

ÖSTERREICHISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN  
PHILOSOPHISCH-HISTORISCHE KLASSE  
DENKSCHRIFTEN, 267. BAND

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Proceedings of the  
7th Seminar of the International  
Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995

General Editor: Ernst Steinkellner

Volume VII

# The Inner Asian International Style 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Papers Presented at a Panel of the  
7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies,  
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Edited by

Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter and Eva Allinger



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BEITRÄGE ZUR KULTUR- UND GEISTESGESCHICHTE ASIENS

Nr. 25



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Vorgelegt von w. M. ERNST STEINKELLNER in der Sitzung am 17. Dezember 1997

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung des Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung

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ISBN 3-7001-2749-9

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Wien

Druck: Ferdinand Berger & Söhne, 3580 Horn

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors would like to thank several colleagues for their assistance, firstly Prof. Dr. Ernst Steinkellner, Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna. As always, his support for the research and intellectual inquiry pertaining to this topic, which continued through several years in the form of various seminars at the Institute, was of considerable value to the editors and other participants in this volume. Dr. Christian Luczanits, also of the Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, assisted in the preparation of the illustrations to this volume as well as provided valuable critical comments for several of the authors, as also Prof. F. Bischoff. We also thank Dr. Helmut Krasser of the Austrian Academy of Sciences for having provided important technical assistance, advise, and infrastructure in the preparation of this volume. And we particularly thank Mag. Christian Jahoda for his careful preparation of the camera-ready copy, as well as his critical comments.



# IS THERE AN INNER ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STYLE 12TH TO 14TH CENTURIES? DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM AND PRESENT STATE OF RESEARCH\*

by

Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, Vienna

The study of Tibetan art is a relatively new field. The initial task was to order the large corpus of painting – usually without provenance or inscriptions – in time and space. The architectural monuments, which are the only hope of providing the chronological context for the portable art, are only recently accessible to scholars and then rarely with adequate opportunity to study and document precisely the surviving art. Tibetan literary sources provide little information that is of help in defining taxonomic structures for Tibetan painting prior to the 15th century. In the rare cases when Tibetan painting is discussed in the learned tradition, these discussions are not illustrated and, as a result, it is extremely difficult to understand what precisely the painting looked like. The identification of Tibetan artists and the definition of Tibetan terms for the art created prior to the 15th century is even more problematic (e.g. Jackson 1996: 69–76).

It is generally agreed that a truly Tibetan style of art emerged in the 15th century. The paintings of earlier periods were usually classified according to the proposed source of inspiration, thus one distinguished between Kashmiri-, Pāla-, and of course Nepalese-inspired art. However, these different groups were not always so uniform or distinctive.

Attempts at a taxonomic order of painting revealed a group of thangkas and mural paintings which everyone accepted as having a related and distinctive style (fig. 1). These paintings have been grouped together under the term Pāla International Style (or just the International Style), the Pāla-Tibetan Style, the Pāla-related Style, or the bKa'-gdams-pa Style. Examples of this so-called "International Style" extend from Ladakh to Central Asia (Khara Khoto and Dunhuang) to Tibet and Burma and from the ca. late 11th to the mid-14th century. Although widely used, the term is nowhere clearly defined and the implied context appears to become more vague as the corpus of painting attributed to the 11th–14th centuries expands. The style has not yet been the subject of a scholarly monograph.<sup>1</sup>

It was considered an opportune moment to reconsider the question of this style in a panel to be held at the 7th International Conference of Tibetan Studies: Does this style exist, and if so, what are its essential features? To what degree are these features also shared by other contemporaneous Indian-inspired artistic schools? What are the precise elements which can be identified as Pāla? Is the emphasis on Pāla origins a meaningful distinction? Is it more meaningful to define regional schools based on the different and distinctive elaborations of the Indian-derived forms combined with local artistic traditions? Panel participants were also asked

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\* The research for this discussion was financed by the Austrian *Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung*.

<sup>1</sup> Two seminars took place at the Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna, where these problems were discussed. In addition to Allinger and Luczanits published here, other members of both of the seminars were Françoise Härtl, Sigrun Fröhlich and Renate Ponweiser. I thank them all for their stimulating contributions.

to consider the question of methodology and terminology. Does our more expanded artistic corpus and better acquaintance with the Tibetan sources allow us to define the artistic styles according to Tibetan definitions and cultural categories?

In the enthusiastic discussion among the rather large audience following the presentation of the papers<sup>2</sup> at the 7th International Conference of Tibetan Studies, it was unanimously decided that the term Pāla International Style had been serviceable at a particular stage in the history of Tibetan art, when the corpus of art was smaller, provenance rare, and chronology a matter of intense debate. However, as the corpus of portable painting and archaeological documentation grew, the stylistic dissimilarities became more obvious. In the context of present research, the term was no longer considered useful. A relatively large corpus of paintings whose common feature is the presence of stylistic elements derived from Indian art, plus the considerable advance in the understanding of Tibetan political and religious history, makes a reconsideration of these related groups of paintings a useful undertaking.

The first question which needs to be considered is the notion of an International Style. Useful methodological comparison can be found in earlier studies of European art ca. 1400, known in English as the International Gothic Style.<sup>3</sup> The discussions concerning the exhibition held in Vienna and the catalogue (1962) provide an instructive approach to the phenomenon of the wide distribution of shared artistic motifs at a given moment in time. For instance, why does a particular artistic vocabulary conquer a large and diverse artistic community? What were the factors which allowed for this artistic language to be mutually understood despite the vast dissimilarities, i.e. ethnic differences etc., over this large geographic area?

The European art categorized by this term shares relatively uniform stylistic characteristics, so that at first glance the regional variants of the style appear indistinguishable. It is only through careful analysis of small features and genre details that the different schools within this style can be distinguished. In the case of the so-called Inner Asian "International Style" although the common features are immediately recognizable so also are the differences. A painting from Khara Khoto of the 13th century is stylistically similar to a painting from 13th-century Burma but one never confuses them.

### **A Brief Review of Studies on the Pāla International Style**

Initially there was little agreement as to the provenance of the paintings in this style. Tucci (1949: 331, Pl. E) (fig. 1) initially defined this type of painting as belonging to a Nepali school. This approach was followed and expanded by Lo Bue (1985). These paintings were compared with the mural paintings in the Alchi lHa-khang So-ma which at that time was believed to date to the 12th–13th century, thus this style was called western Tibetan (Olschak and Wangyal 1972: 202), followed by Klimburg-Salter (1982). Béguin (1977: 75) originally drew attention to the Indian origins of this style. Later, Pal (1984: 29ff.) defined the pictorial sources more precisely as Pāla-Sena and attributed the paintings in this style to central Tibet. Most subsequent researchers have followed this trend. In 1986/87 Béguin and Fournier dedicated an entire article to the post-Pāla International Style. The point of departure was a group of Ladakhi monuments; Béguin and Fournier defined five stylistic groups within this larger stylistic cate-

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<sup>2</sup> Included here are the two papers from Bautze-Picron and Samossiuk which were originally prepared for the conference, although the authors subsequently were not able to attend.

<sup>3</sup> I thank Françoise Härtl for drawing my attention to several useful articles on this topic.



gory. Here they note that Tucci and Lo Bue confuse Nepali and post-Pāla images. Although Béguin and Fournier carefully define their stylistic categories and examples, it must be admitted that from a strictly historical perspective Nepali art of the 12th–14th centuries is also essentially post-Pāla. Indeed it would seem that we have here sometimes a disagreement regarding attributions, but also a semantic difference.

Other scholars were more hesitant in defining the historical development of the style. Thus Karmay (1975) saw the development of the style as resulting from a complex process beginning with Pāla-Sena, traveling via Nepal to Tibet, and ending, for the purpose of her study, in Khara Khoto. Rhie (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 51) summarizes or condenses the description of this long art historical process by simply referring to paintings as a group having Indo-Nepalese stylistic elements, thus including of course the Pāla experience. Singer (1994) is even more reductive. She simply refers broadly to the northeast Indian origins of specific paintings. Both of these last two publications avoid the more restricted sense associated with the term Pāla and recognize more complex art historical developments. Bautze-Picron has in several earlier articles (1993, 1995/96), as also here, attempted to precise the different stylistic characteristics of some of these northeast Indian stylistic idioms.

But no matter what they called it, all scholars identified a relatively large group of paintings which shared a group of stylistic characteristics, among which Indian elements predominated. Paintings in related styles were identified throughout Inner Asia as far as Burma, thus it was considered to be an international style. However, as the number of paintings and monuments increased the appreciation of the rather wide range of formal variations also increased. Thus as early as 1984 Pal acknowledged two variants within this Pāla-inspired style. As already noted, Béguin and Fournier (1986/87: 380) described five groups within the post-Pāla style through the 15th century, one of which was characterized by eclecticism. For instance there are examples of paintings from Ladakh where Kashmiri-inspired figures and Nepalese-inspired protector figures surround a central configuration which is depicted in a “post-Pāla” manner.

### Typological Organization of Stylistic Groups

In part in acknowledgment of this eclecticism some authors preferred to move away from terminology emphasizing foreign influences. Several different typologies have been proposed, e.g. based on patronage groups or geographically defined regional styles.

Pal (1984: 29ff.) attempted to define stylistic groups on the basis of patronage, thus the bKa'-gdams-pa School. This referred to the same group of paintings others called post-Pāla or Pāla International. Unfortunately, the bKa'-gdams-pa association in these thangkas was essentially hypothetical. At that time no painting was known with figures from the bKa'-gdams-pa lineage identified by clearly contemporaneous inscriptions. One thangka (Singer 1994: Fig. 16) with an apparently later inscription on the back identifies the central figure as Atiśa. Now it can be verified that the iconography of this figure is similar to the only (to my knowledge) contemporarily inscribed figure of Atiśa (fig. 3). Based on the inscribed representations on the Spiti thangka, other thangkas may be identified with paintings of lineages that originate with Atiśa.<sup>4</sup> Singer (1997) followed Pal's methodology. Although denying that the sTag-lung

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<sup>4</sup> For instance in Pal 1983: Pl. 9. The unidentified small figures to the right and left appear to be Atiśa and his main disciple 'Brom-ston. Also based on the iconography on the Spiti thangka other attributions to bKa'-gdams-pa figures become questionable. Such as in Singer (1994: Pl. 17a), where the figure in monastic dress is identified as 'Brom-ston although the latter was an ordained layman and thus in the Spiti thangka is shown in layman's clothes and with long hair.

paintings constitute a stylistic group, she grouped together paintings which could be identified as having a common patronage source.

This point certainly needs to be carefully examined in the future. Do the paintings dedicated to the bKa'-gdams-pa lineage holders have distinctive formal elements which are different from paintings dedicated to the bKa'-brgyud-pa lineage holders? Can the appellation bKa'-gdams-pa School be used to define a stylistically homogenous group of paintings associated with the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition? Or is the same style also used for paintings dedicated to bKa'-brgyud-pa masters originating from the same region? A complication here is that in the early period the schools founded by Atiśa and Mar-pa were called bKa'-brgyud. Atiśa's followers called themselves bKa'-brgyud bKa'-gdams-pa. Here Stoddard proposes that *rGya-lugs* refers to the northeast India-Pāla style.

The studies in this volume demonstrate that related stylistic groups usually may be defined geographically. For example however, the wide diffusion of these regional styles (from Central Asia and Ladakh to Burma) demonstrates precisely how difficult this process of stylistic differentiation is in a world of itinerant artists, portable paintings, and peripatetic pan-Tibetan religious orders.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, in order to define the individual idioms within this style it is first necessary, as Bautze-Picron demonstrates, to carefully define the vocabulary of forms. Then through a comparative formal analysis one can determine the place of each group of paintings within the local art historical tradition, as well as its relationship to the Indian artistic legacy. For instance, Luczanits has noted that in Ladakh the *stūpa* paintings, which he publishes here, form a complete break with the earlier style of painting from the region, well known for example from the Alchi 'Du-khang. Thus suggesting that the style was imported. It is instructive to note the similar phenomenon in Spiti valley, Himachal Pradesh, India. Thus in Ladakh and western Tibet the use of this style can be seen as an historical episode rather than a natural part of the art historical development.

The consistent feature found in all the stylistic variants of the general style discussed here is the composition, and particularly the depiction of the central configuration. There is always a single figure on the axis of the composition which is much larger than all other figures (fig. 1). In slightly later paintings it is usual for this figure to be separated from the surrounding image by an oblong, square panel structure (fig. 4), very frequently this central figure is accompanied by a pair of much smaller attendant figures, usually Bodhisattvas (fig. 2). There are numerous variations on this theme, i.e. the frame can be lobed – three or five lobes, there can be small figures represented at the upper part of the frame, within or without the frame. The Bodhisattvas often share some similar stylistic features – the torso is represented frontally and the feet are seen in side view, there is a high and elaborate coiffure and the crown is composed of triangular elements, but not always, compare fig. 5 from Stūpa 1 at Tabo and fig. 2, a thangka from Spiti. On closer examination it is usually these genre elements, style of dress, textile patterns and jewelry that show a marked regional pattern. The regionally distinctive dress of donor figures is well known, but also one may compare the costume of the Padmasambhava figure (fig. 4) from Tabo with the same figure in a painting from central Tibet

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<sup>5</sup> Essentially the terms found in Tibetan sources and inscriptions are without a clear definition, in fact, most of these terms are either geographic or sectarian, e.g. bKa'-gdams-pa, Kha-che-lugs (Klimburg-Salter 1987), rGya-gar-lugs and Li-lugs. The term proposed by John Huntington (Huntington and Huntington 1990: 294ff.) Shar-mthun-ris is rejected by Jackson (1996: 34): "... this term is not to my knowledge attested within the Tibetan learned tradition ...".

(Rhie and Thurman 1991: 46.1). As is consistent with other central Tibetan paintings in this style, the garments are patterned in several rich all-over designs and other decorative elements create a sense of movement around the figure. In contrast, the Tabo figure wears a simple monastic robe over the typical western Tibetan shirt/jacket which in this case, unusually, has an all-over pattern. Earlier representations of this costume are always without patterns. The monastic robe is edged with a thick white line. This is also a widespread feature of the art of western Tibet (fig. 6 from the same *stūpa*, as well as figs. 2 and 3). For instance, this motif is used throughout the paintings of the Gyatsa (the so-called Maṇḍala Temple in Tholing) (fig. 7).

Thus we see in Spiti (i.e. western Tibet), as in Ladakh, a local variant of this so-called "International Style" which is totally different from the Indo-Tibetan style which preceded it. The typical triad for instance (figs. 1 and 2) is unknown in the earlier art of the region. Nonetheless, the local stylistic variant has certain distinctive features, for instance the pointed *uṣṇīṣa* of the late 11th century (Klimburg-Salter 1997b: fig. 224) becomes even more exaggerated, sprouting a spear-like extension (compare Klimburg-Salter 1997a: fig. 1c), and the white edged robes, and the generally simpler compositions, and lack of excessive surface and background ornamentation, as seen in the central Tibetan variants of this general style. The chronology of this style is hardly studied in western Tibet (Klimburg-Salter 1997b). It remains to be determined if, and to what degree, the different stylistic variants were associated with specific sectarian groups, as suggested by Luczanits for Ladakh and Samossiuk for Khara Khoto.

### Future Tasks

Within the context of the questions raised above let us consider some of the directions for future study which emerge as a result of the papers presented here. A point of departure, as has been stressed here and in 1995/96 by Bautze-Picron, is to define precisely the structure of the artistic language and its origin. The art production in the 11th to 13th centuries in eastern India was enormous and spread over a relatively large area. Within this area there were distinctive preferences and historical developments and the iconology was not always uniform. So it is necessary to define with greater attention how these forms changed in the various regional schools which developed beyond India. An image was usually transformed as it traveled away from its Indian origins; a form frequently lost its iconographic meaning, becoming essentially decorative. A point manifestly clear in Toyka-Fuong's article is that not all Pāla-derived styles belong to this so-called "International Style". The paintings discussed by Toyka-Fuong, dated ca. 1020, from Dunhuang, although derived from Pāla art both in terms of style and function, were well within the general scope of Chinese painting in Dunhuang within the 10th and 11th century.<sup>6</sup>

Samossiuk, dealing with paintings attributed to the same period, demonstrates how the religious, political, and institutional contexts of both the Tibetan and the Chinese cultural spheres can assist us in dating paintings. A comparative analysis of these two paintings studied here and dated to the late 11th/early 12th century from Khara Khoto should now assist us in

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<sup>6</sup> A curious feature here is that most of the examples Toyka-Fuong cites are later than the Dunhuang paintings. The logic here is that earlier paintings have simply not survived. But can there be other explanations for the source of these Indian elements in Dunhuang? For instance the miracle of the monkey at Tabo (1042) may be compared to the Dunhuang example.

dating paintings from Tibet in related styles. This article also draws attention to the new phase of scholarship on Khara Khoto which attempts a more precise chronology up to the 14th century rather than to catch all the attributions “before 1227”.

One of the earliest paintings belonging to this broad stylistic group is the Ford Tārā discussed here by Allinger. The history of the study of this painting presents several interesting problems in the definition of this general style. This painting has earlier been considered an example of the “bKa’-gdams-pa style”. This assumption was based in part on the proposed identification of the two historical figures as Atiśa and ’Brom-ston.

Art historians tended to repeat the dGe-lugs-pa version (or revision) of Tibet’s religious history whereby Atiśa is seen as the essential personality in the propagation of Buddhism during the Later Diffusion of Buddhism (*phyi-dar*). In fact, Atiśa was only one of a number of *paṇḍits*, many of whom have not come down to us in history, who came to Tibet to teach or assist in the process of translation of religious texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan. In addition there were also Tibetans who spent many years in India studying Buddhism before returning to their homeland and playing an active role in the teaching and translation of Buddhism. One well known example of this phenomenon is of course Rin-chen-bzang-po who was a central figure in the establishment of Buddhism in the kingdom of the kings of Purang-Guge. However, another extremely important figure who, in this context, has not received the attention he deserves is Mar-pa.

The Tibetan Mar-pa spent many years in India before returning to central Tibet. His teaching at that time is considered to mark the beginning of the bKa’-brgyud-pa school. It is only reasonable to imagine that Mar-pa would have brought from India not only texts, but also the icons and liturgical objects necessary for meditation and ritual practice. Stoddard in her article here publishes a book cover with an important inscription which contains, among other names, a reference to the family (or better clan) of Mar-pa who may well be, as she says, the same as the great teacher.

It will be remembered that a large percentage of the paintings which have been identified either by inscription or according to paintings of lineages can be attributed to sub-schools of the bKa’-brgyud-pa. Luczanits has proposed that the introduction of the regional version of this style in Ladakh is likely to be connected with the advent of the ’Bri-gung-pa, a bKa’-brgyud-pa sub-sect.

Several articles in this volume call attention to the relationship between variants of this style and specific religious transmissions. The intimate relationship between art and ritual in Vajrayāna Buddhism is well known, as is the wide-spread importance of the Yoga Tantras. Heller’s article draws attention to the fact that there were different commentaries (variants) of the same root text, and specifically of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala, throughout this region at this time, a phenomenon also valid at Tabo (Klimburg-Salter 1997b). Until now few studies have attempted to understand the transmission of art forms as a part of the religious history of the region. For instance, it has been frequently noted that an unusually high percentage of portraits of hierarchs are found during this period and that in the 13th century the representation of religious lineages becomes progressively more important (Luczanits). Thus the conclusion is inescapable that a major function of thangka painting at this time was to propagate and edify the major teachers of a particular lineage.

However, the understanding of both the evolution of iconographic forms as well as their transmission is not a simple process and one must always remember that the image not only has a religious function but also has an aesthetic function, as Bautze-Picron has noted: “The visual

experience was not exclusively the result of dogmatic iconography but partook also of an inner plastic logic. Stylistic rules can also direct the composition of the image.” (1993: 284).

And finally referring again to studies of the so-called “International Gothic” which have noticed the decentralization of political power during that time as well as the mobility of artists and religious personages, it would certainly be important to define more precisely the political and institutional relationships of the different monasteries during this expanded period. As our corpus of objects expands and our understanding of the political and institutional contexts of the period become more refined, it should become easier to define with precision both the historical, art historical, and religious basis for the stylistic unity as well as the regional dissimilarities which occur in the definition of each of the typologically and geographically defined stylistic groups.

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Fig. 1: Ratnasambhava, gouache on cloth, c. 12th century, Los Angeles County Museum of Art





Fig. 2: Amitābha, gouache on cloth, 12th–13th century, private collection



Fig.3: Detail with Atiṣa (Jo-bo rJe) and 'Brom-ston, figures 3 and 4 from right





Fig. 4: Padmasambhava, Stūpa I, Tabo, c. 13th century





Fig. 5: East wall of Stūpa I, Tabo, c. 13th century



Fig. 6: Detail, east wall of Stūpa I, Tabo, c. 13th century





Fig. 7: Gyatsa, Tholing, c. 13th century, photographed by E. Gherzi, Tucci Archives. By courtesy of Is.I.A.O., Rome



Fig. 8: Gyatsa, Tholing, c. 13th century, photographed by E. Gherzi, Tucci Archives. By courtesy of Is.I.A.O., Rome



# THE ELABORATION OF A STYLE: EASTERN INDIAN MOTIFS AND FORMS IN EARLY TIBETAN (?) AND BURMESE PAINTING

by

Claudine Bautze-Picron, C.N.R.S. - Paris

## Introduction – Methodology

This article considers the study of motifs of Indian origin which are included in the composition of “Tibetan” or Burmese paintings. It is essentially based on the analysis of two paintings (BP 1995/96, figs. 1–2 [in colour] and 4–11, 14 [details], again here figs. 1–2) which, as will be shown here, belong to the latest phase of Indian and the earliest phase of Tibetan *thangka* painting. This assessment results from a detailed analysis of decorative motifs which they include. The methodology which is employed here was already successfully used by French art historians for the study of various aspects of the arts of India and South East Asia where no securely dated material allows one to propose the evolution of these arts. Thus, it is through a minute, at times tiresome, study of motifs and of their variations that one can propose a relative chronology which can be afterwards buttressed by elements providing for an absolute chronology. This study requires a dismemberment of the images: motifs are extracted from the images in order to be compared to their counterparts in other artifacts, painted or carved; this “philological” approach considers the vocabulary on which an image is elaborated, the words, i.e. the motifs, which are organized in certain patterns in order to convey a certain message: this aspect of the analysis, which is to pass from a consideration of pure formal and “decorative” motifs to the iconographical level of interpretation, will not be dealt with here.

Besides, the study of decorative/iconographic motifs applied to the sculpture and manuscript illuminations of Bihar and Bengal, provides a detailed map and chronology of the distribution of the motifs. This “map” should help in tracing, with some accuracy, the geographical origin of motifs observed on Tibetan paintings. This can also perhaps constitute the introduction to the systematic study of the very same motifs in early Tibetan paintings and the study of their transformations therein. This study requires one to isolate motifs, to propose a catalogue of them and to study their forms and their evolution. The comparative study of a group of motifs can consequently allow one to propose a chronological pattern, which, in the absence of any safely dated material, remains to some extent tentative. This should also permit one to go beyond the general assessment about the “Pāla” influence, eventually to eradicate this terminology and to trace with more precision the actual sites where decorative motifs were more particularly part of the artistic language. Moreover, it allows one to understand “what” is actually illustrated.

As a matter of fact, when dealing with early Tibetan painting or sculpture, authors assess often a “Pāla” origin to a number of elements, including some iconographic aspects. None the less, this label does not contribute to a better knowledge, even less understanding, of the real Indian component within the art objects. Such a vague denomination is used as if the art of eastern India was still in a rough stage of study, all “Indian things” mixed together as if sunken in a nebulous area – and as a result, wrong information is at times given about the Indian artifacts which are considered for sake of comparison (recently for instance by Rhie 1997, 46 and fig. 25: the sculpture was found at Viṣṇupur and not at Nālandā).

However, we cannot propose here a study of every “decorative motif” depicted in early Tibetan painting. We shall concentrate on those actually observed on two thangkas and shall only eventually evoke motifs like the rocky landscape and the mountain with its caves and trees. We shall also not study the dress worn by the Bodhisattvas and characters such as Māyā, their jewellery or their hairdress although much can be said about them.

A style, or a particular phase in the development of a style, or a stylistic idiom – which is the regional form adopted by a particular style – is not exclusively bound to a specific material. The study of Indian art does not generally encompass the various aspects of the artistic production in a certain region at a particular period, but is limited to the analysis of a specific material, be it painting, be it stone carving or bronze casting. However, the stylistic forms transcend these differences in material, as will be seen in the second part of the analysis.

Studying objects which would appear at a first glance to be Indian, but were found in Tibet, like the thangkas of figs. 1 and 2 forces one to introduce a very detailed analysis of them. The aim of this paper is not to demonstrate their Indian origin or their Tibetan genuineness; it is probably more relevant to notice that, because of the ambivalent position which they occupy at the merging of two historical phases of Buddhism, they belong to the eastern Indian tradition of painting even though they anticipate the later development of Tibetan painting. Keeping in mind this frame, we can attempt to trace what is “Indian” in them, how “Indian” they are, and hence, how “Tibetan”.

Both thangkas illustrate the Buddha Śākyamuni at the moment of his Enlightenment and introduce a number of scenes around the central image in an iconographic composition which traces its origin in eastern India (BP 1995/96). It is evident that these paintings introduce iconographic aspects which can be directly related to stone sculptures of Bihar and Bengal. This is of particular interest since it allows one to locate very precisely the areas or sites where these aspects were more particularly favoured. As a consequence, and since in a religious art, the style is deeply rooted in the iconography, we are also in the position to suggest possible sources for the elaboration of the decorative palette of the paintings.

### Comparative Material

The selection of the comparative material, i.e. thangkas, wall-paintings, illustrated manuscripts and stone sculptures, does not depend exclusively on their iconography although it is easier to uncover the stylistic similarities and dissimilarities which exist between images sharing the same iconography than between images of different iconographies since some specific motifs are evidently related to the depicted iconography.

#### a. Thangkas

Beside seven paintings listed in a previous article (BP 1995/96, 380, listed A-F [also here A to F] and fig. 3 [here G]) which illustrate the Enlightenment of the Buddha, the study of decorative motifs and of the composition of the images requires one to enlarge this list with examples illustrating various iconographies: H. Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā (Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 13), I. Mañjuśrī (*idem*, cat. 12), J. Tārā (Ford collection; Pal 1984, 224; Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 108; Rhie/Thurman 1991, cat. 24; CS 1994, figs. 7–9). Various portraits of hierarchs should be added to the list, such as the one of K. the Kaśmīri Śākyaśrībhadrā [1127–1225] (Pal 1969, cat. 5 [with further references], Pal 1984, fig. 10), L. Phagmodrupa (Phag-mo gru-pa) [1110–1170] (Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 9), master of M. Thangpa Chenpo (Thang-pa chen-po), the Taglung (sTag-lung) founder (Pal 1990, fig. 6; Sotheby’s 1.11.1993, cat. 69; CS 1994, 121–122

and fig. 25; CS 1997, fig. 37) and three further portraits: N (Sotheby's 17.6.1993, cat. 41), O (Sotheby's 4.6.1994, cat. 41) and P (Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 10; Sotheby's 23.3.1995, cat. 75). Beside some more thangka which will be mentioned in the course of the discussion, reference to the pictorial material discovered at Khara Khoto will be at times required.

## b. Wall-paintings

The iconographic and stylistic history of the wall-paintings adorning the monuments of Pagan is still unwritten. Authors, like P. Pal or more recently J. Casey Singer, who have been concerned with the study of Tibetan painting, have already had the opportunity to stress the existence of stylistic similarities with the Pagan murals, without however detailing this aspect of the question. However, field-work carried out in spring 1996 in the villages of Minnanthu and Myinkaba allows one to allude to some of the paintings covering the inner walls of numerous temples. Thus, the following monuments will more particularly be taken into consideration: 147 (Tha-kya-muni-hpaya, c. 13th c.: Pichard 1992/95, vol. 1, 230–233), 505 (Ka-tha-pa-hpaya [east], c. 13th c.: *idem*, vol. 2, 331–333), 577 (Nanda-na-nya-hpaya, c. 13th c.: *idem*, vol. 3, 35–39), 676 (So-hla-wun-hpaya, 1269 A.D.: *idem*, vol. 3, 188–191), 1250 (c. 12th c.: *idem*, vol. 5, 160–161), 1323 (Kubyauk-gyi in Myinkaba, 1112 A.D.: *idem*, vol. 5, 242–251 or Frash 1996, 56), 580 (Loka-hteik-pan, c. 12th c.: *idem*, vol. 6, 198–202), 1605 (Patho-tha-mya, late 11th c.: *idem*, vol. 6, 244–248).

## c. Manuscripts

Among the numerous illuminated manuscripts from Bihar and Bengal, four provide particularly precious information. Manuscript A belongs to the Baroda Museum where 22 folios are preserved including the colophon which mentions that the manuscript was realised in the 8th regnal year of Harivarman, i.e. around 1100 (Bhattacharyya 1944, 18 and after him: Losty 1989a, figs. 2–3; Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, 78 [1081/82] and figs. 25a-b; Saraswati 1978, 77, 80 and 163). Other folios of the same manuscript are dispersed in Western collections (Pal 1984, pl. 5; Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, 82 and pl. 16, fig. 26) (here: figs. 13 and 29).

Manuscript B is preserved in the British Library. It illustrates the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* and is dated around 1100 by J. Losty who attributes it to a western Bengal atelier (Losty 1989a; Losty 1982, 34: cat. 10; also in Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 29) (here: figs. 14–17, 23, 27–28, 30). The paintings share, however, a number of stylistic and iconographic features with the Baroda manuscript and with wall-paintings of Pagan, which permits one to suggest a south-eastern Bengal origin.

Manuscript C. Only two folios of this manuscript, preserved in the Asia Society of New York, will be considered here. But this work occupies a particular position in art history. The issue of the existence of two groups of paintings, which must be attributed to two different ateliers, located in different areas, was recently discussed (Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 58). The colophon indicates the regnal year 15 of Vighrahapāla [III], thus in the third quarter of the 11th c. and a rededication was made in the 12th c. in the regnal year 8 of Gopāla [IV]. The importance of the manuscript lies also in the fact that it contains inscriptions in Tibetan which name its successive owners, including the great Śākyaśrībhadrā who probably brought it to Tibet when he left Vikramaśīla. J. and S. Huntington (1990, 185), while describing the manuscript, locate, tentatively, the atelier for the second part of the manuscript in “Bihar (?)”.<sup>1</sup> Con-

<sup>1</sup> They mention that the white background of the paintings in this part of the manuscript would also be noticed on

trarily to these authors, I suggest to consider the illustrations on a white background, with a restrained treatment, a more round but also stiffer line, to belong to the first phase of illustration of the manuscript whereas the paintings of the second group, characterized by a more nervous and more lissom line or by a richer palette, are typical of the style blossoming in the first part of the 12th c., illustrated more particularly by manuscripts of Rāmapāla and Gopāla [IV].

#### d. Sculptures

We shall repeatedly refer to various images from Bihar which share similar decorative motifs, and to a group of sculptures from south-east Bangladesh which share the iconography and some stylistic designs of the large *thangka* (figs. 2 and 3). These stelae can be dated in the second part of the 12th c. (BP 1992a; BP 1995/96, figs. 15, 17, 22; BP 1996, figs. 23–29).

### The Decorative Motifs

#### a. The Architectural Structure

The central deity sits in an architectural setting. A trefoil is drawn within the lower recesses of a temple, which are surmounted by the tower; this upper structure rests on two pillars or on walls hidden by the two attending Bodhisattvas. In this case, only the edge of the wall is marked by the gemmed row. A very clear depiction of the motif is seen in fig. 1. The pillars sustain the main structure as well as the side niches where the attending Bodhisattvas are depicted. They are eight-sided and remind one of the octagonal pillars seen on slabs from Nālandā and the area (BP 1991, figs. 6–20). A rhomboid ornament is painted at mid-height, the same occurs on a Nālandā style stele (Begley 1969, cat. 3). A similar, but triangular, element hangs from the upper part of the pillars; the same, much larger, occurs on these examples from Nālandā or on other ones from other sites in Bihar where it usually falls above the capital (fig. 36).

##### 1. The *āmalaka*

The very same painting offers an element which does not appear anymore on the other paintings with an architectural setting, and which finds its origin in India, i.e. the *āmalaka*. This fruit occurs above the pillars and below one of the upper recesses. If it occurs also on slabs from Nālandā (BP 1991, figs. 6–16, 18–20), it more usually crowns the tower above images carved in the drum or in the high bases of votive *stūpas* (Bénisti 1981, figs. 8–11; Woodward Jr 1990, figs. 1, 3–5) (figs. 3–7).

On fig. 4, the treatment of the red *āmalaka* crowning the tower still remains close to the carved prototype. It occurs also on paintings in the Kubyauk-gyi at Pagan/Myinkaba (monument 1323) (fig. 8), in the series of depictions of the Buddha of the Past (the same structure is repeated all around the inner wall of the circumambulation path). It is there standing above the successive levels and not above the tower which is not represented. Another treatment is illustrated in the monument 572 (fig. 9) where the upper part of the architecture is shaped as a *bell-caitya*, as it can also be represented on the sculpture from Bangladesh (BP 1992, figs. 1–3; 1996, fig. 28: detail of fig. 3) or as it appears on a *thangka* from Khara Khoto (Piotrovsky

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fragments of a manuscript preserved at Pagan (189, note 16). While at the Pagan Museum in spring 1996, no one could however show me such a manuscript and I suspect that what they observed were probably remains of one of the *thangkas* discovered in the recent years in site monuments (see *Southeast Asia* 1995, 113, 129) where the background is white.



1993, cat. 6). On the *thangka* here like in the paintings of the Nanda-na-nya-hpaya (fig. 10), it is indeed the jar of plenty surmounting the tower which is probably illustrated with the *āmalaka* marking its largest width.

Motifs are also interchangeable: in India, the painters alternated the *śikhara* with the *āmalaka* alone within the same manuscript (Coomaraswamy 1923, pl. XXXIII where the tower is above the Buddha, the *āmalaka* above the Prajñāpāramitā). The sculptors were also able to play with architectural motifs as illustrated here on fig. 5. At Pagan also, the painters could also expose their creativity through the rendering of this motif: in monument 572 e.g. (fig. 9), the architecture in brick is painted above the cult image, whereas the three other sides of the ceiling bear the representation of the light structure, probably reproducing the wooden architecture. Two aspects should be differentiated, on the one hand the variations of motifs introduced in painting or sculpture which reflect the attempt of the craftsman to transform his creation into a work of art and on the other hand, the parallel introduction with these variations, of the hierarchy within the image: the sculptures from Bangladesh (fig. 3) show the *śikhara* only above the main image, the *āmalaka* or/and *cāitya* above the side images. The study of the Pagan murals would most probably reveal the same situation.

It is evident that the motif underwent a deep transformation in its painted representations since the ribs of the fruit look like spears with dots on either extremities as seen on the second tier from the top of the shrine. The motif having preserved its position in sculpture (at the angles or crowning the *śikhara*, or forming the capital of side columns), leads to the conclusion that artists still knew its meaning. This observation applies also to some occurrences in paintings (I). It is thus essentially through its position in the composition and its similarity to the carved motif that we can definitely identify the spear-motif as being the fruit of the myrobalan.

These examples allow one to understand the later development of the motif: it is here seen above the columns and at the extremities of tiers which are interrupted by the arch. But it becomes evident that the painters did not know anymore that they were painting this fruit when spears covered entire levels of the tower and were not limited to the extremities (K); it might be possible here that they saw the motif as treated on the earlier examples as a part of an interrupted frieze and not as an element limited to only a part of the tier. Similar examples are noticed on 12th-century sculptures from central India: the shrine with rows of spears occurs above an image from Tewar (Banerji 1931, pl. XXXVI), above a sculpture allegedly from Sārnāth (fig. 11: but compare the nimbus with Banerji 1931, pl. XL) or even in north Bengal, it occurs in a re-used niche of the Adina Masjid at Hazra Pandua (Hasan 1979, pl. XIV). These various examples are isolated within contemporary and local production (the Tewar images are basically Hindu), and one could surmise that they were carved after painted prototypes showing the spear motif.

Also the painters of Pagan introduced the motif of the spears, differentiating it clearly from its prototype: at the Kubyauk-gyi (fig. 8) or at the Patho-tha-mya (fig. 12), thin white spears are drawn on a dark background. And it appears on the very same images where the genuine *āmalaka* crowns the construction.

The motif underwent transformations. First, on the painting considered here, it is open at both extremities at the level of the shrine where it is depicted. Second, on the painting A, a thin line surrounds it. Third, a square abstract motif marks both ends (K, CS 1994, fig. 12, Losty 1986, fig. 2 and 1989b, fig. 14 = here fig. 41: manuscript from Vikramaśīla, dated around 1145). Fourth, a thick outer line surrounds the line of spears, the motif is integrated in the back of the throne (CS 1994, fig. 12, Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 4 and 12) or in the pedestal sustaining the

central image (Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 13, Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 4 and 12). This last treatment illustrates a complete misunderstanding of the original motif.

## 2. *The sikhara*

The very commonly observed shrine shows a very specific shape: it includes a broad plinth of superimposed recesses of diminishing width, which are delineated with care and which support a tower. The niche is drawn in the lower tiers of this tower while one or two levels are completely represented above it. However, even the lower levels interrupted by the opening are clearly distinguished (K, fig. 1). Five levels are usually painted and the artists avoided repetition by giving another profile to the central, or third, level (**drawing II-1**). The levels sustain the upper tower which includes the figure of a Buddha or of a deity (in the case of the Tārā: H).

The shrine, but deprived of the tower, is a constant motif in 12th-century manuscript illuminations from eastern India where it is related to any iconographical type and not particularly to the Buddha. Among the earliest examples, are those illustrated here on **figs. 14–15** which are, as on south-eastern sculptures (BP 1992a), seen above Śākyamuni's depictions. Manuscripts A and B include depictions of the shrine with large lower recesses acting as a platform for the tower (Pal 1984, pl. 5, Losty 1989a, figs. 3 and 20, here **fig. 16**) as it usually appears on the *thangkas* (see also Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 4) or in the composition of niches at Pagan (Luce 1969–70, pls. 164a-b [Patho-tha-mya], 214a-c [Abēyadana, where the *caitya* replaces the *śikhara*, see below], 227 [Abēyadana, similar to the examples noted here on **figs. 8, 14–15 e.g.**]).

When searching for painted or carved Indian prototypes for the tower, it should not be overlooked that painting and sculpture have to simplify the prototype, evidently because of the difference of size, for instance no *āmalaka* is depicted at the corners on the sculptures from south-east Bangladesh or on the smaller *thangka* (**fig. 1** and BP 1992a). Only two monuments illustrate the model related to the tower observed on the paintings and sculptures, i.e. the temple IV at Barākar, in the district of Burdwan (Asher 1980, pls. 225–226, Saraswati 1976, figs. 6–8) and the Bodhi Mandir (Bénisti 1981, fig. 1). In sculpture, the *āmalakas* disappear usually from the angles, but not the lions. These animals are also depicted on some manuscripts (e.g. B: Losty 1989a, fig. 12 and here, but badly visible, **figs. 14–15, 17**).

The use of the architectural motif in the 11th and 12th centuries is also illustrated by the carving of free-standing small *śikharas*, such as those found at Jhewari in north Bengal, or the one of unknown provenance preserved in the Cleveland Museum (Saraswati 1976, figs. 14–15; Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 41). The tower (BP 1992a, figs. 1–3; 1995/96, fig. 15; 1996, figs. 23, 27–28; Casey 1985, cat. 33) does not evidently copy the actual Bodhi Mandir tower. The network of *gavākṣas* is much simplified: a single vertical row is drawn on a central band, which narrows upwards; they do not contain anymore representations of the Buddha. This central band is surrounded by a row of foliated scrolls and the flat recesses of decreasing width appear in the outer part.

From the available 19th-century material and from the “Pāla” copies of the temple (all recovered in Tibet), it appears that the Bodhi Mandir had its tower adorned by an elaborated system of niches and *gavākṣas* in which images of the Buddha were distributed. It is likely that the niche seen in the tower in painting and sculpture traces its origin to this feature. The same idea, indeed, might be behind these niches on the Bodhi Mandir and those on the carvings and paintings, i.e. images of the Buddha are multiplied and distributed within an architectural structure like within a *maṇḍala*, at the same time that they can be identified with the temple.

A rather similar structure is noticed on bas-reliefs which had belonged to the pedestal of votive *stūpas* from Bodh Gayā. These friezes include a high niche within the tower where a smaller image of the Buddha is depicted (fig. 6). The stucco decoration on a *caitya* at Pagan (fig. 19), reflects particularly well the treatment of this motif. The tower reproduces the tiered shape with a front ornamentation of scrolls around a grotesque head. This tower rests above a broader platform with three recesses and is topped not by the vase of abundance, but by a *caitya*. This accumulation of motifs where the *caitya* and the *śikhara* constitute a harmonious combination above the sanctuary *stricto sensu* (including the high trefoiled niche with image of the Buddha), reflects the local evolution based on Indian motifs: the sculptures from south-east Bangladesh or even the votive *caityas* from Bihar can also present variations but they do not combine the *caitya* and the *śikhara*, they select the one or the other above the lower recesses and the niche. Another example is provided in the Abēyadana, south wall of the circumambulation path (fig. 20; Luce 1969–70, pl. 215d), where the central niche must have contained an image (now lost) of the Enlightenment of the Buddha since the army of Māra is painted around it.

From below the upper *āmalaka*, ribbons are flying (figs. 1 and 2, A; Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 4) which are also noticed in the sculpture of south-east Bangladesh (Casey 1985, cat. 33).

The superimposed recesses, of diminishing width, are delineated with care. Like various other elements of the paintings, they are adorned by a row of petals delineated by a gold line and having their inner field painted in blue or red. The motif constitutes also the frame of the painting and of the different panels and registers (fig. 2). Here also the artists proved their creativity in order to break the monotony; on the pedestal for instance, this petal loses its round shape and is triangular or even square with the angles cut off. This motif and its different shapes is not encountered in sculpture but abstract “decorative” motifs can adorn the flat recesses of the bases supporting votive *stūpas* (Bénisti 1981, figs. 48, 51, 84, 86, 89–91, 95, 97; some of them occur on stone images discovered in Tibet: Rhie/Thurman 1991, cat. 22, Béguin 1990, 171: cat. B).

### 3. The niches in the *śikhara*

On sculptures from south-east Bangladesh where a similar architectural construction is carved, niches are drawn above Śākyamuni where one, three or five Tathāgatas sit, displaying their respective *mudrās* (fig. 3, BP 1992a, 303–304 and figs. 1–7; 1996, figs. 23, 27–28) but they are absent above Buddha images who are not Śākyamuni (Huntington 1984, figs. 208–209, Saraswati 1976, fig. 37). The same Tathāgatas appear in a more elaborate form on images of the three-faced and six-armed Mañjuśrī (Haque 1994, fig. 7, Casey 1985, cat. 33). These small niches are carved in a *stūpa*-shaped shrine. A further development of the motif in Tibet shows the representation of the five Tathāgatas in the same *stūpa*-shaped shrines distributed symmetrically all around the upper part of the trilobate niche (BP 1995/96, figs. 3 and 16: C and G, I). This leads to the progressive disappearance of the superimposed levels. Shrines form then a sequence around the niche at the same time that the number of small monuments increases to seven (and seven Buddhas are then depicted) (BP 1995/96, fig. 16; D). A final aspect of the development is noticed in western Tibet, at Tabo (Tucci 1935/1989, III.1, pls. L, LII, O.C. Handa 1994, pl. 59), and later at Tholing where a series of *stūpas* of various forms crowns a structure in which is painted a deity (Rhie/Thurman 1991, fig. 23) or Tsaparang (Tucci 1935/1989, III.2, pls. LXXXV, CXX) where the monuments lie on the successive levels of a pyramidal construction, indicated by lines with right angles and where the *caityas* can even be distributed within this arch and no more around it (*idem*, pl. CXXI), or on portable paintings like the Cleveland Tārā where three finials surmount the monument (Huntington/Huntington

1990, cat. 113).

A similar construction is also noticed in Pagan, at the Nanda-na-nya-hpaya (monument 577) (figs. 10 and 21) where the levels support six monuments which are either small *caityas* or the same with niches, which have curiously remained empty (they have a plain white background). The small monument 572 (Tatkale-hpaya) has its vault fully painted; above the main, now missing, image, a large *caitya*-like construction is represented: it includes four round niches in which are painted images of Buddha and of other Bodhisattvas(?) (fig. 22). Thus, Pagan offers the possibilities to have either the niches completely integrated within the main structure or to have them painted within independent small monuments which are attached to the central one.

When further registers of narrative panels are added, this motif disappears and only the lobate arch subsists (F).

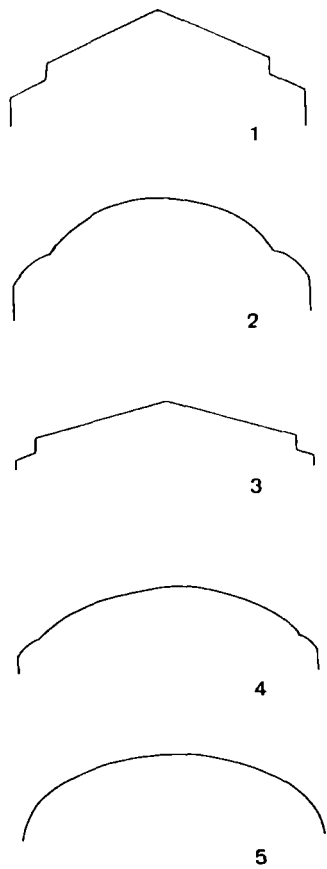
#### 4. The trilobate arch

The trilobate arch has a long history in Buddhist art. It is commonly met within the architecture of eastern India, where it is used for niches carved on the façades of monuments, as seen on the monuments of sites 2 and 3 at Nālandā for instance, where only the central lobe is indicated (Losty 1989a, 3, Asher 1980, pls. 69–70, 73–75), and this particular shape is noticed on the upper tier of a Mañjuśrī image (I) where it reproduces the small niches seen on pedestals of votive *caityas* (fig. 6).

The form is generalized on the slabs of votive *stūpas* (e.g. Bénisti 1981, figs. 56, 60; BP 1995/96, fig. 12), be they from Bodh Gayā or from Nālandā and although it is there deprived of the upper architectural setting, one can surmise that it stood on its own as a hint to the temple, not of the Bodhi in particular, but as a religious construction in general. The motif occurs also, with architectural setting, on the sealings found at Bodh Gayā or elsewhere. In sculpture, the arch, be it trefoil, quinquefoil or plain, could be used as a nimbus, independently from any architectural or natural structure. The same device is noticed in Tibetan painting (CS 1994, fig. 19 or E-F) and is seen in manuscript illuminations, where it is also related to the architectural setting (see above). It was suggested by J. Losty (1989b, 95) that this theme, i.e. the architecture with lobate niche, was more typical in Bengal and eastern Bihar since it is mainly noticed on manuscripts drawn at Vikramaśīla and in the Delta region (see also Hasan 1979, pls. III, XIV showing actual examples of such niches dating probably back to the 12th century and reused in a Muslim context). A further Indian development in the 12th century is to extend to five the number of lobes (Losty 1989b, figs. 1–9, 14).

A subtle transformation of the motif can also be followed in portable painting (drawing I). The trefoil arch occurs on images where the tower is clearly depicted (A, G-I). The quinquefoil is then painted when the main tower has disappeared and is replaced by a small *caitya* similar to the lateral ones (B-D). Thus on the portrait of a hierarch in the Jucker collection (CS 1986, fig. 1, Pal 1984, pl. 6), the quinquefoil arch is shown while the opening of the side niches, indicated either by round or straight lines (see below), follows clearly the form of the trefoil (drawing I.1-2). The central part of the trefoil enlarges its width whereas the side lobes get very much reduced (P, drawing I.3-4). On another painting (N), the cut is clear in the niches delineated by straight lines; but one should notice that the cut is made half the width of a rock and does not coincide with one of the rocks dominating it, as in the case of the Jucker portrait. Besides, the round curved niches lose their trefoils: the distinction between the central and side lobes is hardly distinguishable and the central part is extremely large and flatter (drawing I.4). A further development is noticed on another hierarch portrait (M), a clear cut is still noticeable

in niches (1, 3, 5, 7 starting from the left) on the upper register (with straight lines) (**drawing I.3**); it is hardly visible on the two lower niches of the side panels and has altogether disappeared on the other niches, including the central one: those follow hence a plain curved line (**drawing I.5**).



Drawing I

In sculpture and manuscript illuminations, the arch is also integrated within the rocky landscape (manuscript A: Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, pl. 16 [straight], B: Losty 1989a, fig. 13 [curved] and 14 [straight]). On folio 9 of manuscript B (Losty 1989a, fig. 14) (fig. 23), the arch shows different with straight rather than curved lines. Since this shape is first encountered here in relation to the rocks, it might indeed illustrate the structure of the cave in contradistinction to the cella surmounted by an architectural structure where the niche shows the trefoil or the quinquefoil.

This form is commonly met with on portable paintings where caves forming a frame around the central figure present two shapes which alternate (CS 1986, fig. 1 = Pal 1984, fig. 10; J, L, N and O) (**drawing I.1-2**). On 13th-century paintings, these two shapes tend to disappear; in the two last mentioned examples (N, O), the central arch is extremely large and flat (**drawing I.3-4**); it leads then to the plain arch (**drawing I.5**) and to a large arch with very short and almost indistinct side lobes (M).

On the small painting (fig. 1), a row of beaded arches separated by short loops which are terminated by a red bud-shaped gem, is hanging below the central and the side niches. This motif, which is treated here with great elegance, is also noticed on some other thangkas (J, Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 12, CS 1994, fig. 26 or on portraits: M, N, P). This ornament is not often encountered in the illuminated manuscripts from India. We notice it in manuscripts A (Bhattacharyya 1944, figs. 4, 8, 11, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, pl. 16 top, Losty 1989a, figs. 2, 3) and B (figs. 14–15, 17, 23, Losty 1989a, figs. 8, 25, 45, 47, 52, 54, 56, 59, 63, 64, 67, 69–74, Zwalf

1985, cat. 81) where the looped garland hangs below the arch or is attached at the upper edge of the painting or hangs at the arch below the tower on the margins. It occurs also on 12th-century book covers (1° Losty 1982, cat. 8, Zwalf 1985, cat. 50, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 28; 2° Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 23a-b, Pal 1993, cat. 9) and on paintings of a manuscript dated in the reign of Gopāla IV, second quarter of the 12th c. (Losty 1989b, 95 and fig. 12). Thus this ornament was used during the 12th c. in Bihar and Bengal and it should be compared with the same decoration, but in stucco, which adorned the façades of temples in Bengal (Saraswati 1976, fig. 21) and at Pagan (fig. 19; Luce 1969–70, pls. 255, 339–342, 375). And extremely close to the examples depicted in paintings, it occurs on door-jambos now attached to a modern shrine in Gayā (fig. 18).

A manuscript executed at Nālandā in the regnal year 15 of Rāmapāla, end of the 11th century, includes the falling ornament ending with the same bud-shaped red gem (Rawson 1961, 81 and 85, Losty 1982, cat. 5, pl. V, Zwalf 1985, cat. 156) on the central folios showing

Bodhisattvas or above the Buddha taming Nālāgiri, but as indicated by J. Losty (*idem*, 116), the style of these central paintings differs from the traditional style of Nālandā, which leads this author to suggest that the artist might have been of Burmese origin. To this, we may add that the three quarter profile and the bulging of the face (at the level of the cheeks) is also present at Drathang (Henss 1994, figs. 6 and 7 or 1997, figs. 180 and 183) and occurs on a Burmese cloth painting recently recovered in a Pagan temple (*South East Asia* 1995, 129). Similarly, the same ornament is painted, not falling but arising as a flower, between the different depictions of seated Buddhas on a pair of covers (Pal 1993, cat. 4).

### 5. The *kīrtimukha*

This motif is painted above the upper part of the trefoil on one painting only (fig. 2). This monstrous face, known in India as *kīrtimukha* or “face of glory”, is generalized in the Hindu sculpture from Bihar and Bengal after the 10th c. where it crowns the back-slab. It is observed above the trefoil on slabs from Bihar (Bénisti 1981, figs. 54, 56, 58–81, 65–68) or on independent arches which are used to crown stelae (fig. 7). It is seen at the very same place on Buddhist images from south-east Bangladesh (fig. 3; BP 1992a, figs. 1–2; 1995/96, fig. 15; 1996, figs. 23 and 27; Huntington 1984, fig. 209) and finally, appears in north Bengal, where it does not crown the stele but is carved just above the nimbus (Huntington 1984, figs. 233, 243; BP 1992b, fig. 4). Above the nimbus (CS 1994, fig. 27) or on the arch (fig. 2), it is not only noticed in cloth paintings, but also in the murals of the Nanda-na-nya-hpaya (monument 577) at Pagan (fig. 10). The position above the nimbus is rather awkward in an Indian context (where it usually crowns the image, protecting it). It might be possible that it resulted from the position of a related motif in Nepal as it is observed on one painting (G: BP 1995/96, fig. 3) where a bird, a *garuda*, opens his wings above the nimbus. *Garuda* occurs on other early paintings (M, Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 11, CS 1994, fig. 19 and see below under “The animals of the throne”).

### 6. The trees

Branches of the *Ficus religiosa* arise from behind the shrine (figs. 1–2, A, I, K). Branches also spread around the lower part of the tower on sculptures from south-east Bangladesh showing the Enlightenment (fig. 3). A similar treatment, but much more elaborated, occurs in a manuscript dated around 1200 (Gorakshkar/Desai 1987, 562, pls. II-X, Newman 1990, 130–132).

The motif is closely related to the shrine and this explains perhaps that when the architectural construction tends to dissolve, the tree also disappears (B-G).

Trees constitute a common motif in Indian and Nepalese manuscript illuminations and in cloth paintings. Apart from its relation to the shrine of Bodh Gayā, as in the paintings under consideration, or any other shrine (in manuscript illuminations), it is also connected with a shrine excavated in a rocky mountain. The study of its motif should thus also be related to the analysis of the mountain.

## b. The throne and related motifs

### 1. The cushion and the lotus as seat

The Buddha sits on a thin white cushion which is put above a single row of lotus petals. In one case (fig. 1), the edge of this cushion is adorned by a row of thick dark pearls. This motif occurs also in stone images and finds its origin in the row of stamens arising above the edge of

the petals. In stone sculptures, like on paintings, the pearls can disappear and only subsists a thick line. Both rendering are observed in Tibet: on wall-paintings at Yemar, the row of pearls was very evident (CS 1994, fig. 2a, Vitali 1990, fig. 13); on the sculptures of Kyangbu, the elongated form of the pearls remind one of their original shape in India but the motif is seen only with the single row of petals, not with the double row lotus (Vitali 1990, fig. 12); on paintings at the Jokhang of Lhasa (Stoddard 1994, fig. 4), the green pearls are also seen above a single row of petals.

The double row of petals surmounted by the pearls is also observed on portable paintings (O, CS 1994, figs. 11, 18a and b, 27). In most of the cases, however, there remains only a thick dark line which borders the upper surface of the lotus (B, H, J, L, CS 1994, figs. 12, 15, 19–22, 24, 28, 32, Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 11). A subtle transformation of the line is noticeable: the upper surface is round and artists attempted to show this form through a slight perspective where the side lines converge. The row of petals stops usually at the extremities of the front line where a petal can be profiled (A, G-I, K). In some rare cases (B, Rhie/Thurman 1991, cat. 95, CS 1986, fig. 1), petals are seen from the top on both extremities. In other examples, petals are superimposed on each other and stands, profiled (CS 1994, figs. 11 and 15 going to 12, going to 19, 20 and 24 show how the motif developed from thick and plain petals to thin, pointed and slightly curved ones; see also F, N-L for the last phase).

The study of this particular motif illustrates also how the artist introduced the hierarchy between the different characters. On the small painting (fig. 1), the petals below Śākyamuni and the attending Bodhisattvas have various colours whereas those below the Medicine Buddhas are either red or white. The row of pearls is seen below the central figure but is ignored below the Buddhas of the lower register and those painted on either side of the tower. Small narrow and dark petals form a band above the large petals below Avalokiteśvara, an element which is conspicuous by its absence below Maitreya, where it should be painted according to the rule symmetry (this absence results probably from the artist's oblivion – a not surprising feature in Indian art).

The three human characters depicted in corners on the second painting (fig. 2) sit only on a cushion and not on the flower, a feature which is noticed on two early portraits of hierarchs (CS 1994, figs. 16 and 17a) and which will be preserved in other iconographies where the hierophant is depicted in one of the lower corners, paying homage to the central figure (M, CS 1994, figs. 15, 19, 20, 22).

The Ford Tārā (J) includes a motif commonly met with in the 11th and 12th centuries, i.e. the high foot above which spreads the lotus and to which are attached two large and elaborated scrolls (L, in Bihar/Bengal: Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 49, 129, Bautze/Picron 1991/92, figs. 1, 10, 11).

Two volutes adorned with flowers spread on either side of a portrait (CS 1986, fig. 1, Pal 1984, pl. 6), of images from Khara Khoto (Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 2, 24) or of the footprints of a hierarch (Béguin 1990, cat. 2). They remind one that in the 12th-century sculpture of Bihar/Bengal, the lotuses sustaining the attending deities are all attached to the main lotus and that their stalks spread thus laterally (Huntington 1984, figs. 226, 233, 237; Bautze/Picron 1991/92, figs. 1, 8, 10). In these paintings, the stalks are painted with detail and care, different colours are used and the knots can develop into smaller scrolls and thin red twigs (a later treatment of the motif is seen on a 14th-century painting, where the scrolls have lost the spontaneity, the sinuous movement and follow a systematic line; besides, the superimposed roundels which they form are here adorned by the *aṣṭamaṅgalas*: CS 1994, fig. 32).

The same motif is also seen, although reduced, below a Tathāgata (but illustrated in its genuine function: the lotus on which sits the deity arises indeed from this stalk: *idem*, fig. 15), and with an extraordinary treatment, sustains the lotus below a Mañjuśrī (*idem*, fig. 11). On this very example, large leaves of various colours cover almost the entire lower field of the painting and creep upwards, filling all the empty corners. The motif is, to my knowledge, unknown in Indian manuscript painting but at Drathang (*idem*, fig. 4a, Henss 1994, figs. 5, 5c and 7), leaves spread with the same elegance and circular movement; similarly, a white line underlines their edge (would it find its origin in Central Asia?). Above all, the very same motif occurs in monument 147 of Pagan (Pichard, vol. 1, fig. 147m), in combination with roundels adorned by animals, a motif which is reminiscent of similar medallions observed in Tibet.

The scrolls are preserved on some later portable paintings where they are no more organically related to the lotus (L, N-P) and where the scrolls present the same size, each containing a round lotus. But since they are here combined with the architectural pedestal within which lions and elephants are distributed, one cannot but compare them to the large fragments of Bodh Gayā (fig. 24).

## 2. The pedestal

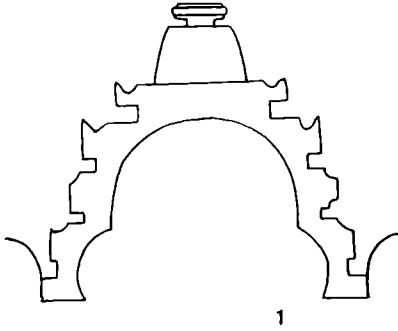
The lotus lies on a base containing small niches where faces of grinning lions and elephants alternate. As usual, the inner part of the large ears and the central part of the pachyderm's face are painted red. The same use of two colours is noticed on the animals sustaining the leogryphs on either side of the Buddha on the small thannga (fig. 1).

This pedestal is common on early portable paintings from Tibet (A, H, I, K, L, N, Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 113 and 116, CS 1994, figs. 12, 16, 17a, 24). A second treatment of the same motif includes lions with or without elephants, which are profiled outwards with often the head turned backwards (C, G, M, O, P, Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 105, 106, 109, 111, CS 1994, figs. 18b, 27, 28, Rossi/Casey Singer 1994, cat. 11, 14). Both treatments, including eventually the drapery (below) are encountered in the Lhaxhang Soma of Alchi (Pal/Fournier 1982, LS 1, 12, 118, 19, 26) or in the Lotsawa Lhaxhang (*idem*, LL 2, 5). This occurrence at Alchi is not surprising; P. Pal already noticed the "Pāla-Tibetan style" of these paintings (*idem*, 56sq), stressing the existence of various criteria, allowing this expression, such as the general composition, the frontal view. It is evident from the extremely linear and stiff treatment of the animals of the pedestal that this motif was not indigenous. This motif like other ones (the back throne, the nimbus, the body, the dress) is much reduced; the shading is rare and not subdued.

These two different ways of presenting the animals occur in Bihar. The frontal view of the head and/or of the torso of the animals is introduced as early as the 9th century and it becomes then a leitmotiv characterizing the atelier of Kurkihār (BP 1989b, 46–47). It was also represented at Bodh Gayā (Huntington 1984, fig. 54), though not with the same enthusiasm. From this site, is known a large pedestal, 1.80 m, today split in two slabs walled into the entrance of the Mahant's compound (fig. 24). The two profiled lions constitute a more general device as seen from the large number of examples (Huntington 1984, figs. 130, 132, 135) and more rarely, two elephants are also profiled (*idem*, fig. 106: the pedestal of the actual image in the sanctum of the Bodhi Mandir, dated in the 12th century – I suppose that the split pedestal illustrated here fig. 24 was the earlier pedestal of the image in the sanctum). The pair of profiled animals was commonly met with at Nālandā and on bronze images.

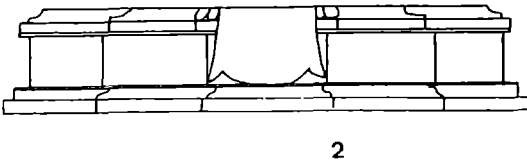


The upper and lower edges of the pedestal have a cyma above the row of blue, red and eventually green petals. A close inspection of the paintings show how the painters really reproduced the pedestal seen in sculpture: the colours within a single horizontal band change



where the profile of the cymas is visible and it coincides also with a rupture in the decoration of the bands with petals (drawing II.2). The first thangka (fig. 1) reflects also the creativity of the artist since the petals are shaped differently.

A similar rendering of the pedestal occurs in the Kubyauk-gyi of Pagan (fig. 26) where it includes the two cymas and the rows of petals: here also, the colours and the shapes of the petals vary. The high pedestal is constituted by a superposition of mouldings which progressively recessed toward the centre adorned by a frieze of elongated rectangular panels separated by gems which most probably reproduced the niches where the animals were depicted. A later development of the pedestal is noticed in the So-hla-wun-hpaya (monument 676) (fig. 25) where the flat central moulding, resulting from the niches, is adorned by a row of rhombi and circles, a motif borrowed also from the painting (see fig. 26), and where the upper moulding bears a decoration of rhombi, a motif which reminds the decoration of the cushion on



Drawing II

which the Buddha sits in 12th-century images from Bihar (e.g. Huntington 1984, fig. 121). Such high pedestals were also integrated in the xylographies of Xixia in the 12th and 13th centuries (Karmay 1974, pls. 16, 19, 22; the later images introduce the drapery: *idem*. figs. 26–28).

### 3. The drapery

The drapery falling in front of the throne is also often met with at Nālandā or at Kurkihār and in eastern Bihar (Huntington 1984, figs. 28, 29, 41). With suppleness, the folds of the material show a waving line on fig. 1 whereas on the subsequent examples, the lower edge follows a more strict horizontal line. This element does not appear on the stone images from south-east Bangladesh where artists combined frontal and profile views of the animals and included, besides, portly figures which support the throne alternating with the animals (BP 1992a, figs. 2–3, 1996, fig. 30). But further east, it occurs on the paintings of the Kubyauk-gyi (fig. 26) or the Patho-tha-mya (Luce 1969–70, pl. 167b) where it falls above the high pedestal. The cloth bears geometric motifs, squares or circles, which are also encountered on cloth paintings.

### 4. The throne

The Buddha leans on a cushion adorned by scrolls and eventually by two large knobs (fig. 2). It

is sustained by the architectural structure of the throne which culminates in two superimposed recesses that are similar to the recesses of the tower.

The lintel supports a pair of birds painted in yellow with the beak, the legs and a crest in red. As such, they are commonly depicted in the stone sculpture of Bihar (BP 1995/96, fig. 12), where even the string of pearls held by the birds is painted in one painting (fig. 1). It would seem that the multiplication of lintels, as it occurs in Burma e.g. (Luce 1969–70, pl. 303 et sq, 400) or in paintings as far as Dunhuang (Karmay 1974, pl. 9) or Alchi (Pal/Fournier 1982, LS 11–12) could be a non-Indian evolution and would perhaps illustrate how the shape of a motif could influence the development of another one, since the superimposed lintels reproduce the architectural recesses within which the trefoiled niche is outlined.

Another motif of the throne appears above the cushion seen behind the seven Medicine Buddhas of the lower register in one case (fig. 1) or behind the Buddha receiving the *madhu* from the monkey (BP 1995/96, fig. 8) and behind the Buddha meditating in the lower register, in the other case (*idem*, fig. 11). These two triangles or rhombi which protrude between the nimbus and the cushion belong to the structure of the throne no longer visible, but I would suggest that they were initially the triangular fleurons which were put above the lintel of the throne in stone sculpture rather than the extremities of the upper part of the throne as supposed by J. Losty (1982, 31 and 32). Twelfth-century sculptures from Bihar and Bengal illustrate this particular rhomboid form, which has probably been in this case influenced by painted examples (BP 1989c, pl. 32-12, 1991/92, figs. 24, 32, 34, Huntington 1984, figs. 208 and 235 where it crowns the nimbus).

The treatment shown in the small painting (fig. 1) or behind the Mañjuśrī images of the lower row on a thangka devoted to the Bodhisattva (I) is close to examples seen in Indian manuscripts, the triangles arise in the angles which they largely occupy. On the second painting (BP 1995/96, figs. 8 and 11), the triangles fall and their upper line is horizontal; till they disappear from the repertoire, this will be their position (A, H, L-P, Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 105, 106, 110, 116, CS 1994, figs. 18b–21, 24, 26–28, 32). On the first painting, they are adorned by an abstract motif, also noticed on illuminations (Zwalf 1985, cat. 156) whereas on the second one, they are plain. The throne is thus here reduced to a cushion, supporting the plain nimbus, and to these protruding angular elements. As such, it is usually seen behind deities in a secondary position, not behind the main image, who sits in front of a more elaborate throne architectural element and/or a more adorned nimbus (M, CS 1994, figs. 19, 24, 27).

##### 5. *The nimbus, the upper part of the throne*

A large nimbus surmounts the throne. The white inner field is limited by a red line and by, but only at the nimbus of the central image, a band of flames which is painted in gold with narrow red and blue lines on the first painting (fig. 1) while on the second painting, the flames appear like small squares painted in the three same colours (fig. 2). The white nimbus occurs often in the illuminations where the red line can also be drawn (fig. 30).

The nimbus lies on the shoulders of the Buddha as if arising from it whereas the second decorative band which runs around its upper part, starts above the lintel of the throne. This decorative band is constituted by large round scrolls painted in gold with their inner fields blue and red. These are obviously lotus petals of decreasing size, which are painted as if being the scrolls of the two *hamsas*. This motif deserves some more remarks. A series of small roundels is seen on folio 42b of manuscript B where the motif is evidently related to the pair of birds (Losty 1989a, figs. 59 – here fig. 17). This shape may have affected the upper part of the throne

on which sits a Bodhisattva (manuscripts A: fig. 29, Bhattacharyya 1944, fig. 9 or Losty 1989a, fig. 3 and B: Losty 1989a, figs. 34, 35, 37, 51 where large curves surround the oval nimbus, or of the bed on which reclines the Buddha in manuscripts B (fig. 27) (*idem*, fig. 25) and C (Huntington/Huntington 1990, fig. 58c) (other examples: Pal 1993, cat. 1D, ill. p. 53, Pal 1988, fig. 10 or pl. 4, and on a cover photographed most probably at Ngor by Rāhula Sāṅkṛityāyana [Pathak 1986, pl. 17, second cover from above], where the Eight Great Events are depicted; further: Woodward Jr 1981, fig. 28 which belongs to a manuscript which, like C, also includes two stylistic trends as noted by Losty who suggests that it was painted in Bihar around 1125–1150 [Losty 1982, cat. 8; Zwalf 1985, cat. 48 and 158; folios also reproduced in Losty 1986, fig. 3; CS 1986, fig. 4] whereas Pal ascribes it to a Bengali atelier (Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, 83 and 87, fig. 27a-c).

The Patho-tha-mya includes also the motifs of the roundels as part of the tail of the *hamsas* (figs. 31–32).

The motif of the roundels is noticed around the nimbus attached to a throne on two book-covers of the 12th century (Boston: Coomaraswamy 1923, pl. XXXIII; Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 22; Los Angeles: *idem*, fig. 23, Pal 1993, cat. 9). On the Boston book-cover belonging to a manuscript dated in the regnal year 4 of Gopāla IV, the motif occurs under two different forms around the trilobate halo painted behind the Buddha of the Past and Maitreya, i.e. volutes and petals.

Both motifs are also encountered in stone sculpture but in different situations: the plain petals reappear on rare examples in the 11th and 12th centuries (Huntington 1984, figs. 109, 151, 156) whereas the volutes or scrolls having this plain round shape, more or less stylised, are depicted on the edge of niches of votive *stūpas* (Bénisti 1981, figs. 11, 12, 73). It seems that a certain confusion arose between two different motifs: the petals with their extremities turning on themselves and the scrolls which belong in their origin to the tail of the bird; the outer shape of these scrolls brought them close to the row of large petals and they got separated from the bird, losing thus their original meaning.

A short remark should be made about the development of the petals/scrolls around the nimbus. Among the late 11th-century paintings at Drathang (Henss 1994, fig. 7 and 1997, fig. 183; Vitali 1990, pls. 29 and 31), a particularly beautiful throne is painted behind the debating Maitreya (who forms a pair with Mañjuśrī). The two *hamsas* have their tail developing into elaborated scrolls forming like a wave along the nimbus; both birds hold short, pearled strings. The treatment is evidently more detailed and relates more directly, to Indian carved counterparts than the rendering noticed on the portable paintings (the outer row of the nimbus show large “flames/petals” as they are seen in Bihar or Bengal and the triangle in which is inscribed the bird with its tail reminds one of the very strict outer shape of the same motif as found on images produced in the area between Nālandā and Antichak (Vikramaśīla) in the 12th century (BP 1991/92, figs. 26, 27, 35 [the Buddha] and 36). But from around the same period, perhaps earlier even, the early murals of Shalu (Vitali 1990, pl. 50, CS 1994, figs. 4b–5) drop the birds and preserve only two large golden scrolls which fill the angles between the cushion and the nimbus. Their line preserves however the movement and detail observed at Drathang.

On the early examples illustrated here, the petals are of decreasing size from bottom to top. In a later phase of the development, golden finials are introduced between the petals (G) or the petals constitute a row of scrolls running along the nimbus but no more attached to it; their outer golden line is then very thick and split into a fringe of short cuttings (Rossi/CS 1994, cat.

14). Completely free, two large scrolls form the tail of birds on later paintings (C, E) unless flames run along the edge of the few smaller petal-scrolls (F).

The same round petals are observed running around the outer edge of a niche in which sits a deity or a monk. Above, we already mentioned a hierarch portrait (CS 1994, fig. 17a) where the same motif appears also around the nimbus. And as such, they appear in manuscript B (fig. 30, Losty 1989a, figs. 18 and 54). Even though they are here simplified, these roundels cannot be identified, in the light of what precedes, with rocks (Losty 1989a, 10 and 16). They occur at the same position above the Buddha teaching at Sārnāth, on a book-cover (Pathak 1986, pl. 17, second cover from top, third panel from left).

The shape is thus integrated into the back of the throne (manuscript A: fig. 29, Losty 1989a, fig. 3, Bhattacharyya 1944, fig. 9, Saraswati 1978, ill. p. 80; manuscript B: fig. 27, Losty 1989a, figs. 34, 35, 37, 51, Zwalf 1985, cat. 81. Further examples: Pal 1993, cat. 9, Pal 1988, fig. 23a; Eastman 1934, cat. 37a, Coomaraswamy/Heeramaneck 1935, cat. 34A). It is usually seen together with two thick finials, painted in gold, which can also protrude on either side of the plain nimbus (manuscript B: Losty 1989a, fig. 58). These finials are here noticed adorning the throne back behind Asita (BP 1995/96, fig. 11). In some rare cases, they are seen on the throne back behind the hierarch painted in the lower (usually left) corner of Tibetan paintings (J; Pal 1990, fig. 7, Rhie/Thurman 1991, cat. 95; CS 1994, fig. 26 where they present a very simplified triangular form). Similarly, the lobes can also be preserved in the back of the throne on portable paintings (CS 1986, fig. 5; 1994, figs. 15, 26; Béguin 1990, cat. 2) and in manuscripts (Eastman 1934, cat. 37a, Coomaraswamy/Heeramaneck 1935, cat. 34A). The drapery which can hang above the hierarch (M, N) constitutes a development of the throne motif, which occurs, in a Nepalese manuscript dated A.D. 1071 (Saraswati 1977, ill. 221).

Related to the motif of the nimbus, is the aura which arises from the complete body of the Buddha. A particular treatment of the aura is noticed in sites very far distant each other: it shows concentric strips of different colours; the motif occurs at Alchi, in the Lhakhang Soma (Pal/Fournier 1982, LS 1, 3, 5–7, 10, 11, 18–21, 23, 30–31), at Pagan, in the Kubyauk-gyi (fig. 26). It is likewise noticed on a thangka representing most probably Vairocana (CS 1994, fig. 12 and from the same 1996, fig. 4)

### 6. The animals of the throne

The nimbus occurs thus with *hamsas* (K; CS 1994, fig. 17a; Pal 1984, pl. 6, CS 1986, fig. 1) or without them (H, I; CS 1994, figs. 7, 11, 16, 20, 24). It can also be related to the *makaras* (L, M, N, P; CS 1994, figs. 17a, 18b; Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 11) or to the *gandharvas* (musicians) (CS 1994, figs. 19, 27).

#### *Hamsas*

Since they symbolize also the ether, the birds are logically distributed above the other animals, or monstrous animals, which symbolize the earth (elephant), the fire and the wind (leogryph) and the water (*makara*). They are profiled, with the nimbus in their back. Their tail can partly be hidden by the nimbus or it can apparently fall and transform itself into the volutes which run along the nimbus (figs. 1, 2). These volutes are drawn with a thick gold line which turns on itself and ends in tiny scrolls painted in the centre of each larger volute, the surface of which is painted in different colours, i.e. blue, red or green. These volutes, of progressively smaller size, creep on the edge of the nimbus and end on either side of the upper part which is unadorned (figs. 1, 2, Rhie/Thurman, cat. 95; Pal 1984, pl. 6, CS 1986, fig. 1). The two extremities of the

volutes can touch each other on the upper part of the nimbus (K; CS 1994, fig. 17a, with *makaras*), can mix with each other and form a fleuron or can be held by the *garuḍa* sitting above the nimbus (G).

We can roughly distinguish three aspects: a) the bird has a tiny but strong body and a large head (fig. 1); b) his body becomes longer and the head can become smaller (fig. 33; K); c) the legs become larger, the head still smaller and the crest disappears (G).

In sculpture, the birds have been generally preserved in India in a Buddhist context even though the fantastic musicians, *gandharvas*, had been already introduced in their place in Hindu art (but also in Buddhist art). The *haṃsas* stand on either side of the nimbus (fig. 3) or at the extremities of the trefoiled arch at Bodh Gayā (BP 1995/96, fig. 12; Bénisti 1981, figs. 42, 56, 59–61) whereas the craftsmen of Nālandā kept this position for the *gandharvas* (BP 1991, figs. 1, 3–6).

In illuminations, a transformation of the motif takes place between the 11th and the 12th centuries. Whereas most of the 11th-century paintings illustrate a free oval nimbus, deprived of the birds, these are generalised in the following century. The bird constitutes, with its tail containing numerous tiny volutes, a very compact motif shaped as a triangle (fig. 37), the very outline occurs on 12th-century stelae from the region of Nālandā and Lakhi Sarai (BP 1991/92, figs. 26, 27, 35) even when the musicians replace the birds (*idem*, figs. 1, 36).

The large volutes are extremely rare in India. However, one notices them on the book-covers of the Boston manuscript, dated in the regnal year 4 of Gopāla [IV], i.e. around 1132.<sup>2</sup> The birds are hidden on the side scenes by the attributes of the Bodhisattva and Tārā, but are visible in the central scene of the attack of the Buddha by Māra (Coomaraswamy 1923, pl. XXXIII). Their tails are shaped as three superimposed volutes of decreasing size, they are drawn with a gold line and their inner surface is alternately painted red or blue. The motif is introduced as such on the *thangka* (fig. 33). The same occurrence of the birds and the volutes is observed on an illumination from manuscript B (fig. 17: Losty 1989a, fig. 59, BP 1989d, fig. 6) and in murals at Pagan.

Indeed, the same careful rendering of the *haṃsas* whose tail transform itself into clearly drawn volutes, is noted in the Patho-tha-mya and the Loka-hteik-pan at Pagan (figs. 31–32). The murals of this site retained only the *haṃsas* on either side of the nimbus, but refused the representation of the other animals of the royal throne. We cannot, however, conclude that this theme was unknown but rather that it did not meet the iconographic interpretation of the Buddha image.

To the observations made above concerning the birds in Tibet, e.g. at Drathang, we should add that they are also noticed at Khara Khoto (Karmay 1974, fig. 19; Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 3–5, 7–8, 12, 44, 73). In a general way, the birds of the Khara Khoto *thangkas* or drawings do not illustrate the fineness of their Indian or Tibetan rendering: their body is elongated and stiff, thrown forwards, the neck is extremely thin and vertical, without the curve noticed elsewhere. Eventually, the hindquarters are hidden by the volutes running on the lintel of the throne below

<sup>2</sup> The date is calculated after the regnal years of Madanapāla, successor to Gopāla after 1143. Gopāla himself ruled at least 15 years, i.e. from 1128 according to present-day knowledge (in the chronology of the Pāla, modifications are to be introduced whenever a new inscription revealing a longer date of reign is discovered). The Boston tablets are partly published in colour by Coomaraswamy 1923, pl. XXXIII and poorly in black and white by Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 22.

the bird (*idem*, cat. 8, 12). Large scrolls may differ from those noted till now and remind one of those of the *makaras* in Nepal as we shall see (*idem*, cat. 45; Karmay 1974, fig. 26).<sup>3</sup>

### *Makaras*

In India, the *makaras* do not occupy the position on the lintel of the throne which is theirs on Tibetan thangkas, since they usually adorn the very extremities of this lintel whereas the birds or the flying musicians are always seen above it, on either side of the nimbus. None the less, the position of the *makaras* on either side of the nimbus, in place of the *hamsas*, traces also its origin in the art of the 9th century at Nālandā (von Schroeder 1981, 51A, B, E, F, 57B, F, 59F, Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 44).<sup>4</sup> In the second part of the 9th century or the early 10th century, this motif is observed in Kurkihār where the *makaras* are shown walking with the forepart held up and the legs far apart (von Schroeder 1981, 58B, 62G, 63G). A circular arch around the nimbus occurs also in Kurkihār bronzes: the lower part is hidden by the volutes of the *makara* tails and the apex can support the *kirtimukha* (*idem*, 62G and without the upper monstrous face: 58B and 63G).

Two further and later images, from the 11th or 12th century, should be mentioned. Both depict the Buddha. The first one was discovered north of Vaiśālī, near the Aśoka pillar (Mishra/Roy 1964, 16, 34–35 and pl. XII) and reproduces the trilobate arch crowned by the *kirtimukha*. Large and intricate volutes run along it and become the tails of the two *hamsas*. The similar motif occurs on Bodh Gayā or Nālandā slabs (BP 1991, figs. 1, 14, 15; BP 1995/96, fig. 12; Bénisti 1981, figs. 15, 56, 59–61, 65–68, 71, 77–80). The second stele measures nearly 3 m and although most probably an image produced in Bihar, it is located at Kaśya where the Buddha died (fig. 35; Frédéric 1957, 126 and pl. IV). The *makaras* are there substituted for the *hamsas*. Venerated in a major Buddhist site, this image could, as much as the Jagdiśpur-Nālandā stele, constitute an iconographic and stylistic reference for those who saw it. This position can be compared with the position of the *makaras* on two stelae from south-east Bangladesh which depict Mañjuśrī (Casey 1985, cat. 33; Haque 1994, fig. 7) where they slightly slid upwards and stand above the lintel, thus replacing the birds. Thus, the introduction of the *makaras* in the upper part of the image would appear, in India, outside a niche or an architectural structure.

A similar position is noticed on a hierarch portrait, perhaps from the late 11th or early 12th century (CS 1994, 113–114 and fig. 17a): the monstrous animals are attached to the scrolls running above the arch which forms a second large nimbus. But within the arch (niche), these are the birds which stand on either side of the nimbus. On either side, the leogryph stands above the elephant, and on this very painting, a small bird has been painted gold, forming an elaborated scroll above the leogryph's head, as if the artist remembered that above the *vyāla*, another animal was usually lying.

<sup>3</sup> The fig. 26 of Karmay illustrates a xylography from Hangzhou, dated 1302 where the *hamsas* integrate details of the first group and simultaneously have the proportions of those of the third one; beside, they are related to large and powerful volutes which disappear behind an elaborated crowning fleuron and which evidently reproduce the scrolls of the *makaras*' tails as they are observed on the very same folio. A similar combination is noticed on the thangka C. The Chinese xylography betrays a clear Nepalese influence: we can compare this part of the image with an arch painted in a manuscript dated A.D. 1367 (Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, pl. 28).

<sup>4</sup> On bronzes eventually cast during Devapāla's reign. Mention should also be made of the Tārā dated in the regnal year 35 of Devapāla, since the arch is spit by the *kirtimukha* and transforms itself into the tail of the *makaras* (Huntington 1984, fig. 33), an image found at Hilsa which is not far away from Nālandā, and besides, the inscription mentions the name of the Nālandā *mahāvihāra*.

The *makaras* replacing the birds on the lintel of the throne, constitutes a feature which occurs repeatedly on Tibetan paintings, *inter alia* those from Taglung (L, M, N, P; CS 1997, figs. 38, 41–45; Sotheby's 21.9.1995, lot 77) where a certain evolution of the motif can be perceived (*idem*, 60). On these very same paintings, the monstrous face is also present above the nimbus, and further in some examples, it might even be *garuḍa* seizing eventually the *nāgas* who occupies this position (*idem*, figs. 38, 41–43; M). We know that the birds are traditionally put above the lintel and we noticed only some rare Indian examples where the *makaras* replace them; also, the *kirtimukha* is rarely observed in India topping the nimbus and *garuḍa* is apparently never encountered in this position.

The combination *garuḍa/kirtimukha-makaras* is, on the contrary, a traditional Nepalese motif to which we shall briefly return. Let us notice that in Tibet, on paintings from Taglung and other regions, we can list variations of the motif, i.e. the monstrous face can occur related to the *hamsas*, particularly on Buddha images (C, F, G; CS 1997, fig. 38) or to the divine musicians (CS 1994, figs. 19, 27 or CS 1997, fig. 45) and it can be a proper depiction of *garuḍa* (*idem*, figs. 38, 42–43 e.g.) as well as the genuine *kirtimukha* (*idem*, fig. 45). It might be that a proper, but tiresome, study of these variations and of the shapes which they offer, might help to clarify the relations between the paintings, a research which is beyond the scope of the present paper.

One of the earliest Nepalese examples of the motif *kirtimukha-makaras*, probably dated A.D. 1054 shows the profiled water animals walking on the lintel of the throne (Pal 1985, cat. P2, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, 100–102 and pl. 22; the date applies to the manuscript, perhaps not to the book-covers collected in Ngor [Pathak 1986, pl. 18]). Let us note that the Nepalese artists allowed themselves much freedom with the traditional theme of the royal throne. For our present interest, only the alternation *makara/hamsa* on either side of the nimbus is relevant but for instance, the bird could also be substituted to the elephant (Pal 1978, fig. 21, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 37 [Neotia manuscript, dated A.D. 1028]; Saraswati 1977, ill. 231, Saraswati 1978, ill. pp. 155 and 158 [manuscript dated A.D. 1073]; Pal 1975, cat. 44, Pal 1978, fig. 25, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, pl. 23 [Binney manuscript, dated A.D. 1138]). On the covers of the Neotia manuscript, birds or *makaras* can be combined with the *kirtimukha*. *Hamsas* alone appear in a manuscript dated A.D. 1117 (Pal 1978, fig. 11) or with the *kirtimukha* on the Nepalese covers of a manuscript written at Nālandā in the regnal year 15 of Rāmapāla (Zwalf 1985, cat. 156 and 171, covers dated around 1150 by Losty: *idem*, 127). The birds appear as late as A.D. 1367 in a manuscript (Pal 1978, fig. 29, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, pl. 28 and see here footnote 3). But, on the contrary, the *makaras* are painted on the covers of the H.K. Swali collection, which are dated c. 1100 (Pal 1978, pl. 23, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 38) and on those of the A.D. 1207 manuscript in the Pritzker collection (*idem*, pl. 26).

Beyond Nepal, the theme found its way to Tibet in the 13th century when it is illustrated on covers of manuscripts (Zwalf 1985, cat. 190, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 55, Rhie/Thurman 1991, cat. 122 where the Nepalese influence is mentioned; Pal 1983, cat. M3 and pl. 4, Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 56a – dated in the 14th–15th centuries). It occurs in the 14th century at Shalu and in the 15th century at Gyantse, where the motif is rare and seems to fall apart, as well as on some contemporary thangka. In the meantime, the motif has found its way to western Tibet where it acquires an extremely elaborate, when not manieristic treatment. The combination *kirtimukha/makara* appears also on the xylographies from Xixia (Khara Khoto: Karmay 1974, fig. 22, Hangzhou: figs. 25, 26, 29 and 30, dated A.D. 1302, and Jishazang: fig. 27, dated A.D. 1306).

### *Vyālas and elephants*

On the early hierarch portrait mentioned above (CS 1994, fig. 17A) as on the small Buddha (fig. 1), the roaring leogryph has a shawl around the neck and his tail arises, erected, between the legs. A certain evolution in the treatment of the pair constituted by the leogryph and the pachyderm can be drawn. On these early paintings (see also L and M, CS 1994, fig. 27), the animals are depicted with volume and movement; their proportions are also perfect. On perhaps later paintings, or in parallel developments, their movement tends to be harder with straight lines, their proportions change and their head is much smaller, the volume disappears (P; CS 1994, fig. 18b; Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 11–12). The tiny figure sitting on the back of the leogryph traces also his origin in India (CS 1994, fig. 27 or 1997, fig. 45 e.g.; fig. 36).

On the hierarch portrait further, leogryphs, elephants as well as birds, have been drawn outside the niche and are not directly addressed at the throne behind the monk; the same construction is also noticed in India, on stelae from south-east Bangladesh e.g. (Casey 1985, cat. 33; Haque 1994, fig. 7; BP 199/96, fig. 15 e.g.).

### *7. The cushion and the decoration of cloth*

The cushion is a permanent element, it partly hides the throne on which leans the various seated deities or hierarchs. It is high, very often painted in a dark colour which enhances the character, himself in a lighter colour and forms thus a kind of halo around the torso. The surface of the cushion is often covered with scrolls or, more rarely, with parallel lines of different colour (CS 1994, figs. 7, 20; Pathak 1986, pl. 3, Béguin 1990, cat. 3 where both motifs are encountered). When the main character wears a monastic robe covered with medallions, the superimposition of the two surfaces on each other enhances the appreciation of the cushion as a halo (L-N, P; CS 1994, figs. 18a, 24, 27).

Although common in eastern India, the cushion was not systematically used there; one meets it behind standing or seated deities, cast in bronze or, more rarely, carved in stone. In this case, images are very often large or even composed of various parts (fig. 36). On the other side, the motif is generalized in the manuscript illuminations. The cushion is higher on the portable paintings, and even in the illuminated manuscripts, the treatment is usually flat and the outer line rather hard. A more plastic and naturalistic rendering of the motif remains rare (Zwalf 1985, cat. 156: compare the plain white cushion behind Maitreya and the same behind the Buddha or Candraprabha).

Two large buttons adorn both sides of the cushion, shown as lotus medallions where the petals are covered with alternating colours; as such, they are fixed on a cushion where red scrolls run on the green background (BP 1995/96, fig. 2; BP 1994, fig. 24 and 1997, fig. 46; N). These ornaments again trace their origin to India where they are commonly carved (fig. 36).

Various geometric motifs, clearly drawn such as rhombi or circular medallions, adorn the cushions in 11th-century manuscripts from India and Nepal (Rhombi: Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 17, pl. 6 [Mahīpāla [II], c. 1075–1080]; Saraswati 1977, ill. 238 and 254 [Nepal, A.D. 1015]. Medallions: Pal 1993, cat. 1 or Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, pl. 4 [Mahīpāla [I], year 15, c. 1015] and pl. 8 [Nayapāla, year 14]; Saraswati 1977, ill. 237, 254 [Nepal, A.D. 1015]). Two colours, red and blue, are used in Nepal for drawing the motifs on the white background. On the contrary, we notice in Bihar that the cloth is darker, often blue and that the medallions are also illustrated through a darker line. A similar geometric decoration was introduced at Pagan (figs. 31–32) where it could also adorn the drapery falling on the plinth or even the roofs of the sanctuary in which the Buddha sits (fig. 26).



In Tibet, two motifs adorn the cushions, i.e. volutes or strips of colours. The first ones are drawn in the same colour as their background, but of a different tonality (darker usually) or in a different colour (red on the green background e.g.), they were very fashionable, particularly at Taglung (I, L-P; BP 1995/96, figs. 1 and 2; CS 1994, figs. 19, 27; CS 1997, figs. 37–38 and 40–49; *Thangka Kalender 1992*, March and May; Rhie/Thurman 1991, cat. 91 or Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 61: from Khara Khoto).

It is apparently towards the end of the 11th century that the volutes drawn on the cushion appear in India. They are noticed on some illuminations of the first part of the manuscript in the Asia Society of New York (manuscript C), which is most probably contemporary with the copy of the text made in the regnal year 15 of Vighrahapāla [III], i.e. c. 1073 (Huntington/Huntington 1990, ill. 58c). The scrolls are drawn with a thick black line on a dark green background. With Rāmapāla's reign and in the following century, these volutes tear into twigs turning on themselves, spreading in various directions and having their extremities split. Whereas in manuscripts of Rāmapāla's reign, we still find cushions which are either plain or adorned with the medallions, in those of Gopāla [IV]'s, the jagged volutes adorn most of the cushions (Rawson 1961, 80; Zwalf 1985, cat. 156 [Rāmapāla, year 15] and cat. 157 or Losty 1990 ["Vredenburg manuscript", dated in the regnal year 36]).

As they are observed on the small thangka (fig. 1; BP 1995, fig. 1), the volutes are similar to those of the manuscript of year 15 or to the folios of the year 18 of Rāmapāla's reign (Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 57; Pal 1993, cat. 5). Besides, the seven Medicine Buddhas lean their back against cushions which are alternately white and yellow: the very same tonalities are noticed in the manuscript of year 15 where the printed motifs are red, as here.<sup>5</sup> The folios of the year 18 include the two printed motifs, i.e. the volutes and the medallions but show the later with two colours, red and blue. In those two manuscripts, the volutes still follow a unique direction where the main volute is adorned by tiny ones attached to it. Later on, in the reign of Gopāla [IV] for instance, this unique direction has disappeared and only separated tiny scrolls subsist with their extremities running in different directions.

Also encountered, the strips of colours were not so common, or rather were either differently used or introduced by other ateliers (CS 1994, figs. 7 and 20, by the same 1996, fig. 9, Pathak 1986, pl. 3, Béguin 1990, cat. 3 where both types of motifs are noticed). They are also observed on wall-paintings from the 11th century at Shalu (CS 1994, 95 and fig. 4b, 5; Vitali 1990, pl. 50) whereas the large scrolls are painted at Yemar (Casey-Singer 1994, 92–94 and fig. 2a after Tucci 1935/1989, fig. 45) around the same period.

They are noticed in Nepal on a book-cover from perhaps around 1000 (Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 8) and in India where they are superimposed to one of the motifs listed above, i.e. the rhombi (*idem*, fig. 12 [Mahīpāla [II], c. 1075–1080]) or the medallions (Pal 1993, cat. 1 behind Mañjuśrī, cat. 3 [Nayapāla, year 14]; cat. 4 [covers which are most probably contemporary of cat. 1 and cannot be dated, as written by Pal, c. 1075–1080]). The combination of the colourful strips with round medallions will find also its way in Tibet (CS 1996, fig. 9).

A further use has been made of this decorative motif: the strips adorn the skirt from Nayapāla's reign (Saraswati 1977, ill. 204 or 1978, ill. p. 47; Losty 1982, ill. p. 27, cat. 4) and also in Rāmapāla's reign (Black 1967, figs. 3, 3a, 5a; further references in Mevissen 1989, cat. M.I.A.3). This particular use of the strips will be met in Tibet where the stripped skirt is

<sup>5</sup> The alternation of these two colours is not systematically applied in later manuscripts; it occurs e.g. in the manuscript dated in the regnal 22 of Govindapāla kept in the Indian Museum, see A.K. Bhattacharyya 1969.

usually worn by the Tathāgatas (CS 1994, figs. 11, 15, 19–21; Pal 1975, cat. 11; Pal 1983, cat. P1, P2; Pal 1984, pls. 7–9; Rhie/Thurman 1991, fig. 12 which belongs to the same group of paintings as Pal 1975 and Pal 1984, pl. 9). This type of cloth occurs repeatedly at Pagan (Luce 1969–70, III, frontispiece and pls. 238c–239a-b, 345a, 353c).

A thin dark edge underlines the outline of the cushion on certain thangkas (I, CS 1994, fig. 27, from the same 1994, fig. 45; Béguin 1990, cat. 3). The edge can be broader and include two lines (*Thangka Kalender* 1992, May; CS 1994, fig. 19; Rhie/Thurman 1991, cat. 91 or Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 61; Rossi/Casey Singer 1994, cat. 2) or even a row of pearls (Pal 1975, cat. 11; Pal 1984, pl. 9 or Rhie/Thurman 1991, fig. 12). This edge appears, rarely, in Indian manuscripts of the late 12th century (Béguin 1990, cat. 1;<sup>6</sup> Gorakshkar/Desai 1987, pls. II, IIIb, IVb, VIIIb, IXb; Pal 1993, cat. 6; Pathak 1986, pls. 22 below, 23 and 24, second from top: it illustrates two folios which are close to the Los Angeles leaf; Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 18).

### c. Selected small motifs

A selection of various motifs is here introduced, which trace their origin to India. They are secondary in the structure of the image, but the analysis of their forms might be of relevance in the study of early Tibetan paintings and would assuredly deserve much more attention than the one paid to them here.

#### *Head-dress*

The tiara worn by the central deity is bound behind the head by two ribbons the extremities of which fly above the ears. Such ribbons are noticed on the Tārā in the Ford collection (J) but on the whole, they are not represented in relation with images of Bodhisattvas or any female deity be they central images or attendants. On the contrary, they appear to be systematically painted on either side of the head of Tathāgatas (CS 1994, figs. 20, 21). The ribbons flying around the hairdress occur in the same position on a votive *stūpa* from Kurkihār which depicts the four Tathāgatas (BP 1989d, pls. 2–5) or are attached to the hairdress of Mañjuśrī for instance (BP 1989c, pl. 32.13). Generally speaking, the ribbons are illustrated in the Buddhist art in Bengal in the 10th century and in Bihar in the 11th–12th centuries where the two thick ribbons present a deep curve on either side of the deity's head (Painting: Coomaraswamy 1928, pl. XXXII where the Tārā and Māyā wear both golden ribbons. Sculpture: BP 1991/92, figs. 7–9, 19, 23, 25, 28, 31, 40).

However, two further ways of presenting the motif are noticed in the 11th and 12th centuries. On the one side, several ribbons are put on each other above the shoulders, eventually combined with the flying ones (*idem*, figs. 14–17, 21–24, 27, 32–33, 36, 39); on the other side, two elongated loops can be attached to rosettes of the diadem above the ears (*idem*, figs. 27 and 36). While the first treatment noticed above is observed on various iconographies, male or female, Buddhist or Hindu deities, the type with the superimposed rows of ribbons is related with demonic deities like Mahākāla or Jambhala and the last model adorns the head of the jewelled Buddha and is precisely observed on a group of thangkas, some of them from Shalu,

<sup>6</sup> It is there noticed behind a depiction of Amitābha; the manuscript is dated in the year 32 of an unspecified reign, which was probably the one of Govindapāla (ruled c. 1161–1175). The same (?) system of dating is used in the Bombay manuscript (Gorakshkar/Desai 1987, 562; the year is there 39). In any case, the Paris manuscript cannot, on stylistic grounds, be attributed to the reign of Rāmapāla as done by Béguin 1990, 18 and 20. It should be rather dated around 1193 or 1207 depending whether the datation starts with the reign or after the king's decease.

illustrating Vajrasattva or Tathāgatas (Pal 1984, pls. 7–8; Pathak 1986, pls. 5–7; Huntington/Huntington 1990, 312, 338–339 and cat. 105, 111, 116).

The Tathāgatas wear a very typical tiara with superimposed levels, which traces its origin in India where it usually crowns Mañjuśrī from the 10th c. and onwards (BP 1989d, pl. 32.13; Huntington/Huntington 1990, 312 and cat. 25; BP 1993, figs. 1, 3–5). This head-dress is well known through the tiaras in metal bearing the images of the five Tathāgatas (BP 1995, 75 note 31). On the small *thangka*, the Bodhisattva at the proper left of the Buddha wears such a tiara where the levels are painted with different colours and are adorned with tiny scrolls (fig. 39).

The same tiara seems also to have been introduced in the paintings of Pagan where it is superimposed on the *jaṭā* (hair is still visible in the upper part) (Luce 1969–70, pls. 227–230, 345).

A closer look at the paintings shows that two diadems surround the *jaṭā*, crowned by a jewel, of the Bodhisattvas. The first one follows the front line; it shows a red broad band on which three high fleurons are attached. The second, which is golden and is adorned with similar fleurons, encircles the chignon or is inserted between two of the colourful bands. The lower diadem can end into the two small fan-shaped rosettes painted above the ears. These two diadems exist in the art of eastern India; a further development in Tibetan painting will be to introduce fleurons at each superimposed level (*Thangka Kalender 1992*, May; CS 1994, figs. 19–20; P). The fleurons constitute a common element of the head ornamentation in the sculpture or painting of eastern India. Their shape is usually triangular like here, but the lower part can tend to present a curve (Béguin 1990, cat. 3) which is also noticed in stone sculpture from south-east Bangladesh (Casey 1985, cat. 30, 33). The following step will be to shape the fluron as a rhombus (*Thangka Kalender 1992*, May; Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 11; CS 1994, figs. 19, 21), a treatment which occurs in Indian manuscripts (Losty 1989b, figs. 11 and 14, fig. 41) and further at Pagan (Luce 1969–70, pls. 227–230).

A red strap holds the hair which spread on the shoulders whereas some locks fall on the breast. This strap is adorned with a small rosette on paintings from Rāmapāla's reign (Zwalf 1985, cat. 156) and on murals at Shalu and Drathang (Henss 1994, fig. 6 and 1997, fig. 180; Kreijger 1997, fig. 192) or on *thangkas* where it can be shaped as a row of pearls on a red background with a pendant or a ribbon (fig. 40).

### *Upavīta*

There would be no reason to deal here with this traditional ornament of the Indian iconography if it would not have known, outside India, a transformation which resulted from the ignorance of the artists of its meaning. As a matter of fact, the *upavīta* can fall on the right shoulder of the Bodhisattva on the viewer's left, as a result of the rule of symmetry (Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 111; Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 5, 7, 8, 12, 17 [with further references]; CS 1994, figs. 15, 21). It is also observed at the Jokhang (CS 1994, fig. 6b) and in Shalu (Vitali 1990, pl. 50). On a painting dated c. 1272–73, the position is inverted: the Bodhisattva on the left (Maitreya) wears the *upavīta* as it should be whereas Avalokiteśvara wears it wrongly, falling from the right shoulder (CS 1997, fig. 41). With the large loop on the thighs which these threads present (Vitali 1990, pl. 50, the Bodhisattva on the right), they announce some further examples from Khara Khoto which illustrate how, outside India, the sacred cord was no more understood, since it can appear as a very long necklace falling on the knees (Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 2, 19).

### *The skirt and the shawl*

Bodhisattvas wear a skirt hiding the upper part of the thighs whereas broad and long flap-ends hang in the back. The skirt is tightened by a golden girdle whereas the upper edge of the skirt is knotted on the hips where two puffs fall with a neatly pleated end. Similar pleats fall along the outer edge of the skirt (figs. 38–39). A later development coincides with the appearance of the same pleating on either side of the skirt (CS 1994, figs. 12, 20; Pal 1984, pls. 8, 9). The same golden thread around the waist and the side puffs occur in the Oxford manuscript and, more adorned, in the New York one (C) (Zwalf 1985, cat. 156; Huntington/Huntington, ill. 58b). Besides, the short skirt with long flap-ends in the back appears in the Vredenburg manuscript (Zwalf 1985, cat. 157, ill. p. 110; Losty 1990, fig. 9 below) and in a manuscript preserved in Los Angeles (Pal 1993, cat. 5).

These various elements had already appeared during Mahīpāla [I]’s reign but they are only combined together toward the end of the 11th century – as they are noticed on the thangka of fig. 2 (and fig. 40). From then and onward also, the skirt or the shawl hiding the breast, can be made of a translucent muslin adorned with tiny flowers (covering the Tārā and the Avalokiteśvara of the two folios dating to Vīgrahapāla [III]’s reign in manuscript C: Huntington/Huntington 1990, ill. 58c).

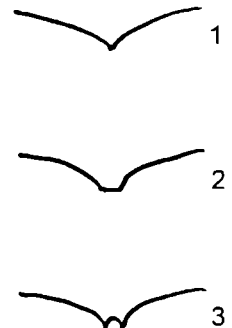
No shawl covers the breast of the Bodhisattvas on the small thangka (fig. 1), a feature also noticed in manuscripts, like the one of Oxford e.g. The central images of thangkas seem to wear it very rarely also whereas it adorns often the breast of Bodhisattvas attending to the Buddha or to a Tāhāgata (fig. 2; CS 1994, fig. 19, Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 2; *Thangka Kalender 1992*, May). And similarly, it is noticed in a manuscript of Govindapāla’s reign, dated A.D. 1155 (*Asiatische Malerei 1994*, 12–13) where it is translucent and can have a thick red hem. In thangkas, the treatment of the shawl knows a simplification: it forms a band of continuous width which falls on both shoulders; it is diaphanous or red and adorned by drops of various colours while the rims are underlined with a darker line (fig. 2; Pal 1984, pls. 7–9). Extremely simplified since only the red hems are painted, it is observed at Khara Khoto (Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 2). In some examples, the shawl falls in a curve on the left shoulder as it is represented in eastern India (Pal 1984, pls. 7–9; fig. 40).

The Bodhisattvas wear on the larger thangka (fig. 40) an embroidered shawl across the breast and falling on the shoulders. It occurs likewise, but not on the shoulders, on painting dated in Govindapāla’s reign (fig. 37). Much simplified – only the red edges form two straight lines – it is seen at Khara Khoto (Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 2). The same cloth forms the long skirt of the Bodhisattvas.

### *The front line of the hair*

The front line of the hair is shaped like a brace on the central image of the thangkas whereas it is straight on the faces of the Medicine Buddhas or the Buddhas of the Past (figs. 1, 2; drawing III.1). This double treatment of the motif helps evidently to create a symbolic hierarchy within the painting, a feature which is also observed on paintings where the central deity is a Tāhāgata (CS 1994, figs. 15, 20; Pathak 1986, pls. 6–7; Pal 1984, pls. 7–9).

A Tibetan development is to cut the point of the brace and to introduce a short curved line (CS 1994, fig. 19; Rossi/CS 1994, cat. 2; BP 1995/96, fig. 3 = G) (drawing III.2). A slightly later form of



Drawing III

the development is noticed at Tsaparang where the short line is deeply curved, with two pointed extremities (Tucci 1935/1989, pls. XII-XV, XXI-XXIX) (**drawing III.3**). In Shalu or Gyantse, a triangular cut-out interrupts the front line, sometimes indicating the parting of the hair (Shalu: Vitali 1990, pls. 49, 51, 67, 68, 70–72. Gyantse: Tucci 1941/1989, figs. 277, 279, 295, 395; Ricca/Lo Bue 1993, pls. 2, 4–7, 15–20, a cut-out which is also noticed in the sculpture of the site: *idem*, pl. 21).

### As a Conclusion

Paintings like sculptures which are structurally identical to them, are religious images in which every element finds its appropriate place. The artists responsible for their realisation had to submit to very strict rules allowing the elaboration of a perfect image in which one can see oneself as the divine. However, transformations are discernible, which open a way to an historical study of the material, as the present study suggests. Being a religious art, it is also highly conservative but the alterations which crept into this repetitive pattern, allow the use of the “method of evolution of the motifs”. It is evident that such a study is here only at its very beginning, what has been done or rather attempted at being done, is to list the “motifs” noticed in the paintings, to trace them in Indian art, and to compare the forms which they present here and there. It is evident that this decorative (and iconographic) vocabulary developed in eastern India and spread all through the Buddhist world from the 11th to the 13th centuries.

A detailed study of the “Indian style” (Rhie/Thurman 1991, 48) and of its impact should consider systematically the rich information which can be provided by the study of the Indian manuscript illuminations. The history of this art is still missing – only J. Losty devoted a careful and precious analysis to some manuscripts in the recent years. However, we can follow the broad lines of the evolution of this art, which allows one to suggest probable dates for the two thangkas under consideration.

The small painting (**fig. 1**) is related to paintings produced in Bihar during Mahīpāla’s and Nayapāla’s reigns (first half of the 11th century) even though it would bear an inscription stating that it had been consecrated by Ōnpo (dBon-po) Lama Rinpoche, abbot at Taglung in 1272–1273.<sup>7</sup> It shares with the Indian paintings the broad upper width of the faces of the Medicine Buddhas (**fig. 34**) who, through their size, compare to the dimension of the manuscript paintings. Similarly, the curls of the hair are all profiled, a feature which is not seen anymore on the central panel of the larger painting (**fig. 33**). The proportions are harmonious. The *uṣṇīṣa* is thick with visible curls and with a round extremity, differing thus from the same motif on the larger painting, where it appears more pointed when the Buddha is profiled while the upper part of the head is flat. A smaller but important detail, at a first glance unnoticed, is the short line at the armpit, which is also noted in manuscripts (Pal 1993, cat. 3: Bodhi scene).

On the second painting (**fig. 2**), one notices various treatments of the face with the front line showing the point or fully horizontal (BP 1995/96, figs. 4–7 to be compared with the second

<sup>7</sup> Information given by Philip Denwood and Jane Casey Singer, letter dated 15 March 1995. That the inscription is not contemporary with the painting is not a surprising feature. This author published a Vajravārāhīmaṇḍala presenting also inscriptions mentioning Ōnpo Lama Rinpoche and she suggested that they do not belong to the same period as the painting itself, i.e. they have to be later (CS 1994, 132 and by the same 1997, 56–58); she mentions (1994, 132) the existence of “over one dozen paintings” inscribed with the name of this Lama but also adds that “he (i.e. Ōnpo Lama Rinpoche) need not have commissioned them all. In fact, the diversity of styles and painterly techniques apparent in this group suggests that he might merely have consecrated or re-consecrated them.” Unfortunately, a proper and systematic list of this group of paintings has never been published so far.

seated Buddha on fig. 11), perhaps a sign of the artist's innovation, which could not break through the main image, which remains much closer to Indian prototypes. The front of the Bodhisattvas or of the Buddhas in the side panels, is also much larger than on the first painting, and differs likewise from the front of the central Buddha. On the small painting, the articulations are visible whereas they tend to disappear on the second thangka.

A thin red line ran along the edge of the white nimbus on the small thangka (fig. 1) whereas on the other paintings, this is a thick red border, only seen together with the line in the central field of the small painting, which underlines the edge.

The shawl worn by Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya is seen on paintings from the second half of the 12th century (fig. 37). However, when compared to these later manuscripts, it is obvious that the cloth painting offers elements which are earlier: thus, the movement of the body (Bautze-Picron 1995/96, figs. 4–5) does not reproduce the sinuosity or the mannerism noticed in these manuscripts or even in wall paintings (CS 1994, figs. 2c, 6b). Simultaneously, the skirt worn by the Bodhisattvas and Māyā preserves its materiality: it does not simply form a dark halo behind the legs as often the case (CS 1994, fig. 11; I); the diaphanous dress on the first painting was visible at the level of the Bodhisattvas' ankles. A proper tension is achieved here between the firmness and solidity of the forms exemplified in the 11th-century manuscripts and by the small thangka, and the extreme sinuosity illustrated in the second half of the 12th century. I would thus propose to date this painting in the first half of the 12th century.

The often published Zimmerman painting (A), which shares the iconography of the thangka reproduced here on the fig. 2, illustrates in a completely different stylistic idiom a probably later development. Lines are harder, the edge of the dress is underlined by a straight line, interrupted at right angles. Legs and arms are extreme thin and the articulations are hardly visible; similarly, the treatment of the body is simplified with the torso and the hips barely indicated. Thus, the sense for the volumes and for the lines illustrated on the two paintings under consideration has undergone here a deep transformation. This geometrization of the forms creeps also in small details, e.g. the outer line of the clouds is straight with regular recesses and has lost its roundness as well as the motif has been deprived from its depth. Proportions also differ, for instance the heads of the Bodhisattvas or of the Buddhas on the side panels are much larger. And in various aspects, large heads, hard lines, flat volumes, teaching Buddha with bare shoulder, it announces the paintings of the Lhakang Soma (Pal/Fournier 1982, LS 34–35 – correspondences should also be made with 13th-century wall-paintings from Pagan/Minnanthu).

So whether Indian or Tibetan, it is evident that the stylistic sources of inspiration for these paintings lie entirely in Indian soil. One cannot argue with the presence of elements such as the Tibetan hierarchs in the corners, the dress of Śākyamuni's father or the monument symbolizing Kapilavastu as proof of a Tibetan origin. Magnificent banana trees are depicted on the painting in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Rhie/Thurman 1991, cat. 12 with further references) and nobody will ever pretend to consider this painting to be from India. And on a thangka which is evidently Tibetan (G), Śuddhodana wears only a skirt, like on the Zimmerman painting.

Besides, these two paintings are, from an iconographic point of view, canonically Indian: when he teaches, the Buddha has to have both shoulders hidden by his dress (see also the Buddha of the Past: figs. 1 and 2 and compare to the teaching Buddha in the tower [fig. 4] who is most probably Vairocana [*idem*, 359]). The painting in the Zimmerman collection departs from this tradition but still keeps remembrances of it: at Sāmāth and Śrāvastī, the right shoulder

is bare (as it is here on the later Tibetan painting: C, G, I) but coming down from the Heaven of the 33 Gods, his shoulders are protected (but in India, he does not display the *mudrā* of teaching on this occasion: fig. 15).

The Buddhist world of the 11th to 13th centuries is not the confused period which a first approach to the art could suggest. The existence of relations between specific centres can be assumed from a study of the artistic remains, e.g. in India itself, there are some sites which dominate, like Nālandā, Lakhi Sarai or Bodh Gayā (not mentioned here, but the numerous models of the Bodhi temple found in Tibet and the “andagu” small plaques testify to the central position of the site). At the periphery, sites, today probably untraceable, must be located in north Bengal and in south-east Bangladesh. Beyond Bangladesh, Pagan is the largest site where architectural, sculptural and pictorial remains testify to the intensity of the production in the 12th and 13th centuries. And from an even superfluous comparison with thangkas found at Khara Khoto, it becomes evident that another cultural or spiritual road existed between Pagan and this site (Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 6 illustrates the sunken face with short neck noticed in Burma in late 12th and 13th centuries).

The surviving wall-paintings of the Himalayan range and of Central Asia constitute an irremovable reference, which is not the case of most of the thangkas (the paintings associated with Taglung for instance form a similar group which is “fixed”). The paintings which are relevant here, some in the *mgon-khang* at Shalu and some at Drathang, have been dated in the 11th century (Drathang: Henss 1997, a late 11th- or even an early 12th-century date is possible for the two Bodhisattvas, Henss 1997, figs. 180 and 183, and by the same author, 1994, figs. 6–7. Shalu: Kreijger 1997, figs. 190, 192). However, and it is particularly evident at Drathang as noticed by M. Henss, the inspiration found its source also, if not essentially, in Central Asia. One notices there a combination of images painted in different styles: the “Indian style” is apparently used for the depiction of images like Bodhisattvas (Henss 1997, figs. 180, 182–183; Kreijger 1997, fig. 192) or, secondarily, Buddhas (*idem*, fig. 190: the architectural structure traces evidently its origin in the Subcontinent). Thus either the full treatment of the image or the selection of certain motifs would reveal the Indian connection, an observation which applies also to images of Tathāgatas on cloth or to some rare representations of Bodhisattvas or Tārā (Rossi/CS, cat. 12–13; CS 1994, figs. 4b–5, 6b–7, 11–12). The Tārā in the Ford collection (J) or a Mañjuśrī have been considered to be of Indian origin by J. Casey Singer (1994, 96, 108–109; the Tārā has usually be considered to be Tibetan by Huntington/Huntington 1990 and Rhie/Thurman 1991). A discussion of their real origin is irrelevant for the moment, but I would like to underline that these paintings belong like those of the Bodhisattvas at Drathang or Shalu, or of the Tathāgatas of various thangkas, to the same iconographic and stylistic trend; they belong to the Indian style because they reproduce deities and images of gods which cannot be easily modified. Therefore also, we noticed in the course of this paper that whenever an artist was innovative, it was within the very much restricted limits of “secondary” motifs; this religious obligation of reproducing the traditional divine image did not, none the less, preclude a transformation of this image. Some elements which in India acted as *iconographic*, became outside this country *decorative*, and therefore the possibility was given to modify them, the most evident element being the sacred thread which completely lost its meaning.

This observation applies also to the murals of Pagan; the iconographic program, the structure of the image are directly related to India. Every motif included within an image is iconographic inasmuch as it carries a particular meaning which depends on the representation of the deity or enlarges the meaning of the later and therefore these motifs must be “exported” together with the image of the deity. But at Pagan, like in Tibet or Xixia, the local craftsmen

were able to adjust the local stylistic tendencies to the religious, i.e. iconographic, requisites. When evoking this question, the term “Indian influence” repeatedly occurs; I would rather say, even though this might cause an outburst of temper among some, that the local substratum crept into the genuine Indian religious image. A comparison of the reaction of Tibetan and Burmese artists, almost two centuries’ interval between the first and the second, to the icons imported from India, reveals that the first ones were more conservative and really copied Indian images (and this conservatism lasted till the 13th century) while the other adapted them stylistically more quickly.

Concluding this article, we can only but underline the overwhelming richness of the art between the 11th and 13th centuries in this vast area which had its fundamental spiritual centre located in Bihar. From there, long and deep waves spread in every direction in the Buddhist world, bringing with them icons and their decorative vocabulary. This vocabulary was adapted, eventually translated, into the local stylistic pulsions which in their turn, could irradiate (so, can one perhaps understand how some thangkas from Khara Khoto evidently reflect the “Burmese connection”). It is also clear that this study has been only started here: a precise and detailed history of every “motif” (some have been here only evoked if not completely overlooked, like the tree or the mountain) should be done and not only when they occur in painting (the sculpture and the architecture of Pagan share structural elements and decorative motifs with those mentioned in this study) and moreover, further fundamental aspects of the artistic image, like the composition or the treatment (profile, symmetry, volume, use of colours) deserve a deeper interest in future studies, and this could also help to compare more precisely stylistic similarities between far away sites, Khara Khoto and Pagan or Pagan and Alchi.

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Abbreviations in the text: BP = Bautze-Picron, CS = Casey Singer

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Fig. 1: Buddha, private collection





Fig. 2: Buddha, private collection



Fig. 3: Buddha, Betagi, near Chittagong. Photo J. Bautze



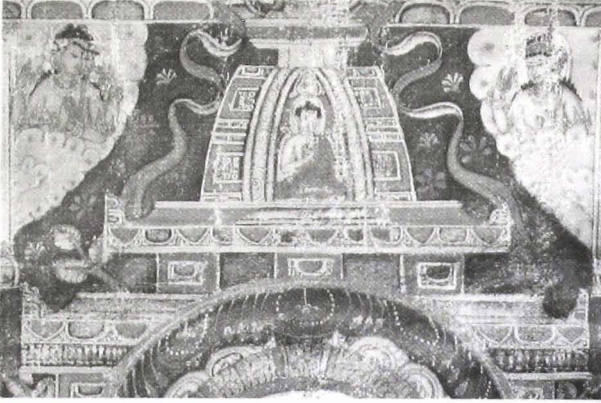


Fig. 4: Śikhara, detail of fig. 1

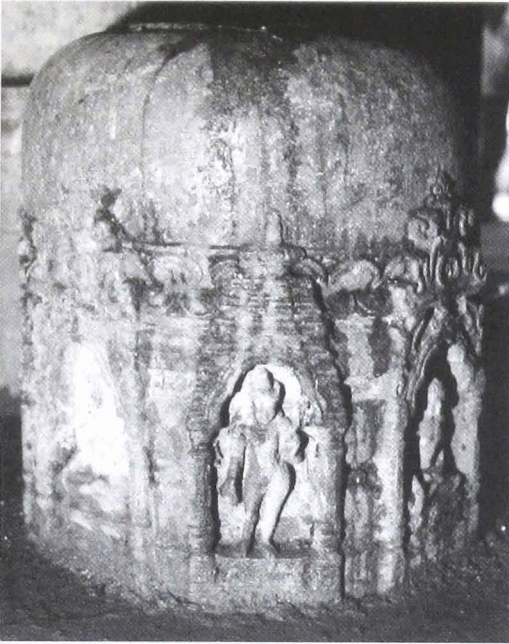


Fig. 5: Votive *caitya*, Nālandā/Badgaon, Sūrya Mandir. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 6: Pedestal from a votive *caitya*, art market, New York. Photo J. Bautze

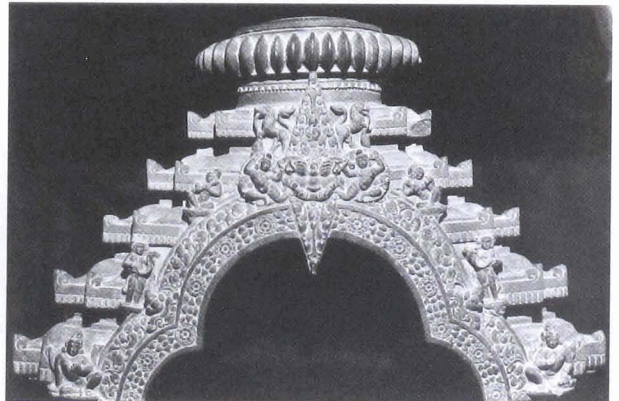


Fig. 7: Arch from a niche, private collection. Photo J. Bautze



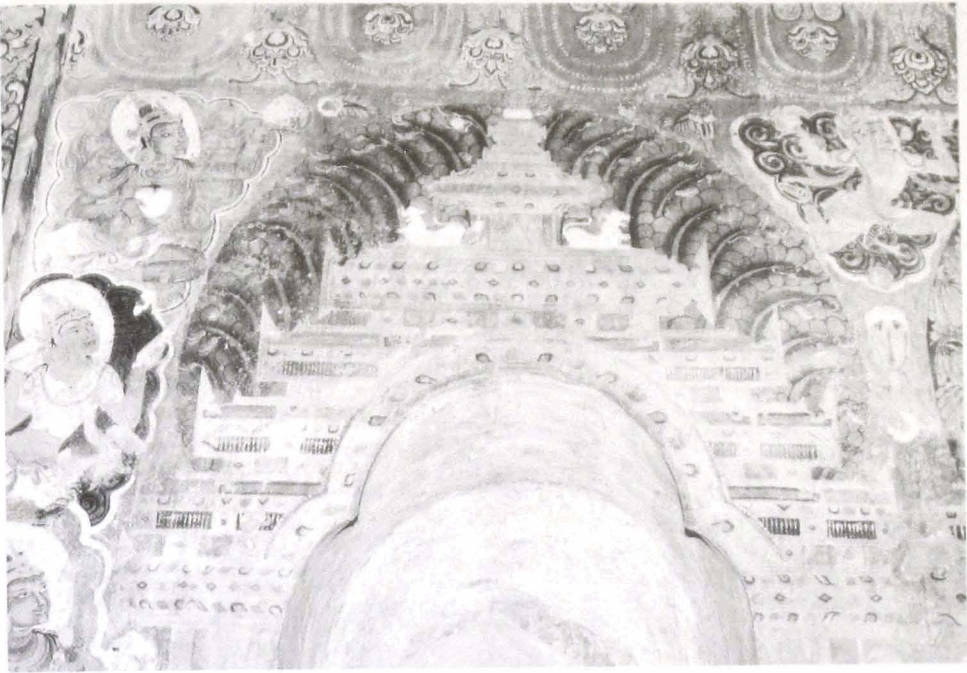


Fig. 8: Painted structure above a niche. Kubyauk-gyi, Pagan. Photo J. Bautze

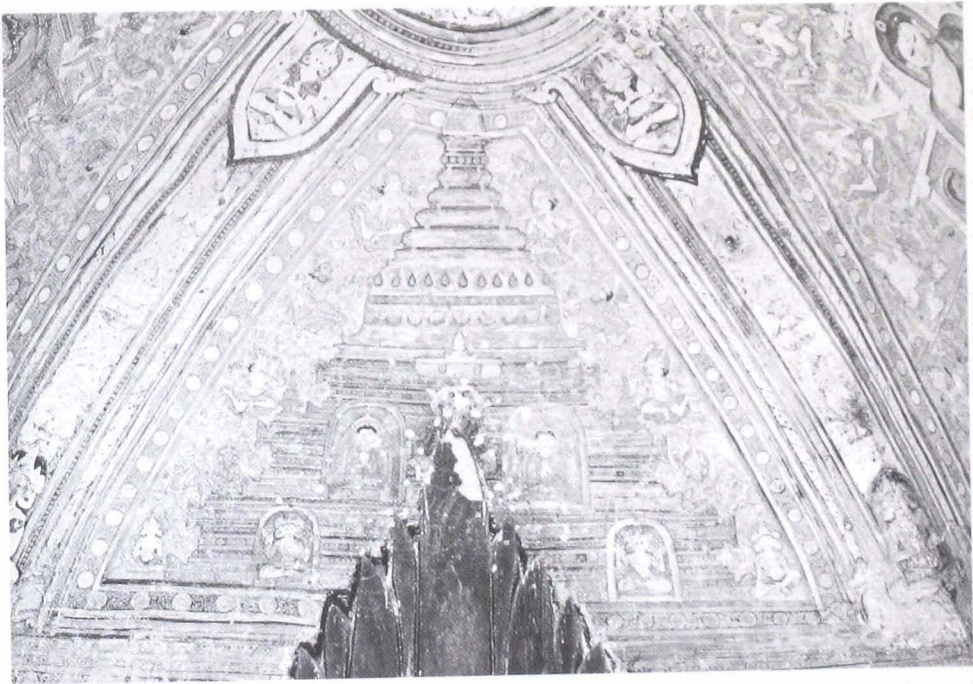


Fig. 9: Monument 572, Pagan. Western wall of the ceiling, above the main image. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 10: Buddha within a temple. Nanda-na-nyahpaya, Pagan. Photo P. Pichard-E.F.E.O.



Fig.11: Avalokitesvara, art market, New York.  
Photo J. Bautze





Fig. 12: Miracle of Śrāvastī. Patho-  
tha-mya, Pagan. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 13: Tārā, Baroda Museum inv. E.G.123. Photo B.  
Breitkopf (courtesy of the Baroda Museum)



Fig. 14: Taming of Nālāgiri, The British Library, OMPB inv.13940, folio 46 verso. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 15: Descent of the Heaven of the 33 Gods, *idem*, folio 44 verso. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 16: Avalokiteśvara in a temple, *idem*, folio 12 verso. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 17: Avalokiteśvara in a temple, *idem*, folio 42 verso. Photo J. Bautze





Fig. 18: Left door-jamb, modern shrine in Gayā. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 19: Stucco decoration. Monument 1250 (*caitya*), Pagan. Photo J. Bautze

Fig. 20: Structure in relief with stucco in the Abèyadana, southern wall. Photo J. Bautze







Fig. 21: Buddha within a temple.  
Nanda-na-nya-hpaya, Pagan.  
Photo P. Pichard-E.F.E.O.



Fig. 22: Monument 572, Pagan, detail of fig. 9. Photo J. Bautze



Fig 23: Avalokiteśvara in a cave, The British Library, OMPB inv.13940, folio 9 verso. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 24: Pedestal, c. 92 x 31cm, left part, Mahant's compound, Bodh Gayā. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 25: Stucco pedestal. Monument 676. Photo J. Bautze





Fig. 26: Buddha teaching within a light structure. Kubyauk-gyi, Pagan. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 27: *Parinirvāṇa*. The British Library, OMPB inv.13940, folio 15 verso. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 28: Avalokiteśvara.  
*Idem*, folio 22 verso. Photo  
J. Bautze



Fig. 29: Avalokiteśvara. Baroda Museum inv.E.G.123.  
Photo B. Breitkopf (courtesy of the Baroda Museum)



Fig. 30: Avalokiteśvara.  
The British Library, OMPB  
inv.13940, folio 40 verso.  
Photo J. Bautze





Fig. 31: Miracle of Śrāvastī. Patho-tha-mya, Pagan. Photo J. Bautze





Fig. 32: The First Sermon, Patho-tha-mya, Pagan. Photo J. Bautze





Fig. 33: Head of the Buddha and upper part of the throne, detail of fig. 2



Fig. 34: Medicine Buddhas, detail of fig. 1



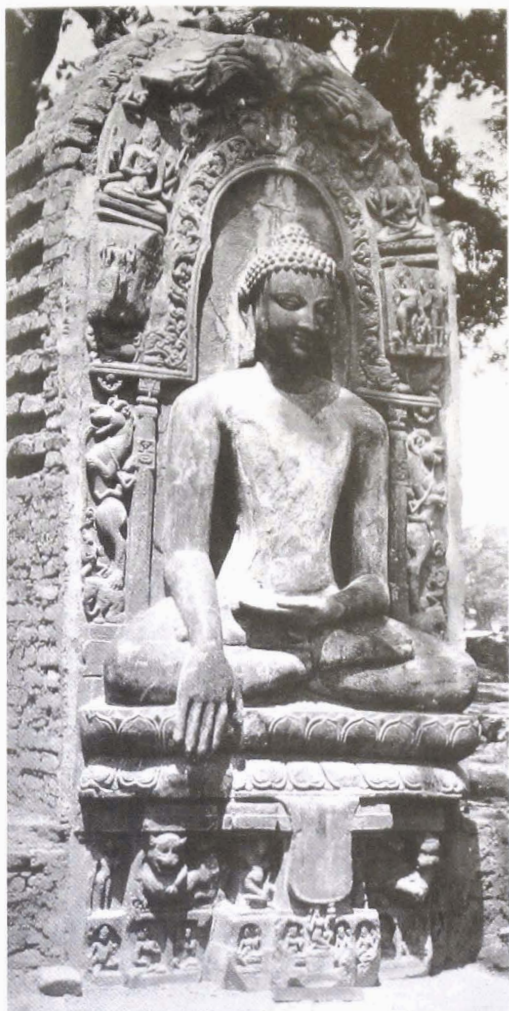


Fig. 35: Large Buddha image at Kasya. Photo Archaeological Survey of India, Year 1910–11, photo 1232, album preserved at the British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections



Fig. 36: Back of the throne behind a large (h. c. 2.60 m) Buddha image at Kāvādol, north of Gayā. Photo J. Bautze



Fig. 37: Kṣitigarbha. The Rietberg Museum, Zürich, Photo J. Bautze



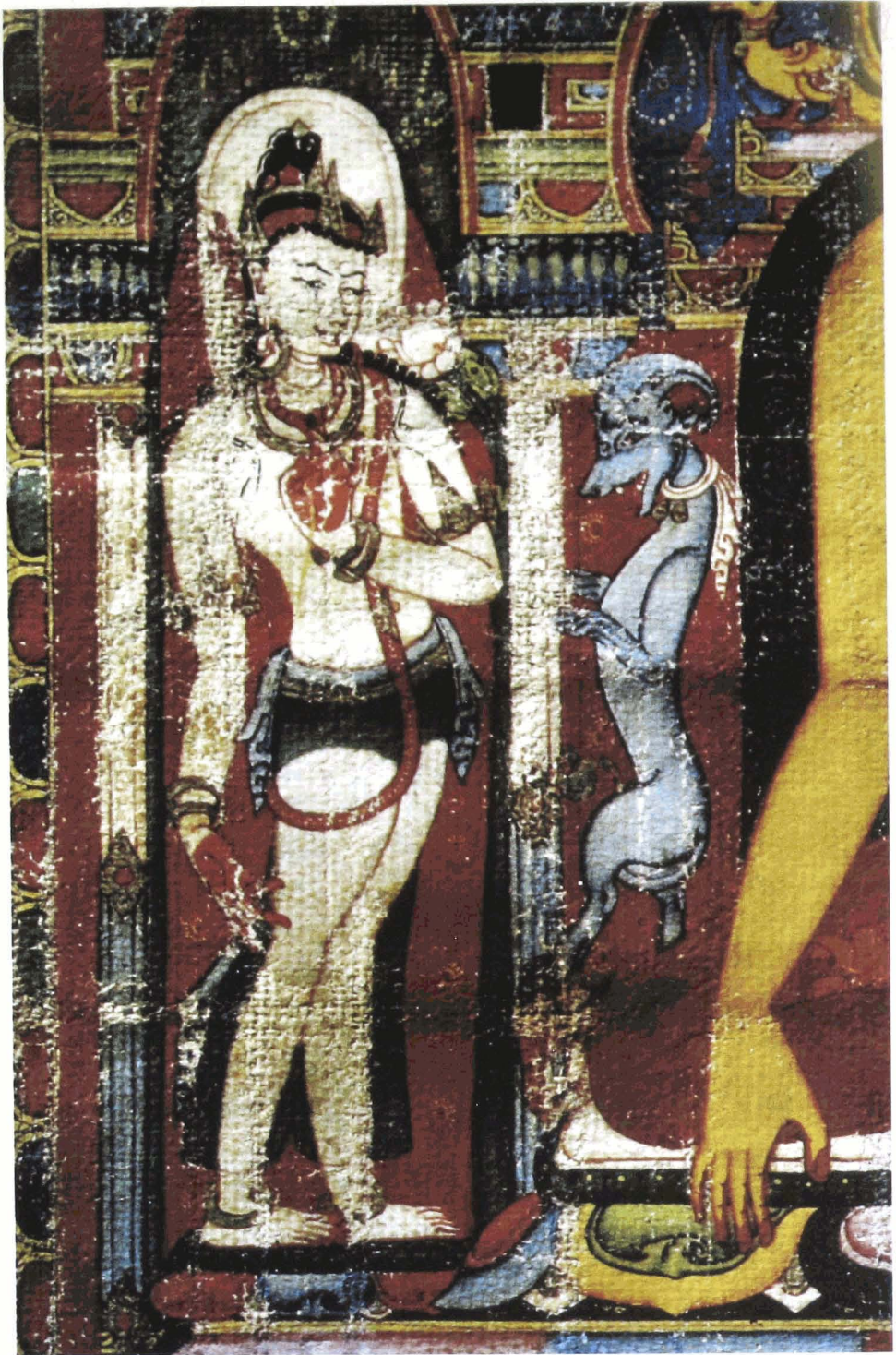


Fig. 38: Avalokiteśvara, detail of fig. 1



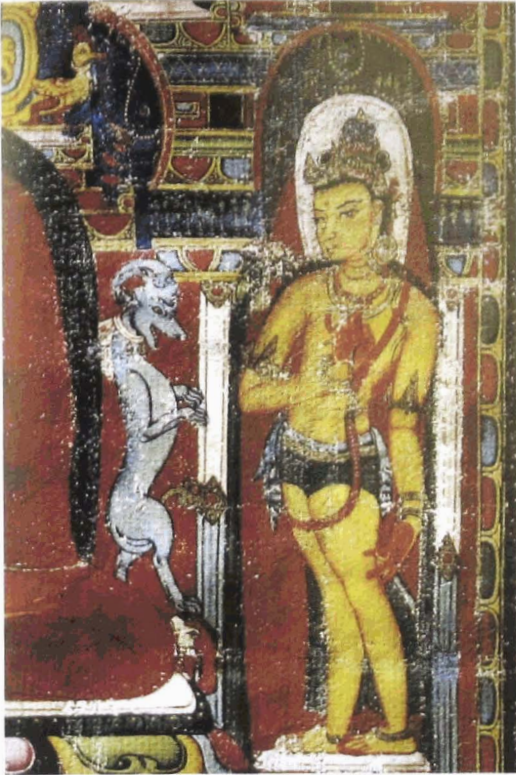


Fig. 39: Bodhisattva, detail of fig. 1

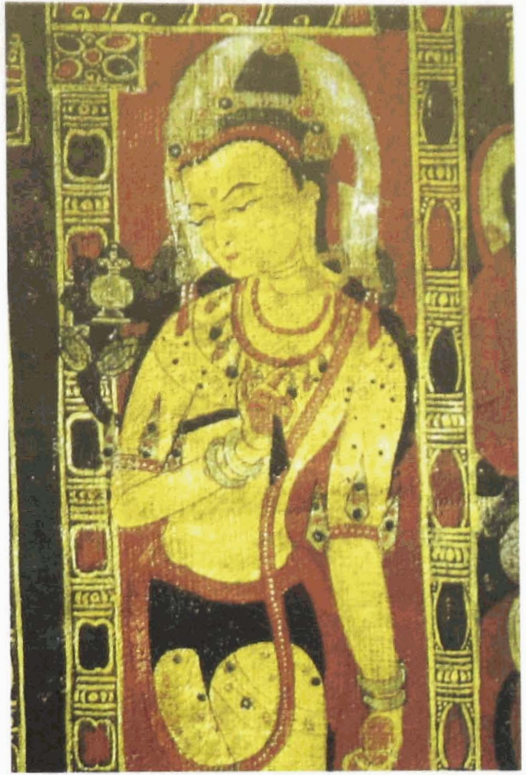


Fig. 40: Maitreya, detail of fig. 2



Fig. 41: Tārā. The British Library, inv.Or.6902, folio 337 recto. Photo J. Bautze



# THE INFLUENCE OF PĀLA ART ON 11TH-CENTURY WALL-PAINTINGS OF GROTTA 76 IN DUNHUANG

by

Ursula Toyka-Fuong, Bonn

## Introduction

The flow of artistic styles between the peoples of Central Asia, along the ancient trade routes, received a great impetus with the development of Buddhist figural iconography spreading from India during the first century BC.<sup>1</sup> The extension of the Kuṣāṇa empire at the beginning of the first millennium promoted the distribution of Buddhist manuscripts and portable images from India to Central Asia through traders and increasing numbers of monks and pious laymen who dared the adventurous pilgrimage.<sup>2</sup> The idea of adorning Buddhist caves with religious wall-paintings as at Ajaṅṭā must have further aroused the fervour of sponsors. The propagation of the faith thus gained a new dimension in a region where the nature of the stone was more favourable to painting rather than sculpture. A sense of competition among donors may have intensified curiosity concerning depictions in neighbouring artistic centres, and artists were probably as mobile as merchants. The quest for conformity to authentic iconographic prototypes led to a search for Indian models for the depiction of Buddhist themes.

In the monastic centres of the oasis settlements the oldest Buddhist wall-paintings, datable to about the 3rd–4th century, are preserved at Miran. They reflect the Gandhāran style which prevailed in the 1st–5th centuries in the region of Afghanistan and north-west India. Important Buddhist art works from later periods are found near Bāmiyān, Khotan, Kuča, Turfan and Dunhuang, revealing in the local idioms, elements of Indian and Iranian stylistic traditions, the influence of which varied at different times. Chinese artistic styles seem to have expanded from Dunhuang to become predominant in the region of Turfan; the Chinese government gained control there in 507 AD, and in Kuča from 658 AD when a Chinese governor was installed in the Tarim basin. The evidently widespread exchange of artistic ideas between the Buddhist centres of Central Asia until well into the eighth century results in an eclectic approach to religious art which may be understood as the expression of a rather “catholic” perception of Buddhism, as well as of a cosmopolitan fashion among the rulers of the time. This is documented by the fact that in the first Buddhist monastery founded in Tibet (at bSam-yas in 775 AD) the three storeys of the main temple are said to have been painted in three different styles, namely Tibetan, Indian and Chinese.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent discussion on early representations of the Buddha in India see Klimburg-Salter, Deborah E. (1995), *Buddha in Indien*, Wien.

<sup>2</sup> The experiences of numerous Chinese monks travelling to Buddhist centres in India since 67 AD through the first millennium are recorded in an extensive corpus of Chinese biographical accounts (*Gao seng chuan*) as translated by several authors; for the later accounts through the Tang dynasty see Latika Lahiri (1986), *Chinese Monks in India. Biography of Eminent Monks Who Went to the Western World in Search of the Law During the Great Tang Dynasty*, By I-Ching, Delhi (Motilal Banarsidass Press).

<sup>3</sup> Stein, Rolf A. (1961), 35–36.

The largest number of painted caves has survived in the city of Dunhuang, which prospered with increasing caravan traffic along the only road to and from Changan, from about the second half of the first century AD. The monastic site was founded after 366 AD, when, according to a stone inscription dated 698 AD, a monk named Lo Cun had a vision of a thousand Buddhas floating above the nearby cliffs – hence the name “Qian Fo Dong” (Thousand Buddhas Caves). Hundreds of grottoes were excavated at the site which is also known today as Mogaoku. Through the centuries, local donors, passing merchants, and pilgrims between China and India sponsored the decoration and restoration of caves with wall-paintings and painted clay sculptures. The earliest caves preserved today were painted in the early 6th century AD during the reign of the Northern Wei dynasty (424–534), slightly later than the Buddhist grotto complex of Yungang in Shanxi province with its monumental stone reliefs. As in the sculptural forms of the Yungang reliefs, the influence of stylistic repertoires of the Gupta type from Mathurā is traceable in the early clay figures and wall-paintings of the early Dunhuang caves. Later examples from the early 7th century onwards show some influence of Gandhāran features, such as the accentuation of musculature in drawing, deep folds of garments, dramatic shading effects, and the dance-like body postures of female figures. However, Indian influence seems to have ceased after Dunhuang came under Tibetan occupation between 777 or 778 and 848, a time during which artistic activities were virtually discontinued. Some paintings on cloth discovered in Dunhuang by Sir Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot, now in the collections of the British Museum, National Museum New Delhi, and Musée Guimet, possibly dating to the 9th–10th centuries AD, still convey an echo of Indian aesthetic concepts.<sup>4</sup> However, due to the portability of such art works the possibility cannot be excluded that they may have been executed elsewhere before being transported to Dunhuang.

Paintings preserved on the walls *in situ* are therefore of primary importance. Their technical refinement and graceful intensity reached a peak between the 6th and 8th centuries. After the recovery of Dunhuang from the Tibetans, the leading Chinese Li clan had some grottoes restored and probably a few new ones commissioned, yet the splendour and grace of the old ones was never to be reached again. Gradual decay in artistic concepts, techniques and the quality of materials can be seen in wall-paintings of the later period, including those in grotto 76. The fortunes of the city declined when the political situation in the region of Shazhou (including Dunhuang) grew unstable during the disturbed period of the Five Dynasties (907–960), when the local Uighur inhabitants gained control. From 960, the leading Uighur Cao clan ruled Dunhuang and sponsored a number of grottoes including the last securely datable one (shortly after 980 AD: see below). The Uighurs maintained close relations with their Central Asian neighbour states and with the Chinese Song dynasty established in 960 AD. However, from the beginning of the 11th century they were under growing pressure from the Tanguts who were expanding their influence from the south-east, and it was probably in the wake of one of their raids that in 1017 the Dunhuang monks sealed precious paintings and manuscripts in the hidden cave which was discovered by Sir Aurel Stein. At exactly which date Dunhuang was absorbed into the Tangut Xixia empire, which was attacked in 1227 by the Mongols, is still a question of scholarly debate, since historical sources are contradictory.<sup>5</sup> The leading Russian Tangutologist Ewgenij Kyschanow advocates the year 1038 in accordance with Tangut and

<sup>4</sup> See Whitfield, Roderick (1982), 54-1, 16-2, 51 and (1983), pls. 5 and 11; Karmay, Heather (1975), 8–17; Klimburg-Salter (1982), pl. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Zhong (1990), 99–121.

Chinese sources.<sup>6</sup> However this may be, a number of painted grottoes can safely be attributed to the period of Xixia reign. It was probably effected before 1074 AD, the date of Dunhuang's earliest preserved inscription in Tangut language, which had been introduced in 1036 AD, two years before the Xixia ruler Yuanhao proclaimed himself emperor.<sup>7</sup>

### “The Miracles of the Eight Stūpas”

The paintings on the east wall of grotto 76 were first published by the Dunhuang Academy of Research in 1987, along with some general remarks to the effect that they belong to the very few wall-paintings dating from the Song period; in relation to Dunhuang this would have to mean between 960 and 1038.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of stylistic comparison with paintings such as those in grotto 61 which were executed shortly after 980, and with later ones of the Xixia period, this time frame is acceptable, taking into account the prevailing historical controversies. But there is ground for more precision. Attention should be drawn to the subject matter and general concept of the paintings in question, which indeed seem to be without any parallel in what has been preserved of Chinese painting known so far. Though their artistic execution betrays a rather provincial standard in late Dunhuang art, the paintings to be discussed evidence not only an acquaintance with, but also the acceptance of, Pāla icons as artistic prototypes within a certain range, at least with regard to the depiction of the Buddha legend about the beginning of the second millennium.

The title of the paintings is mentioned in the Chinese publication as “Ba ta bian”, meaning “The Miracles of the Eight Stūpas” and could refer to a textual tradition in the old literary genre of “bian wen” (“wonder writings”), which combine popular tales about the power of magic with canonical texts. For the subject discussed here a textual source is preserved in the Chinese Buddhist canon under the title of *Fo shuo ba da ling ta ming hao jing*, *Buddha's spoken Sūtra of the Names of the Eight Great Magically Potent Stūpas*, translated by a monk named Faxian from a Sanskrit text no longer extant.<sup>9</sup> Several Chinese sources contain records concerning Faxian (not to be confused with the famous monk travelling to India around 399–414, whose name is written with a different character for ‘xian’) as one of the eminent Indian monks living in China during the Song period and translating numerous Buddhist canonical texts, for which the emperor in 987 AD bestowed the new Chinese name of Faxian or Dharmabhadra. The confusion in early research about the identification of Faxian, whose original Indian name is transcribed as Tianxici (T'ien-hsi-ts'ai) and reconstructed as Devaśānti<sup>10</sup> has been corrected

<sup>6</sup> Kytschanow, Ewgenij I., (1993), 50.

<sup>7</sup> Dunnell, Ruth (1992), 179, suggests that Dunhuang may actually have been ruled by the Tanguts only after 1074 AD.

<sup>8</sup> *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, The Dunhuang Institute of Research (ed.) (1987), vol. 4, pls. 105–109, text vol. 5, 25.

<sup>9</sup> “Hachidairyōtomyōgōkyō”, in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (1925), vol. 32, no. 1685 (ibid. no. 1684, Hachidairyōtobonsai, contains a sequence of invocations under the title of *Fo shuo ba da ling ta fan zan*, *Buddha's spoken Sanskrit Praises of the Eight Great Magically Potent Stūpas*). The sūtra has been translated into English by Fan-I Su and published with amendments under two different English translations of the Chinese title and the reconstructed Sanskrit title of *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya (caitya-stotra)* in Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 531–533; the Chinese term “ling” describing the supernatural power of the stūpas is rather to be understood as “magically potent” than as “magician” (see ibid. note 4).

<sup>10</sup> See *Hōbōgin*, Fascicule Annexe (1978), 255 (sub nomen Hōken) and 283 (sub nomen Tensokusai resp. Fa-hsien/Faxian). The entry was amended with reference to *Hōbōgin*, Fascicule Annexe 1e ed. (1931), 138, where, according to different dictionaries and compilations, the monk Faxian/Fa-t'ien is said to have been given the name of Faxian/Fa-hsien.

by Jan Yü-hua on the basis of newly discovered Chinese texts. According to these, he was a native from Kashmir and reached China in 980 AD after having been detained at Dunhuang for a few months by the local ruler. From 982 he lived at the Chuanfayuan west of the Taiping Xinguosi, working together with others, two Indian monks by the Chinese names of Shihou and Fatian (Fa-t'ien), a native from Nālandā. Faxian continuously held the court title of "Probationary Lord of Imperial Banquets" and died in China in 1000 AD. He received high-ranking posthumous titles.<sup>11</sup> Until now, no specific reason seems to explain why he and his team chose for translation the *Sūtra of the Names of the Eight Great Magically Potent Stūpas*. In this text, the Buddha names the eight places most important in his life as represented by eight *stūpas* imbued with magical powers. Thereafter, the faithful are called upon to erect *stūpas* and make offerings to them in order to gain salvation. Huntington concluded that a cult of the Eight Great Events (*aṣṭamahāprātihārya*) in the Buddha's life was popular in Pāla times and supposes that this was the background for the frequent representation of a sequence of eight representative events in Pāla art. The tradition of such cult, taking the form of pilgrimage to the actual sites, has been pointed out earlier by Huntington.<sup>12</sup> Different texts discussing *stūpas* being erected on the sites important in the Buddha's life have once been summed up by S. Oldenburg: 'Eight *stūpas* were erected on the sites which had been sanctified through events in the Buddha's life, the four *stūpas* relating to the most important events bearing an identical name in all the texts: birth (*jāti*), enlightenment (*bodhi*), turning of the Wheel of Law (*dharmacakrapravartana*), entry into Nirvāṇa (*mahāparinirvāṇa*), the other four *stūpas*, which were named differently in the texts, are dedicated to episodes from the life of the Buddha as a teacher.'<sup>13</sup> In China the ritual of offering a multitude of *stūpas* for spiritual salvation is already recorded as early as the 7th century, when between 601 and 604 the Chinese emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty had 111 *stūpas* erected.<sup>14</sup>

The so-called "Miracles of the Eight Stūpas" represented in grotto 76 at Dunhuang does not seem to be connected directly to the iconographical programme seen on the other walls. The paintings on the northern rear wall are no longer recognisable, but the southern and northern walls each show an eleven-faced bodhisattva, Guanyin, in a hilly landscape with eight narrative scenes from the *Guanyin jing bian* (Sūtra of miracles of Guanyin) and *Yaoshi jing bian* (Sūtra of miracles of Bhaiṣajyaguru). Both paintings show a stylistic resemblance to the depiction of landscape and narratives in the grand View of Wutaishan preserved in grotto 61, which according to an inscription must have been painted shortly after 980, the year when the princess of Khotan, portrayed next to it, married the son of Cao Yijin, ruler of Dunhuang. There is a similar semi-abstract concept of landscape, with green and softly rounded hills and horizontal strips of green grass forming a contrasting pattern with the alternating blank ground. The little narrative scenes seem strewn at random in the open space of the landscape, conceived from different angles one above the other. Clouds are painted in a similar ornamental way with long parallel structured tails and a double volute head, also with double contour line. Even some of the stylised ornaments in the ladies' garments of grotto 61 reoccur in the ornaments of framing borders in grotto 76. The paintings on the rear western wall have faded. In front there is a large

<sup>11</sup> See Jan Yü-hua (1966), 34–37; referring to the Dunhuang episode the author mentions that the two Indian monks were forced to cast away their staffs, water jars and other things, which indicates the declining role of Buddhism.

<sup>12</sup> Huntington, John C. (1987), part I, 55–63, part II, 56–68.

<sup>13</sup> Oldenburg, S.F. (1914), Materialy po Buddhistskoj ikonografii Khara Khoto. Obraza tibetskovo pisma, n. X-2326, Petrograd. This paraphrase follows a translation of Kira Samossiuk in Pjotrowskij (1993), 118.

<sup>14</sup> Zwalf, W. (1985), 49.

stucco image of the Buddha, probably dating from the 10th–11th century but having undergone repair. His right hand is now raised in *abhayamudrā* and the left shows *dhyānamudrā*. The Buddha is facing east towards the cave entrance, where the wall is adorned with the paintings to be discussed here, which extend on both sides of the entrance opening. The paintings on the lower half of the wall are no longer extant. The upper half is well preserved and the general layout is clearly visible. Originally, the complete wall was adorned with eight rectangular panels, each about 100 cm in height and 80 cm in width and framed by a broad border either with floral pattern or consisting of a double row of pearls. The panels are arranged in groups of four on both sides of the entrance, only the upper horizontal row of four being preserved today. This row depicts the first and third event south of the entrance and the fourth and seventh north of it. Below it must once have been depictions of the second, fifth, sixth and eighth event, resulting in a compositional device which forced the eye up and down if the viewer wanted to follow the chronological order.

In the centre of each panel is depicted one of the Eight Great Events within the doorway of an architectural structure which is meant to recall a *stūpa* but actually looks more like an unconventional mixture of *stūpa*, shrine and throne. The roof of the building is surrounded by four *apsarās* gliding down from heaven, each on a black leaf-shaped cloud. They have a rather boyish appearance with slender long arms and legs, squarish heads resembling some of the figural types depicted in the narrative scenes on the earth below, and they also wear the same brownish-black loincloth and head ornament. An *apsarā* of quite a different kind is depicted on the very top of each panel painting, above a layer of clouds, framing the whole wall and originally obviously continuing across the other walls of the grotto. These large *apsarās* of a roundish womanly type are reminiscent of the ideal of beauty in middle Tang times, depicted in a standard Dunhuang style of the 10th to 12th centuries. Each of them carries a platter from which flowers drizzle down, filling the air.

In the lower half of the painting the central scene is encircled by smaller narratives grouped along the inner frame of each panel. Not all of them can be explained *ad hoc*, as a discussion of their literary sources would go beyond the purpose of this study. It seems, however, that they relate to various sources of Buddhist literature, like e.g. the *aṣṭamahāprātihārya* sequence as well as the *Lalitavistarasūtra*. Besides these, other textual traditions seem to be involved, probably from Indian as well as from Chinese sources. There is variety also as far as the compositional order of the small narrative scenes is concerned. Some have to be obviously viewed in a clockwise direction like in the first painting discussed, some, anti-clockwise like in the case of the last painting and some belong together with the main central scene, like in the second and third painting. In the middle the lower part of each painting a huge stele on a lotus base is depicted as if standing in front of the central scene which, according to the Chinese custom of recording historical circumstances in stone inscriptions, bears a Chinese inscription in vertical lines to be read from left to right. The texts contain a short explanatory text to the pictorial representation ending in a line actually denoting the title of the painting by giving the Chinese term “ta” for *stūpa* and the respective number out of the set of eight. The style of handwriting seems awkward in some instances and is not free of orthographic mistakes. On top of each stele a horizontal line of characters written in a style similar to the Proto-Śāradā script and can be deciphered with some difficulty. I am indebted to Jens-Uwe Hartmann and Sieglinde Dietz for giving it an initial evaluation and for suggesting that these lines name the title of each painting referring to the event as it is usually termed in Indian texts.

The main stylistic and technical features – the strong sense of narrative as well as the draughtsmanship and colour treatment – are consistent with the kind of painting prevailing in



Dunhuang at the time, as will be discussed below. The colour palette is limited throughout to seven colours, namely ice-blue, sky-blue, turquoise, violet, red-brown, charcoal grey, and black. A similar palette is found in many wall paintings in Dunhuang of the period and, though in more opaque tones, in wall paintings of the 6th century there and in the old monastic centres further west such as Qizil. Ultimately, this palette seems to be frequent in the region where the main population was Uighur, and is therefore often linked in Chinese publications to a so-called “Uighur style” of painting. In grotto 76 at Dunhuang, however, the treatment of the cool palette of water-tones achieves a special transparent, glassy effect similar to water-colour painting, the reason for which may be less artistic than economic. This conclusion may also be drawn from the fact that colours are often applied in a sketchy way: overlapping contour lines, shading which seems coarse and uneven – all betraying a certain carelessness in the technical execution of the painting. However, special skill is evident in the brush lines which create animal forms as well as the large *apsarās* roaming the clouds above. These may well have been painted by artists trained in that kind of pictorial motif.

The sequence starts south of the entrance just next to the opening, with the first event in the Buddha’s life, his birth in Lumbinī Garden (fig. 1). It depicts Queen Māyādevī in the centre, standing under a tree bearing fruits and lifting her right arm, grasping one of the branches. She is traditionally depicted in this age-old posture of female *yakṣīs* while giving birth. The baby Prince Siddhārtha is depicted twice in the same scene: jumping energetically out of his mother’s right side, and gliding down to earth under a cloud. The queen is shown with a dark skin, wearing only a short brown loincloth (*paridhāna*) bound between the legs with a white cloth, rimmed by white folds along the waist, and overlaid with strings of pearls. Her head-dress consists of a band with five roundish plaques, such as are found in the head-dress of bodhisattvas in earlier Dunhuang wall-paintings like those in grotto 404. She also wears a rather heavy necklace and simple rings around her arms and ankles. She is flanked by two, possibly female, attendants. One is standing on her left, smaller than herself but wearing a similar crown and bearing, what looks like a staff, in the right hand. Another attendant is seen on her right, much smaller and with bent knees, in a posture of devotion with both hands clasped in front of the chest holding what could be a short scarf. The depiction of the queen conveys a restricted *tribhaṅga* S-bend of the body and lightly emphasizes the female form by rounding the hip and breast in contrast to the small waist. The rather clumsy limbs reveal an uneasiness on the part of the artist to depict the naked body of an Indian beauty. The extremely long arms and legs featured in all the human figures throughout the paintings undoubtedly reflect figural types of Pāla art. But the linear rendering of the figures results in somewhat unnatural stances, betraying the fact that Chinese artists as a rule gave predominance to the depiction of the garment instead of body structure.

The central scene is surrounded in the lower half of the painting by smaller narrative scenes illustrating various events of Śākyamuni’s life, starting from the right. The first scene shows a person sitting in a leisurely posture on a Chinese style ‘kang’ and attended by a servant with the infant boy in his arms. He seems to present him to another person sitting on the ground with crossed legs and attended by a standing servant holding a flywhisk. This attribute characterized the person as a wise man with outstanding powers and shown stretching out his arms as if wanting to take the child in his arms. An inscription on the left reads: “King Jinfan holds the Prince in his arms.” The right inscription reads: “The Great Magician and Immortal Asishui (i.e. Asita-rsi)<sup>15</sup>”. There can be no doubt that this is a depiction of Siddhārtha’s father King

<sup>15</sup> According to Soothill, William E./Hodous, Lewis (1959), 290a, “Asixian” is the phonetical transcription of the



Śuddhodana receiving the prophet Asita. The latter had a vision and travelled to Kapilavastu, where, upon seeing the boy, he prophesied his attaining of enlightenment. The scene below depicts, as is written next to it, “The Prince leaving at midnight by jumping over the city wall”. Siddhārtha is seen leaving a typical Chinese walled city on his horse carried by four genies so that the hoofs would not make any noise. The whole figural group is wrapped in a cloud, signifying that, indeed, he leaves unnoticed. On the opposite side, the horse Kaṅṭhaka is seen with sadly drooping neck after being left by its master, another person standing close to him holding a roundish black object in both hands. The nearby inscription “The Prince is approached by Cinuo (i.e. Chandaka)<sup>16</sup> and offers him a hat” explains the scene as showing Siddhārtha’s loyal servant Chandaka being sent off for the palace to return to his parents, as a sign of renouncing the world, his turban – here denoted by the Chinese term for an official hat – and his hair. The moment of Siddhārtha cutting off his hair to become an ascetic is depicted in the left corner, where the Prince is seen inside a cave overgrown by wild vegetation, accompanied by the inscription: “On Snow Mountain was the place where the Prince cut his hair”. Above follows a scene inscribed “The Prince retired for six years to meditate”, showing Siddhārtha meditating in *padmāsana*, his hands held in *dhyānamudrā*, inside a cave with a small figure standing close to him. Possibly this figure represents the girl Sujātā who offered milk to the master after he had ended his years of stern ascetic fasting. Having accepted Sujātā’s gift Siddhārtha took a bath in the river before turning to Bodh Gayā for his final enlightenment. The inscription on top refers to this episode stating “This is the place of bathing in the Xuhai river” meaning perhaps Nairāñjanā River near the place of the Buddha’s final enlightenment. The last scene at the top, however, does not show the Buddha under a Bodhi-tree, but again sitting in meditation inside a cave.

The figural scenes are commented by the Chinese inscription on the stele in front of the central scene: “I am the original Buddha Śākyamuni and have left my former existence to become a child in Jiapi (i.e. Kapilavastu).<sup>17</sup> I rode on a white elephant (in my mother’s dream of conception) and turned to the prayers of mankind. I took my throne on the blue lotos<sup>18</sup> and pointed to Heaven and Earth.<sup>19</sup> King Jinfan (i.e. Śuddhodana) held the Prince in his arms. The Immortal Asi (i.e. Asitarsi)<sup>20</sup> prophesied<sup>21</sup> that this is definitely the King of the Law, the saviour of all. Indeed he explained the four (modes of) life<sup>22</sup> and indicated to the beings the six ways<sup>23</sup> (of existence). With leaving the town he renounced worldly fame and overcame (the

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name of the prophet Asita-rsi (sic!).

<sup>16</sup> See Soothill, William E./Hodous, Lewis (1959), 765b.

<sup>17</sup> “Jiapi” is explained as an incorrect form of transcription for Kapilavastu in Soothill, William E./Hodous, Lewis (1959), 316a.

<sup>18</sup> If the character *lian* is to be read as “blue lotos” – indeed the only reading which would make a sense – the writing is partly incorrect as the radical is missing.

<sup>19</sup> This gesture of the Buddha as a child calling heaven and earth to witness has been a popular subject in Chinese Buddhist sculpture, though mostly found in later representations.

<sup>20</sup> See above note 16.

<sup>21</sup> “Ji xiang ji qu” is found explained in this in way in Foxue da cidian, Ding Fubao (ed.) (1994), vol. 1 (shang), 527, xia 6.

<sup>22</sup> Soothill, William E./Hodous, Lewis (1959), 178b, explain this term as equivalent to *caturyoni*, the four modes of birth, viviparous, oviparous, water-born and metamorphic.

<sup>23</sup> According to Soothill, William E./Hodous, Lewis (1959), 139a, the term denotes the six ways or conditions of sentient existence in the cycle of rebirth; the inverse combination of *liu dao si sheng* is referred to as the equivalent to “the six ways of rebirth and the four holy ways of rebirth”.

cycle of) life and death. On Snow Mountain he gave the proof. On the site, where the Bodhi-tree<sup>24</sup> was bearing ample fruit, he was born. This is the first Stūpa.”

The final sentences of the inscription refer to the central scene of the panel, as does the line written in Proto-Śāradā script on top. According to Jens-Uwe Hartmann and Sieglinde Dietz it may be deciphered as: “*Lumbini caitya (ratna?)*” meaning “The (jewel of?) Lumbini *stūpa*”. Thus, the Sanskrit line as well as the very last line of the Chinese inscription give the title of the painting and indicate that the architectural structure in its centre is meant to represent indeed a *stūpa*. The Sanskrit title names the site of the *stūpa* and the Chinese title contains an enumeration referring to a cycle. Both can be taken as hinting at the concept of veneration of a memorial *stūpa* set up on the place of the Buddha’s birth in Lumbinī garden. Thus a connection between the pictorial cycle of the Eight Events of the Buddhas life and the cult of the Eight Great Stūpas finds a confirmation here in Dunhuang.

Next towards the south, there follows the depiction of the third great event, the First Sermon or the Turning of the Wheel of the Law in the Deer Park of Sārnāth (fig. 2), the second event of the Buddha’s enlightenment having been depicted below in the row of panels now destroyed. The central scene shows the Buddha closely flanked by his two chief disciples, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāna, each sitting on a separate lotus, each wearing the same ice-blue monastic garment like the Buddha himself with a violet part falling collar-like around the neck and showing an *uṣṇīṣa*, a halo – though slightly smaller – and all three figures showing *añjalimudrā* with clasped hands. This *mudrā*, however, is iconographically incorrect in this context, for the Buddha should display the *dharmacakramudrā*, the gesture of turning the wheel of the Law, the *mudrā* being identified with the eightspoked wheel represented on top of the stele in front. Here the artist seems to have confused the depiction of the third event with the depiction of the fifth, the miracle of Śrāvastī, to be seen in the painting adjoining the door opening to the north (fig. 3). There, the Buddha is depicted in a threefold manifestation with his figural emanations depicted nearly identically and with the central image actually displaying *dharmacakramudrā*.

In the incident of the First Sermon, the Buddha, as is well established in Gupta sculpture,<sup>25</sup> is shown surrounded by bodhisattvas. Here, they are seen in two groups of three to each side of the *stūpa*. They are kneeling on lotus thrones under flowering trees with their hands raised in adoration, adorned with fluttering pearl garlands, three-pointed crowns and *paridhānas* as described before. Their gracious postures seem animated by the movement of a recent arrival at the site and stimulated by an inspiring event. On the right side of the *stūpa* an inscription explains: “Bodhisattva Wenshu (i.e. Mañjuśrī) coming to listen to the assembly of the Teaching of the Law”, on the left side another inscription reads: “Bodhisattva Puxian (i.e. Samantabhadra) coming to listen to the assembly of the Teaching of the Law”. In the lower right corner of the panel five attending figures are referred to in the inscription as “The five converted believers”, identifying them as the five companions who had once left Siddhārtha, disappointed by his giving up extreme fasting, but who were converted by his sermon to become his first monks. Except for the halos and garlands they are depicted similarly to the bodhisattvas, showing the slightly twisted posture in the waist, roundish hips, and long legs with stereotyped muscle structuring. In the opposite corner of the panel there is a group of five nuns, perhaps meant to depict the embracing character of the Buddha’s teaching – that is, for men and women equally – with the number five balancing (according to a basic principle of

<sup>24</sup> To refer to the Bodhi-tree in this context is obviously a mistake, as this was the place of Buddha’s final enlightenment whereas his birth is said to have taken place under a fig-tree.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, Joanna (1975), 181–182.

Chinese aesthetics) the group of five believers on the right side. Mentioned in the inscription as the “Five Biqiuni<sup>26</sup> listening to the (Turning of the) Wheel of the Law of the Four Noble Truths”, the nuns are actually depicted like monks in a gown covering both shoulders but leaving the chest bare. Their appearance, with shaven heads in a slightly deformed squarish shape, is a stereotype found in numerous examples in the later wall paintings of Dunhuang. The juxtaposition of two groups of five people found in this painting may refer to a passage transmitted in the context of the *Lalitavistara* as translated by Foucaux, where the five first disciples of the Buddha are said to have been joined by five other ‘persons’.<sup>27</sup>

The large stele is here flanked by a female and a male deer representing the deer park. The largely unreadable Chinese inscription contains in the first lines an indication of the Buddha passing knowledge to his listeners on the occasion of his First Sermon. The concluding lines read: “ .... The five adepts began to spread the Four Truths of the teaching. On this site the Wheel of the Law began to turn. This is the third *stūpa*”. The horizontal Sanskrit line reads “*Dharmacakra caitya ratna(m?)*”, the last word no longer clearly visible. This title, “The jewel of Dharmacakra *stūpa*”, though not stating the name of the place, again indicates the memorial *stūpa* as being the object of pictorial representation with the figural scene inside added as a helpful means for spiritual visualization in the act of veneration.

North of the entrance there should follow, according to the order of sequence in this layout, the fifth of the Eight Great Events showing the Buddha’s descent from Indra’s heaven of thirty-three gods. Instead, there can be no doubt that what is actually depicted is the Fourth Great Event, the miracle of Śrāvastī. There, the Buddha manifested himself in four appearances at the same time: sitting, standing, lying and walking. In the painting, the Buddha is seen in three nearly identical appearances very much like the central scene in the depiction of the third event. Yet a close look reveals that the emanations grow directly out of the main body, which is not framed by a separate mandorla, and that they are nearly as large, and certainly larger than the figures of the two disciples. However, instead of the *dharmacakramudrā* of the main Buddha image, the two emanating images display *añjalimudrā*. In respect to the confusion of the First Sermon and the Great Miracle in pictorial representations of the Buddha’s life scenes, it is noteworthy that Joanna Williams pointed out a similar ambiguity in Gupta steles dating 5th to 6th centuries from Sārnāth.<sup>28</sup>

The smaller scenes surrounding the *stūpa* cannot be definitely identified because the inscriptions have not been filled in. On the right side a monk or nun is to be seen pointing to the *stūpa* and turning his head towards a figure following behind, obviously an adept who is going to be ordained. Could this figure be meant to represent the ascetic Purāṇa Kāśyapa who was converted at the sight of the Buddha’s supernatural multiplication? In stylistic terms the figure looks much like the five adepts in the panel discussed before. A difference is to be seen, however, in the way of drawing the *paridhāna* as well as the undressed body. There is an even more distinct swing in the much broader hip. The body is heavier, the limbs are more fleshy, the shoulders more sloping. The same features characterize two figures, possibly adepts, approaching the *stūpa* from the opposite side, one of them carrying an incense burner for ritual veneration. Quite obviously, the hand of a different artist is discernible. Yet another figure type

<sup>26</sup> The Chinese expression for women who have become a Buddhist nun, according to *Foxue da cidian*, Ding Fubao (ed.) (1994), vol. 1 (shang), 729 shang, is derived from the Sanskrit term *bhikṣuṇī*.

<sup>27</sup> Foucaux, Philippe Édouard (1884), 378.

<sup>28</sup> Williams, Joanna (1975), 182.

is introduced with the five men kneeling in the lower right corner of the painting with hands raised in adoration. The inscription next to them reads: “The five daoist masters are returning to the Buddha”. If it was not for this inscription the five kneeling figures would have scarcely been recognized as Daoist masters, as they are dressed like men of the lower class with simply knotted hair scarfs and show rather coarse facial expressions, as figural types reminding one of the herdsman driving horses in Li Longmian’s handscroll painting “Driving the Herd near to Weiyuan” (*Lin Weiyuan mufang tu*) in the collection of the Palace Museum Beijing and dated 1052 AD.<sup>29</sup> To depict Daoists as men of the lower class could have the purpose of degrading them as former enemies of Buddhism with reference to the heavy disputes between Buddhist and Daoist fractions which had disrupted Chinese society since Buddhism was introduced. On another level, the conversion of the Daoists could also be meant as a parallel to the subduing of heretic masters, for which purpose the Buddha performed the miracle. In the lower left corner of the painting another two faithful rest in adoration, both dressed and adorned like the one led by the monk or nun. A high ranking figure is seen kneeling on a carpet and offering flowers as is mentioned in the faintly visible inscription next to it. Though the inscription does not seem to give any concrete statement, this figure could refer to the donor of the paintings. Such an assumption would be appropriate regarding the function of sponsors and their representation in the wall-paintings as usually transmitted in Dunhuang. The Chinese inscription on the front stele due to the dark underlying brown colour is nearly unreadable, but the Sanskrit inscriptions written in horizontally arranged letters in Proto-Śāradā script on top of the stele could be deciphered as “*Mahapra(t)[i](harya) (caitya ratna)*” (with the *i* damaged and the *harya* added), “The (jewel of the) great magically potent (*stūpa*)”.

The last preserved painting of the cycle (fig. 4) depicts the Seventh Great Event, the Buddha announcing his approaching death and entry into *nirvāṇa*, when receiving a gift of honey from a monkey in Vaiśālī. According to Joanna Williams the story of the Monkey’s Gift only occurs in the Pali *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, in the *jātaka* collection preserved in Tibetan translation as the “Dzan Glin” and in the travel account of the Chinese monk Xuanzang.<sup>30</sup> The event is depicted in the most lively manner characteristic of depictions recalling the event in stone carvings from Pāla times.<sup>31</sup> The central scene shows the Buddha sitting in European fashion on a lotus with his feet resting on a smaller blossom. He is attended by his pupil Ānanda on his right and by a bodhisattva on his left side. As usually seen in versions of the same episode preserved in many Pāla manuscript illuminations, the Buddha is shown in three-quarter profile bent towards the monkey while stretching out his hands. The monkey offering a bowl with both hands is seen with a smiling human face and a hairy body. What is said to have happened after the Buddha accepted the gift of honey from the monkey is depicted in the figural scene in the lower right corner of the painting, where three stages of the episode are depicted by means of figural repetition. The monkey is seen dancing happily because of his being accepted as an equal by the Buddha, in this stage being depicted like a human, as is often found in Pāla art (fig. 5). Frantic with joy, in a moment of carelessness he falls into a pit and dies, as illustrated

<sup>29</sup> The scroll is published in *Song Huaci, I (Sung Painting: Part I, Five Dynasties - Northern Sung)*, Ch’in Hsiao-yi (ed.) (1985), 196–205, ill. no. 58–73.

<sup>30</sup> See Williams, Joanna (1975), 183, and footnote 68.

<sup>31</sup> Compare an unpublished stone relief in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, recently acquired from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts showing as the main image a Buddha holding a bowl in the gesture of meditation and near the lower edge two small human-like figures in animated postures, meant to depict the joyfully dancing monkey whose bowl of honey had just been accepted by the Buddha.

just in the corner and stated in the inscription: "The tree-monkey was so delighted having offered the honey that he performed a dance and fell into the pit". After his death he is depicted ascending to heaven, as indicated in the inscription on the right side of the *stūpa*: "The tree-monkey died and received life. In Heaven (the genies) scatter flowers as offerings to nourish him". In the opposite corner of the painting are seen three Buddhist monks, one of them dressed in a different garment and obviously giving religious instructions, referring to an episode not explained by any inscription. The two bodhisattvas approaching above them on lotos flowers with hands in the *añjalimudrā* are mentioned in the inscription on the left of the *stūpa*: "On hearing voices the bodhisattvas follow to where the Buddha holds assembly". Their figural type is similar to the panels described before, though they are additionally adorned by fluttering scarfs and round haloes. Here the artists may have had in mind passages such as those in the *Lalitavistara* in the context of accounts of the laudatio of gods and bodhisattvas after the Buddha's victory over Māra.<sup>32</sup>

The inscription on the central stele can be read as follows: "Inside the city ..(?)*she*<sup>33</sup> the monkey presented honey to the Saint. The Buddha accepted (his gift). The monkey was extremely happy and started to dance. Thereby, he fell into the pit and died. This is the site where he ascended into heaven. Prosperity. This is the 7th *stūpa*." The Sanskrit line on top of the stele only readable in fragments contains the syllables *.ai .a lyam caitya ratna* thus again stressing the "...jewel of the *stūpa*" as the main object of presentation and referring to the episode having happened at its site and depicted inside for spiritual visualization.

A depiction of the Eight Major Events of the Buddha's life as preserved in grotto 76 is not found anywhere else in Dunhuang, though there are frequent representations of single episodes from the Buddha's lives in wall-paintings from the 6th to 8th centuries, and also small cycles like e.g. a sculptured icon of the preaching or meditating Buddha flanked by small paintings showing the Buddha riding an elephant in Queen Māyā's dream of conception and the young prince Siddhārtha secretly leaving his parents' palace. Grotto 290 contains the most extensive depiction, consisting of 26 episodes joined horizontally forming narrow bands, which are dated 557–581 and considered the oldest and most extensive depiction of the Buddha's life circles known from medieval art in China. When, and in which ritual context, certain important events consolidated into fixed sequences on Indian art cannot be discussed on this occasion. According to Taddei the earliest historical sequences are to be found about the first century AD in Gandhāran stone reliefs.<sup>34</sup> The earliest paintings of any event of the Buddha's life as depicted in the wall-paintings of Ajañṭā have been discussed by Yazdani and Schlingloff.<sup>35</sup> Concerning the Eight Great Events there is ample evidence that the subject was firmly established in Pāla sculpture and painting. Numerous examples from the early 11th to the 13th century are preserved, especially in the form of miniature illuminations for *pothi* manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*, which indeed reveal that the Dunhuang paintings in grotto 76 are basically similar in the representational concept of the main figural scenes. This includes the oldest illuminated manuscript preserved from Eastern India dated into the 5th

<sup>32</sup> Foucaux, Édouard (1884), 303 ff.

<sup>33</sup> The first character of the place name cannot be read properly. The combination of both characters could well be understood as a transcription of the Sanskrit name of Vaiśālī.

<sup>34</sup> Taddei, Maurizio (1995), 47.

<sup>35</sup> Gh. Yazdani, *Ajanta* (1930–35), 4 vols., Hyderabad/London, and Schlingloff, Dieter (1987), *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings. Identifications and Interpretations*, Delhi (Ajanta Publications).

regnal year of King Mahīpāla, according to Zwalf around 1000 AD, now in the Cambridge University Library,<sup>36</sup> an illuminated manuscript referring in the colophon to 15th year of King Vighrahapāla [III?], according to Huntington ca. 1073 AD, now in The Asia Society, New York,<sup>37</sup> an illuminated manuscript from Nālandā monastery dated in the 15th regnal year of Rāmapāla, according to Zwalf ca. 1097 AD, now in the Bodleian Library<sup>38</sup> and the oldest preserved illuminated manuscript from Nepal dated Nepal Saṃvat 135 (1015 AD) in the Cambridge University Library.<sup>39</sup> Though there are distinct stylistic differences between the miniature sequences of all of these manuscripts, there is a fundamental consistency in the artistic approach which seems to mark a frame for the central figural scene of the Dunhuang paintings. Here the stage is conceived in the limited space of a door entrance so that the figures have to be narrowly grouped together, as they are in the small squares between texts of the palm-leaf manuscripts. For example, the Buddha's birth as depicted in grotto 76 in Dunhuang basically echoes the iconographic concept of the same episodes as depicted in the earliest manuscript illumination from Eastern India dated around 1000 AD now in the Cambridge University Library (fig. 5). The device of showing the infant twice during the process of birth is not seen there, but it is known from earlier stone reliefs and does appear in the Nepalese manuscript dated 1015. There, as in most of the Eastern Indian manuscript illuminations, figures of Brahmā and/or Indra would appear in the scene holding a white scarf for welcome, roaming in the clouds or standing side by side. It may be that in the Dunhuang version the figure holding what looks like a stick was meant to show Viṣṇu as one of the subdued gods of old. An even more distinct, though not quite successful, attempt to follow Pāla painting prototypes can be seen in the depiction of the third and fourth of the Eight Great Events. As evidenced in the above mentioned manuscript dated around 1000 AD the two episodes of the First Sermon and the Wonder at Śrāvastī are depicted in a similar composition as seen in Dunhuang yet adhere to the decisive iconographic differences (fig. 6). In all the examples mentioned the Buddha's two disciples are depicted squatting somewhat apart so that the Buddha's throne back shines through. They are of much smaller size, without *uṣṇīṣa* and the hands raised in adoration, whereas the Buddha performs the gesture of Turning the Wheel of Law. In Dunhuang, the artists followed closely but got the *mudrās* and the characteristics of the Buddha's outer appearance confused with the following depiction of the wonder of Śrāvastī, the iconography of which largely corresponds with the version of the manuscript dated around 1000 AD in Cambridge University Library. The representation of the event of the Buddha receiving the monkey's gift of honey as seen in Dunhuang finds a prototype in the earliest illuminated manuscript from Eastern India dated around 1000 AD (fig. 5). A Pāla manuscript, possibly from Bihar and referring in the colophon to the 8th regnal year of King Gopāla [III?], dated by Huntington ca. 1151 AD, contains a miniature depiction of the same episode with the dance and the death of the monkey, however, integrated into the same pictorial unit just next to the Buddha.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Inv.no. Add. 1464, for black & white illustrations see Zwalf, W. (ed.) (1985), 117, no. 155.

<sup>37</sup> Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection, 1987.1; ill. in Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 185–189, no. 58 (part A), ill. pl. no. 58b.

<sup>38</sup> Inv. no. MS Sansk.a.7(R), ill. in Zwalf, W. (1985), 116, no. 156. ill. p. 106.

<sup>39</sup> Inv.no. Add. 1643, ill. in Zwalf, W. (ed.) (1985), 126, no. 167, ill. p. 118–119.

<sup>40</sup> Preserved in the Asia Society, Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd. Collection, 1987.1, see Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 185–189, no. 58 Part B, ill. no. 58c.

The preference of filling the visual plane, however small, with many figures in lively movement (or, if the number of figures is reduced, to enlarge the figures or certain objects) of course is rooted in the Pāla aesthetic concept from which the Chinese concept differs radically. Some of these differences become visible in the Dunhuang paintings discussed here, where the central figural scenes reflect a different approach to the representation of the same episode. In addition, the extended spaces between and around the figures are left blank, not filled with colour; the colour palette in general is quite different. There is a less expressive use of curved outlines than in the manuscript illuminations, especially in the much less sensual appearance of the human body, a more static stance in postures, and a more restraint interaction between the figures. This last mentioned difference may be seen e.g. in the episode of the Buddha's birth. Whereas in the Pāla manuscript paintings the queen is usually depicted leaning heavily on a maid, in Dunhuang the queen is depicted standing isolated under the tree with the attendant figures set clearly apart. These attending figures are depicted in different sizes, obviously according to their social rank. This kind of hierarchical scaling has been pointed out as characteristic of Pāla miniature painting by many scholars, but is much less important in Chinese narrative painting. In the context of the Eight Great Events, however, the artists seem to have deliberately drawn from a Pāla artistic device. Thus, the accentuation of a *tribhaṅga* S-bend in the figural depictions, which in Pāla painting produces an abrupt enlargement of the hips, is modified in the Chinese paintings into a clumsy appearance of the body as a whole, or a sharp forward bend of the waist which is at variance with the stiff and stick-like posture of the legs, something which does not become more natural through the stereotyped depiction of muscular structure. The impression of awkwardly twisted bodies is in many instances further enhanced by the remarkable length of arms and legs features in all the human figures in the Dunhuang paintings of grotto 76 and was probably considered close to Pāla prototypes in a similar way as it seems to have been in the Pāla-inspired painting style prevailing in and possibly originating from central Tibet around the same time. In many cases the result is a much more static, if not uneasy representation, of human figures, contrasting sharply with the lively movement of figures in the late Pāla manuscript paintings.

In some instances the figural depiction, however, as in the kneeling bodhisattvas in the Deer Park of Sārnāth, the more gracious postures and the horseshoe shape of their haloes are closer to Pāla prototypes. This is also true of the depiction of some other details, such as the high three-pointed crowns worn by bodhisattvas and lay believers, and the necklaces with longish, tooth-like pendants like those worn by the five converted followers attending the Buddha's First Sermon. Such necklaces are often to be found in the paintings of crowned Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the style of 'Tucci's Plate E group'<sup>41</sup> of Tibetan paintings as well as in the Khara Khoto paintings of the same group.<sup>42</sup> Also frequently seen is the short *paridhāna* worn by all figures except monks and nuns in the Dunhuang paintings and used to hint at an 'Indian' figure type. In Dunhuang grotto 76, however, only some minor figures in secondary scenes are clothed in a very narrow, shorts-like *paridhāna*. Most of them wear a fluffy *paridhāna* held by a band between the legs as seen in some of the above mentioned Pāla illuminations and the episode of the Buddha's birth in the Nepalese manuscript dated 1015 in the Cambridge University Library. The long transparent *dhotī* worn over the *paridhāna*, as seen in the Pāla

<sup>41</sup> For illustrations and a recent discussion concerning paintings of this group see Jane Singer (1994), 96–112, and pls. 7, 15.

<sup>42</sup> See the fragment of a *thangka* painting showing Avalokiteśvara now in the collection of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Michail Pjotrowskij (ed.), (1993), 138.



manuscript illuminations and in the paintings of the 'Plate E group', however, is in no instance found in the preserved paintings of grotto 76 in Dunhuang. Neither does one find a depiction of a transparent scarf bound across the breast as seen with certain figural representations in Pāla miniatures.

Summing up, it can be said that the iconography and artistic interpretation of the main figural scene in the wall-paintings of grotto 76 provide certain references to the depiction of the Eight Great Events as transmitted in Pāla manuscript paintings – after all, the only kind of paintings preserved from the Pāla period. There are several other aspects which seem to be transmitted directly from Pāla prototypes, such as the depiction of single events of the Buddha's life surrounded by an architectural structure. In the wall-paintings of grotto 76 this is called a 'ta' or 'caitya' in the Chinese and Sanskrit inscriptions, but indeed rather looks like a temple – or the entrance of a temple – than a *stūpa*. Similar architectural structures framing depictions of the Buddha's life scenes can be seen in an Eastern Indian miniature stone sculpture from the late Pāla times preserved in the Cleveland Museum of Art. The unusual piece is carved in the shape of a small shrine with a high multi-tiered tower, on the four sides of which are depicted four episodes of Buddha's life in a sequence unconventional in Pāla art.<sup>43</sup> The only scene corresponding to the paintings preserved at Dunhuang is the Buddha's birth at Lumbinī (fig. 7). The comparable figures in Dunhuang (fig. 1) show differences in the less voluminous forms, less strongly curved outlines and the looser space between the figures. Yet their stylistic rendering obviously cites figural prototypes like those in the stone carving, especially as far as proportions and the postures of the standing figures are concerned.<sup>44</sup> The piece can thus be dated 11th century AD according to the Dunhuang wall-paintings. Its function and a possible ritual context is more unclear, for the possibility that the sculpture was originally put on top of another structure cannot be ruled out. As for the architectural setting, it seems that the framing pillars and the three lobed arches decorated each with a *garuḍa* in the centre do not represent doorways into a sanctum but rather are to be explained as niches within a temple tower.

The architectural structures depicted in the Dunhuang paintings, however, seem to actually represent the entrance and roof of a small temple building. It incorporates certain traditional stylistic elements in a peculiar composition unparalleled in the architecture – whether real or depicted – preserved from both Pāla India and China. The overall impression seems to reflect an artist's vague understanding of 'typical Indian' temple architecture. Such knowledge may have reached Dunhuang through manuscript illuminations. There are numerous examples preserved depicting a deity inside a temple or shrine, like the above mentioned Nepalese manuscript dated 1015 AD showing deities in their places of worship in different regions of Asia. There, in the central miniature of folio 127a (fig. 8) is seen Lokanātha from Rāḍhya inside a temple structure with a roof of receding tiers comparable, though not identical to, the Dunhuang wall-paintings. The same might be said about the architectural structures seen in folio 20b (right) around a Buddha from Puṇḍavardhana and in folio 89a (right) showing Vajrapāṇi as worshipped in Uḍḍiyāna. The temple building around the deity carries a roof with

<sup>43</sup> The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund (71.167), see Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 168–169. The piece has a height of 28.8 cm and a width of 8.4 cm. Depicted are the attack of Māra, Buddha calling the earth to witness, Buddha offering his inheritance to his son Rāhula and his birth at Lumbinī garden. There has been a separate study by Forrest McGill, *A Miniature Shrine in the Cleveland Museum*, M.A. thesis, University of Michigan, 1972, which I was unable to see. The reference was given in Susan L./John C. Huntington (1990), 168–169, where the piece was published again.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 169, fig. 11, who date the piece ca. 12th century.

three horizontal layers of what looks like square bricks decorated with points and spirals;<sup>45</sup> similarly seen in grotto 76, maybe as a strongly simplified echo of the elaborate *candraśāla* (moon-chamber) ornaments in the towers of early Indian temple architecture. In Pāla manuscript painting, Buddhist or Hindu deities are also frequently depicted inside a temple with three-tiered roof which Losty has characterized as a *bhadra* temple<sup>46</sup> in later Pāla manuscripts from the 12th and 13th centuries. Roof structures or roof-like niche frames on temple walls, or *stūpas* showing recessing tiers with a flat horizontal tier on top, seem to have not been uncommon in India and Tibet around the beginning of the second millennium AD and are preserved in numerous architectural and pictorial examples. However, a short pointed roof constructed of alternating long and short layers of bricks decreasing stepwise towards the top, as depicted in the Dunhuang paintings, neither belongs to the repertoire of Chinese architectural elements, nor does it seem to relate exactly to the high multi-tiered *śikhara* towers of traditional Indian temple architecture. In Pāla stone sculptures, however, *śikhara* towers are occasionally depicted in a shorter and nearly pointed version which may have been the model for the roof construction depicted in Dunhuang. Such a *śikhara* can be seen in a Pāla stone stele of the 11th century depicting the image of a crowned Buddha inside a temple preserved in the Leiden Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde.<sup>47</sup> An even closer example was pointed out to me by Thomas S. Maxwell who discovered, in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, a Pāla stele dating 11th century, which might represent the prototype of a temple structure at least partially reflected in the Dunhuang wall-paintings (fig. 9).<sup>48</sup> Carved in black stone is the image of Buddha Akṣobhya inside a temple with a tiered roof on which small Buddha statues and heavenly musicians are depicted. Above there is a large *āmalaka* stone with a *kalaśa* on top, both of which are reduced in size in the Dunhuang paintings, where the *āmalaka* additionally balances a horizontal cone holding the banners.<sup>49</sup> Structural differences are obvious in the architectural base, as the ledges seen in the sculpture are missing in the paintings where there is an additional rim of lotus leaves. This is a common element in pagoda base structure since the Tang dynasty, one of the best known examples preserved being the so called Baiyunguan (White Cloud Temple) pagoda in Beijing built in 739 AD. The multi-tiered base constructed out of patterned bricks is found depicted similarly as a form of pedestal in Dunhuang wall-paintings from the 7th and 8th century, and derives from a form of base construction for small shrines and sculptures common during the Tang dynasty. Whether and when architectural structures like the one depicted on the Dhaka stele were introduced into the region of Dunhuang, whether the Nepalese played any role in this transmission – a question which still has to be investigated – cannot be answered at present. Yet there is evidence that sanctuary structures made of bricks with a recessing pointed roof were built there when Dunhuang came under Tangut domination and after the Tangut script was introduced in 1038. In grotto 285,

<sup>45</sup> Zwalf, W. (ed.) (1985), 126, no. 167, ill. p. 118.

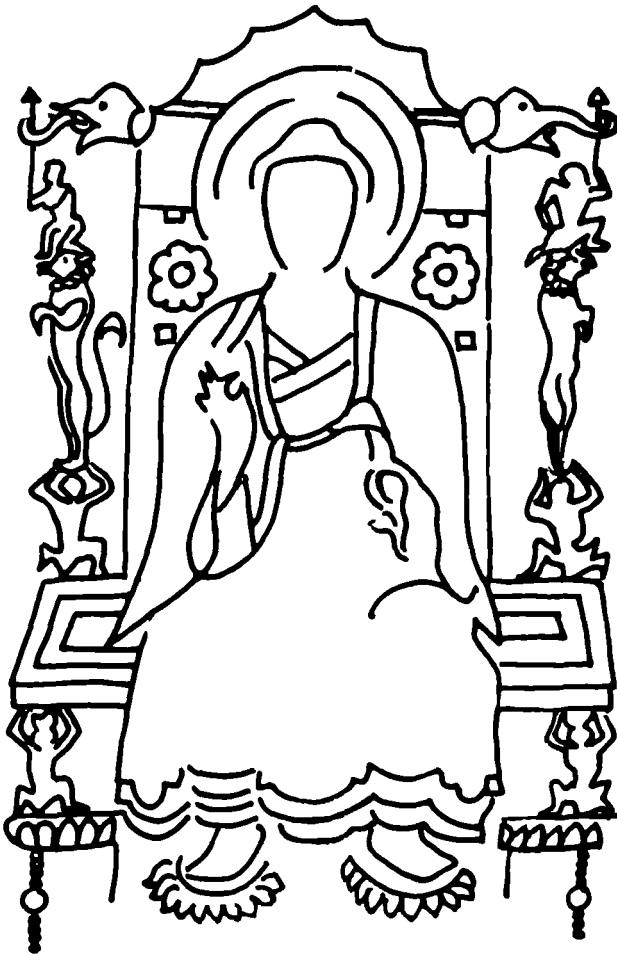
<sup>46</sup> Losty, J.P. (1989), part I, 90. Illuminations showing a single deity inside similar shrines are also found in Pāla manuscript probably from Bihar dating around the middle of the 12th century published by Pratpaditya Pal (1993), cat. nos. 6, 7, 9.

<sup>47</sup> The piece is registered under inv. no. 3063-3, unpublished.

<sup>48</sup> Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, Inv. no. 1117, 108 x 51 x 18 cm.

<sup>49</sup> A similar decoration on a flatter tiered roof is depicted on a pair of conch shells in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, showing Hindu and Buddhist (?) deities inside a temple again with three-lobed entrance, see Huntington Susan L./John C. (1990), 179–180, nos. 51, 52. The authors suggest the carvings were executed in Eastern India or Bangladesh around the 12th century, yet maybe they could be dated earlier into the 11th century.

which was painted during that period, a detail of the wall-paintings shows a small structure with a sharply pointed roof built of regular receding layers of bricks (sketch 1) next to which four people are seen in a posture of veneration. The Tangut inscription just below states that such and such person went to perform sacrifices, pay reverence to the Buddha images and burn incense in a mountain temple.<sup>50</sup> Evidence that the stepwise recessing pointed brick roof was at least known to artists and artisans of about the middle of the 11th century can also be found in the so-called “Iron Pagoda” (Tieta) of Youguo temple in Kaifeng, Henan, built in 1049 AD. Besides glazed reliefs showing *apsarās* on large leaf-like clouds known from Tangut paintings and prints, the tower is adorned between the roofs of the 13 storeys with several small reliefs of standing Buddhas, each in a niche in the shape of a shrine with stepwise recessing pointed roof.



Sketch 1: Dunhuang, Mogaoku, Grotto 405, west wall, 7th c. AD

In both examples the shape of the roof is the only element comparable to the architectural structure depicted in the wall-paintings of grotto 76 at Dunhuang called a ‘*stūpa*’ by the inscriptions. There, the roof of decorated brick tiers shows another peculiar element rather known from Pāla sculpture than from architecture, not much of which is preserved. The entrance of the building, topped by a fairly common three-lobed arch, is framed on both sides by pillars showing a vertically arranged animal configuration consisting of a crouching elephant carrying a rampant ram mounted by a small riding figure. Pairs of vertically piled animals with the central one – instead of a ram or he-goat – more often figuring a lion or a hybrid “horned lion” (*vyāla*)<sup>51</sup> are well-known in Indian art, especially in the decoration of thrones. In her monograph on symbolism in Indian throne decoration Jeannine Auboyer attributed to the proto-lion the meaning of outstanding power and royal sovereignty, this last aspect finding emphasis by the addition of horns in respect to the important role of the he-goat (*ajāṣabha*) in brahmanical rites

<sup>50</sup> Shi Jinbo/Bai Bin/Wu Fengyun (1988), 334, pl. 405.

<sup>51</sup> Liebert, Gösta (1976), 348.

of royal investment and of cervid species in Indian legends connected to mythical and ceremonial traditions of the Altaic region.<sup>52</sup> In India, the oldest depiction of two flanking rams each standing on top of a little human figure is preserved in the wall-paintings of cave I in Ajañṭā, on the back of the *abhiṣekā*-throne in a painting of the legend of Prince Mahājanaka dating from the 6th century AD.<sup>53</sup> Later on, hybrid creatures with varying kind of horns, feet etc. become widely spread as a “framing” element in the throne of a Buddhist icon. The most frequent depictions are preserved from Pāla sculpture, where numerous compositions are preserved in stone and metal showing a central deity flanked by a rampant *vyāla* spitting a string of pearls out of the mouth or licking a string of pearls which forms the surrounding decorative frame. Evidence is already found in a metal sculpture from Kurkihār (Bihar) now in the Patna Museum, which according to Susan L. Huntington is securely dated in the reign of the Pāla king Devapāla by an inscription mentioning the 9th year of his reign. Huntington in 1984 equalled this reign year to the second quarter of the ninth century and in 1990 to ca. 821 AD<sup>54</sup> (fig. 10). The outstanding piece shows Balarāma flanked by two *vyālas* actually more resembling lions, as their horns are scarcely discernible. In other pieces this tiny distinction of a fantastic creature may be completely missing.

In China, a later yet perfectly conventional version of the Indian style *vyāla* configuration has survived in the stone reliefs framing the entrance of the famous Jurong gate north of Beijing, constructed, according to Jiro Murata and Akira Fujieda, about 1343–1345 as a *stūpa* gate under the supervision of a Tibetan lama and inscribed among others in Tibetan and Tangut languages.<sup>55</sup> The *stūpas* originally placed on top of this ‘arc de triomphe’ are no longer preserved, but the front arch is surrounded with elaborate stone carvings. The top is crowned by a *garuḍa*, the entry is flanked on both sides by a standing elephant carrying a rampant, pearl spitting *vyāla* with Kumāra riding on its back and grasping its tail. Murata and Fujieda pointed out in their very detailed study that such depictions of rampant *vyālas* go back to stone sculpture at Mathurā, and that *stūpa* arches of this kind were introduced into China only during the period of the Yuan dynasty by Tibetan lamas.<sup>56</sup> A depiction of an elephant carrying a rampant hybrid creature is traceable somewhat earlier in woodcut illustrations preserved in the J.-P. Dubosc collection. One of these illustrations to original text sheets of the Jishazang edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon carved around 1302 AD in Hangzhou depicts the Buddha in

<sup>52</sup> See Jeannine Auboyer (1949), 108–109 and 126–128; the author points out the prevailing confusion in the depictions between ram and he-goat and concludes a similar solar respectively royal symbolism of both species. Alfred Salmony (1968), 23, mentioned two cycles of Hindu mythology descending from cervid stories as well as, according to V. Fausbøll, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, London 1930, 246, eleven deer symbols from earlier legendary traditions incorporated among the *jātakas*. Concerning the representation of hybrid beasts with antlers or simple horns in graves from the Southern Chinese Chu culture dating 7th–3rd centuries BC as well as from the slightly later Dongson culture of Annam, Carl Hentze first suggested a connection to the morning sun on the basis of Shang period pictographs (1951), 21. Alfred Salmony concludes that though their earliest visual depictions are much earlier than the Indian types their source were indeed “the horned felines of India”, arguing that “the Indian prototypes of a Chinese motif was literary rather than visual” (op.cit., 51). In China, the horned hybrides of the Chu culture are generally regarded as guarding the dead against evil spirits and snakes, possibly depicting the earth god Tubo mentioned in Chinese sources, see Sun Zuoyun (1973), 247 ff.

<sup>53</sup> Auboyer, Jeannine (1949), 128 and pl. IV, d.

<sup>54</sup> Huntington, Susan L. (1984), 42; Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 374.

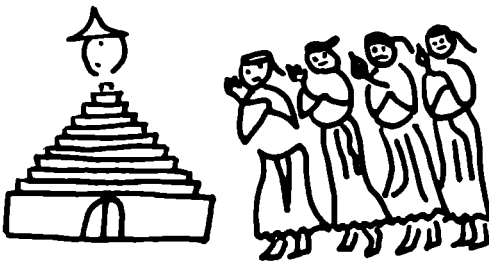
<sup>55</sup> Fujieda, Akira/Murata, Jiro (1957), vol. 1, 328, and pls. 7 (west pilaster), 8 (east pilaster); in Chinese Buddhist bronzes of the 18th century the Indian style *vyāla* configuration reoccurs in the context of a renaissance of classical Indian art styles.

<sup>56</sup> See op.cit., 348 and 51–55.

conversation with a Tibetan monk, each surrounded by an archlike frame both sides of which show a rampant creature with a lion's head and a ram's legs and hoofs.<sup>57</sup>

Evidence of a configuration of a rampant animal and a human figure is documented in China as early as the late 5th to early 6th century in the Buddhist rock caves at Yungang, Shanxi province. It is found there in carvings framing the archways of several grottoes, composed of e.g. a human figure below (which e.g. may be a Brahman as in cave 9, a genie as in cave 10 or a bodhisattva as in cave 60), a phoenix in the middle and another genie or deity on top. It is noteworthy that none of these configurations show hybrid animal forms otherwise well established in pre-Buddhist Chinese art and that all of them are part of an architectural context framing the entrance to a sanctum. In this function there may be a connection to the representation of horned lions on the back of the occidental gateway in Sāñci (1st c. BC).<sup>58</sup>

Besides this rather sinized version of a configuration framing the entrance into a sanctum, it is noteworthy that a version of an Indian style configuration flanking a deity as part of a throne is preserved from an even earlier time in Dunhuang. In a 7th-century wall-painting in grotto 405, the Buddha is depicted sitting in European fashion, flanked on each side by a rampant lion carrying on its head two genies – one of them holding a fly whisk – and standing with his hind legs on the head of a kneeling genie instead of an elephant. The head of an elephant however appears on each end of the protruding horizontal pole on the upper edge of the throneback just next to the Buddha's head (sketch 2). In the ornamentation of the throneback the painter seems to depict an unusual inlay technique which Basil Gray traced back to the Persian or Byzantine throne forms described in old sources as made of teak and ivory.<sup>59</sup> The earliest examples in China so far of a framing configuration of the Indian type flanking the entrance of an architectural structure, and especially a sanctum are depicted in grotto 76 in Dunhuang. However there, in contrast to the Indian tradition, the rampant animal above the crouching elephant definitely represents a ram, not only with a ram's head but also with a ram's legs and hoofs. Why in Dunhuang a ram was substituted for the Indian *vyāla* cannot be answered with certainty. It may



Sketch 2: Dunhuang, Mogaoku, Grotto 285, north wall, mid- or late 11th century

well be that some versions of the hybrid *vyāla* with ram horns in Pāla art works, where the ram-like character of the beast was stressed in the depiction of the horns and the body, like e.g. in a ca. 10th-century stone stele from Guneri (Gayā, Bihar)<sup>60</sup> showing the Buddha calling the earth to witness, after reaching China were misinterpreted there as actually representing a ram. It should not be overlooked in this context, that the configuration of a rampant ram atop an elephant is also frequently found as a throne element framing a

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Karmay (1975), 50, fig. 29; on p. 49 the author points out that "it is remarkable that the 'Gate of Glory', which appears so often in Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan art, should have appeared in this Chinese Tripiṭaka in the first years of the 14th century".

<sup>58</sup> For illustrations of the Yungang reliefs see Osvald Sirén (1925), tome I, pls. 36a, 37a, 60; the Sāñci relief is illustrated in Sir John Marshall/Alfred Foucher (1940), vol. II, pl. 63. Jeannine Auboyer also mentions the representation of a horned lion in Amarāvati (ca. 100 AD), without further details (1949), 128.

<sup>59</sup> Gray, Basil (1959), 48, no. 29.

<sup>60</sup> Huntington, Susan L. (1984), fig. 118.

deity or lama in Tibetan thangka paintings from the late 11th century onwards.<sup>61</sup> In the gSum-brtsegs wall-paintings at Alchi in Ladakh dated by Roger Goepper around 1200 AD, another variant of animal configuration is seen on both sides of Buddha Amitābha, dressed in a red robe consisting of a crouched elephant beneath a lion carrying a huge rampant bird. The latter could be interpreted as a phoenix as in the above mentioned early rock carvings of the Yungang caves.<sup>62</sup>

The well-known Tibetan thangka painting of the Green Tārā in the Cleveland Museum of Art, dated around 1300 AD by Pal and showing comparable animal configurations next to the goddess, documents in a, until now unique way, an aspect not yet noticed in the different publications. The painters clearly distinguish between the functions of the animal configuration as a throne element and as an architectural element.<sup>63</sup> Tārā is sitting on a throne framed by a standing-ram-atop-standing-elephant-motif which is placed inside a five-lobed temple entrance, the pillars of which are decorated each with a standing lion atop a crouching elephant. Both versions of the animal configuration clearly distinguish between the function as throne element and as a decorative architectural element flanking the temple entrance. In this last function the animal configuration of a ram atop a crouching elephant is represented in the earlier Dunhuang wall-paintings. There can be little doubt that the knowledge of the architectural function of the configuration was gained from the acquaintance with Pāla prototypes now lost, possibly through Chinese pilgrims touring eastern Indian Buddhist centres and temples or through portable paintings of such buildings.

## Conclusion

As has been outlined above, the depiction of the Eight Great Events inside a so-called '*stūpa*' seems to be most unusual in Pāla art. Equally, the iconographical concept of combining one of the Eight Great Events with other narrative scenes from diverse textual sources on the Life of the Buddha within the composition of one panel seems to be unseen so far. There does exist a rare example in a slightly later Tibetan painting of the Pāla-inspired school dating from the 13th century embodying an underlying concept of comparable kind (fig. 11). There, the central image shows the Buddha in the moment of victory over Māra, depicted on a throne inside a temple entrance flanked by two bodhisattvas, surrounded by depictions of the other seven of the Eight Events as well as by small narrative scenes of the Buddha's life which Huntington has traced back to the Twelve Deeds as transmitted by the Lalitavistara.<sup>64</sup> The pictorial language of

<sup>61</sup> For example a thangka showing Vajradhātu Vairocana in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts datable in the period between 1065–1085 according to Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 313–314, pl. no. 106.

<sup>62</sup> Goepper, Roger (1982), 68, pl. 11; the author discussed his dating of the paintings in his article "Clues for a Dating of the Three-Storeyed Temple (Sumtsek) in Alchi, Ladakh" (1990), 159–169.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Pal, Pratapaditya (1984), pl. 18; why in Tibet rampant rams or he-goats seem to be more frequently painted on the throne backs 'framing' a Buddhist deity or lama partly finds an explanation in the role of the species in Tibetan wildlife, legend and folklore. Furthermore, certain narrative traditions based on Indian legends translated into Tibetan as mentioned by Jeannine Auboyer (1949), 127, n. 5, may also have contributed to the fact. However Auboyer's exclusive remark on the hybrid animal type fused of ram/goat and lion when mentioning the transmission of India's animal configurations as part of Buddhist throne depictions in derivative cultures seems to need modification considering the material discussed here as well as numerous other art works having emerged from Tibet during the last decades, (1949), 125.

<sup>64</sup> Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 316–318, no. 107, still date the piece late 11th or early 12th century, whereas the increasing number of Tibetan paintings from the Pāla-inspired school having emerged on the market since give ground for a later dating. Compare also the thangka mentioned under the following note.

this painting is based on Pāla art styles, concerning for example the structural order of the visual plane, the treatment of space inside the visual units, figural compositions, figural types and colour scheme. The obvious stylistic conventions, like the angularity of line and the twisted posture of the bodies, undoubtedly link this painting to the Pāla-inspired pan-Tibetan painting style which developed around the middle of the 11th century in central Tibet. But at the same time reveals the connection to other later paintings of this style.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the combination of two iconographic schemes in one visual plane cannot be seen as a feature “wholly Tibetan” and an exclusive symptom of the “emerging intellectual maturity among the Tibetan teachers” of the middle 11th century.<sup>66</sup> Rather this feature but is earlier documented in Dunhuang, where in grotto 76, as has been described above, some of the same episodes from the Twelve Deeds appear in the small narrative scenes surrounding the depiction of each of the Eight Events.

The roots of such an underlying concept are to be looked for in Pāla art, where configurations within one pictorial plane of a central Buddha image – mostly in the event of Calling the Earth to Witness – surrounded by depictions of the Buddha in the other seven *aṣṭamahāprātihārya* events are frequently preserved in sculptures of the 10th and 11th centuries.<sup>67</sup> The paintings in grotto 76 in Dunhuang, however, incorporate yet another compositional scheme which also hints at a different ritual function. The single depiction of the Eight Great Events, each in a compositional unit of its own conveys a more extensive process of visualization in the context of more extensive pictorial quotations of canonical texts. The primary importance of textual traditions given in these paintings can be deduced from the iconographic composition of each panel as well as by the accentuated narrative depiction of each event inside a sanctuary building. The most obvious evidence is given by the position of an inscribed stele in a prominent position, the contents of which outline the context of the central scene with the surrounding smaller scenes. In Dunhuang, of course, there is a tradition of illustrating Buddhist canonical texts going back at least to the 9th century AD. In the 10th century, the *Sūtra of the Ten Kings of Hell*, found in Dunhuang, gives evidence of coloured narrative sketches illustrating scenes described in the text below. However, the representation of the Eight Great Events in separate pictorial units, each in the size of an icon for worship, as found in grotto 76, is undoubtedly rooted in Indian Buddhist art. Whereas the tradition of worshipping images of the Buddha’s life within the pictorial unit of a stele, may be traced back to Gupta sculptures from Sārnāth. The paintings in Dunhuang pick up devices which were probably common in large size Pāla paintings lost today, and are reflected in the preserved Pāla manuscript illuminations. This conclusion can be drawn mainly in respect to the increased importance of pictorial illustration versus textual source, and in respect to the disregard of chronology within the sequence of the eight scenes. Such a disregard of chronology as encountered in manuscript illuminations may well have been the reason why the Dunhuang painters did not arrange their horizontal layout of scenes according to the chronological

<sup>65</sup> Compare a thangka showing Mañjuśrī inside the doorway of a multi-towered temple complex dating ca. 13th century from the Zimmermann family collection published by Singer, Jane (1994), 87 ff. and Rhie, Marilyn/Thurman, Robert (1996), Nachtrag no. 175 (29d), 422.

<sup>66</sup> Huntington, Susan L./John C. (1990), 318. As Eva Allinger kindly pointed out to me after reading through my manuscript, Pratapaditya Pal in his description of the same thangka in *Art of the Himalayas, Treasures from Nepal and Tibet*, New York 1991, 146, had also found it “difficult to agree with Huntington” in this respect, a doubt now confirmed by the earlier wall-paintings of grotto 76 in Dunhuang.

<sup>67</sup> Compare steles illustrated in Susan L. Huntington (1984), figs. 108, 131, 134, 152, 153 and a stele ca. 10th century possibly from Nālandā in the Alsdorf foundation, Chicago, which was illustrated and discussed in Susan L. Huntington/John C. Huntington (1990), 139, no. 14.



sequence as might be expected from the 6th century wall-paintings of Dunhuang grotto 290 mentioned above. Furthermore, the unparalleled appearance in Dunhuang wall-paintings of titles written in Sanskrit above the Chinese inscriptions accentuates the reference to orthodox textual traditions from India. At the same time the fact that the Sanskrit inscriptions are short and rather matter of fact in character compared to the lengthy Chinese inscriptions reflects one of the most fundamental differences between the character of textual narrative in Chinese and Pāla tradition.

The Buddha's promise, announced in the text on the Eight Magically Potent Stūpas as translated by Faxian, that those who offer those *stūpas* sincerely, will go to heaven, was thus heard by a faithful sponsor who substituted the dedication of *stūpas* by paintings. The painters were undoubtedly Chinese. Their painting was largely consistent with Chinese wall painting of the late 10th to early 11th century, before 1038 AD, the year when the Tangut empire was established and most probably also Tangut dominance over Dunhuang, after which the omission of Tangut in the inscriptions would have been improbable. Thus, the paintings were probably executed before 1038 but after Faxian's translation of 998 AD became known. Maybe it approximately corresponds in time with the Chinese inscription by the monk Yunshu sent to India as an envoy of the Song emperor, which is preserved in Bodh Gayā and dated 1021 AD. The sponsor of the Dunhuang cave must have ordered his artists to care for an orthodox Indian touch, which is hinted at by a somewhat linkish reinterpretation of Pāla style elements in the depiction of figures. It is possible that the artists were inspired by a set of *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya-caityastotra* manuscript illuminations imported from Pāla India or even by a set of *paṭas*. Indeed, the broad ornamented frames of each panel do recall mountings of paintings to be hung up according to a certain ritual function. This assumption implies that the cult of the eight *stūpas* was actually practised in Dunhuang at the beginning of the 11th century. Further we may assume that this cult was originally practised at a certain time of the year, and that according to the prominent spatial positioning of the paintings opposite the main icon inside the sanctum, this cult must have played an important role in the spiritual life of the Buddhist community of Dunhuang at the time when it was popular in Pāla India. This could be an indication of its first introduction to the region, and in any case of the immediate influence of Pāla iconographical concepts. Stylistic elements of Pāla art are scarcely traceable in this sinisized reinterpretation. Later on this reinterpretation, it may be assumed, with a growing influx of Tibetan art styles in Dunhuang during the Xixia period, matured into the painting style lavishly applied in grotto 465 and in the Tibetan and Tangut thangka paintings of the Pāla-inspired international style.

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Fig. 1: Dunhuang, Mogaoku, Grotto 76, east wall, "The First Stūpa" (The First Great Event).  
 Courtesy of the Dunhuang Institute of Research, Dunhuang



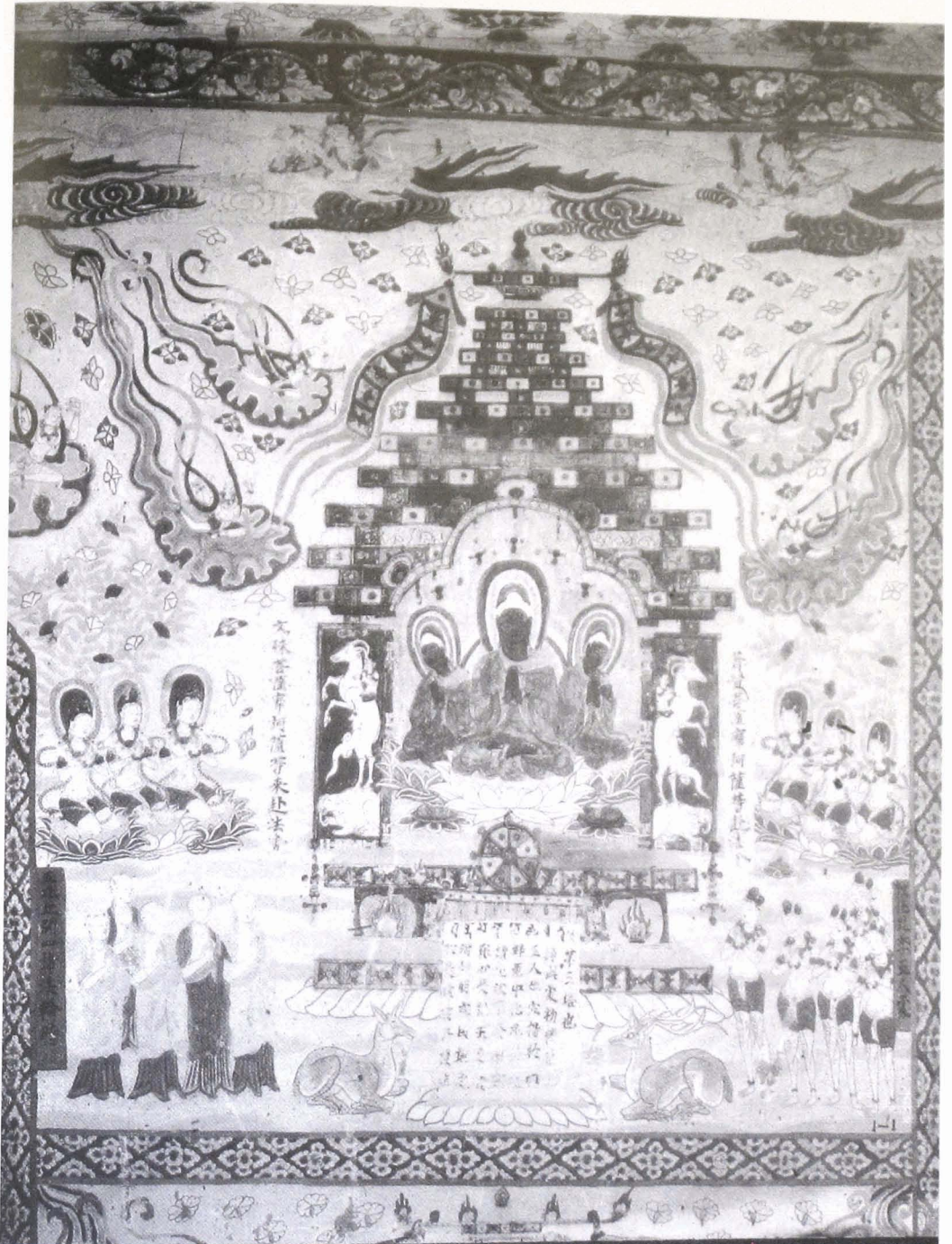


Fig. 2: Dunhuang, Mogaoku, Grotto 76, east wall, "The Third Stūpa" (The Third Great Event).  
Courtesy of the Dunhuang Institute of Research, Dunhuang





Fig. 3: Dunhuang, Mogaoku, Grotto 76, east wall, Title invisible (The Fourth Great Event).  
Courtesy of the Dunhuang Institute of Research, Dunhuang





Fig. 4: Dunhuang, Mogaoku, Grotto 76, east wall, "The Seventh Stūpa" (The Seventh Great Event).  
Courtesy of the Dunhuang Institute of Research, Dunhuang



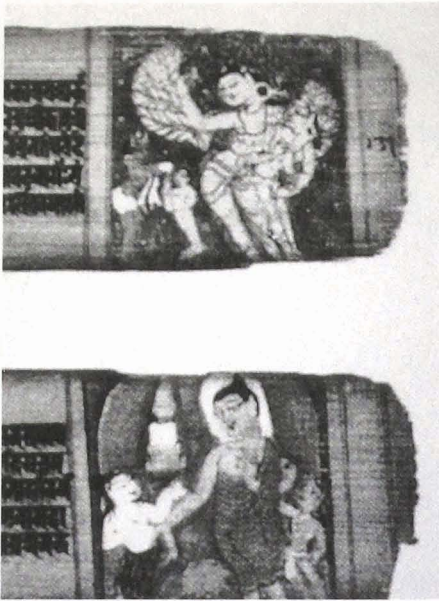


Fig. 5: Manuscript of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in Sanskrit, Eastern India, c. 1000 AD, ink and gouache on palm leaves, 227 folios, 5 x 53.5 cm, Cambridge University Library (Add.1464), folio 127b. Courtesy of the Cambridge University Library, Cambridge

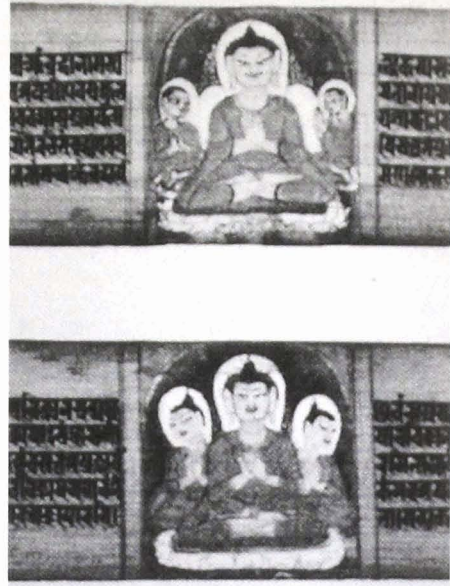


Fig. 6: Manuscript of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in Sanskrit, Eastern India, ca. 1000 AD, ink and gouache on palm leaves, 227 folios, 5 x 53.5 cm, Cambridge University Library (Add. 1464), folio 128a. Courtesy of Cambridge University Library, Cambridge



Fig. 8: Manuscript of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in Sanskrit, Nepal, Śrī Hlam monastery, 1015 AD, ink and gouache on palm leaves, 223 folios, 5.25 x 54 cm, Cambridge University Library (Add., 1643), folio 127a. Courtesy of Cambridge University Library, Cambridge

Fig. 7: Miniature Buddhist Temple, 11th/12th century, yellow-beige stone, H. 28.9 cm, W. 8.5 cm, D. 8.5 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, no. 71.167. Courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland



Fig. 9: Akṣobhya, 11th century, Black stone, 108 x 51 x 18 cm, found in Vikrampur, Dhaka, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, inv. no. 1117. Courtesy of National Museum, Dhaka (Photo by Thomas S. Maxwell, Bonn)



Fig. 10: Balarāma, Kurkihār, Bihar, dated 9th year of the reign of King Devapāla, ca. 821, Patna Museum, Patna. Courtesy of Patna Museum, Patna



Fig. 11: Scenes from the Life of Buddha Śākyamuni, Tibet, 13th century, water-based pigments on cotton cloth, 31.5 x 23.5 inches, The Zimmerman Family Collection





## TWO TIBETAN STYLE THANGKAS FROM KHARA KHOTO

by

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The collection of paintings from Khara Khoto now in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, spans a period from the 11th to the end of the 14th century, which coincides with the date of the books and documents and with the lifespan of the town itself. In 1227 Chinggis Khan overran Khara Khoto. This event divides the existence of the town into two periods: the first one is the time of the Tangut state Hsi Hsia (Xixia) – ca. 1030 until 1227, the second one is the Mongolian rule Ho-hsi (Hexi) territory – 1227–1387.

Only one painting in the collection can be dated with absolute certainty: the Crowned Buddha (The State Hermitage No. X-2432, Piotrovsky 1993: 234–235). In his right hand the Buddha holds a coin bearing the imperial device of T'ien-yüan, the last Emperor of the short-lived Northern Yüan Dynasty (1378–1387), which was founded by the Mongols after they had been driven out of China.

Porcelain fragments with cobalt-blue decoration and other new documents from Khara Khoto discovered by Chinese archaeologists, prove the survival of Khara Khoto until the end of the fourteenth century.

The artefacts from Khara Khoto are characterised by elements of style corresponding to the three prevailing cultural traditions: Chinese, Tibetan and Central Asian. In this paper I will examine two Tibetan style thangka. The first of them (fig. 1) was published as “Lama Portrait of a Monk” in the catalogues *Wisdom and Compassion* and *Lost Empire of the Silk Road*.<sup>1</sup> Recent research has broadened our understanding of Tangut Buddhist art as well as relations between the Hsi Hsia state and Tibet. There has also been significant new research regarding Tibetan art of the 11th to 14th centuries. It is possible now to suggest an historical context for the portrait and to precise the date.

A monk sits on a throne atop of a multicoloured lotus. The throne has a crosspiece at the top supported by dark-blue golden-tailed leogryphs standing on the backs of elephants. Above the crosspiece are two yellow birds. In the art of India the Cakravartins, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas were represented sitting on such a throne. The hierarchs of Tibetan Buddhist schools also sit upon such thrones.<sup>2</sup> The monk's undergarment is in a light coloured yellow, his upper robe is lilac-brown, and his outer robe is orange. As a rule Tibetan hierarchs wear the traditional waistcoat. The monks represented in the Khara Khoto thangka do not wear the waistcoat. The careless and clumsy execution of the soles of the feet and of the left hand suggests that the portrait was in the process of being reworked, or rather was not finished. There are no wheels on the soles of his feet and palms – the sign of the fully enlightened person. The careless execution of the feet contrasts with the skill in the depiction of the refined, intelligent face and the bright individuality of the features and expression.

Beneath the throne stand two donors, both opulently dressed (fig. 2), the man in red with a golden hat and a woman in a red dress with a gold pattern. Tangut law states that “the wives,

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<sup>1</sup> Rhie and Thurman 1991: no. 91; Piotrovsky 1993: no. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Singer 1994: fig. 17a.

daughters, daughters-in-law of relatives (of the Emperor) ... must all seek special permission to wear garments woven or decorated in gold.”<sup>3</sup> The dresses, hats and hairstyles have analogies in other images from Khara Khoto.<sup>4</sup> I suppose that the man and the woman belong to the imperial family. It is possible that they are the Tangut Emperor and Empress. It is very important to note that they are Tanguts, that is to say, the thangka was painted before 1227.

The portrait has many analogies in the Tibetan art of the 12th–14th centuries. Hierarchs of religious orders or abbots of the monasteries were depicted displaying the earth-touching gesture, or the teaching gesture, or the gesture of religious exposition. The right hand of the monk in the Khara Khoto’s portrait is in *vitarkamudrā*, as for example the *mudrā* in the portrait said to be Atiśa.<sup>5</sup> It is possible to suppose that our monk had been invited to the Tangut state to preach the *dharma* and held a high position which permitted him to be represented together with the Imperial couple.

The Tangut law code which was issued 1149–1170, the years of the reign of the Tangut Emperor Jen Tsung (1139–1193), mentions the titles of the religious preceptors: *shang-shih* – The Supreme preceptor; *huo-shih* – The State preceptor; *te-shih* – The Virtuous preceptor, and so on.<sup>6</sup> There is no title *ti-shih* – The Imperial preceptor. It is possible that this title was appointed by the Tangut Emperor Jen Tsung after the publication of the law code. There is the story concerning the invitation to the *huo-shih* to become the State preceptor to the Hsia throne. As Dr. Ruth Dannel comments, it indicates a very special relationship between the Tangut throne and the *saṃgha*.<sup>7</sup> Sometime after 1180 the title *ti-shih*, Imperial preceptor, was founded. We know the names of the *ti-shih*. All of them were Tibetans and were the adepts of bKa’-bryud-pa subjects. One of them belonged to the Karma-pa school, he was dispatched by the first hierarch of the school, Dus-gsum mkhyen-pa (1110–1193), to the Tangut throne. The name of the Karma-pa disciple and representative was gTsang-po-pa dKon-mchog seng-ge (?–1218). He served the Hsia kings and died in Liang-chou in 1218–1219. R. Dannel relates that “The *ti-shih* served as the emperor’s chaplain or personal teacher, and conducted the ceremonies of consecration. ... One of Ti-shi Ras-pa’s – the third *ti-shih* – biographies defines *ti-shih* as a lama who consecrates the crown of the Emperor. Before the position *ti-shih* was inaugurated *kuo-shih* acted in this capacity for the Emperor.”<sup>8</sup>

It is difficult to say whether *huo-shih* or *ti-shih* is represented in the thangka. In any case it may be dated not earlier than 1170, but I incline to a later date. The depicted emperor is young, while Jen Tsung was an old man in 1170. I believe that here is represented one of his successors, for example Ch’un-yu (1193–1206), but I am not able to prove this hypothesis. As the Russian tangutologist N. Nevski noted “the Emperor himself, at least during the time of Emperor Jen-hsiao, was evidently a semi-divine ruler, for the court odes exalt them as ‘human Emperor-Bodhisattva’ and ‘Buddha – son of Heaven’.”<sup>9</sup> Naturally the new Tibetan orders and

<sup>3</sup> Kiczanov 1989: 113.

<sup>4</sup> Piotrovsky 1993: nos. 38, 46, 49.

<sup>5</sup> Singer 1994: fig. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Kiczanov 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Dannel 1992: 86–87.

<sup>8</sup> Dannel 1992: 96.

<sup>9</sup> Nevski 1960: 82.

monasteries needed the rich patrons, and in turn Tangut Emperors needed a spiritual background to sacralize their power.

The relationship between the emperor and the religious preceptor was the most important aspect of the state and spiritual life. Therefore I believe it is not mere chance that a text dated to the first quarter of the twelfth century recorded the debate of the Chinese Emperor of the T'ang Dynasty, Shun Tsung (805), with *huo-shih*, the State preceptor Ch'en-kuan (797–838).<sup>10</sup> This text has an illustration; the composition of the illustration reminds us of the composition of the Chinese Sung Dynasty scroll from Khara Khoto with the representation of the Chinese Emperor and Buddhist monk.<sup>11</sup>

I would like to comment on the Khara Khoto “Bhaiṣajyaguru thangka” (fig. 3) from the point of view of the history of Tangut-Tibetan-Mongolian relations. At the bottom left corner of the thangka there is the portrait of the Black-hat Karma-pa hierarch (fig. 4). The monk has dark skin, high, sharp-outlined cheek-bones, a small beard and moustache. He is dressed in a red-orange undergarment (no Tibetan waistcoat), a brown robe made of patches, and a yellow outer robe with medallions. The black hat with crossed *vajras* on the front of the hat points to the fact that the monk is the hierarch of the Black-hat Karma-pa school, a branch of the bKa'-bryud-pa. The black hat was a gift to the first Karma-pa Dus-gsum mkhyen-pa (1110–1193) by a *dākinī*.

Emperor Jen Tsung wrote a letter to mTshur-phu monastery to invite Dus-gsum mkhyen-pa to the Tangut court. The hierarch refused. He dispatched his disciple to the Tangut kingdom and ordered him to meditate in the Ho-lan-shan mountains,<sup>12</sup> where the summer residence of the Tangut Emperors, the royal tombs, the monasteries and printing shops were located. It is possible that the first Karma-pa hierarch may be the person represented in the thangka. If we examine the right bottom corner we can see the donor and a monk (fig. 5). The donor's dress reminds us of the Tangut donor's dress depicted in other thangkas from Khara Khoto: he is clothed in a black long robe with narrow sleeves, neither Chinese nor Mongolian. He has loose flowing hair and a beard. He looks like a Tangut man.

The relationship between Dus-gsum mkhyen-pa and the Tangut throne had a profound character. An anecdote from his biography demonstrates this: “when asked to name some of the previous incarnations among his closest followers his reply included ‘The lama of Tangut Dharmaraja.’”<sup>13</sup> Assuming that the first Karma-pa needed Tangut patronage, his answer testifies to his interest in the alliance with the Tangut.

The monk looks Indian (fig. 5). He holds the bell in his right hand. He is wearing a yellow hat with short-pointed lappets that have somewhat of an analogy to a painting in Ajaṅṭā<sup>14</sup> and an Avalokiteśvara thangka from Khara Khoto.<sup>15</sup> We learn about the presence of Indians in the Tangut state from the narrative documents from Khara Khoto dating to the time of Jen Tsung's

<sup>10</sup> Menshikov 1984: 266.

<sup>11</sup> Piotrovsky 1993: no. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Sperling 1987: 33; Menshikov 1984: 70.

<sup>13</sup> Dannel, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Alkasi 1983: 182, pl. 192.

<sup>15</sup> Piotrovsky 1993: no. 14.

reign.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to imagine the Indians, travelling between Central Asia and India and in the region of the Tangut state during the turbulent years before and after the Mongolian attacks. But it is worthwhile to remember the Nepalese painter Aniko, who worked with a group of craftsmen at Khubilai's court in Yüan Dynasty China.

If one accepts the suggestion that the Black-hat Karma-pa represented here is Dus-gsum mkhyen-pa<sup>17</sup> then the thangka may be dated to ca. 1190, between 1189, the year of the foundation of mTshur-phu monastery, and 1193, the year of Jen Tsung's death.

But in spite of this suggestive fact for dating, I wish to examine a second solution proposed by Dr. Heather Stoddard in a personal letter. I highly appreciate her idea that the Black-hat Karma-pa is the second hierarch of the school, the famous Karma Pakshi (Pag-shi).

Thirteen years passed between the death of the first hierarch and the birth of his incarnation. The Tangut state collapsed in the meantime. The Mongols were interested in legitimising their power in the territory of Ho-hsi, the former Tangut state, and in maintaining the status of the "Ti-shih" – Imperial preceptor – to the Emperor. The following events are well known.

Khubilai, after his successful campaign in the south of China, returned to his domain and, as Prof. L. Petech notes, "he does not seem to have paid much attention to the young Sakya-pa Scholar ('Phags-pa). Soon after he became interested in quite another holy man. It was Karma Pakshi (1206–1283), one of the most famous miracle-workers in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1255 Karma Pakshi received an invitation from Qubilai."<sup>18</sup> They met at Amdo. Then he left Khubilai's realm for Liang-chou and Gan-chou and travelled to Möngke khan's court not far from Khara Khorum. The way from Gan-chou to Mongolia went via Khara Khoto and took six days, as Marco Polo informed us. I cite from L. Petech's paper: "He won the favour of the quaan and probably participated in the great disputation between Buddhist and Taoist held in that year. But the death of Mongke threw everything in turmoil (1259)." It is interesting to note that Altan Tobchi states that Karma Pakshi came by Goden khan's invitation together with Sakya Paṇḍita (Sa-skya paṇ-chen) to Liang-chou in 1247. In 1258 the disputation between 'Phags-pa and Karma Pakshi was crowned with the success of 'Phags-pa.

It is clear that the Bhaiṣajyaguru thangka could have been painted in Khara Khoto itself in the time of Karma Pakshi's travel from Gan-chou to Mongolia between 1255 and 1259. However, there are doubts. The first one concerns the figures of the donor and the Indian monk and the typology of 13th-century thangkas depicting the lineage of the hierarchs or the abbots.<sup>19</sup> I think if this painting depicted the second Black-hat hierarch, the portrait of the first one would have been painted here too.

There are three rectangular frames for inscriptions by the sides of these three figures, but they were left unscribed. Why? If Karma Pakshi visited Khara Khoto itself and if the donor ordered the thangka in his honour or in connection with his arrival to Khara Khoto why would the painter have left the frames unscribed?

So I conclude two possibilities when the thangka could have been created: that is ca. 1190's or ca. 1260's. However, as we have seen there is more evidence in favour of the earlier date. It

<sup>16</sup> Menshikov 1984: 50–51; Dunnel 1992: 96.

<sup>17</sup> It was the proposition of Prof. M. Rhie to consider the monk as the first Karma-pa hierarch (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 50).

<sup>18</sup> Petech L., *International relations...* I have the paper of Prof. Petech in the manuscript.

<sup>19</sup> Singer 1994: fig. 32.

will be noted that I have proposed that the portrait of the hierarch (fig. 4) was painted between 1193–1206.

If both my suggestions are accepted, then the two thangkas in consideration would be attributed to the same general period – ca. end of the 12th or beginning of 13th century. A comparison of the representations of the Karma-pa hierarchs in both cases would support this hypotheses.

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Fig. 1: Portrait of a monk, thangka, The State Hermitage, St. Petersburg, No. X-2400

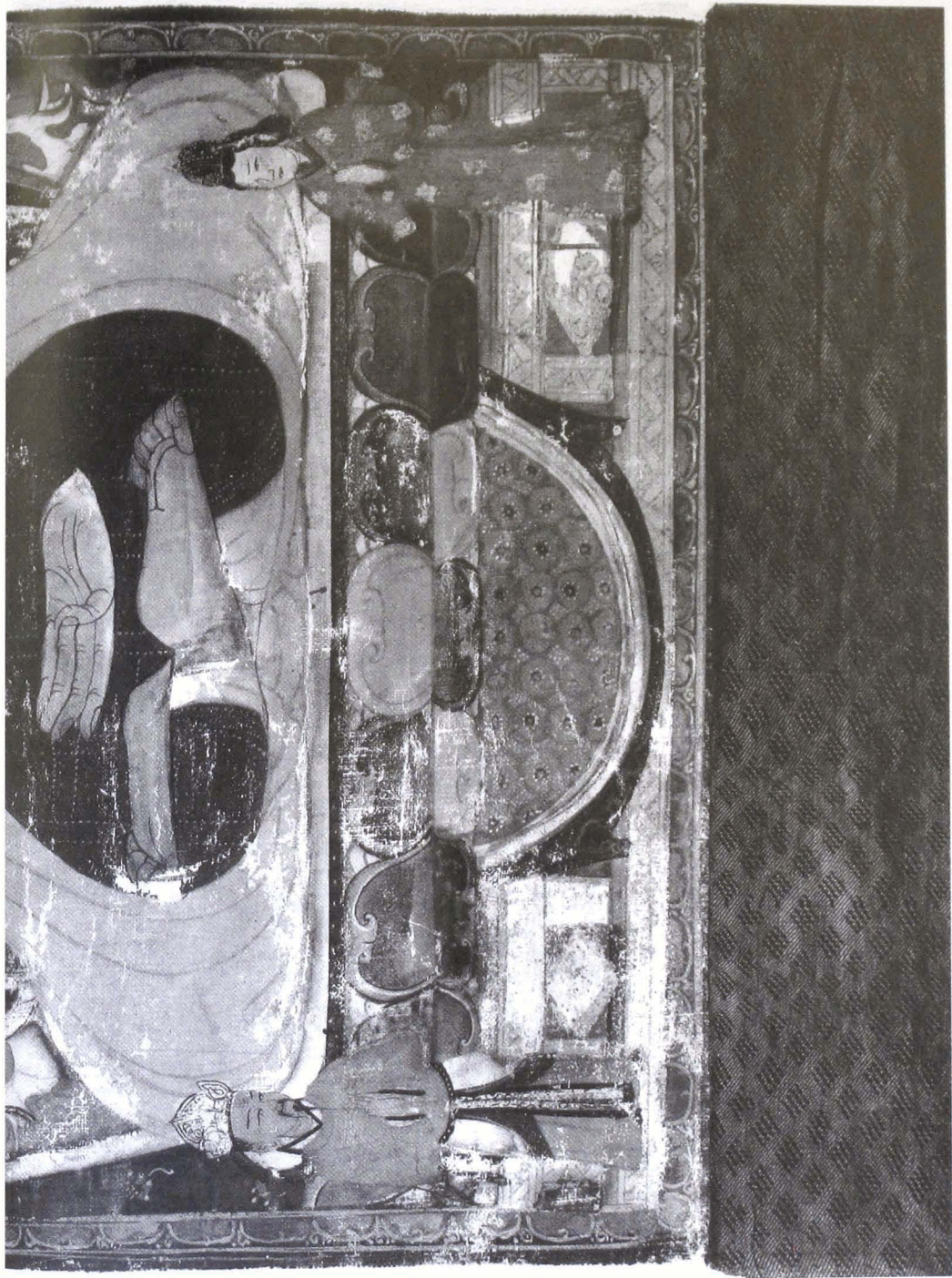


Fig. 2. Detail of fig. 1





Fig. 3: Bhaiṣajyaguru, thangka, The State Hermitage, St. Petersburg, No. X-2332



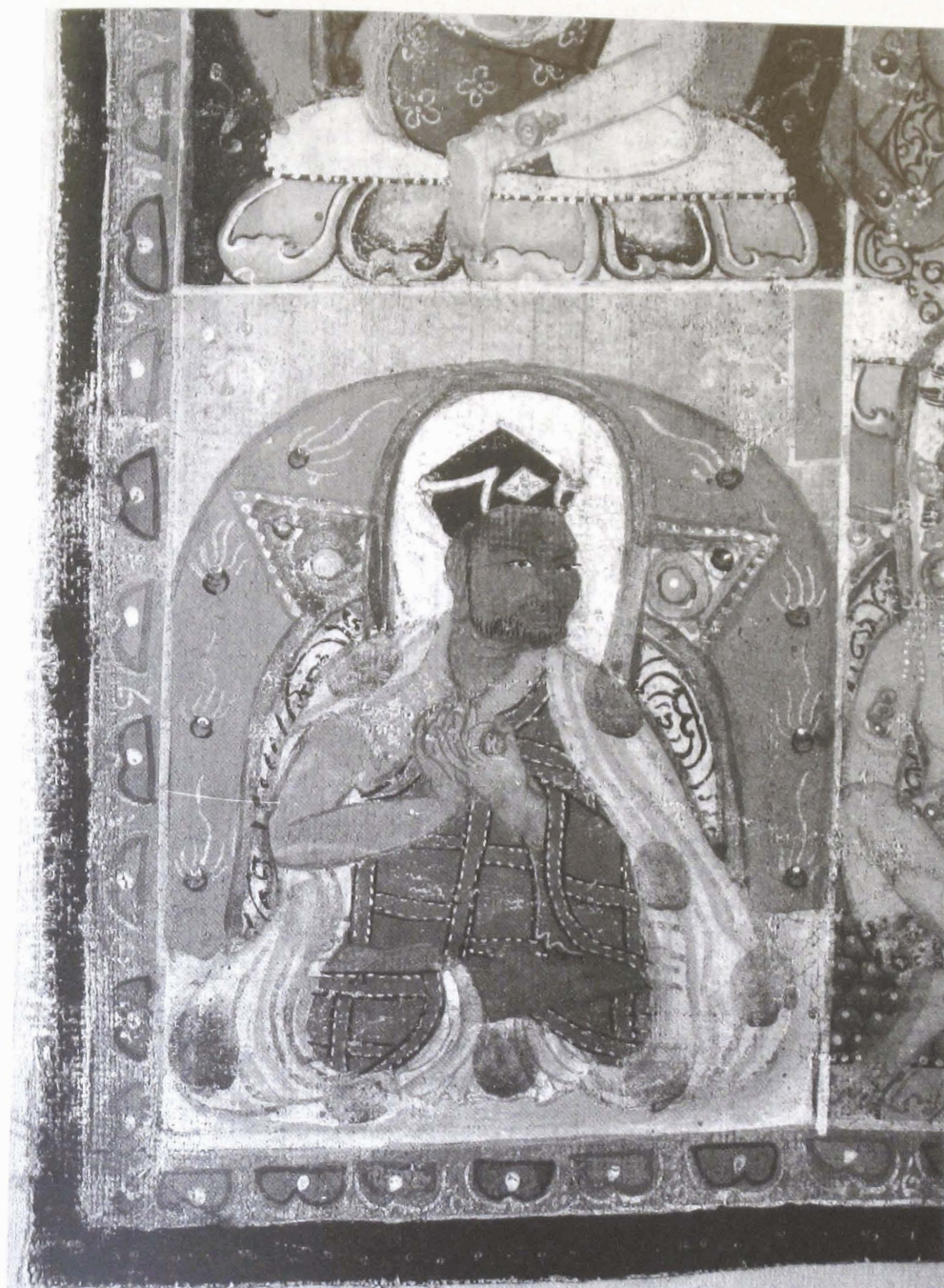


Fig. 4: Detail of fig. 3





Fig. 5: Detail of fig. 3



# THE GREEN TĀRĀ IN THE FORD-COLLECTION: SOME STYLISTIC REMARKS\*

by

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It has frequently been observed that there are many parallels between the late Buddhist art of India and that of several Buddhist countries such as Burma, Tibet and Central Asia in the period from the late 11th century to approximately the 13th/14th century, a phenomenon often referred to as the 'International Style'. It is accepted that the art of the Pāla period played a dominant role for art in the countries on India's periphery from the turn of the century onwards, that is, it became very important for these countries, as did the Buddhist religion itself. Buddhism not only became established there, but in contrast to India, went on to develop further. However, despite the common model, the artistic results that it engendered in the individual countries were very different; that is, there were autonomous traditions which then fused with these new influences.

In this article, the example of the Green Tārā in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Gilmore Ford (fig. 1) is used to examine the connections between the production of art in these countries, and the question considered of whether this work can be considered as exemplifying an 'International Style'.

The stylistic classification of the Green Tārā in the literature published to date has only gone as far as assigning a label to it; Pal (1984: Appendix) assigns it to the bKa'-gdams-pa style and J.C. Huntington (Huntington and Huntington 1990: 318–320) to the early *shar mthun* (pure Pāla style). Rhie (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 47–49) attempts to subsume a number of early Tibetan paintings into a group on a stylistic basis, and Singer (1994: 96, 107, 108) includes Indian examples in her stylistic comparisons. However, here it would seem necessary to extend the frame of reference, that is, to examine the wider artistic environment in respect of possible and perhaps even reciprocal relationships. For this, the style of the figures, the composition of the picture and various individual motifs will be compared. I intend to show which elements were taken over from other regions and to what extent a distinctive Tibetan pictorial concept was developed.

The Green Tārā thangka has a very complex, yet unified composition, if one disregards the bottom zone, which is separated from the rest of the picture by an ornamental border. An abstract, ornamental and thus entirely non-naturalistic mountain landscape (narrow parallel strips in various colours with slanted upper edges) extends from the ornamental strip at the lower edge almost to the top of the picture; at the top trees rise above the crags and between the peaks human figures, animals and plants can be made out. At the centre, on a lotus throne rising out of a pool, sits the Tārā in the largest of the rock caves which finishes in a trefoil arch (cave

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\* I would like to thank Professor Deborah Klimburg-Salter for her personal encouragement and support during the planning and writing of this article. Under her supervision, a seminar was held at the Department of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna on the subject of the 'International Style'. Thanks are also due to all my fellow-students who participated in this seminar and contributed their papers and ideas, thereby providing valuable impulses for my article. My participation in the Conference was made possible by the *Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung*.

and pool are mentioned in Candragomin's *Sādhana*<sup>1</sup>). Under the trefoil arch but on separate lotus thrones sit a pair of attendant deities to either side of the Tārā. At the sides and above are a total of 19 smaller niches in the rocks for other figures; these niches finish in different kinds of arches but are symmetrically arranged. The niches contain (in the top row) five Jinas and two bodhisattvas, in the spandrels a monk and a layman, at the sides eight Tārās who ward off the eight dangers and below these on each side a bodhisattva with an attendant.

### The Style of the Figures

The central figure of the Green Tārā conforms to a type which is widespread in Indian art: the Tārā sits in *lalitāsana*, her right hand supported on her right knee, holding an *utpala* in her left hand. Her head is inclined slightly to the left, with her right shoulder lowered and her right hip raised. Her whole body thus describes a gracefully sinuous curve. Belly and hips are well-developed. Below the navel she wears a girdle which hints at the form of her body with its soft contours. From the girdle falls a gauzy skirt which partly covers her legs. Her limbs are slender. The whole figure is richly adorned, as is appropriate to the rank of the Tārā: she wears a crown, earrings, necklaces, armbands around the upper arms and wrists as well as bangles on her legs and rings on her toes. There is little trace of any modelling – the figure primarily owes the vividness of its appearance to the subtlety of its linear outlining.

The aesthetic and artistic roots of this type of figural representation are to be found in Indian art of the Pāla period. Kramrisch (1929) characterises this art as follows: in the 9th and 10th centuries these figures are distinguished by a ponderous grandeur; they seem rather heavy and earthbound. At the same time they are characterised by their softly sensuous modelling, a legacy from the Gupta era. It is not until around the middle of the 11th century that this heaviness gives way to the graceful type of figure adorned with accessories which become an increasingly important pictorial element in their own right. This appears to have been the point at which Pāla period art lost its homogeneity and distinct regional styles developed.

Kramrisch's analysis was based exclusively on statuary forms. A few examples of the goddess seated in *lalitāsana* will suffice to illustrate this development.

The figure of the Tārā from Hilsa/Dt.Patna (stele, Patna Museum No. 6014. Huntington 1984: Fig. 33)<sup>2</sup> is powerful and solid, an impression reinforced by the way the belly bulges over the belt. The modelling endows the surface of the body with an emphatic sensuousness.

From the 11th century onwards works from eastern Bihar and Bengal predominate. The figures are slimmer and have lost their solidity and sensuousness, frequently to the point where they lack any vibrancy of effect. There is a marked contrast between the mostly smooth body surfaces and the overly ornate engraving of the jewellery.

Of these numerous but mostly undated works from Bengal, the Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā from Somapara/Dt.Dhaka (fig. 2) can still be assigned to the 11th century. Here the body is slender and graceful. In the case of the slightly later Tārā from Nimdighi/Dt.Rajshahi (fig. 3), the body seems almost overwhelmed by the decorative elements. The folds of drapery on the upper body and legs are rendered as uniform strips, making the figure seem stiff and less vigorous than the Tārā from Somapara.

<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of its iconography see Allinger 1997.

<sup>2</sup> According to an inscription this stele was made in the 25th or 35th regnal year of Devapāla; c. mid-9th century.

Apart from all these general parallels in the appearance of the figure it is important for a stylistic analysis to consider examples from painting, despite the difficulty of comparing monumental painting with manuscript paintings. No monumental painting from the Pāla period in India has survived, and only a few manuscript paintings have been preserved from the 11th century onwards. Examples of monumental painting have been preserved in Burma, Central Asia and Tibet, and will be used for purposes of comparison here, albeit taking into account the changes that were specific to these regions.

In the miniatures of one of the oldest surviving manuscripts, a fragment of a *Prajñāpāramitā* text, now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (No. M.86.185a-d) (Pal 1993: 50–53),<sup>3</sup> the bodies of the figures seem heavy and thickset, yet at the same time they are softly modelled.

In a *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript, now in the University Library, Cambridge (No. Add. 1688) (fig. 4),<sup>4</sup> the bodies also seem modelled in a similarly soft and sensuous fashion; the transitions between the individual parts of the body are fluid and subtle. The sinuous curve of the body is stronger and makes an entirely natural impression. The jewellery here does not represent a contrast to the body surfaces but rather complements and enlivens them.

A contrast to these examples is provided by the miniatures in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Sansk.a7(R)) (fig. 5).<sup>5</sup> The sharply-drawn contours are accompanied by colour shades which emphasise the impression of harshness; the faces are also drawn harshly and separated into their individual parts. The bodies seem slender, as the torsos are very elongated and the hips and belly are very small. The individual deities portrayed sit in *rājalilāsana*, *vajraparyāṅkāśana* and *virāsana*, whereby the sitting positions seem overly-complicated; the gestures appear mannered and artificial. The jewellery gives the impression of being finely engraved.

A wholly different style can be found in Bengali manuscript painting. In the miniatures of two manuscripts from the era around 1100 – *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* now in the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery<sup>6</sup> and *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* now in the British Library, London (No. Or.13490) (figs. 6, 7, 8)<sup>7</sup> – a much lighter impression predominates. The drawing is sketchier and the paint applied in flat areas of solid colour. There is no discernible modelling. The same characteristics are also found in monumental painting from Burma, Tibet and Khara Khoto.

On the outer wall of the ambulatory of the Abèyadana temple at Pagan (last quarter of the 11th century) there are representations of bodhisattvas (fig. 9) and Tārās. They are seated with their bodies inclined slightly. The drawing is simple yet elegant. No modelling is used and the

<sup>3</sup> According to the colophon the manuscript was copied in the 27th regnal year of Mahipāla (I) – c. early 11th century; its place of origin is not given.

<sup>4</sup> According to the colophon the manuscript was copied in the 14th regnal year of Nayāpāla – c. mid-11th century; the place of origin is not given.

<sup>5</sup> According to the colophon this manuscript was copied in the 15th regnal year of Rāmapāla – early 12th century – in Nālandā.

<sup>6</sup> According to the colophon copied in the eighth regnal year of Harivarman. Reproductions of the 22 miniatures extant at Baroda in B. Bhattacharya 1943/44.

<sup>7</sup> Reproductions of nearly all the extant miniatures are to be found in Losty 1989. No colophon has been preserved. Losty's attribution to Bengal was made on stylistic criteria.

paint is applied in flat areas of solid colour. These are qualities that also characterise the paintings of the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*.

A Green Tārā from Khara Khoto (silk tapestry, *kesi* technique) should be mentioned in this context (fig. 10): she sits in *lalitāsana*, with both head and body slightly inclined. Although she appears slender, her hips and belly are fairly pronounced. In this she resembles the Green Tārā in the Ford Collection, as does the narrow oval form of the head. However, the principal feature shared by both works is the elegant subtlety of line which imbues the bodies with life. The Tārā from Khara Khoto also lacks any kind of colour modelling.

Apart from these works, which clearly reveal the connection with Bengali manuscript painting, there were at the same time other stylistic forms extant in the countries mentioned above, for example, the harsh drawing and three-dimensional colour modelling in the frescoes at Drathang/Tibet (Vitali 1990: 37–68, pls. 29.34). Thus different stylistic variants developed parallel to one another.

### The Composition

The extremely complicated composition of the Green Tārā thangka in the Ford Collection – the abstract rendering of a rocky landscape with numerous symmetrically arranged niches – has no direct models in Indian art, although there are a number of works which may have stimulated the artist's imagination, e.g.

- Avalokiteśvara, stone stele from Kurkihār (fig. 11): in the rocky landscape are figures contained in niches; animals and plants are to be seen on the crags. The rocks themselves are not elongated as in the Ford Collection thangka, but square, as in the paintings from Ajaṅṭā and in Nepalese manuscript paintings.
- Umā-Maheśvara, stone stele from Joradeul/Dt.Dhaka (Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, No. 67.233, before 1250. Haque 1992: 486).

Even if, for purposes of comparison, one were to consider stone carvings with representations of the Eight Great Events in the life of the Buddha, for example the stele at Jagdiśpur (Huntington 1984: Fig. 131), these works differ from the Ford Collection thangka in that the composition is much looser; nowhere is the pictorial surface so clearly divided into panels.

Occasionally a kind of division into panels occurs in manuscript painting, as for example, in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (fig. 7) and in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* from Nepal now in the University Library, Cambridge (No. Add.1643):<sup>8</sup> Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā, fol.80b/1. (Ghosh 1980: Fig. 14).

In early Tibetan painting on the other hand one frequently finds the strictly delimited composition of the Ford Collection thangka, for example in the portrait of a Sakyapa hierarch (Jucker Collection, Basel, c. 12th century) (fig. 12), or in a group of Tibetan-influenced paintings from Khara Khoto, for example Avalokiteśvara (St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage, c. 12th century) (fig. 13).

The portrait of the Sakyapa hierarch is a 'lineage thangka', i.e., a representation of the spiritual ancestors of the subject. Avalokiteśvara is surrounded by five Jinās above and eight deities in the shape of bodhisattvas at the sides and below. There are no known Indian models

<sup>8</sup> Copied in the year 135 according to Nepalese calendar = 1015 AD.



for these strictly-divided, many-figured compositions lacking in any kind of narrative content. This type of composition – later mostly without the rock-forms – remained common in Tibet, while hardly occurring in other areas. One may therefore assume that it was an essentially independent Tibetan achievement which arose not only out of aesthetic considerations but also from religious necessity.

### Individual Motifs

Almost all the individual motifs to be seen in the Green Tārā thangka from the Ford Collection can be found in nearly every country whose art was influenced by India at that time. Here only a few will be discussed.<sup>9</sup>

The typical narrow stylised forms of the rocky peaks and the niches can be found in Bengali manuscript painting, but not in that of Bihar: *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (British Library Or.13490), fol. 8b (Losty 1989: Fig. 13), manuscript leaves in the Ellsworth Collection, New York (Pal 1984: pl. 5), also in Pagan/Burma, in the Abēyadana temple (Luce 1970: vol. 3, Figs. 227, 231–236) and in the Green Tārā from Khara Khoto (Fig. 10), as well as three thangka fragments from Khara Khoto (The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Nos. X-2350, X-2399 and X-2359, Piotrovsky 1993: 124–127)

As can also be seen from these examples, the three- or five-fold arch incorporated into an architectural element or stylised rock forms can be frequently found in the art of these countries, but rarely occurs in art from Bihar.

The large Tārā of the Ford Collection thangka has a horseshoe-shaped mandorla and sits with a cushion behind her back. Her golden nimbus is much more richly decorated than those of the smaller figures on the edge of the painting. Tārā's nimbus is red and surrounded by a light-coloured roll bound with red and blue ribbons whose ends flutter outwards. Gold tendrils are attached to the outer edge of the nimbus. Red and blue ribbons as part of the Tārā's headdress can be made out against the whole background of the nimbus.

In Indian manuscript painting, nimbuses are almost always undecorated; only occasionally do they have a border of a different colour. In the case of Pāla stone images, nimbuses with a roll-like border resembling twisted cords can frequently be found, for example with the Buddha in Devisthān Mandir, Dt. Gaya (stele, c. 10th century, Huntington 1984: Fig. 117).

Occasionally bunches of ribbons sweeping out in a U-shape from the ornamentation above the ear are represented, but they never fill the whole nimbus: Maitreya from Hasra Kol or Viupur, Dt. Gaya (stela, c. 10th century, Patna Museum No. 1681, Huntington 1984: Fig. 120).

The type of nimbus in the Ford Collection Tārā can be seen frequently in Tibet, for example in the Ratnasambhava (Jucker Collection, Basel) (Fig. 14) and the thangka with Scenes from the Life of the Śākyamuni Buddha (Zimmermann Collection, New York, 12th century, Pal 1991: 144–146).

Similar forms can also be found in the paintings from Khara Khoto, e.g. Śākyamuni Buddha Preaching (St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage, No. X-2337, Piotrovsky 1993: 112–115) and Avalokiteśvara (fragment, St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage) (fig. 15); here the ribbons in the nimbus are depicted in the same way as in Indian art. They swing up in a U-shape from each ear but do not extend all over the whole nimbus.

<sup>9</sup> A detailed examination of the individual motifs has been undertaken by Claudine Bautze-Picron in her article "The Elaboration of a Style: Eastern Indian Motifs and Forms in Early Tibetan (?) and Burmese Painting" in this volume.

Outside Tibet and Khara Khoto the type of nimbus with a roll-like border and the fluttering ribbons inside is rarely seen. In Bengal the nimbus with roll-like border occurs once in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (British Library Or.13940, fol. 42b, Losty 1989: Fig. 59) and the fluttering ribbons occasionally in Burma, for example in the Myinkaba Kubyaukgyi temple at Pagan (1st quarter of the 12th century): bodhisattva (Strachan 1989; pl. XVIII).

The large Tārā in the Ford Collection thangka is decked out with ornate jewellery: a crown, earrings, short and long necklaces, a sacred thread in the form of a chain, armbands on her upper arms and wrists, rings on her fingers, a girdle and rings on her feet and toes. The type of jewellery corresponds to that worn by the deities in the art of the Pāla period. Comparisons with motifs from the stone images can be made (for example, the Tārā from Somapara) (fig. 2), but it must be born in mind that in painting the three-dimensional quality of the jewellery is hardly ever suggested and that the medium necessarily affects the form; paintings should therefore be preferred for purposes of comparison.

The Tārā's jewellery is distinguished by the sharp points of her crown and the armbands on her upper arm as well as the closely-threaded pendant gems of her necklaces and the strings of pearls suspended from her girdle and the armbands. The drawing of the jewellery is flat and two-dimensional, with the exception of broad armbands on her wrists. By contrast, the one visible armband on her upper arm is drawn as if it were merely a two-dimensional ornament, disregarding the curve of the arm. The points of the crown have also been drawn without regard to perspective and the curve of the head. The numerous precious stones are merely painted onto the gold ground with no indication of three-dimensionality.

Jewellery with similar sharp points is found in Indian manuscript paintings, for example in the 'Vredenburg' manuscript (London, Victoria and Albert Museum No. I.S.4-10, 1958) (fig. 16).<sup>10</sup> Here the jewellery is less ornate but displays the same points on the crown and armbands on the upper arms as well as the same earrings and pendants of precious stones on the necklaces. In this painting, however, the items are clearly represented as three-dimensional objects.

In the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* manuscript (British Library Or.13940) the two-dimensional representation of the jewellery is much more pronounced, for example in fol. 10b (fig. 7) and fol. 44a (fig. 8): the broad crowns with their sharp points hardly seem to be three-dimensional objects any more. This impression is reinforced by the schematic drawing of the hairline which runs like a black band around the ears and forehead, while in the 'Vredenburg' manuscript the hair is represented in a more naturalistic manner.

The same two-dimensional representation of the jewellery and the hairline can be seen in the Ford Collection Tārā and in other Tibetan thangkas, as well as in art from Burma and Khara Khoto e.g.

- Ratnasambhava, (Jucker Collection, Basel) (fig. 14): both the forms of the individual elements of jewellery and the way they are represented display similarities with the Ford Collection Tārā. In the former, the armbands on the upper arms are adapted slightly to the curve of the arms, but the lateral points of both the armbands and the crown are drawn without any regard for perspective. The black line around the ears and across the forehead representing the hairline is also present.
- Bodhisattva, mural painting, Myinkaba Kubyaukgyi Temple in Pagan (fig. 9).

<sup>10</sup> Reproductions of all the miniatures are to be found in Losty 1990.

- Padmapāṇi, Khara Khoto (St. Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum) (fig. 17).
- Mañjuśrī, Khara Khoto, (St. Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum, No. X-2359, Piotrovsky 1993: 139).

A few of the jewellery forms are not found in Indian art, for example the pendants attached to the long necklace and the form of the three-pointed armbands on the upper arms.

**In conclusion**, one can say that the Green Tārā from the Ford Collection displays many different influences from regions outside Tibet in its figural ideal, composition and in many of its individual motifs, but that it also clearly possesses a distinctive Tibetan character.

As a work of art, the Ford Collection Tārā is of exceptionally high quality and cannot in any way be considered an 'eclecticistic' work. It is a unified, consistent whole which is clearly indebted to previous models but which has assimilated these models independently and should be seen in the context of Tibetan painting. The crucial achievement of this early Tibetan thangka painting lies in its composition, in the creation of principles of order for the representation of many-figured groups which are not connected by narrative but stand in a hierarchical relation of dependency to one another.

The figural ideal is strongly indebted to the art of the Pāla period; its translation into painterly terms displays close affinities with Bengali painting.

The comparison of the individual motifs shows that at the time when the Ford Collection thangka was painted, around the 12th century, there were close connections with the artistic provinces of India where Buddhism was prevalent, in particular with Bengal, as well as with the regions bordering on India to the east and north. The similarity of motifs is often used to support the idea of a homogeneous international style in these regions in the period from the 11th to the 14th centuries. However, the circumstance should not be overlooked that the individual countries developed their own unmistakably independent art, that is, that over and above the connections evident in the individual motifs, the style of works of art in these countries is very various and can always be recognised as belonging to the art of a particular region. Thus, the premise for a style in the sense of a homogeneous and unmistakable phenomenon is not given.

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Fig. 1: Green Tārā, thangka, collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Gilmore Ford



Fig. 2: Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā, stele from Somapara/Dt.Dhaka, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka No.11.B(V)a/2



Fig. 3: Tārā, stele from Nimdighi/Dt.Rajshahi, Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi No.A(c)2/91



Fig. 4: Tārā, *Pañcarakṣā* Manuscript, Cambridge, University Library, No.Add.1688, fol. 20a



Fig. 5: Maitreya and Candraprabha, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* Manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Sansk.a7(R)





Fig. 6: Vajrasattva, *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*, London, Brit.Lib. Or. 13940, fol. 10a



Fig. 7: Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara, *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*, London, Brit.Lib. Or. 13940, fol. 10b



Fig. 8: Khadiravaṇī Tārā, *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*, London, Brit.Lib. Or. 13940, fol. 44a

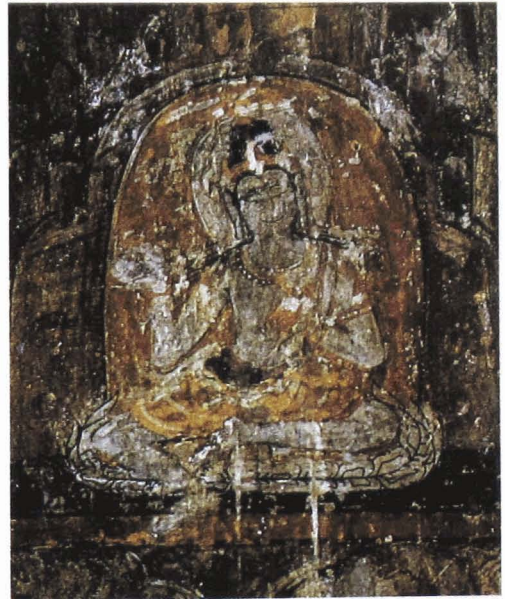


Fig. 9: Bodhisattva, Pagan Abèyadana temple



Fig. 10: Green Tārā, silk tapestry, *kesi* technique, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, No. X-2362



Fig. 11: Avalokiteśvara, stele from Kurkihār, Indian Museum, Calcutta No. 5859/A25160



Fig. 12: Sakyapa Hierarchy, thangka, Ernst Jucker Collection, Basel-Ettingen



Fig. 13: Avalokiteśvara, thangka, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, No. X-2355





Fig. 14: Ratnasambhava, thangka, Ernst Jucker Collection, Basel-Ettingen



Fig. 15: Avalokiteśvara, thangka fragment, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, No.X-2352



Fig. 16: Bodhisattva, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* Manuscript, Victoria and Albert Museum, London No. I.S.4-10, 1958, from the Vredenburg-Collection, fol. 89b



Fig. 17: Mañjuśrī, thangka fragment, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, No.X-2359





# THE “INDIAN STYLE” *RGYA LUGS* ON AN EARLY TIBETAN BOOK COVER

by

Heather Stoddard

First of all it is proposed that the beginning of the period we are considering be put back from the 12th to the 11th century, based on an inscription written on an early Tibetan book cover dating to this period. The inscription, which is very important because of its rarity, mentions that the images in the “Indian style volume” *rGya legs lugs*, were painted in “Indian style” *rGya gar lugs gi ri mo*. Further, all those involved in the execution of the volume(s) are clearly, from their names, Tibetans. The first question is what does this “Indian style” mean in this context, and in what way does it relate to the style of sculpture and painting that spread throughout Asia during this period? The second purpose of the paper is to explore further this pan-Asian phenomenon in the arts, as it flourished inside Tibet from the 11th through to the 14th century, and to propose that the style probably had more than one geographic origin.

It has been pointed out in previous detailed studies<sup>1</sup> that Pāla influence spread from India far and wide throughout the rest of Asia, from the eighth or ninth centuries right up to the annihilation of Buddhism in India in the twelfth century. Both style and period coincide with the latest development of the teachings of Śākyamuni, that of Vajrayāna Buddhism. Sculpture and painting expressed visually the complexities of the “Diamond Path” and spread with the teachings, northwards through Kashmir, Gilgit, Afghanistan and Persia, and through Nepal into Tibet and Central Asia. It travelled along the Silk Roads to Dunhuang, went on into China, and right across to Korea and Japan. It spread east to Burma and south as far as Indonesia. Many of the painted banners from Dunhuang show distinct influences of this style, and its presence in the 8th and 9th centuries along the oases of the Silk Road, is often associated with the period of occupation by the armies of the sPu rgyal Empire of Great Tibet (mid 7th-mid 9th century).<sup>2</sup>

However, anti-Buddhist persecutions in Tibet, and China, in the mid-9th century partially interrupted this current. Western scholars have called the following century in Tibet the “Dark Age”, in reference to their own medieval history, but it is known among Tibetan scholars as the “Age of Splintering of Tibet” *Bod sil bu’i dus skabs*. At this time the Tibetans were losing control over territory they had ruled for approximately two hundred years in Central Asia, whilst the newly emerging empire of Mi nyag (Chin. Xixia, Russ. Tangut) (982–1227),<sup>3</sup> was establishing its own powerful state in much of the same territory.

The earliest phase of the re-introduction of Buddhism was during the second half of the 10th century when the *vinaya* tradition was brought back from two extremities of the periphery of the

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<sup>1</sup> D. Klimburg-Salter (1982), *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path*, Los Angeles, UCLA; Huntington, J. and S. Huntington (1990), *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, Seattle and London, Dayton Art Institute.

<sup>2</sup> See *Sérinde, Terre de Bouddha*, (1996), Paris, pls. 148, 149; 279–284.

<sup>3</sup> Kychanov, E.I. in *Lost Empire of the Silk Route*, ed. by M. Piotrovsky (1993), Milano, pp. 49–58, where the date of the inception of the Tangut Empire is brought back half a century from 1032 to 982, based on arguments laid out by the eminent Russian Tangutologist.

Tibetan plateau. Firstly, from the north-east, in what is today traditionally known as Amdo. The northern part of this territory was at the time being taken over by the above-mentioned Tanguit Empire. In Tibetan texts extensive territory in the north is referred to as Byang Mi nyag, and although the Tibetans had lost military domination, one of the main cultural orientations was still tending towards this region of Central Asia. Further it was there that the early tradition of Tibetan Buddhism still survived, in hidden valleys and caves in the rocky fastnesses of tributaries of the Ma chu River. This is why the goatherd Mu dza ka ra phen was sent there to look for ordination under the “Three Men of Tibet”, who had fled during the persecution. Mu dza ka ra phen was ordained as dGongs pa Rab gsal (892–975), and it is his disciples, known as the “Ten Men of dBus gTsang” who brought the *vinaya* tradition back, thus allowing for the re-establishment of the monastic community, and the re-opening of monasteries in Central Tibet at the end of the 10th century.

As the author tried to show at the SOAS conference,<sup>4</sup> it is practically certain that the monks also brought art back with them to adorn the numerous temples that they founded.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the earliest wall-paintings that have survived in Central Tibet, in Gra thang and Zha lu, are situated in monasteries founded by direct disciples of dGongs pa Rab gsal. These paintings appear eclectic in style, yet they do represent a specific stylistic current, and when compared with the stucco images in Gra thang, g.Ye dmar and the other temples in Myang sdod, it is clear that they all do belong to the same style.

Parallel to this, at the other extremity of the Tibetan plateau, also in the second half of the 10th century a group of young Tibetan boys were sent by King Ye shes 'od, from Gu ge to Kashmir, to study Sanskrit and the *vinaya*. Rin chen bZang po (958–1055) was one of the only survivors, and he made three journeys, two to Kashmir and one to East India, spending about 17 years away. Returning from his second journey he brought back over thirty (32 or 33) artists *lha bzo*,<sup>6</sup> from Kha che to adorn the temples that were being built in western Tibet. Thus, although, as far as I know, the texts may not specify the name of this style, what we may call *Kha che lugs*,<sup>7</sup> was used especially to adorn the temples built by Ye shes 'od, Rin chen bZang po and later Tibetans in Gu ge (e.g. rTa pho, 'Kha char, mTho lding, Myar ma, Tsaparang, Rad nis, Phyi yang and Dung dkar).

However, by the early 11th century, there was a back-to-the-roots movement with both dGongs pa Rab gsal's disciples and the sons of Byang chub 'od, turning their attention to the Holy Land of India, with the aim of obtaining “pure vows” in the heartland of Buddhism. Monasticism had already been re-implanted, in a very active way, in Central Tibet. Dozens of small *vihāras* had been set up, but now it was becoming necessary to re-affirm the authenticity of the *saṃgha*. Buddhism in India was flourishing. Thus the whole orientation changed from Central Asia and Kashmir, as cultural references, back to India. At that time two traditions were at their apogee, and were in powerful interaction, on the one hand the great *vihāras* or

<sup>4</sup> See H. Stoddard (1996), “Early Tibetan Paintings: Sources and Styles (Eleventh-Fourteenth Centuries A.D.)”, *Archives of Asian Art* XLIX, 26–50.

<sup>5</sup> See dKon mchog bsTan 'dzin, *bZo gnas skra rtse'i chu thig*, Beijing 1994, 74–78, for a list of these early foundations and their founders.

<sup>6</sup> *Collected Biographical Material about Lo-chen Rin-chen bZang-po and his subsequent reïmbodiments*, Delhi 1977, 90–94, 176–180.

<sup>7</sup> D. Klimburg-Salter found a later source which mentions *Kha che lugs*. Paper delivered at the Csoma de Körös Symposium at Sopron, 1987.

monastic universities were flourishing, and on the other, the *mahāsiddha* tradition which spread far and wide. Nāropa once held the keys of Vikramaśīla. Atiśa was a great tantric yogin.

Thus it was to India that Mar pa and others like him went in the early 11th century. They brought back with them teachings, and oral transmissions, but also illuminated manuscripts, statues and paintings, and no doubt, in certain cases, a good knowledge of the art of Pāla India that they had seen in the temples they frequented. It is quite possible that some Tibetans, who were highly reputed amongst the Indian teachers for their energy in their studies, also took up painting during their lengthy sojourns in India.

However, not long after, historical events brought in another dominant current. Buddhism was destroyed in India, and so the centre of activities moved up to Nepal. As Tibetans studied with Newari masters, and stayed for long periods there, the art *Bal ris*, too came to dominate and replaced to a certain extent *rGya lugs*. It was to remain the most important influence in Tibetan art as it developed and flowered in the 15th century.

### The *rGya lugs* Book Cover

Let us get back to the “Indian Style” or *rGya lugs* as it was known in Tibet. Recently several early book covers have come out of Tibet. Their proportions show that they were made to accommodate the large pages of Tibetan loose-leaf books, and while they demonstrate the use of different techniques – painting, calligraphy and metal work, they form a stylistic group. One of them bears an important inscription, which gives the names of those who collaborated in the preparation of the volume(s), including the artist. They are identified as being descendants of the family of the “Venerable” Mar pa, and the book is said to be in the “style of an Indian volume” *rGya glegs lugs*, and the artist is explicitly stated to have done the images in “Indian style” *rGya lugs* (figs. 1–4).

#### Inscription (in *dbu can*.)

(line 1) *Dus gsum rgyal ba thams cad skyed pa'i yum// skyob pa rkang gnyis gtso bos legs gsungs pa// shes rab pha rol phyin pa stong phrag brgya pa'i 'bum// thar pa 'dod phyir gsung rab 'bum snyon(?) bzhengs//* (line 2) *sngon kyi dus su dge spyad tshogs bsags pa// bdag gzhan 'byor ldan mi'i rigs su 'khrungs// nor gyi 'byor pa rNams thos bu bas lhag??// yab mes gdung rus bisun pa Mar pa'i sras//* (line 3) *rgyu rtsal kun la mkhas pa Yon brtsun yab sras dang 'dzangs la 'phrul ldan rog mo gZung sgron gyis// chos kyi zhabs thog rGya glegs lugs su bgyis// ng..o..u...kas? !?e mo gzung nge dang//* (line 4) *pho rtsal ldan gyi Mar pa 'Go yor gyis// dge'u tshul du...(bskrun?) pa gyis pa lags// rGya gar lugs kyi ri mo legs mo 'di// gYo ru Dol gyi Gong rje lha bzo...?i..... dge'o//*

**Translation** (line 1) “Mother, Giver of Birth to all Buddhas! The Good Word uttered by the Protector, chief of all men! Prajñāpāramitā, the Hundred, Thousand, One Hundred Thousand Verses that lead beings across to the other side! Because of their desire for Liberation, they had this Excellent Word written (line 2). Having amassed good actions in former times, they were born in the ancestral clan, offspring of the venerable Mar pa, wealthy for themselves and for others, more endowed with riches than Vaiśravaṇa’s son(?). (line 3) Yon brtsun, father and son(s), skilled in all arts, with the(ir) wise and magical companion, gZung sgron, created this book, a religious offering, in the style of an Indian volume..... (line 4) Mar pa 'Go yor, the courageous man, edited it in virtuous



fashion(?), while the divine artist, Lord Gong of Dol in g.Yo ru, (executed) the fine Indian style paintings. Virtue!”

### The *rGya lugs* Style

From the inscription we may confirm that the term *rGya lugs* – meaning the style that had been evolving in India during the late Pāla dynasty – was used by the Tibetans in the eleventh century, and we may infer that it was (re-)introduced into Tibet through such teachers as Mar pa and 'Brog mi who spent many years studying in India, at the feet of the most eminent teachers of that age.

This term *rGya lugs* is the same that is used in the earliest Tibetan sources to describe the “Indian style” that was introduced into Tibet under the sPu rgyal dynasty. Thus it is a generic appellation, referring to the visual aspect of the “body, speech and mind” teachings transmitted from India into Tibet. At the beginning of the *phyi dar*, it was no doubt brought in by such translators and teachers as Mar pa and 'Brog mi. The *btsun pa* Mar pa mentioned in the inscription may not be Lho brag Mar pa, the teacher of Mi la ras pa, since there were other eminent teachers living around that time, with the same clan name, for example Mar pa Do pa of Yar 'brog. The title used in the inscription *btsun pa* can refer to an ordained monk, but is also used in the general sense of “noble”, or “respectable” for a layman. On the other hand, those who made the volume(s) clearly belong to a family lineage, and not a spiritual one, since they are referred to as the “sons (i.e. offspring) of the noble Mar pa, (belonging to) his ancestral paternal clan: *yab mes gdung rus btsun pa Mar pa'i sras*//.

Mar pa Chos kyi Blo gros (1012–1097) of Lho brag, spent twenty-one years in India, of which sixteen with Nāropa.<sup>8</sup> He was a yogin and translator, and although art is not an important theme in his *rnam thar*, he very probably became familiar with the *sku rten* “physical supports” of the Buddha’s teachings during his travels in India, with statues and paintings, as well as with the *gsung rten* “verbal support”, and amongst the many texts he brought back with him it is likely that there would have been illuminated manuscripts. He also no doubt brought back statues and paintings, and these, associated with his sacred person and his travels in India, would have served as inspiration for Tibetan artists over the following generations.<sup>9</sup> Several bKa’ brgyud pa schools developed from his teachings, branching out at the time of the great yogin Phag mo gru pa (1110–1182), and the lineages founded by his disciples seem to have been particularly inclined towards the arts, maintaining this tradition throughout the centuries. One of Mar pa’s “sons” (*sras*) was Mar pa sGo legs. When he died, the furnace was opened after the cremation, and it was found that “the five gods of bDe mchog and other deities had appeared” on bits of his skull.<sup>10</sup>

The inscription on the book cover names the courageous Mar pa 'Go yor, the clever woman gZung sgron, and the divine artist of Gong rje, all apparently members of the same clan. Judging by the style of the motifs, the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript together with its decorated

<sup>8</sup> *Mar pa lo tsa'i rnam thar*. Chengdu 1984, 98.

<sup>9</sup> One recurrent theme in *rnam thar* is the distribution of precious objects belonging to a master, often at the time of his death, but also during his lifetime, to his disciples. The origin of such objects is often mentioned, giving added sacred value to the object, and authenticity to the lineage.

<sup>10</sup> *Mar pa lo tsa'i rnam thar*, op.cit., 144–166. Other such examples are known in Tibet, and a collection of twelve such “spontaneous images” are kept in the new museum in rTse thang.

book cover, was probably executed some time in the late 11th or early 12th century. *g.Yo ru* refers to the region of *dBus*, surrounding Lhasa and *rTse thang*, and *Dol* may be the name of a place in the *sKyid chu* valley, not far from Lhasa, on the way to *sNye mo*.

The surviving *thangkas* and wall-paintings in this style (i.e. the wall-paintings in the *Jo khang* at Lhasa and the *thangkas* from *sTag lung* monastery) are mostly linked with the *dBus* province around Lhasa, and also with *Lho kha*, where *Mar pa* lived. The oldest wall-paintings in the "nine-storey" tower built by *Mi la ras pa*, in *Lho brag*, under orders from his guru *Mar pa*, show definite links with this Tibetan *rGya lugs*. From *Mar pa* the teachings were passed on through *Mi la ras pa*, *sGam po pa* and *Phag mo gru pa*, and as mentioned above, from him stem the various *bKa' brgyud pa* sub-schools, whose monasteries were mostly established in *dBus*.

The inscription provides precious information. Not only does it identify all those who participated in the making of the book, but confirms that the artist was Tibetan, and that he was skilled in the "Indian style". This is the first concrete evidence of Tibetans working in foreign styles, since other early texts which mention paintings or sculptures from the *sPu rgyal* dynasty on into the first centuries of the *phyi dar*, often mention foreign artists who were invited to Tibet to decorate the temples and monasteries, but scarcely pay any attention to their own people. This has led to the assumption that Tibetans did not develop into artists in their own right until much later, for example at around the beginning of the fifteenth century or even sixteenth century, when it is held (by the Tibetans themselves), that the first indigenous Tibetan schools of art came into being.<sup>11</sup>

We may also take note from the inscription that the practice of the arts could be hereditary, and that the female companion of *Yon brtsun* took part in the preparation of the volume. The "divine artist", *Lord Gong of Dol*, is not specifically stated to be of the *Mar pa* clan. As "*Lord rje*", he would have been of noble origin, but in any case, he must have been very close to the other members of the *Mar pa* clan. We do know that during the lifetime of *Lho brag Mar pa* his clan was very well-to-do, and if the *btsun pa Mar pa* on the inscription is the famous translator, it would not be at all surprising if one or two generations later his offspring had become even "richer than the son of the God of Wealth".

Although we must bear in mind that the *Mar pa* on the inscription may be in fact another lama, living during the same period, the link with India, and the fact that Tibetans were painting competently in *rGya lugs* style, still remains.

### The Design of the Book Cover

The various figures and motifs found on this and other comparable wooden book covers can help us understand what *rGya lugs* meant to Tibetans during the early *phyi dar*. The details may be compared with *thangkas* and extant paintings in Tibet and Central Asia, and thus help define the period and spread of the style.

The jewel border, and curling leafy foliage, as well as the simple central motifs recall very closely patterns seen in many of the *thangkas* from the great monastery of *sTag lung*, to the north of Lhasa, in *dBus* (fig. 5). The palette is composed of red, orange, light green, dark green, black and gold. On the border triangular and oval jewels alternate in red and dark green, each

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<sup>11</sup> *sMan bris*, founded by *sMan bla Don grub* is supposed to be the earliest Tibetan school of art. He lived at the beginning of the 15th century. See David Jackson (1996), *A History of Tibetan Painting*, Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences.

containing a small central twirl in gold, with more gold swirling patterns in the background (fig. 6). The foliate border is done in dark green, with black and gold linear touches highlighting the forms. The foliate scrolling contains faces and masks, human figures, vases, and the diamond lozenges contain jewels and flower patterns.

Examples of other book covers in this series bear close comparison. One is painted and has the same palette, with a red background, and images of the Buddha, Tārā, Ṣaḍakṣarī Avalokiteśvara, etc. In the roundels are *haṃsa*, symbolising the universal breath or *prāṇa*, and lions (figs. 7–9).

Two other book covers are decorated with decorative plaques in gilt copper with inset turquoises and corals. Here, in spite of the difference in materials, the forms and motifs compare closely with similar elements in the painted book covers (fig. 10).

### An Extant Wall-painting in this Style in the Jo khang

On the first floor of the Lhasa gTsong lag khang, in the oldest part of the edifice, on the south-east corner just near the Guru Rinpoche chapel, there was until 1994(?), a soot-covered wall-painting, half revealed by pilgrims rubbings, showing a Buddha figure, flanked by bodhisattvas. In spite of its dilapidation, and subsequent removal, the style of this painting is closely linked to Pāla India, and can be compared with a number of early Tibetan thangkas that have come out of Tibet over the last fifteen years, and which may be identified in a general way with the “Pāla” style. Looking at the details on many of these paintings, we find similar motifs and treatment of line, colour and volume as is found in the group of Tibetan painted book covers in question here.

If we turn to Roberto Vitali’s extremely valuable study of *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (London 1990: 69ff.), and examine his analysis of the early wall-paintings in the Jo khang, we find two different styles, attributed by the author to the two periods of restoration of the Jo khang at the beginning of the *phyi dar*.

A first restoration was carried out between 1076 and 1087, by Zangs dkar lotsawa ’Phags pa Shes rab, who according to Vitali, built the wall creating the Zhal ras lha khang chapel, still visible to the south above the Central Shrine. He also extended this gTsong khang dbu ma, containing the most holy statue of Jo bo, and added the six male and six female tall bodhisattva statues (still there), two attendant figures of Byams pa and ’Jam dpal dbyangs (no longer there?) as well as the Thub pa Gangs chen mtsho rgyal image behind the Jo bo and the two guardian figures, flanking the gateway, Hayagrīva and Vajrapāṇi (still there).<sup>12</sup>

The second restoration was carried out roughly one century later, in 1160, by Dwags sgom Tshul khriṃs snying po (1116–1169), disciple of sGam po pa, of bKa’ brgyud pa lineage, being third in line after Mi la ras pa from Lho brag Mar pa. According to Vitali, the wall-paintings found inside the present Zhal ras lha khang would belong to this restoration, and so are later than those on the walls outside.<sup>13</sup>

In view of the Dwags sgom’s bKa’ brgyud pa origins, and what we now know of the style of the sTag lung paintings, this author would suggest that it might be preferable to invert the two groups of wall-paintings inside and outside the Zhal ras lha khang. Those inside the small Zhal ras chapel would then date to the 11th century, i.e. the period of the first restoration, under

<sup>12</sup> R. Vitali (1990), *Early Temples of Central Tibet*, London, Serindia, 78–80.

<sup>13</sup> Vitali (1990), *op.cit.*, 82.

Zangs dkar lotsawa, while those which were on the wall outside the Guru lha khang would date to the time of Dwags sgom, and so to the second restoration.

Vitali relates that Dwags sgom entrusted the care of the Jo khang to Lama Zhang (1123–1193), who was one of the most outstanding figures of his age, and founder of the monasteries of Tshal Gung thang in 1175.<sup>14</sup> A fine portrait which may be of Lama Zhang,<sup>15</sup> is in the style of the sTag lung paintings. The latter are close to the remnants of painting outside the Guru lha khang, and which may be the only wall-paintings *in situ*, that clearly represent the later *rGya gar lugs* in Tibet. But is this the Pāla style? How do we relate the style of these examples, mentioned here, to that found in Zha lu and Gra thang, and to the painted banners from Dunhuang, belonging to the period of Tibetan occupation?

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<sup>14</sup> See Vitali (1990), *op.cit.*, 82, and D. Jackson (1994), *Enlightenment by a Single Means*, Wien, 58–66.

<sup>15</sup> Identified by the present author in ca. 1985 from a small inscription written in a rather hurried way on the lotus throne, as Zhang ston Chos kyi bla ma, abbot of sNar thang. The inscription is however quite different from the elegant sophistication of the painting, and the present author's doubt seems founded, since the publication of a *kesi* thangka, apparently of the same personage, but described as the other famous Lama Zhang, founder of Tshal Gung thang, in *Bod kyi Thang ka*, pl. 62.





Fig. 1: Inscription, 'Mar pa' book cover, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard



Fig. 2: Inscription, 'Mar pa' book cover, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard

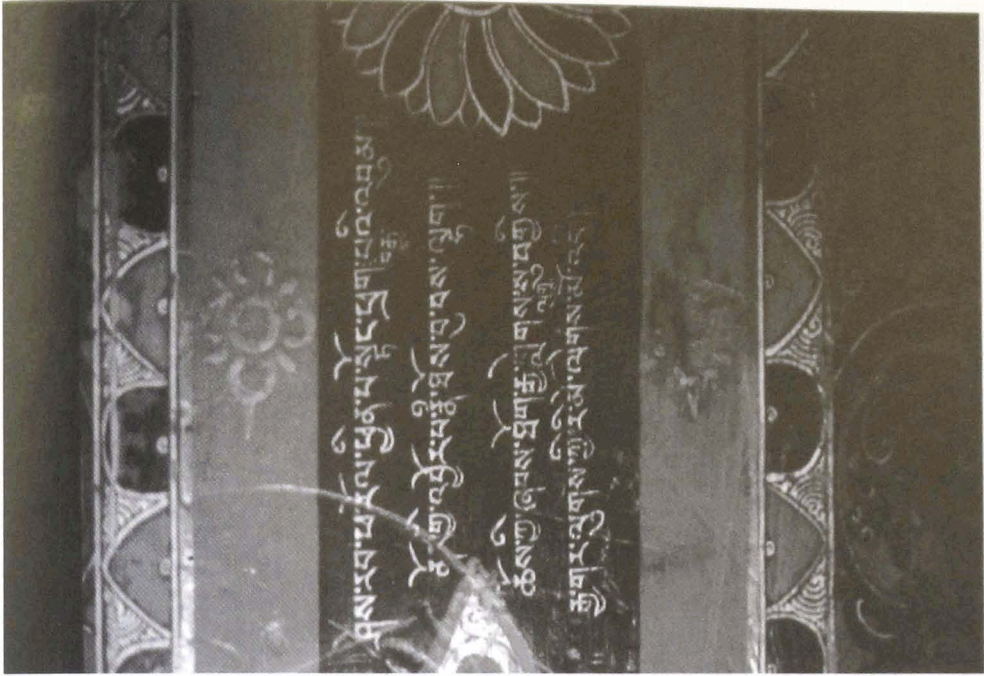


Fig. 3: Inscription, 'Mar pa' book cover, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard

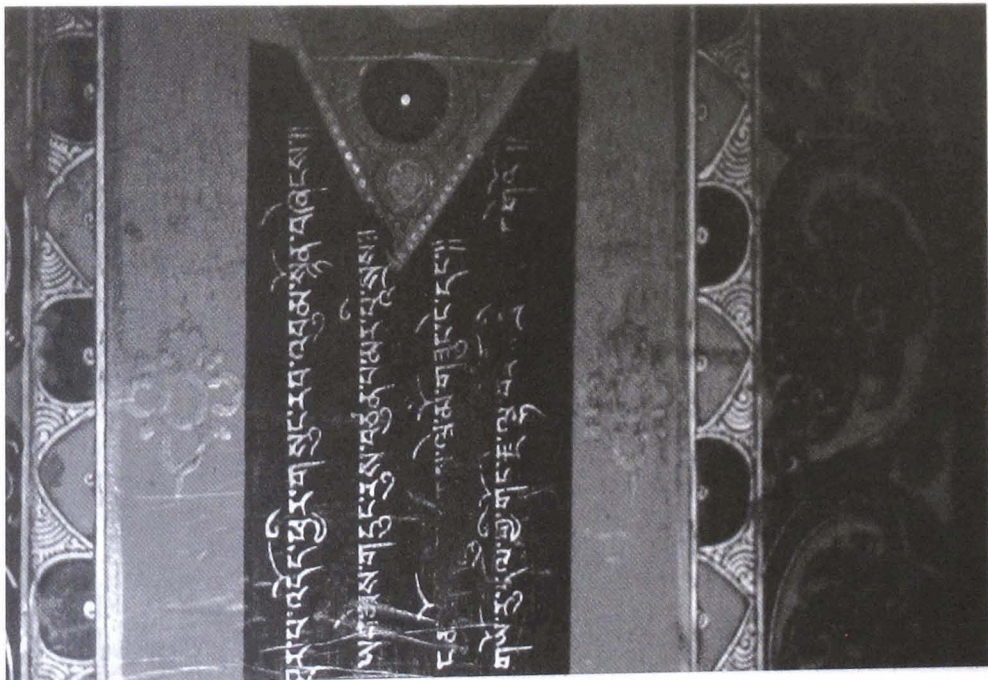


Fig. 4: Inscription, 'Mar pa' book cover, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard



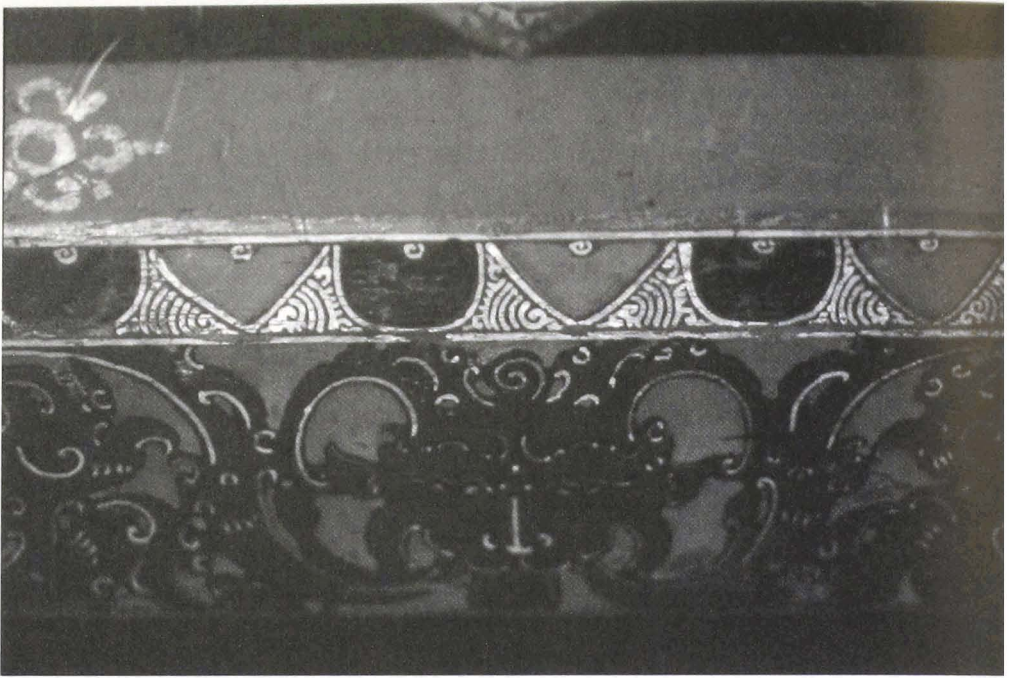


Fig. 5: Detail of border with leafy foliage in black and green, with “*kīrthimukha*”(?) face, ‘Mar pa’ book cover, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard

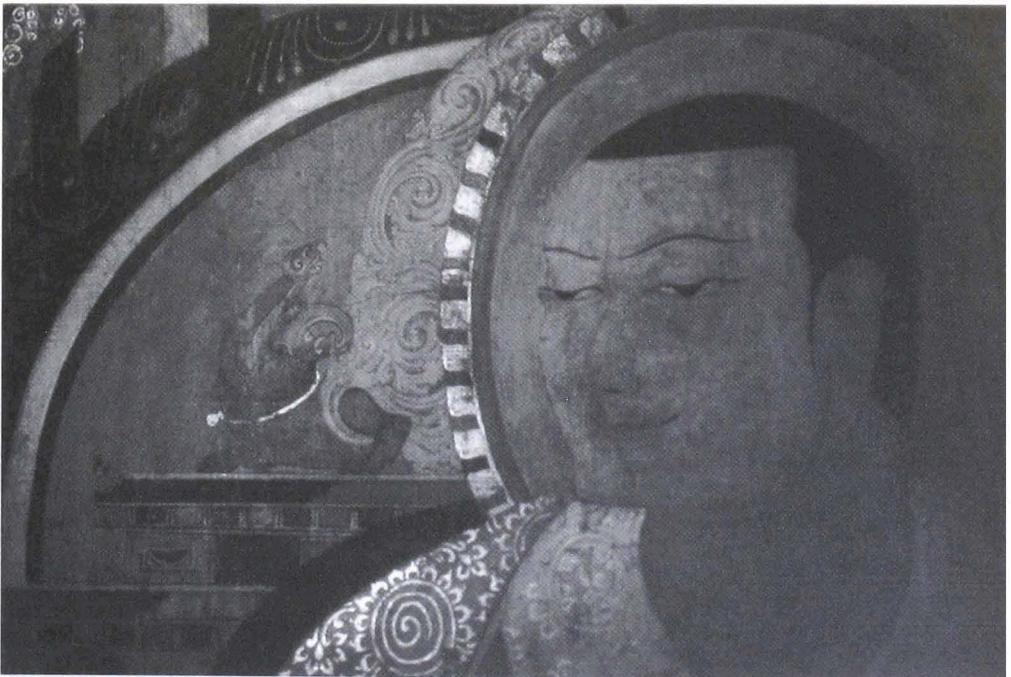


Fig. 6: Detail of border in orange and red with gold jewel motif on a thangka, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard



Fig. 7: Detail of Buddha on a contemporary book cover, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard



Fig. 8: Detail of Green Tārā from a contemporary book cover, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard





Fig. 9: A contemporary book cover with lions and geese in roundels, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard



Fig. 10: The 'Mar pa' book cover and a second one of similar date decorated with gilt adornments, private collection. Photo H. Stoddard

# THE CAVES OF GNAS MJAL CHE MO\*

by

Amy Heller, Nyon

In 1991 He Qiang reported a group of five caves having 33 statues in the vicinity of Gampa rdzong, near the Tibetan border with Sikkim.<sup>1</sup> Relating their construction to caves along the Silk Route attributed to the late Tang dynasty, he dated this group of caves to the latter portion of what he termed the Tibetan “Imperial” period, ca. 800 A.D. Three photographs were published, one of which appeared to represent Vairocana, corresponding to the emphasis on Vairocana as is indicated by recent research on sPu rgyal dynasty rock inscriptions and Buddhist carvings in eastern Tibet.<sup>2</sup> A more detailed visit was needed to determine if the historical attribution could be substantiated and to identify the iconography if possible.

In southern Tibet, approximately 30 km west of Gampa rdzong, the grottoes gNas mjal che mo (“Meeting with the Great Presence”) are situated in the vicinity of the famous mChod rten nyi ma pilgrimage site.<sup>3</sup> To travel there, we proceeded south from Sa skya to Tingkye rdzong, then followed what is locally called the Yeru Tsangpo road along the southern river bank for approximately 40 km. The road continues due east to Gampa rdzong, but we left the main road at Muk si (sMug bsil, “Cool fog”), following a small track (east-north-east), in the direction of Grang lung (“Cold valley”) where the grottoes lie. The cliff is virtually indistinguishable from those surrounding it; to the south, there is a large red hill known as Dre’u ri (“Donkey Mountain”), after which the white cliff may be seen at the center of the plain. The white cliff has given rise to the caves’ alternate name, gNas skya che mo, the “Great Pale Place” or “Great Pale Presence”. The geographic location is approximately 28°15 latitude and 88°00 longitude. The mChod rten nyi ma area lies two valleys further south in the direction of the border with Sikkim. Although mChod rten nyi ma is traditionally associated with Ye shes mtsho rgyal and Padmasambhava, it is only historically attested as of the 14th century with the religious master rGod ldem (1337–1409). To date, the only mention of gNas mjal che mo in any historic or

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\* A.H. is particularly thankful to Valrae Reynolds and to Ulrich von Schroeder for advice and encouragement, and to Christian Luczanits for sharing the results of his most recent research. Funding for this project was partially provided by private sources and by C.N.R.S. URA 1229, under the direction of Professor Anne-Marie Blondeau, in 1995 and 1996. Grateful acknowledgment also to Phuntshogs Tshering, President of Lhasa Academy of Social Sciences for naming Tshering rGyalpo and Tshering Phuntshogs of Lhasa Academy to help my research.

<sup>1</sup> He Qiang (1991), “Naijiaqiemu Grottoes in Gangba County, Tibet”, *Southern Ethnology and Archaeology* 4 (Tibet Archeology issue), Sichuan University Museum, Chengdu, 179–186.

<sup>2</sup> Chab spel, T. (1988), “bTsan po’i dus kyi brag brkos yig ris gcig gsar du mtham sbyor hus pa”, *Krung go bod kyi shes rig* 1, 44–53. gNya gong and Padma ‘Bum (1988), “Yul shul khul kyi bod btsan po’i skabs kyi rten yig brag brkos ma ‘ga”, *Krung go bod kyi shes rig* 4, 52–65. Heller, A. (1994a), “Ninth century Buddhist images carved at lDan ma brag to commemorate Tibeto-Chinese Negotiations”, in *PIATS Fagernes 1992*, 335–349; appendix vol. I: 12–19. Heller, A. (1994b), “Early Ninth Century Images of Vairocana from Eastern Tibet”, *Orientalions* 25/6, 74–79. Heller, A. (1997a), “Eighth- and Ninth-Century Temples and Rock carvings of Eastern Tibet”, in *Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style*. Jane C. Singer, Philip Denwood (eds.), London, Calmann & King, 84–103; 296–297. Heller, A. (1997b), “Buddhist images and Rock inscriptions from Eastern Tibet, VIIIth to Xth century, Part IV”, in *PIATS Graz 1995*, Volume I, 385–403.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Chan, V. (1994), *Tibet Handbook*, Chico, Moon Publications, 801–813. Tranglung or Neh is mentioned on pp. 809, 840.

liturgical literature is in connection with mChod rten nyi ma:<sup>4</sup> after pilgrimage to mChod rten nyi ma, the visit to Grang lung was required of certain lamas. The entire area has low population density. In our travels from Sa skya, few villages were seen other than the modern town of Tingkye, but the Tingkye plain has many prosperous, well-irrigated farms. The continuation of the Yeru Tsangpo valley is very sparsely populated after the Tingkye plain, for the glacial flow from mChod rten nyi ma only provides water during a few months. The caves are on a high hill, isolated in the middle of a plain; the hamlet of Grang lung lies at the foot of the hill (fig. 1). One householder serves as guardian for the caves to which wooden doors have been affixed. Access to the grottoes was by ladder from the roof of a house leading to a path along the side of the hill, or a side path along the ground. The grottoes are at a height of approximately 10 meters above ground level.

On the cliff face in-between the entrances of the two largest caves, a triptych, ca. 90 cm high, was carved in relief (fig. 2). Although damaged, the triptych presents indications of antiquity. There are three trilobate arches; in the excavated recess behind each arch, a clay statue of a seated Buddha. In all cases, there has been some erosion of the clay due to exposure to the elements. In many cases, the typical group of three figures corresponds to the Buddhas of the Three Times (past, present, and future), Kaśyapa or Dīpaṅkara, Śākyamuni and Maitreya. However, it is by no means sure that this identification corresponds to the group represented here. In one of the earliest Tibetan historical works, the group of Dīpaṅkara at right, Vairocana in the center, and Maitreya at the left is attested, while Śākyamuni is positioned in front of the group of three, but this also does not seem to correspond here.<sup>5</sup>

On the façade the left arch is very damaged, but the seated statue inside (height ca. 65 cm) may be identified as Buddha Śākyamuni in *dharmacakramudrā*, having a prominent *uṣṇīṣa* and dressed in Indian monastic robes, as evidenced by the round neckline of his robe and the appearance of light fabric.<sup>6</sup> There is no crown. The cheeks do not have prominent bones, the jaw is rounded, the face on the whole is plump. The forehead is low, the square hairline frames the forehead. The eyes appear closed, but the face is placed straight forward.

The central arch is the tallest, presenting fragments of lintels on the façade, and a capital separating the arch from the pillar. The statue is the tallest of the three, representing a crowned Buddha dressed in a robe with v-neck collar, a thick belt with a large, carved jewel at center; the fragments remaining below the waist show incised carving for a segment with large, round medallions as if a hem, beneath these the clay is carved in even diagonal lines to depict the thick folds of fabric. The crown is composed of three isosceles triangular panels, with rosette at the temples. The damaged condition prevents certainty as to the original decoration. The face is elongated and relatively narrow, but this may be due to erosion. It would appear that the eyes gaze downward, the chin slightly pulled toward the neck. The left hand is missing but the right

<sup>4</sup> Buffetrille, K. (1997), "Pèlerinage et Inceste: Le cas de Mchod rten Nyi ma" in *PIATS Graz 1995*, Vol. VI, in press.

<sup>5</sup> *sBa bzhad*, Beijing, 1980, 44.

<sup>6</sup> The artists' technical term for this robe is *rGya gar li ma lugs kyi chos gos*, literally "monastic robe in the style of Indian metal images". We thank the painter dNgos grub Rong of Kathmandu for this information. Upon verification, stone Mathurā images show the robe off shoulder, while Gandhāra stones images of Buddha have round collar, but prominent folds. The Gupta stone images show the robe with round collar and fabric which clings to the body, presenting less folds. This style robe was followed in Indian metal statuary, especially prized by Tibetans, and adopted as a stylistic model. Due to the length of the technical term, the abbreviated term "*rGya gar li lugs*" was also used in conversation.

hand lies flush against the chest in a position which leads us to believe that the *dharmacakra-mudrā* was intended. The left leg is missing beneath the knee but the sole of the foot may be seen, while the right leg is intact except for the foot. The shape of the throne base is formed from a horizontal plinth, placed above a narrow square; it would appear that this throne structure is entirely sculpted in clay, contrary to Yemar, attributed to late 11th century, where a cut stone slab has been laid horizontally as part of the throne infrastructure.<sup>7</sup> Due to the *mudrā*, lion throne, crown and non-monastic garments, I propose to identify this Buddha as Vairocana in a *sambhogakāya* manifestation.

Inside the right arch, although the face of image has been completely effaced, remains of an *uṣṇīṣa* and long ear lobes may be seen. The body is more intact. The Buddha's robe has again a v-neck collar and shows an oval medallion at the center of a thick belt; the edge of a long sleeve with wide, rippling cuffs may be seen on the sole remaining arm. The *āsana* appears to be *padmāsana*, but this is not certain. Due to extreme erosion of the clay, it is not possible to propose an identification for this image.

This arch, although damaged, retains the original multi-tiered construction of panels and lintels above two columns. Incised carving of series of triangles and diagonal lines decorate the narrow horizontal plinths. The three arches were built each to represent a temple doorway. It is as if the Buddha is seated inside a *stūpa*. The architectural model is not a real Tibetan temple doorway which is typically rectangular, lacking a curved arch and sometimes presenting several levels of intersecting beams above the horizontal door lintel. Here, instead, the shape of the entrance invites comparison with the gates to temples drawn as part of *maṇḍala*, which follow the model of Indian doorways and temple façades. In Tibet, at present, among the earliest extant examples are the *maṇḍala* attributed to Bu ston (1320) at Sha lu (Zhwa lu) monastery. However, in Tibet, earlier examples of this style doorway and tiered roof may be found on murals paintings showing the Buddha worshipped inside a *stūpa*, in what is now the *mgon khang* at Sha lu which may date from the late 11th century.<sup>8</sup> Often found in India during the Pāla-Sena dynasty, this style of arch and door was widely used, some examples recently found in 12th-century Xixia excavations, from Ningxia Hui autonomous region.<sup>9</sup> The Indian architectural model is illustrated in a *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript now in the British Library originally produced in Vikramaśīla monastery and dated by colophon to ca. 1145.<sup>10</sup> In this illumination portraying Maitreya inside a *stūpa*, the simple geometric designs of the tiers of narrow lintels are the same as those carved on the pillar of gNas mjal che mo; the pennant festoons at the edge of the tiered lintel are no longer evident at gNas mjal che mo, but it is clearly shown above lintels in the mural painting from Sha lu *mgon khang* (fig. 3). Tucci found somewhat similar tiered lintel *stūpa* façades in stucco at Yemar and rKyang bu, now destroyed, on the Gyantse-Sikkim route, closer to Gampa rdzong, but further east.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Vitali, R. (1990), *Early Temples of Central Tibet*, London, Serindia, pls. 18, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Ricca, F. and L. Fournier (1997), "Notes Concerning the *Mgon Khan* of 'Zwa-lu", *Artibus Asiae*, vol. LVI, 3/4, 343–363.

<sup>9</sup> Although photography is not permitted, in cave 4 Yulin, tentatively attributed to Xixia occupation, late 12th century, I have examined very similar throne and *stūpa* architecture. Cf. Linrothe, R. (1996), "New Delhi and New England: Old Collections of Tangut Art", *Orientalia* 27/4, 32–41, particularly plate 7.

<sup>10</sup> British Library, London, Or. 6902. We thank Ulrich Pagel for his help. Cf. Losty, J.P. (1982), *The Art of the Book in India*, London, British Library, (pp. 32–33, color plate III).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Vitali, R. (1990), op.cit., fig. 11b.



We were permitted to visit two of the five grottoes; the other three, we were told, were empty, having neither statues nor painted inscriptions. One large cave measuring approximately 3.85 x 3.85 m, contained an altar and a skin of a yak, black and white, ca. 200 cm long, the head intact; this skin was placed on a chassis of wood, with several ceremonial scarves visible on the thick fur. The village headman described this skin as the mount of dPal ldan lHa mo, to whom the grotto was dedicated. On the ceiling, traces of paintings. There were traces of paint on the walls as well (floral motifs, leaves) and painted outlines where statues had formerly been sculpted, now totally missing. After excavation, the ceiling was coated with clay so as to permit a flat surface. Painted in the ceiling were geometric subdivisions as squares approximately 60 cm. There was no wood infrastructure to the cave, only clay on rock. The palette of color appeared to be primary tones of red, blue, green and black, somewhat darkened and obscured by smoke damage. The light conditions in this cave were not sufficient for photography. The floor of the cave was stamped earth. Neither painted or carved inscriptions were found, nor any trace of effaced inscription.

The major objective of our visit was to examine the sole remaining grotto with statues. It faced south, dimensions approximately 2.5 x 2.5 x 2.5 m. To construct it, the rock had been gutted; on each of the four walls a wooden scaffolding (beams reaching from floor to ceiling, approximately 15 cm broad, 12 cm thick) had been affixed, and a heavy coating of clay and mud then applied. The images were sculpted in the round in mud, straw and clay, then painted.<sup>12</sup> The costumes and jewelry appear to be made from the same clay as the bodies; as visible on the photographs, small, thin additional wood sticks were added to construct the crowns (fig. 4). Due to the extreme symmetry of composition, the identical garments for all the Buddhas and attendant deities, it would appear highly likely that the entire cave was decorated at the same time, although later re-painting was evident.

The general composition is oriented in relation to the Buddha (height 1.3 meters) on the north wall, whom we identify as Vairocana, in *sambhogakāya* manifestation, his hands originally in *bodhyagrī mudrā*, as deduced from the two remaining fingers of the left hand (fig. 5). Inside an oval halo, Vairocana is seated in *vajrāsana* on a throne supported by two lions. Although his crown has been much damaged, the position of the plain front rim is almost a square around his broad forehead. A piled chignon is prominent, as are the tendrils of hair about his shoulders. There is a break at the earlobe; in comparison with the other Buddha and attendant figures, it is probable that circular earrings were suspended but are now destroyed. The square forehead, massive jaw, the facial features, particularly the long pointed nose, recall the physiognomy of Indian or Nepalese people of Newar ethnic group. The broad face, the eyebrows meeting at the bridge of the nose, the elongated eyes with the dip of upper eyelid, and the large mouth with curvaceous lips are "idealized" facial features, very similar to the Buddha's face at rKyang bu.<sup>13</sup> The body proportions are a mixture of the Indian and Nepalese models, while on the whole the costume treatment tends more towards Nepalese styles. Both necklaces and armbands have strings of large round beads with cluster of beads as a central decorative element; this style of jewelry is known from Nepalese metal sculptures, but the

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<sup>12</sup> C. Luczanits has suggested instead "a rough body-outline has been left when carving the rough rock. On this outline the clay layer has been attached and finally sculpted. There is no need for an armature or a stone structure inside as the rock takes over this function" (letter of 17.IV.97). This hypothesis is probably correct but the wooden beams appeared to be supporting beams.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Vitali (1990), fig. 9.

double strand beads also reflect Indian models since ca. 7th century.<sup>14</sup> Armbands positioned high above the elbow are known from Licchavi images. The chest is draped by a cloth modeled in clay, carefully knotted above the heart, in narrow folds of thin fabric; the abdomen is almost completely flat. A *dhoti* is indicated by the regular folds of fabric visible at the waist, extending beyond the belt which is also composed of two strands of large beads. The treatment of the fabric accentuates the folds, not the fabric patterns.

Vairocana is not directly surrounded by recognizable attendant deities: instead there are four objects, represented with human heads atop the general shape of the object. This “personification” of objects is unique to gNas mjal che mo, as far as we know.<sup>15</sup> To the upper right of Vairocana, a *viśvavajra* (cf. fig. 6), at lower right, a lotus, to the upper left of Vairocana, a vase, and at lower left, an unidentified object. In *maṇḍala* at Alchi, surrounding Vairocana are four of the five female partners of the *tathāgata*, each holding a symbol of one of the Buddha families, while in the *maṇḍala* at gDung dkar, rather than deities, the four symbols surround Vairocana.<sup>16</sup> At gNas mjal che mo, the four “personified” emblems may therefore be identified as the four goddesses.<sup>17</sup> At the borders of the wall, framing the throne, a *makara* and beneath, the griffin has been completely destroyed, only a hole remaining on the wall on both sides, while the elephant support remains.

On the east and west walls, the four *tathāgata* (height 90 cm) may be identified, each seated on a throne supported by an animal emblem, and making the distinctive *mudrā* (diagram 1). On the west wall, Amitābha in *samadhimudrā*, his throne on peacocks; the body very well preserved but the head completely destroyed. On the same wall Amoghasiddhi, in *abhayamudrā*, two *garuḍa* holding up his throne with their claws. Both *garuḍa* have human faces and lack beaks. The asymmetry is marked by one *garuḍa* having the wings point down, the other’s wings are directed upwards. Each Buddha is surrounded by four male Bodhisattva attendants, dressed in long *dhoti* and jewels. Although their identification is somewhat problematic due to the damage, which has left many of the attendants’ statues without hands and thus without the attributes they once held, their iconography has been tentatively identified by Christian Luczanits (cf. diagram 1, figs. 7–14). The body colors of the attendants may have been changed over time as there is visible repainting. The attendants have beaded belts, armbands, bracelets at wrists and simple necklaces.

On the south wall, there are two rows of deities. On the upper level, eight standing female attendants, all crowned, wearing jewels and skirts. These deities correspond to the group of the eight goddesses as offering deities (figs. 15–18). Their crowns had two rows of large beads at the rim touching the forehead, three triangular panels with an exterior surround of beads and infill of what appears to be vegetal designs; each crown had a rosette at the temples; braids and hoop earrings were visible on several figures. The shoulder proportions are less massive than the Buddhas or Bodhisattva, but the upper arms, lacking all muscle definition, are big and thick. The breasts are almost flat but the curves of the belly are emphasized by a fabric draped

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Huntington, S. and J. (1990), *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, fig. 80 on page 390.

<sup>15</sup> I thank R. Linrothe for suggesting a possible precedent, cf. *maṇḍala* of Uṣṇiṣavijaya from Dunhuang, illustrated in D. Klimburg-Salter (1982), *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path*, Los Angeles, pl. 73.

<sup>16</sup> R. Goepfer (1996), *Alchi*, London, Serindia, 191. I thank Lionel Fournier for photographs of gDung dkar.

<sup>17</sup> I thank Christian Luczanits for the tentative identification of all the secondary deities, which correspond to those in the principal *maṇḍala* at Tabo, cf. C. Luczanits (1997), “The Clay Sculptures” in D.E. Klimburg-Salter, *Tabo, A Lamp for the Kingdom*, Milan, Skira, 189–205.

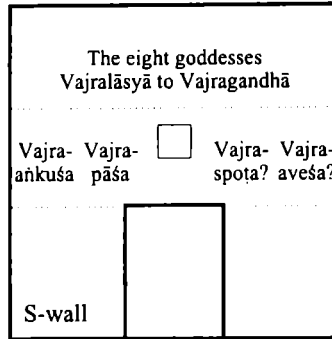
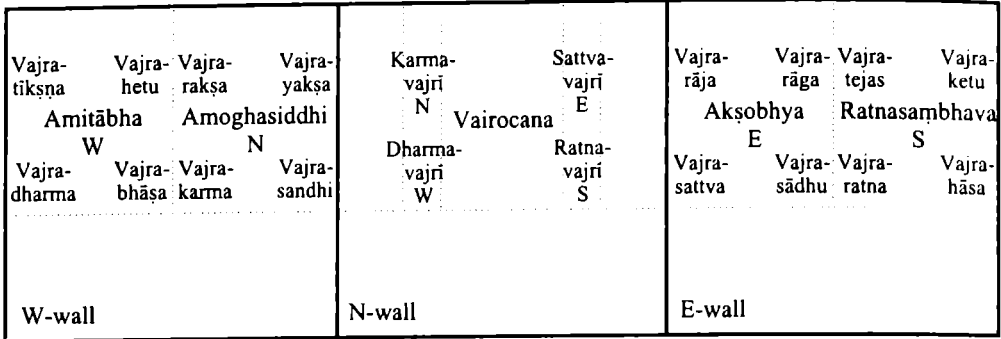


Diagram 1: The Deities of the Sculpted Cave at gNas mjal che mo (C. Luczanits)

from shoulder to waist. The skirt is draped from below the waist with a wide fabric belt, at hip level, thin pleats between the thick, tubular legs and thin pleats as side draperies. This style of garment is popular in Nepalese sculptures of 11th to 13th century, it also recalls the costumes of the attendants and musician goddesses modeled in stucco at rKyang bu. In one case, an additional fabric ribbon decoration is sculpted at mid-thigh. Similar costume and jewelry in contemporary sculptures are found in a statue now in the Newark Museum (fig. 21), which may be a provincial Tibetan rendering following a mixed Pāla and Nepalese style.<sup>18</sup> On all the attendants, the crowns are rather damaged, as are some arms and hands. However, it is possible to understand the original composition here, where each attendant had its arms in a different position, some holding musical instruments, others presenting ceremonial scarves.

On the lower level, there are only four deities, all guardians (figs. 19, 20). Two wear tiger skins, but most distinctive is the guardian wearing a short red *dhoti* with rippled edge at the edge of the fabric beneath the belly; instead of simply hanging to the ground between the legs, the fabric modeled as if twisted behind him, extending in elaborate, rippling folds. The body proportions are rather heavy and very muscular, height is approximately 75 cm.

He Qiang, in his initial description of gNas mjal che mo grotto attributed this construction to the sPu rgyal dynastic period and compared it with Maichishan. However, the Indian rock caves such as Ajaṅṭā (6th c.) and Ellora (8th c.) must be considered, for rock excavation was well known in the Indian subcontinent. Although certainly found along the Silk Route, the

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Reynolds, V., Heller, A. and Gyatso, J. (1986), *Catalogue of the Tibetan Collection of the Newark Museum*, Newark: 68 and von Schroeder, U. (1981), *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, Hong Kong, Visual Dharma, 31B, 31D, 31F, 31G.

technique of clay statues used for portraits is described in the earliest Tibetan historical accounts,<sup>19</sup> qualified as *Bod lugs* “Tibetan style”;<sup>20</sup> the implication is that the Tibetan medium is clay. The throne model as found inside the cave of gNas mjal che mo is known in Dunhuang, and also in the 9th-century eastern Tibetan sites of lDan ma brag and ‘Bis mda’ temple, near Jyekundo.<sup>21</sup>

Among paintings found in Dunhuang, there is a silk *maṇḍala* of the five *tathāgata* representing each Buddha holding an emblem, seated on a throne plinth supported by an animal.<sup>22</sup> Two Bodhisattva attendants are near each Buddha. Although the animals and attributes correspond to those in later works, the *mudrā* of the five Buddhas do not correspond to those which later become customary. This *maṇḍala* was identified as a Vajradhātumaṇḍala by previous studies and tentatively dated to ninth century.<sup>23</sup> Many Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts describe the five Buddha families (*rigs lnga*) but the directions, colors, and *mudrā* may vary. To date and identify the *maṇḍala* represented at gNas mjal che mo, it may be helpful to review here the evolution of the iconography of Vairocana in Tibet as well as historic and stylistic consideration as clues for a chronological framework.

In Tibet, dating from the reign of Khri srong lde brtsan and Sad na legs, representations of Vairocana in *abhisambodhi* aspect (gold body, one head, hands in the *samādhimudrā*) have survived to the present.<sup>24</sup> Texts describing the Abhisambodhi Vairocana and Sarvavid Vairocana in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* cycle were found in the Dunhuang Tibetan manuscripts.<sup>25</sup> The Tibetan manuscript, P.T. 240, describes a *maṇḍala* for Vairocana, in *saṃbhogakāya* aspect, in the context of 8 attendant females as well as the four *tathāgata* near him; his *mudrā* is the *byang chub mchog gi phyag rgya*, which means literally “the *mudrā* of perfect enlightenment”. This is typically understood to refer to *bodhyagrimudrā*, which it translates into Sanskrit, but the literal meaning does not actually describe the hands’ position. In this text, four attendant females are offering goddesses, while the other four are the *yum* of the *tathāgata*. Each *yum* holds the emblem or symbol of the *tathāgata* family, such as wheel, the lotus. There are no protective deities in the entourage as described by this text. This text may tentatively be dated ninth to tenth century.<sup>26</sup>

Far more elaborate representations with full entourage are characteristic of the 11th-century religious establishments in mNga’ ris contemporary with Rin chen bzang po (958–1055), such as Tabo, in which the deities are sculpted in clay as almost life-size participants in a *maṇḍala* centered around Vairocana. The root *maṇḍala* can largely be associated with the tradition of the *Sarvatathāgatattattvasaṃgrahatantra* which Rin chen bzang po translated, as well as several commentaries on this *tantra*. In this cycle, Vairocana is represented as part of the five Buddha

<sup>19</sup> *sBa bzhad*, Beijing 1980, 4; *sBa bzhad*, Dharamsala, 1968, 9.

<sup>20</sup> *sBa bzhad*, Beijing 1980, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. Heller (1994a) and (1994b), op.cit.

<sup>22</sup> Musée Guimet, Paris (MG 17.780).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. D.E. Klimburg-Salter (1982), op.cit., 144 and plate 68.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. A. Heller (1994a, 1994b, 1997a), op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> A. Heller (1994a, 1994b), op.cit.; T. Skorupski (1983), *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, critical edition, Delhi, Śata piṭaka series, 311–314.

<sup>26</sup> M. Lalou (1939), *Inventaire des manuscrits tibétains de Touen-Houang*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 66–67.



families, with 8 goddesses and 4 guardians.<sup>27</sup> According to recent research by C. Luczanits, the iconography of the sculptures at Tabo corresponds specifically to the commentary by Ānandagarbha, translated by Rin chen bzang po.<sup>28</sup> This same commentary has been identified as the basis of the iconography in several painted *maṇḍala* at Alchi., dated by Goepper to early 13th century.<sup>29</sup> Tucci published as well another five Buddha family *maṇḍala* from Nako.<sup>30</sup> In addition, two painted *maṇḍala* at gDung dkar, possibly dating from mid-12th century, correspond to this five family configuration.<sup>31</sup> Gnas mjal che mo may now also be identified as a sculptural representation of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala. Despite some iconographic variation, it is probably to be related to the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgrahaṇāntra* commentary by Ānandagarbha as analyzed by Luczanits. Although He Qiang attributed a 9th century date to these statues for reasons of clay techniques as well as some costume and throne models known along the Silk Route, it would seem that the development of Buddhist texts and iconography in Tibet does not support this early date.

The chronology of Rin chen bzang po's translation obliges a date no earlier than mid-11th century for this cycle of Vairocana and the four *tathāgata* and attendants in Tibet. At gNas mjal che mo, despite the even more damaged condition of the cliffside triptych, the crown structurally and ornamentally compares closely with the main Vairocana inside the cave. This inclines towards an opinion that the cliffside decoration and the cave were virtually contemporary. Comparison with Tucci's photographs of western Tibet of the early *phyi dar* statues demonstrates clay as a medium, as do the photographs of the elaborate clay sculptures along the Gyantse-Sikkim route when examined by Tucci's expeditions earlier this century. The costumes in gNas mjal che mo are far more simple. Perhaps the gNas mjal che mo group is earlier than rKyang bu?

In many respects, in the analysis of gNas mjal che mo, to date we have found almost no historical information, nor technical innovation which would allow the formulation of a chronological framework. The liturgical history provides a sense of chronology, while the artistic context is rich both for neighboring sites and for possible aesthetic models. According to Losty, the direct route from India to Sikkim, leading towards Gyantse, is the route from Bengal, while the heartland of Pāla is further west in Bihar; Vikramaśīla had been situated on the border of Bihar and Bengal.<sup>32</sup> The direct route from Bihar led to Kathmandu, and certainly manuscripts from Bihar would have been treasured by the Nepalese; indeed some manuscripts found in Nepal and previously attributed to a Nepalese provenance were in fact brought to Nepal from Bihar.<sup>33</sup> For Tibetans, appreciation of Pāla aesthetics was linked to Indian masters

<sup>27</sup> Lokesh Chandra (1988), Preface to Tucci, *Indo-Tibetica* III/1, XIX; cf. also J.C. Singer (1994), "Painting in Central Tibet, ca. 950–1400", *Artibus Asiae*, vol. LIV 1/2, 110–112.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. note 14 supra and C. Luczanits (1997), op.cit.

<sup>29</sup> R. Goepper (1996), op.cit., 188.

<sup>30</sup> Tucci (1968), *To Lhasa and Beyond*, Rome, 168, pl. LXXX. I thank Peter Hessel for his photographs of Nako.

<sup>31</sup> Chronology from R. Vitali (1996), *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang according to the mNga'ris rGyal.rabs by Gu.ge mkhan.chen Ngag.dbang grags.pa*. Tho.ling gtsug.lag. khang lo.gcig.stong 'khor.ba'i rjes.dran.mdzad sgo'i go.sgrig tshogs.chung, Dharamsala, and Pritzker, T. (1996), "A Preliminary Report on Early Cave Paintings of Western Tibet", *Oriental Art*, 27/6, 26–47.

<sup>32</sup> Losty, J.P. (1989), "Bengal, Bihar, Nepal? Problems of provenance in 12th century illuminated Buddhist manuscripts, part one and part two", *Oriental Art*, 35/2–3, 86–96 and 140–149.

<sup>33</sup> Losty, *ibid.*, p. 95, fig. 12. We thank Deborah Klimburg-Salter for calling this hypothesis to our attention.

such as Atiśa, who had resided in Vikramaśīla. Indeed, Atiśa's path to Tibet had crossed Nepal, where he remained a full year before resuming his journey to mNga' ris then towards Lhasa.<sup>34</sup> The Nepalese by then were experienced artists, long familiar with Pāla models and also creating their own styles. Whether directly in provenance from Bihar or Bengal, or from Nepal, for Tibetans in the 11th to 12th century, the Indo-Nepalese aesthetics were highly esteemed for sculptures and painting, and copied assiduously. As a working hypothesis, in consideration of the liturgical developments, of the iconography, the artistic and architectural similarities noted earlier with dated Indian manuscripts, the wall-paintings of the Sha lu chapel, and the clay statuery of rKyang bu, we propose that the sculptures of gNas mjal che mo were made in the second half of the 11th to the mid-12th century, by Tibetan artists following, to a certain extent, Indo-Nepalese figurative and costume style. Only future studies will permit us to ascertain this hypothesis.

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<sup>34</sup> Eimer, H. (1979), *rNam thar rgyas pa. Materialien zu einer Biographie des Atiśa (Dipaṅkaraśrijñāna)*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, vol. II, sections 244–249, pages 182–186.



Fig. 1: Village Grang lung and the rock face (photo 4,28;  
all photos by the author unless otherwise specified)



Fig. 2: A triptych composition on the cliff face (photo 1,12)



Fig. 3: Preaching Buddha inside a *prāsāda-pañcāyatana* arch, Sha lu mgon khang, 11th century (photo L. Fournier)



Fig. 4: Vairocana with his entourage (photo 1,19)

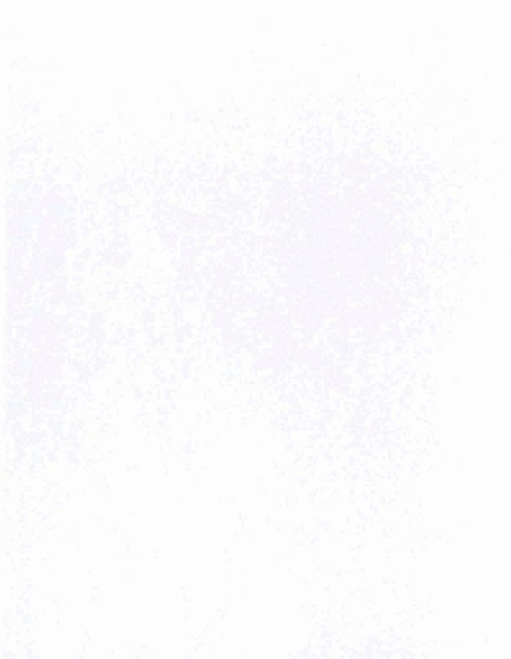


Fig. 6: A personified *viśvavajra* representing the goddess Karmavajrī (photo 4,5)







Fig. 5: Detail of Vairocana (photo 1,35)





Fig. 7: Akṣobhya with his entourage (photo 1,21)



Fig. 8: The Bodhisattva Vajrarāga holding a bow, to the upper right of Akṣobhya (photo 2,3)



Fig. 9: Ratnasambhava with his entourage (photo 1,22)



Fig. 10: Amitābha with his entourage (photo 1,15)



Fig. 11: Amoghasiddhi with his entourage (photo 1,16)





Fig. 12: Detail of Amitābha (photo 1,27)



Fig. 13: Detail of Bodhisattva Vajrahetu, to the upper right of Amitābha (photo 3,4)



Fig. 14: Detail of Bodhisattva Vajrabhāṣa, to the lower right of Amitābha (photo 2,30)





Fig. 15: The eight offering goddesses (photo 1,24)



Fig. 16: The goddess Vajralāsya(?) (photo 2,20)



Fig. 17: The goddess Vajramālā (photo 2,21)



Fig. 18: Head of Vajramālā (photo 3,23)



Fig. 19: The gate-keeper Vajrāṅkuṣa (photo 2,9)



Fig. 20: The gate-keeper Vajrapāśa (photo 2,6)





Fig. 21: Bodhisattva Maitreya, The Newark Museum

# ON AN UNUSUAL PAINTING STYLE IN LADAKH<sup>1</sup>

by

Christian Luczanits, Vienna

Only 15 years ago it was the general opinion among scholars that the paintings of the lHa-khang So-ma in Alchi are attributable to the 12th–13th centuries.<sup>2</sup> In addition, thangka paintings of a similar style were dated to the same time range and vaguely attributed to the “Western Trans-Himalaya” (e.g. Klimburg-Salter 1982: pls. 109–112). Today the historical picture has changed quite dramatically thanks to the vastly increased amount of objects and documentation available.

As a result of Goepper’s recent studies (1990), which date the gSum-brtsegs to c. 1200–1220, the chronology of the Alchi monuments must be reconsidered. Further, many more artifacts, mainly thangkas, have appeared on the art market, some with a known provenance.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the archaeological evidence is today more accessible as some of the preserved Central Tibetan monuments of that period have been partly published,<sup>4</sup> and related schools of art, like the one from Khara Khoto, are also available to a greater public.<sup>5</sup>

Today it is generally accepted that the thangka paintings bearing similarities to the lHa-khang So-ma paintings mentioned above are usually from Central Tibet<sup>6</sup> and that several stylistic variations occur in Central Tibet right into the 14th century. However, a detailed analysis of the stylistic variants of the painting schools of 12th–14th-century Central Tibetan thangka painting has only just begun. Among the Central Tibetan thangkas, the large group associated with sTag-lung monastery discussed by J.C. Singer (1997) is outstanding.<sup>7</sup> An interesting

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<sup>1</sup> The research for this article was conducted under a grant from the Austrian *Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung*. I am particularly grateful to Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter for carefully reading and correcting this paper and for discussing several crucial points with me.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977: 64–70, 79, col.pl. xvii, figs. 55–64; Klimburg-Salter 1982: 165, 167, figs. 14, 17, 26, 45; Pal 1982: 62; figs. LS1–37.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. the catalogue of Rossi and Rossi 1994: nos. 5, 9–14. It is said that more than 200 early Tibetan paintings have appeared on the market in the last two decades. Although only approximately a quarter of these have been published, and are thus available to a larger number of scholars, this material has greatly improved our knowledge of the art of the 12th to 14th centuries.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Vitali 1990 on Yemar, Drathang, the Lhasa Jo-khang and Shalu; Henss 1994 and 1997 on Drathang; Ricca and Fournier 1996 and Kraijger 1997 on Shalu.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. through the exhibition catalogue *Die schwarze Stadt an der Seidenstrasse. Buddhistische Kunst aus Khara Khoto. (10.–13. Jh.)*, ed. M. Pjotrowskij 1993, also published in other European languages.

<sup>6</sup> An exception is presented in Klimburg-Salter 1997.

<sup>7</sup> According to Singer (1997: 52) over 50 thangkas can be related to the monastery of sTag-lung and the school of the same name. Singer has certainly succeeded in presenting a conclusive chronological sequence for a part of these paintings, particularly the portraits of the sTag-lung hierarchs. Regarding the style represented by these paintings she argues that one cannot talk of a distinctive sTag-lung school or style as such (id. 62–3). However, despite the uniquely large number of thangkas associated with one place and a limited period, she has not yet attempted to differentiate between the styles, stylistic variants or schools of painting employed at or for sTag-lung monastery. The definition of distinctive schools of painting of 12th–14th-century Central Tibet remains a task for the future.



approach to the problem of the derivation of a certain group of Central Tibetan paintings is presented by Bautze-Picron (1995/96 and in this volume). She attempts a detailed analysis of the iconographic and stylistic similarities between Pāla stelae and some Tibetan thangkās. The discovery of a distinctive group of West-Tibetan thangkās belonging to the same period by D.E. Klimburg-Salter (1997b and in this volume) represents another crucial piece in the puzzle of early Tibetan art history.

On the basis of new primary documentation this article attempts to give a clearer picture of Buddhist painting in Ladakh from around 1200 through the 13th century. After a survey of the well-known West Tibetan painting styles and the presentation of a number of motifs differentiating the contemporary Central Tibetan paintings from the Alchi paintings, a crucial phase in the history of the Alchi paintings is examined. Around 1200 the beginnings of the influence of Central Tibetan painting is discernible at Alchi with the occurrence of new motifs in a small painted *mchod-rten* within the Alchi *chos-'khor*. While the style remains typical for Alchi the new motifs most probably occur due to the influence of the 'Bri-gung-pa school (cf. below).

In the second part of this article an unusual and distinctive painting style will be presented which was documented in 1994 at Alchi and Lamayuru inside two very ruined gateway *mchod-rten*. This distinctive painting style displays all the motifs known from Central Tibetan painting and has little relation to the paintings at Alchi. In the light of this new evidence the origin of the simple Early Ladakhi painting style as represented by the lHa-khang So-ma will be briefly reconsidered.

### Naming Early West Tibetan Painting Styles

While the paintings of the Tabo sGo-khang are in a simple style with poor-quality colours the paintings dating from the renovation completed in 1042 are sophisticated and are done in rich, good quality colours. The paintings of the renovation period have been called Indo-Tibetan painting (cf. Klimburg-Salter 1994: 441), a term that takes the present location in Northwest India and the (presumed) derivation of the painting style into account. It is in fact quite possible that the artisans decorating the Tabo gTsug-lag-khang were Indians. This painting style of the Tabo renovation period is continued in Mangnang, Nako, and Dungkar, until the establishment of the 15th–16th-century temples in Tholing, Tsaparang, and Tabo (cf. Klimburg-Salter 1997a: 207–227). It is a distinctive painting school with a restricted geographical spread.<sup>8</sup> It is because of the occurrence of this style solely in West Tibet that this style should rather be termed West Tibetan than Indo-Tibetan. It is evident, too, that this painting school has been handed down in West Tibet as it occurs far beyond the presumed direct influence of India. It seems reasonable therefore to speak of a West Tibetan style, the earliest representative of which has been preserved from the renovation period at Tabo (i.e. c. 1042) and which terminates with the paintings at Tsaparang.

On the other hand, it is quite likely that the Alchi paintings – as well as paintings from related monuments – were executed by Kashmiri painters. This assumption is supported not only by the depiction of contemporary Kashmiri temples on the Avalokiteśvara *dhōṭi* in the Alchi gSum-brtsegs (Goepper and Poncar 1996: 50–51), but also by the fact that this sophisticated – and in details somewhat mannered – painting style found no major successors

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<sup>8</sup> It is not clear if the style was actually restricted to the regions once belonging to the Guge kingdom, or if it also occurred in Purang. In addition there are obvious relations to the Alchi paintings, although the two groups of paintings can be easily differentiated.

in Ladakh or West Tibet.<sup>9</sup> Considering the derivation of the painters, the painting style preserved at Alchi and related monuments can be called Kashmiri style.

In contrast to the Kashmiri paintings at Alchi, the somewhat crude and naive paintings of the Alchi lHa-khang So-ma and the temple at Shang-rong, the bCu-gcig-zhal at Wanla, the Seng-ge lHa-khang at Lamayuru, the Guru lHa-khang at Phyang and the cave at Saspol<sup>10</sup> are certainly the products of a native Ladakhi painting school. The style of this group of monuments could uniformly be termed Early Ladakhi style. However, despite many similarities the paintings preserved in these temples are quite distinct from one another. Until now there is no fixed point for dating any of these temples and their decoration may have been accomplished over a long period as suggested by Béguin and Fournier (1986: 382–85).<sup>11</sup>

### An International Style of Painting?

The Early Ladakhi painting style shares many features with the Central Tibetan paintings of the 12th to 14th centuries. As similar paintings occur in Khara Khoto in Central Asia and Pagan in Burma as well, different collective names were used to indicate the relation of all these paintings. At the plenary session at the IATS, Graz 1995, the term “Middle Asian International Style, 12th–14th century” was used as a working title.

Given the clearly discernible distinctions between the regional styles, and their subdivisions, the concept of an International Style had to be dismissed. It is not a style that links the art of Central Tibet and Ladakh, of Pagan and Khara Khoto over a period of more than 200 years, but rather a number of characteristics that are shared internationally within a Buddhist environment but are represented in local variations. While shared characteristics do help us in defining the relationship between different groups of painting and sculpture (cf. e.g. Bautze-Picron’s approach in 1995/96 and this volume), the dissimilarities between the groups are crucial for defining stylistic groups and painting schools.

The characteristics under discussion are not solely of a stylistic nature, but include the composition, the typology of representation, the iconographic preferences as well as a number of isolated decorative motifs. It is rather the composition of the main elements in the painting which is the decisive element when attributing a painting to the period under discussion.

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, the monuments of Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda are found within a very restricted geographical area. In addition, it is clear that the time gap between the Alchi 'Du-khang and the Alchi gSum-brtsegs temples – and with it the occurrence of the Kashmiri style in Ladakh – cannot be much more than two generations (cf. Goepper and Poncar 1996: 18). Only a few later Ladakhi *mchod-rten* contain a very simplified variation of the Alchi style without the mannerism of the detail. These *mchod-rten* paintings could well have been done by local painters imitating the Alchi paintings. Despite different shapes and different decorations all early (pre-dGe-lugs-pa ?) Ladakhi *mchod-rten* are locally associated with Rin-chen-bzang-po.

<sup>10</sup> For pictures of the Alchi lHa-khang So-ma cf. note 2 and Khosla 1979: pl. 41, Béguin and Fournier 1986: figs. 10–14; for Alchi Shang-rong Béguin and Fournier 1986: figs. 3–9, for the bCu-gcig-zhal at Wanla cf. note 27, for the Seng-ge lHa-khang at Lamayuru cf. Khosla 1979: pl. 53, Genoud 1982: ‘Lamayuru’ 1–6; for the Guru lHa-khang at Phyang cf. Genoud 1982: ‘Guru Lha khang’, Béguin and Fournier 1986: figs. 19–21; and for the cave at Saspol cf. Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980: col.pl. iv, figs. 69–73, Genoud 1982: ‘Saspol’, Béguin and Fournier 1986: fig. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Despite the scarcity of comparable material at that time, Béguin and Fournier rejected the early dating of these temples. They attribute the temple at Shang-rong to the end of the 14th century, the Guru lHa-khang to the first decades of the 15th century, the lHa-khang So-ma to the end of the 15th century and the cave of Saspol to the beginning of the 16th century.

Among the characteristics which are shared by all the distinctive stylistic groups alike, the following are the most relevant in the present context:

\* The strict division of the decorated surface into rectangular units often clearly separated by a border. This border is usually not a simple line, but consists either of a row of petals or gems painted usually red, green, and blue. The border can also be defined by stylised rocks. Only in West Tibet a simple line does occur quite commonly.

\* The throne-back is covered by a cushion decorated with scrolls and sometimes with knobs at the sides. The throne-back is often only represented by triangular projections at the height of the shoulder. In addition, the head-nimbus is incorporated into the throne structure.<sup>12</sup>

\* The standing Bodhisattvas flanking the main image in a triad are usually shown in 3/4 profile for the body, but full profile for the feet. The toes are directed towards the central image. Sometimes the body is represented frontally, but the feet are shown in profile or the legs are in a dancing posture. The same position is also used for other standing deities, as the seven Buddhas of the past and Maitreya on two Central Tibetan thangkas (Rossi and Rossi 1994: nos. 12 and 14).

\* The standing Bodhisattvas wear a short *dhoti* that does not cover the knees, and a transparent long one reaching to the feet. Their high *uṣṇīṣa* is situated at the back of the head (only visible in profile). Typical are also the narrow pointed ornaments of the jewellery and helmet-like crowns.

\* The paintings are without any notion of space. Behind and front are differentiated only by the front element covering the one behind. The bodies of the figures are only slightly shaded.

All these characteristics can have very distinctive regional variations as evident when comparing them in detail.<sup>13</sup> Here I have chosen only those elements which differentiate Central Tibetan thangkas from the paintings preserved at Alchi and related monuments. Naturally the Alchi paintings cannot be confused with the Central Tibetan ones, as their general aesthetic is in any case completely different. Nevertheless, the two groups also share many motifs, for example the throne base or pedestal with square compartments containing grinning lions, elephants etc., the leogryphs and other animals flanking the sides of the throne, one placed on top of the other, or the *makara* on the horizontal top of the throne with the *garuḍa* holding their tails. Such motifs should be considered pan-Indian elements in Tibetan painting rather than having a distinctive regional origin. Nevertheless, these pan-Indian motifs are usually not differentiated from “the north-east Indian influences” one sees in the Central Tibetan paintings.

### Alchi and the 'Bri-gung-pa

To complicate matters there is a clear influence from Central Tibet recognisable in some Alchi paintings, particularly in the depiction of the so-called Rin-chen-bzang-po. In a small *mchod-rten* inside the *chos-'khor* the “Rin-chen-bzang-po” is flanked by two Bodhisattvas (fig. 1).<sup>14</sup> The triad of a Buddha, or his representative (a personification of his teaching) in the shape of

<sup>12</sup> In later paintings, or paintings more removed from the original source of this peculiarity, the cushion assumes the same function as a halo and often only the triangular projections and the scroll pattern recalls the original function of this element.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. the Khara Khoto group with the wide un-Indian heads and where the sacred thread is often misunderstood, or the sTag-lung group with their peculiar iconography where the *bla-ma* is represented as Buddha.

<sup>14</sup> This *mchod-rten* is numbered J2 in Snellgrove and Skorupski (1977: 78–9, col.pl. XIII).

an eminent *bla-ma*,<sup>15</sup> flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas of considerably smaller size, is far from being common in West Tibetan painting. It neither occurs in the Tabo Main Temple<sup>16</sup> nor in the Alchi gSum-brtsegs.<sup>17</sup> This group therefore did not belong to the iconographical repertoire of West Tibet or Kashmir but reveals a foreign influence. In Alchi it first appears under the influence of the 'Bri-gung-pa school.

A lineage of the 'Bri-gung-pa is preserved in the third storey of the gSum-brtsegs and serves as a *terminus post quem* for the gSum-brtsegs paintings (cf. Goepper 1990). They cannot have been done before the last decades in the life of the 'Bri-gung Rin-po-che (1143–1217), the founder of this school, mentioned as the last in the lineage. A similar, but unclear, lineage consisting of seven figures is depicted in the small *mchod-rten* above the "Rin-chen-bzang-po". In addition several Mahāsiddhas are represented at the sides of the composition. Although panels have been prepared beside the figures, their names were never filled in.

Taken alone, the formal characteristics displayed in the central "Rin-chen-bzang-po" are quite similar to the depiction of a sTag-lung-pa hierarch in Central Tibetan painting (fig. 2). In both cases the cape is used to frame the figure and moreover the details of the dress resemble each other. But the style of the two paintings is completely different. The way the cape is depicted in the *mchod-rten* is not common in the Alchi paintings, where the cape falls behind the body in an essentially triangular shape (cf. the donor depictions Goepper and Poncar 1996: 79, 110–15). In the gSum-brtsegs, even in the depiction of the lineage, the capes are of the Alchi type (Goepper and Poncar 1996: 216–7). By contrast, the lineage figures depicted in the small *mchod-rten* wear capes whose shape conforms to the Central Tibetan typology.

How can this change be explained? It seems that the gSum-brtsegs was decorated at a time when the 'Bri-gung-pa (or their reputation) had just arrived at Alchi. Their lineage is included, but the style of their depiction and the iconography of the whole temple follows the old Ladakhi school deriving from the work of Rin-chen-bzang-po. In Ladakh the centre of this old school was apparently Nyar-ma, where sKal-ldan-shes-rab, the founder of the Alchi 'Du-khang, and probably also Tshul-khrims-'od, the founder of the gSum-brtsegs and the large *mchod-rten*, were educated (cf. Denwood 1980: Inscription 3, lines 10–11 and the fragmentary inscription 7). The insertion of the 'Bri-gung-pa lineage may also explain the occurrence of two teachers (Dvags-po-'on and Dvags-po-chung-pa between sGam-po-pa and Phag-mo gru-pa) who do not occur elsewhere. In the small *mchod-rten* the Central Tibetan influence is not only evident in content, but also in some of the motifs (e.g. the triad, the round cape) and in the iconography (the lineage and the Mahāsiddhas well as the teacher as Buddha). It can quite safely be assumed that these changes are a result of the increasing influence of the 'Bri-gung-pa school.

To sum up, the triad of a teacher flanked by two Bodhisattvas, the manner in which "Rin-chen-bzang-po" is represented, the lineage above and the Mahāsiddhas at the sides of the

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<sup>15</sup> On the identification of an eminent *bla-ma* with the Buddha in a bKa'-brgyud context in 13th-century Tibet and an extremely interesting visual representation of this theme cf. Singer 1994: 116–7, fig. 21. For a better picture cf. Singer and Denwood 1997: fig. 308.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Klimburg-Salter 1997. A similar group is only present in the form of the clay sculptures in the cella; however, there the flanking Bodhisattvas are actually only the first pair of four images, the other two being located just in front of the cella.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Goepper and Poncar 1996. I also do not remember any such composition in the Alchi 'Du-khang, but this temple is not sufficiently published. There is also no evidence of this group in the related monuments of Mangyu and Sumda.



central figure can all be considered as resulting from Central Tibetan influence brought by the 'Bri-gung-pa. It is evident that under these circumstances it is highly unlikely that the central image is in fact a representation of Rin-chen-bzang-po.<sup>18</sup> Despite the Central Tibetan influence on motifs and iconography the *mchod-rten* is painted in the typical Kashmiri style of Alchi.

Taking all these factors into consideration, it is most likely that the small *mchod-rten* is not much later than the gSum-brtsegs and the Great Stūpa, both of which were founded by Tshul-khrims-'od (Goepper 1993). With the latter it shares the depiction of the same four priests on the walls of the inner *mchod-rten* and the manner in which the "Rin-chen-bzang-po" is represented (Goepper 1993: fig. 14).<sup>19</sup> In the Great Stūpa, too, "Rin-chen-bzang-po's" dress is depicted in the Central Tibetan way, but he is not surrounded by secondary figures and the painting is of exceptional quality. The small *mchod-rten* is probably the last monument in Alchi to be painted by Kashmiri painters.

### Two Painted *mchod-rten*

There are many *mchod-rten* throughout Ladakh with a small painted chamber or a gateway containing paintings in a simple variant of the Alchi style.<sup>20</sup> These *mchod-rten* paintings could well have been done by local painters imitating the Kashmiri paintings found at Alchi and elsewhere. However, there are also two ruined *mchod-rten* preserving a distinctly different style, which is not related to the Alchi paintings. Both the poor state of preservation of the two *mchod-rten* paintings and my rather cursory documentation done in 1994 limit the present iconographic and stylistic analysis.

A nearly collapsed gateway *mchod-rten* stands near the hamlet of Alchi Shang-rong (fig. 3). The square chamber inside the dome is painted and has a lantern ceiling of six levels. The few remaining traces of painting on the ceiling show a chessboard pattern and a swastika pattern. On each of the side walls of the chamber four *jinas/tathāgatas* are represented in the centre of the wall, each flanked by two Bodhisattvas. All the painting is severely damaged and the colours have completely disappeared. The central panel is surrounded by the Thousand Buddha motif and some irregularly placed secondary deities. There is a horizontal row of eight to ten Buddhas above and below each of the panels, and beside the panels are placed five rows of two Buddhas each. The Buddhas perform the *mudrā* (and presumably had the colour) of the respective *tathāgata* presiding on the wall. At least in some cases, additional small Buddhas are represented in the upper corners of the central panel.

On the east wall the central panel with Vairocana (white, *dharmacakramudrā*) is flanked by an image of Śākyamuni to Vairocana's right and a priest to his left (fig. 4). The Ratnasambhava panel in the south has a small image of a white protector to Ratnasambhava's right, presumably a form of Vajrapāṇi,<sup>21</sup> and a deity with two arms raised at the sides to his left (fig. 5).<sup>22</sup> The

<sup>18</sup> A detailed analysis of the paintings in the *mchod-rten* including the other walls would go beyond the present context and remains a future task.

<sup>19</sup> The inscription found in the Great Stūpa only indicates that the gSum-brtsegs already existed. It gives no clue to the larger historical context or the identity of the priests depicted (cf. Goepper 1993: 112–5, 142–3).

<sup>20</sup> I have documented such *mchod-rten* in Nyarma, Tikse, Stok, Basgo, Alchi and Lamayuru and plan to publish some of them in a future article.

<sup>21</sup> Mallmann 1986: 414. Otherwise only Vajrāṅkuṣa, the protector in the eastern gate of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala, is painted white, but such an identification is beyond the present iconographical context.

Amitābha panel on the west wall has another priest flanked by six smaller figures to Amitābha's right. The four upper small figures flanking the priest are representations of four Buddhas. The unrecognisable figure to the right of the central panel, possibly also a priest, is also flanked by smaller figures, presumably Buddhas. In the north, Amoghasiddhi is flanked by a white Bodhisattva to his right and a (green ?) Tārā, holding an *utpala*, to his left.

It is evident that the *mchod-rten* is dedicated not to Vairocana, but to Akṣobhya, who is not depicted among the four *tathāgatas*. To the right of Vairocana, a form of Śākyamuni is represented performing *bhūmisparśamudrā* (fig. 4). He is dressed as a Buddha, sits on a lion throne and is flanked by two monks. It is thus Śākyamuni in the same iconography as Akṣobhya, who has shifted into the central position of the five families.

Stylistically these paintings share many of the characteristics of Central Tibetan paintings absent in the paintings of Alchi, for example the cushion at the throne-back (once finely decorated with a scroll pattern as visible behind Vairocana, fig. 4, and Amitābha), the flanking Bodhisattvas and their dress, the crown, the spatial organisation (as usual in West Tibet there are no borders), and the flat rendering of the figures.

Some features of these *mchod-rten* paintings are distinctive. The Bodhisattvas are standing in an extreme *tribhaṅga*, their hips pushed forwards. The *tathāgatas* and the Bodhisattvas wear crowns with extremely large fan-shaped knots at the sides. The *dhoti* of the *tathāgatas* covers the knees and is decorated with bands painted in a such way that they are parts of circles of which the centre is on the respective knee. On the Vairocana *dhoti* a rosette pattern is discernible capping the knee. At the top of the throne-back, at the height of the nose of the *tathāgata*, the thick horizontal bar with upturned ends terminates in a large flower.

The figure of Śākyamuni has the wide white band indicating an edge of the *saṃghāṭi* crossing the upper left arm. The way the two lion heads are placed at the sides of the lotus, the open mouth turned towards Śākyamuni, reveals that the painter was familiar with West Tibetan or Kashmiri painting as preserved at Tabo or Alchi. The lions at the sides of Vairocana's throne face towards the sides but are hardly visible. Despite the fragmentary state of the paintings it is clear that the painters did not just follow a strictly prescribed pattern, but could produce variations on a theme. This is visible in the depiction of the flanking Bodhisattvas. Each Bodhisattva to the sides of Vairocana holds its right hand in front of the breast, while to the sides of Ratnaśāmbhava, the Bodhisattvas are completely symmetrical. To the sides of Amoghasiddhi, the Bodhisattvas have the outside arm placed at the hip and the Bodhisattvas flanking Amitābha are shown frontally.

Another *mchod-rten* with a similar painting style – presumably from the same school and roughly contemporary with the first one – is found in a group of *mchod-rten* at the western end of Lamayuru village. Earlier it was also a gateway *mchod-rten*, but today the eastern end is closed by a wall. As with the *mchod-rten* at Alchi Shang-rong, the gateway is organised on the east-west axis.<sup>23</sup> The Lamayuru *mchod-rten* contains a chamber measuring c. 2.15 x 2.15 metres and is considerably larger than the Alchi Shang-rong *mchod-rten*. Of the original lantern ceiling only the outer three layers are preserved, its painting being fragmentary. In the corners fragments of a *pūrṇaḡaṭa*-motive are discernible (fig. 11), and on the second level a simple swastika pattern with rosettes appears. The paintings on the walls are in poor condition and also

<sup>22</sup> It might be Śaḍaḡaṣāriḷokeśvara, but the central arms are not recognisable. His throne appears to be flanked by lions.

<sup>23</sup> Present entrance towards the west at 285°.

fragmentary and only the north and south walls are largely preserved. Today only the colours white, grey, red, brown, bright brown, and blue (for the background) can be differentiated.

The composition of the deities on the side walls is similar to the *mchod-rten* of Alchi Shang-rong. In Lamayuru the section for the central deity takes up one third of the wall's total space (fig. 6). There are seven rows of four Buddhas to each side of the central panel, all Buddhas performing *bhūmisparśamudrā*. The rows of Buddhas are again interrupted by other deities, a larger one – occupying the space of four Buddhas – to the proper right of the central panel and a small one – taking one Buddha's space – to the proper left. A valance with *kīrtimukhas* goes all around the walls at the top (fig. 11).

On the east wall only a few traces of the paintings remains and the west wall is completely void of the original decoration. To the left of the central panel with Ratnasambhava on the south wall (fig. 6) a white Buddha performing *varadamudrā* and holding a *pātra* is represented (fig. 10). To the right a small goddess takes the space of one of the Buddhas. On the north wall Amoghasiddhi's panel (fig. 7) is flanked by a six-armed (?)<sup>24</sup> Bodhisattva to the Buddha's right and a small goddess to his left. The frontally depicted elephants on the throne pedestal have a red tusk and the lions are grinning. As all the small Buddhas are performing *bhūmisparśamudrā* it is quite certain that here, too, Akṣobhya is the main deity of the *mchod-rten*.

The style displays similar features to those discernible at Alchi Shang-rong, but there seems to be an even wider range of variation. These variations might also be due to the larger size of the paintings. Ratnasambhava wears a long *dhotī* with a rosette pattern at the knee (visible in fig. 9), while Amoghasiddhi wears a short *dhotī* and a scarf which floats over the arms and terminates in front of the legs (fig. 8). On the Ratnasambhava panel the horizontal upper edge of the throne-back terminates in a blossom or bud, while Amoghasiddhi has a different throne-back. The flanking Bodhisattvas are again standing in an extreme *tribhaṅga*. The crown-points seem to be somewhat wider than in Alchi.

Some features are different from the Alchi *mchod-rten* or have not been identified there. The Bodhisattvas have a trapezoid *ūrṇā*, their eyes are thin slits with a curved upper lid, eyes and eyebrow project over the edge of the face and a line is painted from the lower lip to the chin. A knot is clearly visible at the back of the *dhotī*, and a long ribbon hangs down from it along the leg. The Bodhisattvas flanking Amoghasiddhi have a turban-like *uṣṇīṣa* with the folds of the cloth clearly indicated (fig. 8). The Bodhisattva to the right of Amoghasiddhi has a wide scarf crossing in front of his hip, a loop of which is lying on his left arm held in front of the breast, while the Bodhisattva to the right of Ratnasambhava (fig. 9) has a knee-long lower *dhotī*. The latter has a helmet-like crown and he is holding an *utpala* with a sword on top. The bell-shaped tassels between the hair-locks on the shoulders are also remarkable.

The Thousand Buddhas (fig. 10) have a smiling mouth and again the white band is shown crossing the left upper arm. The depiction of the larger Buddha shows some additional unusual features: the three-parted *uṣṇīṣa*, the wavy edge of the *saṃghāṭi* crossing the breast, the wavy double line inside of the elbow and the band crossing the upper left arm and continuing over the left lower arm as if it would be a scarf.

A number of details of the *pūrṇaḡhaṭa* are also worth noting (fig. 11). The vase stands on a lotus, has a very narrow neck and a wide, flat rim, and is decorated with a scarf knotted at the

<sup>24</sup> The deity carries an arrow and a bow in the upper two hands raised at the sides and the middle arms are both in front of the body. However, it could also be that the deity is only four-armed.

sides. It is filled with large leafy greenery and two fan-shaped blossoms are depicted at the sides encircled by their own stems.

### The Style

Despite the bad state of preservation the paintings are extremely clear and it is still possible to appreciate their workmanship. In addition the paintings display a large range of variation in details. It is particularly noteworthy that in the Alchi Shang-rong *mchod-rten* the nearby Kashmiri paintings have been quoted in stylistic as well as iconographic features. The representation of the lions has been noted above, but also the depiction of priests surrounded by Buddhas and other figures are features apparently taken from the Alchi paintings. The variations and quotations present in both *mchod-rten* are evidence of a fully developed painting school.

The paintings represented by the two *mchod-rten* not only have some of the internationally shared characteristics absent in the Alchi group of paintings; the composition, the style, and the iconography are also completely different. As we have seen, some of the features present in the two *mchod-rten* are clearly related to Central Tibetan painting, but several others are quite distinctive of the paintings preserved in the two *mchod-rten*. Let us consider some of these distinctive features.

Generally the central panels have a somewhat crowded appearance unknown in Central Tibetan paintings. Instead of the clearly separated spaces allotted to each figure or element of the composition, the different elements overlap, e.g. in fig. 9 the paw of the leogryph is in front of the Bodhisattva's left arm and the *makara* above is virtually treading on the Bodhisattva's nimbus. The flower terminating the horizontal bar of the throne-back is in front of the nimbus and the *makara*. The space above the throne-back is filled with the elaborate volutes from the tail of the *makara* (figs. 5 and 6).

The thick horizontal bar of the throne-back with the upturned ends and the large flowers (cf. fig. 5 and fig. 9) is unusual in painting. This feature is better known from carved wooden book covers, although there the construction of the throne-back is usually somewhat different. The throne construction of the *mchod-rten* appears to go back to the elaborate throne constructions made at rKyang-bu (cf. Vitali 1990: fig. 9) in 11th-century Central Tibet. The Amoghasiddhi at rKyang-bu also wears Bodhisattva dress and a long *dhoti*. It is particularly remarkable that the faces of the Bodhisattvas in the Lamayuru *mchod-rten* paintings (figs. 8, 9) share also the same facial features with the rKyang-bu and g.Ye-dmar sculptures. In both cases the faces are square and have a prominently marked chin.

The *dhoti* covering the knees is common in paintings of Nepalese origin or workmanship which are attributed to the 13th century (cf. Béguin 1990: no. 9, no. F [p. 176–7]; Kossak 1997: figs. 2, 4). These Nepalese paintings also share the throne construction and the crowded character. However, the motifs and features the Nepalese paintings share with the *mchod-rten* paintings in Ladakh are executed in a completely different manner. It is sufficient simply to compare the manner the *dhoti*-cloth is represented in the two cases to demonstrate that there is no direct relationship between the Nepalese paintings and the ones in Ladakh.

The band in a contrasting colour crossing the upper arm of a Buddha's *samghāti* becomes a common feature in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Tibetan painting – in Central Tibet as well as in West Tibet (cf. Klimburg-Salter 1997b). The probably earliest example, attributed to the “13th century or earlier”, with this feature that I have noticed is a small painting published in Rossi and Rossi (1994: no. 5). The roughly contemporary bronze Buddha that follows (Rossi



and Rossi 1994: no. 6) shows a perfect three-dimensional rendering of this feature. However, it is unclear to me where this feature derives from.

Considering these comparisons, it is evident that the two *mchod-rten* in Ladakh preserve a unique painting style with affinities to Central Tibet and, vaguely, to the southern regions of the Tibetan plateau, where there was a tradition of carving wooden book covers. However, the comparisons are not sufficient to attribute the origin of the paintings or the painters to a smaller geographic region. The quite strong affinities to the rKyang-bu Amoghasiddhi<sup>25</sup> and the common vocabulary shared with Central Tibetan paintings are, however, sufficient to attribute the origin of this painting style to Central or South Tibet.

The *mchod-rten* paintings cannot be considered a direct predecessor of the style preserved in the lHa-khang So-ma and the related monuments. These Early Ladakhi paintings adopt rather the much gentler rhythm usual for Central Tibetan paintings. Nevertheless the two *mchod-rten* represent a painting style in Ladakh which does not derive from the western regions but comes from the east, from Central or South Tibet. The paintings in the two *mchod-rten* are more refined than the rather simple Early Ladakhi paintings in temples such as the lHa-khang So-ma.

### The Historical Setting

The small Alchi *mchod-rten* allows me to suggest when the new painting style reached lower Ladakh. It shows that a new type of painting, with a new style and iconography, became known at Alchi at the beginning of the 13th century. Certain elements of the new iconography were employed in the small *mchod-rten*, but the style was not yet adopted at Alchi.

Variants of the new painting style can be seen throughout West Tibet. It was used for the renovation of the Tholing Main Temple (the temple of Ye-shes-'od) as well as for the decoration of *mchod-rten* in Tabo (Klimburg-Salter, figs. 4–6, in this volume). The group of West Tibetan Thangka paintings, possibly produced in Spiti, published by Klimburg-Salter (1997b) are also evidence of the new style in West Tibet. The two *mchod-rten* introduced here represent a Ladakhi variety of this new painting style.

This new style is clearly related to Central Tibetan painting, the similarities being not solely stylistic, but also (or perhaps even more) formal and iconographic. Nevertheless, the West Tibetan varieties of this style are clearly distinct from the Central Tibetan ones.

Historical information about West Tibet in the 12th and 13th centuries is scarce and there is no clue as to how the different varieties of the new style are related to each other nor in which context they were developed. As can be seen in the example of Alchi, the new painting styles are most probably the result of the increasing influence of some Central Tibetan schools established in West Tibet. Of these schools, the 'Bri-gung-pa were apparently the most important. They are present in Alchi already by 1200–1220 and had contacts with the ruling houses of Purang, Guge and Ladakh throughout the 13th century (cf. Petech 1997: 240–42; Vitali 1996: 372–90, 408–25, 437–41). A bKa'-gdams-pa background can be assumed for at least some of the paintings published by Klimburg-Salter (1997b).

Given that the new style coincides with the influence of the newly founded schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the emergence of the new painting style in West Tibet can thus not predate the last quarter of the 12th century. Only in the 13th century is the increasing influence of the

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<sup>25</sup> This relationship is particularly remarkable and should be borne in mind when comparing the sculptures of rKyang-bu and associated monuments with painting.

Central Tibetan schools also documented in textual sources. It is therefore most likely that the variants of the new style were used not earlier than the 13th century.

The two Ladakhi *mchod-rten* can be linked neither to a definite historical event nor to a particular artistic school. The rather unusual details of the paintings and the few comparable paintings also do not allow specific statements about the genesis of the influences or the origin of the painters. The two *mchod-rten* therefore can only be roughly attributed to the 13th century.

The style evidenced in the wall paintings of the two *mchod-rten* is possibly a predecessor of the distinct Early Ladakhi painting style mentioned above. This style occurs in usually small, single, square structures and shares all the characteristics of 12th–14th-century Central Tibetan painting. Probably the best known example from this group is the lHa-khang So-ma of Alchi. The bCu-gcig-zhal of Wanla, the Seng-ge lHa-khang at Lamayuru, the Guru lHa-khang at Phyang, another lHa-khang at Alchi Shang-rong and the cave above Saspol may be counted as belonging to that group.<sup>26</sup> The establishment of a date and an inner chronology for all these monuments in this style in Ladakh remains a task for the future.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> In addition to the temples mentioned, the repainting in the Lo-tsa-ba lHa-khang, and the 'Jam-dpal lHa-khang within the Alchi *chos-khor*, the paintings of the 'Tsa-tsa Puri' in Alchi Gomba (cf. Khosla 1979: 66–68, fig. 11, pl. 58) and a fabulous *mchod-rten* said to be at Nyoma in the upper Indus valley (cf. Francke 1914: 56–8) should also be considered.

<sup>27</sup> Béguin and Fournier (cf. above note 11) have attempted such a chronology but had no access to any of the preserved temples. Of the early Ladakhi temples, the bCu-gcig-zhal at Wanla appears to be the most promising. It not only has most of its original decoration intact, but also preserves an interesting founding inscription. The publication of the Wanla inscription and its implications for the history, art history, and cultural history of Ladakh is in preparation.

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Fig. 1: The “Rin-chen-bzang-po” in the small *mchod-rten* of the Alchi *chos-khor* (CL94 18a,19)





Fig. 2: The sTag-lung master Tashipel, c. 1200  
(detail of Singer 1997: fig. 37)



Fig. 3: The collapsing *mchod-rten* at Alchi  
Shang-rong (CL94 14,35)

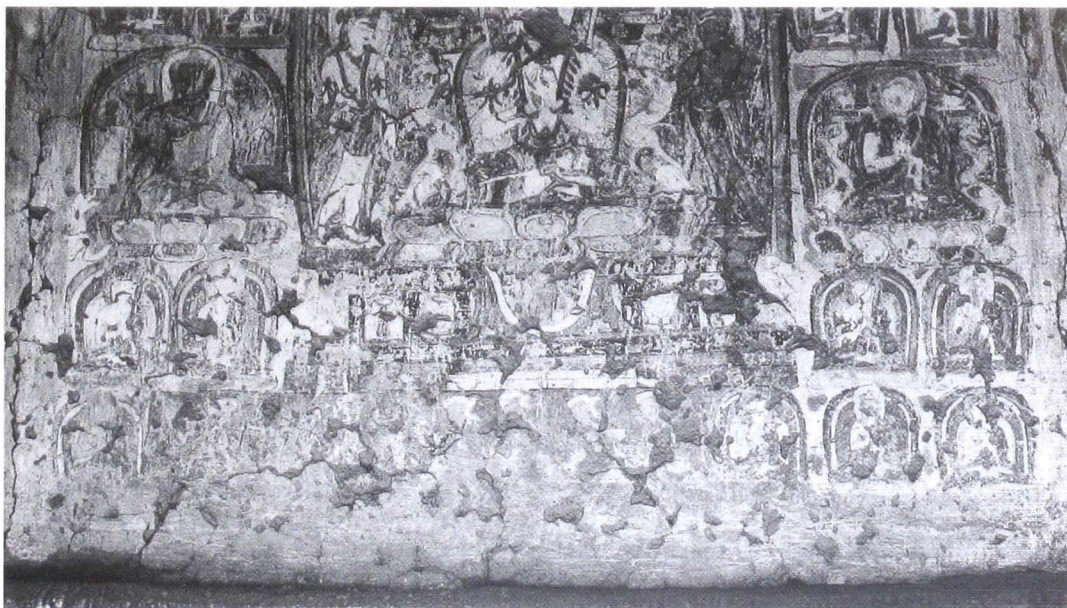


Fig. 4: The east wall of the *mchod-rten* at Alchi Shang-rong with Vairocana (CL94 20,3)





Fig. 5: The south wall of the *mchod-rten* at Alchi Shang-rong with Ratnasambhava (CL94 20,4)

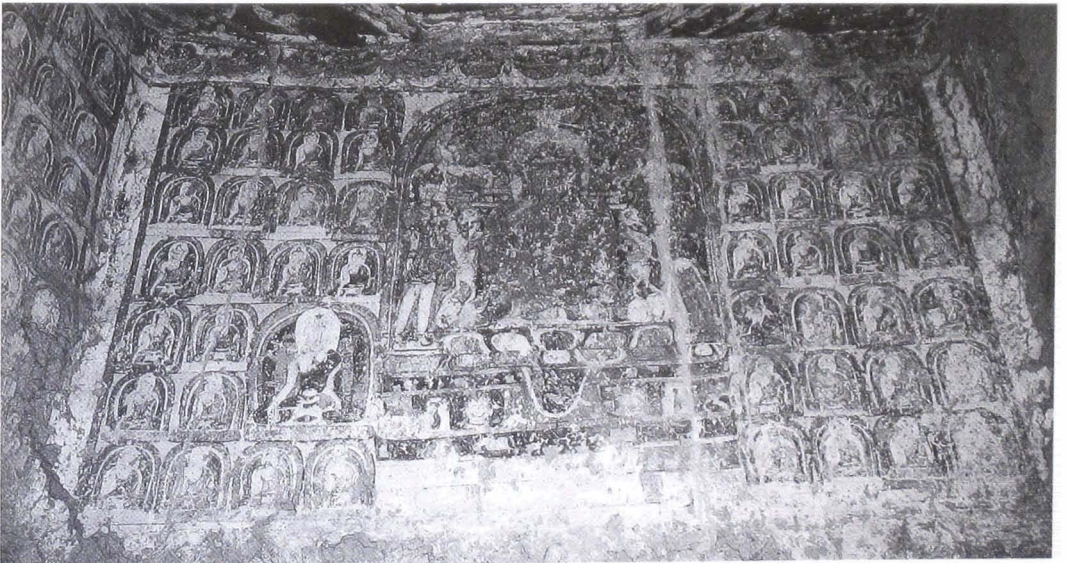


Fig. 6: South wall of the gateway *mchod-rten* at Lamayuru with Ratnasambhava (CL94 28,5)





Fig. 7: The central panel with Amoghasiddhi flanked by two Bodhisattvas, north wall of the gateway *mchod-rten* at Lamayuru (CL94 28,9)





Fig. 8: Bodhisattva to the proper right of Amoghasiddhi,  
north wall of the gateway *mchod-rten* at Lamayuru (CL94 28,10)



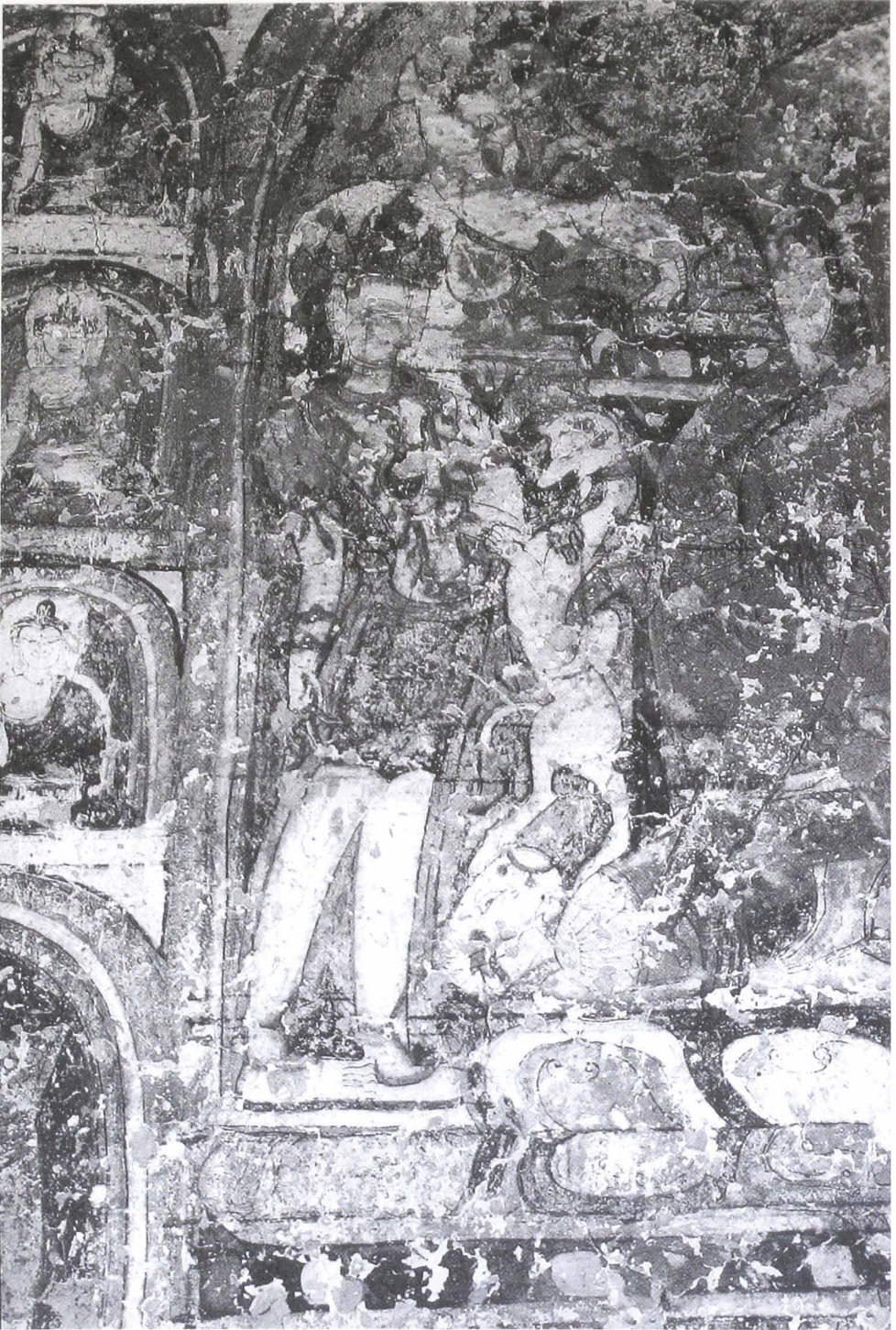


Fig. 9: Bodhisattva to the proper right of Ratnasambhava, south wall of the gateway *mchod-rten* at Lamayuru (CL94 28,12)





Fig. 10: Detail of the Thousand Buddhas and Ratnasambhava/Śākyamuni, south wall of the gateway *mchod-rten* at Lamayuru (CL94 28,13)

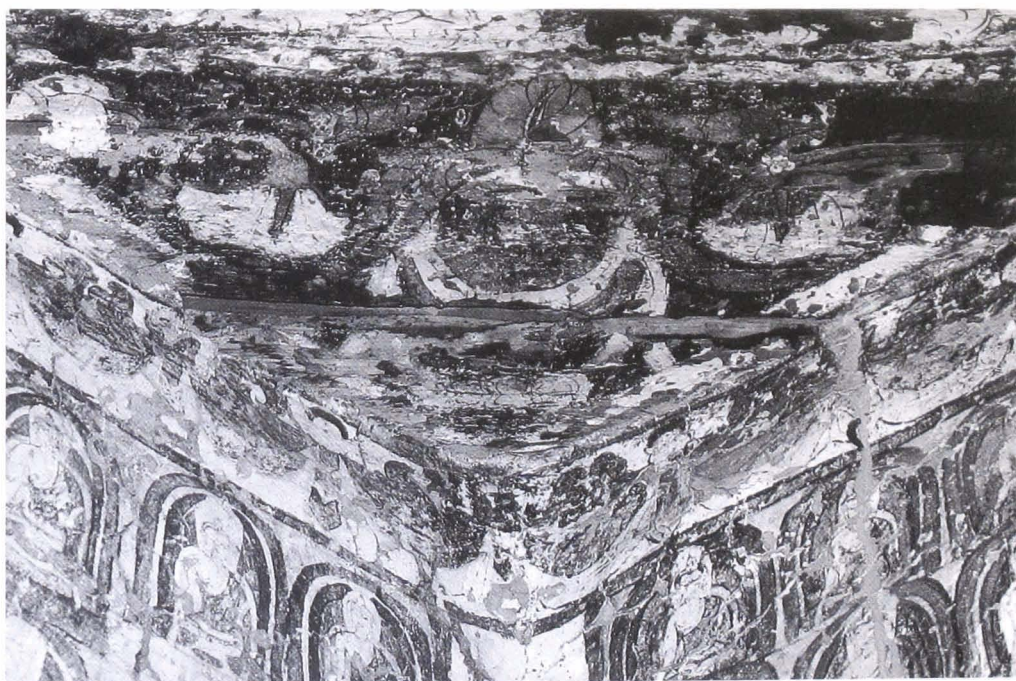


Fig. 11: A *pūrṇaghaṭa* is painted in the far corners of the lantern ceiling of the gateway *mchod-rten* at Lamayuru, a valance with *kīrtimukha* decorates the upper edge of the walls (CL94 28,14)



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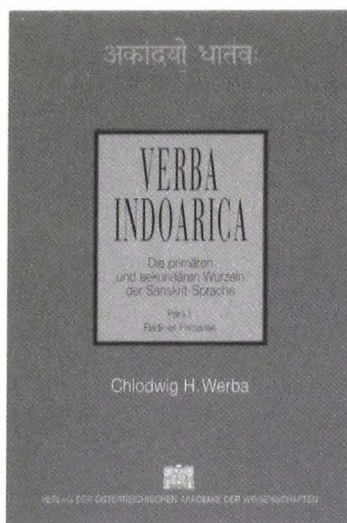
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590 Seiten, 15x24 cm, broschiert,

ISBN 3-7001-2628-x

ATS 690,- DEM 94,50 CHF 86,-

3200 Jahre Sanskrit und fast 200 Jahre seiner Erforschung werden in 663 Lemmata dokumentiert, die alles repräsentieren, was die bis heute lebendig gebliebene Kultursprache des alten Indiens an Verben aus dem Uralischen des 3. bis 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr. ererbt hat. Erstmals bilden an die 500 ausgewerteten Sanskrit-Texte dafür eine sichere und umfassende Basis. Ein Schlüssel zur klassischen Sprache und zum lebendigen Geist Indiens!

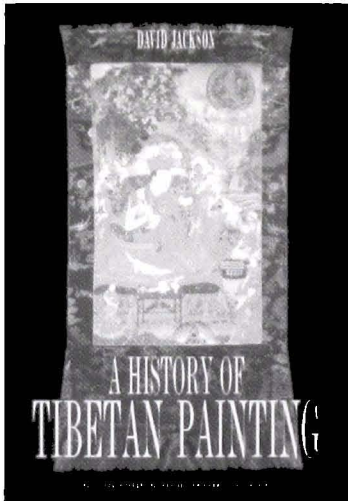
Sanskrit *as*<sup>8</sup> 'be', together with its Old-Persian and Avestan counter-part *ah* originating from Proto-Indo-Iranian *\*Has* (3/2<sup>nd</sup> millenium BC) and being a cognate of New-English *is* via its Proto-Indo-European source *\*h<sub>1</sub>es* (4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> millenium BC), Skt. *dam*<sup>293</sup> 'subdue', going back via PII *\*damH* to PIE *\*demh<sub>2</sub>* (together with its NE cognate *tame*), Skt. *vas/us*<sup>536</sup> 'spend the night', the source of which (as of OP/Av. *vah*) is PII *\*Huas*, ultimately deriving from PIE *\*h<sub>2</sub>ues* (as NE *was*), and 660 further mono(/bi)syllabic items which as basic verbal morphemes express an action, a state or a becoming, constitute the group of what is to be called the *primary roots of Sanskrit*, from which nearly two thirds of the exceedingly rich verbal inventory of the best- and longest continually documented Indo-European language of Asia are formed, as well as perhaps nearly a half of the nominal inventory. To present these *roots* and the stems and word-forms built on their basis as reliably as possible, nearly 500 texts composed over four millennia have been thoroughly exploited, from the *Rgveda Samhitā* (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC) to Jagannātha's *Bhāmivilāsa* (17<sup>th</sup> century AD), from Pānini's *Astādhyāyī* (6<sup>th</sup> century BC [?]) to Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa's *Dhātukāvya* (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD), together with the body of published academic scholarship on the language and literature of (Vedic, Epic, Classical and Hybrid) Sanskrit since CHARLES WILKINS' *The Radicals of the Sanskrita Language* (London: East India Company, 1815) has been studied and duly cited. Concerning the mode of primary quotations, the standards of FRIDERICUS ROSEN's *Radices Sanscritae* (illustratas edidit F.R. Berolini: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1827), NIELS L. WESTERGAARD's *Radices linguae Sanscritae* (ad decreta grammaticorum definivit atque copia exemplorum - exquisitiorum illustravit N.L.W. Bonnæ ad Rhenum: H.B. König, 1841) and the two *Petersburger Wörterbücher* (1855–1889), all of them citing the *loci* explicitly, have been combined with that of WILLIAM DWIGHT WHITNEY's *The Roots, Verb-Forms, and Primary Derivatives of the Sanskrit Language* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1885 [repr. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1945]), referring only to the text-strata. This combination helped, on the one hand, to avoid the many mistakes made by the latter in his famous monograph and, on the other, to enable the reader/user to check whatever he or she wants by referring to the quotes given. Thus the use of the first part of the *Verba IndoArica*, to be called *ākādayo dhātavaḥ* 'ak/ac and the other (662) roots', because it starts with *\*ak/ac* 'see' (< PII *\*Hak/ĕ* < PIE *\*h<sub>3</sub>okʷ*), a root which is not productive on the synchronic level of the language and is therefore marked with an asterisk, overlooked (not recognized) by WHITNEY in his *Roots* as were 901 others (marked in bold print), will be facilitated, as even the preverbs used in combination with finite or infinite verb-forms are duly recorded and their semantics amply documented.



Bestellung und Auslieferung: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften  
A-1011 Wien, Postfach 471, Postgasse 7/4, Tel +43-1-515 81/DW 401-406, Fax +43-1-515 81-400  
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