



the wahedi





OSTINDIEN UND CHINA.

0 50 100 Deutsche Meilen (15 = 1 Grad)

- Chinesisches Reich: — China, — Unterworfenen Länder
- Staaten, welche China tributpflichtig sind.
- Unabhängige ostindische Staaten.

Europäische Colonien.

- Britisch
- unmittelbarer Besitz
- mittelbarer Besitz (Schutz- & Vasallenländer).
- Niederländisch
- Französisch
- Spanisch
- Portugiesisch

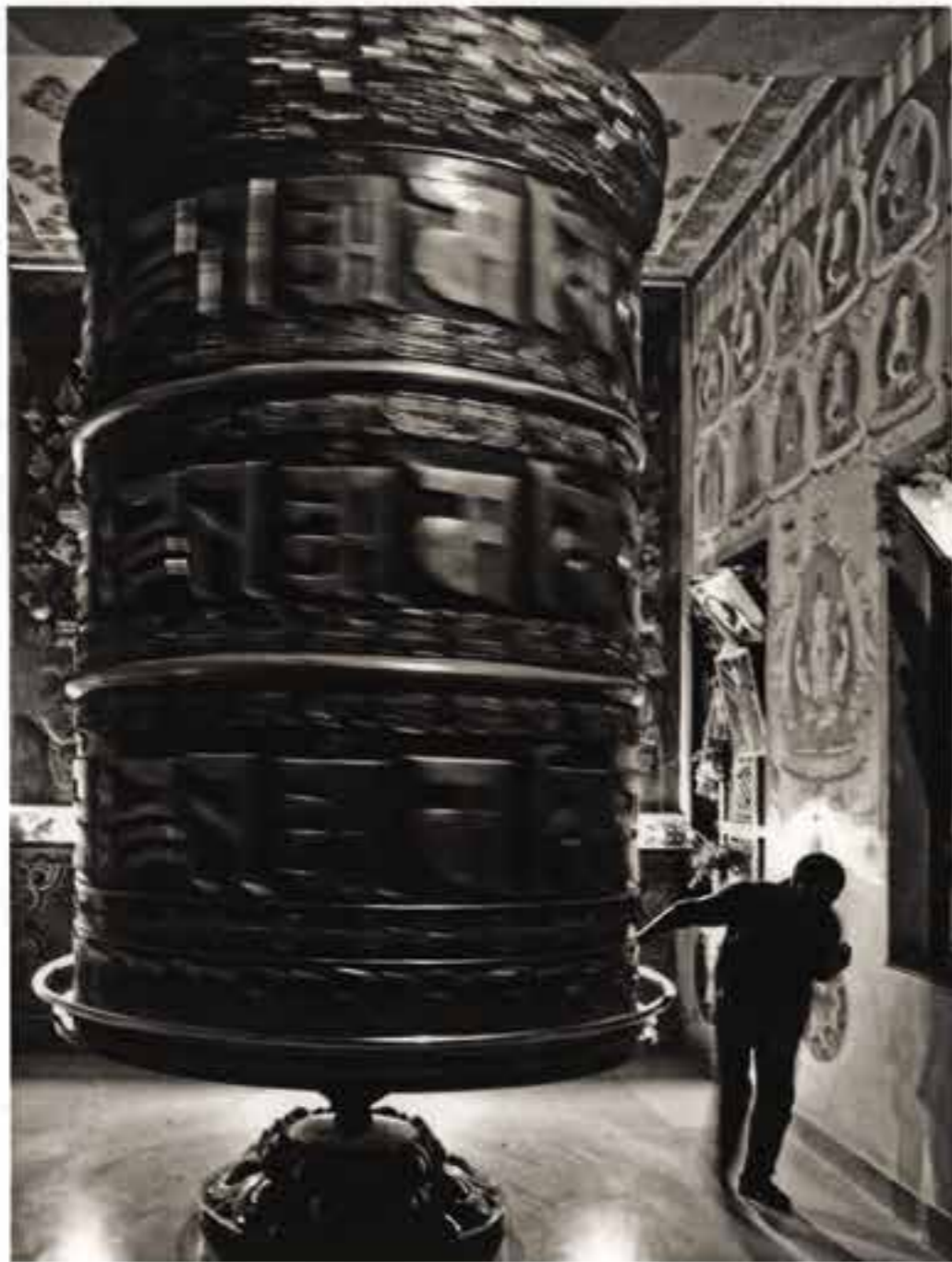
TKD

**„Death is only the end
if you assume the story
is about you.“**

the wheel

Martin Kesting

- I. **The Wheel**
- II. **Rites de Passage**
- III. **Masters and Servants**
- IV. **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**



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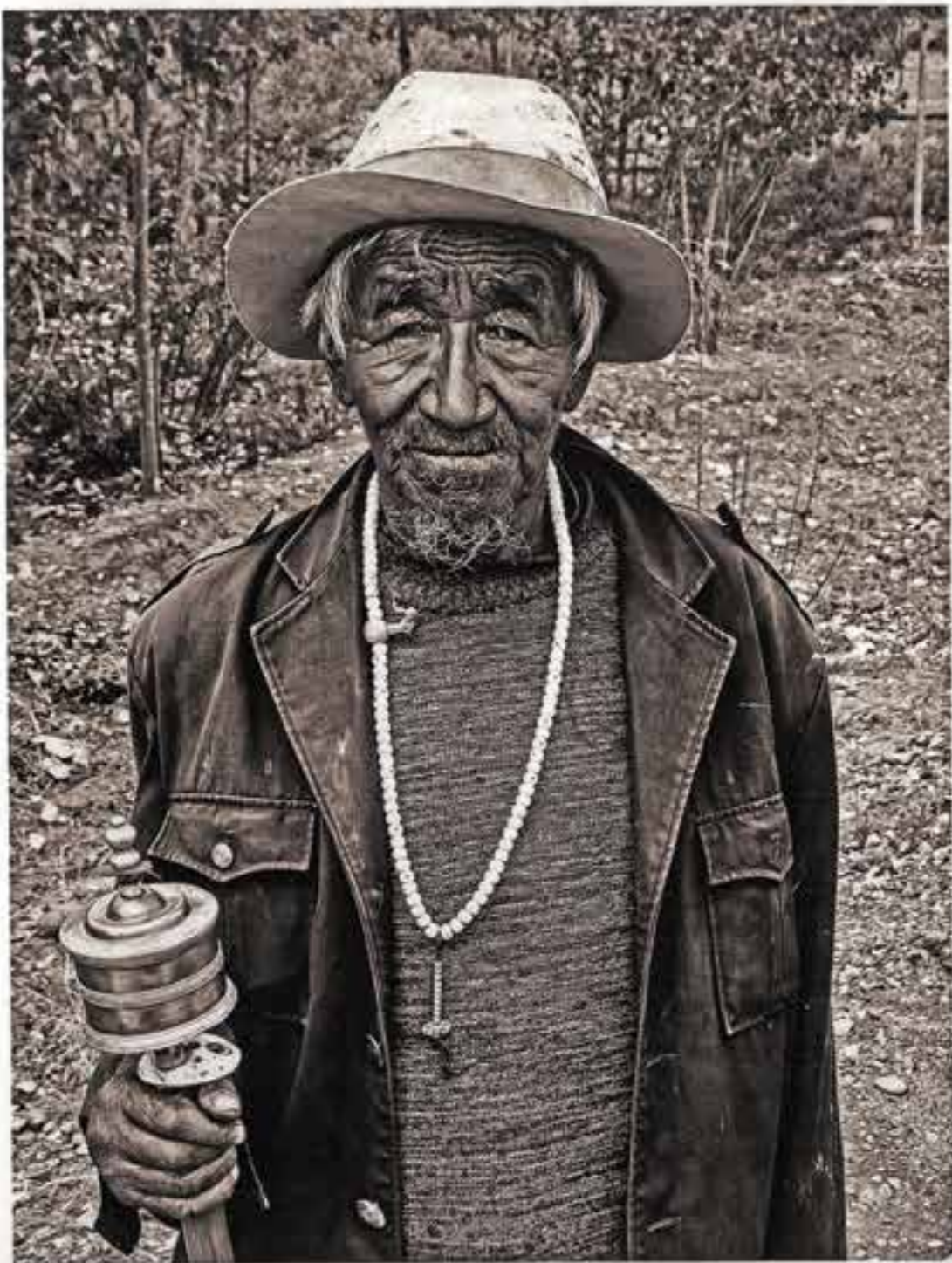
SELF ARISEN
 SWAYAMB. LEGENO, WHEEL
 IT 1 PART, MOVEMENT, CLOCKWISE
 ACCUMULATING SPIRITUAL ENERGY

I. The Wheel

The Tibetan word for a pilgrimage is ney-khor. This means "to circle a holy place". For time immemorial, people have been circling power places like mountains, lakes, meditation caves temples and stupas. People undertake these often arduous journeys because they want to have a spiritual experience, need healing, or want to fulfil a promise.

WHEEL
 "WALKER"
 NEY/KHOR





The most important ritual circling (kora) takes place around Mount Kailash (6,638 m) in a remote area in Western Tibet. According to Buddhist tradition, circling Mount Kailash one is able to break the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. It is forbidden to climb the summit of Kang Rinpoche (Snow Jewel). It is a holy mountain for Hindus, Jain, Buddhists and Bön. The Kailash is like a three-dimensional mandala in a landscape not from this world.







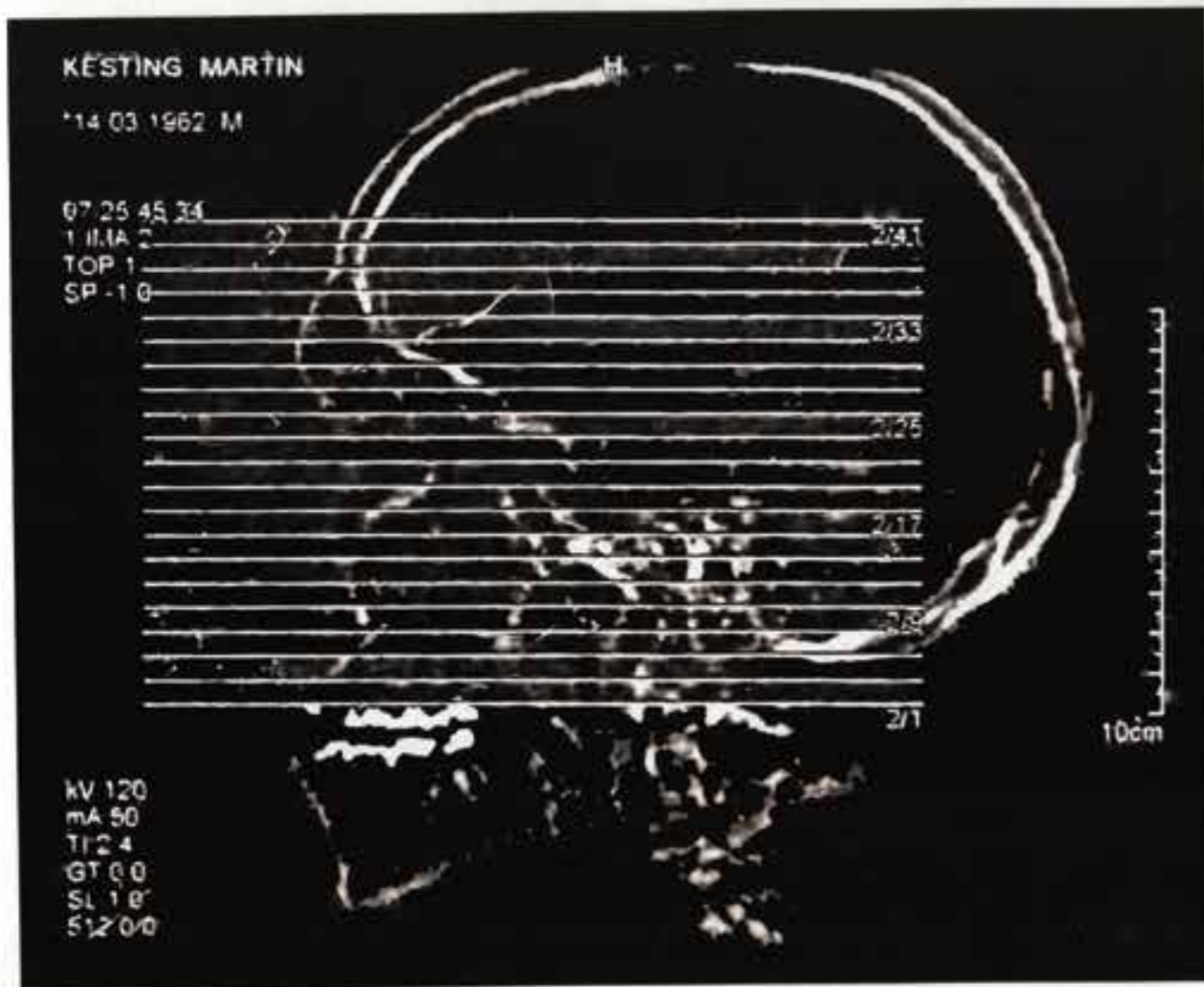


Prayer wheels and prayer flags are archetypical symbols of Tibet. But by no means are they mechanical devices aiding the easy dispatch of sins or aiming bribing the Gods as is often the impression in the West. Lama Anagarika Govinda (Ernst Lothar Hoffmann), a German traveller to Tibet, wrote after his pilgrimage in 1948, "Buddhist prayers"are not requests to a power outside ourselves and for personal advantages but the calling up of forces that dwell within ourselves..."



Taking a psychological approach is typical for Tibetan Buddhism: Gods and demons don't exist outside of us but are called up by ourselves, they are not separate from us. We may become Gods. Or demons. or something in between, like a human being. But the best thing would be to eventually become a Buddha. A pilgrimage can't hurt.





I was at Mount Kailash, but I didn't manage to circle it. Sudden obstacles are not unusual during a pilgrimage. One day before the planned Kora, we had reached Lake Manasarovar^a (at 4,590 metres). The lake is not far from Mount Kailsh^a, and it is the most beautiful place I was ever allowed to behold to date. Physically I wasn't feeling well, but mentally, I was entirely present. When hiking along the shore, I felt exhausted and euphoric at the same time. A big black bird followed us for a long while, then disappeared behind a meditation cave crowned by fluttering prayer flags. More and more, I felt as if in a dream, and I didn't know what to make of it.



We hiked along the lake to Chiu Gampa Monastery and visited the meditation cave where the great Padmasambhava died. There, I nearly lost consciousness. I thought, come on, so close to the finish, don't flake out now. Padmasambhava, a Buddhist master and magician living in the 8th century, brought Buddhism to then shamanist Tibet. He conquered the local nature deities, but instead of obliterating them, he turned them around. Bound by oath, they henceforth had to protect the new teachings. Iconography depicts them full of fierce energy and heavily armed. The third eye on their forehead identifies them as protectors. I like them.

One of these fierce Buddhist guardian angels was apparently watching over me. In Tibet they say that when they are present, big black birds show up. In Darchen, right before the planned circling of Kailash, I was feeling worse, and I had to think about that black bird time and time again. I checked my blood pressure. My body was in great danger, but I still thought that things would work out fine. During the night, I started bleeding through the nose and had difficulty breathing. My wife insisted that I go to a hospital and so probably saved my life. I sought help at Purang near the Nepalese border, some 900 altitude metres further down.



ME



"To die on a pilgrimage is the best result. Getting sick is the second best, and at the very least you should get robbed or lose something," as a Tibetan saying has it. So I didn't take the opportunity to die on this pilgrimage. On a pilgrimage in India, back in 2001, I had already had a close shave. There seems to be a pattern forming. But the Westerner in me thinks it's a good thing to keep my body a little while longer. Knowing that I am not my body. So as to be able to walk a few extra miles.

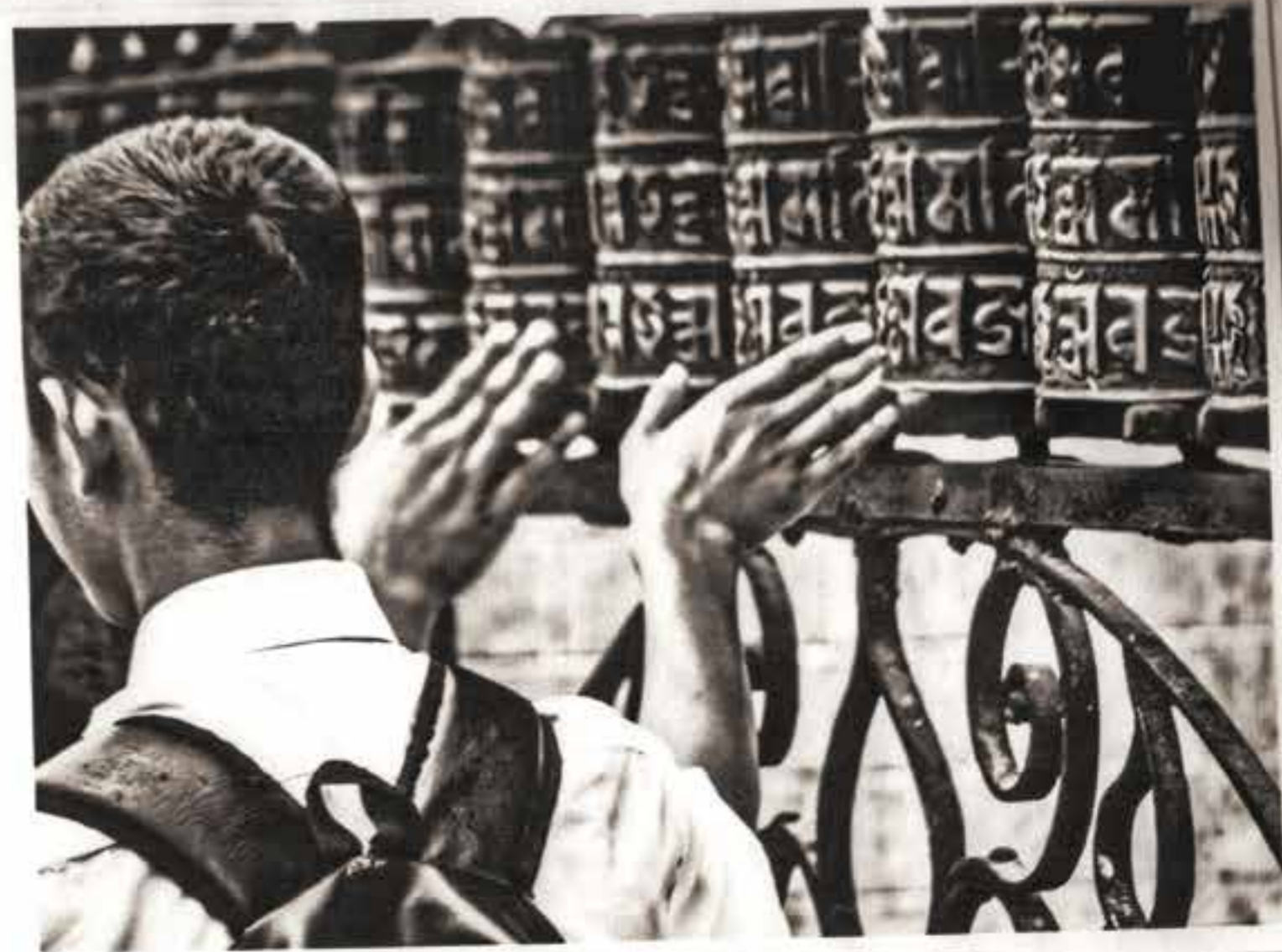






In Nepal, we mingle with the pilgrims circling the stupas in Kathmandu. Stupas are massive, hill-like Buddhist buildings symbolising Buddha and his teachings. The Swayambunath stupa is a place revered by both Hindus and Buddhists. In Nepal, there are many such power places. The stupa crowns a hill above Kathmandu and is beset by hordes of monkeys.





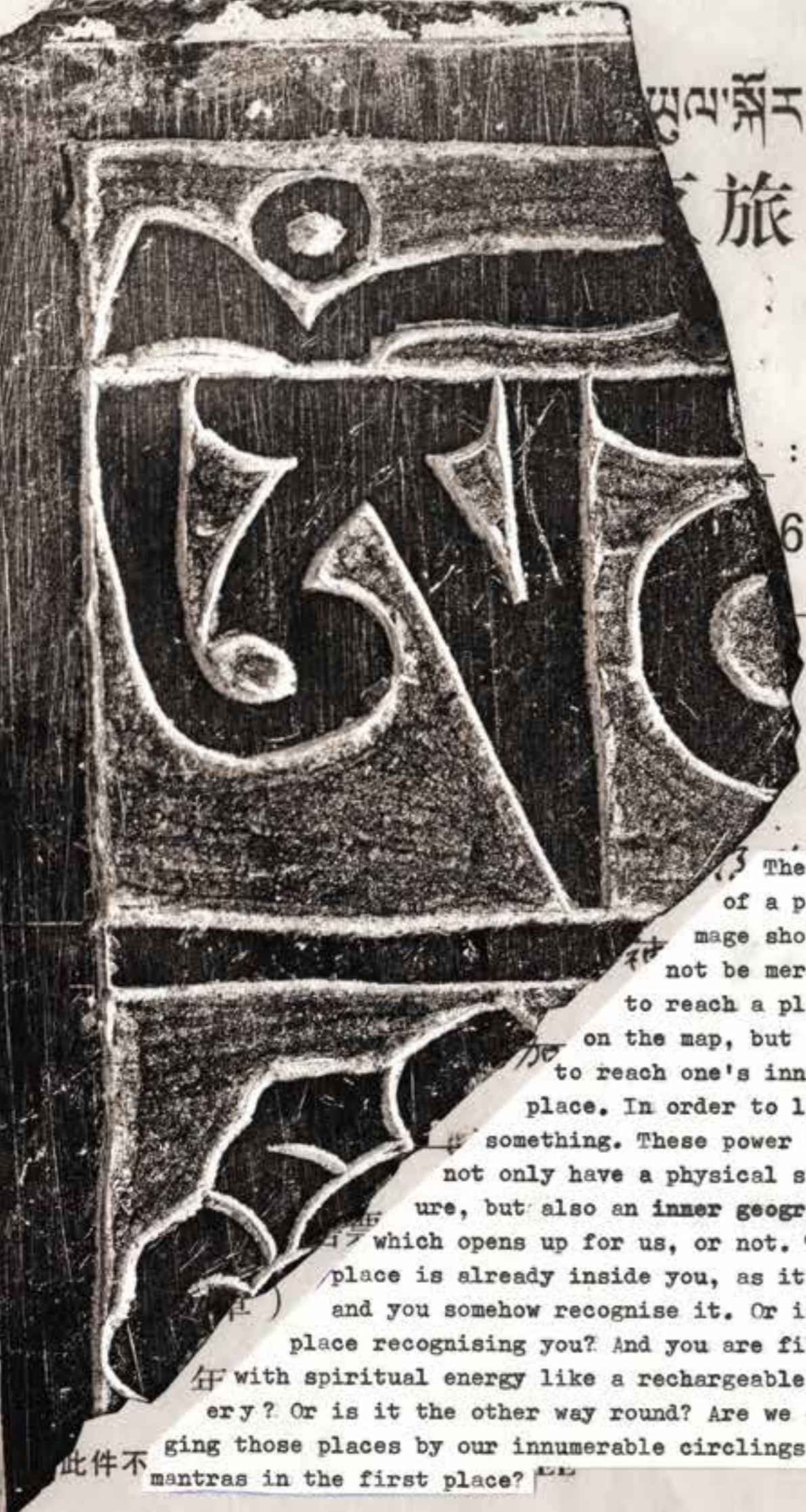


After you've climbed the hill and your breathing slowly gets back to normal, you look into the eyes of Buddha. Try looking through the eyes of Buddha. Get in line with the thronc circling ~~the~~ the stupa. Turn the prayer wheels. A mantra will take shape inside you. Smell the butter lamps. A woman in trance, some people gather around, supporting her. They ask her for advice. The woman stammers phrophesies. Someone tells us she is a former Kumari, an incarnation of Hindu goddess Durga.

Early morning at Boudhanath stupa. Join the large number of pilgrims. A group of school girls makes a quick round before school. A man on crutches may take several hours to complete his round. A woman measures ~~the~~ the length of the Kora with her body, flinging herself to the ground. An ancient woman holding the hand of a child. The smell of smouldering juniper wood. And pretty dangerous-looking dogs, but they are only up to their own devices. For the old monk, I'm already a familiar face. "You should meditate more instead of taking all those pictures." he tells me. And right he is, but holding my camera in one hand and my mala in the other feels good at this moment. I make a wish to come back to this place some day.







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旅游发展委员会

旅藏确认函 NO 0113

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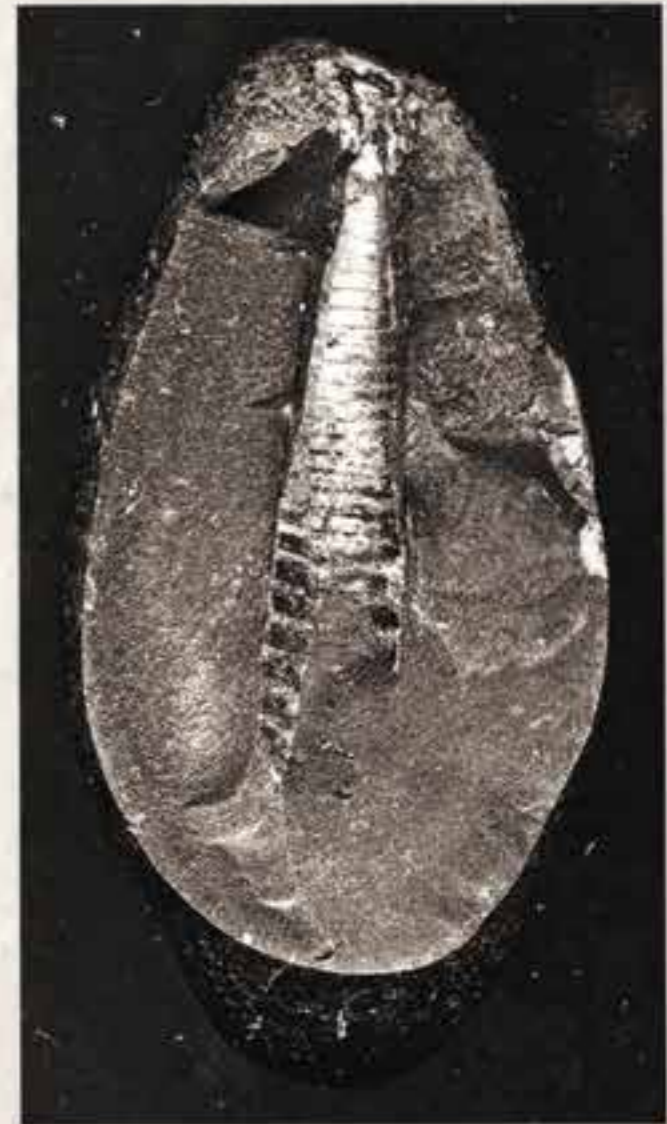
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日喀则、桑桑、
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西藏自治区旅游发展委员会



壹陆 捌 贰 叁 年 月 日



The goal of a pilgrimage should not be merely to reach a place on the map, but also to reach one's inner place. In order to learn something. These power places not only have a physical structure, but also an inner geography which opens up for us, or not. The place is already inside you, as it were, and you somehow recognise it. Or is it the place recognising you? And you are filled with spiritual energy like a rechargeable battery? Or is it the other way round? Are we charging those places by our innumerable circlings and mantras in the first place?

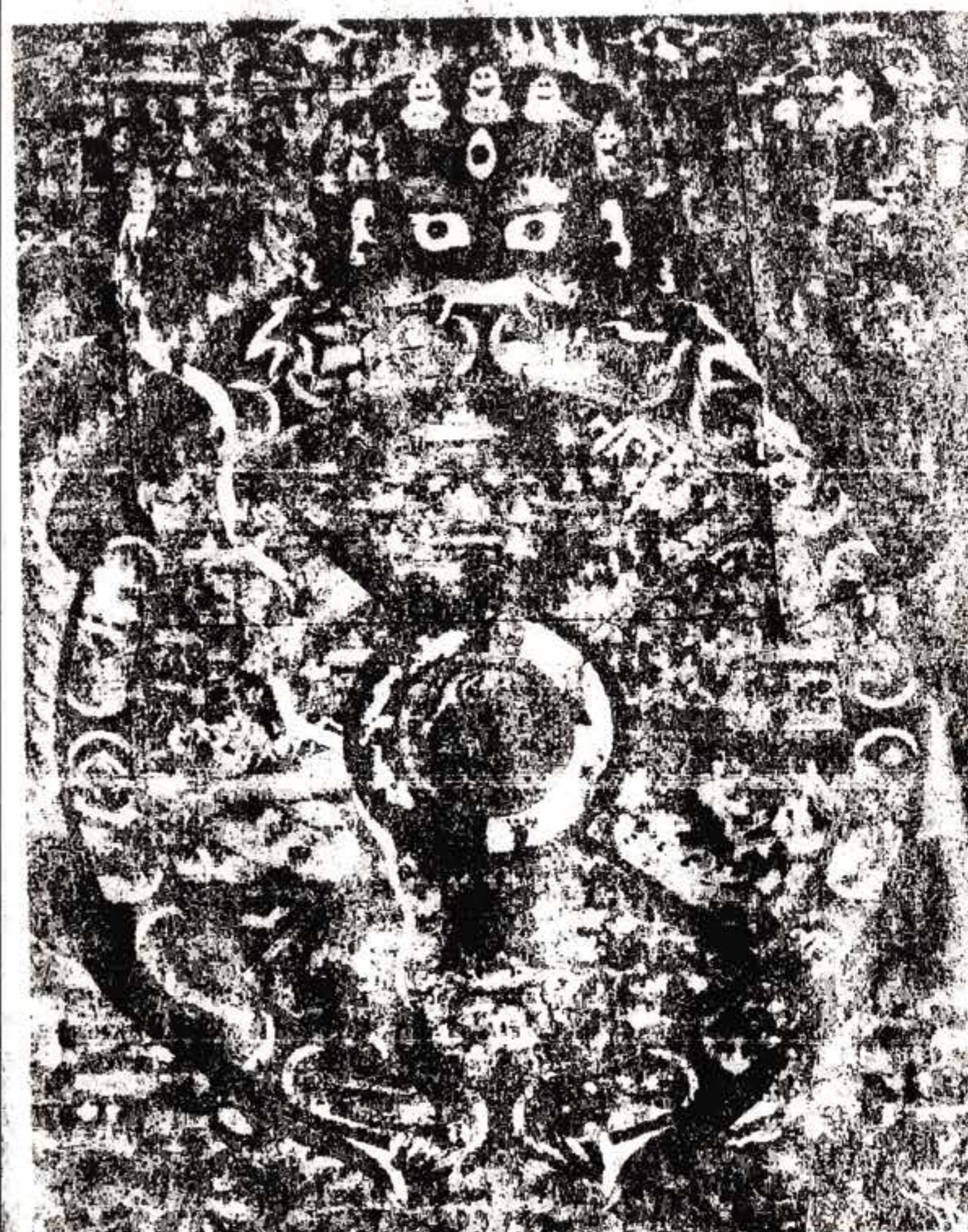
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Rites de Passage

II.

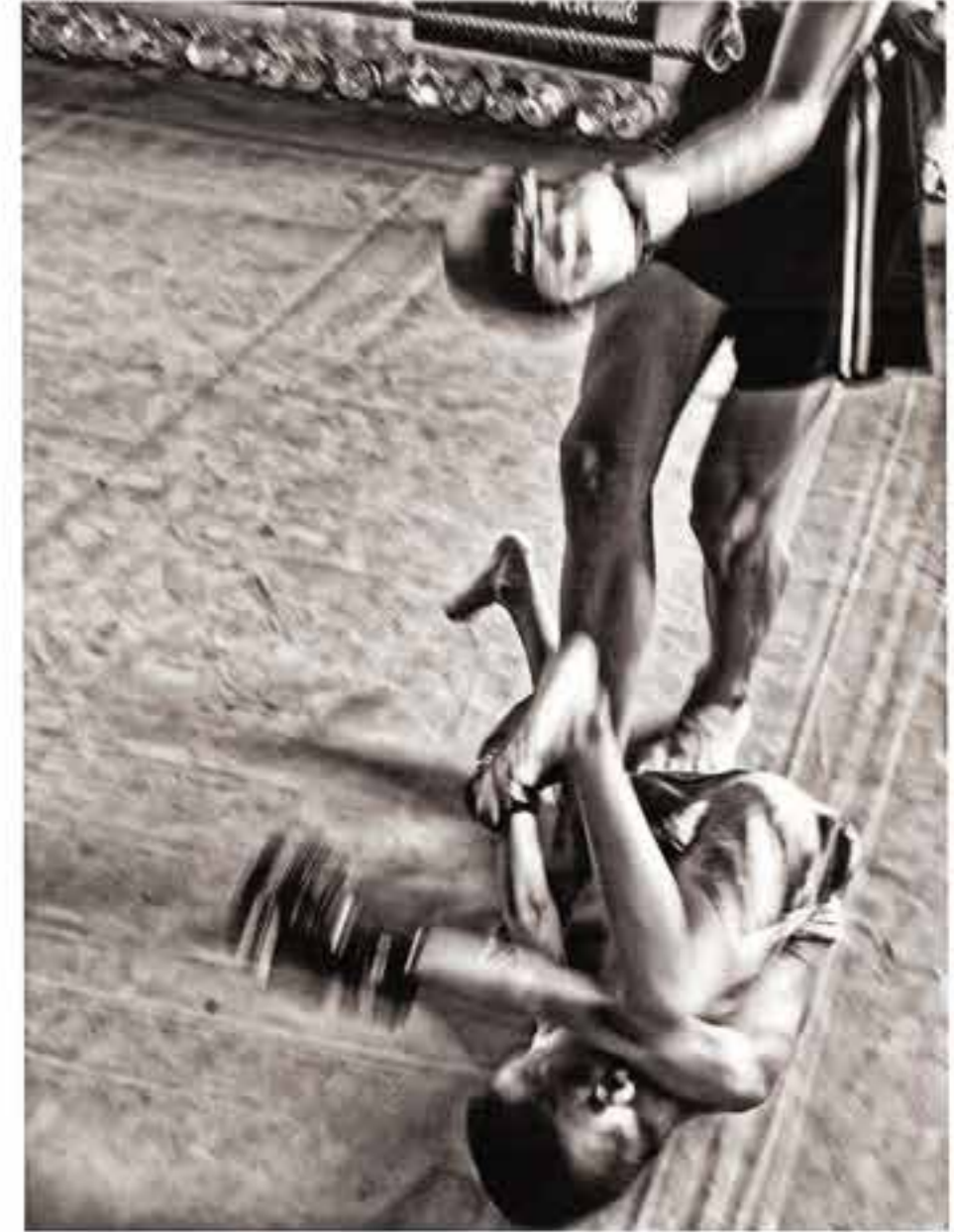
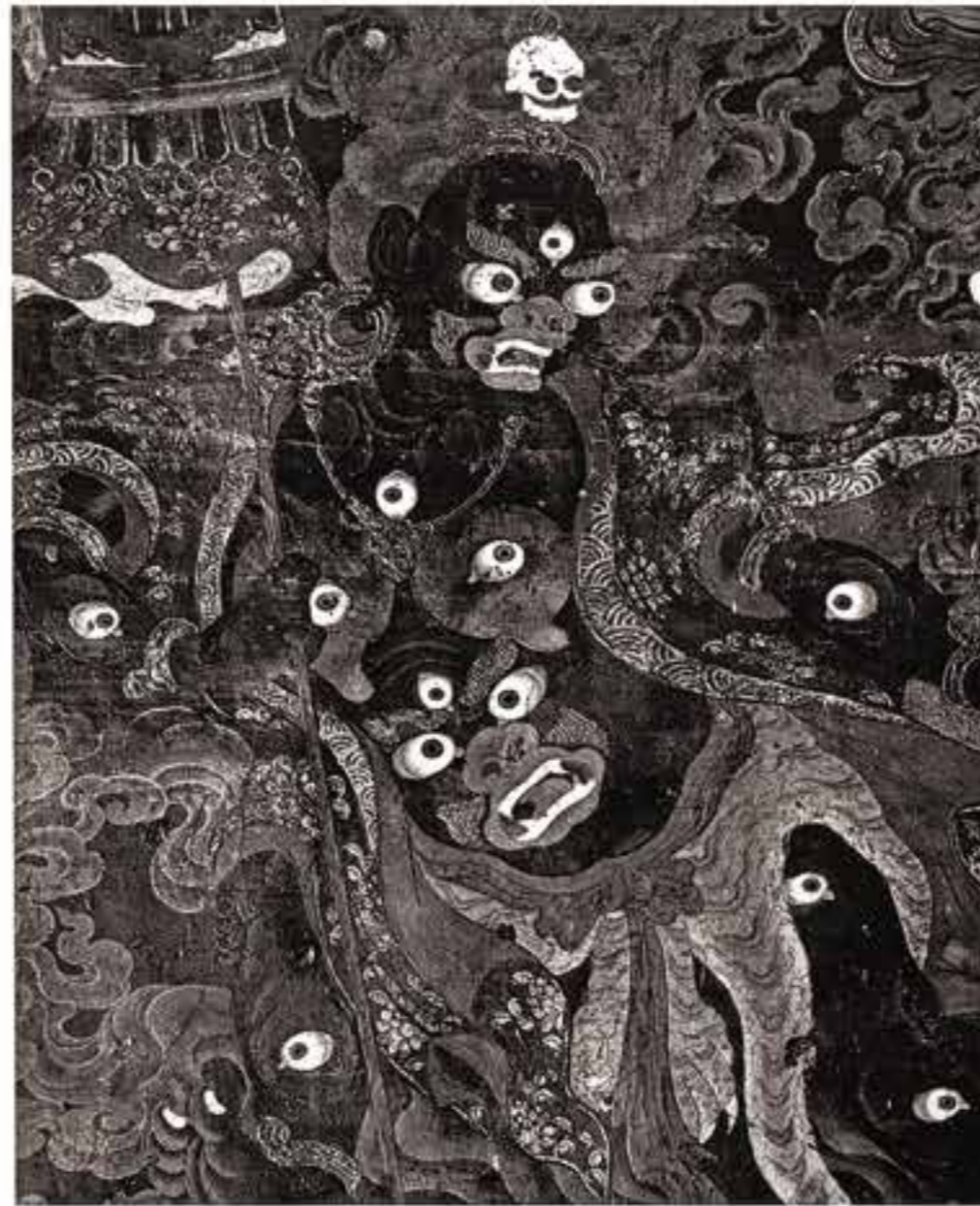
On the walls of Buddhist monasteries, time and time again we see pictures of big wheels. The demon Mara represents transience, holding the wheel of existence in its claws. A pig, a bird, and a snake close to the wheel's hub symbolise the three "spiritual poisons", greed, hate and ignorance. They keep us inside the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. That's Samsara.



"I believe that, as a species, human beings define their reality through suffering and misery."

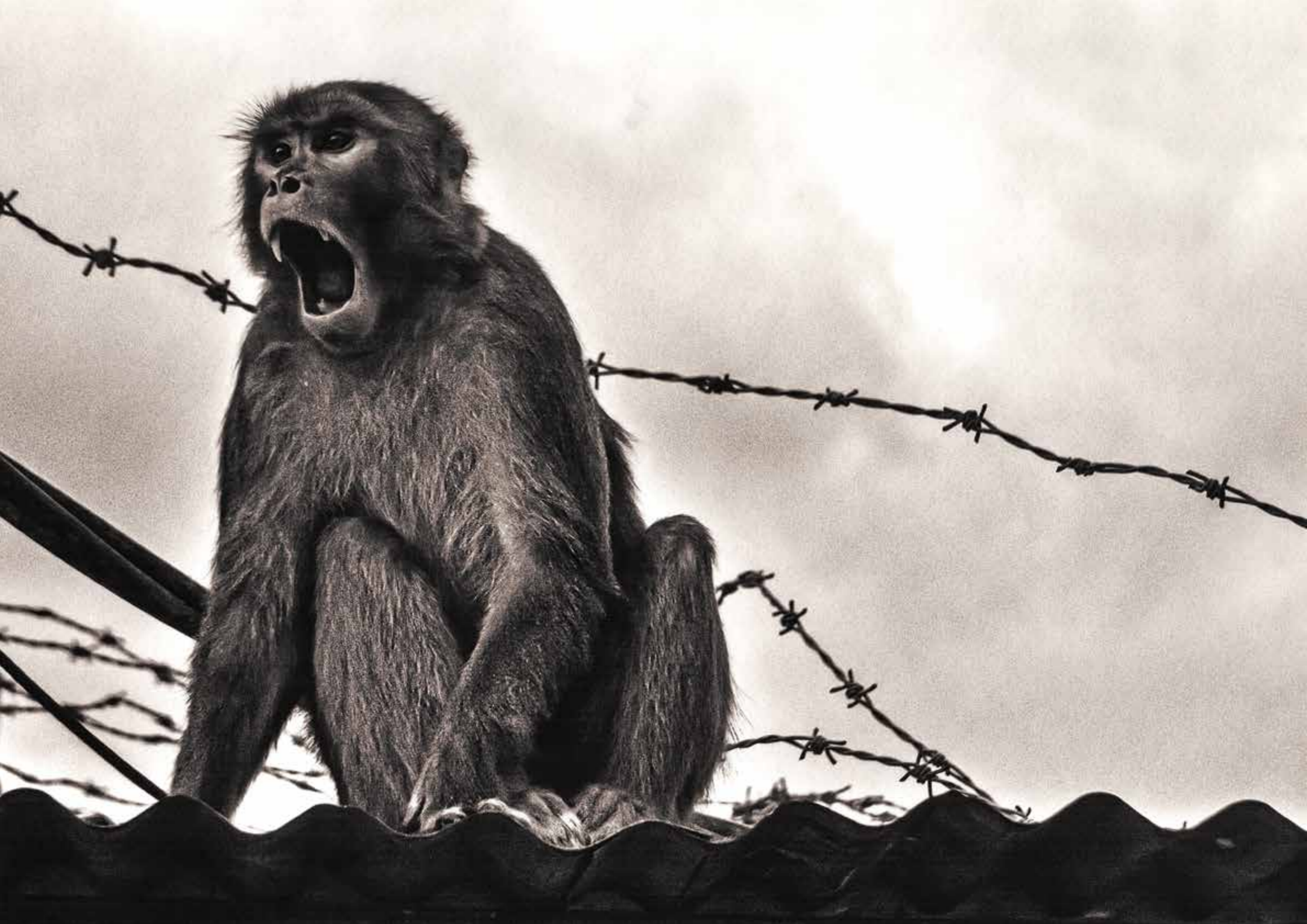
Agent Smith (Bot)
The Matrix

It is said that we as human beings have ideal possibilities for development in order to act consciously, to break the wheel and to leave the the cycle behind.



"Gods, demons, the whole universe, are but a mirage which exists in the mind, 'springs from it, and sinks into it.'"¹

¹ A declaration continually repeated by Tibetan mystics.
Alexandra David-Néel, "Magic and Mystery in Tibet" 1929





Your cooperation and support are greatly appreciated.



- 5. Respect the laws, local customs, religious & cultural value of Nepal.**
- 6. Please maintain distance while taking photos of burning corpse.**
- 7. In case of loss, theft, cheating, robbery immediately contact the tourist police or nearest police station.**

Thanks for your visit, wish you all the best !

Pashupati Area Development Trust

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The Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu has survived the 2015 earthquake rather well. We are visiting the ritual cremation grounds at the banks of the Bagmati river. A woman is deep asleep at the tiny Kali Temple; to the left and right, stakes are burning on the platforms at the river bank.

"Let us Preserve our Monuments and Cultural Heritage"

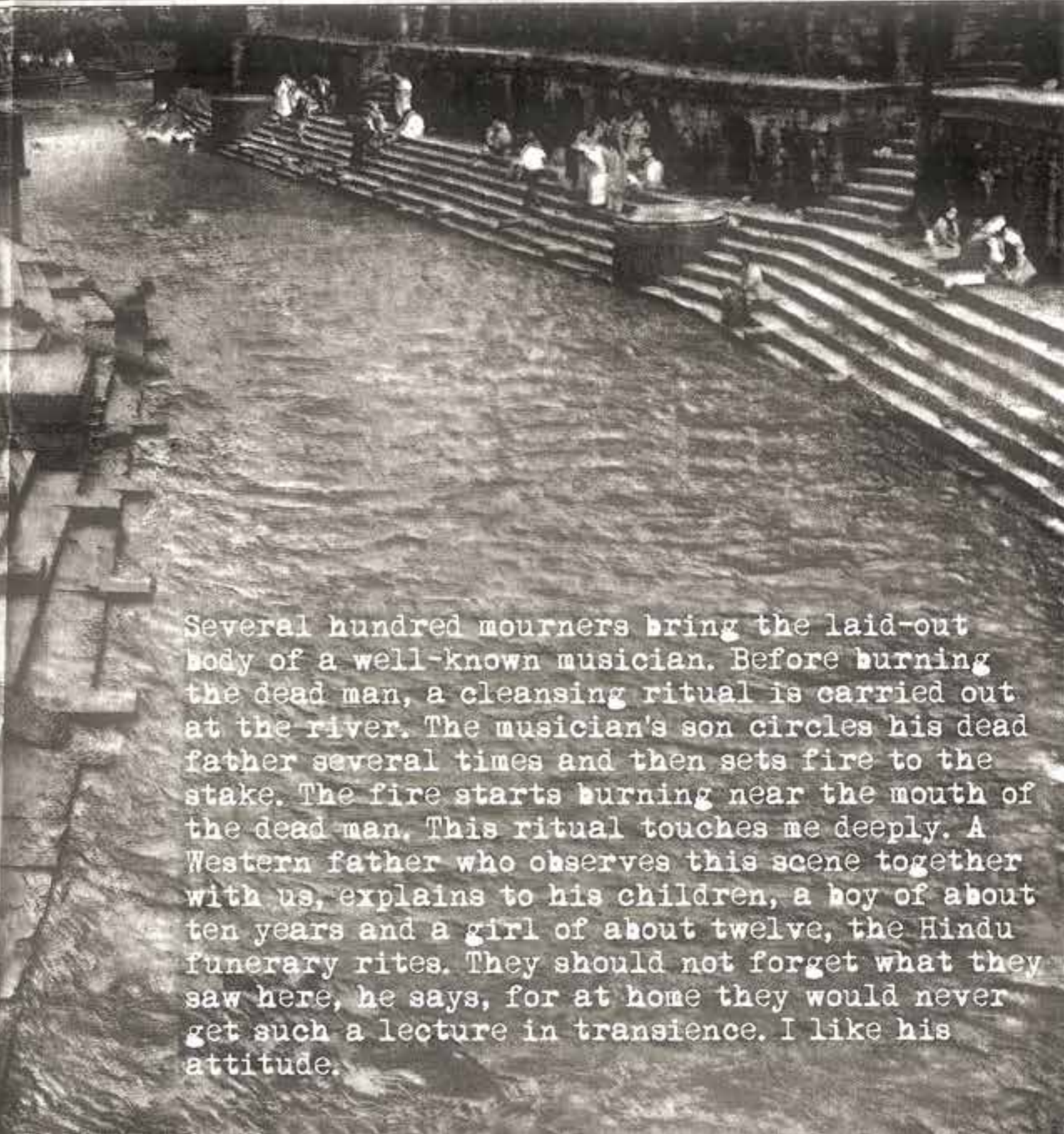
"WORN-OUT GARMENTS ARE SHED
BY THE BODY: WORN-OUT BODIES
ARE SHED BY THE DWELLER
WITHIN... NEW BODIES ARE
DONNED BY THE DWELLER,
LIKE GARMENTS."

BAGHAVAD-GITA



The Himalayan

ON S A T U R D A Y



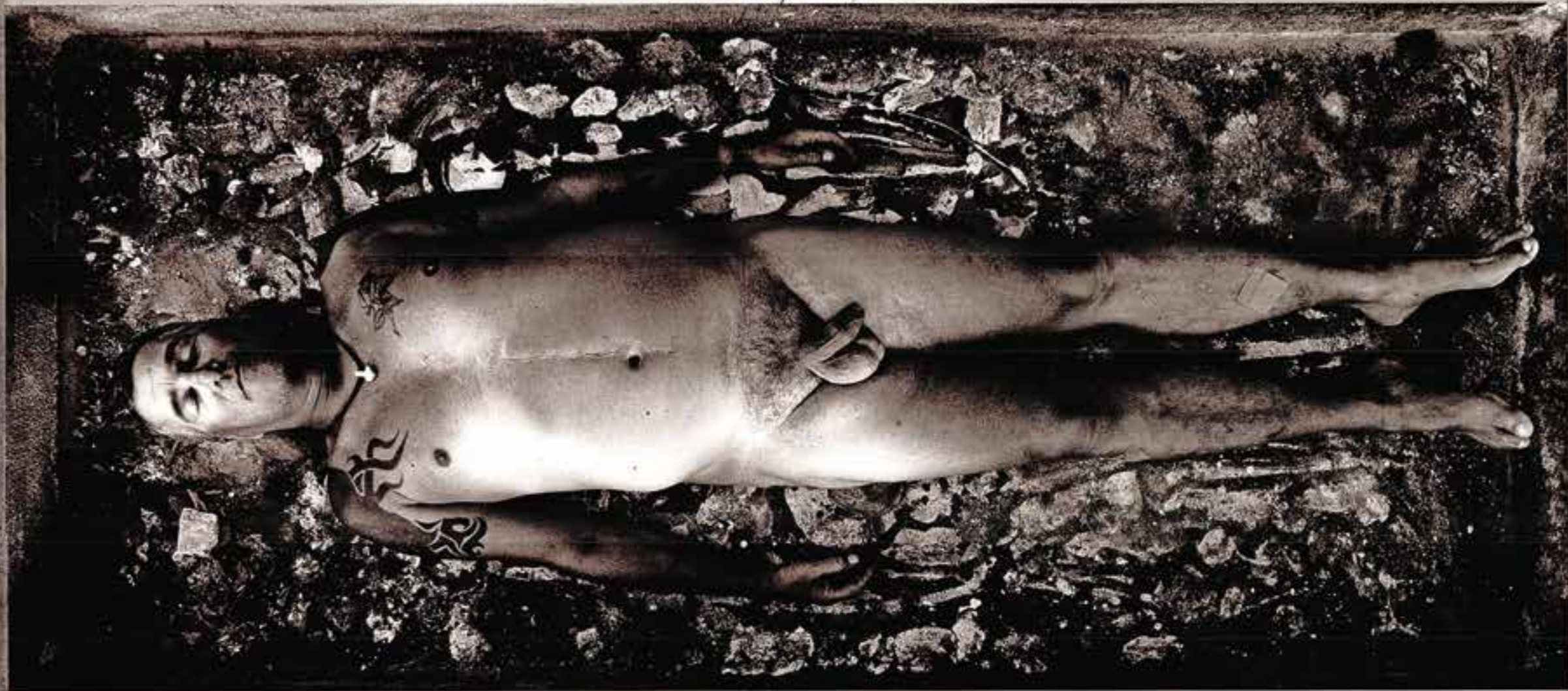
Several hundred mourners bring the laid-out body of a well-known musician. Before burning the dead man, a cleansing ritual is carried out at the river. The musician's son circles his dead father several times and then sets fire to the stake. The fire starts burning near the mouth of the dead man. This ritual touches me deeply. A Western father who observes this scene together with us, explains to his children, a boy of about ten years and a girl of about twelve, the Hindu funerary rites. They should not forget what they saw here, he says, for at home they would never get such a lecture in transience. I like his attitude.



On the other side of the ghat, we see a body which is nearly completely burned. A priest opens up the skull with a heavy blow of his bamboo staff. The sign that body and soul are now finally separated. The ashes are swept into the river, some bones are washed and taken away. You hardly see mourning, nor tears.

In Tibet we visit the Samding Monastery at Lake Yamdrok. We sit down for a short meditation. A monk opens the Gönkhang for us, the Protector Chapel. Exciting! But now let's go easy and be respectful of the manifestations of the fierce energies! Painted dark, smelling strong, full of arms and animal hides. On the walls, ceremonial masks and pictures of energetic forms of Buddha. Dancing skeletons and the image of a "sky burial".

17



fit

The dead body is dissected and left to feed birds and jackals. Our driver would also like to get such a burial for himself, when the time comes, he tells us. Before leaving the Gönkhang, and grateful for the experience, we leave behind an offering of barley beer for the protectors.



In Buddhism, there is no concept of an unchangeable soul which takes on a new body time and time again, i.e. a reincarnation in the literal sense of the word. From a Buddhist perspective, what continues to have an effect after death is not an "I"-person, the "self", but a mind stream, a continuum without beginning or end. You could compare the transition with a billiard ball which stops upon hitting another ball while handing over the energy impulse. The ball that now rolls on, is a different one. But its essence is the same. A completely new existence conditioned by the previous existence.



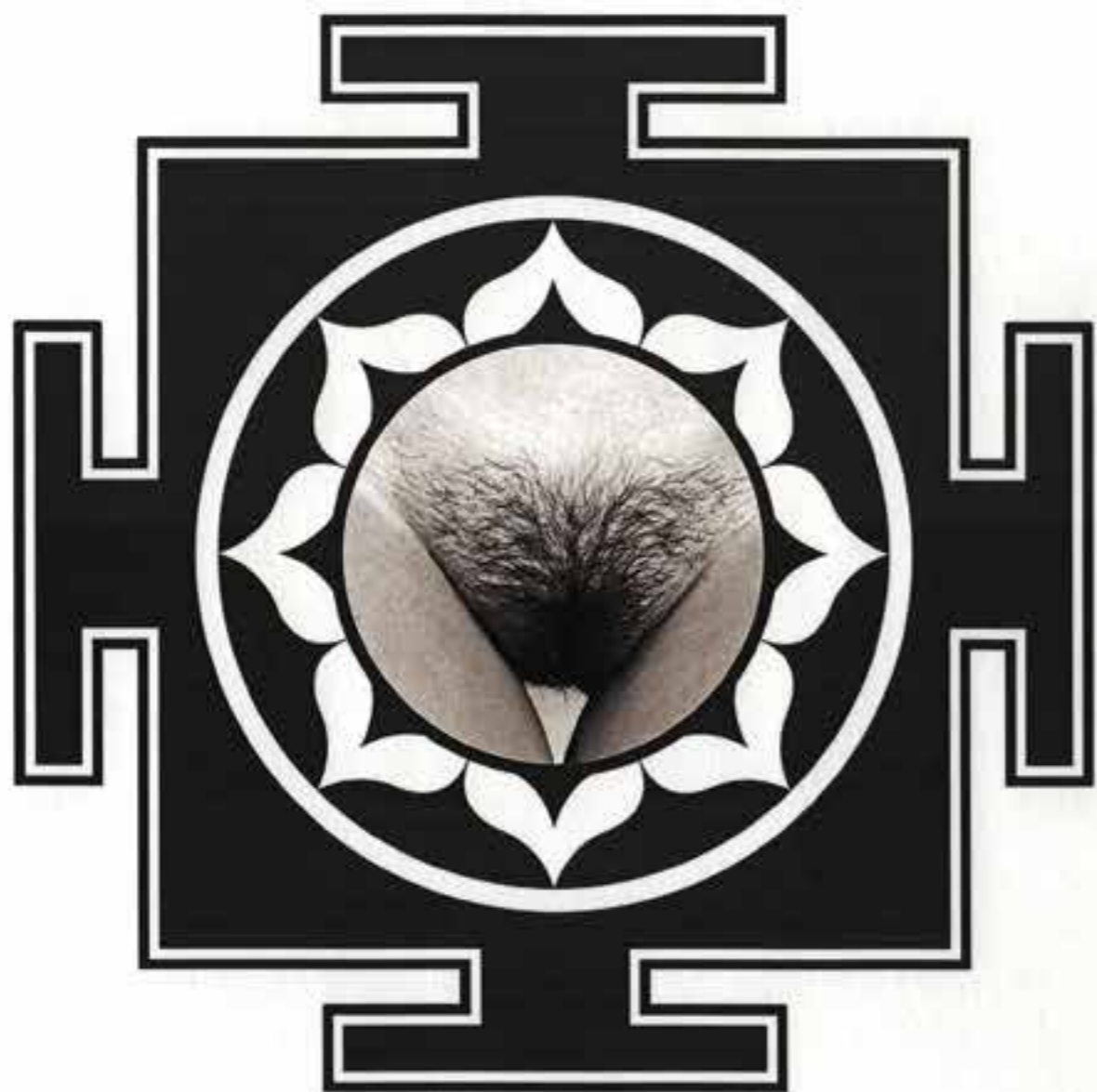


"NOW YOU ARE EXPERIENCING THE RADIANCE OF THE
CLEAR LIGHT OF PURE REALITY. RECOGNIZE IT! ...
DO NOT FEAR IT; THAT IS YOUR OWN ILLUSION."
TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD



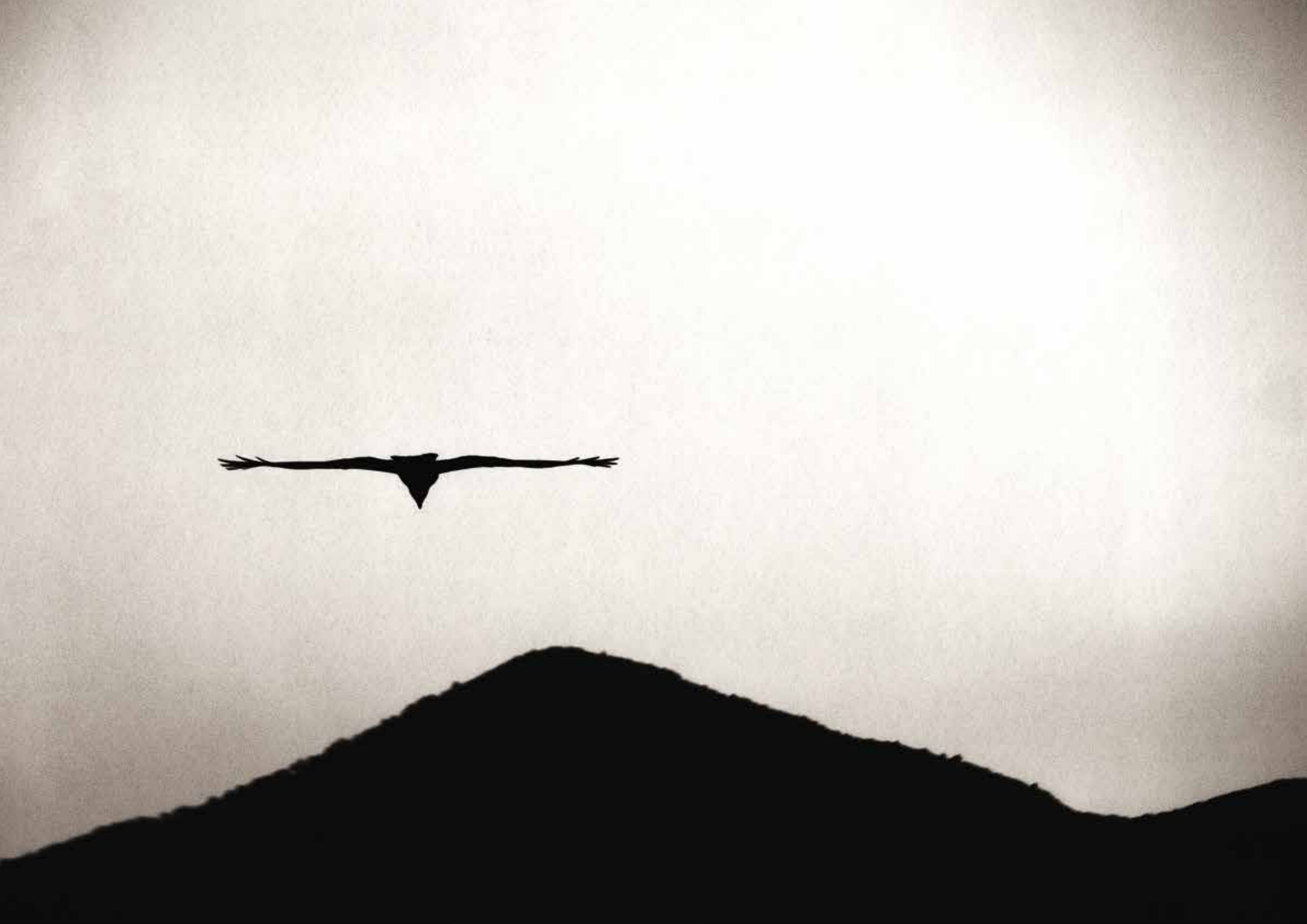
Many people think dying means switching out the lights, and that's it. May well be. But it could also be quite different, and the lights really start illuminating then. Nobody knows. I consider the possibility that the Tibetans are right and consciousness exists independently of the brain. The brain is like a radio, not like a broadcasting station. And the mind stream will look for a new receptor once the old appliance is broken.

And that "one" wakes up in a post-death state, the bardo. That as one's personality slowly disintegrates, a very strange, subjective inner pilgrimage will start. It is said to be important to stay fearless during this journey, and to keep a clear mind. Can't hurt to consider this possibility. And if Tibetans are wrong and the light stays out, then that won't be none of my business any more either.

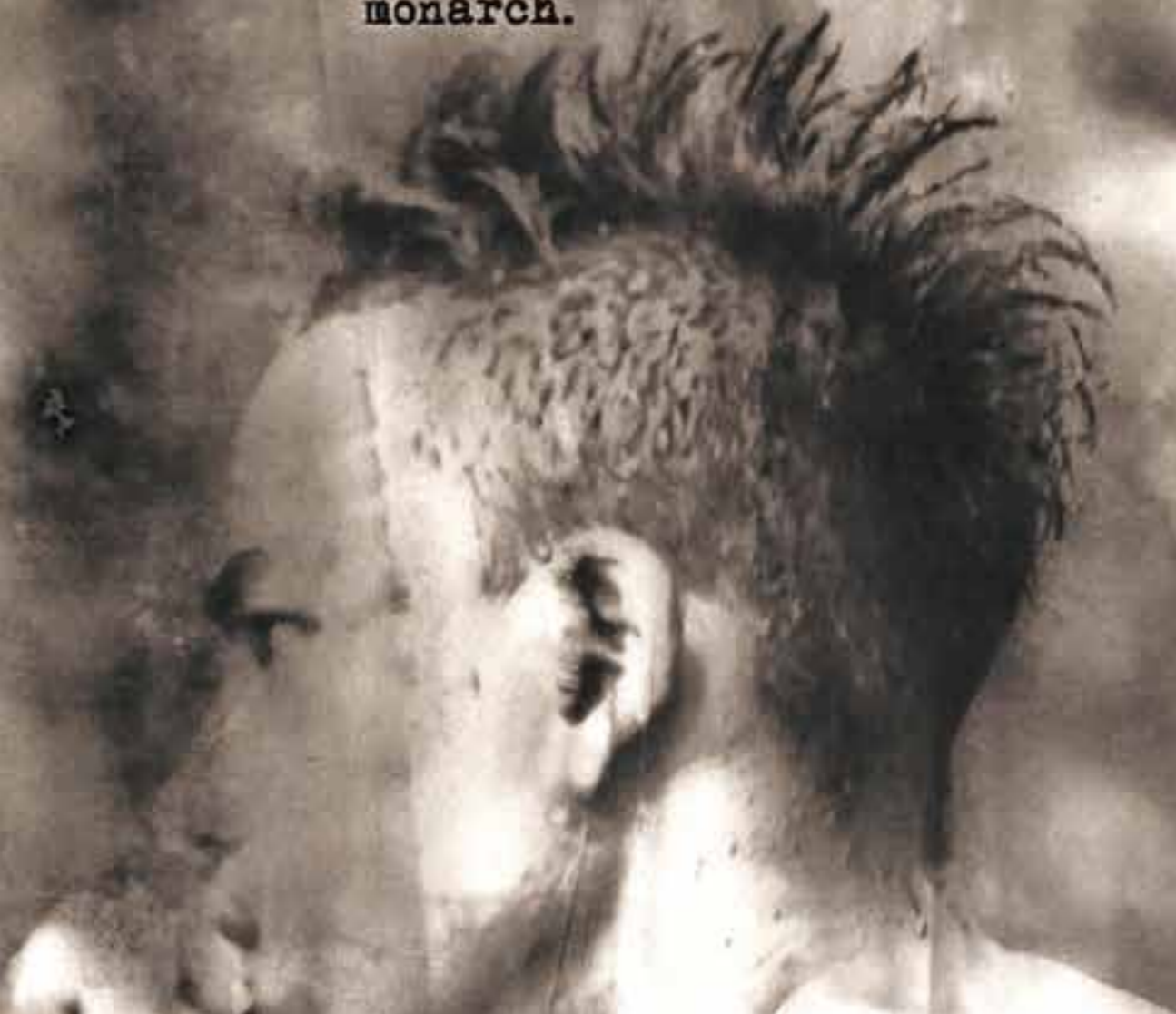


"As sensory impressions fail after death, all mind's subconscious content comes alive. Then the strongest imprints and motivations gradually take the form of a dominant dream that pulls mind into the six realms of existence which best correspond to its content."
Lama Ole Nydahl, "Entering the Diamond Way"





We arrive in Bangkok shortly after the death of King Bhumibol, Thailand's regent for eighty years. Whatever one may think of the politics in Thailand and the role of the monarch, the mourning of the Thai people is deep and touching. All of Bangkok wears mourning, and in the streets, food and drink is free to honour the deceased monarch.



The Siriraj Medical Museum in Bangkok is a forensic museum. The exhibits are disturbing and an even stronger memento mori than the Tibetan protector chapels. In a display cabinet, there's the mummy of serial killer Si Quey, who back in the 1950s killed children and ate their livers. This drastic showcasing is intended to prevent copycats. Directly opposite, you see a baby drowned in the Chao Praya river, now afloat in formaldehyde. The way we see it, this setting somehow lacks respect. As a conciliatory gesture, there are toy offerings which visitors and staff left to form a heap underneath the display cabinet. Thus, the display cabinet is turned into a shrine. Obviously, many are touched by this scene just as we are. No photos! The security staff never loses sight of us.





On Bali, where Hinduism is prevalent, we attend the cremation of a priest not far from Ubud. A cremation on Bali is loud and strange. A huge bull constructed out of bamboo and fabrics serves as a sarcophagus, carried by dozens of young men. A gamelan orchestra creates a terrific noise as the procession gets underway.

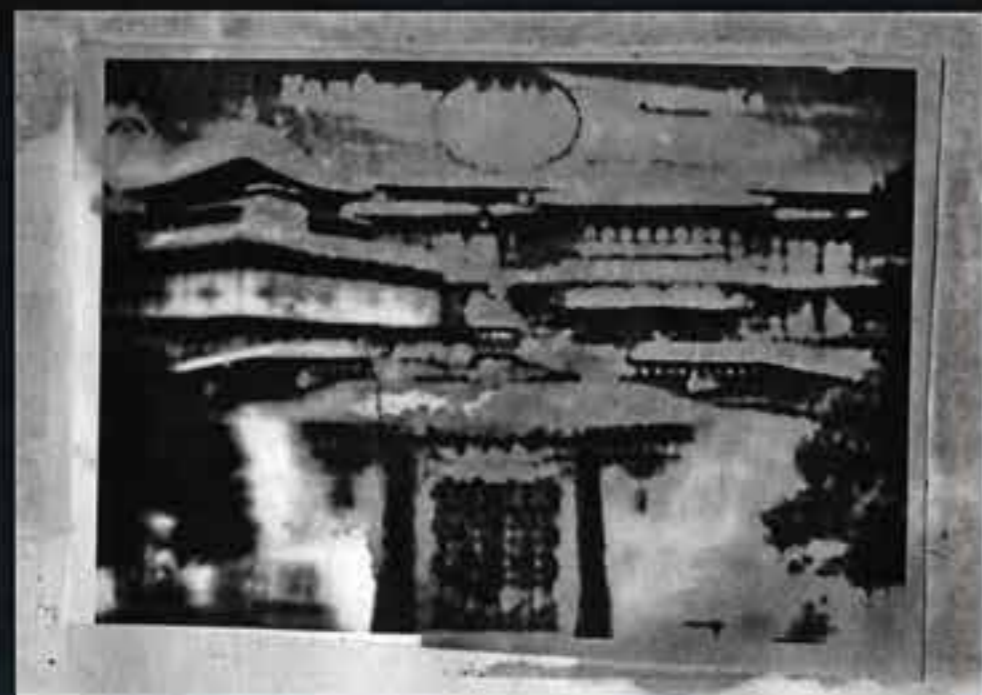


The scaffolding gets shaken and turned several times in order to confuse less-than-well-meaning spirits on the route to the cemetery. Huge fun. Another scaffolding symbolising the Balinese universe contains the body which in many cases had been buried for several years already and got exhumed for this procession. After all, such a splendid ceremony is costly, and the money to pay for it needs to be saved up first.

The gamelan is blaring louder and louder, the throng follows to the cemetery. Westerners are welcome, but traditional attire is expected. At the cemetery, the body is taken from the platform. A dead bird symbolizes the soul of the deceased. Body and sacrificial offerings are placed inside the sarcophagus, and women with offerings circle the stake. The flames shoot up. The soul's container is burning. According to Hindu perspective, the soul is now finally free to seek unity with the divine. For the Balinese, this is a reason to celebrate.







III. MASTERS AND SERVANTS

The airplane from Kathmandu touches down on Tibetan soil. Terra sancta, sacred ground. Sceptical yet prepared to believe, we enter the promised land. The altitude slows down our thinking, and we move about as in slow motion. When we drive from the airport into Lhasa, we're confused. Wide, well lit boulevards won't fit the medieval Tibetan image in our minds. The City of Gods is top modern and efficiently organised. The German in me is pretty impressed, notably after the experiences in chaotic Kathmandu.

拉司通宾馆
拉司通宾馆

拉萨市拉司通宾馆



In Lhasa, we see more immigrated Han Chinese people than Tibetans. But there are still a few Tibetans who interfere with the image of a purely Chinese metropolis. Stubbornly, they continue to circle Jokhang Temple, Potala Palace and other power places, murmuring mantras, distrustfully observed by security forces on rooftops. As if at any time another (hopeless) revolt might break loose. Time will solve this problem. The old Tibet is still there, but the Big Dragon seems to have won the game.







Tibet lost its sovereignty, and not quite without its own fault. The merely religious concept of rebirth became political in Tibet. According to Buddhist teaching, enlightened beings have achieved control over the cycle of birth-death-rebirth and are able to self-determine after death whether to be reborn in order to help other beings. Since the 13th century, Buddhist masters in Tibet have continued to conduct their stream of consciousness after death. Abbots from large monasteries became their "own" successors as "tulkus". Over the time, the spiritually influential monasteries gathered more and more economic and political power. History was made by the abbots of large monasteries.

Tibet was and still is a mental projection screen for the West. The process of identifying a new rebirth has found its way to Western pop culture in a romanticised form. But this process never was romantic, since it's always also a question of political power. Inner rivalries and outside influence were the order of the day. Power-hungry neighbours like the Chinese and Mongolians felt invited. From the 18th century onwards, China exerted increasing influence by means of a divide-and-rule policy. Even today's "dialectic materialist" Beijing tends to use this "tulku-system" for direct political actions. Masters turned to servants.

Upon leaving Shigatse, our jeep is redirected by wildly gesticulating policemen to stop at a gas station. Many cars are waiting. After a few minutes, a motorcade of dark limousines thunders past. When we ask, which party VIPs are making such a stir, the terse answer is: "The Panchen Lama." This high reincarnation plays a key role in identifying a "new" Dalai Lama. In 1995, monks identified a successor, acting against the wishes of Beijing. Up to this day, the young boy and his family have disappeared without a trace, and a different candidate, backed by Beijing, entered the scene. Not entirely surprisingly, this one came from the family of a party cadre. In the case of the Karmapa, another high reincarnation, China also exerted its influence. There are two candidates: One who's been identified traditionally, and one supported by China and, surprisingly enough, by the Dalai Lama. Divide and rule.



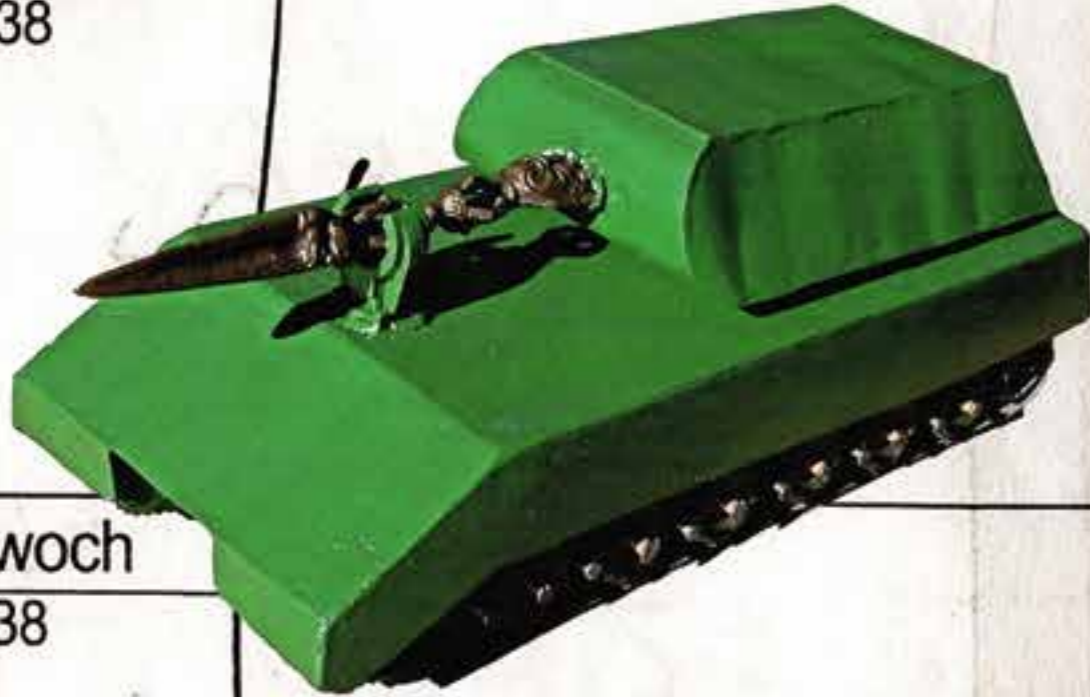


There are spies in all monasteries. Monks who won't cooperate disappear. Cooperating monasteries are quite well-to-do (in material terms), as we can witness again and again. The destructions dating back to the cultural revolution are hardly noticeable any more. During the Maoist cultural revolution from the mid-1960s to the 1970s, most monasteries were destroyed.

I can understand why they cooperate. After all, they are not only responsible for themselves, but also for their families, friends and communities. There are benefits. When I had to get a treatment in the hospital, this is done fast, competently, and free of charge.

On the market at Shigatse, an old jewellery trader sells destroyed silver gau (prayer boxes) as raw material. Gau are reliquaries carried around one's neck. My gau contains stones and earth from various power places, blessing ribbons and memories of loved ones. Gau are charged objects held in great honour by their wearers. If I lost my gau it would not be nice, but it would be my own fault. When I imagine somebody ripping it off my neck, trampling it underfoot, I feel sick. This is exactly what happened during Tibet's "peaceful liberation", as the old woman sadly explains to us. The destroyed gau she sells were found during the renovation of a monastery been destroyed during the cultural revolution. I buy one from her.

20 | Dienstag
KW 38



21 | Mittwoch
KW 38

SHIGATSE

22 | Donnerstag
KW 38

LHASA

... kleine Dosen, ...
... hälter und Talismane dienen. Sie werden um ...
... rden. Reliquien ... Knochen oder Fr ...
... n verstor ... dem Ghau ...
... Erde ... den und ...
... n ion ... as ...
... meine ... stelle, ...
... die von ... ampelt dare ...
... schlecht. Gel ... der Kulturrev ...
... die alte Frau ... erklärt. Die ze ...
... sie verkauft, sind ... Renovierung eines ze ...
... funden worden.



Freitag 23
KW 38

7

Samstag 24
KW 38



Sonntag 25
KW 38



TEMBER

I	D	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	
8	9	10	11	
15	16	17	18	

"May I take photos of you?,"

"Why?,"

"Because of your T-shirt. That's controversial. In Germany, you would go to jail for wearing it.,"

"The Swastika is an ancient Buddhist symbol!,"

"I know. Still, you're wearing the Nazi flag on your T-shirt. And I'm sure you know it, too.,"

He laughs. "Here is Nepal. No problem. But you don't have any bad intentions, do you?,"

"No, I'm an artist working on a book.,"

He strikes a pose. "OK, then go ahead, take your photos.,"



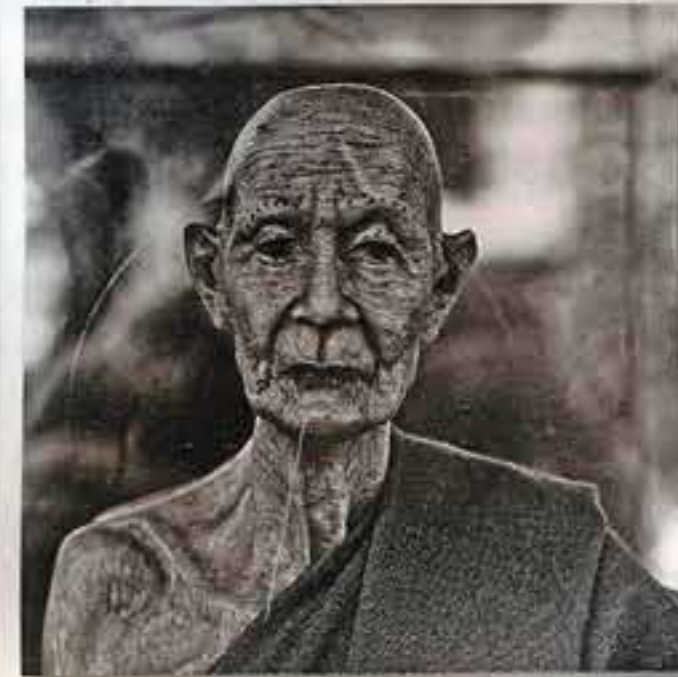
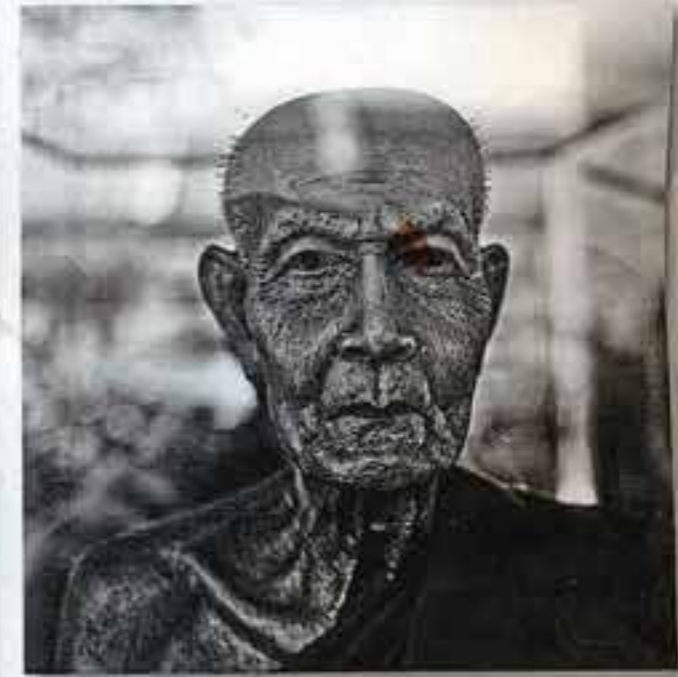
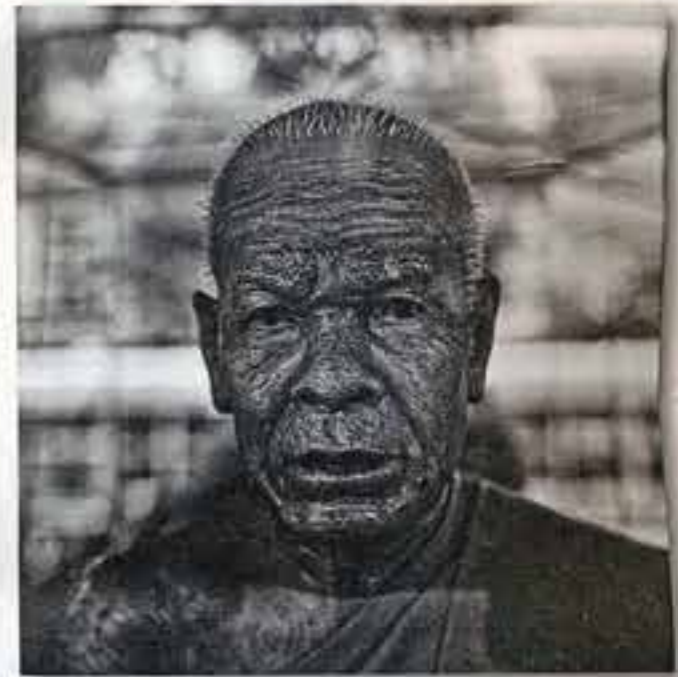
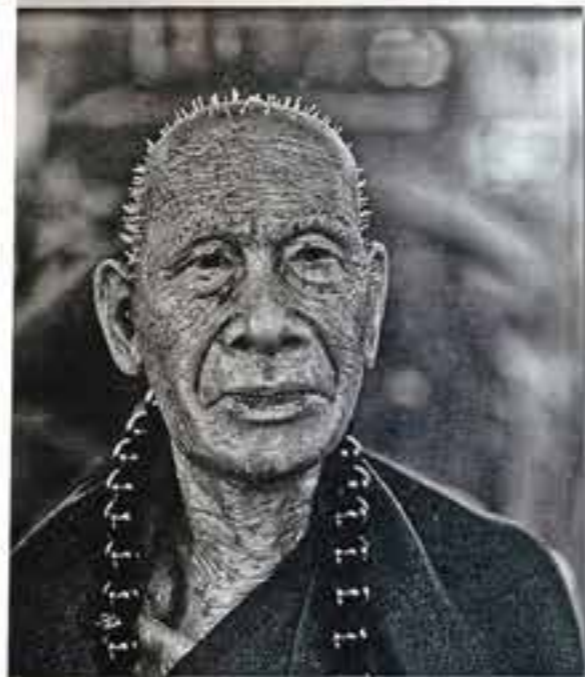
One of the most fascinating places in Bangkok is the Amulet Market at the Chao Praya river. In Thailand, amulets are traded in great numbers. Often, you see men wearing several of them. The amulets symbolise protection, wealth, and health. Some are bought and sold for astronomical prices. Most of them represent buddhas, monk-magicians, and protector deities. Others are strange voodoo-like objects. Still others are meteorites or other stones believed to have cosmic powers.



"There is no essential difference between matter and mind, between the outer and the inner world ... If we can see the matter from this point of view, we shall be able to grasp the real meaning of relics and sacred objects like amulets, etc."
Lama Anaga-rika Govinda



Close to Silom Road in Bangkok, we visit the gallery of Thai photographer Mani Sriwanichpoom. He takes a critical view on marketing Thai Buddhism with its strong interconnections to politics. I buy a small catalogue called "Masters". It contains blurry black-and-white photographs of famous magician-abbots. The blurriness hides what's essential: the monks are only rather lifelike sculptures made of plastic. They are sold by the monasteries as an important source of income, and they look hyper-real. A few days later I take photos of some of these sculptures I find somewhat scary in Bangkok's China Town.





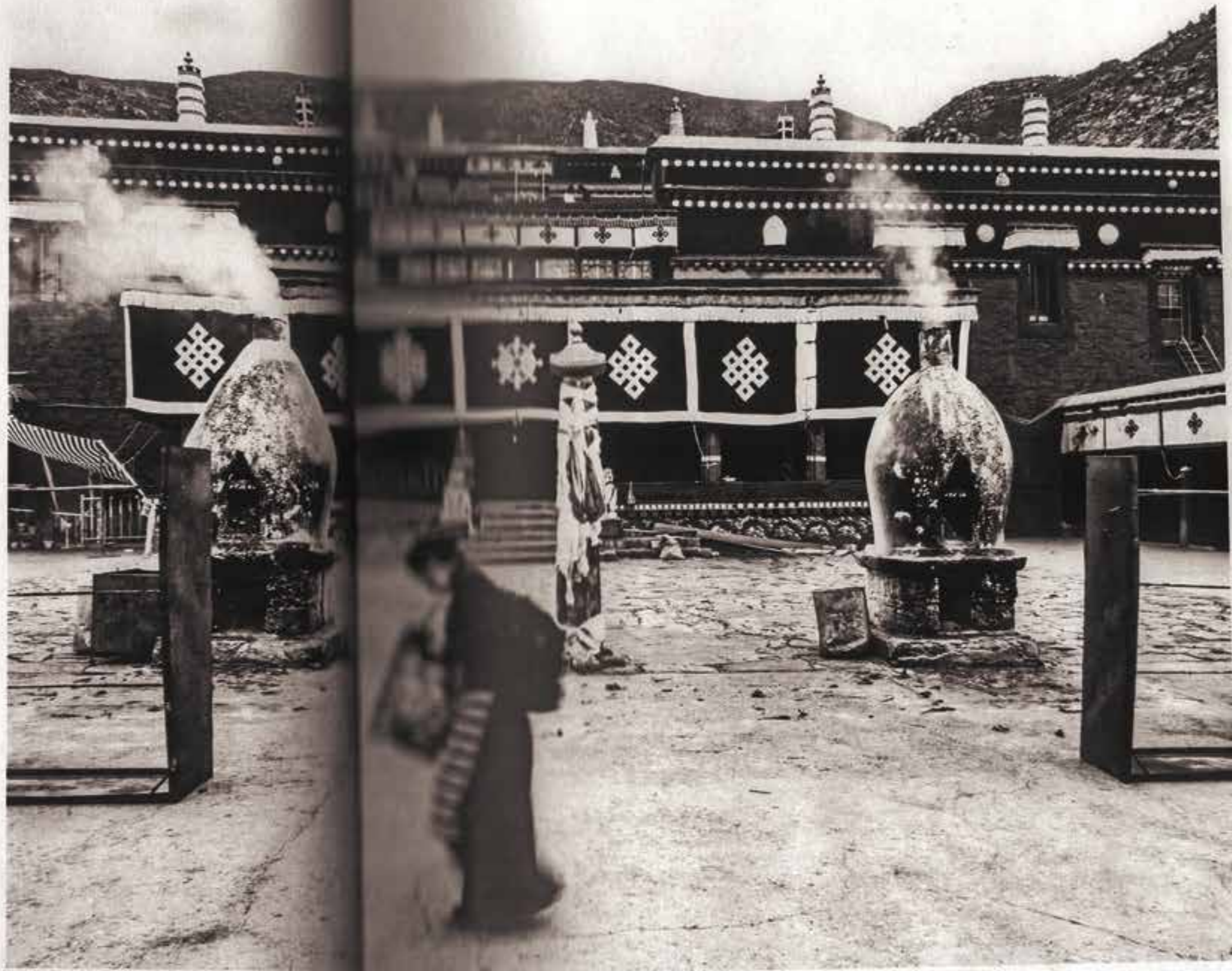
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The **GOOD**
The **BAD** and
THE **UGLY**



At the beginning and the end of our journey to Tibet, we visit the Nechung Monastery in Lhasa. It used to be the seat of the Tibetan State Oracle. Padmasambhava banned a shamanist deity and bound it by oath. Since then, it has been manifesting again and again in the shape of men who are not to be envied. The deity projects its stream of consciousness forcefully into the physical aspects of the medium, taking over for a short time. That takes a lot of effort, and as a rule, the medium will not become very old. The Nechung Oracle in its Indian exile still is as important advisor to the Tibetan government in exile, and it is asked regularly. But it's not always that one gets an answer: "Sometimes he just responds with a burst of sarcastic laughter.."
(Dalai Lama) On our final visit to the Nechung Monastery before leaving, we already know the routine. The monks let us do as we please. We make a sacrificial offering of barley beer, saying thanks for our protection.





During our stay at the Sangye Choeling monastery in Kathmandu, we regularly take part in the morning pujas. The pujas are always dedicated to certain Buddha form, in turn texts are being recited and ritual music is being played. The monks follow their practice, we follow ours. But this morning, everything is different. We see a large altar full of offerings. Some Nepalese people from the region take part in the puja, since a relative of theirs has fallen seriously ill.

This puja is dedicated to a female protector form of Buddha, Namgyalma (Victorious One), and is to help the sick person. Today, everybody is highly focussed, even the youngest monks. No routine, today it's serious. We know the musical instruments: long brass trumpets, a kind of clarinet, conch horns, cymbals and drums of different sizes. Bass drums and resounding brass, overlain by clashing cymbals and shrill flutes, with rhythms changing abruptly and frequently. It feels like a thunderstorm. A sound wall hits us, and our body-mind system resonates. Rock'n'Roll.

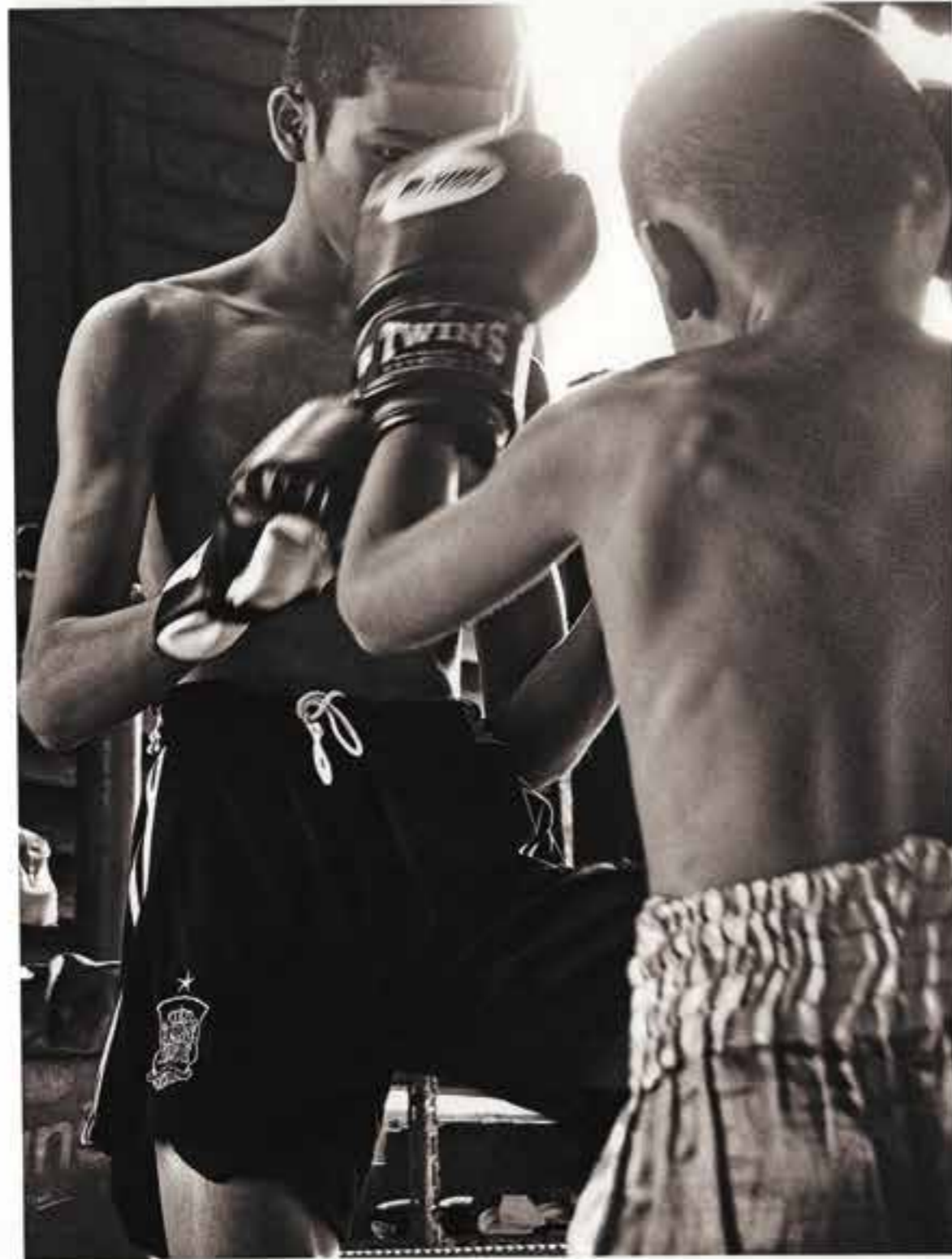




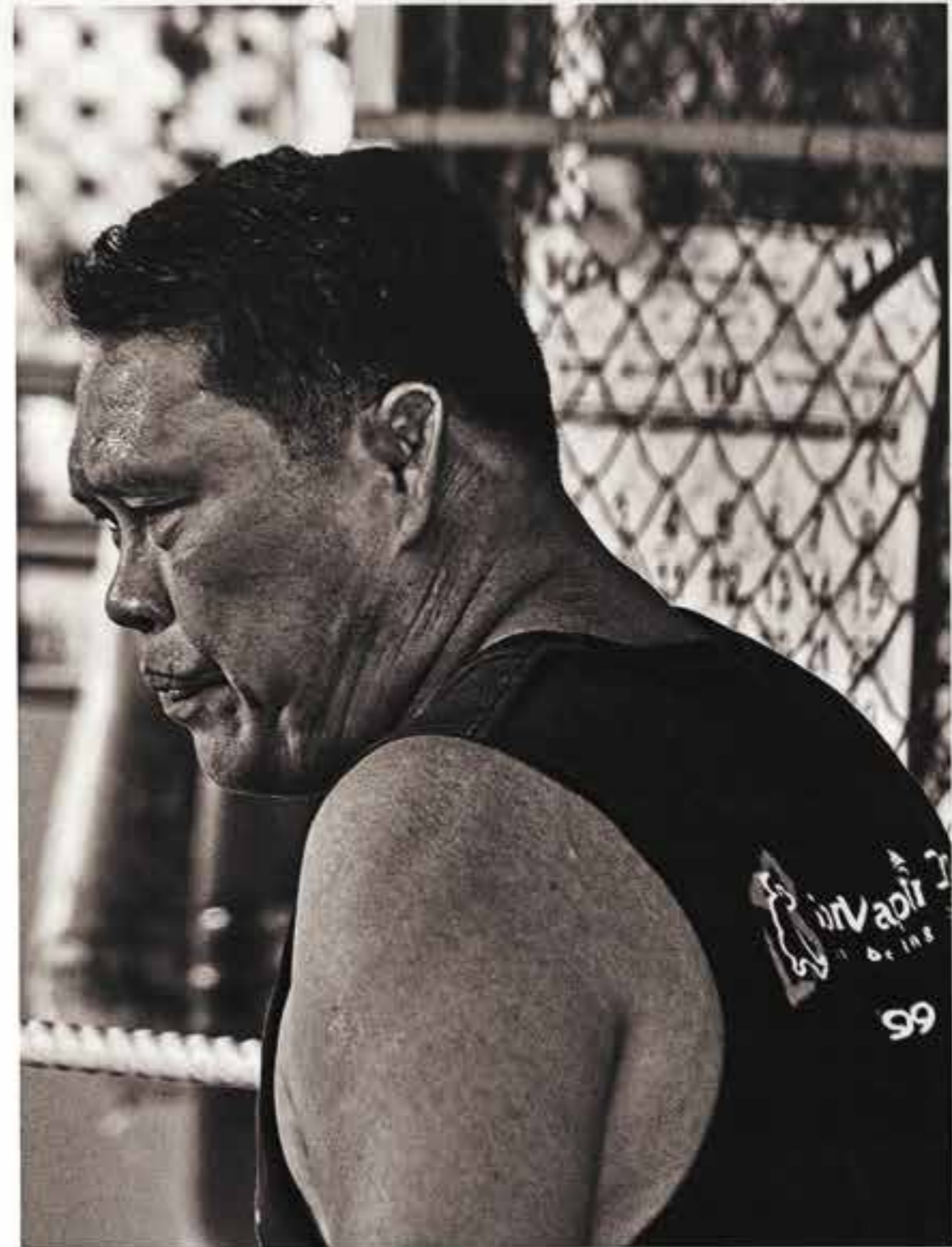
The Annapurna Circuit in Nepal is blocked. Even the long suspension bridge is rendered impassable by hundreds of animals. We wait. Tens of thousands of mountain goats and sheep from Mustang are herded down into the Nepalese valleys during these days for the Dashain festival. The most important celebration in Nepal lasts 15 days and honours Hindu goddess Durga, the female archetypal force in the Universe, as slayer of buffalo demon Mahishasura. The ever-returning victory of good over evil.

Water buffalo and other cloven-hoofed animals give their lives for their role as the bad guys in the Durga story. Buffalos used to be sacrificed in masses, so we are told, but today only few ritual sacrifices are performed in temples. Dashain is nowadays a festival for the whole family. People buy a goat, have it blessed, a tika (a ritual red dot) is marked on its forehead, it gets slaughtered and eaten. But even today, a lot of blood flows in the gutter, because the goats are often slaughtered in the streets. The butchers traditionally keep the heads as part of their pay.





The Khru (master) at the Thai Boxing Gym in Bangkok's Farang-Ghetto Khao San looks the many fights he's fought. He is a nice man and allows us to take photos. Two boys are in the ring, one maybe fifteen, the other maybe ten years old. The little one won't give in, the elder one has some difficulties and is in a defensive stance. Though maybe he only offers the younger one an opportunity to show what he can. Punches, kicks with the elbows or knees, kicks with



the feet. Finally the younger one slows down, he topples a few times. The Khru glows with pride. Some farang working out in the back are observing the fight admiringly. What battle spirit! The younger one is so exhausted he can barely keep standing, and finally the Khru calls off the fight. Having kids fight against each other is not a good idea? Granted. But Muay Thai is one possible way out of poverty and still better than criminal alternatives. Totally legitimate if you live in a poor society.





VISIT BALI

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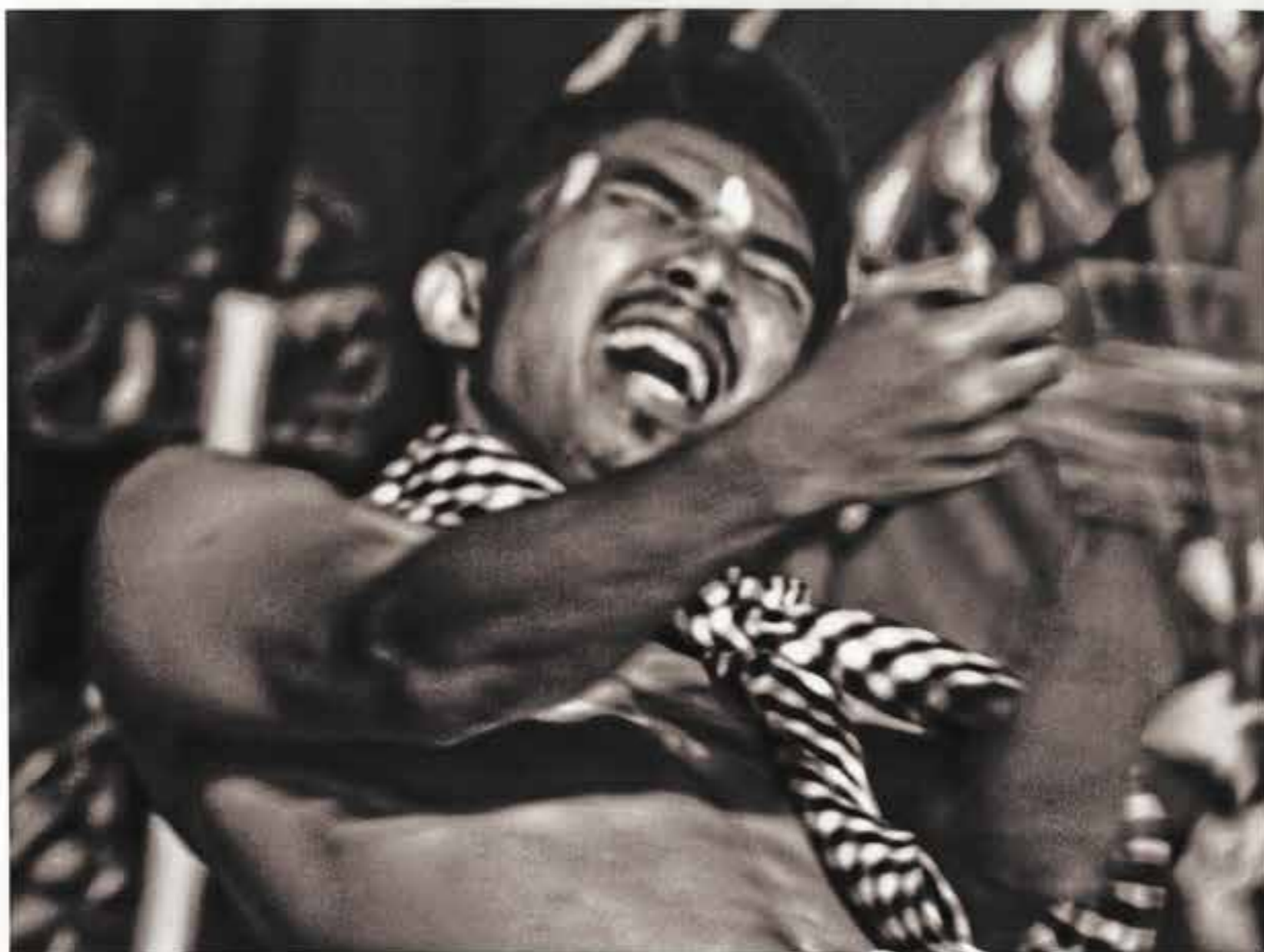


In Balinese cosmology, everything is a perennial dance between the poles of chaos and order. Too much chaos, and everything will disintegrate, too much order, and everything will stagnate. What is needed is a dynamic balance. The eternal battle between good and evil is manifest in the Barong dance as a mixture of drama, humour, and trance. The Barong is a kind of mythical lion, a king of the good spirits and protector of villages. Basically, it is a good character, if a bit scary. Rangda is the child eater, queen of demons and godmother of witchcraft.

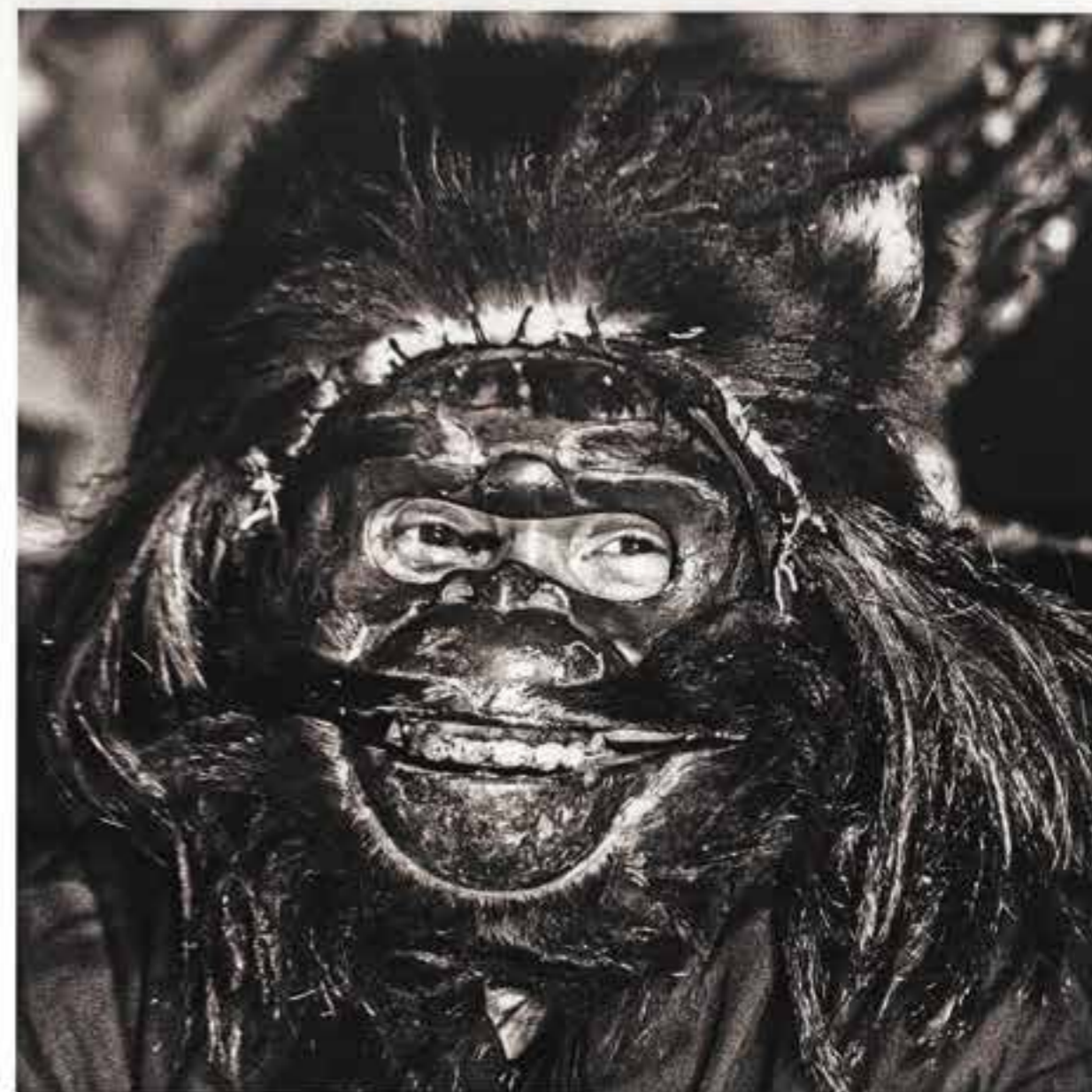
Not completely evil, she may also appear as protectress. The characters appear in a wild changeover, there are comic battle scenes, the actors laugh at the audience and at each other, and everything is accompanied by highly dramatic gamelan music. The Banjar kids watch the spectacle open-mouthed and wide-eyed. Just like me. The piece is based on the ancient Indian Ramayana epic. It's about prince Rama saving his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana. My favourite character is Hanuman, the loyal and fearless monkey general.

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The climax arrives with the kris dance. The kris is a dagger with a wavy blade which may possess supernatural powers and which is held in high regard by its owner. A horde of warriors attacks Rangda with their kris, but Rangda throws a spell on them, and they turn their weapons against themselves. They fall into a trance, sinking their daggers into their own breast. Granted, some of them only act the trance, but others are really out of control, sinking their daggers deep into their breast. No blood is flowing.



At a certain point, they all fall down. Some of them really have lost consciousness, others are play-acting. A priest sprinkles holy water on them, and they slowly recover. Everybody smiles. Everything is at its right place, the powers are in cosmic balance. And hey, it's all a game, right? Just like the man who jumps into the fire during the Kecak dance the next evening and stays unhurt, right?



Later that night underneath the mosquito net, my thoughts wander. It is a good thing that our landlady performs her daily offering rituals for our house as well. The dark powers receive wonderful offerings made of flowers, banana leaves and rice on the floor, the deities receive theirs on a little wall altar. One comes to an arrangement. As a visitor to the island, one should by all means listen to the Balinese in all things spiritual. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

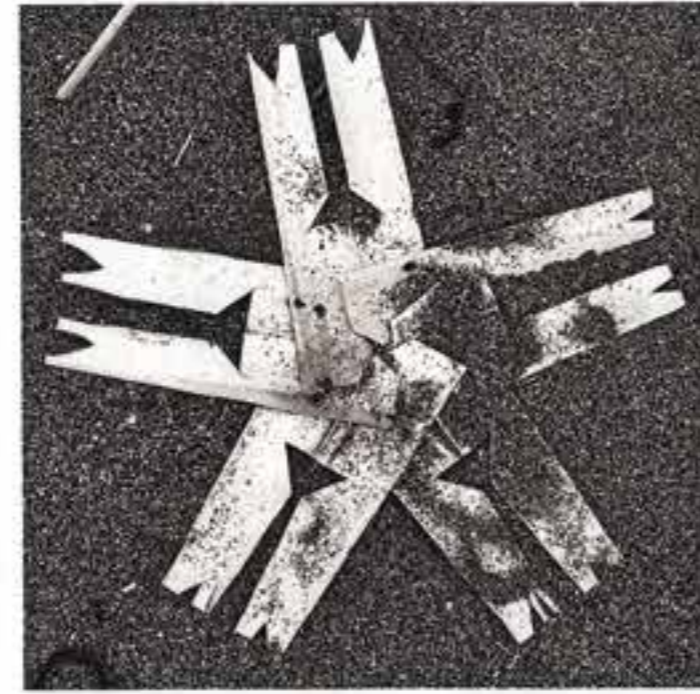




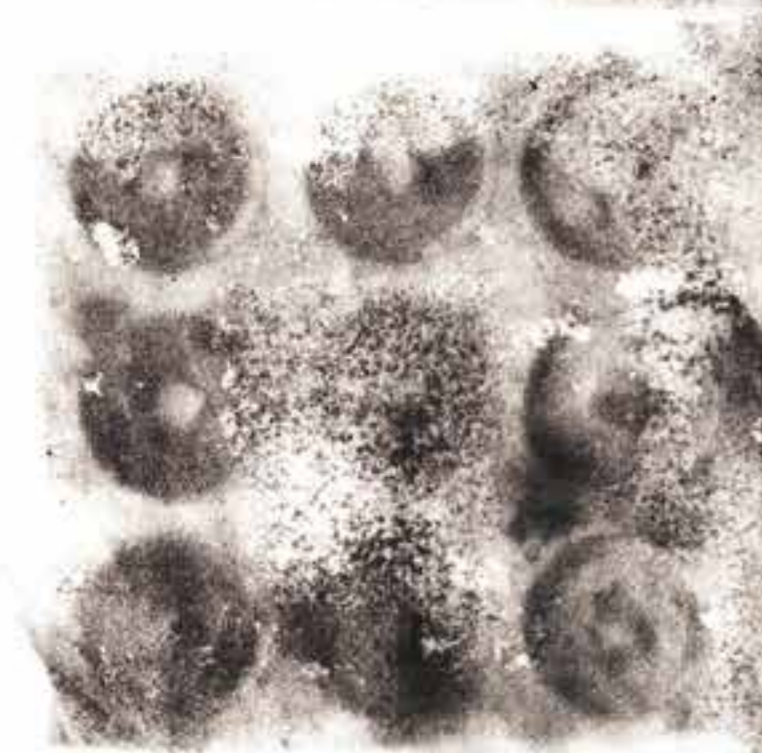




At Seminyak beach, there's the Petitenget Temple. Sacrificial offerings are placed on the sand, and the high tide comes to get them. Traditionally, alongside flowers, food, etc., offerings also comprise old Sino-Indonesian coins with a hole in the middle (Kepeng), which used to be a kind of universal currency throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Today, these old bronze coins have become rare, and the pragmatic Balinese people take tin replicas instead.



The sea swallows old and new coins, and gives them back many years later and transformed. The tides have encrusted the coins with an armour consisting of sand and corroded metal. We are walking the beach for several days, searching for such coins which become visible only during low tide. When you break open the coin's armour, you find a much slimmer coin inside. Sometimes, all that's left is the essence of the coin, scarcely discernible, as its own impression.



These four travellers have inspired me, and their books have accompanied me on our journey.

Alexandra David-Néel

Alexandra David-Néel (1868-1969) was a French feminist, opera star, philosopher, and a great traveller. In the early 20th century, she travelled alone to Asia, at a time when this was unheard-of for women. During her travels, she also came to Tibet, and when she reached Lhasa in 1923, she probably was the first European woman to do so. David-Néel was ordained and appointed a Lama. She published several books on Tibet and went on lecture tours. In her old age, she was appointed a Knight of the French Legion of Honour. Shortly before her death at the age of 100, she had her passport renewed.

Ernst Lothar Hoffmann (Lama Anagarika Govinda)

Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898-1985) was a German scholar, mystic, author, and artist. He is regarded as an important interpreter of Buddhism and Daoism and he founded an order. When still quite young, he became a Buddhist and published comparative studies. In the 1930s, he went into retreat in northern India. From there, he travelled to the most remote areas of Tibet, took photos, painted, and wrote. He described these travels e.g. in his book 2 „The Way of the White Clouds“. He died laughing.

Hannah and Lama Ole Nydahl

Hannah Nydahl (1946-2007) was a Buddhist teacher and translator from the Tibetan language. She is responsible for the authentic translation of many texts. Together with her husband Ole Nydahl (*1941) whom she married in 1968, she travelled to Nepal, like many hippies at the time. In Kathmandu, they met important Tibetan lamas in exile, and finally became the first Western pupils of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, the Head of the Tibetan-Buddhist Karma Kagyu tradition. As a result of their involvement in Tibetan Buddhism, they gave up drugs and smuggling. After several years of training in the Himalayas and at the behest of the Karmapa, they founded innumerable Buddhist centres in the West since 1972 and have spent their life travelling and teaching.

This book is dedicated to Agnes.

I feel very grateful towards Michael Ackerman for his tremendous support. Not only did he inspire me to start this project (and to finish it), but he accompanied me throughout the entire editorial process with a critical mind and giving me plenty of hope. Thank you, Michael.

I am very much indebted to Lenka Kesting. Not only did she save my life during the journey, she let me take her photographs time and again in strange situations, and she even became co-editor of this book. Last but not least thanks for my photo in chapter 2.

I am grateful to all people who let me take their photo. Those I didn't ask for their approval, I now ask for their forgiveness.

I'd like to thank Ludwig Fiebig for translating the text from German into English and André Liegl for post production.

All my friends, acquaintances, and even strangers, who I continually confronted with work-in-progress designs, who I pestered, and on whose critical feedback I insisted, deserve great thanks for their honesty and patience.

© Photographs Martin Kesting 2016

Except:

The photo of my tumor in chapter 1 was done by „Krankenhaus Neukölln, Pathologie“ in 2001. After I survived an operation on 10 September 2001, I asked the Pathologic Dept. for a photo of my personal "alien," and they gave me a diapositive as a present.

The photo of the corpse of „Si Quey“ used for the collage in chapter 2 is by „Bobby (from London)“, 2006, licensed under the © Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license, screenshot made on 6 January 2018.

The photo of the author as a corpse in chapter 2 is by Lenka Kesting (2019).

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For the endpapers I scanned a map from „E. von Sydows Schulatlas“ from 1872.

In chapter 2 I use a scan of page 7 of the „The Himalayan Times“ from 10 September 2016 (www.thehimalayantimes.com).

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Verbatim quotes from:

Lama Anagarika Govinda. The Way of the White Clouds. 1966
The Wachowskis. The Matrix. Film from 1999
Alexandra David-Néel. Magic and Mystery in Tibet. 1929
The Baghavad Gita
Padmasambhava. The Tibetan Book of the Dead.
Lama Ole Nydahl. Entering the Diamond Way. 2nd edition 2012
Lama Anagarika Govinda. Psycho-cosmic Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa. 1976

The motto at the beginning of the book („Death is only the end...“) is taken from the „Night Vale podcast“
<https://twitter.com/nightvaleradio/status/552567153065742337>

Author's note:

A collage in chapter 2 shows a sculpture called „Bones“ by Thai artist Pansak Thurantariviya photographed at the Thai National Gallery in October 2016.

The „Tank Man“ puppet scanned for chapter 3 was taken in January 2016 at the Albertinum in Dresden from an installation by Fernando Sánchez Castillo. The puppet was molded after the iconic photo of the Tianamen Place from 1989.

Sculptures made by the author are: „PP“ 2017 made from Koh Phi Phi floatsam shown in chapter 2; „Transition“ from 2013; and „Tank II“ from 2012, shown in chapter 3.



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OSTINDIEN UND CHINA.

0 50 100 Deutsche Meilen (15 = 1. Breitengrad)

- Chinesisches Reich: — China, — Unterworfenen Länder
- Staaten, welche China tributpflichtig sind.
- Unabhängige ostindische Staaten.

Europäische Colonien.

- Britisch
- unmittelbarer Besitz
- mittelbarer Besitz (Schutz- & Vasallenländer).
- Niederländisch
- Französisch
- Spanisch
- Portugiesisch

