TALLY-STICK AND DIVINATION-DICE
IN THE ICONOGRAPHY OF LHA-MO

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Lha-mo, one of the most colourful and complex figures of the Tibetan Buddhist mythology, has been discussed by many authors since the publication of Grünwedel's fundamental work. The main questions of the mythology built up around her figure and the development of her cult have been examined lately in two outstanding works by Tucci, *Indo-Tibetica* and the *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*. Concerning the evolution of Lha-mo's mythology, Tucci pointed out the pre-Buddhistic elements contained in the present-day Lha-mo figure; among them, he attached great importance to surviving traits of the *Magna Mater*. The canonized form of her cult was first introduced in Tibet by the *panjika* *U-rgyan Gsas-ba 'Bes-ral*, and has been developed by diverse sects.

This study is devoted to two objects of ancient origin in the iconography of Lha-mo which have so far not been clearly explained. The historic examination of them might contribute additional material to Lha-mo's mythology.

One of the attributes is a stick tucked in the belt of the Goddess or — at times — held in her hand. In Tibetan sources it is called the *khram-štī* (Table I, Fig. 1). Several eminent scholars have examined the word. R. Stein interpreting the Tibetan divination-cards published by him, discussed the expression *khram-mdos* and thus elucidated the word *khram*. His point of departure was that the full form of *khram-štī*, which, in the *Dictionary of Das* (p. 169a—*b*) is listed as *khram-kha'i štī*, denoting wood in the form of a cross bearing incised lines, is representing the attributes of a god and contai-

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ning squares with mystic figures in them which serve as a means to make attempts at witchcraft... R. Stein concluded from this, that the word khram-kha' — which according to him, means visage trompeur (evidently assuming a connection between khram-pa as liar, kha-khram as lie, i.e. a liar mouth, and kha' face, mouth, see op. cit., p. 319—320) — is the mottled face of demons (kha'-dré) in their angry (khrö-bo) aspect. He also mentions that the khram-sìh, the khram-woods, denotes a cross shaped wood on which culprits were stretched to be flogged (Das, Dict., p. 169: khram-sìh or khrims-kyi khram-sìh). Hence, R. Stein concluded that the expression khram actually referred to the demons themselves.

According to Waddel? a ram's skull with a quaint outfit was used in the ceremony of closing the door of the earth, meant to drive off or delude the demons of the earth. Among others the image of a man, a woman and a house were affixed to the ram's skull, besides the khram-sìh, the 8 yarkhams, and the 0 means. The ram's skull thus adorned was placed over the house gate with the idea of deluding the demons. According to Waddel, the khram-sìh means a tree picture. Thus, the correlation of the ritual would give no explanation as to the role of a tree picture. The prayer said during the ritual hints at the fact — by the way confirmed also by Waddel — that the objects hung outside the house for the demons, serve to mislead them into the belief that the foregoing pictures are the inmates of the house, so that they may wreak their wrath on these bits of wood and so save the real human occupants. Basing himself on the above description of Waddel, R. Stein assumed, that the core of the khram-belief is that the crimes which call for punishment are identified with the demons. Thus, the khram-cross (khram-mdas) would as a matter of fact be a deceptive object, a ransom (gngul), serving to drive the deity or demon back to where it had come from. The process of identification — concludes R. Stein — leads to the point where the object is identified with the specially pure concept of the deity or demon.

R. Stein's explanation of the function of the object is most ingenious. A scrutiny of the origin of the object and of the primary meaning of the term are, however, felt to lead further. A semantic difficulty of R. Stein's explanation seems to be that the equivalent of the khram-kha member in the expression khram-kha'sìh from which he had correctly set out, is given by Jäschke (Dict., p. 49a) and followed by Das (loc. lvid.) as a cut, a notch (in wood), so as to cross another as an ornament and from this it is hard to derive the meaning visage trompeur.

Tucci calls attention to the iconographic significance of the khram-sìh. He remarks that although the object has a magic role here, too, it differs somewhat from that given by R. Stein: 'They may have a mnemonic value,

7 L. A. Waddel, The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism, Cambridge 1934, p. 484.