

# Jewellery

OF TIBET AND THE HIMALAYAS



John Clarke

This book presents the traditional jewellery of Nepal, Tibet and the Himalayas in all its splendour, and tells the fascinating stories of trade, conquest, faith and fortune that lie behind it. The jewellery of the region has an extraordinary visual impact, with its vibrant combination of gold and silver with turquoise, coral, amber and pearls, elements of which were traded from



countries far distant from the Himalayas. It is worn as much for its religious and talismanic associations as for adornment, and may well represent a woman's whole portable wealth in terms of a dowry.

John Clarke has travelled widely in the region and his illuminating text discusses the connection of jewellery to religion and folk beliefs and its rich and many-layered symbolism. Drawing together historical accounts and the oral traditions of living craftsmen, he gives a picture of how goldsmiths and jewellers operated in the past and today, and how jewellery was, and is worn now. He shows Nepal and Tibet to have been the cultural and economic crossroads of Asia, centre of a world-wide network of trade routes, rather than the isolated Shangri-La of imperial history.

This beautifully illustrated book draws on the finest examples from the V&A and other British collections, both public and private. It brings into the spotlight one of the richest decorative traditions of the world, and one increasingly appreciated and emulated in the west.

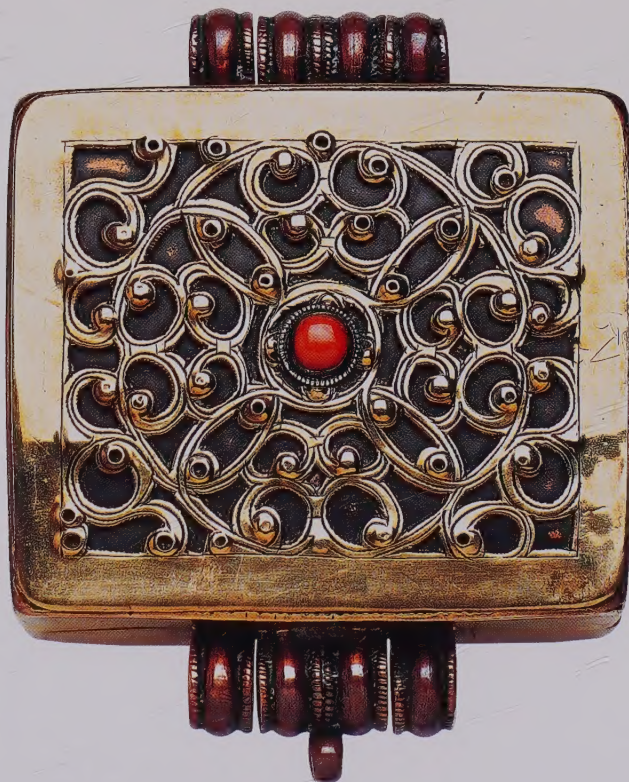
100 colour and 5 black and white plates





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Front jacket illustration: Woman's waist ornament (plate 60)

Back jacket illustrations (clockwise from top left): Details from plates 109, 69, 62, 44

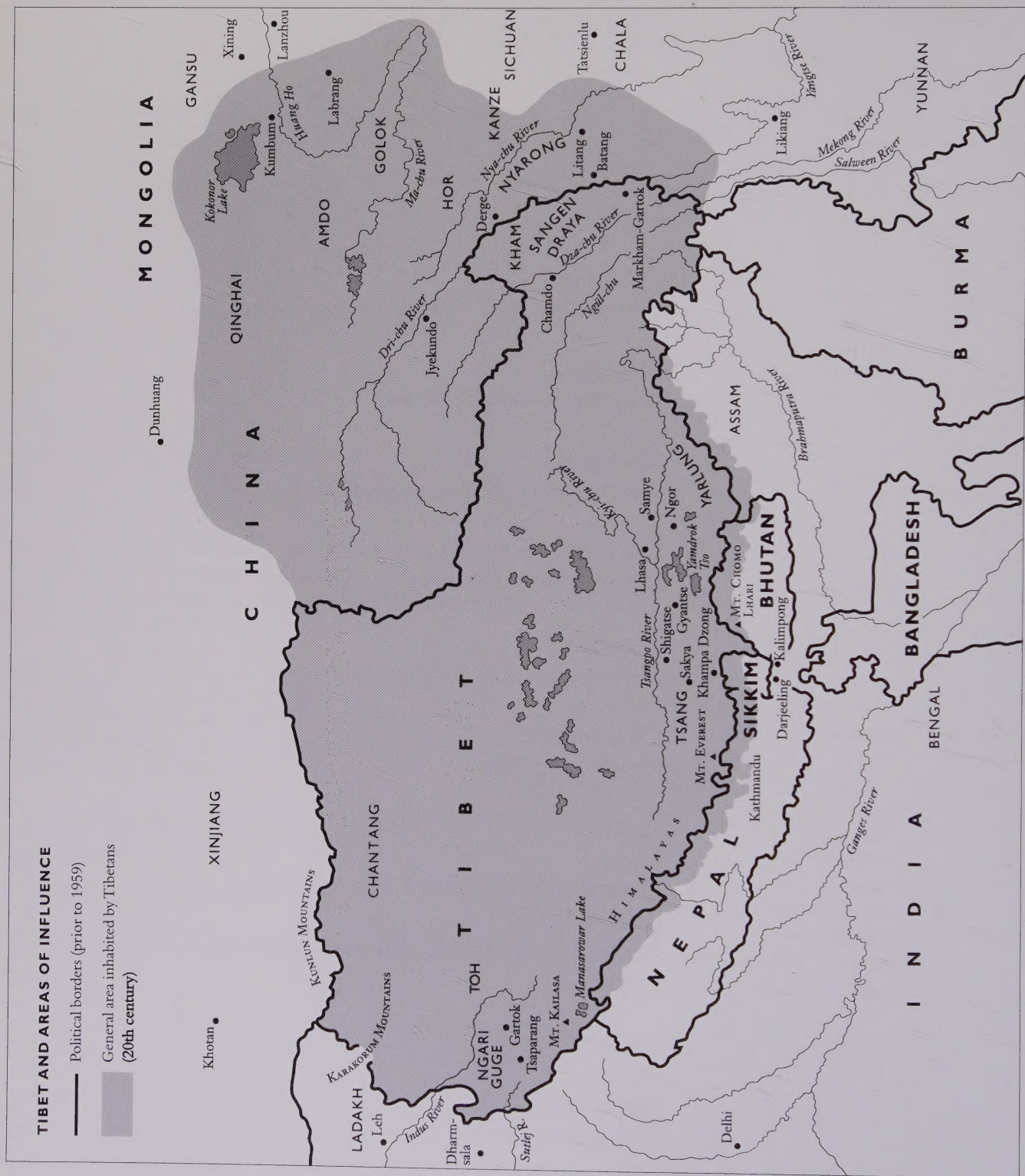
Frontispiece: Ceremonial amulet box (plate 111)

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# Preface

Despite an ever growing interest in the arts of the Himalayan region it is only in the last two decades that any serious studies of its jewellery have been made. Two pioneering works in German<sup>1</sup> were followed by Jane Casey Singer's *Gold Jewellery of Tibet and Nepal* and perhaps the first comprehensive survey of Nepalese jewellery by Hannelore Gabriel in *Jewellery of Nepal*. A number of museums have also published parts of their collections in recent catalogues.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps inevitably, catalogues of individual institutions or private collections tend to reflect respectively the biases and strengths of their holdings or the approach of a collector, and therefore to give a partial picture. The aim of this work therefore is to give a balanced and accessible survey of the subject, drawing for the first time on all the major British national collections which until now have remained mostly unpublished and unseen. A selection of the most significant and visually pleasing pieces has been made from such collections which include the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Museum, National Museum of Scotland, Liverpool City Museum, Ashmolean Museum, Pitt Rivers Museum and the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The core of several of these collections takes us back to an early period of contact between Britain and the Himalayan countries. In the case of the East India Company Museum, whose jewellery collections now form part of the Asian Department of the V&A, the earliest traceable purchases were made during the 1850s in Kathmandu, Sikkim and the newly acquired trading town of Darjeeling. Another significant group of jewellery and other objects was brought out of Tibet as the result of the expedition of 1904 led by Colonel (later Sir) Francis Younghusband. Objects acquired by officers, soldiers and other diplomatic personnel stationed at the trading posts, established in Tibet as a result of the expedition, gradually entered western collections over the next decades, were sold on at auction and snapped up by museums. The Nepalese jewellery held in western museums tends to consist predominantly of stone-inlaid ceremonial pieces made by Newar goldsmiths. The visual impact of such objects evidently appealed to nineteenth-century museum curators but their preponderance means that no meaningful coverage of the other styles worn in Nepal is possible. It therefore seemed appropriate to concentrate on Newar jewellery in the Nepalese section here rather than to attempt a wider survey.

This book brings together recent research on the history of jewellery in the region, on regional styles and on the production techniques of goldsmiths, with information on the religious imagery found on pieces, the folklore surrounding stones and the part jewellery played in Tibetan and Nepalese society. This provides the reader with an understanding of the contextual background which should enrich the visual appreciation that these pieces naturally evoke. The far-flung trade routes by which coral, amber, pearls and turquoise travelled to Tibet and Nepal from Europe and Iran is a fascinating aspect of the subject that links our own cultures to the heart of Asia. The wearing of traditional jewellery still remains a living tradition in many areas as contemporary photographs testify. It is hoped that the visual record of these photographs, together with groups of the objects themselves, will give a real feel for the distinct regional styles worn throughout this huge area which is virtually the size of western Europe.

## **Note on names in the Tibetan language**

The phonetic versions of Tibetan names have been given throughout the text. Transliterated equivalents (according to the Wylie system) may be found in the glossary alongside the phonetic versions.

Unless otherwise indicated, all foreign terms in italics are in the Tibetan language. The exceptions are Sanskrit (denoted by S), Newar (denoted by N), and Chinese (denoted by C). In Chapter 6 all terms in italics are Newar.



# The History and Culture of the Himalayas

THE WESTERN STEREOTYPE of Tibet as a cultural island isolated in Asia is in many ways the opposite of historical reality. Already by early in the seventh century, when it enters recorded history, Tibet had become a great trading nation and was exporting the salt, wool, musk, yak tails and horses that are a feature of its later trade, receiving in return Chinese silk, spices and brick tea. From this period onwards Tibetan culture was shaped by its assimilation of cultural, artistic and religious influences from its neighbours, especially India, Nepal and China. Under a succession of powerful king/emperors, or *tsenpo*, Tibet emerges during this period as a unified warlike state with an expansionist military policy dominating large parts of Asia beyond its borders.<sup>1</sup> During these centuries Buddhism, in both its Indian Mahayana and probably Chinese Ch'an forms was introduced, although it met opposition from the indigenous animistic religion, later called Bon, with its belief in spirits of the air, rivers, lakes and earth.<sup>2</sup>

The Mahayana teachings that became predominant were brought mainly from India and Nepal. They stressed the ideal of the Bodhisattva, a being who eschewed Buddhahood in order to keep being reborn in the world in order to guide others towards enlightenment. There were also more advanced and secret Tantric or Vajrayana practices that were considered a fast but dangerous path to enlightenment involving visualization, breath control and the use of mantras or magical sounds. Tibetan translators and practitioners who returned from India gathered their own students and their successors eventually formed the nucleus of three new monastic orders between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

From the twelfth century onwards the orders began to become centres of political power in their own right and developed rivalries which helped keep power largely decentralized until the mid-seventeenth century when one order, the Gelukpas, became dominant. In 1578 the leader of the order,



1. JEWELLERY DECORATING THE JOBO IMAGE  
JOKHANG TEMPLE, LHASA, 1980s

The earliest known set of ornaments decorating this most sacred of Tibetan images, brought from China in the 7th century, were donated by one of Tibet's greatest religious leaders Je Tsongkhapa in 1409. The crown, earrings and breastplate on the front of the image today were taken from another statue to replace the original, lost or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. They are thickly encrusted with women's *ga'us*, *dzi* beads and multiple settings of corals, turquoises and pearls.

Photograph © Ian Cumming/Tibet Images

the abbot of Drepung monastery, Sonam Gyatsho, was given the honorific title 'Ta Le', the Mongolian equivalent of his name 'Ocean of Wisdom', by his Mongolian supporter Altan Khan. So began the tradition of the Dalai Lamas who under the fifth Dalai Lama in the mid-seventeenth century eventually unified secular and religious power. The theocratic government established then survived largely intact until nine years after the Chinese invasion in 1950.

China exercised a loose but real control over Tibet during the nineteenth century and the conservative monastic establishment readily accepted its exclusionist policy which they saw as protecting religion. The exclusion before 1950 of all but a very little modern western influence kept Tibet politically and technologically where it had been for centuries. Wealth continued to be concentrated in a small number of immensely rich noble families whose estates provided surplus agricultural produce that could be sold for profit. In addition the nobles, together with the monasteries and the two greatest political figures in Tibet, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, engaged in the lucrative trade in Chinese tea and silks.

When the Chinese communists came to power in 1949 and declared their aim the 'liberation' of Tibet, its past isolationism meant that it had only a small and ill-equipped army and almost no international support. After a brief campaign, communist forces entered Lhasa in 1950. At first they worked with the existing government but by the mid-1950s were introducing ever more repressive laws. Finally a spontaneous uprising occurred in Lhasa in 1959 when it appeared that the Dalai Lama's life was threatened. It was put down harshly and with great loss of life<sup>3</sup> by the army and from this point on China imposed direct rule, dissolving the old government structure. The destruction of monasteries and traditional lifestyles was well underway by the early 1960s but was frighteningly intensified during the Cultural Revolution (1966-77). Since then 120,000 Tibetans have followed the Dalai Lama into exile, settling in India and throughout the world and establishing a seat of government in exile at Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh. There and elsewhere in India they have made a determined attempt to re-found monasteries and to maintain and transmit their traditional culture to new generations. Inside Tibet the most repressive policies were repealed in 1980, allowing a measure of religious freedom and the entrance of monks into the remaining few monasteries. However, Tibetan culture and religion remain threatened by the mass migration of Han Chinese and the suffocatingly tight government control of religion.

## **An Introduction to the Regions of Tibet**

The present day borders of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, created in 1964 by the Chinese administration, are far narrower than Tibet's traditional borders. To the north and east large parts of the former Tibetan provinces of Amdo and Kham are now amalgamated with the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai and Sichuan. Historically Tibetan culture spread still further beyond even its pre-Chinese takeover limits. In spite of such recent losses the present TAR still covers over one million square kilometres, an area roughly equivalent to Britain, France and Germany combined, but with a population of about ten million.

Tibet, literally at the heart of Asia, lies sandwiched between two major Asian powers, India to the south-west and China to the east. Names such as 'roof of the world' are justified by Tibet's sheer height, with most of the country lying at over 3,500 metres.<sup>4</sup> Tibet is ringed on three sides by some of the highest mountains in the world (see map). It contains a number of distinctly different and varied landscapes created by differences in land height and rainfall. Across the length of northern Tibet from the western almost to the eastern border stretches a vast wilderness area of high-altitude plateau, the Changtang, lying mostly above 5,000 metres and thickly set with salt-bearing lakes. Too high and cold for agriculture, its vast grasslands and deserts are inhabited here and there by nomads who rely on their herds for survival. The former province of Kham is an area of wide, fertile pastures and river valleys watered by the monsoons of nearby Assam and Yunnan. Four of Asia's major rivers, the Salween, Mekong, Yangtse and Yalung flowing south-east into China proper, create river valleys that get progressively narrower and deeper towards the east and eventually turn into gorges. Throughout the region agricultural land alternates with expanses of high grassland,<sup>5</sup> the home to nomads with their herds of yak, goats and sheep. Black nomad tents made of woven yak hair dot the grasslands while in the valleys substantial stone or earth and wood houses provide the dwellings for farmers.

The men of Kham have long had the reputation as the best warriors in Tibet, although they are also often characterized by other Tibetans as quarrelsome. A sword was typically carried by men, not only in times of war but in peace to protect themselves from the robbers who were especially endemic in the nomadic grasslands to the north and east (plate 77). Despite the often turbulent nature of the border, Kham in particular was a prosperous area, famous for its metalwork and the home of a number of important monasteries such as Derge and Chamdo.

In the north-east the Changtang merges with large areas of rolling grasslands inhabited by nomadic populations in present-day Qinghai province (former Amdo). Finally there is the economic and cultural heartland of Tibet, lying along the fertile valley of the Yarlung Tsangpo to the south. Within this valley, with its strong trade links to India and Nepal in the south, lie many of Tibet's most important monasteries and towns, including the capital itself, Lhasa.

## **The Himalayan Kingdoms: Ladakh, Sikkim, Bhutan and the Western Himalayas**

The Himalayas contain some of the highest mountains in the world, which in some parts of Bhutan rise abruptly from the Indian plains from only 150 metres above sea level to several peaks above 7,000 metres. Within the wide range of physical environments it is possible to discern three broad climatic areas defined by altitude within long sections of the Himalayan chain. The lowest of these three step-like zones supports lush tropical forest which extends to about 1,500 metres. For the most part such lowland areas have not been settled by Tibetan peoples who historically had little resistance to malaria and other tropical diseases. From about 1,500 to 3,000 metres there stretches a temperate zone covered by the dense forest still retained in many areas of Sikkim and over half of Bhutan. Here maize and wheat can be grown and, up to a limit of 2,000 metres, wet rice planted in terraced fields in the valley bottoms.<sup>6</sup> Herders maximize grazing by taking their flocks and herds to high pastures in the early summer and down to low ones in the autumn. Higher up, from 3,000 to 5,000 metres, is an Alpine zone in which climate and altitude are almost identical to those of the Tibetan plateau itself. Lahaul, Spiti, much of Kinnaur and the northern border regions of Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and Arunachal Pradesh all share these harsh high-altitude desert conditions. The quintessentially Tibetan yak, *Bos grunniens*, can only survive well at above 2,500 metres and is most at home in the high zone. Single-handedly this animal provides many of life's necessities: butter, milk and meat, wool for making ropes, blankets and tents, leather for the soles of boots and, equally importantly, transportation and a means of ploughing.

Tibetan populations with their distinctive Buddhist religion and culture extend well beyond the twenty-first-century borders of Tibet into the high alpine valleys along the 2,400-kilometre length of the Himalayan chain. Known to the Nepalese and Indians as Bhotia, 'Bhot' meaning Tibet, these

groups speak dialects of Tibetan, use Tibetan script and share the Tibetan physical characteristics. The spread of such Tibetan Buddhist populations is the result of over a thousand years of sporadic migrations of small groups fleeing persecution or in search of new living space. In Ladakh these movements may have started during the middle of the eight century when Tibet established control of the territory<sup>7</sup>. Towards the middle of the ninth century western Bhutan was being settled by Tibetans who, according to one Tibetan source, were imperial border troops who decided to settle rather than return to Tibet at the time of the collapse of the Tibetan monarchy in 842.<sup>8</sup> The ancestors of the Namgyal dynasty of Sikkim originally came from eastern Tibet in the thirteenth century<sup>9</sup> while in 1533 other groups from Kham colonized parts of the northern Nepalese regions becoming known as Sherpas, their name *sharpa* meaning easterner.<sup>10</sup> Migrations continued throughout the Himalayas until at least the seventeenth century, although in many cases we do not know when they occurred.

Cross-border trade through the river valleys that flow down to the Indian plains, as well as trade and religious contacts across the Nepalese border, have helped to maintain the links between the Tibetan homeland and such outlying communities sharing the same basic language and religion. Although Tibet has come to be the dominant influence on the cultural and religious life of the region, the existence of many indigenous peoples and of immigrants from central Asia, India and Nepal, who to varying degrees have intermixed with Tibetan populations, has created a vibrant and richly complex picture. Tibetans commonly refer to such groups as 'Monpa', non-Buddhist lands south of the Himalayas being historically referred to as 'Mon'.<sup>11</sup> Some of these, such as the original inhabitants of Sikkim and western Bhutan the forest-dwelling Lepchas and Limbus, maintained elements of their own languages, dress and animistic religion.

There were also ancient immigrants such as the Dards who by the first century CE may have already arrived from central Asia to settle in the upper Indus Valley of Ladakh.<sup>12</sup> Much more recently, since the late nineteenth century, large numbers of Hindu Nepalese immigrants have settled in Sikkim, first encouraged by the British who had established a protectorate over the country in 1890. There are also many Indian Himalayan areas, such as Kinnaur, where Indian populations have intermarried with Tibetans giving rise to varying degrees of cultural blending. Altitude and proximity to the Tibetan border are usually the factors determining ethnic make-up and religion: the nearer one approaches the plateau the more likely

is it that one will find Tibetan Buddhism and culture.<sup>13</sup> In the south-west, the network of mountains and narrow valleys which form Lahaul and Spiti (Himachal Pradesh) are another such area. Today, although Hinduism is also found there, Tibetan culture and religion predominates in Lahaul, centering on the Chandra and Bhaga Valleys, and in Spiti a subsidiary valley to the Sutlej. In Kinnaur, in the 100-kilometre-long section of the upper Sutlej Valley, Buddhism also predominates in the populations living in the northern third running up to the Tibetan border.

Along the Himalayan chain lie the present-day Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan and the two former kingdoms of Sikkim and Ladakh. Ladakh encloses the most westerly corner of the high Tibetan plateau and the upper reaches of the Indus River. Its 155,000 square kilometres of high-altitude desert has one of the lowest population densities in the world with around one person per square kilometre.<sup>14</sup> Most settlement lies along two parallel valleys, that of the Indus and of the Zaskar to the south. In these areas oasis-like farming settlements vividly dot with bright green the dry grey-brown surrounding landscape, the fertile alluvial soil being brought to life by the ingenious use of irrigation channels fed by water from glaciers and streams at a higher level. The often substantial mud-brick houses stand in small fields enclosed by stone walls shaded here and there by willows and poplars. To the east lies the start of the high desert plateau, the Changtang, a bare and windswept landscape where water freezes at night even in midsummer. This area forms part of western Tibet and like it is inhabited by nomads raising sheep and goats to produce wool.

Ladakh's continuous trade and religious links with western and central Tibet<sup>15</sup> have fostered its Tibetan culture while politically, from the mid-tenth century until 1834, it has remained a separate Buddhist kingdom. However, for much of its history Ladakh has remained at the crossroads of several cultures with India to the south, Muslim Kashmir and Pakistan to the north-west and Tibet to the east. It has suffered repeated attacks by more powerful Muslim states surrounding it and has come under their political control for long periods but, beneath a nominal adherence to Islam forced upon it, has mostly remained Buddhist.

Ladakh lay at the centre of trade routes connecting the Punjab in northern India with Yarkand and Khotan in central Asia, feeders to the earlier central Asian silk route. Ladakh was mostly an entrepôt centre for the trade between India and central Asia and Tibet. Through these routes went Indian products such as tea, textiles, spices and coral to central Asia



2. TASHILUNPHO MONASTERY  
AND THE YARLUNG-TSANGPO  
VALLEY, SOUTHERN TIBET

A view showing the gilded roofs of the most important temples in Tashilunpho monastery. Below it is part of the city of Shigatse and beyond that the Yarlung-Tsangpo Valley.



and Tibet while in the other direction came Chinese and central Asian silks, silver, carpets and Tibetan wool and gold.<sup>16</sup> At Indian Independence in 1947, the Maharaja of Kashmir, who controlled Ladakh, seceded it to India but only a year later Pakistan, who claimed the territory, invaded Baltistan in northern Ladakh. Although this territory was lost, the heartlands of Ladakh were saved. The area has remained disputed to the present day, both by Pakistan and China who in 1962 invaded and took control of part of the high plateau in the east.<sup>17</sup>

Adjoining Nepal's eastern edge is the former kingdom of Sikkim. Independent from 1642 until 1975, it is now absorbed into India. Its people are a mixture of indigenous groups such as the Lepchas, Tibetans and recently arrived Nepalese immigrants. To the east Sikkim is divided from Bhutan by a wedge of Tibetan territory, the Chumbi Valley,<sup>18</sup> which forms a natural corridor that rises to the plateau between the two countries. This became one of the principal trade routes with Tibet after the British established a trade station at Yatung in 1903/4.

The kingdom of Bhutan bounded in the north by Tibet and in the south by the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal

is almost exactly the size of Switzerland, 46,500 square kilometres, but with a population of just under 600,000. Most settlement is concentrated in its middle temperate zone at 1,500–3,000 metres, a landscape of green valleys surrounded by hills and mountains. Much of the country's ancient primary forest cover remains while in valleys below rice, barley and wheat grow in small fields. The distinctive, chalet-style, Bhutanese houses with their overhanging roofs of wood shingles, or more recently of shiny corrugated iron, are scattered amongst rice paddies.

Bhutan became a separate entity politically as the result of a dispute in 1616 between rivals for the leadership of the Drukpa Kagyupa which forced the Lama Nawang Namgyal to flee Tibet and establish his own government. Since the 1950s Bhutan has followed the path of a separate and gradual development to safeguard its unique Buddhist heritage and prevent the type of westernization that mass tourism brings. This has meant that the country remains closed to mass tourism but it has sought western expertise on education, health and communications in order to create the foundations of a modern state.



# Why was Jewellery worn?

**B**YOND THE APPEAL OF THEIR LUSTROUS SURFACES and glowing colours, pieces of Himalayan jewellery have the power to reveal intimate facets of the lives of those who owned and wore them. Like a tiny mirror reflecting a society often distant in time and space, a single piece can reveal its wearer's sex, their regional origins, position in society and way of life as well as allowing us glimpses of religious preoccupations and beliefs.

Most jewellery made from precious metals was considered auspicious and luck bringing in Tibet and many pieces were also believed to have strong amuletic properties. In southern Tibet it was considered bad luck for a woman to go without her hair ornaments except at times of mourning.<sup>1</sup> Up until the 1950s this led to women sleeping in their enormous headdresses (plate 64) a practice which necessitated lying with them outside of the bed.<sup>2</sup> There were certain ceremonies that were thought to be more effective when women wearing jewellery were present while to give a woman a precious stone on her betrothal was believed to protect her during pregnancy. There were also a few items that were worn specifically to guard against spiritual evil such as the large ivory rings worn, on the thumb of the left hand, by men in the past to protect them against witches<sup>3</sup>. Tibetan belief also held that without pierced ears one risked being reborn as an animal such as a donkey in a future life. This led men, who normally wore one earring in the left ear, to also wear a small stud of polished turquoise in the right. An equally universal practice which continues today is the use of amulets contained in decorative boxes or *ga'us*. *Ga'us* were used in all areas influenced by Tibetan culture and by almost everyone both rich and poor and are still worn by many Tibetans today. The word *ga'u* means simply case or container for relics and must be distinguished from the amulet, or *ten*, within. Both Buddhists and the



3. MAN WEARING A BOX *ga'u* AT A FESTIVAL  
Derge, 2003

Although often slung across the left shoulder at the front of the body, amulet boxes are sometimes worn in this way at the side. The type of silk sash seen here is also sometimes used instead of leather straps. In the past it was common to possess several *ga'us* and quite usual for a man to carry five or six on a journey.<sup>1</sup> But in the early 20th century Tibetan travellers were sometimes seen carrying as many as twelve facing at the front, back and sides, to protect themselves from evil that might come from any direction. They might even be attached to the leading animals in pack trains to protect the whole caravan.<sup>2</sup>

followers of the indigenous Bon religion<sup>4</sup> wear *ga'us* to protect them against the attacks of capricious nature spirits such as the *lu* living in the waters of lakes and rivers, mountain spirits and the *sa dag* or 'Lords of the Soil'. Although peaceful it is believed that such entities can become angered by disturbances or pollution of the earth or waters (page 40). In addition to Buddhist deities and rolls of printed prayers, any objects that have been worn by or come into contact with revered religious figures, such as scraps of clothing or bits of silk presentation scarves known as *katag*, are highly regarded for their protective power. However, no amulet is regarded as effective unless activated by a lama through prayers and offerings to the Gods and through the faith of its wearer.

The powerful protective and medicinal qualities of stones (chapter 3) served to increase the spiritual benefits given by jewellery such as *ga'us*. The rosary, or *trenng wa*, was also charged with spiritual power by its constant religious use. While fleeing on horseback from the invading Chinese, Jamyang Sakya dropped her finest jewelled rosary. Unable to dismount because hotly pursued, she quickly reasoned that 'the prayer beads protective function would prevent our enemies from pursuing us beyond the point where they had been dropped'.<sup>5</sup>

Jewellery and clothing in Tibet formed the two most obvious and visible indicators of wealth and social position. In many instances, particularly if you were a government official, rank determined what you were allowed to wear. But there remained plenty of scope for those with money but without official rank to show off. This led to wide differences in richness of ornamentation and finish within the same basic type of ornament according to the economic status of its owner. Thus the wealthiest women from southern Tibet, or *Tsang*, who might be the wives of rich merchants and not necessarily the nobility, swathed their hooped headdresses in strings of pearls (plate 64) in addition to studding them with corals and turquoises. At the other end of the social spectrum, the poorest woman wore a similar wooden hoop, set with perhaps just a few small turquoises or corals, or simply a felt circle set with stones worn around the head. Other ornaments too such as the *ga'u* or amulet box were also commissioned according to the financial resources of the patron.

For men similarly jewellery and ornament were statements of their position in society. Together with his gun, sword and saddle, a man's amulet box or *ga'u* was a status symbol on which he lavished as much wealth as possible. If he was an official in the Lhasa government, he was required to wear the indicators of his rank which were highly regulated according



4. OFFICIAL'S HAT  
SILK BROCADE, COPPER-GILT,  
TURQUOISE.  
Lhasa, c.1930s  
16 cm high, 33 cm diam.

One visible and very specific symbol of rank was the gold hat finial called *trudok* or *shalok* which decorates this brocade-covered hat with its fringe of silk tassels. These were detachable and could be worn on both winter and summer hats<sup>3</sup> by officials of the fourth rank upwards. The approximately 70 to 80 fourth-rank officials who were responsible for many of the routine duties of government wore turquoises such as this.<sup>4</sup> National Museums Liverpool

to position. What was worn depended on which of the eight levels of government officialdom he belonged to. One of the most visible insignia of office for all lay officials was the thin pencil-shaped earring, or *sochi*,<sup>6</sup> (plate 49) and the stone-set, gold hat finial (plate 4) called *trudok* or *shalok*.<sup>7</sup> The particular stone worn on the top of a hat or hat finial showed the wearer's rank. The Prime Minister, a first-rank official, wore a pearl at the top of his finial, the four cabinet ministers, of second rank, wore rubies while lay officials of the third rank, who were the heads of government departments, wore coral hat ornaments. When hats were not worn, lay officials wore a small, oval, turquoise-studded amulet box in the queue of their braided hair called *tagab*<sup>8</sup> (plates 47, 48).

An official's wife too had to be provided with jewellery appropriate to her husband's rank. There were a few ornaments that were considered essential for self-respecting women of any but the poorest class in Lhasa. These consisted of the

horned coral-and-pearl-covered headdress or *patruk* (plates 53, 55), the long lotus-bud-shaped earrings or *akor* (plate 56), the *ga'u* or amulet box and the *trakey* or string of pearls.<sup>9</sup> Women would not often be seen without at least earrings and an amulet box. The next most eye-catching element of female ornament was the square or pillow-shaped, jewel-set amulet boxes or *ga'us* (plates 51, 52, 54) strung on necklaces of corals, turquoises and pearls. Even down to the 1950s, men and women of the ruling class were obliged to wear full sets of appropriate ornaments for important occasions and a woman could be fined for not wearing her headdress during the New Year ceremonies.<sup>10</sup>

There was much jewellery that was worn by both sexes and several common types of amulets, rings and earrings were seen adorning both men and women. In general men's rings and amulet cases tended to be larger and heavier versions of women's but were, as in the case of the saddle ring, often of the



5. CEREMONIAL SWORD BELT  
Formerly owned by Wangchen  
Gelek Surkhang  
Copper-gilt, iron-gilt, turquoise,  
coral, lapis lazuli and Chinese  
brocade  
Eastern Tibet or China,  
c. 18th or 19th century  
98.5 cm long

A sword belt of pierced iron roundels and embossed plaques set with semi-precious stones sewn onto a brocade belt. Two wheel-shaped hanging roundels are suspended from the lower edge for attaching a sword and knife. A high-quality piece befitting an official who became one of the four 'Shapés' or cabinet ministers of the central Lhasa government.  
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

same basic type. Either sex wore square, rectangular and round *gau's* and small shrine-shaped *ga'us* around the neck. When a similar form of earring was worn as in eastern Tibet, the women's versions were usually larger, more elaborate and decorative and women wore pairs while men wore a single piece. Although there were a number of ornaments worn by both sexes, a larger volume of jewellery and ornament was (and still is) differentiated by gender. Men never wear bracelets or traditionally feminine materials such as pearls, conch shell or precious stones. The form and decoration of male and female amulet cases is also often different, with women's generally showing the greatest variety of geometric shapes ranging from simple round and square designs to ovals, rectangles, double-ogee-ended rectangles to octagons and cylinders. A favoured shape worn almost only by men was the large version of the shrine-shaped oblong box, with an ogival top standing to over 35 centimetres in height called *ga'u dawang* or *dre pang* in central Tibet.<sup>11</sup> While most women's *ga'us* retain their function as relic holders, all, without exception, have a more obvious function as pieces of jewellery than do men's and make greater use of precious or semi-precious stones in their decoration.

A woman's jewellery was often her major independent financial holding, most of which came to her at marriage. At this time a mother would hand on sets of the most important pieces to her daughter. Other gifts of jewellery and clothes were given by her new husband and family.<sup>12</sup> In western Tibet the new clothes and jewellery given by her parents were worn by a bride at her departure ceremony in her own family house, those given by the bridegroom's family were reserved for the

wedding ceremony itself at the groom's house.<sup>13</sup> It is a Tibetan custom for a bride to be given a jewel, usually a turquoise, by her new family to wear on her head at marriage. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Lhasa, the stone was given by a senior servant of the bridegroom's party at the time a bride left her family home.<sup>14</sup> More recently a mother-in-law has been the one to welcome a new daughter by putting a turquoise on her head while others recite auspicious verses in a ceremony called *yu she*.<sup>15</sup> In place of a turquoise, wealthy families in the past sometimes used a jade mounted in gold and set with pearls. This jewel called *tsigyu thakpa*<sup>16</sup> was worn on the back of the woman's headdress in Lhasa and southern Tibet. It signified her married status but divorce could be easily carried out by a husband just by the symbolic act of plucking the stone from his wife's head.<sup>17</sup> It was the custom for a woman to keep all the jewellery given by her relatives if she divorced or if her husband died, but the ornaments given by her husband were kept by him or retained by his family in the case of his death.

In eastern and western Tibet, and particularly amongst the nomad populations of those areas, much of this wealth was worn in the form of ornaments or stones attached to felt that extended down a woman's back. In times of crisis, the gold or silver could be sold as scrap or in its made-up form and the stones too could be sold individually or in groups as necessary. Many Tibetan refugees kept their families for extended periods in India during the decades after 1960 by gradually selling off their family jewels one by one. In Lhasa and other towns the wealthiest women would store jewels and ornaments not in use in chests as it was only on religious festivals, at ceremonies or



6. SCREEN AROUND THE JOBO IMAGE  
Silver, corals, amber, pearls, turquoise,  
lapis lazuli, sapphires  
Jokhang, Lhasa, 1673

The dedicatory inscription on the reverse of the silver surround to Tibet's holiest image, restored in 1673, lists as donations at the time 67 turquoises, 1,215 corals, 1,595 pearls, 4 amber teacups, 257 pieces of jade, over 3,000 precious stones, as well as numerous silver and gold rings, amulets and other ornaments. Many of these were inset into its front and sides. The inscription also gives the names of the Nepalese and Tibetan craftsmen who collaborated in its making.  
Photograph Michael Hens

for the visits of important people that all their finery was worn.

Despite the custom of passing jewellery on in one's family, jewellery was also recycled, no longer fashionable items being melted down and the stones reused. The best gold and silver pieces, particularly *ga'us*, were alternatively given as meritorious donations to important religious figures either during their lifetime or after their death to adorn their funerary stupas or *chortens*. Giving gifts, including precious metal objects or jewellery, to monasteries or lamas was an accepted way of generating merit that was believed to lead to spiritual benefits for the individual. In Ladakh today, when a woman dies without a daughter, individual stones or even her entire turquoise-covered headdress may be given to the local monastery as an offering.<sup>18</sup> An early example of the practice was recorded during the journey to central Tibet of the great Indian Buddhist teacher Atisha in 1054. As the revered guru neared Lhasa, a girl who saw Atisha spontaneously gave him the ornaments on her head as an offering.<sup>19</sup> When new decorative *toranas* or surrounds to particularly important religious images were commissioned, it was usual to set an abundance of stones and pieces of jewellery into the metalwork as decoration. Monastic authorities could draw on existing stocks and combine them with new gifts as happened when a new screen around the Jobo, the most sacred image in Tibet, was commissioned in 1673 (plate 6).<sup>20</sup> The sides of the large, magnificent, gilded tomb stupas, or *chortens*, of the Dalai Lamas in the Potala Palace (plate 7) are also richly set with symmetrically arranged *ga'us*, earrings and large cut and polished semi-precious stones.



7. THE RELIQUARY STUPA OR CHORTEN OF  
THE 13TH DALAI LAMA (1876–1933)  
Potala Palace, Lhasa, 1933  
Gold, precious and semi-precious stones

Women's earrings and amulet boxes and the long earrings of officials are seen here set into the gilded surface of the splendid 14-metre-high reliquary *chorten* containing the body of one of Tibet's greatest recent rulers. On older *chortens* – from the first which holds the body of the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–82) to those constructed up until the mid-19th century – virtually the only jewellery items present are the large ceremonial pieces worn at the New Year.  
Photograph Michael Hens



8. WOMAN FROM NORTH-EAST TIBET, 1922–40

This photograph shows the spectacular back ornaments worn in the area around the great Kokonor lake. Large dish-shaped bosses of worked silver, pieces of amber, turquoise and coral are sewn onto wide felt strips hanging from the shoulders. Such ornaments are mainly reserved for festival times today but until the 1950s were everyday wear, worn whilst carrying out daily tasks such as milking. When combined with large earrings and large round or square amulet boxes hung from their necks women could be heard coming from a distance through the clanking of their jewellery.<sup>5</sup>

The Collection of the Newark Museum. Gift of the Reverend Marion G. Griebenow, 1946.

## History, Change and Fashion

The evidence that would allow us to trace the history of Tibetan jewellery is unfortunately very fragmentary, confined to a small number of scroll and wall paintings, the accounts of earlier western visitors and a tiny number of archaeological finds. But exciting new evidence is being unearthed from burials of the royal period (the seventh to the ninth centuries) and two embossed gold earrings and parts of a silver-gilt reliquary of this period are now known.<sup>21</sup> It is undoubtedly the recycling of high-value precious metals that has resulted in the destruction of all but a few identifiable survivors from before the eighteenth century.

It is likely however that clues to far older patterns of jewellery wearing exist within the multiplicity of present-day or recent regional styles. This is particularly true of nomad groups and sedentary peoples in the eastern and western borderlands, areas politically marginalized by the Tibetan state since the seventeenth century. Until 1950 there were distinct generic similarities between key types of jewellery worn by nomads right across Tibet from the west to the east.<sup>22</sup> This was seen most strongly in the custom of nomad women wearing their wealth in the form of silver plaques, coins and shell disks sewn to felt strips which hung down the their backs. Amongst these groups this type of ornamentation was observed as early as the seventeenth century in north-east Tibet but was also found in western Tibet up until the 1940s.<sup>23</sup> Dressing their hair into the auspicious Buddhist number of 108 braids hanging to the waist, and attaching strings of turquoises to the front braids either side of the face, was an ancient custom that continues amongst nomad women in both eastern and western Tibet.<sup>24</sup> The practice may be first recorded in paintings of c. 1042CE at the monastery of Tabo in Himachal Pradesh (plate 10)<sup>25</sup> and at Alchi (Ladakh) in the twelfth century.<sup>26</sup> It was first observed by Friar Odoric who travelled through Tibet in the fourteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Although the number of tiny plaits may fall short of the sacred 108, the fashion is still found virtually everywhere except in central Tibet. Another shared trait is the wearing of distinctive gold, copper-gilt or silver concave disks on their heads by women both in the western Himalayan districts of Lahaul and Spiti and in Derge and Chamdo in the east (plates 79, 80). In both areas these saucer-shaped plates are set with a central turquoise or coral.<sup>28</sup> This fashion was also seen in *Lh'ari* in southern Tibet until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> In all these cases we may be seeing survivals of what were probably widespread ancient Tibetan jewellery customs perhaps displaced or changed in central





9. WOMAN'S BACK ORNAMENTS

Padded cotton, conch shell  
North-east Tibet  
Hair bags: 105 cm long, 15 cm wide  
Back ornaments, middle band: 150  
cm long, 37 cm wide

These multi-coloured felt strips covered with sewn on conch shell disks are one of the typical back ornaments of nomad women in north-east Tibet. The upper surfaces of the three panels of padded cotton are lined with variously coloured cloths and covered with sewn on shell disks which would reach almost to the ground behind their wearer. The varicoloured ends made of cotton and velvet embroidered with silk and gold thread decorate the front ends of useful hair bags concealed behind them. The full set of ornaments also includes two more similar felt strips which are worn one at each side (not shown). National Museums of Scotland

10. MANUSCRIPT PAGE

Tabo 'Kanjur' gouache on paper  
Tabo, Himachal Pradesh, late 11th  
century

A group of women kneel before a preaching Bodhisattva. The front braids of their hair are decorated with lines of turquoises and large turquoises are hung over their foreheads, reminiscent of the arrangement at the front of *perak* headdresses in Ladakh today. Photograph by Deborah Klimburg-Salter. Western Himalayas Archive, Vienna

Tibet by the upheavals caused by the establishment of the Dalai Lama's government from the seventeenth century onwards.

At the time of the New Year, officials in Lhasa wore exceptional jewellery and *gyaluche* costumes, the 'garments of royalty' which were said to copy those of the royal princes of ancient Tibet (plate 11).<sup>30</sup> Although the *ringyen*<sup>31</sup> or 'ancient ornaments', which survive today mostly in the storerooms of the Potala, appear to be seventeenth century or later they may copy or incorporate stones from much earlier pieces. The practice of wearing these ornaments was introduced by the fifth Dalai Lama in 1672 and was part of the ceremonial intended to evoke the splendour of the ancient 'Religious Kings' of the seventh to the ninth centuries as well as to draw a conscious parallel between his own dual secular and religious powers and theirs.<sup>32</sup> But the 'Great Fifth' had, in reality, both borrowed the practice from Changchub Gyaltsen (1302-64) the former ruler of Tibet and seized the jewels from his palace.<sup>33</sup> A very large turquoise-covered *ga'u* worn in a mid-fifteenth century *tangka*, or scroll painting, by a high official of

Drakpa Gyaltsen (1374-1432), a descendant of Changchub Gyaltsen, is almost identical to *ga'u* in the existing *ringyen*.<sup>34</sup>

Only a few Tibetan jewellery types, such as the round-hooped earring or *along* (plate 12) worn from at least the fourteenth century,<sup>35</sup> can be traced any distance back in time through depictions in art works. A mandalic amulet design has been excavated from a tomb of the eight/ninth century in north-east Tibet although as yet no portable containers have been recovered.<sup>36</sup> But the *ga'u* is certainly an ancient type, one of whose possible prototypes in the form of small, round amulet boxes appears in north and east Indian stone sculpture of the Pala Dynasty (tenth to twelfth centuries).<sup>37</sup> The strong and deep-rooted amuletic tradition of India together with the close religious connections existing between the two Buddhist cultures during the eighth to the thirteenth centuries make it likely that the custom derives from there. The image of the *ga'u* also occurs in the Prajnaparamita Sutra, an Indian scripture forming the doctrinal foundation of Buddhism in Tibet whose two earliest translations into Tibetan were in the ninth and eleventh centuries.<sup>38</sup> A very few, tiny, complete bronze-cast *ga'u*s



II. THREE OFFICIALS WEARING THE ORNAMENTS OF THE ANCIENT KINGS, *ringyen*  
Lhasa, 1937

Adorning the New Year costumes were pieces of special jewellery, the *ringyen*<sup>6</sup> or ornaments of the ancient kings said to date from the period of the Tibetan monarchy (7th to 9th centuries). These consisted of large, circular, gold amulet boxes studded with turquoise,<sup>7</sup> heavy pendant-turquoise earrings<sup>8</sup> and a long gold strip covered with turquoises attached to the left ear, always shown supported as here in the hand. Necklaces of large coral beads and even larger amber beads, some the size of golf balls, completed the ensemble. Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford



12. MANUSCRIPT PAGE  
Five Hymns to the Pancaraksha Goddesses  
and the Mahasannipataratnaketurdharani  
Gouache on paper  
Dolpo, northern Nepal, c.14th century  
Page size: 65 cm long, 21 cm wide

A group of donors and lama wearing the costume and jewellery of this part of western Tibet during the 14th century. The first layman to the right of the officiating lama wears earrings consisting of three turquoise-covered drops, the third from the lama, a woman, two prominent gold-hoop earrings and a round convex gold and turquoise head ornament. The other men all wear large pieces of turquoise in their hair above the ears. Private collection

may date from between the seventh and thirteenth centuries; these form part of the category of small metal objects that are found in the fields called *thok cha*, or 'thunder iron', believed by Tibetans to be made when lightning strikes the ground.<sup>39</sup>

What little evidence we have suggests that up until the start of the twentieth century changes in the style of jewellery and the manner in which it was worn occurred relatively slowly. As the century advanced however, contacts with western culture, increasing tourism and political upheavals have had a significant impact on the role of jewellery. One of the clearest changes has been the reduction in the amount of jewellery worn on a daily basis. This trend was already visible in central Tibet before the Chinese takeover and Cultural Revolution. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Lhasa headdress or *patruk* was worn in everyday life but, after about 1930, together with other ornaments it gradually came to be worn less and less<sup>40</sup> and was eventually reserved only for ceremonial occasions. During the second half of the century the same trend has become more marked both throughout Tibet and the whole Himalayan region. Now, although women in the remote Zanskar Valley of Ladakh still wear their turquoise-laden *parak* headdresses even while working in the fields, this custom has entirely ceased in the Indus Valley around Leh, the capital, where tourism, film, video and television have dramatically changed cultural norms. During the last 15 years, the wearing of full sets of ornaments and headdresses has declined even at festivals in Ladakh although they are worn on official occasions and by Buddhist brides.<sup>41</sup> The sizes of jewellery and ornament have also changed noticeably over the

last century. Anecdotal evidence suggests that during the first half of the century there had been an increase in size and elaboration. According to Dorje Yudon Yuthok all the main female ornaments such as the *akor* had been much smaller until the early nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> She believed that by the mid-twentieth century they were nearly twice the size of the earlier pieces. However, since the 1960s the trend has been towards wearing smaller as well as fewer pieces of jewellery.

While such changes in style seem to have happened gradually, the political upheavals following the Tibetan revolt against Chinese forces in 1959 and after that the Cultural Revolution (1966–77) have permanently changed Tibetan culture and transformed what people wear. After the Chinese had taken control, there was a period prior to the Cultural Revolution when many valuable objects were appropriated by Chinese officials and family jewels and religious objects were forcibly confiscated. During the Cultural Revolution there was systematic and organized looting of precious stones and metals from the religious images in monasteries, prior to their destruction.<sup>43</sup> The wearing of traditional ornaments was forbidden as one of the 'Four Olds' and goldsmiths and silversmiths became political targets as they not only produced religious objects but also worked for the nobility. At this desperate time some people buried their ornaments and religious objects. Only after 1980 when new laws relaxed the most severe policies of the past 14 years were people allowed to wear traditional jewellery again. What is worn today in central and southern Tibet is however a much scaled-down and much poorer version of what was worn before 1959. The



13. AMULET BOX, *ga'u*  
Iron gilded  
Eastern Tibet, c.15th century  
9.30 cm long, 9.20 cm wide, 3.50 cm deep.

The style and extremely high quality of the pierced and inlaid ironwork on this *ga'u* link it to a well-known group of ritual objects made during the reign of the Chinese emperor Yong Lo (1403–24) which were Imperial gifts to important Tibetan religious figures. The characteristic scrollwork with lotus blossoms, which covers the front, and the signature inlaid spiral scrollwork in gold wire, found on the hinges of this exquisite *ga'u*, also suggest the same date and place of production. It may be that objects such as this formed smaller diplomatic gifts made at the time. The reverse of the box is covered with inlaid geometric ornament.

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few pre-1959 *patruks*, *ga'us* and other ornaments to have survived are now worn only at festivals. At the same time, older jewellery is frequently sold to Nepalese dealers who take it to Kathmandu while new Nepalese-made 'Tibetan' items are sold to Tibetan women who pass them on to tourists as family heirlooms.<sup>44</sup> But in eastern and north-eastern Tibet much more traditional jewellery is worn although it is produced increasingly by Chinese silversmiths (pages 46–9).

Within the underlying homogeneity of Tibetan culture, spanning the area from Ladakh and the Himalayas in the west to the grasslands of Qinghai province in the north-east, myriad variations existed in material culture and language, some obvious and others much more subtle. As we shall see there were strong regional preferences for particular types of amulets, earrings and belt ornaments. But most obvious of all were the strikingly distinctive types of women's headdresses, whose style and shape changed dramatically every few hundred kilometres as one traversed the Tibetan plateau from west to east.

As we have seen, the jewellery of the Lhasa nobility acted very much as indicators of rank and status both amongst male government officials and their wives. In Tsang, southern Tibet, women wore the equivalent to the Lhasa *patruk*, a dramatic D-shaped headdress called *pagor* covered in pearls, turquoises and corals. To the south-west in the Himalayan borderlands such

as Lahaul and Kinnaur, mixed populations of Tibetan and Indian peoples have given rise to the interesting mixture of jewellery types where Indian Hindu anklets, nose rings, earrings and forehead ornaments with multiple hanging drops are worn with Tibetan ornaments and some unique local pieces. In Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti large, oblong, lobed-ended *ga'us* called *tungma* and heavy bracelets are worn with lozenge-shaped cloak clasps and the large and unique local dress pins of brass or silver (plate 93).

Culturally Ladakh is part of western Tibet and its jewellery tends to be predominantly variants of types worn there. Women's ornaments are dominated by the striking turquoise-covered headdresses called *perak* (plates 98, 99). Stones are pierced and sewn to a tapering base of leather or felt which in the better *peraks* are over one metre long and stretch from the forehead down to the centre of the back. Recognizably different variants of the classic Ladakhi *perak* are found in the Zaskar and the Waka chu Valleys in Ladakh, in the Humla and Mustang districts in Nepal, in Spiti and in Ngari in western Tibet (plate 89).<sup>45</sup> For special occasions in Ladakh and western Tibet, freshwater-pearl earrings are combined with three or four necklaces, or *skecha*, of alternating corals, turquoises and amber or mother-of-pearl beads. Necklaces may have one or more *ga'us*, usually octagonal, at their centre. The long-standing fashion for multiple necklaces is documented by the

eleventh-century murals of Tabo monastery and by fourteenth-century manuscript illustrations.<sup>46</sup>

Equally as rich and distinctive as the elaborate constructions of central or western Tibet are the head ornaments of women in east Tibet which tend to consist of stones tied or sewn to the hair or a felt cloth and set close to the head. Combinations of coral, turquoise and amber tend to predominate in hair ornaments and pearls are less in evidence than in central or western Tibet. From the grasslands of the Horpa (north-central Tibet) into the Chamdo and Derge areas in eastern Tibet, married women continue to wear embossed gold or copper-gilt disks, or *metog*, in their hair (plates 79, 80). The women of Gaba province on the borders of Amdo wear five or more large golf ball-sized amber balls sewn onto black felt, one at the crown of the head and others at either side, often with small corals set at their centres (plate 21). Traditional belts are of leather with attached silver plates and in both Kham and Amdo a pair of decorative belt-hangers, or *lo chab*, are suspended from belts (plates 74, 75, 76).

In the predominantly nomadic area of north-east Tibet (the former Amdo) most of a woman's ornaments are carried on her back, in the form of shell or silver bosses attached to felt strips hanging from her shoulders almost to the ground behind. At the front, from the centre of the belt, hangs an ornamental silver or brass milk-pail hook, symbolizing women's role in milking. Women from the *Gnolok* ethnic group wear equally heavy back ornaments featuring instead large amber balls into the centres of which corals are attached.

Many Khampa men today continue to wear a single plait of hair that they enlarge by entwining it with black or red threads and wrap around their head.<sup>47</sup> Through this they thread gold or silver rings and sometimes a plain thumb-ring of mastodon ivory. Silver clips with multiple settings of stones, or *trati*, are also fashionable. Amongst the coral- or turquoise-set gold or silver finger rings are often found 'saddle rings', or *tagam*, so named from their shape (plate 15). A single pencil-shaped earring featuring a single coral bead similar to the type worn in pairs by women is worn in the left ear. Finely worked tinder pouches, or *mechag*, are hung from the belts of men in both Kham and Amdo and in the past it was common for men to thrust a sword, often in a turquoise- and coral-encrusted scabbard, ready for use, horizontally through their belts. In Amdo men commonly wore square or round silver *ga'u* boxes around their necks (plate 81), with large pendant or round silver earrings decorated with small corals or turquoises along their front edges.



14. WOMEN'S EARRING  
Silver and coral  
Eastern Tibet, c.19th century  
15 cm long

Long earrings of this type are worn by both men and women in eastern Tibet though the presence of a decorative crescent hanger with bells suggests this belonged to a woman. Acquired in Darjeeling in 1855. V&A: 03059

15. 'SADDLE RINGS', *tagam*  
Silver and coral  
Central and eastern Tibet,  
c.19th century  
Rings 3.5 cm long

The name of the two rings is based on their resemblance to the Tibetan saddle. They are used all over Tibet although the form originated in Kham and has remained most popular there. These were bought in 1904 in Lhasa from women selling butter in the market. Obtained on the 1904 British Expedition to Tibet. V&A: IM 10/11 - 1911





# Symbolism, Folklore and Beliefs

THROUGHOUT THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD the brilliance, beauty and rarity of gemstones have provided a metaphor for the sacred and spiritually exalted, whether embodied in an enlightened teacher, experienced in transcendent states of awareness or envisioned as paradisaical landscapes. Light-saturated, jewel-like colours have also been described by mystics and by visionaries following altered states of awareness. Aldous Huxley theorized that our brains normally act as filters, allowing through only what is necessary for survival but obscuring a reality that is actually full of the intense light and colour ascribed to the heavens of the world religions and partially reproduced by the stained glass in Christian churches.<sup>1</sup> The paradises of cosmic Buddhas that are found in Mahayana scriptures, brought to Tibet from India, are full of descriptions of radiant colours and bejewelled landscapes. The 'Western Paradise' (S. *Sukhavati*) or the 'Land of Bliss' (T. *Dewacan*) is described in just such a manner in a first-century Sanskrit work. That world it says 'is adorned with jewel trees... the ground contains a great variety of jewels and gems... the surface of the ponds there... abound in golden water lilies, with stalks of lapis lazuli, and with shoots and stamens of diamond, well scented and delightful...'.<sup>2</sup> When paradises are shown in Tibetan paintings, jewels, inter-mixed with auspicious emblems, are usually painted as piles of brilliantly coloured pear-drop shapes at the bottom of the picture, where they are placed as offerings to the presiding Buddha, just as they are also shown on the upper edges of large amulet boxes.

The use of the imagery of jewels goes back to the inception of Buddhism itself in India where the 'Three Jewels' (S. *tri ratna*, T. *konchog sum*) symbol was created to represent the three pillars of the religion: the Buddha, the Buddha's teachings or Dharma and the Sangha or community of monks. In Tibet the 'Three Jewels' are shown as a pyramid with flames

rising from their tops. Another symbolic jewel form the 'Wish-Granting Jewel' (S. *cintamani*, T. *yid zhin norbu*), a magical gem consisting of six or nine elongated jewels surrounded by flames, is one of the emblems most frequently found on the front of *ga'us* (plates 61, 62).<sup>3</sup> It was one of the 'Seven Jewels of Royal Power' (*gyaltsi rinchen nadun*) emblems of the World Ruler (S. *Chakravartin*) in ancient India. In the new Buddhist context this emblem of the power and riches of the world-ruling king became a metaphor for enlightenment's ability to satisfy all desires, both spiritual and material, with the flames blazing from it representing the radiance of the enlightened mind.<sup>4</sup>

The imagery of the jewel in combination with the lotus lies at the heart of the symbolism of Vajrayana Buddhism as practised in Tibet. It is famously enshrined in the Tibetan mantra to the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara 'Om mani padme hum hri', translated as 'Hail to the jewel in the lotus'. The jewel and lotus are the two primary coefficients of enlightenment, both a description of enlightenment itself and the path to it. The lotus represents Wisdom (S. *prajna*), supreme consciousness and understanding, the container and support of all phenomena, identified with the feminine principle. The jewel is synonymous with the diamond (S. *vajra*), the active male principle of the 'Skillful Method' (S. *upaya*), the compassionate deeds which naturally arise from Wisdom. Together these qualities are the essence of Buddhahood itself. Male/female imagery runs through the whole of Tibetan religious practice expressing itself as the sexually joined images of male and female deities (*yab yum*). The jewel and the lotus thus also signify the male and female sexual organs.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the most renowned Buddhist teachers and religious texts have titles containing 'jewel' and 'gem' as their epithets. A famous example is the 'Jewel Ornament of Liberation or the Wish-Fulfilling Gem of the Noble Doctrine' by Gampopa, founder of the Kagyu school in Tibet (1079–1153).<sup>6</sup> In the Tibetan language there are several, almost interchangeable, terms that mean precious and jewel. The Tibetan word *rin chen* means 'precious' and also 'jewel', while *nor bu* translates directly as 'precious jewel'. *Rin po che* or 'precious one' is a high honorific title given to incarnate lamas although it too has the meaning of 'jewel of great value'.

In the Tibetan world there are strong beliefs in the numinous, protective power of stones to shield their wearers from harm and in their medical potency against certain diseases. Powdered stones are sometimes ground up by Tibetan doctors to form one of the ingredients in the large pills called

*ril bu*. One of the most magically powerful stone beads, the etched agate *dzi*, is for example mixed with powered pearls, silver and gold dust to be taken as a remedy for epilepsy. In other preparations it dries out serum and alleviates eye diseases and fever of the bones.<sup>7</sup> The *dzi* is worn by both men and women to protect them from the attacks of evil spirits who can cause sickness and death. If a *dzi* breaks it is considered to have done its job of protecting its wearer but is no longer 'pure' or as effective.



16. WOMAN'S NECKLACE  
*Dzi* beads, glass imitation *dzi*,  
 imitation jade and coral beads  
 Bhutan foothills, early 20th century  
 11.5 cm diam., largest *dzi* 3.3 cm long

This necklace is part of a complete Tibetan-style costume from the foothills of Bhutan and is typical of many in its combination of real and imitation beads. The real chalcedony *dzi* are the browner beads towards the top, the others are black and white glass imitations. Jade has been simulated by green glass while marble stained red and waxed imitates Italian coral.  
 V&A: IM 121–1923



Most Tibetans believe that *dzi* have a divine origin and are certainly not man made, consequently over the centuries a huge body of folklore has built up surrounding them. Some believe that *dzi* originally belonged to the gods who threw them away when even slightly blemished, a story that conveniently accounts for the many chipped and broken pieces found. Another belief relates to the legendary Tibetan folk hero Gesar of Ling who in his epic story carried off treasure from Iran, including many *dzi*, after winning a war against it. It was said that over time these prizes were dispersed all over Tibet. But the most common belief is that *dzi* are worms or insects that move under the earth and turn to stone when found by humans. In the popular imagination they are discovered in ‘nests’, something probably suggested by finding groups of them together. Some also believe that they must be ‘fixed’ or ‘stopped’, turned to stone by having dust thrown at them or by being spat on when they are encountered.<sup>8</sup>

The high Tibetan valuation of the turquoise, or *yu*, is first recorded in documents from the period of its ancient kings (seventh to ninth centuries). Contemporaneous manuscripts preserved at the central Asian oasis of Dunhuang prove it was offered in ceremonies to deities and to demons as ‘ransom’ in rituals to avert sickness.<sup>9</sup> The supernatural, the exquisitely beautiful and the precious are all variously described in Tibetan folklore as turquoise even when the colour is not directly applicable. Thus while it would be natural to describe a lake or well or some flowers as such, the epithet is also applied to the manes of horses, bees, the hair of goddesses, the 13 turquoise heavens and to the bodies of children born in a supernatural way.<sup>10</sup> The stone is linked, by virtue of its colour association, with Green Tara and when worshipping this deity a rosary of turquoises is ideally used (plate 17).<sup>11</sup> In an early twentieth-century monograph on turquoise, Tibetans were reported as valuing it second only to gold, something reflected in the way they would say ‘this is turquoise and not a stone’. Big turquoises were sometimes engraved with magic formulas to enhance their power. Like prized weapons they might be also given individual names, such as ‘the great star shining on the meadow land’ — a stone paid as part of a tribute to the king of western Tibet in the eleventh century.<sup>12</sup> Fine, large stones could be given to high lamas or saints as presents while small stones, like brick tea, were once used as a type of currency.<sup>13</sup>

Tibetans are often experts in judging the qualities and types of turquoise and other stones. Scholars have elaborated this lore in materia medica, or medical texts, and in others which deal with the criteria by which stones and ornaments



17. ROSARY, *treg wa*  
Turquoise and coral  
Tibet, c.19th century

This turquoise rosary is divided into three equal sections by three large coral beads. Three small strings of corals are added for counting the tens, hundreds and thousands of complete rosary recitations. Turquoise was considered especially appropriate for religious practice featuring the Green Tara. A similar rosary worn as a necklace may be seen in plate 64 showing a southern Tibetan woman.

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are judged called *dagtab*. Thus there are seven types of turquoise listed in The Blue Beryl, a medical treatise written at the end of the seventeenth century by Sangye Gyatso (1653–1705). These include red-tinted, white-tinted, superior white, refined, mediocre, blue and Chinese.<sup>14</sup>

Like *dzi*, turquoise has strong protective and beneficial medicinal qualities. It is believed to purify the blood and remove poison, jaundice and diseases of heat affecting the liver. It was also said that swallowing a native Tibetan turquoise was a cure for poison while to stud a *ga'u* with good turquoises was believed to strengthen the bones and prevent injury in the event of a fall.<sup>15</sup> The best-quality unflawed pieces are also traditionally thought to avert the evil eye, repel demons and prevent bad dreams. Another belief is that when a turquoise changes colour from blue to pale green it indicates that the wearer has an illness. While some hold that on being given to a new owner in good health its depth of colour is restored, there is also the idea that a turquoise can like a person 'die', at which point it turns green and eventually black.<sup>16</sup> This relates to the fact that turquoise absorbs water and, through long-term contact with the oil in human skin and exposure to light, the softer varieties tend to discolour. In a related belief, turquoises were also placed at the bottom of teacups as it was thought they would change colour if poison was present, so acting as detectors. Stones with good colour are therefore regarded as 'living' turquoise and have life-giving properties.

Coral, or *churu*, is regarded in Tibet as being lucky and power bringing for women and as strengthening the blood and aiding menstruation. It is also used in the treatment of fevers of the blood and liver or illness induced by poison. The medicinal properties of coral were known in China and integrated into the materia medica there by the Tang dynasty (seventh to tenth centuries) from where they may have spread to Tibet. Coral can represent the warmth of the sun and important symbolism surrounds its combination with the pearl, attributed to the cool moon.

Pearls in India were used as cures for eye diseases, poisoning and consumption but in Tibet are valued for enhancing women's fertility. The pearl, or *mu tig*, was linked to the moon, though black pearls were believed to relate to Saturn. As with the turquoise, The Blue Beryl text gives an extensive list of 16 types of pearls. While some of these, such as the 'inferior red pearls from the brains of Mongolian snakes' are drawn from earlier Indian mythology linking jewels to serpents or sea monster's (*makara*) brains,<sup>17</sup> others like the Chinese pearl or the pearl from the fertile regions of Amdo are likely to be

rooted in real knowledge of sources.<sup>18</sup> Mother-of-pearl, or *nachi*, is said to cure cough, asthma and colic and may also be used as a substitute for pearls by poorer people.<sup>19</sup> Like turquoise, jade, or *yangti*, was worn to forestall accidents.

Metals, like stones, are thought to possess medical properties with gold being described in The Blue Beryl as increasing longevity and dispelling demons.<sup>20</sup> Silver dries out serum, pus and blood while 'sweet cooling' copper dispels sicknesses of heat in the liver and lungs.<sup>21</sup> Iron, on the other hand, has a somewhat sinister reputation being associated with black magic and rites for casting out demons.<sup>22</sup>

Diamond (*S. vajra*, *T. pha lam* or *dorje phalam*) is not aesthetically prized but nevertheless plays a supreme role in Tibetan Buddhism as a symbol of the nature of enlightenment. As the clearest, hardest, most indivisible and indestructible stone known, it most naturally represents the unchanging and unbreakable brilliance and splendour of the Buddha mind. Thus the stone has both the meaning of diamond-like permanence and ultimate stability. At the same time it means 'lightning-like flash of the illumination of enlightenment'. The Sanskrit name for diamond, *vajra* (*T. dorje*), which combines all these and still further meanings, has given its name to Tibetan Buddhism itself, *Vajrayana*, 'the diamond path'.

Although much less hard (7 on the Mohr scale of hardness compared to the diamond's 10) and comparatively easily cut or broken, quartz crystal, or *man she*, nevertheless also reproduces many of the qualities of clarity of the diamond. It has also been used to symbolize the Buddha mind, particularly by the Dzogchen teachings which emphasize the pure and limitless awareness of the primordial mind within each human being. In Dzogchen initiations clear quartz in polished ball or faceted form is revealed to the student as a metaphor for this state of 'Great Perfection', which is the very meaning of the word Dzogchen. The primordial mind in a state of realized clarity, like the crystal, reflecting and refracting sunlight and creating rainbows, similarly reflects and refracts the 'rainbow' of material phenomena without becoming affected or dulled by them.

Many of these stones are used in bead form to make rosaries (*S. malas*, *T. treng wa*) whose use lies at the heart of popular religious devotion amongst monks and laymen alike. The saying of mantras or prayers is a meritorious activity believed to help offset the effects of negative deeds and generate a beneficial force in one's life. Rosaries are held wrapped around the left wrist or often are worn as a necklace, particularly in eastern Tibet (plate 77). The majority of rosaries

are made from wood or seeds, with red sandalwood and the seeds of the lotus, or *rudraksha*, considered auspicious for most rites. Almost all have 108 even-sized beads, although religious texts specify varying numbers for particular practices. The number 108 has many sacred associations in Buddhism but was already a holy number in Hinduism where as a multiple of twelve and nine it represents the nine planets in the twelve houses of the zodiac.<sup>23</sup> Beads for counting the tens and hundreds of complete rosary recitations are added on two, small, tasselled strings of gold, silver or bronze beads (plate 17). These often have a *dorje*, representing single units, and a bell, representing tens, at their separate ends. Once one round of the rosary is completed a bead from the *dorje* string is pulled down. When ten beads have been built up on that side, a single bead on the bell side is pulled down and the *dorje* beads pushed back up. A third set of counter beads ending in a wheel or jewel for the thousands is sometimes also used. At the bottom in the centre of the rosary are three retaining beads, or *do dzin*, which symbolize the Buddhist trinity of teachings, community and the Buddha himself, here represented by the largest of the beads.

Richer members of society and high-ranking lamas were able to afford beads of precious stone such as emeralds, rubies or sapphires or, more commonly, of rock crystal, turquoise, agate, coral, pearl, amber, conch or ivory. Stones were also selected to be appropriate to a chosen deity. These included turquoise for the Green Tara, red coral or carnelian for Vajrayogini and lapis lazuli for the Medicine Buddha. But in texts different stone beads are also prescribed for use in the four main categories of rites: those of increasing, appeasing, controlling and destroying. For increasing life-span, knowledge or religious merit, the best beads are said to be of *Bodhi* or lotus seed, gold, silver, bronze or copper, while for peaceful appeasing rites, such as those for clearing away obstacles like an illness, clear or white beads made from crystal, (plate 18) pearl, mother-of-pearl, moonstone, conch shell or ivory are described as appropriate. For controlling or overcoming rites, the beads should be of coral, carnelian, red sandalwood or other fragrant substances while for rites aimed at destroying malicious spirits, beads made from *rudraksha* seeds, human or animal bone, iron or lead are advised.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most immediately noticeable visual aspects of depictions of Tibetan Buddhist deities is their rich adornment with gem-set jewellery. These are the 'Eight Jewel ornaments' of crown, earrings, short, medium and long necklaces, bracelets, anklets and a jewel net girdle that were derived from

the royal ornaments of ancient India. As the ideal of the Bodhisattva developed around the beginning of the Christian era, these ornaments were adopted in the religious sphere and became an essential part of the newly developing iconography. Just as the secular symbols of the universal monarch, or chakravartin, were re-interpreted by the early followers of the Buddha as symbols of his universal spiritual power, the Bodhisattva's jewel ornaments and clothes, copied from the royal costumes of ancient India, are likely to mainly symbolize spiritual wealth and power, acting as a reflection of the splendour and riches of an enlightened one's inner state.

It is, however, difficult to find any relationship between actual Tibetan jewellery and that worn by the deities of its



18. ROSARY, *treng wa*  
Clear quartz crystal, turquoise, brass  
Tibet, c.19th century  
33.5 cm long

A small rosary made of clear quartz-crystal beads which, together with other white stones, texts describe as the best type for use in peaceful rites. At the bottom in the centre is a small *dorje* and three retaining beads, or *do dzin*. The saying of mantras or prayers while circumambulating religious buildings, and as part of daily devotions, is counted as meritorious. It is believed that they will help offset the effects of negative deeds and generate a beneficial force helping towards a good rebirth.  
Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

pantheon, a situation which stands in contrast to that in the surrounding cultures of China, Nepal and India. In Tang dynasty China between the seventh and the early tenth century, courtly ladies tried to emulate the look of the Bodhisattva by wearing similar necklaces, torques and hair decorations,<sup>25</sup> while in Nepal key items adorning deities were worn during human initiation ceremonies up until the present. In north and north-west India depictions of jewellery on Buddhist sculptures of the first century BCE to the third century CE, and of the tenth and eleventh centuries, match either surviving jewellery or types still worn today.<sup>26</sup> There are some obvious cultural differences between Tibet and its neighbours that may be partly responsible for the lack of such a relationship. The close relationship between the types of jewellery worn by humans and images, reflected at life-cycle rituals in Nepal, is absent but the answer may equally lie in the very awe and veneration for such divine forms that was central to Buddhism in Tibet. Intense visualization of the appearance of a Bodhisattva or Buddha, leading to deep identification with it, lies at the heart of the Tantric path. When monk practitioners visualize themselves as deities in religious ceremonies or dances, replica ornaments and headdresses such as the 'Five Buddha' crown, or *rigna*, are certainly worn. One other ceremonial use of jewellery is the wearing of ornaments carved from human bone by monks during exorcistic dances and at other Tantric rituals. The same set of six bone ornaments are worn by wrathful guardian and semi-wrathful Tantric deities and are a condensed version of the eight ornaments worn by peaceful Bodhisattvas.<sup>27</sup> However, to wear the 'divine' jewellery or ornaments of deities at other times appears not to have been culturally acceptable in Tibet and might have been considered spiritually injurious.

### Emblems and decoration

Most of the symbols encountered as decoration on Tibetan jewellery were drawn either from early Indian culture or from the art of China or central Asia. Indian motifs became familiar through the importation from India of religious images, scroll paintings, books and ritual objects during the spread of Buddhist doctrines to Tibet. The borrowing of Chinese symbols probably occurred more through the importation of silks and brocades brought to Tibet by trade or as gifts and were highly prized from an early date by religious leaders and the nobility. Gifts of out-of-fashion dragon robes were also given in large quantities to important Tibetan leaders by the Chinese emperors. Amongst the borrowings from Chinese art

are the mountains, sea and clouds design and the familiar lower-herm motif from these garments, which were transferred to many contexts in the Tibetan decorative arts including the lower edge of *ga'us*. Three of the main five universal elements are shown together in this way, the rocks representing earth, the waves water and the sky and clouds air (plate 20).

Some sets of emblems such as the 'Eight Symbols of the Taoist Immortals' (*C. Ba An Xian*) have a different name in Tibet and original meanings have been lost. This set of the



19. AMULET BOX, *ga'u*

Copper and silver with inset turquoises  
Probably central or southern Tibet,  
c. first half of 19th century  
10.3 cm high, 11 cm wide

The central emblem on this amulet is the powerfully protective *Namchu Wangden*, 'Sign of the All Powerful Ten', a monogram combining ten intertwined syllables in Lantsa script that together represent the elements of the universe. Each letter corresponds simultaneously to a part of the mandala of the human body and to cosmic forces. Crowning it is the sun/moon and flame symbol, *nyi da*, abbreviated here to a single flame, that symbolizes enlightenment.

V&A: 06125

attributes of the Immortals have been mistakenly interpreted by Tibetans as the Chinese version of the 'Eight Auspicious Emblems' and transliterated as *Ba shang*. In a similar way the bat (*C. fu*), whose Chinese name<sup>28</sup> has the same sound as the word for happiness, and is therefore a symbol for the state, loses this original meaning but retains general auspicious connotations.

It is not surprising that some of the most frequently found sets of auspicious emblems are associated with Buddhism. By far the most common set of these depicted on *ga'us*, and also the most often encountered throughout the Tibetan world, are the 'Eight Auspicious Emblems' or *Tashi tagye*. They are likely to have evolved from earlier groupings of the symbols of royalty which were appropriated and given new meanings by the emerging Buddhist and Jain religions.<sup>29</sup> Although the set is mentioned in early Indian Buddhist texts,<sup>30</sup> it is not represented in art of the same period. In fact one of its first appearances in its present form is on late ninth- and early tenth-century Buddhist drawings and silk paintings from Dunhuang in central Asia.<sup>31</sup> Each emblem came to symbolize an aspect of the spiritual riches and the empowerment brought to an individual by the Buddhist religion.<sup>32</sup> For example the Umbrella, or *dug*, an ancient Indian emblem representing royalty and dominion signifies the Buddha's universal spiritual monarchy. Another popular symbol from the set, used in its own right in Tibet as luck bringing, is the 'Endless Knot', or *pal bu*, which represents the way in which everything is interconnected and interrelated. The 'Eight Auspicious Emblems' are offered either physically or in imagined form during the consecration of statues, *rab ney*, or buildings, at the enthronement of important religious or secular persons and in a host of other ceremonies such as those intended to bless a journey.

Another ancient Indian emblem frequently found on jewellery such as *ga'us* and belt hangers (plates 20, 74) is the monster mask called *zibag*, or *tsipatar*,<sup>33</sup> in Tibet. Originally derived from the Indian *S.kirttimukha*, or 'Face of Glory', an emanation of Shiva found as a protection above temple doorways and religious images. In Tibet and Nepal a similar leonine face is frequently found above or below the openings on *ga'u*, guarding both the deity within and the wearer himself. In Tibet the monster mask combines the *kirttimukha*'s face with the Garuda's (the half-human, half-eagle sky deity) horns, vestigial wings, its sun/moon head ornament and its two arms grasping serpents or foliage.<sup>34</sup> In Indian folklore Garuda represents the forces of the sun and sky who

continually wage war against the powers of the waters, represented by snakes which Garuda grasps in both arms and chews. In Tibet the Garuda, or *khyung*, was seen as a protection against poisoned water or other diseases brought by water spirits, or *lu*, and as a rain bringer through his ability to control such spirits. The many other auspicious Indian and Chinese symbols used in Tibet are summarized by Valrae Reynolds and discussed at more length by the Tibetan scholar Sherab Dargyab and by Robert Beer.



20. MAN'S AMULET BOX, *ga'u*  
Silver with painted image on paper  
Probably central or southern Tibet,  
c.19th century  
17 cm high, 16 cm wide

Amidst the scrollwork are the auspicious 'Seven Jewels of Royal Power', the symbolic accoutrements of the ancient Indian kings, and below them the protective monster mask, or *tsipatar*, emerging from a mountain and sea design. The flaming 'Wish Fulfilling Jewel', *yid zhin norbu*, at the apex of the box is a magical gem that brings about all desires. Acquired during the 1904 British expedition to Lhasa.V&A: 393-906



# Metals, Gemstones, Corals and Pearls

## Semi-precious and precious stones

IN THE MID-SEVENTH CENTURY the Chinese emperor received gifts of precious stones and metals from the first great Tibetan King Srongtsen Gampo, showing that jewels were highly valued in Tibet from the very beginning of its recorded history. The annals of China during the Tang Dynasty (seventh to tenth centuries) also record that Tibetans then valued a blue stone called *C. se se*, which was probably sky-blue lapis lazuli,<sup>1</sup> or *vaidurya*, above all others, and that both men and women wore them as head decorations. Tibet continued to receive small amounts of lapis lazuli, used as accent points in jewellery, from the ancient mines of Badakshan, a northern province of Afghanistan, well into the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

The marked Tibetan taste for turquoise is already well documented during the period of the early Tibetan kings (627 to 836 CE). The Chinese annals describe its export at that time from Tibet while other texts list its use in ceremonies. It also took its place amongst offerings of gold, silver, gemstones, pearls and corals, piled around the bodies of the king/emperors in their tombs.<sup>3</sup> Further evidence for the use of pearls during those centuries comes both from archaeology and a Chinese account of the funeral practices of a people living to the north-east of central Tibet who removed their dead leaders' brains and then filled their skulls with pearls and jade.<sup>4</sup>

For most of its later history, coral and turquoise were the most popular ornaments in Tibet and were used everywhere, although amber and pearls were almost as highly favoured. It is hard to realistically imagine the huge quantities of coral, turquoise, amber and pearls that have found their way to the great plateau from this early period up until today. Early travellers were struck by how much was worn on a daily basis, even by poorer people. In 1775 George Bogle, envoy of the East India Company to the



21. WOMAN WEARING GABA HEAD  
ORNAMENTS  
Eastern Tibet, Yushu, 2003

A festival headdress showing the extraordinarily large amber pieces set with corals worn in the north-easterly part of Kham. Sewn onto felt strips these extend most of the length of her back. The necklaces of mixed corals and imitation *dzi* beads are also definitely for wear on special occasions.

Panchen Lama at Tashilunpho, exclaimed that 'the quantity of the first two kinds of beads (coral and amber) that is on the head, even of a peasant's wife or daughter, is amazing'.<sup>5</sup> Bogle also remarked on amber beads as big as hen's eggs, an observation borne out by similar-sized pieces still worn on the festival headdresses of women today in eastern Tibet (plate 21). The enormous demand for stones was fuelled not only by their use in jewellery and personal ornaments, such as belts and tinder pouches, but it was also common to inset coral and turquoise on a wide range of domestic and ritual vessels and the sheaths of prized swords. We also know that by the early ninth century the technique of embellishing metal images with stones had been introduced from Nepal or India.<sup>6</sup> The gold-covered and richly jewel-set images and reliquaries, or *chortens*, that survive in Tibet's largest monasteries bear witness to a people's deep devotion expressed through jewelled splendour. The former wealth of its monasteries can still be glimpsed today in images such as the 26-metre-high, gilded-copper Maitreya, the Buddha of the future at Tashilunpho monastery, whose crown and ear ornaments are thickly set with gems. Even the wisdom point, or *S.urna*, between the eyes, hardly visible from the ground, is set with a total of thirty-one diamonds, including one of walnut size, over three hundred pearls and more than a thousand polished pieces of coral, amber and turquoise. For many centuries, the most revered religious images in Tibet have also been honoured by being further adorned with gem-set jewellery in the form of separate breastplates, earrings and necklaces of semi-precious stones.<sup>7</sup> As donations were given they became ever more heavily and elaborately decorated. In the case of the holiest image in Tibet, the seventh-century Sakyamuni Buddha in the Lhasa Jokhang, successive pious gifts had, by the 1950s, covered its entire front with a layer of jewellery (plate 1).

In Tibet the turquoise, or *yu*, has long been the most favoured stone, valued almost as if it were on the level of a precious gem.<sup>8</sup> It varied in colour and composition according to its source being both found inside the country and imported from China and Iran. Early documents dating to the ninth/tenth centuries show that by then Tibetans were aware of a number of sources of the stone within Tibet itself. Turquoises are listed as coming from Kongpo (south-east Tibet), and from Dargyal, a title given at that time to the people of north-east Tibet.<sup>9</sup> Small deposits of turquoise certainly exist in eastern Tibet (plate 22) and, according to a Chinese source, near Lhasa but probably the best source of Tibetan turquoise were the Gangchen mountains of Nari in





22. TIBETAN AND CHINESE TURQUOISE  
Largest 3 cm long

Samples of turquoise collected by Bertold Laufer on a trip through eastern Tibet during 1908–10 help make clear the difference between Chinese and Tibetan turquoise. The two pale green stones at the top are recorded as Tibetan, perhaps from one of the eastern Tibetan sources of Dayab, Batang, Derge or Chamdo. The six more bluish-coloured samples below them are from Honan in China. Photograph by John Weinstein. Collections of the Field Museum, Chicago.

western Tibet. This was the area ruled by the kings of Guge who paid a regular tribute in the stone to the kings of Ladakh.<sup>10</sup> Tibetan turquoise tends to be greenish and have brown or black veins, often in a spider's web pattern. Although Tibetan turquoises were prized for their magical and medicinal properties, a much higher value was given to the deep blue, flawless turquoises coming from Iran. Generally the greener and lighter a stone the less value it had. The mines of the province of Sistan in south-east Iran were one of the main sources during the nineteenth century, the stones were imported through central Asia and via Ladakh into Tibet.<sup>11</sup> But the most famous source, known for the quality of its stones since Roman times, lay near Nishapur in the Iranian province of Khorasan. The mines there continued to be a source for Tibet into the early twentieth century.<sup>12</sup>

Leh in Ladakh acted as an entrepôt centre for this trade and large quantities of Iranian turquoise passed through it to Lhasa and central Tibet. In the mid-nineteenth century many polished stones travelled in boxed drawers, each box holding 800 to 1,000 stones.<sup>13</sup> From the nineteenth century onwards a seaborne trade in Iranian turquoises became increasingly important, with Bombay and Calcutta as the main ports of entry to India.<sup>14</sup> Chinese turquoise was also brought to Tibet, perhaps from the mines of Yunnan or Hubei provinces which were operating from the start of the fourteenth century, although by the nineteenth century supplies came from Honan (plate 22).<sup>15</sup>

The other favourite Tibetan decorative 'stone' is red coral, *Corallium rubrum*, which is actually the calcareous exo-skeleton secreted by colonies of tiny sea animals called coelenterates. The main source of coral, or *churu*, lay far off in Italy making it even more expensive than turquoise and in 1904 a British officer found it selling for its weight in gold in Lhasa.<sup>16</sup> Marco Polo records the first-known use of coral in Tibetan women's jewellery in the thirteenth century, commenting that it 'is very expensive for they use it to adorn the necks of their women and of their idols'.<sup>17</sup> From this time right up until the twentieth century, Italy remained one of the most important sources of coral for both Tibet and Mongolia; the Tibetans particularly valuing the deep blood-red colour of Italian coral. Medieval records show that from the thirteenth century Italian merchants were supplying coral and amber to both Mongolia and Tibet. Routes began at the main coral-exporting ports of Marseilles, Livorno, Genoa and Naples. A southerly route to Tibet was used between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries which lay across the Mediterranean, through Syria,

Iraq and Iran, then running via Samarkand it crossed central Asia reaching Leh and finally Lhasa.<sup>18</sup> Small quantities of Mediterranean coral, together with Chinese and Persian Gulf coral continued to reach Tibet via this central Asian route down to the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

It was, however, the discovery of the direct sea route to India at the end of the fifteenth century that opened the way to large-scale seaborne importation of Mediterranean coral by the Portuguese and the English from the sixteenth century onwards. By the nineteenth century, Calcutta and Bombay<sup>20</sup> had become the main ports of entry and in the twentieth century Tibetan merchants travelled to Calcutta to buy coral at its annual fairs which featured Italian boats laden with the cargo.<sup>21</sup> In north-east Tibet in the late 1940s one western traveller found the pink Taiwanese and red Italian coral vying for favour and Chinese merchants conducting a direct trade in Chinese coral with the nomads of this area.<sup>22</sup> Today coral from Taiwan is sold in large quantities in east and north-east Tibet.

Amber, or *poshe*, the yellow or red fossilized tree resin was almost as popular as coral in Tibet and had sources on the Baltic coasts of northern Europe, Burma and Siberia. A muddy red-brown or yellow variety called Burmite was named after its source in Myanmar (Burma) and was traded to Sikkim and eastern Tibet.<sup>23</sup> From the early seventeenth century, the more distant Baltic amber was also brought to Indian ports by European trading companies. In the mid-seventeenth century we also have a report of Armenians trading amber carvings produced in Gdansk (former Danzig) to Tibet.<sup>24</sup> At this time merchants from Bhutan and Tibet also came down to Patna and Dacca (northern India and modern Bangladesh) to exchange their musk for yellow amber (and coral) beads.<sup>25</sup> Other supplies of Siberian amber, from the shores of Lake Baikal in Buriatia, part of eastern Siberia lying on the borders of Outer Mongolia, were being used by the nomads of north-east Tibet in the 1940s.<sup>26</sup> Pale yellow Russian amber which may be from the same source is being imported into eastern Tibet today.

Large quantities of both marine and freshwater cultured pearls have been used in Tibet since at least the eighth century. Although little is known about the trade in pearls before the sixteenth century, two of the main sources of supply until then, the Persian Gulf and the waters between Sri Lanka and southern India, had been fished since remote antiquity.<sup>27</sup> The oyster beds off the island of Bahrein in the Persian Gulf were the source of best-quality large pearls called Basra pearls. From across the Indian Ocean, pearls fished in the Persian Gulf and

the Red Sea joined others from southern India and Sri Lanka at the largest Indian pearl markets of Calcutta and Bombay, pre-eminent from the eighteenth century onwards.<sup>28</sup>

One little-known way in which sea pearls reached Tibet in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was through the trading activities of Hindu mendicant ascetics or Gosains. These Hindu monks combined pilgrimages to holy places in India, Nepal and Tibet with a trade in gemstones, corals and pearls which they concealed in their hair or wound into their waist-cloths. We know from an inscription on an eighteenth-century Indian painting that they travelled each year to the south-east coast of India to buy corals and pearls which they traded in the foothills of Nepal.<sup>29</sup> Gosains travelled in large numbers to southern Tibet and 300 were noticed at Tashilunpho in 1774 by George Bogle while on the first British diplomatic mission to Tibet. He tells us that they were fed and housed by the third Panchen Lama who with his extensive trading interests was happy to support them.<sup>30</sup>

While sea pearls have always had their place in Tibetan jewellery, freshwater and freshwater cultured pearls have if anything been more important. Freshwater pearls from Russia were exported in the nineteenth century through central Asia to markets in Leh and Lhasa.<sup>31</sup> These could have come from Lake Baikal in Buriatia, said to contain large but poor-quality pearls.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century, Kalmuck Mongols living in eastern Turkestan and the lower Volga were the main pilgrim traders in Russian pearls to central Tibet. Freshwater Chinese pearls from sources in Litang, eastern Tibet, the rivers of Shensi in northern China and the Sungari River (Song Hua Jiang) in Manchuria may also have supplied Tibet.<sup>33</sup> From the mid-twentieth century small irregular *keshi* or 'rice crispie' freshwater cultured pearls cultivated in Japan began to oust the Basra sea pearls in Ladakh (plate 98).<sup>34</sup>

Another significant maritime product for the Tibetans was the conch, *Turbinella pyrum*, used in Buddhist monasteries in a





24. PAIR OF WOMEN'S EARRINGS  
Silver and imitation coral  
Min Jiang Valley, eastern Tibet  
(border of Sichuan and Gansu), c.1970–80  
15 cm long

A variant of the more usual eastern Tibetan earring with multiple silver hanging chains and coral and silver pendant terminals. The triple setting of imitation corals faced forward when worn.

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23. PAIR OF CONCH SHELL BRACELETS, *tunglak*  
Ladakh, early 1930s

Two sawn-off sections of conch shell forming simple bracelets for women. Although no longer worn in Tibet, the custom of wearing them continues in country areas of Ladakh.

V&A: IS 17–1989 b&c (part of set shown in plate 97)

whole form as a trumpet or cut into round sections as bracelets (plate 23). The conch occurs in the same Indian waters as pearls especially off the coast of south-east India and northern Sri Lanka. Accounts from the sixth century onwards speak of the sea trade in shells to Bengal (now Bangladesh) where they were cut and shaped into bangles at Dacca and other centres. During the nineteenth century almost the entire output from there was sent to Tibet.<sup>35</sup>

So great was the demand for coral and turquoise and so potentially profitable the market that imitation stones had already begun to be made by the nineteenth century. These included glass imitation corals from Japan and China and copies of dyed bone or shell; the bulk of modern copies are made from glass or plastics.<sup>36</sup> Turquoise beads were faked in plastic and glass in India, Nepal, China and Japan and today dyed turquoise matrix floods eastern Tibet (plate 80). Copies tend to be slightly too glossy and of an unnaturally lurid blue or are too regular and obviously mould formed.

Although the taste for diamonds and other precious stones such as sapphires and emeralds was largely a twentieth-century phenomenon in Tibet, they were also imported earlier. A record from the end of the eighteenth century shows that diamonds, emeralds and sapphires were being imported then from India.<sup>37</sup> The diamonds used in Tibet at that time may have been either Indian or Brazilian but by the twentieth century are likely to have come from South Africa whose deposits were discovered in the early 1860s. Emeralds,<sup>38</sup> or *margad*, a form of beryl, were traded to India and Iran in large quantities from the Mexican, Peruvian and Columbian sources by the eighteenth century. The Spanish, whose conquests in the sixteenth century had opened these countries, exported their surplus stones to Goa and Diu from where they were sold on throughout India. Other supplies entered through the seaports of Bengal during the late sixteenth century.<sup>39</sup> Sapphire, or *S.indranila*, and rubies, or *pemaraga*, were mined in Sri Lanka although other supplies of ruby also came from Myanmar (Burma).<sup>40</sup> But most of the 'rubies' used in Tibetan jewellery were actually rose-pink spinels commonly called 'Balas rubies' from Badakshan (plates 110, 112). Their name is a shortened form of balakshan an Arab derivation of Badakshan. The Badakshan mines are recorded by tenth-century Arab writers and continued to supply Tibet right up until the early twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> Other semi-precious hardstones whose source lay mainly in Sri Lanka include pink or white tourmaline, called *amatasi* or *stang zil*, topaz and zircon. In Lhasa it was also possible to buy costly jade from the

mines of Khotan in central Asia and this sometimes appears in jewellery.<sup>42</sup>

The trade in gemstones, coral and pearls formed a mainstay of the long-distance trade in luxury goods of high value and low weight. Merchants specializing in such trade who were resident in Tibet included Kashmiris, Armenians, Muslim Ladakhis, Chinese and Nepalese. Before the Chinese closed the border to foreigners at the end of the eighteenth century, these expatriate communities gave Lhasa a distinctively cosmopolitan feel. Of this group the Nepalese were probably the most important dealers in gems in Lhasa, the centre of the gem and gold trade. Here they owned many of the shops close to the Barkhor market surrounding the Jokhang in the heart of the old city.<sup>43</sup> As well as specialized traders, there were always the countless pilgrims, such as Tibetans who visited the holy sites of the Kathmandu Valley each winter and who used the opportunity to buy turquoise, agates and precious stones.<sup>44</sup>

### The supply of precious metals

That Tibet is a country rich in gold is evident from its early history. Tribute gifts sent to the Chinese emperors by Tibetan king/emperors between the seventh and ninth centuries include sumptuous vessels such as a wine jug in the form of a goose over two metres tall, a suit of golden armour and a complete miniature city.<sup>45</sup>

Not only did Tibet excel in goldsmithing at this early date but gold formed one of its leading exports, reaching the west via the Arab Caliphate and going to Tang China. It was to remain one of the foremost Tibetan exports until the twentieth century. Almost all the gold in Tibet has been extracted from alluvial or placer deposits as dust and nuggets. The comparative lack of organized mining in Tibet, and certainly of deep mining, has been the result of the strongly held Tibetan belief that mining is offensive to the earth spirits who, if angry, send illness, crop failures and other misfortune. From as early as the thirteenth century, travellers to Tibet also observed that the Tibetans often left nuggets *in situ* or replaced them when found, as they believed these, together with the veins themselves, to be somehow the 'parents' of the dust. But despite such disruptions and deep-seated religious misgivings both open-cast mining and panning has been carried out in Tibet for centuries. Gold was extracted by shovelling mud and sand into a wooden trough or artificially created stone channel. Pieces of rough woollen cloth or several short turfs at its lower end acted as strainers. As the diverted stream flowed over the sods with river mud piled on top of them, the heavier gold was

freed by the running water and caught in the turf.<sup>46</sup>

Although gold is recorded in other areas, none of the deposits are as rich and extensive as those in the west and east of the country. In the former kingdom of Guge (western Tibet) royal annals reveal a minister in the late eleventh century with the title 'Lord of Gold', suggesting that he had been appointed to supervise extraction of gold in the region.<sup>47</sup> *Thog ja lung*, the most important western Tibetan mine, was still being worked in the twentieth century. At the western goldfields labour was mostly seasonal and migrant, winter working conditions being particularly harsh at the highest fields which reached an altitude of 5,000 metres. To bad weather was added the hazard of untrustworthy and even dangerous fellow workers giving something of a Klondike feel to the encampments. As one Tibetan in the twentieth century put it, 'those who went gold mining made their wills first'.<sup>48</sup> Most workings came under the jurisdiction of Lhasa-based *Serpons*, officials who sold concessions and extracted dues.<sup>49</sup>

Alluvial gold was abundant everywhere in the river gravels of eastern Tibet, east of the Yangtse. In the early twentieth century some of the richest mines were at Gyalrong, Nyarong and Erkhai and at Taining north of Dartsendo.<sup>50</sup> The nomads of Amdo, north-east Tibet, felt a deep unwillingness to disturb the spirits of the ground by mining and some communities prohibited any extraction on pain of severe penalties. Nevertheless gold mining was a frequent, though minor, nomad activity, perhaps encouraged by tax requirements in the form of gold dust. The richness of deposits in Amdo also attracted large numbers of seasonal Chinese miners from bordering Sichuan although the government had to protect them from attacks by religiously minded nomads.<sup>51</sup>

While gold was always the most valued metal, the bulk of Tibetan jewellery is actually made of silver. Although silver ore has been mined in eastern Tibet since at least the eighteenth century<sup>52</sup> by far the greatest supplier was China. Chinese bullion in the form of boat-shaped ingots reached Leh and Lhasa via Chinese central Asia until the early twentieth century, brought back as the profit of Indian merchants from their trade there.<sup>53</sup> Other Chinese silver was available at the hands of Chinese traders at centres such as Kangding in Kham in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indian silver, including the Indian rupee, high in silver content, together with old and damaged items remained important sources for craftsmen during most of the last two centuries.<sup>54</sup>

Any discussion of the supply of metals and stones to Tibet cannot ignore that most highly prized Tibetan bead, the *dzi*,

whose very name means ‘shine, brightness, splendour’. Both inside Tibet and in the community in exile genuine *dzi* of unusual pattern continue to be valued far above any natural stone. The rarity of real as opposed to imitation *dzi* and the fact that they are objects found in fields and grasslands have led Tibetans to think of them as supernatural in origin. But as we shall see *dzi* are clearly related to a much wider group of ancient, man-made Asian beads. They are usually made from chalcedony, a quartz hardstone that includes agate and carnelian. A typical *dzi* is barrel-shaped with tapering ends and is from 2 to 6 centimetres in length. These beads have distinctive geometric and symbolic patterns created in dark lines on an artificially whitened background. The most common patterns are circles called eyes (plates 16, 25), but there are many other patterns to be found including double waves or ‘tiger stripes’, dog-teeth and the extremely rare swastika or *yung drung dzi*. High prices, even by western standards, are regularly paid for exceptional pieces.

The consensus of opinion is that Tibetan *dzi* are of prehistoric date and some are even reported to have been found in ancient burials together with arrowheads.<sup>55</sup> We know that Tibetans have valued *dzi* for centuries since textual references from the sixteenth century onwards discuss their types and values.<sup>56</sup> It is also highly likely that banded agates or onyx were the original inspiration for *dzi*. Although *dzi* are called ‘etched’ agates, that is a misnomer as they are actually stained or bleached, or a combination of the two, through an application of chemicals and heat. The bleaching of stone to create a pattern is a truly ancient technique found in the Indus Valley sites dating from 2,700 to 1,800 BCE. The Tibetan *dzi* are really part of a far larger Asian decorative tradition that embraces north India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran and the same production techniques were used to decorate beads in the latter country up to the mid-seventh century CE. However, as defined by Tibetans themselves the true *dzi* is only found in Tibet, Ladakh and Bhutan.

We have some clues to the probable production technique for making *dzi* as the bleaching of agates was still happening in Sehwan on the Indus in Pakistan in 1857. At this time, washing soda or calcium carbonate in a water solution was drawn onto a carnelian plaque with a reed pen. When dry the stone was buried in the embers of a fire and left for five minutes.<sup>57</sup> Then when cool it was polished leaving a white design on the red stone. The whitening is not a mere surface decoration but a deep-seated bleaching of the body of the stone that leaves the surface untouched. What has just been

described is a simple bleaching of a linear pattern onto natural stone but many *dzi* are produced by a combination of both staining and bleaching. A dark brown or black stain may be given to chalcedony beads by soaking them in a sugar solution, drying them and then heating them. The sugar carbonizes and changes the stone to a permanent darker hue. The bleaching technique can then be used to create light patterns on the new dark surface.<sup>58</sup>

*Dzi*, which have always been much sought after, have probably been imitated from an early date as the finding of copies of *dzi* in Tang period graves in China suggests. Copies were probably also made in India, Japan and Germany in a wide variety of materials including serpentine, glass, plastic and porcelain (plates 16, 25). Describing such imitations, an article published in 1932 commented that they are very common ‘and can be bought in the bazaars anywhere, even Calcutta’.<sup>59</sup> Convincing glass copies are now entering Tibet from Taiwan.



25. NECKLACE OF IMITATION GLASS *dzi* BEADS  
coral and rock crystal  
Tibet, c.19th century  
36 cm long

The *dzi* shown here are mostly of the common two- or three-‘eyed’ type. Broken *dzi* are less valuable than whole ones and some believe that they represent beads that have protected their wearers by absorbing negative forces which have caused them to break. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford



# Craftsmen and their Work

TODAY, AS IN PAST CENTURIES, jewellery production in Tibet and the Himalayas lies in the hands of two types of craftsmen, part-time country village blacksmiths and silversmiths and full-time gold and silversmiths in towns. In small villages it is common to find farmers who are also part-time metalworkers. At times of the year when there are few agricultural demands, particularly in the winter, there is an almost unbroken stretch of up to six months when metal can be worked and skills developed. *Garra*, or part-time blacksmiths, in Tibet and the Himalayan districts of Ladakh, Lahaul and Spiti meet part of the local demand for gold and silver jewellery although they spend far more time making iron agricultural tools and other copper and brass utensils.<sup>1</sup> But there are also many farmer/silversmiths who, especially in eastern Tibet, are important producers of jewellery and ornament.

It would be wrong to conclude that these part-time workers were partially skilled for some of the highest-quality work throughout the Tibetan world, including eastern Tibet, which was renowned for its metalwork, was made under such conditions. Where there were not enough men to carry out both farming and metalworking, the women and children of the family did the farm work or hired help might be brought in for heavy tasks. Sometimes the situation was easier and silversmiths worked within extended farming families with several brothers and sisters who maintained the farm, while they were able to devote themselves full time to their craft. Some of the best gold, silver, copper and ironworkers were concentrated in the Derge and Dayab districts of eastern Tibet. There the small villages of Derge Horpo, Derge Payul, Apishang and Dagyab were famous for the high quality of their gold and silver products and were the source of especially prized *gau*'s and tinder pouches (plates 73, 75, 84, 86).<sup>2</sup> In most cases their continuing existence depended on their locations close

to monasteries or trade routes that provided regular supplies of work. However, in the border regions of eastern and north-eastern Tibet, Chinese metalworkers made a large proportion of the Tibetan-style jewellery and other metalwork required. Chinese Muslim metalworkers in Xining and Sungpan sold their wares to Tibetans in border towns such as Batang and Litang, while others led a peripatetic life, wandering between nomad encampments on the grasslands of Amdo.<sup>3</sup> These highly skilled craftsmen, like the Nepalese in south and central Tibet, were able to convincingly imitate Tibetan style. In Bhutan, before metalworkers were centralized in Thimpu in 1952, most worked for their local district administrator, or *dzong pon*, who paid them an allowance.<sup>4</sup>

Although jewellery and ornaments were made by village craftsmen across Tibet and the Himalayas, the greatest numbers of full-time jewellers, or *ta zowa*, lived in major towns, a situation that continues today. The large market town of Shigatse in southern Tibet was a major centre for the production of silverwork for which it was well known. A western visitor in 1939 noticed that most of the women's jewellery produced there was made by Newar craftsmen from Nepal.<sup>5</sup> The same craftsmen made a large contribution to jewellery production in Lhasa (see below) and in towns and villages all over south and central Tibet.

### Gold and silversmiths in Lhasa

As the biggest centre of population the capital, Lhasa, with its constant stream of incoming pilgrims and merchants offered the largest market and was the greatest centre of jewellery production. Lhasa was renowned for its gold jewellery and one nineteenth-century western visitor commented that 'in Lhasa even the poor people wear gold jewellery'.<sup>6</sup> During the period 1930-59 there were around 100 jewellers, both Tibetan and Nepalese, in the capital. Of these, however, perhaps only 15 to 20 were capable of high-quality work while only a handful of about five to seven frequently worked for the nobility.<sup>7</sup> The commonest commissions from the officials of the government were those they required to show their status (pages 64-5) but there was also a huge production for their wives.

The continual demand for jewellery in Lhasa was not confined to the nobility, and, as almost everyone possessed at least an amulet box and a necklace, it spanned all classes. Visiting or local merchants, pilgrims from as far away as Mongolia and monks from the nearby monasteries of Ganden, Drepung and Sera could all on occasion be clients. *Geshu*, or novices up to the rank of *gelong* or ordained monks, ordered



26. THE EX-LHASA JEWELLER TSERING CHOPHEL, (b. 1921)  
Dharamasala, 1987

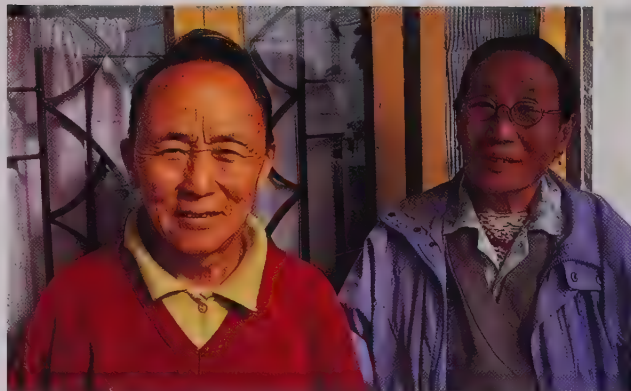
One of the best jewellers in Lhasa during the 1940s and 1950s, Tsering Chophel now works in Dharamasala, northern India, for the Tibetan community in exile. Although in Tibet he worked only on gold jewellery, today he also makes metalwork of all types, including vessels in silver.



small round *ga'us* to hold the image of their *yidam* or tutelary deities. The *khenpos*, or abbots of monasteries, also needed large shrine *ga'us* to furnish their private shrine rooms and to carry for protection on long journeys. While such orders were unofficial, the government itself sometimes needed jewellers to set stones into the sides of ritual objects, or perhaps the crown of a newly made deity being installed in one of the large monasteries surrounding Lhasa. For such work the government used jewellers from its own workshop situated just below the Potala in the village of Zhol. This building called the *Dod zhol pal khyil* housed about 150 metalworkers of all types organized into guild groups. Amongst them were about ten jewellers who worked in concert with gold, silver and coppersmiths and others.<sup>8</sup> When off duty, government workers were free to take private orders and were frequently commissioned by officials to make hat ornaments and other jewellery of rank for them. In Lhasa before 1959 freelance goldsmiths tended to be highly specialized and generally only worked gold and cut stones.<sup>9</sup>

As we have seen, the Newar craftsmen of the Kathmandu Valley were important producers of jewellery throughout central and southern Tibet and they were also amongst the most valued jewellers of the capital itself. There was probably an established colony of Nepalese traders and metalworkers in Lhasa by the late seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> These were either Newars from the Kathmandu Valley or the offspring of Newar men and Tibetan women, called *katsaras*, who were prohibited from inheriting their father's wealth in Nepal and often became traders or metalworkers in Tibet. During the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, western visitors wrote of Newar craftsmen as the most skilled metalworkers, casters and jewellers in Lhasa. Although before the late nineteenth century they had evidently been important in the government workshop, they were barred from entry to it by the 13th Dalai Lama (1876–1933) probably as part of his conscious programme to promote an independent Tibet.<sup>11</sup> However, Newar gold and silversmiths continued to be privately patronized by laymen and monks alike in Lhasa during the first half of the twentieth century (plates 28, 61) and continued to work in Tibet even after the Chinese invasion of 1950.<sup>12</sup> One of their noted skills lay as jewellers, particularly in stone setting and filigree work (see pages 60–61).<sup>13</sup>

In Tibet there was, and still remains, a prejudice against metalworkers of all types. This is mostly a legacy of Buddhism which has looked down on all those taking life or dealing with



27. THE EX-TIBETAN  
GOVERNMENT SILVERSMITH  
CHOGYAL, (B.1939) AND  
WIFE  
Gangtok, Sikkim, 2000

This craftsman worked in the Tibetan government workshop below the Potala Palace during the 1940s.

28. WOMAN'S AMULET BOX, *ga'u thubzhi*  
Silver-gilt, turquoise  
Lhasa, c. late 19th century  
9 cm by 9 cm square, 2 cm deep

The accession details record that this *ga'u* was made by Newar craftsmen in Lhasa. It was probably typical of a large production commissioned by those of moderate means that both Tibetan and Newari silversmiths and jewellers were responsible for. This was the most fashionable type of women's amulet box in Lhasa during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Bought from Annie Taylor. National Museums of Scotland



products made from dead animals such as tanners and butchers. Metalworkers and particularly ironworkers were included in this group as they made tools and weapons that either directly or indirectly took human and animal life. In spite of the general antipathy to blacksmiths, who mostly lived on the outskirts of towns and cities like Lhasa, those who made objects in the precious metals were regarded in a much better light. Both the nature of the materials themselves, and the fact that gold and silversmiths were often producing things of a religious nature, helped to raise their status in popular eyes. In Lhasa therefore there was no objection to the common practice of gold and silversmiths renting houses in the centre of the city while maintaining their main residence on the outskirts.<sup>14</sup> They had cellar-like, below-ground-level workshops although they would often work on the street above and have a few finished pieces at their side to attract the attention of passers by.

In contemporary Tibet with its improved communication links, there is much greater mobility of craftsmen than ever before. This has led to large numbers of metalworkers from eastern Tibet and Chinese craftsmen from Yunnan settling and working in towns throughout Tibet including Lhasa. Within the last ten years, silversmiths from Hoqing in Yunnan have settled in the towns of eastern Tibet in particular where they now dominate the production of jewellery. This has probably been achieved by their use of semi-automated methods to produce work more cheaply than local Tibetans. These pioneers were alerted to the economic possibilities in east Tibet by an earlier wave of Tibetan traders who, from the 1940s onwards, patronized them in Yunnan and found they could order cheap copies of Tibetan objects to take back to Tibet. Tibetan-style ornaments made by them are generally of poorer quality than traditional Kham pieces. However the picture is not entirely bleak for local Tibetan craftsmanship in east Tibet. Skilled part-time silver and goldsmiths still operate in the farming villages of the area and, probably because they do not have to rely on metalworking as their main income, they do not have to compete with Chinese newcomers and can continue to supply the quality end of the market.

### The ordering and making of jewellery

In the past when business was slack, jewellers might make a few pieces to sell ready-made but the bulk of their work was done on a commission basis. In common with other metalworkers, they often went to the house of a wealthy patron who was ordering a large number of pieces to make

them on the spot. During the time there, from a week up to several months, they would receive a daily wage, plenty of good meals from the family and a final present.<sup>15</sup> While all the raw materials were available in Lhasa and craftsmen could be asked to obtain them, patrons frequently provided them in the form of scrap jewellery and recycled stones taken from redundant older pieces. Today craftsmen continue to mostly make things on commission basis. When ordering, a client might bring a model to be copied or a craftsman may sometimes draw out a design for approval.

Gold and silver are measured in Tibet and Nepal in tola weights, one tola being equal to 11.5 grams, a unit said to have derived from the weight of an old Indian silver rupee. Various recipes involving natural substances were used in the past to give different finishes to gold. A fifteenth-century text records one designed to give a patina of age that relied on a mixture of brass and copper dust, juniper seeds, iodine salt, sulphur, rock salt and burnt sugar.<sup>16</sup> But gold with a reddish tinge, or *ser dang*, was the most appreciated finish and a variety of methods, all non-permanent, were used to achieve this. In one, gold was first



29. FIRE OR MERCURY GILDING  
Derge Peyul, eastern Tibet, 2003

In order to fire gild metal, a mixture of mercury, stone and glass particles and gold are first ground together with water in a ratio of four parts mercury to one of gold. After the metal to be gilded is cleaned in acid, it is coated with an amalgam of the ground gold and mercury. Here we see the moment that occurs after two or three minutes of heating on a brazier, when the mercury evaporates to leave a layer of pure gold. The operation is taking place in the street with onlookers at a distance as the vapour is highly poisonous.

cleaned by heating it with borax and fruit acid and then boiled with pieces of silver and copper in a solution of a colourant used in dyeing.<sup>17</sup> Most gold and silversmiths gild their own objects using mercury or fire gilding *tsha ser* (see plate 29 for description of the process). Although electro-plating is easier, safer and cheaper, coverage is thinner and paler in tone than the admired rich hues found on fire-gilded pieces.

In Tibet the term for goldsmith was *ser zowa*, derived from *ser* or gold and *zo* meaning 'maker'. Although there was another word for jeweller, *ta zowa* or 'stone cutter/setter', in practice goldsmiths often also cut and set stones and the terms were interchangeable. Silversmiths, or *nul zowa* 'makers of silver', were also, as we have seen, large producers of jewellery and ornament. In towns gold and silversmiths workshops usually open onto the street or are tucked behind a small shop area. Today many Chinese workers in Tibet actually live in their workshops and a tiny sofa and television may look down on the anvil and hearth. In country villages where there is more space, workshops are often close to a craftsman's house in a lean-to to give maximum light. The actual working area is

usually quite tiny. A metalworker sits cross-legged behind his small mud or mud-brick hearth, usually not much more than 60 centimetres square, at one side of which is a goatskin or metal mechanical bellows. Charcoal made from willow, poplar or thorn wood smoulders at its centre ready to be blown to a red heat by the bellows. A short upright anvil will be stuck into a log close by. The hearth is essential for a variety of operations: for the melting of metal in crucibles when casting, for annealing or softening metal to prevent it becoming brittle, and for heating fluxes and solders. A nearby bowl of cold water is also needed for cooling hot metal and another holding an acid to clean the oxides and fluxes from a piece after working.<sup>18</sup> Although the names of tools vary slightly from area to area their forms are basically similar throughout the Tibetan world. The same can also be said of the techniques of production, many of which probably have prehistoric origins. It is only in the last few decades that technological innovations have crept in such as the use of mechanical rather than goatskin bellows, or a western-style vice for holding small pieces of silver rather than the hand-held wooden clamp, or just hands themselves.



30. JEWELLER'S WORKSHOP  
Leh, Ladakh, 1986

The workshop of a Muslim jeweller in the centre of Leh showing a craftsman at work on a gold amulet box. A hearth and hand-turned mechanical bellows are situated in front of the goldsmith.



31. EMBOSsing ORNAMENTS FOR A BELT  
Derge Peyul, 2003

A craftsman chases the front of an ornament set into pitch which absorbs the hammer blows. For working the back, the pitch, which lies on a wooden board, must be warmed to remove the pieces, which are then re-set. There must be no air spaces under the metal or the plaques will crack.

Chinese metalworkers are also introducing gas blowtorches and a far greater use of die stamping to speed up production but, on the whole, the ways in which pieces are made still reflect ancient traditional practices.

A large percentage of work relies on a combination of the simple raising of shapes by beating or *dungpa*, and fine embossing or *tsakpa* techniques. Embossed designs, or *bur tshag/hrob tshag*, are first raised by means of punching and then sharpened and embellished by chasing, a technique that pushes metal apart each side of the line of impact rather than removing it as in engraving. In both cases a hammer is used in conjunction with punches or chisels. In eastern Tibet where silversmiths took the most time and care over objects, an 18-centimetre-high *ga'u* box might take a month to finish. For each working the sheet metal must be set into pitch, which supports it while it is being beaten and chased. A sticky pitch, or *lam ber*, is made from a mixture of heated aromatic tree resin called *pokhar*,<sup>19</sup> mustard seed oil, Chinese or Indian vermilion dye and a filler such as pulped tree bark or ground clay.<sup>20</sup> A variety of differently sized hammers, or *tho ba*, punches, chisels, shears, files, tongs and wire brushes are used by smiths in their operations. The various sizes of punches and chasing chisels, or *zong*, used for modelling and raising have many names varying from region to region. The punches used in embossing are rounder while sharper-edged chasing chisels are employed for making fine straight lines.<sup>21</sup> There are a host of other punches and chisels used to make round surfaces, repeating patterns and curved lines.

A box *ga'u* in central or south Tibet is worked for a minimum of three times beginning from the front, following an initial stencilled or drawn design. It will then be embossed from the reverse and finally chased from the front. A better result is obtained by a further repetition of both processes. The main reason that craftsmen from eastern Tibet were so renowned was that they embossed *ga'us* and other pieces not three or four times as was usual elsewhere but up to as many as eight or nine times, alternating work from the back with chasing from the front to produce a pin-sharp crispness of detail (plates 84, 86). Each time the piece was removed after working, it was heated to prevent it becoming brittle, cleaned in an acid solution and then washed. In eastern Tibet each of the auspicious emblems would be embossed and gilded separately.

The extensive use of ribbed or 'pearled' wire, or *buti*, in Tibetan jewellery creates a large part of its distinctive look and feel. In a thick gage it is used to form earrings (plates 65, 66)



32. WIRE DRAWING  
Chamdo, 2003

To make pearled wire a craftsman first hammers a silver ingot into a long thin rectangle and then rounds the edges. This picture shows how this is then pulled repeatedly through smaller and smaller holes in an iron plate using large pincers. After a few pullings it must be heated to prevent the metal splitting. One tola weight (11.5 grams) of silver will make up to an amazing 1,025 metres of wire.

33. SILVER GRANULATION  
Chamdo, 2003

Here we see small granules of silver being set onto the side of a man's queue ring. The tiny balls must be matched in size by eye and then attached using a dab of silver/copper solder which is heated until it fuses the balls with the bezel. Granules are first made by melting small snippets of silver on a charcoal bed with a borax flux, which helps them liquify while the charcoal keeps them separate as they form.



and in thinner diameter to decorate the front edges of *ga'u* boxes, rings and many other items. To create the effect, wire is drawn repeatedly through thinner and thinner holes in an iron drawing block, or *tranyi*,<sup>22</sup> and then ribbed using a tool made from a block of wood with a grooved iron blade, or *booga*,<sup>23</sup> which is rolled backwards and forwards along its length. Pearled wire is also plaited to enrich the fronts of belt hangers and head ornaments in eastern Tibet. Seams are joined and small elements such as silver granules and pearled wire attached to surfaces using solder in conjunction with a borax flux or *tsala kharpo*.<sup>24</sup> Borax is found on the salt lakes of the high northern Changtang and has the useful chemical action of cleaning as well as helping to prevent the oxidization caused by heating, so promoting fusion. A common solder for joining silver combines copper, zinc, tin and silver. This is placed on the join where a solution of flux has already been applied and intense heat is directed onto it by means of a thin blowpipe or, more recently, a blowtorch.

Chinese silversmiths working in Tibet at present are using production methods that cut down on the costly, time-intensive processes of embossing. Two-piece, base-metal dies, cast by the craftsmen themselves, are used to punch out belts, plates, *ga'u* fronts and other popular ornaments. A final chasing from the front is used to sharpen the indistinct struck design. The die method is mainly used for items in great demand and Yunnanese craftsmen do still make single objects. An even more recent innovation is the introduction of factory-made kaolin moulds for cheap rings, earrings and small pendants produced by a company in Fujian. These are miniature, mass-produced, lost-wax moulds which allow a complete ring or earring to be made in under ten minutes including time for cleaning and trimming. For the most part Tibetans have not as yet adopted these methods although they sometimes use two-piece sand moulds for belt hangers and *ga'u* fronts.

### Stone cutting and polishing

Tibetans may have learnt the intricate art of carving semi-precious stones from their Nepalese neighbours who lived and worked as jewellers in Tibet from at least the end of the seventeenth century and probably long before. Unfortunately Tibetan literature makes little mention of gold or silver working techniques which were generally not thought of as sufficiently important compared to religious or even medical themes.<sup>25</sup> But a few inquisitive scholars did record some aspects of stone cutting and metalworking within craftworking sections of larger encyclopedias of Tibetan culture. It is

fascinating to find that several key techniques involved in working semi-precious stones recorded by the great fifteenth-century religious leader Ratna Lingpa (1403–73) are closely comparable to those used by craftsmen today.<sup>26</sup> Good-quality diamond is described by him as the best material for cutting, chopping, rubbing and piercing but, if this is not available, he says one should use a wet copper blade to pick up a crushed stone called *koranza* and then 'cut the jewel as a carpenter would cut a piece of wood'.<sup>27</sup> Today, turquoise, lapis lazuli or coral are cut using a strip of copper in just this way with a solution of grey abrasive corundum called *kolentsi* or just with crushed garnet. *Kolentsi*, probably the same as *koranza*, is used by present-day jewellers both as a whetstone with water to polish and shape and to make abrasive powder. Another green-grey, fine-grained sandstone called *datowoka* is used for shaping and polishing and both stones, according to informants, are found in central and southern Tibet. *Kolentsi* powder or ground glass can also be mixed with liquid pitch, or *ber*, and cast into an artificial whetstone about 15 centimetres long. The finest polishing is sometimes carried out by using a Bhutanese bamboo called *ba* that can also be cut into slivers to make thin lines on the surfaces of stones.<sup>28</sup> For piercing stones, Ratna Lingpa observed that a copper needle was used with more *koranza* powder and water. To make the handling involved in the process of polishing a small stone easier, the early account says it can be stuck to a support such as a stick with pitch. There were also recipes for enhancing the colour and lustre of stones just as there were for gold. Ratna Lingpa in the passage quoted above says that turquoise may be made lustrous by boiling in good-quality barley beer, or *chang*, or made golden by repeated polishing with a melted mixture of crystal, kaolin, copper, silver, lead and saltpetre.

Both technological limits and the dictates of their own taste have meant that only the softer semi-precious stones such as turquoise and lapis lazuli were cut in Tibet and, when intended for rings, are either flat or of a rounded cabouchon form. Today, as in the past, *ber*, or a substance called *lacha* made from the secretions of the insect *Laccifera lacca* and mustard oil, is used to stick stones into their bezels. Stones are simply pressed down into the hot pitch, which holds them once cool, but the method is far from effective in the long term as the pitch dries and stones often fall or are knocked out. It was said that when members of the Tibetan government were dressed in their official ornaments, they preferred to ride slower mounts such as donkeys rather than risk riding faster on horses and joggling free some of the stones they were wearing.



# Jewellery in Nepal

ALTHOUGH NEPAL IS GEOGRAPHICALLY SMALL, the equivalent of Austria and Switzerland combined (140,798 square kilometres), it contains a huge diversity of landscape and climate matched by a multiplicity of ethnic groups, languages and cultures. Surrounded by India on all but its northern border, which lies against the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, it encompasses the greatest possible variation in altitude and corresponding climatic zones anywhere on earth. From the Terai in the south, which is only a hundred metres above sea level, the land rises to the stupendous Himalayan mountain range in the north, which includes Mount Everest, the highest point on earth at 8,848 metres. From the beginning of its civilization, Nepal's mountains, which cover 90 per cent of its area, have shaped its history and cultures. Its three main mountain chains: the Middle Hills, the Churia Range and the Himalayas have acted as a major barrier to conquerors from both Tibet in the north and India in the south. Although suffering an incursion in the medieval period, Nepal was never, for example, occupied by Muslim forces and this allowed its unique cultural blend of Hinduism and Buddhism to continue developing until the present day. The other main legacy of its mountainous topography is that throughout its history Nepal has been a place of refuge for persecuted peoples. The largest numbers have come from India but influxes of Tibetans have also had a large impact on Nepal's culture. Their presence is felt not only where it might be expected in the high Himalayan border zone but also in the Middle Hills, the heart of the country, where the ethnic Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Newar, Rai Thakali and Limbu speak Tibeto-Burman languages revealing their ancient Tibetan origins. The complexity and the richness of its present day multi-ethnic society with its 37 languages is primarily the result of this historical role as refuge zone and the blending of such peoples over more than 2,000 years. It is possible to

broadly correlate the three main geographical divisions of the Terai, Middle Hills and Himalayan areas with cultural and ethnic groupings. These divisions run roughly parallel to the Himalayan mountain range in the north.

Much of the Nepalese jewellery in this volume was made and worn by the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, an area which forms the historical heartland of Nepal lying at the centre of the Middle Hills. The valley is a bowl about 19 kilometres wide by 24 kilometres long surrounded by a rim of mountains, its dense population supported by a temperate climate allowing up to three crops a year. Culturally and economically it is the most important area in Nepal and contains the capital Kathmandu, seat of the government and monarchy. The Middle Hills themselves are in reality the Mahabharat Lekh mountains rising to 1,000–2,000 metres. Within the fertile valleys and terraced hill and mountain slopes of this 75-kilometre-wide zone live the majority of Nepal's estimated 21 million population. In the far south alongside the Indian border lies the Terai, a flat sub-tropical lowland. Formerly the area was a malaria-infested jungle but clearance and malaria eradication a few decades ago have turned it into the richest arable land in Nepal. In the north of the country is the Himalayan region where in the valleys, between 3,000 and 5,000 metres, live Tibetan Buddhist peoples, the Sherpa of Solu Khumbu and the people of Humla, Doplo, Mustang, Manang and the Upper Aran.

## The Newars

The Newar people may have emerged in their Kathmandu Valley homeland by as early as the sixth century BCE. They were the result of intermarriage between a group called the Kiratas, who had come from north-east India a century or so earlier, and the first settlers of the valley. The society was agriculturally based and it was to be the riches from trade and over a thousand years of royal patronage that were to fuel the well-developed Newari artistic culture. The Kathmandu Valley lay on main trade routes between India and Tibet but was also blessed with a temperate climate and flat, fertile land. Most Newars live in the Middle Hills and the valley itself where they make up more than half the population. They are an industrious people who traditionally excel as traders and craftsmen although farmers, or *Jyapu*, still form over 50 per cent of the population of the valley.<sup>1</sup> The Newars of today are the result of intermarriages in the distant past when Buddhist monks and Hindus fled the Muslim invasion of northern India between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and later when Hindus escaped inter-dynastic wars and persecutions. The mix of peoples and religions has led to the development of a highly complex society whose organization was moulded by the imposition of a formal caste system by the Hindu ruler Sithimalla (r.1382–95) in the fourteenth century. Although formally abolished in 1960, the Nepalese caste system devised then, which integrated Buddhists and Hindus into a layered



34. DURBAR SQUARE, BHAKTAPUR, NEPAL, 1988

This picture shows the typical pagoda temple style of traditional Nepalese architecture with their carved wooden facades.



structure, continues to underpin Newar society.

Religion is the other great defining force for identity in Nepal. The majority of Newars follow Hinduism, with a tiny percentage being Buddhist and 3 per cent Muslim, while Christians, Jains and others account for the remainder. However, the picture is far more complex than this bare analysis alone can suggest and ignores the overlapping and syncretism that is such a strong feature of religion in the Kathmandu Valley. Perhaps the most ancient layer of religious belief, and one still much in evidence today, is that of animism which sees all natural phenomenon as alive and governed by indwelling spirits that may be benevolent or malevolent and which must be propitiated to ensure their good will. Of the main Hindu deities Shiva is the most popular, worshipped by almost all Hindu Newars in his forms as Pashupati and the fierce Bhairav. The female embodiment of Shiva, the fierce but beneficent Durga, is the most loved and worshipped goddess, shown in her most popular form riding a lion and killing the buffalo demon Mahisasura (plate 35). Buddhism, though a minority religion, continues to be of considerable importance in the Kathmandu Valley. Buddhism mainly entered the country in its Mahayana or 'Great Path' form which stressed the ideal of the Bodhisattva. As less remote beings than Buddhas, Bodhisattvas came to be worshipped and petitioned for help in human affairs and their forms multiplied over the centuries. As Buddhism evolved in Nepal, it interrelated with Hinduism producing a remarkable and generally tolerant syncretism which has led to Buddhists and Hindus worshipping the same deities, each under their own names, at many shrines. Hindus worship Buddhist gods as Hindu deities but equally Buddhists venerate Hindu deities.

The many festivals of the Newar year, honoured by Buddhist and Hindu, low and high caste alike, are spectacular religious occasions that bring all its people together. Many are *yatras* when the gods or goddesses are dressed in lavish clothing and jewellery and carried on chariots through the streets. Amongst the most important is the *yatra* of the royal Kumari in Kathmandu. The goddess Kumari is believed to incarnate in the form of a young virgin Newar girl who becomes a living goddess. Although most of the valley towns have their Kumari, the royal Kumari embodies the form of Durga called Taleju, the special protector of the royal family and the nation. Girls who are chosen for the royal Kumari must be fearless, physically unblemished and without wounds. One of the most fascinating aspects of the Kumari is that much of the jewellery she wears on ceremonial occasions is identical to that worn by



35. CEREMONIAL AMULET BOX, *jantar*  
Silver-gilt, pink and blue sapphires,  
rubies, emeralds  
Kathmandu Valley, Nepal,  
c.19th century  
11.5 cm long, 9.5 cm wide,  
4 cm thick

The front of this case is embossed with probably the most popular deity in Nepal, the Goddess Durga, shown here in her eight-armed form as the destroyer of Mahisasura, the buffalo demon (Durga Mahishasuramardini). The goddess rides on her lion mount and spears the demon emerging from a buffalo to the right. A piece of such high quality bearing the nine planetary gems on its reverse may quite possibly have been worn by the goddess Kumari, one of the living incarnations of Durga.  
Private collection



36. REVERSE OF CEREMONIAL *jantar*,  
PLATE 35  
Silver-gilt, coral, pearl, garnet, emerald,  
cat's eye, topaz, sapphire, ruby

The *nau ratna* or 'nine gems' which each represent one of the visible planets, sun, moon and two mythological planets, Ketu and Rahu. In India and Nepal these have been worshipped as deities since ancient times and are regarded by both Buddhists and Hindus as giving protection against misfortunes brought by malign planetary influences. In this case the central stone is a coral carved in the form of Ganesh representing the sun, although ruby usually takes this position (and the sun is represented again in the outer circle). Around it are arranged in a microcosmic model of the planetary system: the pearl (Moon), coral (Mars), topaz (Venus), ruby (Rahu), cat's eye (Ketu), garnet (Sun), white sapphire (Jupiter), emerald (Mercury) and sapphire (Saturn).

girls during their early rites of initiation, by brides and by women entering old age. The life of a Newar of either gender is punctuated by ceremonies that celebrate and bless its key stages or *samskara*.

### Newar Jewellery

Most Nepalese believe that jewellery has strong protective and health-giving properties helping to draw beneficial energies into the life of its wearers. Much of this power has to do with the inherent qualities of the raw materials involved. Gold (N. *sun*), the purest and most sacred metal since it is incorruptible and will not pollute, is identified with the sun god Surya by Hindus. These qualities have led it to be considered the best material for personal ornaments, especially those worn on the head, the purest part of the human body. In the ayurvedic medical system followed in India and Nepal, gold is believed to increase sexual potency and to benefit the head. Silver (N. *chandī*) is the second ranking in purity in the Hindu world, associated with the moon and the feminine. Even the impure copper (N. *tama*) and iron have beneficial qualities: copper purifies the blood and iron repels evil spirits and ghosts. The Hindu beliefs which helped shape Kathmandu Valley society ascribe particular protective properties to stones, corals and pearls. Coral is associated with the planet Mars and necklaces made from it are thought to act as an antidote to malign planetary influences. Coral also features in the *nau ratna* or protective 'nine gems' set which is also popular in India. The stones are arranged in a mandalic form on rings or amulets, with each one corresponding to one of the visible planets, the sun and two mythological planets (plate 36).<sup>2</sup> Each is believed to receive the energies of their corresponding celestial body, deified as gods and goddesses. Set in a pendant or ring, they protect from all bad planetary influences.

For the Newars the giving and wearing of special jewellery helps to mark and sanctify the major stages of a person's life. There are individual pieces and some sets of ornaments that are worn only on particular occasions. By wearing the finest jewellery Newars believe women bring blessings on important occasions; in the case of marriage this beneficial power is directed particularly towards the woman's new husband and also strengthens prayers for fertility and wealth in the couple's future life together. Newar women wear as much jewellery as possible at their marriage, ideally made of the purest gold. Although family pieces are given by a mother to her daughter as part of her dowry, marriage is also a time when most major new pieces are ordered by families. By tradition both the

groom's family and the bride's parents give gold and silver jewellery of a set weight, a situation that contrasts with India where the bride's family are expected to bear the whole burden of this provision.

While the preciousness of jewellery is deeply rooted in religious beliefs and the desire to draw happiness and protection into one's life, its economic value remains central. The main part of a bride's dowry is a certain quantity of gold jewellery, specified by tola weight (see page 46). This is in theory a woman's own property, one of the few sources of disposable wealth that by traditional law she can hold, being barred from inheriting property.<sup>3</sup> It forms a measure of financial security to be kept against the exigencies of life – sickness, old age or widowhood. However, in reality sons and husbands have access to such pieces and can pawn or sell them if the need arises. When money becomes available again, new jewellery can be ordered and restored to its wearer.

Although shadowy the early history of Nepalese jewellery is illuminated by brief but fascinating glimpses afforded by mid-seventh century Chinese visits to the kingdom. The envoy of the Chinese emperor at this time observed the Newar king Narendradeva wearing gold earrings with pendant jade drops, a belt with gold plaques ornamented with Buddha images and an array of semi-precious stones (see page 58).<sup>4</sup> The early Chinese visitor recorded that the common people at the time wore horn and bamboo ear ornaments which no doubt reflected their low economic status and ancient tribal preferences for natural materials.<sup>5</sup> Other natural substances such as seeds and teeth were also probably widely worn and their forms have survived in some cases into later centuries as pseudomorphs, copied in precious metals. The ribbed, seed-like surfaces of the *tilhari* and *nau gedi* (plate 37) beads of today suggest natural prototypes and *nau gedi* actually means 'seed' as well as 'bead'.<sup>6</sup> The Chinese envoy's account suggests that in common with other Asian cultures early Nepalese royalty probably kept for themselves the privilege of wearing precious metals and stones. This use of dress and jewellery to mark social status continued into later centuries in Nepal and we know that during the Malla period (1200-1768) the untouchable caste were forbidden to wear gold, the law required them to wear iron and live outside settlements.<sup>7</sup>

With the exception of the Tibetan north, most of the jewellery forms of Nepal and especially those of the Kathmandu Valley reflect those of India. This is a legacy of two



37. NECKLACE, *N. nau gedi*  
Silver, beads, cotton thread  
Middle Hills, Nepal,  
first half 19th century  
27 cm diam. total, beads 3.3 cm long,  
3 cm thick  
Pendant  
Silver and agate  
Sikkim, c.19th century  
10.5 cm high, 9.5 cm wide

At the centre of the necklace is a large bell-shaped bead filled with pitch, which has red seeds pressed into it for decoration. The other barrel-shaped fluted beads are also made of thin silver over a pitch filling. These are worn mostly by western Tamang women of the Middle Hills. The pendant was worn by the indigenous Lepcha women of Sikkim. As the grains of silver decorating its surface between lines of pearled wire are so tiny, making soldering too messy, it is likely that true granulation has been used. In this technique, practised in the Himalayas only in eastern Nepal, adjoining Sikkim, the surfaces of two metals are fused by heat and a catalyst alone.

Acquired by the East India Company Museum in 1855. V&A: IS 03073  
Bequest of Lord Curzon.  
V&A: IM 179-1927

millennia of trade, the movement of peoples and strong dynastic contacts from the south. The early migrations of Hindu and Buddhist refugees and Indian rulers who seized power or maintained marriage contacts with their homeland all helped to spread Indian styles. Rulers such as Sithiti Malla (r.1382–95) from northern Bihar, who unified the Kathmandu Valley, would have brought their family jewellery and goldsmiths and the Indian jewellery, which royalty and



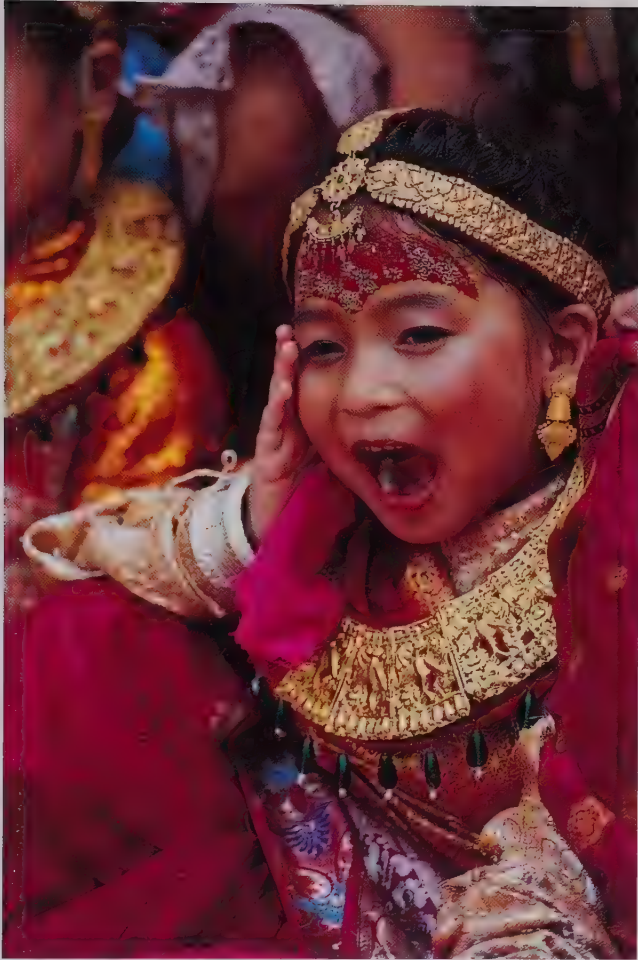
38. IMAGE ADORNED WITH JEWELLERY  
Approximately 2m high  
Patan, Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, 2000

A modern-crowned Buddha image with embossed and jewelled crown, dressed in robes and wearing separately made earrings, a *suta* necklace and the heavy silver chain called *sikha*. This contemporary image shows ancient traditions and skills being carried forward into the next century.

aristocrats must have continued to wear, would have been gradually adopted or incorporated by their host societies. In many cases the jewellery types brought to Nepal are still worn in India today. The *tilhari* wedding necklace and multiple round-hoop earrings worn in western Nepal are identical to those worn in Rajasthan while the torque necklaces of western India and the cuff bracelets of the western and eastern states mirror those worn by the Newars. The Indian prototypes of several key Newar forms – the wide gorget necklace or *suta*, the cuff bracelets and necklaces with jewels hanging from their lower edges or *tikma* – all appear in stylized form on sculptures made in north and east India between the ninth and twelfth centuries.<sup>8</sup> They are mirrored in Newar art from the same centuries onwards.<sup>9</sup> By the seventeenth century painting and metal sculpture, particularly of royal donor figures, begins to clearly reflect the wider variety of types worn today.<sup>10</sup> *Suta* and *tayo* necklaces, hair ornaments, round and stud earrings and cuff bracelets are all in evidence, and are mentioned in a list of jewellery worn by the queen of King Bupatindra Malla in the seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> Today most are used only for the rituals that mark the major events in a person's life but it is this ceremonial jewellery that particularly sets Newar ornament apart from that of other Middle Hills peoples. Although some forms are related to other ethnic groups in Nepal, the large necklaces and elaborate head ornaments of the Newar are uniquely their own. The majority of jewellery types shown in this book are worn by women in life-cycle ceremonies and by humans portraying gods or goddesses in religious dances and processions while similar pieces are used to adorn the images of deities (plate 38).

At many of the major ceremonies of a woman's life, including a girl's initiation ceremony, or *ihī*, at marriage, or *ihī pa*, and in the three rites of entering old age, or *burka janko*, the same basic set of ceremonial ornaments are used. On these occasions the *sir bandi* or head ornament (plate 39), the *tikma* necklace (plates 39, 40), the *tayo* or *toh* necklaces (plates 106, 107), the cuff bracelets (plate 39) and the *jantar* or amulet container (plates, 35, 36, 111) are all often seen. Other distinctive gold repoussé head ornaments, worn on the top or back of the head at marriage or the old-age ceremonies, are called *lunya swan*.<sup>12</sup> The broad, crescent-moon-shaped necklace called *suta* or *konchi* (plate 113) is worn by boys and girls at their initiation rites, *bare chuyigu* and *ihī* respectively, and is a constant decoration around the necks of religious images (plate 38).

The lozenge-shaped *tayo* (plates 42, 106) is perhaps the most famous necklace of the Kathmandu Valley and is unique



39. YOUNG GIRL AT AN *ihī* CEREMONY  
Kathmandu Valley, 1980s

Between the ages of seven and twelve girls celebrate a mock marriage to a form of the god Vishnu, symbolized by a bel fruit. This ritual, one of the most venerated by Newars, means that throughout her life a girl is protected from becoming a widow, since she is married to an immortal. It also establishes her right to divorce and re-marriage. She is shown wearing auspicious red clothes associated with marriage, the *tikma* necklace (plate 40), cuff bracelets, and the *sir bandī* head ornament. The latter consists of three bands of cloth covered with gold-embossed plates and the central *bindia* or *tika* marriage token.

Photograph by Hannelore Gabriel

to the Newars. The main pendant is gold or copper-gilt worn horizontally from multiple yarn threads or, on the more elaborate *tayo bizakani*, supported on each side by bands of cotton embellished by sewn on gold plaques. As a powerful sacred ornament, *tayo* are appropriate for the adornment of deities and may be seen being worn by incarnations of the living goddess Kumari when attending public religious events. More frequently they are glimpsed around the necks of metal statues, especially Buddhist images such as Dipankara, the



40. CEREMONIAL NECKLACE, *tikma*  
Gold backed with pitch, silver, silk cord,  
turquoise, coral, rubies, sapphires  
Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, c. 19th century  
24 cm maximum width, plaques 4.8 cm tall

The *tikma* necklace worn by Newar women at many life-cycle ceremonies including *ihī*, or a girl's initiation (plate 39), and marriage and also seen around the necks of those portraying female deities at dances (plate 107). Separate embossed-gold plaques filled with pitch are hinged at the back. Usually these are sewn onto red felt which is missing on this piece. Matching turquoises from two very different sources have been combined here to provide a striking contrast, the pale pieces are each carved with representations of the Hindu god Vishnu on Garuda, his vehicle.

V&A: IM 92-1911

Buddha of the past epoch.

More widely used than these are *jantar*, or square amulet boxes of gold, silver or copper, that encase protective objects such as written mantras or prayers. The wearing of *kalli* or anklets is now much more limited than in the past: married women no longer, as previously, wear them up until the birth of their first child and they are worn only at weddings and for protection by children. In the Hindu tradition gold, with its divine associations, cannot be worn below the waist except by royalty or deities so anklets are made of silver or iron. These are thought suitable for wearing close to the feet which are polluted by contact with the ground. Women's anklets, worn now only at weddings, are often solid, massive and heavy and have simple knob or lion-headed terminals. Anklets made of iron are thought to protect their wearer from ghosts and evil spirits and are still considered essential for children. Bracelets *sinkhwa lun churi* (plate 104) are similar in form to anklets and may be hollow or solid with decorative lion terminals. Wider cuff bracelets, or *baju*, are 4 to 17 centimetres wide and made of two hinged pieces of ridged metal, ideally of gold but owing to its scarcity and cost today increasingly made of silver (plate 39).

Although large pieces of ceremonial jewellery are still kept by wealthy families, there is less jewellery worn on a day-to-day basis than several decades ago. The plethora of large and heavy earrings and necklaces worn in the first half of the twentieth century is no longer seen. A reduction in the size of pieces and in the way they are worn has come about as a result of several combined factors. Modernization and changes in taste have coincided with a huge population increase which has set rising demand against the small trickle of precious metals entering the country. As the traditional barter economy has given way to a cash one, when money for necessities is scarce old jewellery is often sold. An increasing tourist demand has led to the export of old pieces and a still further drain on gold supplies. There are also increasing concerns about the security risk involved in wearing large gold pieces which are now seldom seen on the streets. Women, perhaps conditioned by western norms, are now also more conscious of the distortions of the ears and nose that are caused by wearing heavy jewellery and, even in the country, wearing large quantities of silver ornaments is going out of fashion. Today small earrings, stud nose rings, a gold chain necklace and a simple pendant are often the only jewellery worn by a woman on a daily basis. Men never traditionally wore much jewellery; today some may wear a gold chain and a gold ring with an inset coral bead.<sup>13</sup>

## Craftsmen, Materials and Techniques

Chinese diplomatic missions who visited Nepal in 647 and 657 CE were impressed by the lavish use of pearls and precious stones decorating religious images in the capital and by the jewels worn by the king himself.<sup>14</sup> These were set with pearls, mother-of-pearl, coral, amber and jade. The Kathmandu Valley lies on a main trade route from India to Tibet and it is likely that from an early period it shared many of the same sources of imported gemstones as its larger neighbour to the north. We know that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Hindu trading pilgrims brought south Indian pearls and other precious stones into Nepal and almost certainly the same seaborne imports to India supplied both Nepal and Tibet. A list of Indian exports to Nepal in 1830–1 shows that although a large percentage of the Mediterranean coral beads, Iranian turquoise and Baltic red and yellow amber were being traded on to Tibet, there was nevertheless a healthy demand for them in Nepal itself. This came not only from the Tibeto-Nepalese of the Himalayan borderlands but also from the peoples of the Middle Hills, both Indo-Nepalese and Tibeto-Burman. A difference in Tibetan and Nepalese taste is reflected in the same list of nineteenth-century exports which records that 100,000 Nepalese rupees worth of diamonds, emeralds, rubies and sapphires were consumed in Nepal in 1830 while none found their way to Tibet.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of human jewellery Newar taste was actually generally averse to large gem-set surfaces preferring the beauty of beaten and worked gold and silver. However, stones were used in the valley towns from medieval times onwards to enrich the surfaces of metal images and to carpet with precious and semi-precious stones the ceremonial jewellery of images and a wide variety of other objects. Together these factors, including the increasingly Indianized taste of the Rana aristocracy from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, help explain the large-scale importation of gems. Nepal does have deposits of ruby, garnet,<sup>16</sup> tourmaline and moonstone, and beryl and tourmaline have been mined at Chainpur in eastern Nepal for several decades. Rock crystal is mentioned by the Chinese envoy to Nepal in the seventh century as one of the stones used by the Nepalese king to adorn himself. There was evidently a large production of religious icons, stupas and *shri yantras* or mandala designs carved in clear quartz in the nineteenth century that suggests a local supply. Today, coral comes from Taiwan and many other stones, including imported Iranian turquoise, from Jaipur in Rajasthan.



41. ROYAL CROWN AND BREASTPLATE  
Silver and silver-gilt, turquoise, coral,  
soapstone, moss agate, pearls, emeralds,  
sapphires, rubies, diamonds  
Kathmandu Valley, Nepal,  
late 18th or 19th century  
24.4 cm high

A gem-encrusted crown of the general type worn by royal princes in Nepal. The front is dominated by three plaques with crescent-moon bases supporting the figures of, at the centre, the Buddha Amitayus and at each side the Green Tara. At the centre of the forehead plate is a carved soapstone image of the Green Tara, while hanging from its bottom edge are a series of green moss-agate drops. The attached *suta* breastplate bears a centrally placed monster mask. Emeralds, rubies and diamonds were favourites of the Rana aristocracy during the 19th century and stones with known Indian and European provenances are recorded as included in the royal regalia.<sup>9</sup>  
© Copyright The British Museum

Gold prized for its purity and beauty in the Hindu world, was the most preferred and widely used metal by the Newars. Nepal has always relied on gold-rich Tibet for its supplies as it contains only minor alluvial deposits in the Kali Gandhaki and the Kathmandu Valley rivers. Today these are panned secretly by boatmen and fishermen as extraction is illegal. The precious metal is also recovered from the earth, under the eaves of temples with gilded roofs and from the dust of goldsmiths' workshop floors. A special group of Shakyas called Dhoosas buy the earth and recover gold, silver and copper by a series of washing, separating and melting processes.<sup>17</sup> Today gold is also imported from India but until recently any importation was illegal. Like gold, silver was mostly imported from Tibet in the past. Nepal's second largest source was the Indian silver rupee.<sup>18</sup> Up until the late nineteenth century Nepal was rich in copper and exported the metal to Tibet, but throughout the twentieth century copper was mainly imported from India.<sup>19</sup> Its use in jewellery making has always been very limited and mainly confined to act as a base for gilding to cut down on the cost of large ceremonial gold jewellery.

Newar goldsmiths in the Kathmandu Valley are almost all of the highest or Banra caste, the descendants of Indian



42. WOMAN'S NECK ORNAMENT, *tayo bizakani*

Brass and turquoise  
Made by Astaman Sakya, 2000  
Lozenge pendant 10 cm long

A newly made piece prior to fire gilding, with stones temporarily laid into settings. This is a version of the more elaborate form of *tayo* (plate 107) the *tayo bizakani* which always features the nine- (or up to thirteen-) headed protective cobra raised above a jewel setting. A meshed brass necklace replaces the more usual cloth supports covered with embossed gold or gilded plaques. This was made for a Newar family using gilded rather than pure gold ornaments as is increasingly common today.

Buddhist monks. The majority are Shakyas with smaller numbers of the priestly Vajracharyas or 'vajra masters'. Most Banras live and work in Patan with smaller groups in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. Outside of the valley they monopolize the making and selling of metalwares throughout the towns of the Middle Hills. But in the valley towns they continue to live in the *baha* or *bahals*, complexes of dwellings built around a temple and courtyard that were the former Buddhist monasteries. Shakya goldsmiths generally work in the open-fronted ground floors of their own homes or in the adjoining courtyards. Most work is commissioned by individual shopkeepers, or today by exporters. In many cases the same craftsmen make jewellery for both Hindu and Buddhist Nepalese patrons and for Tibetan Buddhist refugees.

The tools, general working methods and layout of a Newar gold or silversmith's workshop is similar to that of a Tibetan metalworker and many processes are also closely paralleled. Gold is either bought from the goldsmith or brought in by the client as broken or damaged scrap jewellery to be recycled. Instead of a cash payment, it is common for craftsmen to keep a small percentage of the precious metal as raw material. The same pitch (N. *jhau*) required for repoussé work (*tappal* or *tronjah*) is used to fill beads and other pieces covered with thin gold to make the metal go further.<sup>20</sup> In order to minimize the loss of gold, filing and sawing is kept to an absolute minimum and when necessary carried out over a piece of paper or other container so that filings can be saved for re-melting. With care many traditional shapes such as *dhungri* earrings (plate 105) can be cut from the sheet with shears and without the need for filing. As in Tibet gold with a rich reddish glow is valued and this is imparted to a finished gold piece by brushing it in a solution of red ochre. After the piece has dried, it is heated gently and brushed clean again in water to give the gold the required red tinge.<sup>21</sup>

The *jarao* or stone-inlay technique, so well represented here, involves the use of gold, silver or brass wire which is beaten into thin strips. These are then cut into tiny circles that form the different-shaped cloisons according to the part of the design being formed: for example, the tail feathers of the peacock in plate 110 required long, slender compartments, while its head needed a tear shape. Spirals, or *shikon*, U shapes, or *palicha*, and circles, or *fakon*, are the most common shapes. The piece to be decorated then has solder and borax flux applied to the cloisons either in powder, solution or solid form, after which it is heated to fuse the whole wire tracery together. When cool, stones of the right shape are selected or cut to fill



43. AMULET BOX, *ga'u*  
Copper-gilt,  
turquoise, coral  
Patan, Kathmandu  
Valley, 2000  
7 cm long, 5 cm wide

A modern version of a Tibetan *ga'u* nears completion. This one is being made for the western market by a present-day Newar stone carver although the combination of filigree and stones set into metal cloisons is an ancient Newari one. The time-consuming nature of shaping and polishing tiny stones is illustrated by the craftsman's comment that the face of the seated Bodhisattva had taken him three days alone.



the metal bezels and are set into *jhau* mastic.<sup>22</sup>

In older examples of *jarao* individual stones that depict faces or other important parts of the figure are often finely carved. The skill of Newar stone carvers was praised by western visitors to Lhasa during the nineteenth century and is apparent on many of the pieces in this book. Although this tradition was reported to be dying in Nepal during the early 1980s<sup>23</sup>, an increase in demand from dealers ordering for the export market in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the West has led to something of a revival. Some of the wealthier cutters use machine-driven, carbon-steel Indian saws and corundum disks to cut and shape

stones. Although many have the metalworking skills to enable them to make finished jewellery, there are also those who specialize only in fine stone carving (plate 43), depicting Hindu and Buddhist deities, flowers and animals. Iron tools are used with abrasive powders to carve coral, turquoise, bone, ivory, tourmaline and jade. Stones are stuck onto the end of sticks with *jhau* mastic which allow them to be fixed into a vice or clamp for carving. The present generation of carvers remember their fathers using hand-held, bamboo bow drills. But to pierce stones today they use a hand-operated drill similar to the old-fashioned, European wood drills.

# Lhasa



#### 44. OFFICIAL'S NEW YEAR EAR ORNAMENTS

Part of the ornaments of the ancient kings, *ringyen* Silver-gilt, turquoise, lapis lazuli, coral, rubies, white sapphire, rock crystal, carnelian  
Lhasa, c. 18th or 19th century  
9.5 cm high, bottom circle 6.5 cm diam.

Two ceremonial earrings of the type worn by noblemen since the 17th century at the New Year ceremonies in Lhasa. At this time officials dressed in what were believed to be the ornaments of the early kings of Tibet (7th to 9th centuries) (see page 22). These large earrings were far too heavy to be worn conventionally and were tied across the head or draped around the neck. The pale turquoises



covering IM 83–1911 evoke the concentric open petals of a lotus while both pieces bear the protective monster mask often found on these ornaments. The ubiquity of similarly modelled masks on ceremonial Newar jewellery suggests that Newars were responsible for these pieces. Purchased from Imre Schwaiger. V&A: IM 83–1911, IM 88–1911



45. CEREMONIAL NEW YEAR  
EAR ORNAMENTS

Formerly owned by  
Wangchen Gelek Surkhang  
Gold, turquoise, coral, agate,  
silk thread

Lhasa, 18th century or later  
Round earring: 11.5 cm  
long, piece with attached  
tassels: 16 cm long.

The personal ceremonial  
earrings of a junior official  
who later became one of  
the four most important  
cabinet ministers or *Shapés*  
of the inner cabinet. The  
round turquoise-covered  
ear ornament was worn at  
the right shoulder, the other  
piece with the coral and  
turquoise beads and tassels  
at the left shoulder. Plate 46  
shows Surkhang wearing  
what appear to be these  
very ornaments during  
New Year 1937.

Ashmolean Museum,  
Oxford





46. WANGCHEN GELEK SURKHANG WEARING THE ORNAMENTS OF THE ANCIENT KINGS, *ringyen* Lhasa, 1937

A young official during the New Year ceremonies wearing the *gyaluche* or 'garments of royalty', believed to be the dress of the early Tibetan kings, which included a short brocade jacket, coloured scarf and white papier-mâché hat imitating a turban.<sup>10</sup> The round ceremonial earrings, worn together with the usual long official's earring, are probably the set held today in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (plate 45) At other times this very valuable jewellery and costume was kept in the treasury of the Potala Palace and a member of the cabinet, or *Kashag*, checked its issue and return. Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford



47. LHASA OFFICIAL WEARING *ga'u*, *tagab* OR *takor*, AND EARRING, *sochi* Photograph 1936

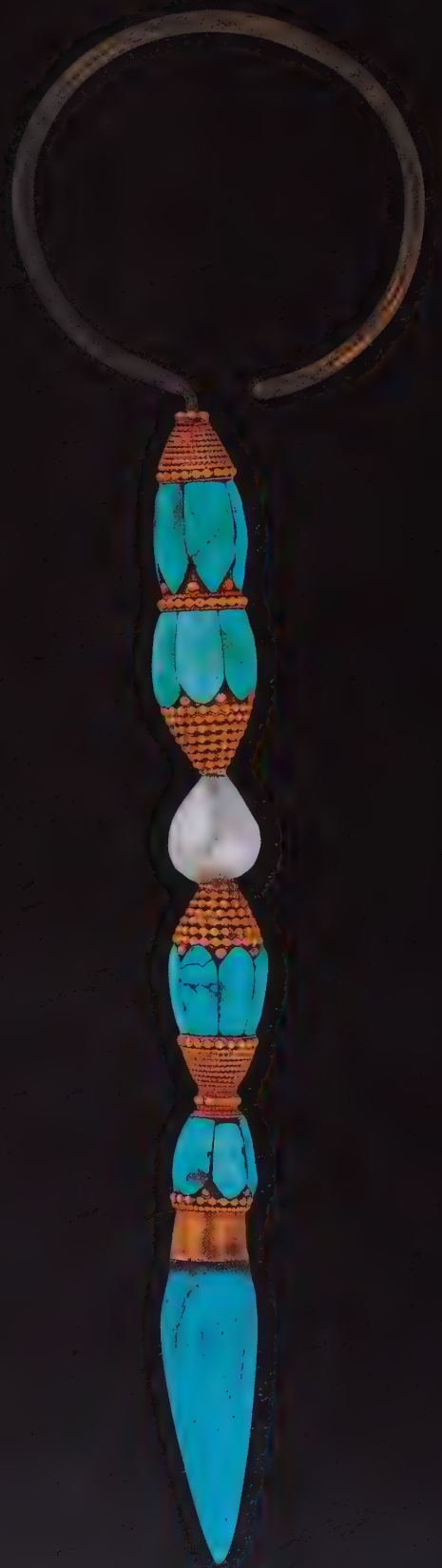
Only officials of the fourth rank and upwards were allowed to tie their hair up in two braided knots, or *pachok*, which were interwoven with red ribbon. Oval amulets were tied onto the front of these knots with the turquoise – covered side facing outwards.<sup>11</sup> The idea behind the placing of amulets in this position was that the written prayers contained within them would help both to protect the wearer and to sanctify his actions. The servants of officials often wore similar *ga'us* made of a cheaper material attached to their queues. Officials of all ranks wore the long thin earrings. Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

48. OFFICIAL'S HAIR AMULET BOX, *taghab* Silver-gilt and turquoise Lhasa, c first half of the 19th century (right) 5.3 cm long, 3.6 cm wide

Government officials of the Fourth Rank and above in the Lhasa government wore this distinctive type of small oval *ga'u* in their braided hair (plate 47) as a symbol of rank. They were tied, edge on, with the turquoise-covered front side outwards, between the two plaited hair knots on top of the head. There is a Sherpa legend that the practice originated with the kings of ancient Tibet.<sup>12</sup> Most *taghab* are made of gold but the same type was also made in brass and used to decorate the queues of the servants of officials and noblemen. Acquired by the East India Company Museum in 1855. V&A: 03051

49. OFFICIAL'S EARRING, *sochi* Gold, pearl, turquoise and glass Lhasa, 19th century (far right) 16.8 cm long, 4.5 cm wide

All lay officials wore the thin, pencil-shaped, gold and turquoise earring with a pearl at its centre and a glass turquoise-coloured drop, there being a law forbidding the use of actual turquoise for this. These were worn in the left ear, the gold hoop fitting through the pierced ear while a silk cord fitting over the ear helped to take some of the weight. The same long pencil-shaped earring was also a symbol of government office amongst officials in the principality of Sakya in southern Tibet.<sup>13</sup> Postmen, undertakers and the servants of officials could also wear brass versions of this type of earring. © Copyright The British Museum







50. WOMAN'S WAIST  
ORNAMENT, *gyenzen*

Silver and gilt copper,  
turquoise

Central Tibet, c.19th or  
early 20th century  
71 cm max. length, central  
hanger 30 cm long,  
3 cm wide

One of the most eye-catching ornaments worn at waist level by noble women in Lhasa was this T-shaped, flexible belt composed of separately cast silver links and set with plaques covered with turquoises. On important occasions long strings of turquoise, coral and pearl beads were attached from the wheel-like end of the central strap which hung down at the front (plate 53). These looped on one side, or on both, almost down to the ankles and back up to hook into the main garment under the shoulder. This piece cleverly and unusually incorporates Lhasa women's earrings to form decorative terminals at each end. Bequest of Lord Curzon. V&A: IM 303 – 1927



51. WOMAN'S 'EIGHT-CORNERED' AMULET BOX, *ga'u zurgyad*  
Copper-gilt, turquoise and imitation precious stones  
Made by Chozai, Gangtok, 1960–80  
8 cm square

*Ga'us* of this Maltese Cross, or eight-armed star shape, became fashionable in Lhasa during the 1940s and 1950s and are made today for members of the Tibetan community in exile. The ex-Lhasa jeweller Chozai who lives in Gangtok, Sikkim, made this example. Women often placed a prize *ga'u* at the centre of a necklace of turquoise, coral and *dzi* beads. More *ga'us* were worn on important occasions to increase the dressy effect of a woman's costume.



52. WOMAN'S NECKLACE AND  
AMULET BOX, *ga'u thub zhi*  
Gold, silver, *dzi*, turquoise,  
zircon (?), rubies, coral  
Box 11 cm square

The classic Lhasa women's *ga'u*<sup>14</sup> whose form of two intersecting squares symbolizes two crossed *dorjes*, the *S.vishvavajra*, symbol of the ultimate stability of Buddhahood. The symmetrical arrangement of shaped and polished turquoises and precious stones is typical. Fashionable in Lhasa from at least the middle of the 19th century, this type of *ga'u* grew increasingly elaborate and larger in size with time, reaching its apogee in the 1940s (plate 51).  
Gift of Mrs Bailey, National Museums Liverpool





53. TWO LHASA  
NOBLEWOMEN  
Photograph, 1921

These two aristocratic young women are probably wearing almost their full set of jewellery, only worn on the most formal of occasions.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the headdress, amulet box and large earrings there is the long *kyetring* necklace made up of jades, corals and turquoises reaching to the waist. It is held in the correct position by being hooked up to another ornament, the *yarthen*, its many strings of seed pearls held parallel by turquoise-set gold plaques. Other body-length necklaces of semi-precious stones are attached to the bottom arm of the waist ornament or *gyenzen*. The full set of ornaments worn by a noblewoman could be extremely valuable, and when walking through busy city streets, required an accompanying servant to prevent theft.<sup>16</sup>  
Pitt Rivers Museum,  
University of Oxford



54. WOMAN'S NECKLACE OF  
FAKE *dzi* BEADS AND AMULET  
BOX, *ga'u thub zhi*  
Silver, pearls, turquoise,  
and glass  
Lhasa, c.20th century  
*Ga'u*: 10 cm long, 10 cm  
wide, 2.6 cm deep  
Necklace: 36 cm long

From the 1930s onwards in Lhasa pillow-shaped *ga'us* such as this, a variant of the older square shape, became popular. Silver pearled wire, pearls, turquoise and imitation corals cover a silver-gilt base. The necklace is of imitation glass *dzi* beads.  
Pitt Rivers Museum,  
University of Oxford





55. WIFE OF THE GYANTSE  
DZONGPON (DISTRICT  
GOVERNOR)  
1936

The Lhasa-style earrings and *patruk* headdress are being worn with an amulet box and hanging ornament. Corals and turquoises were drilled and stitched onto the rolled cotton or wood or leather armatures, the pearls attached in strings along the three sides. Before the age of puberty, girls wore their hair in a single plait to which stones were attached. The same stones, together with new pieces, were fixed to the *patruk* a girl was given to symbolize her coming of responsible age – sometime between the years of 15 and 20. The donning of the *patruk* occurred at the *patruk* ceremony which formally marked this rite of passage. Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

56. PAIR OF WOMEN'S  
EARRINGS, *akor*  
Silver and turquoise  
Lhasa, 19th century  
12 cm long, 4 cm wide

Lhasa women wore this type of ear ornament with ends in the form of stylized lotus buds. Called *akor* they hung at either side of the face hiding both ears and facing forwards to show their inset stones. Due to their considerable weight, they were either attached with small hooks to the headdress or hung over the head. This type is found as a decoration on the sides of the tombs of the 11th (1838–56), 12th (1856–75) and 13th (1876–1933) Dalai Lamas in the Potala Palace. Bought from Annie Taylor. National Museums of Scotland





57. PAIR OF WOMEN'S  
EARRINGS, *along*  
Silver, turquoise and coral  
Lhasa, 19th century  
12 cm long, 4 cm wide,

A popular earring type  
during the 19th and 20th  
centuries worn by women  
in both central Tibet and  
the Chamdo area of eastern  
Tibet.

Bought from Annie Taylor.  
National Museums of  
Scotland

58. WOMAN'S HEADDRESS,  
*patruk*  
Coral, turquoise  
and seed pearls  
Lhasa, 20th century  
36.5 cm long, 33 cm wide,  
3 cm deep

The horned *patruk* headdress was a Lhasa style, worn with the two points at each side of the head and tied on with the cords visible here (plate 55). Fashion also affected headdresses and before about 1930 these were much flatter in form. This is the richest seed-pearl-covered type of *patruk* (*mutik patruk*), which was for special occasions while there was a coral and turquoise *patruk* for everyday wear. Although mainly worn by the noblewomen of Lhasa, the wives of wealthy traders also adorned themselves with the *mutik patruk* when funds permitted. Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology





59. BACKVIEW OF LHASA  
WOMAN, c.1930–49

A rarely seen view that shows how the triangular Lhasa headdress or *patruk* was worn and reveals the waist ornament of multiple silver chains hanging at the back. A wig of false hair was attached to each of the *patruk*'s front corners and fell loose to the shoulders. From there it was gathered in several braids bound with coloured string and then descended at each side nearly to the knees. It was very important for women to have corals and turquoises matching in colour and size on their *patruks* and stones might be taken from older family headdresses and necklaces or bought over a number of years.<sup>17</sup>

© The British Museum





60. WAIST ORNAMENT  
Silver, silver-gilt, turquoise,  
rubies, sapphires, beryl  
Probably Lhasa,  
early 20th century  
48 cm maximum length,  
22 cm length of drop

This was one of the most spectacular but seldom worn of the sixteen types of Lhasa women's ornaments.<sup>18</sup> The way this was worn hanging at the back of the waist is revealed by a recently discovered photograph (plate 59). The piece probably evolved

from the former custom of hanging a purse and needle case at each side at the back of the body as is still sometimes done in eastern Tibet. At the centre of the oval plaque is the motif of the legendary 'Wish-Fulfilling Jewel', or *yiid zhin norbu*, here shown by a setting of three turquoises and a green beryl. Each of the multiple chain links are in the form of miniature *dorjes* or 'diamond sceptres'. Purchased from Imre Schwaiger. V&A: IM 385-1914

61. MAN AND WOMAN'S  
AMULET BOX, *ga'u*

Copper and copper gilt  
turquoise and 8 rubies  
Probably central or  
southern Tibet, c. 19th  
century

Larger 24 cm high, 20 cm  
wide, 6 cm deep  
Smaller 9.5 cm high, 9.5 cm  
wide, 1.5 cm deep

Although both these amulet  
boxes are standard Tibetan  
forms, their workmanship  
clearly reveals that they  
were made by Nepalese  
craftsmen, perhaps working  
for Tibetan patrons while  
resident in a Tibetan town.  
Not only is the style of the  
scrollwork and the 'Eight  
Auspicious Emblems'  
around the central figure of

the Bodhisattva  
Avalokitesvara markedly  
Nepalese, but the  
surrounding door-pillars  
and imitation brickwork  
actually look like temple  
architecture of the  
Kathmandu Valley. The  
woman's square Lhasa-style  
*ga'u* is set with a coral  
carved with an eight-armed  
Tantric figure, a form of  
decoration typically found  
on Newar jewellery.  
Purchased from Imre  
Schwaiger. Large *ga'u*,  
V&A: IM 26-1955; small  
*ga'u*, V&A: IM 171-1910



62. MAN'S AMULET BOX, *ga'u*  
*dawang*

Silver and silver-gilt,  
copper, painted clay  
Lhasa, c. late 19th or early  
20th century  
24 cm high, 18 cm wide,  
8.5 cm deep

A large travelling *ga'u*  
exquisitely embossed with  
flowering tendrils and the  
type of sprig leaves favoured  
by Lhasa goldsmiths. Within  
the scrollwork are the 'Eight  
Auspicious Emblems' of  
Buddhism and below the  
central window, as an  
offering to the deities  
within, the 'Five Sense  
Symbols', *dod yon nya*,  
comprising sight (mirror),  
hearing (lute), smell  
(incense), taste (food) and  
touch (cloth). At the  
bottom is the protective  
monster mask and  
mountain and sea design  
and at the top the 'Wish-  
Fulfilling Jewel'. This box  
encloses a stamped and  
gold-painted clay relief of  
the group of the twenty-  
one Taras, female goddesses  
who offer protection from a  
range of misfortune.  
Bequest of Lord Curzon.  
V&A: IM 133-1927





## Central and Southern Tibet



63. WOMAN'S HEADRESS,  
*pagor*  
Turquoise, coral, white glass,  
brass, cane and felt, human  
hair  
Southern Tibet,  
c.19th century  
33 cm high, 50 cm wide

The headdress of a woman from southern Tibet, Tsang. The cane structure is covered in red felt with strands of 'pearls' simulated with white glass beads. False plaits of human hair are attached at

each side. The extraordinary horn-shaped women's headdresses of central and southern Tibet may have pre-Buddhist origins and remind one of the silver-encased hair constructions of the Kalkha Mongols shaped like the horns of the wild sheep, *Ovis ammon*, which one scholar traces back to the Sino-Siberian Iron Age.<sup>19</sup> A common ancient ancestry for Tibetan and Mongolian headdresses is far from improbable, though the 600-

year-long history of Mongolian intervention in Tibetan political and religious affairs spanning the 13th to the 18th centuries make a later borrowing from Mongolia also quite possible. This historical connection was certainly celebrated by the use of specially rich Mongolian style costumes worn by the *Yasos*, officials in charge of the New Year celebrations in Lhasa. National Museums of Scotland

64. WOMAN FROM SOUTHERN  
TIBET, 1920-21

A lady from southern Tibet wearing the most elaborate and expensive type of headdress, or *pagor*, from that region. Only on the richest was the arched area completely filled, as here, with multiple strings of freshwater pearls. The higher the headdress the more fashionable it was considered, although even moderate *pagor* were unwieldy and liable to be blown awry in high winds. They required stabilizing with hooks and cords at the back. Hair was braided into many tiny plaits and hung down from where it was fixed at each side of the arch.

Photograph by W. P.  
Rosemeyer. Pitt Rivers  
Museum, University of  
Oxford





65. PAIR OF WOMEN'S EARRINGS, *along*  
Silver and turquoise  
Lhasa, c.late 19th century  
4 cm in diameter

This is one of the most popular types of earring worn throughout Tibet in pairs by women and singly by men. The hoops are made from pearled wire, the bezels decorated with separately added silver granulation. As they were heavy to wear, the weight was taken by a chain or thread hooking them up into the hair or even over the head. Each has a small ring under the bezel by which the chain was attached.

Acquired during the 1904 British expedition to Lhasa.  
V&A: IM 12&a1911



66. MEN'S EARRINGS  
Silver and turquoise  
Guru, central Tibet, early 20th century  
upper: shank 5.3 cm long, bezel 3.6 cm long  
lower: shank 4.2 cm long, bezel 4.1 cm long

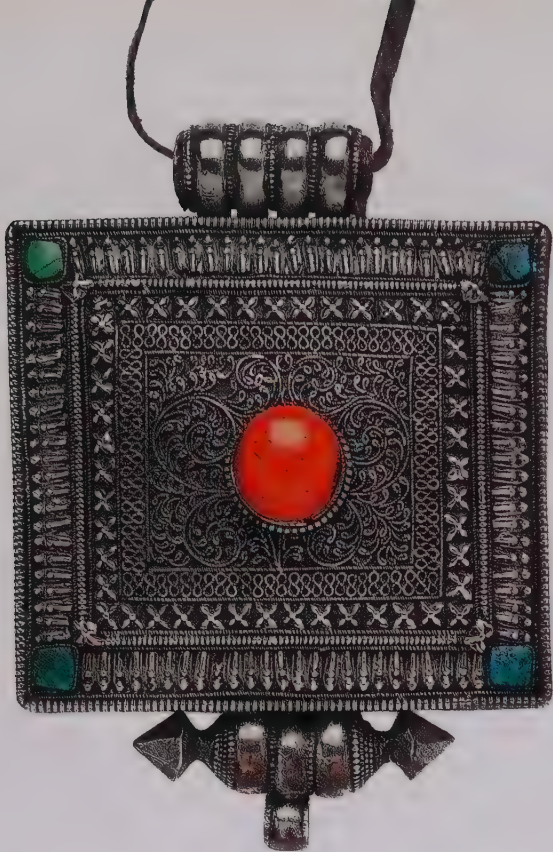
Stylish variants of the normal man's earring with lotus-shaped, turquoise-covered plaques. They are not a pair but part of a larger group given by Sargent Heaney, a member of the British military expedition to Lhasa in 1904. This fact, together with the place of acquisition, the site of a battle, suggests they were collected from the battlefield by him during the British advance on Lhasa.  
National Museums  
Liverpool

67. NOMAD MAN WEARING  
HOOP EARRING, *along*  
Ladakh, c.late 20th century

The most popular men's earring in Tibet and Ladakh, a circle of beaded wire set with a single turquoise facing outward. This man is probably saying prayers as he is fingering the rosary around his neck while the photograph is being taken.

© Diane Barker/Tibet Images





68. WOMAN'S AMULET BOX,  
*ga'u*  
Silver, copper, coral and  
turquoise  
Tibet, c.early 20th century  
10 cm long, 8 cm wide, 3  
cm deep

The front of this amulet box is covered in separately embossed or stamped filigree sprigs, flower and petal elements. Though retaining their functions as containers for relics, women's *ga'us* always have a role as pieces of jewellery and tend to be more decorative than the equivalent men's boxes. Bequest of Lord Curzon, acquired in Sikkim. V&A: IM 177-1927



69. AMULET BOX, *ga'u*  
Copper, brass and coral  
Tibet, c.19th or 20th  
century  
9 cm long, 11.5 cm wide,  
3.5 cm deep

Beaded, openwork brass scrolls radiate from a central coral, overlaid against a copper background. The *ga'u* contains a block-printed charm featuring the magical numbers of the nine planets and the eight trigrams derived from the *I Ching* which together guard against adverse planetary influences. V&A: IS 14&a1965





70. WOMAN'S AMULET BOX,  
*ga'u sutumba*  
Silver, turquoise  
Tibet, c.early 19th century.  
7.5 cm long, 6.4 cm wide

This type of rectangular *ga'u* called *sutumba* or *surdewa* was very popular in the border areas of west and south Tibet, and in the Indian Himalayan districts of Spiti and Lahul. The central field of filigree wire surrounding a stylized lotus bud with a central turquoise is typical of the decoration found on this type of amulet box. On all *ga'us* the stylized *dorje* ornament always hangs at the bottom when worn.  
Obtained in Kathmandu in 1855. V&A: 13054



71. WOMAN'S AMULET BOX,  
*ga'u kerima*  
Silver  
Probably Sikkim, first half  
of 19th century  
8.5 cm long, 6 cm wide

Although worn in all areas, the oval-shaped silver *ga'u* called a *kerima* (*khedi* in Lhasa) was particularly favoured by women in the southern border areas of Tibet, in Sikkim and Bhutan. The name is derived from *khal* meaning

kidney, a reflection of its shape. Many women's *ga'us* including this one have a loop at the bottom from which hung suspended ornaments or decorative chains that hooked up to shoulder level. A plainer version of this pleasing *ga'u* form was worn by nuns throughout Tibet.  
Acquired in Sikkim by the East India Company Museum in 1855. V&A: 03065 IS

## Eastern Tibet



72. AMULET CASE, *ga'u*  
Copper and brass  
Chamdo, eastern Tibet,  
c. early 20th century  
11.5 cm long, 15 cm wide,

This beautiful container displays the typical Tibetan decorative effect where one metal is overlaid on another, here brass against copper. The central symbol is the *dorje* representing enlightenment with an auspicious conch below it. Around each edge is a protective mantra in the archaic Lantsa script. V&A: IM 77-1929



73. TINDER POUCHES, *mechag*  
Steel, gold, brass and leather  
Eastern Tibet,  
c.19th century  
left, 18.5 cm long,  
8.3 cm wide  
right, 12 cm long,  
6 cm wide



Until the mid-20th century tinder pouches were widely used in Tibet where they were carried hung from the belt. Steel ridges at the bottom of the pouches enabled a spark to be struck using the flint and dry tinder was carried within. The piece on the right is enlivened with auspicious dragons chasing a jewel, skilfully executed in inlaid gold on iron, a technique

for which the craftsmen of eastern Tibet were famous. The swastika is an ancient Indian auspicious emblem also used in Tibet. The other pouch is decorated with two facing deer in brass which look back to the prehistoric animal style of the Sino-Siberian steppes. Bequest of Adelaïne Gourlay, V&A: IS 26-1965, IS 28-1965



74. BELT ORNAMENTS, *lochab*  
 Silver, silver-gilt, coral and  
 leather  
 Eastern Tibet, c.19th  
 century  
 31.5 cm long, 12 cm  
 maximum width

A pair of woman's belt ornaments from eastern Tibet which continue to be worn in the area especially at festival times (plate 76). They are suspended, one at each side of the body, from a belt and are decorated with tassels or chains that hook up to a central purse or other ornament. The embossed silverwork contains representations of jewels, evoking wealth, and protective monster masks. These typically eastern-Tibetan objects were acquired at Tashilunpo monastery in southern Tibet, making it likely that they were former donations of visiting pilgrims from the east of the country. Obtained on the 1904 British Expedition to Tibet. V&A: 411&a-1906

75. BELT ORNAMENT, *lochab*,  
AND TINDER POUCH, *mechag*  
Silver, steel, coral, turquoise  
Eastern Tibet, c.early 20th  
century

Belt hanger: 22.5 cm long  
Tinder pouch: 12.7 cm  
long

A woman's belt hanger  
decorated with scrollwork  
surrounding a central  
turquoise. The jaws of a  
monster mask at the  
bottom of the embossed  
silver plaque hold a silver-  
looped ornament from  
which hangs a tinder  
pouch. *Mechag* from Kham  
are amongst the most  
beautifully decorated in  
Tibet, the settings of large  
coral beads in silver petal  
ornaments is typical of  
centres such as Derge.  
© Copyright The British  
Museum



76. WOMAN OF THE GABA  
AREA, EASTERN TIBET, YUSHU,  
2003

A woman at festival time  
wearing two pairs of belt  
hangers at each side, front  
and back, over her otter  
skin dress, or *chupa*. The  
'Two Fish' emblem with  
chains and miniature fish  
ornaments suspended from  
the front belt hanger is  
typically eastern Tibetan.  
An ornamental silver chain  
hung with bells links the  
back hangers to a purse at  
the centre of her waist. She  
also wears several coral  
necklaces and a single  
amber and coral head  
ornament.





77. TEENAGE BOY OF EASTERN TIBET, YUSHU, 2003

Though the rest of this ensemble is mostly seen only at festivals, the coiled queue wrapped with red braid and threaded with rings is commonly worn by men throughout the area. The queue rings worn here are of ivory, silver and coral. The boy also wears *dzi* and coral necklaces and a bone or ivory rosary, a ring on every finger and another rosary wrapped around his right wrist. Machismo demands the sword stuck through the waistband, his right hand rests on its hilt. A purse with hanging chains and stylized fish hangs at waist level and is linked to other ornaments at his back.

78. MAN'S QUEUE RING, *gyu ya*  
Silver, dyed coral  
Chamdo, eastern Tibet,  
2003  
7 cm high, 5 cm wide

This type of ring is threaded into the queues of men as decoration in eastern Tibet, often in groups of two or three. The queue is worn coiled around the head and threaded with red braid to enlarge it (plate 77) or a separate, false, queue-shaped hairpiece may be worn. The ring was made by a craftsman from Yunnan living in Chamdo who, like many other Yunnanese silversmiths, makes traditional jewellery for Tibetan patrons.  
V&A: IS 17-2003





79. WOMAN WEARING HEAD ORNAMENT, *melong pongu* OR *metok*

Copper-gilt, silver-gilt, dyed turquoise matrix  
Derge, eastern Tibet, 2003

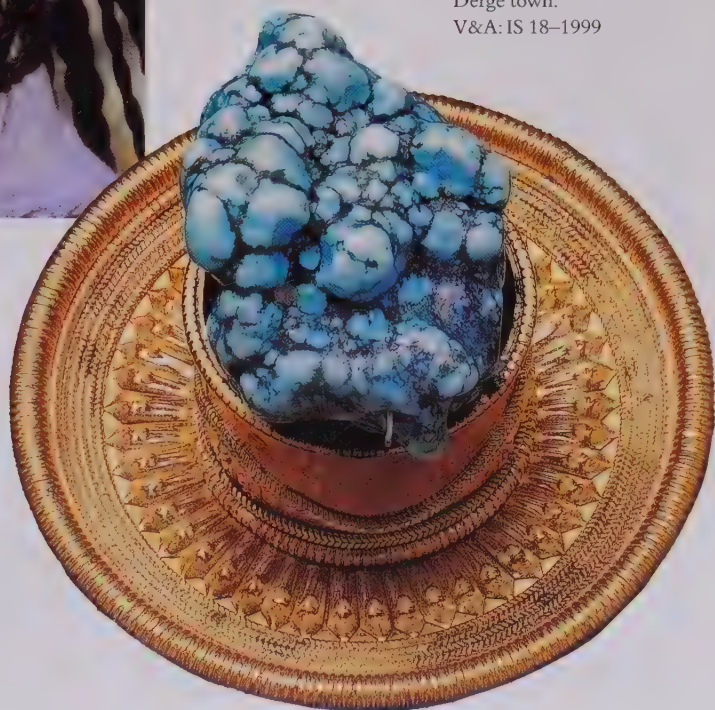
This woman wears the typical head ornaments of the Derge and Chamdo region in eastern Tibet. The metal is copper-gilt decorated with beaded wire and a central turquoise, favoured in Derge. Coral is more popular in Chamdo.

80. WOMAN'S HEAD ORNAMENT, *melong pongu* OR *metok*

Copper-gilt, silver-gilt, dyed turquoise matrix  
Derge, eastern Tibet, 2003  
8.5 cm diam., 5.5 cm high

The largest version of the *metok* or 'flower' ornament, usually worn singly on the front of the head by women in the Derge and Chamdo areas of eastern Tibet (plate 79). At festival times a pair may be worn, one at the front and one at the back of the head joined by a line of turquoises and corals attached to the hair. The dish-shaped plaque is enriched with circles of beaded and plaited silver wire. Made by a Chinese craftsman from Yunnan living and working in Derge town.

V&A: IS 18-1999





81. AMULET BOX, *ga'u*  
Silver and coral  
North-east Tibet, c. first half  
of the 19th century  
17.5 cm maximum length,  
pendant 10.8 cm diam

A round *ga'u* of the type worn by both nomad men and women in north-eastern Tibet called simply *go go* or *gor-mo*, meaning 'round'. Its surface is covered with concentric silver-embossed elements representing the petals of an open lotus, symbol of purity and spiritual power.  
V&A: 02085



82. MAN'S EARRING, *along*  
Silver, coral and turquoise  
Eastern Tibet, c.early 19th  
century  
8 cm long (left)

MAN'S EARRING, *along*  
Silver and turquoise  
Tibet, c.late 19th century  
2.5 cm diam. (centre)

WOMAN'S EARRING, *chusin*  
*kamo*  
Silver and coral  
Batang area, eastern Tibet,  
c.early 20th century  
2.25 cm long (right)

The shaped turquoise on the bottom ring is set into a bezel decorated with granulation. Throughout Tibet and Ladakh men who were not of noble status, and therefore not allowed to wear the pencil-shaped earring, wore instead a round, pearled wire hoop in their left ear.

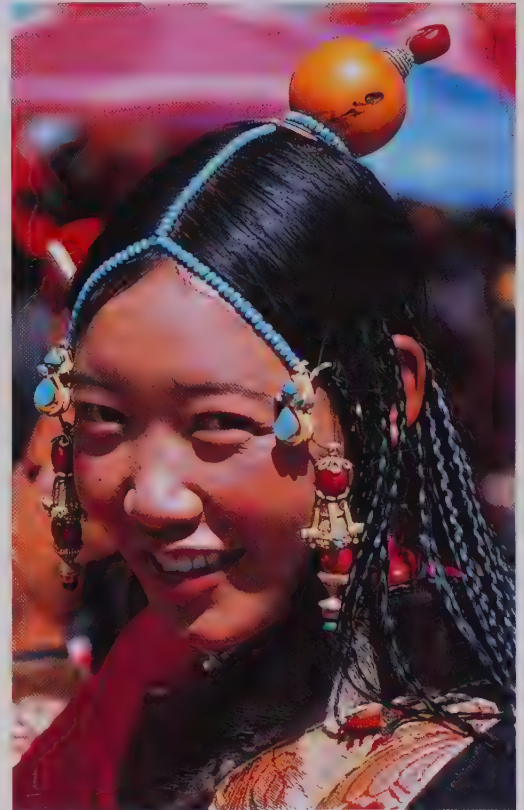
Above are two characteristically eastern Tibetan earrings, to the right a style worn by the women in the border area of Batang in eastern Tibet. Two stylised facing *chusin* or sea monsters, which give their name to this earring, hold a coral bead between them. On the left a man's earring of the type worn in eastern Tibet.

Man's earring (straight), collected by Captain Hamilton.

© Copyright The British Museum

83. YOUNG WOMAN OF GABA, eastern Tibet, Yushu, 2003

This shows another way of adorning the head in eastern Tibet using a single, large ball of amber and a smaller ball of coral linked by strings of small turquoise beads to the earrings. These are a modern version of traditional earrings worn in the area, probably made by Chinese craftsmen. The thread which takes the weight off the ear is just visible running diagonally across the hair from the top of the hoop. Notice the braids starting at the level of the ears.





84. MAN'S AMULET BOX, *ga'u chengap*  
Silver and silver-gilt, eastern Tibet, c.20th century  
22.7 cm high, 17.2 cm wide, 7.5 cm deep

This amulet box exemplifies the embossing technique of eastern Tibet which shows a greater precision and sharpness than work from other regions (cf. plates 61, 62). By comparing variations in the style of scrollwork, and certain symbols such as the 'Eight Auspicious Emblems' and the monster mask, both shown here, it is often possible to locate the region of origin of large *ga'us*. Such styles are identifiable

as central/southern and eastern Tibetan, Bhutanese, Newari and Chinese.<sup>20</sup> The scrollwork on this piece is typical of eastern Tibet in its consistency, showing little space between tendrils (cf. plate 62 from Lhasa). Not only are the auspicious emblems on eastern Tibetan pieces more detailed and three dimensional than those from other areas, but several are totally different in form. The heads of the fish in the 'Two fish' symbol here for example meet at the bottom while on *ga'u* from central/southern Tibet (plates 61, 62) their bodies arch together with heads meeting at the top. © The British Museum

85. AMULET BOX, *ga'u*  
Iron  
Probably eastern Tibet,  
c.17th century  
8.5 cm long, 9cm wide,  
2.7 cm deep

The front of the box is composed of pierced ironwork scrolls incorporating the 'Eight Auspicious Emblems', dragons and clouds. Iron is seldom used to make amulet containers probably because, compared to gold or silver, it is not usually

valued as a material for ornaments. It also has additional negative associations with blacksmiths, traditionally among the lowest in Tibetan society and with rituals such as exorcism (page 30). However, as texts say it frightens hungry ghosts and evil spirits, it might be thought most suitable for warding off negative spiritual forces. National Museums Liverpool



86. MAN'S AMULET BOX, *ga'u chengap* (FORMERLY OWNED BY SURKHANG SHAPÉ) Silver and silver-gilt Eastern Tibet, c.20th century 28.5 cm high

A finely worked *ga'u* decorated with the 'Eight Offering Goddesses' set amidst scrollwork. Very large box *ga'u* such as this were only worn, or carried by one's servants, as protection on long journeys. While travelling they could be set up as temporary shrines during stops en route but at other times would be kept on the family altar. The abbots of monasteries and other high-ranking religious figures commissioned box *ga'us* as lavish as any nobleman's<sup>21</sup> which, when not in use, were displayed on their private altars. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



# Western Tibet, Ladakh, Bhutan and Sikkim



87. WOMEN'S HEAD ORNAMENTS, modelled in 2003  
Silver, enamel, turquoise, coral and turquoise, c.mid 20th century  
Rongchung district, Ngari, western Tibet

The jewellery of women in Ngari is amongst the most elaborate in Tibet and is seen to full effect in this set.

A turquoise-covered *perak* headdress is combined with a large silver forehead ornament featuring the sun/moon, the symbol of enlightenment, fringed with thin leaves or *genshung*. The latter was only worn down on the most important occasions, at other times it could be flipped back over the head. Framing the face on each

side and above are Indian enamelled ear ornaments with attached streamers and bells (see plate 92). As in Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti the front edges of the shawl are joined by a lozenge shaped clasp or *digra*.  
V&A: IS 10-23-1999



88. SIDE VIEW OF WOMEN'S HEAD ORNAMENTS, modelled in 2003  
Silver, enamel, turquoise, coral and turquoise  
Rongchung district, Ngari, western Tibet, c.mid 20th century

Large circular ear ornaments add further richness to the ensemble. They hook up at each side to a cotton band that encircles the head.  
V&A: IS 10-23-1999



89. WOMAN'S HEADDRESS,  
*perak*

Silver, brass, lead, coral, turquoise, imitation turquoise, cowries, seeds, mother-of-pearl, bone and glass sewn onto felt. Rongchung district in Ngari, western Tibet, c. mid-20th century  
76 cm long, 22 cm maximum width

This headdress forms part of a complete costume and set of jewellery (IS 6–24–1999) last worn in the mid-1970s (plates 87, 88) by a farmer's wife living near the Indian border in western Tibet. The straight silver bar was worn across the forehead, from which there hung the sun/moon emblem and from that chains with leaf and bell terminals. Immediately behind the bar are sewn six to seven lines of corals and freshwater pearls while down the back are attached eighty turquoises separated by horizontally placed brass plaques. Framing the face at each side hung strings of coral beads with alternate silver spacers.

V&A: IS 19–1999



90. AMULET CASES, *ga'u*s,  
SHAWL CLASP, BANGLES  
Silver and turquoise  
Part of a woman's costume  
IS 6-24-1999  
Rongchung district in  
Ngari, western Tibet,  
c.mid-20th century

Rectangular amulet,  
9 cm long, 8.6 cm wide  
Cylindrical amulet,  
12 cm long, diam. 3 cm  
Clasp, 11.5 cm long,  
7.5 cm wide  
Bracelets, 8.5 cm  
maximum width

The rectangular *ga'u* is a  
shape often seen in western  
and southern Tibet. It was  
worn around the neck with  
the cylindrically shaped  
amulet box called *chugsung*,  
full of rolled prayers on  
paper, immediately below  
it. The lozenge-shaped  
silver clasp, or *digna*, set with  
turquoise held together the  
two front ends of the felt  
shawl at the chest.  
Accompanying these pieces  
are a pair of hollow silver  
bracelets, or *dhugu*,  
decorated with long-life  
(*c.shou*) designs.  
Rectangular amulet,  
V&A: IS 17-1999  
Cylindrical amulet,  
V&A: IS 18-1999  
Clasp, V&A: IS 14-1999  
Bracelets, V&A: IS 20/21-  
1999

91. EAR ORNAMENTS, *kotak*

AND FINGER RINGS

Silver, coral and turquoise  
Part of a woman's costume;  
V&A: IS 6–24–1999.  
Rongchung district in  
Ngari, western Tibet,  
c. mid-20th century  
Ear ornaments, diam. circles  
10 cm, chains 28 cm long  
Rings, V&A: IS 11–1999  
diam. 1.5 cm; V&A: IS  
12–1999 diam. 2 cm

This pair of strangely elegant ear ornaments are suspended by crescent-shaped hooks from a cotton headband encircling the head. The longest of the sets of meshed wire chains hangs towards the front of the face and the edge of the circular ear ornament with corals and turquoise faces the front. Either side of the stones, coiled silver wire decorates and gives body to the ear ornaments. Two coral and turquoise inlaid finger rings lie between them.

Ear ornaments,  
V&A: IS 22/23–1999  
Finger rings,  
V&A: IS 11/12–1999



92. WOMEN'S HEAD ORNAMENTS

Silver and enamel  
Part of a woman's costume;  
V&A: IS 6–24–1999  
Rongchung district in  
Ngari, western Tibet,  
c. mid-20th century

Forehead ornament,  
41 cm maximum length  
Ear ornaments,  
44 cm maximum length,  
diam. of disks 4.5 cm

A forehead ornament and triangular ear ornaments, or *milminto*, of silver and characteristic blue and green *champlevé* enamel from the enamel-making centre of Nurpur in Kangra district. The forehead ornament with parallel rows of silver chains, enamelled disks and a central crescent moon hung with bells is similar to the *daoni tilak* made in nearby Mandi (Himachal Pradesh). Both sets of ornaments support bunches of silver chains hung with cascading pipal-leaf shaped pendants. Proximity to the border and cross border trade was responsible for the adoption of such Indian items as part of traditional female attire in Ngari, Spiti, Lahaul and Kinnaur.<sup>22</sup>

Forehead ornament,  
V&A: IS 10–1999  
Ear ornaments,  
V&A: IS 15 & 16–1999



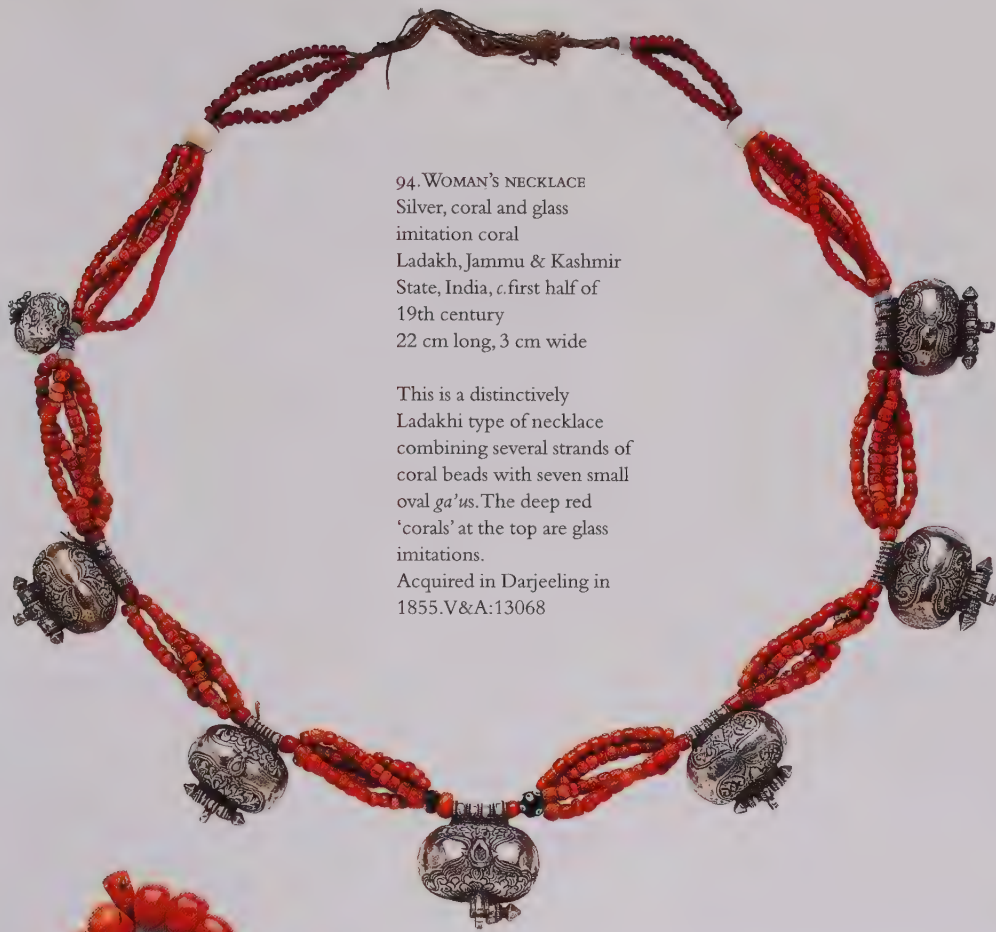


93. DRESS CLASP, *pichuk* (SPITI) OR *tomukeh* (LAHAUL)  
 Brass and iron  
 Lahaul, Spiti or Kinnaur,  
 Himachal Pradesh,  
 c. late 19th century  
 20 cm high, 19 cm wide

A brass dress clasp from the western Himalayas formed of three separate rings symbolizing the 'Three Jewels' of Buddhism. This is a distinct local type used to pin together the ends of a woman's wrapped upper garment at the left shoulder. It is found

throughout a zone in the Himalayan borderlands under different names. Its superficial resemblance to a Celtic brooch led earlier scholars to speculate wildly on improbable cross-cultural links.  
 V&A: IS 4-1954





94. WOMAN'S NECKLACE  
 Silver, coral and glass  
 imitation coral  
 Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir  
 State, India, c first half of  
 19th century  
 22 cm long, 3 cm wide

This is a distinctively  
 Ladakhi type of necklace  
 combining several strands of  
 coral beads with seven small  
 oval *ga'us*. The deep red  
 'corals' at the top are glass  
 imitations.  
 Acquired in Darjeeling in  
 1855. V&A:13068

95. WOMAN'S NECKLACE  
 Silver, coral and turquoise  
 Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir  
 State, India, c first half of  
 19th century  
 22 cm long, 3 cm wide

The fashion in Ladakh and  
 western Tibet for wearing  
 multiple strands of  
 necklaces, which can be  
 traced to the 14th century,  
 may be responsible for this  
 type of necklace that  
 combines two strings of  
 coral beads with silver  
 spacers and drops. The  
 fringe of drops also recalls  
 Indian necklace fashions  
 and suggests influence from  
 there transmitted via much  
 used trade routes to the  
 south.  
 V&A: IS 1858-1883



96. WOMAN WEARING  
FESTIVAL DRESS  
Leh, Ladakh, 1990

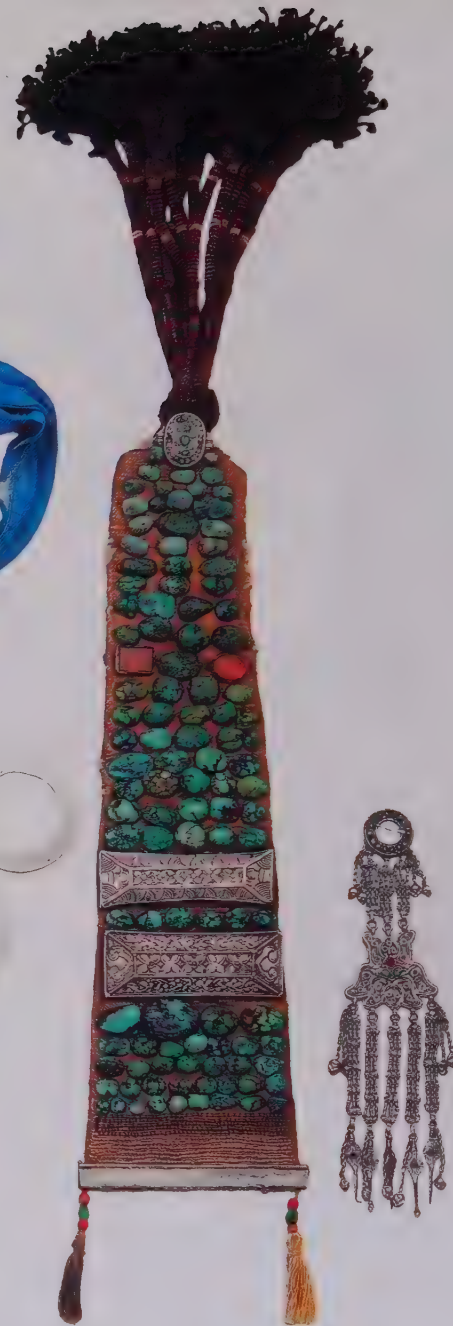
A woman's best attire is dominated by her *perak* headdress, traditionally given to the eldest daughter when she marries. Its dozens of turquoises may therefore represent pieces collected and passed down over many generations. The costume is completed by a chatelaine, hung from the shoulder, freshwater pearl earrings, an elaborate necklace with *ga'u* and a silver waist ornament with hanging chains or *dodchas*. A needle-case and purse are sometimes added. Photograph by Graham Brandon



97. WOMAN'S WAIST  
ORNAMENT, *dodchas*  
WOMAN'S CHATELAINE SET,  
*sondus*  
WOMAN'S BRACELETS, *tunglak*  
WOMAN'S HEADDRESS, *perak*  
Silver, brass, turquoise,  
coral, cornelian, conch  
shell.  
Leh, Ladakh, c.1930  
Waist ornament: 309 cm  
long  
Chatelaine: 28 cm long  
Bracelets: 6 cm diam.  
Headdress: 96 cm long,  
13 cm maximum width

Parts of a complete set of female Ladakhi costume and jewellery. The pierced brass disk in the form of the luck-bringing 'Endless Knot' with streamers of cowry shells, ending in bell terminals, hangs at the waist from a tie-dyed silk waistband. The other ornaments are a silver vanity set including

tweezers, nail- and toothpick and brush which is attached to the left shoulder (plate 98) and the pair of conch shell bracelets. These are placed on the wrists of a girl when young and cut off and replaced when outgrown. They normally then remain on the wrists for a woman's whole life.



The headdress was acquired separately and is the type worn in Rupshu (eastern Ladakh) and in adjoining Ngari (western Tibet) with a flat bar at the front (plate 89). Waist ornament, V&A: IS 17d-1989; chatelaine, V&A: IS 17f-1989; bracelets, V&A: IS 17b&c1989; headdress, V&A: IS 7-1954





98. WOMAN WEARING  
FESTIVAL DRESS  
Leh, Ladakh, 1990 (detail)

The *perak* is a status symbol for a Ladakhi woman, her wealth and position are shown by the number and quality of the turquoises present. This is one of the best *perak* with up to nine lines of stones and a maximum width of 25 centimetres, the poorest might have only one line and be 10 centimetres wide. This woman is wearing the

most popular type of earring composed of strings of freshwater pearls attached to a metal hoop whose weight is supported by chains. Both the earrings and her face are framed against black wool ear flaps or *tsaru*. Her necklace of coral, turquoise, pearls and *dzi* beads combines a central octagonal *ga'u* and a turquoise-inlaid 'Wish-Fulfilling Jewel'. Photograph by Graham Brandon



99. BACK OF A WOMAN'S  
HEADRESS, *perak*  
Leh, Ladakh, 1990

From above the *perak* headdress resembles a snakeskin and from the front a woman wearing one is reminiscent of a raised cobra about to strike, a resemblance made stronger by the two black-wool ear flaps worn at each side of the head.<sup>23</sup> The snake imagery is deliberate as women in Ladakh are traditionally associated with the *lu*, the underworld spirits of the waters.<sup>24</sup> The

wealthiest women have a further side decoration of up to ten strings of coral beads hung from a silver bar down the back on the left side. The sides of the head are enriched with hanging silver ornaments, or *shunga*, in the form of silver plaques or auspicious knot motifs, from which hang small bells. Along the sides of the head hang silver chain ornaments, or *daoni*, imported from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh.<sup>25</sup> Photograph by Graham Brandon.



101. CHATELAINE ORNAMENT  
Silver, turquoise and garnet  
Acquired in Sikkim  
Possibly western Himalayas,  
c.19th century  
14 cm diam., 4 cm high

This convex silver ornament is covered with concentric circles of turquoise, garnet and filigree. Although the turquoise points to Tibetan taste, other aspects of the

piece such as its ring of garnets, symmetrical filigree work and beaded outer edge are Indian in style. This suggests that it originated in an area where mixed cultures prevailed such as Sikkim or another sub-Himalayan area. Its back is fitted with three loops for attachment to a belt or garment.<sup>26</sup> Bequest of Lord Curzon. V&A: IM 162–1927



100. PAIR OF BRACELETS,  
*dobchu*  
Silver, turquoise, glass  
imitation turquoise, coral  
Probably eastern Bhutan,  
c.first half of the 19th  
century  
6.5 cm maximum diam.  
2.3 cm width of band

This type of heavy silver bangle was popular in the eastern part of the kingdom of Bhutan and in related forms in Tibet. Their surfaces are encrusted with beaded and plaited wire and silver granulation. The small ill fitting stones which are probably replacements are imitations.

Obtained in Sikkim and acquired by the East India Company Museum in 1855. V&A: 03468&a





102. MAN'S AMULET BOX  
Silver and woven cotton  
Bhutan, 19th century  
14 cm high, 11 cm wide,  
6.4 cm deep

A beautifully embossed box *ga'u* made by Bhutanese craftsmen who traditionally imitated eastern Tibetan forms of scrollwork and auspicious emblems. Their own scrollwork, seen here, achieved a similar depth and clarity of detail but was slightly thicker and more

overlapping in form. The first Political Officer, Sikkim and Bhutan, John Claude White (in office 1889–1908) was particularly impressed by Bhutanese metalwork. He attributed its excellence to the fact that craftsmen were kept on retaining fees by district governors, giving them abundant time to spend on individual orders. National Museums Liverpool

103. DRESS PINS, *tinkhup*,  
AND ROUND CLIPS, *koma*  
Silver, silver-gilt, imitation  
glass, turquoise  
Bhutan, 19th and 20th  
centuries

Large dress pins:  
38.5 cm (chain lengths)  
Round clips:  
48.2 cm overall length,  
each clasp 5.1 cm wide  
Small dress pins: 16 cm  
long, ring diam. 5 cm

The changing styles of shoulder pins/clips used in Bhutan over the last century to join the women's garment (*kira*) are charted here. Up until the start of the 20th century two cumbersome silver swivel pins or *tinkhup* balanced by chains which lay across the back, were the main type in use. Smaller versions of these came in sometime at the start of the 20th century and soon began to include attached round plaques. The two round plaques were then produced on their own without the pins and are worn today with an interconnecting chain at the front of the body. The examples shown here are decorated with auspicious 'Endless Knot' designs.



Large dress pins, acquired  
by the East India Company  
Museum in 1855.

V&A: 03071

Round clips, acquired  
and made in 1971.

V&A: IS 39-1971

Small dress pins,  
c. early 20th century.

V&A: IS 168:1-2-1991

# Nepal



104. TWO PAIRS OF  
BRACELETS, N. *sinkhwa*  
*lun churi*  
Copper-gilt  
Nepal, c. first half of 19th  
century  
03009&a: 11 cm diam.  
03011&a: 8 cm diam.

The usual form of Newar  
bracelets with facing

dragon-head terminals, a  
type also worn in Tibet. On  
the larger hollow pair a  
section of the ring hinges  
out to allow fitting to the  
arm. The smaller pieces are  
solid cast.

Acquired by the East India  
Company Museum in  
1855. V&A: 03009&a,  
03011&a



105. PAIR OF EARRINGS,  
N. *dhungri*  
Gold  
Probably Middle Hills,  
Nepal, c. 18th/19th century  
4.2 cm square

A square form of the more usually round *dhungri* earring once worn by the Indo-Nepalese and Tibeto-Burman peoples of the Middle Hills. A square earring, with a similar pattern of symmetrical embossed foliage, is shown being worn on the diagonal by a 16th- or 17th-century image of a Bodhisattva in a Paris collection.<sup>27</sup> Obtained in Kathmandu; acquired by the East India Company Museum in 1855. V&A: IS 08672

106. WOMAN'S NECK  
ORNAMENT, N. *tayo*  
Copper-gilt, silk thread  
Obtained in Kathmandu,  
Nepal, c.first half of 19th  
century  
Lozenge pendant:  
12 cm long

An important piece of  
Newar ceremonial  
jewellery which has  
protective functions such as  
guarding against evil spirits.  
It is considered essential for  
a bride and is also used in  
the ceremonies prior to  
menstruation and on  
entering old age. Although  
hollow, it is closed and  
cannot be used as an amulet  
container. Its cylindrical  
form suggests an Indian  
origin as does the tear-drop  
ornament on the upper  
edge recalling the double-  
mango motif on Indian  
jewellery. *Tayo* are also worn  
by dancers depicting deities  
(plate 107)  
Acquired by the East India  
Company Museum in  
1855.V&A: IS 03034







107. TWO BOYS DRESSED AS DEITIES IN A PROCESSION Kathmandu, early 1980s

The boy at the front of the picture is dressed as Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, and wears a crown, *tayo* neck ornament, armlets and cuff bracelets. Behind him is another boy portraying Radha, Krishna's wife, with a gold chain hair ornament, or *nyapu sikha*, normally worn by girls. Photograph by Hannelore Gabriel



108. FOREHEAD ORNAMENT  
FOR AN IMAGE

*Jarao* work  
Silver-gilt, turquoise, coral,  
lapis lazuli, (mixed-cut)  
rubies, (mixed-cut)  
sapphires, (rose-cut)  
diamonds, (step and mixed-  
cut) aquamarine, zircon and  
freshwater pearls.  
Kathmandu Valley in Nepal  
or Tibet, c.18th century  
22 cm long, 6.5 cm wide

The gently curving convex  
plaque was intended to fit  
the forehead of a large image,  
attaching to the crown by  
two hooks at the side. Carved  
corals and turquoises are used  
to represent three crowned  
meditational Buddhas.  
At the centre is the red  
Amitayus and at either side  
the blue Akshobhya. The wide  
variety of precious stones and  
their disparate cuts suggests

they were gathered from  
many sources over a long  
period of time. Examination  
also shows that the colour  
of some of the rubies and  
aquamarines has been  
artificially enhanced by  
placing coloured resin  
behind them within foil  
backings.  
Purchased from Imre  
Schwaiger.V&A: IM  
160–1913

109. PAIR OF EARRINGS FOR A  
RELIGIOUS IMAGE

*Jarao* work  
Silver, silver-gilt, turquoise,  
lapis lazuli, coral, pearl,  
feldspar, zircons, pink and  
blue sapphires,  
aquamarines, emeralds and  
diamonds.  
Kathmandu Valley in Nepal  
or Tibet, c.18th century  
7.5 cm square, 1.5 cm thick

These heavy earrings were  
clearly intended for  
attachment to a large image.  
Both plaques have foiled  
diamonds at their centres  
and a field of gems enclosed  
within a border of  
turquoise lotus petals. Four  
coral monster masks are  
placed in each corner.  
V&A: IM 89&90–1911



110. SET OF CEREMONIAL  
JEWELLERY

Silver-gilt, turquoise, coral,  
spinel, beryl, rubies,  
sapphires, diamonds,  
hessonite garnet, and lapis  
lazuli.

Kathmandu Valley, Nepal,

c.17th or 18th century

13 cm square, 2 cm thick

Ceremonial Earrings

Silver-gilt, turquoise, lapis  
lazuli with foiled rubies  
and sapphires

Kathmandu Valley, Nepal,  
c.17th or 18th century.

11 cm long, 6 cm wide,  
3.5 cm deep

This set of ceremonial  
jewellery shows the Newar  
stone carving and setting  
tradition at its height.

A gracefully portrayed  
peacock forms the centre  
of an openwork design of  
tendrils and clusters of  
flowers depicted in metal  
and settings of precious  
stones. The peacock is a  
symbol of luck, prosperity  
and longevity for both  
Hindus and Buddhists and  
is deified as Maha-Mayuri,  
the Great Peacock.

The earrings show two  
attendant figures each side  
of a four-armed deity  
whose deep blue colour  
suggests that it may be  
Vishnu.

National Museums of  
Scotland





III. CEREMONIAL AMULET  
BOX, *N.jantar*

*Jarao* work  
Silver-gilt, turquoise, coral,  
(mixed-cut) rubies, (mixed-  
cut) sapphires, (oval, step  
and mixed-cut) emeralds  
and (oval mixed-cut)  
hessonite garnets  
Kathmandu Valley, Nepal  
c.18th century  
9.2 cm high, 7.6 cm wide,  
1.5 cm deep

The central symbol is the  
Nepalese version of the  
Tibetan monster mask,  
*N.chepu*, whose horned  
face and two hands grasping  
foliage is skilfully  
represented using carved  
turquoises which are also  
used to form a lotus-petal

edge to the box. Above the  
head is the 'Wish-Fulfilling  
Jewel' formed from two  
emeralds and a ruby. The  
fashion for using this  
distinctively Newari type of  
stone inlay called *jarao* or  
*jadoba* (page 60) was  
strongest during the 18th  
and 19th centuries. The  
technique uses a network of  
cloisons formed from thin  
strips of wire to hold  
stones, often combined as  
here, with spiral filigree  
elements. In Nepal it  
appears from as early as the  
12th century where it  
decorates the front of the  
ritual crowns worn by  
priests.<sup>28</sup>  
V&A: IM 91-1911

II2. BELT CLASP  
*Jarao* work

Silver and silver-gilt,  
turquoise, white and red  
coral, amber, (cabouchon  
and mixed-cut) spinels and  
rubies, (mixed-cut)  
sapphires, (cabouchon and  
mixed-cut) emeralds (oval  
mixed-cut), white topaz  
Kathmandu Valley, Nepal,  
c.18th century  
15 cm long, 6 cm wide

The central panel of this  
three-part clasp bears the  
emblem of the *S.visuvajra*  
or crossed *vajra*,  
representing the  
unshakeable stability of the  
enlightened state. At its  
centre is a single white  
topaz. Monster masks,  
*N.chepu*, formed of carved  
coral and turquoise guard  
each end. *Jarao* stone inlay  
of this type was used to  
decorate a wide variety of  
ornaments, shrines, ritual  
objects and sword and knife  
hilts. When the tourist  
market first developed in  
the 1960s, it became  
popular as a decoration for  
trinket boxes and decorative  
animal figures. But after  
reaching a peak of  
production in the 1970s, it  
declined rapidly and today  
is found only on tourist  
jewellery and Christmas  
decorations.  
V&A: IS 43-1962





113. CEREMONIAL NECKLACE,  
*N.suta* OR *konchi*  
Copper-gilt, turquoise,  
coral, rubies, (mixed-cut)  
sapphires  
Kathmandu Valley, Nepal  
c.19th century  
24 cm high with pendants,  
10 cm wide

A wide gorget necklace with a central plaque of pale pink coral carved into the form of the deity Ganesh, flanked on either side by dragons grasping rubies in each front claw. The *suta* necklace is often placed around the necks of religious images but also used in the initiation ceremonies of Newar boys and girls. *Suta* made for images usually curve around the neck while those such as this, intended for human wear, are crescentic and provided with a chain or cord. This is an ancient form which can be traced back at least as far as the 9th century in the art of north India.  
V&A: IM 296–1913



114. PAIR OF EARRINGS

Silver, copper-gilt, glass and seed pearls

Kathmandu Valley, Nepal  
c.18th or 19th century.  
4.5 cm diameter

Constructed in alternate concentric circles of silver-gilt petals and imitation sapphires, rubies and emeralds forming open lotuses, edged with seed pearls. The very large posts for attachment at the back of each indicates that they were probably intended for the ears of an image.

V&A: IM 149&a-1910

115. EARRING

Silver, silver-gilt, lapis lazuli, turquoise, seed pearls, ruby, emeralds

Kathmandu Valley, Nepal  
c.18th or 19th century  
10–5 cm high, 5.5 cm wide

A tiny but beautifully made standing figure of the mythical half-man, half-eagle Garuda, the vehicle of the Hindu deity Vishnu. Garuda is also a frequently encountered protective emblem in Buddhist culture. A peacock-like fan of tail feathers with turquoises at their tips rises at the back of the head. The lower edge is hung with seed pearls and small leaves of silver-gilt. Purchased from Imre Schwaiger. V&A: IM 181-1913



116. CEREMONIAL NECKLACE,  
*N.toh*  
Copper-gilt, lapis lazuli,  
turquoise, coral and blue  
enamel  
Kathmandu Valley, Nepal,  
18th or 19th century

A collar worn by both boys and girls in childhood initiation rituals. The presence of markedly Chinese-style dragons, and the use of enamelling surrounding the cabouchon turquoises and corals which is not traditional in Nepal, is

puzzling. Could Newars living in Tibet or even Mongolia have picked up Chinese designs and techniques, or might the Chinese delegations which visited Nepal in the 19th century be responsible for such long-distance influence? A number of similar pieces have been photographed in use in Nepal during the late 1970s.<sup>29</sup> More recent examples are plainer and may be flat rather than round.  
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117. EARRING FOR IMAGE  
Silver-gilt, turquoise, lapis  
lazuli, beryl, spinels, coral  
pink and blue sapphires.  
Kathmandu Valley,  
Nepal or Tibet,  
c.18th or 19th century  
14 cm high, 5 cm wide

One of a pair of heavy earrings made for attachment to an image. The top roundel contains the typically fat-cheeked style of the Newar monster mask, or *chepu*, with two hands and facial features outlined in thin wire and with inset stone eyes. The 'Wish-Fulfilling Jewel' appears above the creature's head. The lowest plaque bears the peacock, a favourite Newar emblem, believed to neutralize poison and guard against death from snakebite. Purchased from Imre Schwaiger. V&A: IM 84a-1911

# Notes

## Preface

- <sup>1</sup> Weihreter, H., *Schmuck aus dem Himalaja*, 1978; Windisch Graetz, S & G, *Juwelen des Himalaya*, 1981.  
<sup>2</sup> Jones, 1996, Reynolds, 1999, and Untracht in *Traditional Jewellery of India*, 1997.

## Chapter 1

- <sup>1</sup> Heller, 1999, pp.7-52.  
<sup>2</sup> Probably called *Tsug* in the 7th to 9th centuries.  
<sup>3</sup> It has been estimated that at least one million Tibetans have lost their life.  
<sup>4</sup> Created by the collision of two tectonic plates 50 million years ago.  
<sup>5</sup> At up to 5,500 metres.  
<sup>6</sup> Bhutan and Sikkim are well known as rice-producing areas from which in the past rice was exported to Tibet. Sikkim's name, *dre jong*, means 'rice country'.  
<sup>7</sup> Rizvi, 1998, p.56, Shakya, 1982, p.16.  
<sup>8</sup> Aris, 1979, pp.57-59.  
<sup>9</sup> Kotturan, 1983, pp.30-31, Steinmann, 1998, pp.121-122.  
<sup>10</sup> Gabriel, 1999, p.109, settling in the regions of Solu Khumbu and Helambu.  
<sup>11</sup> Myers and Bean, 1994, pp.47-48.  
<sup>12</sup> Shakya, 1982, p.16, Rizvi, 1998, p.54.  
<sup>13</sup> Raha and Mahato, 1895, pp.295-296, 299.  
<sup>14</sup> At 2,500 to 4,500 metres.  
<sup>15</sup> Heller, 1999, p.55, Rizvi, 1998, pp.65,68,73.  
<sup>16</sup> Warikoo, 1989, pp.55-89, Rizvi, 1998, pp.98-112.  
<sup>17</sup> The Akshi Chin.  
<sup>18</sup> T.*Dromo* 'wheat land'.

## Chapter 2

- <sup>1</sup> Sakya & Emery, 1990, p.3.  
<sup>2</sup> Yeshe, Pugh, Phipps, 1992, p.76, Yuthok, 1995, p.188.  
<sup>3</sup> Untracht, 1997, p.146, fig. 259, p.155, fig. 275.  
<sup>4</sup> Belleza, 1998, p.60 illus.59 for Bon *ga'u*.  
<sup>5</sup> Sakya & Emery, 1990, p.306.  
<sup>6</sup> Reynolds, 1999, p.99, plate 39.  
<sup>7</sup> Reynolds, 1999, p.99.  
<sup>8</sup> Clarke, 1995, vol.1, p.128, Singer, 1996, p.21 footnote 33.  
<sup>9</sup> Yuthok, 1995, p.186.  
<sup>10</sup> Singer, 1996, p.20.  
<sup>11</sup> Clarke 1995, vol.1, p.127.  
<sup>12</sup> Yeshe, Pugh, Phipps, 1992, pp.79-80.  
<sup>13</sup> Khenrap, 2000, p.73, both sets were also sometimes provided by the groom's family.  
<sup>14</sup> Bell, 1928 repr.1991, p.180.  
<sup>15</sup> Goldstein, 2001, p.1013.  
<sup>16</sup> Yuthok, 1995, p.322, Jones, 1996, p.276.  
<sup>17</sup> Kawaguchi, 1909, p.360, MacDonald, 1929, p.138.  
<sup>18</sup> Personal communication from Monisha Ahmed, July 2002.  
<sup>19</sup> Bell, 1928 repr.1991, p.164.  
<sup>20</sup> In the Water Ox Year, translation by Michael Henss.  
<sup>21</sup> Heller, 2003, pp.55-57.  
<sup>22</sup> Rockhill, 1894, pp.357-358.  
<sup>23</sup> Nieuhof, 1673, p.358, Govinda, 1979, vol.2, pp. 119, 189.  
<sup>24</sup> Beall, 1989, pp. 57, 101, Normantas, 1994, pp. 9, 37.  
<sup>25</sup> Klimburg Salter, 1997, p.94, figs.55, 56, p.125, fig.123.  
<sup>26</sup> Goepper & Poncar, 1996, pp.79, 137, 143, Pal, 1984, pl.17, 13th-century *tangka* showing same.  
<sup>27</sup> Yule, 1913, p.150.  
<sup>28</sup> Untracht, 1997, p.211, pl. 427, Weihreter, 1988, p.197, pls.114, 249, 273, in Lahaul called *mulang* or *kirkirtsi*.  
<sup>29</sup> Rockhill, 1891, p.76.  
<sup>30</sup> Richardson, 1993, pp.14-17, Singer, 1996, pp.21-22.  
<sup>31</sup> Reynolds, 1999, p.84, Clarke, 2001, pp.46-47.  
<sup>32</sup> Reynolds, 1999, p.84, Shanghai Museum, 2000, p.165, pl.77.  
<sup>33</sup> Clarke, 2001, pp.46-47.  
<sup>34</sup> Singer, 1999, pp.173-174.  
<sup>35</sup> Henss, 1996, p.213, Heller, 2001, p.70.  
<sup>36</sup> Heller, 1999, p.35, illus.26.  
<sup>37</sup> Indian Museum, Calcutta: images 3803/A25141, Kr 7.  
<sup>38</sup> Haahr, 1969, p.314, the closed *ga'u* as the primeval source of life, in the colophon.  
<sup>39</sup> Belleza, 1998, pp.44-64.

- <sup>40</sup> Yuthok, 1995, p.321.  
<sup>41</sup> Personal communication from Monisha Ahmed, July 2002.  
<sup>42</sup> Yuthok, 1995, pp.187-188. Dorje Yudon Yuthok's memories of life in Lhasa stretched back to before 1920 and her mother and grandmother's recollections went back into the previous century.  
<sup>43</sup> Mullin/Wangyal, 1983, pp.10, 19, Yeshe, Pugh, Phipps, 1992, p.81.  
<sup>44</sup> Teague, 1995, p.79.  
<sup>45</sup> Weihreter, 1988, pp.111, 113, Gabriel, 1995, pp.90-95.  
<sup>46</sup> Klimburg-Salter, 1997, p.94, figs.55-56, p.125, fig.123, Heller, 2001, p.70.  
<sup>47</sup> Rockhill, 1895, p.690.

## Chapter 3

- <sup>1</sup> Huxley, 1954.  
<sup>2</sup> Conze, 1959, pp.222-223, 232-233 the *Sukhavativyuha*, 'Description of the Happy Land'.  
<sup>3</sup> Beer, 1999, p.210.  
<sup>4</sup> Dagyab, 1995, pp.70-71, Beer, 1999, p.162, for its beneficial worldly properties.  
<sup>5</sup> Snodgrass, 1985, pp.213-214.  
<sup>6</sup> Guenther, 1989.  
<sup>7</sup> Parfionovitch, 1992, p.61.  
<sup>8</sup> Ebbinghouse and Winsten, 1988, pp.45-46, 48 for legends.

- <sup>9</sup> Stein, in Macdonald 1971, pp. 232, 305, 505, 509, Heller, 1986, p.76.
- <sup>10</sup> Pogue, 1915, p.114.
- <sup>11</sup> Richtsfeld, 1983, p. 306.
- <sup>12</sup> Vitali, 1996, p. 519.
- <sup>13</sup> Pogue, 1915, pp. 77, 81.
- <sup>14</sup> Parfionovitch, 1992, p.217.
- <sup>15</sup> Laufer, 1913, pp. 6, 11, Singer, 1996, p.33, Bell, 1928 repr. 1991, pp.151, 240.
- <sup>16</sup> Walker-Watson, 1983, pp.16, 17, Untracht, 1997, p.145, Gabriel, 1999, pp.56-57.
- <sup>17</sup> Snodgrass, 1985, p.351, Untracht, 1997, p.145.
- <sup>18</sup> Parfionovitch, 1992, p.217.
- <sup>19</sup> Weihreter, 1988, p.22.
- <sup>20</sup> Singer, 1996, p.33.
- <sup>21</sup> Parfionovitch, 1992, p.61.
- <sup>22</sup> Clarke, 1995, pp. 64-65.
- <sup>23</sup> Beer, 1999, p.215.
- <sup>24</sup> Yeshi (ed.), 1987, p.80, Beer, 1999, p.215.
- <sup>25</sup> Singer, 1996, pp.12-13, Beer, 1999, p.215.
- <sup>26</sup> Woodford Schmidt, 1995, pp.16-33. Amulets worn by 10th- and 11th-century stone images display tiger-claw amulets a type still worn in the 20th century, see Untracht, 1997, pp.91-96.
- <sup>27</sup> Olson, 1950, vol.2, p.55, Beer, 1999, p.161, Untracht, 1997, pp.91-96.
- <sup>28</sup> Olson, 1950, vol.2, p.56, Beer, 1999, p.161.
- <sup>29</sup> Czuma, 1978, figs. 3 & 5 for Jain prototypes, Beer, 1999, pp.171-172.
- <sup>30</sup> Dageyab, 1995, pp.17, 115.
- <sup>31</sup> Salter, 1982, p.139, pls. 61, 69, 73, Whitfield, 1982-85, vol.2, fig 78.
- <sup>32</sup> For the full set see Dageyab, 1995, pp.15-36, Reynolds, 1999, pp.255-6.
- <sup>33</sup> Written *dzi bar* but commonly pronounced as *zibag*. The name is a transliteration of the Sanskrit name *cipata*, meaning 'flat nosed'.
- <sup>34</sup> Singer, 1996, pp.40-41, Beer, 1999, p.69.

#### Chapter 4

- <sup>1</sup> Schafer, 1963, pp. 222, 230, 232-333.
- <sup>2</sup> Heron, 1930, p.27, Schafer, 1963, p.231.
- <sup>3</sup> Haahr, 1969, pp. 350, 388.
- <sup>4</sup> Haahr, 1969, p.347, the *Dro* clan, Heller, 1998, pp.86-87, fig.6.
- <sup>5</sup> Markham, 1879, p.100.
- <sup>6</sup> Lo Bue, 1981, p.58.
- <sup>7</sup> Markham, 1879, p.100.
- <sup>8</sup> Aluminium phosphate.
- <sup>9</sup> Stein, 1971, p.509.
- <sup>10</sup> Laufer, 1913, pp.17-18, Walker-Watson, 1983, p.16.
- <sup>11</sup> Aitchison, 1874, pp.85, 164, Laufer, 1913, pp. 17, 19-20.
- <sup>12</sup> Pogue, 1915, pp.12-14, 34, 40, 71-72, Heron, 1930, p.26.
- <sup>13</sup> Aitchinson, 1874, p. 85.
- <sup>14</sup> Ramsay, 1886, pp.162-163, Laufer, 1913, pp.18-19.
- <sup>15</sup> Pogue, 1915, p.82 footnote 10, Wilson, 1997/98, p.34.
- <sup>16</sup> Waddell, 1906, p.348.
- <sup>17</sup> Yule, 1926, p.49.
- <sup>18</sup> Del Mare, 1996, pp.10-13 and illus.
- <sup>19</sup> Gerard 1841, pp. 183, 297-298, Aitchison, 1874, p.164.

- <sup>20</sup> Aitchison, 1874, p.164, Yogev, 1978, pp.102-105.
- <sup>21</sup> Stephens, 1985, p.21.
- <sup>22</sup> Migot, 1955, p.94, Parmee, 1972, p.81.
- <sup>23</sup> Untracht, 1997, p.147.
- <sup>24</sup> Yogev, 1978, pp.104, 108, Rice, 1980, pp. 20, 57.
- <sup>25</sup> Tavernier, 1977 repr. vol.3, pp.203, 208.
- <sup>26</sup> Migot, 1955, p.243, Ronge, 1978, p.144.
- <sup>27</sup> Aaronson, 2001, pp.131-132, 200.
- <sup>28</sup> Camman, 1952, p.163, Untracht, 1997, p.333.
- <sup>29</sup> Probably Italian coral imported to nearby Fort St George (Madras).
- <sup>30</sup> Clarke, 1998, pp.52-54, 64-65.
- <sup>31</sup> Aitchison, 1874, p.300.
- <sup>32</sup> Boyer, 1952, p.175, Aaronson, 2001, p.144.
- <sup>33</sup> Boyer, 1952, p.175, Camman, 1951, p.60, Schafer, 1963, p.244.
- <sup>34</sup> Aaronson, 2001, pp.146, 157, 161, 178-179.
- <sup>35</sup> Hornell, 1914, pp. 3 f, 69, 75, Yule & Burnell, 1996 repr., p.184.
- <sup>36</sup> Liu, 1995, p.224.
- <sup>37</sup> Camman, 1951, pp.162-163.
- <sup>38</sup> Emerald is a beryl coloured green by chromium and vanadium or both.
- <sup>39</sup> Untracht, 1997, p.328.
- <sup>40</sup> Finot, 1896, p.41, Hughes, 1997, p.304.
- <sup>41</sup> Grenard, 1904, p.300, Hughes, 1997, pp. 280, 286.
- <sup>42</sup> Heron, 1930, p.27.
- <sup>43</sup> Lo Bue, 1985/86, p.412.
- <sup>44</sup> Van Spengen, 2000, p.127.

- <sup>45</sup> Lo Bue, 1981, pp. 54, 57, Singer, 1996, p.32.
- <sup>46</sup> Singer, 1996, p.32.
- <sup>47</sup> Vitali, 1996, p.329.
- <sup>48</sup> Ronge, 1978, p.144, Lo Bue, 1981, p.54.
- <sup>49</sup> Trotter, 1877, p.102, Wakefield, 1966, p.42.
- <sup>50</sup> Lo Bue, 1981, p.56.
- <sup>51</sup> Lo Bue, 1981, p.56-57.
- <sup>52</sup> Lo Bue, 1981, p.53.
- <sup>53</sup> Lo Bue, 1981, p.44, Warikoo, 1989, pp.77, 82, 85.
- <sup>54</sup> Lo Bue, 1981, p.53.
- <sup>55</sup> Wojkowitz, 1952, p.132.
- <sup>56</sup> Ebbinghouse & Winsten, 1988, pp.47-49.
- <sup>57</sup> Ebbinghouse & Winsten, 1988, pp.39-40, white lead and potash can also be used.
- <sup>58</sup> Untracht, 1997, p.148.
- <sup>59</sup> Jones, 1996, p.308.

#### Chapter 5

- <sup>1</sup> For Lahaul see Mamgain, 1975, p.127, for Spiti, see Harcourt, 1874, p.76, Mamgain, 1975, p.157, for Kinnaur see Sharma, 1967, p.46, for Ladakh see Clarke, 1998, pp. 9-18, Clarke, 1999, pp.58-71.
- <sup>2</sup> Clarke, 1995, vol.1, pp.9-18.
- <sup>3</sup> Rockhill, 1891, p.81, Rockhill, 1894, p.115, Rockhill, 1895, p.708.
- <sup>4</sup> In 1952 they were gathered together at *Dechen Choling* to assist with the building of a new palace.
- <sup>5</sup> Tucci, 1978, pp.150-151.
- <sup>6</sup> Gill, 1883, p.136, Macdonald, 1929, p.235.
- <sup>7</sup> Clarke, 1995, vol.1, p.112, Singer, 1996, p.36.

- <sup>8</sup> Clarke, 2002, pp.122-125.
- <sup>9</sup> Due to a tax imposed by the government workshop on each skill practised by freelance workers.
- <sup>10</sup> Teague, 1995, p.50.
- <sup>11</sup> Clarke, 2002, pp.122-125.
- <sup>12</sup> Huc, 1928, repr. vol.2, p.182, Ronge, 1978, pp.87, 129, Lo Bue, 1985/86, p.409, Clarke, 2002, pp.120-122, 126-127.
- <sup>13</sup> Clarke, 1995: vol.1, p.116.
- <sup>14</sup> Schweizer, 1976, p.93.
- <sup>15</sup> Yuthok, 1995, p.190.
- <sup>16</sup> Ju Mipham, 1993, p.103, AL5, quoting from Ratna Lingpa's '*rtā dmar las tshogs*'.
- <sup>17</sup> Dagwab, 1977, vol.1, p.49, *sa tshur nag po*, Untracht, 1997, p.145, fig.257 for another recipe.
- <sup>18</sup> In Ladakh a citric acid solution made from local apricots is used, in east Tibet in the past a solution was made from a seed *ta bu* and sulphur.
- <sup>19</sup> Dagwab, 1977, p.48.
- <sup>20</sup> Dagwab, 1977, p.48, the red dye is called *gyam tshal dmarpo*, see Dilmar Geshe *bzo gnas* for a similar recipe using *lam ber*, *laccha*, pine resin, soot and kaolin.
- <sup>21</sup> See Rauber Schweizer, 1976, pp.148-149 for detailed names.
- <sup>22</sup> See Rauber Schweizer, 1976, p.146, *jur mig*.
- <sup>23</sup> Simple rounded iron rockers with rounded blades are used in Bhutan while the Chinese in eastern Tibet also use a manufactured threading device which is wound

around the wire.

- <sup>24</sup> Sodium tetraborate.
- <sup>25</sup> Though alloys and casting processes used in making religious images do feature see Lo Bue, 1981.
- <sup>26</sup> Two scholars, De'u dmar (dGe bshes) bstan 'dzin phun tshogs also called Dilmar Geshe, (born 1672) and 'Jam mgon 'Ju Mipham rgya mtsho (1846-1912) in their *bzo gnas* texts both quote passages from Ratna Ling pa's '*rtā dmar las tshog*'. 'Ju Mipham acknowledges his debt, Dilmar Geshe does not.
- <sup>27</sup> Dilmar Geshe, 1990, pp.71-72. 'Ju Mipham, 1993, p.103, AL5 ff.
- <sup>28</sup> Das, 1960, p.917, '*ba*'.

## Chapter 6

- <sup>1</sup> Teague, 1995, p.122.
- <sup>2</sup> Usually ruby, pearl, diamond, emerald, tiger's eye, topaz, sapphire, zircon and coral.
- <sup>3</sup> Gabriel, 1999, p.17, although this is not the case in modern Nepalese law.
- <sup>4</sup> Teague, 1995, p.276.
- <sup>5</sup> Gabriel, 1999, p.21.
- <sup>6</sup> Gabriel, 1999, p.27.
- <sup>7</sup> Teague, 1995, pp.276-277.
- <sup>8</sup> Pal, 1988, vol.2, pp.125, 164, 174, 208.
- <sup>9</sup> Schroeder, 1981, pp.313, 343, 355-59, Uhlig, 1995, pp.135, 152.
- <sup>10</sup> MacDonald and Stahl, 1979, p.150, Gabriel, 1999, p.25, Bajracharya, 2001, p.77.
- <sup>11</sup> Gabriel, 1999, pp.23-25.
- <sup>12</sup> See Gabriel, 1999, pp.75-76.
- <sup>13</sup> Gabriel, 1999, p.31.
- <sup>14</sup> Lo Bue, 1985, p.262.
- <sup>15</sup> Hodgson, 1874, repr. 1971, p.108.
- <sup>16</sup> Gabriel, 1999, p.54, rhodolite and almandine garnet.
- <sup>17</sup> Gajurel and Vaidya, 1984, pp.57-65, *Dhoo* meaning 'dust' and *sa* 'one who handles'.
- <sup>18</sup> Gabriel, 1999, p.52.
- <sup>19</sup> Teague, 1995, p.78.
- <sup>20</sup> Teague, 1995, p.162, a mixture of the resin from *Sal* trees, mustard seed oil and brick dust.
- <sup>21</sup> Stephens, 1985, pp.27-28.
- <sup>22</sup> Mukherjee, 1978, p.453, Stephens, 1985, pp.31-32, Teague, 1995, pp.226-7.
- <sup>23</sup> Stephens, 1985, pp.30-31.

## Caption Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Roerich, 1931, p.261.
- <sup>2</sup> Roerich, 1931, p.261.
- <sup>3</sup> Singer, 1996, pp.116-117, Reynolds, 1999, p.85.
- <sup>4</sup> Reynolds, 1978, p.45, Reynolds, 1999, p.99 plate 38.
- <sup>5</sup> Yeshi & Phipps, 1992, p.80.
- <sup>6</sup> Richardson, 1993, pp.14-17, Reynolds, 1999, p.84, Clarke, 2001, p.467.
- <sup>7</sup> Essen and Thingo, 1989, p.295, plate 197, Clarke, 2001, p.467, plate 2.
- <sup>8</sup> Singer, 1996, p.21, illustration 46.
- <sup>9</sup> Landon, 1928, vol.1, pp.236-239.
- <sup>10</sup> Richardson, 1993, pp.14-17, Singer, 1996, pp.21-22, Reynolds, 1999, p.84, plate 36.
- <sup>11</sup> Singer, 1996, p.21 footnote 33.
- <sup>12</sup> Schmidt/Thome, 1975, p.114.
- <sup>13</sup> Ekvall & Cassinelli, 1969, p.366, communication from Monisha Ahmed, July 2002, on long earring in Ladakh.
- <sup>14</sup> Clarke, 1995 vol.1, p.129, vol.2, pp.440-442 illustrated, Untracht, 1999, p.145, *dorjema*. Stein, 2001, p.202 *gru bshi*, 'square'.
- <sup>15</sup> Yuthok, 1995, pp.185-186, for the 16 types see 321-325.
- <sup>16</sup> Singer, 1996, p.20.
- <sup>17</sup> Yeshi, Pugh, Phipps, 1992, p.74, Reynolds, 1999, p.88.
- <sup>18</sup> Yeshi, Pugh, Phipps, 1992, p.76, Untracht, 1997, p.36 plate 38.
- <sup>19</sup> Boyer, 1952, p.192.
- <sup>20</sup> For mixed styles and the issue of copying see Clarke, 1997, pp.287-289.
- <sup>21</sup> Landon, 1905, vol.1, p.376, illustration of three shrine-shaped *ga'us* owned by the Regent of Tibet.
- <sup>22</sup> Archer, 1986, p.65.
- <sup>23</sup> Untracht, 1997, p.152.
- <sup>24</sup> Kaplanian, 1981, p.86.
- <sup>25</sup> Untracht, 1997, pp.151-152, fig.267.
- <sup>26</sup> Jones, 1996, pp.253-254, pls.10, 30, another example.
- <sup>27</sup> Macdonald and Stahl, 1979, p.150 pl.111.
- <sup>28</sup> Beguin, 1984, p.176.
- <sup>29</sup> Windisch Graetz, 1981, pp.167, 171.

# Glossary

*Akor* (*ae skor*): lotus-shaped turquoise-covered earring worn by Lhasa women.

*Along* (*nga long*): round-hoop earring worn by both sexes in central and southern Tibet. Name of straight earring in eastern Tibet.

*Buti* (*'bu sgril*): pearled wire.

*Booga* (*'bu 'ga*) or *Bubtri* (*sbub dkris*): tool for creating the ribbed surface of pearled wire.

*Chagab* (*rgya gab*), *Chengab* (*mchen gab*): eastern Tibetan names for a man's large amulet box.

*Chorten* (*mchod rten*): stepped conical structure that symbolizes Buddha's enlightenment, often used as a reliquary.

*Churu* (*byu ru*): coral.

*Dagtab* (*brtags tab*): texts describing the appreciation of precious objects and stones.

*Datowoke* (*da 'bstod 'o bskod*): a type of sandstone whetstone used to polish and shape stones.

*Dawang* (*da dbang*) or *Drepang* (*'dras pang*): name of large

shrine-shaped amulet box or *ga'u* worn by men in central and southern Tibet.

*Dolkhar mutik* (*dol khar mu tig*): type of pearl from Amdo (north-east Tibet).

*Dorje* (*rdo rje*): diamond and also 'diamond sceptre', a ritual object symbolizing enlightenment.

*Dorje phalam* (*rdo rje pha lam*): diamond.

*Dug* (*gdugs*): the Umbrella, symbol of protective power from the 'Eight Auspicious Emblems' see *Tashi tagye*.

*Dzi* (*gzi*): bleached agate bead.

*Gaba* (*Nga ba*): people living in the north east of eastern Tibet.

*Gara* (*mgar pa*): a blacksmith.

*Gyalrong* (*rGyal rong*): a goldfield in eastern Tibet.

*Gyaluche* (*rgya lu chas*): costumes formerly worn by junior officials at the New Year, supposedly the same as those used by princes at the time of the Tibetan monarchy.

*Gya mutik* (*rgya mu tig*):

Chinese pearl.

*Gyuya* (*kyu ya*): a large ring threaded through the queue of a man in eastern Tibet.

*Kashag* (*bKa' shags*): the Tibetan cabinet of four ministers.

*Khedī* (*khal di*): oval woman's *ga'u* (Lhasa name).

*Kherima* (*mkhal ri ma*): oval woman's *ga'u* (southern Tibetan name).

*Kolentsi* (*ko len tsi*), *Koranza* (*ko mya dza*): an abrasive powder (probably corundum) used in conjunction with a copper blade to cut and polish stones.

*Konchog sum* (*dkon mchog gsum*): the three symbolic jewels of the Buddhist religion: the Buddha, the teachings and the religious community.

*Lam ber* (*lam 'ber*): pitch used to hold sheet metal during embossing and for setting stones into bezels.

*Lu* (*klu*): a water spirit.

*Man she* (*man shel*): rock crystal (clear quartz).

*Mechag* (*mes lchags*): tinder pouch.

*Nam chu wang den* (*nmam bcu dbang ldan*): a monograph called the 'Sign of the All Powerful Ten' (comprising ten Sanskrit syllables representing the cosmos according to the *Kalachakra Tantra*). Worn as an amulet.

*Nul zowa* (*ngul bzo ba*): a silversmith.

*Nya chi* (*nya phyis*): mother-of-pearl.

*Nyarong* (*Nyag rong*): goldfield in eastern Tibet.

*Pachog* (*pa lchog*): the two braided hair knots worn formerly only by Lhasa officials of the fourth rank and above.

*Palbu* (*dpal be'u*): the 'Endless Knot' symbol of interconnection from the 'Eight Auspicious Emblems'; see *Tashi tagye*.

*Perak* (*be rag*): turquoise-covered headdress worn in parts of western Tibet and Ladakh.

*Pokhar* (*spos dkhar*): a tree resin used to make the pitch on which objects are embossed, see *lam ber*.

*Poshe (spos shel)*: amber.

*Rab ney (rab gnas)*: the ceremony of consecration of a religious image.

*Rechi shing lo (ri pyi shing lo)*: 'coiled spring leaf', a type of scroll or *pata* used in eastern Tibet.

*Rigna (rigs lnga)*: ritual crown depicting the five meditation Buddhas.

*Ringyen (ring rgyan)*: the ornaments of the ancient kings worn by officials in the New Year ceremonies and said to have belonged to the kings of Tibet (7th to 9th centuries).

*Sadag (sa bdag)*: the spirits of the earth or soil.

*Ser dang (gSer mdangs)*: the reddish colour given to newly made gold articles by means of painting on a chemical.

*Serpon (gser dpon)*: official in charge of goldfields in western Tibet.

*Ser zowa (gser bzo ba)*: a goldsmith.

*So chi (so sbyis)*: long earring worn by lay officials.

*Sutumba (su tum ba), Sur dewa (sur de dba)*: rectangular woman's *ga'u* popular in western and southern Tibet.

*Ta zowa (phra bzoba)*: jeweller.

*Tagam (sta gam)*: ring of saddle shape.

*Tagor (skra gor), Tagab (ta ghab)*: small oval amulet box worn by lay officials of Fourth Rank and above.

*Tashi tagye (bkra shis rtags brgyad)*: the 'Eight Auspicious Emblems' of Buddhism.

*Tathi (pkra ti), Takhor (pkra khor)*: silver and inset stone clip ornament worn in the queues of men in eastern Tibet.

*Ten (rten)*: an image, painting or stupa (*chorten*), literally 'a support for religion'.

*Thok cha (thog lcags)*: small, ancient, cast-metal objects found in the fields and open country, believed to be of supernatural origin by Tibetans and often worn as amulets.

*Tranyi ('bra gnyis)*: an iron block with holes of varying sizes used for drawing silver wire.

*Treng wa (phreng ba)*: rosary.

*Trutok (bru mdog)*: hat ornament worn by officials of Fourth Rank up.

*Tsang (gTsang)*: southern Tibet.

*Tsha tser (tsha gser)*: fire or mercury gilding.

*Tsipatar (rtsis pa ta)*: the monster mask, a protective symbol derived from the Indian *kirttimukha* or 'Face of Glory.'

*Tubshi ('grub bzhis)*: square form of Lhasa women's amulet box or *ga'u*.

*U (dBus)*: central Tibet.

*Yangti (gyang ti)*: jade.

*Yid zhin norbu (yid bzhin nor bu)*: the 'Wish-Fulfilling Jewel' that grants all wishes.

*Yu (gyu)*: turquoise

*Yushe (gyu shad)*: the custom of a mother-in-law placing a turquoise on a new daughter-in-law's head after marriage.

*Zong (gzong)*: generic name for embossing punches and chasing chisels.

*Zurgyad (gzur brgyad)*: eight-armed Lhasa women's amulet boxes that appeared in the 1940s.

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