The Bird and the Mandala: A Study of Tibet's First Monastery, Samye

Fig. 1.0. Front of the main shrine building (Utse), Samye, Tibet.

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Abstract

Samye was the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, built around the eighth century A.D.. This project examines the first two floors of the Main Shrine from a pilgrim's viewpoint, using data gathered from field visits. After presenting a portrayal from within the Buddhist tradition, I provide a tentative analysis from a sensory and spatial viewpoint. This project proposes that there exists not only a sensory and spatial viewpoint, but also an intellectual and a societal viewpoint. In addition to a sensory self, there is also a societal self, and this project analyses of Samye Monastery from the viewpoint of this societal self. As part of this analysis, the project uses the work of Michel Foucault, but concludes that Foucault's concepts, while useful for understanding the educational, penal, and medical aspects of monastic life, oversimplify the spiritual experience of the Buddhist practitioner and have a limited application to the understanding of religious buildings.

Abstrait

Samye a été le premier monastère bouddhiste au Tibet et fût construit autour du huitième siècle. Ce projet porte sur les deux premiers étages du temple principal tels qu'observés du point de vue d'un pèlerin lors des visites faites sur le terrain. À la suite de la présentation de l'intérieur bouddhiste, je poursuivrai avec une tentative d'analyse sensorielle et de l'espace. Ce projet propose qu'en plus d'un point de vue sensoriel et spatial il en existe également deux autres dont l'un est intellectuel et l'autre, sociétal. En plus d'un soi sensoriel, il y a aussi un soi social. Enfin, il propose que les concepts de Michel Foucault pourraientt avoir une application dans le domaine éducatif, mais est très limitée d'autrefois.

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Chapter I. Introduction

The medieval world was very different from the modern one. The cosmic order, the earth, and the environment were suffused with symbolic meanings and sacred significance. Spirituality was woven into the texture of medieval life, into the very rocks, stones, and mountains. As is true in many cultures, these elements are still present in Tibet. This project attempts to bring these elements to bear on an examination of the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, Samye, built in the eighth century A.D. and located four hours drive south of the capital city of Lhasa. We shall see how these symbols were absorbed into the Buddhist culture at Samye.

In this chapter, I provide a brief introduction to the monastery, describing the layout of the building and situating its design in relation to the practices of its users. Chapter II, "The Bird", describes the space from a Tibetan pilgrim's viewpoint, emphasizing the importance of Samye as a sacred space. Chapter III, "The Light", gives a phenomenological account of the pilgrim's progress through the monastery, and takes a more historical look inside the main hall. Chapter IV, "The Senses", provides a phenomenological account of ritual and its importance for the integration of the Buddhist practitioner with his socio-religious environment. Chapter V, called "The Gaze", applies Michel Foucault's analysis of power to monastic space. I argue that Foucault's work can help us understand educational, medical, and even penal elements of the Panopticon in monastic life, but that it ultimately provides an oversimplified view of the Buddhist self, neglecting the importance of the spiritual side of monastic life and the Buddhist philosophical claim that there is no self. I conclude that sensory experience and architecture play a great role in the sacred experience at Samye, and that this sacred experience is irreducible to relations of power.

Site Description: The Circle or the Mandala

Geomancy and a proper reflection of the cosmos are the intentionality of design as signified by the structure of the monastic complex at Samye (see fig. 1.1, 1.2). Based on the Indian Buddhist monastery Oddantapuri, Samye faces east and has four stupas or reliquaries, and four gates, which represent, respectively, the four continents and sub-continents.[1] The monastery is built in the shape of the circle of the sacred mandala. The first three floors of the main hall, or Utse, are thought to constitute the three *kayas*, that is the Buddha's body, speech and mind, in ascending order. Arriving at Samye, one is struck by the white walls that encircle the geomantic design. The outer wall, an oval shape, is crowned by 1008 two-meter stupas.[2] Stupas, or *chortens* in Tibetan, are reliquaries that contain sacred objects such as texts or relics. Pilgrims generate karmic merit by circumambulating stupas.[3] These merits are then multiplied by being dedicated to the benefit of all other beings.

Circumambulating pilgrims enter the portico of the Utse under the watchful eyes of the mythical bird Garuda (see below), who bites a stylized snake in its beak (fig. 2.1). They turn left into a gallery of prayer wheels, or *manis*, continuing the circumambulation (fig. 3.1 #2). These actions may be performed not only in order to establish their merits, but also out of respect and the need to establish an inscribed physical contact through hands and feet.[4]

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[1] Patrul Rinpoche, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* (Boston: Shambala, 1998), p. 334.
[2] 1008 and 108 are auspicious numbers for Tibetan Buddhists.
[3] Karma means "action" in Sanskrit and refers to the law of consequences for one's actions. It follows a person from life to life with good and bad consequences.
[4] This bodily inscription is not the full prostration that is common at Jokhang Lhasa (fig 3.4). See Gavin Flood, *The Tantric Body: The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2006), p. 100. The tantric body seeks its "salvation" by tracing and inscribing it through the body.

Fig. 1.1. Aerial view of the wall and Samye. (Reproduced from Essence of the Ages.)

Fig. 1.2. A pilgrim admires the walls from the outside ambulatory.
(Courtesy of Gu Li.)

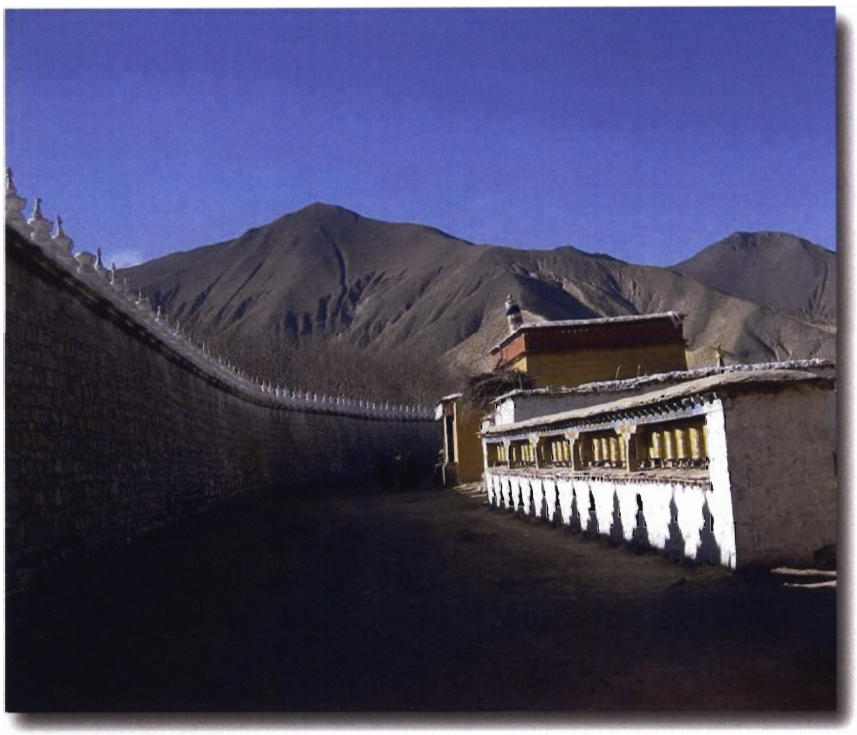

Fig. 1.3. Inside view of walls with 1008 stupas. (Courtesy of Gu Li.)

Fig. 1.4. At the centre of the mandala lies the main shrine building, the Utse, that represents Mount Meru, the center of the cosmos. (Reproduced from Sacred Destinations. Photograph Alick Mighall.)

Chapter II. The Bird: A Pilgrim's Guide to Samye

> ...[T]he most powerful places of pilgrimage in Tibet are certainly the cave-sites, and the most renowned cave-hermitages are associated with Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, Tibet's Great Guru. It is not coincidence that the locations where Guru Rinpoche is said to have meditated are age-old power places of geomantic perfection. The Tibetans did not need the Chinese science of *feng-shui* to identify these sights. Just as the Druids in Europe and the Dravidian priests in India unerringly identified the sights of their temples and their cave- hermitages with focal points of natural energy, so did the Tibetans. In general, cave-sights are located high in the upper reaches of valleys, and frequently they are self-evident points.... They are found in phallic peaks with a vista pointing at every other significant point in the panorama; in scraps or crags at the very top of a valley with a vista overlooking the valley plain; on prominences at the confluence of the rivers; on top of large rocks in a valley with a vista overlooking the valley plain; or at the centre of an amphitheatre of rolling hills. *A sense of being at the centre of a mandala* is frequently felt at such sights. ... Guru Rinpoche's power-places are characterized by several of these features.[5]

According to Buddhist tradition, once a bird flew down and saw the spirit of the snakes, or *nagas,* that lived beneath Tibet. The bird was a sacred bird, a Garuda, or *khyung* in Tibetan (see fig. 2.1). In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the Garuda represents the arrival of the more "peaceful" Buddhism into a land of "shamanistic practices" that could involve animal and/or human sacrifices. The Garuda snatches the symbol of that ancient religion, the snake, and snaps it with its teeth.[6] In terms of the history of Tibet, the mythic discourse says that the Garuda found the area of Tibet, represented by a female ogress.[7] The Garuda made a circle of a mandala, creating a demarcation of the sacred and separating it from the profane.[8]

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[5] Keith Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1988), p. 5.

[6] The Garuda has its roots in Hinduism which continued to influence the Indian Buddhist tradition until the twelfth or thirteenth century. Robert Beer, *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols* (Boston: Shambhala, 2003), 72.

[7] This image symbolizes our primordial nature, which is already completely perfect. The Garuda chick has already developed its wing feathers within the egg, but it cannot fly before it hatches. Only at the moment when the shell cracks open can it burst forth and soar into the sky. Similarly, the masters tell us, the qualities of Buddhahood are veiled by the body, and as soon as the body is discarded, they will be radiantly displayed. Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco: Harper Row, 1994), p. 109.

[8] For a discussion of the sacred and its relation to the profane, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion,* (Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1987), p. 12.

Fig. 2.1 Statue of Garuda snapping a snake, 19th century Tibetan. (Reproduced from Juncosa, "An Afternoon Amid Mythic Creatures". Photograph D. Finnin.)

In an analogous myth, the mandala and its circular demarcation can be said to become the actual demarcation of the revelation of the spiritual through the flight of Tibet's "Buddha", Padmasambhava, an emanation of Amitayus.[9] a *tantrika* said to be able to perform magic. These acts impressed the local Tibetans who had believed in and cherished the pre-Buddhist animistic religion, Bön, and who now turned to Buddhism. As with Saint Patrick and his conquest of the local druid religion of Ireland and its symbolic snakes, Padmasambhava, a tantric master, had to conquer the *nagas* of the Tibetan religion in order to clear the land for Tibet's first monastery,

[9] There are consecration rituals dating from the 10th Century found in the Dunhuang caves by Kuladatta in Sanskrit which involved some spikes for the string and water jugs for the consecration of the grounds. As per my conversation with Jacob Dalton, there is no historical evidence for more than this so far for Padmsambhava. Jacob Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Study of IOL Tib J 644 and Pelliot tibétain," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec., 2004): 759–72.

Samye (see fig. 4.5).[10] At the Samye monastic complex, the *nagas* in blue are still alive, subjugated but remembered in the columns that hold up the Pehar Ling chapel which houses the subjugated deity of the local mountain of Hepori. In the eighth century, this depiction was probably thought to represent the view that, according to legend, Padmasambhava had when he flew into the air and drew the outlines by means of his shadow onto the ground.

Left: Fig. 2.2. Once subjugated, the *nagas*, instead of tearing down the Buddhist complex helped to build it. (Photograph by the author, 2010. All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.)
Right: Fig. 2.3. Pilgrims admire the *nagas* on the columns and ceiling at the Pehar Ling chapel in Samye.

[10] The nagas control the grounds and water beneath the earth. They must be either pacified or one must ask their permission to build on their grounds. Nagas also have a role in Tibet as the keepers of secret texts that are revealed at opportune moments in history such as during "degenerate" times, when there is a loss of faith by practitioners.

Chapter III. The Light or 'Ozer

III.1. The Pilgrim

Outside the Utse, or the main shrine building, is an arcade gallery of prayer wheels. Inside, the inner sanctum has galleries with murals for more circumambulation, and this area is known as the *'khor ba* (pronounced "korra"; see fig. 3.1)

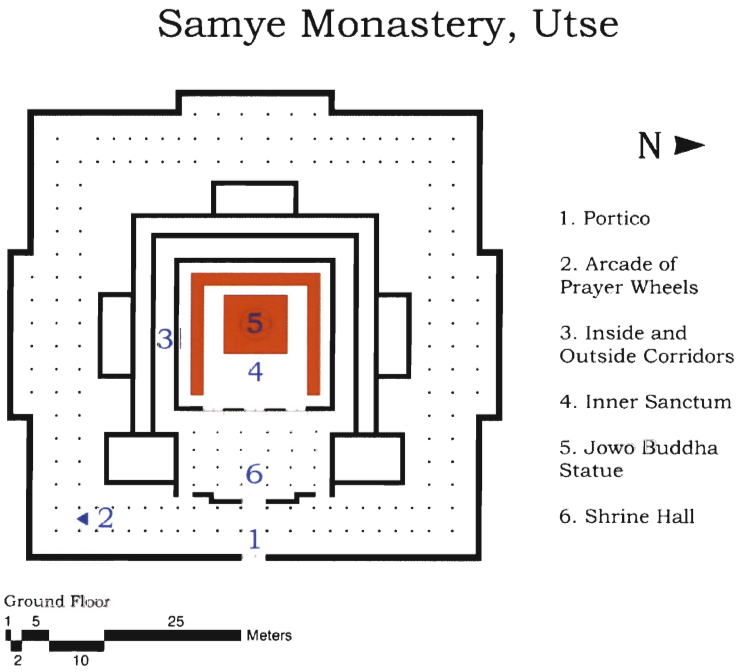

Fig. 3.1. Diagram of the main shrine complex. (Drawing by Author, Autocad rendering by Ali Tanha.)

At the portico, pilgrims enter under the watchful eyes of Garuda. At the portico, as in many important temples, pilgrims conduct their prostrations. For example, the Nyingma and the Kagyu lineages generally require 100,000 full body prostrations in order to be initiated into Vajrayana, the "secret mantra". These actions may arise from a need to inscribe the body, thus establishing the individual's soteriological merits. The adherent becomes at one with the actual practice of

circumambulation, so that entering the mandala of Samye means to inscribe the cosmos potentially on its three bodies.

Fig. 3.2. Entering from the left, the pilgrims are greeted by statues of Tibet's first Buddhist monks, who persisted despite "hostility" from pre-Buddhist ministers and ordinary Tibetans. In the diagram in fig. 3.1 this is the left entrance to the shrine hall, at #6.

Fig 3.3 Wrapping around the inner sanctum, pilgrims enter a corridor of paintings depicting Buddha's past lives. Note the bright sunlight from the window that contrasts strongly with the darkness inside. In the diagram in fig. 3.1 this is at #3.

Fig. 3.4. Pilgrims prostrate themselves while doing '*khor ba* outside the seventh century temple, Jokhang, in Lhasa, Tibet. (Reproduced from Art.com. Photograph by Kryzysztof Dydynski.)

In most temples, such as Johkang in Lhasa, pilgrims normally go directly into the inner shrine. At Samye, rather than entering the Utse immediately, pilgrims tend to make an immediate left into an arcade of prayer wheels, continuing their circumambulation (fig. 3.1 #2). Keith Dowman explains the ritual:

> Circumambulation, prostration, offering, recitation of mantra, and meditation are the devotions performed by every pilgrim at the power-places on his route. ...*To the pilgrim aware of the mandala principle and the calming and centering of awareness that the exercise produces through identification of consciousness with the centre of a mandala circle and the symbolic modifications of its circumference, korra can be a potent method of heightening awareness.* When the korra is coupled with recitation mantra its effects are increased. Korra is usually performed clockwise around an image, a temple, or a sacred mountain or lake, while some korra circuits embrace a unity of power-places that can take days or weeks to circumambulate. The effect of prostration is self-evident: it induces a mind-state of devotion and receptivity to the deity or the lama to whom the prayers are addressed. The obeisance or prostration is performed before receptacles or symbols of one of the three existential modes or "bodies", of the Buddha: an image represents the Buddha's form.... Pilgrims prostrating from their home in eastern Tibet all the way to the Holy City of Lhasa, for instance, prostrate to a visualized image of the Buddha....The offering of ... a butter lamp is the symbolic gift of light; incense gives pleasure to the deity.[11]

[11] Dowman. *Power-Places of Central Tibet*, p. 6.

Coming into the gallery, pilgrims continue to circumambulate. They pass the main hall where the monks gather (described in the next section). Here, pilgrims are greeted by saintly scholars from different eras spanning the period from the eighth century to the fifteenth century. Because of its tumultuous history, these saints come from three different lineages in an ecumenical spirit. The oldest are the statues closer to the central axes, which date from the establishment of the monastery in the eighth century and belong to the "oldest lineage", or Nyingma in Tibetan. Entering from the left, the pilgrims are greeted by statues of Tibet's first Buddhist monks, who faced "persecution" from the majority Bön society (fig. 3.2).[12]

The first passage ends at the left flank of statues, and the pilgrim must step through three doors of "salvation" to enter the inner sanctum. These doors of liberation offer three paths, called "emptiness, aspirationlessness and signlessness."[13]

Fig. 3.5 Main hall. The statue of the Dalai Lama stands to the side near the three doors of liberation. (Courtesy Gu Li.)

[12] The other major lineage belonging to the Dalai Lama is called Geluk, which I discuss in chapter V below.
[13] Gyurme Dorje, *Footprint Tibet Handbook* (Bath, UK: Footprint, 1999), p. 175.

III.2. Utse Vihara, the Inner Sanctum[14]

Upon reaching the inner sanctum, the pilgrim is greeted by a protector deity as well as Buddha's disciples (fig. 3.1).[15] Their sacred statues flank the gallery on the left. Jowo Changjub, the Buddha, is on the right. Padmasambhava, who as I described above helped to establish Samye by the use of magic, is straight ahead.

Guardians or protector deities (*chaityas* in Sanskrit) are found in most Buddhist temples. When a protector deity has its third eye opened, it means that it is a worldly deity who is spiritually awakened. The deity not only protects the dharma, or teachings, of Buddhism, but is also meant to purify one's negativities, namely the three poisons of anger, ignorance and jealousy, which according to Buddhism are the root of our worldly attachments and condemn us to a cycle of re-birth, or *samsara* (fig. 3.8). Thus the protector deities help hasten one's awakening.

Passing the various deities and Buddha's disciples, one reaches a wall filled with *pechas*, or xylograph colophons (*tengyur* and *kangyur*). These are, respectively, sutras of the Buddha's words and scholarly commentaries by Indian or Tibetan scholar/saints. The Padme Samye Monastery in New York is a smaller scale monastery named and based on the original Samye in Tibet. There, books and pechas are housed on the second floor since it is said to be the speech emanation of the Buddha. It is quite possible that in the eighth century, the scriptures at the original Samye were also originally intended to be housed on the second floor, which embodied Buddha's speech (*sambogakaya*). Today, they are stored on the first floor behind the "body emanation" (*nirmanakaya*) of the Buddha Sakyamuni.

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[14] The *viharas*, or halls, in India were originally constructed to shelter the monks during the rainy season, when it became difficult for them to lead the wanderer's life. They took on a sacred character when small stupas (housing sacred relics) and images of the Buddha were installed in the central court. As donors gained much merit as if they housed monks, they took on a more permanent character. The fact they began to house relics meant they took on a sacred element throughout the centuries until they became monasteries such as Nalanda. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Available at http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/628714/vihara, accessed September 10, 2010.

[15] Although many statues and original buildings have been destroyed by political intrigue and war, there remains room for philological research.

Windows on the second floor above the inner sanctum are covered so as to diffuse the light, increasing the sense of mystery and the need for butter lamps and lights to illuminate the statues. One wonders how the pilgrim manages not to fall down in the darkness. He must reach out to touch a wall in order to steady himself (fig. 3.9). The play of light and dark increases the sense of mystery for the pilgrim. The effect is similar to the dim light cast by the stained glass windows of a Gothic church (fig. 3.18).

As the pilgrims ambulate their way into the inner sanctum, they do the *'khor ba* round the main shrine of Sakyamuni Buddha (fig. 3.2). Many pilgrims give offerings of butter or money (fig. 3.9). According to Dowman,

> Offering, or ritual giving, is perhaps the most vital purpose of the pilgrim at the power-places he visits, but there is no one explanation of the purpose of this function. Offering is made as obeisance and as a thanksgiving; as a token requiring reciprocal response from the deity; as a propitiation averting hostile influences; as a means of accumulating merit towards a better rebirth; and as a symbolic gift of sensory pleasure. The meaning of the offering is determined by the giver and the object of the gift. The offering of a katak, a white flaxen scarf, is a token of respect; a butter lamp is the symbolic gift of light; incense gives pleasure to the deity; a piece of cloth or any personal effect left on an altar reminds the deity of the giver's prayer, food or drink offered to the deity pleases the deity and when returned to the giver contains the blessing of the deity. Pilgrimage and prostration and korra are exercises that purify the body, mantra purifies the voice and focuses the concentrated meditation that purifies the mind.[16]

Through the darkness, the walkers are suddenly confronted with a bright light thrown over the four meter tall statue of the Buddha, Jowo Changchub. The light simulates the idea of a spiritual light, or *'Ozer*. In fact the statue is partly lit up by butter lamps (fig. 3.13, 3.14). Perhaps the light can be understood as the adherent's guru or Buddha nature. Both lead to the same understanding that the true view is one of non-dualistic thinking or, in Zen, "emptiness". One is struck by the recognition that the *'khor ba* contains a sacred moment. A pilgrim makes a spiritual connection with the sacred statue that is different from the modern secular aesthetic context. Because it is so dark, one is in awe of the encounter with the Buddha embodied in the statue.

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[16] Dowman. *Power-Places of Central Tibet*, p. 5.

The Utse also contains paintings, or thangkas. As I have suggested for the relation of the pilgrim to the sacred statues, Heather Stoddard claims that there is a special, intimate connection between thangkas and the Buddhist practitioner:

> Such objects are called "mind vows" or *thugs dam*, and may be passed on from generation to generation like, for example, the superb eleventh century Nalanda manuscript in the Asia House Gallery in New York. Certain thangkas bear the name of the lama who consecrated them. Normally, this ritual would take place at the time of completion of the painting (or sculpture), but there may be other occasions, such as during a grand ritual consecration of a large stupa or statue, when many smaller older images, paintings and other ritual objects might be consecrated.[17]

Brocades hang from the clerestory (see fig. 3.18), forming a pillar-like atmosphere akin to that at the second-century Ajanta caves in India. In general, the monastery recalls the Ajanta caves in India, which were built during the second century A.D. and which were a major influence on the architecture of Samye (fig. 3.15, 3.16, 3.19). The precise date of the introduction of brocades and parasols to Samye is unknown, but they seem to mimic these pillars. The brocades are actually victory banners (*rgyal tschan*) meant to signify the victory of Buddhism and also the triumph over one's own attachments to the worldly poisons of ignorance, desire and anger. The height of the two storey clerestory above the main assembly hall makes them a suitable enhancement to the aesthetic and spiritual impact of the space.

Light and Dark in the Pilgrim's Walk Through the Inner Sanctum

There is a deliberate use of light and dark right on the Utse's main floor. The pilgrims walk in from the harsh desert-like sun at over 3000 meters above sea level and are plunged into dark shadows. After a few seconds of adjustment to the sombre lighting, they finally meet alluring pools of light around hallowed scholarly saints and bodhisattvas. Like the chiaroscuro effect of the Italian Mannerist School of the Renaissance, this effect is used at Samye to enhance depth. Here it

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[17] Heather Stoddard, "Early Tibetan Paintings: Sources and Styles (Eleventh–Fourteenth Centuries A.D.)." *Archives of Asian Art* 49 (1996): 26–50.

is used to create a sense of intimate mystery as well to bring out the light that seems to highlight the statues. The emphasis in the Buddhist temple is on the karmic connection between the sacred statue, which not only represents but "is" the deity or saint, and the Buddhist practitioner. This explains the prostrations, the *'khor ba* walks, and the gifts of butter and money often left at each deity, large or small. The Buddha statue is the Buddha himself; it also represents one's own Buddha nature. On a philosophical level, these representations and concepts are of course "empty", or the illusions of existence (*maya* in Sanskrit). In semiotic terms, the symbol (signifier) and the signified are inextricably enmeshed. In reflexive terms, the symbol reflects one's existential inner nature.[18] In Vajrayana, during the "generation stage", the objective of the meditator is to enter the Mandala of the deity and encounter a deity such as Chenrezig, who emanates our compassionate aspect. The "completion stage" of Vajrayana is being at one with the deity. Subject and object are foreshortened and finally at one.

The Second Floor

Early in the morning, a pilgrim walks down another dark corridor. She goes up three steps to unleash the lock herself in order to continue her *'khor ba* rounds. She enters successfully. Other pilgrims also walk up the steps. The final step has a door frame that they have to walk over. It is ever so slightly awkward for the uninitiated in tow, for he has to bow slightly and regain his step gracefully. That slight bow is a reverence for the monastic space that the architecture enforces. Within the inner sanctum, there is a hidden ceiling in which Vairotsana, a great Buddhist teacher

[18] Toni Huber refers to a "secret self" that the adherent wishes to be liberated from the endless cycles of rebirth, whether in the hells, earth, or the temporal heavens. Toni Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 1999), p. 99. Here I am making a distinction between a Buddhist philosophical or epistemological understanding of self. This contrasts to the more academic phenomenological and sociological discourse in the chapter below.

who came to be called "like the boundless sky", is said to have hidden in order to escape the wrath of the murderous Queen Marpo (fig. 3.6).

Fig. 3.6. On the second floor, adherents line up to see the hidden ceiling under the two white arrows.

Vairotsana writes the story in his autobiography. According to this account, Vairotsana wandered all over south Asia for thirty years in search of Buddhist teachings outside Tibet, which he later described as a type of exile. Just after 755 A.D., Vairotsana returned and gave secret teachings to the King of Tibet and his Buddhist ministers. He taught the King in the same manner as his teacher Shri Singha had taught him – by day the causal gradual approach and at night the "fruition approach" (Dzogchen). But political intrigue at court cut short the King's study with Vairotsana. The Indian king had got wind of the transmission of the secret doctrines to Vairotsana. Assisted by Queen Tsepong Za of Tibet, who had her own political agenda, the Indian king had Vairotsana slandered. The Queen and her Bön ministers wanted to arrest and execute the great Buddhist scholar and translator, but Vairotsana hid in a hidden ceiling. The King found someone else, dressed him as the monk, and then had him executed, in accordance with the usual old Bön practices of ransom and sacrificial ritual.

Fig. 3.7. A shrine to King Trisong, who holds a sceptre and Vairotsana. This view greets the visitor who climbs a precarious ladder to peek into the hidden ceiling.

When the Queen's staff eventually found the concealed scholar, he was exiled despite his pleas and banished to the far east, to Tsawa Rong in the country of Gyelmo Rong. There, he taught Dzogchen to figures who have since become legends: Yudra Nyingpo, Sangton Yeshe Lama and the old beggar Sangye Gompo. In central Tibet he taught Nyak Jnanakumara, and the Khotanese Queen Liza Sherab Dronma. Later he was invited to Khotan.[19] Perhaps embittered by his exile, Vairotsana predicted that the King's lineage would expire and that the country would experience years of turmoil. The prophecies apparently came true as the country suffered over two hundred years of religious civil war and the so-called Dark Ages. After 1000 A.D., Atisha of Bengal brought Buddhism to Tibet. Many historians claim that Bön became "Buddhacized".

If Tibet's tradition is followed, this ceiling is a symbol of the ebbs and flows of Buddhism in Central Asia and Tibet. It was an oasis of non-Buddhism in the eighth century and is now a hidden oasis of Buddhism in a Tibet that, along with parts of Mongolia, is faced with a brutal modernity. The story of Vairotsana is not a well-known anecdote except among the followers of the "old

[19] Keith Dowman, "Legends of the Dzogchen Masters", in *A Resource for Vajrayana Buddhists* (http://www.keithdowman.net/lineage/dzokchen_masters.htm, accessed August, 28, 2010).

lineage", or Nyingma, but it is being revived, perhaps, in modernity, as pilgrims young and old await their turn to climb a somewhat precarious ladder to glimpse a hidden King and his teacher, Vairotsana.

There is some complexity in finding textual affirmation of this ceiling since Vairotsana's autobiography refers to hiding in the pavilion's column while the King found a substitute.[20] Any evidence of the event in the ceiling itself has been removed since the actual ceiling seems to be a new reconstruction, perhaps built after the havoc of the Cultural Revolution when both the third and fourth floors were ruined. This is an example of "historicity" meeting with the reality of contemporary practice of the *'khor ba*. If a culture agrees to a story despite the indications of divergent facts, does is it make the story any less true? Tibetans believe they are descended from the monkey while Christians believe they are descended from Adam and Eve. Which is veracity and which is more authentic? Legend and customs might vary widely from what we in the West now regard as a verifiable historical account, but these narratives continue to shape the society and individuals who believe them.

Around 755 A.D., King Trisong, mentioned above, imported all the Indian sages to Tibet.[21] Whether or not the story of Vairotsana is true, Samye is a sacred space of great importance to Tibetan Buddhists. All the lineages of Tibetan Buddhism come and visit Samye. It is part of the Tibetan national consciousness equalled only by the great early Tibetan buildings such as Jokhang, Potola and Ramoche. Monastically and institutionally, Samye is a first amongst equals.

Samye's original statues were likely sold or destroyed in the Bön suppression of the ninth century or another such event before the Cultural Revolution of 1966. It is quite likely that there

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[20] Vairotsana's autobiography as recorded by his disciple Yudra Ningpo in *The Great Image* presents the latter version. Yudra Ningpo, *Ani Jinba Palmo, Trans. The Great Image: The Life Story of Vairochana, The Translator* (Boston: Shambhala, 2004), p. 74.

[21] Thus deciding the dispute in the Samye Debate, in which Indian Gradualists were pitted against the Chinese Chan "Instantanists".

were once larger statues on both the upper and lower levels. The statues on the second floor are eight of Buddha's disciples, including Samye's first monks and abbots and protector deities (fig. 3.6).

Fig 3.8. Walking in the dark narrow inner corridor means the pilgrim has an intimate encounter with Buddha's past lives. The walls are about 5 meters high.

Fig. 3.9. Upon reaching the inner sanctum, the pilgrim is greeted by a protector deity as well as Buddha's disciples.

Fig 3.10. Acala is a Wisdom King who vowed to protect the Buddha but also to destroy one's delusions: ignorance, anger and envy.

Fig 3.11. Butter lamps. The pilgrimage inside and outside the Utse.

Fig. 3.12. Yambulang is a typical Tibetan fortress structure but its main floor is adapted for a small *vihara* (hall) with small statues on the side.

Fig 3.13. Shakyamuni, inner sanctum, Samye monastery. Side view.

Fig. 3.14. Sakyamuni Buddha, inner sanctum, Samye monastery. (Reproduced from Benoist Sebire, "Pictures of Samye".)

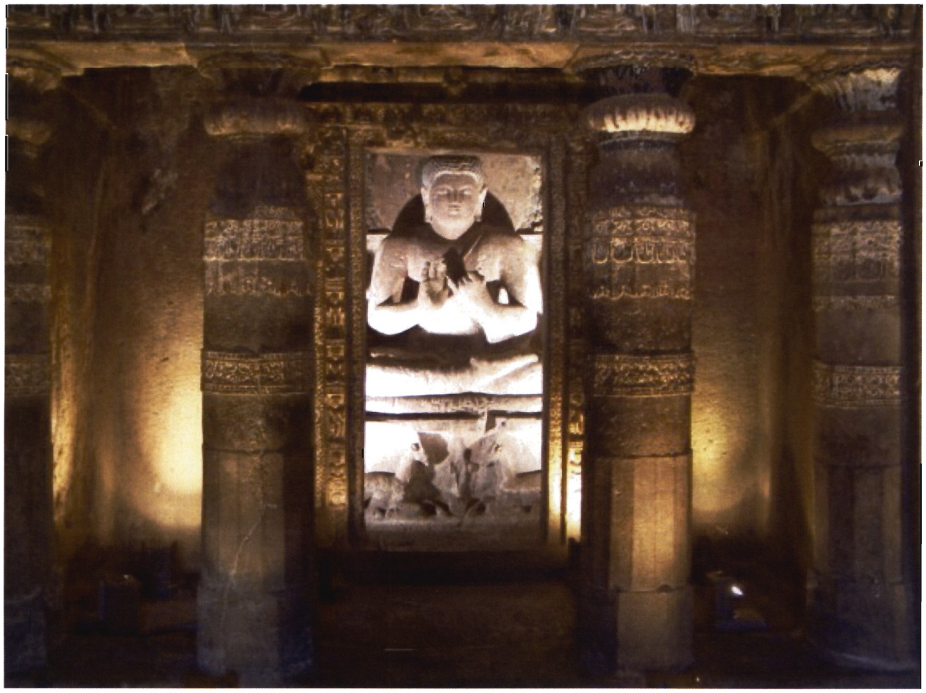

Fig. 3.15. Buddha and pillars, Ajanta Cave number 4. (Reproduced from For Mom, Love Steve.)

Fig 3.16. Pillars and Buddhist statues, Ajanta Caves. (Reproduced from Psingh Choudhary, "Ajanta Caves".)

Fig 3.17. Brocaded parasols of victory, Samye Monastery.

Fig. 3.18. The clerestory on the second floor is covered, muting the harsh sunlight and increasing the sense of mystery and the statues lit by butter lamps.

Fig. 3.19. Curved corridor of deity statues, Ajanta Caves, India. (Reproduced from Iloveindia.com, "Ajanta Caves".)

Fig. 3.20. Corridor in the Utse, Samye Monastery.

Chapter IV. Finding the Tibetan Self in Samye

IV.1. Purification Rituals

In the seventh century, as in many societies throughout history, Tibetans were concerned about famine, illness and drought. Living under harsh conditions in high altitudes, the shamanistic Bön priests were not always able to find a remedy to ward off these "evil deeds". According to tradition, Indian *tantra* presented alternative "magical" technologies. Along with its tantric veneer, Buddhist discourse presented itself as a more amicable approach to these issues by turning within. It emphasized a less daunting alternative of addressing one's inner demons through meditation, rather than focusing on external cures for ailments and hardship. Buddhism exhorted emptiness. It required an awakened recognition that the dualities of the inner contemplative life and the outer material life are illusory.[22]

King Trisong Deutsen issued an edict that tried to establish a monastic and scholarly epistemology imported from Indian Buddhism that complemented his semi-nomadic military empire, and wanted to establish the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. However, he was unable to build his Samye Monastery; his ambition to do so only led to a two-hundred-year-long civil war, which ended in the demise of the Yarlung Empire. This is the historical account. According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, construction on Samye was in fact begun, but *nagas* destroyed the monastery during the night (fig. 4.2). The solution was one of consecration and purification through rituals and devotion. Through the use of magic rituals and chants, Indian Buddhism had to triumph over and subjugate the local deities and non-Buddhist deities. One means by which this

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[22] This is a explanation from a modern practitioner of Buddhism: "What do Buddhists believe in? The Buddha explained that life inevitably means problems, frustration and pain (at the latest at death). These problems are caused by our ignorance, confused emotions and negative actions. As we decide everything with our own minds and we can all change our minds, it is possible to end problems and pain by changing our own minds and leading a wiser and more positive life. Once we completely understand the world, we can make an end to all our suffering and go to Nirvana." Rudy Harderwijk, *A View on Buddhism* (http://www.viewonbuddhism.org/where_beginner_study_practice_meditation.html, accessed May 10, 2010).

was accomplished, according to Buddhist lore, was in the consecrating flight of Padmasambhava described in chapter II. Another practice that Padmasambhava used for this purpose was to use the magic dagger, Vajrakila to create a circle of the mandala, rendering the site sacred and ensuring the safety of the temple. Once this ritual was performed, the *nagas*, rather than destroying the temple, started to help build the temple.

For Tibetan Buddhists, Padmasambhava convinced the indigenous deities of Tibet to adopt Buddhism through magic or rituals. How do such rituals affect the senses of Tibetans on a concrete basis? How did, and do, these inform the notion of the Tibetan self at the very first Buddhist monastery? Vincenna Adams, a medical anthropologist, has proposed a tripartite concept of self—the social, mental and the physical.[23] I propose that these three selves affected how the Tibetan monks prepared the land for a sacred building such as Samye Monastery. The contemporary practitioner who uses Samye Monastery is constituted in the same way, and so has the same motivations, as the original monks. In the rest of this section, I show how the personal self requires a grounding of the senses, which is encountered in rituals such as the Vajrakilaya ritual, which I describe below. The ritual begun by Padmasambhava continues today, and provides an example of the mutual influence of the societal, physical and mental selves as they interact to inscribe the sacred on the Buddhist practitioner.

IV.2. Consecrating Sacred Spaces in Tibetan Architecture

> The life-world is the world of our immediately lived experience, as we live it, prior to all our thoughts about it. It is that which is present to us in our everyday tasks and enjoyments-reality as it engages us before being analyzed by our theories and our science. [It] is the world that we count on without necessarily paying it much attention, the world of clouds overhead and the ground underfoot, of getting out of bed and preparing food and turning on the tap for water.

[23] Vincenna Adams, "Production of Self and Body in Sherpa and Tibetan Society", *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnomedicine*, p.151.

> … The life-world is thus the world before we experience it in its enigmatic multiplicity and open-endedness, prior to conceptually freezing it into a static space of "facts" – prior, indeed, to conceptualizing it in any fashion.[24]

The legend of Padmasambhava grew after the "dark ages" of Tibet during the eight and ninth centuries. The precious guru was said to have subdued demons as he went to Tibet from Nepal. At Samye as well as in Palpung, Nepal, he assumed the wrathful emanation of Vajrakilaya and subdued the *nagas*, as well as the head of the Bön, Pehar (fig. 4.6). Padmasambhava used a magic dagger called a *phurba* (fig. 4.7) to inscribe the mandala designating the sacred space where the monastery was built. Today, the Vajrakilaya ritual is used by thousands of practitioners of the Nyingma sect, the oldest of the lineages in Tibetan Buddhism. In order to investigate what sensory elements are involved in this ritual, and how they contribute to the sense of self of practitioners, I will use a video clip of the New Year's lama dances (*cham yig*) at Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling Monastery in Nepal (fig. 4.8). which are similar to those performed at Samye.[25]

Sound

Chants, prayer, and mantras have magico-medical effects. On the video clip at 00:18 seconds, one can hear samples of trumpets and music. According to Rudy Harderwijk, the vocal chanting and the ritual music of Tibet is "believed to have been originally transmitted by *dakinis* (*mkha 'gor ma*), the realized female yogins of the pure realms. … The musical modes are classified to correspond to the four activities of pacifying, enriching, magnetising, and destroying."[26] Different types of instruments, including cymbals, bells, guitars, lutes, are used. In the Buddhist tradition, the nature of these instruments is wisdom, which makes an offering to the ears of the Buddhas and

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[24] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More than Human World* (New York: Pantheon, 1996), p. 40.
[25] One can follow this chapter by watching the 2010 lama dances at Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling, "Lama Dances 2010," http://www.shedrub.org/videoplayback.php?vid=45.
[26] Harderwijk, *A View on Buddhism*.

Bodhisattvas and all the enlightened beings: "Sound represents wisdom because wisdom is a special power of the mind which penetrates phenomena. Compassion is achieved through great wisdom; interdependence of all phenomena is realized through great wisdom. Of course, all phenomena have the nature of interdependence, causes and conditions, but sound is especially easy to understand"[27] (fig. 4.9). The Buddhist practitioner thus encounters the auditory experience of ritual music as an instantiation of a social meaning that presents the music as a means of access to the spiritual realm.

Sight: Light, Mandala, Dagger

Robert Beer states that Tibetan butter lamps derived from Nestorian Christianity along with rosaries, or *malas.* Nestorians were exiled from the west and went into the Central Asia region, later becoming known as Egyptian and Persian Orthodox Christians. I suggest that, within the contexts of temples or monasteries, the lamps that cast their dim light in the dark Gothic-like inner sanctum hall, or *vihara,* symbolize the light that one sees when one dies and, according to Buddhism, enters the forty-nine days of the intermediate state. Following this light leads one into Amitayus or Tushita, the heaven in which Buddha resides. The burning of lamps is thus not only a sensory experience, but carries devotional, psychological and philosophical meanings for the practitioner.

During the *cham* dances, the lay Buddhist would not only experience Samye itself as a great mandala, or sacred circle, but would also see the mandala that had been constructed for the ritual (fig. 4.8). In the Vajrakilaya ceremony, he would witness the stabbing of effigies representing the inner poison of ego-clinging. These acts would provide a visual reenactment of the heroic deeds of Padmasambhava in which the practitioner participates.

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[27] Harderwijk, *A View on Buddhism.*

Smell: Incense and Tormas

Tormas are barley offerings in the shape of tridents, made to the deities. They are placed on the altar of most temples and shrines, and burned during purification rituals (fig. 4.12). Effigy figures are important in both the Bön and Buddhist traditions as means of capturing and dispelling demonic spirits, which the Bön and earlier Tibetans understood as the causes of famine, disease, and other evils. In Bön, the spirits are understood as external creatures, but in Buddhism they are thought to represent inner demons, especially "one's own ignorance. Ignorance is the biggest demon because ignorance is what gives rise to ego-clinging, emotional patterns, and mental concepts, which are like the retinue of the demon."[28]

The Buddhist ritual incorporates both these meanings. In the video, effigies are burned to symbolize the inner and outer negativities of the past year. Exoterically, by this action the *nagas* and evil non-Buddhist spirits of Samye are captured and appropriated under the Buddhist pantheon of deities. Esoterically, the inner demons are conquered. In both cases, the ritual creates a sacred space worthy of a monastery such as Samye, which was destined to be shaped as a mandala. Both meanings operate on all three levels, the physical, mental and the socially mediated level. The exorcising of demons is a mental exercise that buys into the social context of Buddhism, in which one is expected to perform this exorcism, but physical means that appeal to the various senses, such as smell of the burning effigies, are used to effect the exorcism.

During rituals, juniper bushes are burned in an urn to form a sort of incense, colouring the air a light silver-grey. The smell of the butter lamps is also strong. Buddhists see these smells primarily as offerings to deities, who are thereby called to purify the land. The redolence of the air

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[28] Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche, *The Dark Red Amulet: Oral Instructions on the Practice of Vajrakilaya* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications), p. 57.

as a result of these various burning items provides the pilgrim with a sensory experience of the arrival of the deity, and help involve all aspects of the practitioner in this social practice.

Synesthesia

The physical aspects of the self are aggregates of the senses or synesthesia, which are stimulated in this ritual and applied to the practitioner's body as he absorbs the ritual and prostrates to the emanations of the Buddha—the stupas, the lamas, and the monasteries. The above analysis of how Buddhist ritual uses the senses to invoke the spiritual shows how, in the monastery, the mental self is constructed from a synthesis of all the sensory inputs in the context of the social self. The societal self emerges from the transformations experienced by the personal and mental selves, which are further reciprocally influenced by the societal self. Thus, the mythical is inscribed into the physical, mental and societal selves.

Synesthesia pervades the Vajrakilaya ceremony. The thangka painting is a way for the nomad to visualize or pray to a symbolic representation of the Vajrakilaya, which has possible connotations of pegging, exorcising, healing, staking a tent, or clearing a sacred space (as in Samye). All the elements described above are combined when a practitioner meditates or prays in front of a thangka painting of Dorje Phurba or, in Sanskrit, Vajrakilaya. In fig. 4.6 below, the magic dagger, a *phurba*, is in the lower two hands of Vajrakilaya as he embraces his consort.[29] The razor wings are meant to cut any inner and outer obstacles preventing the practitioner from achieving spiritual awakening. As Vajrakilaya embraces his consort, their feet crush those who broke their vows (*samaya*). The union represents the union of wisdom and compassion.[30]

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[29] The divine embrace is a metaphor for the union of great bliss and emptiness, which are one and the same essence.
[30] Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche, *The Dark Red Amulet*, p. 170. The dark red amulet in the title is the medium in which the *terma* or treasure was revealed to Terton Tsasum Lingpa in the seventeenth century.

IV.3. The Buddhist Self and Synesthesia

The Tibetan understanding of synethesia not only constitutes a personal self for the Buddhist practitioner, but goes beyond this self, collapsing the social and personal self. This is illustrated by the great saint and poet Milarepa, who lived two hundred years after the construction of Samye. He was said to have been meditating when, just as Jesus was challenged in the desert, he was attacked by a demon, called Mara. In response, he realized that Mara's various apparitions were just projections from his own mind and self:

> I pay homage to you Marpa the translator.
> In the immense sky of your compassion
> Are gathered from all sides of the clouds of mercy
> From which feel the productive rain of grace.
> Thus the harvest of your disciples was increased.
> To immeasurable sentient beings as infinite as space,
> Pray grant your grace-waves for the attainment of Enlightenment.[31]

Here the poet pays homage to his root teacher, Marpa, but the poem is grounded in the physical world by employing poetic analogies to describe this figure, such as "sky of compassion", "the rain of grace", "the harvest of your disciples", and so on. Milarepa addresses the demons by calling them hungry ghosts, but instead of an understandable emotional reaction of fear, he is able to detach himself from his emotions and respond:

> With faith arising in my heart,
> I am learning the Dharma.
> Knowing the Law of Cause and Effect,
> I practice austere living;
> Diligent and persevering,
> I see the true nature of Mind.
>
> I realize that all forms are but illusions [Maya],
> I thus free myself from the illness of ego-clinging,
> I thus cut off from the Subject-Object Fetter,
> Of Samsara,
> And reach the Buddha's realm, the immutable Dharmakaya.

[31] Milarepa, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* (Boston: Shambala, 1999), p.58.

I am a yogi who has gone beyond the [human] mind;
How can you afflict me, you troublemakers?
Your vicious deeds and mischievous intentions,
Weary you, but do me no harm.

Again, you must know that mind is the course of hatred....
You collect all the forces therein to throw against me,
It can hardly ripple my all embracing Wisdom.
For in my mind, no fear can arise.

Milarepa tells the demons that since he is now cut off from ego and the duality of subject and object, he has no fear of them and therefore they can longer harm him. Seeing that Milarepa is beyond fear, the demons ask for a dharma teaching. Milarepa asks them to repent and live virtuously and they promise to obey.

This pacification is important in Buddhist discourse. The esoteric level is understood as a personal self, which recognizes emptiness and comes to understand itself as a projection of the social or the inter-subjective level. The subjective and the objective worlds collide for Milarepa. In an inter-subjective dialogue, the saint identifies that there was neither subject nor object; therefore there was no need for fear, no possibility of harm, thereby ensuring the subjugation of the evil and his inner fears.[32] Thus the story of Milarepa expresses how the physical senses, combined with the mind and in the context of a relationship to the social realm, allow the conquering of the self.

[32] "That tree bending in the wind, this cliff wall, the cloud drifting overhead: these are not merely subjective; they are inter-subjective phenomena—phenomena experienced by a multiplicity of sensing objects." Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, p. 38.

Fig. 4.1. Samye as a mandala; the Eastern entrance to the Utse. (Courtesy of Chris Bell.)

Left: Fig. 4.2. Khrisna dances on the naga King Kaliya and his wives. (http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_Jo7lJoQhtjw/SOpOszfJU6I/AAAAAAAAC10/r0vn5RH0ghg/s1600-h/Naga+wikipedia+WQ.jpg, accessed April 20, 2010.)
Right: Fig. 4.3. Festival representations of Padmasambhava and his consort, Yeshe Tsogyal. (Reproduced from University of Kent, "Tibetan Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury".)

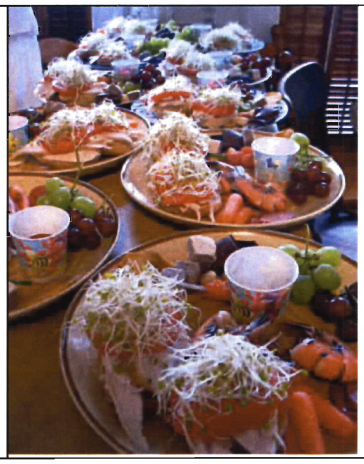
Fig. 4.5. *Nagas* on the ceiling of Pekar Ling, a chapel for the protector deity at Samye.


Left: Fig. 4.6. Varjrakilaya holding a *phurba* in his lower hands. (Reproduced from Vajrayana, "Yidam: As Divindades Meditacionais".)
Right: Fig. 4.7. A *phurba* with *nagas* on the lower blades.

Left: Fig. 4.8. Beginning of footage of the lama dance: *Cham* dance. (Reproduced from Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling, "Lama Dances 2010".)
Right: Fig. 4.9. Large horns called "*dung chen*".

Left: Fig. 4.10. Sight: *Cham* dance in a sacred circle or mandala underneath the Dharmacakra on a temple roof. (Reproduced from Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling, "Lama Dances at Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling Monastery".)
Right: Fig. 4.11. Smell and touch: Heat from butter lamps.

Left: Fig. 4.12. Torma offering. (Reproduced from Palyul Centre UK, "Tibetan Art of Torma-Making with Lama Dawa Norbu".).
Right: Fig. 4.13. The transformative burning of tormas and effigies. (Reproduced from Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling, "Lama Dances at Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling Monastery").



Left: Fig. 4.14. A pilgrim pushing the wooden spokes of a prayer wheel.
Right: Fig. 4.15. Taste: Tsok offering, sweets for the deities. In many communities, these are shared, giving a strong shared sense of a social self.

Chapter V. The Gaze: An Analysis of Tibetan Monastic Space

Fig. 5.0. Monks debate. (Reproduced from Travelblog, "Llasa – Day 1".)

The practices of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism had a normative influence on its architecture. Under an educational mandate, which was meant for the benefit of all beings, these practices combined what I will call the "monastic" and the "sovereign" gazes, that is, hierarchical ways of looking that embody monastic and monarchical power. These depended on the internalization of the Buddhist discourse on karma and mental afflictions. In this chapter I will study plans of the Gyume Monastery in Lhasa, built in 1471 by the Geluk lineage,[33] as well as the eighth-century Samye, originally of the Nyingma lineage, in order to determine how this kind of gaze is manifested in the building typology.

The work of Michel Foucault provides a model of the way that a building can come to embody a particular kind of gaze that, at least to an extent, is helpful for understanding the

[33] Gyume Dra-Tsang was a tantric college for the Geluka school. Monks enrolled here to get their PhD equivalencies in tantric studies, now called "Tibetan Buddhism". In the eighteenth century, enrolment was limited to 555 highly qualified monks who had finished studies at other monastic universities.

architecture and practices at Samye. Foucault's analysis in *Discipline and Punish* of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a prison building in which power practices revolve around 360 degree visual surveillance as a means of control, is helpful for modeling the inscription of the self that takes place within educational, medical, and penal systems. Here, I ask to what extent the model of the gaze presented in *Discipline and Punish* can be used to understand Buddhist religious buildings, examining both the later Gelukpa structures and the earlier structure of Samye. My analysis reveals limitations to the attempt understanding religious architecture on the basis of Foucault's approach, primarily in what I will call the anti-hierarchical "fellowship" gaze found at Samye, and in the Buddhist teaching of emptiness. At the end of this section, I suggest that Foucault himself later became aware of the limitations of the hierarchical model of the gaze that he presented in *Discipline and Punish*, pointing towards a more promising means of modeling the Buddhist monastic self in the Greek notion of "care of the self".

V.1. Discipline and Surveillance: How Karma Forms An Economy of Sins

Monastic architecture relies upon the monk to realize his own karma. The monk was traditionally a penitent who realized the errors of his previous lives and became aware of the three poisons inside him: desire, ignorance and anger. Traditionally, the monk's goal was to make amends for his past sins and to prevent himself from committing further sins in the future. This allowed the monk or penitent to accept the power of the teacher who guided him. The lama's monastic gaze assumed that the monk was a penitent for his bad karma from his current and previous lives and therefore a self-aware "patient". This patient is willing to reform his ailments on while on the path of self-liberation of Buddhahood.

This sets up the monk/penitent as a parallel case to Foucault's prisoners, sick, and insane. According to Foucault, these figures, having become objects of knowledge, had their bodies inscribed with power through the internalization of norms imposed by an authority figure. In such a way, the selfhood of the penitent was shaped by adherence to social rules. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault writes,

> The legal punishment bears upon an act; the punitive technique on a life; it falls to this punitive technique, therefore, to reconstitute all the sordid detail of a life in the form of knowledge, to fill in the gaps of that knowledge and to act upon it by a practice of compulsion. It is a biographical knowledge and a technique for correcting individual lives. The observation of the delinquent 'should go back not only to the circumstances, but also to the causes of his crime; they must be sought in the story of his life, from the triple point of view of psychology....This biographical investigation is an essential part of the preliminary investigation for classification of penalties before it becomes a condition for the classification of moralities in the penitentiary system. It must accompany the convict from the court to the prison, where *the governor's task is not only to receive it, but also to complete, supervise and rectify its various factors during the period of detention'*.[34]

In the case of the Buddhist project of enlightenment, the "governor" was not only the practitioner himself but also the spiritual teacher. The "period of detention" is monastic study and training. In the advanced stages of training and retreats, the monk undertook the *vinaya*, more than 200 monastic vows, as he accepted the supervision and the rectification of the penitentiary system. In Buddhism, unlike in Foucault's account, the adoption of the norms of the system includes the recognition of the unity of the practitioner with all of existence. In advanced Buddhist training, the monk or nun realizes that there is no real division between the adherent and the world of non-duality (*rangtong*) or emptiness (*sunyata*). One Bodhisattva vow is therefore that of the heroic promise to aid all sentient beings before ascending into "full" Buddhahood. The lama and the monk were thus both engaged in a fused relationship of reformer/penitent for the benefit of all human beings and animals in the past, present and future. The discipline was both within the monk and without.

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[34] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (Vintage: New York, 1995), p. 252. Emphasis added.

V.2. Debate and Examination as Spectacle

Nowhere was this discipline more normative than in the layout of a debating courtyard (fig. 5.2, #1). Seated on a throne, the abbot had a clear view of all the monks before him. The high seat was and still is a symbol of high learning as well as sovereign power by virtue of the abbot's office.[35] In figure 5.1, the abbot, who seems to be the thirteenth Dalai Lama, sits higher than the monks and appears to be examining the monks just beneath and directly before him. The more junior monks did not share the same privileged view, but instead witnessed a "spectacle", as Foucault calls it in *Discipline and Punish*. Spectacles are public punishments with the aim of making society more self-aware and penitent. The spectacle/exam is therefore offered, according to Foucault, as an excellent pedagogical technique, and here we can see this technique taking place in the Buddhist monastery.

The abbot appointed a debate master to oversee the courtyard, thereby delegating powers to subordinates. During class debates, the debate master passed his duty onto a *kyorpon*, a class leader. This hierarchy was reflected in the plans for the monastery, as I shall describe below.

[35] As I wish to argue in another project, this sovereign gaze is derived from its transmission from the eighth century kings in Lhasa and at Samyem who decided to submit to the laws of Buddhist dharma, triggering a civil war with the Bon priests.

Fig. 5.1. Debate courtyard, Loseling, Tibet. (Reproduced from Drepung Loseling Monastery, "A Brief History: Drepung Loseling College".)

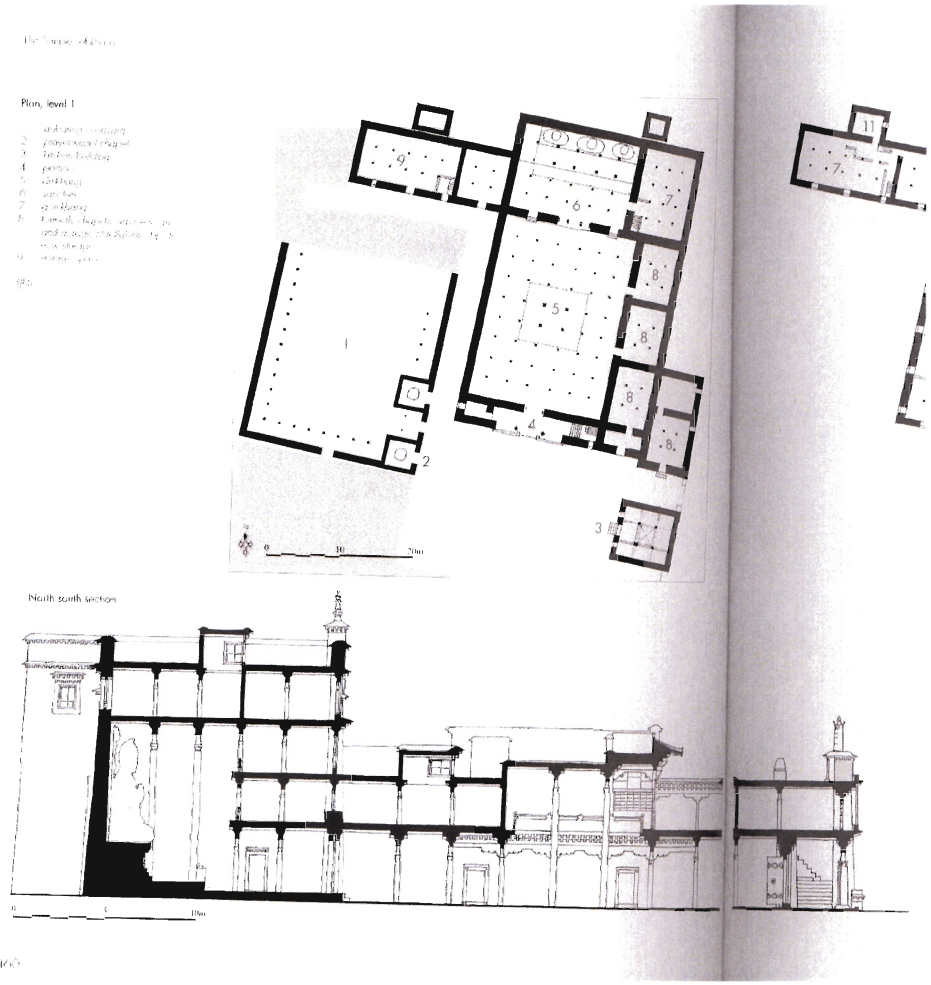

Fig. 5.2. Gyume Monastery plan, level one (above) and cross section (below). #1 is the debating courtyard, while the central position is taken up by the assembly hall, #5, and the inner sanctum with its three-storied statues, #6. (Alexandre, *Temples of Lhasa*, p. 160.)

V.3. Karma as Trope for Disease

On the first level of the monastery, the assembly hall and the inner sanctum (fig. 5.2, #5 and #6) were reserved for formal ceremonies or quiet study and prayers, all under the gaze of large Buddha statues. Although, according to Buddhism, Buddha nature is inherent in all of us, in the afflicted dualistic world that we actually inhabit we see Buddha as something external to us. This view is likely shared by the "everyday" pilgrim who is attached to the trappings of rituals. Thus the Buddha's gaze might have been thought to have a beneficial effect on one's karmic afflictions of anger, envy and desire. This allowed the lama to take on the role of the building doctor.

In Europe, in the Victorian home, in a change referred to as the "domestic sanitation movement", the "building doctor" usurped the roles of the architect and sanitarian. The home was seen as a patient to be diagnosed, treated, and healed by the building doctor.[36] In Tibet, although the lama or abbot who was the keeper of the Buddhist discourse may not always have been an architect, his intentions were nevertheless to shape the occupants through the fundamental underpinnings of the planning.

Much of Buddhist medicine is very much interconnected with spiritual aims. As adherents seek the blessings of clans or families from a lama, the focus shifts from the individual sensory self to a notion of a societal self. The Tibetan doctor (*amchi*) looks at the harmony between family members and neighbors to determine whether those relations are affecting the physical ailments at the level of the body. Buddhist rhetoric also calls upon one to end mental afflictions in order to gain liberation and one's own path to the Buddhahood within. The characterization of the mental afflictions of desire, ignorance and envy as deadly poisons of the ego was a medical trope that allowed for the extension, by analogy, of the instructor as a spiritual guide to include the role of a

[36] Annemarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses and Women 1870–1900* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996), p. 39.

healer. In the monastic context, the lama or teacher assumed the building-doctor's role. By following the teachers' wishes or application of the dharma teachings, the monk or nun would heal themselves of their mental afflictions.[37] Their delusions would cease, or so the societal norms dictated. Health was thus a soteriological issue, with karmic sins understood as unripened afflictions or diseases. This allowed for the power of the gaze of the teacher/doctor to cure his fellowship of monks.

After the fourteenth century, the power of the Dalai Lama solidified as the notion of a healthy body free of disease, illness and famine assumed state power and knowledge. Music and *'cham*, when performed publicly, carry out this therapeutic inscription of the social self, where everyone is connected to the clans and other Buddhists. The self in question is a relational and dialogical Tibetan self. Prayers, mantras, circumambulation and study of the teachings (dharma) were supposed to be beneficial to the monk or nun. They had a therapeutic effect on one's karma from previous lives. Nuns would be re-born favorably as a monk and allowed to enter the Buddha heaven, Tushita. Heaven is a gendered space that only allows entrance to men, who were not tainted by worldly concerns of the leaky body, i.e., menstruation. This hierarchy was reflected not only in the teachings such as this one, but also in the organization of space in the monastery, as I explore in the next section. Thus the notion of karmic health naturally leads into an examination of an analysis of spatial power in the Tibetan monastery, both before and after the thirteenth century.

V.4. Hierarchy

Thomas Markus wrote about the Saint Gall monastery built in Switzerland in the twelfth century,

> The monastic community had its formal structure. Inside the monastery church the roles of its members was signified by spatial location and by differences in the amount of space allocated, in the elaboration of the furnishings, in seeing and being seen by others, and in entrances and circulation routes. At the apex of the pyramid was the abbot, deriving

[37] Annemarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way*, p.157.

authority from external relationships of church and state and ultimately from an invisible presence who was signified by iconographic signs.... Closeness to the heart of things was a sign for both the living and the dead.[38]

In Buddhist monasteries, the room furthest from the entrance is the most powerful, because a person would need to pass through all the preceding rooms to get to it, making it the most difficult to reach. The head abbot and the Dalai Lama not only had larger rooms that were the furthest from the entrance four levels below, but their rooms were also the closest to the main shrine statues of the Buddha, as the cross section shows (fig. 5.2, 5.3). Their quarters hovered above the largest of the giant statues in the inner sanctum. Here, sovereign and the monastic power combined, as the Dalai Lama of the fourteenth century was the head of both church and state, while the abbot was the third most important person in Tibet under the rule of theocracy. The Tibetan state had assumed powerful control as the Dalai Lama was installed as leader, thus combining monarchic with religious power. The Sakya and Geluk lineages can thus be understood as moving from the monastic gaze into a royal or state gaze. The turning point came in the early fourteenth century, when the Mongolian armies policed monks of the less powerful sects or lineages, forcing them to disrobe or join state sponsored lineages.

Foucault argues that Napoleon similarly had both the gazes of the modern state and the ancient monarch, and that this underlay his power:

The importance, in historical mythology, of the Napoleonic character probably derives from the fact that it is at the point of junction of the monarchical, ritual exercise of sovereignty and the hierarchical, permanent exercise of indefinite discipline. He is the individual who looms over everything with a single gaze which no detail, however minute, can escape: 'You may consider that no part of the Empire is without surveillance, no crime, no offence, no contravention that remains unpunished, and that the eye of the genius who can enlighten all embraces the whole of this vast machine, without, however, the slightest detail escaping his attention (Treilhard, 14). At the moment of its full blossoming, the disciplinary society still assumes with the Emperor the old aspect of the power of spectacle. As a monarch who is at one and the same time a usurper of the ancient throne and the organizer of the new state, he combined into a single symbolic, ultimate figure the whole of the long process by which the pomp of sovereignty, the necessarily spectacular manifestations of power, were extinguished one by one in the daily exercise of surveillance, in a panopticism in which the vigilance of intersecting gazes was soon to render useless both the eagle and the sun."[39]

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[38] Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (London New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 23.
[39] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 217.

For Markus, this symbolizes ultimate authority. Foucault, as he did in the case of Napoleon, would point out that in the Buddhist monastery the authorities were intersecting: that of state, church, education and medicine.

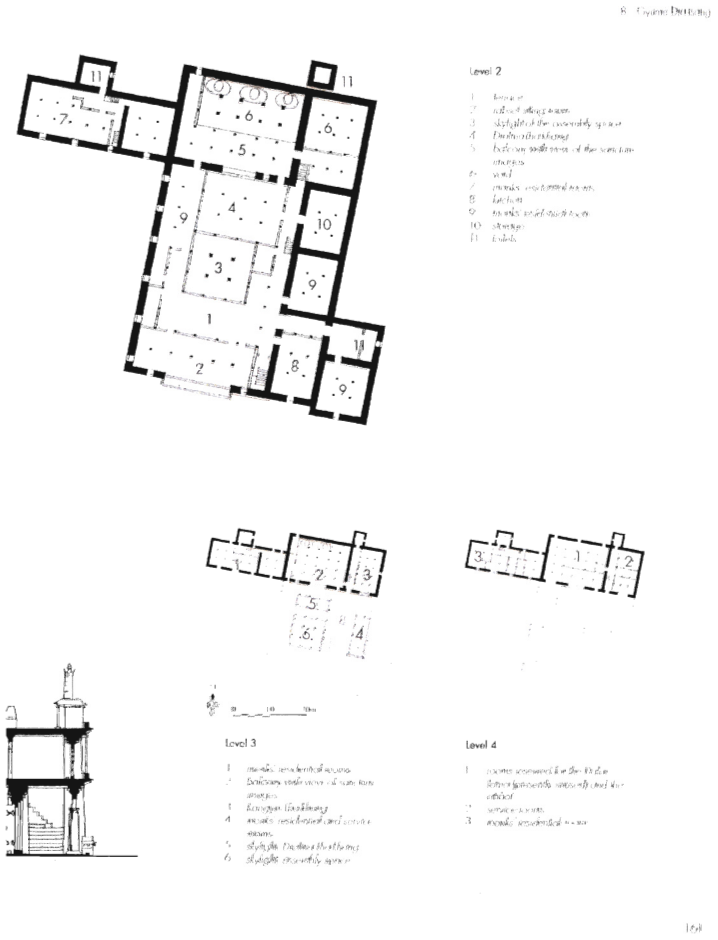

Fig. 5.3. Gyume, levels 2 through 4. On level 4 at the bottom right, room 1 was the Dalai Lama's room and/or the abbot's room, and was directly above the Buddha Statues. (Alexandre, *Temples of Lhasa,* p. 160.)

Fig. 5.4. Inner sanctum: pilgrims and monks as Buddha gazes on at Jokhang Temple, Tibet, eighth century. (Alexandre, *Temples of Lhasa.*), p.11.

Samye was built before the integration of state and religious power, and this is likely to have been reflected in the original layout of the monastery. After the installation of the Dalai Lama as leader of the nation, he had a special room at Samye, but prior to that it is unclear where the head abbot stayed. It is true that there was a separate building for the top monks at Samye, but in general there is less evidence for a hierarchical organization of monastic space at Samye than at other monasteries, including Gyume.

V.5. Fellowship

There was a hierarchy at Samye, but it was less pronounced than in monasteries built after the fourteenth century. At the Gyume College, if the fourth floor was reserved for the Dalai Lama when he visited, then the more functional aspects such as toilets, storage spaces and kitchen were all on the lower levels. This was in keeping with the hierarchical structure. The more senior monks

seemed to be on the floor just below the abbot, level 3 (fig. 5.3). The rooms were relatively small and isolated from the hectic activities below. On level 2, there were shared monk's quarters (fig. 5.3). This level also had a shared balcony overlooking the statues, allowing for more of what I call the "fellowship" gaze, that is, a non-hierarchical shared experience of looking. The construction of level 2 allowed for the shared experience of a balcony view of the Buddha statues. In *Building Power*, Anna Andrzejewski describes a similar effect in a different space, in which "Gazes worked in the liminoid context of the camp-meeting grounds to shape individuals' relationships to one another in ways that ultimately strengthened the community as whole."[40]

The monks at Gyume experienced the gaze of the fellow graduate students, who had the shared experience of striving for the Geshe degree (equivalent to a Ph.D.). They memorized and prepared for the examinations/debates, while watching the image of large Buddha statues. This was a more egalitarian gaze that encouraged monastic and scholastic learning. The same type of camaraderie existed on the first level again in the larger residential accommodations for the monks. Again, in keeping with the structure of the building, the monks shared the same 5am wake-up calls and designed activities.

At the Samye Monastery, the monks' corridors encircle the building that represents Mount Meru, where the Buddha resides. Doors and curtains between the monk's area and the corridor provide some measure of privacy from the abbot's scrutiny. However, the configuration does not prevent the gaze from fellow monks, either senior or more junior. As figures 5.5, 5,6 and 5,7 show, the fellowship gaze is strongly present at Samye:

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[40] Anna Vemer Andrzejewski , *Building Power: Architecture and Surveillance In Victorian America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 2008), p. 157.

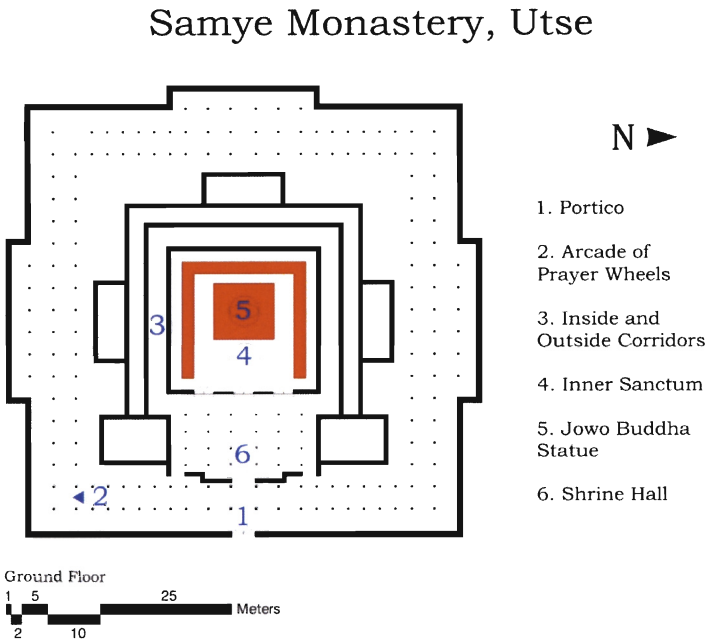

Fig. 5.5. Plan of the main shrine complex. This is repeated for the reader's convenience from chapter III. The Utse or main shrine is surrounded by an outside arcade gallery of prayer wheels. Inside, the inner sanctum, in red, is surrounded by galleries with murals for more circumambulation. Today, the monks live on the second floor directly above these prayer wheels. The abbot and the higher monks live outside in a separate building to the east just south of the Green stupa.

Fig. 5.6. Second level arcade squaring the sanctum at Samye Monastery. This is the second floor above the arcade (see fig. 5.5 above). Note the red cushions and the doors and curtain hangings over the windows. There is a relative sense of informality compared to the main shrine hall. (Courtesy of Chris Bell.)

Fig. 5.7. At Samye Monastery, monks study or pray on the second level arcade. Away from the eyes of the abbot, perhaps, these are examples of the fellowship gaze and liminoid spaces. (Courtesy of Chris Bell.)

In the Gelukpa and Karma Kagyu lineages, tradition normally dictates that the abbots sit directly in front of the assembly hall in front of a statue of the Buddha especially while teaching, enforcing a hierarchical imposition of authority. In the modern 1/6th scale replica of Padme Samye in New York, by contrast, the abbots sit with mere human-sized statues (not ones that are three storeys high), and not in front of the shrine but to the left side corner, near windows. The assembly hall is much shallower than in the plans from older monasteries, allowing a more intimate sense of a humbler and intimate fellowship "gaze" between abbot and students.

V.6. Gazing the Gaze: Deconstructing Foucault's Gaze

Although I have been able to use Foucault's account of power and the gaze to analyse some aspects of monastic space and its relation to the selfhood of Buddhist monks, whether a sovereign or monastic gaze, or even a full fledged prison-like Panopticon, can be found in Buddhist monasteries depends on the time period. Later monasteries may have plans that reflect the intersection of sovereign and spiritual power, but the layout of the eighth-century Samye

emphasizes the non-hierarchical fellowship gaze, and as I have just suggested, later monasteries also attempt to subvert this hierarchical means of organizing space

In the above section, we saw that in a monastic discipline education is foremost in the training of monks. The debate is a prime example, in which a monk progresses under the tutelage and supervision of his elder/superiors under the abbot. The gaze in question is therefore one of education, that is, it is a hierarchical gaze in which the student monk is regarded benignly by his superior with the aim of educating him. The teacher or the abbot sits on a higher seat in a very centralized position, making his authority very clear. All the ranks and the various levels for each year of monastic education are accounted for under a sophisticated, multi-level system of discipline, similar to any other educational setting, from primary schools to universities. I suggest that a hierarchical gaze will be present wherever education is taking place, and so in this respect Foucault's analysis applies to Samye. This educational Panopticon was likely true for the first few scholars who studied under the abbot Śāntiraksita in the Nyingma era of the eighth century, during which Samye was built, and continues to be true today for the monks who study there. Moreover, education in nearly all periods of history has required a privileged position for the teacher and specific to the Tibetan monastery.

However, it is not clear how central or how high the abbot's seat in the main shrine hall was originally, compared to the monks' (fig. 5.5). Was it slightly higher or was it much higher and central? The Nyingma abbot today seats outside and below the inner sanctum of the gilded Buddha and his gaze, facing the other monks, just like in any other classroom. When praying, however, he joins the monks. This reveals how the hierarchical gaze is in Samye only insofar as it is an educational institution, whereas the spiritual aspects of life in the monastery elude this analysis.

In most Gelukpa temples built after the fourteenth century, the Dalai Lama's thrones are fairly close if not directly on the central axis facing the adherents. They are normally in front of Buddha Sakyamuni or mere inches from that privileged axis. However, even under the Geluk's appropriation of Samye in the 1600s, the fifth Dalai Lama's throne lay to the right of the central axis of Samye Jowo's gaze. Rather than facing south into the monks, it faces west. A recent visit in 2010 showed the Dalai Lama's seat within the inner sanctum just to the right. This could have been due the closing of the central doors of liberation and the placing of the protector deities of Pehar and Tsiu Marpo during the festival *bSam yas Doldas* (*mChod Pas*) (fig. 5.5, red section). The deities subjugated under Buddhism are now commemorated annually. According to Kevin Dowman, however, the fifth Dalai Lama installed a fixed permanent throne outside the entrance to the main hall, again to the east and not on the central axis. In Buddhism, the east is a privileged position occupied by Akshobya, one of the five Buddha *Dhārani dharanis*.

What kind of gaze is implied by this placement of the throne? This depends on who occupies it. For the teacher, it is an educational gaze. For the Dalai Lama, it is a monarchical gaze. Any argument to this effect would be tenuous, and must be based on the imperial ambitions of the fifth Dalai Lama in Lhasa, for example, the major expansion of the Potala in the seventh century. The Dalai Lama also made major renovations to the Samye monastery. Was there was a conscious accommodation of this early monastery within the Gelukpa architectural pantheon of great monasteries? Until we examine textual sources we may tentatively claim that the fifth Dalai Lama accommodated his aspirations within the original intent of the eighth century, that is, the Nyingma tradition. Foucault's account applies less readily to the power of the fifth Dalai Lama, who placed his Samye throne to the side and never on the central axes in deference to the Buddha's gaze. It is

an implicit recognition that even the Dalai Lama's power is worldy and therefore subservient of the transcendent gaze that of the Buddha.

V.6. Care for the Self

The use of Foucault's notion of an authoritative gaze, embodied in the layout of a space. Spiritual aspect. Even Foucault acknowledges it. In 1981–1982 Foucault gave a series of lectures entitled "The Hermeneutics of the Self."[41] Here, Foucault recount Socrates' love for a young man who is rich but has not received a proper education. Rather than counselling a life of idle richness or attempting Athenian politics for the sake of glory, Socrates counsels the young man to "care for the self". This meant intellectual study and also *spiritual purification for personal transformation*. This Socratic notion opens up the possibility that a monk or a Grey Nun in French-Canada could choose to "care for the self" and thusly transform him or herself. Unlike the ancient Athenian slave that Socrates described, the modern person is afforded more occasions for seeking such knowledge (*connaissance*) versus mere know-how (*savoir*). With meagre resources, Tibetan nuns are using partial knowledge of their situations to care for the self. There is a nunnery associated with Samye in Tibet, near the cave retreats of Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyal (the "second Buddha" in Tibet and his consort).

V.7. Etic Reading

An etic view of monastic space, such as the one given in the last few sections, is likely to produce a finding of a centralized "gaze" from a power figure, whereas the foremost issue is in the emically Buddhist discourse is that there is no self in a fully awakened practitioner. During the eighth century, the notion of *sunyata* (emptiness) did not recognize a separation between the adherent and

the Buddha image before them. There is unity between subject and object. Everything and everyone is of "Buddha nature". This notion is also non-conceptual, so can only be grasped in meditation, when one is completely absorbed and has epiphany. As a result, this non-duality might not be present in each pilgrim who might have extreme devotions to Samye Jowo, the Samye Buddha. An etic materialist reading would state that this allows an non-agented devotion to the Buddha as a kind of "supra-deity". This view would claim a self-imposed "gaze" by an all-knowing Buddha, whose rules of dharma are administered by the local abbot or lama. The Buddhist discourse would reply that this is a temporary situation in which the practitioner only exists as a separate subject within the cycle of endless rebirth until they can awaken and see the absolute view. Arguing that the monastic gaze was akin to a highly disciplined Panopticon would be at best an etic reading that ignores Tibet's traditional view of *sunyata*, and the relationship of Buddhist practitioners to Samye and its monastic program. It misses the emic aspect, the experience of aspiring to emptiness and unity.

V.8. Care for the Self

The use of Foucault's notion of an authoritative gaze, embodied in the layout of a space, . Spiritual aspect. Even Foucault acknowledges it. In 1981–1982 Foucault gave a series of lectures entitled "The Hermeneutics of the Self."[42] Here, Foucault recounts Socrates' love for a young man who is rich but has not received a proper education. Rather than counselling a life of idle richness or attempting Athenian politics for the sake of glory, Socrates counsels the young man to "care for the self". This meant intellectual study and also *spiritual purification for personal transformation.* This Socratic notion opens up the possibility that a monk or a Grey Nun in French-Canada could choose to "care for the self" and thusly transform him or herself. Unlike the ancient Athenian slave

that Socrates described, the modern person is afforded more occasions for seeking such knowledge (*connaissance*) versus mere know-how (*savoir*). With meagre resources, Tibetan nuns are using partial knowledge of their situations to care for the self. There is a nunnery associated with Samye in Tibet, near the cave retreats of Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyal (the "second Buddha" in Tibet and his consort).

Chapter VI. Conclusion

This project has examined the first two floors of the Main Shrine of Samye Monastery from a pilgrim's viewpoint as well as from the viewpoint of sensory and space analysis. I have argued that there is not only a sensory self but also a mental and a societal self, and that these three selves interact and influence each other in the performance of Buddhist ritual. I used the work of Michel Foucault to help explain the production of the self that takes place in the Buddhist monastery, as exemplified by Samye, but the applicability of his account was limited by lack of a hierarchical order of gazing in Samye monastery.

The significance of Samye is as a building and institution that stood between Tibet's past and its future; between Tibet's pre-Buddhist religion, Bön, and that of its imports, still new in the eighth century, Indian Buddhism and tantra. Thus, I began by considering, in chapter II, the Tibetan imaginary landscape of the earlier mountain gods and their subjugation by the Buddhist *tantrikas*. Mountains, objects, and buildings are all infused with symbolic power, which in the case of Samye reflects the actual syncretization of pre-Buddhist and Buddhist meanings. The arrival of Buddhism under the mandate of the imperial watch and the importation of Indian texts and architecture, which occurred over 1000 years before the establishment of Samye, have important implications for the meaning of Samye temple. Because the temple's architecture is heavily influenced by its Indian roots, the experience of walking through its dark corridors is different from walking through any other temples and monasteries in Tibet and certainly in the modern secular world.

My detailed site description of the sacred space of Samye monastery included an analysis of the religious meaning of architectural elements such as corridors, murals, doorways, statues, thangkas, and victory banners, and emphasized the effects of light on the Buddhist practitioner.

This analysis naturally led to a phenomenologically "embodied" approach fully explained in chapter IV, which gave an account of the production of the self through the use of the senses in the Buddhist ritual of Vajrakilaya. I found that, in the religious practice of Buddhists, the five senses combine in a form of synesthesia. The music, dance, burnt offerings and the physical circumambulations used during rituals create a palpably sensorial experience for the practitioner. Yet this sensory self has to unite with a societal or Tibetan self in order to function harmoniously. In short, this was an academic attempt at understanding what a Buddhist adherent experiences as they move through the monastic space. This process is taken to avoid the etic or outsider Tibetological stance that has exoticized or misinterpreted Tibetan Buddhism from its inception in the last 1800s until the 1950s and, in many academic quarters, the present day. Thus, the project balanced the etic and emic viewpoints in a thorny venture to explore the sacred architecture of Tibet.

In order to provide a contrast to the harmonious concept of the relation between the sensory, mental, and societal selves in Buddhist practice, in chapter V I turned to the notion of power presented by Michel Foucault's conception of the prison of the Panopticon. According to Foucault, in Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, power flows from an authority along the central axes plans of the building. The guards stood in a privileged position, hidden from view but able to see the prisoners in one gaze who, as a result, internalized the rules imposed by this authority. In the Tibetan monastery, the central axes led to the "center of power" of the Buddha statue, which is ostensibly a locus of the central gaze. Foucault's analysis could be applied to some monasteries, especially those built after the fourteenth century. These monasteries were constructed to that the sovereign Dalai Lama could gaze from his seat in proximity to the giant Buddha statues. However, in the eighth century Samye, I found that this power presents itself primarily in the educational

context. Foucault's account applies less readily to the power of the fifth Dalai Lama, who placed his Samye throne to the side and never on the central axes in deference to the Buddha's gaze.

My analysis of the Gyume and Samye Monasteries has showed that monasticism had a normative influence on its architecture and created a clear typology or archetype which was perpetuated over 2000 years. The abbot's power over his students was manifested in the building's architecture and spatial manipulations, in order to allow Foucault's Gaze. Additionally, the abbot's power uses a system of subordinates such as debate masters and class leaders to implement discipline and authority. This authority was partially based on the successful internalization of the Buddhist discourse: one's liberation depended upon removing the obstacles created by one's own past actions (karma). This normative agenda is evident in the layouts of the Gyume Monastery and perhaps Samye. Although this hierarchical organization is evident in these monasteries, nunneries and Western Buddhism show a glimmer of hope that avoids the program of the system of practices that Foucault describes.

Further research could include a thorough analysis of the third floor and the forbidden fourth floors of the monastery. All pictures of these places are usually highly restricted, but many texts remain in Tibetan and Sanskrit and might provide more details.

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