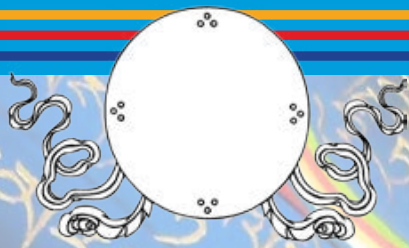


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# Liberation Through Seeing

## The Tagdrol Mandalas for the Cinerary at Merigar West

For the last few months a team of experts, under the guidance of Migmar Tsering, has been working at Merigar West on a project to create a set of beautifully decorated *mandalas* for the newly built cinerary situated just below the Gonpa. The team is made up of artists, calligraphers and Tibetologists who have put their skills together to create a set of twelve large panels that will decorate the ceiling of the cinerary.

The four main panels depict three different *tagdrols*, one of which is repeated, and are *tagdrols* that give liberation through different types of contact, including seeing. One of them is a *tagdrol* from



L-R Giorgio, Migmar, Magda, Anna and Natalia.

Photo by Liz Granger

the 'Longchen Nyingthig' (*klong chen snying thig*), a *terma* from Jigme Lingpa. The second *tagdrol*, which is repeated on two separate panels is from the 'Lama Gongdu' (*bla ma dgongs 'dus*), a cycle revealed by

the great *terton* Sangye Lingpa. The third *tagdrol* comes from the 'Nyingthig Yashi' (*snying thig ya bzhi*) of Longchenpa.

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### Head Print

Directly above the main cave is an interesting indentation in the bottom of a rocky overhang considered to be an imprint of the Guru's head. Strangely unique in this part of the landscape, and perfectly shaped like the top of a head, this really does seem to be a simulacrum. The site is little known and seldom visited. There is no path, and the way is straight uphill through the forest.

### Hat Print

Far better known than the head print, the Guru's hat print is found below the village, not far from the road. It is marked out by prayer flags, but a local guide could be a good idea.

### Shoe

This recently discovered image of a giant shoe in the style worn by the Guru has not yet been verified, but certainly seems to be what it claims. Uncovered by the recent excavations for the road, this large stone image lay unnoticed beside the foot trail for generations. Located above the hat print, a walk down from the village could include seeing both sites. Trident Mark: A matter of meters above the image of the shoe is a strange phenomenon – three holes seem to have been melted into boulder in a for-

mation that immediately puts one in mind of a giant trident.

### Footprint

Not in Melamchi-ghyang, but visible from the road near Kachung, is a self-arisen phenomenon of another kind – a clearing in the forest high on the western mountainside clearly resembling a giant footprint. According to local people, this clearing has never been forested and will never grow trees.

In sum, Yolmo is an incredible and practically undiscovered practitioner's paradise of awe-inspiring mountains, faith-inspiring self-arisen phenomena, and health-in-

spiring waters. Its close proximity to Kathmandu begs that any pilgrim who comes to Nepal make the journey into the mountains to witness for themselves the majesty of the Yolmo Snow Enclosure and receive the blessings imparted by the great Guru of Odiyana and his disciple, Yeshe Tsogyal.

For more information about the area and the history of Yolmo, one can purchase the *Guide to the Hidden Land of Yolmo Snow Enclosure* and its History by Khenpo Nyima Dondrup – ISBN No. 978-9937-506-46-5 ©

*Less than a month after the writing of this article a series of earthquakes devastated Kathmandu and the mountain regions of north-eastern Nepal. Melamchi-ghyang was not spared. Formerly a village of 45 homes, only two were left standing after the initial quake struck at 11:56 am on April 26. While only one life was lost in the impact, many were injured, and the 300-year-old statues in the rang-jung nyi-da cave are said to have fallen. The temple in the village centre, as well as the renowned village school have collapsed, and with monsoon rains fast approaching, life for the people of Melamchi-ghyang is only going to get harder.*

*But not all is bleakness and misery. Aid agencies and relief teams, who have been working with the villagers since the early days of the disaster, have already begun to plan how best to rebuild the village, and one U.K.-based charity has even pledged 10 computers to the school.*

*Now, more than ever, the villagers of Melamchi-ghyang need our support. In the short term they need our donations; in the longer term they need trekkers and Buddhist pilgrims to renew tourism in the region, stay in their new lodges, and visit in their ancient meditation cave.*

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Before the artistic work could begin, Migmar Tsering, the project leader, Margherita Pansa, Merigar's resident librarian, and Giorgio Dallorto, calligrapher researched each of the *tagdrols*, consulting two separate editions of each text, published by different printing houses. Margherita kindly provided copies of the texts from the Merigar West library. Although the *mantras* are generally the same in both editions, there are slight differences in the texts, the design, and the background colors. Their research was not limited simply to studying and comparing the different versions of the texts but also enlarging and consulting copies of the small *tagdrol* that is already available at Merigar.

After checking the original texts, Migmar enriched the different *tagdrol* with the use of color. In general color is not used with these *mantras* so he had to work out which colors to use in different sections according to the Buddha families. In addition he made use of the five colors that represent the five elements – Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water – using them in the mother-son order, according to Tibetan astrology, with the mother-color giving protection to the son-color.

The *mantras* in the four *tagdrol mandalas* were first of all written in pencil in elegant *uchen* letters by Giorgio Dallorto and then painted in gold by Migmar. The syllables of the five Dhyani Buddhas were painted in pure gold while the rest of the *mantras* were painted using gold mixed with other powdered metals including silver, copper, iron, and bronze.

There are many different *mantras* in all four *tagdrol mandalas*, the main one being the Song of the Vajra and the *mantras* of the Five Buddha Families, then the 25 *Thigles* of the Universe, the *mantras* of the 42 Peaceful and 58 Wrathful Deities, as well as many other *mantras* listed in the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead'. Each *mandala* also includes the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet plus the *mantra* of interdependence.

The other eight panels are decorated with the six-syllable *mantra* that liberates the six classes of sentient beings, empowering through the essence of the Six Dimensions of Samantabhadra: HA A HA SHA SA MA. In each panel, the *mantra* is written in a different type of calligraphy in golden letters. The scripts used were:



Migmar.

Photo by Maurizio Mingotti

- *uchen* (*dbu can*);
- *umed* (*dbu med*);
- *phagpa* (*phags pa*) or square script or *hor yig*;
- *mar chen* (*smar chen*), ancient writing from Shang Shung;
- two forms of *spungs yig* originally from Tagzig (*rtag gzigs kyi yi ge spungs so chung, rtag gzigs kyi yi ge spungs so che ba*);
- *srin yig*;
- *mar* (*smar*) or *lha babs yi ge*, the language descended from the gods.

The colors used for the *mandalas* were put together in a traditional way and included mostly natural pigments mixed with powdered semi-precious stones, including turquoise, pearl, coral, lapis lazuli, amber and malachite, as well as eight types of precious pills to increase potentiality. Usually these types of pills are used together with *mantras* and precious stones inside a statue when it is authenticated.

Some of these precious pills are made up of sacred substances linked to Body, Voice and Mind and to developing their potentiality and prosperity in general. Others on the other hand are composed of medicinal substances. For example, some precious pills contain *sangpo drug*: *lsmanl bzang po drug*, "The six excellent medicines", which are used as the base of medicine: nutmeg, saffron, bamboo pith, cloves, cardamom and kakola (*Amomum medium*) as well as *pachung nga* (*ba byung lnga*), five products from the cow: urine, dung, milk, butter, and curd. Still others contain substances such as red sandalwood (*tsan dan dmar po*), white sandalwood (*tsan dan dkar po*) and camphor (*ga bur*).

When all the panels have been completed, the four main *tagdrol mandalas* will

be placed in the centre of the ceiling of the cinerary in the four directions, corresponding to the four doors in the buildings. The eight panels with the *tigles* of the six *Lokas* will cover the rest of the ceiling. The internal part of the building will be ready for Rinpoche's arrival at Merigar in mid June. The external decoration should be completed in time for the August retreat at Merigar West with the Master when the building will be formally inaugurated.

In addition, professional photos will be made of the four *tagdrol mandalas* that will be reproduced in a much smaller version and made available at Merigar in the near future for those who need them.

The international team for this project who came from different areas of the Dzogchen Community headed by Migmar Tsering consisted of painters Anna Pucci, Magda Zych, Yu Shang, Natalia Kushnariova and Lenka Chanova, Migmar and Giorgio Dallorto for the Tibetan calligraphy and Margherita Pansa for research and advice on the texts and Tibetan scripts. The work, which went over several months, was done



Giorgio Dallorto.

Photo by Nikol Staniso

entirely in karma yoga. The whole team would like to thank the Merigar Gakyil and the Gekos, Nikol Staniso for their kind assistance. Their hope is that their hard work will create a good cause for others in the future.

Once the internal part of the cinerary has been completed, work will start on the outer part of the building and the area surrounding it. There are plans to put all the *mantras* of Simhamukha around the outer part of the building and also to create a pleasant garden. Funds are still needed for this work and we warmly invite readers to donate to the project using the following link: [www.dzogchen.it/il-cinerario/](http://www.dzogchen.it/il-cinerario/) ©





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