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ABBREVIATIONS

A	*Aṅguttara-nikāya*
AO	*Acta Orientalia*
AM	*Asia Major*
As	*Aṭṭhasālinī*
BEFEO	*Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*
BHSD	F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*
BM	*Burlington Magazine*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BSR	*Buddhist Studies Review*
CIS	*Contributions to Indian Sociology*
CPD	*Critical Pāli Dictionary*
CSSH	*Comparative Studies in Society and History*
CSLCY	*Chin-so liu-chu yin*, in TC, no. 1015
D	*Dīgha-nikāya*
Dīp	*Dīpavaṃsa*
EA	*Études Asiatiques*
EFEO	Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient
EJS	*European Journal of Sociology*
EI	*Epigraphia Indica*
ERE	*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings, Edinburgh, T.&T. Clark, 1911
HJAS	*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*
HR	*History of Religions*
IASWR	Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions
IBK	*Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
IIJ	*Indo-Iranian Journal*
IT	*Indologica Taurinensia*
JA	*Journal Asiatique*
JAS	*Journal of Asian Studies*
JHR	*Journal of the History of Religions*
JIABS	*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*

JNCBRAS	*Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JNRC	*Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*
JPTS	*Journal of the Pali Texts Society*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JS	*Journal des Savants*
Kv	*Kathāvatthu*
Kv-a	*Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā*
MCB	*Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*
M	*Majjhima-nikāya*
Mhbv	*Mahābodhivaṃsa*
Mhv	*Mahāvaṃsa*
Mp	*Manoratha-pūranī*
MSMS	Monumenta Serica Monograph Series
Paṭis	*Paṭisambhidā-magga*
PTS	Pali Text Society
RH	*Revue Historique*
RO	*Rocznik Orientalistyczny*
S	*Saṃyutta-nikāya*
SBE	Sacred Books of the East
Saddhamma-s	*Saddhamma-saṅgaha*
SLJBS	*Sri Lanka Journal of Buddhist Studies*
Sp	*Samantapāsādikā*
SSAC	*Studies in South Asian Culture*
T	The Taishō edition of the Buddhist Canon in Chinese (vol. no.)
Th	*Theragāthā*
TMKFTCC	*Tao-men k'o-fa ta-ch'üan-chi*, in TC, no. 1215
TP	*T'oung Pao*
TC	The Taoist Canon, text numbered in accordance with the Harvard-Yenching Index to its titles
TTD	Tibetan Tripiṭaka, sDe-dge Edition
TTP	Tibetan Tripiṭaka, Peking Edition
UCR	*Univeristy of Ceylon Review*, Colombo
VBA	*Visva-bharati Annals*
Vin	*Vinaya-piṭaka*
Vism	*Visuddhimagga*
WZKSO	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- (und Ost) asiens*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Acknowledgements: Figures 1, 2 & 3 taken from C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, New York, 1975; Figures 4, 5, 6 & 7 from A.U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art,* Oxford, 1938–39; Figures 12 & 13 were drawn by Cathy Cantwell.

Observations on the Tibetan Phur-ba and the Indian Kīla

R. Mayer*

The Tibetan ritual implement the *phur-ba*, called *kīla* in Sanskrit, has attracted the interest of Western scholars for many years. R.A. Stein, J. Huntington, T. Marcotty, G. Meredith, and S. Hummell have all contributed studies ranging from entire books to learned articles. A consensus seems to have been reached by most of these scholars, that although the *kīla* in some form or other was certainly known and used in India, the characteristic form of it that is so widespread in Tibet is not of Indian, but of autochtonous Tibetan provenance—or, in the opinion of Hummell, of Mesopotamian origin. Thus Huntington writes "no *phur-ba* like instrument has been demonstrated to be of Indian origin up to the present day".[1] He loosely suggests that the *phur-ba* was incorporated from Bon into Buddhism.[2] Similarly, R.A. Stein was for many years very interested in the origins of the *phur-ba*, but he also writes that although the Tibetan *lamas'* religious and philosophical explanations of their *phur-ba* are in Indian Buddhist idiom, the actual form and shape of the *phur-ba* itself, as known in Tibet, seems to be purely Tibetan. Stein says that no literary or archeological evidence for it has ever been found in India; and although he concludes at the end of his research that there is no doubt that some kind of *kīla* was known in India, he feels he can not establish that the Indians ever knew it in the form used in Tibet.[3]

The implications are that it was borrowed from Bon and the allegedly 'translated from Sanskrit' rNying-ma-pa texts describing it are apocryphal.[4] Keith Dowman follows these two scholars and says the *phur-ba* is one of several very important ritual implements which the rNying-ma-pa yogis borrowed from the Bon.[5] While conceding that the *kīla* was known in India in some form, he says that there is no

* An incomplete and primitive presentation of this material (including some errors) is due to appear in the next issue of the *Tibet Journal* under the title "Tibetan Phur-bas and Indian Kīlas". In the present contribution the material has been reworked and expanded.

[1] J. Huntington, *The Phur-ba—Tibetan Ritual Daggers*, Ascona, 1975, vii.

[2] *ibid.*, vii.

[3] R.A. Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1971–72, 499.

[4] R.A. Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1977–78, 648, 654.

[5] K. Dowman, *Skydancer*, London, 1984, 302.

representation of the *kīla* as the Tibetans know it in Indian bronze or stone art or in the literature of the *siddhas*. Therefore Dowman stresses its Tibetan or Himalayan 'shamanistic' uses as being the more significant.

The purpose of this paper is to show that this consensus is quite possibly mistaken and that the question remains open.[6] Not only was the *kīla* known and used in India in some form or another, but that characteristic form that we now call the Tibetan-style *phur-ba* might also be of surprisingly orthodox Indian provenance, and this in turn implies that the allegedly 'apocryphal' texts describing it might also in fact be genuine translations from Sanskrit. This is not necessarily to deny that the prominence the *phur-ba* received in Tibet might have been partly Bon inspired, since it seems ever more likely that the Bon themselves were at least in major part a religion of Indic origin, perhaps the result of a very early *stratum* of Buddhist [or even Śaiva?] proselytizing in west Tibet.[7] Thus they might well have had their own Indian-derived *phur-ba* tradition in Tibet before the Buddhists. Nevertheless, Padmasambhava's well attested association with the *kīla* rites provides a more probable explanation for its popularity amongst his Tibetan devotees.[8]

It appears that the Tibetan *phur-ba*, or *kīla* in Sanskrit, is only the most recent manifestation of a long and varied line of Indian ritual items that have been generated over the last three millennia or so, based on a few particular Vedic or Epic concepts. Two of these notions are especially important with regards to the *phur-ba* or *kīla*, one a myth and the other a ritual implement. The age of the myth is controversial; was it Vedic or Epic? For the purposes of this paper, it makes no difference.[9]

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[6] The generosity of John Irwin greatly facilitated the production of this paper. Mr Irwin has, over the years, accumulated a large number of references to the *indrakīla*, which he unstintingly shared with me, thus saving me many hours of laborious searching in libraries. Thanks are also due to Richard Gombrich, who made me aware of Lily de Silva's article, and to Charles Malamoud, who gave me additional useful references. Philip Denwood has been immensely helpful in referring me to the various *śilpaśāstras*, as have Kevin Latham and above all Luke Lau and Stephen Hodge in reading Chinese texts for me. Michael Aris devoted some hours to correcting the worst enormities of my style and presentation, for which I shall remain very grateful for years to come.

[7] D.L. Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, London, 1987, 390–391.

[8] See the various hagiographies and the Tun Huang text Pelliot 44; also R.A. Stein, "A propos des documents anciens relatifs au Phurbu", *Csoma de Koros Symposium*, Budapest, 1978 and Bischoff and Hartmann, "Padmasambhava's Invention of the Phur-ba", *Etudes tibétaines dédié à Marcelle Lalou*, Paris, 1971; also the *sBa-bzhed*, in S.G. Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, Leiden, 1988, 6.

[9] The controversy hinges on whether the Vedic adjective *vṛtrahan*, = 'victorious', and cognate with the Avestan *verethragan*, = 'victorious', was falsely etymologized by brahmans to render 'smiting Vṛtra', Vṛtra thus coming to appear as a proper name and the serpent Vṛtra being invented to make sense of the new etymology. Thus the whole myth of Indra slaying Vṛtra would have arisen out of a false etymology. But in the much much later period of historical concern to this paper, the myth certainly did already exist, so the controversy as to its precise origin is irrelevant. See M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Leiden, 1975, 64.

The myth introduces the crucial notion of the *kīla* as the cosmic mountain, Meru. It is an account of creation in which Indra slays the serpent Vṛtra, thus allowing the world to come into existence. F.B.J. Kuiper has (controversially) called this cosmogonic myth "the basic concept of Vedic religion."[10] He feels it is basic because Indra is arguably the most important of Vedic gods, and, as Kuiper writes:

> "Indra's mythical role remains limited to this single exploit. Again and again the poets say that he slew the dragon, extended the earth, and lifted up the sky, but that is about all they can tell us about him."[11]

Kuiper adds:

> "This myth owed its fundamental importance to the fact that every decisive moment in life was considered a repetition of the primeval process. Therefore the myth was not merely a tale of things that had happened long ago, nor was it a rational explanation of how this world had become what it is now. The origin myth constituted the sacred prototype of how, in an endlessly repeated process, life and this world renewed themselves again and again."

According to Kuiper, Vedic ritual made much of this myth.

The story itself varies slightly in different versions. The basic outline, in Kuiper's words, is as follows:

> "In the beginning there was only water, but these primeval waters bore in themselves the germ of life. From the bottom a small clod of earth rose to the surface where it floated about. The clod spread on the surface and became a mountain, the beginning of the earth, but it continued to float (unanchored) on the waters… In this first stage, the world was still an undifferentiated unity, …none of the contrasts that constitute our phenomenal world yet existed. There was no heaven or earth, no day or night, no light or darkness, no male or female…"

This state of undifferentiated unity came to a sudden end with the birth of Indra from out of nowhere, who then performed his great demiurgic acts. Firstly, Indra found that the primeval mountain was still floating about unsecured on the waters, but to allow creation to flourish, Indra had to fix it firmly to the bottom so it could no longer move. Secondly, it also had to be opened up or penetrated, to allow the locked-in creation to pour forth from out of it. But there was a strong force of resistance to both of these acts personified as the serpent Vṛtra, whose name literally means 'obstruction' or 'resistance'. Indra slew Vṛtra after a struggle, and

[10] F.B.J. Kuiper, *JHR*, 1975, 107–120.
[11] *ibid.*, 110.2

he managed to burst open the mountain, from which all creation then poured forth. Now the mountain spread on all sides until it became the whole expanse of the world. Indra then performed another very important cosmogonic act, by becoming for a while the pillar that props up the sky, which until then had been lying flat on the face of the earth.

The relevance of this myth to the *kīla* is revealed by Kuiper in a 1970 article. Kuiper writes:

> "Indra made (the mountain) firmly rooted in the bottom of the waters. Since this mountain was the cosmic centre, the central point of the earth, the whole earth thereby became firm and steady. Thus the cosmic mountain not only was the origin of the earth, but also came to function as the peg which secured the earth a firm support. This idea still survives in the later literature, where Mt Mandara (= the unmoving) as the cosmic pivot is called Indra's Peg (*Indrakīla*), and the concept of a mountain functioning as a peg is expressed by the term *kīlādri*."[12]

This myth, or something very like it, seems to be closely connected to the advent of the *kīla* as a popular symbol or motif in Indian religious thinking, and its various themes are repeated endlessly over the centuries in a wide variety of literary and ritual references, especially, as Kuiper points out, in the later literature.

Charles Malamoud says that *Indrakīla* features as the name of a mythical mountain in both the epics and the Purāṇas.[13] Other authors, such as Sørensen[14] and Lily de Silva,[15] also mention several epic citations of *Indrakīla* as a mythical or cosmic mountain.[16]

The modern Tibetan *phur-ba*, of course, is also invariably and ubiquitously associated with the Mt Meru or Mandara, both in liturgy and also sometimes in iconography. For example, even in a modern liturgy by bDud-'joms Rin-po-che, composed up to two or three thousand years after the formulation of these ancient myths, the deity Vajrakīla still "rolls the Mt Meru *kīla*" in his two central hands;[17] just as several modern Tibetan prints of this deity in my possession still depict

[12] F.B.J. Kuiper, *JHR*, 1970, 110.
[13] Personal communication, April 1989.
[14] S. Sørensen, *An Index to Names in Mahābhārata*, 1904, 341.
[15] L. de Silva, "The Symbolism of the Indrakīla in the Parittamaṇḍapa", *SSAC*, 1978, 241.
[16] *Mahābhārata*, 1.3.3; 1.18.112; 2.10.413; 3.37.1497; 3.38.30; 3.39.1562. See also *Śiva Purāṇa*, vol. 3, p.1233. (*Śatarudrasaṃhitā*, ch. 37, v. 651.)
[17] bDud-'joms Rin-po-che, n.p., n.d., blockprint, 3 fols. *dPal rDo-rje Phur-bu'i rgyun gyi rnal-'byor snying-por dril-ba*, fol. 1. See also R.A. Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1976–77, 610.

the top of the *kīla* as Mt Meru, instead of in its usual three-headed form indicating the deity. The 'rolling' of the *kīla* is clearly identified in Tibetan literature with the churning of the ocean with Mt Mandara, for Meru and Mandara are frequently or even usually conflated in Buddhist texts.

In the myth, the original Indrakīla mountain emerged from out of the waters, where it acted as a peg. In the same way, the Tibetan *kīla*'s three blades below are clearly designed as a peg. Mt Meru, writes Lily de Silva, is said in Buddhist cosmology to be submerged in the ocean to a depth of 84,000 *yojanas* and to rise above sea level to an exactly equal height.[18] Thus Tibetan *kīlas* are customarily made with their three-bladed lower pegging part, the equivalent of the submarine part of Mt Meru, exactly half their length. They then mark the sea level, at their mid-point, by the ornamentation of the top of the blade with a *makara*'s head, from the mouth of which *nāgas* pour down the length of the blade. These constitute standard and ubiquitous symbols of the ocean in Indian art.[19] Above the *makara* head, i.e. above sea level, rises the other half of the *kīla*, the eight-faceted shaft, which is equivalent to the different higher worlds and heavens of Meru. It is only in this upper part, says the *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis*, a Vajrakīla root tantra, that the enlightened deities dwell; while the lower three-bladed part is only to subjugate.[20] This is entirely appropriate, since the Indian gods live on the upper realms of Meru, not under the waters, where the *nāgas* dwell.

Indian temples, palaces, *maṇḍalas* and buildings in general were often conceptualized as a universe in microcosm. Little wonder then that in their construction, the first stage had to be the ritual stabilization of the building site with the astrological locating of the serpent below, and the pegging down of its head to stop it moving, in an apparently microcosmic reenactment of the macrocosmic mythology discussed above. This rite of *nāgabandha*, involving the use of a *kīla* both as a gnomon and a peg, is ubiquitous in the Indian *śilpaśāstras*.[21] R.A. Stein's attribution of it to an indigenous and traditional Tibetan "nameless religion" is quite improbable.[22] In the case of buildings, the *nāgabandha* was frequently done with a *kīla* made of *khadira* wood. But the sites for whole cities also had to be stabilized in the same way, and this seems to have sometimes been done with iron, as we hear in an old song about Delhi:

> "All above a polished shaft,
> All a piercing spike below.
> Where they marked the *nāga's* head,

[18] Lily de Silva, *op. cit.* 243.
[19] J.C. Irwin, "Aśokan Pillars: A Reassessment of the Evidence", *BM*, 1976, 737 ff.
[20] *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis*, ch. 10, p. 106. (This modern edition uses arabic numerals rather than the traditional folios.)
[21] See, for example, *Śilpaprakāśa*, 1, vv. 55–60.
[22] R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, Stanford, 1972, 203.

Deep the point was driven down…
Soon a castle clothed with might
Round the iron pillar clomb,
Soon a city… etc."

Unfortunately, when this particular great iron peg was moved by a malicious enemy, the subterranean serpent stirred and shook the earth with a disastrous earthquake.[23] Similar catastrophes are predicted if and when the *kīla* buried by Padmasambhava under bSam-yas in Tibet is moved.

Iron and *khadira*[24] are precisely the materials that are widely used by Tibetans in *phur-ba* manufacture to this day, and are recommended in a large number of Buddhist texts such as the *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis*[25] and the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* commentaries.[26] A similar but slightly different and less violent 'probing' of the *lto-'phye* or underground serpent's armpit, rather than head, but still requiring astrologers etc.,[27] and still based on Indian tantric literature, is described by Tibetan authors, for example Klong-chen-pa in his *Phyogs-bcu-mun-sel*[28] and mKhas-grub-rje in his *rGyud-sde-rnam-gzhag*.[29] Another simpler Tibetan equivalent, but still with Indian, is the rite of *sa bzung-ba*, or "holding the earth". To take an example of this from modern rNying-ma-pa ritual, the *sGrub-khog* of the *bDud-'joms bla-ma thugs-sgrub* says that a *kīla* must be inserted into the ground at the centre of the site where a *maṇḍala* is to be created, thus

[23] A.K. Coomaraswamy, "Symbolism of the Dome", *IHQ*, 1938, 18ff.; M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History, the Myth of the Eternal Return*, New York, 1959, 19.

[24] This hard wood, often identified with the thorny acacia catechu, is constantly associated in *Atharvanic* and thus also later literature as a material specially useful for all kinds of *abhicāra* and protection. These usages apparently derived from the *nirukta* or etymology, *khad* = devour. (See M. & J. Stutley, *Ancient Indian Magic and Folklore*, London, 1980, 117.) Although some Japanese scholars have been tempted to associate the thorny acacia as a prototype *kīla*, the textual ubiquity of the *khadira* makes such an identification unreliable.

[25] *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis*, ch. 10, 106.

[26] N. Iyanaga, "Récits de la soumission de Maheśvara par Trailokyavijaya", in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, vol. 3, MCB, Brussels, 1985, 686.

[27] Stephen Hodge has pointed out to us how, in some Chinese Buddhist texts, the procedures of establishing the site with *kīlas* can become quite complex, including such refinements as all the *nakṣatras* delineated by 28 *kīlas* around the central gnomonic *kīla*. R.A. Stein frequently mentions the *Kriyāsaṃgraha* and the *Vidyottamatantra* as especially detailed in these architectural uses of the *kīla* and also its use in other kriyās such as controlling the *nāgas* to make rain; *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1977, 1978, *passim*. The rites of *sīmabandha* and *nāgabandha* are complex enough to warrant an entire independent study. As far as I know, no such study has yet been made.

[28] Gyurme Dorje, "The Guhyagarbha-tantra and its Commentary", unpublished PhD thesis, SOAS, London, 1987, 1366 ff.

[29] F. Lessing & A. Wayman, *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, Delhi, 1983, 280.

"penetrating the earth and bringing the whole phenomenal world under control", before the construction of the sacred *maṇḍala* can begin.[30]

But if a building was to represent accurately a microcosm of the universe, it had also to demonstrate a reflection of the vertical, Mt Meru-like axial structure of the universe envisaged in traditional cosmology. According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, in many Hindu buildings, this would be represented by the empty vertical space within the central dome or chamber which had the *khadira* wood serpent-piercing *kīla* below, and a finial called a *yūpa* or *stūpikīla* directly above, at the highest point of the building. These two represented the top and bottom points of the central axis;[31] and thus while the insertion of the *kīla* for the *nāgabandha* rites ritually marked the very beginning of the building process, the rites for the insertion of the *stūpikīla* ritually celebrated its final completion, a kind of consecration.

The classic Indian architectural writings or *śilpaśāstras*, such as *Mānasāra* etc., give detailed instructions on the shape and ritual importance of the *stūpikīla* that went above. As to the shape, *Mānasāra* says:

> "the length (i.e. body) of the *kīla* is stated to be triangular, the base square, the middle part octagonal and the top circular.
>
> The width of the *kīla* at the top should be one *aṅgula*, and it tapers gradually from base to top."[32]

This shape is very reminiscent in conception to the modern Tibetan *kīla*, which also has a triangular length, i.e. blade, a square base, an octagonal central shaft, and a round top, often formed as the threefold deities' head that is usually its distinctively Buddhist emblem. *Mānasāra* adds that the *stūpikīla* should be made of *khadira* wood, iron or copper, again the materials favoured in the modern Tibetan *phur-ba*.[33]

Mānasāra devotes no less than seventy-eight verses to the ceremonial erection of the *stūpikīla*. This is a very major ritual occasion, requiring the presence of Brahmans and a highly complex ritual which, exactly as in many allegedly 'apocryphal' Tibetan rNying-ma-pa rites, includes the extensive worship of the *kīla* itself as the supreme deity, ornamenting it by attaching cloths and leaves, honouring it with many precious offerings and circumambulations, the performance of a *homa*, and so on.[34] The celebration of this ritual is said to be

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[30] Page 6, line 6. See C. Cantwell, "An Ethnographic Account of the Religious Practice in a Tibetan Buddhist Refugee Monastery in Northern India", unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent, Canterbury, 1989, ch. 5, 1.2.
[31] A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, 18–19.
[32] *Mānasāra*, viii, vv. 147–9; see P.K. Acharya, *Architecture of Mānasāra*, Oxford, 1933, 205 ff.
[33] *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis*, ch. 10, 106.
[34] *Mānasāra*, viii, vv. 340–418. See P.K. Acharya, *op. cit.*, 217 ff.

absolutely indispensable to the success of the building project and the wellbeing of all those involved in it and of the whole community. The *stūpikīla*, after all, represents the pinnacle of the cosmic axis or Mt Meru, the palace of Indra or the highest gods, rising up above from the serpent- piercing *kīla* down below. Extremely similar passages are found in other *śilpaśāstras*, for example in the *Śilpaprakāśa*, where, significantly, the word *yūpa* is substituted for *kīla*; and in *Mayamata* where the finial is called a *sthūpikākīla*.[35] In the *Ajitāgama* and *Rauravāgama*, the words *stūpikīla* or *stūpidaṇḍa* are favoured.

Mānasāra and other *śilpaśāstras* mention that the middle part of the *stūpikīla* should be octagonal. This feature is a universal requirement in all standard Tibetan *phur-bas*,[36] and is very widespread in the extensive Pāli sources on the *indrakīla*. However, it does not seem to derive from the myth of Indra slaying Vṛtra and allowing the world to come into being. Instead, it is apparently derived from the other Vedic notion that is so central to the form of the modern Tibetan *phur-ba*, namely, the important ritual implement called a *yūpa*, which was a sacrificial post to which animals were tied in Vedic sacrifices. As Lily de Silva has attempted to show, at the latest by the time of the Pāli texts, the *yūpa* and the *indrakīla* were apparently conflated.[37] It is certainly not entirely clear to me as yet exactly how and when this process began, whether it was already so in Vedic times or not. It is not impossible that they were identified with one another from the start. Jan Gonda feels that on the basis of his readings of the *Atharvaveda* and its commentarial *sūtra* the *Kauśika*, he can see a clear functional identification of the *yūpa* as the *axis mundi*, and that it was considered "essentially identical with the fulcrum or pillar of the universe". Hence its conceptualization would have been very close to that of the *indrakīla* in many ways.[38] Likewise, he writes, "the *yūpa* is considered a thunderbolt (*vajra*) standing erect as a weapon against the enemy. The erection of the *yūpa* destroys evil and the powers of darkness."[39] This too is one of the functions of Indra's feats with the *kīla*. In another context, Gonda writes "the *yūpa* sustains the components of the universe; all existence has entered it; being the frame of creation, it enters the thousandfold aspect and components of the universe."[40] Noting that the *yūpa* was frequently associated with Viṣṇu in Vedic texts, he adds:

> "It seems to be in perfect harmony with the character of the god Viṣṇu that the *yūpa* should belong to him. Traversing the parts of the universe and linking these, and especially the sun and the earth, forming the

[35] See *Śilpaprakāśa*, 2, vv. 68–692; and *Mayamata*, vol. 2, ch. 18.
[36] *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis*, ch. 10, 106.
[37] de Silva, *op. cit.*, 244–246.
[38] J. Gonda, *The Savayajñas*, Amsterdam, 1965, 230.
[39] *ibid.*, 147.
[40] J.Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, Delhi, 1969, 81–2.

> mystic centre of the cosmos, being the path which leads to the upper regions, the sacrificial stake and other objects in connection with it belong to the god who pervades the universe, is concerned with the transmission of light to the earth, etc."[41]

Margeret Stutley describes the *yūpa* as "an intermediary between the divine world and earthly life" and points out "the consecrated *yūpa* is included among the *āprī* deities, i.e., the deified objects used at the sacrifice". She adds:

> "sometimes the *yūpa* consisted of three stakes, either bound together or tied at one end to form a tripod… the *yūpa* is usually octagonal and likened to an eight-sided *vajra*, and hence was believed to protect the sacrificer against his enemies from all sides… if the sacrificer desires to cause the death of an enemy he should set up a *yūpa* on a base shaped like a grave, one end sloping to the south… the various portions of the *yūpa* are symbolically differentiated; the base belongs to the *pitṛs*, above that, as far as the girdle, to men; the girdle itself to plants; above it to the Viśvadevas; the top to Indra; the rest to the Sādhyas."[42]

Nevertheless, despite such obvious similarities between the *kīla* and the *yūpa*, there is no explicit lexical identification of the two in Vedic literature as far as I know. But their formal assimilation is eventually, according to de Silva, made clear in a number of Sinhalese and Pāli sources, where the merged *yūpa-kīla* is in some forms described as a Brahmanical object and in others as a Buddhist object. Most other modern authors, for example J. Irwin and J. Miller, tend to identify the *yūpa* with Mt Mandara or the Indrakīla.[43]

Although an entire hymn is devoted to it in the *Ṛgveda*, where it is addressed as a deity,[44] it is from the *Yajurveda* and the *Brāhmaṇas* that we learn most about the *yūpa*. In these texts, we read again and again that the *yūpa* must always be eight-faceted in its shaft, "because the *gāyatrī* has eight syllables."[45] We also learn that at navel height above the ground, the *yūpa* must always be girdled with a three-fold rope girdle wound from *kuśa* grass, to which the sacrificial victim is to be tied.[46] Both these items, the eight-faceted shaft and the knotted rope, are standard features of the Tibetan *phur-ba* to this day, as they were standard features of the *yūpa* or *indrakīla* in ancient Sinhalese *stūpa* architecture, as we shall see. The knot and eight-faceted shaft have of course had to be totally reinterpreted in Buddhism,

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[41] *ibid.* 83.
[42] M. & J. Stutley, *A Dictionary of Hinduism*, 1977, 351.
[43] Most of Irwin's writings present this theme. See also J. Miller, "The Myth of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk", in P. Connolly, ed., *Perspectives of Indian Religion*, Delhi, 1986, 72.
[44] *Ṛgveda*, 3.8.
[45] See, for example, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 5.2.1.8, SBE vol. 41, 31; etc.
[46] A.B. Keith, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School*, 1914, 516–520.

since neither the *gāyatrī* nor animal sacrifice have any place there. But the main mythical and symbolic meanings of the *yūpa* remain remarkably little changed in modern Vajrayāna ritual, since these were from the start more general and less specifically Vedic in nature.

The basic ritual meaning of the *yūpa* was twofold. On the one hand, it served as the pathway to the gods, and as the conduit by which the essence of the sacrifice rose up to the gods.[47] Thus the *Yajurveda* says "the *yūpa* is connected with all the gods; verily in setting up the post he delights all the gods".[48]

We read in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, in Eggeling's translation, that at the climax of an important sacrifice called the *Vājapeya*, a ladder is leant against the *yūpa* and the sacrificer and his wife mount the post. As they climb, the sacrificer says "we have become Prajāpati's children." As he touches the top, he says "we have gone to the light, O ye gods!" Then he finally stands on the top, and says "we have become immortal", whereby he wins the world of the gods. He mutters, "ours be your power, ours your manhood and intelligence, ours be your energies."[49]

But it was precisely this function of opening the pathway to the gods that gave to the *yūpa* its other basic ritual meaning; which, paradoxically, was the diametric opposite, namely to block the pathway to the gods.

In his recent book, *Cuire le Monde*, Charles Malamoud analyses the mythology that gives rise to the *yūpa's* paradoxical double function. The myth is that in earliest times, the gods themselves were the first to discover that they could attain heaven by means of the sacrifice. Wanting to remain exclusive possessors of this unique advantage, they plotted to deprive mankind of any knowledge of their wonderful new discovery. According to the *Aitereya Brāhmaṇa* (following Levi and Malamoud's translation):

> "By means of the sacrifice, the gods raised themselves straight up to the celestial realms. They became worried, thinking "When they catch sight of this heaven, which belongs to us, the humans and the Ṛṣis will want to follow in our footsteps." So they made an obstacle (*ayopayan*) with the sacrificial post; and it is for this reason that the post is called *yūpa*. They came down again, and fixed the *yūpa* upside down, with its tip pointing downward, and then they disappeared straight up again into heaven.
>
> Then the men and the Ṛṣis arrived at the site where the gods had made their sacrifice. 'Let us look for anything that could be a clue to this sacrifice!' they cried. But they couldn't find anything except the upside down *yūpa* post. They perceived that by this post, the gods had blocked

[47] See, for example, C. Malamoud, *Cuire le monde, Paris*, 1989, 248 ff.
[48] *Black Yajurveda* 6.3.3–4; A.B. Keith, *op. cit.*, 519 ff.
[49] SBE, vol. 41, 31.

> the path of the sacrifice. So they dug it out, and re-erected it the right way up, with its point towards the top. Thus they became able to see where the celestial realms were. If in the sacrifice offered nowadays by men the post is stood with its point upwards, this is in order to recognize the route of the sacrifice, to reveal in which direction lies the celestial realms."[50]

Malamoud continues by explaining the puns on the word *yūpa* found in this and several similar passages of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the *Yajurveda*. According to traditional analysis, the word *yūpa* can clearly be derived from the verbal root *yup*, understood in the sense of 'to obstruct', of which the word *ayopayan*, "they made an obstacle", is the causative imperfect. But discernable in the background are two other opposed meanings: *yu* 'to unite' and *yu* 'to separate'. These, writes Malamoud, are the functions of the post: it serves as the passage from the earth to the celestial realms, when it is standing point upwards; but it prevents this connection when it is placed point down.[51] Another understanding of the pun can render the causative of the root *yup* as 'disperse' or 'eliminate the traces of.' Thus another variant of the myth of the *yūpa* occurs in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 3, 1.4.3. According to Malamoud's French translation, it goes as follows:

> "It is by means of the sacrifice that the gods conquered this conquest which is their conquest. They said to themselves: 'How to make it impossible for the humans to ascend to this wellbeing which is ours?' They sucked up the sap of the sacrifice as bees suck honey, and when they had thus drawn out all the milk of the sacrifice, they took the sacrificial post (*yūpa*) and used it to efface the traces (*ayopayan*) of the sacrifice, and then they disappeared."

It is from these myths, ultimately, that the two major functions of the modern Tibetan *phur-ba* derive. The *phur-ba*, like the *yūpa*, serves both as a direct conduit to the sacred expanse, especially of a magically 'slain victim', and also as a boundary marker keeping the unsuitable out of the sacred arena.

The first of these occurs in the rite known as *sgrol* in Tibetan and *mokṣa* in Sanskrit, meaning 'liberation by killing.' This important rite, especially ubiquitous among the rNying-ma-pa, involves the 'liberation', i.e. the 'stabbing to death' with a *phur-ba*, of a *liṅga* or effigy of a Hindu deity dubbed Matraṅgara Rudra.[52]

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[50] C. Malamoud, *op. cit.*, 248–9.
[51] *ibid.*
[52] This means 'Rudra the Mothereater' and is a satirical Buddhist play on the Hindu myth of Rudra's parthenogenesis, i.e. his being born of the seed of all the gods but with no mother. On the contrary, say the Buddhists, Rudra did have a mother—a prostitute who had copulated with numerous demons—but he ate her up as soon as he was born, so giving the illusion of being motherless, and thus should properly be regarded as a demonic mother-eating bastard, not a divine god as the Śaivas believe. At least, this is my interpretation of the myth. R.A. Stein, however, sees *matraṃgara* as a corruption of *mataṅgi*. See *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1972; 1971, 2, 505.

For unlike the more ecumenical Newar Buddhists, who see Rudra as a form of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, in Tibet this Hindu deity of impurity and destruction nearly always only functioned as the Buddhist 'devil'. The rite of *sgrol* is most frequently performed at the *tshogs*, or *gaṇacakra* ritual. The implication of it is that the ignorant or demonic consciousness identified with the effigy of Rudra, whether one's own or someone else's, becomes liberated into the pure land or *dharmadhātu* of wisdom by this 'forceful' method. Stephan Beyer[53] quotes a typical liturgical example from a rNying-ma-pa *gaṇacakra pūjā*:

> "…the Vajra Kīla!
> He casts down like hail.
> He is quick like lightning.
> Planted in the heart's centre
> Of those to be 'liberated'…
> Out through the *kīla*
> Is drawn their awareness
> And flung to the Heart of Padmasambhava,
> The depths of all-beneficent intention. Ah!"

The *Black Yajurveda*[54] describes animal sacrifice in very similar terms. The animal is said to give its consent to die, while tied to the *yūpa*, because its consciousness will rise from there straight up to the heavens. Likewise, in the *Ṛgveda*, the sacrificial animal is told: "Truly you do not die, you do not suffer harm. By paths easy to traverse, you go to the gods".[55] In this Buddhist version too, the practitioner gives his consent that his spiritual negativities and egotism shall be 'sacrificed', represented by the form of a Rudra-like dough effigy, precisely because, like the animal victim of the Vedic sacrifice, his consciousness too will be drawn through the *yūpa*-like *phur-ba*, straight to the Pure Land or 'Heart' of Padmasambhava; although of course the Buddhist rite is merely a symbolic daily liturgy, not a genuine blood sacrifice like the Vedic rite. Beyer continues:

> "The Master plants his *kīla* in the hearts of the demons, slaying their bodies and liberating their awareness to the Pure Land of Padmasambhava. Then the assembly offers up the 'corpses' of the evil spirits as food."

[53] S. Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā*, Berkeley, 1973, 316.
[54] A.B. Keith, *op. cit.*, 526, n. 6.
[55] *Ṛigveda*, 1.162.21, quoted in M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, 149. This was why sacrificial animals in both Brahmanic and Zoroastrian rituals had to be conscious at the time of death.

This is then divided up by a complex process and eaten. Similarly, at a Vedic sacrifice, while the spirit of the animal went up to the gods, its body remained behind to be divided up as food, after a complex system of division.

In this way we can see that the sacrificial allusions implicit in the *yūpa*-like form of the Tibetan *phur-ba* are highly appropriate. Indeed, it is not at all impossible that they were originally intended to be quite explicit. It seems indisputable that Buddhist *kāpālika* ritual is calqued upon Śaiva prototypes, and animal sacrifice and even human sacrifice were undoubtedly standard features in Śaiva ritual, where victims were offered daily, as a part of the *bali* offerings, to the great patron deity of Śaiva tantrism, Rudra, or his entourage of *kāpālika* gods.[56] Such rites were seen as particularly offensive by Buddhists, hence in parrallel Buddhist Mahāyoga ritual, the same theme of blood sacrifice is continued symbolically in the equivalent *bali* and *gaṇacakra* sections of the Buddhist rite, but completely and totally inverted. Now Rudra is not only hoisted on his own petard, he is sacrificed at his own *yūpa* or *kīla* and served up as food to the Buddhist *Herukas* who consume Rudra, digest him, and thus render him and all his perverted Hindu *kāpālika* ways beneficial. Thus the esoteric Vajrayāna or Buddhist *kāpālikaism* is born of a sacrifice—the sacrifice of the evil Hindu deity Rudra at his own sacrificial stake by the victorious Buddhist *Herukas*—and this great event repeated and celebrated daily in the Mahāyoga *gaṇacakra pūjā*s or *bali* rituals. It is the macrocosmic counterpart to the microcosmic transformation of the individual practitioner's spiritual negativities, and goes a long way to explain the centrality of the sacrificial implement, the *kīla*, as a symbol in Mahāyoga ritual and texts. Indeed, this topsy-turvy theme pervades all Mahāyoga ritual, which consistently turns the world of extreme *kāpālika* Śaiva ritual upside down, outwardly adopting its most transgressive elements while inverting all its meanings to a morality acceptable to Mahāyāna Buddhism.[57] The consistent precision and accuracy with which rNying-ma-pa ritual colonizes, digests and inverts the extreme *kāpālika* cults deriving ultimately from the Hindu deity Rudra suggests very strongly indeed a Sanskritic origin for rNying-ma-pa

[56] See S. Gupta et al., *Hindu Tantrism*, Delhi, 1979, 152–3.

[57] This interpretation of the use of the *yūpa*-like *phur-ba* to sacrifice an effigy of Rudra in the daily *gaṇacakra* practice is entirely my own. Nevertheless, I feel it is well supported by readings of all the classic Mahāyoga texts such as the *Guhyagarbha-tantra* (ch. 15 especially) and the *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis* and is made well-nigh totally explicit in numerous ritual manuals. Cantwell ("An Ethnographic Account of the Religious Practice in a Tibetan Buddhist Refugee Monastery in Northern India", 180; and glossary, 53) shows also how the 'red' or symbolically bloody *gtor-ma* offerings of Mahāyoga Buddhism are always construed, ultimately, as being parts of Rudra's sacrificed corpse, representing the practitioner's negativities. Contrast this with the exactly equivalent actually bloody *bali* offerings of Śaiva ritual, where, far from being the victim, it is Rudra who demands and receives the blood offerings. I am publishing a paper on this theme in the near future.

scriptures. This applies not only to the *phur-ba* tradition, but also to all aspects of rNying-ma-pa religion.[58]

It is therefore obvious that it is not only the Buddhist tantras that have such rites of 'liberation' by means of the *kīla*. For example, the *Vīṇāśikha-tantra*, the sole remaining text of the once widespread *Vāmasrota* of Śaiva tantrism,[59] contains such a rite. Here a *kīla* made of human bone is planted in the genitals of a *liṅga*,[60] and when it is drawn out again, the being represented by the *liṅga* will become 'liberated' (*mokṣam*), i.e. 'die'. Similar references occur in several other Hindu tantras.[61] There is not always indication here of the *kīla* being triangular in shape, but according to Goudriaan, in some texts this is made explicit—for example, in the *Tantrasārasaṃgraha* of Nārāyaṇa, ritual killing or eradication is effected with a triangular *kīla* made of *nimba* wood. So also in an identical stanza in the *Íśānaśivagurudevapaddhati*, and in several other texts.[62] However, Goudriaan makes no mention of whether or not such Hindu tantric *kīlas* have an eight-sided shaft. Unfortunately, human and animal sacrifice have almost become proscribed subjects for modern Indologists, and the standard reference works on tantrism often give few details. It is therefore hard to ascertain if the *kīla* or *yūpa* was the usual implement of tantric blood sacrifice, although we know without doubt that it was the standard implement of Vedic blood sacrifice.

The second mythical purpose of the *yūpa*, its function as the marker of sacred boundaries, is equally ubiquitous in Tibetan Vajrayāna's use of it's *yūpa*-like *phur-ba*. In Tibetan tantrism, ten *phur-bas* are customarily placed, or visualized, around the periphery of a *maṇḍala* to prevent unwanted forces from entering. This rite is found, for example, in the lower tantras of Kriyā and Caryā; thus Tsong-kha-pa writes in his *sNgags-rim-chen-mo*:

> "The *Susiddhi-tantra* explains that the fierce (deity) Kilikīla is always associated with the fence, latticework and *kīlas* surrounding the house in the sense of abiding there as protection."[63]

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[58] Compare, for example, the one-eyed, one-haired, jackal-emanating rNying-ma-pa protectress Ekajaṭī with her almost identical twin of the same name in the *Kālikāpurāṇa*, 63, 62, and the ubiquitous Śaiva tradition of regarding jackals (*śivā*) as emanations of the *śakti*. Or compare the frequent occurrence of that Sanskritic literary *cliché*, the cuckoo, *kokila*, in the name of rDzogs-chen texts. Only by an unfortunate ignorance of Sanskrit literature have Tibetologists been able to persist for decades in construing these as autochtonous Tibetan developments.

[59] T. Goudriaan & S. Gupta, *Hindu Tantric and Śakta Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1981, 16.

[60] H. Brunner-Lachaux, *IIJ*, 31, 3, 1988, 248.

[61] T. Goudriaan, *Māyā, Divine and Human*, Delhi, 1978, 263, 374 ff.

[62] T. Goudriaan, *op. cit.*, 374; personal communication, 23 Jan 1990.

[63] J. Hopkins, *The Yoga of Tibet*, 1981, 100. See also R.A. Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France*, *passim*.

Similarly, it is found in such *anuttara* traditions as Yamāntaka, Cakraśaṃvara, and Sampuṭa,[64] and also of course in the Mahāyoga and Tibetan *gter-ma* traditions. For example, Cathy Cantwell gives the following example from the same rNying-ma-pa *gter-ma* ritual we have mentioned above in connection with the earth-holding rite: here, a protective circle of ten *phur-bas* are ritually hammered into receptacles set in the ground at the ten directions all around the periphery of the *maṇḍala*, prior to setting up the main *maṇḍala* of the rite. These *phur-bas* constitute the 'secret ' or most esoteric aspect of marking the boundaries of the sacred *maṇḍala*, the abode of the Vajrayāna deities. "Having performed this ritual", Cantwell writes, "the boundaries were protected so that people could not 'come and go'."

Again, this commonplace Tibetan use of the Vajrayāna *phur-ba* makes perfect sense in terms of the original myth of the *yūpa*; here, the deities inhabiting the sacred Vajrayāna *maṇḍala* want to keep out profane influences, and they do this by marking their boundaries with *yūpa*-like *phur-bas*, thus excluding the uninitiated and the unsuitable, just as the Vedic gods of the myth used the *yūpa* to try to keep the humans and the *ṛṣis* at bay.

Needless to say, Hindu texts also describe the use of *kīlas* as markers and protectors of ritual or sacred boundaries of various kinds, although in modern ritual it is often only simple sticks or bamboos that are used. Older textual examples are a little more elaborate. One can quote the *Tantrasamuccaya* of Nārāyaṇa, where pegs, this time called *śaṅkus*, are employed. Likewise, the *Somaśambhupaddhati* describes the use of four *kīlakas* to protect the funeral pyre, the *Kālottara* prescribes twelve *kīlas* to protect the *maṇḍapa*, and the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* has a ritual to protect a site or field from all kinds of harm, especially from thunderbolts and explosions, by the enclosing of the site with eight *kīlas* made from *khadira* wood. If Garuḍa's *mantras* are recited over the *kīlas*, the site is said to become inviolable.[65] But S.C. Banerjee, a contemporary author, describes the use of *kīlakas* merely as 'small sticks'.[66]

Of course, both these aspects of the *yūpa* myth, the aspect of opening up the path to the gods and the aspect of blocking the path to them, are interrelated. A palace door, after all, can both open and close. There are numerous references in

[64] For Anuttaratantra examples, see Kazi Dawa Samdup, *The Śrīcakrasaṃbhara Tantra*, London & Calcutta, 1919, 13 ff., as quoted in K. Dowman, *Skydancer*, 350, n. 29; also, *Vajrāvalī*, 33–37 and *Kriyāsamuccaya*, 77–79. Also D. Gellner's unpublished DPhil thesis, 455. For *gter-ma* examples, see C. Cantwell's thesis, section 5.1.5.3. Bulcu Sikl—s has also shown me three instances of *kīla* rites in the tantras connected with Vajrabhairava, where killing is the most notable theme.

[65] *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, ch. 20, vv. 8–10, p. 82; *Tantrasamuccaya*, Part 1, 7–9; H. Brunner-Lachaux, *Somaśambhupaddhati*, Part 3, Pondichéry, 1977, 592.

[66] S.C. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 560.

the Pāli sources of the conflated *yūpa-kīla* serving such palace gate like functions, generally marking the boundary between a more exclusive and a less exclusive space in ancient Indian town planning and architecture.

A.K.Warder translates the Pāli word *indakhīlo* as "royal stake, marking the royal threshold."[67] He adds, " Inda is the name of the king of the gods, hence a title for any king". Lily de Silva elaborates:

> "*Indakhīla*, although explained in the commentaries as *ummāra*, 'threshold', is never used for any and every threshold. It only means a threshold to a settlement [a city or village] under regal authority or to a king's household. *Pācittiya* rule no. 83 clearly states that if a monk, not announced beforehand, crosses the threshold (*indakhīla*) of an annointed king, he is guilty of an offence of expiation. (*Vinaya*, vol. 4, p. 160) Here, *indakhīla* is annotated as 'the threshold of the sleeping room'. (*ibid.*) 'Sleeping room means: there wherever the king's bed is made ready, even if it is only surrounded by a screen wall (*sānipākāra*)'. (*ibid.*) Therefore the *indakhīla* can be conclusively established as a 'royal stake marking the royal threshold'."[68]

In her scholarly article, Lily de Silva has reviewed much of the Pāli literature on the *indrakīla*. We can do no better than to quote at length from her research:

> "In the canonical literature the *indrakīla* is sometimes referred to as *esikā* or *esikātthambha*. According to the *Mahāsudassana-sutta* the prosperous city of Kusavati had as many as seven *esikā* wrought of gold, silver, beryl, crystal, agate, coral, and all kinds of gems, standing at each of the city gates. Its commentary explains that these pillars, as tall as 15 or 20 cubits, were erected at each and every doorpost of the city gates. The *Dīgha-Aṭṭhakathā-īka* identifies them as *indrakīla*. A passage in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* speaks of an *esik* which stands in the frontier city of the kingdom, and it is said to be deeply embedded, well dug in, immovable and unshakeable. The commentary on this passage furnishes us with the following excellent description of an *esikā*:
>
> > 'The *esikātthambha* is made of bricks, stone, or some hard well seasoned timber like *khadira*. When it is erected for protection, it is planted outside the city, for ornamentation it is planted inside the city. When constructing it with bricks, a large deep pit is dug and filled with bricks up to the ground level, and above ground level it is made octagonal in shape and it is painted white. It is polished and painted to such perfection that when elephants rub their tusks

[67] A K Warder, *Introduction to Pāli*, London, 1963, 363.
[68] de Silva, *op. cit.*, 239.

against it, the paint does not chip off. Stone pillars are also octagonal in shape. If the pillars are 8 cubits high, 4 cubits are embedded underground and 4 cubits remain visible above ground. It is the same with pillars 16 or 20 cubits high. In all cases half the length of the pillar remains buried underground and half remains visible above ground. They stand in a zig-zag pattern (*gomuttavaṅkā*). Therefore it is possible to utilize the space in between them for some purpose by flanking them with timber [?*padaracayaṃ katvā*] These pillars are decorated with beautiful drawings and flags are hoisted on them.'

It is interesting to note that these pillars constitute one of the security measures of the city, for they form a sort of fortress for "protecting the inmates and for warding off danger from outside". In other words, with these defence measures the king assures safety for his subjects living within the kingdom demarcated by these limits, and outsiders dare not cross this border without provoking offence… Therefore it is possible to conclude that the *indrakīla* is a royal symbol generally set up at the entrance to places where the king's authority must be recognized. From this survey of Pāli literary sources we can finally define the *indrakīla* as a firm pillar which stands as a symbol of royal authority at the entrance to a city, village or palace."[69]

De Silva continues with a survey of the Sinhalese literary references to the *indrakīla*. While noting that most of the Sinhalese sources merely confirm what was already written in the Pāli sources, she found that both Sinhalese and Indian Tamil sources made one significant addition to the Pāli sources. They furnish conclusive evidence of the practice of worshipping the *indrakīla* in the manner that an image of a deity is worshipped.[70] She quotes, for example, the Sinhalese *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*[71] which says that "even though small children dirty the *indrakīla* erected at the city gates by putting rubbish on it, discreet ones offer incense and flowers to it". Similarly, the third or fourth-century Tamil poem, the *Garland of Madurai* says, according to Basham, that

"the poet enters the city by its great gates, the posts of which are carved with images of the goddess Lakṣmī, and which are grimy with ghee, poured in oblation upon them to bring safety and prosperity to the city they guard."[72]

De Silva adds:

[69] *ibid.*, 240.
[70] *ibid.*, 242.
[71] *ibid.*, 242.
[72] A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, London, 1954, 203.

> "In Pāli literature, the idea of deities residing in the *dvārakoṭhaka* of cities, and in palaces of kings and *setthi* is quite common. These deities ward off disaster as is revealed by the *Kāliyakkinnīvatthu* of the *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā*, and they sometimes even try to advise the inmates of the household under their care. They are occasionally propitiated even with human sacrifices. Now the *dvārakoṭṭhaka* and *indrakīla* are component parts of city gates and are so accepted even in the *Abhidānappadīpikā*. We can therefore surmise that the idea of deities residing in *dvārakoṭṭhaka* may have been the historical antecedent of the *indrakīla* being regarded as an object of worship."[73]

Like Mt Meru, de Silva writes,[74] these *indrakīlas* of the Pāli sources must be embedded in the ground to a depth equal to the part appearing above ground. In this way, the *kīla* is identified with Mt Meru, on the top of which, of course, lies Indra's paradise. Like the *yūpa*, it must be eight faceted. And the *yūpa* too has Indra's paradise situated at its top, according to all the sources in the *Yajurveda* and the *Brāhmaṇas*. Thus the conflated *yūpa-kīla*, known usually as an *indrakīla*, can fulfil its functions as boundary marker. It symbolises the pathway between the human realms at its base, and Indra's realm at its top.

Connected with the *indrakīla* as ritual boundary marker is its more prosaic function as a gate bolt, i.e. as the firm stake set in the ground at the middle of the gateway to which the two doors are then fastened to keep them closed. Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* describes the *indrakīla* thus in the context of a discussion of fortress construction.[75] Similar references to the *indrakīla* as gate bolts occur in Buddhist Sanskrit texts such as the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Mahāvastu* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*.[76] But we can see that the *indrakīla* is in these sources no ordinary doorbolt; for apparently when the Buddha treads on it, on first entering a particular city, the whole earth shakes and roars. Here the *indrakīla* as doorbolt seems to be a paradigm of immovability and stability.

It is from ancient Buddhist Sanskrit and Pāli architectural sources that we find further evidence of the conflation of the *yūpa* and the *indrakīla*. The *Divyāvadāna* describes how a pillar called a *yūpa* should always be set up as the central axial column within a *stūpa's* dome.[77] This is reminiscent of the erection of *yūpas* as a magical device by Brahmans, attested in the Pāli sources.[78] Paranavitana,[79] working on archaeological sites in Ceylon, found in exact accordance with the

[73] de Silva, *op. cit.*, 242.
[74] de Silva, *op. cit.*, 243.
[75] *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, 2.3.36.
[76] Quoted in de Silva, 241, note 53.
[77] Quoted in de Silva, *op. cit.*, 247.
[78] *Jātaka*, vol. 6, 211–214. Quoted in de Silva, 245.
[79] S. Paranavitana, *The Stūpa in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1947, 35–39.

Divyāvadāna, that large stone pillars, eight faceted and with the *yūpa's* knotted rope carved at the appropriate place, were indeed characteristic of ancient Sinhalese *stūpa* sites. John Irwin has assembled evidence to show that by now decayed wooden *yūpas* might well have existed as the axial columns of many other ancient *stūpas* too. But Paranavitana reported that the modern Sinhalese monks always identify these vast stone *yūpas* as *indrakīlas*. In their eyes, the two items had apparently become totally conflated. As the Hindu equivalent to these earlier Buddhist structures, the *śilpaśāstras*' *stūpikīlas* also had the 8-faceted characteristic of the *yūpa*, but also bore the name *kīla* in some texts and the name *yūpa* in others.

The most important contemporary use of the *kīla* in the Theravāda tradition is surely its function as a central feature of the *paritta* ceremony. De Silva writes,

> "The *indrakīla* is a special ceremonial post which enjoys pride of place in the *parittamaṇḍapa*. It is traditionally erected for all 7-day *paritta* ceremonies, and sometimes for over-night ceremonies as well."[80]

The very popular *paritta* ceremony is used, as its name implies, to give protection from diseases and other such misfortunes, and although it largely involves the recitation of a set of particular canonical Pāli scriptures, its function is decidedly apotropeic. The association of the *kīla* as a central feature of this most important of Theravāda Buddhist protection rituals is entirely consonant with the Vajrayāna Buddhist notion of the *kīla* as the most powerful and favoured of specifically protective ritual implements. Like his Sinhalese monastic counterpart, the contemporary Tibetan *phur-ba* expert is frequently called out to use his Vajrakīla rituals to protect the laity from disease and misfortune; yet, like the *paritta* ceremony, the Tibetan Vajrakīla rituals are very explicitly Buddhist in nature, not merely magical. Likewise, in the *parittamaṇḍapa*, the *kīla* is associated with the cosmic central axis as the *bodhimaṇḍa* at Bodhgaya, the place where the Buddha became enlightened. In the same way, the Tibetan *phur-ba* is esoterically associated with the cosmic axis as the esoteric *bodhimaṇḍa*, i.e. the central channel in yoga, the place where the tantric yogin becomes enlightened.

In conclusion, we can see that the myths of Indra slaying Vṛtra and the important Vedic ritual device, the *yūpa*, gave rise to a wide range of ritual developments over subsequent millennia. In this very preliminary survey, necessarily only a small fraction of them have been mentioned. Nevertheless, as we can see, Lily de Silva concluded from her detailed study of the Pāli sources that the *kīla* and the *yūpa* became conflated at some stage.

In support of her conclusions, we can cite not only the *śilpaśāstras*, where *yūpa* and *kīla* are interchangeable terms for the same item, but we can add that the Tibetan *phur-ba*, of which she was apparently entirely ignorant, both in its

[80] de Silva, *op. cit.*, 234.

iconographical forms as well as in its ritual meanings, appears also very accurately to embody all the important aspects of both the *indrakīla* proper and the *yūpa*. And if the Tibetan *phur-ba* too seems to embody these two uniquely Indian devices of *kīla* and *yūpa*, this tends to suggest an Indian rather than Tibetan origin for it. Since its precise form seems to have close counterparts in the *stūpikīla* described by *Mānasāra* and other texts, and in the triangular *kīla* of some Hindu tantras, the probability is therefore strong that the Tibetan *phur-ba* or *kīla* as we know it is a product of Indian culture. Every detail of its shape is apparently accountable for from Indian sources. Its eight-faceted shaft ornamented with knotted ropes derives ultimately from the Vedic *yūpa*, and precisely parallels the later *yūpa* or *kīla* of South Indian and Sinhalese religious architecture, both Hindu and Buddhist. Its tripartite base is found both in a variety of *śilpaśāstras*, and in Hindu tantric rites of magical eradication or killing. One might strongly surmise that something very like it was used in Śaiva human and animal sacrifice at the great Brahmanic temples (but information on this is hard to find because such sacrifices have become virtually a taboo subject among contemporary Indologists). Its *makara* ornaments half-way along its length, at the junction between the triangular blade and the eight-faceted shaft, with the *nāgas* extending down the blade, are consonant with the conceptualization in Indian Buddhist cosmology of Meru as semi-submerged, and perhaps also find a further Indic counterpart in the related and frequent practice of conceiving ritual pillars of many descriptions as rising out of mythical oceans.

If no physical survivals of Indian Buddhist *kīlas* of the so-called Tibetan model have come down to us, this can perhaps be attributed to the rusting of iron, or the rotting of *khadira* wood; or, more likely, to an insufficient search. After all, no tantric Buddhist *kīlas* of any type whatsoever have come down to us from India, as far as I and the learned staff of our larger museums know. Yet not even the most conservative scholars have doubted that such items must have existed in India, widely attested as they are in a wide range of Buddhist tantric texts of all classes, including such Kriyā texts as the *Susiddhi-tantra* etc., Caryā texts such as the *Vajrapāṇyabhiṣeka* etc., Yoga texts such as the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* etc., Mahāyoga texts such as the *Guhyasamāja* etc., and Anuttara texts such as the *Cakraśaṃvara tantras*. The use of the single-bladed *kīla* continues to this day among the followers of the undoubtedly 'canonical' *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* in Japan. Yet if none even of these has turned up in our museums from Indian sources, why should we expect the three-bladed *yūpa*-like variety of the Mahāyoga texts to have fared any better?

Finally, and most importantly, the widespread opinion that the triangular-bladed Tibetan *phur-ba* is unattested in Indian Vajrayāna texts is quite possibly mistaken. Even if we are, like some contemporary Western scholars, to unquestioningly and

uncritically follow a few ultra-radical strands of a later Tibetan (or was it Manchu?) minority tradition[81] and accept the extreme and completely unanalysed and unproven assumption that all the Bon and rNying-ma-pa tantras without exception are (or are considered by the tradition to be) apocryphal forgeries, nevertheless even R.A. Stein mentions three 'canonically' accepted texts, the *Vajramālā-tantra* and the *Heruka-tantra* and a *Mahākāla-sādhana* by Vararuci, transmitted by Siddha Śavaripā,[82] all of which, he says, describe the *kīla* in exactly the form that the Tibetans use it. The *Vajramālā-tantra* is an explanatory tantra of the *Guhyasamāja*, and thus much favoured by the dGe-lugs-pa school, which might explain why they too favour a three-bladed *phur-ba*. We can probably expect more such references to be discovered in the future. However, so entrenched has become the notion of the 'Tibetan' *phur-ba* as a Tibetan invention, that Stein has found it prudent to defer to established academic tradition and suggest, albeit somewhat unconvincingly, that the 'canonical' references to the so-called Tibetan *phur-ba* he had unexpectedly found were perhaps forged Tibetan interpolations, written into the venerable Indian texts at a later date by cunning Tibetans determined to legitimate the use of their beloved three-bladed *phur-ba*, by fair means or foul.[83]

[81] Despite the Ch'ien-lung emperor's (17351–796) cynically manipulative efforts to divide and rule Tibet by such devices as a 'Golden Edict' (*gser-gyi bka'-lung*) in which the dGe-lugs-pa school were declared by decree of the Manchu state to be a purer and better form of Buddhism than the three other schools, (Th'u-bkwan, *Collected Works*, 1969, 601 ff., thanks to Dan Martin for these references) we must not forget that the great majority of Sa-skya and bKa'-brgyud hierarchs from earliest times until now have been enthusiastic expounders and practitioners of rNying-ma-pa 'non-canonical' tantras, as have many important dGe-lugs-pas, most famously perhaps the Great Fifth and sLe-lung bzhad-pa'i rdo-rje and the Sixth Dalai Lama etc. Western scholars like Per Kvaerne, for example, must therefore ask themselves what precisely the Christian term 'non-canonical' means in such a context. I feel Kvaerne's perception of the rNying-ma-pas as a persecuted 'religious underground' whose scriptures were "rejected *en bloc* by all the other schools" (see P. Kvaerne, "Tibet, the Rise and Fall of a Monastic Tradition", in H. Bechert & R. Gombrich, *The World of Buddhism*, London, 1984, 262) is deceptive. On the contrary, they were the most widely respected and expansive of all schools in nineteenth-century East Tibet, for example, and clearly enjoyed widespread affection and appreciation before that time too among most Tibetans. As a doctrinal common denominator uniting the other three schools, however, they appear to have been attacked by foreign powers presumably wishing to control Tibet by using the dGe-lugs-pa as puppets, e.g. by the Dzungars in 1717–20, and by the Yung-cheng emperor in 1726. Much of Tibetan history still remains obscure, however; the reason for these foreign attacks on the rNying-ma-pas is not yet certain.

[82] R A Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1977–78, 648, 653–4; See also his Gueule de Makara, in the same serial 1977, 55, also note 8. *Vajramālā-tantra*, ch. 54; *Heruka-tantra*, ch. 12 (actually, as Stein points out, this is a rNying-ma-pa text that gained admission to the bKa-'gyur later on); Vararuci's *sādhanā* is in the Peking edition of the bsTan-'gyur, vol. 86, 65-6.

[83] R.A. Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1977–78, 648, 654.

But we must not forget that all Tibetan traditions, both the Bon and the totality of the Buddhist schools, accept the so-called Tibetan *phur-ba* as 'authentic', i.e. as non-Tibetan. The Bon see it as originating in the (Sanskritized) west, and the Buddhists as originating in the Indian south. The Sanskrit-based Newar tradition likewise accepts it as orthodox.

Some Western scholars might argue that they do so on suspiciously slender textual evidence. In reply, one must point out that entire and once huge sectors of Śaiva tantrism textually disappeared from their native India over a few centuries. For example, only one *Vāmasrota* text survives; and nothing textually survives at all of the great *Saura* tradition of tantrism that produced, *inter alia*, Konarak temple in Orissa, and which once boasted at the very least a corpus of 85 texts, the titles of which alone survive, listed in the *Śrīkanthīyasaṃhitā*.[84] So, if only a handful of Sanskrit versions of the highly secret Buddhist Mahāyoga tantras had survived the depredations of time and Islam by the time Bu-ston published his bKa'-'gyur; or, more to the point, if only a handful had been surrendered up to him and thus to certain exposure in the public domain by their zealously secretive rNying-ma-pa proprietors in Tibet, we need not be surprised. If entire, vast and wealthy Śaiva tantric traditions could so rapidly disappear leaving no textual trace from their native India, we should have no problem accepting that only a small section of the triangular-*kīla* quoting texts of the Mahāyoga tradition survived in Sanskrit in Tibet, or were available to Bu-ston in Sanskrit. After all, five centuries and several Islamic invasions of India separated the times of Bu-ston and Padmasambhava.

A close reading of the main rNying-ma-pa Mahāyoga Vajrakīla root tantra, the *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis* in 199 pages, shows it to be, judging by its internal evidence alone, typically Indic in every detail, revealing no sign at all of Tibetan material. Its *mantras*, *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas* and rites all correspond with the mainstream Buddhist tradition of such texts as the *Sarvatathāgatatattva-saṃgraha* and the *Guhyasamāja*. For this very reason its evidence in regard to a Sanskritic origin of the so-called Tibetan *phur-ba* is also not absolutely irrelevant. Even if it is a forgery (an axiom apparently assumed a priori and with no further analysis by so many Western scholars), it is at the very least a forgery so well and so early made as a perfect replica of a genuine Indian tantra that we can, as scholars, still use it as a valuable source for Indological material.

But we should not forget that it was the ultra-orthodox Sa-skya Paṇḍita himself who claimed ownership of the original Sanskrit manuscript of the rNying-ma-pa *Vajrakīlayamūla-tantrakhaṇḍa*, and these very same ancient folios themselves, believed by Sa-skya Paṇḍita to have belonged to Padmasambhava personally, apparently survived intact at Sa-skya until the recent Maoist Cultural Revolution.

[84] Verbal communication, Alexis Sanderson, Oriental Institute, Oxford, 15th Oct. 1986.

Although accepted into the bKa'-'gyur through the Sa-skya Pandita's influence,[85] this 5-page fragment of text is to all appearances an excerpt of crucial passages from the much longer and non-'canonical' rNying-ma-pa *Phur-ba bcu-gnyis*, and thus lies at the heart of all traditional rNying-ma-pa Vajrakīla *sādhanas*, both ancient and modern. In similar vein to the Sa-skya Paṇḍita, Bu-ston noted that his main teacher Nyi-ma rgyal-mtshan and others claimed to have seen parts of a *Vajrakīla-tantra* in Sanskrit in Nepal. Not having the Sanskrit versions himself, and being constrained by political pressures, Bu-ston could not include them in his bKa'-'gyur.[86] Yet despite such reliable testimony, absolutely the sole positive evidence cited by Western scholars in asserting a Tibetan origin for the triangular-bladed *phur-ba* is its association with rNying-ma-pa and Bon texts which were rather wildly alleged by early Tibetologists, on the basis of no serious examination, to be Tibetan-composed *en bloc*. There is no other independent evidence. However, the discipline of Tibetology has now matured to the extent that the guesses of the pioneers can be subjected to more intense scholarly scrutiny.

Since it now seems increasingly likely that the triangular *kīla* is of Indian origin, perhaps we ought to reconsider the matter. Perhaps the probable Indic origins of the triangular *kīla* can be added to the accounts—of the Tun Huang texts P44, of Lalou 349; of the *sBa-bzhed*; of the testimonies of the Sa-skya hierarch and Bu-ston's teacher—as additional contributory evidence to a highly probable Sanskritic origin for the Vajrakīla tantras preserved in Tibet. After all, most Tibetan historians of all schools have been saying this all along. So also, in recent years, has David Snellgrove, who very correctly puts forward in his *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* an account of the Indic or Sanskritic origin for most of the Bon and rNying-ma-pa material. Snellgrove's version of events has been favorably received *inter alia* by de Jong, in his review article in the *Indo-Iranian Journal*.

As evidence to support Snellgrove's analysis, we can point out that the existence of an independent Buddhist *kīla* deity, called variously Kilikīla, Vajrakīla, or later on, Vajrakumāra, has never been in doubt. As the Buddhist deification of the *yūpa*-like *kīla* (and we must remember these were deified in the Hindu tradition from the start), Kilikīla usually functioned as the deity of establishing the sacred site and protecting its boundaries, i.e. of *nāgabandha* and *sīmabandha* etc., hence becoming connected to the *daśakrodha* protecting the ten directions. Stein, for example, has discovered him in such a role in a wide range of Buddhist texts such as several Kriyātantra texts translated into Chinese in the eighth century. These include among many others the *Amoghapāśakalparāja*, the *Susiddhikara-mahātantra*, and

[85] TTP, vol. 3, no. 78., TTD, 439. *sDe-dge rgyud ca-pa*, pp.s 86–90. See the colophon by Sa-skya Paṇḍita.
[86] Quoted by G.N. Roerich in *The Blue Annals*, 102, n. 1.

the *Guhyasūtra* etc.[87] Stephen Hodge informs me that the deity exists in some other Chinese texts not mentioned by Stein, such as the *Ekākṣaramahoṣṇīṣa*; also in another longer Uṣṇīṣa text in 10 fascicules which describes itself as "from Nālandā" [T945]; also in the *Guhyasamanya-tantra*; and even in the tantric Perfection of Wisdom in 500 lines. By consulting the *Taishō Indices*, Hodge also discovered further occurrences of the deity Kilikīla or Vajrakilikīla in T895, T974 [a female form here!], T1120, T1124, T1125, T1132, T1225, and T1227.[88]

R.A. Stein has, however, above all failed to point out that there are at least two completely independent texts devoted specifically to Vajrakumāra in the Chinese Canon, and these are both undoubtedly authentic translations from the Sanskrit. According to the Chinese tradition, they were translated several decades before the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism, thus predating Padmasambhava's arrival in Tibet. Their existence in Chinese is significant, for it falsifies the assertion of some commentators who have tried to deny that any such tantric tradition with an independent literature ever existed in India. The texts I have found so far are the *Vajrakumāra-tantra* [T1222], a very long text that will probably comprise between 30 to 50 pages in English translation; and the shorter **Vajrakumārajapayoga-sādhana* [T1223].[89] There is a further text, T1224, which was probably composed in China or Japan. From a preliminary reading, much of the material in T1222 and T1223 corresponds functionally [if not lexically] with the Tibetan tradition, despite their being explicitly derived from an earlier South Indian tradition as opposed to the explicitly Northern origins of the later Tibetan tradition. In both traditions, the central deity has the same name and the same wrathful functions and *kāpālika* appearence. The Chinese text says that Vajrakumāra stands on a 'jewelled mountain' arising out of the ocean, which is just perhaps suggestive of Meru etc. In another passage, T1222 says that Vajrakumāra wields a single-pointed *vajra*, often conflated with a *kīla* in far-eastern texts. Also in both traditions there is mention of the Asura's cave as an all-important location, and above all they share an absolute centrality of the theme of the use of the *abhicāra* system to convert forces hostile to Buddhism, and both include a particular emphasis on the rites of *mokṣa* in which an effigy is stabbed with a *kīla*. They also both have rites to discover hidden treasures (Skt *nidhi*, Tib *gter-ma*) protected by guardian deities, and stress the special appropriateness of the cycle for monarchs

[87] R.A. Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1976–78 *passim*.
[88] Personal communications, Stephen Hodge, 20 December 1989, and 25 February 1990.
[89] Thanks to Stephen Hodge for helping me locate the Taishō number of the longer text, T1222, and in the process discovering the other two. Heartfelt thanks also to Luke Lau, of St Antony's College, Oxford, and to Stephen Hodge for reading most of T1222 with me. It is unequivocally not an excerpt from ch. 6 of the *Susiddhikara*, but a substantial independent text with striking parallels in function and purport to the Tibetan 'apocryphal' versions, although lexically it is quite different.

and generals to protect the state (although these latter two themes are perhaps too commonplace to be counted as significant parrallels).

A detailed reading of these texts is not yet complete, but findings from them will be published in a forthcoming article. It is not yet entirely clear if the deity in these texts is yet identified with Kilikīla—but the fact that a Buddhist *kāpālika* deity specializing in *abhicāra* and called Vajrakumāra was worshipped in eighth-century India is itself very significant. This much has not yet been established or accepted by previous researchers. Nor has adequate account been taken of the prominent role Vajrakumāra plays in Japanese esoteric traditions, both as an individual and as a class of guardian deity, as Michael Strickmann has recently pointed out to me.

As well as such Chinese texts, many 'canonical' Kriyatantra texts in Tibetan cite the Kilikīla deity—e.g. the *Vidyottama-tantra*; the *Kriyāsaṃgraha*; and a wide range of other texts, such as four Sitātapatrā texts and their commentary. These texts also cite the *daśakrodha* in the same form that many 'apocryphal' Tibetan Vajrakīla texts do.[90] The incidence of the *kīla* deity seems to be extremely frequent in Kriyātantra texts in general. However, he is also widespread in Caryā texts such as the *Vajrapāṇyabhiṣeka-mahātantra*; and in Yoga texts such as a *Vajraśekhara-tantra*; and in famous Mahāyoga texts such as the *Guhyasamāja* and the *Vajramālā*; etc. In these Mahāyoga texts, the *kīla* deity begins to take a much more central role, and to resemble the rNying-ma-pa deity very closely, for example his consort Dīptacakra appears in the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* and its derivative literature.[91]

Perhaps a special note should be made of the occurrences of the *kīla* material in Nepal. There are problems in assessing this material, because of the undoubted influence of Tibetan Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley. Nevertheless, *kīla* rites occur at all levels of Newar religion, both Hindu and Buddhist. Not only is the *kīla* the standard implement of the Nepalese *jhāṅkrī*, but the *vajrācārya* too performs a large number of *kīla* rites, ranging from esoteric initiatory ritual to the protection of domestic houses or the making of rain.[92] As a result, a very large body of Sanskrit *kīla* material can be found in Nepal, but so far none of the material I have looked at seems to be specifically of the rNying-ma-pa model.[93] It tends to

[90] F. Lessing & A. Wayman, *op. cit.*, 117, n. 18.

[91] See R.A. Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France* 1978, 1977–78, 648. Stein shows her to be the personification of the *rakṣācakra*, which of course includes the protectors of the ten directions, the *daśakrodha*.

[92] Thanks to David Gellner for this information.

[93] Stephen Hodge tells me that a particular Nepalese text preserved on microfiche by the IASWR seems to be a much longer Buddhist Sanskrit *kīla* text, just conceivably a Sanskrit version of rNying-ma-pa material, but interpretation of this text is not yet complete. While in Kathmandu, I found many uncatalogued and unedited *kīla* texts, some of them lengthy, too many to research exhaustively at that time. Brahmans and Vajrācāryas alike told me of a complex *kīla* tradition in the Kathmandu Valley.

correspond to the *rakṣācakra* rites of the Anuttara tantras, or to the *Guhyasamāja* material. Noteworthy is how similar some of the Hindu and Buddhist material is. Nevertheless, all Newar Buddhists certainly use the same shape and form of *kīla* as their Tibetan counterparts.

The *kīla* deity has therefore had a very long and distinguished history in many undoubtedly 'canonical' texts in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. Even more numerous, even ubiquitous, are the *mantras*, *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas* and rituals involving the *kīla* as object; such occurrences pervade the whole of tantric Buddhist writings from the earliest Kriyātantras up to the latest *Kālācakra* literature. It therefore seems to me unrealistic and romantic to take as an unquestionable axiom (as do so many Tibetologists) that all Tibetan texts and rituals devoted specifically to the *kīla* deity must be apocrypha copied by deceitful rNying-ma-pa charlatans from autochtonous Tibetan 'shamans'—whoever they might have been.

The rNying-ma-pas have always claimed that the Vajrakīla texts they preserve were brought by Padmasambhava from Nālandā to Tibet, in order to perform the *kīla* rites needed to remove the obstacles to the completion of bSam-yas Temple, and then to consecrate it and the whole of Tibet. Tun Huang text P44 gives exactly the same account. This scenario is, for anyone at all Indologically informed, far more *probable* than the bizarre scenario alluded to above. We know, from Sanskrit sources, that all new temples required such *kīla* rites for their foundational and consecrational rituals; and that the deity Kilikīla was always associated, from earliest Buddhist tantric texts onwards, with the removal of preliminary obstacles to such undertakings and the protection of the site. We also know from Chinese sources that independent Vajrakumāra tantras already existed in India by the eighth century; moreover, texts with similar material or at least identical functions to the Tibetan rNying-ma-pa Vajrakumāra tantras. We also know that a *kīla* deity with many of the precise characteristics of the rNying-ma-pa version had begun to emerge in the undoubtedly 'canonical' *Guhyasamāja* literature. Why then must we take it as an article of faith that all Tibetan Vajrakīla or Vajrakumāra tantras of the same period must be apocryphal forgeries? It is far more likely that a substantial core at least of the rNying-ma-pa Vajrakīla texts were genuinely translated from Sanskrit, establishing a model upon which later Tibetan composition was based.

There really can be no reasonable doubt that bSam-yas temple was consecrated with *kīla* rites, since all *śilpaśāstras* require this. Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that such rites were extremely long and complex, marking both the first and the last moments in the construction process, since, again, the *śilpaśāstras* make this clear. Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that a highly developed *abhicāra* tradition used to destroy or convert forces hostile to the *buddhadharma* and based on the deity Vajrakumāra was translated into Chinese from Sanskrit in the first

decades of the eighth century. I therefore believe (*pace* Stein, Dowman et. al.) that the texts describing these lengthy rituals and *abhicāra*s are preserved in Tibetan translation in the 'non-canonical' rNying-ma-pa collections; for I have read texts there that would seem to precisely fulfil these specifications.

It is true that, quite unlike their Chinese counterparts many centuries earlier, the first compilers of the Tibetan 'Canon' refused to allow any Vajrakīla or Vajrakumāra texts at all into their collection, except, eventually, for one minuscule fragment that was newly retranslated in their own time, 500 years after the original translation, by the Sa-skya Paṇḍita in the thirteenth century. Earlier translations even of that fragment, they excluded from their 'canon', despite, as Bu-ston points out, their certain knowledge of the existence of its Sanskrit original. But this is surely a reflection of the religious politics of the times where, as Bu-ston broadly hints,[94] the purveyors of the 'New' Anuttara tantras fought bitterly to upstage and displace the proprietors of the 'Old' Mahayoga tantras such as the Vajrakīla.

The merely political and therefore religiously insignificant nature of the conflict is revealed when one considers that despite all the rhetoric surrounding their 'exclusion' from the 'canon', the rNying-ma-pa tantras were in practice almost universally loved, taught, and propagated by the hierarchs of the newer bKa'-brgyud and Sa-skya schools, and also by a great many dGe-lugs-pas after their arrival on the scene- until, it seems to me, the divide and rule policy of the Manchu hegemony of the eighteenth century, as formulated in the 'Golden Edict' (*gser-gyi bka'-lung*), mentioned above, made this unpolitic.[95] But with the decline of Manchu influence in Tibet, the 13th Dalai Lama reintroduced the rNying-ma-pa Vajrakumāra rites to his personal chapel, the rNam-rgyal drva-tshang, where they continue to be practised to this day.

Thus it is that such a high proportion of the leading commentators and practitioners of the 'apocryphal' Vajrakīla tantras in Tibet have, throughout the last 900 years, been gSar-ma-pas rather than rNying-ma-pas; for example, the Fifth Dalai Lama, or the seventeenth-century Sa-skya-pa A-myes-zhabs. The still popular Western academic myth that it is only after the nineteenth-century *ris-med* movement that rNying-ma-pa tantras in general became widely accepted by the other schools is demonstrably false; those who doubt this are invited to read, for example, the life histories and works of all the Karma-pas, who effectively controlled Tibet for so many centuries and were nearly all ardent devotees of rNying-ma-pa traditions.

Interestingly but predictably, it seems probable that it was not only the Buddhists who worshipped a deity such as the one under discussion. A popular

[94] G. N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, 102, note 1.
[95] See note 81 above.

Hindu god exists called variously Kumāra, Skanda, or Kārttikeya, and famously worshipped in the south as Murugaṇ or Subrahmaṇya. Some versions of this deity seem quite probably to have been Hindu parallels to the Buddhist Vajrakumāra. The parallels between the two deities are sometimes striking, although, as always, great caution is needed to avoid jumping to false conclusions with such materials. But both deities are often worshipped in the month of Kārtikka; with six-segmented *rudrākṣa* bead *mālās*. Both hold two different kinds of *vajras* in their hands.[96] Similar to his Buddhist counterpart, the Hindu Kumāra is regularly worshipped in what appears to be the form of a *yūpa*, and is identified with protective circles made up of cosmic mountains.[97] Both deities are considered by their followers to be the main demon-slayers or protectors of their respective religions. Both are married to their work in the form of their consorts—the Hindu Devasenā (army or weapon of the gods) and the Buddhist Dīptacakra (circle of fire, i.e. protection). Kumāra has an entourage of 9 male heroes (*navavīra*)[98] and Vajrakumāra has an entourage of 10 male *Herukas* (*daśakrodha*). In their respective Northern versions, Kumāra has a vast entourage of female animal and bird-headed *mātṛkās*,[99] while Vajrakumāra has a vast entourage of female animal and bird-headed *piśācīs*. Kumāra is closely associated with a goddess of child illnesses, Revatī, and Vajrakumāra is closely associated with a disease-controlling goddess called Rematī, who sits on the flayed skin of her own child as the saddle of her mule. Just as Vajrakumāra is 'the supreme son' (*sras-mchog*), so also Kumāra is invariably celebrated as the supreme divine son of Rudra.

Even in the very earliest *strata* of Tamil literature, the early *Caṅkam* literature, what little we know of the Hindu god is quite strikingly close to the Buddhist tantric tradition: the use of an effigy or puppet and a three-bladed, chisel-like stabbing instrument in exorcisms; the worship of the deity as a small pillar (Tamil: *kantu*) connected with blood sacrifice; the worship of the deity as a mountain.[100] But our knowledge of early Tamil material is so vague that it would be rash to jump to any conclusions on the basis of such slender evidence. Nevertheless, tantalizingly, Filliozat's translation of an allegedly very early Tamil *Kumāra-tantra* shows that the two deities even have the distinctive *kili* element in their mantra in common, and L'Hernault's study of the original form of the Hindu god's vel or 'lance' shows that it may just conceivably relate to the Buddhist *kīla*; it

[96] F. L'Hernault, *L'Iconographie de Subrahmaṇa au Tamilnad*, Pondichéry, 1978, 19 *passim*.
[97] F.W. Clothey, *Rhythm and Intent*, Madras, 1983, 122 ff. The *yūpa* is of course used in other Hindu rites as well, so one should not place too much emphasis on this point.
[98] See F. L'Hernault, *op. cit.*, 175–6.
[99] *ibid.*, 30.
[100] See F.W. Clothey, *The Many Faces of Murukaṇ*, The Hague, 1978, 25 ff. But Fred Hardy reads the excorcism text as a 'scrutiny', not 'stabbing'. See his *Viraha-Bhakti*, London, 1983, 139. Worship of the deity as a small pillar is however quite certain.

was a three-faceted short stabbing instrument identified as a type or form of Indra's *vajra*.[101]

Perhaps significantly, T1222, the Chinese *Vajrakumāra-tantra*, makes more frequent and prominent mention of the Hindu deity Kumāra than of any other Hindu deity, and includes rites directed to him as well as to Vajrakumāra. The Hindu Kumāra first appears in Buddhist texts in the *Janavasabha-sutta* of the Dīghanikāya. Here called Sanam-Kumāra, he plays the leading role in this Pāli sutta as the principle preacher and supporter of *buddhadharma* among all the gods, rather like a divine counterpart to the human arhats ĩnanda or Śāriputra.[102] As L'Hernault has shown,[103] in the Hindu tradition this youth-god has twin functions of scholar and warrior. By the time of Mahāyāna Buddhism, he seems (again one suggests all this extremely tentatively) to be considered to have become enlightened as a Bodhisattva and to manifest as two separate deities—first as Kārttikeyamañjuśrī (later simply Mañjuśrīkumāra)[104] the scholar and then later as the tantric Vajrakumāra the warrior. The precise details of how this Vajrakumāra became identified with the deity of establishing the site and the periphery Kilikīla and the *kīla* as object are not yet quite clear at the time of writing, but it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that something along these lines happened.

Properly speaking, the history of the development of the Buddhist Kīla deity through the ages, his texts and rites, and his Hindu parallels, are the subject matter for a subsequent paper which will follow the present one.[105] I mention it in passing here only in order to illuminate the need to examine more than merely Tibetan sources before jumping to wrong conclusions about the Tibetan origins of the rNying-ma-pa Vajrakīla texts. For until they have been critically examined and compared with the parallel Chinese and Sanskrit material, it is simply unscientific to pass judgement on their origins.

So despite being very properly acclaimed as a seminal Tibetan scholar (and he has undoubtedly been a major inspiration to us all) by his own admission,[106] R.A. Stein is not a Sanskritist, and his investigations into the *kīla* therefore quite legitimately and very professionally could use no Indic sources whatsoever other than those in Tibetan translation. However, we must recognize the limitations of

[101] See F. L'Hernault, *op. cit.*, *passim*, but especially pp. 145–6, 158–9, 169–171.
[102] See The Sacred Books of the Buddhists series, vol. 3.
[103] See F. L'Hernault, *passim*.
[104] See A. Macdonald, *Le Maṇḍala du Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, Paris, 1962, 122–3, n. 3.
[105] Unknown to me at the time of setting out to write this paper, Martin Boord with the help of some scholars at SOAS was simultaneously accumulating information the deity Kilikīla and the *kīla* as object from Far Eastern, Sanskrit, and Tibetan sources. I hope to be permitted to draw on this considerable resource when it is complete.
[106] R.A.Stein, "A propos des documents anciens relatifs au Phurbu", 434, n. 34.

his approach.[107] In the light of the Indological material that has been presented here, perhaps we can now begin to give the Tibetan tradition the benefit of the doubt, and consider the possibility that our Western academic tradition has perhaps been a little mistaken on this particular issue. Perhaps we have been over-hasty in condemning the various Tibetan traditions as mere medieval foolishness; for they all clearly assert the non-Tibetan origin of the three-bladed *kīla* and its literature, seeing its source either from the (Sanskritized) west in the Bon tradition, or from the Sanskritized south in the Buddhist conception. In my present opinion, both traditions are very possibly correct.

The present research only scratches the surface of the issue of the *kīla* in India. For lack of space, I have omitted much material, for example the closely related *indradhvaja* or *dhvajastambha* cults and a mass of village magical material that involves impalation. But clearly the magical concept of sticking pins in effigies of one's enemies is so pervasive (in India as elsewhere) that not all such occurrences can be considered to directly relate to the ancestry of the Tibetan *phur-ba*, although some of them might. I have also been unable to deal with a large number of magical uses for *kīlas* which also exist in important Buddhist texts; for example, they are used to control *vetālas* in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.[108] So a great deal remains to be researched on the subject. I am sure answers will not be hard to find, if only some one, preferably an Indologist fluent in Sanskrit, finds the time and inclination to do the research.

[107] S. Karmay seems to take a quite different line from my own. He has attempted a history of the Great Perfection with almost no reference whatsoever to Indian or Sanskrit sources. Although I personally have found his work most illuminating and excellent, I can not help but note that it remains unconvincing to those with a detailed knowledge of equivalent eighth-century esoteric Indian tantric philosophies, whether Śaiva or Buddhist. A growing body of opinion seems to hold that the requirements of scientific method neccessitate an enquiry into Indian sources as well as Tibetan, before attempting to arrive at any conclusions about the Great Perfection doctrine's country of origin. Some scholars doubt if a non-Sanskritist or non-Indologist is qualified to make such an investigation.

[108] Thanks to Martin Boord for this information.

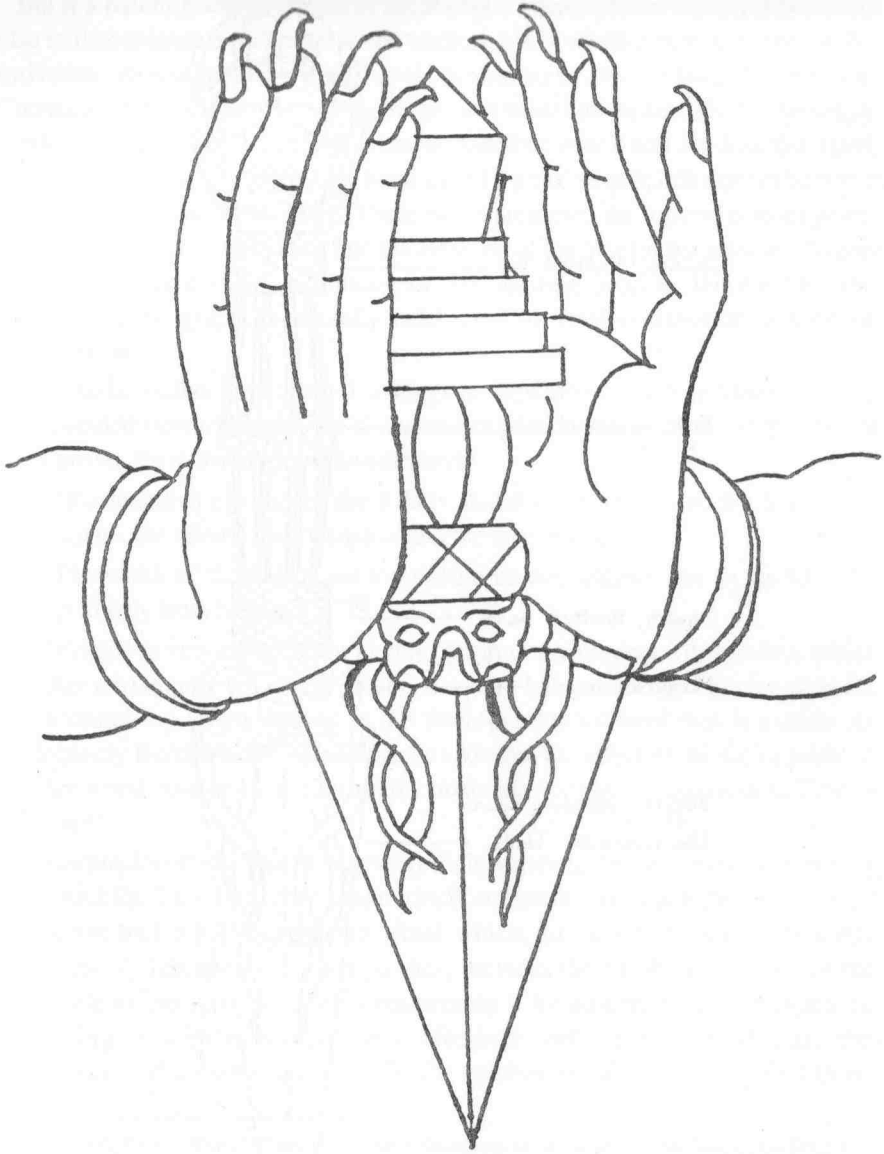

Fig. 12

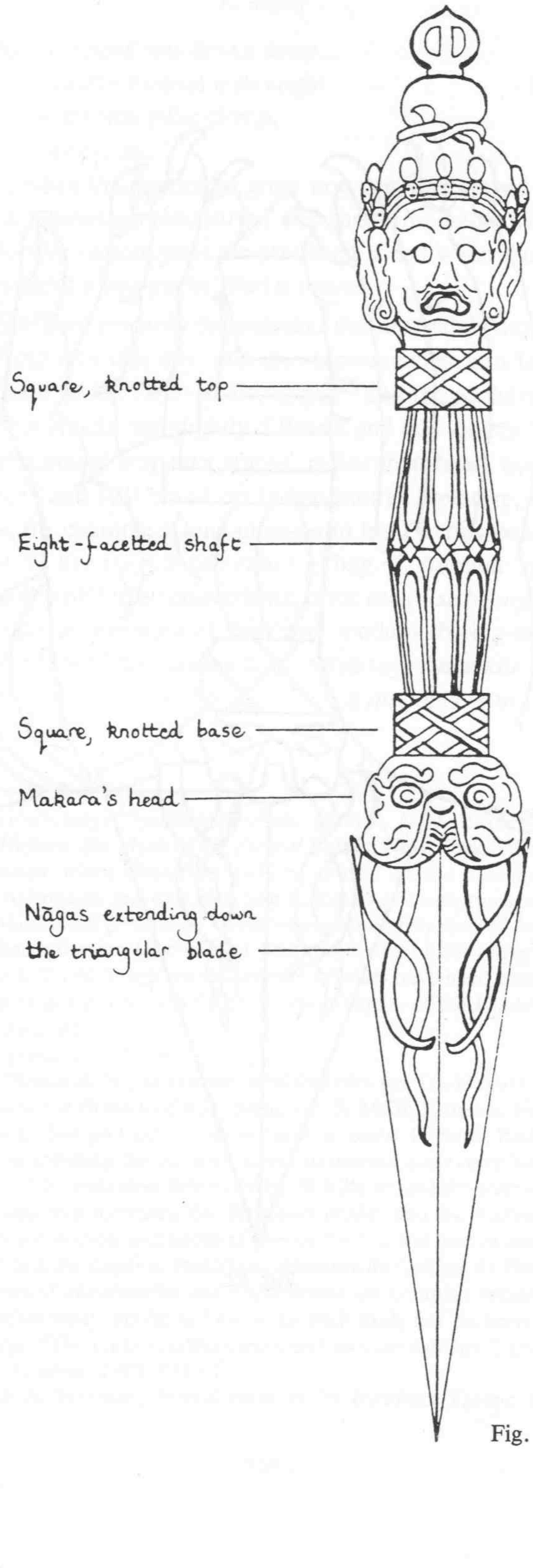
Square, knotted top
Eight-facetted shaft
Square, knotted base
Makara's head
Nāgas extending down the triangular blade

Fig. 13