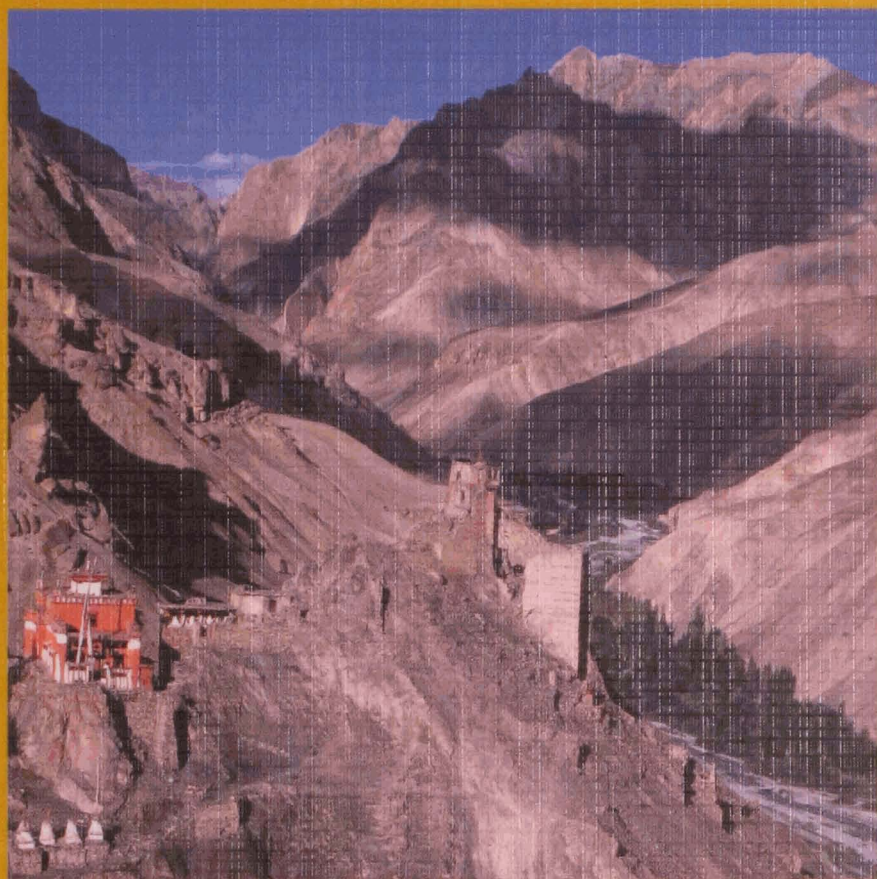


Buddhist Art and Tibetan Patronage

NINTH TO FOURTEENTH CENTURIES



EDITED BY

DEBORAH KLIMBURG-SALTER

& EVA ALLINGER

BUDDHIST ART AND TIBETAN PATRONAGE NINTH TO FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

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On the cover: The Wanla temple in Lower Ladakh (photo Christian Luczanits)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Plates	vii
Preface	ix
DEBORAH KLIMBURG-SALTER—Ribba, the Story of an Early Buddhist Temple in Kinnaur	1
LAXMAN S. THAKUR—Exploring the Hidden Buddhist Treasures of Kinnaur (Khu nu): A study of the Lha khang chen mo, Ribba	29
AMY HELLER—Did Atiśa Visit Zha lu Monastery? Tracing Atiśa’s Influence on Tibetan Iconography	45
EVA ALLINGER—A Gnyos Lineage Thangka	59
KIRA SAMOSYUK—The Reassessment of the Meaning of an Icon from Khara Khoto in the Light of a Tibetan Text from Dunhuang	69
HELMUT F. NEUMANN—The Wheel of Life in the Twelfth Century Western Tibetan Cave Temple of Pedongpo	75
CHRISTIANE PAPA-KALANTARI—The Ceiling Paintings of the Alchi <i>gsum brtsegs</i> : Problems of Style	85
CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS—The Wanla Bkra shis <i>gsum brtsegs</i>	115
GERALD KOZICZ—The Wanla Temple	127
Plates	137

LIST OF PLATES

ARTICLE BY DEBORAH KLIMBURG-SALTER

Colour Plates

- 1 Avalokiteśvara, Sangla (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS99 2,30)
- 2 Murals, interior of the temple, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH93 5,28)
- 3 “Durgā” (photograph John Harrison, WHAV JH98 5,22)

B/W Plates

- 38 Life of the Buddha, Karchung *lha khang*, Nako (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS98 31,41)
- 39 Detail, Mirkulā Devī temple, Udaipur, Lahul (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS91 71,26)
- 40 Upper part of the east façade, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 103,21)
- 41 Door, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 103,36)
- 42 Deity (Avalokiteśvara), façade, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 108,16)
- 43 Vertical row of Buddhas, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 103,30)
- 44 Narastān (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter)
- 45 Vairocana, Ribba (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS98 72,2)
- 46 Detail of Avalokiteśvara, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 106,32)
- 47 Façade with John Harrison (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS98 70,31)

ARTICLE BY LAXMAN S. THAKUR

Colour Plates

- 4 The clay statue of the Yellow Tārā in the sanctum (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)

- 5 A single-line Tibetan inscription, south wall (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 6 A standing deity carved in the *nāgara* shrine on the *lalāṭa-bimba* (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 7 Wood carving on the north gabled niche (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 8 The central panel of a flying *gandharva* on the ceiling (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)

B/W Plates

- 48 The temple of the Lha khang chen mo, Ribba, Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 49 The facial details of the Yellow Tārā (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 50 Vajrapāṇi (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 51 The details of wood carving on the doorjambs (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 52 The details of wood carving on the lintel (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 53 The depiction of the four Buddhas on the door (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 54 Wood carving on the western window (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 55 The details of the wood carving on the ceiling of the circumambulation (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)
- 56 Three copper and bronze statues of the Buddha, Ribba (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)

ARTICLE BY AMY HELLER

Colour Plates

- 9 Avalokiteśvara Thugs rje chen po, molded from unbaked clay and grains, polychrome pigments, 10 cm x 7.5 cm widest diameter, made in modern times from a mold said to be carved by Atiśa ca. 1045, conserved at Zha lu monastery (photograph Amy Heller, 1999)

- 10 Book cover of *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript, polychrome pigments on wood, India, ca. 1100, collection of Sa skya monastery, ca. 50 x 8 cm (photograph Amy Heller, 1995)
- 11 Detail of mural painting, Zha lu mgon khang, entourage of Buddha (Trisamayārāja ?) and attendants, ca. 100 cm x 60 cm, ca. 1045 (photograph Amy Heller, 1999)
- 12 Detail of mural painting, Zha lu *mgon khang*, Head and bust of a bodhisattva, ca. 50 cm, ca. 1045 (photograph Jean-Michel Terrier, 1996)

B/W Plates

- 57 Elephant capital, wood, Zha lu monastery, ca. 1045, approximately 35 x 45 cm (photograph courtesy Terese Tse Bartholomew, 1981)
- 58 Buddha capital, wood, Zha lu monastery, ca. 1045, approximately 35 x 45 cm (photograph courtesy Terese Tse Bartholomew, 1981)
- 59 Buddha (Trisamayārāja ?) and his entourage, 350 cm x 350 cm, pigments and varnish on prepared wall, Zha lu (photograph Amy Heller, 1995)
- 60 Tārā, from Patna museum, Pāla period, ca. 850-950 (after Michel Postel, *Ear Ornaments of Ancient India*, plate V 39)
- 61 Four Bka' gdams pa deities, mid-13th to early 14th century, distemper on cloth, 53 x 42 cm (Donation Lionel Fournier, Musée Guimet, Paris, no. MA 5175)
- 62 Mural painting of Buddha and his entourage, Trisamayārāja Buddha (?), pigments and varnish on prepared wall, Alchi monastery, *lha khang gsar ma*, 14th century (photograph courtesy Lionel Fournier)
- 63 Buddha and his entourage, Trisamayārāja Buddha (?), distemper on cotton, 124 x 86 cm, thirteenth century (courtesy Pritzker collection)

ARTICLE BY EVA ALLINGER

Colour Plates

- 13 Gnyos master, Jucker Collection (courtesy E. Jucker)

- 14 Green Tārā, Collection of John Gilmore and Berthe Ford (courtesy J. G. Ford)
- 15 Avalokiteśvara Ṣaḍakṣari, Collection of John Gilmore and Berthe Ford (courtesy J. G. Ford)

B/W Plates

- 64 Zhang Rinpoche, Potala Palace, Lhasa (after *Bod kyi thang ka* 1984: pl. 62)
- 65 Gnyos master, backside, Jucker Collection (courtesy E. Jucker)
- 66 Two *bodhisattvas*, private collection (after *Tibet, Arte e spiritualità* 1999: 101)
- 67 Stag lung Thang pa chen po, private collection (after Kossak and Singer 1998: no. 18)
- 68 Sangs rgyas yar byon pa, Kronos collection (after Kossak and Singer 1998: no. 19)
- 69 Stag lung Thang pa chen po, Musée Guimet MA 5176 (after Béguin 1990: no. 2)
- 70 Saṃvara and Vajravārāhī, private collection (after Pal 1984: pl. 12)

ARTICLE BY KIRA SAMOSYUK

Colour Plates

- 16 Guanyin, coloured Chinese ink on silk, 12th century, 99 x 59 cm (The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, X2439)
- 17 Detail Pl. 16
- 18 Detail Pl. 16

ARTICLE BY HELMUT NEUMANN

Colour Plates

- 19 Entrance corridor of the Pedongpo cave (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 20 Pedongpo cave: *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 21 Pedongpo cave: detail of *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 22 Pedongpo cave: detail of *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)

- 23 Pedongpo cave: detail of *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)

B/W Plates

- 71 Pedongpo cave: South and West wall with 1000 Buddha images (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 72 Pedongpo cave: 1000 Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 73 Pedongpo cave: vaulted ceiling with textile design (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 74 Pedongpo cave: group of protective deities (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 75 Pedongpo cave: south side of entrance corridor with *bhāvacaakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 76 Cosmic diagram in the entry hall of the 'du khang of Tholing (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 77 Pedongpo cave: two of the Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 78 Phyi dbang: two of the Buddhas in the 1000 Buddha cave (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 79 Pedongpo cave: one of the 1000 Buddhas (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 80 Cave of the Offering Goddesses in Phyi dbang: one of the Buddhas of Confession (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 81 Pedongpo cave: Avalokiteśvara in the entrance corridor (photograph Helmut Neumann)
- 82 Lantern ceiling cave in Dung dkar: Avalokiteśvara (photograph Helmut Neumann)

ARTICLE BY CHRISTIANE PAPA-KALANTARI

Colour Plates

- 24 *Gsum brtsegs*, Alchi, view from the ground floor into the first upper level (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, 1981, WHAV)
- 25 Panel II 36 (detail), Ceiling Decoration, first upper level (II), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (after Goepper 1996: ill. p. 254)

- 26 Resist dyed silk fragment, Moščevaja Balka, 8th-9th century, Hermitage, Kz 5080 (after Ierusalemkaya 1996: ill. 113)
- 27 Panel II 42, first upper level (II), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (after R. Goepper 1996: ill. p. 258)
- 28 Header of a silk banner (*bodhisattva* Wenshu), Dunhuang, 8th-9th century (after Giès 1994 II: 29, ill.3, EO. 1399)
- 29 Wallpainting, Alchi, first upper level (II), left wall, female goddess flanking the elevenheaded Avalokiteśvara (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1981, WHAV)
- 30 Silk cloth, Shoso-in, Nara, 104 x 53,5 cm (after Matsumoto 1993: ill. 56)
- 31 Panels II 36, II 35, II 34, first upper level (II), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (after Goepper 1996: 254)

B/W Plates

- 83 Unidentified scenes on the *dhoti* of the four-armed Maitreya clay sculpture, Mang rgyu (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1983, WHAV)
- 84 Panel II 39 (detail), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1983, WHAV)
- 85 Book cover, Jaina Manuscript, 11th century (after Nawab 1980: colour pl. 78)
- 86 Panel II 48 (detail), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (after Goepper 1996: ill. p. 263)
- 87 Panel II 33 (detail), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1983)
- 88 Alchi, ceiling panels in the niche with 'flying Buddhas' (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1984, WHAV)

ARTICLE BY CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS

Colour Plates

- 32 Mahākāla flanked by riding goddesses above the door in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 73,12)
- 33 Four-armed Mañjuśrī in the Śākyamuni niche in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 72,5)

- 34 Cakrasaṃvaramaṇḍala in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 72,20)
- 35 A twelve-figure lineage above a panel dedicated to the four-armed Avalokiteśvara in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 72,40)

B/W Plates

- 89 The ruins of the Wanla castle with the Wanla temple in the centre (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 67,25)
- 90 The fragmentary remains of woodcarvings on the Wanla castle tower (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 78,8)
- 91 The front side of the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 69,2)
- 92 The construction of the veranda in Wanla (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 69,3)
- 93 The eleven-headed and eight-armed main image of Avalokiteśvara behind the altar of the Wanla temple (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1990, WHAV)
- 94 Bodhisattva Maitreya in the left side niche of the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 71,1)
- 95 The image of Śākyamuni in the side niche to the proper left of the main image of the Wanla temple (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1990, WHAV)
- 96 Lineage sculptures flank the heads of Avalokiteśvara on the gallery of the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 74,3)
- 97 The paper-mâché sculpture of Mar pa in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL94 35,7)
- 98 The beginning of the lineage on Wanla temple gallery (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 76,23)

ARTICLE BY GERALD KOZICZ

Colour Plates

- 36 The Wanla temple (drawing Gerald Kozicz)
- 37 Cross section of the Wanla temple (drawing Gerald Kozicz)

PREFACE

The inspiration for a panel on Tibetan art to be held at the Ninth Seminar of The International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) in Leiden, originated with Hugo Kreijger, who together with Eva Allinger, reviewed the initial concept of the panel with the participants. We very much regret that Kreijger was ultimately unable to participate. The only paper not included here that was presented in the panel on Schools of Early Tibetan Art is Jane Singer's "An early Tibetan painting of an esoteric Buddhist deity". The fate of this paper is unknown to us. John Harrison participated in the panel discussion in Leiden and contributed a preliminary analysis of the architecture of Ribba *lo tsā ba lha khang*, which is contained in the article by Klimburg-Salter.

The papers published here discuss Buddhist artistic monuments from both the heartland of Tibet as well as the far borders of the Tibetan cultural sphere. In each case, the question of the impact of Tibetan patronage is explored. The monuments range in date from the 9th to the 14th centuries, yet in each instance the authors discuss problems related to the evolution of early Tibetan art. In each study the dialectic between local and "foreign" traditions is explored. Thus Klimburg-Salter, Thakur, Heller, Allinger and Neumann discuss the role of Indian artistic traditions in the evolution of the distinctive artistic character of monuments and paintings ultimately associated with Tibetan patronage. A similar process is explored by Samosyuk who examines the manner in which Tibetan cultural elements merge with Chinese, Kidan and Turkic artistic features in the formation of Tangut art. Papa-Kalantari's study also highlights the wide nexus of cultural influences identifiable in the ceiling paintings from Alchi. While in the discussion of Wanla, Luczanits and Kozicz identify the influence of Central Tibet on an emerging local artistic tradition associated with the Alchi group of monuments in Ladakh.

These studies also demonstrate the fact that the study of Tibetan art is still very much in its infancy. Thus Heller, Allinger, Luczanits, Samosyuk and Thakur all utilize previously neglected primary inscriptional or literary evidence for the study of their respective monu-

ments. Neumann, Klimburg-Salter, Thakur, Luczanits and Kozicz provide the first detailed discussions of Pedongpo, Ribba and Wanla. Papa-Kalantari attempts to define a methodology for the study of textile ornaments in Indo-Tibetan painting, a theme that only recently has begun to be explored. The diverse opinions represented here with regard to the small but important monument in Ribba village demonstrate the fundamental role of field research in the study of Buddhist art under Tibetan patronage. Ribba was also mentioned by Laura Di Mattia in her paper “Indo-Tibetan schools of art and architecture in the Western Himalaya at the beginning of the second diffusion of Buddhism: new evidences”, a general review of the Buddhist art of Kinnaur presented at the Leiden conference. Today geographic regions previously closed to travel have become more accessible and an increasing number of scholars are attracted to the study of Tibetan art. Thus, new research will progressively help us to clarify our understanding of the varied historical and cultural contexts in which Tibetan art emerged and eventually flourished.

Christian Jahoda prepared the layout and camera ready copy of this volume. We also thank him for his assistance in copy editing and particularly his meticulous attention to the details of the scholarly apparatus in the text. We also thank the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) who supports the FSP (*Forschungsschwerpunkt*) on the Cultural History of the Western Himalaya; and IAS for providing a subsidy for the colour illustrations in this volume.

Vienna, January 2002

Deborah Klimburg-Salter, Eva Allinger

RIBBA, THE STORY OF AN EARLY BUDDHIST TEMPLE IN KINNAUR

DEBORAH KLIMBURG-SALTER

The following is a brief discussion of a little known Buddhist temple in Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh (India) in a village called Ribba. A description of the temple, known as the *lo tsā ba lha khang* (the name *lha khang chen mo*, see Thakur, is unknown to me) concentrates on those features which, in my view, can be attributed to the original structure. This documentation serves as a basis for an hypothesis regarding the foundation date of the small temple. The art historical evidence is then compared with the information contained in a local song that describes the founding of the temple by Rin chen bzang po.¹

Present State of Research

A continuing problem in the cultural history of Kinnaur-Spiti, is the status of Buddhism at the end of the 10th century, to which time the first Tibetan inscriptions can be attributed.² The most recent general publications on Tibetan art have included the Buddhist monuments of both Kinnaur and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh, India. The discussions have essentially centered on Tabo monastery (probably founded 996, renovated 1042) in Spiti and the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript in Poo

¹ This study is part of a larger project on the culture of the Western Himalayas that has been financed by various grants from the Austrian *Fonds zur Förderung der Wissenschaftlichen Forschung*, since the initiation of the first research project under the direction of Ernst Steinkellner in 1986 at the University of Vienna. Both, philological and art historical research has been conducted in collaboration with IsMEO (now: IsIAO) in Rome. As the number of researchers and, therefore, the research themes expanded, two parallel projects came into being. Since June 2001 these separate projects on art history and philology have been joined by parallel projects on codicology and architecture as part of a FSP (research unit) for the study of the cultural history of the Western Himalaya during the 10th-14th centuries, co-ordinated by the author. A project on the documentation of oral traditions directed by Dietrich Schüller, principle researcher Veronika Hein, is associated with the FSP. I thank Christian Jahoda and Eva Allinger for valuable suggestions.

² The eldest are in the *sgo khang* at Tabo.

village, Kinnaur, attributed to the 11th-12th century (e.g.: Rhie and Thurman 1999: 47ff.). The art historical narrative begins with the missionary activities of *lha bla ma Ye shes 'od* and the *lo tsā ba chen po Rin chen bzang po*.

Today Rin chen bzang po is considered to have played a critical role in the development of Buddhism in the Indian Himalayan region. However, this point of view has not been supported by any epigraphic evidence coming from this area. I have previously noted at Tabo (Klimburg-Salter 1997: 62), that despite extensive inscriptions for both the 996 and 1042 phases, Rin chen bzang po's name does not occur.

Indeed the history of Buddhism in this area is undoubtedly far more complex as recent studies by Dan Martin have demonstrated (e.g. Martin 1996: 175ff.). No attempt has yet been made to clarify the history of Buddhism in Kinnaur. According to some scholars, Buddhism was introduced into lower Kinnaur during the Gupta period (Bajpai 1991: 31). In some villages in upper Kinnaur, e.g. Nako and Chango, there is the tradition that Buddhism arrived with Padmasambhava, called Gu ru Rin po che. A small chapel in Nako, the Gu ru *lha khang*, is dedicated to Gu ru Rin po che, Padmasambhava. This temple is built around a rock believed to contain the handprints and footprints of Padmasambhava (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: 145; Tucci 1935: 172). This relic documents the belief, still transmitted today, that Padmasambhava passed this way on route from Uḍḍiyana to Tibet. At least as early as the 13th century a Tibetan pilgrimage route between west Tibet (Ti se - Mt. Kailāsa) traversed and Uḍḍiyana went via Kinnaur. Rgod tshang pa (b. 1213) may have visited hermits in the region of Nako (Tucci 1971: 377). Nako was a Buddhist center of some importance at that time as seen by the magnificently decorated and relatively large temples attributed to the beginning of the 12th century. The 'Brug pa, who had hermitages near Ti se from the late 12th century, predominate in Nako today and may already have been prominent from the late 12th-early 13th century (Klimburg-Salter 2001). The Gu ru *lha khang* contains much blackened but beautiful mural paintings attributable to the ca. 14th century. The paintings include a Bka' brgyud pa lineage. In nearby Chango village traditional songs give precedence to Padmasambhava and the temple founded by him over Rin chen bzang po and his temple (personal communication, Veronika Hein, Field Report Autumn 2001). The Rnying ma pa school is today preeminent in Chango.

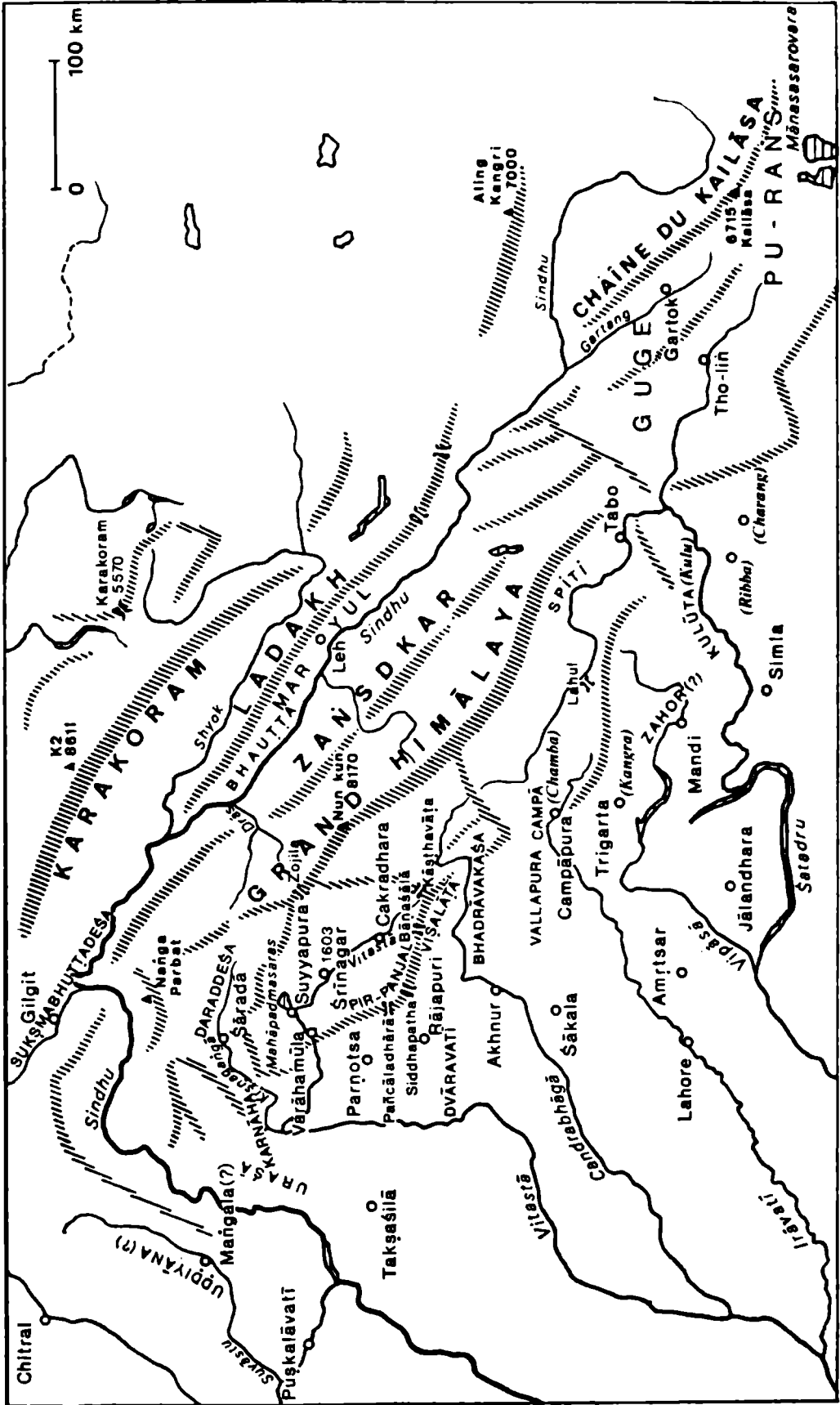


Fig. 1a: Map (after Naudou 1968: 144)

The high quality of the artistic remains throughout Kinnaur testifies to an impressive cultural activity comparable to that in the better known Buddhist monuments of Spiti and Ladakh. Thus a team of scholars from the University of Vienna have recently expanded their research on the Buddhist monuments of Kinnaur (see footnote 1). This thinly populated and relatively fertile mountainous region has never been a political and economic center. Seen from the perspective of Indian history, in the 10th and 11th centuries, the region constituted the eastern-most border of the Kashmiri cultural sphere. Its geographic position at the distant border of this sphere, whose center was in the Jehlum river basin, may be seen in the map drawn by Naudou for his publication *Les Bouddhistes kaśmīriens* (Fig. 1a).

The modern administrative division of Kinnaur was earlier subdivided into smaller units and identified by different names. The designations and their meanings seem to have changed over time. We have no text earlier than Rin chen bzang po's biography describing places in Kinnaur. According to the Biography (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980: 95) the area today known as Kinnaur consisted of at least two different regions—the biography lists Ka nam in Nga ra and Spu in Rong chung, both called border regions (*ibid.*). Later sources, for example the *Mnga' ris rgyal rabs* speak of Ku nu. It is unclear if this term was current in the late 11th century, when the Biography was probably written (date according to Martin 1996: 177). Tucci reported that the region around Poo (Spu) and lower Spiti, in his time was designated as Gang rang. Ribba would not belong to this region. Rather, it is probable that Ribba was included in the territory, south of the Sulej and eastward to Charang, identified by Tucci as Ku nu. But I cannot at this point make a reasonable suggestion as to what territory (if any) might have been identified as Ku nu in the 9th-12th centuries (see Klimburg-Salter in print for further references).

Despite differences in emphasis and interpretation, historians agree that the late 10th and early 11th centuries was a period of intense cultural change in Kinnaur. The decisive factor in the 10th century was the introduction of institutions sponsored by a Western Tibetan dynasty whose centers were located in Pu rang and Gu ge. Precisely because Kinnaur existed on the periphery, far from the political centers in Kashmir and Western Tibet, the history and monuments occur seldom and with contradictory information in written sources (Klimburg-Salter 1994: 59-63; in print). The extreme topography—high

mountains and steep gorges—have always made travel in the area a perilous adventure (e.g. Gerard 1841: 22-59) and thus the monuments have hardly been described. The complex cultural profile visible today in Kinnaur has ancient roots; here cult places dedicated to local as well as Hindu and Buddhist deities co-exist in every village.

Although both Francke and Tucci were able to visit only a few of the places mentioned in Rin chen bzang po's biography, they both drew attention to the importance of Kinnaur during the period of the Kings of Pu rang - Gu ge 10th to 12th centuries. Tucci attributes a number of Kinnauri temples to Rin chen bzang po. "Poo; Shasu, Charang, Sangla, Rippa" (Tucci and Gherzi 1934: 374). The few studies discussing the Buddhist arts of Kinnaur (Klimburg-Salter 1994, in print; Luczanits 1996) confirm the close association of the artistic culture of Kinnaur and Spiti during the 11th-12th centuries. Scherrer-Schaub has recently concluded that, "the quality of the text transmission witnessed by some Tabo manuscripts so far analyzed is reminiscent of the high intellectual Kaśmīrian *milieu*." (1999: 28). It is to be expected that Kinnaur, lying to the south of Spiti, was more open to closer cultural contacts with Kashmir. One witness to the close association between the Buddhist artistic traditions of Kinnaur and greater Kashmir are a group of wooden sculptures at Rang rig rtse temple in Charang (Klimburg-Salter, in print) attributable to the 11th and 12th centuries. The small temple at Ribba provides evidence for the impact of the artistic traditions of greater Kashmir prior to the 10th century and the advent of Tibetan patronage in the area.

Ribba

The village of Ribba (2.550 m) is located high above the Sutlej River in upper Kinnaur. A large and exceptionally attractive village, Ribba must always have enjoyed relative prosperity. The village is surrounded by fertile lands (today mostly orchards) and near the village there are two places where it is possible to cross the Sutlej. A paved road below the village connects it to the main transportation artery running along the Sutlej River (Sanan and Swadi 1998: 143ff.). Above the village runs the old Hindustan-Tibet road. This region is today called upper Thukpa. And extends eastwards to the Tibetan border at the Keobrang pass and southward to include Charang (see map on p. 144, Sanan and Swadi 1998).

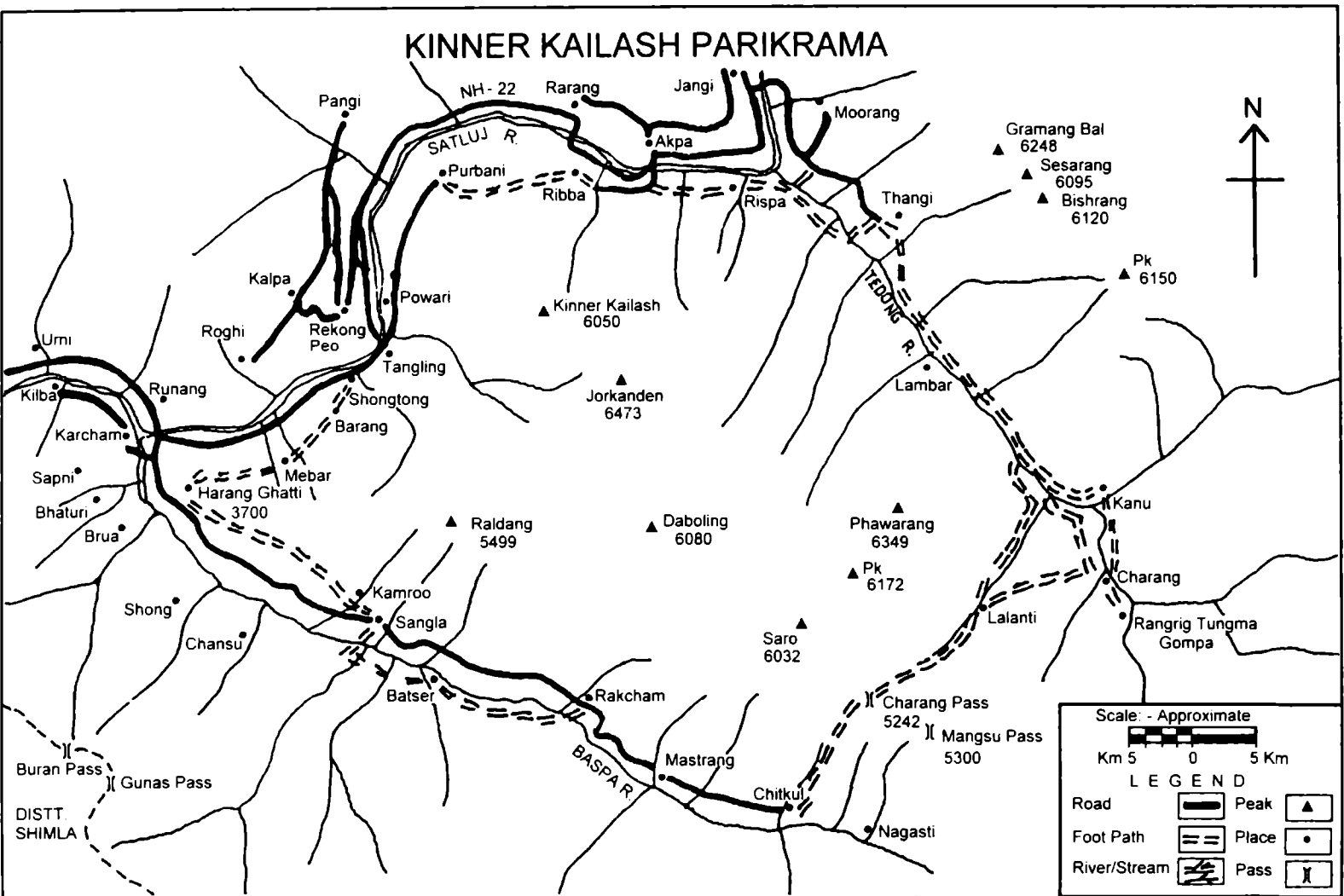


Fig. 1b: Map (after Saran and Swadi 1998: 278)

An important aspect of the cultural identity of Ribba village is its position on the *parikrama* around the Kinnauri Kailash (Fig. 1b). The

history of this *parikrama* remains to be studied. Tradition attributes all the important chapels on the *parikrama* to Rin chen bzang po. The art historical evidence, although not abundant, for the other small chapels does not contradict this tradition. The temples on the *parikrama* which have been the subject of art historical analysis are considered not to be later than the 11th centuries—Rang rig rtse monastery in Charang (Klimburg-Salter, in print) and the small temple in Tangi,³ now destroyed.

The connection of this pilgrimage route to other, perhaps older, pilgrimage routes is an important topic for future research. The part of the *parikrama* that connected Ribba to Rang rig rtse monastery in Charang is apparently the same as the (earlier?) pilgrimage route between Gu ge (Ti se, Mt. Kailāsa) and Uḍḍiyana, according to two texts found by Tucci in Ladakh (Hemis monastery) and Spiti. The most complete itinerary is that of Tshang ras pa who lived in the first half of the 17th century. He travelled from Ti se via the Charang pass (Sarang la) to Ku nu, Poo, Namgya, etc. This old route, (represented as a footpath on the map on p. 144, Sanan and Swadi 1998) crossed the Sutlej River at Ribba in order to proceed to Poo on route to Lahul. Rgod tshang pa (b. 1213), is also likely to have travelled via the Charang pass and hence Ribba as he is reported to have travelled from Ti se to Lahul (Gar zha) via the Nako region and Spiti (Tucci 1971: 377). It is not possible to say when the tradition of this pilgrimage route to Uḍḍiyana—the home of Padmasambhava—began.

The small temple of Ribba is today an annex to a more recent temple. The original small temple faces east with a magnificent view down over the Sutlej. The present enlarged temple has the same orientation. The small temple is now functionally the cella of the temple (Fig. 2). One enters through a carved portal and a veranda on the east. The assembly hall is 8.90 m by 4.90 m, external dimensions 11.65 x 7.35 m. The *'du khang* is said to have been built about 200 years ago. A small chapel for a large *ma ṇi* wheel is built against the south wall of the assembly hall. Today the entire temple is circumambulated along an external *pradakṣiṇapatha*. In the west wall of the assembly

³ The pair of clay guardian figures are the only remaining indications of the old temple, known as a *lo tsā ba lha khang*. The *parikrama*-route is described in Sanan and Swadi 1998: 277-286.

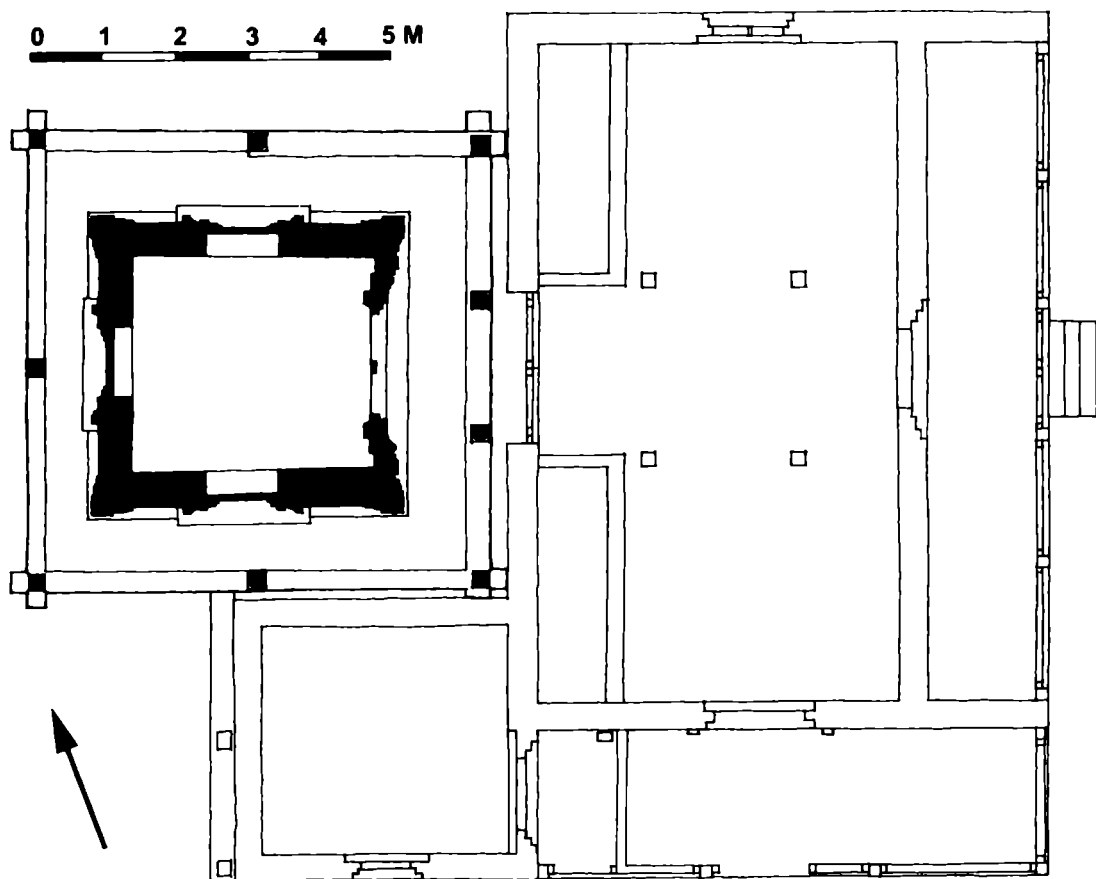


Fig. 2: Floor plan, Ribba (John Harrison, WHAV Vienna)

hall is a large glass door that leads directly to the small temple on the other side. An altar is placed in front of the glass door, apparently associated with the main image, or images, in the sanctum.

The original small temple (today the cella or sanctum) is approximately 4.25 x 4.00 m the interior is 2.90 x 3.25 m and has an extraordinary finely decorated portal / façade. It is precisely this feature which allows us to relate the temple to the later monasteries of the neighboring region of Pu rang - Gu ge, built during the earliest phase of the patronage of the Kings of Western Tibet. Several portals were documented by Ghersi and Tucci in the 1930s. One was a portal at Tholing, (Klimburg-Salter 1988: figs 1, 2, 3) and the other at Khojarnath (Luczanits 1996: fig. 1), both of which were attributed by Tucci to the end of the 10th century. Tucci (1973: 143) proposed that the wood carvings from both temples were produced by Kashmiri workmen. Tucci apparently based his hypothesis on the presence of diverse stylistic elements including the familiar architectural frames

used also in the architectural decoration of the temples found throughout the greater Kashmir area and popular also in the few wooden portable shrines attributed to the Western Himalayas. A number of related, but smaller doors have survived in a much ruined condition in Nako (Pl. 38) and Tabo. The latest in the series of elaborate portals depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni is found in the *'du khang* at Alchi, (Tucci 1973: fig. 133; Klimburg-Salter 1988). The common feature found in the carved decoration of these doors is the use of architectural frames in order to compose separate compositional units. At the centre of each compositional unit a deity or a compact synoptic scene from the Life of the Buddha is depicted. Due to this narrative interest, all of these portals are characterized by an intense overall decoration, with each of the architecturally defined units filled with both figures and decorative forms. An example can be seen in this detail from Nako which begins with the birth of the Buddha, first scene proper right upper row.

The Western Himalayan Buddhist temples from the late 10th century have carved wooden portals—this tradition has been revived in the modern period in Kinnaur—Charang, *Poo lo tsā ba lha khang*, and the recent Ribba *'du khang*. As we shall see the Ribba portal / façade belongs to a well established typology in Himachal Pradesh and may be considered a forerunner of the Western Himalayan Buddhist temple carved wooden portals. As in the Western Himalayan carved wooden portals, the decorative scheme at Ribba uses Kashmiri-style architectural frames but each contains only one figure. There are no synoptic narrative scenes and the total decorative scheme is clearer. It will not be possible in the space available here to identify in detail the genesis of the various elements in Ribba.

The Ribba temple has been often repainted and covered with whitewash, the surface is obscured to such a degree that a precise detailed analysis and comparison of its surface décor is exceedingly difficult. It is only possible to determine the basic decorative vocabulary of the temple. Luczanits attributes the original temple to the early 10th century (Luczanits 1996: figs 7a, b). In my view the lack of surface detail prohibits a precise dating. However, as will be demonstrated, the decorative vocabulary is closest in spirit and intention to the clear simple decorative forms found in the architecture of Kashmir, at the latest, from the 8th century. Thus the Ribba temple may be related to the same phenomenon documented in western Himachal

Pradesh where “northwestern trends typical of Kashmir” (Pieruccini 1997: 225) are found in the architecture of Chambā, probably to be dated after the presumed conquest of Lalidaditya in the mid 8th century (ibid., p. 224).

In general one can say that this type of overall decorated portal / façade derives from the Gupta prototype, one example is from Nañca Pārvatī temple, ca. 475 (Meister et al. 1988: pl. 57). This Gupta style façade was adopted throughout Himachal Pradesh. Examples are the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple in Bharmaur and the Śakti Devī temple in Chatrāhṛī, both in Chambā district. The spatial division of the façade into multiple horizontal and vertical decorative bands is similar, but the examples from Chambā are lacking the Kashmiri architectural framing devices favored at Ribba (Postel, Neven, Mankodi 1985: figs 40, 45, 48). The exception is the Kashmiri style pediment, a later addition added to the top of the façade of the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple ca. mid 8th century (Pieruccini 1997: 224).

In Chambā both the entry portal and the entrance wall of the *garbhagrha* have wooden sculpted façades. In the Mirkulā Devī temple in Udaipur in Lahul, ca. 10th-11th century, there is also a wooden

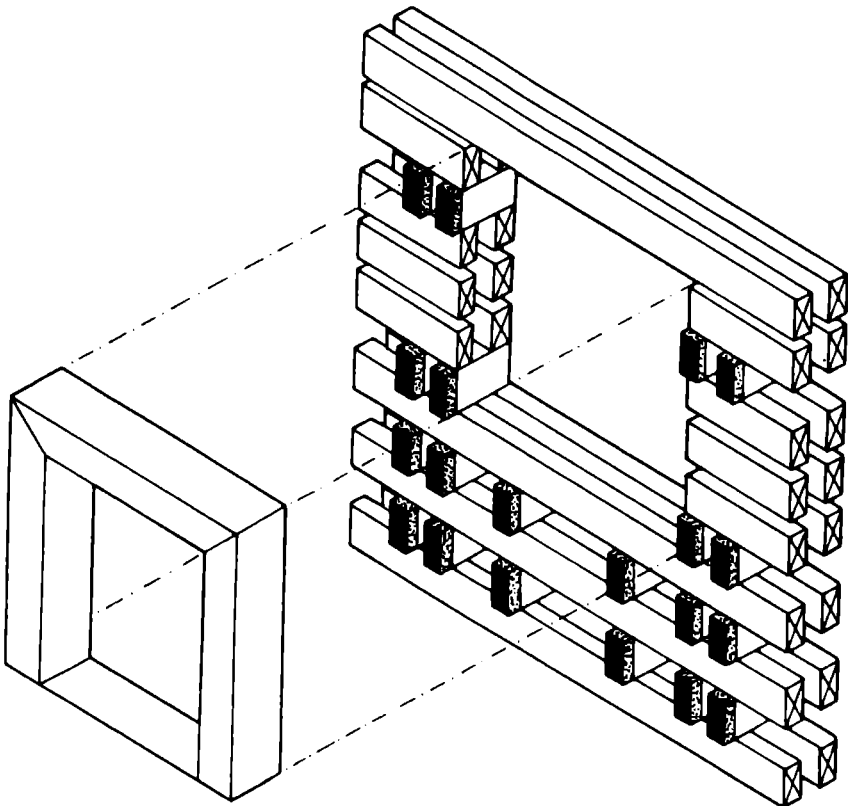


Fig. 3: Construction, Ribba (Michael Falser, WHAV Vienna)

decorated portal / façade of the small *garbhagrha* (Klimburg-Salter 1994: 50-57; Noci 1994: 99-114) (Pl. 39). If we compare details of the wooden decoration of the *garbhagrha* in Lahul, we see the use of some of the familiar Kashmiri architectural forms, but in an extremely complex and highly decorative manner. For instance, individual columns are decorated with rows of circles. There are double columns, double pediments and capitals. The architectural forms are expressed in such an elaborate way that they could never have been associated with actual architectural prototypes. A comparative analysis of the decorative details used on the portal / façade from the *garbhagrha* of the Mirkulā Devī temple and that of the portal / façade at Ribba suggests a considerably earlier date for the latter.

The construction technique of the small temple at Ribba is consistent with traditional methods but with distinctive features. The intersection of double rows of wooden beams (Fig. 3) forms a wall, 0.75 m thick, which is extremely heavy for the small size of the building. The present roof is not original and John Harrison, the architect with the 1998 FWF expedition, was not able to determine the original superstructure. A comparison to other small temples in the region (Tucci and Ghersi 1934: fig. 266) suggests the possibility of a steep (slate covered?) pediment roof. However a double-tiered sloping roof as Pieruccini (1997) proposes in Chambā is also a possibility.

The *pradakṣiṇapatha* is placed on an elevated veranda which once encircled the small temple. It was clearly built before the present '*du khang*' was added. On the west side, WSW corner, is a huge rock with a depression believed to be Rin chen bzang po's foot print. A board of the wooden floor of the *pradakṣiṇapatha* can be lifted up so that the footprint can be viewed. The veranda is today blocked on the south side by a large box, holding books and other assorted objects, so that it is no longer possible to circumambulate the old temple. At least some of the present architectural elements in the veranda were replaced in the 1960s. None of the elements of the veranda appear original as motifs on the pillars, capitals and ceiling boards are different from the motifs on the east portal / façade. Further, as can be seen in Fig. 4 the veranda is bolstered on the north side by piles of stones.

In Pl. 40 one sees a detail of the ceiling of the veranda which connects to the top of the east façade. The beams connecting the pillars

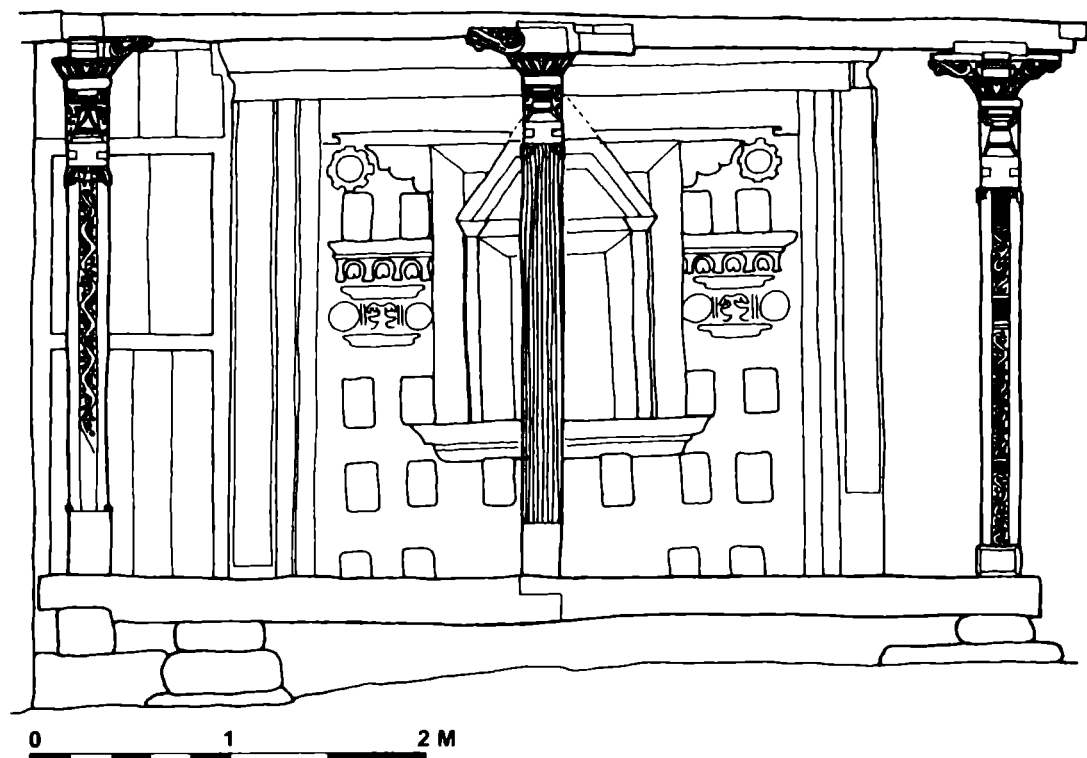


Fig. 4: North elevation, temple with veranda, Ribba (Michael Falser, WHAV Vienna)

of the veranda with the east façade massively disrupt the carved decoration of the upper part of the façade. There is, in fact, no reason to believe that the original temple had a veranda cum *pradakṣiṇapatha*. On the contrary, there is evidence that similar wooden external *pradakṣiṇapathas* have been added to temples in Kinnaur, e.g. in the villages of Gondhla, Ropa and in Chambā (Pieruccini 1997: 220). The present door to the cella also does not date to the founding period of the temple. The figures contained in the nine panels are crudely sculpted and in a different style from the figures in the façade, but similar to some of the veranda architectural elements (Pl. 41). Some of these motifs—the crowned Buddha, the rosette forms—appear to copy, probably original, older models.

The façade of the original temple is 4.20 by 4.10 m, it is wider than it is high. The entire wooden portal / façade from edge to edge and from top to bottom is completely covered with deeply carved designs. The door rests on a double lotus band and the top of the small temple is shaped like a cornice (Fig. 5). The shape of the cornice can be seen from the cross section (Fig. 6). The decoration of the façade is divided into nine vertical and three horizontal bands. The vertical

bands are successively taller moving on a diagonal line outward from the center of the door as well as wider moving upward from above the portal.

At the center of the facade in the middle above the door is a large, much destroyed image of the deity to whom the temple was dedicated. This greatly damaged figure is difficult to identify (Pl. 42). It appears to have four arms and is standing on a truncated lotus pedestal. There appears to be a scarf connecting the figure and the proper left of the pedestal. The figure stands in a complex double architectural frame which is not damaged. There is an *āmalaka* at the apex above the head of the figure. There are several four-armed figure types popular in the area, Viṣṇu, Tārā and Avalokiteśvara. My pref-

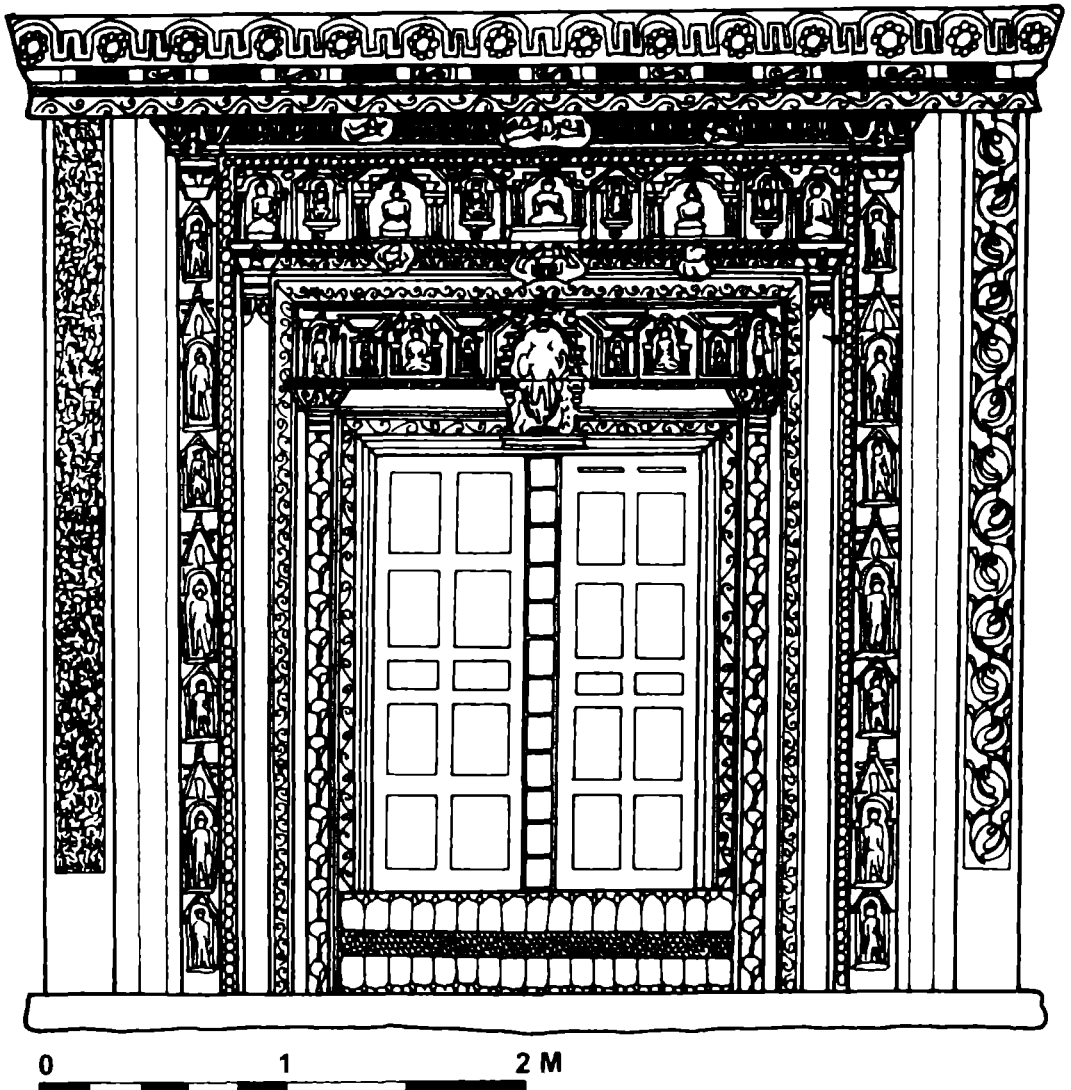


Fig. 5: East portal façade, Ribba (Michael Falser, WHAV Vienna)

erence would be to identify this figure as Avalokiteśvara on the basis of the popularity of this iconographic type in the region. Note the magnificent standing figure of a four-armed Avalokiteśvara still in worship in Kinnaur (Pl. 1). The identification of the Ribba figure as Avalokiteśvara would seem to be confirmed by the fact that the main image of the temple today is a figure of Avalokiteśvara (Pls 4 and 49 in Thakur this volume, see below).

Another interesting comparison is to a standing wooden figure found in Ribba not far from this present *lo tsā ba lha khang*. This figure apparently had three heads and six arms, one can see where the inner arms have been broken off at the chest. The round areas left by the broken front pair of arms seem to have been interpreted as once having been breasts. This image, which has a crown containing the five Buddhas, belonged to the family of Avalokiteśvara. On the proper left hand was a lotus and in a right hand only a *vajra* survived. Luczanits (1996) attributes the figure to the 10th century.⁴

The decoration of the temple façade: moving from the door out, there is a scroll pattern, a vertical row of deeply carved conch shells resting end to end. This theme occurs also in the wooden portal at Khojarnath. Next comes a band with a complex vegetal form and a row of circles. The most dominant feature is a row of vertically organized seven standing figures, some of which are clearly Buddha figures, each slightly turned inward. The figures stand in double tiered triangular archway supported by two columns, the upper part has a triangular deeply carved element (Pl. 43). The original intention of this design can be clearly seen in this detail from the Narastān Temple in Kashmir (Pl. 44). Placed above the row of standing figures is an inverted triangular-shaped capital on which is placed a kneeling figure in profile holding an offering (Pl. 43). Capitals of this shape were quite common in Kashmir, such as at Mārtāṇḍa (Meister et al. 1988: fig. 158). Just directly above the door is an horizontal row of figures. At each end of the horizontal band, placed upon the inverted triangular-shaped capitals is, to each side, a standing female figure slightly turned at the hips. At the center of this row is the damaged

⁴ Nearby where the figure, called today Durgā, was found and is housed, are great piles of wooden architectural elements which must have been part of the original temple housing the figure.

four-armed standing figure and to either side are three seated figures, the central of each group is a seated Buddha. The next horizontal row directly above the standing four-armed figure contains two flying divinities above them is a row of five seated Buddhas with a crowned Vairocana at the center (Pl. 45). Placed between the Buddhas are seated figures. Each of the Buddha figures is placed within a very complex deeply carved double arcade supported by twin columns to each side. Again, above the center Vairocana figure, are two flying divinities facing each other. At the very top row of the cornice is a meander-like pattern enclosing rosettes. This pattern is carried around on the top on the external side of all three walls, to the north, west and south (Pl. 40). Likewise the corner pilasters have the same pattern on both outside, adjacent faces. Compare the outer vertical band, Fig. 5, with the pattern on the north façade, Fig. 6. The simple pattern on the cornice is reminiscent of similar patterns at Pāndrethān and Payār (Meister et al. 1988: Pls 775, 777).

On the north elevation (Fig. 7), at the top of the wall is a row of pairs of birds facing each other with their heads turned back. Birds are a popular motif in the architectural decoration of Kashmir (Meister et al. 1988: Pls 749, 752). A somewhat confusing feature is the wooden truncated triangular pediment set into what appears to be a blind window. Within the lower part of the triangle is set a trefoil motif. The trefoil motif contained within the truncated triangle is a favorite motif found everywhere in buildings dated from the 8th century in Kashmir (Fig. 8a). This feature is found on the external walls, north, west and south (see Thakur Pl. 54). On all three external sides are six round beam ends each of which is carved with ornamental motifs (Fig. 7). On the north side (see Pl. 52 in Thakur this volume), the upper part of the triangular pediment does not appear to be part of the original decoration.

On the inside of the small temple the blind windows are now used as niches to accommodate sculptures (Fig. 6). It is clear that the present iconographic program has been radically and not very aesthetically altered. The main seated divinity is on the back west wall, the right leg descends outside of the niche in a rather awkward manner (Pl. 46). The seven clay figures presently inside the cella are in my opinion not original and therefore a detailed discussion is not relevant here. In short, the earliest sculptures known in Kinnaur date from the 10th-12th centuries and are all in wood with the exception of

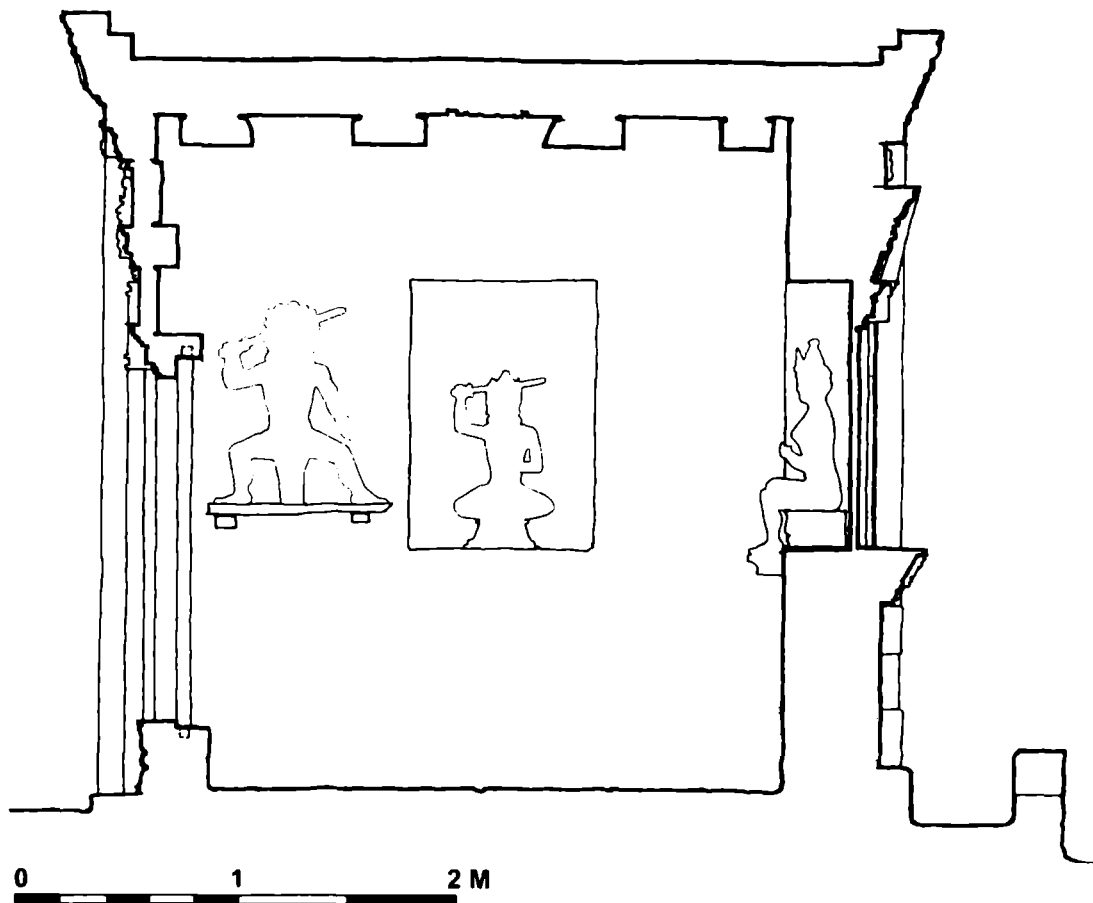


Fig. 6: East-west section, cella, Ribba (John Harrison, WHAV Vienna)

the Ropa clay sculptures ca. 11th century (Klimburg-Salter 1994 and in print, Luczanits 1996). These are quite different in style from the present clay sculptures in Ribba. On the basis of a comparative stylistic analysis to clay figures that may be attributed to the 10th-12th centuries I would suggest that all the present clay statues are later than the 12th century. The 2 guardian deities may be earlier than the other five.

I believe the main cult figure is probably Avalokiteśvara, an identification primarily suggested by the two Tārās—white and green—to either side. The latter have clearly defined female breasts but the central figure, newly painted yellow, clearly does not (see Pls 4 and 49 in Thakur this volume). Female deities in India are always shown with clearly defined feminine attributes round, often voluptuous breasts and round hips. The sacred art of Himachal Pradesh follows the Indian tradition of female representations as a glance at both the architectural decoration or free-standing metal sculptures demon-

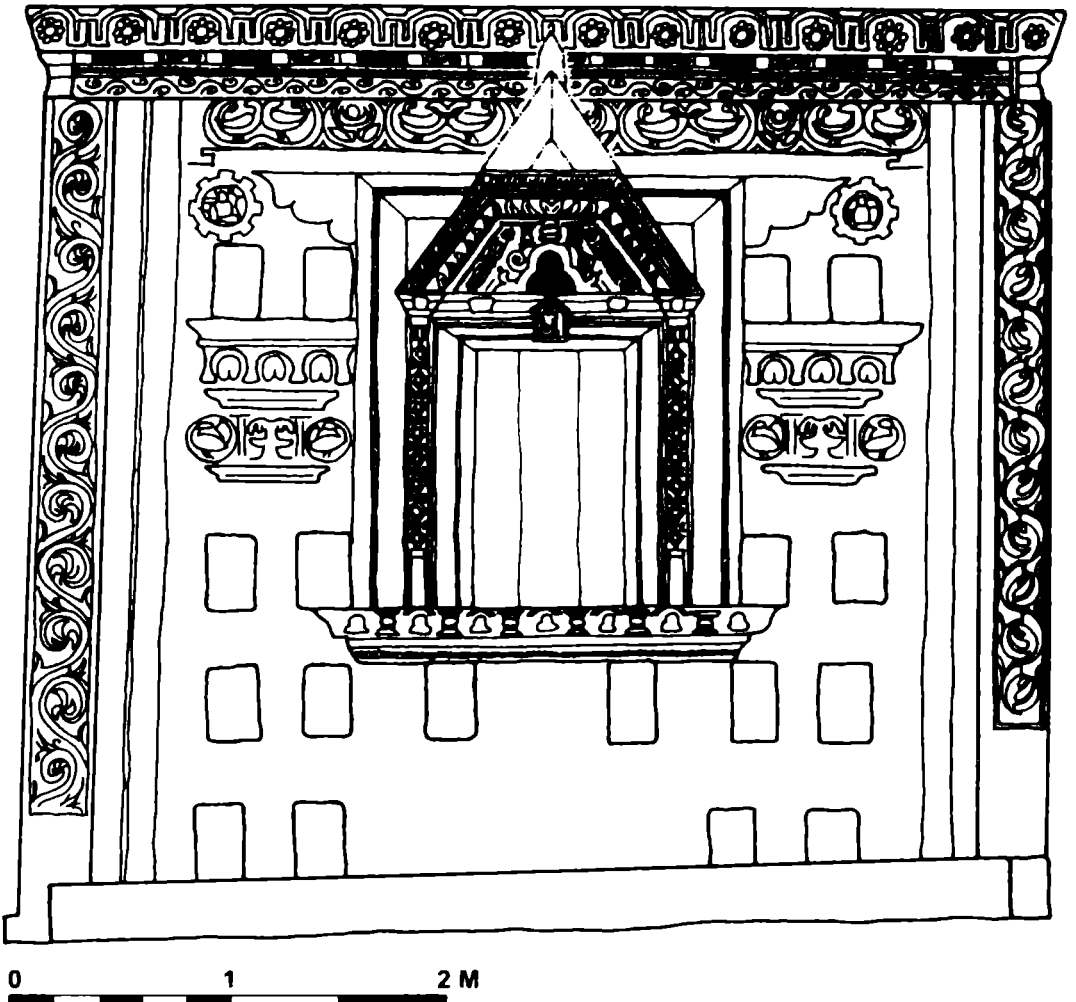


Fig. 7: North façade, Ribba (Michael Falser, WHAV Vienna)

strates, for instances the sculptures from the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple and Śakti Devī temple in Chambā (Postel 1985: e.g. figs 45, 50, 93, 94, 95 and p. 98 Bajaura). There are, to my knowledge, few clay representations of female deities in the Buddhist art of Himachal Pradesh but the painted female divinities in Tabo follow the Indian models (Klimburg-Salter 1997: figs 103, 104). The triad of three Tārās as proposed by Thakur is not known to me in the art of the region. Neither do I know of a group of clay sculptures where Avalokiteśvara is flanked by two Tārās, this triad is however found in later Tibetan painting.

The walls of the interior of the temple are badly blackened, but one can see remains of some paintings and a Tibetan inscription in *dbu med*, that was too faint and damaged for me to be able to be read

satisfactorily. I did not see the *dbu can* inscription discussed by Thakur. However, the costumes and headgear of the secular figures as well as the yellow painted hats of the *bla ma* place these paintings no earlier than the 15th century (Pl. 2).⁵

One of the most beautiful features of this small temple is the carved wooden ceiling design (see Thakur, Pl. 8). A masculine flying figure holds a lotus in the right hand. He wears a bouffant hairstyle, a *dhoti* and a simple necklace. In the corners of the rectangle are flower motifs depicted in profile. This figure style is usually identified as post-Gupta. A related concept is found in the small stone temple at Payār in Kashmir but the lantern roof certainly was used earlier in the Indian Himalayan region. No direct comparison is at present available for this composition but this type of ceiling was popular in Chambā 7th-8th centuries (Pieruccini 1997: 199-206). The flying figure is very close to similar figures found in the triangular corners of the carved wooden lantern roofs in the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple Bharmaur (Pieruccini 1997: 204; Postel 1985: fig. 39) and the Śakti Devī temple Chatrāhṛī (ibid., fig. 46). The latter is dated no later than the 8th century, the former is earlier—various dates are proposed but not later than the 7th century (that is prior to the advent of Kashmiri influence in Himachal Pradesh).

The architectural context

The small temple in Ribba unites themes traditional to the architecture of Kashmir and to a lesser degree, Himachal Pradesh. The small single celled temple placed on a raised platform and with a pyramidal roof is a common motif in the architecture of Kashmir from at least the 8th century. The only temples to have survived in Kashmir are in stone. However, based on the evidence of Ribba as well as the temples in Chambā mentioned above there must have been a number of such temples in wood throughout greater Kashmir. The best known temples of this kind are at Pāndrethān (Figs 8a, 8b), somewhat larger is the temple of Narastān (Pl. 44) and Payār. The former two temples are datable to the 8th century. The latter is usually dated later but belongs to the same typology. On the other hand, the Ribba single

⁵ My view expressed here was also stated at the IATS panel meeting and contrasts with that of L. Thakur's.

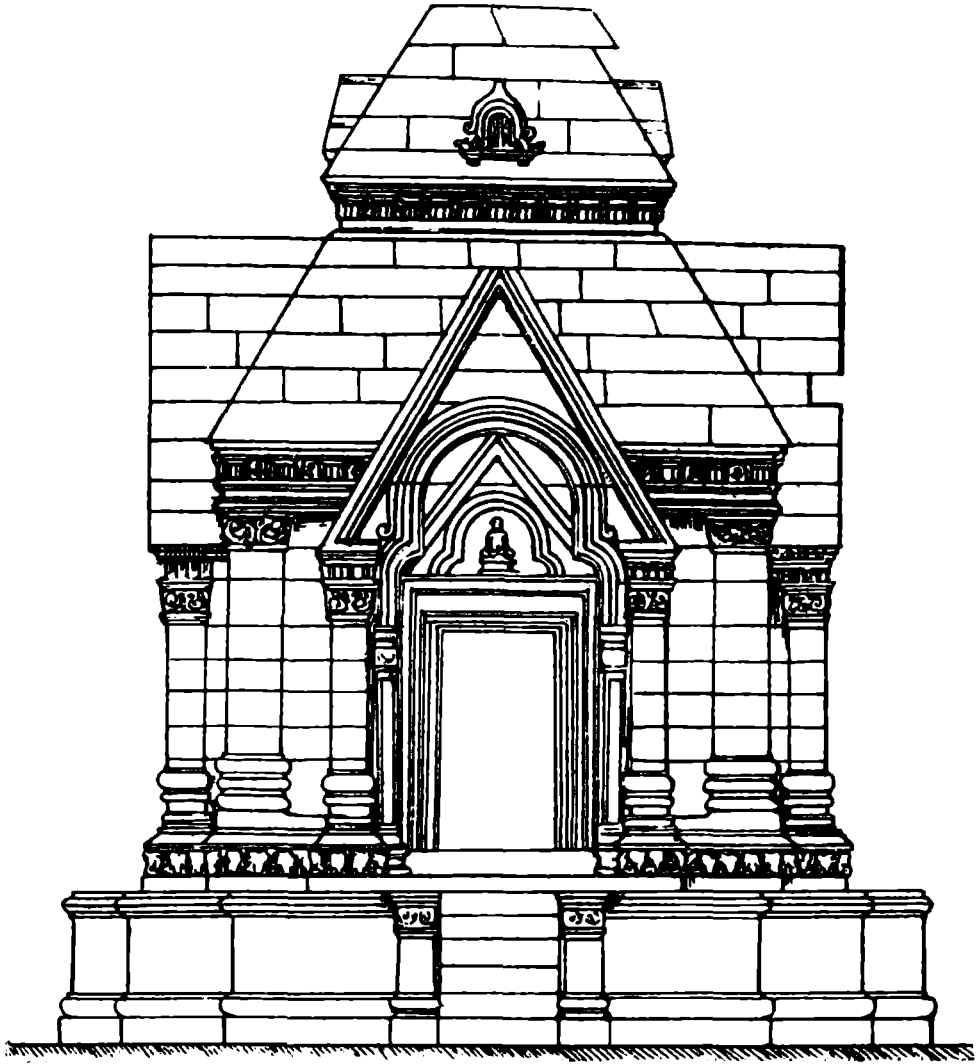


Fig. 8a: Pāndrethān (after Kak 1933: Pl. LXIV)

celled temple with portal / façade relates to the *garbhagrha* with portal / façade in the above mentioned Hindu temples in Chambā and Lahul. Pieruccini has already proposed that the present *garbhagrha* of the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple (Pieruccini 1997: 220) Bharmaur, Chambā was originally a small single celled temple. In my view, this may also have been the case in the Mirkulā Devī temple in Lahul, but this remains to be studied. Thus there may have been a tradition for small, singled Hindu temples with portal / façades in Himachal Pradesh.

The small Ribba temple is the only Buddhist temple in Himachal Pradesh whose architectural forms and decorative themes may be compared to monuments built before the advent of Western Tibetan

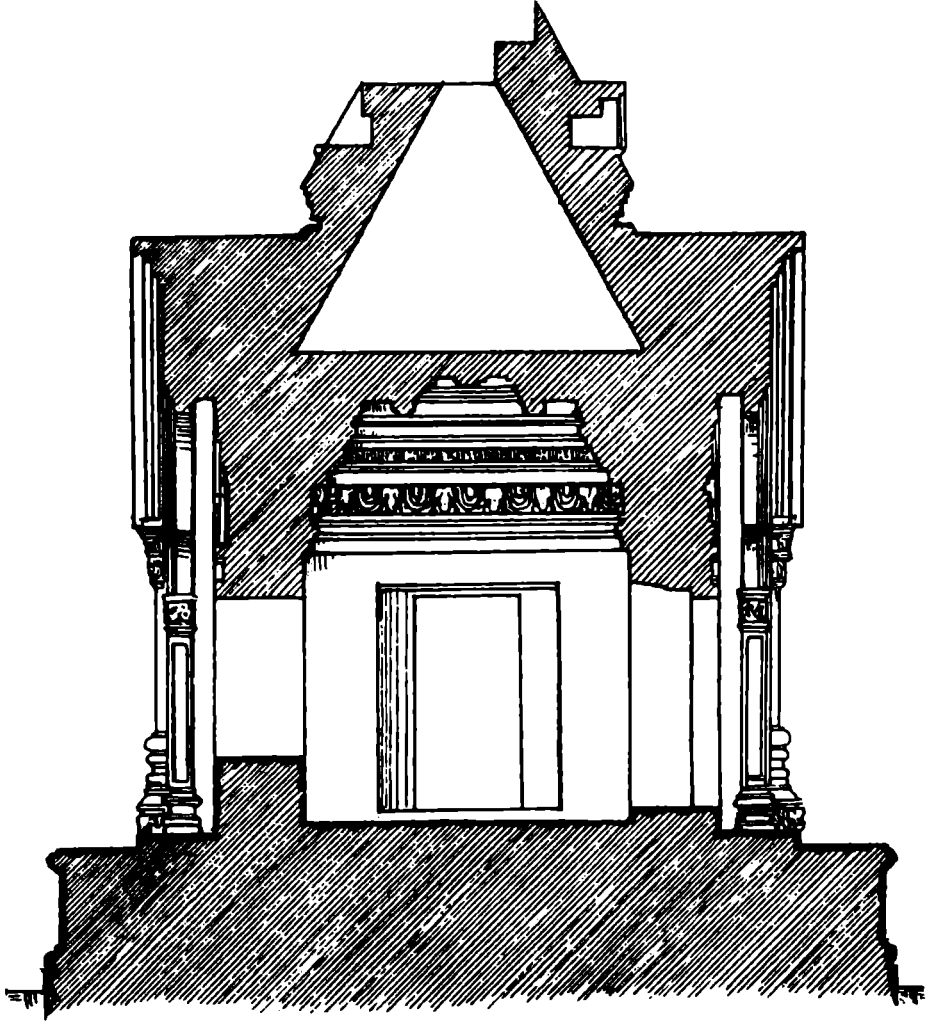


Fig. 8b: Pāndrethān (after Kak 1933: Pl. LXV)

patronage. The decorative architectural vocabulary used particularly as framing devices on the façade, echoes the repertoire of themes characteristic of Kashmir: the split pent-roof pediment framing a trefoil arch, the gabled pent roof, the simple elegant pediment frieze. The paired birds set in round frames and the decoration of the wooden ceiling. Neither this vocabulary of decorative forms nor the iconography can be associated with the other temples that have survived in the area. Only the Mirkulā Devī *garbhagr̥ha* has a portal / façade that uses architectural themes in the decorative vocabulary. The latter, however, are very fanciful and appear to be later than the decorative forms used in the decoration of the temple at Ribba. There are no architectural examples that provide comparison for the Buddhist figures placed in the Kashmiri-style architectural frames at

Ribba. For the small Ribba temple is the only complete (albeit small) Buddhist temple to survive in greater Kashmir. Here this term refers to an extended geographic zone from the Salt Range in Pakistan in the west to Chambā in the east.

The Ribba portal / façade may be considered a forerunner of the much larger carved wooden portal at Khojarnath. In contrast however, the decorative scheme at Khojarnath is organized around narrative scenes. Thus the portal at Khojarnath relates rather to the monumental portals in Tholing and Alchi and the smaller carved doors at Nako and Tabo rather than to the portal / façade of the small single celled temple in Ribba.

Summary of the art historical evidence

The original single-celled temple was elevated on a platform but without the veranda, of the internal decoration only the wooden ceiling is original. The four outer walls all maintain their original decoration which, although covered in many centimeters of white wash, is in good condition with the exception of the standing four-armed figure above the door. This damaged figure depicts the deity to whom the temple was originally dedicated. This figure has been destroyed although the elaborate frame remains intact. The prominent representation of the Five Jina with a crowned Vairocana at the center indicates that this was a Buddhist temple probably built not earlier than the 8th century. However, neither the date of construction nor the main cult figure of the small temple can be identified with certainty. We can only conclude that this small Buddhist temple was built after the advent of Kashmiri influence in Himachal Pradesh, which probably occurred after ca. the mid 8th century, and prior to the advent of the patronage of the Western Tibetan kings in the late 10th century. A working hypothesis of the 9th century as a possible date of construction for the temple is tentatively suggested here. As the art historical evidence is not conclusive can information be obtained from other sources?

Summary of the local tradition

At present I know of no early written source mentioning Ribba. According to the local tradition which I recorded in Ribba Village in 1998:

The temple of Ribba was built by a stranger. This man saw a big tree on the top of the mountain. He went to the tree and there was a Thakur there as it was his property. The man said where the tree lands I will build a temple. So they cut the tree and it landed where he had been standing. The Thakur then helped the man to build the temple overnight. Then the Ribba people came and saw the building; they were very angry and they did not know if it was a temple or a house. So they caught the stranger. They asked: Why did he build this building? They planned to cut his hands off, but before they could, he flew away to the Khadra village (opposite Ribba Village), and then from Khadra to Rarang (on the other side of the river). There he went to the family Rarang-pa. They cried “He is the Lotsawa *chenpo* Rin-chen-bzang-po”. He asked the family “What is your wish?” They had no children. They were then blessed with two children. Until today they have always two children. In Ribba, Rin-chen-bzang-po’s footprints can be seen in the rock on the west side of the temple. He left this print as he jumped into the air and flew away.

A complimentary story is found in Tucci and Gherzi (1934: 380).

A large rock in Rarang is said to contain Rin chen bzang po’s footprint. According to the Rarang story the Great Translator had attempted to convert the people of Ribba to Buddhism, but they did not want his teachings and tried to kill him. He saved himself by flying across the Sulej River to Rarang.

Veronika Hein kindly read this article and has sent me her translation of the same story from Ribba with her preliminary remarks (see Appendix). As her version contains some additional details (which however do not change my conclusions) I include her translation in an Appendix and thank her for permission to publish her field notes in this preliminary form.

Reference to similar stories from other traditions within the Indian cultural sphere demonstrates certain consistent elements, present also in the Ribba story. Temple building is usually associated with a conflict that is resolved through the intervention of deities or persons with supernatural powers (Granoff 1992). Here Rin chen bzang po demonstrates supernatural powers—he saves his life by flying away, he consecrates the temple from the opposite side of the river (Appendix).

The Ribba song can only be properly evaluated when placed within the context of typologically similar stories from the region. Until such time as a comparative analysis is possible it is nonetheless

interesting to compare the evidence obtained from an analysis of the art and the oral tradition.⁶

Conclusion

In essential features the art historical evidence confirms the picture depicted by the songs reported from Ribba and surrounding villages (see Appendix). The temple was probably the first Buddhist structure in the region and it reflects foreign influence (in the story demonstrated by the fact that the temple was built by a foreigner). The art historical evidence would appear to confirm the story's assertion that the community violently rejected the temple. The image depicting the deity to whom the temple is dedicated is not eroded as it is protected by the protruding upper façade (Pl. 47, Fig. 6). Rather, the figure evidences destruction as from a blow from the top down. It is possible that the figure was deliberately destroyed. Could a similar destruction account for the loss of the original images inside the temple? The two witnesses however diverge on the question of the historical setting.

Today the art historical documentation of the *lo tsā ba lha khang* bears witness to the history of more than a thousand years. This long history also lies embedded in the story of the temple's founding. For the purpose of the oral narrative four events that actually took place over a long period of time, are clustered together and identified with the personality of *lo tsā ba chen po*: the founding of the temple, the anti-Buddhist reaction, the subsequent acceptance of Buddhism in neighboring villages and the (re)consecration from afar of the Ribba temple by Rin chen bzang po. The art historical evidence tells us only that the temple was built considerably before the time of Rin chen bzang po, and that some violent act was committed against it. In my view the present sculptures and paintings inside the temple are later than the 12th century. The wooden six-armed figure (Pl. 3) may however be attributed to the time of Rin chen bzang po and thus may testify to the establishment of Buddhism at that time in Ribba.

The impact of the 20th century should not be overlooked. Today Kyi in Spiti Valley is the home monastery of the present incarnation

⁶ Hein is presently collecting songs in Kinnaur and Spiti related to Rin chen bzang po. These songs, when analyzed and published, will certainly contribute much to our understanding of this topic.

of *lo tsā ba chen po*. Both this incarnation (either the 21st or the 19th incarnation according to two different traditions) and the previous four incarnations, were born in the lower Spiti valley at either Sumra or Shalkhar. According to the present *lo tsā ba chen po* (reported during an interview in Tabo July 1996) all incarnations have been born in this region.⁷ The history of this lineage remains to be studied. However, the possibility of a local 20th century revival of interest in this lineage should not be ignored.

Future research on the songs related to Rin chen bzang po and on the Buddhist temples of Kinnaur should help to clarify the chronology of Buddhist art in the region. The question of patronage also remains to be clarified. As we have seen, the building of temples—which is often associated with the introduction of new cult practices, are powerful events that are necessarily associated with persons having magical powers—elsewhere in Kinnaur—Padmasambhava—here Rin chen bzang po, According to different schools, Buddhism was introduced into upper Kinnaur either in the 8th century by the former or in the 10th-11th century by the latter. These two personalities may be understood as representing two different phases in the history of Buddhism.

Tucci (1949: 273) speaks of a “Buddhist renaissance” at the time of Rin chen bzang po. The art produced at this time is characterized by Kashmiri influence. According to the *Biography* this influence came directly from Kashmir. However, it is also possible that one reason that Kashmiri artistic influences were so easily assimilated is that there was already a cultural pre-disposition to these stylistic and iconographic forms. This is precisely the possible scenario that emerges if one combines the evidence of the art and the oral traditions: The small temple at Ribba was dedicated to a four-armed Avalokiteśvara and built in a Kashmiri style. The temple was founded perhaps in the 9th century, in any case, sometime after the mid-8th century when Kashmiri influenced features became popular in the western parts of Himachal Pradesh. The local people rejected the temple and damaged the deity. Later, Buddhist teachings spread under the patronage of the Kings of Western Tibet and many Buddhist

⁷ Shalkhar contains beautifully carved architectural remains attributable to the 10th-11th centuries (Luczanits 1996).

temples were built in Kinnaur. After this phase of missionary activity Buddhism was widely accepted in the area and eventually also in Ribba, thus the small temple was re-consecrated. As evidenced by the several phases of decoration in and adjacent to the small original temple, it has been in use ever since this “Buddhist renaissance”.

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APPENDIX: TEXT OF THE SONG ‘LOTSA RINCHEN ZANGPO’

VERONIKA HEIN

Recorded at Ribba (Central Kinnaur), 24 Sept. 2001 by Veronika Hein. The song was sung in Kinnauri and translated into Hindi by two low-caste women from Ribba, Ratten Mala (40) and Gangri Dolma (45). Translation into English by Sonam Tsering (22) from Tabo, explanations given by the singers in brackets. For the names and a few Kinnauri words a provisional adapted phonetic spelling is used. It will later be replaced by IPA.

Lotsa Rinchen Zangpo

Lotsa Rinchen Zangpo came from outsideⁱ up to Ribba. He first stayed at Holang Stupa.ⁱⁱ (It is very famous because of his staying there.) Then Rinpoche did some *ramnae* (consecration prayer) there.

And from there he went to the top of the village, and from there he saw that this was a very good place, and he thought he could make it a holy place.

Then he went to the *kandre* (high place in the mountains) to get wood. There he saw a very big tree, it was nine ells.ⁱⁱⁱ There was the god Wanshir there (his picture was there in the tree). He thought and took the god out of the tree and put him into a smaller tree.

ⁱ Sonam put ‘..came from there’.

ⁱⁱ In another song it is called ‘Holdang Stupa’.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is left open if it is nine ells in circumference.

Rinpoche again started thinking and said to himself, 'Where the top of the tree falls down I will build the temple^{iv}'. Then he started to cut the tree, and where the top of the tree fell down, he built the monastery in one night, before it got light. He built a very good monastery.

Then Rinpoche again thought, 'I will build one more monastery. Then he collected the Nag *devtas* and asked them to make a pond. 'And I will make a monastery', he thought. But one *nag* refused. His name was Drokto tsang tsang. 18 gods became Rinpoche's friends.

The village of Ribba had 180 inhabitants. They could not recognise the Rinpoche and tried to cut off his hands. Saying he had forgotten his axe he went up onto the roof and from there he was able to fly away. From Khadar (the mountain on the other side of the valley) he turned back to look. 'I have built a monastery, but have not done *ramnae puja*'. Then the Rinpoche did *puja* from the other side. From there he went on to Rarang.

At Rarang near the spring a woman came to fetch water. That woman saw that he was Rinpoche, and she invited him to come to her house. At her house she asked him into her prayer room. She spread a rug for him to sit on. The name of the house was Rarang Bress.

Then Rinpoche spoke, 'You have given me so much honour, now, what is your wish?' Then she asked him to give her family two children for all the generations to come. And he granted her wish.

Then he left that place and went to the Thikderi rock. There he left the imprint of his body on the mountainside.

Comments and explanations added later (at different places)

Because the people of Ribba did not want the Rinpoche to build such a beautiful temple at any other place they tried to cut off his hands.

Lotsawa built the 108 monasteries in memory of his mother.

At Kanam the same song about Lotsawa is known and there the following addition was made: When the Rinpoche flew away from Ribba he gave a message to the people. He told them that if they found they needed his help, there was a big basin lying upside down. And to get his help, they could turn it over. But the villagers did this

^{iv} It is also called '*gompa*' in Kinnauri.

too soon, before the right time had come and all the *nagas* that were caught underneath the basin escaped into the jungle. And this is the reason why there is a great deal of water in Ribba.

Rindzen Tsheten (81) at Malling told us that also at Nako the monastery was built in the same night (as all the other Rinchen Zangpo temples) and the wood for the construction was carried by ants from a place called Chutarkhad.

At Nako the old temples were also built by Rinchen Zangpo and in the same night the local god Purgyal built the irrigation channel for the village.

There is also a foundation myth for Lalung (Lingti) which relates the old willow tree in front of the temple to the foundation by Lotsawa.

EXPLORING THE HIDDEN BUDDHIST TREASURES OF
KINNAUR (KHU NU): A STUDY OF THE
LHA KHANG CHEN MO, RIBBA

LAXMAN S. THAKUR

Ribba, which is called as Ridang¹ in a Kinnauri dialect, is situated on the left bank of the Sutlej (Śatadru) river, just opposite side of the village of Khadra, in Kinnaur district. It is one of the main villages of Kinnaur which is closely associated with the annual Kailāśa *parikramā*. The merits accruing from the performance of the pilgrimage around the Kailāśa remain unaccomplished without paying homage to the temple of the Lha khang chen mo at Ribba (Pl. 48). The paper under discussion tries to analyse its unique architectural layout, the sculptural embellishments, the faded mural fragments, the exquisite wood carvings and some partially legible inscriptions. Every piece of the archaeological evidence examined *in situ* by us provides important clues for suggesting a tentative chronological framework for its construction.

*Architectural Setting**

As can be comprehended from the layout of the temple that it stands on a rectangular plan measuring externally 686 cm by 672 cm, including the projected edges of the wooden rafters. The wooden rafters cross each other at the four corners, and the entire wooden framework stands on a platform of rubble masonry. The original door of the temple faces east but now the construction of a three-tier temple has blocked the entry into the temple's sanctum. Presently, it is approached through a 42 cm wide door from the north (Fig. 1). The measurement of the four walls of the sanctum varies: central wall, 297 cm; south wall, 335 cm; north wall 330 cm, and the eastern wall

¹ A few inhabitants of Ribba gave us the second version of Ridang as 'Rizang'.

* Eds. note: The reader is referred to Thakur 1996 for a glossary of architectural terms used in this article.

282 cm. Externally, the sanctum measures 425 cm by 412 cm. The thickness of the walls varies from 39 cm to 45 cm. Apart from enshrining the original seven clay sculptures in the sanctum, we noticed a number of brass, bronze and copper images and three wooden

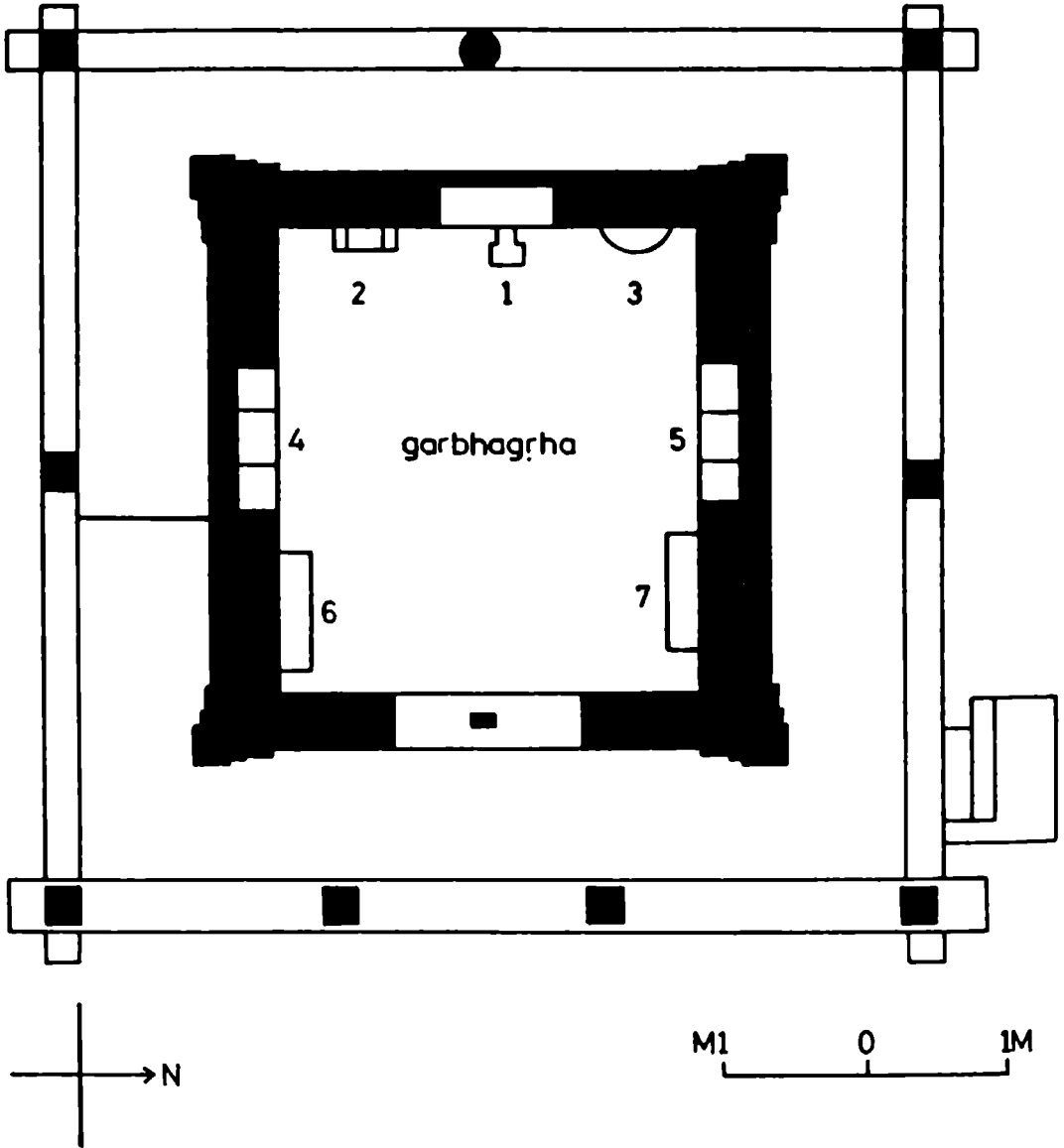


Fig. 1: Ground plan of the Yellow Tārā temple, Ribba, Kinnaur district (drawing: Laxman S. Thakur)

mchod rten. The circumambulation is formed by the four rafters and the nine pillars resting on them, of which, five are fluted.² What distinguishes this temple from the other wooden temples is the presence

² The fluted shaft of the central pillar on the western side is without a square base.

of three elaborately carved pediments on the walls. The superstructure of the temple is built on the wooden architraves resting on the nine pillars. The roof of the superstructure was originally roofed by the wooden shingles, and capped by a wooden canopy (ht. 220 cm), presently preserved in the complex (Fig. 2). Now, the temple is covered by corrugated iron sheets.

Sculptural Productions

This section is devoted primarily to the study of the seven clay sculptures which belong to the period of its foundation. Several clay, metal and wooden sculptures of the later periods have been noticed, but are excluded from this analysis for a want of space. The name, position and measurement of each sculpture is tabulated below:

Sr. no.	Name	wall	ht. from the ground	height	width
1.	Yellow Tārā	central	135 cm	120 cm	56 cm
2.	White Tārā	central	144.5 cm	90 cm	45 cm
3.	Green Tārā	central	133 cm	90 cm	47 cm
4.	Mañjuḥoṣa	south	126 cm	90 cm	36 cm
5.	Vajrapāṇi	north	118 cm	90 cm	36 cm
6.	Hayagrīva	south	145 cm	105 cm	82 cm
7.	Vajrapāṇi	north	123 cm	105 cm	80 cm

For exact location of each deity in the sanctum, see Fig. 1.

It is interesting to observe that the sculptors at Ribba had used four different measurements for sculpting seven deities. The White and Green Tārās form the first group; Mañjuḥoṣa and Vajrapāṇi the second, and Hayagrīva and Vajrapāṇi represent the third group. The main statue, representing the Yellow Tārā, is slightly bigger than those of the White and Green Tārās. Artistic and iconographic details of these sculptures need to be examined much more elaborately.

The Female Goddesses

The western wall of the sanctum has three sculptures of Tārās which are arranged high up on the walls like those of Tabo's *gtsug lag*

khang; however, the Yellow Tārā is placed in a rectangular niche (Pl. 4). She is seated with the right leg pendant, and the foot rests on a specially designed wooden footrest. The wooden strip below her seat is beautifully carved with the half-diamond and semi-circular *guilloche*. The right hand is in *varadamudrā* whereas the left seems to indicate the *abhayamudrā*. She is decked with many ornaments including the round ear-rings and a necklace with the hanging pendants. Her crown is beautifully adorned with the three crescents and triple-pointed devices regularly intervened by the suspended tassels. The almond-shaped eyes are half-closed, and the facial details are serene (Pl. 49). The decorative details of the Green Tārā (Sgrol ljang) and White Tārā (Sgrol ma dkar po) are almost identical.

The major differences are noticeable in the decorative details of the crowns. The White Tārā's right leg does not hang down but rests on the wooden pedestal. The right leg of the Green Tārā is supported by a small lotus and the stem is attached to the bottom of the throne. The entire sculptural group represents the entourage of the Yellow Tārā (Sgrol gser).

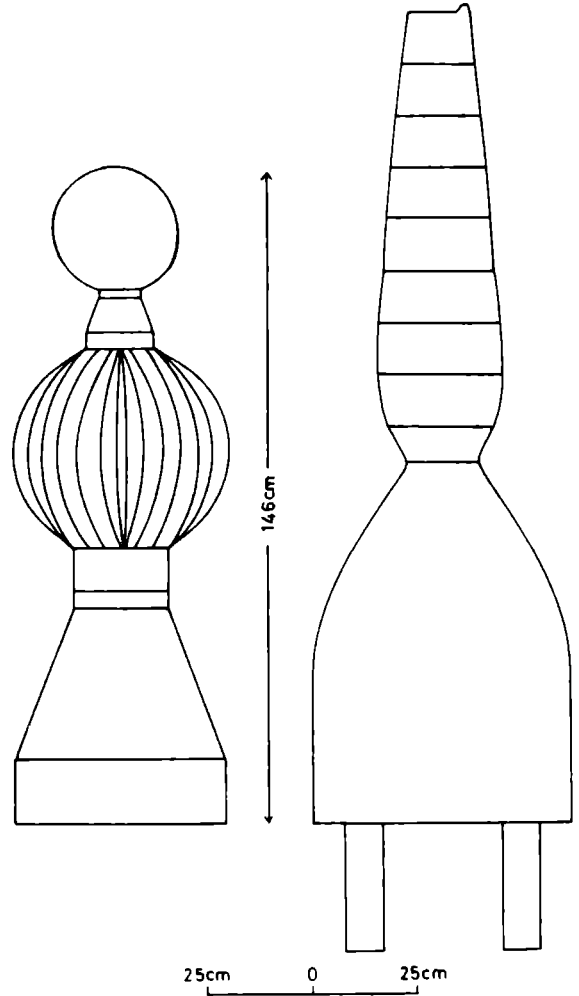


Fig. 2: Elevation of the two wooden canopies, the Yellow Tārā temple (drawing: Laxman S. Thakur)

The Two Bodhisattvas

A niche in the north wall has a seated clay statue of Mañjuḥoṣa. He holds a sword in the right hand and a book in the left. He wears several ornaments, including the round ear-rings, a necklace with a round rosettee in the centre, armlets and wristlets. A niche in the

south wall, however, enshrines a blue-coloured Vajrapāṇi. He is represented here as a *bodhisattva*, wearing a pointed crown and several ornaments. He holds the bell in the left hand and a *vajra* in the right hand. Innermost jambs of the niches are decorated with the *patrāvalli*. The nimbus and the aureole of the sculptures are multi-coloured showing the use of blue, yellow, red and green colours.

The Two Tantric Protectors

The two protectors of the Buddhist faith, Hayagrīva (Rta mgrin) and Vajrapāṇi (Phyag na rdo rje), stand on the wooden pedestals in the south and north walls (Pl. 50). Both of them are wearing skull crowns and snake-*yajñopavītas*. Their lower garments consist of the loin-cloth (*stag gsham*). The flaming halos are painted on the adjoining walls. A single-line inscription has been noticed below the wooden pedestal of Hayagrīva.

Numerous other clay, metal and wooden sculptures have been noticed in the sanctum. Among the notable clay sculptures include Śākyamuni (115 cm by 70 cm), Avalokiteśvara (115 cm by 70 cm) and Padmasambhava (115 cm by 70 cm). Three metal statues of Śākyamuni,³ and two wooden sculptures of Maitreya and Tsong kha pa belong to the later period.

The Perishing Murals

The thick layers of dust and carbon have made the visibility of the murals negligible. Many partially visible figures belonging to both the divine and human realms can be seen scattered on the walls where dust could not damage them. What themes or texts they represent cannot be ascertained. Among the surviving panels on the north wall, however, include the murals of historical personages (Fig. 3) who were closely associated with the construction of the Lha khang chen mo. A panel on the left side illustrates about thirteen figures which are arranged in two rows. An effort has been made to identify some of the figures painted in the lower row. Of particular interest

³ I could not see the metal statues of Śākyamuni in the sanctum of the temple when I revisited Ribba on 22 April 2000 (Pl. 56).

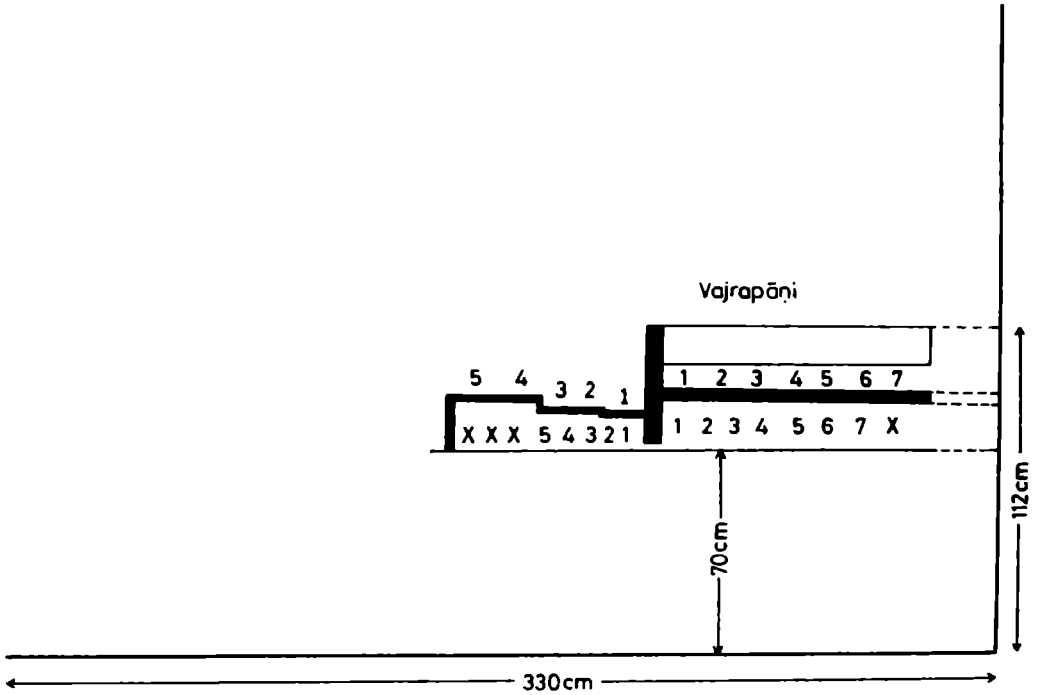


Fig. 3: The mural panels on the north wall of the Yellow Tārā temple (drawing: Laxman S. Thakur)

are the hats of personages in the upper row (Fig. 4, d, e). With the exception of the second figure, who wears a flat hat, the other persons in the row have conical hats. The clothing of the monks consists of a loose garment with the collars turned on the shoulders.

The second panel has about sixteen figures, arranged in two rows, below the wooden pedestal of Vajrapāṇi. The lower row seems to depict the eight nuns as can be inferred from the first inscription written below. It reads: Chos bzang mo (Dharma-

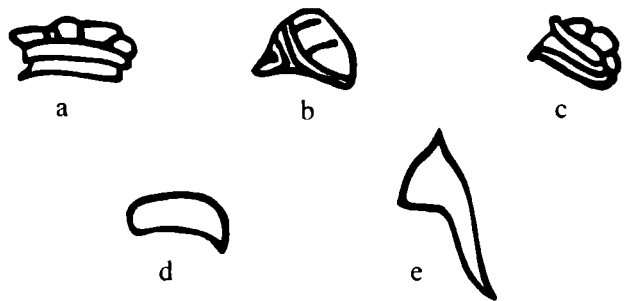


Fig. 4: Hat types depicted on the murals, north wall (drawing: Laxman S. Thakur)

bhadrā). The hat style of the first monk painted in the upper row is quite close to the style of hats worn by some historical persons painted on the walls of the *sgo khang* in the *gtsug lag khang* at Tabo⁴

⁴ For a variety of hats painted in the murals of Tabo, see Thakur 2001: fig. 18; Klimburg-Salter 1997: figs 121, 128, 130-1, 137, 139.

(Fig. 4, a). However, the use of the turbaned hat is peculiar to Ribba. The black or blue upper garment worn by some females is quite different from the western Himalayan costume seen in the murals of Tabo, Lha lung and Alchi. Such costume has not been noticed in the monasteries built during the medieval period.

Murals of the Lha khang chen mo preserve some stylistic elements not encountered either in the murals of the *gtsug lag khang* (painted in AD 996 and 1042) or in the monasteries founded by Ye shes 'od and the *lo tsā ba* Rin chen bzang po in Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti and Western Tibet.

Tibetan Inscriptions

Fortunately, we noticed some inscriptions written on the south and north walls. An inscription on the south wall is written below the wooden pedestal of Hayagrīva (Pl. 5). It reads: lha . khang . chen . mo . yang . rab . byung . ho po rgyal tshan . bya . phul .

Palaeography and orthography of the inscription seem particularly significant when compared with the earliest inscriptions of the *gtsug lag khang* at Tabo. The main peculiarities of the inscription are:

1. no *svasti* sign is noticed in the beginning of the line; 2. no single or double *shad* has been used; 3. *tsheg* is not used regularly; 4. the use of the *na ro* sign is archaic and the two curved strokes cross each other; 5. the *'greng bu* sign is separated from the lower part of the consonant; and 6. the *ya btags*, used thrice in the inscription, is round thus it differs from the angular or pointed sign used in the late tenth and early eleventh century Tibetan inscriptions from Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti.

A single-line inscription can be translated as 'the temple of the goddess, and the eminent, rGyal tshan bya phul (Śreṣṭha-dhvaja) of Ho po'.⁵

⁵ Ho po seems to be the same locality or region referred to as Hobu lang ka in the biography of Rin chen bzang po; see *Collected Biographical Material about Lo-chen Rin-chen-bzan-po and his Subsequent Reembodiments*, ed. Rdo rje tshe brtan, Delhi 1977, fol. 88, line 4. The change from Ho po to Hopu is quite possible in Tibetan, and this region corresponds to the area surrounding Chini (Chine) and Pangi (Pange) in Kinnaur district.

Some historical personages painted on the north wall are identified with the help of the label inscriptions. I could read only three of them:⁶

1. bla . ma . sngan . rgyal . tshan . dang [xxx]
2. chos . bzang . mo . ||
3. [xxx] ge . shes . ||

Palaeographically, these inscriptions are not very different from the one noticed on the south wall. The use of the double *shad*, previously not noticed, is an additional characteristic of the inscriptions.

Wood Carving

The Lha khang chen mo preserves the finest and the earliest specimen of wood carvings from Kinnaur. The superb wood carvings are comparable with those of the earliest surviving temples such as the Lakṣaṇā Devī, Śakti Devī, Markulā Devī and Dakhanī Mahādeva temples. It is, therefore, important to make an in-depth study of its carved portal, door panels, gabled windows, pillars and ceilings of the gallery and the *garbhagr̥ha*.

The Portal

The doorway leading to the *garbhagr̥ha* of the temple measure 136.5 cm by 181 cm, i.e. in a ratio of 1:1.33. The façade is divided into five receding jambs and lintels. The innermost jamb is decorated with the *patralatā* designs; so are the carvings on the corresponding lintel (Pls 51-52). The second jamb shows an auspicious symbol, namely the *śaṅkha* (conch), each arranged one above the other and interspersed by a rosette, thus each unit measures about 14 cm.⁷ The corresponding lintel has in its centre (*lalāṭa-bimba*) a standing figure represent-

⁶ Recently, I made an unsuccessful attempt to re-read them, however, unfortunately, in an effort to renovate the sanctum's walls, the locals have white-washed the lowest portion of the walls and now everything is concealed beneath the layers of clay.

⁷ The wood carvings of the *śaṅkhas* on the doorjambs and lintels are also noticed at Tsarang in Kinnaur, and Khojarnath in Tibet's Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. See, for example Luczanits 1996: 67-75, fig. 2; Ram 1999: 306.

ing possibly either a Buddha or Uṣṇīṣatārā (Pl. 6). The figure is enshrined in a structure which looks like a *nāgara* temple, crowned with an *āmalaka*. On either side of the *śikhara* part of the structure are carved four figures—the figures at the extreme corners represent the standing females. The third *śākhā* is decorated with the seven standing figures.⁸ The second figure from the top is provided with an architectural frame having a double roof which looks like that of a pagoda temple. Similar structures are carved on the façade of the Markulā Devī temple at Udaipur (Lahaul-Spiti). In the centre of the corresponding lintel is depicted Vairocana in *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*, along with his vehicle, a pair of lions. The vehicles of the four other Jinas are also carved below their seats. The entire carvings on the lintel seem to depict the *maṇḍala* of Vairocana. The fourth and the outermost *śākhās* consist of the scroll work done with meticulous care. The corresponding lintel of the fifth *śākhā* preserves very interesting carvings showing the beaded *ardha-candra* decoration regularly interspersed with the hanging tassels. The entire freeze is intervened at three points by the dancing *gandharvas*.

The Door Panels

The door of the temple is divided into two unequal parts by a central wooden doorpost: the space on the left side measures 56 cm and on the right 64 cm respectively. The front side of the central post is carved with the twelve cyclic animals. They represent from top to bottom: mouse, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, bird, dog and boar. The two doors are divided into ten smaller rectangular panels. The use of the double-pillared shaft for the trilobed-arched-structures carved around the Buddhas seem to indicate that these door panels belong to a period when the façade of the temple was carved for there are representations of such double-pillared structures on the lintel. Is it possible that the eight panels in the upper two rows represent the eight Buddhas? The first figure on the left side is missing, however, the iconographic features of the four Buddhas on the right hand side are fully preserved (Pl. 53). The Buddha with the triple-pointed crown on the right side is in *dharma-*

⁸ The total height of this structure enshrining the standing Buddha on the door-jamb is 64 cm.

cakrapravartanamudrā; the figure on his left side is in *bhūmisparśamudrā*; the figure below him is in *dhyānamudrā* and the one on his left is in *sthānakamudrā*. The pillared structures carved around the Buddhas are capped by three *āmalakas*.

The Gabled Niches

The most interesting and exquisite carvings appear on the gabled windows on the exterior side. All the three niches are plastered with the thick layers of the red clay and lime, however, the majestic carvings on the panels are noticeable even today. The rectangular wooden frames of the windows are arranged in jambs and lintels. In the centre of the north window is carved a seated Buddha (Pl. 7). The triangular pediment above has a variety of carvings. At the lowest level is carved a trilobed arch and the inner space decorated with perforated designs. The pointed ending of the arch is capped by an *āmalaka* and a pinnacle. The topmost section of the pediment has three figures carved on it: the centre face and the two adoring figures seated on the raised lotus-seats. All the figures have been painted recently. The wooden window at the back of the wall does not have the triangular pediment but the other decorations are almost identical as noticed on the north wall (Pl. 54). The niche on the south wall is partly hidden and partly damaged but the triangular capping is preserved.

Ceilings

The wooden ceiling of the sanctum preserves in the centre of it a flying *gandharva* (Pl. 8). Carved in a square panel, the figure holds the stem of the full-blown flower in the right hand, and some indistinct object (either mirror or disc) in the left hand. An identical copy of the same figure is carved on the ceiling of the circumambulation. Four corners of the outer square are decorated with the rosettees, and the entire panel is adorned with the chain of beads. The arrangements of the braids of hair is fascinating and the little space left above the head is filled up with a flower. The depiction of such carvings remind us of similar panels carved in the temples of the Lakṣaṇā Devī and Śakti Devī in Chamba, and the murals of the goddesses of offering painted on cloth in the ceiling of the *gtsug lag khang* at Tabo.

Several wooden panels are preserved in the ceiling of the circumambulation. They include the full-blossomed flowers, perforated de-

signs, a man with a lion and a dancing peacock with a snake in his beak (Pl. 55). All these carvings need to be preserved from further decay.

Pillars

The total number of pillars in the gallery of the temple are nine: shaft section of the five pillars is fluted and the others are square. This is the second known Buddhist temple from Himachal Pradesh in which the fluted wooden pillars are used. The other example comes from Gumrang in Lahaul. The capital of the pillars are decorated with the scroll-work. The upper storey of the temple rests on the horizontal wooden rafters laid from corner to corner on the brackets. Originally, the topmost part of the temple was crowned by a wooden canopy, now preserved in the verandah of the temple.

Art Style and a Possible Date of Construction

After discussing above every piece of the archaeological evidence we would try to suggest a possible date for its construction. The wooden façade adorned with certain motifs and devices alone cannot be considered as the only *criterion* for its dating. The question of its chronology will remain unresolved until we take into cognizance the art style and iconographies of the original seven sculptures enshrined in the sanctum. Equally important to analyse is its plan and architectural layout. No tentative date for its construction can be suggested without studying the palaeographic and orthographic features of the surviving Tibetan inscriptions. The primary data supplied by the above mentioned pieces of evidence can further be verified with the help of numerous decorative motifs carved on the façade, niches, and the ceilings of the sanctum and the circumambulation. Such a comparative study has been attempted below so as to resolve the question of its vexed chronology.

The entire superstructure of the temple stands on a raised platform of stones. The plan of the temple is unique but to me it seems to be

an extension of the plans of the Śakti Devī temple, Chatrarhi.⁹ This kind of plan was also used for the later pagoda temples in Kulu, Simla and Mandi districts. What interests us here the most is the receding graduations of the four corners. Such a phenomenon has not been noticed in the early wooden temples of Himachal Pradesh. The only example of this kind of design is found in the *karna* proliferations of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple at Naggar (Kulu) (Thakur 1996: 76-7, fig. 30). This temple belongs to the beginning of the twelfth century AD. The Lha khang chen mo of Ribba seems to be of an earlier period for reasons that the architects experimented with the wooden material in Kinnaur and did not achieve a complete success with such receding corners as done later in the beginning of the twelfth century by the *sūtradhāras* at Naggar. Thus the study of its layout demonstrates that the Lha khang chen mo borrowed and improved subsequently the technique of the plan used in the early temples of Chamba and Kulu, and incorporated new architectural elements in devising the receding corners, later perfected by the stone masons at Naggar in Kulu.

Sculptural data in the temple provide equally fascinating information. The crowns of the four sculptures are identical. Three-pointed parts of the tiara emerge from the middle of the crescent, and from the pointed edges of the crescent suspend down three tassels. The crown of sculpture at Ribba is slightly different from the crowns of the clay sculptures of the *gtsug lag khang* at Tabo. The fluttering streamers emerging from a rosettee decorated above the ears is missing at Ribba. The flaming halo as seen around the sculpture at Tabo is also absent at Ribba. With the exception of the Yellow Tārā, which is sculpted in perfect scale, the anatomical details of the other sculptures are not worked out very accurately, however, a ratio of 1:2 has been maintained for Tārā's width and height proportions. It seems very likely that the sculptors working at Tabo in AD 996 improved upon the art traditions already prevalent in Kinnaur, Simla Hills, Kulu and Chamba.

No detailed analysis can be presented on the mural style of the temple. Some of the crowns, however, are similar to those of Tabo's

⁹ Cf. Thakur 1996: 92, fig. 34; see also the plan of the Chandrasekhara temple, Saho, *ibid.*, 65, fig. 23.

murals painted in AD 996. A variety of hats are used by the personages painted on the north wall. The conical hat is quite common and normally used by the Indian *paṇḍitas* and the Tibetan *lo tsā ba*. The second variety (Fig. 4, e) of hat resembles the flat hat used by some *kalyāṇamitras* in the Gaṇḍavyūha murals at Tabo. The turbaned-type hat is unique to Ribba for similar hats are not seen in the murals of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur. The style of such hat is also different from the turbaned-hats noticed in the murals of the *gsum brtsegs* at Alchi (Pal and Fournier 1982: figs S5-8). The upper garment of some nuns consists of a loose gown with an open frontal part but it differs substantially from the cloak worn by the retinue of Wi nyu myin at Tabo. The stylistic trends and their exact sources as noticed at Ribba remain unidentified. Possibly, the murals represented the 'incipient Mnga' ris style' or the local 'Khu nu style'.

The epigraphical data recovered from the temple clearly suggest that the inscriptions contain most archaic features of orthography, and thus may be earlier than the inscriptions of the *gtsug lag khang* at Tabo dated AD 996. The wood carvers of the Lha khang chen mo seem to be dexterous artisans who embellished fastidious façade, trefoiled niches and delicate carvings on the ceilings of the circumambulation and the sanctum. The use of the triangular pediment for the niches is unique at Ribba. This particular decorative device travelled from Kashmir to Chamba and thence onwards to Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur and Western Tibet. Under the able guidance of the *karminā* Gugga, the artists of the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple at Bharmaur tested its applicability as early as AD 700.¹⁰ The re-appearance of the triangular pediment at Ribba is something revealing and interesting. The use of the double pagoda-type roof with birds in the lateral corners of the upper tier has been noticed at several places such as Tabo and Udaipur both in Lahaul-Spiti. The regular use of the double-column support for enframing the deity on the lintel and the door-panels at Ribba perhaps preserves an art tradition which is earlier than the Markulā Devī temple. A bow-type element, sprouting forth from the topmost canopy noticed in the wooden Buddhas from Tabo,¹¹ is missing at Ribba.

¹⁰ See, for example, Thakur 1996: pl. LXXXII; Goetz 1955: pl. Ib and pl. II.

¹¹ See Tucci 1988: pls. XLVI-XLVIII; Francke 1914: pl. XVIII.

Two crucial and persuasive pieces of evidence at Ribba can further be used as decisive factors for settling the chronological problem. The depiction of the architectural frame for enshrining the main standing deity on the *lalāṭa-bimba* of the temple is the representation of the *nāgara* temple. The *nāgara* temple architecture represents several evolutionary stages in Himachal and the adjoining areas. The *nāgara* replica carved on the *lalāṭa-bimba* has *karṇaṇḍakas* which mark the each *bhūmi* (stage) of the conical *śikhara*. Also the *jaṅghā* part of the temple has the pillared niches (*gavākṣa*-windows). The five pillars used in the circumambulation of the temple are fluted. The question arises: is there any *nāgara* temple in Himachal which possesses all the three features? The earliest use of the *karṇaṇḍakas* has been noticed in the Baśeśar Mahādeva temple, Bajaura (ninth century); however, the deep niches are not used at Bajaura.¹² Deep niches along with the pillared portico and the fluted pillars are noticed in the temples of Chamba such as the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple and the Hari Rāi temple (Thakur 1996: 68, pl. LIII). The former belongs to the reign of Yugākaravarman (constructed in *c.* AD 950) and the later was constructed in the eleventh century (*c.* AD 1081). Is it possible that the Lha khang chen mo at Ribba too was completed sometime in the middle of the tenth century AD by a local Buddhist community who employed several artists for the completion of the temple possibly from the regions of Chamba and Kulu?

The Lha khang chen mo at Ribba is so far the earliest surviving wooden pagoda temple in the western Himalaya, preserving *in toto* the splendid wood carving tradition of the Champakā region. Murals of Ribba undeniably represent a style whose origin should be rooted in north-western traditions. No surviving mural fragments of this period are available for comparison from either Chamba or Kashmir, however, a school of painting seemed to have been established in Chamba sometime in AD 700. The use of the expression *naiḥka chittraiḥ* in the Nandī image inscription corroborates it. On the basis of the available epigraphic, architectural and sculptural data, especially the existence of a replica of the *nāgara* temple carved on the façade showing the corner—*āmalakas* and pillared niches on the *jaṅghā* part suggest that such decorative devices were used simulta-

¹² See Thakur 1996: 55, fig. 17, pl. XXXIV.

neously along with the fluted pillars in the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple at Chamba. The same artistic trends possibly influenced the wood carvers of the Lha khang chen mo soon after the completion of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple. The temple of the goddess Tārā might have been completed between AD 955 and 995; the former date is suggested on the basis of the completion of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple in AD 950, thus by allowing a period of five years for an art style to travel from Chamba to Kinnaur (however, it can be copied in the same year if an architect or a wood carver is invited directly from Chamba); and the latter date is arrived tentatively from the known date of the establishment of the Tabo monastery. When Rin chen bzang po had travelled quite extensively in Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti after AD 975, and quite possibly, he might have visited Ribba and its splendid temple of the Yellow Tārā since it is located on the Kinnaur Kailāśa *parikramā*. Subsequently, the local folk traditions possibly tried to preserve Rin chen bzang po's association with the temple, and resulted finally by assigning the construction of the temple to the great *lo tsā ba*. On the contrary, the inscriptions preserved in the temple speak about the eminent, Rgyal tshan bya phul (Śreṣṭha-dhvaja) of Ho po and the *bla ma* Sngan rgyal tshan.

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DID ATIŠA VISIT ZHA LU MONASTERY? TRACING ATIŠA'S INFLUENCE ON TIBETAN ICONOGRAPHY*

AMY HELLER

Introduction

Although traditional histories of Zha lu monastery mention the consecration of Zha lu by Atiśa (956-1054), the great Indian Buddhist scholar, this episode is lacking in his biographical literature.¹ Nonetheless, among the mid-11th century mural paintings at Zha lu, a form of Buddha which was one of Atiśa's personal meditation deities (*yi dam*) may possibly be recognized (Eimer 1979: fol. 2b). This Buddha is Trisamayārāja Buddha, the Buddha of the Triple Vow (*dam tshig gsum gyi rgyal po*). The earliest biographies of Atiśa emphasize his visions of this Buddha while he was in the Gtsang province where Zha lu monastery is situated (Eimer 1979: fol 71b). In addition, Atiśa translated a ritual for this Buddha which is included in the Tibetan canonical literature.² Certainly, Atiśa's reverence for the Trisamayarāja Buddha cannot alone be a definite indication of Atiśa's presence at Zha lu. In fact, other iconographic identifications for this wall painting might also be considered (see below). Atiśa has great renown as a translator and as author of major philosophical treatises and commentaries but his numerous liturgical compositions, some of which he both composed and translated, are seldom emphasized. Among these rituals are treatises which constitute a distinctive iconographic aspect from those otherwise known, for deities such as Avalokiteśvara, Acala, Gaṇapati, Tārā, Vajravārāhī as well as Śākya-

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¹ Vitali 1990: 93 (n. 31) cites the 14th century biography of Bu ston as the earliest source describing Atiśa's consecration of Zha lu, see the critical edition of the biography by Ruegg 1966: 90.

² *Dam tshig gsum bkod pa'i rgyal po yi ge brgya pa'i sgrub thabs*, translated by Atiśa and Dge ba'i blo gros, Sde dge 5104 (= Cordier 1909-1945: LXXXVI, 14); see also Sde dge 2697.

muni and Trisamayārāja. We propose to examine here some aspects of the history of the transmission of Atiśa's teachings as well as to examine a recently discovered source on the history of Zha lu monastery. This source records Atiśa's visit and gives insights on the aesthetic models *en vigueur* at Zha lu during the 11th century.

The Genealogy of the Lce Clan

The starting point for this research was a Tibetan blockprint text, the composition of which has been dated to mid-16th century by internal evidence of the last abbot cited. This text is entitled *Chos grva chen po dpal zha lu gser khang gi bdag po jo bo lce'i gdung rabs*, and recounts the genealogy of the founder of Zha lu, Lce btsun shes rab 'byung gnas (ca. 1007 - ca. 1060 ?) from the 8th to 15th centuries.³ It emphasizes the donors of foreign origin during the foundation of the Zha lu monastery and highlights the importance of Nepalese aesthetic influences during the 11th century. This genealogy relied on earlier historical sources and claimed to trace the genealogy of the clan throughout Tibetan history. While it is fascinating to learn of lives of ancestors during the time of Khri srong lde brtsan, the information on the foundation period of Zha lu was rather different from other histories. This text discusses the travels of Lce btsun to India, subsequently to Nepal, and his return to Zha lu, whereupon the original architectural configuration of Zha lu monastery is recounted. The following is a summarized translation of these passages (fol.13b, 15 a):

Then Lce btsun himself had constructed the following chapels: the main temple *gtsug lag khang* of Zha lu in the shape of an *dbu rtse* temple (n.b. a three level, trapezoidal shape construction as in the *Bsam yas dbu rtse*).⁴ On the west two rooms for the north and south chapels, and on the east side, up above there was the Yum chen mo chapel, and below what is now called the *mgon khang*. At that time, it was not a protectors' chapel (*mgon khang*), it was a deambulatory (*rgyun lam*).

³ Tucci 1949: 656-662 translated a truncated version of this text, lacking the exact title, the first five pages, as well as folio 15a under the title: *From the Genealogies of Zha lu*. The blockprint I consulted is complete in 55 folia. It is conserved in a private collection in India. The full text of the passages summarized here are to be found in the appendix to this article. I thank Franco Ricca for reference to the date according to Martin 1997: 171.

⁴ Denwood 1997: 222 and Kreijger 1997: 170-172 discuss alternative hypotheses for the phases of the construction.

Having decided to renew his monastic vows in India, Lce btsun studied at Bodh Gayā with Abhayākara. After he returned to Zha lu, he formally invited Atiśa to consecrate the *gtsug lag khang* (*de nas jo bo chen po rje zhog pa la spyan drangs zhva lu'i gtsug lag khang la rab gnas zhus pas/ rab gnas legs khyad par can la rab gnas chags shing bkra shis so/*). As Atiśa particularly venerated the Thugs rje chen po aspect of Avalokiteśvara, he made a prophecy of a spontaneously appearing image from India which would fulfill their mutual spiritual aspirations.

Fol. 20b-21a:

At that time there were Indian, Nepalese and Tibetans from Dbus and Gtsang as donors. In particular the Nepalese were the very good donors (because) they had wealth from the properties of rGyan ri and Zhal ri (n.b. these are the two mountains of Zha lu and rGyan gong, the monastery built earlier down the road from Zha lu). Thus they constructed a reliquary *mchod rten* at the foot of the Zha lu mountain, and now still (in the 16th c.) this is called the Nepalese *mchod rten*. Due to discussion between those of Zha lu and Ri phug, it was decided that better benefit for all beings would occur if Atiśa's special image of Avalokiteśvara was brought to Zha lu, thus it was conserved as the major image in the *dbu rtse* chapels.

Atiśa's arrival for the consecration thus was followed by the installation of the miraculous Avalokiteśvara image at Zha lu, these two events and the consecration all occurring for the benefit of all the population on the banks of the Gtsang po.

The account of the 11th century ends abruptly. It is followed by a long discussion of the genealogy and confrontations of rival clans until construction and donations are again described for Grags pa rgyal mtshan's restoration in early 14th century.

This account is more than laconic. To a degree, it corresponds to other known histories of Zha lu but does not agree with the earliest biographies of Atiśa, which completely omit any mention of Zha lu. The description of the Indian and Nepalese donors supporting Zha lu is noteworthy. Certainly, the presence of Newar artists at Zha lu is historically documented for the 14th century renovations. However there is no earlier documented evidence of Newar artists, although Zha lu is situated beside one of the major trade routes leading to the Kathmandu valley. If there were Nepalese donors to Zha lu during the 11th century, it would not be surprising to find Newar artists al-

ready present at Zha lu at this time.⁵ Two wooden capitals photographed at Zha lu (Pls 57 and 58) are potentially artistic evidence of such Newar presence at an early date, as the carving of the floral and vegetal scrolls, the elephant and Buddha recall Newar workmanship (Slusser 1982: pl. 165).⁶ Lce btsun invited Atiśa to Zha lu, after the former returned from his studies in India with Abhayākara in ca. 1039 (Vitali 1990: 96). This is one year prior to Atiśa's departure from Vikramaśila to Nepal where he resided in Kathmandu during 1040-1041, leaving there to move to western Tibet in 1042, then to central Tibet in 1045. As Vitali remarked, it is certain that Atiśa arrived in central Tibet during 1045, thus the Zha lu consecration would have to be no earlier than 1045. Petech has recently formulated the hypothesis that the 1042 restoration of Tabo may have been held in 1042 in order to commemorate Atiśa's arrival in the kingdom (Klimburg-Salter 1997: 62-63, fn. 14). A similar hypothesis for Zha lu is plausible.

Due to Atiśa's Indian nationality, he is regarded as one of many Indians who introduced the Tibetans to Indian aesthetics. It may be presumed that wherever he traveled, he brought with him numerous Indian manuscripts, paintings and sculptures as didactic tools. During his residence in Nepal he most probably encountered Newar artists eager to study and emulate the Indian models. Atiśa's biographers describe his skills as an artist and a calligrapher (Eimer 1979: fol 20a-b). Although this may be literary cliché, according to the Zha lu monks, Atiśa personally carved a *tsha tsha* mold for Thugs rje chen po Avalokiteśvara which they still use today, inscribed in both Tibetan and Sanskrit (Pl. 9).⁷ At Zha lu monastery, whether one considers Atiśa himself as the harbinger of Indian artistic tendencies or if these are to be attributed to the presence of the Indian and Newar donors, the mural paintings of the *mgon khang* show marked influence of Newar painters adapting Indian aesthetic models.

⁵ Roberto Vitali quoted the *Myang chos hyung* (17th century) for the presence of Nepalese as donors to Zha lu. See Vitali 1990: 97.

⁶ I thank Terese Tse Bartholomew for kindly providing these photographs from her visit to Zha lu in 1981. The capitals are no longer extant.

⁷ Peter Skilling has translated Atiśa's *tsha tsha* ritual in his forthcoming monographic study on Buddhist sealings. I thank him for calling my attention to Atiśa's daily practice of stamping *tsha tsha* and his composition of a ritual for this practice, described in Skilling (forthcoming).

This is particularly evident when examining these wall paintings from an aesthetic perspective. The studies by Jeremiah Losty revealed clear differentiation in the Newar and Indian manuscript painting styles of this period (Losty 1989a, 1989b). Losty compared 11th to 13th century manuscripts of Nepal, Bihar and Bengal to distinguish direct Pāla aesthetic from Newar aesthetics inspired by Pāla prototypes. Jeremiah Losty (Losty 1989a: 86) delineated the following characteristics:

For Nepal: “somewhat rounded face, tubular limbs, palette of red/orange contrasted with dark blue, volume created by color modeling”.⁸

For India: “more oval face, heavier limbs and torso, exaggeratedly curvaceous standing and seated postures, soft tone red but bright pigment yellow, volume created by outline.” (as visible in this Indian book cover, now conserved at Sa skya monastery, Pl. 10).

Particularly striking in the 11th century mural paintings of the Zha lu monastery entrance chapel is the stiffness of the body postures of the Bodhisattvas who crowd together surrounding the seated Buddha in his *stūpa* (Pl. 59: Buddha and entourage, Pl. 11: detail of entourage). There is a complete absence of voluptuous seated or standing postures which characterize Indian aesthetics of this period. Yet certain aspects of the jewelry and costume models very certainly derive from Indian antecedents. The double-pair of earrings is an example of an Indian jewelry model adapted by the painters at Zha lu, as seen in this Pāla statue of Tārā wearing one earring in her earlobe and another earring at the back of the ear (Pl. 60) and the head of a Bodhisattva from Zha lu (Pl. 12).⁹ Closely examining some of the individual figures, the painters have achieved nuances of chromatic modeling which are emphasized to create an effect of volume to the bodies as visible in the head of the Zha lu Bodhisattva (Pl. 12). If one follows Losty’s schema, this technique of painting, and the elongated body proportions reflects the work of Newar painters.

⁸ See for example the manuscript of the Neotia collection, dated 1028, illustrated in Pal and Meech-Pekarik 1990: fig. 37. I thank Jean-Michel Terrier for discussion on the differentiation of Indian and Newar painting modes at this time.

⁹ Michel Postel (1989) documents appearance of such double earrings worn by both female and male deities from sixth century to Pāla period models approximately from Atiśa’s own region and lifetime in his pls II 20, II 26, II 27, II 32 and pls V 25, V 26, V 39, V 49. I thank C. F. Roncoroni for reference to this study.

The transmission and spread of Atiśa's teachings

Further evidence of Atiśa's presence at Zha lu might be shown if the iconographic scheme reflected Atiśa's personal meditations or visions. The fortuitous discovery in the Tibetan Bstan 'gyur of two ritual compositions by Atiśa for the specific iconography of the Tri-samayārāja Buddha (see note 1), who may be represented in this Zha lu chapel, led me to investigate Atiśa's influence upon Tibetan iconography not only at Zha lu Monastery but also elsewhere in Tibet. While the results at this phase of research do not prove whether or not Atiśa did visit Zha lu, the vast quantity of compositions in praise of numerous deities, replete with detailed iconographic descriptions signed by Atiśa as author or translator, amply document the enormous influence of Atiśa in this formative period of Tibetan Buddhist iconography.

Before discussing specific information from these texts, let us consider their context. Alaka Chattopadhyaya has listed more than a hundred texts either translated or composed by Atiśa but his iconographic contribution was not particularly emphasized.¹⁰ Thus art historians tended to think of Atiśa as a teacher of theology and philosophy while in fact he also created many meditative practices for various deities. Consultation of the Tibetan Buddhist canonical literature (even the Bstan 'gyur alone) reveals no less than 103 texts signed by Atiśa or attributed to him of which perhaps 75 are ritual compositions with iconographic descriptions. While the Bka' gdams pa monastic order stemming from Atiśa's direct disciples is well known for limiting the diffusion of certain tantric texts as part of their monastic ideals, other rituals of praise for numerous deities were widely transmitted to students. The variety of deities is impressive and includes tantric deities such as Saṃvara (Sde dge 1491).

Atiśa's teachings spread widely beyond the Bka' gdams pa monasteries due to Atiśa's numerous disciples and their students. For example, ca. 1130 A.D., Dus gsum mkhyen pa, the first Karma pa hierarch, practiced the Saṃvara cycle and rituals for Acala according to the method of Atiśa's cycles, having studied them with Yol chos dbang, a disciple of Atiśa (Roerich 1979: 475). Later, he learned from Sgam

¹⁰ I thank Dr. Helmut Eimer for very kindly sending me his annotated list of A. Chattopadhyaya's list of Atiśa's works, correlating the Sde dge and Beijing canonical literature (Chattopadhyaya 1967: 442-503).

po pa the Lam rim according to the Bka' gdams pa tradition. More important still is the pivotal role of Phag mo gru pa (1110-1170),¹¹ who studied with many Bka' gdams pa masters, most notably the disciple of Po to ba, 1031-1105, abbot of the Rwa greng monastery founded by Brom ston, Atiśa's direct disciple. Consequently, Atiśa may be represented in mural or portable paintings as a spiritual ancestor of Phag mo gru pa. In addition, Atiśa may figure in lineages of transmission of other Bka' brgyud pa sub-schools. For example, Atiśa may be counted in Stag lung lineages due to Phag mo gru pa's students which included Stag lung thang pa bkra shis dpal (1142-1210). He may also figure as a spiritual ancestor for the 'Bri gung pa, because the founder of this sub-school, 'Bri gung Rin chen dpal Jig rten mgon po (1143-1217), was one of Phag mo gru pa's four principal disciples (Roerich 1979: 562-563). Due to the transmission of Atiśa's liturgical teachings in these schools, deities particularly venerated by Atiśa frequently are represented as protectors in the lower register of paintings commissioned within the Stag lung pa and 'Bri gung pa monastic schools.¹² Extending their domain beyond the 'Bri gung monastery northeast of Lhasa in central Tibet, the 'Bri gung pa founded hermitages in the Kailash region of western Tibet ca. 1215, and then were active further west in Ladakh, notably at Alchi monastery (Petech 1988: 355-388; Goepper 1990). At Alchi, the pantheon is largely inherited from the iconographic systems of Bka' gdams pa inspiration, replete with representations of those deities esteemed by Atiśa. The Stag lung teachings spread from central Tibet to eastern Tibet as of ca. 1275 when the Ri bo che monastery was founded as a branch monastery of Stag lung (Singer 1997). These examples show that in addition to the immediate repercussion of Atiśa's translations and compositions during his lifetime or shortly thereafter, the iconographic legacy of the Bka' gdams pa persisted and spread. During the 14th century, Tsong kha pa revitalized the transmission of

¹¹ See Roerich 1979: 270 for his general biography but also Roerich 1979: 555 for Phag mo gru pa's Bka' gdams pa studies.

¹² For representation of deities according to Atiśa's specifications, see Kossak and Singer 1998: pl. 10, Buddha with Acala, Avalokiteśvara and Tārā. For portraits identified as Phag mo gru pa and Stag lung chen po, see *ibid.*, pl. 26, where the White and Green Tārā and Vajravārāhī in the lower register are all to be recognized as teachings inherited from Atiśa due to his rituals for Tārā (Sde dge bstan 'gyur 3685, 3688, 3689), for Vajravārāhī (Sde dge 1592).

many of these teachings as part of his creation of the corpus of Dge lugs pa liturgies.

The Principal Meditation Deities of Atiśa and the 11th Century Mural Paintings of the Zha lu Monastery's Entrance Chapel

In 1476, the highly reliable Tibetan historical work the *Blue Annals* devotes a full chapter to Atiśa and the Bka' gdams pa teachings, explicitly describing the transmission among his students of his practice of the Trisamaya Buddha and even a vision of Acala as protector (Roerich 1979: 312), as well as Atiśa's devotion to Tārā¹³ (Roerich 1979: 241, 246, 254). The biographies of Atiśa describe his visions and ritual compositions while he is in Tibet—between 1042 and 1054—for Buddha of Medicine, Acala, White Tārā, Green Tārā, Avalokiteśvara.¹⁴ These are precisely the deities represented in this painting from the Fournier collection (Pl. 61), which represents a group of four deities: Sman bla, Acala, Green Tārā, Avalokiteśvara Thugs rje chen po all in forms sacred to Atiśa. This group contrasts with the so-called *Bka' gdams lha bzhi*, the Four deities of the Bka' gdams pa teachings, which are understood to be representations of Śākyamuni, Acala, Green Tārā and Avalokiteśvara Thugs rje chen po. The latter three all correspond to Atiśa's special iconographic visions.¹⁵ Atiśa's vision of a metaphysical debate between Manjuśrī and Maitreya also lead to a distinctive manner of painted representation, found in the 11th century murals of Gra thang, as well as at Zha lu monasatery in a series of later mural paintings.¹⁶ In the Tibetan canonical literature, a specific text by Atiśa in praise of the Buddha of

¹³ Allinger 1997: 667 and Singer 1998: 65 both observed that the Ford Tārā corresponds to the ritual Atiśa translated and both scholars study specific aspects of style and iconography. Heller 1999: 146-147 (pl. 78) translated the liturgy of Atiśa's ritual for a specific form of Acala.

¹⁴ Eimer 1979: Sman bla: 91b3, 91b5 for composition of rituals; see fol. 92a Acala; 80a6 Avalokiteśvara Thugs rje chen po; 94a Tārā vision. (section 387).

¹⁵ Lokesh Chandra 1974: vol. 1, Śākyamuni 160-163; Avalokiteśvara 478-481; Acala 758-763, Tārā 622-625. For Tārā, this unusual aspect corresponds to a *thang ka* of Tārā revered at Rwa greng as a legacy from Atiśa. On the *Bka' gdams lha bzhi* see "The Transmission of the Bka' gdams legs bam" presented at IATS Leiden 2000 by Franz Karl Ehrhard, whom I thank for correspondence on the transmission of the teachings and identification of this group of four deities.

¹⁶ Henss 1997: 167. Eimer 1979: fol 94b vision of Maitreya and Mañjuśrī. For detailed analysis, see the forthcoming monographic study on Zha lu by F. Ricca and L. Fournier.

Medicine is not found to my knowledge, but possibly this was included within the body of a larger text. Atiśa's compositions for the other deities are all included in the Bstan 'gyur. Let us now attempt to understand to what extent Atiśa's visions or his ritual compositions influenced the choice of iconography at Zha lu.

There are at present four panels of mural paintings in the Zha lu entrance chapel now called the *mgon khang*. The two panels on the left are attributed to the 11th century although much over-painting is visible, particularly immediately beside the door. Of the two panels on the right, one retains much 11th century painting while the other has been over-painted several times, starting with the renovations of 1306 (Vitali 1990). These panels all represent seated Buddhas inside a temple, surrounded by Bodhisattvas, monks and animals. To the right, the two Buddhas are to be identified as Śākyamuni, recognizable by monk's robe and the gesture of *bhūmisparśa*, seated in a rainbow nimbus which is placed inside the distinctive architecture of the Mahābodhi temple at Bodh Gayā; To the left, two Buddhas wearing monastic robes are seated inside a temple in the position called *vajraparyāṅka* (*rdo rje dkyil khrung*), their two hands in teaching *mudrā* (*dharmacakramudrā*).¹⁷ The skin color of the Buddha's faces varies from pink to golden but this may be due to over-painting.

Ricca and Fournier's previous study of the iconography of the mural paintings of the immediately adjacent 11th century chapel revealed the textual source of these paintings to be the *maṇḍala* of the *Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara* and the *Durgatipariśodhana*, although the planetary deities' attributes did not correspond in every respect (Ricca and Fournier 1996: 353). Both of these cycles are dedicated to Vairocana. The Buddha Vairocana is the Buddha who in diverse liturgies signifies the Dharmakāya. As the Dharmakāya is beyond representation, by convention Vairocana is usually represented in the royal crown and garments of the body of bliss (Samboghakāya). Some liturgies however, specify that he may also be represented in the color and body form and monk's robes of Śākyamuni, the

¹⁷ See Tucci, *Indo Tibetica* IV (1): 106-112, for this iconography identified in relation to the Buddha Vairocana and his role to uphold the sacred vow.

Nirmāṇakāya.¹⁸ Whether Vairocana's body is of golden or white color, the hands characteristically make the *bodhiyagrī-* or *samādhi-mudrā*, representing a supreme moment of enlightenment in accordance with the liturgical cycle. In the context of the Five Jina, Vairocana is typically represented making the *dharmacakramudrā* as the Wheel of Dharma is symbolic of Vairocana's spiritual family.

This reasoning led me to the hypothesis that the two Buddhas on the left wall may be aspects of Vairocana in correspondence with the *yi dam* worshipped by Atiśa. Lokesh Chandra has identified such a Buddha as Trisamayamuni, the Sage of the Triple Vow, more literally the Buddha of the Triple Sacrament or Commitment (*samaya / dam tshig*).¹⁹ The *sādhana* of Trisamayamuni specifies this Buddha as an aspect of Vairocana.²⁰ The term triple vow refers to the oaths pronounced by the faithful: 1) to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha; 2) the commitment to generate the enlightened mind of spiritual aspiration, and lastly 3) the Bodhisattva vow (Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, vol. 2: 113). Clear pre-eminence in the Tibetan pantheon was established as indicated by the fact that the first ritual of both of the two Sgrub thabs rgya mtsho anthologies of the Bstan 'gyur are dedicated to this form of Buddha.²¹ This liturgy used a terminology of place of residence and attitude situating this Buddha as a purposeful conflation of identity between Vairocana and Śākyamuni.

¹⁸ Vairocana represented in monastic robes as Śākyamuni is described by Jayaprabha, 9th century, in the Beijing Bstan 'gyur 3489. A detailed discussion of this ritual is included in my article in press "P.T. 7a, P.T. 108, P.T. 240 and Beijing bstan 'gyur 3489: Ancient Tibetan rituals dedicated to Vairocana" to appear in the E. Gene Smith Felicitation volume, R. Prats, T. Tsering, and D. Jackson, eds.

¹⁹ Lokesh Chandra 1991: pl. 525. I thank Ulrich von Schroeder for this reference and a photograph for study (von Schroeder 2001: 89b). Lokesh Chandra 1991: 525 and Willson and Brauen 2000: pl. 15 both illustrate a variant of the *dharmacakramudrā* for this Buddha, with the hands splayed outward, while Ulrich von Schroeder has photographed in Tibet an example from north-east India where the Buddha makes the traditional *dharmacakramudrā*.

²⁰ I thank Ven. Mtshan zhabs Rinpoche, Zürich, for reading this ritual evocation with me. The Rinpoche clarified that he understood the text to state that the Buddha is an aspect of Vairocana, and not, as M. Willson translated, "the Lord is crowned with Vairocana". See pl. 15 and the translation by M. Willson on pages 243-244 in Willson and Brauen 2000. The Tibetan text is found in the *Sadhanamala* (Lokesh Chandra 1974, vol.1: 148). Neither Willson (pl. 15), nor Lokesh Chandra (525) nor von Schroeder (89b) have a crown with a Buddha.

²¹ See Cordier 1909-15: LXXI, 95/96 as well as LXXXVI, 14 (sDe dge 4221/4222 and 5104).

At least three alternative hypotheses for the identification of the two Buddha in *dharmacakramudrā* represented in the mural paintings of Zha lu might be considered: the Buddha Śākyamuni at the moment of the first teaching (although in this case usually the gazelles are represented under the throne rather than lions as at Zha lu); or possibly Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, or possibly Akṣobhya.²² Not only the context of the entire composition and all the paintings within the chapel must be analysed, but also the complete group of mural paintings executed as part of the same period of consecration, including perhaps mural paintings in chapels elsewhere in the monastery. It would be far beyond the scope of the present article to attempt to definitively identify in full the Buddhas of the entrance chapel due to these considerations. Be that as it may, as mentioned above, the *Blue Annals* duly recorded the devotions by Atiśa and his followers to the Trisamaya Buddha, thus this hypothesis of identification should be among those retained pending future studies which may determine both Atiśa's historical role at Zha lu and the full iconographic scheme at the time of the monastery's consecration.

To conclude, a final example of Atiśa's influence is found in this composition of a Buddha in monk's robes, in *dharmacakramudrā*, surrounded by a group of Bodhisattvas and monks, with seven Green Tārās in the lower register, found as a mural painting in Alchi's *lha khang gsar ma* (Pl. 62) and as a *thang ka* (Pl. 63).²³ Conforming to the pattern of emulating the Bka' gdams pa iconography in Alchi, it is thus not surprising to find a wall painting which may also represent this Trisamayamuni aspect of the Buddha, and here with seven protecting Green Tārās at his feet. As the Green Tārā is most noted as a favorite for Atiśa's devotions, this may possibly reflect the liturgies composed and translated by Atiśa, represented long after his lifetime and far from the paths he trod.

²² Goepper 1999 presents a differentiated analysis of Akṣobhya's preaching iconography. Drège 1999: fig.11 includes a Xi xia blockprint inscribed as "Maitreya naissant en haut au ciel des Tuṣita" dated 1189. Ricca and Lo Bue 1993 illustrate chapel 1E, Dga' ldan lha khang devoted to Maitreya where there is a representation of Śākyamuni displaying *dharmacakramudrā* (pl. 36). Klimburg Salter 1997b discusses the Vairocana identification and Atiśa. I thank F. Ricca, E. Lo Bue and C. Luczanits for correspondence on differentiation among these identifications.

²³ See Pal and Fournier 1982: pl. LS12 and Heller 1999: pl. 58 for a proposed identification of the identical iconography as an aspect of Vairocana represented in the *Nirmāṇakāya* body of Śākyamuni.

Appendix: Transcription of Passages Summarized in the Article

Fol. 13b-15b

De nas lce btsun rang gi zhva lu'i gtsug lag khang/ dbu rtse nub ma gnyis kyi lho byang gnyis/ dbu rtse shar ma'i yum chen mo'i steng – (illegible two letters) dang/ 'og gi da lta mgon khang byas pa 'di/ de dus mgon khang min rgyun lam yin pa de rnams bzhengs pa'o/ rgyu rin chen sna tshogs las grub pa'i spyang ras gzigs lde sku ru bzhengs/ da lta rang byon bzhugs pa'i lho phyogs na zhal byang gzigs na bzhugs pa de bzhengs nas gsol ba btab (14a) pas/ de'i zhal nas/ rgya gar rdo rje gdan du jo bo kha sar pa ni/ de bzhin gshegs pa dgung lo bcu gnyis pa'i sku tshad khyad par 'phags pa gcig byon pa 'dug pas/ de gdan drongs gsungs nas der lce btsun gyis gdan 'dren pa'i 'dun pa mdzad/ don gnyis pa bod kyi sdom pa 'di ma dag par shes nas/ zhva lu dge 'dun chos sde dang bcas pa 'go ba ye shes g.yu drung la gtad/ de dus zhva lu pa la ka bzhi gdung brgyud byung zer/ de nas lce btsun gyis rgya gar rdo rje gdan la byon/ rdo rje gdan pa chen po slob spon a bha ya ka ra la sdom pa blangs chos mang po zhus/ spyang ras gzigs kha sar pa ni spyang drangs pas/ rgya gar gyi lha bsrung mams ma dga' nas/ rgya gar chu bo ganga las spyang ma drongs/ de nas lce btsun gyis dkon mchog la zhag gsum gyi bar du gsol ba btab pas/ mon pa'i mi tha mal pa las nyis 'gyur gyis che ba gcig byung nas/ rnal 'byor pa khyed sku 'di gar spyang 'dren zer/ bod na zhva lu (15a) zer ba'i gtsug lag khang gcig yod pa sa der spyang 'dren pa yin byas pas/ 'o na ngas khur gi bla bya 'am zer/ bod kyi zhva lu tshun spyol glu ji tsam dgos pa ste ra gsungs nas spyang drangs/ zhva lu'i gtsug lag khang gi rten gyi gtso bo la bzhugs so// da lta rang byon gyi sku rgyab na bzhugs pa 'di yin no// spyang 'dren mkhan gyi mi de rang bzhin med par yal song/ rten ngo mtshar bar grags so/ de nas jo bo chen po rje zhog pa la spyang drangs zha lu'i gtsug lag khang la rab gnas zhus pas/ rab gnas legs khyad par can la rab gnas chags shing bkra shis so// de dus jo bo'i zhal nas jo bo thugs rje chen po la yi dam byed mi su yod gsungs pas/ lce btsun gyis bdag sdogs lag zhus pas/ 'o na chu bo chen po sidhu'i 'gram na 'phags pa spyang ras gzigs rang byon gcig 'byon par 'gyur ro zhes gsung lung bstan to//

Fol. 20b-21a

De dus rgya gar ba/ bal po/ dbus gtsang pa mams yon bdag du gdag/ khyad par bal po mams (illegible three letters) yon bdag bzang/ bal

po mams kyis rgyan ri dang/ zhal ri nor gyis dogs nas zhal ri'i mda'
 ru mchod rten bzhengs pa dus deng sang yang bal po mchod rten du
 grags pa rgyan gong gi nub ston na bzhugs pa 'di yin par gda' lags/
 de nas zha lu pa dang ri phug pa gnyis bka' sgros te/ jo bo zhva lur
 'gro don che la btsan pa yong zer ras zhva lur gdan drangs te/ zhva
 lu'i dbu rtse nub ma gnyis kyi lho phyogs kyi rten gyi gtso bo la
 bzhugs so/ /

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A GNYOS LINEAGE THANGKA¹

EVA ALLINGER

In my stylistic analysis of the Green Tārā in the Ford Collection (Allinger 1998) (Pl. 14) I attempted to demonstrate that the artist who created this masterpiece of Tibetan art in the 12th century had absorbed many elements from regions beyond Tibet (Bengal, Burma, Khara Khoto) but that this work nevertheless possessed a distinctive Tibetan character. I compared it to the portrait of a Gnyos master in the Jucker Collection (Pl. 13) whose identity was still unknown at that time. Another thangka (*thang ka*) from the Ford Collection portraying Avalokiteśvara Ṣaḍakṣari (Pl. 15) was found to display a close stylistic proximity to the thangka with the image of the Green Tārā (Allinger forthcoming).

In the following article the recently-discovered inscriptional material on the reverse of the thangka with the portrait of the Gnyos master (Pl. 65) will be presented which will allow this thangka to be placed in a more precise chronological frame. Subsequently this stylistically related group, initially consisting of three thangkas (The Green Tārā, Avalokiteśvara Ṣaḍakṣari and the Gnyos master), will be extended with further examples and finally compared with a group of iconographically similar but stylistically different paintings. This comparative analysis allows us to give a small insight into the great stylistic variety of Tibetan painting in the 12th century.

The thangka with its portrait of the Gnyos master (Pl. 13) has been in the Jucker Collection in Switzerland for several years. It was first published in 1984 by Pal in his *Tibetan Paintings*: pl. 6 as “Portrait of a Sakyapa Hierarch”, 12th century. In July 1986 Jane Casey Singer published a detailed description of the thangka under the title “An Early Painting from Tibet” and proposed a dating of “1300 or before”. The thangka was restored between the appearances of the two publications.

¹ I would like to thank Deborah Klimburg-Salter for her encouragement and comments on this work. This paper results from a project, supported by the Austrian *Fonds zur Förderung wissenschaftlicher Forschung*.

During the course of his work in cataloguing the Jucker Collection Hugo Kreijger discovered numerous inscriptions on the reverse side of this thangka which provide clues as to its subject's identity (Pl. 65).² All the inscriptions are written in Tibetan *dbu can*. Behind almost every figure the mantra *ōṃ ā hūṃ* is written; behind the main figure can be made out the inscription *ōṃ sa rva byid svā hā* (Sarvavid), the *ye dharma*-formula in Sanskrit and the 'patience creed' in Tibetan, as well as the name (number 1 in the diagram) *s[lob dpon] chen po gnyos yab drags pa*; the remainder of the inscription is illegible.

Additional members of the Gnyos family identified in the two niches above the shoulders of the central master are (nos. 2-4): *slob dpon chen po gnyos lo rtsa pa*, *slob dpon chen po sras rdo rje bla ma* and *slob dpon chen po gnyos dpal 'byung*.

The *Blue Annals* (Roerich 1949-1953: 372-373) relate that the *lo tsā ba* Gnyos 'byung po a contemporary of Mar pa travelled to India in order to learn the method of Buddhajñāna, the *Guhyasamāja tantra*, from Balin *ācārya*. He transmitted these teachings to his son

Rdo rje bla ma, who in turn taught them to his son
 Gnyos dpal le, who transmitted them to his son
 Gnyos grags pa dpal, who taught them to his son
 Rdo rje gzi brjid, known as Sangs rgyas Ras chen Rgyal ba Lha nang pa.

From this the following information emerges for the figures depicted on the thangka: In the niche to the right of the central master the *lo tsā ba* and his son Rdo rje bla ma are depicted. In the left-hand niche is Rdo rje bla ma's third son, Dpal 'byung; according to the history of the Gnyos lineage (*Kha rag gnyos kyi gdung rabs khyad par 'phags pa*, fol. 20-22³) it was he who transmitted the teachings and not the first son Dpal le (respectively Dpal lo) named in the *Blue Annals*. The lama (*bla ma*) beside him has no identifying inscription.

Thus the central master could be taken to represent a portrait of Dpal 'bung's successor if one assumes that *drags pa* has been written for *grags pa*.⁴ The pronunciation is the same in both cases. Grags pa

² I thank Hugo Kreijger for giving to me this material.

³ I thank Prof. Franz-Karl Ehrhard who read with me this text.

⁴ In Kreijger (2001) I provided the entry for the "Nyö master" (plate 21, pp. 72-73). In this contribution the name of Grags pa dpal erroneously is written Drupa-pal—a phonetically spelled (!) version done by the editor; in footnote no. 53 the name according to the inscription is cited correctly as *drags pa*.

dpal was the son of the second of the three sons of Rdo rje bla ma, of Dpal gyi seng ge; not of Dpal le—as written in the *Blue Annals* (*Kha rag gnyos kyi gdung rabs*, fol. 31). Grags pa dpal died in a male iron horse year: 1210. The identity of the monk on the right-hand in the left-hand niche remains open. A possible hypothesis is that it represents the son of Gnyos Grags pa dpal, who could have commissioned this thangka with a portrait of his father—why else would the latter be referred to as “father” (*yab*) here? Rdo rje gzi brjig is known to have lived from 1164 to 1224; he was a disciple of 'Jig rten Mgon po (1143-1217), the founder of the 'Bri khung school, he had been fully ordained as a monk and had himself founded the Bka' brgyud Lha pa school. He had inherited estates in Bhutan where he spent eleven years of his life (c. 1204-1215) (*Kha rag gnyos kyi gdung rabs*, fol. 31, 37). The Lha pa school was very influential in Bhutan for a brief period, but was subsequently eclipsed around the middle of the 13th century by the 'Brug pa (Aris 1979: 168).

The spiritual lineage of the Gnyos is also documented by inscriptions on the back of the thangka. The lineage of Balin, the teacher of Gnyos *lo tsā ba*, is described in the *Blue Annals* (Roerich 1949-1953: 372) as follows:

- 1) 'Jam pa'i rdo rje (Mañjuvajra)
- 2) *ācārya* Buddhajñānapāda
- 3) Mar me mdzad bzang po (Dīpaṅkarabhadrā)
- 4) 'Jam dpal grags pa'i Bshes gnyen (Mañjuśrīkīrtimitra)
- 5) Dpal Bde ba chen po (Kamalakuḷīśa)
- 6) Yan lag med pa'i rdo rje (Anāṅgavajra)
- 7) *ācārya* Yi ge pa
- 8) *ācārya* Karṇa pa

The names on the thangka are: (nos. 6-13)

- 6 (= 2) *ghu ru ye shes zhabs* (Jñānapāda)
- 7 (= 3) *ghu ru mar me mdzad* (Dipaṅkara)
- 8 (= 4) *ghu ru 'jam dpal grags pa* (Mañjuśrīkīrti)
- 9 (= 5) *dpal ste pa* (dpal bde pa ?)
- 10 (= 7) *yig ge pa*
- 11 (= 8) *ka ṇa ba* (Karṇa pa)
- 12 *mi tra ba* (Maitripa)
- 13 = *bhad (?) lang a tsar rgya* (probably written for Balin *ācārya*)

Yan lag med pa'i rdo rje is missing; here we have Maitripa instead. Further name inscriptions are present for: (nos. 14-17)

14 'Jam dbyangs – Mañjuḥoṣa

15 rdo rje 'chang – Vajradhara

16 (chag) na rdo rje – Vajrasattva

17 mkha' 'gro ma na ya shri – Dakīṇī na ya śrī

18 is not a name inscription and is written in a slightly different hand:
'di na mar kyi 'di tshe 'jig byed rgyud pa (the transmission of Bhairava up to here, up to this time)

There are no inscriptions behind the second monk, the three siddhas on the right and behind the figures in the bottom row. Here we have only the mantra *ōṃ ā hūṃ*.

The two figures on the extreme left and right in the bottom row are depicted in three-quarter profile; they wear princely ornaments and both sport sparse goatee beards. Singer's proposed interpretation of these figures as *bodhisattvas* seems to me open to question.

The figure in the *stūpa* is very similar to the Mañjuḥoṣa in the centre of the top row (14); he is saffron yellow, with one head, six arms (on the right holding a sword, in *varadamudrā* and holding an arrow; on the left holding a book, an *utpala* and a bow), seated in *dhyānāsana* and wearing the ornaments of a *bodhisattva*.

The next two figures have been interpreted by Singer as Padmapāṇi and Yamāntaka. Both were in a very poor condition before restoration (Pal 1984: pl. 6): in the case of the white figure the head and the right shoulder were undamaged; an open *utpala* can be clearly seen. There might also be an *utpala* above her left shoulder. It is possible that this figure is a White Tārā. Yamāntaka can be clearly identified: he is blue-skinned with a bull's head, two arms (with *kapāla* and *karṭṭikā*), wears chains of human skulls and stands in *pratyāliḍha*.

Singer (1986: 43) described the two groups on the right as initiation scenes:

The first initiation occurs by water. A red-skinned figure standing in water pours water into the hands of a seated initiate dressed in a monk's robe. From the monk's head emerges a beam of light producing a *stūpa*. This unusual scene probably interprets the Buddhist notion that the mind in its purest state is clear and luminous, and gives rise to the thought of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*), a critical stage in the development of the *bodhisattva*'s wisdom. The *stūpa* is a fitting symbol here since it is often used to symbolize the mind of the Buddha. In

the next scene the same initiate receives from the great Vajrasattva a bell and a thunderbolt, two ritual symbols signifying transmission of the most subtle teachings on enlightenment.

I have not been able to find any comparable representations and I am thus unable to offer any other interpretation of these two scenes. It is however remarkable that in this row there is no monk shown as consecrator/*sādhaka*.

The inscriptional material on this thangka would indicate a dating of around 1200: Grags pa dpal died in 1210, Rdo rje gzi brjid lived from 1143 to 1217; he possibly commissioned the thangka before 1204, the year he probably went to Bhutan. In view of the paucity of securely datable Tibetan paintings, data of this kind is very valuable in order to be able to carry out further stylistic analysis and dating.

Stylistic School A

I have placed this thangka with its portrait of a Gnyos master in a stylistic group together with the Green Tārā (Pl. 14) in the Ford Collection which, according to the analysis of the inscriptions by Dan Martin (2001) can be dated to the 1160s-1180s; as well as a further thangka representing Avalokiteśvara Ṣaḍakṣari (Pl. 15) (Allinger forthcoming) in the same collection (which lacks any historically relevant inscription). This group will be referred to here as School A. This school of painters worked for various religious schools. The Tārā is to be associated with the Bka' gdams pa school, on the reverse is an inscription revealing that the thangka was at one time in the monastery of Reting (*ra sgreng ba'i lha*). The Gnyos and their Lha pa school belonged to the Bka' brgyud pa.

Furthermore the design or preliminary drawing used as the model for the silk thangka in *kesi* technique (Pl. 64) seems to fit into the milieu of School A. This thangka has the portrait of Zhang Rinpoche (1123-1193), the founder of the Tshal pa Bka' brgyud pa school. The biographical data of Grags pa dpal and Zhang would allow the conclusion that both lived in Lhasa during the 1170s and 1180s. The Tshal pa monastery founded by Zhang is situated very close to Lhasa. The painters working in the manner of School A must have been located in and near Lhasa.⁵

⁵ The privately-owned thangka showing two *bodhisattvas* published in 1999 by Pal (pl. 6) and Heller (*Tibet, Arte e spiritualità*, pp. 101, 186 and 187), which sur-

Stylistic School B

Jane Singer—in her 1997 article ‘Taklung Painting’—has put together a further group of paintings bearing inscriptions which allow a fairly secure dating. These are thangkas associated with the Stag lung monastery, the centre of another sub-school of the Bka’ brgyud pa. This was founded in 1180 by Stag lung Thang pa chen po, also called Bkra shis dpal (1142-1210), a disciple of Phag mo Gru pa (1110-1170), the founder of one of the four major schools of the Bka’ brgyud pa school. The earliest works of this group were produced around 1200; they will be referred to here as School B.

The portrait of Stag lung Thang pa chen po (Pl. 67) displays a composition very similar to that of the Gnyos master in many respects. The individual motifs such as the form of thrones, nimbuses etc. would also seem to indicate that the same formal repertoire was being used. The essential differences are to be found in the execution.

School A is characterised by a very painterly style, for example the modelling of the rocks is generally achieved by means of delicate gradations of colour. In the case of School B by contrast, a harsher, more graphic style is evident. The individual forms are sharply delineated and display further detailed drawing within the major shapes. Modelling is achieved by means of contrasting colours, for example yellow and blue. In the composition used by School B, the grid-like structure is more strictly executed than in School A, with continuous lines running beneath the thrones of the individual figures. The latter school merely gives each figure its own throne and these are often not arranged in a line.

However, what seems to me to be the essential characteristic of School A is the inclusion of numerous, almost genre-like, motifs whose presence is not determined by the subject of the thangka. Thus these motifs introduce a strongly personal element into the painting: animals and plants are represented in relative profusion in the pond and between the rocks of the thangkas depicting Tārā and Avalokiteśvara, themes lacking entirely in the paintings of School B. There are no animals in the latter school and only a few plants represented in a

vives only in a very fragmentary state, also displays strong stylistic similarities with School A and could probably be assigned to this group (Pl. 66).

very schematic fashion. The colours used by School A are starker and more luminous.

In the silk thangka of Zhang Rinpoche, the characteristic soft modelling is not present to any discernible degree—probably on account of technical constraints—but the numerous representations of animals among the rocks indicate a close relationship to School A.

As a group, the School A thangkas not only make a more painterly impression but also seem to have a greater variety of individual styles, while the thangkas of School B are characterised by an ornamental severity. This can be seen from one of the later paintings of the Stag lung group, the portrait of the third abbot of Stag lung—Sangs rgyas yar byon pa (1203-1272) (Pl. 68). The typical stylistic features that were already present of the time around 1200 have become more marked; in particular the hard graphic execution is far more evident.

Thus one can assume that different schools of painting—both located in and near Lhasa—while using the same pictorial framework, arrived at different stylistic results.

Two Bka' brgyud pa paintings of footprints

An analogous comparison can be made with two footprint thangkas, which are assigned to the Bka' brgyud pa school:

In the first example—a portrait of Stag lung Thang pa chen po (Pl. 69)—the central group consists of a lotus throne extending over the whole width of the picture. The throne is topped by a canopy of peacock feathers. Between the two footprints are representations of Saṃvara with Vajravārāhī (below) and Stag lung Thang pa chen po (above).

The individual pictorial sections are divided by jewelled bands instead of stylised rocks. The two lateral tendrils—the forms of the nodes and the flowers—as motifs recall the tendrils in the picture of the Gnyos master. Here, however, the execution recalls the same sharply delineated style as in the portraits of the Stag lung lamas mentioned previously; the colouring as a whole is also very similar, the muted colours of the tendrils being particularly remarkable.

In the second example (Pl. 70) Saṃvara und Vajravārāhī only are represented between the footprints; here they have separate lotus thrones. At the upper edge of the picture are two rows of niches, a lineage in the upper row and ten sixarmed deities and a figure sur-

rounded by a rainbow in the lower row. The information concerning the identification of these figures was given to me by Kathryn Selig-Brown, who translated Phag mo gru pa's text "Requesting Footprints" and made the connection between the footprint thangkas and the teachings of Phag mo gru pa. The upper row has a Buddha to the left and right. On the left are Vajradhara, two Mahāsiddhas most likely Tilopa und Nāropa, on the right in 7th and 8th place are Mar pa and Mi la ras pa with Sgam po pa (1079-1153) in 6th place. Selig Brown thinks the central figure is probably Phag mo gru pa because of the characteristic beard and the figure directly below being most likely one of his close disciples.⁶ This thangka could thus be dated to the third quarter of the 12th century.

Here too there are jewelled bands as dividing elements rather than rocks. The execution of the tendrils, the presence of *nāgas*, the colours and the painterly composition place this thangka closer to School A than the thangka with the portrait of Thang pa chen po, despite the similarity in motifs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this comparison is to show that the adoption of pictorial types or individual motifs on its own does not constitute an adequate basis for a stylistic typology. In Tibetan art of the 12th and 13th centuries similar motifs can very often be found, a fact which is frequently used in attempts to justify the existence of an 'International Style'. However, stylistic comparisons will show that within this painting there were individual currents or schools which differed from one another quite clearly. I see this paper as a first step in this direction, but as there are now a large number of paintings belonging to these groups, and many of very fine quality I feel that differentiating these currents would offer a rewarding task for further analysis.

⁶ I thank Kathryn Selig-Brown for giving me this information. The material is part of her doctoral thesis.

Appendix

Diagram of the reverse side

8	7	6	14	15	16	17
9	2	3			4	5*
10						*
11			1			*
12						*
13						*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*

* no inscription of name

Names written on the thangka and in the

Blue Annals

1	<i>s[lob dpon] chen po gnyos yab drags pa...</i>	Gnyos grags pa dpal
2	<i>slob dpon chen po gnyos lo rtsa pa</i>	<i>lo tsā ba</i> Gnyos byung po
3	<i>slob dpon chen po sras rdo rje bla ma</i>	Rdo rje bla ma
4	<i>slob dpon chen po gnyos dpal 'hyung</i>	Gnyos dpal le
5	–	Rdo rje gzi brjid
6	<i>ghu ru ye shes zhabs</i> (Jñānapāda)	<i>ācārya</i> Buddhajñānapāda
7	<i>ghu ru mar me mdzad</i> (Dīpaṅkara)	Mar me mdzad bzang po
8	<i>ghu ru 'jam dpal grags pa</i> (Mañjuśrīkīrti)	'Jam dpal grags pa'i Bshes gnyen
9	<i>dpal ste pa</i>	Dpal bde ba chen po
10	<i>yig ge pa</i>	<i>ācārya</i> Yi ge pa
11	<i>ka ṅa ba</i>	<i>ācārya</i> Karṇa pa
12	<i>mi tra ba</i> (Maitripa)	
13	<i>bhad (?) lang a tsar rgya</i>	Balin <i>ācārya</i>
14	<i>'jam dhyangs</i> (Mañjughoṣa)	
15	<i>rdo rje 'chang</i> (Vajradhara)	
16	<i>(chag) na rdo rje</i> (Vajrasattva)	
17	<i>mkha' 'gro ma na ya shri</i> (Dakṣiṇī...)	
18	<i>'di na mar kyi 'di tshe 'jig byed rgyud pa</i>	

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THE REASSESSMENT OF THE MEANING OF AN ICON FROM KHARA KHOTO IN THE LIGHT OF A TIBETAN TEXT FROM DUNHUANG

KIRA SAMOSYUK

This paper sets out to demonstrate that the main characteristic of Tangut art that is, its combination of Chinese, Tibetan, Kidan and Turkic artistic features applies not only at the formal artistic level but also at the more profound level of meaning.

This idea is best illustrated by reference to the Chinese Style Guanyin icon from Khara Khoto (Pls 16-18). I have published an interpretation of the semantics of this icon in my paper “The Guanyin Icon from Khara Khoto” (Samosyuk 1997). It is perhaps worth recalling certain aspects of this interpretation. I will leave aside the meaning of the image of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, since the semantics of the Chinese Moon - Water Guanyin is clear, and focus only on the function of the Avalokiteśvara as Yinlu pusa—Bodhisattva showing the way for the Righteous Man into the Pure Land of the Buddha Amitābha.

The Righteous One burning incense is attended by a boy standing on the cloud. This is the only icon painting of which I am aware in which the image of the Bodhisattva is combined with what appears at first glance as a “genre” scene: Tanguts dancing and playing musical instruments near an open grave, horses standing beside the grave, with a banner (*bunchuk*) behind them. This composition has no parallel in Chinese or Central Asian art.

It is worthy to note, however, that it is precisely Shuiyue Guanyun iconography which is found in combination with intriguing literary, historical or genre scenes.

The position of the Righteous Man with the boy on the cloud, between the real earth and the Bodhisattva’s abode, indicates that the Righteous One has already died; consequently, the icon depicts not the invoking of the Bodhisattva but the actual journey to the Pure Land. In the paper referred to above I proposed that the righteous person is identifiable with the Tangut Emperor. I did not, however, explain the figure of the boy attending the Emperor.

Pictorial, ethnological and narrative materials of a similar nature now lead me to conclude that the scene represented at the bottom of the icon has a special sacred meaning and depicts the funeral of the Tangut Emperor with its accompanying ritual and funerary feast.

The horses are intended for sacrifice. In the Tangut “New Code of Laws” of the second half of the twelfth century the sacrifice of horses is mentioned twice: as sacred animals along with bulls and cows were sacrificed to the Spirits of the Sky in the old Imperial Palace. At the same time a special article of the Code prohibits horse sacrifice to the deceased (*Izmenennyi i zanovo utvrzhdennyi kodeks deviza tsarstvovaniya Nebesnoe Protsvetanie* I: 362). The Tanguts followed their ancestral custom in burying horses along with their master. The scene represented in the icon could indicate either that the funeral of an Emperor was exempt from the requirements of the law or that the funeral depicted took place before the prohibition of the horse sacrifice.

The banner (*bunchuk*) consists of a very long shaft with an elaborate pointed top and a red tassel with a multicolored ribbon. The disproportionately long shaft links the lower register—the earth—with the upper—the realm of the Bodhisattva. The meaning of the shaft is similar to that of the *dmu*-rope of the Tibetan (and not only Tibetan) mythology, or the rainbow (Stein 1972: 203) or the wind-horse of the Ge sar epic. I have also written about the Kirghiz custom of breaking a shaft during the horserace near a grave, symbolising the end of the mourning period for the relatives of the deceased and the final departure of the soul of the dead from the earthly realm.

The banner marks the path by which the soul will reach the Pure Land. The horses and the banner reflects the Tibetan and Turkic or perhaps we should say “steppe” elements in the icon.

Thus the icon combines features of the cultures of the different peoples surrounding the Tangut: the Chinese style, iconography, symbolism stand alongside Tibetan, Central Asian, Turkic and Mongolian features.

The principal peculiarity of the icon is its unique depiction of the Avalokiteśvara accompanied by the blood sacrifice of the horses.

Of particular interest in this connection is an article by R. A. Stein “Un document ancien relatif aux rites funéraires des bon-po tibétains” (Stein 1970: 155-186). The article contains a reading, translation and interpretation of two Tibetan texts from a sealed Dunhuang

cave. The texts (Mss. Pelliot 1042 and 239), dating from AD 1030-1040 describe Bon funerary rituals as assimilated by Buddhism. They coincide almost precisely with the Khara Khoto icon.

The subject of the texts and Stein's interpretation are briefly as follows. Each text consists of two parts of which the first is purely Buddhist in meaning and is devoted to Avalokiteśvara's activities and to the incarnation of the deceased in six circles. The material is entirely familiar. The second part relates to the adaptation of the Bon religion by Buddhism. While one side of the page has the description of the Bon ritual adapted by Buddhism the other side contains pure Buddhist preaching in the form of a sermon addressed to the king. This last part is of particular interest since the Khara Khoto icon depicts a royal figure—the Tangut Emperor.

As regards horse sacrifice. Stein writes, that in Tibet it was indeed only the burial of rulers which could be accompanied by animal sacrifice and moreover, even this custom was discontinued from the second half of the ninth century. Tibetan Buddhists subsequently substituted representations of animals for the real thing, or alternatively set the animals free after completion of the funeral rites. The text lends support to this.

Each step in the ritual is accompanied by a vow of happiness (*pariṇāma*), one vow (or incantation) for each of six elements of the funeral rites. Each vow in turn consists of two parts: the first of Bon origin, the second—Buddhist.

The first vow relates to the “tente du corps”—the baldachin (Tibetan *rin gur*) (Stein 1970: 178, note 22). The second relates to the “parents maternel”—the parents of the maternal line (Tibetan *dbon lob*.) I will return to these two personages below.

The third vow relates to the “pure grains”, that is, the preparation of sacrificial food.

The fourth vow relates to the “le mouton de l'abri”—the ram of the refuge (Tibetan *skyibs lug*). In the ritual the ram acts as a guide for the deceased across the rough terrain.

The fifth and longest vow relates to the horse. The Buddhist part of the vow describes the compassion of Avalokiteśvara in the image of the *Balaha* horse. The Bon part is the incantation to and glorification of the *Balaha*. The merits of the deceased are compared with the merits of the *Balaha*. The horse is a guide preceding the funeral procession. He must serve as mount animal and a friend of man during

both earthly life and afterlife. My interpretation of the image of the horses in the Khara Khoto icon coincides with these Tibetan texts.

The sixth vow relates to the yak. The Yak's function in the funerary rituals is to protect the deceased man against the demons.

Having established clear coincidences between the Khara Khoto painting and the Tibetan texts let us return to the first and the second vows.

The first is *rin gur*—"tente du corps"—baldachin. Stein offers several hypotheses regarding its meaning, but chooses as most likely that *rin gur* means windhorse, that is, as he explained in his book *Tibetan Civilization*, the dwelling-place of the soul. I suggested this same meaning for the banner. Tran van Giap (1939) named it as "la bannière de l'âme" l'âme (soul) of the Chinese-Vietnamese tradition.

The last enigmatic element in the ritual in Stein's opinion is *dbon lob*. *Dbon* is a nephew or grandson on the maternal line. By examining different comparative contexts Stein surmised that *dbon lob* is a relative of the female line who is to be sacrificed. But the ancient custom of burying a sacrificial victim—be it a minister or his substitutes, a valet or a nephew—together with the deceased ruler was replaced by the custom of leaving the victim alive but isolated from the world in the vicinity of the tomb. In Stein's view, the dead man and his valet or nephew were represented by statues or something similar. The notion that figurines were substituted for live animals is corroborated by the stone and bronze sculptures of horses, cows and dogs recovered from the burial places of the Tangut Emperors. I suggest that cows or bulls were used in place of yaks since the Tangut had no yaks. Moreover, dogs had a special role in Tangut customs.

If the *dbon lob* denotes a "nephew" we may follow Stein's suggestion and suppose that the function of the boy represented is that of a sacrificial victim. It was most likely a purely symbolic sacrifice.

After writing this paper I happened to read an old Russian translation of a Chinese work concerning funeral ceremonies (Tsvetkov 1857: 261-381). This involve making a *hunbo*—the puppet for the soul or of the soul and *lingzo*—the chair for the soul. The priest in charge performs the ritual in front of a "chair of the soul" and asks the soul for permission to write the name of the deceased person on a special tablet. Before burial the soul is held to be dwelling in the name—banner. The banner is then buried in the grave together with the puppet of the soul. I am not a specialist in Chinese ethnology but

I believe that this ancient custom is to be found in a huge area of China, Tibet and Central Asia.

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THE WHEEL OF LIFE IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY WESTERN TIBETAN CAVE TEMPLE OF PEDONGPO

HELMUT F. NEUMANN

In the beginning of the later diffusion of Buddhism (*phyi dar*) in Western Tibet major temples were erected in the capital of Tholing and at other important places. Significant wall paintings from this period, however, survived only outside the confines of present day Tibet. Towards the end of the 11th century, a number of cave temples were carved into conglomerate cliffs exposed by the force of the tributaries of the Sotlej River. The most splendid caves discovered so far are those situated in the vicinity of the villages of Phyi dbang (Neumann 1998: 52-60) and Dung dkar (Pritzker 1996: 26-47; Neumann forthcoming). The magnificent paintings covering their walls are the earliest Western Tibetan paintings surviving in Tibet proper, except for the few paintings on the lowest part of the walls of the temple of Ye shes 'od in Tholing, which were covered by the debris when the temple was destroyed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, miraculously preserved and excavated in 1999 (Luczanits 1996: 76-77; Cheng'an 2000: vol. 2, 236-238).

In the neighbouring valley of Pedongpo (abbreviated from Pad ma'i sdong po, "the stalk of the lotus"), an additional painted cave has been discovered. The cave was carved into the cliffs in the vicinity of a considerable number of unpainted caves. The East facing cave is roughly quadrangular (3.4 by 4 m) with all four walls (Pl. 71) fully covered with painted images of Buddhas seated on lotus cushions (Pl. 72).¹

The most fascinating paintings, however, are those painted on the walls of the entrance to the cave. The cave is accessed by a conically vaulted corridor (Pl. 19) which widens as one descends to the floor of the cave. The walls of the vault and the sides of the corridor are fully covered with paintings. On the vault, bands with geometric motifs

¹ The identification of this series of 1000 Buddhas will be discussed briefly at the end of this paper.

(Pl. 73) were painted, clearly imitations or rather transpositions of textiles, similar to what can be observed on the ceiling of the lantern ceiling cave in Dung dkar (Pritzker 1996: Fig. 4, 5 and 6; Neumann 2001: figs. 12-15) while in the earlier structure of the Tabo *gtsug lag khang* real textiles covered the ceiling (Klimburg-Salter 1997: Figs. 192 and 194).

The corridor must have been considered as an entry hall (*sgo khang*), since the paintings also include the representation of protective deities (Pl. 74) and a Wheel of Life (Skt. *bhāvacakra*, Tib. *srid pa 'khor / rten 'brel gyi 'khor lo*) (Pls 20 and 75). Like the well known 5th century *bhāvacakra* in the veranda of cave 17 in Ajaṅṭā, the earliest surviving of these wheels the Pedongpo Wheel of Life is painted on the left side as one enters the entry hall.

The *bhāvacakra* of Ajaṅṭā (Waddell 1892: pl. 7; Schlingloff 1971: Abb. 1 and 2; Schlingloff 1988: 383, 384) was first described by Ralph (1836), then by Fergusson (1845: 20) and by Burgess (1879: 61f.). But only L. A. Waddell in 1892 was able to identify it correctly as the Buddhist cycle of Existence, or Wheel of Life. Waddell came to this conclusion due to his knowledge of more recent Tibetan examples. On the basis of explanations he had received from learned lamas (*bla ma*), Waddell knew that the outer ring of both the Tibetan Wheel of Life and the wheel in Ajaṅṭā, contained the 12 causes of rebirth (Skt. *nidāna*; Tib. *rten 'brel*).

These 12 causes of rebirth form a logical sequence in which the result of each cause leads to the ensuing cause.² In Pedongpo the first three *nidāna* (Pl. 21) and the last three *nidāna* can still be well recognized. Two blind old people walking on sticks symbolize the ignorance, *avidyā* (Tib. *ma rig pa*), the potter forming pots from clay represents formation and action, *saṃskāra* (Tib. *'du byed*), a monkey

² The *nidāna* on the *bhāvacakra* in the courtyard of the Dzong of Punakha in Bhutan are also shown in a counter-clockwise sequence, as evident from Lauf (1972: 141-43, ill. 59). The *bhāvacakra* illustrated in Waddell 1892, pls 8 and 8a, Olschak 1972: 106 and 107, Essen and Thingö 1989, pl. I-28, Rhie and Thurman 1999, pl. 180 have a circle of *nidāna* running in a clockwise direction, which seems to be the rule. The same is the case for a wheel of existence on a photo in the Asian Art and Archaeology Photo Collection of the Kern Institute Library of Leiden University. This photo, taken ca. 1920-30 and collected by Dr. J. Ph. Vogel, was kindly brought to the author's attention by Dr. Gerda Theuns-de Boer.

jumping on a tree stands for conscious experience, *viññāna* (Tib. *rnam shes*). The last three *nidāna* (Pl. 23) are *bhāva* (Tib. *srid pa*), a fuller life symbolized by a married woman. The eleventh *nidāna*, birth, *jāti* (Tib. *skye ba*) is represented by a woman giving birth and the 12th and last *nidāna*, decay and death, *jarāmāraṇa* (Tib. *rga shi*), a *yogi* is meditating in front of a corpse with bound feet.

In Pedongpo the sequence of the *nidāna* is counter clockwise and therefore differs from the representations of the *bhāvacakra* in Ajañtā and most recent Tibetan versions (Waddell 1892: pls 8 and 8a; Olschak 1972: 106, 107).

The most fascinating feature of the Pedongpo *bhāvacakra* is the next ring, which, to this author's knowledge, has not been identified so far in any other painted *bhāvacakra* in Tibet.³ It consists of a series of tubes or perhaps rather double-sided funnels into which creatures are disappearing while different creatures are seen emerging on the other side. A bird's head comes out of a tube into which an animal must have entered, its feet still visible. An animal head emerges from a tube into which a human being is disappearing.

In two instances a human upper part of the body arises out of a tube into which an animal appears to have entered on the other side.⁴ This evidently is a cycle of rebirth: birds, mammals and men die and are reborn as different beings.

Confirmation of this can be found in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin, a Buddhist school which had its followers in Kashmir and neighbouring countries from the first centuries of our era. This text describes exactly how Buddha taught the *bhikṣu* to draw the wheel. We are here primarily interested in the explanation for this cycle of rebirth in the Pedongpo *bhāvacakra*. This author translated into English Przulski's French translation (Przulski 1920: 316, 317) of the

³ For the existence of a similar ring in a *bhāvacakra* painted on the walls of the chamber of cave 19 in Yulin, China, see footnote 4.

⁴ A 1997 Chinese publication by the Dun Huang Academy on the Yulin grottoes contains on page 168, fig. 7 a small drawing which may be an analogue representation: the upper part of a human body emerging from a tube into which the hind part of a horse is disappearing. Dr. Amy Heller has brought this drawing to the author's attention, together with the information that it is part of a wheel of life in the ante-chamber of cave 19 of Yulin which is attributed to the Tang period. The authors of the Yulin book do not give any explanation for the meaning of this drawing, nor for the wheel of life to which it evidently belongs.

Chinese version of the Vinaya:

At the place of the rim of the wheel you represent a water wheel (Noria, ghaṭīyantra), there you place a large number of water buckets, and you draw there a picture of creatures who are being born and who die. Those who are born have their head out of the bucket, those who die will have their feet out of the bucket.

Or from the Sanskrit text (Przyluski 1920: 317, footnote 1)

Leaving one existence and being reborn in another by the game of the Noria.

This is exactly what is pictured on the Pedongpo *bhāvacakra*. This cycle is absent from the Ajaṅṭā *bhāvacakra* and has so far not been described for other Tibetan Wheels of Life. Already Jean Przyluski (1920) complained in his publication on the wheel of life in Ajaṅṭā:

Le dessin de la jante est également simplifié dans les modèles les plus récentes. Là où le Vinaya prescrivait de figurer une noria charriant des vivants et des morts, on ne trouve plus rien de tel quand on examine la fresque d'Ajanta ou les images tibétaines.

On the other side, however, this cycle might be represented on the Tabo *bhāvacakra*. In her monumental work on the Tabo *gtsug lag khang*, Deborah Klimburg-Salter published a small black and white photo (Klimburg-Salter 1997: Fig. 42), on which next to an elephant (which apparently is part of the world of the gods), a stream of water is visible, which also forms the rim of the wheel and would therefore be at the right place for the cycle of rebirth. The caption reads: “The stream of samsara, [...] two figures swimming in the stream of life; [...].” The text contains the following interpretation: “At the edge of the wheel is a stream with bodies tossed by waves.” (Klimburg-Salter 1997: 80).⁵

⁵ The Tibetan translation of the Vinaya of the Mūlasavāstivādin which Klimburg-Salter had consulted, unfortunately does not describe this additional circle. The latter has so far only been found in the Chinese translation on which Przyluski based his French translation.

Eds. Note. The *Divyāvadāna*, ed. Cowell and Neill 1866: 300-302, describes the progressive (clockwise) and regressive (counterclockwise) representation of the 12-

But what can actually be seen on this photo of the details of the Tabo *bhāvacakra*? We see similar tubes as in Pedongpo from which human beings appear to emerge, one having a halo, the other a beret-type hat. Entering into the tube is what seems to be the lower part of a human body, a skirt with feet below and two legs above. It would be interesting to see the other figures in the stream.⁶

The largest part of the circle is comprised by a depiction of the 6 forms of existence. The upper part of the wheel contains the world of gods, the *asuras* and the human beings. In the centre is the world of the gods (Pl. 23). These gods are clad in small *dhotīs*; two gods, accompanied by female companions, sit in *lalitāsana*, apparently listening to the flute player.

On the right is the world of the *asuras* (Pl. 23 right side). The *asuras* differ from the gods by being dependant on the life-supporting nectar which they must steal from the gods. They continuously engage in warfare which is vividly depicted on the photograph to the right: dressed in blue coats and helmets, they shoot arrows against which they protect themselves with large shields.

To the left of the world of gods is the world of men (Pl. 23, left side). The artist endeavoured to capture men in various activities. One fights with sword and shield, one carries a basket on the back, the hands raised to the strings by which he holds the basket with his head, as it still can be seen today in rural areas of Central and South Asia. One is kneeling, the hands raised in adoration, all others are seated: a man with a wide rimmed hat and a blue coat, typical for Western Tibetan lay persons of the period, the accompanying lady covers head and shoulders with a brown shawl.

The three worlds painted on the lower half of the wheel are reserved for those destined to a less favourable rebirth: The world of animals, the world of the hungry ghosts and the hells. Directly under (Pl. 22) the world of the *asuras* is the world of the hells. The artist has vividly depicted some of the tortures men are expected to suffer

part Chain of Existence, discussed in Klimburg-Salter 1997: 91 and Schlingloff 1988: 173 where fn. 9 quotes the Sanskrit verses. Further Sanskrit sources are cited in *ibid.*, footnotes 17-28 and p. 298 cites the relevant references to the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya.

⁶ When this author photographed in Tabo 19 years ago, he missed the wheel. The more he is grateful to Deborah Klimburg-Salter's for having published it.

in the hells: one is pierced by a large number of spears, another by a big beam. A big bird picks on the head of a frightened crouching creature.

To the left of the hells is the world of the ghosts suffering hunger and thirst. Below the world of men is the world of animals, in which various animals are depicted, most prominently a horse (Pl. 21, lower left).

In the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin only five worlds are described, the world of the *asuras* is not mentioned. The Pedongpo *bhāvacakra* shares the six worlds not only with all other known Tibetan *bhāvacakras*,⁷ but also with the 5th century *bhāvacakra* in Ajaṅṭā. This is another indication for the fact, that this Vinaya is not the direct basis of any *bhāvacakra* known to me. As was remarked by Deborah Klimburg-Salter, in Western Tibet we hardly ever have the exact text on which the painting cycles in the temples are based, but mostly only a related text.⁸

The hub of the wheel (Pls 20 and 23) is formed by a brown circle containing white pictures of three animals as described in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin: a pig, a snake and a turtle-dove. They represent delusion, hate and passion respectively, the three roots of evil which arise from each other in an eternal sequence. They form the nave of the wheel, setting it in motion thus perpetuating the eternal cycle of birth and death, the overcoming of which is one of the primary purposes of Buddhist endeavours.

Pig, snake and dove are represented in the centre of all Tibetan wheels of life known to this author. In some examples the three animals bite each other in the tail, thus forming a circle (Essen and Thingo 1989 I: pl. 28).

The mechanisms symbolized in the *bhāvacakra* are an essential basis for Buddha's teachings. It is therefore easily understandable that the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin describe that Buddha himself ordered the wheel of existence to be drawn in the entry hall of

⁷ See the *bhāvacakra* referred to in footnote 2, which all display the six worlds, even if in two of them (Lauf 1972: ill. 59) the world of animals and the world of the hungry ghosts have changed places, in another (Essen and Thingo 1989 I: pl. 28) in addition also the world of the *asuras* and the world of men.

⁸ Klimburg-Salter, remark on occasion of the 15th International Conference of the European South Asian Archaeologists, Leiden, 1999.

the monastery, giving exact indications concerning every detail of its execution.

According to the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin these prescriptions also comprised that the wheel should be held by the monster of impermanence (Przyluski 1920: 318).

Outside the wheel one has to draw the monster (yakṣa) of impermanence, the hair disordered, with open mouth, the two arms spread widely to hold the wheel of life.

This description corresponds precisely to some examples of later Tibetan Wheels of Life (Waddell 1892: pls 8 and 8a; Olschak 1972: 106, 107) and also to the wheel of Ajaṅṭā, but not to the wheels at Pedongpo and Tabo.

The Pedongpo *bhāvacakra* is held on all four sides by identical female figures, in view of the halo possibly goddesses, who clasp the wheel with the arms spread out, their heads with the typical Western Tibetan hairstyle. So far no reference to these four goddesses could be found in the literature. But they are not only depicted in Pedongpo and Tabo, but also in Tholing in the entry hall to the 'du khang (Pl. 76) where they hold a cosmic diagram. Here they are painted without the halo, wearing a blouse which leaves the breast and belly uncovered, a typical depiction of goddesses in Western Tibetan paintings up to the 16th century. But in Tholing the wheel is held additionally by the monster of impermanence. The Tholing diagram may thus form a link between two different traditions.

The Pedongpo cave may have contained a main image on the pedestal in the centre of the cave, now in ruins. The walls of the cave are covered by 1000 Buddha images. They are not 1000 Buddha images, not even 996 as in the *maṅḍala* ceiling cave in Dung dkar, but only 787. They are all inscribed, their names corresponding in their sequence to a well-known series, the list b (according to Weller 1928) of the Tibetan *Aryabhadra kalpikasūtrā* (Chandra 1996: 4), which is based on one of the two different Sanskrit sources of the 1000 Buddha names. In an inscription in the cave, the artist calls it: a *gtsug lag*

khang for the 1000 Buddhas of the Fortunate Era (kald pa [sic] bzang po).⁹

Comparing the style of two Buddhas from Pedongpo (Pl. 77) with two Buddhas from the cave of the 1000 Buddhas in Phyi dbang (Pl. 78), we can observe similarities as well as differences. They clearly belong to the same painting tradition prevalent in Western Tibet in the 11th and 12th century. The physiognomy, the narrow eyes in which the pupils have been drawn as small dots and the posture are quite similar, but there are striking differences.

The Phyi dbang Buddhas have been painted more delicately, the physiognomy is finer, the robes flow graciously. The Pedongpo paintings appear much less sophisticated. This comparison can be repeated by contrasting a Buddha image (Pl. 79) from Pedongpo with one of the 35 Buddhas of confession (Pl. 80) from the cave of the offering goddesses in Phyi dbang. In Phyi dbang the Buddha appears to be sitting in the large circle of the *prabhamaṇḍala*, which is supported by the lotus, while in Pedongpo he sits on the lotus cushion in front of the *prabhamaṇḍala*. The Phyi dbang Buddha looks straight at the spectator, with a rather serene expression. The Pedongpo artist in contrast, was less successful in giving the Buddha a spiritual expression.

Less striking are the differences between the six-armed Avalokiteśvara (Pl. 81) in the entry corridor of the Pedongpo cave with the six-armed Avalokiteśvara (Pl. 82) from the centre of a *maṇḍala* in the cave with the lantern ceiling in Dung dkar. Both are gracious, with the features, jewellery and emblems delicately painted on the white body with brown/red and blue as the major colours of the composition. A close observation, however, reveals that the Dung dkar painting is more refined. Details such as the jewellery in the hair and the pattern and flow of the *dhoti* are particularly revealing.

What conclusions can be drawn from these observations for the dating of the Pedongpo cave? It is conceivable that the Pedongpo cave, which is executed in an similar style as the Dung dkar and Phyi dbang paintings, only at a lower level of artistic achievement, might both have been painted simultaneously towards the end of the 11th

⁹ The author thanks Heidi Neumann for the identification of the Buddhas and the translation of the inscription.

century, by a less gifted artist. But it is also possible and probably slightly more likely, that the Pedongpo cave was painted somewhat later, in the first half of the 12th century, for Western Tibet a period of political instability and domination by foreign powers, which nevertheless might have permitted the construction of this small Buddhist cave temple. Perhaps even as a quiet retreat for monks fleeing the turmoil which the greater centres such as Tholing, Phyi dbang and Dung dkar must have suffered when the kings of Gu ge lost their power.¹⁰ In this time of unrest and war it might have been particularly indicated to remember the basic elements of Buddhist philosophy, such as those symbolized in the *bhāvacakra*.

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¹⁰ In the first decade of the 12th century Gu ge was invaded by the Gar log of Central Asia and did not recover from this blast for the entire century. No major building activity took place during this period (Petech 1999: 4, on the basis of the *Lde'u* chronicles of the late 13th century and of the *Mnga'ris rgyal rabs.*).

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THE CEILING PAINTINGS OF THE ALCHI GSUM BRTSEGS: PROBLEMS OF STYLE

CHRISTIANE PAPA-KALANTARI

In recent years the ceiling paintings in 10th-13th-century Western Tibetan monasteries have been identified as an important constituent part of the overall decoration of sacred spaces and made the object of specific scholarly analysis.¹ The artistic and art-historical significance of the paintings on the ceiling panels of the *gsum brtsegs*, a multi-storey structure in the monastery complex at Alchi (Ladakh), derives from the fact that they are without doubt the last testimony to the mature achievement of an otherwise lost tradition, their formal virtuosity and sophistication indicating that they were created at a late stage in this tradition.² R. Goepper (1995, 1996) has dealt with these paintings in several articles and summarised his findings in his systematic examination of the *gsum brtsegs*, and was one of the first scholars to point out the problem of the art-historical classification of the ceiling paintings. On the basis of his identification of the dyeing and weaving techniques discernible from the paintings as well as his analysis of individual motifs and types of ornament and their affiliations, he suggested various types of Indian and Central Asian textiles as possible models.

The following article is intended to show that in addition to the primary formal analysis of motifs, a differentiated examination of the pictorial interpretation of textile sources will facilitate understanding of the artistic and art-historical context. First the various functions of textiles as signifiers in the context of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries will be examined, inasmuch as these are relevant for the interpretation of the ceiling paintings at Alchi. The first part of this discussion will investigate the specific artistic intentions represented by these paintings on the basis of a comparative analysis with a selected tex-

¹ My participation in the conference was made possible by a grant from the *Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung*.

² Formerly within the western Tibetan cultural sphere, Alchi now falls within the political borders of the Indian state Jammu and Kashmir.

tile type. It will be suggested that the imitation of textiles is only one aspect of a wholly artistic process that took place against the background of the rich and diverse tradition of Western Tibetan Buddhist ceiling painting.

Not only individual motifs will be examined but also the question of the disposition of particular groups of motifs within the sacred space and thus the specific relationship between architectonic structure and the artistic programme of the paintings. The resulting observations allow conclusions to be drawn about the function of the paintings as part of the overall decoration and iconographic program of the temple.³

The gsum brtsegs at Alchi and Its Historical and Artistic Context

Among the rich, sophisticated, artistic currents in the region of the Western Himalaya the 'Alchi group' represents a separate local school whose early phase is represented by the *'du khang*, *gsum brtsegs* and other religious structures at Alchi, as well as the temples at Sumda and Mang rgyu. The Alchi group constitutes an artistic tradition whose antecedents are largely unknown and which, in stylistic terms, can only be loosely associated with contemporary schools in Western Tibet.⁴

According to local tradition, Alchi is one of the legendary 108 temples commissioned by the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po (958-1055) in the western Himalaya. However, an inscription on the

³ I would like to thank D. Klimburg-Salter, E. Allinger and C. Luczanits for their helpful criticism and support.

⁴ The stylistic identification of this group of monuments is a complex issue that involves several unanswered questions. In the case of the early art of the Western Tibetan region, a phase that coincides with the redissemination (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism, it is generally assumed that there was pervasive influence from Kashmir, an important centre of Buddhist teaching and artistic production. Indirect evidence of this is provided by the contemporary Kashmiri temples depicted on the *dhoti* of the Avalokiteśvara in the *gsum brtsegs* (see Goepper and Poncar 1996: ill. p. 46ff.). Close stylistic parallels can also be found with late Kashmiri sculpture. Cf. C. Luczanits (1998: 153), who describes the painting of the early Alchi phase as the Kashmiri style since it had no direct succession in Ladakh or Western Tibet. In contrast to these are the mural paintings of later temples at Alchi, such as the *lha khang so ma*, which share many elements with Central Tibetan painting of the 12th to 14th centuries and which Luczanits characterises as the "early Ladhaki painting style" (ibid.). The exact temporal sequence of the establishment of these stylistic variations has not yet been determined.

wall of the *'du khang* ascribes this monastic foundation to a monk by the name of Skal Idan shes rab, who like the founder of the *gsum brtsegs*, Tshul khrims 'od, was descended from the influential 'Bro clan (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980: 146). The members of this clan belonged to an important aristocratic line that originated either in western or central Tibet and were prominent landowners at the time when the monastery was founded at Alchi.⁵ There is very little evidence for the dates of any of the monks, but the representations of a lineage of the 'Bri gung pa with inscriptions on the third level of the *gsum brtsegs* provide a *terminus post quem* which indicates that the paintings cannot be dated any earlier than the beginning of the 13th century (Goepper 1990: 159-175).

The *gsum brtsegs* is a part of the sacred compound (*chos 'khor*) at Alchi, which is sited at the top of a slope above the Indus. The structure dominates the individual religious buildings of the complex, which are sited on an east-west axis, on account of its striking, three-storeyed form and the fact that it is taller than all the other buildings. However, it is probable that the *gsum brtsegs* was not conceived as the liturgical centre of the complex, as was the case with the three-storey temple at Bsam yas.⁶ Both the evolutionary history of this type of building and the function of the *gsum brtsegs* are largely unsolved questions, answers to which would be of major significance, above all for the interpretation of the iconographic programme of the decoration inside the *gsum brtsegs*.⁷

The various themes in the decoration of the *gsum brtsegs* indicate that the iconography at Alchi belongs to the esoteric tradition of the Vajrayāna. The central figure of the iconographic programme is Sarvavid Vairocana, who dominates the Buddhist cosmology of many western Tibetan monasteries (Khosla 1979: 32).⁸

The *gsum brtsegs* today is a free-standing, three-storey, centrally

⁵ With the Second Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (*phyi dar*) political power had shifted to the western borders of the Tibetan Cultural Sphere.

⁶ On the question of the evolution of Buddhist religious building complexes in Tibet see Vergara and Béguin 1987, Klimburg-Salter 1997b.

⁷ See R. Linrothe (1996: 269ff.), who develops interpretations put forward by R. Khosla (1979) in the context of the overall programme of the decorations, and points out the varying hierarchical levels in the iconography of the individual floors. Also of interest is the study by R. Linrothe (1999).

⁸ For a discussion on the iconography of Vairocana in Tabo see Luczanits 1997: 189ff.

organized building. Erected on an approximately cross-shaped ground-plan, it is relatively small: the east-west axis measures 11.4 metres, which corresponds more or less to the height of the building. Entering through a low door one emerges into a room whose sides are extended by three alcoves each containing a colossal clay statue of a *bodhisattva*. At the centre of the room is a *mchod rten*.

The interior of the building consists of three communicating spatial units, one on top of the other. The only division between the floors is a ceiling between the ground floor (I) and the first upper level (II) which is constructed as a gallery running around the walls.⁹ The third level (III), which is enclosed by a lantern roof, is constructed on a square ground-plan with sides measuring a good two metres, and rests on the flat ceiling of the upper floor. The ceilings of the ground floor (I) and the first upper level (II) are divided into 48 panels, 24 on each floor, by beams running from the entrance wall to the back wall. This architectural situation determines the artistic decoration of the ceiling, which is composed of various ornamental and figural representations depicted on the individual panels (Pl. 24).

The square opening at the centre of the temple allows a view of all three levels, thus enabling the ceiling paintings together with the sculptural and pictorial elements to be experienced as a formal unit of immense richness and colourful splendour. The representations on the ceilings initially evoke the impression of textiles which have been attached to the panels, and display a wealth of ornamental and figural representations. Some of the figural scenes on these panels are of a remarkable complexity, as will be shown below. Similar panels are found in the temples at Mang rgyu and Sumda. Some of these textile motifs are also found in the representations of the costumes worn by the figures in the murals, others are only found on the ceilings.

Textile Representations in Buddhist Temples

The textile representations at Alchi differ considerably from those at Tabo, where it is primarily printed Indian textiles that have been identified as possible sources. In particular, in comparison with the

⁹ The numbering of the panels on the ceiling follows that of R. Goeppe, 1996. Goeppe's 'First Upper Floor' I call here 'Ground Floor' (I), and his 'Second Upper Floor' 'First Upper Level' (II). The Roman figures indicate the floor on which the painting is to be found.

ceiling paintings of the two temples there is hardly any correspondence in terms of motifs and their compositional structure. Above all it is only the representations of the Alchi group that exhibit the variety in their figural repertoire paired with illusionism in the rendering of textiles that constitutes the special fascination of this art.

This preoccupation with representations of textiles is a feature that Alchi shares with the whole of the region of Western Tibet until the 12th/13th century. Comparative studies of the representations of costumes in Alchi have evidenced some degree of faithfulness to types of historical textiles known and diffused throughout India and Central Asia in the period under consideration (cf. Goepper 1993b, 1995, 1996). On the basis of an analogy to the ceiling textile motifs, however, it can be suggested that realistic representations of historical costumes and their textile motifs are not likely to have been intended in Alchi (cf. Papa-Kalantari 2000). They thus would significantly differ from the paintings at Tabo and the Poo-Manuscript, where the costumes and their decoration correspond to historically-attested examples, and where there is a clear difference between the cultural spheres.¹⁰ By contrast, at Alchi the differentiation between the various types of costumes is less consistent. It is perhaps significant that an equivalent historical reconstruction for the representations of garments in Alchi, as was done for Tabo, is still lacking. The naturalistic depiction of ethnic dresses and representation of a material culture could prove to be but an aspect of relative importance in Alchi. Another somewhat neglected aspect that is worth considering in this context, is the value of costumes and textiles functioning as forms of idealisation and legitimation of authority of the portrayed figures, royals, nobles and saintly persons.¹¹

¹⁰ See E. Wandl (1996, 1999a, 1999b), who identifies various types of costume in the murals of the assembly hall at Tabo, differentiating between Tibetan costumes, for example cloaks made of plain wool, and “foreign” forms of clothing, such as Indian *dhotis*, that are usually produced in a resist-dye technique on lightweight materials with small-scale patterns. In Alchi, beyond the limitations in respect of the costumes already mentioned, there is a great wealth of ornamental and figural decoration (cf. e.g. Goepper and Poncar 1996: ill. p. 79, 171). Their regional models have not been identified yet.

¹¹ In this connection the representations of costumes at Alchi attest to the fact that precious textiles were also an important component in the self-conception of the ruling elite in Western Tibet (cf. Klimburg-Salter 1996 b). The striking interest in textiles and elaborate costumes is here to be understood as an aspect of courtly cul-

The depiction of real textiles and forms of clothing in the sense of observed forms is after all only one function of textile representation in the context of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, as precious fabrics function as signifiers in various respects. The wealth of colours and motifs in the decoration of the costumes and on the ceilings here makes an essential contribution to the magnificent atmosphere of the sacred setting.

The use of textiles in a religious context is dealt with in a *vastu-śāstra* (treatise on dwelling), such as *Mayamata*, a Sanskrit text on architecture and iconography from the 11th-12th century. The section entitled 'Making the Roof and Completion of the Building' describes the use of textiles, for instance affixing banners and other hangings to the ceiling and the doors during the consecration ceremony. It states: "Then the temple is to be 'dressed' in cloth from base to the finial whilst the finial's axis is adorned with new cloth..." (*Mayamata* 1994: 295).¹²

The many textiles from Tibetan monasteries that have ended up in Western collections attest to the fact that these monastic institutions collected luxury textiles from the earliest times onwards. In the ritual context textiles played a prominent role in various areas: the textiles brought as offerings to the temple and its deities, such as tapestries, embroidered silks, brocades and damasks which were used as altar

ture corresponding to the role of richly-decorated robes in portraits of Central Asian dynastic rulers. The antecedents of this courtly culture have not yet been precisely defined; the numerous references to the luxurious art of Central Asia should perhaps be interpreted as an indication of the claim of the influential 'Bro clan to belong to the tradition of Greater Tibetan rulers. Scriptural sources from Tibet's imperial period indicate that members of the 'Bro family were among the most powerful clans under the king Khri Srong lde btsan and his successors and their members often occupied the position of *blon po chen po* (chief minister) (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 29). For the history of the 'Bro family in the Western Himalayas see also Petech 1977: 15ff.; 1997: 231.

As to the function of the costumes depicted in Alchi R. Vitali argues that certain robes, e.g. with medallions are signs of rank, and are not examples of ethnic dress (1990: 52). For the question of function and meaning of early portrait painting in Tibet cf. also Singer 1996.

¹² A significant fact should be mentioned here: between the ceiling beams of the assembly hall at Tabo lengths of cotton or linen have been put up and used as the ground for paintings with representations of textiles (in contrast to those at Alchi these motifs display mainly ornamental and floral decoration); (cf. Klimburg-Salter 1997a: ill. p. 172ff.). However, there was no continuation of this practice in Western Tibet. At Alchi the paintings have been executed directly on the wooden panels.

cloths and canopies, for the veiling of statues and as protective coverings for paintings.¹³ For certain ceremonies specially cut textiles were used to decorate the walls, ceilings and columns in the interior of the temple. After these liturgical ceremonies the hangings were taken down again and preserved in the storeroom of the temple (Reynolds 1990: 89). This symbolic aspect of the material culture of textiles was possibly also transferred to the medium of painting.

Here I would like to contrast comparable representations from Tabo; the ceiling paintings at Tabo (Himachal Pradesh, c. 11th century) and Alchi display completely different motifs and belong to two independent traditions of painting which lie more than a century apart, but they do resemble each other in one significant aspect: the representations of textiles on the walls cannot be equated with those on the ceilings, as the various complex forms of decoration on the ceiling, such as beaded roundels and other patterns, which are familiar from woven textiles, only occur here and not as decorations on the costumes in the murals. Thus one may assume that these representations also differentiate between the symbolic functions of various types of textile: for hangings for furniture, walls and honorific canopies it was presumably fabrics with a certain weight and durability that would have been considered suitable.¹⁴ These characteristics are possessed for example by silk textiles with woven decoration whose priceless-ness also made them suitable for the honouring of persons or the ritual decoration of sacred spaces. Complex silk textiles are clearly de-

¹³ "The Five Offerings of Sensory Enjoyment [Skt. *pañcakāmaguṇā* (sic), Tib. 'dod yon sna lnga] represent the most beautiful objects which attract the five senses... As objects of the most delightful sensory pleasure [silk cloths] are presented as offerings to the deities or *gurus*, symbolising both the desire to please the enlightened beings and as a gesture of sensual renunciation on the part of the donor" (Beer 1999: 194).

On the connection between the historico-cultural significance of textiles in the religious context and the role of precious textiles in medieval Asian trade see V. Reynolds (1995, 1997a, 1997b). The examination of the trade links is relevant in that textiles are particularly suited as carriers of motifs, and their mobility can explain their diffusion even in extremely remote areas. In this respect Ladakh is a relatively little-researched area.

¹⁴ In contrast to utilitarian textiles of lightweight printed fabrics, such as the Indian cotton weaves depicted in the costumes of the murals in both monasteries. It is perhaps more than mere coincidence that the ceilings at Tabo are hung with a coarse cotton or linen fabric onto which the paintings were executed. (For a description of the fabrics used see Wandl 1999a: 17).

picted on individual ceiling panels at Alchi—one example of this is dealt with below—while the source of the forms of ceiling decoration at Tabo has not yet been determined with any precision. However, it may be assumed that there, too, luxury textiles from central Asia or China served as the models.

This brings us to a further aspect of the functional interpretation of the ceiling paintings at Alchi, as textiles play a significant role in connection with various forms of the honorific canopy, which has been extant in India from the early Buddhist era. In this context honorific parasols, canopies and wall-hangings have the function of transforming a secular space into a sacred space.¹⁵ D. Klimburg-Salter (1996a, 1997a) has made a comprehensive study of the symbolic aspect of ceiling painting as representing a canopy in the light of paintings from Central Asian sanctuaries such as Bāmiyān as well as the ceiling paintings at Tabo, thereby re-opening the subject of the phenomenon of Western Tibetan ceiling painting in the art-historical and cultural context. A characteristic of the Western Tibetan type of honorific canopy is that the ceilings are decorated with textile representations which are organised in parallel panels and subordinated to the architectonic structure of the building (Klimburg-Salter 2001).

These paintings are combined with painted, carefully draped valances at the top of the walls which join seamlessly with the ceiling paintings and reinforce the interpretation of the ceiling as a canopy (*ibid.*).

To arrive at an understanding of the specific form of the Alchi paintings, the historical, historico-cultural as well as the symbolic and ritual aspects must first be considered. The differentiated stylistic evaluation of these different functions has also yet to be considered.

¹⁵ In Western Tibetan art various forms of honorific canopies such as parasols, baldachins and wall-hangings serve as an honorific tribute to various deities and members of the nobility, or as ritual decoration for sacred spaces (Klimburg-Salter 1997a: 177). The honorific form of the parasol is attested in the *gsum brtsegs* by representations of celestial beings holding parasols on the various throne-like architectural structures which hover above the deities (cf. Goepfer and Poncar 1996: ill. p. 99). Originally the parasol was presumably intended as a symbol of sovereign power which was then transferred to the Buddha. Thus the honorific parasol also contains the aspect of the glorification of the *cakravartin* or universal ruler. Parasol (Skt. *chattrā*, Tib. *gdugs*) and banner of victory (Skt. *dhvaja*, Tib. *rgyal mtshan*) also belong to the so-called Eight Auspicious Symbols (Skt. *aṣṭamaṅgala*, Tib. *bkra shis rtags brgyad*). See also Beer 1999: 171ff.

The Ceiling Paintings at Alchi and Their Relationship to Textile Sources

In the literature, this preoccupation with sumptuous garments and textile patterns has long been seen as one of the most astonishing aspects of the early painting at Alchi. The most detailed studies to date have been made by Roger Goepper (1993b, 1995, 1996). His exposition is based on the hypothesis that both the representations of costumes on the walls and the ceiling paintings are in fact depictions of real textiles which were produced in highly-specialised workshops associated with courtly circles in Kashmir. Since Goepper was unable to find any connection between the patterns and Indian textile art, but some of the motifs corresponded to ornamental forms on temples in Kashmir, he concluded that the models used must have derived from Kashmir. However, as no examples of early textile art in Kashmir have survived and no references to this kind of production exist in the literature, there is as yet no adequate evidence for this thesis.

In his 1997 study, R. Goepper revised the former thesis of an exclusively Kashmiri provenance for these textile models, proposing that the source for these paintings could have been various Indian and Central Asian textiles. The author describes numerous dyeing and weaving techniques that can be discerned from the paintings. However, he does not give any comparable examples from textile art which would permit one to establish whether the proposed textile types can actually be considered as possible models in respect of the motifs that appear at Alchi. Goepper's interest focuses primarily on prominent types of decoration and their affiliations, such as the beaded roundel, back-to-back pairs of animals or swastika patterns. His observations give an insight into a rich artistic milieu in which various currents were integrated. He establishes influences from India and the Middle East as well as forms which can be assigned to the Hellenistic sphere. Many of these forms he sees as belonging in the widest sense to the Iranian tradition (Goepper 1993b: 70 ff.). Giuseppe Tucci (1973: 181) emphasised very early on that the decorative forms of the sumptuous robes of early Tibetan sculptures, such as those in Grwa thang (Drathang), reflect Sasanid textile art to varying degrees, and also placed the costumes at Alchi in the wider context of post-Sasanid and Iranian influences. In her historical survey of the role of luxury textiles in Tibet, V. Reynolds (1995: 89)

also emphasises the special significance of medallion textiles; these were popular all over central Asia and could have had courtly status in China and Tibet as well. As no other textiles with figural roundels from the early Tibetan era have been found, Reynolds believes that the Alchi paintings are important evidence of a continuation or revival of the Sasanid medallion in the Tibetan sphere. Thus the roundels at Alchi represent late evidence for the dissemination of this type of pattern in Tibet (Reynolds 1995: 122).¹⁶ There is however no historical evidence suggesting that the symbolic meaning of individual motifs was still current when the monastery at Alchi was being decorated.

Figural beaded roundels are *the* leitmotif of Central Asian luxury textiles. The occurrence of this prominent type of pattern at Alchi thus prompted particular interest in the material culture which these paintings, *inter alia*, represent. Recent studies of the decoration of the ceilings and the painted costumes at Alchi frequently focus on the beaded roundels, despite the fact that they constitute only a small part of the textile representations at Alchi. The strong bias towards the history of textiles in the interpretation of the paintings at Alchi as well as issues relating to the contemporary material culture are without doubt connected with the numerous examples of textiles of major historical significance that have found their way into Western collections over the past few years (see Wardwell 1992; Watt and Wardwell 1997).

It will now be demonstrated that the beaded roundel at Alchi is merely one example of a constantly recurring compositional principle that organises single figures or scenes into repetitive surface patterns. J. Trilling (1985: 7 ff.) has called the interplay of certain stylistic features, i.e., the inclusion of framed, autonomous individual motifs in a repetitive, symmetrical pattern, the *medallion style*. This is a compositional principle for which there is ample evidence in Central Asia. The most prominent examples are probably the zenith paintings in the caves at Kizil, which have a late echo in the *dhoti* patterns at

¹⁶ In connection with the beaded roundels on the ceiling at Tabo, T. Murray (1994) voices the assumption that there must have been trade in textiles with Indian weaving centres in the Pāla kingdom to the south. However, owing to the lack of evidence it cannot currently be verified whether the beaded roundel, which also belonged to the international idiom of luxury art, was also produced for trade in Indian courtly workshops.

Alchi and Mang rgyu (Pl. 83). Textiles—by reason of their mobility—are particularly suited as vehicles of visual culture. But it is particularly significant that this aesthetic phenomenon is not restricted to a single medium (ibid.: 3).

Within the art of Kucha we find for example, specific repetitive schemes in the wall paintings as well as in stucco and tiles on the floor.¹⁷ Also in the Alchi group of paintings it can be observed, that aesthetic principles of surface compositions transcend media and techniques.¹⁸

In the recent literature, stylistic examination of the paintings at Alchi has been somewhat neglected in favour of studies focusing on the history of textile art. The following section is a comparative analysis, based on selected examples of extant textiles, of the relationship between the ceiling paintings and textile art and the function of the latter as a model, in order to illuminate various aspects of the artistic conception represented by the paintings.

A Type of Chinese-central Asian Textile as the Model for a Group of Panels on the First Upper Level (II)?

It will be demonstrated that these panels provide evidence of the ability to render in paint particular characteristics that derive from various methods of decorating textiles. This would suggest that in part real models could have been used for the paintings. The depiction of textiles in the sense of a naturalistic copying of a model is however probably only applicable to a part of the paintings, as will be explained below. In this connection a certain phenomenon should be mentioned which will here be referred to as 'superimposition': the figural motifs are frequently not congruent with the type of textile represented and in many cases exhibit parallels with examples of not only Indian but also Central Asian painting. On the one hand this makes clear the virtuosity in the handling of the textile models. At the same time, however, it reveals the complexity of these paintings and the wealth of connections not only with textile patterns but also

¹⁷ The oasis of Kucha in Central Asia is an area into which Sasanian influence expanded during the sixth century. The ceiling paintings show narratives illustrating the life and teachings of the Buddha (cf. Grünwedel 1920: figs. 44, 45). As far as the surface compositions of the paintings are concerned, these display strong parallels with patterns found in Sasanian silverwork (cf. Harper 1978: cat. no. 22, 2a).

¹⁸ An example for this will be shown below.

with other media and traditions. It also demonstrates the high level of skill and originality possessed by the Alchi artists.

The type of textile chosen as an illustrative example only occurs on the first upper level (II) of the *gsum brtsegs*. Panels that are assumed to belong to a regionally specific type of textile will be grouped together such that first those examples are dealt with that can be proved to be representations of textiles. Following these will be figural representations which share certain characteristics with the previous textile representations but which also display connections with other artistic media.

The decoration of Panel II 36, (Pl. 25) shows roundels consisting of white rings on a blue ground which are connected to a small disc at their centres by narrow bars and tendrils. The roundels also serve as filling elements between the individual wheels and form small nodules in the interstices. As will be shown below, these paintings are modelled on a resist dyeing technique using woodblocks called clamp-resist dyeing.¹⁹ This can be presumed from the similarities in both technical characteristics and in motifs as compared with extant textile examples. Characteristic of this dyeing technique are the pale contours outlining the motifs in the original colour of the fabric. The white bars derive from the raised sections of the pattern block known as cloisons, which separate the individual hollows holding the dye. This technique may be imagined as follows: thin or loosely-woven cloth is laid between two plates with carved, mirror-image pattern motifs and the two blocks pressed together. One after the other, the dyestuffs are introduced into the channels that run through the blocks. This produces fabric with white-contoured patterning on a coloured ground.²⁰ It is perhaps more than just a coincidence that in

¹⁹ This technique together with ikat, batik, plangi, mordant printing as well as a number of other methods to the so-called resist-dyeing technique in which ornamental patterns are produced by masking parts of the fabric before dyeing takes place. For a detailed description of these dyeing techniques see Bühler 1972, 1974 and Matsumoto 1984, 1993.

²⁰ Goepper (1996: 225), proposed that this could be a resist-dyeing technique like batik, in which the wax resist was applied with a stamp. According to this theory, the tendrilling would thus represent coloured veining that occurred through the masking substance (e.g. wax resists) breaking off from the fabric. However, this is contradicted by the fact that the veining at Alchi is colourless; one would have to imagine the dyeing process underlying the representation at Alchi in complete reverse: the

the representation of one of the roundels the blue parts are missing; this could be imitating the circumstance that dyestuff was not introduced into a particular canal during the dyeing process, the original colour of the fabric thus being preserved in these areas.²¹

A major piece of evidence in the identification of the decoration at Alchi is provided by a fragment of silk found at the necropolis of Mošćevaja Balka (Pl. 26) on the Caucasian Silk Road. It is a tabby weave cloth, whose provenance has been suggested by Ierusalemkaya as China or East Turkestan.²² Not only does it display astonishing similarities to the paintings at Alchi—roundels with radial bars and tendrilling in the intervening spaces; the two examples are also closely related in terms of colour: the silk fragment has (!) bi-coloured patterning in blue and reddish-brown, although the latter has since faded to a dark beige.

A pattern that is closely related to Panel II 36 is to be found on Panel II 42 (Pl. 27). Irregular roundels of varying sizes are scattered on a blue-green ground. The roundels are connected to one another by bars and tendril-like scrolls growing out of the frame. The white-contoured motifs appear in a light brownish-red tone and display white crossbars at their centres.

Closer examination reveals that the pale bars exactly divide the different colours from one another. This characteristic would support the assumption that as in the case of Panel II 34 the painting is intended to represent a clamp-resist dyed textile.

A further interesting example for comparison in terms of dyeing technique is provided by the fabric section from a banner with the representation of the *bodhisattva* Wenshu (Mañjuśrī) from the Musée

dyestuff is unable to penetrate the fabric in areas where the resist has been applied, thus creating motifs in the original colour of the fabric.

²¹ Pl. 30 shows an example of a clamp-resist dyed tablecloth in the Shoso-in with a 'mistake' of this kind: in the background of the tree at two corresponding places the blue colour is missing where the fabric was folded before dyeing. For a description of the use of this type of fabric in China see Gao 1992.

²² The silk fragment (Inv. no. Kz. 5080, 17 x 11 cm) is dated by the author, A. Ierusalemkaya (1996) to 8th-9th century (see also Bühler 1974: 76). Mošćevaja Balka (the name means 'Gorge of Relics') lies in the foothills of the northwest Caucasus on the Caucasian Silk Road. The objects found in the excavation led by N. I. Vorab'ev in 1905 are today preserved in the Hermitage in St Petersburg.

Guimet (Pl. 28).²³ The triangular header of this ritual banner from Dunhuang displays a pattern of scattered blossoms seen from above with the leaves and stems forming the connecting elements. Smaller flowers are set into the interstices. While the two examples differ in terms of motif, the colour scheme of blue, reddish-brown and white represents an astonishing similarity with the paintings at Alchi.²⁴

It is not intended to trace any motif-related dependence in the examples of textiles already mentioned but rather to prove that a particular group of paintings clearly reproduces the technical characteristics of clamp-resist dyeing. Although this does not solve the question of putative models, certain regional attributions will be proposed below. Textiles with very similar patterns to the previously-mentioned example in this dyeing technique are preserved in the Shoso-in, the Japanese imperial treasure house at Nara, where major examples of Chinese and Japanese textiles from the 7th-8th century are kept. Among the Shoso-in textiles, which give an excellent overview of the richly diverse textile art of the Tang era, the printed silk textiles such as the clamp-resist dyed fabrics form a major part of the luxury textile collection. These textiles were obviously as sought-after as silks with woven patterns. Their frequent appearance in China and Central Asia during the Tang era might be connected to the fact that in terms of the motifs and their size, this technique allows great artistic freedom and the use of as many colours as required, and is also suited to producing larger quantities of cloth (Matsumoto 1984: 94). Among the textiles from Dunhuang and the Shoso-in, those with scattered patterns of often markedly stylised flowers seen from above form an important group.²⁵

²³ This banner belongs to a large number of manuscripts, painted silk banners and ornately-decorated textiles found in Cave 17 at Dunhuang (the so-called 'Secret Library') by A. Stein and P. Pelliot at the beginning of the 20th century. The finds included a large number of textile fragments of varying sizes which were probably offerings brought by pilgrims (Giès 1994: 16).

²⁴ With respect to the motifs the banner in Paris displays a network of vegetal elements while in Alchi the ornamental pattern is geometrical; however, examples from the same group of textiles have also survived: another poorly-preserved Tang dynasty clamp-resist dyed silk fragment of a banner from Dunhuang now in the Musée Guimet (Giès 1994: ill. 44, EO. 1166) displays simple roundels with cross-bars at their centres.

²⁵ According to A. Bühler (1974: 73), most of the Central Asian finds come from the provinces of Gansu and Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, and in terms of motif and style correspond with the Chinese textiles in the Japanese collection.

The basic form of many Tang-era textiles consists of compositions of a larger or smaller number of discrete symmetrical units which are mostly arranged around a centre and only loosely connected with the surrounding elements. These characteristics are to be found on both the panels shown here. Whether Tang-era textiles from China or Eastern Turkestan served as models for these panels, or whether models from other workshops in Central Asia underlie these patterns cannot be determined on the basis of the material currently available to me. A secure localisation of the Southern Caucasian textile find could provide further indications here.

The frequent appearance of the ornamental pattern on Panel II 36 in the same form and colours in the murals indicates that there was a familiarity with this type of textile (cf. Pl. 29), which might have been extant at the monastery rather than having been introduced indirectly by means of a pattern book or other painted models.²⁶ The fact that it can be clearly 'read' as a dyed fabric would also support this hypothesis.

Panel II 34 (Pl. 31) could also hypothetically be connected with clamp-resist dyed examples from the Shoso-in. It displays pairs of birds back-to-back, probably peacocks and geese, on pedestals which are placed one above the other in the manner of a candelabrum. The motifs appear in blue on a reddish-brown ground. The comparable examples of Japanese and Central Asian textiles are characterised by a pastel-like palette of colours, the white contours of the resists and the busy, shimmering impression of colour deriving from the irregular distribution of the dye during the dyeing process. As far as motifs are concerned, there is a series of screens and banners in the Shoso-in

Bühler assigns them to the era of the 8th-10th century (ibid.). The technique is also found in other regions of Central Asia; however, surviving examples do not display the characteristic scattered patterns. In the area around Rayy a textile fragment was found with the typical repertoire of forms found in woven silk textiles with roundels and interstitial motifs (ibid.: ill. 50). The pattern is laid out along symmetrical vertical and horizontal axes. The decoration on the costumes depicted in the 11th-century murals in the Lashgari Bazaar in Afghanistan might be reproductions of clamp-resist dyed fabrics and resembles the patterns at Rayy.

²⁶ The monk's robe worn by a buddha in a painting with Amitābha's paradise displays blue wheels on a pale background (Pal 1975: ill. p. 72). In a representation with the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara the pattern appears on the shawls and *dhotis* of celestial beings (ibid.: ill. p. 62). In the '*du khang*' it decorates the shawl on an honorific parasol which is placed over the pair of nobles in the famous 'Royal Drinking Scene' (ibid.: ill. D23).

which typically have horizontally symmetrical designs combined with animal motifs.

There is in fact a somewhat loose but interesting parallel with a clamp-resist dyed cloth in the Shoso-in, which displays opposing pairs of ducks on a pedestal of flowers beneath a tree growing out of the pedestal (Pl. 30).²⁷ The motifs are in ochre and reddish-brown on a blue ground.²⁸ The motifs at Alchi are admittedly far simpler and correspond to the ornamental repertoire that also appears in other media in this artistic tradition, as the wooden reliefs with comparable candelabra and tendrilling on the portal of the Vairocana Temple at Mang rgyu prove.

There are further examples of panels that might also be, hypothetically, seen as belonging to this group in which certain aspects of the latter type of textile such as use of colour, contouring and horizontally symmetrical arrangement of the motifs appear in combination with a vocabulary of idioms which can be assigned to the painting traditions of the Indian sphere, and perhaps also to those of Central Asia. I shall refer to the independent compositions that arose in this way as 'composed textiles' or 'textile paraphrases'.

Panel II 39 (Pl. 84) displays twelve rows of dancers and figures equipped with weapons on a neutral ground. In each row two figures in various intricate poses are placed opposite each other.²⁹ Some of these figures hold sacrificial bowls and in their lively poses resemble the flying deities or *apsarās* which populate the throne architectures and *maṇḍalas* of the murals and are frequently depicted upside down,

²⁷ The silk cloth measures 104 x 53.5 cm, Shoso-in, Nara. The simple or double-symmetrical design indicates that the fabric was folded once or twice before it was put into the block press (cf. Matsumoto 1993: ill. 47, 48, 51).

²⁸ The motif on this textile is related to the ancient oriental Tree of Life flanked by animals. Lotus pedestals placed one above the other like candelabra with birds are also a frequent motif in the cave temples of Dunhuang (Whitfield and Otsuka 1995: ill. 860). In Cave 288, in the oblong fields of the painting on the ceiling gable there are two lotus pedestals, one placed above the other, the upper pedestal serving as a perch for single birds or pairs of birds (ibid.: ill. 236). The subject itself could derive from the Indian Buddhist tradition or even from its ceiling painting, examples of which are to be found in Caves 1 and 17 at Ajaṅṭā. Representations of birds, in particular propitious *hamsas* (geese) and peacocks are not only a frequent motif at Dunhuang and Bāmiyān but can also be traced back to the Buddhist ceiling paintings at Ajaṅṭā and Ellora.

²⁹ See e.g. Goepper and Poncar 1996: ill. p. 120ff. The throne of Akṣobhya has comparable figures of male celestial musicians, dancers and acrobats.

as if hovering in the air with outstretched arms.³⁰ These are to be found immediately next to the central deity of the murals and will be discussed below in connection with the question of possible iconographic functions. Other figures bear swords and shields and seem to be engaged in combat with one another.³¹ The figures are one-dimensional, with pale contours and silhouettes, and placed against a patchy reddish background. The patchiness might be an imitation of the technical circumstance of the dye being unevenly distributed when it is introduced externally into the channels. Finally, the layout of the elements along a vertical axis should be mentioned, which is indicative of the typical horizontally symmetrical patterns of clamp-resist dyed textiles and can be attributed to the cloth having been folded before it was placed in the block press.

In terms of their motifs however, the paintings differ from surviving examples of this dyeing technique. The figural representations as such probably derive from painting rather than textile patterns, and in certain details display parallels with the Western Indian tradition. An interesting object for comparison is provided by a painted wooden book cover (Pl. 85) showing a battle scene from a Jaina legend. What is significant for the purpose of comparison are the rigid, formulaic poses of the warriors such as that of the archer on the chariot, his legs extended in full stride, which corresponds to some of the figures at Alchi, for example those in the upper and lower rows of the panel, as well as details of the costumes, which are very likely of Indian origin.³² In stylistic terms the representations at Alchi corre-

³⁰ See Goepper and Poncar 1996: ill. p. 186 and 200 for comparable representations of *apsarās* flanking the gates of *maṇḍalas*.

³¹ Dancers with swords and shields are also encountered in Buddhist reliefs, especially those in Aurangabad; but the murals at Mang nang also have *apsarās* with swords (see Tucci 1973: 113). Folk dancers from Skardu wear kaftan-like jackets and when performing their dances also carry shields like the figures on the panel described (Klimburg-Salter 1987: 696).

³² See E. Wandl (1996: 24), who also refers to this book cover in her identification of costumes at Tabo and finds numerous similarities. If one follows her argument, the costumes shown here are also in all likelihood of Indian origin: most of the figures wear Indian *dhotīs*, with scarf-like ends hanging down in the middle. A short jacket, open at the breast, whose hem runs into a point at the sides, clothes the hero of the legend standing at the centre and matches the garment worn by one of the warriors in Alchi in the second row from the bottom. The same clothing is also worn by figures on the walls of the *gsum brtsegs*; for example, male figures waving cloth

spond to those in the Jaina painting not only in the poses of the figures, which are also to be seen in the painting, but in particular in the pattern-like one-dimensionality and the angular forms of the bodies that characterise these figures, as well as their strong contours.³³ At the same time individual motifs recall subjects in the ceiling paintings of Central Asian Buddhist cave temples. This aspect will be treated below.

By contrast, the regular arrangement of the individual elements into a pattern as well as the imitation of the dyeing process described above were evidently intended to make the representations appear to be reproductions of printed cloth.³⁴ Whether silk textiles of this kind were being produced in India or Central Asia in the Middle Ages is not known. In the case of the last panel described one may speak of a 'composite textile representation' or textile paraphrase, whereby motifs from various painting traditions are combined with the typical features of a particular dyeing technique and organised in characteristic patternings.

A further example in this group is Panel II 48 (Pl. 86), which has female figures, perhaps dancers, which in stylistic terms show clear correlations with the Indian aesthetic tradition. The women with their

parasols and long ribbons which flank the gates of a *maṇḍala* on the first upper level (Goepper 1996: 208).

³³ P. Pal (1994: 95) was the first to point out that individual motifs on the ceiling of the *gsum brtsegs* were comparable to the Western Indian style of Jaina manuscripts. There are a number of indirect indications for contacts and cultural exchange between various regions of the Western Himalayas and Western India. These are attested by e.g. the textile representations at Tabo in Himachal Pradesh (Klimburg-Salter 1999/2000). E. Wandl (1996, 1999a) was able to identify Western Indian costumes and textile patterns in the paintings of the main temple, and establish connections with textiles from the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent. In Alchi there are also a series of textile representations and ceiling panels for which textiles from the important textile-producing centres in northwestern India, such as Gujarat and Rajasthan, could have provided the models (cf. Goepper and Poncar 1996: e.g. ill. p. 234, 243). More detailed treatment of the late reflection of Western Indian art in the painting of Western Tibet is to be found in the works of D. Klimburg-Salter (1999/2000).

³⁴ A clamp-resist dyed silk fabric from Tibet displays auspicious symbols arranged in mirror image (Bühler 1974: 80, ill. 57 and ill. 58 date to the 18th or 19th century). However, they are considerably later than the textiles preserved from Central Asia which were dyed in the technique that had probably reached its zenith in China by the 7th century. The only evidence for this technique from India are the blocks found at Ahmedabad, which probably date to the 16th or 17th century (Bühler 1974: 110).

long, straight hair wear tight-fitting upper garments with characteristically elongated sleeves which follow the movements of the arms, being whirled about in the air to form loops. These accentuate the flowing movements of the figures, with their emphatically female shapes. Various elements in the forms of the costumes can be linked to Tibetan and maybe even Western Indian traditions.³⁵ R. Goepfer (1995: 115) points out that these elongated sleeves could be a reminiscence of the characteristics of the costumes worn by Chinese dancers.³⁶ Dancing women in complicated poses with shawls looping in the air can be seen among the representations of paradise in the Dunhuang murals (cf. Whitfield 1995, Cave 220, ill. 226). Here it should be remarked that the vaulted ceilings of the Tang-era caves at Dunhuang exhibit comparable subjects with figural representations that convey the same impression of weightlessness shown by the figures on Panels 39 and 48. The vaulted ceiling of Cave 329 (cf. *ibid.*, Cave 329, early Tang era, ill. 129), for example, is crowned with the representation of a canopy with valances which at its edges and centre opens up illusionistically into a sky populated with celestial beings in animated flight such as *apsarās*, who dispense flowers and play on musical instruments.³⁷ In stylistic terms as well, the paintings

³⁵ The legs of the figures are concealed in long, wide trousers with turn-ups laid in folds. Elongated sleeves and trousers with hems in a contrasting colour are features of Tibetan clothing, such as that worn by the figures in the legend of Sudhana at Tabo (Klimburg-Salter 1997a: fig. 123). However, this costume, which resembles a trouser suit, has more loosely-fitting upper garments and also lacks the long scarves wrapped around the dancers' hips. On the other hand the non-Tibetan costumes on the female figures at Tabo consist of tight-fitting tops and loose trousers and probably come from northwestern India (Wandl 1996: 37). Elongated sleeves that can be used to make loops in the air while dancing, do not occur in the examples mentioned here. It is uncertain whether they came from India or perhaps belonged to a vernacular tradition stemming from eastern Central Asia.

³⁶ Elongated sleeves have been a feature of the robes of Tibetan rulers since early times, as the paintings in Cave 159 from the middle Tang era in Dunhuang attest (Whitfield and Otsuka 1995: pl. 257). Dancers in paintings at Dunhuang also wear costumes with elongated sleeves (*ibid.*, Cave 156, late Tang era, ill. 238). The paintings at Alchi can perhaps also be interpreted as representations of dance and music as tributes in a liturgical or ritual context. Both activities are represented as female personifications among the offering deities of a Vajradhātu *maṇḍala* (Goepfer and Poncar 1996: 123).

³⁷ To this group belongs a further panel, II 33, in this group with 'flying' riders at full gallop (cf. Pl. 87), in blue on a pinkish ground, which could be compared with the representation of the Great Departure in the same cave (cf. Whitfield and Otsuka 1995, ill. 129), in which the *bodhisattva* Siddhārtha, mounted on his horse and

at Dunhuang with dark-coloured, rather naturalistically rendered figures and a sharp delineation of the major shapes which move freely in space against a light-coloured background, are not dissimilar to those at Alchi. This is not to suggest that there is a direct motif-related correlation; it is also entirely unclear as to how any such influence might be explained in terms of the history of the development (whereby textiles on account of their mobility have special significance on diffusion of motifs). Here it will suffice to point out the fact that the figural elements mentioned appear together on the ceilings in Dunhuang (this point will be dealt with in connection with the question of the disposition of the motifs in the sacred space), a circumstance that is of significant relevance for a comparison with the group of panels from Alchi being described here. In addition, it should be stated that the artistic tradition of the Tang era was important when possible textile models for this group of panels were being examined.

To return to the question of textile sources, it should be noted that the representations at Alchi are not merely repetitive decoration; they display a great variety of forms, and by virtue of their plasticity are closer to the genre of painting rather than a dyeing process, while certain characteristics in the way the paint has been applied and the light-coloured contours of the figures do seem to imitate the technique of resist-dyeing. In addition, we have here a free arrangement of patterns along a vertical axis. Rendered with naturalistic qualities of movement, that provide a sense of space and modelling, the figures are however difficult to imagine as a pattern on a fabric treated in the presumed dyeing technique. As has been described in connection with the last-mentioned panel, it would seem that this is also a case where motifs which obviously derive from various different artistic traditions have become superimposed on characteristics exhib-

accompanied by celestial beings that bear him aloft, leaves his parents' palace (I thank E. Allinger for bringing this to my attention). The Retreat from the World (*abhinīṣkramaṇa*) is also a subject that appears at the centre of ceiling paintings at Central Asian Buddhist sites, two in particular - one in a beaded roundel, the other in a lotus roundel in Sängim (von Le Coq 1928-33, vol. 7: fig. 49a) and Murtuq (ibid.: fig. 50) respectively, being of special relevance here. The subject of riders, albeit in the context of the hunt, appears frequently in the paintings of the *gsum brtsegs* and represents the courtly/profane repertoire of motifs, which is also prominent in the murals. Riders executing the so-called Parthian shot are a frequent decorative motif in Tang-era ornamental art, as attested by another example of a resist-dyed silk fabric (cf. Gao 1992).

ited by printed silks which derive from the techniques of certain dyeing processes.³⁸ The figural representations discussed above do not correspond to the prevalent motifs found on the type of textile that was probably used as a model. These representations, referred to here as textile paraphrases, employ various types of patterning used in textile art to create independent compositions. This can be presumed especially in those cases where Indian motifs have been incorporated into representations of Central Asian luxury art.

The Ceiling Paintings in Their Architectonic Context

In addition to the examination of individual motifs, the ornamental forms of the ceilings as a component in the decoration of the ritual space as a whole will now be considered. Certain principles of composition which emerge from this illuminate other aspects of the artistic conception of the ceiling paintings. What is relevant to this question is the classification of the representations into pattern types, the examination of how variants of the latter are organised and their position in the architectonic context. If one compares the frequency and characteristics of one of these types of pattern on both floors, it is quite clear that the individual floors were executed by different hands (an impression confirmed by stylistic analysis). In addition, it would seem that less expensive pigments were used on the first upper level (II), and that the designs were less carefully executed; however, this is perhaps because more care was taken with the painting on the ground floor (I) in view of the fact that it was closer to the viewer. It cannot be excluded that the two floors were decorated at different points in time; however, this question cannot be answered here. In addition, differences in motifs can also derive from iconographic differentiation, an issue that will also be treated briefly below.

Examination of the distribution of the forms of representation (cf. diagram, Fig. 1) reveals clear differences between the individual floors.³⁹ Thus patterns imitating the technique of clamp-resist dyeing described above are only to be found on the ceilings of the first upper level (II). Typical of the paintings on this floor is the 'free' organisation of elements on a monochrome ground. Complex types of pat-

³⁸ The exact technical identification however must remain speculative.

³⁹ If a type of pattern is present on both floors, the frequency with which it occurs will vary considerably, and the variants will also differ in essential features.

terns, which presumably derive from the characteristic kinds of patterning exhibited by Central Asian luxury art, occur more frequently

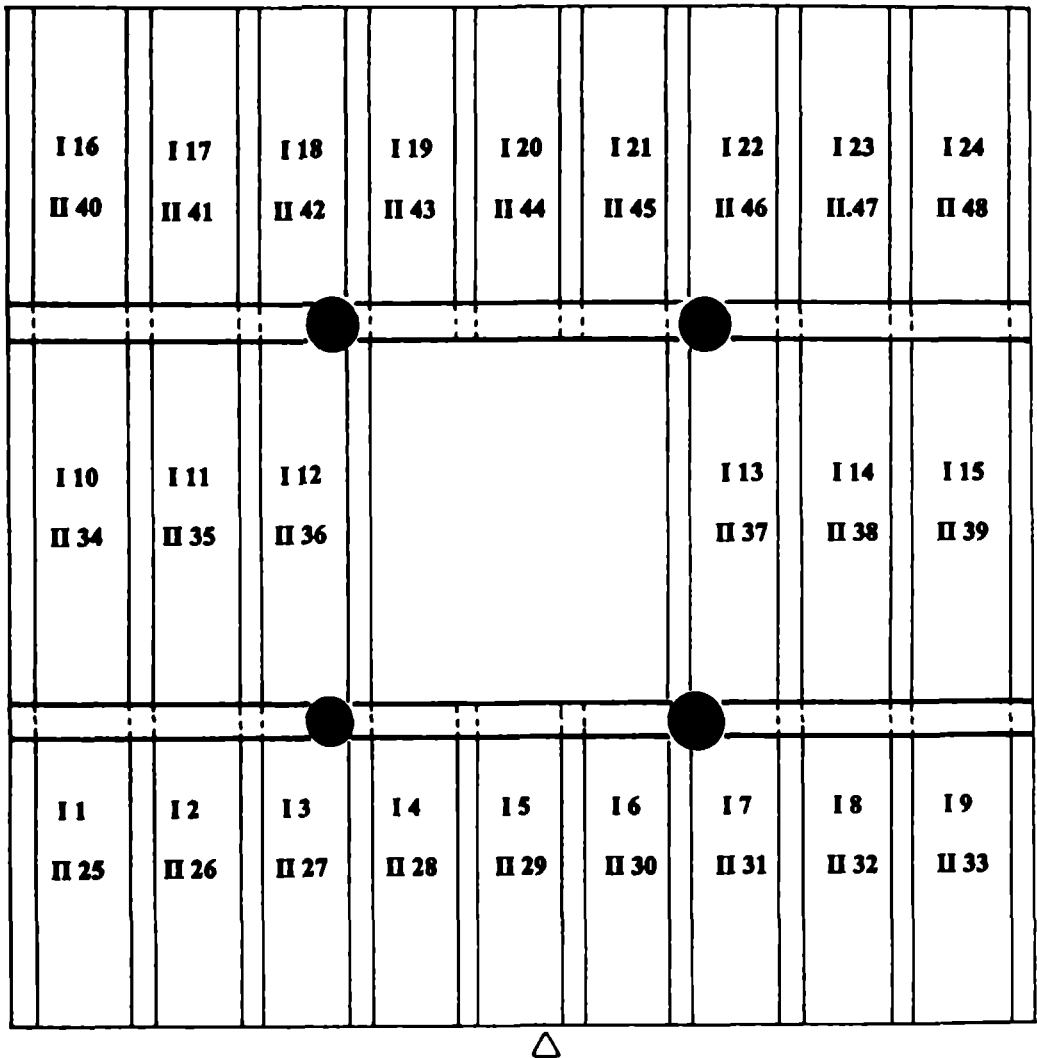


Fig. 1: Diagram, wooden panels with textile motifs: I 1 – I 24 /ground floor (I), II 25– II 48 / first upper level (II) (adapted from Goepper 1996: 227)

on the ground floor (I). Here the ‘Indo-Iranian’ motifs predominate, with roundels containing riders and symmetric pairs of animals aligned along a vertical axis of symmetry. To this group also belong examples with running animals in bands with different coloured grounds in the fashion of brocade patterning.

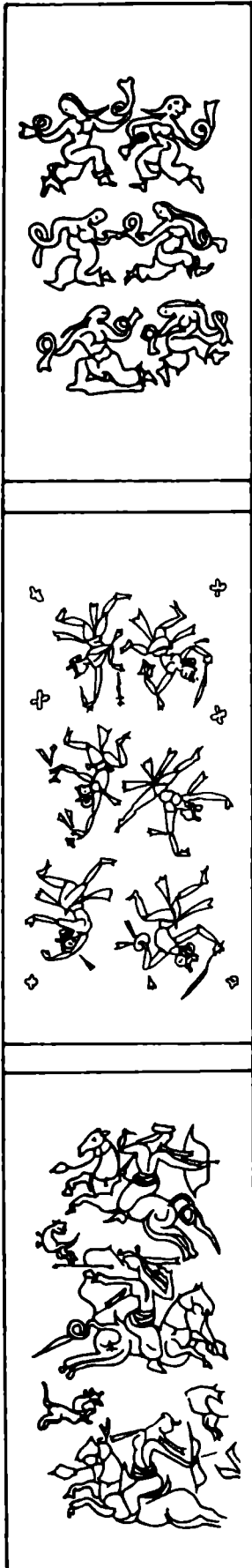
Classification according to pattern type allows not only attribution to specific textile traditions but also reveals regularities in the distri-

bution of the panels.⁴⁰ As an example, there is a symmetrical distribution of variants of a group around the deities in the niches to the right and left of the entrance wall: on the east side with the monumental Mañjuśrī sculpture there are for example three types of candelabrum motif on a red ground (Panels I 9, I 14, I 24, cf. diagram, Fig. 1) around the central panel in front of the niche.

Similar symmetrical forms can be observed on the first upper level (II). Three variants of clamp-resist dyed representations (already described in detail above) are arranged in the first row adjacent to the wall with the portrayal of the Tārā. The central position of the deity in the murals on both floors is accentuated by the fact that the central panels are to be 'read' in a different direction to the adjacent panels (cf. illustration, Fig. 2).

There are further interesting features to be discovered here which are of possible relevance on an iconographic level, as the panels mentioned occur exclusively on the upper floors. As has already been mentioned above, the figural representations on a neutral ground so characteristic of this group of panels, for example dancing figures with swirling elongated sleeves and figures that fly through the air with sacrificial bowls, recall to a certain extent the *apsarās* or celestial beings which have populated the ceilings of Buddhist shrines since early times. On the panels of the canopy of a niche in Alchi there are moreover flying deities with *uṣṇīṣa* clothed in a kind of monk's robe (Pl. 88), which are placed between simple floral dividing elements and which float towards the monumental sculpture (stylistically the paintings belong to those on the first upper level (II) and are almost identical to the 'flying Buddhas' in the interstices of the lantern ceiling of the *stūpa* chapel at Mang rgyu; cf. Linrothe 1994: fig. 4, 4a). In this respect there are certain parallels with the representations at Tabo. There complex figural beaded roundels appear on the ceilings of the apsis and the ambulatory which contain flying deities with sacrificial offerings. The question arises, whether this type of motif marks a particular area of the temple and is possibly con-

⁴⁰ As well as grouping the panels according to clamp-resist dyed ornamental forms, the representations can also be assigned to a series of other pattern types. This procedure is particularly important in that individual groups can thus be attributed to regionally-specific textile traditions which display their own characteristic features in terms of pattern composition and motif. The results have been described in my MA thesis (Papa-Kalantari 2000) and will be published elsewhere.



nected in terms of the history of development with representations of celestial beings on the ceilings of Indian and Central Asian religious structures.

The fact that figures belonging to related thematic spheres appear in free arrangements only on the ceilings of the first upper level (II) at Alchi, and that they are symmetrically grouped around the respective deity in the wall niches, might indicate that they are arranged according to generic organisational concepts on an iconographic level. In order to verify this supposition, however, comparative studies of the decoration of other Western Tibetan temples will have to be undertaken. Analysis of the spatial disposition of the representations together with the examination of the ceiling as a constituent part of the whole iconographic programme of the decoration of the ritual space will be of primary importance in studies of this kind.

In conclusion it should be stated that it was possible, based on the evidence of a group of panels on the upper floor, to demonstrate that the painted motifs represent the precise imitation of a particular textile dyeing technique, namely that of clamp-resist dyeing. The question of the textile models on which these painted panels were based can as yet only be tentatively answered. On the basis of the characteristic features in respect of compositional principle, motif and dyeing techniques displayed by some of the panels described here it can be assumed that these models must have been closely related to Tang-era clamp-resist dyed textiles from Chinese Central Asia. Ex-

Fig. 2. Graphic illustration of the ceiling panels II 48, II 39, II 33 (details), *gsum brtsegs*, first upper level (II), and their position to the right (east wall) of the entrance wall

amples of this type of precious silk fabric which derive from the Mogao Caves of Dunhuang in Gansu Province or are preserved in the Shoso-in, correspond to an astonishing degree with the forms found at Alchi. One panel showing this textile type, as we have seen, can especially be related to a southern Caucasian textile find. This example still leaves open the possibility of models from centres of production located further west along the Silk Road.

It is important to note here that at Alchi, in contrast to Tabo, where the main parallels are with the patterns of “Fusṭāṭ-textiles” (a group of resist-dyed cotton fabrics that can be related to Gujarat and Rajasthan), Central Asian luxury textiles can additionally be proposed as possible models.

The subtle handling of textile characteristics proves not only that this was a theme which had long had a place in this tradition but also indicates that a certain process of detachment from the textile sources had taken place: the imitation of textiles in the sense of a naturalistic handling of the models is, as has been shown, only true of some of the panels described here. Variants of the group of representations presented here are it is true related to the presumed type of textile source in respect of their ‘syntax’ (surface compositions, colour, contouring), but are not identical in terms of vocabulary (individual motifs). Figural motifs often show a vivid sense of movement, variety and a visual complexity that runs counter to the tendency of repeated motifs characteristic of textiles. Various characteristic features of the analysis of style and motif on the other hand can be linked to specific traditions of Western and Northwestern Indian art as well as Central Asian ceiling painting, and throw light on the ‘cosmopolitan’ character of this complex artistic tradition.⁴¹

Examples are some of the most prominent motifs at Alchi, such as the ‘Sasanid’ riders and paired back-to-back lions in roundel patterns that recall Western-Central Asian luxury textiles. R. Goepper (1993b: 59) has found sources for these motifs in surviving examples of Kashmiri art. The reliefs preserved on an architectural fragment of the Avantisvāmin temple, datable to the 9th century with their figural

⁴¹ Hardly any research has been done on the historical background of this complex artistic situation, for example the influence of dynastic founders of religious settlements or that of the Tibetan clergy and their sectarian links. The examination of the trade routes will be of primary importance in this context.

beaded roundels could be interpreted as evidence for a phenomenon whose distribution in Central Asia can be traced back to models from late antiquity. What we have here is a constant formal factor which, used in different media, accentuates individual, iconographically significant elements and at the same time works them decoratively and rhythmically into the composition of large-scale patterns. J. Trilling (1985: 27), in an analysis of late Roman mosaic and Byzantine textile art has pointed out the cultural and historical strength of a formal impulse that “transcend[s] media and techniques”. In this connection A. Riegl’s similar ideas on the *Kunstwollen* of the late Roman art industry should also be cited.

This article is not primarily concerned with the question of the derivation of motifs but intended to demonstrate on the basis of stylistic analysis that the ceiling paintings exhibit links with various different traditions and media, which fed into a homogeneous form of representation in a complex process of superimposition. Various characteristic features, which can be traced back to textiles from different regions, such as the treatment of the motifs, colouring and pattern composition, were worked into independent compositions.

A complex process such as that described here is only imaginable as the result of a long-term development, a circumstance that is reflected in the virtuosity and sophistication of the Alchi group of ceiling paintings. This means that these paintings can only be properly appreciated if they are understood not only as a testimony of the material culture of the region but as an independently developed genre. This assumption is supported by further aspects, such as the relationship between architecture and painting. The interaction between these two fields has been evidenced here by a number of observations relating to the motifs and their disposition within the interior. This clearly shows that the ceiling panels should be analysed as part of the decoration of the *gsum brtsegs* as a whole, beyond their purely decorative effect. However, any conjecture as to the iconographic function of these paintings remains for the present in the realm of hypothesis. The comparative investigation of western Tibetan ceiling paintings against the background of Indian and Central Asian ornamental forms would constitute a rewarding subject for future research.

It was demonstrated that the transposition of textile decorative forms into the medium of painting was accompanied by the emanci-

pation of the idea of the decoration of the temple from its material source. The way this complex process took place will need to be examined more closely.

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THE WANLA BKRA SHIS GSUM BRTSEGS*

CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS

Wanla is a village in Lower Ladakh located at the confluence of two streams in a side valley between Khalatse and Lamayuru. The valley opens out at this point and is relatively flat and fertile. The village houses are placed on the slopes around a prominent rock hill that once boasted an impressive castle. Today the ridge of the rock is dominated by the lofty structure of the three-storeyed Wanla temple and the rather clumsy residential building built roughly 20 years ago on one side (Pl. 89). Of the castle, which once surrounded the temple, only two towers from different periods and a number of walls remain.

The Wanla temple is, in my opinion, one of the most underestimated monuments in the context of academic research on Tibetan and in particular Ladakhi history. In Wanla not only is a practically complete monument of the founding period preserved, but the temple even contains an extensive inscription relating to the background of its foundation. Although the importance of this inscription has been well known since Francke's work on the "Antiquities of Indian Tibet" and several authors have used information from the inscriptions, it has never been published.¹ Together with the art historical

* I am grateful to Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter and Eva Allinger for their comments on a previous version of this article and to Gerald Kozicz and Holger Neuwirth (Technical University Graz) for discussing the architecture of the temple at length with me. My research on early Buddhist art in the western Himalayas is since years generously funded by the Austrian *Fonds zur Förderung wissenschaftlicher Forschung* (FWF) and since recently also by a research grant of the Austrian Programme for Advanced Research and Technology (APART) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

¹ Francke (Francke 1914: 97) was told by his monk informant in Lamayuru that the Wanla inscription records that the Wanla temple, the Seng ge sgang (Seng ge *lha khang*) of Lamayuru, a ruined temple at Chigtan, and the Lha bcu rtse *lha khang* at Kanji are of the same period called "Bka' gdams pa time". Consequently Francke sent 'a man' to record the Wanla inscription and afterwards suspected a second inscription as, in his interpretation, the inscription copied is not from the "Bka' gdams pa time" but from the Muslim period. Francke already recognised the importance of the inscription (Francke 1926: 273), but a number of erroneous readings led him to some curious interpretations. Francke saw in the Wanla inscription "the only Tibetan record of the Kashmir expeditions against Ladakh in the fifteenth century", and he

evidence, Wanla provides information on an otherwise practically unknown period of Ladakh's history, the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. This information also appears to be highly relevant for the history of Tibetan Buddhism in general, as the art preserved at Wanla also provides evidence of the reception and adaptation of Central Tibetan Buddhist art in the western Himalayas.

This article aims to demonstrate the relevance of the Wanla temple for Western Tibetan history and art history on the basis of the inscription and the artistic decoration of the temple. After an introduction covering the historical context of the temple I will give an impression of the art the temple contains and its relevance for a discussion of painting styles and school attribution in Tibetan art. My colleague Gerald Kozicz discusses the architecture of the building in a parallel article in this volume. A more comprehensive discussion of the art and architecture of Wanla, including a detailed description of temple's contents and its art historical significance as well as an edition of the Wanla inscription will be published in the near future.

Historical Context

In the chronicles of Ladakh Wanla is mentioned for the first time when the Ladakhi king Lha chen Nag lug is said to have built a castle at Wanla in a tiger year, and one in Kha la rtse in a dragon year (Francke 1926: 36, 96-97).² This event occurred at some point in the 12th century.³ It may well be that parts of the present day ruins go back to this original foundation (Pl. 89). However, while it is rather unlikely that the remaining fragmentary woodcarvings on a balcony of one tower are remnants of the original foundation, it is also not entirely impossible (Pl. 90).

At the time of the events described in the Wanla inscription the castle already existed and was home to the four sons of a minister of

placed the inscription in a Muslim context as he sees what he takes to be Muslim names (e.g. A li erroneously read for the place name A lci) occurring side by side with Tibetan ones.

Vitali published apparently hastily copied excerpts of the inscription and drew on its historical information (Vitali 1996: 385-90).

² *rgyal po des stag gi lo la wan lar mkhar rtsigs / 'brug gi lo la kha la rtse* (L. Ms. *kha la rtse mkhar brtsigs so*) *rtsigs so //* (Francke 1926: 36).

³ According to Francke King Lha chen Nag lug ruled ca. 1110-40 (ibid.: 96).

an unnamed government in the Wanla valley termed *rgya shing*. The eldest son, a certain 'Bhag dar skyab, is the hero of the inscription and the founder of the temple. He was first appointed leader of the district (*mi sde'i gtso bo skos*) and at the age of thirty took over the throne of the small kingdom around Wanla. Consequently he is said to have conquered the surrounding region from Wakha, Kanji and Suru in the south to Alchi, Mangyu and Ensa (?) in the north, i.e. a substantial region of Lower Ladakh.⁴ He further is said to have been offered the throne of Kashmir (*kha ce'i yul*, v38)⁵ and to have collected tribute from the northern nomads. Finally, the Wanla Bkra shis gsum brtsegs temple, as the temple is described in the inscription, is erected at the centre of the castle.

It is evident from the inscription that the small Alchi dominion, which made it possible for the monk descendants of the 'Bro clan to erect numerous magnificent temples of imported workmanship of highest quality, no longer existed by then. As I will specify below, these events occur in an otherwise completely obscure period of Ladakh's history between the foundation of the Alchi group of monuments,⁶ the latest of which are to be attributed to the early 13th century, and the establishment of the kingdom of Ladakh in the early 15th century (Petech 1977: 20-22). Mnga' ris was not part of the two censuses carried out in Tibet in 1268 and 1288 by the Mongol Emperors of China, and not directly under Sa skya pa administration (Petech 1977: 22).

Sculpture and Painting

The Wanla temple is three-storeyed and contains three niches for large standing sculptures at the back (south) and the sides. The tem-

⁴ Wanla inscription verses 36-39: *wa kha mkhar po che dang kan ji nam su ru // en sa a lqi mang rgyu mnga' 'og mdzad // kha ce'i {line 14} yul du skyod nas khri dpon mnga' gsol byas // byang gyi ru ba bzhi nas khral thud mang du sdus //*

Currently it is still unclear to me if *nam* between *kan ji* and *su ru* is a place name in its own right or should be added to one of the two others given (*kan ji nam* or *nam su ru*).

⁵ It is rather unlikely that the regions closer to Ladakh (Dras or Kargil area) were already Muslim by that time (cf. Holzwarth 1997).

⁶ This designation refers to the early temples of Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda that share a particularly high quality and style. Of the several temples of this group the Alchi *gsum brtsegs* is the best known.

ple is entered via a veranda, the original construction and ornamentation of which is still preserved (Pl. 91). The second storey is an open gallery entered via a window-like door from the roof of the veranda. The third storey is a lightweight construction lantern simply placed on the ceiling of the temple's second storey. Although there is no apparent structural connection between the lantern and the remaining building, the style of the preserved paintings on the walls of the lantern as well as the reference in the inscription to three storeys in the temple's name (Bkra shis gsum brtsegs) prove that the lantern was added at a very early stage (for a more detailed description and plans of the architecture cf. Gerald Kozicz in this volume).⁷

The three niches contain three large standing clay sculptures with Avalokiteśvara in his eleven-headed form taking the central position (Pls. 93, 96). Today the Wanla temple is called "Bcu gcig zhal" after this approximately 5 m high image. An image of an originally silver-coloured Bodhisattva Maitreya (only in 1996 was this image repainted in white, Pl. 94) is placed inside the left-hand niche (to the proper right of the central image) and Śākyamuni in the right-hand niche (the side images are 3.40 m high, Pl. 95). A group of contemporary paper-mâché sculptures is placed on the gallery to either side of the main image. All three storeys including the niches are covered with largely contemporary murals, which to a large extent are hardly visible due to a thick coating of soot. In addition, the bookshelf flanking the altar in front of the main niche obscures a considerable section of the murals. It is for these reasons that it has not yet been possible to conduct a comprehensive survey of the murals.

The bases and capitals of the pillars, the brackets, as well as the veranda and the door are decorated with woodcarvings. The founding inscription is located immediately to the left of the Maitreya niche (left-hand niche, Pl. 94), while a donor assembly is depicted on the opposite sidewall (to the right of the Śākyamuni niche).

As apparent from the architecture and the name, the Wanla temple can to a considerable extent be understood as a reference to the Alchi monuments, particularly the *gsum brtsegs*. However, the architecture, the sculptures and paintings all display enormous technical and cultural divergences.

⁷ At the current stage of documentation it cannot be ascertained if the third storey was already part of the original design or a slightly later addition.

Iconography

In the sculptural programme at Wanla the central eleven-faced and eight-armed form of the 'Great Compassionate One' (Thugs rje chen po) is invoked for remedy of daily misery and can therefore be understood as acting in the present. Together with the flanking future and past Buddhas the sculptures simply signify the continuity or continuous accessibility (past, present and future) of the Buddha's teaching. Stylistically roughly contemporary with the clay images is a group of paper-mâché sculptures representing a Bka' brgyud pa lineage headed by Vajradhara (Pls. 96, 97). These sculptures were apparently made for flanking the heads of Avalokiteśvara in the gallery.

This rather simple and clear sculptural programme contrasts starkly with the intellectually conceived programme of the Alchi *gsum brtsegs* centring on Maitreya. As an inscription in the Maitreya niche notes, the three Bodhisattvas of the *gsum brtsegs*—Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Maitreya—are considered to be representations of body, speech and mind, and the three images are set up to help believers to attain *nirmāṇa*-, *sambhoga*-, and *dharmakāya* respectively (Denwood 1980: inscription 6). Although this interpretation, written probably slightly later than the construction of the temple by a monk named Grags ldan 'od, must be considered problematic it nevertheless proves the highly intellectual concept underlying the art of Alchi (cf. Goepper and Poncar 1996: 46-48). In fact, the whole decoration of the monument appears to follow an over-all concept, albeit in part inconsistently pursued.⁸

Like the sculptural decoration, the murals of Wanla, too, are evidence of a marked shift from earlier iconographic programmes such as those at Tabo or Alchi. The inscription mentions that all aspects of the Buddhist teachings of the time—'old and new'—are present in the decoration assembled in the extensive pantheon covering all the walls. Indeed, it is a mixture of deities that had been prominent in earlier western Himalayan monuments and deities of iconographic themes 'new' to the region, which characterises the decoration. For

⁸ I refer here to Rob Linrothe's first attempt at an analysis of the programme (Linrothe 1996).

the purpose of this article it is sufficient to prove this point with a few examples.⁹

Among the iconographic features already known from earlier monuments in the region, particularly from Alchi, the following are of note. As at Alchi, Mahākāla, flanked by protectresses, takes the position above the two doors (Pl. 32). Of the *maṇḍala* attributed to the *yoga*-Tantra class, the dominant class in the earlier art in the region, the Vajradhātumaṇḍala has a secondary position among the temple's paintings and also occurs as the root *maṇḍala* of the Sarvadharmapariśodhanatantra as described by Vajravarman. A more prominent position, to the right of the main niche behind the bookshelf, is given to the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṅjuśrīmaṇḍala, and the four-armed Maṅjuśrī, so common in Alchi, is also represented prominently on a side wall of the niche of Śākyamuni (Pl. 33). This distribution reflects the gradual shift from Vairocana to Maṅjuśrī as is apparent in the Alchi group of monuments and at Dunkar; at both sites there is a temple dedicated to Maṅjuśrī. In addition, already familiar themes are the Life of the Buddha, the Mahāsiddhas and several representations of Bka' brgyud pa lineages.¹⁰

The 'new' themes are largely well known from 13th century Central Tibetan painting and/or stem from the *anuttarayoga*-Tantras, which were apparently not represented in the western Himalayas until the thirteenth century. These themes are either represented as complete palace *maṇḍala*, as e.g. a Vajrayoginī-, a Cakrasaṃvara- (Pl. 34), and a Mahākāruṅikamaṇḍala, or in 'horizontal' fashion with a large central deity and the secondary deities placed around it. Among those depicted in the latter fashion are Amitāyus, other variants of Cakrasaṃvara, Hevajra and numerous fierce deities. Among other themes known from Central Tibetan 13th-14th-century thangka painting are the different Buddhas flanked by Bodhisattvas, Śākyamuni in the Bodhgayā temple, and Bodhisattvas with their secondary deities (Pl. 35). In addition, a large representation of Guru Rinpoche occupies a prominent position on the left-hand wall of the main niche.

⁹ At the current stage of documentation and due to the blackened condition of the paintings and the fact that they are obscured by furniture the complete programme of the temples decoration can not yet be ascertained.

¹⁰ On the introduction of the Mahāsiddhas and lineage representations in the latest phase at Alchi cf. Luczanits (1998).

Regarding the distribution of the different themes it can only be said to date that *anuttarayoga* themes tend to be found on the ground floor close to the main image, while paradise and assembly depictions are particularly frequent in the upper storeys.

In contrast to Alchi, the distribution of the themes identified so far seems not to follow an integrated iconographic programme for the whole temple. Besides the sculptures, only some of the main themes, such as the Life of the Buddha represented along the back of the temple, are represented in relation to the architecture and its layout. Most of the deities surrounded by secondary figures are placed in unevenly distributed squares next to each other covering the whole wall surface as if smaller and larger thangkas were placed side by side. This distribution of the iconographic themes is of course well known from the Alchi *lha khang so ma* and related temples.

Style

The Wanla inscription notes that the woodcarvings are 'as if made by Nepalis' but from the context of this statement in the inscription it appears to be doubtful that the paintings were also conceived after a Nepali model.¹¹ Instead, the phrase demonstrates that the founder had to rely on local workmanship and that this workmanship based itself on foreign models. This is exactly what appears to have happened at Wanla.

Stylistically the Wanla paintings are clearly no longer part of a western Himalayan tradition, but their style is based on Central Tibetan thangka painting attested from the 12th century onwards (cf. particularly Pl. 35). This school of painting is the result of a strong Central Tibetan influence, which can be observed throughout the region from the end of the 12th century at the earliest, and throughout the 13th century. The final shift in the painting tradition must have occurred sometime in the middle of the 13th century, when the paint-

¹¹ Verses 59-63: *skyes bu g.yas g.yon g#is dang ya them ma them dang // mchod pa'i {line 22} lha mo rnamis dang rin chen shar ru dang // rta babs chos kyi 'khor lo bkra shis brdzas brgyad rnamis // rkos dang 'bur ma lasogs 'bal po'i bzo' dang 'tshungs // 'og {line 23} gzhing bkod pa khyad 'pha[g]s gsar rnying lha 'tshogs bzhengs //*

ers of Alchi where not available anymore and the central Tibetan Bka' rgyud schools became dominant in the west.¹²

In comparison to Central Tibetan examples and some thirteenth century examples in the western Himalaya,¹³ the Wanla paintings are of much simpler workmanship. This flat and rather naïve painting style is representative of similar Central Tibetan-derived local styles evidenced at several places, particularly but not exclusively in Lower Ladakh. To mention only those within the presumed territory of the Wanla kingdom: the *lha khang so ma* of Alchi and another *lha khang* at Alchi Shang rong,¹⁴ the Seng ge sgang at Lamayuru, and a small temple at Kanji.¹⁵ Although no date for any of these local styles has been established and an inner chronology for the Ladakhi monuments sharing this particular kind of painting has still to be established,¹⁶ Wanla appears to be an early representative of this local style.

School and Date

I have shown elsewhere (Luczanits 1998) that the latest phase of the early Alchi temples, i.e. the *stūpa* and temples attributable to the early 13th century, attests to a quite prominent Central Tibetan influence apparently brought to the region by the 'Bri gung pa school. Roughly at the same time the Ladakhi king Dngos grub mgon pa-

¹² For a more detailed discussion of this shift towards a new style cf. Luczanits (1998).

¹³ E.g. the renovation period paintings of the Tholing Main Temple and a number of *mchod rten* at Tabo (cf. Klimburg-Salter 1998: figs. 4-8), and various *mchod rten* in Ladakh (cf. Luczanits 1998).

¹⁴ At Alchi temples and *mchod rten* continued to be built throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, as evidenced by e.g. the alterations to the veranda of the 'du khang, the *lha khang so ma*, and a number of other *mchod rten* and monuments at different sites all over the village.

¹⁵ 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 magnificent *mchod rten* said to be at Nyoma in the upper Indus valley (cf. Francke 1914: 56-8) are to be considered as well. Variations of this style are also found in the Guru *lha khang* at Phyang and the cave above Saspol.

¹⁶ Béguin and Fournier (1986) have attempted such a chronology but did not gain access to all of the preserved temples. Of the early Ladakhi temples, the Bcu gcig zhal at Wanla appears to be most promising for achieving an absolute date for this painting style.

tronised 'Jig rten mgon po in 1215 and laid down "the rule that Ladakhi novices should go to dBus and gTsang for higher studies and ordinations." (Petech 1977: 166).

The Wanla inscription clearly sets the foundation and usage of the temple in a Bka' rgyud pa context by mentioning that among the decorations the Bka' rgyud pa *bla ma* are represented as being headed by Vajradhara.¹⁷ The inscription most probably refers to the sculptures presumed to sit on the gallery flanking Avalokiteśvara's heads. Among these paper-mâché sculptures only the first five figures, e.g. Marpa on Pl. 97, are clearly identifiable while the later *bla ma* show little differentiation. In painting the lineage is represented several times, two of them preserved completely. There the lineage consists of twelve (ground floor, Pl. 35) or thirteen figures (gallery, the beginning of the lineage is shown on Pl. 98).

In a second part of the inscription, the Bka' rgyud pa context is further narrowed down to the 'Bri gung pa. A *bla ma* named Shag kya rgyal mtshan, and with a partly illegible title, is invited to the place to deliver teachings.¹⁸ However, I have not yet been able to define the exact relationship of this second part of the inscription to the main part.

It is clear from the inscription that the Wanla temple was founded and decorated in a Bka' rgyud pa, but not necessarily only 'Bri gung pa, environment. In contrast to Alchi, where the first 'Bri gung pa influence is only recognisable by certain new iconographic themes represented (e.g. the depiction of the Mahāsiddhas and a lineage¹⁹), in Wanla the Bka' rgyud pa influence is visible in almost all parts of the decoration. Besides the numerous new iconographic themes the painting style and the composition (apparently partly deriving from thangka models) also show a strong dependence on Central Tibetan painting. It thus is to be expected that most of Wanla's decoration can be considered Bka' rgyud pa. However, this can only be proved when the various individual iconographic themes depicted are studied in detail.

¹⁷ V70-71: *rdo rje 'chang gis dbu' mdzad da ltar bzhugs {line 26} kyi bar || bka' rgyud bla ma rnam s kyi sku gzugs thog mar bzhugs ||*

¹⁸ V118-20: *o # dar dang 'o zer 'bum nyis pho rtsal phun sum tshogs || thu cungs shag kya rgyal tshan 'bri gung byon nas ni || chos rje'i zhabs pad btugs nas chos khrid mang du {line 44} zhus ||.*

¹⁹ Cf. n. 10.

From the information contained in the inscription and the artistic decoration of the Wanla Temple it is not yet possible to propose a precise date for its foundation. However, the range within which the temple could have been founded is relatively narrow. Considering the severe cultural shift and the lineage represented in the paintings the earliest possible date would be the end of the 13th century. On the other hand a considerable gap between the events mentioned in the inscription and the foundation of the kingdom of Ladakh in the early 15th century has to be expected, as none of these events narrated in the inscription is recorded in a historical text. Thus, the foundation of the Wanla temple most likely took place sometime during the first half of the fourteenth century.

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THE WANLA TEMPLE

GERALD KOZICZ

The Wanla temple is the last remaining, structurally intact part of the former fortress which is situated above the village of the same name. Positioned on a roughly north to south running ridge it can be accessed by winding paths from both sides of the slope. As with all other Buddhist monuments of the region it features a clear geometric shape. The ziggurat-like form is dominated by the concentrically mounted lantern and stressed by the flat roofs.

In August 1998 a complete architectural survey was carried out on the Wanla temple. Aims of such an all-encompassing approach as has been applied in this case, are to generally establish the measurement and investigation of:

1. building dimensions and separate structural elements
2. statics and construction
3. condition of building materials in terms of ingredients and composition
4. profiles of damage and structural deformation
5. changes to the original form of the building due to repair work or alterations

Based on the results of the fieldstudy digital plans are then drafted. Thus, revealing the building's exact dimensions and proportions on the one hand, and, on the other, allowing for the precise duplication of deformations to then be plotted. By superimposing the various plans and including the information derived from photographic documentation, a precise analysis of a building's architectural structure can be performed. Points 1-4 provide additional information on the original building's subsequent alterations. These alterations may usually be not immediately apparent but only noticeable by detecting changes in the area of building technology and materials. In order to clarify point 5, especially with regards to the exact manifestation of a date, an art historian's analysis of the various components' construction in view of decorative and iconographic elements is absolutely necessary. Once sufficient amount of information has been gathered,

a chronological table of the building's history can be established and the original shape investigated.

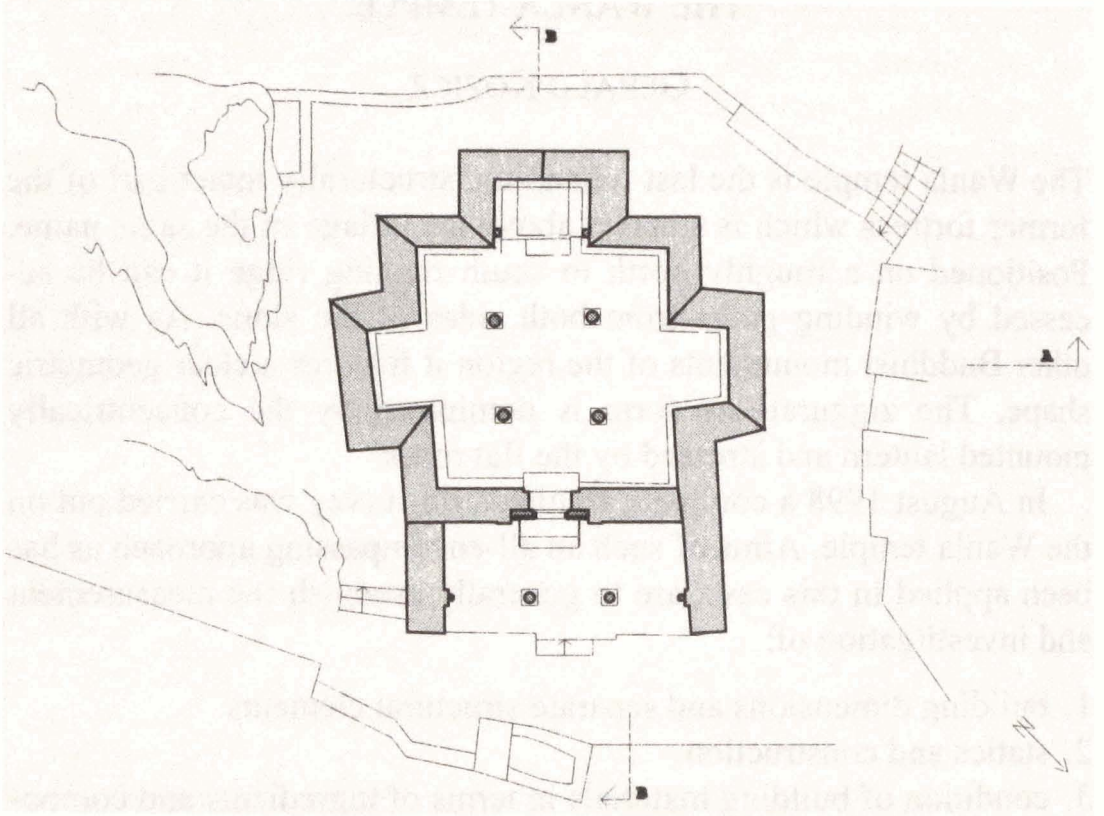


Fig. 1: Ground-plan of the Wanla temple (drawing Gerald Kozicz)

The results of this analysis were, in the particular case of the Wanla temple, summed up and transferred into a digital 3D-model. This model not only clarifies the building's proportion and impression of its interior space, it also explains the structural concept. It also shows the interrelation of the various structural elements, the architectural problems arising and their part played in the subsequently occurring damage to the building.

The following description of the Wanla temple is based on the results of the analysis and will be explained by using some of the plans and the 3D-model. The model, our chosen form of representation, corresponds largely with the building's current form but excludes the Mani walls, since they have been added to the temple at a later time. They are of no structural necessity and affect the original building's outer proportions and appearance severely (Pl. 36).

The site-layout of the temple is very similar to a cross. The main axis runs from northeast to southwest, opposing the direction of the ridge, with the entrance and the veranda facing northeast and the

apsis situated on the opposite side. On the secondary axis we find the side niches. The central space, which I refer to as the “cube”, is based on a square with a lateral length of about 5.5 m. Inscribed within its centre is another square of 2.15 m. The inner square’s corners form the central base to the axis of four wooden columns. These columns, on which the two major structural beams rest, carry a high percentage

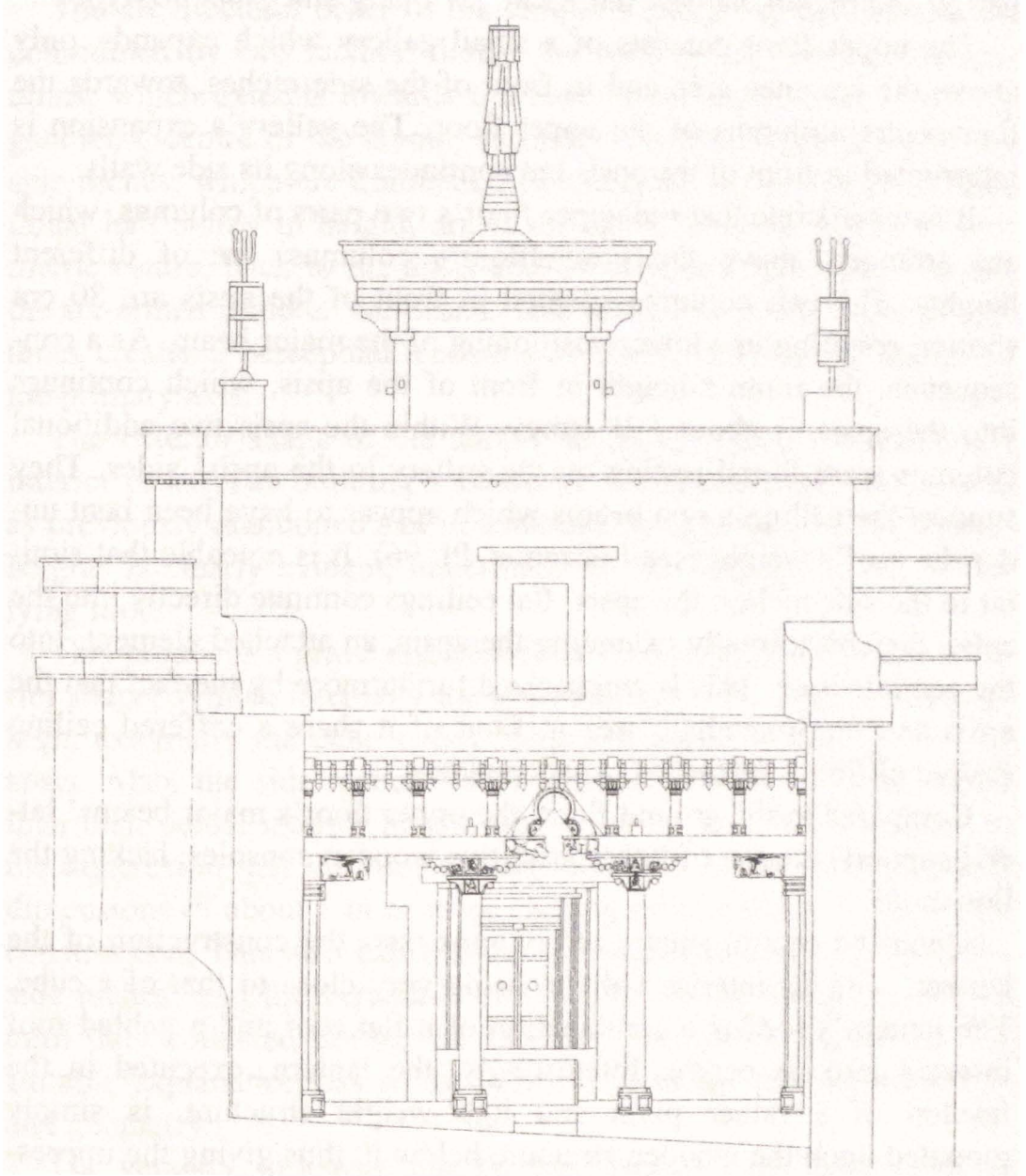


Fig. 2: Front view of the Wanla temple (drawing Gerald Kozicz)

of the vertical load of the building, namely the roof of the cube. The major beams run orthogonally to the main axis and divide the cube into three bays. On the groundfloor, the second bay of the cube ex-

pands towards the side niches. The side niches are one-storey high and have flat ceilings.

The columns are fluted and have been fitted with bases and decorated capitals. The major beams are laterally supported by lion consoles. In terms of structure and decoration these wooden elements suggest a close relation to the most important monuments of the same period and region, namely the Alchi *'du khang* and *gsum brtsegs*.

The upper floor consists of a small gallery which expands, only above the entrance area and in front of the side niches, towards the four central columns of the upper floor. The gallery's expansion is interrupted in front of the apsis but continues along its side walls.

It is remarkable that the upper floor's two pairs of columns, which are arranged above the groundfloor's columns, are of different heights. The two columns situated in front of the apsis are 80 cm shorter, resulting in a lower positioning of the major beam. As a consequence, the room's height in front of the apsis, which continues into the apsis, is about 1 ½ storey. Within the apsis two additional columns were found resting on the gallery to the apsis' sides. They support the ceiling's two beams which appear to have been bent under the roof's weight (see Luczanits, Pl. 96). It is notable that similar to the side niches, the apsis' flat ceilings continue directly into the cube, thereby formally extending the apsis, an attached element, into the central space. This is emphasized furthermore by the fact that the apsis and the immediate area in front of it share a coffered ceiling crafted of finely decorated, wooden plates.

Compared to the ground floor, the upper floor's major beams' lateral supports consist of rather primitive wooden consoles, lacking the lion motif.

Upon the central square of columns rests the construction of the lantern, with its interior volume being very close to that of a cube. The lantern's roof is a combination of a flat roof and a gabled roof inserted into its centre. Interestingly, the lantern, executed in the fashion of a rather plain and light-weight structure, is simply mounted upon the wooden structure below it, thus giving the impression of having been attached at a later stage. In addition to that one can identify a structural beam belonging to the cube's roof, which continues under the lantern without interruption. Its presence even suggests that the roof, once closed in this particular area, subsequently had to be re-opened in order for the lantern to be attached.

Christian Luczanits opposed the architectural analysis' findings, by pointing out that the Wanla temple had been described as a three-storey high building in the inscription that dates back to the building's very beginnings. Perhaps the lantern had been built during a separate step of construction within the building's primary architectural phase.

The architectural order of the temple's interior space is therefore determined by two factors: firstly, the open space between the columns, which extends towards the lantern, serves as a focus on the geometric centre of the layout; secondly, the spatial gradation of the side niches, which are dominated by the apsis, by boasting an additional half storey in height, draws the attention away from the geometric centre, back to the apsis and the temple's ideological centre, the six-armed Buddha Vairocana. This particular arrangement of volumes creates a perceptual tension and results in the accentuation of the primary axis.

The exterior shape of the temple seems to reflect the building's interior order. The building's silhouette is dominated by the lantern, as previously mentioned and in addition, the gradation of the niches' heights is clearly evident, underlined by the veranda's even lower-lying roof.

This produces a grave difference between interior space and exterior shape. Whilst, internally the apsis appears to be only 1 ½ storeys high, externally the cube's roof merges seamlessly with that of the apsis. Also, the side niches' roofs appear to be half a floor higher than their actual interior height. These severe contradictions lead to the conclusion that the roof constructions are heavily banked, with dimensions of about 1 m or more causing extraordinary loads on the construction. This also explains the difference in levels between the side niches' and the veranda's roofs. This feature was not apparent until data collected during the fieldstudy had been digitalised. No suitable explanation has so far been found in the field of aesthetics and geometry.

The veranda, in a way, can be described as a room enclosed on five sides. Its roof is laterally carried by forwardly extended temple walls which open towards the front, where a wooden construction provides further support. This wooden structure consists of two columns, lateral pillars attached to the side walls and two beams that are connected by vertical struts. The lower-lying beam is interrupted in

the central field, with the existing gap bridged by a trifoliate arch. This arch furthermore accentuates the temple's entrance and main axis. The beams' ends facing the gap are decorated with guards in animal form, lateral support is provided once again by lion consoles. Within the area of the side walls and on the columns are the same type of capitals as found on the groundfloor of the temple's interior. Therefore the lower beam's structure of support is almost identical to

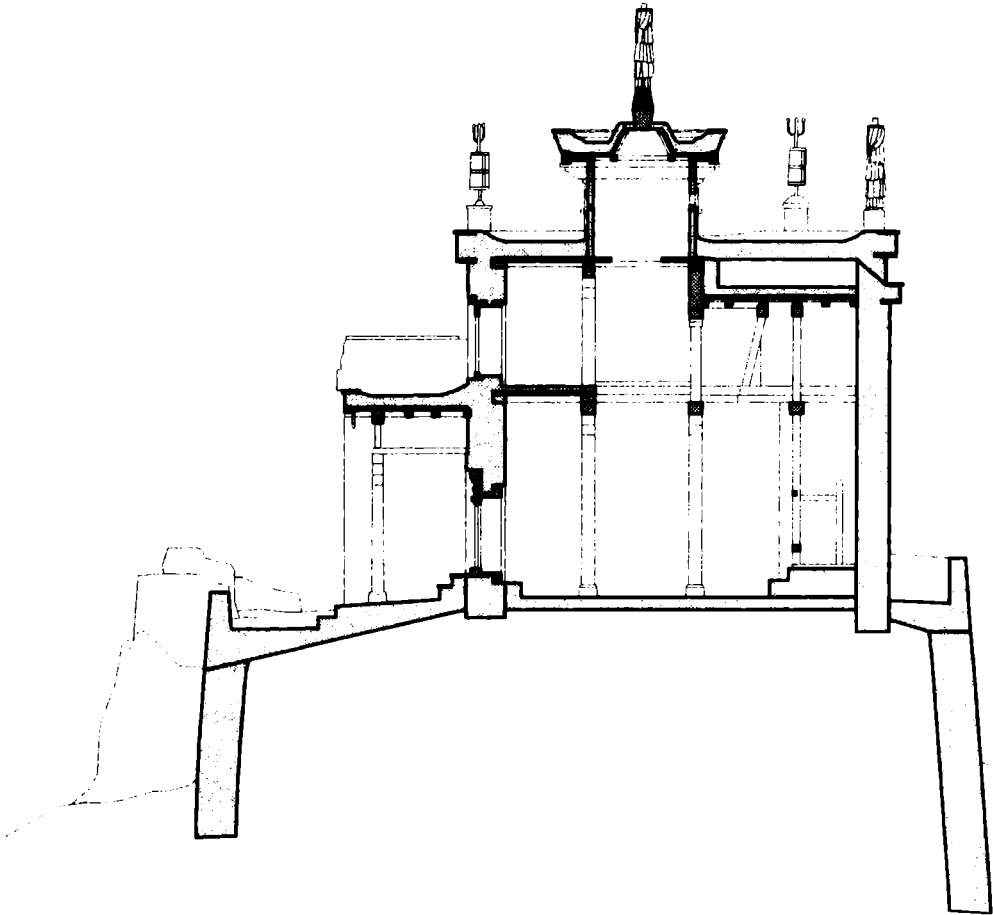


Fig. 3: Longitudinal section of the Wanla temple (drawing Gerald Kozicz)

the temple's interior groundfloor wooden structure, differing only in the addition of lateral pillars at the veranda's side walls, which provide extra support for the lion consoles. The structural instability caused by the interruption of the wooden structure's lower-lying beam had to be corrected by horizontally connecting the two separated beams, in the area of the columns and by means of one tie-beam each, to the main temple walls, thus providing stability against horizontal movements caused by loads and other forces (see Luczanits, Pl. 92).

The detailed wooden elements as well as the Wanla temple's concept of form point towards a close typological relationship to the Alchi *gsum brtsegs*. In fact, a close similarity of the ziggurat-like shapes is confirmed by an identical site layout in terms of form and proportion, which differs slightly in size and orientation, as the main axis of the *gsum brtsegs* faces southeast. This difference is of minor

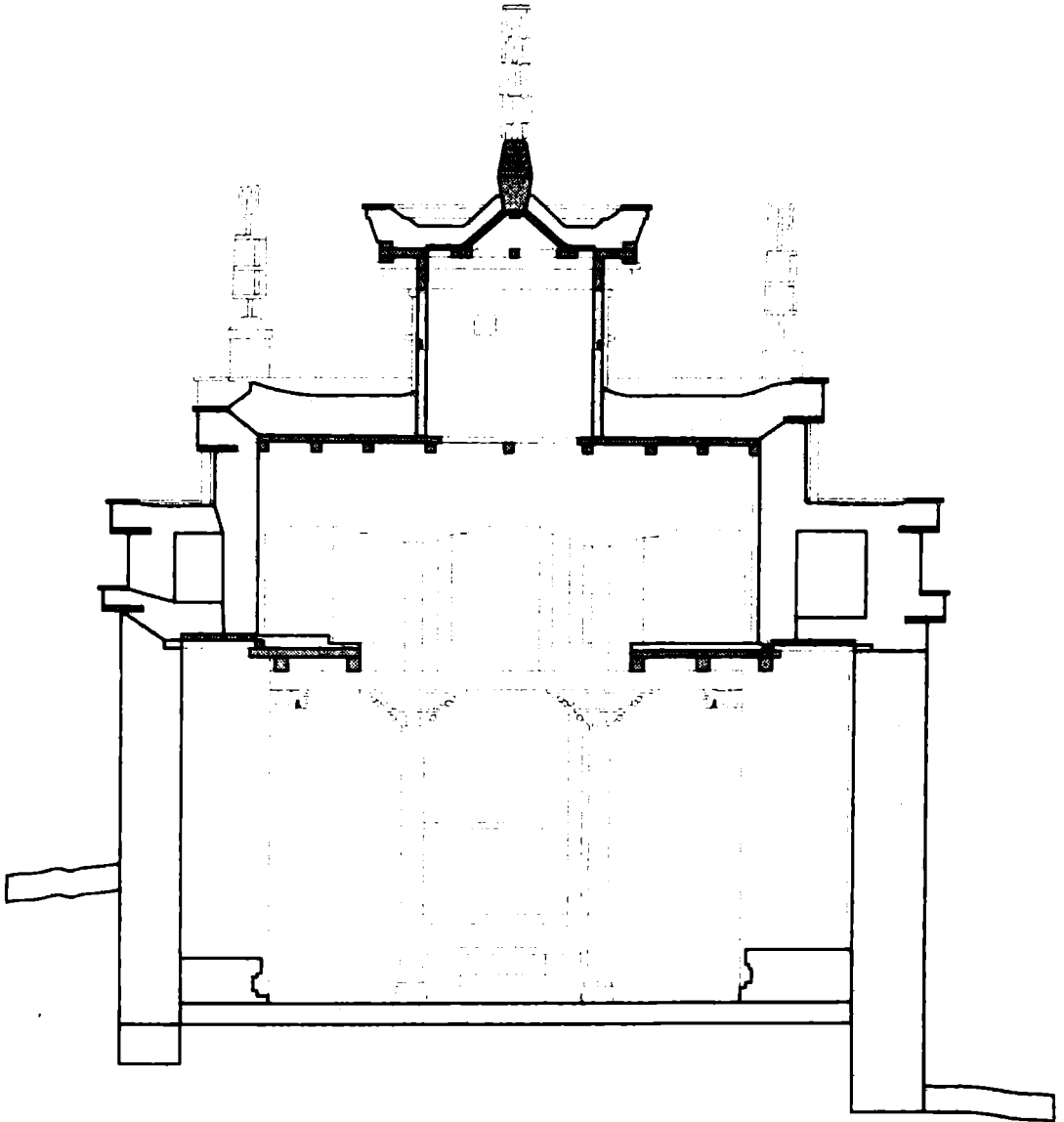


Fig. 4: Cross-section of the Wanla temple (drawing Gerald Kozicz)

importance as it is an obvious consequence of the two monuments' varying locations.

The *gsum brtsegs*'s interior also displays four columns arranged in a square and an opening from the cube towards the lantern. Contrary

to the Wanla temple, the gradation of *gsum brtsegs*'s niches, which measure $1 \frac{1}{3}$ floors in height and expand above the gallery, is more subtle. From the exterior the niches are as easily identifiable as the $1 \frac{1}{2}$ floors high apsis, whose roof does not merge seamlessly with that of the cube. Additionally, the roofs of *gsum brtsegs*'s niches and apsis are gabled, on their interior structurally and aesthetically tied into the entire design concept, and externally clearly identifiable in their elevation. This indicates that *gsum brtsegs*'s side roofs are not banked but display regular structural dimensions. The cause of Wanla's constructional problems could not be derived from an architectural comparison between these two buildings.

Thus, despite sharing a similar typological pattern, there are severe differences between the two buildings. The veranda on *gsum brtsegs*'s second floor is probably the most obvious one, as well as the lantern's canopy, a former protection of its window opening, which could still be determined in spring 2000 by means of two supports' remains and two half-supports attached to the lantern's front.

In addition to the presence of multi-storeys, *gsum brtsegs*'s veranda also differs in its wooden structure's execution. The concept is similar, but in contradiction to Wanla, the lower horizontal beam at the *gsum brtsegs*'s veranda is not interrupted and there are three trefoil arches serving as symbolic shelters for wooden Buddha sculptures. However, the lower beam's interruption and the trefoil, which emphasize the entrance's main axis but simultaneously destabilize the structure, are also apparent at Alchi 'du khang's veranda in almost identical form, where it has almost been obscured by subsequent insertions of attached walls and a *stūpa*. As in Wanla's but not in *gsum brtsegs*'s case, the incurring structural instability had to be corrected by two horizontal tie-beams.

The comparison between Wanla's and *gsum brtsegs*'s lantern construction is also of interest. The main difference, only noticeable from the interior, lies within their roofs. Contrary to Wanla's construction, *gsum brtsegs*'s is based on those of Alchi's *stūpa*, modelled on the *maṅḍala* form.

Construction

In the Wanla temple's construction, the region's vernacular architecture, building materials and technologies of the period, found their application. The results are: massive, up to 80 cm wide, clay brick

and stone walls bound by loam mortar; the utilisation of an interior wooden skeleton consisting of round columns arranged in a square, and several orthogonally arranged layers of beams (see Pl. 37). The walls are finished in plaster, whereby the interior walls' plaster also carries a layer containing wall paintings.

The roofs are flat constructions built upon on a horizontal wooden ceiling. According to the traditional method the roof is made of several layers of clay, of which the final one consists of tiny particles. This final layer should, in theory, be water proof, but due to material fatigue it requires frequent and proper maintenance which should mean, replacing the old layer by a new one. In reality, new layers have just been added on top of each other, sometimes even constructed from low-quality compounds, resulting in extraordinary roof loads which do not correspond to the building's original condition and therefore static load. This fact still does not explain the thickness or particular concept of the side niches' increased roof height of the Wanla temple.

Even though we can assume that the coffered ceiling above the apsis, where a few slipped posts allow a view into the roof's cavity, consists of a double roof construction, precise information about the exact internal structure and the vertical pressure caused by the load could only be clarified by opening the roof.

To what extent the niches' and apsis's roofs correspond to the building's original form, is still unclear. Based on the interior spaces' shared ceiling constructions and the sculptures' and paintings' proportions, one can strongly presume that the interior space, as found today, is original.

It is obvious, that the most serious damage profiles occur in those areas of the walls where varying loads meet in one point. This is particularly the case at the cube's corners and side niches, where the loads of the main beams and the weight of the wall above, bear upon the groundfloor's lion consoles. At all four corners the plaster shows severe cracks, in one case, a large slab of plaster containing wall paintings has already detached itself from the masonry.

Conclusion

As the site-layout reflects the basic idea of a building in terms of form, function and construction and immediately relates to its architectural structure, we may therefore regard the Wanla temple as a

three-storey building based on a cross-shaped layout. Due to the fact that the Alchi *gsum brtsegs* is the only remaining monument which can be related to Wanla's temple in terms of regionality and time of construction, it can be assumed that it either served as Wanla's major architectural model, or at least, provided a common aesthetic and structural concept shared by both temples.

Considering the particularity of its construction site the Wanla temple may be considered a unique monument despite of the typological similarities. In terms of construction, especially due to the structural irregularities in the roof areas, the Wanla temple becomes a very special case study, underlining the importance of a detailed investigation and analysis of a building's structure and static system. This is even more important if the analysis' results form the starting point for further restoration work, guaranteeing in detail a lasting preservation of the building.



1 Avalokiteśvara, Sangla (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS99 2,30)



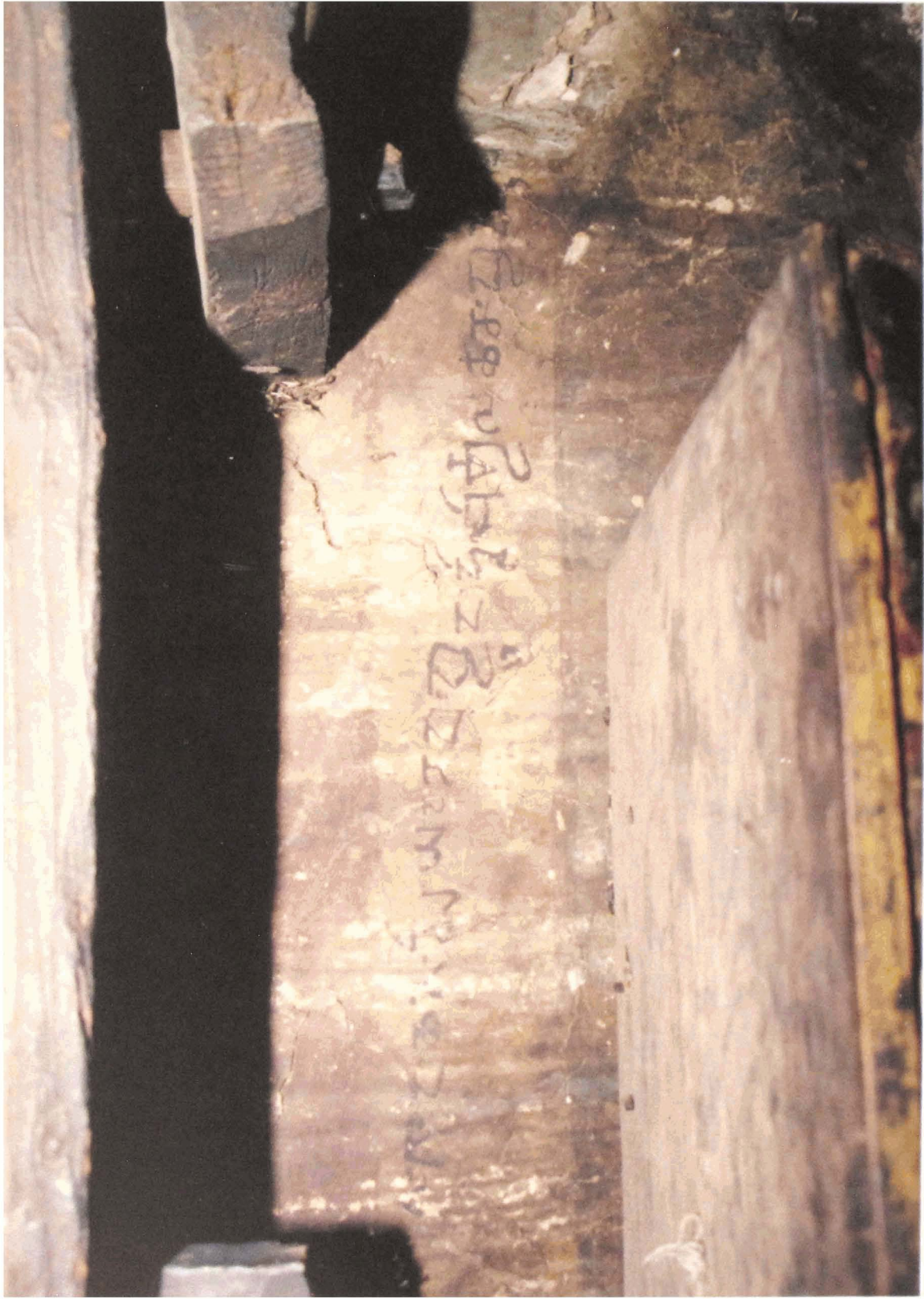
2 Murals. interior of the temple. Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH93 5,28)



3 “Durgā” (photograph John Harrison, WHAV JH98 5,22)



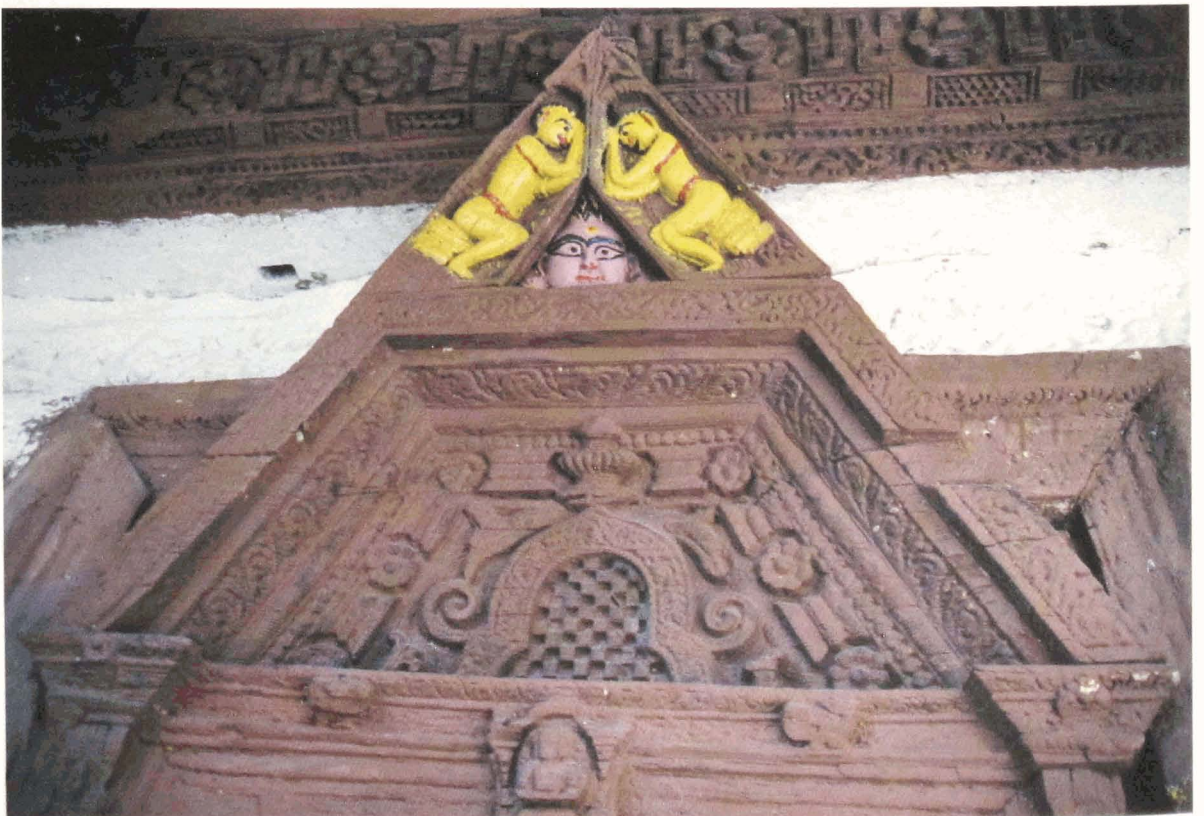
4 The clay statue of the Yellow Tārā in the sanctum (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



5 A single-line Tibetan inscription, south wall (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



6 A standing deity carved in the *nāgara* shrine on the *lalāṭa-bimba* (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



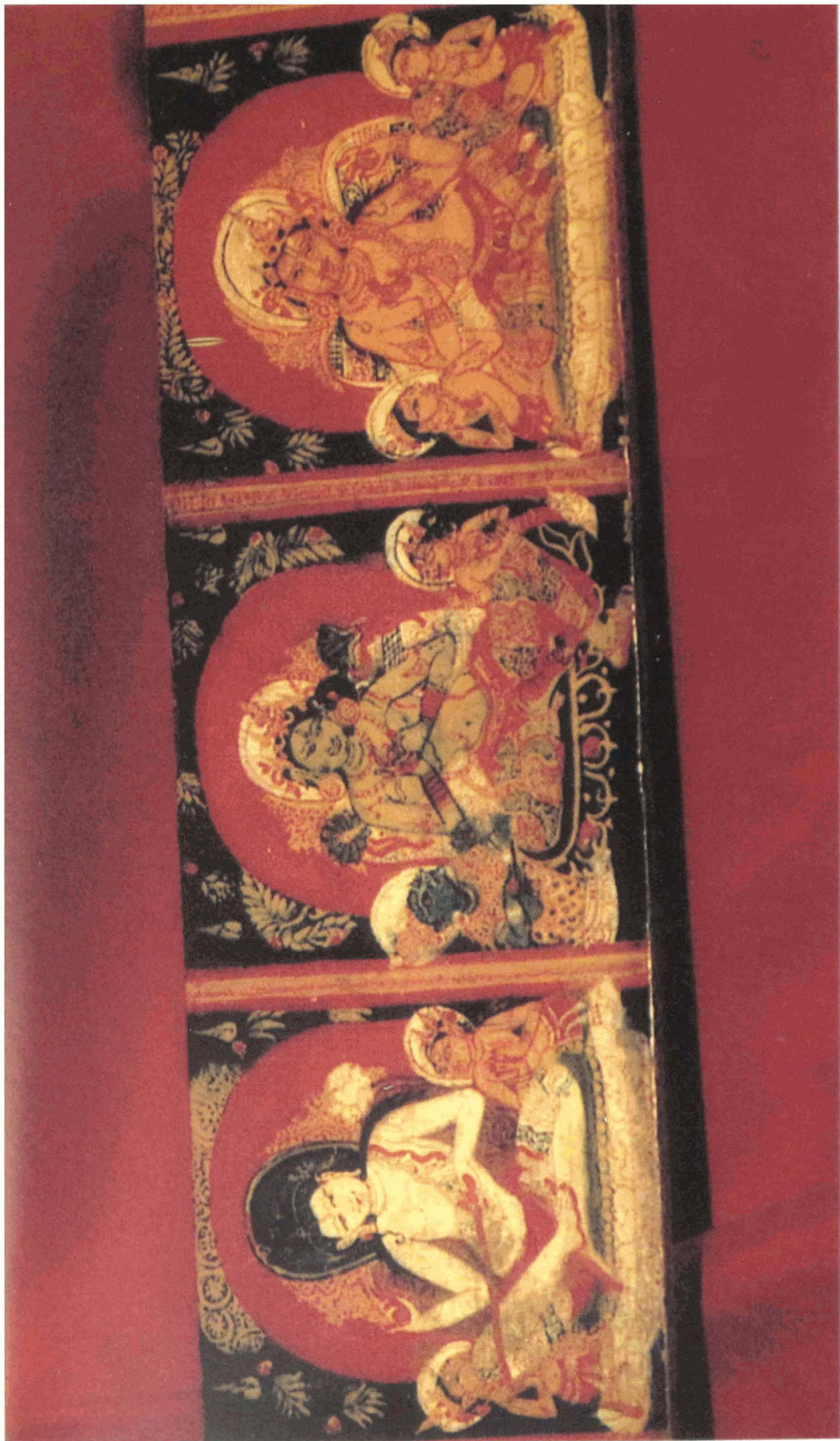
7 Wood carving on the north gabled niche (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



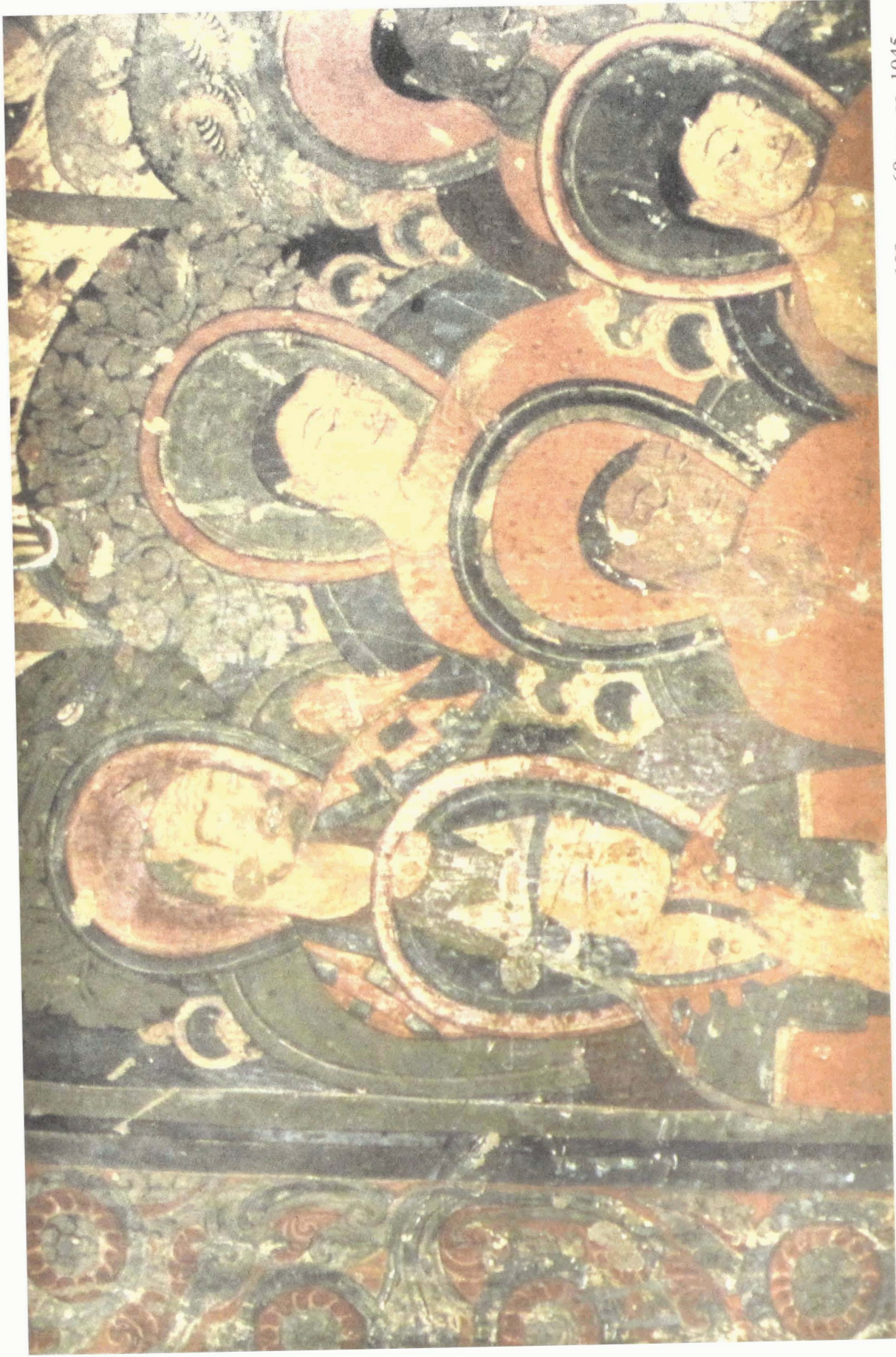
8 The central panel of a flying *gandharva* on the ceiling (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



9 Avalokiteśvara Thugs rje chen po, molded from unbaked clay and grains, polychrome pigments, 10 cm x 7.5 cm widest diameter, made in modern times from a mold said to be carved by Atiśa ca. 1045, conserved at Zha lu monastery (photograph Amy Heller, 1999)



10 Book cover of Prajñāpāramitā manuscript, polychrome pigments on wood, India, ca. 1100, collection of Sa skya monastery, ca. 50 x 8 cm (photograph Amy Heller, 1995)



11 Detail of mural painting, Zha lu mgon khang, entourage of Buddha (Trisamayarāja ?) and attendants, ca. 100 cm x 60 cm, ca. 1045 (photograph Amy Heller, 1999)



12 Detail of mural painting, Zha lu *mgon khang*, Head and bust of a bodhisattva, ca. 50 cm, ca. 1045 (photograph Jean-Michel Terrier, 1996)





14 Green Tārā, Collection of John Gilmore and Berthe Ford (courtesy J. G. Ford)



15 Avalokiteśvara Sadaksari. Collection of John Gilmore and Berthe Ford (courtesy J. G. Ford)



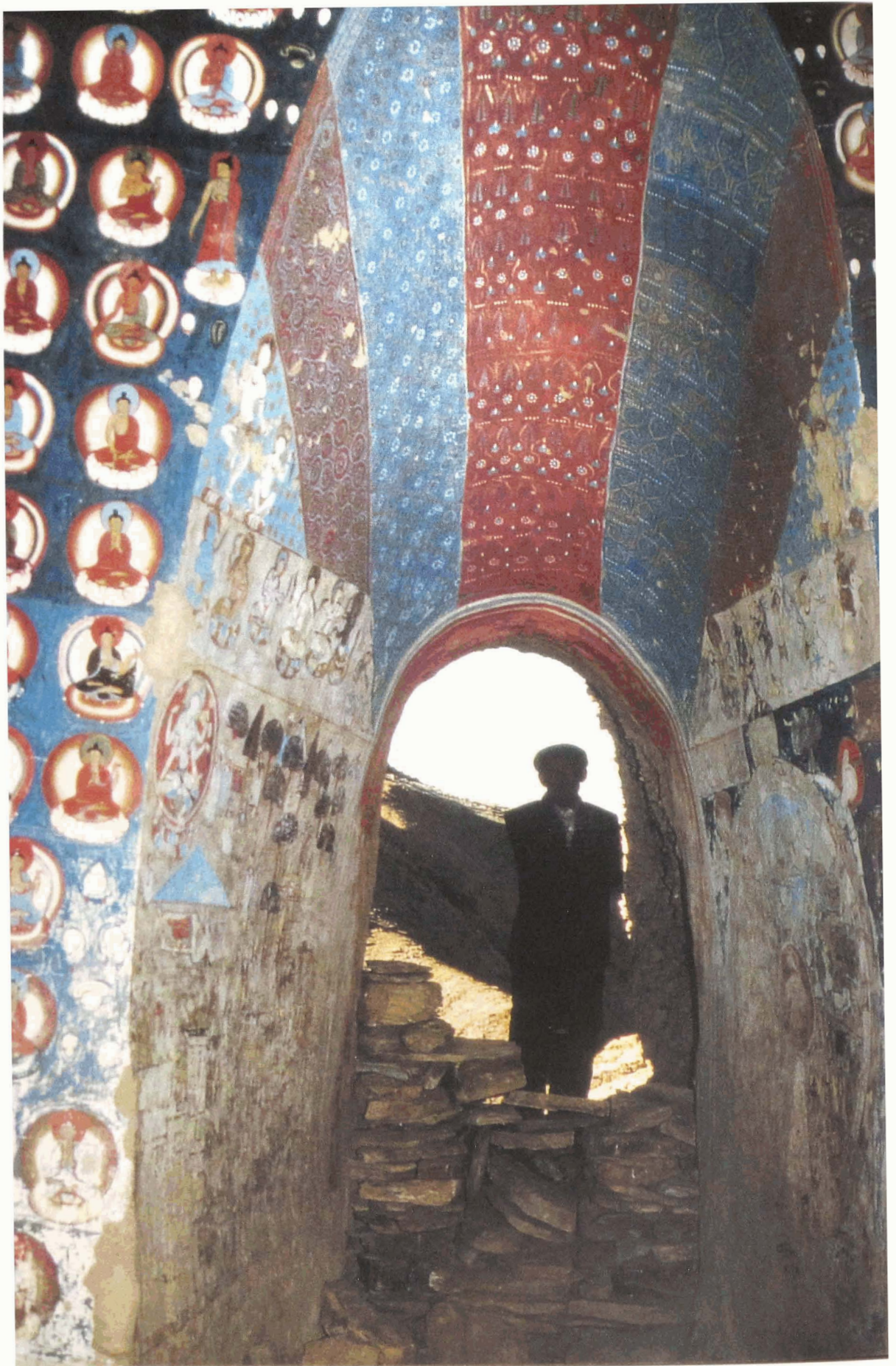
16 Guanyin, coloured Chinese ink on silk, 12th century, 99 x 59 cm (The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, X2439)



17 Detail Pl. 16



18 Detail Pl. 16



19 Entrance corridor of the Pedongpo cave (photograph Helmut Neumann)



20 Pedongpo cave: *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)



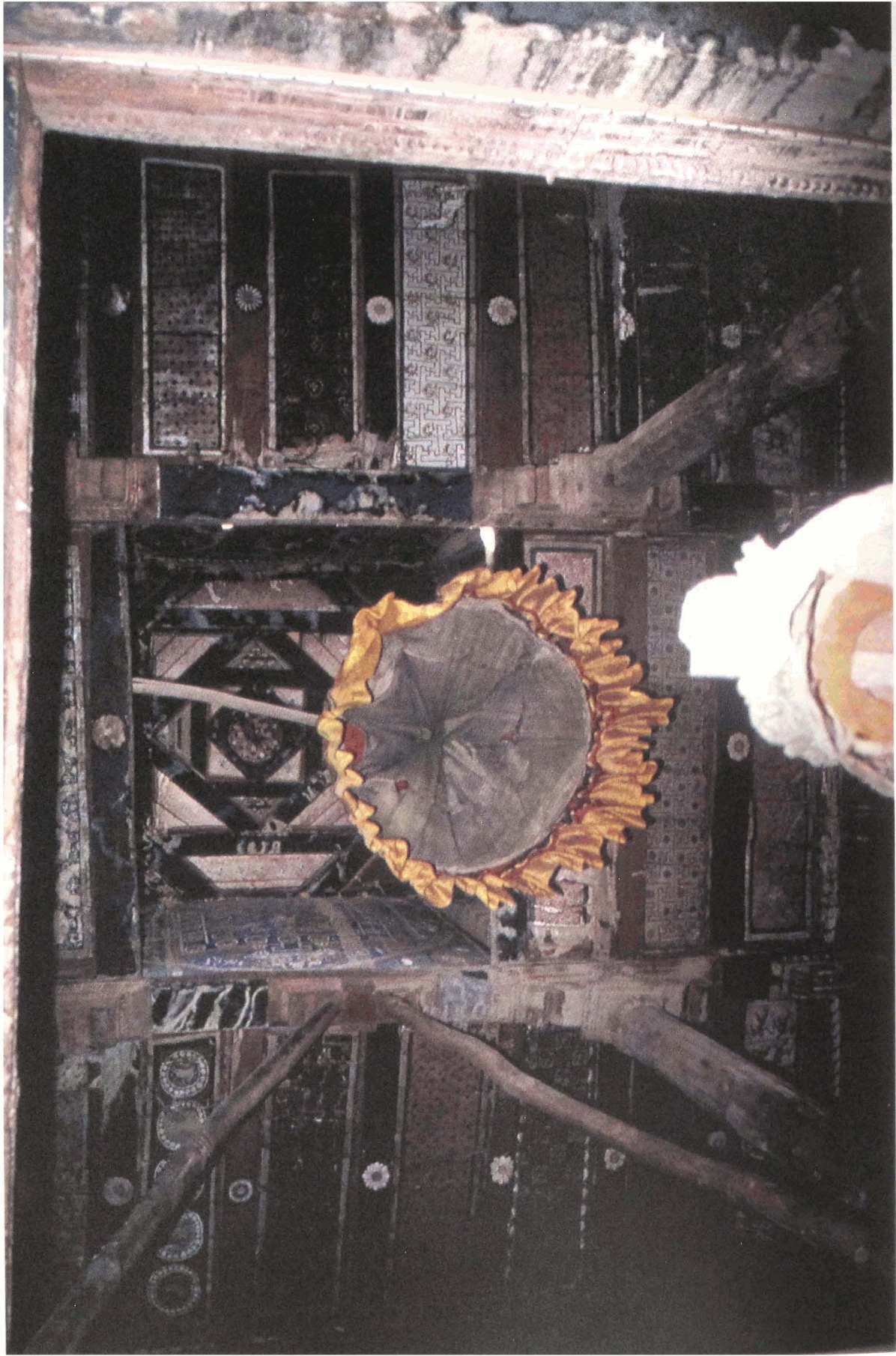
21 Pedongpo cave: detail of *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)



22 Pedongpo cave: detail of *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)



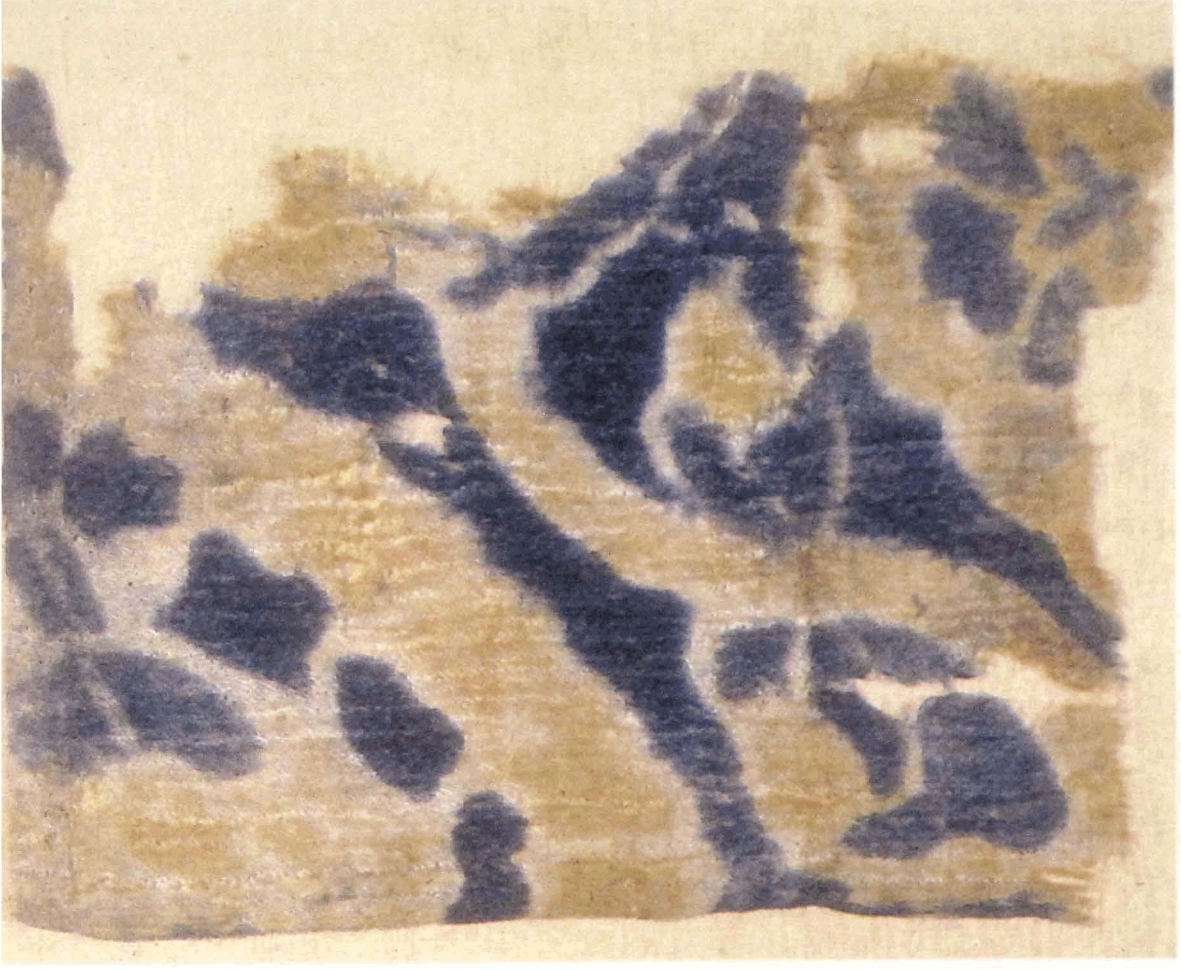
23 Pedongpo cave: detail of *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)



24 *Gsum brtsegs*, Alchi, view from the ground floor into the first upper level (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, 1981, WHAV)



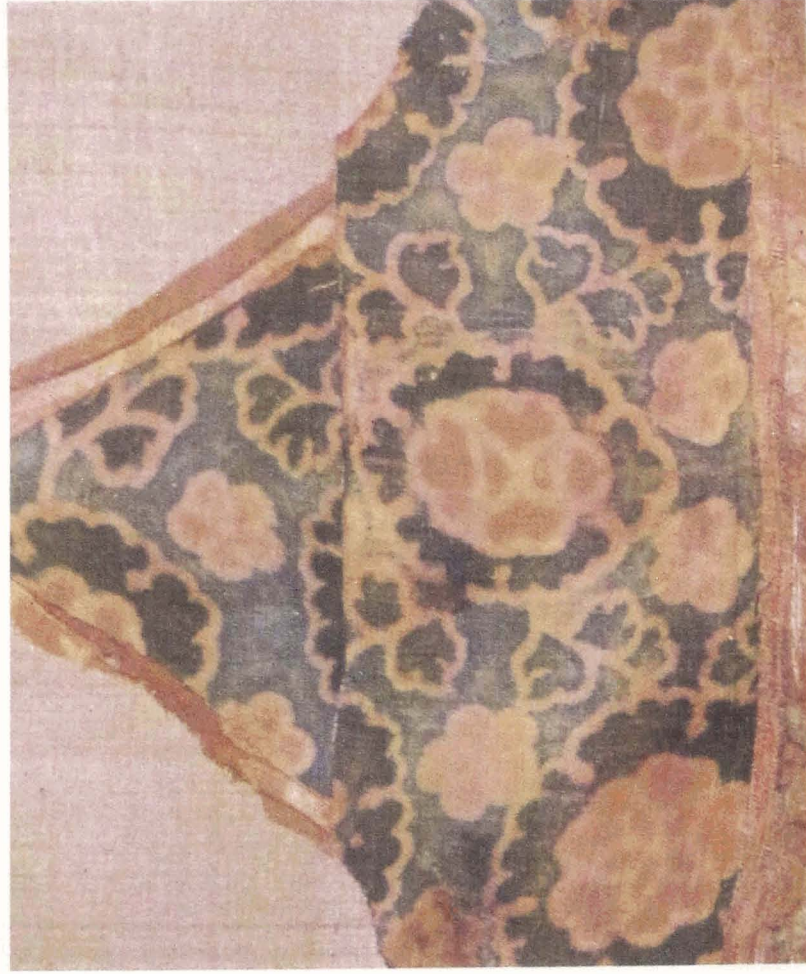
25 Panel II 36 (detail), Ceiling Decoration, first upper level (II), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (after Goepper 1996: ill. p. 254)



26 Resist dyed silk fragment, Mošćevaja Balka, 8th-9th century, Hermitage, Kz 5080 (after Ierusalemkaya 1996: ill. 113)



27 Panel II 42, first upper level (II), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (after R. Goeppe 1996: ill. p. 258)



28 Header of a silk banner (*bodhisattva Wenshu*), Dunhuang, 8th-9th century (after Giès 1994 II: 29, ill.3, EO, 1399)



←

29 Wallpainting, Alchi, first upper level (II), left wall, female goddess flanking the elevenheaded Avalokitesvara (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1981, WHAV)



↑

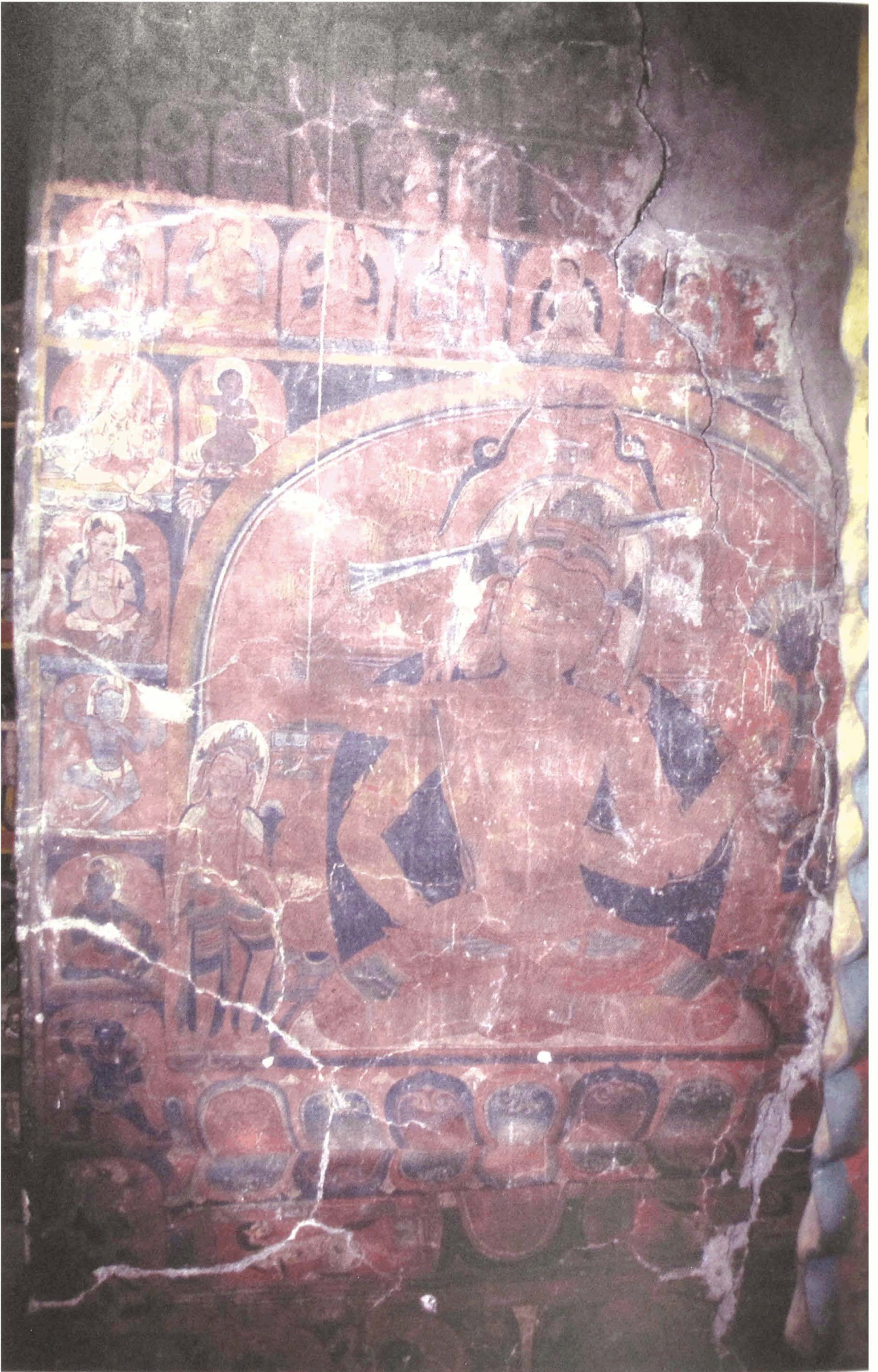
30 Silk cloth, Shoso-in, Nara, 104 x 53,5 cm (after Matsumoto 1993: ill. 56)



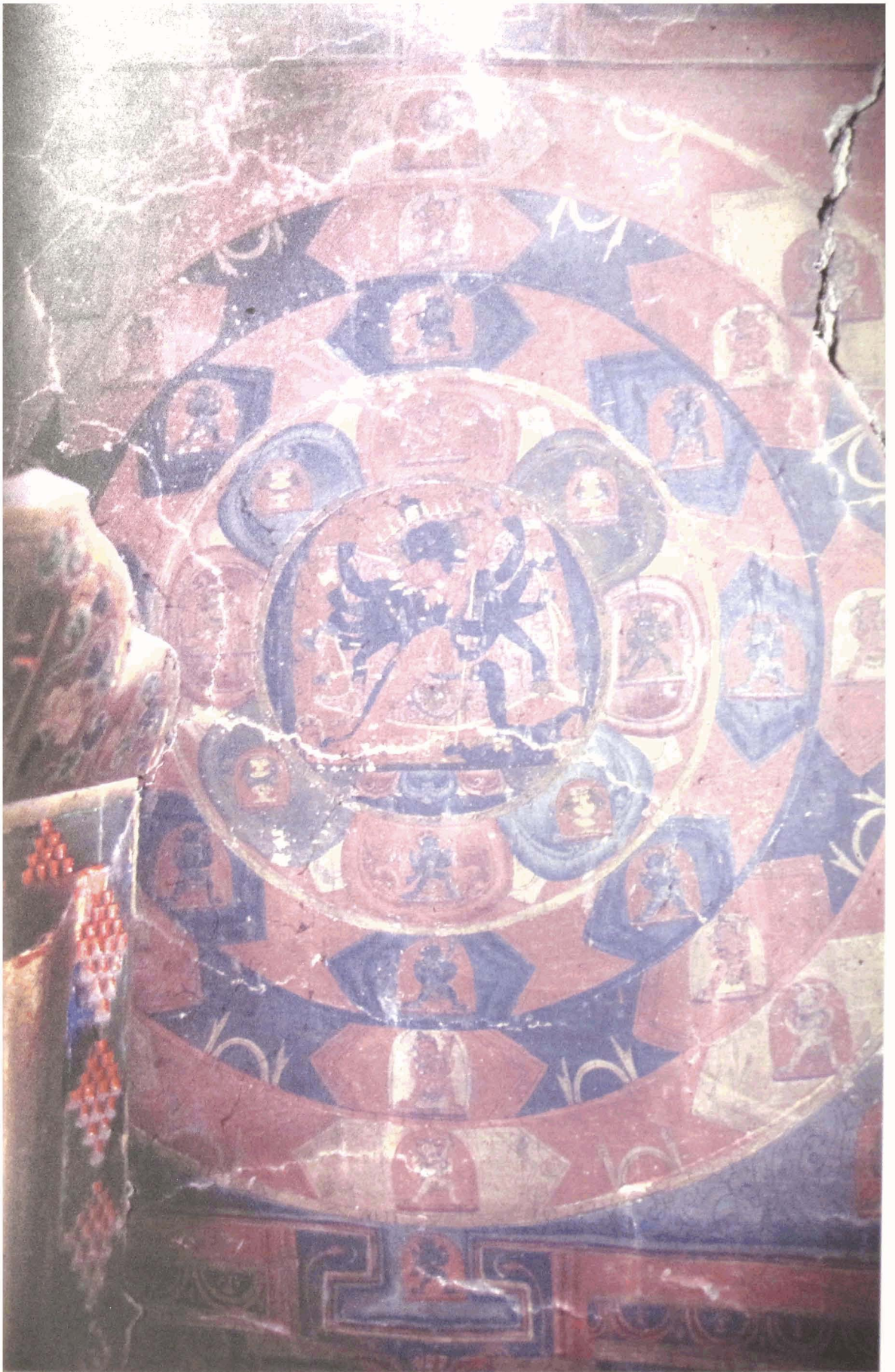
31 Panels II 36, II 35, II 34, first upper level (II), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (after Goepper 1996: 254)



32 Mahākāla flanked by riding goddesses above the door in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 73,12)



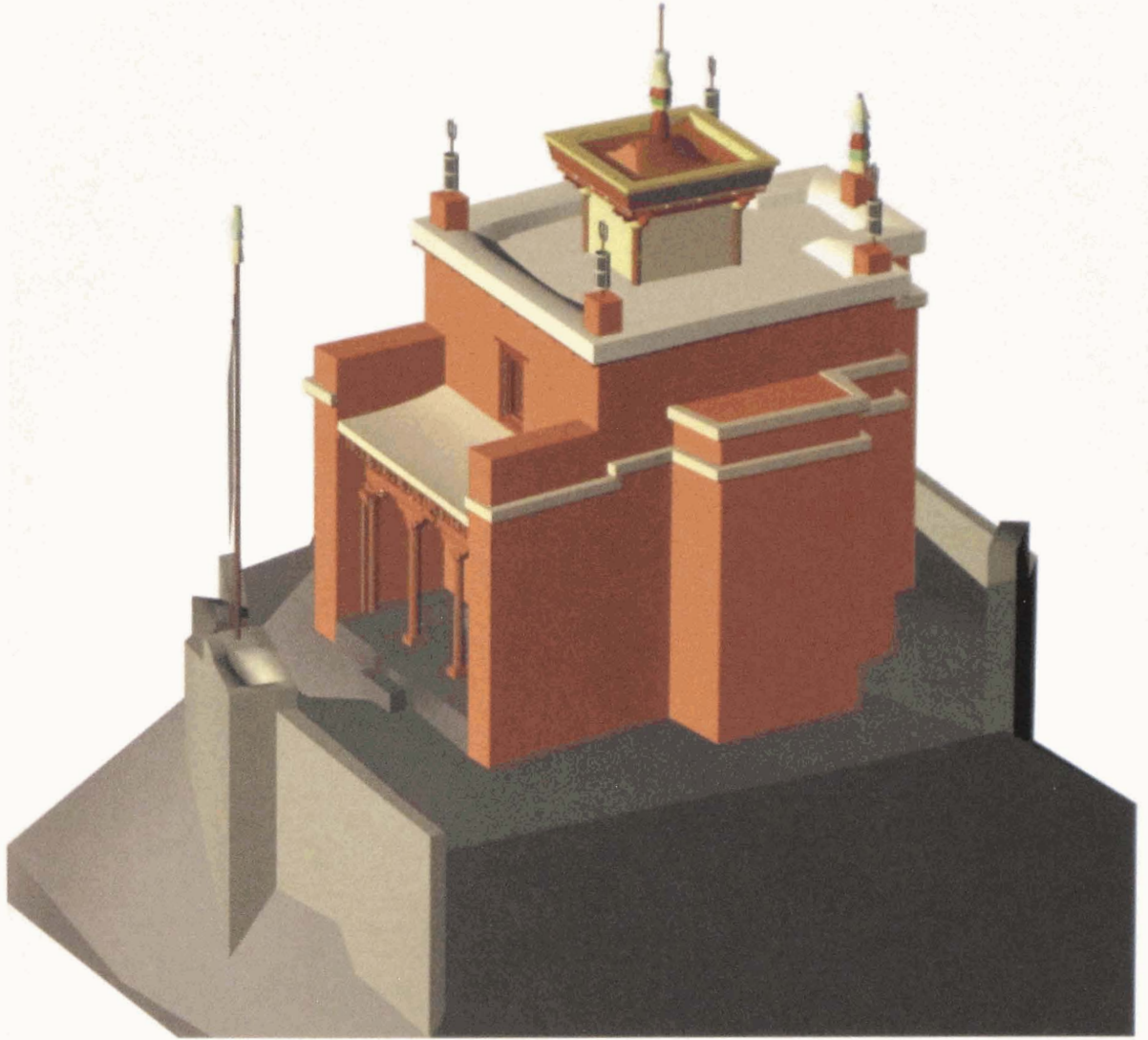
33 Four-armed Mañjuśrī in the Śākyamuni niche in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 72,5)



34 Cakrasamvaramandala in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV
CI 08 73 20)



35 A twelve-figure lineage above a panel dedicated to the four-armed Avalokitesvara in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 72,40)



36 The Wanla temple (drawing Gerald Kozicz)



37 Cross section of the Wanla temple (drawing Gerald Kozicz)



38 Life of the Buddha, Karchung *lha khang*, Nako (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS98 31,41)



39 Detail, Mirkulā Devī temple, Udaipur, Lahul (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS91 71,26)



40 Upper part of the east façade, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 103,21)



41 Door, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 103,36)



42 Deity (Avalokiteśvara), façade, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 108,16)



43 Vertical row of Buddhas, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 103,30)



44 Narastān (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter)



45 Vairocana, Ribba (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS98 72,2)



46 Detail of Avalokiteśvara, Ribba (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV LCH94 106,32)



47 Façade with John Harrison (photograph Deborah Klimburg-Salter, WHAV DKS98 70,31)



48 The temple of the Lha khang chen mo, Ribba, Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



49 The facial details of the Yellow Tārā (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



50 Vajrapāṇi (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



51 The details of wood carving on the doorjambs (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



52 The details of wood carving on the lintel (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)

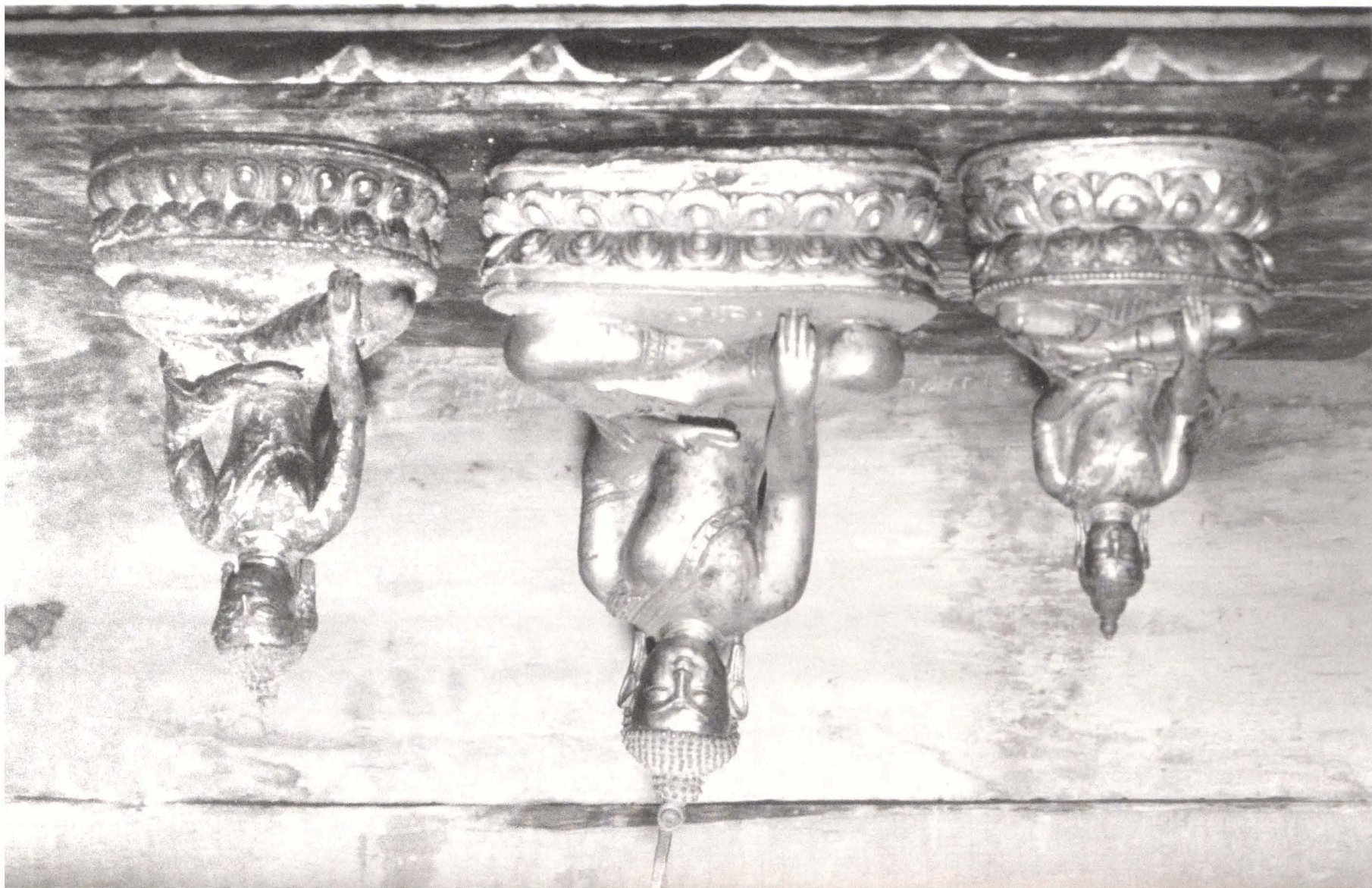


53 The depiction of the four Buddhas on the door (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)



54 Wood carving on the western window (photograph Laxman S. Thakur)







57 Elephant capital, wood, Zha lu monastery, ca. 1045, approximately 35 x 45 cm (photograph courtesy Terese Tse Bartholomew, 1981)



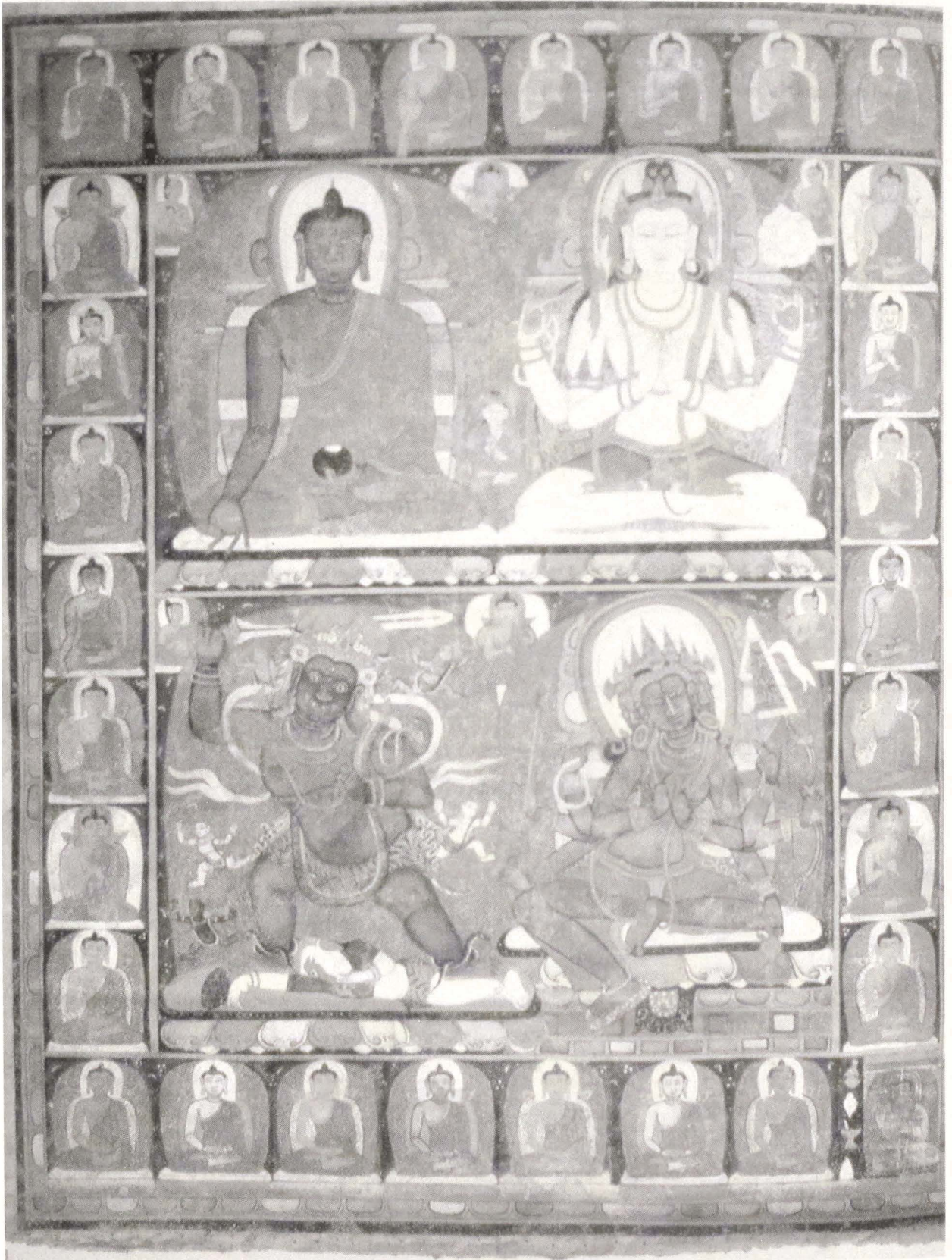
58 Buddha capital, wood, Zha lu monastery, ca. 1045, approximately 35 x 45 cm (photograph courtesy Terese Tse Bartholomew, 1981)



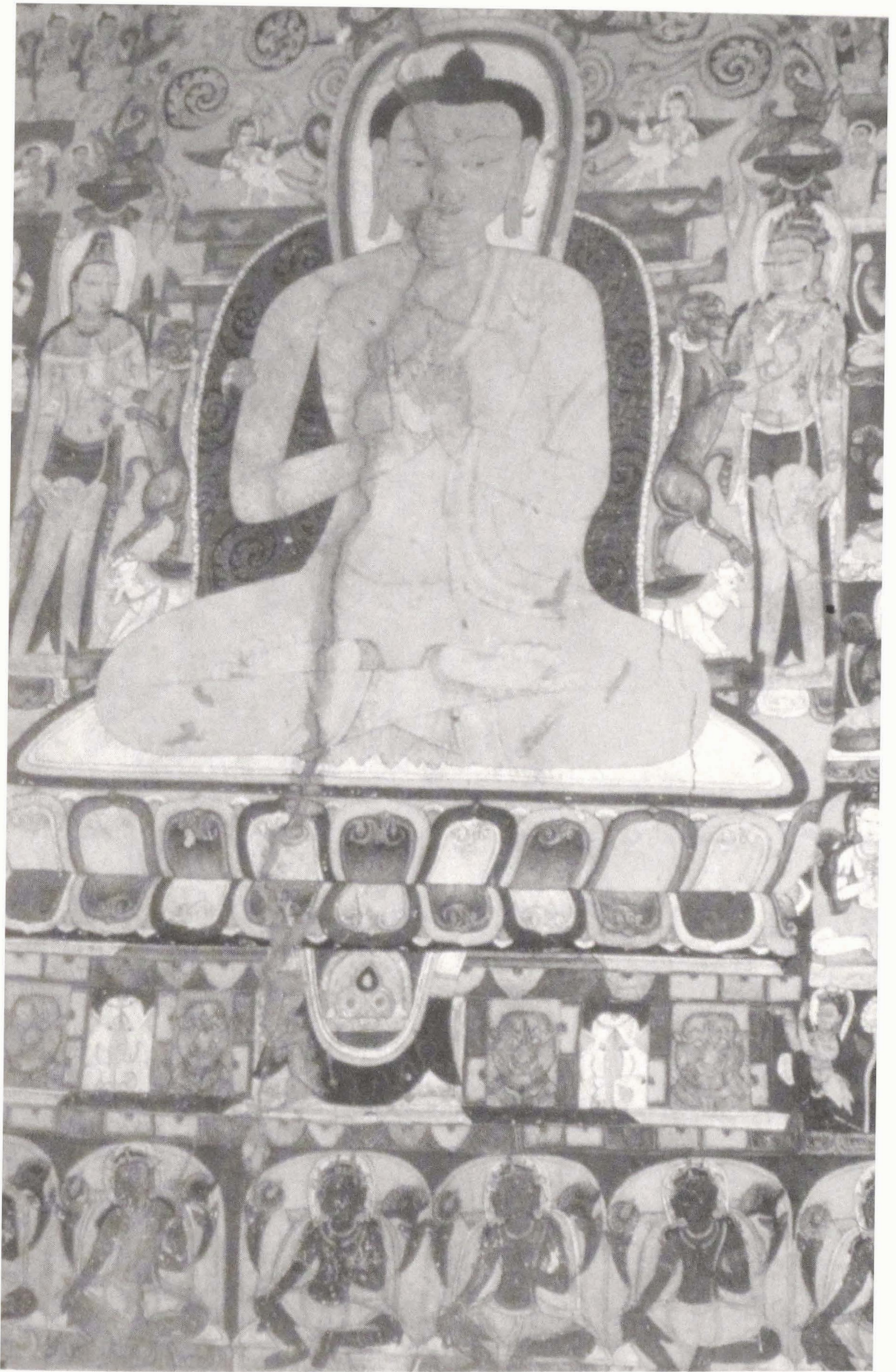
59 Buddha (Trisamayarāja ?) and his entourage, 350 cm x 350 cm, pigments and varnish on prepared wall, Zha lu (photograph Amy Heller, 1995)



60 Tārā, from Patna museum, Pāla period, ca. 850-950 (after Michel Postel, *Ear Ornaments of Ancient India*, plate V 39)



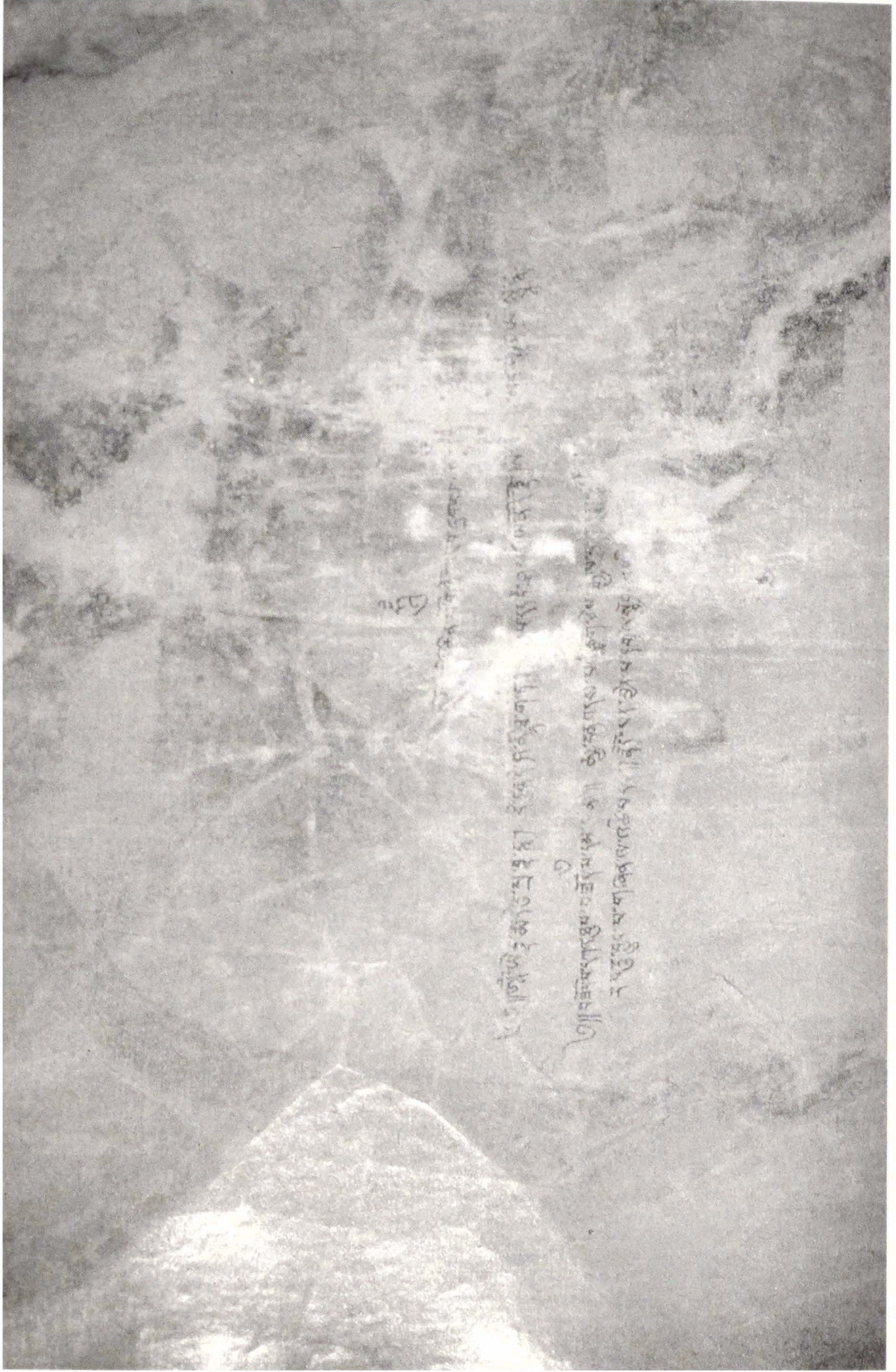
61 Four Bka' gdams pa deities, mid-13th to early 14th century, distemper on cloth, 53 x 42 cm (Donation Lionel Fournier, Musée Guimet, Paris, no. MA 5175)



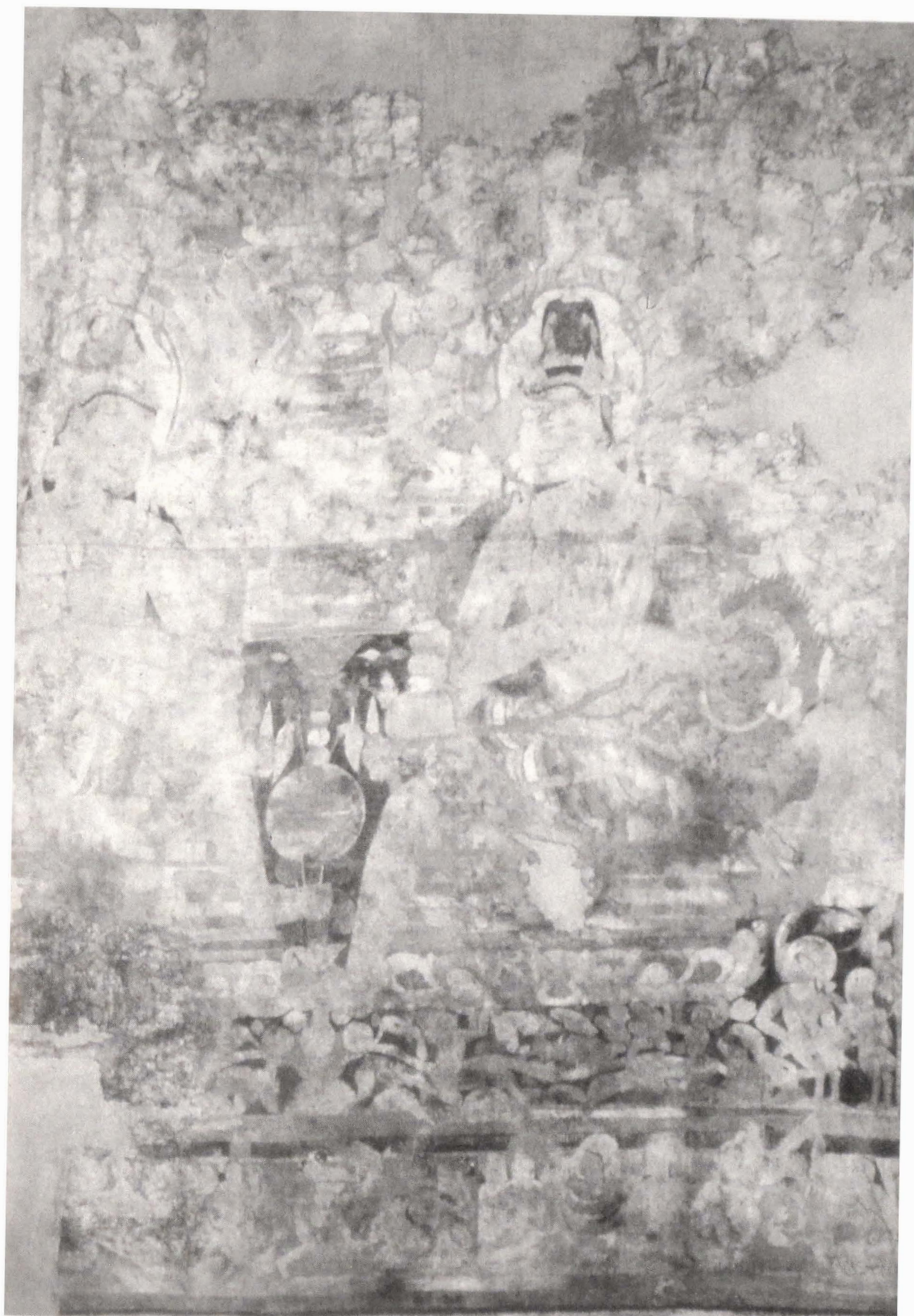
62 Mural painting of Buddha and his entourage, Trisamayārāja Buddha (?), pigments and varnish on prepared wall, Alchi monastery, *Iha khang gsar ma*, 14th century (photograph courtesy Lionel Fournier)







65 Gnyos master, backside, Jucker Collection (courtesy E. Jucker)



66 Two bodhisattvas, private collection (after *Tibet, Arte e spiritualità* 1999; 101)





68 Sangs rgyas yar byon pa, Kronos collection (after Kossak and Singer 1998: no. 19)



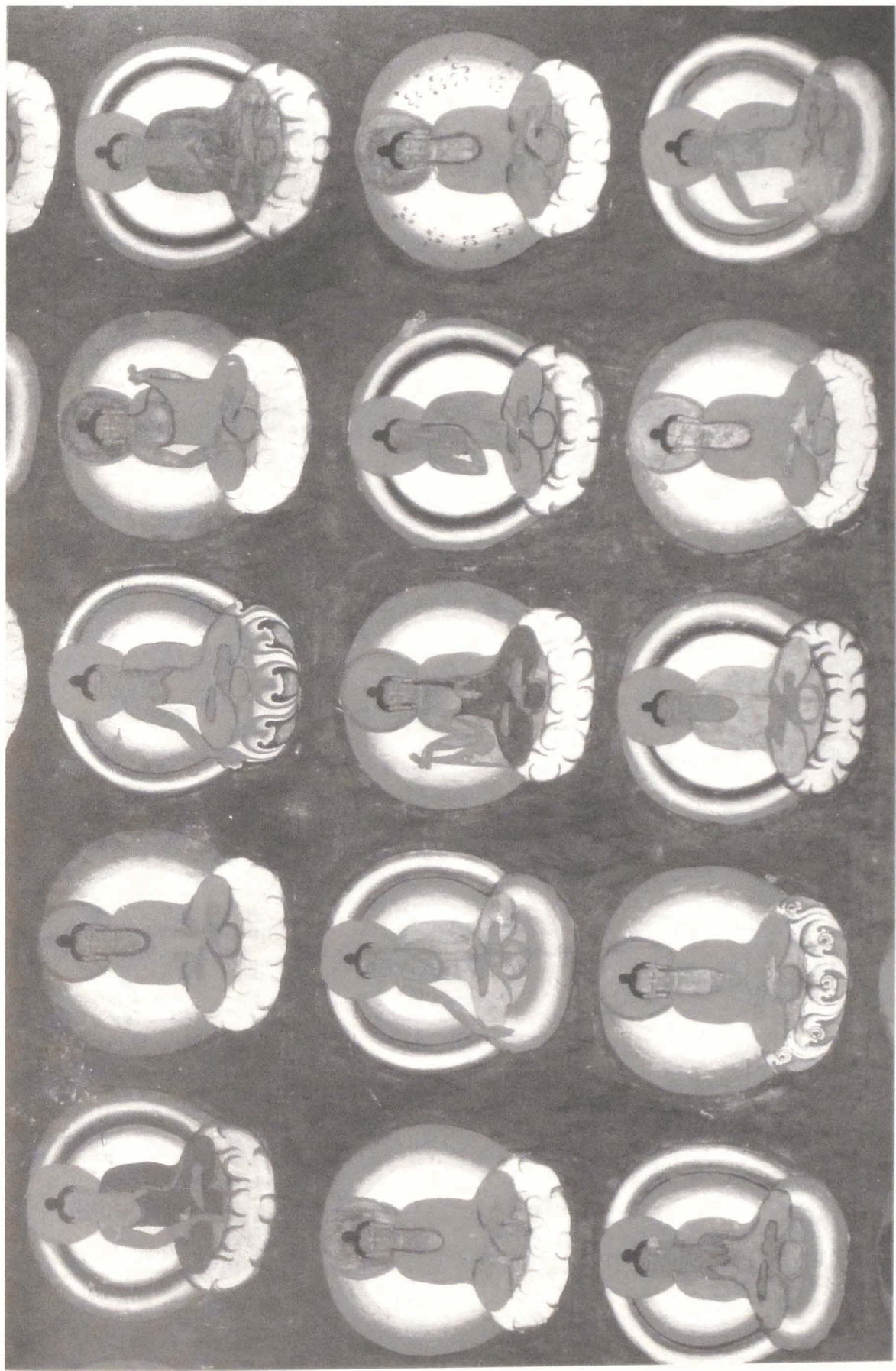
69 Stag lung Thang pa chen po, Musée Guimet MA 5176 (after Béguin 1990: no. 2)



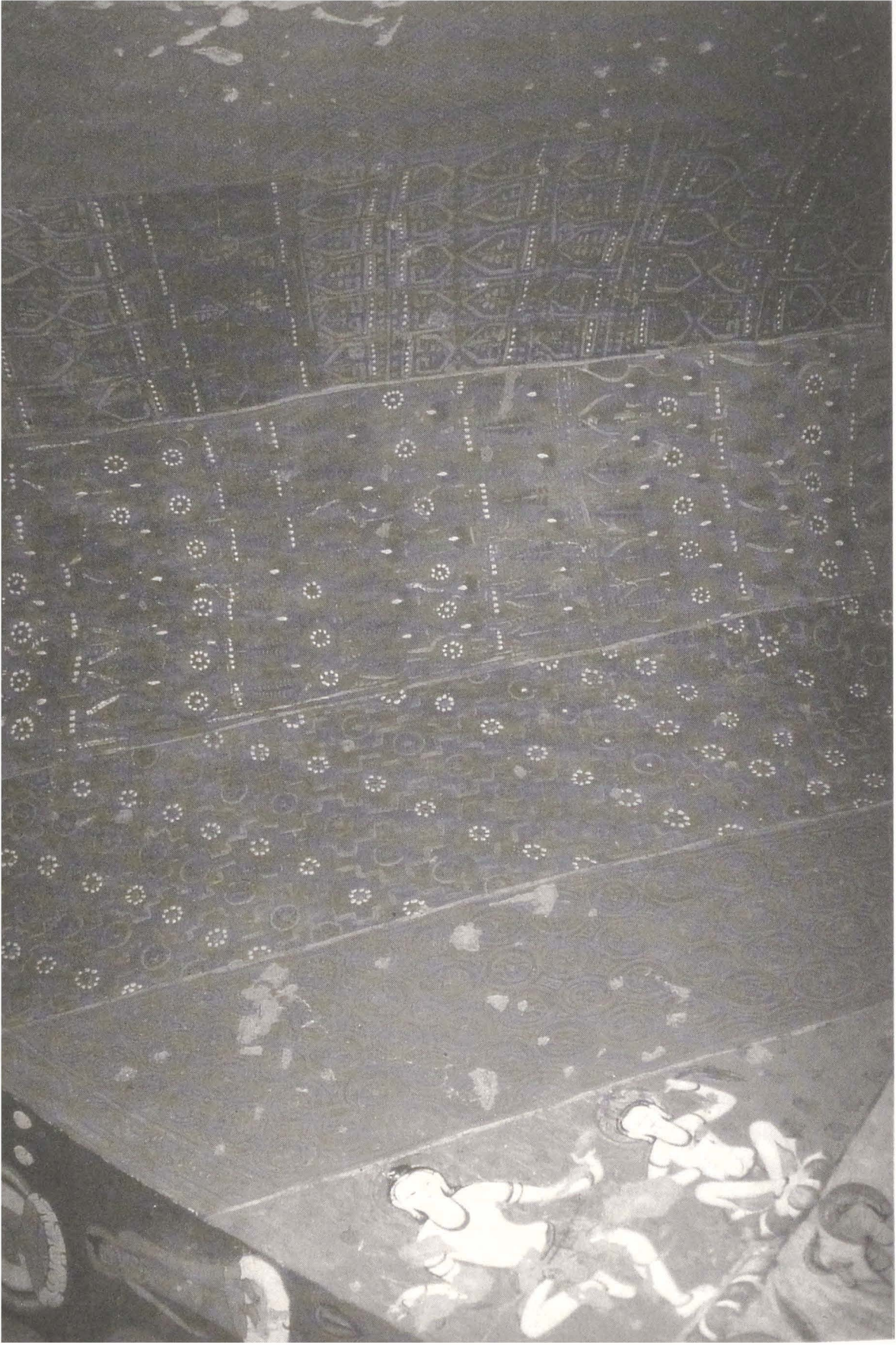
70 Samvara and Vajravārāhī, private collection (after Pal 1984: pl. 12)



71 Pedongpo cave: South and West wall with 1000 Buddha images (photograph Helmut Neumann)



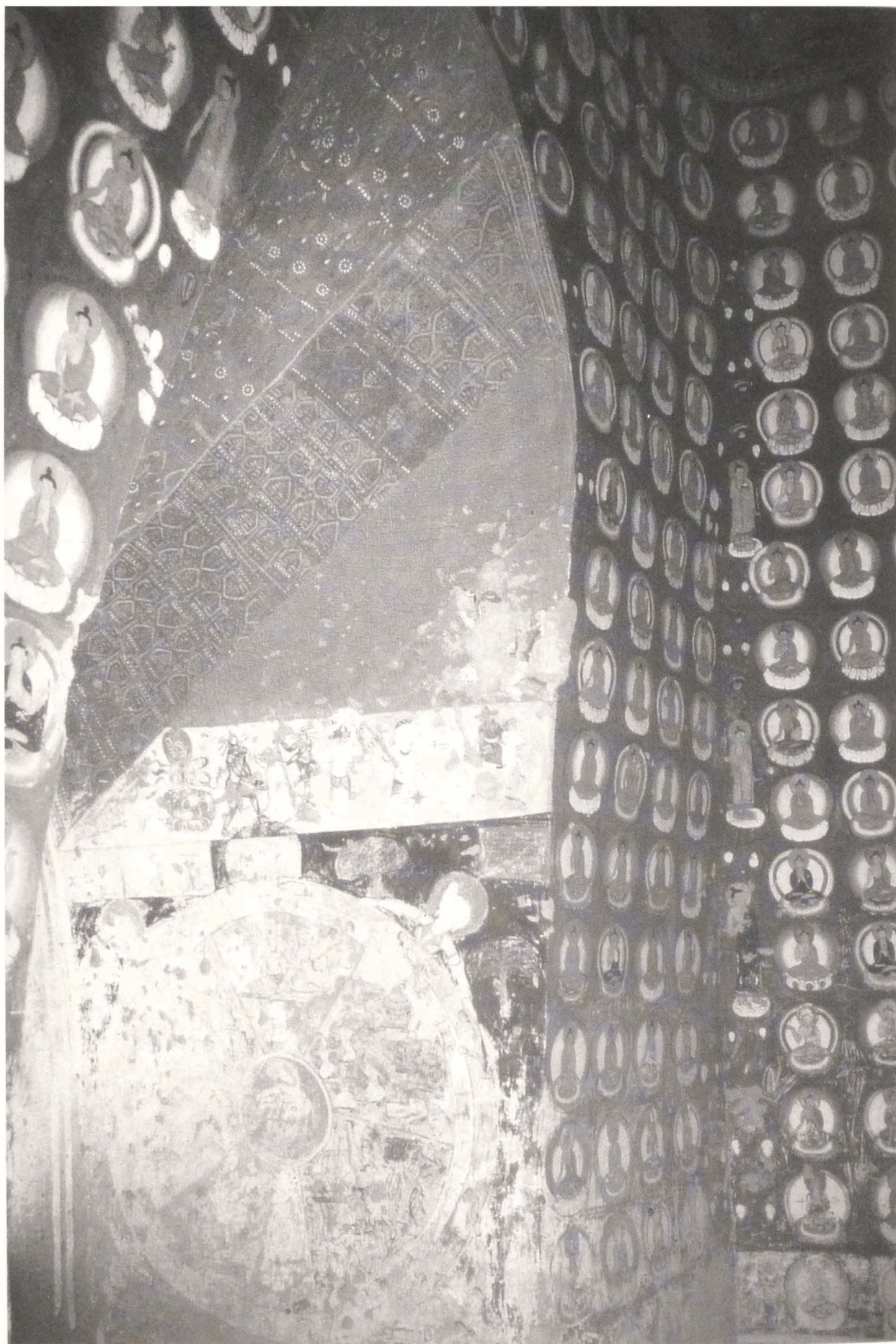
72 Pedongpo cave: 1000 Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa (photograph Helmut Neumann)



73 Pedongpo cave: vaulted ceiling with textile design (photograph Helmut Neumann)



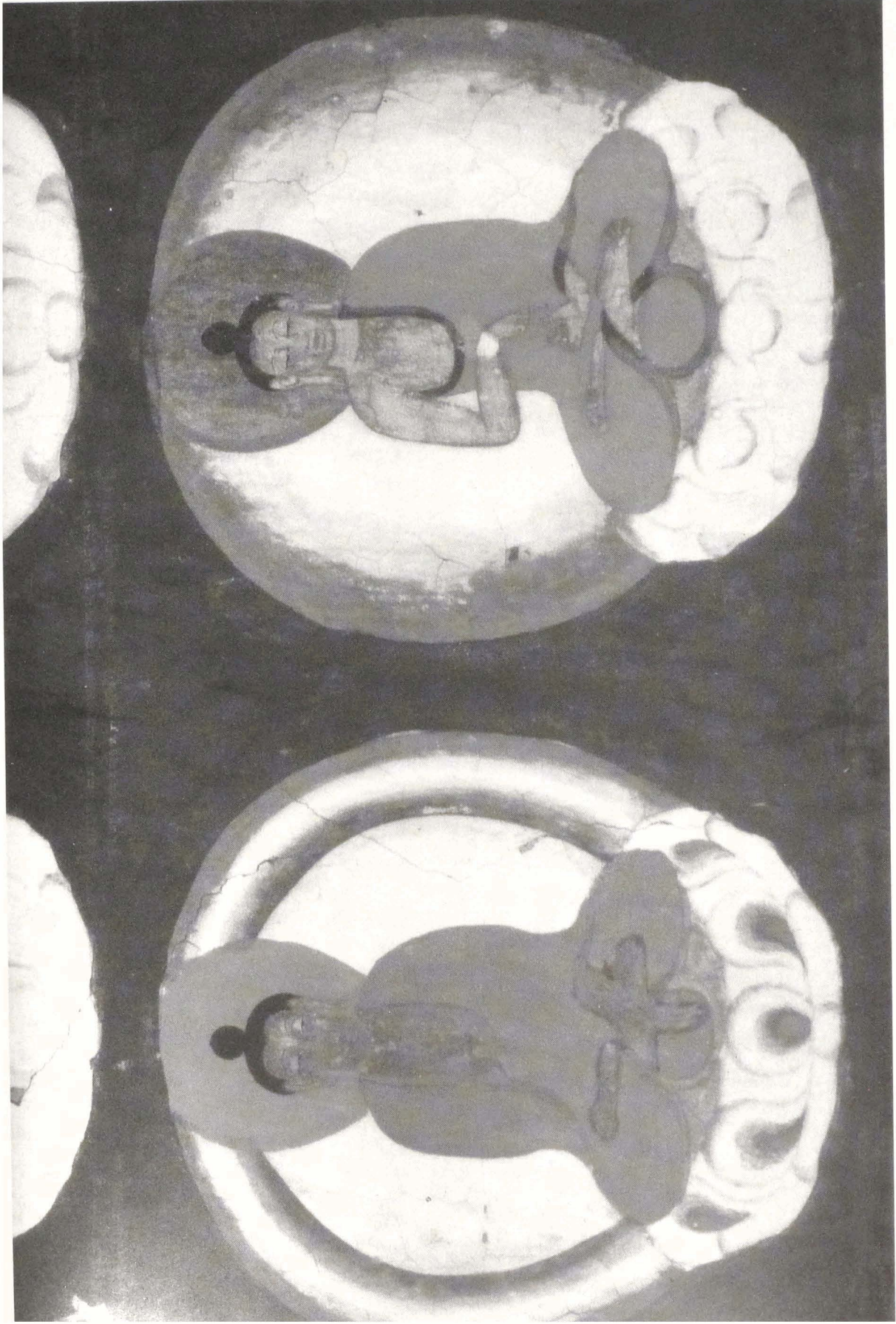
74 Pedongpo cave: group of protective deities (photograph Helmut Neumann)



75 Pedongpo cave: south side of entrance corridor with *bhāvacakra* (photograph Helmut Neumann)



76 Cosmic diagram in the entry hall of the 'du khang of Tholing (photograph Helmut Neumann)



77 Pedongno cave: two of the Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa (photograph Helmut Neumann)



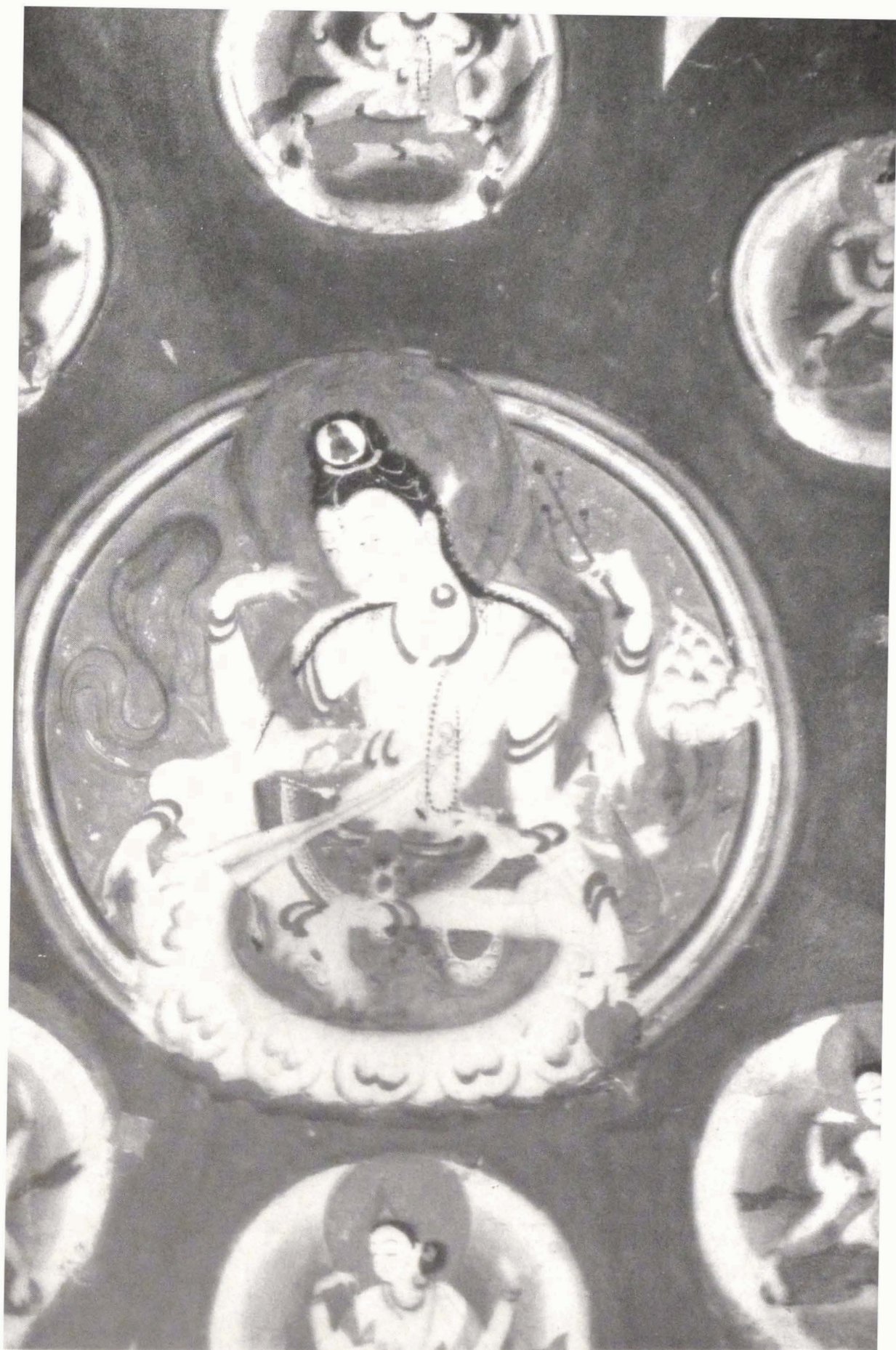
78 Phyi dbang: two of the Buddhas in the 1000 Buddha cave (photograph Helmut Neumann)



79 Pedongpo cave: one of the 1000 Buddhas (photograph Helmut Neumann)







82 Lantern ceiling cave in Dung dkar: Avalokiteśvara (photograph Helmut Neumann)



83. Unidentified scenes on the *dhoti* of the four-armed Maitreya clay sculpture, Mang rgyu (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1983, WHAV)



84 Panel II 39 (detail), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1983, WHAV)



85 Book cover, Jaina Manuscript, 11th century (after Nawab 1980: colour pl. 78)



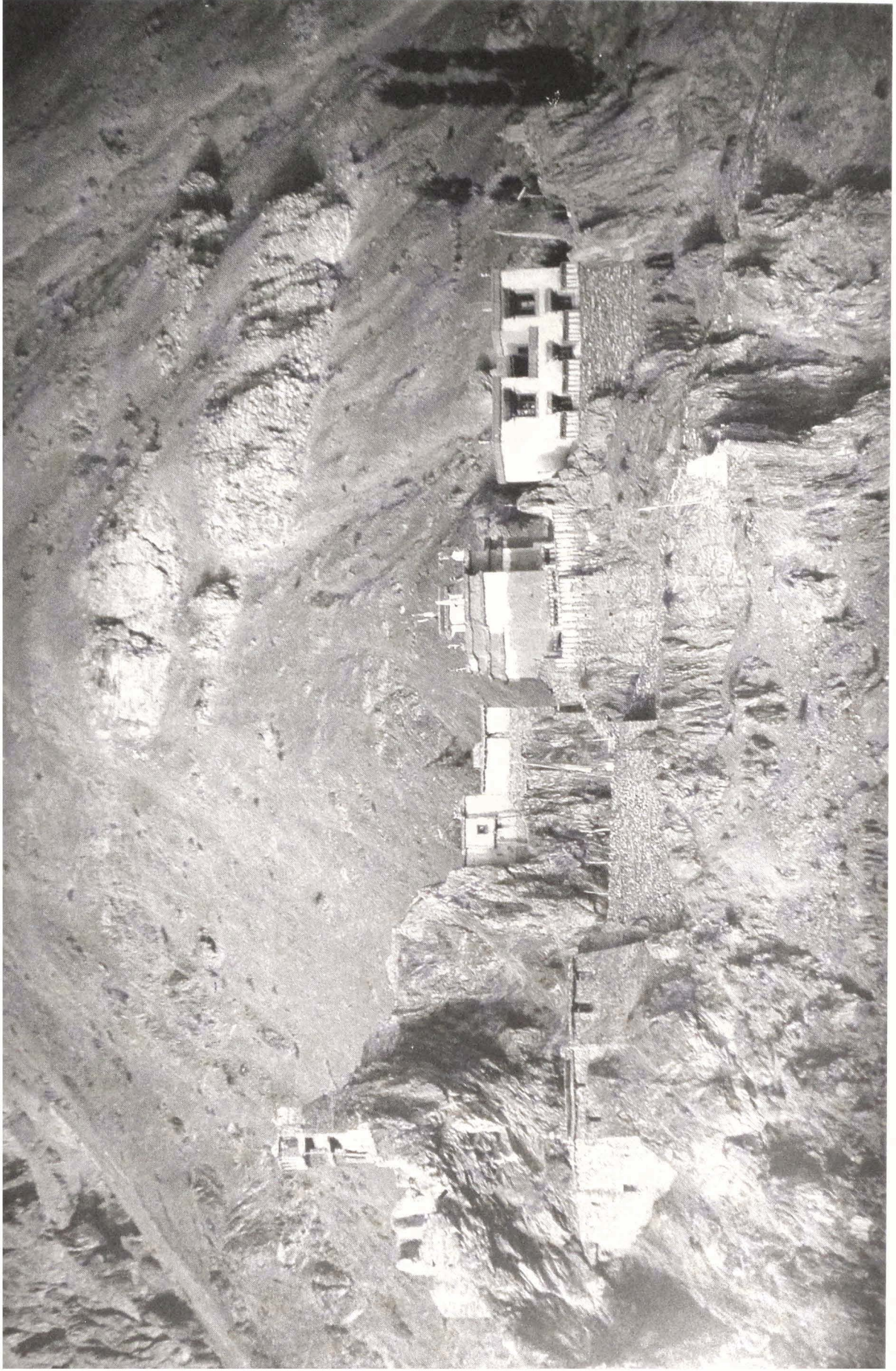
86 Panel II 48 (detail), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (after Goepper 1996: ill. p. 263)



87 Panel II 33 (detail), *gsum brtsegs*, Alchi (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1983)



88 Alchi, ceiling panels in the niche with 'flying Buddhas' (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1984, WHAV)



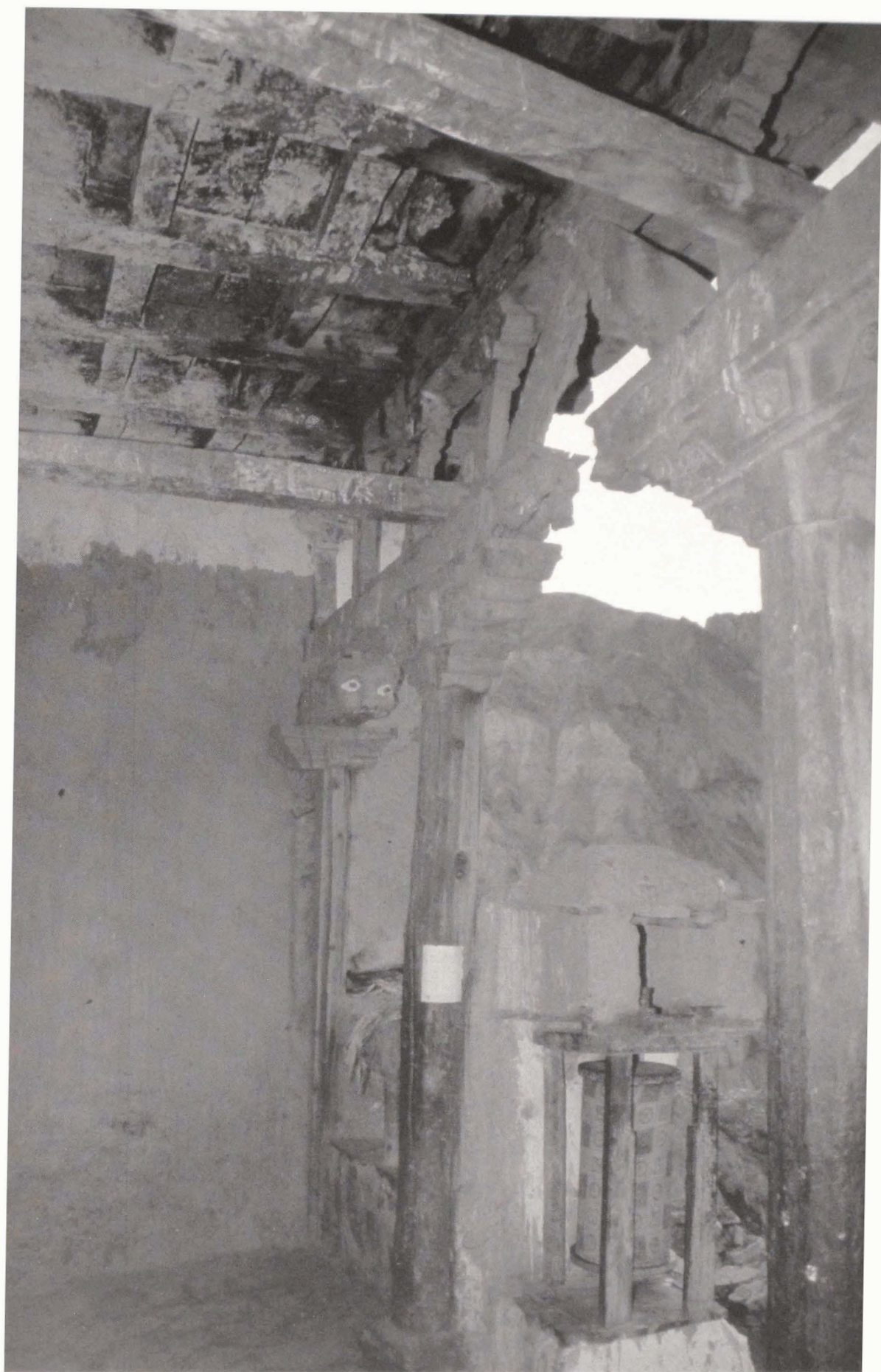
89 The ruins of the Wanla castle with the Wanla temple in the centre (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 67,25)



90 The fragmentary remains of woodcarvings on the Wanla castle tower (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 78,8)



91 The front side of the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 69,2)



92 The construction of the veranda in Wanla (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 69,3)



93 The eleven-headed and eight-armed main image of Avalokiteśvara behind the altar of the Wanla temple (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1990, WHAV)





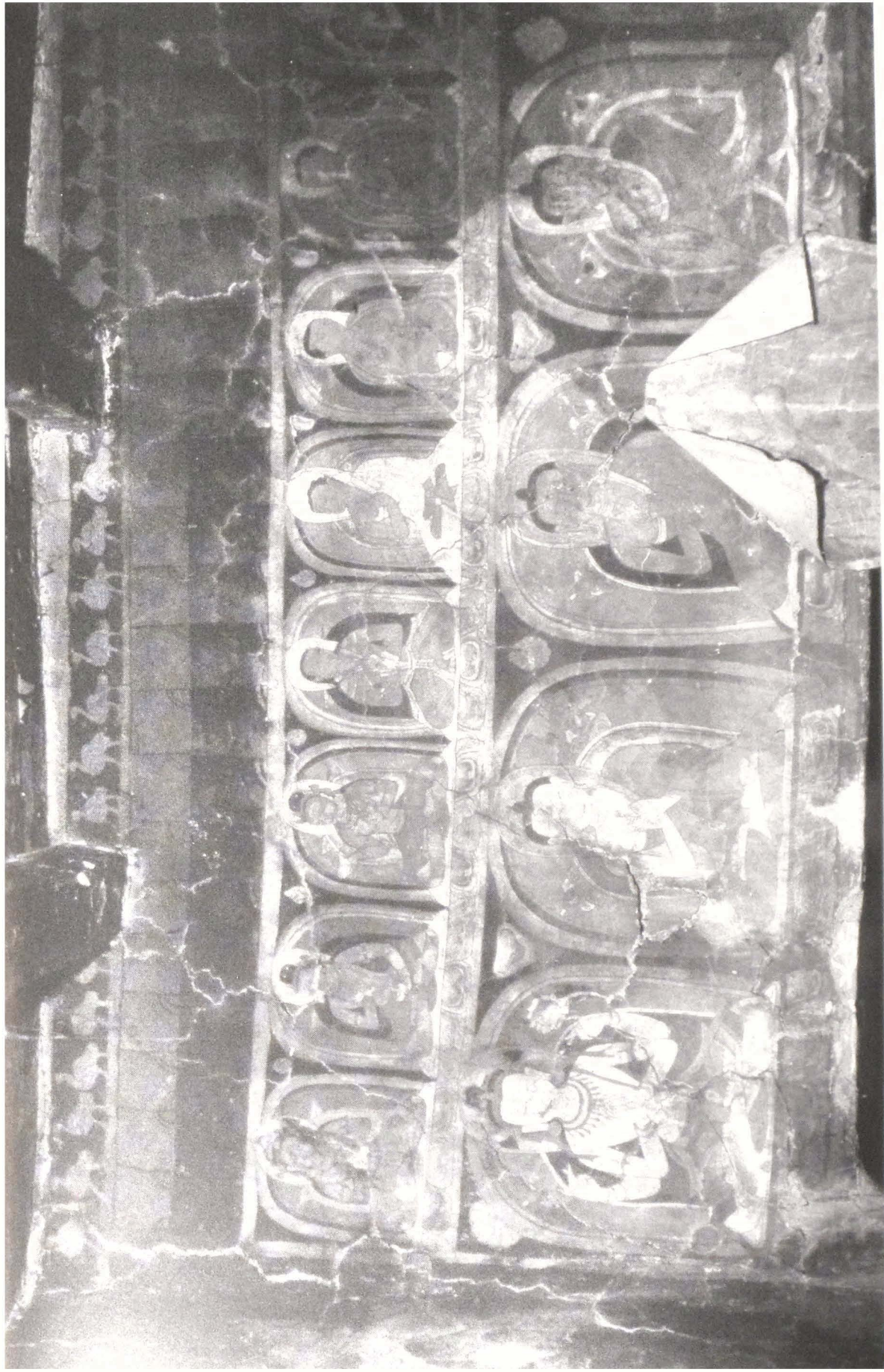
95 The image of Śākyamuni in the side niche to the proper left of the main image of the Wanla temple (photograph Jaroslav Poncar, 1990, WHAV)



96 Lineage sculptures flank the heads of Avalokiteśvara on the gallery of the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 74,3)



97 The paper-mâché sculpture of Mar pa in the Wanla temple (photograph Christian Lucza-



98 The beginning of the lineage on Wanla temple gallery (photograph Christian Luczanits, WHAV CL98 76,23)



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DEBORAH KLIMBURG-SALTER,
Ph.D. (1976) Harvard University,
Department of Fine Arts, Habilitation
(1990) University of Vienna, is currently Professor of Asian Art History at the Institute for Art History, University of Vienna. Her research interests include the art history and archaeology of Afghanistan, Northern India, Tibet and Pakistan and she is the author of several monographs, of which *Tabo – a Lamp for the Kingdom: Early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalaya* (Milan 1997; New York 1998) is the most recent.

EVA ALLINGER
(Mag. Phil.) has studied Art History and Archaeology, and Tibetology and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna. She has published on problems of style and iconography of Indo-Tibetan art (10th-13th centuries).

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