

Early Indo-Tibetan
Buddhist Art
in the Western Himalaya

TABO
*a Lamp
for the Kingdom*



Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter

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a Lamp for the Kingdom

Early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalaya

with contributions by

Christian Luczanits, Luciano Petech, Ernst Steinkellner, Erna Wandl



THAMES AND HUDSON

*Frontispiece.
Bodhisattva Vajragarbha
(rDo-rje-snying-po)
Ambulatory: south wall, upper register
(BS3)*

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To
Eugenio Gherzi
and in the memory of
Giuseppe Tucci



Eugenio Gherzi, Giuseppe Tucci
and four other members of the Tucci Expedition 1933
Chandra Valley (?), Lahul

Preface and Acknowledgements

Seen through the window of my memory, Tabo looks now as it did when I first visited the Spiti valley more than 18 years ago. The low, clay-coloured monastery buildings are shrouded in dust and sheltered between the steep barren mountains and the brilliant sky. Gheri, who has seen many of the earth's beautiful places, said that when he thinks of Tabo he first remembers the sky. As the sun arises before the monastery gates the sky is grey then pink and then as the sun travels up the valley, the sky changes to every imaginable shade of blue and lavender, with the sun's disappearance behind the monastery walls, the last deep purple surrenders to blackness filled with stars. The cloudless heavens, the dust-laden air, the stillness occasionally punctuated by an animal's cry, the villagers clothed in dark traditional dress bringing in the harvest, and the few monks in their burgundy robes attending to the ancient crumbling monastery and their daily devotions, that was Tabo as I first saw it. When I last visited Tabo in June of 1996 there were new buildings in the village and monastery and the valley was filled with tent cities, temporary tea houses, shops and restaurants, 3,000 peace-keepers and 27,000 pilgrims who had come to be blessed by his Holiness the Dalai Lama and to celebrate the monastery which had served as the spiritual heart of the region for a thousand years.

The works of Giuseppe Tucci and Eugenio Gheri inspired the first trip to Tabo and they have remained my constant companions throughout. The enduring legacy of Tucci's historical and philological inquiries during the 1933 and 1935 expeditions owed much to his fortunate collaboration with the resourceful and gifted Eugenio Gheri – physician, photographer, cartographer, diarist, and beer brewer. Completely different in their talents, ideally suited to one another by temperament, they formed an extraordinary team. They spent more than three years in intensive collaboration and then they separated to follow their different interests – each destined for long and brilliant careers. Together Tucci and Gheri documented and published every important Buddhist monument in the western Himalayas.

I had met Tucci in Afghanistan shortly before my first unsuccessful attempt to visit Tabo, when it still seemed an impossible adventure. Who could have imagined that six years later I would undertake the ordering of his Photographic Archive, which belongs to IsIAO and is housed in the National Museum of Oriental Art? Or that Gheri and his wife would become valued friends? It is a personal sadness for me that Mrs. Gheri did not live to see the completion of this book which she did so much to encourage.

All of us who have contributed to this book dedicate our small efforts to Eugenio Gheri and the memory of Giuseppe Tucci in grateful acknowledgement of their prodigious accomplishments and con-

tributions to science. The reward of my commitment to the study of Tabo's history has been the abiding friendship of all those who first began this journey with me. Over the years new friends also contributed to the pleasure and success of this research. The sustaining spirit of this study until today is the Abbot Geshe Sonam Wangdü and the monks, particularly Sangpo, Lama Tobgye, Yeshe Phuntsok, and Nyima Tashi, who each year welcomed us 'home' with generosity and tranquil good humour.

The Archaeological Survey of India supported our efforts throughout, and I thank former Director General M.N. Deshpande and Chief of Conservation R. Sengupta for their initial encouragement. Continuing support came over the years from subsequent Directors General, particularly M.C. Joshi and Joint Director General Acala Moulik. The hospitality of dear friends – Dhanvanti Swadi, Deepak Sanan, Ujjwala and Narinder Chauhan awaited us wherever they resided. In countless small villages in Spiti, Lahul and Kinnaur we were always received with kind hospitality, but special thanks must go to our friends whom we visited every year and who often accompanied us on our travels – Gautam Lama, Om Prakash, Shamsher and Sushil Negi and M.S. Negi. Throughout Himachal Pradesh many government officers assisted us in too many official and unofficial ways to be listed here, but I must specially mention Phuntsok Rai, now a Minister of the State whom I have known since my first visit to Tabo. That our travels were possible at all is due largely to the efforts of the Austrian Embassy, particularly H.E. Christoph Cornaro, H.E. Karl Peterlik, Peter Launsky, Thomas Buchsbaum, Munish Bahl.

Since 1985 every aspect of the project has been supported by grants for research and travel by the Austrian Fonds zur Förderung der Wissenschaftlichen Forschung. Without their support quite simply none of it would have been possible.

The final phase of work on this book took place at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. I thank the Institute's School of Historical Studies for the honour and privilege of participating as a Member in the life of this extraordinary community. During this time I particularly benefited from the insights and observations of my colleagues Oleg Grabar and Irving Lavin, as well as Marilyn Lavin, Giles Constable, James Trilling, Dore J. Levy, and Christine Guth. I am also profoundly indebted to my colleagues at the University of Vienna, particularly the Dekan of the Geisteswissenschaftliche Fakultät, and the members of the Institut für Kunstgeschichte, headed by Professor Friedrich Teja Bach for their understanding and support.

Many friends in India, Europe, and America offered support and encouragement at critical moments. Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner and I shared the first and most magical adventure. Gail Cornaro accompanied me in 1989, and my son Sacha Klimburg also journeyed with me to Tabo. Thanks are also due to Ramesh Sharma and Uma Gajapati Raju, Shubindu Kaushik, Jill Norgren, Ralph Norgren, Louise Cort, Judith Lerner, Mirabai Bush, Irene Montjoye, Robert Ellsworth, and Fabio Pittella of Skira Editore.

Both the research and preparation of this book took place at the Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna and also at the IsMEO (now called IsIAO) in Rome. The Director of the Institute, Ernst Steinkellner, provided the organisational, intellectual, and spiritual infrastructure which permitted this research to flourish. Both his own extensive knowledge of Buddhism and Tibet and the considerable resources of the Institute were always available. We are grateful to the colleagues of the Institute who assisted us in many ways, some of whom also collaborated in field work – Helmut Tauscher, Michael Torsten Much, Kathrin Kronsteiner, Mischa Tauscher-Lamberg. During our field work we collaborated with Paul Harrison and particularly Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, our valued companion and source of wisdom. Professor Steinkellner and Dr. Scherrer-Schaub generously allowed me to quote their unpublished articles, in addition they each read the entire manuscript and made important and detailed corrections.

Since 1984 this research was part of a joint collaboration with the IsMEO (now IsIAO) and I thank Gherardo Gnoli for his invitation to undertake the cataloguing of the Tucci Photographic Archive and for permission to publish Ghersi's photos from the 1933 and 1935 Tucci expeditions. For the support and administration of the project I am indebted to Luciano Petech, who also generously gave council on all philological and historical matters throughout our research. His profound understanding of the history of the period served as the framework for all of our research and we are very grateful that he has contributed his major study to this volume. Sincere thanks go also to Maurizio Taddei for his support and consultation; his extensive knowledge of Indian art and archaeology was invaluable. Also from IsIAO I thank Anna Maria De Angelis, formerly Secretary General of IsMEO and Francesco Noci and Pat Smith who were part of the 1991 mission to Tabo and each contributed to this volume. I also wish to thank Donatella Mazzeo, Director of the Museum, for her support and encouragement. At the Museum thanks also go to Oscar Nalesini, Giulia Talamo, and Paola D'Amore for their collaboration on the study of the Tucci Archive.

I am grateful to the Sud family, Shimla for allowing us to study and publish objects from their important collection. I also thank Prof. Wolf Kahlen for permission to publish a photograph from his extensive collection on Tabo.

My most sincere gratitude goes to Roger Goepfer and Jaroslav Poncar who in 1989 gave me a complete set of Poncar's marvellous photographs of the Tabo Main Temple. Prof. Poncar also travelled with us to Tholing; I thank him for his extraordinary, and characteristic generosity in permitting me to publish his photographs here.

The long process of giving shape to this book was stewarded by Erna Wandl who not only contributed the results of her research to this volume but with patience and good humour typed and transcribed endless field notes and reports as well as co-ordinated tedious administrative details. Together with Christian Jahoda they transformed my notes and illegible writings into a readable manuscript. Jahoda copy-read this manuscript more times than bears thinking about, and I am indebted to his patience and sharp eye. His careful attention to detail saved me from many errors and inconsistencies. He also prepared the index. I thank him for his contributions.

But my greatest debt is to Christian Luczanits, since 1991 my partner on this journey. In many ways this book is a result of our collaboration over these last years. Within the scope of the project on Early Indo-Tibetan Monastic Art, supported by the Austrian Research *Fonds*, he is in charge of the Visual Resources Collections. He controlled the visual material for this book and prepared all the graphic components. He co-ordinated our Himalayan expeditions and was responsible for the better part of the photo documentation and the transcription of the most difficult inscriptions. From our shared observations, analysis and sometimes conflicting views exchanged during the many months of field work, evolved the essential lines of the argument presented here. As I struggled to understand the meaning and history of the Main Temple he offered uncompromising criticism. He read and corrected all my chapters, however the errors of judgement or fact which remain, are mine alone. His own scholarly research provided an important dimension, only partially acknowledged by the numerous citations to his work. The book is only one part of an ongoing journey and I am grateful for his patience and generosity in sharing it with me.

Guide to the Reader

Our goal was to make Tabo and its history accessible to the general reader, while accurately sharing new information with the specialist. Unfortunately an extremely important source, the *mNga'-ris rgyal-rabs* by Gu-ge mkhan-chen Ngag-dbang-grags-pa was unknown to us. Prof. Petech and I regret that this book was already in press when we received from Roberto Vitali his edition and commentary. We both thank Vitali for having sent us copies of his work. The *mNga'-ris rgyal-rabs* offers a large amount of new information and it is unfortunate that Prof. Petech was unable to make certain small changes to his chapter on the history of western Tibet. Nonetheless this text does not contradict the main lines of the historical argument presented here.

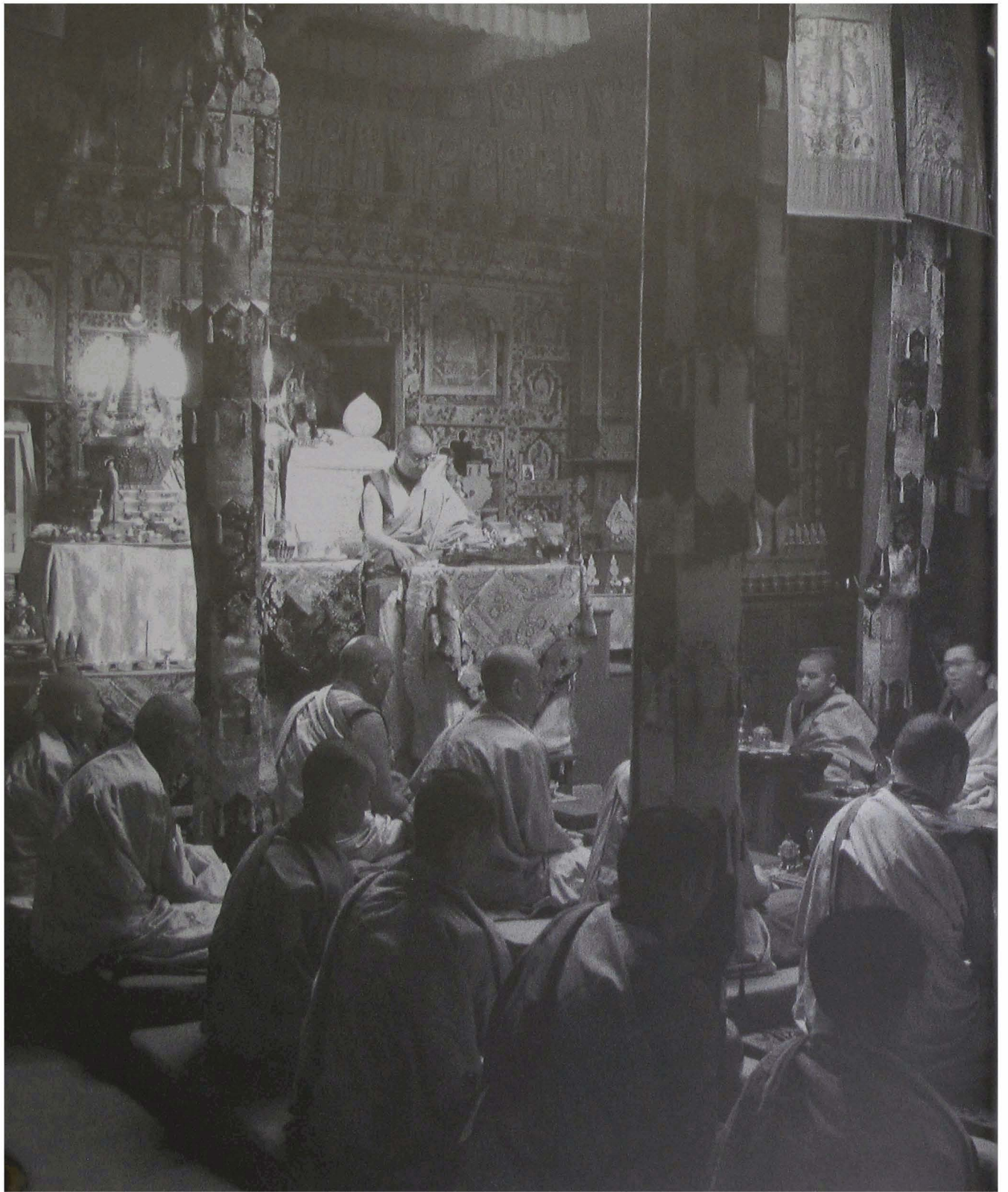
As little scientific work on this subject has been published to date, a great deal of specialised information is briefly indicated with references to further scholarly sources. In order to assist the general reader with the “cast of characters” I have added in the Index a brief explanation for the most frequently used names. The specialist will find it useful to read this book together with *Inscriptions from the Tabo Main Temple: Texts and Translations* (eds. Luciano Petech and Christian Luczanits, Serie Orientale, Rome). If we have too often mystified the layman and infuriated the scholar, my apologies to both.

Short Guide to Pronunciation

The transcription of Sanskrit words follows the standard adaptation of the transcription system found in Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, repr. Delhi 1984. The transcription of Tibetan words follows the Wylie system (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 22, pp. 261–267). There are no diacritical marks. “'” is a letter in the Wylie system. The pronunciation of initial consonants in Tibetan words is often simplified in the spoken language. Thus the first or second or even sometimes the third letter of a syllable may not be pronounced. This is indicated in the transcription system by a capital for the radical letter in the first syllable of all proper names. The eight prefixed letters g, d, b, m, r, s, l, and “'” (apostrophe) may be ignored. Final consonants are also not always pronounced, and the final d, n, l, and s shorten the preceding vowel. Thus dPal-ldan is pronounced Pelden.

Some combinations of consonants are pronounced as a single sound: gy = j; py = j; phya = ch; bya = ch; mya = nya; tr, dr, mr, sr usually omit the “r”.

Other combinations are simplified in pronunciation: db = w; dby = y; kr = tr; khr and phra = trh; gr and br = dr. Ng in Wylie system is n and as a final syllable is pronounced as “g”. Thus Byang-chub-'od is pronounced Changchub Ö. For a more complete system of the pronunciation rules any Tibetan dictionary or grammar may be consulted. Foreign words and names of literary works are written in italics. For frequently used Tibetan names, the approximate pronunciation is given in the index. All names and words which are found in standard English usage are written in normal script, without diacritics and following standard spelling. Thus Dalai Lama, Lhasa etc.



I. The Way to Tabo

The story begins with a place, a small village in the valley along the Spiti river (figs. 1, 7), tributary of the Sutlej. And a large temple at the edge of the village, today surrounded by chapels and stupas and a new temple and monks' quarters. According to the Renovation Inscription (Appendix), the temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) was then called dPal-ldan bkra'-shis bde-gnas (Noble Auspicious Joyful Place), a name which never occurs again. The monastery (referred to in the last line of the Renovation Inscription) must always have been called by the name of the village, as also in the caption which identifies the Tabo community (Saṅgha) (fig. 139).

The spelling of the name of the village varies through the centuries. The earliest records, the Renovation Inscription and some folios in the temple "Kanjur" (Canon) read *Ta-po*; later inscriptions in the temple and texts such as the Great Translator Rin-chen-bzang-po's biography read *Ta-pho* (or *rTa-pho*). And today one finds the Indianized variant Tabo¹.

The name of the village, like the other names appearing in the Entry Hall inscriptions is obviously a non-Tibetan name. The changes in spelling represent various phases in recording the pronunciations and then adapting the name to the Tibetan language². Here we use the modern Indian version. But what was the original language spoken in the area, was it the language of Zhang-zhung? (See Petech Chapter VII.)

Tabo was a royal monastery, founded and renovated by two of the most famous royal lamas of the distinguished line of the kings of Purang-Guge. The Renovation Inscription tells us the temple was founded by the "Bodhisattva" (the royal lama Ye-shes-'od) (fig. 2), and renovated 46 years later by his grandnephew, the royal priest Byang-chub-'od (fig. 5). But tradition attributes Tabo's founding to the Great Translator Rin-chen-bzang-po³. Yet despite the many historical names written in the temple, his is not among them and his role is still not understood. Tabo was also the largest monastery in the western borderlands of the kingdom, and the first monument in India to use the Tibetan language as a medium of communication.

Traces of the pre-Tibetan culture remain in the Entry Hall to the Main Temple. One of the main characters of our story is the protectress of the temple Wi-nyu-myin (fig. 39) placed conspicuously above the entrance to the Assembly Hall opposite the original entrance to the temple. She must have been a powerful presence in Tabo to have been given such importance in the new temple. Indeed a female deity remained the protectress in Tabo (Rizvi 1987) until the modern period. She was only slowly transformed into a Buddhist deity, rDo-rje-chen-mo (see Chapter V.2). The earlier importance of her cult in Tabo may

H.H. the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, detail of fig. 53
Tabo, Main Temple, Assembly Hall

have been the reason for the large Buddhist temple having been placed in Tabo. Could the disturbance in Tabo between 996 and 1042, which may have occasioned the Admonitory (“Hortative”) Inscription in the Assembly Hall, have been caused by her devotees? Were this inscription and the renovation of the temple motivated by the same causes, when precisely did the renovation occur? Also important was the influence exerted by aristocratic families on the location of new monastic complexes. The powerful ‘Bro family owned estates in lower Spiti which may account for the three Buddhist establishments, including Tabo.

The geographic location of Tabo village is not particularly auspicious. Lari, only five km to the east along the Spiti river also possessed a temple and the temple Byang-chub-gling must have been close by (map 2. West Tibet). Indeed the lower Spiti valley was apparently an extremely important centre for the transmission of Buddhism. The over 35,000 folios of the Tabo “Kanjur” represent only small fragments, so that the original library must have been immense, so large in fact that the philologists postulate that the “Kanjur” must actually represent several destroyed libraries which were gathered together after a disaster (perhaps the Sikh invasions) and placed in the Tabo Assembly Hall.

Among the questions still to be answered are why was the monastery located here, what form of religious practice predominated there in the 10th and 11th centuries, who were the main characters in the story and, what were their contributions to the monastery? What was the function of the temple?

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief introduction to the history of our research on Tabo monastery, to explain the goals and approaches we used and the difficulties we encountered. When Chhaya Bhattacharya and I first visited Tabo in 1978, at the suggestion of the then Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) M.N. Deshpande and the Chief of Conservation R. Sengupta, there was very little known about the art of the Trans-Himalayan region⁴. In the excellent survey published in 1971 by Debala Mitra on the Buddhist archaeological sites of India, Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh are not even on the map. At that time little research had been conducted in these areas (Francke 1914, Tucci 1933 and 1935, Snellgrove 1957). The only study to describe Tabo in some detail was Tucci’s *Indo-Tibetica* published in Italian in an extremely small edition. Since Tucci’s research, more than 45 years had passed. Thus, we were completely unprepared for the extraordinary state of preservation of the monument.

Neither of us had ever seen a free-standing Buddhist monument in India (that is not a cave temple) with its roof intact. And for many years, indeed, until the results of the ¹⁴C-analysis became available I could not believe that we were looking at the original ceiling in Tabo. Not only was the decoration of the monument complete but unlike almost all other Buddhist monuments in India, there was an inscription which recorded the founding date of the temple as well as an extensive renovation 46 years later. This inscription had been published by Tucci. It was our original hope to try to document everything that we could as precisely and completely as possible and to verify certain key points about the artistic program.

All research, and particularly field research, proceeds on the basis of choices which are, in the best of circumstances, motivated by the resources available and one’s own personal interests and skills. In this instance it was clearly impossible for two young women with 12 rolls of film to document everything and so we decided to concentrate on the largest and earliest temple, the Main Temple of the complex.

At that time very few monks were living in Tabo: the senior monk Geshe (*dge-bshes*) Yeshe Chönden (Ye-shes-chos-ldan) and Lama Tobgye (sTobs-rgyal), who is a native of Spiti, and Geshe Sonam Wangdü (bSod-nams-dbang-’dus) and some children, particularly Yeshe Phüntso (Ye-shes-phun-tshogs). Geshe Yeshe Chönden died before our return (see Interview Chapter II). But the others have remained our friends and collaborators, especially the extraordinary personality Geshe Sonam Wangdü. We had intended to interview local lamas to find out their views about the iconography and history of the monas-

tery. (Had I known as much of Tucci's working methods then as I do now, I would have realised that Tucci had certainly already explored this possibility.) Geshe Sonam Wangdū informed me that the local people no longer knew anything about the old iconography and that he and Geshe Yeshe Chönden were from Tibet and had only recently arrived. However, they knew about the great age of Tabo and its importance in the history of the *phyi-dar* (Later Diffusion of Buddhism) in Tibet and they were anxious to learn more. Thus began our collaboration and Geshe remains still today an inexhaustible source of encouragement and support. We had two goals: to understand the chronology of the Main Temple and the organising principle of the iconography.

Tucci had proposed a 14th-century date for the decoration of the temple and the Renovation Inscription on the basis of a name he had read in a caption to the painting above the Renovation Inscription. We could not confirm this reading⁵. Further we could find no evidence that the sculptures of the mandala were not original. Thus it seemed to us at that time that there was every reason to believe that the decoration (with the exception of the modern repairs) dated from the 10th–11th centuries (Klimburg-Salter 1982: 157).

Due to the enormous amount of material that Tucci collected on his long journey, by the time he returned to his desk and his notes in Italy, naturally, it was difficult to remember precisely each monument. Thus he had a stunning cultural panorama against which, by virtue of his unique talents and instincts, he was able to understand the large sweep of contemporary history and ideology. But sometimes the details were lost. Thus in Tabo he made a few errors in interpretation which would have been avoided if he had had more time. As it is, what he and Ghersi accomplished in only three days still defies imagination.

Although our ideal would have been first to carefully and objectively document the evidence and then to interpret it, this is seldom possible. Due to the very often faded and destroyed condition of the material, sometimes one cannot avoid interpreting as one records. The best that one can try to do is to record various possibilities, and not to exclude less likely variants based on the current state of knowledge. With regard to Tabo this was particularly important as we discovered that almost all of the iconography, such as the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala and the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala, could to a large degree be related to known textual sources, but not precisely. Therefore it is important to emphasise the objective description of the material. There is always hope that new discoveries will provide the solutions.

We returned to our respective institutions and began to work through our documentation. The first and most difficult problem was the geographic location of Tabo. At first glance it was difficult to understand how a monument of such high quality and cosmopolitan artistic achievement came to be located in the Spiti valley. The style and content of the art links Tabo to the Buddhist centres in western Tibet, Central Asia, Greater Kashmir, and western India. Archaeological finds in Himachal Pradesh indicate a long period of human habitation, but no earlier monument is known from the immediate geographic region. Tabo represents the first phase in the intense and permanent cultural transformation of the region. It was our goal to understand the process by which from the 11th century, a nexus of cultural influences converged on Tabo, and an economic infrastructure was created which allowed such a lavish investment in what must have been, even then, a provincial location.

In an effort to understand the larger economic and cultural context in which Tabo was situated I initiated a multidisciplinary project at the University of California which culminated in 1982 in the exhibition and catalogue *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path. Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes*. The Indo-Tibetan art which developed in this region was seen as only one aspect of a larger and older phenomenon, the cultural interdependence which resulted from the interlocking nature of the trade routes. The basic hypotheses involved a new understanding of the character of the

Buddhist monastery and its relationship to the exchange network. In contrast to the long held belief that the major corridors of communication between India and China moved through Afghanistan and then turned north, we proposed that as a result of the advance of Muslim armies trade was re-routed over the Trans-Himalayan region through present-day northern Pakistan and Ladakh⁶. This research project attempted to explore the distinctive esoteric Buddhist art which evolved in the 10th–13th centuries in the monastic centres located along these cultural corridors – or trade routes – through the western Himalayan region (Klimburg-Salter 1982: 23).

At that time it seemed to me that one could best understand the process of cultural transformation of the region by analysing the changes in Buddhist institutions, ideology, patronage and art and their links to the interregional and international interaction along the exchange network. It was, however, necessary not only to define precisely the commodities but also the avenues and mechanisms of exchange. It turned out that the evidence available for this type of study was simply insufficient. A more precise analysis necessitated a more profound and objective description of the material culture at that given moment in time. Thus we felt the need to understand more about other contemporaneous monuments but in particular to have more documentation.

The next phase of research on Tabo began in 1984, at the request of the President of the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (IsMEO), Prof. Gherardo Gnoli, and the Director of the National Museum of Oriental Art, Dr. Donatella Mazzeo. I undertook two separate but related projects, research on the Tucci Collections at the museum and for IsMEO the organisation of the Tucci Photographic Archive kept in the museum (Klimburg-Salter 1991). Out of the incredible chaos of the 6,000 unidentified photographs, priceless new documentation for the cultural history of western Tibet began to appear. This long process was only possible because of the co-operation of several people. Firstly, General Dr. Eugenio Ghersi and his wife. Ghersi brought to this new project the same precision which had made him so valuable to Tucci during their long research travels in 1933 and 1935 and the writing of their book together in 1934 (Tucci and Ghersi 1934). Thanks to Ghersi's constant input (Klimburg-Salter 1985; 1990) Oscar Nalesini and I were eventually able to reconstruct the cut-up and dispersed negatives (Nalesini 1994) and then with help from Giulia Talamo reconstruct the western Himalayan travels (Klimburg-Salter, Nalesini and Talamo 1994). Thanks to the large amount of unpublished material, many avenues for new research became available. Once again it was necessary to define research goals.

Since 1985 I had been working at the Institute of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies (ITBS) at the University of Vienna with Ernst Steinkellner on an interdisciplinary project entitled Early Indo-Tibetan Monastic Arts. In 1989 a joint undertaking between the ITBS and IsMEO was begun. The formulation of this project owes a great deal to the collaboration of Ernst Steinkellner, Maurizio Taddei, and Luciano Petech. It is only thanks to their advice and critical guidance over the years that this project (often far too ambitious for the means available) flourished⁷. The focus of our project was defined as the Buddhist culture of the period of the kings of Purang-Guge (10th–12th centuries). We would concentrate on Tabo, but also attempt to identify and document other artistic and literary remains of the period based on Tucci's earlier work and the Archive material. This research orientation resulted not only from a preference for the study of the earlier historical periods but also from a respect for the organic growth of institutions, that is, the conviction that one should begin at the beginning. None the less we were completely aware that there were other choices that could have been made. Someone else might have found it equally important first to document all of Tabo monastery and then to publish this complete documentation, and only later go back and try to analyse the smaller parts of the monastery and its history. Our approach was exactly the reverse: we attempted through an interdisciplinary method to try to differentiate as closely as possible

the early chronological phases and then to understand as profoundly as possible the various contexts in which the arts were embedded, the historical, religious, ideological contexts. Above all it was clear that it was necessary to try to visit Tabo again.

It had been ten years since our trip to Tabo and the difficulties in getting there had only diminished slightly. First one had to get permission to visit Tabo (an Inner Line Permit) and also permission to remain long enough to actually study the monument. This process alone was an intellectual challenge: at one point we had permission to be in Tabo, but not to travel there. But then one had to cope with the daunting physical hindrances. I was once asked how we managed to get to Tabo and I answered, on our part only equal parts luck and foolhardiness. The real work was done by the Austrian Embassy in cooperation with the Government of India: H.E. Dr. Christoph Cornaro, H.E. Dr. Karl Peterlik, Mag. Peter Launsky, Dr. Thomas M. Buchsbaum and Munish Bahl and several others, but their efforts would have been useless without the support of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) – particularly the former Directors General M.N. Deshpande and M.C. Joshi and the former Chief of Conservation R. Sengupta – we are most grateful that they all continue to consult with us.

But what I remember most about navigating the Indian bureaucracy was that each year – at some critical moment – in Delhi, Shimla, Kalpa, Kaza, Kyelong – just when all the conflicting official concerns seemed to overwhelm our small interests we would encounter an “enlightened bureaucrat” who found our work interesting and important – who himself was full of curiosity about the history and culture of these people and this place and he would suddenly cut through all the red tape – and we would be on our way. Unfortunately despite all good intentions we were usually, at least initially, not able to stay longer than two weeks within the “inner line”, and thus could never finish our documentation in one season. Perhaps even more critical, we had almost no time to explore related monuments until 1991.

Because of the poor condition of the murals it was/is exceedingly difficult to photograph the paintings and inscriptions. Originally there were only two sources of natural light in the centre of the Main Temple and the smaller temples had no light other than the sunlight that came through the door⁴.

Photographing the paintings is really a technical hurdle in itself and demands a particular skill. We are therefore particularly grateful to Roger Goepper and Jaroslav Poncar for having given us their 600 plus photographs taken by Poncar at Tabo in 1984. It was these photos together with my original photographs which formed the basis of our studies during the 1980s, and Prof. Poncar’s photographs form the core of our photo documentation in this book.

During the 1989 field research⁹ we were able, for the first time, to visit Poo and Nako (Klimburg-Salter 1990). This time we had the advantage of Gherzi’s maps and photographs in the Tucci Archive. On the basis of Gherzi’s photographs we located in Khor, below Poo, the important inscription written during the 11th century, first noted by Francke. Tucci never published the stele, nor did we, and I suspect that his reasons were quite similar to ours¹⁰. This much ruined inscription is difficult to interpret. One important case in point, Ye-shes-'od's title could be explained only in recent months on the basis of a recently discovered last folio of a *Śatasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* from Tabo, dating from the end of the 10th-beginning of the 11th century (Scherrer-Schaub forthcoming). Another important discovery in Poo was an illustrated manuscript most certainly dating to the 11th century. While visiting the Translator's Temple I noticed the carved wooden covers of a manuscript lying on a low table near the wall of the temple. From the style of the covers it was clear that they dated to the early medieval period and I requested permission to look inside. As there was only a young boy present and he was uncertain as to his responsibilities, he permitted me to look only at the title page (Klimburg-Salter 1994a, 1994c). This consisted of two exquisite paintings with brilliant colours depicting two images of the Buddha, each surrounded by an assem-

bly. and the title of a *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript (fig. 222). It was immediately apparent that the style of the painting could be attributed to the 11th century (Klimburg-Salter 1994c).

The results of the 1989 expedition completely corroborated Tucci's working hypothesis that the biography (Tucci 1933) of the Great Translator Rin-chen-bzang-po was an invaluable guide to the monuments of this time. The entire area of upper Kinnaur and lower Spiti was obviously dotted with small monasteries containing paintings and sculptures of a high aesthetic order. And there was apparently an intensive production of Tibetan manuscripts¹¹. Manuscripts were copied and illuminated which had been translated in central Tibet during the Earlier Diffusion of Buddhism (*snga-dar*)¹², as well as newly translated religious texts. The discovery of a local school of miniature painting and production was only one part of a fascinating new development in the research on western Tibetan culture.

At the same time the ASI had been working steadily on the cleaning of the monument. Each time we arrived we were presented with something different which we had to rephotograph etc. Fortunately, Luczanits was in Tabo in 1990 at the time the murals in the Entry Hall became visible. He was the first to decipher the inscriptions (Luczanits forthcoming [a]) and to be able to share his excitement with the abbot Geshe Sonam Wangdū and Sangpo (now head lama) on being confronted with the images of the royal lama Ye-shes-'od and his sons.

These discoveries and the mystery of the hand-written manuscripts in the temple motivated the next expedition. In 1991 the joint team from the Institute of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies (ITBS) of the University of Vienna and from the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (IsMEO) conducted its first true "mission". The most significant addition was the philological team headed by Ernst Steinkellner, including Helmut Tauscher, Panglung Rinpoche and Elena De Rossi Filibeck. The art historical team consisted of Christian Luczanits, Francesco Noci, Pat Smith and myself. Our documentation advanced quite considerably, not only because of the prodigious work by Luczanits in photographing and transcribing inscriptions, but also thanks to the sketches and the reconstructions made by Smith and the preliminary sketch plan of the Main Temple made by Noci (Klimburg-Salter 1994a).

The philological team had to check the wall inscriptions with particular attention to the *Gaṇḍavyūha* being studied by Steinkellner (1995), the Admonitory Inscription by Tauscher (forthcoming), the Renovation Inscription by Steinkellner and Luczanits (Appendix), the other historical inscriptions by Luczanits (forthcoming [a]). The other goal was to make an assessment of the exceedingly chaotic collection of folios which was respectfully called by the monastery "Kanjur" (Canon)¹³.

The new material in the Entry Hall provided the evidence for the late 10th-century culture of Spiti at the time the monastery was founded. The inscriptions which identified each of the individuals contained names, including clans or places, which although written in a Tibetan script were originally non-Tibetan. Similarly the protectress of the *gtsug-lag-khang* (the Tabo Main Temple) also had a non-Tibetan name and belonged to the indigenous culture of the area prior to the advent of Buddhism.

Also in 1991 we were permitted to see and photograph the rest of the Poo manuscript. We were astonished to find that each of the 303 pages was painted with an image of the Buddha, clothed in a variety of textiles (Klimburg-Salter 1994c). Further, the style of the Buddhas compared quite closely to the style of the Buddhas in the wall paintings from Nako¹⁴.

As a result of the extraordinary new amount of material which became available after the 1991 expedition, it was necessary to reformulate our research goals and our methodology. Following our tendencies to concentrate on a precise historical moment, we now formulated our research goal: to understand how the Main Temple came to look as it did after the renovation of the temple in 1042. The perverse problem at Tabo was that, despite abundance of information: original architectural context, complete iconographic

program, metres of epigraphic evidence – historical and religious inscriptions, including a date of the founding and major renovation 46 years later, and the names of the patrons of both these phases of activity – it still proved impossible to explain the meaning and function of the temple. This problem quite simply came from the fact that the monastery is still the most important source of information for a history of the art and culture of the time. And thus, although the evidence was there, the interpretation of it was difficult without reference to contemporaneous monuments. The other monuments created during this period were either represented only by photos in the Tucci Archive (the original monuments having been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution in Tibet) or had hardly been documented at all. Thus it was necessary to document Nako, Chango and Poo in Himachal Pradesh; and Dung-dkar, Tholing and Khojarnath in mNga'-ris (Tibet) in order to understand the larger historical, cultural, religious, and institutional contexts. Thus in 1993, after again visiting Himachal Pradesh, Luczanits, Poncar and myself visited Tibet. Under a joint project with the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences we were able to visit the monuments of western Tibet and prepare a complete photo documentation of Tholing¹⁵.

Once again we began a new phase in our study. It was thus necessary to prioritise our goals and establish a sequence for our research. Our primary goal was a complete and objective description of the Main Temple at Tabo. This would then permit an analysis of the different iconographic elements and an understanding of the hierarchy of iconographic themes, spatially and ideologically, and eventually an understanding of the ritual topography of the monument as well.

In order to understand the meaning of the monument in all of its complexity I attempted to analyse the uses and functions of the temple from three different points of view: firstly from the perspective of those who commissioned the monument, this included both the patrons and the designer, the person actually responsible for designing the iconographic program; the artist; and the intended audience. However, the reader should be aware that we are only at the beginning of our study, that most of the elements of our proposed historical model are still tentative and that we use this form of historical narrative in order to bring together the disparate pieces of our puzzle. The interpretation of various elements of the story will certainly be amended as new information becomes available. Much cannot be explained about the art of Tabo. None the less, due to the importance of the monastery for the artistic, historical, philological and philosophical studies of India and Tibet, it seemed important to present the documentation available to us, even when its implications were not always clear.

In Tabo the role of the patron was dominant. He commissioned the finest artists and materials and also a decorative program of unusual sophistication. It is interesting in this connection to note that the complete organisation of the Main Temple's iconographic program has an intellectual character. If one looks at the monument in cross sections it appears like a two-dimensional image. Comparing the temple to a hanging scroll painting from Dunhuang (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pl. 61), one sees in the lower register the historical figures (patrons etc.) and the protector deities, in the middle register the mandala, and above the Vairocana and attendant figures, corresponding to the Entry Hall, Assembly Hall and Apse. There is an hierarchy of sacredness from the bottom to the top of the painting and from the front to the back of the temple.

Although a number of historical personages are presented in the paintings their respective responsibilities are unclear. To begin with there is a donor who provides the money, who may be different from the person who actually initiates the commission, the latter may be a high lama or a layman. These persons may have the ability to design the iconographic program, or a particularly important religious person may be chosen for this work. So this sphere of responsibility is usually a co-operative effort (see Chapters II and V).

The next group is the artists. To some degree, the workshop, its methods and composition can also be suggested on the basis of an analysis of the painting and sculpture (Chapter VI). As for the intended audience, this is of course the most difficult element of the story to define. One must assume in the first instance the monastic community. They are represented in every one of the assemblies listening to the preaching Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Also the local élite, the lay Saṅgha – because according to the Buddhist concept the Saṅgha is composed of both the monastic and the lay communities – is sometimes included in the assemblies, for instance at the beginning of the Pilgrimage of Sudhana where Mañjuśrī is preaching to Sudhana, who is depicted as a western Tibetan layman.

The iconographic program which was produced during the renovation period was both innovative and traditional. The complete programmatic integrity of the Main Temple can be understood by its relationship to other religious monuments. The Indian temple is conceived of as a representation of the cosmos and in that sense may be considered a mandala. There are many points of comparison, but the most pertinent is to Borobudur in Java. The exact interpretation of the Great Stupa remains problematic – but it is clear that it is a mandala, a cosmic diagram. The remarkable thing is that the essential elements are the same as in Tabo but in a slightly different order – Life of the Buddha, Pilgrimage of Sudhana, the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala.

Certain elements of the Buddhist art of the late 10th, early 11th century in Java seem quite parallel. One example is a Vajradhātu-maṇḍala composed of small bronze sculptures, a miniature version of the clay Vajradhātu-maṇḍala at Tabo. These two different sculptural versions of the same theme, dating from the same time, at the two extreme boundaries of the Buddhist world are both based on the same body of literature, the Yoga Tantras.

The easiest explanation for these similarities is the existence of a common tradition in north-east India. However, it is believed that the great Bengali scholar-priest Atiśa studied in Java and, if it is correct that the historical event “commemorated” in the renovation of Tabo in 1042 was Atiśa’s arrival in western Tibet – then the connection between the iconographic concerns in Himachal Pradesh and Java in the 11th century may be more complex.

An interesting point here is the international nature of monastic Buddhism at the end of the 10th to the beginning of the 11th centuries. First one must remember that Buddhist art and ritual are intimately connected and both are based to a large degree, although not exclusively, on Buddhist texts. The majority of these texts, although eventually translated into many languages, originated in India. The visual representations – that is the iconography – of the deities mentioned in these texts also originated, to a large degree, in India. Throughout the history of Buddhism, great emphasis was placed on ascertaining and maintaining this authentic Indian tradition. Due to the destruction of Buddhism in India, many of the original Indian models have been lost. But the Indian origin of most figures in the Buddhist pantheon can be seen from their dress and other cultural attributes (e.g. fig. 16). Most of the surviving monastic art of the 10th/11th centuries was associated with Mahāyāna Buddhism. Esoteric Buddhist practices entered the “mainstream” only gradually.

There were also similarities in socio-political contexts. State-supported Buddhism was a common feature of the 10th century. The ruling élite were prominent patrons of Buddhist institutions and the emergence of esoteric Buddhist rituals within the monastic setting has been linked to the merging of sacred and secular institutions. This phenomenon has also been used to explain specific choices, such as the preference for the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, and the associated iconographic program (Snellgrove 1987). For these reasons, among others, the Buddhist art of the 10th–11th centuries from India, Central Asia, Tibet, China, Japan, and Indonesia had many similar features. Not so in the 16th or 20th centuries. Over the

centuries Tantric practices multiplied – accepted in some regions but not in others. The secondary deities of the Buddhist pantheon began to appear in local dress. And local deities joined the Buddhist pantheons thus also creating great differences in the Buddhist art of different cultures. Naturally these historical changes affected Buddhist practice in Spiti as well. Although the old Assembly Hall is still used on special occasions the rituals performed there by the monks are based for the most part on the Anuttara Tantra class of literature. Precisely that class of Tantric literature that the royal patrons Ye-shes-'od and Byang-chub-'od hoped to suppress.

Today the monks of Tabo belong to the dGe-lugs-pa order but at other times in the last 1,000 years the rNying-ma-pa, the bKa'-gdams-pa and the Sa-skya-pa were present in the monastery¹⁶. But the essential function of the temple remains the same – for monastics as well as lay people, the temple remains a lamp for this kingdom.... [where] “the visitors who see or touch all these many painted images of the Lords of (the five kinds of) Existence, the Sugatas (Buddhas) together with their sons [Bodhisattvas] ... and hearing the best teaching identify [their] minds with.... the guides who rescue all living beings from the ocean of samsara!” (Steinkellner and Luczanits, Appendix).

¹ Other variants, e.g. Ta-so, also occur. In 1982 before the folios were known I chose the statistically most frequent spelling Ta-pho.

² This process of trying to adapt local pre-Tibetan place names to the Tibetan language causes considerable confusion, e.g. there is no reason to believe that Lalung was ever meant to have the Tibetan name Lha-lung. In Kinnaur and Spiti apparently the names were simplified for the English tax records. A glance at any English travel account of the 18th–19th centuries demonstrates the Englishman's losing battle against the strange-sounding names of the region. Representing numerous languages and dialects there was hardly any linguistic consistency or toponymic pattern. The result, an unrecognisable jumble of dissident consonants.

³ It was this tradition which I followed in Klimburg-Salter 1982.

⁴ Dr. Bhattacharya, a specialist in Central Asian art, was at that time at the National Museum in New Delhi.

⁵ In contrast, we found that the Renovation Inscription was very close to what Tucci published. Thus we continued to use Tucci's text as the basis for our study. Finally, however, in 1990 Luczanits began the painstaking job of transcribing the text again. Then Steinkellner generously agreed to work on the inscription. They discovered that it was actually a poem with a sophisticated structure. Thanks to Steinkellner, the new translation in the Appendix was possible.

⁶ Klimburg-Salter 1982: 22.

⁷ All of our research including field research has been funded by the Austrian Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung from 1985 to present and the work on the Tucci Archive in Rome 1984 to 1993 by CNRS.

⁸ Later the ASI put skylights into the Main Temple. There was usually no electricity. As we always travelled on a minimal budget we could not initially have our own power source. Only later in 1991 did we try to use our own small generator which is still in use by the monastery today. But then we only used our lights sparingly due to uncertainty about the effect of the lights on the wall painting – although recent conservation research finds that the lights, in the small exposure used by us, are not harmful to the paintings.

⁹ Mischa Tauscher-Lamberg, Helmut Tauscher, Gail Cornaro and myself.

¹⁰ Klimburg-Salter 1990; 1994c. Thakur 1994.

¹¹ The evidence of the manuscript we discovered in Lahul in 1991, an illustrated copy of the *Lalitavistara* containing a Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit text by the famous team of Ye-shes-sde prepared in central Tibet during the Earlier Diffusion of Buddhism in the c. 9th century, indicates that the translation traditions of the first period had been brought to western Tibet and to Himachal Pradesh when it became part of the kingdom of the kings of Purang-Guge.

¹² As well as manuscripts translated lo-

cally from Sanskrit into Tibetan.

¹³ In the subsequent five years a number of different researchers under the direction of Steinkellner, principally Scherrer-Schaub and Harrison and also Cüppers, Lasic, Pagel, Tauscher and Tomabechi have attempted to put order into the 35,000 stray folios. A number of studies of the collection (Steinkellner) or of singular texts (De Rossi Filibek, J. Panglung and Tauscher) have already appeared in *East & West* (1994). New contributions by Eimer, Harrison, Otokawa, Saito, Scherrer-Schaub and Tomabechi are expected to appear in *East & West* (1998). According to the first results of the philological research, part of the extant collection at Tabo represents a very well transmitted tradition (in some cases even better than the corresponding canonical tradition), attesting the high quality of the intellectual milieu of western Tibet at the beginning of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism.

¹⁴ Because of the stunning quality of the paintings at Nako which we visited for the first time in 1989, Luczanits and I then visited Nako on each of the subsequent journeys to Himachal Pradesh in 1990 (Luczanits alone), 1993, 1994 and 1996.

¹⁵ This forms the subject of the next volume on our research on western Tibetan art.

¹⁶ Lecture given by Geshe Sonam Wangdū at the India International Center, in New Delhi, Oct. 1996 on the occasion of the Austrian-Indian Millennium Conference.



II. Tabo Monastery: The Setting

Tabo monastery, situated in the village of the same name, lies at 3,280 metres altitude near the Tibetan (Chinese) border in the secluded Spiti valley, just north of the Sutlej river – an area which was restricted to foreigners until recently (map 2. West Tibet). The monastery (founded A.D. 996) is of singular importance because of the unique beauty of its art as well as its pivotal historical role in the transmission of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and culture in the 10th/11th century.

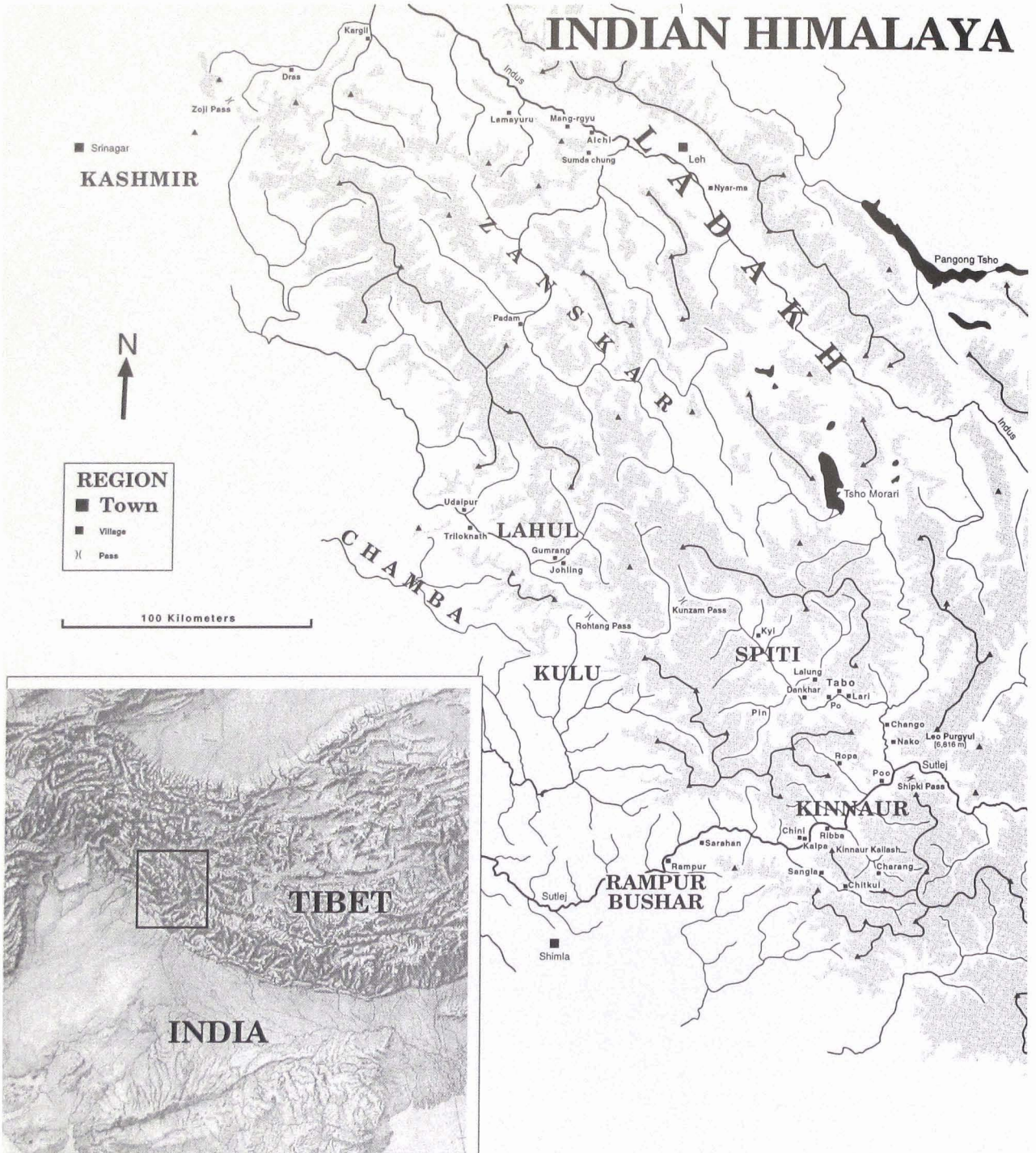
Tabo is the oldest continuously functioning Buddhist monastery in India and the Himalayas with its original decoration and iconographic program intact. The ancient monastery compound (*chos-'khor*) is defined by a wall (figs. 31, 32) which separates it from the modern monastery buildings and the village (fig. 1). Within the *chos-'khor*¹ are nine chapels built between the late 10th and the c. 17th century and numerous stupas (plan 1). This study deals only with the first century of the monastery's existence and the Main Temple, the *gtsug-lag-khang*². The Tabo Main Temple preserves an extraordinary wealth of documentation for the history and culture of the period. The iconographic program, dating from the restoration phase 1042, is complete – painting, sculptures, inscriptions and extensive wall texts.

Although there have been significant changes in Buddhist practice during the last millennium, thanks to the good state of preservation and the abundance of primary documentation, it is still possible to trace some of the traditions connected with the first hundred years of the monastery³. Likewise, due to the extreme climatic conditions and the pre-industrial phase of socio-economic development, until recently, Tabo village and the surrounding region have maintained an economic and social structure somewhat analogous to that which existed a thousand years ago.

In this chapter I will summarise briefly the geographical and historical setting. Particular emphasis is placed on the avenues of communication between Spiti and the surrounding regions, noting also the location of the other extant Buddhist foundations attributable to the 10th–12th centuries. In present-day Himachal Pradesh temples are located in the following villages: in Kinnaur: Ropa and Kanam along the routes leading from Kinnaur to upper Spiti; Poo (sPu) along the route to West Tibet and Nako and Chango and Shelkar on the routes either to the east or north to Ladakh and Central Asia; Ribba, Charang and Sangla along routes leading to West Tibet and India; while in Spiti, Lari and Tabo lie along a route to Ladakh and Central Asia, Lalung lies in the Lingti valley at the head of a particularly advantageous summer pasturage; in Lahul, Johling and Gumrang lie along the route from Kulu to Ladakh and Zangskar. The spatial relationship of these other Buddhist foundations to Tabo and the communication nexus can be seen from maps Indian Himalaya (p. 22) and West Tibet (p. 33).

Fig. 1. Tabo village and monastery (1996)

INDIAN HIMALAYA



Most of these monasteries, including Tabo, were founded by members of the dynasty of the kings of western Tibet. I call them here kings of Purang-Guge because their political centre was in Purang and their religious centre in Guge (see Petech Chapter VII). In some contemporaneous sources (such as the colophon to Atiśa's great work *A Lamp for the Enlightenment Path* (*Bodhipathapradipa*) (BCLS, BPP1, BPP2), the region around Tholing is still called Zhang-zhung. Some of the kings of this dynasty were also monks. These monks of noble birth are known as a *lha* (god) *bla-ma* (royal lama). Another honorific applied to royal lamas is *lha btsun-pa* (royal priest). The royal lamas (*lha bla-ma*) who were the patrons of Tabo monastery, as well as other ecclesiastical residents, were key figures in the establishment of Tibetan culture in the Indian borderlands and the transmission of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism to Tibet.

Although ostensibly in each generation there was a distinction between the ruling king, a layman, and his brother (or brothers) who were royal lamas (*lha bla-ma*), there is some reason to suggest that political power may have continued to reside with Ye-she-'od who established this tradition. For instance, in one legend he had been leading an army against the "Gar-log". As we shall see in Chapters V and VI the iconography of historical figures – including the prominent enthronement of the royal lama – suggests that we have here an early form of theocracy.

The royal patrons, kings of Purang-Guge, were descended from the ancient Tibetan monarchy. Their ancestors migrated to West Tibet in the 10th century (see Petech Chapter VII). By the end of the 10th century their territory stretched from Ladakh to Purang and included all of western Tibet (ancient Zhang-zhung). Successive members of this dynasty built many monasteries along the trade routes linking the far corners of their kingdom. They so skilfully integrated political, religious, and economic institutions that throughout the 11th century these monasteries were unparalleled for their artistic, literary, and religious achievements. As we shall see in the following chapters, the Main Temple at Tabo was a royal monument and its decorative program was based on the ideology of its patrons: legitimacy, status, piety.

A thousand years ago Tabo served as a meeting place between two cultures, which is graphically represented in the art. According to the *Blue Annals* (BA, 355), Indian pandits came to Tabo to learn Tibetan. Here also the laborious process of translation (always conducted by a team of Indian and Tibetan scholars) was pursued, as well as religious studies; for example, the Kashmiri Jñānaśrī and the scholar rNgog Lotsawa bLo-Idan-she-rab (1059–1109), famous for his works on the Mahāyāna and Buddhist logic, spent some years there. In short, as its geographic position would indicate, Tabo served as an intermediary between the Buddhist communities of India and Tibet. Likewise, the art which was created there used Indian forms in conjunction with Tibetan wall texts in the context of a newly evolving ritual activity which is usually described as Indo-Tibetan. By examining in detail selected aspects of the decorative program, we will attempt to understand the genesis of these forms in India, but also in part in Central Asia, and how they related to the later Indo-Tibetan art of the West Tibetan kingdom. The style and iconography of the paintings and sculptures brilliantly express the cultural synthesis which evolved in the Indo-Tibetan borderland.

Tabo seems to have always had the closest cultural ties to the villages west as far as Po and east to Nako in Kinnaur. This area may have been known as Cog-la, which appears several times in the 10th-century inscriptions in Tabo. In modern times this term refers to Po, Tabo, Lari; there is also the term sPi-lCog (i.e. sPi-ti lCog-la). More commonly, Po to Sumdo is referred to today as Sham.

The lower Spiti valley and upper Kinnaur province were once the south-western border of the kingdom of the kings of Purang-Guge whose first administrative centre lay in Purang. According to the generally accepted story of the foundation of this kingdom, these western territories – upper Kinnaur, Spiti, Lahul, Zangskar and Ladakh – first came under the nominal rule of this Tibetan dynasty under the

first two kings in the mid-10th century (see Petech Chapter VII). In approximately the last quarter of the 10th century, the third king of the dynasty, known by his religious initiation name Ye-shes-'od, began an intensive missionary campaign throughout his realm (fig. 2). One of his earliest recorded activities was the founding of the monastic complex Tholing in mNga'-ris, which remained the spiritual centre of the kingdom for many centuries. Other major foundations were Nyar-ma, the main Buddhist centre in Ladakh, and Kha-char (Khojarnath) in Purang. Ye-shes-'od was assisted in his missionary activities by his preceptor, a Tibetan lama from western Tibet, who became known as the Great Translator (*lo-tsa-ba chen-po* Rin-chen-bzang-po). He earned this title because of his prodigious activities translating Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Tibetan. The primary source of information concerning his life is contained in his biography. A later source, perhaps 14th-century, the biography is often not precise and sometimes contradicts other information – and thus must be used with caution (see Petech). For instance, although the biography tells us that Rin-chen-bzang-po founded Tabo, the inscriptions in the temple do not confirm this.

Combining the evidence from several sources, it seems clear that Ye-shes-'od founded Tabo early in his missionary activity and before he had begun his collaboration with Rin-chen-bzang-po. Indeed, I propose in Chapter V that the portraits in the Entry Hall belong to the same period as the famous edict (Karmay 1980a) where Ye-shes-'od calls himself the king of Purang, the royal lama (*lha bla-ma*) Ye-shes-'od, thus combining his royal title and ecclesiastical name. The grander title found on the Poo stone stele (*dpal lha btsan po lha bla ma ye shes 'od*) is probably later (Klimburg-Salter 1994c: 55). Judging from the oldest paintings in Tabo, Buddhism at the end of the 10th century was heavily influenced by Central Asian and local cult traditions. The protectress of the temple, Wi-nyu-myin, was a local deity, unknown in the Buddhist pantheon (fig. 39). The style and iconography of the other deities dating to this time, although Indian in origin, reflect influences from Central Asia.

From an edict (Karmay 1980a) which Ye-shes-'od distributed, we know that he was troubled by the unorthodox behaviour of some Buddhist practitioners. It can be inferred from the Admonitory Inscription in the Assembly Hall (c. 1042) detailing punishments against persons who harm monks that some sort of violent anti-Buddhist event occurred in Tabo prior to 1042. As part of his efforts to proselytise Buddhism and reform local Buddhist practice, he enlisted the aid of Rin-chen-bzang-po, recently returned from study in India (see Petech Chapter VII). Later the royal lama sought more teachings and manuscripts from India, and thus Rin-chen-bzang-po, together with other young western Tibetan students, returned to India. According to his biography Rin-chen-bzang-po returned with artists as well as ritual objects and texts. The sophisticated style and iconography of the Assembly Hall, when contrasted with the more provincial Entry Hall, is powerful evidence of the success of Ye-shes-'od's efforts. An important example of the changes which occurred in the years separating the painting of the Entry Hall and the Assembly Hall is the transformation of Wi-nyu-myin, the local protectress. In the Assembly Hall she is depicted according to a Tibetan typology, her retinue seated to either side of her, the stag to her left (figs. 55, 56). Later, in the Protectors' Chapel (*mgon-khang*) Wi-nyu-myin returns as an attendant deity Gar-mdzad-ma to rDo-rje-chen-mo (fig. 57)⁴. The liturgy for rDo-rje-chen-mo performed until today at Tabo is attributed to Rin-chen-bzang-po and is said to have been composed in Tholing.

Later generations of the same royal house continued the reformation of local Buddhism and the adaptation of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. Byang-chub-'od (figs. 5, 14), Ye-shes-'od's grandnephew, is also famous in Tibetan history for his contribution to the Later Diffusion of Buddhism. He completely refurbished Tabo (Appendix), built other monasteries, such as Mang-nang in western Tibet, and he invited the great Bengali scholar-priest (pandit) Atiśa to western Tibet. Atiśa's famous work, the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, was composed at Tholing at the request of Byang-chub-'od. Here Atiśa extols the ideal of the Mahāyānist

Fig. 2. Lha bla-ma Ye-shes-'od and
his son Devarāja
Main Temple, Entry Hall, south wall



Fig. 3. Four monks identified by
captions
Main Temple, Entry Hall, south wall
First monk 'Dul-ba-byang-chub from
sNyel-'or, last monk is from Mag-pi-
tsa





monk (presumably as contrasted to the Tantric yogi) and the gradual path to enlightenment⁵. Another important figure was Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od, Byang-chub-'od's younger brother. He was the only translator in the royal family and an active reformist (Karmay 1980b). He apparently worked closely with Ye-shes-'od and Byang-chub-'od as he is represented with them in Tabo and in the Temple of the 16 Arhats in Tholing (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: Fig. 237). He may also have been a patron in the Main Temple (fig. 151) (see Chapter V). This missionary work was continued by other members of the same dynasty, rTse-lde and Lha-lde.

Ye-shes-'od's missionary work was an enormous effort which was certainly supported by many other persons, lay and religious, whose names have not survived. Some of these, however, were depicted together with the royal lamas in the paintings in Tabo. The princes depicted on the north wall of the Entry Hall are even slightly larger than the royal lamas on the south wall. Perhaps they provided the lands for the monastery, as was the case with the 'Bro family and Alchi. In the Renovation Inscription painting Byang-chub-'od is accompanied by the presumed abbot of Tabo to his left, identified as 'Dul-ba-byang-chub (fig. 6) and to his right by an obviously important lay supporter from Rum (fig. 4). Such local support existed in every one of the temples founded at this time. But their stories have disappeared.

Tabo occurs in Rin-chen-bzang-po's biography in the list of "smaller" places (*yul-chung*). In reality, the Tabo Main Temple is larger than all the other Buddhist temples in present-day Himachal Pradesh and must have been the main temple of Kinnaur-Spiti.

The Geographic Setting

In the absence of medieval texts, we may use evidence obtained from 19th- and 20th-century travellers. In this way we can, in part, understand the demographic and socio-economic contexts during the 10th-11th centuries, following the establishment of the numerous new monastic centres by the kings of Purang-Guge⁶.

Left
Fig. 4. Lay person from Rum
Main Temple, Ambulatory, southern
face of the entrance to the Cella, detail
of painting above Renovation
Inscription

Above
Fig. 5. Probably lha bla-ma Byang-
chub-'od
Main Temple, Ambulatory, southern
face of the entrance to the Cella,
painting above Renovation
Inscription

Fig. 6. 'Dul-ba-byang-chub, probably abbot of Tabo monastery in 1042
Main Temple, Ambulatory, southern face of the entrance to the Cella,
painting above Renovation Inscription



The village of Tabo (fig. 7) lies along the Spiti river in a relatively wide valley bordered by steep cliffs (figs. 1, 9). The length of the valley is about 130 km. Spiti has a higher elevation than Lahul to the north-west and Kinnaur to the south.

The present appearance of the physical environment, as well as the politico-geographical contexts are particularly modern phenomena and are not useful for reconstructing the earlier history of the region. It is probable that Spiti has changed more radically in the last 25 years than at any other period in the last millennium. Most of these changes have been the result of accelerated modernisation introduced from the outside (principally the Indian government) and in part resulting from the political tensions between India and China. The extreme change in climate, however, seems to be part of broader global trends. Nineteenth-century travellers reported minimal rainfall in Spiti, yet rainfall has been increasing each summer during the last decade. In 1993, 1994 and 1995 the intense rains caused disastrous mud slides and the collapse of houses. An incredible situation when one considers Hutton's observations: "Rain is here almost unknown, falling only like angel's visits, and even then so sparingly as to be of no use except to allay the clouds of dust for a few hours" (Hutton 1840: 949).

The intensive Indian development efforts have to a large degree transformed the landscape. The reforestation project has brought trees to an area which, at least in historical times, never saw them before. Earlier travellers of the 19th century speak of an high-altitude desert with only a few stunted juniper and slender willow trees. In 1850 Capt. W.C. Hay reported, "... Spiti is a mass of nearly bare rocks, with here and there small patches of cultivation, almost entirely without trees, thinly populated, and small villages, the largest not having above 5 houses" (Hay 1850: 448).

Although the Spiti valley is relatively wide, the broad alluvial deposits are often too high above the river to permit irrigation with traditional methods, thus the minimal precipitation meant that agriculture could only flourish where irrigation was possible (fig. 8). Thus, the amount of arable land was less than it is today. The demographic distribution appears to have been the same as today, but it is probable that the size of the population in the 11th century was closer to that reported in the late 19th century rather than the increased population which one finds today. Of the reports of earlier travellers, those who visited the Spiti valley in the period between 1840 and 1850 probably are the most atypical. In 1838 Hutton reported that "Runjeet's troops" had ransacked Spiti the year before. "Laree" (Lari) is listed as having three families of c. 20 people (Hutton 1840: 493), Po is described as poor and shabby. Tabo village (*ibid.*, 494–5) is described as being inhabited largely by lamas who also cultivate the soil. "The houses of the Lamas were pulled down, and the noses and hands of the idols were cut off and thrown into the river" (*ibid.*, 494). The destruction of the Tabo Main Temple is recorded by an inscription in the Assembly Hall.

We have no reliable statistics for the 19th century but a relative idea can be gained from the travel reports. In 1850 Hay reported that the population of Spiti was on the increase. He estimated that the 60 villages of Spiti contained 316 houses with a combined population of 1,607 (Hay 1850: 437). This indicates a decrease in population from the time of Trebeck's visit in 1822 when he estimated the population at about 2,000. However, he lists only some 30 villages in Spiti and 13 in Pin valley and as it hardly seems likely that the number of villages increased by one third and the population decreased by 25 percent one may imagine that Trebeck, who stayed at Dankhar and did not visit lower Spiti, may have underestimated the total number of villages. Thus, the reduction of the population following the Sikh wars was probably even more severe.

Lari, which is always listed in all 19th-century sources, was apparently far more important than Tabo. Lari, the first major village in Spiti, must always have had a certain prominence as it appears also in Rinchen-bzang-po's biography in the list of smaller places where monuments were built by the Great Trans-

Fig. 7. View towards Tabo
Tabo village seen from the east
(downstream)



Fig. 8. The upper Spiti valley
View towards the upper Spiti valley
from the path leading from Kaza to
Tangyud





Fig. 9. The gorge of the lower Spiti valley below (east of) Tabo between Lari and the Zangzam bridge

lator. Tabo village apparently was, even prior to the Sikh wars, not very populous. It does not appear at all on Trebeck's map. In 1931 Tucci found a ruinous state in the monastery and only two monks. The 1961 census reported 140 "souls". The fifty lamas reported (*Himachal Pradesh District Gazetteer* 1975: 281) at Tabo cannot be accurate. When the present abbot Geshe Sonam Wangdü came to Tabo in 1976 there were only four monks. In 1973 at the beginning of the Indian government development campaign, Rizvi (1987) reported that Tabo village had 35 houses and a total population of 146 persons; presumably these are the equivalent of the "souls" reported in 1961.

The descriptions of Spiti valley up to the present depict a thinly populated region with a subsistence economy based on grain and fine woollen cloth which were traded for basic commodities and occasional luxury items, within an intra-regional exchange system (Moorcroft and Trebeck 1971 II: 71–72) (fig. 10). Gerard also reported three lead mines which were very productive, located at "Lara, Leedang, Posko [= Po]" (Gerard 1993: 149). This balance between the population and its resources seems to have been adequate and relatively stable. Trebeck reported in 1822 that one third of the population did not possess land, approximately the same proportion was reported by Rizvi in Tabo village in 1973. Even in 1850 Hay reported, "I should upon the whole, say that the country is in a prosperous state, the people are well housed, well clothed, and possess an abundance of food, such as they are accustomed to: they are contented and happy, with principles of order and industry, and, with a moderate taxation, I think they will prove good subjects, and useful and beneficial to the Government to which they are now annexed." (Hay 1850: 448)

Today the politico-administrative system ties Spiti to Lahul in a single district. In earlier historical periods these districts were not always linked politically, although the traditional pattern may be seen in Trebeck's observation that the Lhasa government, via its Changthang representative, claimed jurisdiction over south-east Spiti, while Ladakh had political authority over the northern part of Spiti, also to

Fig. 10. The caravan of the Tucci expedition on the way to Tabo Between Po and Tabo



some degree *de facto* of the part under nominal Tibetan jurisdiction. Today the road between Spiti and Kinnaur is open throughout the winter. Before motorised travel, winter travel was certainly more complicated. The Spiti river valley was the main connection for trade coming either via high Kinnaur or from Purang and West Tibet via the Shipki pass to Kulu or Ladakh. Although easier than the other two routes connecting Kinnaur and Spiti, this latter route was also the longest. The shortest route between Spiti and Rampur (the major trading town and winter capital of the Bhashar state) and lower Kinnaur, leaves the Sutlej at Wangtu (still an important checkpost) and goes via Katgaon to the Pin valley. Another route, also practicable only in summer went by Sunnam and Ropa (where there are copper mines) and the Mani pass. The preferred caravan route, which was the same as the old Hindustan-Tibet route used by Tucci, went from Chini (near the modern town Kalpa), to Lippa, over the Runang and Hang passes, followed the Spiti river as far as Shelkar, then to Sumrah where the path then crossed the Spiti river just below Lari. The route northward followed the Spiti river (map 1. Indian Himalaya).

Today, with the closing of the Indo-Tibetan border, the connection to western Tibet has died out. But earlier, important trade connections were maintained with Guge, and local monks would travel to Guge for their religious education. To the east, the main corridor of communication was certainly along the Sutlej river via the Shipki pass. But also from the Spiti valley it was possible to travel directly to Guge, either via the Parang pass (behind Kyi monastery) or the Tunglung pass, and thus to Changthang (Hay 1850: 429–31). In the early 19th century Trebeck describes a lama and his party departing from Dankhar monastery in upper Spiti “on a trading trip” to Tashigang (Moorcroft and Trebeck 1971 II: 64). Local products as well as those transhipped from western Tibet and Central Asia were sent to Rampur, the great trade emporium for the whole region. From Rampur goods were shipped all over India (Lafont 1985).

Although this route from Tabo north-westward to Lahul and northward to Ladakh and Central Asia

was an important trade corridor, communication was certainly more complicated than to the south. The difficult passes separating Spiti and Lahul and Spiti and Kulu are blocked by snow at least half the year. Via the Pin valley, there was a more direct route to the west before it was blocked by the rupture of a glacier in the 19th century. Thus earlier, there were closer trade and cultural connections with Kulu than is today apparent. Kulu was the nominal ruler of Lahul until 1846 when the former became a subdivision of Kangra district. The importance of the Piti (i.e. Spiti) Thakurs in the history of Kulu has given rise to much speculation as to a possible political connection between the two regions, but nothing is actually known. The most recent hypothesis places the advent of the Piti Thakurs in Kulu between the 8th and 12th centuries (Howard 1995).

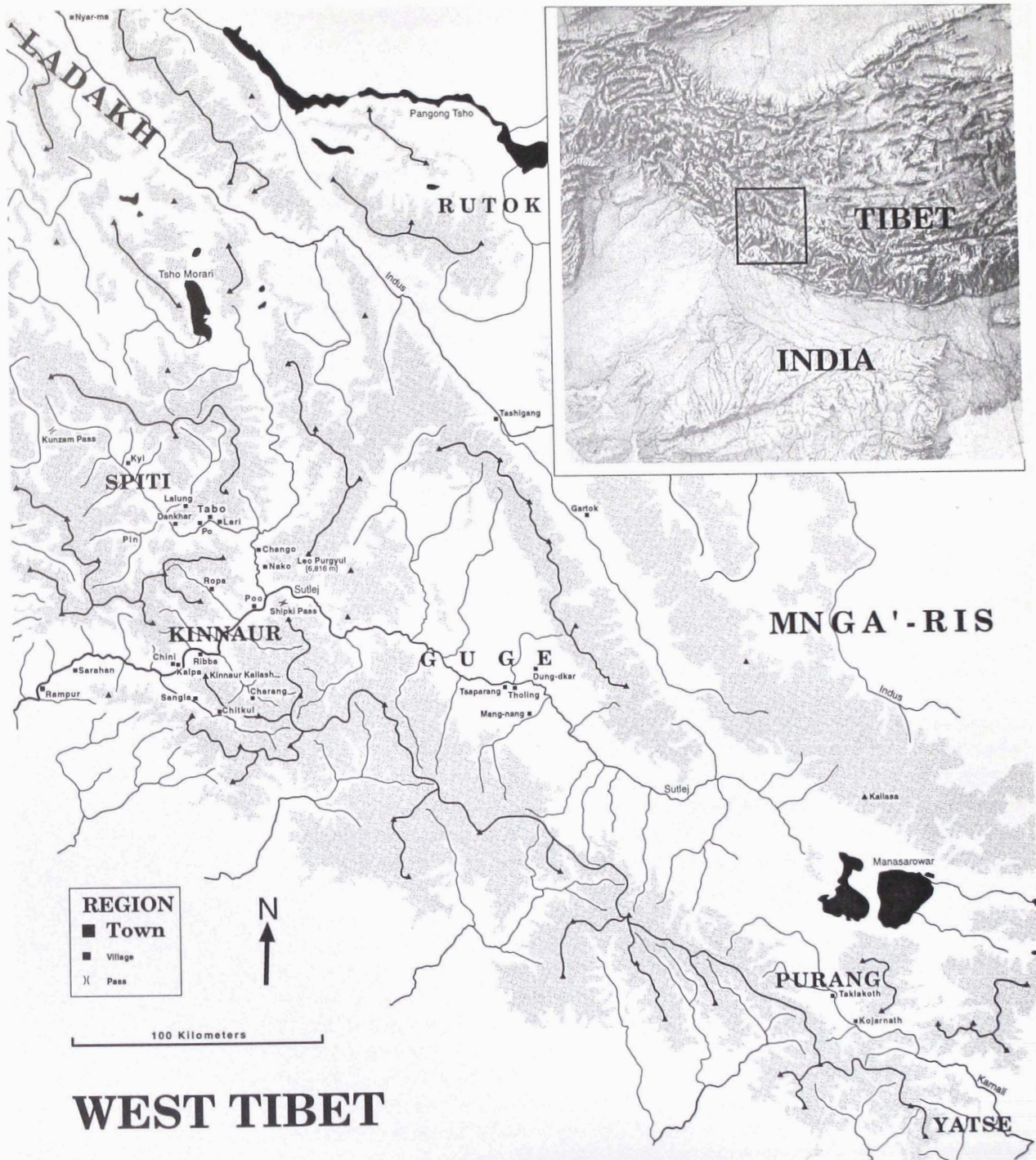
Tucci and Ghersi followed the traditional routes between India and western Tibet in 1933. As they travelled with a fairly heavily loaded caravan (fig. 10, and see pictures in Klimburg-Salter 1990), the distances they covered in a day fairly well approximates the progress any caravan following this route prior to the 1970s (see Ghersi's maps and graphs, Klimburg-Salter 1990: Figs. 14–25). As one will note in Ghersi's table (Klimburg-Salter 1990: 158–160), the travel time is not so great as one might think.

Historical Setting

It is most difficult to extrapolate the cultural situation in Spiti prior to the 10th century. Neither Tabo nor any other village in the Spiti valley was a major economic, political, or cultural centre prior to the 10th century. Thus, it is not surprising that Spiti valley is not mentioned in earlier literary sources. Nor has any archaeological investigation been conducted in the valley. Attempts to identify the earlier history of the Spiti valley on the basis of evidence pertaining to the earlier history of Lahul or Kinnaur are too vague to be useful. Thus, the only primary evidence for the history and culture of the valley in or before the 10th century are the remains of the art and inscriptions dating to the foundation phase of Tabo monastery.

The imposition of Tibetan culture and Buddhism permanently transformed the indigenous culture. The only information concerning the character of this pre-Buddhist culture are place or clan names appearing in the Tabo Entry Hall (*sgo-khang*) inscriptions. These may derive from the language of Zhang-zhung. It seems safe to assume that the population of Spiti, as the rest of present-day Himachal Pradesh, was not Tibetan in the 10th century. The distinctive and still unidentified cultural features in the Tabo miniature and mural paintings, particularly the murals from the Entry Hall, may derive from the earlier Zhang-zhung culture. As Tucci has already remarked, the transformation of this region involved both political and religious institutions. The native inhabitants of Spiti and Kinnaur were ethnically and linguistically different from the new Tibetan ruling class. The many small monasteries covering the area provided the means not only for the dissemination of Mahāyāna Buddhism but also for economic development and cultural pacification.

Prior to the 10th century, Spiti and Kinnaur belonged to the ancient kingdom of Zhang-zhung. Although Zhang-zhung was conquered by the Tibetans in the 7th century, the Zhang-zhung culture continued to survive in different forms. At the time of the western Tibetan kings the region around Tholing was still called Zhang-zhung, as stated in the colophon to Atiśa's A Lamp for the Enlightenment Path (BCLS, BPP1, BPP2). As late as the 14th century Bu-ston Rinpoche refers to the king of Zhang-zhung, meaning the king of Guge (see Petech Chapter VII). In the colophon of a Tibetan *Prajñāpāramitā* ms. found by Tucci in Puling in Purang, the area is referred to as being the centre of Zhang-zhung (Tucci 1935: 8–9). Remnants of the Zhang-zhung language have recently been identified in the spoken dialect of Kinnaur. The Tabo inscriptions appear to mark the beginning of the Tibetanisation of the region⁷. Comparing the frequency of essentially non-Tibetan clan or place names associated with the monastic community re-



corded in 996 and the totally Tibetan names found in the later dGe-lugs-pa chronicle, the *Vaiḍūrya ser-po*, one can appreciate the progressive Tibetanisation of the local culture. Today a western Tibetan dialect, called locally Bhoti, is spoken in Spiti.

In the 10th century, Spiti, together with the surrounding region, was the scene of intensive missionary work instigated by the royal dynasty whose centre of activity lay in western Tibet between Tholing in the north and sTag-la-mkhar (Taklakoth) in the south. At the centre of this region lies the holy mountain Kailāsa¹. The contribution of this dynasty to the re-establishment of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism in Tibet (the period is known to the Tibetans as the Later Diffusion of Buddhism) was so great that the principal personalities are mentioned in every history of Tibet. These later literary sources are often vague or contradictory about specific facts and dates. Historical literature is primarily concerned with events and personages important for religious history. Biographical literature is essentially hagiography, nonetheless biographies contain very valuable historical information. The most detailed source for the activities of the royal lamas is the biography of their preceptor, the Great Translator Rin-chen-bzang-po. According to the biography, under the patronage of several members of the royal dynasty of Purang-Guge, Rin-chen-bzang-po established many chapels (the auspicious number is 108) which spread from gLo (Mustang) to lower Kinnaur and northward to Lahul and Ladakh. To a surprising degree, the information contained in the biography can be confirmed from archaeological remains. The enormous sanctity attached to the names of Rin-chen-bzang-po and his royal patron, the former king and royal lama Ye-shes-'od, can be understood from the fact that many of the temples which they built are still preserved and identified as having been founded by them. This fact is the more remarkable for the extremely small size of all the temples, excepting the main centres at Tholing, Nyar-ma, and Kha-char (Khojarnath) and the Tabo Main Temple. The survival of so many small Buddhist chapels can only be attributed to their special status. For example, even though the temple at Johling in Lahul is in complete ruin, the harvest offerings are still placed before the now ruined altar (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 47–50).

That this missionary activity was motivated by piety is beyond doubt, but its success was in part due to massive financial input. The nature of the economic infrastructure which enabled the construction and decoration of so many temples, as well as the production of the vast numbers of manuscripts and liturgical objects needed for the temples, is unclear. The most likely solution is that the kings of western Tibet were able to construct an efficient international trade network which allowed them to export precious metals mined in their territory, particularly Guge. This network certainly depended, in part, on the small monasteries established throughout the kingdom and located at strategic points along the trade routes. That these monasteries provided Tibetan speakers with facilities in the foreign, non-Tibetan environments, was certainly a positive factor in the successful administration of trade. Tucci believed that the depopulation of western Tibet, which he estimated at 98%, was not just the result of climatic changes. According to him, western Tibet was populated and rich (until the c. 17th century) as long as it was ruled by a government which could successfully exploit the mines and international trade connections.

Gold was mined in the regions of Kailāsa and Changthang and today a number of other precious metals are also exploited. Other minerals were mined in Kinnaur and Spiti, such as copper at Ropa and lead at Po and other places (Moorcroft and Trebeck 1841 II: 71; Gerard 1993: 147). It seems likely that precious metals were among the chief export commodities of the kingdom. Also important was exchange in textiles. Himachal Pradesh is even today noted for its fine woollen textiles. It is also probable that imports of fine textiles such as cotton and silk came from regions as far as India (Gujarat) and Central Asia (Bukhara). The main indication for the importation of these luxury textiles are the extremely fine patterns, obviously copied from real textiles (see Wandl Chapter V.6), which are reproduced in mural

paintings at Tabo and the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript from Poo (Klimburg-Salter 1994c). These patterns seem to derive almost exclusively from Indian textile traditions'.

The intimate connection between trade and religious establishments is a well-known phenomenon in the history of Indian Buddhism (Klimburg-Salter 1982: 154). The kingdom of the kings of Purang-Guge, from Ladakh to Mustang, was connected by a dense network of trade routes facilitated by the strategic placement of a large number of temples directly controlled by the royal family and their noble supporters. Thus, a number of interrelated factors encouraged political and eventually cultural integration on the western borders of the kingdom. Tibetan cultural imperialism travelled under the banner of a reformed Buddhism, but the benefits for the indigenous aristocracy were not only spiritual but also material. Although referring to a slightly later period this description of the relationship between monastic establishments and the economy also assists us in understanding the situation in the 11th century. "In practice, this monastic economy fostered trading relations both within and across Tibetan borders. Chains of 'daughter' monasteries grew up along the trade routes, serving not only to tap the economic resources of wider areas, but also to provide caravans with safe haven at night against marauding 'bandits' who may well have been connected with a rival trading system" (Fisher, Rose and Huttenback 1963: 27–8).

Petech remarks that the kings of Purang-Guge possessed two moral assets, indisputable legitimacy and great prestige. It is therefore not surprising that the themes of political legitimacy and cultural identity are written large on the walls of the Tabo Main Temple. An analysis of the names and costumes of the monastic community (in the Entry Hall on the south wall) and the aristocracy (on the north wall) demonstrates the importance of indigenous culture at the time Tabo was founded. The royal patron and his sons are seated in the middle of a large assembly of monks, nuns and lay people. Depicted in a parallel composition on the opposite wall are the local aristocracy. The princes wear a style of Tibetan overcoat (*phyupa*) and a type of fabric (silk or cotton with floral designs) which never occurs again in the later art of the region (fig. 50). From the 11th century, males wear typical Tibetan wool coats without patterns, as can be seen in the paintings in the Assembly Hall (*'du-khang*) (fig. 121).

A more monolithic social order is depicted in the paintings of the royal patron and the members of the Saṅgha (lay and ecclesiastical) accompanying the Renovation Inscription written in 1042 (figs. 5, 14, 139). The latter documents the complete renovation initiated by another prince of the royal house of Purang-Guge, Byang-chub-'od (grandnephew of Ye-shes-'od) (Steinkellner and Luczanits, Appendix).

The wall paintings in the Entry Hall and fragments from the original wall paintings in the Ambulatory (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 28–29) demonstrate that when Ye-shes-'od and his two sons founded the monastery in 996 the artistic culture had a provincial, regional character with influences deriving from India and Central Asia. The painting technique and pigments show a lack of sophistication and access to quality materials. Particularly unexpected is the presence of iconographic themes deriving from non-Buddhist traditions, most importantly the protectress Wi-nyu-myin.

A totally new aesthetic is introduced in the 11th century. The Assembly Hall (*'du-khang*), Ambulatory (*skor-lam*), and perhaps Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*) as they exist today, with only some areas of damage and restoration, were created during the renovation period¹⁰. Both the sophistication of the underlying philosophical conception and the clarity of its expression in visual terms testify to the presence of a unique and gifted personality, or personalities. Not only was there a will to create a symbolically coherent ritual space but also the means to gather artists and materials of the highest quality.

This temple not only is one of the most stunning artistic achievements of its time, but it also documents the ideology of this remarkable royal dynasty. While the architecture is specifically designed as the context for ritual and cultic activity, the rhetorical possibilities of the art were also skilfully manipulated.

Thus, comparing the representation of different iconographic themes in the Entry Hall and the Assembly Hall, such as the representation of historical personages, we see how the change in the style and composition of the images reflects social and political changes.

For instance: in the Entry Hall the royal patrons are placed at the centre of the composition but hardly larger than the other members of the congregation; in the Assembly Hall a clear hierarchy is represented, where the royal lama dominates all other social groups. The local aristocracy in 1042 plays only a minor role, but its members are still represented as donors. The man to the proper right of Byang-chub-'od was certainly a major figure in the renovation. This man is identified as being from Rum, as are two donors in inscriptions recorded by Tucci on the other side of the Cella (Tucci 1935: 74). Where Rum was is unclear. Tucci quite logically suggested the area around Tabo. Contemporary Islamic sources use the word to designate the West, specifically Byzantium. Also women were prominent. A female donor is represented next to the donor in the Cella painting and one is listed among the donor inscriptions, now lost, recorded by Tucci. The Indian (Kashmiri) style of the religious images was a political statement which affirmed support for Indian Mahāyāna culture. The Buddhist ecclesiastical élite of India had attained a high level of intellectual sophistication. Thus, we have here not only ideological change but also cultural change, the expansion of the provincial boundaries of this western Tibetan dynasty into the cosmopolitan world of Indian monastic Buddhism.

The ambitious renovation of this royal monastery was completed in the same year that Atiśa, the most famous of the Indian pandits, arrived in western Tibet. The Bengali monk was in western Tibet from 1042 to 1045. There is little information on the monasteries which he visited other than Tholing and Mangnang where he lived (Tucci 1971b: 479–481; Eimer 1979). But, as recorded in the *Blue Annals*, many other pandits came to Tabo. The monastery served as a centre of translation and learning where Indian pandits met their counterparts, learned Tibetan, and contributed to the massive intellectual and cultural process known as the Later Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (Steinkellner forthcoming).

The later history of the monastery, the dates and circumstances of the construction and decoration of the various architectural units, belongs to a future research agenda. As noted earlier, our study is limited to the first hundred years of the monastery. It is clear from the high quality of the 11th- to 12th-century artistic remains in Lahul, Spiti, and Kinnaur that this was the most productive period in the history of Buddhist art of the region. Indeed only a few completely new foundations can be identified between the 12th century and the latter part of the 20th. Usually, a Buddhist monastery originally founded during the Later Diffusion of Buddhism (such as Tabo or Nako) was redecorated and enlarged over the centuries through the construction of additional chapels and monumental painted stupas. In addition in Lahul there is a curious history of syncretism between Buddhist and Hindu cult places, the most famous example being at Triloknāth (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 50–57; Maxwell 1980). As a result, the original history of these cult places is almost impossible to unravel.

Tabo monastery contains the largest number, and the best preserved group of Buddhist monuments in Himachal Pradesh. The nine chapels, four decorated stupas, and cave shrines contain paintings datable to the 10th–11th century (Main Temple), 13th–14th centuries (the stupas), and from the 15th to the 20th centuries (all other chapels). Except for the Main Temple and the painted interior of the stupas, all other extant paintings are attributable to periods following the dGe-lugs-pa ascendancy. Due to the historically close ties between Tabo and Tholing it is probable that Tabo came under the influence of the newly formed dGe-lugs-pa order at about the same time as Tholing. *Chos-rje* Ngag-dbang-grags-pa, born in mNga'-ris, was a pupil of Tsong-kha-pa (the founder of the dGe-lugs-pa order). He returned to mNga'-ris, converted the king and his subjects and “rebuilt the temple of mT'o-lidin” (Tucci 1971b: 478, n. 1). As Tholing is

Fig. 11. The section of the Tabo Assembly Hall damaged in 1837. The restoration is recorded in an inscription on paper attached to the wall
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north wall



today largely in ruins we can only tentatively identify the Assembly Hall with this period of artistic activity in the first half of the 15th century. Also at this time, at Tsaparang, the wife of the king of mNga'-ris, Don-grub-ma, built the Red Temple (Lha-khang dmar-po). The White Temple (Lha-khang dkar-po) and the 'Jigs-byed lha-khang were built by the king's nephew and therefore, according to Tucci, cannot be earlier than the 16th century (Tucci 1971b: 478). On the basis of a comparative analysis to these temples, at Tabo the Protectors' Chapel (*mgon-khang*) of the Main Temple and the Golden Temple (gSer-khang) cannot be later than the early 16th century. The wall paintings of the other temples are later, predominantly of the 17th century, although some temples such as the Mandala Temple (dKyil-khang) and Maitreya Temple (Byams-pa lha-khang) may originally have been built earlier, perhaps in the 11th century.

From the 17th through the 19th centuries Spiti was often the political pawn of its larger neighbours Bashahr, Kulu and Ladakh, although ties to monastic centres in western Tibet, dating back to the beginning of our millennium, were never lost.

In the 17th century Ladakh had considerable political and cultural influence on Spiti, as is evidenced in Tabo in the Large 'Brom-ston Temple. Ladakh's territorial ambitions in western Tibet, and the subsequent conflicts ending with the defeat of the Ladakhi kingdom, resulted in the Ladakh-Tibet treaty of 1684. Tibet claimed as a basis of its territorial rights the "traditional boundaries" of the western Tibetan kingdom founded by sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon in the 10th century. Although there was some ambiguity in the treaty, the boundary between Ladakh and Tibet was fixed at the Lhari stream, which flows into the Indus five miles south-east of Demchok. Soon after 1687 Spiti again passed under the nominal control of Ladakh and upper Kinnaur was ceded to the Bashahr Rāja who had been allied with Tibet (Petech 1977: 71). In any case neither in this nor in the subsequent treaty were boundaries indisputably delimited. Apparently in the 17th century the boundaries of the kingdom of Purang-Guge established by sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon

were considered a matter of common knowledge. But territory was less important to Ladakh than favourable trade conditions, and these they secured.

The extremely distressed state of the manuscript collection (the so-called Tabo Kanjur) suggests that Tabo must have been the scene of some violent confrontations during its long history. Only two such events, however, are recorded in the inscriptions. The first of these, sometime prior to 1042, can only be inferred from the warning contained in the Admonitory Inscription against harming the monastic community (Tauscher forthcoming).

The attack on the Tabo Assembly Hall in 1837 is recorded by an inscription and confirmed by the still visible damage to the adjacent parts of the wall (fig. 11). This catastrophe was mentioned also by Hutton (1840: 494) who passed through the Spiti valley in June 1838. He tells us that although this destruction is attributed by the local people to “Runjeet’s troops”, “...in reality it seems that it was perpetrated by the followers of the Ladakh Rajah themselves, who when deserted by their master, thought to ingratiate themselves with their conquerors, by assuming the same form of turban, and mutilating the gods of their own countryman” (*ibid.*). He goes on to say that the same fellows plundered every village in Spiti (*ibid.*). The event in question is probably the flight of the Ladakhi Prince-King mChog-sprul and his mother following the unsuccessful revolt of the son against the Sikhs. They escaped to Spiti and eventually found safety in Bashahr (Petech 1977: 142). However, Spiti was soon, Petech estimates 1839 (Petech 1977: 143), again used as a royal refuge. dNgos-grub-bstan-'dzin (“Raja Marut Tunzin”) believed to have been associated with a rebel revolt was pursued by Sikh troops, captured near Tabo and deported to Leh where he was imprisoned.

The Dogra conquest of Ladakh and the subsequent Dogra-Tibetan war 1841–42, severely disrupted international trade, the economic lifeline of the region. In the 1842 treaty between Tibet and Kashmir the former invoked the same logic regarding the traditional boundaries of the 10th-century territory, but apparently following the de facto situation as of 1687. As the agreements, and in 1842 the subsequent memoranda, make clear the primary point was to establish appropriate conditions for trade between the two countries. With regard to territory, Tibet was principally concerned with maintaining the gold-fields and the appropriate conditions for their exploitation (Fisher, Rose and Huttenback 1963: 53–59).

After 1846 with British rule in the area, Spiti came to enjoy a century of relative tranquillity and semi-independence. The India-China border dispute from the 1950s reawakened awareness of the geopolitical importance of this isolated area.

The same “traditional boundaries” established in the 10th century and reaffirmed in the late 19th century were cited by India in the 1956 dispute with China. Both treaties were invoked by India in the dispute over areas lying north of the Shipki pass, while the later treaty is their basis for the claim of territory south of the Shipki pass. India claims six passes as being on the boundary between the two countries while China claims they are within her territory (Prescott, Collier and Prescott 1977: 34). The area around the Shipki pass was fiercely guarded in the 19th century. Every traveller complained of having to make time-consuming detours when travelling from Kinnaur to Spiti because of the difficulty with “Tartar” troops. It is likely that Spiti always had to be alert to good relations with the more important neighbours on all sides. The situation is well expressed by Gerard in 1817. “[Spiti] is a district lying between Busehur, Kooloo, Ludak, and Chinese Tartary; to each of which states it is tributary” (Gerard 1993: 147). However, the Tibetanisation of the region, introduced during the Later Diffusion of Buddhism was never reversed. The monastic culture and hence the artistic culture of Spiti continued to be dominated by Tibet until the modern period.

In contrast to Spiti, Kinnaur must always have been a cultural watershed. The population still remains ethnically and linguistically mixed. Kinnaur with its warmer climate and fertile lands, and with easy access to trade with India, was understandably attractive to the West Tibetan kings. But the pacification of

this non-Tibetan population may not have been easy and we have no idea how long Tibetan rulers maintained control over the area. But a Tibetan form of Buddhism still flourishes today. The different temples in Kinnaur mentioned above seem to have been continuously in worship throughout this millennium. Some centres in Kinnaur such as in Ribba (Luczanits 1996a) may even predate the Later Diffusion of Buddhism. As in Lahul, but unlike Spiti, in Kinnauri villages there are shrines to Hindu and local deities as well as the Buddhist cult places. But in Kinnaur, as elsewhere in Himachal Pradesh, active participation in Tibetan Buddhist communities has increased markedly since the Tibetan refugees settled in India. Many temples have been refurbished or, as in Poo, newly built with popular subscription.

Each of these communities has its own stories, local lamas, or reincarnated lineages who have been actively involved in the community for generations, deriving new inspiration and support from famous Tibetan lamas. The several visits in the last decades by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness the Sa-skya khri-'dzin have done much to encourage the faithful, but also other Tibetan teachers and meditation masters have had a profound effect on the communities.

The story of the renaissance at the ancient Tabo monastery under the direct encouragement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his Junior Tutor, gSer-skong Rinpoche is a particularly dramatic example. Under the energetic and affectionate guidance of Geshe Sonam Wangdü, deputed by gSer-skong *mtshan-zhabs* Rinpoche in 1976, Tabo has been transformed from a sleepy, impoverished monastery into an active centre for the study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism, not only for the increasingly large number of young monks but also for the people of the surrounding communities.

For those of us who have known Tabo for the last two decades the transformation worked by this scholarly gentle monk is nothing short of a miracle. Following is an interview with the Geshe who has been the abbot of Tabo since the death of Geshe Yeshe Chönden in 1983. He briefly narrates the main details of his and gSer-skong Rinpoche's participation in the Tabo community.

Tabo Today: Interview with Geshe Sonam Wangdü

gSer-skong *mtshan-zhabs* Rinpoche was Junior Tutor (literally partner in debate. *mtshan-zhabs*) to His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. He visited Kyi and Tabo monastery for the first time in 1969 and stayed two days at Tabo monastery. At the request of the sponsoring communities, i.e. Tabo, Lari and Po (Cog-la)¹¹, he visited Spiti valley many times until his demise in 1983. He gave two months' long teachings when he visited Tabo monastery in 1973. There were four lamas (monks) resident in Tabo monastery. Lama Sonam Ngödrub and Lama Sonam Tobgye were jointly functioning as head lama of the monastery.

The sponsoring community, i.e. Tabo, Lari and Po, requested the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche to send two monks with the *dge-bshes* title ("Doctor of Theology") to take charge of Tabo monastery and teach Tibetan language to the monks.

In accord with this request, in 1976 the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche deputed two monks, namely Geshe Yeshe Chönden (*dge-bshes* Ye-shes-chos-ldan) and Geshe Sonam Wangdü (*dge-bshes* bSod-nams-dbang-'dus) at that time resident at Mundgod (Karnataka), to Tabo monastery.

In 1979 the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche again visited Tabo and Spiti valley. At the monastery he gave teachings on Buddhism and blessings to fully-ordained monks (*dge-slong*) and novice monks (*dge-tshul*).

In 1981 the Venerable Rinpoche again visited Tabo in order to give sermons on *Lam-rim chen-mo*, initiations of Yamāntaka and Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and others.

In July 1983, the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche accompanied His Holiness the Dalai Lama who performed the Kālacakra initiation ceremony at Tabo. At the request of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for a month at Tabo monastery he conducted a solitary prayer retreat (*mtshams*). At the completion of this retreat he gave a sermon on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* in the Kālacakra Temple, the new Assembly Hall of the Tabo monastery.

Following an invitation by the people, on 29th August, 1983 the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche went to Sumda and then came back to Tabo and then set out for Kyibar the same day. On this day he breathed his last breath without taking any medicine. According to those present, the body remained in the *samādhi* posture for 36 hours without any sign of death on his face. Seventy-two hours later he was cremated, at which time a new spring water gushed out nearby the cremation site. A rainbow was seen in the sky.

After four days those who had remained at the gSer-skong Labrang, gSer-skong's residence at Dharamsala, as well as the monks of Tabo monastery, Kyi monastery and the residents of Cog-la (Tabo, Lari and Po) requested the Dalai Lama to identify the reincarnation of gSer-skong Rinpoche.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama told them to be patient. The second time they sent their request, His Holiness told them to organise community prayers.

The third time His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself came to gSer-skong Labrang and told the residents that the great Guru had been reborn in Spiti valley. According to the indications the child was Tendzin Kesang (bsTan-'dzin-skal-bzang) who was brought to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who gave his recognition of the reborn gSer-skong Rinpoche.

His Holiness described the events as follows – trying in many ways to find out the true reborn Lama rDo-rje-'chang, i.e. gSer-skong Rinpoche, no stone had been left unturned, every effort was made to be accurate. After many trials, bsTan-'dzin-skal-bzang, son of Tshe-ring-chos-dar of Lari (Spiti), had been identified as the genuine reincarnation. His mother's name is Kun-bzang. This was declared under His Holiness' stamps and signature on 15th August, 1988.

The reincarnated gSer-skong Rinpoche made his ceremonial entrance to Tabo in September 1988. The enthronement ceremony took place at gSer-skong Labrang, Dharamsala. The reincarnated gSer-skong Rinpoche was warmly welcomed by the Administration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans at Dharamsala.

After the enthronement ceremony at Dharamsala the Venerable gSer-skong *mchog-sprul* Rinpoche was sent to Mundgod (Karnataka) for his education. He has been warmly welcomed there also. Now the Rinpoche is being educated at dGa'-ldan monastery Mundgod.

The Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche visited all the monasteries of Spiti valley as well as all the villages of the valley. He spread the teachings of Buddhism and eradicated social evils like drinking wine, smoking, snuff-taking, and slaughtering. Due to his blessings the people of the valley lead a peaceful life. His dedication towards Spiti valley especially to Tabo monastery can never be forgotten.

Biography of Geshe Sonam Wangdü

I was born in Tibet in a village named Sangchung of Tehsil Lahri Go in 1930. Father's name is Sonam Tobgye and mother's name is Kunda. We are seven brothers and I am the youngest one.

In 1937 at the age of seven years I entered my home monastery named Lahri sde-tshan dgon and started my education.

In 1944 I entered dGa'-ldan Byang-rtse grwa-tshang (monastic college) rKong-po khang-tshan (hostel) for my higher education. In June 1959 during the Chinese torture I came to India via Arunachal.

On entering India I stayed in Assam State of India for two years along with many of my fellow lamas. After two years we were shifted to Mundgod (Karnataka). At Mundgod I remained involved in constructing monastery buildings and taking an active role in the administration of dGa'-ldan Byang-rtse.

In 1976 the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche deputed me and my fellow Lama Geshe Yeshe Chönden to Tabo monastery. We were charged with running the monastery smoothly and teaching Tibetan language to the monk students.

In 1977 I got the degree of *dge-bshes lha-rams-pa* from dGa'-ldan monastery Mundgod (Karnataka).

Before our arrival, there were four lamas (monks) at Tabo monastery and the condition of the monastery in the field of learning Tibetan language, paintings and maintenance of the monastery was very poor. On our joining Tabo monastery in 1976 the sponsoring villages, i.e. Tabo, Lari and Po, began to send their children to the monastery for a Tibetan education.

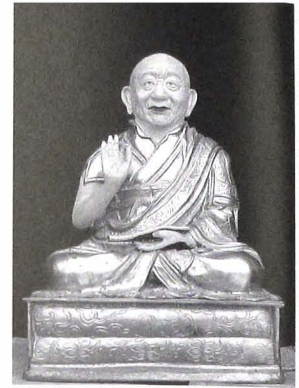


Fig. 12. The late gSer-skong Rinpoche Tabo monastery; bronze

In 1978 a monk's hostel was constructed under our guidance and directions.

In 1982 with the kind and valuable guidance of the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche, the co-operation of the sponsor villages (Cog-la) and the dedication of our monk students we constructed the Kālacakra Mandala Temple for the performance of the Kālacakra initiation by His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

In 1983 on request of the sponsoring villages, Tabo, Lari and Po, the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche, and all the monks of Tabo monastery including myself and Geshe Yeshe Chönden, His Holiness the Dalai Lama agreed to give the "Kālacakra initiation" at Tabo; he performed the "Kālacakra initiation" from the newly constructed Kālacakra Mandala Temple for the benefit of all human beings.

After the performance of the "Kālacakra initiation" I requested His Holiness to kindly allow me to leave this monastery in view of my weak health. This had developed because of the severe climatic conditions at Tabo. But His Holiness directed me to remain there and run the monastery.

After the demise of Geshe Yeshe Chönden in Dharamsala in 1983, whose stupa was built in Tabo, I took complete charge of the monastery. During these years I have constructed school buildings, hostel buildings, temples and I have also planted apple, apricot, poplar, and willow trees, about six acres which are now bearing fruit.

In 1993 I received the degree of *dge-bshes sngags-rams-pa* (advanced degree in Buddhist Tantric studies). At present the monastery is functioning well in the fields of Buddhist studies and Tibetan language. The school for young monks increases steadily in size every year. Tibetan and Indian teachers from outside Spiti have also come to assist us with teaching. There is a painting school under the direction of Lama Sonam Tobgye. The financial position of the monastery is also sound as compared to the situation when I first joined at Tabo monastery.

Geshe Yeshe Chönden was born in Tibet in a village namely Phempo in 1921. He started his education in dGa'-ldan Byang-rtse grwa-tshang Hardong khang-tshan and got his degree of *dge-bshes lha-rams-pa* and *sngags-rams-pa*.

In 1976 he was deputed to Tabo monastery by the Venerable gSer-skong Rinpoche. He stayed at Tabo from the years 1976 to 1983. On the 25th of the 9th month of the Tibetan year in 1983 he died at Dharamsala.

¹ We use this term here in the modern local usage. In the *Blue Annals* (BA, 355) the monastery is called Chos-'khor Tabo. Tucci understood the term to refer to a religious council (e.g. Chu-mig chos-'khor in 1277 A.D.). He thus proposed that the great council of 1076 was held at Tabo. I have never found any support for this hypothesis and concur with Petech that this event must have been held at Tholing.

² We use this term in its modern local usage to refer to the entire Main Temple. It would seem that this is the sense in which it is used in all the inscriptions in the temple. However in the Mandala Temple (dKyil-khang) the term appears to refer to the whole complex. There are many instances for the use of the term as we have employed it. For instance the dBu-rtsc at bSam-yas is called the *gtsug-lug-khang*.

³ Since 1989 an interdisciplinary team of scholars from several countries has conducted an intensive study of the art and architecture, the Tabo manuscript collection, and its history.

⁴ The full Tibetan name of the main protectress is bKa'-srung lha-mo rDo-rje-chen-mo. The attendants are Remati with a mule and Gar-mdzad-ma with a stag.

⁵ These teachings eventually led to the foundation of the bKa'-gdams-pa order by Atiśa's disciple 'Brom-ston. In the late 14th-15th century this order was absorbed into the dGe-lugs-pa school founded by Tsong-kha-pa.

⁶ The annexation of present-day Himachal Pradesh by the kings of Purang-Guge brought enormous changes. Thus, it may never be possible to reconstruct the socio-economic and cultural context of Tabo monastery prior to the 10th century.

⁷ Petech places the Poo inscription somewhat later in the 11th century.

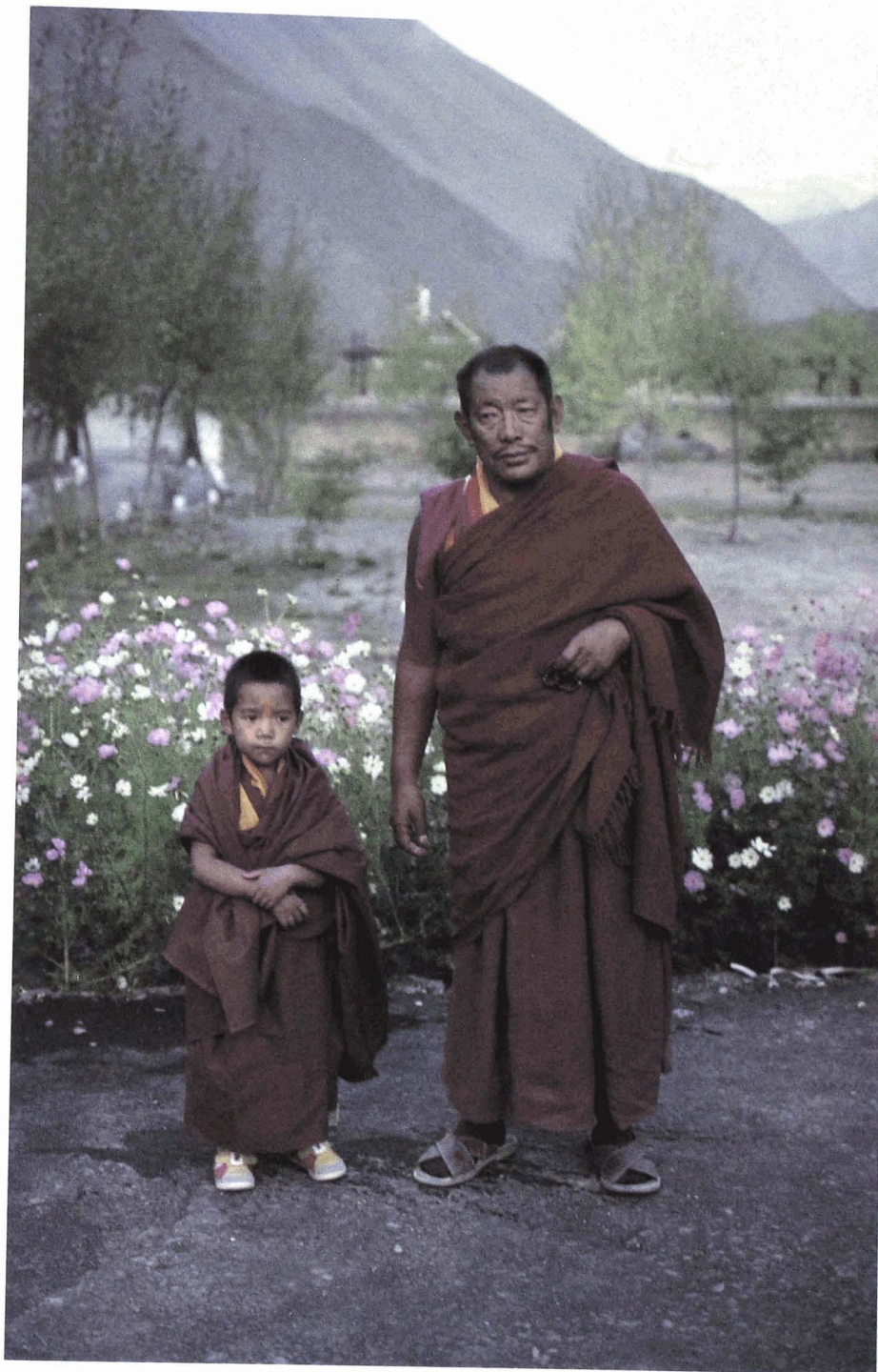
⁸ Map. No. 1 in Pranavananda (1983) shows the various pilgrimage routes connecting Kailāsa to the surroundings in 1947.

⁹ Of course since it seems certain that the painters came from outside Spiti it is also possible that the textile patterns derived only from their pattern books. Based on the evidence of different painted textile patterns at Alchi, Ladakh seems to have had more intensive cultural relations at the end of the 12th century with Central Asia.

¹⁰ As we shall see in the next chapter, the iconographic relationship of the figures in the Cella to those of the Assembly Hall are still somewhat problematic.

¹¹ These small villages known collectively as Cog-la are a single political district as well, with one *Pradahn* (president).

Fig. 13. The abbot of Tabo monastery, Geshe Sonam Wangdü, and the reincarnation of gSer-skong Rinpoche (1989)





III. The Proposed Chronology for the First 100 Years of Tabo Monastery

Tabo serves as one of the primary sources of documentation for the cultural history of Spiti and western Tibet in the 10th–11th centuries. However, it is precisely the lack of primary documentation from other sources that has until now prevented a totally satisfactory interpretation of the evidence from Tabo. Because of the extraordinary complexity of the material, and the importance of the lacunae, I have, during the various phases of our work, only been able to propose working hypotheses for a relative chronology of Tabo (1985, 1994a)¹.

Since 1992 (Klimburg-Salter 1994a), the cleaning of the murals in the Ambulatory by the Archaeological Survey of India has revealed more extensive sections of the first phase of painting. Also studies by different colleagues on the inscriptions (Luczanits forthcoming [a]), wall texts (Steinkellner 1994, 1995, forthcoming; Tauscher 1994, forthcoming), and on the Tabo manuscript collection (Scherrer-Schaub forthcoming and others) have greatly expanded our understanding of contemporary culture and society. And Luczanits' intensive studies of the clay sculptures have also produced evidence pertaining to chronology and iconography. Since the sculptures and paintings combine to form a single iconographic program, we will attempt to integrate the evidence from both in order to resolve the chronological conundrum.

There are three types of evidence pertaining to the chronology of the artistic production of the first century: Tibetan inscriptions, archaeological evidence, including ¹⁴C-dating, and art historical evidence². This internal evidence is then further refined through the evidence provided by other Tibetan contemporaneous literary texts, as well as slightly later texts. In the latter category the most important is the biography of the Great Translator Rin-chen-bzang-po to which we will refer again.

Inscriptional Evidence

Without a doubt, the most valuable information for the cultural history of Tabo derives from the extensive inscriptions. These fall into two groups, the historical and the religious inscriptions. All of the religious inscriptions in the Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) can be dated to the first century (the 10th–11th century) (Steinkellner forthcoming). The historical inscriptions date to at least three periods, early, middle and late³. The early inscriptions from Tabo (Klimburg-Salter 1994a; Steinkellner 1994; Petech and Luczanits forthcoming; Steinkellner forthcoming) can be dated by virtue of their palaeography and content, that is reference to well-known historical figures⁴.

Fig. 14. Probably lha bla-ma Byang-chub-'od
Main Temple, Ambulatory, southern
face of the entrance to the Cella,
painting above Renovation Inscription

The key to our chronology is the Renovation Inscription (fig. 139) found on the west wall to the south of the entrance to the Cella. This inscription tells us (see Steinkellner and Luczanits) that 46 years after the temple was founded by Ye-shes-'od, Byang-chub-'od, "motivated by the thought of enlightenment", restored this temple and that the current inscription was written after the painting of the *dri-gtsang-khang*, the Cella, was completed. A problem with this inscription has been the fact that the only chronological point given is that Ye-shes-'od founded the temple in the monkey year. This date belongs to the early Tibetan system of reckoning time which is based on the duodecenary cycle, where each year is named after one of the animals of the Central Asiatic zodiac. One needs a certain larger historical context in order to determine which cycle is relevant. In this case we can narrow the gap because all of the historical characters in our story are well known and have relative dates based on other sources (see Petech Chapter VII). We have already explained (Klimburg-Salter 1985) our reasons for choosing 996, which is also the traditional date accepted by the local people for the founding of the monastery. However 984 and 1008 would also be theoretically possible.

All the evidence, inscriptional, archaeological and art historical, confirms that there were two phases of art production in the first hundred years of the monastery's existence, plus recent repairs. The inscriptions of the 10th and 11th centuries share palaeographic and orthographic peculiarities which, when compared to contemporary usage in central Tibet, would be considered archaisms. However the Entry Hall inscriptions attributed to 996 are distinguished from the 11th-century inscriptions in the Assembly Hall by the presence of non-Tibetan clan and/or place names. Even some of the Tibetan proper names appear to be adaptations from another language and not always properly understood, so that the same name will be spelt in different ways. Thus we feel confident in dating the Entry Hall inscriptions earlier than the inscriptions in the Assembly Hall.

According to our calculation, the Renovation Inscription was written in 1042. All the other inscriptions which have the same palaeographic and orthographic characteristics are dated to the same period: the extensive wall texts of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* (Steinkellner 1995); the Admonitory Inscription quoting the *Daśacakraṣṭigarbhamahāyānasūtra* (Tauscher forthcoming) and the identification labels of the historical figures on the east wall (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 34; Luczanits forthcoming [a]). As all the inscriptions belong to the same period as the associated paintings, these paintings also can be attributed to the same period as the Renovation Inscription. As we shall see the other evidence confirms this.

In addition there are three later inscriptions in the Assembly Hall which record donations to the monastery. They contain references either to the Dalai Lama or Tsong-kha-pa and thus can be dated to the dGe-lugs-pa period. And another inscription records the attack on the temple by the Sikhs in 1837 (Chapter II)⁵. These inscriptions, written on paper and pasted on the wall, are found in areas where the paintings have been severely damaged and then partially repainted in the modern period.

The Archaeological Evidence

The inscriptional evidence thus indicates that the earliest paintings (Phase I) are in the Entry Hall (figs. 16, 19) and that all the inscriptions in the Assembly Hall (except the later inscriptions) can be dated to the renovation period (Phase II). This is confirmed by the archaeological evidence. In the Ambulatory, particularly on the north side, both the inner and the outer face of the Ambulatory, as well as on the west wall there are extensive areas of mural painting which go underneath the present layer of mural painting. An analysis of the style and pigments of this original layer of painting (figs. 15, 190) shows clearly that it is related to the mural paintings in the Entry Hall (*sgo-khang*) (compare fig. 15 and fig. 40). As we shall discuss below, the second layer, that is the present layer, in the Ambulatory can be dated to the renovation phase ending in 1042.



Fig. 15. Lower part of a Buddha seated on a lotus, A.D. 996
Main Temple, Ambulatory, north corridor, inner wall
Bottom of the wall, below the last row of Buddhas painted during the renovation phase. Stylistically, this Buddha can be compared with the Buddha in the Entry Hall.

Fig. 16. Moon-God, Chandra
Main Temple, Entry Hall, south wall, third row, north side





Fig. 17. Flying deity playing a trumpet and holding a flag
Main Temple, Ambulatory, ceiling:
painting on cloth

Further, as the Entry Hall and the Apse are bonded to the Assembly Hall there is no doubt that the plan of the temple, minus the New Entry Hall and Protectors' Chapel (*mgon-khang*), is original. The small traces of paint in the Assembly Hall which go underneath the clay sculptures of the mandala must therefore belong to the original (Phase I) program. The only complete figure in the Assembly Hall to survive from Phase I is the seated, nine-headed green figure on the south wall in the transition zone to the Apse (fig. 20).

The evidence of the paint underneath the mandala sculptures makes it clear that the mandala sculptures belong to Phase II (Luczanits Chapter V.7)⁶. The stylistic analysis confirms this. Likewise certain technical considerations suggest that the Cella sculptures may belong to Phase I, particularly in the transition zone to the Apse the conjunction between the standing Bodhisattvas and the ladder-like construction. The ladder supports the ceiling and must always have been part of the original building phase. In general however these Cella sculptures are problematic and they will be discussed again at the end of the section on art historical evidence.

The last piece of archaeological evidence that we have pertaining to chronology are the three ¹⁴C-dates for the painted textile panels fixed to the ceiling (figs. 17, 18). These analyses were quite important because they confirmed that the present ceiling is original. They could not however provide an absolute date for the ceiling paintings. Also the analysis was for the cloth not the painting. The painted cloth was part of an iconographic configuration which was intended to represent a canopy; the cloth is attached to the ceiling and the valance is painted along the walls. There are in fact three canopies, one canopy covering the mandala of the Assembly Hall, and another canopy running over the Ambulatory. The third canopy is meant to cover the Cella. Two samples of cloth were taken from the Assembly Hall, the third from the Ambulatory. All three samples give readings which would fall within the first 100 years of Tabo

Fig. 18. Painted textile patterns placed between the beams
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, ceiling:
painting on cloth

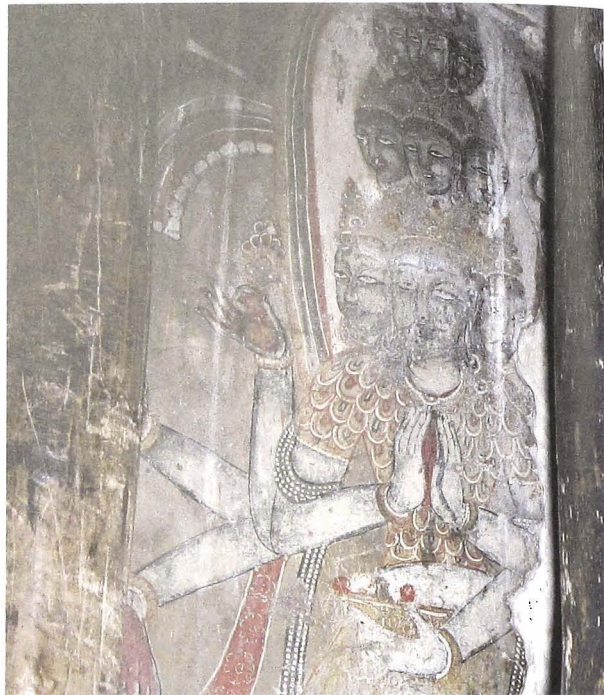
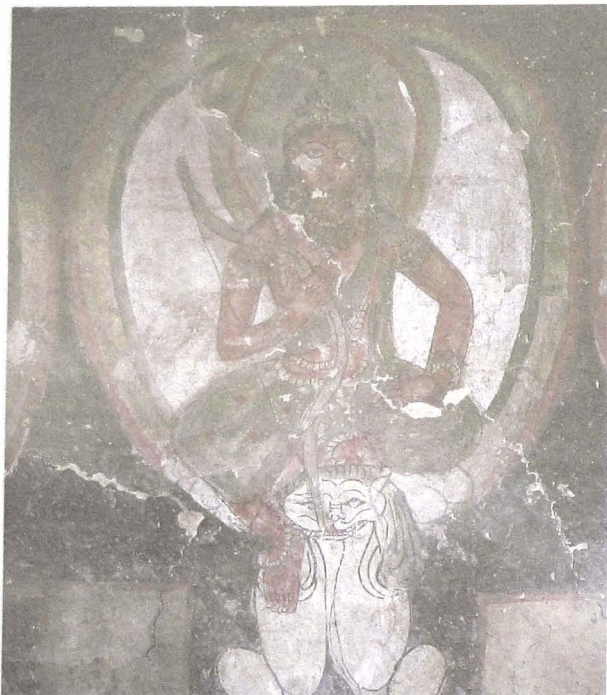


monastery⁷. While it is clear that the technique of all the ceiling paintings is the same, the style of all of the painted ceiling textiles cannot be directly compared because the motifs are totally different⁸. The relatively close coincidence of all three of these ¹⁴C-readings indicates that the ceiling paintings date to either the original iconographic concept of the temple or to the renovation phase. Since the painted valances belong to the renovation period (painted valances do not occur in Phase I nor are there any indications for ceiling paintings in the Entry Hall), the ceiling paintings may also be tentatively dated sometime after the temple was first completed in 996 and before the completion of the renovation in 1042. As a working hypothesis I propose the early 11th century.

Clearly, the ceiling paintings do not help us to refine our chronological scheme, since their content and style are different from the rest of the paintings, particularly those in the Apse which were probably painted by other artists. However, Wendl (Chapter V.6) notes that some of the designs in the Assembly Hall ceiling paintings also occur in the wall painting of the Assembly Hall. As we will discuss in Chapter VI, the ceiling paintings appear to have been inspired either by textiles or by portable arts from western India. The ceiling paintings are important for our understanding of the original iconographic program of the Main Temple.

Art Historical Evidence

The following is only a summary of the art historical evidence; a more detailed discussion of the different stylistic groups and their significance for the later art of the region is found in Chapter VI. As we have just noted, the evidence for the paintings of the Phase I, 996 appears to be firm without any contradictions. However, we now encounter some difficulties with regard to the Phase II paintings and perhaps even a divergence from the inscriptional evidence⁹. Also, the chronology of the sculptures is not totally clear.



The mandala sculptures and the Cella sculptures belong to two different stylistic groups. The question is, which is older?

The five sculptures referred to as the Cella group (the three sculptures in the Cella itself and the two in front of the Cella), although in a similar technique, are in a totally different style (fig. 29). The rather less harmonious and more provincial style of these figures is distinct from the gracious Kashmiri-derived style of the mandala sculptures (fig. 21). Therefore, each group can be attributed to different artists. There is not enough space for two different groups of sculptors, presumably from different areas, to work together in the temple, therefore one presumes that the sculptures are from two different dates. The more provincial style of the Cella sculptures may relate them rather to the 996 phase, although the Entry Hall paintings are certainly not technically sophisticated while the Cella sculptures are. We shall first present the evidence for the chronology of the paintings and then turn to the sculpture.

We can summarise the present state of our knowledge as follows. To the four stylistic groups that were initially identified (Klimburg-Salter 1985)¹⁰, we were able to add the earlier group, the 996 paintings (Klimburg-Salter 1994a). Thus, we have two stylistic phases. Phase I dates from the late 10th century, and fragments of it are found throughout the temple. The paintings attributable to this phase are identifiable by the generally inferior quality of the pigments and the binding material (figs. 15, 16, 19, 20). The palette is limited to a few colours, predominantly green, rose, pink, some yellow and red with highlights in white and heavy black outlining. The figure style is awkward and the line often rather insecure. In general one may describe the style as provincial. Comparisons can be drawn to some works on paper from Dunhuang which are usually attributed to the Himalayan School. The best preserved paintings in this phase are the complete program in the Entry Hall. Here the portraits of Ye-shes-'od and his two sons would seem to confirm this attribution to Phase I.

Left
Fig. 19. Deity sitting on a lion
Main Temple, Entry Hall, south wall,
first row

Above
Fig. 20. Green Tantric deity with nine
heads and eight arms
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, passage
leading to the Apse, north wall, below
the gatekeeper Vajrasphota (no. 32)

There are only a few traces of Phase I painting in the Assembly Hall proper, but inside the transition zone to the Apse, paintings are located under the clay guardian figures Vajrapāṣa and Vajrasphoṭa (nos. 31 and 32). On the south side a figure is now covered by the Admonitory Inscription, on the north side the nine-headed green figure is still clearly visible (fig. 20). Also the fragments in the Ambulatory underneath the present Phase II layer of paint can safely be attributed to the foundation period as the style and pigments agree with the ones used in the Entry Hall.

However, the nine-headed green figure (fig. 20) is stylistically different. In fact only the border at the bottom of the wall, which is also found in the Ambulatory, confirms that this painting belongs to Phase I. The figure style is rather more refined and the green colour is more intense than the rather muddy green used elsewhere in Phase I paintings. The white dots and thick black outlining on the face may be later additions. Many things about this curious figure are difficult to explain, not only the more assured style of the figure but why it has survived. Every other figure from Phase I in the Assembly Hall and Apse has been overpainted, why did this one remain? Presumably, the answer is connected with the identity of the figure, which is also problematic. The image is most likely a local protective divinity and thus, as in the case of the protectress Wi-nyu-myin in the Entry Hall, it was considered more prudent to allow him to remain in his accustomed place despite the massive renovation¹¹.

Phase II is essentially the present iconographic program in the Assembly Hall and the Apse, except for the modern repairs. All of these paintings and sculptures can be dated in the 11th century. In Phase II we have four stylistic groups, identified as A through D. It is important to remember that these four stylistic groups belong to a single cultural phase in the 11th century. Our problem is how to explain the differences between them. Can these differences be explained by virtue of a chronological gap or as a result of different artists? As we shall see below, Group A is our true Kashmiri-derived style to which both the paintings in the Ambulatory (fig. 22) and the sculptures of the mandala (fig. 21) belong. Group A and perhaps also Group B (all of the narrative paintings and the protectress in the Assembly Hall) (figs. 23, 24) may in fact represent the master painters and sculptors who were brought directly from the greater Kashmiri region, as stated in Rin-chen-bzang-po's biography. Groups C (the topmost zone of the Assembly Hall, the Buddha Realms) (figs. 25, 26) and D (the Cella and the east wall of the Ambulatory) may represent the local painters working in the same style but in a more simplified, stylised manner. We shall return to this suggestion.

First let us briefly examine some of the distinctive features of the four stylistic groups. An example of the earliest phase of painting (Group A) is seen in this image of a white Bodhisattva (fig. 22), Śūraṅgama. Characterised by graceful, subtle contours and delicate modelling, the form is relaxed and gracious, the torso turns gently at the waist, the navel is depicted by double lines over a swirl. There is no vertical line or other form of exaggerated shading here as often occurs in Group C. The most remarkable feature of the Group A figures is the extraordinary attention to detail. The five-part crown reveals the striped white ribbon covering the *uṣṇiṣa* and rising in between the crown, the black hair flowing out of the crown and down the shoulders. The side ribbons attached with two simple white loops are placed above a white rosette with red centre which sits above each ear. The gold setting and the jewels in the crown, necklace and armband are depicted with extraordinary care, likewise the textiles, such as the elaborate scarf across the chest, which are one of the distinctive features of Group A painting. The face is drawn simply with long, thin, almond-shaped eyes, deeply shaded in the outer corners, a small nose and tiny, bow-shaped mouth. Another characteristic feature of these Bodhisattvas is the shape and treatment of the halo and the mandorla. The latter is an elongated oval with coloured stripes, and the former is horseshoe-shaped with a beautiful striated flaming edge enclosing three stripes and a white scalloped inner border edged with



Fig. 21. Bodhisattva Vajrahāsa (rDo-
rje-bzhad-pa)
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east
wall, middle section (no. 13)

Fig. 22. Bodhisattva Śūrangama
(dPa'-bar-'gro-ba)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, upper register (BS8)





four-dot motifs. The inner portion is red. This precise shape and decor is found on the seated clay divinities of the mandala. Other features, such as the five-pointed crown on a wreath tied with protruding bows which are placed above a round flower over each ear, are also found in the clay sculptures in the Assembly Hall.

From the rather strong similarity in figure style, formal and iconographic details, and composition it would appear that the Bodhisattvas painted in the Ambulatory date to the same time as the clay mandala sculptures (fig. 21). By comparison to Phase I Entry Hall it is clear that this Group A is more sophisticated and cannot belong to the founding date of 996 – represented by the Phase I painting. Thus Group A belongs to the first moment of Phase II in the 11th century. Unfortunately there is no really comparable painting for this Group A at Tabo although the origins of the style can be traced to the art of Kashmir (Klimburg-Salter 1982: 163). The three other stylistic groups B, C, D demonstrate a certain evolution within the manner of mural painting in the western Himalayas towards a more formalised line and treatment of all the major iconographic details, including a more flat, diagrammatic treatment of the body. Details in which this more simplified and hard-edged manner can be seen are in the flame halo, the lotus seat, the drapery, textile pattern, crown and jewellery. In the last three categories one notes that the enormous diversity of different designs is replaced by more conventionalised patterns, so that the same forms appear on each figure with only slight variations. Certain features, particularly crowns, also tend to become somewhat simpler, compare figs. 22, 26 and 27. However within this general tendency there are variations, so that we have on the one hand the very simple painted figures of divinities (Group B) contained in the narrative paintings. These can be dated to c. 1042 (Tucci 1935: Tav. XXIV) (figs. 23, 119) and are relatively quite small. On the other hand in the Group C paintings (figs. 26, 106, 107) the figures appear more complex, yet use the same vocabulary of forms. And then there is Group D, which is the latest (figs. 27, 28).

Group A painting appears to be the source from which the other groups derive and therefore may be considered earliest. Group B consists of all the narrative paintings, the renovation period donor painting and the protectress in the Assembly Hall, thus a large, diverse group of figures in which the religious figures, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas play only a minor role (figs. 23, 24). These figures are usually small in scale and relatively simply drawn and therefore are not directly comparable to the same figures in Group C. Group C consists only of deities, mostly Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (figs. 25, 26), and the

Fig. 23. Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang), Mañjuśrī blesses Sudhana Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall (below goddess, no. 26)

Fig. 24. Life of the Buddha, Veneration of the Relics Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall (below goddess, no. 25)

guardian figures in the top row of the Assembly Hall, but also the offering goddesses just below. These goddesses are painted between the upper part of the clay mandorlas of the figures of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (fig. 103). The exaggerated and intense shading relates them to other figures in Group C but there are slight variations in the representation, so that at least two artists can be recognised for instance, on the north and south walls (compare figs. 103 and 104).

Group C paintings of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have the same essential features as the Group A and B figures but the execution of the details is exaggerated and schematic. The figure style is also somewhat different. The Buddha figures (fig. 25) are more solid, the face broad and the shoulders wide and square, in contrast to the Group A figures which have oval faces and small facial features, their bodies are more graceful and elegant, the shoulders and chest gently sloping towards the narrow waist, the monastic robes falling in multiple shaded folds around the slender bodies.

Small mannerisms which are barely perceivable in the drawing of the Group A figures are exaggerated in the drawing of the Group D figures (figs. 27, 28), the thin red line defining the inner eye socket is extended to the edge of the face, the small indents at the mouth become black triangles, the simple dot for the *ūrṇā* is transformed into a complex graphic design (compare Group D figs. 109 and 113 with Group A fig. 160).

The Bodhisattva garments of the Group A figures also have a natural rhythm, the garment falling realistically around the seated figures, the patterns following the contours of the body. In contrast, the Group C Bodhisattvas have a more exaggerated movement of the torso and the arms but the garments are depicted in a rather unnatural way, the patterns are simply flat and do not follow the contours of the body. This tendency is even more marked in Group D where the dhoti sometimes looks like a flat piece of paper decorated with an overall design.

Also the shading of the figures is markedly different in all the stylistic groups. In all the groups the shading is accomplished in different colours depending on the base colour of the figures – blue, and red are shaded in black, green in dark green, while yellow is shaded in a soft orange and white with an intense red. In Group A the shading is the most subtle. In some cases it is barely discernible being little more than a shaded line defining the inner eye socket and the lower lid (figs. 169 and 174). In other examples, the lightly shaded outline defines not only the eye but also the mouth. A light shading runs under the hairline and around the face and the other body contours – the arms, the pectoral muscles and the belly (figs. 160, 174, 175). The most subtle shading in Group A is found on the Buddhas in the Ambulatory (fig. 181): here the subtle gradations of orange outline all the body parts. In the figure of the monk also in the Ambulatory (fig. 189) the shaded contours are much heavier, but this figure has been partially restored. A very similar use of shading is found in the Group B figures. Particularly finely modelled are the figures on the east wall – such as Mañjuśrī (figs. 23, 119) or the retinue of the protectress (fig. 55) or the figures in the renovation period donor paintings (figs. 5, 14, 140, 141). The shading is quite different in the Group C and D figures. For example the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara (fig. 113) is shaded with a more intense red line, e.g. the face, or thicker shaded line (e.g. around the stomach area) forms a geometric pattern. Compare for instance the way the parallel red lines defining the nose arbitrarily extend over the mouth to the chin, to a parallel example of a Bodhisattva from Group A in the Ambulatory (fig. 175) where the gradually intensified shaded area around the nose and mouth rather gives volume to the contours of the face. The expressionistic use of shading is one of the distinctive features of Group D. Here the dark, intense shading (fig. 27) forms broad bands around all the contours. The shaded areas are so thick that they form a play of independent geometric forms – note the area between the eye and the edge of the face, or at the edge of the pectoral muscles.

The use of shading as a means of coloration, rather than as a device to define volume is an important feature in the later painting of this school and becomes progressively more insistent. In Nako (figs. 226, 230) for instance, the use of orange shading on yellowish bodies becomes more marked, exaggerated, although adhering to the same basic concepts as in Group A Tabo. While in Dung-dkar the darker figures are intensely shaded, creating abstract geometric patterns (fig. 231). This same exaggerated shading is later applied also to sculpture, such as the example from Sumda in Ladakh (fig. 223). This is a particularly interesting example since the use of this mannerism on a three-dimensional image makes it clear that this is a purely decorative device. This expressionistic tendency finds its most exaggerated expression in Dung-dkar but was not adopted by later generations. In fact it is rather the Group A figures in Tabo which seem to have had the greater impact on the later art of western Tibet. One can see this development in the later painting in Tabo, in the beautiful paintings of the Golden Temple (gSer-khang) (fig. 221 and in Tholing fig. 220), although the face is much broader there are still small facial features, tiny mouth with deep set corner indentation and gentle, modulated shading around the hairline and other contours. These gently rounded and graceful forms distinguish the western Tibetan painting school in both mural and portable painting of the 15th to 16th centuries.

Despite the differences which can be noticed in the four groups there is an underlying stylistic unity of the paintings of the second phase in the Assembly Hall. It should also be noted that these groups have a certain spatial definition. That is, the mural paintings of the Ambulatory belong together in Group A, as also the Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*) with the east wall of the Ambulatory (Group D); similarly in the Assembly Hall the east wall can be grouped together with the narrative paintings (Group B) and these in turn are distinct from all of the paintings in the upper zone (Group C). This fact clearly indicates that painters worked intensively together on distinct sections of the temple, thus the differences between these stylistic groups result in the first instance from the fact that they are painted by different artists. How great the time gap was between the production of the different groups of paintings is not easily understood.

The only directly comparable paintings are those from Mang-nang and their date of production is hypothetical. Nor does the presence of foreign influences in the paintings help us to refine the chronology. As we shall see in Chapter VI these foreign elements, although clearly definable, are nonetheless well integrated into the Tabo stylistic idiom. Thus it seems probable that these foreign influences were adapted by these artists prior to coming to Tabo.

With regard to the differences between Groups B and C it is really impossible at this point to determine if these differences should be interpreted as contemporaneous but different manners of the same style or different chronological phases. It is Group C which can be related to the painting from Mang-nang and, in some features, to the paintings from Nako. An altogether different stylistic group is "D" which is found in the Cella and the east wall of the Ambulatory, and is the latest group of Phase II.

The Cella Sculptures

Were the Cella sculptures renovated at the same time as the Cella paintings or do they belong to Phase I? Moreover the beautiful painting (fig. 201) on two of the Bodhisattva garments probably dates from the same period as the Cella paintings (fig. 28). Both the paintings and the sculptures are in a provincial style, in contrast to the Kashmiri-derived style of the paintings and sculptures in Groups A, B, C and the awkward way that the lotus bases extend over the edge of the platform in the Cella suggests that the Bodhisattvas (fig. 29) may be a later addition. However there are problems with all these points; the now red Vairocana and the four Bodhisattvas date, in their present form, from the same time. If the Bodhisattvas are later additions, then the original main figure of the temple may have been destroyed and the present



Fig. 25. The Buddha of the Nadir,
Padmaśrī (Pad-mo-dam-dpal)
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south
wall (above Vajraketu and Vajrahāsa,
nos. 12+13)

Fig. 26. The Bodhisattva Ārya
Avalokiteśvara ('Phags-pa sPyan-ras-
gzigs-dbang-phyug)
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north
wall, upper section (above
Vajradharma, no. 14)





Fig. 27. Unidentified Bodhisattva
Main Temple, Ambulatory, east wall,
north corner, upper register (BS16)
Probably an object or ornament with a
viśvavajra as attribute in the right
hand; left fist on thigh

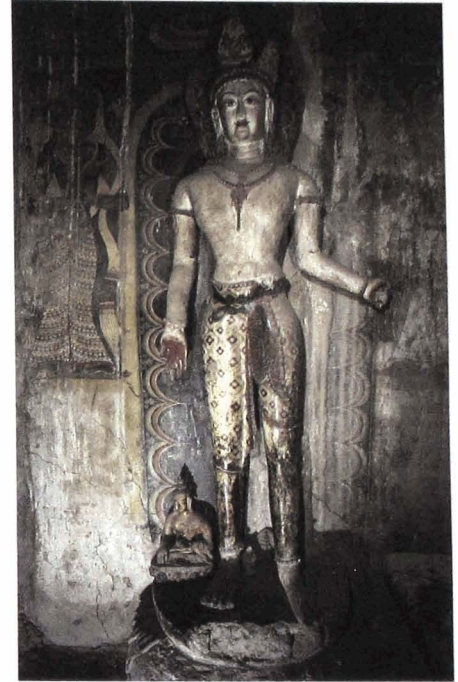
Vairocana figure substituted in the renovation phase. This is not impossible but certainly complicated, particularly with regard to the two Bodhisattvas bonded to the ladders (see Luczanits Chapter V.7). There are traces of older painting underneath the painting on the Bodhisattva garments. Thus, it is more probable that the Cella sculptures are older than the Group D paintings. This is also suggested by the reuse of a mould used for the mandala group. (All this is discussed at length in Luczanits.) Here our working hypothesis is that the Cella group of sculptures is original (Phase I) and that the Cella paintings Group D date from the end of the renovation phase. However, the reader is urged to remember that this is only a working hypothesis and that we consider the question of the date of the Cella sculptures still open.

Unfortunately, critical information is missing. It is certainly not a coincidence that we are uncertain about the process of renovation in the Cella area. It is precisely here that both the Admonitory Inscription and the Renovation Inscription are located. Unfortunately the significance of this is still unclear. To begin with we do not know why the temple was renovated so soon after it was built. We know nothing about the organisation of labour or the nature of patronage and the manner in which the two interacted. How was work divided among the artists and the craftsmen? How long did each of these various tasks take? To what degree were the craftsmen supported by local workers, or were all the craftsmen and workers imported? If the latter, then one must assume that due to the extreme cold weather, it was the habit then, as it is today, that people from outside of Tabo would leave before the snow set in, in order to avoid being trapped in Tabo during the long winter period. What happened to the sculptors' moulds? Did they belong to the artists or the donors, did the craftsmen take their moulds with them when they left Tabo, or did they leave a few moulds behind in order to make repairs? In addition to which, the cold would have been simply too intense to allow for this kind of artistic work during the winter months. Therefore, the work would be limited to approximately the four summer months. How much work could be accomplished? And in what order?

Fig. 28. Goddess with blue lotus
(utpala)
Main Temple, Cella, south wall
Attending the Bodhisattva
Avalokiteśvara



Fig. 29. Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara
(sPyan-ras-gzigs-dhang-phyug)
Main Temple, Cella, south wall; clay



Production of the Paintings and Sculptures

To a certain degree the sequence of work in the renovation phase can be determined. Logic would indicate that the mandala sculptures (fig. 21) would have been placed into the walls first and then it would have been necessary to repaint the walls because of the large damage around the area of each sculpture. The fact that the painted Bodhisattvas in the Ambulatory (fig. 22) and the figures of the mandala are both in the Kashmiri-derived style (Group A) represents no problem. One can easily imagine the painters working in the Ambulatory while the sculptors worked in the Assembly Hall ('*du-khang*). Highly skilled craftsmen planned the technically complex system by which the sculptures were probably anchored into the vertical posts within the wall (Sengupta 1982). It seems reasonable to imagine that this work would have taken at least the entire four months of one year if not more.

So, hypothetically, in year one of Phase II the painters and sculptors were imported from the greater Kashmiri region. The iconographic scheme of the Assembly Hall and Apse was laid out. The lines dividing each wall into three zones were drawn after the clay sculptures and their mandorlas were fashioned but before the painting of each zone because everywhere the painting goes over the lines.

The following year the narrative painting and the east wall of the Assembly Hall would have been created by a different group of painters (Group B). The question is, could all of this have been created in one season? This of course is impossible to say. However, it is fairly clear that the artists were working under some considerable time pressure. For instance the most elegant, complete, and artistically sophisticated painting of the Sudhana (Tib. *Nor-bzang*) cycle is the first surviving scene of Mañjuśrī speaking to Sudhana, which would have been the second or third in the original composition. When one compares this scene (fig. 23) with some later scenes towards the end of the story it is clear that there is a progressive reduction in painted detail and sophistication in the treatment of the figures. Conversely the compositions

remain as complex at the end as they are in the beginning. The compositions throughout are sophisticated and the manner in which they relate to the text leaves no doubt that the entire group (visual and literary narratives) was planned together. Thus, the simplification of the details refers only to the execution of the paintings. The same phenomenon can be noticed with regard to the inscriptional panels, as some have been left completely empty and it is clear that there was simply no time to fill them in. These inscriptional panels also allow us to understand that the work was executed at several places simultaneously as the blank panels are not always at the end. It thus seems clear that the entire narrative with text panels was planned, perhaps even roughly sketched out first, and then the painting and writing of the narratives began. As we have elsewhere noted (Klimburg-Salter 1987), the apparent difference in style between the paintings of the Sudhana cycle and the narrative paintings of the Life of the Buddha disappears upon closer examination. And it is clear that all of the narrative paintings (of Group B) were painted by the same workshop. Further, when one compares the details in the Renovation Inscription painting (figs. 4, 5, 6, 140, 141) with details in the paintings at the end of the Life (fig. 24) or the beginning of the Sudhana cycle (fig. 23), it is clear that several painters worked simultaneously. Whether we are dealing with renovation phase year two, or years two and three, is impossible to say.

We also have an indication that the work was interrupted, perhaps by the winter months. This hypothesis is based on the evidence of the mural paintings in several different places in the Main Temple. For example, in a section of the upper east wall of the Ambulatory there is a painting of the valance which is clearly painted by one person and continued by somebody else in a closely similar but not identical pattern and a different mode of representation (fig. 30).

As for Group C (figs. 26, 107), to which all the figures at the top of the wall belong, it is really impossible to definitively explain this stylistic difference. The fact that all the paintings are at the top of the wall and would hardly have been visible, as there was only one light source in the middle of the temple, would account for the simplification of the forms. The treatment of the figure style is very hard, with a somewhat geometric definition of the body parts. One would have to, at least, propose different artists. We do not know if it would have been possible for the painting at the top and at the bottom of the wall to have been executed simultaneously, since one does not know the kind of scaffolding that was used. Painting attributed to Groups B and C are closely related to the wall paintings from Nako and most of the miniature paintings from Tabo and elsewhere in Himachal Pradesh (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Figs. 44–50).

All of the paintings of the Cella (figs. 28, 150) and a part of the upper east wall in the Ambulatory (Group D) are later than Groups A, B, C, but also attributable to the 11th century. The style of the Group D paintings can be seen to derive from Group C but it is simpler and more provincial (see Chapter VI). But as we have seen, the Cella sculptures also represent a local style which is at present difficult to date¹².

The critical question here is the definition of a “local” style or styles. Phase I paintings and the Cella sculptures are both provincial in style so that it would be logical to relate them to one another. But Group D is also a local style however rather more sophisticated than the Phase I paintings. Also Group D clearly comes after Group A, B, and C. So that Group D may be considered to be the later of the two local schools of painting. There are undoubtedly also different styles among the sculptures found locally. Luczanits has compared some formal elements of the Cella sculptures to the group of so-called Nāgarāja bronzes¹³. This comparison to some of the bronze sculptures bearing Nāgarāja’s (Nā-ga-rā-dza) name, in various combinations, may one day prove to be the clue to the chronology of these images.

The fact that a number of these sculptures are still to be found *in situ* in Himachal Pradesh, and can in part be related to the clay sculptures in Ropa, Kinnaur (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Figs. 52, 53, 58) (fig.



Fig. 30. Valance and Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa Main Temple, Ambulatory, east wall, upper section
Two different artists were at work, representing two different moments of the renovation period. The black Buddha and valance above belong to Group D-Cella paintings

216) confirms that we are dealing with a local style. Here we must distinguish between these images in a rather provincial style and the standing Buddha figure now in the Cleveland Museum (see Chapter V.2) and the Bodhisattva in Ladakh (fig. 218). These images are of an extraordinary quality and rather in a Kashmiri style which can be compared to the Group A paintings in the Ambulatory (figs. 35, 181). However the inscriptions also distinguish these images from all the others by identifying them as the personal images of Nāgarāja (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pl. 27).

Unfortunately, the comparison to the so-called Nāgarāja sculptures does not assist us in refining our chronology, as none of these sculptures contain a date. Art historians generally agree on an early 11th-century date, although some of these sculptures have been given a date as late as the 12th century. Nāgarāja was the younger son of Ye-shes-'od, his major period of activity was necessarily later than his father's. Further, although the dates of Ye-shes-'od's life are hypothetical (Petech: A.D. 959–1036), it seems that Tabo was founded rather earlier in his missionary career. Devarāja may have been the abbot of Tabo, and Nāgarāja must have been quite young as he was not yet ordained (he is called prince in the inscription). Thus, it does not seem possible to assign Nāgarāja's period of patronage to the same period as his father's. A working hypothesis would place the high point of Nāgarāja's activity at the earliest late in the first quarter of the 11th century and thus the sculptures bearing his name may also belong to this period.

In addition one should note that there would be a certain divergence in stylistic elements between the monumental clay sculptures and the small bronze sculptures due to the differences in scale and material. A satisfactory explanation for the Cella sculptures must await more research on the modes of artistic production and patronage in the kingdom of Purang-Guge.

The Renovation Phase: Patron and Designer

As we have seen, the simplest solution based on the inscriptions would be to propose two periods of decoration of the Main Temple: 996 (Ye-shes-'od) and 1042 (Byang-chub-'od). However there is a third donor image. This image is located in the Cella (fig. 151) and the place underneath the painting where an inscription might originally have been is now destroyed. Who is this donor and how can he be related to the renovation work initiated by Byang-chub-'od and recorded in the inscription?

The initial phase in 996 seems clear, at least for the paintings. All of the Entry Hall paintings are attributable to this phase, also the layer of painting underneath the present layer in the Ambulatory and the paintings located under the clay guardian figures W16 Vajrapāśa and W17 Vajrasphoṭa in the transition zone to the Apse. But what about the Cella sculptures? Either they must be related to the 996 phase, as we now hypothetically presume, or we must attribute almost all of the remaining paintings and sculptures in the Main Temple to the renovation phase.

Phase II is also clear except for the paintings in the Cella. Group D is related to the third donor represented in a painting which mimics the Byang-chub-'od donor painting and therefore must be younger (fig. 151). However, although the visual vocabulary of the painting is the same, a critical difference is that the donor is not frontally represented. He holds an offering and is turned slightly to his right in the direction of the main image and the main donor Byang-chub-'od. In that sense he is in a subsidiary position (and his image is also lower down). A comparative stylistic analysis of the paintings in this style (Group D) demonstrates that this group of paintings still belongs to the same cultural phase as the rest of the 11th-century paintings in the Main Temple. One possible hypothesis is that the entire Cella, painting and sculptures, were renovated last, perhaps shortly after Group C was finished, by a different donor but under the general patronage of Byang-chub-'od. The existence of other donors is indicated in the Renovation Inscription.

The Renovation Inscription says that Byang-chub-'od "motivated by the thought of enlightenment" restored the temple 46 years after it was built. In the next stanza it is said that the inscription was written after the repainting of the Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*) was finished, so that it may be permissible to separate these two actions. I suggest in Chapter V.3 that this subsidiary patron may have been Byang-chub-'od's younger brother, the translator Zhi-ba-'od. Either the renovation work was accomplished last under the general patronage of Byang-chub-'od together with the *lha bla-ma* depicted in the Cella; or Byang-chub-'od was not able to finish satisfactorily the work in the Cella before the date on which the renovated temple was consecrated in 1042, and the painting of the Cella was completed shortly afterwards¹⁴.

Still unresolved is the question of the origin of the total iconographic program. In its originality, consistency, and intellectual and artistic brilliance the decoration of the renovation phase is certainly unparalleled in any other temple which has survived. All of the available space was used for a precisely orchestrated and intimately integrated iconography. That this conception was the product of a singularly gifted mind cannot be questioned. Because of the dominance of Rin-chen-bzang-po in the literature, not only for the period generally, but also for his association with Tabo, the natural tendency would be to imagine that it was the Great Translator himself who planned the iconographic program of the Assembly Hall (earlier, I followed this tradition [Klimburg-Salter 1982: 157]). However, the primary evidence is lacking. As we have already noted in our discussion of the historical figures, Rin-chen-bzang-po does not occur anywhere in the Main Temple. As the wall paintings are destroyed in a number of places, particularly to the left and right of the door into the Assembly Hall, one might logically propose that this lack of evidence is circumstantial. What speaks against this assumption is that the two areas where one might expect to find Rin-chen-bzang-po represented are either in the paintings of the monastic community (Saṅgha) at the end of the 10th century in the Entry Hall, or in the representation of the most important members of the Saṅgha and the patrons above the Renovation Inscription of 1042. Both of these compositions are complete and Rin-chen-bzang-po does not occur in either. As he was already famous in his lifetime it seems impossible to imagine that he could have partaken in either one of these phases of development or restoration without his name having been included. One possible explanation is that he did not belong to the Tabo monastic community and thus, might have been depicted somewhere else but not among the members of the Tabo community. There is no other space in the Entry Hall where an additional composition of historical persons might have been represented. Thus, we must assume he was not part of the founding phase of the monastery. From the renovation phase, however, there was a large composition on the east wall of the Assembly Hall to the right of the door. According to the typology of the composition (see Chapter VI), this scene must have represented the ruling dynasty and other important historical figures. Thus, Rin-chen-bzang-po may have been represented here. The only other possibility: a redecoration phase prior to 1042, when at least the sculptures of the mandala and the paintings in the Ambulatory were made. This work, conducted under the guidance of Rin-chen-bzang-po, was simply never recorded or this inscription was subsequently overpainted in 1042.

In short, Rin-chen-bzang-po was certainly not the founder of Tabo monastery; this honour goes to "the ancestor, the Bodhisattva", Ye-shes-'od, as the inscription clearly tells us. Neither do we have any internal evidence that he was responsible for the artistic program, nor that the paintings were executed by the artists, or their descendants, which he is said to have brought to this Himalayan kingdom. Thus we must consider the possibility that the later tradition concerning his Tabo activity contained in his biography and the *Vaidūrya ser-po* is false.

The one question which will probably always remain in the realm of hypothesis is the motivation for the renovation of the Main Temple only 46 years after it was initially built. As we have seen there is

evidence that there had been a violent confrontation in Tabo which may have caused some damage to the temple. In any case, the artists and materials available to Byang-chub-'od 46 years later were far superior. This alone may have motivated him to restore and refurbish the temple that was clearly an important monument in Ye-shes-'od's missionary scheme. And it could not have been a coincidence that this renovation was completed in the very year the famous Indian pandit Atiśa first arrived in Guge at the invitation of the same royal lama (*lha bla-ma*) Byang-chub-'od.

¹ Unfortunately, although our continued work over the years has produced some significant new information, we still are not able to present a definitive model for the first 100 years.

² Because of the 150 years plus or minus factor with the ¹⁴C-dating, in our view it is less valuable for the historical period.

³ The early and the middle inscriptions will be treated in depth in a separate volume edited by Petech and Luczanits.

⁴ As discussed elsewhere, the distinctive features of the palaeography, which allow us to date them to an early period, could of course also occur in later inscriptions which deliberately attempt to use archaisms or have simply copied earlier inscriptions. However, in our judgement such occurrence especially in such a large amount of inscriptions as found in Tabo would eventually produce certain inconsistencies and anachronisms which is absolutely not the case in Tabo. Therefore, we feel confident in attributing these inscriptions to the 10th–11th century.

⁵ The later inscriptions will be published by Elena De Rossi Filibeck.

⁶ I had originally assumed (Klimburg-Salter 1982, 1985) that they would have to belong to the Phase I since they are bonded to the walls.

⁷ These three minuscule fragments of

cloth had already detached from the ceiling. We would like to thank Mrs. Acala Moulík then acting Dir. General of ASI for permission to test these fragments. The three samples: 1. 965 +/-45 (Ambulatory), 2. 1145 +/-50, 3. 1025 +/-50 (last two from the Assembly Hall), the mean average would be 984 +/-78.

⁸ The different themes are discussed in Chapter V.5.

⁹ As we are dealing with a rather large amount of painting and sculpture and the problem is somewhat complex, we refer the specialist to the earlier discussions (Klimburg-Salter 1985 and 1994a).

¹⁰ In 1985 before the Phase I paintings in the Entry Hall had been studied I proposed that the sculptures must belong to the initial phase, as the process of inserting them into the wall would have been simply too destructive. According to Luczanits' analysis, however, this may be precisely what occurred. The wooden struts which were already in the wall were reused for the sculptures in the new style. It seems to me the simplest solution would be to imagine that there was originally also a Vajradhātumaṅḍala which was renovated in the new Kashmiri idiom. In addition to which the incongruence between the sophisticated Kashmiri style of sculptures and the provincial style of the 996

paintings prohibits the attribution of the mandala sculptures to the 996 phase.

¹¹ See Chapter V for further discussion of the iconography.

¹² One problem in accounting for the difference in style between the groups of sculptures is that we do not know how long it took to finish all the painting of the renovation period. If we have a gap of three or four years between the production of the mandala sculptures in year one of Phase II, and the Cella sculptures, it is perhaps not impossible to imagine that simply another group of local sculptors were then commissioned to construct these images.

¹³ These images each have an inscription containing at least part of the name of Nāgarāja (in Tibetan transcription Nāga-rā-dza), presumably the son of Ye-shes-'od who is represented with his father in the Entry Hall. In my view however, there are so many of these and their quality so diverse that I wonder if it is reasonable to attribute all of them to the same patron.

¹⁴ Temple consecrations are an important event and often connected to other events, such as the presence of an important person, in this case the coming of Atiśa to the kingdom. Thus it is not unusual for the celebration to occur either before the work is totally completed or even sometime after.



IV. The Sacred Compound (*chos- 'khor*)

The Sacred Compound is located in the middle of the valley a comfortable distance from the Spiti river (fig. 1). The compound is defined by a wall and includes nine chapels and many stupas. The intimate connection to the village is characteristic of the Buddhist foundations of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism and distinguishes them from later foundations, such as Dankhar and Kyi, also in Spiti. The latter, like their Tibetan counterparts, are located on rocky prominences above the village and the cultivation.

Without archaeological excavation it is impossible to be absolutely certain where the compound wall was located. The assumption has always been that the present location is original. When Tucci and Ghersi visited Tabo in 1933 there were ruins along the inside of the wall which probably represented the monastic quarters and other workrooms, as such structures are otherwise not in evidence.

Tucci reported that the monastery was in a ruinous state, and this can be seen in Ghersi's photos (figs. 31, 34). Forty-five years later, when I first visited Tabo, almost all the buildings had been repaired and, unfortunately, most of the ruins levelled. This was the result of the combined efforts of the village and the ASI. In addition some structures had been added, such as the abbot's house (fig. 32).

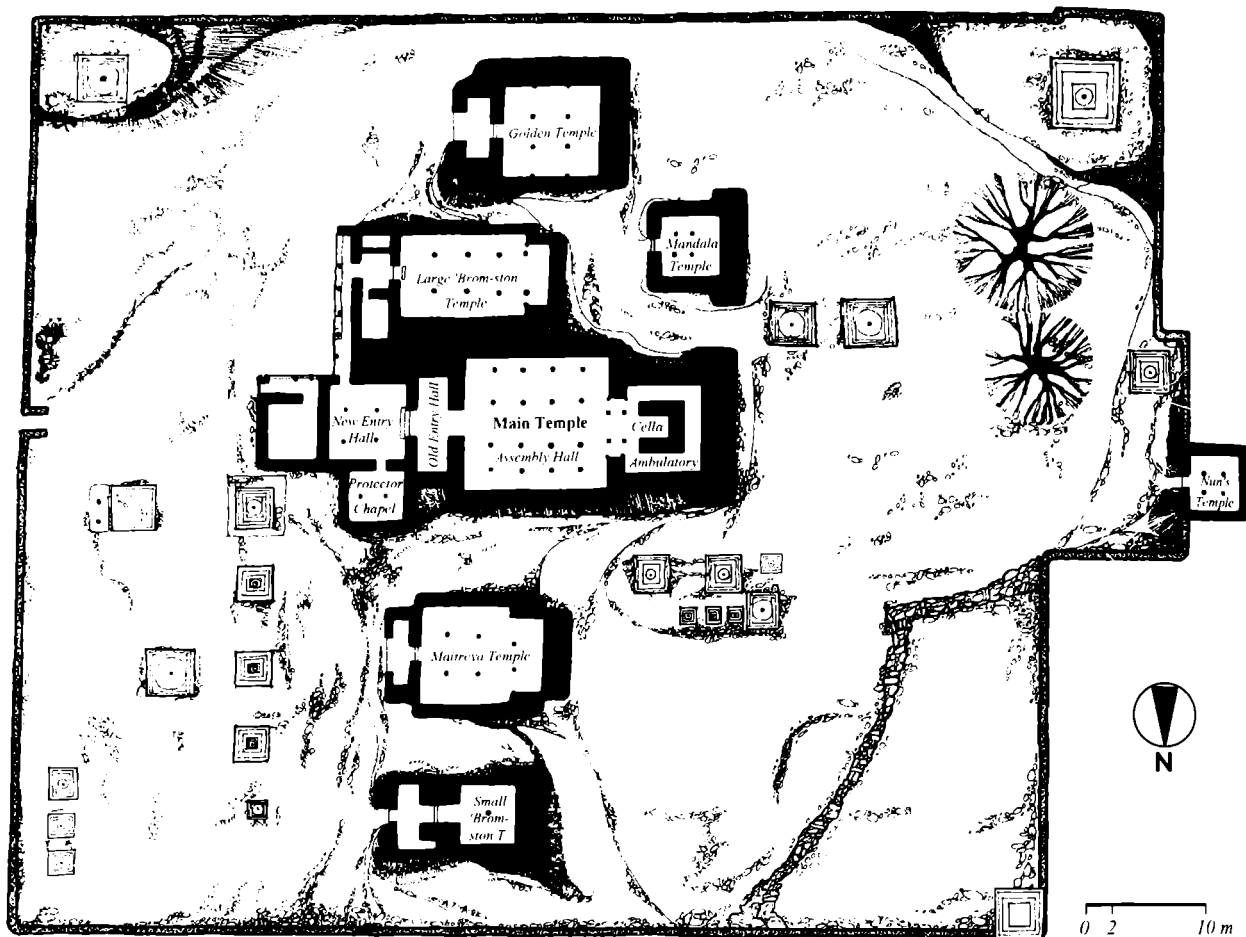
The only evidence we have for the appearance of the Sacred Compound prior to the plan made by Francke as a result of his visit in 1909, is the plan of the Sacred Compound painted in the Mandala Temple (dKyil-khang) and identified by inscription. Unfortunately, the painting is so faded that it is difficult to reproduce. According to the painting the Main Temple (called *dgon-chos*) is at the centre, to the proper left the Maitreya Temple (Byams-pa lha-khang) and a temple called dKar-chung (this name is presently used for the so-called Nun's chapel situated in the back wall to the proper left). The Golden Temple (gSer-khang) and a 'Brom-ston Temple ('Brom-ston lha-khang) to the proper right of the Main Temple. The whole is surrounded by a wall. Thus, although the present paintings in the chapels listed above are all later (with the exception of the Main Temple) we know that these temples already existed by the 15th century when most probably this painting was produced.

Although there are no early paintings which have survived from the founding period, except in the Main Temple, a few early architectural elements do exist. Unfortunately, it would appear that some of them have been reused. An example is the beautiful wooden capital in the Golden Temple (gSer-khang). However, the column associated with the capital is slender and unworked, unlike the 10th-century columns located in the Assembly Hall (*'du-khang*) of the Main Temple.

Based on the evidence of the paintings, only the Main Temple can be definitely ascribed to the found-

Fig. 31. Tabo monastery, the Sacred Compound (*chos- 'khor*) in 1933

Fig. 32. The Sacred Compound (*chos- 'khor*) in 1991



ing period in 996. As we will see in Chapter V, the original entrance was directly opposite the Apse and the present Entry Hall (*sgo-khang*) did not exist (plan 1 Sacred Compound). The south wall is exceptionally thick and there is a narrow chamber, perhaps the remains of an old building or a storeroom. In any case, the 'Brom-ston Temple now adjacent to the Main Temple, did not exist in 996. The porch which now connects the two temples is recent.

On functional grounds, the small Mandala Temple may also be considered a product of a relatively early period. It was not unusual to have a smaller Mandala Temple near the larger Assembly Hall. The former was used for Tantric initiations and teachings, one example is the *gSum-brtsegs* at Alchi. Today there are three large mandalas in a very ruined condition. The main mandala is again dedicated to Vairocana but the textual source is different from the mandala in the Main Temple. There are also extremely important historical paintings where many scenes and persons are identified, often badly misspelt and poorly preserved.

The small 'Brom-ston Temple is not very distinguished inside. The door to the temple however still retains the much ruined traces of carving which can be dated to the 13th or 14th century.

Plan 1. The Sacred Compound (by C. Luczanits, based on a plan of Romi Khosla 1979: 38)
The plan represents the state of the compound before the recent alterations

Fig. 33. Woodcarving with
Bodhisattva
Tabo Monastery; 11th century



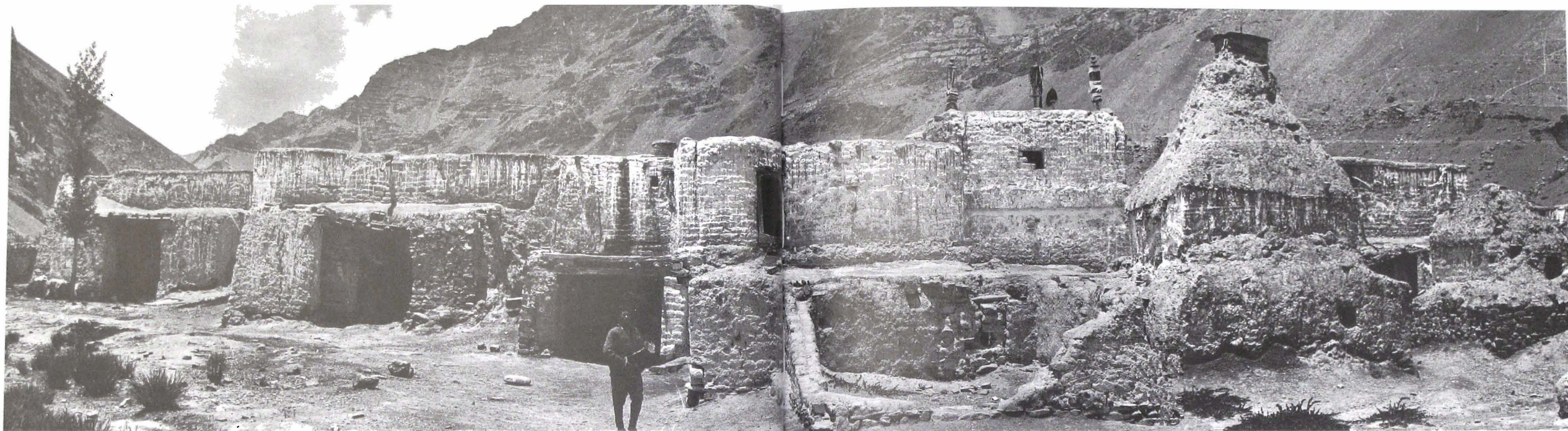


Fig. 34. The Sacred Compound. Tabo Monastery in 1933

The Maitreya Temple is also ancient. There is a carved stone column base containing the figure of a lion. There are also traces of a painting from the c. 14th century. The main icon is a very large seated image of Maitreya of an indeterminate age. According to the sketch in the Mandala Temple the Maitreya Temple was originally two stories high. This is also clear from the damage on the entrance wall. But the most important evidence which suggests that the temple may date to the first 100 years of the monastery's existence is the wooden door frame. Unfortunately the carved decoration is so abraded that an 11th-century date cannot be definitely demonstrated.

The Large 'Brom-ston Temple contains mural paintings of the Eight Medicine Buddhas and can be dated to c. 17th century. Underneath is painted the narrative of the Life of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

The large Golden Temple has beautifully preserved murals of a very high quality which can be dated to c. 16th century. There are a number of diverse iconographic themes which are also found elsewhere in other temples in the compound, such as an elegant depiction of Sarvavid Vairocana (fig. 221). The style of these paintings can be compared to paintings in Guge and gTsang at about the same time (Chapter VI).

The small temple set into the back wall of the compound and today called the Nun's Chapel has rather poor paintings of about the 18th century.

Among the many stupas dotting the compound, I have seen four which are painted inside. The paintings in two of the stupas can be dated to around the 14th century. In one of these stupas a carved wooden lintel was found (fig. 33). The carving is extremely fine and from the figure style may be attributed to the 11th century. When the building to which it belonged collapsed this fragment was evidently placed in the stupa as a votive offering.

All of the recent monastic structures – the monks' quarters and the New Assembly Hall – are located outside the old Sacred Compound (fig. 32). However, the protectors' chants are still recited twice daily in

the Protectors' Chapel adjacent to the Old Assembly Hall and the butter lamps and other offerings are carefully tended in the Main Temple, which continues to be used also for special ceremonies. A great moment in Tabo's long history occurred in the summer of 1996. In this year Tabo celebrated its millennium. His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama occupied the throne reserved for him in the Main Temple (fig. 53) and performed the opening ritual of the Kālacakra initiation. During the two-week teachings 27,000 people came to Tabo to offer devotion and receive blessings, and once again "the temple dPal-ldan bkra'-shis bde-gnas [was] as a lamp for this kingdom" (Renovation Inscription).



V. The Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*)

The temple is located on the medial, east-west axis of the Sacred Compound (*chos- 'khor*) (plan I Sacred Compound). The outer wall which demarcates the sacred space of the monastery probably occupies its original position; it has been completely repaired (fig. 32). The abbot's quarters, a two-story structure with a kitchen below, were built some decades ago in front of the New Entry Hall to the Main Temple. The New Entry Hall, which is more recent than the rest of the temple, gives access to a Protectors' Chapel (*mgon-khang*) on the north side. The paintings in the New Entry Hall date around the late 19th or early 20th century. The paintings of the Protectors' Chapel are of a fine quality with intense colours and date to c. 15th or early 16th century. Thus, today one enters the Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) from an entrance on the south of the New Entry Hall, and turning, one enters the Old Vestibule (= Entry Hall) from the east. The Main Temple at Tabo originally consisted of an Entry Hall (or Vestibule) (*sgo-khang*) leading to the Assembly Hall (*'du-khang*), at the western end of which is an Apse containing a Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*) with an Ambulatory (*skor-lam*) (plan Main Temple). Thus, the original entrance to the Main Temple was on the east-west axis opposite the main image which was originally the image in the Cella.

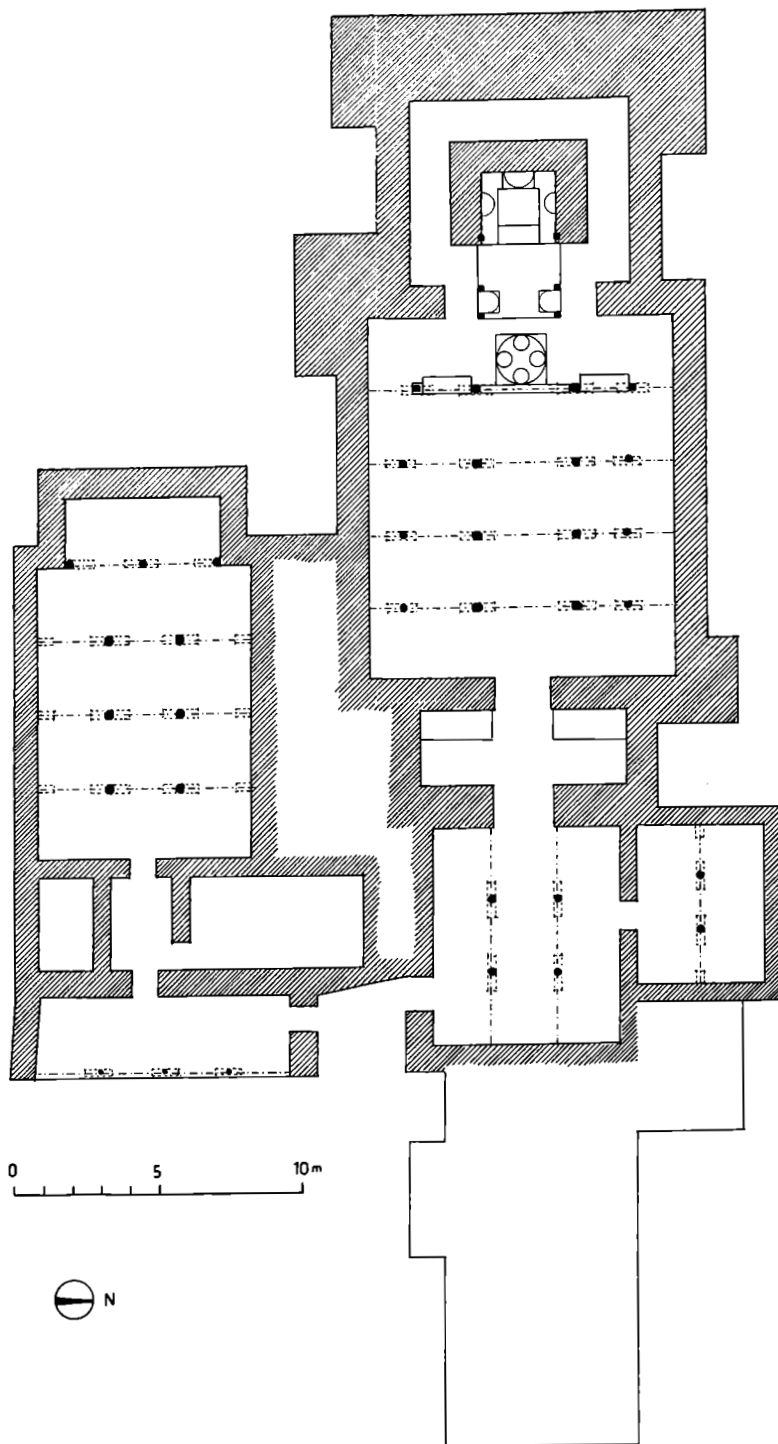
The small (7.20 × 2.65 m) originally dark Entry Hall (*sgo-khang*)¹ is the only part of the complex to retain the decorative program painted when the monastery was founded in 996. The Assembly Hall is dominated by the main iconographic theme of the temple, the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. The deities are represented by life-size clay sculptures. The painted decoration is meant to complement this main theme. At the western end of the Assembly Hall is a painted bookcase containing the so-called Kanjur (the Canon). At the centre of the bookcase is a throne reserved for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Behind the throne one of the four faces of the main image, Mahāvairocana, can be seen partially covered by silken robes and white offering scarves (*kha-btags*) (fig. 59).

The Tabo collection is kept in 60 bundles, containing manuscripts of various size, wrapped in orange cloth. The texts belong to several periods, some of them can be traced to the early centuries of the monastery's existence. They were found in an unbelievable disorder, probably kept in this state ever since the destruction of the Tabo monastery library, when presumably they were gathered together with other texts from nearby monasteries (Steinkellner 1994). The so-called Kanjur collection is revered because of its antiquity and special status. Indeed, beside being an extraordinary historical treasure, the Buddhist texts are considered as sacred relics. Recently reordered by Harrison and Scherrer-Schaub and the monks², the analysis of the "Kanjur" has already begun to illuminate the previously lost western Tibetan canonical

Fig. 35. The future Buddha Maitreya
(Byams-pa)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, west wall
(B8)

Plan 2. The Complex around the Main Temple (F. Noci)

Today the Main Temple is part of a larger complex including a New Entry Hall, the Protectors' Chapel and the Large 'Brom-ston Temple



tradition. The many pilgrims who have worshipped in the temple over the years have been completely unaware of the great literary legacy that lies here, obscured behind the offering lamps.

The pilgrim performs the circumambulation of the temple in a clockwise fashion, by turning left after entering the Assembly Hall. The thoughtful visitor would enter the Assembly Hall with a lamp to guide him while performing the ritual circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā*), which by custom would be performed at least three times while walking in a crouching position and passing underneath the images of the mandala. Thus one receives their blessing through the crown of one's head. In this position one would come, quite literally, face to face with the narrative imagery, on the south and adjacent walls the Pilgrimage of Sudhana, and on the north and adjacent walls the Life of the Buddha.

In order to stay within the sacred precinct of the mandala, protected by a pair of guardian figures at the east and west entrances, the pilgrim would need to remain within the Assembly Hall but passing behind the Mahāvairocana figure (see diagram 8. Assembly Hall Circumambulation). When this ritual is completed the worshipper would pass into the Ambulatory in order to circumambulate the images in the Cella. When the temple was first built there may have been only one main image in the Cella which was worshipped by performing the *pradakṣiṇā* through the Ambulatory. At that time the sacred hierarchy of the temple was even clearer – from the world of men in the Entry Hall to the “holiest of holies”, the world of gods, in the inner sanctum. The division between the profane world outside the temple and the sacred world inside was marked by the then entrance wall to the Entry Hall. On the wall were painted two large compositions – the Buddhist description of the samsaric world (the Wheel of Life) and the cosmos.

A remarkably large number of Tibetan inscriptions literally cover the walls in all three parts of the temple. The full text of the inscriptions is published by Luczanits (forthcoming [a]), all quotes are from this work. What is most remarkable is that they are written in Tibetan at all. The inscriptions in the Entry Hall, attributed to 996, are the oldest Tibetan inscriptions in India. The names of places, clans and the protectress are written in Tibetan script but they are not always Tibetan. All indications are that this is the first period of Tibetan cultural domination in the region. Apparently only the ruling élite were Tibetan³. How these foreign rulers and the local population adapted to each other is unknown. There are, however, indications of religious conflict, not only in Tabo but also elsewhere in the kingdom.

The inscriptions are of two types – religious and historical. Together they document the ideology of the patrons, who were obsessed with the themes of legitimation and authentication⁴. Not only are each of the many historical figures identified, but even the sacred iconography is in many cases identified, such as the Buddhas in the Ambulatory and the entire story of Sudhana's pilgrimage. In every case the planners have painstakingly recorded the authentic canonical source on the walls. The emphasis on the Mahāyāna Sutras is completely consistent with the ideology of the patrons, the royal lamas. The iconographic program of the Main Temple is the perfect expression of the Mahāyāna teachings. According to Tibetan tradition the Mahāyāna consists of the Pāramitāyāna and the Mantrayāna, the latter being the Tantric Path (Vajrayāna). This is clearly symbolised not only through the icons which are represented but also by the images of the three “Turnings of the Wheel”, the preaching of the Buddhadharma: the first Turning of the Wheel at Sārnāth is expressed in the Entry Hall – the *Prātimokṣasūtra* and also the *Ye dharma*-formula written repeatedly in the Assembly Hall and Ambulatory⁵; the second Turning of the Wheel at Rājagṛha (in the Life of the Buddha) – the Mahāyāna Sutras represented by the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, *Lalitavistara*, *Daśacakṛakṣitigarbhamahāyānasūtra*, *Bhadrakalpikasūtra*; the third Turning of the Wheel, the Tantric teachings (at Dhanyākara, at the beginning of the Pilgrimage of Sudhana) are represented by the Yoga Tantras and especially those related to the Vajradhātu- and Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍalas. In an area where orthodox Mahāyāna Buddhism was hardly understood, the sacred iconogra-

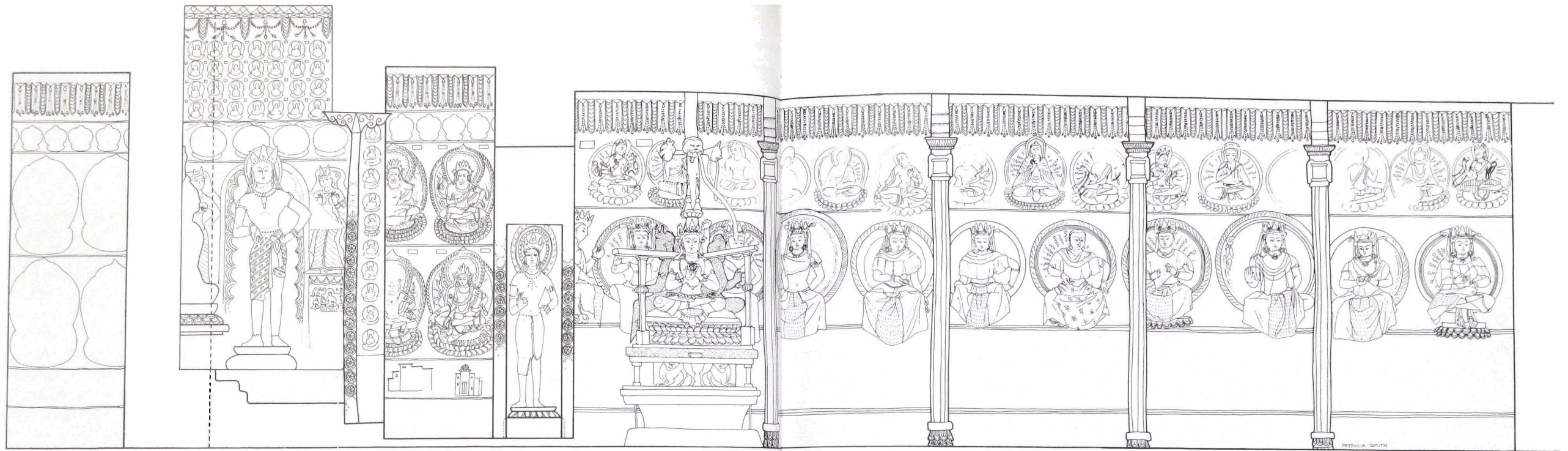


Diagram 1. Cross Section Main Temple (P. Smith)
The cross section does not include the Entry Hall

phy in the temple must be seen as a massive proclamation of the authentic word and deeds of the Buddha.

But more than that, the inscriptions as well as the images established the very presence of the Buddha in the temple. The verse rendition of the Chain of Causation (“*Ye dharma*”) was considered, and used in later Mahāyāna Buddhism as a relic of the Buddha. This verse was inscribed (stamped) on clay seals and buried in stupas (reliquary mounds) as relics of the Buddha (*dharmaśarīra*). In time the Buddha came to be seen as a living presence in his relics and thus in the place where his relics rested (see Schopen 1990: 215, n. 81). Likewise, the Buddha was present in the temple through his words – all the religious inscriptions are quotations from Sūtras, which are the Buddha’s word. As it was said of the Main/Great Temple (dBu-rtse) at bSam-yas, so also could one say of Tabo: “All the murals were [executed] in accordance with the manner of the Sūtra; all the figures (*lder tsho*) were [executed] in the manner of the Tantric Mantra” (GR1, 381).

We can only understand the function of the Assembly Hall by analogy to modern practice. According to present custom anyone may enter the Assembly Hall at any time, although pilgrims and lay people tend to visit on special occasions. The only ritual practice for lay people in the Assembly Hall is ritual circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā*). The disposition of the painting and sculpture allows us to propose the manner in which the *pradakṣiṇā* was performed. In addition, the monastic community would sit in the hall several times a day (how often depends on the calendar) for religious devotions. In the interims the hall may have been used for religious instruction. From sunrise to sunset the Assembly Hall would have been lit by a great mass of lamps (the number depending on the prosperity of the community). Daylight came into the temple only through a small hole at the centre of the ceiling in front of the main image and a small window in the Cella. For someone sitting in the middle of the hall, the dominant impression would be of the life-size images of the mandala hovering in a painted environment about 1.5 metres above the

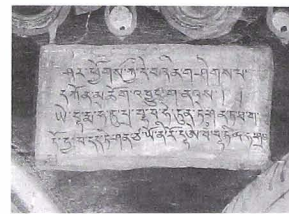


Fig. 36. Caption identifying the Buddha of the East, Ratnākara (dKon-mchog-’byung-gnas), followed by the *Ye dharma*-verse
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south wall, upper section, east side, to the proper left of the Buddha of the East

floor – above the Buddha realms, below the narratives. The paintings would have been visible but barely intelligible except if one were to examine them with the aid of a lamp.

We must assume that the “message” of the inscriptions and decorative program was intended primarily for the monastic community and the upper strata who supported the state religion. The general population was illiterate and “foreign” (with respect to Tibetan culture). Further, public ceremonies were probably, as today, held outside in front of the temple. So, although the ultimate goal of the massive missionary undertaking was the establishment of “correct” Mahāyāna Buddhism throughout the realm, it would seem most likely that in this initial phase the intended audience in the Great Temple were the lay and religious élite.

¹ The present skylight was added by the ASI.

² There is an international team of philologists co-ordinated by Ernst Steinkellner in co-operation with Geshe Sonam Wangdū (see Chapter 1, n. 13, for

a description of the team).

³ As these names have not been identified the language is also uncertain, but this area previously was part of the kingdom of Zhang-zhung.

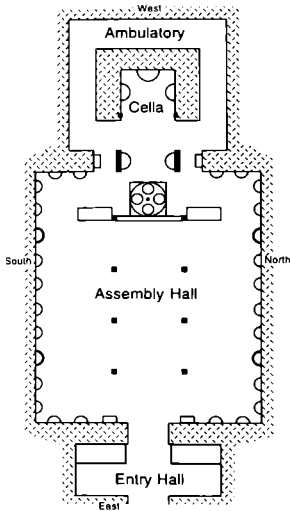
⁴ Steinkellner (forthcoming) discusses

the religious inscriptions. In Petech and Luczanits (forthcoming) all the inscriptions are given in full.

⁵ This verse condenses the essence of the Buddha’s teaching as it was first delivered in Sārnāth.



V.1. The Entry Hall (*sgo-khang*)



Plan 3. Entry Hall

The Entry Hall is one of the most precious surviving documents of the history of Indo-Tibetan culture, despite its bad state of preservation. An analysis of the style and iconography should eventually enable us to understand the nature of contemporary religious and political ideology. The Entry Hall paintings can be attributed to the foundation period of the temple on the basis of a comparison to the quite similar painting in the Ambulatory. Large areas of these early mural paintings have been revealed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under the present painting (fig. 190).

In the Entry Hall and the Ambulatory the figures are drawn in a rather sketchy and imprecise manner with a heavy black outlining, the colours are then applied in large strokes often rather messily overlapping the outline. In addition to the similarities in the quality of pigment and colour, the similarity between the style of the figures speaks for an attribution to the same date. For instance, Buddha figures on their lotus seats are represented in the Ambulatory and the Entry Hall paintings. If one compares the Buddha's lotus seat on the upper east wall in the Entry Hall (fig. 40) and the fragments in the Ambulatory (fig. 15), one sees that the Buddha figure sits on the inside of the lotus which is depicted as a wide flat cushion, thick black vertical lines represent the stamen and the upper row of petals are shown rather round and plump with pointed tops and the lower row of petals are depicted smaller and also with extremely well-defined points. The whole is outlined in a rather light cosmetic pink. The same manner of drawing the lotus is found on a number of paintings preserved at

Dunhuang (i.e. Nicolas-Vandier 1976: Pl. 30).

The iconographic program of the Entry Hall certainly has a complex and fascinating story which, due to the destruction of significant features as well as the lack of primary literary sources, is at present difficult to decipher. Almost all of the separate elements can be related to iconographic systems well known in the slightly later art of the Himalayas, but the conjunction of iconographic forms as presented here appears unique. What follows is just a brief summary¹.

The survival of this group of paintings is quite astonishing since the rest of the temple was totally repainted 46 years later in the much more sophisticated and brilliant Kashmiri-related style. At no point in the following millennium was the Entry Hall ever repainted, which is usually considered an act of devotion in Buddhist sanctuaries. It is not possible to definitively explain why these murals have been allowed to survive throughout the millennium. The Entry Hall may have been considered a particularly sacred monument because of the presence of portraits of the founder of the temple, Ye-shes-'od, and his two sons Nāgarāja and Devarāja on the south wall (figs. 2, 45) and the fact that it served not only as the vestibule to the temple but also as the chapel of the protective deity of the Main Temple, the goddess Wi-nyu-myin. Both the patron and the protectress were particularly revered, each in their own way. Ye-shes-'od is extolled in Tibetan history as a key figure in the resurgence of Buddhism in the 10th-11th century. He is called a Bodhisattva in the Renovation Inscription (Steinkellner and Luczanits, Appendix) and

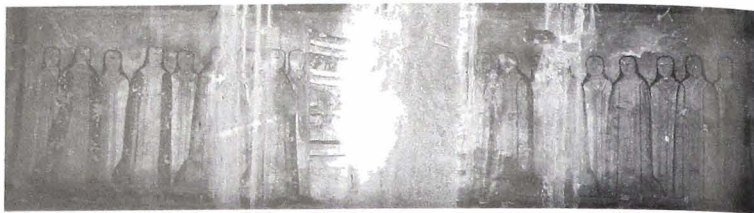
Fig. 37. The retinue of protectress Wi-nyu-myin
Main Temple. Entry Hall, west wall,
above the entrance to the Assembly
Hall

may even have been called a Bodhisattva in his lifetime (Scherrer-Schaub forthcoming). The protectress was probably the main deity in the village prior to the conquest of Buddhism. A thousand years later she is still a presence to be reckoned with (see below).

West Wall

As one enters the vestibule one is facing westward and the protective goddess and her retinue are located in front of the viewer directly above the entrance to the Assembly Hall (fig. 38) (diagram 3. Entry Hall West Wall). With the perverse fortune which often accompanies research on historical monuments, this composition is completely intact except for the main figure in the centre portion, which is washed away. All that remains is the head of a reindeer depicted against a curtain-like backdrop consisting of horizontal stripes in red, white and black (fig. 39). According to the inscription in a box at the bottom of the picture plane, just underneath the head of the reindeer (fig. 39), the missing image represented the protectress of the Tabo Main Temple and her retinue of 18 female figures. Judging from the amount of space, the protectress was depicted riding on the reindeer. According to the inscription, the protectress was called *Wi-nyu-myin*² (fig. 39). We have not yet been able to identify this clearly non-Tibetan name. There are nine female figures to the right and left of the central figure forming a symmetrical composition. The goddesses are dressed alike. They wear western Tibetan female dress, that is a long cape without fastening, edged in embroidery, an underrobe in white with long full sleeves, many necklaces and a blue stone on the forehead. The only two figures who are depicted differently are placed to the proper right and left of the central figure. Because of their raised arms their capes fall open revealing a red jacket. The figure to the proper right wears a red jacket with a flower pattern; she extends her left hand in offering or she is holding a stick which supports the curtain (fig. 39)³.

The long horizontal panel containing the protectress and her retinue is placed directly above the door to the Assembly Hall and is separated from the door jamb only by a decorative band which is now largely destroyed. As is typical of all the compositions in the Entry Hall, there are neither background elements nor framing devices so that the composition has no spatial dimension. The linear figure style reaffirms the stark simplicity of



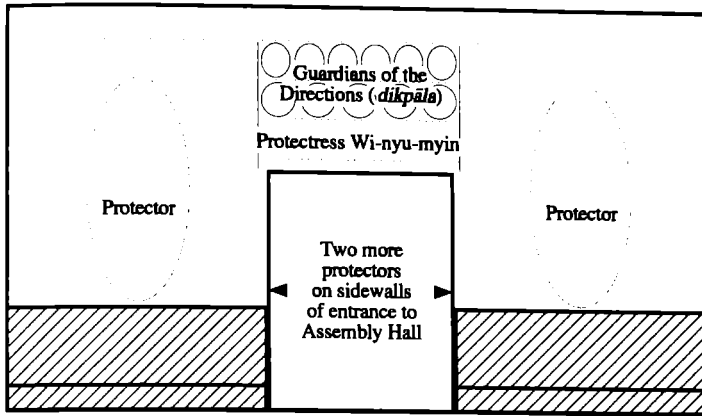
the visual presentation. The goddesses are depicted in the same western Tibetan dress as the female figures in the 11th-century painting at Tabo but the style and composition of the painting is unique. As is consistent with the style of the paintings in this artistic phase, the figures are all simply drawn in a heavy black outline, the facial features dominated by the large staring eyes. Flesh tones are pinkish red and the paint is applied unevenly, but not consistently enough that one could speak of shading. Indeed the coloration does not indicate volume; rather the figures appear quite flat. The long row of standing figures has a stately and solemn quality which is accentuated by the rhythmic alternation of the figures: every second figure stands behind. The symmetry of the columnar figures is broken only by the slightly raised outside foot as if the two lines of figures were moving towards the centre of the composition (fig. 38). Perhaps the frieze represents the slow, graceful local dance which even today is performed by women standing in a line. The women still wear capes (the present fashion is for short capes) and jewels adorn their long, straight hair. Today a large broach fastens the capes at the breast but at the end of the 10th century the ladies apparently, as here depicted, held the cape together with their hands. Every chapel in Tabo has a representation of the protectress and her retinue – the number of attendants decreases with time – over the entry door, but this is the only example where the figures are standing. Indeed the typology for the protectress in the Assembly Hall is the same as for all the assemblies depicted here, whether the main figure is a royal lama or a Buddha.

As the image of the goddess is missing we have no information about her other than her non-Tibetan name and the fact that her “vehicle” is a grey-blue reindeer. So it is not possible to identify her with any other goddess of which there are many in the Indian and Tibetan cultural zones. The idea of a vehicle (*vāhana*) is not unique to Indian culture: it is shared by the Shamanist cultures of the world. In Indian art the god is represented



Fig. 38. The protectress and her retinue
Main Temple, Entry Hall, west wall,
above the entrance to the Assembly
Hall

Fig. 39. Detail of the protectress panel,
the head of the deer who carries the
protectress and the inscription
containing the identification *Wi-nyu-
myin*
Main Temple, Entry Hall, west wall,
above the entrance to the Assembly
Hall



formed today in the Bon monastery in Solan, H.P., India. However, Bon was not the only pre-Buddhist religion in Tibet. Stein (1987) talks about the no-name religion with its host of spirits, and certainly there were everywhere local traditions and cults. Even today many of the village protectors in Spiti-Kinnaur are female, and many are extremely powerful, dominating even the Buddhist and Hindu cults in the respective villages.

It is fascinating to trace the transformation of Wi-nyu-myin into the Tibetan protectress rDo-rje-chen-mo (bKa'-srung lha-mo rDo-rje-chen-mo). Although her name has changed, she maintains her spiritual role in the community. We shall discuss this process further when considering the protectress in the Assembly Hall. The present tradition maintains that the *sādhana* (ritual text) to rDo-rje-chen-mo performed at Tabo, was composed by Rin-chen-bzang-po in Tholing. rDo-rje-chen-mo is said to have been the personal protectress of the Great Translator (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 36-7). This bond between the Great Translator and the Tabo protectress continues until today. During the celebrations of Tabo's 1,000-year anniversary, the present incarnation of Rin-chen-bzang-po was seated in the Assembly Hall on a throne prepared for this occasion directly in front of thrones for H.H. the Dalai Lama and the Governor of the state. rDo-rje-chen-mo spoke with Rin-chen-bzang-po through a medium⁴.

Above the protectress are two wide bands of six figures on top and five figures in the bottom row. Both of these rows are very much destroyed and difficult to identify. What can be noticed is that the deities in the row directly above the protectress each sit on a vehicle. They can be identified by their vehicle (*vāhana*) and colour as the *dikpāla* including the sun and the moon (diagram 2. The Guardians of the Directions). These pan-Indian deities occur frequently as protectors in Hindu temples. In esoteric Buddhist iconography, as here in the Entry Hall, they appear together with other pan-Indian deities, such as the planets, protecting the perimeter of the mandala. There are many different *sādhana* and sequences of mandala known from textual sources surviving in Sanskrit or Tibetan or both. But much was certainly lost. The tradition followed in Tabo can be related to early known *sādhana* but not directly identified with any of them. Also useful is the cycle of Sa-skya mandalas (published by bSod nams rgya mtsho [Ngor Thar rtse mKhan po 1983]) which, although later, is

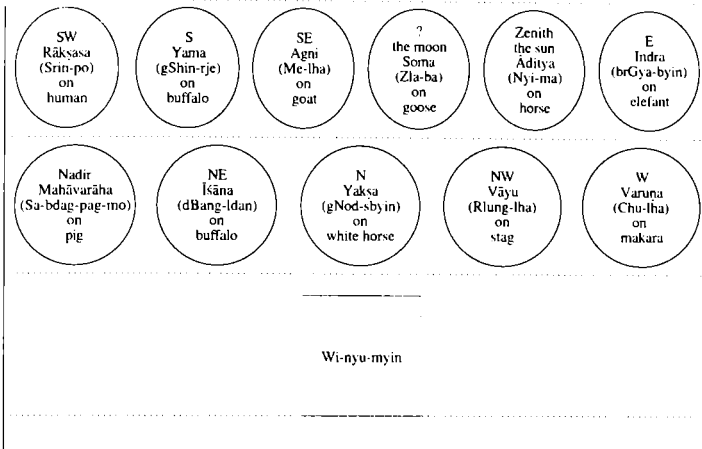


Diagram 2. The Guardians of the Directions. Detail of Entry Hall West Wall

Diagram 3. Entry Hall West Wall

seated on his vehicle which characterises some aspect of the god's essence. Thus the vehicle is an immutable part of the deity, however other aspects of the deity are expressed through other features, such as colour, hand-held attributes, etc. In short, we do not have enough elements here to identify Wi-nyu-myin with any protectress (*srungs-ma*) from any other known system.

Part of the methodological problem here is that we do not know what cults were prevalent in the Tabo area prior to the Buddhist missionary activity of the late 10th century. One of the indigenous non-Buddhist religions of Tibet, Bon, considered Zhang-zhung as its homeland. A major protectress of the Bon pantheon also has retinues in three groups of nine goddesses, and a masked dance (*'cham*) featuring these protectresses is still per-

based in part on the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tantra* of the Yoga Tantras. The latter text represents a parallel and contemporaneous tradition to that found in Tabo. There are several mandalas preserved in this Sa-skya cycle that have a group of 11 deities functioning as *dikpāla* (e.g. bSod nams rgya mtsho 1983: no. 27 and the Vajrapāṇi-maṇḍala, no. 34)⁵. These groups are also described in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tantra* (Skorupski 1983: 51–53, 313).

To either side of the entrance to the Assembly Hall are two shallow pedestals, largely reconstructed by the Archaeological Survey of India. Standing on these platforms are guardian figures very much repaired, which are more recent in date than the paintings (see Luczanits Chapter V.7). They are far smaller than the painted mandorla flames behind them. Comparing the style and pigments of these flames, it is clear that the flame mandorlas belong to the original composition. Thus, one can presume that originally to either side of the door there were two larger sculptures representing guardian figures. The only other sculpture in the Entry Hall is a seated clay figure of Gaṇeśa, which according to old photographs was originally placed near the Cella. The Gaṇeśa is much ruined but the modelling is extremely lively and the image would appear to be a rather early depiction. Francke photographed this figure placed near the Mahāvairocana sculpture (Francke 1914: Pl. XVIIa). Its present ruined condition probably occurred when the statue was moved.

East Wall

On the opposite wall, that is the entrance wall, to the proper right of the door (north side, east wall) the composition is also largely destroyed, but what remains is of great significance because this composition directly links Tabo to mainstream Indian Buddhist art (diagram 4. Entry Hall East Wall). In the right hand corner are the remains of an extremely large Wheel of Life (*bhavacakra*). This depiction is the earliest known Tibetan example of this important theme. The earliest example of the Wheel of Life which has survived, is found in the wall paintings in Ajaṅṭā, India (Schlingloff 1988: 167–174). Although in its essential features the Tabo Wheel of Life is similar to later Tibetan examples, there are a number of unique elements. The Wheel of Life appears to have had an elliptical rather than a round shape and projecting from either side at the top of the ellipsis

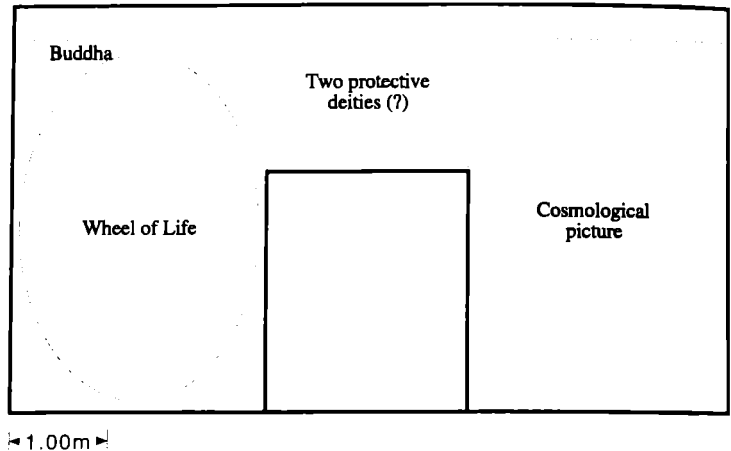


Diagram 4. Entry Hall East Wall

are human-like creatures with horseshoe-shaped halos who are holding the Wheel between their hands (fig. 41). There may originally have been four figures, but the bottom half of the Wheel is missing. In contrast, the usual Tibetan image has only one monster holding the Wheel in his four clawed limbs, his head is on the axis of the circle⁶. Very little of the composition remains but, moving from the top down in a clockwise direction there are fragments from the realm of man (here is also a fragment of an inscription) and probably the hell realm, judging from the frightful depictions. Another fragment may represent the realm of the gods because all of the figures there are peaceful looking and wear crowns. The figures wear Tibetan dress. The style of the figures is simplified and somewhat provincial but they are depicted with a strong vitality. At the edge of the Wheel is a stream with bodies tossed by the waves (fig. 42).

Above, beside the arm of the figure holding the Wheel of Life, is an inscription panel and next to this a representation of a Buddha seated in the Gesture of Boon Giving (*varadamudrā*) (fig. 40). The inscription is a quote from the Vinaya⁷. The Tibetan inscription is from the conclusion of the *Prātimokṣasūtra* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*. It is in a sense an admonition to the monks to practise Buddhism. Only if they observe the principles of Buddhism (the Eightfold Path) and the rules of the order, can they escape the cycle of rebirth and suffering depicted in the Wheel of Life. The metaphor for the samsaric world – human existence – is here depicted as a stream with people caught in the currents.

Fig. 40. Buddha above the Wheel of Life
Main Temple. Entry Hall, east wall,
north corner



Fig. 41. Humanoid monster holding
the Wheel of Life
Main Temple. Entry Hall, east wall,
north corner
Panel with two verses above, another
panel on wheel, stream of samsara



Fig. 42. The stream of samsara
Main Temple. Entry Hall, east wall,
Wheel of Life
Two figures swimming in the stream
of life: elephant, tree and pool from
the World of the Gods



Representations of the Wheel of Life were probably among the earliest pictorial images in Buddhist art, although the earliest to survive is from the 5th century. Instructions concerning the painting of the Wheel of Life are contained in the Monastic Regulations (Vinaya)⁸ together with the general instructions concerning the decoration of a monastery⁹. According to the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin¹⁰ a Wheel of Life should be represented in the vestibule of every Buddhist monastery. Our example is too fragmentary for a detailed comparison, although it is clear that what survives coincides with the canonical instructions. In short, the Wheel is held by the Monster of Impermanence, the twelve-part chain should be represented clockwise, progressive and counter-clockwise, regressive; the five realms of existence (hells, animals, ghosts, gods, men, or in the Tibetan tradition the six, including *asura*) are represented in compartments and in the middle should be represented a snake (symbolising hate), turtle-dove (passion), and a pig (delusion). Above the Wheel should be a representation of the Buddha, complemented by the canonical text in verse (*Divyāvadāna* [Cowell and Neil 1886: 300]; Schlingloff 1988: 168) as is the case at Tabo. This inscription is found in modern Tibetan monastic mural paintings of this theme (Bechert and Gombrich 1984, picture on p. 24). There is also a description of the Wheel in the *Divyāvadāna* (Cowell and Neil 1886: 300–302). According to tradition, the Wheel of Life was first described by the Buddha Śākyamuni and later discussed by Nagārjuna¹¹. This notion derives from the fact that the image is a pictorial synthesis of the core of the Bud-

dhist teachings, the relationship between cause and effect, the Chain of Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which results in the cycle of suffering and rebirth. The Chain is seen as having a tripartite structure composed of twelve links¹². The teaching on the Chain of Dependent Origination together with the Four Noble Truths¹³ constitute the traditional core of the Buddhist message¹⁴. Meditation on the Wheel of Life, the 12 Links of Dependent Origination, brings one to an understanding of the two aspects of samsara – the nature of suffering and the cause of suffering – which in turn develops renunciation which is the path to liberation.

It is particularly important to note the emphasis on this teaching in Tabo. The *pratītyasamutpāda* is written on the Wheel of Life only fragments remain (Luczanits forthcoming [a]). Not only is the Wheel of Life depicted, as prescribed in the Entry Hall, but the synthesis of the teaching of the Four Noble Truths (the verse rendition of the Chain of Causation, sometimes called in popular literature the “Buddhist Creed”, *Ye dharma ...*) is written repeatedly in Tibetan on the walls of the Assembly Hall (see below in the section on the Assembly Hall).

In the Tabo Entry Hall this pictorial description of the samsaric world is extended or complemented by a pictorial description of the cosmos – on the other side of the entry door. Elsewhere this pair of cosmic diagrams is painted in the porch of the Assembly Hall at Tholing¹⁵ and at bSam-yas. In the Entry Hall at Tabo very little survives. To the far proper left of the door one can see a series of horizontal parallel lines representing the heav-

ens, underneath which there is a large palace drawn in red and black with a Bodhisattva seated inside. There are various images including water motifs. But the area is simply too destroyed to be accurately interpreted. While the Wheel of Life describes the nature of *samsara*, the different cosmologies sought to define the dimensions of the cosmos. Together they graphically depict the microcosm and the macrocosm.

Not only the visual imagery but also the placement of the two diagrams is profoundly symbolic. The east wall was originally the outside, entrance wall of the Main Temple. Thus these images demarcated the boundary between the profane, outside world, and the sacred world – the world of the mandala. It will be remembered that according to the Mahāyāna teachings all Buddhists, monastic and lay, could achieve enlightenment in this lifetime. Thus the proclamation of the essence of the Buddha's teaching demonstrated also the path to salvation. As one entered the temple, this path lay before one. Upon leaving the temple, the visitor was confronted with the description of the phenomenal world, which lay beyond, and the suffering which attends the cycle of re-birth. I am reminded of Dante's warning placed above the gates of Hell, "Abandon Hope All Ye Who Enter Here".

Most of the composition above the entrance to the Entry Hall (east wall) is destroyed. However, in one half of the section above the door one can still see the remains of a large seated figure with a red scarf flying from the shoulders. Next to this is a figure wearing a tunic with a pattern like chain armour. A smaller personage painted in a greenish-brown colour may be seated on the knee of this larger figure. Underneath are also various figures in contorted postures who are partially hanging down, rope-suspended between wooden supports. They are half naked, some wrestling or embracing (figs. 43, 44). The two larger figures might have been protective deities as well but they are too ruined to be interpreted.

South and North Walls

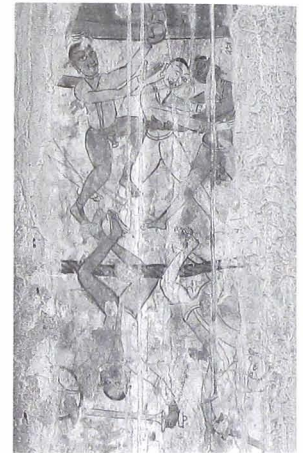
There is a roughly parallel organisation on both walls. The south wall is far better preserved (fig. 45). The north wall has such massive destruction that it is practically impossible to reconstruct the original iconography. Although some iconographic elements occur on the north wall that are also present on the south wall, there are

also significant unique elements on the north wall, so that one must presume that the images on each wall represent two distinct, although perhaps complementary iconographic units.

The south wall is divided horizontally in half (diagram 5, fig. 45). The very top of the wall underneath the ceiling consists of a band of very simply drawn lotus leaves alternately growing down and up. Underneath this are three rows which originally contained eight deities each, each figure subscribed in its own bicolour round mandorla. Under this were originally eight rows of historical personages of which only the first five from the west are to some degree extant. The floor of the Entry Hall has risen during the last millennium so that the bottom row appears now to be under the present floor level. Although the entrance side, east part of the south wall, is almost totally damaged, it would appear as if there were originally 13 figures in each of the rows of historical personages. The deities are larger than the historical figures (fig. 45).

The background of all three rows of divine figures is painted a dark blue-black. Each of the surviving deities has an almost round mandorla and an oval halo. When the left hand does not hold an attribute it is in the vajra-fist¹⁶. Reading from the east wall, top row the second figure is bluish-green with one head and four arms. The third figure is red with one head and two arms, the fourth a red Gaṇeśa with four arms. He is seated on a throne-like structure; underneath are two rats represented back to back. Following figures three, five and six and in the middle of the *nāga*-vehicle of figure seven are empty squares originally meant for captions but never used. The fifth figure, a red Bodhisattva, sits on a lotus with his right foot on a lion's shoulder, the left hand in vajra-fist; the right hand holds a bow (fig. 19). Sixth, a greenish-white Bodhisattva sits on a half vajra, left hand in vajra-fist, right hand holds a club (?) in front of the chest; underneath appears to be the top half of a vajra as his seat. Seventh, a greenish Bodhisattva seated on *anāga*, left hand in vajra-fist. Eighth, Śiva, white, sits on a white bull. Every second figure has a third eye. These may be a version of the eight Great Gods of the Indian pantheon.

In the second row, only six of eight figures – counting from the east wall, figures three to eight – survive (fig. 45). All the figures sit on curled up *nāga*, the head of the snake sticking off to the proper right side of the figure. All of the snakes, as also elsewhere in the Main



Figs. 43, 44. Half-naked figures fighting and loving Main Temple, Entry Hall, east wall, above the entrance

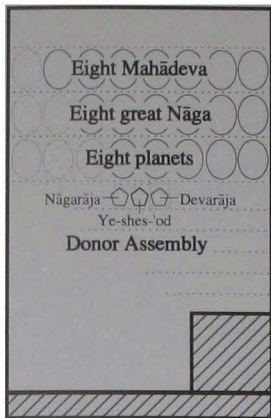


Diagram 5. Entry Hall South Wall

Fig. 45. The south wall of the Entry Hall





Fig. 46. Śiva sitting on Nandi
Main Temple, Entry Hall, south wall,
first row, west corner



Fig. 47. A nāga with blue lotus
(utpala)
Main Temple, Entry Hall, south wall,
second row, west corner
This nāga erroneously has eight
instead of the usual seven snake heads
behind the crown

Temple. have a red (ball-like) crown slightly behind the head (fig. 47). All the left hands of these figures are in vajra-fist mudra, the right hand in front of the chest. Figures five and seven are grey-green and hold a stalk with three stems and a blue lotus (*utpala*) in their right hand (fig. 47). The eight *nāga* here, also described in the mandala of Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara (de Mallmann 1986: 269), each have seven serpent heads. This is a theme which may also have been represented at Dunhuang, as seen from some fragments which have survived in the National Museum in New Delhi.

In the third row, only the last five figures have survived. Figure four is pinkish-red and seated on a lotus. The fifth figure is seated on a throne with a lotus in the left hand, also flesh-coloured. The sixth figure holds a flower stalk in the right hand and sits above geese placed back to back. Figure seven is also flesh-coloured, seated on a sickle-shaped moon, in the left hand is held a book, the right hand is in *varadamudrā* (fig. 16). Figure six is pink outlined with a thick red line, left hand in vajra-fist, right hand holds a red lotus. Figure seven, which is relatively well preserved, gives a good idea of the style of the deities in these three rows. The figure is deline-

ated with a black line, emphasised with another colour such, as red in this case. The eyes are wide and staring, the eyebrows a single line, and the nose and mouth are round and summarily drawn. The jewellery and crown are simple and often awkwardly drawn. The limbs often seem flaccid and the hands and feet are similar in appearance. Crossing over the chest and tied at the left shoulder is a shawl. The dhoti (skirt-like covering of the lower body) has a pattern of horizontal lines. Another variant of the dhoti-pattern is seen on figure eight. Here is an overall flower pattern consisting of white dots with a red centre – the pattern is common today in India and is often made by tie-dyeing. This pattern, which is found on several of these figures as well as the royal figures on the north wall, is never found in the rest of the Assembly Hall. Elsewhere the patterns are far more complex.

The lower half of the wall represents one of the most fascinating historical documents surviving from the period of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism. The first five rows appear to be divided more or less by an imaginary line running vertically along the centre axis of the wall (fig. 45). The figures to each side face towards the cen-

tre. In the top two rows the first seven figures in both rows on the proper left side of the wall face to their right hand. In the next row of figures the seven on the proper left are facing to their right and the six on the other half of the wall are facing to their left. These two rows of figures are represented somewhat larger than the rows beneath so that the rows beneath have one more figure each.

Each of the historical figures is accompanied by an inscription placed above him, many of which are still legible. The man represented in the centre of the first row is no less than the patron and founder of Tabo monastery and one of the key figures of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism, the royal lama Ye-shes-'od (fig. 2); to either side are his two sons. The figure to his proper right is identified as *lha-sras* (prince) Nāgarāja. The figure to his left is identified as *lha btsun-pa* (royal priest) Devarāja (diagram 5. Entry Hall South Wall). Each figure sits on a carved wooden throne. Ye-shes-'od is only slightly larger than the other two. All three figures sit underneath a fringed canopy and they hold in their right hand a *mālā* in front of their chest. Nāgarāja wears secular dress and is the first of a row of secular figures. Next to Nāgarāja is a very much defaced pyramidal form with some sort of ball on top, perhaps a closed umbrella. This appears to be very similar to the form that is also placed next to the royal monk (*lha bla-ma*) Byang-chub-'od depicted above the Renovation Inscription (figs. 5, 14).

Ye-shes-'od is seated with his head slightly turned towards Devarāja (fig. 2). Ye-shes-'od does not wear monastic dress, although he was certainly ordained at that time, as Ye-shes-'od is his ordination name. Devarāja to his proper left, however, wears monastic dress. He sits at the head of the row of monks and therefore may have been the abbot of Tabo at the time. Unfortunately, his name does not occur in the much later 17th-century text *Vaidūrya ser-po*, which gives a list of some of the abbots.

Behind Devarāja are seven monastic figures seated on cushions on low stools, each of whose name has survived (fig. 3). The fourth in the row of monks is particularly important because he occurs twice again 46 years later in paintings in the Assembly Hall. His name is sNyel-'or *dge-slong* 'Dul-ba-byang-chub, indicating that he ('Dul-ba-byang-chub) is a monk (*dge-slong*) from sNyel-'or. Each monk holds a *mālā* in front of his chest. They wear the typical monastic dress of the western Himalayas, a monastic robe over a long-sleeved blouse.

The patchwork pattern on the monastic robe in some places is still visible. Among the other figures in the row, each is identified as a fully ordained monk (*dge-slong*), and the clan/place sNyel-'or occurs again, as well as the frequently found Mag-pi-tsa. These clan/place names occur frequently among the rest of the clan/place names given on the north and south walls. In the 17th-century list of abbots in the *Vaidūrya ser-po* (Tucci 1971b: 482) many come from Tabo village or the neighbouring Lari. Therefore, sNyel-'or and Mag-pi-tsa may have been the pre-Tibetan (Zhang-zhung?) names for local villages. In the second row are six figures wearing flat hats, kneeling on one leg and turned to the centre. The line continues with six monks with inscriptions, some legible; they all follow the same pattern. In the third row secular figures and monks are also depicted. In the fourth row are represented nuns, of which six survive (fig. 48). They are kneeling, their hands covered by long sleeves. In the fifth row are males wearing red flat hats with red ribbons flying from the shoulders of their white robes; they are in the mudra of devotion. The last figure is depicted frontally (fig. 49). (See Luczanits forthcoming [a] for the inscriptions.)

The north wall is very much destroyed. On the upper half of the north wall are painted six rows of deities, with one head and two arms, as on the south wall. There is also a six-headed figure in the top row. Beneath this are five surviving rows of historical figures with originally three more rows at the bottom that are now completely destroyed (diagram 6. Entry Hall North Wall). These figures have a certain graphic parallelism with the historical figures on the other side except that in the first two rows on the north wall only secular figures are represented such as the first and slightly largest figure, in the "Do not fear"-gesture. He wears a yellow coat with flowers and contrasting red collar and lined sleeves (fig. 50). Each of the figures sits on a throne underneath an umbrella. Each has an inscription panel, some of which are inscribed, but some, curiously, appear never to have been written in. The implication of this is difficult to imagine. Those panels which have survived identify the figure as a prince (*lha-sras*) – except for the third figure who is female (*lha-lcam*). Their noble status is indicated by the rich embroidered cloth of the overcoats. The latter are quite unlike the undecorated *phyu-pa* worn by the men in western Tibetan dress in the Assembly Hall. Thus, these images probably represent the local aristocracy.

It is difficult to interpret the paintings on the two walls and we will return to the question of historical figures and their representation at Tabo in the chapter dealing with iconographic themes (Chapter VI). Here, however, we may advance an hypothesis regarding the iconography of the heavenly figures: the 8 Great Gods (Mahādeva, of the Hindu pantheon), the 8 Great Nāga, the 8 Planets and the 28 Mansions are the first in the list of the 75 Faultless Protectors as found in the Sa-skya mandala dedicated to Sarvavid Vairocana (bSod nams rgya mtsho [Ngor Thar rtse mKhan po] 1983: no. 27). These groups are also found protecting the outer precincts of mandalas listed also in earlier sources, that is, in traditions which were certainly contemporaneous with Tabo, such as the *Durgatipariśodhana-tantra* (Skorupski 1983). The same pan-Indian deities appear in the outer circles of the Dharmadhātu-vāgiśvara-maṅjuśrī-maṅḍala (NSP 21) (see below) (de Mallmann 1986: 2, 268–269, the NSP 21). Until recently the style and the iconography of the pan-Indian deities in the Entry Hall appeared unique. However, a recently published article on two 11th-century Protectors' Chapels (*mgon-khang*) from Zha-lu in south central Tibet (gTsang) notes the presence of the same groups of deities, also represented in an extremely simple, provincial style (Ricca and Fournier in press)¹⁷. Thus, this iconography was evidently widespread in Tibet at that time.

There are also stylistic similarities between the Tabo and Zha-lu figures. However, a closer examination reveals too many divergent elements (such as the crown types and their ties) to speak of direct influence. Rather the authors' prudent conclusion must certainly be correct, that in both monasteries we have a provincial regional style which results from the introduction of both Tibetan and Central Asian elements into an Indian conception (Ricca and Fournier in press).

As we will see also in the discussion of the Vajradhātu-maṅḍala and the Dharmadhātu-vāgiśvara-maṅjuśrī-maṅḍala in the Assembly Hall, each of these mandalas has several variants. It is possible that we have here represented a system of protector deities which has not otherwise survived, either in textual or visual form.

It does seem possible to conclude however that the Entry Hall served several functions, one of which was as a Protectors' Chapel. In this function it included not only the main protectress of Tabo but also the principal groups of guardian deities, often found guarding the pe-



Fig. 48. Nuns
Main Temple, Entry Hall, south wall
The captions of these nuns have not been filled in



Fig. 49. Lay personages
Main Temple, Entry Hall, south wall

riphery of the mandala. One must remember that, in its present form, the Entry Hall is 46 years older than the Assembly Hall. Thus if one chooses to see these guardian figures as protecting a mandala, then one must propose that in its original form (i.e. dating from 996) the main theme of the temple was (as in the program of 1042) a mandala, probably also dedicated to Vairocana. This may also be indicated by the painted guardian figures at the two entrances to the Assembly Hall.

Going from the Entry Hall into the Assembly Hall we see on the inside of the doorway, which is rather wide due to the extreme thickness of the mud walls, further remains of the original murals of the temple. On the north side is a red figure of Hayagrīva (fig. 51). The figure has a third eye and fangs, a terrifying aspect, and around his neck and waist are wrapped three snakes.

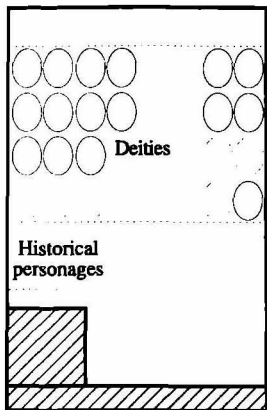
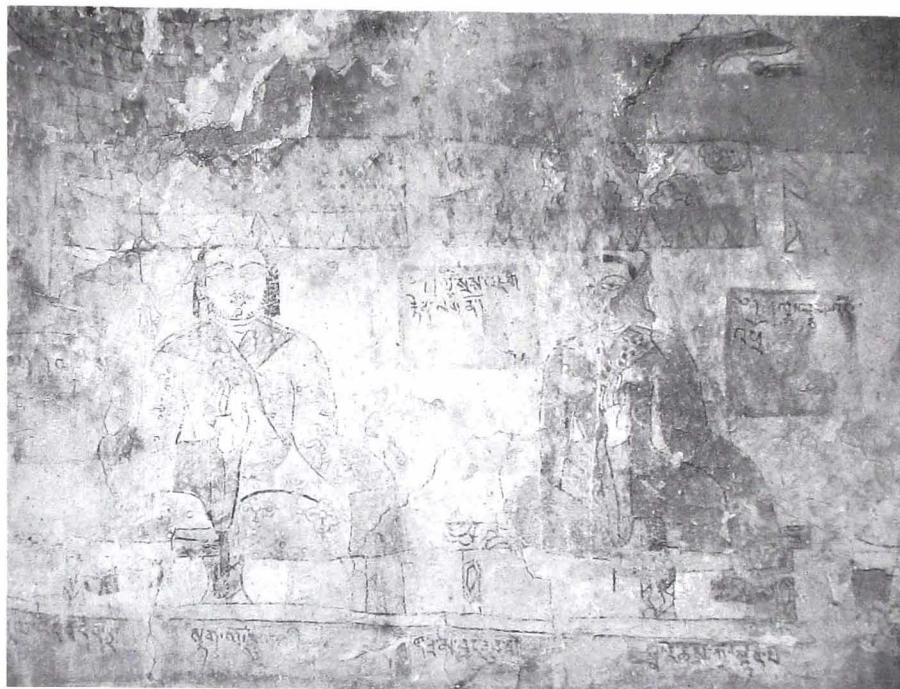


Diagram 6. Entry Hall North Wall

Fig. 50. Noblemen
Main Temple. Entry Hall, north wall
While the name in the first caption is
not preserved, the second caption
mentions a lha-sras 'Jig-rten-mgon



The style and colouring of these snakes coincide quite closely with the snakes painted in the Entry Hall and therefore allow us to date these paintings to the same time as the Entry Hall paintings (A.D. 996). On the opposite side of the entry way, that is on the south side, the figure is much more destroyed but enough remains to allow us to identify this figure tentatively as Mahākāla or Mahābala (?). Hayagrīva holds a vajra in the raised right hand which is in the menacing hand gesture (*tarjanimudrā*); the left arm is lost. He wears a crown and necklace of skullbones and also has a third eye. He is surrounded by flames in the same style as those that have been noted in the Entry Hall. It is interesting to note here that all of the surviving earliest chapels of Spiti-Kinnaur have precisely these two *dharmapāla* represented¹⁸. (See Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 67–74 for photo of Ropa in Kinnaur.)

The pair of painted guardian figures within the east wall entrance to the Assembly Hall must be seen together with the figures originally painted within the west wall entry (so conceived if we consider the Assembly Hall to have been a mandala with two “gates”). Only the green, seated nine-headed figure on the north face

of the western wall at the entry to the Ambulatory remains (fig. 20). On the southern face of the western half-wall only the top of the mandorla and a point of the crown remains under the inscriptions. The position of the southern figure under an inscription attributable to c. 1042 and certain details of the nine-headed figure allow us to date these two guardian figures to the original 996 phase of the temple. Thus we have in the original phase of the temple four painted guardian figures protecting the sacred space contained in the Assembly Hall, plus in the Entry Hall two large-size clay guardian figures, plus all of the groups of pan-Indian protectors associated with the outer ring of the mandala, plus the main protectress of Tabo, *Wi-nyu-myin*. As if this veritable frenzy of paranoia were not enough, in the renovation phase the four clay guardian figures of the *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala* were added, two each by the east and west “gateways” to the Assembly Hall. This plethora of protectors would only make sense if one sees them as having different functions.

Wi-nyu-myin and her retinue had the primary function of pacifying and protecting the entire sacred space. The clay sculptures in the Entry hall would have been

the usual protector figures always placed at the doorway to the temple in the Indian cultural sphere (one must remember that this was the original door to the temple). The painted guardians at the east and west “gateways” probably belonged to, and guarded, the sacred sphere of the mandala which even in the original scheme was the main theme of the Assembly Hall, with the “Faultless Protectors” of the pan-Indian pantheon constituting the outer ring of this mandala.

Another important function of the iconographic program of the Entry Hall was to present the worldly protectors of the realm, not only the royal patron and his sons but the entire fourfold Saṅgha consisting of the lay and monastic communities, male and female. This visual propaganda must have been quite important as Tabo was founded during a critical moment in the history of the kingdom of Purang-Guge (see Chapter II). That Ye-shes-'od is shown in secular dress, but identified with his ordination name and placed at the centre of the row of secular and monastic figures, seems to be the visual equivalent of the titles he used in his famous edict, “the King of Purang, the royal lama” (*Pu hrangs kyi rgyal po lha blama*; Karmay 1980a: 157). The symbolism of this representation also seems consistent with a passage quoted by Petech (Chapter VII)¹⁹ where *lha bla-ma* Ye-shes-'od is said to have met with his two sons in order to set up the administration of the kingdom as a sort of theocratical estate. According to the text the administration would have been set up by the elder son Lha 'Khor whom Petech associates with Nāgarāja. Thus the Tabo painting could have documented a similar assembly where Ye-shes-'od, although ordained, continued to fulfil the function of ruler, but together with his two sons, the elder of whom, Nāgarāja, like his father, had both secular and sacred functions. This painting may also depict the assembly which may have coincided with the founding of the Tabo Main Temple (hence the presence of the monastic community). The merging of sacred and secular institutions is also suggested by the title of the younger brother Nāgarāja, here simply “prince” (*lha-sras*) but in other sources he *lha btsun-pa*, a religious title which in the later periods is used by the younger brother of the king. The prominent position of the nobility, male and female, depicted directly opposite the royal personages, would also suggest an administrative assembly. It is also interesting that the nobles wear costumes that are different from

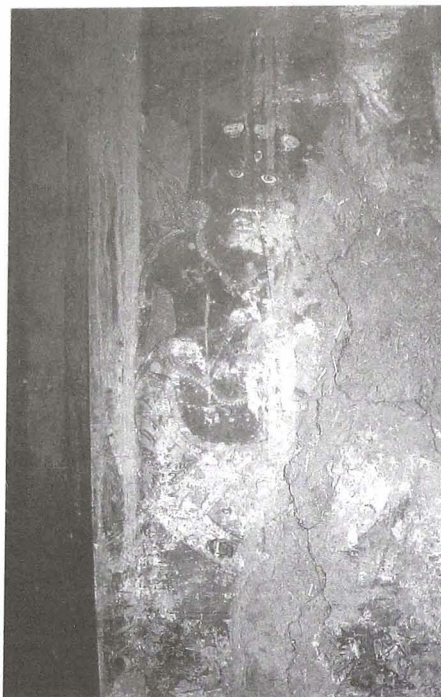


Fig. 51. The guardian Hayagriva Main Temple, doorway between Entry Hall and Assembly Hall, north wall

those worn by the western Tibetan nobles in the paintings of the 11th century. This suggests that they belong to a different, probably local, ethnic group. There is undoubtedly much more that these paintings have to tell us about life in Tabo at the end of the 10th century.

¹ The inscriptions are given in full in Luczanits (forthcoming [a]).

² *∴ gtsug lag khang gi srungs ma // sman che[n m]o // wi nyu myin 'khor ba dang bcas pa //*.

³ Protectresses are important in the Bon pantheon. The group of 27 “Powerful Ladies” (*dbang-mo*) consists of three groups of nine goddesses each, who are the retinue of Srid-pu'i rgyal-mo (“Queen of the Created World”). This figure, however, does not seem related to Wi-nyu-myin, as the former rides a red or black mule (see Kvaerne 1995; e.g. p. 105, n. 54 and pp. 107ff.). These groups of nine female deities are also briefly noted by Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 312–315.

⁴ Observed by Luczanits in June 1996.

⁵ The variable elements here are the sun and the moon, the Zenith and the Nadir, and Sa-bdag phag-mo.

⁶ In Ajaṅṅā only two human-like hands

remain at the top; see Schlingloff 1988: fig. p. 383. The elliptical shape may be the result of trying to adapt the form to the space available. Schlingloff proposes the spatial restrictions at Ajaṅṅā as the reason for anomalies in the Wheel of Life painted there.

⁷ First identified by Panglung Rinpoche in 1991 and subsequently by Luczanits. The verse is edited in Tibetan in Luczanits forthcoming [a].

⁸ Q Vol. 43,73,1-2 (f. 107ab), Q Vol. 44, 85,4,7–87,3,8. See Schlingloff 1988: 155, n. 5, who cites the relevant primary and secondary literature.

⁹ Note that a quote from this Vinaya is located above the Wheel of Life.

¹⁰ The texts have been quoted by Schlingloff 1988: 173, n. 16–28.

¹¹ Tenjur mDo XVII.

¹² See Steinkellner 1988: 39–41 and 46, n. 47.

¹³ Suffering, the origin of suffering, the

cessation of suffering, the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

¹⁴ For the most up-to-date bibliography see Steinkellner 1988: 46–47, fn. 48, note particularly the extensive bibliography on the *pratītyasamutpāda* in Cooper 1984 and Schoening 1995.

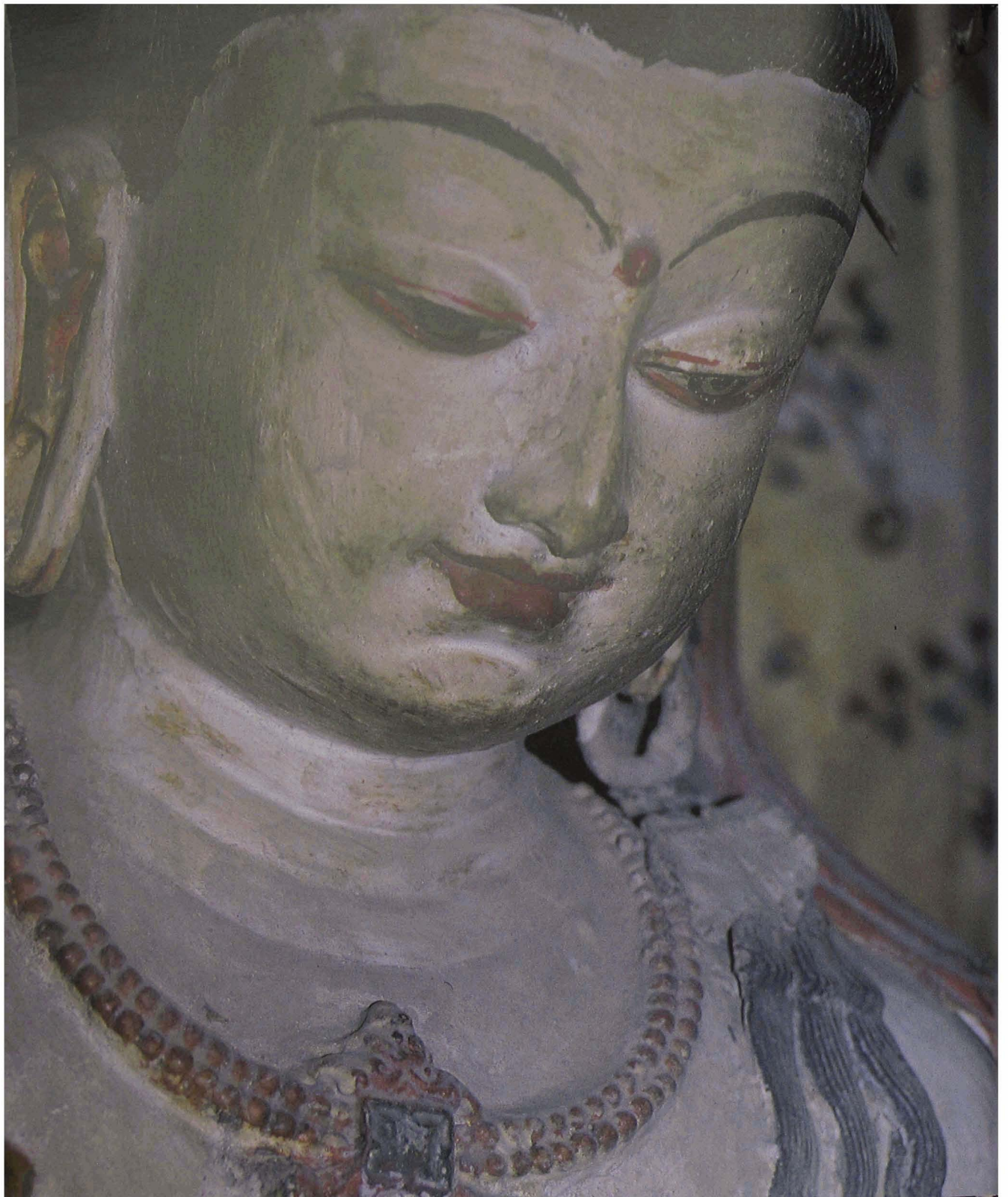
¹⁵ I thank Kathrin Kronsteiner for her photographs of these paintings.

¹⁶ This is not a standard terminus but it well describes what we have abundantly in Tabo. This term is adapted from Saunders (1985).

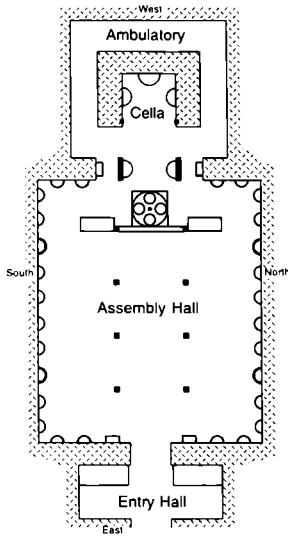
¹⁷ The author would like to thank Prof. Ricca and Mr. Fournier for having sent her slides and the proofs of the article.

¹⁸ In Ropa, Ribba and a pair of *dharmapāla* taken from the original chapel in Tangi in Kinnaur.

¹⁹ Transmitted by Sa-skya Paṅḍita but originating with bSod-nams-rse-mo.



V.2. The Assembly Hall ('du-khang)



Plan 4. Assembly Hall

Unlike the Entry Hall, which is dated to the first artistic phase at Tabo, the total iconographic program of the Assembly Hall and also the Apse can be dated to the second artistic phase, that is the 11th century (Chapter III). The iconographic program of the Entry Hall must have been retained in its original form not only because of its relationship to the founder of the temple, but also because it was iconographically consistent with the newly planned program of the Assembly Hall. Thus, seen from the perspective of the present iconographic program of the Assembly Hall, the Entry Hall can be considered the Protectors' Chapel (*mgon-khang*) containing the deities of the outer ring of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. The present program of the Main Temple combines both the original program and the new program of the 11th-century renovation. This is the reason for the two main images, the original main image, Vairocana, in the Cella, and the four-bodied representation of Mahāvairocana (Vajradhātu-Vairocana) added in the 11th century in front of the Cella.

The Assembly Hall is a completely decorated cube, except for the floor. It is in fact a total environment which was planned and decorated in the 11th century as a unified composition. The hall is conceived of as a Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. The Lord of the Mandala, Vairocana is located at the back of the hall before the transition to the Apse (plan 2. Main Temple). The 32 life-size clay sculptures are bonded to the wall and seem to float in space surrounded by a painted environment. There is a graphic symmetry to the program, each wall appearing to mirror the other. Each wall is divided in three hori-

zontal sections, the middle section contains deities of the mandala (fig. 54).

Painted below the sculptures of the mandala is an extensive narrative cycle. Beginning on the east wall to the proper left of the entrance and ending on the west wall at the entrance to the Ambulatory is the story of the Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Tib. Nor-bzang) interspersed with panels containing the Tibetan text of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* of the *Avataṃsaka* literary corpus (Steinkellner 1995 and 1996). Beginning on the other side of the entrance to the Ambulatory, on the west wall, and ending on the east wall is painted the Life of the Buddha based largely on the *Lalitavistara*.

In the upper zone are depicted different Buddha realms. The upper section of the north and south wall is occupied by the Buddhas of the Ten Directions each with two Bodhisattvas in attendance. On the east wall above the doorway is a large panel in which the central figure is a protectress of Tabo together with her retinue, parallel to the depiction of Wi-nyu-myin/rDo-rje-chen-mo on the other side of the wall in the Entry Hall. Thus, the protectress is represented twice, over the doorway leading into the Assembly Hall painted at the time of the foundation and over the doorway in the Assembly Hall painted at the time of renovation. Above this is seated a Buddha with two Bodhisattvas – Avalokiteśvara and Samantabhadra in attendance. Next are the three Protector Bodhisattvas (*rigs-gsum mgon-po*), Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi. In the upper zone on the north side of the west wall and on the east wall are represented Tantric configurations, perhaps originally mandalas but

Fig. 52. Detail Bodhisattva Vajrahāsa (rDo-rje-bzhad-pa) Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (no. 13): clay



Fig. 53. Rab-gnas pūja performed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1996 Tabo, Main Temple. Assembly Hall

depicted in a horizontal format. On the west wall, north side, is depicted the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala; on the south side of the west wall and the north side of the east wall there are much ruined compositions which may originally have contained the main deities of mandalas. In each instance there are goddesses and guardian figures. On the west wall the main figure is a Buddha image (diagram 10. Assembly Hall West Wall) and on the east wall it was a standing protector of the mandala (diagram 7. Assembly Hall East Wall)¹.

As I noted in Chapter I, in order to understand “how the monument came to look as it did in the 11th century”, I have tried to understand the contributions of the patron, designer, and the artists on the one hand, and the expectations and perceptions of the visitors on the other.

We cannot yet explain the process by which the decorative program of the Main Temple was conceived and executed. From biographies of religious men (*rnam-thar*) we learn of temples whose iconographic programs were designed by famous lamas, such as is the case of Bu-ston at Zha-lu. From these examples it would seem that the lama, sometimes together with the patron, would conceive of a complete iconographic program, sometimes through

a dream. A program as complex as that in the Main Temple at Tabo must have been planned together with a master craftsman/artist in order to achieve the balance and harmony which is such a satisfying element of the decoration. Due to time restrictions imposed by the long and severe winters, it would have been impossible to finish the work in one season. It must have been necessary to draw up the basic divisions of the program at the outset. This scheme was then filled in by different groups of artists probably from the same workshop. A comparison of the style of the different parts of the program indicates that groups of artists worked on the individual sections of the temple, i.e. east wall of the Ambulatory and/or the Cella. However, that the framing elements and the lines dividing the horizontal zones were painted first throughout the temple can be seen by the fact that the figurative elements in each of the zones in the Main Temple are occasionally painted over the lines dividing the zones. Note how the mandorlas of the goddesses are painted over the dividing line, the haloes of the Bodhisattvas are painted over the line and at the upper level where the valance demarcates the pictorial plane, note how the heads of the guardian figures come over the valance.



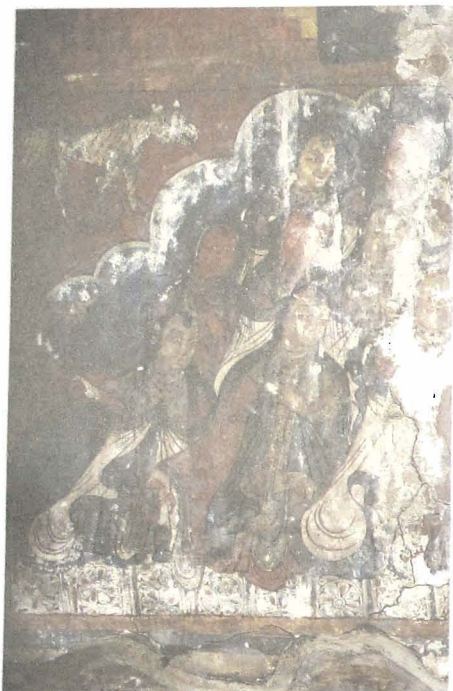
Fig. 54. The sculptures of the Vajradhātu-maṅḍala Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east and south walls

We have no information concerning the organisation of artists and their workshops. We can extrapolate the division of labour to some small degree from written accounts in the biographies, but they are always exceedingly vague. From the close coincidence of some of the more complex textile patterns it would appear that certain artists specialised in filling in textile motifs and that different artists worked on the north and south walls. There may have been other specialisations as well. It also appears that the artists who painted the ceiling textiles in the Apse did not work elsewhere in the temple. Also it seems that the master artists began the work on a particular sequence but did not work consistently to the end. For example, the first scenes of the Sudhana cycle (fig. 23) are far superior to the final section. Naturally, particularly important scenes may have been assigned to the master. The panel containing the protectress and her entourage was painted by the same artist that painted the beginning of the Sudhana story (fig. 56). On the other hand, these two paintings are adjacent to each other on the west wall so this may have resulted from the master painter having simply begun by the entry way.

The patron was certainly also an important factor. The paintings which can be attributed to the patronage of Byang-chub-'od are superior in quality to those in the Cella which were donated by the royal lama (perhaps Zhi-ba-'od, fig. 151) whose picture is represented in the Cella adjacent to the paintings he commissioned. Continued detailed study of this very large amount of painting may allow us further insights into the division of labour and the production of the iconographic program of the Main Temple.

The Protectress

Over the main entrance, on the east wall, is located a large panel containing the protectress of the temple and her retinue. The composition is very much destroyed by water damage coming from the roof. Nonetheless, enough remains to see that the original quality was marvellous, obviously a product of a master painter (figs. 55, 56). It is also of great significance for the history of Tabo. The explanation of the iconography is certainly of primary importance. The protectress sits in the centre of the composition (fig. 56). Larger than the other figures, her hands clasping her cape in front of her, she is



frontally represented and motionless. She has a halo, a red face, her long black hair crowned with blue stones, many necklaces cover her throat. Her cape falls in voluminous folds around her, exposing the lining which is decorated with a floral pattern. She grasps a staff in her hands (or it may be an arrow). She sits on a patterned cushion in front of a curtain. The curtain is draped and held up by a series of knob-like projections. The construction is similar to the curtain behind Byang-chub-'od above the Renovation Inscription (cf. fig. 139). This curtain is lined with a fabric with rows of repeated rosettes. This same striped motif is used in several other instances in the Assembly Hall, for example, in the carpet upon which the entire retinue sits (fig. 55) and on the ceiling (fig. 18). As is typical of this type of enthronement scene, there are ladies looking over the curtain at the protectress.

To either side of the throne are seated a retinue of goddesses adorned in similar dress and jewels. There are nine goddesses to the right and there were perhaps also nine to her proper left. The goddess seated to the far right has her right arm raised holding aloft a griffin-headed staff. There does not appear to be a comparable



Fig. 55. The retinue of rDo-rje-chen-mo/Wi-nyu-myin
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, above the entrance

Fig. 56. Protectress rDo-rje-chen-mo/Wi-nyu-myin
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, above entrance

figure on the other side. Behind the goddesses the area is painted black and framed in a scallop design edged in white. Behind this the wall is painted red. To the far right, against the red background 6 horses or mules are represented, they are saddled and thus meant for the retinue to ride. Above – smaller and without saddles – is a lion and a leopard. To the far left mules are also represented but I am not sure how many. In front of them stands a large and noble white stag, before him stands a female figure with a ferocious aspect and a yak hair cape.

Today the protectress is called rDo-rje-chen-mo and the daily protectors' chant which is addressed to her was (according to the colophon) written by Rin-chen-bzang-po in Tholing. According to this *sādhana* bKa'-srung lhamo rDo-rje-chen-mo rides a lion and carries a thunderbolt and a vessel with *amṛta*. To her right is Remati holding a magic stick and a sack with diseases; to her left is Gar-mdzad-ma who rides on a stag (see Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1956: 36). None of the figures in this configuration coincide precisely with this description, but all the elements, except the attributes, are present. The earliest representation of this triad is in the Protectors' Chapel (*mgon-khang*) (15th–16th century) (fig. 57) and it

Fig. 57. Tabo Protectors' Chapel: protectress rDo-rje-chen-mo attended by Gar-mdzad-ma to her left holding an arrow and to her right is Remati South wall, west side



Fig. 58. Tabo, Mandala Temple: protectress rDo-rje-chen-mo and her retinue East wall, above entrance



is then represented in every other chapel in Tabo in the same position (above the door) but in a progressively simpler composition. It is interesting to note that in the Mandala Temple (dKyil-khang) the assembly around the protectress is faithfully copied for the last time (fig. 58).

Is the protectress in the Assembly Hall still Wi-nyu-myin with her stag to the far left, or was she known already as rDo-rje-chen-mo? In that case the figure in the yak hair cape must be Gar-mdzad-ma standing before her stag and Remati sits to the far right with a raised staff. However she was called in the mid-11th century, she must have been a powerful lady, for even today – a thousand years later – she is still protecting Tabo and the Great Translator. When in June 1996, the present incarnation of Rin-chen-bzang-po communicated with her, he sat facing this picture and talked to her through a medium (see Chapter V.1).

The Vajradhātu-maṇḍala

As we have already said, it is no longer possible to reconstruct the iconography of the Assembly Hall during the first phase. Only exceedingly small traces of paint under the present wall paintings testify to an earlier phase of decoration. The fragments in the Ambulatory indicate that the decoration there during the first phase was thematically similar to that which was painted during Phase II. It is also possible that the original iconographic theme of the Assembly Hall was also a Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. The decorative program of the renovation phase may be a more ambitious expansion of the original conception.

The centre of the mandala is represented by a fourbodied, over-life-size clay figure of Mahāvairocana (h. 110 cm) seated upon a single lotus throne. The hands have been repaired but each of the images once performed the same variant of the Gesture of Teaching the Buddhist Law (*dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*). The image is today painted white with gold faces, but originally was a golden yellow colour (fig. 61).

Today the circumambulation path leads one behind an altar in order to circumambulate around the main image (diagram 8. Assembly Hall Circumambulation). The four-sided image is attached to a pole which is attached to the ceiling. The throne is made up of a series of rectangular and circular platforms, which may have been intended to bring the deity above the level of the sculptures of the four Jina (h. 105 cm) in the mandala. As is natural in the spatial hierarchy, they are the largest figures in the mandala. Beginning from the top we have, supported by the central pole, four lion-like faces (*kirtimukha*) (fig. 62). Bits and pieces of pearls and scarves protrude from their mouths. In between the four *kirtimukha* are four stupas of the Descent From Heaven-kind (fig. 63); each stupa is elegantly formed, painted and placed on a lotus platform.

All the elements protruding around the Mahāvairocana are completely painted and appear to have been meant either to hold the sculptures themselves or to be decorative elements like the *kirtimukha*, etc. The double lotus seat of the divinity has two layers of petals. The lotus petals are painted in alternating colours, three in the lower, two in the upper, as are the lotus seats of the painted Bodhisattvas in the upper zone of the Assembly Hall. The crowns are the same as on the clay Buddhas and Bodhisattva figures of the mandala. The square platform which supports the lotus has a rock-like design and the much smaller square pedestal which supports the throne has four pairs of lions facing backwards, their tails raised (fig. 64). The next round platform is placed on a somewhat convex pedestal which in turn is placed on a supporting platform.

The 33 clay figures of the mandala appear highly sophisticated in both their technique as well as their style (see Luczanits Chapter V.7). The elegant proportions of the gently modelled and sloping broad-shouldered chests, as well as the well-turned limbs and the round faces with the beautifully formed features are clearly the product of an accomplished artist. The great similarity in the

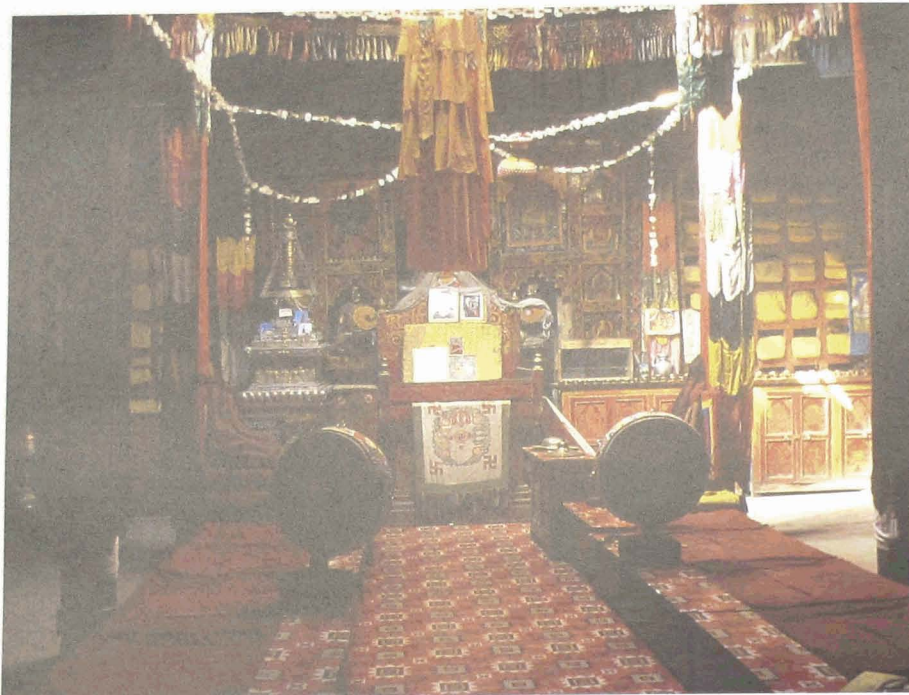


Fig. 59. Central altar with the bookcases to either side
Main Temple, Assembly Hall
Throne of the Dalai Lama in front of the main image, the Mahāvairocana

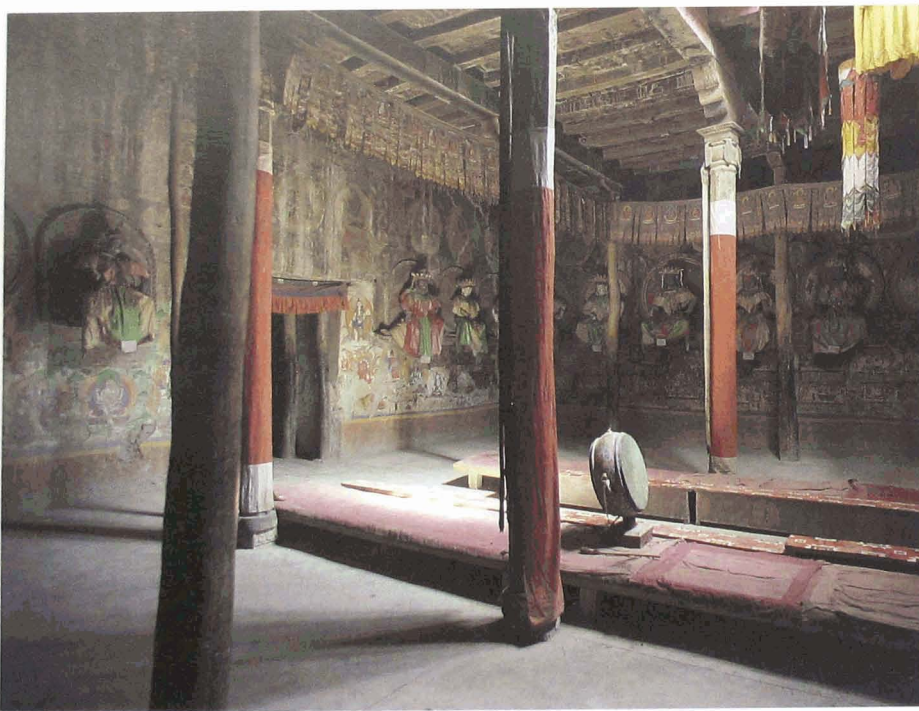


Fig. 60. General view of Assembly Hall
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east and south walls

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Fig. 61. Mahāvairocana (rNam-par-s nang-mdzad), south figure
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, behind the altar; clay





Fig. 62. Kirtimukha above Mahāvairocana
Main Temple, Assembly Hall; clay

Fig. 63. Stupa above Mahāvairocana
Main Temple, Assembly Hall; clay

Fig. 64. Lion on Vairocana's throne
Main Temple, Assembly Hall

faces, as well as the crowns and jewellery, suggests that moulds were used, in which case all of the raised parts, such as the jewellery and the flames on the mandorlas, would presumably have been moulded and added separately. The technique and its implications are discussed at length in Luczanits Chapter V.7. We are, of course, here exempting those faces and other sections that are clearly restored. The use of moulds was common in early medieval India for both baked and unbaked clay figures (Varma 1970).

Each of the deities of the mandala except the guardian figures sit in a perfectly round mandorla. The flames and edge of the mandorla are in high relief. The Jina figures have an additional row of vajras (Tib. *rdo-rje*) in stucco as well as their vehicles painted beneath them, for example no. 6 on the south wall, Akṣobhya with the elephants painted next to the lotus throne (fig. 98). Their radiance is expressed by multicoloured wave-like lines. The deities are suspended above their clay lotus seats, the drapery of their lower garments (where it has survived) rippling downwards to the lotus petals (fig. 101).

The original conception of the beautifully modelled and painted life-size mandala must have been marvel-

lous. The image of Mahāvairocana (fig. 61) allows us to appreciate the quality of the original artistic conception – from the playful, fluid forms of the lions painted on the base to the whimsical, brightly coloured *kirtimukha* crowning the central pole of the figure (fig. 62). All the 33 figures have the same smooth, elegant contours of the face and torso, the gently rounded cheeks, dimpled chin, broad shoulders with a slightly muscular chest flowing uninterrupted to a narrow waist. The style of these figures can be seen as a perfect expression of the Kashmiri aesthetic of about the 10th century. The most relevant comparisons are found in Hindu monumental sculpture, such as from the temples of Avantipur (Avantisvāmin and Avantisvara) founded by Avantivarman 855–83. But also comparisons to portable sculpture, such as the so-called Queen Didda bronze. Particularly relevant are: the lotus seat as a raised pedestal, the articulation of the torso, the facial features. This sculpture is dated by inscription to Queen Didda's reign A.D. 980–1003. Certain features of the Queen Didda bronze are also found elsewhere in the regional art, such as the wooden sculpture from Rangrig rtse (Charang) (Singh forthcoming), or the Cleveland Mu-

Fig. 65. Gate-protector Vajrāṅkuśa
(rDo-rgje-lcags-rgyu)
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east
wall, Vajradhātu-maṅḍala (no. 30);
clay



seum's standing figure of the Buddha (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pl. 27) inscribed with the name of *lha btsun-pa Na-ga-ra-dza* (Nāgarāja), Ye-shes-'od's younger son who is depicted in the Entry Hall. The articulation of the torso is very similar to the sculptures while the symmetrical, fluid folds of the monastic garment at the neck and over the shoulders, as well as the shape of the *uṣṇiṣa* are quite close to the painting of the Buddha in the Ambulatory (figs. 35, 181, 182). This comparison is particularly pertinent because the bronze, like the Tabo images, is of a very high quality. The large image, 98.1 cm high, is certainly the product of royal patronage, as was Tabo. Unlike most other images with Na-ga-ra-dza's name inscribed on them, this one and the Ladakh Bodhisattva (fig. 218) specifically say that the image is his personal possession (*lha btsun-pa Na-ga-ra-dza'i thugs-dam*).

In some cases, due to heavy restoration (as in figs. 75, 88 and 96) the serenity of expression and the fluid relationship of the body parts is no longer apparent. Also the dynamic postures of the guardians in their horse-shoe-shaped halos may at first glance indicate that they are from a different period. However, Tucci was wrong when he came to this conclusion (Tucci 1935: 31–36).

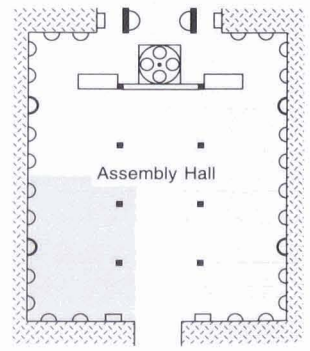
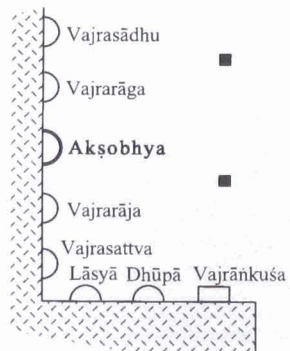
It is possible that later, when looking at photographs, or considering his notes, Tucci mistakenly came to this conclusion based on the face of the guardian Vajrāveśa (fig. 97) to the proper right of the entry to the Assembly Hall. This face has indeed been very much restored. However, contrary to Tucci's assertion, a careful study of the architecture and mandalas confirms that all the sculptures of the mandala are to a large degree original, there are no additional images and none are missing. Tucci's logic was apparently that the later guardian figures are larger (wider) because they in part occupy space originally intended for four additional offering goddesses. That is, according to Tucci there were originally 12 offering goddesses making a total of 37 figures of the mandala which is the more usual number for the Vajradhātu-maṅḍala. As difficult as it may be to identify the present mandala with an existing literary source, there can be no doubt that the iconographic configuration as it exists today was created in the 11th century². During my first visit to Tabo with Dr. Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner it was possible to establish the original character of the present mandala (Klimburg-Salter 1982: 162; 1985). During subsequent field work³ Luczanits,



Fig. 66. Vajrāṅkuṣa
Fig. 67. Vajradhūpā
Fig. 68. Vajralāṣyā



Fig. 69. Vajrasattva
Fig. 70. Vajrarāja
Fig. 71. Akṣobhya
Fig. 72. Vajrarāga
Fig. 73. Vajrasādhu

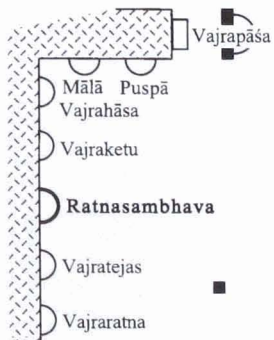
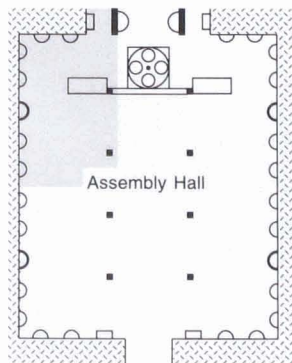


Plan 5. The eastern quarter of the
Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (blue)

Fig. 74. Vajraratna
 Fig. 75. Vajratejas
 Fig. 76. Ratnasambhava



Fig. 77. Vajraketu
 Fig. 78. Vajrahāsa
 Fig. 79. Vajramāla
 Fig. 80. Vajrapuṣpā
 Fig. 81. Vajrapāśa



Plan 6. The southern quarter of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (yellow)

by observing faint traces of the original paint underneath the present layers of paint, and co-ordinating the position of the arms and hands with the textual indications for mudras or hand-held attributes, was able to identify more precisely the figures of the mandala. This then permitted a more reliable concordance between the Tabo mandala and the literary sources (see Luczanits Chapter V.7).

The symmetrical ordering of the figures of the mandala is complicated in Tabo by the fact that the Assembly Hall is not a square but rather a rectangle. Thus, the mandala has only two doors on the short sides, east and west, rather than four doors in each of the four directions. Thus, it was not possible to order all the figures of the mandala symmetrically according to direction. When this is possible, as with the guardian figures, the images are placed directionally. The four quadrants are differentiated by colour, that is the respective colour of the families' main images (plan 12. Quarters of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala). Thus, for instance, both Ratnasambhava and Akṣobhya are placed on the south wall but only Ratnasambhava is the Lord of the Southern Sphere and Akṣobhya, who is placed in the eastern quadrant, is Lord of the Eastern Sphere. Opposite him on the north wall is placed Amoghasiddhi, Lord of the Northern Sphere, and in the western quadrant of the north wall is placed Amitābha, Lord of the West.

The four Buddha figures, two on each side, are placed symmetrically, surrounded by an even number of Bodhisattvas and goddesses (see plan 11. Deities of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala). The eight goddesses are located in pairs to the right and left of the guardian figures along the east and west walls. Thus, the four (two pairs) of protector deities guard each of the two entrances to the mandala and they are flanked by the four pairs of goddesses of offering instead of twelve goddesses of offering, as is the case in most other root mandalas of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. According to Luczanits' reconstruction, the four missing goddesses (Sattvavajrī, Ratnavajrī, Dharmavajrī, Karmavajrī) were represented by clay symbols placed on the wooden throne, one each between the four images of Vairocana, respectively vajra, ratna, lotus, and crossed vajra. The same concept is seen in the picture of a detail of the central image of the root Vajradhātu-maṇḍala of the Sa-skya cycle published by Hiroshi Sonami (bSod nams rgya mtsho [Ngor Thar rtse mKhan po] 1983: no. 27): here one sees



Vairocana with the four symbols just mentioned placed around him in the four directions.

The identification of the images derives from their position in the mandala as well as their colour (which indicates to which Buddha Family they belong), their mudra and in the case of the Jina their vehicle. Further, the four Jina are identifiable by their slightly larger mandorla, the addition of a row of vajras inside the mandorla, their animal vehicle supporting the throne, their absolute frontality and their mudras. The hierarchy of the images in the mandala is also indicated by their placement and size.

Thus, the Lord of the Mandala (Mahāvairocana) is located in the centre and is the largest (c. 110 cm height, head height 25 cm, width 20 cm); the four Jina height c. 105 cm, head height 19 cm, width 16 cm; the sixteen Bodhisattvas height c. 100 cm, head height 19 cm, width 16 cm; eight goddesses height c. 90 cm, head height c. 18 cm, width 15 cm⁴.

There are textual descriptions of mandalas with two instead of four doors known; there are also 33-deity mandalas but none of these can be identified in all details with the mandala as represented in Tabo. The text must also have included the 32 Bodhisattvas in the

Fig. 98. Head of an elephant, the vehicle of Akṣobhya Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, between Akṣobhya and Vajrarāga (nos. 2 and 8)

Ambulatory as the retinue of the four-bodied Vairocana (eight Bodhisattvas for each figure) and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions (see bSam-yas below).

Origin of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala

Our explanation of the manner in which the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala was actually used and experienced by the Buddhist visitor in the middle of the 11th century is based to some degree on extrapolation from modern practice, but also on the formal clues within the structure itself – specifically, as already noted, the location of the images and their symmetry. It can be presumed that the 11th-century conception of the mandala, as it is found in Tabo, derived from two sources, artistic-architectural tradition and literary tradition.

Three-dimensionality is inherent in the basic conception of the mandala, which is considered a cosmogram, a depiction of the cosmos. The mandala serves several purposes, as an aid to meditation, and as the realm of initiation into specific esoteric meditations. The ultimate goal of all these practices is liberation from the cycle of rebirth and suffering. Each mandala contains the essence of a Tantric teaching symbolised in succinct graphic form. Through the ritual performance within the sacred sphere of the mandala, the worshipper identifies with the deity – the identity of the microcosm and the macrocosm. Only advanced practitioners (*sādhaka*) were actually initiated into the mandala. The majority of Buddhists contemplated the essence of the deity and received his blessings.

The monumental mandala and its relationship to ritual practice can be traced to the Vedic period in India and is found in some form in all Indian religions. In Tibet too, most sacred structures are understood to be mandalas, for instance the earliest monastery in Tibet, bSam-yas. Although it is sometimes debated if bSam-yas can actually be conceived of as a mandala, the Main Temple, the dBu-rtse, is said to have been conceived of as a Vajradhātu-maṇḍala.

The existence of Borobudur in Java, built c. 800, indicates that there was a tradition within the Indian cultural world for monumental constructions representing the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. Borobudur is particularly interesting from our point of view for several reasons. 1) We have the fusion of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala with an architectural space. 2) The elements of the icono-

graphic program are the same as those at Tabo: the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, and the narratives from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the Life of the Buddha⁵. The viewer begins with the Previous Lives of the Buddha and then, through the ritual circumambulation of the stupa, he progresses from terrace to terrace upward through the Life of the Buddha Śākyamuni, followed by the Pilgrimage of Sudhana and then, as he circumambulates through the mandala, he ascends through successive layers of realisations (Lokesh Chandra 1979, Gómez 1981)

Although we have very little information about the religious architecture of the period of the ancient monarchy in Tibet, we do have some indication that some important chapels dating to the period were dedicated to Vairocana, for instance Khra-'brug, Bya-sa and bSam-yas (Richardson 1990). The latter is particularly important for our purposes. Although a detailed description of the iconography exists only from later sources, early 14th-century, this none the less would appear to be a reliable description of the monastery as it was during an early period. It certainly represents the monastery as it was known by the end of the 10th century when Tabo was built (Sørensen 1994: 375, n. 1240). According to a description in the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* (GR1), complemented by other sources (Sørensen 1994), it is clear that the central, three-story temple, known as the dBu-rtse (chen-po), was dedicated to Sarvavid Vairocana. Śākyamuni and his retinue were represented on the ground floor, and the murals depicted on the walls of the innermost compound represented the Life of the Buddha (GR1, 377). Vairocana and his retinue appeared on the next or middle floor. On the upper, the third floor was Sarvavid Vairocana, "... [with four heads], each [head] having two retinues, being [thus surrounded] by the eight Bodhisattva-sons, inside [equipped with images of the assemblage] of gods (*nang gi lha*) such as Bodhisattva rDo-rje rgyal-mtshan etc. and [of] the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, [of] the Wrathful Acala and Padmapāṇi etc. The [artistic] craftsmanship was in the Indian style. The murals [depicted scenes culled from] the Daśabhūmika-sūtra..." (GR1, 378–9)⁶. The three stories were also interpreted as representing "the three bodies" (*trikāya*), "the form-body" (*nirmāṇakāya*), "the enjoyment-body" (*saṃbhogakāya*) and "the dharmabody" (*dharmakāya*) respectively. Thus, through the ritual of circumambulation, the worshipper could ascend to the *dharmakāya* in a similar way

as one progressed through the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala at the Great Stupa at Borobudur.

There is, as we have seen, also a threefold vertical division of space in Tabo which, within the more greatly restricted architectural space, has certain similarities with the iconographic program at bSam-yas. Thus, also at Tabo, the Buddhist through his circumambulation, at minimum three times, could ascend through the three “bodies” (*kāya*). The *nirmāṇakāya* is represented through the spiritual pilgrimage of Sudhana and the Buddha Śākyamuni, the *sambhogakāya* is represented by the images of the mandala and the *dharmakāya* is represented by the images of the Ten Buddhas and their attending Bodhisattvas, also the Tantric images.

Again remembering the far greater size and complexity of the temple at bSam-yas it is interesting to note that all of the iconographic elements which are present in the Tabo Main Temple were also found in bSam-yas (although naturally not the other way around). The source of one of the paintings of the Buddha Life is specifically stated to be the *Lalitavistara* (GR1, 380). In one of the satellite chapels, murals with scenes from the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* are mentioned. In concluding the description of the Main Temple the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* notes, “When [one further made a] circumambulation along the great circumambulation-path (*'khor sa chen po*), [it could be observed that it was] erected in [the form of] the *maṇḍala* [in which] Vairocana purified [all] the damned existences (*ngan song sbyangs ba'i dkylil 'khor, durgati[pari]sodhana*)” (GR1, 380).

During the Later Diffusion of Buddhism the popularity of Vairocana continued, as can be demonstrated by all of the surviving monuments in western Tibet, not only those attributed to the kings of Purang-Guge but also in Ladakh, as in Alchi. In the surviving temples in India we have no complete sculptural mandala as at Tabo. But an exactly contemporaneous Vajradhātu-maṇḍala made of individual, small size (less than 10 cm) bronze figures from Indonesia testifies to the wide-spread popularity of the themes (Lim 1964). Further, the existence of three-dimensional representations of the mandala in Java and Spiti in the 10th/11th centuries indicates that this tradition existed earlier in India, undoubtedly in the north-east.

A roughly contemporaneous example of the temple as mandala (or mandala as temple) is found in Tholing at the rGya-gser-khang, also called by Tucci the temple

of Ye-she-'od. This enormous building with a cruciform plan and an east-west axial orientation has the profile, in plan, of a stupa and to some degree also some of its ritual and symbolic functions. At the centre of the temple was a central Cella with a monumental four-bodied figure of Vairocana (the base survives). A retinue of deities was depicted also in the form of clay figures attached to the wall of the inner courtyard around the Sarvavid Vairocana. Only fragments of the clay halos remain. However, the painted fragments underneath suggest that the clay images represent a second phase, the initial iconography was largely (or only?) painted. It is unknown if the clay figures of the mandala were complemented by painted figures next to the clay figures, as found in the later mandala renditions in Tsaparang (Tanaka 1994). This same phenomenon in the Tabo Cella may be attributed to the 11th century. At each side of the rGya-gser-khang's central courtyard was an additional temple devoted to one of the Jina each with four attendants (i.e. a pentad).

In Lalung in the upper Spiti valley, there is a fourfold seated figure of Vairocana (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Fig. 19). This image completely fills the chapel in which it is now found. There is no decoration on the wall, so one does not know if the room as it is currently constructed is original. It is possible, indeed, that there were deities painted on the wall that were complementary to this figure or that the chapel was much larger and contained other sculptures; it is no longer possible to say. A fourfold Vairocana is also represented as a clay figure in the gSer-khang, the Golden Temple. But here he has one body and four heads. This chapel can be dated, on the basis of the style of the figures, to a period later than Tabo, that is c. 1200 (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 46).

Nako in Kinnaur is an important example of a mid-11th-century complex of temples. The iconography, as at Tabo, is also derived from the Yoga Tantra class of literature. In the painted Vajradhātu-maṇḍala Vairocana is represented with one body and four heads. It is in this form also that he occupies the centre of the mandalas at Alchi and other contemporaneous chapels in Ladakh.

Another distinctive feature in Nako is the pairing of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala with the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala. In Tabo the latter still has only a subsidiary role.

In the Tabo Main Temple there are no painted Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, indeed there are no round “palace-



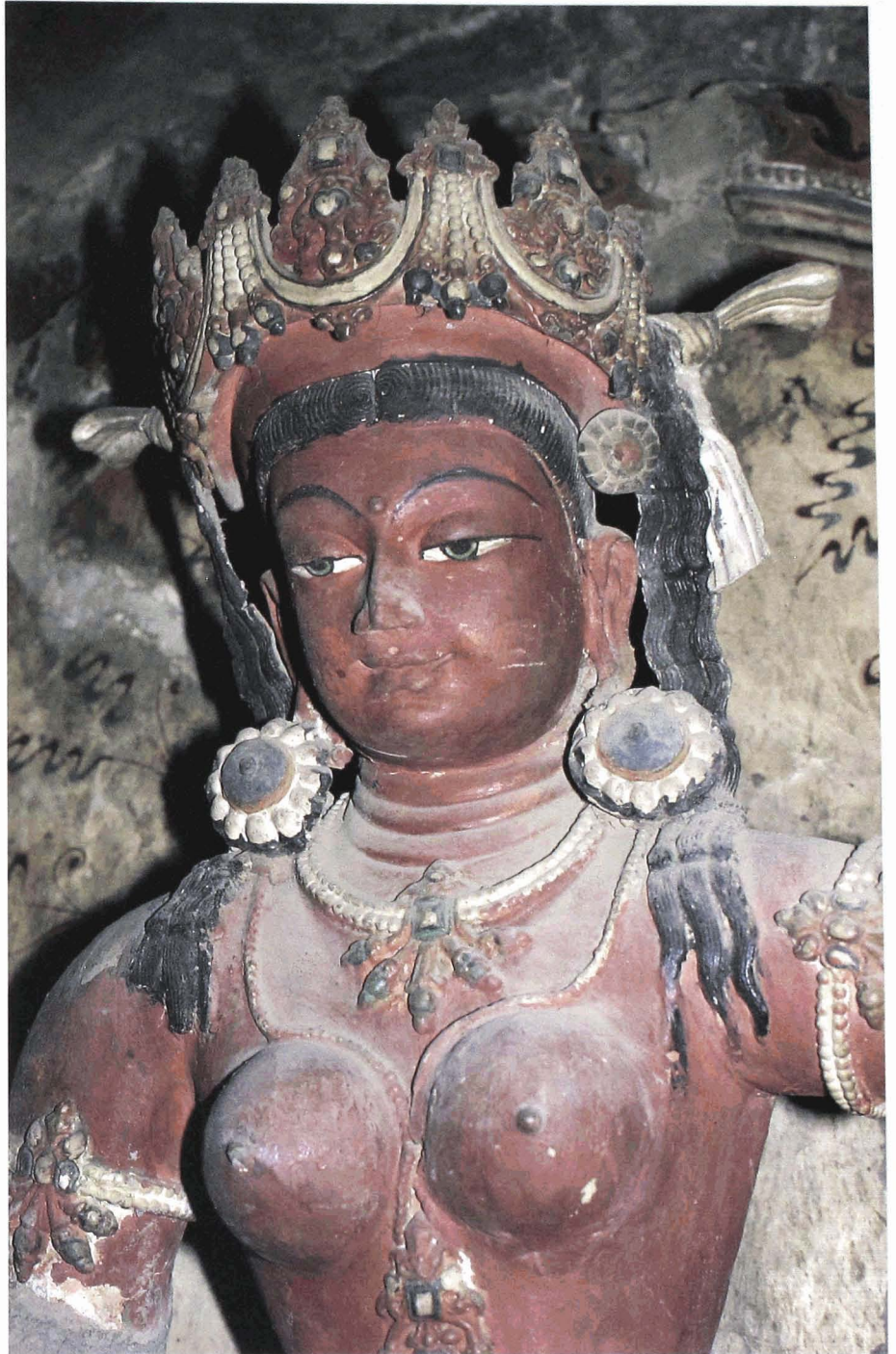
Fig. 99. The goddesses Vajranṛtā (rDo-rje-gar-ma) and Vajragandhā (rDo-rje-dri-chab-ma) Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (nos. 25 and 29); clay

Fig. 100. Vajranṛtā holds a vajra with three points Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (no. 25); clay The only attribute preserved among the mandala sculptures



Fig. 101. Dhoti of Vajradharma
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north
wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (no. 14);
clay

Fig. 102. Goddess Vajrālokā
Main Temple, Assembly Hall,
Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, west wall (no.
28)



temple” mandalas at all. The earliest mandalas of this kind in Tabo are in the Mandala Temple (dKyil-khang). The unique vision at Tabo was the animation of the architecture through the life-size sculptures of the mandala. As we have seen, however, there is a conceptual antecedence in the earlier art of greater India. The essential notion is that the stupa/temple is a mandala and that the believer through his ritual circumambulation and his meditation enters into the mandala and unites with the deities who reside there.

During the Later Diffusion of Buddhism the most frequently utilised texts belonged to that class of esoteric literature (Tantras), called Yoga Tantras. In this system Vairocana occupied the centre of the pentad of Buddhas (or Jina)⁸. Two texts of this class of Tantras which were important during this period are the *Sarvatathāgata-taitva-saṅgraha* (STTS) and the *Durgatiparisodhana-tantra* (DPST) (for a detailed description of the former see STTS-a; and for the latter Skorupski 1983). They are particularly important for an understanding of the contemporaneous religious practices in Spiti because both texts as well as some commentaries were translated by Rin-chen-bzang-po (see list in Tucci 1933: 40f.). The Great Translator was particularly familiar with the works of Ānandagarbha (Kun-dga'-snying-po), see for instance BA, 352 *passim* for a list of translated works. Ānandagarbha's commentary to the STTS coincides in most features with the iconography of the clay figures in Tabo. The Sa-skya tradition is based on the root text of the STTS and is also close to the Tabo Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (bSod nams rgya mtsho [Ngor Thar rtshe mKhan po] 1983: no. 22)⁹. None the less, the Tabo mandala does not precisely coincide with any of the mandalas known from surviving texts¹⁰. Indeed the Tabo Vajradhātu-maṇḍala is a precious witness for the intellectual climate reflected by the STTS and in the DPST. In a sense the iconography of the Main Temple shares features found in both systems – the Lord of the Tabo mandala is Mahāvairocana, he is represented four times, as in the STTS. He is not a Vairocana with four faces (called Sarvavid, Tib. Kun-rig) as in the DPST (cf. the Sarvavid Vairocana from the Tabo gSer-khang, fig. 210). That this concept was elsewhere also followed in Spiti is clear from the similar Vairocana in Lalung (Klimburg-Salter 1994a). However the protective deities found in the Entry Hall seem closer to those in the precinct of the DPST (e.g. Skorupski 1983: 313, n.) than

the protective deities in the STTS.

It should be remembered that only a small portion of the once extant Buddhist literature has survived. Even more critical, we have very little understanding of “living” Buddhism a thousand years ago. That is Buddhism as it was practised. Until now, western scholarship has relied almost totally on textual criticism, although it seems quite certain that the literary texts only represent one aspect of an élite concept of the religion. An understanding of early Tantric Buddhist practice would ideally have to integrate information deriving from philological, archaeological and literary studies (Nihom 1995). For this method Tabo provides rare and precious testimony. But it is not always possible to reconstruct the program against a literary model. In a sense Tucci's failure to identify the mandala resulted from a methodological failure, which was understandable given the short amount of time that he was in Tabo. Had he insisted on the superiority of the archaeological evidence, he might have placed more emphasis on explaining what was actually there, rather than what ought to have been there according to the surviving textual tradition.

As we have seen in the description of the Main Temple at bSam-yas and the Great Stupa at Borobudur, as the believer performs the ritual of circumambulation through the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, he also progresses through the Three Realms (*trikāya*). The Tabo Main Temple is much smaller and simpler but here too the Three Realms are represented as the three horizontal divisions of the Assembly Hall, “the form-body” (*nirmānakāya*) the narrative paintings, “the enjoyment-body” (*saṃbhogakāya*) the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala and “the dharma-body” (*dharmakāya*) the Buddha fields / Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Traditionally the practitioner would circumambulate at least three times around the main Vairocana image. In Tabo he progresses through the spiritual geography of the mandala and simultaneously identifies with the spiritual pilgrimage accomplished in the narratives, first by Sudhana and then by Siddhārtha, the Buddha Śākyamuni. Thus through meditation and ritual circumambulation he performs a symbolic pilgrimage which also leads to successively higher levels of consciousness.

Other Buddha Realms

The only areas of the Assembly Hall to suffer considerable destruction are at the top of the walls and here were

Fig. 103. Goddess of Offering
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east
wall, middle section, between the
goddesses Vajradhūpā and Vajralāsyā
(nos. 22 and 26)
She holds a vajra in front of her breast
and a ratna in the left hand



Fig. 104. Goddess of Offering
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north
wall, Vajradhātu-maṅḍala, between the
Bodhisattvas Vajradharma and
Vajratikṣṇa (nos. 14 and 15)



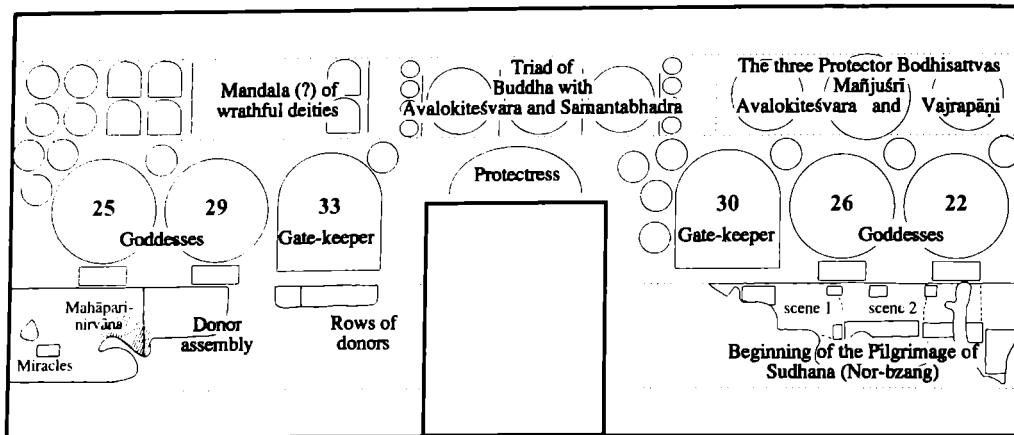


Diagram 7. Assembly Hall East Wall

located the only Tantric representations. There were only two mandalas represented in the Assembly Hall during the early period: the painted Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala and the celebrated sculpted Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, which also depicts only the main deities. No paintings in the Assembly Hall from this period represent a divinity with his Prajñā, that is the *yab-yum*. “mother-father” images.

On the east wall above the door is a large central panel located above the panel depicting the protectress of Tabo and her retinue (diagram 7. Assembly Hall East Wall). The figures in the central triad are bordered on both sides by a parallel composition consisting of a vertical row of four Buddhas (fig. 105) and an assembly of deities and monks. The figures on each side turn towards the middle as if hearing a discourse. The Buddha seated at the centre of the composition, above the protectress Wi-nyu-myin/rDo-rje-chen-mo is meditating. To the Buddha’s proper right is a white Avalokiteśvara with an elaborate hairdress and crown (fig. 106). To the Buddha’s left is a green Samantabhadra.

To the proper left of this triad Avalokiteśvara is depicted again (fig. 107). The two Avalokiteśvara figures are the same, the first in three-quarter view, the second in frontal view. A whimsical touch are the buds sprouting through the ears, in place of the usual round earrings. Also the treatment of the Buddha in Avalokiteśvara’s crown can be related to the five Buddha figures in the crown of the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara on the west wall (fig. 113). This is just one of the many cross references among the figures represented along

the top of all four walls in the Assembly Hall, which confirms that they were painted by one group of painters. That these painters belong to the same artistic tradition as the painters responsible for the narrative imagery can be seen by the continuity in such genre details as textile patterns. The dhoti of the Avalokiteśvara figure (fig. 107) has a sort of floral pattern which is a simplified version of the design which is found in the Ambulatory (fig. 164) and on some of the remaining textiles of the clay images.

The second Avalokiteśvara is part of another triad. Next to Avalokiteśvara, in the centre of the triad, is a red Bodhisattva. The right hand in *varadamudrā*, the left hand palm placed down on the left knee in a vajra-fist. This figure and the blue Bodhisattva to his proper left (in the corner) are more crudely drawn than the preceding figures and do not appear to have been painted by the same artists. In fact, the blue Bodhisattva seems to be painted over a figure which was originally greenish. The two Bodhisattvas are identified by inscription as Mañjughoṣa, a form of Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi, respectively. This triad, the three Bodhisattvas, is a discordant element in an otherwise symmetrically planned scheme. The corners of the east and west walls are occupied by Tantric themes. The triad is important iconographically because it represents the three Protectors of Tibet (*rigs-gsum mgon-pa*). This triad is also identified with the three great kings of the ancient monarchy, or in western Tibet by the royal monks (*lha bla-ma*): Ye-shes-'od, Byang-chub-'od, Zhi-ba-'od.

Above the shoulders of the Bodhisattvas on the east



Fig. 105. Buddhas, monks and Bodhisattvas
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, upper section, flanking the central triad above the entrance



Fig. 106. Avalokiteśvara
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, upper section, left Bodhisattva of the triad above the entrance

Fig. 107. Avalokiteśvara
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, upper section, south side, one of the three Protector Bodhisattvas (rigs-gsum mgon-po)



wall and the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas on the north and south walls are panels containing the identification of the figures followed by the *Ye dharma*-verse in Sanskrit written in Tibetan letters (fig. 36).

On the south and north walls is represented the theme of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions with their attendant Bodhisattvas (figs. 108, 109, 110)¹¹. Thus, on each wall are represented five Buddhas, each with a pair of Bodhisattvas turning towards them, thus, 20 Bodhisattvas in total. This sequence, as all the iconographic units of the Main Temple, are read in the direction of the ritual circumambulation. This can be substantiated from the inscriptions identifying the Buddhas. Thus we learn that the directional logic follows that represented also in the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (see plan 12. Quarters of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala) within the rectangular space of the Assembly Hall where four symmetrical quadrants are described. The placement of the directional Buddhas becomes clearer if one remembers that a two-dimensional mandala is always represented with west up and east down, and one begins the reading (or ritual circumambulation, *pradakṣiṇā*) from the bottom (east) moving in a clockwise direction. In the Tabo Vajradhātu-maṇḍala one

begins the circumambulation moving to the left of the door, in the eastern quadrant, governed by Akṣobhya (sculpture no. 2), then passing into the southern quadrant, etc. Thus although the first five Buddhas of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions are on the south wall the enumeration begins with the Buddhas of the eastern quadrant which is also the eastern quadrant of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. In other words each of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions occupies a symbolic space parallel to the figures of the mandala beneath them. However the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the north and south walls are a mirror image of each other. Further their function is to verify that the cosmos in its totality is represented. Often the Jina of the mandala are described as occupying the Ten Directions. But the primary function of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions may have been to “authenticate” the teachings contained in the Tantras and Sutras presented in the Main Temple. A Mahāyāna Sutra (the Buddha-word) begins with the observation that the Buddha preached the Sutra in the presence of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and their retinue.

The sequence begins on the south wall, and the first figure is a white Bodhisattva turning slightly towards

his left, that is towards the red Buddha in *dhyānamudrā*. There is a general typology with slight variations for all the Bodhisattvas: the first two on the south wall east corner are good examples. They each turn towards the red Buddha between them, the Buddha of the East, Ratnākara. The first Bodhisattva is white and has the right hand in front of the chest: the second, who is red has the right hand raised with the thumb and index finger together, holding an offering to the Buddha. The next triad has a white Buddha in *vitarkamudrā* in the centre, the Buddha of the South-east, Padmottaraśrī (figs. 108, 109, 110).



The theme of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions is mirrored on the north wall. We shall therefore continue the description of this theme and then return to the composition in the upper section of the west wall. On the north wall from the eastern corner there is a sequence which parallels the figures on the opposite wall. In the first triad is a white Bodhisattva, Ārya-Avalokiteśvara (fig. 26), the left hand placed behind his left knee. The crown, jewellery, dhoti, etc. are the same as of all the Bodhisattvas on this wall.



An unusual feature of the Tabo Assembly Hall is the small number of Tantric images and their obscure placement. The only Tantric images are found on the upper section of the east and west walls where they would have been only partially visible because of the height of the ceiling and the lack of light. Our description begins on the west wall of the Assembly Hall in front of the Cella, beginning in the south corner and moving towards the north wall (diagram 10. Assembly Hall West Wall). The wall in this corner is extensively damaged so that it is no longer possible to define the original configuration. Judging from the surviving elements and the central placement of the Buddha figure, it is possible that a mandala with a Buddha as the central deity was originally represented here above the final scenes of the Pilgrimage of Sudhana and the two clay goddesses Vajramālā and Vajrapuṣpā (nos. 23 and 27).

The entire south-western corner has been destroyed and there is only a little bit of painting that has remained. A Buddha figure in *dharmacakramudrā* is seated on a double lotus with alternating blue, red and green petals. Underneath the lotus are two lions with their heads up and turning backwards, looking at the Buddha figure. They are white with red details and stylistically the same as the lions of the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-maṅjuśrī-



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Fig. 108. Bodhisattva Padmahasta (Lag-na-pad-mo)
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south wall, upper section, from the south-eastern triad of Buddhas of the Ten Directions

Fig. 109. The Buddhas of the Ten Directions. The Buddha of the South-East, Padmottaraśrī (Pad-mo-dam-pa¹-dpal)
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south wall, upper section, central image of the south-eastern triad

Fig. 110. Bodhisattva
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south wall, upper section, right image of the south-eastern triad

Following pages

Fig. 111. Black wrathful deity
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west wall, upper section, south side, part of a mandala-like composition

Fig. 112. Green vajra-holding wrathful deity
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, upper section, north side, part of a mandala-like composition centred around a wrathful deity

maṅḍala. Above and to the left of the Buddha are two much damaged goddesses addressing offerings to the Buddha. There seem to have been originally four goddesses to the proper left of the Buddha. They were divided from the four guardian figures (*chos-skyong*) by a painted architectural element which looks like a pillar painted red, white and green. This same pillar is found on the east entry wall north side (fig. 118).

The guardian figures are exceptionally beautifully painted with very expressive shading dramatically delineating the body parts. They have four heads and eight arms. The guardians which have survived are painted black, blue, and red. Only the upper two are intact (fig. 111). The dark blue Mahākāla has matted hair and a crown of skulls. Snakes ring his limbs, and he has a tigerskin loin cloth. His eyes are bulging, accentuated by the fierce eyebrows, broad nose and grimacing mouth showing fangs. All of the guardian figures have a similar style. Indeed, it is clear that all the images in the upper zone were drawn and painted by the same artists. All the guardians have the right leg bent and the left leg stretched out, which is the usual posture for all of the painted guardian figures in Tabo. Under their feet and between the edges of the horseshoe-shaped, red mandorlas are reclining red figures, male and female. They are facing towards the centre. They are represented in a variety of realistically drawn postures, e.g. one figure with three heads (perhaps Brahmā) is kneeling in such a way that his knees are on the ground. He appears to be holding up the base of the *chos-skyong* and is resting on his right elbow. At the opposite side of the base is a female. She is sitting with the soles of the feet flat and the knees more or less supporting the horseshoe. She wears a crown, jewellery and Indian-style dress, similar to the goddesses painted in the middle zone between the clay mandorlas.

To the proper left of these figures were four more goddesses. The three that survived are painted blue, red and green. At this point the wall is totally destroyed. Above this entire composition is the same elegant valance which borders the upper portion of the entire Assembly Hall. Between each bracket are peacocks facing the entry to the Ambulatory (fig. 195)¹².

At this point the structure of the doorway to the Cella is exceedingly chaotic. In the crumbling half-wall (diagram 10. Assembly Hall West Wall) are beams, capitals and other supporting vertical and horizontal elements

from different periods. It would appear, however, that the ceilings of the three sections of the transition zone to the Cella are original, not only because the wall here supports the roof, but because the ceiling contains fragments of painted textiles which date according to ¹⁴C-analysis, at the latest, from the renovation period (see the section on the Canopy below, Chapter V.5).

On the east wall, north side of the entry way to the Ambulatory there is an horizontal mandala dedicated to Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī.

The Iconography of the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṅḍala

The composition is painted at the top of the west wall just under the painted valance which borders the top edge. The entire composition is painted against a blue background. The mandala has a horizontal organisation. The figures are grouped in pairs to the left and right of the central divinity Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara (also known as Mañjuḥṣa), a form of Mañjuśrī (fig. 113). Relating this mandala to the more traditional circular composition, each group of divinities could be seen as forming concentric circles around the central divinity.

The main deity is reddish-white with four heads: white, blue, red and the top head may be a reddish-orange shade. The central hands make the gesture of the *dharmacakramudrā* (Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine) – the right hands hold a sword, arrow and vajra, the left hands a bow, book (*Prajñāpāramitā*) and the lower left hand, which is destroyed, should hold a bell. The divinity wears a red, bejewelled crown with five points each bearing a seated Buddha figure and each painted a different colour. The jewellery, *mālā*, and costume have finely wrought floral and geometric designs in blue and red on white; the folds of the garment are shaded a uniform dark blue. The circular red mandorla is edged with blue and white stripes.

The next eight figures in the mandala, two pairs to each side, are identifiable as the eight Uṣṇīṣa: from the east Mahoṣṇīṣa, Sitaṭāpatra, Tejoraśi, Vijayoṣṇīṣa, Vikīraṇa, Udagata, Mahodgata, Ojas. Each has a mandorla, the outer edge red and the inner white, while the haloes are red with almost vertical sides and a pointed top. The figures are each seated on a lion vehicle. The divinities are depicted in three-quarter view turned towards the central divinity. The left hand rests on the seat and the right is raised holding what appears to be a wheel.







Fig. 113. Detail of Dharmadhātu-
vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west
wall, upper section, north side, central
image of the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-
mañjuśrī-maṇḍala

The figures to the central divinity's right are alternating red and white while to the left they are crudely repainted but one at least appears green. The lion vehicles are particularly expressive: their ferocious heads turn back with bared teeth, the white neck hairs spring upward into their red manes. As mentioned before these same lions survive in a fragmentary composition on the other corner (south side) of the west wall.

The next circle moving outwards in the traditional circular composition would find the four Buddhas at the cardinal points and their placement here would seem correct although the colours vary from the description in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (NSP) 21¹³. To the right of Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara in the upper row is a blue-coloured Akṣobhya on the elephant vehicle, and beneath that is red-coloured Ratnasambhava on the horse vehicle. To the left of the central deity in the upper row is a red figure of Amitābha seated on elegant peacocks, their blue heads turned inward, and in the lower row a blue figure of Amoghasiddhi, seated on red *garuḍa* (fig. 114, cf. the depiction of the same deity in Nako, fig. 228). Each of the Buddhas has four heads, eight arms and a red mandorla. As for their attributes, they show only few deviations (Klimburg-Salter forthcoming [c]). In the case of Ratnasambhava for instance, the attributes enumerated from the top, proper right side first, are sword and bow; arrow and twig; makara-headed staff and bell; vajra and mudra with hand resting at hip and index raised (left hand). The order of these attributes is different in the NSP 21 but here they are parallel to the attributes of the head of the "family" Mañjuḥṣa. The colours are different from the NSP 21, in the latter the principle face of Ratnasambhava should be yellow and here it is orange. Next are placed two Buddha goddesses beside the Buddhas at the far left and right of the mandala. These should be, according to NSP 21, Māmaki and Locanā (fig. 115), Pāṇḍarā and Tārā respectively, related to Mañjuḥṣa, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. Ratnasambhava is omitted in the text (de Mallmann 1964: 83). They each have four heads and eight arms and a red mandorla. Again their attributes show only few deviations, e.g. in the case of Locanā the attributes enumerated from the top, proper right side first, are sword and bow; arrow and book; makara-headed staff and bell; vajra and mudra with hand resting at hip and index raised (left hand). The four-headed guardian figures are missing.

Beneath a red border are female divinities in different colours – but many are so crudely repainted that neither the original colour nor the original iconography can be distinguished. Because of their number and position it is tempting to consider the possibility that they represent one of the sets of goddesses associated with the mandala but the information is not sufficient to discuss their identification.

There are certain details of this mandala which are problematic, such as the name of the central divinity – and of the mandala itself. As de Mallmann has noted in her admirable study, the majority of the names for Mañjuśrī are interchangeable (de Mallmann 1964: 20). Thus, the name Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara is found in the *Sādhanamālā* (SM 61), but for other aspects of Mañjuśrī as well. Here, however, I follow de Mallmann (who uses as her authority the NSP) and reserve this name for the aspect of Mañjuśrī, also called Mañjuḥṣa, with four faces and eight arms with the main hands forming the *dharmacakramudrā*. Moreover this divinity is not shown possessing his Prajñā (consort) (de Mallmann 1964: 61). With the exception of the colour, and the fact that the attributes in the upper two left hands are reversed, our divinity coincides with the description in NSP 21¹⁴.

Unfortunately we have almost no information about the history of the mandala. This divinity was also popular in contemporary north-east India. Several stelae survive where the core figures of the mandala are represented. The complete mandala as it exists in NSP 21 contains 216 personages and is considered to be one of the most complex and important in the collection (de Mallmann 1964: 82–96, 229–241). It is useful here to translate part of de Mallmann's analysis. In effect the mandala (of Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī) in the NSP constitutes a veritable summation of Buddhist teachings. It contains and gathers together notions borrowed from traditions as ancient as the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (with the eight Uṣṇīṣarāja) or the *Sarvathāgatataṭṭvasaṃgraha* (with the Vajrī and the Vajra), from philosophy (with the 52 personified abstractions) and even from Hinduism because it integrates 84 divinities of the Hindu pantheon. But contrary to the Kālacakra-maṇḍala, the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala preserves the integrity of the Buddhist doctrine and assimilates the Hindu deities by attaching them to the diverse lineages (Kula) of the Buddha in relation to their spatial disposition in the mandala



Fig. 114. Amoghasiddhi
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west
wall, upper section, north side, deity
of the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-
mañjuśrī-maṇḍala

Fig. 115. The Tantric goddess Locanā
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west
wall, upper section, north side, deity
of the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-
mañjuśrī-maṇḍala

(de Mallmann 1964: 15). Many aspects of the mandala have been studied but for our limited purposes here it is only useful to note that in NSP 21, Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī may be considered as the essence of Mahāvairocana, and that the “erotic-mystical” aspects which characterise the majority of the mandalas are absent (as also in the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, NSP 19), the main personages being represented alone rather than with their Prajñā (consort). It is consistent with the reformist character of Buddhism at the time of Ye-shes-'od and his successors that the two mandalas most prominently represented in the Main Temple are not associated with “erotic-mystical” symbolism. Two aspects of the mandala which were particularly resonant to the prevailing religious climate: the main deities are not represented with their Prajñā and the skilful integration of the Hindu deities. These figures are among the most exquisite and finely drawn in Nako (fig. 230)¹⁵.

The simple horizontal arrangement of the mandalas found in Tabo is not unique in the monastic wall painting of the period. This format also plays an important role in the pictorial scheme of the monastery of Mang-nang (in West Tibet). In the documentation made by Ghersi and

kept in the Tucci Archive in Rome (Klimburg-Salter, Nalesini and Talamo 1994: 202) no mandala of Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī has been identified but at least three other mandalas are clearly represented. Each is presented according to the simple geometric principles which also govern the mandala at Tabo. One of these is a horizontal mandala and the other two form a square (fig. 117). In each case, as at Tabo, the central figure, very much larger than the other figures, is isolated in the centre of the composition by its mandorla. The other figures are clearly separated by their mandorlas, the edges of which touch those of the next figures. All the deities have circular mandorlas except the guardian figures whose mandorlas are horseshoe-shaped.

The extreme simplicity of the Tabo and Mang-nang mandalas can best be appreciated when compared with the sophisticated and elaborate mandalas from Nako and Dung-dkar, Alchi and Sumda (fig. 116, see Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980: fig. 58) and Mang-rgyu in Ladakh. It is of course this latter type which became the standard “temple-palace” mandala scheme. The Tabo horizontal mandala recalls earlier Buddhist compositions, such as the “proto-mandala” from the Hindu Kush –



Fig. 116. Sumda-chung, Ladakh:
centre of a Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-
mañjuśrī-maṇḍala

Bāmiyān and Kakrak – where each divinity is separated from the next by a circular mandorla (Klimburg-Salter 1989: Figs. 26 and 30). The simple, usually horizontal, compositions have no extraneous detail. However, it is not possible to conclude that Tabo and Mang-nang form the end of an old tradition while Nako represents the beginning of a new compositional tendency. Firstly, the chronological gap between them (see Chapter VI) is not sufficient to account for the development of so sophisticated a series of forms as the mandalas found at Nako; secondly, even if such a development in the art of the western Himalayas were possible within this short period, it is improbable, given the evidence from Dunhuang. Here fully developed mandala schemes existed already in the 9th century (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pls. 61, 68, 69, 72, 73). It is thus clear that at both Tabo and Mang-nang a deliberate choice was made for a simpler compositional scheme. Why this choice was made remains to be answered (Klimburg-Salter forthcoming [c]).

On the west wall on the north side, directly opposite the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala the paintings have suffered extensive water damage coming from the roof. They no longer have the beautiful modelling

and intense colours of the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala. However, the style of the figures is similar. The centre of the composition is totally destroyed. A large horseshoe-shaped mandorla was framed by two poles. The centre of the composition was occupied by a figure in the same posture (*lalitāsana*) as the guardian figures on the west wall. We use the term “mandala-like composition” because of the presence of certain elements typical of a mandala: the large central figure (= the Lord of the Mandala), the offering goddesses and the guardian figures.

Beginning from the north-east corner (diagram 7. Assembly Hall East Wall) there are four goddesses: two red ones, a white and a green. Next to them are four guardian figures (fig. 118). The outer two towards the northern wall are in different standing postures (*sthānaka*). The uppermost was originally green and appears to have had eight arms. The number of heads is no longer clear. His legs are widespread and he is facing forward. The figure beneath him is red and appears to have had eight arms, the heads are missing, the right leg is stretched out. The next figure on the top is bright blue, the right leg is bent, and the left leg is stretched out. He had eight arms. The figure beneath him is dark blue, the right leg is bent, the left leg stretched out. He had apparently eight arms and four heads; each of the heads are in different colours. The lower part of each of the horseshoe-shaped mandorlas are very much destroyed and repainted and are somewhat difficult to read. Underneath the upper figure from the outside were originally two reclining human-like figures which are now destroyed. The blue guardian figure, a Mahākāla, stands on two reclining figures that were similar to those on the west wall south corner (fig. 118). This group of eight figures is divided from the central composition by a vertical post, painted alternately red and green with a very elegantly drawn white cloth tied around the middle.

In the central composition there are fragments of more horseshoe-shaped mandorlas and figures. There are two pairs of guardian figures (*chos-skyong*), both turned slightly towards the central figure. However, only the left pair is well preserved. These guardians each have one head and two arms. The upper figure is green (fig. 112), the lower figure is blue. The central composition is bordered by posts tied in the middle with a white cloth. Next to this is the composition representing monks, gods and a row of four Buddhas flanking the central triad above the door.

Narrative Painting in Tabo

The narrative painting occupies one third of the pictorial space of the Assembly Hall and is an important aspect of its decoration (fig. 54). In the ritual circumambulation the first narrative cycle is the story of the Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Tib. Nor-bzang), taken from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* of the *Avataṅśaka* literary corpus. The Life of the Buddha is the theme of the second half of the narrative painting. The narrative paintings are located underneath the 32 clay sculptures of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, the main iconographic theme of the Assembly Hall. The narrative begins on the east wall to the proper left of the entry and moves in the direction of the *pradakṣiṇā* – the ritual circumambulation. Today one performs the circumambulation by moving under the deities of the mandala, the deities touching the head of the worshipper who is eye-level with the narrative scenes. (In order to actually see the scenes, however, one needs a lamp.) (diagram 8. Assembly Hall Circumambulation)

The first part of the visual narrative of Sudhana's pilgrimage has been destroyed. It is probable that the beginning of the story occupied the space between the door and the first inscribed panel. As all the rest of the literary text is contained (in redactional abbreviation) in the wall panels, there is no reason to doubt that the text was originally conceived as complete (Steinkellner 1995).

The first surviving scene depicted after the first inscribed panel is Sudhana's meeting with Mañjuśrī (fig. 23, 119). The paintings and the text contained in panels are organised into 56 sections depicting the 53 stages of pilgrimage. These stages are represented as different places where Sudhana meets the 53 Spiritual Friends (*kalyāṇamitra*) of his spiritual journey. The story continues on the south wall and ends on the west wall to the south of the entrance to the Ambulatory. The Life of the Buddha begins on the other (north) side of the entrance to the Ambulatory and ends on the west wall.

As we shall see, the functional unity of the narrative paintings is consistent with the integrated iconographic program of the Assembly Hall. As with the images of the mandala, the other iconographic elements are also in balance – each wall graphically mirroring the other. This is also true in the narrative painting, although the graphic parallels are less frequent and less obvious than in other iconographic themes such as the Buddhas of the Ten Directions.

The unity of the iconography, including the narratives, is experienced in the simplest sense, by the practitioner

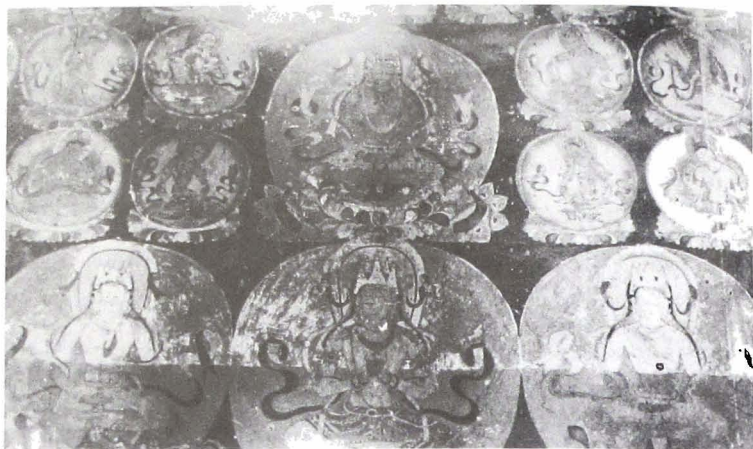


Fig. 117. Mang-nang, western Tibet: upper part of a horizontal mandala of the five Jina Lower temple

during the performance of the ritual circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā*) (diagram 8. Assembly Hall Circumambulation). The intended continuity between the two narrative cycles is visually reinforced by the parallel organisation of the final Heaven scene in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (Samantabhadra's Vision or Paradise) and the initial Tuṣita Heaven scene of the Life of the Buddha (diagram 10. Assembly Hall West Wall). Another point connecting the narratives: the practitioner begins his pilgrimage at Dhanyākara where Śākyamuni preached the Tantras one month before his departure from this worldly existence (*parinirvāṇa*), and ends his pilgrimage in Kuśinagara with the cremation and the distribution of Śākyamuni's relics.

The fact that the west door to the mandala is guarded by two guardians (*dvārapāla*) also indicates that the sacred ground of the mandala is confined to the Assembly Hall. It would seem correct to propose that the mandala was circumambulated without entering the Ambulatory. Thus the circumambulation of the mandala and the sacred pilgrimage are one and the same.

The Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang)

The representation of the Pilgrimage of Sudhana is divided into irregularly spaced areas containing mural paintings with panels of various sizes containing a redacted version of the text of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (diagram 9. Assembly Hall South Wall). Each painting represents the place where Sudhana meets one of his Spiritual Friends and the texts in the panel below it derive from the same chapter, but their content, although parallel, is not identical. The wall text only relates to the



Fig. 118. Two goddesses and four wrathful deities
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, upper section, north side, part of a mandala-like composition centred around a wrathful deity

Painted narrative in that they both contain a concrete reference to the *kalyāṇamitra* and the setting in which he meets Sudhana. However, the function of the wall text panel is to present the text of the Sutra, which for the most part is of an abstract nature. The paintings, on the other hand, try in visual form to convey the narrative – the main characters of each scene are presented, as well as a sequence of activities and the movement of the characters between the scenes. Steinkellner (1995: 22) has concluded that the wall texts neither directly explain the paintings, nor could they be used to explain the painting, such as through an oral recitation¹⁶. Yet it is not clear if the paintings alone would be comprehensible, even though this story was popular during the period, as is to be seen from the scene in a leaf from the Tholing *Prajñāpāramitā* ms. (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pl. 101). Here masculine figures dressed in costumes like those used in the Tabo Nor-bzang story are shown making offerings to the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā*. The painting is accompanied by the prayer “just as Nor-bzang attained the highest stage, may I and all beings, without exception, remain on the path of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom)”.

In some way the two components of the Tabo narrative cycle, the more concrete painting and the more abstract wall text, must have been considered complementary; although they each had a different function¹⁷.

One of the most beautiful paintings of the Sudhana cycle is the first surviving section on the east wall. Here we see Mañjuśrī (figs. 23 and 119) surrounded by the gods on his right and on the left by the people of

Dhanyākara to whom he is preaching. Behind Mañjuśrī is the famous stupa, beneath this is Sudhana (fig. 23) with an attendant holding an umbrella over his head. This designates Sudhana as a noble or holy person. Sudhana has long hair signifying a lay person and he wears the typical western Tibetan lay costume.

A charming example of how skilfully and economically the painter is able to set a narrative sequence is found in fig. 120 which represents Sudhana's visit to the monk Meghaśrī (Scene 2)¹⁸. Sudhana finds his house empty, then he climbs Mt. Sugrīva looking for Meghaśrī, but finds the mountain inhabited only by mountain sheep, antelopes and musk deer (fig. 233). Sudhana finds Meghaśrī on another peak but only on the seventh day.

Scene 17 (below Akṣobhya [no. 2] on the south wall) finds Sudhana kneeling before the perfume merchant Samantanetra (his special status indicated by the large umbrella over his head). Sudhana asks for spiritual instruction. The environment of the city, the shop, etc. are skilfully depicted. The artists were particularly skilful in depicting little genre scenes to vividly convey the action of the story (fig. 121). In the story of the Spiritual Friend (*kalyāṇamitra*) Anala, the scenes of torture which were used by this king to deter people from evil doing (Scene 18) are vivid and inventive (fig. 122).

At the end of the south wall is a large painted panel depicting Sudhana's visit to the 51st and 52nd Spiritual Friend. The text is given in a large panel at the bottom of the picture plane. The rest of the space is filled with an architectural structure in which four scenes are depicted. To the proper right Sudhana is shown entering into the building. In the first scene he kneels before Śrīsaṃbhava, in the second scene before Śrīmātī, below there are two more scenes and then Sudhana with a backward glance is shown leaving the city. In the text panel below, the city is identified as Sumanāmukha. The text (Steinkellner 1995: 86–90) relates that the boy Śrīsaṃbhava and the girl Śrīmātī refer Sudhana to the Bodhisattva Maitreya who lives in the south. There is then a rather long discussion of the importance of seeking a Spiritual Friend and the proper manner and attitude.

The two last scenes on the west wall under sculpture number 14 depict Sudhana's visit to Maitreya, the 53rd Spiritual Friend, and finally again to Mañjuśrī, the personification of Wisdom, who had initially sent him on his journey. This last section of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is one of the most poetic and even extravagant parts of the entire text (Steinkellner 1995: 92–104; transl. Cleary

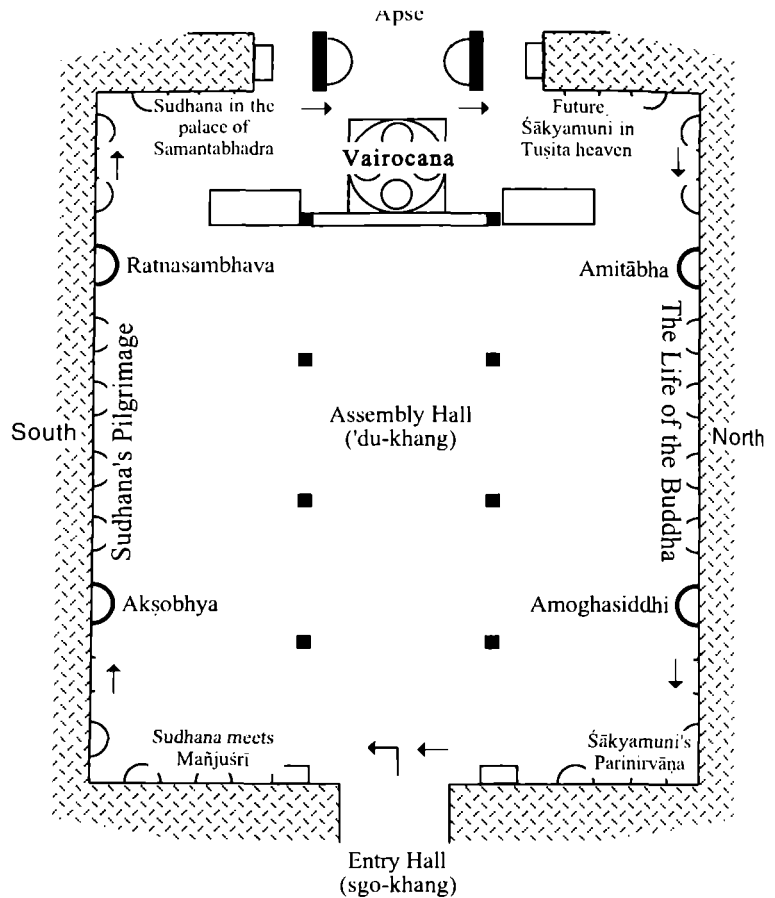
1987: 328–394). The mural paintings must also have been marvellous but unfortunately only fragments remain. Sudhana visits Maitreya in his abode, the tower Vairocana in the palace of Samantabhadra, “This is the abode of those who dwell in the state of emptiness, ...”. In a marvellous panorama Maitreya extols the determination for Enlightenment (*bodhicitta*); he brings forth various miracles as teachings for Sudhana, including his own (Maitreya’s) life and the Spiritual Friends he has visited. In fig. 124 we see a detail of a scene from Maitreya’s life where the virtue of giving away (*pradāna*) is extolled: here Maitreya (seated in a blue Tibetan coat [*phyu-pa*]) gives away two children to a naked ascetic. The inscription, in cursive, identifies the scene as the “Giving of Children” (Steinkellner 1995: 91)⁹. At the end Maitreya tells Sudhana to return to Mañjuśrī. It is he alone who can answer his questions regarding the *successful fulfilment of the Bodhisattva path*.

Passing more than 110 cities, Sudhana returns to Sumanāmukha, represented by the architectural complex in the painting (fig. 125). Then Mañjuśrī extends his hand over 110 leagues (shown by repeating his hand four times – three of which are to be seen in the figure – extending from a cloud), and blesses Sudhana. “Having caused Sudhana to see by means of his spiritual talk, having directed him, inspired him, gladdened him ... plunged him into the sphere of universally good practice, and established him in his own place, Mañjuśrī left the presence of Sudhana” (Cleary 1987: 378).

The final scene of the narrative depicts the realm of Samantabhadra enthroned in his palace, surrounded by a heavenly assembly (fig. 126). Vairocana in a multi-coloured radiance is enthroned on a lion throne above him. The deities are placed under an arch adorned with bells at the centre of a vast multistoried tower. Samantabhadra extends his right hand to Sudhana who is surrounded by a great assembly, Bodhisattvas to his right, monks and all the other classes of beings to his left. Sudhana experiences the vision of the Bodhisattva’s creation and merges with Samantabhadra.

This vision of a great assembly delighting in the presence and the word of the Buddha is a leitmotiv which occurs throughout the Main Temple. It mirrors the meditation of the believer as he performs his devotion in the presence of the Buddhas and joins with others in the Saṅgha as they receive the Buddha-word²⁰.

The heavenly vision is reproduced in a parallel im-



age at the beginning of the Life of the Buddha (on the west wall on the other side of the entrance to the Apse) where Śākyamuni and his successor Maitreya are shown enthroned in the Tuṣita Heaven (fig. 127) (diagram 10. Assembly Hall West Wall).

The west wall, dividing the Assembly Hall from the Ambulatory, ends here. Around the corner at right angles to this last scene is a yellow guardian figure (fig. 81), Vajrapāśa, one of the four door-keepers of the mandala. The two guardian figures (figs. 81, 82), Vajrapāśa and Vajrasphoṭa, on the west side of the Assembly Hall demarcate the sacred precincts of the mandala which coincides with the Assembly Hall. Leaving the realm of Samantabhadra, the last scene of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, and continuing the *pradakṣiṇā*, one crosses behind the over

Diagram 8. Assembly Hall Circumambulation

Fig. 119. Pilgrimage of Sudhana
(Nor-bzang), Mañjuśrī
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east
wall, lower section, first scene of
narrative



life-size clay image of Mahāvairocana, staying within the confines of the mandala. One arrives at the north half of the west wall and the spiritual pilgrimage continues through the story of the Life of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

The Life of the Buddha

The Life also has some, but not as many, panels meant to contain inscriptions. They are, however, totally empty and there is no indication that they ever contained writing (diagram 11. Assembly Hall North Wall). Although at first glance the slender figures in Indian dress and the lush tropical environment give the impression of a different sensibility at work than in the Sudhana story, a comparison of specific details, such as the Bodhisattvas and their crowns, make it clear that the paintings result from the same workshop.

The narrative begins on the west wall to the north of the Ambulatory. The main motif is a palace in which two deities are seated in radiant round mandorlas. The pavilion is hung with bells (fig. 127). The proper right wing of the palace (*kūṭāgāra*) is almost totally destroyed. Various birds and animals inhabit it. Beginning with the upper part, there is a small creature, maybe a monkey. On the next roof underneath is a large bird, and underneath him a beautiful peacock with a long tail. On the upper part of the proper left side of the palace still remain, from top to bottom, a goat, another fourlegged white animal, a *garuḍa*, a turtle perhaps, a bird and a peacock with outstretched tail. In different rooms of various levels of the palace are male personages wearing local dress. The building originally continued all the way down to the base line of the painting. At the centre of the ceiling of the palace is a *kirtimukha*, to each side and below the *kirtimukha* are rows of bells. Below the third row of bells is a green Bodhisattva, his right hand is in a peculiar mudra: the hand is facing towards the chest, the palm turned totally out, the thumb is not visible, the index and all the other fingers are lined up diagonally. The Bodhisattva's hand is extended towards Śākyamuni. The first scene of the story takes place in Tuṣita Heaven and has three parts – (1) Śākyamuni (as Śvetaketu) crowning Maitreya as his successor, the Buddha of the Future, (2) Preaching to the gods for the last time, (3) the Bodhisattva's Descent from Heaven in the form of a white elephant (Luczanits 1993).

(1) At the top centre of the composition Śākyamuni sits cross-legged without a crown, is turning towards



Fig. 123. Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang). Sudhana visits the boy Śṛisambhava and the girl Śṛimatī Main Temple. Assembly Hall, south wall, west corner, lower section, scenes 51 and 52 of narrative



Facing page

Fig. 120. Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang). Sudhana visiting the monk Meghaśrī Main Temple. Assembly Hall, east wall, lower section, second scene of narrative

Fig. 121. Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang). Sudhana visiting the perfume merchant Samantanetra Main Temple. Assembly Hall, south wall, lower section, scene 17 of the narrative

Fig. 122. Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang). scene of torture, detail of Sudhana's visit to King Anala Main Temple. Assembly Hall, south wall, lower section, scene 18 of narrative

his proper left, holding a crown in his two hands. The Bodhisattva wears a dhoti with a pattern of rosettes. To Śākyamuni's left is the Bodhisattva Maitreya, he is red and wears a crown, but is leaning forward to receive a second crown offered by Śākyamuni. His right hand leans on his right knee, the palm is opened as if in the Gesture of Giving (*varadamudrā*). The left hand is raised, the mudra is rather difficult to distinguish. The Buddha-to-be Śākyamuni said: "Most honourable ones, I will go to India ... Behold, here, the Bodhisattva Maitreya; he shall instruct you in the Law." Upon this the Bodhisattva removed the tiara from his head and placed it upon the head of the Bodhisattva Maitreya (LAL 38: 14, 17)²¹.

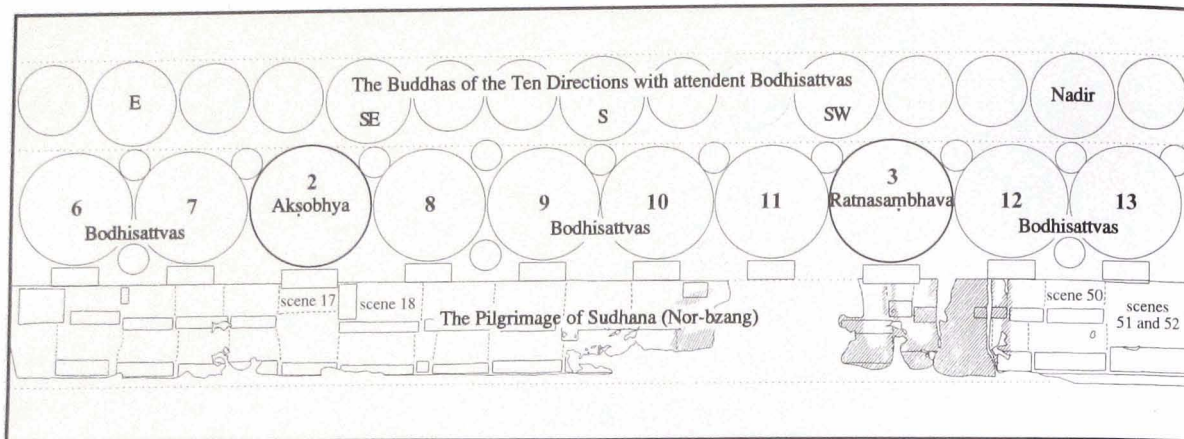
(2) Underneath Śākyamuni sits a white Bodhisattva with the Gesture of Teaching (*vitarkamudrā*). This may represent Śākyamuni preaching to the gods before descending to earth for his last rebirth. An assembly of heavenly deities surround the image of Śākyamuni preaching. They appear to be all masculine figures in the Gesture of Offering (*añjalimudrā*). All of them wear the typical Tabo Bodhisattva crowns.

(3) Moving away from and behind the Maitreya fig-

ure is a beautiful cloud pattern with the rear part and the curled up tail of an elephant.

There is a large crack at the very edge of the palace that divides the Tuṣita scene from the following scene, which takes place in the Deer Park. Four or perhaps five deer mark the beginning of the next scene, which is the self-immolation of the Arhats in the Deer Park. The only portion of this painting which appears to be original depicts a group of four deer underneath the cloud showing the elephant (the Bodhisattva, Śākyamuni) descending to earth. There are seated Buddhas in the flames, which appear to be later additions. There are also three panels at the very bottom of the composition which do not appear to have ever had inscriptions. At the top of the composition are the energetic and free-moving clouds carrying the Bodhisattva in the form of a white elephant.

The next scenes take place in Kapilavastu, in Śuddhodana's palace (Siddhārtha's father) (fig. 128). A large palace with many floors, apartments, towers and terraces crowned with red tiled roofs is the setting for different scenes. There are three scenes: 1) Māyādevī's Dream 2) The Report of the Dream 3) The Interpretation 4) Request to Depart to Lumbinī (fig. 129)²². The palace is rep-



resented by a large architectural composition which fills the vertical and horizontal space of the picture plane.

1) Māyādevī's Dream is depicted in the left centre of the palace. The queen is lying on her left side and seems to be looking towards the elephant who is descending out of a cloud towards her. According to the *Lalitavistara* the Bodhisattva descends from the Tuṣita abode and enters his mother's right side in the form of a white elephant with six tusks and a red head. The only parts of the elephant which appear here are the two hind legs and the tail. The queen is reclining on a couch which is covered with a patterned textile. Behind Māyādevī is a female attendant and in front of her at the foot of the bed lie two more attendants, all of whom are turned towards the figure of the queen. The queen's profile is quite strong with sharply delineated nose and eyes, the hair brought up in a large bun behind the head. The two female attendants at her feet are dressed in a similar way. The veils surround the entire head, almost like a halo with a point at the top. Underneath Māyādevī's bed chamber, a row of ladies is depicted which serves as a scene divider.

2) Beneath this is a rather damaged scene depicting the king, identified by his crown, with Māyādevī seated before him. Here she relates the curious dream of the elephant entering her side.

3) The next scene begins just behind the king. Here the five wise men interpret the dream. They inform King Śuddhodana that the queen will give birth to a son who will either become a Cakravartin (great king) or a Buddha.

4) The fourth scene is placed above the Interpretation of the Dream. Here the king sits under an umbrella

while Māyādevī sits before him (fig. 129). She tells him that she longs to see the pleasure garden at Lumbinī.

Around the corner on the north wall the next five scenes take place in the Lumbinī garden. They show 1) The Procession 2) The King's Retreat 3) The Birth 4) The First Bath 5) The First Steps 6) Departure of the Bodhisattva from Lumbinī – and are among the most marvellous paintings in this narrative cycle.

The entire vertical space of the wall is filled with the great procession which accompanies Māyādevī to Lumbinī (1). According to the *Lalitavistara* the king commands 20 thousand elephants (fig. 130), 20 thousand horses and 20 thousand brave soldiers (fig. 131) and Māyādevī is to ride alone in the finest chariot drawn by noble ladies (fig. 132). Here the painter found a humane compromise, for the chariot is drawn by horses ridden by maidens who turn towards the queen waving fly-whisks to cool her. The energy of this composition is marvellous, it uses the entire space to depict the richness of the procession.

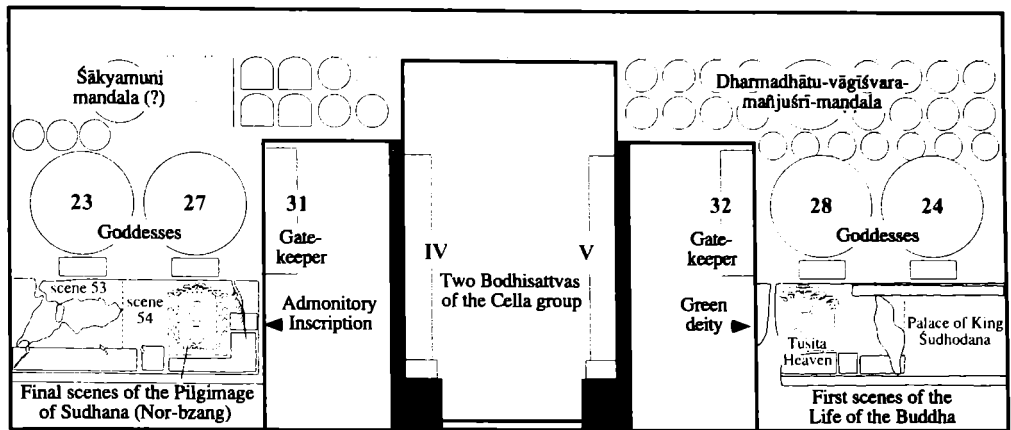
In the Birth scene (3) (fig. 133) in the middle of the Lumbinī garden Māyādevī is shown standing under a fig tree, her right hand holding a branch and the Bodhisattva stepping out from her side. He is received by Brahmā (with three heads) and Śakra (Indra).

In the following scene (4) (fig. 134) Śakra holds the Bodhisattva who is seated in the lotus position on his outstretched hands. Next to it the Bodhisattva is shown standing on lotus blossoms under his feet. A *nāga* lady (a divine serpent) pours water over him. This scene is known as the First Bath.



Diagram 9.
Assembly Hall South Wall

Diagram 10.
Assembly Hall West Wall



According to the *Lalitavistara*, the mother of a future Buddha dies seven days after he is born and goes to Tuṣita Heaven. Māyādevī's sister, Mahāprajāpatī (also a wife of the king) then cares for the Bodhisattva. At the end of the Lumbini scene we see the chariot carrying the Bodhisattva and his aunt to Śuddhodana's palace (6).

The scenes from the Buddha's life in his father's palace are mostly destroyed. It is here that the inscription written on paper and pasted on the wall records the attack on the monastery by Dogra soldiers (see Chapter II). The entire wall appears to have been broken through. Most of the key scenes including the four excursions where the Bodhisattva (Prince Siddhārtha) encounters signs of sickness, old age and death – thus introducing him to the nature of samsara, and then an ascetic which allows him to see the path of the release from suffering – have been repainted.

The original composition begins again below the sculpture of Vajrakarma (no. 18) after the middle of the north wall. At the top of the picture one sees the hoofs of Prince Siddhārtha's horse Kaṅṭhaka as he is carried by heavenly beings from the palace. He approaches the Nairājanā river which cuts diagonally across the pictorial frame and serves as the scene for several events in the region. These scenes are part of the sequence which is associated with Bodhgayā – the place of the Buddha's Enlightenment. All that has survived is 1) Arriving at the Nairājanā river 2) Practising the Austerities for six years 3) Māyādevī begging her son to desist from self-mortification 4) Offering of food by Sujātā (fig. 135) 5) The Washing of the Corpse's Shroud etc. 6) The Ten Milkmaids.

Following the Buddha's Enlightenment (which is lost), there is a (once) luminous scene towards the end of the north wall which occupies the entire vertical expanse of the picture plane. The preaching Buddha is enthroned in a multicoloured radiance. He preaches the *dharma*, the *Lalitavistara*, to a great assembly of gods to his right and laymen to his left. It is also with this assembly that the literary text of the *Lalitavistara* ends.

Following this scene there is a major change in the composition of the wall paintings. Instead of the generous flowing compositions which occupy the entire vertical space, we have a series of small scenes ordered one on top of the other. There are four scenes of the Buddha preaching at the end of the north wall. At the bottom of the wall, the painting depicts the Conversion of the Kāśyapa at Uruvilvā. All these scenes may be located in the general region of Bodhgayā²³.

This same rather chaotic compositional scheme continues in the last section on the east wall. On this wall are located the Four Miracles and the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. The story of each of the Four Miracles is recounted by the device of continuous narration through two or more scenes. Each miracle is presented as a discrete narrative unit, spatially differentiated by the characters turning inward towards the main character, the Buddha Śākyamuni. Each location/miracle is clearly presented. In the upper part of the wall, (E) Sāṃkāśya, the Descent from Heaven of the 33 Gods (see Allinger 1993, Allinger forthcoming [a]); (F) Rājagrha – the Offering of the Monkey at the bottom of the picture plane (fig. 137). The Buddha is shown in profile seated on a throne. He holds in his out-

Fig. 124. The Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang). Maitreya giving away his children in one of his former lives Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west wall, lower section, detail of scene 53, the visit to the palace of Maitreya

Fig. 125. The Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang). Mañjuśrī's hand blesses Sudhana Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west wall, lower section, detail of scene 54

Fig. 126. The Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang). Sudhana with Samantabhadra in front of Vairocana Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west wall, lower section, final scene

Fig. 127. Life of the Buddha. Śākyamuni preaching and crowning Maitreya as his successor in Tuṣita Heaven before his final rebirth Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west wall, north side, lower section, first scene

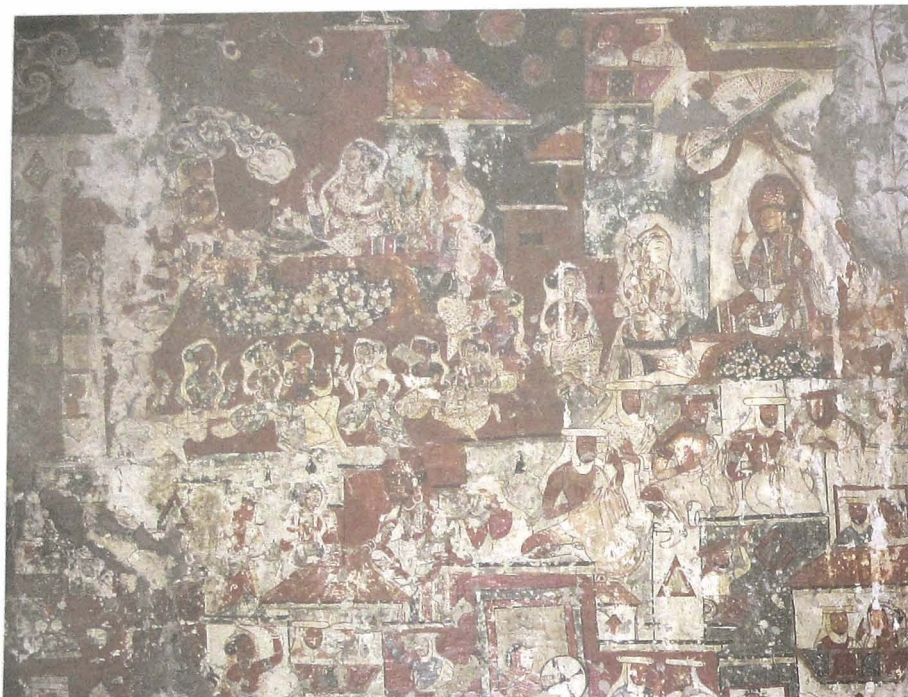


Fig. 128. Life of the Buddha, royal palace of King Śuddhodana with Māyādevī's Dream, the Report of the Dream, its Interpretation and the Request to Depart to Lumbini Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west wall, north side, lower section

stretched hands the bowl of honey which the monkey kneeling before him has just offered him. The next scene underneath shows the monkey dancing for joy. And underneath this the monkey falling into a well while dancing, from which he was immediately reborn in heaven. (G) The Miracle of Śrāvastī; (H) Nālāgiri – the Subjugation of the Mad Elephant.

Then come the last scenes of the Buddha Śākya-muni's life at Kuśinagara. At the centre of the painting is represented the (I) *mahāparinirvāṇa* and then (spatially speaking the last scene) is (J) the Cremation. Then the action moves backward to (K) the Veneration of the Relics (fig. 136) (Klimburg-Salter forthcoming [d]). These scenes are organised in such a way that the last vertical section takes place at Rājagṛha and Kuśinagara, the two final stages of Śākya-muni's life.

Image and Text

The spiritual journey is presented as a pictorial narrative of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the Life of the Buddha progresses chronologically, following a wavelike organisation until the end of the north wall. The mural painting of the Life of the Buddha which begins in the north-east corner has a

different composition and breaks with the consistent serpentine organisation of the many metres of narrative painting which precede it. This compositional inconsistency allows us to understand the relationship between text and image in the narrative painting in the Tabo Assembly Hall (Klimburg-Salter forthcoming [d]).

An important difference between the two narrative cycles in the Assembly Hall is the presence of written wall texts (Steinkellner 1995). In the *Gaṇḍavyūha* there are large panels of inscriptions skilfully integrated into the pictorial composition – i.e. often functioning as scene dividers. These large panels were conceived of as pages and thus are numbered (by letters) in red and black in the upper lefthand corner according to the Tibetan system. The text is a skilful shortening, not a synopsis, of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* – a significant intellectual achievement – (a diplomatic edition of the wall text has been prepared by Ernst Steinkellner, 1995). Each written panel contains the portion of the Sutra which is also relevant to the scene presented above. Thus, the abstract content of the Sutra is included, as well as the “story”. In effect there are parallel texts. The problem is why are both the written and visual wall texts there?

Fig. 129. Life of the Buddha, Request
to Depart to Lumbini
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west
wall, north side, lower section





Fig. 130. Life of the Buddha, Procession to Lumbinī garden. Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north wall, west side, lower section

In contrast, the Life also has some, but not as many, panels originally meant to contain wall texts. They are, however, totally empty and there is no indication that they ever contained writing.

The Buddhist narrative paintings at Tabo belong to a type of wall painting known in the Chinese tradition as “transformation tableaux” (*pian-hsiang*). However, the presence of the comprehensive wall texts introduces a new element and thus indicates a function different from the Tang period murals at Dunhuang (Mair 1986a, Wu Hung 1992).

The depiction of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in the Tabo Assembly Hall appears to be the earliest wall painting to use a parallel written and pictorial text. A more abbreviated form of this type of representation is known from China, but no similar concept is known from India. The earliest surviving images from the Life of the Buddha in India at Bhārhut were accompanied by captions but these, apparently, were later considered superfluous. Brief captions identifying the narrative, a place, or a person seldom occur in the wall paintings at Ajañṭā. There are also a few instances of such captions, written in cursive script, on the relevant scenes in the story of

the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in Tabo. But these captions are very different from the wall texts which are conceived of as pages, as can be seen from both their form and content. This phenomenon occurs only occasionally in later Tibetan temples. A particularly interesting example is found in Zha-lu monastery. Here the wall inscriptions, also placed in page-like panels, begin with a panel containing the frontispiece of the *Jātakamālā* (stories of the Buddha’s previous lives). Exactly as the frontispiece of a valuable book, the panel is dark blue with the title written in gold in Sanskrit and Tibetan.

The most important themes in Indian Buddhist narrative painting are the Life and Previous Lives of Śākyamuni. The history of the canonical literary tradition of the Life of the Buddha is still the subject of scholarly debate. The only Sanskrit text to survive which relates the story from the Tuṣṭita Heaven to the *mahāparinirvāṇa* is the *Buddhacarita*, a non-canonical source. The earliest surviving pictorial text which contains passages from the entire life is the mural painting from Ajañṭā, c. late 5th century A.D.²⁴ The paintings in the Tabo Main Temple are the earliest example of a linear chronological Life of the Buddha from the Tuṣṭita Heaven to the Dis-

Fig. 131. Life of the Buddha, Procession to Lumbinī garden Main Temple. Assembly Hall, north wall, west side, north section



Fig. 132. Life of the Buddha, Māyādevī in her chariot, Procession to Lumbinī garden Main Temple. Assembly Hall, north wall, west side, lower section



tribution of the Relics. From the discordance in the compositional mechanisms it is clear that this narrative scheme is in its formation stage.

From the very little evidence surviving from greater India, it would seem that the *Lalitavistara* was an important source for the pictorial rendition of the Life of the Buddha from the post-Gupta period onward. This tradition continued in the Trans-Himalayan regions of Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. In Tabo, despite the loss of several sections, a large part of the narrative is well preserved. It is thus possible to analyse how the written narrative was transferred into the pictorial language.

Unlike earlier Indian paintings there is a linear chronological order to both narrative cycles at Tabo. But in the Tabo painting this order extends only from the Buddha's sojourn in the Tuṣita Heaven to the Buddha's exposition of the *Lalitavistara* following his Enlightenment in Bodhgayā and the First Sermon at Sārnāth. This is also the final chapter of the *Lalitavistara*. In the wall paintings an abrupt change in the format and organisation of the scenes occurs at this point. Beginning in the north-east corner we find that the free flowing horizontal hand-scroll-like organisation is replaced by scenes

placed one above the other, each representing the Buddha preaching. All scenes represented in this section follow the Buddha's Sermon at Sārnāth.

The organisation of the images on the east wall is even more distinctive. Here we find a series of separate narratives representing the Four Miracles, each unit organised according to the principle of continuous narration. The scenes are piled up horizontally, one on top of the other. Empty spaces between the scenes serve as dividers. Then come the final scenes of the Life; there is no chronological order – so that the Worship of the Relics comes before the Cremation in Kuśinagara.

The Tabo artists were apparently familiar with earlier Indian art (such as the scenes with Māyā or the Buddha receiving the honey pot from the monkey [fig. 137]). But many scenes include details unknown in Indian art, such as in the details of the Procession to Lumbinī (figs. 130, 131, 132), or genre details in the Descent from the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods at Sāṃkāśya. In an analysis of the latter scene Allinger (1993) has demonstrated that the Tabo artists used traditional Indian elements but created a new and original pictorial representation uniquely suited to the needs of the new Indo-Tibetan community. It is precisely this perspective which allows us to explain the narrative painting in the Assembly Hall – the choice of subject and the relationship between image and text.

The pictorial narrative of the Life of the Buddha in India developed in a context where the basic philosophical concepts (e.g. karma) and methods (e.g. meditation, pilgrimage) were familiar. So also the stories connected with the Buddha's progress to Enlightenment were drawn from the Indian cultural context and easily assimilated. As the pictorial language developed, it drew on other visual models and folk stories becoming in time an independent visual tradition which seems to have, to some degree, differed from region to region (Taddei 1993 and 1995: 43–49). The monumental narratives were also found in different contexts – adorning stupas which were the focus of public pilgrimage sites (e.g. Borobudur), or the walls of the living quarters in a monastery (Ajaṅṭā) where they were intended for the monks. Thus, various narrative modes also developed. Occasionally a linear chronological order dominates (as in some Gandhāra friezes) but usually not. But a spatial organisation of the narrative was always present. The stories were usually grouped together according to the place where they oc-

curred, whether or not these separate events were then linked according to a temporal sequence. As we have seen, this is true of both visual narratives at Tabo.

It is now generally accepted that this emphasis on place coincided with the importance of pilgrimage in India. Śākyamuni's progress to Enlightenment could be experienced by the practitioner through the ritual of pilgrimage (to the places sanctified by Buddha's presence). In Tabo, the benefits of pilgrimage could be reproduced in a miniature scale through the rite of ritual circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā*).

Thus, in the Tabo Assembly Hall the practitioner first participates in "Sudhana's Miraculous Journey" (Steinkellner 1995) from place to place and then Śākyamuni's progress to Enlightenment. The clarity with which the stages of the Pilgrimage are represented, clearly establishes the message, the function of the visual wall texts. Unlike in India, where Śākyamuni's story had been integrated into the general cultural landscape, in the Indo-Tibetan borderlands a heterogeneous audience needed to be addressed and in part even converted.

Thus, for the new community and its missionary goals, the need for authenticity (validation from a canonical source) (Steinkellner forthcoming) was considered more important than aesthetic unity. As there was no complete canonical literary biography of Śākyamuni, the designer followed the *Lalitavistara* to its conclusion and then added the synoptic scenes from other sources to conclude the story. The Tabo painting may in fact have been the first attempt to design a continuous visual narrative of the Buddha's life from the Tuṣita Heaven to the Distribution of the Relics. By the 14th century an integrated life story had been achieved in literature and art (Luczanits 1993, Klimburg-Salter 1988) and had become ubiquitous in Buddhist wall painting throughout the western Himalayas.

The Ritual Function

Because the narrative paintings run underneath the clay figures of the mandala the worshipper automatically comes eye to eye with the narrative images as he is performing the ritual circumambulation. Indeed the process of circumambulation allows the worshipper to perform a spiritual pilgrimage while also passing through the sacred geography of the mandala. The sculptural panels of the same themes at Borobudur were also "activated" by the ritual of circumambulation. But no par-

allel painting of a Buddhist temple survives in India; although we can test our hypothesis in the rock-cut caves at Kyzil in Central Asia.

The fragmentary art historical evidence from India has left us no comparable monument with the narrative painting intact with the exception of the rock-cut caves in the Buddhist monastic complex at Ajaṅṭā, India, dated c. to the late 5th century. Only recently, thanks to Schlingloff's monumental work (1988), have the contents of the painted narrative cycles been identified. The function of the individual painted programs in their different architectural contexts has yet to be seriously considered. The paintings rarely have a linear, chronological sequence, rather they are often organised spatially – that is according to the location of the action. A variety of narrative devices are used (Dehejia 1990, 1991) but often the temporal sequences are not clearly defined. In short, it is often difficult to understand the stories depicted.

Fortunately, from Kyzil in Central Asia two rock-cut prayer halls have survived with enough of their painted decoration to permit an analysis of the contents, composition, and ritual function. Schlingloff (1991) has demonstrated that in two instances, in the cave of the Zebucart and the "Devils' cave 'A'", the stories of the Previous Lives of the Buddha (*Avadāna*) were organised so as to be read during the ritual of circumambulation. The narrative is portrayed through a series of consecutive monoscenic images, each representing the dénouement of a scene (as in many of the painted panels in the Sudhana story). The story was organised in tiers so that one would "read" each sequence of the story laterally and then continue the story in the next register on the subsequent circumambulation²⁵.

The various social, institutional contexts for the narratives in Kyzil are too imperfectly understood. It is clear, however, that Kyzil like Tabo had a multi-ethnic population and was the scene of conflicting ideologies. It thus seems fair to propose that, as at Tabo, the narratives were meant to "sell" their message. The paintings were there, to be looked at. All this may seem obvious, but this purpose has been questioned: It has been pointed out that many of the murals in Cave 17 of Ajaṅṭā are so densely painted, and the narrative unfolds in such a confusing manner, that it is difficult to understand the story without a good deal of leisure and background knowledge. Thus, one might conclude, not every story is meant to be looked at, just as all inscriptions on monuments are



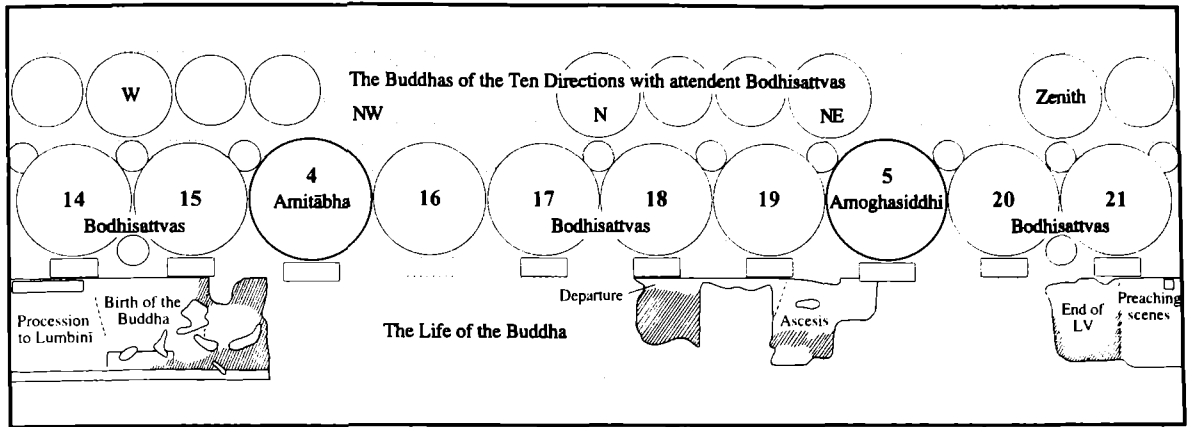


Diagram 11. Assembly Hall North Wall

not necessarily meant to be read²⁶. The example of the Kyzil narrative paintings, however, is conclusive evidence of the connection between ritual circumambulation and the intended reception of the image. There is in fact a somewhat loose but interesting parallel with the narrative Sutra scroll. Here the viewer is stationary but activates the narrative (the unfolding of action through time and space) through his intervention (the simultaneous rolling open and closing of the scroll). In the Tabo and Kyzil prayer halls, the viewer activates the narrative by moving through the space of the image.

The Historical Figures

After the Life of the Buddha more than half of the northern section of the east wall is dedicated to the donors of Tabo. Royal figures in western Tibetan dress are seated before a curtain, with other laymen behind. Associated with this were rows of monks and laymen also once identified by inscription. This composition probably extended as far as the original doorway (diagram 7. Assembly Hall East Wall). Now there is only modern painting except directly underneath the clay sculpture of the gate-keeper there are two panels containing five inscriptions. At the bottom of the panel was an extensive inscription now destroyed.

All historical figures wear the traditional western Tibetan dress, the men wear a *phyu-pa*-like coat with a wide collar and the monks wear a monastic robe over it, with black Central Asian shoes. Their hair is cut short in the style of monks. Underneath them are inscriptional panels, one for each. From the few letters that remain

one good hypothesis is that they represent the ruling dynasty of Purang-Guge. Four figures remain. The central figures under the curtain are surrounded by a large group of people.

Little is preserved of the associated rows of monks and laymen. In the first row below the gate-keeper, Vajrāṅkuśa, are five men, each wearing traditional dress and hats. The inscriptions are partially legible. Another small group of four figures, of which only two are clearly legible, survives. Again the figures are dressed in this combination of western Tibetan coat with monk's gown but with hats (see Luczanits forthcoming [a] for inscriptions, also Klimburg-Salter 1994a). (See Chapter VI.) An interesting question is the relationship of this assembly to the assembly painted above the Renovation Inscription. This assembly was painted at the same time as the narratives of the Life of the Buddha and therefore only a few years before the renovation painting. Since both the composition and the inscriptions are almost totally destroyed, this is the perfect place for all manner of fantasy. This composition may have been intended to present the whole community, while the composition above the Renovation Inscription was painted later when the inscription was written and presented only those personages who were related to the renovation or who belonged to the Tabo Saṅgha (fig. 139).

Fig. 133. Life of the Buddha, Birth of the Buddha
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north wall, west side, lower section

Fig. 134. Life of the Buddha, First Bath
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north wall, west side, lower section

Fig. 135. Life of the Buddha, Śākyamuni fasting
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north wall, lower section



¹ With the exception of the two representations of a nine-headed deity with a horse head, both in the Apse (entry to the Apse north face of the wall, and upper zone east wall), these are the only Tantric representations in the Main Temple.

² Tucci speaks of two gigantic protector images in the small passage leading to the Cella, which he says are definitely recent. This must be a confusion in his notes. He must be referring to the two standing protector figures in the Entry Hall, which are certainly more recent in date.

³ A joint team from the Institute of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Vienna (ITBS) and Istituto Italiano per il Medio Estremo Oriente (IsMEO) visited Tabo in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996. Luczanits' research was carried on from 1990 onwards when the ASI had already taken up again the restoration work begun in the 1960s.

⁴ The guardian figures have a different posture so that their size (110 cm on the east wall and 100 cm on the west wall) cannot be directly related to this hierarchy.

⁵ The paintings in the Ambulatory may have represented stories from the pre-

vious lives of the Buddha contained in the Jātaka and Avadāna literature (Deshpande 1973) or from a Sutra.

⁶ Sørensen 1994: 379 n. 1260. The sources disagree on the total number of images in the retinue of Sarvavid Vairocana, but in no case is 32 listed.

⁷ Naturally, one wonders if a similar progression occurred in Tabo.

⁸ At a later period, in the system associated with the Anuttara Tantra, Akṣobhya occupied the centre of the pentad.

⁹ The core of the mandala, the first 37 deities of the 1037 deity Vajradhātumaṅḍala.

¹⁰ See Luczanits Chapter V.7. *Sarvataihāgatattvasaṅgraha-tantravyākhyā* Q 71, 185, 22–186, 3, 7.

¹¹ The names of the Buddhas and one of the accompanying Bodhisattvas are taken from the introductory chapter to the three larger versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, i.e. *Śatasahasrikā*-, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*-, and the *Aṣṭadaśasahasrika-Prajñāpāramitā*. There also the names of the respective worlds (*lokadhātu*) the Buddhas and their principal Bodhisattvas reside in arc mentioned (Luczanits forthcoming [a]).

¹² In Nako, upper temple, there survives a row of birds at the top of the valance.

A wooden fragment from a now destroyed monastery at Shelkar in Kinnaur also has a carved motif consisting of a stylised valance topped by a row of birds, c. 10th–11th century.

¹³ *Niṣpannayogāvali* 21: the Sanskrit is transcribed in de Mallmann 1964: 220ff.; see also Bhattacharya 1968: 103–4.

¹⁴ We will only list some of the key problems regarding the iconography – to begin with only the main divinities are represented and then the directional symbolism is somewhat unclear because of the horizontal format. The eight Uṣṇīṣa sit on lions but Mañjuṣa does not. Sometimes the colour of the divinities or aspects of them are problematic. In NSP 21, Mañjuṣa is golden yellow (which also affects the colours of the heads yellow, blue, red and white) and forms the centre of a spatial mandala. In SM 61 the divinity is reddish-white and the heads relate accordingly but the figure is not the centre of a physical mandala but rather exists within the mind and body of the practitioner. In Tabo the figure is reddish-white with white, blue and reddish-orange heads. Other differences are that Amoghasiddhi is blue and not green, the colours of the eight Uṣṇīṣa are also problematic.



Fig. 136. Life of the Buddha, Veneration of the Relics Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, north side, lower section

Fig. 137. Life of the Buddha, Miracle of Rājagrha - the Offering of the Monkey Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, north side, lower section

¹⁵ See Klimburg-Salter (forthcoming [a], [b], [c]) for a complete description.

¹⁶ A suggestion which I made earlier, 1984.

¹⁷ The exact analysis of this function and the means by which this was achieved will be the subject of a separate publication.

¹⁸ Scenes are numbered according to the *kalyāṇamitra* visited (see Steinkellner 1995).

¹⁹ Cf. the *Viśvāntarajātaka*.

²⁰ We have already discussed that the Buddha is conceived of as actually present in the temple (see Schopen 1990).

²¹ An extended discussion or explanation of this scene is found in Luczanits 1993.

²² During the pilgrimage Kapilavastu is visited together with Lumbinī which is c. 10 km distance.

²³ Xuanzang's account of the holy sites the pilgrim visits in the area is instructive (Beal 1969).

²⁴ Within Indian Buddhist narrative painting we distinguish two groups of art historical documents: 1) Miniatures

in manuscripts and/or on book covers (which were not illustrations but rather synoptic excerpts from the narrative), which had private and/or semi-private function; 2) The wall paintings, which decorate sacred architecture, are monumental in scale and have a public or semi-public function. Of course, only a small percentage of Indian mural paintings has survived. In any case, the most extensive and only consecutive narrative which has survived in sculpture is found on Borobudur in Java. The relationship between the narrative tradition in stone reliefs and mural paintings remains to be examined.

Until recently little research had been published regarding the correspondence between specific artistic and literary narratives of the Life of the Buddha in India. The early miniature paintings are too abbreviated to allow for a correspondence to a particular text. Thus, only the monumental painting and sculptural art has, until now, been the subject of a comparative analysis. Not-

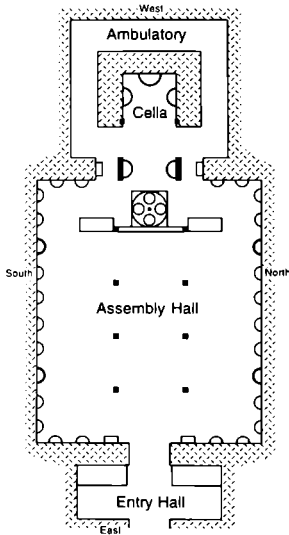
ing only the most influential studies: J. Williams, regarding Gupta-period Sāmāth reliefs noted a preference for the Sanskrit tradition but could not identify a single source (Williams 1975: 188); Krom in his study of the Great Stupa, Borobudur, in Java (Krom 1927) identified the *Lalitavistara* as the source of the sculptured narrative panels. Schlingloff in his studies of the mural paintings from Ajañtā (1982) identified the *Lalitavistara* as the source only for the painting in Cave II, the rest, particularly Cave 16, is largely based on the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*.

²⁵ A similar two-tiered organisation of a narrative sequence – meant to be read through the ritual of the *pradakṣiṇā* – is known from Gandhāra. The possible influence of historical north-west India on Kyzil has long been postulated.

²⁶ There are many examples – the most pertinent are the inscriptions at the top of the wall in the totally dark Ambulatory in Tabo.



V.3. The Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*)



Plan 9. Cella

On the south wall of the entry to the Ambulatory (*skorlam*) is located the yellow guardian figure (*chos-skyong*) Vajrapāṣa with the right knee forward, the left leg extended (*ālīḍhasthānaka*); underneath him is written the Admonitory Inscription. This inscription occupies one half of the wall panel (63 x 103 cm). The other half is neatly ruled off in red and would appear to have been intended to hold another inscription. It was never painted.

The inscription has been translated and edited by Helmut Tauscher (forthcoming) who provisionally dates it c. 1042, the same time as the Renovation Inscription, which is also adjacent to it. The inscription is unique in its form and contents. It begins abruptly without any introductory address. The first three lines contain the message, “No layman, be he a king (*rgyal po*), minister (*blon po [chen po]*), lord (*dbañ po*) or whosoever, is entitled to physically or verbally punish or insult a monk, regardless of the latter’s moral status” (Tauscher forthcoming). The rest of the inscription provides the authoritative source for this statement by quoting the *Daśacakṛakṣitigarbhamahāyānasūtra* (*ibid.*).

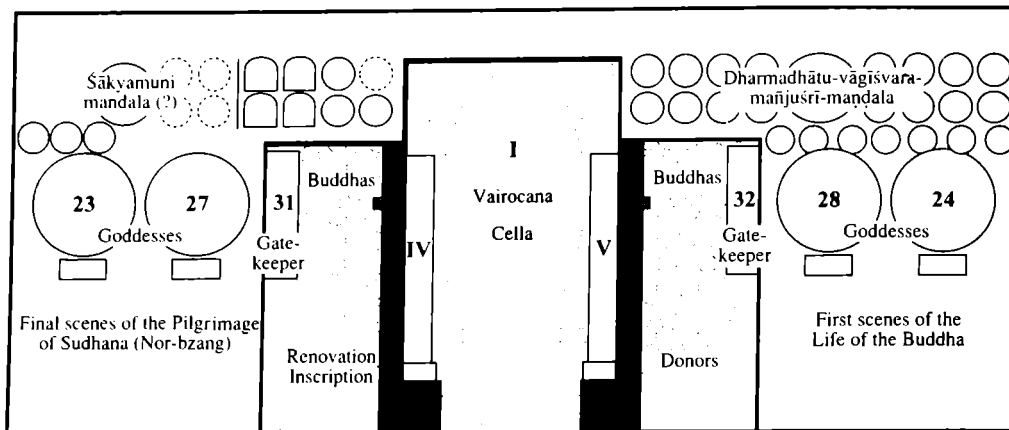
The content of the inscription and its location next to the Renovation Inscription suggests that there was some violent activity against the monastic community which both necessitated the inscription and the renovation of the temple only 46 years after it was built (Tauscher forthcoming and Steinkellner forthcoming).

To the right of the guardian figure, diagonally across the entrance to the Ambulatory, on the wall to the proper right of the Cella, where the *pradakṣiṇā* of the Cella would begin (diagram 12. Transition Zone), we find the

famous Renovation Inscription (Steinkellner and Luczanits, Appendix). And above this is a painting of extraordinary importance (fig. 139). The painting and the inscription date from the same period; this is clear from the manner in which the sleeve of the man from Rum falls over the edge of the inscription (fig. 4).

The painting has three sections. The centre panel consists essentially of the throne scene. The main figure of the composition can be identified as a royal lama by his dress, a monastic robe over a *phyu-pa* (Tibetan coat) with exceptionally long sleeves. We tentatively identify him as Byang-chub-'od who commissioned the renovation recorded in the inscription. He is placed on the axis of the composition and is larger than everyone else; he is seated under an umbrella and in front of a curtain. The drapery falls behind him and is gathered up above him at five points in round knotted forms, coming to a peak at the highest point directly over his head. Underneath the top of the draped curtain is an umbrella, with a gold ball at its apex. The royal lama (*lha bla-ma*) sits on an elaborate wooden throne on a pillow covered with a geometric pattern. The wooden throne has three elaborately carved legs and in the space between the legs are depicted two wheels. The royal lama has a round face, short black hair, fine regular features exquisitely drawn, almond-shaped eyes, a small nose and a small, red mouth. The ears are also finely proportioned, although depicted as seen from the side which is typical in the 11th-century Tabo paintings. He has a broad neck with three folds, a feature found also on Buddha figures. The three folds are considered one of the marks of a great

Fig. 138. Goddess with umbrella
Main Temple, Cella, west wall, right
of Vairocana



man (*mahāpuruṣa*). He wears the typical dress worn by lamas in Tabo. That is a gold-yellow, shirt-like outer garment and a white inner shirt with an extremely wide, white collar trimmed with blue; the sleeves are excessively long, hanging down to the knees and covering both hands. The white inner garment shows at the collar and inside the sleeve, and the outer, long-sleeve garment is of a heavier material. Both garments have very long sleeves. The undergarment shows out underneath the red monk's overrobe where it falls in thick, stylised pleats. The red monk's garment, which is thrown over the left shoulder, is edged at the bottom, the top and on the left sleeve with a black and gold border. Byang-chub-'od sits in the Posture of Royal Ease (*laliṭāsana*) with the left foot on the right side and the right foot hanging down: he wears black Central Asian-style boots. Behind the throne to his left is a tall object which looks like a three-pointed flag. To the right of the figure is another standing object which is not totally clear. If one compares the object with the paintings in the Assembly Hall it would seem to be an umbrella. The fly-whisk and the umbrella are royal symbols and are found frequently in early medieval painting in Tibet. Behind the draped curtain are two standing figures peering over at the seated figure. Both have long hair and seem to wear local Tibetan dress. The one to the left of the royal lama has a whitish face and the figure to his right figure has a reddish face.

The left part of the composition clearly represents, as is said in the inscription, the great Saṅgha of Tabo monastery (*ta po yi dge 'dun sde chen po*) (fig. 6). The com-

munity is organised rather artistically in four rows showing 17 monks. All the monks appear to be in the Gesture of Offering (*añjalimudrā*) (fig. 141). Each monk wears the typical Tabo monastic dress, worn also by the royal lama, except that the sleeves are not so excessively long. There is an artistic alternation of the colours of their faces which are red, yellow or white and the colours of the clothes are changed accordingly. So that from the top we see a white face in profile with a blue collar and a red garment. Next to him, slightly turned away, is a man with a red face and a garment with a white collar. Next to him again, a monk with a white-yellow face who wears a blue garment and so forth. There do not seem to be major variations in the figures except for the bottom row where we see a figure larger than the others, seated with both legs brought up, wearing Tabo monastic dress (figs. 6, 234). The left hand is behind him on the floor, palm down; the right is in front, palm towards his chest, the thumb and middle finger pressed together and holding a small flower. The only slightly distinctive feature besides the larger size and different mudra is the wide-brimmed hat he wears, white on the outside, red on the inside. The shape of the hat is similar to the "black hat" worn by the Karmapa during the ceremony by that name¹. The monk is seated on a red carpet and has red long sleeves to his garment. The figure next to him is also kneeling in *añjalimudrā* on a white square, and the figure next to him is kneeling on a red square. The figure which we take to be the abbot of Tabo from his size and placement is identified in the inscription as the Great Arhat (*gnas-brtan chen-po*) 'Dul-ba-byang-chub.

Diagram 12. Transition Zone Assembly Hall West Wall to Cella and Ambulatory

Fig. 139. Donor depiction and Renovation Inscription
Main Temple, Ambulatory, southern
face of the entrance to the Cella



To the proper right of Byang-chub-'od the composition is divided in two. In the bottom row are the secular figures. Above the secular figures were placed particularly important monks, who were once identified by inscription. On this upper plane there have originally been three figures. All three are kneeling, the left leg drawn up, foot flat on the ground, the right knee on the ground². The one closest to the centre is shown in three-quarter profile in *añjalimudrā*; he has short hair and wears monk's dress. He kneels on a red square. The monk next to him is in the same posture but the left hand is down on the ground, the right hand is raised, palm towards the centre figure. Between them is an inscription panel which is empty. Originally there was a third figure in the same posture with the left hand on top of the left knee. The hand is raised, palm up, thumb and index pressed together. The inscription above is only fragmentarily preserved. In the row underneath are depicted the secular figures. The large man to the proper right of Byang-chub-'od is a most imposing figure, identified by an inscription next to his head as being from Rum (figs. 4, 140)³. He wears the typical western Tibetan overcoat similar to that worn by the monks except without the monk's robe (*samghati*).

The man's coat seems to have two parts. There is a sort of undergarment which has an extremely broad, red collar lined in blue and narrowing to the waist. This undergarment can also be seen at the edge of the sleeves and at the bottom of the robe. Over this comes a coat which is tied at the waist with a broad, white belt and has extremely long sleeves falling in points down over the inscription. His knees are drawn up, his left forearm lies on his left knee, the right knee is drawn up with the right arm resting on it, the right sleeve flowing down to reach the black felt boots. He has long hair rolled under at the neck and a moustache and beard. He has small, fine features outlined with red shading. The inner side of the eye is shown in three-quarter profile. He wears a flat, red, doughnut-shaped hat. Next to him is a figure wearing the same kind of dress but completely white. His skin is pink, he also has long hair rolled under just above the shoulders, but he has no moustache or beard. He wears a white hat with two points. Next to him is a kneeling figure with a white hat. Behind are perhaps female figures.

On the other side of the Cella, on the wall parallel to the composition just described, was a row of seated secular figures with inscription panels. Only Gherisi's pho-



tograph and a few faint traces remains (fig. 142).

The passage way between the Assembly Hall, the Ambulatory and Cella is dark and crowded with four sculptures. Placed on the face of the half walls on the north and south sides are the two guardian figures Vajrapāśa and Vajrasphoṭa (nos. 31 and 32) (diagram 12. Transition Zone). Between them two Bodhisattvas, both yellowish, are standing with their backs to the guardian figures. They are placed symmetrically to either side and to the west of the Mahāvairocana (fig. 143). Thus the west face of the Mahāvairocana faces the Vairocana of the Cella with the two yellow Bodhisattvas in between.

The two clay Bodhisattvas in the transition zone each stand on lotus pedestals placed on a raised block to either side of the Mahāvairocana (fig. 143). According to

Luczanits' analysis (Chapter V.7) these two Bodhisattvas must be original because the ladder structure which supports them also supports the roof (fig. 144). The weight is borne by the right leg, the left is somewhat forward with the large toe over the edge of the lotus⁴. They are lower than the two standing Bodhisattvas in the Cella. Although they have both been extensively repaired, one can tell from the hairstyles and the crowns, and even to some degree from the faces and figure-style, that all the so-called "Cella sculptures" date from the same period (see Luczanits Chapter V.7 for more details). The Bodhisattva to the south on the left appears to have been painted a sort of yellowish colour. The dhoti is wrapped around the protruding belly, the belt is tied with a large knot, one leg of the dhoti is shorter than the other. The

Fig. 140. Donor from Rum Main Temple, Ambulatory, detail of painting above Renovation Inscription, southern face of the entrance to the Cella



Fig. 141. Monks of the Tabo Saṅgha Main Temple, Ambulatory, southern face of the entrance to the Cella, detail of painting above Renovation Inscription

right hand is raised in the Gesture of Disputation (*vitarkamudrā*), the left is open in the Gesture of Giving (*varadamudrā*). The Bodhisattva to the north is also considerably restored but clearly belongs to the same period as the other images (fig. 144). The figure is now painted a golden colour, the right hand which is in *vitarkamudrā* is somewhat peculiar, the hand is held at waist level. The second finger and thumb forming a circle, the index finger and the small finger protruding outwards, hands away from the chest. The face of this figure is quite finely modelled, although in a rather unusual style (fig. 145). The cheeks and chin are round and protruding and the face relatively long. The crown is set on two rows of round, tight curls, the hair falls to either side in multiple small plaits (compare figs. 145

and 148). In the latter example the crown is represented as hair ornament consisting of beads set on the hair and painted red. Perhaps this was the type of crown originally used for the Cella figures (see Luczanits Chapter V.7).

The half wall separating the Assembly Hall from the passage has a three-part construction, the highest point is at the centre opposite the Cella. Due to the thick walls, the painting actually covers three surfaces and there is thus a profusion of painted decoration. There are three different ceiling heights, the Assembly Hall, the Ambulatory and the highest point is in the Cella. Because the mud walls are very thick (1.1 m), between each of these transitions the walls have a soffit. For instance, the soffit of the wall separating the passageway from the Ambu-

Diagram 13. The Cella Walls

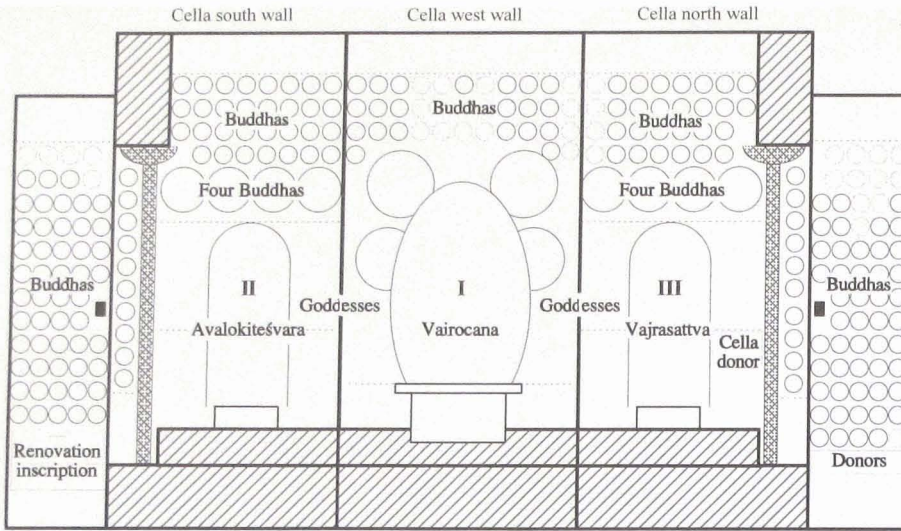


Fig. 142. Lay donors depicted to the proper left of the Cella Main Temple, Ambulatory, northern face of the entrance to the Cella

latory is still decorated with cloth painted in an extremely elegant design. The basic typology of these paintings on cloth is the same as in the Cella. The panels are placed perpendicular to the main cult image, i.e. east-west. There is a border consisting of a running vine motif. Inside the running vine are represented alternately seated figures and animals (fig. 205). In the middle of this decorative ensemble are four circles alternating between the flying divinities and the lotus. This pattern is the same as on the soffit of the wall leading to the entryway to the Cella (figs. 157, 158). In the corners, i.e. the south-west corner, there are different motifs, such as the conch shell.

The small Cella (fig. 146) measures c. 2.55 x 2.65 m, has a raised floor and is slightly higher than the rest of the temple (diagram 13. The Cella Walls). It contains three over life-size clay sculptures, each with a pair of painted goddesses (figs. 29, 149). The Ambulatory runs around the south, west, and north sides of the Cella. The ceiling of the Cella is still completely covered in painted cloth, although very much destroyed.

On the axis of the composition is a seated Jina (Buddha) figure, c. 135 cm h., which has been partially restored. He sits on a throne on a double step pedestal, on the base are two sculpted lions, facing each other (fig. 146). He is painted red and seated in Meditation Posture (*dhyānāsana*) and in the Gesture of Meditation (*dhyānamudrā*). The remains of a garland are still around his shoulders. The same flower garland (*mālā*) is also worn by the standing clay Bodhisattvas. His dhoti has a chainlike pattern painted in red, blue and green. It is similar to several examples of chainlike patterns painted on the ceiling cloth in the Assembly Hall but the colour schemes are quite different and the former is more finely drawn. The Jina's long hair hangs to his shoulders in a similar style to the hairdo of the Bodhisattvas standing to each side of him. His face is flat and the head has lost its hair and crown. He has an oval halo and a round, moulded mandorla with a dense flame pattern which is quite different from the moulded mandorlas in the Assembly Hall. Above the figure of the Jina are four clay flying divinities, two to either side and two above. The two figures below are painted red, the two above are painted green (fig. 147) and blue. The face, the hair and even the patterns on the dhoti are consistent with similar features of the two standing Bodhisattvas in the Cella and would appear to be original (fig. 148). It does not

appear as if there had been another image at the apex of the composition at the top of the wall, but as this part of the wall is completely destroyed it is impossible to say. In the triangle between the side wall and the flying clay figures there are painted female flying divinities.

The identification of the Jina has been the subject of some debate. Tucci (1935: 78) had identified him as Amitābha due to the red colour and *dhyānamudrā*. However, I (1982: 160) suggested the identification of Vairocana due to the lion vehicle and the fact that older images of Vairocana are seated in *dhyānamudrā* – usually with the Wheel of the Law placed on the upturned palms (for instance from Dunhuang, Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pl. 61; or at Ropa in Kinnaur, Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 69, Fig. 52). It has now been established that the Jina might have been painted white (Luczanits Chapter V.7), thus confirming the identification of Vairocana'.

To either side of Vairocana stands one Bodhisattva – to the proper right a white Bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara (fig. 29), and to the proper left a blue Bodhisattva, Vajrasattva (fig. 149). They can be identified by their attributes, which can be inferred from their hand gestures. This pair of Bodhisattvas is found frequently in western Tibet. The most pertinent comparisons are the large standing wooden Bodhisattvas from Ropa c. 10th century (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Figs. 57, 58, 59). We cannot yet identify the two yellow Bodhisattvas.

Also the flat and often rather awkward figure style of the five Cella sculptures is strikingly different from the harmonious forms of the clay sculptures of the mandala. A confusing feature which is difficult to explain is that the Vairocana's necklace is made from the same mould as those used for the sculptures of the mandala. All five figures of the Cella group appear to have been made at the same time. Thus it is reasonable to assume that they are, iconographically seen, a group. The beautiful textile patterns on the dhotis of the Cella Bodhisattvas (fig. 201) and the six goddesses painted as attendants to them (see below) are stylistically quite different and were probably created later.

Singhal (1991) has attempted to identify this group according to the Abhisambodhi-Vairocana-maṇḍala (bSod nams rgya mtsho [1983]: no. 20). Thus, the Bodhisattvas to either side of Vairocana would be identified as Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi and the two Bodhisattvas in front of the Cella as Kṣitigarbha and Ākāśagarbha. As tempting as this identification may be, there are a number

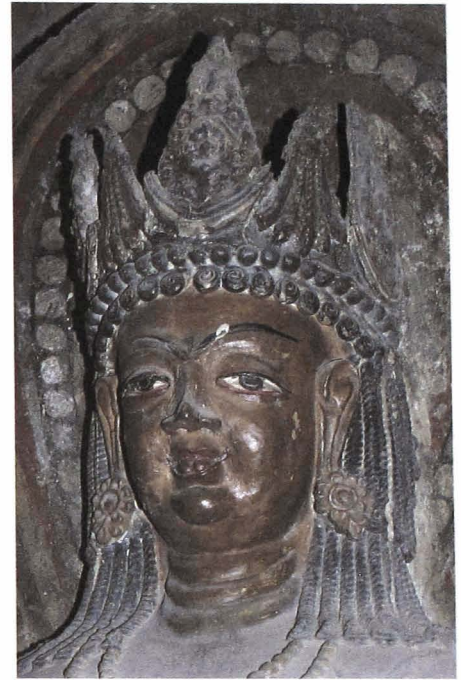


Fig. 143. View from the Cella towards the Mahāvairocana Main Temple, passage between the Apse (Ambulatory and Cella) and the Assembly Hall
Two standing Bodhisattvas (sculptures IV and V) fixed to ladder-like supports

Fig. 144. Bodhisattva V
Main Temple, passage between the
Apse (Ambulatory and Cella) and the
Assembly Hall
The ladder-like support is painted with
lotuses



Fig. 145. Head of Bodhisattva V
Main Temple, passage between the
Apse (Ambulatory and Cella) and the
Assembly Hall
The crown may be of a later date



of problems – for instance, Vairocana faces east, not west as specified in the text, and there is no indication that this figure was ever painted yellow. Vajrapāṇi is not represented, but rather Vajrasattva, as can be seen from the position of the hands, although apparently in this class of Tantras these figures can sometimes be exchanged. The iconography of the two minor Bodhisattvas in front of the Cella do not at all coincide with the text. Singhal follows the identification suggested by Tucci. However, his identification is consistent with his having identified the Jīna as Amitābha. Nevertheless Dr. Singhal's suggestion that this group could be based on the Caryā Tantras would appear to be correct, since the three figures represented in the Cella, Vairocana accompanied by Avalokiteśvara and Vajrasattva, represent the three Buddha families of this Caryā Tantra class of literature.

We are confronted once again with a familiar phenomenon in Tabo. The organising principle of the Cella triad is familiar from the known literature but the exact literary source for the iconography of the total pentad cannot be identified. Nevertheless, in every way Tabo can be related to the later Mahāyāna Indo-Tibetan tradition. The patrons even publicised the authenticity of the

tradition by writing in Tibetan translation the relevant passages from the canonical literature on the walls.

On the other hand, it is understandable that Singhal attempted to explain the paired Vairocana figures at Tabo by reference to a Shingon tradition⁶. There is no known parallel in the earlier Buddhist tradition of India⁷. However, a tradition may have existed for the paired images in the early art of Tibet; that is, a pair of images serving as the main cult figures with the primary image in front. This occurs at both the Jo-khang and the Ra-mo-che in Lhasa, the two primary temples of the time of the ancient monarchy. In each case there is a specific story which accounts for the presence of the second image directly behind the first. This would seem to indicate that such pairs were an exception which needed an explanation. At Tabo it is quite clear from the style of the figures that each of these cult figures came from a different artistic tradition, thus they probably also were created at different times. Presumably there was also at Tabo a legend which explained how or why they came together, but this is now lost, presumably forever. The simplest explanation is that originally the main image of Vairocana was in the Cella, and during renovation the

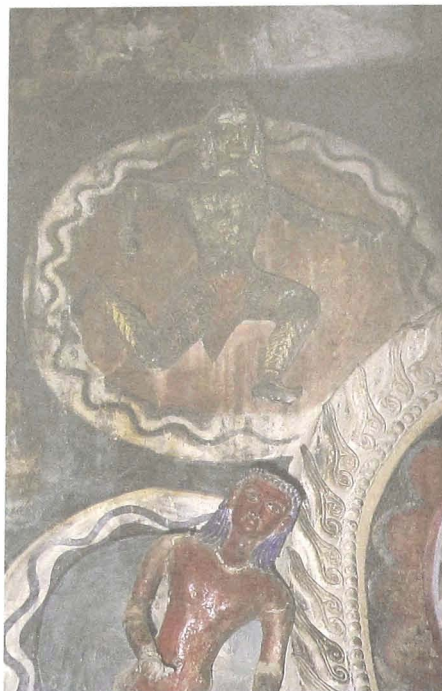
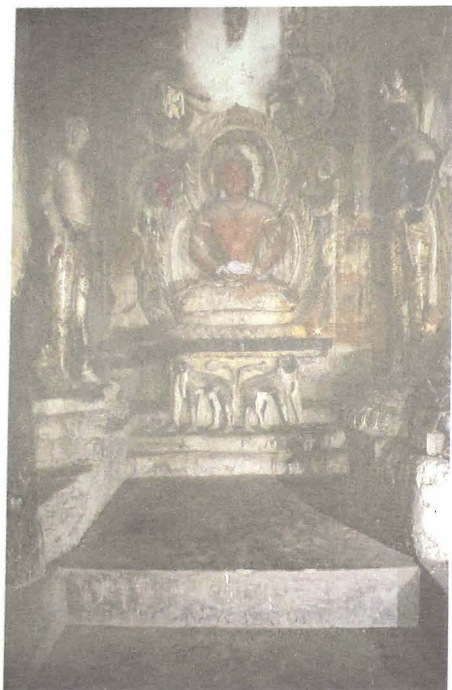


Fig. 146. The Cella Main Temple
The central Buddha Vairocana (today identified as Amitābha because of his red colour). The Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Vajrasattva, standing to his right and left

Fig. 147. Flying deity offering a flower
Main Temple, Cella, west wall, to proper right above the halo of Vairocana (detail of fig. 146)

new Mahāvairocana (as Lord of the Mandala) was added in front of the Assembly Hall.

Each of the three clay divinities of the Cella are accompanied by painted standing female divinities (figs. 28, 150). There are all together six goddesses, two for each of the clay sculptures in the Cella. Beginning on the south wall there is a standing, green-blue female goddess (fig. 28) in the Gesture of Offering (*añjalimudrā*) holding an open, blue lotus (*utpala*). She wears a three-pointed crown which is quite similar to the crowns of the Bodhisattvas painted in the upper zone of the Assembly Hall. On her forehead is painted a third eye. Her hairstyle is quite complex, forming a large spiral with some sort of ornamental headdress in the middle. She wears heavy earrings and jewellery, the long necklace falling between her extremely round breasts. The exaggerated torso, round, full belly, extremely full hips may in part be related to the standing white clay Bodhisattva (fig. 29). Each of the goddesses' entire head and shoulders are surrounded with a shawl, in this case it is white. The shawls are depicted in a partially realistic way, passing over the head and between the four points of the crown. This motif of the shawl forming a halo around the figure is also seen in

the painting of the Life of the Buddha, in the latter instance the veil has a point at the top of the head. On the other side of the standing white Bodhisattva is a female figure which is now almost completely destroyed but appears to have been originally red and holding a flower. At a slightly lower level relative to the ground and facing the clay Vairocana image is another goddess. She is also painted red and is holding a strange snake-like form between her two hands, but instead of a head there is a flower. Again the figure has the same exaggerated breasts, torso and a deep inset navel. The wide hips carry an ornamental gold belt and the bare feet have golden bracelets. To the other side of Vairocana is a far better preserved female figure, painted yellow, wearing a complex three-pointed crown with hanging pearls, the same swirled hairdo that sticks out at the back of the head (fig. 138). The "further" eye is exaggerated. A necklace that falls over the breasts and is twisted into three loops falls down to the stomach. She carries an ornamental umbrella and has a white scarf over her head and shoulders. The mudra is very peculiar: the left hand lies on her hip and appears to have the thumb and all the fingers curled, the palm facing up and the small finger sticking out. The two most

Fig. 148. Head of a flying deity
Main Temple, Cella, west wall, proper
right above the halo of Vairocana; clay



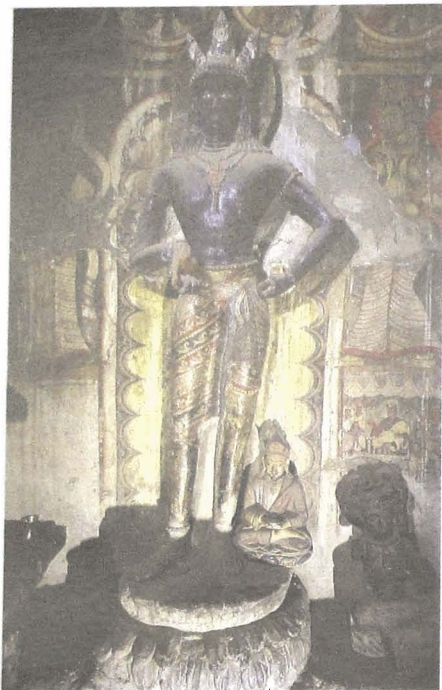


Fig. 149. Bodhisattva Vajrasattva flanked by painted goddesses Main Temple, Cella, north wall (sculpture II); clay



Fig. 150. Goddess to the right of Vajrasattva Main Temple, Cella, north wall (detail of fig. 149)

beautifully painted goddesses are on the north wall. They are both painted green. The one closest to the back wall again has a very beautiful three-pointed crown. She has a cross-shaped mark on her forehead, the right hand has the index and forefinger together, she holds a red vajra. The left hand is lost. The dhoti falls over the ankles; one sees no ankle bracelets but the green feet have red henna on the soles. The last goddess is green and with the same complex crown, elaborate hairdo, etc. (fig. 150). Her two hands are brought up in front of her breast, palms forward, fingers turned back and hold a noose with vajras at the end. The feet have an exaggerated shape with long toes treated in a sort of swirl-like pattern; she wears golden ankle bracelets.

The goddesses each have a mark on their forehead, the first and the last have a third eye, the second and fifth a cross, third and fourth a point. They probably represent the Goddesses of Offering, although the system represented here is not known to me⁸.

The green goddess to the right of Vajrasattva on the north wall stands on a thick line which is the upper border of a painting of a donor and his retinue (fig. 151). This painting shares some general features with other

donor paintings associated with the kings of Purang-Guge, as discussed in Chapter VI. The composition is more schematic than the picture of Byang-chub-'od and the Tabo Saṅgha (fig. 139) above the Renovation Inscription. The figures are defined by a simple black outline, there is no shading, not even around the eyes. Certain features which appear elsewhere in Tabo are here exaggerated, such as the extended "further" eye, the "sailor hats" which do not have a realistic shape and do not fit on the heads but are rather placed on top of them. Some important features do not seem to have been understood, such as the honorific canopy/curtain. In the upper part of the picture frame is a white drapery, like the tops of tents. Obviously, this is meant to represent the same kind of cloth backdrop for the royal lama as in the Renovation Inscription painting, but here the logic is lost, the back and sides of the tent-like structure are missing. Instead, the royal lama is separated from his retinue by a heavy line defining a rectangle with an arch on top. This seems to be a misunderstanding of the honorific curtain separating Byang-chub-'od from the others in the assembly (fig. 139). That the function of this structure is meant to be the same can be seen from the two figures at the sides above

Fig. 151. Donor of the Cella paintings,
probably Zhi-ba-'od
Main Temple, Cella, north wall



the square who look down on the main person, exactly as in the renovation period painting.

The royal lama is larger than everybody else. He sits on a striped pillow, in a variant of the Posture of Royal Ease (*lalitāsana*) with one leg drawn up, his left arm resting on his left knee. He wears the same type of monk's habit as Byang-chub-'od, and even the shading of the undergarment in deep u-shaped folds is similar, but here more schematic and emphatic. Unlike Byang-chub-'od, this personage wears a cap and is not represented in a strictly frontal position, rather he is slightly turned to his right and is making an offering. Indeed, there are no other examples of this typology where the royal lama, who is the main figure of the composition, wears a hat and makes an offering. As we have noted, there is a clear division between the secular and ecclesiastical headgear, and this example indisputably belongs to the latter category. Of all the headdresses represented in Tabo, this one is closest to that worn by 'Dul-ba-byang-chub (fig. 6) who is identified as a Great Arhat (*gnas-brtan chen-po*). Like 'Dul-ba-byang-chub he holds a flower offering, but this example is much larger, consisting of three flowers on one stem. It may be that this

person also has a high rank in the ecclesiastical community, in addition to his royal status. Only one of the royal lamas of this line was also a translator (*lotsawa*) and an important personage in the missionary activities of this dynasty, Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od, Byang-chub-'od's younger brother. We know that this scholar and royal lama had a special relationship to Tabo because he is represented together with Byang-chub-'od and Yeshe-shes-'od in the Mandala Temple (*dKyil-khang*) (Tucci 1935: Tav. LVIII). Zhi-ba-'od also appears in Tholing, again together with Yeshe-shes-'od and Byang-chub-'od, in the Temple of the 16 Arhats (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: 237).

Unfortunately, we know so little about the dynasty of the kings of Purang-Guge that it is impossible to identify any of the other figures in this painting. The visual vocabulary appears to be the same as that used in the other historical paintings in the Main Temple. The assembly to the right and the left of the main personage are clearly differentiated. There are no religious personages represented. However, the six personages represented to the proper left appear to be more important than the six on the right side because they are slightly



larger. The four behind wear the typical “sailor hat”, the two in the front the flat, red, turban-like hat. In the Renovation Inscription painting, the men wearing the red, turban-like hats seem to be more important. To the proper right the five males behind do not wear hats, and they are so small that they could be children, but this is not at all certain. The one female represented sits alone in the front row and is clearly the most important person on this side. Due to our limited understanding of both the secular iconography and the history of the period, this important historical document remains a mystery.

This donor painting is contemporaneous with the six Offering Goddesses in the Cella, as well as some of the paintings on the east wall of the Ambulatory (Group D as defined in Chapter VI) (fig. 27). They all share the same simplification of line and the exaggeration of certain features which seems to indicate that these paintings are later than the renovation period paintings. On the other hand they clearly belong to the same cultural context but may have been painted by a less sophisticated atelier. Thus, this donor picture and the other paintings in the Apse which are stylistically related to it, may

have been almost contemporary with, or only slightly later than, the renovation period paintings.

The upper part of the back (west) wall of the Cella is quite destroyed. There are remains of the typical decorative valance all around the inside of the Cella (fig. 152). As already noted, this variant of the valance is very simple and closer in its form to the valance in the Ambulatory. Underneath this were originally three rows of eleven Buddha figures from top to bottom and two Buddhas in the corners of a fourth row, all of which originally had identifications. The Buddhas are painted in alternating colours.

The upper parts of the south and north walls of the Cella are also decorated with rows of Buddhas. On both walls at the top we have eight Buddhas across in four rows (fig. 153) – row four has only seven Buddhas. Each Buddha is provided with an inscription panel but most of them now appear to be empty or illegible. The Buddhas are represented in different colours but the same colour was used for the vertical rows. Underneath is a larger row of four Buddhas, each seated under a tree. The first Buddha is green, one shoulder bare, the mudra



Fig. 152. Decorative valance Main Temple, Cella, south wall

Fig. 153. Buddha Main Temple, Cella, rows of Buddhas, upper section of the walls

Fig. 154. One of eight Buddhas Main Temple, Cella, south wall, upper part of the wall



Fig. 155. Buddha of the Bhadrakalpa Main temple, Ambulatory, western corridor, inner wall (outer wall of the Cella), uppermost row of Buddhas The Buddha 97 of the Bhadrakalpikasūtra. His name is written on the dividing line above him: Tathāgata Pad-ma

Fig. 156. Valance with pearl garland held by kirtimukha Main Temple, Ambulatory, western corridor, inner wall (outer wall of the Cella)

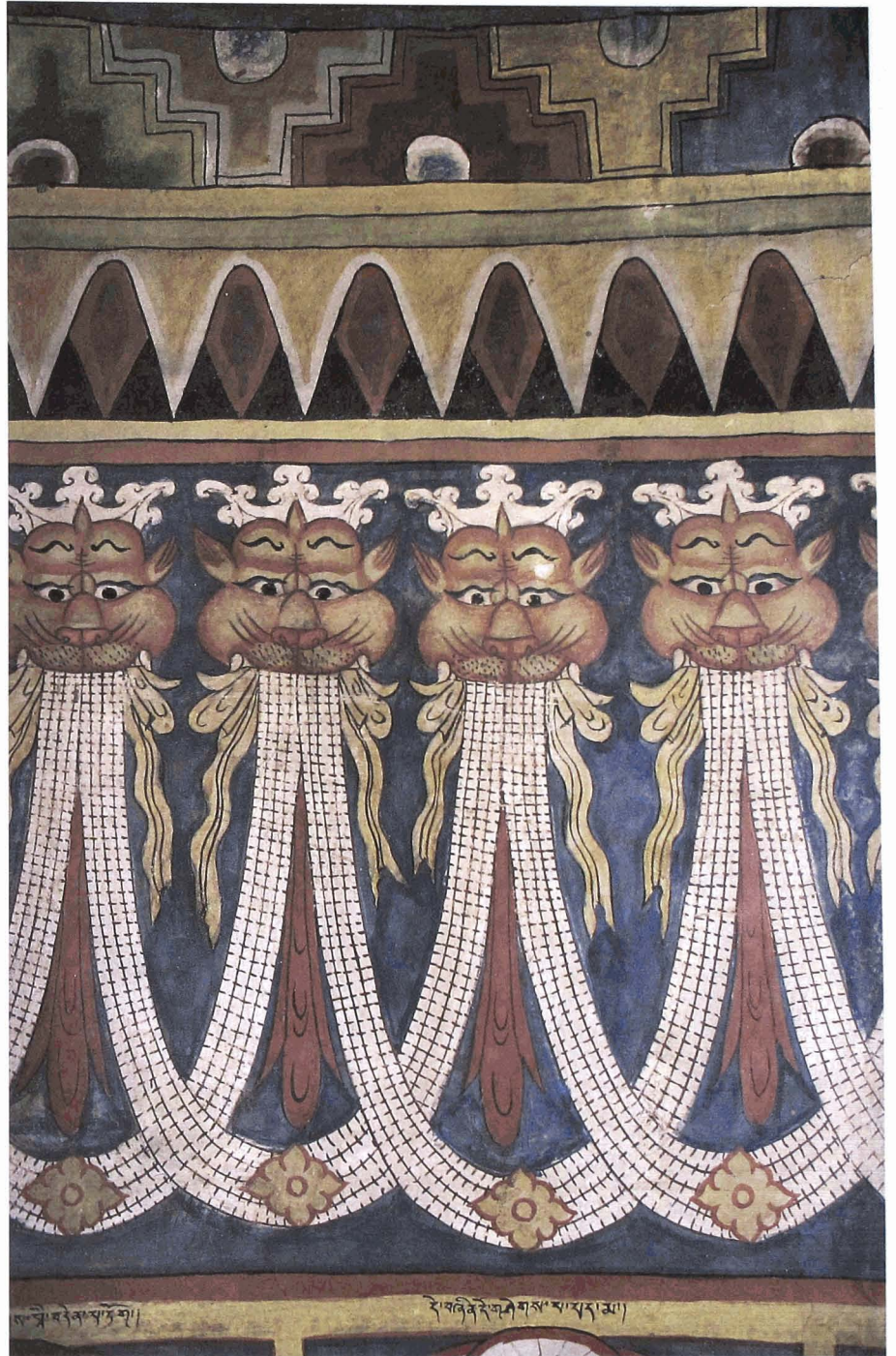
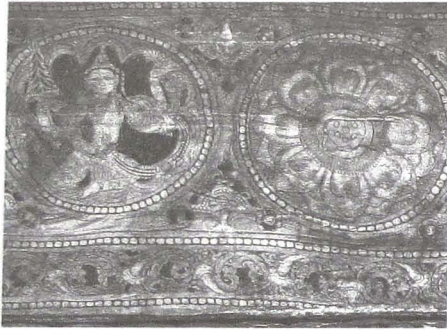




Fig. 157. Rectangular textile panel with floral border, above the entrance to the Cella Main Temple, ceiling of the entrance to the Cella

Fig. 158. Painted textile Main Temple, ceiling of the entrance to the Cella; paint on cloth

Fig. 159. Mañjuśrī Main Temple, Cella; stone
The sculpture is broken apart at the waist. Pilgrims carry the upper part of this sculpture on their back through the temple for pradakṣiṇā



is impossible to determine. The next Buddha is red with both shoulders covered. The third Buddha may have been yellow, but it is now totally destroyed. The fourth is blue, one shoulder bare and may be in *vitarkamudrā*.

The north wall has a parallel composition with eight Buddhas in two rows. Rows three and four have only seven Buddhas (an impost block embedded in the wall accounts for the shorter line of Buddhas). Again each has an inscription panel, now destroyed. Underneath are again four larger Buddha figures. They seem to be somewhat more finely drawn than those on the south wall. Moving from the east to the west, the first figure is blue-green, has one shoulder bare, the left hand lies on his lap, the right hand is raised in *abhayamudrā*. The folds of the robe are represented with deep shading as is also the underrobe which is white. The next figure is now destroyed, it was originally red. The next one was originally blue, now destroyed, and the last was yellow and appears to have been in *dharma cakramudrā*.

The inner surface of the east wall above the doorway of the Cella, the east wall of the Cella itself, is decorated with a row of Buddhas now interrupted by a skylight recently enlarged by the Archaeological Survey.

The uppermost border valance appears to be the same valance that surrounds the entire inside walls of the Cella and is similar in conception to the painted valance in the Assembly Hall. Underneath the valance there were originally three rows consisting of nine Buddhas painted in alternating colours. The soffit of the entry to the Cella is covered with cloth which is beautifully painted with a running vine motif in gold and red and white on a blue background, edged with a pearl border. There are five circles with a pearl border. As mentioned before they contain a lotus and flying divinities (figs. 157, 158).

On the outer walls of the Cella, which are the inner walls of the Ambulatory, there are rows of Buddhas painted in the same Thousand Buddhas composition (fig. 155) as is painted on the inside of the Cella. On the inside walls of the Ambulatory, that is the outer wall of the Cella, the theme of the Thousand Buddhas, *Bhadrakalpa*, occupies all the space. The fragments of the Phase I paintings indicate that the same iconography originally existed on the outer Cella wall. Here (fig. 15) we see rows of Buddhas seated on lotuses, the Buddhas separated by vertical lines. The same colour scheme is used in the example of a Buddha figure in the Entry Hall (*sgo-khang*) (fig. 40).

At the top of the wall, there is painted a variant of the valance on the outer wall of the Ambulatory. This time yellow *kirtimukha* hold white strands of pearls stretching in loops between them (fig. 156). The ceiling

of the Ambulatory has been partly restored by the ASI but the original painted fabric remains. The pattern which consists of flying divinities and lotus flowers is the same as on the soffits in front of the Ambulatory and the Cella.

¹ The black hat ceremony is performed only by the Karmapa, the head of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

² We have already noted that this posture denotes offering.

³ For a discussion of the inscription cf. Luczanits forthcoming [a].

⁴ This phenomenon is to be seen in some metal sculptures, such as the standing Buddha figure from the Cleveland Museum attributed to c. 1000.

⁵ The only element here which seems inconsistent with Vairocana is the flower garland around the shoulders.

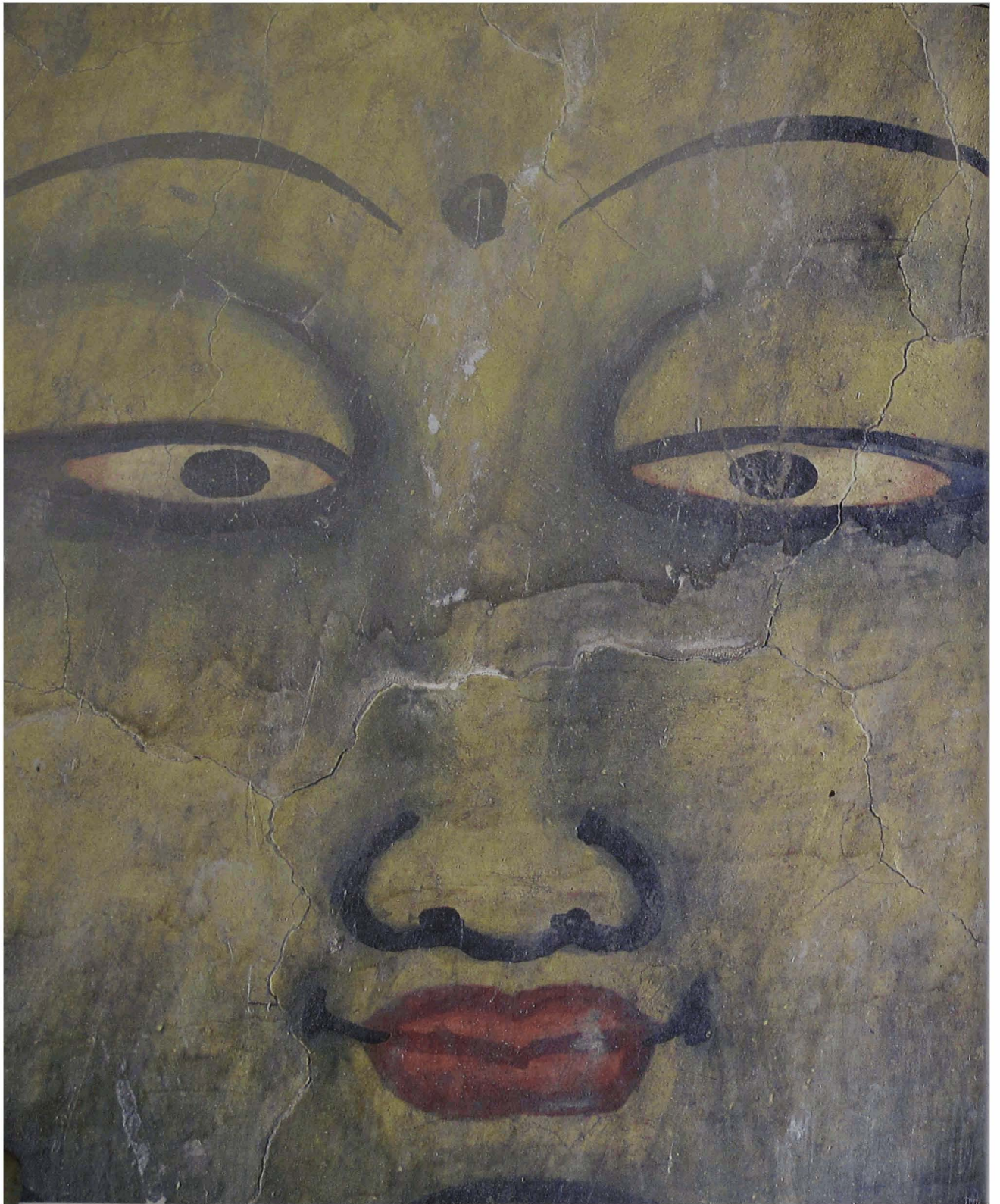
The flower garland is never worn by a Jina in contemporary iconography. There exists a figure of Mañjuśrī who is white and sits in *dhyānāsana* on a lion throne. This figure is not known in the contemporaneous art or literature of the region, so it is difficult to imagine this form of Mañjuśrī as the principal deity of the Cella.

⁶ The attempt by Dr. Singhal to identify the two forms of Vairocana and their retinue at Tabo with the Garbhadhātu- and Vajradhātu-maṅḍalas of the Japanese Shingon Buddhism does not seem appropriate in this cultural context. This

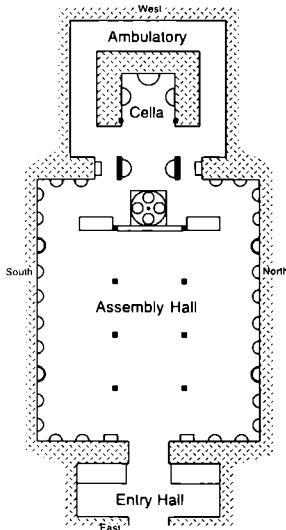
tradition is not otherwise known in the Trans-Himalayan region and there is no reason to believe that Tabo was an exception.

⁷ One should note here that only relatively few temples associated with the late Mahāyāna, compared to the vast number which once existed, have been systematically excavated. For it is only within the context of esoteric Buddhism that one might hope to find a parallel for these paired Buddhas.

⁸ I thank Eva Allinger for information about Tārā mandalas.



V.4. The Ambulatory (*skor-lam*)



Plan 10. Ambulatory

Fig. 160. Mahābodhisattva *Mahābala (sTobs-po-che) Main Temple, Ambulatory, north wall, lower register, MBS13

There are four principal themes in the Ambulatory – the 32 Bodhisattvas, the 8 historical Buddhas, the Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa, and the narrative scenes. The basic theme of the north and south corridors' outer walls is the 32 Bodhisattvas (16 Bodhisattvas and 16 Mahābodhisattvas).

On the lower part of the wall beneath the paintings of the 32 Bodhisattvas is a narrative composition which is, at first glance, stylistically similar to the story of Sudhana. However, the latter ends in the Assembly Hall at the entrance to the Ambulatory. The subject of the Ambulatory narrative is clearly different. The theme has not yet been deciphered. There are subtle differences also in the style and composition of the two painting cycles. The narrative composition here is narrower and the scenes more simply organised and there is a more regular placement of the yellow painted panels (also empty) along the bottom of the scene. The figure style is also different. The painters apparently did not come from the same workshop as those responsible for the narrative paintings in the Assembly Hall.

At the top of the outer wall of the Ambulatory, the upper part of the wall is banded by a border consisting of a row of Buddhas, each Buddha seated on a two-tiered lotus in a multicolour aureole with a flame-bordered, horseshoe-shaped halo, similar to that surrounding the Bodhisattva. Buddhas with both shoulders covered in the Gesture of Meditation (*dhyānamudrā*) alternate with Buddhas with right shoulder bared in a variety of mudras (fig. 162). This band of Buddhas runs completely around the entire wall of the Ambulatory.

Each of the Buddhas has a panel with an identification next to it (diagram 14. Ambulatory East Wall).

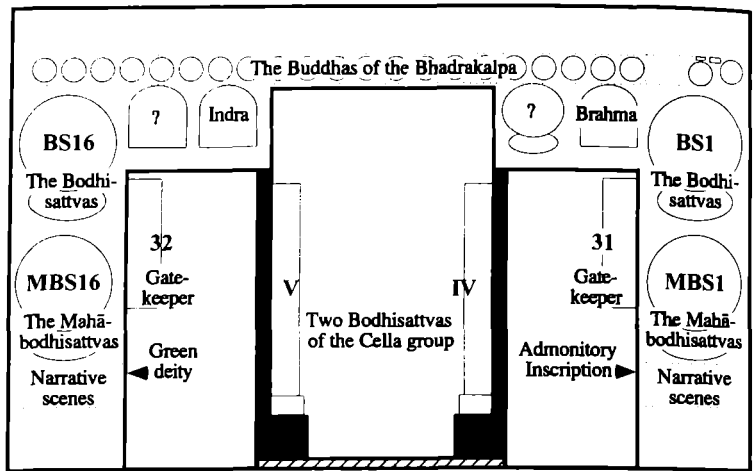
The sequence of Buddhas is a depiction taken from the *Bhadrakalpikasūtra* (Luczanits forthcoming [a]). The series begins, as in the Sutra, with the Bodhisattva Pramuditārāja requesting Śākyamuni to preach. The former is shown (upper east wall, outside wall of the Ambulatory) kneeling and in the Gesture of Offering (fig. 161). Śākyamuni no longer exists, but the lion of his throne enthusiastically addresses the Bodhisattva. Standing behind the Bodhisattva is a large crowd of monks; only fragments of the inscriptions survive, but they seem to be the favourite disciples of the Buddha Śākyamuni. “The venerated Śākyamuni is residing in [the city of] Śrāvastī; together with one hundred thousand monks and eight hundred million Bodhisattvas.” (Luczanits forthcoming [a]). Following the Śākyamuni, running along the entire outer wall of the Ambulatory (fig. 162) and then continuing on the inner wall of the west and north corridor (fig. 155). The names faithfully follow the *Bhadrakalpikasūtra* (see Luczanits forthcoming [a] for details).

Above the row of Buddhas is a very beautiful valance (fig. 30) topped by a jewel-like pattern. Above this, painted on the wooden beams, is a step-like, almost meander-like pattern. But this in most places has been destroyed.

Perhaps the most exquisite painting in the temple is found in the Ambulatory. The 32 Bodhisattvas consist of 16 Mahābodhisattvas in the lower row and 16 Bodhisattvas in the upper row (diagrams 15, 16. Ambulatory South and North Walls). The sequence begins on the

south half of the east wall of the Ambulatory, continues on the south wall to the north wall and ends on the north half of the east wall of the Ambulatory (see diagrams of the Ambulatory walls). Thus, as with all the iconographic configurations of the renovation phase the program is read in the direction of ritual circumambulation. Luczanits (forthcoming [a]) has read the inscriptions which accompany all the images on the south and north wall; the east wall seems not to have had inscriptions. While the Bodhisattvas are familiar, the Mahābodhisattvas include some unusual names and the textual source has not yet been identified. The images are organised by colour in two rows of seven Bodhisattvas on the south and north walls, plus two on each side of the east wall. (As the east wall is interrupted by the passage between the Cella/Ambulatory and Assembly Hall, the east wall has a north and a south section.) On the south and south-east walls, the first group of eight Bodhisattvas are blue. These are followed by a group of eight white Bodhisattvas. On the south-eastern wall the Bodhisattvas are particularly damaged and only survive in an extremely fragmentary form. Also here the style appears somewhat more hard-edged than on the west and south walls.

All the figures on the south and north walls are distinguished by a very elegant figure type. Distinctive features are the tri-partite modelling of the chest, the round head and even, round facial features placed above a rather thick triangular neck marked by three deep folds. All of the figures have elaborate crowns in various designs but of similar shape. The crown is tied by an elaborate white bow behind rosettes placed above the ears which appear to anchor a band that runs underneath the crown (fig. 169). The jewellery is extremely complex and elaborate and different for each of the figures. Each of the figures sits in a half lotus posture (*satvaparyāṅkāṣana*). Some of the Bodhisattvas have a pearl "sacred thread" (fig. 174), some a shawl over the shoulders (fig. 169). The pattern of each of the shawls is painted very carefully and no two patterns are alike (figs. 164, 169, 170, 176), likewise the dhotis (skirt-like garment) (figs. 165, 166, 167, 168, 177). The dhoti of the Mahābodhisattva I (east wall, south side) is extremely beautiful (fig. 180). It has a striped pattern, red, white and black and where it falls between the legs it shows a rippling design. The bottom edge of the dhoti has a row of exquisite white ducks. The lotus seat of the Bodhisattva is carefully drawn but slightly different from



those on the north and south walls. The inner part of the lotus is not depicted by a series of dots, but rather by large coloured circles, and the edge of the lotus is a black band with red, white and yellow letters probably in Sanskrit. The lotus has two rows of petals alternating blue and red. The petals are described in a gently curving fashion with pointed ends. The next two blue figures on the north wall are also distinguished by the exquisite details of the crowns, jewellery and textiles. The Bodhisattva in the upper zone, identified as Gaganagañja, holds a round-like object looking like a prayer wheel. The Mahābodhisattva below holds a crescent on lotus (figs. 163, 164). This figure wears an exquisite jewelled belt and a textile shawl painted red with a white and blue floral pattern that is also to be found on the dhoti of one of the other figures and also on the painted garment of some of the clay figures in the Assembly Hall (see also figs. 21, 107, 168).

On the south wall are first eight blue and eight white Bodhisattvas (figs. 163, 165, 166, 169, 171), on the north wall there were then eight red (figs. 173, 174) and eight green Bodhisattvas (figs. 175, 179), the first two of the red Bodhisattvas are lost. The outer and inner walls of the Ambulatory on the north side have a decoration parallel to that of the Ambulatory on the south side, but it is not so well preserved. It has been severely damaged and is now extensively repaired by the Archaeological Survey including some in-painting which is usually identifiable. There are, from the top, an extremely beautiful valance pattern and under that a row of 17 Bud-

Diagram 14. Ambulatory East Wall as seen from the Cella

Fig. 161. The Bodhisattva
Pramuditarāja requesting the Buddha
Śākyamuni to teach the
Bhadrakalpikasūtra
Main Temple, Ambulatory, east wall,
south corner, uppermost section



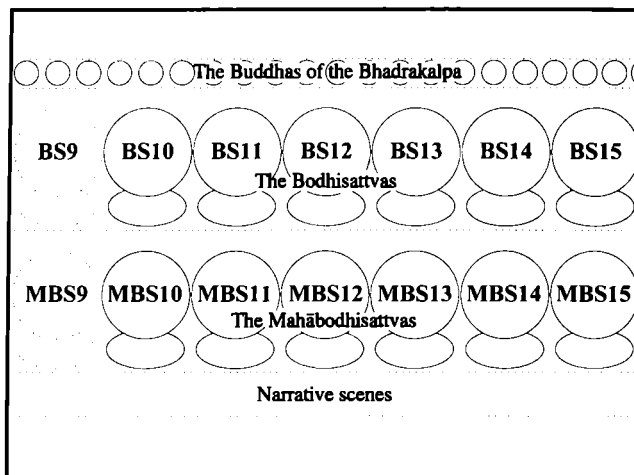
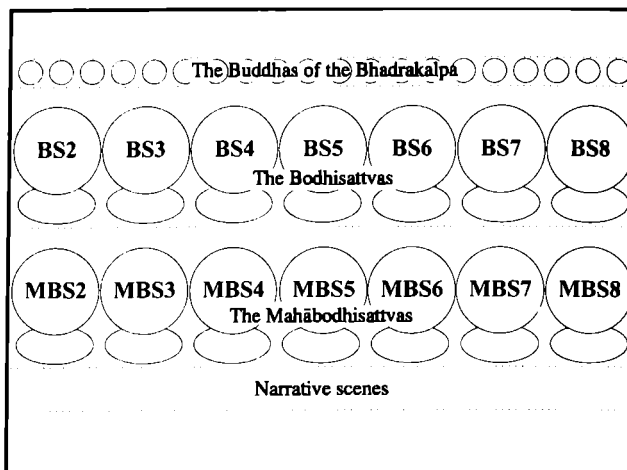
Fig. 162. Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south wall,
uppermost section
It is not clear which of the captions
refers to which Buddha



dhas of the Bhadrakalpa. Under this is a row of Bodhisattvas of which seven have survived. They are organised in two rows, one directly above the other. There are two more Bodhisattvas on the eastern wall next to the entrance (figs. 27, 180). The first three of the remaining Bodhisattvas of each row are red and the second three remaining Bodhisattvas green, with the two on the entrance wall green and the one underneath blue-green.

The eight red Bodhisattvas on the north wall are the most ruined of the composition. They appear to have been recently touched up so that the present red colour is rather glaring and uneven. The wall here at various points has buckled and it is difficult therefore to analyse the style of the figures. Where they have not been restored, the crowns are essentially the same typology as on the south wall and one even finds occasionally some of the same textile patterns (fig. 174). On the north wall as also on the south wall, there is a tremendous variety in the details of the crown, jewellery and textiles. Indeed, one of the most delightful aspects of these Bodhisattva paintings is the occasional whimsical detail such as the small fox-like animal hide held in the left hand by the red Mahābodhisattva Sūradatta (dPa'-bas-byin) (figs. 172, 173). The depiction of the attributes is detailed and often so fanciful that it is difficult to decipher their meaning. The Mahābodhisattva Mahābala (sTobs-po-che) (fig. 175) holds a three-tiered diamond or crystal in front of his breast (fig. 176). The long graceful fingers of the right hand curl seductively around the crystal, the left hand lies on his left thigh, the long fingers curled into a mudra (fig. 177). The walls in the north-east as in the south-east sections are very destroyed (diagram 14. Ambulatory East Wall). On the inside of the Ambulatory on the east wall, there is a fragment of painting depicting an extremely beautiful green Bodhisattva with the body parts emphasised through very strong shading (fig. 27). The blue-green Bodhisattva below is depicted in a similar style. The pattern of the drapery of the Bodhisattvas is very complex and elegant (fig. 204).

It should be noted that the Bodhisattvas on the east wall have a rather intense modelling of the figure, but the uniformity of figure-style, that is the line of the figure, the proportions, the facial details, crowns, garments, mandorlas, haloes, in short, every detail except for the shading, is so similar that there can be no question that the entire composition must have been created by one workshop, although undoubtedly by different hands. There are, however, distinctive features.



The textile patterns are more complex. Only on the east wall of the Ambulatory are figurative elements found, note the ducks bordering the dhoti in fig. 180 and in fig. 204. Other mannerisms, such as the drawing of the inside of the lotus as if seen from above, and the strong shading, suggest a slightly later date for the Bodhisattva figures on the east wall. The function of this wall may explain this fact. On the Assembly Hall side of the half-wall and on the inner face of the thick wall, to the right and the left in the transition zone to the Ambulatory, are mounted clay sculptures of the mandala. Thus, the Ambulatory side of the half-walls could not, as with the south, west, and north walls of the Ambula-

Diagrams 15, 16. Ambulatory South and North Walls



Fig. 163. Mahābodhisattva
*Samantāvabhāsa (Kun-tu snang-ba)
(blue)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, lower register, MBS2



Fig. 164. Detail of Mahābodhisattva
*Samantāvabhāsa

Fig. 165. Mahābodhisattva *Vimala
(Dri-ma-med-pa) (blue)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, lower register, MBS3



Fig. 166. Mahābodhisattva
*Amitabuddhi (Blo-gros-mtha'-yas)
(white)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, lower register, MBS6



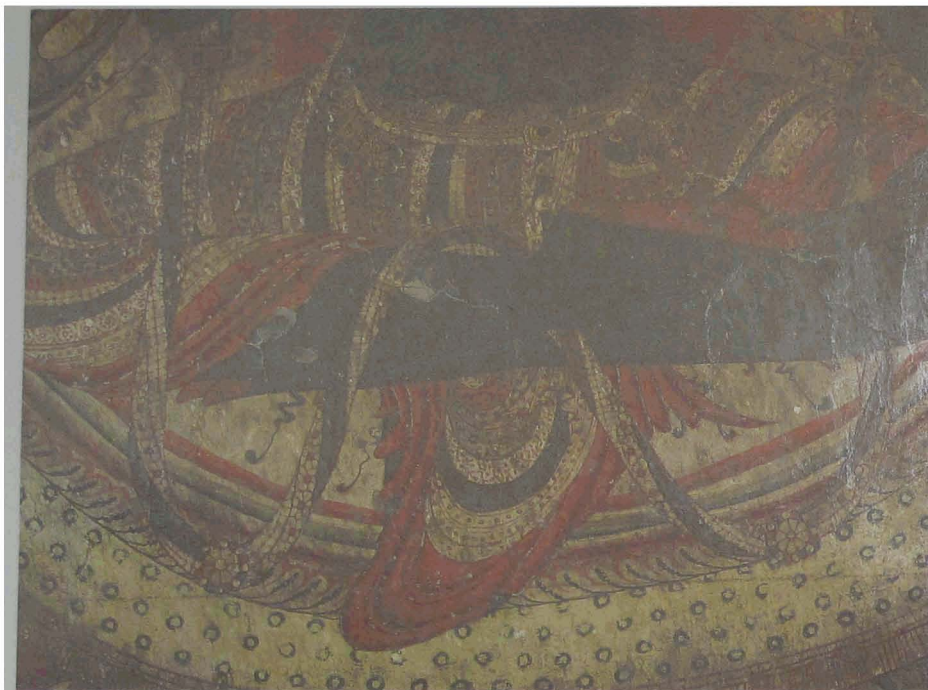


Fig. 167. Dhoti of Bodhisattva
Vajragarbha (rDo-rje-snying-po) (dark
blue)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, upper register, BS3

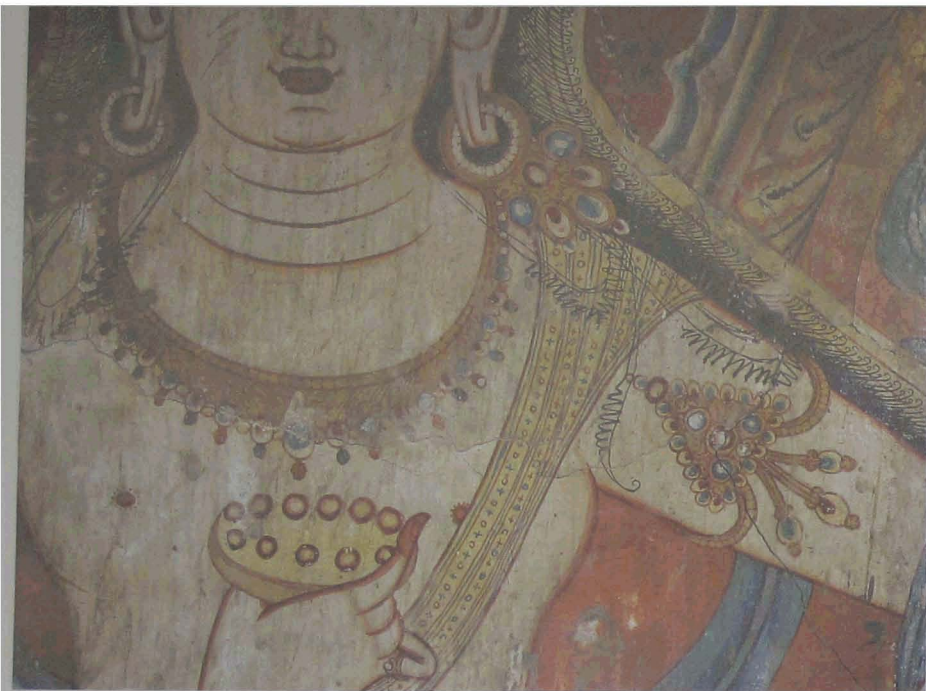


Fig. 168. Dhoti of Bodhisattva
Śūraṅgama (white)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, upper register, BS8

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Fig. 169. Bodhisattva Samantabhadra
(Kun-tu-bzang-po) (white)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, upper register, BS7





Left
Fig. 170. Detail of Mahābodhisattva
*Sreṣṭhin (Tshong-dpon) (white)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, lower register, MBS8

Fig. 171. Mahābodhisattva *Sreṣṭhin
(Tshong-dpon) (white)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, south
wall, lower register, MBS8



Left
Fig. 172. Detail Mahābodhisattva
*Sūradatta

Fig. 173. Mahābodhisattva *Sūradatta
(dPa'-bas-byin)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, north wall,
lower register, MBS12
Holding an antelope skin (looking
like a fox) in the left hand

Fig. 174. Bodhisattva Pratibhānakūṭa
(sPobs-pa-brtsegs-po) (red)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, north wall,
upper register, BS11

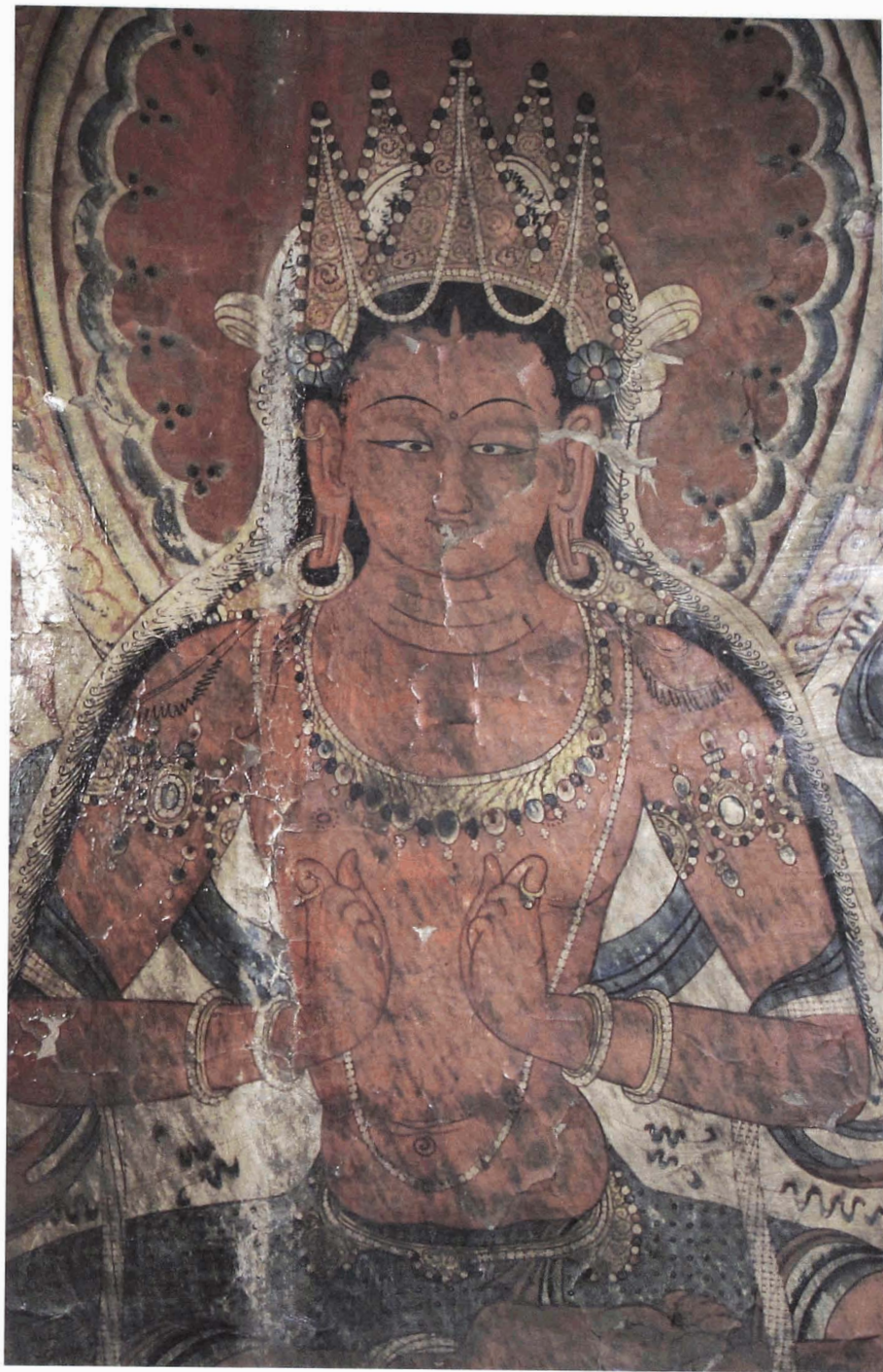


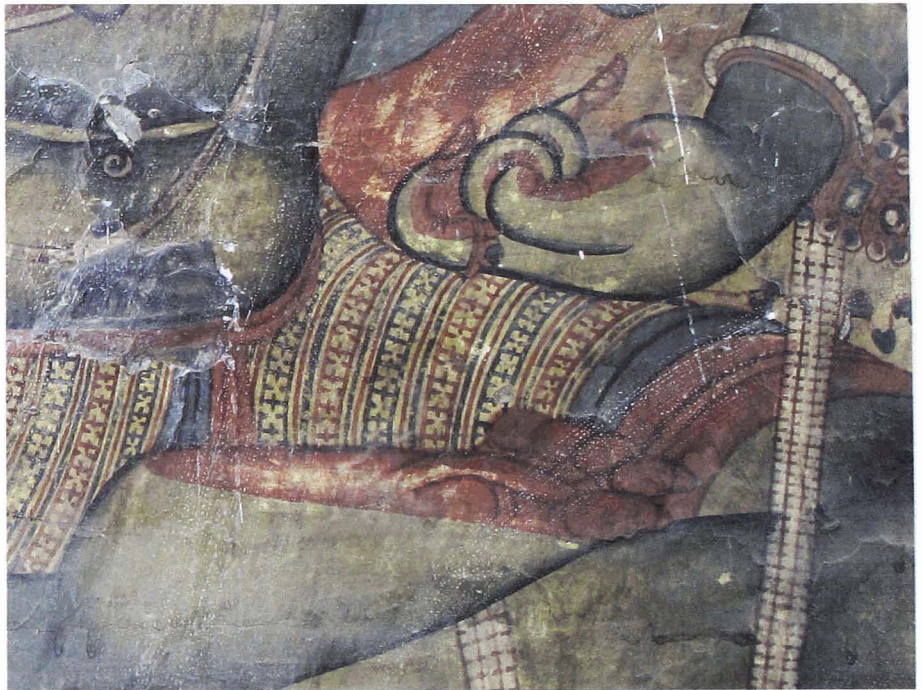


Fig. 175. Mahābodhisattva *Mahābala
(sTobs-po-che) (green)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, north wall,
lower register, MBS13

Fig. 176. A crystal held by the
Mahābodhisattva *Mahābala (sTobs-
po-che) (green)



Fig. 177. Mahābodhisattva *Mahābala
performing the vajra-fist (green)



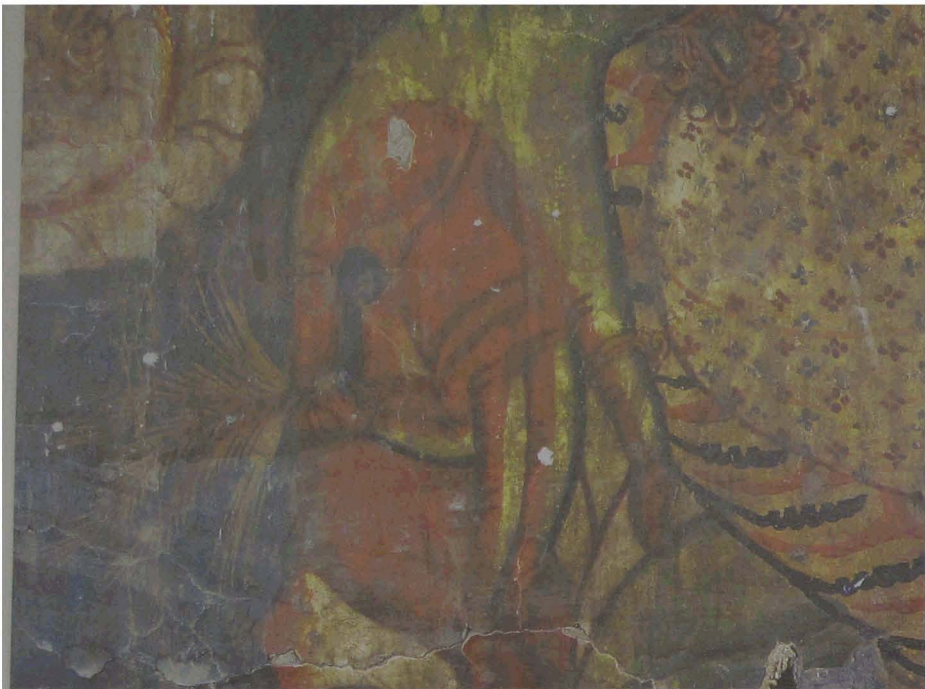


Fig. 178. Coniferous twig held by
Mahābodhisattva Jñānaprabha

Fig. 179. Mahābodhisattva
Jñānaprabha (Ye-shes-'od-gzer)
(green)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, north wall,
lower register, MBS15



Fig. 180. Mahābodhisattva (blue)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, east wall,
south corner, lower register, MBS1

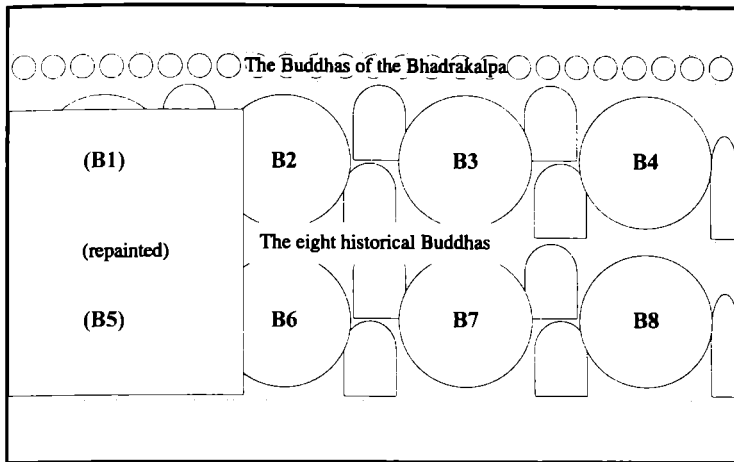


Diagram 17. Ambulatory West Wall

tory, have been painted at the same time that the sculptures were being constructed. Thus, probably the following year, only after the sculptures were finished and the Bodhisattvas on the north and south walls of the Ambulatory were painted, other painters, albeit of the same workshop, were able to paint the Bodhisattvas on the north and the south halves of the east wall.

The narrative paintings in the Ambulatory have not been deciphered. Deshpande (1973) identified one Avadāna story¹. It is clear that there are certain themes which are found also in the Sudhana story – assemblies grouped around a Buddha (fig. 183), Bodhisattva (fig. 184) or a lay person (fig. 185) – but the style is far simpler, more provincial. One may compare like motifs, such as the Tibetan-style architecture or the female dress (fig. 184). But there are also totally new genre details which are not understood, such as the male figures in brown costumes with pointed hood (fig. 185). These paintings are later and by different artists than those who worked in the Assembly Hall. Perhaps this painting is contemporaneous with the Cella painting.

Standing in the Cella and looking at the east wall of the Ambulatory above the passage (which is the back side of the west wall of the Assembly Hall), at the height of the ceiling, the uppermost border consists of triangles. Underneath that are circles in alternating colours and underneath that an extremely beautiful valance consisting of drapery interspersed with dangles held together in the middle by *kirtimukha*. Underneath the valance is a row of Buddhas. They are very elegantly painted with alternating colours and different mudras, and each Bud-

dha is provided with an inscription panel. Underneath, above the smaller side entrances are four deities of which only one on the north side is really well preserved. This one is black, has nine heads, topped by a horse head, and eight arms. This apparently represents the same Tantric deity surviving from the foundation period in the transition zone (fig. 20). Next to it, also in a horse-shoe-shaped mandorla, the vajra-holding god Indra sits on his elephant. On the south side is Brahmā seated on a pair of geese.

The back wall of the Ambulatory has, as we have already noted, the same valance, indicating that the entire composition of the Ambulatory was painted at the same time. The composition on the back wall appears to have originally consisted of eight seated Buddhas of which only six have survived (diagram 17. Ambulatory West Wall). A large section of the wall at the south corner has been repainted with a relatively modern painting of Tsong-kha-pa. The original composition can be seen above it, however. Apparently, the wall was damaged at the time of the Dogra invasions, as is recorded in the inscription on the north wall of the Assembly Hall. The seated Buddhas are exquisitely painted (figs. 181, 182). They are all seated in the Meditation Posture (*dhyānāsana*), the uppermost is red in a variant of the Gesture of Preaching the Law (*dharmacakramudrā*).

The style of the Buddha figures reminds one of the style of metal sculptures attributed to the 10th–11th century Kashmir. Considering the outline of the head, as well as the treatment of the figure and the proportions, one of the closest comparisons would be between the detail of the future Buddha Maitreya (B8) (figs. 181, 182) and the standing Cleveland Buddha (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pl. 27): it is oval, the *uṣṇīṣa* round with the curls forming a textured pattern in profile. The features are very regular and even, the ears outstanding. The shoulders are broad, the waist and hips narrow. The monk's robe has a round, low neckline where three different fabrics can be seen, blue white and red. The neckline is depicted with a curving line, the consecutive U-shaped folds dipping down to the waist. The garment falls in regular deep folds along a median line of the body (fig. 182). The movement of the garment is fluid showing deep curvilinear lines depicting the U-shaped folds where it falls from the mid-arm to the knee. Each Buddha is seated under a different tree in a perfectly round multicoloured mandorla with multicoloured ra-

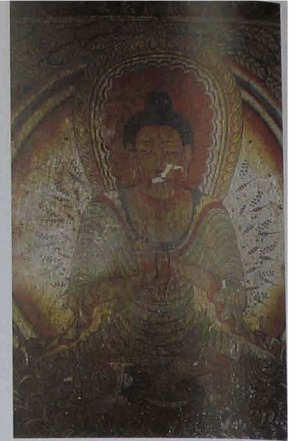


Fig. 181. Head of the future Buddha Maitreya (Byams-pa)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, west wall (B8)

Fig. 182. The future Buddha Maitreya (Byams-pa)
Main Temple, Ambulatory, west wall (B8)

Fig. 183. Narrative scene with preaching Buddha
Main Temple, Ambulatory, east wall, south side, lower section



Fig. 184. Narrative scene with
preaching Bodhisattva
Main Temple, Ambulatory, north wall,
lower section



Fig. 185. Narrative scene
Main Temple, Ambulatory, north wall,
lower section





Fig. 186. Buddha
Main Temple, Ambulatory, west wall
(B4)



Fig. 187. Shimla, India: seated
Buddha
c. 11th century, O.C. Sud Collection;
h. 7 cm



Fig. 188. Attendant monk
Main Temple, Ambulatory, west wall

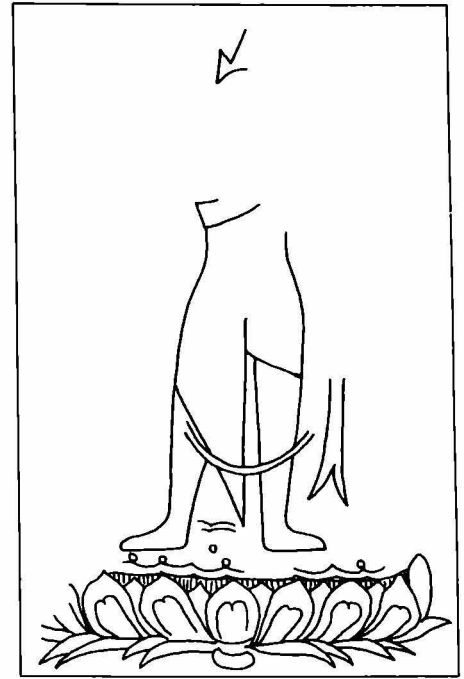


Fig. 189. Attendant monk
Main Temple, Ambulatory, west wall

Fig. 190. Two phases of painting Main Temple, Ambulatory, northern corridor, outer wall
Below the fragments of a narrative scene, a large lotus as well as the feet of a standing Bodhisattva are discernible, beneath this a vine border



Fig. 191. Reconstruction standing Bodhisattva (996)



diance and a pointed horseshoe halo with a red (figs. 182, 186), yellow and black flame pattern which is the same as that to be seen on the Bodhisattvas on the side walls, as well as the Buddha figures in the very top row around the outside wall of the Ambulatory (fig. 162). The same shape of the head and depiction of the robe, worn low on the right side, with the wide sleeve flowing over the left knee, is found in a small bronze from the O.C. Sud Collection (fig. 187). The figures of the monks flanking each Buddha are also depicted in the same smooth, harmonious style. The robe has the same ripple effect (fig. 188). Some of the kneeling monks are wearing patchwork robes (fig. 189).

Particularly noteworthy on the west and north walls are the fragments of the first phase of painting underneath the present 11th-century narrative murals. The

former were exposed as a result of cleaning by the ASI. The 10th-century painting (fig. 190) consists of a simple floral band of several petals in white and green against a rose-coloured background with a stem-like frame forming a curl at the bottom of each of the blossoms. All of the flowers point upwards and in the interstices above and below are three triangular leaves, two pink and one green with a small ball in between. This pattern runs at the bottom of the walls for the entire length of both the inner and the outer wall of the Ambulatory. In several places the original program above this floral border can be seen (fig. 190), here consisting of large rose-pink lotus petals. From the fragments of underpainting on the outer wall of the Ambulatory, there seem to have been painted Bodhisattvas standing on top of the large lotus flowers (cf. fig. 191).

¹ Renate Ponweiser is attempting to decipher the sequence.



V.5. The Canopy

The Vajradhātu-maṇḍala in the Assembly Hall is covered by a canopy. The canopy is constructed of strips of fabric, perhaps cotton or linen (no analysis has been done) that have been painted and then affixed to the ceiling between the beams (figs. 192, 193, 194). That the entire ceiling decoration is to be considered a canopy can be seen from the painted valance at the top of the walls. All around the Assembly hall was painted a curtain-like valance and above this was originally (at least on the west wall) a row of birds, only a fragment of which has survived (fig. 195). The ceiling textiles are painted in bands of geometric and floral patterns in shades of brown, yellow, orange, blue and black with touches of green and red (figs. 18, 193). This iconographic scheme contrasts quite notably with the images on the textile panels on the ceiling of the Apse which contain figurative elements (fig. 196). The painted ceiling textiles must have been prepared for this particular space after the roof was completed because each of the textile panels fits quite precisely the space allotted to them. Both the colours and at least one of the designs (Wandl Chapter V.6) (fig. 18) indicates that the ceiling textiles must date to the first century of the monastery's existence. This is also confirmed by ¹⁴C-dating. Since the Entry Hall, the only part of the temple with the original program from Phase I, has neither valance nor ceiling cloth, I assume that this phase did not have a canopy decoration. Since all the paintings of Phase II (11th century) have painted valance and ceiling cloth, I presume that the concept of the canopy dates to this phase.

What was the function of the canopy in Tabo? De-

fining the canopy as the ceiling cloth plus painted wall valance, there are three canopies in the Main Temple. One covers the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (equals the Assembly Hall)¹, one covers the Cella, and one covers the Ambulatory. The canopies are further distinguished by their iconography – the one over the Assembly Hall has no figurative elements and the two in the Apse have the same designs (see below) but the valances are different. It is not clear if the patterns have different symbolic functions or if the differences result from a different date of manufacture or different artists. According to the ¹⁴C-examination, the one sample from the Ambulatory was dated 1075 ±95 (1 sigma) compared to the two samples from the Assembly Hall 938 ±53 (1 sigma). However, since the date of the analysis is for the cloth (not the painting) – which was certainly imported a great distance from India and thus necessarily made several years before it was painted and placed on the ceiling – and since we consider the sample base too small and the plus-minus factor too large, we consider the ¹⁴C-method as having only relative value for dating. Thus, we accept the ¹⁴C-dates as confirmation of the formal analysis, which suggests that the ceiling paintings were made during Phase II (11th century)².

The principal difficulty in dating the cloth paintings in the Apse is that the individual motifs are mostly unique within the context of the Tabo decorative repertory, and there are no other directly comparable cloth paintings known. All of the Buddhist monasteries dating to the Later Diffusion of Buddhism in Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh and also many later temples in western Tibet

Fig. 192. Ceiling painting on cloth Main Temple, Assembly Hall, ceiling, detail of fig. 194; cloth

have paintings on the ceilings deriving from textile patterns. What is unique at Tabo is the use of real cloth on the ceiling. Tabo was apparently one of the first temples to be built in this area using this particular theme.

The tradition, however, is much older. The use of an elaborate umbrella or small canopy to honour a personage or deity is found throughout the art of Central Asia. In the paintings from Dunhuang some form of canopy hangs over every sacred or holy figure (Wang-Toutain 1994). This is clearly the theme in the Entry Hall. Here the umbrella occurs without the curtain, which is ubiquitous in the painting of the 11th century. In the rock-cut chapels at Dunhuang and Kyzyl, a painted canopy covered an altar or a sacred group of images. Throughout Asia, cloth or metal canopies cover an entire altar group, and they can be quite monumental. Canopies were also prominent in the early temples in Tibet. On the ground floor of the Jo-khang in Lhasa, there is an exquisitely carved wooden canopy. From the palaeography of the inscription (the part which is on my photograph is a Sanskrit mantra written in Tibetan) and its decoration, it may date to the 11th or 12th century (fig. 200). An extremely pertinent example comes from bSam-yas – the chapel of Bu-tshal gSer-khang-gling was in the form of the Vajradhātu-maṅḍala. “The images inside [the chapel] both had a general canopy [covering all the statues] and an individual canopy” (GR1, 389).

The Jo-khang example is a true canopy. Its decoration is centrally organised and may be compared to painted canopies from Dunhuang. The two Tabo variants are very different. The decoration consists of contiguous rows of unrelated designs. Further, the Tabo canopy represents the beginning of a local tradition because the Nako valance and ceiling paintings (figs. 197, 199) follow the designs in the Tabo Assembly Hall ceiling paintings. As we shall see, the Himachal Pradesh canopy motifs seem to descend from a north Indian tradition.

In the Hindu Kush, at Bāmiyān, in the 7th or 8th centuries, canopies were painted above a sacred space. The style of the painted canopies at Bāmiyān can be seen as a forerunner of those in the Apse in Tabo. At Bāmiyān, as later in Tabo, the design consists of a series of strips of textile material that are placed between the beams. In Bāmiyān, Cave Complex C, vestibule, these textiles sometimes appear to form a patchwork. In any case the painted textile patterns consist of diverse textile motifs, floral, geometric, as well as the very popular pearl



roundel motif containing a variety of figurative and non-figurative elements, particularly the lotus flower seen from above (fig. 198). These themes are found in the ceiling paintings in the Apse at Tabo (fig. 196). On the other hand, the pearl roundel motif is never, to my knowledge, used on ceiling decoration in Central Asia. The designs of the painted baldachin in Central Asia are centrally organised, having more the quality of an abstract mandala pattern. Thus, the variant represented in Bāmiyān and later in Himachal Pradesh appears to derive from a merging of the Chinese Central Asian baldachin with a native Indian canopy which may earlier have been used primarily as an honorific covering for personages, lay and religious (Klimburg-Salter forthcoming [b]).

I am not suggesting a direct influence from Bāmiyān on Tabo, but rather identifying a widespread preference in the decoration of Buddhist temples in the mountainous regions of north-west India. This earlier tradition provided the artistic background for the choice of these same themes at Tabo.

Apparently, quite soon it was discovered that the canopy theme could be more cheaply and easily repre-

Fig. 193. Painted textile placed between the beams
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, ceiling:
paint on cloth

Fig. 194. A strip of cloth with painted
textile patterns placed between beams
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, ceiling
Cloth, strips to either side have not
survived. Beams decorated with
painted rosettes

Fig. 195. Row of birds and valance
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, top of
west wall

Facing page
Fig. 196. Painted textiles placed
between the beams
Main Temple, Ambulatory, ceiling:
paint on cloth





Fig. 197. Nako, Kinnaur: ceiling painted with fantastic animals
Main Temple, ceiling
Painted directly on the wooden planks of the ceiling

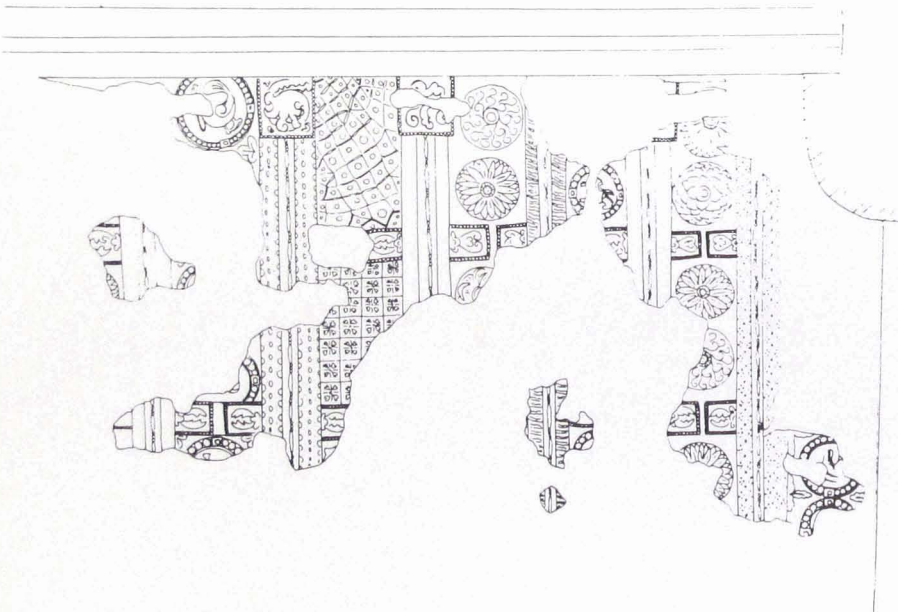


Fig. 198. Bāmiyān, Afghanistan:
reconstruction of the ceiling in Cave D
Reconstruction by Akira Miyajiri (after
Klimburg-Salter 1989: Fig. 68)

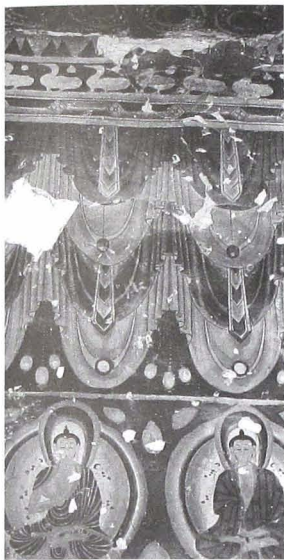
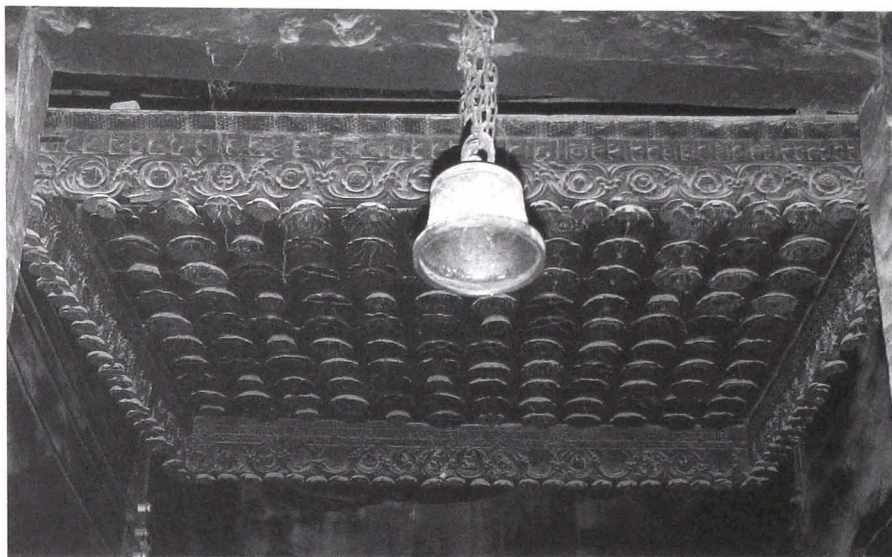


Fig. 199. Nako, Kinnaur: valance with row of ducks
Small Lo-tsa-ba Temple, upper part of south wall

Fig. 200. Jo-khang, Lhasa: canopy
Above the entrance to the central part of the temple: wood



sented by simply painting the textile patterns between the beams of the ceiling. Thus, in both Lotsawa Temples at Nako, which are only slightly later than the Main Temple at Tabo, rows of textile patterns similar to those in the Assembly Hall at Tabo are painted directly on the wooden ceiling (fig. 197). They are completed by a painted valance whose form resembles the valance in the Tabo Assembly Hall (fig. 199). As the roundel and lotus motif are only found in the Tabo Apse and resemble the earlier ceiling paintings from Bāmīyān, one might think that the latter are older than the textile patterns in the Assembly Hall which are closer in date to the similar motifs at Nako. However, the pearl roundel motif is also found in the ceiling painting at Alchi (Goepper 1993, 1995) *c.* 1200. However, these patterns belong to a totally different tradition (Goepper 1993, 1995). Both painted ceilings and textile motifs as aspects of architectural decoration in Buddhist monasteries have only recently been recognised as important themes. Relatively little documentation has been published. It is, therefore, too early to attempt to date precisely the two types of

ceiling paintings in Tabo. Although it is possible that the Apse textiles may be slightly earlier than those in the Ambulatory. Almost certainly they are painted by different artists, who were familiar with the art of western India, perhaps Gujarat.

The honorific function of the cloth canopy *baldachin* is clear. But in Tabo there is another form of honorific cloth covering, the umbrella, and from the 11th century also the curtain. In the representation of Byang-chub-'od the curtain is combined with the umbrella. The honorific umbrella has a specific function in Tabo. It is used wherever a royal lama is depicted and it is represented over the relics of the Buddha. Relics are similarly honoured in other Tibetan painting traditions. In Zha-lu in the great Ambulatory around the Main Temple in the Life of the Buddha, the *mahāparinirvāna* is represented with the draped cloth curtain background behind Śākyamuni and an elaborate canopy with valance over him³. Thus the combined motif of umbrella and curtain as honorific symbols appears to have become a standard motif in later Tibetan painting as well.

¹ Here we must remember that the original function of the mandala was to serve as an altar.

² One needs also to be cautious because

of the possibility of traces of foreign elements, such as pigments and glue which attached the cloth to the ceiling.

³ I would like to thank Kurt Tropper for

sharing his photographs of Zha-lu monastery with us.



The art of Tabo provides us with rich material for the study of costumes and textiles used and known in the West Tibetan region during the 10th and 11th centuries. A great variety of different textile motifs with often highly complex designs can be seen on the dhoti and scarves worn by the Bodhisattvas and other deities painted on the murals and represented in the clay sculptures. The extensive narrative painting and the portraits of historical figures give us a good record of the different costumes, as well as other objects of the material culture. And textiles are imitated in the painted strips of cloth decorating the ceiling of the temple (see Klimburg-Salter Chapter V. 5).

Most of the textiles depicted do not represent indigenous Tibetan products. They are multicoloured and give the impression of lightweight fabrics, very different from the mostly plain, heavy woollen textiles worn by the inhabitants of the cold Himalayan region and for which the raw material was locally available. This foreign cultural element most clearly can be seen in the narrative paintings in the Assembly Hall (*'du-khang*). Here, two large cycles – the Pilgrimage of Sudhana, from the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, and the Life of the Buddha – are painted in parallel compositions on the lower part of the wall. The Sudhana story occupies half of the east, the south and half of the west walls, and the Life of the Buddha begins on the other half of the west wall, runs along the north and ends on the east wall (see Klimburg-Salter Chapter V.2). The narration of Sudhana's pilgrimage is set in a Tibetan environment; this is clearly seen from the architecture, the people are wearing typical

West Tibetan dress – heavy, loose and certainly woollen garments with hardly any designs, which we also find in other contemporaneous wall and miniature paintings of the region. In contrast, the Life of the Buddha is set in a non-Tibetan environment. The people who are represented in the paintings are clearly distinguishable by their costumes, coiffures and jewellery from the West Tibetan people depicted in the Sudhana cycle. The garments of these non-Tibetan people look light, almost always have patterns and cling to the body, large parts of which they often leave uncovered. They show typical Indian elements. The impression is that the artist attempted to recreate the environment of the Buddha's homeland in the Gangetic plain.

The textile motifs depicted on the dress of the people shown in the narration of the Life of the Buddha correspond to the type of patterns which can be seen on the dhoti and scarves of deities of all the non-narrative paintings of the temple and in part also to the textile motifs painted on the ceiling of the Assembly Hall. But before we consider the question of textile motifs and the type of fabrics shown, let us look in more detail at the costumes represented in the narrative paintings and the depictions of historical personages.

The West Tibetan Costumes

The male figures in the Pilgrimage of Sudhana and the historical paintings wear pants suits with wide overlong sleeves and large collars covering almost the whole breast (figs. 121, 123). At the waist the garment is fastened by a belt or sash. The legs of the trousers end by a

Fig. 201. Dhoti of Vajrasattva
Main Temple, Cella, north wall
(sculpture II)

part laid into plaits which corresponds in colour to the collars and cuffs, but is in contrast to the main colour of the suit. Therefore, the garment is always depicted in two colours (mainly red or white, combined with blue), and there never occur any patterns. With this dress the men wear pointed black (sometimes also white) boots. Some of the men also wear hats, whereby one can see a connection to the male hairdos. The hair is worn in two different ways: either it is hanging down loose over the back (as is also the case with the females) or it reaches to the neck and is curled up at the end. Only figures with the latter type of coiffure are depicted with hats. The hats may indicate a specific social standing.

Only in the narrative paintings in the Ambulatory (*skorlam*) (which are slightly divergent in style from the narratives in the Assembly Hall) is a slightly different type of male costume represented. Here the pants suit has no opening in front of the breast but a high round neckline. In combination with this garment the figures wear hood-like hats which reach down till over the shoulders (fig. 185).

Almost all of the men wear a tight-fitting necklace with a big blue stone, certainly a turquoise, in the middle.

Whereas the male costume in the earlier paintings of the Entry Hall (*sgo-khang*) and in the later paintings of the Assembly Hall is represented in the same way, there is a slight variation in the depiction of the female dress. All of the female figures shown in the Assembly Hall wear the same kind of costume. It consists of a wide cape which reaches to the ground and an undergarment, either a long dress or a combination of a jacket and a long skirt – this cannot be ascertained from the paintings (fig. 123). The cape is put on in such a way that the shoulders remain free and it is held together in front of the breast – either by hand or a kind of fastening one cannot see. The colour of the cape is almost always white with a blue trimming. Only in the group associated with the protectress of the temple, Wi-nyu-myin (see Klimburg-Salter Chapter V.2), the trimming of the capes shows a floral motif (fig. 55). Besides that, all the Tibetan costumes in the Assembly Hall are without patterns. The undergarment has the same wide, over-long sleeves and the large collars as the male costumes. It is mainly painted in the colours red and green.

In the Entry Hall, the depiction of the protectress of the temple with her female attendants also occurs (fig. 38). Unfortunately, the depiction of the protectress herself has been destroyed; only the deer on which she is

riding remains. These paintings were executed in 996, some decades earlier than those in the Assembly Hall. The females here also wear long capes decorated with trimming, and undergarments. But the cape is worn differently from those depicted in the Assembly Hall. It covers the shoulders and is clearly held together in front of the breast by the hands (fig. 37). Two of the females of the protectress' entourage are only partly covered by the cape, so that one can see the undergarment, which consists of a jacket reaching down to the hips and a long skirt (fig. 39). The jackets have the same long, wide sleeves as the dress depicted in the Assembly Hall, but the large collars are missing. Some of the undergarments have traces of very simple patterns. Only the jacket of the female standing next to the protectress on the left side is fully decorated with a floral pattern.

All of the female figures wear necklaces made of white and blue stones, the number of the necklaces probably depending on the social rank of the person. Most of the women are depicted with three necklaces, the attendants of the protectress of the temple in the Assembly Hall wear five or more and the protectress herself wears seven. In addition, the female, and sometimes also male, figures wear a head adornment, either one single blue stone in the middle of the forehead or strings studded with blue stones reaching from the top of the head down till over the shoulders. How long cultural traditions can remain alive is demonstrated by the observations of J.B. Lyall, who visited Spiti in the second half of the last century and who wrote the following regarding the women of the region: "[...] on the top of their heads the married women wear a 'pirak' or silver ornament, from which hang strings of beads on both sides of their faces, and long tails of leather studded with coarse turquoises. The girls wear only a single turquoise threaded on their hair near the parting [...]" (Lyall 1875, cited in Bajpai 1987: 39).

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in the narrative paintings of the Assembly Hall a second ethnic group is depicted, clearly distinguishable by their attire from the western Tibetan people.

The non-Tibetan Costumes

People wearing non-Tibetan costumes are depicted almost exclusively in the narrative cycle of the Life of the Buddha. Only a few such figures are represented in the narration of Sudhana.



Fig. 202. Life of the Buddha.
Procession to Lumbini
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north
wall, west corner

The most frequently depicted male costume can be seen in figs. 130, 131 and fig. 202. This type of dress consists of a tight-fitting, long-sleeved upper garment, a lower garment which is probably a dhoti (it could also be a tight-fitting pair of trousers, from the paintings this is not clear), a big shawl covering only the left shoulder and reaching down to the knees and a turban-like headgear. The upper garment has a high, round neckline and is decorated with cuffs and bands at the upper parts of the sleeves. Sometimes there is a special decoration also fixed at the top of the shoulder. Almost all of these garments are patterned. The headgear is always of plain fabric, either white or red. It is of a flat, circular shape with a piece of cloth falling down half the back and another piece covering the neck. The figures also wear

high boots with a trimming of wild animal skin. Some of the men are armed with long swords, spears or reflexive bows and round shields.

The musicians depicted in the Lumbini scene are dressed in almost the same way. They wear the same tight-fitting upper garment, dhoti and sometimes also the shawl. But they never wear headgear. The instruments they play are trumpets and drums.

A second type of male dress worn by only a few of the figures, among them the king (fig. 129), consists of a long-sleeved jacket, a dhoti and the already mentioned high boots (sometimes these people are shown without any footwear). The jacket is open, leaving a large part of the breast visible and it is also decorated with cuffs and has a bandlike insertion at the upper part of the

sleeves. Figure 203 shows this type of costume worn by one of the very rare figures clad in Indian dress represented in the depiction of the Sudhana story. Here the jacket is smaller than those shown in the paintings of the Life of the Buddha and the above-mentioned decoration on the sleeves is missing.

Soldiers constitute another category of male figures depicted in the narrative of the Life of the Buddha (fig. 202). They wear an armour consisting of two parts: a short-sleeved upper garment reaching down to the hips and long trousers. This armour is composed of small overlapping oblong plates probably made of leather. Often instead of the trousers a dhoti is worn, and sometimes the soldiers also wear the above described turban-like headgear. We find the same type of short-sleeved armour in a contemporaneous miniature painting from the region (Klimburg-Salter 1994c: Fig. 3a) but here the soldier is part of a group of Tibetans and he seems to wear the armour in combination with the Tibetan wool trousers. Armour of this type may have been used over an extended area and, therefore, probably cannot be classified as typically Indian.

The male figures are represented with two different coiffures. Most of the men are depicted with loose back-combed hair reaching to the shoulders. Some wear their hair formed in a knot at the back. The king is represented with this latter hairdo. All of the men are depicted with a beard and big, round earrings.

Although distinctive, this particular conjunction of features has not yet been culturally identified. Some elements of the dress, like the dhoti and the shawl, called *chadar*, doubtless point to an Indian provenance. Both garments have a long tradition on the subcontinent. A male person wearing the *chadar* for example is shown in the paintings decorating one of the rock-cut structures at Ajanṭā (late 5th century A.D.). And this figure also wears the *chadar* in combination with a long-sleeved, tight-fitting garment with a high, round neckline and a flat, round turban (Bhushan 1958: Line drawings 29, fig. 3; Chandra 1973: 84, fig. 67). But we do not find an exact comparison in early Indian art for the specific headgear shown in the Tabo narratives. Similar turban-like headgear, however, with attached pieces of cloth for the protection of the neck is represented in Iranian art of the 12th century. Here we also find garments having cuffs and ornamented, band-like insertions on the upper part of the sleeves. The type of male

costume depicted in the Tabo murals seems to combine elements from Indian culture with others coming from more northern regions. The headgear appears to be especially suited for desert areas.

For the second type of male costume depicted in Tabo, composed of a jacket and a dhoti, we find an equivalent in miniatures of Jaina manuscripts from Gujarat and Rajasthan (Nawab 1980: 40, Col. Pl. 78; Chandra 1970: Fig. 25). In addition, high, pointed boots which seem to have a trimming of wild animal fur are depicted, looking very similar to those represented at Tabo. The males in the miniature painting also wear their hair either combed back and reaching to the shoulders or formed in a knot at the back. Often the men depicted in the Jaina manuscripts are shown with a beard and wearing large, round earrings. In addition, the same types of weapons as those in the Tabo narratives are represented, that is, long swords, reflexive bows and round shields.

All of the female figures depicted in the Life of the Buddha at Tabo, including the queen, are clad in the same type of costume. Their dress consists of three parts: a long-sleeved, tight-fitting upper garment showing a deep décolleté neckline and reaching to approximately the navel, having a pointed end in the middle of the belly; long, wide trousers; and a light shawl which covers the head and falls down the body in front of the arms reaching almost to the ground (figs. 132, 133, 135). The trousers are tight-fitting at the hips and very wide at the feet, almost always covering them. Many of the standing female figures look as if they were wearing skirts. Only when depicted in sitting poses can one clearly see that they wear trousers (fig. 128).

In fig. 203 we see one of the very few figures wearing Indian dress which are depicted in the narrative cycle of the Sudhana story. The type of trousers worn by this lady slightly differs from the one dressing the females represented in the narratives of the Life of the Buddha. The trousers here are not that wide and at the end of the legs are laid-in pleats (like the trousers of the Tibetan costumes). But as this figure otherwise is represented in exactly the same way as all the other Indian females, this dissimilarity may not point to a different type of costume but to a different artist executing the paintings, maybe not as familiar with the “foreign” costumes as his colleague(s).

All the women wear their hair in a big knot at the back of the head and are adorned with round earrings, necklaces and bangles.



Fig. 203. Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-
bzang)
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south
wall, scene 50. Sudhana's visit to the
brahmin Sivarāgra

We find no exact equivalent for the female costume in pictorial sources, although from the type of garment, jewellery and hairdo it doubtlessly can be attributed to the Indian world. While for the male attire and certain elements of the material culture depicted in Tabo, we find parallels in Jaina manuscripts, the female dress represented there resembles only remotely the fashion shown in the western Tibetan paintings of the 10th–11th centuries. The women depicted in the Jaina manuscripts also wear bodices but these are half-sleeved and have a high neckline. Their lower garment is a kind of *sari*, covering about three quarters of the legs. The hairdo and jewellery, however, correspond to those represented in Tabo.

In the encyclopaedic work *Mānasollāsa* (MS), written by the western Cālukya King Someśvara in the 12th century, the women from Gujarat are said to wear full-sleeved bodices (*Mānasollāsa*, II, p. 102, s. 87, cited in Chandra 1973: 123). Apparently the bodices depicted in the Jaina manuscripts were not the only kind of bodice used in the region. As to the origin of the trousers, traditionally the women of Rajasthan wore wide trousers, called *ghagara* (Bhushan 1958: 27). But it is un-

clear if they can be related to the trousers depicted in Tabo.

In conclusion, one can say that it is not yet possible to identify the exact place of origin of the “foreigners” costumes represented in the narrative paintings from Tabo. From certain elements of the costumes, however, a provenance from the north-western regions of the Indian subcontinent, namely Gujarat, Rajasthan or Sind, seems to be the most probable. To this area also point the textile motifs, which, in addition to the costumes, help us to identify the non-Tibetan cultural element found at Tabo.

The Textile Motifs

As already stated, the Tibetan costumes (and of course the monks' robes) are usually without patterns, while all of the other textiles represented in the Tabo Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) have patterns. They decorate the garments of the people in the narrative paintings and the dhoti and scarves of deities, and are painted on the strips of cloth which are attached to the ceiling. Even in the early and very simple paintings of the Entry Hall a variety of different textile motifs occur.

The majority of the textile designs show the same characteristic features: Very often the patterns are organised in stripes; patterns composed of small elements, like crosses, dots, little circles and lines, occur frequently and almost always have an ornamented border; the most frequently used motifs are rosettes, simple flowers, various crossforms, zigzag lines and tendrils of vine; the prevailing colours are red, blue and white.

The textile depictions in the Entry Hall are clearly different from those of the rest of the temple. The patterns are neither organised in stripes nor do they show borders, and the single elements making up the pattern are relatively large (figs. 46, 47), although some of the motifs show forms similar to those represented in the later paintings of the temple.

Figurative textile patterns occur only in the Ambulatory and Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*), both in the wall paintings/paintings on clay sculptures and in the ceiling decoration. In the wall painting of the Ambulatory, textiles are depicted which show a design of rows of geese or ducks, sometimes holding a flower in their beaks (figs. 180, 204). The pattern of the dhoti of a standing Bodhisattva sculpture in the Cella is composed of rows of fabulous creatures, all having wings and fins and heads of either a human being, a horse, an elephant or a ram (figs. 149, 201). The figures represented on the ceiling textiles are flying offering gods depicted in pearl roundels (figs. 17, 158, 196), as well as fabulous creatures, geese and human beings entwined with vine tendrils (fig. 205). The contrast with the abstract patterns depicted in the ceiling paintings of the Assembly Hall is particularly remarkable. The absence of figurative patterns is especially noticeable in the ceiling paintings. We do not know the significance, if any, of the fact that figurative patterns occur only in the Ambulatory and Cella.

¹⁴C-dating of the ceiling textiles confirms that they were produced between the end of the 10th century and the first half of the 11th. They are of a coarse fabric covered with a thick layer of paint. Due to these characteristics they also – as the representations on the murals and clay figures – can only be considered as imitations of patterned fabrics. Of course it would be interesting to know why one did not attach real textiles to the ceiling instead of using the cloth as canvas. Possible explanations are that the respective textiles were not available at the time the ceiling had to be decorated, or that the –

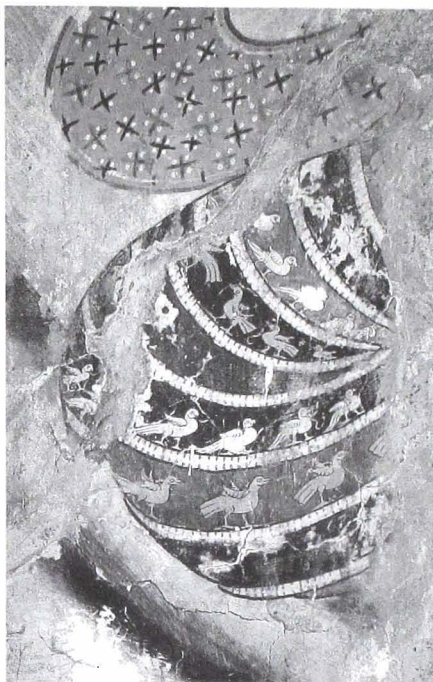
almost certainly – lighter fabrics were not considered durable enough. Or maybe the solution found in Tabo was simply the most accurate or cheapest way to satisfy the demands of the “architects”. In any case, it is interesting to note that most of the patterns shown on the ceiling of the Assembly Hall are similar to those represented in other textile depictions in the temple and some of them are even absolutely identical (compare fig. 56 with fig. 18).

Techniques of Textile Decoration

Several different techniques used for the decoration of fabrics can be inferred from the textile representations at Tabo. A large part of the depictions almost certainly shows resist-dyed textiles. Most apparently, this technique can be seen from patterns which show white motifs on a coloured ground. In such a case, the white parts of the fabric would have been covered by a resist during the process of dyeing and, therefore, were not pigmented. This technique of using wax or other pastes, which must be easily removable after the dyeing, is generally known by the Malayan term *batik*. The fact that the textiles imitated at Tabo always show repetitive, relatively small elements, suggests that the resists were applied by printing blocks. A typical pattern for the resist-dye technique in the Tabo paintings is represented for instance in fig. 28, where white flower- or sun-motifs can be seen on a dark background, or in the frequently depicted cross-motif which occurs in various forms (see fig. 177). Among this type of textiles can also be grouped those showing the figurative motifs of geese (fig. 180). And the extraordinary pattern on the dhoti of a standing clay Bodhisattva in the Cella, composed of stripes showing fabulous creatures, always in white against a coloured ground (figs. 149, 201), also may have been achieved by this technique.

Most of the patterns are depicted in blue and red. The dye-stuff used for achieving a blue colour was certainly indigo. Traditionally, madder or morinda roots were applied in India for achieving red and brown tones. Using the latter substances, in order to be able to take the dye, the cotton fabric, before the dyeing process, needs to be prepared with a mordant. As such, traditionally mainly alum, iron or tannin were used. The parts of the fabric which are not affected by the mordant remain white; they resist the dye. In the case, for example, of a textile with a red ground, the fabric must be immersed

Fig. 204. Textile pattern with rows of ducks
Main Temple, Ambulatory, west wall,
east corner, MBS16



in a mordant bath and a resist must cover the parts not to be dyed red. In Tabo most of the patterns are depicted in blue and red, which indicates a technique of combined indigo and mordant dyeing. In most of the Tabo depictions red is not the ground-colour, but is part of the pattern. In such textiles, the mordant seems to have been applied by block printing.

Exclusively mordant-resist-dyed fabrics may be seen in some of the depictions showing textiles patterned only in red and brown colours (see for example the dhoti of the female figure at the left upper part of fig. 149).

Another technique of textile decoration which can be deduced with a high degree of certainty from the depictions in the Tabo paintings is that of tie-resist-dyeing. In this case, individual parts of the fabric are lifted and completely or partially tied before the fabric is dyed. The parts tied together cannot take the dye. This technique produces a circular or lozenge-formed pattern (depending on how the fabric was folded before being dyed). By repeating this process, multicoloured textiles can be produced. Examples of textiles decorated by this technique in the Tabo representations may be the dhoti seen in fig. 29, showing a circular pattern, or the textile

depicted on a clay figure of the mandala in the Assembly Hall, showing the typical lozenge-forms (fig. 101). The technique of tie-resist-dyeing in India is especially popular in Gujarat, where it is called *bandhani*, and in Rajasthan where it is known by the term *chunari*².

Some of the textile representations in Tabo may imitate another form of resist-dyed fabric, namely wrap-resist-dyeing. With this, the fabric is rolled up (often diagonally, that is beginning at the corner) and then tied very tightly at intervals with strong thread. No dye can penetrate the fabric at these reserved parts. This process can be repeated several times, producing a pattern of parallel lines. This technique too is typical for Rajasthan and Gujarat where fabrics of this kind are called *laheria*. A depiction for example at Tabo which might represent this type of textile is the dress of the goddess of fig. 150.

Most of the textile depictions in Tabo seem to imitate various resist-dyed fabrics. Such textiles, as we have seen, can especially be related to Gujarat and Rajasthan and, as is clear from literary and archaeological evidence ("Fustat-textiles", see below), have a long tradition in this area³. It is said that the soil in this part of the sub-continent with its particular mineral content and the quality of the water give a special brightness to the colours obtained through the application of dyes and mordants (Gillow and Barnard 1991: 57).

Although very appealing and requiring a high level of skill and technical knowledge, the resist-dyed fabrics cannot be considered to be luxurious textiles. It is interesting to note that in the Main Temple at Tabo we find no imitations of silk brocade or textiles woven in the highly sophisticated *lampas*-technique (which integrates two systems of warp and weft with each other), as we clearly do in Alchi, Ladakh (Goepper 1993a, 1995). Only in the painted ceiling textiles in Tabo do pearled roundels occur – a typical element of the patterns of the precious silk fabrics which have survived from c. the 6th century onward from Persia, Central Asia or China (see for instance Falke 1951; Meister 1970). But the motifs enclosed by the pearls in Tabo (as in the ceiling paintings in Alchi) clearly belong to the Indian cultural sphere, like flying offering gods and lotus flowers (figs. 17, 158, 193, 196).

With regard to the depictions showing offering gods, it is by no means certain that they imitate actual fabrics. Remarkable is also that the motifs of pearl roundels only occur on the ceiling and never in textile depictions on



Fig. 205. Textile placed between beams, running vine with figures and animals
Ceiling of the central passage between Assembly Hall and the Apse; painting on cloth

other parts of the temple. In Indian sources no evidence for pearl roundels used as textile designs survived (which, of course, does not exclude the possibility that such textiles once existed). A kind of pearl roundel, however, depicting a rosette motif, showing similarities to one of those depicted in Tabo (fig. 193), has been preserved in the ceiling paintings of a Viṣṇu temple in Madanpur. District Lalitapur, Uttar Pradesh, dated to the 12th century (Kramrisch 1939; Nawab 1980: 6–7, fig. 8). Kramrisch notices that these paintings stylistically are very close to miniature paintings from western India of the 12th–14th centuries (1939: 175, n. 3). Pearl roundels (showing figurative motifs) also have been preserved on an architectural fragment of the Avantisvāmin temple in Kashmir, datable to the 9th century (Goepper 1993a: Figs. 18 and 23, 1995: Figs. 22 and 24). These examples at least show that the motif of the pearl roundel was not unknown to the Indian world. But the information and source material available to us today is simply not adequate to allow us to determine the origin of the pearl roundel motifs shown in Tabo.

Another representation on the ceiling textiles at Tabo, which may not imitate textiles, are the depictions of figures (human, geese, fabulous) sitting on lotuses and entwined by floral elements (fig. 205). The textile containing this motif is placed above the entrance to the Cella. A similar depiction is found in western Indian miniature painting – on a painted wooden book cover of a Jaina manuscript dated to c. the 11th century (fig. 206, after Nawab 1980: 41, Col. Pl. 82).

Regarding the provenance of the clearly non-Tibetan

textiles depicted in Tabo, we have seen that the techniques which can be inferred from the paintings are particularly associated with the north-western Indian regions Gujarat and Rajasthan. To these regions also point the textile motifs. Very similar, and sometimes even identical patterns to those in the Tabo representations can be found in textile depictions in Jaina manuscripts from Gujarat and Rajasthan dated from the 11th to the 15th centuries. And we also find strong parallels to the patterns of the “Fustat-textiles”⁴, a group of resist-dyed cotton textiles excavated in the old capital of Egypt, al-Fuṣṭāṭ. R. Pfister (1938) was the first scholar to identify a part of these textiles as Indian products. This attribution resulted from his observation of parallels between the textile patterns and architectural decoration from Gujarat. Recently carried out ¹⁴C-analyses of the textiles showed dates from the 11th century onward, the majority dating to the 14th–16th centuries (Barnes 1996, 1997, Chapter 4). Regarding the provenance of these textiles, for some authors a larger geographical area than Gujarat, including for instance Rajasthan and Sind, seems possible (Barnes 1992: 25–26). The limited scope of this article does not allow me to give a detailed comparison showing the similarities between the textile motifs of Tabo and those of the aforementioned regions of north-western India⁵.

Concluding, one can say that the results of our studies do not yet allow us to give an exact identification for the place of origin of the non-Tibetan textiles depicted in Tabo. Especially with regard to the costumes, the lack of source material leaves room for speculation. Non-

Fig. 206. Detail of Jaina bookcover with animals in running vine motive 11th/12th century, Jaisalmer (after Nawab 1980: Col. Pl. 82)



the less, at the present state of research, for the textiles shown at Tabo, the strongest parallels undoubtedly can be seen with the western region of the Indian subcontinent, in particular Gujarat and Rajasthan. Therefore, we

tentatively suggest these areas as place of origin for the western Tibetan textile representations. For a discussion concerning the transmission of this cultural element to western Tibet see Chapter VI.

¹ This research was made possible by a grant from the Austrian Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung.

² In Bāṇabhatta's *Harṣacarita* (HC) (written in the 10th century) for example, as Chandra (1973: 58–59) remarks, cloth referring to the famous tie-dyed products of Gujarat and Rajasthan is mentioned (HC, 261).

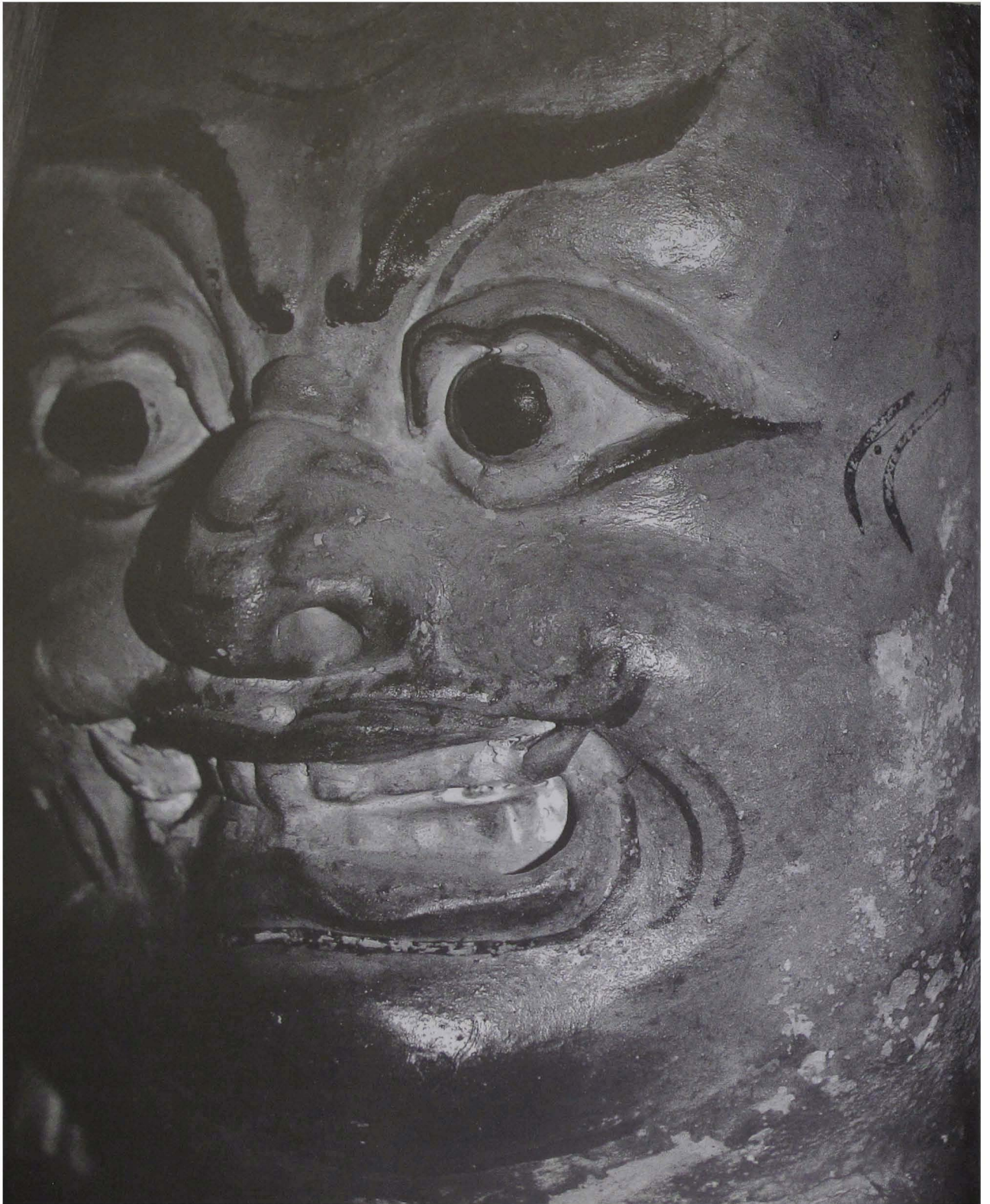
³ For information about traditional Indian techniques of textile decoration,

particularly about reserve techniques, see for example Bühler 1972; Bühler and Fischer 1977; Gittinger 1982; Gillow and Barnard 1991; Calico Museum of Ahmedabad 1980; Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1986.

⁴ In recent years it was repeatedly pointed out that the use of the term Fustat-textiles is problematic (Barnes 1990, 1992; Bérintain 1989; Vogel-sang-Eastwood 1990) because in al-Fuṣṭāṭ not only textiles of an Indian

provenance, but also others, coming for instance from the Mediterranean area or the Near East, were found. Moreover, Indian trade textiles of the same type as those called Fustat meanwhile came to light also at other sites, for example at *Quscir al-Quadim at the Red Sea* (Whitcomb and Johnson 1980; Vogel-sang-Eastwood 1990).

⁵ For a detailed comparative analysis see Wandl 1996 and Wandl in press.



V.7. The Clay Sculptures

All the Buddhist monuments – major monasteries and small village temples – built in the region of the West Tibetan and Ladakhi kingdoms during the time of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (10th–13th centuries; called *phyi-dar* in Tibetan historical literature) contain clay sculptures. These sculptures are usually found in the main niches on the central axis of the temples, and thus represent the main theme of the temple decoration. It is therefore surprising that they have received so little attention until now.

This neglect can partly be explained by the difficulties encountered in any study of these clay sculptures. Generally, the sculptures have been repaired and repainted at least once, very often quite recently and with evident lack of skill. Usually, as they are often the main images in the monuments, they are also the most venerated. They are dressed in lengths of cloth and covered by piles of ceremonial scarves (*kha-btags*) and it is usually not permitted to uncover them.

In the Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) of Tabo, too, clay sculptures represent the main themes of the temple decoration (fig. 54). Here, three groups of sculptures can be differentiated according to their function, location, iconography and style. Thanks to permission from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and even more to the cordial, helpful and understanding attitude of the abbot and monks of Tabo monastery, it was possible to carry out a detailed examination of the sculptures.

Entry Hall

The first group of sculptures is found in the Entry Hall

(*sgo-khang*) (plan 3), and consists merely of two crudely made gate-protectors (*dvārapāla*) flanking the door leading to the Assembly Hall ('*du-khang*'). The discordant relationship with the large area of flames painted on the walls behind them and the different sizes of the two sculptures prove that they are not original. Their deplorable state of preservation is evidence of a long history of restoration and renovation and allows no clue as to the date of their construction².

However, the remains of the 10th-century painting of flames behind the images and a number of holes in the wall remaining from the wooden supports of the original sculptures show that there have always been two large gate-protectors in this location. From the style of the flames, it can be proposed that these belonged to the time of the foundation of the temple in A.D. 996. It is not possible to tell whether some parts of the original sculptures have been reused in the present ones. In any case, the original protectors may have looked similar to the gate-protectors painted on the sidewalls of the entrance to the Assembly Hall (fig. 51).

Assembly Hall

Entering the Assembly Hall ('*du-khang*') (plan 4), as the eyes grow accustomed to the dim light, the second group of sculptures gradually becomes distinct. As if sitting in the air, a large number of peaceful and serene images appear side by side at eye level along the walls (fig. 54). The blue background covered with flowers further supports the impression that these deities dwell in space.

In the Assembly Hall there are 33 sculptures in the

Fig. 207. Face of the gatekeeper Vajrasphoja
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, passage to Apse (no. 32); clay
Wrinkles and beards of the gate-protectors are suggested by painting

same style. Together they form the Vajradhātu-mahā-*maṇḍala* (the Great Mandala of the Adamantine Sphere), the Root Mandala of the Yoga Tantra class. The central image of this mandala, a Vairocana (rNam-par-sngang-mdzad), is placed in the centre at the rear end of the hall, just behind the altar. Exceptionally, Vairocana is depicted four times back-to-back sitting on the same lotus which is placed on an elaborate lion throne, instead of the usual depiction with four heads only (fig. 61). Among the 33 sculptures the four separate images of Vairocana are counted as one image only!

When one's eyes have finally adjusted to the dim light and further details have been made out with the aid of a torch, one is struck by the contemplative and peaceful aura of the majority of the images (fig. 52). The regularity of the circular nimbus, painted with waves of radiating light, contrasts with the vertical symmetry of the sculptures, which is tempered only by the lively movements of the arms.

The shovel-shaped faces have large, half-open eyes, high eyebrows, a small nose and mouth and a pointed chin. Their even features and serene expressions contrast with their elaborate headgear, consisting of a jewelled crown (*rin-po-che'i cod-pan*), streamers with knots (*dar-dpyangs*), rosettes and earrings. The bodies, slightly V-shaped, have a wide breast and a prominent belly with a deep spiral-shaped navel. The arms, hands and fingers are comparatively strong. The dhoti and an apron-like cloth hanging down between the legs are held in place by a knotted string and a belt of pearls.

The faces of the slightly smaller female images appear a little elongated. These goddesses have a strong V-shaped upper body with circular cup-shaped breasts set on the torso. A long necklace with a large pendant is twisted once between the breasts. The slim waist itself is shown by an unnatural line interrupting the continuity of the body. The swelling belly below the waist is more prominent and the depression of the navel has a rhombic shape. As the goddesses are slightly smaller, their headgear, done with the same moulds as those used for the other figures, is even more prominent (fig. 102).

The bodies of the gate-protectors are similar to the Bodhisattvas, except that the belly is much more prominent. Their round, expressive faces have wide-open eyes, eyebrows which continue to the root of the nose, and an open mouth with the teeth shown – two at the sides are longer. Their hair is bound in a knot with a loop, falling

at the sides in long braids. Beside the streamers they wear bracelets, a necklace and a short dhoti (fig. 65).

Regarding the construction technique, it is the sculptures of the mandala group which are of particular interest³. Although the Vairocana, the other four Jina (Buddhas), the 16 Bodhisattvas and the eight goddesses are slightly different in size⁴, the same construction technique was used for all of them. The four gate-protectors⁵ differ only in so far as their different function and postures make this necessary.

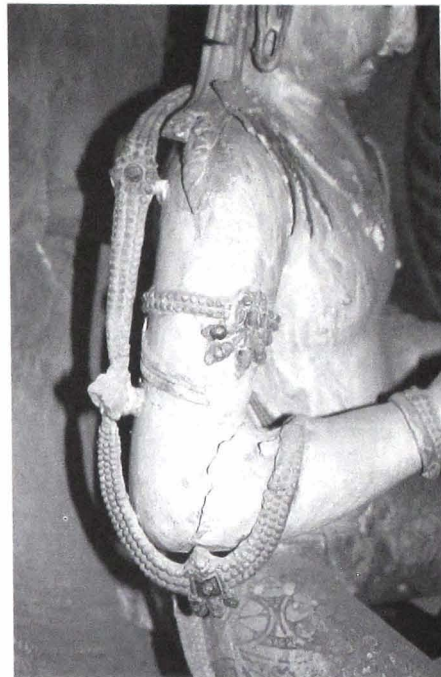
The Vairocana images are constructed in a similar way, but the elaborate throne construction deserves a detailed description (fig. 61). It is built on a square stone and clay foundation around a round central post. The square and round parts of the throne can be differentiated by their respective functions: the round parts are the stem (bottom) and the blossom (top) of the lotus-flower, while the square parts form the lion-throne. Additional supports at the corners of the round part emphasise the throne's squareness. The 43-cm-high round lotus stem, narrow at the bottom and wide at the top, is painted with a leaf-pattern very similar to the pattern indicating rocks at the feet of the gate-protectors. Both the stem and the double lotus blossom, being the same for all four figures, are evidence of the unity of the four images seated upon it. In contrast, the lion throne has four similar sides, on each of which a pair of lions is painted as the vehicle for the four images (fig. 64). Moreover, the four figures are separated by diagonal beams projecting outwards. Above the heads of the sculptures beautiful *kirtimukha* (resembling the face of a lion) spit jewels (fig. 62). Just below the latter, four stupas of the "Descent from Heaven (*lha-babs*)"-type are modelled in relief against the central pole facing the intermediary directions (fig. 63). As the Vairocana images are sitting on the moon-circle cushion directly on the throne, they only have one wooden support at their back connecting them to the central post.

The 32 images attached to the walls are held by two wooden poles (*upasūla*)⁶ each. The lower one carries most of the images' weight, and the stick representing the vertebral column (*vaṅśadaṇḍa*) is inserted into an opening in this pole (like a mortise joint). There is a second supporting pole at the height of the breast (fig. 208). The semicircular lotus pedestal is separately held by two smaller pegs (fig. 211). In the case of the gate-protectors a rock-pattern is painted on the base.

Fig. 208. Side view of Vajrālokā
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, west
wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (no. 28)
The two wooden poles attach the
image to the wall. The semicircular
lotus basement is completely separate.
The upper pole is placed in the centre
of the circular mandorla



Fig. 209. The pearl wreath of
Vajrahāsa
Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south
wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (no. 13);
clay
The wreath of pearls (*ratnamālā*) has a
core of a thin, hard strip of leather and
is fixed with an iron or a wooden nail
to the image



After inserting the supports into the wall, a wooden armature was constructed. Damage to some images at the elbows and hands reveal some details of the armature. The wooden cores were connected to each other by a round mortise joint or simply put side by side with flattened surfaces and held together by wrapping a strip of a hard and still flexible material – presumably leather – and a string of rough wool around them. The end of the leather was held by a wooden nail. Occasionally the wrist joint was supported by a flat piece of hammered iron fixed with a leather strip to the wooden core of the lower arm. The fingers are supported by a wire or leather core.

On this armature the layers of clay were built up. The inner, thicker layers, making up the main bulk of the body, contain straw. To the finer surface layers wool and/or fine straw was added. The surface is of very fine clay, and is worked very evenly and smoothly. The female breasts were moulded separately and affixed to the nearly finished sculpture. The faces of the sculptures are very even and symmetrical (fig. 102), but it is not clear if a mould was used for them at some stage.

After finishing the shaping of the body, the sculptures were extensively ornamented. For most of the or-

naments and flowers a wide range of moulds was used. The forms of these moulds were then used and combined in different ways to give each sculpture a singular appearance. The wreath of pearls (*ratnamālā*) has a core of a thin, hard strip of leather and is fixed with an iron or a wooden nail to the image (fig. 209). The locks of hair and the ribbons are also moulded around a core of leather. The points of the delicate crowns are held by a thin, round wooden peg and occasionally a wire, while the ring holding the parts of the crown seems to be of massive clay with straw. The rosettes and knots at the side of the head are held by wooden pegs inserted into the soft clay.

Once the sculpture was completely ornamented, it was painted. The white priming coat and the paint are relatively thin. The original colours appear to have darkened and have a deep, strong quality. The wide palette of colours used does not include a real dark green, a blue-green being used instead. The modelled hair was continued in the painting and all the nooks of the body – such as the inside of an ear – were painted in darker colours. Folds and the beards of the gate-protectors were also suggested by painting (fig. 207). Although the sculp-

tures are three-dimensional in any case, painting was additionally used to indicate shading (fig. 81)⁸.

All the jewellery, flames, streamers, crowns etc. are also painted. Many of these original ornaments have been preserved (fig. 211). Particularly noteworthy are the painted cloth patterns on the dhoti, which are executed in a very fine manner and are evidence that the artists were familiar with precious textiles (fig. 101).

Below the present layer of painting and sculpture some traces of an older layer of painting are preserved. This can be particularly well seen between the images of Vajrasattva and Vajrarāja (nos. 6 and 7) and below the western gate-protectors Vajrapāsa and Vajrasphoṭa (nos. 31 and 32). This fact, as well as a stylistic comparison with the murals of the renovation, suggests an attribution of the mandala to the period of the sanctuary's renovation, i.e. to the years immediately before 1042. This means that contrary to our earlier opinion (cf. Klimburg-Salter 1982: 162–4; 1994a: 35–6) all the supporting wooden pegs were inserted into the original earthen wall when the building (datable 996) was already more than 40 years old! Although this sounds unlikely for nearly life-size and heavy sculptures in a building with walls made of earth, the remaining traces allow no other interpretation. It is quite certain that a wooden framework inside the wall was used to hold the sculptures. This framework must have been present from the original construction of the building or – less likely – it was inserted when the sculptures were made. Most likely, however, is a combination of these possibilities i.e. the frames for holding the sculptures are added onto an existing wooden framework within the walls supporting the architecture⁹.

As we have seen, the sculptures are mainly of massive clay on a comparatively fine wooden armature and thus must weigh more than 100 kg each. Therefore securing the figures to the wall of dried earth was certainly a very difficult task, and it was accomplished in such a skilful manner that most of the sculptures are still in place. This despite the fact that Himachal Pradesh regularly suffers from severe earthquakes. The fact that the clay, although massive, dried out without any traces of cracks provides further evidence of the high level of technical achievement manifest in these images.

In conclusion, although several of the mandala sculptures have been repaired and most of them have been repainted, they all still display features dating from their

original construction. Only one of the figures has been completely remodelled (Vajrahetu, no. 16, fig. 210), but even in this case the original jewellery preserved from the original sculpture has been reused. As proved by the inscription beside it, this was only done in the middle of the last century when this section of the wall was damaged.

The most difficult question regarding the Tabo mandala concerns iconography. Because the central image is Vairocana it has been known since Tucci's publication that the mandala is a form of the Root Mandala of the Yoga Tantra class, the Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala. Although several attempts have been made to find a textual source for the mandala or to identify the Tabo images with the help of related texts, the mandala has not been satisfactorily identified¹⁰. There are three major problems: the central image of Vairocana consists of four separate images, the mudra of the Vairocana figures, the absence of the four goddesses around Vairocana, and the question of the attributes. None of these questions can be solved with any certainty at the moment. However, thanks to the detailed survey of the sculptures, credible explanations can be suggested for each of these problems¹¹.

The central Vairocana, instead of having four faces¹² only, is depicted as four different images sitting back-to-back on the same throne (fig. 61). Although the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṅgraha* (STTS) and its commentaries differ in the descriptions at this point, none of them clearly refers to four images. However, in the commentaries to the STTS it is evident that a representation of Vairocana with four separate bodies is not without basis¹³. Further, the Vairocana depicted with four faces could be interpreted as the two-dimensional version of four separate images. Beside the Tabo Vairocana fourfold images are known from Lalung and Tholing in the western Himalayas as well as the Lho-brag Khom-ting temple and the Yum-chen-mo temple at gNas-gsar in central Tibet¹⁴. These are in the centre of the buildings, while the two-dimensional version is also found in sculpture when it is placed against a wall (e.g. in Alchi, Mang-rgyu, and Sumda in Ladakh as well as in Gumrang in Lahul).

The hands of all four images at one time most probably showed the same hand gesture, presumably a variant of the Gesture of Teaching the Buddhist Law (*dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*). Śākya mitra calls Vairocana's gesture a wisdom fist (*ye-shes kyi khu-tshur*,



Fig. 210. Bodhisattva Vajrahetu (rDo-rje-rgyu)

Main Temple. Assembly Hall, north wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (no. 16). This Bodhisattva is the only sculpture which was redone to a very large extent after it was damaged in the last century (recorded by an inscription to the side of it). However, even here the remains of the original, particularly the moulded jewellery, have been preserved and reused



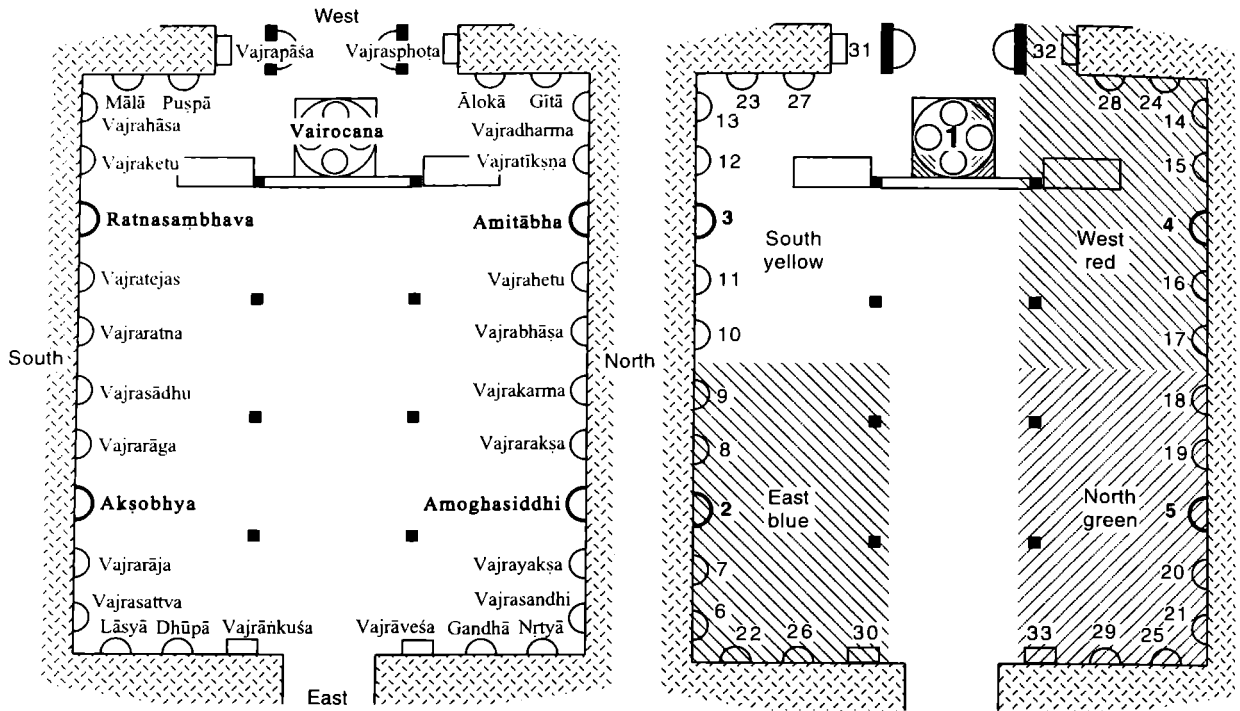
Fig. 211. Vajratikṣṇa (rDo-rje-mon-po) could once have held a thin, light sword in the raised right arm Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north wall, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (no. 15); clay

Q70 233,3,3), and Ānandarābha describes Vairocana performing the Mudra of Highest Enlightenment (*hyang-chub-mchog gi phyag-rgya — bodhyagrīmudrā*, Q71 185,3,8 4,2). In the *bodhyagrīmudrā* the extended index finger of the left hand should be grasped by the right fist, and the right fist is usually shown from the back¹⁵. Despite the fact that all iconographic texts of the Yoga Tantras prescribe the *bodhyagrīmudrā*, the most usual Tibetan depictions instead have the palm of the right hand turned towards the viewer, which makes it a *dharmacakramudrā*¹⁶. The regular occurrence of the *dharmacakramudrā* instead of the *bodhyagrīmudrā* might be due to the fact that according to late Mahāyāna texts Vairocana is considered the *sambhogakāya* of Śākyamuni¹⁷. There Vairocana is the teacher of gods and

humans, the supreme teacher. It is interesting to note, that in de Mallmann only once is Vairocana said to be depicted with *dharmacakramudrā*, and there he bears the surname Śākyasiṃha, Lion of the Śākya family¹⁸. That it was intended to show this particular aspect of Vairocana is evidenced by the Assembly Hall's general iconographic program. The fourfold Vairocana is placed between the final scene of the Sudhana narrative and the initial scene of Śākyamuni's Life, in both of which the references to each other and the mandala are apparent by similar frames around them (cf. figs. 126, 127). Sudhana's pilgrimage culminates in his reaching equality with the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra in the presence of the (preaching) Buddha Vairocana (fig. 126), while in the first scene of Buddha's Life Śvetaketu, i.e. Śākyamuni before his last birth in Tuṣita Heaven, is depicted preaching on a lion throne (fig. 127). Except for the fact that the Tabo Vairocana consists of a fourfold image instead of a figure with four faces only, the depiction in Tabo displays a form of Vairocana which became the standard Tibetan interpretation of this deity within this particular context.

The absence of the four goddesses Sattvavajrī, Ratnavajrī, Dharmavajrī and Karmavajrī (rDo-rje-sems-ma, rDo-rje-rin-chen-ma, rDo-rje-chos-ma, and rDo-rje-las-ma), the mothers of the four Buddha-Families (*rigs kyi yum*), also has no presently known textual basis. It is clear that they were never represented as sculptures in Tabo, as there is no empty space left where they could have been¹⁹. Ānandarābha includes the four goddesses around Vairocana but rather emphasises the nature of their attributes, which are the symbols of the four Buddha-Families. Śākyamitra mentions the four goddesses, but does not describe them.

In the Root Vajradhātu-maṇḍala of the Ngor Collection the four goddesses are represented only by their attributes painted around the central Vairocana²⁰. Even for the representation of the symbols of the four goddesses there is little space in Tabo. The only places where something is evidently missing is at the base of the posts supporting the diagonal beams between the four Vairocana images (fig. 61). However, these are directed towards the intermediary directions, while the text clearly prescribes the cardinal directions²¹. On the other side, adjusted to the rectangular form of the Assembly Hall, the whole mandala in Tabo is rather organised in the intermediary directions²². Therefore, the presence of these



attributes at the corners of Vairocana's throne would conform with the layout of the Tabo mandala (see plan 12. Quarters of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala).

This brings us to the question of attributes. Of all the sculptures of Tabo only one carries an attribute in its hand: the offering goddess Nṛtyā (Gar-ma, E31) in the north-east corner of the Assembly Hall holds a three-pointed vajra in her raised left arm (figs. 95, 99, 100). Due to its physical appearance and the perfect state of the hand holding it, this vajra certainly belongs to the original construction. It is further remarkable that Nṛtyā is the only figure of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala for which Ānandagarbha in his commentary to the STTS prescribes a three-pointed vajra instead of the usual five-pointed one²³. Did the other images also once have attributes?

This question can no longer be answered with any certainty. The hands, in so far as they are preserved in a perfect state, show no traces of attributes. Thus, in earlier publications it was assumed that the images never had attributes. However, I would like to draw attention to another sculpture, the depiction of Vajratikṣṇa (rDo-rje-mon-po), who iconographically is none other than Mañjuśrī (fig. 86). This image would normally carry

two attributes, a *Prajñāpāramitā* book in the left hand at heart-level, and a sword in the right hand, which is raised "as if striking/piercing all Tathāgata"²⁴. The left hand could easily have held a small book as does the Bodhisattva Akṣayamati (Blo-gros-myi-zad-pa, BS12) painted on the Ambulatory north wall. On the other hand, the raised right arm could never have held a proper sword between its fingers. However, at the top of the head of this image, just behind the jewelled crown, a wooden stick projects vertically and does not serve any obvious purpose. Seen from the side, this stick forms a straight line with the raised right hand (fig. 211), and it is evident that it could once have held a thin light sword, probably made of wood too. One has to bear in mind that both the preserved vajra of Nṛtyā and the presumed book of Vajratikṣṇa are of a disproportionately small size, a fact which can be seen in the paintings from Nako and Alchi as well. Furthermore, the vajra is placed loosely in Nṛtyā's hand, and although it cannot be taken off, it can be turned within the hand. Considering this new evidence, it seems likely that all the images once held attributes, although these would have been of a merely symbolic size²⁵.

Plan 11. Deities of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala

Plan 12. Quarters of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala

In addition, the careful survey of the sculptures carried out in the summer of 1994 revealed that a number of major alterations had been made to the mandala images during restoration work. The most crucial factor for the identification of the figures is the body-colour used for each of them, which has occasionally been changed. The relevance of the hand gestures of the present-day sculptures has also been verified. As it turned out, all the original body-colours and most of the hand gestures of the sculptures agree with the standard descriptions of the central deities of the Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala as found in the STTS-commentary by Ānandagarbha²⁶, the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala as described in the *Nispannayogāvalī* (NSP 19, de Mallmann 1975: 57–58) or the description of the Root Mandala for the Yoga Tantra in the *rGyud-sde-kun-btus* (GDK). Ānandagarbha's description is apparently the basis for the later Tibetan iconographical descriptions of the deities belonging to this mandala, and his description and the names used by him have been used here to identify the Tabo images (plan 11. Deities of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala)²⁷. However, Ānandagarbha, NSP 19 and the GDK give a different description of the central Vairocana, and they all mention the four goddesses around Vairocana. Further, these texts add a number of deities to the outer circles of the described mandalas, which are not represented in Tabo.

For most of the images beside the central Vairocana Ānandagarbha's descriptions are very close to the Tabo mandala. That they do not agree in all details is due to two circumstances: on the one hand, there is a certain iconographic carelessness on the part of the sculptors. This is evident from the distribution of the different sitting postures. The text prescribes the *vajraparyāṅka* (*rdo-rje skyil-mo-krung*) – sitting cross-legged with both feet on the thigh of the other leg – for the Jina, and the *sattvaparyāṅka* (*sems-pa'i skyil-mo-krung*) – sitting cross-legged with only the right foot on the thigh of the left leg – for Vajrasattva and the others. In Tabo both postures are found, but here the Jina Amoghasiddhi (fig. 92) is depicted in *sattvaparyāṅka*, and some of the Bodhisattvas and goddesses sit in *vajraparyāṅka* (the Bodhisattvas figs. 73, 75, and the goddess fig. 96). On the other hand, there were certain artistic conventions which varied the prescribed iconography in certain ways. The best example for this is Vajrayakṣa (rDo-rje-gnod-sbyin, fig. 93), which according to the description would

tend to look like a gate-protector with large belly and two teeth projecting from the sides of the mouth. In West Tibetan sculpture and painting he is depicted just like the other Bodhisattvas. Instead of having fangs and holding them at the mouth, he holds two long teeth as symbols in his hands in front of the breast²⁸. In a similar way an artistic convention may be the explanation for the depiction of Vairocana with *dharmacakramudrā* and as four separate images. Further, in the case of extreme colours prescribed for the images like black for Vajrayakṣa and white for several images including Vajrāṅkuṣa (fig. 65), these colours apparently have been altered by shading to somewhat milder tones for aesthetic reasons.

To summarise, the 33 sculptures of the Tabo mandala preserve an unusual version of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, for which only a partial explanation has been found in textual sources to date. In future its full explanation might be found in some commentary on a Yoga Tantra, but despite the possible existence of a textual source, the Tabo mandala itself can be taken as evidence of the fully developed iconography of the Yoga Tantras in 11th-century West Tibet. Despite the absence or hypothetical presence of the four goddesses around the central Vairocana the Tabo mandala represents the core of the Root Mandala of the Yoga Tantra. Due to the images' good state of preservation, it is in itself a complete commentary on the STTS. In fact, the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala as represented in Tabo is a predecessor of the prescriptions in later Tibetan commentaries, particularly the ones of the Sa-skyia school which may directly derive from the translations and teachings of Rinchen-bzang-po, who translated the STTS, the commentary by Śākyamitra and the first chapter of Ānandagarbha's commentary containing the Root Mandala.

Cella

The third group of clay sculptures in the Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) is found in and in front of the Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*) situated in the back of the temple (plan 9, fig. 146). Just opposite the rear (western) image of the fourfold Vairocana, these large²⁹ and relatively flat images, leaning against the wall or a ladder-like construction, appear clumsy and extremely stiff. This group consists of one Jina, four standing Bodhisattvas, and four deities – two of them torsos only – flanking the Jina and offering flowers. In contrast to the sculptures of the mandala, most images in this group

have been restored several times. The last time was when the (today) blue Bodhisattva (fig. 149) had to be restored by the ASI after the earthquake of 1975³⁰.

Nevertheless, there are enough features preserved to prove that these sculptures are of the same workmanship. Apart from the similar style, the standing Bodhisattvas and the Jina share such peculiar details as the same *mālā* constructed of half-flowers (fig. 213) and a larger right loop inside the lotus-petals of their pedestals. Also the way the hair is dressed is the same on all the images including the flying gods flanking the Jina (figs. 145, 148).

The Cella itself and the surrounding Ambulatory belong to the original building from 996. The Cella is the highest part of the building (diagram 1). The three-part construction of the passage leading to the Cella and the Ambulatory is unusual. The two smaller and lower entrances at the sides face the front walls of the Cella – a place used for the Renovation Inscription and donor depictions. The central passage is both higher and wider, and is directly opposite the Cella (diagram 12. Transition Zone).

Two of the standing Bodhisattvas are fixed onto the two ladder-shaped supports separating the side-entrances from the main passage (figs. 143, 144). Each of these supports consist of two posts connected with four small crossbeams of which the lower three crossbeams are additionally connected to each other with three vertical wooden bars, the central one being wider (fig. 212). For the dating of the group of sculptures in the Cella, the crucial question is if this construction – including the sculpture – is from the original building phase or not. Today additional supporting posts have been added at the back or in front of the older ones (fig. 82).

The present state of the sculptures affords little precise information about their original construction technique, and only a few stylistic and iconographic details have been preserved which can be attributed to their original condition. Only the flying gods flanking the Jina are well preserved and give an impression of the original appearance of these sculptures (fig. 147)³¹.

The elongated face of the green deity is modelled in a superbly expressive manner (fig. 148). The features of the face are clearly discernible: the round, yet sharp chin, the undulating lines of the thick lips and the nostrils, the somewhat bulging folds around the eyes and the eyebrows indicated by an engraved line. The hair-style is remarkable, having a flat hair-knot at the back of the head, a straight line of curls at the hairline, and

long braids of curled hair falling side by side upon the shoulders. A string of pearls was placed just above the hairline.

All the images have three step-like folds at the neck and a simple V-shaped upper body, which is only slightly modelled (fig. 144). At the navel, the belly bulges awkwardly. Legs, arms and hands are extremely stiff and only slightly modelled. The arms and hands further appear too thin for such imposing images. The Bodhisattvas stand on their right leg, while their left one is slightly set forward such that the large toe projects over the edge of the lotus pedestal (here too consisting of the lotus-blossom and the moon-cushion).

The Bodhisattvas wear a dhoti held by a belt of pearls. The dhoti is lower at the right leg, and has two layers of cloth on the left. The edge of the dhoti is shown by a modelled undulating line. The beautiful patterns painted on the dhoti of the Bodhisattvas standing in the Cella are certainly later additions, probably belonging to the same period as the painted female figures flanking them. The original patterns might have looked like the simple cloud-like flower design, traces of which are found on the Bodhisattvas in front of the Cella (fig. 144). The deities wear a dhoti or trousers with a short apron and knee-high felt boots (fig. 147)! One can only hazard a guess as to whether the latter and the dhoti-pattern of the Jina – reminiscent of the ceiling decoration in the Assembly Hall – are original.

The sculptures of the Cella are constructed in a similar way to the mandala images, but here they stand on firm pedestals. The supporting wooden poles (*upaśūla*) – two in the case of the Bodhisattvas, and only one for the Jina³² – are therefore smaller and do not bear much of the weight of the images. On ASI photographs of the destroyed blue Bodhisattva in the Cella – made available to me by R. Sengupta³³ – a long, thick stick representing the vertebral column (*vaṅśadaṇḍa*) is visible. It appears to have a hexagonal shape and tapers (probably becoming round) towards the top. It projected so much beyond the body of the image that it even penetrated into the flat hair-knot of the sculpture. At the shoulder the joint was supported by a rope.

There are at least three different layers of clay. A first body of clay, around which a rope might have been wrapped, covers the wooden armature. The main bulk of coarse clay forms the body of the image. This layer was already sculpted and had a relatively smooth sur-

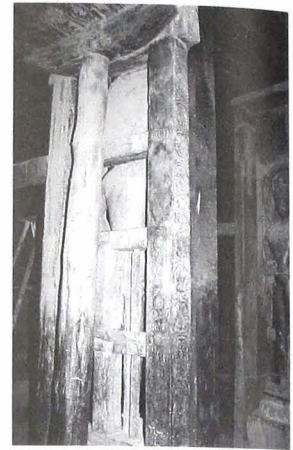


Fig. 212. Ladder-like scaffolding for the sculptures painted with simple geometrical and flower motifs Main Temple, passage between the back of the temple (Ambulatory and Cella) and the Assembly Hall, back of sculpture IV

Fig. 213. The *mālā* built from a row of painted blossom-halves on the back of sculpture V Main Temple, passage between the Apse (Ambulatory and Cella) and the Assembly Hall

Fig. 214. Necklace of Vairocana
Main Temple, Cella, west wall
(sculpture I)



Fig. 215. Necklace of Mahāvairocana
Main Temple, Assembly Hall



face. The fine surface-layer of clay is a maximum of one centimetre thick. The clay of this layer contains a little hair, straw and small stones (< 3 mm). The final layer was then painted, originally apparently with thin colours. Here, too, shading was painted (visible on the lions and in the armpit of Bodhisattva V).

The original jewellery was formed by hand and consisted of relatively simple flowers and a string of pearls. It appears that the Bodhisattvas outside the Cella did not originally have crowns, as their hairstyles are completely modelled and their present crowns mainly consist of moulded forms taken from the mandala group. The present crowns are, moreover, set roughly on top of the string of pearls³⁴. The same cannot be said for the Bodhisattvas in the Cella, as they have been heavily restored at the back of the head, and it is not clear if the same hair-knot was once there or not. Furthermore, the coarse form of some of the crown-points preserved there does not belong to the mandala group but would rather correspond to the other original jewellery. These crown-points therefore might also be original.

The lotus petals on the pedestals of both the standing Bodhisattvas and the Jina, despite their different

sizes, share a similar feature that cannot be accidental: the inner righthand loop of the lotus petal is always wider than the lefthand one. It thus appears that the petals were made with moulds and then refined. A similar form of pointed lotus-petals with two inner loops appears to be prominent in the earlier phase of murals in the Ambulatory (fig. 190). Furthermore, the shape of the *mālā* is remarkable; it is built from a row of painted blossom-halves (fig. 213). A comparable half-flower pattern appears on the ladder-posts in the passageway containing the two Bodhisattvas.

Apart from their respective positions and probably also the presence of a crown, the pedestals, too, suggest a certain iconographic and functional difference between the two pairs of Bodhisattvas. The lotus pedestals in the Cella – as that of the Jina – have two layers of lotus petals, while the ones in front of the Cella have only one layer. These differences might indicate a difference in the respective ranks of the Bodhisattvas within the pantheon.

A confusing element in the analysis of this group of sculpture is that in one or more of the repairs, moulds from the mandala sculptures were used for some of the jewellery. Purely on technical grounds it is difficult to decide if these forms of jewellery from the mandala had been added already during the period of the renovation (which would make the Cella sculptures predate the mandala group) or even as late as during a recent restoration by the ASI. In the case of the crown of one Bodhisattva (sculpture IV) outside the Cella, which generally appears to be a later addition (cf. above), a moulded part that was broken or deliberately taken off, could have been used again in another place. The same could be true for other moulds used on the Cella sculptures, some of which have apparently been remoulded from the ones used for the mandala sculptures.

In the case of the necklace of the Jina (Vairocana), which is nearly identical to the one worn by the Vairocana of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, the supposition that it has been taken from one of the mandala images appears rather unlikely (figs. 214, 215). This moulded necklace seems original and it is too fragile to have accidentally fallen or been deliberately taken from its original place and reused here. This necklace is even more complete than the one on the fourfold image, as the body of the Jina is larger and the ends of the necklace did not need to be shortened. Is it possible that this necklace was

added to the sculpture during the time of the extensive renovation in the middle of the eleventh century? This question will have to be considered again later.

Because of the red body-colour and the Meditation Gesture (*dhyānamudrā*), the Jina has been interpreted by Tucci (1935: 82–84) as Amitābha/Amitāyus, who would conventionally sit on a peacock throne. As this image sits on a lion throne, Klimburg-Salter (1982: 160) suggested that the Jina sitting in meditation once was a form of the Jina Vairocana whose hands held a wheel in the Gesture of Meditation³⁵. The latter assumption can be supported by the fact that the image has an underlayer of white paint.

The Bodhisattvas have been repaired so often that their present gestures and colours cannot be relied upon as a basis for interpretation. Nevertheless, I shall attempt a description of their possible earlier form as far as my survey allows. No trace of an attribute is preserved, but here, too, the same suppositions formulated for the mandala group would appear to be valid.

In the Cella the white Bodhisattva (south, fig. 29) seems to have once been yellow (as can be seen from its legs). Its right hand displays the Gesture of Giving, and its left arm is held to the side (this is probably the result of having been broken and then restored in this awkward position to enable it to be supported by the wall). The blue Bodhisattva (north, fig. 149) might have been green, but traces of yellow and of another green are also visible. Compared with the photograph taken by Ghersi in 1933 (Tucci 1935: Tav. XL)³⁶ the hand gestures were carefully reproduced by the ASI in 1978. The right hand is held in front of the breast with the palm upwards, while the left hand rests, turned inwards, at the hip. Although the gestures look awkward today, in my opinion they still give a faithful impression of their original position. This pair of Bodhisattvas are most probably Avalokiteśvara/Padmāpāni and Vajrasattva/Vajrapāni. These are the main Bodhisattvas of the Lotus- and Vajra-Families in the Caryā Tantra system³⁷. The southern Avalokiteśvara most probably held the stem of a lotus flower in his right hand, while Vajrasattva held a vajra in front of his breast and a bell (*ghaṇṭā*) at the hip. In Ropa's small temple an iconographically similar pair is preserved in the form of marvellous standing wooden sculptures³⁸.

Of the Bodhisattvas in front of the Cella the one to the south seems to have been always yellow or orange.

Of his gestures, Teaching (*vitarka*) with the right hand and Giving (*dāna*) with the left one, the Teaching Gesture is certainly not original, although the hand seems to have always been extended forwards. His counterpart to the north was once yellow too, and his hands show the Gesture of Teaching with the right hand and a gesture as if holding something at the hips with the left (fig. 144). The Gesture of Teaching with the tips of thumb and index finger together was also used for holding small attributes (e.g. a rosary), and this might have been intended with these two Bodhisattvas. The identification of these images will not be possible until a textual source has been found. The Chinese or Japanese traditions, although helpful to some extent, cannot be used as sole evidence, but must be supported by the evidence that the proposed tradition was most probably present in the region.

In the hand of the flying green god a simple flower is preserved. The simple sculpting of the flower is formally comparable to the tails of the lions at the throne of the Jina, which apart from repairs appear to be original too.

Despite the basic technical similarities, the pentad of the Cella is remarkably different from the mandala group. Taken together, their style and iconography are rather unusual and their much worse state of preservation further complicates the issue. The more severe damage to the Cella sculptures are further a sign of inferior technical refinement compared to the mandala group.

Comparisons, Chronology, and Workmanship

From our survey of the Tabo Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) two different groups of clay sculptures can be attributed to the first hundred years. The first group is contemporary with the decoration of the Entry Hall (*sgo-khang*), and thus belongs to the founding of the temple in A.D. 996. Evidence for this is provided by the painted flames preserved in the Entry Hall and corroborated by the existence of a Cella belonging to the original foundation, and which usually houses the main idol. The second group are the mandala sculptures located in the Assembly Hall and attributable to the period of renovation in the years immediately before 1042.

It cannot be said with any certainty what the temple looked like when it was first decorated. There were certainly two large gate-protectors in the Entry Hall flanking the entrance to the Assembly Hall. Of these protectors only the flames are preserved, which were painted



Fig. 216. Ropa, Kinnaur: Vairocana
Translator's Temple, west wall

on the wall behind them and are contemporary with the other paintings in the Entry Hall. The protectors most probably looked like the ones painted on the sidewalls of the door leading to the Assembly Hall (fig. 51). These gate-keepers, too, are contemporary with the other Entry Hall paintings. As the existence of clay sculptures is thus proved for the time of the foundation, it has to be expected that at least the main image in the Cella was also made of clay. Most probably this sculpture was not the only one. But were the images in and in front of the Cella the same ones as are present today?

There can be hardly any doubt that the tripartite structure of the passageway connecting the Assembly Hall with the Cella and Ambulatory is from the original building period. The particular form of pillar construction

inside the passage only makes sense if sculptures were always intended in their present position and size. The height of the crossbeams agrees exactly with the major divisions of the images: the lower crossbeam is at the height of the lotus cushion, the second one at the knees, the third at the hip, and the fourth is at the height of the shoulder (figs. 143, 212). The sculptures are fastened to this frame at the vertical bar slightly below the third crossbeam (at the bottom of the sculpture) and at the fourth one (at the neck of the sculpture)¹⁹. As has been demonstrated above, stylistically the two Bodhisattvas standing in the passage belong to the group preserved inside the Cella.

The pillars and some crossbeams are painted in thin colours with simple geometric and floral patterns. Although they cannot be directly compared, the quality of the colours and the crude style of painting give a similar impression to the early paintings of the Entry Hall and the Ambulatory. The same type of half-blossom used for the *mālā* of the sculptures is painted on the pillar construction twice. Different layers of paint are not discernible on the pillars.

The interpretation of the Jina in the Cella as Vairocana implies either that the Jina and the lion throne are contemporary, or that the lion throne is even older than the Jina and was left *in situ* when the Jina was changed into an Amitābha. The latter possibility appears rather contradictory, as I cannot think of a reason why someone reconstructing the main image in the Cella would retain the older throne including the lions and not depict Amitābha with his correct vehicle.

The iconography of Vairocana holding a wheel in the Gesture of Meditation is unusual in this cultural context. In the western Himalayas it is only found once more in Ropa (fig. 216; see also Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Fig. 52), while all the other comparable examples come from Central Asia (particularly the banners from Dunhuang)²⁰ and Japan, where it is still used today. In consideration of these facts, it is unlikely that a donor or artist later than the eleventh century would continue to use a Vairocana iconography of this type.

As mentioned above, the case of the Buddha's necklace is intriguing, since it stems from the mandala group. The simplest solution, of course, would be the assumption that the Cella sculptures already existed at the time the mandala group was made, and that the artists of the mandala group decorated the Cella Jina with the necklace.

Thus, from the evidence within the Main Temple – the question of the construction in the passage, the iconography of the Jina, and the moulds from the mandala group used in the Cella sculptures – it can be assumed that the Cella group as it is still preserved today belongs to the time of the foundation or any time preceding the renovation of 1042.

Stylistically the Cella images do not compare to the ones from other monuments in the western Himalayas, or indeed anywhere else I know of. Compared with the mandala group they are simple, stiff, strictly frontal, and somewhat disproportionate. Thus they contrast with the mandala group in a similar way as the Entry Hall paintings do with the renovation paintings.

Looking at details, the Cella sculptures are a curious conglomeration of influences and unfamiliar peculiarities. The dhoti, with the left leg covered, the point between the legs and the peculiar folds are not found anywhere in the same form, but this type has been known in Kashmir since the 8th century and is particularly common on bronzes of Bodhisattvas attributed to the 10th–11th centuries. The standing Bodhisattvas which were painted in 996 in the Ambulatory are dressed in a similar type of dhoti as the clay sculptures (fig. 190, fig. 191: Reconstruction Standing Bodhisattva).

The simple jewellery and the stiff standing posture with the toes of one leg projecting over the edge of the lotus are best compared to Bodhisattvas among the Nāgarāja bronzes⁴¹ and a few other West Tibetan metal sculptures⁴². Certain facial features and the engraved eyebrows also seem to relate to these bronzes. Particularly noteworthy is a standing eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara from the Cleveland Museum of Art⁴³, which, beside the above-mentioned details, also shares some stylistic features, including the awkward belly and a certain stiffness in the limbs, with the Tabo Bodhisattvas. Another related image is a very beautiful bronze Bodhisattva in the O.C. Sud Collection, Shimla (fig. 217). While the bronze is generally much more refined, its dhoti compares very well to the Tabo figures, as the lower piece of cloth covering the right knee is executed in a similar way. Beside this peculiar detail the bronze shares the features of the Nāgarāja bronzes. As evidenced by the very fine inlay work on the dhoti, the face, and the unusual crown, this bronze was probably made in Kashmir.

Other technical and stylistical elements derive from Central Asia. The flat halo attached to the back of the

head is found in clay sculptures at Dunhuang, and the high felt boots of the flying deities also appear in Chinese Central Asia. The curious hairstyle has no direct comparison, but seems to derive from the high hair-knot as seen locally in early woodcarvings as found in Ribba, Ropa and Poo⁴⁴. This “local” derivation is demonstrated by the clay sculptures from Ropa (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Fig. 53) and Tiak (Tucci 1973: Fig. 68), which share the same braids, but not the peculiar straight, shoulder-length hairstyle as found in Tabo.

All of these comparable sculptures, except the undated sculptures from Ropa, are attributed to the 11th century or earlier. Nevertheless, the comparisons are few and appear rather superficial, but post-11th-century comparisons are even more scarce. The negative argument thus formulated also supports an early date for the Cella sculptures, i.e. to the late 10th-early 11th centuries.

The few comparisons cited do not alter the strong local character of the Cella images. As with the architecture, the sculptures are of a relatively high technical standard, but of a rather simple aesthetic quality. The general impression is that of a three-dimensional version of an Himalayan style as defined by Klimburg-Salter (1982: 117–8) for certain groups of Central Asian or Himalayan paintings. It seems that the Cella sculptures – like the paintings in the Entry Hall and the sculptures of Ropa – are the work of a “local” or rather West Tibetan workshop.

That there were sculptures in the Cella at the time of the foundation has already been mentioned. The mandala sculptures were made in the years before 1042. Thus the simplest and most likely conclusion for an attribution of the Cella sculptures is that they are contemporary with the lost gate-keepers in the Entry Hall. Therefore the Cella sculptures can be hypothetically attributed to the founding of the temple in A.D. 996.

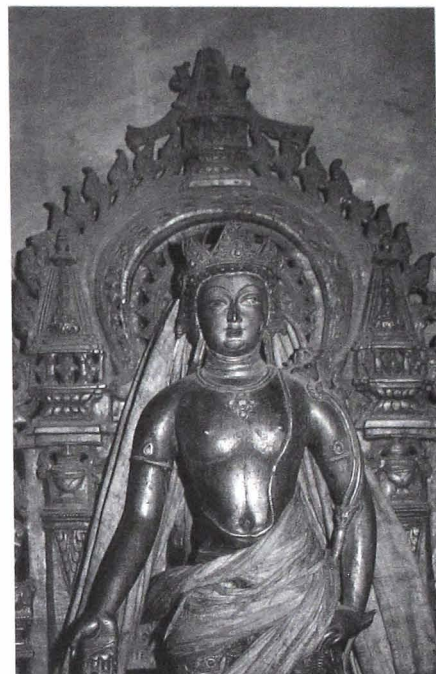
In contrast to the Cella sculptures, the sophistication of the mandala sculptures is astonishing. Their very high technical standard, the high number of moulds, designed to be used in several kinds of combinations, the rich and individual ornamentation of each sculpture and the high aesthetic quality of the images is evidence of highly developed craftsmanship, a craftsmanship with a long and living tradition in sculpting clay.

As already said above, the mandala group is attributable to the years immediately before A.D. 1042. These sculptures are thus the most important reference point

Fig. 217. Shimla, India: Bodhisattva
Bronze with silver and copper inlay.
O.C. Sud Collection; h. 13.4 cm



Fig. 218. Phyang monastery, Ladakh:
Avalokiteśvara/Padmāpāni; metal
The pedestal of this standing sculpture
bears the inscription: lha-btsun-ba nā-
ga-ra-dza'i thugs-dam - "personal
image of lha-btsun-ba Nāgarāja"



in the study of clay sculptures in the western Himalayas.

From a stylistic point of view the images of the mandala group are exquisite. The uniform bodies with their idealised, soft forms are clearly still related to the post-Gupta sculpture of northern India. They are usually said to be of Kashmiri workmanship. However, Kashmiri sculpture from the mid-9th century onwards clearly divides the upper body into three parts: the swelling breast, the flattened part between the breast and the waist, and – below the waist – the swelling belly around the navel. This division was schematic around A.D. 1000, and is the most easily recognisable feature of Kashmiri-influenced West Tibetan bronzes. This division of the upper body cannot be found in the Tabo clay sculptures, where only the breast and an elongated belly with the depression of the navel set into its centre are differentiated. Generally the Tabo sculptures are smoother and more even. These major differences might, to a large extent, be due to the different materials used – bronze or stone in Kashmir, both of which are difficult to work on, and clay in Tabo, which is soft and easy to model.

In respect to the sculpting of the body, the exquisite images of the Gaurī-Saṅkara pair in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa complex in Chamba⁴⁵ display certain similarities to the mandala group from Tabo. An even closer resemblance is present in an unusual bronze sculpture from Phyang, Ladakh (fig. 218)⁴⁶. The face of this sculpture is very similar to the Tabo sculptures, and even the spiral set inside the navel is present. However, all the jewellery and the crown are very different from those of the Tabo figures, and its frame is very unusual.

The remaining clay sculptures in other monuments in the western Himalayas dating to the Later Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (*phyi-dar*) are remarkably different from the Tabo mandala sculptures. Generally – as in Lalung, Nako and the Alchi group of monuments – the comparable clay sculptures are much smaller⁴⁷, but have a more complex surrounding framework. The technique is usually much less sophisticated, and with far fewer moulds used and fewer individual variations.

In Sumda-chung, in Ladakh, which belongs to the same period as the three-storied temple at Alchi, i.e. around 1200, the original painting of the sculptures is also preserved. As the stylistic features suggest, these

sculptures – like all the original paintings of Alchi and related monuments – can be considered to have been made under the supervision of Kashmiri craftsmen, or at least the strong influence of a Kashmiri school. They thus bear witness to the development of Kashmiri art in the first two centuries of the 2nd millennium A.D. The characteristic threefold division of the body is still found in Sumda; there it is even exaggerated by painted shading, which results in a rather grotesque effect (fig. 223).

To my knowledge, the mandala group preserved in Tabo is unique. As no comparable sculptures can be found in any other monument in that region, and as not even a single mould of this group reappears in any of the other monuments – although I have seen and documented many – these sculptures must have been done by a group of artists foreign to this region, in whose country of origin the sculpting of large permanent figures in clay had a long tradition.

As the style of the mandala sculptures is only partly comparable to the contemporary Kashmiri style, it is also possible that the artists of the mandala group came from some neighbouring region in north-west India. In contrast to the Tabo images the sculptures from the Alchi group of monuments clearly display the direct influence of Kashmiri art.

Clay Sculptures in the Western Himalayas

In the temples built during the Later Diffusion of Buddhism in the western Himalayas, the clay sculptures always represent the main theme of the temples' iconographic program. Technically and iconographically the preserved clay sculptures are remarkably consistent, while from a stylistic point of view the variety is astonishing. It is therefore very difficult, or even impossible, to suggest an inner chronology for them purely on stylistic grounds. However, they are mostly found within a context which provides at least some information regarding their chronological placement.

With regard to the construction technique, the sculptures are in the Indian tradition of clay sculpting as it is preserved in various *Śilpaśāstra* and *Purāna* texts⁴⁸. These texts, the earliest of which are attributed to the second half of the 1st millennium A.D., consider clay as one of the materials suitable for the main image. They then compare the materials used for a clay sculpture with the components of the human body as understood by Indian physiology (Varma 1970: 5–10). In this respect

the wooden armature is compared with the bones and the clay with the flesh or muscles of the human body. Thus according to this tradition the body of the clay images mainly consists of clay, while later – in India as well as in Tibet – the main bulk of the clay was replaced by straw.

The earlier technique with a clay body was used in the second half of the 1st millennium A.D. throughout the regions influenced by Indian culture; i.e. from Ceylon to Central Asia and even China. A peculiarity of some clay sculptures preserved in the western Himalayas and Tibet is the fixation of the sculpture in the wall only, without any support from the floor, as found in its most sophisticated form in the mandala group in Tabo.

The consistent iconographic program of the early West Tibetan temples is characterised by a form of Vairocana as the main image. He can be represented either in meditation – as in the earlier examples at Tabo and Ropa – or as Vajradhātu-Vairocana (rNam-par-srang-mdzad) with four heads and some variant of the Teaching Gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) or the Gesture of Highest Enlightenment (*bodhyagrī mudrā*). The surrounding of Vairocana, however, is subject to many variations. While in the earlier examples at Tabo and Ropa the iconographic program remains unclear, the later examples usually represent different (or different forms of the same) mandalas of Vairocana.

The images of Ropa and the Cella in Tabo preserve unusual iconographies which appear to lie outside the mainstream tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Like their style, their iconographic peculiarities express a provinciality far removed from the sophistication found half a century later with the mandala group at Tabo. These images represent the beginning of the strong Buddhist reformation initiated by the King Ye-shes-'od. Tabo was certainly a very large foundation for that period, and, as the inscriptions prove, it was built directly under the patronage of Ye-shes-'od and his sons. The Cella sculptures, like the paintings and inscriptions in the Entry Hall dating from the same period, are most likely evidence for the first phase of royal patronage. At that time, Buddhism, as well as Buddhist education, were on the threshold of a (new) beginning.

Only 46 years after the foundation of Tabo, Byang-chub-'od “regarded the work of the ancestor as old,”⁴⁹ and had it redone to a large extent. The remains of that phase bear witness to a sophisticated and highly edu-



Fig. 219. Lalung, Spiti: the sculptures of Lalung Golden Temple, 12th century. The clay sculptures are much smaller than in Tabo, but their composition is often more complex

ated Buddhist environment, which also had the economic resources to import experienced craftsmen and materials of an astonishing quality. Apart from the other decoration, the mandala sculptures are evidence of this intellectual and material wealth.

While in the early phase of the decoration at Tabo a strong regional character and links with Central Asia are evident, in the later phase these are overlaid by Indian craftsmanship. This marked cultural shift is also attested in textual sources. The King Ye-shes-'od felt obliged to circulate an open letter against the impure practices of abbots and tantrists "*living in the villages*"⁷⁵⁹, while at the time of Byang-chub-'od a large Buddhist community with close contacts to Indian teachers developed a very effective school of translation. Tabo was

one of the places where these translations were done.

The mandala sculptures are integrated into a sophisticated iconographic program comprising at least the whole Assembly Hall. This program was then considered important (and probably revolutionary) enough to replace the previous decoration that was less than 50 years old. Compared with the earlier decoration the new program reveals certain changes which can be summarised in the following way: As evidenced also by Ye-shes-'od's letter, there is a certain conservatism apparent. Tantric deities with multiple heads and arms are hardly depicted and there is no depiction of a mandala as such, but only the main deities of mandalas are shown. In addition, the Hindu and local deities which would be in the outer parts of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala and the Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala and which take most of the space in the Entry Hall are excluded in the new decoration. The new program is exclusively dedicated to Buddhist deities. Finally, most important is the strong integrative character of the new decoration. One tried to unify the information from Buddhist sources from different schools and periods through a common denominator (e.g. the identification of Śākya-muni and Vairocana). This is actually a principal feature of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet in general of which the Tabo renovation program is the earliest evidence. This integrative character may also have caused some iconographic discrepancies with the extant texts as evidenced by the mandala group sculptures, particularly the iconography of Vairocana. The Tabo renovation program is not the depiction of a series of texts, but an interpretative representation of a combination of texts. The Root Mandala of the STTS represented by the 33 sculptures is only a part of this whole.

The stylistic, iconographic, technical and intellectual differences to be seen between the two early groups of clay sculpture and painting in Tabo are evidence of the general development towards a Tibetan Buddhism. They are also an expression of the rapidly expanding economic and intellectual wealth of the Purang-Guge kingdom and of West Tibetan Buddhism.

* This research was made possible by a grant from the Austrian Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung.

¹ The one to the left of the door (southern side) has a height of 135 cm and a width (from toe to toe) of 170 cm. The one to the right (northern side) a height of 150 cm and a width (from hand to hand) of 170 cm.

² The entire plinth of these two images has been extensively renovated by the ASI. It is now completely regular. The details of construction visible today – the thick wooden pole as a vertical axis (*srog-shing*) of the southern protector, the use of a thick layer of straw between the wooden armature and the clay surface, and the use of paper (interestingly, stray leaves taken from the “Tabo Kanjur”, the collection of loose folios found in the Tabo Main Temple) within the uppermost surface of the image – indicate that these sculptures are of a comparatively recent age.

³ The details concerning the construction are based on extensive documentation of all the apparent constructional details done *in situ* in 1994. Of course this does not contain any material or colour analyses, neither of which were available to me. Shortly after my documentation in 1994 a team of the ASI started to restore the sculptures for the millennium celebrations of the monastery held in 1996. A more detailed description of the construction technique will be published elsewhere (Luczanits forthcoming [b]).

⁴ Vairocana: height 110 cm; head: h. 25 cm, w. 20 cm; base 180 cm wide; four Jina: height c. 105 cm; head: h. 21 cm, w. 17 cm; sixteen Bodhisattvas: height c. 100 cm; head: h. 19 cm, w. 16 cm; eight goddesses: height c. 90 cm; head: h. 18 cm, w. 15 cm. The measurements are approximate!

⁵ Gate-protectors: height of protectors 1 and 32 (east wall): 110 cm; of protectors 16 and 17 (west wall): 100 cm. This difference in size might be due to the location of the latter two on the sidewalls of the passage leading to the Ambulatory.

⁶ The technical Sanskrit terms are taken from K. M. Varma 1970.

⁷ As no analytical data were available to me it is not certain if this material is leather, but judging from its appearance it is highly probable.

⁸ Usually with red, which was already extensively used in the plastic art of Gandhāra. However, at Tabo both lines were used for the “dark parts” and com-

plete shading was executed.

⁹ There are only few traces of the original layer of painting in the Assembly Hall, and this might be because it was destroyed when the wooden supports were constructed. Sengupta (1982: 168) records wooden planks – or rather a complete wooden framework – within the original mud walls, which might have been used for fixing the sculptures as well. There also is the possibility that the supports for older sculptures already in place from the original building period were reused, but there is no evidence for such an assumption.

¹⁰ Identifications have been attempted by Tucci 1935: 25–72 (particularly Fig. 2 [p. 26] and pp. 62–72); Khosla 1979: 32–34, 44, Fig. 2; Klimburg-Salter 1982: 161–2; Shashibala 1986: 37–41; Singhal 1991 and in several publications written in Japanese (e.g. Miyasaka 1992). Reedy and Reedy 1987 offer an interesting analysis of the mudras occurring at the Tabo mandala. To my knowledge, none of them have succeeded in solving all the outlined problems in a convincing manner.

¹¹ The following texts have been used for the identification of the sculptures. The Root Tantra, the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṅgraha* (STTS), Skt. Lokesh Chandra (ed.), Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 1987; Tib. Q4, its commentaries the *Ÿākhyā* by Ānandagarbha, Q71 and the *Kośalālaṅkāra* by Śākyamitra, Q70. Further the mandala has been compared with the description of the same mandala in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (NSP19, de Mallmann 1986: 57–58) and in the *Saskya* collection of Tantras, the *rGyud-sde-kun-bius* (GDK), Vols. IV, XXII (69ff.).

¹² Apparently the four faces give Vairocana the attribute of omniscience (Skt. *sarvavid*, Tib. *kun-rig*). This name was used by Tucci throughout his discussion of the Tabo mandala. However, strictly speaking the central image is simply Vairocana, as he is not called Sarvavid in the STTS and its commentaries. Vairocana is called Sarvavid (Kun-rig) when he is in the centre of a mandala related to the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tantra*. The Root Mandala of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tantra*, which is actually said to be identical with the STTS Root Mandala, differs from the STTS mandala with respect to the names of the Jina and the goddesses around Vairocana. Sarvavid Vairocana is shown in the Meditation Gesture (cf. Skorupski 1983: 311, n. 5).

¹³ The original text says “facing in all directions” (*sarvatomukha* STTS 5.6) while Ānandagarbha says (according to the Tibetan translation) Vairocana should be drawn with four faces, the first face looking east (*zhal bzhi pa| zhal dang po shar du gziṅs pa'o*) Q71 185.4.2). In Śākyamitra's commentary to the STTS, the *Kośalālaṅkāra*, it says: *bcom ldan 'das rnam par snang mdzad sangs rgyas bzhi bzhugs pa'i tshul du bzhag go|* (Q70 233,1,7), which can be translated as: “the venerable [Buddha] rNam-par-s nang-mdzad is placed as four Buddha residing”. Further down it says: *bcom ldan 'das rnam par snang mdzad ni ye shes kyi khu tshur bcangs pa ste| phyogs bcu char du yang zgugs su bri par bya zhing| seng ge gdan la bzhugs par bya'o|* (Q70 233,3,3). “The venerable rNam-par-s nang-mdzad holds/performs a wisdom fist; even in each of the ten directions [he] should be drawn in bodily form, and [he] should sit on a lion throne.”

¹⁴ For Lalung cf. *Spiti no hibutsu*, p. 63; Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Fig. 19. In Tholing only the cross-shaped throne of this image is preserved. The two examples from central Tibet are mentioned in Richardson 1990: 271–2.

¹⁵ Cf. Saunders 1985: 102–7; for pictorial representations, e.g. Goepper 1984: Pl. 24 for Alchi; Lo Bue and Ricca 1990: front cover, Pls. 68, 74, 76 for the Gyantse sKu-'bum.

¹⁶ For example the Root Mandala of the Yoga Tantras in the Ngor Collection.

¹⁷ E.g. in the *Avataṅsaka* corpus or the *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra* (Lamotte 1975: 267–270).

¹⁸ This is in the case of the Durgatipariśodhana-maṅḍala, NSP 22 (de Mallmann 1986: 62–4; 392–95).

¹⁹ The absence of the four goddesses is not all that surprising, if one considers that e.g. in the verses dedicated to the *karmamudrā* in the STTS (30–31) these goddesses are not mentioned.

²⁰ bSod nams rgya mtsho 1983: nos. 22 and 23. In fact, in several Vairocana mandalas, these deities are mentioned as being symbolised by their attributes (cf. e.g. Tucci 1935: 43–49).

²¹ In the cardinal direction only the slightly projecting beams in the centre of each side of the uppermost platform could have served such a purpose, but there is no trace that they have ever been used.

²² The solution in some of the Japanese publications is not convincing, as the four symbols painted between the

Bodhisattvas on the north and south walls chosen to represent the four goddesses are part of the eight auspicious symbols.

²³ STTS-*vyākhyā* Q 71, 186,2,4-5: "Garma, of a body-colour like Vajrakarma, holds a vajra with three points; [she] makes dance-[gestures] with both arms and abides [in this way]."

²⁴ Cf. the description by Ānandarāgarbha Q 71, 186,1,4-5.

²⁵ Skt. *cihna, nimitta*, Tib. *mishan-ma* can be translated by both attribute and symbol!

²⁶ The *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha-tantra-vyākhyā* Q 71, 185,2,2–186,3,7.

²⁷ The names of some of the Bodhisattvas vary throughout the Yoga Tantra literature. cf. Snellgrove 1987: 210. However, the mandala of Ānandarāgarbha differs only very little from the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala of the Sa-skya tradition as represented by the Ngor mandala no. 22 (bSod nams rgya mtsho 1983).

²⁸ Cf. Vajrayakṣī, the female form of this Bodhisattva, in the paintings of Alchi (Goepfer 1984: Pl. 27).

²⁹ The sitting Vairocana/Amitābha has a height of approx. 135 cm; the standing Bodhisattvas are slightly higher than 2 m including the *uṣṇīṣa*. These measurements are without pedestal or throne.

³⁰ Cf. R. Sengupta in Klimburg-Salter 1982: fig. 42 (p. 117), Diagram 1 (p. 159), p. 168.

³¹ Francke (1914: 38) notes the gods as "exceedingly well executed".

³² It is possible that the Bodhisattvas in the Cella had additional supports for the arms at the elbows.

³³ The photographs of the ASI which I used have the following negative numbers: 78/NR, 82/NR, 81/NR, 80/NR, 57/NR, 58/NR, 227/77, 85/NR, 87/NR, 814/NR, 85/NR.

³⁴ It is also possible that the original crown was not made of clay, but in some other material and merely placed on the hair above the string of pearls.

³⁵ Cf. two banners from Dunhuang: Nicolas-Vandier 1974/76: frontispiece, 58–61 (no. 28), 216–225 (no. 104); Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pls. 61, 68.

³⁶ Even at the time of Tucci's visit, the right arm was supported by an additional wooden stick under the elbow.

³⁷ For the identification of Vajrasattva with Vajrapāṇi cf. Wayman 1992: 84. A similar identification of these sculptures at Tabo was suggested by Singhal (1991: 27) on the basis of establishing a group of deities around the central Vairocana which can be compared to the Japanese Shingon tradition. To identify Vajrapāṇi with the Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta is, however, not possible in Tabo, as this Bodhisattva belongs to the "family" around Avalokiteśvara (cf. de Mallmann 1986: 241). Mahāsthāmaprāpta might rather be a possible identification for the southern Bodhisattva in front of the Cella. Tucci (1935: 84–86) identifies the Bodhisattvas as Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, because they are the principal attendants of Amitābha. Accordingly, the outer pair of Bodhisattvas are identified as Ākāśagarbha and Kṣitigarbha.

³⁸ Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 71–73, Figs. 57–59. For a comparison of these Bodhisattvas with other woodcarving from the region cf. Luczanits 1996a.

³⁹ Certainly a good sculptor would be able to fit a sculpture into this construction at a later date as well, but without the sculptures the crossbeams and the other vertical bars would serve no purpose.

⁴⁰ Cf. above note 35.

⁴¹ This particular group of bronzes is called the Nāgarāja bronzes because many of them have inscriptions referring to *lha (btsun-pa)* Nāgarāja, a son of King Ye-shes-'od. However, not all of the inscribed bronzes can be associated with this donor, as some appear to be later copies. As several new examples of Nāgarāja bronzes have appeared

recently, a detailed study of these and related early West Tibetan bronzes would certainly be very fruitful. Examples of Nāgarāja Bodhisattvas are published in von Schröder 1981: 122, 18E or Klimburg-Salter 1982: 103. Pl. 27; Pal 1989b: Figs. 10, 11; Uhlig 1995: no. 43; Thakur 1995.

⁴² Cf. e.g. von Schröder 1981: 19B, 20E, 22A; Pal 1989b: Fig. 9; and a bronze from Kinnaur published by Singh 1994.

⁴³ Von Schroeder 1981: 18C; Klimburg-Salter 1982: 105, Pl. 32; Pal 1989a: Figs. 16–18; Rhie and Thurman 1991: 322–23, no. 127.

⁴⁴ For Ropa cf. Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Fig. 59; for Ribba and Poo cf. Luczanits 1996a.

⁴⁵ Pal 1975: Pl. 85, attributed to the 10th century; von Schroeder 1981: 24D, attributed to 900–950 A.D.; Postel et. al. 1985: Fig. 130, attributed to c. 1025.

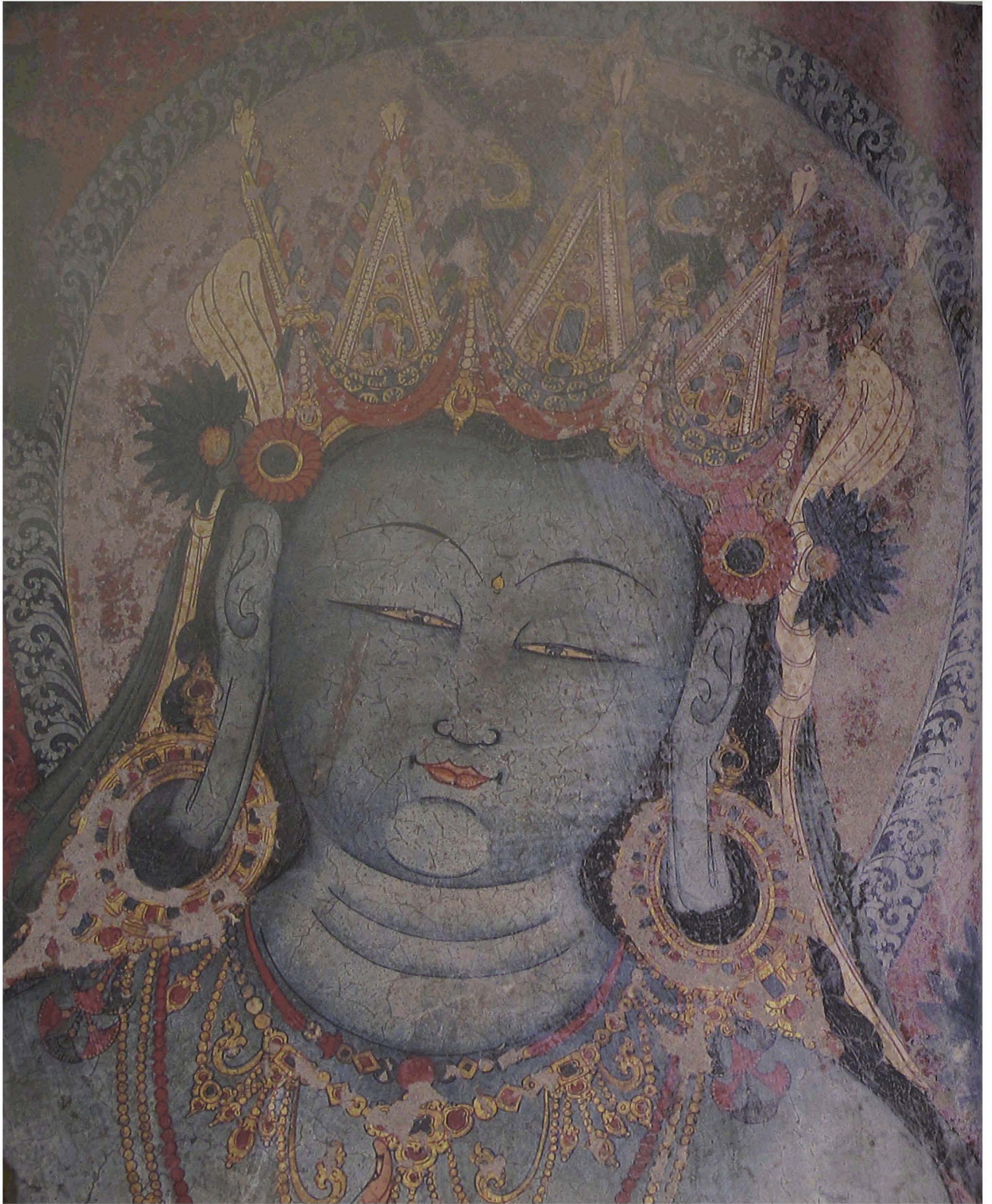
⁴⁶ The pedestal of the sculpture bears the inscription: *lha btsun ba nā ga ra dza i thugs dam* – "personal image of *lha btsun-ba* Nāgarāja". The image thus belongs to the group of Nāgarāja bronzes although it is in a somewhat unusual style and displays an extraordinary high level of craftsmanship.

⁴⁷ I am purposely excluding the gigantic Bodhisattvas to be found in some of the monasteries mentioned in my comparison, as these due to their size and resulting technical construction are very different from the sculptures in the niches.

⁴⁸ A good summary of this technique in all its aspects can be found in Varma 1970. The only ancient Indian Buddhist text of this kind, which clearly derives from Hindu predecessors, the *Mañjuśrībhāṣita-Vāstuvidyāśāstra* or *Mañjuśrībhāṣita-Citrakarmasāstra*, has been preserved in Ceylon (cf. Ruelius 1978 and Marasinghe 1991).

⁴⁹ Cf. the Renovation Inscription verso 6 (in Steinkellner and Luczanits. Appendix).

⁵⁰ Cf. Karmay 1980a: 153.



VI. The Emergence of a Style

How and why did the temple come to look as it did in the middle of the 11th century? The objective and detailed description of the Main Temple allowed us to establish the original iconographic program and its relationship to the architecture. Then it was possible to analyse the uses and functions of the images, by whom and in what context they were encountered. But it was also necessary to understand to the degree possible the different contexts in which the architecture and its decoration were embedded.

In Tabo we have the unique opportunity to examine the reciprocity of art and ritual in its original physical setting. As the main temple for the Buddhist monastic and lay communities, the overt and primary function of the temple was and is as a setting for ritual and cultic activity. But Tabo was also one of the main temples commissioned by the ruling dynasty; thus, it was an important link in the interlocking system of new political, economic and social institutions. The definition of the institutional contexts as well as the immediate and extended historical contexts is difficult (Chapters II and VII). As we shall see in the discussion below, a new visual vocabulary emerged in the 11th century as a response to this complex of concerns. These themes remain important in the later art of the period.

We have already explained that our historical models are only working hypotheses, which permit us to propose, in the first instance, a relative chronology. An absolute chronology is not possible because there are no firm absolute dates, either from internal or external sources. Rather, a chronology for the art of Tabo can be proposed which relates the stylistic groups to each other, where our fixed point is the stylistic Group B which can be associated with the Renovation Inscription, to which we assign the date 1042. Group C is comparable to Mang-nang which was founded by Byang-chub-'od before Atiśa left the kingdom in c. 1045 (as he was said to have resided there) (Tucci 1971b: 481). The art of Tabo can serve as a bench mark for a relative chronology of the Indo-Tibetan art of the 10th–12th centuries.

Within the geographic boundaries of the territories known to have been ruled by the dynasty of the kings of Purang-Guge a few monasteries have survived with decoration datable to the 10th–12th centuries. As we shall see, both the painting, monumental and miniature, and the clay sculptures which have survived in these monuments share certain formal and iconographic features. The wooden portal in Khojarnath (Luczanits 1996a) belongs, together with the first artistic phase at Tabo, to the earliest surviving art of the period. Each represents a distinctive manner. Also from this early phase are architectural elements in Shelkar in upper Kinnaur and the Lotsawa Temple in Ribba in Kinnaur (Luczanits 1996a); the latter may even be earlier. This c. late 10th-century style is quite different from the Indo-Tibetan style which survives

Fig. 220. Tholing, western Tibet: head of Bodhisattva Vajrapāni
Assembly Hall, Apse, north wall;
c. 15th century

not only in the second artistic phase at Tabo but also in the art of the 11th–12th centuries from Tholing and Mang-nang in mNga'-ris documented by Ghersi in 1933–35 and preserved in the Tucci Archive. Of the several other monuments from this period which were in Spiti – e.g. Lari and Byang-chub-gling (Tucci 1971b: 481) – nothing is known to me, but some of the decorated folios now in the Tabo “Kanjur” may originally have come from one of the other monastic centres in Spiti. The surviving art of the several centres in Kinnaur – Nako, Poo, Ropa, Charang – appears, in relation to Tabo, to date from the middle of the 11th century. The latest painting attributable to the kings of Purang-Guge is to be found in mNga'-ris in West Tibet near the ancient capital of the realm Tholing, and at Dung-dkar and Phyang (see map 2. West Tibet). Through our discussion in this chapter of a few stylistic and iconographic themes we can see both the unity of this artistic school as well as its chronological development. Artistic production continued to flourish within the kingdom of Guge until the 17th century (see Petech Chapter VII). The volume of art production, however, seems to have reduced in the 12th–14th centuries. Indeed the intense activity necessary in the 11th century to provide texts, images and ritual objects for so many new religious foundations did not need to be duplicated in the succeeding centuries. This may be one reason why art production in the 13th and 14th centuries was considerably reduced. There were certainly economic and political factors at work as well. But then, there was a virtual renaissance beginning in the 15th century. The decoration of a number of temples can be attributed to the 15th and 16th centuries. The quality of these paintings is very fine (figs. 220, 221). Both the iconographic themes and the stylistic mannerisms seem to revive the artistic concerns of the Indo-Tibetan art of the 11th century.

Mural Painting in Tabo 10th–11th Centuries

The contrast between the style and iconography of the art of the Entry Hall (Phase I) and that of the Assembly Hall (Phase II) images demonstrates that a new cultural orientation was achieved in the 46 years separating the two artistic phases. The iconographic program of the Entry Hall temple built by Ye-shes-'od includes non-Buddhist, pan-Indian deities which are grouped around a non-Buddhist protectress and reflects a less orthodox Buddhism than the Assembly Hall. The iconography of the Entry Hall represents the situation as it was during the time of Ye-shes-'od when the language and the gods of Zhang-zhung were still included in a Buddhist temple. Indeed the Renovation Inscription tells us that Byang-chub-'od was motivated to renovate the temple because he found it “old”. In the normal course of things a temple would hardly be considered “old” in such a short period of time unless there had been some destruction, or unless old here meant out of date.

A difficult question here is the significance of the Central Asian-influenced style in the Entry Hall. From the point of view of both style and iconography, the Phase I paintings of the Entry Hall, A.D. 996, can be seen as belonging to a formative phase in the history of the art of the kingdom of Purang-Guge. The process by which Central Asian influences came to Spiti is impossible to define. The natural flow of merchants and missionaries along the trade routes between Central Asia and India would account for a certain degree of cultural exchange. However, in Tabo there seems to be a more intensive connection. This is to be seen not only in the paintings in the Entry Hall (Phase I) but also in the oldest examples of the texts found at Tabo. In the course of her study on the Tabo “Kanjur” Scherrer-Schaub has identified numerous parallels to the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang – in language, style, orthography and technique. Particularly interesting is the similarity between the paper used for these manuscripts at Dunhuang and the earliest manuscripts at Tabo. This would be evidence for at least one commodity definitely traded to Spiti from the Tarim Basin. But even more important it is evidence of direct connection between at least one group of monastic communities in the Indian Himalayas and Central Asia.

Fig. 221. Sarvavid Vairocana (photo by Wolf Kahlen)
Tabo, Golden Temple, north wall; 16th century



It is also not impossible that the expulsion of the Tibetans from Dunhuang after 847 by the local authority, Zhang Yichao, drove some artists and other families southward towards India. But this was a process, not a single event, and such abrupt and total cultural change is more easily accomplished with a pen than in reality. Indeed it is not unlikely that some artists, as also trading communities remained for some time in Central Asia. In fact in analysing three paintings on paper and three small silk banners which can be associated with Tibetan manufacture by their style and inscriptions, Whitfield raises the possibility that they were created after the middle of the 9th century (Whitfield 1983 I: 22). Indeed it is these same paintings (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, Pls. 47–49; Matsumoto 1937: 201–203) which would be comparable to the Entry Hall paintings.

The problem is the uncertainty regarding patronage and date of manufacture of the paintings and drawings from Dunhuang in non-Chinese styles. Indeed it is important to remember that this group consists of works in different styles and qualities and the only common feature is that they are clearly not created by Chinese artists. But whether they represent Indian, Khotanese or even western Tibetan influences or even artists (Whitfield 1983 I: 22) is difficult to say.

more expressionistic use of shading – is also found in Central Asian art. The true Indo-Tibetan style begins in the 11th century (Tabo Phase II) and has a homogenous stylistic evolution through the 11th-12th centuries in monuments associated with the kings of Purang-Guge. The stylistic consistency of these paintings is striking. Both the mural and the miniature paintings strive to depict a heavenly world filled with light. There is a consistent aesthetic preference for brilliant and intense colours often highlighted with gold. Also there is, throughout the period, experimentation with different techniques which would intensify these effects and produce a greater plasticity. Thus, at Tabo and Tholing parts of the mandorlas, including the ring of vajras, are raised, giving an even greater sense of depth to the aureole diffused with rainbow-coloured waves of light. In Nako (fig. 228) and the paintings from the Poo *Prajñāparāmīta* (fig. 222) there is even greater emphasis on the gold-painted relief sections (relevant to the size of the image). In miniature painting, gold was lavishly used as a background (fig. 224), and both gold and silver were used in a great variety of contexts; even in miniature painting, sculpted details were raised and then painted in gold (Poo *Prajñāparāmīta* fig. 222). In addition to the liberal admixture of gold, various techniques were used to intensify the colours: the Tholing miniatures in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art have a varnish-like substance covering some of the paintings. The two paintings of the Poo *Prajñāparāmīta* are burnished. The lavish use of gold and silver in painting continued in the later periods as well. In the Tholing Assembly Hall (*du-khang*) (fig. 220) gold is used on the jewellery and highlights other areas throughout the painting. Only frag-

mentally, the Phase I style of the Entry Hall is characterised by a more provincial manner. A thick, black line outlines the figure in a rough, sketchy manner. The facial features and limbs are awkward and unrealistic. There is no shading as such – but thick lines of pink paint are used inside the black outline. The development of a more subtle form of shading and coloration – the chronological development towards a



Fig. 222. Frontispiece of a *Prajñāparāmīta* manuscript with a depiction of the First Sermon Poo *Prajñāparāmīta*

Fig. 223. Sumda-chung, Ladakh: a
clay image of the Bodhisattva
Vajrakarma (rDo-rje-las)



ments from the famous Golden Temple (gSer-khang) have survived the Cultural Revolution, but the original effect must have been overwhelming – the entire painting, including the background design, was suffused with gold. There was also a Golden Temple at Tabo (fig. 221). The use of gold was not so lavish here, but still the use of gold judiciously applied throughout causes the light to dance across the surface of the painting.

On the other hand, shading was used as a means of coloration, not as a device to define volume. The effects of contrasting colours used for shading became, with time, progressively more dramatic. Interestingly, these effects were also used on sculpture. In Tabo the sculptures of the mandala protectors are very expressive (figs. 65, 81, 82, 97, 207). On the yellow figure orange is used to highlight the body parts. In the early 13th century at Sumda in Ladakh this mannerism becomes almost surrealistic. However, it is simply an adaptation to sculpture of a mode of representation used in painting (fig. 223).

There are a number of characteristic features of this school which can be identified: the distinctive manner of representing the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures as well as in the architectural settings sometimes used to frame them, the textile patterns, the representation of lay people in typical western Tibetan costumes, the depictions of assemblies both mundane and heavenly.

Buddha Images

The style of the Buddha figures and the architectural frames can be traced to the simpler, more robust forms in the earlier art of Kashmir. The images which are the closest stylistically to the elegant Kashmiri prototypes are the Tabo Phase II, Group A paintings and sculptures (see Chapter III). From this early figure type develops a more mannered figure style which becomes characteristic of the slightly later paintings surviving in Nako and the miniature painting from Poo and Tabo (figs. 222, 225). These stylistic tendencies continue in Ladakh in the 13th century.

Only fragments of Buddha figures have survived from the first artistic phase at Tabo (figs. 15, 40). They show a very simple figure defined by thick black lines. The outline of the figure is filled in with haphazard strokes of thin colour. The U-shaped parallel folds of the garment are rigid and without any of the shaded modulations of the 11th-century images. On the other hand, in Tabo Phase II the mode of representation is rather more volumetric (fig. 162). Deities often are depicted with abstract shading of the body parts. All deities, except the patronesses of Tabo who are dressed in western Tibetan costumes (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Fig 6), are represented in Indian costumes¹.

A large number of Buddha images have survived in the wall paintings and miniature paintings of the region from the 11th–12th centuries. There is an essential continuity in the basic formal characteristics of this iconographic type throughout the life of this artistic school, and minor variations in representation can be seen as having a chronological significance.

The Indo-Tibetan Buddha type from the 11th century appears to have a Kashmiri antecedent if we take as examples either sculptures excavated in Kashmir, such as from Parihaspura (Klimburg-Salter 1989: Pl. 41) or sculptures presumed to be from Kashmir (*ibid.*: Pl. 40): the ovoid shape of the head, hair style with a widow peak, round curls which are visible in silhouette, and the high, round shape of the *uṣṇīṣa*, small regular facial features, gently swelling forms of the body with a fluid transition of body parts, the monk's garment with symmetrical parallel folds and the patchwork pattern often outlined in gold (figs. 224, 225). The modelling of the Buddha figure in the 11th-century murals is accomplished by muted shades of often contrasting colour applied to the contours of the body parts (figs. 162, 226), and in the manuscripts by a subtle shadowing of the contours. Perhaps the most exquisite example is the miniature painting from Tholing (fig. 224).

Fig. 224. Preaching Buddha Manuscript painting, western Himalaya; private collection, 11th century





In Phase I, the patchwork monastic garment is commonly worn by monks (fig. 3). In Phase II, Group A there is a greater emphasis on the patchwork robe (fig. 189), which in addition becomes a standard feature in the representation of Buddha figures. In a number of 11th-century examples the patchwork on the robe is marked in gold, as in this painting from the narrative of the Life of the Buddha in the Tabo Assembly Hall. This type of Buddha image is found also in the slightly later painting from Nako where the same essential stylistic characteristics are to be seen, but the figure is longer and more slender.

Beginning in the second half of the 11th century the patches on the monastic robe are transformed into a geometric pattern (fig. 226). The *uṣṇīṣa* becomes pointed and sometimes elaborated with a decorative element (figs. 222, 224, 225). The Buddha figure in Dung-dkar continues this tradition, i.e. the treatment of the monastic garment, shape and silhouette of the *uṣṇīṣa*. But the figure style is more mannered. Note the cluster of pleats at the ankle and the elongation of the figure (Klimburg-Salter forthcoming [a]: Fig. 19). Some of these stylistic features survive in Ladakh in the 13th century. In the Buddha image, today in Ladakh, we note that the torso of the standing Buddha still has the clearly defined tripartite division. The architectural frame is an adaptation from motifs used on architectural facades dating to an earlier period (fig. 227).

Fig. 225. Preaching Buddha and attending Bodhisattva
Tabo "Kanjur", gouache on paper

Fig. 226. Nako, Kinnaur: Buddha (?)
preaching
Small Lo-tsa-ba Temple



Fig. 227. Nako, Kinnaur: architectural frame
Small Lo-tsa-ba Temple



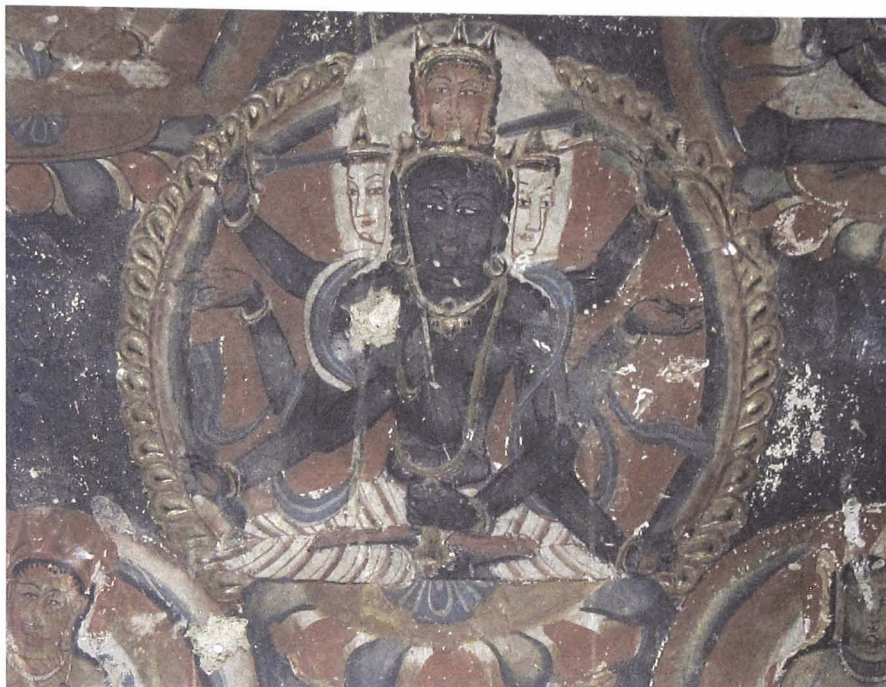
Architectural Frames

In sculpture and wooden architecture the architectural frames retain to some degree elements of architectural logic. In painting, fanciful architecture in heavenly environments is used as a frame for a seated Buddha and less frequently a Bodhisattva figure. This type of lobed arch covered by a multi-tiered roof and topped by a dome or round finial is found only in heavenly architecture. The architectural frames are higher in the middle, the arch consisting of four or five lobes (figs. 127, 227). The roofs are built up of multi-layered, often tiled, sections, and sometimes, as in miniature paintings, the corners of the roof are shown upwardly tilted at the edges. The roofs are decorated in a variety of ways, either with multicoloured tiles (fig. 227) or painted with a floral motif (fig. 127), a row of wooden dangles always hangs under the eaves, and often there is a bell at the corners. These same wooden dangles are still found today on all temples in Kinnaur as well as other parts of Himachal Pradesh. In a wall painting in Tabo, inside the lobed arch hang numerous bells and on the stepped roofs are seated a variety of birds and small animals (fig. 126). In the *Lalitavistara* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, as well as other Sutras, the Buddhas are described as preaching to an assembly seated in wonderful palaces or towers (*kūṭāgāra*). The heavenly architecture found in Indo-Tibetan painting expresses this concept in an effective mixture of fanciful and actual forms.

Textiles: Patterns and Costumes

The profusion of textile motifs everywhere in the Main Temple is such an important feature that we have devoted an entire chapter to the topic (Wandl Chapter V.6). The textile motifs occur in two contexts: as discrete patterns decorating the ceiling and on essentially Indian style costumes, including Bodhisattva dress. They are carefully depicted patterns and can be identified as deriving from Indian sources; the textiles depicted are usually copies of patterns produced in a resist-dye technique on light-weight fabric

Fig. 228. Nako, Kinnaur:
Amoghasiddhi of the Dharmadhātu-
vāgīśvara-mañjuśrī-maṇḍala
Main Temple, south wall
Raised sections at edge of the halo and
the jewellery are painted gold



(Wandl Chapter V.6: Wandl 1996; Wandl in press). In Group A the patterns on costumes are depicted in a naturalistic manner as if they were painted from direct observation (Klimburg-Salter 1994a, 1994b). The costumes of lay personages in the depiction of the Life of the Buddha point to the influence of the desert regions of India, particularly Gujarat, although the neighbouring areas of Rajasthan and Sind would also be possible (Wandl Chapter V.6). Some of the ceiling paintings in the Apse have a horizontal format which has been further emphasised by the definition of rectangular panels with borders, as well as the insets of floral motifs between the roundels (fig. 157). The rectangular composition relates so strongly to painted book covers that there might well have been a direct influence. The ceiling textiles in the Apse can be related to some of the very few early Jaina painted book covers from the Gujarat region c. 12th century (fig. 206). Further, among the motifs painted on the ceiling textiles the flying figures painted in roundels in the Ambulatory (fig. 196) and Cella are stylistically unique in the temple.

As we have already noted the rows of textile motifs painted on the cloths affixed to the ceiling of the Assembly Hall (e.g. fig. 192) are often the same as the patterns used on the costumes worn by the deities. Thus, although these patterns can also be traced to western India, they belong to the large repertory of motifs used in the 11th-century art of Tabo, and should not be considered the product of a special or distinct group of artists.

The treatment of the Tibetan environment and costumes is no less skilful and informed than the treatment of the Indian environment and costumes. Thus we must assume that the artist was familiar with both the local environment and Indian pictorial tradition and was already skilled in monumental Buddhist wall painting. Further, we must search for a Buddhist environment where the artists would have had access to art produced in a cultural climate parallel to those represented by the Jaina book covers.

The most obvious solution is the area of Gujarat, particularly the coastal area of Saurāṣṭra around the



ancient kingdom of Valabhī and in Kathiawar. Although Buddhist institutions had rapidly declined from the 8th century, the historical circumstances surrounding the final destruction of the Buddhist establishments, particularly the invasion by Mahmud of Ghazni c. 1025, suggest that the monks and artists would have sought refuge in the more secure Buddhist monasteries in the mountainous region of north-west India.

In summation, changes in the manner of depicting the textiles appear to have a chronological significance. In the earliest surviving painting from the 11th century (Group A) (e.g. figs. 167, 168, 177) the patterns of the textiles follow the movement of the garment in a realistic way, later the patterns are depicted as if they are painted on a flat surface without any attention to the contours of the body and the movement of the material (fig. 228 Nako). This fascination with textile patterns is characteristic of all the painting of the time of the kingdom of Purang-Guge. However, an unusual feature is the presence of textile motifs and costumes which can be identified, most probably, with the art of Gujarat. The fact that the Gujarati-type costumes did not continue in the later art of the school of Purang-Guge may mean that the responsible artists may have died out or that these exotic costumes were no longer considered attrac-

Fig. 229. Preaching Bodhisattva attended by lay people in western Tibetan dress
Tabo "Kanjur", gouache on paper

Fig. 230. Nako, Kinnaur: deity with
consort dressed in local western
Tibetan dress
Main Temple, south wall



tive. However, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayana has identified some similarities between a group of representations in Alchi gSum-brtsegs and Gujarati costumes.

Representations of Historical Personages

Historical persons are portrayed with careful attention to the ethnic background and status. These attributes are expressed through costume, placement, and relative size. The historical persons consist of personages dressed in Indian or local western Tibetan costume. Historical figures in Indian attire occur only in narrative contexts. Here costume is specifically meant to identify a place and ethnic group: India / Indian. In this context the iconographic meaning is quite clear. The intention is to define the Indian setting of the Life of the Buddha (Klimburg-Salter 1987: 699). What is less clear is why these Indians are dressed in costumes which are derived from western India – perhaps Gujarat. As everyone familiar with the Life of the Buddha knows, this specific geographic area could not possibly be associated with the region where the story takes place.

The function of western Tibetan costumes is somewhat more complex, as the contexts in which the costumes appear are more varied. What is manifestly clear – from the great pains taken to represent variations in costume, such as head dresses – is that the costumes were meant to have a significance. If nothing else, the costume establishes the identity of the patrons as ethnically non-Indian, and probably western Tibetan. The protagonists of the Sudhana (Tib. Nor-bzang) story wear the same costumes. They are depicted as western Tibetans living in a local environment (Klimburg-Salter 1987: 692). Why was it important to define so clearly the ethnic character of the patrons and of all the historical figures represented in the temple?

As we have discussed in Chapter I, the ruling dynasty traced its lineage to the ancient Tibetan monarchy – therefore a clear depiction of their ethnicity was part of their political legitimation. The aristocratic 'Bro family were also associated with the ancient Tibetan monarchy. They were great landowners locally and were associated with the ruling dynasty as ministers and through marriage.

The Main Temple was a royal monument and its decorative program was based on the ideology of its patrons: *legitimacy and piety*. The concern with *legitimacy* appears to have been paramount both in the secular and religious spheres. As we shall see, in the discussion of iconographic themes below, all of the large corpus of inscriptions and many of the iconographic themes, particularly the assemblies, can be explained from this perspective.

The piety of these patrons is legendary. Their missionary activities, according to their own literary testimony, were aimed at restoring Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, and destroying unorthodox Tantric practices. The iconography of the Assembly Hall and the Apse confirms that the patrons of the renovation phase – Byang-chub-'od and other royal patrons and masters of his time, perhaps including Zhi-ba-'od – were primarily influenced by contemporaneous philosophical interests in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. This is clear from problems raised and discussed by Atiśa in *A Lamp for the Enlightenment Path (Bodhipathapradīpa)* and its Commentary (BCLS, BPP1, BPP2, BCLK), both of which the scholar-priest composed “at my devout and ardent disciple’s request” (referring to Byang-chub-'od). Thus, we may consider this text (*Bodhipathapradīpa*) by Atiśa (c. 982–1054) to express also the philosophy of the patron Byang-chub-'od (see also the Commentary *Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikā*, ascribed to Atiśa in the Tenjur but sometimes questioned), the support of monastic Mahāyāna Buddhism is clearly expressed, and a cautious acceptance of the Tantric path articulated. In the *Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikā* the question of authenticity and legitimate transmission is raised. Thus, clearly these concerns were not restricted to the patrons of Tabo but were an important intellectual/religious issue of the period.

There are two groups of historical persons represented, religious personages: royal lamas and monks; and lay people: the royalty and commoners. Royal lamas can be identified by their iconographic attributes and placement in the composition. They are always found frontally represented, on the axis of the composition, and are normally slightly larger than the other figures in the configuration. Monks and lay people are presented in a variety of attitudes either as part of assemblies or listeners to sacred discourses.

In the first artistic phase at Tabo in the Entry Hall, attributed to 996, all historical figures are represented in rows on the lower half of the north and south wall (figs. 45, 50; Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Figs. 8, 9). The figures are painted, so far as we can see, in a flat planar style. All princely figures in the first (top) rows of personages, whether royal lamas or lay persons, sit under a canopy on low benches facing forward with one foot hanging down, the right hand holding a *mālā*. The princes depicted on the north wall (fig. 50; Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Fig 8) wear a wide-collared yellow or white Tibetan overcoat (*phyu-pa*) with a floral pattern which consists of four petals and a red centre dot, black boots and a belt. These figures are identified in the inscriptions as *lha-sras* (prince) but their names are either absent, illegible or not identified. Some may have belonged to the 'Bro family who had estates in Cog-la (the Tabo region).

Most fantastic for the historian is the painting of the three figures in the top row of historical figures at the centre of the composition on the south wall of the Entry Hall (figs. 2, 45). According to inscriptions they represent the royal lama Ye-shes-'od and his sons *lha-sras* Nā-ga-rā-dza, and *lha btsun-pa* De-ba-rā-dza (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 29 and Fig. 10). Unfortunately, their costumes are difficult to see. However, a confusing point is that Ye-shes-'od (who was certainly already ordained, as the inscription identifies him by his ordination name) wears princely dress – in contrast to his son De-ba-rā-dza to his proper left, who wears monastic dress. I have suggested that this princely dress represents his dual function as worldly ruler and monk (see Chapter V).

Representations of lay persons in the bottom rows on the north and south walls are shown kneeling. They wear white, wide-collared overcoats. They have red doughnut-shaped turbans, red ribbons float from their shoulders (fig. 49). The kneeling figures in brown overcoats without hats (fig. 48), according to their inscriptions, should be identified as nuns. Thus all classes of persons directly associated with the life of the monastery are represented.

In Phase II, 11th century, the community of lay people, princely and common, worshipping or listening to sacred discourses, are also dressed in western Tibetan costumes, which are similar to the costumes depicted in the first phase but also slightly different. This distinctive costume is made of wool and has no patterns. The male overcoat has a wide belt and wide collar in contrasting colour (figs. 4, 121). The females wear a long dress covered by a long full cape with deep round collar (figs. 23, 55). There are specific styles of costumes for men and women but both figures wear jewellery made of large blue stones worn on the head and neck. There are also two types of hats worn by lay men, the white so-called sailor hat (lay figures in figs. 23, 229); and the red, flat, doughnut-shaped turban (fig. 4) which has the form, but is considerably larger than the smaller red turban worn by the kneeling figures in the Entry Hall. The significance of the different hats is not clear. The costumes typical of the second phase can be seen in both miniature painting (figs. 222, 229) and mural paintings in the Assembly Hall in Tabo, Tholing (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: Fig. 238), and Nako, as well as Dung-dkar (fig. 231, bottom).

Until now, historical figures in the miniatures occur only as donors (i.e. Poo fig. 222; Tabo fig. 229) or listeners to sacred discourses, with one curious exception, a small representation which may be a portrait (Klimburg-Salter 1994b: Pl. 8). In a folio from Tholing (Tucci 1949: vol. III, pl. c) male donors appear in dress which resembles the Tabo costumes. In a curious miniature painting from Tabo, five women worship a Bodhisattva, a sailor hat hovers above the women, indicating the disembodied presence of a male donor (fig. 229).

The importance of local dress as a means of defining status and ethnicity can be understood when we compare the Tabo images to the representations of historical personages in Ladakh. This example from Mang-rgyu in Ladakh is typical of the costumes of Ladakhi noblemen in the early 13th century. A tight-fitting caftan is essentially Central Asian in style. The cloth is decorated in a large, repeated floral pattern, quite unlike any textile pattern at Tabo.

In Tabo the only deity to wear western Tibetan dress is the protectress and her retinue. Later in Nako the distinctive type of western Tibetan dress is continued. But here in addition to local nobles, this dress can also be worn by pan-Indian deities. Just one example is this small scene where a woman in a very stylised representation of western Tibetan dress is seated on the knee of a deity dressed in Indian Bodhisattva garments (fig. 230).

Local monks and royal lamas wear garments which combine the Indian monk's dress and the western Tibetan overcoat. Occasionally lamas represented in paintings datable to the 11th century wear a variety of different hats which may signify different monastic ranks. The figure in fig. 6 to the proper left of the main personage (identified by inscription as 'Dul-ba-byang-chub, Klimburg-Salter 1994a) may be the abbot of Tabo judging from his size and placement, and therefore the hat may signify this rank (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 34). The same figure, identified also as 'Dul-ba-byang-chub, occurs in the centre of a row of historical figures to the right of the entry to the Assembly Hall (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: Fig. 13). The hat shape is not the same but it is also red, which distinguishes it from the white hats worn by male figures in this row. This same figure (identified by inscription) 46 years earlier, the fourth in the row of monastic figures, row 1 on the south wall of the Entry Hall, wears no hat.

Monks represented in other contexts – narrative or iconic compositions (e.g. figs. 120, 136, 188, 189) wear traditional patchwork monk's garments. Thus the presence of the Tibetan overcoat (*phyu-pa*) must be considered significant. It seems reasonable that the particular costume worn by the royal monks (*lha bla-ma*) in Tabo was meant to convey precisely this double message. Also this costume can be seen as a response to the particular historical circumstances. When the legitimacy of this dynasty was no longer a question, then the royal monks, in this instance Ye-shes-'od, Byang-chub-'od and Zhi-ba-'od wore simple monks' robes as in the Mandala Temple (dKyil-khang) c. 15th century (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: Fig. 237; Tucci 1935: Pl. LVIII).

All of the historical figures, lay and religious, princely and commoners, are found together in larger compositions – the great assembly. This is one of the most distinctive iconographic features of this artistic school. Each of our Buddhist complexes has had at least one such assembly².

In Nako the assembly scene is much destroyed, but fragments can be found on the south wall in the Translator's Temple (*Lo-tsa-ba lha-khang*) together with a much destroyed inscription. A part of the assembly at Tholing was photographed by Ghersi (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: Fig. 238) and fragments of an extensive composition can be seen in Dung-dkar. At Tabo one assembly in the Entry Hall survives from Phase I and from Phase II three assemblies of historical persons survive in the Main Temple: at the entrance to the Cella (fig. 139) above the Renovation Inscription dated 1042; a smaller assembly is depicted in the Cella (fig. 151); and the largest assembly is found to the right of the door in the Assembly Hall and is only fragmentarily preserved. Parallel to these assemblies of historical figures are assemblies grouped around deities. For instance the protectress' assembly (fig. 55) has the same vocabulary as that representing the historical figures; also the assembly surrounding the Relics of the Buddha (fig. 24).

The principal components are the same in all of these configurations. Although the paintings are too fragmentary to allow us to speak with confidence about a stylistic progression, a clearly identifiable iconographic development appears to have a chronological significance. One or more royal lamas, or

Fig. 231. Dung-dkar, western Tibet: two Bodhisattvas, a small mandala and fragments of a donor assembly below. Cave with lantern ceiling, lower part of entrance wall, left side



later a prince, sits enthroned under an umbrella or canopy at the centre of the composition and to either side is placed a group of persons, predominantly monks to the proper left of the main figure and lay people to the proper right, except in the Cella where the disposition is reversed (fig. 151). Although all these compositions are damaged¹, fortunately the centre personage of each composition is to some degree preserved. Judging from the association of the central configuration with inscriptions recording donations, repairs, etc. to the monastery one can propose that these main figures (at Nako, Dung-dkar, and Tabo) represent the royal donors.

Royal donors are presented in a specific setting (the development of which I have described elsewhere, Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 30–31) – seated on a wooden throne, under an umbrella or canopy which is placed in front of a curtain. From the 11th century the curtain is draped and held up at several points – behind this there are onlookers wearing western Tibetan costume. The earliest form of this configuration is also the simplest. In the Tabo Entry Hall (fig. 2) the royal lamas are seated on thrones under elaborate umbrellas (or a canopy). All later representations of this theme combine the honorific function of the curtain with that of the umbrella. The two elements, which symbolically reinforce each other, first occur together in the famous painting of the Byang-chub-'od period, above the Renovation Inscription⁴ (fig. 14). The curtain is placed behind the royal lama, who is depicted at the centre seated on his throne with the nobles and monks to each side. The same motif – curtain and umbrella – is found together with the relic casket of the Buddha (fig. 24) c. 1042. The addition of the curtain may indicate a change in the conception of the royal lama. Originally in Gandhāran art, the umbrella-curtain motif was used for an enthroned deity (Klimburg-Salter 1995: Pl. 152).

Originally there was a much larger compositional scheme to the right of the entry way in the Assembly Hall. Now much destroyed, the painting apparently represented the monastic community with a row of

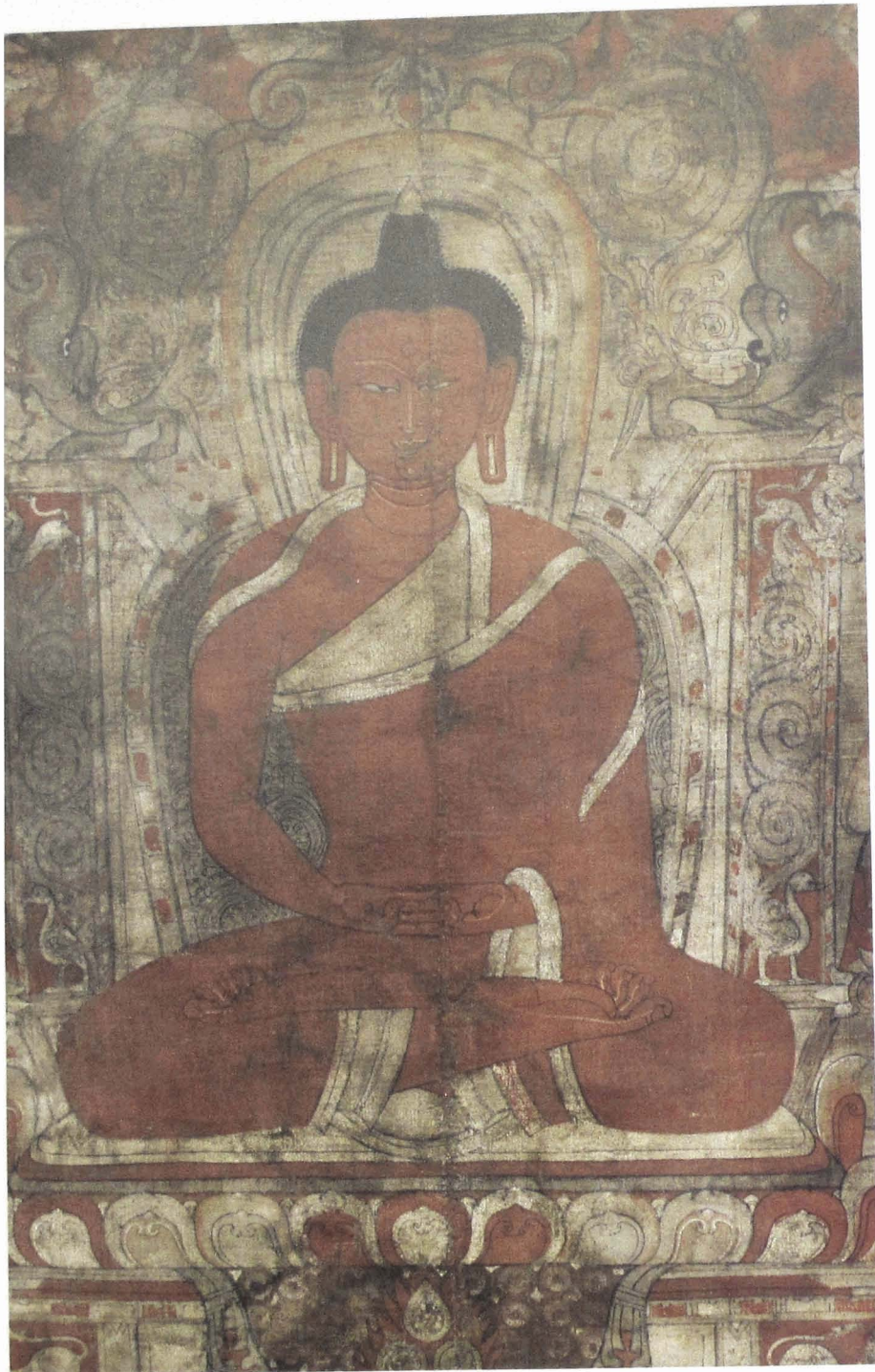


Fig. 232. Amitābha
Thang-ka said to be from Tabo,
private collection, 13th/14th century

royal lamas at the centre. The centre figure is missing. A draped curtain separates larger, seated personages from comparatively smaller, standing onlookers. Which royal lamas were represented is not known.

The Cella assembly is curious because although the same elements are present as in the earlier assemblies there appears to be some misunderstanding. The honorific cloth covering has no logical model – it is neither an umbrella, nor a curtain. The Renovation Inscription painting seems to be the misunderstood model for the curious geometric shape behind the seated *lha bla-ma*. Also the positions of the monks and lay persons are reversed.

In Guge, the continuation of the same typology for representing the royal patrons, including the royal lamas and the community of monks, was used into the 12th century, as can be seen in the much destroyed painting from Dung-dkar (fig. 231, bottom). The basic typology here remains the same. A single princely figure is seated, as at Nako, under an umbrella and in front of a curtain. To the prince's right is an extended row of figures sitting before a draped curtain. This typology (enthroned royal donor seated under an umbrella and before a curtain and surrounded by the lay and monastic community) is used only by the kings of Purang-Guge and painted in the monasteries they founded⁵.

Artistic Production at Tabo

The extraordinary degree of sophistication of all aspects of the 11th-century painting suggests that a cosmopolitan workshop directed by a skilled master artist collaborated with the patron designer in the production of the decoration. The artists adapted their repertoire to the pre-designed program and the iconographic prescriptions proposed by the Tabo patrons/designer. We should remember that it is not unlikely that different groups of artists were responsible for Group A and Group B. The extraordinary complexity of the jewellery, as well as some of the textile patterns in Group A are not repeated in Group B. However, there is a basic stylistic unity between the two groups if one compares the drawing of the faces and the figure styles. Just the enormous difference in scale between the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Ambulatory and those depicted in the narrative paintings would also necessarily indicate a much greater degree of simplicity in Group B paintings. However, that the artists of both Groups A and B and also C came from the same cultural milieu seems none the less to be indicated.

It is also not impossible that a separate group of artists were responsible for painting the ceiling cloths. How and why a different group of artists came to be present in Tabo is a matter of conjecture. One possible scenario is that the artists came together with the large amount of white cloth which was imported for that purpose. In any case, this cloth was certainly imported from western India and the patterns that were used in the ceiling paintings of the Cella and the Ambulatory would appear at least in part to have derived from book covers, examples of which have survived from Gujarat c. early 12th century. The textile patterns painted on the ceiling of the Assembly Hall can be in part related to textile patterns which are represented in Groups A and C. These designs may therefore have been taken from pattern books already used in Tabo or else derived from the same common source as the textiles reproduced elsewhere. As it is not clear whether the distinctive patterns in the Assembly Hall and the Cella area are the result of different iconographic needs or different artists, it is also not possible to say if all the ceiling paintings were produced at the same time.

In conclusion, all that we can say at this point is that the artists working at Tabo came from a workshop where artistic influences from several regions were present. Artistic elements deriving from Gujarat were skilfully integrated with influences coming from nearby regions. Greater Kashmir, western Tibet and Central Asia. Some stylistic modifications were noted which were in part attributed to differences in

artists and time of production. We have noticed that the principal iconographic themes are the same throughout the surviving monuments until the 12th century and that there is a stylistic evolution.

This artistic school must have begun at Tholing, although only a few photographs survive of wall painting there that may be earlier than Tabo (Luczanits 1996b: Fig. 5; Henss 1996: Fig. 3)⁶. The representation of specific historical types and scenes which were restricted to the school of Purang-Guge are already completely developed in the Tabo Assembly Hall. The representations of the many figures in western Tibetan dress are so sophisticated and the iconography so consistent that one cannot imagine that this is the first monumental complex to experiment with this visual vocabulary. Rather one may imagine that the Tabo Assembly Hall was part of a second phase in art production which included other monuments by the same sponsor Byang-chub-'od. The only evidence for this are Gherzi's photographs from Mang-nang.

What emerges from this summary is the picture of a large and sophisticated workshop, which included artists or pattern books from different areas. Influences could be identified from the art of Central Asia, western Tibet, Kashmir and Gujarat. The latter appeared in two different forms so that it is possible that they came from two unrelated sources – the painters of the ceiling cloth in the Apse may, in fact, have come with the cloth itself from western India.

One can only imagine that the responsibility of integrating these diverse influences, craftsmen and artists, as well as allocating the extremely expensive materials used – pigments of the finest quality, etc. – must have fallen to an extremely gifted master artist. And that the success of the whole undertaking rested on the collaboration of supremely gifted individuals. This is in fact not surprising. Petech describes this kingdom as “the most brilliant centre of religious, literary and artistic movements in Tibet”. We know from the literary sources that the most important scholars of the time were attracted to the kingdom – from the evidence of the extraordinary redaction of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in the wall texts we know that at least one of these scholars participated in the production of the iconographic program at Tabo. It is not unlikely that the “author” of this text was also the “author” of the iconographic program.

To return to the artists – such a brilliant workshop could not have been assembled for Tabo alone and the evidence of Mang-nang (Klimburg-Salter 1985: 28) is that they worked on other monuments commissioned by Byang-chub-'od as well (Klimburg-Salter 1985: 39–40). The wall paintings and the miniature paintings show so many similar features that it seems reasonable to suggest that the same workshop may have spent the cold winter months – when work on architectural decoration would have been impossible – illuminating manuscripts. This would account for the stylistic unity noted throughout the period in both monumental and portable painting (Klimburg-Salter forthcoming [a]). It is clear from the fragmentary remains that only a small part of the brilliant artistic productions from this region in the 11th–12th centuries has survived.

Artistic production from the following centuries is even more scarce. I know of only one and perhaps two painted hanging scrolls which were found in Tabo in the early 1930s. The hanging scroll representing Amitābha is painted on rather coarse linen (fig. 232). The composition is simple, the figure massive, the face is broad and the facial features small. The halo is horseshoe-shaped, the garment defined simply by broad bands at the edge. The palette is very limited: red, black, white. A painting now in the USA was acquired in 1934 in Spiti (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pl. 108)⁷. Both the coarse fabric and the figure style is very close to fig. 232. They may both be dated to the c. 13th–14th centuries. The only *in situ* evidence we have for this style are two stupas in the Tabo Sacred Compound (*chos-'khor*) which are painted inside⁸.

In the 15th century there is a revival of a very elegant painting style in Guge which has many of the characteristics of the earlier Indo-Tibetan school of western Tibet. Both wall paintings (e.g. Tholing fig.

220) and thangkas are known (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pls. 120 and 121). It would be interesting to explore the reasons for this renewed interest in the earlier art of the kingdom of Purang-Guge.

¹ There are exceptions to this generalised categorisation where a particular artist uses the same style for both groups – as in the first scene from the Sudhana story (fig. 23).

² Tucci did not record this theme at Mang-nang and the paintings are now largely destroyed.

³ In Tabo large sections have disappeared – the proper right and lower portions in the Entry Hall; the rows of figures on the wall on the opposite side of the entry to the Cella; most of the composition to the right of the entry to the Assembly Hall.

⁴ It is precisely a comparison of such

motifs from the Byang-chub-'od period painting which permits us to attribute the narrative paintings in the Assembly Hall to the same period, that is c. 1042.

⁵ This feature is important evidence that Dung-dkar, which is not far from Tholing, was apparently still under the patronage of the kings of Purang-Guge. The continuity of the western Tibetan school of painting at Dung-dkar is seen not only in the representation of the royal donors, but also in the continuation of specific themes, for example in the seated Buddha figure. Since a stylistic analysis of the Dung-dkar paintings suggests an attribution in the early

12th century, the artistic school of Purang-Guge may be considered to have continued until that time.

⁶ A separate publication on Gherzi's photographs from Tholing in the Tucci Archive is in preparation.

⁷ This painting was said to have been acquired in Po monastery in Spiti. At the time I published this painting I did not realise that there is no Po monastery. Po together with Lari and Tabo village comprise the ancient region of Cog-la which is traditionally attached to Tabo monastery.

⁸ A publication dealing with these paintings is in preparation.



VII. Western Tibet: Historical Introduction

The history of the Himalayan countries cannot be forced into a common frame. Geography itself dictates the inevitableness of a subdivision into as many units as there are valleys, of such economic (agricultural or commercial) importance as to be sufficient to supply the basis for a viable political unit. Each kingdom or principality had its origin in the valley of a river originating either within or to the south of the great Himalayan range and feeding into the two major river systems of upper India: Indus and Ganges-Brahmaputra. Actually, the upper Indus valley itself supplies the space where the largest of the kingdoms developed: Ladakh.

Some physical features are common to all. The climate is on the average severe, because of the altitude and the scarcity of precipitation beyond the first mountain ranges. Rice and wheat cultivation ceases at a medium height, and barley is the only crop that can be grown in the upper parts of the valleys, as high as 4,000 metres and more. Artificial irrigation is almost always necessary, water being derived from mountain streams or less frequently from the rivers, as the latter often flow in more or less deeply cut ravines and thus offer little possibility for laying out fields on their banks. Animal husbandry is always an important activity and is the sole source of livelihood wherever altitude or aridity prohibit all but the most meagre form of agriculture. It is unchecked by natural or political boundaries. Formally defined frontiers were (and are) more or less artificial, being usually modern innovations. Shepherds from the north crossed the mountains regularly in search of better seasonal pastures on the southern slopes of the range.

From the ethnologic and linguistic point of view, this region shows an extreme variety. It has offered a last haven of refuge to remnants of populations pushed back toward the higher valleys and thus saved from extinction by their new isolation. The whole southern slope of the Himalaya is a true linguistic museum.

State formations were strictly local, the demographic and economic bases being insufficient for the rise and duration of larger units including more than one main valley. When this happened, as in the case of Zhangzhung earlier and of Ladakh later, such "imperial" extensions were condemned to a rapid dissolution, either through internal collapse or as the result of foreign invasions.

A feature common to all these mountain states (the one exception was Bhutan) was that their form of government was strictly monarchical, in some respects even preserving the traditions of the ancient Tibetan empire. No theocracy on the central Tibetan pattern developed (always with the exception of Bhutan).

Although enjoying a high prestige, the monks took no part in the administration and usually were not directly involved in politics. Of course, however, the religious and economic weight of the monasteries made itself felt. Also, particularly able and respected clergymen could wield considerable influence as spiritual advisers to the ruler.

The history of the western Himalayan region of Tibetan culture has been recovered from oblivion only in part, and it is a general rule that the smaller the unit, the less known is its history. Only from Ladakh a chronicle

Fig. 233. Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Nor-bzang), antelope (detail of fig. 120) Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, lower section

of some sort has come down to us, but it is of little use for the period before the 15th century.

Zhang-zhung and the Tibetan Empire

Nothing is known of the history of western Tibet during the first half of the first millennium A.D., not even in its broad outlines. The first flashes of light begin to illuminate the scene at about the same time as the formative stage of the Tibetan empire about A.D. 600. The western regions formed a large kingdom called Zhang-zhung, its original capital being probably Khyung-lung dNgul-mkhar on the Sulej. The language spoken in the country belonged apparently to the western Himalayan dialects. Some relics have come down to us, mostly from fairly recent word lists. The early history of Zhang-zhung is dimly known from stray references in the Dunhuang Annals and Chronicles. It has been suggested that the country originally extended to the regions to the north-west and even north of central Tibet (Tucci 1956: 91–2, 104–5). An excessive extension eastward is not acceptable. Some light, however, comes from the Chinese texts, provided we accept the identification of Zhang-zhung with the country called Yang-t'ung by the Chinese (Yamaguchi 1977: 55–95). To be more precise, Greater Yang-t'ung corresponded to Upper Zhang-zhung, i.e. Guge and Purang, while the name Lesser Yang-t'ung indicated originally the upper valley of the Tsangpo from the Mar-yum pass to Lha-rtse. Later it was applied to the north-western region, which after the "horns" (*ru*) reorganisation of the second half of the 8th century came to be known as Lower, i.e. Eastern Zhang-zhung (Satō 1981: 45–70). This may explain why in the modern Bon-po tradition one of the three main pilgrimage sites of their religion lay in the zone of the sTag-rgo mountain and the Dang-ra lake in southern Changthang; probably it was also a political centre of ancient Zhang-zhung (Berglie 1980: 39–44; Cech 1992: 388). Anyhow, in later times Zhang-zhung came to be limited to what is now western Tibet and some adjacent hill tracts.

Relations with the rising state of central Tibet started at the beginning of the 7th century. In that period Greater Yang-t'ung was able to send embassies to the Chinese court in 631 and 641. A friendly connection with the Tibetan royal house was established when the Zhang-zhung king Lig-mi-rhya married the sister of the emperor (*btsan-po*) Srong-btsan-sgam-po. Then they quarrelled because of the disrespectful treatment meted

out to the Tibetan princess, and in 644/5 the Tibetan emperor defeated and dethroned his brother-in-law¹. The Chinese texts too inform us that by the end of the K'ai-yüan period, i.e. before 649, Greater Yang-t'ung had been overwhelmed and annexed by Tibet.

The settlement of the conquered territories took a long time. In 653 a revenue officer (*mngan*) was stationed in Zhang-zhung and in 662 and again in 675 administrative settlements (*mkhos*) were carried out. In 677 a rebellion broke out, but was put down almost at once. This time the country was fully integrated into the Tibetan empire. In 719 a census (*pha-los*) of the tax-paying families was made. The national language gradually lost ground to Tibetan. The process, however, lasted for several centuries and the underlying non-Tibetan layer is still recognisable in the toponomy.

The Formation of the Western Tibetan Kingdoms

The dissolution of the Tibetan empire was followed by a long period of internecine strife. What happened in western Zhang-zhung after 842 is totally unknown², but we may suppose that the Tibetan administration of that marginal area collapsed and vanished.

In central Tibet the succession of the anti-clerical emperor gLang-dar-ma was disputed. The chief queen sNa-nam-bza' (or 'Bal-bza'?) put forward as her candidate a three-year-old son of her elder brother. Only the strong support of the queen could compel the ministers to accept him, and therefore he was popularly known as Yum-brtan³. He was confronted almost at once with an alleged posthumous son of the dead emperor by the junior queen Tshes-pong-bza'⁴. He was born in the Yarlung valley and was called 'Od-srungs, a name by which he appears in three Dunhuang documents.

In Amdo a high official from the dBa's (sBas) family rebelled and fought successfully against the local Tibetan governors, and less so against the Chinese. As a consequence, the outer dependencies in Central Asia and in north-west China were lost. In central Tibet the conflict went on without a solution. 'Od-srungs found himself at a disadvantage because his adversaries were in possession of dBus with the capital Lhasa. He also lost his main support when his mother was killed in northern dBus. The kingdom was practically divided into two ill-defined areas of influence (sTod-khrom and sMad-khrom), most of gTsang with Yarlung following 'Od-srungs, while Yum-brtan prevailed in dBus.

'Od-srungs seems to have reigned till about 905⁵. He was followed by his only son dPal-'khor-btsan, who reigned for eighteen years, i.e. till c. 923⁶. His reign was an unmitigated disaster. The later tradition credits him with the construction of eight chapels, one of them being sMan-lung. But according to DEU/2, 142, he was an evil-minded and foolish man. His misrule caused disaffection, so that several vassals went over to Yum-brtan's son mGon-spyod. Anarchy was rampant, and even the royal tombs in the Yarlung valley were dug up and looted⁷. Then the noblemen assembled and summoned from dBus one Khri-lde-srong-btsan, otherwise unknown, and placed him in power, probably as a sort of regent (*bla-mgo dang-po*). The chiefs of 'Phyos (in the Yarlung region) handed over to him the royal insignia as well as the temple of bSam-yas, and with it presumably the greater part of the remaining territories in eastern central Tibet. This marked the end of the rule of 'Od-srungs' line in the old core of the country, where the dynasty of Yum-brtan became dominant⁸.

dPal-'khor-btsan's two sons were pushed westward. The elder bKra-shis-brtsegs-pa-dpal, born from a mChims lady, retained at first a foothold in the g.Yo-ru "horn" and in gTsang, but eventually had to retire to Lastod in western gTsang. His three sons, the "Three sMad-kyi-lde", partitioned the inheritance among themselves, thus further weakening the power of their family. Their numerous descendants followed the same pernicious custom, giving origin to dozens of small principalities. Eventually they sank to the level of petty local chiefs or even of landowners. The most important of these statelets was Mang-yul Gung-thang, which lasted till 1619/20.

The younger brother Khri-kyi-lding, more commonly known as sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon, migrated to the West and entered the territories of ancient Zhangzhung. He was little more than a high-born adventurer and his following was anything but numerous. Among them, however, there were the scions of two families of the highest nobility, Cog-ro and Pa-tshab, who had played a role during the last two reigns of the monarchy. Even more important was the 'Bro clan, which had been practically the premier noble family during the twilight of the old regime: a 'Bro lady was the mother of the last two Tibetan emperors Ral-pa-can and gLangdar-ma. To the same family belonged the old faithful official known to the Chinese by the name Shang P'i-p'i, who led the struggle against the warlord Lun K'ung-

jo (*blon* dBa's Khong-bzher-legs-stengs), till he was defeated and compelled to retreat westward⁹. The feud between 'Bro and dBa's, which had dominated the late 8th and early 9th centuries, continued and extended to dBus as well. The 'Bro still held minister rank under dPal-'khor-btsan (GBYT, I, f. 153b). A more substantial element of strength accrued to the family from the fact that its original home was Yang-t'ung, i.e. Zhangzhung. They still owned estates in Guge and Cog-la (KPGT, Ja. f. 20b). There is a possibility that the creation of the West Tibetan kingdom was due to the initiative of this clan, which invited sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon to their country in order to give a cover of legitimacy to their local power¹⁰.

With the help of these old families sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon gradually built up from scratch an extensive state in the Western Countries (sTod), which came to be known as sTod mNga'-ris, Western Dominion. One of the earliest historical texts, the chronicle composed in the last quarter of the 12th century by mNga'-bdag Nyang Ral, tells us the story of the conquest. Nyi-ma-mgon, bent on establishing a home for his three sons, sent ahead three officials to reconnoitre the possibilities of the Western Territories, while he himself camped to the north of the lake Manasarowar to await their reports. "The first envoy visited Purang and upon his return reported to the king that in a valley similar to the entrails (*kog-pa*) of a spotless horse, surrounded by snow, there sat a man resembling a worm (read *srin-bu* for *srin-po*). The man who went to Guge said that it was a valley similar to the entrails of a fully white (*btang-dkar*) fish, surrounded by rocky passes (*la-g.ya*); there sat a man resembling a sheep. The man who went to Mar-yul (upper Ladakh) said that it was a country surrounded, as if it were, by a whirling (*ko-mog*) river; there sat a man resembling a frog (*sba*)"¹¹.

After this exploration the king, who was a devout Buddhist, entered Purang and gradually obtained the favour and support of the local people, mainly by promoting commercial activities and providing for ample supplies of food. In this way he was accepted as ruler of Purang, where he established the Royal Law (*rgyal-khrims*). Having raised an army in his new domain, he invaded and conquered Guge. Then he led an exploratory party of one hundred horsemen toward Mar-yul. We get a glimpse of his journey from the *Chronicle of Ladakh*. He marched through the Ra-la pass and built

in its vicinity the Red Castle (Ra-la mKhar-dmar, Ralajung of the maps; on the Indus c. 79°45' long., 32°27' lat.). He founded another castle at rTse-tho rGya-ri, perhaps on the hill above rGya, on the border between Ladakh and Rupshu. For the moment, however, he left Mar-yul proper untouched. Having thus imposed the Royal Law upon the whole of sTod mNga'-ris, he built as his residence the fortress (*sku-mkhar*) of Nyi-bzungs in Purang and assumed the title of *mnga'-bdag*, somewhat lower than the old *btsan-po*; it was borne by his successors till the end of the 11th century. Later (?) he completed the conquest of mNga'-ris with the final annexation of Mar-yul, where he enforced the Royal Law and put to death the "criminals" (i.e. his opponents) that had taken refuge in that area¹².

The whole story, whatever its historical core, supports our impression that the invader from central Tibet disposed of slender resources of his own. He built up a kingdom by means of an able exploitation of the economic resources of Purang, a region which remained the centre of the power of Nyi-ma-mgon and of his successors. The relatively solid structure of the new Himalayan state rested upon such moral assets as undisputed legitimacy and great prestige in Tibetan eyes¹³.

The date of these events is unknown. sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon may have reigned c. 923–950. If this is so, we may place the conquest of the Western Countries in the thirties of the 10th century; the Horse and Sheep years, to which the *Chronicle of Ladakh* attributes the foundation of Ra-la mKhar-dmar and of rTse-tho rGya-ri in the earlier stage of his conquests, may correspond to 934 and 935.

At this point arises, however, the awkward problem presented by the chronology of the late 9th and the 10th centuries. It has been remarked long ago that at least one whole sexagenary cycle has been lost in the main body of the tradition, and hence in the Tibetan historiography¹⁴. This problem seems to confront us in this case too. We may, however, approach the question from the generational angle. The tradition, albeit fragmentary and conflicting, seems to agree on the number of generations in both the lines of 'Od-srungs and of Yum-brtan. Atiśa's two hosts: 'Od-lde (1042) and Bodherāja (c. 1047) belonged to the seventh generation after gLang-dar-ma. We must also take into account the fact that both Yum-brtan and 'Od-srungs were proclaimed kings at their birth or shortly after, and their reigns throw into disorder the generation average. Thus

seven reigns in two hundred years remain within the limits of the possible. The generational (and hence chronological) sequence here suggested seems on the whole acceptable.

sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon married the daughters of his chief supporters Cog-ro and Pa-tshab. After the establishment of the kingdom he contracted two further marriages, with a Zhang-zhung girl and with sTag-gzigs-ma, a Persian or Arab lady. From his first wife Cog-ro Zhang-kha-ma (but from a 'Bro lady according to the LDGR) he had three sons, collectively called the "Three sTod-kyi-mgon"¹⁵. After the death of their father they divided the kingdom among themselves, as it was provided for from the beginning. According to most of our sources, the first-born dPal-gyi-lde Rig-pa-mgon (usually shortened as dPal-gyi-mgon) took Mar-yul, the second son bKra-shis-mgon got Purang, the third lDe-gtsug-mgon received Guge or Zhang-zhung. We should remember that after this period the old name Zhang-zhung receded in favour of Guge, which was originally but a part of Zhang-zhung; later the two names became almost synonymous (Tucci 1956: 74–5). The name of the territory allotted to the third brother varies; several texts give him Khu-bu (Kinnaur), "which is a part of the Mon country"¹⁶, while the *Chronicle of Ladakh* replaces it with Zangskar and Spiti¹⁷. A more detailed and somewhat diverging scheme is found in another authoritative text: the first brother took Mar-yul and Nub Ral-la; the second received Zhang-zhung and Ci-cog (i.e. sPi-lcog), sNyi-gong (?) and Ru-thog, sPu-rangs and Ma-tsho (?), altogether six districts. The third brother had to be content with Gar-zha (Lahul) and Zangskar¹⁸. The three new principalities were collectively known as mNga'-ris skor-gsum. It seems, however, that the dominions of the second and third brothers were soon amalgamated, possibly because one of them died without male issue.

The Early Kings of Purang

As a working hypothesis we may date the reign of the first king bKra-shis-mgon to c. 950–975. Purang, with Guge as a dependency, formed the nucleus of a confederation which included also Mar-yul and lasted till the end of the 11th century. Although since Tucci's pioneer study of 1933 we have grown accustomed to call the kingdom by the name of Guge, we must keep in mind that for two centuries or more the political centre was Purang and not Guge.

At this point we may introduce a piece of evidence supplied by our earliest source, the “Introduction to Buddhism”, compiled in 1167 by the Sa-skya-pa hierarch bSod-nams-rtse-mo (1142–1182)¹⁹. This author defines his dates not only by the 12-year cycle, but also by the number of years elapsed since the *nirvāna* of the Buddha, an event which according to him, and to the Sa-skya-pa school in general, occurred in 2133 B.C. (Macdonald 1963: 64–7). This passage of SNTM, as well as two others to be quoted later, were copied into the biography of rJe-btsun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan by the Sa-skya Paṅ-chen (1182–1251): “All the *yab-mched* of the West and of the East met at sPeg-mkhar of the Cog-la region²⁰, and on this occasion a great oration was delivered [or: a great discussion was held]. The hermitage of Pa(Sa)-sgam in the Rum region²¹ was renovated. Calculating the time of this event, it was in the year A.D. 992.”²².

The meaning of the whole passage hinges upon the words *yab-mched-hying(s)*, literally “all the fathers and brothers”. We may adduce for comparison a similar collective term from a text belonging to the same school and referring to a slightly earlier period: “The two sons of dPal-'khor-btsan divided (their territory) into two (parts), West and East. The six *yab-mched* reduced it to small fragments”²³. The “Six *yab-mched*” in that case were the Three sTod-gyi-mgon, sons of sKyi-dlde Nyi-ma-mgon, plus the Three sMad-kyi-dlde, sons of bKra-shis-rtsegs-pa-dpal. Thus in my opinion we may understand the term *yab-mched* to mean in practice “all the members of the dynasty”. It follows therefrom that our text alludes to a family meeting of the various descendants of dPal-'khor-btsan in the third generation, aimed perhaps at a final delimitation of their respective dominions. The foundation or renovation of the Pa-sgam or Sa-sgam hermitage could indicate a growing attention to the resurrection of the monastic order destroyed by gLang-dar-ma, then taking shape in central Tibet.

bKra-shis-mgon²⁴ and his wife Pa-tshab-bza' had two sons, called (Khri-dpal) 'Khor-re and (Khri-dpal) Srong-nge. The former (or the latter; the tradition is uncertain on this point) became king of Purang²⁵, married and begot two sons, who appear in all our sources with the Sanskrit names Nāgarāja and Devarāja. Apparently he did not reign for a long time (c. 975–985?), because in the second half of his life he abdicated in favour of his brother and was ordained as a monk. Henceforward he

was known by his religious name Ye-shes-'od²⁶.

This tale shows that in that remote corner of the old Tibetan empire Buddhism had not died out. What kind of Buddhism it was, is another question. A dismal picture of Buddhism in those times is drawn by the *Ngor Chronicle*: “After the persecution of gLang-dar-ma and down to this time (i.e. the times of Srong-nge and 'Khor-re) a few lay devotees only paid attention to the Path of the *dharani*. ... After the death of the king, each of his sons and the students followed the Law only partially. After the gradual break-up (of the kingdom), religious practice became mixed with Bon and [the Buddhists] practised *gyer-sgom* [a rNying-ma-pa and Bon-po brand of meditation] ... The temple attendants wore ragged cassocks and still let themselves be called by the titles *sthāvira* and *arhat*. Pretending to follow the rules, they observed only for a very short time the summer retreat of three or four months. Taking as excuse the spiritual obstacles, they became ever more evil-minded. The very words *cittotpāda* and initiation had disappeared”²⁷.

Confronted with this situation, the royal monk set to himself the life-task of reviving true Buddhism and organising ex-novo the ecclesiastical establishment. Ye-shes-'od became not only the moving force in the re-introduction of the Buddhist community, but he also exercised a general supervision over religious affairs and monastic foundations. He started thus a custom that later was taken up again and followed by the younger brother(s) of each ruling king.

His building activity is evidenced by epigraphy. The famous inscription commemorating the restoration of the Tabo temple in Spiti informs us that “the ancestor Bodhisattva” (i.e. *lha bla-ma* Ye-shes-'od) founded the temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) in the Monkey year, i.e. probably in 996; this is also the date accepted by local tradition. The half-effaced inscription on a stele near sPu (Poo) in Kinnaur seems to refer to the building of a (no longer existing) temple by *lha bla-ma* Ye-shes-'od²⁸.

The new king, too, (c. 985–1000) was a builder. If this be 'Khor-re, he founded a chapel (*lha-khang*) at Kha-char (Khojmath) and a fortress at sKar-dung (Kardam), both in Purang. At the end of his life he too was ordained, having as his lama the 'Dzam-gling Chos-rje of sKar-dung²⁹.

The two royal brothers summoned two Buddhist scholars from Kashmir, but this first attempt foundered on the language difficulties, as no trained interpreter and

translator was available (GBYT, I, f. 156b; NYANG, ff. 498b–499a). Then, according to the tradition preserved in many texts, Ye-shes-'od, intending to place on scholarly foundations the revival of religion, selected 21 young men, provided them with ample means and sent them to Kashmir to be trained there as professional translators (*lotsawa*). Only two, however, survived the trying climate; one of them was Rin-chen-bzang-po of Guge.

This brings us to the foremost personality in the story of the western Tibetan rebirth of Buddhism. Our main source is his biography, supposedly authored by one of his direct pupils, but probably compiled much later, in the 14th or early 15th century. According to this text he was born in 958 and died at the age of 98 (counting in the Tibetan fashion), i.e. in 1055. This datation is followed by all later texts without exception. We feel, however, rather uncomfortable in making these dates fit into the frame of western Tibetan history, as reconstructed from other sources.

The narrative too diverges in essential points from the general tradition. It tells us that Rin-chen-bzang-po took his vows as novice at the age of 13. When he was 17, he left his home on his own initiative, with no help from anyone, accompanied by one single attendant and carrying only 600 cowrie shells for his travel expenses. Not a single word is said about royal patronage. His departure is dated in the Pig year 975³⁰, and this rules out support by Lama Ye-shes-'od, whose ordination as a monk was performed several years later.

The young novice from Guge went through a long and severe course of studies, at first in Kashmir under Paṇḍita Śraddhākaravarman and then in northern India, with several other scholars. He returned home after an absence of 13 years; that would be in 988³¹. Then for several years he kept quiet in (or limited his activity to) his home country Guge.

The whole account, inclusive of dates, seems rather strange, and I entertain a lingering suspicion that the biography places all the events of his early life, birth included, one 12-year cycle too early. A corrected set of dates 987 and 1000 would fit much better in the framework. But there is not a single shred of evidence to support these hypothetical dates.

The turning point in Rin-chen-bzang-po's life was his departure for the royal capital of Purang. There Srong-nge (or 'Khor-re) had been succeeded by his son

Lha-lde (c. 1000–1025)³². The king and his uncle Ye-shes-'od realised that they had found in Rin-chen-bzang-po a full-fledged scholar, well equipped for the task of both translation and organisation. They showed him much respect and bestowed upon him the title of *dbu'i-mchod-gnas*, implying supremacy over the practising Buddhist believers.

Being thus clothed with official authority, Rin-chen-bzang-po embarked upon widespread building activity, founding chapels (*lha-khang*) in Purang and in the regions farther south, as far as lower Kinnaur. According to the biography he took a pledge (*zhal-bzhes*) to build 108 chapels, a conventional sacred number. The outstanding building enterprise of this period was the result of his employment by King Lha-lde as the chief executive for the construction of the Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) of Kha-char (Khojmath), the national shrine of Purang. Ye-shes-'od likewise utilised him for the foundation of Tholing, the main temple and monastery of Guge. Lastly, Rin-chen-bzang-po went to Mar-yul (Ladakh), where he built the monastery of Nyar-ma, now in ruins, but in early times the main cultural centre of that country. In a word, he was instrumental in the creation of the three chief shrines of mNga'-ris skor-gsum. Foremost among them was the royal temple of Tholing, now largely destroyed. The only surviving parts of the sacred compound are the '*du-khang* with its wall paintings but deprived of the statues, and the *White Chapel*³³, both of which in their present form date to a later period. Before the so-called Cultural Revolution this was the greatest monastic complex of western Tibet.

It was probably in the course of this absorbing activity that Rin-chen-bzang-po, now aged 49 (i.e. in 1003) received at last ordination as a full monk (*bsnyen-rdzogs*) from the Paṇḍitas 'Od-zer-bzang-po (Candrabhadra), Bhinase (?) and Kamalarakṣita³⁴. At an unspecified time after the ceremony the king sent him on a second Indian journey, limited this time to Kashmir. His task was to obtain religious texts and to enlist a number of artists (*lha-bzo-pa*) and craftsmen, to be employed for the decoration and embellishment of the new temples and chapels. It is impossible to determine an even approximate date for his departure. As a pure guess, I would place it about 1010–1015. His last visit to Kashmir lasted for six years.

After his return home a sharp increase of Indian influence can be noticed in the artistic activities of the

Lotsawa, to be attributed mainly to his Kashmiri collaborators³⁵. His biography contains an interesting list of 21 chapels he founded “in lesser places” (*yul-chung*) (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980: 95). Some of them were erected on estates or villages which the king had granted to the Lotsawa and to his four chief disciples. All but five of these chapels were identified in the field by Tucci, but in many cases they have disappeared, or only ruins are left (Tucci 1933: 71–2; Tucci 1935: 11–4; Tucci and Ghersi 1934, Index). They were spread over a limited area, including Guge, Spiti and upper Kinnaur. Only two foundations fall outside these limits. One is Zher-sa (or Zher-wer) in Purang, the main estate donated by the king to Rin-chen-bzang-po. With some doubts, I would identify Zher with Shar of the maps on the Karnali river about eight kilometres below Khojarnath. The other is Zho-ling, i.e. Johling in Lahul³⁶.

The list includes also Tabo, and this requires some discussion of Rin-chen-bzang-po’s connection with that famous monastery. As noted above, Tabo had been founded by Ye-shes-’od in 996. Rin-chen-bzang-po’s name does not appear in the Restoration Inscription, nor among those of the about 30 monks portrayed and identified by subscriptions on the walls of the *sgo-khang*. According to the stylistic sequence of the wall decoration in the temple as established by Professor D. Klimburg-Salter (1985: 11–41; 1994a: 32–8), the paintings of the *sgo-khang*, which is demonstrably the oldest portion of the temple, are devoid of any trace of Kashmiri influence, which would be hardly possible in the presence of the painters brought in by the Lotsawa. This seems to preclude a share of Rin-chen-bzang-po in the earliest building period and to reduce his “foundation” to a partial reconstruction of the ‘*du-khang* and to the execution of a second cycle of frescoes (the great Vajradhātu-maṇḍala) under strong Kashmiri influence.

Another, equally important result of Rin-chen-bzang-po’s third and last mission to Kashmir was a greatly increased translating activity. The basic concept was that a pure brand of religion could be based only on a direct knowledge of the Indian canonical and philosophical literature. Rin-chen-bzang-po worked strenuously in collaboration with Indian masters, foremost among them his old Guru Śraddhākaravarman, who had been invited to Guge (SNTM, f. 314a). His output was truly stupendous, as evidenced by the list of his translations (in Tucci 1933: 40–5). Thanks to Ye-shes-’od and to Rin-chen-

bzang-po, western Tibet became the main centre from which a new brand of Buddhism spread to the Tibetan-speaking countries.

To this period belongs a somewhat puzzling piece of information, once more supplied by bSod-nams-rtse-mo. The text is indifferently preserved, but it was copied by Sa-skya Paṅḍita in one of his works, and this helps us to obtain better readings.

“*Lha bla-ma* Ye-shes-’od and his sons met at the Pa(Sa)-sgam Byams-snyom-gling hermitage. The younger prince Lha ’Khor was ordained. [Concerning] the subjects residing in the region of Guge, the elder [prince] of Zhang-zhung carried out a general settlement³⁷. Calculating the time [of this event], it works out for A.D. 1016³⁸.”

The historical import of this text is not clear. The younger and elder princes ought to be Nāgarāja and Devarāja. The name Lha ’Khor applies probably to Nāgarāja. If this be accepted, we may suppose that Guge proper with its centre Tholing was organised as a sort of theocratical estate or feudal chiefship governed by Ye-shes-’od and his sons, and that on this occasion its administration was formally set up by his elder son. A later source seems actually to allude to such a division: Srong-nge (i.e. in this case Ye-shes-’od) is said to have received Guge, while Purang was assigned to ’Khor-re (KT 1745, 73). It may also be relevant in this context that the three, father and sons, are portrayed on the south wall of the Tabo *sgo-khang*, being identified by captions under each figure. It is also interesting to note that the list of 21 chapels discussed above seems to cover almost exactly the area of the supposed ecclesiastical estate of Guge. The latter included also sPu (Poo), where a badly damaged inscription seems to belong to this period. It was set up by the *lha-sras xxxxx radza*, i.e. probably Nāgarāja. It is dated in a Dragon year, which in my opinion may correspond to 1024³⁹.

There is no further mention of the settlement carried out in 1016, and both Nāgarāja and Devarāja sank into oblivion. Their names do not even appear in connection with the imprisonment of their father and the efforts to ransom him. Still, according to a passing mention in the biography of Atiṣa, they were still alive in c. 1046, at the time of the Indian master’s stay at mChims-phu near bSam-yas. They tried to obtain from him the precepts of the Great Brahman (*bram-ze chen-po*), but were obstructed by ’Brom-ston (Eimer 1979: 252, no. 304).

During the reign of Lha-lde the kingdom took a strong religious tinge. Even the old aristocratic families that had accompanied sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon to the West took part in the work sponsored by the royal house. We find the names of a Cog-ro and of a Pa-tshab among the translators (GBYT. I. f. 159b), and the 'Bro family, who owned estates in Ladakh, built there the temple of Alchi, widely known for its fine pictorial decoration.

Lha-lde was followed by his eldest son 'Od-lde (c. 1025–1060). In a Mouse year, the thirtieth of his life (perhaps 1036) the king went personally to Ladakh where, acting upon an indication by Rin-chen-bzang-po, he founded the monastery of dPe-thub (Spituk) (VS, f. 224a). His younger brother Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od became the first and only *lotsawa* of the family. He displayed a considerable activity at Tholing, sponsoring translations and executing some personally. The third brother, called at first bKra-shis-'od⁴⁰, was ordained under the name of *Iha bla-ma* Byang-chub-'od. He followed in the footsteps of his grand-uncle Ye-shes-'od as the chief of the monastic establishment in Guge.

Iha bla-ma Ye-shes-'od was still alive. The circumstances of his death are the subject of a romantic tale, found with some variants in many texts. He had gone out on an armed expedition to collect the gold necessary for the invitation of an Indian pandit. He was ambushed and made prisoner by a non-Buddhist people, called Gar-log in some texts, on the Indian border. Their chief placed him before the alternative, either to give up his religion or to pay a ransom of gold equal to his own weight. His grandnephew Byang-chub-'od worked hard to collect the ransom, even as far as dBus and gTsang, but the quantity offered fell short of the required. Ye-shes-'od told his nephew that, as he was an old man at the end of his life and was being severely treated by his captors, it was better to employ the gold for inviting an outstanding Indian master. His wish was complied with, and although the story ends at this point, it is assumed that he died in prison⁴¹.

This tale, however, cannot be reconciled with the biography of Rin-chen-bzang-po, according to which Ye-shes-'od fell ill and died in his monastery of Tholing. Rin-chen-bzang-po, who did not arrive in time at his deathbed, performed the funeral rites (RCZP, 92). So the historicity of this edifying narrative is not beyond doubt.

We can now make an attempt at determining the date of Ye-shes-'od's death. By all versions, the old man was

keen to have a prominent pandit invited. Following his last wish, in 1037 a mission was dispatched to India, to invite Atiśa⁴². Thus we may place the decease of Ye-shes-'od at one or two years before that date. There is a text which confirms this calculation. It informs us that Ye-shes-'od was barely one year younger than Rin-chen-bzang-po, that he was born in a Bird year and that he lived for 78 years⁴³, which settles his life-dates as 959–1036. There is no cogent reason for rejecting this piece of evidence, however late and isolated.

Whatever circumstances of the death of Ye-shes-'od may have been, it did not cause a slackening in the building activities of the royal house. Byang-chub-'od followed up the tradition of his grand-uncle, and several new chapels were built under his patronage and the supervision of Rin-chen-bzang-po. Such were Tsha-basang in Purang and Mang-nang in Guge. The Tabo inscription tells us that Byang-chub-'od renovated the temple 46 years after it was built by Ye-shes-'od. If we accept the year 996 as the date of foundation, then the renovation was carried out in 1042, the very year of Atiśa's arrival and perhaps in connection with it.

The invitation extended by 'Od-lde and Byang-chub-'od to Atiśa was a turning point in the religious history of Tibet. The motives were above all religious⁴⁴, but we may suppose also other reasons, such as the age of Rin-chen-bzang-po, now old and worn out, and a wish to crown the activity of the two royal brothers with a resounding enterprise. Their choice fell upon Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna, usually called Atiśa (982–1054), a renowned teacher of the monastic university of Vikramaśilā in eastern India. After demurring for a long time, he followed the summons, travelled to Purang by way of Nepal and stayed in the kingdom for three years (1042–1045) as the honoured guest of the royal house. Old Rin-chen-bzang-po, treated somewhat superciliously by the Indian master, still collaborated with him in the translation work. Then he retired to meditation practices and died in 1055 at the age of 98 (97 for us)⁴⁵.

By that time the conversion of western Tibet to the new brand of Buddhism had been completed, meeting apparently with little resistance. And yet, Zhang-zhung is traditionally considered as the cradle of the Bon religion, from which some opposition could have been expected. There may be a hint to that effect in our sources. Rin-chen-bzang-po is said to have overcome (*btul*) kLu sKar-gsal and to have refuted through religious disputes

the incorrect practice of the Tantras⁴⁶. It has been suggested that kLu sKar-gsal is probably to be identified with gShen-chen kLu-dga' (996–1035), whose rediscovery of a Bon Abhidharma text (*Srid-pa'i mdzod-phug*) at 'Grig-mtshams mTha'-dkar (1017) marks the beginning of the Later Spread (*phyi-dar*) of Bon⁴⁷. One early Bon-po master, Bru Khyung-gyi-rgyal-mtshan, is said to have been summoned from gTsang by the kings of Purang, Shangs and Se-rib. In 1262 the Bon-po Burchen Tshul-khrims-rgyal-mtshan was sent by his teacher to several western districts, among which Purang is listed; he obtained 133 pupils from Purang and from Byang (see Jackson 1978: 201 and 206–7). As late as the 15th century sPyan-snga bSod-nams-rgyal-mtshan of Phag-mo-gru (1386–1434) eliminated dKar-gdum-pa, a Bon-po master living in Purang who was harrasing the hermits (BA, 594). This means that up to that time Bon had some following in western Tibet. But after the 15th century and down to the present day no trace of organised Bon-po communities can be found in mNga'-ris skor-gsum; Bon has its strongholds in Khams and in parts of southern Tibet.

The influence of Atiśa was far-reaching. He gave to Tibetan Buddhism a new philosophical basis. He summarised his views in a small treatise called *Bodhi-pathapradīpa*, compiled at Tholing and addressed to Byang-chub-'od. He strongly advocated the study of Indian texts and the observance of the monastic rules, without deprecating, however, a prudent use of Tantric Yogas of the first two classes. But in the course of his stay in Guge he was not allowed to translate Tantric texts⁴⁸.

The question of Tantrism loomed large in the religious life of the western Tibetan kingdom and was not without political undertones. At about the same time central Tibet was the scene of a strong revival of the rNying-ma-pa school, i.e. of the kind of Buddhism prevailing during the last decades of the old monarchy. After the destruction of the old monastic order and of its establishment by gLang-dar-ma⁴⁹, some of its members had taken refuge in Amdo, from where in the second half of the 10th century they staged a come-back to central Tibet. The date calculated by 'Brom-ston for the start of the rNying-ma-pa revival is 978. But it began in earnest only with the foundation of the first monasteries: rGyan-gong in gTsang (997) and Mo-ra-'gyel in dBus (1009). In the first quarter of the 11th century it

received a further impetus thanks to the patronage of some descendants of Yum-brtan, i.e. Khri-lde-mgon-btsan of dBus and Tsha-na Ye-shes-rgyal-mtshan of bSam-yas⁵⁰.

A translation activity was started at bSam-yas at the same time as in Guge. Tsha-na Ye-shes-rgyal-mtshan, also called *mnga'-bdag* Lha Ye-shes-rgyal-mtshan, worked as *lotsawa* and, in collaboration with the Indian master Kamalaguhya, translated the *Vajrahdayālaṃkāra*, as well as a consistent group of small texts, now included in the Tenjur⁵¹. The Yum-brtan line rivalled with the Guge kings in the religious and cultural field, starting from a different basis.

Outside Purang, other members of the 'Od-srungs branch followed the same trend. The Three sMad-kyi-lde, i.e. the cousins of Ye-shes-'od who ruled in the Lhartse region, sponsored the introduction of the New Tantras (*sngags gsar-ma*) based on Sanskrit texts in contrast with the Old Tantras (*sngags rnying-ma*) largely of local Tibetan origin. In order to restore Buddhism in their domains they addressed themselves to Lo-ston rDo-rje-dbang-phyug, one of the leaders of the rNying-ma-pa revival and the founder of the rGyan-gong monastery, who sent them two of his pupils. They started their religious work at the time when Rin-chen-bzang-po was approaching the age of 50, i.e. in or shortly before 1007. Much later the two teachers sent 'Brog-mi and sTag-lo gZhon-nu-brtson-'grus to study in India, and in due course 'Brog-mi introduced into Tibet the New Tantras (BA, 205).

The Purang kings had become suspicious of the increasing popularity of the Tantras not only in Central Tibet, but in their own territories as well. Actually, as the *Ngor Chronicle* pithily puts it, "taking the texts literally without knowing the theory of the Tantras, (the Buddhists) employed many erroneous practices for obtaining release and practising yoga" (NGCB, f. 126b). Thus the kings took steps to oppose Tantric practices in their more objectionable forms. At an unknown date Ye-she-'od issued an appeal against this undesirable trend, putting forward a strong plea for the need of following the Indian texts, since a knowledge of them was the main sign of orthodoxy⁵². Atiśa himself had to comply with the policy and the wishes of his hosts, at least to a certain extent. Still, a Tantric college (rGyud-bzhi sde) was (later?) established at Tholing in the building where he had resided (VS, f. 219a). More or less the same stand

was taken by the bKa'-gdams-pa school, founded by Atiśa's pupil 'Brom-ston and accepted and followed by the Guge kings.

Several years later strong evidence of the collaboration of the Guge kings with the bKa'-gdams-pa is offered by an interesting document. In the Water-Monkey year Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od issued from the palace of Purang a sort of edict to the lay and ecclesiastical devotees, emphasising the need of a strict observance of the monastic rules and condemning the rDzogs-chen doctrines as influenced by those of the heretics (Shaiva yogins?)⁵³.

To the same period belongs a dated item of information: "mNga'-bdag 'Od-lde-btsan respectfully invited to sTod the btsad-po Khri bKra-shis-lde-btsan. They met at the place of religious studies in sTod. Calculating the time [of this event, it works out to] A.D. 1057"⁵⁴

The name of the guest, who bore the ancient title *btsad-po*, lacks the decisive element before lde-btsan and is therefore impossible to identify. This is the only scrap of evidence we possess on the diplomatic relations between the Tibetan rulers of that period.

Those years mark the zenith of the kingdom, which for about one hundred years was the most brilliant centre of religious, literary and artistic movements in Tibet. The political centre continued to be Purang. Atiśa was invited to Purang, and Guge is conspicuously absent in his biography. Even the name Zhang-zhung appears only as the birth country of Rin-chen-bzang-po. On the other side, the few colophons in the Kanjur and Tenjur mentioning the name of the ruler and the place where the translation was made show that Tholing was almost always the focus of religious activity.

The crown upon the whole development was set by the religious conference (*chos-'khor*) convened in 1076 by 'Od-lde's son and successor rTse-lde (c. 1060–1080) together with his uncle Zhi-ba-'od. The élite of Tibetan scholars attended. No historical text gives a clue about the venue, but the second colophon of the translation of the *Pramānavārttikālaṃkāra* (T.5719) mentions a great gathering of Indian and Tibetan scholars at Tholing. We may conclude that the assembly met at the main religious centre of the kingdom, as was to be expected.

Royal patronage was continued by rTse-lde, who invited several scholars. One of them was the Kashmiri Pandit Jñānaśrī, who stayed at Tabo for more than three years⁵⁵. In 1075 the king financed the Indian voyage of

rNgog Lotsawa bLo-ltan-shes-rab (1059–1109).

We may as well mention here an event that should have shaken considerably the political equilibrium in the Purang-Guge region, but cannot be pinned down in time. According to the *Chronicle of Ladakh*, a king of that country bearing the purely Indian name Utpala, invaded Kulu and made that state a tributary vassal. "Then he subjugated [the country] from bLo-bo and Purang to the region of Bre-srang in the south [and to] Chu-la-me-'bar", besides other places to the west and to the north. All the local chiefs paid tribute and attended his court (LDGR, 35.25–8). bLo-bo or gLo-bo is Mustang in Nepal. Bre-srang cannot be identified. Chu-la-me-'bar is the Muktinath shrine, to the south of Mustang.

Tucci suggested that Utpala may have belonged to a group of Aryan-speaking clans that penetrated into the western Himalayas (1956: 109). It is a hopeless task even to make a guess about the date of Utpala's conquests. In the royal list of Ladakh he is the seventh ruler after dPal-'khor-btsan (905–923?). He is also the seventh ruler counting back from dNgos-grub-mgon (r. 1213). On a rough reckoning, Utpala might be placed half-way between those two dates, say about 1060. However, the early royal genealogy of Ladakh is utterly untrustworthy and Utpala's campaigns, which are unknown to all the other sources, remain (so to say) hanging in the air. Anyhow, we may feel certain that they had no lasting effects.

Almost all of our texts know of only one son of rTse-lde, the name being variously spelt as dBang-lde, 'Bar-lde, Bha-le. The issue has received new light from the two *lDe'u Chronicles*, which, however, do not wholly coincide. The list of rTse-lde's successors is twice interrupted by other matters, and names found in the first chronicle are absent in the second and vice-versa. Without going into details, we may propose the following working hypothesis. rTse-lde had three sons. One was dBang-lde (c. 1080–1100), who is mentioned with many laudatory epithets in the texts, but with the simple title *mi'i-dbang-po* at the end of the colophon of the *Pramānavārttikālaṃkāra*. He continued to support the Indian studies of rNgog Lotsawa⁵⁶. His brother was 'Od-'bar-lde, of whose name 'Bar-lde is a truncated form and Bhale a corruption. He built the 'Dzam-gling-rgyan-bkod-pa temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*) at Tholing. Another son of rTse-lde, perhaps the youngest, was 'Phyar-chen, who became a monk and was a co-founder of the fa-

mous gLang-skor shrine of Pha-dam-pa near Ding-ri (BA, 913).

The son of 'Od-'bar-Ide (DEU/1) or of dBang-Ide (DEU/2) was bSod-nams-Ide. The latter in his turn had three sons. The eldest bKra-shis-rtsegs was killed by the Gar-log. The second (no name given) acted as regent (*minga'-thang-skyong*), but he too was killed. The third brother 'Od-'bar-Ide stayed in Gar-log territory, possibly as a prisoner⁵⁷. This completely isolated body of information closes the account of the Purang kings in both DEU. They conclude the tale remarking that this was the senior line (*gcen-rgyud*), going back to the mythical king Bya-khri, alias sPu-de-gung-rgyal. Both texts are apparently unaware of, or chose to ignore, the developments following the Gar-log invasion, which may have happened about the middle of the 12th century.

The Rise of the Kingdom of Ya-tshe

Whether we admit or not the isolated information supplied by DEU, the fact is that a deep change took place in the western Himalayas during those years. It implied a break with the past, not merely formal, but real. The events that led to and characterised this transition are difficult to unravel, because of the large element of incompatibility in the sources. We find on one side the solid block of the Tibetan historians, whose lists of the West Tibetan kings present no essential variants. On the other side stands a single Sanskrit inscription, the *kirtistambha* (or *prasāsti*) of Dullu in western Nepal, dated 1357⁵⁸, which largely agrees with the Tibetan tradition for the names of the kings, but sharply diverges on the origins of the first and second dynasties of the new kingdom. In my opinion, the time has come to redress a balance hitherto heavily weighted in favour of the Tibetan tradition, and to give more attention to the *prasāsti*. The following pages present an attempt to build up, as far as possible, an acceptable reconstruction of that troubled period⁵⁹.

As said above, the Tibetan tradition at large knows nothing of the Gar-log catastrophe. None the less, it supplies some hints that seem indeed to point to a break in the history of the kingdom. The list of kings in Bu-ston and in the *Ngor Chronicle* stops with dBang-Ide. Most of the other historians replace at this point the usual cliché "his son was X" with another: "after him in succession, X", giving the royal names with no further re-

mark. This seems to indicate that we are no longer confronted with a genealogy, but with a mere list of connected or unconnected names.

According to all our later sources, the next king after dBang-Ide or 'Bar-Ide was bKra-shis-Ide, perhaps the same as the bKra-shis-rtsegs that was killed by the Gar-log. The name of the next ruler shows many variants: Bha-Ide, Bha-re, Bha-le; they appear to be clumsy attempts at giving a Tibetan garb to a foreign name. The following king has a purely Sanskrit name: Nāgadeva, sometimes Tibetanised as Nāga-Ide.

Most of the chronicles indicate at this point a sharp break in the historical sequence: "It is generally agreed that the *bisan-po* of Guge, Purang and Mang-yul (in this case = Mar-yul) lasted down to this king (i.e. Nāgadeva)"⁶⁰. Either as a result of the shock caused by war-like events or for other unknown reasons, the West Tibetan confederation headed by the *bisan-po* ceased to exist and each of its components went his own ways.

Here the Dullu inscription comes in. It deals with two different genealogies. The front face of the stele concerns the family which in the 14th century supplied the successor to the main dynasty that had become extinct. This successor was the father of King Prthivīmalla (r. 1349–1358) who caused the *prasāsti* to be engraved. The other genealogy starts abruptly in the last lines of the front side and occupies the whole of the back side. It begins with Nāgarāja, who is almost certainly identical with Nāgadeva of the Tibetan historians. The names of Nāgarāja's father and ancestors are not given. His original home was Khāri, which in my opinion is to be identified with [rGyal-di-jmkhar, a royal capital of Purang⁶¹. He extended his rule to Jāveśvara[-pradeśa], a general name of the Jumla region in Nepal, and founded a city called Señjā, which Tucci identified with modern Sija or Lamathada to the north-west of Jumla (Tucci 1956: 112–4). After Nāgarāja, Señjā became the capital of the kingdom and supplied the name by which it was designated in the local inscriptions.

One century later the *Nepalese Chronicle* and documents call the kingdom of Nāgarāja and of his successors by the name Khasiyā, and the Khāsa country in the Sapādalaḥṣa hills is mentioned in an inscription set up in 1278 by one of these kings at Bodhgayā. The Khāsa were apparently an Aryan tribe which entered western Nepal from Garhwal and/or Kamaon, two regions where some early kings of the dynasty exerted political and

military action⁶². In Tucci's opinion this was a part of a general restlessness caused by the arrival of clans from the foothills, another instance being that of Utpala. Whether Nāgarāja was actually a Khāsa leader, cannot be determined.

The almost unanimous Tibetan tradition tells us that Nāgadeva's successor bTsan-phyug-lde "went to Ya-tshe" or "was lord of Ya-tshe" or "went to Ya-tshe and ruled there". Ya-tshe was the Tibetan name of Señjā, and henceforward Nāgadeva's successors regularly appear in the Tibetan texts as kings of Ya-tshe⁶³. The Tibetans continued to recognise them as overlord of mNga'-ris in their quality as successors (if not descendants) of the ancient emperors. This fiction was maintained till the second half of the 14th century.

bTsan-phyug-lde may be identified either with Nāgarāja's son Cāpa or with his grandson Cāpilla, since the Dullu inscription shows one generation more than the Tibetan texts. After bTsan-phyug-lde or Cāpilla the royal lists of the chronicles and of the *prasāsti* coincide, the Tibetan ending *-lde* matching the Sanskrit *-calla*⁶⁴. After Aśokacalla/Aśog-lde (r. 1255–1278), to whom two Bodhgayā inscriptions are due, the onomastic pattern shifts to the pure Sanskrit ending *-malla*, transcribed as *rmal* or *smal* by the Tibetans. This change seems to indicate a growing Indianisation of the dynasty, which continued, however, to employ the old title *mnga'-'bdag* in their relations with central Tibet (KPGT, Ja, f. 149a).

Purang, Guge and Ya-tshe c. 1200–1400

After Nāgarāja the kings of Señjā/Ya-tshe apparently maintained some sort of suzerainty over Guge and Purang. But having their capital in a distant region with difficult routes of communication, their control over western Tibet soon became a matter of form rather than of substance. This process created a political vacuum which, as is the rule in such cases, came to be filled by the groups in actual power locally. These new states soon (how soon is not known) became independent from Ya-tshe. It is not clear whether the new rulers of Guge and Purang were connected in some way with the old line descended from sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon. At any rate, in the 14th century Bu-ston addressed the king of Zhang-zhung as a descendant of *lha bla-ma* Ye-shes-'od.

For the first half of the 13th century, some information can be gained from the *Guide to Khojarnath*⁶⁵ and

from the *Guide to the Holy Places of the Kailāsa* (Ti-se; written in 1896). With their help we can retrace a group of kings that reigned in Guge and Purang.

The first of these rulers was sTag-tsha Khri-'bar. In 1213 the great Kashmiri scholar Śākyaśrībhadra, usually known as Kha-che Pañ-chen, on his journey back home stopped for some time in Purang, where he acted as teacher to the *chos-kyi rgyal-po* sTag-tsha (YLJB, 179). Two years later (1215) Ghu-ya-sgang-pa, appointed as the first rector (*rdor-'dzin*) of the 'Bri-gung-pa hermitages in the Kailāsa-Manasarowar region, was protected and supported by three rulers. The first was *lha-chen* dNgos-grub-mgon of Mang-yul, meaning in this case Ladakh (LDGR, 36.9–12; Petech 1977: 19). The second was the Guge *chos-rgyal* Khri bKra-shis-lde-btsan, of whom we know that some years later he came to Khojarnath to protect the temple from the danger of the river⁶⁶. The third ruler was *rgyal-po bla-*[sic for *lha?*] *chen* sTag-tsha Khri-'bar together with his son gNam-mgon-lde (Ti-se, 34, f. 28a). The *Guide to Khojarnath*, too, knows sTag-tsha Khri-'bar and his sons Khri bKra-shis dNgos-grub-mgon and gNam-mgon-lde. Shortly after we find a Purang *rgyal-po* Jo-bo A-tig(-sman) donating Khojarnath and other temples to the 'Bri-gung-pa order⁶⁷. This happened probably in 1219, when the 'Bri-gung abbot dBon Shes-rab-'byung-gnas (1187–1241) on the occasion of his pilgrimage to the Kailāsa imparted initiation upon *mnga'-'bdag* A-dig, as well as upon the king of Ya-tshe⁶⁸. A-tig was a son of sTag-tsha Khri-'bar, and the two were mentioned together a few years later (Ti-se, 37, f. 31a). The non-Tibetan name A-tig/A-dig seems to belong to the Zhang-zhung language⁶⁹; possibly it was the vernacular name of the ruler officially known as gNam-mgon-lde.

About 1240–1250 we find a Guge *rgyal-po* Khri bKra-shis-dbang-phyug and his son dPal-mgon-lde donating a cave near dKar-sdum (Kardam) in Purang to the second rector (*rdor-'dzin*) Nyi-ma-gung-pa. About 1260 (?) the Guge *rgyal-po* Khri Grags-pa-lde and his sister (*lha-lcam*) bSam-grub-rgyal-mo invited the rector to Purang and granted to the 'Bri-gung-pa order the estates of Upper and Lower Thang-chung (Ti-se, 38, 58, ff. 31b, 54b). These donations show that in that period the Guge kings wielded authority in Purang.

The place where the royal couple received the 'Bri-gung-pa rector was called rGyal-di-mkhar in Purang. This fortress was the political centre of Purang from the

13th to the 15th century. Its location remains obscure⁷⁰.

In the second quarter of the 13th century, the rulers of Mang-yul Gung-thang, descended from bKra-shis-rtsegs-pa-dpal's eldest son Lha-lde, entered the scene. They became a serious rival to Ya-tshe in the supremacy over Guge and Purang. In the war that broke out in c. 1235 the king mGon-po-lde was defeated by a Ya-tshe general, fled to sKyid-grong and was killed there. As a result, Ya-tshe remained paramount in Purang for some years. Then Mang-yul, bolstered up by matrimonial alliances with the 'Khon ruling family of Sa-skya, recovered strength. With Sa-skya armed support king bTsun-pa-lde thoroughly defeated the Ya-tshe army (c. 1252)⁷¹.

At this moment a foreign power made its presence felt in the Himalayas. During the years 1268–1368 central Tibet, including Lower (sMad) mNga'-ris, was governed by the Yüan (Mongol) dynasty of China in partnership with the Sa-skya-pa sect. Two military commanders (Chin. *tu yüan-shuai*) were stationed in mNga'-ris skor-gsum. Guge and Purang were not covered by the Mongol census of 1268, but were included in the census ledgers after the general revision carried out in 1287. We are informed that 767 out of the several thousands of *hor-dud* (tax-paying households as census and taxation units) in mNga'-ris "were subjects of the *mnga'-bdag* descended from the ancient kings" (Petech 1990: 53). This *mnga'-bdag* was apparently the ruler of Mang-yul Gung-thang. King 'Bum-lde-mgon's (b. 1253, d. 1280) close connection with Sa-skya brought recognition and support by the Mongols. He was overlord of Guge and Purang, where he built the fort of dKar-dum sNam-gyi-khyung-rdzong (KT 1748, 108). The efficient imperial mail service covered also that part of his dominions, where the "lesser postal relay" (*'jam-chung*) of Ma-pang, i.e. of the Manasarowar region, was staffed by the people of Northern and Southern Guge (Petech 1990: 65). 'Bum-lde-mgon's successor Khri-lde-'bum travelled to the Mongol capital, where in 1307 he obtained official recognition as commander (*tu yüan-shuai*) and lord of the 13 districts (*tsho*) of mNga'-ris. His appointment made him the local representative of the imperial government (KT 1748, 113; Jackson 1976/77: 45).

Mongol influence may have had something to do with the ascendancy of the 'Tshal-pa sect in Purang. That school and its fief (*khri-skor*) in the Lhasa region had been placed in 1251 under the protection of (in practice, granted as appanage to) Prince Qubilai. After he as-

cended the imperial throne, he and his successors were always well disposed toward the 'Tshal-pa (Petech 1990: 11, 87, 95). The history of that school included in the *Hu-lan Deb-ther* informs us that Ru-thog-pa Sangs-rgyas-'od, living in the early 13th century, dwelt in Mi-la-ras-pa's rDzong-drug and near the Kailāsa⁷². His pupil rTogs-ldan Dar-ma-bsod-nams definitely shifted his residence and activity to Men-zhang⁷³, Purang, Dol-po and gLo-bo. 'Tshal-pa influence reached a climax when rTogs-ldan g. Yung-sa-ba was appointed chaplain (*bla-mchod*) to the king of Purang and resided at his court. He was succeeded in that dignity by Lama Tshul-dar-ba, who in his turn was followed by Lama Shes-rab-'phel. The latter was granted by the king of Purang the "gSer-gyi gtsug-lag-khang founded by Rin-chen-bzang-po" (probably Tholing)⁷⁴. Another donation concerned the bZhi-sde gtsug-lag-khang, perhaps the Main Temple in the royal residence rGyal-di-mkhar. His successor Sangs-rgyas-'od too was a chaplain to the king of Purang. He visited also Guge, where he acted for a time as teacher of that king. Then he returned to Purang where, as well as in Men-zhang, he displayed an intense religious activity (HD, 147–8; cf. Yamaguchi 1992: 61–2). For this part of our story we have no dates, nor even a chronological parallel. But since Sangs-rgyas-'od was active at the time of the compilation of the *Hu-lan Deb-ther* (1346), we may place the series of the 'Tshal-pa chaplains of Purang in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. If the gSer-gyi gtsug-lag-khang was really Tholing, this would imply a paramountcy of the kings of Purang over Guge.

We do not know exactly who the rulers were who patronised the 'Tshal-pa, but we can hazard a guess. The *Guide to Khojarnath* contains a fragmentary genealogy of kings who apparently ruled over Purang. It starts with sTag-tsha Khri-'bar, already known to us, and continues with his two sons Khri bKra-shis dNgos-grub-mgon and gNam-mgon-lde. The son of the latter was Khri bKra-shis rGyal-po-lde and then in succession Khri bKra-shis sTobs-ldan-lde, the royal monk (*lha-btsun*) rDo-rje-seng-ge and Khri bKra-shis bSod-nams-lde⁷⁵. The onomastic pattern is the same as for the kings of the 11th century and this, coupled with the approximate coincidence of time, justifies us in supposing that these shadowy rulers were the patrons of the 'Tshal-pa masters.

The name of the last king leads us back to Ya-tshe. In the late thirties of the 14th century the Ya-tshe/Señjā dy-

nasty descended from Nāgarāja had died out and a new ruler was chosen and enthroned. According to the Tibetan chronicles his name was bSod-nams-lde, king of Purang⁷⁶, apparently identical with the ruler mentioned in the *Guide to Khojarnath*. Upon his ascending the throne of Señjā he translated his name as Puṇyamalla (*bsod-nams = puṇya*), and this is the name by which he is known to the Dullu inscription and to the *Nepalese Chronicle*. This presents a serious genealogical problem, with which we shall deal elsewhere (see Addendum B).

The Tibetan histories are supported by an independent piece of evidence. The great scholar Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub sent a letter, dated 3rd July 1339, to “the Great King protecting the Law, Great Divine Ruler” bSod-nams-lde, who had been elected king of western Tibet⁷⁷. No place of residence is mentioned. Apparently he moved to Ya-tshe, still maintaining his rule over his home country.

With this event, Purang finally came to an end as an independent state. Afterwards no king of Purang appears in the texts, but only governors or local feudatories (*sde-pa*). The country remained united with Ya-tshe till the end of the 14th century.

As to Guge, no information is forthcoming except for the visit of 'Tshal-pa Sangs-rgyas-'od. We may only add that Bu-ston addressed a letter dated 18th September 1339, to an unnamed king of Zhang-zhung Guge, begging him to protect religion following the example set by *lha bla-ma* Ye-shes-'od and Rin-chen-bzang-po (Bu-ston's *Collected Works*, La, f. 96a-b). This date is only a couple of months later than the congratulations offered to bSod-nams-lde. Generally speaking, the history of Guge in the second half of the 14th century is a total blank.

The main event of that period was the eclipse of Mongol-Sa-skya power. Already in 1324 Sa-skya had been seriously weakened by the division of the abbatial family and estate into four branches (*pho-brang*). It was further undermined by the steady rise of the Phag-mo-gru-pa leader Byang-chub-rgyal-mtshan, while the Mongol dynasty of China sank to its inglorious end. 'Tshal-pa political power in the Lhasa region was rubbed out by Byang-chub-rgyal-mtshan in 1350⁷⁸ and this may have contributed to the total extinction of 'Tshal-pa influence in Purang.

For some years Ya-tshe seems to have been the paramount power in the Himalayas. Puṇyamalla's son Pṛthivimalla, the ruler praised in the Dullu *prasaṣti*, was

a generous patron of Buddhism in general and of the Sa-skya school in particular. In 1350 he sent an embassy to Sa-skya and Lhasa, carrying the means for a sumptuous redecoration of the Jo-khang. He even tried to mediate in the interecine strife going on in central Tibet⁷⁹. He is the last king of Ya-tshe included in the royal lists of the Tibetan chronicles.

His successors Sūryamalla (r. 1367) and Abhayamalla (r. 1376–1391) are known only from their inscriptions, mostly written in the local vernacular, only the introductions being couched in flowery Sanskrit⁸⁰. With Abhayamalla the kingdom disintegrated, and after him most of its remnants passed under the power of Hindu chiefs, who used a different onomastic pattern and shifted the capital from Señjā to Jumla. The first of them was Balirāja (r. 1398–1406). According to a later source he was a minister of local (Mon) origin, who usurped the throne (KT 1745, 75). Almost certainly, he was not a Buddhist. After this Ya-tshe, now called Jumla, disappeared forever from the politics of the Himalayas. The principality lasted till 1788, when it was absorbed by the Gorkha kingdom of Nepal.

The role played by the Khāsa kingdom of Señjā/Ya-tshe in Himalayan history deserves some comment. Even if we do not accept the tale of the overthrow of the old Purang kingdom by the Gar-log, it is clear that Ya-tshe represented a new political structure built on a new basis. The ruler's political activity was directed, as far as we can see, mainly toward Nepal. This is not contradicted by the clashes with Mang-yul Gung-thang, by occasional patronage to shrines at Lhasa and Sa-skya (but also Bodhgayā) and by the fiction by which the Ya-tshe dynasty was considered by the Tibetans as a heir of the old monarchy. The epigraphy of the dynasty is Indian, the era employed in the inscription is Indian, the environment in which it rose and flourished was mainly Indian. By right, its history belongs not to Tibet, but to that of the various states of mixed but mainly Indian civilisation scattered on the southern slopes of the Himalaya. Of course Ya-tshe may have played a role in the increase of Nepalese influence on Tibetan art through the work of the artisans (*lha-bzo-pa*) sent by the kings to decorate, with images and paintings, the Lhasa Jo-khang and perhaps some buildings at Sa-skya.

The Kingdom of Guge c. 1400–1630

The years around 1400 saw a radical change in the po-

litical scene of the region. First there was a temporary revival of the power of Mang-yul Gung-thang under King bSod-nams-lde (b. 1372, d. 1404). He recovered Purang, apparently wresting it from Ya-tshe domination, possibly profiting from the crisis which shook the latter country when Bālrāja usurped the throne.

But the same fate, political eclipse, befell the conqueror almost at once. This was caused primarily by bSod-nams-lde himself, who granted gLo-bo, present-day Mustang, together with Purang as fief to Chos-skyong-'bum, a younger brother of the general of Men-zhang origin who had conquered Purang (KT 1748, 119). Under Chos-skyong-'bum's son A-mc-dpal the new principality gained independence. He maintained his grasp on Purang and consolidated it by appointing and removing at will the commanders of dKar-dum fort, then as later the strategic key to that region (Jackson 1978: 216).

Gung-thang was unable to react. After bSod-nams-lde's death in 1404 the throne was usurped by his widow, the Guge princess Chos-rgyal-mo, who ruled the kingdom as queen in her own right (*mnga'-'bdag chen-mo*) till 1419, when at last the rightful heir, her stepson Khri Lha-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was able to ascend the throne (KT 1748, 121–2). This troubled situation inhibited any attempt at re-establishing suzerainty over gLo-bo; and Mang-yul Gung-thang vanished altogether from the political horizon of Guge.

The great religious event of that period was the penetration of the new dGe-lugs-pa school founded by Tsong-kha-pa. The reform was introduced into Guge by Chos-rje Ngag-dbang-grags-pa, a native of mNga'-ris and a pupil of Tsong-kha-pa, who came back from Central Tibet and settled at first at Old (*sa-rnying*) Dung-dkar⁶¹. His religious activity there was noticed by three brothers belonging to the Guge royal house, called bKra-shis-lde, Khri rNam-rgyal-'od and Śākya-'od. The last one was (or became) certainly a monk, because he appears as abbot of Mang-nang. The three brothers employed Ngag-dbang-grags-pa for exorcising the female demon bKra-pa dPon-mo, whom neither the Sa-skyapa nor the 'Bri-gung-pa had been able to subdue. He accomplished the task, and then the king (or his successor; no name is given) accepted the new school and permitted its propagation. There was no opposition, as even a Sa-skyapa scholar and incarnate (*dge-bshes sprul-sku*), then staying at the Guge court, encouraged the change. Ngag-dbang-grags-pa's success was quick and

complete and the dynasty became a convinced supporter of the dGe-lugs-pa order. Ngag-dbang-grags-pa was appointed abbot of Tholing and in due course succeeded Śākya-'od as abbot of Mang-nang⁶². He founded "New Tholing" (*bKa'-'gdams gsar-rnying-gi chos-'hyung*, f. 98a), meaning perhaps a large-scale reconstruction of that monastic complex.

The king who gave the decisive impetus to the diffusion of the new school in Guge can be identified with Khri Nam-mkha'-dbang-po (or: -dbang-phyug) Phun-tshogs-lde dpal-bzang-po; this cumbersome name is variously shortened in the texts. He was a less shadowy figure than his predecessors. We know that he entertained close relations with Tsong-kha-pa's pupils and spiritual descendants in Central Tibet. He asked from rGyal-tshab Dar-ma-rin-chen (1364–1432) a commentary on the *Rājaparīkathā-ratnamālā* (Dar-ma-rin-chen's *Collected Works*, Ka/8). He sent an invitation to mKhas-grub-rje (1385–1438), receiving a courteous but negative answer (mKhas-grub-rje's *Collected Works*, Ta, ff. 86a–87b). mKhas-grub-rje in his turn exchanged letters with the queen Khri-lcam-rgyal-mo, who obtained from him a short hymn in praise of Cakrasaṃvara. She went to sNar-thang, where she received initiation⁶³. The king, together with Khri rNam-rgyal (probably identical with Khri rNam-rgyal-'od mentioned above), established for Ngag-dbang-grags-pa the bKra-shis-chos-gling monastery at Dung-dkar⁶⁴.

An undertaking of far-reaching consequences was the foundation of the Tsaparang temples. In the time of King Khri Nam-mkha'-dbang-phyug Phun-tshogs-lde an otherwise unknown master called Ha-se 'Phags-pa Yeshe-brtson-'grus (apparently a dGe-lugs-pa) built at Tsaparang the temples of Bre-lan and bLo-stangs, also called bKra-shis-dar-rgyas. They were intended to serve as summer and winter monastic residence respectively, but were considered as a single establishment⁶⁵. Probably at the same time, or slightly earlier, the construction of the great Tsaparang palace was started, which became (perhaps not at once) the royal residence⁶⁶.

Ngag-dbang-grags-pa was appointed concurrently abbot of bLo-stangs, thus completing his and the dGe-lugs-pa clergy's control over the main monasteries of the country. As everywhere in Tibet, the old bKa'-'gdams-pa foundations in Guge accepted the reform without opposition. The chronology of these developments cannot be ascertained exactly, but may be placed in the twen-

ties of the 15th century. The terminus ante quem are the contacts of the king with Dar-ma-rin-chen, who died in 1432.

Religious changes in Purang followed a quite different path. In 1436 Kun-dga'-bzang-po (1382–1456), the founder of the Ngor monastery and of the Ngor-pa subsect of the Sa-skyapa, visited for the second time gLo-bo, where he was received with great honours. On this occasion Nam[-mkha']-rtse[-mo], the official in charge (*drug*) of bZhi-sde, after having consulted with the Guge *rgyal-po* Khri Nam-mkha'-i-dbang-po, sent the Guge mKhan-chen Chos-kyi-seng-ge to invite the Ngor master to Purang (not to Guge). He accepted the invitation and, accompanied by an escort of one hundred men, travelled to rGyal-de'u (i.e. rGyal-di-mkhar), where he stayed for three months. He presented large offerings to the famous Jo-bo images at Khojarnath and lectured and granted initiations at rGyal-de'u and in the Nya-rtse-rig and bZhi-sde monasteries (*dgon-pa*) (NGNT, f. 38; SNLG, ff. 7b and 10a). Guge was apparently excluded, except for the courteous gesture to the king and clergy of that country.

The political background of the Ngor-pa's activities is clear. Purang was a dependence of gLo-bo and the official in charge (*drug*) Nam-mkha'-rtse-mo was apparently the local representative, or governor, for the gLo-bo ruler. The control over Purang by A-me-dpal's son and successor A-me-bzang-po was so complete that, besides carrying out restorations at Khojarnath, he was able to take that shrine away from the 'Bri-gung-pa and to grant it to the Ngor-pa, to whom it still belongs⁸⁷. We may add that in 1449 Kun-dga'-bzang-po received a gift of 300 gold ounces from mNga'-ris and that towards the end of his life he again passed some time at Khojarnath (NGNT, f. 40b).

Guge contributed some scholars to the Ngor-pa order. Foremost among them was the Guge Paṅ-chen Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, who became the teacher of the famous gLo-bo mKhan-chen bSod-nams-lhun-grub (1456–1532) (NGCB, f. 171a; NGNT, ff. 35a and 41b; SNLG, f. 7a). The Guge king Khri Nam-mkha'-dbang-po himself, renounced the throne and was ordained as a monk; he "renovated the great monastery"⁸⁸.

A rather serious blow to peace and welfare in the country was dealt by an invasion of the Hor. In the forties of the 15th century, Hor armed parties repeatedly entered Mang-yul and robbed the officials of the gold-

fields in Northern g.Yas-ru and the *shing-po* (timber-carriers?) of the northern pastures of Byang⁸⁹. It was feared that they could penetrate central Tibet as well. The danger was averted by the famous saint and bridge-builder Thang-ston-rgyal-po (1385–1464), who restored the Sa'i-ma-rtse *mchod-rtse* built many centuries before by Padmasambhava "on the border between Hor and Tibet". This was done during his stay at Ngam-rings of Northern La-stod in 1448 (THST, ff. 130a-b, 136a–140a). The raids were apparently carried out by Turk marauders from Central Asia (sTod Hor). Guge and Purang too were involved, as the *Guide to Khojarnath* informs us that the Hor looted that shrine (Tucci 1956: 62–3).

We may perhaps connect these raids from Central Asia with an entry in the *Chronicle of Kashmir*. It tells us that King Zain ul-Abidin (1420–1470), "in [temporary] occupation of the Bhauṭṭa-bhūmi, gave armed protection to people in Goggadeśa. In Śayādeśa the formidable command of the king saved from the Yavana (Muslims) a golden image of the Buddha"⁹⁰. Ninety years ago A.H. Francke identified Goggadeśa with Guge. But in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī Chronicle*, Bhauṭṭa or Bhoṭa (Bod, Tibet) is the regular name for Ladakh, and Śayā is certainly Shel (Sheh), the old capital of Upper Ladakh. As the scene is limited to the Ladakhi area, I would suggest an identification of Gogga with the 'Gog goldfields in or near Ruthog, mentioned twice in the *Ladakhi Chronicle* (LDGR, 35.15–16). The sequel of events may be reconstructed on the following lines: Zain ul-Abidin entered Ladakh, conquered Sheh and pursued the Central Asian raiders, from whose hands he recovered a golden Buddhist image. He also marched to the 'Gog goldfields in order to protect them from the Hor. This would imply a sort of Himalayan solidarity to defend the goldfields against intruders from the north.

However that may be, that period saw the end of the dominance of gLo-bo over Purang, which in the second half of the 15th century came again under Guge overlordship.

Another serious disturbance is adumbrated in the vague report of an invasion by bLo-gros-mchog-lDan, king of Upper Ladakh (c. 1435–1460). He brought back from mNga'-ris skor-gsum a set of valuable coats of mail, swords, knives, turquoises, saddles, horses, etc. (LDGR, 37.3–8). Whether Guge was affected by this royal brigandage is unknown.

In 1472 a serious conflict broke out between Guge and Southern La-stod, so that the teaching in the gLo-bo monasteries had to be suspended for three years. In the second year of the war a battle was fought (SNLG, f. 23a-b). But we know nothing of the motives and of the outcome of the war.

Equally unknown is the name(s) of Khri Nam-mkha'-dbang-po's successor(s), under whose rule the events sketched above occurred. The fog in the genealogical and chronological picture lifts only with bLo-bzang-rab-brtan, son of the *chos-rgyal* Buddha. This king, a patron of the dGe-lugs-pa community and a convinced follower of Ngag-dbang-grags-pa's tradition, was a contemporary of the 'Bri-gung abbot Kun-dga'-rin-chen (1475–1527), of the gLo-bo ruler Tshangs-pa bKra-shis-mgon (d. 1489) and of the latter's younger brother, the gLo-bo mKhan-chen bSod-nams-lhun-grub (1456–1532)⁹¹. He was probably also the unnamed king of Guge to whom the Second Dalai Lama dGe-'dun-rgya-mtsho (1475–1542), then in his tenth year (1483/4), wrote a letter (Second Dalai Lama's *Collected Works*, Rī, ff. 20b–21a). These elements allow us to place his reign in the last years of the 15th century. His wife Don-grub-ma founded the Red Temple (mChod-khang dmar-po) at Tsaparang, and had it sumptuously decorated⁹². In those times the governor (*sde-pa*) Kun[-dga']-bsam[-grub] governed Purang on behalf of Guge (Ti-se, 39, f. 33a).

bLo-bzang-brtan's son 'Phags-pa-lha, the recipient of two letters from the Second Dalai Lama⁹³, was probably on the throne when the "Mad Saint" gTsang-smyon Heruka (1452–1507) performed his third and last pilgrimage to the Kailāsa (1496). He stayed for a short while at dKar-dum in Purang before proceeding to the holy mountain. During his visit a war was going on between the gLo-bo king bDe-legs-rgya-mtsho and the Purang monk-official (*dpon-btsun*) sNyan-grags, who acknowledged the suzerainty of Guge. rGyal-ti-rdzong (the same as rGyal-di-mkhar), held by the Purang forces, withstood a long siege. The Saint tried to mediate, without success at first, whereupon he retired to rGyal-ti. Although a sharp engagement was won by the Pu-rang-pa, who killed many gLo-bo soldiers, eventually they were compelled to yield. A treaty was concluded, by which the taxes and compulsory service ('*u-lag*) due to Guge were transferred to gLo-bo (TSSM, ff. 90a–93b). As far as we know, this agreement soon became obsolete and Purang returned to Guge.

The next king was Śākya-rin-chen. His elder brother Śākya-'od was ordained and headed the dGe-lugs-pa clergy as *rje-btsun*. In a fresco at Tholing he is even given the title of *thams-cad mkhyen-pa* (Omniscient). Śākya-rin-chen may be identified with the junior lord (*bdag-po sku gzhon-pa*) who exchanged letters with the Second Dalai Lama (Second Dalai Lama's *Collected Works*, Rī, ff. 23a-b; cf. Yamaguchi 1992: 73, note 10). He was possibly ruling in Guge when western Tibet became the target of a Muslim invasion directed toward Lhasa itself. Its leader was the Kashgar prince Mirza Haidar Dughlāt, who had invaded and occupied Ladakh. He started from Leh in July 1533, following the trade route (*ra-zam*) to the Manasarowar lake. Then he turned southward and on August 22nd he reached Kārdum (dKar-dung) in Purang. The local fort resisted all assaults and a rescue force of 3,000 infantry, sent perhaps by the Nepalese kings, was thrown back only with difficulty. Mirza Haidar's brother being among the slain.

The conqueror left Purang and continued his march westward. But the cold and the high altitude wrought havoc with his horses, and eventually he was left with only 90 mounted retainers. So he had to turn back when he had reached a place at only eight days' distance from Ursang (dBus-gTsang, i.e. Lhasa). On October 27th he rejoined the main body of his army and on December 17th he was back to a place called Tāmlik, perhaps somewhere in the region of modern Gartok, where he had left his baggage and his loot. There he was visited by an embassy from Guge, who promised to pay tribute. To arrange the details, he travelled lightly attended to the city of Guge, a two days' march from Tāmlik. This can hardly have been Tsaparang; more probably, it was a locality on the border of Guge, perhaps Dung-dkar. He stayed there for three days, settled the amount of the tribute (3,000 *mitkal* of gold) and then returned to Tāmlik, only to find that the bulk of his army had dispersed. He reached Leh with only a handful of followers. He lingered on in Ladakh for two years more and eventually decamped for Kashmir (Elias 1895: 451–7). We may be certain that the promised tribute was never paid.

'Jig-rten-dbang-phyug, son of Śākya-rin-chen, is a less shadowy figure, and the information available is sufficient for tracing an approximate chronology. Together with his younger brothers 'Jam-dbyangs-pa and Phyag-rdor he built the White Temple and the Vajra-

bhairava shrine at Tsaparang⁹⁴. Relations with the head of the dGe-lugs-pa school grew more intimate. In 1537 the king obtained from the Second Dalai Lama a short commentary on the *Śūnyatā-saptati* (Second Dalai Lama's *Collected Works*, Ra. ff. 1–28). A few years later (1540) he financed a large-scale enterprise: together with his minister Ngag-dbang-mam-rgyal he sent to the Dalai Lama the substantial means required for the creation of a large college at the mouth of the 'On valley in dBus. It was fittingly called mNga'-ris grwa-tshang and remained a flourishing centre of dGe-lugs-pa studies down to our time⁹⁵. During those years an outstanding religious personality started his career in Guge. This was Śānti-pa bLo-gros-rgyal-mtshan, born at Dung-dkar and a nephew of *rgyal-sras* Maitri-pa who had founded the Shangs-rtse monastery. After having undergone his training in central Tibet, some time before 1542, he returned to Guge⁹⁶. He was then a simple ascetic (*bya-bral*), but during the following years he rose to become the spiritual adviser of the king and to hold the abbatial chairs of Tholing, bLo-stangs and Shangs-rtse. He built the bKra-shis-lhun-po monastery at mDa'-pa-sa (Dawadzung)⁹⁷. In 1546 King 'Jig-rten-dbang-phyug, followed by some envoys of Śānti-pa, travelled to Drepung ('Bras-spungs), where he paid his respects to the child Third Dalai Lama (DL3, f. 28b). Some years later he abdicated, and in 1555 he again visited the Third Dalai Lama. This time he was accompanied by Śānti-pa himself, who in that period was elected as the seventh abbot of the great monastery of Tashilhunpo (bKra-shis-lhun-po) in gTsang, with the title of Paṅ-chen (DL3, f. 40a-b).

'Jig-rten-dbang-phyug's patronage of the dGe-lugs-pa school did not prevent him from protecting the old, now somewhat decayed 'Bri-gung-pa hermitages at the Kailāsa. The king and his Purang governor (*sde-pa*) bSod-nams-rab-brtan helped the *rdor-'dzin* to restore various buildings; also some estates were recovered (Tise, 39, f. 33a).

A matrimonial alliance was concluded with the decaying kingdom of Mang-yul Gung-thang. A Guge princess called dKon-mchog-bzang-mo, clearly a kinswoman of 'Jig-rten-dbang-phyug, married the Gung-thang ruler Kun-dga'-mnam-rgyal-lde. After the death of her husband she became the wife of his nephew Khri bKra-shis-dpal-'bar. She was killed in 1555⁹⁸.

The reign of 'Jig-rten-dbang-phyug appears to mark the zenith in the history of Guge. The economy of the

kingdom, not damaged by the meteoric passage of Mirza Haidar, was apparently flourishing, as revealed by the large means supplied for the construction of the mNga'-ris grwa-tshang college. The main items of income were presumably wool goods, then as later the main staple of the country, and the goldfields in the desert wastes north of the Kailāsa, in the region of modern Thok Jalung, the main centre of gold digging during the 19th century⁹⁹.

The next king Ngag-gi-dbang-phyug is a mere name for us. Probably his reign saw another raid from Guge's western neighbour. The Ladakhi king bKra-shis-mam-rgyal (c. 1555–1575) is said to have "conquered everything from Purig to Gro-shod, bringing home enormous herds of horses" (LDGR, 37.23–24). Gro-shod is the district of the upper Tsangpo, from the Mar-yum pass to the junction of the Tsa-chu. Once more this information is too vague to permit us to understand how far (if at all) Guge was affected by this invasion, which looks like a large-scale looting raid.

The younger brother of the king, Shes-rab-'od-zer, held the abbatial chairs of the most important monasteries in Guge, viz. bLo-stangs, Bye-dkar, rNam-rgyal-rtse (at Dung-dkar), Mang-nang, Do-shang, Shang-rtse¹⁰⁰.

Then Nam-mkha'-dbang-phyug ascended the throne. His younger brother bLo-bzang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-'od endowed the side-chapels of Bre-Idan containing the mandala of seventeen deities¹⁰¹. He held the abbotship of Tholing, bLo-stangs and bKra-shis-lhun-po at mDa'-pa-sa (Dawadzung). This general picture did not change until the end of the kingdom. The younger brother of the king, usually styled *lha-btsun*, controlled the dGe-lugs-pa clergy by means of the abbotship of all the monasteries of some importance. This arrangement was made necessary by the wealth and influence of the monastic communities.

This period saw another, much more serious invasion from Ladakh. King Tshe-dbang-rnam-rgyal (c. 1575–1595) claims to have conquered, while still a young man, all the country as far east as Ngam-ring (the capital of Northern La-stod), including gLo-bo, Purang, Guge, etc., besides Jumla in western Nepal and Nyung-ti (Kulu). He carried away as hostages all the rulers of those regions and placed his representatives in their castles, "thus enlarging the territory of Mar-yul". Guge had to pay an annual tribute of 300 ounces of gold, some silver, 100 three-year-old sheep, one charger, ten tanned skinbags. This was intended as a permanent imposition,

by which Guge became a tributary of Ladakh (LDGR, 38.8–11). It had no lasting effects, however, because of the disaster suffered by Ladakh during the following reign at the hands of the Balti chief Ali Mir¹⁰². Still, the humiliation inflicted on Guge portended the end of its independence in a not distant future. Regretfully, we have no means to ascertain the name of the king of Guge who had to accept such a subordinate status, nor the date of the event.

Khri Nam-mkha'-dbang-phyug was succeeded by his son Khri Nyi-ma-dbang-phyug¹⁰³, followed in his turn by Khri Grags-pa'i-dbang-phyug. Another son was the *lha-btsun* bLo-bzang Ye-shes-'od, who as usual became the head of the clergy.

The next king was Khri rNam-rgyal-grags-pa-bzang-po, who together with his uncle the *lha-btsun* renovated the bLo-stangs temple at Tsaparang. Nephew and uncle sent an invitation to the First Paṅ-chen bLo-bzang-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1570–1662). He arrived at Tholing on July 7th, 1618, and was received with great honours by the *jo-bo bdag-po*, as was the royal title in that period. Accompanied by the king, his uncle and his brother, the Paṅ-chen visited also Mu-dkar (i.e. Do-shang), Mang-nang, mDa'-pa bKra-shis-lhun-po and Shang-rtse. The *lha-btsun*, whom the Paṅ-chen called by the title *zhabs-drung chos-rje*, was recognised as the spiritual head (*bstan-pa'i bdag-po*) of the kingdom. This was simply the recognition of a position he already held, as abbot of Tholing, bLo-stangs, rNam-rgyal-rtse, Do-shang, mDa'-pa bKra-shis-lhun-po, Shang-rtse. On October 2nd the highly revered churchman left Guge, performed the pilgrimage around the Kailāsa and then returned to Tashilhunpo. This visit by the second highest head of the dGe-lugs-pa school was the last moment of glory and prestige for the decaying kingdom (PC1, ff. 63b–65a; cf. VS, f. 220b).

The royal host of the Paṅ-chen was succeeded by Khri bKra-shis Grags-pa-lde¹⁰⁴, who was already on the throne in 1622. His grand-uncle the *lha-btsun* continued to be the strong man behind the scene till his death in 1626, although his official position as head of the clergy was formally transferred to the brother of the ruling king.

During his reign the Jesuit Antonio de Andrade (1580–1634) established a mission of his order at Tsaparang (1624). It prospered for a few years under the benevolent protection of the king and in spite of the hostility of both *lha-btsun*. From the letters and rela-

tions of the Jesuit Fathers we obtain a lively, although biased picture of the Guge kingdom shortly before its extinction. Their account of the local economy and commerce is noteworthy. An annual caravan from central Tibet brought to Tsaparang silk, chinaware, and tea procured from China. This institution survived all the subsequent political changes¹⁰⁵.

By then the curtain was lifting for the last act of the tragedy. The main actor was the greatest of the Ladakhi kings, Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal (1610 or 1616–1642). The details of his conquest of Guge are supplied by a letter of Father de Andrade. As his queen had lost her reason during her confinement, the Guge king contracted a fresh marriage with the sister of the Ladakhi ruler. The wedding ceremony was performed by proxy, but when the new queen, on her way to her husband, was at a two-days' distance from Tsaparang, the king suddenly forbade her to proceed and sent her back to Ladakh. Of course this act was considered an intolerable insult by Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal, who at once declared war. The conflict continued desultorily for a long time, rendering impossible the tilling of the fields and the exploitation of the gold mines. A revolt by three feudatory chiefs made the situation even worse.

The Tibetan texts tell us a slightly different story. The Ladakh-Guge conflict was already going on in 1622, when it was interrupted by a truce mediated by Murdzing, the abbot of the 'Brug-pa monastery of sTag-sna in Ladakh. The truce did not last for long, partly because of the marauding activities of the 'Brug-pa monks of the Manasarowar-Kailāsa hermitages. The economic situation grew more and more difficult, and in 1630, while the king was seriously ill, some feudatories, headed by the chief of Chumurti, rose in revolt, called in the king of Ladakh and offered him the crown of Guge. Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal laid siege to Tsaparang. The chief lama (i.e. the *lha-btsun*) advised the king (*jo-bo bdag-po*) to surrender under the condition of keeping his kingdom as a tributary state. The king followed this advice, but the pledges given were treacherously broken and the king, his son and his brother were taken prisoners and carried off to Leh. A part of the garrison of Tsaparang, which still offered resistance, was granted free departure for central Tibet. The royal family was later allowed to migrate to Lhasa, where the last male descendant of the Guge dynasty died in 1745. With the deaths of his two daughters the family died out¹⁰⁶.

Guge and Purang down to the Present Times

The rest of the story of the twin countries Guge and Purang is purely provincial and offers but scanty interest. The new masters, who were followers of the 'Brug-pa sect, showed themselves coldly indifferent (to say the least) toward the dGe-lugs-pa clergy. They were also definitely hostile to the Jesuit mission, and the journey of Father Francisco de Azevedo to Leh (1631) failed completely to obtain better conditions. In 1635 the mission had to be withdrawn, and an attempt to re-open it in 1640 ended in disaster, the last Jesuit brother being detained at Tsaparang till his death.

Seng-ge-mam-rgyal secured the frontier of his new dominion by a series of police operations against raiding Mongol clans and Guge refugees in gTsang. It was upon his return from one of these expeditions that he died at Hanle, in November 1642.

After some bickering between his three surviving sons, and after a provisional regency of the widowed queen, in 1647 the kingdom was partitioned. bDe-ldan-mam-rgyal (1642–1694) became king of Ladakh, the third brother received Zangskar and Spiti, and the second, who had been ordained a monk under the name of Indrabodhi, was given Guge, under the suzerainty of the Ladakhi king. The widowed queen kept Purang as her personal estate till her death in 1650¹⁰⁷.

We have no information concerning the conditions in Guge under the long rule of Indrabodhi, except that the Ladakhi king, a staunch follower of the 'Brug-pa school, took measures to keep within limits the number of the monks and of the landed estates of the dGe-lugs-pa monasteries in Guge. Of course this aroused opposition from the Dalai Lama's government and his Qośot protectors, at first on the diplomatic level only. Relations between the two states worsened during the seventies of the century, and in 1679 the Fifth Dalai Lama decided upon war.

The Mongol-Tibetan army, led by the Mongol general dGa'-ldan-tshe-dbang-dpal-bzang, entered the Manasarowar region, defeated a Ladakhi advanced force at Ra-la mkhar-dmar and pursued its remnants as far as the present border of Ladakh. Other survivors took shelter in the fortresses of sTag-la-mkhar (Taklakoth), rTsa-brang (Tsaparang) and bKra-shis-sgang (Tashigang), but were compelled to surrender during the winter months of 1680. The whole of Guge and Purang passed under the rule of the Lhasa government. Indrabodhi had fled,

and the last we hear of him was his defence of Zangskar, at first against the Mongols and later against Kulu forces.

The war continued for some years more. In the end Ladakh was saved from extinction only by the intervention of the Moghul governor of Kashmir, whose troops beat back the Mongol-Tibetan army.

The peace between Lhasa and Ladakh, mediated in 1683/1684 by the sixth 'Brug-pa incarnate Mi-pham-dbang-po, was hard on the vanquished. The wool trade in western Tibet was declared a monopoly of Kashmir, thus excluding Ladakhi mediation. The general trade was to be carried out in the form of an annual caravan (*chappa*) from Lhasa. This was but a confirmation of the old custom already noticed by de Andrade in 1625. On the other side, a triennial mission from Ladakh was to bring tribute to Lhasa; of course its main purpose was trade. The revenue of mNga'-ris skor-gsum was to be reserved for the 'Brug-pa incarnates, but actually the Lhasa government kept it in their hands, indemnifying the 'Brug-chen with the revenue of three estates in central Tibet.

In this rather devious way Guge and Purang were annexed to Tibet¹⁰⁸. The Dalai Lama's government reorganised its new dominions on the following lines. Guge was placed under a district governor (*rdzong-dpon*) residing at Tsaparang. From the religious point of view, Tholing continued as the main centre of Guge, its abbot being appointed by the Lhasa government from among the monks of Drepung. Purang saw more radical changes. rGyal-di-mkhar lost its status as district headquarters. The district governor of Purang resided now at sTag-la-mkhar (Taklakoth). Shortly before 1687 a new monastery called bShad-'phel-gling (Simbiling or Shimbuling) was built near sTag-la-mkhar as the new religious centre, the abbot being appointed by the Lhasa government from among the monks of Se-ra¹⁰⁹. Two other district governors were stationed at Ru-shod (Rupshu) and at mDa'-ba-rdzong (now usually spelt Zla-ba-rdzong; Dawadzong). The four governors were subject to the supervision and control of the chief commissioner of western Tibet (*sgar-dpon*), stationed in the zone to the west of the Manasarowar, his headquarters being sGar-dbyar-sa (Gartok) in summer and sGar-dgun-sa (Gargunsa) in winter.

Ladakh's losses included also Spiti (only temporarily) and upper Kinnaur. The latter was ceded to the Rāja of Bashahr who had cooperated with the Lhasa troops.

Thus the destruction of the old kingdom of Guge was complete.

In the following centuries Guge and Purang underwent a long process of economic and cultural decay, to which Tucci's travel accounts of 1933 and 1935 bear a sad testimony. No important event disturbed the somnolent quiet of the country, with one exception. In 1835 General Zorawar Singh had conquered Ladakh for Gulab Singh, chief of Jammu and later Mahārāja of Kashmir. After repressing a last rebellion of the Ladakhis, in 1841 Zorawar Singh sent an ultimatum to the chief commissioner (*sgar-dpon*). No reply being received, he invaded western Tibet with a force of six thousand men. On August 23rd he entered Tsaparang. The Dalai Lama's government reacted promptly and with energy. A large force was sent out from Lhasa, and on November 14th, 1841, it met the main body of the Jammu army, already weakened by the harsh climate, at Do-yo near Taklakoṭh. Zorawar Singh was defeated and killed, fighting gallantly to the bitter end. His army was wiped out. The victorious Tibetans marched on and invaded Ladakh, but were thrown back, hemmed in and compelled to capitulate. The war was brought to an end by a memorandum drawn up by the commanders of both armies in September 1842; it confirmed the old frontier and the old trade regulations¹¹⁰.

Purang was only marginally involved in the Tibetan-Nepalese conflict of 1855/56. One of the territorial claims advanced by the Nepalese government was the cession of the Taklakoṭh district. A small Nepalese force entered Purang in April 1855 and destroyed the old castle of Jidikhar. There was, however, no serious fighting in that secondary theatre of war¹¹¹. The peace treaty restored the precedent situation.

Zorawar Singh and the Nepalese (chiefly the former) had caused some damage to monasteries and castles, but this was nothing in comparison with the terrible havoc wrought by the bands of the Red Guards that scoured the country during the so-called Cultural Revolution. The scars still defile old cultural centres like Tsaparang and Tholing, and several chapels going back to the times of Rin-chen-bzang-po simply exist no more.

A last word should be dedicated to Spiti. Seng-ge-mam-rgyal severed its centuries-old intimate ties with Guge. When the Ladakhi kingdom was partitioned among his three sons (1647), Zangskar and Spiti were given to the youngest brother bDe-mchog-mam-rgyal,

who was still alive in 1666. His descendants continued to rule in Zangskar, but Spiti seems to have returned under the loose sovereignty of Ladakh. In 1684 Spiti was formally ceded to the Lhasa government, which appointed a governor. But soon the post lapsed and the valley came again under Ladakhi domination, with the exception of an interlude (1729–1758), when it recognised the overlordship of bKra-shis-mam-rgyal, king of Purig (Petech 1977: 78–9).

Control over Spiti was always a vague affair. The governors, styled at first *ga-ga* and later *no-no*, were accounted as one of the eight feudatories of Ladakh. After the abolition of the Ladakhi kingdom the autonomy of the *no-no* was gradually curtailed. Still, they have lasted to this day, although shorn of administrative and judicial powers.

In 1846 Spiti was detached from Ladakh, to become British Indian territory. Today it is part of the Spiti-Lahul district included in the Himachal Pradesh state of India.

Addendum A.

The Gar-log Question

The identity of the Gar-log with the Qarluq of Central Asia was recognised long ago by H. Hoffmann (1950) and was at once accepted without qualification. From the philological point of view the identification is certain. From the historical side, however, we have to draw distinctions, as Hoffmann himself had already recognised.

The name Gar-log surfaces for the first time in the 9th century. It appears in a tale concerning a monk who, fleeing from the persecution of gLang-dar-ma, travelled from Lhasa to mNga'-ris sTod, passed through the Gar-log country and arrived in the Hor (Uighur) principality (BTCB, 201; HD, 41). This happened in the forties of the 9th century. At that time, the equation with the Qarluq presents no difficulties from the historical and geographical angle.

The story of Ye-shes-'od's imprisonment and death at the hands of the Gar-log is unknown to the earliest chronicles (SNTM, DEU/1–2). It first appears in HD (1346/68), followed by BA, DMSM, KPGT and later works. In a group of fairly early sources, viz. GR1 (1364/68), GBYT (1434) and the two earliest biographies of Atiṣa (*rNam-thar rgyas-pa* and *rNam-thar yongs-grags*) the narrative is more or less the same, with a substantial exception: the Gar-log are not mentioned and the vil-

lains of the plot are some *mu-stegs-pa* (heretics), a rather vague term with a religious and not ethical connotation. From the very beginning the tale contains the remark that Ye-shes-'od was made prisoner while going to India or to the Indian border to get the money needed for inviting an Indian scholar. So it is to the Indian side that we have to look for the Gar-log of Ye-shes-'od and of the destruction of Guge in the 12th century.

The *mu-stegs-pa*, violently opposed to Buddhism, look more like fanatical Muslims than Hindu hill tribes, as already pointed out by Hoffmann. Thus we have to suspect in both the "heretics" and the Gar-log some Muslim invaders from India, synonymous with the learned (and later) term *Turuṣka*.

For this equation we have fairly ancient evidence. 'Jig-rten-mgon-po (1143–1217) intended to go to the Gar-log country to convert the *Turuṣka* there (*Biography of 'Jig-rten-mgon-po*¹², f. 79a). Dam-pa dMar-po (late 11th century) is said to have stopped by magic a threatened invasion of the Gar-log (BA, 1029). At the time of Kha-che Paṅ-chen's stay in Tibet (1204–1214), Magadha had been invaded by the Gar-log (KPGT, II, 492). For Chag Lotsawa (1197–1264) the Gar-log were a kind of *Turuṣka* and their name is repeatedly employed for Muslim raiding parties, who in the thirties of the 13th century harassed Bihar, and chiefly Bodhgayā, Nalanda, etc. They also threatened repeatedly the Mithila capital Simraongarh (CHAG, ff. 8b, 10b, 11a, 12b, 34b, 35a, 38a). During his first journey to India U-rgyan Sengge-dpal (1230–1309) had to invoke mGon-po to escape from a Gar-log army. During his second journey (1261) he was a witness to restoration work sponsored by the kings of Sri Lanka and other rulers after the destruction caused at Bodhgayā by the Gar-log (KPGT, II, 482).

In the 13th century the Qarluq are no longer relevant to our question. They still lived in their old camping grounds in the Ili valley and were divided into two sections: the Qarluq of Almaliq who later submitted to Jinghiz Khan, and the Qarluq of (or subject to) the Uighurs. In 1141 after the Gur-Khan's victory over the Saljuq at Qatvan they extended their influence as far as Samarkand, but even then they had no connections with the Himalaya (Barthold 1968: 326 and 333–4; Buell 1992: 16).

Summing up, the Gar-log of the 13th century were Muslims of Turkish origin, ruled by the so-called Mamluk Sultans of Delhi. But we cannot identify them with the Qarluq who captured Ye-shes-'od in the thir-

ties of the 11th century, unless we imagine some sort of sideline to the Indian expedition led by Mas'ud of Ghazna in 1037. A Ghaznavid garrison was stationed at Kangra from 1009 to 1044. They, however, barely held that fort and were merely a passive element. As to the Gar-log who in the 12th century destroyed the Purang kingdom, it is impossible at present to suggest a satisfactory identification.

Addendum B.

The Succession of Puṇyamalla and the Dullu Stele

As we have noticed above, according to the Tibetan tradition, bSod-nams-Ide, king of Purang, was elected to the throne of Ya-tshe when Nāgadeva's line died out. He translated his name as Puṇyamalla.

The version of the Dullu *praśāsti* differs widely and it seems worthwhile to discuss it in some detail. The rulers recorded on the front face of the stele used the family ending *-pāla*. At first they are not localised. We have to wait for the fourteenth ruler of the list Varagajamahīpāla to obtain the information that he dwelt in the Goha district (*viśaya*), possibly modern Garjyān Koṭ or Gothichaur in the Madhyavarti Aśi subdistrict (*darā*) of the Jumla district¹³. He defeated the chiefs (*ṇṇpati*) of Cīna¹⁴ and established an undefined connection with Jāva, i.e. Jumla town. His successor Viśvapāla ruled in the Jhumakāra *viśaya*, perhaps Jupal or Jhumchaur in the Tibrikot subdistrict. Then there was apparently a break in the succession, because the next king Jivapāla is said to have been born in the family of the Ṭhi lords (*Ṭhi-narendrakule jāto*). As his new family name he assumed that of Gelā, the present-day twin villages of Upper and Lower Gelā in the Cārsāṭi Bārabīs subdistrict. The name of his son is not given, we are merely informed that he took [also] the title of [lord of] Śrī Jāva, i.e. Jumla. His son was Puṇyamalla, who married Śakunamālā, a lady perhaps belonging to the Nāgarāja dynasty. "From this pair the first Śrī Malla [rulers] were descended." Then the inscription (back face) tells us that "as there were no descendants of Nāgarāja left, Puṇyamalla of the Gelā family was crowned king".

Since Gelā is certainly not the same as Purang, it seems impossible to reconcile the two accounts; at least, this was my conclusion in 1980. I think, however, that an attempt can be made now at overcoming this discrepancy. As already indicated, the *Guide to Khojarnath* contains a list of kings apparently ruling in Purang,

whose names begin with the royal title Khri. If we interpret the term *Ṭhi narendrakula* of the inscription as referring to the Khri rulers of Purang (which appears phonetically possible), we might suppose that at a certain moment a king of Purang annexed the Gelā region and adopted locally the ending *-pāla* to soothe the feelings

of his new subjects. His grandson, the Khri bKra-shis bSod-nams-lde of the *Guide to Khojarnath*, would be the man who succeeded to the throne of Ya-tshe.

Of course this explanation sounds rather complicated, not to say far-fetched; but I see no other way of reconciling the two versions.

¹ On the dates and circumstances of the conquest of Zhang-zhung and on the first occurrence of the name Gu-ge as a part of Zhang-zhung see Uray 1968: 292–7; 1972a: 5–38.

² The Tibetan administration of the farthest west of the Himalayan dominions remained unimpaired till the end of the monarchy. As late as 836 the regional assembly (*'dun-sa*) of Bru-zha (Gilgit) was still functioning (SNTM, f. 316a).

³ The very existence of Yum-brtan has been denied by Richardson 1971: 433–9; 1988: 1221–9. This theory is difficult to uphold in view of the unanimous evidence of our earliest sources (SNTM, DEU/1–2).

⁴ My narrative is based mainly on DEU/1–2, partly echoed in KPGT.

⁵ Our sources disagree radically on the chronology of gLang-dar-ma's successors. Without entering into details, we can broadly distinguish two traditions. We have a "short chronology", represented in DEU/2, 141–2 (life of 'Od-srungs: 45 years, with a mistaken calculation 840–881, actually 840–884) and KPGT, Ja, ff. 139a-b, 141b (39 years, i.e. 846–885, the birth date conforming to the KPGT's date of 846 for the murder of gLang-dar-ma). YLJB, 68,

agrees with this system. A "long chronology" is adopted by the Sa-skya-pa tradition, starting with SNTM and GPGT (3 years, to be corrected to 63 years; 843–905). Other chronicles following the same system are NYANG (partly incorrect), DEU/1 (55 years; 847–901), BTCB (63 years; 845–907), DMSM (60 years, to be corrected to 63 years; 843–905). NEL, 83, is hopelessly corrupt, but appears to follow the same tradition. HD and GR1 give no dates for the successors of gLang-dar-ma. I accept, not without misgivings, the Sa-skya-pa reckoning. The whole problem is discussed at length in Petech 1994: 649–59.

⁶ By almost unanimous consensus, dPal-'khor-btsan was proclaimed king at the age of 13, reigned for 18 years and died at 31. All these dates hinge on the chronology of 'Od-srungs, and therefore oscillate between 869–883 (NEL) and 892–923 (Sa-skya-pa). NYANG, ff. 483b and 493a, agrees with the Sa-skya-pa, but the date of death Fire-Sheep should be corrected into Iron-Sheep.

⁷ The Sa-skya-pa, NEL, HD and GBYT follow DEU/1–2 in placing the rebellion and the desecration of the royal tombs in the time of, or shortly after

dPal-'khor-btsan. The dates generally accepted are Earth-Ox 929 and eight years later, i.e. 937, respectively. On the other hand KPGT, Ja, f. 140a, and GR1, 437–8, place these events in the times of 'Od-srungs and Yum-brtan, in which case the dates would be 869 and 877.

⁸ Up to this point my narrative follows DEU/1–2. See also my paper cited in note 5.

⁹ *T'ang-shu*, transl. P. Pelliot 1961: 134–35. The complete name of dBa's is found in KPGT, f. 140a.

¹⁰ This was first suggested by Snellgrove 1987: 471.

¹¹ NYANG, f. 493a-b. I am grateful to dGe-'dun-mthar-phyin for his help on this rather obscure passage.

¹² The legendary account of Nyi-mamgon's conquest of western Tibet is based mainly upon NYANG, ff. 493a–95a, with some additional facts.

¹³ The biography of Atiṣa confirms that the allegiance of mNga'-ris was obtained mainly by peaceful means.

¹⁴ The problem was first mooted in Petech 1939: 44, followed up in a note I contributed to Tucci 1941b: 281–5. It was then discussed at some length by G.N. Roerich in his Introduction to BA, xvii–xviii, and by H. Richardson (1957:

57–78). It is still far from a solution, and this causes almost insuperable contradictions in the history of the rNying-ma-pa survival in Amdo and revival in central Tibet.

¹¹ The genealogy of the descendants of sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon can be found in almost all the general histories of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, all of them employing the same set of names. A convenient tabulation is found in Tucci 1956, to which other lists could be added now.

¹² NEL, 68; GPGT, f. 199b. NYANG, f. 499a, shows a completely different and unreliable distribution.

¹³ LDGR, 35.13–18. In KT 1745, 73, the names are changed into Pi-ti-lcog and Zangs-dkar sgo-gsum.

¹⁴ GBYT, I, f. 154a. On sPi-lcog see below, note 20.

¹⁵ bSod-nams-rtse-mo has preserved some materials going back to the times of the monarchy and to the century following its collapse. See Szerb 1983: 380–82.

¹⁶ Cog-la or lCog-la refers to two different tracts in the same region of the Himalayas. One is Gug-lCog (i.e. Guge lCog-la) and the other is sPi-lCog (i.e. sPi-ti lCog-la). Gug-lCog appears already in the Dunhuang Annals, in connection with Zhang-zhung. It revolted against Tibet in 674 and three years later its king Rin-tsub-skor was involved in the general rebellion of Zhang-zhung. In KPGT, Ja, f. 20a, Gug-ge and lCog-la are included in Lower Zhang-zhung. Another passage of the same text (f. 20b) mentions the five districts (*sde*) of Gug-Cog. A long unpublished inscription in the Lalung temple in Spiti has twice the Gug-lCog dominion (*mnga'-ris*). So this particular lCog-la is adjacent to Guge. If sBeg-mkhar in lCog-la is identical with Bekhar of Tucci and Ghersi 1934: 369. Biar of the Survey maps, then Gug-lCog was to the west of Guge, going down the Sutlej valley. – sPi-lCog on the other hand appears as sPyi-sde lCog-la in the same passage of the Lalung inscription, and this proves that the two lCog-la are distinct. Tho-gar dGe-mdzes of sPyil-Cog (*sic* for sPyi-lCog) was one of the translators of a short text in the Tenjur (T. 2146). The LDGR, 15.18, mentions sPi-ti together with sPi-lcog. NYANG, f. 500b, mentions Pil-Cog-rTa-po. Lastly, the lCog-la's side of an inscription on the wall of the Tabo 'du-khang clearly refers to sPi-ti lCog-la. Even today according to the local people lCog-la yul-gsum includes three vil-

lages (*yul*) on the Spiti river, viz. sPog (Po). Tabo and Lari.

¹⁷ The name Rum (Tum) occurs already in a 9th-century document from Miran (Thomas 1951: 149, 1.17). At Tabo it occurs once in inscriptions on the wall of the 'du-khang and again on the wall of the sgo-khang, where Rum is said to be included in the Guge district.

¹⁸ Variants are placed between brackets: *chu pho 'brug gi lo la Cog la yul* (add *gyi*) *sPeg (sBeg) mkhar du sTod sMad kyi yab mched bying* (omitted) *gdan 'dzom pa'i dus su mol ba chen po mdzad* : *Rum (Tum) yul Pa (Sa) sgam gyi dben sa gsar du btsugs pa'i dus su brtsis na / lo 3125*. (SNTM, f. 316a-b; SKP, f. 297b)

¹⁹ dPal 'khor sras gnyis sTod sMad gnyis su gyes / yab mched drug gis rgyal sa khol bur bzung. (GPGT, f. 199a; NEL, 84)

²⁰ Or lDe-gtsug-mgon according to BTCB, GR1, YLJB, KPGT, DMSM.

²¹ DEU/1, 368 and 381, DEU/2, 141 and 146, give him also the ecclesiastical-looking name 'Od-lde-rgyal-mishan, which is understood by PAKP, f. 147b, as the name of another king inserted between 'Khor-re and Lha-lde. This is certainly incorrect.

²² Some earlier texts equate Ye-shes-'od with 'Khor-re: Biography of Atiśa, DEU/1–2, NYANG, HD, BA. For most of the sources, starting with SNTM, it was Srong-nge who became Ye-shes-'od. The printed editions of BTCB follow the first version, while two manuscripts of the same work follow the second (Szerb 1990: 64, n. 4). – For the possible dates of Ye-shes-'od see later.

²³ NGCB, f. 126a. Snellgrove (1987: 473) suggests that the religion found by sKyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon in old Zhang-zhung was a debased and mixed popular form of Buddhism.

²⁴ The Tabo inscription was first published in Tucci 1935: 195–98. On the sPu inscription see p. 235 and n. 39.

²⁵ For 'Khor-re's foundation of the Kha-char lha-khang see SNTM, f. 314b, and GR1, 456. Following the *Guide to Khojarnath*: 41, 'Khor-re built not only Kha-char, but also the fort of sKar-dung.

²⁶ RCZP, 87. The only comprehensive study of the renovator of Buddhism in western Tibet is still Tucci 1933.

²⁷ The biography allows a period of seven years for his first visit to Kashmir. Afterwards we read that the whole journey to Kashmir and India lasted thirteen years. The two figures, however, should not be added, because his sec-

ond stay in Kashmir was very short, being intended only for the recovery of some books he had deposited there. The thirteen years are therefore inclusive of the first seven-year residence in Kashmir. According to PAKP, f. 176a, Rin-chen-bzang-po returned to Tibet at the age of 33, which supports the date suggested above.

²⁸ The full name according to a colophon was Khri bKra-shis *mnga'-bdag* Lha-lde-btsan. For DEU/1, 381, and DEU/2, 147, this was the official name of Srong-nge. This onomastic pattern is common to all the Purang kings of the 11th century, as shown by various colophons in the Kanjur and Tenjur. The full royal style was dPal Lha-btsan-po Khri bKra-shis *mnga'-bdag* X-lde-btsan. See some examples in Tucci 1933: 24n and 50–1.

²⁹ Tucci's manuscript of the biography, f. 29b, expressly attributes the construction of Tholing to Ye-shes-'od and his two sons through the agency of Rin-chen-bzang-po. SNTM, f. 314a, credits Ye-shes-'od alone with the foundation. In the same vein, but with more details, NYANG, f. 500b, attributes to Ye-shes-'od the building of the *gtsug-lag-khang* of Kha-char, rTa-po, Nyar-ma, Shanggling in Pu-rigs (a quite isolated item of information) and Tho-ling in Guge. This was done before he sent Rin-chen-bzang-po and the twenty young men to study in Kashmir. – On the present conditions of Tholing see Tanaka 1994: 863–72.

³⁰ This item of information is found only in PAKP, f. 178b; the biography is silent on the subject.

³¹ NYANG, f. 501a, calls Rin-chen-bzang-po the "statue-maker from Zhang-zhung" (Zhang-zhung-gi lha-bzo).

³² Zho-ling has been identified with Johling near Gemur in Lahul (Klimburg-Salter 1994a: 47–9).

³³ I understand the word *'khos* in the same sense as *mkhos* of the *Dunhuang Annals* and of KPGT, i.e. "settlement, introduction of administrative structures". See the discussion by Uray 1972b: 18–20.

³⁴ Variants are placed between brackets: *me pho 'brug gi lo la lha bla ma Ye shes 'od* (Ye shes 'od omitted) *yab sras dhen gnas Pa (Sa) sgam Byams snyoms gling du gdan (chal) 'dzom mo* (omitted) / *lha sras gcung Lha 'khor rab tu gshegs ('byung) / Gu ge'i yul na gnas pa'i 'bangs Zhang zhung zhig* (omitted) *gis (gi) gcen (chen) gyi 'khos chen po mdzad pa'i dus su brtsis pa na / Sangs*

rgyas mya ngan las 'das pas (Sangs ... pas omitted) lo 3149 lon te (SNTM, f. 316a; SKP, f. 297b). From Sa-skya Paṇḍita this text passed into the *Dezhhin-gshegs-pa thams-cad-kyi bgrud-pa gcig-pa 'i lam-chen gsung-ngag rin-po-che 'i bla-ma bgyud-pa rnam-thar*, f. 27b.

³⁹Thakur 1994: 369–75. My interpretation of this inscription differs from Thakur's.

⁴⁰This name is found only in the *mNga'-ris chos-'byung*, quoted in HD, n. 249.

⁴¹This story appears for the first time in HD and was unknown to all the earlier texts. GBYT, I, f. 156b, states expressly that Ye-shes-'od died on the barbarian frontier (*mtha'-khob*) and KPGT, II, 292, says that he was done to death by the Gar-log. An isolated variant is found in YLJB, 91: the lama was taken prisoner on the Indian frontier by a Sog-po army. But on p. 41 of the same text the captor is called king of the Gar-log. A legendary character of this tale is suggested by Snellgrove 1987: 480. – On the Gar-log question see Addendum A.

⁴²On the date see the texts quoted in Vitali 1990: 67, n. 121.

⁴³*mNga'-ris Gung-thang lo-rgyus*, quoted in KT 1745, 74. The same work is cited in KT 1745, 71, and KT 1748, 145. Its author was the Gung-thang *mnga'-bdag* Nor-bu-lde (b. 1450). This source tells us that Nāgarāja was ordained as Byang-chub-'od and Devarāja as Zhi-ba-'od (KT 1745, 74). Of course this is an egregious blunder.

⁴⁴A justification from the traditional point of view is offered in NEL, 153.

⁴⁵The closing lines of RCZP contain a chronological error. Atiśa is said to have heard of the wonders that happened during the cremation of the dead Lotsawa and to have commented upon them. As a matter of fact, Atiśa died one year before Rin-chen-bzang-po.

⁴⁶Critical edition by Szerb 1990: 87–8 (f. 153). This passage was mistranslated in BTCB, 214, and hence in Tucci 1933: 67. The Nāga (kLu) sKar-rgyal is often depicted in western Tibet as a female demon converted by Rin-chen-bzang-po. See Tucci and Ghersi 1934: 339 and Tucci 1936: 168.

⁴⁷Smith 1970: 6, n. 13. This 'Grig-mtshams or 'Bri-mtshams mTha'-dkar is mentioned as the place of discovery of *gter-na* in the *Legs-bshad gter-māzod* (Karmay 1972: 129). It is not the same as the 'Bri-mtshams situated in sGos-yul, i.e. the district in gTsang at the head of the Chumbi valley (Tucci 1941a: 67).

⁴⁸For a balanced view of the role played by Atiśa in western Tibet see Snellgrove 1987: 480–85.

⁴⁹On the real import of gLang-dar-ma's "persecution" see the remarks by Karmay 1988: 77–8. The historicity of the fact is radically negated by Yamaguchi 1995.

⁵⁰A summary of these events is provided by Vitali 1990: 37. The date of rGyan-gong, the first new monastery in central Tibet, is discussed by Vitali 1990: 91–2. We may add that in the opinion of DEU/2, 158, the return of the rNying-ma-pa to central Tibet took place in 969. On the two sponsors see e.g. BZH, 87; NYANG, ff. 495b–496a; HD, 41; DMSM, 170–2. Another patron was Tshaj[-la]-na's son *btsan-po* Khri (or Khri-pa).

⁵¹T.451; 1303, 1846, 1850, 1853, 1859, 1866, 1870, 1872–78. Judging by his name, Ye-shes-rgyal-mtshan may have been a royal monk, at least at the end of his life; but in T.1874 he adds to his usual style *mnga'-bdag* the higher title *lha btsan-po*. His approximate date can be deduced from the fact that his Indian collaborator Kamalaguhya or Kamalagupta worked also with Rin-chen-bzang-po.

⁵²Published by Karmay 1980a. Cf. Snellgrove 1987: 186–8 and 474. A rather vague hint can be detected in NEL, 153.

⁵³Published by Karmay 1980b. Karmay proposes the equivalence 1092 for the date Water-Monkey. Some doubts, however, can be entertained: 1092 seems too late for a prince who in c. 1040 had organised the invitation and the voyage of Atiśa. As the letter has come down to us in a work of c. 1600, we may suspect that only the animal component is original, as it was almost the rule in that period. SNTM, f. 315a, aptly remarks that in his time (1167) the duodenary cycle was the one normally employed; some people indeed calculated by the 60-year cycle, "but that could not be said to be in common use" (*de thung mong la grags pa ma yin no*). Thus we are justified in assuming that in the present case the element component is due to a later reconstruction. The Monkey year could be 1058.

⁵⁴*De nas sTod du mnga' bdag 'Od lde btsan gyis / btsad po Khri bKra shis lde btsan* (omitted) *phyag nas sryan drang pa 'i tshes / sTod kyi chos nyom (nyam) pa 'i ra sa (pa 'i sar) 'dzims ('dzom dus) su brisits pa la 3190* (SNTM, f. 317a; SKP, f. 298a).

⁵⁵A fairly long list of Indian scholars invited by rTse-lde is found in DEU/2, 148, and GBYT, I, f. 155a-b.

⁵⁶On dBang-lde's religious activities see also NYANG, f. 511b, and KPGT, II, 337. He appears with the name dBang-phyug-lde in BA, 325; but on the next line of the same page he is called dBang-lde. dBang-phyug-lde occurs also in the *hKa'-gdams gsar-mnying-gyi rnam-par thar-pa*, f. 112b. One Khri bKra-shis dBang-phyug nam-mkha'-btsan is mentioned in BTCB, 216, as the ruler who patronised rNgog Lotsawa (Obermiller mistranslated this passage). He was a different man from dBang-lde, because YLJB, 127, mentions both together as the patrons of rNgog's translations after the latter's return to mNga'-ris in 1092. This proves also that dBang-lde was still reigning on that date.

⁵⁷The relevant passages are: DEU/1, 383, I, 2; *id.*, 382, II, 11 and 12; *id.*, 384, I, 1; DEU/2, I, 2 and I, 10. – For some discussion of the Gar-log see Addendum A.

⁵⁸This most interesting inscription was published in Tucci 1956: 46–9. Independently from Tucci, it was edited by (Yogi) Naraharinath 1955: 58–64 (reprinted in *Himavai Saṃskṛti*, I/1, 2016 V.S., 40–1, and in *Sandhipatrasaṅgraha*, Kathmandu 2022 V.S., 767–8). The Yogi was able to read the damaged lines 16–25 of the front side of the stela; whether correctly, is another question.

⁵⁹The following pages are not intended as a history of the Ya-tshe kingdom. They merely aim at correcting and supplementing some special points of my article Petech 1988b, which in turn supplements Tucci 1956.

⁶⁰HD, 43. Cf. GR I, 461, and KPGT, Ja, f. 142a. The old imperial title *btsan-po* is here improperly used instead of *mnga'-bdag*.

⁶¹The reading *khāri* is proposed by Naraharinath; Tucci reads doubtfully *khyāti*. Naraharinath identifies Khāri with the village of that name in the Karān subdistrict (*darā*) of Jumla district in West Nepal. This would involve us, however, into insuperable contradictions with the Tibetan text. – YLJB, 72, quoting one gSer-thog-pa Rin-chen-rdo-rje, asserts that the Ya-tshe dynasty was descended from mGar sTong-btsan, the famous minister of Strong-btsan-sgam-po; but this isolated piece of information goes against the solid body of the Tibetan tradition and can hardly be accepted.

- ⁶² On the Khasiyā in Nepalese history see Petech 1984. Index. Adhikary 1988 can be useful only for its convenient collection of Khāsa inscriptions. The author did not utilise the recent literature and had virtually no access to the Tibetan sources.
- ⁶³ The earliest mention of the Ya-rtse (*sic*) kings is found in GPGT, f. 199b.
- ⁶⁴ For a comparative list of the Khāsa kings in the Dullu inscription and in the Tibetan chronicles see Tucci (1956: 66) and Petech (1988b: 382).
- ⁶⁵ The *Guide to Khojarnath (Lhar bcas 'gro ba 'i mchod sdong Jo ho dngul sku mched gsum sngon byung gi gam dang brjod pa 'i rin chen vaidūrya sngon pa 'i wang)* written in 1880, was printed at Dharamsala in 1988.
- ⁶⁶ *Guide*: 47–49. The temple of Khojarnath has always been in danger of being swept away by the Kamali river when in spate (Tucci 1937: 35).
- ⁶⁷ Ti-se, 36, f. 29a. The suffix *smān* is out of place here. It indicates the female of any class of gods and demons and is also used as a honorific form applied to ladies (Tucci 1949: 720).
- ⁶⁸ BA, 605. Perhaps on the same occasion Bya-dkar was given to the 'Bri-gung-pa, to whom it belonged before becoming a dGe-lugs-pa institution (VS, f. 220b).
- ⁶⁹ Compare the name Zhang-zhung-bza' Li-thig-smān, one of the wives of Srong-btsan-sgam-po (DEU/1, 276, 379; KPGT, Ja, f. 44b).
- ⁷⁰ Perhaps rGyal-ti ought to be sought outside the Kamali valley.
- ⁷¹ KT 1748, 94; Jackson 1976/77: 41. On Gung-thang supremacy from mid-13th to mid-14th century see also Jackson 1978: 214.
- ⁷² The Six Castles (*rdzong-drug*) are listed in MLRP, 156–7.
- ⁷³ The Men-zhang were a group of nomadic clans, who in the late 11th century migrated from Guge to Byang, i.e. the Pra-dum-rtse (Tradum) region. A section of them shifted back to Groshod. The Men-zhang played a political role in Mang-yul Gung-thang till the early 15th century. (Paper read by Mr. R. Vitali at the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies held in June 1995 at Schloß Seggau, Austria.)
- ⁷⁴ gSer-gyi lha-khang is a name of Tholing already in the colophon of the *Kalāpalaghuvrtti-sīsyahita* (T.4284), translated by Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od. So also in VS, f. 219a.
- ⁷⁵ *Guide*: 47, 55. None of these names

appears in Ti-se.

⁷⁶ He was ruling Purang since at least 1323, because in that year Bu-ston sent a letter to the *chos-rgyal* bSod-nams-lde (BTNT, 121).

⁷⁷ *dPal chos skyong ba 'i rgyal po chen po lha mnga' bdag chen po ... mNga' ris stod du rgyal por bskos pa bchin* (Bu-ston's *Collected Works*, La, ff. 90b, 96a). Some time later (?) Punyamalla sent a complimentary mission carrying presents (BTNT, 122).

⁷⁸ On the 'Tshal-pa downfall see Petech 1990: 109.

⁷⁹ See the texts quoted in Petech 1988b: 381, note 91. The exact date is found in *rLangs-kyi po-ti bse-ru rgyas-pa* (ed. Chah-spel Tsho-brtan-phun-tshogs, Lhasa 1986), 202.

⁸⁰ For the inscriptions of the later kings of Señjā/Ya-tshe see Adhikary 1988, Appendix nos. 33–7, 39.

⁸¹ Ngag-dbang-grags-pa, the missionary in Guge, is a different person from Lotsawa Ngag-dbang-grags-pa, who acted as teacher of King bSod-nams-lde of Mang-yul Gung-thang (KT 1748, 120) and went to Sa-skyā to ask for human and superhuman explanations of the failure of his work in mNga'-ris (SNLĠ, f. 3b). The Lotsawa lived one generation earlier; he was a Sa-skyā-pa and not a dGe-lugs-pa.

⁸² VS, ff. 218b–219a. The mNga'-ris passages of VS, which are fundamental for the later kings of Guge, were translated by G. Tucci (1971b: 472–88). – On Mang-nang see VS, f. 221a. The temple and its magnificent frescoes are noticed in Tucci 1937: 57–63. They exist no more, the temple having been destroyed during the so-called Cultural Revolution.

⁸³ Letters: mKhas-grub-rje's *Collected Works*, Ta, ff. 87b–89a. Commentary: *bCom-ltan-das 'Khor-lo-bde-mchog yab-yum la mdun-par bstod-pa 'i rab-tu byed-pa, ibid.*, ff. 18b–20b. Initiation: KHGI, f. 11a.

⁸⁴ VS, f. 222b, where the name of this Guge king is shortened into Khri dBang-phyug-lde. The identification seems certain; see Yamaguchi 1992: 67 and 72–3, note 7. On the Dung-dkar monastery and the paintings in its chapels see Tucci 1937: 170–1.

⁸⁵ VS, f. 219b. Bre-ltan, i.e. the temple complex in upper Tsaparang, was a complete ruin already in 1933 (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: 304–10). The only surviving building was the small bDe-mchog chapel, described in Tucci 1936: 16–74. bLo-stangs, popularly called Lo-thang

already in the 17th century, stands on the plain below the castle and is dealt with in Tucci 1936: 167–9. bLo-stangs was the titular see of Tsaparang and no separate abbot of Bre-ltan is mentioned in VS.

⁸⁶ On the foundation of Tsaparang and of its temples see the discussion in Yamaguchi 1992: 67–9. No source delivers us the name of the capital of Guge before it was shifted to Tsaparang. It may have been Tholing, which certainly played that role in the time of Ye-she-'od. The two places are only about ten kilometres apart.

⁸⁷ *Guide*: 49. Ti-se, 39, f. 32b; Pranavananda 1950: 104. According to DMSM, 170, the gLo-bo chief forcibly attached the monasteries of various schools, turning them over to the Sa-skyā-pa or Ngor-pa. He showed a particular animosity toward the dGe-lugs-pa.

⁸⁸ NGNT, f. 39a: *chos sde chen po gsar du btsugs*.

⁸⁹ On Byang see n. 73.

⁹⁰ *Bhoṭṭabhūma mahindreṇa Gog-gadeṣe kacadana | bāṇagaurakharā-streṇa guṇair-lokās-ca rakṣiīāḥ || samijīte Śayādeṣe krūrādeṣo mahipath | suvarṇa-Buddhapratimā Yavanebhyo varakṣa saḥ ||*. Jonarāja's *Dvitiya-Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, vv. 1106–1107.

⁹¹ Ti-se, 39, f. 33a, where bKra-shis-mgon and bSod-nams-lhun-grub are incorrectly called princes of Guge.

⁹² VS, ff. 219b–220a. She too received a letter from the 2nd Dalai Lama (Second Dalai Lama's *Collected Works*, Rī, ff. 30b–31a).

⁹³ Second Dalai Lama's *Collected Works*, Rī. A first letter was written by the Dalai Lama when aged ten, i.e. in 1483/4, to a king of Guge whose name is not given, but was probably 'Phags-pa-lha (ff. 20b–21a). In a second letter the king is once more without a name (f. 21b). In a third letter the name 'Phags-pa-lha appears at last, but the year is not indicated (ff. 22b–23a). A last letter has neither name nor date (f. 23b).

⁹⁴ VS, f. 220a. A colophon mentioning this king is found in Tucci 1935: 177–8.

⁹⁵ VS, f. 160b. DL5-a, Ca, f. 16a.

⁹⁶ Śānti-pa informed the Second Dalai Lama of his departure (Second Dalai Lama's *Collected Works*, Rī, f. 29a).

⁹⁷ On Śānti-pa see the information collected in Petech 1988b: 385, note 95. – The Dawadzong bKra-shis-lhun-po monastery is described in Tucci 1937: 149–50.

⁹⁸ KT 1748, 138 and 139. A letter from

the 2nd Dalai Lama to this queen is found in his *Collected Works*, Ri, f. 55b.

⁹⁹ As early as the 15th century Guge appointed a “master of the goldfields” (*gser-dpon*) in g.Yas-ru Byang-pa (THST, f. 136a). For a lively description of the goldfields and their working see Elias 1895: 421. On gold washing in the 19th century see L. Boulnois 1983.

¹⁰⁰ For an identification of these monasteries see Tucci 1971b: 478–88.

¹⁰¹ On the interpretation of this passage of VS see Yamaguchi 1992: 73, n.12.

¹⁰² On Ali Mir and his overthrow of Ladakhi power see Petech 1977: 33–4.

¹⁰³ A colophon mentioning this king is published in Tucci 1935: 177.

¹⁰⁴ Ti-se, 40, f. 33b, informs us that the Guge king bKra-shis-mgon, Khri Grags-pa-bkra-shis and others patronised the 'Bri-gung-pa hermitages. Khri Grags-pa-bkra-shis is of course the same as Khri bKra-shis-grags-pa, but bKra-shis-mgon is otherwise unknown.

¹⁰⁵ The basic study on the Tsaparang mission is still Wessels 1924: 43–119. Also Toscano 1977: 334–423.

¹⁰⁶ On the Ladakhi conquest of Guge and

on the fate of its royal family see Petech 1977: 41–45 and the texts quoted there.

¹⁰⁷ On the partition of Seng-ge-mam-rgyal's kingdom see Petech 1977: 58–9. A document of Indrabodhi, issued from Tholing in November 1651, was published by Schuh 1985: 57–9.

¹⁰⁸ On the war of 1679–1684 and the treaties that ended it see Petech 1977: 71–80.

¹⁰⁹ DL5, Nga, f. 277a-b; DL5-a, Ca, f. 226. Locally, the foundation of bShad-'phel-gling is attributed to General dGa'-ldan-tshe-dbang, the conqueror of western Tibet (Tucci 1937: 29).

¹¹⁰ A good account of Zorawar Singh's campaign in mNga'-ris can be found in Datta 1973: 131–44. See also Petech 1977: 145–6.

¹¹¹ Pranavananda 1949: 135n (where the date 1854 should be corrected to 1855); Rose 1971: 110; ZHWA II, 22–3.

¹¹² Shes-rab-'byung-gnas (1187–1241), *Chos rje 'Jig rten mgon po 'i rnam thar phyogs bcu dus gsum ma*, in *The collected writings of 'Bri-gung Chos-rje 'Jig-rten-mgon-po Rin-chen-dpal*. New Delhi 1969, I.

¹¹³ This and the following identifications are proposed by Naraharinath 1955. For a list of the 19 subdistricts of Jumla and of the villages contained in each of them see Naraharinath 1955: 13–9.

¹¹⁴ For Tucci's *Cina-nppatin*, Naraharinath reads *srīla-nppatin*, which makes no sense. On Cina as a Himalayan region included in ancient Zhang-zhung see Tucci 1956: 103 and Tucci 1971a: 548–50. Tucci's identification of Cina with Kunawar is, however, untenable. His source, a Bon-po guide to the Kailāsa written in 1844/47, has been published in the meantime by Namkhai Norbu. GTS, 54, states that Zhang-zhung Tsi-na was the valley of the Byema-g.yung-drung, one of the streams that join to form the Tsangpo. Thus Cina corresponds to Gro-shod, the region to the east of the Mar-yum pass, and this is confirmed by an interlineary note: *Gro-shod zer* (*ibid.*, p. 20). The identification is geographically plausible, as Gro-shod lies due north of Jumla, beyond the Himalayan divide.



Appendix A New Translation of the Renovation Inscription in the Tabo Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*)¹

Giuseppe Tucci and Eugenio Ghersi visited the temples in Tabo² from July 18th to 21st 1933 (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: 121–32). The inscription was copied for Tucci by his lama³. No legible photograph seems to have been made of the inscription proper⁴, so that the later edition was entirely based on the lama's copy. Consequently Tucci had no means of knowing the extent of the many gaps in the inscription when he came to prepare his edition. In addition, the lama's copy contains a number of misreadings. For some of these Tucci proposed corrections which now can actually be confirmed as the true readings.

During our stay in Tabo in 1991⁵, Luczanits made a careful survey of the inscription, comparing it with Tucci's edition. The state of the inscription in 1991 was such that in a number of places syllables or parts of syllables which were evidently still legible for the lama in 1933 and are contained in Tucci's edition were no longer extant. After our return the new readings were checked with the aid of various, usually inadequate photographs and additional photographs made in 1994 by Luczanits.

The new reading by Luczanits revealed a number of features that decidedly improve upon Tucci's edition. Not only do we now know the extent of the gaps, but a considerable number of syllables and words read differently. In addition, the use of the *shad* and other marks of separation in the inscription which evidently the lama did not pay any attention to, now turns out to be a carefully applied means for graphically structuring the text.

A new edition of the inscription will be published in *Serie Orientale*, Rome. Here, we present only our new

translation which we believe also improves upon Tucci's pioneering attempt at its interpretation. No new historical information has emerged. However, the inscription (written in verse except for its *narratio*) proves to be a piece of monastic Tibetan poetry of considerable quality, and, although deteriorated, merits our attention as one of the rare documents of early Tibetan poetry. It will be a matter of further literary research to interpret the poem in detail, to indicate the lines of association with the Buddhist literary heritage and to analyse the poetic means applied.

The inscription is located on the lower part of the left frontal end of the wall enclosing the Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*). It is written on a rectangular panel within a frame between two red lines. It measures approximately 23 × 110 cm and comprises 12 lines. The inscription contains a short historical record and a "transfer of merit" formulated in an elevated style to mark the occasion of the conclusion of the renovation work in the Tabo Main Temple (*gtsug-lag-khang*).

The author of the inscription was a monk of the Tabo community who took an active part in the renovation of the temple. His name, Phes- [?] kha rgyu-bdag, possibly rGyu-bdag from Phes [?], is given in line 2, although the first syllable is highly uncertain. The second and third syllables were still legible when the lama made his copy for Tucci in 1933 (cf. Tucci 1935: note 2), but all that now remains of the author's name is the last syllable: *bdag*.

In the inscription's *narratio*, the author gives the date⁶ and states his wish of giving a short historical record as

Fig. 234. 'Dul-ba-byang-chub, probably abbot of Tabo monastery in 1042. Main Temple. Ambulatory, southern face of the entrance to the Cella, painting above Renovation Inscription

well as expressing a transfer of merit⁷ at the conclusion of the renovation work in the Main Temple.

The inscription is clearly divided into three main parts:

[1.] a short *narratio* in prose which contains the date is followed by

[2.] a record (*lo-rgyus*) (1–7a). This record consists of three parts:

[2.1] an introductory call for attention (1–2a),

[2.2] the foundation of the temple by Ye-shes-'od (2b–4),

[2.3] its renovation by Byang-chub-'od (5–7a).

[3.] a formulation of the transfer of merit (*bsngoba*) (7b–17) which consists of two parts:

[3.1] “primary merit”

[3.11] first, the merit accrued from the actual renovation work is dedicated to the main donor, the king, and others (7b–9) and

[3.12] extended in particular to all visitors of the temple (10–11).

[3.2] Then the “secondary merit” accrued from dedicating the primary merit to other beings (*gzhan la sngos pa las*, 12a) is reflexively dedicated to the author, his friends, and the participants in the work of renovation (12–17),

[3.21] and this second dedication uses an extended simile (12–14),

[3.22] and concludes with final wishes (15–17).

Translation:⁸

Earlier, in the monkey year, the ancestor, the Bodhisattva⁹, erected this temple. Then, after 46 years, the grandnephew *lha btsun-pa* Byang-chub-'od, motivated by the thought of enlightenment, restored this temple. Exhorted by his precious order we were commissioned as reward.

Therefore, when the painting of the Cella (*dri-gtsang-khang*, *gandhakuti*) was completed, the wish to make a record [of this] and a transfer (of merit) arose in the monk Phe- (?)] *kha rgyu-bdag*, and he said:

To the short record of the erection of this beautiful temple for all those beings who are tired from [having walked] distant paths and are abandoned by friends and beloved ones, and who perceive the misery [in this world], listen with ...¹⁰. (vv.1–2a)

This king, personification of a god, born of divine race, of the lineage of Bodhisattvas, lord over all black-

headed (people), who by (his) perfect, innate insight brought the light of wisdom (ye-shes-'od) to the darkness of ignorance, abandoned (his) reign, which is connected with samsara, like a withered garland of flowers because he regarded (it) as an illusion. [He] then offered the whole *kingdom* for the sake of the dharma. When the lay people of the realm (*mnga'-ris*) had become white, [he] erected here the temple dPal-ldan bkra'-shis bde-gnas as a lamp for this kingdom. (vv.2b–4)

The same grandnephew, in the family lineage of this excellent being, truly provided with the threefold training, planted the root of faith of the tree of insight and spread the flowers and fruits of the Tripitaka. (v.5)

When this sovereign, the *lha-btsun* Byang-chub-'od, regarded the work of the ancestor as old, he gathered many masters and craftsmen, and provided the materials. When we, then, were commissioned by (his) profound order, we purified [the place] well and [the work] was done. (vv.6–7a)

May through this merit which we, motivated in this way by good thoughts, *gathered* [as] white as jasmine the light of a very white moon , because of the work which was done here, the noble donor, the King in the Dharma *rje-btsun* Byang-chub-'od, and other (donors?) in all births in all forms of existence be adorned with excellent bodies with many good features that may be desired by all lay people, and then practice the conduct of a Bodhisattva in all forms of existences, and in due course proceed towards highest enlightenment! (vv.7b–9)

May also all the visitors who see or touch all these many painted images of the Lords of (the five kinds of) Existence, the Sugatas together with their sons , after seeing in person the Sugatas of the good age and their sons, and hearing the best teaching *identify* [their] minds with the guides who rescue all living beings from the ocean of *samsara*! (vv.10–11)

By this great merit, as extensive as space, which came about from dedicating all the good to others in this way, may we, together with our friends (and) the whole retinue attached to (this) work be very quickly pulled out from such a house, having the high walls of pride and intoxication piled up through [our] erroneous conceptions which take, since beginningless (time), as real [what is not real] (*dnag-zhen*), and which is down from a and has firmly established the pillars and beams of passion and hatred and thus bears the name

of the circle of the three existences, by the long arms of wisdom, expert in distinguishing (*bsham-mnga*), and great compassion! [May we] then be [in] the excellent house, the house of the thought of truth, *which was taught by you*, well furnished with the seat of happiness and be satisfied by the food of meditation and the drink of *liberation*, and be brought together always with the Friends of the Six Perfections! (vv.12–14)

In this [excellent house] the defilements are used as servants which [we] employ as [we] please, and the pond of release is filled with the water of meditation with

the lotus of spread from all may [we] be *bathed* in the teaching of good thoughts ...! (v.15)

Fumigated [with] the perfume of morality, dressed in the best clothes of shame and modesty and well adorned with the good primary and secondary characteristics (of the body) [may we] with the charioteer, the thought of enlightenment, in the chariot of supernatural knowledge of the highest great vehicle, raise the banner of the *bodhimandala*¹¹ in this monastery, connected with the eightfold [path] in which nirvana and tranquillity are beginning to bloom! (vv.16–17)

¹ First edition and translation: "Iscrizione di Tabo" in Tucci 1935: 195–204. A full version of this paper, including the text of the inscription, will be published in *Serie Orientale*, Rome: "The Renovation Inscription of the Tabo gTsong lag khañ. New Edition and Translation".

² The proper old spelling of modern Tabo and the etymology of the name are unclear. Several differently etymologized spellings such as *Ita*, *rta*, *sta* can be found, and the variations *po/pho/bo* are also attested in inscriptions and manuscripts. For convenience sake, we earlier followed the proposal of Klimburg-Salter to use a spelling "Ta pho" (1987: fn. 9). At the last meeting of the Tabo research group in Vienna (January 19–20, 1996) it was decided to abstain in the future from this or similar differentiations, and to return to the modern spelling "Tabo".

³ According to Tucci's notes in the edi-

tion (cf. Tucci 1935: 197, nn. 1, 8; 198, notes 3, 4; 200, n. 3). This lama joined the expedition on July 7th (cf. Tucci and Ghersi 1934: 80). He was from Kaze monastery (*ibid.*) and his likeness is shown in fig. 74, but his name is not mentioned.

⁴ Cf. however, Photo Tucci Archive Neg. Dep. L. 6029/38, which shows the inscription in its place below the painting. For the interpretation of the painting cf. Chapter V.

⁵ As members of the joint expedition of the Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome, and the Institute of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Vienna. Our participation was supported by a grant from the Austrian Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung.

⁶ For the dating of the "monkey year" as A.D. 996 cf. Chapter VII.

⁷ For a survey of studies on the related ideas cf. H. Bechert 1992: n. 11.

⁸ Complements implied by phrase or term are given in round brackets. Complements of interpretation are given in square brackets. Words in *italics* are uncertain proposals of meaning.

⁹ I.e. Ye-shes-'od. Verse 3a alludes to his name (cf. Tucci 1935: 198, n. 7). He is considered to be a Bodhisattva (cf. Karmay 1980a: 150–1). This appositional term was used by his descendants as his name but seemingly not by himself. It may go back to the phrase *byang chub sems dpa'i gdung (brgyud)* ascribed to earlier kings (Karmay 1980b: 9; 1981: 209) which is used here as well (cf. v.2b).

¹⁰ "interest"? (read perhaps *nan*?).

¹¹ The meaning of *bodhimandala* (*byang-chub dkyil-'khor*) is unclear to us. It seems to be a synonym of *bodhimanda* (*byang-chub snying-po*) which refers to the seat of the Buddha's enlightenment.

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MLRP Dur-khrod nyul-ba'i rnal-'byor-par rus-pa'i rgyan-can, *Biography of Mi-la-ras-pa (rNal-'byor-gyi dbang-phyug chen-po rje-btsun Mi-la-ras-pa'i rnam-thar)* (Indo-Iranian Monographs IV), ed. J.W. De Jong. 's Gravenhage 1959.

MS *Mānasollāsa of Someśvara*, G.K. Shrigondekar ed., vol. II, Baroda 1939.

NEL Nel-pa Grags-pa-smon-lam-blo-gros. *sNgon-byung-gi gtam me-thog phreng-ba* [1283]. *Nel-pa Paṇḍita's Chronik Me-tog Phren-ba* (Studia Tibetica, Band 1), ed. and transl. H. Lebach. Munich 1987.

NGCB Ngor-chen dKon-mchog-lhun-grub [1497-1557], *Ngor chos-'byung (Dam-pa'i chos-kyi byung-tshul legs-par bshad-pa bstan-pa rgya-mtshor 'jug-pa'i gru-chen). A History of Buddhism being the text of Dam-pa'i chos...*, begun by Ngor-chen dKon-mchog-lhun-grub [c. 1550] and completed by Sangs-rgyas-phun-tshogs [1692]. *Reproduced from a rare xylographic print from the 1705 sDe-dge blocks from the Library of Burmiok Athing by Ngawang Topgay*. New Delhi 1973.

NGNT Ngor-chen Sangs-rgyas-phun-tshogs [1649-1705], *Biography of Ngor Kun-dga'-bzang-po (rGyal-ba rDo-rje-thang Kun-dga' bzang-po'i rnam-par thar-pa legs-bshad chu-bo 'dus-pa'i rgya-mtsho)* [1688; largely based on the biography composed in 1455 by Mus-pa chen-po dKon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan, 1388-1469]. sDe-dge print.

NSP *Nispannayogāvalī*, by Abhayakaragupta, ed. B. Bhattacharya. Vol. CIX of Gaekwad's Oriental Series. Baroda 1949.

NYANG mNga'-bdag Nyang RaI(-pa-can) Nyi-ma-'od-zer [1124/1136-1192/1204?], *Chos-'byung me-tog snying-po'i sbrang-rtsi'i bcud* [also *rNying-ma'i chos-'byung chen-mo, mnga'-bdag*

Nyang-gi chos-'byung, Dam-chos chos-'byung] [c. 1175-1190?]. *Die große Geschichte des tibetischen Buddhismus nach alter Tradition rNiin ma'i chos 'byun chen mo. Faksimile-Edition der Berliner Handschrift (Staatsbibliothek, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Hs. or. 1640) des Geschichtsbuches Chos 'byun Me tog sñin po'i sbran rci'i bcud, auch mNa' bdag Nān gi Chos 'byun genannt, verfaßt von Nān Ral pa can (1136-1204 A.D.)* (Monumenta Tibetica Historica, Abteilung I: Scriptorum, Band 3), R.O. Meisezahl. Sankt Augustin 1985.

PAKP Padma dkar-po [1527-1592], *Chos-'byung bstan-pa'i padma rgyas-pa'i nyin-byed ('Brug-pa'i chos-'byung)* [1575, revised 1580]. *Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po*, ed. L. Chandra. New Delhi 1968.

PCI bLo-bzang-chen-kyi-rgyal-mtshan [First Pañ-chen, 1570-1662], *Autobiography (Chos smra-ba'i dge-slong bLo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan-gyi spyod-tshul gsal-bar ston-pa nor-bu'i phreng-ba)*. Collected Works of the First Pañ-chen, vol. Ka/1.

Q *The Tibetan Tripitaka*, Peking Edition kept in the Library of the Otani University, Kyoto, ed. Daisei T. Suzuki. Tokio-Kyoto 1955-1958.

RCZP Gu-ge Khyi-thang-pa dPal-yeshes, *Biography of Rin-chen-bzang-po (Byang-chub sems-dpa' lo-isā-ba Rin-chen bzang-po'i 'khrungs-rabs dka' spyad sgron-ma rnam-thar shel-phreng lu-gu rgyud)*. In D.L. Snellgrove & T. Skorupski, *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh, Vol. 2: Zangskar and the Cave Temples of Ladakh*, pp. 85-116. Warminster 1980.

SKP Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan [1182-1251], *Biography of Sa-skya-pa Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (bLama rje-btsun chen-po'i rnam-thar; included in mKhas-pa rnam-skyi 'jug-pa'i sgo)*. *Sa-skya bka'-'bum* (compiled by bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho, 15 vols., Bibliotheca Tibetica 1/1-15, Tokyo 1968-69), vol. Tha, ff. 288b-299b.

SM *Sādhana-māla*, ed. B. Bhattacharya, Vol. XXVI and XLI of Gaekwad's Oriental Series. Baroda 1925-1928.

SNLG (gLo-bo mKhan-chen) bSod-nams-lhun-grub [1456-1532], *Autobiography (rJe-btsun bSod-nams lhun-grub legs-pa'i 'byung-gnas rgyal-mtshan dpal-bzang-po'i rnam-par thar-pa)* [1514?]. Ms. in the Library of the Tōyō Bunko, Tokyo.

SNTM bSod-nams-rtse-mo [1142-1182], *Chos-la 'jug-pa'i sgo* [1167], *Sa-*

- skya bka* - 'bum (compiled by bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho, 15 vols., Bibliotheca Tibetica 1/1–15, Tokyo 1968–69), vol. Nga, ff. 263b–317a.
- STTS** *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha. Sanskrit text with introduction and illustrations of maṇḍalas*, ed. Lokesh Chandra. New Delhi etc. 1987.
- STTS-a** *Sarvathāgatatattvasaṅgraha. Facsimile reproduction of a tenth century sanskrit manuscript from Nepal*. Reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove (Śatapitaka Series, Vol. 269). New Delhi 1981.
- THST** Ngag-gi-dbang-phyug, *Biography of Thang-ston rgyal-po (Grub-pa'i dbang-phyug chen-po lcags-zam-pa Thang-ston rgyal-po'i rnam-par thar-pa ngo-mtshar kun-gsal nor-bu'i me-long* [1588].
- Ti-se** 'Bri-gung-pa bsTan-'dzin-chos-kyi-blo-gros, *Gangs-ri chen-po Ti-se dang mtsho Ma-dros-pa bcas-kyi sngon-byung-gi lo-rgyus mdor-bsdus-su brjod-pa'i rab-hyed shel-dkar me-long* [1896]. *Two Tibetan Guide Books to Ti se and La phyi* (Monumenta Tibetica Historica, Abteilung I: Scriptores, Band 4), ed. and transl. E. De Rossi Filibeck. pp. 11–113. Bonn 1988.
- TSSM** rGod-tshang-ras-pa sNe-tshogs-rang-grol, *Biography of gTsang-smyon Heruka (gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka phyogs thams-cad las rnam-par rgyal-ba'i rnam-thar rdo-rje'i theg-pa'i gsal-byed nyi-ma 'i snying-po)* [1547] *The life of the Saint of gTsang*. New Delhi 1969.
- VS** *sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho* [1653–1705], *Vaidūrya ser-po* [1692–98] (Tib. woodprint). Lokesh Chandra's edition (New Delhi 1960) presents too many abbreviations and omissions to be safely used.
- YLJB** (Yar-lung Jo-bo) Śākya-rin-chen-sde, *Yar-lung jo-bo 'i chos-'byung* [1376]. Chengdu 1987.
- ZHWA** Zhwa-sgab-pa dBang-phyug-bde-ldan, *Bod-kyi srid-don rgyal-rabs*. 2 vols. Kalimpong 1976.
- AOH** Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
- BEFEO** Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient
- CAJ** Central Asiatic Journal
- EW** East and West
- HJAS** Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies
- IJJ** Indo-Iranian Journal
- JA** Journal Asiatique
- JASB** Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal
- JIABS** Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies
- JRAS** Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
- PIATS** Proceedings of the Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies
- WZKS** Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasien
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