

TIBETAN RELIC CLASSIFICATIONS

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This essay is an attempt to clarify the Tibetan concept of relics through a survey of various classifications of relics found in the Tibetan literature. This study leads us to reconsider the significance of objects found within Tibetan images and *stūpas*, and to question the methodologies employed in previous research.¹

Tibetan Concepts of Relics.

As the Tibetan concept of relics was based on the Indian Buddhist tradition, we begin our survey with a brief summary of the types of relics known to have existed in India. Based on archaeology, testimonies of Chinese pilgrims to India and Indian Buddhist literary sources, three categories of relics may be distinguished:² 1) The bodily remains of the Buddha and other important (even if subsequently anonymous) saintly persons.³ 2) Various objects that came into contact or were otherwise associated with them. 3) Relics of the *dharmā*, including entire scriptures or, in the majority of cases, the verse of interdependent origination⁴ as well as *dhāraṇīs* derived from certain Dhāraṇī Sūtras. Providing one of the solutions to the problem of locating the presence of the Buddha, who has passed into *nirvāna*, within the samsaric world, these relics create possibilities for interaction with him; they provide inspiration and a *locus* for worship.⁵

Tibetan literature contains threefold, fourfold and fivefold classifications of relics (*ring-bsrel*). Mkhas-grub-rje (1385-1438) supplied a threefold classification based on 'former *paṇḍitas*',⁶ and therefore dating to before the fifteenth century:

[The Buddha] taught to insert into *stūpas*: [1] relics of the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata; [2] bodily relics, [3] relics of the garb.⁷ [1] Relics of the *dharmakāya* are *dhāraṇīs*, [2] bodily relics are mustard-seed-like relics which emerge from bodily remains;⁸ [3] relics of the garb are images.⁹

The former *paṇḍitas* not only classified these relics, but also ranked them in the same order as highest, middle and lowest. This ranking of *dhāraṇīs* as superior to other types of relics is found in those Dhāraṇī Sūtras which recommend the deposition of their particular *dhāraṇīs* in *stūpas* and images (see Bentor, in preparation). Their style of argumentation is one typical of the *sūtra* literature. The element chosen for comparison is usually a highly regarded practice or object of worship, second only to the main topic promoted in the specific *sūtra*. Such arguments may at times reflect actual dialogues between theoretical views represented in those practices. In this case, the dialogue is between those who locate the presence of the Buddha in his physical relics, and those

who locate this presence in his teachings found in a concrete form in scriptures and *dhāraṇīs*.

The identification of relics of the garb with images in Mkhas-grub-rje's work is atypical for most of the literature on the subject. In most cases, relics of the garb are explained to be hair and nails,¹⁰ as well as various objects that came into contact with the saints (see below). Hair and nails as relics of the garb appear at least as early as Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan [1147-1216] (translated in Bentor, in preparation). If we take relics of the garb to mean relics of contact, Mkhas-grub-rje's threefold classification would be parallel to our summary of relics found in India.

Far more common in Tibetan works is the fourfold classification of relics listed at least since the time of Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan. One such enumeration is provided by the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682):

1. Bodily remains: such as bones of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and lineages of Lamas.
2. Mustard-seed-like relics: 'increasing bone' (*'phel-gdung*) of Tathāgatas and relics (*ring-bsrel*) of scholars and practitioners.
3. Relics of the garb: hair of the head, nails and so forth.
4. *dharmakāya* relics: *dhāraṇīs*.¹¹

The fourth category is formed by dividing the bodily relics of the threefold classification into two. Bones of saints such as the Buddha, Lamas and so forth are differentiated from mustard-seed-like relics. Mkhas-grub-rje, on the other hand, explained the bodily relics as mustard-seed-like relics which emerge from bodily remains. The mustard-seed-like relics (*yungs-'bru lta-bu'i ring-bsrel*) are small spherical relics the size of mustard seeds, which are said to grow out of other relics, or to emerge from holy personages (even while living) and sacred objects. They may function as both relics and as 'signs of saintly death' (Martin 1992 and forthcoming).

In the fourfold classification given above, the mustard-seed-like relics include two types: 'increasing bone' (*'phel-gdung*) of the Tathāgata and 'relics' (*ring-bsrel*) of scholars and practitioners. The term *ring-bsrel* has both general and specific meanings. In its general meaning, *ring-bsrel* covers all types of the threefold, fourfold, and fivefold classifications of relics. In its specific meaning, *ring-bsrel* is one type of the mustard-seed-like relics. Both *ring-bsrel*, in its specific meaning, and 'increasing bone' have the ability to multiply or to emerge out of other relics. This capacity has important practical consequences. It ensures a constant supply of relics even when only one tiny fragment is available. This type of relic is what makes it possible to deposit a relic of Buddha Śākyamuni in *stūpas* constructed nowadays. Such relics would grow out of other pieces of his bones, or from another mustard-seed-like relic that originated from the Buddha's relics. The term 'relics as small as mustard seeds' is encountered in a number of *sūtras* in an hyperbolic sense, mustard seed being a simile for the smallest measure.¹² Relics even the size of mustard seed are said to produce inconceivable results [*Adbhutadharmaparyāya*, *Kūṭāgāra* and *Mahāraṇa Sūtras* (Bentor 1988), the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama Sūtra* (Emmerick 1970: 6)].¹³ Yet, the capacity of relics 'the size of mustard seeds' to multiply is not explicitly found in these *sūtras*.¹⁴

Another common Tibetan classification of relics is a fivefold one. Some authors such as Padma-phrin-las (1641-1717, p. 304-305), and Kong-sprul Blo-gros-

mtha'-yas (1813-1899, p. 101), present both fourfold and fivefold classifications. Padma-'phrin-las lists the fivefold types of relics as follows:

1. Relics of the *dharmakāya*.
2. Relics of bodily remains of the Tathāgata.
3. Relics of the garb.
4. *Dharma*-relics (*chos-kyi ring-bsrel*).
5. Mustard-seed-like relics.¹⁵

Similar lists are provided by other authors of manuals for the deposition of relics and *dhāraṇīs*.¹⁶ Numbers 2-3 and 5 in the above list are identical to those in the fourfold classification. The relics of the *dharmakāya* are here further divided into two separate categories. This is explained by Padma-'phrin-las as follows:

The scholars taught to identify the relics of the *dharmakāya* [no. 1] as *stūpas* and *tsha-tsha* which symbolize the quality of that [i.e. the *dharmakāya*]. The others [nos. 2,3,5] are as before. The *dharma*-relics [no. 4] are the collected words of the Buddha (The Victorious One, *gyal-ba*) [including both] the great and small Vehicles.¹⁷

Kong-sprul explains *dharma*-relics as *dhāraṇīs* and books.¹⁸

The fivefold classification is further explained in a work by Chos-kyi-grags-pa written in 1636 C.E.:

There are five relics: 1) Relics of the *dharmakāya*. 2) Relics like mustard seeds. 3) Relics of *dharma*. 4) Relics of physical remains. 5) Relics of the garb. Among these:

- 1) Relics of the *dharmakāya* are receptacles of the *dharmakāya* which indicate [or are a conventional sign of] its nature, such as the eight *stūpas* of the Tathāgata and *tsha-tshas*. The relics of the *dharmakāya* to be inserted inside them are: [Śākyamuni's mantra:] *Om namo bhagavate śākyamunaye tathāgatāya arhate samyaksambud[d]haya tadyathā Om muni muni mahāmune* [read *mahāmune*] *Svāhā* as well as [the *dhāraṇīs* of] Uṣṇīṣavijaya, Vimaloṣṇīṣa, Guhyadhātu, Bodhigarbhālaṅkāraḥ, and Prañītyasamutpāda. Uṣṇīṣavijaya, Vimaloṣṇīṣa, Guhyadhātu and Bodhi-alaṅkāraḥ may be found¹⁹ in another book.
- 2) Relics like mustard seeds emerge from the bones of exceptional persons such as the three 'saints' [Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas]. Furthermore, those that have clear color and are slightly larger than, or the size of, a pea are called *gdung*, while those which are smaller than this are called *ring-bsrel*. In the *Sku-gdung 'Bar-ba'i Rgyud* and other Rnying-ma-pa *tantras* there are *śa-ri-ram*, *ba-ri-ram*, *chu-ri-ram*, *nya-ri-ram*, and *pañca-ram*.²⁰ Even though such a classification exists, it refers only to colors and shapes. They, as well as all the *gdung* and *ring-bsrel*, are included within the category of mustard-seed-like [relics].

- 3) Relics of *dharma* are mantras taught in the supreme great secret Vajrayāna and the numerous collections of *dhāraṇīs* taught in the Sūtrayāna of Mtshan-nyid-Prajñāpāramitā. Furthermore, the pronouncements of the Buddha and reliable commentaries on them are called relics of the *dharma*.
- 4) Relics of bodily remains are those of superior persons such as the root lama as well as the community of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Śrāvakas, and Pratyekabuddhas or receptacles of the Body, Speech and Mind which emerge from them or parts of these [personages] such as flesh, blood, and bone. These are called relics of bodily remains.
- 5) Relics of garb are hair, finger or toe nails as well as cloth and so forth of the personages who were just mentioned; in short, the numerous items blessed by connection with their bodies.²¹

Relics of *dharma* are here the teachings of the Buddha written as mantras and *dhāraṇīs* and also books containing his pronouncements, and this even includes reliable commentaries on the word of the Buddha. These are all relics of the *dharmakāya*, the 'corpus of teachings', in its concrete sense. The new category in the fivefold classifications are relics of the *dharmakāya* in its meanings of the Buddha's qualities, the realization of enlightenment, that which was taught by the Buddha, the reality itself, and so forth (Eckel 1992: 97- 109; Harrison 1992). These relics are *stūpas* and *tsha-tshas* which symbolize the *dharmakāya*. Hence, while relics of *dharma* are the Buddhist teachings embodied in books, the relics of *dharmakāya* symbolize the manifold abstract aspects of the *dharmakāya*. The *stūpa*, the symbol of the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, came to be also the relic of the *dharmakāya*. The *stūpa* encompasses both the abstract and manifested forms of the Buddha and the *dharma*. Within it are contained bodily remains and books — relics of the physical body of the Buddha and the corpus of his teachings (*dharmakāya* in one of its concrete meanings), while its external shape symbolizes enlightenment, reality itself, the path for realizing it, the qualities of the Buddha; in short, the *dharmakāya* in its abstract meanings. Furthermore, the *stūpa* is a symbol of the *dharmakāya* not only in its external form. In fact, the *stūpa* (and *tsha-tsha*) itself became a relic. Smaller *stūpas* as symbols of the *dharmakāya* are deposited within larger *stūpas* together with the physical relics and the relics of the teachings.

In his threefold classification, Mkhas-grub-rje listed *dhāraṇīs* as the highest. Dge-lugs-pa authors such as the First Panchen Lama (p. 802), the Fifth Dalai Lama (p. 401.5) or the First Lcang-skye²² who favored a fourfold classification also ranked the *dhāraṇī* relics as superior. This is also the position of the *Dhāraṇī Sūtras* (see above). The importance of the *dhāraṇīs* is evident also in the Tibetan name for the practice of depositing these sacred items in *stūpas* and images, which is called *gzungs-'bul* — the offering of *dhāraṇīs*, or *gzungs-gzhug* — the insertion of *dhāraṇīs*. In this case the word *gzungs* (or *dhāraṇīs*) serves as a collective name for all types of relics.

On the other hand, others, such as Kong-sprul (who presents a fivefold classification), say:

Whatever is the size of the receptacle (*rten*) it is necessary to have the complete five relics as the main inner deposits. Furthermore, [a *stūpa* or

image, etc.] without either mustard-seed-like relics or *dharm*-relics is improper.²³

Here, the essential relics are both (one type of) the physical relics and the relics of the *dharm*. These are also the most frequently encountered types of relics in India (see Bentor, in preparation).

*The Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan*²⁴ as a Source for the Tibetan Classifications of Relics.

In presenting his threefold classification of relics in the 15th century Mkhas-grub-rje commented that the 'former *paṇḍitas*' on whom he relied based their classification in turn on the *Byang-chub Rgyan 'Bum* (1968:106-107). *Byang-chub Rgyan 'Bum* is identified by Wayman (*ibid.*) as an abbreviation for *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan 'Bum zhes bya-ba'i Gzungs* (Toh. 508). Padma-'phrin-las (1671-1717, p. 305) cites a work entitled *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan-gyi Gzungs-kyi Cho-ga Zhib-mo* as a source of his fivefold rather than threefold classification of relics. He does not identify the text as canonical and we may assume that this source is different from the *Byang-chub Rgyan 'Bum* that is said to contain a threefold classification. But Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas (1813-1899), who follows the pattern of Padma-'phrin-las' presentation (both in listing first the fourfold classification and then the fivefold, and in the sequence of items in each listing), not only identifies the source of his fivefold classification as the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan-gyi Gzungs-kyi Cho-ga Zhib-mo*, as Padma-'phrin-las does, but also remarks that this is a new translation from Chinese (*rgya-nag gsar 'gyur*, p. 101). According to its colophon, Toh. 508 was indeed translated from Chinese in 1743 as part of a project of translating canonical texts missing in the Tibetan canon but extant in Chinese. This text is found only in the Lhasa Kanjur and in some, but not all, of the Derge Kanjurs.²⁵ The absence of Toh. 508 in Tibet prior to 1743 has provoked comments on several occasions. In his Kanjur Dkar-chag, Bu-ston (1290-1364) said: "A complete version of this text should be searched for, as it was translated into Tibetan,"²⁶ a statement repeated in the *Gsan-yig* of the 5th Dalai Lama (Jampa Samten 1992: 120). Also Mkhas-grub-rje stated that the *Byang-chub Rgyan 'Bum* on which the 'former *paṇḍitas*' had relied (see above) did not exist as a complete text during his time (15th century) in Tibet (1968: 106-107).

However, a translation dated 1743 could not have been the source for Padma-'phrin-las who was killed during the Dzungar invasion in 1717/18. We know that a text called *Byang-chub Snying-po'i Rgyan 'Bum zhes bya-ba'i Gzungs* is included in the ninth-century Ldan-kar-ma catalogue.²⁷ Further Jampa Samten has recently shown that our text is one of the 23 texts contained in the Phug-brag Kanjur, and not in any of the other editions of the Kanjurs. As suggested by Schopen (1985:124, n. 11) and confirmed by Scherrer-Schaub (1992) a version of this text entitled *Byang-chub-kyi Snying-po'i Gzungs-kyi Cho-ga* is found also among the Dunhuang manuscripts (PT 555). One of these earlier texts may have been available to Padma-'phrin-las.

The examination of the relic classifications found in the different available versions of the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan* generates as many problems as it solves.

One classification given in Toh. 508 (translated from Chinese, Lhasa, *rgyud*, vol. *ta*, 492a) consists of the following:

1. *chos-kyi sku'i ring-bsrel* — relics of *dharmakāya*.
2. *chos-kyi dbyings-kyi ring-bsrel* — relics of *dharmadhātu*.
3. *rus-pa'i ring-bsrel* — relics of bone.
4. *sha'i ring-bsrel* — relics of flesh.

As was already shown this list "is a predominantly, perhaps exclusively, late Chinese classification" (Schopen 1985: 127). This is, however, not the only classification found in Toh. 508. Another fourfold classification is given as follows (Lhasa, *rgyud*, vol. *ta*, 489a):

1. *chos-kyi dbyings-kyi ring-bsrel* — relics of the *dharmadhātu*.
2. *rus-pa'i ring-bsrel* — relics of bone.
3. *sha'i ring-bsrel* — relics of flesh.
4. *yungs-'bru lta-bu'i ring-bsrel* — mustard-seed-like relics.

This list is partly parallel to the predominantly Chinese categories and partly to the Tibetan fourfold classification (see above) which is repeated here in a sequence corresponding to the last list.

1. *chos-sku'i ring-bsrel* — relics of *dharmakāya*.
2. *sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel* — bodily remains.
3. *sku-bal-gyi ring-bsrel* — relics of the garb.
4. *yungs-'bru lta-bu'i ring-bsrel* — mustard-seed-like relics.

The first category in Toh. 508 (Lhasa, fol. 489a) can be taken as parallel to the relics of the *dharmakāya* of the Tibetan classification. Both *ring-bsrel* and *dbyings* are possible translations of the Sanskrit word *dhātu*. We might note that where the Phug-brag version of the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan* has *chos-kyi ring-bsrel* (on fols. 59b and 63b), the Lhasa has *gsungs-pa'i chos-kyi dbyings* (fol. 485a) and *chos-kyi dbyings-kyi ring-bsrel* (fol. 489a). Hence, the origins of the term relics of *dharmadhātu* may have been *dharmadhātu* in its meaning of 'relics of *dharm*'. In this case, relics of *dharmadhātu* in Toh. 508 could have the meaning of relics of *dharm*, i.e. books and *dhāraṇīs*. The last category in Toh. 508 (fol. 489a) is identical to the parallel one in the Tibetan list. Relics of bone (*rus-pa'i ring-bsrel*) are similar to bodily remains (*sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel*). Finally Toh. 508 has relics of flesh where the common Tibetan classification has relics of the garb. While relics of flesh are not commonly included in the main Tibetan classifications, they do occur as, for example, in the work by Chos-kyi-grags-pa cited above (type 4), in Martin (forthcoming) or in Hsüan Tsang's account of Bodhgaya (1885 II: 133).

The Phug-brag version of the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan* contains yet other listings of relics categories. In a passage parallel to Toh. 508, fol. 492a, the Phug-brag Kanjur (fol. 66a) has only one type of relic — bodily remains of the Tathāgata (*de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i ring-bsrel-gyi sku-gdung*). The parallel to Toh. 508, fol. 489a, in the Phug-brag Kanjur, (fol. 63b) has bodily remains of the Tathāgata and *dharm* relics which are mere mustard seeds (*de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel dang/*

chos-kyi ring-bsrel yung[s]-'bru-tsam). Here the measure of mustard seed seems to be used in the same hyperbolic sense encountered in various *sūtras* (see above). In the fourfold and higher classifications of relics the mustard-seed-like relics took on a life of their own and appeared as a separate type of relic.

The Dunhuang version of our text has again differing categories.²⁸ The parallel to Toh. 508, fol. 492a and Phug-brag, fol. 66a refers, like the Phug-brag Kanjur, to bodily relics alone (*ring-bsrel snyed-kyi sku-gdung*, PT 555, fol. 22b1), but the parallel to Toh. 508, fol. 489a and Phug-brag, fol. 63b provides a sixfold classification of relics (PT 555, fol. 20a2-3):

1. *de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i chos-kyi ring-bsrel* — *dharma* relics of the Tathāgata.
2. *de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel* — bodily relics of the Tathāgata.
3. *sku-bal-kyi ring-bsrel* — relics of the garb.
4. *gdung-gi ring-bsrel* — bodily relics.
5. *chos-kyi ring-bsrel* — *dharma* relics.
6. *yungs-'bru tsam-kyi ring-bsrel* — relics just as mustard seeds.

Here '*dharma* relics of the Tathāgata' are distinguished from '*dharma* relics', and 'bodily relics of the Tathāgata' are distinguished from 'bodily relics'. Otherwise this listing is similar to the fourfold Tibetan classification.

These versions of the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan* contain one, two, two sets of four, and six types of relics. They do not contain a threefold classification as mentioned by Mkhas-grub-rje nor a fivefold listing cited by Padma-'phrin-las and Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas. Still, it should be emphasized that all the types of relics which appear in the different versions are relics that were actually in use in the Indo-Tibetan tradition. Another aspect that requires examination is the context of these classifications in the scripture. The intent of the relevant passages in the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan* is not to provide us with a scholastic analysis of the types of relics but rather to demonstrate the still greater power of the *dhāraṇī* taught there. In one occurrence the merit accumulated through the deposition of the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan Dhāraṇī* in a *stūpa* is said to be superior to that of the deposition of other types of relics which are then listed. This type of argument is typical for the genre of *Dhāraṇī Sūtras* related to *stūpas* and images which are collectively called by Tibetan authors 'the five great *dhāraṇīs*' (*gzungs-chen sde lnga*).²⁹ Where the other of the *Dhāraṇī Sūtras* use as the basis of comparison relics in general (*ring-bsrel*), bodily remains (*sku-gdung*), Tathāgatas, and the *dharma* as teachings, all in incalculable large numbers,³⁰ the different versions of the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan* list as their basis for comparison one or more different types of relics.³¹ For the sake of the arguments made in the text, the number of the types of relics is not what is important.

The importance of the categories of relics which appear in the various versions of the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan* lies in their uniqueness within the Indo-Tibetan literature. It seems that no other scriptural authority for the classification of relics was available to Tibetan authors writing on this subject. But it is difficult to know which, if any, versions of the *Dhāraṇī Sūtra* were available at every point in history. The complexities in the historical transmissions of this scripture in Tibet make it difficult to judge in every case whether the citations by Tibetan authors are direct quotations of

particular versions, or attributions of non-canonical systems of relic classifications to this *Dhāraṇī Sūtra*. It is also not clear whether certain later Tibetan classifications were incorporated into some of the versions of this scripture. We might conclude, however, that the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan* is the main scriptural authority for the differing relic classifications used in Tibet. In addition, Tibetan authors rely on scriptures that teach, for the most part, only one type of relic such as the *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra*, *Adbhutadharmaparyāya, Kūṭāgāra Sūtra* and *Mahāraṇa Sūtra*, which mention bodily remains, the *Pratīyasamutpāda Sūtra* and the '*Five Great Dhāraṇīs*', which mention relics of *dharma*, and the *Subahupariṣcchā Tantra*, which seems to mention both.

Comparison to relic classification of the Theravāda tradition.

The scriptural authority of the Pāli and Theravāda tradition with regard to relic classification has long been cited by Western scholars. In the absence of any well known Mahāyāna classification, this Pāli listing was used by scholars writing not only on Pāli or Theravāda Buddhism but also on the Mahāyāna tradition. This Pāli classification does not, in fact, refer to relics but rather to shrines (*cetiya*s). It does not appear in the canon but in the introduction to the *Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka*³² dated to the fifth century C.E. or earlier (Trainor 1990: 110), and consists of 1. shrines for the bodily remains (*sārīrika*), 2. shrines for objects used by or associated with the Buddha (*pāribhogika*), and 3. indicative shrines (*uddesika*). The first two categories are parallel to the Tibetan classification of bodily remains and relics of the garb.³³ Tibetan relics of *dharmakāya* may be classified as indicative relics. Yet, this would neither exhaust the entire range of indicative shrines nor of relics of *dharmakāya*. In a previous treatment of Buddhist relics and their classifications Benard (1988) assumed the threefold typology of the Pāli literature to be the basic Buddhist classification. She then placed the various types of relics she found in the Tibetan tradition into these Pāli categories. Not only is there no justification for such a procedure, but this synthetic approach fails to do justice to the historical dynamics of the various Buddhist traditions.

A Sinhalese classification of shrines, said to be based on the scriptural authority of the *Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka*, consists of bodily relics, the *bodhi* tree and images of the Buddha (Gombrich 1971: 105; Trainor 1990: 109-110). This list, which introduces innovations in relation to the earlier one, bears resemblance to Mkhas-grub-rje's threefold classification, but the *bodhi* tree replaces the *dhāraṇīs* of his classification. In addition there occurred an expansion of the threefold Pāli classification into a fourfold one. An example may be found in the Thai tradition:³⁴ 1. *dhātu-cetiya*, shrines for bodily relics; 2. *paribhoga-cetiya*, shrines by use or by association, especially the *bodhi* tree (as in the Sinhalese tradition); 3. *dhamma-cetiya*, doctrinal shrines; according to Phra Rajavaramuni, a doctrinal shrine is a "monument of the Teaching where inscribed palm-leaves or tablets or scriptures are housed" (*ibid.*). In the earlier period these were mostly the verse of interdependent origination (see above). Later shrines of *dhamma* were the Pāli canon, extracts of it or its commentaries, whether inscribed on bricks used to erect *stūpas* or as books. 4. *uddesika-cetiya*, indicative shrines; for the most part images, as in the Sinhalese tradition, but other 'reminders' as well.

Unlike the classical classification of the *Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka*, and similar to the Tibetan one, this Thai typology does include relics or shrines of the teachings. These appear as well in later Pāli sources, such as the *Sārasaṅgaha* by Siddhattha (13th-14th centuries?) and the *Vinaya-ṭīka* by Sariputta (12th century?).³⁵ If compared to the Tibetan fourfold classification, this Theravāda classification has, in place of mustard-seed-like relics, indicative reminders. These indicative reminders (and to some extent also reminders by association) include mostly images of the Buddha depicting events in the life of the Buddha, *stūpas* and paintings or reliefs representing the sites of the great events in the life of the Buddha, copies of *dhātu-cetiya*s and *paribhoga-cetiya*s, copies of the Buddha's footprints and of other *uddesika-cetiya*s, and so forth. These shrines do not house any sacred objects or relics, be they physical remains, objects that came into contact with the Buddha, or the holy scriptures. Instead they are indicative of sacred events and sites.

Let us examine these indicative shrines and some of their Tibetan parallels. Any shrine bound up with the location of various events in the life of the Buddha would theoretically remain limited to the geographical sphere of the Buddha's activities. In order to expand this geographical area, various legendary accounts relate shrines located outside the Ganges valley to the Buddha's visits there. The Buddha is said to have visited Sri Lanka (Trainor 1990: 90-91, 139-140), Thailand (Pruess 1976), northwestern India (Fa Hsien 1886/1965: 29; Hsüan Tsang 1885: 93) and even Tibet (Martin 1991: 152). The footprints or shadows left upon such visits became relics as well. Such accounts, however, cannot be related to the major events in the life of the Buddha, in particular to his enlightenment or *nirvāṇa*. The *uddesika* shrines serve to transport the Buddhist sacred geography of India into the wider Buddhist world. In Tibet this function is fulfilled, for example, by the eight *stūpas* related with each of the four major and four minor events in the life of the Buddha.³⁶ Each of these *stūpas* receives its own distinctive shape. When constructed in other locations, these *stūpas* make the eight most sacred sites in the life of the Buddha available for worship. These complexes of eight *stūpas*, known already in India (I Tsing 1896: 108) have been commonly constructed by Tibetans until the present day. Their role in transferring the sacred Indian pilgrimage sites to Tibet, which makes possible the worship of the eight great events in the life of the Buddha, and especially his enlightenment, is considerably more important for Tibetan pilgrims than the spatial symbolism of the *stūpa* so extensively discussed in recent publications (especially Snodgrass 1985).

Conclusions.

Tibetan images and *stūpas* may contain a large variety of objects, such as bodily remains, hair, nails, teeth, skulls, pieces of cloth, hides, pellets (*ril-bu*), images, *stūpas*, *tsha-tshas*, paintings, block-printed pictures, large number of *dhāraṇīs*, scriptures or parts of them, Indian and Tibetan works and so forth. Since this content does, for the most part, clearly reflect Buddhist classifications of relics and of receptacles of the Buddha's body, speech and mind,³⁷ it is remarkable that the bulk of the Western literature on this subject has failed to notice any significant linkage between this content and the Buddhist cults of relics. This oversight may be a result of the primary method of investigation which has usually involved little more than emptying private and museum pieces of their fillings and describing them.³⁸ Such a method tells us very

little about the cultural and Buddhist significance of these ritual deposits. It is hoped that the present essay will contribute to our understanding of Tibetan concepts of relics and eventually allow us to see the practical implications for their placement in images and *stūpas*.

NOTES

¹Among these works are those by Olson (1950-71), Lange (1964), Schulemann (1969), Sommarström (1980), Hatt (1980), Preston (1983), Reedy (1986), Leonov (1991 & 1992), and Pal (1992). It should be emphasized that these works display varying degrees of familiarity with the cultural context of their findings. Some go beyond simple description to employ various scientific methods of analysis such as carbon dating and x-ray. These type of analyses have little to offer in the way of cultural and religious explanation.

²This is based on Hsüan Tsang 1885; Fa Hsien 1886/1965; Falk 1977; Schopen 1985, 1987, 1991; Mitra 1990 and references there; Trainor 1990; Boucher 1991, etc.

³Around main objects of worship are found also *stūpas* containing relics of people wishing to be buried *ad sanctos* as shown by Schopen (1987).

⁴The *ye dharmā... gāthā*, see Boucher 1991.

⁵Reynolds 1977; Schopen 1987 & 1988; Trainor 1990; Boucher 1991; Collins 1992: 235-238; Eckel 1992.

⁶For corrections to Wayman's translation of this passage, see Schopen 1985: 123-4.

⁷*Sku-bal*; this will be explained below.

⁸This will be clarified below.

⁹*De-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i chos-sku'i ring-bsrel/ sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel/ sku-bal-gyi ring-bsrel-rnams/ mchod-rten-du gzhus-par gsungs-te/ chos-sku'i ring-bsrel ni gzungs-rnams-so/ sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel ni sku-gdung-las byung-ba'i ring-bsrel yungs-'bru tsam-mo/ sku-bal-gyi ring-bsrel ni sku-gzugs-te/ Mkhas-grub-rje 1968: 106.*

¹⁰See references in the following note.

¹¹*Ring-bsrel-la/ sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel/ yungs-'bru lta-bu'i ring-bsrel/ sku-bal-gyi ring-bsrel/ chos-sku'i ring-bsrel-rnams-las/ sku-gdung ni/ sangs-rgyas/ byang-sems/ nyan-rang/ bla-ma brgyud-pa-rnams-kyi gdung-rus lta-bu/ yungs-'bru ni/ de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i 'phel-gdung dang/ mkhas-grub-rnams-kyi ring-bsrel/ sku-bal ni dbu-skra/ sen-mo sogs/ chos-sku'i ring-bsrel ni gzungs-rnams-la ngos-'dzing-pas/ pp. 406.6-407.2.* Similar classifications are also found in the works of Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, p. 240.3-4; Stag-tshang Lo-tshā-ba, fol. 47a; The First Panchen Lama, p. 801; Padma-'phrin-las, p. 304; Lcang-skyā I, p. 84.3, 84.5; 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa I, p. 494; Gung-thang Dkon-mchog-bstan-pa'i-sgron-me, p. 465; Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug, fol. 7a; Kong-sprul, p. 101.

¹²On the measure of mustard seed, see Emmerick 1967.

¹³See also Adikaram 1953; 137; Bigandet 1912: II 89. After the Buddha's *nirvāṇa* his relics are also said to have dispersed in the world into invisible particles like mustard seeds (see Strong 1979: 223).

¹⁴For the ability of relics to 'grow' (*rgyas*) as found in the *Pitṛputra Sūtra*, see Martin 1992: 188.

¹⁵*Chos-kyi sku'i ring-bsrel dang/ de-bzhin-gshegs-pa'i sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel dang/ sku-bal-gyi ring bsrel/ chos-kyi ring bsrel dang/ yungs-'bru tsam-gyi ring-bsrel dang lngar gsungs-pa. p. 305.1-2.*

¹⁶Chos-rnam-pa, pp. 6-7; Chos-kyi-grags-pa, pp. 281-283.

¹⁷*Mkhas-pa-dag-gis chos-sku'i rings-bsrel ni de'i yon-tan mtshon-byed mchod-rten dang sâtsha/ gzhân-rnams gong-dang 'dra-la/ chos-kyi ring-bsrel ni rgyal-ba'i bka' theg-pa che-chung gis bsdus-pa-rnams-la ngos-'dzin-par gsungs/ p. 305.2-3.*

¹⁸Chos-kyi ring-bsrel gzungs sngags dang glegs-bam la ngos 'dzin, p. 102.

¹⁹Literary: 'it is necessary to draw from'.

²⁰This passage from the *Sku-gdung 'Bar-ba Tantra* is translated and explained in Martin, forthcoming.

²¹*Ring-bsrel lnga ni chos-sku'i ring-bsrel/ yungs-'bru lta-bu'i ring-bsrel/ chos-kyi ring-bsrel/ sku-gdung-gyi ring-bsrel/ sku-bal-gyi ring-bsrel-rnams-so/ de-dag-gi chos-kyi sku'i ring-bsrel ni/ rnam-pa brdar btags-pa'i chos-sku'i rten bde-bar-gshegs-pa'i mchod-rten brgyad dang sâtstha lta-bu yin-la/ de-yi nang-du gzhug-pa'i chos-sku'i ring-bsrel ni/ Om na-mo bha-ga-wa-te Shâ-kya-mu-na-ye ta-thâ-ga-tâ-ya arha-te samyak-sambu-[d]dha-ya tadya-thâ Om mu-ni mu-ni ma-hâ-mu-ne-ye Svâ-hâ/ ces dang/ gzhân-yang/ gtsug-gtor-rnam-rgyal/ gtsug-tor-dri-med gsang-ba-ring-bsrel/ byang-chub-snying-po'i-rgyan-'bum/ rten-'brel-snying-po-mams yin-no/ gtsug-gtor-rnam-rgyal/ gtsug-tor-dri-med/ gsang-ba-ring-bsrel/ byang-chub-rgyan-'bum bcas dpe gzhân-nas 'bebs-dgos-so/ yungs-'bru lta-bu'i ring-bsrel ni/ 'phags-pa gsum-sogs gang-zag khyad-par can-gyi gdung-las byung-ba-ste/ de-yang kha-dog-dwang-shing sran-ma'i rdog tsam yan-tshad-la gdung zhes dang/ de-las chung-ba-rnams-la ni ring-bsrel zhes bya-la/ sngags rnying-ma'i sku-gdung-'bar-ba'i rgyud sogs-las ni/ sha-ri-ram/ ba-ri-ram/ churi-ram/ nya-ri-ram/ panyca-ram/ zhes-par dbye-ba-yang kha-dog-gi dbyibs tsam-du zad-pa'i phyr/ de-ltar gdung dang ring-bsrel thams-cad yung[s]-'bru lta-bu'i khongs-su bsdu'o/ chos-kyi ring-bsrel ni gsang-chen rdo-rje theg-pa mchog-las gsungs-pa'i sngags-rnams dang/ mtshan-nyid pha-rol-tu phyin-pa mdo-sde'i theg-pa-nas gsungs-pa'i gzungs-kyi tshogs ji-snyed-pa dang/ gzhân-yang rgyal-ba'i bka' dang de-dag-gi dgongs-'grel tshad-mar gyur-pa-rnams chos-kyi ring-bsrel zhes bya'o/ sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel ni/ rtsa-ba'i bla-ma sogs gang-zag mchog sangs-rgyas dang byang-chub-sems-dpa' nyan-rang-gi tshogs-dang bcas-pa'i sku-gdung-ngam/ de-las byung-ba'i sku gsung thugs-kyi rten-nam/ de-dag-gi cha-shas sha khrag rus-pa'i tshogs la-sogs-pa-rnams ni sku-gdung-gi ring-bsrel zhes bya'o/ sku-bal-gyi ring-bsrel ni/ bshad ma thag-pa'i gang-zag de-rnams-kyi dbu-skra dang phyag-zhabs-kyi sen-mo dang na-bza' la-sogs-pa mdor-na sku dang 'brel-ba'i byin-brlab-kyi tshog ji-snyed-pa-la sku-bal-gyi ring-bsrel bshad-do/ pp. 281-3. This text, a copy of which was kindly loaned to me by Trangu Rinpoche in Bodhanath, Nepal, had been priorly referred to in Martin (forthcoming) who paraphrased this fivefold classification as well.*

²²Lcang-skyia I says: "Four [types] of relics were taught. Among them, the relics of the *dharmakâya*, the *dhâraṇî* mantras were taught as superior." *Rings [sic]-bsrel bzhi gsungs-shing/ de'i nang-nas chos-sku'i rings [sic]-bsrel/ gzungs-sngags mchog-du gsungs-de/* (P. 6301, p. 89.4.4-5). Here Lcang-skyia quotes the *Guhyadhâtu*, Tog Palace, # 469, vol. 102, pp. 12.7-13.4.

²³*Rten che-chung gang-yin-kyang nang-gzhug gtso-bo ring-bsrel lnga tshang-bar dgos-shing/ de-las-kyang yungs-'bru lta-bu dang chos-kyi ring-bsrel gnyis-ka'am gang-rung med-du mi ring zhing/ p. 102.5-6.*

²⁴The various versions of the title of this scripture are mentioned below.

²⁵See also Schopen 1985: 124 and Jampa Samten 1992:120.

²⁶Cited in Scherrer-Schaub, 1992.

²⁷Schopen 1985:125; Jampa Samten 1992: 120.

²⁸I would like to thank Christina A. Scherrer-Schaub for providing me with the following details.

²⁹See Bentor, in preparation. The five *dhâraṇîs* include in addition to the *Byang-chub snying-po rgyan (Bodhigarbha)*, also the *Uṣṇîsavijaya* (Toh. 594-598), *Vimaloṣṇîsa* (Toh. 599, 983), *Guhyadhâtu* (Toh. 507, 883) and *Pratîtyasamutpâda* (Toh. 212, 520, 980). Occasionally the *Râsmivimâla* (Toh. 510, 982) is replacing one of these five.

³⁰See Bentor, in preparation.

³¹In another instance the different types of relics are one among the several similes used to illustrate the extent of the merit that can be derived from retaining, reading, reciting, understanding and so forth, of the *Byang-chub Snying-po Rgyan Dhâraṇî*.

³²Fausbøll 1887: iv 228; translated into English by Rouse 1901: 142.

³³These two types of relics are mentioned also in the *Milindapañho* 341.

³⁴Phra Rajavaramuni 2535 B.E. (1990-1991) and Damrong Rajanubhab 1973. I would like to thank Charles Hallisey and Peter Skilling not only for introducing me to these sources respectively, but also for providing me with copies.

³⁵Sasaki 1992:40 and Charles Hallisey, communication, Dec. 1993; see also Boucher 1991: 26, n. 75.

³⁶See Tucci 1932/1988: 21-24; Bagchi 1941; Maue and Röhrborn 1979; Nakamura 1980; Huntington 1985-86 and 1987; etc.

³⁷In addition the pedestals or thrones (*khri*) contain various offerings and 'omens', such as earth and stones from holy places, medicinal herbs, grains, jewels, edibles, etc.

³⁸See n. 1.

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Le *stûpa* de Bodnath au Népal, Bya-rung kha-shor pour les Tibétains, est si célèbre que l'histoire de sa fondation est dans toutes les mémoires et qu'il suffira ici d'en rappeler les grands traits. Les variantes sont relativement nombreuses (voir en annexe le tableau qui répertorie les plus importantes), mais le schéma principal se ramène à ceci : trois frères ayant prononcé devant ce *stûpa* qu'ils ont construit le voeu de renaître au Tibet pour y diffuser le bouddhisme, reprennent naissance comme le roi Khri-srong lde-btsan, l'Abbé Śântarakṣita, le maître Padmasambhava.

Quant au nom du *stûpa*, il trouve son explication dans la version répandue actuellement où c'est la mère des garçons, gardeuse de volaille de son état (*bya-rdzi-mo*), qui avait commencé la construction (après avoir demandé un terrain apparemment minuscule au roi du Népal, selon une version). L'extension de ce terrain — miraculeuse ou grâce à l'astuce de la femme —, et la taille de l'édifice ayant suscité la jalousie et l'opposition des habitants du Népal, ceux-ci demandèrent au roi d'interdire la construction ; mais le roi refusa, arguant de sa parole donnée : " J'ai laissé échapper de ma bouche : ' il convient de le faire ' (*bya-rung kha-shor*), [et un roi ne revient pas sur sa parole]." Ainsi, si l'on voulait traduire le nom actuel du *stûpa*, on pourrait le rendre par "Construction autorisée verbalement".

Mes premières recherches sur l'histoire de la construction de Bya-rung kha-shor remontent aux années 1976-1977, dans le cadre de l'étude du *bKa'-thang Zangs-gling-ma*, et je les ai reprises d'une manière plus globale en 1982-1983¹. Tout récemment, F.K. Ehrhard a publié un court article : "The stupa of Bodhnath : A Preliminary Analysis of the Written Sources"² et, avec Ph. Pierce et Ch. Cüppers, une plaquette : *Views of the Bodnâth-stûpa*³. Dans ces deux publications, F.K. Ehrhard examine de manière beaucoup plus exhaustive que je ne l'avais fait les documents tibétains sur l'histoire de ce *stûpa* au Népal à partir du 16ème siècle, et les sources népalaises pouvant faire état de l'existence d'un *stûpa* sur le site, antérieurement au 16ème siècle.

En effet, l'histoire de ce monument soulève plusieurs questions concomitantes :

1. Depuis quand le site de Bodnath a-t-il été reconnu par les Tibétains comme celui de Bya-rung kha-shor ?
2. Existait-il un *stûpa* et une tradition népalaise antérieurs qui autorisaient l'identification à Bya-rung kha-shor ?
3. Si l'histoire de la construction est légendaire, quelle est son origine, et comment cette histoire s'est-elle développée ?
4. Enfin, si l'on dénie tout caractère historique au récit de la fondation, quelle est la signification réelle de l'élaboration d'une telle légende ?

Pour les deux premières questions, les conclusions de F.K. Ehrhard rejoignant pour l'essentiel celles auxquelles j'étais parvenue, je renvoie à ses articles, n'indiquant ici que brièvement les résultats :