Dating Tibetan Art

Ingrid Kreide-Damani (ed.)

Reichert

Contributions to Tibetan Studies

Edited by David P. Jackson

Volume 3

WIESBADEN 2003

DR. LUDWIG REICHERT VERLAG

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Essays on the Possibilities and Impossibilities of Chronology
from the Lempertz Symposium, Cologne

edited by
Ingrid Kreide-Damani

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With the subvention of *Kunsthaus Lempertz*, Cologne

Umschlagabbildung: Christian Luczanits Fig. 3

Bibliografische Information Der Deutschen Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.ddb.de abrufbar.

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem Papier
(alterungsbeständig – pH7, neutral)

ISBN: 3-89500-355-7

Druck: Memminger MedienCentrum AG
Printed in Germany

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INTRODUCTION

During the past twelve years, international trade in Tibetan art has enjoyed an unprecedented upswing, as buyer demand has confronted limited supply. Prices have risen to dizzying heights, in line with the maxim: "The older the piece, the higher the price."

In order to analyse whether such a development in prices was academically justified and to establish more transparency, Lempertz Auction House of Cologne, Germany, invited nine leading European scholars to present papers on research methods and problems relating to the dating of Tibetan art. The meeting, held amid a circle of collectors and connoisseurs, took place on November 17 and 18, 2001, at the Cologne Museum for East Asian Art and at Lempertz Auction House. During these two days, the Lempertz symposium in Cologne became a lively forum for discussion. The speakers as well as the audience seized the opportunity to expand their horizons and better understand each other's positions. Sharing expertise and experiences, they scrutinized the problem of dating art from new perspectives.

In this publication we would like to present to the reader the revised papers of seven of the nine speakers at the Lempertz Symposium. Their diverging points of view as to the possibilities of dating Tibetan art are based on different scholarly approaches and reflect the freedom of academic research. The order of contributions follows that of the symposium, with the exception that David Jackson's comments in response to Martin Brauen's reconstruction of an unresolved court case have been moved up one slot to immediately after Brauen's contribution. Brauen's "detective story" touched off an animated discussion, and it was also a challenge to Jackson for testing his own method of dating Tibetan paintings, as described in Jackson's supplemented paper.

To ignite discussion was indeed the intention of the symposium, not least with respect to Roger Goepper's dating of the Sumtsek temple in Alchi. Goepper's dating had been questioned by Fournier in 2001,[1] but during the symposium it was corroborated by new arguments both from Goepper himself and from Christian Luczanits.

Jane Casey Singer's scholarly detective work documents just how difficult it is to establish the dating of a work of art with absolute certainty. Heather Stoddard presents historical and political facts that place stylistic developments within West-Tibetan art in a new, hitherto unconsidered light. By contrast, the practicing Buddhist and reincarnate high lama Loden Sherap Dagyab Rinpoche overturns the aesthetic perceptions and

1 "An Interview with Lionel Fournier," in *Orientations*, vol. 32, no. 1, January 2001, pp. 68–75.

material valuations of Tibetan art in the Western world. Dagyab Rinpoche subjects the supposedly universal validity of a Western understanding of art to critical examination and confronts the Western view with a different interpretation of reality. Not least in order to qualify or "relativize" the other vehement discussions conducted almost exclusively from Western perspectives, his contribution has been placed at the beginning of this volume.

Michael Henss regretted being unable to include his contribution on style copies in Tibetan bronze artwork in the present volume. Ursula Toyka-Fuong, who personally guided the symposium participants through the normally inaccessible Schulemann Collection in the archives of the Museum for East Asian Art, has already published elsewhere a comprehensive publication on that collection.[2]

The authors' different systems of transcribing Tibetan have mostly been preserved in this book, in conformity with the diverse scholarly approaches and questions posed by this group of researchers on Tibetan art.

The Role of the Art Trade

When approaching Tibetan art, the art trade gains valuable orientation from the expertise and information made available by scholarship on art. Because of the large amount of time that research requires, people in the art trade normally cannot involve themselves intensively in research. The art trade may, however, be in a position to make contributions from its experience, pass on information and encourage discussions, but its primary interests remain commercial. Yet even from a trade perspective, divergent scholarly points of view on the dating of Tibetan art should not be excluded without careful consideration. The reader is invited to form his or her own judgement.

A Few Words of Thanks

The editor wishes to thank the contributors to the Cologne Lempertz symposium and the authors of this volume. Without the support of Lempertz Auction House, Cologne, this book would not have been able to appear. The publication owes its present form to David Jackson as editor of the series *Contributions to Tibetan Studies*, whom the editor of this volume would also like to thank again for his constructive criticisms and improvements. Special thanks to Prof. Hendrik Hanstein and the colleagues of Lempertz Auction House, particularly of the East Asian Department, for their support in organizing and conducting the symposium, and to Angelika Borchert for her energetic

2 SAGASTER, KLAUS, and TOYKA-FUONG, URSULA (eds.) 1984, *Ikonographie und Symbolik des tibetischen Buddhismus. Die Kultplastiken der Sammlung Werner Schulemann im Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst*, Cologne, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

commitment. For her kind support of the Lempertz symposium and for her presentation of the Schulemann Collection, normally off limits at the museum's archives, thanks are due to Dr. Adele Schlombs, Director of the Museum for East Asian Art in Cologne. Last but not least, I would like to thank Edith C. Watts for her translations of the German contributions.

L. S. Dagyab Rinpoche

ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TIBETAN BUDDHIST ART AND ICONOGRAPHY

In spite of its opulent richness of colour and form, Tibetan art is dependent on and governed by strict guidelines. Leeway for the artist's free expression in the individualistic European sense is present only to a limited extent. His goal is not the realization of his own creative imagination, but rather service to an object of religious veneration. A work of art represents something like a "super-reality" in idealized form. Its individual elements are familiar to the artist from sacred texts, and it is his task to depict them as faithfully and accurately as possible, and to awaken them to life through his artistic ability. (In this lecture I shall use the masculine pronoun for the sake of simplicity, although of course there are a few women artists and masters.) The artists' compositions are therefore limited to traditional religious symbolism. Objects from everyday life, realistic landscapes, and so forth, are practically never painted. Portraits of historic masters are for the most part strongly idealized; they seldom reveal individual traits.

What could possibly motivate the artist to produce such works under such circumstances? In fact, a Tibetan artist does not regard himself primarily as an artist, but rather as a Buddhist practitioner. The requirement that he do his best according to the strict rules of a firmly established tradition would not seem strange to him, because the entire path of practice in Tibetan Buddhism is structured in this way. The practitioner is presented with a complete and carefully transmitted path in which nothing important has been changed for hundreds of years. In addition, the reverence of the practitioner for religious objects and symbols is very great. The artist cannot do otherwise than take an inner posture of respect and devotion towards them. Spiritual inspiration is integrated into the process of production of a work of art, so that it simply does not occur to the artist that the work is his creation alone. On the contrary, the more he is able to surrender his individual self and to conceive of himself as a kind of transmitter, the better he is able to realize his artistic intentions.

Let me offer one example of the great difference between the Tibetan view of art and that of the West. Let us assume that a Tibetan Buddhist master brings an educated Westerner who is interested in Tibetan art into his shrine room. The Westerner lets his gaze wander appreciatively over the various statues and thangkas. His connoisseur's eye quickly notes which statue is artistically superior and which comparatively inferior. Maybe he will express surprise that some of the statues look "funny" and crude; a few thangkas may appear downright "cheap." If he expresses his criticism, perhaps pointing

with his finger, too, his Tibetan companions will suddenly become quieter and quieter. What has happened?

A Tibetan regards a work of art from a completely different perspective: For him the "blessing" or "blessing energy" that is bound up with the art object is of absolutely decisive importance. Even if the statue that my master gave me is very crude by formal criteria, for me it is filled with her or his blessing; I perceive the "quality behind the quality." In spite of my scholarly and scientific work, the religious function of the object remains for me primary – never aesthetic or financial considerations.

Naturally, we Tibetans also esteem old art works that are seldom to be seen and of excellent quality, just as Westerners do. But as I have already emphasized, such objects must have been owned by monasteries or masters and blessed over and over again by the practice thereby associated with them. In Tibet it is even customary to take thangkas and statues along on journeys to sacred places, to ceremonies or on pilgrimages, in order to have them infused with even more blessing.

A consecrated statue is the seat of divinity for Tibetans. There are numerous eyewitness reports of statues that have moved of themselves or that have shed tears from their eyes. I experienced one such situation in 1958 in Tibet – just before the flight of the Dalai Lama. Together with another Rinpoche I conducted a seven-day "exhortation ritual" to the protective deity of our region, Setrab. After two days of intensive meditation and prayer, we suddenly observed how the horse of the Setrab statue in the temple room all at once began to sweat. For us Tibetans, such events are factual, because we live in another cultural context.

Though many Westerners may have difficulty understanding these beliefs, there are a few simple, practical things that they, too, should learn which would make us Tibetans much happier. For example, one should never say, "This statue is ugly"; at most one should say that it is poorly made. One should never point to religious objects with one's finger, but rather with the whole hand, palm upwards. Consecrated objects are never placed directly on the floor, and one should absolutely never step over them! Also, one should never place a Buddha statue on top of a Buddhist text, because the text represents the Teaching itself.

Naturally, one can no longer assume today that each and every Tibetan artist has such a strong religious motivation or deep understanding of his own activity. Particularly in the last few decades it has not escaped young artists, both in exile and in Tibet, that there is an interesting market for thangkas in the West and that one can earn a lot of money in this way. It goes without saying that the quantity of recently produced thangkas has increased, but not their quality.

In addition, many of the old techniques are in danger of dying out because the few still-living masters who practice them in Tibet are very old and may well pass away before they can hand on their knowledge and skills to suitable students. Therefore, efforts to preserve Tibetan culture must aim at discovering such traditions as may still be alive in Tibet, in order to document and preserve them.

How a Tibetan Work of Art is Produced

Let us return to the process of producing Tibetan works of art. I shall take as my point of departure the description of a desirable state of affairs, despite my critical remarks above, no matter whether this ideal was realized in the past or can be in the present.

Two groups of people participate from the very beginning in the process of producing religious art: the sponsor and the artist. Good motivation is important for both, and both gain significant religious merit from the project.

The sponsor should have the pure motivation of serving the Dharma and thereby his fellow human beings through financing a major work of art. Such a work of art can be, for example, a votive offering to express gratitude if the lama of a monastery has resolved a conflict by means of religious teachings, as often occurred. Or it can be connected with a wish or a promise for the future. The money that the sponsor provides must not have been obtained dishonestly, so no money-laundering! He must treat the artist with respect and provide him with the necessary materials, lodging, food and medical care during the entire time in which the work is produced. Upon completion the artist receives a donation as well. Naturally, a number of sponsors can join together to share costs. The sponsor can then dedicate appropriately the religious merit that he has thereby gained. If in connection with his own person, it can be dedicated for the purification of negative karmas accumulated in the past, or for an auspicious rebirth, or for the well-being of all sentient beings in general.

The artist must fulfil two conditions: he must be a conscientious Buddhist practitioner and have completed a thorough study as painter, sculptor or calligrapher. The training of a thangka painter by a qualified master, for example, takes place several years, and a master seldom trains more than a handful of students at one time. The curriculum includes various disciplines, such as the study of canonical and non-canonical texts from which the artist derives the guidelines for size, proportions, posture, attributes and basic colours of each figure, right down to the last details. In addition to the basics of the Buddhist graduated path, he must familiarize himself with a series of Tantras, and not just in theory. He is instructed to practice Tantric meditation continuously in everyday life and in retreat. It is made clear to the student that artistic work is just one part of Buddhist practice, and that drawing and painting in turn have no effect on the development of his consciousness. Parallel to this comes a strict training in drawing, for starters.

The proportions of all the deities are subject to established measurements, which are calculated in the Tibetan unit of measurement *sor* – that is, the breadth of the middle finger. There are detailed *sor* charts from which the measurements of the upper and lower arm-breadths of female, male, peaceful or wrathful deities can be derived. First of all an exact grid is drawn on the basis of these criteria, in which diagonal guiding-lines are included. The secure support of this grid is then filled in with the actual drawing. It is interesting to note in the face of a deity, for instance, that over the centuries the distance between mouth, nose and eyes and also the shape of the cheeks have changed a great deal, but not the *sor*-measures. The total distance from chin to hairline, for example, must always measure twelve *sor*.

Only when the student has gained a sure feeling for the proportions has he progressed enough to be permitted to move on to brush and paint! The spiritual training runs parallel to the technical training all along. As in the case of the sponsor, the motivation of the student and future thangka painter must be free of self-interest or desire for fame. He should also conduct himself in a manner suitable for a Dharma practitioner who observes the rules of Buddhist ethics and is moderate and peaceful in his behaviour, inspiring confidence in others.

If the new thangka painter obtains a commission, he does not just begin to work right off. First comes a phase of intensive inner and outer preparation, in which spiritual and sometimes physical purification (for example, not eating certain foods) and the generation of the right motivation play a decisive role. If the commissioned thangka depicts a Tantric deity, the painter must have received the empowerment to practice this deity from a Tantric teacher and have completed a meditation retreat for this deity. He must concentrate on and identify himself as deeply as possible with the deity, uniting himself with it and understanding its special energy. With regard to the pictorial representation, he will of course keep to the rules that he has learned. Furthermore, he can let himself be inspired by available thangkas and, above all, read the *sādhana*-meditation with the greatest care in order to derive the information from the texts concerning the form and ornamentation of the deity, its attributes and its environment. Then he can gradually begin to collect his utensils, bless them and put them in order through certain rituals, stretch his canvas and begin priming it.

Then follows, in a well-learned sequence, the sketching of the outlines and the application of first light and then dark areas. The environment is painted first, then the clothing, the body, and the gold ornamentation. Only an established palette of colours is used traditionally, consisting of "father" and "mother" colours. At the very end, the eyes of the central figure are painted. This so-called "opening of the eyes" is itself a separate ritual accompanied by a special meditation on the part of the painter.

If one looks at thangkas, one can clearly see that in spite of the strict regulations, pictures are by no means identical. There are differences, especially in the fineness of exe-

cution, and above all in the features of the face and the surrounding of the central figure. Furthermore, paintings differ in the landscapes, individual details of clothing, the design of the throne and in general variations in colour tones. Some thangkas seem somewhat sterile and static, while others truly vibrate with life, energy and presence.

Religious Uses

Before a work of art can be released for religious use, it must be ritually consecrated. In the case of a statue, it will be filled with rolls of paper upon which mantras have been printed, with relics of revered Buddhist masters, and with healing herbs, sweet-smelling medicinal substances, or sometimes with grain and gemstones. In large statues, smaller statues, texts and smaller stūpas are placed inside. In the case of thangkas, the reverse side is inscribed with "core syllables" (for example: *oṃ āḥ hūṃ*), mantras, and prayers. Finally, it can be blessed through the handprints, fingerprints or seal of a lama. The person carrying out the entire blessing ritual recites mantras and prayers in which he invokes the particular deity. He identifies himself with it and transfers once more its energy and its blessing into the object. This ritual's purpose is to render the blessing unshakeable in its permanence.

A sacred object can be employed by a Buddhist viewer in various ways, ranging from simple popular piety to the application of the subtlest methods. Each religious work of art automatically represents the Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, either individually or all together. They symbolize the objects of Refuge to which every Buddhist turns: The Teacher, the Teachings and the Community of those who strive for Enlightenment. Every Buddhist practice is carried out in connection with the Three Jewels, whether in the form of humble reverence or of complete identification. When we speak of "practice" here, we are always referring to two kinds: The accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom, i. e., activity and understanding. Together these two practices lead to Buddhahood.

But what does this practice look like concretely when carried out in conjunction with a physical object, a sacred work of art? Simple Tibetan nomads, farmers or merchants take a very pragmatic approach. Statues and thangkas remind them, first of all, of everything that is holy and salutary; sacred objects lift them above profane everyday life. For them, deities are truly present living entities who have populated the mountains, rivers and landscapes since time immemorial, some of whom were placed in the service of Buddhist teaching only at a later time. A work of religious art is the visible recipient of the common people's worship. They prostrate themselves before such objects, bring them offerings and recite prayers and appeals.

Those monks, nuns and lay persons who have studied Buddhist teachings more thoroughly, and who are aware of the importance of clear knowledge and the actual nature

of all phenomena, naturally find other ways to relate to sacred objects. Most of the practices that uneducated people perform are also performed by advanced students, but with deeper understanding. Thus, in Vajrayāna the external representations of deities and their maṇḍalas in thangkas are viewed and then rendered present to the mind through visualization. These inner images become ever more stable and subtler with increasing experience, and in the end bring about a profound process of understanding and a transformation of consciousness.

The History and Transmission of Tibetan Art

Let us now come to our main topic, the history and transmission of Tibetan art. When we speak of "art", we mean mainly painting and sculpture. But also the architecture of houses, temples, monasteries or stūpas is included. Three types of painting are important: murals, thangkas (roll-paintings) and book illustrations. With regard to sculpture, we refer primarily to statues and masks: those of the Cham dances, for example. But "sculpture" also includes other three-dimensional objects such as reliefs, stūpas, maṇḍala-models and miniature ritual images called *tsakli*, which represent an intermediate category between sculpture and painting. Sculptures can be made of gold, silver, copper or bronze, but also of clay, sometimes mixed with paper-mâché, wood, or bones. On the whole they are painted as well, after they have been modelled.

In the following discussion we shall mainly investigate the Tibetan traditions of thangka painting. Thangkas can deal with such themes as stories from the life of Buddha Śākyamuni or from His past existences, the lives of other Buddhas and Buddhist masters, representations of the Buddhist pantheon, as well as individual depictions of Buddhas, masters, meditation deities, maṇḍalas and Pure Lands (i. e., paradises), or depictions of the six different realms of existence. They are painted, woven, sewed, glued or printed on cotton, silk, or paper.

The Tibetan painting schools that arose in the course of time and are still known today can be classified geographically into those of central, eastern and western Tibet. In the 7th century, the first great early Dharma King of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo, commissioned artists from India and Kashmir to decorate a temple. After very promising beginnings, Buddhism was practically wiped out in Tibet during the 9th and 10th centuries due to the persecutions of King Langdarma. Only in the remotest parts of eastern Tibet did scholars, lamas and artists find a refuge. So it was that the painter Ga Nyiokpa (dGa' Nyi-'og-pa) was able to preserve the tradition of the Bardri school of painting. The eastern Tibetan Gadri (*dGa ' bris*) school that later became very famous goes back to him.

The Shangdri (*Shangs bris*) School is mentioned as being one of the most important schools of the 12th century. During this time the lama-kings of the Phagmo-Drupa Dy-

nasty reigned. The founder of the Shangdri School, the famous painter Shangs Nam-mkha' rgyal-mtshan, was among those close to these kings. Another famous painter towards the end of the 12th century was Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan (1182–1251), the greatest scholar of the Sakyapa tradition.

Apart from the Gadri School mentioned above, four additional great painting traditions are mentioned in the art history of eastern Tibet: (1) the Dzadri (*rDza bris*) School with its famous depictions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, (2) the Tsanag (*Ca nag*) School, which especially emphasized landscape painting, (3) the Gyadri (*rGya bris*) School, which demonstrates considerable Chinese influence when depicting landscapes and buildings, and (4) the Dedri (*sDe bris*) School, which combine the Gadri and Gyadri Schools.

One could characterize the more recent painting schools – Mendri, Khyendri and Karma Gardri – as the main groups. They are founded on the above-mentioned styles, especially the Mendri School that was developed by Menthangpa Dondup Gyatsho (b.1404?). A later representative of the Mendri School in the 17th century was Tulku Chos-dbyings rgya-mtsho, who founded his own branch of the Mendri School so that we distinguish today between the old and new Mendri schools. The style of the old school is described with the Tibetan adjective *bab chag po*, which one could translate as "unassuming and noble," conveying a sense of simplicity and tastefulness. The newer branch, by contrast, shows almost dancer-like forms when depicting human figures; the depictions here are generally overly refined. This newer style has spread from western Tibet to eastern Tibet and into Mongolia. In each area, particular features have developed.

According to the Tibetan manual *dPal 'byor rgya mtsho* by sTag-tshang Lo-tsā-ba Shes-rab rin-chen (b.1405), classical Tibetan art arose as a combination of prototypes from five countries:

From India
Beautiful houses
The Bodhi [stūpa]
Various flower offerings
Auspicious symbols and signs
Garlands and chains of jewels

From China
Decoration motifs
Good luck symbols
Clothing
Thrones
Amusing figures

From Kashmir
Lakes
Ponds
Water animals
Forests
"*Nāga*-substances" (gemstones)
Depictions of smoke billowing

From Nepal
Patra decorative designs
Rainbows
Clouds
Trees with jewel garlands
Birds
"Substances" of the Gods
(Jewel ornaments)

From Tibet
Cliffs
Mountain meadows and pastures
Snowy mountains
Wild animals
Canopies
Draped ornaments/ earrings
Jewellery
Various forms

The Mendri and Karma Gardri Schools are the only traditions worth mentioning that are still alive, having been passed down to the present day from one master to another in an unbroken lineage. Therefore I would like to briefly describe them.

The thangkas of the Old and New Mendri Schools have much in common in terms of landscape: both depict an opulent display of trees, leaves, rainbows, clouds, jewels and bodies of water. Clouds are frequently depicted as multi-layered, and a spatial effect for the sky is obtained through variations in colour tone and "cloud borders." Gold frequently appears in the depiction of flames, lotus seats, trees, bodies of water and cliffs. Trees in particular have triple-level foliage and are ornamented with golden jewel-garlands. Cliffs are for the most part depicted with pointed forms. Human figures have broad foreheads, clothing lies close to the body and reveals bodily forms. Drapery is indicated by graduated colour shadings. Painters of the living Karma Gardri School maintain that the Mendri style uses too much colour shading, which lends a restless appearance to the faces of peaceful deities. They also regard Mendri landscapes as unrealistic; for example, they consider depictions of mountains by the other school to be too idealized and not craggy enough.

The Karma Gardri School was influenced by Chinese art in many ways. The priming of the canvas is always very thin in this style, so that the structure of the cotton cloth shows through. Motifs such as landscapes, animals and human beings are depicted very realistically. Portrayals of mountain villages and bodies of water occur frequently. Lakes are depicted full of waves, and tree branches seem to sway in the wind. Bodies of water and trees have no gold ornamentation, however. Cliffs have mostly rounded shapes. Glorioles and rainbows are transparent and lack outlines; they sometimes end

quite abruptly. The palms of the hands and soles of the feet of the figures depicted are the same colour as the bodies, for example, blue in the case of a blue deity and not, as is otherwise the general rule, always red. The proportions of the face, the underarms and the thighs reveal a slight foreshortening, which lends a sculptural appearance. Nonetheless, the painters of the Mendri School criticize the Karma Gardri School for making the facial expressions of wrathful deities too peaceful and their postures in general too rigid and static.

The Composition of Works of Art

When painting a figure, the artist first draws the outlines of the body over a grid of horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines. The figures can be identified through such attributes as the number and postures of their arms and legs, their hand gestures and body colour, other special marks of peaceful or wrathful manifestations, union with a female or male partner, animal mounts, thrones, lotus seats, and lunar or solar discs. A deity can hold a wide variety of symbolic attributes in his or her hands. Among the most frequent are the *vajra*, bell, sword, book, jewel, flower, *mālā* (rosary), snare, bow and arrow, trident, club, chopper, and skull cup. The hand gestures *(mudrā)* include, for example, the gesture of touching the earth, of equanimity, of proclamation of the Teachings, of giving, and of threatening. The basic body colours of the deities are generally connected with their specific type of Buddha activity, of which there are four or five. Peaceful activities are symbolized by white, activities of increase by yellow, powerful activities by red and wrathful by blue or black. The aspect of activity in and of itself and in its various forms is symbolized by green.

Each iconographic distinguishing mark or motif has a symbolic meaning. For example, the seven parts of the throne of a master or Buddha and the base of a stūpa stand for the "Seven Stages of Enlightenment." The six ornaments of the back of a throne symbolize the "Six Perfections" *(pāramitā)*. The solar disc on the lotus seat stands for absolute wisdom, the lunar disc symbolizes relative wisdom, and the lotus, the purity of consciousness.

Modern Developments

Tibetan art has been exposed to strong external influences during the last 50 years or so, a time in which the greater portion of the Tibetan cultural realm has belonged to the Peoples' Republic of China. During the chaos of the so-called Cultural Revolution, which arrived in Tibet in the early 1970s, many works of art were either destroyed or taken abroad. Tibetan artists were employed only by the Communist community and painted propaganda pictures. At the beginning of the 1980s, within the context of overall liberalization, traditional artistic activity again became possible to a certain degree. During this time two additional art-currents arose:

Firstly, in eastern Tibet there spread with astonishing speed a new painting style, the so-called Khantse Art, which formally derives from thangka painting but also contains elements of fantasy art and Chinese folk art. Its typical themes include the world of Tibetan myths and fables, and also modern scenes such as a nomad on a motorcycle accompanied by his wife, holding a Chinese umbrella. But politically idealized events are also depicted.

Secondly, a few Tibetan artists who orient themselves towards Western art have completed studies at Chinese art academies. In 1995 a degree program in art was introduced at Tibet University in Lhasa. This year (2001), a free, modern course of art studies is to be introduced. Many of the Tibetan artists who have studied in China have since become instructors at Tibet University. The art scene in Lhasa is booming; small artists' groups and galleries have sprung up.

But first-class traditional art is seldom found in Tibet today. The technical competence, religious background and corresponding motivation of thangka painters and statue makers are often mediocre. Good teachers hardly exist, and much art is produced for the tourist market, i. e., for "non-Buddhists."

In Conclusion

Future scholarship in the area of Tibetan art will have to deal primarily with the following issues: A considerable body of literature exists on such subjects as measures and proportions that for the most part have not been researched. The various Tibetan painting styles are even less well researched - not only in their broad outlines, but particularly concerning the developments and branches of the independent painting traditions. For unquestionably the claims in catalogues about the origins and dating of certain works should be treated with the greatest scepticism. These researches are all the more necessary because today the danger exists that genuine styles in their original purity will be lost through becoming mixed up with other traditions. In addition, the analysis of relevant Tibetan texts should be pursued with greater thoroughness than has been done until now, because differences even with regard to the basic proportional diagrams are discernible already in the basic textbooks. Such differences might well live on in different schools of painting. These points will need to be examined by historians in the coming years.

Roger Goepper

MORE EVIDENCE FOR DATING THE SUMTSEK IN ALCHI AND ITS RELATIONS WITH KASHMIR

In 1990 the author presented some facts leading to a revision of the dating then accepted of the Three-Storeyed Temple (*gSum brtsegs*, pron.: Sumtsek), one of the main buildings in the religious complex of Alchi, situated on the southern bank of the river Indus seventy kilometres southeast of Leh[1]. In most publications, the erection of the Sumtsek had been placed in the 11th or 12th century A.D. The new facts moved the date forward about one century to *circa* 1200 A.D. Since then this new dating has been accepted by many authors, but it also met with strong rejection in some quarters.[2]

The later dating is mainly based on the representation of a series of nine priests painted on the left panel of the front wall beside the window.[3] **(Fig. 1)** Tibetan inscriptions giving the names of the priests begin with the sentence: "I, the monk called Tshul-khrims 'Od, bow respectfully and take refuge in the *bhagavan* Vajradhara (rDo-rje-'chang), in (who is) the essence of Body, Speech and Mind of all the Buddhas of the Three Times". Actually the small figure of Vajradhara is placed between those of the first two Indian priests, Tilopa and Nāropa. The name Tshul-khrims 'Od as that of the founder of the Sumtsek appears in two other inscriptions in the Sumtsek[4] and also in one inside the so-called "Great Stūpa".[5] The inscriptions clearly show that Tshul-khrims 'Od of the mighty 'Bro clan was the initiator and founder not only of the Sumtsek and the neighbouring Great Stūpa, but also of several other temple buildings, of their pictorial program and even of the copying of sacred Buddhist texts. That he himself brings his name in contact with the list of the nine priests points to the fact that he was familiar with the meaning of the figures represented in the wall paintings of the upper floor in the Sumtsek.

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1 GOEPPER, ROGER 1990, "Clues for a Dating of the Three-storeyed Temple (Sumtsek) in Alchi, Ladakh", *Asiatische Studien*, vol. 44–2, pp. 159–176.

2 See, for instance, "An Interview with Lionel Fournier", *Orientations*, vol. 32, no. 1, January 2001, pp. 68–75.

3 Names and dates for all priests, as also a description of the representations on the other two panels, above and to the right of the window, are given in detail in *Asiatische Studien*, vol. 44–2 1990, pp. 159–176.

4 Nos. 6 and 7 according to SNELLGROVE AND SKORUPSKI 1979–1980, *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*, Warminster, vol. 2, pp. 135–139 and 147–148.

5 *Asiatische Studien*, p. 161. For a full translation of the long inscription see GOEPPER, R. 1993, "The Great Stūpa at Alchi", *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 53, 1–1, pp. 111–143.

Fig. 1 Wall with window in the second upper storey of the Sumtsek. Sequence of nine priests ending with 'Bri-gung-pa in the panel left of the window (photo: J. Poncar)

Fig. 2 The bottom row in the sequence of nine priests. Figure to the left: 'Bri-gung-pa ('Jig-rten mgon-po, 1143-1217) (photo: J. Poncar)

The group of the priests ends in the bottom row with three figures (**Fig. 2**): to the right Dags-po On chung-ba, to be identified as sGam-po-pa's nephew sGom-chung or dBon-sgom Shes-rab-byang-chub; in the middle Phag-mo gru-pa (1110–1170); and to the left 'Bri-gung-pa, i. e., 'Jig-rten mgon-po (1143–1217), founder of the 'Bri-gung-pa sub-sect of the Kagyüpa order. Each of the nine figures of this panel is clearly identified by an accompanying respectful inscription.[6]

The line of important patriarchs ending with the person of 'Bri-gung-pa fits well into the westward spread of this branch of the Kagyüpa order beginning in 1191 and finding its culmination around 1215.[7] At that time, the Ladakhi king dNgos-grub promoted this new Buddhist sect and later kings established the monastery of Lamayuru as centre of the school.[8] The king also established a law, according to which novices from Ladakh had to study and get their ordination in Central Tibet so that the direct cultural and religious influence was shifted to the east.[9] This impact may explain the fact that the murals in the Sumtsek do not correspond to the usual 'Bri-gung-pa iconography as it may be seen in the slightly later (13th century) wall paintings in the Seng-ge sgang of Lamayuru.[10]

That the murals in the Sumtsek clearly exhibit a Kashmiri style and therefore must have been executed by artists from the neighbouring country in the west, may be substantiated by several facts. Characteristic is their extreme elegance and fineness in details, not be found in slightly earlier wall paintings in Tabo or Tholing. A date for the Sumtsek around 1200 A. D. coincides well with the last flourishing of Buddhist religion and art in Kashmir. After a general degeneration and a suppression under the reign of king Harṣa (1089–1101) later kings of the Lohara dynasty, beginning with Uccala (1101–1111) and his queen Jayamatī again started to build Buddhist monasteries. This new flourishing of Buddhism reached its peak during the reign of king Jayasiṃha (1128–1154), also in this case assisted by queen Ratnadevī and the minister Rilhana.[11] In these decades preceding the foundation of the Sumtsek in Alchi, Buddhist culture for the last time gained wider influence in the state of Kashmir, mainly by royal patronage before its definite downfall after 1300 A. D.[12]

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6 The wrong identification of gurus no. 8 and 9 of the 'Bri-gung-pa lineage in my publications of 1990 and 1996, based on misspellings of their names in the inscriptions accompanying the paintings in the Sumtsek, was corrected by David Jackson 2002, "Lama Yeshe Jamyang of Nyurla, Ladakh: the Last Painter of the 'Bri gung Tradition," *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 27, no. 1 and 2, p. 164.

7 See VITALI, ROBERTO 1996, *The Kingdoms of Gu-ge Pu-hrang*, Dharamsala, p. 372f.

8 PETECH, LUCIANO 1977, *The Kingdom of Ladakh*, Rome, p. 18–20; and PETECH, L. 1978, "The 'Bri-guṅ -pa Sect in Western Tibet and Ladakh", in *Proceedings of the Csoma de Körös Memorial Symposium*, Budapest, Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica, vol. 23, pp. 18–20.

9 PETECH, L. 1977, p. 166.

10 VITALI, R. 1996, p. 382.

11 See KHOSLA, SARLA 1972, *History of Buddhism in Kashmir*, New Delhi, p. 51f.

12 KHOSLA, S. 1972, pp. 52–55.

This situation makes it plausible that nobility and clergy in the neighbouring kingdom of Ladakh employed artists from Kashmir for the decoration of temples, especially since this tradition could be traced back to the period of the great missionary Rin-chen bzang-po (958–1055).[13] That Kashmiri artists were active decorating the Sumtsek is rather obvious from how well acquainted they were with the life of royalty and gentry in their home country and with the general religious setting.

Plausible evidence of this is the scenes painted as decoration on the *dhotī* of the colossal clay figure of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the left niche of the Sumtsek.[14] We find here not only correct representations of architectural structures of temples and palace buildings characteristic of Kashmir, but also lively scenes showing the king and his retinue on horseback starting for a hunt. Other scenes may be regarded to a certain extent as a map of the landscape around the capital city, Śrīnagar. A Hindu temple with Sadaśiva stands in the direct neighbourhood of the royal palace. A monastery-like building with a figure of Green Tārā in its upper storey is connected with a chapel for the Hindu god Balarāma and with a Śiva temple containing a *lingam* covered by flowers. **(Fig. 3)** Integrated into a hillside, we find a temple of Tārā flanked on one side with the head of the Hindu goddess Umā and with Viṣṇu in the form of Vasudeva on the other. **(Fig. 4)** More examples could be listed. It is highly improbable that non-Kashmiri painters could have presented in such convincing details the symbiosis of the religious cultures existing in Kashmir at that time.

Another clue for the close connection with Kashmir is a certain iconographical emphasis on the goddess Tārā to be observed in the murals of the Sumtsek. Images of the Green Tārā (Śyāma-Tārā) as icons in temples – or chapel-like buildings – appear four times just in the decorations of Avalokiteśvara's *dhotī* described above. The extremely elegant lower frieze of paintings on the left wall of the left niche housing the colossal statue of Avalokiteśvara shows a group of five Green Tārās, four of them arranged around the large central figure exhibiting a highly erotic flair.[15] **(Fig. 5)** The left wall of the first upper storey shows as central figure a standing Tārā as Saviouress from Eight Kinds of Fear (Aṣṭabhayatrāna-Tārā), flanked by scenes actually showing the dangers or fears and the salvation from them.[16] The opposite right wall has as main image the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara (Ekādaśamukha-Avalokiteśvara) adored by a group of emaciated *pretas* asking for his help.[17] In this connection it is interesting that Tshul-khrims 'Od in his dedicatory inscription in the Great Stūpa mentions the production of

13 See TUCCI, GUISEPPE 1988. *Rin-chen bzaṅ-po and the Renaissance of Buddhism in Tibet*. New Delhi.

14 See the illustrations and a detailed description in GOEPPER, R. 1996. *Alchi. Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary. The Sumtsek*. London, Serindia Publications, pp. 46–71.

15 See plate, GOEPPER, R., 1996, p. 73.

16 GOEPPER, R. 1996, pp. 158–163.

17 GOEPPER, R. 1996, p. 154f.

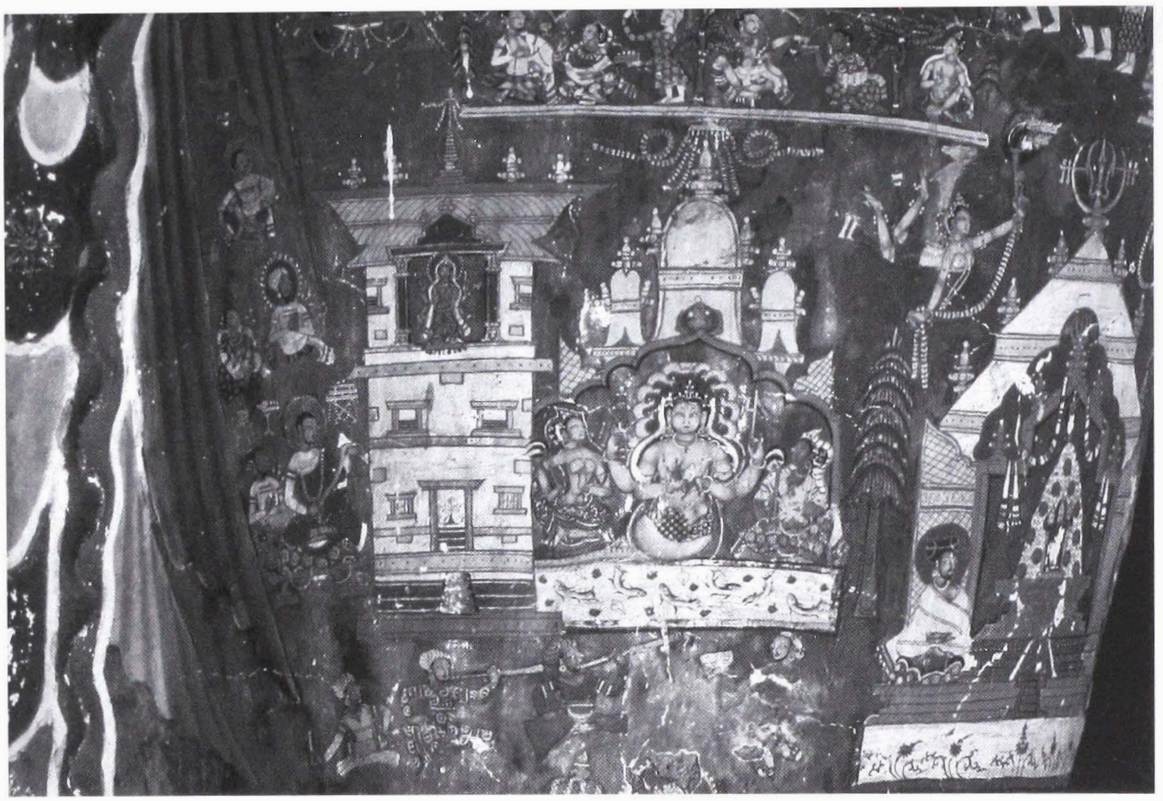

Fig. 3 Scene painted on the dhotî of Avalokitesvara's sculpture in the left niche: Building with figure of the Green Târâ in a monastery-like building, connected with a chapel for the Hindu god Balarâma and with a Siva temple with lingam (photo: J. Poncar)

Fig. 4 Hills with a temple of the goddess Târâ, flanked by one for the Hindu goddess Umâ on one side, and for Visnu in the form of Vasudeva on the other (photo: J. Poncar)

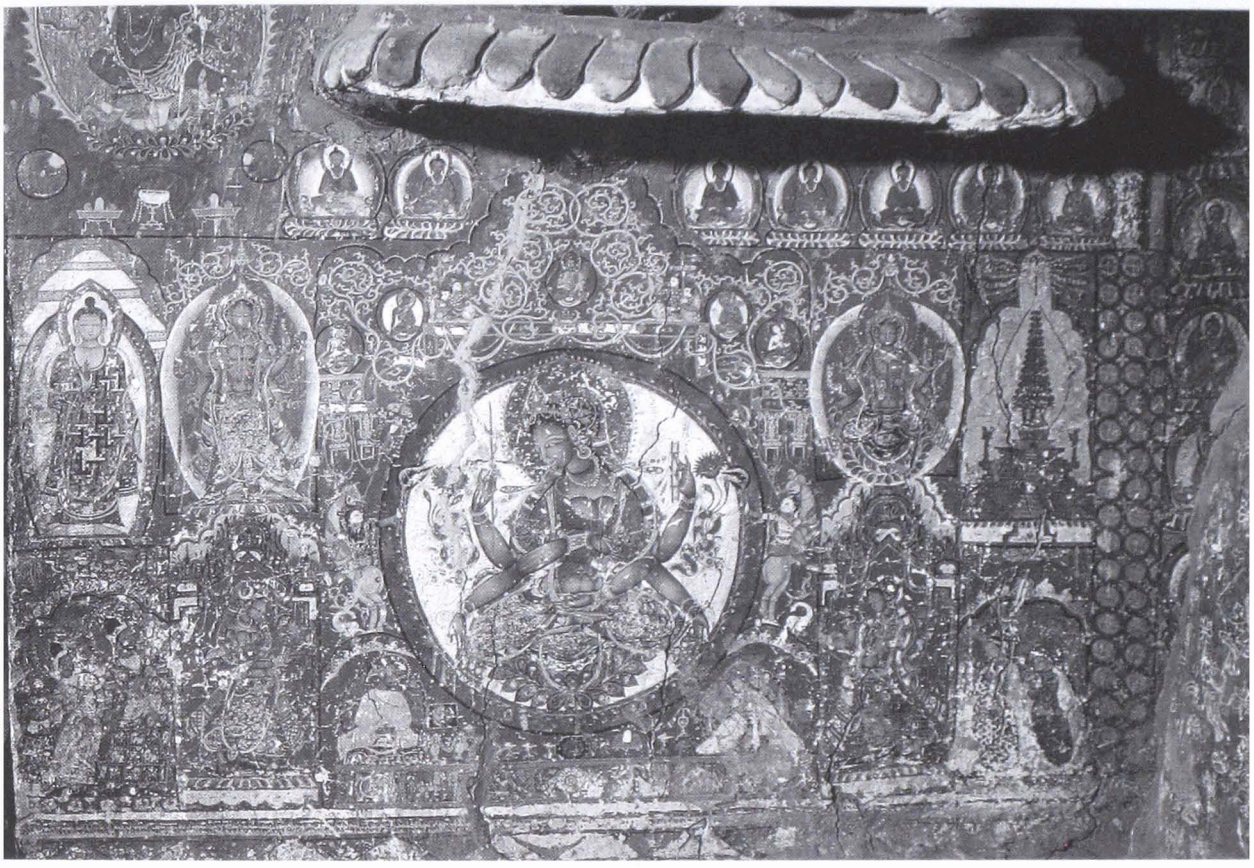

Fig. 5 Lower part of the left wall in the left niche of the groundfloor. Group of five Târâs with accompanying secular figures. On the lower margin the narrow white band containing the Proto-Sâradâ inscription is difficult to recognize (photo: J. Poncar)

many images not only of Buddhas Akṣobhya and Amitābha, of protective deities and Bodhisattvas, but also of female goddesses like Tārā.[18]

Possibly this predilection for the goddess may be interpreted as a reflection of the revival of her cult in Kashmir. When Śākyaśrībhadra (1140s–1225) after his return from Tibet reorganised the decaying Buddhist religion and ritual in Kashmir, he promoted especially the cult of Avalokiteśvara and Tārā.[19] The veneration of the goddess had already before been inaugurated by the Kashmiri Ravigupta. Among Śākyaśrībhadra's many works, two are directly dedicated to Tārā, but he was also engaged in the translation of four Sanskrit texts on Tārā into Tibetan with the help of monks from that country. Another Kashmiri priest named Tathāgatabhadra was during the 13th century active in China and translated there a *sādhana* on the Tārā as Saviouress from the Eight Kinds of Fear, originally composed by the Kashmiri Sarvajñamitra.[20] The parallelism between the new Kashmiri interest in Tārā and her representations in the Sumtsek can hardly be explained as pure coincidence.

Lastly, one more fact indicates a very close connection of the Sumtsek paintings with Kashmir: an inscription in a very narrow white borderline underneath the large panel with the five Tārās on the left wall in the left niche of the ground floor.[21] **(Fig. 6–12)** Since this narrow field is close to the floor of the building, it is rather exposed to damage, so that the writing could not yet be deciphered completely. From the white borderline on the opposite wall of the niche, the inscription has disappeared completely. Whereas all dedicatory inscriptions in the Sumtsek are clearly written in Tibetan, mostly in *dbu-can* characters, these two lines definitely are in an Indian script that has been identified as *Proto-Śāradā*.[22] Since it was impossible to take detailed close-up photographs and copying by hand did not lead to the expected results, the content of the long inscription is not yet known. Oskar von Hinüber was able to read only two words (*koṭiśata*, "hundred times ten millions"). He excluded the possibility that the text is a *dhāraṇī*, but could not offer any other explanation. The position of the inscription at such an unobtrusive place may point to the fact that the text was written by one of the Kashmiri artists. One can only hope that it may one day be deciphered.

18 *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 53, 1–1, 1993, p. 114.

19 NAUDOU, JEAN 1980, *Buddhists of Kashmir*, Delhi, pp. 246–249.

20 NAUDOU, J. 1980, p. 252. Indeed, Sarvajñamitra's description of the Saviouress from the Eight Kinds of Fear is closest to the representation of this subject in the first floor of the Sumtsek (ALLINGER, EVA 1999, "The Green Tara as Saviouress from the Eight Dangers in the Sumtseg at Alchi." *Orientations* 30–1, pp. 40–44.).

21 Hardly to be recognized in the plate p. 72, GOEPPER, R. 1996.

22 In a letter to the author from Oskar von Hinüber, Indologist at the University of Freiburg, dated 31 May, 1996.

Fig. 6ff. The hardly legible Proto-Sâradâ inscription (photos: J. Poncar)

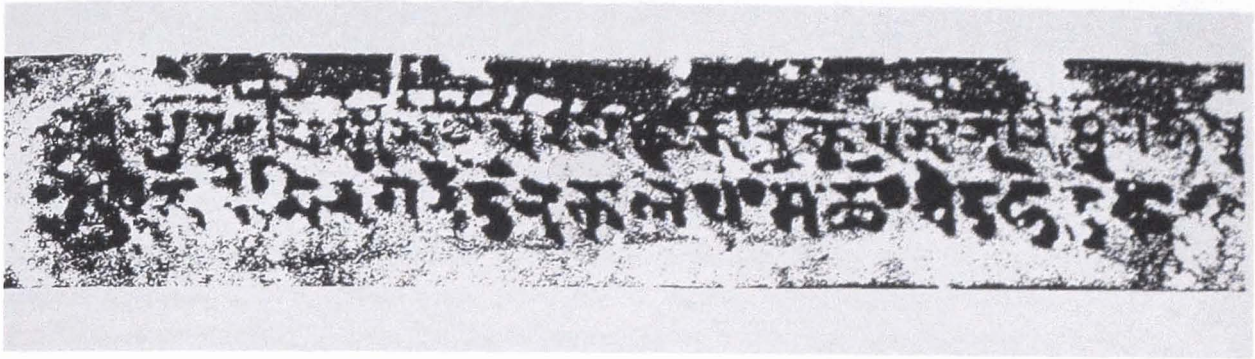

Fig. 6

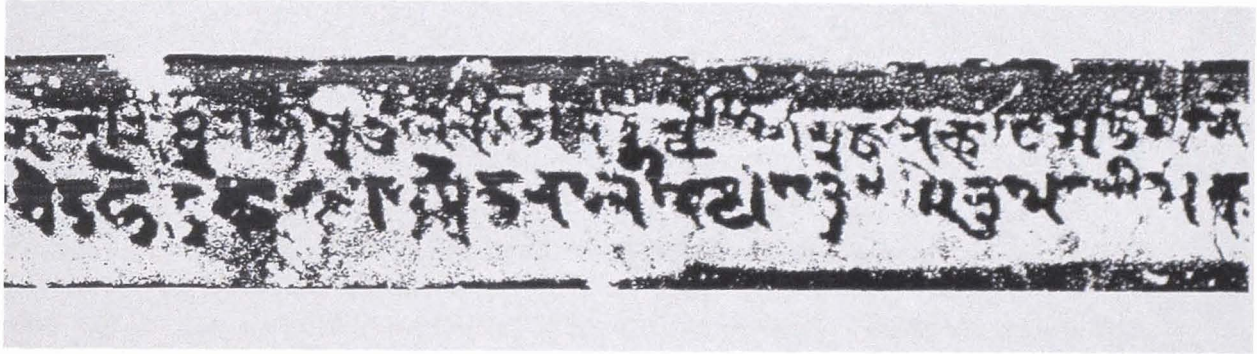

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

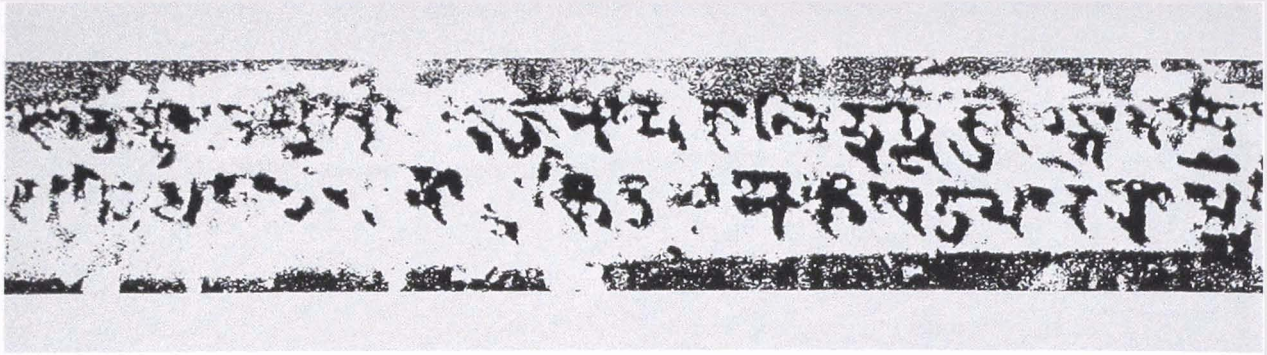

Fig. 9

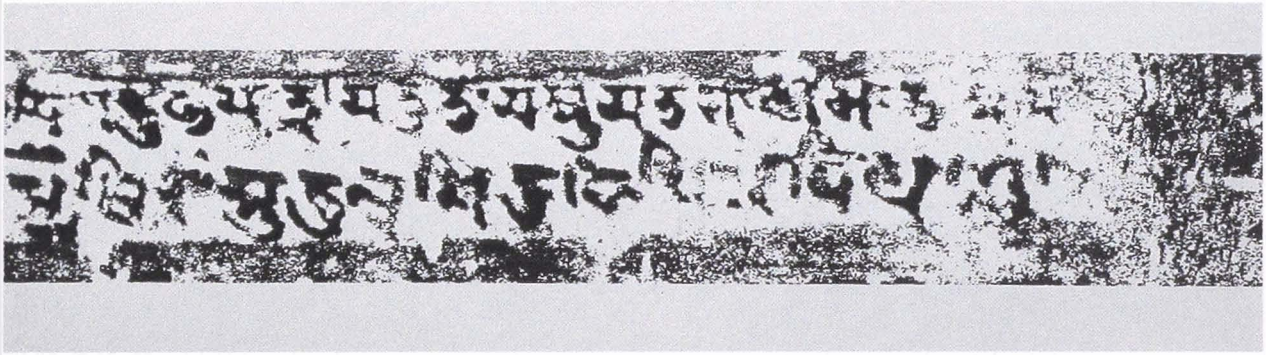

Fig. 10

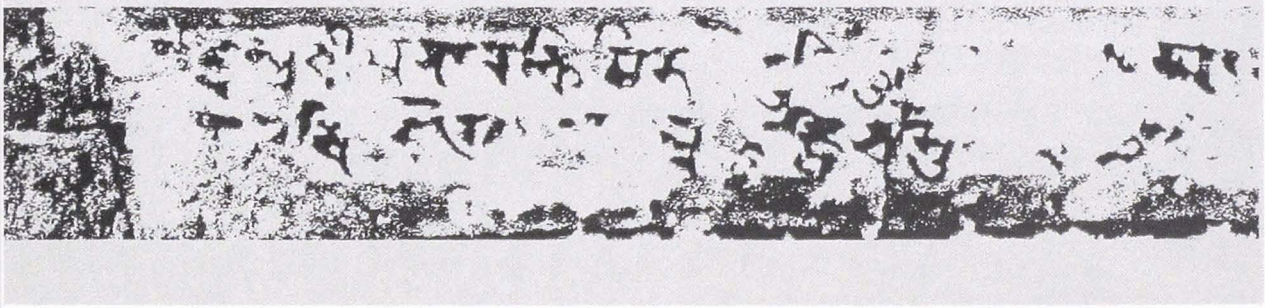

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Christian Luczanits

ART-HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF DATING TIBETAN ART•

Like much of Western art, Tibetan art was obviously not created so that future art historians could easily date it centuries later. No Tibetan artist – a figure who in any case hardly ever existed as an individual – ever intended to create a painting or sculpture clearly attributable to a certain time and region. If anyone wanted us to know about the creation of an artefact, it was the pious donor. However, he too was not interested in letting us know when and where the artefact was made; what counted for him was why he commissioned its execution. It is thus not surprising that few objects or even parts of a monument's decoration can be securely dated. In most cases, the dating of a portable object or the decoration of a monument has to rely largely on art-historical methods, i. e., on the iconography, composition, style and use of particular motifs.

Compared with art-historical studies of Western art, Tibetan art history is still in its infancy.[1] This is particularly obvious when dating an early Tibetan scroll painting (thangka) based purely on stylistic criteria. In such cases the dates proposed by different scholars quite frequently fluctuate by centuries. There are naturally many reasons for this, but the one I would like to stress is the difference in availability of comparable documentary material to different scholars. Each scholar in the field has assembled his own documentation over the years, but in very few cases does the quantity and quality of this documentation allow him to study an object in a detailed manner comparable to the standards of Western art history. Instead, conclusions pertaining to the dating of an object often have to be reached on the basis of a very small number of comparisons and

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• "Aspekte zur Datierung Tibetischer Kunst": Paper presented at a symposium on 'Dating Tibetan Art' organized by the Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne, 17th–18th November 2001. This article derives from an invitation to the 10th Austrian 'Kunsthistorikertag', where I was asked to introduce the study of Tibetan art to art historians working on Western art (LUCZANITS 1999/2000), as also from a subsequent review article on Amy Heller's book Tibetan Art (LUCZANITS 2001). One example presented stems from my research work on the early Buddhist art of the western Himalayas while the other two are from the collection of Tibetan thangkas acquired by Giuseppe Tucci and now held in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale, Rome. I am indebted to D. E. Klimburg-Salter, whose critical comments have prompted considerable improvements. The presentation of the first example profited greatly from communication with Dan Martin on an early Central Tibetan thangka I am preparing for publication, as it provided me with some of the historical context utilized in this article, and from his comments on an earlier version of this article. I am also grateful to Rob Linrothe and Gene Smith for their suggestions and corrections. My research activities, on which these observations are based, have been generously funded by the Austrian 'Fonds zur Förderung wissenschaftlicher Forschung' and are currently being funded by an APART (Austrian Programme for Advanced Research and Technology) grant from the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale and its staff provided excellent working conditions for several weeks in the last years and the Istituto Austriaco di Cultura lodging for much of this time.

1 That at least is my conclusion in LUCZANITS 2001.

attributions of comparable objects in publications, the latter usually being published in a form that it is insufficient to verify the conclusion.[2]

Another aspect I would like to point out is the rather narrowly focused interest of the art market and museum curators with regard to an object of art. As shown by recent publications on Tibetan art, the main goal of initial research on an object is to date it, to identify the main subject and recently also to attribute a certain origin of workmanship to it.[3] However, the study of Tibetan art – if pursued in a methodologically correct manner – is extremely time-consuming and always remains a work in progress (i. e., it can always be further refined). It may suffice here to quote the marvellous description of this process by Panofsky (1955: 17–18):

> He [the art historian] *knows* that his cultural equipment, such as it is, would not be in harmony with that of people in another land and of a different period. He tries, therefore, to make adjustments by learning as much as he possibly can of the circumstances under which the objects of his studies were created. Not only will he collect and verify all the available factual information as to medium, condition, age, authorship, destination, etc., but he will also compare the works with others of its class, and will examine such writings as reflect the aesthetic standards of its country and age, in order to achieve a more "objective" appraisal of its quality. He will read old books on theology or mythology in order to identify its subject matter, and he will further try to determine its historical locus, and to separate the individual contribution of its maker from that of forerunners and contemporaries. He will study the formal principles that control the rendering of the visible world, or, in architecture, the handling of what may be called the structural features, and thus build up a history of "motifs". He will observe the interplay between the influences of literary sources and the effect of self-dependent representational traditions, in order to establish a history of iconographic formulae or "types". And he will do his best to familiarise himself with the social, religious and philosophical attitudes of other periods and countries, in order to correct his own subjective feeling for content. But when he does all this, his aesthetic perception as such will change accordingly, and will more and more adapt itself to the original "intention" of the works. Thus, what the art historian, as opposed to the "naïve" art lover, does, is not to erect a rational superstructure on an irrational foundation, but to develop his re-creative experiences so as to conform with the results of his archaeological research, while continually checking the results of his archaeological research against the evidence of his re-creative experiences.

I may add here, as this seems particularly relevant for art-historical writing on Tibetan art, that in order to properly evaluate any scholarly study, it is very important to present in detail the methods used to reach a particular conclusion.

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2 The most serious problem in this regard is that usually inscriptions on an object are published either not at all or incompletely, making it impossible to verify the conclusions drawn from them. Furthermore, published pictures of an object alone can usually not be considered as adequate documentation, since the details are not reproduced comprehensively in them.

3 These points are discussed extensively in LUCZANITS 2001.

To date, comprehensive publications that treat many aspects of the complexities of collections of Tibetan thangkas or other art objects are fairly rare.[4] In this paper I intend to demonstrate by means of three examples the possibilities and restrictions of art-historical methods with regard to dating Tibetan art on the basis of the documentation available to me.

Example One: Alchi and Its Relationship to Central-Tibetan Art

The most fascinating example demonstrating the possible results to be gained from art-historical methods, i. e., in this case an analysis of composition, style and iconography, is found in the early-13th-century paintings at Alchi monastery in Ladakh, India. This example also shows the interrelationship of completely different painting styles brought together by historical circumstances. The following observations completely support Roger Goepper's dating of the Alchi monuments and actually prove – in my opinion beyond a doubt – that his attribution of the Alchi Sumtsek (*gSum brtsegs*) to the early 13th century is correct. As the following analysis will also show, this conclusion is also of major relevance for the history of Central Tibetan art in general, as it appears that the Alchi murals were executed at a turning point in the history of Tibetan art.

Goepper's attribution of the Alchi Sumtsek is based on a lineage represented on the third floor of the temple. As he has shown, the last person depicted in the lineage and identified by inscription is the founder of the Drigungpa ('Bri-gung-pa) school, Jigten Gönpo ('Jig-rten-mgon-po 1143–1217), abbot of Drigung monastery from its foundation in 1179 to 1217, providing us with an approximate date for the painting of the lineage and its captions, which must have been completed by 1217. I have already noted in a previous article that the depiction of a teacher's lineage is a new subject in western Himalayan art,[5] but there is much more to say about it.

Looking at the lineage represented on the third floor of the Alchi Sumtsek, it is obvious that the teachers are depicted in an unusual way when compared to other lineage depictions of comparable age **(Goepper, Fig. 1, p. 16)**.[6] For example, the depictions of Marpa (Mar-pa 1012–1096) dressed in white robes with a red cape holding *vajra* and bell, as well as that of Milarepa (Mi-la-ras-pa 1040–1113) as a naked white *siddha* holding a

4 Among the most valuable recent efforts to publish Tibetan art objects in a more complete manner are in my opinion ESSEN and THINGO 1990; RHIE and THURMAN 1991, RHIE and THURMAN 1999 in connection. with the website www.himalayanart.org and WILLSON and BRAUEN 2000. When talking to publishers or visiting exhibitions one gets the impression that such comprehensive efforts are largely considered boring or even superfluous for the general public. It is, however, also obvious that it is easier to make a publication or exhibition without carrying out or financing original research, as both are primarily judged by their commercial success (sales or attendance figures).

5 LUCZANITS 1998.

6 For overviews and large pictures, cf. GOEPPER 1990 and GOEPPER and PONCAR 1996, pp. 212 and 216f.

scarf, are unique. Considering the quality of the Sumtsek paintings, the detailing of the figures in the lineage appears unusually clumsy although the quality of the paint and the painting are essentially the same.

The depictions of the teachers following Milarepa cannot be considered as individualized, the last three teachers are depicted in **Fig. 1 (= Goepper, Fig. 2, p. 17)** and differ considerably from comparable portrayals at Alchi. These six teachers are white-skinned,[7] perform various gestures common to Buddha images (three of them teaching, i. e., displaying *dharmacakramudrā*), sit on cushions covered with animal skins and wear a two-piece patchwork monastic garment and a cape. The depiction of the clothing seems unusually clumsy, particularly with the awkwardly drawn cape placed flat behind the body forming two pointed ends at the sides (as if attempting to represent one cape placed above another). Capes like this are found neither on any comparable painting of this lineage nor anywhere else at Alchi.

If we compare these depictions to those of local teachers common at Alchi as found on the same wall just on the other side of the window **(Fig. 2)**, it becomes clear that the pointed ends of the cape have been taken over from here. The local teachers, however, do not wear a cape, but a light, transparent garment wrapped around the body covering almost all of their white robes underneath. These teachers are flesh-coloured, often wear a characteristic hat, and sit cross-legged on cloth-covered cushions, their hands folded in meditation underneath the upper garment.

It would seem that the lineage depiction of the Sumtsek demonstrates the painters' problems in rendering a new subject in the absence of a proper visual model for it. They must, however, have received detailed instructions regarding the types of figures to be depicted, their individual characteristics and the parts comprising the teacher's clothing. The cape possibly posed a particular problem as the hands performing the various gestures were not meant to be covered.

Soon after the Sumtsek was built, two unusual *chörten* (*mchod rten*, skt. stūpa) were erected within the monastic complex of Alchi: the well known Great Stūpa[8], and another, smaller *chörten,* which has remained largely unnoticed.[9] Both contain an inner *chörten* with its interior walls dedicated to the same four teachers, but while in the Great Stūpa only the teachers are shown, in the small *chörten* they are accompanied by secondary figures as well.[10] For this article only the so-called Rinchen Zangpo (Rin-chen-

7 Possibly to contrast them with Tilopa and Naropa, who are dark brown (GOEPPER and PONCAR 1996, p. 216).

8 SNELLGROVE and SKORUPSKI 1977, p. 77f., and the detailed study by GOEPPER 1993.

9 Only SNELLGROVE and SKORUPSKI 1977, p. 78, describe the *chörten* and also note that here the teachers represented in the inner *chörten* have a context.

10 I do not want to dwell here on the iconography of these teachers and their identity, but given the new historical context the Alchi monuments are to be seen in today, the identifications suggested by

Fig. 1 The three last teachers of the Alchi Sumtsek lineage including Jigten Gönpo see Goepper, Fig. 2, p. 17 in this volume

Fig. 2 Three local teachers, Alchi Sumtsek (photo: Western Himalayan Archives Vienna [WHAV], J. Poncar 1984)

bzang-po), here shown in a detail from the small *chörten* **(Fig. 3)**, is of interest.[11] While it is obvious that the painting style in general is still typical for Alchi, the way the figure is depicted clearly demonstrates that by now the painters have become familiar with the way a teacher is shown in contemporary Central Tibetan painting.[12] The painting of the teaching scholar portrayed here is generally much more harmonious and realistic. Note in particular the way the cape now envelopes the figure, partly overlapping the upper arms and the knees, around which it falls in an elegant curve and is then tucked under the crossed legs of the scholar. Possibly the Alchi painters had by this point seen a visual model for the way the teacher was to be depicted.

Again, this teacher is visually differentiated from the local teacher as found on the side-walls of the same stūpa **(Fig. 5)**.[13] While both types retain their characteristic features as established for the Sumtsek paintings,[14] the local teacher now wears a monastic patch-work robe with hands and feet visible, but still distinct from that of Rinchen Zangpo.[15]

The new artistic influence on the early-13th-century monuments at Alchi is even more obvious when one considers the context in which the so-called Rinchen Zangpo is shown in the extremely informative small *chörten* **(Fig. 4)**. The teacher is flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī) and two seated deities at the level of his head (Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara and Green Tārā). Above this another unusual early lineage of the Kagyüpa (bKa'-brgyud-pa) school is depicted, here ending with a *siddha* taking the place of the last teacher.[16] To either side are nine more *siddha,* while seven protective deities occupy the bottom of the composition.

Both the elements comprising this arrangement as well as their arrangement are clearly reminiscent of Central Tibetan thangka paintings of that time, although it is executed without the strict divisions that are characteristic for the latter paintings.

SNELLGROVE and SKORUPSKI 1977 and followed by GOEPPER 1993 certainly need to be re-considered.

11 Cf. also SNELLGROVE and SKORUPSKI 1977, pl. 13; and GOEPPER 1993, fig. 14.

12 For the usual depiction of teachers during the 13th century, compare for example KOSSAK and SINGER 1998, nos. 5, 11, 17, 18, 19, 26, 30, and 51.

13 Compare also the teachers in the Great Stūpa in GOEPPER 1993, figs. 15 and 16.

14 For example teaching gesture versus meditation, white as opposed to flesh-coloured skin.

15 Now it is actually this type of dress that looks odd, as the patchwork pattern flattens the figure and the pointed ends at the sides no longer make sense. His patchwork dress differentiates him from the other monks depicted in the row below him, who wear the same dress as the teachers in the Sumtsek.

16 It could well be that this is meant to be the same *siddha* as the dark-skinned one represented as the main figure of the two *chörten* interiors depicted directly opposite the so-called Rinchen Zangpo and frontally. His identity is still a mystery and is crucial for a more precise understanding of the context in which these later Alchi paintings were executed. For a depiction of this *siddha*, who is usually identified with Nāropa, in the Great Stūpa cf. GOEPPER 1993, figs. 12 and 13. This *siddha*, usually depicted crouching and holding a twig and a flute, is also represented in a prominent position at the bottom of the *dhotī* of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in the Alchi Sumtsek (GOEPPER and PONCAR 1996: 102, 109) and, as I discovered on my last visit, is also depicted in the niche of the Assembly Hall of Sumda Chung, a monument decorated by artists of the same painting school(s) as Alchi.

However, if one compares this Alchi mural with dateable Central-Tibetan paintings, one arrives at the surprising conclusion that the painting in the small *chörten* actually is to be placed at the beginning of a new development taking place at the same time in Central Tibet. This can best be shown by an analysis of the representation of the central teacher. **(Fig. 3)** He is shown in 3/4 profile teaching and is flanked by Bodhisattvas. This composition makes it obvious that the teacher is himself to be understood as (equal to) a Buddha.[17] In this regard the Alchi mural is partly even more explicit than the usual teacher depictions on thangkas known from Central Tibet.[18]

Most of the elements comprising this arrangement, e. g., the central teacher (with or without flanking Bodhisattvas), the lineage, the *mahāsiddha*, the row of protectors, and the thangka-like composition, were not used earlier in western Himalayan paintings, where teachers are usually depicted in assemblies[19] or in a completely different setting, as is evident from the depiction of the local teachers on the sidewalls. **(Fig. 5)** There the teacher, instead of being depicted as a Buddha himself, is surrounded by the five *tathāgata* headed by Vairocana, while underneath him is a row of further local monastic figures.

Among others, there are two new concepts visible in the Alchi paintings previously unknown in the western Himalayas that are of interest to us here: the Indian-derived teaching tradition shown as a lineage and the notion of the teacher as (equal to) a Buddha. The foundation for the concept of an Indian-derived teaching tradition was, of course, already established towards the end of the eighth century at the famous debate at Samye (bSam-yas) and by the invitation of the famous Indian teachers to Tibet, foremost among them the eminent scholar Atiśa (956–1054), who visited West and Central Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century. The notion of the direct succession of a certain teaching tradition from person to person has its roots in the Tantric tradition, which prescribes initiation into a certain type of teaching. However, the systematic emphasis on such a derivation by means of a teacher's lineage appears to have become prominent in Tibet only during the 12th century within the new schools,[20] and became

17 "Such a painting would certainly seem to pay Rin-chen bzang-po full honours as an acknowledged Buddha-manifestation." See SNELLGROVE and SKORUPSKI 1977.

18 Teacher representations flanked by standing Bodhisattvas are fairly rare in comparison. For example, of the ones in *Sacred Visions* referred to in note 12 only no. 17 has flanking Bodhisattvas. In terms of composition, too, this painting (now privately owned), which is executed in an entirely unique style, is the closest comparison to the Alchi depiction. Other examples with flanking Bodhisattvas are three paintings of the Taglung school from the late 13thand early 14th centuries: one in the Musée Guimet MA 6083; BÉGUIN 1995, pp. 482–84; SINGER 1997, fig. 43 identifies the main image as Önpo Lama (Sangs-rgyas dBon Grags-pa-dpal 1251–1296) and the others in private collections (ROSSI and ROSSI 1994, no. 10; SINGER 1997, fig. 41, again identified as Önpo Lama). This composition is also found in a thangka of uncertain context and in poor condition in the Koelz collection at the Museum of Anthropology at Ann Arbour, Michigan (COPELAND 1980: 98).

19 Compare for example KLIMBURG-SALTER 1997, pp. 220–25 and figs. 45, 139, 151, and 231.

20 An interesting question in this regard is when such teaching traditions were first noted in the literature. One of the earliest mentions may be a short text by Zhang g.Yu-brag-pa brTson-'grus-

Fig. 3 The so-called Rinchen Zangpo of the Small Stūpa at Alchi (photo: WHAV 104,25, C. Luczanits 1998)

Fig. 4 In the Small Stūpa the teacher is represented as (equal to) a Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas (photo: WHAV 104,23, C. Luczanits 1998)

Fig. 5 The wall to the proper left of the so-called Rinchen Zangpo with a local teacher in the centre (photo: WHAV 104,16, C. Luczanits 1998)

extremely influential.[21] Whatever the social and political circumstances were that supported such a move, the need to justify a teaching by its link to the Indian tradition, thus demonstrating its authoritative derivation, is evidenced by the prominent position given to the lineage in the literature and painting of that time.

The perception of the contemporary Tibetan teacher as (equal to) a Buddha appears to have been established only in the second half of the 12th century in Central Tibet and mainly in a Kagyüpa (bKa'-brgyud-pa) context. An exceptional thangka painting today in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, is extremely interesting in this regard.[22] **(Fig. 6)** In this painting Mahāvairocana, the supreme Buddha of the Yogatantras, is surrounded by six Bodhisattvas; a lineage is represented above and a row of mainly protective figures appears at the bottom of the painting. The lineage at the top is the usual Kagyüpa lineage, but the last figure is depicted in the crown of Mahāvairocana, a position that is usually occupied by a spiritually superior manifestation. Accordingly, the teacher in the crown is depicted frontally and teaching like a Buddha. Given its position in the lineage, the figure must be identified as the famous teacher Phagmodrupa (Phag-mo-gru-pa 1110–1170; no. 7 on **Fig. 6**) from whom eight Kagyü schools derive, among them the Drigungpa ('Bri-gung-pa), Taglungpa (sTag-lung-pa) and the Yazangpa (g.Ya'-bzang-pa), each founded by one of his pupils,[23] and who is said to have proclaimed himself as Buddha of the present age.[24] The painting is, however, most likely to be posthumous, as is indicated by the presence of a practitioner, possibly a disciple of Phagmodrupa, to one side of Vairocana's lotus (no. 8 on **Fig. 6**). This extreme religious-political statement can therefore be attributed to the late 12th century at the earliest.

Another prominent protagonist in advertising the notion of the teacher as a Buddha is a disciple of Phagmodrupa and the founder of the Taglung school, Taglung Thangpa Chenpo or Trashipal (sTag-lung Thang-pa-chen-po or bKra-shis-dpal, 1142–1210;

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grags-pa (1123-1193); RGYUD PA SNA TSHOGS 1972. In a personal communication (July 18, 2001) Dan Martin, who pointed out this text to me in another context, called this text a proto-*gsan-yig*, that is a predecessor of the texts dedicated to the teaching traditions cf. below, Example 2. Zhang g.Yu-brag-pa brTson-'grus-grags-pa (1123–1193) himself, too, is depicted on a famous early tapestry in the Potala collection (DORJI, CHÁOGUÌ, and WANGCHU 1985, no. 62).

21 Although this is certainly an oversimplification, one can even suppose that the success of this concept ultimately led to a counter-development in the old schools, in particular to the 'Treasure' (*gter-ma*) tradition of the Nyingmapa (rNying-ma-pa).

22 After KOSSAK and SINGER 1998, no. 13. Compare also SINGER 1994; SINGER 1998 and; SINGER and DENWOOD 1997.

23 For a table of the different Kagyü schools, cf. for example TSERING GYALPO, HAZOD, and SØRENSEN 2000, p. 230.

24 ROERICH 1988r, p. 552. By contrast, from the story of his life as told in GYALTSEN 1990, pp. 205–63, it appears that his pupil Jigten Gönpo introduced this notion (cf. in particular p. 206). The latter also wrote a hagiography of his teacher. Gene Smith suggested looking in the collected writings (*gsung 'bum*) of Phagmodrupa for further clarification of his position in this regard.

abbot of sTag-lung 1180–1210). He is shown with unusual frequency in exalted positions and frontally.[25]

Seen in this light one can interpret the more usual 3/4-profile depiction, as was also used at Alchi for the so-called Rinchen Zangpo, as slightly undermining the explicit statement made by the composition with two flanking Bodhisattvas. While the Cleveland thangka remains unique, the composition of the Alchi mural with Bodhisattvas flanking the central teacher is occasionally taken up again.[26] As far as it has been possible to identify them to date, most of the relevant paintings depicting a lama at the centre of a composition like that at Alchi can be attributed to the Drigungpa, Taglungpa, Yazangpa[27] and Tshalpa[28] schools – the first three deriving from Phagmodrupa – and thus set in a Kagyüpa context.[29]

The extant evidence can be summarized as follows: both the mural in the small *chörten* at Alchi as well as the depiction on the Cleveland thangka can be read as rather explicit religious-political public statements: "the teacher is (equal to) a Buddha". In addition, the Cleveland thangka can be interpreted as documenting an experiment with this new subject. One may thus conclude that the Alchi and Cleveland paintings document the emergence of a new understanding of the teacher in Tibetan Buddhism, certainly within the Kagyüpa schools. The teacher is no longer only a pious donor and able practitioner, but an embodiment of the Buddha and his sacred teaching (the footprint on the paintings with Taglung Tashipal or the third Karmapa[30] can also be understood in this way). This shift in the meaning of a teacher, at least as a religious-political statement, most probably took place just at that time, i. e., in the late 12th and early 13th centuries.[31]

Taking together the facts that the first relatively securely datable depictions of a teacher as Buddha are from the late 12th and early 13th centuries,[32] that some of these examples

25 Cf. for example BÉGUIN 1990, no. 2 (MA 5176); KOSSAK and SINGER 1998, no. 18 and: SINGER 1994, 25; SINGER 1997, figs. 36, 37, 42 and 44. Kossak (1999/2000: 5) notes that the auspicious wheel on the sole of the feet of Taglung Thangpa Chenpo show that the lama is an enlightened being.

26 Cf. note 18.

27 Cf. MIGNUCCI 2001.

28 The above mentioned depiction of Zhang Rinpoche (n. 20).

29 Somewhat on the periphery of that context is the depiction of a gNyos hierarch, a secular teacher, on a well-known thangka in the Jucker collection, which is also to be attributed to around 1200 (ALLINGER 2001; 2002). A painting from the time of the third Karmapa with footprints has similar features, but is no longer nearly as explicit as it represents Buddhas a level (row) above the Karmapa lineage cf. SINGER 1994, fig. 32.

30 BÉGUIN 1990, no. 2 (MA 5176); JACKSON 1999, p. 76, fig. 1 (cf. also p. 78, pl. 1).

31 Dan Martin 2001, pp. 155f., mentions an interesting example demonstrating this shift in paintings recorded of sPyil-phu monastery. While the second abbot, Lha Lung-gi-dbang-phyug Byang-chub-rin-chen (1158–1232), was depicted along with his nephew to either side of an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, the third abbot, Lha 'Gro-ba'i-mgon-po was shown in the centre of the painting surrounded by the 16 Arhats.

32 I disregard here a thangka with a depiction of a teacher in the Metropolitan Museum of Art attributed to as early as the late 11th century (KOSSAK and SINGER 1998: no. 62) for two reasons: firstly the

Fig. 6 Thangka in the Cleveland Museum of Art with Phagmodrupa (Phag-mo-gru-pa, 1110-1170; no. 7) in the crown of Vairocana (after Kossak, Steven M. & Jane Casey Singer [1998] Sacred Visions. Early paintings from Central Tibet. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art: no. 13)

can be read as uniquely explicit religious-political statements, and that at the same time many new concepts become established in the old and new schools alike, one may even ask whether these early depictions were not produced on the threshold of a new development of Tibetan Buddhism in general.[33] Indeed, I think they were.[34]

Example Two: A Series of Paintings Dedicated to Cakrasambara or Khorlo Demchog ('Khor-lo-bde-mchog)[35]

In the previous examples the lineages, particularly the main lineage of the Kagyüpa school, played a major role in enabling us to date some of the paintings under discussion, at least approximately. The main function of these lineages has already been discussed, and from the late 12th century onwards a huge variety of such lineages occurs in literature and painting. Already fifteen years ago David Jackson (1986; 1990) tried to make scholars aware that numerous teaching traditions represented in the paintings are recorded in the literature (the so called *gsan yig* or *thob yig*, "records of teachings"); however, this literature is only rarely consulted for identifying a lineage. Of course, in the absence of inscriptions naming the images, as is the case with those Jackson has studied, the effort of identifying such a lineage is a difficult and often fruitless task.

However, as the Indian derivation of a teaching was an important matter to the Tibetans from the late 12th century onwards up to at least the 15th century, the lineage depictions are relatively precise in the number of figures represented and thus often give a definitive clue for at least an approximate dating, even if the lineage cannot be identified completely. This is especially true if a thangka is not studied as an isolated painting, but as part of a larger series, which it often was. The following example presents such a case and furthermore shows that a careful study of the lineage also helps us to understand the possible original purpose of a thangka series, even if it is only fragmentarily preserved.

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inscription on which the dating is based and which reportedly is difficult to interpret (id. 64, n. 1) has not been published and thus cannot be verified, and secondly this teacher depiction need not be read as depicting the teacher as a Buddha, as he is only shown with two Bodhisattvas (Maitreya and Mañjuśrī) hovering in the sky above him.

33 This development can also be seen as preconditioning the establishment of the first reincarnation lineage after the second Karmapa (Kar-ma-pa) Karma Pakshi (Kar-ma pak-shi 1204–83) in the course of the 13th century (cf. the fascinating account in KAPSTEIN 2000, particularly pp. 97–100).

34 The comparisons cited here are far from being complete. A more careful and detailed analysis of the teacher depictions and their interrelationship from an iconographical and iconological viewpoint would certainly enable one to differentiate different shades of (self?) representation and in this way also help to date comparable thangkas where the central figure can not be readily identified.

35 Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, no. 960; Measurements: h. 80 cm, w. 71 cm; region: Central Tibet [illegible] (TUCCI 1973b: 234, fig. 207).

The paintings under consideration are: one painting already published by Tucci and formerly in the Robert Hatfield Ellsworth private collection (80 x 73.7 cm; Thangka 1; **Fig. 7**),[36] Thangka no. 960 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome (80 x 71 cm; Thangka 2; **Fig. 8**),[37] and another painting in a private collection published in *Sacred Visions* (80 x73 cm; Thangka 3; **Fig. 9**).[38] Despite the somewhat different appearance of each thangka in the respective publications, their dimensions, subject matter and extremely similar stylistic features allow the conclusion that these three paintings are part of a series executed by the same painting workshop or artist. All three paintings show the dominant central pair of Cakrasaṃvara ('Khor-lo-bde-mchog) embracing his partner Vajravārāhī (rDo-rje-phag-mo) surrounded by the 60 secondary deities of the maṇḍala as well as the six heroes (*dpa' bo* or *vīra)* on the left and six mothers (*ma mo* or *mātṛkā)* on the right.[39]

The three paintings display the usual composition: the two main figures at the centre are surrounded by the secondary deities of their maṇḍala, in the upper part a lineage is represented and in the lowest row are some additional protective deities and a depiction of the practitioner.[40] When analyzed in detail, it emerges that the thangkas mainly differ from one another in the lineage represented in the upper part, which is of varying length. Furthermore, the iconography of the secondary figures varies slightly and the number of protective deities is reduced when the lineage at the top is more extensive. Here I concentrate solely on the lineages, as they are most relevant for dating the series, although a detailed study of the iconography may certainly refine our knowledge of the background of these paintings.

As already pointed out in earlier studies of these paintings, the choice and quality of the colours and the style indicate a Sakyapa (Sa-skya-pa) context. This is further evidenced by the presence of three successive eminent Sakyapa masters who are often recognizable by their distinctive physical features and secular dress, namely Sa-chen Kun-dga'-snying-po (1092–1158), who is depicted as an elderly man in lay dress with a bald head and white side locks standing on end; bSod-nams-rtse-mo (1142–1182); and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1147–1216), the latter two also dressed in layman's garments. In addition, Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251) can be identified by

36 Published by TUCCI 1949, no. 186, pl. 220, p. 603, and again in *Wisdom and Compassion* (RHIE and THURMAN 1991, no. 69, pp. 216–19), where it is attributed on stylistic grounds to the late 14th or early 15th century. The thangka is today in another private collection.

37 A considerable section of this painting (the two bottom rows are cut off) has been published in TUCCI 1973a; 1973b, fig. 207.

38 KOSSAK and SINGER 1998, no. 43, p. 156f., where it is described by J. C. Singer and attributed to ca. 1400 following the date for Thangka 1 (RHIE and THURMAN 1991: no. 69, pp. 216–19).

39 On the iconography of Thangka 960, compare my description in the forthcoming catalogue of the Tucci collection in Rome.

40 On the practitioner (who can also be the donor) in the bottom section of a thangka painting cf. MARTIN 2001.

Fig. 7 The lineage of Thangka 1 also published by Tucci in Tibetan Painted Scrolls, pl. 220 (after Rhie, Marilyn M. & Robert A. F. Thurman [1991] Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet. New York, Harry N. Abrams: no. 69)

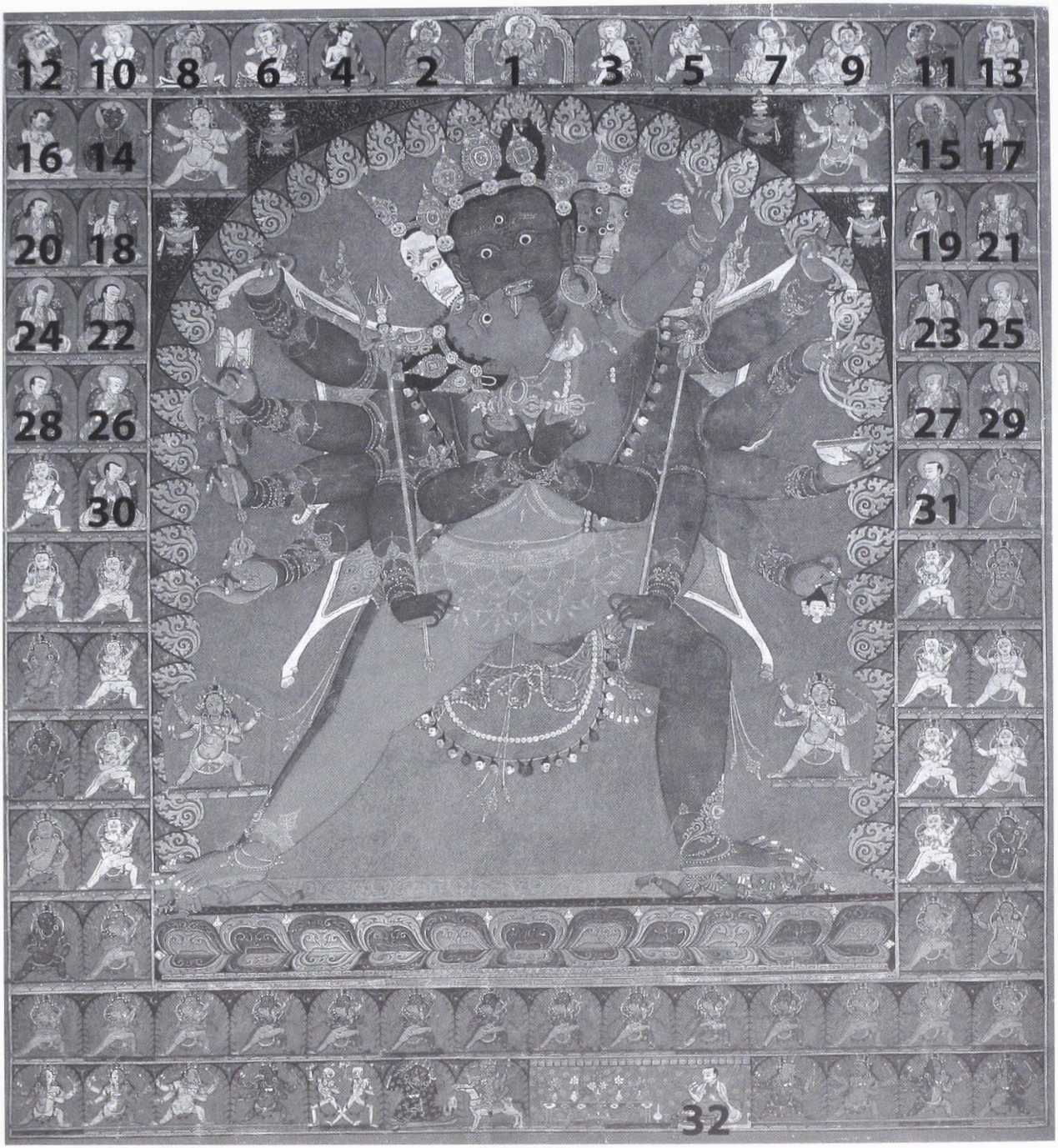

Fig. 8 The lineage of Thangka 2 (Thangka no. 960 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, photo: WHAV)

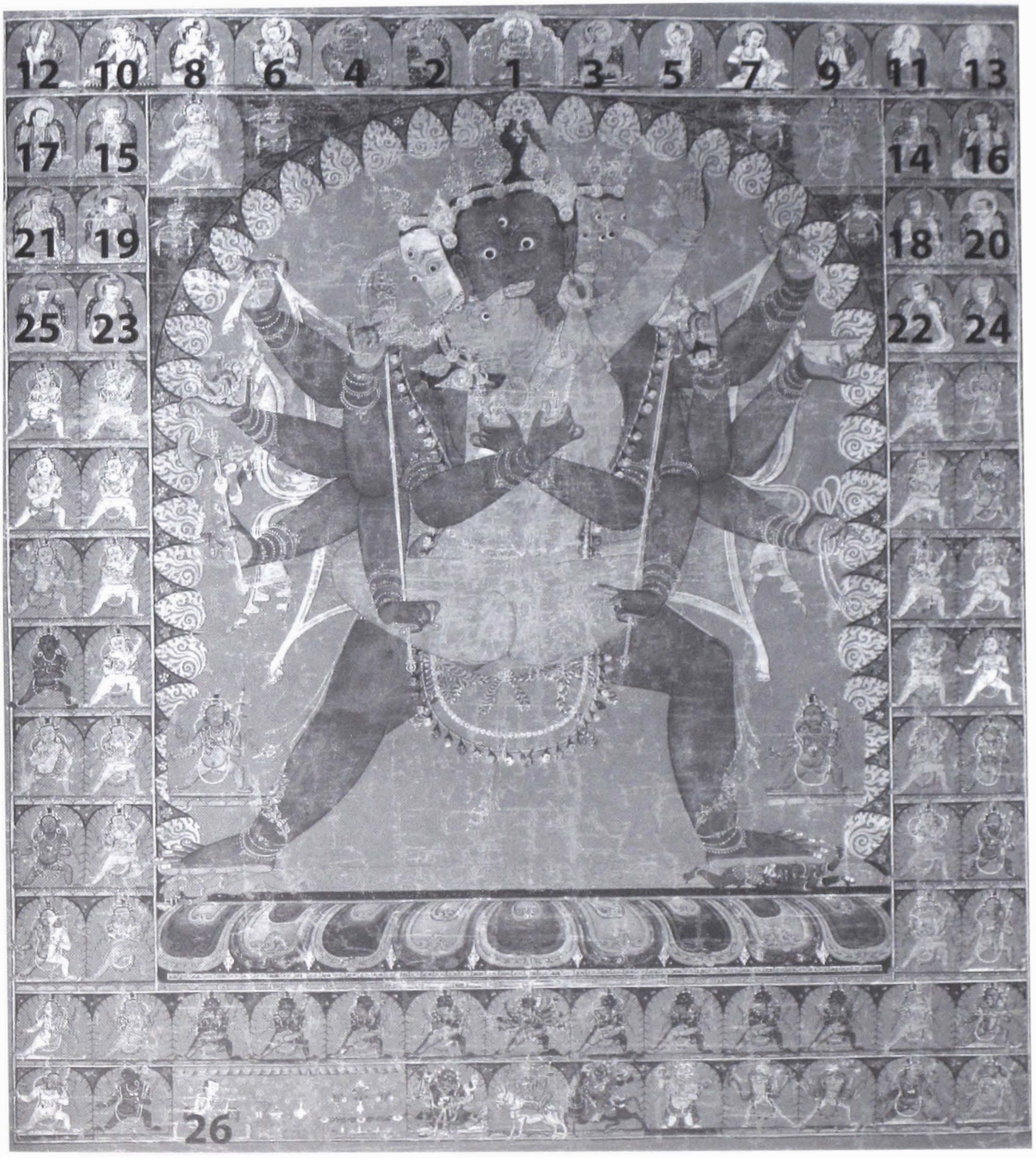

Fig. 9 The lineage of Thangka 3 (after Kossak, Steven M. & Jane Casey Singer [1998] Sacred Visions. Early Paintings from Central Tibet. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art: no. 43)

his rounded red hat and the fact that he is holding stems of lotuses topped by sword and book, his regular attributes.

The teachings of Cakrasaṃvara were handed down from India to Tibet by Great Adepts (*mahāsiddha*). Tibetan literature[41] differentiates between three major teaching traditions named after the *siddha* who initially received the individual teachings. The lineage of *siddha* and teachers in the upper part of Thangka 2 represents a variant of one such tradition, that of Lūyipa. The other traditions are ascribed to Ghaṇṭapāda (Dril-bu-pa) and Kaṇha or Kṛṣṇacārin (Nag-po-spyod-pa) respectively. In addition, the Sakya tradition handed down numerous further variants as taught in different schools that vary the three principal maṇḍala.[42] For each of these traditions a lineage is handed down and for many of them a considerable number of variant lineages are differentiated, which are again named after a prominent teacher. In a text dedicated to the lineages of the extensive non-sectarian *Collection of All Tantras* (*rGyud sde kun btus*),[43] more than 30 lineages (not including further variations of many of them) of teachings dedicated to different maṇḍala of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī are listed, nine alone from the tradition attributed to Lūyipa, together with 12 lineages of different traditions dedicated to the 62-deity maṇḍala.[44]

The main differences between the maṇḍala of these three traditions, at least in the Sa-skya context I surveyed, appear to be mainly: In Lūyipa's tradition the maṇḍala has 62 deities with the secondary deities being four-armed. According the Kaṇha or Kṛṣṇacārin (Nag-po-spyod-pa) tradition the maṇḍala is the same, but the secondary deities are two-armed instead of four-armed. The maṇḍala of Ghaṇṭapāda's (Dril-bu-pa) outer (*phyi*) tradition that is usually represented contains five deities only, the *ḍākiṇī* in the outer circles again having only two arms,[45] while an inner (*nang*) tradition differentiates another 62 deities.[46]

In all three paintings, the lineage commences at the centre of the top row reading from the inside outwards with the left-hand figure first, while the succession alters in the following rows (cf. **Fig. 7**, **Fig. 8**, and **Fig. 9**). None of the lineages in the texts used[43] are actually identical to those in the thangkas under discussion, but they provide enough information to identify most of the figures depicted and the principal teaching tradition involved. Thangka 1 appears to represent the inner or secret (*nang*) maṇḍala of the

41 I only consulted literature of the Sa-skya school.

42 Cf. the maṇḍala nos. 62–74 of the Ngor collection in BSOD-NAMS-RGYA-MTSHO 1983; drawings in RAGHU VIRA and LOKESH CHANDRA 1995, pp. 62–75.

43 Full title: *rGyud sde rin po che kun las btus pa.*

44 RGYUD SDE KUN BTUS PA'I THOB YIG 1971, pp. 107.1–139.4. The lineages have been compared with those in the THOB YIG RGYA MTSHO 1968, p. 50.2.3ff., of Ngor-chen Kun-dga'-bzang-po (1382–1456).

45 Cf. the maṇḍala nos. 62–64 of the Ngor collection (BSOD-NAMS-RGYA-MTSHO 1983; drawings in RAGHU VIRA and LOKESH CHANDRA 1995).

46 Cf. for example RGYUD SDE KUN BTUS 1971, vol. 12, text LXV.2.

Ghaṇṭapāda (Dril-bu-pa) tradition, with Ghaṇṭapāda identifiable as the first *siddha* in the lineage, as it is a 62-figure maṇḍala with two-armed secondary deities. Although the iconography of the *siddha* is not as expected, the number of *siddha* and teachers and the position of the identifiable Sa-skya hierarchs show that it is of the school of Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251; hence called *Sa-lugs*).[47] Thangka 2, MNAO 960, is closest to the Lūyipa tradition handed down through lo-tsā-ba Mar-pa-do-ba Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug (1042–1136;[48] hence called *Mar-do-lugs*), while Thangka 3 is closest to the Kṛṣṇacārin (Nag-po-spyod-pa) tradition, again handed down by Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251; *Sa-lugs*).[49]

	Thangka 1[50]	**Thangka 2**[51]	**Thangka 3**[52]
	Ghaṇṭapāda (Dril-bu-pa), Sa-lugs (?)	Lūyipa, Mar-do-lugs	Kṛṣṇacārin (Nag-po-spyod-pa), Sa-lugs
1	Vajradhara (rDo-rje-'chang)	Vajradhara (rDo-rje-'chang)	Vajradhara (rDo-rje-'chang)
	Vajravārāhī (rDo-rje-phag-mo)	Jñānaḍākiṇī (Ye-shes-mkha'-'gro-ma)	Vajrasattva (rDo-rje-sems-dpa')
	Ghaṇṭapāda (Dril-bu-pa)	*siddha* Lūyipa	Saraha[53]
	[54][Rus-sbal-zhabs[55]	Deṅ gipa[56]	Nāgārjuna
5	Jālandhara ('Bar-ba-'dzin)	Lavapa	Śavaripa[57]
	Karṇapa (Nag-po-spyod-pa)[58]	Indrabhūti[59]	Lūyipa
	Guhyapa	Katsaṭapa	Dārikapa[60]
	rNam-rgyal-zhabs]	Ghaṇṭapāda (Dril-bu-pa)	Ghaṇṭapāda (Dril-bu-pa)
	Tailopa	Rus-sbal-zhabs[61]	Rus-sbal-zhabs
10	Nāropa	Lanka-ling-pa[62]	Śrī Jālandhara ('Bar-ba-'dzin)
	Pham-mthing-pa gcen 'Jigs-med-grags-pa	Kṛṣṇācārin (Nag-po-spyod-pa)	Kṛṣṇācārin (Nag-po-spyod-pa)
	gcung Ngag-kyi-dbang-phyug	Kuśalanātha	Guhyapa[63]

47 The *sa-lugs* lisneages of the inner and outer traditions are identical. TUCCI 1949, p. 603, identified the painting as representing Lūyipa's tradition, but there is no Lūyipa tradition lineage with Dril-bu-pa as first *siddha*, and in the Lūyipa tradition *maṇḍala* the secondary deities are four-armed.

48 TBRC: P3814.

49 This lineage is actually identical with that of the Lūyipa tradition, *sa-lugs;* the two can thus only be differentiated by the iconography of the maṇḍala.

50 Tucci 1949, TPS and *Wisdom and Compassion.*

51 MNAO 960.

52 *Sacred Visions* no 43.

53 Elderly, light-skinned *siddha* aiming an arrow.

54 The *siddha* in brackets cannot be considered as identified, as their iconography does not conform to their representation in the other two thangkas.

55 Here a dark-skinned *siddha* seated on a tiger skin and drinking from a skull-cup.

56 Depicted seated on a tiger and drinking from a *kapāla* as flombīheruka usually is.

57 Dancing, light-skinned *siddha* carrying a dog on his shoulder and holding bow and arrow.

58 Here light-skinned.

59 The *siddha* in royal robes seated on a throne.

60 Wearing the robes of a king.

61 He is not listed in the consulted lineage, but follows Ghaṇṭapāda (Dril-bu-pa) in the regular *sa-lugs* lineage, while in others he is immediately succeeded by Śrī Jālandhara ('Bar-ba-'dzin).

62 He is light-skinned and drinks from a horn.

63 = Bhadrapa.

klog-skya Shes-rab-brtsegs	Tilopa	rNam-rgyal-zhabs
Mal lo-tsā-ba Blo-gros-grags	Nāropa	?
rJe-chen yab-sras-gsum [Sa-chen Kun-dga'-snying-po (1092–1158)	[64]	Tilopa
slob-dpon bSod names-rtse-mo (1142–1182)		Nāropa
rje-btsun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1147–1216)]		Bal-po Pham-mthing-pa [*gcen* 'Jigs-med-grags-pa
chos-rje Sa-skya paṇḍita (1182–1251)		Bal-po Pham-mthing-pa [*gcung* Ngag-kyi-dbang-phyug]
7 other teachers and the practitioner	Sa-chen Kun-dga'-snying-po (1092–1158)	Klog-skya Shes-rab-brtsegs
	slob-dpon rin-po-che bSod-nams-rtse-mo (1142–1182)	Mal *lo-tsā-ba* Blo-gros-grags[65]
	rje-btsun rin-po-che Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1147–1216)	Sa-chen Kun-dga'-snying-po (1092–1158)
	chos-rje Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251)	*rje-btsun sku-mched* [rje-btsun rin-po-che bSod-nams-rtse-mo (1142–1182)]
	7 other teachers and the practitioner[66]	[rje-btsun chen-po Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251)]
		chos-rje khu-dpon [Sa-skya Paṇḍita]
		[67][chos-rgyal Phags-pa]
		6 other teachers and the practitioner

With these three lineages from the same series, it is interesting to note the iconographic similarities and differences in the depiction of individual figures. Lūyipa is depicted drinking from a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in one case (Thangka 2; **Fig. 10**) his left arm resting on a stand. In two cases Ghaṇṭapāda (Dril-bu-pa) is performing his usual huge leap in the air, holding *vajra* and bell in his outstretched hands, but once (Thangka 3) he is seated with arms crossed over his breast and presumably holding his attributes. In all cases he is orange. Rus-sbal-zhabs is light-skinned and is seated on a tortoise (*rus sbal*); once he has one hand raised and one holding a *kapāla*, while in the other case he holds a *mālā* in both hands and appears rather elderly (Thangka 3). In Thangka 1, however, he is dark-skinned, sits on a tiger skin and drinks from a cup, indicating that in this thangka another variant of the lineage is represented. This is also suggested by the depictions of Kāṇhapa or Kṛṣṇācārin (Tib. Nag-po-spyod-pa), the dark *siddha*, who is twice depicted as dark grey and blowing a long black horn **(Fig. 11)**, while in Thangka 1 he is light-

64 The remaining images in the following four rows are *bla-ma*, usually with *vajra* and bell in their hands or on lotuses at their sides. The identity of some of the figures following the last *siddha* (Nāropa) is still unclear as no perfect match for the depicted lineage has yet been found in the literature.

65 Long-haired, wearing secular dress.

66 I thank David Jackson for trying to identify these figures for me.

67 The identity of the following six figures cannot be verified, but it is quite certain that here it is not the lineage transmitted via Ngor-chen Kun-bzang that is depicted.

Fig. 10 The siddha Lūyipa is atypically represented drinking from a skull-cup on Thangka 2 (Thangka no. 960 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, photo: WHAV, C. Luczanits 1999)

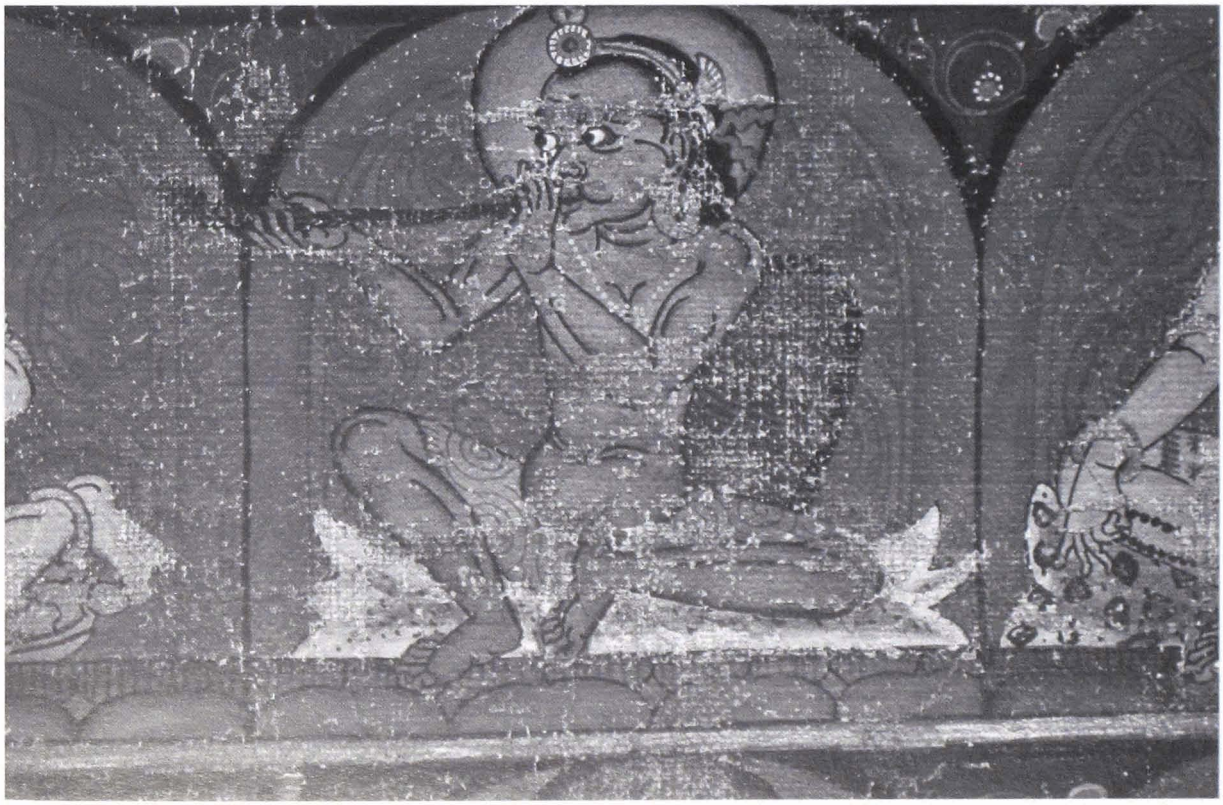

Fig. 11 The siddha Kāṇhapa or Kṛṣṇācārin (tib. Nag-po-spyod-pa) on Thangka 2 (Thangka no. 960 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, WHAV, C. Luczanits 1999)

Fig. 12 A highly distinctive, but hitherto unidentified Sakya teacher of c. 1400 with a black net attached to the front of his hat (Thangka no. 960 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, photo: WHAV, C. Luczanits 1999)

skinned and not individualized. In the case of Tilopa and Nāropa, one always holds a *mālā* with both hands, while the other holds a drinking horn or a *kapāla* as his attribute. In general the physical appearance of the same *siddha* often differs considerably from depiction to depiction and shows that only very few of them are actually individualized.[68]

Not surprisingly, among the Tibetan teachers following the *siddha* only few have distinctive recognizable features and that in all three thangkas none of the teachers following Sakya Paṇḍita can be identified with certainty. But clearly this set of paintings represents the different teaching traditions on Cakrasaṃvara within the Sakya (Saskya) school that were handed down to the practitioner represented at the bottom of each painting. The latter was most probably also the commissioner of this series. It is further evident from the three extant paintings that the practitioner received two of these teaching traditions from the same teacher, a very distinctive lama with a net attached to the front of his pointed red hat **(Fig. 12)**.[69]

Comparing the number of figures represented with those usually found in the written lineages and their dates, the paintings can be dated quite accurately. Accordingly, the practitioner represented at the bottom of each painting is a contemporary of Ngor-chen Kun-dga'-bzang-po (1382–1456; abbot 1429–1456) or of one of his pupils, and the paintings can therefore be attributed to the second quarter of the 15th century at the earliest.[70] I believe that an iconographic analysis of this kind, even if it does not provide a solution to all the problems, allows the series to be dated much more precisely than would currently be possible by means of a purely stylistic analysis.[71]

Example Three: A Stylistically Unique Painting of an 18-Deity Maṇḍala of Vajrapāṇi (Phyag-na-rdo-rje 'khor-lo-chen-po dkyil-'khor)[72]

In the third example neither the iconography nor the lineage helps to date the painting; here dating is completely dependent on style alone and demonstrates the limitations of such analysis if close comparisons are lacking. Thus, at the current stage of my research, I am not able to propose a narrow date range for this thangka depicting a maṇḍala of Phyag-na-rdo-rje 'khor-lo-chen-po or Vajrapāṇimahācakra (Museo

68 Cf. the discussion of the *siddha* depictions of the Alchi Sumtsek by LINROTHE 2001.

69 The other tradition he received from this teacher is the one represented in Thangka 1. See RHIE and THURMAN 1991, no. 96, pp. 216–219.

70 Thus the attribution of the paintings to ca. 1400 in KOSSAK and SINGER 1998, no. 43, and in RHIE and THURMAN 1991, no. 96, pp. 216–219, appears a little too early.

71 Some of the stylistic features of this painting will be discussed in the forthcoming description in the Tucci thangka catalogue.

72 Measurements: h. 65 cm., w. 56 cm.; religious school: Sa-skya-pa (?); published: LO BUE 1983, no. 8; TUCCI 1949, no. 184, pl. 218, p. 602f.

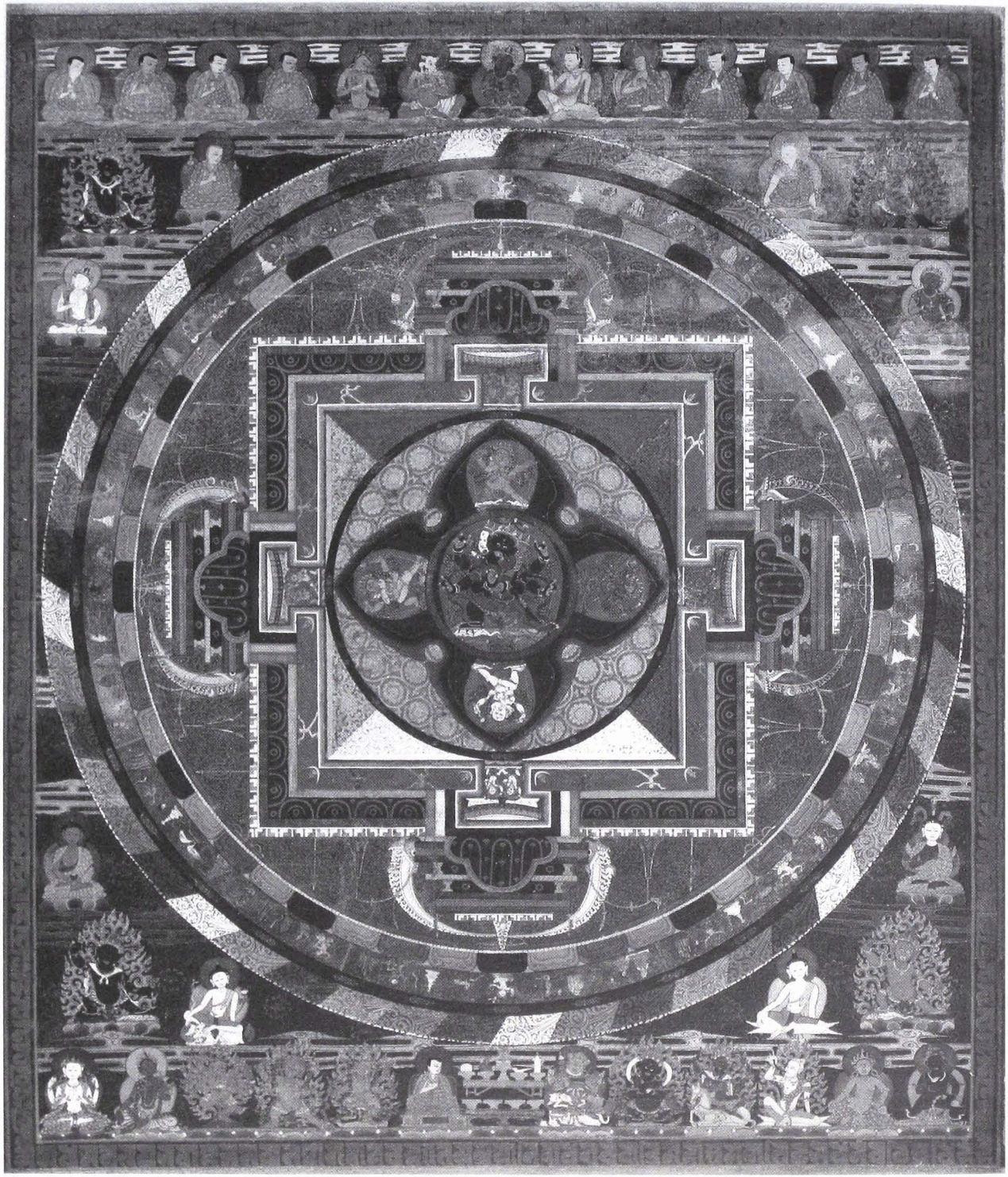

Fig. 13 A maṇḍala of Vajrapāṇimahācakra (Phyag-na-rdo-rje 'khor-lo-chen-po)
(Thangka no. 950 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, photo: WHAV)

Nazionale d'Arte Orientale no. 950; **Fig. 13**).[73] As is common with later paintings, the lineage depicted in the top row, beginning with Vajradhara (rDo-rje-'chang), the *ḍākiṇī* Siṃhavaktrā (Seng-ge-gdong-ba-can), Śavaripa, Dza-ba-ri-pa, and the *paṇḍita* Devapūrṇamati, is abbreviated.[74]

This well-preserved and very fine thangka is particularly remarkable for its graphic qualities. The fresh colours, the strictly geometric composition as well as the use of finely decorated areas of contrasting colours make the painting not only unique in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale collection, but in a wider context as well. While gold and green predominate within the maṇḍala structure, a dark blue background dominates the surrounding area. The perfect symmetry of the maṇḍala contrasts with the fine decoration with repetitive scroll or flower patterns often painted in gold. While the bottom figures are placed on a common lotus ground, all other features are set off against an ornamented blue background **(Fig. 15)** horizontally structured by highly stylized flat clouds of varying colours **(Fig. 16)**. The exceptional graphic quality of the painting reaches a climax in the miniature depictions of the eight cemeteries in the maṇḍala circle **(Fig. 14)**; there the major iconographic elements are evenly spread over a bright blue background otherwise filled with a repetitive pattern of clouds.

Due to these rather unusual stylistic features there are hardly any clues for determining its date and place of manufacture. The strict layout and the exquisite decorative patterns are reminiscent of the paintings of the Ngor school and related schools of painting from the 15th century onwards.[75] However, those paintings set the secondary figures around the maṇḍala in circular compartments and frames are used in the upper and lower sections. Even the palette of dominating green and blue tones differentiates this thangka from the earlier Ngor and Sakyapa paintings. The unified blue background placing the maṇḍala in space does occur in some of these paintings, but becomes much more dominant in a small number of later examples [76]; however, these paintings do not share such details as the large flowers within the blue pattern or the contrasts between the different patterns. The comparatively wide free expanses between the different elements of the

73 The maṇḍala has already been identified by TUCCI 1949, pp. 602–3, on the basis of a description of the maṇḍala in the *dPal phyag na rdo rje 'khor lo chen po'i dkyil chog srid 'dul byed* by the Tibetan scholar Tāranātha. In the *rgyud sde kun btus* there are two descriptions of the *maṇḍala* the second of which is again at least partly dependent on a description by Tāranātha (RGYUD SDE KUN BTUS 1971, vol. 8, XLVI, 1+2; cf. also SGRUB THABS KUN BTUS 1970, vol. 3, p. 251 f.). For other depictions of this maṇḍala cf. BSOD-NAMS-RGYA-MTSHO 1983, no. 46; or RAGHU VIRA and LOKESH CHANDRA 1995, no. 46.

74 If one counts the depicted figures one would only arrive at ca. 1300, approximately the time of Buston rin chen grub, 1290–1364, who is part of the lineage.

75 Cf. for example KOSSAK and SINGER 1998, nos. 45–47, or LEIDY and THURMAN 1997, nos. 21, 22, 24, 25 and 26.

76 Good examples for comparison in this respect include RHIE and THURMAN 1999, no. 171 (attributed to the second half of the 14th century!), no. 172 (attributed to the late 15th/early 16th century), and no. 173 (attributed to the first half of the 16th century) or KREIJGER 1999, nos. 63 and 64 (attributed to the late 16th and early 17th century, respectively).

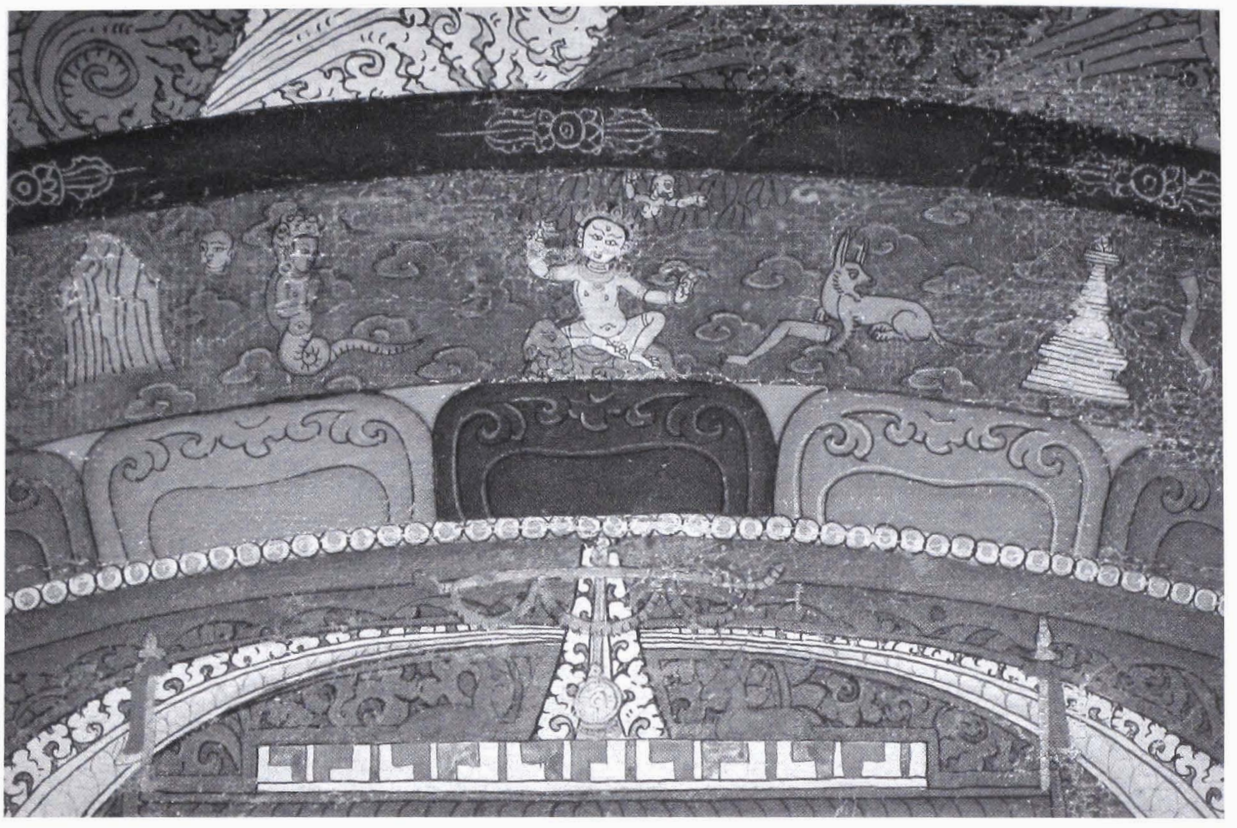

Fig. 14 Detail of the eastern cemetery with Indra as its protector at the centre (Thangka no. 950 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, photo: C. Luczanits 1999)

Fig. 15 Avalokitasiṃhanāda (tib. Spyan-ras-gzigs Seng-ge-gra) seated in front of a beautiful ornamented blue background (Thangka no. 950 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, photo: C. Luczanits 1999)

Fig. 16 Palden Lhamo (dPal-ldan-lha-mo) and Brāhmaṇarūpamahākāla (mGon-po-bram-ze-gzugs-can) (Thangka no. 950 in the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, photo: C. Luczanits 1999)

painting[77] together with the absence of any framing for the figures are further differentiating characteristics.[78]

In addition, there is absolutely no comparison (at least as far as my research to date has revealed) for the exquisite graphic quality described above, for the singular palette of colours or the use of the skilfully stylized horizontal cloud layers with their varying colours.[79] For Lo Bue (1983: pl. 8) this thangka documents the influence of Newar styles[80] in the later epoch and he attributes it to 18th-century Central-Southern Tibet, without however citing any convincing comparisons. Given the composition of the painting this would appear to be too late, but the different coloured clouds would tend to indicate a rather more recent date.[81] Nevertheless, as at present no conclusive comparisons can be cited for many aspects of the painting, only a very broad range (16th to 18th centuries) can be suggested as a possible date for this thangka, with an earlier attribution being more likely.

Summary

The last example shows on the one hand that when the extant documentation is insufficient not even an approximate proposal for a date can be made without a great deal of speculation. On the other hand its attribution to the 16th century or later is evident when one considers the development of Tibetan painting in general. Leaving aside copies of earlier painting, such a general development is as noticeable within Tibetan painting as it is within Western art. Although the different phases overlap, there is a development in Central Tibetan painting from less strictly organized paintings (often teaching scenes; to some extent Alchi can also be counted among these) to strictly organized paintings from the late 12th to 15th centuries with the images set into compartments (Example 2). For me this is the visual expression of the Tibetan need to organize and systematize the various Buddhist teachings received from India. From the 16th century at the latest onwards, most likely under the influence of Chinese art, the concept of a single landscape setting for a thangka or wall painting is almost unanimously integrated in varying ways. A subtle version of this concept is evident in the third example.[82]

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77 In this regard, painting no. 173 in RHIE and THURMAN 1999 is closest.

78 In the comparisons cited above the figures are at least set off against the background by a halo completely surrounding the figure.

79 The shape of these clouds is not found anywhere else, but compare best to some of the clouds in LO BUE 1983, no. 19 (attributed to 19th-century Bhutan), while different coloured clouds seem only to appear in the 18th century at the earliest. However, I have not made a specific survey in this regard.

80 I have not yet found anything in late Newar art that would support this notion, but I have only limited resources available to me in this regard.

81 Differently coloured clouds are, for example, prominent in the depictions of the Qianlong emperor on Tibetan style paintings attributable to the second half of the 18th century (HENSS 2001).

82 The role and development of the landscape settings for the chronology of Tibetan art was discussed at the suggestion of D.E. Klimburg-Salter at a workshop meeting on the Tucci thangkas at the

When considering Tibetan art as a whole one must not forget that we are looking at a huge variety of traditions (supported by different schools, central and local) over a period of a thousand years. Only 20 years ago very little was known about the development of Tibetan art and almost all of current knowledge was based on Tucci's work of the 1930s to 1950s. In addition, many works of Tibetan art have only recently been made accessible to scholars through publication.[83]

The examples presented here also demonstrate that careful analysis of published paintings will never be possible on the basis of publications alone, as the iconographic details of the secondary images are barely visible and inscriptions identifying secondary images are often not published. Even less attention is given to other inscriptions, such as the consecration *mantra* on the back of a thangka. This is, of course, a great pity because it means that a huge amount of additional information on the painting is not made available. Certainly, such information is only of interest to the specialist, but its collection in an appendix would be entirely sufficient.[84] In addition, there are many early works, particularly less well-preserved ones, which have not yet been published and are unlikely ever to be published.

Only comprehensive and publicly accessible publication or documentation that enables the scholar to extract all possible information from a painting or object will allow the present limitations in dating Tibetan art to be overcome in the future. Only then can a comprehensible and much more detailed foundation for dating Tibetan art be established.[85] As many of the objects come onto the art market at some stage, it is to a large

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'Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin', December 2000. Klimburg-Salter is planning a discussion of this aspect in a section of the forthcoming Tucci thangka catalogue.

83 At least one third of the people studying Tibetan art in greater detail were present at the Lempertz Symposium. It is thus not surprising that even when the material for a detailed study is already available such analysis has not yet been carried out. For example, Jane Casey Singer has not yet been able to study the early central Tibetan paintings in sufficient detail to establish a basis for early Tibetan painting, and Roger Goepper has not yet provided a detailed stylistic analysis of the early monuments at Alchi.

84 I am aware that in some cases the publisher or the design of a publication may not allow the author to provide this information to the specialists in an appendix. However, present-day media offer other low-cost forms of making this information available to those interested.

85 At Vienna University we have built up an archive concentrating on early Western Himalayan art which, thanks to the generosity of Jaroslav Poncar and Roger Goepper, now also contains the Alchi documentation. Altogether approximately 40000 slides are now held in the Western Himalayan Archives Vienna (WHAV). Similarly focused, publicly accessible photographic archives on other regions or subjects, e.g., early thangkas, or Central Tibetan temples, would greatly facilitate the establishment of a proper art-historical basis for early Tibetan art. Another method of publishing the pictorial material in such a way that all the information is available has been successfully demonstrated by the website of the Rubin collection (http://www.himalayanart.org/). On this website thangkas from private collections are made available in an exceptionally comprehensive way by allowing one to zoom in on details such that even the captions are legible. In the same way the reverse of each thangka can be viewed. The site even offers other private collectors the possibility of having their paintings included. However, currently it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a secondary deity in the Rubin collection without going through hundreds of them. Similarly, there are

extent in the hands of the auction houses and galleries to make this information available to scholars and to accelerate the progress of our knowledge of Tibetan art and hence our ability to date Tibetan art more precisely.

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no stylistic comparisons to be found there. This is partially compensated by the accompanying book publication (RHIE and THURMAN 1999).

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Heather Stoddard

'BRI GUNG, SA SKYA AND MONGOL PATRONAGE:

A Reassessment of the Introduction of the Newar "Sa skya" Style into Tibet

The Newars and their artists are present in the history of Buddhism and in the construction of temples in Tibet, right from the beginning of the introduction of Buddhism in the 7th century. The earliest carved wooden doorways of the Jokhang bear witness to this. The relative proximity of the Kathmandu valley to Lhasa, and the friendly relations in economic, cultural and religious affairs between the two countries has allowed for almost continuous exchange over the last thirteen centuries.

Furthermore, there is a general acceptance among art historians that the Newar style (Tib. *Bal bris*, pron. Beltri, or *Bal po'i lugs*, pron. Belpö luk) in its later, fully blown and richly ornamental form, was adopted in the first centuries of the Latter Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet by the Sa skya school,[1] especially in connection with their rise to eminence as imperial preceptors at the court of the Mongol emperors in Beijing. The invitation made by 'Phags pa to Anige and his companions to come and join him at court catalysed an influence that was already present in Tibet. Under the patronage of the Mongols, this style flourished and developed from ca. 13th through to the 15th centuries, reaching a high point in the wall paintings and sculptures of the rGyal rtse dPal skor Chos sde monastery (founded 1418) with its sKu 'bum stūpa (founded 1427). This centre was itself an important Sa skya establishment, ruled over by the princes of rGyal rtse, notably the founder, Rab rten Kun bzang 'Phags pa (1389–1442). His spiritual preceptor, Vanaratna (1384–1468), who made two long sojourns in rGyal rtse, was perhaps the last Indian *pandit* in the Land of Snows[2].

The great Assembly Hall of Sa skya – one of the most important and rare surviving temples of Tibet today – also displays the overwhelming presence of this "Newar" style

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1 For a recent reference to this generally accepted connection, see S. KOSSAK and J. C. SINGER 1999, *Sacred Visions: Early Paintings from Central Tibet*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, pp. 138–143.

2 Published in KOSSAK and SINGER 1999, pl. 55, as "Portrait of a Buddhist Hierarch", with an erroneous elaboration based on the idea that it might be Atiśa, due to the presence of the *pandit's* hat. For a description of the thangka, see the forthcoming study F.-K. EHRHARD, *Life of Vanaratna*, with an analysis of his portrait and the surrounding lineage, ed., Lumbini International Research Institute, Nepal.

in the array of large gorgeously ornate gilt copper statues ranging over several centuries.[3]

This later *Bal bris* is characterised by the rich flourishing patterns that fill the space of the "toraṇa"[4], with *makara*, or *haṃsa* goose finials developing voluptuous voluted tails rising to merge with the fulsome sinuous loops of twin *nāga* who almost come together just below the apex, dominated by a large *garuḍa*.

In India and Nepal, similar richly ornamented images precede the Tibetan model. The flourishing *makara* tail represents the primordial waters of creation, and finds its origin in Indian mythology. It appears in Indian, Southeast Asian and Nepalese art, both Hindu and Buddhist, surmounted by various motifs, but most often by the mask of a *kīrttimukha*, or "face of glory", with large bulging eyes and strings of jewels, or "life-giving rain", dripping from its gaping mouth.[5]

It is interesting to follow this motif briefly as it develops through different forms and symbolism, from Ajaṇṭā in the 7th century, into Tibet in the 12th century. In early concrete example taken from "real life", illustrates the *jātaka* of the Bodhisattva Mahājanaka, who has renounced the pleasures of the palace to take up the ascetic life. He is receiving *abhiṣekha* from two human attendants, who pour water over him from large round water pots (Ajaṇṭā 7th century, **Fig. 1**).[6] The full rounded forms of these pots appear to be echoed down the centuries, in the toraṇa we are examining, where instead of the actual waters of consecration for the young prince, gushing primordial, symbolic waters form triumphal archways over the figures of enlightened Buddha, Bodhisattva or human teachers.

Interestingly, the throne that Mahājanaka sits on is an early example of the *makara*-backed throne of the style that spread northwards into Nepal and Tibet. In the Ajaṇṭā example, the animals are ornamental motifs on the square throne back, with leogryph and young boys below them (instead of riding them, as in later models) rising to salute the Bodhisattva, on either side. This type of throne was widespread in India, and already

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3 Photography is strictly forbidden in Sa skya, so there are very few good photos of the images. See the publication in Chinese, *dPal ldan Sa skya'i dgon, Sajia si*, Beijing Cultural Relics Publishing, 1985, pl.18–32, for some examples of the images in the main assembly hall.

4 The term "toraṇa" is used here to indicate the triumphal archway as distinct from the *prabhāmaṇḍala* of rainbow light, or flames of wisdom. See S. HUNTINGTON 1985, *The Art of Ancient India*, New York 1985, 1993, pp. 60–68 and 111, where the toraṇa from the Sunga period, ca. 100–80 B.C.E. in Bhārhut and Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh, India, and Begram, Afghanistan, already show many of the elements and symbols seen in later Buddhist toraṇa and throne-backs. See also the 10th century stone toraṇa in the Mukteśvara temple, Orissa, S. HUNTINGTON 1985, p. 427.

5 See A. SNODGRASS 1985, *The Symbolism of the Stūpa*, Southeast Asia Program (SEAP), Cornell University, Ithica, New York, pp. 305–317, on the different types and symbolism of the *kālamakara* or *kīrttimukha* gateways, found in Hindu and Buddhist art all over Asia.

6 See AMINA OKADA and JEAN-LOUIS NOU 1991, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, Mahājanaka Jātaka, pp. 97 and 101.

seen, for example, in the image of the teaching Buddha, 5th century C.E. in Sarnath[7]. Much earlier on, practically all the elements are present in the archaic toraṇa at Bhārhut (100–80 B.C.E.), and Sāñcī (2nd–3rd decade of 1st century C.E.).[8] The fully developed later form in India, dating to the 11th and 12th century, includes elephants surmounted by prancing leogryph, with young boys riding on their backs, with *makara*, *haṃsa* geese, or *kiṃnara* perched above them on the throne bar, sending up the flourishes of their tails to join the *nāga*, *apsara*, or other simpler motifs, with *kīrttimukha* or *kālamukha* at the apex.[9]

Thus, if the 7th century human *abhiṣekha* scene is echoed in an abstract way through the "flourishing" *makara* tails surmounted by a *kālamakara*, or *kīrttimukha*, in accordance with the interesting symbolic parallels provided by Adrian Snodgrass,[10] this "gateway" must be considered as distinct from the more common and simpler *prabhāmaṇḍala*, or "circle of light", made up of an oriole of flames of wisdom (for wrathful figures), or of rainbow light (for peaceful figures). These are seen surrounding all kinds of deities throughout the Indian sub-continent and beyond. Both types appear in Tibet, and while the two are often integrated in the same image, it is notable that the wrathful figures of Vajrayāna, who are always surrounded by flaming *prabhāmaṇḍala,* are rarely if ever shown accompanied by the above-mentioned "six animals" and the *kīrttimukha* arch.[11]

In Indian architecture, the water pot, or gushing water motif, associated with twin partly human figures takes numerous rounded and sinuous forms, associated with the primordial waters, or the *nāga* that preside over them, or the energy patterns in the body of the yogin that are symbolised by them.[12] See, for example, one of the most simple expressions of this motif, where the *kālamakara-cum-kīrttimukha* or *nāga*-like toraṇa or both surrounds Buddha figures in Nālanda stūpa number 3, or the *bho* ornament in Mukteśvara temple, Orissa.[13] **(Fig. 2)**

In Tibet, as has already been suggested, this kind of toraṇa is distinct from those found in the Indian sub-continent; the Tibetan one is dominated by a powerful *garuḍa* who clutches two *nāga*, in half serpent, half human form in its talons, while they gyrate below him **(Fig. 3)**, sometimes with palms joined in imploring prayer.
The early models for the Tibetan version seem to be found in Newar book covers and manuscripts dating to the 11th and 12th centuries. However, during this period the Newar too, always show this type of toraṇa surmounted by a *kīrttimukha*, and never by a *garuḍa*. Furthermore, it was around the turn of the 13th century that a more specific style

7 S. HUNTINGTON 1985, p. 203.
8 S. HUNTINGTON 1985, 1993, p. 203, fig. 10.20; pp. 64, 94–98; B. N. Misra 1998, Nalanda, Delhi, vol. 2, p. 53, fig. 15.
9 S. HUNTINGTON 1985. See the examples on pp. 401 and 409f.
10 See A. SNODGRASS 1985, pp. 305–319, for the symbolism of the *kālamukha* or *kīrttimukha*.
11 See R. LINROTHE 1999, *Ruthless Compassion*, London, Serindia.
12 A. SNODGRASS 1985, op.cit., pp. 305–319.
13 S. HUNTINGTON 1985, pp. 428, fig. 19.18.

Fig. 1 Early Indian torana, Ajaṇṭa, 7th century (photo after Amina Okada and Jean-Louis Nou, Paris Imprimerie National 1991, Mahajanaka Jataka, p. 97,101)

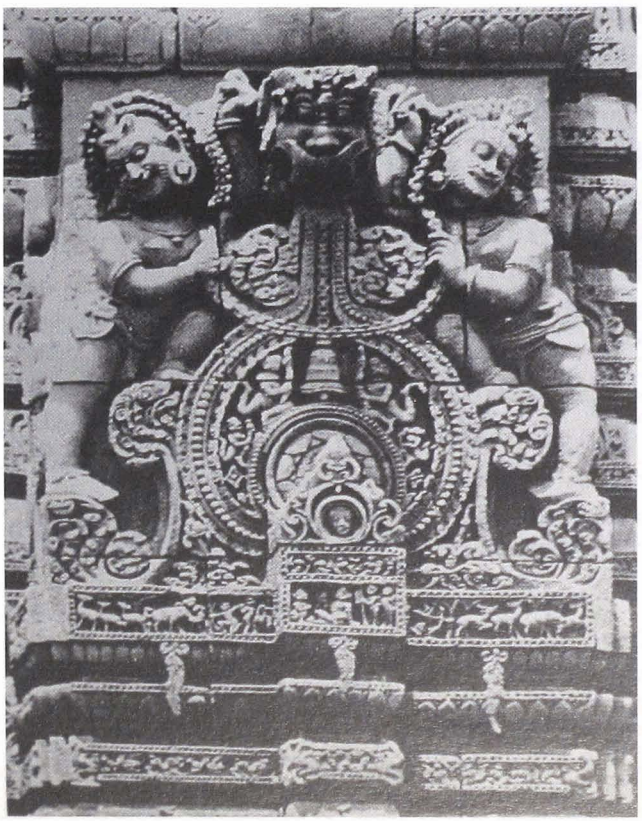

Fig. 2 Indian torana in Mukteśvara temple, Orissa, 10th century (photo after S. Huntington 1985, 428, 19.18)

Fig. 3 Tibetan torana dominated by a powerful garuḍa who clutches two nāga (photo after Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchase, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Philanthropic Fund Gift 1991 [1991.304] "Portrait of an Abbot", published in "Sacred Visions. Early Painting from Central Tibet," Kossak and Singer, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1999, pl. 30)

came into vogue – based as usual on Indian precedents – in which the heavy coils of the *nāga* bodies took on a distinctly scaly and three dimensional aspect.

In Tibet itself, the dating of this type of toraṇa is not easy. It appears, as we have said, to be strongly associated with the rise of the Sa skya to power and influence in the mid-13th century, and the employment of Newar artists in Tibet and at the court of the Mongol empire in Dadu (Beijing). The famous Newar artist Anige (1245–1306) who accompanied Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251) and his nephew 'Gro mgon 'Phags pa (1235–1280) to the court of Kublai Khan dominated the second half of the 13th century, while his school spread far and wide in China, Mongolia and Tibet. The two series of five *tathāgata* in Zha lu monastery, dating to ca. 1330, are fine examples of this Newar-Tibetan-Mongol court style, as Roberto Vitali has clearly demonstrated in *Early Temples of Central Tibet.*[14]

However, this paper aims to show that other traditions in Tibet used this same type of toraṇa from early on, parallel to the Sa skya pa and perhaps even predating them. Sa skya was founded in 1073, but we do not have any early images from this monastery that can be securely dated before the 13th century. One early set of *tathāgata* have been associated with that school, but in the light of this presentation, we may doubt this attribution.[15]

Perhaps the earliest datable Tibetan image showing this type of toraṇa is that of 'Bri gung Rin chen dpal (1143–1217), more generally known as 'Jig rten gsum mgon ("Lord of the Three Worlds"), founder of 'Bri gung mthil in 1179. According to Tibetan sources, numerous small portrait images of this great meditation master were made during his lifetime for his disciples who lived in caves and hermitages scattered the length and breadth of the Himalayas[16]. A small fine portrait image in Musée Guimet in Paris, which may be as early as the beginning of the 13th century, is with little doubt such a one, or at least a very early copy.[17] **(Fig. 4)** Thus it may be as much as one century earlier than the 1302 C.E. illustration from the Jishazang Tripitaka from Hangzhou, which shows a Tibetan monk in debate with a Buddha and is of Sa skya inspiration.[18] The important role that 'Bri gung Rin chen dpal and the succeeding abbots of his monastery played in both religious and political affairs through the 13th century has been obscured by the rivalry between the two schools and the rise to pre-eminence of the Sa skya pa in the political sphere.

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14 R.VITALI 1990, London, Serindia, ch. 4, pp. 89–122.

15 Museum of Asian Art, San Francisco, accession no. KAZ 91, 1991–2, p. 3.

16 'Bri gung bsTan 'dzin Padma'i rGyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gDan rabs gSer phreng* (dated 1803), *Gangs ljongs rig mdzod 8*, Lhasa 1989, p. 90f.

17 Musée Guimet, MA 6032, published in GILES BÉGUIN 1994, *Le Tibet de Jean Mansion*, pl. 42, dated 16th century. There is very little doubt however that this image dates to the lifetime of Rin chen dpal, or to shortly after his passing away in 1217. Thus it must be late 12th- mid-13th century.

18 See HEATHER KARMAY 1975, *Early Sino-Tibetan Art*, Warminster, Aris and Philips, ch. 2, fig. 29.

Fig. 4 Small portrait image, Tibet, beginning 13th century, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 6032

Historically, as is well known, the domination of the Sa skya monks at the court of the Mongol emperors was not a foregone conclusion. The earliest Tibetan Buddhist monks to have met the Mongol princes appear to originate from 'Bri gung mthil, notably a delegation to the Tangut Kingdom of Xixia led by gTsang pa Dung khur ba in 1222. On that occasion they met with the Mongols for the first time [19].

According to R. Vitali, the second 'Bri gung hierarch, 'Bri gung Gling pa Shes rab 'Byung gnas (1187–1241), maintained widespread contacts with the different leaders in the lands surrounding Western Tibet during his seven year stay there. He attended, for example, a meeting held in ca. 1220 on the frontiers of the Tarim Basin, involving the Mongols who had recently conquered Southern Turkestan and representatives of the Qarluq (Gar-log) Turk converted to Islam, led by Sulayman Bheg (Sin-thig-bheg). Vitali implies that Shes rab 'Byung gnas would have spoken in the name of the lamas of Phag gru gDan sa mthil and 'Bri gung in Central Tibet, and also for the princes of gTsang and the Western-Tibetan kingdoms of Guge, sPu hrang and Mar yul. We know too that the King of Ya rtse in Western Nepal was one of his important patrons.[20]

After the death of Genghis in 1227 and the flight of the Tangut nobility to Central Tibet, the Tibetans stopped paying tribute to their Mongol patrons. This explains why in 1240, rDo rta the "Black" invaded Tibet with an army of 30 000 men. They burnt Rva sgreng and rGyal Lha khang, killing the master So ston and 500 monks. On this occasion it was another lama of 'Bri gung, sGom pa Shak rin, who confronted the Mongols, and according to Tibetan sources brought about an appeasement [21].

Around this time the chief lamas of Central Tibet entered into, or were constrained to take part in, a new politico-religious alliance with the sons of Toluï, himself son of Genghis. Expressed in Tibetan sources as the relation of "patron-priest" *(yon mchod)*, 'Bri-gung allied with Möngkä, eldest son of Toluï; Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251) with Godan; the Phag-mo-gru with Hülagü, the Karma bKa' brgyud with Arigh Bukha, and the 'Tshal pa bKa'-brgyud initially with Kubilaï Khan (r. 1260–1294). However, Kubilai later transferred his patronage to form the most celebrated *yon mchod* alliance with Sa skya Paṇḍita's nephew 'Phags pa (1235–1280).[22] From this list we can see that initially, before the establishment of 'Phags pa as imperial preceptor at the court of Kubilaï Khan in 1260, the Phag gru and Karma bKa' brgyud schools dominated the scene and, one might say, were in the forefront in the quest for wealthy Mongol donors.

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19 *Ibid.*, p. 42, for the sources. However, the discussion concerning the image of a Tibetan master is erroneous, since it is Karma Pak shi, who was in Xixia much later, in 1256, who is represented on the thangka.

20 See R.VITALI 1996, *The kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang*, Dharmasala, pp. 389, 403, and 414–423.

21 GEORGE ROERICH, trans.1 949–1953, *The Blue Annals*, translation of 'Gos Lo tsā ba, *Deb ther sngon po*, Calcutta, rev. Delhi, pp. 91, 577–8; *rLangs kyi po ti bse ru*, Gangs can rig mdzod, Lhasa 1986, pp. 109–110; R. Vitali 1996, p. 418.

22 dPal 'byor bZang po, *rGya Bod yig tshang chen mo*, Chengdu 1985,pp. 255–6. Variant lists are given in other sources, cf. *rLangs kyi po ti bse ru*, Gangs can rig mdzod, Lhasa 1986, p. 110.

However, as might be expected in view of the importance that this kind of patronage might bring, rivalry arose between the lineages, and in 1245 it was not a bKa 'bgyud lama but Sa skya Paṇḍita and his nephew 'Phags pa who were invited to meet Godan Khan. According to Tibetan sources, this was due to his greater learning, but it is suggested that a power struggle was also taking place between the different religious traditions in Tibet.

While the Sa skya monks established themselves firmly at the Mongol court, taking over from the second Black Hat Karma Pakshi (1204–1283)[23], the bKa' brgyud lamas still kept a foothold in the much damaged Tangut empire in Central Asia[24], as well as in widespread regions of Tibet, ranging from Khams in the east, right over to Guge in the west. In central Tibet several major monasteries founded in the 12th century were flourishing, while in the west, lamas of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud, but especially the 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud, still clearly dominated the religious and political scene at the courts of the kings of Mar yul, Ladakh and Ya rtse, south of Pu hrang.

The 'Bri gung Style in Western Tibet

Evidence of 'Bri gung presence can be found all over Western Tibet. The first expedition to Gangs Ti se (Kailash), organised by 'Bri gung Rin chen dpal took place in 1191. This was followed by other missions made by other chief disciples such as gNyos rGyal ba Lha nang ba (1164–1224) through into the 13th century. The monastery of A lci came under their dominion, as Prof. Goepper has shown by analysing a 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud lineage that appears in the upper chapel in fine Kashmiri style.[25] However, in spite of this initial lineage painted in A lci, the bKa' brgyud yogins from the central and eastern regions of Tibet soon began to adorn the temples with provincial examples of their traditional "Indian style" (Tib. *rGya gar lugs*) art, showing for the first time deities of the *Anuttarayogatantra,* which had not been present in A lci before their arrival. Indeed, it is the Yogatantra maṇḍala that dominate the earlier period of A lci, where the paintings are executed in pronounced Kashmiri style.[26]

In the newer "provincial" wall paintings, we can see a significant difference between the rather pure "Pāla" or "Indian style" of the well-known sTag lung pa thangkas and these 'Bri gung wall paintings. In the sTag lung thangkas a simple rainbow, or rainbow with a *ljags chil* reed hut around it, is surmounted by a very discrete tiny *garuḍa*

23 GEORGE ROERICH, trans.1 949–1953. *Blue Annals*, pp. 486–487; and 'Bri gung bsTan 'dzin Padma'i rGyal mtshan, p. 113.

24 'Bri gung bsTan 'dzin Padma'i rGyal mtshan, p. 105, mentions that Ti shri ras pa, one of Rin chen dpal's direct disciples became lama to the king of Mi nyag, and so was named Dishi (imperial preceptor). Later on Karma Pak shi built a temple in Mi nyag in 1258, after leaving the Mongol court.

25 R. GOEPPER AND J. PONCAR 1997. *Alchi*. London, Serindia.

26 This of course goes against Prof. Goepper's conclusion that A lci was founded by the 'Bri gung pa.

nestling almost unnoticeable in the rainbow itself.[27] In the early-13th-century 'Bri gung toraṇa, on the other hand, the flourishes of the *makara* tail, the fat *nāga* coils and the large *garuḍa* that adorn both the A lci wall paintings[28] and (to a lesser extent) the Rin chen dpal image from Musée Guimet, are obviously present.

Thus – and this is one conclusion of this small study – we may tentatively attribute a 'Bri gung provenance to images from around 1200 onwards (both paintings and sculptures) that show a combination **(Fig. 3)** of the "flourishing *garuḍa* toraṇa" with the elegant simplicity of the "Indian style" as seen in the sTag lung paintings. The author also considers that this style can be associated with gDan sa mthil and with Phag mo gru himself, thus bringing back the date to a still earlier period, the mid-12th century.

Another conclusion is that the "flourishing *garuḍa* toraṇa" can no longer be identified with any particular school in Tibet, or rather must be associated with both the Sa skya and 'Bri gung schools, thus denying any "sectarian" appurtenance. This puts a nuance on my previous study of the origins of styles in Tibetan art which showed that the styles found in the early period of the "Latter Diffusion" were strongly associated with the teaching lineage of a particular school and its geographic origins outside Tibet.[29]

Now it is also clear – and this is coherent – that a given style may also be associated (though it need not always be) with the donor patrons of the lineage, especially with those non-Tibetan princes from the Indian sub-continent, namely from India, Nepal and Kashmir. According to the *'Bri gung gDan rabs gSer 'phreng* ("The Golden Rosary of the Abbots of 'Bri gung"), Rin chen dpal himself had many foreign disciples and princely donors including "kings of India", who as mentioned above had portrait statues made of him using different precious metals.[30] Furthermore, recent research in Tibet indicates that Rin chen dpal was one of the main lamas in the bKa' 'brygud tradition – preceded perhaps by a co-disciple at Dvags la sGam po – to have introduced the construction of the famous bKra shis sgo mang stūpas of gDan sa thel and 'Bri Gung thel, which were in a fine sophisticated Newar style.

One last point for further reflection. The *garuḍa* clutching the *nāga* in its talons at the top of the toraṇa is certainly not Newar in origin (unless further evidence is provided). One fine powerful example can be clearly seen today in the remains of the toraṇa that surrounded the Śākyamuni image in the ground floor chapel of the dBus rtse of Gra thang. According to G. Tucci, this monastery was in pristine condition until late 1940s, and therefore almost certainly until the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

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27 See for example, KOSSAK and SINGER 1999, *Sacred Visions*, *op. cit.*, pl. 18, sTag lung Thang pa.

28 See the Lhakhang Soma in A lci, in 'Bri gung provincial style, PAL and FOURNIER 1983, *Alchi*, New Delhi, Kumar, pl. LS12.

29 H. STODDARD 1996, "Early Tibetan Paintings, Sources and Styles (11th-14th century)", *Archives of Asian Art*, vol. 49, pp. 26 and 50.

30 'Bri gung bsTan 'dzin Padma'i rGyal mtshan, pp. 90f. and 95.

Gra thang was founded in 1081,[31] only eight years after Sa skya. It belonged to quite a different tradition, i. e., that descending from the "Ten Men of dBus and gTsang" who reintroduced the *Vinaya* and the monastic system from north-eastern A mdo into Central Tibet in the late 10th century. The series of temples that the "Ten Men" founded or reopened are characteristic of a pre-*Phyi dar* style, going back, in the opinion of the author, to the Tibetan empire of the sPu rgyal (7th – 9th century).[32]

Thus we may ask a final question: In using this strongly pronounced *garuḍa* toraṇa in their imagery, were the Phag gru and 'Bri gung hierarchs making a statement about their practice? Were they indicating, as the "rNying ma pa" were already doing at Gra thang in a reverse order, that they traced their own religious tradition not only to the "New Orders" coming in directly from India through such masters as the translators 'Brog mi (993–1073) and Lho brag Mar pa (1012–1060), but also to the ancient Buddhist tradition of Tibet and the "Second Buddha", Padmasambhava?[33]

Martin Brauen

FORGERY, GENUINE OR PAINTED OVER: ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF DATING A THANGKA EXACTLY

In May, 1984, a European auction house sold a Tibetan painted scroll (**Fig. 1**). The auction catalogue described the painting:

> Thanka. This old roll-painting deriving from the Ngor School bears the specific name Sakya Lharab. It depicts the lineage of the Sakyapa School..., beginning with Buddha Vajradhara, the Siddha Virupa, Krishnacarin, Damarupa, Avadhuptja, Viravajra, etc. The two great Sakyapanditas, Jetsün Sonam Tsenmo and Jetsün Dagpa Gyaltsen, two monks who lived in the 12th century, are seated on a throne in the centre of this magnificent painting. Both scholars are surrounded by the lineage gurus of their school, whose tradition continues to exist without interruption to the present. Most of these high lamas were monks; but those identified by their white clothing were laypersons. This precious painting bears witness to the great painterly tradition as it was cultivated in central and southern Tibet and which also seems to have been influenced by Nepalese painting.
>
> Tibet, ca. 19th century, 86 x 78.5 cm.
>
> Cloth borders above and below.
>
> (12.000,–)

The painting was purchased by a collector and dealer. When the buyer showed it to specialists in the USA, they laughed at him and told him that he had bought a forgery. Thereupon the buyer filed suit in the commercial court with jurisdiction in the city where the auction house is located. The matter came to trial. I shall leave you in the dark about the outcome for now. In what follows I shall largely quote from the trial transcript and in this way let you take part in the proceedings.

Expertise U

In the course of the trial, several expert witnesses wrote expertises, which cannot all be presented in detail. One expertise that played an important role was that of the expert U, who testified:

> This is a thangka with two Sakya panditas, these here are monks, abbots both of a monastery and at the same time of the region that they governed.
>
> The Sakya panditas were put in power as rulers of Tibet in the 14th century by the Mongols, and are therefore of special significance in the Tibetan tradition. They came from the Sakyapa School, which originated in this monastery.
>
> The painting is on old cloth, consisting of two pieces joined together. It depicts 24 Sakya abbots, who ruled in Sakya from the middle of the 14th century. The upper row of the

painting, i. e., of the smaller figures, depicts the Adi-Buddha, the primordial Buddha Vajradhara in the middle; from whom the Sakya abbots descend, and an abundance of tantric Gurus, i. e., the entire teaching tradition of the Sakyapa, Grishnamacharin, Virupa, Tilopa, Naropa, and so on. It is therefore a thangka that was painted entirely in the traditional style and whose red border bears the names and initials of the individual abbots in fine gold script. This painting executed in the Ngor style is extraordinarily fine...and was probably painted on the occasion of the enthronement of an abbot at the beginning of the 19th century. ...Here we have the 24 abbots; as you see, it is undoubtedly a late painting. I would date it between 1830 and 1850. (But) I regard the claim that it is a recently painted work on new cloth as untenable. This claim can be dismissed.

Attorney for the Plaintiff:

On the basis of what distinguishing features do you categorically rule out that it was not painted later on old material with new paints in the Western sense of a forgery?

Expert U:

On the grounds of the palette of colours, for one thing, the painting style and the iconographic significance of the 24 abbots depicted here, each in his own unique position. It is inconceivable that such individual features – some of them even have portrait-like qualities – could exist in a painting done subsequently.

Attorney for the Plaintiff:

If someone were out to do that, he would pay attention to just such details. How do you conclude that it was not painted later, i. e., that the features are not intentionally present, as long as you do not have test results for the materials?

Mr. U:

The paintings of the second half of the 20th century are so fundamentally different from this picture – one really ought to hold them up next to each other. One ought to have an example of forgeries here, which (as has been mentioned) are produced in great numbers. I know of not one (publication) dealing with this subject matter, and I draw my conclusions on the basis of my knowledge of the painters in Kathmandu who paint every day and in the three main locations, which I have already mentioned (...). It is just the way they are that they deal with these things very superficially. In my view, we have here a typical example of an extraordinarily fine painting.

It would be conceivable, I will not rule it out now, that in very recent times perhaps some people attempt this and copy such things on the basis of old prototypes. But they would be recognizable then, too, because there is practically no more old cloth available. So in practice one could have to paint over (an old painting) and here you can see clearly that it has not been painted over...But since we can probably rule out that this picture was painted in the last five years...I would really rule (this) out, because the patina alone indicates that the picture definitely could not have been produced in the last 20 to 30 years. One might say, possibly around 1900, but at that time that (type of) picture was no longer being painted; it was no longer available. So here there is a break. These things are not dated. Basically you only say always: At that time one painted in this tradition, and then it suddenly breaks off. The Sakya tradition breaks off in the middle of the 19th century. If a forgery of such a pic-

ture were to suddenly appear. in my opinion it could not have been painted before 1970/75. That is to be ruled out in the case of this painting.

Attorney for the Plaintiff:

Because of the cloth background?

Mr. U:

Because of the cloth background, because of the brush strokes, the colours used and because of a certain patina that this painting possesses in spite of everything. There is not a trace of an attempt at artificial aging here. If you look at the edges, this red and how the textile underneath shows through, then you can conclude on the grounds of the age of the materials in the painting alone. I would say that, if you compare it even with European canvasses, it is simply a piece – leaving everything else aside for the moment – that is at least 100–150 years old, with this consistency of condition and preservation.

The Plaintiff:

Could this painting also have been painted in 1910 or 1920? What is the proof that it was painted around 1870?

Expert U:

Because the tradition of Sakya painting ended around 1850.... Here we have without doubt the fact that these pictures were not used, but rather that they were painted on the occasion of the consecration of the abbot, at the enthronement of the abbot, and then were locked up. They were rolled up and were practically taboo. Because of this the impression arises that they were – I might even say – painted yesterday.

This so-called expert testimony, which went into more detail, led to the following exchange between the attorneys. Attorney for the plaintiff:

In my opinion, an analysis of the material is indispensable for a reliable dating in the case of this gradual development of styles, and I therefore move that an analysis of the material regarding the paints be obtained...

Attorney for the auction house:

I am not of the opinion that further expertises need to be obtained. We have found with great difficulty an expert in this field in far-off GB, who has no connections with the parties, certainly not with Gallery X.... I do not see the point of further expert opinions. also because Swiss experts are of exactly the same opinion. I refer to Mr. S. who reached the same conclusion as U.

The following chain of argumentation I shall summarize for the sake of completeness. The attorney for the auction house refers to the fact that the previous owner had acquired the work in India in the years 1953–1958. After that, he had (allegedly) purchased nothing more. Expert U indicated, "It is possible in and of itself that forgeries have been produced in very recent years ..., but before 1969 such forgeries were definitely not produced." This fact alone excludes the possibility of forgery here, the opposing attorney concluded.

Expertise B

Some days after that court hearing, the plaintiff's attorney gave expert B the task of writing an expertise, which was also subsequently submitted to the court. Expert B introduced his position with some general remarks on forged Tibetan paintings:

> A good forger produces works that appear beautiful and genuine to a potential buyer, both at first glance and also after a preliminary, but more thorough, observation. A picture is considered genuine when it shows the typical features of a particular style and corresponds exactly to the iconographic rules. But since the forger operates according to the principle "time is money" (and also knows that only very few purchasers possess the knowledge of detail necessary to detect a forgery), he often makes mistakes through inexact details. But these details are just as important as the other, larger parts of the paintings. A Tibetan painter has only the narrowest artistic liberties. Of course, mistakes also occur from time to time in genuine traditional paintings, but these are exceptions. When a series of inconsistencies and mistakes are present, it is entirely plausible and also correct to suspect that the painting is a forgery.
>
> For a traditional, authentic painter, the time he needs to produce a thangka painting is of secondary importance. For him the only important thing is to produce the religious object, the thangka painting, exactly according to tradition. If he were to make mistakes, such as inconsistencies, omissions or wrong additions, he would not only produce an object useless for religious purposes, but would also commit "sin," i. e., accumulate bad karma. For this reason alone an authentic artist may not and will not permit any mistakes. The forger, on the contrary, has no such scruples. This is his weakness, and here he makes his mistakes!
>
> Most mistakes in forgeries are found in the following areas:
>
> 1. Iconography: Iconographic details are incorrect or inexact.
> 2. Stylistic features: Confusion of features of style from different epochs and of different schools.
> 3. Consecration: Consecration is lacking (which very rearly can occur with old pictures), or is faulty.
> 4. Paints and material: Faulty selection of colours and paints or cloth support.
>
> But since there are very few scientific studies on paints and on the underlying materials of Tibetan paintings available at present and because I am not in a position to take paint samples and test them, I shall restrict myself to the first three points. As I shall show, the clear-cut result of an exact study of the iconography and stylistic features is that this painting is a forgery. An analysis of the paints and material is therefore superfluous.
>
> Point 1. Iconographic details:
>
> The painting reveals only a few mistakes in iconography. Clearly the painter followed an old prototype closely. Nonetheless, there are some iconographic errors.
>
> For example, bDag med ma (uppermost row, third from right) and Bir wa pa (uppermost row, third from left) are iconographically very dubious. The depictions of some of the monks are also questionable. But since the iconographic rules for the depiction of monks are often not as strict as for the depiction of deities or of well-known groups of saints, I shall not dwell further on these anomalies, as they are only of secondary significance.

Point 2. Stylistic details:

The picture reveals very many stylistic abnormalities. A specialist will particularly note various stylistic features that were only common in early paintings, but were no longer common later. In addition, these old elements reveal straightforward mistakes. The painter was not aware of certain characteristics of the old painting tradition, which led to a couple of striking mistakes in style, namely:

1. The throne with the typical pillars and the tendril-supraporte is only to be found in very old paintings **(Fig. 2)**. A Ngor painting from the 19th century or from the 18th or 17th centuries is unknown to the present day!
2. Missing *makara*-beings: In early paintings the typical tendril-supraporte are to the left and to the right. On the pillars of the throne there are always *makaras* **(Fig. 2)** or other mythical beings **(Fig. 3)** to be seen, but never jewels formed in such a way as in the present case. (Such) jewels... occur to the left and right of the throne only in later paintings. Thus, in this painting elements have been combined that belong to styles which are separated by about 200 years!
3. Tendril forms: A tendril-branch growing out of the centre of a tendril-spiral is also stylistically erroneous. All growths, i. e., secondary branches of tendrils arise from the side. This can be supported by countless examples. **(Fig. 4)**
4. Aureoles: In old (Ngor) paintings the aureoles (mainly those around the bodies) are not circular, but rather flattened out and adapted to the contours of the body **(Fig. 5)**. In later paintings the aureoles, especially the aureoles surrounding the heads, but also those surrounding the bodies are circular **(Fig. 6)** ... In the present painting, which is supposedly 19th century **(Fig. 1)** and is ascribed by the seller to the more recent generation of Ngor paintings, the aureoles are very flattened out and hug the body closely (especially the body and head-aureoles of the monk sitting to the right).
5. Throne of the secondary figures: A further inconsistency in styles and their epochs is the following: In very early paintings the secondary figures are occasionally framed in small niches, or in tendrils, or sit on a kind of throne **(Fig. 2, 3, and 5)**, similar to what is the case in this painting **(Fig. 1)**. But this is no longer the case in more recent paintings. In all later Ngor paintings the secondary figures simply have aureoles and no longer sit in niches or on their own elaborated thrones **(Fig. 6)**. Here again we have proof that the painter of this picture must have copied an old painting, without taking into account the fact that the stylistic feature just mentioned is characteristic of older paintings.
6. Stylistic features foreign to the Ngor school: Together with the very old elements which, as has been mentioned, occur only in very early paintings, we find features that are typical for the more recent Central-Tibetan school, a school that has nothing to do with the Ngor school being copied here! In this context, the following should be enumerated:
   a. The wavy rays of light in the head-aureoles of both main figures.
   b. Ornamentation of the lotus flowers of the thrones of both main figures.
   c. The colouration (too many yellow tones).
   d. The manner of outlining the individual figures.
   e. The cloud depiction to the left and right of the second-highest middle figure.

Fig. 1 The Thangka under dispute

Fig. 2 "Portrait of an Abbot". Central Tibet, dated ca. 1350. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Philanthropic Fund Gift 1991 (1991.304), published in "Sacred Visions. Early Painting from Central Tibet," Kossak and Singer, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1999, pl. 30

Fig. 3 Portrait of two monks. Tibet, dated 14th- 15th century. Collection John Goelet, (today most probably in the) Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Published in Toganoo, Shozui M., "Buddhist Paintings of Tibet and Nepal" 1986

Fig. 4 Vairocana and retinues. Tibet, dated 1st half 14th century. Private Collection, Switzerland

Fig. 5 "Sakyapa Lineage", Central Tibet, dated 1475-1500. Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, published in P. Pal, "Art of Tibet: A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection" Los Angeles 1990, pl. 18

Fig. 6 Potrait of `Phags-pa-rin-po-che, Tibet. Published in "Peintures du monastère de Ngor. Catalogue of the art-galery Robert Burawoy," Paris, 1978, dated here 1st half 17th century

Conclusions of Expert B:

> The thangka painting of the two Sakya monks is characterized by countless stylistic errors and inconsistencies. Next to very old features characteristic of the Ngor school (and also in part of the painting school of Western Tibet), which have not been used for at least 200 to 300 years, the painting contains more recent stylistic features of the school of Central Tibet. Many points indicate that the painter copied an old prototype without fully mastering the old style and without bearing in mind that Central-Tibetan elements have no place whatsoever in such a painting. As the many precisely described examples demonstrate, the painting in question is a forgery, and therefore a picture that was produced in the last 20 or 30 years.

What expert B did not take into account at the time was the possibility that an old painting in very bad condition was completely repainted. This expertise submitted on behalf of the plaintiff elicited two counter-expertises from the defendant: first from the already mentioned expert U, and second from expert S.

Reply by U

In his reply, Mr. U's main argument for the authenticity of the painting is that the stylistic discrepancies noted by expert witness B were examples of a change of style. This is to be seen with the throne, with the throne pillars with the missing mythic beings, in the design of the decorative trimmings such as the tendril forms, and by the introduction of Western-Tibetan stylistic features. Mr. U concedes that the aureoles do remind one of old Ngor paintings, but asserts that this could also prove that the artist wished to combine contemporary elements with traditional ones in this 19th-century painting. In short, he interprets inconsistencies as a change in style and views correspondences with old Ngor paintings as an indication that the artist was trying to synthesize old and new styles!

Mr. U discusses in addition several further points that, in his view, were decisive for correctly evaluating the painting, but which expert witness B failed to address:

1. The quality of the material and its borders was not mentioned. But U understood the fact that the cloth pieces were sewn together as a decisive indication of authenticity.
2. The fine gold-painting indicated the religious significance of this painting.
3. One can rule out that this painting is a forgery, because it was in Switzerland already at the time that such forgeries began to be produced.

In August 1987, expert B replied to the two expertises of S (see below) and U. In brief, he stated:

> Both Mr. S and Mr. U repeatedly emphasize that they know how Ngor paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries look like, i. e., the characteristics of the so-called Ngor School at that time. Because only someone who knows how painting was done during a particular time is

> able to assign a previously undated work to this time. No comparison and therefore no dating of an undated work is possible without concrete, previously dated examples. But where are these Ngor paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries with which the painting in question could be compared by Mr. U and Mr. S? Where are the illustrations for comparing such paintings? I personally know not a single Ngor painting in a private collection or museum that has been shown to be or is claimed to be from the 18th or 19th century. Where then – to formulate the matter in all clarity once more – are the illustrations or source materials to permit such a dating?

Expert B analyzed Mr. U's statements. One of B's key critiques: Mr. U makes claims that more recent paintings were painted only into the 19th century (not later), (meditation) maṇḍalas were not displayed in monasteries, most paintings of the 19th century were painted in Beijing, and paintings of the late 18th and 19th centuries show wear and tear. Expert B also shows that Mr. U comes to two different datings in the same expertise. At one point U calls it, "a late work... between 1830 and 1850," whereas elsewhere he dates it "perhaps...maybe around 1900". Mr. U contradicts himself on another very important point, namely the determination of the end of the Ngor School. As expert B points out:

> On the one hand U states (correctly) that it is not known how long painting was done at Ngor, and that we cannot date the end exactly and nobody can say when it ended there. On the other hand, U states that for all practical purposes there was no more painting in the (Ngor) tradition after 1840/50, but elsewhere he states that it had already come to an end in 1680; and he states elsewhere yet again: We can assume that (Ngor painting) in the traditional sense continued to be painted up to and including the 19th century...

Expert B continues:

> Mr. U involves himself in a contradiction when he admits he is no expert on textiles and yet makes clear assertions about the age of the cloth and on the technique of textile production.

Expert B also believes he can detect a great uncertainty in Mr. U's position when he claims, "since one can plausibly rule out that this picture was painted in the last 5 years...," or when he refers to "...a certain patina, which the painting possesses in spite of everything". Expert B inquires: Does this mean a certain patina is present anyway, even though the painting basically looks so new and in fact is new?

A further argument offered by Mr. U and questioned by expert B concerns the time of purchase by the previous owner. Mr. U maintains that the painting was purchased in the 1950s and therefore cannot be a forgery. To this, expert B asks:

> Is it proven without a doubt that the previous owner acquired the painting in the 1950s? If so, can one prove that no forgeries were produced already in the 1950s?

I wish to point out in this context Mr. U's contradictory statements, as he also refers to the year 1960 as the year of the first forgeries. The time in which – according to Mr. U – forgeries are supposed to have appeared (all quotations from the same eypertise):

'in the last 5 years'
'not earlier than 1970/75'
'first attempts in the year 1970'
'at the earliest from 1965/66'
'none (forged work) known before 1960/70'

Regarding Mr. U's statement that the quality of the underlying material also indicates the great age of the painting, B stated:

> The quality of the cloth (the fact that it is sewn together) cannot be cited as proof of authenticity. Every shrewd forger prefers to use old-looking materials, to deceive dealers and customers...

Expert B then concludes about U's expertise:

> It reveals numerous obvious errors, mistaken claims and wrong mentions of so-called facts, and U's "expertise" reveals crass inconsistencies and clear-cut contradictions. U's expertise is in my opinion (expert B) completely worthless.

Noted in passing: Nonetheless U's "expertise" went almost completely unchallenged.

Expertise of S and Reply by B

Mr. S draws the following conclusion in his expertise:

> In the case of the painting of the high lamas, there is not the least doubt that it is not (sic!) an authentic painting of the Ngor School of the 19th century. ...The painting reveals no elements of style that would not be possible from the standpoint of (this style's) development. There is also not the least indication of an antiquated style attempting to copy a Ngor painting of the 16th or 17th centuries.... The painting of the high lamas is an almost unbelievably fine, exact and careful piece of work. The completion of this painting must have taken months of patient work. The incredibly fine and precise inscriptions deserve special attention...

On Expert B's Criticism of Iconographic Mistakes

Expert B maintains that: "For example, bDag med ma as well as Bir wa pa are iconographically very dubious". Expert S observes in his statement that both saints are depicted on two other very similar paintings and thereby draws the following conclusion:

> Here is clearly proven that bDag med ma and Bir wa pa are to be found in all three paintings of the high lamas discussed here. Therefore B's claim that the presence of bDag med

ma and Bir wa pa is very dubious is not true. Rather, it is very much the case that the presence of these siddhas is correct.

Expert B replies:

I have never characterized *the presence* of both figures as dubious. I simply noted that the iconographic representation of both figures is very dubious. The depiction of other lamas is also questionable. Again, the issue here *is not the presence* of these monks in this painting, but *the manner of their depiction.*

On Expert B's Criticism that Stylistic Details Are Wrong

Expert B had written:

The throne with the typical pillars and tendril-supraporte is provably only to be found in very old Ngor paintings and does not occur in more recent Ngor paintings...A Ngor painting from the 19th century or from the 18th or 17th centuries with this tendril-supraporte is completely unthinkable and unknown to the present day!

Expert S replies:

Wrong. Justification? The painting of these high lamas is 19th century.

Expert B later replied:

Here S appeals to a strikingly simple "mode of proof": the claim that the tendril-supraporte is false because counterexamples exist. But please pay close attention to which counterexample expert S cites: It is the painting in question, i. e., the very painting whose authenticity is questioned. The questionable, disputed painting is cited as proof of its own authenticity! In his statement, Mr. S mentions not a single other recent painting from the 18th or 19th centuries that reveals a tendril-supraporte such as in the painting under investigation.

On the Aureoles

With the purpose of disproving the claim that it is only in old Ngor paintings that the aureoles are not circular, but rather flattened out and adapted to body contours, expert S assembled the following chart:

No. in expertise S	*dated*	*Head aureole*	*Body aureole*	*fig. in this article*
B-10	14th century	flattened out	flattened out	2
B-11	15th century	flattened out	flattened out	
B-04	ca. 1500*	round	round	5
B-12	16th century	round	oval throughout	
B-13	16th century	oval throughout	round	
B-09	17th century	round	round	

*(dated by others "1600")

Even though the chart supports expert B's claim that only in old Ngor paintings are the aureoles flattened out so as to conform to body contours, Mr. S does not admit that, but

rather introduces a new argument: The form of the body aureoles is fixed not only stylistically but also for reasons of spatial relations arising from the (positions of) the secondary figures. In his words:

> "The oval body aureole results only from the fact that ... only two high lamas have to fill the slightly reduced space of four lamas".

Expert B in his later reply:

> Mr. S overlooks here that style is not only a matter of details, but also just as much a matter of the overall composition. In other words, round aureoles in more recent Ngor paintings are possible because the basic construction or structure of the painting permits this. And this basic structure is, as has been said, also a feature of style.

On the Presence of Central-Tibetan Style Elements

Mr. S asserted about the presence of Central-Tibetan style elements, whose presence expert B had pointed out:

> It is correct that the painting of the high lamas reveals Central-Tibetan elements. It is wrong, however, that such Central-Tibetan style elements could not appear in a Ngor painting of the 19th century... Since the middle of the 19th century, the Sa skya pas stagnated into insignificance in the area of culture, and the high lamas depicted here derive from this late phase in the 19th century.

Expert B's later reply:

> Mr. S just leaves the matter with a remark, "*Such Central-Tibetan style elements can appear in a Ngor painting of the 19th century...*," but he does not try to prove this with examples. The reason is simple: There is no proof!

Expert B concludes:

> The painting reveals a mixture of stylistic features that exists in no examples known to me or in the examples provided by Mr. S. The painting contains:
>
> 1. Elements of style that are only found in early Ngor paintings
> 2. Next to them, features that unmistakeably point to a modern Central-Tibetan style
> 3. Certain old-style features have been painted wrongly, because of the painter or forger's unfamiliarity with them.
>
> All of these points, as well as the overall appearance, prove clearly and unmistakeably that the present painting is a forgery. I would qualify the statement of Mr. S that it is an unbelievably fine, exact and careful work: It is indeed an exact and careful piece of work, but that by no means proves that the painting is authentic. Good forgeries characteristically approach their original as closely as possible, attempting to imitate the fineness of the original.

With this evaluation, the case seemed more tricky than ever!

Expertise on the Age of the Textile

Since the plaintiff regarded an analysis of the materials used as indispensable for determining the age of the cloth and of the paints, the commercial court ruled that an expertise be obtained on the age of the textile, the paints used and the cloth borders. Prof. W from a highly regarded technical university was appointed.

A cloth sample of ca. 0.5 cm x 4 cm in size was taken from the painting. This sample, which contained only a little priming paint, was first mechanically cleaned in an ultra-high-frequency bath and subsequently chemically cleaned with a standard procedure. After this, there was practically nothing left except pure cellulose. The purified probe was burned in a closed system, and the CO^2 reduced to cobalt and graphite.
The C-14 dating was carried out with the mass-spectrometry method developed in this particular institute within the frame of a regular C-14 measurement period. After translating the results obtained into the true or calendar age, Prof. W came to the following result:

> The plants from which the textile here at issue was produced were harvested with 95% probability between 1320 AD and 1480 AD. ...The result of our measurements of the textile sample from the Tibetan roll-painting "thangka" (...) rule out any doubt that the cloth base of the painting derives from the time period between 1320–1480 AD. On the basis of this result the conclusion cannot be drawn that the paints derive from the same time period. This question could only be answered with finality after a dating of the paint itself, if this is technically possible (the paint must contain organic binders).

After acknowledging the supplementary expertise of U and the expertise of Prof. W, the commercial court ruled:

> Taking into account:
> - that in the meantime C-14 results have been submitted and
> - that the objections of the plaintiff to the expertise and supplementary expertise of U do not appear untenable from the beginning, and because the court regards itself as not competent to decide whether they are correct or not,
>
> the court rules that an overall expertise be obtained with regard to authenticity of style.

The Expertise of GB

The general expert GB appeared on February 22, 1991, before the commercial court. He pointed out in his introductory remarks that research on Tibetan art is a new discipline. The issue of dating has given rise to friendly conflicts among specialists. The broad stages of the development of Tibetan art are known, but nonetheless one cannot expect the same precision in such a new area of scholarship as with the chronology of Western works of art.

Expert GB also refers to two tendencies in dating. One, the Anglo-Saxon tendency, asserts high, that is to say, old, datings. Another tendency, to which he belongs, prefers the study of decorative elements. The dating hypotheses of this school of thought often lead to more recent datings, and one is more cautious in this school than in the Anglo-Saxon school. One finds an ever-greater consensus with regard to dating in the recent years, but it is nonetheless the case that these hypotheses stand on relatively weak argumentation. Published laboratory tests are rare and insufficient for providing an indisputable basis.

Expert GB then discusses two types of forgeries in Tibetan art: First of all, pieces produced for tourists.

> They are easy to recognize from the painting, which is unskilful. The colours and the colour structure are, for example, like a wax tablecloth that is used in the kitchen. The iconography, the mode of representation, is almost always a product of fantasy.
>
> The second group of forgeries is limited in number. The paintings are produced by projecting slides of old works and painting over them.

According to expert GB, the painting in question belonged neither to the first nor to the second category of forgery. The picture, he believes, belongs to one of the best-known schools of Tibetan painting, which was extensively influenced by Newar art. He distinguishes four phases of that style's development, which cannot be repeated here.

Regarding the painting of the two monks: This work prolongs the style of the 16th century. Expert GB compares the painting with a series of monks' portraits, which he dates to around 1600 (**Fig. 6**). But the painting in question was produced later. He refers to the small human figures on little clouds and to the lions in the lower borders, which are different from those in the above-mentioned series. The colours, too, are especially crude. One could also speak of flawed knowledge of the aureoles. These were not properly understood. This is a further element that proves that the work was carried out at a later point in time. He concludes:

> The painting is to be dated from the beginning to the middle of the 17th century, but with fluid (time) boundaries and with caution.

Conclusion by GB:

> In spite of a few inconsistencies with regard to Tibetan painting, in view of our current state of knowledge ... it seems likely to me that the work is to be considered old, as Nepalese-influenced style from Tibet, to be ascribed approximately to the first half or to the middle of the 17th century. It is very unlikely that it should be ascribed to the 19th century. Stylistically there are no reasons to regard it as being a forged, modern work. The only reservation to be made concerns the pigments. If a microanalysis were to reveal that chemical paints were used, then it would have to be a forged, modern work.

After the completion of the entire hearing, the attorney for the plaintiff submits the following statement: "The plaintiff withdraws his suit. We request the court to rule on court costs and damages".

Concluding Remarks

You have surely noticed in the course of my presentation where my sympathies lie: with expert B.

Because I am expert B!

Since no legally valid ruling is available, I cannot say that my claim that the painting is a forgery is absolutely correct. Of course, I am still of this opinion now, but would have to revise my judgement only in one respect: I am even more convinced today than ten years ago that the picture is an unskilfully executed repainting and over-painting of an old picture. In all likelihood an old painting, whose details were hardly visible any more, was painted over by a painter (in the best case we can say restored), who had not the slightest inkling of the Ngor School of the 15th or 16th centuries. A few details were still visible enough to be recognized; others, on the contrary, were no longer visible – and there the imagination of the painter took over – who, I am still convinced, repainted the thangka into the form in which it exists today.

What struck me most about this case is:

1. The unprofessional, unscientific procedure of certain experts (and the difficulty of convincing a court of this lack of professionalism).

2. The impossibility of *proving* the age of a Tibetan religious object beyond the shadow of a doubt. After this court case and the most varied expertises, we have not grown one bit smarter; on the contrary. The following datings have been reached:

The auction house:	ca. 19th century
Expert B:	20th century
Expert U:	1830-1850, possibly 1900
Expert S:	19th century
General expert GB:	First half or middle of the 17th century
Prof. W:	1320-1480 (only regarding the cloth support)

One would think that the confusion could not be greater! But the confusion was worsened still further when a participant in the Lempertz symposium (Mr. J) developed an interest in the painting's inscriptions. He analysed them and concluded that the picture is: "an early 16th-century thangka (ca. 1520s/1530s). Commissioned

by the 9th Ngor abbot, Lha-mchog-seng-ge (1468-1535), abbatial tenure ca. 1524-1535." The chart must therefore be extended by another line between Prof. W and general expert GB!

3. Further, it is striking how pointless it is to challenge the authenticity of a purchased art work in court, as long as the party being sued is a well-established enterprise that is not ready to reach a settlement out of court. If the auction house had lost this trial, it would have suffered great damage to its reputation. Therefore it made every effort to win or to compel the party of the plaintiff to give up. After all, the court costs exceed the price of the painting. These costs were an enormous sum for an individual plaintiff, but a sum that the auction house took in stride. The auction house would have certainly appealed to the next higher instance, if it had lost. This had meanwhile occurred to the plaintiff!

4. Finally, a piece of advice for you potential buyers: Do not let yourselves be misled by datings such as *"ca. 19th century" or "19th/20th century"*! Strictly speaking, the court could have stated that the auction house's dating was not all that wrong. *Circa* implies a certain leeway in the dating: The object could be (a little) older or (a little) more recent that the date given. What is (a little) older than the 19th century? The 18th century. And what is (a little) more recent than the 19th century? The 20th century – with which we arrive at my dating!

It seems to me that when an auction house dates an object as *ca. 19th century*, something is fishy. This was confirmed to me by a former employee of the auction house. But he did not want to testify, because he is still working in the same field. One hand washes the other.

Editor's Note:

Martin Brauen's reconstruction of the above Swiss court case prompted David Jackson to take this difficult case as a test of the method he proposed. The editor welcomes Jackson's continuation of the discussion and hopes for further comments on Brauen's paper as well as on other opinions and conclusions expressed in this book. It was the intention of the Lempertz Cologne symposium from the start to encourage open discussion.

David Jackson

THE DATING OF TIBETAN PAINTINGS IS PERFECTLY POSSIBLE – THOUGH NOT ALWAYS PERFECTLY EXACT

Though nobody doubts the difficulty of dating much of Tibetan art, this problem reflects more the elementary stage of present research than the impossibility of dating. "Exact" dating is of course usually not attainable – at least not in the narrow sense of dating to the precise day, month or year. (Such exact dating is also not possible for many comparable works of medieval European art.) Yet chronological precision is relative, and in a scholarly discipline where such knowledge is deemed virtually impossible, dating to within a generation or two is to be welcomed as wonderfully "exact."

Tibetan painting did of course develop through a historical sequence of styles, and no competent art historian has ever disputed this. Furthermore, many individual paintings can be dated to within a few decades. In these respects, too, Tibetan Buddhist art does not differ fundamentally from traditional religious arts in Europe. But the same level of connoisseurship has not yet been reached regarding the arts of Tibet. The history of Tibetan painting in particular has until now mostly been left to those who lacked the necessary qualifications as historians.

Though the stylistic development of Tibetan painting has been known in its broadest outline since TUCCI'S *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (1949), the historical sequence of the various styles could not be established in detail because not enough individual paintings have been accurately dated or otherwise placed in a precise historical context. Those working in the field since Tucci have often overlooked such vital historical evidence as:

1. inscriptions mentioning patrons or datable historical figures
2. the structure and contents of lineages, and
3. mentions of important artworks in the external historical record.

A Few Basics of Method

The basic method for dating paintings involves two main steps:[1]

I Dating individual paintings primarily by interpreting internal evidence relating to datable people.

II For works lacking such internal evidence, provisional dating by comparing them stylistically with paintings datable through step I.

Obviously, step I is primary, and without it, step II will have nothing to compare.
To outline more precisely some of the main parts of the first step:

I The dating of individual paintings through gathering and interpreting the internal and external evidence relating to datable people.
  A Gathering internal evidence relevant to chronology. "Internal" evidence means all clues inside the painting itself relating to datable persons, mainly 1. written or 2. iconographic.
    1. Written evidence:
      a careful deciphering and copying of all inscriptions;
      b classifying of inscriptions according to type, time (contemporaneous with painting or subsequent) and location of inscription on painting or mount;
      c extracting names and identifying persons and places named.
    2. Iconographic evidence:
      a identification of famous founding or lineage masters through the iconography of portrayals;
      b identifying the lineage through structural analysis and through (sometimes hypothetical) identifications of series of individual masters.
  B Locating external evidence relevant to chronology
    1. External evidence from the written record useful for identifying and dating historical figures:
      a Life histories of individuals, e.g., biographies or biographical sketches;
      b Records of religious lineages of transmission, e.g., *thob yig;*
      c Histories of religious schools, e.g., *chos 'byung*
    2. External evidence from histories that refer to the commissioning or painting of thangkas or murals.
    3. Evidence from other very similar or related paintings.
      a Other paintings from the same set existing elsewhere. Often the final painting of a set is the most useful chronologically, especially where it portrays and identifies the patron.

1 Cf. KOSSAK in KOSSAK, S. and SINGER, J. C., 1998, p. 26f.

b Where there is a clear link with the activities of an otherwise documented artist, patron, etc.

C Interpreting the historical evidence in order to reach a chronological judgment.
The main task is to link up individuals mentioned in the internal evidence to records about them in the external evidence.
The identification of even a single dateable figure will allow the establishing of at least one chronological limit or terminus (for example, "It cannot have been earlier than master X").
Important non-chronological conclusions are also possible. The identifying of founding masters will often link the painting with a particular school, tradition or even monastery.

The presence or absence of inscriptions should always be noted the first time a thangka is catalogued or systematically described. In this way, each new catalogue or study can document internal evidence by at least carefully recording inscriptions. (If done adequately once, this need not be repeated.) Pains must be taken to decipher and copy accurately, even if this requires calling in a qualified person from outside. Copies should be literally exact, and if an inexperienced Tibetan or Westerner assists, they should resist the natural tendency to "correct" spellings that appear incorrect. Most difficult inscriptions will never be interpreted correctly if they are not first published in a complete and accurate form.

Inscriptions can be divided into those that seem to be contemporaneous with the erecting of the painting, and those that seem to have been added later (e.g., to record later consecrations or possession). Inscriptions mainly identify individual figures or groups, or relate details about the painting's commissioning, painting, consecration, or later ownership. On very old or highly revered paintings, inscriptions referring to the consecration (*rab gnas*) of the painting by a specific master may have been added later, sometimes several generations later, and they may need to be confirmed by a careful analysis of the painting.

Not only the painted surface, front and back, but also the brocade mount should be examined for inscriptions. On thangka-mounts of paintings belonging to sets, the position of the individual painting within the set is often indicated by conventional shorthand notations on the mount. These can be crucial for locating a painting within its series.

For complex compositions within a single painting, a chart should also be provided that indicates the position of each figure with a number. If a detailed iconographical description is intended, it is desirable to present at least a preliminary chart, numbering each figure, even if arbitrarily. Better still, if a lineage is present and it can be identified and interpreted, one should give a diagram with numbers corresponding to the order of the lineage.

The key to reaching a reliable chronological judgment at the end of step I is the presence of internal evidence that is interpretable chronologically, i. e., that relates to dateable historical people, whether in the inscriptions or iconography. The main task in establishing a dating is to link individuals mentioned in internal evidence to records about them in the external evidence. Here one must demonstrate that the proposed identification is not only *possible*, but indeed *probable*. If a name in the inscriptions is common, it is not sufficient to find just anyone in the Tibetan historical record with that name and then to assume that the two names refer to a single person. This would lead to an elementary fallacy of historiography that plagues countless amateur genealogies – the identification of a commonly named ancestor with a famous person possessing the same name. The vaccine against this plague is simple and effective: for frequently occurring names, a historian must cite proof that two identical names probably refer to one and the same person. With common names, the burden of proof rests with the person asserting the identity. With unusual names, the identity can be more readily assumed.

There may be a very small number of cases – such as wall-paintings without inscriptions or identifiable masters – where external historical evidence from the written record (e.g., a history of the temple or biography of its founder) might give a convincing dating. But here the painting should be checked anyway for stylistic similarities with other more securely dated pieces and for evidence of later renovations.

"Art history," a sage once said, "is art plus history." In the past many who have tried to bring Tibetan art and history together have been handicapped by the fact that their step-II datings were often based on other step-II datings that were based on still other step-II datings. They will not fail to appreciate the almost revolutionary implications of dozens of new step-I datings: here we have something of substance to compare. This holds especially for the long-neglected study of paintings later than the mid-15th-century.

Accuracy of Datings

Granted that datings of two kinds can be made, what good is it to date with "reliable" methods, if the resulting datings are not all that precise? Indeed, just how precise are step-I and step-II datings? Step-I datings can, in my experience, be accurate enough for most art-historical purposes. The well-documented ones are usually reliable to within a period spanning about two generations (i. e., plus or minus 20 or 30 years). The methods of dating depend upon certain suppositions, such as that an abbot identified in the inscription as patron probably commissioned works toward the end of his life in general and during his abbatial tenure in particular. In the analysis of lineages, one similarly presumes (as is reasonable) that the patron was the disciple of the last lineage master, and that he commissioned the painting in the last two decades of that last master's life or in the first two decades after the master's passing. There are, of course, exceptions to these rules of thumb.

The accuracy of step-II dating would make a subject for study in its own right. But it is clear that for comparative dating to reach its optimal accuracy, it requires for its comparisons a continuous series of paintings – drawn from the relevant artistic and religious traditions – that have been reliably dated through internal evidence. Ideally, two or three firmly dated paintings should be available for comparison from each generation. If the rate of stylistic change is fast (as does occur in certain periods), then the datings will be more accurate. But the slower the rate of stylistic change, the greater the room for chronological error.

Assuming that a continuous series of step-I datings has been made, I believe step-II datings will one day be able to approach in the best case accuracy to within one or two generations (i. e., plus or minus 25 to 50 years). In the worst case, one will still achieve the accuracy of some of the best connoisseurs today, i. e., plus or minus 75 to 100 years.

Higher degrees of probability – nearing or reaching 100% certainty – can also be achieved in some respects. For example, it is certain that a painting was painted in or after the lifetime of any historical figure portrayed. But the earlier the figure, the greater the period encompassed by the anterior limit ("the painting must be later than..."). Hence the value of a complete lineage, which provides not only anterior, but also posterior limits.

Higher certainty can be gained at the cost of diminished accuracy. Most paintings with lineages, we can assume, were painted in the last 25 years of the last lineage guru's life, or in the 25 years following his death. The probability that such a painting was made in the last 40 years of the last master's life or in the 40 years after his death is, of course, still higher. It is almost certain that such a thangka was painted within the last 70 years of its last master's life or in the 70 years after his death.

A Difficult Test Case

Does such a method really work? Will it lead to a dating of existing thangkas to within a generation or two? With a little luck and a certain amount of effort, yes.[2] But only if the thangkas contain relevant internal evidence and are studied in connection with the history and lineages of the concrete Tibetan Buddhist traditions that gave them birth.[3] Thangkas cannot be studied in a historical vacuum. It is best to start by investigating sets and stylistic or iconographic corpuses, beginning with those that bear lineages and inscriptions.

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2 See for instance the results reached through lineage and inscription analysis in JACKSON 1986, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998 and 1999a. Since the mid-1990s, a few other scholars have noticed the potential usefulness of this method, including J. C. SINGER 1994 and 1997 and KIMIAKI TANAKA 1996, pp. 6–9.

3 See for instance JACKSON 1999.

As an interesting test case for this method, let us take the thangka that was the subject of a legal suit in Zurich, as Dr. Martin Brauen has described at great length. The basic problem then as now is how to date the painting reliably. Several expert witnesses submitted widely differing datings to the court, in part because the thangka contained both distinctly earlier and later stylistic details, which nobody could explain art-historically. Basing themselves mainly on style, the experts could reach no consensus at that time, but then again they did not refer to the rich internal historical evidence present in the painting.

Let us now analyze the inscriptions and lineage structure of this thangka, and then try to interpret these within the historical context of the tradition that produced the thangka. Dr. Brauen kindly sent me black-and-white photographs of many details of the painting, including most of the inscriptions. By lucky coincidence, the thangka comes from a tradition whose paintings I have been investigating in recent years.

The inscriptions identify the main figures (27 and 28) as Ngor abbots and include a verse in praise of (27) Kun dga' dbang phyug: *rgyud sde kun gyi de nyid gzigs// smin grol dga' ston phyogs bcur 'gyed// phrin las dbang phyug 'dul ba yi// 'dren pa dam pa de la 'dud//.* The second verse, in praise of (28) Go rams pa, begins: *rgya chen bsod nams lus stobs rab rgyas te// de gshegs gsung rab seng ge'i nga ro yi// log smra'i ri dags mtha'* ... [incomplete].

A smaller inscription to the bottom right clearly identifies the patron and his purpose: *lam 'bras [b]rgyud pa'i kha skong 'di rig pa 'dzin pa lha mchog seng ges bzhengs//* "This continuation of the Lam 'bras lineage thangkas was made by the mantra practitioner Lha mchog seng ge."
The structure:

7	5	3	1	2	4	6	
8	26a	24b?	25		24c?	26b	9
10							11
12							13
14							15
16		**27**			**28**		17
18							19
20	22	23	24		29	30	21

The lineage:[4]

(1) rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara)
(2) bDag med ma (Nairātmyā)
(3) Birwapa (Virūpa)
(4) Nag po pa (Kṛṣṇapāda)
(5) Ḍāmarupa
(6) Avaduti pa
(7) Gayadhara
(8) Bla chen 'Brog mi Lo tsā ba (992–1072?)
(9) Se mKhar chung ba
(10) Zhang dGon pa ba [Zhang ston Chos 'bar]
(11) Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158)
(12) bSod nams rtse mo (1142–1182)
(13) rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216)
(14) Sa paṇ (1182–1251)
(15) 'Phags pa (1235–1280)
(16?) [Zhang dKon mchog dpal (b. 1240)]
(17?) [Tshogs bsgom Kun dga' dpal]
(18) Nyan chen pa [bSod nams brtan pa]
(19) Brag phug pa [bSod nams dpal] (1277–1352)
(20) dKar po brag pa Rin chen seng ge
(21) Bla ma Blo gros brtan pa (1316–1358)
(22) Bla ma dam pa [bSod nams rgyal mtshan] (1312–1375)
(23) dPal ldan tshul khrims (1333–1399)
(24) Buddha shrī (1339–1419)
(25) [Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456)]
(26a) [Mus chen dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (1388–1469)]
(26b) [Mus pa chen po, repeated!]
(27) rJe btsun Kun dga' dbang phyug (1424–1478)
(28) Go rams pa bSod nams seng ge (1429–1489)
(29) Mus chen Sangs rgyas rin chen
(30) [dKon mchog 'phel?]

Thus the inscriptions point unmistakably to the participation of the Ngor abbot Lha mchog seng ge (1468–1535) in the making of the thangka. The lineage structure indicates that the patron belonged to generation 31, the generation of dKon mchog 'phel's

4 Since not all inscriptions were photographed, I supplied a few names within square brackets from context. In the above lineage, the third and fifth abbots of Ngor, 'Jam dbyangs shes rab rgya mtsho (1396?–1474) and dPal ldan rdo rje (1411–1482), seem to have been omitted. The small figures to Ngor chen's right and left (marked as 24b? and 24c?) may be his two other main teachers, Shar chen and Sa bzang pa.

disciples. The dating indicated by both lineage and inscriptions is therefore: the early 16th century.

Lha mchog seng ge was a major figure at Ngor in the early 16th century who commissioned many paintings during his abbatial tenure (1524–1535), and by his time the old sets of lineage thangkas painted at Ngor in the period of its founder, Ngor chen, needed to be brought up to date.[5] We now know that Lha mchog seng ge was involved in carrying out at least one such "completion" (*kha skong*), i. e., of this set of Lam 'bras lineage thangkas, as explicitly stated in the present inscription. Thus this stylistically puzzling painting, with its portraits of the Ngor abbots Kun dga' dbang phyug (1424–1478) and Go rams pa (1429–1489) as main figures, was meant to continue an old and by then venerable set depicting the lineage masters of the Lam 'bras.[6] This continuation presumably consisted of three thangkas, each portraying pairs of lineage-master abbots: 1. a first painting showing (25) Ngor chen and (26) Mus chen, 2. the present one, showing (27) Kun dga' dbang phyug and (28) Go rams pa, and 3. a third one, showing (29) Mus chen Sangs rgyas rin chen and (30) dKon mchog 'phel.

Seldom has one short inscription pruned back so radically the endlessly proliferating vines of style-based speculation. The inscription has other art-historical implications: knowing that he was continuing an older set, it would make sense that Lha mchog seng ge when commissioning this and the other completing thangkas in the 1520s or 1530s would instruct his artists to try to imitate the old-fashioned style of the then archaic 15th-century original. (The painters were provided with slightly older cotton cloth as supports, as shown by later analysis of that cloth.) The painters would not have been experts in the older style and so would also have unconsciously included stylistic elements of their own later – for us almost "modern" – early-16th-century style. The painters' inability to imitate the earlier style perfectly can be presumed to have caused the oddly mixed style and ultimately the confusion among later experts trying to date it.

In the last ten years the investigation of the history of Tibetan painting has thus made significant strides, but only to the extent that we have learned to exploit the internal historical evidence (lineages and inscriptions) of individual paintings in ways that conform to high professional and scholarly standards. Yet a certain amount of educational work is still needed; even the most competent and accurate dating may not be easy for those not following these developments closely to understand or accept immediately. To this day, a correct, carefully worked out dating based on internal evidence can still be mistaken by those not well versed in Tibetan literary language and Buddhist history as just one more contribution to the formerly prevailing guesswork and speculation.

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5 For other later continuations of important sets in the late 16th century, see JACKSON 1996, p. 78.

6 The painting's structure resembles in some respects – including the repeated appearance of Mus-chen above as gurus of both main figures – a painting portrays the Ngor abbots Kun dga' dbang phyug and Go rams pa in the Los Angeles County Museum.

But let's keep this in methodological perspective. Until about ten years ago, "prevailing wisdom" (or as Dr. Brauen might call it with some justification, "prevailing confusion") about post-15th-century Tibetan painting styles and their dates was based mainly on secondary datings (step II, above), with hardly any accurately dated (through step I, above) thangkas to compare. Not enough primary datings had been performed for secondary dating to become well informed and well founded. But now, ten years later, we are at least in a position to distinguish the two types of datings and to perform more primary datings, are we not?

Ten years ago nobody had identified or dated any of the important early Ngor pa painting sets commissioned by the founder, Ngor chen. Now we have.[7] By 1990, only a few later Ngor pa thangkas had been dated by internal evidence.[8]

A decade ago, nobody had seriously tried to establish when the great stylistic change from the old predominantly Indic aesthetic to a mainly Chinese one occurred. Now we know the change began in the middle of the 15th century with the stylistic revolution led by the great artists sMan thang pa sMan bla don grub and mKhyen brtse.[9] The stylistic dissonance of the present puzzling Ngor pa thangka embodies this aesthetic sea-change in a fascinating way.

Ten years ago few people knew that connoisseur-patrons in Tibet sometimes commissioned works in an intentionally archaic style or copied famous older models. Now we know several examples not only from the written record,[10] but one from even this same Ngor pa tradition.[11]

Ten years ago, almost nobody thought the stylistic development of the Tibetan schools from the mid-15th-century onward was worthy of serious study. Now at least preliminary investigations of this period have begun.[12] Previously, for many experts, the post-sMan thang pa developments in dBus and gTsang provinces formed a single amorphous category usually lumped together under such vague headings as "recent" or "ca. 18th or 19th century", or even, at unguarded moments, as "modern" (leading one jokester to remark that Tibet was the only country in the world whose modern art began in the 15th century). Hence the majority of expert datings of the thangka in question ten years ago to the 17th to 19th centuries. (Such later datings were encouraged by the nearly immaculate condition of this painting.) Interestingly, the most accurate estimate – to the first

7 See JACKSON 1996, pp. 77–82.

8 In JACKSON 1990 I provided step-I datings of several earlier (late-15th-century) and later Ngor pa thangkas. For further references to internally dated later Ngor pa thangkas, see JACKSON 1996, p. 87, note 185.

9 See JACKSON 1996, section II, chapters 3 and 4.

10 See, for instance, JACKSON 1996, pp. 283 and 371–374.

11 JACKSON 1996, p. 82, and plate 1. On that and other later dated Ngor pa thangkas, see ibid., p. 87, note 185.

12 JACKSON 1996, passim.

half of the 17th century – was made by "general expert GB," a French museum curator with the greatest experience cataloguing post-15th-century thangkas and a person who takes later periods seriously. His estimate was only one century too late, which is still acceptable for a purely step-II dating through stylistic comparison at that time.

Yet it is precisely cases like the present "fishy" thangka where responsible scholarship demands a careful sifting of the painting's internal historical evidence, namely through a step-I dating based on inscriptions and lineage structure. A decade ago, none of the experts was in a position to do this.

Thus it is indeed possible to date an object of Tibetan Buddhist art such as this richly inscribed thangka with a reasonable degree of certainty, in this case to the period 1510–1535. There is no harm if the strict standards of proof from criminal jurisprudence are not attained, such as certainty "beyond the shadow of a doubt." Historiography aims to establish the probability of a historical assertion, not its plausibility, possibility or certainty.[13] (By coincidence, a similarly less stringent burden of proof also applies in civil suits, at least in countries that inherited English legal traditions.) Still, it is almost 100% certain that the painting was produced between 1480 and 1535, given the dates of the commissioning lama's life.

No convincing case has been made that the painting is a 20th-century fake because of iconographic mistakes. The iconography of the lineage figures, including Virūpa and bDag med ma (Nairātmyā), is correct. Here both are shown in their role as teachers of the *Lam 'bras* instructions, and Virūpa's hands are in the gesture of teaching, one of several standard postures in which he is depicted.[14] **(Fig. 1)** But note that the positions of Virūpa and Nairātmyā are erroneously reversed in the lineage.

Since the painting's key inscription accounts well for the conflicting styles found in it, there is hardly any need to consider whether the thangka could have been a recent fake merely because of stylistic inconsistencies. To assert it was inauthentic would require stronger prima facie evidence and also a plausible motive. In art dealing, a forger's usual motive is to relieve the buyer's bank account of as many Swiss francs as possible. But what forger in his right mind would have devoted such exquisite efforts to producing this strange hybrid style on a genuine 15th-century cloth support with faultless inscriptions, iconography and lineage – all pointing like a smoking gun toward a Ngor abbot of the early 16th century – only to flog it on the market as "ca. 19th century"?

13 JAQUES BARZUN and HENRY F. GRAFF, *The Modern Researcher* (New York, 1970), p. 155: "In history, as in life critically considered, *truth rests not on possibility nor on plausibility but on Probability.*"

14 See the same depiction of Virūpa and Nairātmyā for instance in P. PAL 1984, *Tibetan Paintings*, plates 35 and 39; and P. PAL 1983, *Art of Tibet*, plate 18.

This stylistically puzzling Ngor pa thangka and the attendant Swiss court case certainly prove the near-impossibility of reaching a reliable dating *for those experts in the late 1980s*. But no more general conclusions can be drawn from that court case about the accuracy or reliability of the dating methods that a competent historian might use today – namely, the investigation of inscriptions and lineages – since no past expert took these decisive factors into account.

Concluding Remarks

Tibetan religious art underwent its own special stylistic development under its own unique historical circumstances. So did every other traditional religious art in the world, and there is nothing uniquely or impossibly difficult about dating paintings from north of the Himalayas. The methods I have sketched above are commonsensical and can be applied to historical relics from any highly literate country, so why not to those from Tibet?

A good historian will remain cautious and not uncritically accept anything, whether doubtful evidence or overly simple methods. But if I were to boil down my recommendations to just a few points, I would stress again careful attention to inscriptions and lineages, for they are most likely to yield for many thangkas valuable anterior or posterior limits for dating. Thus any serious description of a Tibetan painting will include and record all inscriptions – with the possible exception of the commonly repeated consecration *(rab gnas)* formula on the rear. When studying thangkas that depict lineages, the documentation should include: (1) a *chart* showing the arrangement of figures actually found in the painting, using numbers for each figure belonging to a lineage or lineages, and (2) a sequential *list* of the names of the figures in the probable lineage or lineages – as far as it can be established – with numbers matching those in chart (1). **(Fig. 2 and 3)**

I at one time assumed that such basic elements of documentation would be self-evident, and was surprised to find how seldom these steps have so far been followed systematically. In reality, such a method will never be successfully employed in all its aspects by more than a handful of people. In order to reach an accurate step-I historical interpretation, a good knowledge of the history of the tradition that produced the thangka may also be required for all but the most simple and straightforward cases. Correct interpretation thus depends on a high level of competence in art, history and written Tibetan. Who can spare the years needed for becoming expert in all three? Dating through step-II stylistic comparison, by contrast, does not require the same constellation of skills, and should be possible for a larger number to attempt once a sufficient number of paintings have been reliably dated and documented as points of comparison.

Thus the dating of Tibetan paintings remains perfectly possible for a small number of competent specialists, though it may not necessarily be precise or easy for all exem-

plars. The main task at present is to document thoroughly as many pieces as possible, concentrating first on important sets and obvious masterpieces. One will have to work from the paintings for which there is rich documentation to those for which ample documentation is lacking, and not the reverse. One cannot expect too much from individual minor pieces collected almost at random for ethnographic purposes, but even those should be possible to date approximately and classify stylistically as soon as we have an adequate corpus of well-documented and reliably dated paintings to compare. Until the richly inscribed main masterpieces in particular have been studied with more care, it is premature to speak of the impossibility of their dating.

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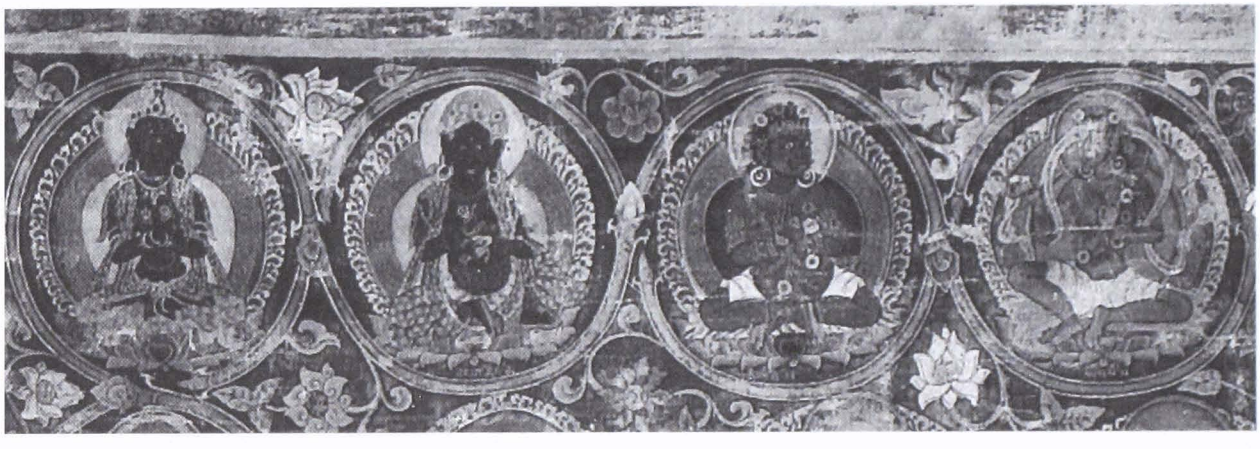
Fig. 1 The Ngor Abbots rGyal tshab Kun dga' dbang phyug and Go rams pa bSod nams seng ge, with their Lam 'bras or Hevajra Lineage



Detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 2 Mañjuśri-Yamāntaka with Drikungpa Guru Lineage

Fig. 3 Sahaja-sambara with Drikungpa Lineage

Fig. 1
The Ngor Abbots rGyal tshab Kun dga' dbang phyug and Go rams pa bSod nams seng ge, with their Lam 'bras or Hevajra Lineage.

This more complicated thangka shows the necessity of checking for possible splits in the lineage. The Los Angeles County Museum catalogue, P. PAL 1983, P13 (plate 18), described this painting as "Sakyapa Lineage," "Central Tibet (Ngor Monastery), 1475–1500." (It was exhibited in Paris at the Grand Palais as part of the major exhibition *Dieux et demons de l'Himalaya, Art du Bouddhisme lamaique* 1977.) PAL'S catalogue presents the inscriptions in an appendix by H. E. RICHARDSON, p. 260. The two main figures are rGyal tshab Kun dga' dbang phyug (1424–1478), nephew of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po and fourth abbot of Ngor (tenure 1465–1478), and Go rams pa bSod nams seng ge (1429–1489), sixth abbot of Ngor (tenure 1483–1486). This painting was probably commissioned on the late 15th century by a student of these two masters (such as dKon mchog 'phel 1445–1514, abbot of Ngor 1486–1513). The smaller figures portray a *Lam 'bras* or Hevajra lineage of Sa skya and Ngor. The lineage begins from the top left corner and proceeds right until the end of the first row, but the slightly larger figures of Sa chen Kun dga' snying po and his sons bSod nams rtse mo and Grags pa rgyal mtshan (nos. 11, 12 and 13) are positioned in the second row according to a different convention: centre, second from the left, and second from the right. Then the lineage forks: the main line goes from Sa skya Paṇḍita (Sa paṇ) to 'Phags pa and hence to dPal ldan tshul khrims, while another goes from Sa paṇ to his disciple Nyan chen pa and hence to dPal ldan tshul khrims, the teacher of Buddhashrī in the Lam 'bras lineage. Ngor chen received the transmission from Buddhashrī. Ngor chen and his student Mus chen each appear twice in the second row, once above the heads of each of the two central figures. The sequence of figures is approximately:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14 22a 21a 21b 22b 15a

12 11 13

15b 16a

16b 17a

17b **24** **27** 18a

18b 20

19 23

25 26

The lineages of teachers:
(1) rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara)
(2) bDag med ma (Nairātmyā)
(3) Birwapa (Virūpa)
(4) Nag po pa (Kṛṣṇapāda)
(5) Ḍāmarupa [not Nāropa!]
(6) Avaduti pa
(7) Gayadhara
(8) Bla chen ['Brog mi] (992–1072?)
(9) Se ston [Kun rig]
(10) Zhang ston [Chos 'bar]
(11) [Sa chen Kun dga' snying po] (1092–1158)
(12) bSod nams rtse mo (1142–1182)
(13) rJe btsun [Grags pa rgyal mtshan] (1147–1216)
(14) Sa paṇ (1182–1251)
(15a) Tsho[gs] bsgom [Kun dga' dpal]
(15b) 'Phags pa (1235–1280)
(16a) [Nyan] chen pa [bSod nams brtan pa]
(16b) Zhang dKon [mchog] dpal (b. 1240)
(17a) dKar po brag pa [Rin chen seng ge]
(17b) Brag phug pa [bSod nams dpal] (1277–1350)
(18a) Ri khrod pa [Blo gros brtan pa] (1316–1358)
(18b) Bla ma dam pa [bSod nams rgyal mtshan] (1312–1375)
(19) dPal ldan tshul khrims (1333–1399)

(20) Buddhashrī (1339–1419)
(21a) [Ngor chen!] (1382–1456)
(21b) [Ngor chen] Kun dga' bzang po [!]
(22a) Mus chen [dKon mchog rgyal mtshan] (1388–1469)
(22b) Mus pa Chen po [!]
(23) 'Jam dbyangs shes rab rgya mtsho (1396?–1474)
(24) rJe btsun Dam pa Kun dga' dbang phyug (1424–1478)
(25) dPal ldan rdo rje (1411–1482))
(26) Bla ma bSod nams dbang phyug
(27) rJe btsun Dam pa bSod nams seng ge (1429–1489)

Nos. 22–25 were the second through fifth abbots of Ngor, all disciples of Ngor chen. Nos. 26 and 27 were also disciples of Ngor chen, Go rams pa bSod nams seng ge being the sixth abbot and bSod nams dbang phyug, the only one in this group who was not a Ngor abbot. It is at first sight curious that Ngor chen and Mus chen are depicted twice each, with identical dress and gestures, though with a younger appearance over Kun dga' dbang phyug and an older appearance over Go rams pa. The historical justification is that Kun dga' dbang phyug studied under this pair at an earlier period, while Go rams pa did not meet them until they were older. One should also note that the Kun dga' dbang phyug depicted here clearly belonged to the Ngor pa lineage; he is not the Kun dga' dbang phyug of the Sa skya gZhi thog bla brang who lived from 1418–1462, as suggested in the PAL catalogue, p. 260.6.

Fig. 2
Mañjuśrī-Yamāntaka with Drikungpa Guru Lineage. This black thangka depicting "Mañjuśrī-Yamāntaka" ('Jam dpal gshin rje gshed) as main figure is chosen as a practical example for the dating method. It was published in ESSEN and THINGO 1989, II-331, where its dimensions were stated to be 48.5 x 40 cm. [sic] and it was dated to the nineteenth century. It was not identified by ESSEN and THINGO as Drikungpa, though they noted the Nyingma origin of this lineage. The painting may well have been commissioned by a disciple of Chos kyi nyi ma (27th abbot, 1755–1792), which makes the dating very close to that proposed in ESSEN and THINGO II, p. 154, namely "18th century."

The order of the lamas in the lineage is:

10	8	6	4	2	1	3	5	7	9	11
18	16	14	12				13	15	17	19
22	20								21	23
24										25

The last fourteen lamas are:

12. gTsug lag dpal dge
13. sLob dpon chen po [Padmasambhava]
14. Ba su dha ra
15. sNub Sangs rgyas ye shes
16. rGyal dbang Ratna [? rGyal dbang Rin chen phun tshogs 1509–1557?]
17. Chos rgyal phun tshogs (1547–1602)
18. bKra shis phun tshogs (1574–1628)
19. [Rig 'dzin] Chos kyi grag[s] pa (1595-1659) [first Chung tshang]
20. Don grub chos rgyal (1704–1754)
21. Phrin las bzang po (1656–1718) [out of order]
22. dPal gyi rgya mtsho
23. bsTan 'dzin 'gro 'dul (1724–1766)
24. dPal ldan mGar chen pa
25. Chos kyi nyi ma (27th abbot, 1755–1792)

Fig. 3

Sahaja-sambara with Drikungpa Lineage. This Drikungpa thangka depicts Sambara (bDe mchog) in two-armed form (Sahaja-sambara, Lhan skyes bde mchog) with four other deities (*bDe mchog lha lnga*), accompanied by a lineage of Drikungpa masters. Lineage analysis indicates it was probably commissioned by a disciple of the abbot Phrin las rnam rgyal (b. 1770). This painting has been published in JACKSON 1996, p. 343, pl. 60. Preserved in a private collection, Cologne, it was described as "Central Tibet ('Bri gung?), ca. late 18th or early 19th century", dimensions: 58 x 40 cm.

10 8 6 4 2 1 3 5 7 9 11
21 19 17 15 13 12 14 16 18 20 22
31 29 27 25 23 24 26 28 30 32
33 34

1. rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara)
2. Klu sgrub (Nāgārjuna)
3. Dril bu pa (Ghaṇṭapāda)
4. Dzalendhara (Jālandhara)
5. Nag po spyod pa (Kaṇha or Kṛṣṇacārin)
6. Tillopa
7. Nāropa
8. Karṇaripa
9. Bla ma rDo rje gdan pa
10. Paṇ chen Abhaya
11. [rTsa mi?] Sangs rgyas grags
12. sKyob pa 'Jig rten-mgon po [Here out of order because of his importance for the lineage; his place in the chronological succession should be after no. 14]
13. dPal chen rGa Lo tsā ba

14. Phag mo gru pa [1110–1170]
15. sPyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas (1175–1255)
16. Rin chen rdo rje
17. dBang phyug bsod nams
18. Grags pa shes rab
19. Kun mkhyen Tshul rgyal grags [=Tshul khrims rgyal po]
20. Grags pa rdo rje
21. gTsang pa [Blo gros] bzang po
22. mKhan chen Rin chen bzang po
23. rJe btsun bSod nams mtshan can
24. rJe btsun sNa tshogs rang grol [rGod tshang Ras pa]
25. Chos rgyal phun tshogs (1547–1602)
26. bKra shis phun tshogs (1574–1628)
27. dKon mchog ratna [dKon mchog rin chen, 1590–1654, 1st Che tshang]
28. Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa [23rd abbot of Drikung] (1595–1659)
29. dKon mchog phrin las bzang po [24th abbot, 1656–1719]
30. bsKur ma ra dza [Dharmarāja? Don grub chos rgyal?]
31. Ngag dbang phrin las
32. dPal ldan 'Gar chen pa
33. dKon mchog ting [=bstan!] 'dzin chos kyi nyi ma (27th abbot, 1755–1792), i. e. Chos kyi nyi ma, for short.
34. dKon mchog ting [=bstan!] 'dzin phrin las rnam rgyal (28th abbot, b. 1770), i. e. Phrin las rnam rgyal, for short.

Jane Casey Singer

A TIBETAN PAINTING OF CHEMCHOK HERUKA'S MAṆḌALA IN THE McCORMICK COLLECTION, REVISITED

Lempertz is to be commended for convening a symposium on the crucial question of establishing chronology in Tibetan art. The assessment of art-historical chronology – *dating an object* – is an imprecise science. But like the natural sciences, it is founded on a careful, dispassionate assessment of evidence. Art historical evidence emerges from various sources: historical and doctrinal texts, inscriptions, iconography, and style. Although occasionally a single piece of evidence allows one to unerringly ascribe a date to an object or monument, it is clear that one most often arrives at a reliable sense of chronology only after weighing evidence from many sources. This paper considers the various types of evidence available to ascribe a date to one painting. A painting of Chemchok Heruka's Maṇḍala, in the McCormick Collection, demonstrates the complexities involved in assessing textual, historical, inscriptional, iconographic and stylistic evidence concerning such fundamental questions as the determination of a painting's date and provenance.[1] **(Fig. 1)**

The painting's central father-mother pair (*yab yum*) consists of a winged, six-armed, three-faced male deity purple-brown in colour, who holds a flayed human skin, two *vajra* and three skull cups. His consort, blue and one-headed, holds a skull cup and an implement that is no longer legible. The precise identification of this iconography would be difficult to determine were it not for consecration inscriptions on the back of the painting. These reveal that the iconography portrayed is that of Chemchok Heruka (che mchog he ru ka; Skt., Mahottara Heruka).[2] Indeed, the central cluster of deities and the eight surrounding clusters bear mantras that name many of the deities and identify the specific attainments to which the *rig 'dzin* (Skt., *vidyādhara*) or "awareness holder" will accede as he gradually completes the Chemchok Heruka meditation. In short, each cluster represents a particular state of meditative awareness.

The practice of Chemchok Heruka was introduced to Tibet through the Nyingma order. Nyingma historians hold that texts associated with the tradition were hidden during the Buddhist persecutions after the *snga dar*, the early introduction of Buddhism to Tibet (ca. 7th to mid-9th centuries), but were rediscovered in the late 12th and 13th centuries.

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1 This paper is dedicated to Kai McCormick, his older brother Eamon, his parents Beata Tikos and Michael McCormick, and to the memory of his grandmother Anna Marie McCormick (1921–2000). See an earlier study of this painting in ERBERTO LO BUE 2002, ed. *Tibet Journal* 27, no. 3–4.

2 DENISE PATRY LEIDY and ROBERT A.F. THURMAN 1997 identify the iconography as the closely related Mahāśrī Heruka in *Mandala: The Architecture of Enlightenment*, New York, Asia Society Galleries and Tibet House, p. 78.

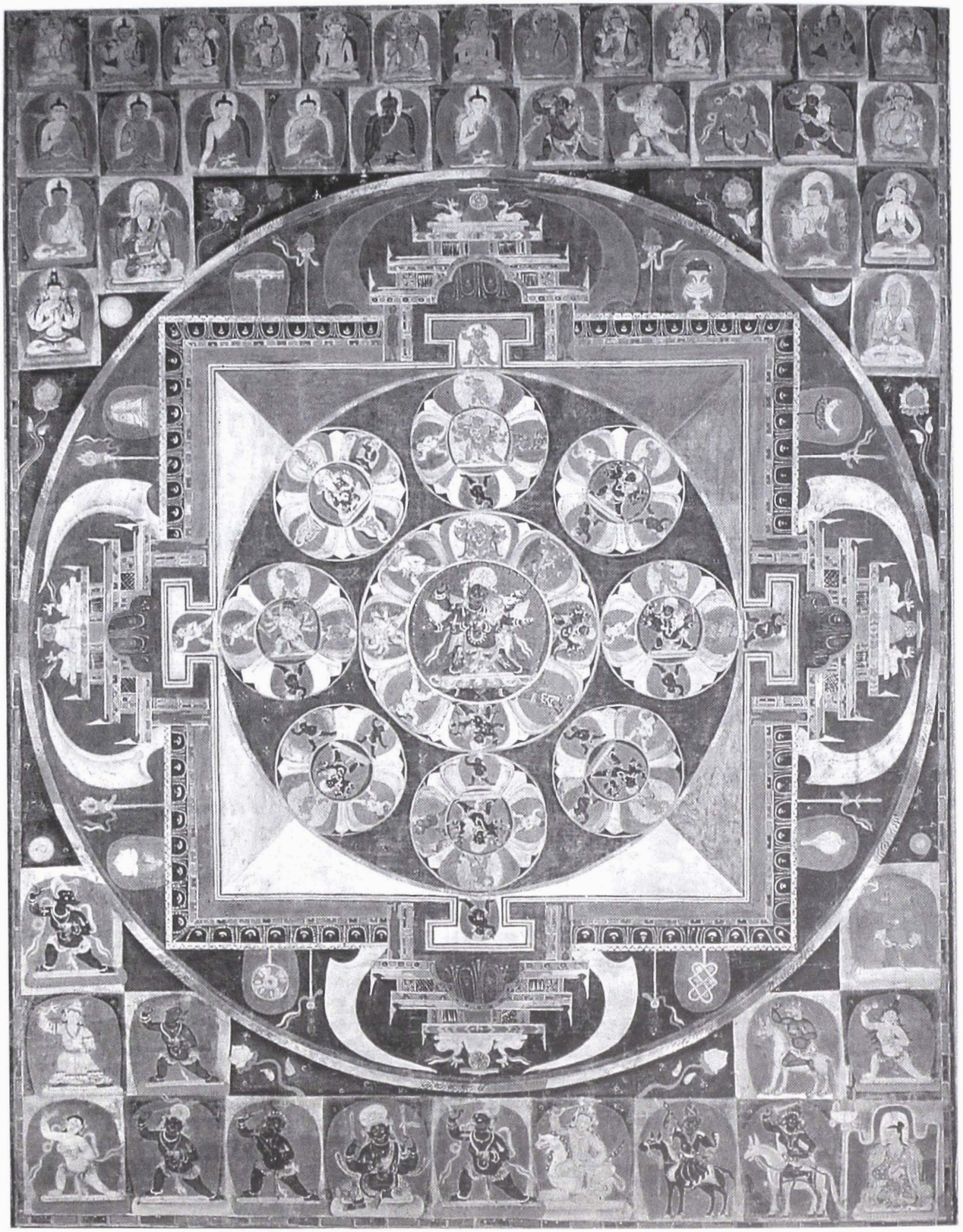

Fig. 1 Chemchok Heruka Maṇḍala, McCormick Collection, New York, distemper on cloth, Tibet, c. 1150-1250, 96.5 x 81.3 cm. Copyright McCormick

The first text of this cycle to emerge was the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i rgyud*, "The Tantra of the Gathering of the Sugatas of the Eight Transmitted Precepts", which was discovered by the great Nyingma *tertön*, Nyangrel Nyime Öser (Nyang ral Nyi ma'i od zer, 1136–1204).[3] The second text, known as the *bKa' brgyad gsang ba yongs rdzogs* or "The Consummation of Secrets of the Eight Transmitted Precepts", was discovered by another great Nyingma *tertön*: Guru Chöwang (Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug, 1212–70).[4] His residence was at Neshi Ritrö (*gnas zhi ri khrod*), just a few kilometers below Tsemo (*rtse mo*), where Nyime Öser lived.

The colophon on Nyime Öser's text states that it was translated by the Indian Buddhist master Padmasambhava (fl. 8th century) and the Tibetan translator, Vairocana; the original Sanskrit text does not survive. Guru Chöwang's text is also said to have been translated by Padmasambhava in the 8th century. Padmasambhava appears in the Chemchok painting just outside the maṇḍala circle, wearing his characteristic helmet-like cap and holding a *vajra*, a skull cup, and a ritual staff that rests against the crook of his left arm. **(Fig. 2)**

Since it is our understanding that paintings such as this were commissioned in association with the study of its teachings and in association with the study of a text or texts, the author tried to determine which of these texts could be associated most closely with the Chemchok painting. In brief, it would seem that either text could have served as a guide for the painting. Both describe the iconography of the painting in its essential details, but neither perfectly describes all of the maṇḍala's deities as they appear in the Chemchok painting. Moreover, texts and image vary in the geographic distribution of a few of the deity clusters, as will be explained.

Nyime Öser's tantra contains the most complete description of Chemchok Heruka's maṇḍala and may thus serve as the primary textual guide for interpreting this Chemchok maṇḍala. Chapter eleven of Nyime Oser's text describes the emergence of Chemchok Heruka, his consort Tromo Namshal (khro mo gnam zhal; Skt., Dhātv-īśvarī), and the other deities in his cluster. **(Fig. 3)** Each pair of deities at the four cardinal points is identified and described in a manner that essentially corresponds with the iconography of the McCormick painting.[5] The text then describes four female gatekeepers (*ta kri ta*

3 See GYURME DORJE and MATTHEW KAPSTEIN, trans., 1991, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, 2 vols., Boston, p. 756; and GYURME DORJE 1992, *Tibet: A Handbook*, Bath, 2nd edition, p. 207.

4 See *Rin chen gter mdzod* published by DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE, vols. 22–23.

5 I. e., the text describes the pair of deities to be visualised on the eastern spoke of Chemchok's maṇḍala cluster as "the Bhagavan Raksa Heruka, together with his consort, his faces dark brown, white and red; and holding the wheel, lotus, noose, and a garuḍa bird." [*bcom ldan raksha he ru ka/ smug nag dkar dang dmar ba'i zhal/ 'khor lo de bzhan padma dang/ ti ri'i rgyu zhags 'dab chags kyung/ bam sum 'dren cing yum dang bcas/ shar gyi rtsibs la mkhas pas bskyed*] One sees in figure 4 that the male figure in the eastern direction of Chemchok's cluster is indeed three headed, but the main head and the body is blue, not dark brown as specified in the text. Moreover, of the implements that he holds in his six hands, only one—the noose—corresponds to those described in the text.

Fig. 2 Padmasambhava, detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 3 Chemchok and Consort, detail of Fig. 1

sgo ba bzhi) and ten directional guardian deities (*dregs pa phyogs skyong 'dul byed khro bo bcu*), in contrast to the four animal-headed deities depicted at the intermediate directions (SE, SW, NW, NE) in the painting. The text states that one who successfully completes this cycle of visualisation becomes an awareness holder who attains the enlightened attributes of a Buddha (*yon tan gyi rig 'dzin*).[6]

The text then introduces the eastern cluster of deities known as the *yang dag thugs*, associated with attainment of the pristine cognition of Buddha mind (*thugs kyi rig 'dzin*), led by Vajra Heruka and his consort Krodheśvarī.[7] **(Fig. 4)** Consecration inscriptions on the back of the painting confirm this attribution.[8] Nyime Öser's text specifies that the deities marking the four cardinal points of this cluster are Buddha Heruka, Ratna Heruka, Padma Heruka, and Karma Heruka.

The southern cluster, known as *'jam dpal sku* in both the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i rgyud* and in the painting's consecration inscriptions, is associated with *sku'i rig 'dzin*, attainment of the enlightened attributes of the Buddha bodies.[9] Yamāntaka and Ekajaṭī are at the centre, surrounded by four father-mother pairs, the *gshin rje gshed bzhi yab yum*.

To the west is the cluster identified as *pad ma gsung*, associated with the *gsung gi rig 'dzin* or attainment of the enlightened attributes of Buddha speech.[10] Hayagrīvarāja and Ekajaṭī preside at the centre. In the north is the cluster identified both in text and painting inscription as *phur pa phrin las*, associated with attainment of the enlightened activities of a Buddha.[11] At its centre are Vajrakīlaya and Tṛptacakra (*'khor lo rgya 'debs ma*), surrounded by the *sras mchog rigs kyi phur ba bzhi* (Buddhakīla, Ratnakīla, Padmakīla, and Karmakīla).

Similar discrepancies exist with regard to the three other deities associated with the cardinal spokes of Chemchok's maṇḍala cluster.

6 On the *yon tan gyi rig 'dzin*, see GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, vol. 2, p. 143 and passim.

7 On the *thugs kyi rig 'dzin*, see GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, vol. 1, pp. 282–83, where the five attributes of the Buddha mind are identified as the pristine cognitions of the expanse of reality, of sameness, of accomplishment, of discernment and the mirror-like pristine cognition.

8 Painting inscriptions: oṃ *ru lu ru [lu] huṃ bhyoh huṃ phaṭ yang dag thugs badzra he ru ka!*.

9 Painting inscriptions: oṃ *akroteka yamantaka ha na ma tha bhanja huṃ phaṭ 'jam dpal sku'i lha!*. See GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, vol. 1, p. 282, where the five Buddha bodies are identified as the body of reality, the body of perfect rapture, the body of emanation, the body of indestructible reality and the body of awakening.

10 Painting inscriptions: oṃ *hayagriva hu lu hu lu huṃ phaṭ padma gsung gi lha tshogs!*. GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, vol. 1, pp. 282–83 describe the five modes of Buddha speech as the speech of uncreated meaning, the speech of intentional symbols, the speech of expressive words, the speech of indivisible, indestructible reality and the speech of the blessing of awareness.

11 Painting inscriptions: oṃ *badzra ki li ki la ya sarva vighna bam huṃ phaṭ phur pa 'phrin las kyi lha!*. GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, vol. 1, p. 23 describe the five enlightened activities of a Buddha as pacifying suffering and its causes, enriching the excellent provisions, overpowering those who require training, forcefully uprooting those that are difficult to train and spontaneously accomplishing whatever emerges without effort.

The clusters at the four intermediate points of the compass are identical in both texts and in the painting's consecration inscriptions, but there is variation in their geographic associations. Three of the intermediate clusters are associated with rites of exorcism and the dispensing of curses: the south-eastern cluster, known as *'jig rten mchod stod*; the north-western cluster, known as *dmod pa drag sngags*; and the north-eastern cluster, known as the *ma mo 'bod gtong*.[12]

In the south-western direction, as noted in the painting inscriptions and as specified in both texts, is the *rig 'dzin 'dus pa*.[13] **(Fig. 5)** This cluster represents the lineage holders of the Eight Transmitted Precept teachings, those historical figures who successfully mastered Chemchok Heruka's meditations. It is noteworthy that the male and female figures at its centre are dressed in Tibetan costume. He wears a helmet-like cap and holds the bell and *vajra*; she holds the skull cup. Consecration inscriptions behind these figures state *oṃ vajraguru padma siddhi hūṃ*, probably referring to Padmasambhava, the 8th century Indian Buddhist master who inspired the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism and served as co-translator of both *terma* under discussion.

Chronological Implications

What are the chronological implications of these observations about painting and texts? Recall that the Nyingma tradition holds that although the Chemchok iconography was introduced by Padmasambhava in the 8th century, it was lost during the splintering of the monarchy beginning in the middle of the 9th century until it was rediscovered by Nyime Öser during the second half of the 12th century.[14] Soon afterwards, Guru Chöwang uncovered a related text. Barring an oral tradition that kept the tradition alive before Nyime Öser found his text in the late 12th century – a possibility apparently not recognised by the Nyingmas themselves – textual evidence would thus suggest that this painting can be no earlier than the second half of the 12th century.

Inscriptions on the back of the painting shed further light on its date and enable one to establish the painting's terminus ad quem to be 1272–73. **(Fig. 6)** Although faint in figure 6, examination of the painting itself makes clear that the inscription near the top border states that the painting "dwells under the immeasurable consecrations of the four

12 The geographic associations stated here follow those specified in inscriptions on the back of the McCormick painting. Both texts concur in assigning different geographic attributions for these three clusters, specifying that the *' jig rten mchod stod* is in the NW; the *dmod pa drag sngags* is in the NE; and the *ma mo 'bod gtong* is in the SE.

13 Painting inscriptions: oṃ *vajra gu ru siddhi huṃ rig 'dzin brgyad gyi lha/*

14 Dudjom Rinpoche's account of Nyime Öser's biography states that during a retreat in the second half of the 12th century, he was led by Yeshe Tshogyel, famous adept and consort of Padmasambhava, to the Shitavana cremation grounds where he was initiated into the Chemchok teachings by Padmasambhava and eight other *vidyādharas*. GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, p. 757.

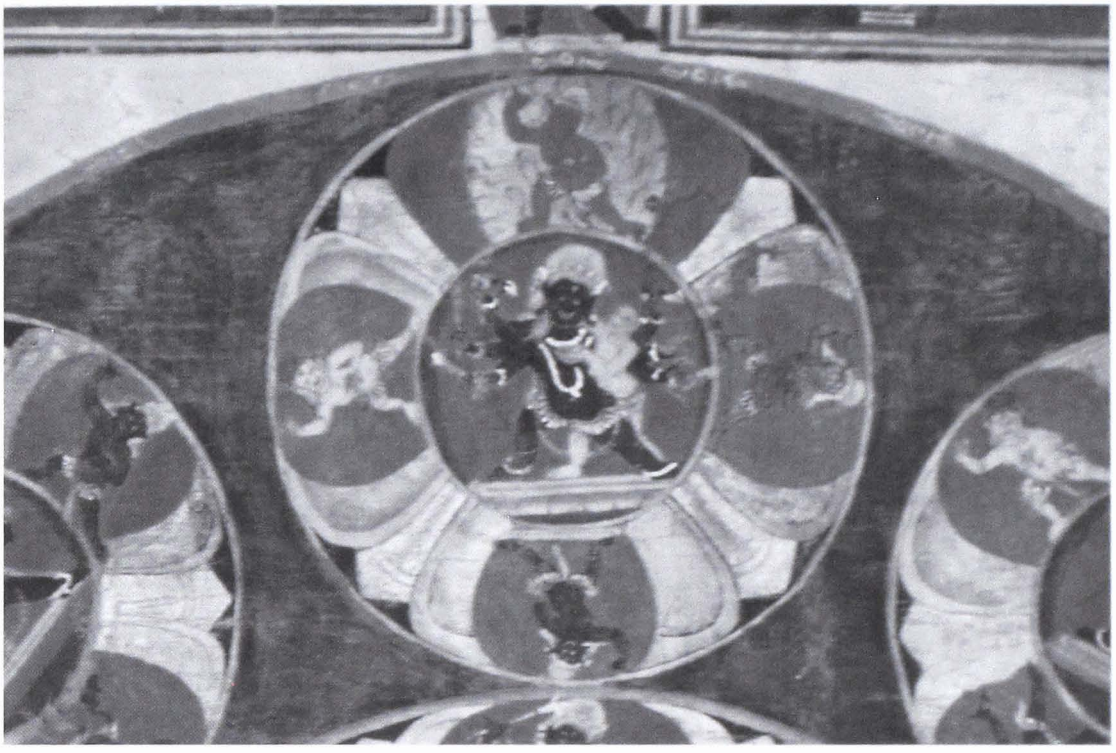

Fig. 4 Eastern cluster, detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 5 Southwestern cluster, detail of Fig. 1

teachers and disciples from Chöje Rinpoche (chos rje rin po che) through to the illustrious Lama Rinpoche Önpo (bla ma rin po che dbon po dpal)."[15] Taklung is a Kagyu monastery 65 kilometers north of Lhasa, founded in 1180 by Takung Thangpa Chenpo. Önpo Lama Rinpoche (1251–96), Fourth Abbot of Taklung, is well known from dozens of inscriptions on Taklung paintings that bear his name. Chöje Rinpoche almost certainly refers to Taklung monastery founder, Taklung Thangpa Chenpo or Tashipel (1142–1210), for such is the case in other inscriptions in the Taklung corpus.[16]

The inscription thus refers to consecrations of the painting by the first four Taklung abbots. While the inscription is relatively straightforward, it can be interpreted in two ways, each with different implications for the painting's date. If one takes the inscription literally to mean that each of the first four Taklung abbots successively consecrated the painting, then the painting must have existed before 1210, when first abbot and founder Tashipel died. But it is also possible to interpret the inscription metaphorically, that is, that the painting bears the metaphorical consecrations of the first four abbots through the person of Önpo, whose authority as fourth abbot inherently confers the authority of the previous three. If one follows this interpretation, one cannot argue that the painting necessarily existed before first abbot's death in 1210 and it could have been created at any time before or during Önpo's period as abbot in 1272–73.

A second inscription, near the centre of the painting, states "May the incomparable holy teacher Prajñāguru and I, Kīrtishrī Rashmibhadra, have inseparable power to attain the oral teachings, to purify our mistaken minds, and to guide beings (to spiritual liberation)."[17] **(Fig. 7)** This was certainly composed by Önpo Lama Rinpoche, probably sometime between 1272, when he succeeded his teacher Sangye Yarjön (sangs rgyas yar byon; a.k.a. Prajñāguru, 1203–72) as Taklung abbot, and the following year, when monastery politics forced him to leave Taklung. He later established Riwoche (ri bo che) monastery in Kham, which became home to a sub-order of this Kagyu branch. So these inscriptions provide a firm terminus ad quem of 1273.

Thus, we know that this object existed in 1273, but how much earlier than this is the painting likely to be? A portrait of Önpo Lama Rinpoche, now in a private collection, can be reliably dated to 1272–73, the same date as the Chemchok painting's terminus ad quem.[18] Its style and composition typify Taklung painting of the 13th century. The Önpo

15 The Tibetan inscription: *chos rje rin po che nas bla ma rin po che dbon po dpal yar chod yab sras bzhi'i rab gnas dpag du med pa bzhugs/.*

16 *See* JANE CASEY SINGER and PHILIP DENWOOD, eds. 1997, *Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style*, London, p. 294, n. 16.

17 The Tibetan: *mtshungs med bla ma dam pa pradznya 'ghu [ru dang] bdag 'ghir ti shri ra smri bha tra 'bral med [ci] [g]sung bka' bsgrub cing/ rang sems 'khrul pa dag pa dang// 'gro' ba'I 'dren pa nus par shog//* An identical inscription appears on a Taklung painting, *see* SINGER 1997, "Taklung Painting", in SINGER and DENWOOD 1997, p. 294, n. 14; and a Taklung *tsakli*, *see* AMY HELLER, "A Set of Thirteenth Century Tsakali", in *Orientations Magazine*, vol. 28/10, pp. 48–52.

18 Published in SINGER and DENWOOD 1997, fig. 41. An inscription on the reverse states that Önpo consecrated it, and consecration inscriptions indicate that it is his portrait. After initial consecratory mantras: *oṃ āḥ tathāgata vajradig* [Vajradhara] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ Prajñāpāla* [Tilopa, fl. late tenth

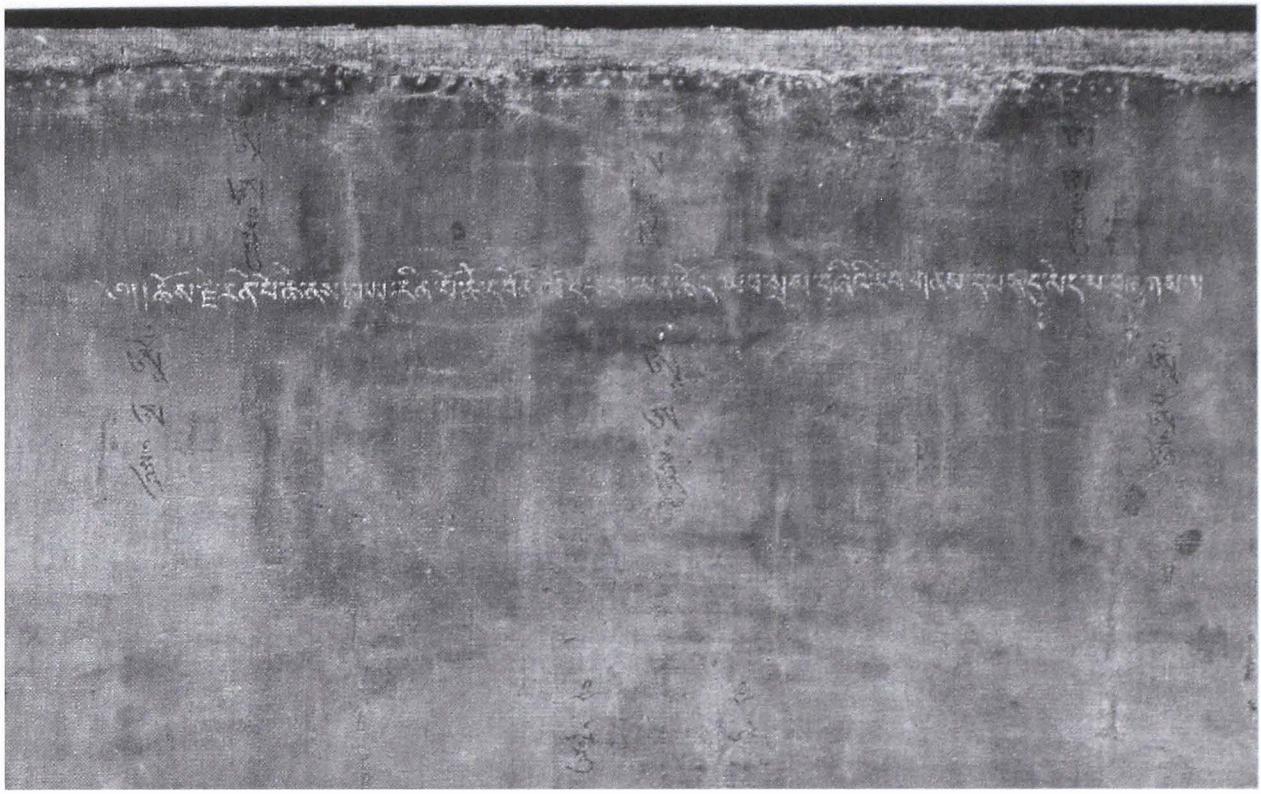

Fig. 6 Reverse, detail of Fig. 1

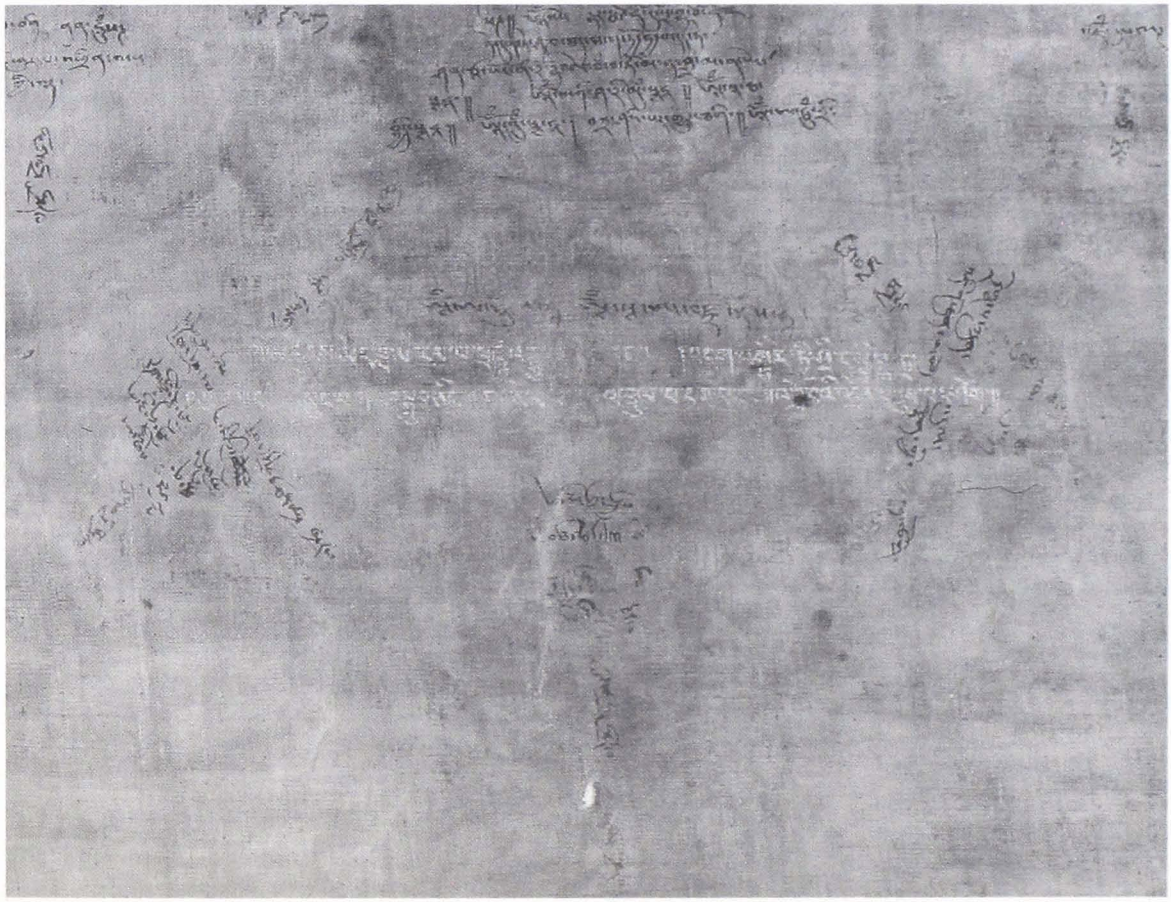

Fig. 7 Reverse, detail of Fig. 1

portrait offers no particularly compelling stylistic parallels with the Chemchok painting and supports the view that although certainly consecrated by Önpo, the McCormick Chemchok Heruka painting is unlikely to have been commissioned by him.

Most works that were certainly commissioned by Taklung monastery demonstrate some concern for their particular lineage. The Önpo portrait in a private collection places emphasis on the spiritual lineage specifically associated with this sub-branch of the Kagyu order. Thus, one sees the spiritual progenitor Vajradhara through Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, and Phakmodrupa, master of Taklung founder Tashipel. Above the central figure is a vignette showing the first three Taklung abbots within a trilobate arch. The absence of any iconographic reference to the Taklung lineage in the McCormick painting, and the presence of Nyingma icon Padmasambhava also point to the view that it was not commissioned for the Taklung Kagyu centre.

Another significant iconographic clue to the identity of the painting's commissioner is that of the sacrificiant in the McCormick painting's lower right corner. **(Fig. 8)** Although not inscribed, his appearance closely corresponds to the official Nyingma iconography for the two *tertöns* Nyime Öser and Guru Chöwang, as will be discussed below. While these figures require more study, they are thought to represent the painting's donor, commissioner, or ritual sacrificiant – that is, someone who conducts ceremonies associated with worship of the deities portrayed in the painting. The Chemchok figure wears the robes of a lay practitioner, long hair drawn up into a bun at the back of his head, holding the *vajra* and bell, symbols of esoteric Buddhist practice. A skull cup supported by three skulls, further esoteric accoutrements, appears just above his right shoulder. The Nyingma order supported both lay and monk practitioners. The biographies of both Nyime Öser and Guru Chöwang describe them as "Bodhisattva practitioners" who did not take monastic vows.[19] In contrast, from the start, the Taklung painting tradition depicts sacrificiants in standard Tibetan monastic garb, as seen for example on another Önpo portrait, in **figure 9**: yellow sleeveless vest, red lower and upper robes.

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century to early eleventh] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ jñānasiddhi* [Naropa, 956–1040] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ dharmamati* [Marpa, 1012–1096] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ vajraketu* [Milarepa, 1040–1123] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ guru ratna matikīrti* [Gampopa, 1079–1153] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ guru ratna vajrarāja* [Phakmo Drupa, 1110–1170] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ guru ratna maṅgalaśrī* [Tashipel, 1142–1210] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ guru ratna ratnanātha* [Kuyelwa, 1191–1236] *hūṃ / oṃ āḥ guru ratna prajñāguru* [Sangye Yarjon, 1203–1272] *hūṃ/ oṃ āḥ guru ratna kīrtiśrī rasmibhadra* [Önpo Lama Rinpoche, 1251–1296] *hum/* Other mantras follow, as well as the 'ye dharma' and 'patience' verses. These Sanskrit names act as *dhāraṇī*, sacred sounds whose vibrations are extremely auspicious. 'Gos Lo tsā ba states that Phakmo Drupa's ordination name was *rdo rje rgyal po*, whose Sanskrit equivalent was Vajrarāja, as in this consecratory inscription. Kīrtiśrī Rasmibhadra, as mentioned above, is the Sanskrit equivalent of Önpo's birth name, Drakpapel Öser Sangpo (*grags pa dpal 'od zer bzang po*). It is not clear in every instance how the Sanskrit names relate to the historical figures otherwise known as Tilopa, Nāropa, Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, Phakmo Drupa, Tashipel, Kuyelwa, Sangye Yarjön, and Önpo Lama Rinpoche, but it was common for Tibetans to receive a Buddhist name when ordained, which often had a clear Sanskrit equivalent.

19 GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, pp. 758, 760.

The iconography of the McCormick figure matches that in a modern drawing of Guru Chöwang, the second *tertön* discussed earlier: both hold the bell and *vajra*, the hair drawn into a bun at the tops of their heads. **(Fig. 10)** This drawing appears in Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*.[20] Dr. Gyurme Dorje, one of this compendium's translators, notes that the sketch is drawn from an iconographic tradition recorded at Mindroling monastery, which dates at least as early as the 18th century.[21]

Further evidence that the painter intended to represent Guru Chöwang in the McCormick painting can be found in Lokesh Chandra's iconographic compendium, *Buddhist Iconography*.[22] **(Fig. 11)** Although wearing a cap in this representation, Guru Chöwang holds the bell and *vajra*, just as he does in the McCormick painting. Lokesh Chandra's drawing derives from an *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript of unspecified date.[23] It is noteworthy that Dudjom Rinpoche's opus presents the earlier *tertön*, Nyime Öser, in a similar iconographic guise, also in lay robes, hair drawn into a bun. **(Fig. 12)** He holds a covered jar, with a tantric skull full of offerings before him. The 18th century iconographic tradition at Mindroling allows a five hundred year gap between Guru Chöwang's own time, and it is difficult to ascertain its relevance to late 12th or early 13th century depictions of the *tertön*. Thus, perhaps the best one can say is that the figure of the sacrificiant certainly resembles early Nyingma *tertöns* and it is plausible, though by no means certain, that the McCormick figure was intended to represent Guru Chöwang.[24] This piece of evidence also has chronological implications, since we know that Guru Chöwang discovered his Chemchok text around 1235.[25] As will be argued below, this iconographic assessment needs to be considered in light of other evidence provided by an assessment of style.

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20 GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, p. 761.

21 GYURME DORJE, Oral communication, May 2000.

22 LOKESH CHANDRA 1991, *Buddhist Iconography*. Compact edition (New Delhi), fig. 1894.

23 Ibid., pp. 43–52.

24 BRYAN PHILLIPS of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Virginia, Personal correspondence, May 2002. He is working on literature associated with Nyime Öser and Guru Chöwang and kindly read this paper, offering important insights into the possible identity of the Chemchok Heruka sacrificiant. Nyime Öser's son, Namkhapel (*nam mkha' dpal*) although not a *tertön* himself, was appointed lineal successor by his father, and served as teacher to Guru Chöwang. He was also known as patron of arts, having commissioned statues, a gold script redaction of the *bKa' brgyad* and other works. It is possible that this painting was commissioned by Namkhapel, who was active in the last decade of the 12th and first three decades of the 13th century. See BRYAN PHILLIPS, "Consummation and Compassion in Medieval Tibet: The Māṇi bKa' bum Chen-mo of Guru Chos-kyi dbang-phyug," Ph.D dissertation, University of Virginia, forthcoming.

25 GYURME DORJE and KAPSTEIN 1991, p. 762.

Fig. 8 Sacrificiant, detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 9 Sacrificiant, detail, Onpo Lama Rimpoche Portrait, private collection, distemper on cloth, Tibet, c. 1272-73, 39 x 31 cm. Copyright McCormick

Fig. 10 Guru Chöwang, modern drawing based on c. 18th century tradition after Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kaptstein, trans., eds., The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. Its Fundamentals and History. 2 vol., Boston 1991, vol. 1, p. 761

Fig. 11 Guru Chöwang, after Lokesh Chandra, Tibetan Buddhist Iconography, Compact Edition, New Delhi 1991, fig. 1894

Fig. 12 Nyima Özer, modern drawing based on same source as fig. 10

Style Analysis

Of all the types of evidence available to the art historian, style can be the most difficult to interpret. This is not always the case; sometimes a painting or sculpture clearly belongs to a relatively narrow chronologically range. Yongle period sculpture, for example, is easily recognisable and can be firmly dated to 1403–24.[26] In this instance and with respect to the McCormick Chemchok painting, style analysis is not a particularly sharp diagnostic tool, essentially because of the dearth of comparative material. I interpret the style of the Chemchok painting to suggest a date of ca. 1150–1250, as will be explained below.

In important ways, the painting resembles a ca. 11th or 12th century Vairocana maṇḍala, now in a private collection. **(Fig. 13)** If one masks the top and bottom registers of the McCormick painting, one sees that both paintings emphasise broad colour fields, rendered in a similar palette. The maṇḍala palace is cut into four quadrants, each beautifully coloured in a bold field of savoury orange/red, yellow, green and white or dark blue. In the Vairocana maṇḍala, the colour field continues beyond the palace walls, bound only at the very edges of the painting by a thin circle of fire. The colour field in the Chemchok maṇḍala palace is somewhat truncated when compared to the Vairocana maṇḍala, ending at the palace walls except for the continuity of colour provided by the ends of a double *vajra,* broken arches in the same colour as the adjacent field, which envelope the four gates. This compelling, primal expanse of colour can be seen in other 11th or 12th century works, including a Cakrasaṃvara maṇḍala, now in a private collection, which dates to ca. 1100.[27]

Both paintings exhibit a naïve quality with respect to the depiction of natural forms. A compelling though child-like depiction of a lollypop tree appears in the Vairocana maṇḍala, not unlike a flower in the sky, also conceived and rendered in a naïve manner just outside the Chemchok palace walls. **(Figs. 14 and 15)** Similar observations can be made about the ceremonial staffs with their flying tassels, seen in both the Vairocana maṇḍala and in the Chemchok painting. **(Figs. 16 and 17)**

The historical figures depicted in the Vairocana painting are also naïve in style, and noteworthy for their costumes and manners. **(Fig. 18)** Of particular interest are the historical figures in the lower left corner. Drawn against a white, trilobate arch is a man dressed in yellow robes, hands hidden within its wide green cuffs. He is seated on a carpet and displays his tongue in a distinctively Tibetan manner of demonstrating respect. Either a local potentate or a religious figure, his position at the top of this assembly of officiants suggests his superior status. Below him and also seated on carpets are two other male figures who appear to enact consecration rites associated

26 See DAVID WELDON 1996, "The Perfect Image: The Speelman Collection of Yongle and Xuande Buddhist Icons", *Arts of Asia* 26/3 (May-June 1996), pp. 64–73.

27 STEVEN M. KOSSAK and JANE CASEY SINGER 1998, *Sacred Visions*, New York, pp. 52–54.

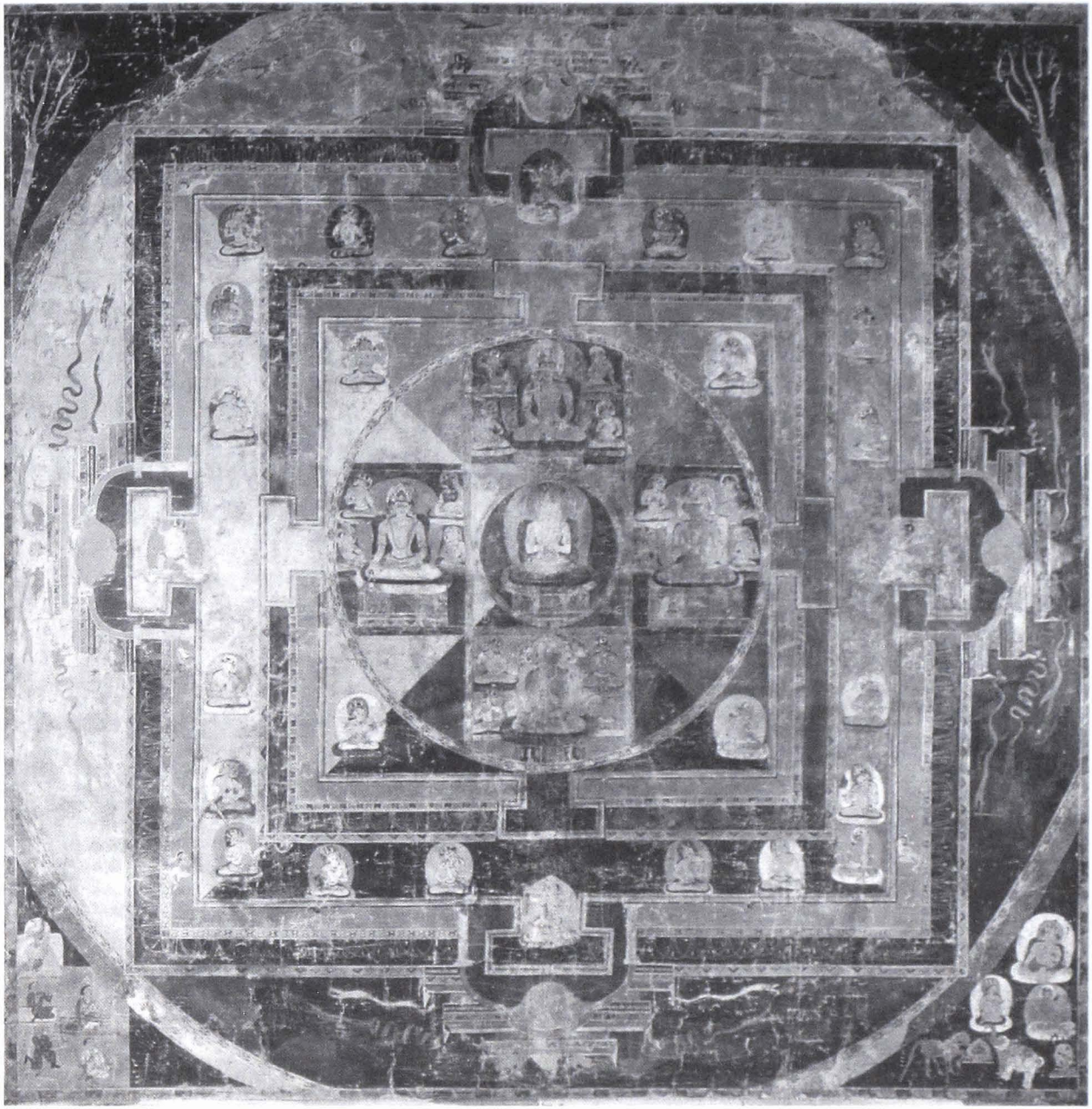

Fig. 13 Vairocana Maṇḍala, Private Collection, distemper on cloth, Tibet, c. mid-10th-11th centuries, 127 x 124.5 cm. Copyright McCormick

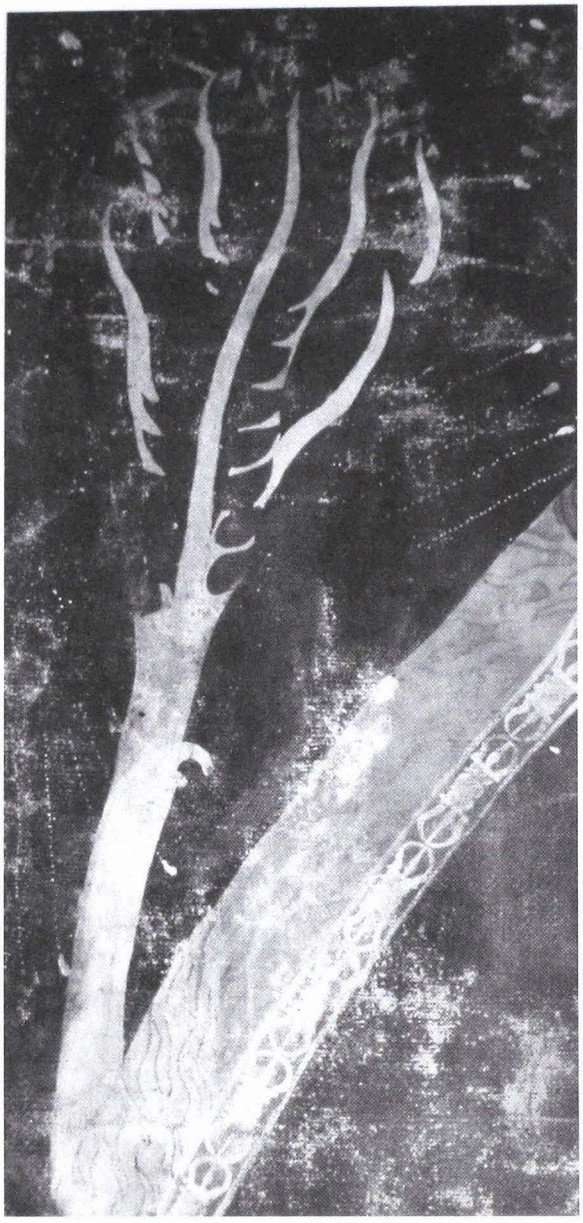

Fig. 14 Tree detail of Fig. 13

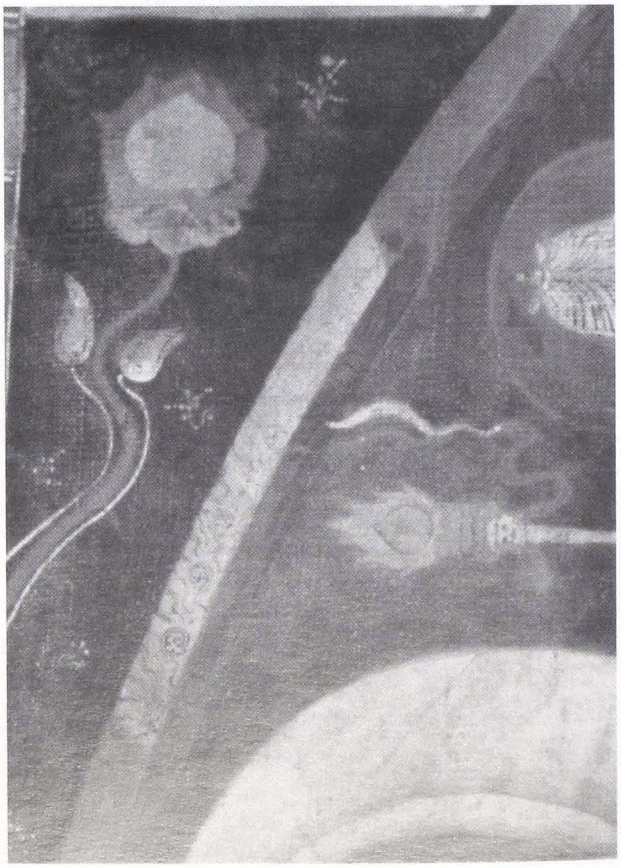

Fig. 15 Flower detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 16 Ceremonial staff and streamer, detail of Fig. 13

Fig. 17 Ceremonial staff and streamer, detail of Fig. 1

with the maṇḍala. One figure holds the long handle of an incense burner; another holds a bell and a large *vajra*, thunderbolt sceptre. Beneath these two, a man on bent knee holds forth an offering bowl, and another holds his hands in *anjali*, the gesture of adoration. The identities of these figures and their monastic or sectarian affiliations are uncertain. However, their naïve characterisation – particularly that of the two figures with page-boy hair – is similar to that of a family of donors depicted in Yemar, a ca. 11th century temple in southeast Tibet near the Bhutanese border and along the ancient trade route between Lhasa and Kathmandu.[28] **(Fig. 19)**

Although not quite as idiosyncratic as the historical figures at Yemar and in the Vairocana maṇḍala, the sacrificiant in the Chemchok painting exhibit some pre-13th-century features. **(Fig. 8)** He wears a green under robe adorned with gold patterns, its cuffs and borders in red, the yellow outer robe falling behind one elbow, and in front of another, bearing resemblance to the treatment of the yellow-robed figure in the Vairocana maṇḍala.

The convention of depicting a monk in a robe whose cuffs and borders are in contrasting colour, and with a yellow outer robe appears in pre-13th century works, such as a Mañjuśrī painting in a private collection.[29] **(Fig. 20)** It is interesting to note that several early historical sources, the *sBa bzhed,* the *Blue Annals*, and Pawo Tsukla Trengwa's *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga 'ston* all mention that during the period of Buddhist persecutions and neglect that preceded the 11th century, Buddhist monks lived as laymen but distinguished themselves by a border on their robes.[30] Perhaps this tradition influenced the depiction of monks in painting and sculpture of the 11th and 12th centuries.

The 11th–12th century Vairocana Maṇḍala and the Chemchok maṇḍala also differ significantly. The Chemchok maṇḍala observes stricter isometric rules, a hallmark of later maṇḍala design; it also introduces registers of figures outside the maṇḍala circle that include historical persons connected with the transmission of the painting's iconographic tradition, a feature of increasing importance as one approaches the 13th century.[31]

One cannot rule out the possibility of an early-13th-century date for the Chemchok maṇḍala, as can be seen in a comparison with a ca. first half 13th century painting of

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28 See ROBERTO VITALI 1990, *Early Temples of Central Tibet*, London, pp. 37–68.

29 Published in KOSSAK and SINGER 1998, pp. 67–69.

30 See R.A. STEIN 1961, *Une Chronique Ancienne de bSam-yas: sBa-bzhed*, Paris, p. 61; gTsug lag phreng ba, The Second Pawo Rinpoche, *Scholar's Feast of Religious History* (*Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*), vol. ja, fol. 139b; GEORGE ROERICH, trans. and ed 1949–1953, *The Blue Annals*, from 'Gos Lo tsā ba, *Deb ther sngon po*, Calcutta, rev. Delhi, 1976, reprint 1979), pp. 60–69.

31 See, for example, developments in the Taklung group of paintings in SINGER and DENWOOD 1997, pp. 52–67. The identities of the red- and yellow-robed figures outside the main circle of the Chemchok maṇḍala are not yet clear.

Saṃvara and Vajravārāhī, now in a private collection.[32] While not identical, one would be hard pressed to argue that subsidiary figures such as those in the bottom registers of the Saṃvara and Chemchok paintings were produced at significantly different periods. Thus style, in this writer's estimation, would suggest that the Chemchok Heruka painting was produced some time during the second half of the 12th and first half of the 13th century.

It is not yet clear just how this painting, perhaps commissioned by Nyingma *tertöns* Nyime Öser or Guru Chöwang during the late 12th or early 13th centuries, came to be consecrated by the Kagyu master, Önpo Lama Rinpoche of Taklung in 1272–73. One further piece of evidence supports the view that the Chemchok painting's consecration by Önpo in 1272–73 is likely to have been the re-consecration of an existing work. Several paintings that bear inscriptions stating they were consecrated by Önpo Lama Rinpoche of Taklung exhibit unusual painting styles. Among them is a painting of Saḍakṣarī Lokeśvara, now in a private collection, which exhibits none of the elements of style and composition that typify the eighty or so works certainly commissioned for this early Kagyu monastic centre. **(Fig. 21)** This painting, like the McCormick work, was also probably (re-)consecrated by Önpo, but – as has been argued with respect to the McCormick Chemchok Heruka painting – is unlikely to have been commissioned by him. The Chemchok and Saḍakṣarī paintings are alike in that they exhibit different, idiosyncratic styles and yet both were consecrated by Taklung's Önpo Lama Rinpoche in 1272–73.

Textual and doctrinal history, inscriptions, iconography, and style all have light to shed on the date of this painting and on the circumstances surrounding its commission. And each body of evidence poses its own interpretive challenges. Neither of the early *termas* so closely describes the McCormick painting that one can unequivocally state that either was more likely to have been connected with it. The inscriptional evidence certainly provides a terminus ad quem, but the full chronological range that it suggests is much broader, i. e., ca. 1180 (the year of Taklung's founding) to 1273. A style analysis points to a second half 12th or first half 13th century date. When assessed in light of the chronological evidence provided by textual history, iconography, and inscriptions, this seems about as precise a chronological attribution as the evidence allows.

In closing, the author would like to argue in favour of a diversity of views. While desirable in general, it would be unnatural if we were to agree on all chronological matters. Our assessments are surely made on the basis of carefully considered evidence, as this writer has attempted to do in this paper. But we will differ in the types of evidence with which we work, in how we weigh and interpret this evidence. More fundamentally, we will differ in the kinds of questions we pose.

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32 Published in PRATAPADITYA PAL 1984, *Tibetan Paintings*, Basel, pl. 12. The painting bears a Taklung lineage that ends ca. mid-13th century.

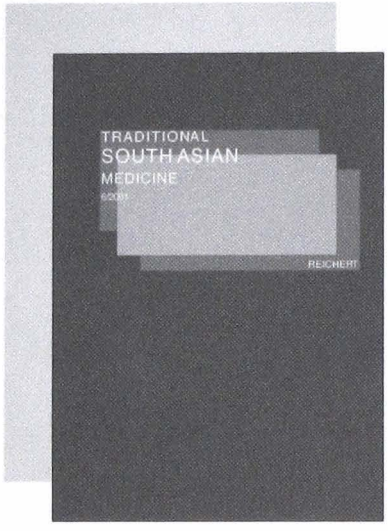
Fig. 18 Historical figures, detail of Fig. 13

Fig. 19 Donors at Yemar, photograph after Giuseppe Tucci, Indo-Tibetica. 4 vol. Roma 1932-41, vol. 4.3, fig. 48

Fig. 20 Detail of monks, Mañjuśri, Private Collection, distemper on cloth, Tibet, c. 11th-12th century, 46 x 33.7 cm. Copyright Private Collection

Posing questions that reflect one's own curiosity – surely the heart of intellectual freedom – will naturally be expressed in the resulting scholarship and in its sometimes differing conclusions.

Fig. 21 Ṣadakṣarī Lokeśvara, Private Collection, distemper on cloth, Tibet, c. 12th-13th century, consecrated by Onpo Lama Rimpoche. Copyright Private Collection



Traditional South Asian Medicine Vol. 6 / 2001

Ed. by Rahul Peter Das
and Ronald Eric Emmerick
2001. 24 x 17 cm. 210 Seiten, 3 Tabellen,
brosch., EUR 39,– (3-89500-230-5 /
ISSN: 1618-1522)

Traditional South Asian Medicine Vol. 7 / 2003

Founded by Rahul Peter Das
and Ronald Eric Emmerick (†)
Edited by Rahul Peter Das
2003. 24 x 17 cm. 216 Seiten, 1 Abb.,
brosch., EUR 39,– (3-89500-356-5 /
ISSN: 1618-1522)

Traditional South Asian Medicine (previously: Journal of the European Āyurvedic Society) is a scholarly journal devoted primarily to the study of all aspects of traditional South Asian medical systems, particularly, but not exclusively, the Āyurvedic tradition. It features not only historical and philological studies, but also such as concern themselves with living traditions, including their interaction with non-South Asian medical traditions both modern and pre-modern, and their practical application. The journal is, however, also open to research on matters relating to the human body or issues of health and hygiene in traditional South Asia even when not placed within the context of a particular medical system. Since the journal's aim is to publish only contributions of a very high standard, it does not appear regularly, but only when enough contributions of such standard justifying the publication of a new issue have come together. No comparable journal with the characteristics mentioned is currently being published; as such, Traditional South Asian Medicine is unique.

Contributions to Tibetan Studies
Edited by David P. Jackson

Vol. 1: Three-Vow Theories in Tibetan Buddhism

A Comparative Study of Major Traditions from the Twelfth through Nineteenth Centuries

Von Jan-Ulrich Sobisch

2002. 24 x 17 cm. 596 Seiten, 10 Abb., Leinen,
EUR 58,– (3-89500-263-1)

Während die Moralvorstellungen des herkömmlichen Buddhismus eine unbedingte Vermeidung unmoralischer Handlungen verlangen, können im Mahāyāna moralische Regeln durchaus einmal außer Kraft gesetzt werden. In dem in Tibet praktizierten Vajrayāna werden in manchen Texten solche Übertretungen sogar zur Pflicht gemacht. Die seit dem 12. Jh. zu beobachtenden Versuche, die verschiedenen Selbstverpflichtungen des Prātimokṣas, des Mahāyānas und des Vajrayānas zu harmonisieren, führten nicht selten zu scharfen Kontroversen. Einige Strategien zur Lösung des Konflikts bestanden in dem Versuch, aus der postulierten Überlegenheit des Vajrayānas entweder eine automatisch „erhöhende Transformation" der „niederen Gelübde" oder aber ihr gänzliches „Ausblenden" abzuleiten. Andere erklärten die Besonderheiten des Vajrayānas als Ausnahmeerscheinungen in der Praxis einzelner, hochbegabter Yogis, während im Allgemeinen die solche Erscheinungen betreffenden Textstellen der Tantras so zu interpretieren seien, daß sie auch vor dem Hintergrund der konventionellen Moral bestehen können.

Diese Studie untersucht die Entstehungsphasen der Lehrmeinungen sowie ihre späteren Ausdeutungen. Zu ihren Ergebnissen zählt u. a. die Erkenntnis, daß gleichlautende Begriffe von verschiedenen Autoren häufig in voneinander abweichender Weise gebraucht wurden, und daß zunächst konträr erscheinende Positionen oft nur auf einer unterschiedlichen Gewichtung einzelner Aspekte beruhen. Allerdings dürften diese Gewichtungen in nicht unerheblicher Weise für die unterschiedliche Handhabung der Praxis verantwortlich sein.

Das Werk enthält neben einer Einleitung biographische Notizen zu allen Autoren, deren Texte herangezogen wurden, inhaltliche Zusammenfassungen der wichtigsten Werke mit ausführlichen Anmerkungen, eine ideengeschichtliche Untersuchung zentraler Begriffe, Dokumentation und Übersetzung tibetischer Texte und detaillierte Indizes. In der Hauptsache werden Texte des Inders Vibhūticandra und der Tibeter Go-rams-pa (Sa-skya-pa), sGam-po-pa (bKa'-brgyud-pa), Karma-'phrin-las-pa und Karma-nges-don (Karma bKa'-brgyud-pa), Kong-sprul (Ris-med), 'Jig-rten-mgon-po und rDo-rje-shes-rab ('Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud-pa) sowie von mNga'-ris Pan-chen und Lo-chen Dharmashrī (rNying-ma-pa) bearbeitet.