

Holy Dogs of Tibet

Introduction and Chapter One

by Gerald D'Aoust

Foreword

This little article has been prepared with the sincere hopes of sparking some profound interest towards the beneficial preservation of an apparently superficial, but, possibly one of the holiest element of the rich cultural heritage of the Tibetan Reincarnationist Faith.

From a captivating recollection of nearly unbelievable facts, please, follow the Holy Dogs inside this condensed yet amazing reconstitution of this lost and precious treasure of Old Tibet...

"Om! The Jewel in the Lotus! Hum!"

Introduction

For nearly 1300 years, now, Tibetan High Lamas have traditionally been preserving a little and most adorable breed of long haired dogs, known among them as Apsos, or Gompa Apsos.

However, before going any further, the reader should be correctly informed that the cross-bred pseudo-Apsos available from the Occidental registered dogs market have very little in common with the real and rare classic Tibetan Apsos which are presently on the verge of extinction.

Also, just as many other things which unfortunately vanished since the Tibet Invasion by Chinese people in 1959, the "true reason "behind the meticulous keeping of the little Holy Beasts" in the secluded Monasteries of Tibet has become and still remains a small enigmatic mystery...

Chapter One

Holy Dogs Amulets

In order to give the reader a foretaste of the Holy Dogs' important religious significance in Old Tibet, it seemed auspicious to begin this article with a little exhibition of believed very old amulets; some of which representing the famous sacred little dogs.

It is a well-known fact, that Tibetans of all classes have always, and even more in the past, enjoyed wearing amulets whether around their neck, wrists or fingers or again on their dresses or other garments, displaying and indicating by such their deeply-rooted reincarnationists beliefs. Just as other faithful persons in other religions, they liked to express their convictions and even superstitiously protect themselves by adorning their persons with various representations of sacred elements of their faith.

For your kind information, this little collection of supposedly High Lamas' amulets was acquired in Delhi, India in 1984. It apparently came out with the help of some Tibetan people from a monastery in Western Tibet shortly prior to its looting by some invaders.

In any case, over a thousand years old Holy Dogs amulets, you will agree, represent an obvious acknowledgement and a tangible evidence or testimony of the Holy Dogs long time presence inside the Tibetan Faith.

By the way, these amulets are known in Tibet as "Toug-Chas" (incorrectly spelled of course), which literally means "Things which fell from Heaven"!

They are said such in the sense that they are spiritually high. The Tibetans have sometimes unusual ways of saying things. For instance, they call their livestock sheep, goats and yacks "fields on hooves!"

On the first photograph, we have a group of "Dorges". The "Dorge" (known in India as Vajra) is, according to scriptures, the Thunderbolt.¹ It is the symbol of Jupiter or Indra, the Sun God, or the Universal Monarch like Buddha. Thus, it represented symbolically the mastery of life. The incredible wear and tear condition, especially the central one in the row, is explained by the rolling in the hands of the prayer.

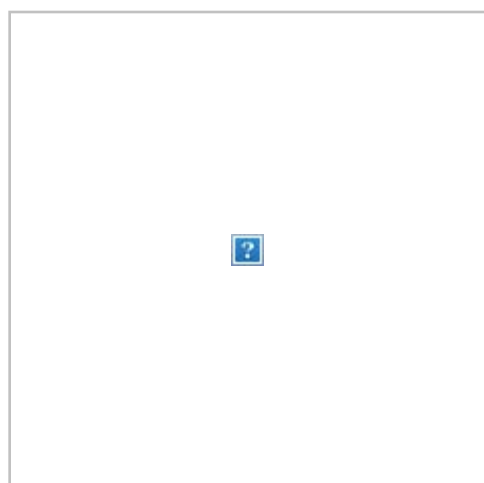
The little one in the shape of a cross is nothing else than a cross-thunderbolt, a double-dorge or Visva-Vajra.² Lama Govinda explains the power of this symbol of supra-spiritual knowledge:

"This is also expressed in Amoghasiddhi's visva-vajra, which is an intensification of Aksobhya's vajra, not merely in the sense of a reduplication, but in that of a new perspective, a new plane of activity, a new dimension.

"This Inner Way leads into the mystery of Amoghasiddhi, in which the inner and the outer world, the visible and the invisible, are united, and in which the spiritual takes bodily shape, and the body becomes an exponent of the spirit.

"For Amoghasiddhi is the Lord of the Great Transformation, whose vehicle is the winged man, the man in transition towards a new dimension of consciousness. He is the Lord of the element "Air" or "Wind," the principle of motion, of living breath, of life-force." ³

In simple words, the Cross represents the mastery of lives in the two worlds, indicated by the two axis... the horizontal as the samsaric world on earth and the vertical with Heaven on top and Hell downward.



On this second photograph, we have an old copper amulet of the "Endless Knot" or Lucky Diagram⁴ which represents the endless cycle of life and death. This symbol, actually a form of "Ouroboros" has been used by other reincarnationists civilisations like the Celts for example.

The other amulet on the second photo is a mysteriously simple 6 links brass stick which somehow represents the chain of Samsara,⁵ in its six levels.

"The 6 worlds of Samsaric existence, are translated as follows:

S= sura, or god, referring to the deva-world;
A= asura, or titan, referring to the asura-world;
Na= nara, or man, referring to the human-world;

Tri= trisan, or brute animal, referring to the brute-world;
Pre= preta, or ghost, referring to the preta-world;
Hung= hell (from Hunu, meaning "fallen"), referring to the hell-world."

In this third photo, we can see clockwise, from lower left...

- A brass representation of a "Stupa" or "Chorten," monuments usually of stone, in which are kept the relics of bygone Tibetan Saints. Similar monuments also exist elsewhere in other lands and civilizations.
- A begging bowl... an attribute of many divinities. This magic bowl turns the alms into Amrita or Elixir Vitae, responsible for the Divine Lustre.
- Then a single small "Fish of Gold" and further along "Dual Fishes of Gold," very clever symbolic representations of the allegory of everlasting souls in the sea of death⁶, and most glorious emblems.
- A "Tortoise Shell," which symbolises Eternal Longevity.
- And finally a Scull-Cup, the symbolic representation of your renunciation of the samsaric world.⁷



In this fourth photo, the upper binoculars represents the all-seeing "Eyes of the World" like the ones on the Bodnath Stupa. They seem, just as in Greek, Egyptian, Roman (etc...) mythologies, believed to be connected with Sun-God worship.⁸

Lower, we get to see something fairly unusual in this "Triple Rosary" obviously a very intelligent representation of the Holy Trinity or Tri-Kaya, as it is better known in Tibet.

"These three series of Buddhas are arranged according to the mystical theory of the three bodies of Buddha (Tri-kaya); namely...

(a) the Dharma-kaya, or law-body, which has been termed "essential wisdom (Bodhi)" and is self-existent and everlasting, and represented by Adi-Buddha,

(b) the Sambhoga-kaya or adorned body, or reflected wisdom, represented by the celestial Jinās, and

(c) the Nirmana-kaya, or changeable body, or practical wisdom represented by Sakya Muni and the other human Buddhas. Though in a more mystic sense Sakya Muni is considered to be an incarnate aggregate of the reflected wisdom of all the five celestial Jinās.

"But these five celestial Jinās were latterly held to unite also within themselves both the form of metaphysical bodies, both the Dharma-kaya and the Sambhoga-Kaya." ⁹



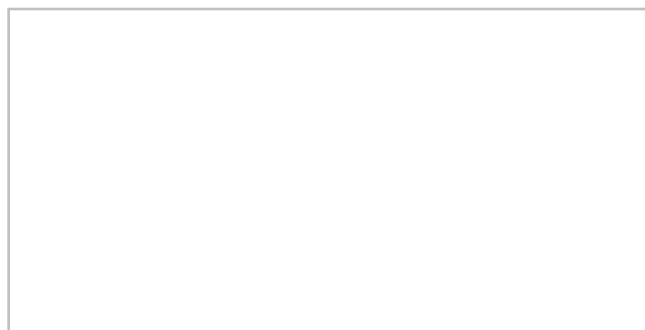
According to this theory, the Buddha would consist of three bodies, two of them being metaphysical bodies, both the Dharma-kaya and the Sambhoga-kaya.

He seems to change his physical bodies like we change cars. His Sambhoga-kaya looks like a mirror of the Nirmana-kaya..., but adorned of the most beautiful shining jewels. A luminous speculum!

Finally, the Dharma-kaya is self-existent, therefore the first of all others and everlasting... past, present and future.

And in this last, but not least photo, you finally get to see the Holy Dog amulets. These, surprisingly look exactly like true little Apsos in the down position... standing ready. It is logically the only way the artist could make them strong and yet comfortable to wear, using the "cast-in-mud" melted wax method, as in all the other pieces.

It is surprisingly convincing to acknowledge the presence of Holy Dogs among such prestigious spiritual symbols of the Tibetan Cultural Heritage. That's only because they are actually themselves, them "little selves," symbols... the living symbols of a most beautiful legend...



Notes:

1. "Bardo Thodol," according to Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup, edited and compiled by W.Y. Evans-Wentz, Oxford University Press, 1927, 4th edition, 1960, reprint 1978, pp. XXVIII et XXXIII.
2. *Ibid.* and L. Austine Waddell, M.B., "Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet," Heritage Publishers, New-Delhi, India, 1979, first published in London 1895, pp 340-1.
3. Lama Anagarika Govinda, "Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism," published by K.P. Churamani for B.I. Publications, New Delhi, 1960, p. 262.
4. Waddell, pp 392-3.
5. "Bardo Thodol," p. 24.
6. Waddell, pp 392-3.
7. "Bardo Thodol," p. XXX.
9. *Ibid.*