

## MANDALAS OF MANDALAS: THE ICONOGRAPHY OF A STUPA OF MANY AUSPICIOUS DOORS FOR PHAG MO GRU PA

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There can be no doubt that the so-called “*Register of the Reliquary Stupa of Many Auspicious Doors for Phag mo gru pa*” (*Phag mo gru pa 'i gdung rten bkra shis sgo mang gi dkar chag*, KCh-1) is an extremely interesting source. The text does not describe the reliquary stupa of Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–1170) in terms of its shape and symbolism, but focuses on the deities represented on the six levels or tiers underneath the stupa’s dome. Each tier contains one or more configuration of deities in each of the cardinal directions, often comprising of one or more mandala assembly. Each tier can thus be seen as a mandala of mandalas, as can the whole stupa. In total, the text states, the stupa holds an impressive pantheon of 2,170 deities.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the text does not give all their names, but identifies the main deities and usually the first deity heading an assembly around the main deity. Occasionally the entire assembly is enumerated. This source thus represents an impressive record of deities as they were known and systematized at the time it was written down. But when was the text formulated?

As is pointed out by Olaf Czaja in note 6 of his contribution to this volume, there are numerous versions of this description, and these are either

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to His Holiness 'Bri gung Skyabs mgon Che tshang, the 37<sup>th</sup> throneholder of the 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud lineage, who first made me aware of the text this article deals with. Later I had the opportunity to study the text in detail during my 2005/06 fellowship at the Lumbini International Research Institute. Gene Smith generously provided the second source text from his vast TBRC collections for comparison. Finally, my understanding of the text has greatly profited from Olaf Czaja’s contribution to this volume, even if his exhaustive study did not alter my original conclusion.

<sup>2</sup> Although reproduced here as given in the text, the counting of the deities appears problematic at times. Not only is there the usual inconsistency concerning the counting of deities in *yab yum*, but there are also obvious errors.

found in the collected works of 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), the founder of the 'Bri gung pa school, or in those of 'Bri gung *spyang snga* Shes rab 'byung gnas (1187–1241), an immediate pupil of 'Jig rten mgon po (TBRC P131). Czaja takes the latter as the actual author of the text and, from the historical context he has worked out, sees this text as an authentic work of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. I have only used one version of the text found in the collected writings of 'Jig rten mgon po (KCh-1 = TBRC W23743) as my main source and compared important sections of it to two other versions of the same text, both found in the same volume (KCh-2 and KCh-3 = TBRC W30101) and the latter being somewhat longer than the former. From these, and from a comparison to Olaf Czaja's study, it appears that the divergences between the different versions of the text are negligible for the purpose of this study.

Che tshang Rin po che made me aware of this text since he thought it would solve my query concerning sources for the representation of the Eight Great Siddhas in early Tibetan painting. As will be seen below, that was not the case, but I was fascinated by the extensive pantheon it describes, since it represents a textual pendant to the pantheon surviving in the Auspicious Three-storeyed Temple (Bkra shis gsum brtsegs) at Wanla. That monument is connected to the 'Bri gung school and was most likely built sometime in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, I use that temple as my main object of comparison even if the study of the pantheon represented there has not yet been concluded.<sup>4</sup>

In the course of my study I began to wonder if the pantheon described in the text may date indeed to the early days of the 'Bri gung school or if it is not more likely to represent a later stage in its development. In the following, I will analyse the description of the stupa strictly in terms of its iconography and the relative arrangement of its deities and compare these with other depictions in early Tibetan art to establish the context to which that pantheon can most likely be ascribed.

In the introductory section the text mentions two major protagonists responsible for the creation of the stupa, namely a certain master Tshul rin,

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<sup>3</sup> On Wanla and its inscription see Luczanits 2002 and Tropper 2007.

<sup>4</sup> An analysis of the Wanla pantheon will be included in a publication dedicated to the architecture and art of this temple which is being prepared in cooperation with Carmen Auer and Holger Neuwirth.

presumably Tshul khrims rin chen, in charge of the construction, and an image maker (*lha bzo mkhas*) and craftsman (*bzo rig pa*), called Mañibhadra, invited from Nepal. It is clear from the description that the images described are placed on the sides of each of the six tiers, which are counted from above. On each tier each side has five panels, the outer ones receding towards the corners. Thus the stupa described has 20 corners. In addition a lotus is inserted between the fifth and sixth tier. A much more detailed description of the stupa is provided in Czaja's contribution.

### TIER 1

Each tier is described in the direction of circumambulation, starting with the pantheon in the east. The east panel of the uppermost tier has Vajradhara in the centre flanked by, as I understand it, the six images of *chos rje* Phag mo gru pa as (in the form of?) the five family Tathāgata and Vajradhara with the six Pāramitā as their partner.<sup>5</sup>

In the south, Vajradhara is flanked by the first lineage holders of the Bka' brgyud pa school complemented by Jo bo chen po Rje lha gcig, a title referring to Atiśa,<sup>6</sup> on the level of Sgam po pa. West and north have an unspecified *sahaja* (*lhan cig skyes pa*) deity in the centre, each flanked by six siddhas.<sup>7</sup> The lineage in the west likely refers to Cakrasaṃvara, since Indrabodhe (Indrabhūti) is the principal lineage holder to the proper right of the main image, and the lineage in the north probably refers to Hevajra, of which Virūpa is the principal lineage holder (see table Tier 1). The two outermost masters on this side are Padmasambhava/Padma 'byung gnas and *mkhan po* Bodhisattva, which is a common epithet for Śāntarakṣita, clearly two figures that are not included here as lineage holders.

<sup>5</sup> *chos rje phag mo gru pa rigs rnam pa lnga rdo rje 'chang dang bcas pa'am/ pha rol tu phyin pa drug dbye ba med pas bsdus pa'i sku drug* (KCh-1 p. 364). KCh-3 has simply *chos rje rin po che ſ sku rigs rnam pa lnga ...* (p. 118).

<sup>6</sup> Atiśa is included at this point among the great Bka' brgyud masters (see Gyaltzen 1990).

<sup>7</sup> KCh-3 has Vajradhara in the centre of all four faces. However, since the groups of siddhas flanking them are commonly associated with Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra, I have preferred and interpreted the reading of the short versions (KCh-1 and 2).

TIER 1			Centre				
E	Six mages of Phag mo gru pa as five Tathāgata and Vajradhara & six Prajñāpāramitā			<b>Vajradhara</b> Rdo rje 'chang & three Vajrayoginī		Six mages of Phag mo gru pa as five Tathāgata and Vajradhara & six Prajñāpāramitā	
	Rje lha gcig (Atiśa?)	Mar pa Lho brag pa	Tillipa (Tilopa)	<b>Vajradhara</b> Rdo rje 'chang & three Vajrayoginī		Nāropa	Mi la ras pa Sgam po pa
W	Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva & Nāgabodhi	Ḍombhī- heruka	Indrabhūti & Lakṣmīkarā	Sahaja ( <b>Cakrasaṃvara</b> ) & three Vajrayoginī		Saraha, Khanadho & Rohe	Lūhipa (Lūyipa)
N	Padma 'byung gnas	Rdo rje Dril bu pa	Virūpa flanked by ḍākini	Sahaja ( <b>Hevajra</b> ) & three Vajrayoginī		Dzalan- dharapa	Saroruh- vajra & Padmanī
							Bodhi- sattva

The centre of each direction also includes three images of Vajrayoginī, who is called the mother of the Buddhas of the three times. The text counts altogether 53 images on the first tier.

Analysing this configuration, the mention of Phag mo gru pa along with the five Tathāgata and Vajradhara is remarkable, even if it is not clear from the phrase how exactly it has to be understood. The exaltation of Phag mo gru pa is reminiscent of the Cleveland Museum of Art thangka, in which the same teacher is shown as Ādibuddha in the crown of Vairocana.<sup>8</sup> However, in the case of his *gdung rten*, as described here, this exaltation appears to be much more appropriate. It is also clear that in both cases the representations were done after his lifetime.

In addition, the phrase may also be meant to convey the sense that the five *jina* and Vajradhara are represented alike, i.e. all holding their respective attributes in the right hand and a bell in the left. This might refer to a form of the five Tathāgata as depicted on the west wall of the lantern of the Wanla temple, where the five *jina* are seated with their *prajñā* on their laps and holding the family symbol in their right hands. Sadly, these are so poorly preserved that the photographs of them are hardly readable (Figs 1, 2). The most famous example of such a *jina* iconography is the Akṣobhya of the Musée Guimet.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Kossak & Singer 1998: no. 13 and Luczanits 2003: 34, fig. 6.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Kossak & Singer 1998: no. 42.



Fig. 1: Vairocana with *prajñā* holding a wheel and a bell, the central figure in the group of the five *jina*; Wanla temple, west wall of the lantern; first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century; photo C. Luczanits 2003 6,17.

Fig. 2: Akṣobhya with *prajñā* holding a *vajra* and a bell, from the same group as Fig. 1; Wanla temple, west wall of the lantern; first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century; photo C. Luczanits 2003 6,19.

Concerning the siddhas in the first tier, there is an obvious tendency to represent them in triads; thus on the west side Nagārjuna/Klu sgrub is flanked by Āryadeva and Nāgabodhi/Klu'i byang chub, and Saraha by the *ḍākinī* Khaṇaḍho and Rohe, while on the north side Birwa pa (Virūpa) is flanked by two unnamed *ḍākinī*. However, these triads do not conform to those found in early representations of the Eight Great Siddhas, which are characteristic for early 'Bri gung painting, as I have shown elsewhere (see Luczanits 2006, 2006a). Of particular interest in this regard is a line drawing in the Rubin Museum of Art, likely bearing the footprints of 'Jig rten mgon po himself and thus dateable to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> In that drawing, henceforth referred to as the Rubin Museum drawing, the siddhas and their company are actually inscribed. On the top left of the composition, Indrabhūti and Lakṣminkāra

<sup>10</sup> For pictures of the whole drawing see HAR no. 65205. The drawing has also been published in Klimburg-Salter 2004 and Linrothe 2006: Cat. no. 6.



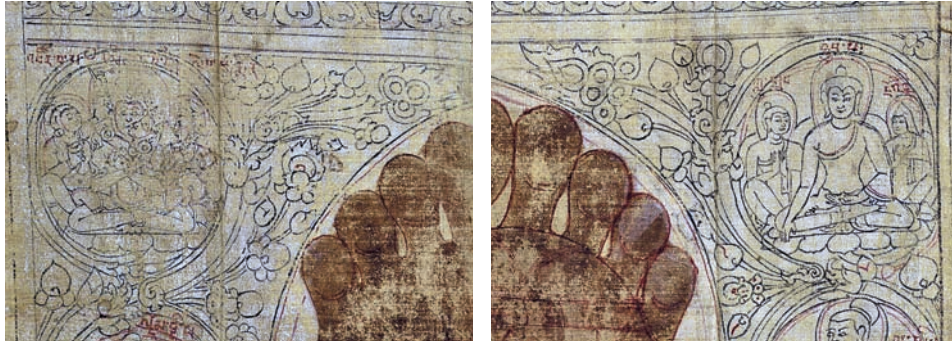


Fig. 3: The upper right triad of Indrabhūti, Lakṣminkāra and Virūpa.

Fig. 4: The upper left triad of Śākyamuni flanked by Nāgārjuna and Atiśa; details of a drawing on silk with the footprints of 'Jig rten mgon po; early 13<sup>th</sup> century; courtesy of the Rubin Museum of Art (HAR no. 65205).

are accompanied by Virūpa (Fig. 3), and on the opposite side there is the triad of Śākyamuni flanked by Nāgārjuna and Atiśa, the 'siddha' Nāgārjuna thus identified with the famous scholar of early Mahāyāna (Fig. 4). In the description of the stupa Indrabhūti and Lakṣminkāra also occupy the position to the proper right of the main deity, but Nāgārjuna's triad is in a secondary position at the edge of the western face, and he himself is the main figure of the triad. The position to the proper left of the main deity is occupied by Saraha flanked by two *ḍākinī*. Such a configuration is not found among the early 'Bri gung pa paintings but among some Stag lung, or better Ri bo che paintings, such as the exquisite thangka of a Ri bo che hierarch in the Musée Guimet, which is to be attributed to the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 5).<sup>11</sup> This small thangka also shows other relevant features, namely the separation of Virūpa and Indrabhūti. Indrabhūti's triad here has a venerating figure at the place where Virūpa is shown in Fig. 3, whereas Virūpa is allotted a separate position among the rocks surrounding the main image. In the iconographic program of the stupa, too, Virūpa has been allotted an independent prominent position among the siddhas on the north side.

The triad of Nāgārjuna on the Rubin Museum drawing also gives Atiśa a completely different position from that he has among the lineage holders placed on the stupa. As the Rubin Museum depiction (Fig. 4) indicates, Atiśa was seen foremost as the teacher who transmitted the teaching of emptiness to

<sup>11</sup> A thangka published in Han Shuli (1995: 317) has a very similar composition.



Fig. 5: The Stag lung hierarch and founder of Ri bo che Sangs rgyas dbon po (1251-1296) on a painting of the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century; Musée Guimet, MA 6063; after a Musée Guimet brochure.



Tibet. On the stupa, in contrast, he has become part of the main Bka' brgyud lineage itself, placed between Mi la ras pa and Sgam po pa. So far, I have not come along any depiction of this lineage, but depictions of Atiśa may be found separate from the lineage holders proper. An early inscribed example in this respect is an unusual thangka dedicated to a group of six Bka' brgyud pa teachers, today also in the Rubin Museum of Art, where Atiśa is placed in the bottom right corner, clearly an inferior position.<sup>12</sup> Another telling example is the representation of the Stag lung hierarch Sangs rgyas yar byon Shes rab bla ma/Prajñāguru (1203–1272, abbot 1236–1272) on a thangka of the collection of John and Berthe Ford in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. It contains both a Bka' brgyud pa and a Bka' gdams pa lineage, the latter represented in a secondary position on the right beginning with Atiśa in the top corner.<sup>13</sup>

Most telling, however, is the inclusion of Padmasambhava/Padma 'byung gnas and Śāntarakṣita as the outermost masters on the north side. As they are not lineage holders of Hevajra, their inclusion among the major masters here must have some other purpose. In early Stag lung and Ri bo che paintings, Padmasambhava eventually comes to be included among the masters of the tradition. Again one can use the Guimet and Ford collection thangkas as examples, of which the latter can be dated to the last quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Padmasambhava does not occur in early Himalayan monuments at all, his earliest representations dating to the mid- or late 13<sup>th</sup> century, but he takes a prominent position in the paintings of Wanla, where he is shown

<sup>12</sup> The thangka has formerly been in the Jucker collection. For depictions see Kreijger 2001: 67, Jackson 2009: fig. 3.1 or HAR no. 89141. Despite the abundance of inscriptions the iconography of this thangka is still not entirely clear.

<sup>13</sup> For a depiction see Pal 2001: no. 134 or HAR no. 73808. A similar composition is found on a thangka published in Singer 1996: fig. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Unless there is a special reason to do otherwise, such as the footprint in the case of the Rubin Museum drawing, I generally interpret early Bka' brgyud pa hierarch representations as posthumous and thus made after the lifetime of the respective hierarch, but, if this is the last teacher mentioned in the mantras on the back, within the abbot-ship of his successor. Since the Sangs rgyas yar byon from the Ford collection does not have Dbon po's mark of ownership on it, which I take as sign of a reconsecration performed in Ri bo che for objects taken from sTag lung, it was likely produced in Ri bo che after Dbon po moved there in 1273. An earlier portrait of the same teacher in the Kronos collection, probably to be dated to the short tenure of Dbon po in Stag lung (1272–1273), as suggested by Jane Casey Singer, has a considerably different iconography (Kossak & Singer 1998: no. 19).



several times, once together with his eight main manifestations on the left side wall of the main niche.<sup>15</sup> His inclusion and that of Śāntarakṣita are evidence of the integration of the powerful association with the religious heritage of the imperial period within the Bka' brgyud pa schools.

## TIER 2

The second tier is dedicated to diverse *anuttarayoga* Tantra cycles. There are two subjects that occupy the whole face, the most prominent being the 72-deity mandala assembly of the Guhyasamāja in the east, which is centred on Aggression-*vajra*/Dveṣavajra/Zhe sdang rdo rje, with three faces and six arms, in union with the goddess Touch-*vajrī*/Sparśavajrī/Reg bya rdo rje ma, their names being telling in comparison to those on the Rubin Museum drawing (see below). The remaining deities enumerated have their common Tathāgata and goddesses names.

In the centre of the south is a 23-deity assembly of Vajrakīlaya/Rdo rje gzhon nu in union with Tr̥ptacakra/'Khor lo rgyas 'debs ma, “together with the ten wisdom-*krodha*, Hūṃkara etc., the ten mothers Śabdavajrā/Rdo rje sgra 'byin ma etc. and the foremost son Vajrakīla/Badzra ki la etc.” Interestingly, to the proper right of the Vajrakīlaya assembly, Kālacakra/Dus kyi dkyil 'khor takes a fairly secondary position in the iconographic program of the stupa. On this side are also found the assemblies of Mahācakra/'Khor lo chen po, a form of Vajrapāṇi, and on the proper left of Vajrakīlaya, two wrathful manifestations of Mañjuśrī, Yamāntaka/gShin rje gshed and Vajrabhairava.

In addition, a 16-deity Hevajra/Dgyes pa'i rdo rje assembly is described in the position underneath the lineage, likely referring to Cakrasaṃvara in the west. This side is further occupied by assemblies of Mahāmāyā, Jñānaḍākinī/Ye shes mkha' 'gro ma and two small assemblies of Vajrayoginī/Rdo rje rnal 'byor ma in the periphery, one of five and the other of seven deities. The other cycle occupying the complete face is the 62-deity mandala assembly of Cakrasaṃvara in the north, with the siddhas and other elements mentioned for the charnel grounds.

In addition to these main cycles, small assemblies of different forms of Avalokiteśvara are also mentioned for this level: east, a Ṣaḍakṣara/Yi ge drug pa triad, presumably Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara flanked by Mañidhara and Ṣaḍakṣarī-

<sup>15</sup> On the emergence of Padmasambhava see Kapstein 2000: 155–60.

TIER 2			Centre		
E	Ratnasambhava	Vairocana	72-deity <b>Guhyasamāja</b> assembly & <b>Ṣaḍakṣara</b> triad	Amitābha 'Od dpag tu med pa	Amoghasiddhi
S	14-deity Mahācakra [Vajrapāṇi] (3f, 6a) & Mdzes ldan ma	10-deity Kālacakra (4f, 12a) & Viśvavajrī	23-deity <b>Vajrakīlaya</b> & Tṛptacakra assembly & <b>Mahākaruṇa Cintāmaṇicakra</b> pentad	10-deity Mañjuśrī Yamāntaka (3f, 6a) & Ro langs khro mo	Vajrabhairava (9f, 34a)
W	7-deity Vajrayoginī	6-deity Mahāmāyā (4f, fa) & Buddhaḍākinī	16-deity <b>Hevajra</b> (8f, 16a) & Nairātmāyoginī assembly & <b>Amoghapaśa</b> pentad	13-deity Śrīdevī [Jñānaḍākinī] of the <i>Caturpīṭha-tantra/Gdan bzhi rgyud</i> (3f, 6a)	5-deity Vajrayoginī
N	charnel grounds with siddhas	62-deity mandala of <b>Cakrasaṃvara</b> & 11-headed <b>Lokeśvara</b> triad			charnel grounds with siddhas

Mahāvidyā; pentads of Mahākaruṇa Cintāmaṇicakra/Thugs rje chen po Yid bzhin gyi 'khor lo, south, and Amoghapāśa/Don yod zhags pa, west; and north, a triad of the Eleven-headed Compassionate Lord. In total 359 deities are counted for the second tier.

Obviously, such huge cycles are difficult to compare, but there are some interesting details one can point out. As mentioned, the Guhyasamāja assembly is centred on Aggression-*vajra*/Dveṣavajra/Zhe sdang rdo rje in union with the goddess Touch-*vajrī*/Sparśavajrī/Reg bya rdo rje ma. The captions on the Rubin Museum drawing name the male deities of the Guhyasamāja cycle depicted there in the same manner. However, the most prominent deities flanking 'Bri gung pa in the second row underneath the lineage are Samantabhadri/Kun tu bzang mo to the left of 'Bri gung pa—female deities being in the more prominent position here—and Delusion-*vajra*/Mohavajra/Ti mug rdo rje to the right. These deities belong to the family of Vairocana as confirmed by the wheel in their lower right hand, the hand holding the principal attribute. These are followed by Māmaki/Ma ma gi and Aggression-*vajra*/Dveṣavajra/Zhe sdang rdo rje in a secondary position; they hold the *vajra* in the principal right hand and thus belong to Akṣobhya's family. The Rubin Museum drawing reflects the religious environment around 1200, when Vairocana was still considered the principal Buddha, even if the cycle concerned is to be classified



Fig. 6: Vajrakīlaya assembly from the Bka' brgyad; Wanla temple, left side wall to the right of the Maitreya niche; photo C. Luczanits 2003 12,18.

Fig. 7: Main section of the Cakrasaṃvara mandala wall; Wanla temple, right side wall to the left of the Śākyamuni niche; photo C. Luczanits 2003 10,10.

as *anuttarayoga* Tantra.<sup>16</sup> This is also indicated by the names of the female forms, which are the standard goddess names of the *yoga* Tantra. In contrast, the description in the *Register of the Reliquary Stupa* clearly reflects a later stage, when Akṣobhya occupies the central position, and the goddesses are named differently as well. However, it is impossible to give a specific time for this shift, which was obviously a gradual one.

If the identification of the *sahaja* deities on the first tier, made on the basis of the siddhas, is correct, there is an obvious inconsistency in the layout of the iconographic program concerning Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra. In the

<sup>16</sup> For example, on the thangka with Phag mo gru pa and Stag lung Thang pa chen po Bkra shis dpal/Maṅgalaśrī (1142–1210, abbot from 1180 to 1210) the white Guhyasamāja deity is in the top centre (e.g. Kossak & Singer 1998: no. 42). The same is true for the bottom row of the five heroes on the Vajrayoginī mandala assembly thangka in the Fournier collection (e.g. Béguin, 1990: no. C).

west we have Cakrasaṃvara on the first tier above a Hevajra assembly on the second tier. In the north the relationship is reversed, with Hevajra above and two Cakrasaṃvara mandalas on the second and third tiers. It is also possible, but unlikely, that the directional attribution of the two lineages on the first tier is not correct.

Most surprisingly for an early 13<sup>th</sup>-century context is, however, the prominent position allotted to Vajrakīlaya in the centre of the south. The few details mentioned of this depiction conform to the Byang gter tradition version of the mandala discovered in 1366 by Dngos grub rgyal mtshan, but it is still unclear to me at this stage if there are earlier versions of this assembly using the same terminology.<sup>17</sup>

In general, the Tantric cycles represented on the second level more or less conform to the program found on the ground floor of the Wanla temple. The two Guhyasamāja assemblies are placed in the top centre of the walls flanking the main niche. A Vajrakīlaya assembly is found on the left side wall (Fig. 6), which is occupied by the nine Mahāyoga assemblies based on the Bka' brgyad, a set of eight Mahāyoga teachings each of which is associated with a deity and together forming a kind of super-mandala. This is the earliest depiction of this topic known to me so far. On the wall opposite the Bka' brgyad, to the left of Śākyamuni's niche, Cakrasaṃvara is emphasized by being placed in a full mandala, whereas Hevajra, Vajrabhairava, Kālacakra and Mahāmāyā take a minor position in the corners outside the mandala (Fig. 7). Another early Vajrakīlaya representation, even in the form of a regular mandala, is preserved at Wa chen, a West Tibetan cave site documented by Tshe ring rgyal po (2006).

The prominent role of the different forms of Avalokiteśvara is surprising when compared with early 13<sup>th</sup>-century 'Bri gung paintings. Ṣaḍakṣara already occurs on the unusual hierarch representation at Alchi in a marginal position, but attains a more prominent placement in the course of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, different forms of Avalokiteśvara become deities of major importance in this school. This is seen in the Wanla temple, where an 8-armed 11-headed Avalokiteśvara is the main deity, and all the other forms mentioned here, partly including their assemblies, are also represented

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<sup>17</sup> Boord 1993: 79–89.



in the main niche, with Śaḍakṣara, in an highly esoteric form, in the centre of a mandala.

### TIER 3

On the third tier from the top, the 47 deities of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala centred on Vairocana/Rnam par snang mdzad—with faces in all [directions] (*samanta-mukha/kun tu zhal*) and the hands in *bodhyagrī mudrā*—occupy the entire east face.<sup>18</sup> The description also mentions that the four mothers of the families are represented in a concealed form (*sbas pa'i tshul du*), which likely means that they are shown as the symbols of the four Buddha families around Vairocana, a very common depiction.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the main cycles, each side of this level has an unspecified kneeling form of Acala/Mi g.yo ba, whose 11-deity assembly is on the west side as well.

The south face has an 18-deity assembly of Buddhakapāla/Sangs rgyas thod pa in union with Citrasenā/Sna tshogs sde ma in the centre flanked by two *nirmāṇakāya* assemblies, on one side that of the King of the Array of the Triple Samaya/Trisamayavyūharāja/Dam tshig gsum dkod pa'i rgyal po Śākyamuni,<sup>20</sup> and on the other Bhaiṣajyaguru/Sman bla surrounded by the other six medicine Buddhas (*sman bla mched bdun*). Small assemblies of Vajrasattva and Mañjuśrī Lion of Debaters/'Jam dpal Smra ba'i sengge, take the peripheral positions.

The centre of the west side is occupied by a very curious 17-deity assembly of Prajñāpāramitā/Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin ma. The four-armed Prajñāpāramitā, called lady (*īśvarī*) of the Vajradhātu, is surrounded by an assembly of eight goddesses led by Mahāpratisarā/So sor 'brang ba chen mo. Exceptionally for the text, all eight goddesses are enumerated by name, indicating that this configuration was not common at the time. The remaining

<sup>18</sup> There is an obvious error in the counting of the deities here. Those mentioned make up 49 deities and represent the main mandala without its gate-keepers. This makes one wonder if gate-keepers were represented at all on this higher levels.

<sup>19</sup> See in particular the examples of a Nālandā image of Vairocana (Luczanits 2004: figs 226–28), the Assembly Hall of Tabo (Luczanits 1997 or 2004: 43–56), the images of gNas mjal che mo (Heller 1998) and the Vajradhātumaṇḍala depictions in Kossak & Singer 1998: no. 45 (Kronos Collection), Pal 1997: no. 72 (Navin Kumar) and Pal 2003: no. 115 (private collection), to mention only a few.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Tachikawa, Chandra & Watanabe 2006: no. 2.

TIER 3		Centre			
E	Ratnasambhava	Akṣobhya	47-deity <b>Vajradhātu Vairocana</b> ( <i>bodhyagri</i> ) & Acala	Amitābha Snang ba mtha' yas	Amoghasiddhi
S	9-deity Vajrasattva	5-deity Trisamaya- vyūharāja [Śākyamuni]	18-deity <b>Buddhakapāla</b> (4a) & Citrasenā & Acala	7-deity King of Medicine [Bhaiṣajyaguru]	7-deity Mañjuśrī, Lion of Debaters
W	17-deity Uṣṇīṣa- cakravartin	11-deity Acala	17-deity <b>Prajñāpāramitā</b> (4a) with Mahāpratisarā etc. & Kneeling Wrathful King	5-deity <i>mgon po</i> Tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa [Vajrapāṇi?]	12-deity Avalokiteśvara
N	5-deity heart mandala of Vajrapāṇi	10-deity Yang dag Heruka (3f, 6a) & Kro ti sho ri	14-deity <b>Cakrasaṃvara</b> (4f, 12a) & Vajrayoginī & Kneeling Wrathful King	9-deity Eight-armed Tārā	5-deity Hayagrīva

goddesses are: Rdo rje mi pham ma, Sdig pa thams cad spong ba, Gdul dka' ba, Bdud thams cad 'joms ma, Sgo mtha' yas pa, Dkon mchog 'byung gnas, and Cundā/Skul byed ma. Indeed, except for the first and last, the latter being also a *dhāraṇī* in the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇjuśrīmaṇḍala, the names of the goddesses are highly unusual and a similar list could not be found elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> The assembly is completed by the Eight Great Bodhisattvas. Besides the 11-deity assembly of Acala mentioned above, the west side further houses a 17-deity assembly of Uṣṇīṣacakravartin/Gtsug gtor 'khor los bsgyur ba, *mgon po* Unfathomable Time and Wisdom/Tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa, actually a form of Amitāyus, and a 12-deity assembly of Avalokiteśvara/Spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug including Śaḍakṣarīvidyā/Yig drug rig ma and offering goddesses.

On the north side Cakrasaṃvara/'Khor lo bde mchog is in the centre again, now in an assembly of 12 *dākiṇī*.<sup>22</sup> To its proper right are assemblies of

<sup>21</sup> In general, it can be assumed that this list refers to personified *dhāraṇī*, as is also supported by KCh-3, where they are called *rigs sngags kyi rgal mo*. Among the ten *dhāraṇī* of the *Akṣayamatipariṣcchā* the fourth is Gdul dka' ba, and the ninth Sgo mtha' yas pa'i rgyan (see Pagel 2007: 168). Dkon mchog 'byung gnas is listed as a Bodhisattva meditation in Mvy 743 (ibid. 158). Bdud 'joms ma is the name of a form of Tārā (Mārasūdāna-Tārā).

<sup>22</sup> This conforms to the so-called 13-deity Dhūtaguṇa Cakrasaṃvara mandala (Bsod nams rgya mtsho 1991: no. 74).



Fig. 8: Assembly of an eight-armed Vajradhātu Vairocana; Wanla temple, main wall to the left of the main niche; photo C. Luczanits 2003 11,01.

Fig. 9: Large assembly centred on the seven medicine Buddhas; Wanla temple, main wall to the left of the main niche; photo C. Luczanits 2003 12,02.

Yang dag Heruka, and the heart-mandala of Vajrapāṇi, and to its left are the mandalas of the Eight-armed Tārā/Phyag brgyad sgrol ma and of Hayagrīva/Rta mgrin with three heads and six arms. In total there is an assembly of 260 deities on the third tier.

Concerning the general arrangement, it is remarkable that assemblies which are usually categorized under different groups of Tantra are found together here, a feature that is also seen at Wanla. The hierarchies expressed in the two pantheons thus do not stem from a strict classification of the different deities and their assemblies according to the common categories of Tantras, but follow some other system. While emphasizing the Vajradhātu mandala on the east, it may well be that the central Vairocana is thought to be eight-armed like the one at Wanla (Fig. 8), this tier very much gives the impression of a collection of important cycles that did not fit into the upper

tiers. These cycles may at least partly reflect their practical importance. In Wanla comparable iconographies are distributed around the four walls making up the back corners of the ground floor, where they commonly occupy a less prominent position than those mentioned for the higher tiers. Among them is an unusual composition dedicated to the Seven Medicine Buddhas centred on Bhaiṣajyaguru/Sman bla placed within an elaborate palace (Fig. 9). In this case, Śākyamuni is represented in small size in the stupa above the central image.

Certainly, the assembly of Prajñāpāramitā in the west is the most striking, since many of the deities surrounding her are not identifiable at all. The only comparable arrangement I have come across is represented on the bottom of the marvellous Vajraḍāka Cakrasaṃvara mandala in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>23</sup> There, the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is flanked by the red Kurukullā<sup>24</sup> and white Cundā,<sup>25</sup> and on the outside are possibly Dhanada-Tārā, a form of Green Tārā,<sup>26</sup> and a six-armed form of Vasudhārā, the wealth goddess.<sup>27</sup> Prajñāpāramitā takes a minor position in the Wanla pantheon, where she is surrounded by 22 Buddhas.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Leidy & Thurman 1997: no. 13, Luczanits 2006: fig. 4.16 and Brauen 2009: 84–85, pl. 3.

<sup>24</sup> She holds a bow and an arrow in one pair of hands while the other pair performs the gesture of fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*) and holds the stem of a red lotus.

<sup>25</sup> Except for the gesture of the second right hand, her iconography follows the descriptions in the *Sādhanaṃālā* (nos 129 and 131; de Mallmann 1986: 143–44).

<sup>26</sup> The goddess appears to hold a rosary and a book in her upper hands. The lower left hand holds something unidentified between index finger and thumb, and the right appears to perform some kind of *vajramudrā*. Tārā images are of a very similar iconography, but performing *varadamudrā* with the lower right hand and holding the blue lily (*utpala*) in the lower left hand, are common in the Alchi group of monuments. For depictions in the Alchi Sumtsek, see Goepper & Poncar 1996: 59, 63–65, 72 (the two upper flanking Tārā, details 81, 84, 85). They also make clear that the hand that is supposed to hold the blue lily is often held in the manner shown here.

<sup>27</sup> She performs the gesture of venerating the Tathāgata (*tathāgatavandanā* or *vandanābhīṇyamudrā*), holds a bouquet of jewels, and performs the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*). With the left hands she holds the Prajñāpāramitā book, an ear of rice, and a vase of plenty. Her depiction conforms to the *Vasundharodeśa* as summarised in de Mallmann, 1986: 141–42, where the goddess is in the centre of a mandala.



TIER 4		Centre			
E	Aparājita	Maitreya	Śākyamuni & 250 Akṣobhya & Vajrāṅkuśa	Samantabhadra	Trailokyavijaya
S	Acala	Vajrapāṇi	Śākyamuni & 250 Ratnasambhava & Vajrapāśa	Ākāśagarbha	Amṛtakuṇḍalin
W	Yamāntaka	Mañjuśrī	Śākyamuni & 250 Amitābha & Vajrasphoṭa	Lokeśvara	Hayagrīva
N	Niladaṇḍa	Kṣitigarbha	Śākyamuni & 250 Amoghasiddhi & Vajraganṭha	Nīvaraṇa- viṣkambhin	Ṭakkirāja

## TIER 4

The fourth tier has a unified program throughout, with Śākyamuni flanked by two of the eight Bodhisattvas of the *bhadrakalpa* and two wrathful deities on each side. These main deities are surrounded by 250 Buddhas on each side for a total of 1,000, each of them in the iconography of the Tathāgata of their respective direction. For example, in the east the repeated Buddhas perform the earth-touching gesture of Akṣobhya, on the south that of Ratnasambhava and so on. In addition, there are also the four gate-keepers characteristic of yoga Tantra mandalas Vajrāṅkuśa/Rdo rje lcags kyu etc. This level is said to have 1,093 deities in total.

I do not know of any comparable composition, but there are a number of more general comparisons that appear to be useful to set this composition in context. The concept of the repeated representation of 250 deities in the cardinal directions is found as early as in the eighth century in connection with the Vajradhātu mandala. Ānandagarbha/Kun dga' snying po, in his commentary to this cycle, the *Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalopikasarvavajrodāya/Rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga rdo rje thams cad 'byung ba* (VDMo), prescribes the repeated representation of the main *vajra*-Bodhisattva for each direction. A number of Vajradhātu mandala representations have this composition.<sup>28</sup> However, if the same topic or the main mandala of the Durgatipariśodhana cycle are represented on a thangka set, repeated Buddhas

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Kronos collection: Kossak & Singer 1998: no. 45; Kumar collection: Pal 1997: no. 72 and Han Shuli 1995: 327.



Fig. 10: Durgatipariśodhana mandala with the Buddhas in the cardinal direction repeatedly represented; Alchi Tsatsapuri, eastern temple, ground floor, left side wall; photo C. Luczanits 1998 123,21 (WHAV).

Fig. 11: Detail of the northeast corner of the same mandala with repeated representations of Amoghasiddhi and Akṣobhya; photo C. Luczanits 1998 124,02 (WHAV).

take the position of the repeated *vajra*-Bodhisattvas. On all the examples I know, the repeated Buddhas are either performing *bhūmisparśamudrā* only or they are shown in the iconography of all five Buddhas, regardless of the direction the thangka represents as a whole.<sup>29</sup> What is important in this context is that none of these compositions can be dated to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. They become common around 1300 and are popular into the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

In Wanla both sides of the entry wall are covered with comparable compositions. To the left of the entrance the five *jina* take the centre, while nine Buddhas are centred on a crowned Buddha and head the configuration on the wall to the right of the entrance. Similar compositions occupy the walls

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, HAR nos 15, 98, 178, 270, 281, 373, 1006, 69109, 69110, 69401, 89961. Early examples of this composition are studied in detail in Luczanits *in press*.

near the entrance to the gallery as well. The best comparison is certainly a Durgatipariśodhana mandala in one of the Tsatsapuri temples in Alchi (Figs 10, 11). In this mandala the core assembly in the central palace is surrounded by a second palace with repeated representations of the Buddha in monastic robe and in the iconography of the respective directional *jina*. Both this example and the ones on thangka sets combine iconographic features of the main mandalas of the Vajradhātu and the Durgatipariśodhana cycles, by replacing the specific Buddhas of the Durgatipariśodhana mandala with the common five *jina* as they occur in the Vajradhātu mandala.

#### TIER 5

The fifth tier is dedicated to goddesses. In each direction are three central goddesses, flanked by two groups of four offering goddesses on either side. On the periphery, on the proper right side are the goddesses Viṇā/Pi wang ma, Vaṃśā/Gling bu ma, Murajā/Rdza rnga ma and Mṛdaṅgā/Rnga chen ma as well as Rūpavajrā/Gzugs rdo rje ma, Rasavajrā/Ro rdo rje ma, Sparśavajrā/Reg bya rdo rje ma and Dharmavajrā/Chos rdo rje ma. On the left side are the goddesses Vajrahāsyā/Rdo rje bzhad ma, Vajralāsyā/Rdo rje sgeg ma, Vajragītā/rDo rje glu ma and Vajranṛtyā/Rdo rje gar ma as well as Vajrapuṣpā/Rdo rje me tog ma, Vajradhūpā/Rdo rje bdug spos ma, Vajrālokā/Rdo rje snang gsal ba and Vajragandhā/Rdo rje dri chab ma. As a group, these are known as the sixteen goddesses of sensual enjoyment (Beyer 1978: 159–64).

More important are the central goddesses, a main one flanked by two others. In the east we have Parṇaśabarī/Parna sha wa ri flanked by Mārīcī/'Od zer can and Jāṅgulī/Dug sel ma. In the south a form of Tārā with four heads and eight arms is flanked by Uṣṇīṣasitātāpātra/Gtsug gtor gdugs dkar mo can and Cundā/Bskul byed ma, with one head and four arms.

In the west Dhvajāgrakeyūrā/Rgyal mtshan rtse mo'i dpung rgyan can, with four heads and eight arms,<sup>30</sup> is flanked by Ekajaṭī/E ka dza ti and Mahāsahasrapramardanī/Stong chen mo rab tu 'joms ma, a Pañcarākṣa goddess. Finally, in the north there is Vasudhārā/Nor rgyun ma with Mahāpratisarā/So sor 'brang ma chen mo, another Pañcarākṣa goddess, and Kurukullā/Ku ru ku le to her sides.

<sup>30</sup> See Willson & Brauen 2000: no. 268.

TIER 5			Centre		
E	Viṇā etc. Rūpavajrā etc.	Māricī (3f 6a)	<b>Paṇṣābarī</b> (3f 6a) & Mahārṣi	Jāṅguli Dug sel ma	Vajrahāsyā etc. Vajrapuṣpā etc.
S	Viṇā etc. Rūpavajrā etc.	Uṣṇīṣasitātapātra (3f 6a)	<b>Tārā</b> (4f 8a) & Mahārṣi	Cundā Bskul byed ma (4a)	Vajrahāsyā etc. Vajrapuṣpā etc.
W	Viṇā etc. Rūpavajrā etc.	Ekajaṭī (8a)	<b>Dhvajāgrakeyūrā</b> (4f 8a) & Mahārṣi	Mahāsahasra- pramardanī (4f 8a)	Vajrahāsyā etc. Vajrapuṣpā etc.
N	Viṇā etc. Rūpavajrā etc.	Mahāpratisarā (8a)	<b>Vasudhārā</b> (6a) & Mahārṣi	Kurukullā (4a)	Vajrahāsyā etc. Vajrapuṣpā etc.

In addition to the central triads of goddesses, one of the four great sages (Mahārṣi/Drang srong chen po) shares centre position on each side, each holding a different attribute. These are: a fully grown *utpala* flower in the east, a fruit (*shing thog*) in the south, Me sgron, the great sage of Agni/Me lha, in the west holds a flower, while the one in the north has a flask. In total there are 150 deities on the fifth tier.

There is very little comparable to these arrangements in what I consider to represent at least a section of the early 'Bri gung pantheon.<sup>31</sup> Female deities with a protective function do occur, but their forms are usually simpler than those described for the stupa. Concerning the female deities, it is remarkable that Uṣṇīṣavijayā is not depicted at all in this extensive pantheon, although she does occur in a prominent position in later examples of 13<sup>th</sup>-century 'Bri gung paintings. Also the Pañcarākṣa goddesses take a secondary position here and are not represented as a group. These goddesses are prominent on a few early thangkas, such as an Amoghasiddhi thangka in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See Luczanits 2006a.

<sup>32</sup> Kossak & Singer 1998: no. 23c. For a discussion of the iconography of the set this painting belongs to, including the Pañcarākṣa representation, see Luczanits *in press*.



## TIER 6

The sixth tier is underneath the lotus on which the other platforms are built and is discussed in detail in Olaf Czaja's contribution to this volume. In each direction a protector (*mgon po*) and a form of Śrīdevī/Dpal lha mo chare the centre position, to either side of a central lotus stem. These core deities are flanked by two deities of wealth, among them the earth goddess. Two great *nāga* kings take the outside positions (see the tier 6 table). Thus, there are six main images on each side, each surrounded by eight or more secondary deities. In addition, all deities are placed within the loops of a common lotus scroll. In general, such scrolls are common in early 'Bri gung paintings. In the earliest examples the scroll surrounds not only the bottom row of deities but also the Eight Great Siddhas represented on the sides of the thangka, while in later examples it is only used for the bottom row of deities.<sup>33</sup>

The protector of the east is the Raven-headed Mahākāla/*mgon po* Bya rog ma, with one head and four arms, surrounded by the ten guardians of the directions headed by Indra/Rgya byin. On the Rubin Museum drawing a four-armed form of Mahākāla in what appears to be the common iconography is identified as Bya rog ma. The apparent inconsistency of the caption with the depiction is clarified by Olaf Czaja in his contribution to this volume (see p. 239ff.). Bya rog ma's counterpart on this side of the sixth tier is a four-armed form of dPal ldan lha mo, Prāṇasādhana/Srog sgrub ma,<sup>34</sup> with one head and four arms and accompanied by the *nāginī* Makara-faced/Chu srin gdong and

<sup>33</sup> In the Western Himalayas representations of beings within a common lotus scroll are already found in the Tabo Main Temple, where this is still an exceptional motive restricted to an innovative ceiling painting on cloth (see Wandl 1997: fig. 205). In the 12<sup>th</sup>-century monuments lotus scrolls are increasingly used to encircle Buddha representations outside the mandala proper (e.g. in Nako and the Alchi 'Du khang). More significantly, the lotus encircles the sculptural assemblies on the main walls of many Western Himalayan monuments, most importantly those of the main temples of Lalung, Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda, where it arises from a vase underneath Vairocana's throne (for illustrations see Luczanits 2004). It is this concept that is utilized in early 'Bri gung painting. However, as many examples show, the motif continues to be prominently used into the 14<sup>th</sup> century and among other schools as well (see for example Kossak & Singer 1998: nos 22 and 30, which are actually contemporary) and thus cannot be considered characteristic of early 'Bri gung art.

<sup>34</sup> A form of Śrīdevī with the full name Srog sgrub lcags phur ma (Chandra 1986: 900).

TIER 6		Centre				
E	Ananta & eight great <i>nāga</i>	Vaiśravaṇa & eight <i>yakṣa</i> , etc.	<b>Raven-headed Mahākāla</b> & ten guardians of the directions	<b>Srog sgrub ma</b> (4a) & eight goddesses with knife and <i>kapāla</i>	earth goddess Brtan ma & eight Bum pa & <i>jo mo lnga</i>	Mahāpadma & eight great <i>nāga</i>
S	Padma & eight great <i>nāga</i>	Āṭavaka 'Broḡ gnas & eight more	<i>mgon po</i> <b>Gtsug tor rten</b> & eight classes of god	<b>Dud sol ma</b> (4a) & ten goddesses with knife and <i>kapāla</i>	Viṣṇu Khyab 'jug (9f, 4a) & eight great heavenly bodies	Śaṅkapāla & eight great <i>nāga</i>
W	Takṣaka & eight great <i>nāga</i>	Mahāgaṇapati (4a) & eight alike	<b>Legs ldan nag po chen po</b> & eight war- gods (4a)	<b>Gcer bu bong zhon ma Shan pa nag mo</b> & four queens of the four times	Jambhala & eight alike	Karkotaka & eight great <i>nāga</i>
N	Vāsuki & eight great <i>nāga</i>	Kinnara-king Ljon po & 10 mountain deities in an assembly of 19	<i>mgon po</i> <b>Mchog sred</b> & <i>mgon po</i> Rta mangs, the demon-king Lang ka etc.	<b>Dbu bcu bdun ma</b> & four Bse goddesses & twelve Bstan ma	Aparājita & eight cave <i>yakṣinī</i>	Anavatapta Ma dros pa & eight great <i>nāga</i>

eight other goddesses. The wealth deities on this side are the king of the *yakṣa*, Vaiśravaṇa/Rnam thos sras, with one head and two arms, surrounded by the eight *yakṣa* Pūrṇabhadra/Gang ba bzang po etc., as well as Jinarṣabha/Rgyal ba khyu mchog<sup>35</sup> on one side, and the earth goddess Brtan ma, with one face and two arms, with a retinue including the five *jo mo* deities and the medicine goddess (*lha sman*) Bkra shis tshe ring ma.<sup>36</sup>

In the south is the goddess Dhūmavatī/Dud sol ma, her name meaning 'black smoke'.<sup>37</sup> In comparison, the four-armed Śrīdevī on the Rubin Museum drawing is identified as Rematī. To her side is a *mgon po* Gtsug tor rten, with one face and two arms, surrounded by the eight classes of gods (*lha ma srin sde brgyad*) headed by the great *nāga* king Ocean/rGya mtsho. The wealth deities on this side are the *yakṣa* Āṭavaka/'Broḡ gnas, with one head and two arms, crowned with the lord of the teaching on one side, and on the other, "the

<sup>35</sup> See Willson & Brauen 2000: no. 324. With the exception of Jinarṣabha the set conforms to Willson & Brauen 2000: 300.

<sup>36</sup> These must be the Tshe ring mched lnga.

<sup>37</sup> Chandra 1986: 898. The common translation of her name as 'Vetālī', a female cemetery spirit, seems as much a misunderstanding or reinterpretation as the variant spelling Bdud sol ma, "Dispel the Māra!", as it is also used for one of the twelve Tārā of the Karma pa school.



Fig. 12: Jambhala with vases and repeated representations of himself in male and female form (eight each) on the lotus throne; Central Tibet, 14<sup>th</sup> century; bronze with traces of pigment, 41.0 x 25.0 x 23.0 cm; courtesy of Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase, S1996.39; photo C. Luczanits 2001 (D2913).

Fig. 13: Side view of Fig. 12 with the female forms on the base; photo C. Luczanits 2001 (D2917).

great *ṛṣi* who makes rain in time on earth (Jambudvīpa) and ripens the crops of man” Viṣṇu/Khyab 'jug, with nine heads and four arms and Vajrapāṇi on the head, surrounded by the eight great heavenly bodies, namely the *mahārṣi* sun, moon etc.

In the west is the Glorious Excellent Mahākāla/Dpal Legs ldan nag po chen po,<sup>38</sup> with one face and two arms, surrounded by the eight war-gods. To his side is the naked Ass-riding Black Butcheress/Gcer bu bong zhon ma Shan pa nag mo, with the queens of the four times and a *makara*-headed *nāginī*. This form of Dpal ldan Lha mo appears to be similar to the goddess on a

<sup>38</sup> Twice an attendant of Mahākāla is named this way (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 46, 53).

thangka in the Pritzker Collection, which also features Padmasambhava in the upper right corner.<sup>39</sup> The wealth deities in the west are Mahāgaṇapati/Tshogs kyi bdag po chen po, with one head and four arms, and Jambhala/'Dzam bha la, with one head and two arms, both surrounded by an assembly of eight deities resembling them. This latter feature recalls the Jambhala sculpture in the Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, DC, where the secondary deities are represented on the base along with a row of vases (Figs 12, 13).

Then, in the north of tier 6, on one side, is *mgon po* Highest Craving/Mchog sred, with one face and two arms, surrounded by *mgon po* Rta mangs, the demon-king Lang ka with ten necks (*mgrin bcu*) etc. On the other side is the goddess Seventeen-headed/Dbu bcu bdun ma surrounded by four Bse goddesses (*bse'i lha mo mched bzhi*),<sup>40</sup> twelve Bstan ma goddesses (*bstan/brtan ma bcu gnyis*)<sup>41</sup> led by Kha rag khyung btsun Rdo rje dpal gyi yum,<sup>42</sup> and again the *makara*-headed *nāgini*. This latter deity is represented on a beautiful fragment from one of the Densathil (Gdan sa mthil) stupas today in the Freer and Sackler Galleries (see Czaja in this volume, Fig. 19 on p. 258).

The wealth deities in the north are the great king of the Kinnara, Druma/Ljon po, with one head and two arms playing a *viṇa*. He is accompanied by 19 mountain deities, a considerable number of them listed by name. Of these, half are well known, while the rest is not found in commonly available sources.<sup>43</sup> The listed deities are Gnyan Thang lha,<sup>44</sup> Yar lha sham po, Drags lha sgam po, 'O de gung rgyal, Gnyags lha byar ma, 'Chims lha than tsho, Skyi lha sbyar ma, Rma chen po spom ra, 'Byam po klu phrug and *lha btsun* Mu ne. The other wealth deity on this side is Aparājita/A pa ra tsi ta holding a jewel-vase (*rin po che'i bum pa*).

<sup>39</sup> Kossak & Singer 1998: no. 31.

<sup>40</sup> On the little known Bse demons see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 310.

<sup>41</sup> See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 181–198.

<sup>42</sup> Bzhad pa'i rdo rje 1979: fig. 26.

<sup>43</sup> I have looked in the following sources: Bzhad pa'i rdo rje 1979; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993.

<sup>44</sup> Gnyan chen thang lha (Bzhad pa'i rdo rje 1979: fig. 11).



## CONCLUSION

Given the high number of deities and their assemblies described in the text, it is surprising to see how little actually conforms to those in paintings of the Bka' brgyud pa schools in general, but especially the 'Bri gung pa school, which are dated with some certainty to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. In fact, some of the divergencies are so significant that it appears to be very unlikely that the text actually is what it is supposed to be, namely a description of the pantheon on a stupa made for Phag mo drupa during the lifetime of 'Bri gung pa, i.e. before 1217. Most significantly, the arrangement and identity of the siddhas represented on the upper level do not conform to any of the early concepts, neither the common Bka' brgyud lineage nor the group of eight *mahāsiddha* which must have played a major role among the pupils of Phag mo gru pa.<sup>45</sup>

Another crucial factor is the incorporation of teachings that are connected to the Rnying ma pa school. Padmasambhava himself is depicted on the highest level, albeit in the periphery, and a considerable number of iconographies associated with him are found throughout the pantheon, among them the prominently placed Vajrakīlaya assembly in the centre of the south side on the second tier. This contrasts with the fact that Padmasambhava does not occur at all in the early 'Bri gung paintings, and in Stag lung paintings his inclusion among the masters depicted on the top of the painting can quite safely be attributed to the last quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century at the earliest. Interestingly, in the pantheon of the Wanla temple, iconographies associated with Padmasambhava take an even more prominent place, with Padmasambhava and his eight manifestations taking the top right wall position in the main niche, and a whole wall dedicated to the deity assemblies of the Bka' brgyad.

The art historical comparison thus determines a considerably later date for the described pantheon, namely not earlier than the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Olaf Czaja uses the same text and variants thereof for a detailed study of the *bkra shis sgo mang mchod rten* of Densathil. Indeed, given the virtual identity of the description to one of these stupa, including such details as the deities represented on the columns and the four great kings in the intermediary directions in front of the lowest level, I think the text very likely represents a genuine description of the erection of one of the Densathil

<sup>45</sup> See Luczanits 2006

stupas. Czaja, in contrast, takes the text as describing a monument that was originally erected in the first decade of the 13<sup>th</sup> century according to a vision of 'Jig rten mgon po, its pantheon also serving as the model for the Densathil stupa (see Czaja p. 200ff.). The issue at hand is thus clearly a conceptual and methodological one and reflects the different perspectives we have according to our respective fields and also the different ways of assessing the material at hand.

The crucial question from my perspective is the extent to which the fragmentary art historical evidence can be used as a 'historical' source. I have repeatedly attempted to interpret art historical evidence in conjunction with the political and religious history of the early Buddhist schools, the most successful attempt in this regard probably being my study of the earliest representations of the eight great siddhas referred to several times (Luczanits 2006). It is clear that what I consider to represent the earliest 'Bri gung paintings (Luczanits 2006a) may only cover part of the pantheon this school may have emphasized in its first hundred years. Furthermore, it must be assumed that many of the religious teachings are not reflected in the art at all, an obvious example being the many tutelary deities (*yi dam*) which were practised for a considerable time before their first depictions emerged. However, when also taking into account the decoration of monuments, the extant evidence seems consistent enough to constitute general trends within a much more complex process of development.

In this respect it is crucial to consider when the notion of such a comprehensive and possibly even holistic pantheon that is presented by the text actually came into being. We know that monuments attributable to around 1200, such as those of the Alchi group of monuments (Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda), the Dungkar caves and the Amitāyus temple at sNye thang,<sup>46</sup> are still very conservative in their depictions, with nothing even hinting at such an extensive pantheon. Even the extensions of Shalu in the 14<sup>th</sup> century are rather conservative, but an attempt to represent a complete pantheon is clearly visible there as well, even if the pantheon is predominantly *yoga* Tantra. The Densathil stupa and the Wanla temple, in contrast, emphasize the Anut-tarayoga teachings and publicize them in a manner that appears to be quite revolutionary. It is also remarkable that their pantheons are composed of deity

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<sup>46</sup> See von Schroeder 2001: II, 860–869.

assemblies as they are found on thangkas, Wanla even copying the composition of such scroll paintings on the wall. If a similar pantheon existed in earlier times, it was most likely a series of scroll paintings, such as the Vajrāvalī sets in the Sa skya pa schools. There is, however, no hint in this direction from what is preserved today.

Another more general issue concerns the nature of the different schools and what artistic representations they may have used at the beginning to differentiate themselves from one another. Obviously, the Bka' brgyud schools emphasized the same deities, but there was a considerable individuality in the art they produced. This is most apparent in their earliest paintings and drawings. Only towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in particular after the decisive split with Dbon po in 1273, did the Stag lung school include subjects in their representations reflecting doctrines adopted from the Sa skya pa and Rnying ma pa schools. The 13<sup>th</sup>-century 'Bri gung paintings do not provide any suggestion of such an adoption.

To conclude, in my assessment, the pantheon described in the text cannot be earlier than 1300, not only because it does not conform to what is found in early paintings and because it includes Padmasambhava and is related to Rnying ma pa teachings very prominently, but also because there is simply no other evidence than the attribution of this text to 'Bri gung pa or his disciple, indicating that such a comprehensive approach for the decoration of a monument was used earlier than the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Even then the Bka' brgyud conception expressed in the pantheon described and also in the temple of Wanla are unique early examples. Concerning the 'Bri gung school, such a interpretation confirms the major break in the artistic evidence as it has been seen in early 'Bri gung paintings, which may well coincide with the destruction of 'Bri gung monastery in 1290 and the subsequent rebuilding of the school according to new lines established in accordance with the development within fellow schools. A more gradual adaptation of this kind is visible in the Stag lung paintings.

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# TIBETAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN CONTEXT

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	
ERBERTO LO BUE & CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS . . . . .	vii
The Historical Architecture of the Trandruk Temple in the Yar lung Valley of Tibet	
REINHARD HERDICK . . . . .	1
Considerations on the Development of the Representation of the Buddha's Life in Early Tibetan Thangkas	
EVA ALLINGER . . . . .	27
Preliminary Remarks on the Donor Inscriptions and Iconography of an 11 <sup>th</sup> -century <i>Mchod rten</i> at Tholing	
AMY HELLER. . . . .	43
Courtly Cavaliers, Mounted Heroes and Pehar: New Issues in the Iconography and Iconology of Protector Deities in Early Western Himalayan Art	
CHRISTIANE PAPA-KALANTARI. . . . .	75
An Early Wall Painting of a Bhaiṣajyaguru Mandala in Western Tibet	
HELMUT F. NEUMANN & HEIDI A. NEUMANN . . . . .	121
Inscriptions and Captions in the Gu ru Lha khang at Nako, Kinnaur	
KURT TROPPER. . . . .	143
Visual Evidence for 'Bri gung Activity at Nako, Kinnaur	
MELISSA R. KERIN . . . . .	175
The Commemorative Stupas at Densathil a Preliminary Study	
OLAF CZAJA . . . . .	197
Mandalas of Mandalas: The Iconography of a Stupa of Many Auspicious Doors for Phag mo gru pa	
CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS. . . . .	281

Three Tibeto-Chinese Mandala Paintings of Around 1442 URSULA TOYKA-FUONG . . . . .	311
Reconstructing Sakya: Written Sources, Photographic Archives and Fieldwork FEDERICA VENTURI . . . . .	335
The Śambhala Murals in the Klu khang and Their Historical Context. A Preliminary Report ERBERTO LO BUE. . . . .	353
The Dbu yab pho brang in the Nor bu gling ga and Its Connection with the Murals of the Klu khang Behind the Potala JAKOB WINKLER . . . . .	375
An Unusual Highlight in Trade in Tibetan Art: A 20 <sup>th</sup> -century Thangka of Shangs pad, Protector of the Dge ldan byams pa gling Monastery at Chamdo in the Province of Dargyab in Kham, Eastern Tibet INGRID KREIDE-DAMANI . . . . .	393