A Swiss private collection contains a bronze of smAn-gyil-bla (short: smAn-bla), the so-called Medicine Buddha. This figure is remarkable, because smAn-bla is not represented in the usual form of a Buddha or, as in Lamasist paintings, in the canonical garb of a Bodhisattva with a crown, but with a lama cap instead. What, however, proves that the seated figure is smAn-bla, is the medicinal fruit (Tib.: A-ru ra-terminsil chebulu) in his right hand, the ams-bowl in his left, and the eight accompanying figures at the foot of the lotus-pedestal which, according to ancient texts, are to be regarded as manifestations of smAn-bla’s healing power, originally represented by a group of only six, later on seven Medicine Buddhas.1

smAn-bla is often found on Lamasist pictures (Tib.: Thang-ka), together with the Tibetan King Khla-rang-Idge-bra (755-797) and the great scholar Shamsakshita (Tib.: Zhi-ba-tsho; Thams-cad-mkyees-pa-zhil-ba-tsho), who had been invited to Tibet by the King and who, together with Padmasambhava, was mainly responsible for the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. The worship of the Medicine Buddha seems to be specially connected with Shamsakshita, and according to the La-nuge-ngal-rgal, the cult was later on especially favoured by the King “Od-rgang in West-Tibet.” In the Manjusrimukalpa already Bhaisajyaguru appears as Bhaisajyavardhanyaraja in the rank of a Buddha. According to Przybylski, this work seems to have received its final form in the 8th [-10th] century; according to B. Bhattacharyya, however, its first chapters go back to the second or third century A.D., and it is probable that it was translated into Tibetan already in the 8th century.2

The Chinese and through it, the Japanese tradition, which contains the most ancient Chinese materials, is of special importance for the history of Lamasist iconography.3 The famous bronzes of the Medicine Buddha in Japanese temples belong to the 7th century. Indian Sutras dealing with the cult of Bhaisajyaguru have been translated into Chinese already in the period from the 5th to the 7th century, and were used in Japan in the 7th and 8th century. Among the early translations, the one made by Huai-Lang was a favourite of the Emperor K’ai-Hai. The Indian missionaries Vashambhi and Anaghayana, who came to China in the 8th century and were colleagues of Padmasambhava, played a considerable role in the cult of the Medicine Buddha in China.
In the 9th century the Yakushi cult in Japan reaches its full bloom. The oldest Japanese iconography shows Yakushi standing or sitting, with Abhaya-mudra of the right hand and Varada-mudra or Dhyanamudra of the left, which latter often holds a medicine-vessel. The Lenist iconography prefers the Myrobalan (Tib.: An-ni; cfr. ear statue) or a flowering twig in the right hand (Varada-mudra) and the alms-bowl in the left. The bowl may contain pomegranate or a plant, generally a peach. The symbolic meaning of the peach or the pomegranate is prosperity and fertility.  

In the scriptures on sMan-bla, which was printed on the order of the Chinese Emperor, the Medicine Buddha forms a popular triad with Vairocana (Tib.: bSsTan-pa, po-shag-po, skya-rgyal-rab) and the so-called Dhyanibuddha Amitabha (Jap.: Amida). Besides these there are deities in which Vairocana takes the place of Amitabha or into which Dipankara, one of the predecessors of Gautama Buddha has been accepted, and sometimes even Kubera, the God of Wealth.  

Here one notices Amitabha's Vairocana's and Dipankara's relationship to the concept of light, characteristic also of sMan-bla itself. In the latter, if the latter does not occupy the centre of the cosmic Mandala, dominates the east and a paradise of light, similar to that of Amitabha. In this realm his consort associates, Suryaprabhadeva (Tib.: rig-ma-ba, Jap.: Nikko) and Chandraprabhadeva (Tib.: zla-ba-ba, Jap.: Gwakko), have special functions as sun and moon light.  

In this connection we have to recall the original number of six Medicine Buddhas, forming the triune of sMan-bla and originally representing his manifestations. This has its parallel in the Six Amahap Spantas, the companions and hypostases of Mazda in the Zaratustrian religion. But also the light-character of Anisthe and the 35 Buddhas of Forgiveness who help to open the entrance to the paradise of Amitabha, belong into this context. As to the Five Dhyanibuddhas, it may be said that they are similar to the five Light-Kings, associated with Mani, and the relations of the Dhyanibuddhas to their Bodhisattvas are similar to the doctrine of the Fravaries who are a kind of doubles of the human beings on earth. These Iranian parallels to the ideas connected with sMan-bla and his triune, as well as the fact that the number of Dhyanibuddhas is five, may perhaps point to the origin of sMan-bla and to the regions which were the former centre of Mahayana teachings and their symbiosis with Western traditions.
Round about this centre we may have to seek the homeland of Padmasambhava (Swat) among whose followers the worship of Amitabha was so popular that he himself was regarded as the Nil-manakaya of Amitabha. In the circles around Padmasambhava one can also observe a special partiality for the Medicine Buddha, and this all the more, if we remember Amoghavajra and Vajrabodhi with their influence upon the cult connected with Yarushi in Japan by way of China, or if we think of Shantaraksita, whose sister is believed to have been married to Padmasambhava. The origin and the propagation of the worship of sMan-bla seems to have been closely connected with the origin and propagation of Amitabha.

At the time when sMan-bla still lived as a Bodhisattva, who in honour of the Buddha allowed himself to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, he is said to have made twelve vows, in which he promised to bring light into the spiritual darkness of living beings and to lead those, who were driven hither and thither by their illusions, upon the way of the Buddha, so that they might find peace in the Mahayana. But he also wanted to look after the physical welfare of men, by healing the sick and the weak, freeing the prisoners, feeding the hungry, quenching the thirst of the thirsty, clothing the poor and providing them with the means of a life without want. His help also includes the cosmic relations of man, by protecting them from the dangers that threaten them from the influence of the stars or from the vicissitudes of the climate. For this reason the twelve great Generals of the Yaksas (Skt.: Mahayaksashasas-pati) have offered their help to sMan-bla. With their armies they guard the treasuries and forces of the earth as well as the cosmic powers of space. In this way the Yaksas become personifications of the means employed by physicians.

Thus it is logical if the Mandala of sMan-bla, which is shown in its eight separate parts by eight pictures in the Chinese book mentioned by us, we find that on the outermost circle, besides Suryaprabha and Chandraprabha, appear the twelve Yaksas Generals and the ten Lokapalas associated with them as representatives of the cosmic principles of order, the directive forces of the universe. In another context the Yaksas Generals are regarded to be the protection of the zodiac. In a Mandala of the Medicine Buddha in the Uigur-Central-Asiatic art, the Generals carry the symbols of the representatives of the zodiac in their hair. Altogether it seems that there are relations between the twelve Yaksas Generals and the twelve signs of the zodiac.
At the beginning of this article we draw the attention of the reader upon the rare and remarkable iconography of sMan-bla, as demonstrated in the above-mentioned status of a swiss priva collection. There is no difficulty to understand the Bodhisattva-attire and its ornaments, since in Lamaitam sMan-bla is sometimes represented as a Bodhisattva, and since Bhaishajyaguru and Bhaishajyaraa have not yet, as in Japan (de Visser, I.C.) and as Pelliot (I.C.) remarks developed into two different entities, of which the first has the rank of a Buddha, the second (as distinct from the Manjushrakasita I.C.) the rank of a Bodhisattva. Remarkable, however, is the Lama-cap, which must not be confused with the strange headgear of some Lamaist deities, reminiscent of the cap which was worn by the French Jacobines.

In Japan, Binzuru (Binzuru-Sinm) a favourite popular deity of healing, is always shown with a cap. This Binzuru is regarded by some people as a manifestation of Yakushi. J. J. Rein gives a description of this cult in which the devotees bring the sick parts of their body in touch with the corresponding parts of the image. The same practice was followed in connection with the famous statue of sMan-bla at the ICaga-povi near Lhasa, which was used to be invoked on the occasion of medical operations, during the preparation of medicines and during the collection of medical herbs.

But since Binzuru is meant to be one of the 16 (18) Sthaviras, namely Pindolabhararaja, it would hardly be admissible to use his headgear as an explanation for the cap of sMan-bla. It is easier and simpler to seek the explanation in the fact that sMan-bla, being an abbreviation for sMan-gyi-bla-ma, perfectly corresponds to Yao-Shi (Skt.: Bhaishajya-Guru), which is to be translated with teacher or master and spiritual guide in the art of healing. Moreover, it is the special meaning of bla-ma in Lamaitum which accounts for the prominence of the Bhaishajyaguru, even in outer appearance, in contradistinction to the iconography of Indian, Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. This becomes evident in such passages as: "Bla-ma-med-pa-pung-rol-ma sangs rgyas- bka'-yes-'hun-yang-mag" (Before the Lama there exists not even the name of the Buddha) and "SkaI-pa-ston-gi sangs-rgyas-kyang-bla ma- dang-la-rten-nas-dug" (The Buddhas of thousand world-cycles lean upon the Lama).

The Ven. Lama Anagarika Govinda has drawn my attention upon the fact that the image of sMan-bla, discussed in this article, has his robe wrapped around his body in the wrong direction, i.e., from right to
left (cf. A. Grunwedel, *Mythologie des Buddhâmus*, Leipzig 1900, Fig. 34 Padmasambhava). The cap is reminiscent of the Pad-žwa of Padmasambhava and of the Gtungs-žwa of the minstrels of the Ge-sar epic. Both of them as also the similar headgear of some Lânaist deities (resembling the cap which was won by the French Jacobins), go back upon non-Buddhistic traditions of the Eurasianic region. The peaked central part of the cap points at connections with the concepts of the holy mountain in a similar way as the towers (called of the White Old Man and some Chinese fertility gods (cfr. S. Humwe), "Der Weiße Alte," in: *Sinologica VI*, 1960). We have already mentioned the origins of the ideas centering around the Man-bla in the country of Padmasambhava's birth. It does not seem likely that the image is a fake, since the back of the pedestal (in Sino-Tibetan style) shows traces of a Tibetan inscription (., .mng.

Tebksh iːh . . .) almost rubbed out by use, which indicates that the image was frequently handled. The image may belong to the Red Cap sect.°°
1. Also sMan-bla-rgyal-po arsd sMan-gyi-bla Betunyal-c'd-kyi-rgyal-por 
Skt: Bhaishajyaguru Vaidyaprabhasa Tathagata, Bhaishajyaguru, 
Bhaishajyaraja, Bhaishajyaveeduryarajja; Mongol: Otaci, Chinesse: Yao-
Shi-Liu-Li-Kuang-Ju-Lai, thong: Yao-Shi-Fo; Japanese: Yaku-shi-
nyorai.

427, especially p.542. The names and the iconographical colours 
of the retinue of sMan-bla in S. Hummel, Der Medizin-Buddha und 
seine Begleiter (in: Sinologica, 1. 2. p. 81ff.), with special reference to 
"sMan-bla'i-cho-ga'i-bsham-blok kyis legs-len-zur-du blo-sgral"; a 
print published in Peking 1744 or the orders of the Chinese Emperor, 
The iconography of sMan-bla differs here from that given in Biblio-
thece-Buddhica, Vol. V (only in regard to mTsa-n-legs-dpal, and from 
the version given by W. E. Clark, Two Lamaist Pantheons, Cambridge 
(M) 1937, B,137, only with regard to Chos-agrags-taya-mtsho's-dby-
angs. Concerning further works on the Medicine Buddha, transla-
ted in the 15th century into Chinese or Mongolian from Sanskrit or 
Tibetan, cfr. W. Heissig. Die Pekingner lamaistischen Blockdrucke, Wies-
baden 1934, p. 75 & 83; e.g. a work of the Pan-chen-Blo-bzang-
chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan.

3. Lo-sgrigs-rgyal-rabs, ed. A. H. Francke (in: Journal & proc. of the 

4. A. Macdonald, 
Buddhist Iconographer, 2nd, ed., Calcutta 1953, p. 14f., M. Lalou, 
Iconographie des Etoffes Peintes (Pata) dans le Monastirinalokpa, 


6. S Hummel, Miaras-pa und die xKar- rgyud-pa Schule (in: Kol-
ros V, 4, p. 305).

7. Further Chinese and Japanese representations in M., W. de Visser 
I. c. S. Hummel, Der Medizinbuddha I. c.

8. On account of Central Asian concepts according to which sMan-
bla is also the Lord of the zodiac, G. Tucci (India-Tibetica Vol. III, 
Part I, Roma 1935, p. 169) suspects that the number seven, consis-
ting of sMan-bla and his six attendants, points towards planetary
connections. Even if this were the case, it would be a later deve-
lopment derived from quite different trends of thought. We shall re-
vert to this subject in connection with the Yakshe Genales.

9. In connection with this and with regard to further parallels (for inst.
the creation of Avrikotkesvara through a ray of light emanating from
Amitabhā; cfr. a similar procedure concerning the Lhā-phyi of Mani;
S. Hummel Die lamaistischen Kultplastiken im Linden-Museum (in :
Tribus 11).

in Swat (in: East and West, IX, 4; Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims in
the Swat Valley. Calcutta 1940; The Tibetan White-Sun-Moon and
Cognate Deities (in: East and West, XIV, 3-4). According to this,
Padmasambhava propagated the worship of dKar-mo-njé-la in Tibet. This
figure with the attributes of sun and moon is obviously a variation of
a deity known in Central Asia and probably a product of Iranian
Civilisation; cfr. in connection with this, Buddha with sun and moon
as a statue in Rotterdam (Vernaa4l zing: Chinesische en Tibetische
Kunst, Rotterdam 1935-1939, Table XXIII).

11. Concerning Amitabha (Amātiyus) in China and Amoghadāra,
cfr. M. W. de Visser, l. c. p. 320. As to the origin of the cult of
186ff.


13. Cfr. the reconstruction of the Mandala in S. Hummel, Der Me-
dizinbuddha, l. c. : 24 helpers on the outermost circle (3 in each of
the eight pictures). Concerning the meaning of the well-known Bo-
dhisattva, who also accompany the sāman-böl cfr. R.F.G. Muller, Die
Krankheit und Heiligtümer des Lamaismus (in: Arch. med. 22,
p. 95ff.)

14. E. Wurtschmidt, Gandharvanägri Tafeln, Leipzig 1925, p. 871
and Tabig 50; cfr. also S. Hummel, Kosmische Strukturläppre der
Tibeter (in: Geographia Helvetica 1954, S. 34ff.)

15. S. Hummel Die Jakobinaarmutze in der Umgebung des Yama (in
preparation).

16. An illustration is published by Basil Hall Chamberlain & W. B.
Mason in A Handbook for Travellers in Japan (Murray's Handbook),
London 1899, p. 46