

The Mandalas of Tibetan Buddhism and Western Psychotherapy

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A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The Mandala of Tibetan Buddhism and Western Psychotherapy

Kathryn Snook

Several Western psychotherapeutic practices have incorporated the use of the mandala into their diagnostic and healing practices. Often, references to the Tibetan Buddhist mandala as being a sort of mandala prototype are found in the writing of Jungian psychoanalysts, art therapists and self-help instructors. This is especially intriguing given that Jungian psychotherapy is based upon the idea of a “Self” and the achievement of self-realization, whereas the inherent existence of any such “Self” is denied in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, with the mandala being employed to aid in this realization. Ultimately, this thesis brings together Tibetan Buddhist and Western psychotherapeutic scholarship regarding the mandala in an effort to determine how these two contexts conflict and/or conform to one another, and to shed light on how they may be reconciled despite their differences.

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Introduction

“Magical Mandala Stickers”, “Mandala Tattoos”, “Mandala Healing Kit”, “The Mandala Colouring Kit: All You Need to Create 12 Stunning Greeting Cards” – one need only visit their local Chapters Book Store to find such titles. It would seem that along with the South Beach Diet and Do-it-yourself home renovation shows, the use of the mandala is one of the latest and greatest ways to improve your life. Indeed, if one were to type the word “mandala” into a Google search, there will be at least 11, 100,000 options to choose from. Of course, one could narrow their search to one of the suggested headings of “printable mandala”, “mandala colouring” or “how to make a mandala”! As a student of religion with a particular interest in Buddhist art, I found myself asking, “What on earth is going on here?”

My husband arrived home one evening from having visited a friend and informed me that he had seen home-made mandalas hanging all over the wall of his friend’s home. After questioning his friend about these drawings, it was ascertained that he was creating them as part of his psychotherapy homework for personal healing. Immediately, my curiosity was piqued, and it was decided at that moment that this infusion of the mandala into Western society needed further investigation.

The introduction of the mandala into contemporary Western consciousness can be traced back to the work and research of Psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, who kept a personal journal of his own mandalas in addition to discovering them in the drawings of his patients and in his world travels. While

he was not the first scholar to take an interest in the religion, philosophy and symbology of the East, he was instrumental in bringing Buddhist psychological thought into Western psychology. In the end, Jung came to believe that the spontaneous creation of the mandala by his patients was a visual symbol that depicted the current state of their psyche, in addition to their psyche's work toward individuation, as evidenced in his text *Mandala Symbolism*.

Many well-know psychoanalysts and art therapists have followed in the footsteps of Jung and incorporated the mandala into their daily psychotherapeutic practice, such as Jungian psychoanalysts M. Esther Harding and Edward Edinger, and renowned art therapist Joan Kellogg. "Buddhist psychology has now gained some credence in the West and is starting to exert a growing influence both on various areas of medicine and well-established Western psychotherapies" (Michalon 2001, 202). The work of Dr. Mark Epstein and transpersonal psychotherapist Dr. Jack Engler, are key examples of this. Today, empirical studies are even being undertaken to observe the healing nature of the mandala in patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety disorders.

However, the mandala has a much longer and greater history in the East. While many cultures around the world have had their own versions of the mandala, the mandala has achieved its most full and complex development in Tibet. Furthermore, references to the Tibetan Buddhist mandala as being a sort of mandala prototype are often found in the writings of Jungian psychoanalysts, art therapists and self-help instructors.

It is fascinating how many Jungian psychoanalysts and art therapists have been strongly influenced by Buddhism and have introduced Eastern religious ideas into their theories and therapeutic practices. This is especially intriguing given that Jungian psychotherapy is based upon the idea of a Self, and the achievement of self-realization, yet elements (in this case, the creation of mandalas) from a seemingly highly contradictory philosophy are being incorporated into some healing practices. After all, the “self” does not inherently exist in accordance with Buddhism, and the mandala is a tool employed to aid in that very realization!

This thesis will focus on the traditional meaning, purpose and construction guidelines of the mandala in the Tibetan Buddhist context as well as in the context of Jungian psychotherapy, art therapy and the current self-healing culture. There is no shortage of literature regarding the use of the mandala by Jungian analysts, art therapists, or self-helpers. Nor is there any lack of literature concerning the general incorporation of Buddhist philosophies and practices into Western psychotherapy. However, literature covering any in-depth exploration of the relationship between these traditions with respect to the mandala is scarce. The ultimate aim of this thesis is to bring together Tibetan Buddhist and Western psychotherapeutic (including Jungian therapy and art therapy) scholarship regarding the mandala in an effort to determine how these two contexts conflict and/or conform to one another, and to shed light on how they may be reconciled despite their differences.

The history and traditional understanding of the nature and purpose of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala along with its guidelines for construction will be discussed in detail in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, I will discuss some contemporary interpretations and/or explanations of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala, which were meant for delivery to a Western audience rather than Tibetan Buddhist monastic practitioners. Chapter Three details the Jungian interpretation of the mandala and subsequent use of the mandala in art therapy and self-help books. Lastly, in Chapter 4 I will bring together the material presented in the first three chapters in order to highlight how this material is either conforming or conflicting in nature, and determine how and if the theories and usage of the mandala in each context might be reconciled.

As a precursor to the first two chapters of this thesis, it would be useful to discuss some of the important texts and authors that pertain to the study of the Tibetan Buddhist Mandala. Many of the texts crucial to the identification and interpretation of the mandala were translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit and can be found in The Tanjur, a portion of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. One such text is the *Mahavairocana Sutra*, an esoteric text written in approximately A.D. 650 (although this date varies in different sources), which is essentially a mandala manual, and is one of the texts on which Tibetan esoteric Buddhism is based. This text is not well known outside of Tantric Buddhism, but is essential to those within the esoteric tradition for the purposes of proper mandala creation. This text contains a dialogue between Mahavairocana Buddha and his disciple Vajrasattva, in which Mahavairocana begins to translate his incomprehensible (to

the reader) teachings regarding form and emptiness into ritual forms that people can understand. Mahavairocana reveals the “Mandala of the Womb Realm” and teaches the rituals that relate to this mandala.

The *Vajravali* is another important text pertaining to the proper creation and use of the mandala within Tibetan Buddhism. Written by a Bengali Buddhist monk by the name of Abhayakaragupta (eleventh – twelfth century), this text contains a liturgical system that could be applied to all mandalas known in esoteric Buddhism at the time of its creation. The *Vajravali* contains twenty-six mandalas. An additional text is the *Nispannayogavali* (NSP), which was also compiled by Abhayakaragupta. The NSP consists of twenty-six chapters, each describing a different mandala used in esoteric meditation practices. It is crucial for the study of Buddhist tantra because it describes with great exactitude the visualization of the most characteristic mandalas of late Indian Buddhism. Abhayakaragupta does not specify his audience; however, due to the contents of the book, it is probable that it was meant for monks and artists. The NSP complements the *Vajravali* by supplying the three-dimensional mandalas with a condensed essence. Thus, the *Vajravali* and the *Nispannayogavali* are able to serve together as a standard for exploring the mandala. Furthermore, the intrinsic value of the *Nispannayogavali* has become all the greater due to the unavailability of most of the original Sanskrit texts that Abhayakaragupta used to describe various mandalas. A critical edition of the Sanskrit *Nispannayogavali* was initially published by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya in 1949.

One last text of importance for research of the mandala in the history of Tibetan Buddhism is the *Sadhanamala* ("A Garland of Means for Attainment"). The *Sadhanamala* (SM) is an eleventh century Sanskrit manual of iconographic descriptions, with an unknown author. (While Bhattacharyya dates the *Sadhanamala* back to the eleventh century, the Encyclopedia Britannica states that it was written anytime between the fifth and eleventh centuries.) "The *Sadhanamala* is a collection of descriptive formulae designed to be used by those who desire to evoke the mental image of a given deity for purposes of worship, or more especially, of plastic realization in painting or sculpture. The artist, in order to accomplish his purpose, must first effect an imaginative self-identification with the form evoked, and then only proceed to the handiwork" (Bhattacharyya 1968, 187). Benoytosh Bhattacharyya edited the *Sadhanamala* in 1925 (Vol 1) and 1928 (Vol 2) and this edition became regarded as the standard edition of the SM. However, it was only based on eight manuscripts of the now forty that are available in the world. Thus, there have been new versions of the *Sadhanamala* since 1928 that incorporate the remaining thirty-two manuscripts.

While the above texts are critical within the esoteric monastic realm of Tibetan Buddhism when it comes to the proper creation of the mandala, they are of no use to the layman and difficult at best for the Western scholar of Buddhist religion to truly comprehend to their intended extent. The creation of the mandala is the work of the Tibetan Buddhist monastic practitioner alone, as it is a complicated and risky enterprise. Only those who have undergone intense

training are advised to engage in the ritual of mandala creation. This leaves inquiring minds (such as Western scholars of religion) with the need to consult secondary sources to aid in the understanding of the meaning and purpose of the mandala. While there are a great number of books now available to the general public about the healing power of the mandala, there are limited academic texts pertaining to the history and philosophy of the mandala in Buddhism, let alone the Tibetan Buddhist Mandala, that go into any real depth on the subject. However, limited as we are, there are a few scholars that stand out in their study of the Tibetan mandala.

A scholar of great importance in this area was Professor R.A. Stein (1911 – 1999). Stein is credited with having undergone expeditions through central Asia in the 1920's and 1930's from which he discovered early Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts and art, including mandalas, at the Mogao caves (Caves of a Thousand Buddhas) near Dunhuang, which are now a part of the famous Stein Collection found at the British Museum. Furthermore, Stein was a professor of oriental culture in France, and was responsible for writing *Tibetan Civilization*, a well-known text in the world of Tibetan Studies.

Indian scholar Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya is another key figure in the study of the Tibetan Mandala, as it was previously noted that he translated and published the *Nispannayogavali* and the *Sadhanamala*. Bhattacharyya (1897 – 1964) also published several other texts of prime importance for the student of Religious Studies, such as *The Indian Buddhist Iconography* and *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*. The work of David Snellgrove will also be discussed in

this thesis. Snellgrove, a scholar of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, wrote important texts such as *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* and *A Cultural History of Tibet*, from which information regarding the mandala can be obtained.

Furthermore, Dr. Martin Brauen, author of *The Mandala: Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism* and Head of the Department of Tibet, Himalaya and Far East at the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich, is an additional scholar of importance in the study of the Buddhist mandala.

Another key figure was an Italian scholar of Asian cultures by the name of Giuseppe Tucci (1894 – 1984) who specialized in Tibet and the history of Buddhism, and authored over three hundred and sixty books and articles, such as *The Religions of Tibet*, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* and *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala*. However, Tucci's interpretations of the Buddhist mandala depart from traditional understandings in that they are infused with a Jungian flavour, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Lastly, the work of Buddhist meditation master, scholar, teacher and artist, Chogyam Trungpa (1939 – 1987) will also be drawn upon to a great extent in Chapter Two. Mr. Trungpa is widely recognized as a paramount teacher of Tibetan Buddhism and was a key figure in the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism to the Western world. Mr. Trungpa is known to have had a controversial career, and was described as having “crazy wisdom” by those who followed his teachings in the West. Unfortunately, Chogyam Trungpa died at the age of forty-eight; however, he left a multitude of writings that will keep his name

alive for a long time to come. His text *Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle* will be discussed at length in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER 1: History of the Mandala in Tibetan Buddhism

The Tibetan people first laid eyes on the visual mandala, along with other forms of Buddhist art and culture, at approximately the same time as they were introduced to Buddhism as a whole. This process began with the third king of the Yarlung Dynasty, Songtsen Gampo (604 – 650 CE). Songsten Gampo is credited with bringing Buddhism to the Tibetans in the seventh century. As a result, during the eighth through twelfth centuries, the Tibetans busied themselves with ongoing expeditions to India and Nepal to obtain Buddhist texts, instructions and initiations. Consequently, the Tibetans inherited the Indian Buddhist tradition in its entirety (Snellgrove 1968, 72).

A part of this inheritance included the Buddhism of Bihar and Kashmir, which was heavily influenced by Hindu religious practices. In addition, both the regions of Bihar and Kashmir had become generally Tantric by the time that the Tibetans took an interest in them. The Tantric practitioners, who were originally non-monastic yogins, had different ideas than their other Buddhist colleagues with regard to the attainment of enlightenment. Unlike their Mahayanist counterparts, they felt that one needn't experience an indeterminate number of rebirths in order to achieve enlightenment. Rather, one could perfect oneself in one lifetime given the correct instruction and dedication (Snellgrove 1968, 116). This is where the mandala came to be an important tool.

Thus, by the time Buddhism reached Tibet, the artistic expression of

Buddhism had already been well established in India. David Snellgrove explains that "The subject matter and stylized arrangements were completely Indian in origin, and Tibet received these as part of a general Buddhist heritage...but no other Buddhist country now possesses the wealth and variety of religious paintings". In addition, he noted that of all Tibetan art, religious painting demonstrates the most typically Tibetan style (1968, 142).

Historical evidence of the Tibetan painted mandala has been revealed in both China and Tibet. At the beginning of the seventh century, the Tibetan army began to move into Central Asia under the direction of Songsten Gampo, attacking China in 635. As a result, the four major Chinese strongholds in Turkistan fell under Tibetan rule. Tibet eventually conquered Kansu and the majority of Northern Yunnan and Szechwan and finally the Chinese capital of Ch'ang-an in 763. Lastly, in 781, Tun-huang surrendered to the Tibetans after ten years of resistance (Powers 1995, 125). However, the Tibetan empire began to crumble when a Buddhist monk assassinated King Lang Darma in 842 due to his persecution of Buddhism. Consequently, this also marked the end of the Yarlung Dynasty and the end of the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet (Powers 1995, 134-135).

Evidence of the Tibetans in the above noted areas has been found in various locations along the Silk Road such as in Dunhuang and Marin, and has included manuscripts and various pieces of art. In fact, sketches of mandalas were even found within the Dunhuang cave manuscripts that have been dated

back to the eighth through tenth centuries (Brauen 1997, 12). Moreover, several of the Dunhuang paintings involve characteristics that continued in later Tibetan religious art (Snellgrove 1968, 90).

While many of the discoveries of the Silk Road are now housed at libraries and museums in Britain (such as the Stein Collection at the British Museum), India (such as the Miran Murals housed in the National Museum of New Delhi), France, Germany, China and Japan, the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) has made these discoveries available to the public. The IDP is “an international collaboration based at the British Library to make information and images of more than 100,000 manuscripts, paintings, textiles and artefacts from Dunhuang (Tun-huang) and other Silk Road sites freely available on the Internet” (International Dunhuang Project, homepage). Items found in the IDP database come from archeological sites along the silk road dating from 100 BC to AD 1200. While the IDP is based at the British Library, it contains images from the collections of the various libraries and museums listed above.

We also know that the first monastery established in Tibet took place during the reign of King Khri-srong-lde-brtsan (740 – 798 A.D.). This monastery, named “*bSam-yas*”, was based on the architectural principles of a three-dimensional mandala, in which there is a central temple surrounded by an arrangement of other buildings (Snellgrove 1968, 72). This monastery had symbolic significance of the mandala “enclosing the temple-palace of supreme divinity at the core of the universe” according to Snellgrove (1968, 78).

Furthermore, thangkas, Tibetan paintings on cloth, began to feature very complex mandalas as early as the eleventh or twelfth centuries. For instance, mandalas were present among the wall paintings of the old Tibetan monastery of Tabo. According to Snellgrove, a complete mandala series of the central Buddha Vairocana and his main divinities, dated back to the eleventh century, is preserved in the main temple of Tabo. What is more, all Buddhist artistic expressions found in Tabo follow the styles of Northwest India from the tenth century (Snellgrove 1968, 111).

In summary, the Tibetans inherited mandala subject matter and form from their Tantric Indian neighbors. Evidence of the use of the mandala by the Tibetans was discovered in both Tibet and China as early as the eighth century via the paintings and manuscripts discovered along the Silk Road, as well as in the architecture of the *bSam-yas* monastery.

Introduction to the Tibetan Buddhist Mandala

Before getting into the complexities of mandala making, it would be of great use to define the mandala. One might think this would be quite a simple task; however, upon investigation, one will find that there is no single, simple definition of the mandala. That being said, the following are some definitions of mandala:

- “A diagram used in tantric meditation as an aid to visualization, which represents the residence and perfected attributes of a Buddha” (Powers 1995, 452).

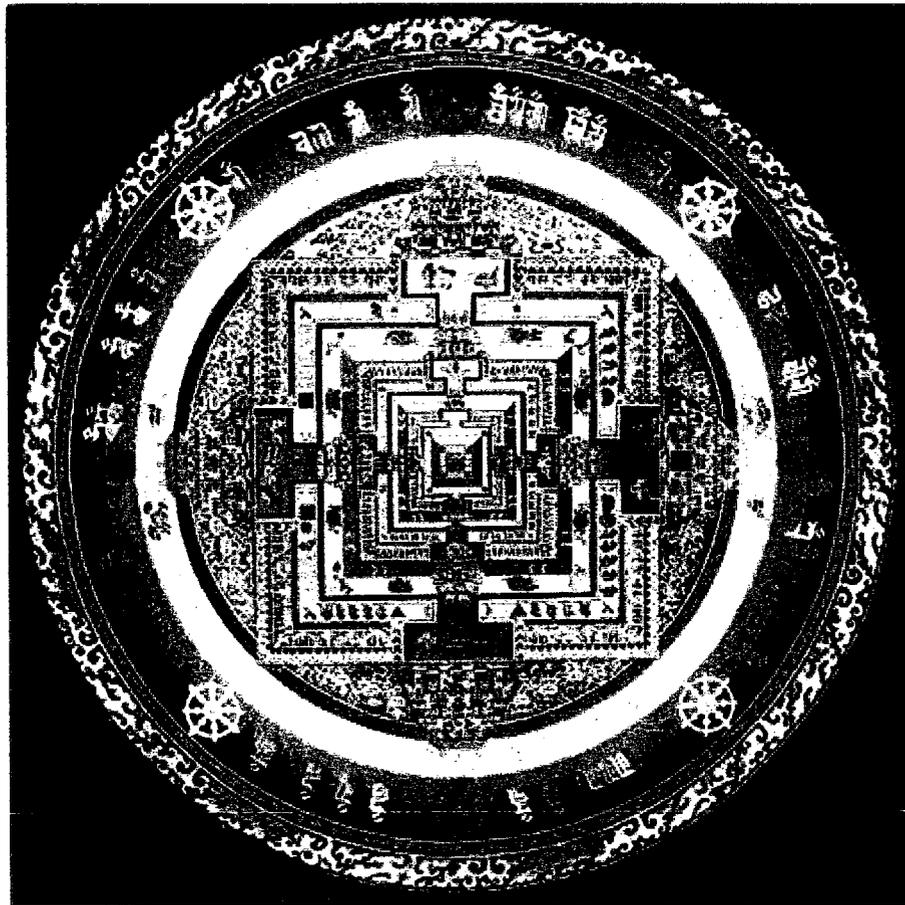
- “The mandala represents a sacred realm, often the celestial palace of a Buddha, and it contains symbols and images that depict aspects of the enlightened psycho-physical personality of the Buddha and that indicate Buddhist themes and concepts” (Powers 1995, 227).
- The mandala is an enclosure that separates a sacred area from the everyday profane world. It represents the domain of a specified divinity. (Snellgrove 1987, 198).
- “The mandala represents the self-identification of the microcosm (the human person) with the macrocosm, which has the nature of samsara for the unenlightened mind; conversely, it reveals itself as the perfect expression of buddhahood when all misleading distinctions disappear in the enlightened state of nonduality” (Snellgrove 1987, 229).
- “A sacred place, most often represented as a geometric, symmetrical arrangement of shapes with a particular deity at the centre – in complex two- or –three- dimensional versions from small painting to entire monastic centres” (Fisher 1997, 217).
- “The mandala as mirror of the cosmos – not just the outer cosmos but also the microcosm, the person – is based on the assumption of close relations between world, mandala and person” (Brauen 1997, 21).

There are four types of mandalas: two of which are outer mandalas made of powdered colours or painted on textiles. The others are the mandalas formed in

meditation and finally the “body as a mandala” (Brauen 1997, 11). This chapter will focus on the outer mandalas and the mandalas formed in meditation.

The outer mandala is a highly symmetrical diagram in which the focus is concentrated on the centre of the diagram. In general, the mandala is divided up onto four equally proportioned quadrants and is “built up of concentric circles and squares possessing the same centre” (Brauen 1997, 11). Of the Kalacakra mandala for instance, Brauen states that the square area at the centre is divided into four triangles of equal size and whose points meet in the middle of the mandala. Each of the four triangles is associated with one of the four cardinal directions and is coloured with the shade associated with its cardinal direction, with the east always positioned in the bottom portion. “Each of the four outer sides of the square is interrupted in the middle by a T-shape”, which is an entrance gate, “since the square in the mandala is none other than a building or the ground plan of a palace”. Deities are housed in the palace and are represented in their full physical appearance or hinted at by their respective symbols, small circles or dots, or their seed-syllables (Brauen 1997, 13).

Outer mandalas are created in both two and three-dimensional forms. Two-dimensional mandalas are created of either coloured powders (sand mandalas) on a flat surface or painted on cloth. Of interest, the sand mandala is dismantled at the end of the mandala ritual to symbolize the impermanence of all things, whereas the painted mandalas are stored. Other mandalas, both two and three dimensional, are made of gold, silver, wood, clay, shell, stone, or horn according to the *Dharmamandala Sutra* (Brauen 1997, 12).



Kalacakra Mandala from M. Brauen's *The Mandala: Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism*

On the other hand, the mandala created in meditation is known as the "visualization" of the mandala. In this situation, all components of the mandala are visualized in the mind of the practitioner with the same amount of detail found in the outer mandala.

Purpose of the Mandala

Having a basic understanding of what defines the mandala, the purpose of the mandala can now be discussed and better understood. Religious art is far

from aesthetics alone. In Tibetan Buddhism, the mandala serves to represent the Buddhas and their powers and to provide ritual access to these powers. “To impart the most profound religious truths, Tantric Buddhism employs pictorial representations with an intensity found in no other form of Buddhism and scarcely in any other religion” (Brauen 1997, 9). For the Tibetan Buddhists, the highest goals are those of understanding of the doctrine of emptiness and no-self in order to liberate oneself along with all living beings from samsara, the vicious cycle of suffering (rebirths). To briefly elaborate, within Tibetan Buddhism it is asserted that the person is made up of what are known in Sanskrit as the *skandhas*, or five aggregates. They are form, feeling, perception, intellect and consciousness. Each of these *skandhas* builds upon its predecessor, expanding the territory of ego as they are further developed. When grouped together, they yield the psycho-physical personality in its totality. The psycho-physical personality constitutes everything that we perceive as the “individual”. However, the problem commences when we begin to input something more on this totality, an enduring quality that we often label as the “self” or “soul”. People mistakenly begin to think that this self or soul exists independently of the *skandhas*, which is a “false belief”. A Tibetan Buddhist will tell you that there is no such self or soul that exists independently. The *skandhas* themselves are in constant change, and are subject to dependant arising (the belief that all worldly things are dependant on other worldly things for their existence), which proves that they do not inherently exist (Powers 1995, 63). According to a Tibetan Buddhist Lama, “The door that leads us out of samsara is the wisdom that realizes the emptiness

of self-existence [*Sunyata or Sunya*]. This wisdom is the direct remedy for the ignorance which is both a cause and effect of clinging to the self, and which believes the self or 'I' to be inherently and independently existent" (Powers 1995, 63). The attainment of this wisdom is achieved by way of meditation on the various Buddhas and their attributes, and the mandala aids in this goal by making the goal of meditation a visual attainment. In other words, the mandala is a pictorial aid. When the practitioner is engaged in the journey through the mandala, "he encounters the various forces radiating from the inside out, identifies with the central deity, apprehends all manifestations as parts of a single whole, and moves closer to the goal of perfect understanding or enlightenment" (Leidy & Thurman 1997, 41). It is important to understand, however, that mandalas "only hint at what they are meant to represent; they are only aspects of the absolute and not the absolute itself in all its splendor and bliss" (Brauen 1997, 9).

In the esoteric tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, while many mandalas are created with sand or cloth, the highest level of mandala construction is one in which the mandala is created within the mind of the practitioner. According to the Tantric text entitled the *Guhyasamaja* (c.a. 350),

When *Bodhicitta* [mind of enlightenment] secures oneness with S'unya...in the highest state of meditation, its mind-sky is filled with innumerable visions and scenes, until at last like sparks the *Bodhicitta* visualizes letters of the alphabet as germ syllables, which gradually assume the shape of deities, first indistinct, then changing into perfect, glorious, living forms, the embodiments of the infinite. (Bhattacharyya 1949, 15)

In further explanation, Bhattacharyya states that the psychic force of the worshipper reacts with S'unya creating manifold appearances of deities. Interestingly, it is the limitless reaction that gives rise to the great variety and form of deities in the Buddhist pantheon. There is no limit to the variety and form of deities. [As a result, the deities were classified under five families which are generally presided over by one of the five *dhyani* Buddhas, namely Aksobhya, Vairocana, Amitabha, Ratnasambhava, and Amoghasiddhi (1949, 15).] He further states, "the worshipper in deep meditation visualizes the deity with a form and a variety of symbols. Each and every detail of the mandala is created and held in the mind of the practitioner, including, most importantly, the central deity. To this end, there is a class of special literature in Buddhism called the *Sadhanas*" (Bhattacharyya 1949, 14). The *Sadhanas* were recorded by those who had gained extraordinary mind powers (*siddhis*), known as "Siddhas". (Bhattacharyya 1968, 18). Within the *sadhanas*, the yogin is given fixed procedures to aid in his success along with practical directions concerning the visualization of various deities. Many of these *sadhanas* are located in the *Sadhanamala*. The *Sadhanamala* is very clear about the fact that mandalas are ultimately meant to be visualized. This text begins by telling its readers that the initiate must meditate on himself as the deity. The visual details of the deity are given, such as the number of arms, colours and associated symbols for the purpose of this meditation. For example, the god Mahabala, a fierce emanation of Buddha Amitabha, is described in the *Sadhanamala* as follows:

The worshipper should think himself as Mahabala with one face, four arms and red complexion. His brown hair rises upwards and is tied by a snake.

He carries in his two right hands the white staff and the chowrie while the two left show the mudra of bowing and the raised index finger. He is clad in tiger-skin, wears ornaments of snakes and stands in the Pratyahita attitude. His face looks terrible with bare fangs and his is bright like the orb of the sun. He holds the effigy of Amitabha on the crown. (qtd. in Bhattacharyya 1968,145)

As the initiate becomes increasingly more identified with the deity, he strengthens his ability to visualize the deity in all necessary complexity for sustained periods of time. All of this leads to expansion of the powers and wisdom possessed by the given deity. This exercise causes the deity to enter a physical object by representing it externally in the form of art (the mandala).

Historian of Tibetan Civilization R.A. Stein found similar instructions in his investigation into two sixteenth century Tibetan texts, namely Drukpa Kunlek's autobiography and Chankya Rolpai Dorje's text entitled *Reflections on Thonmi Sambhota's Orthography*. According to Stein, these texts assert that once the deity has entered the object, the object becomes empowered and thus able to exert the influence of the deity (Stein1972, 182). Unfortunately, this incredibly fine level of introspection as it relates to the ability to visualize a deity is something that few people are capable of doing. For those not able to achieve this level, they must resort to ritual observances that provide approximations of the original. Instead of being able to experience the mandala both inwardly and outwardly, as texts such as the *Nispannayogavali* and the *Sadhanamala* state it is meant to be experienced, most are only able to experience it outwardly in the form of a painted mandala. Ultimately, the painted mandala is used as a visual

aid to awaken our “higher” senses toward the goal of perhaps being able to finally experience the mandala inwardly.

Preparations and Details for Construction

“Mandalas...are likely to give the European beholder an impression of stylistic elegance or an aesthetic satisfaction that were not intended by the artist, and are not felt by a Tibetan audience. It is the same with the colours, gestures and attributes of various deities which are all carefully laid down in books” (Stein 1972, 281).

The construction and design of a mandala is no simple matter. The rites associated with the construction of the mandala vary within the differing Tantric Buddhist traditions, and the repertoire of different mandalas along with their corresponding symbols and deities is also quite vast from one Tantric Buddhist tradition to another (Brauen 1997, 9). As a result, this chapter will only offer a small sample of this repertoire. Common to all Tantric Buddhist traditions, however, is fact that the creation of a mandala is accompanied by a complex form of worship, which presupposes the presence of a Master (Acarya). The details of the rites associated with the construction of a mandala must be participated in with a tremendous amount of attention due to the importance of the result that the individual wishes to attain. Any error or oversight will make the whole process null and void.

The Master not only performs the necessary ceremonies involved in the making of the mandala, but has also been responsible for preparing neophytes by ensuring that they have enough spiritual maturity to be initiated into the mysteries of the mandala. Spiritual maturity is accomplished by way of scholastic and doctrinal study, and is the result of a very long and patient journey on the part of the apprentices. With specific regard to the making of a mandala, scholastic and doctrinal preparation is important because mandala is explicitly based on Scriptural texts. Each detail of the mandala has been memorized prior to its creation. The neophyte will have gone through a long period of training in the technical aspects of artistry, including the way that symbols are to be drawn and the philosophical concepts underlying them. All of the above is evidenced in the following passage found in the English translation from the Chinese version by Subhakarasiṃha and I-hsing of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*:

It is desirable that the acarya in the first status of the mandala should have the *bodhi*-mind, that he has superlative wisdom and mercy, masters many accomplishments, performs Prajñāpāramitā skillfully, is versed well in the three yānas, understands the true meaning of Mantrayāna, is acquainted with the mind of sentient beings, believes in the Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas*, obtains the abhiseka of instruction of the doctrine, understands well the iconography of the mandala, that his nature is agreeable and tender, and that he is free from egoism, he can decide the conduct of Mantrayāna, he is well trained in yoga and has the courageous *bodhi*-mind. (1990, 13)

Because such careful attention and precision must be used in the creation of a mandala, it should come as no surprise that there are several texts of extreme importance with regard to this matter. The *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (c.a. 650) is a very important and widely used text for the construction of a mandala.

It can be thought of as a sort of mandala-creating manual. In it, the preparations that must be made in addition to the mantras to be recited and actual guidelines for construction are meticulously outlined. For example, in Chapter 11 “The Esoteric Mandala”, Buddha Vairocana provides the following instruction to Vajradhara, the Master of Mysteries:

Next oh master of mysteries, I will preach the mother of the Buddhas and the *Bodhisattvas* in the mandala. When the sacred figure is installed in the mandala, she is excellent and in true golden colour. Surround it with vajra-mudras. This is the most excellent mandala. I will now tell you of her sacred figure. There is a big lotus in the mandala. It is brilliant all over and yellow. Put the usnisa of the Tathagata inside. Draw Tathagata-caksu at one third position surpassing the middle position. She is inside the flame. Write *bjias* all over. (1990, 135)

However, there are several other texts that are important to the Tibetan understanding of the purpose and construction of a mandala, such as the aforementioned *Sadhanamala* and the *Nispannayogavali*. The *Nispannayogavali* was compiled sometime in the eleventh or twelfth century by Mahapandita Abhayakaragupta, a prolific writer and Tibetan scholar, who was associated with Vikramasila monastery - a famous Buddhist Esoteric centre in Bihar. (Bhattacharyya 1949, 9) Consisting of twenty-six chapters, each chapter gives detailed descriptions of a particular mandala used in Tantric meditation practices along with details regarding the proper iconographic representation of more than six hundred Buddhist deities.

For example, the seventeenth mandala described in the *Nispannayogavali* according to the English translation by Bhattacharyya is entitled the *Marici Mandala*. Marici has three faces and six arms, and is associated with seven

sows. The *Nispannayogavali* outlines the following details regarding the proper construction of her mandala:

Within the first circle, there are eight goddesses placed in the cardinal directions and intermediate corners as follows:

1. Arkamasi in the east
2. Indumasi in the south
3. Antardhanamasi in the west
4. Tejomasi in the north
5. Udayamasi in Agni
6. Gulmasi in Nairrta
7. Vanmasi in Vayu
8. Civaramasi in Isana

In the second circle around the principle deity (Marici) are eight deities in the four cardinal directions, two in each corner as follows:

1. Mahacivaramasi and Varahamukhi in the east
2. Padakramamasi and Varali in the south
3. Parakramamasi and Vadali in the west
4. Ugramasi and Varahi in the north

The gates of this mandala are to be guarded by the following four deities:

1. Alo in the east
2. Talo in the south
3. Kalo in the west
4. Matsaro in the north

Lastly, the sires of the deities have been fixed in this mandala according to their colour as follows:

1. Vairocana for white deities
2. Aksobhya for blue deities
3. Ratnasambhava for yellow deities
4. Amitabha for red deities
5. Amoghasiddhi for green deities

(1990, 52-53)

So how does the process of construction begin? First, the appropriate location for the construction must be chosen. Not surprisingly, there are strict guidelines with regard to where a mandala should be constructed. "A mandala is

drawn upon the ground on a purified surface consecrated with appropriate rites”

(Tucci 2001, 37). According to the *Mahavairocana-Sutra*:

You should draw mandala in other places such as a vihara, tranquil place (aranya), a decent and pure room and high pavilion, beautiful ponds and a garden, a caitya and Agni-temple, a former cattle-pen and a confluence of rivers, a sanctum of gods and a deserted room, a place where a sage acquired his objective. You should draw a mandala in the above-mentioned places and other places that are pleasant for the advantage of disciples. (1990, 14)

Once the appropriate location has been established, the *Mahavairocana-Sutra* states that the following guidelines should be followed: “Remove the gravels, fragments of earthenware, broken wares, skulls, hair, rice brans, ashes, charcoal, prickly bones, rotten woods as well as insects, ants, minute worms, poisonous and stinging insects. Having got rid of such evils, the acarya should choose an auspicious day and time” (1990, 14). Having established location and made it suitable for construction, the mantra yogin (Master) meditates with concentrated mind, followed by the recitation of mantras (Subhakarasingha & I-hsing 1990, 16). At this point, he is ready to receive his apprentices. All of the above - the discovery and preparation of location for the mandala as well as the recitation of mantras and meditation takes place over a period of seven days according to the *Mahavairocana Sutra* (1990, 17). The actual construction of the mandala is to take place on the seventh night, as is evidenced in the *Mahavairocana Sutra*. “O foremost preacher of wisdom, how long will it take to finish drawing the mandala?” ... “A mandala should be drawn this very night (the seventh night)” (1990, 20).

As seen in previous examples, precise instructions about how to divide up the mandala, the placement of images and colours to be utilized and required accessories are explicitly given in religious texts.

“Each figure in a mandala has several purposes, functioning as a specific deity, as a manifestation of the central deity’s power, as a focus of visualization and meditation, and as a signpost for a spiritual process. Each plays many roles during rites and visualizations which presumes a constant dialogue between the deity at the heart of the mandala (and in its various components) and the practitioner who moves, at least metaphorically, from outside the mandala to its core.”
(Leidy & Thurman 1997, 41)

There is very little room for artistic license in the construction of the Buddhist mandala. The *Mahavairocana Sutra* is one text responsible for these instructions. For instance, with regard to colouring, it is said that one must “Dispose the colouring from inside, and not from outside. Put the white colour first of all and the red colour the next. Put yellow and blue in due order and the innermost shall be dark. Such is the order of colouring” (*Mahavairocana Sutra*). In addition, according to Bhattacharyya, in the *Sadhanamala* it states the following concerning the colours and symbols of the five *dhyani* Buddhas:

Jino Vairocana khyato Ratnasambhava eva ca
Amitabhamogasiddhiraksobhyasca prakiritah
Varna amisam sitah pito rakto haritamecakau
Bodhyangi Varado *Dhyanim* Mudra Abhaya-Bhusprsau

Translated into English, this means:

The Jinas (victorious ones) are Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi and Aksobhya. Their colours are white, yellow, red, green and blue, and they exhibit the Bodhyangi (teaching), Varada (boon), *Dhyani* (meditation), Abhaya (protection), and Bhusparsa (earth-touching) attitude of hands respectively. (Bhattacharyya 1968, 47)

Elaborating on colour symbolism, the correct use of colour is absolutely crucial to the construction of the mandala. The mandala is typically divided into isosceles triangles of colour, which include four of the five following colours: white, yellow, red, green, dark blue/black. With regard to the order of colour in the mandala, there are different rules set out depending on which Tantra is being used. The *Mahavairocana Sutra* states that the interior of the mandala should start of white, with red, yellow, blue and black following. The *Chandamaharosana Tantra* states that the middle of the mandala should be black and that the remaining colours should be applied as follows:

In the East, one should draw White Immoveable.
Likewise Yellow Immoveable in the South, and Red
Immoveable, one should draw in the West.
One should draw in the North Green Immoveable.
(qtd. in George 1971, 75)

On the other hand, the Kalacakra mandala (which belongs to the highest class of Tantra known as the Anuttarayoga Tantras), states that white should be placed in the north, yellow in the west, red in the south, green and blue in the centre and black in the east (Brauen 1997, 10). As noted above, each of these colours is associated with one of the five Buddha families (*dhyani* Buddhas). The following is a chart showing the relationship between the *dhyani* Buddhas and their representative colours:

Colour	<i>Dhyani</i> Buddha
White	Vairocana
Yellow	Ratnasambhava
Red	Amitabha
Green	Amoghasiddhi
Dark Blue	Akshobhya

From this chart, one can see that Vairocana governs the colour white, Aksobhya governs dark blue, Amitabha governs red, Ratnasambhava governs yellow, and green is governed by Amoshasiddhi. (Bhattacharyya 1949, 15) It is believed that by meditating on these respective colours, one may achieve the different types of realization that are associated with each of the five *dhyani* Buddhas. R.A. Stein noted that “mandalas and their deities vary with the ‘family to which they belong. The tutelary deity his Lama chooses varies with the disciple’s intellectual and emotional pre-dispositions. And it is by merging with the deity and master combined that the disciple attains ‘the Absolute” (1972, 179).

Each *dhyani* Buddha is also associated with one of the five aggregates, or structural elements (*skandhas*), which are responsible for the creation of ego. The “five aggregates” or *skandhas*”, consisting of form, sensation/feeling, perception/name, intellect/mental factors and consciousness, are deified in Vajrayana as the five *dhyani* Buddhas (Bhattacharyya 1968, 42).

Within the *skandhas* there exists an emotive life that is just waiting to break through once the original identity is disintegrated. The emotive part of our personalities consists of five elements, known as the five passions or disturbing emotions. They are: anger (wrath), ego (pride), strong desire (concupiscence), jealousy and mental darkness (ignorance). Each of the disturbing emotions is also associated with a *dhyani* Buddha, colour and Skandha, as shown in the following chart:

<i>Buddha</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>Aggregate</i>	<i>Passions</i>
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Vairocana	White	Form	Darkness
Ratnasambhava	Yellow	Feeling	Pride
Amitabha	Red	Perception	Concupiscence
Amoghasiddhi	Green	Intellect	Jealousy
Aksobhya	Dark Blue	Consciousness	Wrath

With respect to the mandala, it would lose its symmetry if one of the above should prevail over another. In addition, the psychological life of humans would be disturbed and we would be barred from enlightenment. This is the reason why Buddhism speaks of transforming the passions rather than repressing them. They are essential aspects of our personality and therefore must not be suppressed. If we were to attempt to suppress these passions, they would burst forth in a violent and inflexible manner. They must be worked with, rather than against (Tucci 2001, 53).

In summary, the Tibetan Buddhist mandala has a long history, as evidenced by the discovery of mandala sketches found in Tibetan manuscripts along the Silk Road that date back to the ninth century. While the mandala did not originate with the Tibetans, but was rather passed on from the Indians, it has achieved its most complex development in Tibet. The Tibetan mandala is used as a visual aid to meditation on the various Buddhas and their attributes for the purpose of gaining the wisdom of enlightenment or the benefit of all sentient beings. It represents the sacred realm and is protected from the profane world by its outer boundaries. Within the mandala are symbols and images signifying Buddhist concepts and which reflect both samsara for the unenlightened mind

and the enlightened state of being which understands the doctrine of selflessness and emptiness.

The Tibetan Buddhist mandala can be either visualized in the mind or have concrete two or three-dimensional form. In either case, the creation of the mandala is highly ritualized from preparation to completion. Only the highly trained practitioner can engage in mandala work, and the associated rituals, form, colour and images contained within the specific mandala are prescribed for the practitioners in texts such as the *Sadhanamala*, *Mahavairocana Sutra* and the *Nispannayogavali*. These texts are difficult for the average Westerner to fully comprehend or decipher due to the fact that they originate from a context which is highly distinct from one in which we are familiar. In the next chapter, contemporary understandings and explanations of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala will be discussed in an effort to further clarify the nature of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala and in order to reveal how the perception of the mandala may have changed.

CHAPTER 2: Tibetan Buddhist Mandala: Modern Interpretations

With the emerging popularity of the mandala in the West during the twentieth century, several scholars of Eastern religion and culture along with Tibetan Buddhist practitioners took it upon themselves to add their interpretations of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala to the existing literature. For this thesis, I have chosen to discuss three such scholars: Giuseppe Tucci, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, and Chogyam Trungpa. These three individuals were chosen in an effort to briefly demonstrate some of the different paths that have been taken in the modern interpretation of the mandala. Modern discussions of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala were first presented to the West by non-Tibetan scholars, such as Giuseppe Tucci who began his expeditions into Tibet in 1933. It was not until the 1970's that the West began to see the emergence of Tibetan Buddhist lamas providing first hand teachings of the dharma in the West. Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche and Chogyam Trungpa were two such tulkas, both from the Kagyu sect, who made Tibetan Buddhist teachings accessible to the West in the 1970's. Born within six years of one another, they went in very different directions with their teachings, as will become apparent later in this chapter.

Italy's Giuseppe Tucci (1894 – 1984) is one of the founders of the field of Buddhist Studies. Tucci's study of Asian religions resulted from his own spiritual quest. A supporter of Mussolini, Tucci did not find the Buddhist religions to be in conflict with fascist ideology, and was thus able to undertake his study without political consequence. In fact, in 1933, Tucci was named Vice President of the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, an organization created for the

purpose of the promotion of cultural ties between Italy and Asia. It was in that year that he underwent his first expedition to Tibet, and began a life-long study of Tibet. Further expeditions to Tibet then took place in 1935, 1937, 1939, and 1948. In addition, Tucci authored many texts about Tibetan culture and religion from roughly 1930 to 1970. Some of titles included: *Indo-Tibetica Volumes 1-7*, *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala* (1949), *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (1949), *Secrets of Tibet* (1933) and *The Religions of Tibet* (1970).

Tucci had a great deal of interest not just in the spiritual teachings of Asia, but also in the arts of Asia. During his travels, he collected many art objects from Tibet, Nepal and Ladakh that were subsequently housed in the National Museum of Oriental Art in Rome. One can imagine that this is what led to Tucci's interest in the mandala, which culminated in the release of his text entitled *Teoria e pratica del Mandala* (*The Theory and Practice of the Mandala: With Special Reference to the Modern Psychology of the Unconscious*) in 1949.

It was Tucci's assertion that the mandala's purpose is to act as an instrument of disintegration from the "One" to the many and reintegration from the many (microcosm) to the "One" (macrocosm) (2001, 25). In his text *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala*, Tucci states that once one is fully dissatisfied with his/her current state of psychic functioning, he/she longs "for a state of concentration in order to find once more the unity of a secluded and undiverted consciousness, and to restore in himself the ideal principle of things" (2001, 25). It is for that reason that the mandala can be viewed as more than just a cosmogram, but rather, a psychocosmogram, in Tucci's opinion. However,

while the Tibetan Buddhist mandala could be viewed as a psychocosmogram due to the fact that it does represent and symbolize psychic processes, the idea that it is one's dissatisfaction with the experience of the psyche that precedes the use of the mandala seems to be a bit of a stretch within the Tibetan Buddhist context. The use of the mandala is primarily limited to religious practitioners who have undergone a great deal of training and preparation for its use. A mandala is a visual aid toward the attainment of establishing the wisdoms of the five *dhyani* Buddhas. While the motivation of the religious practitioner within Tibetan Buddhism involves the cessation of suffering, the goal is to put an end to samsara rather than find "the unity of a secluded and undiverted consciousness".

Tucci stated that the mandala "is like a magical and irresistible admission into this formless and tumultuous tangle of forces. With the symbol he [the novice] grasps, dominates and dissolves it. Through the symbol he gives form to the infinite possibilities lying in the depths of his subconscious, to unexpressed fears, to primordial impulses, to age-old passions" (2001, 22). Here, again, Tucci appears to have gotten away from the traditional purpose of the mandala. The statement above regarding "primordial impulses", the "subconscious", and "age-old passions" sounds as though it was inspired by Jungian thought rather than authentic Tibetan Buddhist teachings, which will become evident in the following chapter. [In fact, in the Preface of *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala*, Tucci states that he is aware of Jung's research and psychoanalysis (vii). Furthermore, he makes specific reference to Jung and his work concerning the mandala in the text entitled *The Golden Flower* (2001, 37).] While Tucci's interpretations of the

mandala tend to stray from traditional Tibetan Buddhist interpretations, Tucci does note that the novice must have a solid comprehension of the symbology contained in the mandala, in addition to having the ability to interpret this symbology, before he can indeed take possession of the mandala (become identified with it and its resident deity).

Another key figure in the modern discussion of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala is Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche (1933 – present). The ninth incarnation of the great Thrangu tulka, and Khenpo (abbot) of the Kagyu sect, is renowned for making complex Tibetan Buddhist teachings accessible to the West. Thrangu Rinpoche started providing teachings to the West in approximately 1976 and now has seventeen centres in twelve countries, including Canada and the United States.

Some of Thrangu Rinpoche's teachings have included the subject of the mandala. In his words,

A mandala is actually a three-dimensional representation of what is to be visualized in the form of a temple. We are looking straight down onto a transparent roof which is four sided. The outcroppings from the basic square are the four doors facing the four directions. One can see there is a snow lion on the right and a peacock on the left of each door. On the ground floor inside the temple is a vajra representing Akshobhya, a lotus representing Amitabha, a double vajra for Ratnasambhava, the three jewels for Amoghasiddhi, and wheel of dharma for Vairocana in who sits in the center of the temple. The inside circle is a circle of lotuses on which the temple rests. The outside circle is the mandala plate upon which everything rests. When doing a Vajrayana practice, a mandala such as this one would be visualized in three dimensions as described. (2001, 13)

As we can see, Thrangu is careful to note that the mandala is actually the form of a temple, in which various Buddhas are housed, thereby separating the sacred

from the profane world and removing chances of impurity or distraction when the practitioner envisions moving through the temple. He has maintained the traditional understanding of the form of the mandala. Thrangu also discusses the transformative qualities of the mandala with specific focus on the five *dhyani* Buddhas (Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, and Vairocana) and their respective colours and symbols. He explains that the mandala is an aid toward realization of the wisdoms of the five *dhyani* Buddhas. Thrangu Rinpoche states that one way to accomplish this goal is to “eliminate the five disturbing emotions of anger, attachment, ignorance, pride and envy. When these disturbing emotions are pacified, the wisdoms of the five *dhyani* Buddhas can shine forth” (2001, 1).

According to Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Buddha Akshobhya (the immovable, stable and changeless Buddha) is realized when one achieves an absence of anger, which in turn is named mirror-like wisdom. He resides in the eastern portion of a mandala on an elephant throne. (2001, 8) Furthermore, he represents the skandha of consciousness and is blue in colour. (2001, 3) “Blue symbolizes permanence that is changeless just as the sky has always been blue, whether this year or a thousand years ago. The Buddha Akshobhya is blue to represent this changelessness” (2001, 8).

Ratnasambhava is realized when the negative emotion of pride or ego is transformed into the wisdom of equality. “When ego and pride have been removed, we are open to receive all the positive knowledge and qualities” (Thrangu Rinpoche 2001, 10). Thrangu Rinpoche explains that in believing we

are separate from others (having a belief of self or ego), we begin to think ourselves superior to others. Thus, when we give up our idea of self or clinging ego, we realize equality (2001, 2). Residing in the South in a yellow or golden colour that represents wealth, Ratnasambhava is seated on a horse's throne in the vajra posture of fulfillment. Lastly, he represents the skandha of feeling (Thrangu Rinpoche 2001, 10).

Buddha Amitabha is said by Thrangu Rinpoche to be the wisdom of discrimination. In order to attain this wisdom, one must eliminate strong desire and attachment. Thrangu Rinpoche explains that "when we are under the influence of attachment, we discriminate between good and bad, beautiful and ugly, and then we cling to what seems to be attractive and shun those things that seem bad or ugly. Attachment and aversion are disturbing emotions that arise from not understanding the nature of things as they are and as they appear" (2001, 10). In visual representations, Amitabha is red in colour and sits on a peacock throne when seated on a throne. Lastly, Amitabha represents the skandha of perception (Thrangu Rinpoche 2001, 7).

Thrangu Rinpoche states that Buddha Amoghasiddhi is realized when one overcomes the disturbing emotion of jealousy and thus achieves all-accomplishing wisdom. He is green in colour and is seated on a shang shang throne. Lastly, he represents the skandha of formation (2001, 9).

Lastly, the fifth *dhyani* Buddha, Vairocana, is realized when one overcomes the negative emotion of ignorance. The wisdom that results from overcoming ignorance is the wisdom of the highest state. It is the wisdom that

sees things as they truly are (Thrangu Rinpoche 2001, 1 - 4). According to Thrangu Rinpoche, "Buddha Vairocana discloses the dharma to all living beings. He is white in color representing "without fault" and he rests in the center of the mandala and is on a lion's throne" (2001, 14). Vairocana represents the skandha of form.

Clearly, Thrangu Rinpoche has kept in line with the traditional understandings of the mandala and highlights the role of the five *dhyani* Buddhas when it comes to transforming the disturbing emotions. In this way, he highlights the psychological benefits associated with mandala work in a way that the Western audience can more easily identify with.

A last key figure in the modern discussion of the mandala is meditation master, scholar and artist, Chogyam Trungpa (1940 – 1987). Trungpa had a controversial career to say the least. Born in Tibet, he was recognized as the eleventh tulka of the Trungpa teaching lineage (of the Kagyu School) at the age of thirteen months. Thus began his intensive monastic training, which led to his ordination as a novice monk and the age of eight and a full ordination at the age of eighteen. Reaching India in 1959, Trungpa was appointed to be the spiritual advisor to The Young Lamas Home School in Dalhousie by the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Trungpa then received a scholarship to attend Oxford University where he studied philosophy and comparative religion, and then established a meditation centre in Scotland in 1968 in order to teach Western students the dharma. It was during that time that he became known for his unorthodox teachings and ways of life, which included drinking, smoking and sexual relations

with his students. In 1969, he entered a solitary meditation retreat after which he decided to become a layman, marry a Scottish woman, and move to North America. This decision left many of his students upset to say the least; however, it was Trungpa's conviction that if the dharma was to take hold in the West, it needed to be delivered in a manner that was "free from cultural trappings and religious fascination" (Trungpa 1991, 170-171). Because he spoke English, Trungpa was one of the first lamas that could deliver his teachings to Western students without the aid of a translator. In addition, he was known for presenting Buddhist teachings in a contemporary manner. This went a long way toward spreading his teachings throughout North America. His career in North America included the founding of the Naropa Institute in Colorado (1974) and establishing the Shambhala Training program in 1976 with the directive of creating an enlightened society by way of mindfulness meditation "in a secular setting" (Trungpa 1991, 172).

As part of Trungpa's teachings to the West, he dedicated an entire text to the subject of the mandala. In his text *Orderly Chaos: The Mandala Principle*, Trungpa begins by stating that there is no point in discussing the nirvanic mandala, including all of its divinities and their placements, until one understands the samsaric mandala. Ultimately, Trungpa combines traditional Tibetan Buddhist understandings of the mandala with what appears to be his own unique theory regarding "orderly chaos".

Trungpa asserts that the mandala principle is "orderly chaos". According to Trungpa, there is chaos and confusion because there is no external ordering

principle: everything happens by itself. However, it does come in a pattern, therefore creating order. Unfortunately, working with that order is terribly confusing, which creates a great deal of chaos. Trungpa explains that the mandala principle involves the mandalas of samsara and nirvana, which are considered to be equal and reciprocal. Thus, "if we do not understand the samsaric aspect of mandala, there is no nirvanic aspect of mandala at all" (1991, 3). It is through meditative practices associated with the mandala principle that we begin to realize that the opposites of experience (confusion and enlightenment, chaos and order, etc) "are inseparable parts of a total vision of reality" (Trungpa 1991, 3).

Trungpa explains that the basic ground out of which orderly chaos is born is that of a sense of imprisonment. We feel as though the world has us caged, as though we have no say in the matter. Thus, from the beginning we feel that we must engage in some sort of battle (1991,1). It is at this point that our confused mind decides to give in to the situation, to accept the battle situation without question. Our relationship with the world becomes one of feeling the need to get the most we can out of our imprisoned situations, and we lose all sight of what our life situation is truly all about. As Trungpa states, "we decide to become deaf and dumb" and "avoid being sensitive to whatever life situations we encounter on the way" (1991, 28).

With regard to confusion, Trungpa states that we are "confused methodically", meaning that our confusion is intentional because we make the decision to ignore ourselves and reject wisdom and enlightenment. We would

much rather continue on with our material obsessions, passions and other ill-informed tendencies. Due to this, we create a mandala: a self-existing circle (1991, 3).

Thus, it is Trungpa's contention that prior to using the painted mandala as a visual aid toward achieving the "ultimate goal", one must first work with the samsaric aspect of the mandala. "We have to make the best of samsaric situations and work with them. After we have worked with samsaric situations, we gradually develop an awareness of the background, or environment, in which the samsaric mandala functions. We begin to discover that there is something more than just this world alone, than the world in our dualistic sense of it" (Trungpa 1991, 83). Thus, according to Trungpa, once one has developed an awareness of how the samsaric mandala functions, he or she is ready to begin work with the nirvanic mandala (and thus the ultimate goal) as a novice. Interestingly, while the samsaric and nirvanic aspects are traditionally said to be equal and reciprocal, Trungpa's assertion that one must first work with the samsaric aspect of the mandala in order to develop enough awareness to work with the nirvanic aspect of the mandala makes one question whether they are indeed equal and reciprocal, as his statement gives the impression that one is ultimately of greater importance than the other

With regard to the samsaric mandala itself, Trungpa stated that the eastern quarter of the mandala is connected with consciousness and irascibility. This type of aggression involves "an extremely severe attitude toward yourself...You constantly have a war going on between that and this, so in order

to defeat whatever it might be, you have to be aggressive, pushy; you have to come down heavy and sharp all the time” (Trungpa 1991, 30). Feeling and pride are connected with the southern quarter of the mandala. The western quarter is connected with perception and cupidity. The northern quarter of the mandala is connected with Intellect and jealousy. “It is a paranoid attitude of comparison rather than pure jealousy” (Trungpa 1991, 32). Lastly, the centre of the mandala is connected to form and ignorance. Taken all together, they form a complete picture of our existence. We are the mandala (Trungpa 1991, 33). In comparing Trungpa’s description of the samsaric aspect of the mandala with the traditional description of the placement of the *dhyani* Buddhas as discussed in Chapter One, it appears that Trungpa has held true to the form of the mandala. For instance, he states that the northern quarter of the mandala is connected with intellect and jealousy. This corresponds with the traditional formatting outlined in the *Chandamaharosana* Tantra, which states that Green Immoveable should be drawn in the North (green being associated with Amoghasiddhi, who represents the skandha of intellect and the disturbing emotion of jealousy).

Lastly, Trungpa asserts that each person’s experience of a mandala is different, due to the fact that we each have our own feeling of the mandala that is related to one area of the mandala. This is not to say that we don’t partially relate to the other areas, but simply that we are drawn more to one than the others. Trungpa states, “We could say that we have a certain potential. Because we are one of the four, we have certain characteristics...each of us has our own heavy-handedness, which is exactly what makes the path necessary”

(1991, 35). So we see that Trungpa has remained true to the traditional form of the Tibetan Buddhist mandala. In addition, he maintains a traditional view of the mandala in terms of its samsaric and nirvanic essence depending on whether one has an enlightened or unenlightened mind. However, he adds his own unique dialogue when it comes to his theory of existence as “orderly chaos”.

The writings of Giuseppe Tucci, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, and Chogyam Trungpa are only a sample of the vast amount of literature that has touched upon the mandala over the past fifty to sixty years; however, they certainly demonstrate the differing theories and explanations given to the western world regarding the mandala since our fascination with it began in the twentieth century. Clearly, these writings range from holding true to the traditional Tibetan Buddhist theory of the mandala, to providing new and/or altered interpretations concerning the intention of mandala creation and its resulting effects. Thrangu Rinpoche remained faithful to the traditional interpretation of the mandala, whereas Tucci seems to have incorporated Jungian ideas into his interpretation of the mandala. Lastly, Trungpa offers an explanation which more or less stays true to tradition when it comes to the form and basic nature of the mandala. While his explanations read quite differently from more traditional explanations, they appear to be getting to the same point. However, Trungpa adds his own distinction to the topic of the mandala with his discussion of “orderly chaos” as being the mandala principle. He asserts that when one meditates on the mandala principle, one realizes that both samsara and nirvana are made up of orderly chaos and are inseparable.

CHAPTER 3: The Western Encounter with the Mandala

Introduction of the Mandala into Psychoanalysis: Carl Gustav Jung

A Brief Overview of Jung's Theories

Prior to discussing the mandala within Jungian psychology, it would be useful to provide a very brief overview of some Jungian concepts. First, according to Jung the psyche is comprised of both consciousness and the unconscious. The conscious contains within it the ego, and the unconscious contains within it both the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The personal unconscious contains repressed feelings or thoughts that have been personally acquired and is represented by the shadow, whereas the collective unconscious is represented by the archetypes and contains omnipresent and unchanging impulses, and instincts that have been universally inherited" (Jung 1989, 401-402). This brings us to the archetypes. These are unconscious and pre-existent forms that manifest themselves spontaneously. "In archetypes the urges of the unconscious have not as yet been differentiated, for differentiation is a function of consciousness. Therefore they appear in ambiguous or dual form, in fact as pairs of opposites – as good-bad, favourable-harmful, spiritual-demonic, and so on..." (Harding 1973, 367). If consciousness chooses one of the opposed values over the other, the remaining value becomes repressed in the unconscious along with its specific energy. Highly important to this chapter is Jung's notion of the "Self", which is the psyche in its entirety and includes the conscious and the unconscious. The Self is also explained as being the

archetype of order and the totality of personality. Jung states that “the self is our life’s goal, for it is the completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality” (Jung 1989, 398). The “Self” is attained by becoming individuated. Individuation (Self-Realization) is the process by which a person becomes an indivisible unity or homogenous being by overcoming the incompatibilities between the conscious and unconscious via transformation rather than suppression. It is also described as the bringing together of the quaternity of functions. Jung believes that nothing can be whole unless it is a quaternity, thus the God-image must be a quaternity. Jung believed that the God-image coincides with the archetype of the Self and that it is a symbol of the Self and of psychic wholeness. In relation to the goal of individuation, there are also the “psychological types”, which are known as the quaternity of functions (thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition) that must be fully developed in order to be individuated. Lastly, one must understand what Jung meant by “neurosis” in order to comprehend his explanation of the occurrence of the mandala later in this chapter. Neurosis is defined as considerable unresolved tension between the ego and the unconscious

Jung’s Introduction to the Mandala

Mandala forms caught Jung’s interest from the beginning of his career. This is clear when one investigates the contents of Jung’s M.D. dissertation entitled *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena*, which was completed in 1902 while he was an assistant physician at the Burgholzi Mental Hospital and University Clinic in Zurich. In his dissertation, Jung describes one

of his patients who fantasized a detailed circular diagram; however, he did not refer to this circular diagram specifically as a mandala at that time. It was during his time at the Burgholzi Mental Hospital (1900 – 1909) that Jung began to notice the frequency in which his patients (as well as the patients of his colleagues) were experiencing dreams that contained circular diagrams, as well as the frequency of the appearance of the circular diagrams in their artwork. Later, while Jung while working with Freud, he wrote *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (1911 – 1912), in which he wrote extensively of symmetrical dream-cities, crosses, sun-wheels, and mystic roses. However, he did not label these symbols as mandalas until he revised the text in 1952 according to the editorial preface found in Jung's text *Mandala Symbolism* (vi). Shortly thereafter, Jung broke with Freud, resulting in a three year period of chaos and confusion in which Jung suffered from hallucinations and periods of manic depression. Interestingly, in 1916, after this three year period, Jung painted his first mandala, which he named "Systema Mundi totius" (The System of All Worlds). Jung stated

It was only toward the end of the First World War that I gradually began to emerge from the darkness. Two events contributed to this. The first was that I broke with the woman who was determined to convince me that my fantasies had artistic value; the second and principal event was that I began to understand mandala drawings. This happened in 1918-19. I had painted the first mandala in 1916 after writing *Septem Sermones*; naturally I had not, then, understood it. (Jung 1989, 195)

Jung detailed his mandala fantasy images and kept the majority of his mandala drawings in the *Red Book* (Jung 1989, 188). However, he did not publish any of his mandalas or his conclusions about them until he wrote his commentary on Richard Wilhelm's translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower* in 1929,

approximately ten years after he maintains that he began to understand the mandala.

Looking back into Jung's history, however, raises the question of whether he had not encountered mandala forms even before he began his medical studies. In his autobiography entitled *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung discusses his youth, including his school and student years, in detail. Raised the son of a Protestant clergyman, Jung began his life surrounded by religion. He recalls having read all the religious texts he could get his hands on from his father's library. In addition, Jung even recalls that he was enthralled with illustrations of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva found in an old children's book entitled *Orbis Pictus* at the early age of six years old (Jung 1989, 17). During his teenage years, Jung read Goethe's *Faust*, which he states poured into his soul "like a miraculous balm" (Jung 1989, 60). Goethe's *Faust* remained an integral part of Jung's life thereafter, as he stated that during his student years his "godfather and authority was the great Goethe himself" (Jung 1989, 87). Dr. Barry Jeromson of the University of Southern Australia wrote about the influence that Goethe's *Faust* had with respect to Jung's creation of *Systema Munditotius*. Dr. Jeromson describes a scene from Goethe's work:

Early in *Faust* 1. On a moonlit night, Faust, empty and despondent despite all his knowledge and academic honours, opens a secret book written by Nostradamus. While pondering the role of sacred signs to give access to '[m]ysterious spirits hovering near', Faust 'lights upon the Sign of the Macrocosm'. In contemplating this sign, typically a symbol of the cosmos as concentric spheres incorporating the four elements — in other words a mandala — Faust experiences joyous gnosis of healing and wholeness. (2007, 26)

Jung's reading of *Faust* also ignited his interest in philosophy, which led to him to read works such as those by Plato, Socrates, Heraclitus, Eckhart, and Schopenhauer between the ages of sixteen and nineteen (Jung 1989, 68-69). Jung further states in his autobiography that he had a difficult time settling on his choice of profession, as he had great interest in history, philosophy, and archeology (particularly everything Egyptian and Babylonian) based on the extensive reading he had undertaken in his teenage years (1989, 84). All of this early background is significant in that Jung often refers to Faust, Horus and his four sons, and medieval Christian symbolism during his later discussions of mandala symbolism. For instance, in his commentary found in *Secret of the Golden Flower* (1929) (his first published writing on the subject), Jung states:

Mandala means a circle, more especially a magic circle, and this form of symbol is not only to be found all through the East, but also among us; mandalas are amply represented in the Middle Ages. The specifically Christian ones come from the earlier Middle Ages. Most of them show Christ in the centre, with the four evangelists, or their symbols, at the cardinal points. This conception must be a very ancient one because Horus was represented with his four sons in the same way by the Egyptians... For the most part, the mandala form is that of a flower, cross, or wheel, with a distinct tendency toward four as the basis of the structure. (Jung 1989, 396)

It is thus clear that despite the fact that Jung does not make use of the term "mandala" until later in his career, he met with the mandala form prior to his medical studies, and perhaps even in his childhood and teenage years through his Christian education and then his reading of books concerning medieval Christianity, ancient Egypt, and of course, his beloved *Faust*.

Jung's Understanding of the Mandala

Jung concluded that it is probable that the mandala is an archetype, which is inherent in the collective unconscious and thus beyond individual birth and death...and thus "eternal presence" (Jung 1972, 221). Jung began to use the mandalas that had been spontaneously manifested in his patients' dream/fantasy images and artwork in his treatment practices, believing that his patients' spontaneous creation of mandalas (and his subsequent interpretations of their mandalas) would aid in the speed of healing by creating a calming healing effect and facilitating psychic integration. Jung stated the following with regard to the effect of the mandala on the maker or viewer: "A rearranging of personality is involved, a kind of new centering. That is why mandalas mostly appear in connection with chaotic, psychic states of disorientation or panic. They then have the purpose of reducing the confusion to order, though this is never the conscious intention of the patient" (Jung 1972, 76-77). However, he was cautious not to divulge his knowledge of the mandala, as he didn't want his patients to be influenced to create them, but rather to produce them spontaneously. Instead, the use of mandalas in therapy came from Jung encouraging his patients to make the transition from talking to painting at a particular point in their therapy (Slegelis 1987, 302). Ultimately, Jung came to view the mandala as being a visual representation of the Self, which manifested itself out of our innate need to become self-realized individuals. In order to achieve this self-realization, the opposites contained in the psyche must be reconciled (Jung 1972, 4-5). Jung explains:

The energy of the central point (centre of personality) is manifested in the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to *become what one is*, just as every organism is driven to assume the form that is characteristic of its nature, no matter what the circumstances. This centre is not felt or thought of as the ego but, if one may so express it, as the *self*. Although the centre is represented by an innermost point, it is surrounded by a periphery containing everything that belongs to the self – the paired opposites that make up the total personality (1972, 73).

Jungian psychoanalyst M. Esther Harding explains the “Self” well in the following passage:

The governor of a circle is of course its centre, around which everything revolves. In the psyche likewise, the centre is ruler of the entire man. In the conscious realm the ego is master, but in this larger sphere the ego is only one voice among many. The ruler here must transcend the ego. It must be a suprapersonal value that can command the allegiance and obedience of the ego, just as the ego, through the development of consciousness, comes to transcend the autos. This ruler Jung called Self. (1973, 361)

Keeping in mind that the ego is only the centre of consciousness and only contains a small part of the psychic energy inherent in the entire psyche, Harding explains that ego consciousness results from the inherent energy of the instincts having been taken up by consciousness and directed into a different aim (1973, 204). Whereas the ego is the centre of consciousness, the Self is the centre of the whole personality, and includes the ego, consciousness, and the unconscious. Becoming whole, or individuated, means that we have reconciled those aspects of our personalities that have been overlooked (those in the unconscious realm). It means that we must unlock the psychic energy contained in the unconscious realm so that we are no longer guided by ego alone, but by the psyche in its entirety. Achieving psychic integration, or individuation, also involves coming to terms with the “shadow”. The shadow is a part of the

personal unconscious, and is comprised of those repressed parts of ourselves that we find unsavory, such as instincts, weaknesses, and “dark” thoughts. In order to become whole, each person must reconcile with his/her shadow, as its continued repression can only inhibit personal growth. According to Jungian theory, we must learn to accept those aspects of ourselves that we find disturbing if we are to reach a higher level of psychic awareness. On the journey of individuation, Jung asserted that “the traveler must first meet with his shadow, and learn to live with his formidable and often terrifying aspect of himself: there is no wholeness without a recognition of the opposites. He will meet, too, with the archetypes of the collective unconscious, and face the danger of succumbing to their peculiar fascination” (Fordham 1953, 77).

Lastly, Jung was very clear about his conception that the mandala is a living symbol. In his text entitled *Psychological Types*, Jung warns that a symbol must be distinguished from a mere sign. A symbol, according to Jung, is a living thing. “It is the expression of a thing not to be characterized in any other better way. The symbol is alive only in so far as it is pregnant with meaning” (1971, 473).

Construction and Interpretation of the Mandala

Jung’s belief that patients should not be directly influenced to create mandalas led him to the strategy of simply encouraging them to move from narrative to painting within the course of their therapy. This is because Jung felt that for the mandala to accurately represent the Self in its current state, it must

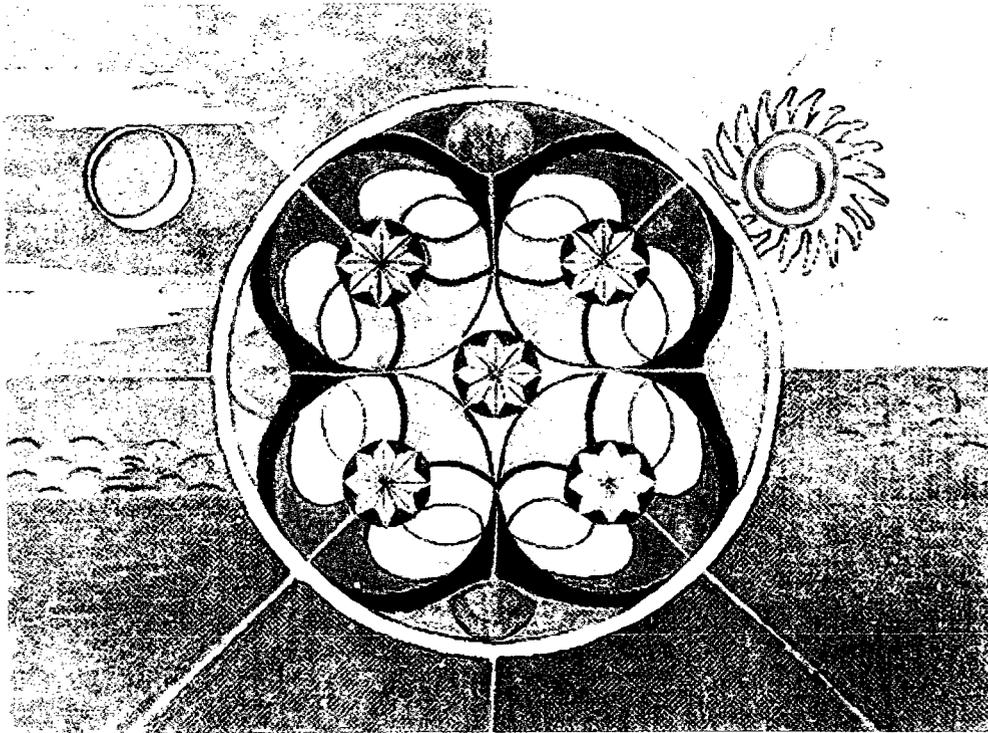
have been created spontaneously from the contents of the unconscious rather than through some sort of conscious intent. According to Jungian analysts, mandalas manifest themselves in the dreams or fantasy images of the individual at a time when the conscious realm is in a state of chaos or confusion.

Furthermore, because the mandala symbol arises from the unconscious depths of the psyche, it is reported that the patient enters a different state of consciousness when working with his/her mandala. Jung stated that while painting the mandala, "the picture seems to develop out of itself and often in opposition to one's conscious intentions" (1972, 68).

Jung states that individual mandalas contain unlimited motifs and symbolic allusions which are meant to represent the contents of the entire psyche (Jung 1972, 5). He observed nine different designs/elements that appeared regularly in the mandalas of his patients. He noted that these designs had no particular order, but rather that they served to alert him that the process of individuation had commenced within the patient. In this text *Mandala Symbolism*, Jung listed the nine formal elements of mandala symbolism as follows:

1. *Circular, spherical, or egg-shaped* formation.
2. The circle is elaborated into a flower (rose, lotus) or a *wheel*.
3. A centre expressed by a *sun, star, or cross*, usually with four, eight, or twelve rays.
4. The circles, spheres, and cruciform figures are often represented in *rotation* (swastika).
5. The circle is represented by a *snake* coiled about a centre, either ring-shaped or spiral.
6. *Squaring of the circle*, taking the form of a circle in a square or vice versa.
7. *Castle, city, and courtyard* motifs, quadratic or circular.
8. *Eye* (pupil and iris).

9. Besides the tetradic figures (and multiples of four), there are also triadic and pentadic ones, though these are much rarer. (1972, 77)



Jungian mandala, *Mandala Symbolism*, Picture 11

In summary, Jung first published his mandalas and conclusions about the mandala in his commentary for Wilhelm's 1929 translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. However, he had been establishing his relationship with the mandala long before 1929. His psychoanalytic work with the mandala commenced when he became aware of this patient's spontaneously produced mandalas in their dreams, fantasies and artwork. Noting that the spontaneous occurrence of the mandala came about when his patients were in a period of intense confusion and chaos, Jung observed that the mandala had the effect of creating order and a sense of calm within his patients. He felt that the mandala

was a visual representation of the Self and ultimately came to believe that the mandala manifested itself out of the human need to become self-realized (individuated), which can only happen if one reconciles the opposites in the psyche. Jung observed nine symbols or motifs (noted above) that often appeared in the mandalas of his patients, which when observed, informed him that his patients had begun the process of individuation. However, he did not ascribe any particular order to the symbols or motifs. Lastly, Jung maintained that for a mandala to be a true representation of the contents of the psyche, it must be produced spontaneously. As a result, he did not encourage his patients to create mandalas as part of his practice.

The Next Generation: Jungian Psychoanalysts and Art Psychotherapists

Ultimately, within the world of Jungian psychoanalysis, the mandala is still believed to be a symbol of the Self, or current state of the psyche, and is still a major topic of discussion. This is evidenced by the C.G. Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology's Fall 2009 to Spring 2010 *Jungian Advanced Seminars*, where one can participate in the course entitled "C.G. Jung's Red Book and Mandalas: A Search for the Self", as taught by Jungian analyst Jane Selinske. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, some contemporary Jungian analysts are using a different type of mandala work with their patients than was used by Jung. Earlier Jungian analysts, on the other hand, seem to have followed directly in Jung's footsteps with respect to the mandala. One such

psychoanalyst was M. Esther Harding (1888 – 1971), a founding member of the Analytical Psychology Club of New York, the Medical Society of Analytical Psychology of America, and the C.G. Jung Foundation of New York, who had actually worked with Jung in Zurich.

Harding explains the mandala and its effects in a manner that makes Jung's theories more easily grasped. In her work, Harding stays true to the Jungian interpretation of the mandala and the need for its spontaneous occurrence within patients if it is to be truly beneficial. She explains that the mandala is a true symbol, a living experience per se, as it represents a reality that is potential or which exists in the unconscious realm. Harding, like Jung, is careful to point out that a mandala is a living symbol and not a sign, as it arises "spontaneously in dream or phantasy and is progressively delimited and built up during the unfolding of the unconscious material" (1973, 360). Harding is adamant that a mandala cannot be manufactured deliberately. This is because manufactured mandalas cannot alter the condition of the psyche. She states that "a symbol arising out of unconscious depths is not made; it is a true mirror image of how things are in the unseen part of the psyche" (Harding 1973, 387).

Harding also explains that when a patient creates a true picture of their inner situation by allowing the unconscious to dictate what is created, his/her psychic situation undergoes "a change corresponding to the changing images in the picture" (1973, 377). As we can see, the idea that a mandala must be produced spontaneously had remained a constant within Jungian psychoanalysis.

So when and why does the mandala spontaneously manifest itself?

Harding explains that repressed parts of the psyche are expressed via projection, and that our projections must be recognized, disentangled from the situations in life that made them evident, and then brought back into the circle of the psyche if we are to achieve individuation. This process is not a smooth one, but rather involves a considerable amount of inner conflict due to the fact that some of these repressed parts come from the mother and/or father, some from remote ancestors, and others from untraceable origins that manifest themselves in extremely strange ways (1973, 386-387). Harding states,

The marvel is that there is not a perpetual state of war within the psyche, for each of these elements is endowed with energy and so cannot die. Fortunately for our sanity, many of these irreconcilable elements lie deep within the unconscious, locked in primordial sleep; those which may be stirred are shut away in separate compartments. But as life progresses and an increase of consciousness is achieved, the inner conflicts awaken, and the problem of reconciling the oppositions they reveal has to be undertaken as a serious and urgent task. It is at this time that the mandala symbolism begins to appear in dreams and other unconscious products, pointing the way in which the conflicts can be resolved. (1973, 387)

Thus, the purpose of the mandala is to unify disparate psychic elements under the new rulership of the Self, rather than the ego (Harding 1973, 383).

In *Psychic Energy: Its Source and its Transformation*, Harding draws upon Tibetan Buddhism to aid in her discussion and explanation of the mandala by first discussing Jung's travel to India and his discussions with a "Lamaistic abbott" about the Tibetan Buddhist mandala (1973, 391). Furthermore, Harding states that the precise use of a mandala may be revealed by looking at its use in Tibet, and uses the *chod* (cutting through the ego) ritual as an example in which

the mandala plays a key role in the yogin's aim to "transcend ego consciousness and attain to consciousness of the Self" (1973, 392). Harding felt that the ritual of *chod* paralleled the psychoanalysis patient's experience of undergoing the individuation process, by highlighting the fact that once an individual recognizes and assimilates his/her projections, they lose their power and the patient's "unconditional commitment to the world is relaxed" (1973, 393). I would argue that Harding's explanation of *chod* is not entirely accurate. Indeed the practitioner's goal is to cut through ego consciousness; however, it is not for the purpose of attaining the consciousness of the "Self" (in the Jungian understanding), but rather it has the purpose of cutting through the ego in order to remove the false notion of an individual self and thus realize the truth of *Anatta* (no-self). Thus, we see that the commonality to be found is in the cutting off of egotism; however the end result is not similar.

Despite the fact that Harding sees parallels between the Tibetan Buddhist use of the mandala and the psychotherapy patient's use of the mandala with respect to outcomes, she does acknowledge that their procedures differ greatly, and that the psychotherapy patient would not benefit from attempting to use the mandala in the manner used by the Tibetans. Harding draws upon an excerpt from *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, in which Jung warns that the Westerner should not be taking up the practice of the Chinese yogin, "for then it would still be a matter of his will and consciousness, and would only strengthen the latter against the unconscious, bringing about the very effect which should have been avoided" (Harding 1973, 395).

More recently, the mandala is widely used among art psychotherapists to increase self-awareness and/or as a tool that offers a way for patients to disclose their feelings and release emotions. Unlike Jung and Harding, art psychotherapists actively encourage the creation of mandalas by their patients. For the purposes of therapy, a mandala is generally considered to be any piece of artwork that is created within the context of a circle (Henderson et. al. 2005, 2).

A study done by art psychotherapist Maralynn Hagood Slegelis set out to test the views that drawing within a circle (mandala) is calming and relaxing. Slegelis states, "To measure such a phenomenon, angles were used to determine possible differences in emotional states between subjects who drew within a circle and those who drew within a square. Angles are interpreted by many art psychotherapists as depictions of frustration and anger (or associated feelings), whereas curvilinear expressions often indicate a state of relaxation" (1987, 305). The results showed that there were significantly fewer angles within circles than within squares, lending support to the theory that drawing mandalas has a calming effect (1987, 308). Patti Henderson, graduate psychology student at Texas A&M University, states that "the mandala serves as a symbolic representation of emotionally laden and conflicting material, yet at the same time provides a sense of order and integration to this material" (Henderson et. al. 2005, 2). It can serve as a tool for the patient to disclose trauma symbolically rather than in the form of a narrative.

Within therapy, the mandala has been found beneficial in many patients including those with schizophrenia and psychotic disorders, dissociative

disorders, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and dementia (Henderson, et. al 2005, 2). However, there is limited empirical research to support this finding. As a result, Henderson and fellow researchers set out to conduct an empirical study on the effectiveness of the mandala as a therapeutic tool. They examined the healing benefits of creating mandalas for individuals suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). The benefits were measured in terms of changes in the variables of PTSD symptoms, depressive symptoms, anxiety, spiritual meaning, and the frequency of occurrence of physical symptoms and illness” (2005, 1). The results showed that mandala creation did indeed aid in the healing process. The experimental group had less severe symptoms than the control group a month after the study. Furthermore, because of the fact that the benefits weren’t apparent until one month after the study, this suggests that the use of mandalas in therapy actually leads to changes deep within cognition. As a result Henderson concludes, “the drawing of a mandala provides cognitive integration and organization to complex emotional experiences that will give a sense of personal meaning as well as serving as a mechanism of therapeutic exposure as does the written disclosure task” (2005, 3).

Heavily influenced by Jungian psychology, art therapist Joan Kellogg (1922 – 2004) also requests that her patients create mandalas (Kellogg 1992, 139). Subjects are not, however, instructed regarding the contents of the mandala. Ms. Kellogg believes that the mandala can provide information pertaining to the current relationship between the ego and the Self within the artist. She further states that the patient enters what can almost be described as

a hypnotic state when working with the mandala, in which the mandala is at work rather than the conscious desires of the patient. Once the mandala is complete, the patient can then critically participate in the finished product for the purposes of healing (1992, 36).

Ms. Kellogg developed the “Archetypal Stages of the Great Round Mandala”, which consists of twelve prototypical mandala forms that reflect “a spiraling path of psychological development” (Fincher 1991, 149). Each stage has its own set of typical designs/images that are found within the mandala. The following are Kellogg’s twelve stages and their corresponding explanations:

- Stage# 1 “the void”, as the deep unconscious
- Stage# 2 “the bliss”, as oceanic experience
- Stage # 3 “the labyrinth”, phylogenic memories
- Stage # 4 “the beginning”, oral stage, baby in the womb or baby at breast
- Stage # 5 “the target”, the anal stage
- Stage# 6 “the split or Dragon Flight”, the phallic or oedipal stage
- Stage # 7 “Squaring of Circle”, the genital stage – “thus we see those four important stages of Freud...Illness that eventuates from trauma at specific stages may be reflected in art products.
- The cycle of becoming a socialized individual is completed.
- Stage # 8, “Functioning Ego”, would be full autonomy or differentiation or individuation. The process begins to reverse itself, that is, we have filled up and now we empty as goals are accomplished or not accomplished.
- Stage # 9 can be imagined as a person integrated in to a larger organism, such as society, anticipating the ending of a cycle of growth called *Crystallization*.
- Stage # 10 signals the end and is called *Gates of Death*.
- Stage # 11, *Fragmentation*, dismemberment, is the breaking down of a transient feeling of integration, which everyone experiences while traveling through what is called *Passages in Life*.
- Stage # 12 is the moment which, in physical process, can be compared to both the final end and rebirth experience, and like the physical process of food ingestion, the expelling of the product. The body also expels internally the energy transformed by the body from food; the emotional feeling may be insight or closure. Thus the cycle keeps repeating itself, for this stage is called *Transcendent Ecstasy* that carries the essence for the next cycle. (Kellogg 1992, 141 – 142)

According to Kellogg, the circle of the Great Round can point the therapist and subject in the direction toward the type of psychological issue that must be addressed in therapy. Kellogg asserts that opposite stages may represent polar opposites in meaning. The following are examples of these opposites in meaning:

Stages as axes

4 Love ----- # 10 Loss
 # 5 Power -----# 11 Powerlessness
 # 6 Separation -----# 12 Union
 #7 Fullness -----# 1 Emptiness
 #8 Singleness -----##2 Multiplicity
 #9 Static Organism -----#3 Becoming
 (1992, 142)

In addition, Kellogg has proposed a hypothesis regarding colour choice as a reflection of conscious and unconscious emotional content within the mandala, which she notes is an open-ended study. Kellogg proposes that red is associated with life force and survival. It is related to the libido, or Id. Yellow is symbolic of homeostasis, or the part of us that seeks preservation in the face of continual change. Lastly, blue is “that force that sluffs off dead cells” (Kellogg 1992, 143). The power behind blue involves both death and rebirth, as death frees energy for birth.

Based on Kellogg’s work with the archetypal stages of the “Great Round Mandala”, she developed the MARI (Mandala Assessment Research Instrument), which is now widely used by art psychotherapists and many contemporary Jungian psychoanalysts alike. The MARI is described as a

comprehensive system based on Jungian concepts that uses mandalas to expose the inner reality of the patient, rather than just what the ego wants us to see. First, the individual taking the Mandala Assessment is asked to choose six symbols from a range of 39 possible symbols that he/she feels an attraction towards. Then, the individual chooses a colour from forty-five possibilities that he/she feels corresponds with the symbol. The symbol and colour cards are then arranged in a circle comprised of the stages from the Great Round of the Mandala as noted above. It is asserted that the relationship between the symbols and colours in the Great Round combine to show an accurate picture of the psyche in its current condition. Last, the individual is asked to think of an issue that is preoccupying his/her life, followed by choosing one or two more symbols and colours based on an intuition that the cards could provide guidance for their issue. It is believed by Kellogg that the best solution for the individual's specific issue comes from their intuition in the context of the MARI (Williams 2006).

Thus it becomes clear that some contemporary Jungian analysts have deviated from the traditional Jungian teachings regarding the mandala. While the patient chooses his/her symbols and colours for their Great Round Mandala within the MARI without any guidance from the analyst, the fact remains that the patient is indeed being presented with the idea to create a mandala and thus the behavior is not spontaneously occurring.

The Self-Healing Movement

One can now find many self-help mandala books in their local big chain bookstore. These books provide the self-helper with instructions regarding the creation of mandalas and their believed healing powers. To my astonishment, when reviewing the varied list of titles available, there was even a mandala colouring book in which the self-helper need only insert his or her own colour choice into the pre-constructed mandala form. Who knew that someone struggling with inner conflict need only purchase a mandala colouring book and a package of crayons to gain insight and healing? This fast food version of therapy certainly cuts down on the effort and money normally required of one if he or she were to participate in the traditional forms of psychotherapy. However, just like most fast food, it lacks any true nourishment.

Art therapist Susan F. Fincher wrote a self-help book entitled *Creating Mandalas: For Insight, Healing, and Self-Expression*. This book “offers guidance in choosing art materials, techniques, and colors for the creation of personal mandalas; and discusses the symbolism of colors, numbers, shapes, and motifs such as birds and flowers” according to the description provided on the backside of the book. Let us first look at Fincher’s hypothesis regarding why humans have come to believe that the circle holds so much meaning. She states:

Consider for a moment where we all originate. We grow from a tiny round egg, supported in the womb of our mother. In her womb we are encircled and firmly held within a spherical space. When it is time to be born, we are pushed by a series of circular muscles down through the tubular birth canal and out through a circular opening into the world. Once born, we find ourselves on a planet that is itself circular, moving in a circular orbit around the sun...The subliminal experience of circular movement, like the

memory of our mother's womb, is encoded in our bodies. Thus we are predisposed to respond to the circle. (1991, 2-3)

When it comes to the mandala, Fincher states:

When we create a mandala, we make a personal symbol that reveals who we are at that moment. The circle we draw contains – even invites – conflicting parts of our nature to appear. Yet even when conflict surfaces, there is an undeniable release of tension when making a mandala. Perhaps this is because the form of the circle recalls the safe closeness of the womb. The calming effect of drawing a circle might also be caused by its capacity to serve as a symbol of the space occupied by our bodies. Drawing a circle may be something like drawing a protective line around the physical and psychological space that we each identify as oneself (1991, 24).

Throughout Fincher's book, she discusses the mandala practices of various cultures, particularly those of the Tibetan Buddhists and the Navajo Indians in order to give the reader some idea of the historical usage of the mandala. Furthermore, with respect to the realm of western psychotherapy, Fincher primarily discusses the insights of Carl Jung and Joan Kellogg. Essentially, Fincher provides the reader with a Cole's notes goulash of various mandala theories and practices in an apparent effort to prove the psychological and spiritual healing powers of the mandala. For instance, after briefly discussing Jung's realizations concerning the mandala, Fincher states, "As it is with Jung, so it is with you. The Self generates a pattern within your inner life. Your mandalas reveal the dynamics of the Self as it creates a matrix where your unique identity unfolds. The mandala circle mirrors the Self as the container for the psyche's striving toward self-realization or wholeness. Within the mandala, motifs from the shared past of all human beings and symbols of individual experience find expression" (Fincher 1991, 20). Interestingly enough, there is no mention of the

fact that Jung believed the appearance of the mandala symbol in the dreams, fantasies and/or artwork of the patient to occur in periods of intense chaos and confusion.

Ultimately, according to Fincher, if we are to become “whole”, we must establish a relationship with our centre (Self). This relationship is to be forged in a sacred space, which can be found in the creation of mandalas.

The mandala invokes the influence of the Self, the underlying pattern of order and wholeness, the web of life that supports and sustains us. By making a mandala we create our own sacred space, a place of protection, a focus for the concentration of our energies. When we express our inner conflicts in the symbolic form of the mandala, we project them outside ourselves. A sense of unity may be achieved from the act of drawing within the circle (Fincher 1991, 25).

Fincher advises the self-helper that the creation of mandalas is best done in solitude “with an attitude of reverence for the eternal patterns of the Self and respect for the truth of the moment”. She further notes: “healing, self-discovery, and personal growth are then invited when we make a spontaneous creation of colour and form within a circle. With care and attention we can learn the symbolic language of the mandala and go deeper into the meaning of who we really are”. She then goes on to say that her book provides the self-helper with “step-by-step instructions” for mandala creation, offering advice regarding methods of interpreting ones mandalas so that they receive the benefit of “greater self-understanding” (1991, 25). This appears to be a glaring contradiction. How can an action be spontaneous if step-by-step instructions have been provided? Moreover, how can it be truly spontaneous when the

individual had already decided that he or she was going to create a mandala for purpose of healing and/or insight?

Fincher lists suggested materials for mandala creation, such as markers, paints, white or black drawing paper and paper plates (1991, 26). She then advises the mandala creator to place his or her materials on the workstation and sit in a comfortable position while beginning to relax ones mental state in order to enhance creativity. Fincher states, "While working on your mandala, you will get better results if you are able to suspend judging and thinking as much as possible. There is no right or wrong mandala. Each is simply a reflection of the person you are at that moment in time. In order to give expression to the unconscious, let instinct guide your choices of colors and forms" (1991, 26). Once the mandala is complete, the creator is to decide where the top is located followed by provided a title for the mandala. Following this, she advises the creator to list the colours, numbers, and shapes found within his or her mandala, all the while making a list of associations pertaining to the colours, numbers and shapes (1991, 28-29). (Fincher lists associations with colours, shapes, numbers and symbols in her book.) Fincher states, "Once your list of associations is complete, read back through it, referring to the title you assigned your mandala. You may begin to notice a pattern of meaning in the words you have written down. Perhaps your list of associations will suggest a theme. Next, attempt to express the central theme of your mandala, derived from its title and your associations, in a few sentences (1991, 29)".

With respect to colour choice, Fincher states ones choice of colours expresses ones innermost thoughts, feelings and intuitions. In the analysis of colour choice, the self-helper can decode the messages being sent by his or her unconscious (1991, 33). The location of colour within the mandala is also important according to Fincher. "Colors placed in the top half of your mandala most often relate to conscious processes. Those in the bottom half tend to show what is going on in your unconscious" (1991, 35).



Mandala from Fincher's creatingmandalas.com

Assuming that the self-helper has read Fincher's book in its entirety prior to attempting his or her first mandala, the question regarding the true spontaneity of mandala creation once again arises. Keeping in mind Fincher's assertion that the mandala reflects the contents of its creator's unconscious, would the pre-instruction of colour, number and shape symbolism/associations not influence the self-helper's choices at some level thereby perverting the results?

Concluding Remarks

While Carl Jung and early Jungian psychoanalysts such as Harding maintain that the mandala should only be produced spontaneously, some contemporary Jungian analysts, art psychotherapists such as Joan Kellogg, and mandala self-help books such as the one by Fincher, have advocated that the mandala does not need to be produced spontaneously in order to have a healing effect. However, despite the fact that Kellogg and Fincher encourage the creation of mandalas for the purposes of healing, Kellogg does not pre-instruct or provide colour or shape associations to the creator prior to mandala creation. Furthermore, it is clear that the use of the mandala for the purpose of healing has taken on various interpretations and applications since Jung introduced it to the world of psychotherapy. Jung and earlier Jungian analysts maintain that the creation of mandalas can have a healing and/or calming effect on the patient and be used as a diagnostic tool if created spontaneously; however, it should be remembered that Jungian theory states that mandalas manifest themselves in the minds of their creators when the creators are experiencing intense inner conflict, chaos and confusion. This is the very reason why they are psychotherapy patients to begin with. Art therapists such as Kellogg depart from Jungian ideals in that they encourage patients to create mandalas; however, they maintain the idea that the mandala can be used by therapists a diagnostic tool, hence the use of the MARI Card test. In addition to using the patient's completed mandala as a diagnostic tool, art therapists believe that the very creation of the

mandala can have a healing effect on an individual because provides an outlet express feelings that the patient may have difficulty verbalizing. Lastly, self-help mandala books, such as the one discussed by Susanne Fincher, advise the self-helper to create mandalas spontaneously, all the while providing step-by-step instructions for their creation in addition to possible symbolic meanings/ associations of colours, shapes and numbers. The mandala in the self-help context is meant to promote emotional healing and personal insight.

CHAPTER 4: Toward Reconciliation

Jungian psychoanalyst Jeffrey B. Rubin's essay entitled "Close Encounters of a New Kind: Toward an Integration of Psychoanalysis and Buddhism" is included in the volume entitled *Encountering Buddhism: Western Psychology and Buddhist Teachings*. In this essay, Rubin compares Psychoanalysis and Buddhism along three lines: visions of ideal health, approaches to the mind and views of the self, and processes used to attain their respective notions of ideal health (Rubin 2003, 42). In this chapter, I have borrowed Rubin's three areas of investigation in order to briefly compare the Tibetan Buddhist versus psychoanalytic and art therapeutic views of ideal health, the self and/or non-self and its relationship to the mandala, and the process of attaining the ideal vision of health as it relates to the mandala. It is my intention that through this brief comparison (which draws on the material presented in previous chapters), any areas in which these two seemingly highly distinct philosophies may achieve some degree of reconciliation will become apparent.

View of Ideal Health

First, I must preface this section by stating that the type of health or well-being that concerns the psychoanalyst/art therapist or Tibetan Buddhist monastic practitioner does not concern one's physical health. This is of course not to say that either tradition does not agree that physical health is important, but rather that their focuses surround the ideal development of one's inner experience and

ultimately the attainment of inner happiness or well-being for the psychoanalyst or art therapist and self-transformation for the Tibetan Buddhist.

Psychoanalysis as a whole is a treatment method for mental or emotional imbalances. This method was created not for an individual who already sustains an adequate level of mental and emotional well-being, but for the individual who is not experiencing a suitable level of mental well-being. After all, individuals tend only to seek the help of a psychoanalyst when experiencing some form of mental turmoil. The focus then becomes one in which the mental illness is cured, the problem is fixed. For Jungian psychoanalysts, the ultimate goal is that of individuation, or wholeness. Becoming whole, or individuated, means that we have integrated those aspects of our personalities that have been overlooked in order to navigate our worlds with greater ease. The ego in its current state must be dissolved and placed in a subordinate position to the Self, and the shadow must be faced in order for the Self to truly become the centre of personality. This process is known as "individuation". Jung stated that one must meet his/her shadow and learn to co-exist with the difficult and even horrifying aspects of him/herself. "There is no wholeness without a recognition of the opposites" (Fordham 1953, 77). It should be noted, that in Jung's opinion, even if one is able to achieve self-realization, this does not extinguish suffering. Jung felt that the individual must endure suffering if he/she is to overcome it. This was evidenced in Jung's "Letters", 1951- 1961. Jung wrote the following:

Man has to cope with the problem of suffering. The Oriental wants to get rid of suffering by casting it off. Western man tries to suppress suffering with drugs. But suffering has to be overcome and the only way to

overcome it is to endure it. We learn that only from him [the Crucified Christ]. (1975, 236)

On the other hand, Tibetan Buddhism searches for the inner experience of enlightenment in order to liberate all beings from the suffering brought about by cyclic existence. The first part of making this goal a reality is to gain “*bodhi* mind”, the intention to attain enlightenment for the benefit of others. This can only be attained by way of understanding fully the doctrines of emptiness, selflessness and dependant arising. One must understand that nothing inherently exists – all phenomenon found in cyclic existence arise, remain, and pass away because of causes and conditions outside themselves. With reference to selflessness, one understands completely that there is no “I” that exists independently. Once one has gained *bodhi* Mind, he/she is a *Bodhisattva*, an enlightened being, who remains in earthly existence for the benefit of others. So we see that while the Tibetan Buddhist monastic practitioner is aiming for enlightenment within himself/herself, the focus is not on the individual but on all living things. This differs from the ultimate goal of the Jungian psychoanalyst, where the focus is completely individual.

View of Self /Non-Self and View of the Mandala

As discussed in Chapter three, for Jungian analysts the “Self” includes all elements of the psyche, both conscious and unconscious (personal and collective) and thus is both personal and non-personal. According to Jung, the ego is only the centre of consciousness, but the Self is the centre of the whole personality, and includes the ego, the remainder of consciousness, and the

unconscious. The ego, which is full of distortions and projections, must be tempered before the Self can emerge. Please note, however, that an individuated ego is still required for one to adequately function in the world. As noted above, the individuation process involves placing the ego in a subordinate relationship to the Self and reconciling the overlooked aspects of our personalities, no matter how alarming (such as in the case of the shadow).

Within Tibetan Buddhism, there is a belief in the concept of “not-self” or *Anatta*, that is, that no “self” inherently exists – it has no enduring quality. This lesson is laid out by Guatama Buddha in the *Anatta Lakkhana Sutta* - Discourse on the Characteristic of *Anatta* (Samyutta Nikaya 22.59). According to this discourse as translated into English from Pali, Gautama Buddha stated that there is no “*Atta*” in terms of a metaphysical self. This is one that has a permanent essence that survives death. For something to be “*Atta*”, it must have total control of the body, feelings, impulses, intentions, thought, consciousness, or perceptions. It must also be permanent and blissful (*Anatta-lakkhana Sutta*). According to Tibetan Buddhist theory, no such thing exists; however, the belief in a metaphysical self leads to suffering. Tibetan Buddhism does not deny the need for the term “self” as employed as a reflexive pronoun. The use of the term “self” is seen as conventional – it is a label for the sum of parts. This type of self, also known as ego (the sense of “I” as separate from what is “not-I”), is composed of the five *skandhas* of form, sensation/feeling, perception/name, intellect/mental factors and consciousness. Each *skandha* builds on the other, gradually allowing ego to expand its territory and give rise to a false notion of a

permanent “Self”. These *skandhas* are deified in Vajrayana as the five *dhyani* Buddhas and are represented in various mandalas. In addition, the emotive part of our personalities consisting of five disturbing emotions: anger (wrath), ego (pride), strong desire (concupiscence), jealousy and mental darkness (ignorance), are also associated with each of the five *dhyani* Buddhas, and thus also found in mandalas.

Given some thought, it appears that the conventional “self” or ego in Tibetan Buddhism also describes the “ego” of Jungian psychoanalysis. Both Tibetan Buddhism and Jungian psychoanalytic theory assert that the ego needs to be dissolved, or put in a subordinate position for optimal well-being. Clearly, one commonality between both traditions is that they both have a focus on trying to deconstruct the ego; however, each has a different reason behind this focus. Psychotherapy is attempting to allow the true Self its expression, whereas Tibetan Buddhism is trying to bring the light the concept of not-self. Furthermore, it seems that the metaphysical “*Atta*” which is not believed to exist in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is strikingly similar to Jung’s idea of the individuated “Self”.

When it comes to the mandala, the Tibetan Buddhist variety is meticulously planned and prepared with very little room for artistic expression. It is a meditation aid and tool for ritual access to the powers of the *dhyani* Buddhas. It can also be described as a symbol of the macrocosm in which the human person is endeavoring to identify with. Alternately, the Jungian psychoanalyst maintains that the mandala is essentially a spontaneously created snap-shot of the individual creator’s psyche in its totality. Jung stated that he began to notice

the spontaneous creation of mandalas in patients who were in a state of neurosis - in a period of mental chaos and confusion. Jung and later Jungian analysts theorize that the mandala is an attempt from the unconscious at reducing this confusion and bringing order. It is the psyche's way of transforming apparently irreconcilable opposites that are occurring in the unconscious realm, and of bringing the ego into a subservient position. Jung states, "Individual mandalas make use of a well-nigh unlimited wealth of motifs and symbolic allusions, from which it can easily be seen that they are endeavoring to express either the totality of the individual in his inner or outer experience of the world, or its essential point of reference. Their object is the *self* in contradistinction to the *ego*, which is only the point of reference for consciousness, whereas the self comprises of the totality of the psyche altogether, i.e., conscious and unconscious (Jung 1972, 5). Lastly, the mandala created in art therapy is often a suggestion on the part of the therapist; however, the contents of the mandala are completely decided by the patient. The mandala can serve several purposes in this context: it can serve as a diagnostic tool, a tool for disclosure in place of a narrative, and as a tool that creates a healing effect just by way of allowing emotions to be released.

Clearly then, both the Western psychotherapeutic and the Tibetan Buddhist mandala have a transformative effect, which is considered to be necessary for attaining the goal of ultimate wellness in each tradition; however, the concepts of wellness in each tradition are different. Tibetan Buddhists believe that there can be an end to suffering, where Jung believed that we must

endure suffering. Also, we can see a parallel between the characteristics of the Tibetan Buddhist and Jungian mandalas in terms of some of their contents. The psychoanalytic mandala contains everything belonging to the Self, which includes paired opposites, contents of the shadow, the collective unconscious, etc., and thus contains both the microcosm and the macrocosm. The Tibetan Buddhist mandala also contains the microcosm and the macrocosm. It contains all components of personality (five *skandhas*), and the paired opposites (the nature of samsara and of the “perfect expression of buddhahood”). Moreover, in Tibetan Buddhism, the five disturbing emotions are paired with each of the five *dhyani* Buddhas with the belief that through mandala meditation, these disturbing emotions can be transformed to their opposites. The paired opposites within the Tibetan Buddhist context bring to mind the nature of the archetypes in Jungian theory, as they are paired opposites. Furthermore, the disturbing emotions as discussed in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition bring the Jungian psychoanalytic concept of the shadow to mind, as it too makes an appearance in the mandala. Lastly, it is interesting to note that both Tibetan Buddhist and psychoanalytic theory agree that negative emotions are not to be exterminated, but rather transformed or replaced, as the attempted extermination of these emotions would only cause further trouble due to the fact that they contain their own energy and cannot be destroyed.

Process of Reaching Ideal Health

Tibetan Buddhism examines the self/non-self by using the meditative method. The ultimate goal of meditation is to gain the wisdom of the emptiness of self-existence and thereby end suffering. This knowledge is achieved by meditating on the various aspects of the *dhyani* Buddhas, and the mandala aids in this goal by making the goal of meditation a visual accomplishment.

In the esoteric tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, while many mandalas are created with various mediums, the highest level of mandala construction is one in which the mandala is created within the mind of the practitioner (visualization). The practitioner creates and holds each and every aspect of the mandala in his/her mind. The precise details of the mandala are prescribed in the *Sadhanas*. However, most practitioners are not able to gain the level of introspection required of visualization, and thus must create the mandala in graphic form. The details of the rituals associated with the creation of a mandala must be completed in with incredible attention due to the importance of the end result. Consequently, the creation of a visual mandala is always presided over by a Master, and the apprentices must already have a high degree of spiritual maturity, which takes years of study to attain. Furthermore, the apprentices will have participated in a lengthy period of training in the technical aspects of artistry, including the way that symbols are to be drawn and the philosophical concepts underlying them. There is little room for artistic expression in the creation of a mandala, as all symbols, figures and colours have been directed in detail via the *Sadhanas*.

Psychoanalysis examines the self by investigating self-experience both historically and in the present. Typically, events of the individual's past are investigated in order to determine one's mental functioning in the present. However, when it comes to the use of the mandala in Jungian psychoanalysis, the focus is not on the past but rather the present. The mandala is a visual representation of the creator's psyche at a precise moment, which shows the clash that is taking place within the psyche between the ego and the contents of the unconscious, the resulting confusion from this clash, and points toward a resolution. For Jung and later Jungian psychoanalysts, in order for a mandala to be truly useful for therapy, it must be spontaneously occurring. There should be no suggestion on the part of the analyst. Moving away from this belief, art therapists have directed patients to engage in the creation of mandalas in order to use them as a diagnostic and healing tool. However, aside from suggesting that patients create visuals within the context of a circle, little other suggestion is given. Even farther from Jungian theory regarding the mandala, today's self-healing books, such as Susanne Fincher's self-help mandala book not only suggest that people create mandalas for the purposes of healing, but also alert them to the meaning of colour and symbol choices in advance. Informing the self-helper that he/she should allow the mandala to emerge spontaneously while simultaneously informing the reader of colour and symbol associations prior to the actual creation of a mandala is obvious inconsistency. Thus, it would seem that this disqualifies today's self-help mandala books from having anything substantial to offer either Jungian psychoanalysis or Tibetan Buddhism.

Thus, we see that the process involved in the creation of the mandala varies greatly between the Jungian psychoanalytic, art therapeutic, and Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Within Jungian psychotherapy and art therapy, the contents of the mandalas are not prescribed for the patient, whereas Tibetan Buddhist mandalas are carefully prescribed in advance with great detail and precision and are overseen by a Master. They also differ greatly with respect to the creator of the mandala. In Jungian psychotherapy, mandalas are said to spontaneously occur in patients experiencing neurosis (significant tension between the ego and the unconscious). Similarly in art therapy, patients experiencing some form of mental or emotional anguish create the mandala. On the other hand, Tibetan Buddhist mandalas are created by monastic practitioners with *bodhi* Mind that have received intense and detailed training in the art and ritual of the mandala.

Toward a Reconciliation

Can these two practices be reconciled, or even integrated? Admittedly, when I first began this research, I would not have believed that there was any way in which this could be possible. However, once more digging was completed; it became apparent that while the two practices differ greatly in many respects, they do share some similarities. The concept of ego in both traditions is similar in that it describes the “I” that has created boundaries separating itself from everything that it perceives as “not-I”. Furthermore, both the Jungian and Tibetan traditions seek to place ego in a more subservient position in order to reach their respective goals of individuation for the Jungian and enlightenment

for the Tibetan Buddhist. With respect to the mandala, both the Tibetan and Jungian mandalas contain elements that are microcosmic and macrocosmic. The Tibetan mandala reflects both the individual and the universe and is used as a tool that aids the individual in his/her quest to identify with universal truths. Similarly, the Jungian mandala points toward the contents of the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious, which contains the universal archetypes. Moreover, each mandala contains paired opposites: those of the archetypes in the case of the Jungian mandala and the five disturbing emotions versus the five wisdoms in the case of the Tibetan mandala. We also see some similarity in the idea that negative emotions, which are reflected in the mandala, must be transformed and not suppressed, as both traditions assert that the negative emotions contain their own energy and cannot be destroyed.

However, similarities aside, it seems that each tradition and practice could offer some valuable perspectives and tools to the Westerner from a pragmatic standpoint. Each of these traditions appears to be at opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to the emotional/mental state of the mandala maker. Jungian psychotherapy patients make use of their spontaneously created mandalas in order to bring order to the chaos occurring within their psyche. They have no cohesive sense of Self or solid psychological functioning according to the Jungian ideal. Art therapy patients are also experiencing some form of mental or emotional turmoil. On the other hand, Tibetan Buddhist monks already have a developed solid psychological functioning. They have the ability to sustain long periods of meditation, which requires great inner cohesion. To

further elaborate on this idea, I draw on the work of Jack Engler, a practicing transpersonal psychotherapist and teacher of Buddhist psychology. Engler stated "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody" (Engler 2001, 117). He comments on the concepts of self/not-self from a developmental standpoint (one which asserts that human development involves systematic psychological changes from birth to death), by essentially stating that a strong sense of self must be in place prior to undertaking the work involved in fully comprehending the notion of "not-self". Engler states:

The farther reaches of meditation practice require a strong ego in the psychoanalytic sense of the capacity to assimilate, organize, and integrate experience; and a relatively well-integrated sense of self. With more compromised ego functions, or a self-structure that lacks sufficient inner coherence, continuity across time and states of consciousness, or a sense of its own fundamental goodness and worth, intensely practiced meditation based on moment-to-moment observation of mind/body experience can run certain risks: increasing anxiety at a minimum; producing fragmentation at worst. (2001,117)

If we relate this to mandala, one could theorize that the mandala found in Western psychotherapy has the purpose of helping one become "somebody" with good psychological functioning and the ability to organize and integrate experience, after which, if one chooses, the Tibetan Buddhist mandala has the purpose of helping the individual to detach from egocentrism and understand principles of selflessness. Engler is of the belief that Western psychotherapy has mapped out the early stages of self development, where Buddhist traditions have mapped out more advanced stages "in which 'decentering' from the egocentrism of early development culminates in selfless altruism" (Engler 20001, 112).

Ultimately, he states that it does not have to be one or the other, but rather both – each having its own value when it comes to psychological well-being.

Engler's developmental approach brings to mind Chogyam Trungpa's assertion that one must first understand the samsaric aspect of the mandala principle before trying to work with the nirvanic aspect. Trungpa describes the samsaric mandala as the "confused" mandala, or the mandala of ignorance. Trungpa states, "Since mandala is based on our ignorance and confusion, there is no point in discussing it unless we know who we are and what we are" (Trungpa 1991, 4). Here we also see a parallel between Trungpa's description of samsaric mandala and the "confused" level of orderly chaos (mandala principle) and the Jungian mandala, which is also born of chaos and confusion. Essentially, Trungpa is saying that we cannot begin to work with the nirvanic mandala until we understand fully our current situation (of samsara) and what is creating this situation. Thus, it seems that Trungpa also advocates a developmental approach when it comes to the mandala. Perhaps this is because his target audience is Western students and not Tibetan monks and nuns, as the Tibetan Buddhist monastic practitioner already understands the nature of samsara when mandala work is begun.

Harvey B. Aronson, Ph.D., M.S.W, a psychotherapist and Buddhist meditation teacher authored a book entitled *Buddhist Practice on Western Ground: Reconciling Eastern Ideals and Western Psychology*. In his book, Aronson discussed and added to Engler's statement that "you have to be somebody before you can be nobody" in such a way that the reader is made

more aware of the difference between an ontological self and a psychological self. He states that when Engler refers to “somebody”, he is referring to a person having some sort of psychological identity and independence. Aronson further notes that in order to be successful in meditation, a person must first have “sufficient psychological selfhood” in order to apply themselves and engage in self-reflection. What is more, Aronson states that a person need not have completed his or her “psychological work” in order to begin exploring Buddhist theory (2004, 71). Aronson further adds to Engler’s discussion by explaining that “the realization of the absence of self does not negate the continued existence of the psychological self” (2004, 70). What he is saying, is that through the practice of meditation on the principle of “not-self”, we come to understand that no “self” exists in the ontological sense. This does not, however, stop us from functioning psychologically. In fact, he states that this actually strengthens emotional and cognitive functioning (Aronson 2004, 71). The above comments made by Aronson are compatible with some Tibetan Buddhist ideology, as the Tibetan Buddhist also denies the existence of an ontological self, but does not deny the need for psychological functioning. Without psychological functioning, one could not engage in the work associated with the quest for enlightenment.

Thus, both Engler and Aronson are of the opinion that the Buddhist concept and goal of “not-self” and the psychoanalytic concept /goal of the self need not be mutually exclusive. They both postulate that there can be some reconciliation or integration between the two traditions despite their differences. However, one must remember that both Engler and Aronson practice and/or

teach Buddhism. Thus, their ultimate goal is not that of individuation in Jungian sense. Jungian psychoanalysts state that the ultimate goal is that of individuation, or the achievement of a fully integrated sense of "Self". Given that the self contains both conscious and unconscious elements, including the collective unconscious, it would seem that the Jungian analyst ultimately believes in a metaphysical self. On the other hand, a Tibetan Buddhist will tell you that no metaphysical self exists.

As the mandala in both traditions is a symbol meant to lead the practitioner to the ultimate goal of "Self", or "No-Self", it could follow that these mandalas produce outcomes that are in some ways compatible when one realizes the definitions of psychological/conventional self or "Self" (Individuated) in the psychoanalytic sense, and what defines conventional self, "*Atta*" (metaphysical Self), and "*Anatta*" (Not-Self) in the Buddhist sense. They are compatible in that they both share the goal of placing ego in a subordinate position and consequently allowing for conscious knowledge of what was previously unconscious; however, their end goals differ.

When it comes down to it, I would agree with Engler when he says "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody". Certainly the highly trained Buddhist monk is a "somebody" prior undertaking the creation of a mandala. Proper psychological functioning is required for such an undertaking. However, as I have not grown up in the Tibetan Buddhist culture, I cannot comment as to whether the experience of neurosis and the spontaneous manifestation of a mandala while in a neurotic state is a known phenomenon. Thus, I cannot

comment as to whether the outcomes of mandala creation according to Jungian practice would even apply in this context. However, as I have grown up in the West, and have studied Jungian psychology, I feel that I am in a place to comment on whether these traditions can be integrated or reconciled in a Western context.

My view is that the theories behind the mandala symbol in each tradition can each be psychologically useful to the westerner depending on the situation he or she is faced with. Meditating on the Tibetan Buddhist theory of no-self, or egolessness, could be highly beneficial for one who has solid psychological functioning and is ready to move beyond his/her established psychological boundaries and relate to the world in a manner that is less "individual" in nature. On the other hand, attempting to come to terms with all contents of the unconscious in order to achieve self-realization is beneficial for the Westerner when plagued by mental instability, thereby allowing for successful maneuvering through daily life with a sense of well-being.

This brings us back to the topic of the mandala itself. Certainly, if one has not been prepared to participate in the ritual creation of a Tibetan mandala according to Tibetan Buddhist standards, he or she cannot expect to achieve the desired outcome associated with this ritual. In addition, one should also not be engaging in mandala creation with the hopes of uncovering the hidden contents of the unconscious in their most authentic state if the nature and symbolism of the mandala has been pre-explained or suggested. As Jungian analysts point out, in order for the mandala to have any transformative power, it must be a

spontaneous creation. Only then will the contents of the unconscious have the ability to shine through, as they will not have been impeded by the ego. This then leaves the use of the mandala as a healing tool used by art therapists, which provides the patient with another method of disclosure and an avenue in which to release pent up emotions thereby creating a calming effect for the patient. This type of mandala creation varies greatly from the Jungian mandala and the Tibetan Buddhist mandala, as the end goal is not the integration of the "Self" (as defined by Jung) or not-self, but simply that of psychological healing via self expression.

Thus, it seems any type of reconciliation is only to be found between the Tibetan Buddhist mandala and the Jungian mandala, in that they both have the common effect of the deconstruction of the ego. In addition, the underlying theories of "Self" and "*Anatta*" (not-self) can both be useful to the Westerner, as they each can serve a different purpose toward the promotion of well-being. However, the successful ultimate outcome from each, individuation for Jungian psychoanalysis and enlightenment for Tibetan Buddhism, are not compatible. Jungian psychoanalysts see the ultimate end goal as that of fully integrated sense of "Self", which is individualized and appears to be metaphysical in nature. On the other hand, when the ego is deconstructed within the Tibetan Buddhist belief system, one fully understands the doctrine of emptiness - there was never a metaphysical self to begin with. This wisdom allows one to become a *Bodhisattva*, whose goal is to help end the suffering of others. We see then,

that the goal of the mandala in Jungian psychoanalysis is individual, whereas the goal of the mandala in Tibetan Buddhism is ultimately universal.

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