

Parallel Visions: Commonalities in The Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen and The Mandalas of the Tibetan Thangka Tradition

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Introduction

In a convent in 12th century Germany, cloistered Roman Catholic nuns painted remarkable illuminations under the precise direction of their spiritual leader, the Abbess Hildegard of Bingen. At the same time, more than 4,000 miles away, Tibetan Buddhist monks living three miles above sea level in the remote Himalayan mountains, produced devotional paintings depicting exalted states of spiritual consciousness.

Allowing for cultural and dogmatic differences, even an uncritical eye detects in both independently produced bodies of work patterns of commonality of design, meaning and content which are nothing less than extraordinary. The shapes of many of these spiritual maps are identical, or uncannily similar, featuring rug-like rectangles and circles within circles creating a *yantra*¹ which is at once the result of contemplation and an aid which can be used to further contemplative practice.

Whether produced as German miniatures or as Tibetan *thankas* painted on brocade or cotton², these mandalas reflect a common visionary experience perceived in isolated spiritual communities which had no knowledge of or contact with each other. Thematically, the two bodies of work address certain recurring subjects: the nature of the cosmos, the wheel of life, the Deity who embraces the world and religious narratives. Both collections have images and examples of the One above all others, the heavenly host, demons and wrathful deities, the intersection of two dimensions of the Divine and even an omniscient Being who, like the bark of a birch tree, is covered with watchful eyes. These themes are represented in similar patterns of medallions, crenellations, windows and halos. There are layers of circles and ovoids with symbolic content, eight-pointed stars and references to the elements as defined in each disparate culture.

While there are many similarities, there are also significant differences which cannot be dismissed (Hildegard's is the work of a single visionary while the *thankas* represent a collective spiritual tradition, for example). The iconographic vocabulary varies from German Catholic to Tibetan Buddhist tradition and is reflected in many subtle and obvious references to religious doctrines and philosophical and mythic worldviews.

But when even the most glaring dissimilarities are taken into account, the viewer is still left with an impression of staggering coincidence. However, not everyone attributes this to a common experience of spiritual insight. A scientific materialist viewing these works might trace their amazing likenesses to the result of certain evolutionary and mathematical processes. Of course, both collections use circles and squares; what shapes are more common in nature? According to scientific materialism, the visionary experience itself is pathological, the result of religious fanaticism, migraine or sexual repression.³ The haunting beauty, disturbing power and hypnotic attraction of these works is, in this view, nothing more than a psychobiological disturbance, appreciated by those who have a sympathetic disorder of their own.

The view of this paper is somewhat different, finding in the commonalities of these illuminations and mandalas⁴ a confirmation of the validity of spiritual truths. Far from being pathological, the visionary states depicted in these compelling works of art have a positive, enlivening impact on those who create and contemplate them and relate to, and may even contribute to, enlightening experiences among those who study and meditate upon them even into the present day. The fact that similar illuminations are part of the Tibetan heritage do not reduce the Hildegardian visions to a lower plane (in the sense of "Oh, every culture did that!"), but rather add reinforcement and corroboration. The awe, power and import of these prophetic insights erupts in the minds and hearts of spiritually advanced, gifted and disciplined people, whether they abide in the verdure of the Rhenish countryside, the ice-capped peaks of Lhasa or in the silent harbors of the heart.

Common Patterns of Religious Discipline

It is no coincidence that the works of spiritual art we are exploring come out of monastic communities in highly developed religious traditions.

As a nun in the Order of St. Benedict, Hildegard had been trained since childhood in the strict monastic discipline of an order of the Roman Catholic Church, a discipline which not only provided a detailed agenda of work, prayer and study for each day of the year but which also established a context for deep personal and group meditation not commonly available to the laity. It was an environment rich with religious sacramentals of the highest aesthetic quality and craftsmanship, given the elevated socio-economic status of Hildegard's family and the families of those whose daughters entered the order in the area of Rupertsberg in the 12th century. Like secular brides of the most affluent nobility, these brides of Christ were talented artists, seamstresses, writers and musicians who lavished their artistic and intellectual gifts on decorative and ceremonial works in celebration of their Lord. Under Hildegard's direction, these talents were directed to capturing the spirit and content of the Abbess's visions in a highly developed form which inspires, instructs and appeals to both aesthetic and religious sensibilities.

Underlying the intelligence and creative mastery of this process was a profound spiritual tradition which valued solitary meditation as well as collective prayer in which the devout not only spoke *to* God but also *listened* to His Voice as well. The Christian tradition by the 12th century had established itself as accepting the concept that God and His saints spoke to humanity through vision and revelation and, more obliquely, through signs⁵. The Biblical prophets, seers and visionaries did not disappear after the writing of Revelation but continued into the contemporary world, according to the medieval perspective.

While the Benedictine community in Rupertsberg was engaged in this complex translation of revelation into art, Tibetan monks were following a path which, for all its many divergences from the way of St. Benedict, had certain core elements in common. Like Hildegard's community, the Tibetan monks followed a religion which had evolved over hundreds of years from the

teaching of one God-man breaking off from an ancient religious tradition (Jesus from Judaism, Buddha from Hinduism).⁶ Both traditions had single-sex monastic communities devoted to prayer, devotion and meditation, balanced by good works, service to the surrounding lay community and medical, scientific, educational and cultural leadership. Like the Golden Rule in Christianity, the Triple Gem (homage to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha or monastic community) is honored in Buddhism.⁷ Tibetan monks pursued an orderly lifestyle of devotion, learning and service not unlike that of the followers of the Rule of St. Benedict.⁸

For all their obvious differences, these two communities of spiritual discipline, learning, service and artistic development shared many elements in common. Not the least of these was the cultivation of concentration through meditation and contemplation, a process which many believers in the spiritual realm are convinced leads to communion with the divine principle (in Buddhism, it may be called Nirvana or the Pure Land; in Christianity, one of the phrases describing this state is the unitive knowledge of the Godhead). This communion (which, in its most exalted state, has been called actual union with the divine) may involve auditory, extrasensory and visual signs, which many believe are openings leading the devotee out of the “world of dust” into the ineffable universe of divine consciousness. In Kriya Yoga, which traces its origins to the “desert fathers” of the Himalayan peaks, the auditory experiences include the sounds of gongs, bells, the actual music of the spheres (the sound of “Aum,” for example, which the devotee hears but does not generate).⁹ These sounds correspond to the awakening of the chakra psychospiritual centers which symbolically are identified with certain spinal ganglia. In Kriya and Kundalini Yoga¹⁰ (both which would have been familiar to 12th century Buddhist renunciants) visual signs are also have value as signs of progress on the way to transformation.¹¹ In fact, artistic depictions of the seven chakras look like nothing so much as primitive progenitors of Tibetan and Hildegardian mandalas.

The history of symbols representing enlightenment in Hinduism and Buddhism has a parallel in Christian iconography which is telling as we seek

an explanation for the startling similarities between Hildegard's work and the *thankas* of Tibet. From the earliest years following the Resurrection, Christians expressed spiritual truths in iconographic paintings which were much more than mere illustrations and reminders of holiness. With their strong primary colors and remarkable overlays of halos and mandorlas¹², they not only provided a beautiful representation of God made flesh, but also served, like the Tibetan *thankas*, as maps leading the highly focused devotee into an engrossing channel of consciousness leading to higher states of knowledge. The Christian iconographic tradition, no less than the Buddhist, exemplifies a truth discovered nearly two millennia later by the French mystic Simone Weil, who wrote that prayer consists of attention (i.e., concentration), "...the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God."¹³ Icons, no less than written Scriptures, are the result of profound spiritual understanding by the artist and can awaken and focus spiritual energy in devotees who give them their undivided attention. This can be done in a manner which uses worldly symbols to emphasize the Word made flesh (as in the icon of the Mother of God of the Sign (A-45) discovered in Roman catacombs¹⁴), or through the use of purely abstract, geometric patterns¹⁵ with an uncanny resemblance to the topography of a computer chip (A-43). In Hildegard, we see both expressions, the human and the abstract, not as contrived by the intelligence of one woman, but rather as a gift bestowed through Hildegard on all who will see, focus and believe. Thus the *Illuminations* explicitly reveal to us the relationship of humanity, nature and God, but implicitly, through abstract design, provide a roadmap for the wandering soul, focusing her journey and guiding her toward the sublime destination.

The External Representation of Revelation

I do not believe that Hildegard's visions, as depicted in the *Illuminations*, come straight from divine revelation to painted manuscript. Some of the revelations, beheld in childhood, were not articulated until her 40th year (except as they were disclosed to her teacher Jutta and her confessor). During this time, as Hildegard grew intellectually and spiritually,

her understanding of these initial revelations was enlarged and enriched. There were other factors at play as well. The visions passed through a variety of internal and external screens before they were “made public.” These filters included psychological, sociological and political elements; subjective inclinations to emphasize or deemphasize certain portions; objective decisions to focus on parts to make a theological or ethical point; religious strictures regarding the scope of interpretation. I suspect that as Hildegard’s theology coalesced, her memory of the visions bent to conform to her developing worldview, just as the visions themselves had influenced the way she was to think and develop a theological system within her faith.

The Tibetan *thankas*, too, are not expressions of raw visionary images received straight from the Third Eye. They reflect the inevitable influences of deliberate self-selection, subliminal screening, a knowledge of what the community would or would not accept, an awareness of the needs of viewers, a sensitivity to the biases and preferences of religious and secular leaders. Not least among the filters standing between revelation and expression is the role of the artist, who brings yet another dimension to the physical representation of an ineffable spiritual state. Yet in spite of this complex array of filters, factors and agendas, the iconographic nature of these images, Hildegardian and Tibetan alike, captures the essential flame of knowing and opens doors to heightened awareness to those with the discipline to sit, to concentrate and to surrender.

Common Patterns of Subject Matter

Comparisons of Hildegard’s work with the *thangka* mandalas of Tibet reveals a wealth of common subject and design elements. The following are observations of identical or similar images common to both bodies of work.¹⁶ I think it is no odd coincidence that the visual images seem to link seamlessly from one to the other, containing elements in one work which cross over into a different subject’s expression in the other. (Perhaps if we were to chart the course of this weaving back and forth and in and out of subjects, designs and cultures, using two different colored markers to make our point, we would wind up with a depiction of a double helix.)

The Vision of the Cosmos. Both Hildegard and the Tibetan masters depict a vision of the cosmos which details the relationship among God, man and nature. "The Universe," part of Hildegard's first series of Illuminations in *Scivias*¹⁷, incorporates in one compelling image the outer limits of what was known as scientific fact and theological truth in the 12th century (A-1). To this writer's knowledge, there is in Western art, science and theological history no comparable visual depiction of these complex relationships at the time *Scivias* was produced. The cosmos is shown as a cosmic egg (ovoid) on a rectangular background. Note the comparison to contemporary *thankas* based on centuries-old models. The *thankas*¹⁸ depict a similar, atomic model, including rings of gases, waves and flame comparable to the rings of gloomy fire and realm of water encasing the world of Hildegard (A-5-8). To quote from Olschak and Wangyal (*Mystic Art of Ancient Tibet*¹⁹

The Buddhist picture of the world, described in the oldest texts, comprises multimillions of world-systems in an infinite space in a development of hundreds of millions of years. Our earth is only one small manifestation of physical life, one "Receptacle of Perishability" among countless worlds which together form the universe. Thus, the Cosmic Mandalas not only symbolically illustrate the development of a world-system, but commemorate the smallness and changeability of our own world.

The first Cosmic Mandalas is encompassed by a flaming circle. At the Centre is a three-footed spiral symbolizing a first movement, surrounded by rotating wind which condenses into the so-called basic elements, representing the states of aggregation: Wind or Air...Fire...Water...Earth... The emerging forms of the elements are painted in the blue ring surrounding the Centre, in the lower sphere intimating the world-continent to be. The blue Ether represents the all-pervading condition, the source of all elements filling the space of the Mandala. On it, circles are drawn; looking like ellipses in their dynamic intersection, they portray the orbits of celestial bodies, painted in all the colors of the rainbow plus black and white and indicating the directions. These twelve astrological circles of the upper sphere demonstrates the movements of sun, moon and stars in the season.

Like the Tibetan mandala (or perhaps predating it), Hildegard's cosmic vision shows both the enormity of the universe and uses a detailed symbology to relate it to the divine plan. A spherical earth is surrounded by a number of concentric zones with spherical

shapes. The outer zones are elliptical, an amazing foretelling of modern science which has found the earth and its atmosphere spherical while the paths of the planets around the sun form ovoid paths. Throughout this image, we see the sun, moon, the major and minor planets, the stars, winds, pure ether, fire, water not only depicted as pieces in a cosmic material puzzle, but also variously symbolizing the life of the soul struggling through purity of faith to attain Christ-like perfection, join the throngs of angelic beings and ultimately ascend to God. A rich overlay of scientific explanation and spiritual allegory pervades this work, echoing its unbeknownst counterparts in another part of the world.

Wheel of Life. Moving from macrocosm to microcosm, the image of the Wheel of Life can be found in both Hildegardian and Tibetan mandalas. This image depicts the cycle of human life (protected or simply controlled by an embracing deity) from birth to grave and/or enlightenment. For Hildegard, the concept is expressed in several different images, including the cosmic mandala, the wheel shape of several of her icons and Illuminations which are divided “comic-strip style” into a narrative tale (A-1, 9, 14). The Wheel of Life mandalas in the Tibetan thanka tradition combine these images and show the human drama as clasped within the embrace of a wrathful deity (A-10-13). Which brings us to...

The Deity Embracing the World. In “On the Construction of the World” in *De Operatione Dei*, man is at the center of a spherical universe whose perimeter is God (A-9). This deity is the God who is Love and who declares to Hildegard, “I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every spark of life, and I emit nothing that is deadly. I decide on all reality. With my lofty wings I fly above the globe. with wisdom I have rightly put the universe in order. I, the fiery life of divine essence, am aflame beyond the beauty of the meadows. I gleam in the waters. I burn in the sun, moon and stars.

With every breeze, as with invisible life that contains everything, I awaken everything to life.”²⁰

The divine personification of *nous*, the supreme source of mind and reason, is depicted with two heads, one bearded, one clean-shaven (these also or alternatively may be interpreted as male and female; see “The Harmony of Opposites” on page 10 of this paper). However, despite the bicerebral nature of this protecting force, it finds an almost perfect complement in the wrathful deity which embraces the communal Wheel of Life. On the one hand, we have Hildegard’s version: the loving aspect of the deity, a solitary human representing all mankind, the embrace of the spherical world by God. On the other hand, we have the Tibetan perspective: the wrathful aspect of the deity, the human condition depicted in all its variety, the embrace of the spherical world by God (A-10-13).²¹

Demons and Wrathful Deities. Our consideration of the wrathful deity links us to the next subject: the way demons and wrathful spirits are depicted in both bodies of work. A comparison of two examples reveals an astonishing similarity in terms of facial detail, expression, color and form (A-20, 21). While a certain amount of this is anthropomorphic use of facial expressions associated with ire or mischief, the similarities seem to go beyond merely ascribing human expressions to spiritual entities, suggesting (from the Jungian psychologist’s perspective) archetypal images of evil or (from a religious point of view) the existence of a common depiction of evil which can be seen in deep meditation.

An Overlay of Eyes. Again, a representation of a wrathful form in Tibetan art links us with another commonality: the being which is overlaid by eyes. I can’t recall another example in religious art of omniscience represented through the form of an eye-covered spiritual being. Hildegard uses this form to great effect in “The One Enthroned” (A-22). As in the comparisons for the Wheel of Life, the Tibetan version is a more animated depiction, showing Rahula, the

leader of protective deities, riding his black horse through raging waves of fire (A-23).²²

The One. Many of Hildegard's visions show the One either in the form of the Son, the Church or God embracing humanity (A-24). Thankas typically revolve around one central character (the Buddha, a buddha or boddhisavatta²³, god or goddess, celebrated lama or divine couple) (A-25-27). In both bodies of work, the holy One may be surrounded by a halo (or aura) and encapsulated in a circular frame suggesting wholeness, unity and perfection.

The Heavenly Host. And as there are is one, there are also many...very many, to judge by the examples provided. "The Heavenly Host" from *Scivias* shows eight orders of angelic beings spun around the empty "O" (A-28)²⁴ A similar host of spiritual entities hovers around the encircled central figure in many Tibetan thankas, suggesting that while ultimate reality may in fact be singular, there is plenty of company for travelers along the way (A-29).

The Harmony of Opposites. Chinese Buddhists, spiritual cousins of Tibetan monastics, inherited much from the shamanistic and Taoist traditions of their ancestors. Chief among these was a reverence for the Tao, the ultimate Way and principle of all things. The phenomenal world is represented in the Taoist tradition in the yin yang (or tai chi) symbol, two curiously zygote-shaped forms, one black and one white, which fit together to make a perfect circle. Each half has at its heart a fragment of the other indicating that in each element there is the seed of its opposite. The halves are curved to suggest motion, for the components of the phenomenal world (as modern physicists confirm²⁵) are nothing but the flow of energy spiraling up and down an unseeable caduceus and back and forth between invisible poles. Space, which Einstein tells us is curved, is at once alive with infinite energy and hollow with ultimate emptiness (and materialists accuse *religion* of being illogical!).

In Taoism, the union of opposites is not the Tao, nor does it in and of itself lead to ultimate knowledge. The tai chi symbolizes not only the union of opposites, and the seeds of one in the other, but also the bondage of desire. The dark half of the tai chi is forever yearning after the light, the light after the dark. They pursue each other eternally in an ever-intensifying swirl until sometimes, in the blur, one cannot differentiate between light and dark at all. At the same time, yin mutates into yang, yang into yin, with no rest, no opportunity to cry "Time out!" and get to the root of the madness. For thousands of years, Eastern spiritual teachers have found that the most effective metaphor for the irresistible magnetism of opposites and the degree to which they keep us from fixing on the highest goal is none other than sexual attraction and intercourse. For this reason, Hindu temples are filled with sculptures of gods and consorts in passionate embrace and some Taoist and Indian yogic traditions even use the sexual act between consenting partners as a tool to get beyond opposites into the Golden Flower where opposites melt away in an all-consuming light.²⁶

In this context, it is not surprising to find that both Hildegardian and Tibetan *thanka* representations use male-female polarity to express a high-level of spirituality relating to the issue of opposites. Some may think it "a stretch," but I am convinced that the visionary image entitled, "On the Construction of the World" (A-30) depicts the same concept as the yin yang construct and even depictions of sexual union between divine principles in *thanka* paintings (A-31). Hildegard may regard these figures as a bearded God the Father and clean-shaven God the Son, and well they may be; but as archetypal images, they strike us as perfect examples of the male (with appropriate 12th century top billing) and the female aspects of the divine in indissoluble union.

Symbols, Patterns and Images

In illustrating these and other subject areas, Hildegard uses a variety of symbols, patterns and images which have exact or similar parallels in Tibetan religious art. The sources of this imagery is varied, and may include: a literal depiction of what she saw in her visions, a conscious decision to use familiar objects or shapes to depict revelations of an other-worldly nature, projections from Hildegard's (and the artists') subconscious, the depiction of things commonly seen or used in other religious painting in a new way. Most extraordinary is the manner in which elements of the Illuminations so closely resemble other visionary art from Tibet created in a different ecclesiastical climate so far removed from the hills overlooking the Rhine Valley. Some of these shared symbols, patterns and images include the following:

Shapes. In addition to the common shapes of the physical world, Hildegard's work features **medallions**. This shape was popular in stained glass treatments of the time, the smooth edges fitting nicely into variously arched and pointed panes (A-32). The medallion is another version of the visionary sphere or circle which is the dominant shape used to express the revelations she received. Sacks and Singer both attribute the use of this shape to the pathology of migraine, and it is true that migrainous aura is often in the shape of a brilliantly scintillating ring (A-9, 24, 35). However, the profound spiritual content of both Hildegard's and the Tibetan mandalas and their use in furthering meditative practice and deepening understanding among others belies any theory that this is a mere neurological dysfunction.

Proponents of the "nothing more than migraine" theory may find in the **crenellations**²⁷ which characterize many of the Scivian Illuminations evidence of the jagged, scintillating perimeters of the ring of migraine aura (A-34-36). However, this pattern has many other sources, including its presence in most monumental architectural constructions of Hildegard's day. While not

graphically identical, there are radiating elements in Tibetan mandalas which suggest a similar recurring, emanating energy, all within a series of concentric circles (A-37, 38, 41).

Another shape identical in both bodies of work is the **window**, often depicting persons or angelic beings. "The One Enthroned," which we examined earlier in reference to the eye-covered body (A-22), provides a series of windows revealing pairs of humans looking out from under the wings of divine protection. Various Tibetan icons use similar shapes to house deities, saints and other luminaries, displayed as borders or in the rectangular field which frames the circular focal point (see again the Kalachakra, Vajradhatu mandala, 13th century portrait of Sangy Yarjon, Third Abbot of Taklung, et. al.). The window is a powerful spiritual symbol, suggesting our separation from God but also an opening, a portal of access through which we can behold the beatific vision.

Not unlike circles and the arching shape of windows are **halos**. Halos as distinguishing marks of holiness are not the exclusive prerogative of Christianity. Throughout the world, enlightened beings are depicted with a glow of radiant light or a semi-circle of brilliance surrounding the head and sometimes the entire body (giving rise to the popular New Age fascination with personal auras). Certainly, the concept of the halo is one which Hildegard would have inherited from her religious tradition, but it is also significant that she uses the perfect circle sometimes as a disembodied halo or a halo *behind* a holy figure, such as "The Trinity in the Unity" (A-24). Both uses are common in Tibet, as seen in the 12th century depiction of Avalokiteshvara (full background halo) (A-25) and Amitayus Buddha (head halo as well as background) (A-26).

The use of variously **pointed stars** in both works is remarkable. In "The Universe" (A-1) and "Man's Fall" (A-2), Hildegard uses six- and eight-pointed stars to represent the souls of humanity or the state of completeness. The stars which fairly fly off the page in "The Fallen Stars" (A-44) find equivalent expression in Tibetan art in the eight-petaled lotuses strategically placed throughout many of the mandalascapes. These star-like lotuses are

encased in medallions, perhaps connoting the eight-fold path which the Buddha prescribed for those who would break the chains of suffering in this lifetime.

And there are other commonalities, including: the concentric layering of circles, the boxes within boxes taking the viewer every deeper into the image, the depiction of the winds, animals in all their variety, the narrative of a Scriptural or Scripture-inspired tale, the little depictions of Hildegard off to the side, like a lama observing from the corner of a thanka, the rug- or tapestry-like frame containing the mandala.

One of the most intriguing is the floorplan, so like a microchip or electronic circuit board in construct. Referenced in footnote 15, the Kalachakra mandala draws on the layout of a temple to create a pathway for the soul. Hildegard's "Tower of God's Anticipating Will" and other Illuminations which reference architectural details give new meaning to Christ's words, "In my Father's house, there are many mansions (rooms). I go to prepare a place for you."

These and other symbols, patterns and images repeat themselves in each body of work. It is also as though one held up a mirror, creating two sets of complementary images. The question is, of course, which is the original and which the reflection?

Conclusion

Surely there are too many similarities to dismiss the concordance of these visions, which are parallel on so many major and minor points, as mere coincidence. Even if one were to generate evidence (which does not exist at this time) proving that cloistered German nuns and isolated Tibetan monks somehow had access to a common source of work and inspiration...even then, it would not be sufficient to explain away the overarching synchronicity of this testament to the unity of divine revelation, a single source of inspiration and showing which reveals itself to committed souls in diverse times, places and circumstances. My own cultural bias is toward Hildegard; another's could as well be toward the Tibetan tradition. Seeing their works together, side by side, we discover that we have more in common than we have in dispute.

Individually or together, we can sit before the mandala in deep concentration and know that there is one Voice which speaks though many may hear.

¹ Yantra is the yoga of visual symbols. (See Holt, Linda, "Masters of the Mind," *Yoga Journal*, February 1982 Issue No. 42, p. 33-39.)

² This paper deals exclusively with mandalas in the *thangka* tradition and does not include other Tibetan visionary graphics and practices such as sand mandalas. The *thankas* described or depicted are parallel to Hildegard's Illuminations: static, painted, of a size suitable to personal contemplation. Sand mandalas represent a different order of visualized spirituality. They are kinetic, dynamic and deliberately (one might say didactically) ephemeral. Of course, in a sense, time and war have turned an original manuscript of *Scivias* into a kind of sand mandala, wiped clean not by the willing hands of adepts but by the indiscriminate flames of ravaged Dresden.

³ Singer, Charles. *From Magic to Science*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1958, p. 231.

⁴ "A mandala consists of a series of concentric forms, suggestive of a passage between different dimensions...From its various manifestations we can derive three basic properties: a center, symmetry, cardinal points." Jose Arguelles, *Mandala*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boulder, Co., 1972, pp. 12-13.

⁵ The science of herbalism which was advanced in Hildegard's time provides many examples of such signs. Leaves, flowers or roots were thought to be useful in treating body parts which resembled them, and, in fact, this often proved to be true. See Culpeper's *Complete Herbal* ca. 1650 for a "modern" view of this symbology.

⁶ One hears so often that Buddhism is a-theistic that one almost accepts it as incontrovertible fact. However, I think it more a matter of semantics than substance. There are many bases for a point-by-point comparison between elements of Christian and Buddhist religions, especially in contemplative traditions and practices, but that is the subject of another essay at another time.

⁷ Saddhatissa, H., *The Buddha's Way*, p. 25, George Braziller, New York, 1971.

⁸ Blofeld, John, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet*, E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1970.

⁹ Yogananda, Paramahansa, *Self-Realization Lessons*, Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles, California, 1984.

¹⁰ Kriya Yoga provides a pathway to divine union through certain breathing exercises and physical postures. Kundalini Yoga has a number of variations (meditation, postures, vigorous movement, even guided massage therapy) which lead the devotee from the lowest states of consciousness (symbolized by the base of the spine) to the opening of the Third Eye in divine union.

¹¹ It is worth noting, however, that Patanjali, the father of Yoga, cautioned adepts in as early as the 4th century B.C.E. that while they are signs of progress along the way, visions and other extrasensory phenomena should not be taken as an end in themselves. The adept may have to exercise even greater discipline to get beyond them to the sightless, soundless abode of perfect union. See *Threads of Yoga: The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* transliterated by Linda Holt, California State University, Dominguez Hills, California 1993.

¹² The term comes from the Latin term for almond. "...a much-used iconographic device symbolizing heaven and the glory of God." Forest, Jim, *Praying With Icons*, p. 55, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1997.

¹³ Weil, Simone, *Waiting for God*, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," p. 105, Harper & Row, New York, 1951 (originally published by G.P. Putnam's Sons). "Although people seem to be unaware of it today," Weil writes, "the development of the faculty of attention forms the real object and almost the sole interest of studies....It always has its effect on the spiritual plane and in consequence on the lower one of the intelligence, for all spiritual light lightens the mind." (p. 106) These quotes support the idea that icons, the Illuminations and Tibetan mandalas all provide a venue for deep religious concentration which is the one sure route to the highest knowledge.

¹⁴ Forest, p. 114

¹⁵ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Sacred Visions, Early Paintings from Central Tibet* (catalog), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1998, p. 165: Kalachakra Mandala.

¹⁶ Please note that while Hildegard's work is restricted to the 12th century by virtue of her lifespan, Tibetan *thankas* are referenced from the 11th to the present. This is done for several reasons. Because of factors such as impermanent materials, fire, storms, war and invasion, there are few 11th and 12th century *thankas* still in existence, necessitating the study of later specimens. However, because the Tibetan iconographic tradition was communal in nature, our study need not be confined to the length of a human lifespan.

Elements used in *thankas* in the 11th and 12th centuries continued to be used and developed in succeeding centuries, and are even incorporated in contemporary *thanka* art.

¹⁷ Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, The Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press, New York, 1990, p. 91.

¹⁸ One of the mandalas illustrated in the appendix is in fact a wall painting, not a *thanka*. due to the sparsity of ancient Tibetan *thankas* surviving to this day. It was used, however, in much the same manner as its cloth-painting "cousins" and depicts a similar visionary view of the cosmos.

¹⁹ Olschak, Blanche Christine, and Wangyal, Geshe Thupten, *Mystic Art of Ancient Tibet*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1973, p. 108.

²⁰ Hildegard of Bingen, *De Operatione Dei*, tr. Heinrich Schipperges in *Hildegard von Bingen, Welt and Mensch*, Salzburg, 1965, cited by Matthew Fox in *Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen*, p. 40, Bear & Company, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1985.

²¹ It's tempting for Christians to point out that their god is benign while the Buddhist version is monstrous. This is not exactly the case. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God may be seen as wrathful as well as forgiving, while in Buddhism there are as many ways to portray gods and *boddhisattvas* as there are human emotions. Both traditions are "on the same page," however, when it comes to the Godhead or Nirvana: the sublimest state cannot be represented for it is beyond description or depiction, possibly beyond infinity itself.

²² The image shown in the appendix is from a fresco in the Temple of Tamshing in eastern Bhutan. While not a cloth *thanka* per se, it represents imagery in a similar mandalaic manner.

²³ A buddha is a being who has entered Nirvana and achieved emancipation. A *boddhisattva* has experienced Nirvana but has deferred total attainment until all sentient beings are free of suffering.

²⁴ The use of the empty "O" as a symbol of the ultimate state of being/non-being is identical to its usage in the Ten Oxherding Pictures of Zen Buddhism. Over the course of 10 pictures, the oxherd seeks to capture and tame the ox. In each frame the ox changes color from pure black to pure white, disappearing from the picture entirely in Frame 9, and in Frame 10 everything is gone except the empty "O." This series of drawings, which expands upon the familiar *tai chi* (*yin yang*) concept, symbolizes man's quest of the Tao, the ground of all being. Frame 10 looks like nothing so much as a floor plan for a Hildegardian or Tibetan mandala (A-46).

²⁵ Although not anyone's idea of scholarly works, two popular books from the '70s, Capra's *The Tao of Physics* and Zukav's *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* provide intriguing *reductio ad absurdum* perspectives on the ultimate as interpreted by physics, reducing subatomic activity to a dance of particles which may not exist set in motion by a force without an origin. See Capra, Fritoj, *The Tao of Physics*, Berkeley, California, 1975, and Zukav, Gary, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, William Morrow & Company, New York, 1979.

²⁶ Holt, Linda, "Taoism and the Allegory of the Internal Alchemy" Parts I and II, *Qi: The Journal of Traditional Eastern Health & Fitness*, Winter 1992 and Spring 1993,

²⁷ See "The Zeal of God," "The Building of Salvation" and most notably "Tower of God," which have the same energy pattern within a circle as many of the more abstract mandalas, notably the Kalachakra series. (While UFO enthusiasts attribute Elijah's wheel to an alien visitation, it could simply have been a visionary experience with much to share with Hildegard and her Tibetan brethren.)

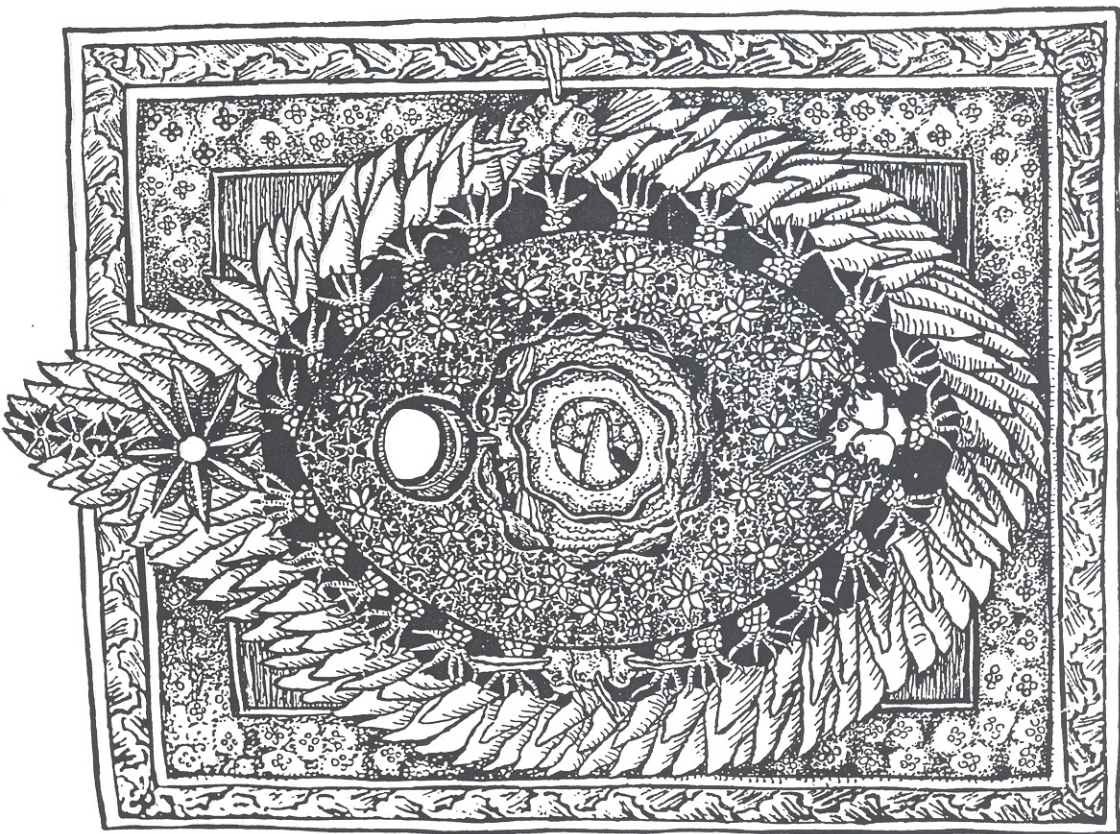
Parallel Visions

Illustration Sources

- A-1 Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*
 A-2 Ibid.
 A-3 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Sacred Visions*, Catalog
 A-4 Olschak, Blanches Christine, *Mystic Art of Ancient Tibet*
 A-5 Ibid.
 A-6 Dharmapala Centre Web Site (contemporary)
www.bremen.de/info/nepal
 A-7 Ibid.
 A-8 Ibid.
 A-9 Hildegard, *De Operatione Dei*
 A-10 Blofeld, John, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet*
 A-11 Reynolds, Valrae, *Tibet: A Lost World*, The American Federation of Arts, New York, 1978.
 A-12 Ibid.
 A-13 Dharmapala Centre, Ibid.
 A-14 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-15 Tibet Art Web site,
www.tibetart.colm/largeimage.cfm/160.html
 A-16 Olschak, Ibid.
 A-17 Pal, Pratapaditta, and Hsien-Ch'i Tseng, *Lamaist Art: The Aesthetics of Harmony*, Museum of Fine Arts. Boston, Massachusetts (no year).
 A-18 Ibid.
 A-19 Ibid.
 A-20 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-21 Blofeld, John, *Mantras: Sacred Words of Power*, E.P. Dutton, New York, N.Y. 1977.
 A-22 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-23 Olschak, Ibid.
 A-24 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-25 Tibet Art Web Site, Ibid.
 A-26 Blofeld, John, *Mantras: Sacred Words of Power*, Ibid.

- A-27 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ibid.
 A-28 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-29 Olschak, Ibid.
 A-30 Hildegard, *De Operatione Dei*
 A-31 Olschak, Ibid.
 A-32 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-33 Asian Art Web Site,
www.asianart.com/mandalas
 A-34 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-35 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-36 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-37 Olschak, Ibid.
 A-38 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ibid.
 A-39 Asian Art Web Site, Ibid.
 A-40 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ibid.
 A-41 Ibid.
 A-42 Ibid.
 A-43 Ibid.
 A-44 Hildegard, *Scivias*
 A-45 Forest, *Praying with Icons*
 A-46 Suzuki, D.T., *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, Grove Press Inc., New York, N.Y., 1960.

Note: Bibliographic information is contained in the endnotes to this paper. Where a reference is not included in the endnotes, it is more fully referenced in this list.



THE UNIVERSE

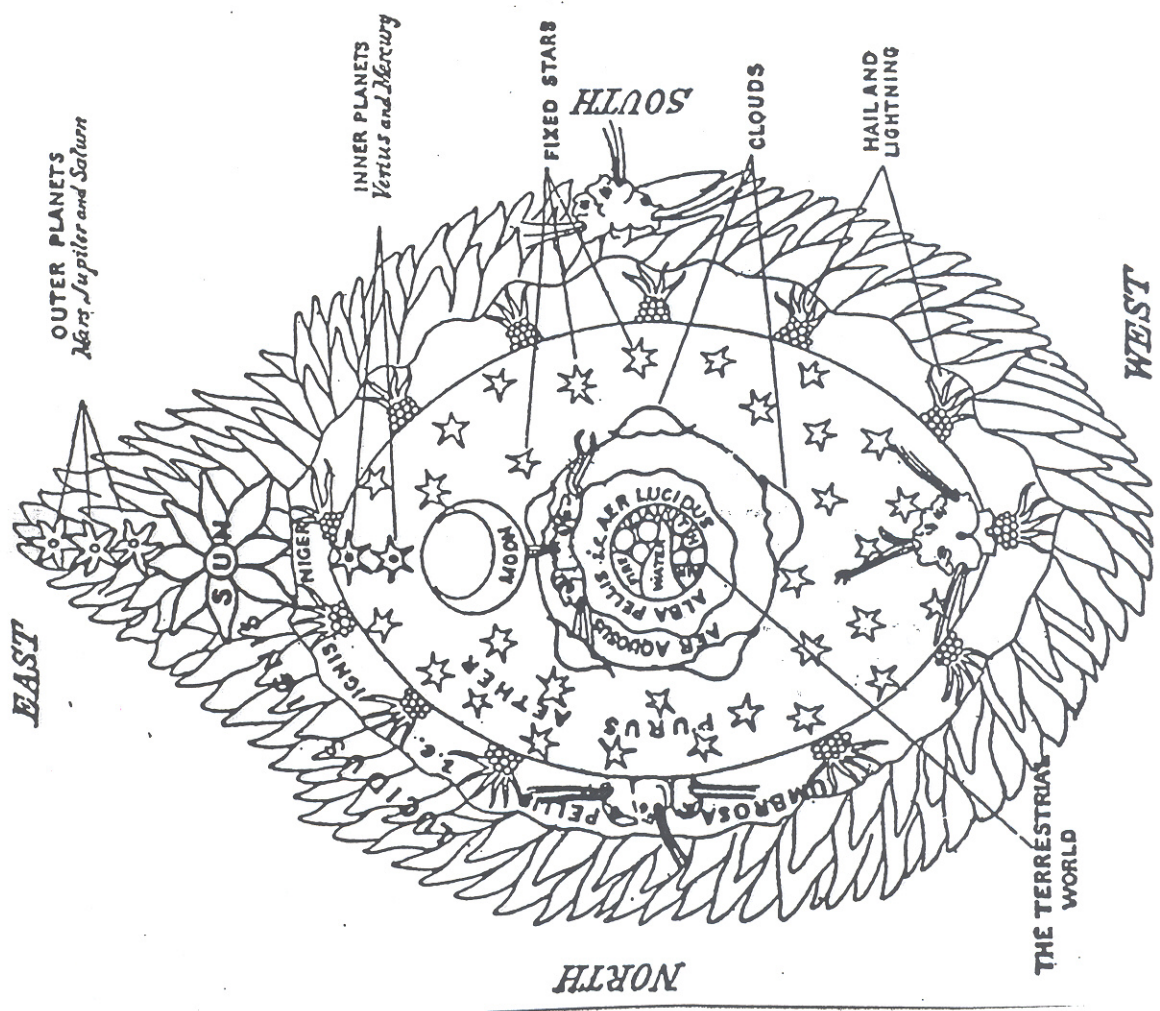
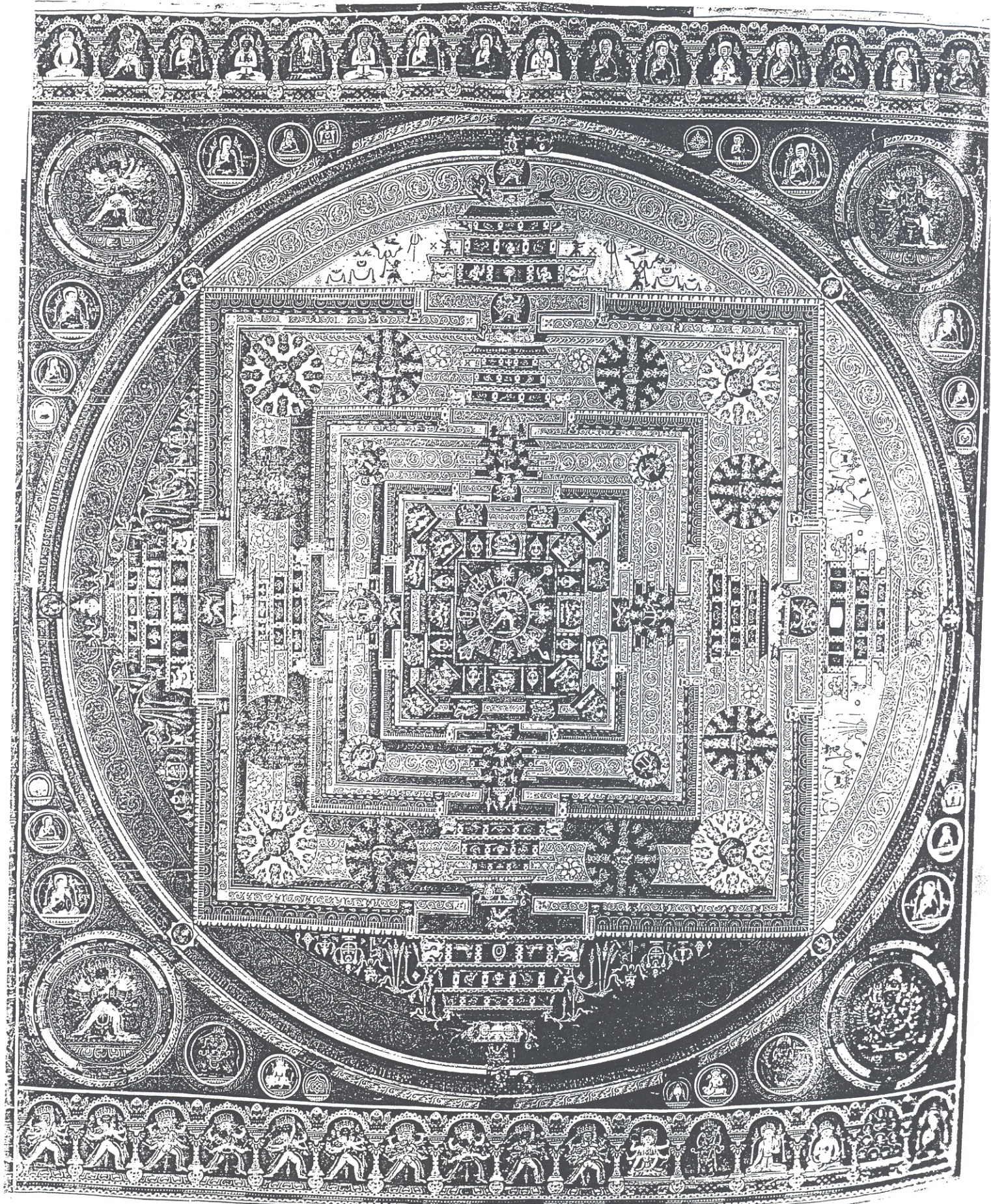
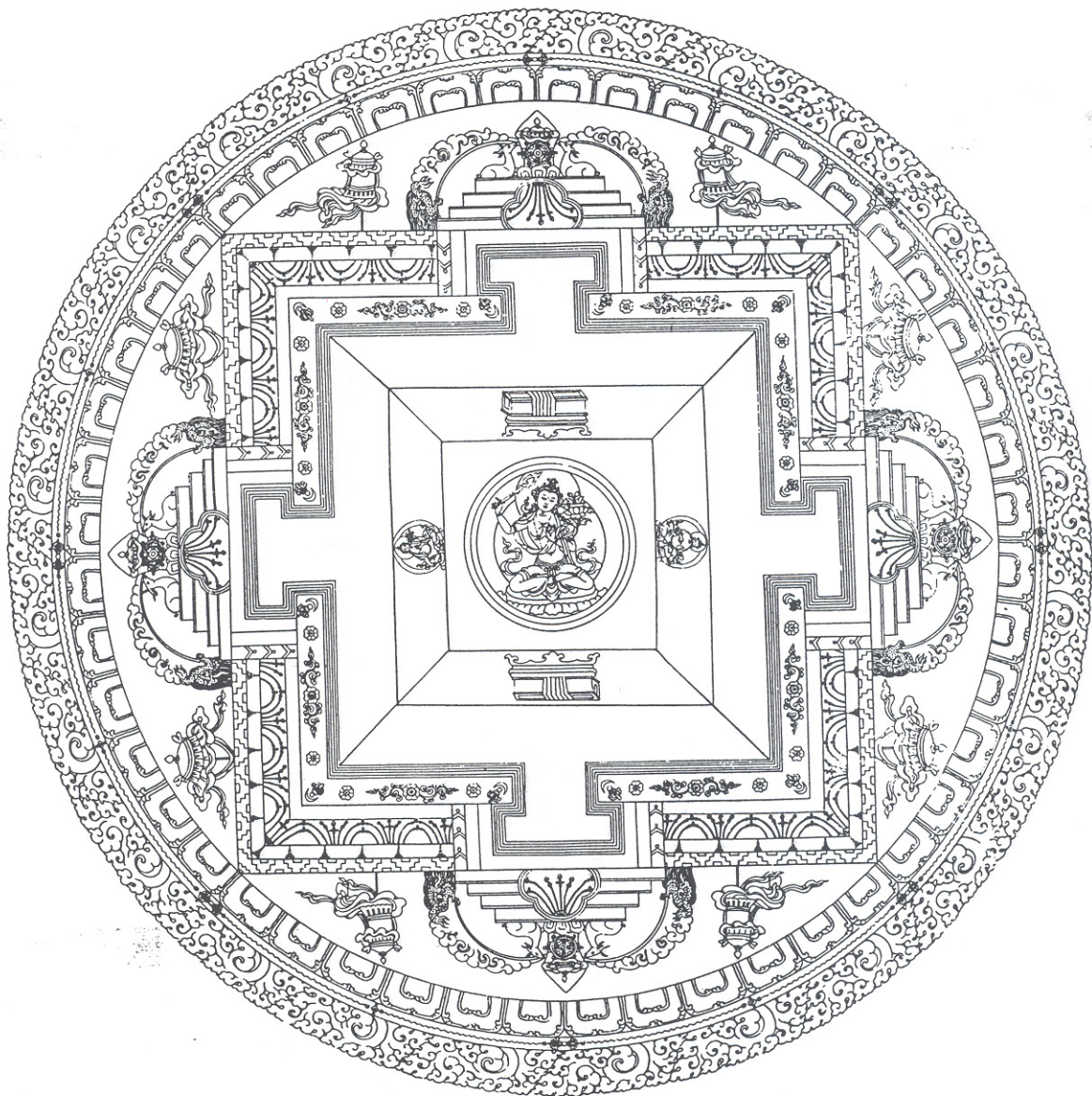


FIG. 95.—Hildegard's first scheme of the universe, slightly simplified from a figure in the Wiesbaden Codex.



MAN'S FALL





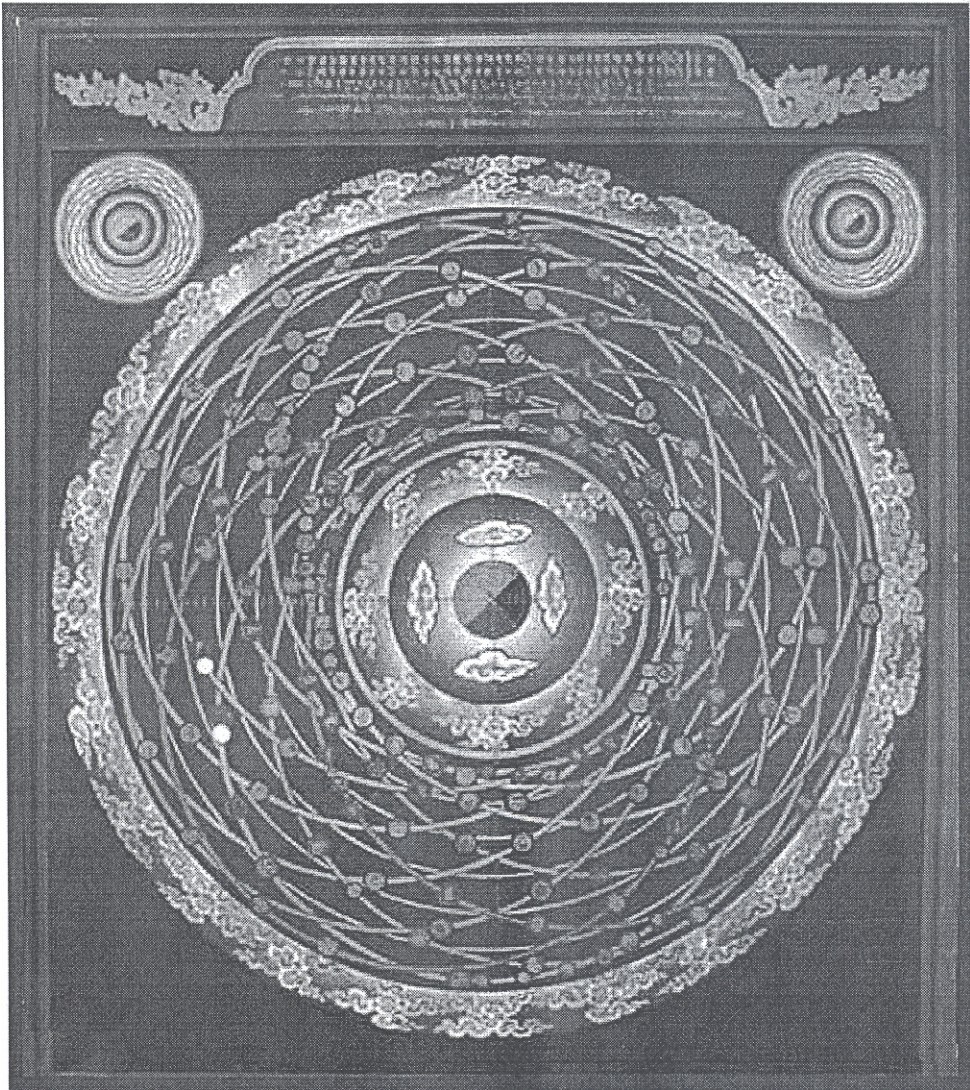
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School of Thangka Painting

9.1 Kosmos Mandala (1)



[More Details / Detailbild](#)



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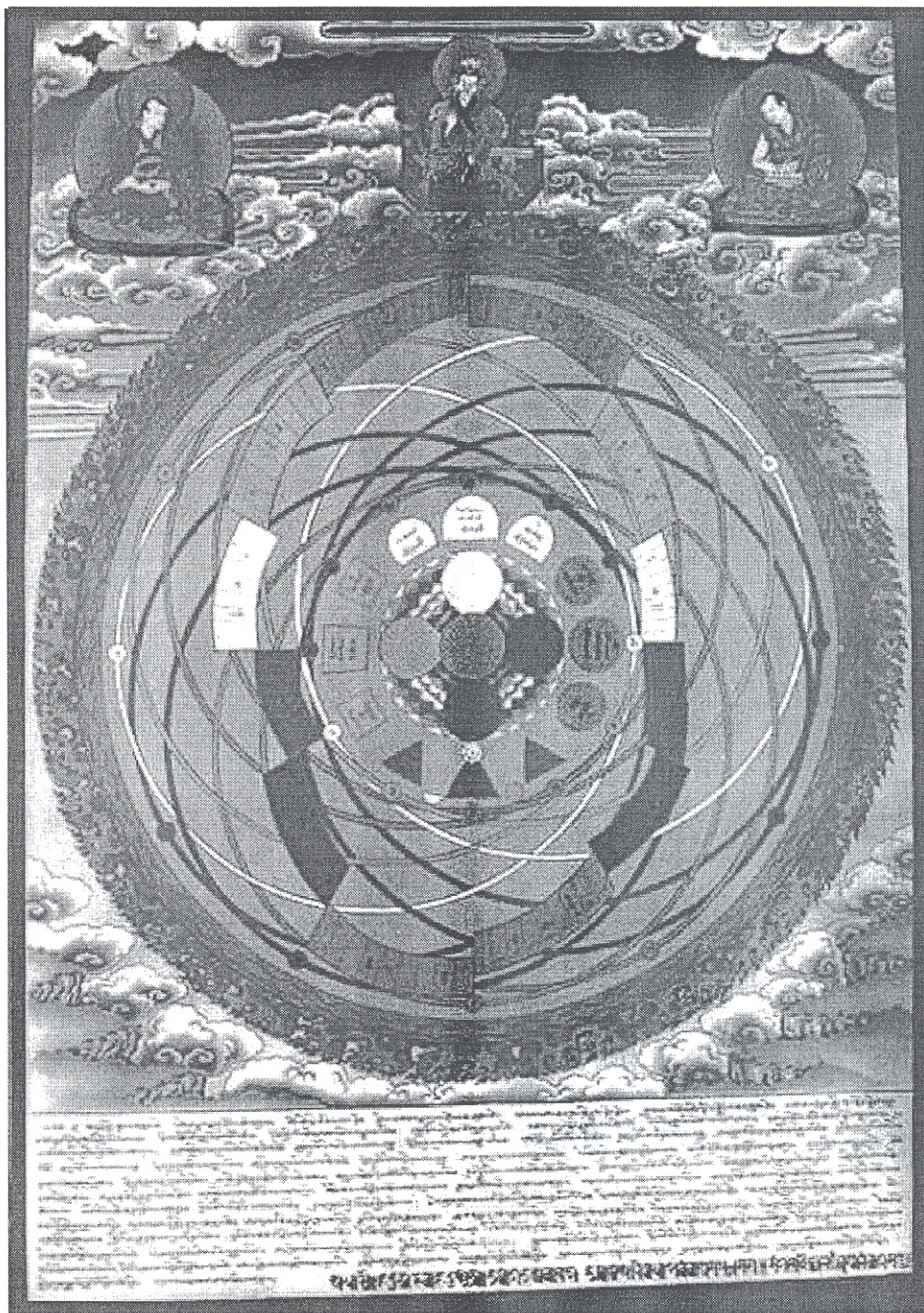
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9.2 Kosmos Mandala (2)

More Details / Detailbild



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9.3 Kosmos Mandala (3)



Detail



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THE TANTRIC MYSTICISM OF TIBET

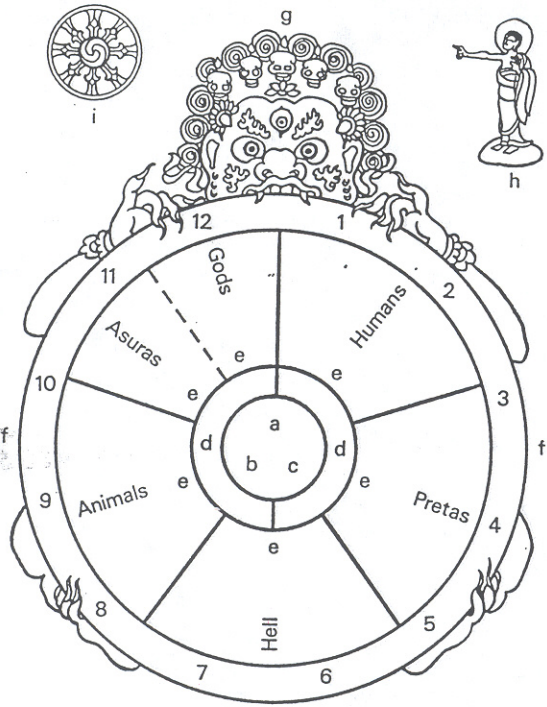


Diagram 4
Key to the symbolism of the Wheel of Life

each rise being succeeded by a fall if evil karma is acquired in the new existence; and each fall being succeeded by a rise when the evil karma is worked off or if the being acquires merit. All these beings endlessly revolve among the six states.

(e) Conditions in each state of existence are depicted graphically.

(f) The twelve links in the chain of causation are illustrated



6. The Wheel of Life



THE WHEEL OF EXISTENCE

This primitively painted *tanka* is a powerful 17th to 18th century example of the endless cycle of rebirth displayed with alarming vividness at the entrance to most Tibetan temples. Devotees were meant to ponder the ultimate delusions of worldly existence while viewing the "wheel" and to be renewed in their striving for release through enlightenment. Clutched by Yama, Lord of Death, the wheel depicts the six realms to which sentient beings are chained, those of the gods (top), titans (upper right), *pretas*, (those guilty of greed in past lives, lower right), hell dwellers (bottom), animals (lower left), and humans (upper left). Each realm has a Buddha who offers salvation with the appropriate symbol in his hands for each realm: "To the gods he brings a lute whose sounds arouse beings from self-complacency; to the titans a sword of wisdom and armor for the spiritual battle; to the *pretas* a vessel containing spiritual food and drink; to the hells a purifying flame; to the animals a book; and to the humans an almsbowl and a pilgrim's staff. The outer rim of the wheel shows the causal nexus or the twelve interdependent causes of rebirth. We may begin at the upper left and proceed clockwise:

1. A blind woman illustrates delusion.
2. A potter illustrates the form-creating activity. As a potter shapes his pots so we shape our karma.
3. A monkey plucking fruit symbolizes consciousness.
4. Two individuals rowing a boat represent personality.
5. An empty house represents the senses.
6. A man and woman embracing symbolizes contact.
7. An arrow entering a man's eye represents feeling.
8. A man being served tea and fine foods symbolizes desire.
9. A person grasping vessels filled with nature's bounty symbolizes clinging to worldly objects.
10. A pregnant woman symbolizes the process of becoming.
11. A newborn child symbolizes birth.
12. A corpse being carried to a cemetery symbolizes death.

Outside of the wheel, in the upper corners, we see Shakyamuni, who taught men how to be free, and Avalokitesvara who helps them to become free.

The Buddha is believed to have formulated his view of life into the "Wheel of Becoming" (*Bhavacakra*) as he meditated under the Tree of Wisdom, and to have first drawn the diagram of the wheel with grains of rice from a stalk which he plucked while walking in a rice field with his disciples. Pictorial details, representing similes and allegories used by Shakyamuni in his teachings, were added to the diagram by the Indian monk Nagarjuna in the second century. Thus the wheel represents one of the oldest Buddhist traditions. The realm of the titans, as well as the Buddhas who stand in each realm, are Tibetan additions. Other details have been adapted to Tibetan life." ¹ *Cat. no. 213.*

¹Eleanor Olson, *Catalogue of the Tibetan Collection and other Lamaist Articles*, volume III, pp. 45-6.

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7.1 The Wheel of Life / Das Lebensrad

[More Details / Detailbild 63 K](#)

[Click here for a Photo from the painting process of this Thangka /](#)

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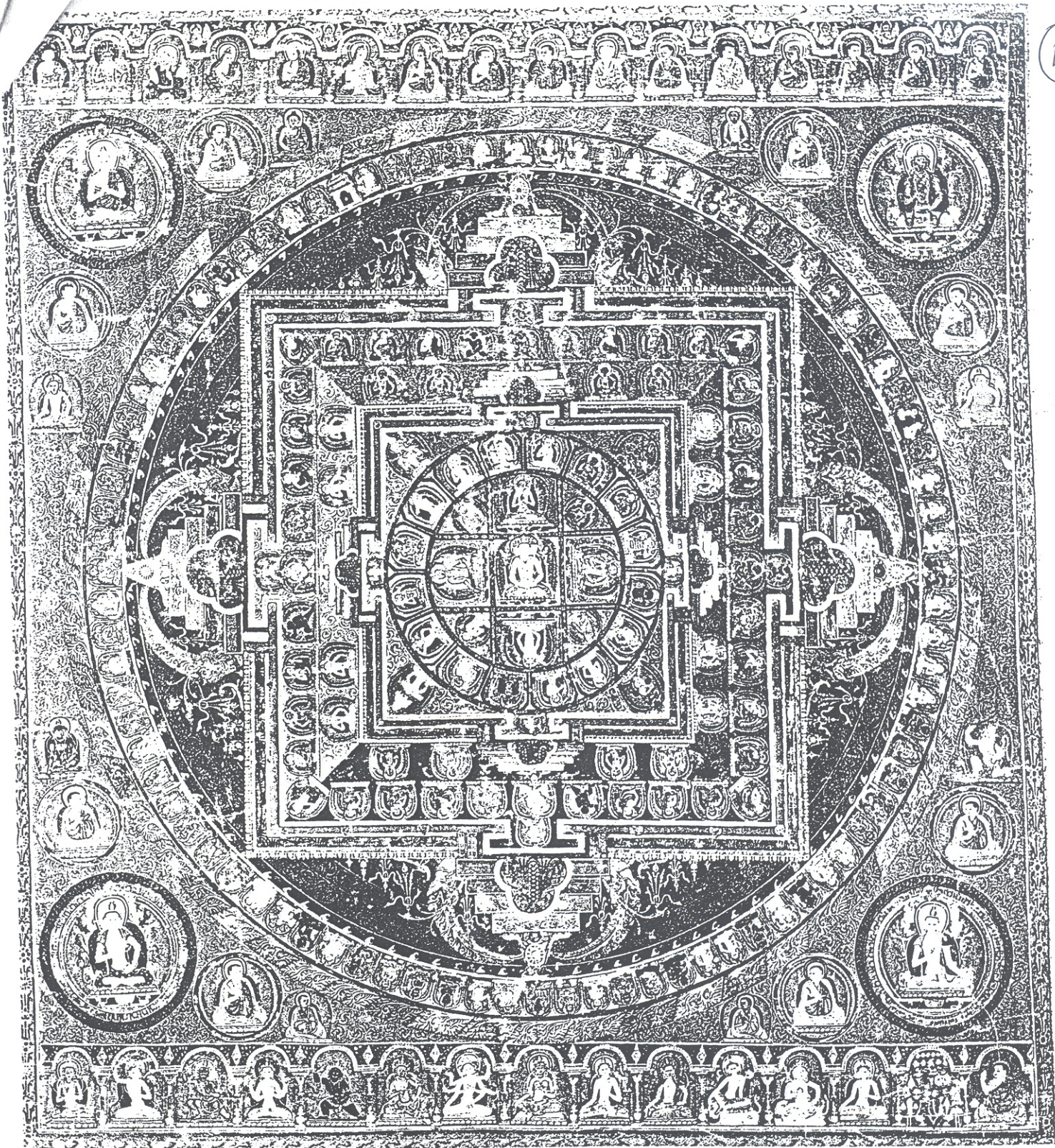


MOTHER CHURCH

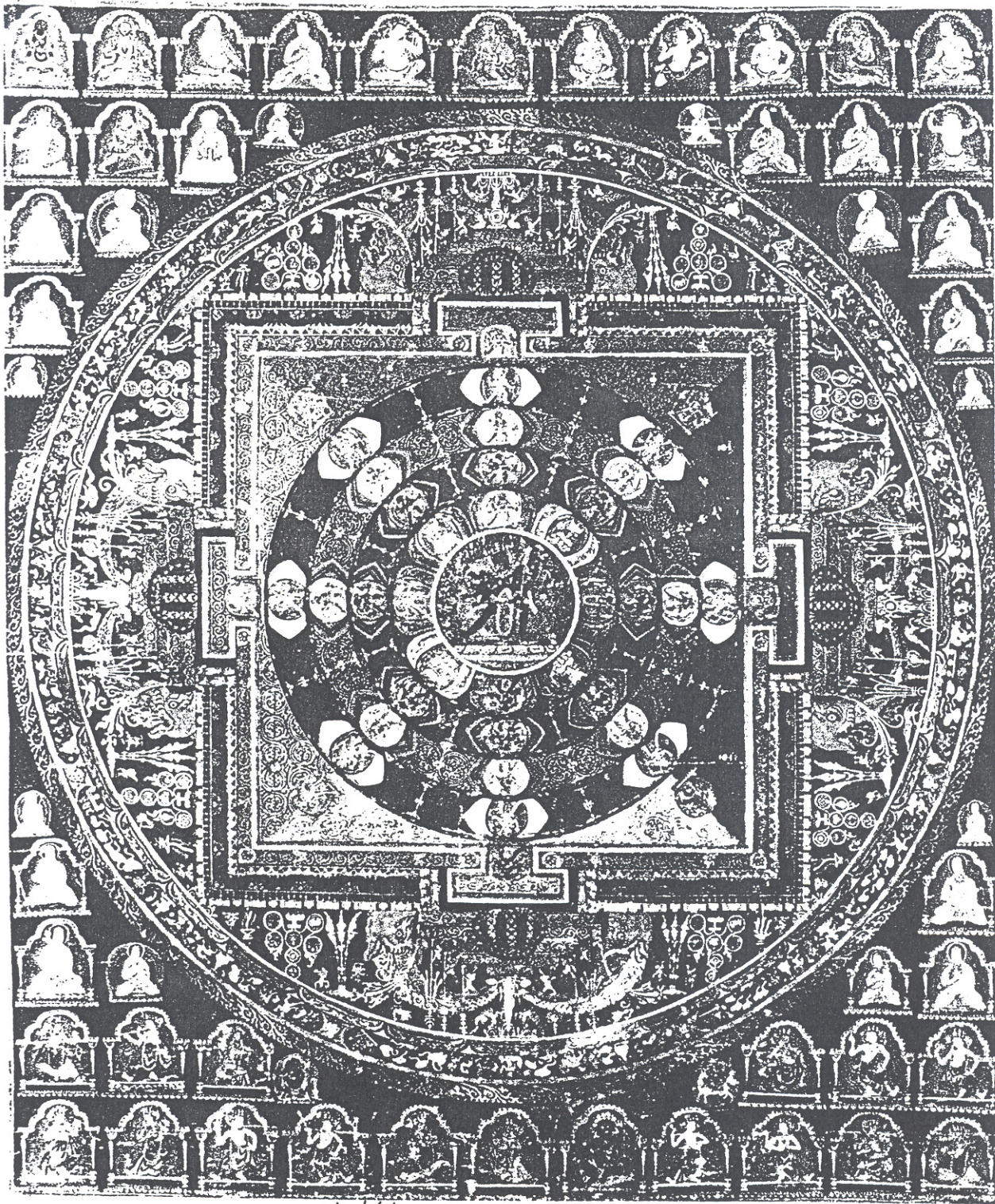
back
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12th century



see p. 19



#14 - see next page
for details

sāhasrapramardanī is here an emanation of Vairocana. On either side of this pentad and extending along the sides to the second last row from the bottom are shown twenty-eight goddesses in five primary colors. Their attitudes clearly indicate that they are engaged in adoring the principal goddess. Of the ten other figures in the second last register, eight represent the Dikpālas, one Mahākāla and the remaining a goddess of yellow complexion. At the bottom are the four guardian kings, a repetition of the four principal dikpālas, Sūrya and Candra, and a scene where a Lamaist priest is performing rituals.

The tanka is probably a work of the Nor school in western Tibet where the Nepali style predominated. Especially characteristic of this style are the vivid reds, the basic composition, the beautiful scroll design and the general figural types. The physiognomies, however, are distinctly Tibetan as are the garments worn by the seven divinities in the central rectangle, the manner of drawing the outline (especially of the female breasts) and the perfunctory attempts at indicating the volumes of the blue figures by different tonalities. In general, the tanka is an excellent example of the Nepali-Tibetan style developed in the sixteenth century in the Nor monastery.

13
Mandala of Vairocana
 Tibet, 17th century.
 Tanka. Gouache on cotton.
 H. 77.5 cm; w. 71.8 cm.
Gift of John Goelet. 67.833

The cult of Vairocana is of great antiquity and is widespread in Buddhist countries. In Japan, as Dainichi Nyorai, he is the supreme divinity of the Shingon sect, and both in that country and in China he is considered to be the originator of the Yogācāra systems of Buddhism. In Nepal, he is often considered to be the supreme Tathāgata and is said to reside within the womb of every stūpa, which is why his plastic representations are rather rare. Equally

rare is his image in Tibet, where the Lamaists consider his cult esoteric and only the initiates have access to his imagery. This is why this tanka representing the mandala of Vairocana as Kun-rig gains especial significance.

Without the exact text on which this mandala is based, it is difficult to identify all the divinities and patriarchs of Lamaism that comprise it. In the center of the mandala is seated the white figure of Vairocana with four heads and his hands in the gesture of meditation (*dhyanamudrā*). (His usual gesture is that of turning the wheel of the Law.) The four other Tathāgatas—Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, Akṣobhya, and Ratnasambhava—are represented in the same circle at the four cardinal points, while in the corners are the four goddesses Sattvajrī, Ratnavajrī, Dharmavajrī and Karmavajrī. The remaining deities, excluding those in the last square of the citadel, seem to follow the prescription of the Vajradhātumandala of the *Nispannayogāvalī* of Abhayakaragupta who flourished in the famous Vikramaśīla monastery towards the end of the eleventh century (see B. Bhattacharyya [ed.], *Nispannayogāvalī*, Baroda, 1949, pp. 10 and 54). The text was of course familiar in Tibet as it is included in the *Tanjur*. But, as is apparent from this painting, there were other traditions as well, and the Lamaists may well have added to the mandala which is why we find sets of other Tathāgatas and divinities included within the mandala proper. On the outside are represented various additional deities and Lamaist monks, while at the lower right corner a lama is seen performing ritual consecration.

It therefore seems that the mandala here is that of Vajradhātu, who is identified with Vairocana. This is also apparent from Japanese Buddhist iconography, where the Shingon sect divides the Yoga mandala into two parts—that of Vajradhātu and that of Garbhadhātu. The diagram of the Vajradhātu shows in the center Vairocana, as the sun, around which revolves in a planetary system the four other Tathāgatas. It must be pointed out,

however, that in the Vajradhātu mandala Vairocana makes the peculiarly Japanese gesture known as *chiken-ini* but when he presides over the Garbhadhātu, which is what he is doing in this painting, his hands manifest the gesture of meditation. Perhaps originally there was one mandala of Vairocana which was later divided into two—that of Vajradhātu and that of Garbhadhātu.

A comparison with the mandala of Samvara (see no. 14) reveals a slight difference in the physical structure of the citadel; otherwise stylistically the two paintings are closely related.

14
Mandala of Samvara
 Tibet, ca. A. D. 1700.
 Tanka. Gouache on cotton.
 H. 76.8 cm; w. 65.2 cm.
Bequest of Daisy Virginia Holde. 65.616

The cult of Samvara or *bDe-mchog*, as he is called in Tibetan, is one of the most important and esoteric of all Lamaistic cults. Equally popular in Nepal and Tibet—and to an extent in China, especially during the time of Ch'ien-lung—he is the principal divinity of an exclusive sect that draws its authority from the *Cakra-samvaratantra*. The ultimate goal of this school, however, is the same as that of others, viz., the attainment of "great bliss" and this is what the name *bDe-mchog* implies.

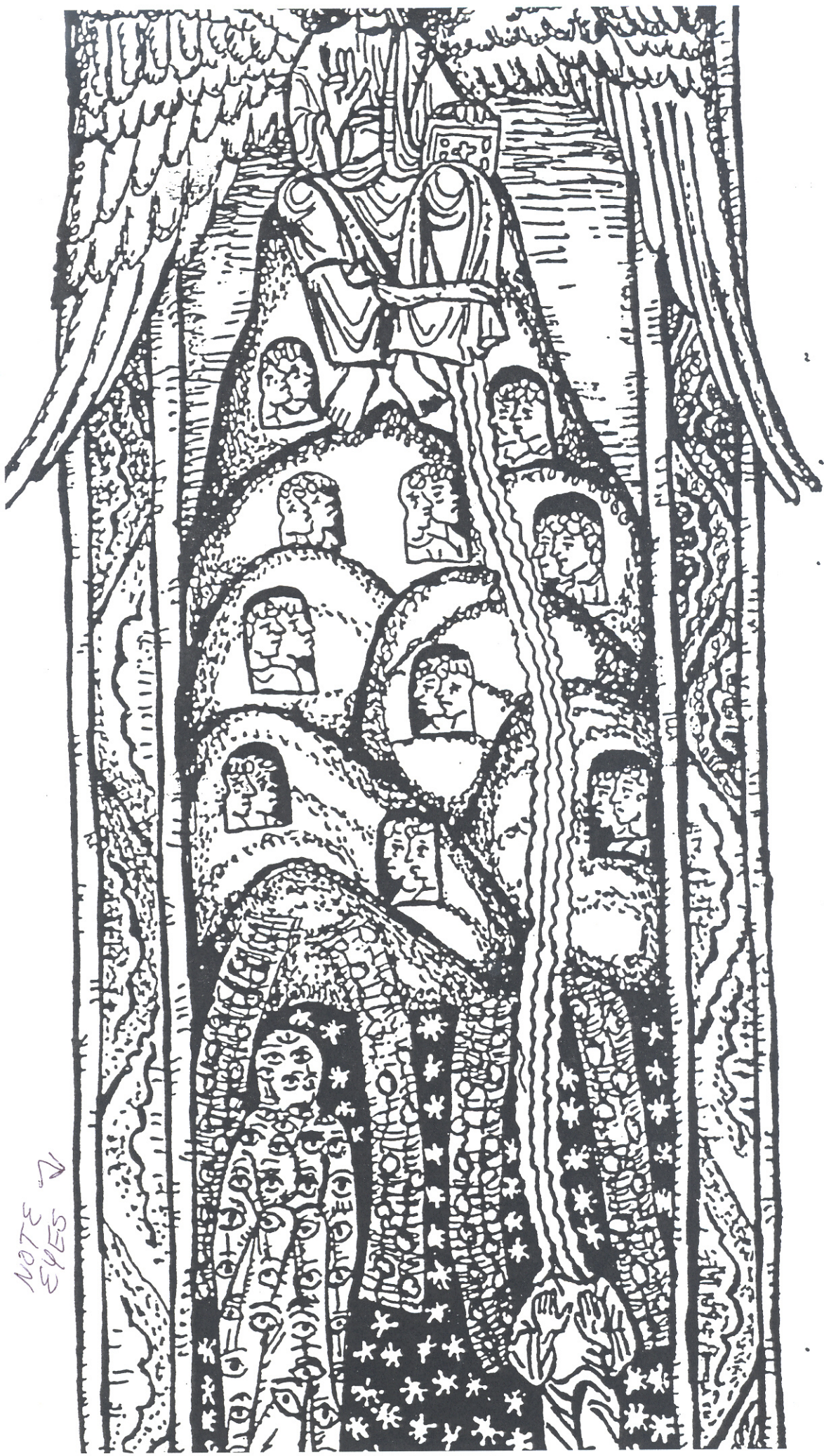
In the center of the mandala, Samvara embraces his partner (*Prajñā*), Vajravārāhī, whose red color signifies passion. She symbolizes knowledge or wisdom, and he the means (*upāya*) for obtaining it, and it is through their union (the Sanskrit word *saṃvara* means bond or union) that "great bliss" is obtained. Other divinities are represented in the four surrounding circles (for a detailed identification see, P. Pal, *The Art of Tibet*, New York, 1969, pp. 135-136). The citadel of the mandala is surrounded by the perimeter circle, divided into eight great cemeteries. Outside the mandala, in the upper sphere, are portrayed several of the Mahāsiddhas

was in the heart of the Celestial Father to
 e end of time, to save and redeem lost
 Virgin, fulfilled with a perfect work all
 nt saints, inspired by the Holy Spirit. It
 first the human arm bends and then the
 When Adam, by God's just judgment,
 ustice first began to move in Noah, like
 roadened into more definite manifesta-
 e more flexible elbow joint. And finally it
 God, through Whom all the signs and
 ly fulfilled, and through Whom all the
 y Jerusalem in her children, are declared
 nd water, as the hand with its fingers
 hes on a work. And thus I perfect My
 on, O Devil! I have opposed you by the
 d the West, and resisted you from the
 course runs. And in the West I have so
 confounded. For in My Church, which
 the work of justice and sanctity, and
 ou wanted My people to be destroyed;
 nd destroyed utterly.
 p to hear inner meanings ardently love
 rds, and inscribe them in his soul and



THE END OF TIMES





NOTE ↙
EYES





THE TRINITY IN THE UNITY

back
new search

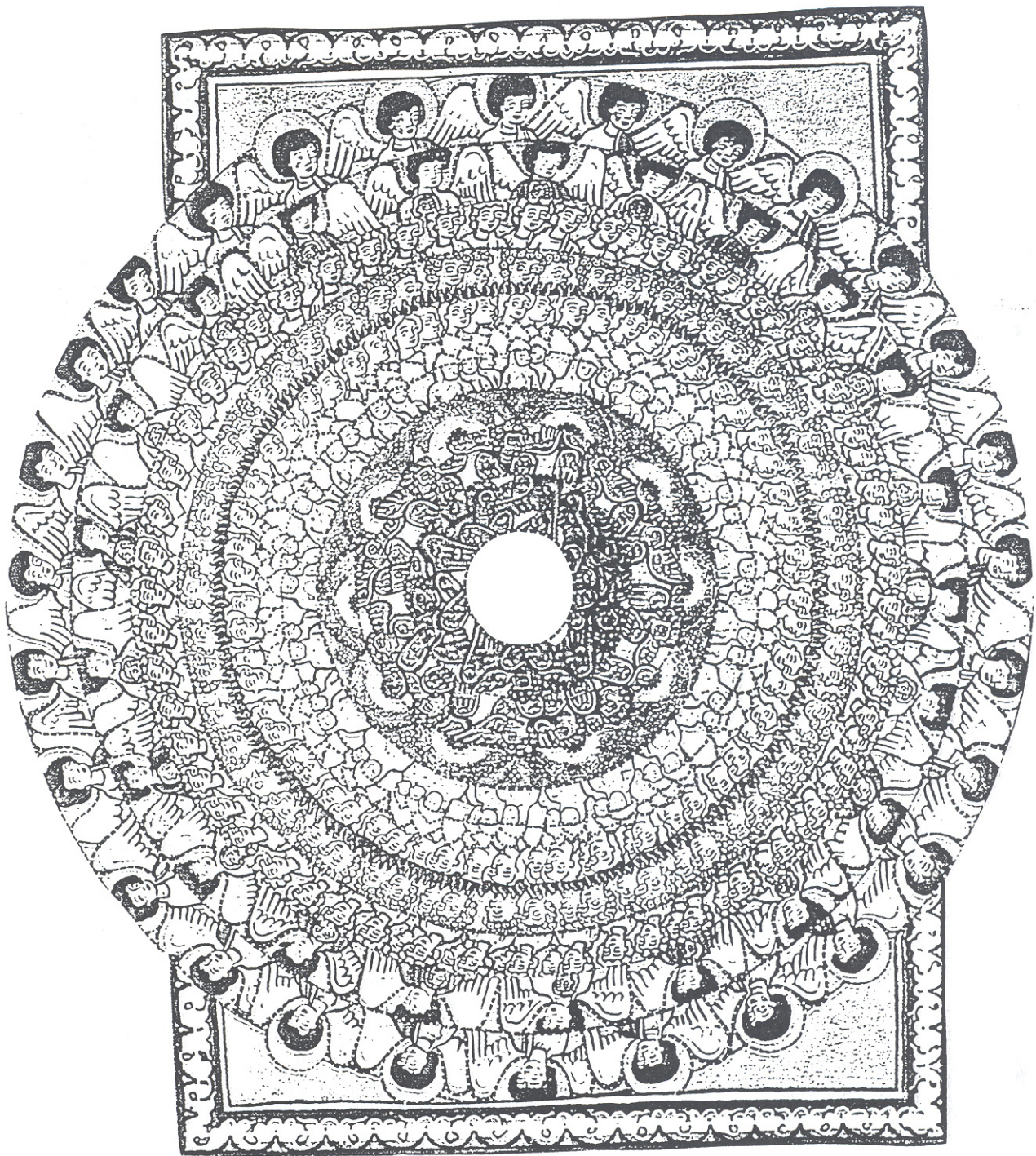


12th century

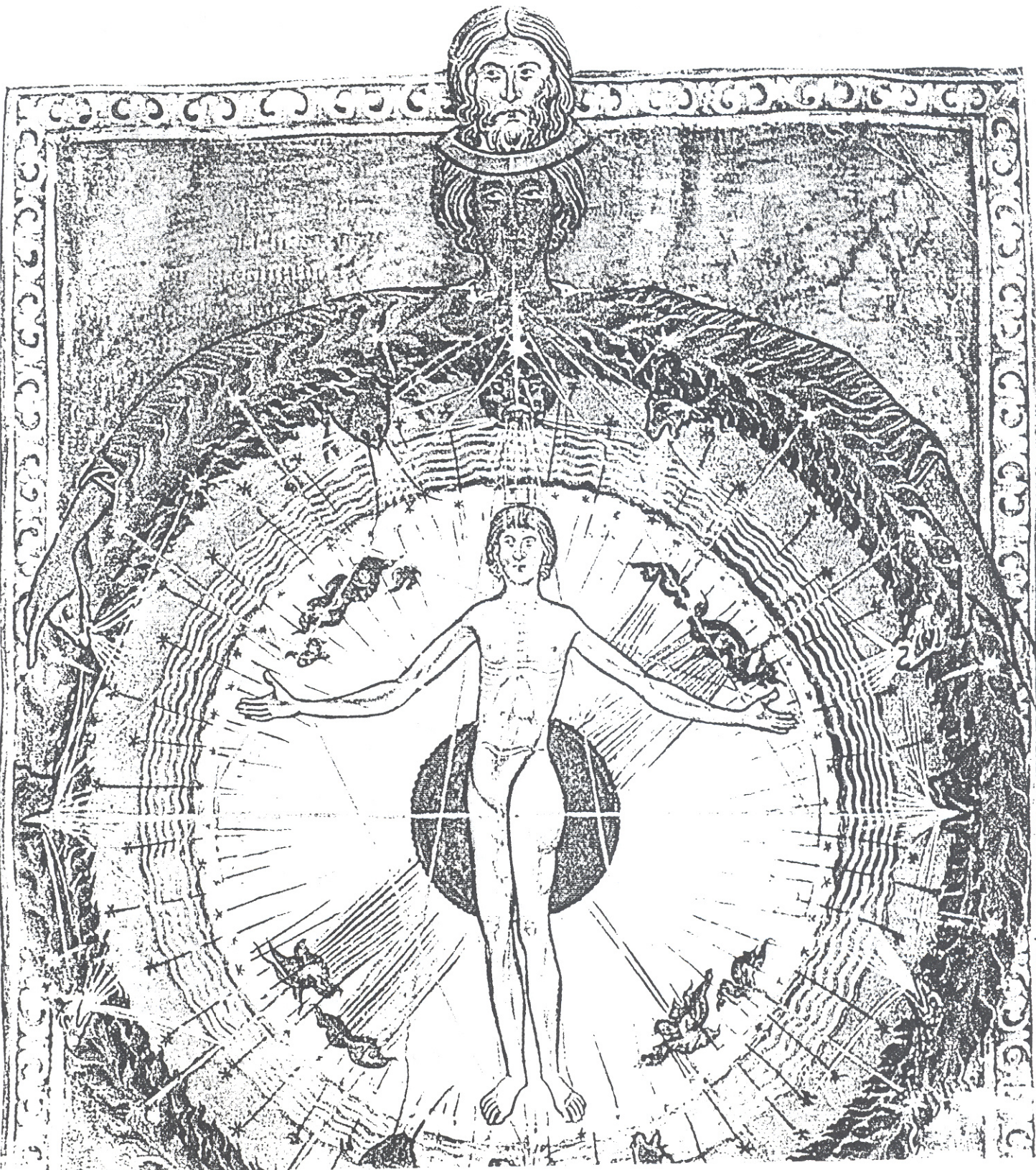


7 Amitayus Buddha (a meditation form of Amitabha Buddha)









६१ वज्रभैरव

६२ गुह्यसमाज

६३ चक्रसंवर



६१ वज्रभैरव

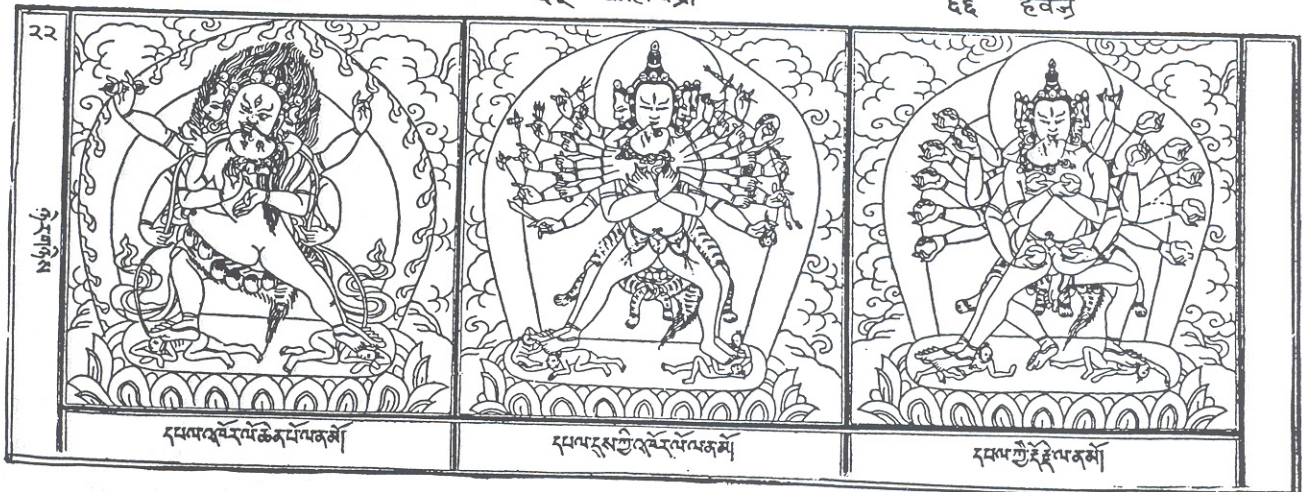
६२ गुह्यसमाज

६३ चक्रसंवर

६४ महाचक्र

६५ कालचक्र

६६ हेवज



६४ महाचक्र

६५ कालचक्र

६६ हेवज

६७ महामाय

६८ गुह्यसमाज-मञ्जुवज

६९ बुद्धकपाल



६७ महामाय

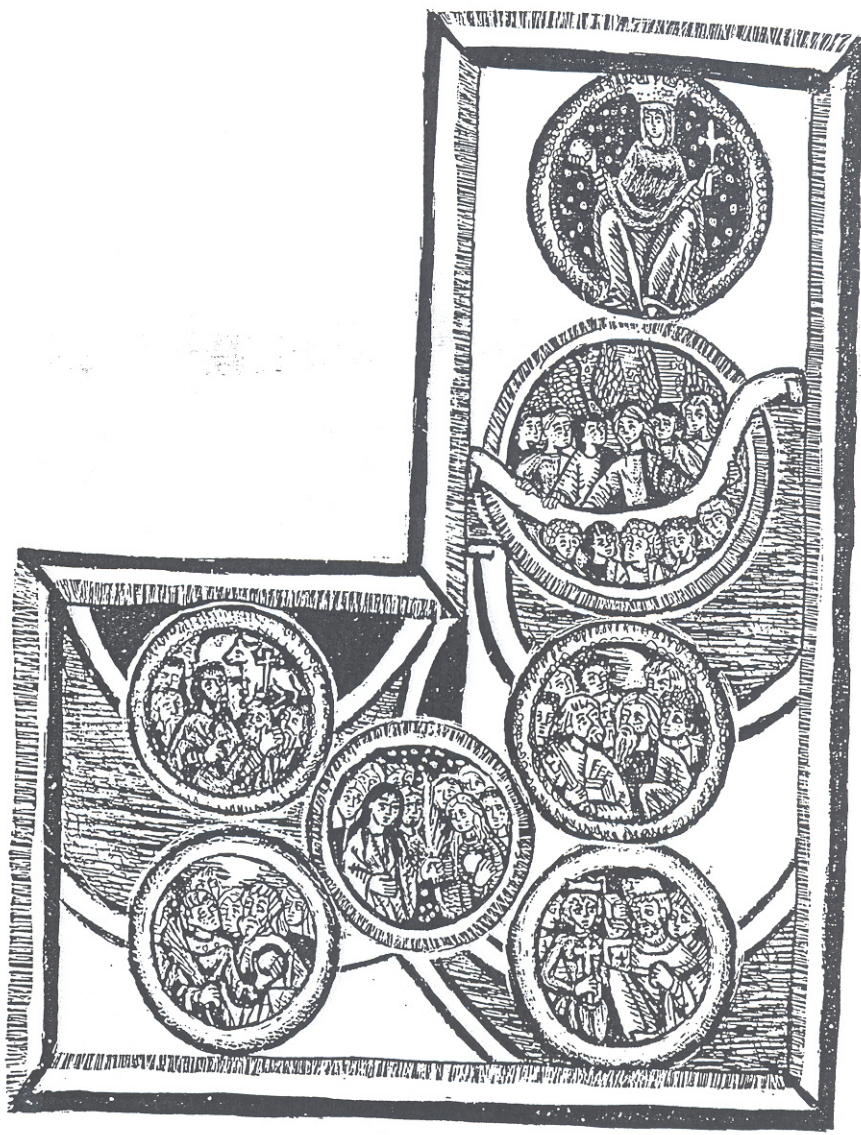
६८ गुह्यसमाज-मञ्जुवज

६९ बुद्धकपाल

61 62 63

64 65 66

67 68 69



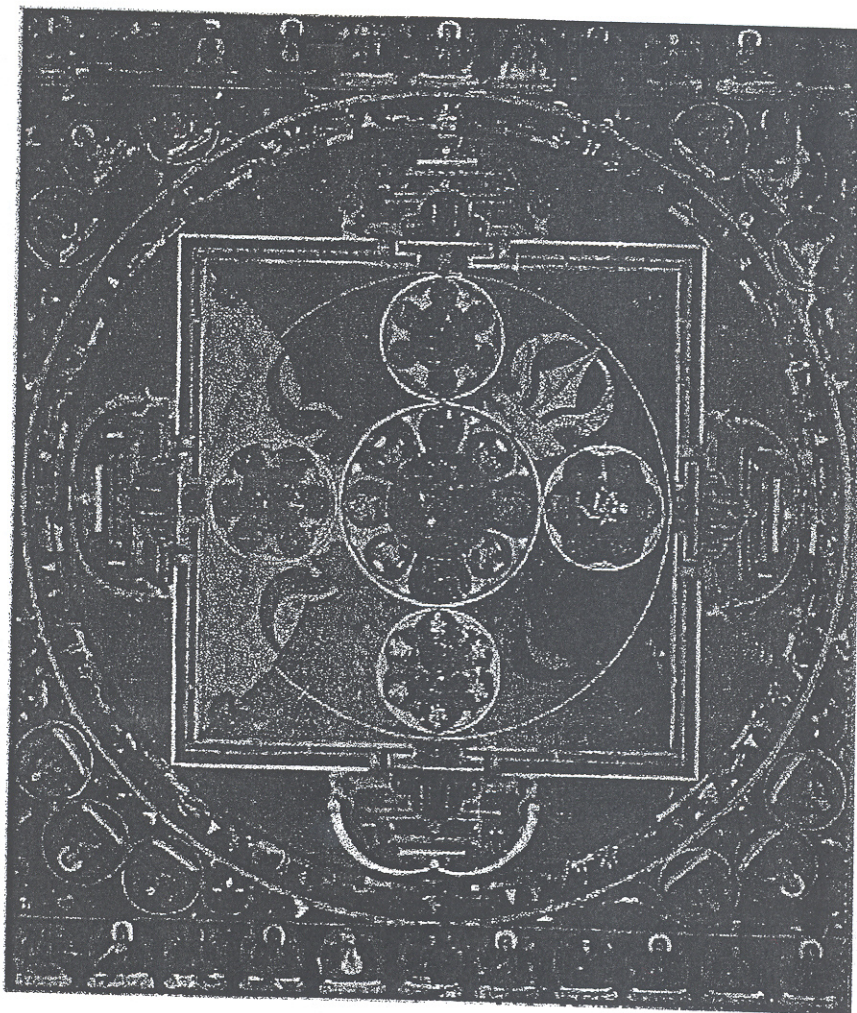
THE CHOIRS OF THE BLESSED

(33)

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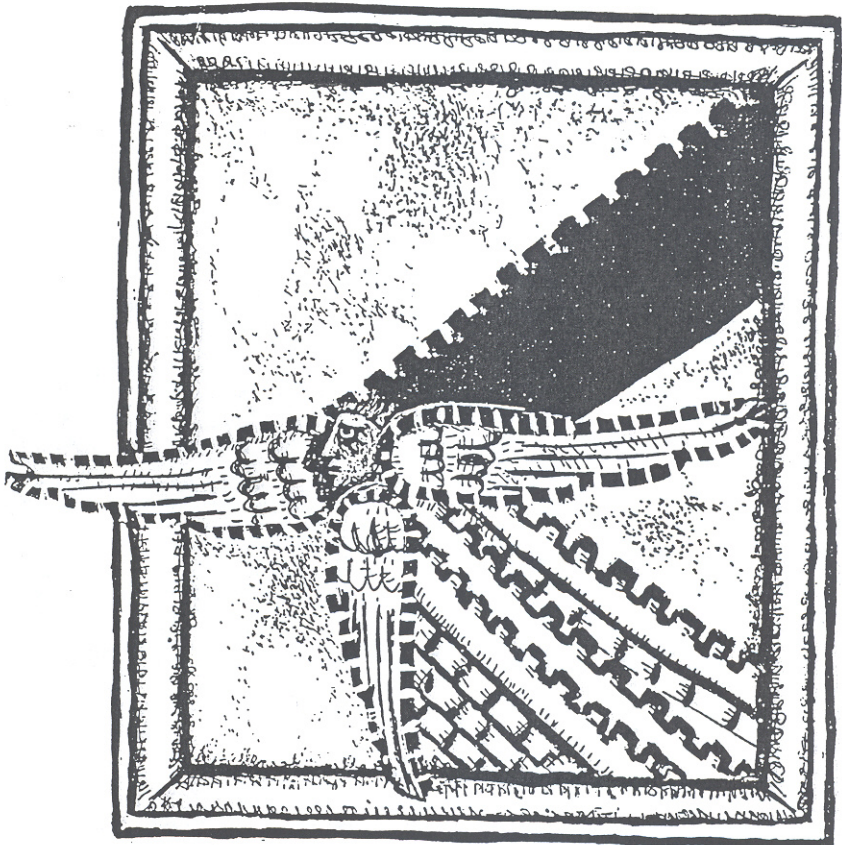
Early Tibetan Mandalas

Vajravarahi Abhibhava Mandala
phag-mo mngon-'byung-gi dkyil-'khor
 Central Tibet, 14th century
 62 x 52 cm

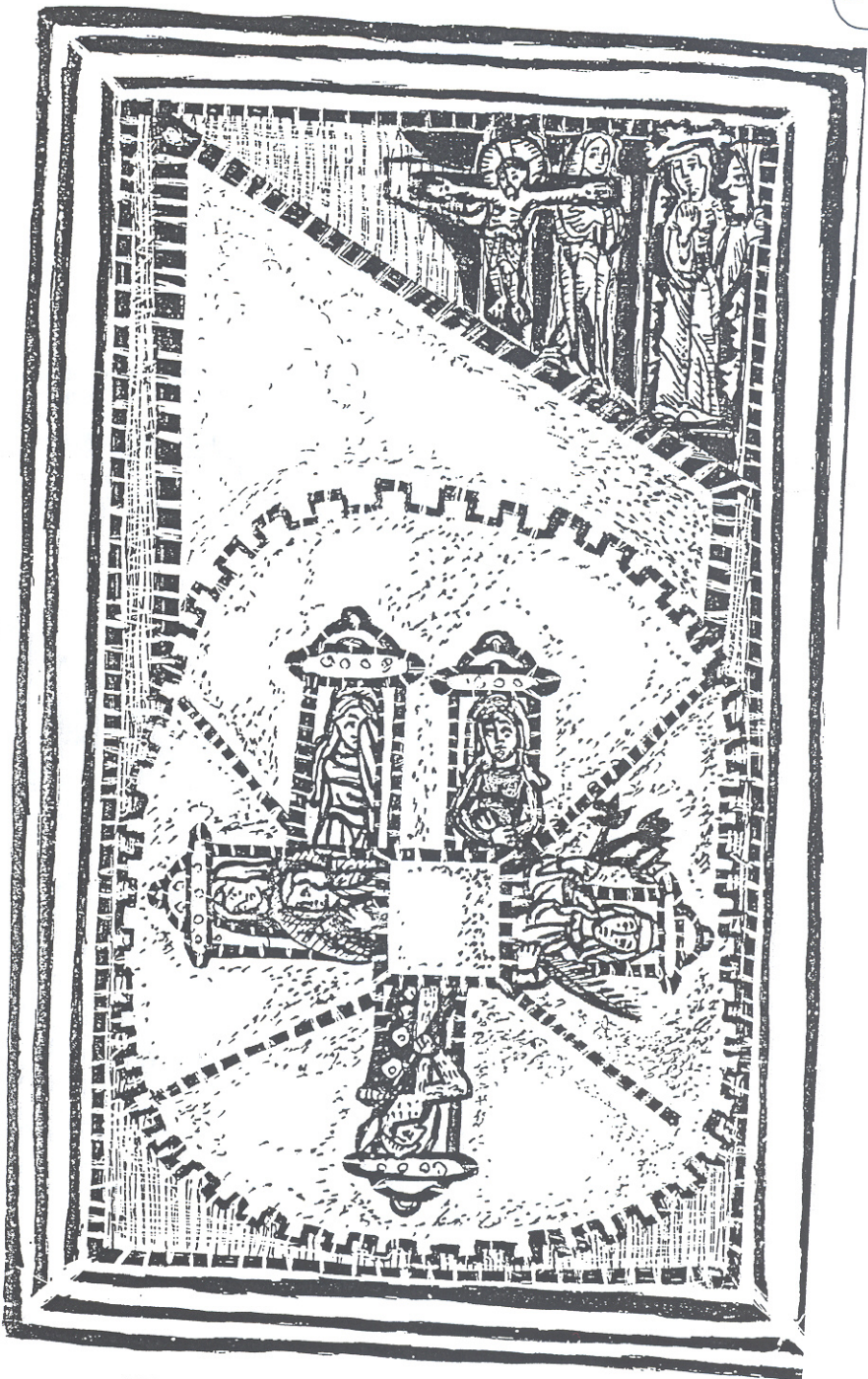


An inscription in the lower register identifies this painting's iconography as phag-mo mngon-'byung dkyil-'khor (vajravarahi abhibhava mandala), "Mandala of the Awakening of Vajravarahi." At the center of the mandala is Vajravarahi in her four-faced, two-armed form. Two arms stretch an elephant skin behind her, others hold the hook, chopper, trident, noose, and head of the Hindu god Brahma.¹ There are many mandalas associated with Vajravarahi; this particular mandala appears to relate to the Vajravarahi Abhibhava Tantra.²

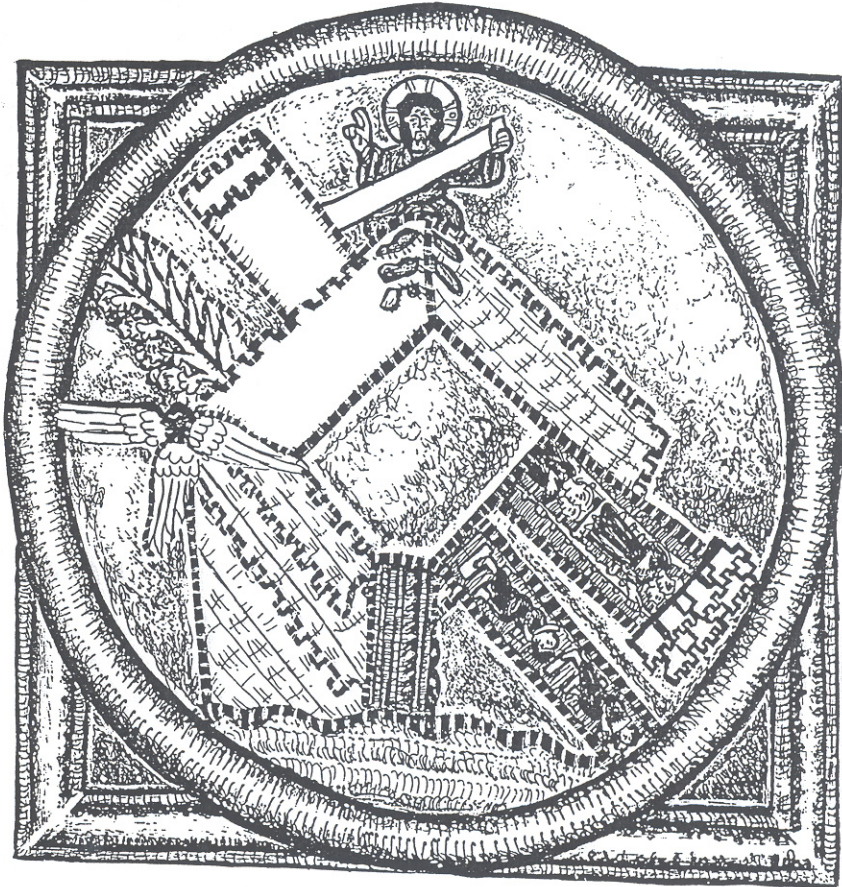
The goddess's first assembly is usually described as the Devicakra, or wheel of goddesses, likened to the center of the world. Thus, Vajravarahi is surrounded by Dakini (E), Lama (N), Khandaroha (W) and Rupini (S). At the intermediate points are



THE ZEAL OF GOD



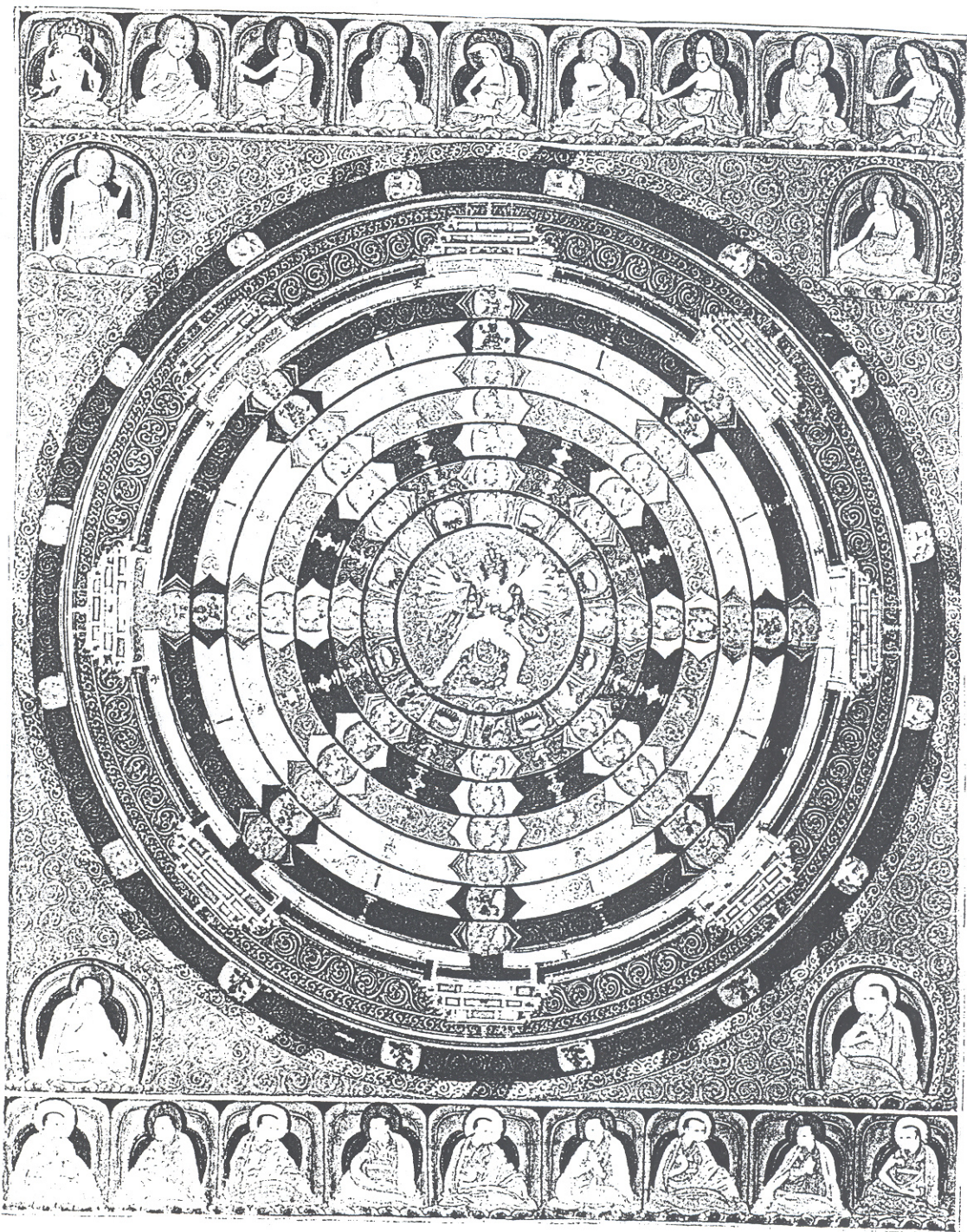
TOWER OF GOD'S ANTICIPATING WILL

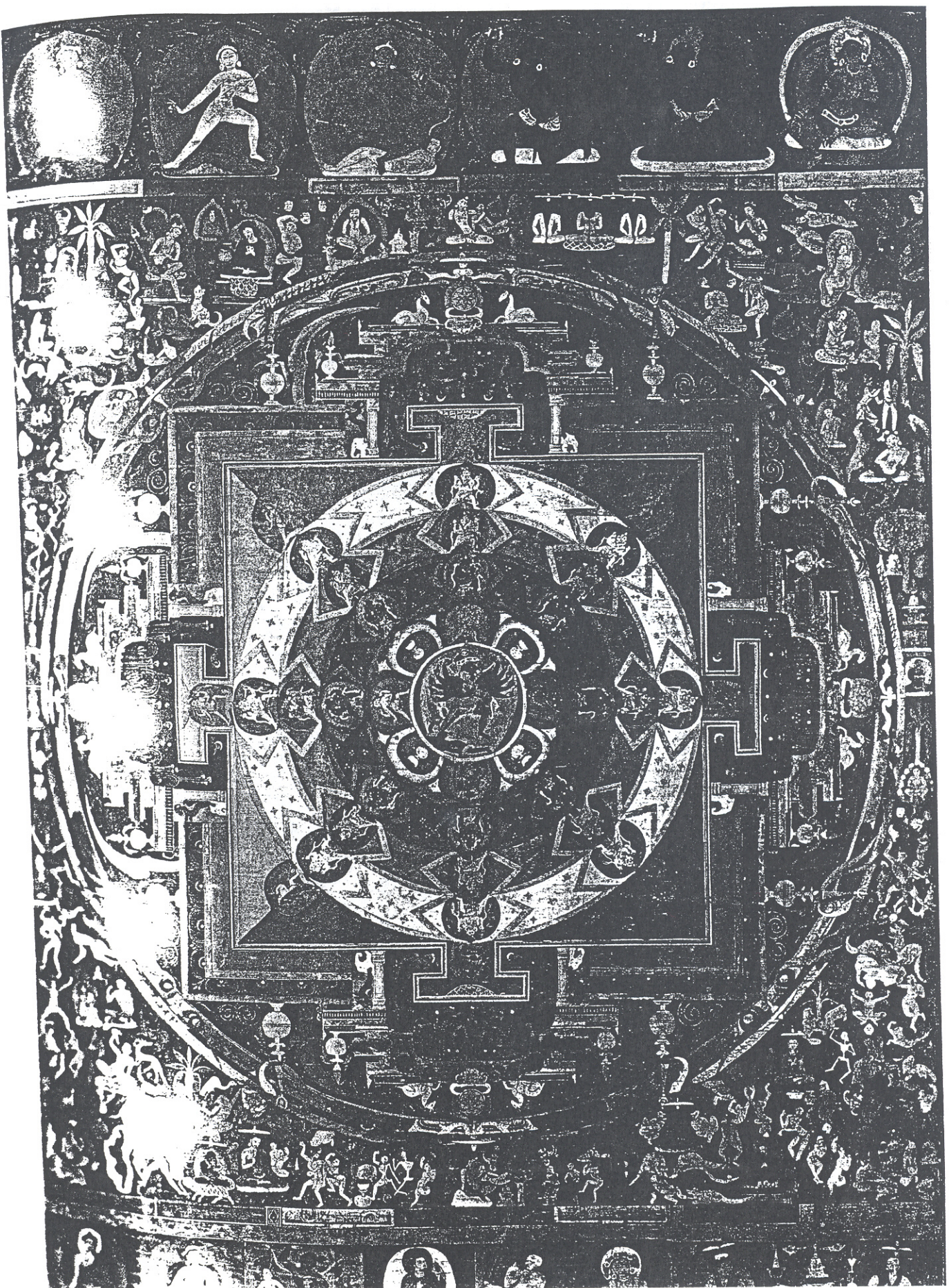


THE BUILDING OF SALVATION

um (bDe-mChog sByangs-
 Cu-gSum). The Yum in his
 i (Phag-mo rDo-rje). His
 the four directions. In the
 posture he stands on BHAIRAVA
 with his free hands he holds
 an elephant's skin, covering
 the drum, the axe, the chopper,
 the second foot of the elephant's
 GA, the skull-cup, the noose
 AHMÂ.

shows KÂLACAKRA-
 -kyi hKhor-lo), the dynamic
 the 'Wheel of Time', accom-
 the Gurus, led (above, left)
 Do-rje Sems-dpah). This
 point in the art of Mandala
 KÂLACAKRA in Yab-Yum,
 twenty-four arms, and sur-
 manifestations (seven
 each of the eight rays)
 the centre. His right hands,
 the thunderbolt and
 the chopper; those
 the arrow, thunderbolt and
 those painted white hold
 the staff and axe. The four
 the bell, shield, KHAT-
 the four red hands hold
 the lotos; and those painted
 the thunderbolt, chain and the
 thus, with his Yum, he stands
 on ANANGA and RUDRA,
 his feet. With the KÂLA-
 'Wheel of Time' was
 set in 1027 with the new
 g time (page 88). On the
 the Path of the ÂDI-
). It is the essence of the
 leads back from the
 enomena to the one
 and form and name, and
 pictures.

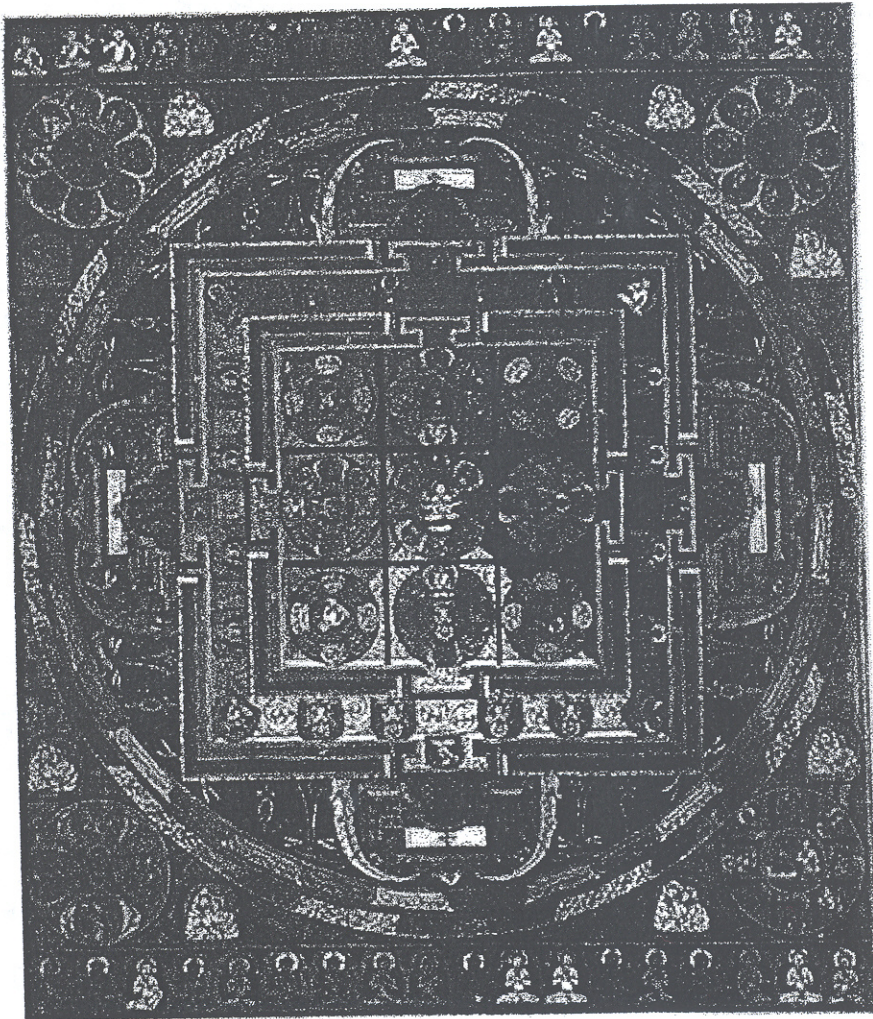




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Early Tibetan Mandalas

Vajradhatu Mandala
bcom-ldan rdo-rje'i dbyings-kyi dkyil-'khor
 Central Tibet, ca. 14th century
 68.5 x 60 cm



Vairocana in his four-faced, eight-armed form presides over this mandala of Vajradhatu, the "Diamond Realm." Nine lotuses arranged in three registers support deities within the main chamber (kutagara). In the center lotus is Sarvavid ("The Omniscient") Vairocana, surrounded by Sattvavajri (E), Ratnavajri (S), Dharmavajri (W), and Karmavajri (N). The lotuses which mark the cardinal points of the compass support four celestial Buddhas (tathagata), each attended by four of the sixteen "vajra bodhisattvas." At the four intermediate points of the compass, each within their own lotus, are the offering goddesses: Lasya (SE; amorous dance), Mala (SW; rosary), Gita (NW; song) and Nrtya (NE; dance). Other bodhisattvas appear in rows just beyond the walls of the main mandala palace, making another group of sixteen bodhisattvas. Four

46. Mandala of Jnanadakini

A Nepalese artist

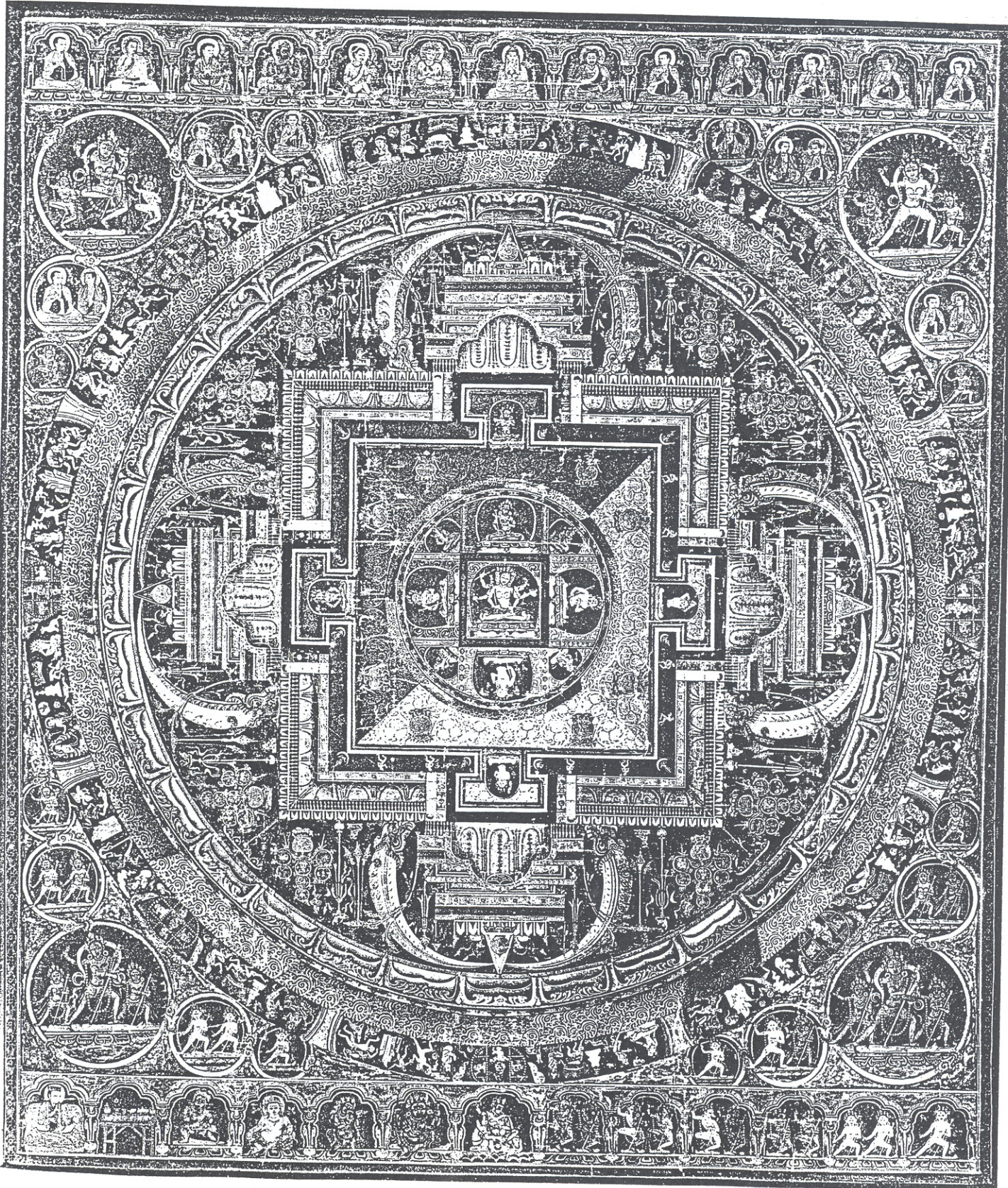
Tibet (a Sakya monastery), late 14th century

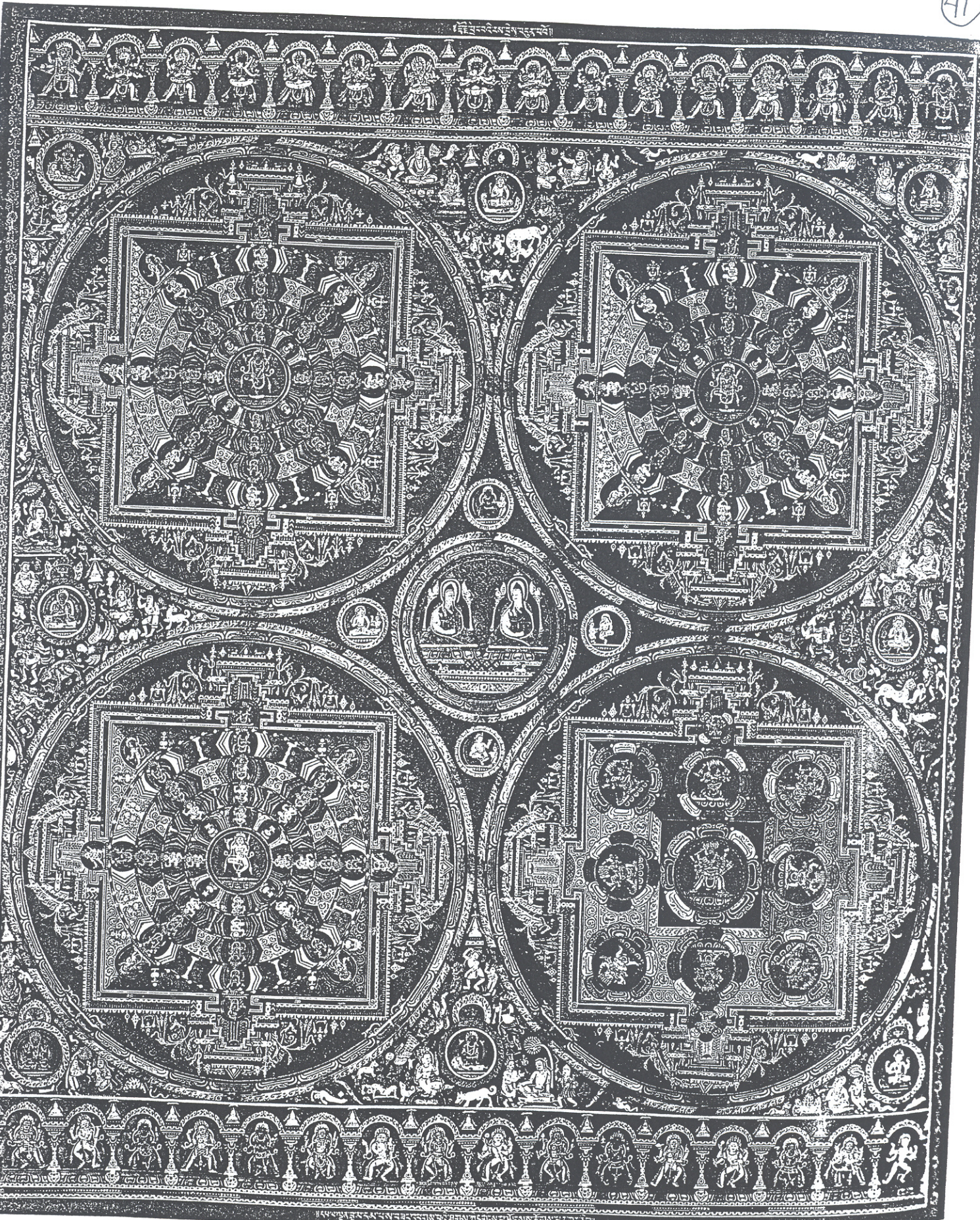
Distemper on cloth

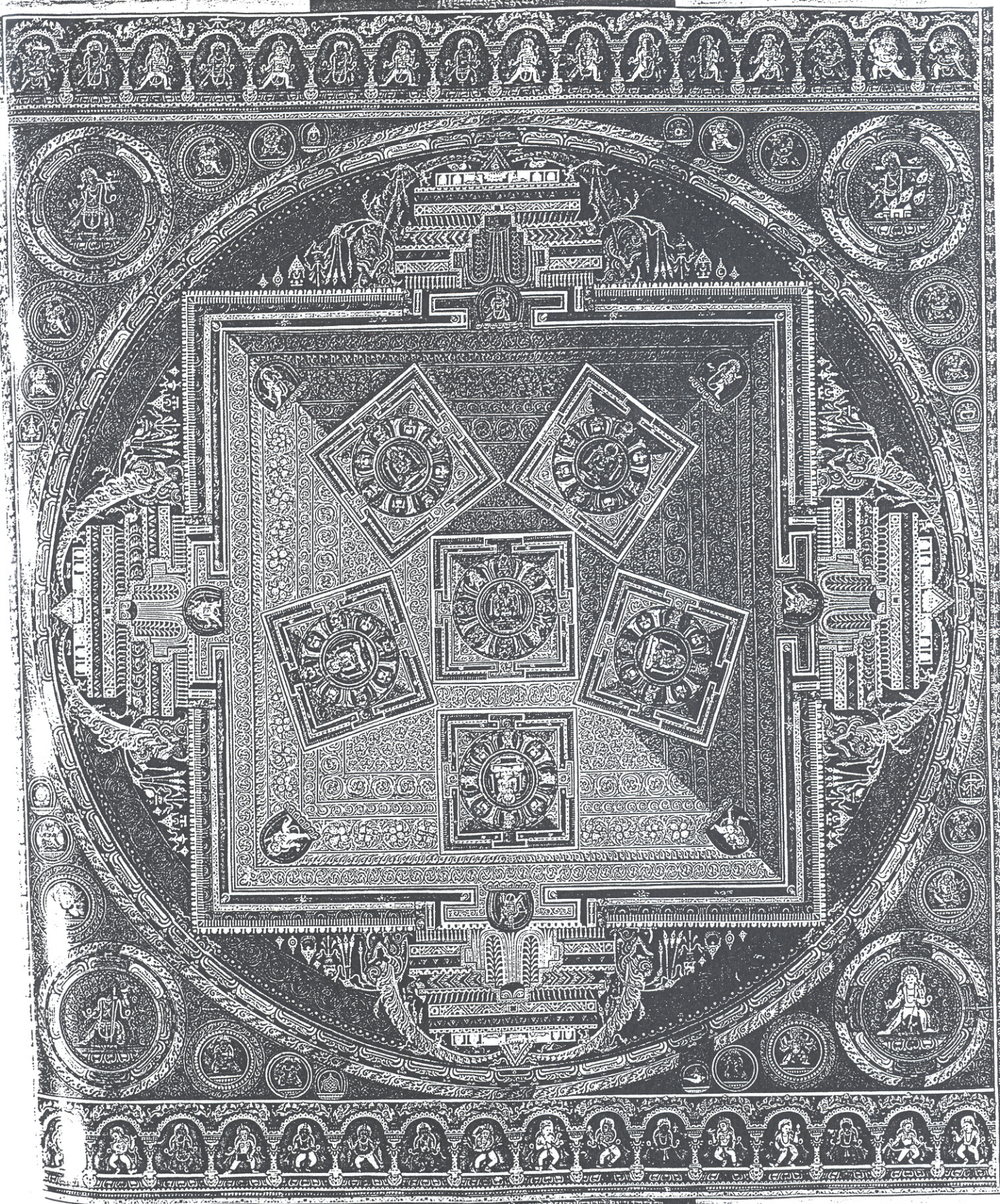
84.5 x 73.3 cm (33¼ x 28⅞ in.)

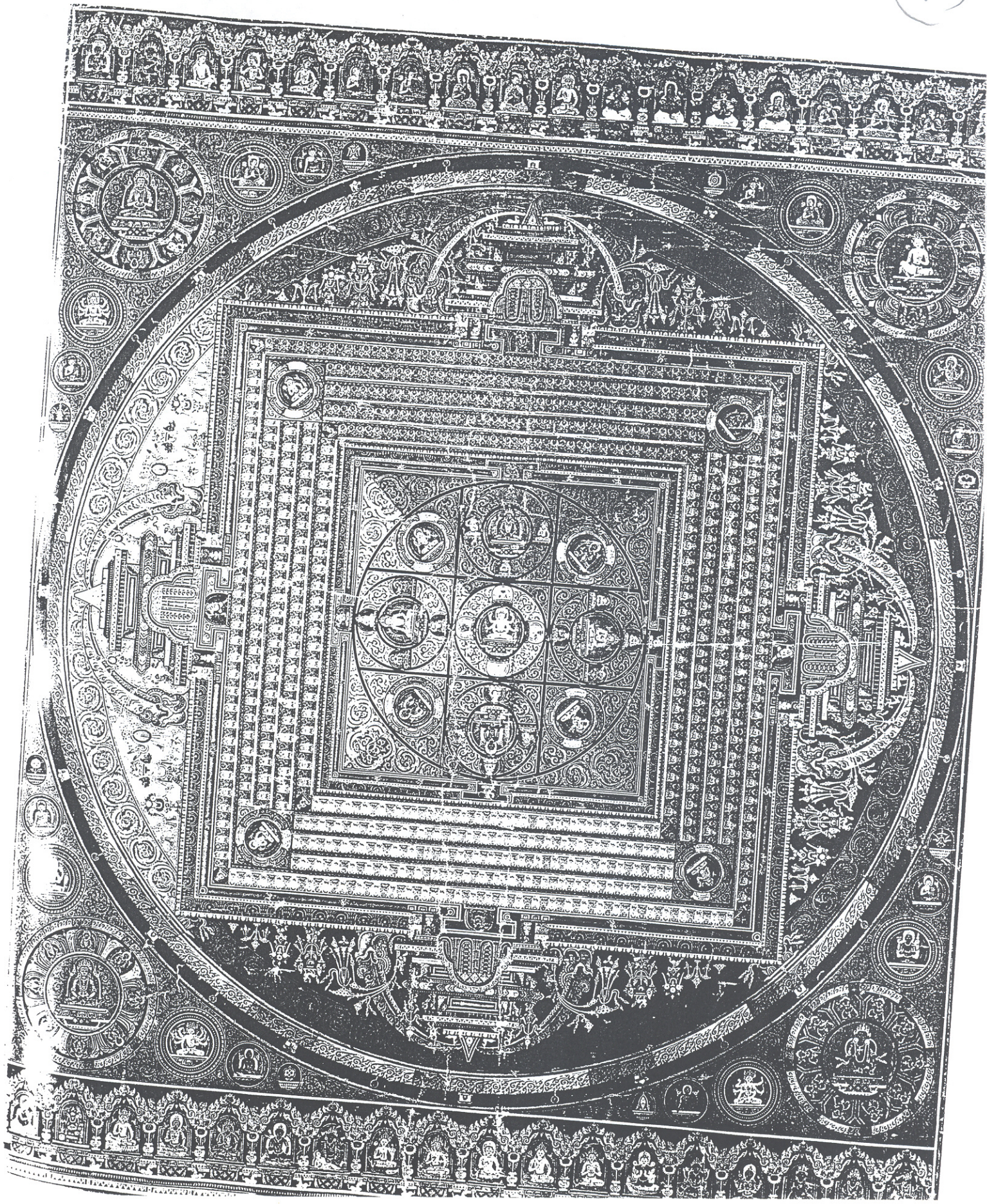
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, 1987 (1987.16)

40

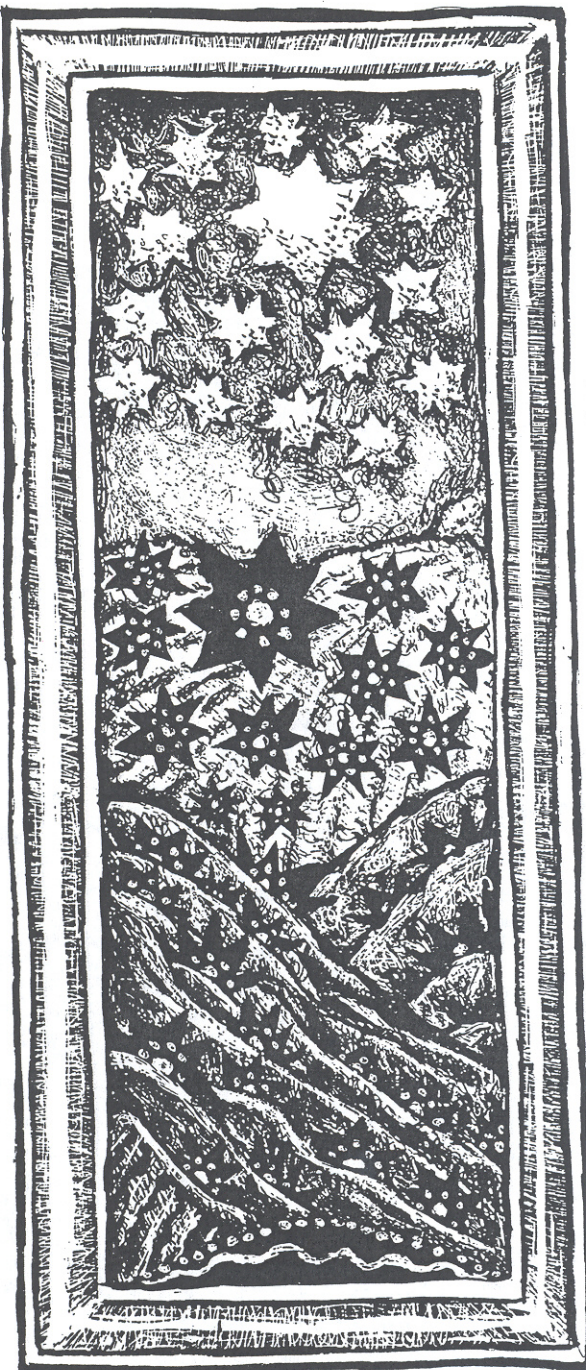








A-44



THE FALLEN STARS

that I could not apprehend it; an
stone, steel and fire, which exten
the depth of the abyss, so that I

And then I saw a great st
One seated on the throne. And a
sparks, which followed the star to
throne like a stranger; they turne
instead of contemplating Him. I
they were all extinguished and a

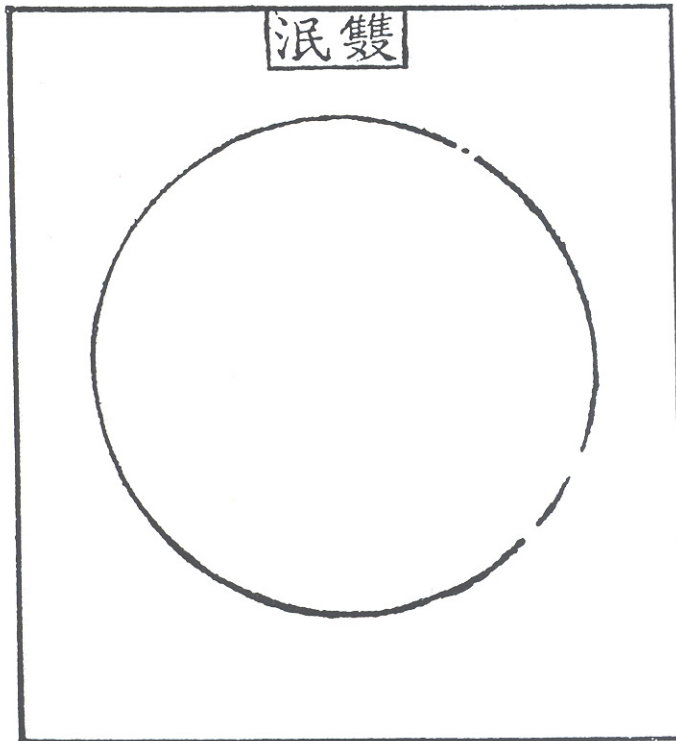
And behold, a whirlwind ar
from the South, behind the One
North, where they were precipita
But when they were extinguishe
immediately return to Him Wh

And I heard the One Who
you see and hear." And, from th
beseech you, my Lord, give me
able to make known these mysti
by the daylight of Your justice, i
to make known the divine cour



Icon of the Mother of God of the Sign.

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10. *Both Vanished*

Both the man and the animal have disappeared, no
 traces are left,
 The bright moon-light is empty and shadowless with
 all the ten-thousand objects in it;
 If anyone should ask the meaning of this,
 Behold the lilies of the field and its fresh sweet-
 scented verdure.

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