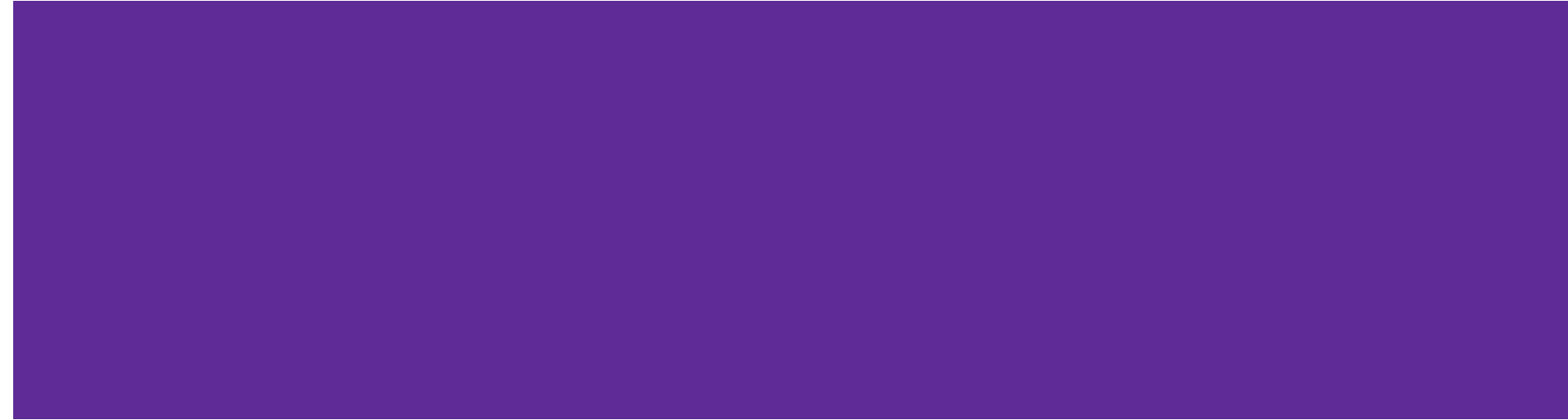


Localizing Religion: the Tibetan Buddhist Diaspora

Tenzing Briggs



Globalization vs. Localization

- How do the two interrelate?
- What are the complexities that come with each?

Overview

1. Dalai Lama's *My Land and My People*
2. A Brief History of Buddhist Philosophy
3. Specific Designs

Localization

from the lens of religion



The Basic Idea

Religious Migration as Localization Process

- Migration of religion = localization
- Denominations' form as religion is reinterpreted for new audiences

The Result?

- History of religion shows complications/considerations in localization, specifically
 - Power struggles
 - Authority
 - Translation

The Dalai Lama's Memoirs



Introduction to the Dalai Lama's Memoirs

Key Chapters

- In Communist China
- Into Exile
- Appendix I — An Outline of the Buddhism of Tibet

as examples in problems — power struggles

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“In Communist China” (pages 115-116)

“My next interview with him lasted for about three hours, and **there was nobody present except an interpreter**. Again, of course, we talked of Tibet and its future. I gave him a personal account of the recent events in Tibet, trying to dispel any doubts he might have had about our situation. I wanted to create a feeling of confidence in his mind, because I was still convinced that we could not get rid of the Chinese rule simply by uncompromising opposition to it. **We could only hope to alleviate it and try patiently to make it evolve into something tolerable.**”

“In Communist China” (page 117)

“Once while I was in Peking I had a chance to see him in action as the great leader of Communist China...and I sat next to him and **could feel the impact of his personality**. The subject of the meeting was the standard of living of the Chinese peasants. **He spoke bluntly** and, I thought, **with great sincerity**, saying that he was not yet satisfied with what was being done in this respect. **He quoted letters from his own village** saying that Communist officials were not doing all they should to help the people.”

“In Communist China” (pages 117-118)

“By then, I had been able to complete a tour of the Chinese provinces, and I was able to tell him truthfully that **I had been greatly impressed and interested by all the development projects** I had seen...And then he edged closer to me on his chair and whispered: “**I understand you very well.** But of course, **religion is poison.** It has two great defects: It undermines the race, and secondly it retards the progress of the country. Tibet and Mongolia have both been **poisoned** by it.”

“In Communist China” (page 118)

“I was thoroughly startled; what did he mean to imply? I tried to compose myself, but I did not know how to take him. Of course, I knew he must be a bitter enemy of religion. **Yet he seemed to be genuinely friendly** and affectionate toward me.”

“Into Exile” (pages 209-210)

“By then, I could not in honesty advise them to avoid violence. In order to fight, **they had sacrificed their homes and all the comforts and benefits of a peaceful life.** Now **they could see no alternative** but to go on fighting, and **I had none to offer.** I only asked them not to use violence except in defending their position in the mountains.”

“Appendix I” (page 237)

“Just as a particular disease in the world is treated by various medical methods, so **there are many religions to bring happiness to human beings and others.** Different doctrines have been introduced by different exponents at different periods and in different ways. But I believe **they all fundamentally aim at the same noble goal,** in teaching moral precepts to mould the functions of mind, body, and speech....Therefore, **it would be better if disunity among the followers of different religions could come to an end.**...To this end, the follower of each religion should **know something of other religions,** and that is why I want to try to explain a little of the Buddhism of Tibet.”

“Appendix I” (page 237)

“I must begin, however, by saying that **it is very difficult to find exact English words to translate** the philosophical terms of Buddhism we use in Tibetan. It is **hardly possible at present to find a scholar who has both a perfect knowledge of English and a perfect knowledge of Tibetan** Buddhism philosophy and religion.”

Memoirs — Takeaways

- Issue of differing ideologies
 - Proposed solution = synthesis
- Further Issue of history
 - violence, extremes, translation

Subtle examples

- Mao-Dalai interaction
- Conflict amid similarities
- The presence of interpreters or translation

History of Tibetan Buddhism



Summary of Tibetan Buddhism History

- Religious Synthesis
 - Union of Bon practice and Tantric Buddhism
 - *dzogchen*
- Conflict between “high” and “low Buddhism”
 - “high” = disseminated by government
 - “low” = practices of common folk

Summary of Tibetan Buddhism

- Examples of conflict
 - Dharma kings and their assassination by monks in late 800s
 - Great Tibetan Debate of 800s
 - King Trisong Detson
 - Indian Buddhism vs. Chinese Buddhism

History — Takeaways

- Synthesis is possible
- Struggles have always existed in religion — even within the “same” religion

Modern Day Examples



My Own Experience

- Barriers to Buddhism in the US
 - Language — lack of multilingualism
 - Geography — traveling to Tibet
- Many denominations across the US

The Dalai Lama Today

- Leap-frogging lineages
 - Panchan Lama & Dalai Lama (mentioned in his memoirs)
- Dalai Lama recently announces interrupting lineage line
 - Having the “next” Dalai Lama not be his reincarnation

Another Modern Examples

“In general, they begin with mantras and mudras that purport to have the power to bring about material success in ways that are remarkably similar to the practices of **contemporary athletes who employ the power of positive thinking, meditation, and concentration, and various kinds of pre-game rituals** to ensure their own success” (Laumakis 239).

Designs



Designs —

Sanskrit



Designs —

Tara



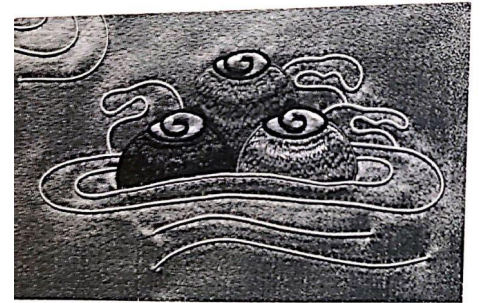
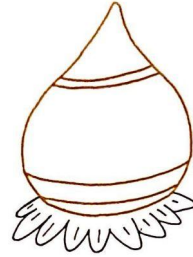
Designs —

Maitreya



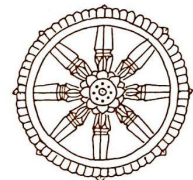
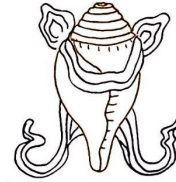
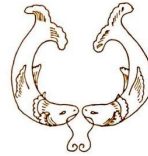
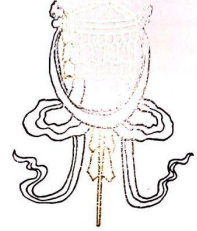
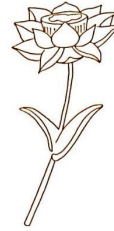
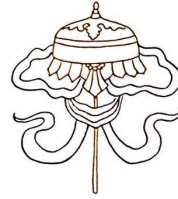
Designs —

wish-fulfilling jewel



Designs —

eight auspicious symbols



1 Parasol, Tibet (above far left)

2 Golden Fishes, Tibet (centre far left)

3 Treasure Vase, Tibet (below far left)

4 Lotus, Tibet (centre above)

5 Conch Shell, Tibet (centre)

6 Endless Knot, Tibet (centre below)

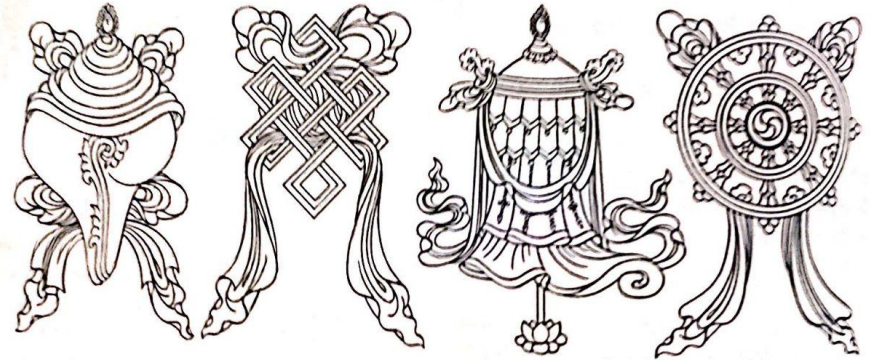
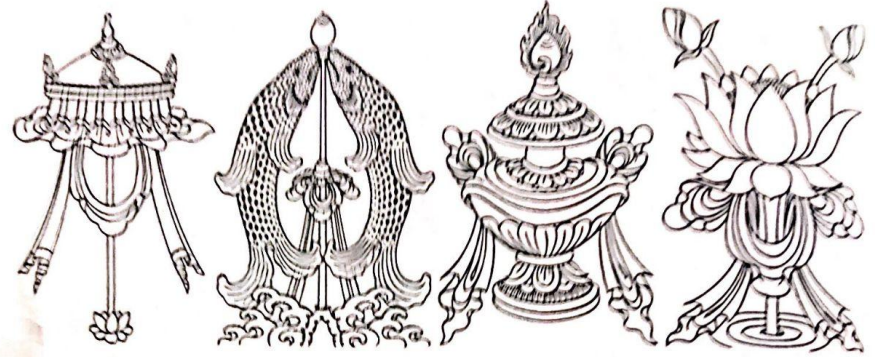
7 Victory banner, Tibet (above)

8 Wheel, Tibet (below)

Designs —

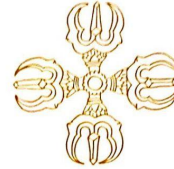
eight auspicious symbols

THE HANDBOOK OF TIBETAN BUDDHIST SYMBOLS



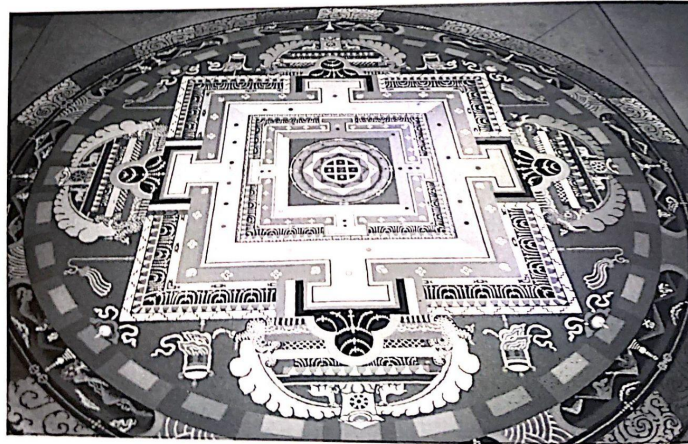
The eight auspicious symbols: top row, from left – the parasol; the golden fishes; the treasure vase; the lotus; bottom row, from left – the right-turning conch shell; the endless knot; the victory banner; and the wheel.

Designs —



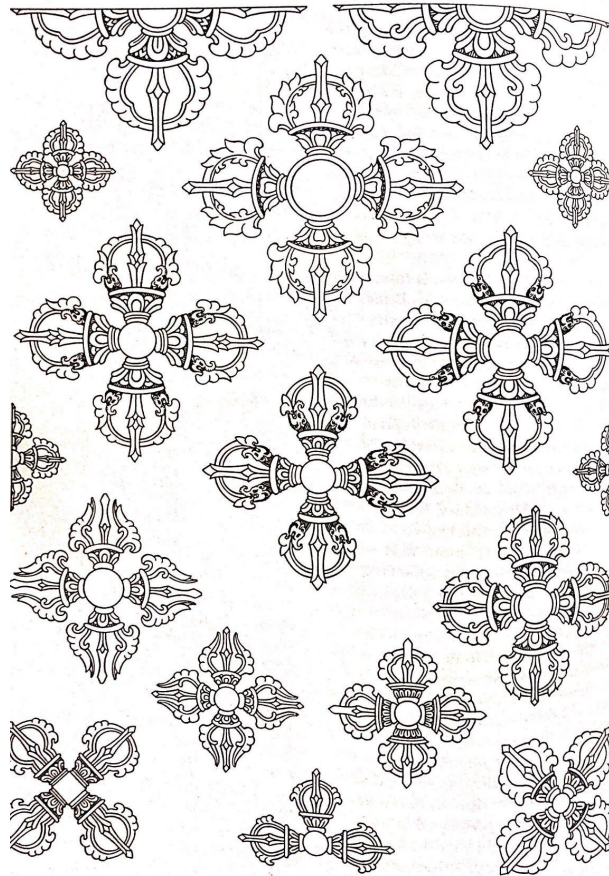
1. Vajra bell, or vajraghanta, bronze, Tibet, 19th century (far left)
2. Three-pointed vajra, Tibet (above left)
3. Crossed vajras, Tibet (below left)
4. Crossed vajras forming the base of the Shi-tro Mandala, sand, USA/Tibet, 2001 (below)

vajras

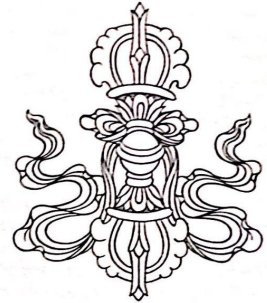


Designs —

vajras



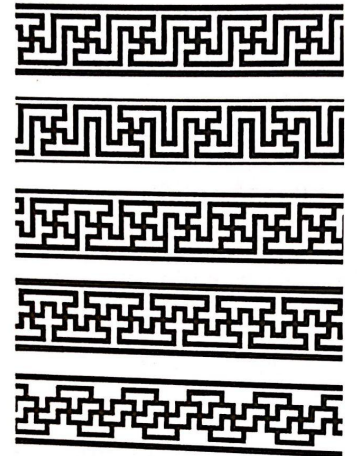
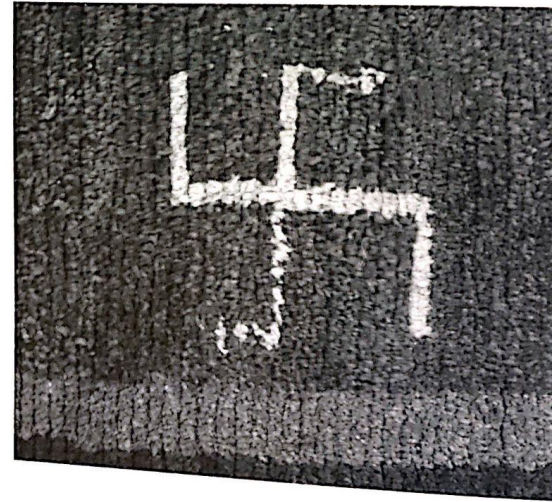
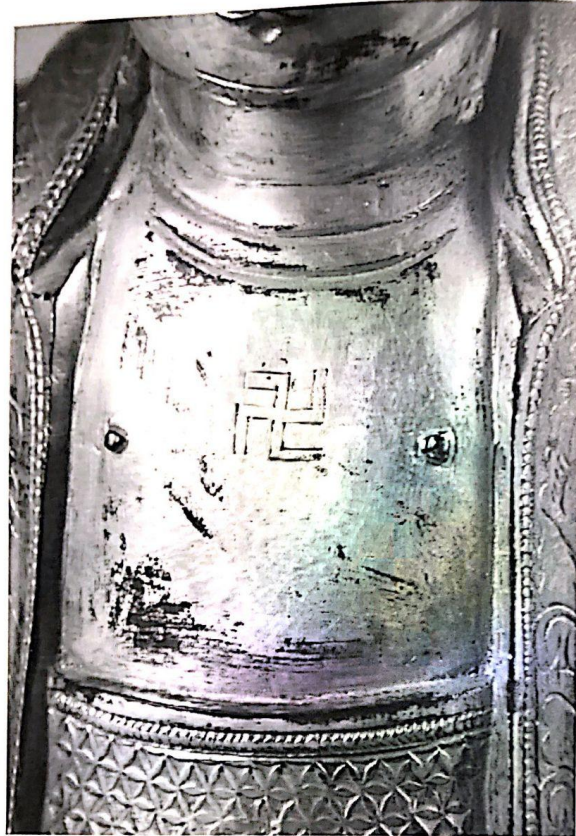
Various examples of st.



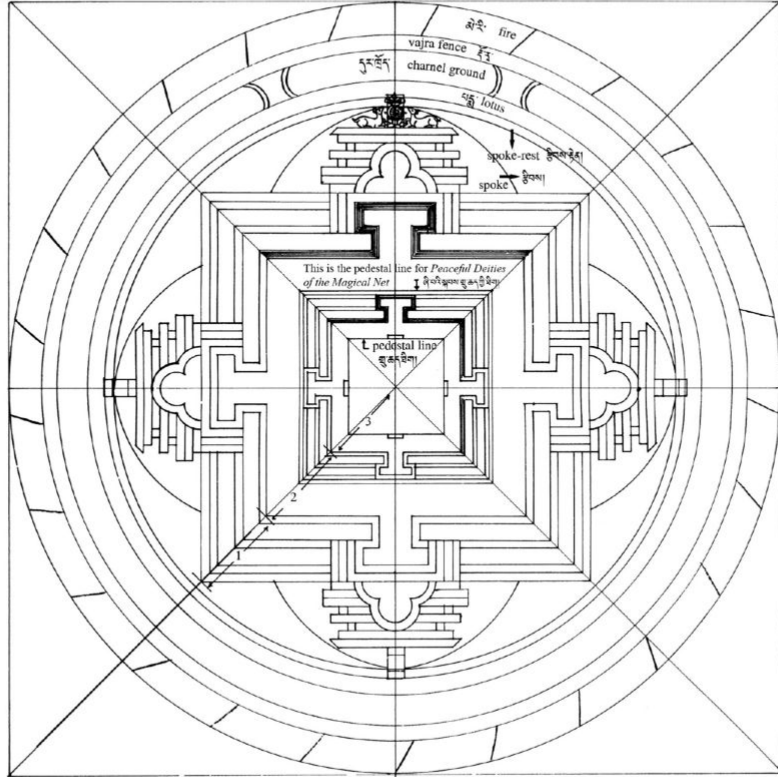
Vajra with silk ribbon.

Designs —

swastika

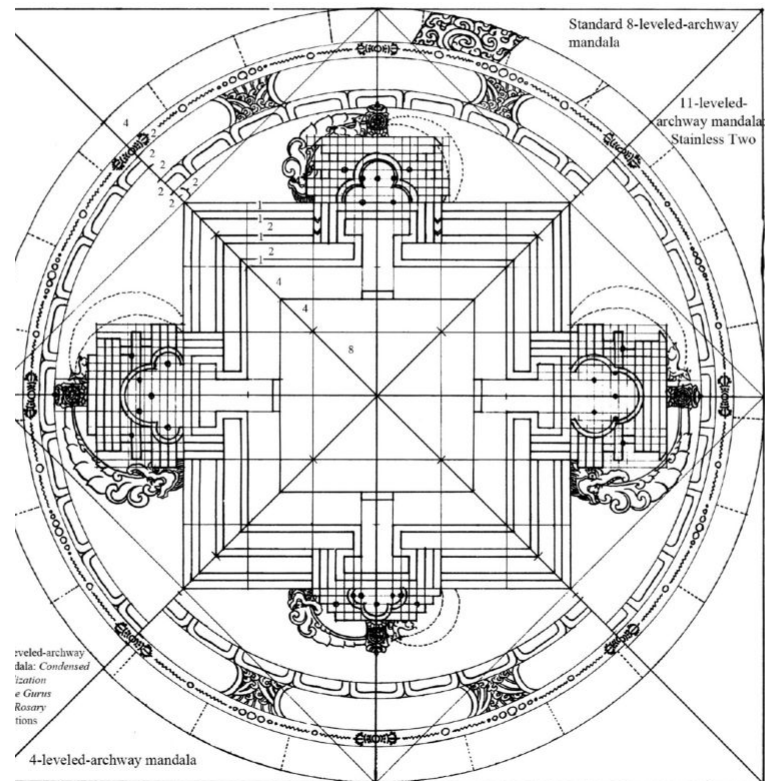
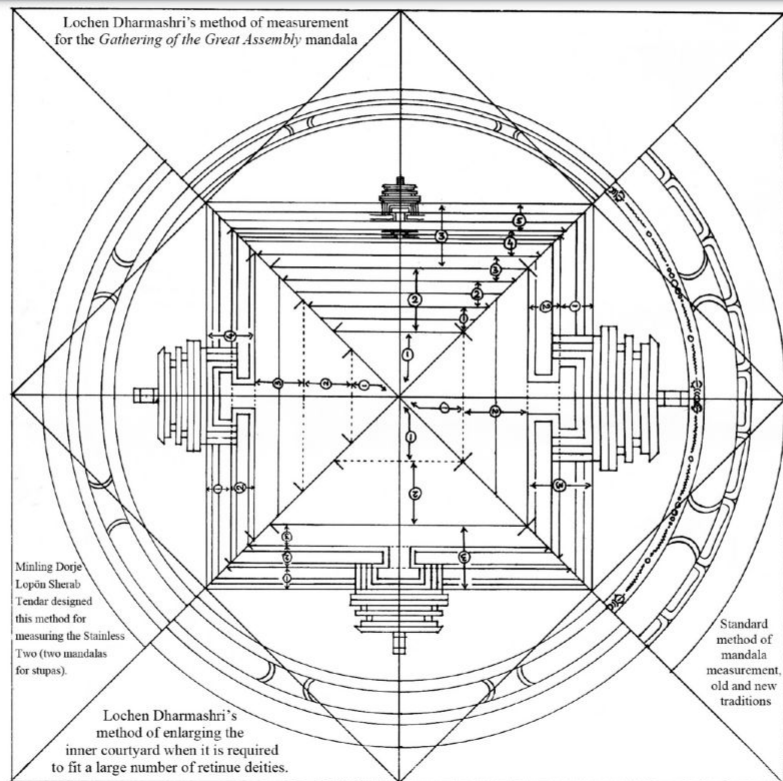


Designs — *Even more complex*



- (1) His feet have a level tread.
- (2) There are wheels on the soles of his feet (ill. 1).
- (3) He has projecting heels.
- (4) He has long fingers and toes.
- (5) His feet are soft and tender.
- (6) His hands and feet are webbed (ill. 2).
- (7) His ankles are like rounded shells.
- (8) His legs are like an antelope's.
- (9) His arms are so long that he can touch his knees with his hands without bending.
- (10) His male organs are concealed within a sheath.
- (11) His complexion is golden.
- (12) His skin is so delicate that no dust adheres to his body.
- (13) The down on his skin grows in single hairs, one to each pore.
- (14) The down is blue-black and turns upwards in little rings curling to the right.
- (15) His frame is divinely straight.
- (16) His body has seven convex surfaces.
- (17) The front half of his body is like a lion's.
- (18) There is no furrow between his shoulders.
- (19) His proportions have the symmetry of a banyan tree.
- (20) His bust is equally rounded.
- (21) His taste is supremely acute.
- (22) His jaws are like a lion's.
- (23) He has forty teeth.
- (24) He has regular teeth.
- (25) He has continuous teeth.
- (26) His eye teeth are very lustrous.
- (27) His tongue is long.
- (28) He has a divine voice, like the karavika bird's.
- (29) His eyes are intensely blue.
- (30) His eyelashes are like a cow's.
- (31) Between his eyebrows is a hairy mole (urna), white and soft like cotton down (ill. 3).
- (32) His head is like a royal turban, with a bump in the middle (ushnisha) (ill. 3).

Designs — *Even more complex!*



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Questions?

