgrims at Buddh-Gaya that their prayers are divided between petitions for temporal prosperity and „the great ultimate perfection“ or Nirvana. — Cfr. H. Kern, Manual of Indian Buddhism, 1896, p. 43.

9) Cfr. e. g. G. Bonvalot, Le Tibet inconnu, 1892, p. 417 and McDonald, The Land of the Lama 1929, p. 64 photo.

10) Waddell, op. cit. p. 540.

11) Rockhill, Land of the Lamas, 1891, p. 246 s.

12) Das, Journey to Lhasa, 1904, p. 345.

13) Bell, op. cit. p. 136.

14) Sarat Chandra Das, Tibetan-English Dictionary, ed. by Sandberg, 1902, p. 697 b.

15) Helmut Hoffmann, Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Bon-Religion, 1950, p. 345, cfr. Dictionaries by Jäschke and by Das.

16) Hoffmann, op. cit. p. 157.

17) C. von Fürer-Haimendorff, Illustrated London News, March 5, 1949 p. 302 s.

18) A specimen is in the possession of the National Museum, Copenhagen.

19) McDonald, op. cit. p. 268.

20) Robert Bleichsteiner, Die Gelbe Kirche, s.a., p. 257 „... Daneben kommen Gesellschaften von Berufsschauspielern vor, die von Ort zu Ort ziehen, um dem Publikum ihr nicht reichhaltiges Programm vorzuführen ...“

21) Waddell, op. cit. p. 561.

22) Cfr. Waddell, op. cit. p. 87 s., and Kah-gyur III, f. 90 (Tibetan Tales, trsl. by Schiefner, into English by Ralston, s.a. p. 354), and M. W. de Visser, Die Pfauenkönigin (K'ung-tsiöh ming-wang, Kajaku myō-ō) in China und Japan (Ostasiatische Zeitschrift, Achter Jahrgang, 1919/1920, Festschrift für Friedrich Huth, p. 370—387) and Siegbert Hummel, Der Pfauenbuddha (Sinologica, vol. II, nr. 3, 1950, p. 234—241).

23) McDonald, op. cit. p. 272.

24) Reeve Heber and K. M. Heber, In Himalayan Tibet, 1929, p. 211. Unfortunately, the authors have not given the song.

25) Helmut Hoffmann, Mi-la Ras-pa, Sieben Legenden, 1950, p. 87 ss.

26) Hoffmann, ibid. p. 20. Cfr. Wilh. Filchner, Kumbum Dschamba Ling, 1933, p. 310, 332 ss, and 505 s.

## APPENDIX.

### Group Dance No. 11.

1. Ara Ya-le tö-pa le-sum /  
(A-ra ya-le stod-pa le gsum)  
Three praises for the whiskers.



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Three praises for the whiskers.

2. U-tra Gya-chang gi lo-ma dra /  
(*dbu-skra rgya-lcañ-gi lo-ma hdra*)  
The hair is like the leaves of the Indian willow.
3. Ara ya-gi tō-pa la tse-sum gyi da-wa tang dra /  
(*A-ra ya-gi stod-pa la rtse-gsum-gyi zla-ba dañ hdra*)  
Praising the whiskers, it is like the moon with three prongs.
4. Chen-mik-ki kar-ma kar-chhen dra /  
(*Chen-mig-gi skar-ma skar-chhen hdra*)  
The star of the eye is like the great stars.
5. Tōd lha-ri chhak dra yō /  
(*Stod lha-ri chags? hdra yod*)  
The upper part is like the form of a divine mountain;
6. Khok med lu-ri chuk-se chuk /  
(*Khog-smad klu-ri gzugs-se htshogs?*)  
The lower part of the body resembles the body of the serpent-
7. Chhip-chhen gur-chhen pung dra yō / mountain.  
(*Chibs-chen gur-chen dpuñ hdra yod*)  
Great horses like large tents abound.
8. Chhip-chung gur-chung pung dra yō /  
(*Chibs-chuñ gur-chuñ dpuñ hdra yod*)  
Ponies like small tents abound.
9. Ara gya-kar la phep tang /  
(*A-ra rgya-gar-la pheb-btañ?*)  
Oh whisker, come to India.
10. Gya-kar Chho-kyi gyal-po dūn-tu /  
(*Rgya-gar chos-kyi rgyal-po mdun-du*)  
Before the Indian religious king,
11. Ara phep-do /  
(*A-ra pheb hdod?*)  
Oh whisker, pray do come.
12. Ara phep-ne ya-chung /  
(*A-ra pheb-nas ya hbyuñ?*)  
Oh whisker, that you have come is . . .
13. Ta tem-dre tashi lo-leg phun-sum-tshog /  
(*Da . . . bkra-sis lo-legs phun-sum-tshogs*)  
Now . . . prosperity and good harvest being perfect are wished.

## Solo Dance No. 5.

1. Gya-kar map-cha ka-ne Yong-nga Yin /  
(*rgya-gar rma-bya ga-nas yon-ña yin*)  
Where has the Indian peacock come from?

2. Gya-kar map-cha shar-ne yong-nga yin /  
(*rgya-gar rma-bya shar-nas yong-na yin*)  
The Indian peacock has come from the East.
3. To-gong map-cha dro-dro ka-la dro-gi yin /  
(*do-dgoñs rma-bya hgro-hgro ga-la hgro-ba yin*)  
This evening the peacock will leave. Where is he going?
4. To-gong map-cha dro-dro nub-ne dro-wa yin /  
(*do-dgoñs rma-bya hgro-hgro nub-la hgro-ba yin*)  
This evening the peacock will leave. He is going to the West.
5. Map-cha khe-pa yin-na go-ne tse-mo tse-shik /  
(*rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na ngo-nas rtsed-mo rtsed-sig*)  
If the peacock is clever, he plays a play (commencing) from  
the head.
6. Te-ne map-cha khe-pa yin-na shok-pa nyi-kyi tse-mo tse-shik /  
(*de-nas rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na sog-pa gñis-kyi rtsed-mo rtsed-sig*)  
Then if the peacock is clever, he plays a play with the two  
wings.
7. Te-ne map-cha khe-pa yin-na ke-pa go-gyu bar-shik /  
(*de-nas rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na rked-pa ngo-hgyu bar-sig*)  
Then if the peacock is clever, he shakes the waist.
8. Te-ne map-cha khe-pa yin-na pu-mo nyi-kyi tse-mo tse-shik /  
(*de-nas rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na pus-mo gñis-kyis rtsed-mo rtsed-sig*)  
Then if the peacock is clever, he plays a play with the two  
knees.
9. Map-cha khe-pa yin-na kor-ra ye-kor che-shik /  
(*rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na skor-ra g'yas skor-byas-sig*)  
If the peacock is clever, he turns in a circle to the right.
10. Map-cha khe-pa yin-na shok-gur phup-shik /  
(*rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na sog-gur phub-sig*)  
If the peacock is clever, he pitches his wings like a tent.
11. Map-cha khe-pa yin-na shok-pa gi shok-tse tse-shik /  
(*rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na sog-paḥi sog-rtse rtsed-sig*)  
If the peacock is clever, he plays the play of the wings with  
the wings.
12. Map-cha khe-pa yin-na shap-tro che-shik /  
(*rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na shabs-bro byas-sig*)  
If the peacock is clever, he dances with his feet.
13. Map-cha khe-pa yin-na chhak-bul lek-sum bar-shik /  
(*rma-bya mkhas-pa yin-na phyag-hbul legs-gsum bar-sig*)  
If the peacock is clever, he makes three graceful salutations.

The translation is based on information received on the spot. Later on, however, it has been suggested that from the 5th verse in Solo Dance No. 5 all final verbs should be understood as imperatives.