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Dough molds such as these are ritual objects called *zan par*. For lay Buddhists in Tibet, the utilization of *gTor ma* has been a common way to interact with the pantheon of deities for the purpose of receiving worldly benefits. According to Tibetan Buddhist belief, all events in this world are a result of past deeds, but are also influenced by the actions of various deities and demons. The offering of *gTor ma* cakes, along with other offerings and meditations, is given either to gain favor of protective deities or to appease malevolent demons.

A closer understanding of the significance of *gTor ma* cake offerings requires an understanding of the accompanying meditative practice. In this practice, the offerer envisions himself as a deity, summoning infinite gifts that become divine offerings of ambrosia. Various goddesses then emanate, again imaginatively, from the offerer and pay homage to him in deified form. After a group of Buddhas complete his final purification, the offerer envisions him or herself giving the offering to the intended deity. As described in Guiseppe Tucci's *The Religions of Tibet*, "here reality is transformed onto a plane of the imagination which is attributed by virtue of meditation a new, more real and more intense reality than normal everyday existence" (Tucci 117). It is within this sacred space that the offerer relates to the deities and effects this-worldly changes from their otherworldly sources.

This meditative practice is made into a ritual and can be performed either by a layman or a lama. The *gTor ma* ritual involves four elements. The first element is the person actually presenting the offering and receiving its benefits. The second element is the entity to which the offering is made. Protective deities called *dharmapalas* provide protection and assistance. Demons, conversely, cause unwanted events such as death or illness. The third element is the offering itself. The offerings are given symbolically through the *gTor ma* cakes, and the types of offerings depend on the deity being approached. For protective deities, offerings of medicines, sweet or good-tasting foods, incense and silk are given. For the malevolent demons, the gifts are usually comprised of blood libations or flesh offerings. Also, scapegoat dolls are used to draw the wrath of the demons away from the offer and his household. The fourth and last element is the vessel in which the offerings are placed. These vessels can be made from gold, silver, copper, brass, wood or terracotta.

The *gTor ma* cakes take the place of actual offerings, vessels and scapegoat dolls. Made from barley-flour, kneaded and molded using *zan par*, *gTor ma* cakes bear images such as those of the offerer and his household, the gifts or offerings, vessels, various animals that carry the vessels, and the eight auspicious signs of Buddhism. Depending on the nature of the deity engaged with, the *gTor ma* cakes are made into different shapes, sizes and colors. Ritual texts describe no fewer than 108 different kinds of *gTor ma*.

Although the particular significance of these *zan par* is unknowable, this information gives valuable insight into the sets of symbols featured. Beginning with the larger of the two, we can see that each side is individually numbered using the Tibetan numbering script. On the first face, beginning from the left, a set of eleven animals is depicted. These animals most likely are offerings to a demon or deity. To the right of the animals is the lotus, a symbol of purity. Past the lotus is shown a set of *gTor ma* offerings. This face ends with the Tibetan numeral for one, carved in the proper reading direction. Given the aforementioned information, the user of this *zan par* would most likely not consider those images as merely representations of offerings. Instead, these images gain significance in the reality encountered during the meditation.

The second face of this *zan par* begins with an arrow, the traditional male symbol, and what appears to be a spindle, the traditional female symbol. This pair of icons is found on many *gTor ma* offerings, and represents male and female scapegoats that exist to draw wrath, harm and bad fortune away from the offerer and his or her household. To the right of this set is a grouping of *gTor ma* offerings, followed by two expertly carved groups of symbols. The first group is the astrological symbols representing the seven traditional planets. The symbols are: a bundle of wood, an arrowhead, a *phur-pa* ritual dagger, a hand, an eye, a crescent and a disk; they signify Saturn, Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, the Moon and the Sun, respectively. The second group is unidentified but may be a set of protective talismans. This face ends with two animals and the number two.

Beginning the third face of this block is a grain offering and a *dvaja*. Next we find a full series of the eight auspicious symbols: the fish, the lotus, the conch shell, the treasure vase, the endless knot, the wheel, the victory banner and the parasol. These symbols are included among the offerings, animals and scapegoats in order to increase the effectiveness of the *gTor ma* offering. Following the auspicious symbols is a set of offerings and animals.

At the left end of the fourth face is an excellent carving of the female and male figures, this time followed by what appears to be a representation of the household itself, also a scapegoat. To the right of these is a jewel, followed by what appears to be a pair of trumpets. Continuing on to the right, we find an offering of grain or cloth, then a lotus, then five more unidentified icons. Past these lie a *phan* victory banner, usually signifying the victory of the Buddhist teachings and knowledge over suffering and ignorance. We then find what could either be a drum or a wheel, two unidentified objects, a lotus, and a *budan* victory banner. Past these lie five of the seven gems. In order, the rhinoceros horn, the coral, the queen's earrings, the king's earrings, and the mirror. Missing from this series are the elephant tusks and the crossed jewels. Finally, this block ends with a bow and arrow and a spindle.

On the second, smaller *zan par* block, the face numbers are carved in their reverse images, so that the *gTor ma* imprint will be read in the proper reading direction. The first of the four faces begins with a number of offerings and conch shells. The end of this face features a lotus and more offerings.

The second face also displays a number of unrecognizable offerings, but near the middle features four of the eight auspicious signs, the parasol, the elephant tusks, the queen's earrings, the parasol again and the victory banner, among other offerings. The symbols at the right end of this face are elephant tusks, a pair of urns typically carried by Amitayus, and a flaming chalice of oil. The sharp edges of the offerings throughout this block suggest that a *gTor ma* offering made from this *zan par* would more likely be used to appease a malevolent deity than to attract a benevolent one.

On the left side of the third face are a number of offerings followed by nine animals: a snake, a frog, a fish, a *makara* or dragon, a snake, a scorpion, a crab and two birds, most likely a raven and a crow. These animals are significant to Tibetan Buddhism because as carrion eaters they bring to mind the impermanence of the body. To the right of these are displayed a drum and a lute, a bow and arrow and a conch shell. This face then ends with a set of seven animals. Aside from the animals, the rest of the representations of the fourth face of this *zan par* are unknown offerings.

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