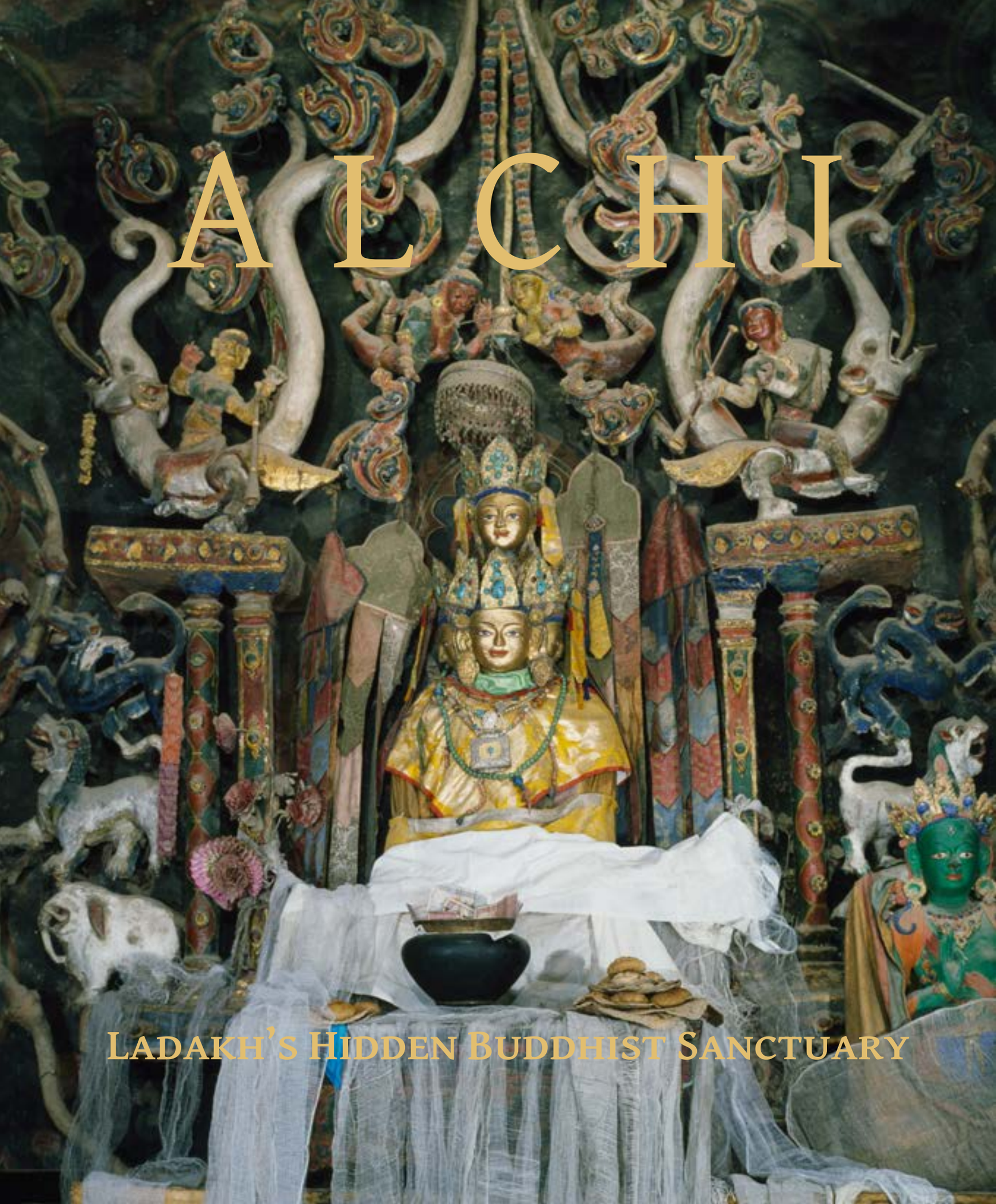


ALCHI

Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary

Volume I
Alchi – The Choskhor



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Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary

Volume I

The Choskhor

Text by Christian Luczanits
Photography by Jaroslav Poncar

Dedicated to the memory of Roger Goepper

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1 Frontispiece: Four-faced Mahāvairocana with offerings in the niche of the Dukhang.

Table of Contents

Volume I

Alchi – The Choskhor 1
Preface and Acknowledgements 8
Introduction 11
The Historical Background 19
The Layout of the Sacred Area 29
Architectural Documentation 33
The Main Temple 37
The Courtyard 42
The Dukhang 50
The Entry Wall 53
The Left Side Wall 97
The Main Wall 177
The Niche 189
The Right Side Wall 193
The Palden Drepung Chörten 243
The Tashi Gomang Chörten 269
The Jampel Lhakhang 293
The Lhakhang Soma 309
The Development of the Sacred Area 345
Appendices 406
Notes Choskhor 429

Volume II

Alchi – The Sumtsek 441
Preface 448
The Sumtsek 451
The Ground Floor 465
The Sculptures and Murals in the Main Niche 544
The Middle Storey 589
The Top Storey 659
The Ceilings and Their Painted Textile Motifs 673
The Alchi Style 715
The Sumtsek Lineage Paintings and Their Implications for Dating 723
Mapping the Iconographic Programme of the Sumtsek 735
The Alchi Mandalas 747
The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek 781
Observations on the Technology of the Wall Paintings 791
Notes Sumtsek 798
Bibliography 814
Index 832



Preface and Acknowledgements

There can be no doubt that the Alchi Choskhor counts among the most important cultural sites worldwide, even if it has never been put on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The state of preservation of the miniature murals on the interior walls of its most ancient structures is simply breath taking, as is the wealth of information they contain. This publication aims to account for both, the exceptional quality of the art and its historical and religious content.

Jaroslav Poncar first reached Alchi in 1974, the year Ladakh was opened for foreign tourists. However, it took until the summer of 1980 until he took the first photographs of them for a documentary on the river Indus for German TV. As it was unthinkable at the time to film the interior of the temple due to lack of electricity, his photographs were inserted into the movie. It was the cameraman and producer Wolfgang Kohl who proposed a complete documentation of the murals. When shown the photographs back in Cologne, Roger Goepper expressed his interest to join such a documentation project.

The first documentation campaign at Alchi took place in summer 1981, with Barbara Lutterbeck, Hans Siegel and Konchok Phanday, a monk from Ladakh, joining Goepper and Poncar. It was done with studio lights brought from Germany that could be run by truck batteries using a converter. The month-long stay was too short to cover all temples, and Goepper was directing what to select among the murals of the Sumtsek and Dukhang. A few pictures of the Lhakhang Soma were made due to its difference in style. The motives were also chosen with an exhibition at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne in mind, which took place in 1982. Its catalogue 'Alchi - Buddhas, Goddesses and Mandalas' was published by Du Mont, Cologne. A second campaign took place in the summer of 1983 and was joined by Johanna (Joan) Engelberta van Lohuizen-de Leeuw from the University of Amsterdam. During this campaign attention was also paid to the ceiling paintings in the Sumtsek and Jampel Lhakhang (Mañjuśrī Temple) and the inscription at the Palden Drepung Chörten (the 'Great Stūpa) was discovered. However, there still remained undocumented paintings, in particular those of the floorless top storey of the Sumtsek. These were documented in the following year, leading to the discovery of the lineage and its inscriptions which enabled the dating of the temple.

By summer 1988 the residence building in front of the Dukhang was torn down and Poncar noticed water seepage damaging murals. These changes provided new motivation to make sure that the entire complex is completely documented. Consequently, in summer 1989, Poncar was joined by Harald Brenner and Horst Winterberg, students from department of imaging sciences, and Gregor Wiesel, a student of the department of architecture, to continue the documentation. Meanwhile portable generators were available in Ladakh, which improved documentation conditions considerably (3). At the end of this campaign Likir monks requested to help with the preservation of the monuments, which led to the 'Save Alchi Project', which undertook yearly campaigns from 1991 to 1994. The restoration was lead by Karl Dasser, professor for restoration of wall paintings at the Fachhochschule Cologne. The restoration work focused on the two ancient chörten before it came to a sudden halt.

2 Previous double page: The Alchi monastic compound seen from the opposite side of the Indus River and looking southeast. The multi-cornered, three-storeyed structure of the Sumtsek can most easily be identified in the centre of the compound. The square structure to the right of it is the New Temple. The larger structure of the Main Temple to the left of the Sumtsek is half obscured by trees. The last building on the left is the double structure housing the Jampel-Lhakhang and Lotsawa Lhakhang, the latter with the larger superstructure. To the right of the Sumtsek, the square structure of the Lhakhang Soma occupies the edge of the compound.

All pictures at Alchi were taken on Kodak films. The detailed documentation was done on Kodachrome 64 (35mm) film, while large format Ektachrome 64 was used for exhibition photographs. Kodak sponsored the films and the prints of the documentation. To check the results Polaroid instant pictures were also made. One has to be aware that at that time, a malfunction on the technical equipment meant that the entire work of a campaign could be lost, as happened in winter 1982 when 20 film rolls of additional motives for the exhibition in Cologne turned out to be black after development. The flash synchronisation failed.

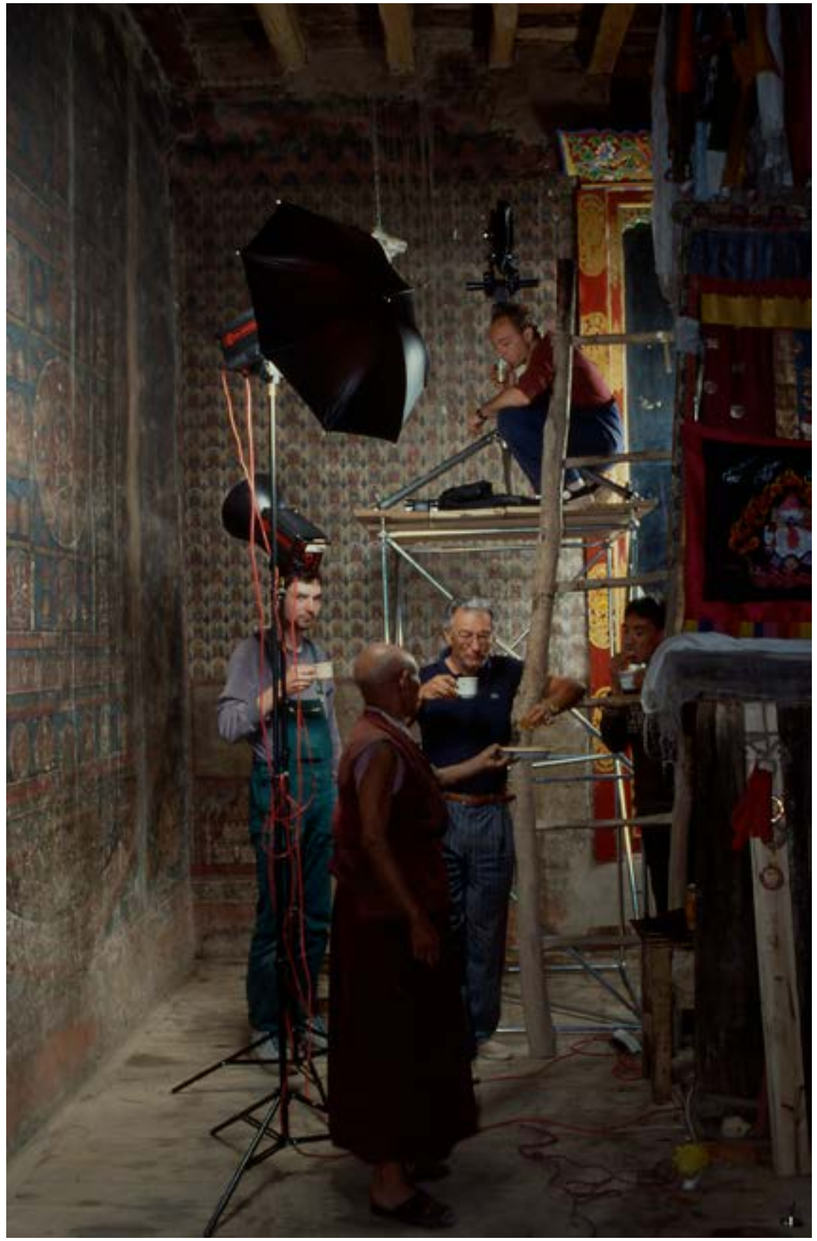
Christian Luczanits met Jaroslav Poncar and his team at Alchi at his first travel to the region in summer 1990, when he was a student. This was his first travel with camera, but its mirror malfunctioned and all documentation he did that year was lost. However, the meeting lead to a long-lasting friendship with Poncar and Goepper generously supplying their documentation for his research whenever required. While working on aspects of Alchi occasionally, this book only came into focus when it became clear that Goepper will not be able to do it anymore. Even then, the first steps were only taken around 2009, when Poncar and Luczanits talked more concretely about it and selected the core of the photographs to represent the respective monuments. By then Luczanits had already worked for more than a decade with Holger Neuwirth on diverse western Himalayan monuments including Alchi, the architecture of which was first recorded during a joint fieldwork.

None of these works would have been possible without the generous permission of Likir monastery and the support of the respective caretakers posted to Alchi. Permissions for the documentation were provided by Likir and the Archaeological Survey of India. Sonam's Zimskhang served as a home away from home, even making *juli-momo*, the traditional local dumplings with apricots as their filling, for us. Foundational work for this publication was done under grants by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), and the Achi Association, while most of the write-up was done during an AHRC research grant on 'Tibetan Buddhist Monastery Collections Today' (Grant Ref: AH/N00681X/1) that also enabled regular visits to the site between 2016 and 2019. Individuals who directly contributed to the content of this work are mentioned in the main text or the notes.

The publication of this book has been generously supported by the Pritzker Art Collaborative, Heidi and Helmut Neumann, the Solomon Family as well as Pia Rampal in remembrance of her mother Tara Sinha. Drafts of the publication have been read by SOAS students and Pia Rampal, and their comments helped considerably to identify potential issues and adapt the text accordingly.

This work includes and builds on Roger Goepper's pioneering work on Alchi. It also demonstrates that much of his research has stood the test of time, including his dating of the main monuments. Through Alchi, Goepper also became a highly valued friend. This publication, thus, is dedicated to his memory.

Christian Luczanits & Jaroslav Poncar



3 'In 1989 Roger Goepper and myself were at Alchi to document the murals as complete as possible. Harald Brenner and Horst Winterberg, students at department of imaging sciences at Fachhochschule Köln (Cologne), and the architect Georg Wiesel were a good support of the project. The large mandalas in the Dukhang were for sure the greatest challenge. Luckily, compared to 1981–1984, working conditions in the temples had improved considerably. A portable generator allowed for the use of studio strobe lights, also a scaffolding was at our disposal. The monks were very welcoming and served tea and cookies during the breaks.' Jaroslav Poncar

Introduction

by Christian Luczanits



4 This tree from the paradise of Buddha Akṣobhya, Abhirati, painted on the back wall of the Dukhang, can equally stand for Alchi itself. The village has been protected historically due to its location and also enjoys a relatively mild climate with an abundance of apricot trees.

This publication is long overdue. The Alchi Choskhor (*chos 'khor*), as it is referred to locally, is one of the most important monuments in the Himalayas as it contains a considerable number of ancient buildings. However, following the pioneering work of David Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski in the two volumes on the *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh* published in 1977 and 1980 respectively, only one of these buildings has been published in detail, namely the three-storeyed Sumtsek. To me, *Alchi - Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary - The Sumtsek* has set an extremely high standard in research, text and image quality, with Roger Goepper responsible for the former and Jaroslav Poncar for the latter. This publication was a model for the present publication, and it is included here as part of Volume II.

Matching Goepper's text in erudition and brevity for the discussion of the entire complex has been the major challenge throughout this project. The second daunting task I set myself was to move scholarship on the site forward beyond the principal identifications already largely contained in Snellgrove & Skorupski's work. This is particularly relevant for the Dukhang, the other major monument at the site. While I cannot claim that I have achieved either of these goals to satisfaction, taking on these challenges certainly improved the outcome.

The Sumtsek volume (Volume II) is still the work of Roger Goepper (3), since most of his original texts are still valid. However, the publication of the Sumtsek volume with this first volume dedicated to the other temples (Volume I) required adjustments to gain consistency across the volumes and to include additional research since the publication of the original Sumtsek volume. Most apparent, the succession of the images on each floor has been adapted to conform to the ritual circumambulation from the entry wall clockwise (in the original publication the left and right walls are discussed before the back wall). Given the smaller format of this publication, the layout had to be adjusted at some places. In terms of text, major changes were needed in the introduction, the information of which had to be distributed between the two volumes, separating the general historical part—now rewritten and part of the first volume—from that specific to the Sumtsek. Any further changes to the original text of the Sumtsek volume, which have been kept to a minimum, are recorded in its introduction as well as in the notes marking the respective places, which also contain Goepper's original phrasing. The Sumtsek volume also contains all original additional contributions and three new ones, one by Rob Linrothe on the contested teaching lineage in the top storey of the monument, one by Nils Martin on the founding inscription of the monument that has not previously been recognised as such, and one by myself introducing and comparing the Alchi mandalas more broadly than possible in the monument focused chapters.

Volume I considers all other monuments within the Choskhor, with the Dukhang taking up about half of the volume. Separate chapters have also been written for the Palden Drepung Chörten (formerly Great Stūpa), the Tashi Gomang Chörten (formerly Small Stūpa), the Jampel Lhakhang (also known as Mañjuśrī Temple) and the Lhakhang Soma. All other monuments are covered in the chapter The Development of the Sacred Area, page 345 ff., which establishes the interrelationship of all the monuments in the complex, including the Lotsawa Lhakhang and a chörten at the approach to the complex, here called the Lönpo Chörten. As can be seen in this enumeration, the names used for the monuments in this publication are Tibetan or Ladakhi rather than their Sanskrit or English equivalents.

Of course, much has been written on Alchi beyond the two publications mentioned so far. Particularly noteworthy are two books, one by the local scholar Nawang Tsering with photographs of Aditya Arya, called *Alchi, the Living Heritage of Ladakh* (2009), and the other published more recently by Peter van Ham & Amy Heller, *Alchi: Treasure of the Himalayas. Ladakh's Buddhist Masterpiece* (2018). While both have been supported by Likir Monastery, which is in charge of the complex, from a scholarly perspective neither of them does justice to the monuments. While the former understandably relies on the local tradition that also informed Snellgrove & Skorupski, the latter pretends to offer scholarship and to update the work of Goepper and others, but actually conflates fact and fiction. Van Ham's publication is disturbingly misleading, not only in the claim that it is based on the first comprehensive documentation of the site—obviously van Ham knows that Poncar has done that long before him—but also in its text which re-enforces and expands unfounded platitudes in ways that rather take away from Alchi than contribute to its understanding.

To be clear, the purpose of this work is to gather what can be learned from the monuments themselves, acknowledging that it builds on contributions made in the past, and not to contest or correct what others have said about it. Citations in the footnotes are thus largely focused on positive contributions to the knowledge on the monuments and only occasionally refer to misinterpretation or misidentification, in particular where these are misleading. The reader is invited to compare and evaluate.

Dating Alchi

A lot of ink has been spilled concerning the date of the Alchi monuments, in particular since the discovery of an inscribed Drigung Kagyü lineage in the top storey of the Alchi Sumtsek (see page 659 ff.).[1] This publication contributes to this discussion insofar as it accounts for the discovery of new information from the inscription in the Great Stūpa, now referred to as the Palden Drepung Chörten, and the foundation inscription of the Sumtsek, which had previously not been fully studied. Of these, the foundation inscription of the Sumtsek provides a religious genealogy of the temple's founder, Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*), and also clarifies the iconography of the Sumtsek sculptures. An abbreviated study and translation of this inscription by Nils Martin has been added to the Sumtsek volume (see page 781 ff.).[2] The Palden Drepung Chörten inscription, written by Tsültrim Ö, not only fully supports Goepper's attribution of the Alchi Sumtsek but may even imply that the Sumtsek was, in fact, built to house a shrine for some form of relics of Drigungpa, the founder of the Drigung school, who passed in 1217. A translation of this inscription has been included in the appendix to this volume (The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff.).

These discoveries aside, it is remarkable that those promoting an earlier date actually never offered a positive argument in support. Instead, the critique of Goepper's observations range from purely emotional (Fournier in Lie Bléhaut 2001) to the downright wacky (Kozicz 2010, n. 1), and they are mostly destructive in their attitude, attempting to de-construct the evidence of the lineage without considering anything else (Denwood 2014). Most recently, Amy Heller (2018) tried to argue for an earlier date by interpreting a name of the previously published part of the Sumtsek foundation inscription without attempting to understand its context. However, since the pioneering study of the Alchi inscriptions by Philip Denwood (1980), it is well known that these texts are extremely complex works that require matching erudition to be made sense of, and that they are lacking in historical information.



5 Jaroslav Poncar documenting a detail of a ceiling panel in the Sumtsek. Most of the documentation has been done by a simple setup of a 35mm camera with two handheld portable flash units attached to it by cables.

One actually wonders why the date of Alchi has been such an issue in scholarship. Local resistance to Goepper's date can be much better understood, as this date may be taken to imply that Alchi was once a Drigung school monument. The Drigung school still has a powerful

presence in the region, but Likir Monastery, to which Alchi belongs, adheres to the Géluk (*dge lugs*) tradition. Rivalries between Tibetan Buddhist schools have never been uncommon, and older monasteries have changed their affiliation during the rise of the Géluk school, which is considerably younger. In fact, I now maintain that crediting early monuments from pre-Géluk times, including Alchi, to the great translator Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055) was and is a clever way to claim a Géluk heritage for them, as the Géluk school sees itself in his continuation. This is particularly obvious in the Red Temple or Dukhang Dzamlinggyen in Tholing, where a triad focused on Rinchen Zangpo to the left of the niche is balanced by a triad with Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the originator of the Géluk school, in its centre.[2] Further, both the iconography and style of this temple link back to the eleventh-century monuments as well, clearly referencing Rinchen Zangpo's time and claiming to be created in his tradition. Since this is in evidence already in the second quarter of the fifteenth century and one of the first monuments preserved of the Guge kingdom with Géluk affiliation, we can't be surprised that this notion spread throughout the western Himalayas with that school.

Obviously, one cannot blame Likir Monastery for this, but there is no doubt that Goepper's discovery of a Drigung lineage on the third floor of the Sumtsek was not met with delight. However, the main affiliation of monasteries of the time at which Alchi was founded was the donor family, who usually also kept the abbotship within the family. In the case of Alchi, this is the Dro (*'bro*) family, which originally came to the region from central Tibet. Thus, although Tsültrim Ö, the founder of the Sumtsek, declared his devotion to Drigungpa and even built a monument and a shrine in his memory, this does not mean that the monastery ever belonged to the Drigung school. In fact, while Drigung teachings and teachers remained relevant at Alchi, there is no indication that those in charge of the Choskhor ever claimed a particular school affiliation.

Methodology

It may be useful here to say a few words about the method used in researching the Alchi monuments, which is very much in line with Goepper's pioneering work. This study first and foremost tries to let the monuments speak for themselves by considering all their details from the architecture to the actual decoration. The general assumption is that unless there is direct and solid material evidence that indicates otherwise, what is depicted in a temple is assumed to go back to its foundation. I mention this specifically as theories have been published that assume restorations without forwarding any concrete evidence for it. This is particularly true for the top storey of the Sumtsek and its lineage depiction, which is analysed in detail in a new contribution to the Sumtsek volume by Rob Linrothe (see page 723 ff.).

To move scholarship on the site forward has been a major challenge that led to a considerable delay of this publication. In particular, the Dukhang begs the question of why these mandalas are there, and what can be said about them beyond their general identification, which largely was achieved a long time ago. Scholarship on the monument has tended to explain its content by using extant translations of Sanskrit sources, comparisons to later Tibetan examples, or later Tibetan commentaries on the depicted mandalas to explain their iconographic details or name the deities. However, the *Sādhanamālā* was translated after Alchi was built and there is no indication that Abhayākaragupta's trilogy—the *Vajrāvalī*, *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, and *Jyotirmañjarī*—played a role in its decoration. The early western Himalayan mandalas actually still document the final stages of the mandala's development, which Abhayākaragupta attempted to solidify. Using these sources, thus, has the inherent danger of distorting the evidence of Alchi. It was thus important to me to base my interpretation on sources that precede or are contemporaneous with the Alchi depictions and have a high likelihood to have been known there. Therefore, I almost exclusively relied on the works included in the Tibetan canon with an emphasis on those that in some way are connected to the western Himalayas, such as works credited to Kashmiri authors or the numerous translations attributed to Rinchen Zangpo. As the information on the texts cannot always be considered reliable this is still an approximation, but one that comes considerably closer to the Alchi depictions.

Now scouring the Tibetan canon to find relevant descriptions has become much easier using digital editions, but it is still challenging and extremely time consuming. The descriptions one may find are usually much less clear than those in later Tibetan commentaries which were written precisely for this reason. Iconographic details are only occasionally provided in the early sources, and the Alchi depictions usually do not follow any of the sources precisely; they are thus a commentary themselves. This becomes even more clear when comparing the Alchi mandalas to those in neighbouring monuments, such as Mangyu and Sumda Chung, which help to establish which parts of a mandala can be regarded more receptive to alternative interpretations than others (see The Alchi Mandalas, page 747 ff.).

A good example to explain the methodology used is the Vajradhātu mandala, the interpretation of which has to rely on sources that were definitely known in the region by the time Alchi was built, namely the root text and its early Indian commentaries. Using secondary studies on these texts, it is crucial to exclude interpretations of the mandala that are specific to Japanese sources, which have been widely used in the study of the Sanskrit root text and its interpretation. Only then—basing oneself on the Tibetan root text, the translated Indian commentaries, the religious milieu apparent in the Alchi inscriptions, and the murals themselves—is it possible to get a closer understanding of the ten mandalas on the middle storey of the Alchi Sumtsek (see The Alchi Mandalas, page 747 ff.).

An example for a topic of Tibetan origin is the identification of the attendant goddesses to Mahākāla on the entry wall of the monuments. Here the consideration of changes in the visual relationship of Mahākāla to the surrounding figures and a comparison to early Kagyü sources on Mahākāla proved crucial, clarifying that it is actually the wrathful goddess that is to be identified as a form of Rematī and not the lady with the peacock feather coat, as Goepper has proposed. The latter clearly is a predecessor of Dorjé Chenmo, but her role at Alchi is too remote from this later identity to identify her as such. Instead she is more cautiously identified as a Menmo or Mamo, a native goddess of life (see page 53 ff.).

Content Issues

Suggesting more cautious or new interpretations does not mean that this publication does not acknowledge other voices. In fact, Goepper's text remains largely unchanged, even if it contradicts what I have observed elsewhere and I am convinced that he would have changed his opinion accordingly. A good example in this regard is his frequent mention of retouching,

with or without thick black outlines, which in most cases appears unlikely to me. However, without close analysis on-site on a case-by-case basis, I cannot be sure that he is wrong and it is simply opinion against opinion. Occasionally, evidence-based alternative readings are provided in the notes.

However, there are a few instances in which bringing the two volumes together is delicate. In a small number of cases the contradictions between Goepper's original texts and my own interpretation are potentially confusing. This became apparent when a draft of this publication was provided to SOAS students in autumn 2019. Simply adding notes pointing towards the new interpretations to the Sumtsek volume turned out to be insufficient. I thus list the relevant issues I could not alter without major interference in the original text here in the succession of their occurrence in the Sumtsek volume:

1. As pointed out above, the identification of the Peacock Cape Lady as Rematī cannot be maintained. Unfortunately, the wrathful goddess represented opposite the Peacock Cape Lady in the Dukhang turned out to be a form of Rematī. This is obviously confusing, but could not be adapted, as much of Goepper's text in this section is based on his identification of this goddess. The reader is thus advised to take the identifications offered in the Dukhang volume (page 53 ff.) as the current one and read those in the Sumtsek volume (page 465 ff.) as an earlier, now outdated interpretation.
2. The same is true for the identification of the six-armed Green Tārā in the Avalokiteśvara niche which also occurs on the left side wall of the Dukhang. This goddess can now be identified as an independent form of Mahāśānti Tārā (page 125 ff.). Nevertheless, in the Sumtsek volume Goepper's identification attempt has been maintained as evidence of the difficulty identifying this goddess (page 511 ff.).
3. The third case is Goepper's identification of the dark-skinned *mahāsiddha* in the bottom centre of Mañjuśrī's dhoti as Nāropa (page 572 ff.). Research subsequent to the Sumtsek volume has made clear that this *mahāsiddha* actually must be Padampa Sanggyé (*pha dam pa sangs rgyas*) an Indian siddha that died in Tibet in 1117 and is credited with the transmission of the *mahāsiddha* tradition to Tibet. In this case, the Sumtsek volume identification contradicts the one proposed for the depictions in the Palden Drepung and Tashi Gomang Chörten (page 254 ff.).

In other cases, Goepper's original identification has been adapted. For example, following research by David Jackson subsequent to the original publication, the identity of the two monks which are exceptionally part of the lineage painting on the top storey of the Sumtsek needed to be altered. As said already, such changes are marked in the notes.

Architecture

A major advance in this publication lies in the architectural documentation, which is the result of a cooperation with a team of architects from University of Technology in Graz, Austria, led by Holger Neuwirth and Carmen Auer, which began with a first joint visit to the region in 1998. All plans presented show the buildings at the same scale, which makes them directly comparable, and represent the condition of 2003. The outlines of the wall plans are based on this documentation and also of directly comparable scale, and I have filled in the details on their decoration.

Likir Monastery generously supported both the original documentation of the monuments by Jaroslav Poncar and the architectural survey of the monuments by the team of Graz and myself. Unfortunately, the cooperation between Poncar and the monastery ended in 1994, and re-establishing a relationship between the two parties, which I attempted about a decade later, failed. In part, this is due to the complex responsibility structure that surrounds the monument, also involving the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), with different parties pulling in different directions. Fortunately this has not affected the interior of the monuments so far, which are the responsibility of Likir Monastery, but their exterior has been transformed over the last two decades. These changes are partially described at the end of the development chapter (see Recent Changes, page 403 ff.), and I leave it to the reader to judge if these measures are successful.

Outlook

While hoping that this publication will stand its ground for a considerable time to come, there are also lacunae that may shift future assessments of details. On the one hand, checking my conclusions largely formulated on the basis of the available documentation *in situ* has not been possible in all areas, on the other hand the necessity of reassessing the Alchi inscriptions has only become obvious to me fairly recently and added another layer of delay to this work. In particular the infrared photographs of the inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten made by Sreekumar Menon turned out to be extremely useful in improving on what is visible *in situ* or through conventional photography. The availability of such photographs would make it worthwhile to restudy all the inscriptions from both historical and religious point of view. Nils Martin's study of the Sumtsek's foundation inscription hints at considerable interlinkage between some inscriptions, the precise nature of which still needs to be fully understood. In addition, it is necessary to make all inscriptions available in Tibetan script, as only then will they be read and recognised locally.

Insisting that the Alchi Choskhor was founded by Rinchen Zangpo in the eleventh century, even though the former is nowhere mentioned in the inscriptions, ironically also denies the local Ladakhi agency in creating these stunning monuments. Taken at face value, the Alchi inscriptions leave no doubt that while the founders of the temples perceived themselves as part of a larger west Tibetan dominion, their education and achievements are local. They speak of a sophisticated religious culture supported by a noble family with wide connections, of the pious activities of exceptional monks from this family and their religious aspirations, and they do so in the forms of songs, poems and acrostics, which still need to be fully decoded. The more I learn about these monuments, the more I think Ladakh should be proud and protective of them.

In my opinion the Alchi Choskhor is a monument of world heritage quality and importance. Its Jewel Temple (*rin chen gtsug lag khang*) and Pile of Jewels Temple (*rin chen brtsegs pa gtsug lag khang*), as the Dukhang and Sumtsek are called in its inscriptions, duly live up to their names. They offer a unique and precious glimpse into the past that is both regional and far-reaching.

The Historical Background

by Christian Luczanits[4]



Little is known about the early history of Ladakh prior to the second half of the tenth century, when it became part of a newly established west Tibetan kingdom and both Tibetan culture and Buddhism were firmly established in the region.[5] It is generally maintained that the population of Ladakh previously was Dardic.[6] From a Kharoṣṭhī inscription found in the area and datable to 111/112 CE, we can deduce that Lower Ladakh may have been part of the Kuṣāṇa empire during the second century CE.[7] However, originally the main trade routes leading from Northern India into Central Asia passed further west through present-day Afghanistan and northern Pakistan.[8]

Following the Kuṣāṇa empire the wider northwest Indian region split into smaller dominions with shifting allegiances. Among these the small Buddhist enclave of the Palola Ṣāhi that flourished from the late sixth to the early eighth century along what is today known as the Karakoram Highway in northern Pakistan is particularly noteworthy. A set of early manuscripts, the so-called Gilgit manuscripts as well as a substantial number of high quality bronzes provide a unique glimpse into a flourishing Buddhist culture at the very beginning of Esoteric Buddhism.[9] A branch of its trade network may well have led along the Indus River and traversed Ladakh onto the Tibetan plateau.

During the middle of the seventh century cultural influence from Tibet reached the country of Zhangzhung, that is the western area of the Tibetan plateau (*changtang, byang thang*) east of Ladakh.[10] Less than a hundred years later their influence has expanded across the area of present-day Ladakh to Baltistan, today in northern Pakistan. This can be deduced from the report of the Korean Buddhist pilgrim Huichao, who refers to this area under the name Greater Bolor. He states that the population of this country is Buddhist, and that there are Buddhist monasteries, but that the country is under Tibetan suzerainty.[11] The area he refers to is that of the Paḷola Ṣāhi mentioned above, which around that time disappeared from the historical stage, wiped out in a power struggle between China and Tibet in this area, which the Tibetans accessed through Ladakh.

Early rock inscriptions in Ladakh along the Indus River, with an important site near the Alchi bridge, clearly demonstrate that the area was of strategic importance during the time of the Tibetan empire (from the conquest of the region to the middle of the ninth century) and beyond (in particular the tenth and eleventh centuries). Even if originally Tibetan cultural influence had not yet deeply penetrated into this part of Ladakh, the frequency of military titles such as 'head of the thousand district' (*tongpön*, *stong dpon*) in the Alchi rock inscriptions testify to the presence of military units in the area.[12]

6 Portrait of the founder of the Alchi Dukhang, Kalden Shérap, heading a monastic assembly performing a ritual. This assembly is part of the donor depiction on the entry wall that marks the foundation of the monument (74).

The height of this depiction is approximately 23 cm.

7 Portrait of Drigungpa in the Tashi Gomang Chörten (252). CL 2003 (D9231).

The comparison between the two portraits demonstrates the difference between the Indian derived local monastic tradition and that of an early central Tibetan school, where a sleeveless vest is added to the monastic attire.

More detailed historical information on the western Himalayan areas only becomes available with the tenth century. The collapse of the Tibetan empire, traditionally marked by the murder of King Langdarma (*glang dar ma*) in 842, resulted in a migration of parts of the old aristocracy, which included members of the former royal family, to more secure areas in west Tibet. In the first half of the tenth century Kyidé Nyimagön (*skyid lde nyi ma mgon*), a descendant of the murdered Langdarma, established a dominion (*ngari, mnga' ris*) in the area of Purang at the invitation of local nobility, and married Khorkyong (*'khor skyong*), a lady of one of these noble clans, the Dro (*'bro*).[13]

The Dro clan likely had its origins in the northwestern region of Zhangzhung and had previously provided queens and ministers to the Tibetan emperors, growing into one of the most powerful families in the early history of Tibet.[14] The clan also played an important role in the western Himalayan region during the following period, as can be substantiated through inscriptions and their instrumental role at Alchi.[15]

There are a number of partially contradictory accounts on the spread of the newly established kingdom in later historical texts, but more recently discovered textual sources provide a clearer picture.[16] Accordingly, the territory of the newly established dominion expanded rapidly, and when Kyidé Nyimagön's sons came of age was divided into three parts, each of them ruled by one of his sons. It is from this division that the concept of the 'dominion in three parts', Ngari Khorsum (*mnga' ris skor gsum*), derives. One of these three parts ruled by its first king Palgyigön (*dpal gyi mgon*) included Maryül (*mar yul*), a term that denotes an area of Ladakh.

Of course, Maryül remained to be tied to the kingdom of Purang-Guge, which was ruled by Palgyigön's brother Tashigön (*bkra shis mgon*). Crucially, with the ascendency of Tashigön's sons Khorré (*'khor re*) and Songngé (*srong nge*) a system of dual rule was promoted in support of organised Buddhism, with one son acting as ruler representing secular law (*rgyal khrims*), while the brothers became monks, one of them representing religious law (*chos khrims*). In this case, Songngé—which is shorthand for Tri Désong Tsuktsen (*khri lde srong gtsug btsan*)—first succeeded his father, but soon abdicated his throne in favour of his brother Khorré (*'khor re*) to become a monk. He is thus better known under his ordination name Yéshé Ö (*ye shes 'od*).[17] Yéshé Ö is known for his stance against unorganised tantric Buddhism and Bön (*bon*) religion, as well as his instigation of every noble family to found a temple.[18] He is also credited with dispatching twenty-one sharp-witted (*blo rno ba*) young monks to Kashmir in order to study Sanskrit and Esoteric Buddhism at one of its centres. Among these was Rinchen Zangpo (*rin chen bzang po*; 958–1155), who became famous for his scholarship and numerous translations.

It is said that when Rinchen Zangpo returned to west Tibet as one of the few monks who survived the unfamiliar Indian climate, he brought with him thirty-two Kashmiri artists together with a collection of important religious texts, many of which he translated into Tibetan. The earliest hagiography of this famous monk, which exists in several different versions, further attributes the foundation of three major and twenty-one minor temples to him.[19] Among these Khorchak (*'khor chags*) in Purang, Tholing (*mtho gling*) in Guge, Tabo (*ta po*) in Spiti, and Nyarma (*nyar ma*) in Ladakh certainly date to Rinchen Zangpo's time. However, as the paintings and inscriptions in the Main Temple of Tabo indicate, this early list rather reflects foundations of Yéshé Ö than the achievements of Rinchen Zangpo. While the former is depicted in the Tabo Entry Hall together with his two sons, the latter does not occur among the monks depicted to their side.

The subsequent rulers and royal monks of the Purang-Guge kingdom are fairly well known. On the secular side Khorré is succeeded by Lhadé (*lha lde*) and Ödé (*'od lde*; *c.* 996–1024). A recently discovered inscription at Kharul, a few kilometre west of Kargil, mentions the latter and is evidence that his realm reached at least up to this point.[20] On the religious side, Yéshé Ö in his role of as pre-eminent royal monk is succeeded by Jangchup Ö (*byang chub 'od*), and Zhiwa Ö (*zhi ba 'od*), the former known for the renovation of the Tabo Main Temple and the latter for another ordinance against a range of tantric teachings.[21]

At this stage another important protagonist of the so-called later spread (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism was invited to west Tibet, namely the great Indian master Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982–1054).[22] Arriving after considerable delay in 1042 he spent three years in west Tibet, where he composed the *Lamp for the Path to Awakening* (*Bodhipathapradīpa*), a concise introduction to Buddhist practice, and also met Rinchen Zangpo who by then was in his 80s.[23] He also contributed to the massive translation work undertaken in the west Tibetan monasteries at the time.

After spending three years in west Tibet, Atiśa moved on to central Tibet where he died in 1054 at Nyetang (*snye thang*) near Lhasa. There, his famous lay disciple Dromtön Gyalwe Jungné (*brom ston rgyal ba'i byung gnas*, 1005–1064) founded the monastery at Reting (*rva sgreng*) and a religious order, the Kadam (*bka' gdams*) school, which focused on authoritative scriptures and continued the oral instruction (*damngak*, *gdams ngag*) lineage established by Atiśa.[24] As Atiśa himself, this school stressed the esoteric nature of the highest tantric teachings, which is reflected in the absence of father-mother (*yab yum*) images in early Tibetan art associated with this school.[25]

Early western Himalayan monuments reflect a similarly conservative attitude with a focus on the Yoga Tantra and their root text, the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas Tantra* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*),[26] which had been translated into Tibetan by Rinchen Zangpo together with one of his Kashmiri collaborators, Śraddhākaravarman.[27] This seminal text propagates Buddha Vairocana as central among the five esoteric Buddhas and the so-called Vajradhātu mandala. The early Alchi monuments mark the very end of this early west Tibetan religious tradition, which has to be distinguished from the Kadam school, with which Rinchen Zangpo is frequently but somewhat misleadingly associated.

That the developments in west Tibet continued to be loosely tied to central Tibet in the late eleventh century is indicated by the organisation of a large council (*chos 'khor*) in Tholing under King Tsédé (*rtse lde*), the successor of Ödé, and Zhiwa Ö, in 1076. However, all these religious efforts could not avoid that split inheritance and internal conflicts fragmented the dominion in the last decade of this century. It is in this time of fragmentation that the historical information found in the Alchi inscriptions has to be placed. These texts demonstrate both, the continued legacy of Ngari Khorsum in both political and religious terms, as well as the relative independence of rather small territories in this western periphery of the region.

A recent study linked the mention of a certain *podrang* Wangdé (*pho brang dbang lde*) in an Alchi inscription to the Guge lineage, namely to the successor of Tsédé referred to under the names of Bardé (*'bar lde*) and Wangdé (*dbang lde*).[28] However, even a short look at the relevant sources makes clear that this connection is tenuous and does not account for the fact that at Alchi the person bears the title *podrang* (*pho brang*), which indicates a role on the religious side. One may also wonder why one would want to link one's ancestry to a short-lived ruler of a distant dynasty rather than to one closer to home, namely the lineage of Palgyigön who



8 Taken in 1982, this view of Alchi Choskhor—this village area is named after the religious compound—from the west documents the relationship of the monastic compound on the left and the four-storey Lönpo house centre right, which clearly was the most prominent building in this part of Alchi. Also clearly visible is the Lönpo Chörten, a gateway chörten that may well mark the original access to the sacred compound. Today modern houses obscure these relationships entirely.

a century earlier took over Maryül. Even the much later kingdom of Ladakh traces itself back to him.[29]

However, the list of rulers succeeding Palgyigön as it is found in the *Royal Genealogy of Ladakh* (*la dwags rgyal rabs*) is rudimentary and not corroborated by any other source. Its historical value, thus, has always been doubted even though a few of the events listed have been taken as historical facts.[30] Goepper, for example, took one of the ruler's names that has a Sanskrit origin, Utpala, as a possible explanation for what appear to be non-Tibetan representations of kings and nobles in the murals at Alchi. But he also pointed out the possibility that 'the local Ladakhi royalty intentionally had themselves portrayed in the guise of Indian or Central Asian rulers'[31] (see Donor Assemblies, page 85 ff.).

The archaeological evidence indicates that the precedent set by the royal house of Purang-Guge was emulated in Ladakh to a considerable extent. Nyarma Monastery, located a few kilometres east of Tiksé (*khrig se*), over the following centuries grew into an enormous complex.[32] Its oldest building, a part of which forms the base of a temple dedicated to the protectress Dorjé Chenmo (*rdo rje chen mo*), likely dates back to its foundation in the late tenth century. The complex was expanded in the following centuries through the addition of at least four major temples. Also the founder of the Alchi Dukhang, a monk called Kalden Shérap (*skal ldan shes rab*), received his religious education here. However, this monastery was abandoned in the fourteenth century and thus only remains in the form of a large ruin.[33] On the basis of comparisons to the Tabo Main Temple, also ruins at Basgo and Leh Choskor can be dated to around the middle of the eleventh century.[34] Historical sources further claim that the monasteries of Spituk (*dpe thub*) and Likir (*klu dkyil*) are equally early foundations, but this cannot be confirmed on the basis of material evidence.[35]

The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek studied by Nils Martin (page 781 ff.) is the historically most informative text among the Alchi inscriptions, but has only partially been recorded previously. This text is a song of praise dedicated to three generations of monks from the Dro clan and their religious achievements. Its poetic language and fragmentary state leave a lot of room for interpretation, and the following account summarizes my take on it, Nils Martin offering much more detail in the introduction to his translation.

The family of the founders of Alchi traces itself back to a branch of the Dro clan from Purang that settled at Nyarma, where it served as minister to a certain *podrang* Wangdé. As the west Tibetan examples show, the title may indicate that this Wangdé is a brother to a ruler in charge of the religious affairs of Maryül, that is Ladakh. It is, thus, fitting that the first of the three monks the inscription focuses on, called Zhiden Ö (*zhi ldan 'od*), is the eldest son of a monk turned householder (verses 49–56). Thereby the inscription implies that this family settled at Sumda (*gsum mda'*), across the mountain range south of Alchi. As has been shown recently, the village that today appears remote had been part of a southern trade route that led from Wanla via Sumda to the Markha valley, a route that more broadly connects Kashmir and west Tibet that must have been of much greater importance in the past.[36]

The information gained from the Sumtsek foundation inscription fits well with what we already knew about the founder of the Alchi Dukhang, a monk called Kalden Shérap (*skal ldan shes rab*). As the Dukhang inscriptions inform us,[37] Kalden Shérap was a monk from the Dro clan born at Sumda and religiously trained in Nyarma (6). He eventually moved to Alchi and founded its Main Temple (*gtsug lag khang*), the oldest temple still existing in the village. He also erected a bridge across the Indus and a fort (*rdzong*). These must have been located at the same place where today's bridge is found. Both the remains of a fort and the numerous rock



9 The monastic complex (*chos 'khor*) of Alchi from the northwest, viewing all temples from the back. The highest structure in the centre is the three-storeyed Sumtsek, to its left the Main Temple, usually referred to as the Dukhang, and to the right the Lhakhang Soma. Along the buildings in the foreground a circumambulation path leads around the walled compound.

inscriptions found there attest to the importance of this site as a river crossing. As Nils Martin shows in his analysis of the Sumtsek inscription Kalden Shérap likely is the second unnamed monk whose deeds are described (57–84). In particular the description of his foundations resonates with that found in one fragmentary inscription in the Dukhang. Being his uncle, Kalden Shérap lived a generation prior to Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*), a conclusion that is also substantiated by the earlier stylistic and iconographic characteristics of the murals in the Dukhang in comparison to those of the Sumtsek.[38]

Nothing is known about Alchi (*a lci*) village beyond what is found in its rock and temple inscriptions. Its name is clearly pre-Tibetan and defies explanation. Located on the southern shore of an alluvial plateau directly above the Indus River it is considerably lower than Sumda on the southern side of the same mountain range. It thus has a milder climate and can grow a greater variety of agricultural products. It probably also derived its importance from the nearby bridge, one of the few places of Lower Ladakh at which the Indus could be crossed all season.[39]

Sumda itself is of two parts, the larger Sumda Chen (*gsum mda' chen*) along the main route, and the three household village of Sumda Chung (*gsum mda' chung*) in a northern side valley directed towards Alchi. A path leads directly from Sumda Chung across a pass called Stakspila and steeply descends towards Alchi, the drop on the Alchi side being 2000 metres in height. Sumda Chung also preserves a temple dating from roughly the same period as Alchi, and numerous ruins of other constructions of the time are found in both Sumda Chen and Sumda Chung some of which may well go back to the same founders as those at Alchi.[40]

Another group of comparative monuments partially decorated by the same artists is found at Mangyu (*mang rgyu*), a village only half a day's walk along the south bank of the Indus towards the west and into a side valley. In terms of workmanship, the monuments there are also closely connected to the Alchi monuments, but studies of its inscriptions have shown that they are founded by members of the Mer (*smer*) clan.[41] A detailed comparison of the mandalas found at the two sites indicates a religious competition between their founders (The Alchi Mandalas, page 747 ff.).

Tsültrim Ö's religious deeds are not only recorded in the founding inscription of the Sumtsek (v. 85–120), but he also authored a text in its top storey[421] and a lengthy inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten.[43] The founding inscription of the Sumtsek, a song of praise composed by a certain Tséden Shérap (*rtse ldan shes rab*), informs us that the three storeys of the structure are dedicated to three paternal uncles (v. 105–108).[44] In contrast, the top storey inscriptions accompanying a series of portraits is authored (but not necessarily written) by Tsültrim Ö himself (The Entrance Wall, page 659 ff.). There he takes refuge to the teachers of a Kagyü (*bka' brgyud*) school lineage ending with the founder of the Drigung (*'bri gung*) Kagyü school simply called Drigungpa (766). This is the famous Jikten Gönpo Rinchenpel (*'jig rten mgon po rin chen dpal*, 1143–1217), today more frequently and honorifically referred to as Jikten Sumgön (*'jig rten gsum mgon*). This information is now further supported by the new reading of the inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten, which mentions the same teacher as refuge, and the depiction in the Tashi Gomang Chörten, the composition of which derives from central Tibetan *thangka* paintings portraying Drigung hierarchs (7, 252).

Thus, from these inscriptions we can conclude that Tsültrim Ö was a younger contemporary and pupil of Drigungpa Jikten Gönpo, the founder of the Drigung Kagyü school, who died in 1217. The Palden Drepung Chörten inscription further implies that the Sumtsek was built in combination with another edifice erected for relics of Drigungpa (see The Pearl Garland

Composition, page 406 ff., stanza 12). If this reading is correct, then the Sumtsek dates to the years immediately following 1217, but even if it is not the temple's foundation cannot precede that date by more than a few years. Thus these inscriptions provide us with relatively narrow absolute dates for both the Sumtsek and the Palden Drepung Chörten. Also the Tashi Gomang Chörten, the Jampel Lhakhang and the courtyard extension must have been built shortly after (see The Development of the Sacred Area, page 345 ff.).

The information gained from the Alchi inscriptions roughly conforms to information about the spread of the Drigung school gained from historical sources, which initiates a major change in the religious situation in the western Himalayas. In the early thirteenth century the Drigung (*'bri gung*) school established itself in the region of Mount Kailash (Kailaśa). On three occasions Drigungpa dispatched groups of monks to the region, the third and biggest group led by Ghuya Gangpa Püntsok Gyatso (*ghu ya sgang pa phun tshogs rgya mtsho*) in 1215. There they quickly gained local support with a king of Mangyül (*mang yul*; that is an alternative designation to Maryül, probably designating Upper Ladakh), Ngödrubgön (*dngos grub mgon*), recorded as one of their supporters together with the kings of Guge and Purang.[45] While none of the recorded events can directly be linked to Alchi, it is clear that these large expeditions must have changed the religious atmosphere in western Himalayas.

At Alchi the last of the early monuments, the Jampel Lhakhang and the courtyard extension, document a decline in material and artistic quality, hinting at an economic decline that likely is associated with warfare in the surrounding areas, in particular the raids into Northern India that destroyed the main monasteries in Northeast India and the repeated invasions of Kashmir by the Mongols, the first of them in the 1230s.[46] Religious activity nevertheless continues and is documented in a considerable number of painted chörten, the Lotsawa Lhakhang and finally the so-called Lhakhang Soma (*lha khang so ma*) or New Temple. The latter documents a major stylistic and iconographic diversion from the earlier western Himalayan tradition. Now deities are depicted in embrace (*yab yum*) and wrathful depictions abound. The composition and colour scheme of the paintings both correspond to contemporaneous central Tibetan *thangka* painting, although they are produced by local artists. The refinement of the sophisticated Kashmiri style preserved in the early buildings has vanished and the figures have a refreshing bluntness.

The Lhakhang Soma paintings are part of a new era of Ladakhi painting with many monuments throughout Ladakh, ranging from the temple at Wanla to the Guru Lhakhang in Phyang.[47] At Alchi, this change from the Kashmiri to an indigenous Ladakhi tradition with strong local flavours can be traced through the painted chörten and the Lotsawa Lhakhang and happened gradually, taking up the remainder of the thirteenth century. Of course, there is no historical information that would accompany it and the monuments themselves are the only source in this regard (see The Development of the Sacred Area, page 345 ff.).

Following the construction of the Lhakhang Soma, donor attention appears to have moved to other areas of Alchi, in particular Shangrong and Tsatsapuri. It is likely that the Alchi Choskhor remained under the descendants of the family of its founders, and that these focused on the preservation of the monuments. An inscription in the Maitreya niche of the Sumtsek records a restoration of the temple (complex) and its paintings under the supervision of a priest called Shérap Sönam (*shes rab bsod nams*).[48] Since the text mentions the name of King Tashi Namgyel (*bkra shis rnam rgyal*) who reigned about 1555–1575,[49] we may conclude

that this must have taken place around that time, that is, during the second half of the sixteenth century. Still, the formulations used in this inscription suggest that the creative religious activity at Alchi had already come to an end sometime before, and that an active religious community no longer existed.

The early phase of Kadam school (*bka' gdams snying ma* or *bka' gdams gong ma*) with its emphasis on elaborate ritual, on the power of propitiating deities and on scholarship, was the precursor of the Géluk school, founded three and a half centuries later by Tsongkhapa (*tsong kha pa*, 1357–1419) and first named New Kadampa (*bka' gdams gsar ma*). It is thus no surprise that when this school established itself in the western Himalayas through pupils of Tsongkhapa in the fifteenth century, that they linked themselves back to the western Himalayan tradition of Rinchen Zangpo, as clearly expressed in one of the earliest monuments of that period, the Red Temple at Tholing. Identifying the portraits of Drigungpa as representing Rinchen Zangpo was a powerful tool to sideline the importance of the Drigung school in the intermediate period, but also resulted in the expansion of the legend of Rinchen Zangpo as the source of one hundred and eight monuments across the region and for the ritual of Dorjé Chenmo, the goddess worshipped in the only functioning temple left at Nyarma.

It is, however, unclear how long the Alchi Choskhor remained in private hands, and when the old monastic complex of Alchi was taken over by the Géluk school monastery of Likir. Situated in a side valley on the opposite side of the Indus River, Likir Monastery today administers the Alchi Choskhor, and delegates the monks that serve at its keeper (*könnyer, dkon gnyer*) and collect the entrance fees. The only specific Géluk topic found anywhere in the Choskhor is a painting of Tsongkhapa in the veranda of the Sumtsek (481). However, I have no record of the modern paintings in the most recent addition to the complex, the Maitreya Temple to the right of the entrance to the Dukhang (483 f.).

In any case, we have to be grateful to everybody who took care of these exceptional monuments over the centuries. As little has been altered in their interiors the Alchi Choskhor monuments offer a unique glimpse into the past when Lower Ladakh flourished under the pious leadership of competing noble families.





10 The Alchi Choskhor (*chos 'khor*) from the north looking at the temples from their backs. The twin temples on the left are the Lotsawa Lhakhang and the Jampel Lhakhang. They are followed by the Main Temple, the Sumtsek and the New Temple at the edge of the compound. CL 2000 (55,03), WHAV.

11 The Alchi monastic compound seen from the east in a three-dimensional model prepared by the Technical University Graz, Austria, under the direction of Holger Neuwirth. Here the twin temples of the Jampel and Lotsawa Lhakhang are seen from the front, and the double chörten in front of the Sumtsek as well as the Palden Drepung Chörten can easily be discerned. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

The Layout of the Sacred Area

by Roger Goepper & Christian Luczanits



12 Above: Drawing of a stupa between the valance cloth in the Sumtsek.

From the very beginning, the natural disposition of the narrow alluvial plateau above a bend of the river Indus chosen as a location for the sacred area (*chos 'khor*) at Alchi limited the possibilities in arranging the buildings. It also prevented any strict 'orientation' of the buildings according to the heavenly directions. Instead, entrances of all the temple halls face the southeast, while nominally they represent the east in most cases.[51] The rather narrow and sloping ground also restricted the possibility of creating a symmetrical and therefore symbolic sequence of monuments along a central axis, as can be observed in other early temple complexes in the western Himalayas, as the one at Tabo.[50]

Today, it is difficult to imagine the original impression of the whole architectural situation since several secular buildings have been erected within the religious compound and also the circumambulation path has changed considerably. Originally the whole area must have been protected by a wall of dried bricks, the remains of which could still be seen in the 1990s forming a right angle to the northeast and northwest of the complex (10). The other parts of this wall are either missing or replaced by more modern walls. The present state allows only speculation on which buildings were originally surrounded by this symbolic iron-mountain ring (*cakravāḍaparvata*, Tib. *chakri rawa, lcags ri ra ba*). Perhaps it only encircled the main temple halls, perhaps it also included monastic quarters for a few monks.[52]

As is common, a path for circumambulation may once have run outside this wall around the whole complex, but in this case also only parts remain. Today this path branches off the direct access path into the complex quite some distance southwest of the first ancient monument. There, its beginning is marked by a much more recent set of three chörten, symbolizing the protectors of the three families (Riksum Gönpo, *rigs gsum mgon po*), the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi.[53] This set is a common transition marker, but in this case is located before another secular building complex that becomes included in the circumambulation (10). After leading around the main building along the edge of the alluvial plain above the Indus it actually leads inside the surrounding wall and quite close to the core of the monastic complex near the double chörten in front of the three-storeyed Sumtsek, relatively close to the entrances of the temples (11). The path continues along the wall and after surrounding the large Palden Drepung Chörten, formerly called the Great Stūpa, at the southwestern edge of the complex joins the direct access path back to the three chörten.

It is also hardly possible to reconstruct the original path leading into the sacred area with any certainty. Probably the Palden Drepung Chörten originally marked the entry into the Choskhor, whereas the Tashi Gomang Chörten, the northwestern of the double chörten directly in front of the Sumtsek, may have acted as the actual portal leading to the Main

Temple (330). That these gateway chörten were regarded as elements of a meaningful arrangement is stressed by the similarity of their inner decoration. The many other smaller chörten spread over the whole Choskhor, especially those outside the perimeter wall near the steep slope down to the river, are of later periods and the sequence of their erection remains unclear (see also Continuous Changes, page 400 ff.).

Among the temple halls the most important one is the Main Temple complex, which includes the Dukhang (Assembly Hall), which is also the oldest surviving building of the Alchi Choskhor. Today the Main Temple is situated near the northwestern end of the sacred area, followed only by the two smaller twin halls of the Lotsawa Lhakhang (Translator's Temple) and the Jampel Lhakhang (Mañjuśrī Temple), but originally it may have occupied a more central position within the whole complex, accentuated by the courtyard in front of its façade (13).

The Main Temple is actually built up of a number of monuments added to the Dukhang within the first century of its existence. Flanking the veranda, two towers where added, only the southern one in its original shape, and then a courtyard wall was built in front of them. Finally, a Raised Chörten was erected in the middle of the courtyard and along the central axis leading from the courtyard door into the temple. All of these buildings are discernible on figure 13.

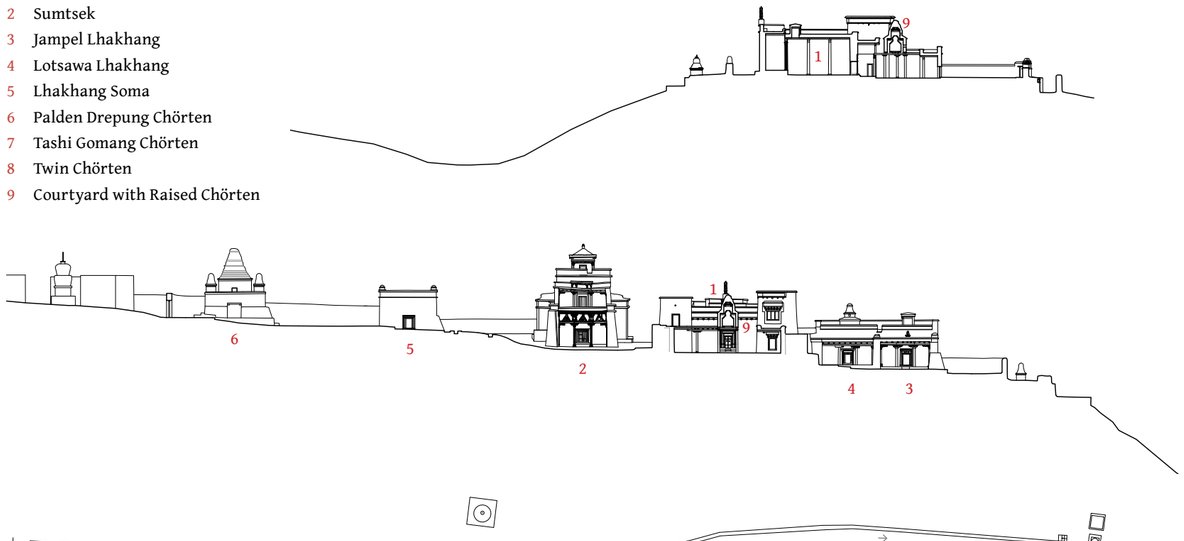
To the left of the Main Temple, and thus met with earlier by the arriving visitor, stands the slightly later Sumtsek (Three-Storeyed Temple), architecturally the most interesting building at Alchi. Immediately in front of the Sumtsek, blocking the entrance to the Main Temple is the double chörten mentioned earlier, which includes the Tashi Gomang Chörten closer to the Sumtsek (330).

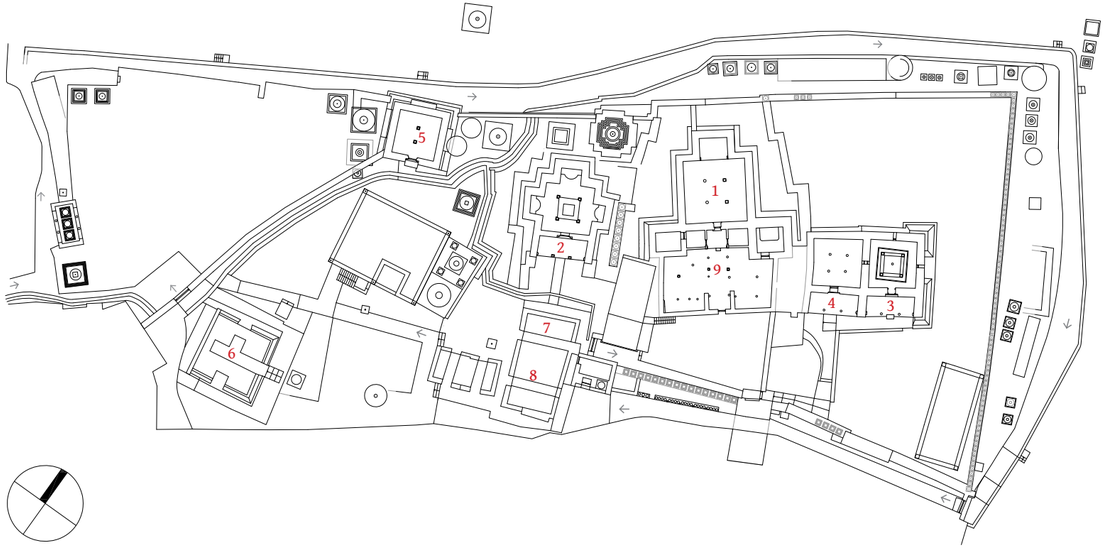
To the left of the Sumtsek, at a distance of about ten metres, the latest and structurally simplest hall was added to the complex, the small Lhakhang Soma (New Temple). The larger building in front of the Lhakhang Soma is called Kanjur Lhakhang, but surely was not conceived as a religious building from the outset (13). Although it is used today as repository for a library containing the translations of the Buddha's teachings (*kanjur, bka' 'gyur*), it is a recent addition and appears to be in private possession independent of Likir Monastery.



13 This wonderful winter photograph taken in 1982 from the opposite shore of the Indus River documents the condition of the compound before the introduction of concrete. The circumambulation path organically follows the clusters of chörten and maṇi walls built along the outer wall of the complex. At that time, there still was a two-storey building directly in front of the Main Temple, which had to be accesses through it. Further the so-called Kanjur Lhakhang is considerably smaller than today. The southwest corner of the complex is occupied by large private house, and beyond it the building housing the three chörten at the beginning of the circumambulation path can be recognised. The large white building in the back is the house of the Lönpo family with Lönpo Chörten to its right.

1 Main Temple
2 Sumtsek
3 Jampel Lhakhang
4 Lotsawa Lhakhang
5 Lhakhang Soma
6 Palden Drepung Chörten
7 Tashi Gomang Chörten
8 Twin Chörten
9 Courtyard with Raised Chörten







14 The cross section cuts through the Main Temple along its central axis and shows the different floor levels of its parts, and the considerably lower pathway on the southeast side. On the northwest side are masonry fragments of a structure around the Main Temple. The lowest terrain point in the northwest side valley is 11 metres below the floor level of the Main Temple.

15 The longitudinal section of the entire area with the orthogonally positioned elevations of the various temples shows the gradation of the terrain. Comparing floor levels in relation to the Main Temple, the Sumtsek is 0.75 metres higher and the Lhakhang Soma an additional 2.16 and the Palden Drepung Chörten further 1.36 metres higher. On the east side, the Lotsawa Lhakhang is 1.50 metres and the Jampel Lhakhang 1.70 metres lower than the Main Temple's courtyard.

16 The site plan of the entire area with the floor plans of the individual buildings shows their relative position to each other and their varying orientation. The Main Temple forms the centre of the complex, the Sumtsek is 5 metres west of it, the Lotsawa Lhakhang with the adjoining Jampel Lhakhang just two metres southeast. The Lhakhang Soma is 11 metres west of the Sumtsek. All temples face southeast, with the Main Temple 52 degrees off the geographic east. The Sumtsek varies this deviation with +9 degrees, the Jampel Lhakhang with +5 degrees, the Lotsawa Lhakhang with +6 degrees and the Lhakhang Soma with +14 degrees.

All plans Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

Architectural Documentation

by Holger Neuwirth & Carmen Auer

Research on the architecture of the monastic complex at Alchi goes back to a first visit in 1998.[54] Subsequently, Holger Neuwirth, member of the Faculty of Architecture at Graz University of Technology, secured funding for a research project titled 'Buddhist Architecture in the Western Himalayas' financed by the Austrian Science Fund. This enabled the documentation of the monastic complex of Alchi in spring 2000. Further, in the course of a follow-up project at Graz University of Technology, the entire complex could be documented tachymetrically in 2003 and 2004, using thirty-two polygon points. In the following years, the data collected in the course of the field research were evaluated and presented in scale plans and spatial models of the entire complex and its individual buildings. During field research in 2005 and 2009 additional data could be collected leading to further improved plans.[55]

The building documentation presented in this publication corresponds to the condition of the monastic complex in 2003. This is crucial, since the Archaeological Survey of India has continued to carry out work at the complex that increasingly altered its appearance. For example, in 2004 the surrounding wall was partially replaced by a wire fence, and the courtyard in front of the Main Temple was roofed. Accordingly, the present building documentation can be used to evaluate the structural changes that have taken place since 2003.

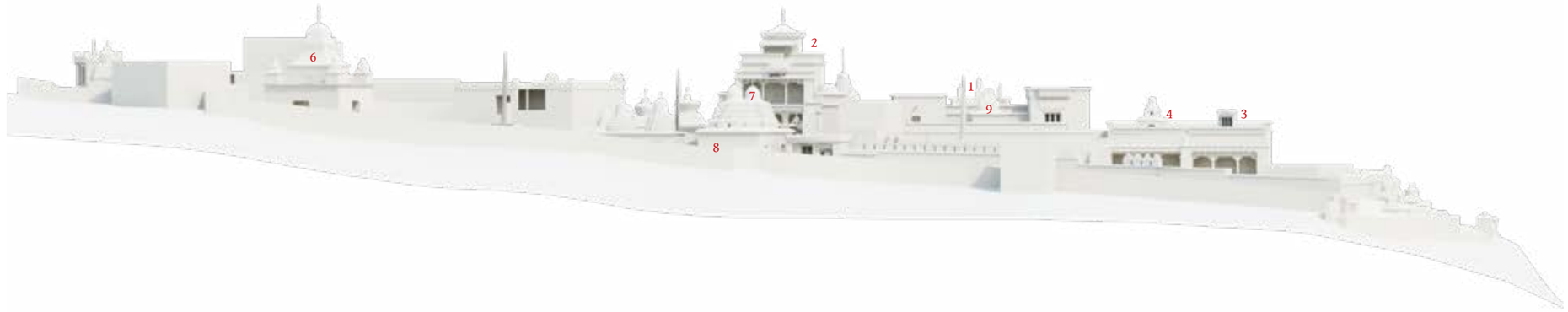
The monastic complex (*choskhor*) of Alchi is situated on a narrow hill section sloping continuously from southwest to northeast above the valley of the Indus River. Outside the fortified circumambulation path, the terrain to the northwest behind the Main Temple descends rather gently, while on the northeast side it drops steeply down towards the river. Following this outer path, which surrounds the entire complex in a clockwise direction, the sacred enclosure can be entered on the eastern side at the lowest point of the area.

The upper gate, which is located on the plateau next to the Palden Drepung Chörten, is 9.74 metres higher than the lowest point of the path. The terrain rises another 1.67 metres to the point where the circumambulation begins today, which is situated next to a cluster of three chörten to the west of the upper gate. The difference between the lower and the upper level of the circumambulation thus amounts to 11.41 metres in total.

Within this area, the terrain course is reflected in a gradation of the site, from the higher level in the southwest to the lower level in the northeast. From here, the terrain drops steeply by 28.75 metres down to the riverbank. The complex, surrounded by walls and chörten, is 133.30 metres long and 59.86 metres wide and covers an area of 5820 square metres.

A narrow path from the upper gate along the western wall leads directly to the Lhakhang Soma. The wider, paved main path leads straight down from the Palden Drepung Chörten to the Tashi Gomang Chörten. Northwest of the Tashi Gomang Chörten is the striking

1 Main Temple
2 Sumtsek
3 Jampel Lhakhang
4 Lotsawa Lhakhang
5 Lhakhang Soma
6 Palden Drepung Chörten
7 Tashi Gomang Chörten
8 Twin Chörten
9 Courtyard with Raised Chörten



three-storeyed Sumtsek with its open porch. The Main Temple is on the northeast side of the Sumtsek and next to it on the slightly lower terrain, the Lotsawa Lhakhang and the Jampel Lhakhang. At the back of the Main Temple stonewall fragments of the outer ambulatory around the temple are preserved. The main path leads around the Tashi Gomang Chörten to a gate, which leads to an open area in front of the Main Temple, which in the 1980s was still occupied by a building (13). In the northwest of this open space, in the middle of the façade, there is the entrance to a partially roofed forecourt that leads into the Main Temple. Following the stairs down on the northeast side, one finally reaches the lowest plateau, where again on the northwest side, the Lotsawa Lhakhang and the Jampel Lhakhang are located directly adjacent to each other.

The orientation of all the temples varies slightly, though each one of them is accessed on the southeast side. The Main Temple as a reference dimension deviates in its orientation—clearly defined by the entrance and the back niche—by 52 degrees from the geographical east. At the Sumtsek this deviation amounts to 61 degrees, at the Jampel Lhakhang to 57, at the Lotsawa Lhakhang to 58 and at the Lhakhang Soma to 66 degrees. This deviation undoubtedly has to do with the topography of the temple area and the resulting peculiarities such as the time of sunrise and the visual relations to specific locations in the landscape.

17 Above: In this model of the southeastern view of the monastic complex the three-storeyed Sumtsek stands out as the tallest building. Also the substantial size of the Palden Drepung Chörten at the entrance of the complex can clearly be recognised. The Main Temple, however, is obscured by all the additional structures placed in front of it.

18 View from the courtyard in front of the Jampel Lhakhang with a view of the Main Temple, the Sumtsek, the Tashi Gomang and the Twin Chörten. In the back is the five tower structure of the Palden Drepung Chörten.

All plans Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.



The Main Temple



19 The space between the two east wall mandalas in the Dukhang, the Sarvavid- and Śākyasiṃha mandalas on the right side wall when facing the main sculptures, is skilfully used to depict a stupa of the descent from the gods type (lhabap chörten, *lha babs mchod rten*). Among its more unusual features are the standing vajra in a shrine on top of the stairs and the teaching Buddha on top of the dome flanked by two haloed guardians wearing tunics and holding lance and sword symmetrically. Left and right are the outermost circles of the mandalas with their characteristic pan-Indian deities integrated as worshippers and protectors of the central mandala assembly.

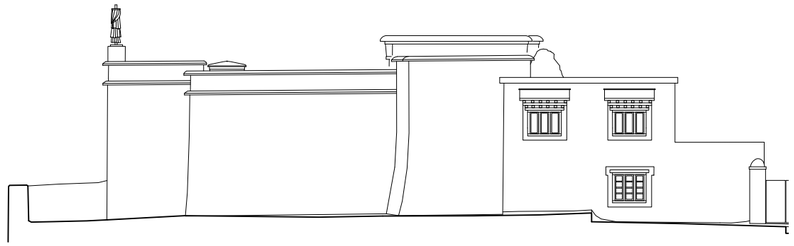
20 Above: One of the lion brackets inside the Dukhang in its original colouration.

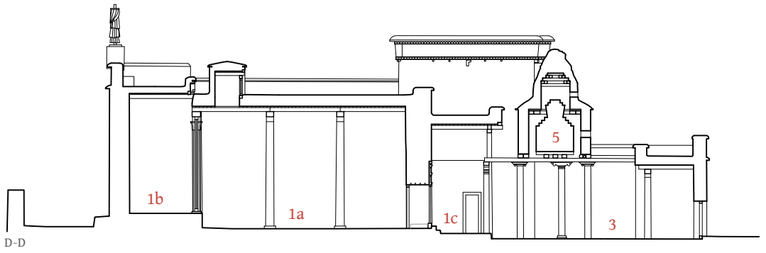
The Main Temple (*gtsug lag khang*) is actually a cluster of buildings including a number of later structures added in front of the actual temple building, the Dukhang (*'du khang*) or Assembly Hall. It includes the veranda refurbished at different periods, the two tower-like structures flanking the veranda, and the walled courtyard in front of the temple. Spatially, also the Raised Chörten has to be counted among these structures, but this addition is somewhat later. Given that none of these additional structures preserves art of a quality comparable to that in the Dukhang, they are only shortly referred to in this chapter. The architectural development of these structures is detailed in several sections of the development chapter (page 345 ff.), where the different phases are presented in chronological succession.

The Dukhang is certainly the earliest monument of the Alchi monastic complex (*chos 'khor*). This is not only indicated by the fact that it is the only temple that allows a larger gathering of monks to assemble, but also architecturally, iconographically, stylistically, and through its inscriptions. In terms of iconography, the life of the Buddha and the large donor depiction on the entry wall as well as the Vajradhātu mandala assembly in the niche (1) present fundamental themes typical for foundational monuments at the period. Stylistically, the murals of the Dukhang are less dense and mannered than those of the Sumtsek (Volume 2), but they are executed in a similar artistic and material quality. Its murals are, thus, more in keeping with other early western Himalayan monuments, such as Tabo and Nako, which arguably represent earlier stages in the development of Buddhism and its art in the western Himalayas.

Unfortunately, there is no way to date the Main Temple precisely. As detailed in the historical introduction (page 19 ff.), inscriptions inside the Dukhang tell us that the temple was founded by the monk Kalden Shérap (*skal ldan shes rab*) from the Dro (*'bro*) family.[57] He likely was the paternal uncle of Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*), the founder of the Sumtsek. This implies that there is only one generation between the two monuments, making it most likely for the Dukhang to date to the end of the twelfth century.

Originally, the structure of the Main Temple consisted of three parts, a niche in the back, the actual assembly hall, and a veranda in front of the entrance, the appearance of which cannot be reconstructed anymore. The two towers flanking the veranda and the courtyard in front of the complex were added at two successive stages, and only when the courtyard was added the veranda got to its present state. The following account presents the monument in the succession the visitor encounters its different parts, and thus leads from the more recent parts to the ancient core, the interior of the Dukhang.





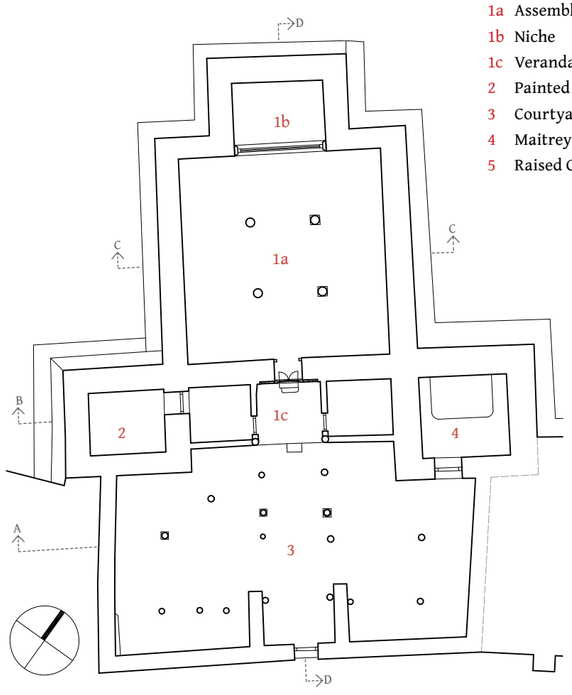
21 The southwest elevation of the Main Temple. On the south side of the complex, next to the courtyard, the caretaker's rooms are attached today.

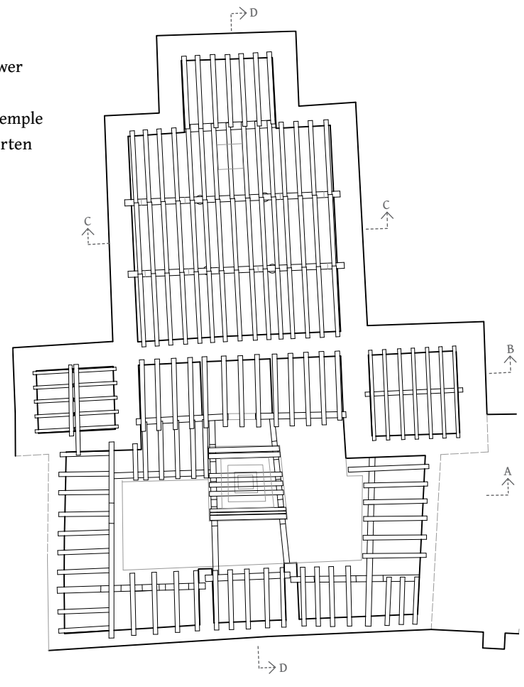
22 The longitudinal section D-D along the central axis showing the increasingly higher floor levels of the Main Temple.

23 Below left: The floor plan of the Main Temple.

24 Below: The beam layer plan revealing differences in construction and the roofless areas of the courtyard.

1 Main Temple
1a Assembly Hall
1b Niche
1c Veranda
2 Painted tower
3 Courtyard
4 Maitreya Temple
5 Raised Chörten







25 The southeast elevation of the Main Temple with the entrance to the courtyard.

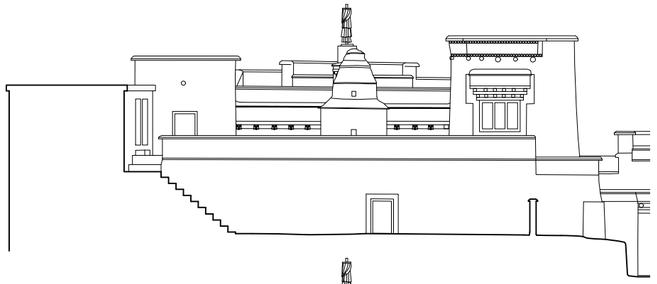
26 The cross section A-A through the courtyard of the Main Temple with its partially roofed areas and the Raised Chörten in the centre.

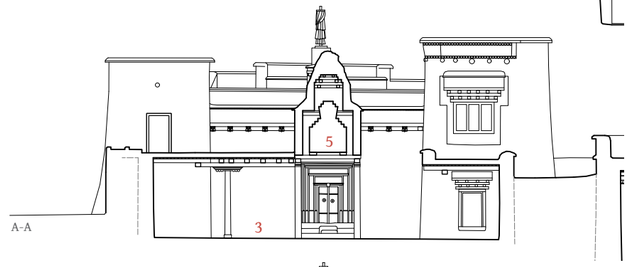
27 The cross section B-B through the veranda of the Main Temple with the two partition walls beside the entrance to the Dukhang and the two side towers. Note the raised floor level of the left tower.

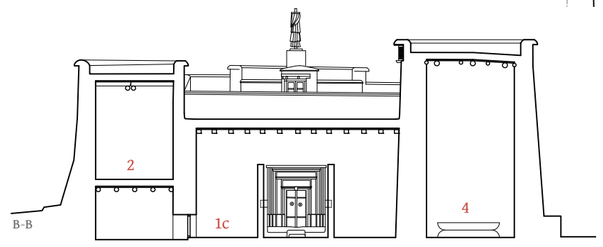
28 The cross section C-C through the Dukhang with the raised niche in the back.

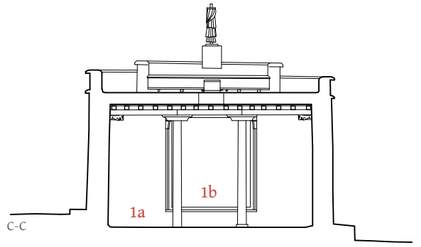
29 The northwest elevation of the Main Temple showing the different heights of the building parts.

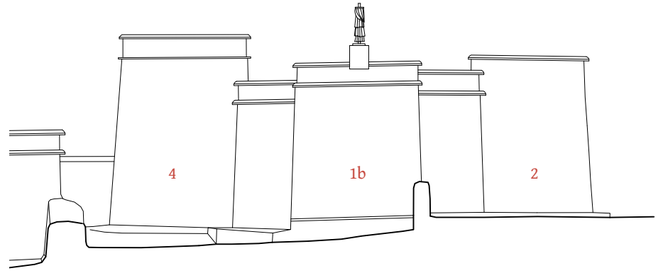
All plans Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.



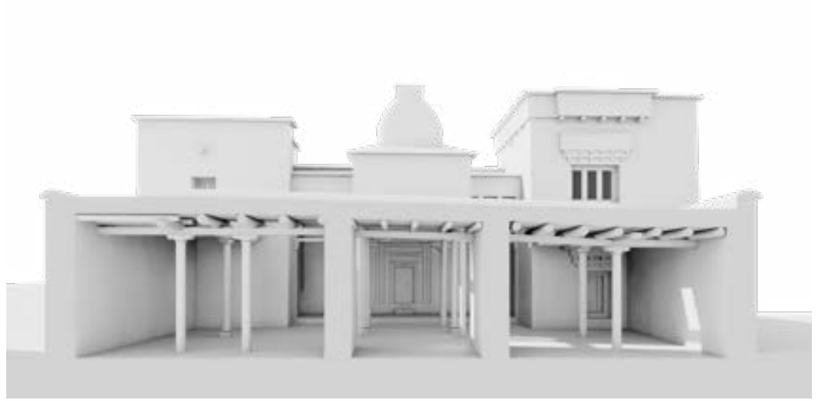














30 Cross section through the courtyard of the Main Temple.

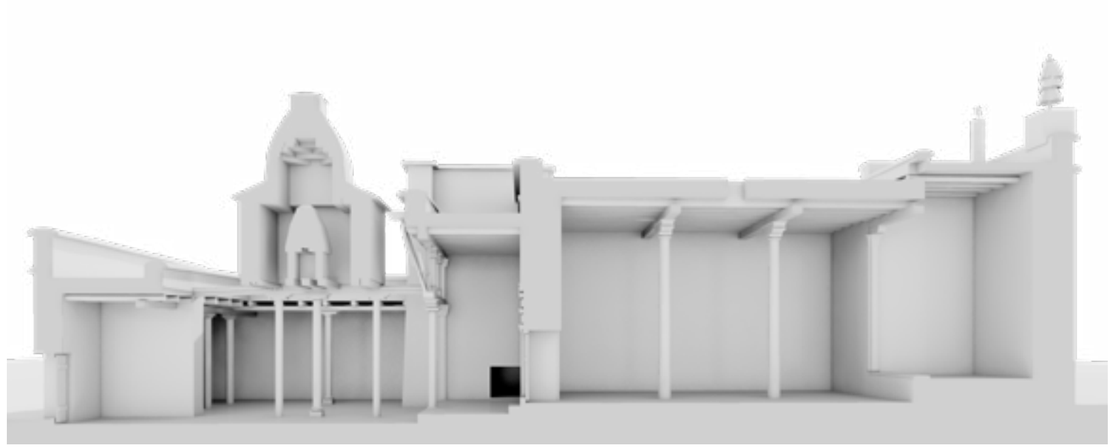
31 Cross section through the Raised Chörten in the front area of the Main Temple's courtyard.

32 Longitudinal section along the central axis of the Main Temple.
All plans Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

Architecture

The Main Temple is the largest building of the sacred area. It consists of the three-part Dukhang and a number of structures attached to it on the southeast side (23). The Dukhang is an approximately square room with an niche on the northwest side that is 0.60 metres higher and a 0.20 metres lower veranda on the southeast side (22). Its main hall is 7.54 metres wide and 7.68 metres deep, and has a clear height of 4.51 metres to the bottom edge of the wooden ceiling. The latter is supported by four columns, the main beams transverse to the main axis (23). The niche is 3.39 metres wide and 2.63 metres deep, and its height is 4.57 metres. The niche is naturally lit from above through a window in its southeast wall. The lantern in the main hall of the Dukhang is a later addition.

The veranda is 7.54 metres wide and 2.33 metres deep, and has a height of 4 metres from the floor level to the lower edge ceiling boards (27). The roof of the veranda is supported by two columns with carved capitals and lion brackets. A carved gable accentuates the central axis in front of the Dukhang's wooden portal (34). The bricked partition walls with differently shaped windows on both sides of the veranda are subsequent additions. Further walls separate the central part of the veranda from the lateral areas. These walls reach up to the upper edge of the capitals only, and leave the veranda's ceiling in full view.



Southwest and northeast of the Dukhang, tower-like extensions are situated on both sides of the veranda. The southwest tower has two rooms one above the other, and the tower interior has a width of 3.07 and a depth of 2.32 metres. The lower room has a height of 1.94 metres, and the room above it is 3.63 metres high and partially painted (see Two Towers, page 352 ff.). The lower room can be entered through an opening on the side of the veranda, while the upper room has a door on the southeast side which can be accessed via the roof of the courtyard.

The northeastern tower is a 3.27-metres-wide and 3.03-metres-deep chapel with a ceiling height of 6.59 metres. This chapel can be accessed from the courtyard through a entrance door on the southeast side and contains a room-high sculpture of the Bodhisattva Maitreya.

The courtyard of the Main Temple has a rectangular boundary wall, its lateral walls connected to the southeast walls of the towers. The entrance to the courtyard is in the southeast wall on the central axis of the Main Temple. On the southeastern front the courtyard is 13.08 metres wide and 5.99 to 6.83 metres deep. The areas above the entrance and along the surrounding walls as well as in front of the southwest part of the veranda are roofed, the ceiling at an approximate height of 2.75 metres.

Along the central axis of the courtyard there is an elevated chörten the base of which begins at the level of the courtyard's ceiling. There is a total of sixteen irregularly placed pillars of various designs supporting the ceiling of the courtyard and the Raised Chörten.

The successive construction phases of the different parts are clearly reflected in the thickness of their walls. While the walls of the Dukhang are 0.88 to 0.99 metres thick, the wall enclosing the courtyard is 0.56 to 0.60 metres thick. In contrast, the partition walls of the veranda have a thickness of only 0.22 metres.

The various parts of the Main Temple can also be clearly distinguished from the outside through their differences in height (32): the roof of the niche is higher than that of the hall in front, permitting a window that directly lights the main sculpture. Directly adjacent to the main structure the two towers rise above the Dukhang, the northeastern tower slightly higher than the northwestern one. The chörten in the middle of the courtyard almost reaches the same height. The attic of the courtyard is considerably lower than that of the Dukhang.

Holger Neuwirth & Carmen Auer



The Courtyard

One enters the area of the Main Temple through a tiny door in the middle of a blank wall and first encounters a short corridor space between the projecting walls supporting the roof of the colonnade along the inner walls of the courtyard. The corridor opens up to a pillar flanked passage leading straight towards the elaborately carved door of the Dukhang (33). On both sides further pillars support the roof protecting the painted walls. It is immediately clear that this forest of columns is the result of many alterations to this space, a half roofed courtyard in front of the Main Temple. Its rather modest dimension indicates that the population using the temple was relatively small when this courtyard was added.

The entrance area as well as much of the courtyard walls are filled with colourful, poorly executed paintings (398 ff.). The colours are recent, but a closer look at the scenes and some untouched, but poorly preserved sections in the western corner of the courtyard, reveals that they are largely following a much earlier layer that still is to be counted to the initial flourishing of the site. They are thus still valuable documents the details of which are discussed in the chapter The Development of the Sacred Area, page 345 ff..

33 This panoramic view of the Main Temple's courtyard shows all the important building phases in one picture. The wall in the background on the left of the picture shows the repainted murals along the courtyards wall. On the right is the elaborately carved door of the Dukhang, and between these is the closed-off left wing of the veranda and the base of the left tower with the original painting in its upper floor.

Summarizing the content, of the courtyard murals, the entrance area contains depictions of Mahākāla, the wheel of life, and the Buddhist cosmos. The remaining walls have five rows of deities above, a top row of Buddhas and four rows of Bodhisattvas, and two rows of narrative scenes are underneath. Within the latter, the centre of each wall is accentuated by a central deity that is executed in higher quality than the rest of the murals here (see 399 f.). The deities featured here are, from the entrance in the direction of circumambulation: four-armed Green Tārā (401), and four-armed Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī (400),[58] six-armed Prajñāpāramitā, and Siṃhanāda Lokeśvara (892). Thus, the entrance wall features the two lotus family (*padmakula*) deities, male and female, and the two wisdom deities Prajñāpāramitā and Mañjuśrī face each other on the side walls.

As the courtyard, the veranda has been considerably altered over time. The only element that is readily visible from the original wooden construction of the veranda is the triangular spacer between the two intermediate beams that terminate in a lion bracket (34). Both the quality of its carving as well as the witheringly are evidence of its antiquity, but placing it within the early chronology of the monuments has been challenging, as laid out in detail in the chapter The Development of the Sacred Area, page 345 ff..

The opening in the centre of the veranda leads directly to an elaborately carved door (35), the modern colouring of which distracts from its antiquity and importance. While common at its time, today it is one of the few such wooded doors preserved throughout the western Himalayas. From the directly comparable examples, only the doors of Khorchak in west Tibet and Udaipur in Lahaul are preserved, the former with considerable damage afflicted during Cultural Revolution, while those of Lachuse, Ribba and the Tholing Serkhang today can only been studied from fragments or photographs.[59] Indeed, some of the details of the Alchi Dukhang door compare well to the carvings of Tholing, Tabo or Udaipur, while others, such as the curled trunk of the elephant, directly relate to representations in the murals of Alchi, such as the elephants as vehicle of Buddha Akṣobhya (494). In fact, this door sets many of the motifs that are characteristic for Alchi and represent a common thread throughout of the Alchi monuments.

To simplify the description of the door, I structure it by its compositional parts, reading the carvings from inside out and from jamb to lintel. The innermost decoration is a band of vajra surrounding the door, accounting for its protective function in this liminal space. The first jambs are covered with vegetable scrolls interrupted by a single meditating Buddha image in central medallions. Buddhas are also found on the capital above the jamb and the associated lintel flanking the central goddess Prajñāpāramitā, which is depicted in the rare six-armed form characteristic for Alchi and related monuments (315). The way her image is set off on this lintel through size and projection conforms to the prominence given to an image in this position in Indian architecture. There, such images are referred to as *lalāṭa-bimba*, and they often directly reference or relate to the main image in the interior of the temple. This is also the case at Alchi, where the Perfection of Wisdom literally underlies buddhahood (313). Prajñāpāramitā also directly references the interior of the temple, where she presides over a mandala represented on the entry wall (49). Between Prajñāpāramitā and the capitals are further two Bodhisattvas, Arapacana Mañjuśrī and possibly Vajrasattva emphasising her wisdom and esoteric prowess. Thus the inner area of the door emphasizes wisdom as the foundation of buddhahood.

Supported by the actual lintel is a panel featuring the five esoteric Buddhas with the four-headed Mahāvairocana in the centre (313). They are placed within elaborate throne frames the arches of which are topped by *garuḍa*. Their arrangement is as unusual as their colouring: read from inside out Ratnasambhava and Amitābha are to the left of Vairocana and Akṣobhya and Amoghasiddhi to the right. In addition, only the central Buddha and Ratnasambhava are painted in the correct colour, Akṣobhya is green while Amoghasiddhi most recently has been white. Nevertheless, the vehicles and matching gestures leave no doubt about their identity.



34 The gable covering the gap between the two intermediate beams of the veranda is beautifully carved with lions and leogryphs. The carving of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in its centre is a later addition.

This view perfectly demonstrates the many changes to the veranda space and its present-day composite character, not only through the diverse shades of the wood, much of it of more recent date, but also in the paintings visible in the background. Both the painted ceiling panels and the mural of the Buddha at his awakening above the door may go back to the time of the expansion of the courtyard, but the mural has been retraced in the recent past.

Given their spatial relationship and subject matter, I read the figures on the second door jamb as flanking the five esoteric Buddhas. Each jamb has four figures, alternating by gender with the respective male closer to the Buddhas. The males are all four-armed and most likely represent the most prominent Bodhisattvas, clockwise from the bottom Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī (320), Vajrasattva (316), Avalokiteśvara (319) and Maitreya (323). These individual identifications are partially hypothetical, as their present colours are unreliable and, uniquely, all four appear to hold a book in their upper left hand, further stressing wisdom as a main theme of the door. The only certain identification is the bottom left Bodhisattva, Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī, as he is accompanied by four goddesses, as is common at Alchi (197, 631, 632).[60] The same four goddesses are also represented between the four Bodhisattvas. These are most likely meant to represent the four outer offering goddesses even though their iconography and arrangement differ from the expected ones deriving from the Vajradhātu mandala. From the bottom left clockwise the goddesses are Ālokā (321), Mālā (317), Dhūpā (318), and Gandhā (322), representing the offerings of butter lamp, garland, incense and fragrance respectively.[61]

The lintel above these jambs links already to the panel with the main scenes of the Buddha's life above it and references both, the awakening and the first sermon (313). In the centre a wheel with a crown on top stands for the Buddhist teaching, whereby the crown may well reference the esoteric teachings in particular. The wheel is flanked by two Buddhas both of which appear to perform a teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*). Together with Śākyamuni in the awakening scene immediately above (34), these may represent the Buddhas of the three times, and thus the eternal continuation of Buddhism. Two expressive wrathful figures with their inner leg stretched towards the wheel likely expand on the awakening scene, while the two deer on the capital reference the Buddha's first sermon.

The middle frame of the door represents a detailed account of the life of the Buddha. The story begins at the bottom of the right jamb with scenes covering the life from the sojourn in Tuṣita heaven to the first competition. It continues on the left door jamb again from the bottom to top covering further competitions, the great departure and ascetic life. Seven more scenes are represented on a large panel fitted above the last lintel and arranged around the Buddha's awakening (313). The scenes emphasized in this way are, from left to right, Sujātā's gift of milk-rice, the monkey offering honey at Vaiśālī, the Buddha teaching his mother in the heaven of the thirty-tree gods (Trāyastriṃśa heaven), the awakening at Bodhgayā, the taming of the elephant Nālāgiri at Rājgir, the first sermon at Sārnāth, and the *parinirvāṇa* at Kuśinagara.[62]

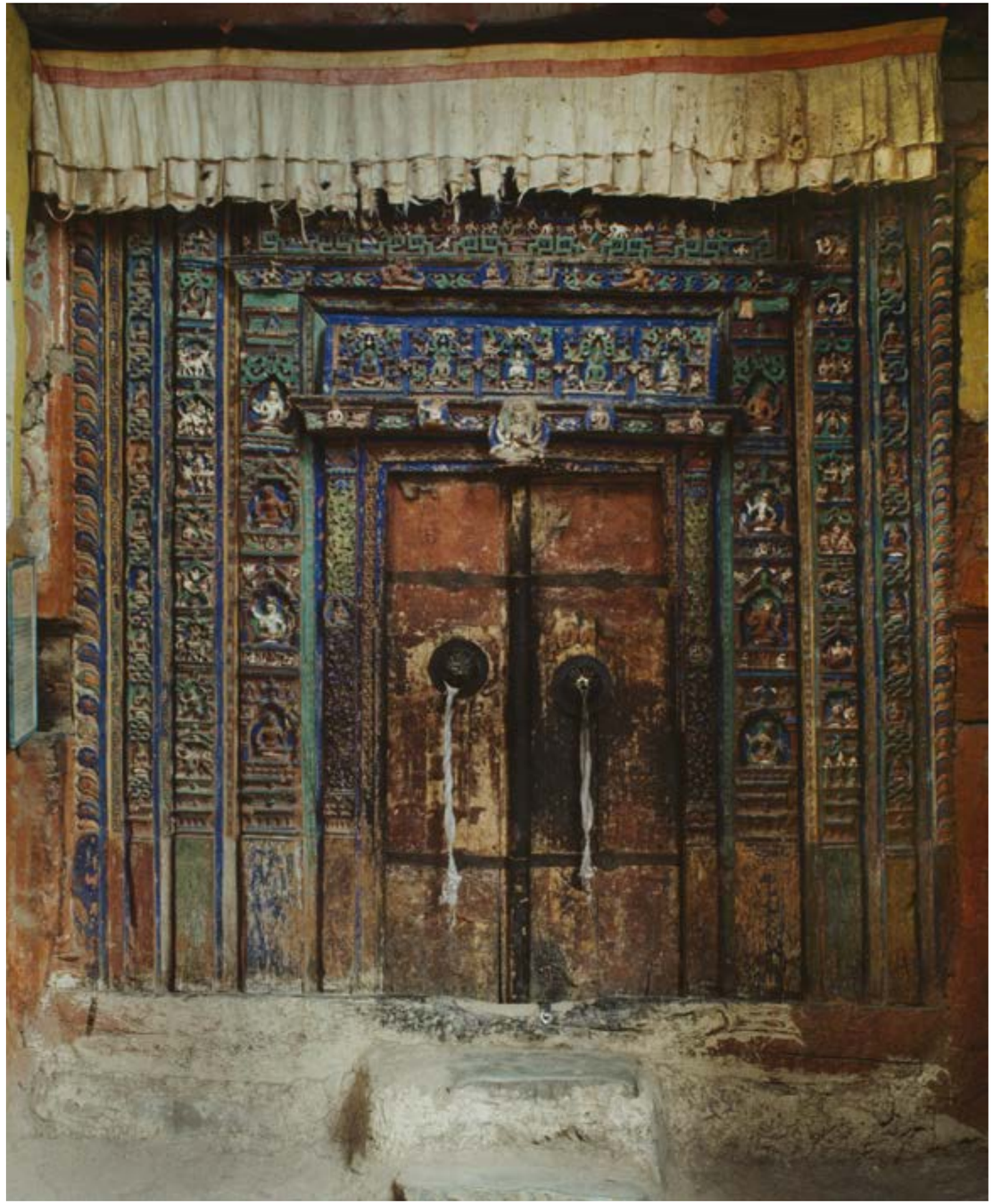
Finally, the outermost jamb features Buddhas performing different gestures. They are framed by two strings that form eight-shaped knots between them. These jambs support the uppermost lintel that has a pair of flying deities offering a crown to the Buddha at his awakening directly underneath them. Further pairs of peaceful and wrathful figures are represented on this lintel between a garland motif. On the sides, a vegetal scroll and a band of lotus petals form the outer perimeter of the door, the latter demarcating the doors surface as a sacred space. Two protectors or gate-keepers carved on beams directly to the sides of the door are today largely obscured by the wall placed in front of them (302).

35 The elaborately carved door of the Dukhang featuring a complete life of the Buddha in the middle part of its decoration. The uppermost lintel and the main scenes of the Buddha's life are obscured by the curtain above. Underneath them, in the centre above the door are the five esoteric Buddhas headed by a four-faced Mahāvairocana. A six-armed form of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is shown immediately below Vairocana in the centre of the lintel.

The innermost door jamb feature small Buddha images within an elaborate scroll. On the next jamb are four four-armed Bodhisattvas and four offering goddesses. The third jamb then shows the birth and youth scenes of the Buddha's life, to be read from the bottom of the right jamb up and continuing on the left jamb. A row of Buddha images framed by an endless knot motif and lotus petals conclude the decoration of the door.

Height of the actual door *c.* 170 cm.

36 Overleaf: The Dukhang in the 1980s with two benches for monks to sit on during ritual in the foreground, the Trilokavijaya and Dharmadhātu mandalas in the background and the clay sculptures of the main niche at the right edge. The chörten is a much later addition to this room.





The Dukhang

Despite the grandeur of its decoration and the complexity of its iconographic programme, the Dukhang or Assembly Hall had been built for a relatively small community of monks and lay followers. In fact, the ritual assembly depicted on the entry wall of the room (74) may provide quite a realistic impression of the size of the monastic community at that time. Of course, the hall originally did not contain the altar and the chörten found there today (36), and thus had more space for the monks to assemble. The Dukhang is a four-pillar hall and has two main spatial units, the main hall measuring 7.5 x 7.9 metres and a niche in the back-wall of 3.3 x 2.4 metres.

In its core, the interior of the temple has been altered relatively little over time, but the ceiling and roof are later replacements. In the case of the ceiling, this is proven by the absence of any of the textile patterns that decorate other monuments of that period, including the Sumtsek, the Jampel Lhakhang (Mañjuśrī Temple), and the Palden Drepung and Tashi Gomang Chörten. This, as well as the shape of the roof itself, indicates that it had been replaced in a restoration.

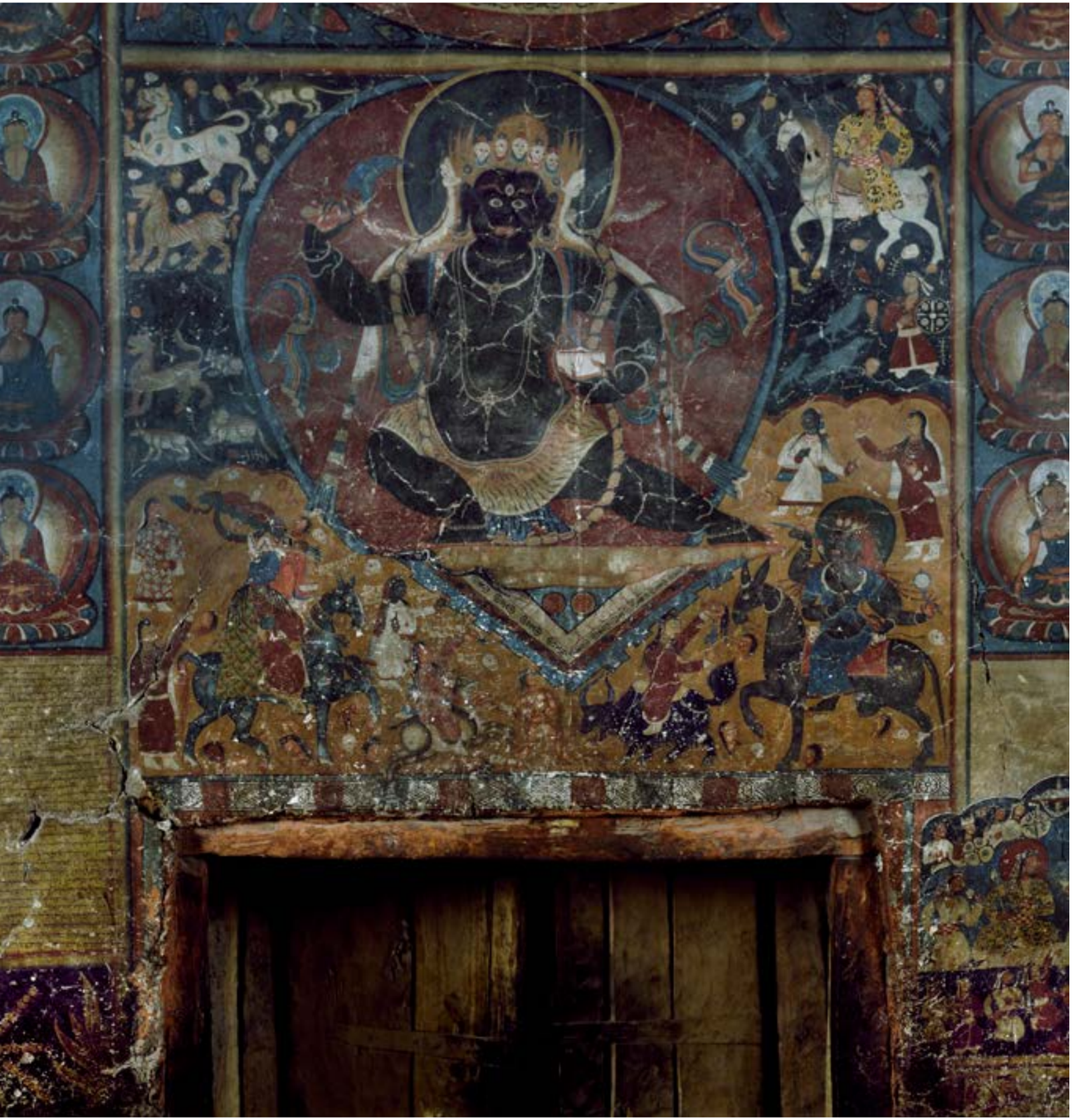
The four fluted wooden columns retain their original bases and capitals. Symbolically the square bases have a round vase of plenty embedded into it, which can be recognised by the foliage projecting from it in the upper corners. In the Dukhang this foliage is still rather obvious, while in later monuments of the Alchi group it gets increasingly abstracted. The capitals consist of two parts, a lower block with superimposed round and square mouldings and the upper elongated part which aligns with the beam and thus functions as a bracket (37). This upper part also has a central decoration and volutes at the sides, and in the case of the Dukhang is additionally extended by two small lions on the capitals on the entrance side. Larger lion brackets support the beam where it enters the walls (20).

Today, the Dukhang is the only temple of the complex that is ritually used. Every morning one of the caretaker monks (*könnyer*) performs a ritual in front of its altar. Today, two monks are dispatched from the head monastery Likir to perform this task and open the doors to visitors; in the 1990s there was only one.

37 The original capitals of the Dukhang consist of two parts, both of which are richly adorned. Above the fluted column, the lower block transitions from circular to square, both parts featuring distinctive ornamentation. The capitals have a central ornament from among the eight auspicious symbols (*aṣṭamaṅgala*), in this case the lotus. In addition to the volutes two lions decorate the sides. These are only found on the entrance side capitals.

There is a clear distinction in the colour of the wood between the original components and the beams that make up the ceiling. The beam above the capital also shows clear signs of a historic water intrusion.





38 Two-armed protector Mahākāla with his retinue above the entry to the Dukhang. The black deity holds a curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and a skull-cup (*kapāla*) and stands above a triangular altar on which a corpse is spread. He is surrounded by a charnel ground occupied by animals and deities of his retinue, a male rider and assistant in the upper right corner and two female ones in the lower corners.

The Entry Wall

Of the Dukhang's interior, the entry wall is the most complex (39). Above the door a two-armed Mahākāla and his retinue protect the sacred space (38). Above it and to both sides are three mandalas, the side ones fairly large and cutting into the valance motif that covers the uppermost area of the walls. These are separated from each other by two vertical rows of seven Buddhas performing different gestures and not identifiable individually. To the left of the door the life of the Buddha is represented in three superimposed horizontal friezes, while to the right the same space is occupied by an expansive donor depiction, the famous royal drinking scene being only a small part of it but in a privileged position just underneath the row of Buddhas and immediately to the side of the door (38).

Mahākāla

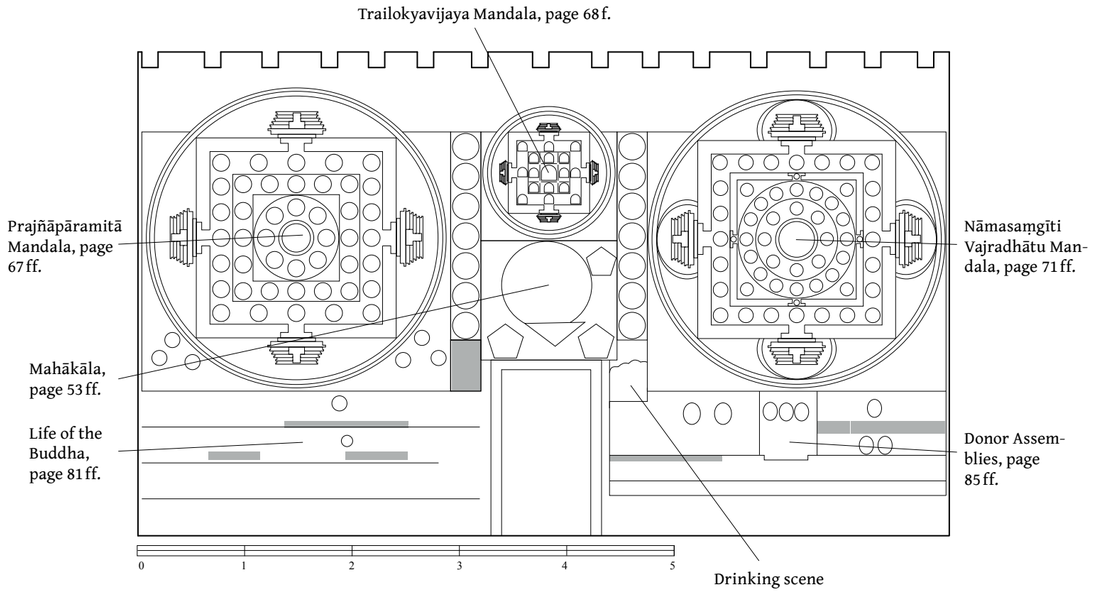
Right above the door is an imposing panel depicting the protector deity Mahākāla in a two-armed form, the practice of which is associated with Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Śākyaśrī (1127–1225).[63] This Mahākāla is, as the name implies, black and stands with his left leg stretched on a human corpse, whereby the bent right leg stands right on the corpse's face.

> Out of Emptiness appears before me in an instant Mahākāla, like cosmic darkness, with one face and two arms, his right hand brandishing a knife, his left holding at his heart a blood-filled skull. In *pratyālīḍha* posture (left leg extended) on a human corpse seat, he is adorned with a tiger-skin and snakes, and has a crown of dry skulls, and a long necklace of fresh heads. With three eyes and yellow, upward streaming beard, eyebrows and hair, he is of dwarfish aspect and extremely angry.[64]

The quoted text also describes that the deity has Buddha Akṣobhya in the crown, while in the Dukhang this association to the vajra family (*vajrakula*) is expressed through the mandala represented above (50).[65] Notable is also the fine vajra-topped crescent in Mahākāla's hair (40), which relates him to Bhairava, the wrathful manifestation of Śiva. As Goepper has established with Mahākāla's depiction in the Sumtsek, the knife raised in the deity's right hand is of a shape that also links it to India (see page 469).

The position of the deity's flaming halo and the altar it stands on are adjusted to the god's stance and thus do not align along the same axes. The corpse, variously described as hungry ghost (*preta*) or a dead man, is painted with its upper side completely flat, and thus somewhat distorted. It lies on a triangular altar, also called a mandala, made up of parallel rows of skull-cups (*kapāla*), vajra and curved knifes (*kartṛkā*) of the same shape as in Mahākāla's hand. The red and orange disks in its centre probably represent sun and moon, and thus hint to eternity, but the cosmic mountain present in later depictions, such as the one in the Sumtsek (517), is missing here. While this form is specific to Alchi, such triangular altars are used for rites of destruction.[66]

The area surrounding Mahākāla is a charnel ground—black at the top and covered by a cloud of yellow dust or smoke at the bottom—filled with body parts, animals and retinue



deities. The latter count among the most intriguing aspects of the Alchi monuments and are difficult, if not impossible, to identify precisely. The reading suggested below is thus tentative and based on a formal and structural analysis of this depiction in relation to textual descriptions and comparative groupings, as well as against the general background of the integration of native divinities into the protective pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism.

In the bottom of the Mahākāla panel two goddesses are singled out. To left, a blue lady riding a blue stallion wears a local pointed hat and a peacock feather cape (41). She holds a vajra in her right hand and a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in her left. The fly-whisks attached to her horse and the umbrella held above the goddesses' head by an attendant evidence her royal status. A wrathful aspect can only be recognised in her four attendants, who are bejewelled, wear local dress and have fangs. One of these is black-skinned and performs a gesture of threatening, while another one rides a deer and, with a curved knife, drives a naked figure with its hands bound in front of her.

The goddess in the bottom right is wrathful, dark-grey and four-armed (42). She sits sideways on a three-legged mule, clearly recognisable by the long ears, and her saddle and stirrups are decorated with skulls. In her right hands she holds a tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) in front of her chest and a dagger, which is directed towards the legs of Mahākāla. In her left hands she holds mirror and noose, the former for blinding the enemies before catching them with the latter.[67] She is surrounded by three attendants, the one in front of her riding a black yak and offering a freshly cut head towards her.

39 The paintings on the entry wall.

40 The details of Mahākāla attest to the high quality of the Dukhang paintings and provide him with a playful character. The hair is finely outlined with the crescent topped by a black vajra only attached to its outer locks. The skulls of the crown are decorated with blossoms and a collar in alternating colours, and they appear to interact with each other. The curved knife (*kartṛkā*) is of an earlier Indian type, with the blade continuing in the direction of the handle, and has a tiny vajra at its tip, which signifies its ritual character.







In terms of identity, the latter represents a form of Rematī, one of the main forms of Penden Lhamo (*dpal ldan lha mo*) or Śrīdevī. The description closest to this goddess, especially in terms of attributes, is the Goddess with Iron Ritual Dagger for Vitality-practice, the Self-arisen Queen (Lhamo Sokdrup Chakpurma Rangjung Gyelmo; *lha mo srog sgrub lcags phur ma rang 'byung rgyal mo*). Tāranātha (1575–1634) describes her as demonic form of the Perfection of Wisdom subduing all harmful, and assigns her to Mahākāla.[68] The comparative goddess in the Sumtsek depiction is of a different iconography (524), but it is again a form of Rematī, Demoness Rematī (Dümo Rematī; *bdud mo re ma ti*), that fits most closely.[69] These identifications are based on much later sources and thus only provide an approximation to understand the Alchi goddesses.[70]

The blue goddess in a peacock feather cape, in the absence of a proper identification, is best called the 'Peacock Cape Lady'. No doubt, she eventually gets identified with and transformed into Dorjé Chenmo, another form of Penden Lhamo, who is considered the personal protectress of Rinchen Zangpo, but the descriptions of this goddess deviate too severely from

41 In the bottom left corner of the Mahākāla panel the Peacock Cape Lady rides a blue horse and holds vajra and skull-cup. An attendant holding an umbrella above her head provides her with royal status. All the females wear local dress, a heavy coat, boots and a cape covering their backs, and only the fangs at the sides of their mouths distinguish them from human portraits, as do their threatening gestures and attributes. That these are considered powerful goddesses can also be deduced from the intentional damage afflicted to their original faces, the current one reflecting repairs. Thus, the original beauty of this goddess is considerably diminished.

42 In the bottom right corner the wrathful Rematī rides a black three-legged mule sitting sideways, all features also characteristic of later depictions of various forms of Śrīdevī or Penden Lhamo, the most important protectress of Tibet. Her attributes—dagger, tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), mirror and noose—serve to subdue malevolent forces. Her attendant, riding a black yak, offers her a freshly severed head.

43 Overleaf: The parts of human corpses in different stages of decomposition, here around the front legs of Rematī's mount, signify a charnel ground, an area where the dead are deposed off.

the Alchi depictions that this name can be applied here.[71] More importantly, identifying the Alchi goddess with Dorjé Chenmo takes away from the unique character of the Alchi depictions which represent an early stage in the adoption of native Tibetan deities under the Buddhist fold.[72]

In general terms, the two goddesses fall in the broad category of female protector deities (Sungma, *srung ma*), but they have different functions. Deities like Rematī fulfil their protection in the framework of Buddhist practice, while the native deity is more closely associated with the protection of the locale and its well-being.[73] In the western Himalayas such native goddesses appear to have been called Menmo (*sman mo*), a class of female spirits converted to protectors of Buddhism.[74] Another early type of such goddesses are the Mamo (*ma mo*), which occur in different groups and are likely candidates for the retinue figures.[75] The Peacock Cape Lady at Alchi most likely represents a goddess of this type worshipped due to her power over life. At Alchi she also has to be seen as balancing the male rider in the opposite upper corner (44).[76]



As has been demonstrated in a number of publications, everything about the rider demonstrates his royal status: he has a diadem bound to his hair, holds a royal sceptre in this hand, wears a coat with lion roundels and *ṭirāz* bands with pseudo-Kufic characters at the upper arms, and rides a white stallion decorated with fly-whisks. In the absence of a proper identification he thus can justly be called 'Royal Rider'.[77] Remarkably, he undergoes a significant transformation until his representation in the Sumtsek murals, where he holds a sword and a freshly severed head (527).[78] In generic terms he may be a *drabla* (*dgra bla*), a class of deities that 'are believed to be especially capable of protecting their worshippers against enemies, and to help them to increase their property.'[79]

The pairing of the Peacock Cape Lady with the Royal Rider is apparent in the transformation of their depictions throughout the Alchi monuments: in the Dukhang Mahākāla panel, the positioning of the retinue gives precedence to the Peacock Cape Lady, while in the Sumtsek the composition is mirrored. There Rematī takes precedence and clearly reflects the iconography of Mahākāla, as can most notably be deduced from the crescent in her hair. She can thus be understood as Mahākāla's consort. In addition, in the Sumtsek, the retinue of the goddesses is more systematized, as apparent by the earliest representation of the Five Sisters of Long Life (Tséring Chénga, *tshe ring mched lnga*) among the retinue of Yamāntaka in the middle storey (663–668). Remarkably, the depictions in the Jampel Lhakhang (373) and the Main Temple's courtyard (402) put even greater emphasis on the retinue around Mahākāla.

Outside Alchi, comparative depictions are rare and often fragmentary, the entrance wall and in particular the area around the door appear to be most prone to damage and replacement. The Tabo Main Temple preserves a precious precedence to Alchi, with the spaces above the door leading into the Dukhang occupied by a native goddess and her female only retinue. In contrast, depictions following the Alchi monuments mentioned above often increase the number of such native deities, which levels the hierarchy among them, and give greater prominence to male deities. The depiction in the Lhakhang Soma demonstrates this well (278–280). The conversion of the Peacock Cape Lady to Dorjé Chenmo can be traced subsequent to Alchi.[72]

As with so many themes of Buddhist iconography, the Alchi depictions quite literally let us see this transformation and thus represent a turning point for both, the loss of power of native deities and their nascent reinterpretation. This goes hand in hand with their subordination to Buddhist protective deities, such as Mahākāla and Yamāntaka. Being the earliest representation of the subject within Alchi Choskhor, the Dukhang depiction still reflects some of the power native deities originally held. Showing the two-armed Mahākāla above the door not only serves the protection of the sacred space, but also as a harbinger for the public emergence of themes deriving from Highest Yoga Tantra practice.



44 The Royal Rider in the upper right corner of the Mahākāla panel is among the highlights of the Dukhang murals. His graceful depiction contrasts with the grim background dominated by dark-coloured birds nourishing themselves on corpses. While the horse is represented in full profile, the rider is turned towards the viewer holding a sceptre in both hands.

45 The Royal Rider is moustached and bearded and wears his hair in long braids. He has a diadem bound around his head and decorative bands with pseudo-Kufic characters reference *ṭirāz* bands of islamicate royal cultures. His robe is decorated with lion roundels, another symbol of royalty.

While all other areas are painted flatly, the face and hands of the Royal Rider are delicately shaded. Here a bright base for the skin colour remaining in the highlights is covered by multiple layers of darker shades encircling them, the darkest areas reaching a reddish hue. The farther eye is fully drawn and projects the profile of the face.







46 Among the animals depicted in the charnel ground around Mahākāla are many beasts of prey, here a snow lion and a tiger.

47 A leopard and a lynx are equally recognisable, while the smaller beasts cannot be identified with certainty.

48 Despite its elegance, the head of the horse is drawn with few lines and light shading only. Thick black lines outline its shape and main features, while its modelling is executed through shading in bright blue washes. An exception is the area of the eye, where the shading is further enhanced by very thin and broken black lines. For the hair, the base colour has been drawn first and quick black lines added on top of it.





49 To the left of the entrance and immediately above the life of the Buddha is a unique forty-five-deity variant of a mandala dedicated the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, the Perfection of Wisdom. It has an inner square surrounding an eight-petalled lotus, and two outer squares distinguished by their background colour. The assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

In the centre: a white, six-armed form of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā seated on a lion throne.

On the eight-petalled lotus in the cardinal directions: four Buddhas in monastic robes.

On the eight-petalled lotus in the intermediary directions: the four mothers of the families.

In the centres and corners of the middle square: eight Bodhisattvas, the ones in the centre holding the attribute of their family.

Along the sides of the middle square between the Bodhisattvas: eight Buddhas in monastic robes, two in each direction.

In the gates of the outer square: four peaceful gate-keepers.

In the corner of the outer square: four Bodhisattvas, again in the colours and holding the attribute of their family.

Along the sides of the outer square: twelve Buddhas in monastic robes, two each in the eastern and western direction, and four each in the south and north.

In the corners of the outer palace: the four outer offering goddesses.

In the gates of the outer palace: four peaceful gate-keepers.

To get a sense of the mandala's size: the meditating Buddha in blue robes represented in the bottom right corner outside the mandala has a height of 13 cm.

Mandalas on the Entry Wall

The upper area of the entry wall further features three mandalas, a small one just above the Mahākāla panel and two large ones to its sides. While the small mandala is dedicated to a wrathful deity and has a protective function, those at the sides complement the mandalas on the side walls of the Dukhang. The descriptions below are complemented by the chapter The Alchi Mandalas, page 747 ff., which introduces the most common groups of deities and discusses the mandalas in comparison to other western Himalayan examples.

Prajñāpāramitā Mandala

The large mandala to the left side of the entrance is a forty-five-deity mandala of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, the personification of the Perfection of Wisdom.[80] Only the left half of this mandala is preserved in its original condition, while much to the right of the central axis has been damaged through a water intrusion. This part has been crudely restored and diverges from the original scheme if a symmetric composition is assumed. The iconography of this mandala as described below thus has to be taken as tentative.

In the centre of the mandala the white, six-armed goddess sits on a lotus supported by lions and performs the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) with her main arms. Her right hands hold a string of beads (*mālā*) and perform the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*), while her left hands hold a book and a flask. The Prajñāpāramitā on the Dukhang door likely had the same iconography (315). The flask distinguishes these representations in the Dukhang from those in the mandalas of the Sumtsek (773) and the Tashi Gomang Chörten (242).[81]

The eight petals of the lotus surrounding the central goddess are occupied by four Buddhas in monastic robes in the cardinal directions, and four goddesses in the intermediary directions. These have the colours of the four surrounding Buddha families, but with the exception of the northern Buddha, do not perform their common gestures.[82] The goddesses, in contrast, hold the attributes of the respective Buddha families.[83] Abstracted versions of the triple jewel (*triratna*) symbol on crescents occupy the corner spaces around the central circle.

In the second square, eight Buddhas in monastic robes alternate with eight Bodhisattvas who occupy the cardinal directions and the corners. While the Buddhas are coloured in no apparent order, the Bodhisattvas have the colours of their respective direction.[84] A similar arrangement is found in the third square, which is occupied by twelve Buddhas, four each on the north and south sides, and eight Bodhisattvas, those at the gates acting as gate-keepers with their usual symbols (see Table 8 on page 755).

Thus there are altogether five goddesses including Prajñāpāramitā, twenty-four Buddhas, twelve Bodhisattvas, and four gate-keepers in this forty-five-deity mandala, which is surrounded by lotus scrolls carrying Buddhas emerging from a vase. Groups of white birds sit on some of the red lotus blossoms.

At Alchi, the mandalas of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā are exceedingly varied. None of the three mandalas extant is the same, and even the iconography of the main deity varies. Judging from the colours of the surrounding deities, in all cases Prajñāpāramitā stands for Buddha Vairocana. All of them can be interpreted as distinct Yoga Tantra interpretations of the goddess who, around the corner of this mandala, is also depicted in the Śākyasiṃha mandala as consort of the central Buddha (198).

Trailokyavijaya Mandala

Directly above the Mahākāla panel is a seventeen-deity mandala of wrathful deities. In its centre is the blue Trailokyavijaya, Conqueror of the Three Worlds, a wrathful form of Vajrapāṇi (50).[85] In this mandala Trailokyavijaya takes the place of Vairocana, as is demonstrated by the secondary deities, which are of the colours and hold the attributes of the surrounding Buddha families. The deities in the cardinal directions, thus, correspond to the primary Buddhas of these families, and thus are likely to be identified as Vajrahūṃkāra, Ratnahūṃkāra, Dharmahūṃkāra and Karmahūṃkāra (51). In the corners of the two squares are wrathful forms of the four inner and four outer offering goddesses in the colours of the respective family but with their usual attributes. The four gate-keepers also directly reference the families through their colour, and they hold the attributes common for this group of Yoga Tantra protectors.



In its location in the Dukhang, Trailokyavijaya takes a position superior to that of Mahākāla represented directly underneath the mandala. Even though he stands in for the central Buddha family, he also represents the vajra-family presided by Buddha Akṣobhya, who at times occupies Mahākāla's crown. This mandala represents the nucleus of the Trilokavijaya mandala (77) and thus equally stands for the conversion of all beings occupying the three words—heaven, earth and underground, to Buddhism. On the relationship between these two mandalas see the section titled Trailokyavijaya Mandala, page 773 f.

50 A unique seventeen-deity mandala of Trailokyavijaya above the Mahākāla panel flanked by Buddhas. The mandala assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

In the centre: Trailokyavijaya.

In the cardinal directions of the inner square: wrathful forms of the four surrounding Buddhas.

In the corners of the inner square: wrathful forms of the four inner offering goddesses.

In the gates of the outer square: four wrathful gate-keepers.

In the corners of the outer square: wrathful forms of the four outer offering goddesses.

Note that in this mandala the colours of the deities fully conform to that of the main directional Buddha.

51 Central square of the Trailokyavijaya mandala with the central deity surrounded by the other esoteric Buddhas in their wrathful form holding the attribute of their respective family. For example, Vajrahūṃkāra immediately underneath the central deity holds a vajra standing in his flat palm.





52 A fifty-seven-deity Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala with all secondary deities holding a sword in the right hand in addition to their identifying attribute. The assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

In the centre: four-faced Mahāvairocana seated on lion throne.

On the eight lotus petals of the inner circle: the four directional Buddhas with their respective mothers.

On the sixteen lotus petals of the outer circle: the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas.

In the corner squares of the inner palace: the four inner offering goddesses.

In the gates of the inner palace: four peaceful gate-keepers.

Along the sides of the outer palace: the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon in the iconography of the main Mahābodhisattva of their respective direction.

In the corners of the outer palace: the four outer offering goddesses.

In the gates of the outer palace: four peaceful gate-keepers.

Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu Mandala

To the right of the Mahākāla panel and above the expansive donor depiction is an unusual variant of the Vajradhātu mandala deriving from a particular interpretation of the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*).[86] Diverse interpretations of this important text ascribe six mandalas to it, this version of the Vajradhātu mandala being one of them.[87] The descriptions in the many commentaries of this text are not very forthcoming in terms of the iconographic details of the deities, but there is at least one commentary that explains the sword held as a second attribute in the right hand of most of the deities of this mandala.[88] Obviously, in this context the sword is that of Mañjuśrī, cutting ignorance and thus symbolising wisdom.

The mandala consists of two palaces with three concentric circles in the inner palace, the central one housing the main deity having multiple layers (52). In its centre is the four-faced, white Vairocana performing the gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*) and seated on a lion-throne (54). He is surrounded by the four secondary Buddhas in their usual iconography. The four mothers of the families in the intermediate directions, in contrast, each hold a sword in the right hand in addition to the family attribute in the left (53). Being on the same level and of the same colour of the surrounding Buddhas, the four goddesses can also be read as their consorts.

All the remaining deities in this mandala also hold a sword in the right hand. The second circle around Vairocana is occupied by the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas; the leading ones, such as Vajrasattva (57) and Vajraratna (55) or Vajradharma (56), occupy the cardinal directions. With the exception of Vajrasattva, who is depicted white, the others are of the colours of their respective family. The four inner offering goddesses in the corners are represented relatively large and wear a bodice (58–61). The four tiny gate-keepers which complete the assembly of the inner palace repeat those of the outer palace and are optional.

The outer palace has its own gate-keepers seated at the doors (62). These and the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon which flank them are again in the colours of their respective families, as are the four outer offering goddesses located in the corners. In contrast to the other mandalas on this wall, the gates of this mandala are framed by two prongs each. As the interior of the doors, these are coloured according to the Buddha in their respective direction.

Thus the two large mandalas on the entry wall continue the wisdom theme already introduced on the elaborate gate at the entrance to the Dukhang. The Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala further resonates with both, the Vajradhātu mandala in the niche opposite it, of which it is a distinct variant, and the Trilokavija mandala represented around the corner on the left side wall. Another variant of Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala can be taken as the main theme of the Sumtsek, as it is represented on the main wall of its top storey (770).



53 The central circle of the mandala features the five esoteric Buddhas and the mothers of the families. Only the five Buddhas, who are depicted in their usual iconography and seated on their usual vehicle, do not have the additional sword attribute that all other deities hold in their right hand.

54 In the centre of the mandala is Mahāvairocana, the ultimate Buddha of the Vajradhātu. He is white, four-faced, the top face has to be imagined to be on the back, performs the gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*), and sits on a lion throne.





55 Ratnasambhava, only partially visible on the right, can be recognised by his gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) and the horse vehicle, Vajraratna and the gate-keeper each hold the family attribute, the jewel (*ratna*), in addition to the sword.

56 The red gate-keeper of the west appears to hold a noose instead of the chain, which may be an error considering the iconography of the other gate-keepers at this level. The Bodhisattva below him is the principal Bodhisattva of the western direction, Vajradharma, a form of Avalokiteśvara that holds a lotus at his heart. He is flanked by white Vajrahāsa, holding a garland of teeth, and blue Vajratīkṣṇa, who holds a book in addition to the sword.

57 The principal Bodhisattva of the east is the white Vajrasattva, holding an upright vajra in his left hand as identifying attribute. This is the only one of the main Bodhisattvas who is not depicted in the colour of his family, which is blue.







58 The yellow offering goddess Vajramālā, garland, holding a garland (*mālā*) besides the sword.



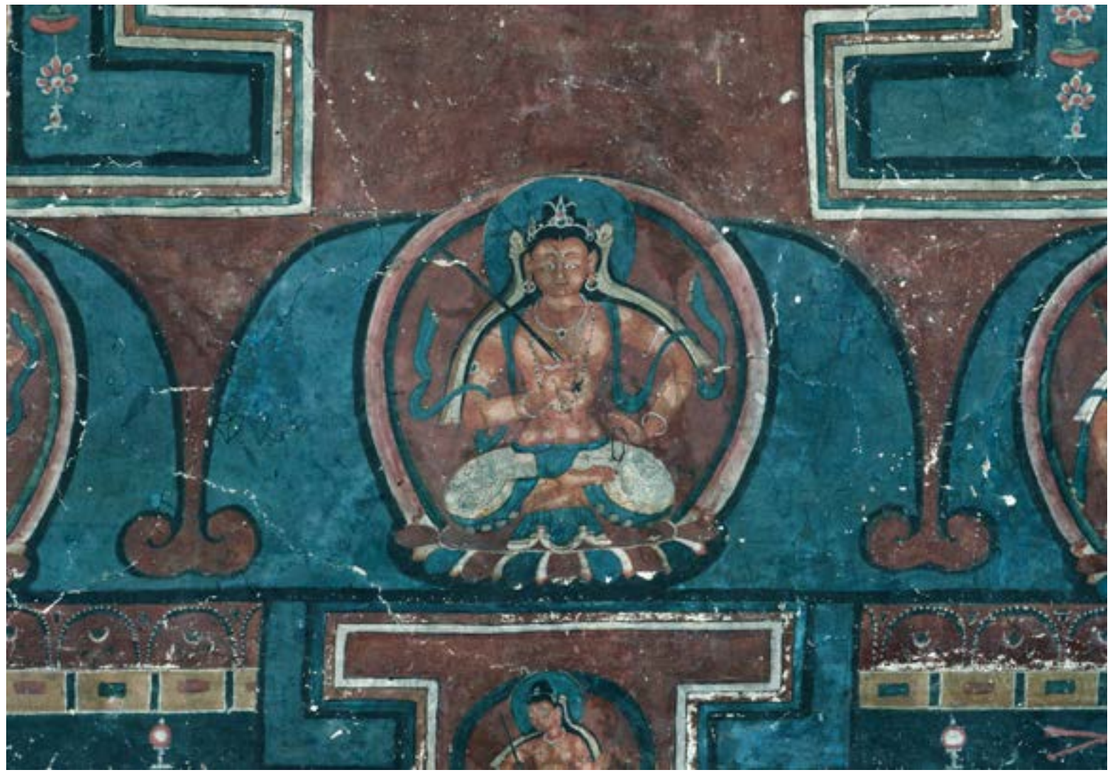
59 The blue offering goddess Vajralāsyā, charm, with her hands at the hip and holding the sword. Here the directional colour was preferred over her usual one, which is white.



60 The red offering goddess Vajragītā, song, holding a *vīṇā* besides the sword.



61 The green offering goddess Vajranṛtyā, dance, raising her left arm besides holding the sword.



62 The gate-keeper of the southern gate Vajrasphoṭa holds a black noose with vajra ends instead of the usual chain in his left hand.

63 Overleaf: The figure above is the gate-keeper of the inner square, whose identifying attribute was never painted. The position of the hand lets one assume it was a vajra, and not the elephant goad as in the larger figure below. The lower figure can safely be identified as gate-keeper Vajrāṅkuśa with the goad shaped as a sea-monster (*makara*), the hook being its trunk. This is the common form of the goad in early western Himalayan murals. The inner palace is outlined in three lines, white, red and blue, referencing the three families, while the outer palace is outlined by five lines in the colours of the five Buddha families.





64 In the depiction of the dream, Queen Māyā lies somewhat awkwardly on a broad bed with a long cushion. She is fully dressed and bejewelled in the fashion of local Ladakhi ladies of the time. Above her the head of the white elephant emerges from the cloud.



65 This scene, likely depicting the protection and worship of Queen Māyā while the Bodhisattva is in her womb, is unique. Now fully dressed in white and seated on a lotus and against an aureole, the queen appears deified. She is worshipped by the gods to her right and Ladakhi male to her left.

Life of the Buddha

In the bottom area to the left of the door the life of the Buddha is presented in three superimposed rows. Representing the most mundane (*nirmāṇa*) aspect of the Buddha's activities, the entry wall of a monument is a common location for this theme.[90] Both the importance and liminality of this story as an introduction to the Buddha is obvious from the Dukhang, where it is found twice within a few metres, once in the carvings on the door and now immediately beyond it among the murals on the entry wall. Remarkably, the two depictions of the narrative differ considerably from each other and emphasize different aspects of the story.

Unfortunately, only the topmost row of the depiction is well preserved while the two rows underneath are increasingly fragmentary. Nevertheless, *in situ* observations allow for reconstructing almost the entire story on the basis of the remaining fragments.[90] Each of the rows is to be read from left to right except for the last scene in the second row, which links the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* to the representation of eight stupas underneath the birth cycle (67), which represent the end of the story.

The life begins in the top left corner with one or two scenes dedicated to the events in Tuṣita heaven. This corner of the wall has been disturbed so severely that nothing remains of the scenes once there. Thus, the first scene preserved is the conception of the Buddha, with Queen Māyā in the dress of a western Himalayan lady lying on a large bed (64). The scene is set inside a brick building with a pointed canopy in the back. The descending elephant emerging from a cloud identifies the event. The interpretation of Māyā's dream of an elephant entering her body is followed by a unique scene, possibly illustrating the protection and veneration of Māyā (65). Now completely dressed in white, Māyā sits on a lotus which appears to be held by the smaller god immediately underneath her, three more gods are to the left and may represent four deities protecting the Bodhisattva in the womb. To the right are two rows of male worshippers in local dress.

In the following birth scene (66), Māyā is again dressed in local fashion and the Bodhisattva emerges from under the armpit of her raised right hand. Two gods hold cloth to receive him. The trees surrounding the figures are full of wildlife, the monkeys obviously not native to Ladakh. The birth is followed by the bath of the newly born Bodhisattva by the gods, all three standing on a common lotus, and the seven steps of the Bodhisattva taken towards the cardinal and intermediary directions (67).

The beginning of row two then probably showed an expanding version of the parallel births among humans and animals, the latter in an unusual variety; there are snakes and camels among the animals depicted there. Of Asita's visit and interpretation of the child's signs one can recognise the ascetic and his companion seated under an umbrella. More unusual is the following depiction of the visit to the temple, in which a red coloured god bows in veneration in front of the Bodhisattva held by his father. Still a child, the Bodhisattva, venerated by gods, meditates under the Jambhu-tree and attends school.

A grown youth, the Bodhisattva enters a number of competitions, which must have been depicted in the corner of the third row. Subsequently, he throws the maddened elephant out of town. The departure, the cutting of the hair, asceticism and likely the donation of milk-rice by the milkmaid Sujātā are following in quick succession. Finally there is the victory over Māra and the *parinirvāṇa* in this row.



66 In this scene depicting the Buddha's birth the Bodhisattva emerges from the armpit and is received by the gods.

At the right edge of the second row, just to the side of the door, is the cremation of the Buddha's body. This scene links to the row of eight stupas represented immediately above it, which symbolises the distribution and entombment of the relics (67). By the time the Alchi murals were painted the stupas for the relics have been cross-identified with another set of eight stupas of different types representing the eight great events in a Buddha's life and the localities at which these events took place. The eight stupas thus also represent the Buddha's life. This is the earliest representation of this theme known to date, and it is replicated in the Lhakhang Soma (288).

Thus, while the depiction of the Buddha's life on the Dukhang door includes events that took place between the awakening and the *parinirvāṇa*, in the murals these are represented by the stupas only. Further, only the life in the murals localises the events of the Buddha's life by representing Māyā in local Ladakhi dress. This resonates with the large donor depiction on the opposite side of the entrance and discussed next.



67 The bath and seven steps of the newly born Bodhisattva. The eight stupas immediately underneath end the Buddha's life in the Dukhang.



68 The so-called royal drinking scene to the right of the entrance to the Dukhang is focused on a central couple with the lady offering a cup to the male. The scene is remarkable for its martial character and its celebration of drinking, both of which can be traced back to pre-Islamic and Islamic cultures of western Central Asia.

Actual size 42 x 34 cm.

Donor Assemblies

To the right side of the door to the Dukhang is a large depiction dedicated to the donors of the temple and their rulers. That it takes the same measure of space as the Buddha's life attests to its importance. Among the depictions two distinct areas have to be differentiated, the large feast assembly spread along the wall and the so-called royal drinking scene (68). The latter is in an elevated position between the feast assembly and the Mahākāla above the door, and it counts among the most discussed motifs of Alchi.[91] Before addressing the interpretations that have been forwarded in the literature it is pertinent to analyse it in some detail.

The drinking scene evolves around four figures, a dominant haloed couple facing each other and, presumably, their two children behind them on the side of their respective gender. They are set off by a sky-blue background the upper edge of which surrounds the heads and halos of the figures. The male on the left wears a diadem, a coat decorated with lion medallions and bands crossing its upper arms, a wide chequerboard patterned belt, and rather fancy black leather shoes with pointed tips. He has a moustache and a beard pointed underneath the chin, and a large circular earring is recognizable underneath his hair. In his right hand he holds a battle axe, and a sword is dug into his belt, while the left hand performs a gesture of communication that is mirrored by that of the lady opposite him. Nothing about his appearance is characteristic for the Himalayas.

In contrast, the lady seated opposite him has her hair decorated with turquoises and wears multiple turquoise necklaces of different length. Her orange-red dress has wide sleeves and a white panel framed in blue in front above the chest, a white cape covers her entire body and she wears white woollen boots. All details of her dress appear to reflect local fashion, and elements of it are used throughout the temple to localise females (66, 134, 150, 182, 183). Seated in an elevated position, the lady offers a short stemmed white cup to the male holding it at its base. While the male directly gazes at her, she has her eyes downcast.

Behind the male kneels a smaller figure in a white coat holding a pickaxe and raising a drinking cup to his mouth, and behind the lady another much smaller lady raises her right arm in a gesture of adoration (*vandanamudrā*).[92] The same gesture, using the left hand, is used by one of the kneeling males underneath the couple to hold up his blue striped scarf towards the central couple. He also holds a pot in his right hand and other drinking vessels of different shapes are placed in front of him. Behind him kneels a second male holding a sword and performing the same communication gesture as the central male. Otherwise the central couple is surrounded by male warriors carrying swords and shields and arranged in pairs of which one wears a white the other a red coat. Only in the upper right corner are two females. Further an umbrella is depicted right above the space between the central couple into which the drinking cup is held.

From the outset, the debate on this scene has centred on three aspects: its martial character, the allusions to Islamic court culture apparent in the dress, and the act of drinking alcohol emphasized in it. None of these appeared compatible with the Buddhist context, an argument that can safely be dismissed today. However, since there are no comparable depictions in earlier or roughly contemporaneous monuments in the western Himalayas outside the Alchi group, it is worth exploring their origin and symbolic meaning. The emphasis on drinking links the scene to the courtly culture of western Central Asia and even the murals



69 As his dress, the facial features of the central male figure in the drinking scene appear foreign to the western Himalayan Buddhist world. His finely trimmed moustache and a pointed beard, the large circular earring and the diadem are all uncommon for depictions of Tibetan culture. While there is no doubt that the alignment of this portrait with the surrounding islamicate Turkic world is intentional, it goes too far to conclude a distinct ethnicity from this. The Royal Rider discussed above bears almost identical features (45), as does Kalden Shérap, the founder of the Dukhang (75). If we accept that these murals have been painted by Kashmiri artists we have to acknowledge multiple layers of cultural translations embedded in these murals.[94]

of Ajanta. Thereby it is usually the male that holds the cup as a symbol of royalty or elite status. In the Dukhang scene it is the cup itself that is emphasized, and it is offered by the female to the male. This detail finds parallels only in a few depictions, most notably on *Mīnā'ī* bowls roughly contemporaneous with the Alchi murals. Equally, the coat with its lion medallions and arm-bands, the so-called *ṭirāz* bands, bearing 'foliate Arabic Kufic script',[93] links the depiction directly to the contemporaneous islamicate Turkic world. This dress appears to have been widely adopted by elites of the time, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, to convey a sense of authority and power. Fittingly, the diadem and the axe are equally symbols of power. The latter links to the martial character conveyed by the Alchi depictions, which are even more apparent in the larger feast assembly to which we turn next.

Unfortunately, the large feast assembly has suffered considerably over time, especially on



70 The central part of the feast assembly with the warrior's banquet in the centre and the yak hunt represented immediately underneath, the yak only recognizable in its outlines.

the side of the entrance. The following description is rather detailed to make up for this, but also to put the drinking scene in its larger context. The feast assembly is composed of four distinct parts, three sub-assemblies and a frieze of riders underneath them (70). Of these, the smallest assembly is in the centre of the composition and represents a banquet of warriors (71). A horizontal divide marked by a cloth or carpet separates a triad of seated commanders from the footsoldiers surrounding them. In the triad the central figure is singled out by his frontal depiction, the nimbus and the umbrella hovering above his head. This emphasis as well as the battle axe he holds signify him as a royal figure. His coat may be of wool, rather than silk, and is embroidered with peacocks and vegetal symbols that look strikingly similar to the fleur-de-lis (72). Of the flanking figures, the one to his proper right offers him a cup, while the one to his left looks on. The soldiers in the lower section of this scene surround



71 The central theme of the large donor depiction is a warrior banquet that celebrates the martial prowess of the male population. It is centred on a triad of commanders in ceremonial dress with surrounded by their soldiers. Here, too, drinking is the main occupation depicted, but the centre of the composition is a three-legged table covered with vessels and topped by a white ceremonial scarf, a *khatak* (*kha btags*).

72 All three commanders wear long coats with lengthy sleeves, but the patterning is different on each. The white coat of the central figure could be either cotton or wool and is pattered with embroidered peacocks and a flower motif strikingly similar to the fleur-de-lis.



a large three-legged table covered with food as well as drinking vessels. A ceremonial patterned white scarf covers the food on the table and may well be the earliest representation of a ceremonial *khatak* (*kha btags*) that has come down to us.[95]

This middle scene links directly to the frieze underneath, which represents a ceremonial yak hunt, the yak only faintly visible underneath the central assembly (70).[96] Their connection is made visual be extending the centre of the middle panel into the lower frieze, the main scene of which is right underneath. There, one of the riders has fallen off the horse and lies to the back of a black yak that is only faintly visible. All riders move from right to left and most of them gallop and shoot an arrow from their bow. On the better preserved right side of the frieze the last two riders are standing still, the front one raising an arrow with the right hand while the bow is carried on his left shoulder, probably indicating that he is about to perform next (76). Thus, the riders here demonstrate their skill in martial arts targeting a yak from their galloping horses, while their commanders look on. This yak-hunt stands for both prowess in hunting and warfare.[97] If the yak thereby is an effigy or not, the symbolism remains the same.

To the left of the warrior's banquet is a royal banquet that expands on the drinking scene, which is located immediately above its left upper corner. It is again centred on a royal couple seated opposite each other but now it is the male who holds a cup towards the female and two children are between them (73). The umbrella, marking the centre of the composition, hovers again above the cup, and underneath it a standing small boy is directed towards his father and holds arrow and bow. The lady and her middle-aged daughter kneeling in front of her appear to hold bunches of three flowers each in their right hands. Nothing indicates in this depiction that this is the same couple as in the drinking scene. The robe of the male has an intricate *svastika* pattern, but it lacks the arm-bands. The lady wears a headscarf falling down her back and a cape with a peacock pattern. Five more males are seated on the left, with their robes featuring arm-bands, while there are only three more women on the right. An area of red background underneath the central couple shows servants engaged in different activities around vessels of food and drink, one of them offering a drinking cup to the couple above. The areas flanking this central section continue the assembly from the top row in two levels. Along the bottom edge of this royal banquet is an inscription panel with very few fragments of what once had been a three-line text, which may well have once identified the central couple.

The third assembly, on the right side of the composition, represents religious dignitaries performing a ritual in front of an audience of lay followers holding flower offerings (74). In it the monks seated in the upper row are separated from the lay followers underneath by the inscription panel that identifies the founder of the Dukhang as Kalden Shérap. We thus may assume that the central teaching figure among the monks represents him (6, 75). He is seated on a throne and surrounded by ritual paraphernalia. All seated monks flanking him have their hats taken off and some of them hold a flower offering. The lay followers underneath wear simpler dress and are again separated by gender. While they appear to hold flowers in one of their hands, the first male also holds a wide cup. Another cup tops a vase-shaped drink vessel standing between the central couple. In this case there are six more females and only four more males, which balances the uneven representation at the royal banquet.



73 As the drinking scene, the royal banquet on the left side of the large donor depiction is equally focused on a royal couple with their two children, which are smaller and depicted between them. The cup is now held by the male and again the umbrella hovers over it. While the ruler wears a coat with a *svastika* pattern, the cape of the lady is decorated with peacocks, very distinguished garments indeed.



74 The monastic community of Alchi led by the monk Kalden Shérap and its lay followers.

75 Portrait of Kalden Shérap, the founder of the Alchi Dukhang and monk heading the monastic community of Alchi in figure 74. He is shown with a fine moustache and beard. A peculiarity of the early paintings in the western Himalayan region are the hats worn by the depicted monks, in this case a wide-brimmed possibly triangular hat with rectangular cut-out in the front centre.



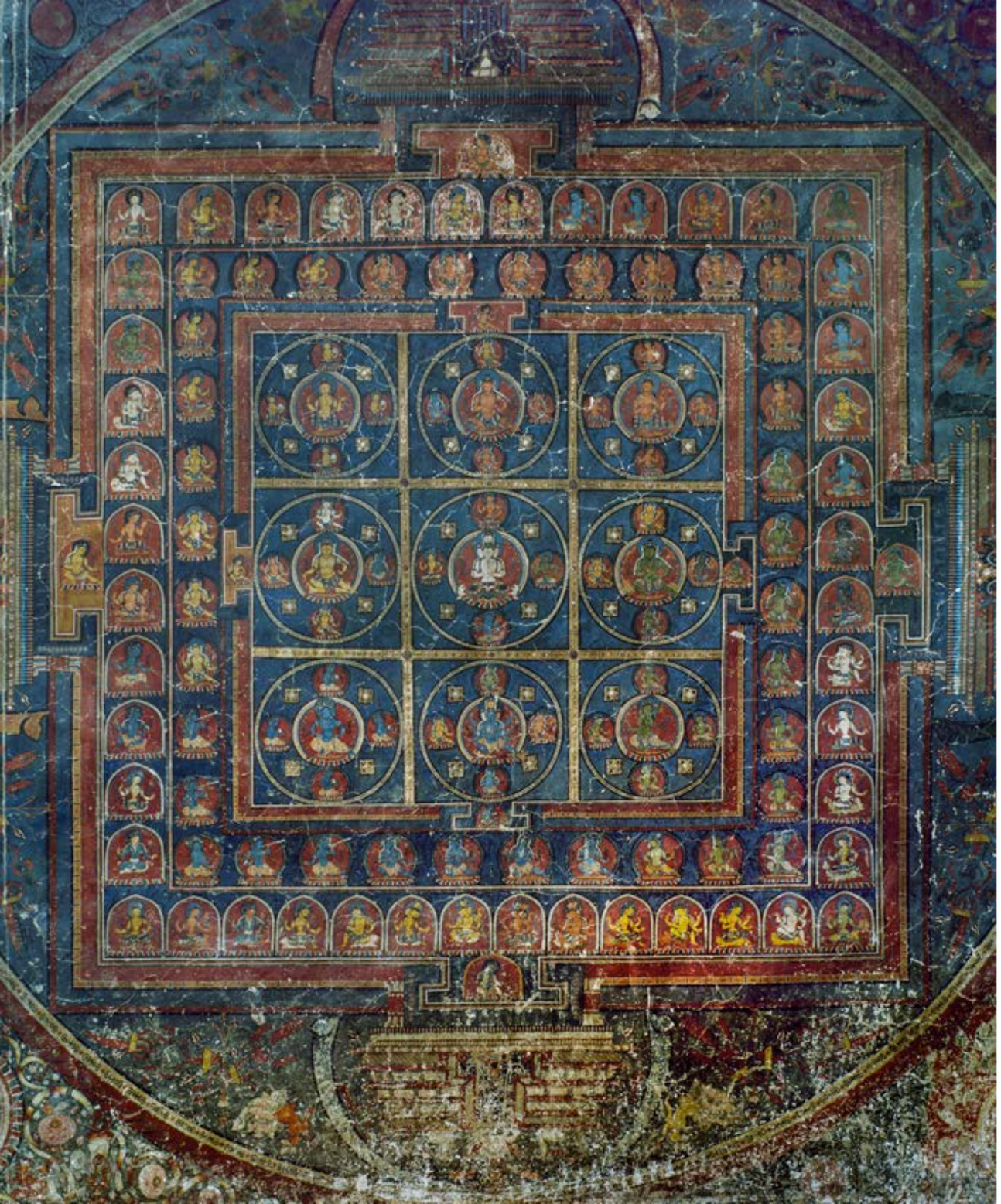
Analysing these depictions together, each of the three themes characteristic for the drinking scene is equally prominent in the larger feast assembly, while the religious gathering is most distinct. There, all lay followers wear the common local dress, and ceremonial drinking is part of the depiction, but it is least emphasized. Even in the number of figures represented this assembly may well reflect the monastic community and its immediate support at the time of the founding of the Alchi Dukhang. It is, thus, this assembly that most clearly reflects Ladakhi culture at the time. The royal banquet balancing the religious gathering then represents the wider community around Alchi, including the local ruler's family (73). Both the *svastika* pattern on the ruler's coat and the peacock pattern on the lady's cape—alluding to the peacock feather cape of the protectress underneath Mahākāla—as well as the balanced offspring between the couple reference its propitious and protective function. The latter is further emphasized through the central martial assembly and the yak hunt represented underneath it. Again, there may well be a realistic aspect in this depiction insofar as stable rule and martial skills were certainly required to maintain the trade across the realm that must have enabled the building of the temple at the first place. It may equally be realistic that male participation in the feast is considerably larger, with the mobile soldiers coming to the feast from a wider area.

There is, however, no recognisable overlap among the people represented in the feast assembly and the drinking scene, which begs the question who is actually represented there. Given the spatial relationship of the scenes and the few hints that can be gathered from the inscriptions it is likely that the royal banquet represents the local rulers of Dro (*'bro*) clan, which is also the family of the Dukhang's founder Kalden Shérap. The drinking scene then sets the depiction of this family into the wider political context, which in this case must reference the ruling house of Maryül.[98] Given that it is the lady who holds the cup there, she may well be a lady of the Dro clan married into the royal house. This speculation would be consistent with the traditional role of the Dro family to supply queens to the ruler in both imperial Tibet and during the emergence of the west Tibetan kingdom, as laid out in the chapter The Historical Background, page 19ff. Both the geo-political understanding expressed in the inscriptions, which reference the 'dominion in three parts', Ngari Khorsum (*mnga' ris skor gsum*), and the history of the Dro family itself make this the most likely scenario.

The Islamicate material culture obvious in the depictions of the rulers is evidence of their broader interconnections throughout the region. As Barry Finbarr Flood has demonstrated for the relevant period, ruling elites often adopt the material culture of the more powerful neighbour, which also allows them to distinguish themselves from their subordinates.[99] But even if we take this for granted, we cannot be certain that the depictions at Alchi are an actual refection of the Ladakhi ruling elite or of the elite of Kashmir, where the painters hailed from. In other words, we have to acknowledge the possibility of multiple layers of cultural translations embedded in these murals. The martial character, the hunting, and the drinking are, however, consistent with the culture of western Himalayan royalty. Their depiction in this Buddhist temple should thus not be considered unusual but merely a full refection of the Ladakhi royal culture of the time.[100]



76 Riders lining up for their shot at the yak during a performance of the martial skills. The middle rider indicates that it is his turn to start riding towards the target.



77 The one-hundred-and-thirty-six-deity Trilokavijaya mandala has two palaces. Its assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

In the centre: Vairocana surrounded by four goddesses, the mothers of the families.

In the squares to the four sides of Vairocana: wrathful forms of the four other esoteric Buddhas surrounded by four Bodhisattvas each, the primary one represented underneath the respective Buddha and in the same colour.

In the corner squares of the inner palace: wrathful forms of the four inner offering goddesses, each surrounded by four additional goddesses playing musical instruments.

In the gates of the inner palace: four wrathful gate-keepers.

In the centre of the inner square of the outer palace: wrathful forms of the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon in the iconography of the main Bodhisattva of the respective family.

In the corners of the inner square of the outer palace: wrathful forms of the four outer offering goddesses, each flanked by four additional goddesses playing musical instruments.

In the outer circle of the outer palace: forty-one couples of converted pan-Indian deities arranged clockwise from the bottom right corner.

In the corners of the outer circle of the outer palace: four converted mother goddesses (*mātṛka*).

In the gates of the outer palace: four wrathful gate-keepers.

The Left Side Wall

In a parallel composition, each of the side walls of the Dukhang is dominated by two large mandalas set against a background of flower scrolls (78). Together with the sculptures of the Vajradhātu mandala in the back niche, they represent the main mandalas of the Yoga Tantras, a corpus of Esoteric Buddhist teachings that emphasizes ritual practice and is based on concepts of five esoteric Buddhas in the centre and cardinal directions. As can be seen from the Alchi depictions this group of five esoteric Buddhas is not always the same and the same Buddha can take on several iconographic forms, facts that are explained in their relationship in a separate chapter (The Alchi Mandalas, page 747 ff.).

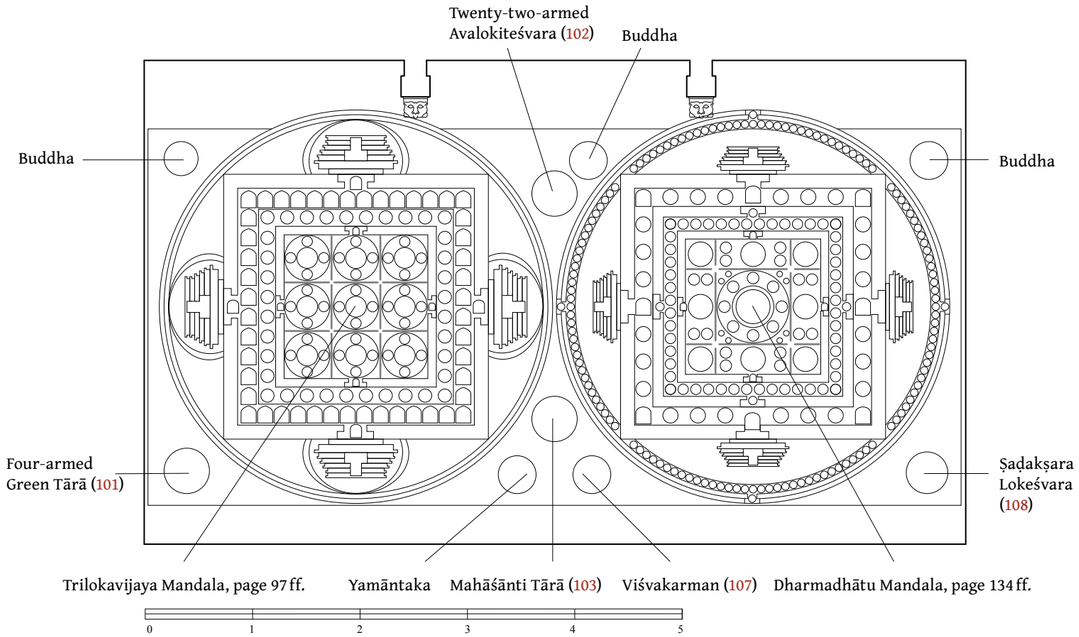
The Alchi depictions relate to the main textual corpora of the Yoga Tantras, namely the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathagatas Tantra* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*) and the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*), as well as related texts. Descriptions in these texts provide the basis for the identification of the mandalas and their deities, but have not necessarily been their direct base. The transmission of these Esoteric Buddhist teachings is complex and multi-layered, with the base texts, the so-called root-tantras, interpreted differently at different times, and only some of these interpretations have come down to us. In fact one of the major issues in the interpretation of the Alchi mandalas is the absence of directly related Tibetan commentaries. Instead the depictions themselves are to be read as such, and they are thus an invaluable source for the transmission of these Esoteric Buddhist teachings from South Asia into the Himalayas.

The Alchi depictions are also a rich source for the iconography of pan-Indian deities from the time and context of the respective commentaries that can be related to them. This is most apparent in the Trilokavijaya mandala located on the entry side of the left side wall, just around the corner of the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala introduced above (page 71 ff.).

Trilokavijaya Mandala

The Great Mandala of the Conquest of the Triple World, or Trilokavijayamahāmaṇḍala, on the left side of the left wall derives from the second section of the *Compendium of Principles*, where it is its main mandala.[101] Its name references the heaven-, earth- and underground-realms which are conquered by Vajrapāṇi on behalf of the Buddhas. This includes the overcoming of the deities inhabiting those realms, an expansive assembly headed by Maheśvara (Śiva) whose conquest is detailed in a famous passage at the beginning of this section in the tantra.[102] These deities are subsequently converted into Buddhist deities, and they are included as such in the outer square of the mandala.[102]

The Trilokavijaya mandala contains one hundred and thirty-six deities distributed in two square palaces, with the outer palace containing two squares of deities (77). Of these the inner square complements the assembly of the inner palace, while the outer square is inhabited by the converted pan-Indian deities headed by Maheśvara. Each of the palaces has four doors occupied by the same set of gate-keepers. The outer doors are massive and flanked by the prongs of a giant crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) underlying the palace's foundation (77, 98). The outer perimeter of the mandala is marked by vajra and fire circles.



The inner palace is divided into nine squares with five deities each. In the centre four-headed Buddha Vairocana sits on a lion throne and performs the gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*). He is surrounded by four goddesses in the colours and holding the attributes of the four surrounding Buddha families (79). Thus, the eastern (bottom) goddess, Sattvavajrī, is blue and holds a vajra, the southern goddess, Ratnavajrī, is yellow and holds a jewel, the western goddess, Dharmavajrī, is red and holds a lotus, and the northern goddess, Karmavajrī, is green and holds a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*). This is the basic matrix for the five Buddha families as it is laid out in the *Compendium of Principles*, whereby the goddesses symbolically generate the surrounding families together with Vairocana as their 'mothers'. The same group of deities also occupies the centre of the main mandala of the cycle, the Vajradhātu mandala represented on the main wall of the Dukhang's back niche (163), but in this case it generates an assembly of wrathful deities. Thus with the exception of the converted gods, all other deities of this mandala are wrathful.

Of the four Buddhas surrounding Vairocana, only the bottom (eastern) one is four-headed and eight-armed. He is Trailokyavijaya, the actual main protagonist of this mandala (80, 869). It is in this form that Vajrapāṇi converts the pan-Indian deities mentioned above, and he therefore stands on Maheśvara (Śiva) and Umā signifying their subjugation. In this mandala Trailokyavijaya thus replaces Buddha Akṣobhya as representative of the vajra family. Another name used for the same deity, Vajrahūṃkāra, derives from his main gesture (*vajrahūṃkāra-mudrā*), holding vajra and bell in the hands crossed in front of the chest in a gesture with the

78 The right side wall of the Dukhang featuring the Trilokavijaya and Dharmadhātu mandalas.

79 In the centre of the Trilokavijaya mandala the four-faced Mahāvairocana is surrounded by four goddesses in the colours of the surrounding Buddha families and holding the respective family symbol. The central Buddha represents the Buddha family and its symbol is the wheel, which is also used to create the circle surrounding the deities. The ornaments in the intermediary directions are raised in pastiglia.

The circle has an outer diameter of approximately 40 cm.





81



80

The actual main figure of the mandala is the four-headed and eight-armed Trailokyavijaya in the bottom square (east), who in this mandala is the wrathful form of Buddha Akṣobhya and represents the vajra family (80). The other Buddhas, yellow Ratnahūṃkāra, red Dharmahūṃkāra, and green Karmahūṃkāra, are equally wrathful but have only two arms. Each of the four Buddhas is accompanied by four of the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas in their wrathful form, the primary Bodhisattva represented underneath the main image and the others to be read clockwise. The circle surrounding the deities is made up of the respective family attributes, vajra, jewels, lotuses, and crossed vajra.

Each square measures approximately 40 cm and the elongated vajra band in pastiglia relief between them is 2.5 cm wide.



82



83

palm directed towards the viewer (869). His other attributes are, listed in functional pairs, sword and vajra, arrow and bow, and elephant goad and noose.

The other three Buddhas are two-armed and reference their respective family in their names and iconography. Thus, in the south is Ratnahūṃkāra, who is yellow, holds a jewel and has the horse as a vehicle, just like Buddha Ratnasambhava (81). Dharmahūṃkāra is in the west (82) and Karmahūṃkāra in the north (83). The four secondary Buddhas are surrounded by the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas in their usual iconography but in wrathful mood (80–83). Accordingly, in the textual sources they have *krodha* (wrathful) added to their names, the main Bodhisattva of the east, for example, fully called Krodhavajrasattva.

The corner squares are occupied by the four inner offering goddesses, each accompanied by a retinue of four unnamed goddesses playing the same musical instruments and representing the sixteen dance-offerings characteristic for the ritual of this mandala.[104] Thus, in the bottom left (southeast) corner is the blue [Krodha] Lāsyā, beautifully shaded, accompanied by four goddesses of the same colour playing small hand cymbals similar to the Tingshak (*ting shags*) still in use in the region (87). The goddesses in the retinue of the yellow Mālā strike a tambourine-like instruments (87), those in the retinue of the red Gītā, who plays a *vīṇā* herself, play a flute (85), and those in the retinue of the dancing green Nṛtyā play waisted drums (86).

The inner palace is protected by the usual set of gate-keepers: in the east (bottom) the blue Vajrāṅkuśa holding an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*), the yellow Vajrapāśa holding a noose (*pāśa*), the red Vajrasphoṭa holding a chain, and the green Vajrāveśa holding a bell. This set of gate-keepers is repeated in the gates of the outer palace.

The four outer offering goddesses are placed in the corners of the inner square of the second palace. They, too, have a retinue of four goddesses playing musical instruments. In the case of [Krodha] Dhūpā, the blue goddess in the bottom left (southeast) corner, the instruments are long trumpets, while for all others they are different types of drums. The other four offering goddesses are the yellow Puṣpā offering flowers, the red Dīpā offering light, and the green Gandhā offering incense. Wrathful forms of the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon in the iconography of the primary Bodhisattva of each family, for example [Krodha] Vajrasattva for the east, complement the inner assembly. These and all other deities of this mandala are listed in the appendix (Deities of the Trilokavijaya Mandala, page 410 ff.).

The most interesting aspects of this mandala are the pan-Indian deities in the outer square. All hold a small vajra in the main right hand, signifying their conversion into Buddhist deities. As indicated by the description of Indra, who holds this transcendent vajra besides his usual one, this attribute transforms the mundane deities into supra-mundane Buddhist deities. The vajra type used here, the ends of the vajra drawn as small triangles, differs significantly from that in the Sarvavid mandala on the opposite wall, where it is outlined in black. The deities are arranged in pairs beginning with Maheśvara (Śiva) and Umā converted into the Buddhist deities Krodhavajra and Krodhavajrāgni in the bottom right corner (88). The deities' clockwise succession around the mandala expresses a functional and spatial hierarchy ranging from deities active throughout space to those specifically active underground. Consequently, the highest deities are depicted across the bottom of the mandala and include Viṣṇu (89), Skanda (Kārtikeya), Brahmā (90) and Indra with their respective spouses.



85 In the corners are the four inner offering goddesses, each of which is accompanied by four identical goddesses playing musical instruments. Above, the red goddess of song, Gītā, playing a lute (*vīṇā*) herself, is surrounded by flute players. Below, the dancing green goddess Nṛtyā has a retinue of goddesses playing waisted drums.



86

87 Southern quarter of the Trilokavijaya mandala. Deities directly referencing the jewel-family occupying this direction are those in yellow, a number of these also holding the family symbol, the jewel. These are Vajrahūṃkāra, the Buddha of the direction in the central circle, the primary Bodhisattva Vajraratna directly underneath him, and the four Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon in the inner circle of the outer palace which replicate Vajraratna's iconography. In contrast to later mandala representations, in which the entire quarter has the background colour of the respective Buddha family, at Alchi only the interior of the gates and the prongs of a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) flanking the superstructure of the outer gate reference the family colour.

The three pairs of converted deities in the outermost assembly are the blue Vajradaṇḍa and Daṇḍavajrāgrā (Mahādaṇḍāgra and Daṇḍahāriṇi), the red Vajrapiṅgala and Vajramekhalā (Piṅgala and Jātāhāriṇi), and the white elephant-headed Vajraśauṇḍa and Vajravilayā (Madhumatta and Māraṇi), leading the lords of hosts.

88 Overleaf: Maheśvara (Śiva), the destroyer, and Umā converted into the Buddhist deities Krodhavajra and Krodhavajrāgni, their new names signifying wrath and fire. Their main right hand holds a three-pronged vajra as a sign of their new identity, while the remaining hands hold attributes commonly associated with them, such as the trident and the tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*). One of their right hands is raised in the gesture of adoration (*vandanamudrā*).

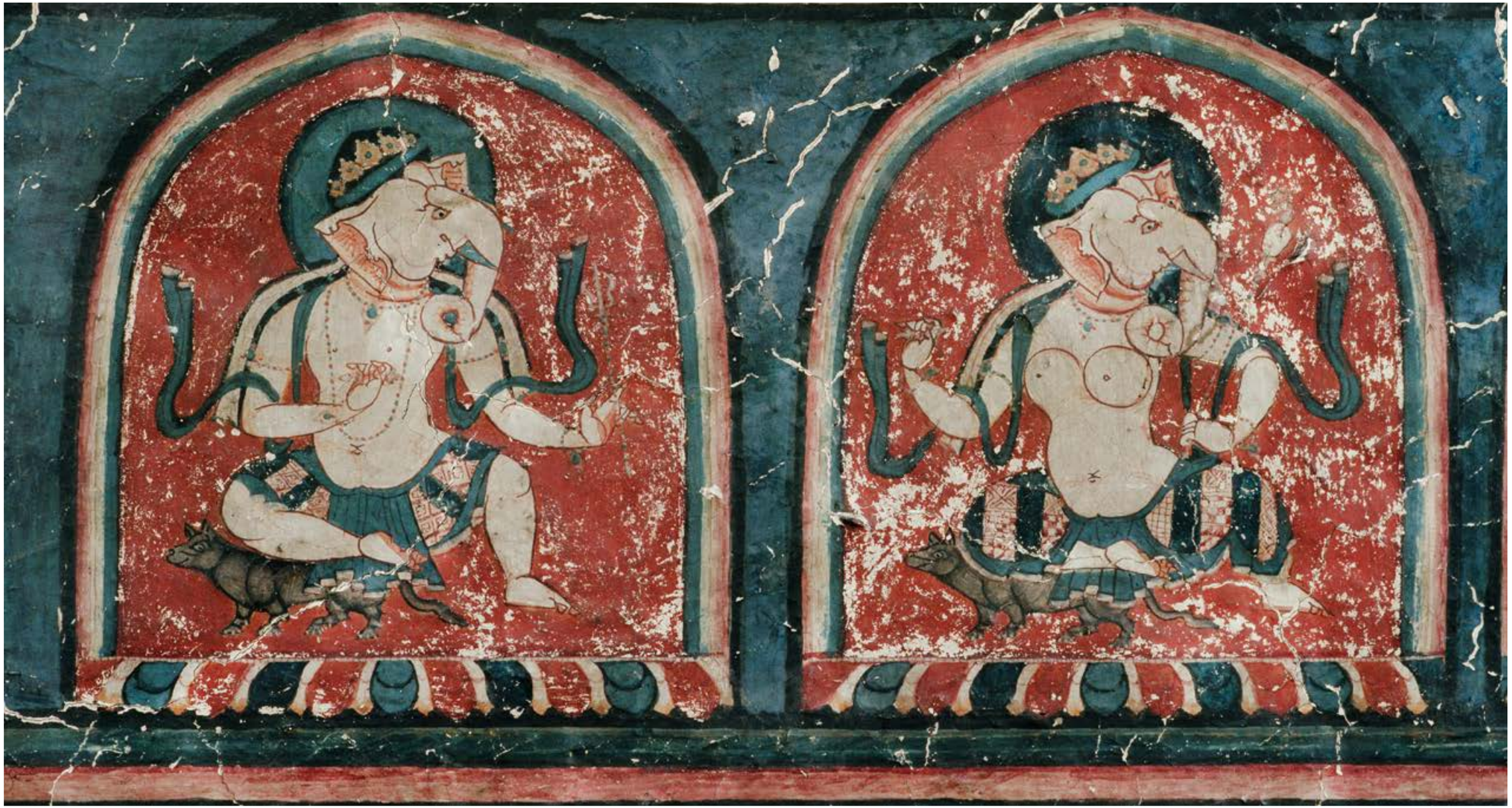




89 Viṣṇu Nārāyaṇa and Rukmiṇī as the Buddhist deities Māyāvajra and Vajrasauvarṇī.



90 Brahmā and Brahmāṇī as the Buddhist deities Maunavajra and Vajraśānti.



91 Jayāvaha and Rati as the Buddhist deities Vijayavajra, lord of hosts, and Vajravaśā.





92 Previous page: Agni, the god of fire, and Āgnedhryā as the Buddhist deities Vajrānala and Vajrajvālā.

93 The two southern gates with the yellow gate-keepers Vajrapāśa holding a noose, and the deities of the two outer assemblies. The two yellow wrathful deities holding a jewel each are the Bodhisattvas Śūraṃgama and Gaganagañja. The red pair of deities each of which holds a severed head are Piṅgala and Jātāhāriṇi as the Buddhist deities Vajrapiṅgala and Vajramekhalā.



94 In the northern gates is Vajraghaṇṭa, holding a bell in this right hand. The two wrathful deities on the inner circle are the Bodhisattvas Akṣayamati and Pratibhānakūṭa. The black pair of deities seated on a bull are Yama, the god of death, and Cāmuṇḍā converted into the Buddhist deities Vajrakāla and Vajrakālī, the gods of time.

The distance from gate to gate is 16.5 cm, and the outer gate is 7 cm high and 14 cm wide.

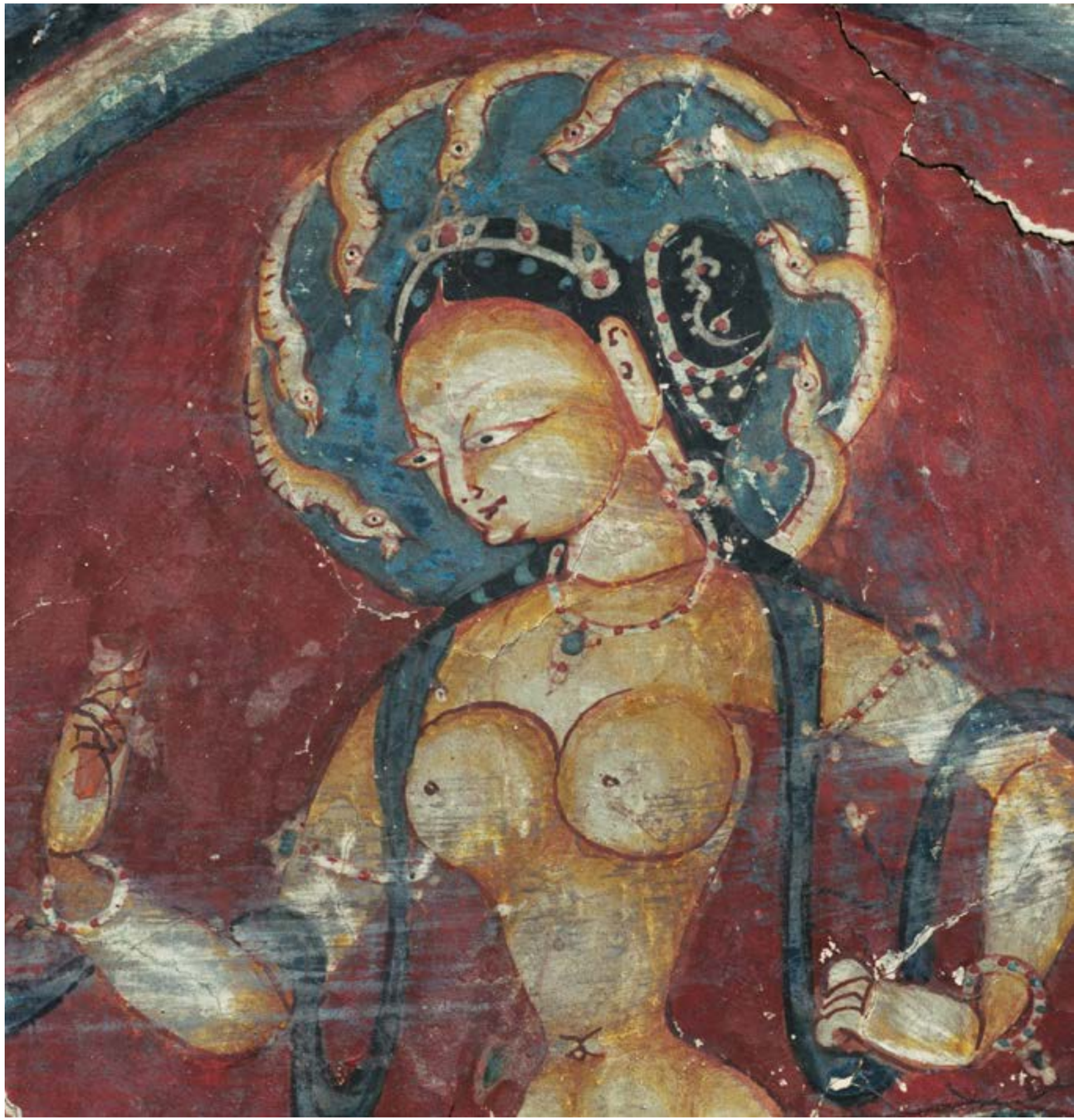


95 The southeast corner of the Trilokavijaya mandala. The two blue wrathful goddesses are Dhūpā, offering incense with a burner, and a goddess of her retinue playing a long trumpet. In the outer square are, read clockwise from the bottom right, the sun god Sūrya, also called Amṛtakuṇḍalin, with Amṛtā as the Buddhist deities Vajrakuṇḍala and Vajrāmṛtā. Both the chariot and the sun disk identify them. In the corner is the yellow goddess of fortune, Śrī, holding a lotus. Above her the moon god Candra, also called Indu, is depicted as the Buddhist deity Vajraprabha.



96 The northeast corner of the mandala with wrathful Nṛtyā, the personification of dance and one of her retinue goddesses from the inner square. In the corner of the outer square is the green goddess Durgā, holding sword and shield besides the vajra. Maheśvara (Śiva) and Umā, to Durgā's left, begin the assembly of converted pan-Indian deities, while the snake-hooded and *makara* riding Vāruṇi ends it as the Buddhist goddess Vajramakarī.

97 The detail of the goddess Vajramakarī demonstrates the finesse of the painting of this mandala. Only from such details the tiny attributes, here the vajra and a noose, can be recognised. Possibly to subvert the usual convention, the snake hood has an even number of snakes, eight.



These five couples are complemented by five groups of four couples each moving from the sky to earth.

The ‘gods who wander in space’ are represented by Sūrya and Candra, personifications of the sun and moon, and the planets Saturn (Śanaiścara) and Mars (Maṅgala). It is these latter two deities that make clear that the commentarial tradition used by the Tibetan scholars has already diverged from the original intention of the root text, as the Sanskrit names make clear that these were originally intended to be Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, the two attendants to Sūrya. The reinterpretation of deities in the commentarial process also led to the surprising detail that there are three elephant-headed gods in this pantheon, two of which also have an elephant-headed spouse. The first pair of these, Vajraśauṇḍa and Vajravilayā (formerly Madhumatta and Māraṇi), head the following group of ‘gods who live in the sky’ (87). That these are called ‘lords of hosts’ (*gaṇapati*) makes the identification of the first god as Gaṇapati obvious, but why does he hold a plough as his attribute, and why is there another elephant-headed couple? As a detailed study on this couple of deities in Buddhist texts demonstrates, here a good degree of ambivalence is already embedded in the Sanskrit text.[105] Combining these facts with obvious issues in the transmission of the deities’ names and a comparative iconography of the deities indicates that this group may reference four Vaishnava deities, Balabhadra, Jayakara, Madhukara and Vasanta, which also occur among the pan-Indian deities in the Dharmadhātu mandala.[106] The cross-identifications between the deities in the two mandalas are noted in with the list of Deities of the Trilokavijaya Mandala, page 410 ff., in the appendix. Nevertheless, the iconographic details of the other elephant-headed pair in this group, Vijayavajra and Vajravaśā (formerly Jayāvaha and Rati) still remain puzzling (91). It is actually the third elephant-headed god who occurs among the last group as Vajravināyaka (formerly Pṛthvīcūlika) and sits on a rat who best fits the common perception of Gaṇapati. His consort Vajrapūtanā (formerly Cchinnanāsā) has the same white colour but no elephant head. The final two groups, the ‘gods who live on earth’ and the ‘gods who live underground’, designated as messengers and servants respectively, mainly recruit from among the guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*). Among the former are Agni (92), Vāyu and Kubera, and among the latter Yama (94) and Varuṇa; Varuṇa’s spouse Vāruṇi (Vajramakarī) is represented in figure 96. The ground-digging Varāha and his spouse Vārāhī, converted to Vajrāṅkuśa and Vajramukhī, complement the last group. The assembly of pan-Indian deities is concluded by the four mother goddesses in the corners of the outer square, namely yellow Bhīmā (95), white Śrī, green Sarasvatī and green Durgā (96). Among these Bhīmā and Durgā are wrathful goddesses, but this is not expressed at Alchi.[107]

Thus, this expanded version of the Trilokavijaya mandala in the Alchi Dukhang offers a fascinating glimpse into the early development of this theme in Tibetan Buddhist culture as it differs from later interpretations. A closely related depiction of this mandala is found at Mangyu, but a comparison of the deities makes clear that it is also a distinct interpretation.[108] The comparison also indicates that at Alchi wrathful deities are represented less expressively, and that the overall interpretation of the theme is less literal and more systematic. The latter is particularly apparent with the depiction and distribution of the pan-Indian deities. Obviously, the conversion of these deities entails their pacification and it is an auspicious event, as is also apparent from the sumptuous decoration around the mandala palace (98, 99).



98 Eleven vajra bridge the gap between the T-shaped opening of the door and its massive superstructure, which is topped by a wheel carried by a winged composite creature flanked by two deer, a reference to the Buddha’s first sermon at Sārnāth. Flags, banners and fly-whisks decorate the gate-superstructure at all levels. The door is flanked by elegant prongs in the colour of the respective directional family.



99 The doors of the Trilokavijaya mandala are flanked by deities, the naked corpulent bodies of which merge with fanciful coloured clouds. This green cloud deity flanks the west gate, plays a long trumpet and holds a garland as an offering. That all parts of the mandala are auspicious is also expressed by the row of vases connected with foliage within the circle of flames.

The content of the two large mandalas dominating the wall as its main subject relates to advanced spiritual practice, in particular the rituals of the Yoga Tantras, which need considerable effort to be learned. The areas outside the mandalas, in contrast, complement these with themes directed towards the lay community and daily practice. These areas are also interesting for the motifs surrounding these deities and the mandalas.

The four-armed Green Tārā in the bottom left corner of this wall immediately demonstrates the more mundane nature of these paintings (100). As personification of compassion and rescuer from dangers, Tārā's popularity among Buddhist lay followers is not surprising. In this depiction the goddess directly interacts with the worshipping couple represented to her side. To accommodate both the iconometric requirements for the representation of the deity and the interaction, the goddess is represented at an angle, making her lean towards the lay followers (101). Also the arrangement of her attributes has been altered, the gestures of her main arms directly engaging with the worshippers. The right hand probably is to be understood as a casual variant of the gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*) and the left holds the stalk of the blue lily topped by a jewel. The other two hands hold a book and an offering bowl (100) respectively, the latter replacing the string of beads (*mālā*) usually held. The worshipping couple wears local dress, and both hold a lotus and a string of beads.

The space surrounding the Trilokavijaya mandala is filled with the volutes of an elaborate lotus scroll, terminating in fleshy lotus blossoms in the centres of the circles formed by



100 The goddess Green Tārā in the bottom left corner is exceptionally well executed. Her elongated, curvaceous body is finely shaded—particular noteworthy is the profile shading of the upper chest—and her ornaments are particularly fine. In this representation Tārā holds a bowl of offerings in the upper left hand.

101 Unusually, the four-armed goddess is represented at a slight angle, as she is directed towards the couple represented outside the lotus medallion she is depicted in. The goddess holds a book in one of her right hands, the other one gesturing towards the couple, and her second left hand holds the stem of a blue lily (*utpala*), here not presented as usually in profile but as a bright blue round blossom.

The lotus circle has a diameter of 48 cm.

the stems. The scroll derives from small vases, one of them just to the back of the worshippers Green Tārā attends to. Remarkably this background pattern surrounding the mandalas changes along a vertical line between them (102), the right half surrounding the Dharmadhātu mandala being covered with a more subdued scroll motif that is only occasionally punctuated by red blossoms.

The space between the two mandalas, and thus along the central axis of the wall, is used to highlight deities of particular popularity, Avalokiteśvara and Green Tārā, both in an iconography distinctive for Alchi. Avalokiteśvara, shown in the upper area of the wall, has eleven heads and twenty-two arms. A variant of the same deity is found in the centre of the left wall of the middle storey in the Sumtsek (669). A textual source describing this form appears not to be preserved, but the salvific quality of this Great Compassionate One is clear from the context there. Symbolically, this Bodhisattva may also stand for the removal of the twenty-two obscurations as accounted in the chapter on Avalokiteśvara in the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*. The associated ten-plus-one stages could then account for the eleven heads.[109]

The corresponding space at the bottom of the wall is dominated by a wonderful representation of the six-armed Green Tārā (103). As the one in the Avalokiteśvara niche of the Sumtsek (562ff.) her representation can be considered a highlight of the temple's paintings. Despite several attempts, this form of Tārā has so far escaped precise identification, as exact textual equivalents cannot be found.[110] However, she most likely represents an independent form of Great Peace Tārā (Mahāśānti Tārā), who is described among the twenty-one Tārā with exactly the same attributes, but of white colour.[111] The blue lily attribute is usually held by green forms of the goddess, and thus indicates that this Tārā originally was green. Also the prominent representation of the flask filled with the white nectar of immortality (*amṛta*) fits this identification. The staff with three ends (*tridaṇḍa*) in her upper right hand further associates this form of the goddess with Kashmir. Thus, we may assume that an independent form of Mahāśānti Tārā had been popular in Kashmir at the time, but that her liturgy has not survived.

To the lower left of Tārā is a panel of similar size dedicated to the six-headed, six-armed and six-legged Yamāntaka. This panel still preserves wonderful details, such as a very fine stupa at the top of the halo and beautifully rendered throne animals, but has suffered considerable damage over time and thus is not reproduced here.[112] A much better preserved version of this deity is found above the entrance to the first upper floor of the Sumtsek (663). While the six-headed Yamāntaka is the only form of this god surpassing death in Alchi and related monuments, later he gets superseded by Vajrabhairava and others.

To the lower right of Tārā is a rare representation of the divine artist Viśvakarman, the 'maker of all' (107). Bearded, crowned and dressed in a short vest and boots, he is identified by the metal-working tools among his attributes. He may also have been the tutelary deity for the artists who created this wonderful monument.

Finally, in the far lower corner of the wall the theme of Avalokiteśvara is picked up again. Now it is the four-armed Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara, the personification of the six-syllable mantra *ōṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*, that is represented (108). His prominence acknowledges the emergence of a then new trend to identify this compassionate Bodhisattva as the one whose special field of action is the Himalayas.[113]

Thus, the space between the mandalas on the left wall is dedicated to compassion, peace, long life and the overcoming of death, as well as artisanship. The latter may here well be signified as a means to achieve the former goals.



102 The two mandalas on the left side wall are painted against different scroll motifs, a black vertical line separating them from each other. While the corners around the Trilokavijaya mandala (left) are filled with the scrolls of a fleshy lotus stem supporting thick blossoms, those of the Dharmadhātu mandala show the scroll as if it would be under water.

In the centre between them is an eleven-headed and twenty-two-armed form of Avalokiteśvara, the ultimate personification of compassion (*karuṇā*).

As early western Himalayan mandalas in general, the Alchi mandalas only have a fire and vajra circle surrounding them. An inner ring of lotus petals, signifying the lotus base for the mandala palace, is only added with the mandalas of the Lhakhang Soma (289–293).



103 The six-armed Green Tārā is best identified as Mahāśānti Tārā, Great Peace Tārā. She holds a string of beads at her heart and the stem of a blue lily in her hand on her lap. Her other hands hold a staff with three ends (*tridaṇḍa*), a book and a flask, and her lower right hand performs the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*).

The damages inflicted on this image along its frame are due to a poor cleaning attempt, rubbing off the paint layer and revealing the white ground.

This panel is approximately 40 cm wide.

104 On top of the throne two deities blowing a conch trumpet ride a fable creature with a lion face.

105 Curiously the lion-faced creatures wear bright green caps, particularly clear in this detail.

106 Overleaf: All details of the goddesses' dress are extremely finely executed and her dhoti is decorated with a *svastika* pattern. Among the ornaments of the throne the lion is usually shown attacking the elephant on which he stands, which in this case is executed extremely playfully.

Underneath Tārā two practitioners perform her ritual, their implements including a ritual mandala and an incense burner between them. The prominent flask behind one of the practitioners at the left edge replicates the goddesses' attribute and contains the white nectar of immortality (*amṛta*). Its large size and white body support the identification proposed for the goddess.









107 The divine artist Viśvakarman is rarely represented, but can be recognised by the iconographic details emphasising the working of metal: the flames behind the body, the hammer and tongs as attributes, and the anvil between the lower legs. The other pair of arms hold a string of beads and a book, symbols of religious practice and knowledge. He is dressed in a short vest featuring *ṭīrāz* bands and wears felt boots.

Diameter of the lotus halo: 42 cm.



108 In the far bottom corner of this wall is Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara, a form of Avalokiteśvara personifying the six-syllable mantra *ōṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*. He is four-armed, has his main hands folded in front of the chest and holds string of beads (*mālā*) and lotus in his outer hands. That the latter has the shape of a different flower demonstrates the artistic freedom of the artists had when painting the monument.

The second large mandala represented on the left side wall is the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrīmaṇḍala, the Dharma Sphere Mandala of Mañjuśrī Lord of Speech, here referred to by the shorthand Dharmadhātu mandala (109).[114] As the name implies, the main deity of this mandala is Mañjuśrī, in the texts also referred to as Mañjughoṣa, who represents the wisdom aspect and stands for Buddha Vairocana (111). Given the position of this mandala to the left of the niche, it is the second most important theme depicted in the Dukhang and in early western Himalayan monuments in general. With the Vajradhātu mandala in the niche, and the Sarvavid mandala directly opposite, it forms a triad of mandalas that is also found in the main temples of Sumda Chung, Nako, and possibly Tabo. The Dunkar caves in west Tibet even preserve three versions of this mandala, one of them on the ceiling.[115]

Descriptions of the mandala are found in several sources, the most frequently used being the one of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* by Abhayākaragupta, which describes 221 deities.[116] This text draws on the *Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrīmaṇḍalavidhi* by a certain Mañjuśrīkīrti, which is included in the Tibetan canon either under this name or an alternative one.[117] Conceptually, the Dharmadhātu mandala builds on the Vajradhātu mandala, and includes the same sets of deities, but all the Buddhas are eight-armed and Vairocana is replaced by Mañjughoṣa.

The depiction in the Alchi Dukhang features as many as 275 deities and no direct textual source is preserved to account for some of its details. However, the above sources are close enough to allow for the identification of all deities within the mandala architecture, while a number of the protective deities in the outer circle remain unidentified. The Alchi depiction is, thus, itself a commentary on the subject and its description below focuses on those aspects in which the depiction diverges from the descriptions. A full list of the deities of this mandala including their iconographic description as found at Alchi is provided in an appendix (page 414 ff.).

In this mandala, the inner palace is divided into nine rectangles, with the central one considerably larger and containing the lotus circle of Mañjughoṣa (111) surrounded by eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas (110). In the corners of this square are the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*). The four secondary Buddhas in the cardinal directions are accompanied by the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas (113, 125), and their consorts occupy the four corners (112, 114).

One reason for the popularity of this mandala may well have been the covert integration of concepts deriving from the Highest Yoga Tantra within the more conservative Yoga Tantra context. This is particularly apparent with the integration of the consorts of the five esoteric Buddhas as established by the *Secret Assembly Tantra* (*Guhyasamājatantra*). The effect of this innovation can be observed by comparing the two mandalas on this wall. While in the Trilokavijaya mandala four goddesses surround the central Buddha Vairocana and the corners of the central palace are occupied by the inner offering goddesses (77), in the Dharmadhātu mandala the central Mañjughoṣa is surrounded by the eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas and the corners of the central palace are occupied by consorts of four of the five Buddhas, also sharing their respective iconography. The fact that the nine-square geometry of the mandala only fits four consorts for the five Buddhas results in variations in their respective allocation. In the case of the Dharmadhātu mandala, the most frequent solution to this problem is that the

109 The Dharmadhātu mandala has three palaces of which the two inner ones are presented here. Their assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

On the central lotus: Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrī or Mañjughoṣa surrounded by eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas.

In the corners of the central square: the seven treasures of a universal monarch are complemented by the lotus symbol to make eight.

In the rectangles to the four sides of Mañjughoṣa: eight-armed forms of the four directional Buddhas, each surrounded by four of the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas, the primary one represented in the bottom right corner of each rectangle.

In the corner squares of the inner palace: eight-armed forms of the Buddha's wisdom-consorts (*prajñā*).

In the gates of the inner palace: four wrathful gate-keepers.

Along the sides of the second palace: twelve goddesses in each direction personifying different sets of a Bodhisattva's accomplishments: namely from the bottom clockwise twelve stages (*bhūmi*), twelve perfections (*pāramitā*), twelve controls (*vaśitā*), and twelve spells (*dhāraṇī*).

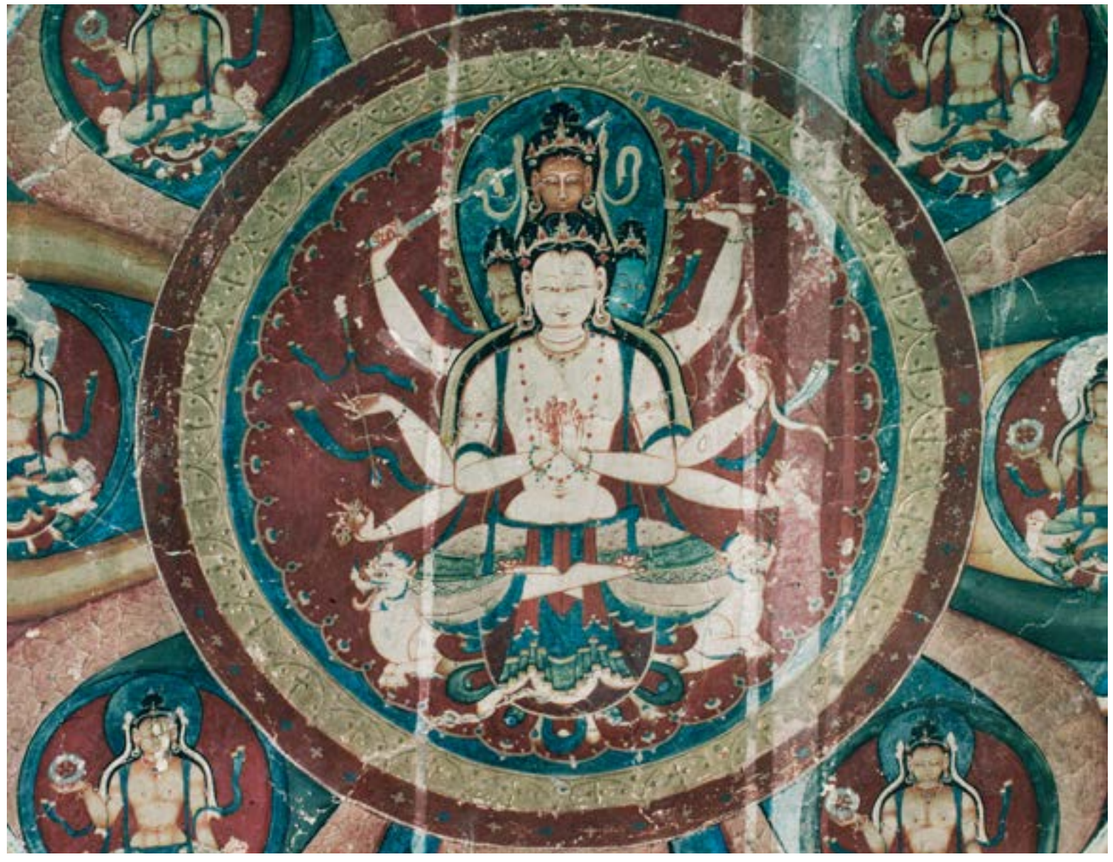
In the corners of the second palace: the eight inner offering goddesses.

In the gates of the outer palace: four female gate-keepers.

A third palace and an outer ring of protective deities complement the mandala.







110 In the Dharmadhātu mandala an eight-armed form of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, called Mañjughoṣa, takes the central position instead of Buddha Vairocana. He is surrounded by eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas all of which are of the same iconography: yellow, holding a wheel in the right hand and seated on a lion throne.

111 Mañjughoṣa is of the colour of the full moon, four-headed and eight-armed. His main arms perform the teaching gesture (*dharmacakra-mudrā*) while the other hold sword and book, arrow and bow, and vajra and bell, here clearly paired with each other. The colours of the secondary heads reference the surrounding Buddha families.



112 As his consort, the goddess Locanā, in the southeast corner of the inner palace of the mandala, shares all iconographic details with Mañjughoṣa (111), including the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*). The goddess wears a bodice of a shape that is typical for the art of Kashmir and schools deriving from it.

The nine compartments of the central palace are separated by bejewelled vajras painted in gold pastiglia relief.

The two Bodhisattvas to the right are Vajrarāja and Vajrarāga from the retinue of Buddha Akṣobhya. While the yellow Vajrarāja—meaning vajra king—holds an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*) as a symbol of his royalty, Vajrarāga—vajra desire—shares his iconography and symbolism with Kāma in a South Asian context, or Cupid in a Western one. He is red and releases an arrow from his bow.



113 In the east (bottom) field of the central palace is Buddha Akṣobhya, who like all Buddhas of this mandala is four-headed and eight-armed. The Bodhisattvas in his retinue are to be read from the bottom right figure, the white Vajrasattva, clockwise. The text refers to Akṣobhya as 'great aggression' and describes different moods for his faces, a detail not found in the Alchi depictions.

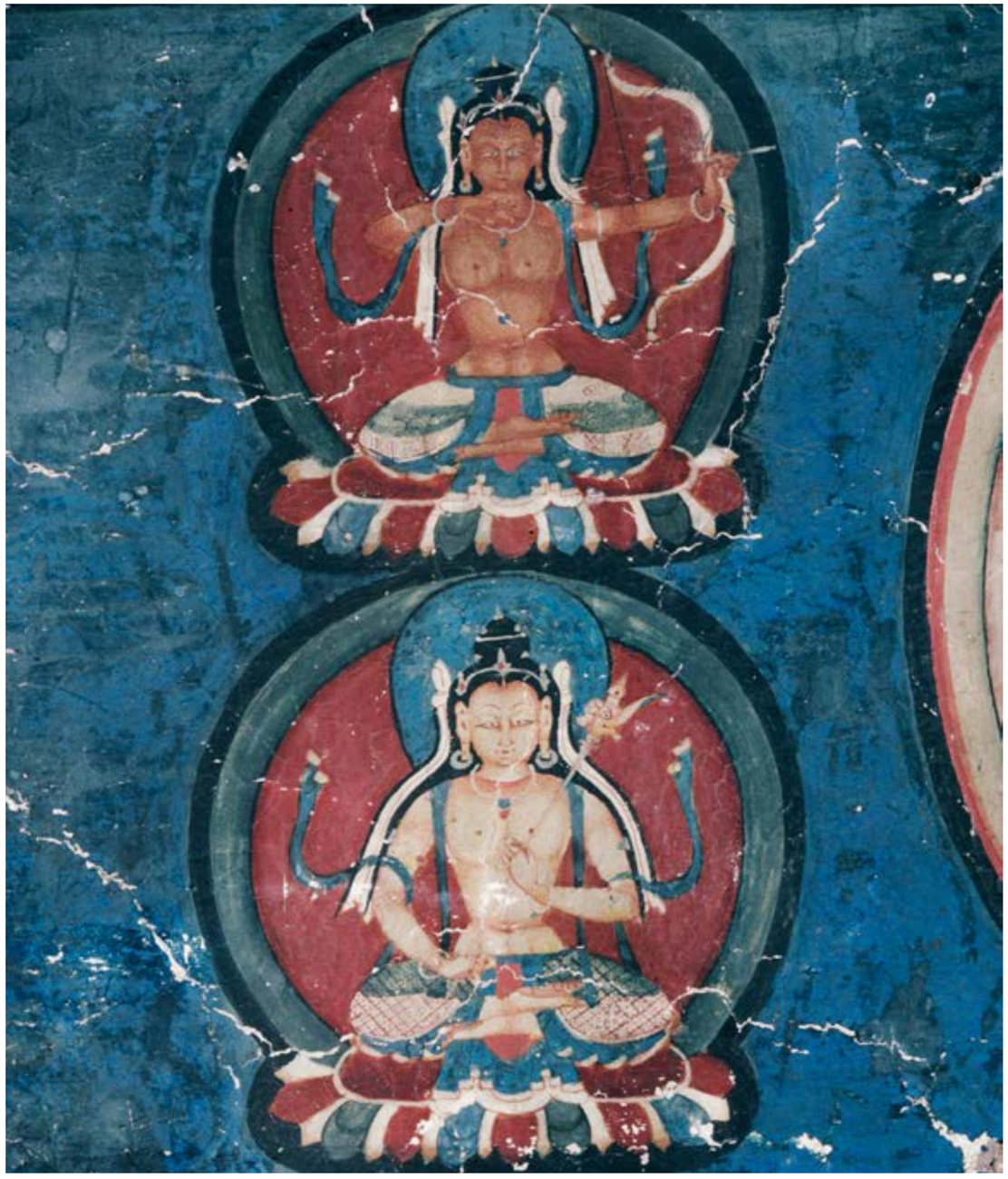
Width of Akṣobhya's halo: 28 cm; height of the gate-keeper: 8 cm.

114 Akṣobhya and his consort, Māmakī, are iconographically identical. In the main hands they hold a sword and perform the gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*), their upper hands hold vajra and bell, the middle ones arrow and bow, and the lower ones goad and noose.

115 Overleaf left: The Bodhisattvas Vajrarāja and Vajrarāga.

116 Overleaf right: The green Vajrasādhu has his hands in front of the chest, and white Vajrasattva below him holds vajra and bell.

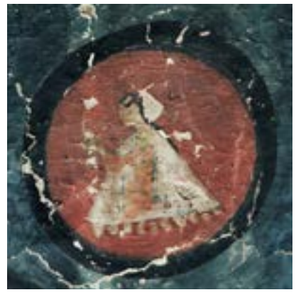








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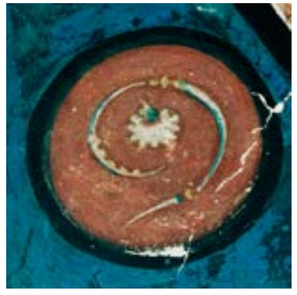
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124

Left: A consistent feature of all fully represented Dharmadhātu mandalas in the region is the representation of the seven treasures of a universal monarch around the central circle. They are skilfully arranged in pairs by type: the minister is faced by the queen (top two), the elephant by the horse and the jewel by the wheel (bottom two). As the eights symbol the lotus is added to the usual set opposite the general, who is depicted wearing armour and weapons while sitting on a throne.

125 The distinctive attribute of Buddha Ratnasambhava in the southern quarter is the wish-ful-filling banner held in his main left hand. He is surrounded by the following Bodhisattvas: the yellow Vajraratna holding a triple jewel in both hands above the head, the red Vajrasūrya holding a sun-disk with both hands in front of the chest, the blue Vajradhvaja, holding the name giving banner, and the white Vajrahāsa, holding a garland of teeth. In the yellow coloured gate is the gate-keeper Vajrapāśa. Thus, the Buddha, the main Bodhisattva, the gate-keeper and the gate itself all are of the colour of the southern Buddha family.



central Mañjughoṣa and Akṣobhya are attributed a consort, while Ratnasambhava remains without. Note that Akṣobhya occupies the east (bottom side) while his consort Māmakī is in the top right corner of the inner palace of the mandala (109).

The second palace contains sets of twelve goddesses on each side, which personify accomplishments of a Bodhisattva. Their family association is expressed by their attributes in their right hands, which are vajra, jewel, lotus, and crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) respectively. The left hand holds their distinctive attribute. In the east are the personifications of the ten stages (*bhūmi*) in the career of a Bodhisattva complemented by an additional stage at the beginning and end, namely Adhimukticaryā (intentional conduct) leading up to the first stage and Buddhasamantaprabhā (Buddha splendour) possibly standing in for ultimate buddhahood (127). In the south are the personifications of the perfections (*pāramitā*), again two additional perfections expanding on the common set of ten. Of these the first one, Ratnapadmapāramitā (jewel lotus perfection), is rather puzzling, while the last, Vajrakarmapāramitā (perfection of vajra action), accounts for the inclusion of esoteric practice. Among the perfections that



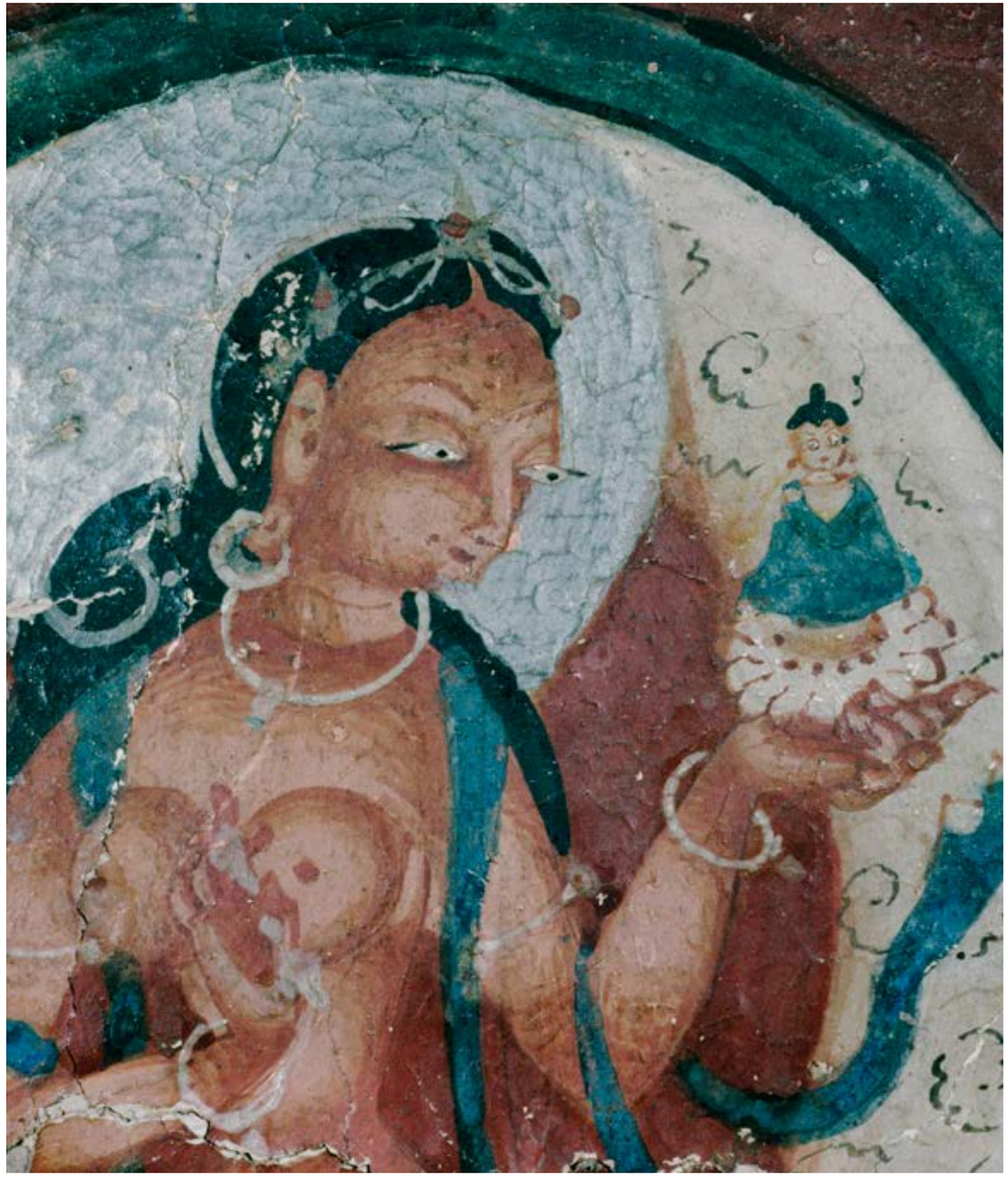
of wisdom, Prajñāpāramitā, is distinguished by having four arms instead of the usual two (128). In the west are the personifications of the controls (*vaśitā*). Here the usual set of ten is expanded at the end by the goddesses Tathatā (suchness) and Buddhabodhi (Buddha's awakening), both directly referencing buddhahood. The north is occupied by personifications of spells (*dhāraṇī*), accounting for Esoteric Buddhist practice. While the corners of this level are occupied by the usual set of inner offering goddesses, such as Lāsyā in the southeastern corner (126), the goddesses in the gates personify the four right cognitions (*pratisaṃvid*) of a Bodhisattva, namely the individual right cognition of the dharmas, meaning (128), definitive words and confidence. We can thus read the second palace as a symbolic representation of the Bodhisattva path in Esoteric Buddhism.

With the deities in the third palace the depicted arrangement diverges most from the textual descriptions. Of the ten wrathful deities (*daśakrodha*) described in the texts only eight are actually represented (132, 133), and those have switched place with the eight goddesses that

126 The second palace of the mandala contains goddesses personifying a Bodhisattva's accomplishments. In the east are the twelve stages (*bhūmi*), the last two of which are represented here, namely the yellow Dharmameghā-bhūmi (Dharma cloud) and Buddhasamantaprabhā (Buddha splendour), each of them with an attribute that alludes to their name. In the corner is Lāsyā, one of the four inner offering goddesses, who is yellow in this mandala instead of the usual white.

Height of the goddesses *c.* 11.5 cm.

127 Buddhasamantaprabhā holds a Buddha image seated on a lotus as her distinctive attribute in her left hand. In the text he is fittingly identified as Buddha Amitābha. As with all *bhūmi* goddesses in the east, her right hand holds a vajra, the family attribute if his direction. Her halo is polished and reflects like silver, a technique used for numerous figures in this mandala.





128 Right: The goddesses in the south of the middle palace are the personifications of the perfections, the core of which are the six-perfections ending in the perfection of meditative absorption, Dhyānapāramitā, and wisdom. The former is represented by the blue goddesses holding a jewel, the family attribute, in the right hand and a lotus in the left. Prajñāpāramitā is distinguished by her four arms, the main ones performing the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) and the side ones holding lotus and book. The gate-keepers at this level appear to be female forms of the usual set, but in this case are personifications of the four right cognitions. The yellow goddess in the gate holding a noose with jewel ends thus is Arthapratisaṃvid, the individual right cognition of meaning.

Height of the goddess in the gate *c.* 8.5 cm.

129 Left: the gates and corners of the third and outermost palace are occupied by eight wrathful deities from a group of ten. At the gates they are flanked by two offering goddesses. Here the yellow, eight-armed protector Prajñāntaka is flanked by the yellow Puṣpā, offering flowers on a plate, and the blue Vajraśabdā (vajra sound), playing a lute (*vīṇā*). Of these goddess Puṣpā is one of the outer offering goddesses, while Śabdā is one of four offerings to the senses.

are said to occupy the corners and gates. The goddesses, instead, flank the wrathful deities used as gate-keepers, the pairs consisting of one of the outer offering goddesses described for the corners and one of four sense offering goddesses described for the gates (129). These changes in arrangement are consistent with later depictions of this mandala in Tibet, and may be explained by an emphasis on the protective function of the deities in the gates.

Besides the goddesses flanking the gates, sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon occupy the sides of this palace. This group differs considerably from those in the Vajradhātu



mandala, and the depiction of the individual Bodhisattvas closely aligns with the textual sources (130, 131). In the west Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta head the group, which are the Bodhisattvas who will succeed Buddha Amitābha in his western Buddha field, Sukhāvatī. This is, thus, another detail that demonstrates the careful integration of more mainstream Mahāyāna concepts within this mandala.

Among the goddesses at his level are also four personifications of the senses: form, sound smell, and taste. The text describes them occupying the gates, but in this depiction they are



130 In the third and outermost palace is a group of sixteen Bodhisattvas, two of which are represented on this double page. This is Kṣitigarbha, who touches the earth with the right hand and holds a red lotus topped by a tree in the left.

Height of the Bodhisattva *c.* 19 cm.



131 The Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha rains jewels from his right hand and holds a wish-fulfilling jewel banner in the left. The depictions of these Bodhisattvas closely align with their descriptions in the textual sources in both colour and iconographic detail.

paired with the outer offering goddesses (129). Only the interior of the gates is coloured in reference to the respective Buddha family. Their large superstructure is flanked by mirror posts with an extensive array of banners hanging from them (145, 146).

With one exception, Yamāntaka in the eastern gate who is six-headed, six-armed and six-legged, the ten wrathful deities are four-headed and eight-armed and thus resonate with the main deities of the mandala. While those in the gates are defined by their family associ-

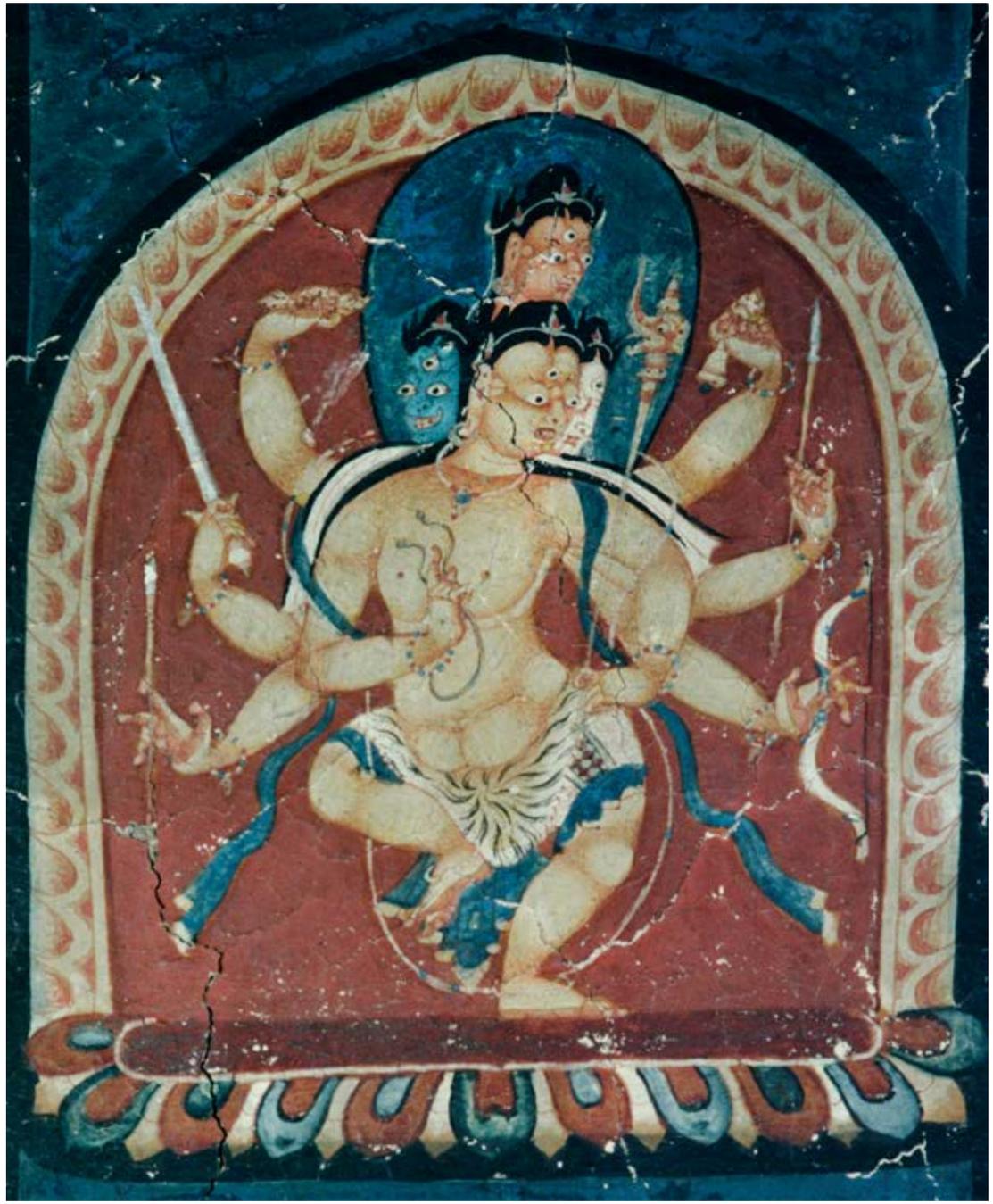


ation (133), those in the corners are subduing the most important South Asian gods, among them are Trailokyavijaya trampling on Maheśvara (Śiva) and Umā in the northeast corner and Vajrajvālānalārka in the southeast corner trampling on Viṣṇu and his consort (132).

Together there are 125 deities occupying the three palaces of the mandala, but the assembly is continued with an array of pan-Indian deities represented along the fire and vajra circles surrounding the palace. These are only partly described in the canonical sources that

132 In the southeast corner is the dark grey Vajrajvālānalārka. His four heads are all of the same colour and he holds the following attributes in this eight arms: vajra and tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), sword and bow, arrow and bell, wheel and noose. He tramples on Viṣṇu and his consort.

133 The yellow Prajñāntaka occupies the south gate and is again four-faced and eight-armed, his side heads being blue, red (top) and white. His main attributes are the noose, the common attribute of a gate-keeper in this direction, and the goad. His other hands hold vajra and bell, sword and lance, arrow and bow.







134 Right: The southeastern direction is guarded by the fire god Agni, who is read and distinguished by his matted hair and his vehicle, the goat. He is four-armed and holds a string of beads and a flask in the outer hands, while the main ones engage with the consort on his lap, who is dressed like a local noble lady.

135 Above: Agni is the head of the eight great ascetics (*ṛṣi*), of which this emaciated figure holding an umbrella is the third.

136 The ascetics are depicted with emaciated bodies, the lines indicating their bones abstracting them. They are all seated on cushions covered by an antelope skin, a symbol of ascetic life. The fourth ascetic is depicted in meditation, his head directed towards the centre of the mandala while his upper body is twisted towards the other side enabling the painter to emphasize the bones of the chest.

have come down to us, and there is an unusual freedom to add deities to it. This, and the fact that sometimes they are not even named individually, make it extremely difficult to identify each of them individually and understand the relationship between the diverse groups and their placement. However, the variety of these depictions is stunning and they account for some of the most intriguing depictions in the temple.

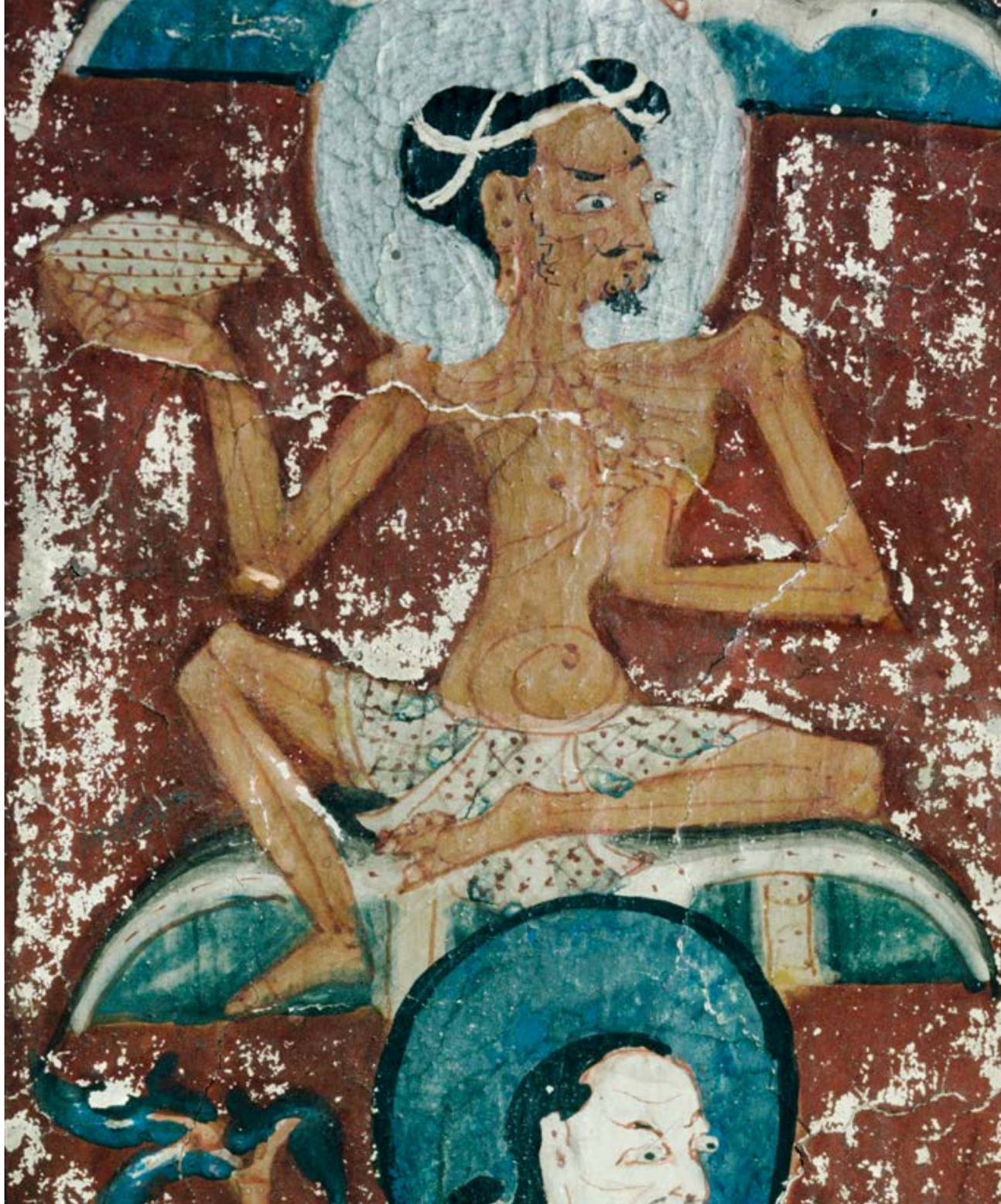
The deities in this circle are arranged around the eight guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*) and are to be read beginning in the northeast. There is Īśāna, a form of Śiva, seated on the bull and with Umā to his side, while the east is guarded by Indra. They are joined by other great gods, which can only be partly identified, Sun and Moon, as well as seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions (*nakṣatra*). Being at the bottom of the mandala the depictions of these deities are poorly preserved and thus are not reproduced in this volume.

The southeast is guarded by Agni, the god of fire, seated on a goat (134). As are most *dikpāla* he is four-armed and has a consort on his lap, which occasionally wears the dress of a local lady. According to the description the *dikpāla* are supposed to have two their hands joined in veneration above the head, a detail rarely depicted at Alchi. Assuming that the painters me came from Kashmir, they may well have had an interest in preserving the dignity of these traditional gods. Agni is accompanied by the eight great ascetics (*ṛṣi*) whose emaciated bodies are highly individualised (136–139). Together with their attributes they provide a sense of individuality that is betrayed when attempting their identification. A comparison of their depiction across several Dharmadhātu mandalas shows that they are depicted differently in each case, even when the comparative site is temporally and culturally closely connected, such as Sumda Chung and Alchi. In the canonical sources individual names and descriptions have only been found in relation to the Sarvavid mandala opposite this one, but they do not match any of the Dharmadhātu mandala depictions.

Yama, seated on a bull in the south (142), is surrounded by the seven mothers (*saptamātṛka*), the first five of which are depicted with four arms and the same gestures and attributes.[119] Continuing clockwise these are Indrāṇī, seated on an elephant (140), Māheśvarī, seated on a three-eyed bull (141), Kaumārī, with six heads and seated on a peacock (141), Vaiṣṇavī, with the side heads of a lion and boar and seated on *garuḍa* (143), Brahmāṇī, three-headed and seated on two geese (143), who are represented below Yama (142). The following two *mātṛka*, Vārāhī and Cāmuṇḍā (144), are wrathful and joined by the curious figure of Bhṛṅgin, who is depicted as an emaciated sage and with two consorts (144).

The nine celestial bodies (*graha*) and twenty-eight lunar mansions are distributed in groups around the mandala, the deities representing celestial bodies followed by seven of the lunar mansions. Among the celestial bodies Rāhu, the personification of the eclipse, stands out, as he is depicted as a large wrathful head only (147). While this depiction is well known in an Indian context, I have failed to find a Tibetan description that conforms to this iconography. In the textual sources directly related to this mandala, the lunar mansions are only listed with their colour. The depictions at Alchi are thus more explicit and can securely be identified by their succession. Curiously, while the text lists the lunar mansions beginning with Aśvinī, the depiction begins with the third lunar mansion, Kṛttikā, conforming to a listing found in sources deriving from the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations*. In fact, for quite a number of the secondary groups of deities depicted in this mandala, descriptions are only found in that context.

137 The sixth ascetic has his matted hair bound to a turban and holds an object that cannot be clearly identified, possibly some kind of vessel. The whimsically drawn facial hair and the rather squarish body indicate the freedom the painters had when rendering these figures.





138 Each of the eight great ascetics (*ṛṣi*) is represented differently and with distinctive gestures and attributes. These features provide the sense that they have distinct iconography. However, in different versions of this mandala their iconography varies; they thus cannot be identified individually.

The seventh ascetic in the middle of this depiction may hold a staff in his right hand.

139 Kneeling sideways, the last of the *ṛṣi* holds a string of beads towards the deities of the mandala. The bun of hair in the back of his head, the bulging farther eye and the moustache gives him an almost comical appearance.

140 Overleaf right: Indrāṇī, the first of the seven mothers (*saptamātṛka*), sits on an elephant and holds skull-cup (*kapāla*) and club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*) in her main hands. The outer hand is forming a fist as if holding a vajra, while the inner one is raised with the palm upwards in a gesture of adoration (*vandanamudrā*).

141 Overleaf left: The white Māheśvarī is three-headed, and the red Kaumārī six-headed. They sit on a three-eyed bull and a peacock respectively, while their attributes and gestures are the same as those for Indrāṇī.





Nairṛti, in the southwest, is accompanied by eight demons (*rākṣasa*) headed by the ten-headed Rāvaṇa. Varuṇa, the god of water in the west, has a retinue of eight snake deities (*nāga*) and the earth-goddess (*bhūdevi*) and eight demi-gods (*asura*) are depicted after them in the western quarter.

Vāyu, the wind god protecting the northwest, is accompanied by the eight *garuḍa*, depicted as corpulent multi-coloured birds with a human head (146). Finally, the north is protected by the wealth deity Kubera (149), who is also the king of the *yakṣa*, eight of which are represented around him (148). They are joined by Hārītī with her children and spouse Pāñcika (150) as well as Gaṇapati, the elephant-headed lord of hosts (151).

The mandala assembly is concluded by four wrathful gate-keepers guarding the gates of this outer circle (142). It is unclear if their attributes have ever been painted.



142 Black Yama protects the south, the direction of death. He is seated on a bull and has only two arms. His consort does not wear a cape, but the large turquoises in her hair still identify her as a local lady. In the gate is the yellow gate-keeper Vajrapāśa, whose noose attribute has not been painted.

143 The *mātṛka* Vaiṣṇavī (below) has the side heads of a lion and a boar and is seated on a *garuḍa*. Brahmāṇī sits on a pair of geese. For reasons still unclear, this group of goddesses accompanies Yama, the lord of death, a fact that may also account for their attributes.

Thus, both religiously and art historically, the Dharmadhātu mandala is a highlight of the Alchi Dukhang. The popularity and prominence of this mandala in the early western Himalayan context most probably lies in the inclusive and covertly more progressive symbolism that underlies this mandala. Clearly, more textual research is needed to unpack this symbolism further and improve our understanding in this regard.





144 The group of the seven mothers (*saptamātṛka*) is concluded with Vārāhī, who is dark blue, and holds a fish in the right hand and a skull-cup (*kapāla*). Like the following Cāmuṇḍā she sits on a corpse and is wrathful with the hairs standing on end. Dark red Cāmuṇḍā is emaciated, and holds a dagger in the right hand and freshly cut head in the left. They are joined by the emaciated Bhṛṅgin, who has one consort on his lap, while a second one stands behind him, both again wearing local dress.

145 This section just above Bhṛṅgin features two of the eight celestial bodies, Maṅgala (Mars) and Budha (Mercury), and two of the twenty-eight lunar mansions. Mars is red, holds a dagger and freshly cut head, and sits on an elephant, while yellow Mercury holds arrow and bow and has no vehicle. The two lunar mansions can be identified as Maghā, yellow and seated on a lion, and Pūrvaphalgunī, who is bright green and sits in meditation on a lotus.

The mandala palace is decorated with a rich array of banners attached to a pole that appears to be topped by a mirror. Note that the bottom banners are traversed by *ṭirāz* bands bearing the same pseudo-script found on the donor's dress.







146 In the northwestern area of the mandala are the eight *garuḍa*, half bird, half man, followed by Rāhu. A mirror post with banners on both sides fills the space between the palace and the outer circle.

147 Rāhu, the eclipse, has eaten his body in wrath and thus is represented by a giant wrathful head only.



148 Kubera, god of wealth and protector of the north, is surrounded by eight corpulent wealth deities headed by the yellow Jambhala, who holds a citrus fruit in the right and a mongoose in the left.



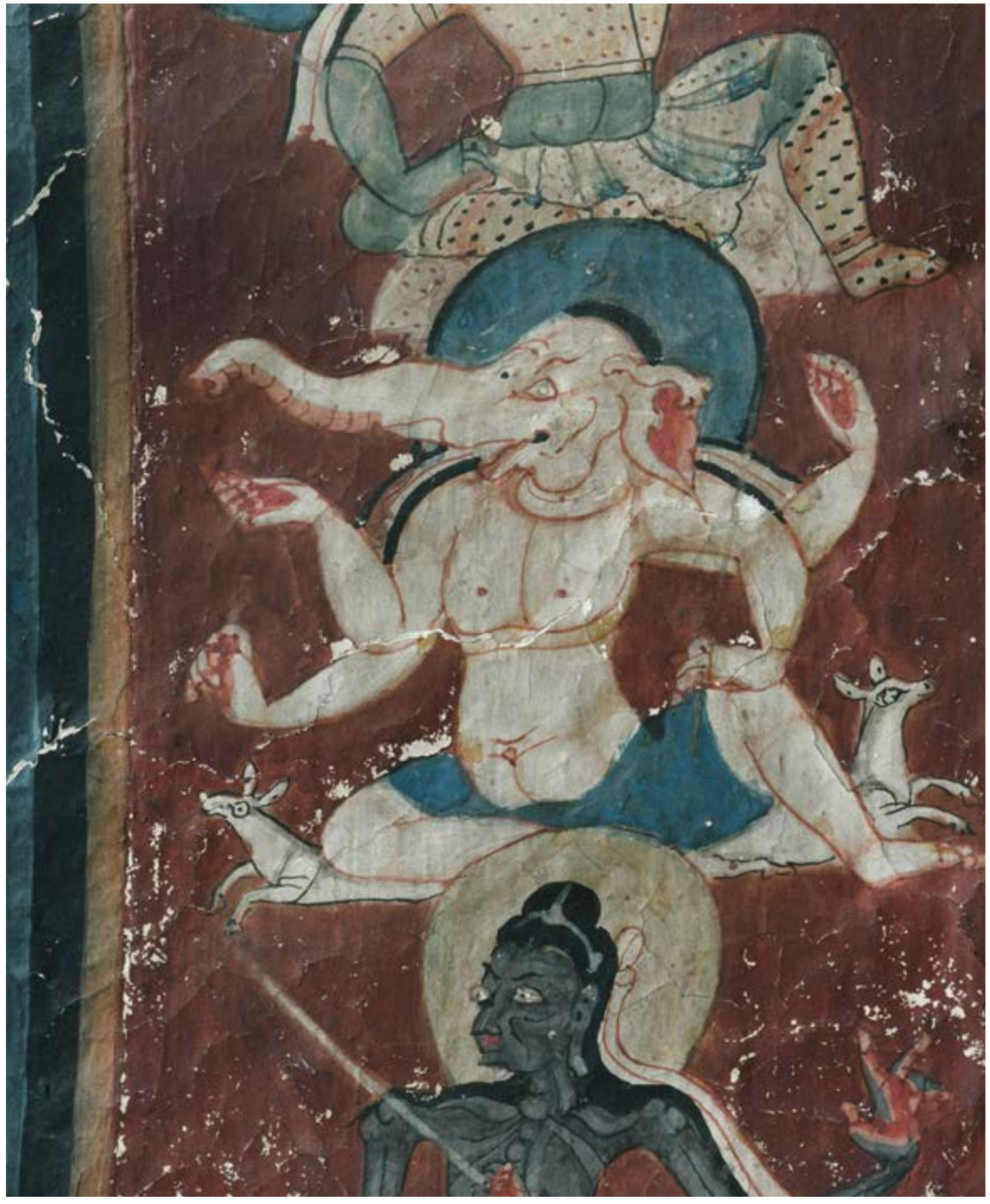
149 The Guardian of the northern direction, Kubera, also has a spouse wearing local dress on his lap. Behind him is the gate-keeper of this outer circle of the mandala, which is Vajraghaṇṭa.



150 An interesting group associated with the wealth deities are the *yakṣa* couple Hārītī and Pāñcika. Underneath them is the four-armed and elephant-headed Gaṇapati, who in a Buddhist context is also associated with wealth.

151 The attributes of the four-armed Gaṇapati are so faded that they can hardly be recognised anymore. The upper right hand probably held a bowl of sweets (*laḍḍu*), and the lower right probably an axe. Of the trident only the stick is preserved and the radish can't be recognised anymore at all. His vehicles are mice or rats, here looking more like antelopes.

152 Overleaf: Raising his five semi-wrathful heads—the fifth has to be imagined in the back—Hārītī spouse Pāñcika looks towards her. He holds a flask in his raised right hand. That he has five heads is the result of a misinterpretation of his name, *pañcan* meaning five.









153 The five-hundred Buddhas represented on the wall to the left of the Dukhangs niche appear to be organised by the colour of their robes, the red robes repeating in diagonals across the wall, while the intermittent blue and green robes may switch. All Buddhas sit on elephant thrones, but their colours and gestures vary. Along the bottom is a large inscription panels divided into three areas. Of these, the inscription on the upper right panel was formulated by the Dukhang's founder, Kalden Shérap.

154 Above: Detail of one of the thousand Buddhas on the main wall.

The Main Wall

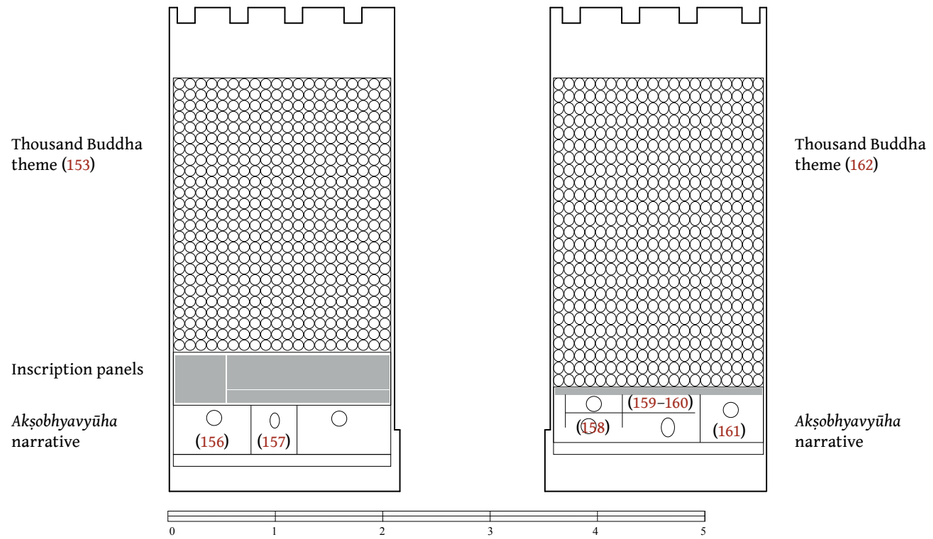
The walls flanking the niche in the back of the Dukhang are covered with the thousand Buddha theme and dedicated to Buddha Akṣobhya (155). The latter is also alluded to by the Buddhas of the fortunate aeon, as all of them sit on an elephant throne, the elephant being the distinctive vehicle of this Buddha (153, 154, 162). While their colours are white, blue, yellow, red and green, the colours of the five esoteric Buddhas, and they are occasionally organised forming diagonals of the same colour of skin or robe, variety takes precedence over organisation with them. This is particularly apparent in the many different gestures the Buddhas are depicted with.

Underneath the five-hundred Buddhas on the left wall is a large inscription panel organised in three distinct areas, a square one to the left and two superimposed rectangular ones to the right. Of these, the larger rectangular panel contains a composition of the founder of the Dukhang, the monk Kalden Shérap, called '*Lamp of Visualisation*' (*gsal 'debs sgron ma*).[120] In this inscription the monk identifies himself as the founder of the temple, reflects on the nature of the cycle of transmigration (*saṃsāra*), and expresses the wish for himself and all living beings to be reborn in the paradise of Buddha Akṣobhya.[121] This paradise is the subject of the other inscription panels[122] and the depictions[123] along the bottom register of this wall on both sides of the niche. In recent years these murals have often been obscured by cabinets containing ritual paraphernalia, the usage of this space over time also resulting in severe damages to some of the scenes.

Uniquely, the paradise of Buddha Akṣobhya, Abhirati, is presented over several panels, details of which are accompanied by captions. Rather than narrating a story, the depictions focus on the wondrous qualities ascribed to Akṣobhya's world in the *Akṣobhyavyūhasūtra*. In the following description six panels are differentiated, three to each side of the niche. These are either separated by clearly demarcated dividers, trees, or combinations of the two.

The first panel shows the Buddha Akṣobhya teaching the fourfold assembly as well as Bodhisattvas and gods (156). The gigantic tree at the left edge of the scene is Akṣobhya's tree of awakening which is described in detail in the *sūtra* and is also separately captioned. Buddha Akṣobhya also expounds the Dharma across his realm and wherever he walks lotuses appear under his feet. In panel two he visits lay followers who worship him with flowers, even a branch of a tree bending towards him (157). The poorly preserved third panel shows the trees that grow garments, the ponds that appear at the will of the beholder, the palaces, and the women, which in this paradise are free of all negative qualities.

In the first panel to the right of the niche Buddha Akṣobhya again teaches the fourfold assembly, but now he is depicted in the lower area of the panel while above is an assembly of gods flanked by trees and ponds, the hallmarks of paradise (158). This panel thus alludes to the notion that in Akṣobhya's world humans can see the gods in the Trāyastriṃśa heaven. The central god has a vertical third eye on the forehead and is four-armed, holding a string of beads (*mālā*) in the main arms in front of the chest and a jewel and a flag in the side arms. From the context, he is most likely to be identified as Indra, the lord of the Trāyastriṃśa heaven, but there is no comparison to these iconographic details.[124] In the absence of



sufficient attributes only few of the other gods can be identified with certainty, among them Gaṇeśa and Śiva, the latter immediately to Indra's left.

The different world levels are also connected by jewel stairs enabling interaction as depicted at the edge of the next panel, which continues the vertical division. In the paradise level above a sole monk walks between trees and ponds (159–160), as the caption above tells us, this is a reminder of the original Bodhisattva aspiration that leads to the attainments of Akṣobhya or rebirth in his paradise. Below, Buddha Akṣobhya is again shown walking on lotuses, now appearing in all worlds at the time of his passing.[125] It is here that local monks are represented among the audience for the first time. The final panel then mirrors the first with the tree along its left edge and the teaching Buddha in the centre, but its audience now includes the lay followers among those flanking the teaching Buddha (161). Wearing Indic rather than local dress they now are reborn in Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati and enjoy his teachings directly, while the monks underneath perform funerary rites.

The theme of Akṣobhya's paradise in interaction with local monks and lay followers also takes centre stage in the Sumtsek, where it is represented on the right side wall of Maitreya's niche (616 ff.). These depictions align with the overall importance of Buddha Akṣobhya in all early monuments at Alchi. Read in esoteric terms, this importance reflects the emergence of Highest Yoga Tantra practices for which Akṣobhya is the primary Buddha.

155 The sections of the main wall left and right of the large niche with the thousand Buddhas above and the paradise of Buddha Akṣobhya below.

156 In the first panel Buddha Akṣobhya teaches an extended version of the fourfold assembly. Between the monastics flanking the Buddha and the lay followers in the bottom row are eight Bodhisattvas. Three gods, *nāga* and *yakṣa* along the right side complement the assembly. The tree on the left edge of the scene is Akṣobhya's tree of awakening.





157 Whenever Akṣobhya moves about his realm lotuses sprout under his feet and the lay followers perform acts of worship.

158 Attending the Buddha's teaching in Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati enables them to see the gods in Trāyastriṃśa heaven, the heaven of the thirty-three gods headed by Indra. The iconography of Indra, with a string of beads in the main hands and a jewel and a flag in the side hands, is unique to this panel.

Unfortunately, the Buddha in the lower part of the panel is almost completely abraded.





159 As the caption above clarifies, the depiction of a sole monk walking in a paradise garden refers to the original Bodhisattva aspiration that lead to Akṣobhya's attainments.

Ponds and trees are the hallmark of paradise and heaven.



160 The monk carries a begging staff and begging bowl.



161 In the last panel of the Abhirati scenes, local monks perform a ritual for rebirth in Akṣobhya's paradise. It is remarkable that here the mandala is represented round. The lay followers flank the teaching Buddha and wear Indic dress, possibly indicating their rebirth in his presence.



162 Rebirth in Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati also gives access to the thousand Buddhas in their different worlds.



163 On the main wall of the niche the four-faced Mahāvairocana is flanked by four goddesses of different colours, the four mothers of the families. The elaborate throne and the stem supporting the lotus of the surrounding figures emerge from a vase underneath the throne, which is also flanked by two *nāga*. While the main image has been restored, everything surrounding it is original to the foundation of the temple. Even the painting that can faintly be recognised in the back is original.

In this photograph the sculptures were not yet separated from the hall in front, and the offerings on the table are traditional ones.

The Niche

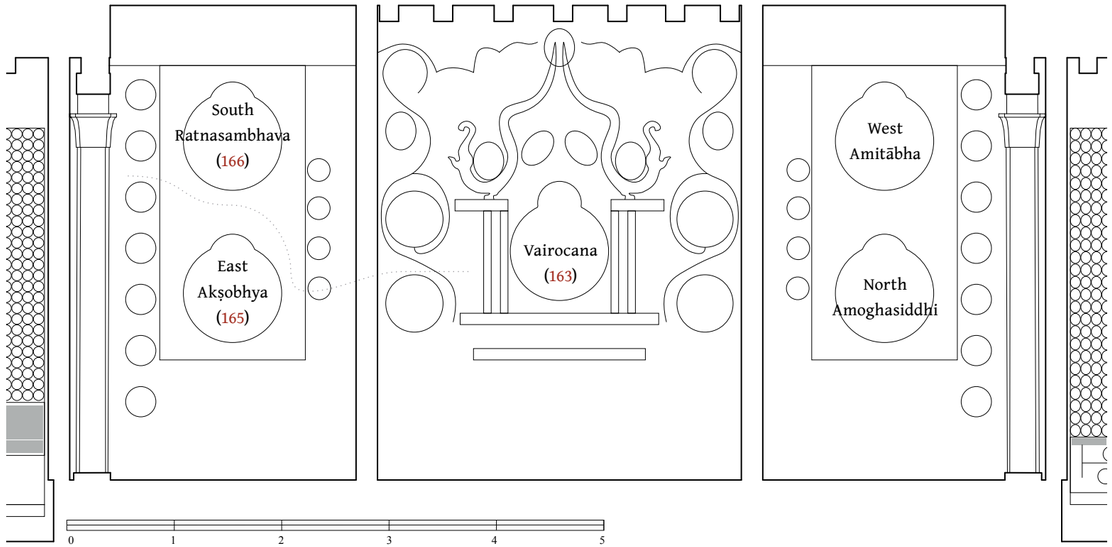
Originally, the niche in the back of the temple was an integrative part of Dukhang, the almost life-size clay sculptures of the five esoteric Buddhas presiding over the gathering of monks and lay followers assembled in the hall during ritual. The sculptures placed on the back and side walls of the niche form the core assembly of the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala, in short the Vajradhātu mandala, the main mandala of the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas Tantra* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*), the remaining deities added in painting. This mandala is, thus, the main theme of the temple's decoration, and it occupies its most sacred part. Thematically it also complements those in the hall in front of the niche. Today the niche is screened off from the hall in front through a glass partition and piled high with furniture.

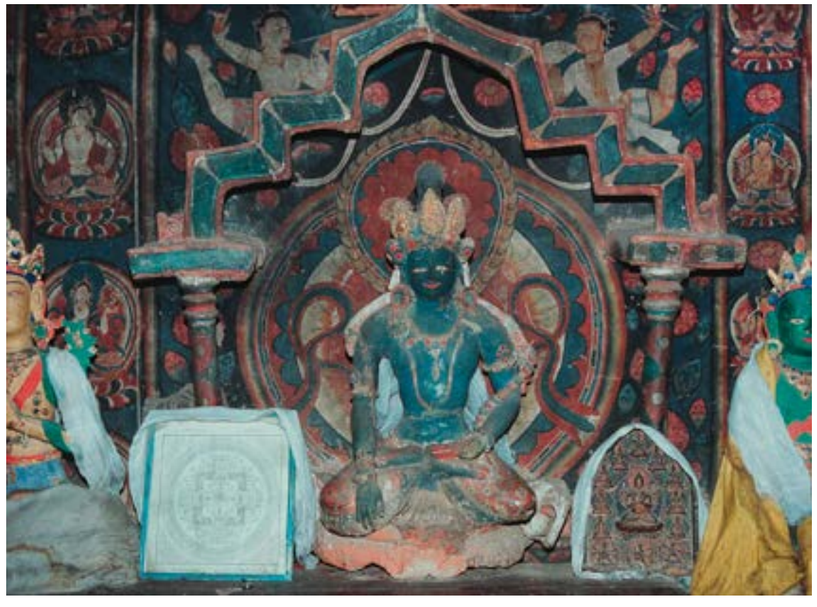
At the back wall of the niche the composition is dominated by the four-faced Mahāvairocana and his elaborate throne (163). The Buddha is flanked by four goddesses, the four 'mothers of the families' surrounding Vairocana in the central circle of the Vajradhātu mandala. Accordingly these have the colours of the four surrounding Buddha families. The colour of Ratnavajrī in the upper right is white with orange shading instead of a clear yellow, as is the case with Buddha Ratnasambhava presiding over her family (166). Above them two seated deities throw offerings towards the main Buddha.

Vairocana's elegant throne frame is well preserved and is defined by five superimposed animals, namely a *garuḍa* on top holding the tails of two winged sea-monsters (*makara*), which form the arch above Vairocana's head. At the sides of the throne an elephant is topped by a lion and a blue fable creature. Below Vairocana, usually obscured by furniture placed in front, a large vase is flanked by two *nāga*. The lotus stem emerging from it supports the main throne and branches out in a large scroll to the sides of it. Surrounding the figures and holding their base, the lotus stem ideally supports all figures on the main wall. The delicacy of this scroll, preserving much of its original painting, contrasts with the sturdy build of the figures.

The other four Buddhas are placed at the side walls, and are to be read from the bottom left, Buddha Akṣobhya (165), clockwise. Each of them is framed by a simple but elegant arch indicating palace type architecture. Originally, all of them were of the usual iconography, their vehicles depicted in a lively manner at the side of the lotus base. However, most of the clay images in the niche show different degrees of repair and repainting, the original appearance of the figures lower down obscured almost in their entirety. Nevertheless, the composition is well enough preserved to enable the reconstruction of its original appearance.

The sculptural configuration of the niche is complemented by deities painted on the side walls and flanking the secondary Buddhas. Although only a part of these figures could be documented, the lower ones concealed by furniture, it is clear that they iconographically complement the sculptures and form the Vajradhātu mandala together with them (164). The Bodhisattvas are painted in the colour of the respective Buddha family and carry the family attribute. Thereby, the vajra holding deities of the vajra-family accompanying Akṣobhya are white (165).



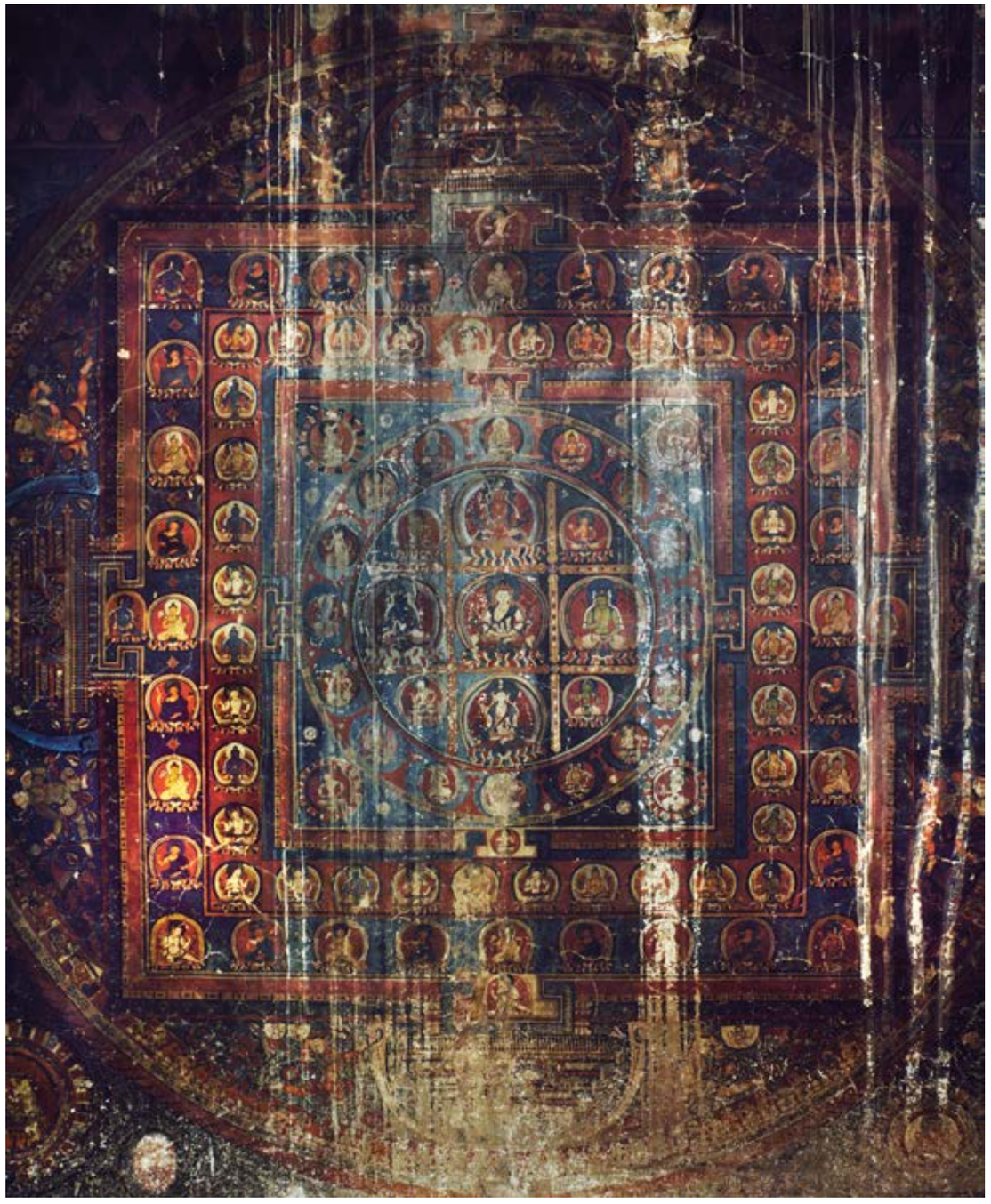


164 The composition of the clay sculptures and the complementary paintings in the niche. The walls to the side indicate the difference in floor level to the main hall.

165 Lower section of the left side wall with Buddha Akṣobhya and some of the painted secondary deities flanking him. Despite the obvious repairs, Akṣobhya preserves sections of the original textile design on his dress. CL 1998 (100,23), WHAV.

166 Upper section of the left side wall with Buddha Ratnasambhava. The Buddha is recognisable by his gesture and the horse vehicle projecting at the side of the lotus throne, while his colouring, white with orange shading, is peculiar to the Alchi Dukhang. This image demonstrates nicely how the painting on the wall complemented the sculptural composition, placing the Buddhas into a blue sky studded with flowers. CL 1998 (100,19), WHAV.





The Right Side Wall

Mirroring the left wall, the right (north) wall of the Dukhang also has two ceiling high mandalas (170). Continuing the circumambulation of the hall, the first mandala one meets after passing the niche is dedicated to Buddha Sarvavid Vairocana (167) and the second mandala to Buddha Śākyasiṃha (198). Both are forms of Buddha Vairocana, and the two mandalas are the main mandalas of a cycle of teachings that derive from the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*). The 'bad migrations' (*durgati*) referred to here are the three lower realms of rebirth in the cycle of *saṃsāra*, namely rebirth among animals, hungry ghosts and in the hells. Accordingly, the ritual of this cycle is used in funerary rites, which makes it the only Yoga Tantra cycle that is still widely practiced today.

The older version of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* originates from about the same time as the Vajradhātu cycle, the eighth century. Its main mandala, the Sarvavid mandala, also features a distinct set of the five esoteric Buddhas with its own colour scheme. Accordingly, the mandala originating from this tantra can be recognised by the colour-scheme of the five Buddhas in its centre, with the most diverging feature from the common set being that the southern Buddha (the one to the right of the main one) is blue, while the one in the east (bottom) is white.[126] At Alchi, this is the case for both mandalas on this wall.

The Tibetan Buddhist canon contains diverse versions of this tantra and quite a number of commentaries. There is thus a great variety in the minutiae of the iconography of mandalas related to this cycle, which will partially be referred to in the descriptions below. The fact that we have two main mandalas for this tantra alone is an expression of the divergences in the root tantras and their commentaries, and the Alchi Dukhang depictions represent a distinct synthesis.[127] As for the mandalas on the opposite wall, there is no direct canonical source for the iconographic details the mandalas display, but their iconography can be reconstructed almost in entirety.[128]

Either of the two main mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* can also be recognised by the depictions of the realms of rebirth surrounding them in the corners outside the fire circle. Their common arrangement is as follows: in the lower left corner are the hells, in the upper left corner the hungry ghosts, in the upper right corner the animals, and in the lower right corner is the human realm, the only one desirable. The latter corner may also show the gods (*deva*) and the demi-gods (*asura*) fighting for prominence, representing the two upper realms in the cycle of rebirth. In the Dukhang these depictions are found in the outer corners of the wall, while the area between the mandalas is dedicated to other, complementary topics (see below). Of the realms of rebirth, only the ones on the niche side are preserved. There in the lower left corner two partially repainted demons cook beings in a large pot, which stands for the hells (168), and in the upper left corner a lady dressed in local garbs feeds three emaciated beings, hungry ghosts (169). As these depictions frame both mandalas on this wall, they also indicate their common source and related purpose.

Both mandalas on this wall have suffered considerably from water intrusions, the effects of which have been mitigated by a historic restoration that only partially follow the original

167 The Sarvavid mandala has two palaces, the inner one with two circles and the outer one with two squares. Their assemblies are made up of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

- In the central circle divided into nine compartments: Sarvavid Vairocana surrounded by four Buddhas and four goddesses.
- In the circle surrounding the central one: the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas.
- In the corners of the inner palace: the four inner offering goddesses.
- In the gates of the inner palace: four peaceful gate-keepers.
- Along the sides of the inner square of the second palace: sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon and sixteen matchless Bodhisattvas alternating.
- In the corners of the inner square of the second palace: the four outer offering goddesses.
- Along the sides of the outer square of the second palace: sixteen hearers (*śrāvaka*) and twelve solitary Buddhas (*pratyekabuddha*).
- In the corners and gates of the outer square of the second palace: the eight wrathful ones.
- Flanking the gates of the mandala: the three continents of each direction.
- In the circle surrounding the palace: pan-Indian deities.



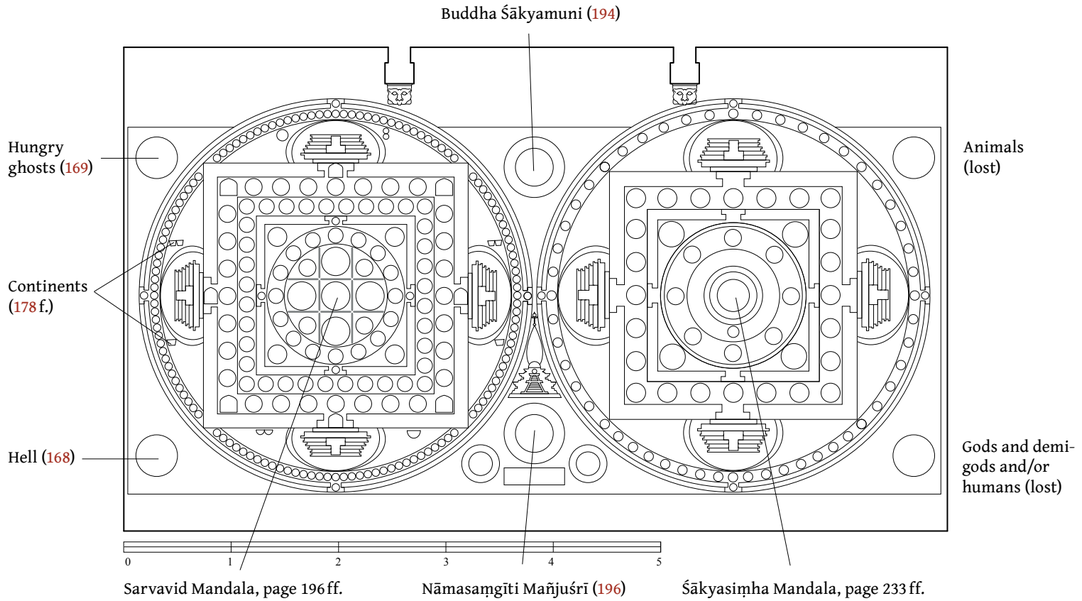
168 In the hell realm, in the lower left corner of the wall, two corpulent creatures cook a pulp of human bodies in a large pan. The faces of the masters of hell have been mutilated and restored and at least the left one was once animal-headed. Most likely this was a bull's head, to indicate that this is the realm of Yama, the god of death. The unusual spiky hair may then derive from the horns of the bull.

Diameter of the lotus 56 cm.

169 In this beautiful depiction, a richly bejewelled noble lady crouches on a throne and feeds three of the hungry ghosts in their realm. The latter are emaciated and both male and female.

These lotus medallion are in the upper and lower right corner of the Dukhang's right wall and two of the originally four representations of the realms of transmigration.





iconography. The description below focuses on the original appearance and attempts to reconstruct what is lacking.

Sarvavid Mandala

The Sarvavid mandala[129] on the niche side of the wall has two palaces, an inner one dominated by a sixteen petalled lotus the centre of which is divided into nine compartments and an outer palace with two squares distinguished by their background colour (167). In the following the deities of the mandala are discussed from the centre outwards. A full list of the deities based on the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala of the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamahāmaṇḍalasādhana*), ascribed to Ānandagarbha and translated in the late tenth century, is provided in an appendix (page 421 ff.).[130] As detailed below, this is the only canonical text that accounts for all deities found in this representation of the mandala.

There are thirty-three deities in the central palace, the primary goddesses at the level of the secondary Buddhas. The central Buddha is white and sits in meditation. He usually has four faces, one in each direction, symbolising his omniscience. This form of Vairocana is, thus, called all-knowing (*sarvavid*, tib. *künrik*), providing a convenient name for the mandala. In the Alchi Dukhang, the central and left areas of the central palace have been severely affected by a water intrusion and are partially repainted. Of the five Buddhas only the northern one preserves all original iconographic features (171). This is Vikasitakusuma, whose iconography is the same as that of Buddha Amoghasiddhi (172). This clarifies that in this variant



170 The right (north) wall of the Dukhang with the two main mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations*.

171 The central lotus circle of the Sarvavid mandala with many of its figures repainted during a restoration. Originally, Vairocana was probably four-faced, but the meditation gesture and the colour of the surrounding Buddhas conform to the standard iconography of this mandala.



172 The northern Buddha of the Sarvavid Vairocana mandala, Vikasita-kusuma, is green, performs the gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*), and has *garuḍa*, half bird and half man, as his vehicle. It is thus only the context that distinguishes him from Buddha Amoghasiddhi.



173 The goddess Tārā, represented in the northeastern direction of the mandala's central circle, holds the family attribute, the crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*), instead of the commonly described blue lily (*utpala*). Her iconography demonstrates that the Sarvavid mandala in the Alchi Dukhang assimilates iconographic features deriving from the Vajradhātu mandala, which contains the standard system of the five esoteric Buddhas.

of the mandala, originally all Buddhas—namely Sarvadurgatipariśodhanarāja in the east, Ratnaketu in the south, and Śākyamuni in the west besides Vikasitakusuma—were depicted with their vehicle and with distinctive gestures.[131]

An assimilation of the Sarvavid mandala to the Vajradhātu derived system of the five Buddhas and their families can also be observed with the goddesses in the intermediate directions. The goddess Pāṇḍarāvasinī in the northwestern corner holds a lotus (171), and Tārā in the northeastern corner of the mandala holds a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) as an attribute (173), which are the symbols of the respective Buddha's families.[132] The original iconography of the other two goddesses, Buddhalocanā and Māmakī, cannot be ascertained anymore.

The sixteen petals of the lotus surrounding the centre are occupied by the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas. They are arranged clockwise beginning with the white Vajrasattva on the northeastern petal. Their iconography is the same as in the Dharmadhātu mandala, but here only few are preserved undisturbed. The assembly of the central palace is concluded by the four inner offering goddesses in the corners and four peaceful gate-keepers.

The outer palace of the mandala contains two squares distinguished by their background colour and distinctive deities. Here the Dukhang representation stands out by including two sets of sixteen Bodhisattvas along the sides of the inner square. These are the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, which are of varied colour and hold distinctive attributes (174), and the sixteen matchless Bodhisattvas, which are represented in the colours and with the attributes of their direction, the eastern ones white and the southern ones blue in accordance with the colours of the Buddhas of their respective directions. The two groups of sixteen Bodhisattvas alternate, and thus both groups are to be read from the northwestern corner clockwise. In the corners of this square are further the four outer offering goddesses.

There are only three canonical sources which describe both groups, and these do not agree with each other in terms of the succession of the Bodhisattvas and their iconographic details. In the Dukhang depiction the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, begin with the Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, clearly identifiable by their attributes. This combination is only found in a single text, the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* mentioned above. This source is thus used to name the figures in the Alchi mandala, including the hearers (*śrāvaka*) and solitary Buddhas (*pratyekabuddha*) in the outer square of this palace, the names of which also vary.

Variations of the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon are integral part of all the main mandalas of the Yoga Tantra, and they stand for the Bodhisattvas permanent engagement for the benefit of all transmigrating beings. The second group of Bodhisattvas, through the power of their respective family, is matchless in mind, good qualities, speech and awakened activity.

The outer square of the second palace is occupied by monks and solitary Buddhas, another distinguishing feature of this particular mandala. The sixteen monks, in dark robes and holding a begging staff (*khakkhara*) and bowl (175, 176), alternate with the solitary Buddhas, who are dressed in bright patchwork robes and hold a fly-whisk and a crescent (177). We thus can read this mandala as a representation of the three vehicles (*yāna*) of Buddhism and the entire Buddhist teaching culminating in the esoteric path represented through the central palace.

The gates and corners of the second palace feature eight wrathful deities (177). Their identification remains tentative as neither of the two possible readings provides a fully satisfying



174 The Bodhisattva Gaganagañja, one of the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, holds a jewel casket in his right hand. He is among the northern Bodhisattvas of this group.



175 The monks are represented in a variety of postures and wear monastic robes. They hold a begging staff (*khakkhara*) and bowl. This is a detail of the first monk in the southern quarter, which is Maudgalyāyana, the disciple of Śākyamuni foremost in miraculous powers.



176 Right: Udāyin, the disciple foremost in generating householder's faith, is the second monk in the southern quarter.

177 Overleaf: The solitary Buddhas are represented with *uṣṇīṣa* and wearing a patchwork robe. They hold a fly-whisk and a crescent. This *pratyekabuddha* is at the southern gate and can be identified as Shérap Gyokchen 'rapid wisdom'. The southern gate is protected by a blue wrathful deity holding a club, probably *Trailokyavinaya (Jikten Sumdül), the 'tamer of the three worlds'.





178 The doors of the mandala are flanked by flying deities playing musical instruments. This deity, flanking the southern gate, plays a conch trumpet. He is looking towards the main continent of his direction, Jambudvīpa, our world, occupied by Brahmā and his spouse. Between them is one of the eight auspicious symbols spread around the mandala, the lotus, in this case topped by a jewel.



179 The deities flanking the gates wear fanciful light dress and their heads, hands and feet are represented white. This deity plays a traverse flute and flies towards the secondary continents of the south occupied by Brahmā's attendants. The auspicious symbol in this section is a banner.

Overleaf: Details of the faces of the two deities showing their fine shading.



180



181

match with the iconography of the individual deities.[133] Together 105 figures occupy the two palaces of the mandala.

The four gates of the palace are framed by the prongs of a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*), which have the colours of the corresponding directional Buddha. They are further flanked by wonderfully painted flying divinities playing musical instruments as offerings to the mandala assembly (178–181). Between these deities and the prongs are geometrical shapes representing the continents of the Buddhist cosmos, each of the shapes occupied by a different set of deities. When viewed from the mandala palace, the larger central continent is represented on the left of the gate while the two smaller outer continents are on the right. A deity couple occupies the large continent and attendants the smaller one. The white semi-circular continents in the east houses Indra and his attendants, the blue trapezoid continents in the south house Brahmā (178), the red circular continents in the west houses Maheśvara (Śiva), and the blue trapezoid continents in the north Viṣṇu (182). The addition of the continents locates the mandala palace on Mount Meru, the cosmic mountain, and demonstrates that in the case of this mandala the cosmos and the mandala converge.

Outside the gates, the Sarvavid mandala is also surrounded by an extensive array of pan-Indian deities that pay homage to the mandala. This depiction is similarly extensive as that of the Dharmadhātu mandala, but the arrangement is only partially comparable and there are considerable iconographic differences in the representation of individual deities. In part this is due to the different source used, as shown by the arrangement of the celestial bodies (*graha*) that also follows the verses of the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala*.[134] But the liturgy only provides iconographic details for some deities and their placement is not specified precisely. In the depictions, too, the individual iconography of the deities is often rudimentary, and when enough detail is depicted there are at times striking differences to the same deity on the opposite wall, which makes it even more difficult to propose an identification. Along with idiosyncrasies of the depictions, such as the preference for a sitting posture with the legs crossed at the ankles, these differences indicate that it is unlikely that the paintings on this wall were done by the same workshop as those opposite.

Again, the deities are arranged around the eight guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*) and I discuss them from the northeast corner clockwise. There Īśāna is surrounded by group of corpulent animal-headed goddesses, presumably a group of *yoginī*, the source and identity of which remains an enigma.[135] Indra at the east (bottom) gate and the deities surrounding him are not preserved. The first and only group that can be identified in the east are thus the last seven goddesses, the first part of the twenty-eight lunar mansions (*nakṣatra*), the two deities preceding them likely are the first two celestial bodies. Agni, the god of fire, guards the southeast and is again accompanied by expressive depictions of the eight great ascetics (*ṛṣi*; 184–196). Yama, the god of death, is seated on a water buffalo and guards the door in the south (183). He is surrounded by six corpulent goddesses which differ greatly from the seven mothers (*saptamātṛka*) represented in the Dharmadhātu mandala as retinue of Yama. Given the names mentioned in the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* the corpulent females are *rākṣasī*, a group of protective goddesses recorded in some of the earliest esoteric scriptures (187).[136]

As in the Dharmadhātu mandala, the celestial bodies and twenty-eight lunar mansions are distributed in groups around the mandala, two celestial bodies followed by seven of the lunar mansions (188, 189). The organisation of the celestial bodies differs from the Dharmadhātu



182 Viṣṇu is the main deity in the main continent of the north, Uttarakuru. He is green, has side heads of a lion and a boar, is four-armed and sits on a *garuḍa*. Only some of his attributes are recognizable in this tiny depiction, the ringed mace typical for the Kashmir region. The pair of fish in the medallion underneath is one of the eight auspicious symbols.



183 The southern gate of the mandala is topped by a wheel carried by a composite creature flanked by two deer. Just above the umbrella protected wheel the tips of the two prongs of the crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) underpinning the mandala palace meet. The prongs in the southern direction are blue, and thus take up the colour of the Buddha in this direction.

On the outside the mandala is surrounded by a wide range of pan-Indian deities paying homage to it. At the southern gate sits the blue, four-armed Yama with his spouse on a water buffalo. He is surrounded by corpulent protective goddesses (*rākṣasī*), one of them holding a curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and a severed head. Their association with Yama can be established through another early esoteric text.[136] The *rākṣasī* are only one of the enigmatic groups represented in the circumference of this mandala.



184 The eight great ascetics (*ṛṣi*) accompanying Agni, the god of fire, are rendered in an expressive manner. This ascetic directly references his overlord by offering fire to the deities of the mandala.

185 This frontal representation of an ascetic perfectly demonstrates the abstract rendering of the emaciated body using a combination of lines and shading. The ascetic holds an offering plate towards the mandala assembly.



mandala as do most of the iconographic details of the individual deities. Nairṛti, in the south-west corner (191), is accompanied by ten demons (*rākṣasa*) headed by the ten-headed Rāvaṇa (190). At the western gate is Varuṇa, the god of water, with his retinue of eight great snakes (*nāga*), and Vāyu, the wind god protecting the northwest corner is accompanied by the demi-gods (*asura*). In the northern quadrant they are followed by the eight *garuḍa*, here depicted in pairs of two side by side and the earth-goddess (192). The wealth deity Kubera, in the north, is the king of the *yakṣa* accompanying him (193). Between them and Īśāna, who protects the northeast, and following the two celestial bodies (*graha*) and seven lunar mansions of the



direction is a group of eight male deities the identity of which is as enigmatic (the lunar mansions and a part of this group can be seen on 19) as that of animal-headed goddesses surrounding Īśāna. Clearly further research is needed to understand these depictions more fully even if it may be impossible to identify them individually.

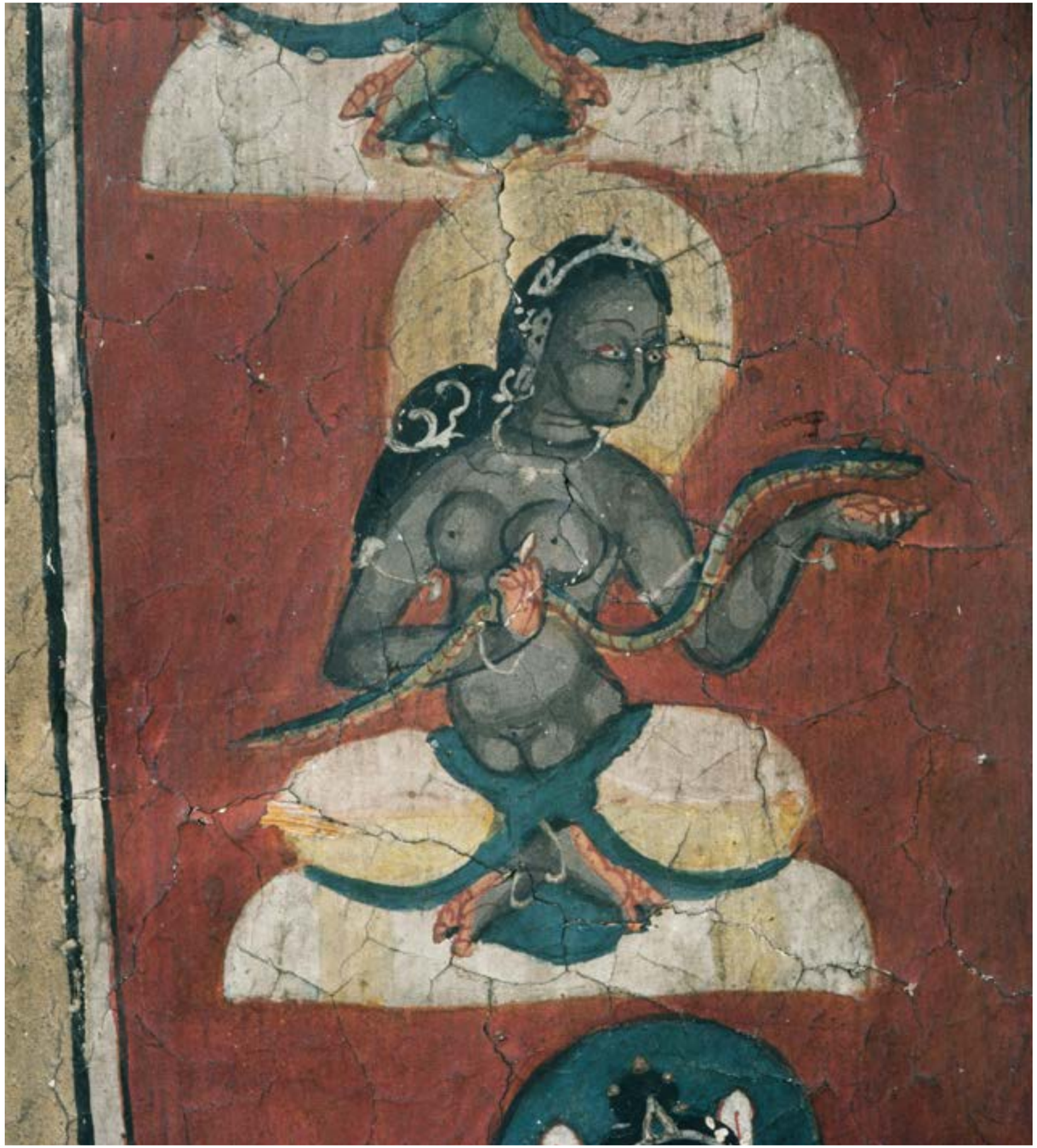
The mandala assembly is concluded by four gate-keepers who are of the colour of their direction but also reflect the guardians of their direction. Thus, the gate-keeper in the south is dark blue and holds a club, a typical attribute for Yama (183), and the guardian of the north is green but rides a horse and is accompanied by a goddess like Kubera (193). All together this mandala contains 255 deities, 142 of those in this outermost circle. The twelve deities occupying the continents are not counted among those.

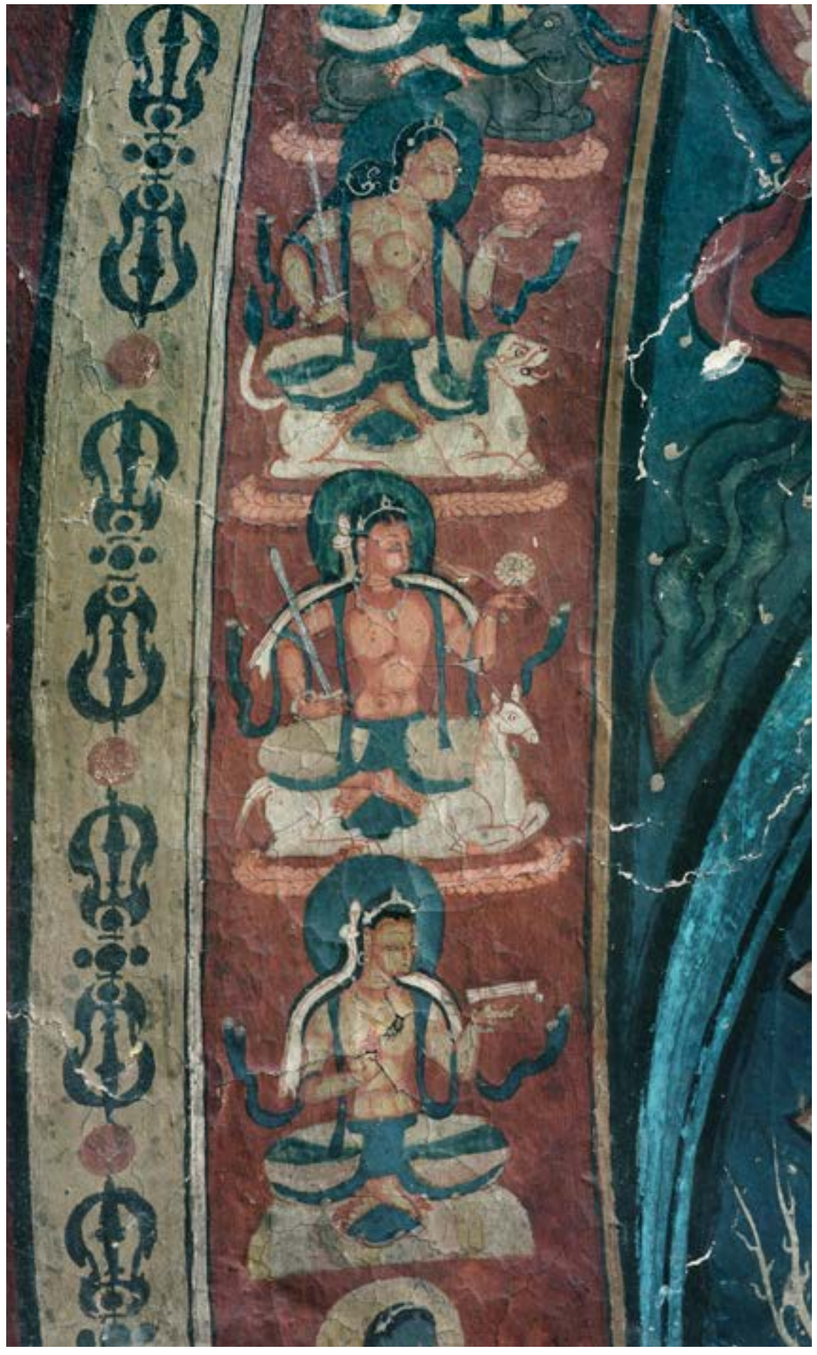
186 Unusually, this ascetic holds an axe besides the offering plate.

Generally, martial attributes and the combination of curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and severed head are often found among the figures in the outermost circle, occasionally alternating with lotus holding ones. The individual iconography of the deities thus appears to be improvised with some groups.

187 Read clockwise, this fascinating protective *rākṣasī* heads the retinue of Yama at the southern gate. Her corpulent body and her snake attribute indicate her function as protectress, in particular from snakebite.

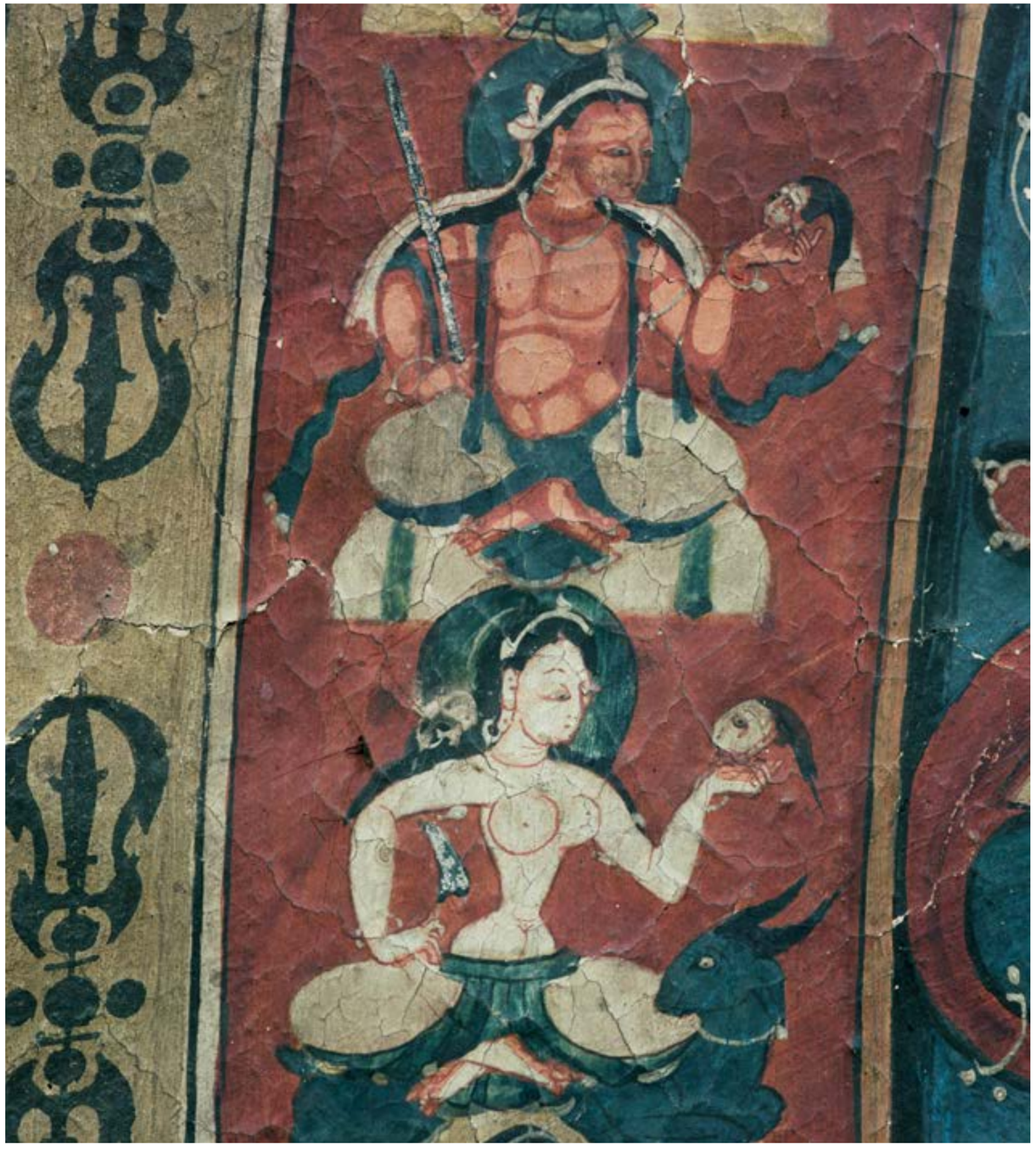
If we take the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* as source for her identity, she identifies as *Vajrakaumārī,[136] but her iconography deviates completely from that of another goddess known under the same name[137] or the Kaumārī among the seven mothers.





188 In each of the directions two of the eight celestial bodies are followed by seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions, the individual identification of the latter being dependent on their succession. Read from the bottom up here Bṛhaspati (Jupiter), holding a book, is followed by the red sun god Sūrya or Āditya, who sits on a horse and holds sword and lotus. The goddess with the same attributes but sitting on a lion is Maghā, which is the star Regulus.

189 The goddess on a goat and holding curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and severed head is the lunar mansion Viśākhā, conforming to the star Alpha Librae and the lunar mansion Libra. She ends the seven lunar mansions on the south side and is followed by the first of the eight demons (*rākṣasa*) who accompany Nairṛti in the southwestern corner.

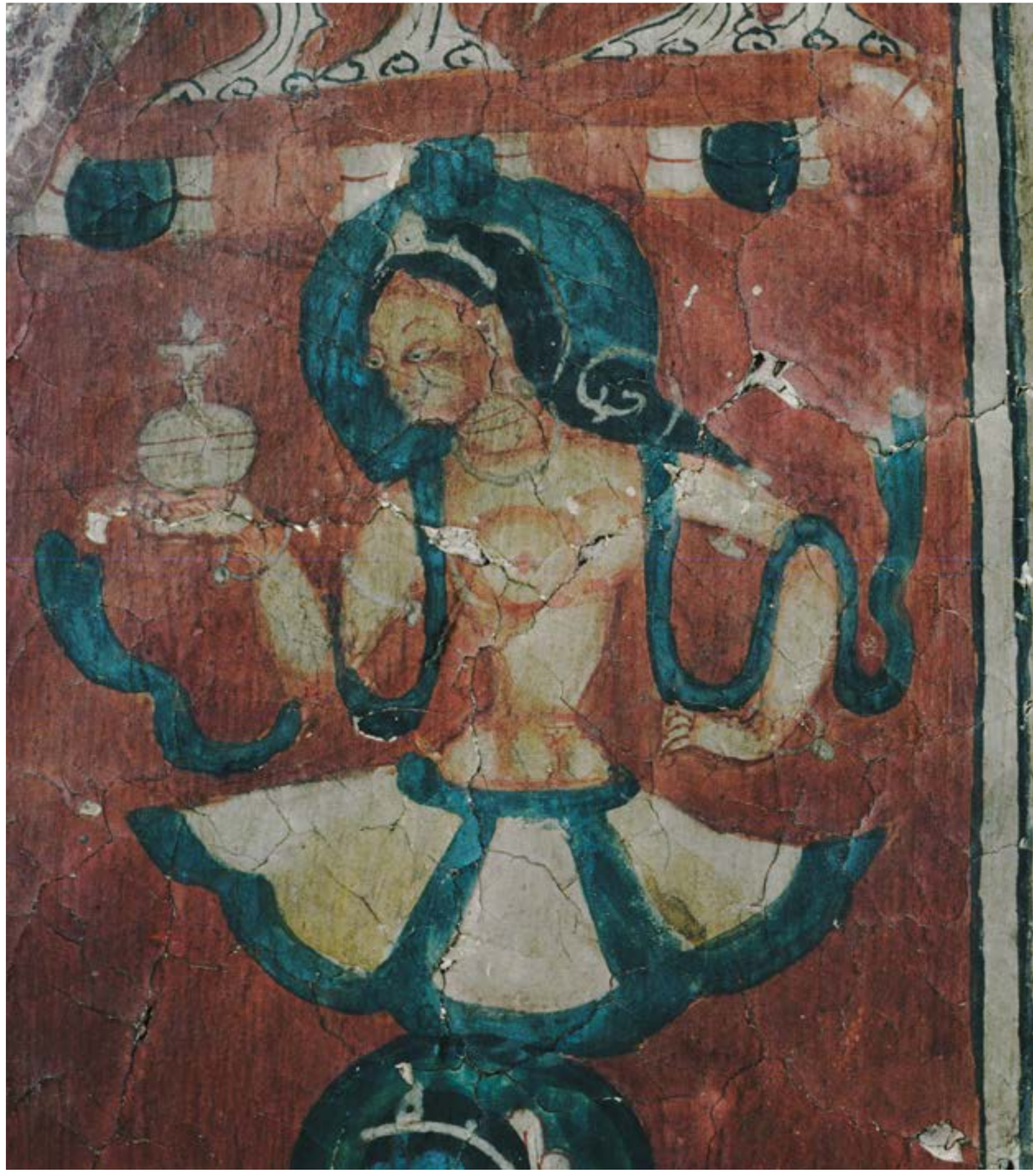


190 The demons (*rākṣasa*) in the southwest are headed by Rāvaṇa, who can easily be identified by his ten heads, the top one that of a donkey. Dressed and booted he sits in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on a corpse and holds sword and shield.



191 The southwest corner is protected by Nairṛti, the lord of the demons (*rākṣasa*). As all the guardians of the directions, he is four-armed and has a spouse in local dress on his lap. Dressed and booted all his hands hold weapons.

192 The earth-goddess Pṛthivī has only an upper body, her lower body being the earth. Here she is depicted with only a skirt underneath the hip and holding a vase. She is represented in the northern quadrant.





193 Kubera, the god of wealth, is four-armed and holds a club and a ringed mace in his left hands. The outer right hand is raised in a gesture of adoration (*vandanamudrā*) towards the centre of the mandala. Kubera guards the northern gate together with a gate-keeper who has the colour of the direction but otherwise reflects the *dikpāla*. As Kubera he sits on a horse and has a spouse in local dress on his lap.

In the case of the Mandalas on the right wall, the depictions in the far corners of the wall outside the fire circle of the mandalas are still part of their iconography. This area is used to represent those realms of rebirth that are to be avoided through the rituals of the different versions of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations*. I have discussed these depictions already at the beginning of this survey of the right wall, as they are the indicators of the wall's conceptual coherence. Thus, this section focuses on the topics represented between the two mandalas, and how they relate to the overall theme.

There are three themes in a vertical hierarchy. In the top centre is the Buddha at the moment of awakening (194), in the centre is a large stupa perfectly filling the narrow space between the outer circles of the two mandalas (19), and at the bottom is a triad of deities in medallions with worshippers between them. In each case a rather conventional iconography is subtly altered to provide an esoteric meaning.

The Buddha at the top is Śākyamuni at the moment of his awakening, as shown by the flesh colour of his strongly shaded body and the earth-touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*; 194). His left hand is resting on his lap with the fingers joined in a vajra-fist, providing an esoteric subtext. The depiction may thus be interpreted as a referencing Śākyamuni's esoteric awakening in Akaniṣṭha heaven.[138] Fittingly, the figure also floats within its halo, that also represents the central carpel of the lotus medallion. The depiction thus renders a time- and space-less form of Buddha Śākyamuni.

The stupa underneath, fully reproduced in figure 19, is remarkably conservative and follows a type characteristic for the northwestern areas of the Indian subcontinent. It has a base of three superimposed platforms, a rather small hemispherical dome, and a long spine of at least twelve umbrellas. A teaching Buddha is shown on top of the dome flanked by two-armed guardians dressed in long coats (195). This stupa type appears to go back to the Gandhāran region and has been attributed to as early as the fourth century on the basis of similar depictions on the Harwan tiles.[139] However, more pertinent to the Alchi depictions are those with guardians standing on the dome, the earliest datable representations of which are from the Palola Ṣāhi kingdom (late 6th to mid 8th centuries) in the region of present-day Gilgit, northern Pakistan, and Kashmir.[140] Its popularity is reflected in all monuments of the Alchi Group.[141] An even more conservative representation of this stupa type is found in the Sumtsek (576).

The Alchi Dukhang stupa is unusual insofar as the Buddha is represented above the dome and not in a niche in front of the dome. Instead, a niche topping the flight of stairs, that is one level underneath the dome, is housing a standing vajra (195). The stupa can thus be read as both a symbol for the Buddha's body, in continuation to Śākyamuni represented above it, and a symbol for the Buddha's teaching, in particular the esoteric vehicle (*vajrayāna*). The position of the vajra niche on top of the flight of stairs hints towards its function in ritual. While it is unclear how these spaces on top of the stairs were used in the past, there can be little doubt that they must have had ritual significance.

Of the bottom triad of deities only the somewhat higher central one is better preserved. It depicts a particular four-armed form of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī extremely popular in the Alchi monuments. Not only is one monument dedicated specifically to this form (see The



194 This extremely fine depiction of Buddha Śākyamuni is found in the top centre of the right wall between the two mandalas. His earth-touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) refers to his awakening at Bodhgayā, but the left hand resting on his lap forms a vajra-fist. The depiction is particularly noteworthy for its fine and pronounced shading and the intricate lines within the halo. That the Buddha's eyes focus on the nose ridge is a rather amusing detail.

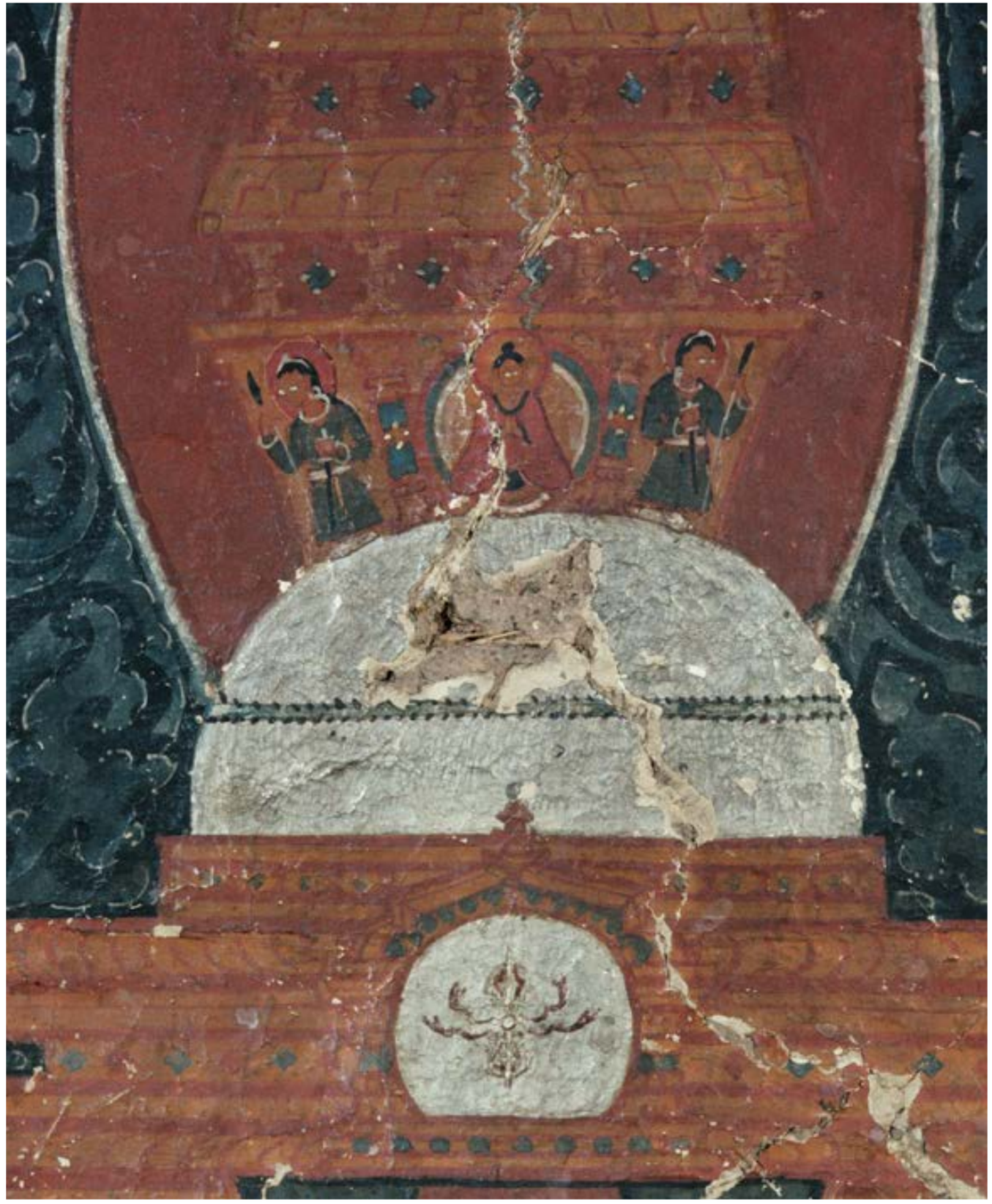
Jampel Lhakhang, page 293 ff.), but repeated representations of it are found throughout the site (see in particular the right wall of the Sumtsek). This form of Mañjuśrī has one head and four arms, the latter holding sword and book as well as arrow and bow (196). Its primary colour is orange, but he also occurs in the colour of all five esoteric Buddhas (629 ff.). In some of the main depictions of this form, Mañjuśrī is surrounded by four tiny depictions of the four outer offering goddesses (197),[61] a detail unique to Alchi.[142] This form of Mañjuśrī represents more than an ordinary wonder-working Bodhisattva, and specifically refers to a group of verses in the tenth section of the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*) dealing with situationally effective gnosis:

> Dressed in the mail of loving kindness, equipped with the armour of compassion, armed with a volume of *prajñā-pāramitā*, a sword, a bow and an arrow, he is victorious in the battle against defilements and unknowing.[143]

This form of Mañjuśrī is the ultimate manifestation of transcendent wisdom. In the absence of a consistent name for this Bodhisattva in the literature it is called Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī (Jampel Dzenjö, *'jam dpal mdzan brjod*) in this publication, a name that is also used for a three-headed manifestation of the same Bodhisattva, which is an alternative form deriving from the same source.[144] Neither of these other forms is depicted in the Alchi group of monuments.

In the Alchi Dukhang, Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī is flanked by two more Bodhisattvas, both of them poorly preserved. The left one is red and four-armed, and likely represents Maitreya.[145] More puzzling is the figure in the right medallion, which is white, three-faced and four-armed. Holding a sword in his upper right hand, performing the gesture of giving (*varada-mudrā*) with the lower right hand, and holding a mongoose bag in the lower left hand,[146] he combines attributes of Mañjuśrī and Jambhala. The worshippers between them are exclusively monks, one of them manipulating a ritual mandala with a vase in his hand, while the others contemplate or hold offerings.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the representation of the human realm which must have once occupied the lower right corner of this wall perfectly links to the representation of the Buddha's life around the corner, which represents the ultimate release of the cycle of rebirth. We may thus surmise that this relationship has been established on purpose.



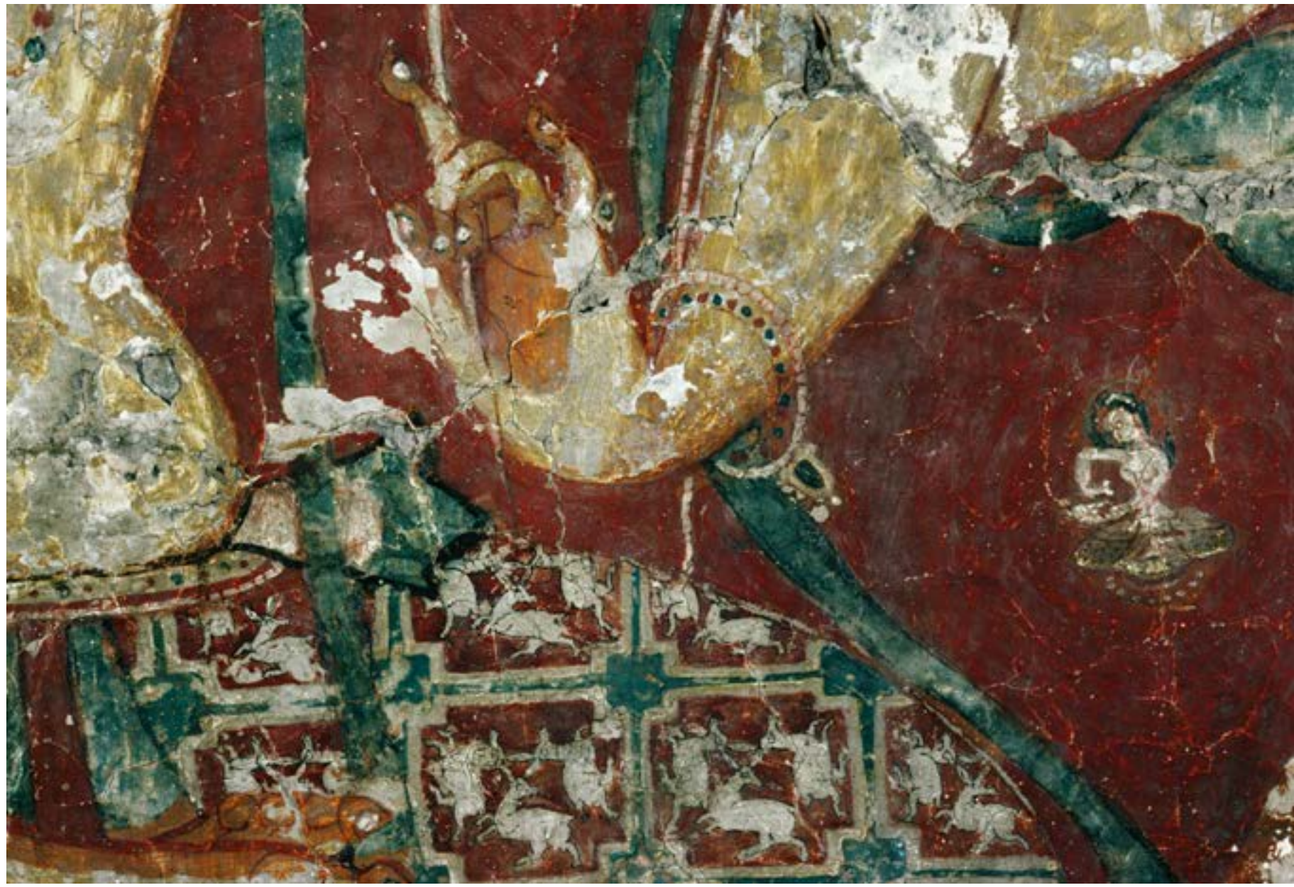
195 Detail of the large stupa painted between the two mandalas fully depicted in figure 19. On top of the dome, at the level of the *harmika*, a teaching Buddha is flanked by two guardians armed with spear and sword. Such guardians are typical for the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent and may be identified as guardians of the directions.

Further, the stair leading up the multi-stepped throne of the stupa culminates in a framed niche holding a vajra. Again, a rather conservative stupa shape is explicitly marked as esoteric.



196 Underneath the stupa is a triad of deities in medallions, the central one shown here considerably larger and thus clearly the main focus. It shows the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in a four-armed form deriving from the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*. The sword brandished above his head pairs with the blue lily carrying a book, and the arrow with the bow. In this publication this form is referred to as Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī.

197 Uniquely for the Alchi monuments each of the hands of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī is accompanied by a tiny goddess offering incense with a conch, and thus to be identified as Dhūpā. Mañjuśrī's dhoti features an intricate textile pattern with three deer (or are they meant to represent hares?) sharing their ears, these ones oddly running in opposite directions.





198 The Śākyasiṃha mandala has two palaces. Its assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

- In the eight spoked wheel topped by an eight-petalled lotus Śākyasiṃha surrounded by eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas. A unique feature is the four-armed Prajñāpāramitā on the eastern petal of the central lotus.
- In the corners of the inner palace: four inner offering goddesses.
- In the gates of the inner palace: four peaceful gate-keepers.
- Along the sides of the outer palace: sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon.
- In the corners of the outer palace: the four outer offering goddesses.
- At the gates of the outer palace: four peaceful gate-keepers.
- In the circle surrounding the palace: pan-Indian deities.

Śākyasiṃha Mandala

The second mandala on the right wall also comes from the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*) and can serve as its main mandala.[147] It centres on a form of Buddha Vairocana called Śākyasiṃha surrounded by eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas on an eight-spoked wheel (198).[148] Śākyasiṃha, the lion of the Śākya clan, wears monastic robes and is sometimes also directly referred to as Śākyamuni. Thus, this mandala is based on the notion that Śākyamuni can be understood as lower manifestation of Vairocana.

The Alchi depiction of this mandala has been severely damaged over time, in particular by a major water intrusion that affected the entrance side corner of this wall, where no original details are preserved. Water also affected the centre of the mandala, its damage being partially repainted in a historic restoration. As previously, the following account focuses on the original parts only.

In contrast to the other mandalas discussed so far, the depiction of the Śākyasiṃha mandala is quite consistent over time, but the Alchi depiction has a few peculiar elements. One of these is right in the centre, where the eastern petal of the central lotus blossom is occupied by a small four-armed depiction of the goddess of wisdom, Prajñāpāramitā. That this goddess is not an addition that happened during a restoration can be seen from the comparison to representations of the same mandala on the third floor of the Sumtsek, where Prajñāpāramitā is six-armed (see 768), and the Lhakhang Soma (293).[81] Thus, in a conception unique to Alchi, Prajñāpāramitā is added to the mandala assembly either as the consort of Śākyasiṃha or the originator of his wisdom.[149] The circle around the central lotus houses the eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas in their usual iconography, with those in the cardinal directions distinguished by their vehicles and following the same colour scheme observed with the Sarvavid mandala.[150]

In the second palace is another variant of the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, many of which have been repainted without considering their identity and iconography. Curiously, the two goddesses in the southwestern corners are almost identical, the outer one standing in for Puṣpā. As the flower attribute for Puṣpā can also be a flower garland, it is of little surprise that she likens Mālā, but artists usually depict them differently. With the addition of Prajñāpāramitā in the centre and the four peaceful gate-keepers repeated for both palaces of the mandala its core assembly consists of forty-two deities. Their names and the iconographic details for those that can be considered original are listed in an appendix (page 426 ff.).

The mandala palace is again surrounded by a circle of pan-Indian deities the number of which can only be estimated. Also their exact identity partially remains a mystery, as no directly related description could be found. The cardinal and intermediary directions are occupied by the guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*), such as Yama at the southern gate (201). Each of these is flanked by a pair of goddesses riding the same vehicle, the first of them mirroring the iconography of the male guardian while the other diverts in colour only (202). Between these directional triads are groups that relate to the guardians of the directions. Thus, around Agni in the southeast are ascetics (*ṛṣi*), around Nairṛti in the southwest are the demons (*rākṣasa*), and around Varuṇa in the west are snakes (*nāga*).[151] Additional deities, presumably standing for zenith and nadir, are represented in the eastern quarter, which is more densely populated. Mirroring the number of deities as it is preserved on the left half of the



199 Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati, one of the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, is located in the southern quarter and holds a staff.



200 Śūraṃgama, one of the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, in the southern quarter. He is white and holds a sword upright in front of his chest.

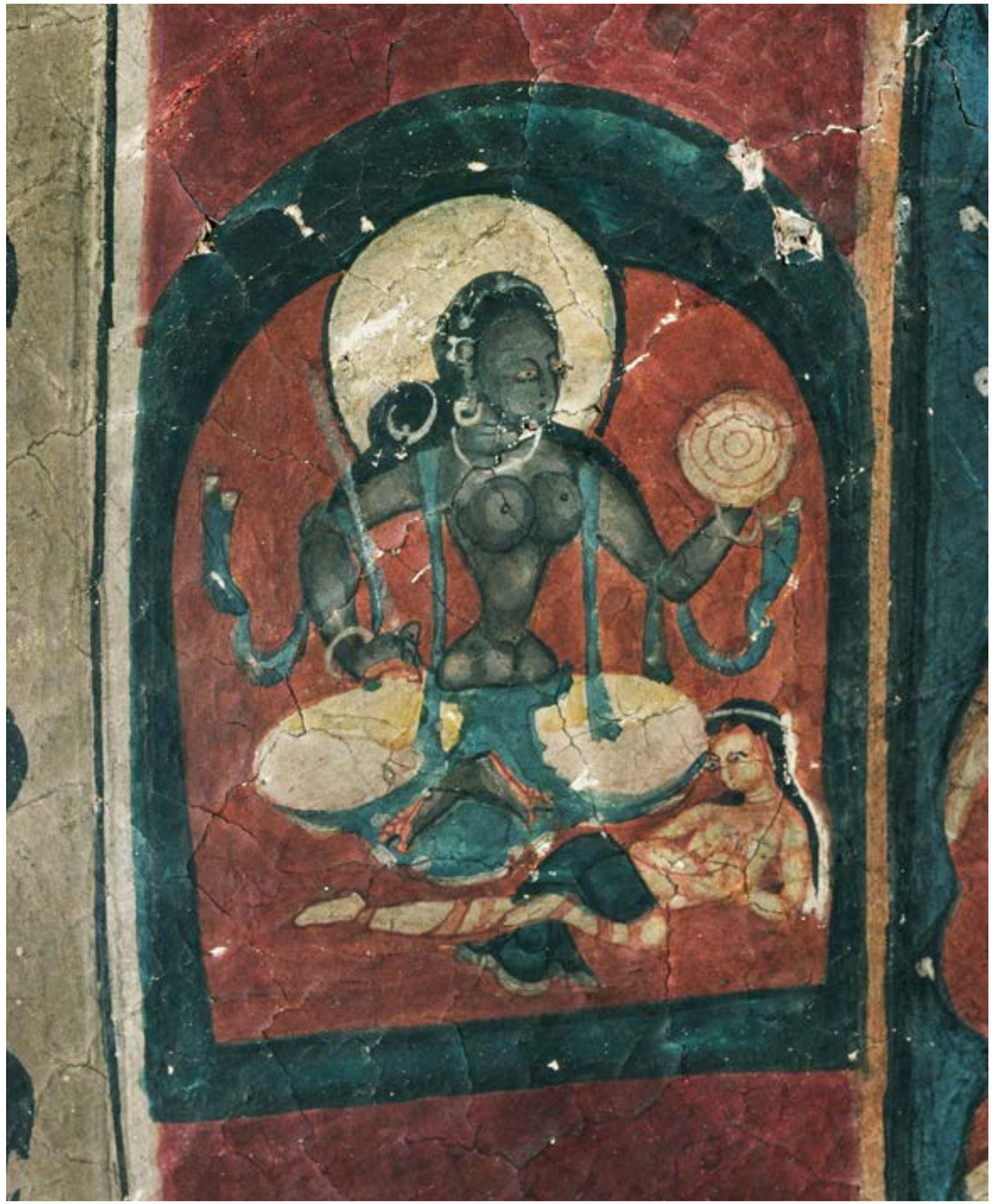
201 Overleaf: The southern direction is protected by Yama, who in this case also holds a pair of cymbals besides the head-topped staff in one of his four arms. In the gate sits Virūḍhaka, the guardian king of this direction, holding sword and shield.





202 Unusually, in this mandala each of the guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*) is accompanied by two females referencing its iconography. The red goddess is holding a head-staff and sits on a buffalo like Yama, and thus could represent his sister Yamī, but she is not named as such in the sources.

203 One of the goddesses accompanying Nairṛti in the southwestern corner mirrors his iconography exactly. She is black, holds sword and shield, and sits on a corpse that has his hands folded in worship. She may thus be identified as a *rākṣasī*.



mandala, there are fifty-two deities in this outer circle.[152] Together with the four gate-keepers of this outer ring, presumably the Four Great Kings (*caturmahārāja*; Gyelchenzhi, *rgyal chen bzhi*), the total number of deities in this mandala is ninety-eight.

As mentioned already, the same mandala is represented in the top storey of the Sumtsek (768) and in the Lhakhang Soma (293). In the Sumtsek, its depiction is surrounded by the realms of rebirth in the form of Avalokiteśvara engaging with the different beings there (884, 885). Thereby the depiction in the lower right corner rather alludes to the realms of the gods and demi-gods (*asura*) than the humans (885), possibly this was the case in the Dukhang as well. The presence of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā in all three versions of this mandala links her to funerary rites, and explains the depiction of a Prajñāpāramitā mandala on a wall of the outer chamber of the Tashi Gomang Chörten (see 234, 241–244). Within the Dukhang her representation also links the Śākyasiṃha mandala to the Prajñāpāramitā mandala around the corner on the entry wall (49).

This concludes the study of the well-rounded programme of the Dukhang. While the Vajradhātu mandala in the niche is the main topic of the temple, it is Nāmasaṃgīti version of the Vajradhātu mandala on the entry wall and the Dharmadhātu mandala immediately to the left of the niche that are more representative of the actual practice at the time. While these mandalas stand for spiritual progression, the mandalas on the right wall address and the Akṣobhyavyūha representation on the main wall are concerned with favourable rebirth. Together, the Dukhang murals also express the position of the Alchi community within a South Asian world seen through Buddhist glasses. The extensive pantheons of pan-Indian deities in the outer areas of the mandalas are particularly noteworthy. Partially steeped deeply in the past they offer fascinating glimpses on the transmission of Buddhism into the Himalayas, which still can be exploited much further than is being done in this publication.

As laid out in detail in the development chapter (page 345 ff.) chronologically the next addition to the Alchi Choskhor is the Sumtsek, to which volume 2 is dedicated. Given the little overlap between the Dukhang and the Sumtsek in terms of their protagonists, the two temples are separated by a generation. Immediately after building the Sumtsek, its founder Tsültrim Ö (*tshul 'khrims 'od*), also built the Palden Drepung Chörten, which is the focus of the following chapter. Together, these two monuments are crucial for dating the Alchi monuments.



204 The Assembly Hall from the perspective of the monk performing the daily morning ritual in which he uses the drum. The alter features diverse offering bowls and musical instruments. In the background are the two mandalas of the right side wall with a stupa inscribed into the space between them.

The Palden Drepung Chörten

205 Opposite page: Four-armed flying deity with flower and musical offerings. The moustached and booted god plays a kettle drum with a stick as well as a hand-drum (*ḍamaru*), while the fourth hand holds a bowl of blossoms aloft.

206 Detail of Padampa Sanggyé's throne frame featuring a peacock standing on the head of the lion-headed fable animal to the side of the *mahāsiddha*'s throne (see 221).

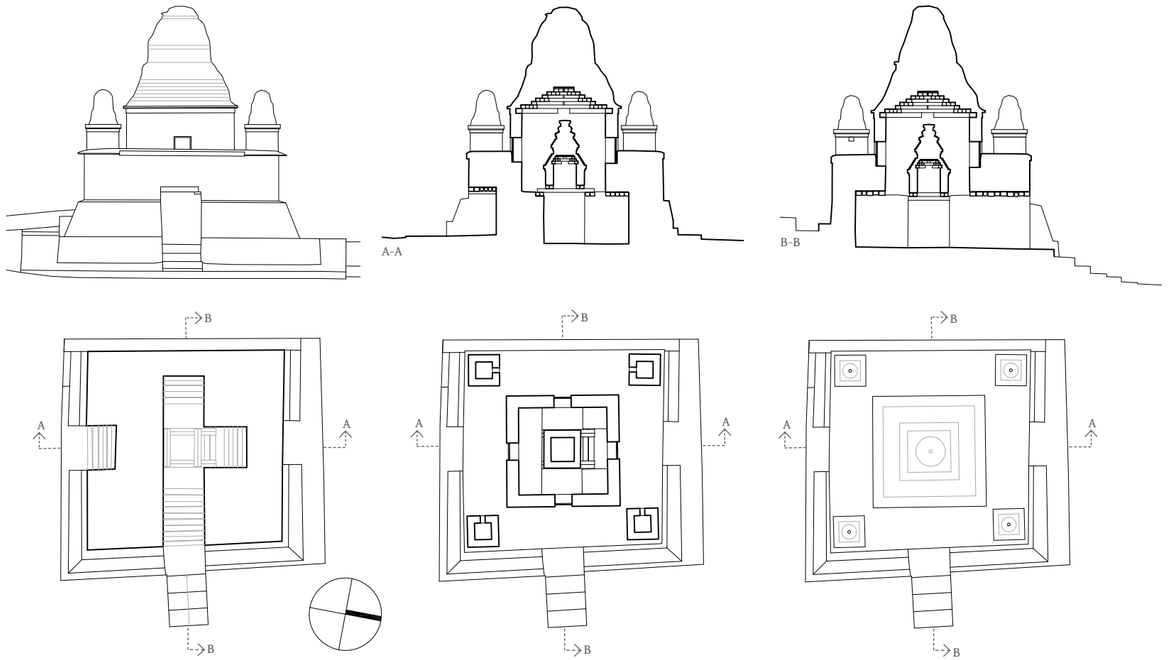
At a considerable distance from the other temples, the Palden Drepung Chörten (*dpal ldan 'bras spung mchod rten*)[153] stands near the western end of the monastic complex just to the side of where one enters it today (11, 330). Visitors rarely notice this substantial building, which is remarkable for the freshness of the paintings adorning its interior (205, 206).[154] The monument, including its important inscription, has been studied in detail in a pioneering article by Roger Goepper, in which he simply calls it the Great Stūpa.

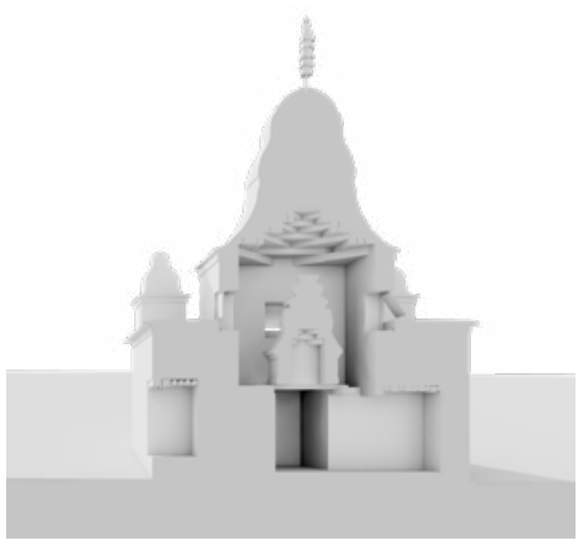
Originally, the building may well have been an integral part of the path leading to the main monuments further down, but the passages that once led through the building have been walled up on three sides, and today it can only be accessed from the east (209). Thus, at the time of its foundation it may have marked the entrance to the sacred area (*chos 'khor*).

The outward appearance of the Palden Drepung Chörten has changed considerably in the last decades.[155] Conceptually, the chörten is a two-storeyed building, the upper storey receding considerably from the lower and crowned by a large central tower. The shape of the central structure is replicated in the four small turrets standing in the four corners (207). Goepper called this 'an abridged *pañcāyatana* layout so familiar in early Kashmiri temple architecture condensed into one single building' (209).[156] As the central tower, the four turrets have a cubic body that is hollow. In the turrets these spaces been filled with votive clay mouldings (*tsha tsha*), which at least partly may go back to the construction period. Based on contemporaneous comparisons observed in other parts of Ladakh, in particular Stok, Shey and Nyarma, it is likely that also the hollow spaces of the corner structures of the lower building have *tsha tsha* in them. Buttresses added to the structure at a later stage reinforce the lower storey (207). Thus the building has little resemblance with the classical Tibetan chörten, but chörten of this type and a variety of other shapes were common around the period of its foundation and can be observed throughout Ladakh.

Unique for the Alchi group of monuments, the structure is hollow and contains an inner chörten. This chörten is on the level of the passages' ceiling and is held by a wooden framework placed on the corners of the three-metre-wide base walls. Above the inner chörten the interior of the building opens into a chapel-like space enshrining it (207). The walls of this space are covered with paintings of 'thousand' Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (211). This area has no access, and the projecting corners supporting the beams holding the inner chörten are used to deposit *tsha tsha* and discarded leaves of old books.

The wooden ceiling of this interior space is constructed in the so-called lantern form typical for square buildings in medieval architecture of Kashmir and early western Himalayan buildings. In this case, it consists of seven layers of beams, each being placed diagonally





207 Elevation, sections and floor plans of the Palden Drepung Chörten. The wall thickness of the bases of the upper cuboid is 0.43 metres, that of the inner chörten 0.31 metres. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

208 Left: Partial reconstruction of the Palden Drepung Chörten. The ceiling constructions of the inner chörten and the surrounding space are designed as lantern ceilings with four layers in the inner chörten and eight layers in the space above. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

209 Overleaf: The outward appearance of the Palden Drepung Chörten, this photograph dating to 1981, is distorted by recent and presumably also historic restorations. View of the northeastern corner of the chörten.



Architecture

The Palden Drepung Chörten stands on a pedestal to compensate for the sloping terrain. The entrance is on the lower east side, where steps lead to the height of the pedestal (209). The external dimensions of the cubic structure are 7.25 metres on the east side, 7.39 metres on the south side, 7.32 metres on the west side and 7.12 metres on the north side and the height is 3.50 metres. The base of the cuboid volume is reinforced with circumferential conical walls. Placed upon it is a smaller 1.50 metre high cubic structure with a side length of 4.10 metres bearing a bell-shaped top structure. The corners of the main cuboid are accentuated with four smaller cubes ending likewise in small bell-shaped tops. The total height of the chörten from the floor level of the passage to the top is 9 metres.

On the south side there is a niche in the middle of the cuboid which is 1.66 metres wide and 1.12 metres deep. The floor lies 0.40 metres above the inner floor level, the height of the niche is 1.60 metres. Obviously, this is a later walled passage to the interior.

Today the interior of the Palden Drepung Chörten can be entered by a 1.53-metre-wide corridor with a passage height of 1.90 metres. An equally high and wide side niche is disposed on the right side of the central axis.

Above the corridor in the centre of the structure a small inner chörten is arranged on a wooden beam construction. The interior of this inner chörten has a side length of 0.84 metres and is 1.30 metres high including the lantern ceiling. The height of its inner wall surfaces is 0.95 metres.

The space above the corridor, around the inner chörten, has a side length of 3.12 metres, the side walls are 2.90 metres high. Four small windows are located in the middle of the walls and light the space. Its top end is formed by a lantern ceiling, which is 5.77 metres high, measured from the corridor's floor level.

Holger Neuwirth & Carmen Auer

across the corners of the tier below, the resulting triangles being closed by boards. As a result we have eight 'overlapping squares, each of which cuts off the angles of the square below it, and thus reduces the extent of the square to be covered' (207).[157]

Inscription

Three of the heavy wooden beams placed at right angles across the central chapel to hold the inner chörten have inscriptions on them. Most important among these is a long text covering the eastern beam and continuing on the western beam.[158] The eastern beam is 14 cm high and 210 cm wide and covered with eight lines of writing, while the matching western beam has seven lines of text. This inscription, written in headed script (*u chen*), records the foundation of the chörten and is the focus of the following account. The texts on the northern beam differ in both format and script and are only partially preserved.[159]

The foundation inscription of the chörten, entitled *Pearl Garland Composition* (*tshig sbyor mu tig gi 'phreng ba*), is written by Tsültrim Ö (*tshul 'khrims 'od*) and accounts for the supports (*rten*) of body, speech and mind he had made until the founding of the chörten and possibly somewhat beyond it. Here I focus on these foundations, while the full translation of the text is provided in an appendix (page 406 ff.). As a support for the body, Tsültrim Ö erected the Sumtsek, named Pile of Jewels (*rin chen brtsegs pa*) in the inscription[160] and a funerary monument (*gdung khang*) for his teacher to repay his kindness.[161] Other monuments and the multiple representation of deities are mentioned here as well. As support of speech, he financed diverse versions of the *Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) corpus amongst other texts. And as support of the mind two chörten based on different models are mentioned, one is called Palden Drepung (Śrī-Dhānyakaṭaka) and is based on the Svayambhu-Śrī-Dhānyakaṭaka[162] 'in the middle of India', the other is called Bumter Tashi Gomang 'taking as a model the Tashi Gomang made by the incarnate jewel teacher'.[163]

While these statements have been recognised earlier, their full significance for the interpretation of the Alchi monuments has not. The teacher referred to here is none other than Drigungpa Jikten Gönpo (*'jig rten mgon po*; 1143–1217), the founder of Drigung monastery and the associated Kagyü school, who is specifically mentioned in the veneration verses at the beginning of the inscription.[164] This text, therefore, fully supports Goepper's reading of the Sumtsek inscriptions as contemporaneous with the monument and the dates they imply (766).[165] We may even infer from it that the Sumtsek contained the funerary monument with a relic of Drigungpa (*gdung khang*) which is listed in the same verse. Thus, the Sumtsek must have been built within a few years around the death of Drigungpa in 1217. Moreover, the tashi gomang chörten mentioned in the text references a famous monument Drigungpa had built for his teacher Pakmodrupa Dorjé Gyelpo (*phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po*; 1110–1170) in the first years of the thirteenth century.[166]

As laid out in some detail in the development chapter (Alchi Type Gateway Chörten, page 364 f.), the Palden Drepung Chörten mentioned in the inscription likely references the structure in the focus of this chapter, while the smaller chörten discussed in the following chapter may well be the Tashi Gomang chörten the inscription mentions. Even if this is not the case, these are more suitable names for these structures than those based on their relative size used earlier.

Murals in the Outer Building

The walls of the chapel-like upper floor, which enshrines the inner chörten, are completely covered with murals. The western wall has eighteen horizontal rows with twenty-four figures each of the blue Buddha Akṣobhya. Where the opening of the window interferes with their regular arrangement the figures are reduced to a smaller scale, and the spaces between them are filled with rhombic jewels. The Akṣobhya are continued on the two side walls to the north and the south, but stop abruptly one vertical row after the windows in these walls (349). Altogether there are about one thousand small images of Akṣobhya, identifiable by their blue colour and the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*).[167]

The remaining parts of the side walls and the eastern wall are covered by Bodhisattvas referencing the five Buddha families in sequential repetition (211). The following identification assumes that they derive from a Vajradhātu context. Accordingly, the white Bodhisattva holding a wheel (*cakra*) representing the Buddha family (*tathāgatakula*) can be identified as Samantabhadra. The blue Vajrasattva holds a vajra and represents the vajra family (*vajrakula*) of Buddha Akṣobhya, the yellow Vajraratna holds a jewel (*ratna*) and stands for the jewel family (*ratnakula*) of Buddha Ratnasambhava, the red Vajradharma holds a lotus and represents the lotus family (*padmakula*) of Buddha Amitābha, and the green Vajrakarma, holds a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) and presides over the action (*karma*) family (*karmakula*) of Amoghasiddhi.[168] The Bodhisattvas are arranged forming diagonal column across the wall (211).

This iconographic programme impregnates the chörten with an all-embracing cosmological character and invests it with a marked 'orientation', a direction from west to east, which is also accentuated by the paintings inside the inner stupa, as we will see below.

Lantern Ceiling

All surfaces of the so-called lantern ceiling of the outer structure are covered with paintings, partly figurative, partly ornamental (348). The vertical faces on the lower three levels continue the theme of the Bodhisattvas of the five Buddha families (210), while the figures on the upper levels form a mandala assembly. The architectural elements of that mandala are drawn on the horizontal surfaces of those levels, beginning with the gate superstructure on the fourth level when counted from the bottom.[169] In contrast, the three lower levels feature an impressive arrangement of textile patterns and flying offering deities (212–219).

At the edge of the lowest layer of triangles a frieze of marching white geese marks the top edge of the walls' decoration. The main motif on these triangles are pairs of flying, four-armed male deities clad in fanciful garments made of colourful and precious material (205, 212–215). The freely painted figures wear short jackets with sleeves of half-length. Most of the jackets are open and expose the bare chests. The deities are wrapped in short skirts and their feet are inserted into richly decorated boots of half-length. They are bedecked with jewellery and wear diadems. In their four hands they carry implements of honour and offerings. Their overall appearance resembles that of similar figures flanking mandala portals in the murals of the Dukhang, but there the figures are corpulent (179, 180). Flying deities of

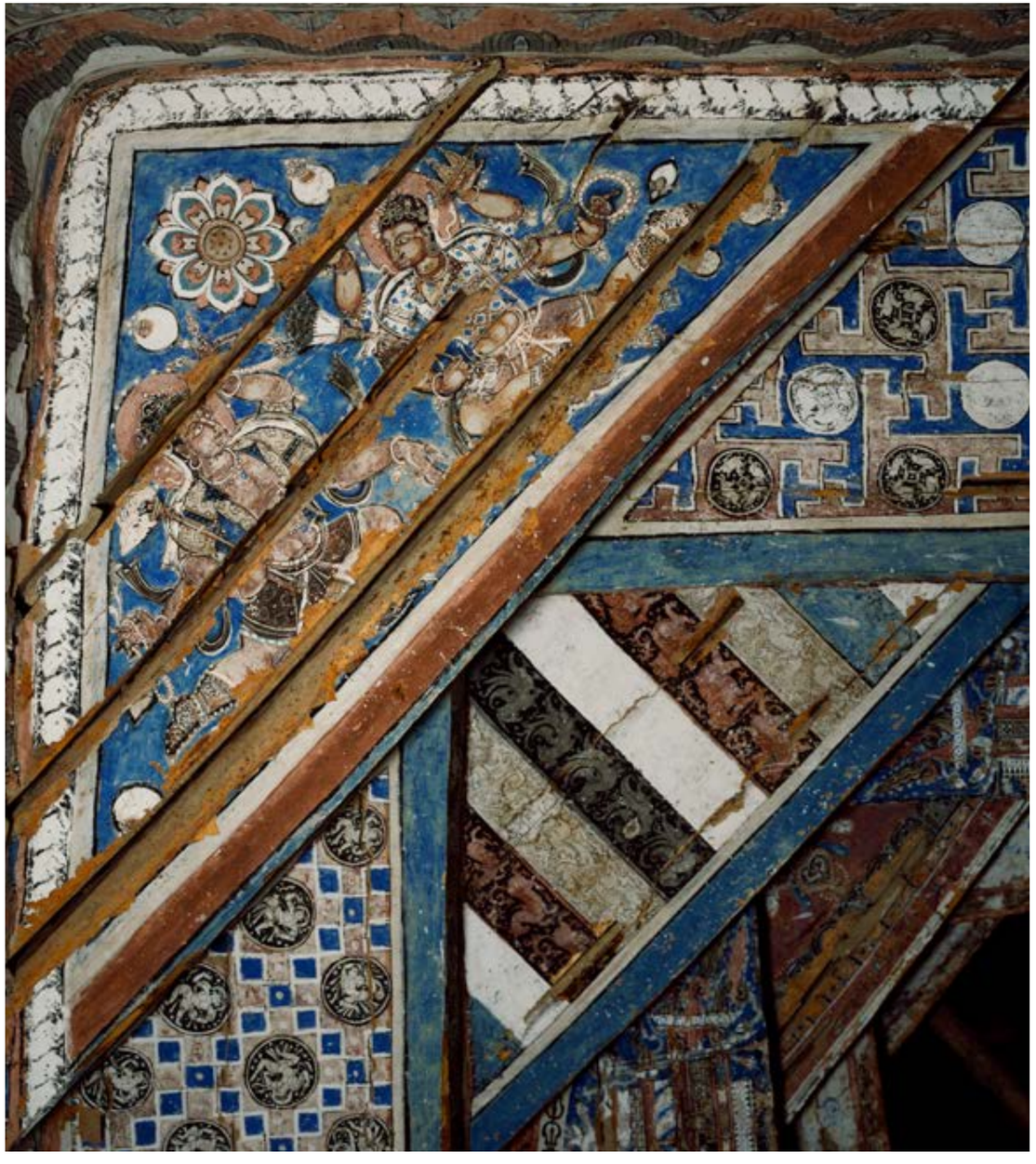


210 The lantern ceiling is actually conceived as a mandala, its gate represented on the fourth level from the bottom. The lower tiers are covered with the five Bodhisattvas representing the five Buddha families on their vertical faces and fanciful textile patterns on the horizontal surfaces. The lowermost corners are occupied by a pair of flying deities each (overleaf).

211 The east wall is covered with five Bodhisattvas representing the five Buddha families, the ones of the same iconography placed diagonally above each other. As is usual for the early Alchi monuments, the upper limit of the wall is delimited by a row of geese, a jewel band and a triple valance, and the lower edge by a lozenge band.

Overleaf: The ceiling of both the inner and outer chörten are of the lantern type, with increasingly smaller squares overlapping each other. The row of geese demarcates the upper edge of the wall. The outer triangles of the outer chörten have freely painted couples of flying deities, each holding different offerings. The following two levels are covered with textile patterns, more complex ones on the second level and differently coloured strips with animals on the third. On the fourth level are the doors of the mandala that occupies the centre of the ceiling.

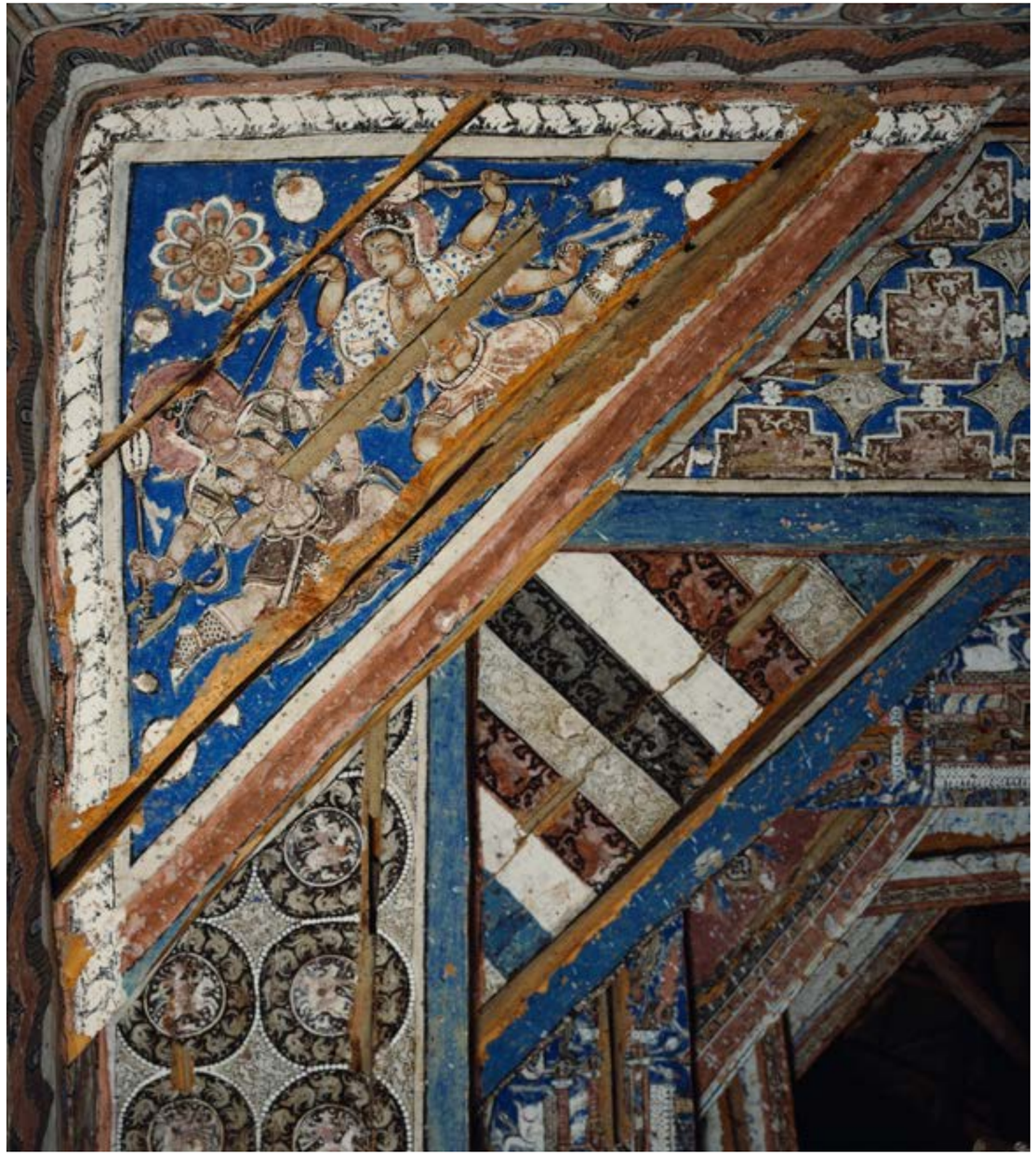




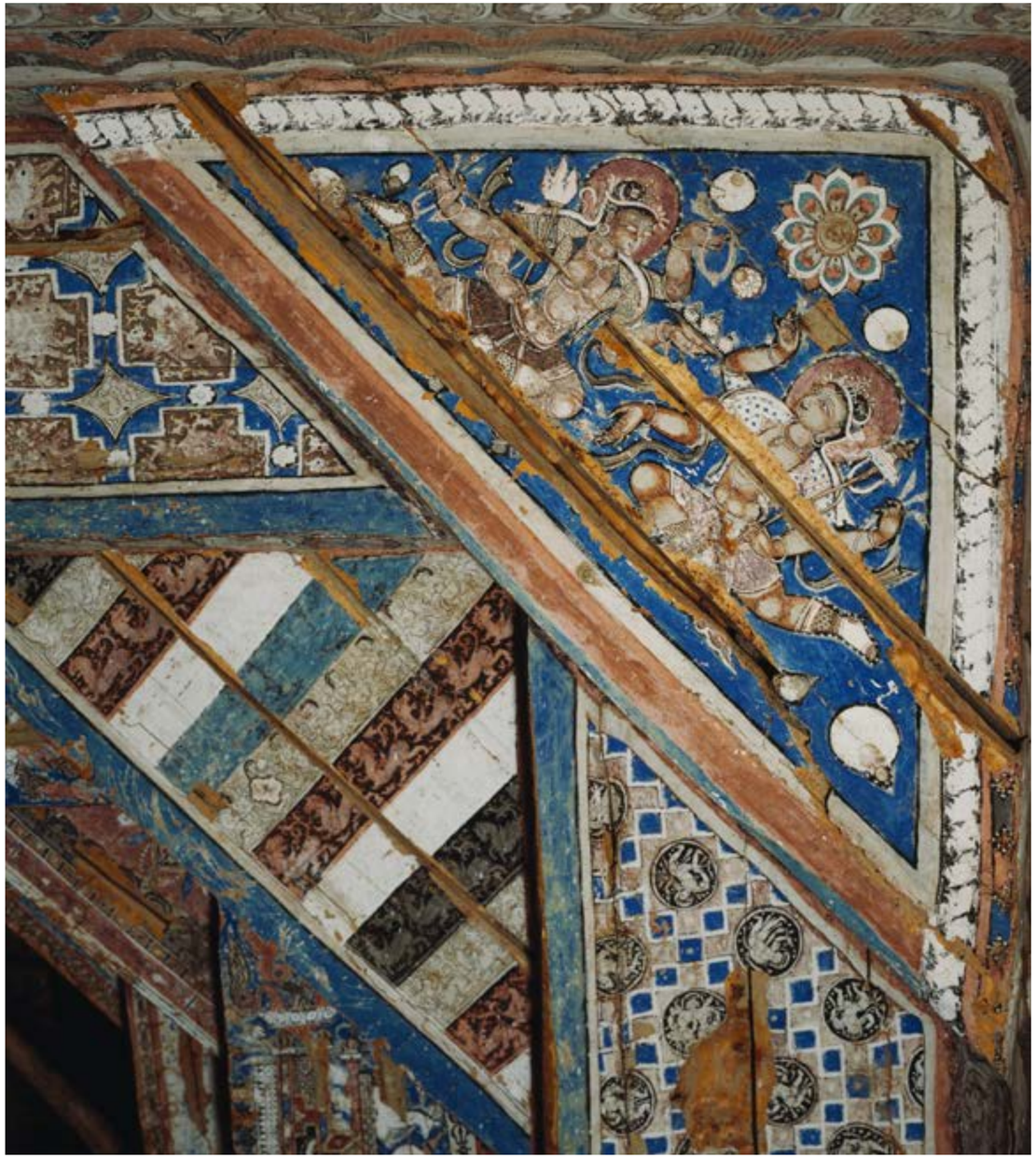
212 Southwest quarter of the lantern ceiling, the flying gods carrying garlands, offering cakes on a plate, fly-whisk and peacock feather fan.



213 Northwest quarter of the lantern ceiling, the flying gods carrying musical instruments, a peacock feather fan and a flag.



214 Northeast quarter of the lantern ceiling, the flying gods carrying fly-whisks and precious objects; and one is playing a trumpet.



215 Southeast quarter of the lantern ceilings, the flying gods carrying precious offerings and royal insignia, the umbrella and the fly-whisk.

this type in the corners of ceiling motifs are well known from temples in Kashmir, such as Pandrethan and Payar, and the surrounding regions.[170]

The trapezoid surfaces of the second level are decorated with four quite different, but equally magnificent textile designs that match those on the ceilings of the Sumtsek in sophistication (details 216–218). The third level continues with textile designs, but now the same basic design, friezes of running animals against differently coloured background, is used in all four corners (219). At the higher levels of the ceiling, now within the mandala, more muted textile patterns continue to be used.[171]

The mandala occupies the space from the fourth level upwards. The triangular horizontal surface of the fourth level contains the superstructure of the mandala gates as well as short sections of the outer vajra and fire circles, which are otherwise cut off by the next lower level of the ceiling (350). The fifth level then holds the walls of the mandala palace and a large vase with ribbons hanging from it (351). Along with textile patterns, a band of vajras and a band of wheels are found on the top two preserved layers, hinting towards the identity of the mandala represented through the deities.[172]

The centre of the mandala must have been occupied Mahāvairocana, whose symbol is the wheel, as the topmost preserved layer depicts the four mothers of the families surrounding Vairocana. These goddesses are flanked by frontally represented four-armed flying divinities with offerings. The row of wheels encircles this group, conforming to the main wall of the Dukhang niche (163) or the centre of its Trilokavijaya mandala (79). On the next level, inside the vajra band but outside the band of wheels, the four surrounding Buddhas are flanked by four Mahābodhisattvas each in their usual iconographic form. The eight offering goddesses on the next level are interspersed with the eight auspicious symbols (*aṣṭamaṅgala*) and the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*). Finally, the outermost level is occupied by the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, who are of the same colour and iconography as the main Bodhisattva of the respective direction. They flank the T-shaped mandala gates painted in the colour of the direction[173] and occupied by peaceful gate-keepers. Thus, the ceiling of this chörten forms a fifty-three-deity Vajradhātu mandala, complemented by auspicious symbols. The existence of the mandala inside the chörten conforms well with the notion that this structure is indeed the earliest preserved example for a Palden Drepung Chörten in the Tibetan cultural sphere.

Inner Chörten and Its Paintings

The inner chörten resting on the framework of beams is made of reddish clay and covered with thin whitewash (220).[174] Originally it was probably painted with bright colours as can still be observed in other Alchi chörten (229). The overall height of the inner chörten is about 260 cm, its width at the base 155 centimetre. Set on its wooden framework without any connection to the massive walls of the outer building, it seems to float in space (207). The walls of the chörten's throne, the lower cube of the structure, are decorated with eight columns in half-relief, the surfaces between them painted with pairs of the vehicle animals associated with the four surrounding Buddhas as can still be seen in the Tashi Gomang Chörten. As Akṣobhya's pair of elephants is represented in the east, this chörten is also dedicated to Buddha Vairocana (353).



216 Medallions of the textile pattern on the south side of the ceiling contain acrobats and dancers, the two in the central medallion sharing one head.

217 The textile represented on the west side of the ceiling has a *svastika* and contrasting medallions pattern. In this case the medallions are filled with four hares chasing each other, their shared ears forming a square in the centre. This motif is frequently found throughout the Alchi monuments, more commonly with three hares.[175]





218 On the north side ceiling panel pearl medallions have idealised hunting scenes with riders shooting arrows (Parthian shot) in a central circle surrounded by a row of birds, possibly geese.



219 On this detail of a textile pattern with horizontal strips of different colours winged horses with foliate tails prance along a dark backdrop below one featuring lion-bodied and monkey-faced fantasy creatures.



220 The inner chörten has a rather complex exterior, as it has three increasingly smaller superimposed layers of multi-cornered steps. The stairs in the cardinal directions of the lower two levels associate it with the descent from the gods type. Moulded blossoms attached to the architecture decorate its base and *harmika* levels. The chörten is painted white today, but originally certainly was rather colourful (see 229).

The chörten proper rising above this substructure is made up of a complex array of multi-cornered base layers, effectively tripling a regular chörten base. Each of the two lower bases has flights of stairs leading across the receding base layers, four layers for the lower part and three for the upper one. Both bases are further topped by layers of expansion forming the throne for the next superimposed base level. The small dome (*bum pa*) is placed on base of two layers without stairs, and is topped by a massive square *harmikā*, the umbrellas above it not preserved.

Entering the building through the now closed western door and looking up into the hollow interior of the inner chörten, one directly encounters the dark-skinned Indian *mahāsiddha* shown on its eastern wall (222). This *mahāsiddha* faces a Tibetan priest with white complexion on the opposite western wall (225). On the two sides walls are brown-skinned local monks, the one to the right middle-aged and clad in a robe of brownish patchwork (223), the one to the left white-haired wearing a white patched robe (224). There are no inscriptions giving their names and their identity was proposed on the basis of the assumed historical context.[176] The identifications presented here accord best to the local evidence and a more comprehensive understanding of the development of the public presentation of Tibetan Buddhism.[177]

The dark-brown *mahāsiddha* on the eastern wall certainly is the most important figure represented, since he is shown frontally (222). Formally identical representations of this *mahāsiddha* at the lower end of the central fold of Mañjuśrī's dress in the Sumtsek (650)[178] and inside the Tashi Gomang Chörten (248) clarify his appearance. He sits in a squatting attitude (*utkuṭāsana*, *tsog pu'i 'dug stangs*), his legs secured by the band of a yogin (S. *yogabandha*). He has long curly hair and staring, slightly squinting eyes. His body seems to be naked, no loincloth can be discerned, but a long cape of white fur is draped over his shoulders. In his right hand he holds a plant with three leaves, in his left a stick-like emblem, probably a flute. The *mahāsiddha* is most likely to be identified as Padampa Sanggyé (*pha dam pa sangs rgyas*), an Indian *mahāsiddha* active in Tibet who died in 1117. This identification has been proposed several times, but the function of his depiction at Alchi remained unresolved.[179] Reviewing inscribed *mahāsiddha* depictions of the same typology that have more recently come to light, it is clear that this *mahāsiddha* stands symbolically for the transmission of the highest esoteric teachings through Indian *mahāsiddha* to Tibet. He is depicted in this position in both Mañjuśrī's dress in the Sumtsek (637) referred to above and in the temple of Alchi Shangrong.[180] The latter and the representation of a very similar looking *mahāsiddha* in the Bardzong cave in Khartse valley, west Tibet, also offer identifying inscriptions that are fairly conclusive.[181] This more general interpretation of this depiction is also supported by the inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten, which does not specifically refer to this figure, but clearly includes Highest Yoga Tantra teachings not the subject of any of the early Alchi paintings.

The white-skinned Tibetan priest on the opposite wall sits cross-legged (*vajraparyaṅkāsana*), his hands forming the teaching gesture (*dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*; 225). His head is turned to the left in half profile and he is clad in typical central Tibetan monastic robes. His importance is accentuated by the rich throne. Locally identified as the famous translator of the eleventh century, Rinchen Zangpo, the new reading of the inscription clarifies that he must be Drigungpa, the founder of the Drigung Kagyü school.[182]

The two local monks with medium complexions on the southern and northern walls and represented in half profile look towards Drigungpa (226). Both sit in meditation and are

signified as scholars and practitioners of Esoteric Buddhism through their accoutrements. The middle-aged monk on the southern wall holds a chain of prayer beads (*akṣamālā*; 223). He wears a light vest decorated with a band of Indic looking pseudo script across the chest and a reddish brown patchwork robe (*kaṣāya*) with a star-like flower ornaments. The area around his face is considerably destroyed, and only the vestiges of a hat remain. Paraphernalia for ritual, among them vajra and bell and a mandala altar, are distributed within his mandorla, and a small adoring local monk kneels in front of him. The aged monk on the northern side with trimmed white hair and beard holds a tiny vajra. He wears only a white outer robe (*saṃghāṭī*) with *svastika* design (224). The begging bowl (*pātra*) and begging staff (*khakkhara*) among his ritual paraphernalia mark him as a renunciant.



221 The interior of the inner chörten with a naked black *mahāsiddha* represented on the east wall. He is the only figure shown frontally and thus has to be interpreted as the main figure among the four teachers represented on the interior walls of this chörten. However, the two teachers in local monastic dress face away from the *mahāsiddha* towards the fourth figure, indicating that his representation is symbolic.

The four level lantern ceiling has a large lotus blossom in the centre and its other levels are covered with textile patterns.

222 Opposite page: The naked *mahāsiddha* crouches with the knees supported by a striped yoga-band, he wears a white cape of fur and holds a twig and a flute (here lost). He is most likely to be identified as Padampa Sanggyé, an Indian *mahāsiddha* active in Tibet who died in 1117. As in the Sumtsek he symbolises the transmission of the *mahāsiddha* tradition and their teachings into Tibet.

While Drigungpa and the aged monk look towards each other, it is the younger monk that takes the more prominent position vis-a-vis Drigungpa and has a worshipper at his feet. It is thus tempting to identify him as Tsültrim Ö, the founder of the monument who also wrote its inscription. The aged monk could then be Kalden Shérap (*skal ldan shes rab*), who founded the Main Temple and who is also depicted at the head of the monastic assembly in the Dukhang (6, 74). Regardless of his identity, it is likely that one of the two oldest chörten in the complex was erected as his funerary monument.

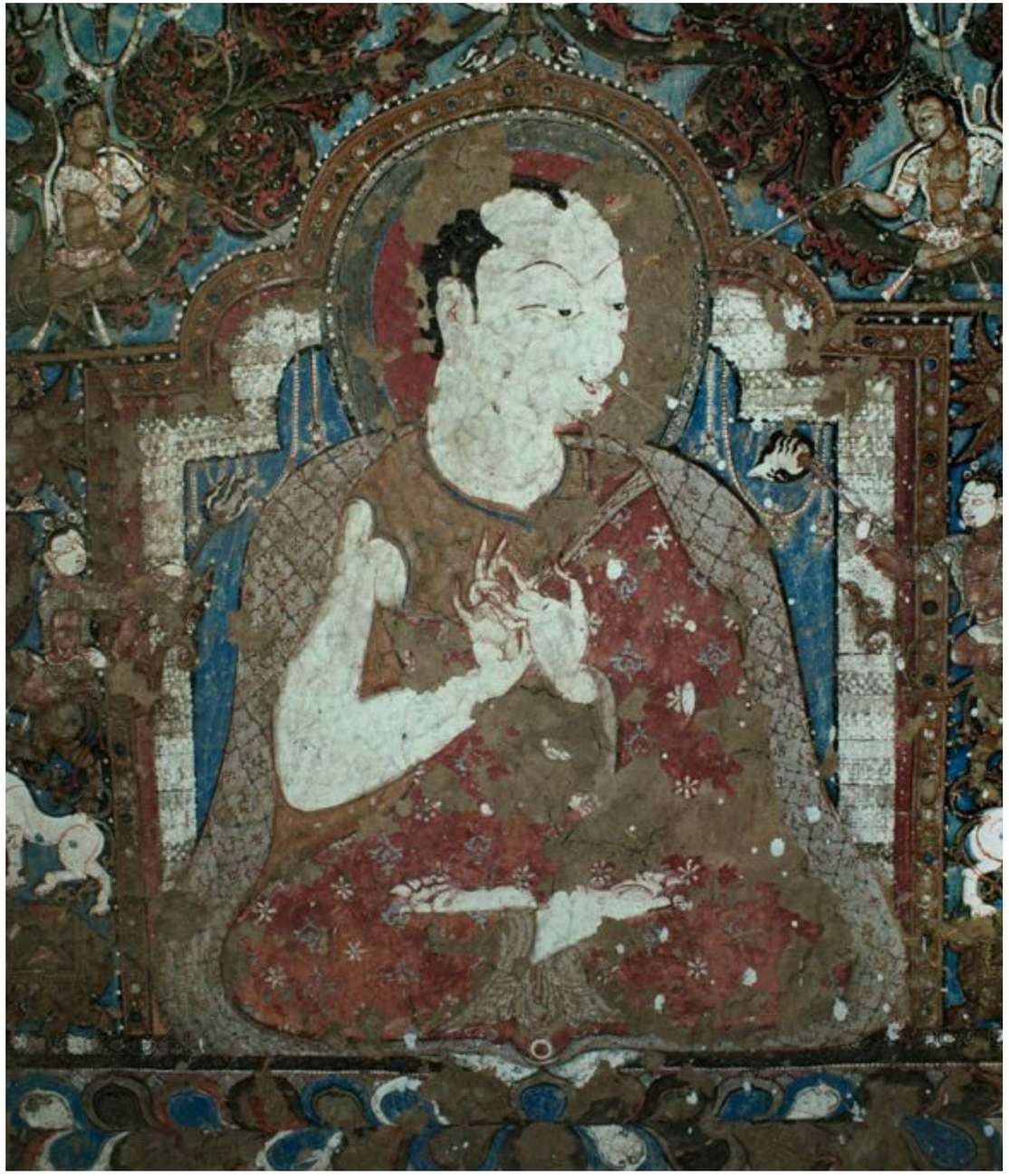




223 The middle-aged local monk on southern wall of inner chörten likely represents Tsültrim Ö, the founder of the Sumtsek and this monument.



224 The aged monk on the northern wall of inner chörten possibly represents Kalden Shérap, the founder of the Dukhang.



225 Drigungpa Jikten Gönpo (1143–1217), the founder of Drigung monastery and the associated Kagyü school, on the western wall of inner chörten. Both the white skin and the set-back hairline are early iconographic features of this teacher. He is shown teaching like a Buddha, but his head is turned sideways towards one of the monks flanking him. The elaborate throne also indicates his elevated status.

226 The interior of the inner chörten with the white-skinned Jikten Gönpo teaching the two local monks shown on the side walls. While he faces the aged monk, the younger one is in the more prominent position towards the central teacher.

The inner chörten also has a lantern ceiling made of wood, but in a simpler structure with only three steps and four layers. A large lotus occupies its centre, while the remaining surfaces are covered with textile designs (221).

Structurally the inner chörten is the sacred core of the building, and the outer chörten forms its shell protecting its sacred inner core. Iconographically, the inner chörten is dedicated to the teachers, and the outer chörten to the Buddhas, with specific reference to Vajradhātu mandala, Akṣobhya and the five Buddha families, embedding the teachers within it and emphasising the cosmic quality of the shell. The shape of the inner chörten references the descent from the gods type (lhabap chörten, *lha babs mchod rten*), a stupa type extremely popular in the Indian Northwest for several centuries,[183] and represented several times at Alchi in a different shape (see 19 & 576).[184] The outer chörten with its superimposed bases,



doors and windows in the four direction and subsidiary chörten at the corners makes this chörten stand out among the chörten of the same time. As the inscription suggests, its shape references the legendary Palden Drepung Chörten at which the Buddha taught the tantras, in particularly the Kālacakra Tantra, but which had a Yoga Tantra mandala in its interior. As such, the Palden Drepung Chörten at Alchi offers the most conclusive glimpse of the religious environment of the Alchi monuments, the decoration of which is steeped in tradition but also hints towards a new era in which the Highest Yoga Tantras come to the fore. This and the freshness of the murals preserved, with their enchanting details make the Palden Drepung Chörten a truly exceptional monument.



227 Detail of Tsültrim Ö's throne featuring a face of glory (*kīrtimukha*) flanked by the heads of sea-monsters (*makara*) in the centre of the throne's arch.



228 Detail of Drigungpa's throne, featuring a god riding a sea-monster (*makara*) backwards and blowing a long horn.

The Tashi Gomang Chörten



229 View of the outer chamber of the Tashi Gomang Chörten. In the foreground is the uppermost tier of the inner chörten with stylised stairs identifying it as referencing the descent from the gods type. The walls behind the chörten are painted with repeated representations of Buddha Akṣobhya, and the lantern ceiling is conceived as a mandala, the gates of which can be recognised to the side of the chörten's dome. The upper levels then alternate between textile motifs and Buddha representations. As in the Palden Drepung Chörten a level of differently coloured strips of running animals takes is prominently positioned.

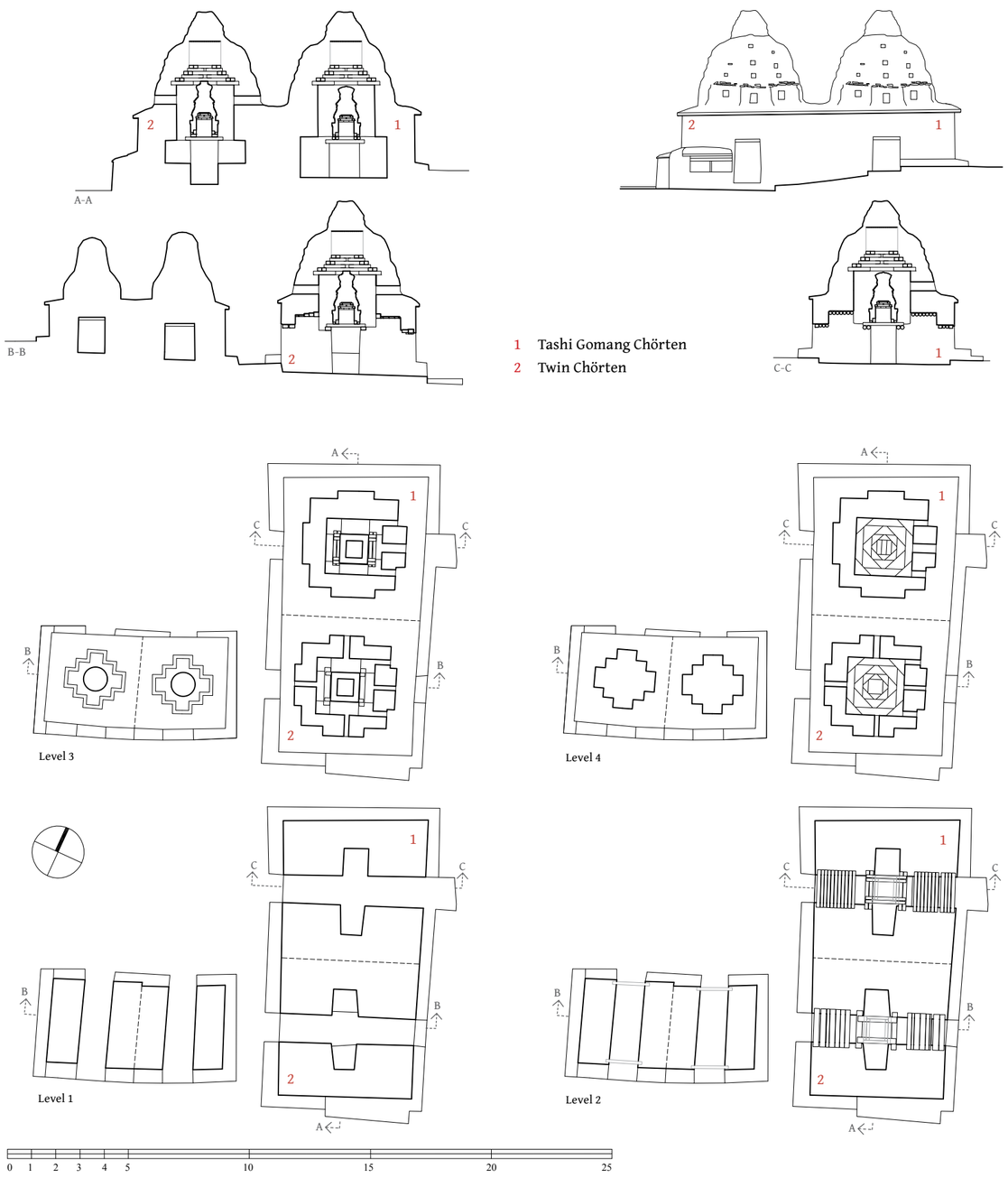
230 Detail of the flying Buddha in the bottom left corner of the Prajñāpāramitā mandala (241).

When the visitor approaches the Main Temple from the Palden Drepung Chörten, the shortest way would lead through the narrow and low gateway chörten that stands directly in front of the Sumtsek. Today, this chörten has a twin to its side, that has been added at a slightly later date (see Twin Chörten, page 391 ff.). While the Palden Drepung Chörten may have served as a gateway to the whole complex, the Tashi Gomang Chörten (*bkra shis sgo mang mchod rten*) leads to the core of the sacred area in front of the Main Temple.

In its outer appearance the Tashi Gomang Chörten differs considerably from the Palden Drepung Chörten as it lacks the wide base. In addition, its superstructure is better preserved and can clearly be identified as that of a chörten of many auspicious doors (tashi gomang, *bkra shis sgo mang*). Therefore, and because a chörten of that type is mentioned in the inscription of the Palden Drepung Chörten, this name is used for this monument that was previously just referred to as 'Small Stupa'.[185] In its interior the Tashi Gomang is essentially just a smaller version of the Palden Drepung Chörten, sharing most of its architectural and decorative features. Again there is an interior chörten in the middle of a larger painted chamber with an elaborate lantern ceiling (229). In two aspects, the interior decoration of this chörten is even more informative; the teachers depicted inside the inner chörten are accompanied by secondary figures and the two side walls of the outer chörten have rare mandalas in their centre, which reveal the mastership of the painters in their freely rendered figures. In addition, also some of the murals of the passage are preserved as well as the outside painting of the inner chörten (229).

The original outside appearance of the Tashi Gomang Chörten has considerably been obscured through many repairs.[186] It may be assumed that the chörten base with the passage was always a simple cube. On it stands a complex superstructure of the Tashi Gomang type (354). In this case, the ground plan of the chörten results from a square and a massive cross, with all four arms of equal length, projecting the sides of the square. On each of the sides are three windows, a motif repeated on all five levels of the chörten's base. The dome itself is small in relation to the massive base, and its exact shape cannot be reconstructed anymore. Likely it was similar in shape to the dome of the interior chörten (229).

Remarkably, the Tashi Gomang Chörten also partly preserves the decoration of the side aisles of the cross-shaped passage in its side wings. There, underneath a decorative double row of chörten of the descent from the gods type is a row of seated Buddhas interspersed with single chörten. Beneath them is a long inscription panel containing a canonical text that extols the immeasurable benefits of the circumambulation of a chörten, the *Caityapradakṣiṇagāthā* (233).[187]



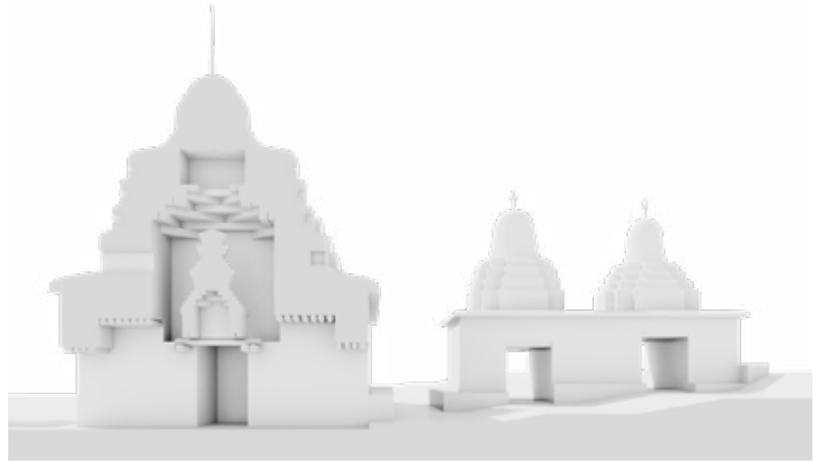
1 Tashi Gomang Chörten
2 Twin Chörten

231 Floor plans, sections and the northeast elevation of the ensemble of four gateway chörten, on the southeast side of the Sumtsek. The two largest structures are the Tashi Gomang Chörten (1) and the Twin Chörten (2).

The floor plans show the horizontal section in the area of the passageways (level 1), the beam layer above (level 2), the spatial placement of the inner chörten (level 3) and the ceiling construction (level 4). The sections show the height development and the ceiling construction in the interior of the rooms.

The heights of the passageways of the two larger chörten vary between 1.27 and 1.81 metres in the access area and rise to 2.00 and to 2.34 metres in the ceilings of the central areas. The ceiling height of the interior is 4.63 metres at the Tashi Gomang Chörten (1) and 4.91 metres at the Twin Chörten (2), measured from the floor level of the passage to the uppermost layer of the lantern ceiling. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020

232 Above: Spatial model of the Tashi Gomang Chörten cut along the passageway. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020



Architecture

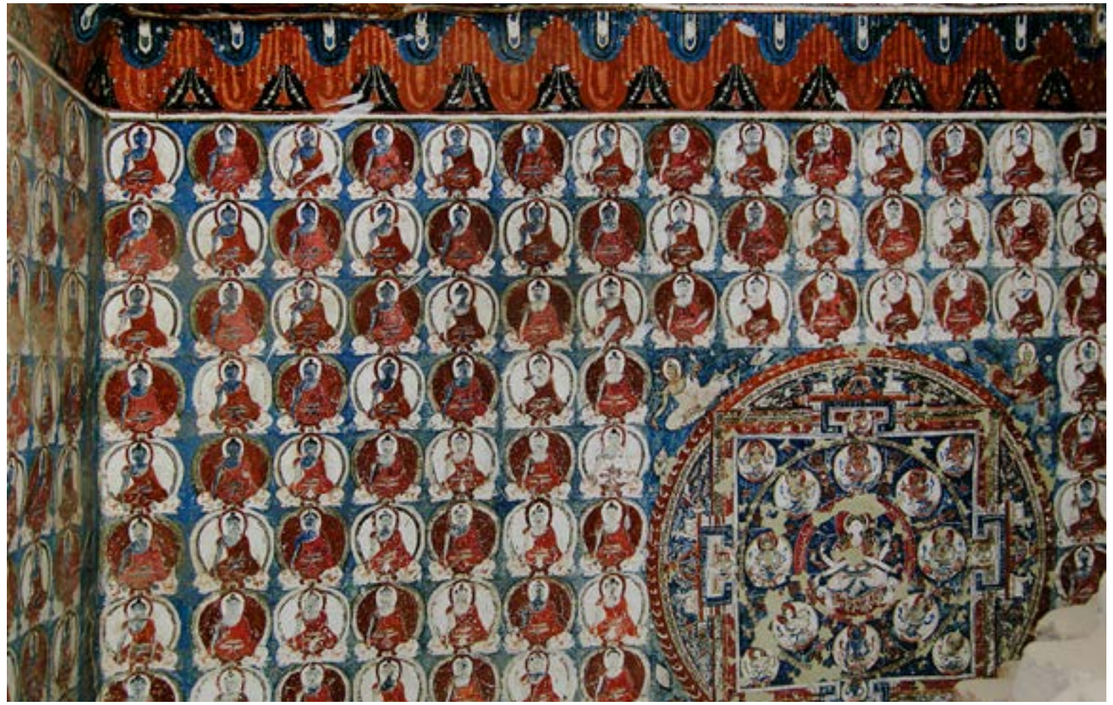
Today, the Tashi Gomang Chörten is part of an ensemble of gateway chörten consisting of two larger and two smaller buildings. They form two pairs of structures standing at right angles to each other.

The Tashi Gomang and the Twin Chörten are oriented from southwest to northeast, with a deviation of 13° from the geographical east. Their joined base has the external dimensions of 5.99 metres on the northwest side, 11.53 metres on the northeast, 5.50 metres in the southeast and 11.32 metres in the southwest. The external height from the ground level of the inner passage to the top of the structure is 6.83 metres for the Tashi Gomang Chörten and 7.10 metres for the Twin Chörten, which has a lower floor level due to the sloping terrain. The average width of the passage is 1.20 metres. Its height varies between 1.27 and 2.00 metres for the Tashi Gomang Chörten and between 1.45 and 2.34 metres for the Twin Chörten. In the middle of the passage, 1.05- to 1.19-metres-wide niches open on both sides. These niches are accessible in the Tashi Gomang Chörten, but filled with bases in the Twin Chörten. A beam construction supports an inner chörten. Entering the chörten the view opens into the interior of the small inner chörten and into the chamber surrounding it. The side walls of the inner chörten are all 0.70 metres wide, their height being 0.60 metres, with a wall thickness of 0.24 metres. The side walls of the square chamber around the inner chörten, are approximately the same width: 2.38 metres in the Tashi Gomang Chörten and 2.34 metres in the Twin Chörten. In both the wall is 2.15 metres high. The ceilings of the inner chörten and the surrounding chamber have lantern ceilings. Above each is another chamber with a side length of 1.30 metres and a height of 1.00 metres and covered with thin round wooden slates. Above is the bricked roof structure of the bell-shaped chörten dome.

The two smaller chörten are relatively simple in terms of construction. The external dimensions are 7.10 metres on the northwest side, 3.46 metres on the northeast and southwest side and 7.28 metres on the southeast side. The height from the ground floor level of the passage to the top is 5.26 metres above the northeastern passage and 4.75 metres above the southwestern passage. The passageways are between 1.16 and 1.26 metres wide and on average 1.38 metres high.

Holger Neuwirth & Carmen Auer





The Walls of the Outer Chörten

The walls of the outer chörten's chamber and the lowest level of the lantern ceiling are covered with approximately one thousand representations of Buddha Akṣobhya (360).[188] The interior decoration also clarifies that the chörten is directed towards the Main Temple area, as only on this side the three windows of the lowermost base level break through to the interior. This side also represents the nominal east of the chörten.

Entering from the direction of the Main Temple, the front or east side of the chörten, the central panel on the left or south wall has a unique thirteen-deity mandala of Amoghapāśa centred on a very rare form of Avalokiteśvara (236). Seated cross-legged, the Bodhisattva is white and has four arms, the main pair of which is joined in meditation on his lap. His other right hand is in the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) while the left curiously holds a vase in front of the body out of which a branch of a tree grows, which should actually be a lotus.[189]

In the centre of an eight-petalled lotus, Avalokiteśvara is surrounded by four four-armed, wrathful deities of varying gender and in opposite stances. Of these, only two can be identified with a good degree of certainty, namely Amoghapāśa on the eastern petal and the dark blue goddess Ekajaṭā occupying the western petal. The former can be identified on the basis of the comparison to the Sumtsek, while the latter holds a curved knife and a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in the main hands, and a sword and blue lily (*utpala*) in the other two, and is documented in this form in several *sādhana*. The remaining two deities in this circle, including the goddess in the north playing a *vīṇā* in two of her four hands (238), remain unidentified here as their iconography deviates too much from other depictions of the respective deities.[190] On these deities, see also the comparison of the two Alchi mandalas to other Amoghapāśa mandalas and textual sources page 774 ff. The petals in the intermediate direction are occupied by four vases topped by skull-cups (235), further re-enforcing the wrathful nature of the deities surrounding Avalokiteśvara. The mandala assembly is completed by the four outer offering goddesses, and the four gate-keepers common in Yoga Tantra mandalas (237; for their description see page 752 ff.).[191]

On the right wall, the wall towards the Sumtsek, is a seventeen-deity Prajñāpāramitā mandala (234). The central personification of the Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) and a class of Buddhist literature of the same name is six-armed and performs the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) with her main hands. Her identifying attribute, the book, may once have been present on the red lotus, while the upper left hand holds a triple jewel (242). Given the very similar forms of this goddess in the Dukhang (49) and the Sumtsek (773) and the assembly of this mandala, there is no doubt that this goddess is represented here.[192]

In this variant of her mandala, Prajñāpāramitā is surrounded by the four secondary Buddhas in their more subtle (*saṃbhogakāya*) form, Buddha Akṣobhya occupying the east. The colour of Akṣobhya's quarter, blue, is used as the background for the entire mandala, while

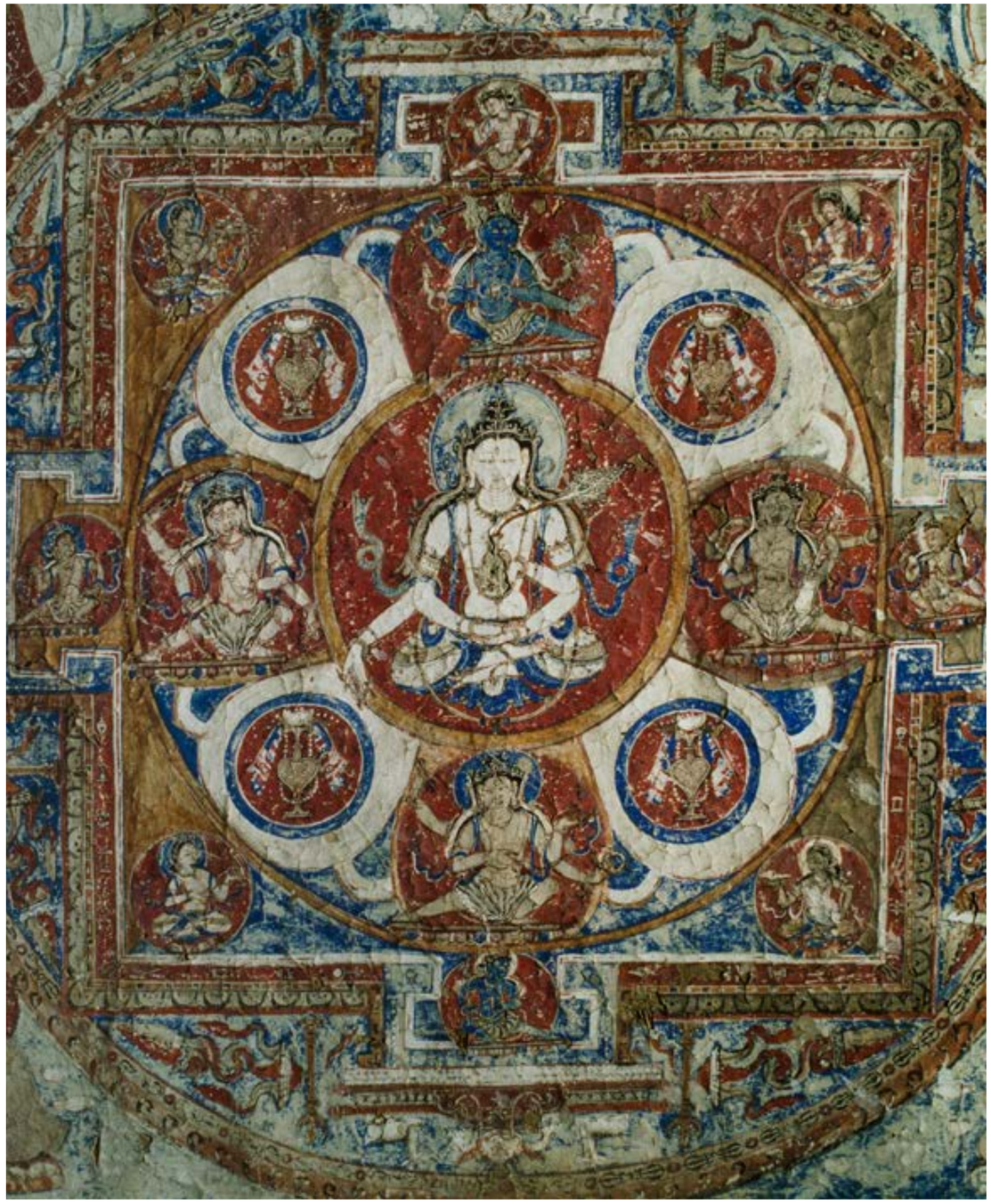
233 In the eastern wing of the passage the original murals are best preserved. They consist of a double row of stupas, a row of Buddhas and an inscription praising the effects of the circumambulation of a chörten. The lozenge band underneath the inscription is a common marker of the bottom end of the painted decoration. CL 2010 (6084)

234 The walls of the outer chörten are filled with repeated representations of Buddha Akṣobhya, and one mandala each is represented in the centre of the side walls. On the northwest wall represented here is a seventeen-deity Prajñāpāramitā mandala.
Height of the Buddha images *c.* 10 cm; the mandala thus approximately occupies a space of 60 x 60 cm. CL 2009 (2562)



235 The lotus petals in the intermediate directions are occupied vases of plenty, the foliage projecting on the sides, covered with scarves and supporting a skull-cup (*kapāla*). The string of beads surrounding it appears to lie on the vase. Each of the tiny vases further has a different motif on its body, in this case a pair of birds.

236 This highly idiosyncratic thirteen-deity mandala of Amoghapāśa is dedicated to an extremely rare representation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara that is also found in this form in the Sumtsek. The contrasting stances between the male and female deities of the main circle and the respective gate-keepers are one of many unique features of this mandala.





237 Gate-keeper Vajrapāśa in the south gate of the mandala.



238 The unidentified four-armed wrathful goddess in the north shoots an arrow and plays a *vīṇā* at the same time. In the gate is Vajra-ghaṇṭa the gate-keeper of the north.



239 The corners around the mandala are occupied by flying Buddhas.



240





241 The seventeen-deity Prajñāpāramitā mandala.

242 This white, six-armed Prajñāpāramitā curiously does not hold her characteristic attribute, the book, but a small book may have been represented on the red lotus blossom.



243 The offering goddess Puṣpā, in the southwestern quarter of the Prajñāpāramitā mandala, holds a plate full of flowers.



244 The northern gate of the mandala with Amoghasiddhi and the gate-keeper Vajraghaṇṭa, who in this case is represented bejewelled and peaceful. These two deities were green originally, but their colour has disappeared entirely.



245 A pair of four-armed flying deities with fly-whisks in the corners of the lowest level of the lantern ceiling. The row of white geese and the valance underneath them are the continuation of the uppermost section of the wall. CL 1998 (102,39)

everything once green has lost its colour (244). This form of the goddess is thus also identified with Buddha Vairocana, which explains her white colour. The central circle further features the four inner offering goddesses, the four outer ones represented in the corners just behind them (243). Further, the mandala is guarded by four gate-keepers, which are represented peacefully in this case (244).

The Ceiling of the Outer Chörten

As in the Palden Drepung Chörten, the outer chamber is topped by a lantern ceiling with flying deities, fanciful textile patterns and a mandala composition. Here only the bottom layer of the ceiling is not part of the mandala, and its triangles continue the geese and valance motifs from the walls and feature pairs of four-armed flying deities executed in a much simpler manner than those in the Palden Drepung Chörten (245). On the vertical side are repeated Buddha Akṣobhya, also continuing the topic from the walls underneath (246).

The mandala in the top part of the ceiling is a variant of the Śākyasiṃha mandala of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*) cycle. The number of deities in this mandala is higher than usual, as its assembly has been expanded by additional figures which rather have to be understood as space fillers than integrative part of the actual mandala assembly. The top central panel, which is lost today, was thus occupied by Śākyamuni in the form of the lion of the Śākya clan (Śākyasiṃha). In its standard form,

246 These five levels of the south-eastern area of the lantern ceiling demonstrates the distribution of the mandala deities. On the top level visible here, the goddess personifying the wheel among the eight auspicious symbols is flanked by the wheel and the queen, two of the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*). On the next level teaching Buddhas on lion thrones are flanked by the actual mandala deities, Vajroṣṇīṣa on an elephant throne of the east and Dhvajoṣṇīṣa holding a banner, who in the mandala occupies the southwest. On the third level from the top the eastern gate-keeper Vajrāṅkuśa is flanked by the offering goddesses Nṛtyā and Dhūpā. Half cut off by the shadow are four of the sixteen Bodhisattvas, on the left Amoghadarśin and Maitreya in the east succeeded by Gandhahastin and Śūraṃgama in the south. The nine Akṣobhya in the bottom row continue the theme of the walls underneath them. CL 2000 (59,27)



this mandala features eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas on the petals of the inner lotus, eight offering goddesses, sixteen Bodhisattvas and four gate-keepers.

Interestingly, the additional deities are added at the inner circles in the immediate surrounding of the main deity, and their main function appears to signify auspiciousness. On the second and third level surrounding Śākyasiṃha are eight goddesses, the four lower ones of them flanked by the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*; 246). Although damaged and difficult to document, the goddesses can be identified as personifications of the eight auspicious symbols, holding the respective symbol in their hands.[193] On the horizontal triangular surfaces are pairs of flying Buddhas on the upper level, and a textile pattern with dancing deities on the level underneath (229).

The fourth level from the top features deities of the mandala assembly in secondary positions, the central position taken by teaching Buddhas on lion thrones, which are also represented on the triangular surfaces. In addition, the Uṣṇīṣa Buddha of the cardinal direction is depicted to the right of the central figure and that of the following intermediary direction to the left, resulting in a rather confusing succession of the deities at this level when read clockwise (246).[194] The outer two levels of the mandala assembly are then straightforward. The assembly of the inner palace is concluded with peaceful gate-keepers flanked by two of the eight goddesses of offering on each side (246). On the level underneath, the outer palace assembly has each of the gate-keepers flanked by four of the sixteen Bodhisattvas. The trapezoid horizontal surface of this level shows the superstructure of the mandala gates and concludes it with a vajra and fire circle.[195]

The Inner Chörten

The inner chörten is equally complex as the one in the Palden Drepung Chörten. While less well preserved in terms of its overall shape through the loss of the *harmika* on top, this chörten preserves much of its original painting, from the animal vehicles at the base to the alternating colours of its many layers (229). The animals on the base confirm the conceptual orientation of the entire structure. Accordingly, the pair of *garuḍa* at the side of the Sumtsek marks this directions as representing the north (356). As the west side of the throne has lions this inner chörten is dedicated to Buddha Amitābha, who exchanged his western position with the central Vairocana.[196]

In its base, the inner chörten again has a small painted chamber measuring between 60 and 65 cm at its bottom edges.[197] The chamber is topped by a lantern ceiling with a central



247 Contrasting colours are used for the lantern ceiling of the inner chörten chamber. Black crosses with lion riders are depicted in the corners of the third level from the top. CL 1998 (104,02), WHAV

248 The eastern panel again features the crouching *mahāsiddha* Padampa Sanggyé holding a twig and a flute. He is surrounded by five teaching Buddhas. Underneath a group of local priests, three on each side, performing ritual offerings. CL 2010 (5892)

249 Overleaf: Although sharing the same blue background with the *mahāsiddha* Padampa Sanggyé and represented in a similar composition, the local monks are directed towards Drigungpa. The aged monk on the south side is dressed in white robes and flanked by two local monks wearing hats. It thus is not clear if he is supposed to be the same person as the one in this position in the Palden Drepung Chörten. CL 2010 (digitally merged)

lotus blossom on the central panel and textile patterns on its other levels (357). Its most remarkable motif are the divine riders on fable animals within black crosses (247).

Thematically the paintings of the inner chörten mirror those of the Palden Drepung Chörten, but this time each of the four teachers is surrounded by additional figures (248 ff.). The individual features of the teachers receive much less attention. Although placed against a continues blue background the compositions here are formally much more rigorous than in the earlier monuments, but stylistically and iconographically the figures are consistent with the other early paintings. Sadly, splashes of whitewash and damages to the lower figures obscure some of the details of these panels.





250



251

The formal rigour becomes particularly apparent with the representation of Drigungpa on the north wall, the composition of which directly relates to contemporaneous central Tibetan scroll paintings of the Drigung school (252).[198] In this composition, the central teacher is flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas, white Avalokiteśvara and orange Mañjuśrī. Above them are Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara and Green Tārā, both seated. In the upper row is a teaching lineage—rather unusual in some of its details—that is flanked by two Buddhas, Amitābha on the left, and a blue Buddha, probably referencing the Medicine Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, on the right.[199] The teaching lineage then commences with the portrayal of Vajrasattva, instead of the standard depiction of Vajradhara, and the two siddhas, Tilopa and Nāropa.[200] The following four teachers in the lineage do not conform to any known depiction, as two of the additional teachers are shown as great adepts (*mahāsiddha*), distinguished by their naked bodies which are only covered by a cape.[201]

The central composition is flanked by two rows of *mahāsiddha*, four on the left side and five on the right. The *mahāsiddha* in the upper left corner, Nāgārjuna depicted as the left figure of a triad with Śākyamuni in the centre and Atiśa to his right, links this group securely to more canonical Drigung representations.[202]

Seven protective deities occupy the bottom row. In spite of their unusual representation, a comparison with other examples of Drigung school paintings, most notably an inscribed drawing with footprints in the Rubin Museum of Art,[202] allows for their identification. The four-armed Mahākāla in the bottom left corner is followed by the wealth deity Jambhala, and the protectors Aparajita, Yamāntaka, Guhyapati Vajrapāṇi, and Acala, who tramples on Gaṇeśa, the personification of obstacles. The last deity is Rematī in her aspect as head of demons.

Thus, the representation of Drigungpa in the Tashi Gomang Chörten shows a much greater familiarity with the way such depictions are composed and executed in contemporaneous central Tibet, but a close analysis of all its elements reveals that this familiarity does not extend beyond the main elements. At first glance, the Tashi Gomang Chörten painting depicts a central Tibetan topic in an unusual style, but the divergence of elements that are canonical in other Drigung works not only indicates that here the painters were not familiar with all aspects of the subject matter to be depicted, but also that it stands at the very beginning of this canonisation.

Overall the iconographic programme of the Tashi Gomang Chörten is clearly commemorative and concerned with the rebirth of the entombed. The Śākyasiṃha mandala on its ceiling directly goes back to the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* and in both the Dukhang and the Sumtsek is connected to Prajñāpāramitā, who also presides the mandala on the north side of the chörten. The Amoghapāśa mandala on the south side is used in a commemorative context. Together they stand for the avoidance of the lower realms of rebirth, while the repeated depictions of Buddha Akṣobhya evoke his paradise Abhirati as an ideal locale for the next life. The chörten thus was probably dedicated to Tsültrim Ö himself or an eminent monk in his environment, the representation of Drigungpa referencing the adherence to this teacher.

Previous page: The aged monk on the north side wears a patchwork robe and is surrounded by the five esoteric Buddhas in monastic robes. This composition and the ritual performed underneath him may well indicate that he has already passed away, and that the chörten is dedicated to him. CL 2010 (digitally merged).

252 In this chörten, Drigungpa is surrounded with deities as they typically occur on central Tibetan scroll paintings (*thang ka*) of the Drigung school. That all elements of this depiction have their idiosyncrasies indicates the early date of this representation. The impression of an enclosed composition is furthered by the separation of this panel from the side ones featuring the two local monks. CL 2010 (6074).





253 Both the central four fold images of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in different colours and the radiating ceiling beams are unique features of the Jampel Lhakhang. This view also shows some of the original wooden elements of the lantern ceiling that once covered the square above the images. The red Mañjuśrī faces the back wall of the temple, which is also dedicated to Mañjuśrī.

254 Detail of a medallion on one of the ceiling panels showing a hunter shooting an arrow backwards. The depiction can be taken as representative of the sketchy but accomplished paintings on the ceiling.

The Jampel Lhakhang

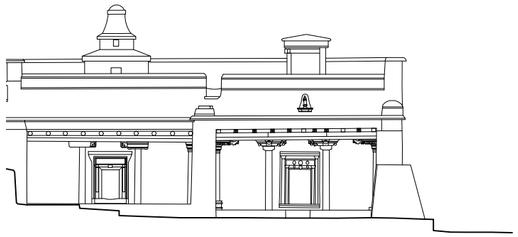


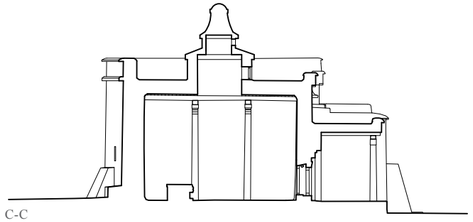
Within the monastic complex the Jampel Lhakhang (*'jam dpal lha khang*) or Mañjuśrī Temple lies at the lower end closest to the Indus River (13, 16). Originally this temple was a free-standing square structure with a two-pillar veranda in front of it (261). The lower quality of its decoration and considerable alterations over time obscure the importance of this unique monument.[203] Indeed, what is preserved of the temple's original decoration is no match in quality to those previously discussed in this volume or the Sumtsek, and its sculptures have been repainted with modern colours (253). Nevertheless, the structure itself, the woodcarvings on door and pillars, the themes painted on the walls and especially the ceilings decoration are still reminiscent of the major Alchi temples (254). Due to their poor state of preservation, most of these elements are described in the development chapter (page 367 ff.).

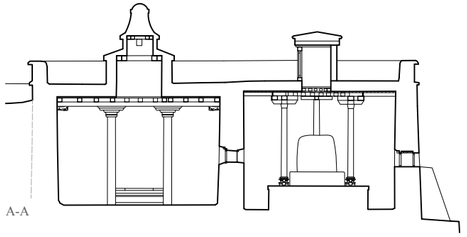
The interior of the temple is constructed around the four central images of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī seated on wide common throne platform. This large and approximately eighty-six-centimetres-high platform leaves only a rather narrow circumambulation passage. In the corners of the platform stand the four interior pillars forming a central square around the images and their frames. Their cross-shaped capitals support a central square of beams above the images (253). The lantern opening up above this square is a more recent intervention. Originally there was a lantern ceiling above the images, the fragments of which are still reused to support the present lantern and recognisable by their painting (253). Uniquely, cross-beams radiating from this central square to the walls support the well preserved ceiling above the circumambulation path (253, 264, 265, 268).

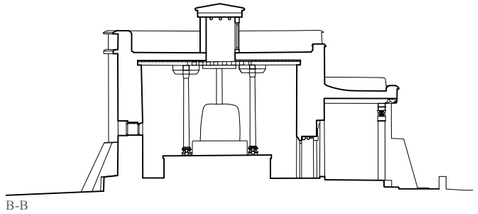
The centre of the platform in the middle of the temple is occupied by the complex three-dimensional throne construction framing a seated, four-armed Mañjuśrī on each side. The images and their frames have been completely repainted in recent times, but almost all their other features—the frame, the moulds, the lotus-petals, the style of the images and the construction technique—indicate that these images are original to the monument. Iconographically, the four images are identical apart from their colours. All are one-headed and four-armed, and once held a sword, a book on top of a blue lily, a bow, and an arrow.

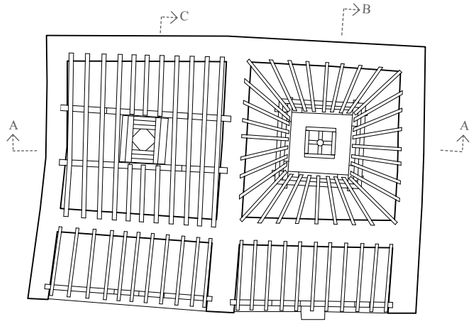
Entering the temple, the visitor first encounters the gold-painted image, which previously was yellow (264, 372). The Mañjuśrī image facing the left side wall is white today (265) and faces a wall dedicated to Buddha Amitābha, and a red Mañjuśrī sculpture faces the back wall (253), which is covered with repeated images of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī around two central panels. In terms of their main elements, the sculpted frames in the Jampel Lhakhang are identical to those painted around Mañjuśrī on the central panels of the main wall and the Mañjuśrī panels flanking the Mañjuśrī image on the right side wall of the Sumtsek (631, 632).

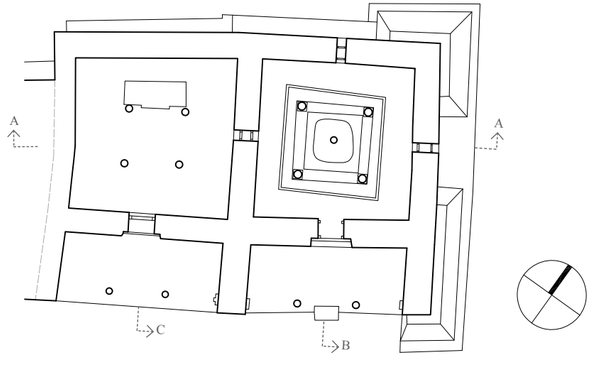














255 Top left: The front (southeast) elevation of the Lotsawa Lhakhang (left) and the Jampel Lhakhang (right).

256 Top right: The longitudinal section (C-C) through the Lotsawa Lhakhang and its veranda.

257 Middle left: Cross section (A-A) through both temples showing the window in the wall shared between them.

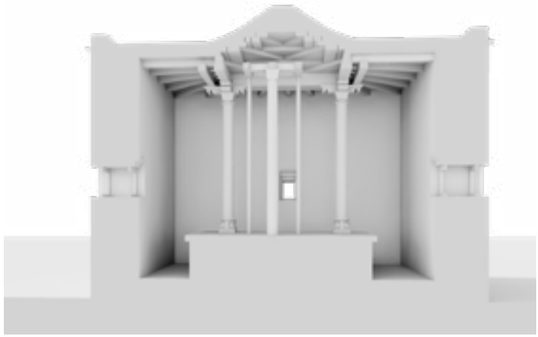
258 Middle right: The longitudinal section (B-B) through the Jampel Lhakhang, with the solid pedestal of the four main sculptures in the middle of the room, and its veranda.

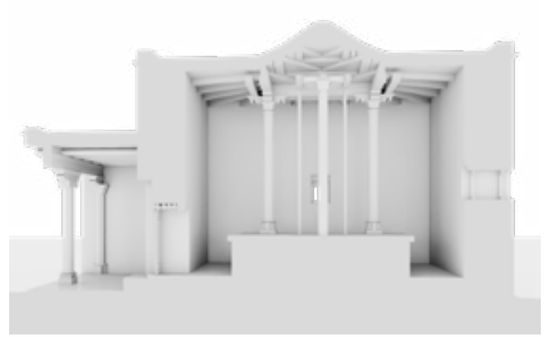
259 Middle left: The ceiling construction of the two temples differs significantly, the one of the Jampel Lhakhang unique to this building.

260 Bottom left: The floor plan of the two buildings.

261 The two three-dimensional sections of the Jampel Lhakhang show the temple as an independent structure and with its lantern ceiling tentatively reconstructed.

All plans Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.





Architecture

The Jampel Lhakhang (Jampel Lhakhang) and the Lotsawa Lhakhang are similar in cubature and construction. The open verandas of both temples have approximately the same orientation as the Main Temple and are located in the southeast. The Jampel Lhakhang, which stands on the northeastern side, was originally freestanding. The Lotsawa Lhakhang was added later and the original window, which previously led to the open air has been preserved in the middle wall until today (257). Both verandas are slightly elevated, each with two columns and side half-columns with carved capitals bearing the roof structure. The left Lotsawa half-pillar was reconstructed during the restoration.

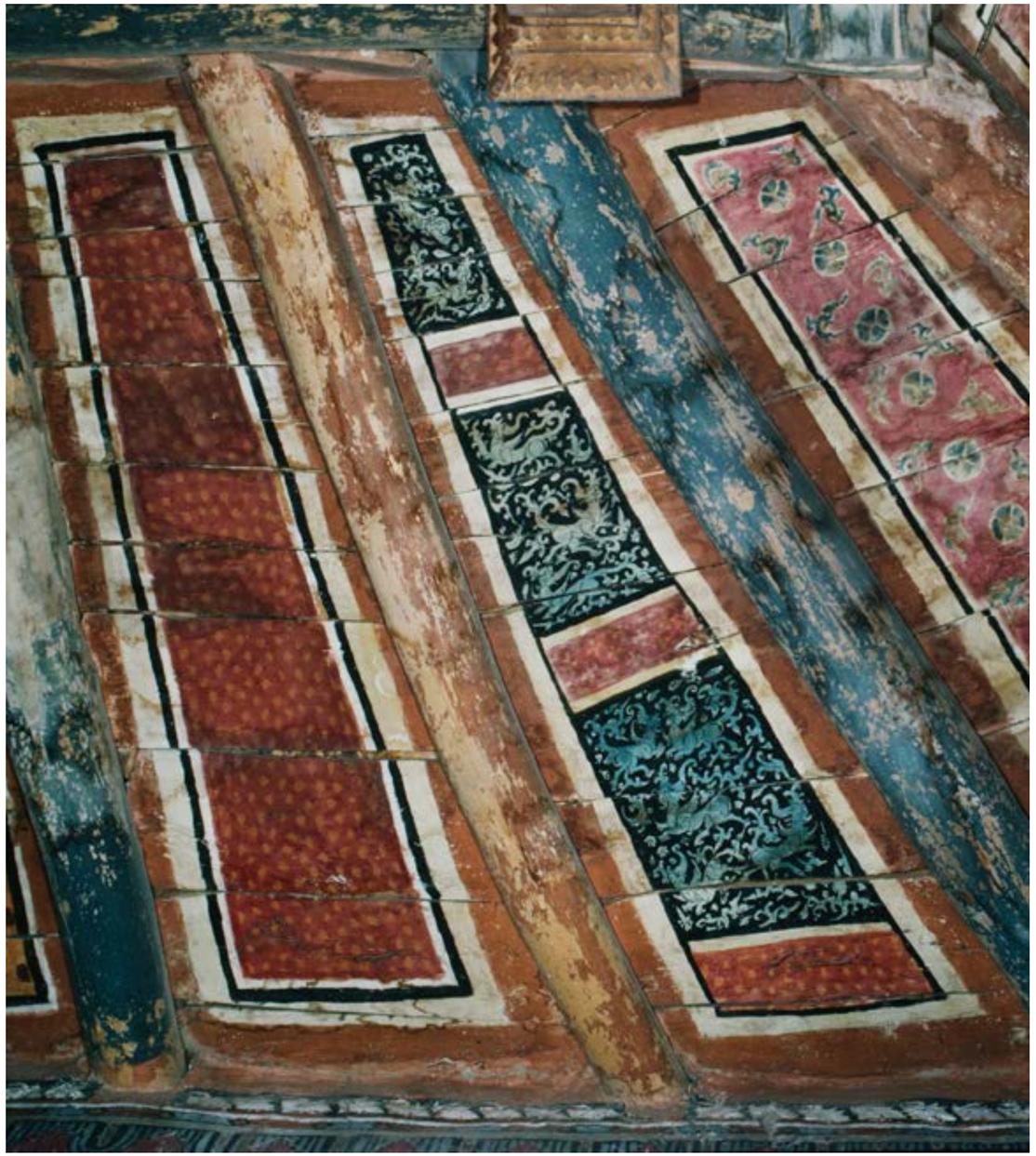
The verandas are designed to liken each other in appearance and dimensions (362): the one of the Jampel Lhakhang is 5.84 metres wide and 2.59 metres deep, slightly deviating in the northeast to 2.44 metres, the one of the Lotsawa Lhakhang is 6.11 metres wide and 2.57 metres deep. The parapet above both verandas runs horizontally at the same height, but due to the difference in the floor level, the Lotsawa's veranda is 2.33 metres to the main beam of the ceiling, while that of the Jampel Lhakhang is 2.63 metres.

The interiors of both temples are roughly square and have almost the same dimensions. Entering the Jampel Lhakhang, the length of the southwest wall on the left is 5.90 metres, the opposite northeast wall on the right side is 5.64 metres. The back wall in the northwest has with 5.71 metres nearly the same length as the front southeast wall with 5.72 metres. Inside the Lotsawa Lhakhang, the right wall is 5.93 metres, the southwest wall on the left 5.71 metres long. The back wall measures 6.09 metres, the front wall 5.91 metres.

The interiors of the two temples, however, could not be more different spatially. In the Jampel Lhakhang the four centrally positioned sculptures of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī are placed on a 0.86-metres-high solid pedestal, which leaves only a narrow passage of 0.99 metres free for circumambulation. The four wooden columns with their elaborate bases and cross consoles stand on the corners of this pedestal and support the circumferential ring beam of the radial wooden ceiling construction (258). The room height is 4.37 metres to the lower edge of the ceiling. The central area of the ceiling directly above the sculpture was renewed and a lantern with glass panels on the southeast and southwest sides was added. Fragments of the original lantern ceiling have been reused in this area. Originally, the room was lit only by three windows, each 0.35 m wide and 0.41 m high, which are located in the centre of the three walls, the southwestern window extending into the Lotsawa Lhakhang today.

The Lotsawa Lhakhang has four wooden columns bearing the main beams of the ceiling in its interior. The room is 3.98 metres high. In the centre of the ceiling is a bricked lantern which tapers in two steps. Above a square opening of 1.72 metres with 1.40 metres high painted side walls, there is a circumferential wooden construction reducing the clear width of the square opening to 0.81 metres. The total height of the room from the floor level to the ceiling of the lantern is 6.30 metres. On the southeast side of the lantern there are two openings that illuminate the room. A solid altar base is located in front of the northwest side of the interior.

Holger Neuwirth & Carmen Auer



262 Three of the ceiling panels with painted textiles of different production techniques. They are presented with borders as if these textiles would have been cut and tailored for the available space.

Particularly noteworthy are the depiction of the animals between the flanking pillars. As in the paintings, the square compartments of the throne base are occupied by a selection of objects belonging to the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) and the eight auspicious symbols (*aṣṭamaṅgala*). The flower-shaped wish-fulfilling jewel (*ratna*) also occurs in the same form in both sculpture and painting. Thus there is no doubt that what remains of the original murals and sculptures is contemporaneous and original to the monument. Finally, the Mañjuśrī image on the right side wall, which is dedicated to Buddha Akṣobhya is bright blue (268), but originally had a darker hue.

As discussed with the earliest representation of this four-armed Mañjuśrī in the Dukhang (page 226 f.), this form of the Bodhisattva derives from the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*). Its usual colour is orange, as in the back wall panels of this temple, but in the Sumtsek and here he is also represented in the colours of the five esoteric Buddhas. With the main sculptures of the temple, one would expect these colours to match the directions of the respective Buddhas, but this cannot be confirmed.[204]

Conceptually, the temple faces south as the side walls are dedicated to the Buddhas of the west, Amitābha, and east, Akṣobhya, respectively. Such a reading would be confirmed if the sculpture facing the entrance was originally yellow. However, this image may also have been orange, referencing the main form of the Bodhisattva. If this was the case and the other images retained their original colouring, they reference the Buddhas Vairocana, Amitābha and Akṣobhya in a clockwise succession, a core group among the five esoteric Buddhas. There is an inconsistency in this reading also: in the Sumtsek, the sculpture of Mañjuśrī is attributed to the family of Buddha Akṣobhya (346), but who would it be in the Jampel Lhakhang? The configuration of the temple resists an attribution to a Buddha, but Buddha Akṣobhya was also depicted on the vertical faces of the lantern ceiling above the Mañjuśrī images (370). However, ultimately the multiple forms of Mañjuśrī in the colours of the five Buddhas imply that he is encompassing the five esoteric Buddhas and is superior to them. This conforms to conceptions of Mañjuśrī from the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* that carry this symbolism explicitly, namely Gnosis-Being Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva) as it is alluded to in verse 27 and elaborated in commentaries on it,[205] and Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha, who emanates from the heart of Vairocana and is depicted in the Sumtsek (see also page 762 ff.).

The wooden planks of the ceiling covering the ambulatory are painted with a similar range of textile patterns as those in the Sumtsek, but they are somewhat less refined. In addition, all its painted wooden panels have been moved at one stage, interrupting the paint layer where the planks meet and partially disturbing the continuation of the painting (270). Nevertheless, the variety of weaving and printing techniques represented, the imagination that went into their conception and the skill with which they have been executed is still remarkable. In addition, the narrowing spaces between the beams necessitated the skilful adaptation of the patterns for each panel, adding an additional illusory effect to their representation (266, 267).



263 An elephant-headed creature with foliage occupying one of the ceiling panels on the entrance side above the golden Mañjuśrī (264).



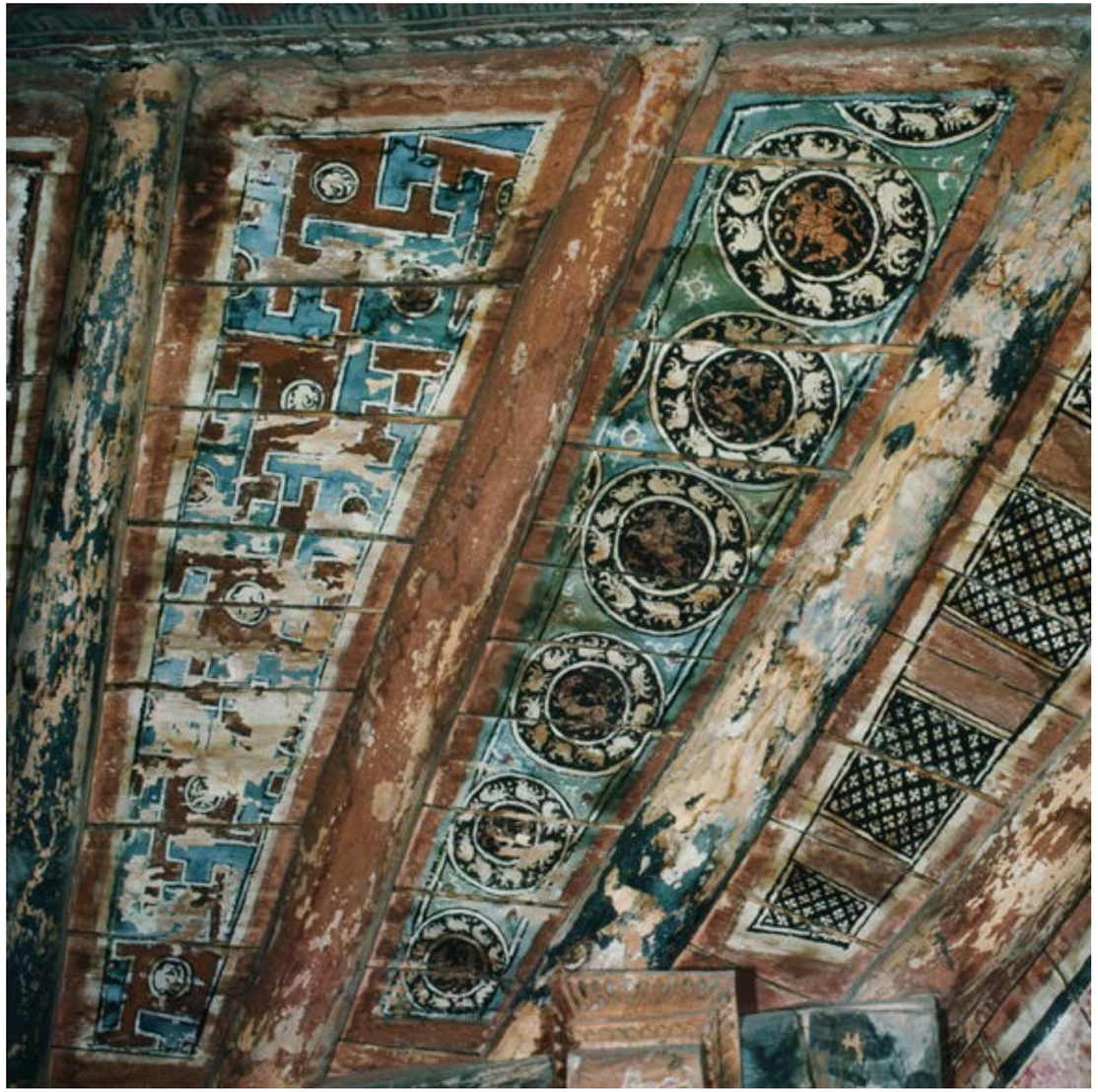
264 Entering the temple in front of the golden Mañjuśrī and looking upwards offers a perfect view on the unusual ceiling construction, with the spaces between radiating cross-beams filled with a rich array of textile patterns. From this side a roughly symmetrical distribution of these patterns can be noticed.



265 Walking in circumambulation around the images the white Mañjuśrī, facing the right side wall, is met second. Here the ceiling panels alternate between simpler printed or dyed patterns with more complex ones.



266 These two complex patterns demonstrate that the narrowing spaces represented an additional challenge for the painters. In both cases the painter tried to maintain the illusion of a real textile by keeping the regularity of the pattern at least partially.



267 In the left panel the regularity of the *svastika* pattern is retained while the medallions on the right are simply enlarged with the available space.

268 The blue Mañjuśrī faces Akṣobhya on the right side wall.





269 In the panel on the left hunters on horseback shoot diverse animals, a tiger crouching undisturbed. Both hunters shoot backwards, their arrows crossing above the deer between them, but not aligned with their positions. The pastel colouring fully reveals the fine and quickly executed drawing that outlines all details.

270 On the right a black ground panel is filled with elephant-headed aquatic creatures (*makara*). Largely arranged in pairs their tails merge when they are directed towards each other. The painters varied their appearance more than would be practical for textile production. That the wooden boards supporting the painting are not fully aligned anymore indicates a major restoration of the ceiling.



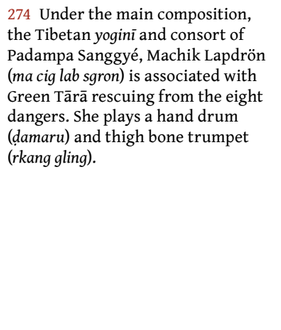


271 In two of the ceiling panels of the Jampel Lhakhang the three-hare motif occupies the centre of large medallions with an outer ring of birds. In one of them it is juxtaposed with the hunter motif (267), while here birds and lions may also occupy the centre. Hunters on horse and on foot are also the subject of the neighbouring panel in black and white.

272 See in detail, the sketchiness of the paintings make it difficult to recognise the animals depicted.



The Lhakhang Soma



273 The composition of Śākyamuni flanked by diverse audiences can be traced back to the description of a superior cloth paintings that is 'beneficial to see' (*mthong ba don ldan*) in the *Root Tantra of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*), a popular early Esoteric Buddhist text. In the Lhakhang Soma, this is the central theme on the main wall. Combining this auspicious depiction with a row of seven Green Tārā at the bottom is characteristic for the Drigung school, as the theme of seven Tārā goes back to a prayer attributed to Drigunpa.

274 Under the main composition, the Tibetan *yoginī* and consort of Padampa Sanggyé, Machik Lapdrön (*ma cig lab sgron*) is associated with Green Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers. She plays a hand drum (*ḍamaru*) and thigh bone trumpet (*rkang gling*).

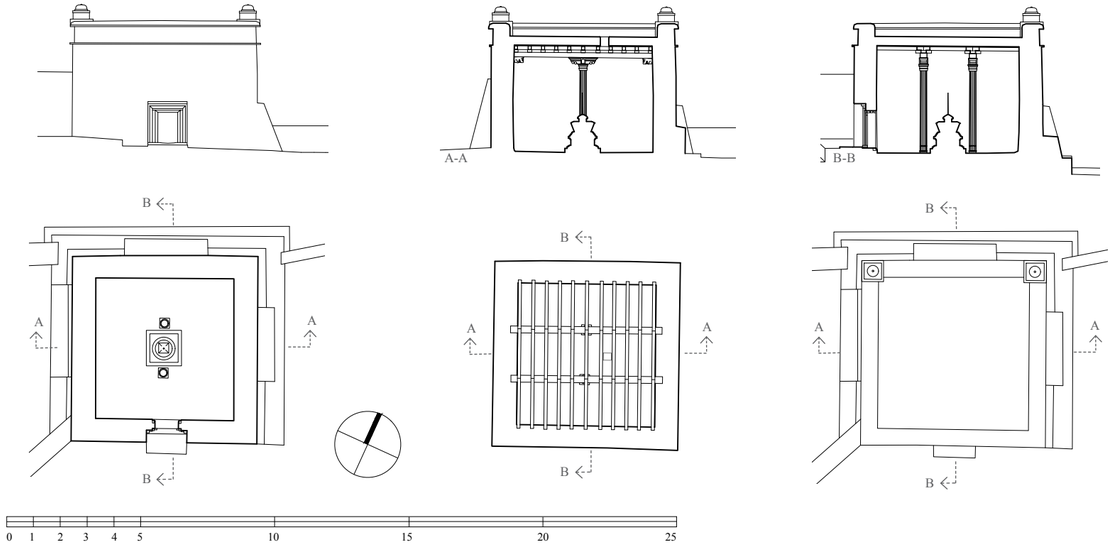
It makes perfect sense if the name 'New Temple', translating Lhakhang Soma as pronounced in the local dialect, goes back to the temple's foundation.[206] At that time, probably in the second quarter of the fourteenth century,[207] everything about this temple was new, its architecture, its artisanship and especially the topics depicted in the murals on the main wall. While previous monuments have shown the emergence of some new trends arriving from central Tibet with the Kagyü schools, in this temple they take centre stage on the main wall (273, 274). The temple is also the product of a new political, economic and religious environment in which the profits from long-distance trade have severely reduced and the western Himalayan branch of the Drigung school dominates quite independently from central Tibet, where its main monastery has been raided to the ground.[208]

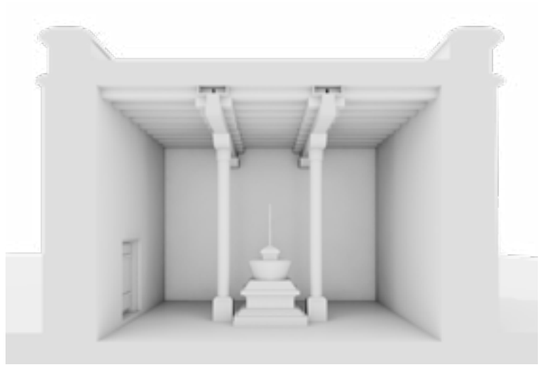
The Lhakhang Soma is located on the village side of the sacred area to the south of the Sumtsek. While the temple got considerable attention in the pioneer studies on the Alchi monuments—and actually played a prominent role in the art history of the Himalayan region[209]—it receives little attention today. On the one hand this may well be due to the inferior quality of its murals, but they are not without charm. On the other hand this may be due to the temple's position within the compound hidden behind the only house built within the sacred area as well as its inconspicuous exterior (16, 464). However that may be, over the years it also became increasingly difficult to see the temple, as the caretaker monks are too few to enable visits to all the monuments given the high visitor numbers.[210]

Architecturally, the temple is a one-storied structure with a roughly square ground plan (275, 276). Its door is made up of multiple interlocked components but not decorated (466). In the interior two pillars along the central axis support two main beams. Their location indicates that the Soma, too, is a commemorative monument, as the chörten in its centre must have been planned in from the outset, even if its present shape is of a more recent restoration (277).

The style of the temple's murals differs starkly from that in the earlier temples. It is a naïve, local adaptation of painting styles predominant in central Tibetan regions at that time, which themselves take Northeast Indian (Sharri) and Nepali (Beri) styles as their model. Within the Alchi Choskhor, this change in artistic background is already reflected in the Raised Chörten in the middle of the Main Temple's courtyard (see page 394 ff.).

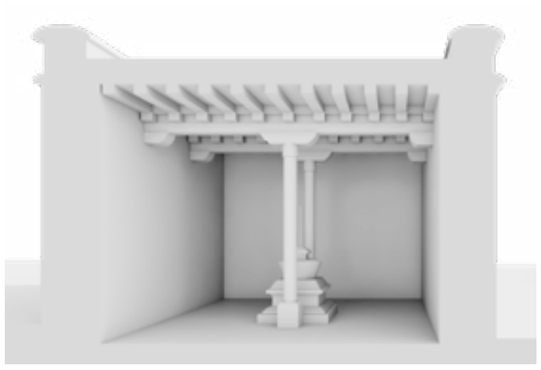
Despite these innovations, the rich local heritage has not been forgotten in the Lhakhang Soma. Throughout the monument references to the earlier monuments can be found and are elucidated in the following. Sadly, many of the lower murals of the Soma have suffered a mutilation of faces, limiting what is presented in this chapter to the best preserved.





275 Southeast elevation, sections and floor plans of the Lhakhang Soma. The base of the temple is approximately square, the outer cube of the temple has a side length of 7.05 metres at a total height of 4.88 metres from the floor level of the interior to the top of the attic. The corners of the flat roof above the northwest wall were emphasized by cube-shaped roof structures. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020

276 Spatial model of the Lhakhang Soma, on the left the longitudinal section, and on the right the cross section. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.



277 Following page: In the centre of the Lhakhang Soma is a chörten of a more recent shape than the temple. However, the structure of building, with two columns along the central axis, indicates that a chörten was placed there from the outset. The main wall features the Highest Yoga Tantra deities along with the portraits of Pakmodrupa and Padma-sambhava. On the right side wall, the Medicine Buddha features in the central panel.



Architecture

The Lhakhang Soma is situated on the west side of the sacred area. The enclosure wall of the compound borders directly on its side walls, which with the exception of the southeast wall, are reinforced by conical buttresses. The attic of the flat roof is accentuated in colour; a tier of branches visible on the outside reflects the position of the ceiling construction in the interior (464). The entrance is located in the middle of the southeastern wall and consists of a simple wooden door in a fourfold stepped wooden portal frame (466). The internal floor level is 0.22 metres below the external ground level.

The room is 5.33 metres wide and 5.25 metres deep, with a height of 3.98 metres up to the wooden ceiling panels. The wall thickness is 0.88 metres. The wooden beam ceiling is supported by two main beams resting on the console capitals of two fluted wooden columns and lion brackets on the side walls (277). In the centre of the room, occupying the space between the bases of the wooden columns, stands a chörten on a square pedestal with a side length of 1.34 metres.

Holger Neuwirth & Carmen Auer



278 Among the native deities surrounding Mahākāla the male ones now take the upper hand, both in position and number. This panel shows a group of six of them to the left of Mahākāla, others are flanking the door left and right. Among the riders in this panel is also a snake deity (*klu*; top left).



279 The Peacock Cape Lady still takes a prominent position, but she is now secondary to the male riders and her retinue is considerably smaller and includes an armoured foot-soldier.

The Entry Wall

The link of the Lhakhang Soma to the earlier Alchi monuments is particularly apparent on the entry wall. Comparing its composition with that of the same wall of the Dukhang there are many parallels, a fact that distinguishes the Lhakhang Soma from other roughly contemporaneous temples such as the temple of Alchi Shangrong or the Senggé Lhakhang in Lamayuru.[211] The actual topics depicted are adapted to the new religious background. Thus, above the door is now a four-armed form of Mahākāla holding sword and tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) in the side arms besides curved knife and skull-cup (470).[211] His retinue has changed as well, both in his immediate surrounding—he is now associated with Cakrasaṃvara above him and Raktayamāri underneath—and the native deities he is represented with (278–280).

To the left of the entrance the main part of the Buddha's life is represented in six superimposed rows (281–285). The life is then continued in a single row to the right of the entrance (286–288) above an empty inscription panel and a large donor depiction (468–469). As in the Dukhang the latter is divided into three parts, the lay followers on the left and the monks on the right flanking a festive banquet scene. The few additional deities on this side are part of the theme to which the left side wall is dedicated and are discussed below.



280 Two of the armed riders to the left of Mahākāla brandishing lances. One has a bird on his hand, presumably meant to represent a hunting falcon.

In parallel to the Royal Rider accompanying Mahākāla in the Dukhang, these riders may be identified as *drabla* (*dgra bla*), but their representation in rows of galloping horses may well be inspired by the local riders demonstrating their military skills in the donor depiction there.

Life of the Buddha

In the lower sections on both sides of the entrance unfolds the life of the Buddha with the majority of the scenes presented in six horizontal rows to the left of the entrance. The location and presentation of this topic thus parallels the Dukhang, and also some of the scenes reference the earlier monuments. As with the life on Maitreya's dhoti in the Sumtsek (page 544 ff.), there is great emphasis on the events preceding the awakening at Bodhgayā and the teaching career is only summarily represented. Like the life in the Dukhang (page 81 ff.) the story ends with the eight types of chörten after the Buddhas *parinirvāṇa* (288). But the story also includes a few events that happened between the awakening and the *parinirvāṇa*, which is only the case with the life shown on the Dukhang's door (313).

The depiction in the Lhakhang Soma is remarkable for the naïve charm that envelops each scene and the overall composition. Like in the Dukhang, trees are used as scene separators, but now they are set against alternating red and blue backgrounds. The documentation assembled focuses on the beginning and the end of the story, as these are also the best preserved. In the following the entire narrative is summarized in the form of short, sometimes tentative, identifications of the scenes.[212]

In the first row, the events in Tuṣita heaven (281) are followed by the descent from heaven, also referred to as the dream of Māyā (282), the birth (283), and reception of the newly born on a sheet of cloth. The birth cycle continues in row two, where the Bodhisattva is welcomed by his nurses,[213] before he takes his first bath and the seven steps in each direction (284). The representation of parallel births ends the birth cycle in the middle of this row. Following the return to Kapilavastu, the Bodhisattva is examined by the sage Asita and predicts his future buddhahood. The final scene shows what I take as the Bodhisattva inside a temple worshipped by the deity of that temple (285).[214]

Row three continues the story with two scenes at school, the throwing of the elephant, as well as the swimming and archery competitions. In row five the events at the harem and the great departure are narrated, including the four excursions, the guarded palace and the cutting of the hair.

In row five are the events following the departure, including the worship of the stupa of the Bodhisattvas hair in heaven, the return of the horse and its eventual drowning.[215] The final two scenes in this row show the Bodhisattva, depicted as a Buddha for the first time, teaching seated on a lotus,[216] and his asceticism at the Nairañjanā River.

Row six depicts the events surrounding the awakening: the village girl Sujātā offers milk-rice to the Bodhisattva after milking the cow, the victory over Māra, the Buddha tames the elephant (the lion also attacking the Buddha in this scene seems to be a misunderstanding), as well as several scenes in which the Buddha meets diverse personages, including an ascetic carrying a basket on the back. The final scene shows the Buddha in meditation.

The narrative continues with a single row to the right of the entrance. These scenes, depicted in a somewhat abbreviated form, most likely represent the first sermon (286), gods in dialogue, the merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika offering a sweet dish (287), the Buddha teaching gods, snakes and man in three successive scenes, as well as the events around the *parinirvāṇa* (288).



281 The Buddha's life begins with the Bodhisattva teaching his fellow gods in Tuṣita heaven. The Bodhisattva, performs the gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*), indicating that he also represents Buddha Vairocana, who in some conceptions is considered the *saṃbhogakāya* of Śākyamuni. The following scene traverses two background areas, the red one emphasising the enthroned Bodhisattva and his action, the consecration of the Bodhisattva Maitreya who is kneeling in front of him, with a helmet-shaped crown. The accompanying gods celebrate the event through playing music and holding objects of honour and auspiciousness. The frieze demonstrates the clever and playful usage of background and scene dividers that can be observed throughout. The frame outlining the red space may mark it as an interior.



282 The Bodhisattva then descends from heaven to take rebirth in his future mother, Māyā, who dreams of an elephant entering her side. Māyā is lying sideways on a bed and is flanked by two gods, who honour and protect her. A grey elephant with a red trunk is hovering in a cloud above her head. The multi-coloured background emphasizes the event and can be read as both the radiance that occurs at the event and a cloth hanging decorating and separating Māyā's chamber.



283 The future Buddha is born from Māyā's right side while she grasps the branch of a tree that also serves as scene separation. In contrast to her representation in the Dukhang, Māyā is here shown in Indian, rather than local dress. The identity of the three figures flanking the scene is unclear from the depiction, as they lack iconographic markers, but it is likely Indra who receives the newly born.



284 Immediately following the birth at Lumbini, the newly born is received by nurses, who are dressed in local Ladakhi fashion but wear crowns. The Bodhisattva is then bathed by the gods and performs seven steps in each direction indicating his world-conquering nature. The animals to the right honour the events and represent the contemporaneous births of key protagonists in the Buddha's life, such as the horse Kaṇṭhaka. Each pair represents a mother with its child, as demonstrated by the birth-giving mother in the upper right corner representing the birth of the Bodhisattva's future wife.



285 Following the return to the city of Kapilavastu the signs of the young Bodhisattva, seated on the lap of his royal father, are interpreted by the sage Asita and a fellow brahmin. The two sages are represented twice, once when Asita observes the Buddha's hand and once when he grieves that he will not be able to benefit from the Bodhisattva's future awakening. In the unusual scene on the right the young, red Bodhisattva, probably referencing Rakta Lokeśvara, is shown standing inside the temple, while a haloed god and his human vehicle worship him with their hands folded.[214]



286 Following the awakening, the Buddha begins teaching at the deer park of Sārnāth. The scene shows none of the characteristic visual markers of the event, such as the deer flanking the wheel of the Dharma or the five monks who attended the event. Here only two seated monks flank the Buddha, while an additional Buddha stands by, as in all the following scenes. This secondary Buddha is unique for this depiction and may mark the scenes as deriving from the Buddha's own narration. His addition makes the scene to the right, gods or Bodhisattvas in conversation with each other, more puzzling, as it marks it as a separate event.



287 The middle scenes of the frieze are dedicated to the Buddha's teaching career. In the upper left area we see the enthroned Buddha receiving the merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika offering a sweet dish as they passed by with their caravan, here represented by the loaded ox. The scene underneath warrants several interpretations, but likely depicts the Buddha teaching the gods. The horse to their side with a triple jewel floating above its saddle probably belongs to the scene above. In the two superimposed scenes on the right the Buddha teaches a pair of snake deities (*nāga*) and humans respectively. These teaching scenes may also represent the three vehicles, Mahāyāna originally taught to the *nāga* and Vajrayāna to the gods.[217]

288 The life is concluded with the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. Above the Buddha has his final rest on a bed, a monk seated to his feet has his hand raised in a gesture of mourning. Underneath the Buddha's body—shown seated and teaching on a throne—is cremated and attended by a mourning monks. The meditating monk seated directly in front of the throne with his back to the viewer can be traced back to depictions of the *parinirvāṇa* in Gandhāran art.[218] That the Buddha's life is a mere display following a pattern of canonical life events is hinted at by the teaching Buddha seated atop the eight stupas along the right edge, the latter symbolising the eight great events in a Buddha's life.





289 In this variant, the Sarvavid mandala has only one palace with a central square surrounded by two more squares. The assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

- In the central circle divided into nine compartments: Sarvavid Vairocana surrounded by four Buddhas and four goddesses.
- In the circle surrounding the central one: the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas.
- In the corners of the central square: the four inner offering goddesses.
- In the centre of the four sides of the second square: four wrathful gate-keepers.[219]
- Along the sides of the second square: sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon.
- In the corners of the second square: the four outer offering goddesses.
- Along the sides of the third square: sixteen hearers (*śrāvaka*) and twelve solitary Buddhas (*pratyekabuddha*).
- In the gates of the third square: sixteen wrathful gate-keepers, four in each direction.

Three of the four corners around the mandala are occupied by wisdom deities, while the fourth shows monks performing a ritual (290).

The Left Wall

The left side wall is dominated by three mandalas along the upper part of the wall and seven additional mandala assemblies underneath. Two more assemblies on the entry wall belong to the same configuration, as all topics derive from the same source, the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*). Thus, in this temple the entire cycle of the Tantra is represented, and this emphasis confirms the commemorative function of the temple already noticed.

The three full mandalas are arranged in a hierarchy from the back wall to the entry wall. The first two of them replicate those on the right side wall of the Dukhang, namely the Sarvavid mandala (289) and the Śākyasiṃha mandala (293), in new variants. In both cases, these variants lack the outermost assembly and thus appear less complex. There is also no explicit rendering of the four realms of rebirth around them. The third mandala is a seventeen-deity rendering of the Amitāyus mandala (292).[220] The hierarchy represented derives from the tantra itself and its interpretation. The Sarvavid mandala is the root mandala of this cycle, and is most often represented. The practice of the Śākyasiṃha mandala is specifically aimed at preventing bad rebirths, and the Amitāyus mandala serves to alleviate the obstructions of karma.

The same hierarchical arrangement has been used for the mandalas assemblies along the bottom of the wall, and they are thus listed below from the main wall towards the entrance. Underneath the Sarvavid mandala are the assemblies of the Vajrapāṇi mandala, meant to prevent sudden death, and the Cakravartin mandala, which is meant to benefit all living beings.[221] Together with the Mandala of the Fierce Divinities (Vajrakrodha mandala), which is destructive in nature, the mandalas listed so far are classified as the super worldly (*lokottara*) mandalas of the cycle.[222]

The remaining six mandalas, all represented by their assembly only, are classified as worldly (*laukika*), and serve to appease gods and spirits and protect from their actions. Continuing from the main wall towards the entrance, they are the Mandala of the Four Great Kings (Caturmahārāja mandala, 293), the Mandala of the Directional Guardians (Dikpāla mandala, 293), the Mandala of the Great Heavenly Bodies (Mahāgraha mandala, 292), the Mandala of the Great Snakes (Mahānāga mandala, 292), the Mandala of the Great Bhairava (Mahābhairava mandala) and the Mandala of the Great Gods (Mahādeva mandala).[223] The latter two mandalas are represented on the entry wall just above the last row of the Buddha's life. The assembly of the long life goddess Uṣṇīṣavijayā, represented to their side, complements the theme of life and rebirth of this cycle well.



290 In the bottom left corner of the Sarvavid mandala, the monks perform its ritual. They are wearing Tibetan monastic dress with sleeveless vest, red outer garment and a red pointed hat. While we can assume from the context of the temple that these are Kagyü monks, there is no way to distinguish their sectarian affiliation further. In fact, while earlier monuments specifically reference Drigungpa in prominent positions, his only representation in the Lhakhang Soma is rather minor. Instead, it is Pakmodrupa, to whom eight Kagyü schools are traced back, who is emphasized on the main wall. The representation of a white robed ascetic (*ras pa*) and Padampa Sanggyé in the upper corners of the same mandala (289) confirm such a wider Kagyü school reading.

Note the depiction of the eyes of the main ritual master; they combine the idealised rendering deriving from eastern Indian Buddha depictions with the projection of the further eye so typical of early western Himalayan art.

This depiction is also remarkable for the careful rendering of the ritual mandala and the implements surrounding it including vajra and bell, water vases, a conch shell and other offerings on typical three-legged stands.

291 Three of the corners around the Sarvavid mandala are occupied by wisdom deities, two of them showing four-armed forms of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, while the upper right corner has a four-armed form of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā (289). The two forms of Mañjuśrī are identical with the exception of their colour, the one in the upper left corner being orange, while the one depicted here is red. This reading assumes that the absence of the book on top of the blue lily in the case of the red Mañjuśrī is not intentional.

While it is clear that the presence of the two forms of Mañjuśrī together with this Yoga Tantra mandala references the earlier monuments, one may just think of his depiction between the two mandalas of the same cycle in the Dukhang (196), their combination here may be read in different ways. On the one hand, the red Mañjuśrī can be read as sub-form of the orange one, as is the case in the earlier monuments. Then the red Mañjuśrī would stand for the lotus family and its emphasis on compassion, fitting its context very well. This reading would indicate a continuity from the earlier monuments. On the other hand, the red Mañjuśrī can be interpreted as an independent form, which would indicate a break from the earlier local tradition.[224]





292 The two mandalas on this page are shown in their relative position to each other.

In the top is the seventeen-deity mandala of the King of Long Life, a form of Buddha Amitāyus. Its assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

- In the central circle: Amitāyus surrounded by four Bodhisattvas headed by Vajrapāṇi.
- In the corners of the two squares: the four inner and four outer offering goddesses.
- In the gates: four wrathful gate-keepers.

The mandala is surrounded by diverse forms of Avalokiteśvara (top) as well as Acala and Vajrapāṇi.

In the bottom left is a thirteen-deity mandala assembly of the great snakes (Mahānāga mandala). In it Vajrapāṇi is surrounded by the group of eight great *nāga*, and gate-keepers occupy the doors. Twenty Buddhas surround the actual mandala assembly.

In the bottom right is a forty-one-deity mandala assembly of the wrathful Vajrapāṇi surrounded by the eight great celestial bodies (*graha*) and twenty-eight lunar mansions (Mahāgraha mandala; the second row on the right is cut off in this photograph but can be seen in figure 293).

293 This variant of the Śākyasiṃha mandala has thirty-eight deities distributed in two squares within a single palace. Its assembly consists of the following groups of deities read from the centre outwards:

- In the eight spoked wheel topped by an eight-petalled lotus Śākyasiṃha surrounded by eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas. As in the Dukhang and Sumtsek versions, an additional white, four-armed Prajñāpāramitā is represented on the eastern petal of the central lotus.
- In the corners of the inner square: four inner offering goddesses.
- Along the sides of the outer square: the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas.
- In the corners of the outer square: the four outer offering goddesses.
- At the gates of the outer square: four wrathful gate-keepers.

Underneath the mandala are two more assemblies of the same tantric cycle. On the left is a twenty-one-deity assembly of Vajrasattva surrounded by the guardians of the directions (Dikpāla mandala). In the centre right is the nine-deity mandala of Vajrapāṇi and the Four Great Kings (Caturmahārāja mandala). The assembly cut off at the right is that of wrathful Vajrapāṇi accompanied by the *bhairava*, a set of wrathful deities (Mahābhairava mandala).





294 Left side of the main wall with diverse esoteric topics in a patchwork like arrangement of compositions that derive from Tibetan scroll paintings (*thang ka*). In the top row are the aspiration deities Vajrapāṇi, Guhyasamāja Akṣobhyavajra, and Kālacakra. In the centre, are the standing four-armed Maitreya, Green Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers, and the triad of Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara. In the bottom the central blue Vajrasattva is flanked by wrathful and peaceful deities signifying protection. Among these is Guru Drakpo (*gu ru drag po*), a wrathful manifestation of Padmasambhava, which accounts for the prominence of Nyingma school derived transmissions for the iconographic programme of the Lhakhang Soma.

The Main Wall

The actual innovation of the temple is the main wall, which displays a large array of highest esoteric teachings not previously depicted at Alchi. Thereby it combines teachings promoted by the so-called 'new schools'—the Kagyü and Sakya schools—with Nyingma school derived teaching that claim their origin from the legendary activities of the eighth-century ritual master Padmasambhava, who is also depicted on this wall (299).

New is also the composition of the wall placing the diverse subjects side by side in arrangements deriving from the Tibetan scroll painting (*thang ka*) with a large central figure surrounded by secondary ones on all sides (294, 298). Consequently, much of the composition of this wall resembles differently sized *thangka* hung besides each other to cover the wall. This fact may well indicate that the subjects depicted in this way were first communicated via such scroll paintings. However, the typical scroll composition also has turned out to be most suitable to communicate the authentic derivations of the teachings through a teaching lineage represented above the main subject, and thus fitted the agenda of the schools competing at the time. Thus, while at Alchi we have one of the earliest depictions of such a composition with the depiction of Drigungpa in the Tashi Gomang Chörten (252), it is only with the Lhakhang Soma that the central Tibet derived teachings come fully to the fore. This goes hand in hand with a change of the monastic robes in which the local monks are depicted (290).

Only the main theme of this wall (273), a teaching Śākyamuni in a composition 'beneficial to see' (*mthong ba don ldan*) deriving from the *Root Tantra of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*) can specifically be connected to the Drigung school, as the row of seven Tārā underneath it directly reference the life of Drigungpa.[225] The top row of the highest esoteric deities shows Vajrapāṇi, Guhyasamāja Akṣobhyavajra, and Kālacakra (295) on the left (294), and Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara (296) and Mahāmāya (297) on the right (298). Each of these is associated with a generic Kagyü lineage, and only with the last deity a lama bears the specific characteristics of portraits of Drigungpa, white skin and a receding hairline (297). He is seated at the top right corner of the entire wall, and thus may well refer to its entirety, but he is not depicted elsewhere or in a larger format.

Instead, the Tibetan monk that is emphasized on main wall is likely Drigungpa's teacher Pakmodrupa Dorjé Gyelpo (*phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po*; 1110–1170), who is shown in Tibetan monastic garb and wearing a Kagyü school hat, and has the generic Kagyü lineage above him. He here stands for the highest tantric teachings that are not derived from Padmasambhava, whose portrait is directly to his side. In other words, the Lhakhang Soma is much less emphatically Drigung than one would assume from the by then long association of Alchi with this school. Like the earlier monuments the Lhakhang Soma links to current developments in central Tibet, namely the rise of the Pagmodrupa dynasty and Densatil (*gdan sa mthil*) monastery.[226]



295 The details from among the aspiration deities along the upper edge of the main wall demonstrate both the conceptual and compositional links to central Tibetan *thangka* painting and the idiosyncrasies of the Lhakhang Soma paintings.

Among the aspiration deities depicted in the uppermost row in the left part of the wall (294) Kālacakra takes the most prominent position immediately to the side of the central Buddha.

The upper row features the five esoteric Buddhas with Vairocana in their centre. They are flanked by Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara and Vajrasattva, with a dark blue Vajrasattva directly under the white one. The remaining deities are personified offerings in the form of the sixteen offering goddesses (*mchod pa'i lha mo bcu drug*) and two four-armed Bodhisattvas who hold incense and musical instruments among other attributes.

296 In the upper row of this composition is an abbreviated transmission lineage that oddly features a Buddha between the *mahāsiddha* and a lay disciple that looks like Marpa.

The central panel is dedicated to the subject of this transmission, the assembly of a seventeen-deity mandala of Sahaja Cakrasaṃvara embracing his consort Vajrayoginī. In the mandala the four four-armed *yoginī* and the four vases occupy the eight petals of the central lotus. Four twelve-armed deities with consorts in the colours of the four secondary Buddhas form a second group, and the four animal-headed gate-keepers and bi-coloured *yoginī* form a third group occupying the gates and intermediate directions.

The eight four-armed offering goddesses in the bottom row of this painting as well as the sixteen offering goddesses in 295 are particularly telling in their stance, which directly compares to central Tibetan *thangka* paintings and sculptural panels of Densatil.[227]





297 The deity in the top right corner of the main wall is Mahāmāya, clearly the least common among the aspiration deities represented. The god is four-faced and four-armed and holds tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) and skull-cup (*kapāla*) in his main arms embracing the consort, while the outer arms hold bow and arrow. His red consort also has four arms and carries the same attributes.

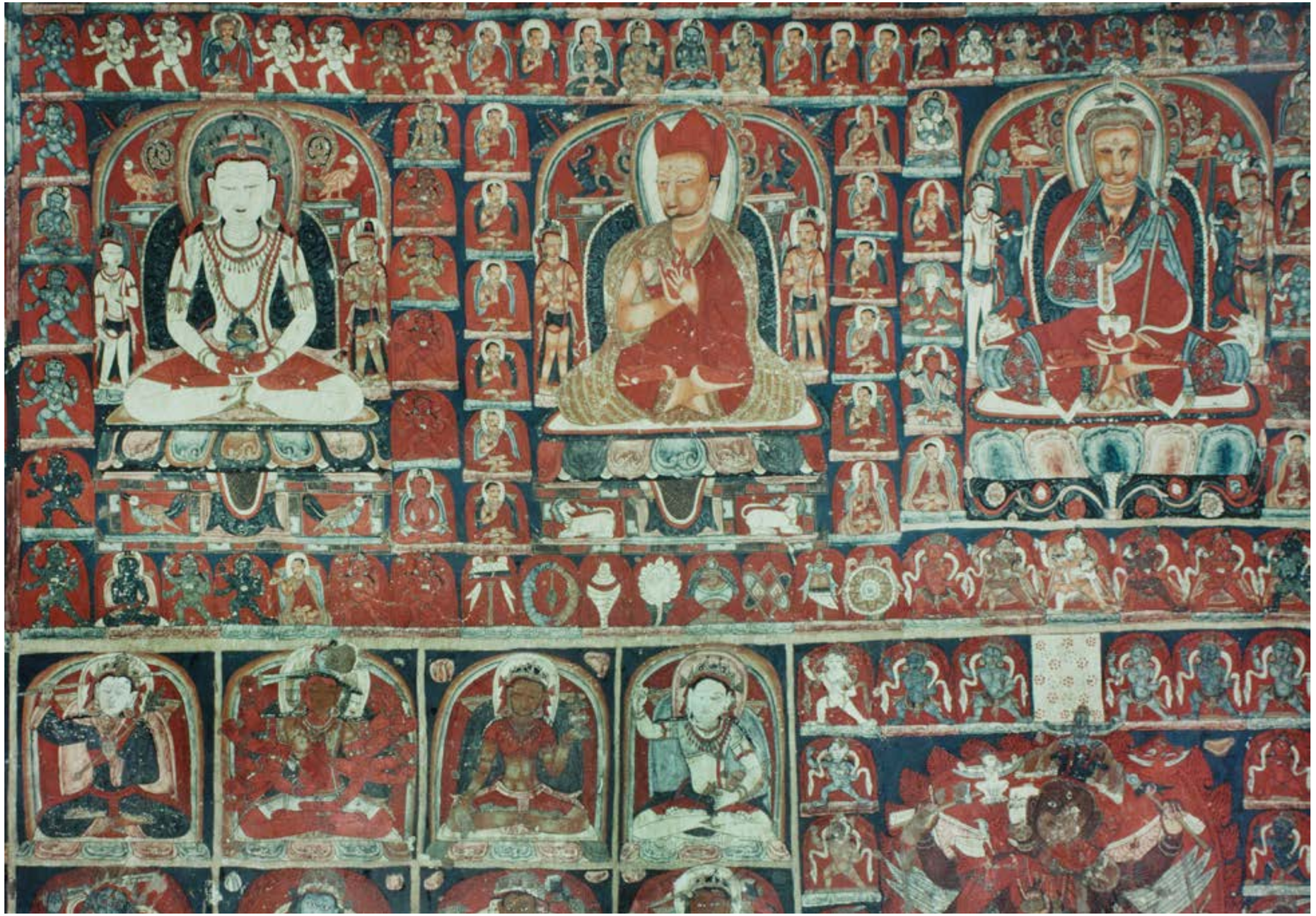
Only the four vases and the four deities flanking the legs belong to the actual mandala assembly, and it is unclear how the remaining figures relate to the theme.

In the somewhat confused Kagyü school lineage on the top Drigungpa in the top right corner is singled out through his white skin and receding hairline. His position probably has been chosen not only in relation to this depiction, but to the entire wall (see figure 298).

298 The right side of the main wall is more evenly composed than the left. In the top are six separate assemblies of approximately the same size with two teacher representations in the lower of the two rows. In the bottom small single deities in three rows are placed besides a large assembly of Hayagrīva. At the bottom are fourteen of the thirty-five Buddhas of confession.

The aspiration deities in the top row are from left to right Hevajra, Sahaja Cakrasaṃvara (296) and Mahāmāya (297). The middle row, is explained in detail in the caption of figure 299.





299 The middle panels to the right of the central Buddha on the main wall (273) provide information on the religious context of the Lhakhang Soma paintings. On the left is a mandala assembly of White Amitāyus transmitted from Padmasambhava, who is represented in the top centre of this panel. The same teacher occupies the centre of the panel on the right, which shows him together with his eight manifestations. He can easily be recognised by his feathered hat, the dress that combines royal and monastic robes, and his attributes, vajra and skull-cup (*kapāla*) along a tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*).

Crucial, however, is the teacher depicted in the central panel the identity of which has puzzled scholars so far. I propose to identify him as Pakmodrupa Dorjé Gyelpo (*phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po*; 1110–1170) who is commonly portrayed with a beard. He is the immediate teacher of the founder of the Drigung school, Jikten Gönpo (1143–1217), who has been depicted in previous Alchi monuments. The shift to Pakmodrupa indicates a more general Kagyü context for this monument, quite distinct from the temple of Alchi Shangrong which is more specifically Drigung Kagyü. Nyingma teachings feature prominently in both and are also in evidence on this wall through the three-headed, and six-armed Hayagrīva in the centre of the cut-off bottom right panel.



The Right Wall

300 The right wall is filled with predominantly blue Buddhas, the central panel featuring the Medicine Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru holding a myrobalan fruit in his right hand at the knee and a begging bowl (*pātra*) in the left. Two smaller panels at a lower level feature the Buddhas Śākyamuni and Akṣobhya, the latter presiding the repeated depictions of this Buddha all across the wall. Among those and aligning with the throne of Bhaiṣajyaguru are two Buddha groups. The ones on the left are clearly the five esoteric Buddhas wearing monastic robes with Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi in reversed relative position. The six Buddhas on the left probably complete the set of Seven Medicine Buddhas, but their iconography references the five esoteric Buddhas as well and their association with an interspersed Vajradhara adds further doubt to their identity.

The Development of the Sacred Area

BY CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS & HOLGER NEUWIRTH[228]



301 The Sumtsek seen from across the boundary walls in 1982. Note that at this stage, much of the wooden framework of the veranda in front of the top storey was still preserved.

302 Carving of a protector deity or gate-keeper on the left side of the Dukhang door. This protector and its twin on the right side of the door are obscured by the later walls separating the side chapels built into the veranda. CL 1998 (97,48), WHAV.

Besides the main monuments, to which separate chapters are dedicated, there are numerous others of lesser quality throughout the complex that document the rich history of the site. They demonstrate that the foundation of the Alchi Dukhang was at the beginning of a religious flourishing of the site that was to last for approximately one-hundred and fifty years, with the Lhakhang Soma standing at its end. Major donor support then appears to have moved elsewhere in the village to the complexes of Shangrong and Tsatsapuri, which are beyond the scope of this chapter.

While harmonious in its appearance until recently and surprisingly well preserved (301), the present condition of the Alchi Choskhor is the result of a long chain of additions and alterations to the complex as a whole and to the monuments within it. A comparative approach focusing on the different historical stages of the buildings and the complex in an interdisciplinary manner yielded a lot of new information. This detailed interdisciplinary survey of the buildings and their artistic decoration makes it not only possible to extract a complex picture of the earliest development of the monastic complex, but also allows to reconstruct its chronology in some detail. Understanding the monuments in their interrelationship is also important for their interpretation. Observations made in the previous chapters are, thus, based on the broader perspective on the development of the complex outlined in this chapter.

This chapter demonstrates the development of the earliest buildings within the temple complex from an architectural and art historical perspective. It presents the structural units in their most likely relative chronology, but there are several instances of closely related monuments for which the evidence is not entirely clear, and the actual presentation has been arranged according to the relationship of the decorations content. The period covered ranges from the foundation in the late twelfth century, the earliest possible date for the founding of the Dukhang in the centre of the complex, to renovations done in recent decades, but the later history of the monuments will be covered only in so far as it is directly relevant for reconstructing the early history of the complex. Of all the monuments in the complex, two are of particular interest: the area of the Main Temple (*gtsug lag khang*) including its courtyard has been affected by numerous changes through time, and the Jampel Lhakhang (Mañjuśrī Temple) the original appearance of which has been altered considerably obscuring that it once was a separate structure (303).



303 The northern part of the sacred area is dominated by the complex structure of the Main Temple. Access to the temple is provided through the passage on the left of the picture, which leads to a large plain wall with a single small entrance. Passing through this door, one enters the partially roofed courtyard in front of the Dukhang, which also features the addition of two towers to the sides of the veranda, and the Raised Chörten in the centre of the courtyard. This entire area has been the subject of many changes throughout the early history of the monument.

The Jampel Lhakhang, the building in the foreground, was an independent structure before the Lotsawa Lhakhang was added at its southern side. CL 2000 (55,32), WHAV.

Methodology

The architecture of the Alchi complex has received considerable attention in the pioneering study of Romi Khosla, which focuses on the status quo at the time of recording, the nineteen-seventies.[229] In the meantime, both the methodologies and the technical possibilities in architectural documentation and their presentation have changed considerably, allowing not only for a more detailed true to size recording of the complex, but also for its three-dimensional representation from different perspectives (11, 17, 18). The new recording of the complex reflects its condition in the early two-thousands, with 2003 being the cut-off point, and not its present condition (see Recent Changes at the end of this chapter).

Many of the salient architectural features of Alchi Choskhor can be reconstructed on the basis of the internal evidence, comparisons to other monuments throughout the wider western Himalayan region are crucial to evaluate others, in particular with regard to changes in the architecture. As outlined in the chapter The Historical Background, page 19 ff., culturally and art historically Alchi monastery is part of a small group of roughly contemporaneous and closely interrelated monuments. Of particular importance are the two monuments closest to Alchi in historical context and craftsmanship, Mangyu and Sumda Chung, both smaller and less well preserved.[230] Other comparative monuments from approximately the same historical context are either in ruins or single chörten.[231]

From an art historical perspective a number of features are crucial to support a relative chronology of the structures within the complex. Iconographically two themes are emphasized, the increasing importance of Buddha Akṣobhya and the occurrence of Drigung school themes, in particular hierarch depictions, within the programme of the monuments. The



304 The three sections of the Dukhang can also be distinguished from the exterior. The niche in the back of the temple is the highest part of the building. The central main hall today has a lantern, and the veranda in front is the lowest part and almost disappears between the two flanking towers added to it at a later stage. Of the latter, the one in the foreground preserves the original size, while the one in the background has been expanded rather recently. CL 2000 (56,03), WHAV.



305 Ruins of an outer wall following the outlines of the Dukhang indicate that it once had an ambulatory. CL 2000 (56,16), WHAV.

former benefits from the fact that the Alchi temples were created at a time when the most esoteric teachings became increasingly public, a transformation that is documented by the shift from Buddha Vairocana to Buddha Akṣobhya as the main one among the five esoteric Buddhas. The Drigung school was one of the 'new schools' carrying this transformation, and its loose association to Alchi is documented in several ways. As a matter of fact, Alchi is the earliest preserved monument in which references to this school become apparent in its visual programme. However, neither did the shift from Vairocana to Akṣobhya happen immediately nor did Alchi become wholeheartedly a Drigung school monastery, and it is exactly the ambivalence towards the new themes which makes them suitable markers of the transformation process that took place during the time while the Alchi monuments were built.

Equally important for establishing a relative chronology is the consideration of the material quality of the monuments as it is reflected in the architecture and the murals. The former is apparent in the needs for later restorations, while the latter can be assessed on the basis of the abundance and value of the paint used and the artistic quality of the sculptures and paintings.

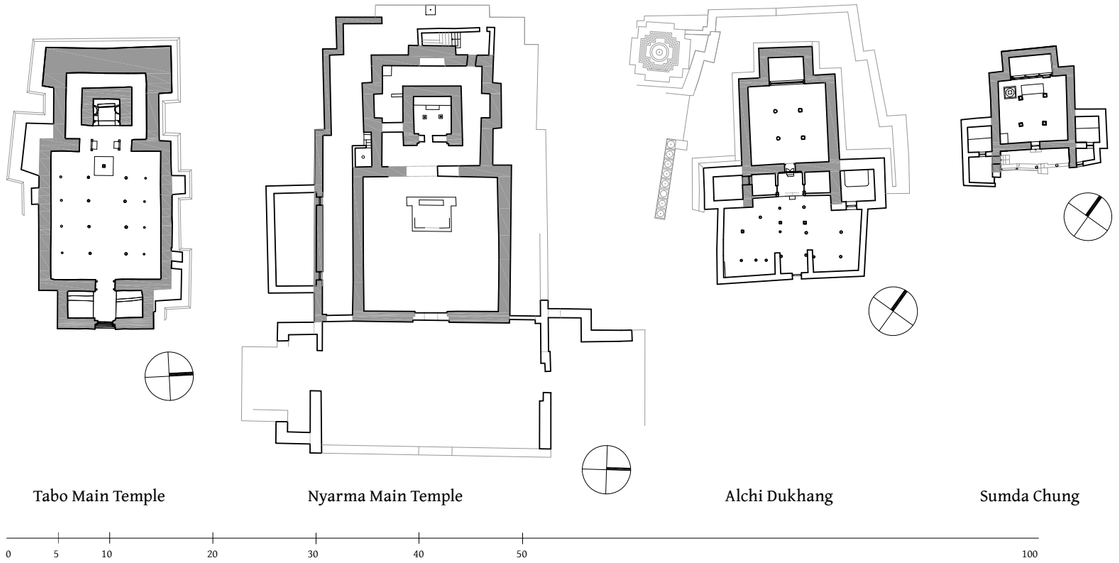
Last but not least, these observations have been strengthened by a re-evaluation of some of the Alchi inscriptions, in particular the founding inscriptions of the Sumtsek (page 781 ff.) and the Palden Drepung Chörten (page 406 ff.), the new finds of which have also been incorporated into this survey.

The principal orientation of the Alchi temples is towards the southeast, but the alignment of each structure appears to have been adapted to the local topography. Situated on an elevated ridge of the alluvial sloping plain above the Indus the width of the built area is rather restricted (13). Most monuments also have a nominal orientation reflected in their iconographic programme, which supports a southern orientation for all temples. In contrast, the four earliest passage chörten are facing east.

Dukhang

The Assembly Hall or Dukhang (*'du khang*) is the largest structure at the centre of the sacred area (*chos 'khor*), and dominates the structural complex of the Main Temple (*gtsug lag khang*). The structure is unanimously seen as representing the oldest stage of the complex.

Architecturally, the original building of the Main Temple has a typical threefold structure consisting of a niche containing the holiest, in this case the clay sculptures surrounded by murals forming a Vajradhātu mandala assembly. In front of it is a comparatively large



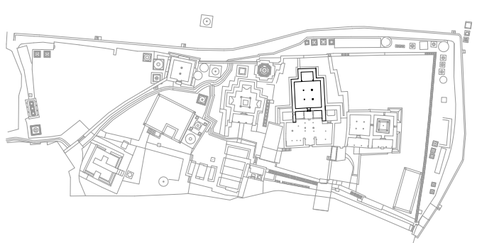
306 An in scale typological comparison of some major early western Himalayan monuments reveals not only their relationship in terms of construction, but also a considerable difference in size. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

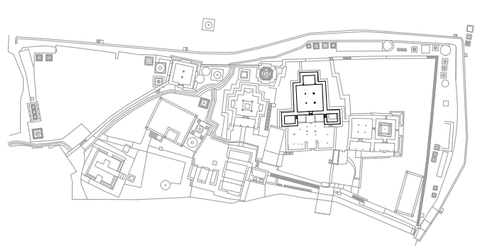
307 In the first two phases of the development of the sacred area, the complex evolved around the three-parted structure of the Dukhang. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

308 In the second phase, two towers of the same size were added to the sides of the Dukhang's entry area. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

almost square assembly hall with four pillars containing murals. Further, the original temple included some form of an entry hall or veranda the original appearance of which must have been similar to the present one (304, 307).

This threefold structure has many typological comparisons in the region, among them in the Main Temples of Tabo and Nyarma, both foundations of the late tenth century, and Sumda Chung contemporaneous with the Alchi temples. A comparison of these monuments at the same scale reveals that the Alchi group foundations are considerably smaller than those of the earlier Purang-Guge kingdom period (306). The comparison to the Main Temple in Nyarma further shows that walls behind the Main Temple of Alchi can be interpreted as remains of an original ambulatory (305). These remains are so fragmentary that only an archaeological investigation of this area could prove if the wall is indeed contemporary with the building or not. Another convention can be recognized in the relative proportions of the assembly halls, in most cases the ground plan of the hall itself is actually a square. Further, the entrance areas are most prone to later restorations, and any evidence for additional original structures around the front of the temple has been obscured by the later interventions in this area.







309 Repairs at the roof of the Alchi Dukhang obscure its original construction almost entirely. The square in the centre remains of the original window, while the lantern in front of it is modern. CL 2000 (56,11) WHAV.

310 The construction of the Main Temple at Sumda Chung indicates that also at Alchi the niche originally may only have had a gabled roof in its centre. The superstructure protecting the original gable is certainly more recent. HN 1998.

311 The lion brackets terminating the cross-beams of the veranda indeed compare best to the ones in the interior of the temple. HN 2003 (60,33).

312 The projection of the front wall of the tower above the veranda. HN 2000.



As is well known since the pioneering work of Snellgrove & Skorupski, the Dukhang focuses on Yoga Tantra topics. In the central niche is a variant of the assembly of the Great Diamond Sphere Mandala (Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala), the main mandala of the Yoga Tantra cycle, headed by a four-faced form of Buddha Vairocana. The main hall is filled with murals of complementary Yoga Tantra topics, including the Dharmadhātu mandala (109 f.) and two mandalas from the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (167 f.), all of which focus on main deities taking the position of Buddha Vairocana. This emphasis on Vairocana is balanced by representing Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati on the short walls flanking the niche (155 f.), and the protector deity Mahākāla, whose primary Buddha also is Akṣobhya, above the entrance (38). As inconspicuous these two topics may appear from the present perspective, both mark a shift from earlier western Himalayan monuments. In the understanding of the research that went into this publication, the paradise of Akṣobhya not only functions as the prime destination for rebirth, but also as a hint towards the more esoteric practices open to advanced practitioners only, and represented in a protective form through Mahākāla.

Also the beautifully carved, but coarsely repainted, door-frame is very likely of the foundation period of the temple, since both its style and iconography conform to it (35). Its main Buddha is again a four-faced Mahāvairocana in the centre of the five esoteric Buddhas. The carved protectors to the sides of the door, now hidden behind the walls closing off the veranda chapels (302), hint towards an original protective function of the iconographic programme of







the original entry structure. Here the Tabo Main Temple can be cited as comparison, as it has protectors in the entrance to the Assembly Hall.[232]

The roof structure of the Dukhang and its niche cannot be considered original, but must have been replaced in their entirety at some stage. This is not only indicated by the lack of original ceiling panels and the lesser quality of some of the wooden members, but also by the exterior of the roof. The changes are most obvious at the window above the niche (309) when it is compared with that of Sumda Chung (310). The latter perfectly preserves the original gable construction with a triangular wooden window frame, which originally was the only light source to the temple. Obviously, the superstructure above the gable of Sumda Chung is a later addition as well, instead we have to imagine that the gable was simply covered with clay, as still the case above the gables of the sculptural niches in the Sumtsek (331).

For art historical reasons our original position that the two-pillar-two-pilaster veranda as preserved today is original to the foundation cannot be maintained anymore without qualifications. Reviewing the wood carvings of the site they develop in parallel to the murals from flatter, less detailed renderings to more intricate and sumptuous detailing (380–385). Thus, it is the carvings on some of the capitals inside the Dukhang (37, 380) that must be considered original to the foundation, while the veranda carvings relate best to those of the Sumtsek and the Jampel Lhakhang, and are most likely contemporaneous with the addition of the courtyard in front of the temple.

Nevertheless, as is indicated by some technical details, there must have been an original veranda of the same size as the present one. The cross-beams supporting the veranda's roof, which is lower than that of the assembly hall, are integral part of the entry wall of the assembly hall. As is also indicated by the truncated form of the lion brackets (311), the cross beams

313 Top section of the Dukhang door with the seven main scenes of the Buddha's life above and the five esoteric Buddhas centred on a four-faced Vairocana below. G. Tucci, IsMEO.

314 Facing page top left to bottom right: Ratnasambhava and Mahā-vairocana in the centre of the five esoteric Buddhas on the Dukhang door. CL 1994 (15,17), WHAV.

315 Six-armed form of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā in the centre of the lower lintel. CL 1994 (15,18), WHAV.

316 Middle row: Unique four-armed from of the Bodhisattva Vajrasattva, the position of the main arms indicating this as the most likely identification. CL 1998 (98,05), WHAV.

317 Offering goddess Puṣpā (in the appearance of the garland holding Mālā). CL 1998 (98,08), WHAV.

318 Offering goddess Dhūpā, her attribute being lost. CL 1994 (15,24), WHAV.

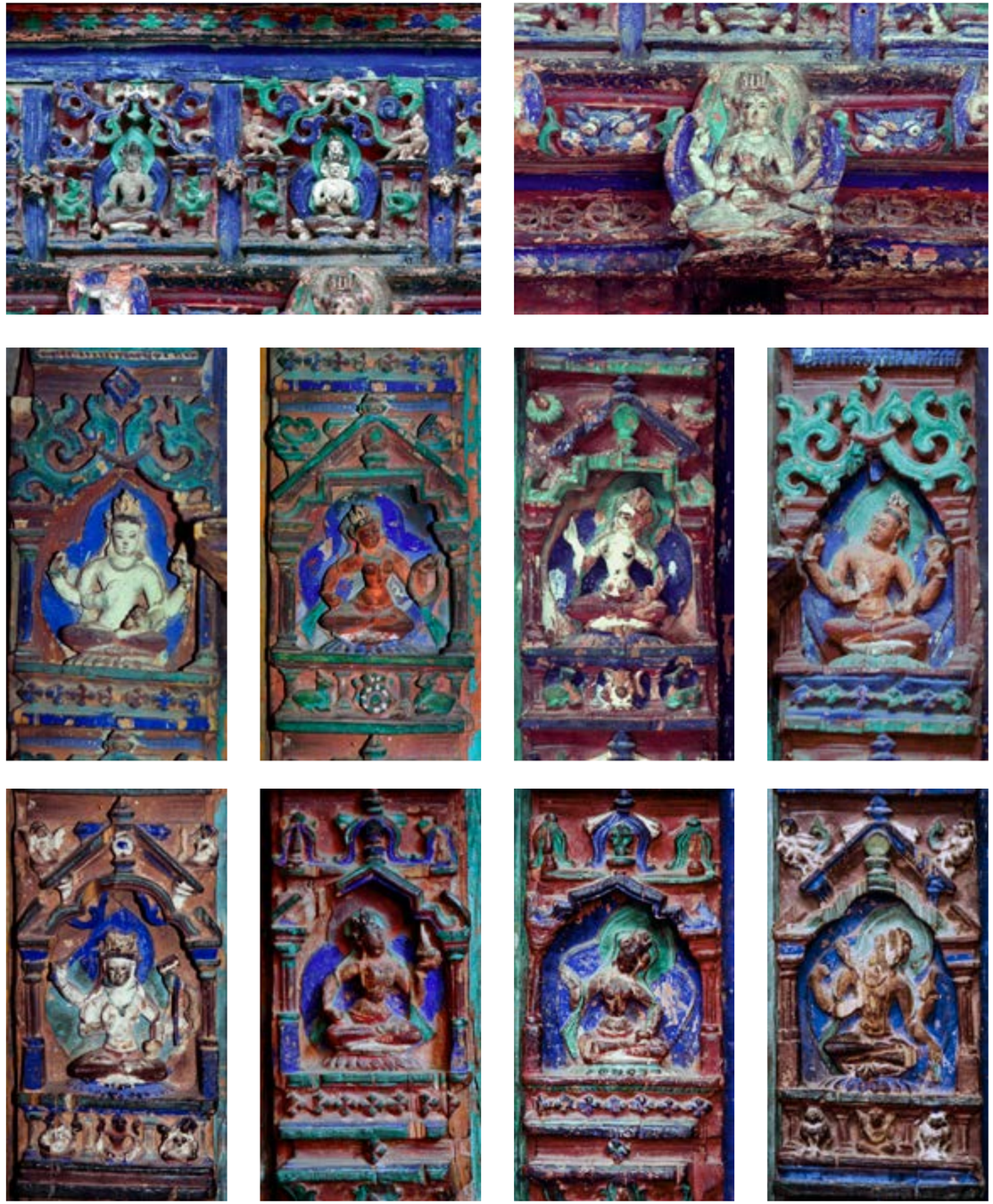
319 Four-armed form of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, the identification suggested by the lotus behind the book in his raised left hand. The colours are modern and can be discarded. CL 1998 (98,13), WHAV.

320 Bottom row: Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī surrounded by the four offering goddesses, which are identical to those on the door itself. CL 1998 (98,10), WHAV.

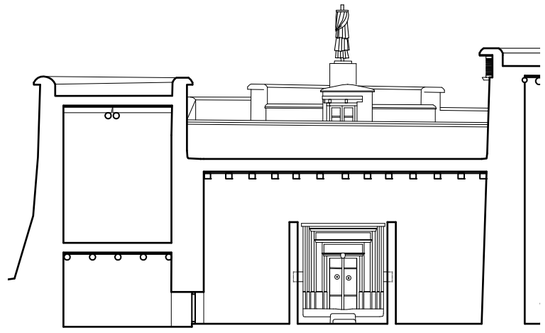
321 Offering goddess Ālokā holding a bowl with a flame. CL 1998 (98,11), WHAV.

322 Offering goddess Gandhā, who once held a conch in her raised right hand. CL 1998 (98,15), WHAV.

323 This four-armed Bodhisattva most likely represents Maitreya holding a flask in his lower left hand. The main right hand most likely holds the *nāgakesara* twig, another characteristic attribute. CL 1998 (98,14), WHAV.[60]







ending in them go back to the original phase, as does their location. A major change in this area likely would have resulted in disturbances of the painted surface in the interior of the hall. Further, the left side wall of the assembly hall continues with that of the veranda, and both the beam supporting the veranda's roof and the capital of the side pilaster there directly align with that wall (311). Above the veranda, this wall continues with lesser thickness to form the right side wall of the left (original) tower (324). In contrast, the southeast wall of the tower, its front wall, takes over the original thickness of the veranda wall, resulting in a projection at that corner above the veranda (312).

In other words, those parts of intricate carving are likely from the later restoration, while the shape of the veranda itself and some of its wooden elements, including the lion brackets ending the cross beams go back to the foundation of the temple. The new additions are discussed with the addition of the courtyard below.

Two Towers

A survey of the courtyard in front of the Dukhang and the structures connected to it reveals that two tower like structures have been added in a second phase to the sides of the original entry hall (308), only the one on the Sumtsek side still of the original size and intent (324). As we have seen, these buildings have been adjoined to the existing structure under the partial usage of already existing walls. It may well be, that at that stage the ambulatory around the temple has been extended around the towers as well.

Architecturally, the original tower is unique insofar as its floor is raised considerably above ground level, creating an empty lower chamber that may have been used for storage, as it can be accessed through a small opening from the veranda chapel (325). The main room above is today accessed from the roof of the courtyard, but its floor level is considerably lower than that, and the ceiling level is marked on the outside by a beam projecting the entry wall above the door (324). The room itself is rectangular, 3.27 by 3.03 metres, with the main and entrance sides wider than the side walls. As damages to the painted surfaces on the interior reveal, the door has been exchanged recently.

Despite its poor condition, this tower is one of the most exciting discoveries of the detailed survey of the complex. With the exception of the painted borders, the valance at the top and the lozenge band at the bottom the main wall is empty. Only three horizontal rows of pegholes, partly patched up with plaster, give an indication of its original usage. In addition, the wall has been covered with bright brown paint that continues onto the side walls. Thus the

324 The two tower buildings flanking the Dukhang, which in 2003 has an additional protective roof. The building on the left is the original tower containing murals, the roof covers the courtyard in the centre of which is the Raised Chörten. CL 2003 (8199).

325 A cut through the tower structures shows the raised floor level of the original tower as well as the access to the space underneath. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

326 Murals of the painted tower: The right side wall of the tower features a single large teaching assembly with the Buddha seated on a lotus stem flanked by *nāga*. Height of the painting *c.* 230 cm. CL 1998 (91,23), WHAV.

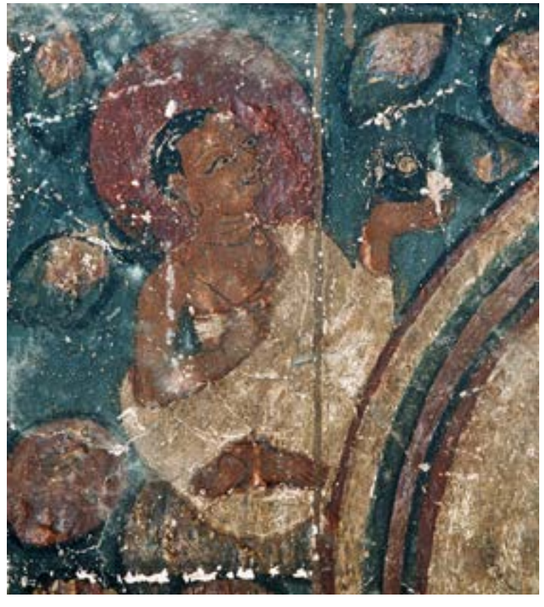
327 Teaching Buddha in the centre of a five figure assembly in the top right corner of the entry wall. Height *c.* 100 cm. CL 1998 (92,17), WHAV.

328 Monk with begging staff and bowl attending a teaching Buddha. Note the thick black outlines around the blossoms surrounding the monk. Height of the figure *c.* 30 cm. CL 1998 (91,05), WHAV.

329 Kneeling worshipper with his body shaded by highlighting. Height of the figure *c.* 30 cm. CL 1998 (91,19), WHAV.









main focus of the room is today represented by an empty space, approximately half a metre deep and occupying the whole main wall.

The remaining walls are covered by differently sized scenes in each of which a Buddha teaches varied audiences. On the left side wall there are the remains of six such teaching scenes with the central Buddhas accompanied by audiences of four, two monks above and two bejewelled Bodhisattvas, gods or lay followers below. These Buddhas may refer to the six predecessors of Śākyamuni but can also be read together with those on the entrance wall. The right side wall, in contrast, is covered by the remains of a single large teaching scene with six rows of three figures on each side as audience, including monks, gods and/or Bodhisattvas, *nāga*, lay followers and musicians in the lower corners (326). The Buddha sits on a lotus supported by four-armed *nāga* and there appears to be a pond underneath. This scene is clearly the main scene of the room and reminds of the final teaching scene of the *Lalitavistara* and other expansive teaching settings as they are found in the Mahāyāna literature, but its exact source has not been identified. The Buddha represented here is most likely Śākyamuni. The entry wall has four more teaching scenes with audiences of four figures each flanking the entrance. Together with the six scenes on the left wall they can be read as referencing the Buddhas of the ten directions. A badly damaged depiction of Mahākāla above the door protects the space. He is of the same two-armed type as in the other early monuments of the site but without retinue.

Only details of the murals, some of the Buddhas (327) as well as their audience, among them monks (328), gods, Bodhisattvas, royal figures (329) and musicians, including a harpist, reveal some of the original quality of these paintings, which for Alchi standards are unusually large scale. The occasional usage of thick black outlines for the main features of the painting is noteworthy. Stylistically these paintings fit between the Dukhang and the early thirteenth-century paintings of the Sumtsek with some elements, such as the Buddha depictions, closer to the latter.

The unusual shape of this monument begs the question about its original usage. We presume that the empty space indicates the presence of a bookshelf used to store books. We know from Rinchen Zangpo's biography and the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari* (*mnga' ris rgyal rabs*)[233] that book donations, in particular the *Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) literature, were a common part of a temple foundation in the region, and also the Alchi inscriptions refer to book production.[234] Thus, the Alchi tower preserves the earliest example preserved in the Himalayas of a space dedicated to book storage. The room can, thus, be seen as a predecessor of a Kanjur Lhakhang (*bka' 'gyur lha khang*), a temple for the words of the Buddha, from a time in which the Tibetan Kanjur has not yet been finalised. This interpretation also explains the emphasis on teaching Buddhas in the iconographic programme of the temple. Even though a direct source for the depictions cannot be identified, reading Śākyamuni as the Buddha in the main assembly and the Buddhas of the ten directions for the others fits the general gist of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. From an architectural perspective, the usage as a book deposit also explains the peculiarities of the building with its rectangular plan and raised floor level to avoid humidity reaching the manuscripts. Thus, it is the function that prompts the peculiar shape of the structure.

Similar tower-like structures have been added flanking the Assembly Hall of Sumda Chung, and details in the architecture, such as the alignment of the wooden sticks at roof level, clearly reveal that they are additions (see 306). However, despite their identical location, these towers were made to house the giant sculptures of the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya, which complement the iconographic programme of the Assembly Hall there.[235]



330 The southern part of the complex with the path leading into the sacred area to the right of the Palden Drepung Chörten. Passing by the recent Kanjur Lhakhang it leads directly towards the Tashi Gomang Chörten, the right of the double chörten in bottom left area. Directly to the right of the double chörten is the Sumtsek, and further right, behind the Kanjur Lhakhang and somewhat encroaching onto the present circumambulation path, is the Lhakhang Soma. CL 2000 (55,28), WHAV.

In Alchi, the tower-like structures certainly preceded the courtyard wall, which enclosed a wider area in front of the Main Temple. From the alignment of the temples (333), it has to be concluded that the courtyard in front of the Main Temple was only built after the Sumtsek was added to the sacred enclosure. This is also confirmed by the decoration preserved in the courtyard.

Sumtsek

Although there have been slight alterations to the three-storeyed structure of the Sumtsek on the exterior and the secondary sculptures in the interior, the temple is preserved in almost immaculate condition. The intricate building has a square interior and niches on three sides (331). Its space is constructed in a clear geometric pattern with the entire structure fitting into a cube and its interior largely following a basic grid deriving from it. The niches have gabled roofs reaching into the upper floor and housing the heads of the large Bodhisattva sculptures placed into them (346).

The three floors of the building actually represent three superimposed sacred spaces, each with its own veranda (301, 332, 497) and a distinct iconographic programme in its interior. The uppermost storey, a lantern size miniature temple, concludes with a lantern ceiling decorated with the painted textile patterns typical for Alchi group monuments (821). In general, the painted ceilings of the Sumtsek represents the highest quality examples for this type of decoration and match the quality of the murals (see The Ceilings and Their Painted Textile Motifs, page 673 ff.).





331 This aerial view reveals the main architectural parts of the Sumtsek. In the centre is a cube surrounded by three niches with gabled roofs, the back niche somewhat higher and larger. The top storey has a conical roof topped by mud and a victory banner. Note also the distinctly shaped chörten in the bottom right corner. CL 2000 (55,25), WHAV.

332 The upper storeys of the Sumtsek have their own verandas, the one of the top storey preserved in fragments only. CL 2000 (56,32), WHAV.

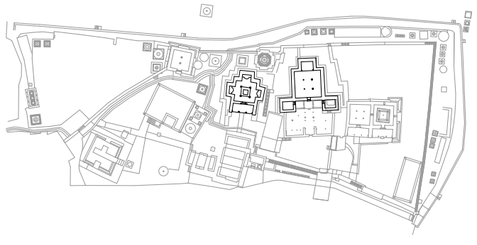
333 In a third phase, the three-storeyed structure of the Sumtsek was added to the complex by Tsültrim Ö approximately a generation after the foundation of the Main Temple. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

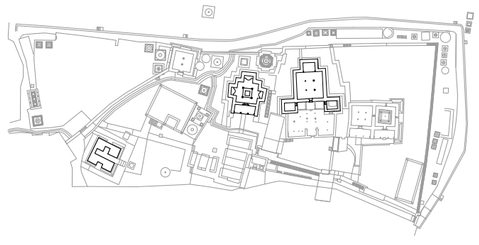
334 In a fourth phase, immediately after, Tsültrim Ö added the Palden Drepung Chörten to the entrance of the complex. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

This is the first instance of a lantern ceiling at Alchi. This ceiling type, forming a false cupola over a square ground plan, is thought to have originated in Iran and spread over large areas of Asia. It is, for example, found in cave temples at Bāmiyān (fifth to seventh centuries CE), and in the caves of Kizil and Dunhuang.[236] It also has been used in temples of Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, as well as in early wooden mosques.[237] In Ladakhi Buddhist architecture it is particularly popular in chörten built in the 13th and 14th centuries and locally attributed to Rinchen Zangpo.

The two lower verandas are of the two pillar two pilaster type, while the uppermost one originally consisted of a light roof held up by two wooden pillars. The latter is only preserved in fragments and is prefigured by the emphasis on the central section of the veranda underneath (332). As liminal spaces between the secular outside and the sacred interior, they have protective and edifying imagery, the decoration on each level adjusted to the content of the interior. Since these are benchmarks for Kashmir inspired woodcarving, they are extensively reproduced here.

On the ground floor veranda, the capitals flanking the entrance feature the protectors Vajrapāṇi (335) and Acala (336), their stance directed towards the entrance. The capitals of the pilasters turned ninety degree towards the veranda's side walls have images of the Bodhisattvas Maitreya (337) and Avalokiteśvara (338) in stunningly different frames and decorative patterns. The side capitals also had leaf-shaped additions at their corners with seated figures in them, only two of them partially preserved. A capital of Lachuse preserves a fragmented version of such a capital that pre-dates the Sumtsek,[238] while the Avalokiteśvara capital is reproduced again in the veranda of the Jampel Lhakhang (407). The triangular insertions in the ground floor veranda are purely decorative and set between triple pillars (340, 510, 511). The figures inserted into these spaces are later additions, as apparent from their relationship









335 Left capital of the ground floor veranda of the Sumtsek featuring Vajrapāṇi. CL 2009 (2140).

336 Right capital of the ground floor veranda of the Sumtsek with Acala. CL 2009 (2141).

(340). In fact, some of them actually changed location over the last three decades.[239] The pilasters in this section, which are much less disturbed than the lower ones, feature *garuḍa* on their capitals (339).

The veranda on middle storey level is structured in the same way, its two pillars above the ones underneath (495). Their capitals have seated Buddhas on the outside, which are considerably worn now. An additional feature are the lions added to the capitals on the entrance side and protecting it. Their pilasters feature flying goddesses offering garlands, their legs joined above the head (342). An astonishing fact is the longevity of the technological shapes of the architectural members used. The lion brackets on the ground floor and the voluted brackets used on the middle storey (341) have their direct predecessors in stone members used in Gandhāran architecture, only their decoration was adjusted.[240] Also the door of the middle storey is carved, but its only figurative depiction is a four-armed Bodhisattva in the centre of the lintel, the identity of which cannot be ascertained (343).

Surprisingly, the main door frame on the ground floor is not decorated at all. The interior of the temple is dominated by the three large standing Bodhisattvas standing in the three niches. In the direction of circumambulation these are four-armed forms of the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī. The back niche for Maitreya is about 40 centimetres taller than the side niches. Each of the Bodhisattvas is flanked by four more sculptures and the entire interior is painted, resulting in an extremely complex iconographic programme (see Mapping the Iconographic Programme of the Sumtsek, page 735 ff.

337 Left capital of the ground floor veranda of the Sumtsek with Maitreya. CL 2000 (56,44), WHAV.

338 Right capital of the ground floor veranda of the Sumtsek featuring Avalokiteśvara. CL 2000 (56,46), WHAV.











339 Pilaster at the top of the ground floor level veranda with *garuḍa*. CL 2009 (2451).

340 View of the left corner of ground floor veranda, with the main architrave and its superstructure. Note the relationship of the triangular element and the sculpture placed within it. CL 2009 (9660).

341 Voluted brackets on the middle storey of the Sumtsek. CL 2000 (57,10), WHAV.

For the present context, it is sufficient to focus on the main themes in comparison to the Main Temple. As such, the Sumtsek's programme represents a further step in the transition from Buddha Vairocana as the pre-eminent Buddha among the five esoteric Buddhas to Akṣobhya. Vairocana, for example, is the central Buddha in crown of Bodhisattva Maitreya, who is the main sculpture of the temple (600 & 674). On the middle storey, Vairocana is represented in the centre of the halo of the Buddha directly above the temple's main image which can be interpreted as apotheosis of Śākyamuni (676).[241] In the top storey, Mahāvairocana is implicitly the main Buddha of the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala depicted on its main wall, as Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha depicted there sits at his heart (770).[242] Actually, all the mandalas on this level have a deity in the centre that represents Vairocana.

Akṣobhya, in contrast, is the Buddha in the central panels of the walls flanking the main niche containing Maitreya, and his representations cover the entire wall (587). Akṣobhya's paradise, Abhirati, is shown on the proper right wall of Maitreya's niche (616), and opposite it is a similar paradise of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī (611), establishing a relationship between the two. This relationship is replicated with the sculpture of Mañjuśrī, who has Akṣobhya in his crown (346). Among the five Buddha fields on the middle storey Akṣobhya is represented on par with Vairocana, but further off the centre of the wall (674 f.). Thus, although Vairocana remains the most prominent Buddha in the Sumtsek, Akṣobhya received more attention than he did in the Dukhang.

However, the relationship of the two Buddhas as it is expressed in the Sumtsek's iconographic programme requires a detour that assesses the niches in their entirety in their relationship to Esoteric Buddhist practice. This reading is the result of the new understanding of some of the depicted topics, in particular the Dharmadhātu mandala and the relationship of the Alchi depictions to the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*), developed while working on this publication. This interpretation further includes the new information on the secondary sculptures provided by the newly translated founding inscription of the temple (see page 781 ff.). Due to the complexity of these spaces, the following section may be difficult to follow without familiarity of the niches' content.





342 Pilaster capital with flying *apsaras* offering garland on the middle storey veranda. CL 2000 (57,14), WHAV.

343 Lintel of the middle storey door with a four-armed Bodhisattva in the centre. CL 2000 (57,02), WHAV.

The two paradise panels on the side walls of Maitreya's niche (611, 616) are accompanied by a large deity each painted in the back of the niche (600).[243] On the side of Akṣobhya's paradise is the eight-armed Mañjughoṣa, the main deity of the Dharmadhātu mandala, and on the side of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī is another variant of Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha. With this ten-armed form, the five heads are differently coloured but they are staggered in a peculiar manner, with the side heads red and blue, and the yellow and green faces above each other on top of the main one.[244] These placements are deliberate, as the right side wall combination replicates the relative positions of the Dharmadhātu mandala and Abhirati paradise in the Dukhang, and Mañjughoṣa provides a clue to the presence of esoteric practitioners at the bottom of Akṣobhya's panel (616–621). The two forms of Mañjuśrī on the left side wall complement each other and are attributed to the same textual source, the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*. The two rows of monastics and lay followers on the bottom of the Mañjuśrī panel (611), however, are rather to be read as directed towards the central Maitreya sculpture than towards Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha, but implicitly still worship him, as he also sits at the heart of Mahāvairocana, who is in Maitreya's crown.

The side niches have deities depicted in their gables that are to be understood as superior to the actual sculpture and the Buddha in its crown. These figures are impossible to see from the ground floor and even from the middle storey one would have to know that they are there to make an attempt to see them (344). However, the careful documentation on which this publication is based revealed their presence and whereabouts. At the pinnacle of the niche above Avalokiteśvara, and thus also Buddha Amitābha in his crown, is a depiction of a white Vajrasattva (345), and above Mañjuśrī, and thus also Akṣobhya in his crown (346), is a four-headed and eight-armed figure seated on an elephant throne (347). This deity combines features of Dharmadhātu Mañjughoṣa with features of Guhyasamāja Akṣobhyavajra, explicitly combining the two and supporting the understanding that the Dharmadhātu mandala implicitly references secret assembly (*guhyasamāja*) practice. Thus, these deities re-enforce that an understanding of the three niches has to be based on the depicted topics, and that the idealised interpretation using the scheme of the three Buddha bodies (*trikāya*) as presented in inscription no. 6 on the left side wall of the Maitreya niche, which is commonly used to interpret the sculptures (see The Colossal Sculptures on the Ground Floor, page 484 f. & 611), must be considered poetic rather than explanatory.

In a content based reading of the ground floor, the Maitreya sculpture alone represents the *trikāya* theory perfectly (600), the sculpture itself representing the enjoyment body (*saṃbhogakāya*). The display of the Buddha's life (601–609), be it that of Śākyamuni or





344 Location of Vajrasattva in the gable of Avalokiteśvara's niche. Note also that the lotus above the Bodhisattva's heads is an independent feature; 1990.

345 Vajrasattva above the head of the Avalokiteśvara sculpture on the back wall of its niche; 1990.

Maitreya, on Maitreya's dhoti perfectly corresponds to the fleeting apparition body (*nirmāṇakāya*) of the Buddha, and the absolute body (*dharmakāya*) is hinted towards by the five esoteric Buddhas in Maitreya's crown (867) as well as Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha.

Against the usual conventions in the Sumtsek the right side walls of the niches, being seen first by the circumambulating visitor, depict the hierarchically more important theme, the left wall depiction resonating with it. Thus, in Maitreya's niche Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati (616) is complemented by a similar realm headed by the four-armed Mañjuśrī (611), of which Akṣobhya is the primary Buddha. It is this latter depiction and the two additional forms of Mañjuśrī along with the *vajrācārya* priests (621) that hints towards an esoteric reading of the niche. Akṣobhya's prominence in the niche and on the walls flanking it (587–599), which also hint towards his Abhirati paradise, stands for the importance of the vajra family (*vajrakula*) in highest Esoteric Buddhist practice.

Avalokiteśvara's niche addresses similar concerns, but in a more mundane context as exemplified by the depictions on his dress (539–561). Here Buddha Amitābha in his Sukhāvatī paradise occupies the centre of the niche's right wall (577–584). Avalokiteśvara and the different forms of Green Tārā on the left side wall of the niche (562–576) can be read as Amitābha's agents addressing mundane concerns, their compassion triggered by worship and contemplation alone. Vajrasattva above the head of Avalokiteśvara (345) merely hints towards esoteric means as an additional resource. Together with the two wrathful protectors at the niche's front end, namely Vajrapāṇi (566) and Acala as wrathful removers of obstacles trampling on Gaṇapati, Vajrasattva forms an esoteric protective triangle for the niche as a whole (522).

The highest esoteric practices are implicitly the focus of the Mañjuśrī niche, the *mahāsiddha* represented on the dhoti of the Bodhisattva representing their mundane protagonists (637–650). The naked black Indian *mahāsiddha* singled out at the bottom of this depiction (650), Padampa Sanggyé (*pha dam pa sangs rgyas*), stands for the transmission of these teachings to the Himalayas. The four-faced, and eight-armed Akṣobhya in the top centre of the niche (347) represents both Dharmadhātu and Guhyasamāja practices.

In this reading, a circumambulation of the monument thus leads from more mundane concerns in present and afterlife to increasingly esoteric forms. Among those the four-armed Mañjuśrī from the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*) is particularly emphasized (629–637). Thereby, the differently coloured representations of Mañjuśrī are the five forms of wisdom as symbolised by the five esoteric Buddhas, and the orange form in the central panel must be considered superior to those. This is a concept unique to Alchi, where this





346 Head of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī with Buddha Akṣobhya in the centre of the five Buddha crown, 1981.

347 Four-faced and eight-armed Akṣobhya above the head of the Mañjuśrī sculpture on the back wall of its niche; 1990.

form of Mañjuśrī is linked to Buddha Akṣobhya through his double representation on top of the Mañjuśrī sculpture (346, 347).

A circumambulation movement is also indicated by the sculptural programme of each niche. As the foundation inscription clarifies (page 788), Avalokiteśvara is heading a unique Amoghapāśa assembly (539; see Amoghapāśa Mandalas, page 774 ff.), a theme that fits well with the more mundane concerns of this niche, while Maitreya (600) and Mañjuśrī (637) are accompanied by the inner and outer offering goddesses respectively. The latter appears to contradict the notion of increasing secrecy, but align with the presiding Buddhas of the two niches as the inner offering goddesses are Vairocana's offerings to the surrounding Buddhas, while the outer offering goddesses are their offerings in return (see page 754).[245]

Increasing secrecy can also be deduced vertically with the middle storey representing variants of the Vajradhātu mandala which, in contrast to those of the Dukhang, are now explicitly re-interpreted from the perspective of the Highest Yoga Tantras (see Vajradhātu Mandalas, page 756 ff.). This is most obvious in the attribution of the goddesses to the Buddhas and the Vajraguhya mandala, which represents the consorts only. On the main wall of the top storey this culminates in the mandala of Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha (770), who in commentaries on the *Litany of Names* is visualised emerging from the heart centre of Mahāvairocana and effectively combines the wisdom of the five esoteric Buddhas in a superior manifestation.

Just opposite this depiction, to the left of the entrance to the floor-less top storey is the inscribed early Kagyü lineage the final teacher of which is Drigungpa (760, 766). The lineage is unusual insofar as two additional teachers are inserted between Gampopa and Pakmodrupa. The depiction also communicates a degree of uncertainty with the topic that is hard to explain if it is not done at the very beginning of the establishment of such lineages in the western Himalayas.[246] These facts and the material and stylistic coherence of this lineage with the other paintings in this floor and throughout the Sumtsek (see The Sumtsek Lineage Paintings and Their Implications for Dating, page 723 ff.) support Goepper's conclusion that this depiction along with its inscription is indeed of the foundation of the temple.

This is Drigungpa's first occurrence at Alchi and, as a new reading of the inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten confirms (see The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff.), it was included here to commemorate him. Otherwise, none of the themes depicted inside the Sumtsek is specifically associated with the Drigung or any other Kagyü school. However, the programme of the temple as analysed above, including the depiction of the eighty plus *mahāsiddha* and the inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten, are clear evidence of a religious environment that is on the verge of making Highest Yoga Tantra teachings public.



348 Of the eight layers of the lantern ceiling of the Palden Drepung Chörten the top panel is lost. It must have contained an image of Mahāvairocana. CL 2010 (5879).



349 General view of the interior of the Palden Drepung Chörten, with the west and north walls in the background. On the latter the array of Akṣobhya Buddhas ends with the last column to right of the window, where it transitions to the Bodhisattvas representing the five Buddha families. CL 2010 (5864).



350 Gate of the ceiling mandala on level 4 of the lantern ceiling in the Palden Drepung Chörten. CL 1998 (101,50), WHAV.



351 Walls of the ceiling mandala and vase of plenty on level 5 of the lantern ceiling. CL 2003 (8377).

352 Detail of the north wall showing the smaller Buddhas at the window and the transition from repeated Akṣobhya to the main Bodhisattvas of the five Buddha families. CL 2003 (8371).

353 East side of the throne of the inner chörten with the faint traces of a pair of elephants, the vehicle of Buddha Akṣobhya. CL 2018 (8566).

The Drigung lineage in the Sumtsek is not the only connection to this school within the Alchi complex, since references to Drigungpa are also found in the two oldest gateway chörten built shortly after it. As documented by an inscription within it, the Palden Drepung Chörten was built immediately after the Sumtsek by the same donor, Tsültrim Ö, who in the inscription re-enforces his veneration for Drigungpa. The inscription also provides valuable clues on the chörten and their designation.

Palden Drepung Chörten

At the southwestern end of the complex, the entrance to the sacred area from the village, the Palden Drepung Chörten may originally have served as a gateway to the monastic complex (13, 330, 334). Today, all but one of the four entrances to the chörten are closed off, and one enters the complex immediately to the side of it. The large gateway chörten was studied in detail by Roger Goepper using the name Great Stūpa for it. As Goepper has already demonstrated, the Sumtsek is mentioned in its inscription, albeit obliquely (see Body Supports, page 407 f.). Information provided in the inscription has also been used to give the two earliest chörten at Alchi proper names.

Architecturally, the Palden Drepung Chörten is a cluster of a large central chörten surrounded by four minor structures placed in the corners of a raised common basement (207–209). Originally, corridors were cutting through this basement on all four sides, giving access to a roughly cubical painted interior topped by a lantern ceiling (348). Within this cube is an





intricate multi-cornered smaller chörten of the descent from the gods type (lhabap chörten, *lha babs mchod rten*) with stairs on all four faces (220, 349). The outer chörten, in contrast, cannot be identified securely in terms of its typology, but it differs from the many auspicious doors (tashi gomang, *bkra shis sgo mang*) type that is represented in other early Alchi chörten. The Palden Drepung Chörten is the largest and probably also the earliest of this type of double chörten monument that only occurs in the among the Alchi group of monuments and within a rather narrow time-frame, the thirteenth century.

As the Sumtsek, the Palden Drepung Chörten is a transitional monument, but it is not actually dedicated to Buddha Akṣobhya, as later passage chörten are (see below). Instead, the mandala of the lantern ceiling represents a fifty-three-deity Vajradhātu mandala (see the description in chapter on this chörten) and dedicates the chörten to Vairocana. In contrast, more than half of the chörten's interior walls are covered with approximately thousand images of Akṣobhya (349). The remaining walls are dedicated to the primary Bodhisattvas of the five Buddha families, but it is unclear who was considered central among them (211, 352).[247] Also the inner chörten is dedicated to Buddha Vairocana, as the pair of elephants representing the vehicle of Buddha Akṣobhya is recognisable on the east side (353).[248]

The inner walls of the interior chörten are each dedicated to the sole representation of a teacher (221–226) two of them already familiar from the Sumtsek. On the east wall, the wall facing the visitor entering the sacred area through the chörten, is the dark-skinned Indian *mahāsiddha* Padampa Sanggyé (222), and opposite him is Drigungpa (225). The latter is of white complexion, and the two priests on the side walls are directed towards him. Both the inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten (The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff.) and the depiction of the same teacher in the Tashi Gomang Chörten (252) prove the identity of this monk.

Alchi Type Gateway Chörten

One of several designations given by local monks to this and other gateway chörten is *kankani* chörten (*kaṃ ka ni mchod rten*). This term refers to the beginning of the mantra of Buddha Akṣobhya, and thus implies an association with—or even representation of—this Buddha.[249] This can often be confirmed when the surrounding walls contain the images of the other four Buddhas among the five esoteric Buddhas in the respective directions. There are several examples for such chörten at Alchi, including the Raised Chörten in the courtyard of the Main Temple and the Lönpo Chörten, both discussed below.

The inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten mentions two other possible designations for the monument Palden Drepung and Bumter Tashi Gomang. Both imply a multitude of images, the term *bumter* (*'bum ther*) referring to one-hundred-thousand of them. The latter stupa-type is linked by the inscription to the Tashi Gomang built by Drigungpa, and it eventually leads to the Tashi Gomang type chörten of Densatil. Their elaborate imagery containing the entire pantheon of deities of the time in an hierarchical arrangement.[250] The Tashi Gomang type further closely relates to the kumbum chörten (*sku 'bum mchod rten*), 'chörten of one hundred thousand images', a name used for a number of large chörten with painted chapels on all levels, the best preserved of which being the one at Gyantsé (*rgyal rtse*).[251] Architecturally a Tashi Gomang is characterized by its many levels each of which features at least three windows, standing for the many doors which reference the multitude of teachings that lead to awakening. In the Densatil chörten these doors are replaced by the deity





354 The outer shell of the Tashi Gomang Chörten of Alchi is of the Many Auspicious Doors type. It has many corners and three windows in each direction on each level. Its passage is aligned with the path leading in front of the Main Temple. CL 2003 (8194).

355 The impressive chörten of Changspa, near Leh, is the best preserved many auspicious doors stupa in the region, but is of a later date and of more typical appearance. The shape of the present dome is the result of multiple restoration.[253] CL 2009 (digitally merged).

assemblies, while in a Kumbum they lead into chapels painted with these assemblies. A ruin of such a chörten is also found at Alchi (477), while the one in Changspa (355), near Leh, was never painted inside. The Palden Drepung Chörten, however, is far removed from this, but the outer shape of the chörten focused on in the following section, earlier called the Small Stupa, fits this type in its outwards appearance (354).

Palden Drepung (*dpal ldan 'bras phung/spung*), in contrast, references a stupa in India, the Svayambhu-Śrī-Dhānyakaṭaka. This name not only refers to the stupa at Amarāvatī, but also to a legendary stupa where the Buddha taught the tantric teachings, including the Kālacakra.[252] It is with the literature of the latter that accounts of this stupa abound. In the context of this publication it is the shape of this legendary stupa that matters most, but the most detailed account we have of its shape postdates the early phase of Alchi and thus cannot be taken as its source. The only earlier account from the twelfth century records a Dharmadhātu mandala, 'identical to the Vajradhātu', over which a stupa was built, and that there were four temples surrounding the stupa dedicated to different deities. This description conforms to the depiction found in the Cambridge manuscript of 1015 CE. The later account overlaps with the earlier one to some extent, but places subsidiary structures in the intermediary directions and states that they are housing Buddhist deities. While none of these accounts directly explain the shape of the Palden Drepung Chörten at Alchi fully, there are some important parallels in particular the niches in the four directions and four surrounding 'temples'. These indicators are taken to identify the Great Stūpa with its five structures (*pañcāyatana*) layout as a Palden Drepung chörten.





356 View of the Tashi Gomang Chörten's inner chörten from the north side with a pair of *garuḍa* on the base. On the left is the window marking the front side of the chörten is visible. CL 2010 (6064).

357 The lantern ceiling of the inner chörten only has a lotus flower in its centre, and textile patterns decorated its larger surfaces. CL 1998 (104,01), WHAV.

Tashi Gomang Chörten

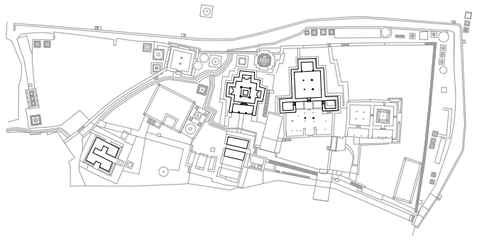
A considerably smaller building closely related to the Palden Drepung Chörten is placed immediately in front of the Sumtsek (358). Conceptually, this chörten may serve a similar gateway function, since its single passage, which has a lower floor level that the surrounding ground, today leads straight into the oldest part of the complex (354). However, its smaller size makes it unlikely that this structure was used as passage on a regular basis. Instead, it is foremost a commemorative structure, prefiguring several smaller chörten immediately to its side (231) and throughout the sacred enclosure and the village.

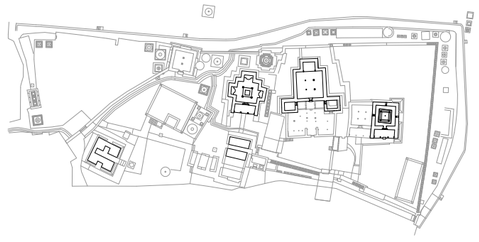
Structurally this monument is very similar to the Palden Drepung Chörten, but its base is proportionally much smaller and it lacks the corner structures. In addition its outer superstructure is clearly of the many auspicious door (*tashi gomang*) type, with three windows on each level of the multi-cornered construction (354).

The lantern ceiling has again at least seven layers, the highest of which is preserved only in fragments, and its vertical surfaces are painted with the deities of a mandala (229). These deities form an assembly dedicated to one of the main mandalas of the Durgatipariśodhana-cycle that has Vairocana in the form of Śākyasiṃha in the centre. In contrast, the lowest level of the ceiling, outside the mandala proper, and the walls of the outer chörten are filled with the representations of Akṣobhya (360). In addition, there are two mandalas on the side walls, a variant of the Amoghapāśa mandala (235–238) and a Prajñāpāramitā mandala (241–244). The inner chörten of this structure preserves the animal vehicles on its throne (356) which curiously do not include the peacock. This means that the inner chörten is dedicated to Buddha Amitābha. Nevertheless, in the only other place where the five Buddhas are shown,

358 In a fifth phase, the Tashi Gomang Chörten immediately in front of the Sumtsek was added. It may have served as entrance to the area of the Main Temple, but its passage is small and it is usually bypassed today. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

359 In a sixth phase, the sacred compound was expanded on the river side with the Jampel Lhakhang. Originally, this temple was an independent structure. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.









360 Repeated Akṣobhya on the interior walls of the Tashi Gomang Chörten. The height of the Buddhas is *c.* 10 cm. CL 2003 (9170).

361 Divine dancing musician with four arms playing a kettle-drum and cymbals on the ceiling of the outer chamber. CL 2010 (6138).

surrounding the priest on the left side wall of the inner chörten (250), it is again Vairocana who is in the centre.

Thus, while the inner chörten is dedicated to Buddha Amitābha, its outer shell focuses on Buddha Akṣobhya, but the ultimate location in the centre of the ceiling of the outer chamber is occupied by a Buddha representing Vairocana. Thus, as in all the monuments attributable to Tsültrim Ö and datable to around 1220 Akṣobhya is emphasized, but the ultimate Buddha is still Vairocana.

The interior walls of the inner chörten copy the arrangement found in the inner chörten of the Palden Drepung Chörten, but here each of the teachers is surrounded by secondary figures (241–244). Most importantly, now Drigungpa is shown in a composition that clearly references early Drigung scroll paintings (*thang ka*) from central Tibet, further supporting the identification of this teacher.[198]

Jampel Lhakhang

Shortly after the Tashi Gomang Chörten a unique temple was added on the river side of the Main Temple in an area of lower ground level that previously seems not to have been



362 The verandas of the Lotsawa Lhakhang (left) and the Jampel Lhakhang (right) partially obscured by apricot trees. Note the location of the Buddha image above the Jampel Lhakhang's veranda. CL 2017 (1185).















363 The door frame of the Jampel Lhakhang is largely original to the temple, only the central part of the lintel being a replacement. CL 1998 (105,05), WHAV.

364 Superimposed lintels of the door to the Jampel Lhakhang featuring the protectors of the three families in the centre and a central Mañjuśrī flanked by Buddhas below. The heights of the three distinct sections are 9.5, 18 and 16.5 cm from top to bottom. CL 1994 (15,31), WHAV.

365 Double pilaster capital with Avalokiteśvara in the veranda of the Jampel Lhakhang. CL 1994 (15,32), WHAV.

366 Bracket with lion supporting the veranda beam. CL 1998 (105,15), WHAV.

367 This section of the veranda preserves the superimposed decorative friezes, a chequerboard pattern, a row of lotus petals, and garland holding faces of glory (*kīrtimukha*). CL 1998 (105,16), WHAV.

368 Veranda capital of the Jampel Lhakhang with Vajrapāṇi. CL 1998 (105,22), WHAV.

369 Veranda capital of the Jampel Lhakhang with Acala. CL 1998 (105,19), WHAV.

370 Remains of the original lantern ceiling of the Jampel Lhakhang have been reused for the present lantern. These depictions of Buddha Akṣobhya were originally on a vertical faces of the ceiling. Dagmar Ley 2009.



used (359). It is dedicated to four images of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī, and is thus called Jampel Lhakhang or Mañjuśrī Temple. The alignment of the structure with the courtyard in front of the Main Temple indicates that these may have been planned at the same time with the courtyard finished after the Jampel Lhakhang.

The temple is a simple square structure with the typical two-pillar-two pilaster veranda in front of it (255–260, 362). The interior is a narrow ambulatory around the central sculptural platform that occupies the entire space between its four pillars (260, 261). As in all cases, the present-day outside fortification is a recent intervention.

The veranda has been subject to considerable alteration over time, including the wooden door-frame (363). Most likely, the inner and outer frames of the door are original to the temple, while the middle lintel featuring the protectors of the three families (*riksum gönpo*) is a replacement deriving from another door (364). In this beautifully carved panel the central Avalokiteśvara is flanked by the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi, representing the lotus, Buddha and vajra families respectively. That this panel does not fit here is indicated by the arrangement of the three Bodhisattvas with Avalokiteśvara in the centre, the flying deities holding a crown of the uppermost lintel, and the fact that Mañjuśrī is also shown in the centre of the lower lintel. Stylistic differences and the absence of scarves with the Bodhisattvas on the middle lintel further corroborate this. Given that this lower image of Mañjuśrī is flanked by Buddhas and that Buddhas are found on the corresponding inner door jambs, one would expect the five esoteric Buddhas on the middle lintel, probably centred on Buddha Vairocana.

Of the veranda pillars, only the upper parts of the double capitals that crown them can be original (368, 369, 382), their style matching that of the cross-capitals in the interior (385),







371 Wooden image of a standing Buddha attached to the front wall of the temple. CL 1998 (105,02), WHAV.

372 Golden image of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī facing the entrance to the temple. The throne is approximately 175 cm high. CL 1998 (105,26), WHAV.

373 Mahākāla above the entrance accompanied by an expansive retinue of local deities. CL 1998 (106,17), WHAV.

374 Vairocana mandala, 58 cm in diameter, on the entrance wall. CL 1998 (106,18), WHAV.

375 The five esoteric Buddhas on the entrance wall, each *c.* 11 cm high. CL 2009 (2590).

but they have been turned around in an earlier restoration. The two protectors, presumably Vajrapāṇi (368) and Acala (369), which are now on the inside were originally on the outsides and are much more worn than current outside of the same capitals (382).[254] Their wear may also have been the reason why they have been turned around. The lions carved on one side of the capital were originally facing away from the centre and towards the lions on the brackets supporting the veranda beam at the side of the veranda (366). Above it original decorative friezes are preserved as well (367). The double pilaster capitals may have been reused from elsewhere, as they do seem a bit out of proportion in relation to the pilaster underneath and the beam above. The eastern capital is well preserved and has Avalokiteśvara on it (365).

Interestingly, there is a badly worn wooden image of a standing Buddha attached to the exterior of the entrance wall above the veranda the identity of which remains unclear (371). While it is unlikely that this image was always in this position—it practically remains invisible to the visitor—stylistically it perfectly fits the period, and it is of higher quality than the sculptures placed in the triangular spaces of the Dukhang and Sumtsek verandas.









376 Repainted image of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī. The panel measures *c.* 65.5 x 72.5 cm. CL 1998 (106,01), WHAV.

377 Repeated four-armed Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī in the colours of the five esoteric Buddhas. CL 2009 (2575).

378 Amitābha mandala on the left side wall; diameter of the mandala *c.* 42.5 cm. CL 2009 (2569).

379 Akṣobhya panel on the right side wall; panel *c.* 30 cm in square. CL 2009 (2577).

Iconographically it can be read as the exoteric representation of buddhahood complementing the esoteric ones inside the temple.

The ceiling of the temple reflects the circumambulatory around the main sculptures with its cross bars radiating from a central square above the four images (259). The present-day lantern above the main images is the result of a later adaptation that opened the original closed lantern ceiling above the sculptures. Elements of the original lantern ceiling have been reused in the lantern and are recognisable by their painting (see 253). This means that the Jampel Lhakhang had originally a conical roof just like the top storey of the Sumtsek (261). Light entered the monument through the three windows in each of the walls, one of them now looking into the Lotsawa Lhakhang (Translator's Temple) with which it shares this wall (421). The joint between the two temples can also be observed on the outside (413); there is a thin crack marking the joint of the walls and above it the layering of the sticks supporting the roof's projection runs around the corner. Thus, there is no doubt that the Jampel Lhakhang was originally an independent structure, and that the Lotsawa Lhakhang was added to it at a later stage. The opening of the Mañjuśrī Temple's lantern appears to be a rather recent intervention.





Despite their repainting, there is no doubt that the sculptures are of the same time as the original murals around them (373–379). Compared to the earlier murals, there is a marked decrease in material quality but the artisanship is still comparable to the earlier monuments.

Opposite the today golden main image (372) the entry wall centres on a large panel of Mahākāla surrounded by a multitude of figures (373). In essence, this depiction builds on the ones of the Dukhang and the Sumtsek, but its retinue is much more expansive. Mahākāla also brandishes the peculiarly shaped curved knife (*kartṛkā*) found in the earlier monuments (38, 517). Of the flanking motifs only the right half provides a complete picture. There, a central panel featuring a mandala of Vairocana (374) is surrounded by approximately half of the 1118 representations of the five esoteric Buddhas, eight larger ones above Mahākāla, that covered the remaining spaces of this wall (375).

The composition of the other walls is essentially the same, as their centre is occupied by a small rectangular window. The left side wall is dedicated to Buddha Amitābha, the central panels showing him in nine-deity mandalas. In the best preserved of these the central Buddha is accompanied by the Mahābodhisattvas of his family and four offering goddesses (378). The central panels are surrounded by 1055 depictions of Buddha Amitābha in monastic robes.

The back wall has two central panels with Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī, both of them probably orange originally. In both central panels, the main images are crudely repainted, but their throne frames are original (376). As in the Sumtsek the main images of Mañjuśrī were surrounded by four tiny goddesses depicted within its halo. The rest of the wall is filled with 1135 four-armed images of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī in the colours of the five Buddhas (377).

The right side wall is dedicated to Akṣobhya, who is represented 1179 times. Only one of the central panels also depicts Akṣobhya (379), while the other one shows a yellow teaching Buddha in monastic robes, conventionally to be identified as Śākyamuni, together with four offering goddesses in the colours of the surrounding families.

Iconographically the Jampel Lhakhang is also a transitional monument with its main emphasis on Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī, who has received considerable attention on the right wall of the Sumtsek already (629–637). There, this form of Mañjuśrī is associated with Buddha Akṣobhya, who in the Jampel Lhakhang was painted on the vertical faces of the lantern ceiling (370). Otherwise Akṣobhya occupies the right side wall only (379), which probably has been chosen on the basis of his directional association with Buddha Amitābha on the opposite wall (378). Symbolically, he also presides over Mahākāla above the door on the entry wall (373). Otherwise this wall is dedicated to Vairocana among the five Buddhas (374). Thus, with the Jampel Lhakhang the balance has shifted to Akṣobhya.

The unusual iconography of the Jampel Lhakhang with its focus on Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī can be read as re-stating a unique local interpretation first observed in the Sumtsek. The newly established relationship to the Drigung school expressed in Tsültrim Ö's inscriptions and—much more cautiously—monuments, is absent here. We may also read the abundance of native deities in the retinue of Mahākāla as emphasising the local tradition.

Veranda of the Main Temple

As said above, the courtyard of the Main Temple was added contemporaneously with the building of the Jampel Lhakhang and probably finished after it. The close relationship between these construction works is indicated by the alignment of the buildings and the similarity in material quality. The addition of the courtyard included a refurbishing of the veranda the woodcarvings, murals and ceiling paintings of which are contemporaneous with







From top clockwise:

380 The original capitals inside the Dukhang are boldly carved and apparently have never been painted.

381 The carvings of the veranda, here a capital and the intermediary beam terminating in a lion, are rather fine and flat, and differ considerably from that of the capitals inside the temple. CL 1998 (97,32), WHAV.

382 The capitals of the veranda of the Jampel Lhakhang are profusely decorated with hardly any surface left out. This side of the capital was originally facing the temple. CL 1998 (105,17), WHAV.

383 The Sumtsek capitals, here one from the ground floor interior, are profusely and deeply carved and preserved in immaculate condition. The central motifs on the ground floor are the eight auspicious symbols, here the conch. As in the Dukhang they were never painted; 1989.

384 The best preserved capital from the courtyard is a bit simpler and more crudely carved than that of the veranda, but has the same more rounded shape towards the volutes. CL 1998 (93,10), WHAV.

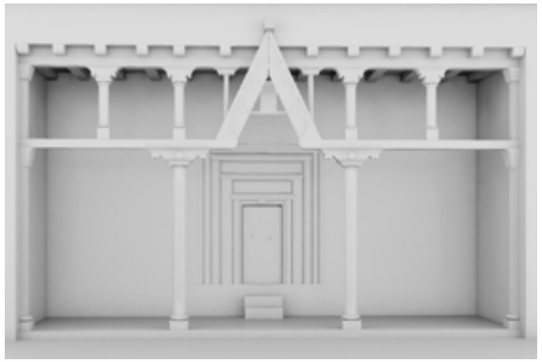
385 The cross-shaped capital inside the Jampel Lhakhang is similarly block-shaped as that of the veranda (382), and its surfaces are less finely carved, probably because of their less visible location. CL 1998 (105,46), WHAV.











386 The beautifully carved gable held by lion brackets likely dates to the veranda's refurbishment. The image placed inside today is a later addition. CL 1998 (97,26), WHAV.

387 Reconstruction of the Main Temple's two-pillar-two-pilaster veranda construction. All the wooden elements included here remain, but are obscured by later alterations. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

the courtyard (394). Nevertheless, due to the complexity of these spaces and their decorative elements and the many changes afflicted to these spaces we discuss the veranda and the courtyard separately.

The proposed chronology is most apparent in the woodcarvings, which have received little research attention so far. However, a comparison of the carvings of the capitals found across the monuments discussed so far indicates that there is a considerable gap between the carvings inside the Dukhang (380) and those of all other monuments, which are closely comparable to each other. Of course, these wooden elements are easily moved in the course of a restoration, and indications of such movements have already been explored above, but even then most remain within the confined space they were originally made for. In comparison to all other examples, the Dukhang capitals are less finely carved, and the section resulting in the volutes remains almost undecorated (380). This becomes particularly apparent when compared with the deeply and profusely carved capitals of the Sumtsek, which are undisturbed (383). Further, only the Dukhang capitals have a band of squares separating the upper from the lower part, while in all other cases rhombic shapes are used. The carvings of the Jampel Lhakhang (382, 385) and the veranda (381) and courtyard (384) of the Main Temple are also profusely decorated, but less deeply carved. Among the latter, those of the Jampel Lhakhang are rather block-shaped, while the lower part of the capitals found in the Main Temple area are all rounded and transition smoothly into the volutes. Only the veranda and courtyard capitals include the square section underneath as part of the same piece of wood.

388 Although of lesser quality and simpler, the Wanla veranda best preserves the original impression the Alchi veranda once must have made. The small pillars supporting the roof are preserved at Alchi as well, but built into the wall forming the side chapels there. CL 2010 (5300).

389 Central triangular construction at the Wanla Temple. CL 2009 (5263).









390 Section of the paintings on the veranda's ceiling. Note the continuous row of lotus rosettes on the cross-beams. CL 1998 (98,20), WHAV.

391 Above the door to the Dukhang, the temptation of the Buddha by Māra's daughters is preserved in re-tracings. CL 1998 (97,47), WHAV.

392 Behind the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara are the re-tracings of an eight-armed Green Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers. This is the chapel to the left of the entrance. CL 1998 (97,10), WHAV.

393 In the chapel to the right of the entrance a thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara is painted on the wall behind the protectors of the three families. CL 1998 (98,21), WHAV.

In other words, while there is no strictly linear development that can be extracted from the capitals the general trends identified support that the carvings of the veranda and courtyard post-date those of the other monuments discussed so far.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a two-pillar-two-pilaster veranda protecting the entrance was part of the original conception of the Main Temple (304). As stated above, a part of its construction, in particular the cross-beams ending in lion brackets may go back to this original veranda (311). But the assessment of the carving of the capitals supporting the beautiful triangular construction in front of the entrance, make it unlikely that it goes back to this original veranda (34, 386). This construction accentuates the entrance area through interrupting the beam in front of it (387). Obviously, the figure of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī placed into the centre of the triangle today is not original to it but has been added at some later stage.

The same construction was then used at the three-storeyed temple of Wanla, where it remained practically unaltered (388). There the number of secondary pillars was increased by one on each side, breaking the continuation with the main pillars underneath, but enabling the depiction of all eight auspicious symbols on them and the accompanying pilasters.

In contrast to the Dukhang itself, the veranda also preserves painted ceiling panels as well as some painted cross beams (390). Their material and stylistic quality again compares best to those of the Jampel Lhakhang. Since the ceiling paintings in both the Sumtsek or the Jampel Lhakhang match the murals in these temples, the paintings of the veranda belonging to this





phase would equally be of lesser sophistication and material quality. Remains of such murals are preserved in both, the veranda itself and the courtyard built in front of it.

The paintings on the back walls of the veranda chapels are re-tracings similar in quality to those in the courtyard. Above the carved wooden door, the wall is painted with the Buddhas victory over Māra (391). To the left of the entrance are the remains of a Green Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers (392), her iconography following that of the Green Tārā in the middle storey of the Sumtsek (690). In the right chapel is a thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (393). Both paintings are today largely obscured by sculptures added to these spaces before they were screened off and could only be studied from the parts still visible. This is a pity in the case of Green Tārā the depiction of which also contains captions accompanying the diverse dangers she rescues from.

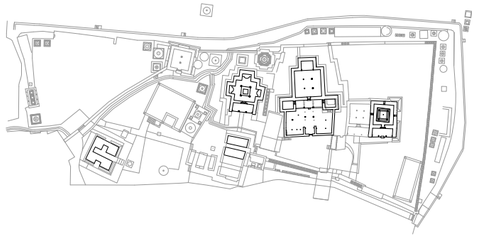
The veranda, thus, was painted with subjects that are new to the Dukhang, and are closer to the iconographic programme of the Sumtsek. The thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara did not occur previously at all and replaces the twenty-two-armed forms observed in the earlier monuments. Emphasising compassion, the veranda paintings are associated with the lotus family of Buddha Amitābha.

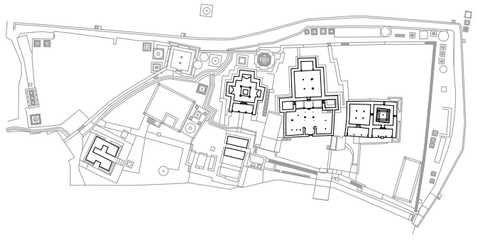
Courtyard of the Main Temple

Given the relatively small size of the Main Temple, it can be assumed that the flat area in front of it always had some public function. The addition of a walled courtyard expanded the temple's space and split the flat area approximately into half. On the river side the area is delimited by a natural drop in the ground level, resulting in a distortion of the courtyard's ground plan on this side (394). The courtyard wall is painted and roofed on the inside forming a colonnade. The entrance to the courtyard is flanked by walls supporting the roofs, which are also painted on both sides.

Also in their original condition, the paintings of the courtyard were of lesser quality than those in the earlier monuments, comparing best to those of the Jampel Lhakhang. They also may have suffered considerably more damage due to their exposure. Today, only the paintings on the front wall of the original tower preserve fragments of the original paint layer in poor condition (396, 397). These paintings also demonstrate the loss of colours due to deterioration resulting from the use of organic pigments. The remaining walls are covered with rather recent re-tracings which followed the original and did not change the iconography and composition, but obscured most details. The colours used for the retracing even reflect the reduced colour scheme that can be observed in the preserved originals.

Except for the entrance area the original courtyard paintings follow the same composition, five rows of deities are represented above and beneath them two rows of narrative depictions are interrupted by central deity medallions. In the top row Buddhas in monastic





394 In a seventh phase, a courtyard was added directly in front of the Main Temple. This expansion included a restoration of the veranda resulting in the shape reflected today. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

395 In an eighth phase, some decades later, the Lotsawa Lhakhang was added between the Jampel Lhakhang—sharing one wall with it—and the Main Temple complex. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.



396 Larger section of the original paint layer as preserved on the outer wall of the left tower. Multiple Bodhisattva occupy the upper part while narrative scenes are shown in two rows at the bottom. Of these the top row shows the last scenes of *Mahādāna Goes to Sea*. The detail of 397 is part of the upper left scene against red background; 1991.



397 Detail of the poorly preserved original paintings of the Main Temple's courtyard showing the brahmin Kapila offering his daughter to Mahādāna (Great Charity; *spyin pa chen po*) in one of the last scenes of the story; 1991.





398 Wolfgang Heusgen and Holger Neuwirth measuring the southeast corner of the courtyard, which is also used to dry apricots. The paintings run all along the courtyard walls. The capital of the corner pillar is depicted in 384. CL 1998 (93,03), WHAV.

399 The off centre position of the deity-medallion on the right (northeast) wall shows that the tower on this side has been extended at a later stage. CL 2000 (56,23) WHAV.

400 Underneath a row of Buddhas of different colours and performing a variety of gestures are four rows of Bodhisattvas. The central deity-medallions are flanked by two rows of narrative scenes. Height for the five rows on top *c.* 77 cm and of the narrative *c.* 55 cm. CL 1998 (96,03), WHAV.

401 The central deity on the wall to the right of the entrance to the courtyard (southeast) has a four-armed Green Tārā in the centre. CL 1998 (95,33), WHAV.

robes perform different gestures. Underneath them are four rows of Bodhisattvas matching the colours of the Buddhas in a diagonal arrangement. Thereby eight different colours have been used, the blue ones most apparent in the arrangement as preserved today. The two rows of narrative depictions are dedicated to the previous births of Śākyamuni (398 f.). Of these, those on the left (southwest) side can still be identified as representing the stories *Mahādāna (Great Charity) Goes to Sea* (*sbyin pa chen po rgya mtshor zhugs pa*) and *[Prince] Mahāsattva Offers His Body to the Tigress* (*sems can chen pos stag mo la lus byin pa*) in versions as they occur in the *Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* (*mdo mdzangs blun*). With the text in hand, these two stories can still be followed quite easily, as almost every event narrated is represented in a separate scene. The stories on the right (northeast) side have few distinctive scenes and thus still await identification.[255]

For this discussion, the central deities dividing each wall into halves are most relevant. The side walls have a four-armed Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī on the left (southwest; 400) and a six-armed Prajñāpāramitā opposite it on the right (northeast) wall (399). The entry wall is dedicated to lotus family deities, namely Siṃhanāda-Lokeśvara (892) on Prajñāpāramitā's side to the left of the entrance and a four-armed Green Tārā (401) to the right. The latter two thus resonate with the paintings opposite them inside the veranda, where the same deities are shown in a different form (see below). The raised pastiglia gilding used for the attributes and the halo of these deities, best visible at the remains of Avalokiteśvara (892), shows that these main panels were of considerable quality originally.







402 The Mahākāla above the entrance to the courtyard has a large retinue to both sides. CL 2000 (digitally merged).

403 To the left of the door, to the right of the entering visitor, is a depiction of the cosmos with a large central palace inhabited by the gods. CL 1998 (95,18), WHAV.

404 To the right of the door, to the left of the entering visitor, is the wheel of life. CL 1998 (95,26), WHAV.

The present off centre position of Prajñāpāramitā on the right side wall (399) along with the fact that paintings in the corner are partly covered by the tower's wall prove that the tower on this side was considerably expanded at a later stage. They also confirm the existence of an original tower of the same size as the one on the opposite side when the courtyard was added.

The re-tracings also preserve the original composition in the entrance area. Above the door the protector Mahākāla is surrounded by a large retinue (402). From the perspective of the entering visitor to the left side of the entrance is a wheel of life (404), and to the right side a depiction of the Buddhist cosmos (403). These murals indicate that the courtyard was added to expand the sacred area of the temple, a reading that also explains the condition and decoration of the veranda.

Usually the wheel of life and the Buddhist cosmos are represented on the walls of the veranda, as is the case in other early western Himalayan monuments. In the Tabo Entry Hall, for example, they flank the entrance, and the cave of Dungpu (or Pedongpo) in west Tibet preserves a depiction of the wheel of life quite close to that of Alchi.[256] It is likely, that originally these themes were found in the veranda and replaced there when the courtyard was









405 The Bodhisattvas Maitreya (?) and Vajrasattva on the side wall of the veranda. These paintings combine details of different periods, and thus record several periods of repainting. CL 1998 (digitally merged).

406 Detail of the white Vajrasattva holding vajra and bell. CL 1998 (digitally merged).

added. This explains why the paintings of the veranda are stylistically and iconographically closer to those of the courtyard than to those of the Main Temple itself.

Even with the addition of the courtyard the Main Temple retains a clear iconographic sequence. Fundamental teachings of Buddhism flank the entrance to the monument and continue in the representation of the birth stories in the courtyard and the life of the Buddha on the wooden door in the veranda as well as the entry wall of the Dukhang. This space, thus, depicts subjects meant for lay-followers assembled in the courtyard during festive occasions. The hall itself is then predominantly dedicated to the Vajradhātu spheres of Buddha Vairocana, with the paradise of Buddha Akṣobhya, Abhirati, representing a less esoteric alternative path. This space, thus, depicts subjects for more advanced Buddhist practitioners, in particular the residing monks.

Two Bodhisattvas

Also the side wall of the original tower retains retraced figures, but their style does not fit squarely into the main expansion phase discussed above (405). Instead, the two large Bodhisattvas combine stylistic features relating to the Jampel Lhakhang, such as the double scarfs, with elements that best compare to Lotsawa Lhakhang discussed next. Their headdress and crown type is unique among the Alchi paintings and appear to be the result of several restoration phases. Iconographically, only the white Bodhisattva is clearly identifiable as Vajrasattva, holding vajra and bell in a typical manner (406). The red Bodhisattvas is most likely Maitreya. The flower attribute, a peony with overlapping petals as found on early cloisonné from the Yuan period onwards, cannot reflect the original shape of this attribute, but the left hand preserves enough detail to conclude that it once held a flask. The two chörten along the left edge of the wall (405) may well be of the same time, but the painting of Milarepa was added at a later stage.







407 Only on the side of the Jampel Lhakhang the original pilaster capital of the Lotsawa Lhakhang's veranda is preserved. It partially copies the one of the Sumtsek (338) and retains the leaf-shaped corner decorations featuring teaching Buddhas. CL 1994 (15,28), WHAV.

408 Door lintel of the Lotsawa Lhakhang with the middle frieze composed of two parts. CL 2009 (2475).

409 While the five esoteric Buddhas are centred on a four-faced Vairocana, the six-armed figure underneath is Maitreya. CL 2009 (2476).

Lotsawa Lhakhang

The Lotsawa Lhakhang (*lo tstsh'a ba lha khang*) or Translator's Temple is squeezed in between the courtyard wall of the Main Temple and the Jampel Lhakhang. Its somewhat naïve paintings are of much poorer quality than those of the temples discussed so far, and thus do not warrant a separate chapter dedicated to its art. Instead, this temple is presented in some detail here.[257]

With one of its walls immediately to the side of the ground level drop mentioned above (395). The pressure from the higher level resulted in a severe deformation of the temples left wall. The four-pillar temple follows the Jampel Lhakhang in its basic structure, but instead of windows has an original two-storeyed lantern. It is thus conceived as a three-storeyed structure like the Sumtsek. The central sculptures in the temple are a recent addition and are not of concern for this discussion (412).

The veranda is the usual two pillar, two pilaster construction, but only the parts on the side of the Jampel Lhakhang are original. The pillar capital on this side has the faint traces of a protector deity on the outside (410) and a lotus motif on the inside, and a lion projects on the side of the door. The pilaster capital has a standing figure in the centre, presumably Avalokiteśvara, and two petal-shaped projections with teaching Buddhas (407). The left pilaster is a recent poor quality addition, there is none on older documentation.[258] Thus the pressure of the slope on this side has resulted in a replacement of all the original wooden elements.

The door to the temple is unusual insofar as the middle lintel is either a case of re-usage or the result of poor planning (408). With its six figures, the five Buddhas with a four-faced Mahāvairocana in the centre and an equally crowned figure performing the gesture of offering and worship (*añjalimudrā*), the frieze was too short to cover the entire space, and a separate piece of wood carved with a vase has been added to its left. The latter motif resonates with the six-armed figure holding a stupa in the upper left hand in the centre of the lower

410 Only one of the veranda capitals is its original position, featuring a protective deity as its central motif. CL 1998 (107,12), WHAV.

411 The main wall side of the back right capital with central sword wielding Mañjuśrī flanked by lions. CL 1998 (108,14), WHAV.









412 View of the Lotsawa Lhakhang towards the main wall with a Buddha sculpture replicating the main theme of the murals in the centre of the room. CL 2000 (64,05), WHAV.

413 The joint between the Jampel Lhakhang and the Lotsawa Lhakhang at the back of the two temples. Note the layering of the sticks around the corner and the hairline crack along the wall. HN 1998.

lintel, which most likely is a form of Maitreya (409). He is flanked by two meditating figures. Other parts of the door have the usual lotus petal and vegetable scroll motifs. The difference in appearance between the pilaster capital in 407 and the door in 409 documents a recent cleaning and repainting of most exterior wooden elements in the complex by the Archaeological Survey of India.

The carvings found in the veranda are clearly of lower quality than the ones found in the earlier monuments. The capitals are rather squarish and the details not as refined, but they still attempt to continue the tradition of the earlier temples. This is most apparent with the capitals in the interior, which are largely well preserved (411).

The window of the Jampel Lhakhang in the shared wall now looks into the interior of the Lotsawa Lhakhang and thus connects the two interiors. In 421 the window's opening is obscured by a mural fragment placed there. The blackening of the wall underneath derives from the butter lamps that have occasionally been burned there.

On the main wall the central focus is Śākyamuni touching the earth with another eight Buddhas represented underneath him (412, 415). To his right he is flanked by another representation of a Drigung hierarch (414), now entirely dependent on the central Tibetan archetype. To Śākyamuni's left, the viewers right, is the Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara triad (416), a topic not found in the region before. Underneath his throne are the eight offering goddesses. The two columns of Buddha Amogasiddhi flanking this central triad (416) prove that the nominal direction of this wall is the north, the temple is thus conceived facing south.

Surprisingly, the details of the representation of the Drigung hierarch are so crude that neither the lineage above nor the *mahāsiddha* to the side can be identified with any certainty (414). Even *thangka* largely reworked in modern times are closer to the original composition than the Drigung hierarch represented here. The teacher in the centre is most likely again Drigungpa with two additional teachers represented to his side among the *mahāsiddha*, and thus potentially following him.[259] While the relationship of this depiction to that of the Tashi







414 Drigungpa with lineage, *mahāsiddha* and protectors on the left side of the main wall. CL 1998 (107,18), WHAV.

415 Śākyamuni in the centre of the main wall. CL 1998 (107,17), WHAV.

416 Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara triad on the right side of the main wall. CL 1998 (107,28), WHAV.

417 Four-armed Green Tārā in the bottom left corner of the main wall. CL 1998 (107,29), WHAV.

418 Four-armed Prajñāpāramitā in the bottom right corner of the main wall. CL 1998 (107,32), WHAV.

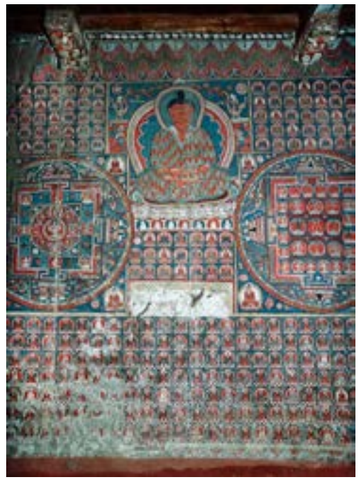
Gomang Chörten is obvious, its idiosyncratic details indicate a considerable distance from mainstream Drigung school depictions of the time.[261]

Along the bottom of the main wall is a row of five deities, all of them four-armed: Green Tārā (417), Mañjuśrī, Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara, Vajrapāṇi, and Prajñāpāramitā (418). The central triad of these represent the protectors of the three families (Riksum Gönpo) with Avalokiteśvara occupying the central position instead of Mañjuśrī, the representative of the Buddha family. The two goddesses on the outside reflect their popularity, but their iconographic forms have been adapted and now conform to common depictions of these goddesses.

As in the Jampel Lhakhang, the side walls are dedicated to the Buddhas Amitābha (419) and Akṣobhya (420) in their respective directions. On each side a large representation of the Buddha in the top centre of the wall is flanked by two lower mandalas, and the remaining space is filled with smaller repetitions of the primary Buddha. This composition has been guided by the window in the shared wall, which made a central composition impossible without covering it up (421).











On the left wall, the large image of Amitābha is flanked by a thirteen-deity Avalokiteśvara mandala to the left, and thus on the entrance side (419). In its inner circle, the Bodhisattva is surrounded by four four-armed wrathful deities, the intermediate directions occupied by vases. Four offering goddesses and four gate-keepers in the outer square complete the assembly. This mandala is reminiscent of the sculptural configuration in the Avalokiteśvara niche of the Sumtsek (539) and even more so of the Avalokiteśvara mandala in the Tashi Gomang Chörten (236), which both can be identified as unusual variants of the Amoghapāśa mandala (see page 774 ff.). However, the paintings in the Lotsawa Lhakhang are so crude that none of the figures has attributes, the central Avalokiteśvara imitating Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara, making a comparison of details impossible. On the main wall side is a twenty-nine-deity mandala with Amitābha in the centre (420). In the central circle he is surrounded by the four Mahābodhisattvas of his direction. The eight offering goddesses in the corners of the two squares and the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, four of the same colour on each side of the second square, complete the assembly. This is a variant of the western quarter mandala from the Vajradhātu cycle, but it misses the four gate-keepers (see page 756 ff.).

419 Buddha Amitābha and two lotus family mandalas on the left side wall of the Lotsawa Lhakhang. CL 1998 (107,13), WHAV.

420 Twenty-nine-deity mandala of Buddha Amitābha. CL 1998 (107,42), WHAV.

421 Buddha Akṣobhya and two mandalas on the right side wall, with the window of the Jampel Lhakhang underneath the Buddha. CL 1998 (108,01), WHAV.

422 Entry wall above the door featuring Mahākāla. CL 1998 (108,03), WHAV.

423 Buddha Śākyamuni on the main wall of the lantern. CL 1998 (108,05), WHAV.









424 Amitābha flanked by two Bodhisattvas on the left side wall of the Lotsawa Lhakhang's lantern. CL 1998 (108,08), WHAV.

425 Akṣobhya flanked by two Bodhisattvas on the right side wall of the lantern. On the side walls, Vairocana is represented around the central triads. CL 1998 (108,07), WHAV.

A fragmentary inscription underneath Amitābha and between the two mandalas (419) praises the teachers and the three jewels.[260] The frequent occurrence of the word *rinchen* in this inscription is seen as a reference to the great translator Rinchen Zangpo, but equally alludes to Rinchenpel (*rin chen dpal*), the ordination name of Drigungpa. Importantly, in this inscription the lama is praised before the three jewels, reversing the order as it occurs in the Palden Drepung Inscription. This change in structure as well as the inscriptions first line suggests a context in which oral transmission (*bka' rgyud*) is of foremost importance. The identification of this figure with Rinchen Zangpo thus has no base, even though the name of the temple today alludes to him.

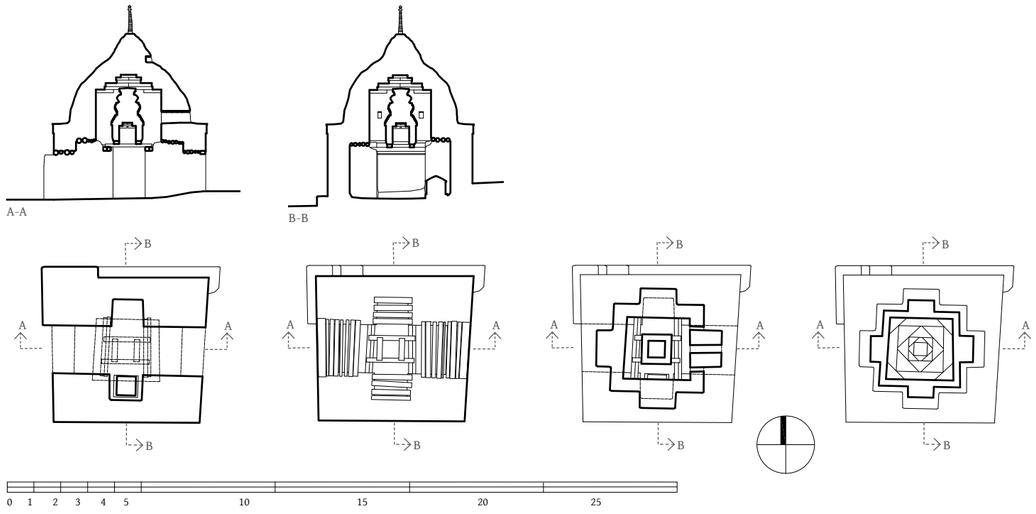
The Akṣobhya wall mirrors the composition, but the space used for the inscription panel on the Amitābha wall is occupied by the window of the Jampel Lhakhang (421). Here the mandala on the main wall side is too damaged to enable secure identification. On the entrance side is a twenty-nine-deity mandala of Akṣobhya that may also be based on the Vajradhātu cycle, but differs considerably from that on the opposite wall in both geometry and assembly. For example, Akṣobhya is shown in monastic robes, there is an inner circle of eight deities around him occupied by Bodhisattvas and/or goddesses, and four gate-keepers populate the gates of the second square.

The entry wall is largely repainted, and it is unclear if the Mahākāla with his retinue of Rematī and Peacock Cape Lady above the door retraces the original or is copied from the Sumtsek (422). Otherwise, it is likely that the remaining wall space was always filled with depictions of Buddha Ratnasambhava.

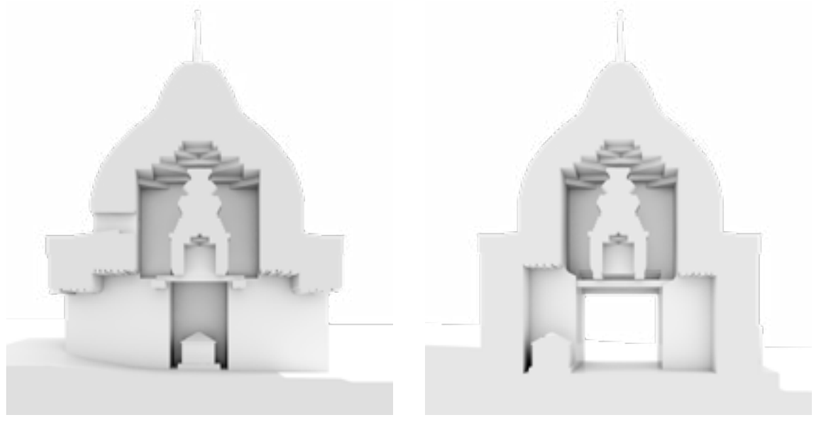
Of the two-storied lantern only the lower one preserves its original murals. Their composition mirrors the one in the lower room, with Śākyamuni flanked by two goddesses occupying the main wall (423), while Amitābha (424) and Akṣobhya (425) are flanked by Bodhisattvas. The ceiling of this storey also preserves simple textile patterns. The lantern ceiling closing off the uppermost storey is only preserved in fragments.

Thus, the iconography of this temple is in some ways reminiscent of the Jampel Lhakhang, but Śākyamuni occupies the main position on the main walls. Nevertheless, with the four walls dedicated to the four other Buddhas arranged by their directions, Vairocana is still the main Buddha of the monument. This is also indicated by the repeated representation of Vairocana surrounding the other Buddhas on the lantern walls (424, 425). Śākyamuni may thus be read as the *nirmāṇakāya* of Vairocana, but he also takes the position of Amoghasiddhi.

Given the nature of this temple, it is difficult to attribute in chronological terms. The Drigung hierarch depiction indicates both, a continuous link to the Drigung school and



426 Above the longitudinal section (A-A) and the cross section (B-B) of the Lönpo Chörten. Below the ground plan and three horizontal sections of the same structure. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.



427 Spatial model of the Lönpo Chörten, on the left the longitudinal section through the interior, and on the right the cross section with the lateral niches. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

considerable distance from the head monastery in central Tibet. Comparing the idiosyncratic features of the hierarch depiction with that of central and west Tibetan *thangka* of similar composition indicates, that the Lotsawa Lhakhang most likely dates to the third quarter of the thirteenth century.[261]

Approximately in the same period, three painted gateway chörten were constructed throughout the sacred area, all of which relate in some way to the Lotsawa Lhakhang. There are no precise clues to decide on the relative chronology between them, and they are presented here in their increasing remoteness from the earlier Alchi chörten in both architecture and art. All three chörten are now clearly dedicated to Buddha Akṣobhya, and thus can be truly called *kankani* chörten.



428 The east side of the Lönpo Chörten with the morning sun on it, only some of the windows on this side visible from the outside. CL 2003 (9437).



429 Interior view of the Lönpo Chörten with Amitābha in the east and Mahāvairocana in the west. The *garuḍa* on the base of the inner chörten mark its northern side. CL 2003 (9477).

Lönpo Chörten

The Lönpo Chörten is the only monument included here that is outside of the Alchi Choskhor. It is found in the garden behind the house of the Alchi Lönpo family who also runs the Zimskhang hotel and restaurants. Its location indicates that in earlier times the path to the sacred enclosure differed from the present one, as the Lönpo Chörten could have served as a gateway leading towards the sacred enclosure. See figure 13, where the chörten is slightly obscured by trees, for the relationship of this building to the Choskhor.[262]

The chörten is again a twofold construction, with a smaller chörten within a larger one, the outward appearance being that of a Tashi Gomang type (426–429). The painted outer chamber has a set of three windows towards the east (428, 429), making this the main direction of the chörten. Each wall has a central panel with one of four Buddhas. Confusingly the positions of Amitābha and Vairocana are exchanged (429), Amitābha is placed on the east wall facing west (430) and Vairocana on the west wall facing east (432). The other two Buddhas, Ratnasambhava (431) and Amoghasiddhi are placed in their usual directions. Vairocana also retains his four-faced form in this representation, which alludes to his earlier primary role (432).

Therefore, the Lönpo Chörten is dedicated to Buddha Akṣobhya, who likely was once represented on the lantern ceiling of the outer chörten. Like all figurative painting on the ceiling, his depiction was painted separately on paper, which was then glued to the ceiling and integrated into its decorative scheme, the loss of most figures resulting in undecorated surfaces where they have previously been (433). As can be deduced from the outline of his halo, Akṣobhya was painted with his head directed towards the east and his feet on the side of Vairocana. That Akṣobhya is the primary Buddha of the chörten can also be concluded from the fact that also all around the secondary Buddhas the side walls are covered with Akṣobhya Buddhas (432).

Except for the loss of most of its figurative painting, the ceiling is well preserved and once featured a deity assembly centred on Akṣobhya (433). It has six levels covered with comparatively coarse textile patterns and there are no elements of a mandala palace. The assembly consisted of four additional figures in the cardinal directions on level four and two offering







goddesses each on level five, two of which are partially preserved (434). The vertical face between them features three Buddhas in monastic robes on each side painted directly on the beam. It is unclear if these are to be understood as part of the assembly or as independent motif.

The inner chörten is again rather complex, and is of the descent from the gods type. It is well preserved, but lacks the superstructure above the *harmika*. Remarkably, the western side of the dome has a Buddha face painted on it (435), facing backwards in relation to the orientation of the outer chörten. However, it is this side that has Vairocana on the corresponding wall of the outer chamber (432) and Śākyamuni on the corresponding wall of the inner chamber (438), and the Akṣobhya on the ceilings of the outer and inner chörten are both directed towards the west as well (440).

Although of much poorer quality and executed in thin layers of paint, the paintings inside the inner chörten clearly reference those in the corresponding places of the Palden Drepung Chörten. However, instead of a *mahāsiddha*, a teaching Buddha flanked by the Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara occupies the main position (438). He is represented on the

430 Buddha Amitābha on the east side of the outer chörten. CL 2003 (9505).

431 Buddha Ratnasambhava on the south side of the outer chörten. CL 2003 (9507).

432 Four-faced Mahāvairocana on the west side of the outer chörten. CL 2003 (9499).

433 The lantern ceiling has six levels and once featured Buddha Akṣobhya in the centre. CL 2003 (9508).

434 The offering goddesses Dīpā and Gītā are placed in the northeastern direction of the ceiling. CL 2003 (9531).







435 A Buddha face is painted on the western side of the inner chörten's dome. CL 2003 (9496).

436 East side of the inner chörten chamber with a Tibetan monk, likely Drigungpa, flanked by two Bodhisattvas. CL 2003 (9446).



west wall of the chörten, and thus the position taken by Drigungpa in the Palden Drepung Chörten, and the flanking monks face him. Of the latter the one to the Buddha's right shoulder is white-skinned, wears patchwork robes and performs the gesture of teaching (437). He is framed in a similar manner as Drigungpa in the Palden Drepung Chörten (225). The teacher to the Buddha's left wears a long robe covering both shoulders and sits in meditation (439). His frame is topped at the sides by pairs of peacocks sharing their heads, referencing the frame of the middle-aged monk on the southern wall of the Palden Drepung Chörten (223). He is also surrounded by ritual paraphernalia and has a monk devotee kneeling in the bottom right corner of his panel.

The wall opposite the Buddha features another white-skinned monk in Tibetan monastic robes performing the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) and flanked by two Bodhisattvas (435). Of these the one to the monk's left is white and holds vajra and bell, and thus can be identified as Vajrasattva. The framing on the top loosely references that of the aged monk in the Palden Drepung Chörten, whose frame also features two stupas in the upper corners (224). Given the more prominent position it is probably this monk who represents Drigungpa and the one he is looking towards (437) could then be a western Tibetan successor of his.

The inner chörten has a four-layer lantern ceiling (440), and here Buddha Akṣobhya in its centre is preserved in fragments (442). He is placed in the same direction as the one in the outer chamber, his feet on the side of the Śākyamuni panel. The two middle layers of the ceiling are decorated with lotus blossoms, while the lowest level features a textile pattern with differently coloured strips.

437 South side of the inner chörten chamber with a white-skinned teaching hierarch. CL 2003 (9447).

438 West side of the inner chörten chamber with teaching Śākyamuni flanked by Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara. CL 2003 (9444).

439 North side of the inner chörten chamber with meditating local monk surrounded by ritual tools and a devotee. CL 2003 (9445).













440 Bodhisattva Vajrasattva to the side of Drigungpa (436). CL 2003 (9473).

441 Lantern ceiling of the inner chörten with Buddha Akṣobhya in the centre directed towards the Buddha panel. CL 2003 (9438).

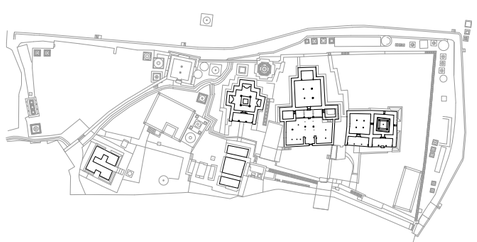
442 Buddha Akṣobhya in centre of the lantern ceiling of the inner chörten. CL 2003 (9440).

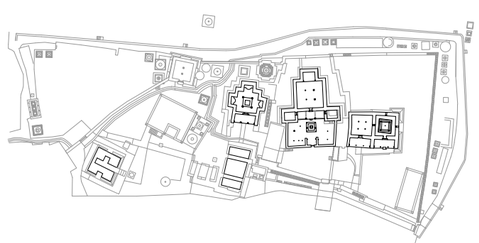
In contrast to the earlier examples, this building can now truly be called a *kankani* chörten, as both of its ceilings once featured Buddha Akṣobhya in its centre. Akṣobhya also dominates the walls of the outer chamber as he already did in the earlier chörten. The reversal of the positions of Vairocana and Amitābha and the representation of the former with four heads both serve to emphasize this Buddha. This becomes even more clear if considering that the entire interior decoration is directed towards the western side, where Vairocana is located, including the Akṣobhya Buddhas and the face on the dome of the inner chörten. That the Śākyamuni panel of the inner chörten is on Vairocana's side reminds of them representing two different qualities of buddhahood, the inner chörten emphasising the wordly (*nirmāṇa*) aspect, and the outer chörten the enjoyment (*saṃbhoga*) aspect of heavenly existence in and beyond the paradise of Buddha Akṣobhya. The Lönpo Chörten thus can be read clearly in continuation of the earlier local tradition, but it incorporates those in a secondary position to the new teachings brought by Drigung school, without expressing those beyond their primary Buddha and their hierarchs.

Stylistically, too, the Lönpo Chörten adheres closer to the earlier local tradition than to styles that may have been come in with the Drigung school. The depiction of the hierarchs follows that of Drigungpa in the Palden Drepung Chörten closely, even citing its usage of blue at the edge of the sleeveless vest. The depiction of the Buddhas, in contrast, emphasizes a new element in the compartmentalisation of the throne frame, emphasising each of its elements through throne elements. This is even more explicit with the second Drigung hierarch

443 In a ninth phase, roughly at the same time as the Lönpo Chörten was built outside the sacred area, the Tashi Gomang Chörten was replicated to its side by the Twin Chörten. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

444 In a tenth phase, the Raised Chörten was added directly in front of the entrance to the Main Temple and in the middle of the courtyard. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.









445 The Twin Chörten to the side of the Tashi Gomang Chörten copying its outwards appearance. CL 2010 (6057).

446 Ceiling of the Twin Chörten's outer chamber with Akṣobhya on the vertical surfaces and a variety of Buddhas on the horizontal ones. CL 2000 (63,18), WHAV.

447 The eastern side of the Twin Chörten's outer chamber with three windows on the side wall and Mañjuśrī on the ceiling. CL 2000 (63,15), WHAV.

448 Detail of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (see also 447). CL 2000 (63,21), WHAV.

in the inner chörten, where the background colour is used to further emphasize the different throne elements (437). Some of these elements are also found in the following monument, which brings us back to the sacred enclosure.

Twin Chörten

The duplication that results from the addition of the Lotsawa Lhakhang to the side of the Jampel Lhakhang is replicated with the Tashi Gomang Chörten, where a second chörten replicating its outwards appearance is added to its side (231, 443, 445). As all previous ones it also has a small chörten with an open painted chamber in its interior. However, the painted decoration is much less complex than that of the Tashi Gomang or even the Lönpo Chörten with which it compares best. The colours used appear a bit thicker and are better preserved than those in the Lönpo Chörten, and the painting style is similarly naïve but clearly not of the same workshop. Parts of the paintings, in particular inside the inner chörten, are covered with streaks of whitewash afflicted to it by careless maintenance work.

As with the other chörten at Alchi the nominal direction of this chörten is east. In the architecture, this can only be recognised by the three windows on this side reaching the interior of the outer chamber (447), while all other sides have only one window in the centre of the wall. The walls around the windows are covered with representations of Buddha Akṣobhya, who is the primary Buddha of this chörten. Curiously, on the south wall a white-skinned











449 Drigungpa (?) flanking the window on the south wall of the outer chamber. CL 2000 (63,20), WHAV.

450 Ceiling of the inner chörten chamber with Buddha Akṣobhya in it's centre. CL 2000 (63,03), WHAV.

451 Teaching Śākyamuni on the east wall of the inner chamber. CL 2010 (5889).

452 Drigungpa on the west wall of the inner chamber. CL 2010 (5890).

453 Hierarch with ritual implements on the south wall. CL 2010 (5891).

454 Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara on the north wall. CL 2010 (5888).

monk, likely alluding to Drigungpa, is represented directly to the side of the central window (449). The south is the direction of death (Yama), does his location thus hint towards the role of monks to reach the paradise of Akṣobhya after passing?

The ceiling of the outer chamber has lost its central panel, which presumably once featured Buddha Akṣobhya (446). The remaining six layers of the lantern ceiling are predominantly covered by Buddhas, Akṣobhya on the vertical surfaces and Buddhas in monastic robes on the horizontal surfaces (447). The only exception is found on the fourth layer from the bottom in the east, where Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of wisdom, is represented instead of a Buddha (448).

As in the other cases the interior chörten is well preserved but has lost its superstructure above the *harmika* (446). The chörten is again of the descent from the gods type, and most of its original painting is obscured by whitewash. The base level lacks the profile pilasters framing the vehicles of the Buddhas, but they probably were painted with them.

The small chamber of the inner chörten has Buddha Akṣobhya represented in the centre of a five layer lantern ceiling (450). This time he is directed towards the east, and the panel featuring a central teaching Buddha is also on this side (451). Opposite the Buddha is a











455 Area in front of the Dukhang with the Raised Chörten supported by pillars in the centre of the roofed courtyard. CL 1998 (90,08), WHAV.

456 View into the upper chamber of the Raised Chörten. CL 1998 (93,21), WHAV.

white-skinned Drigung school hierarch, presumably again Drigungpa (452). He, too, performs the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*), and is directed towards another hierarch performing the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) largely obscured by whitewash (453). This monk on the south wall panel is surrounded by ritual paraphernalia and probably represents the currently active monk of the tradition. The fourth panel does not feature a local monk anymore, but the four-armed Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara (454). While the thrones of the teaching figures on the main axis resonate with those found in the Lönpo Chörten, the figures on the side panels are flanked by two pillars each. In the case of the monk the pillars carry two superimposed blossoms, while in the case of Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara they support a skull-bowl, indicating a tantric practice associated with this Bodhisattva.

The remains of writing on the beam of Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara consist of the knowledge mantra (*ōṃ sarvavid svāhā*), the consecration verse (*ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teśāṃ tathāgato hy avadat teśāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇaḥ*), and the mantra to purify the materials (*ōṃ āḥ hūṃ*) provided here in their Sanskrit versions, as well as the forbearance verse—*Forbearance is supreme ascetic practice, forbearance is supreme* nirvāṇa*, say the Buddha. The renunciate who harms another and who injures another is no monk* (śramaṇa)—whose addition to a painting in Tibetan language is prescribed by the eminent scholar and teacher of Drigungpa, Pakmodrupa (1110–1170).[263]

The quality of the paintings and the iconography of the Twin Chörten largely resonates with that of the Lönpo Chörten, but here the awkward positioning of the Buddhas has been corrected and the references to the local tradition are missing. Instead, it is Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara who is added as a new element, who, together with the skull-bowls flanking him, is reminiscent of the Amoghapāśa mandala painted on the south side of the outer chamber in the Tashi Gomang Chörten and the left wall of the Lotsawa Lhakhang, where this Bodhisattva is also represented on the main wall. These alterations can be read as the gradual replacement of the local tradition to that becoming prevalent with the emergence of the Drigung school in the region. Incidentally, in early Drigung school scroll paintings (*thang ka*) Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara appears to enter the pantheon sometimes in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, and his presence is consistent for the few western Himalayan examples identified.[264]





457 A white-skinned hierarch, presumably Drigungpa, flanked by two Bodhisattvas on the west wall of the upper chamber. CL 1998 (90,13), WHAV.

458 Lantern ceiling of the upper chamber and the two additional monks flanking a window on the south wall. CL 1998 (93,20), WHAV.

459 Śākyamuni flanked by two Bodhisattvas on the north wall of the upper chamber. CL 1998 (90,11), WHAV.

460 Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara painted on the east wall of the upper chamber. CL 1998 (90,14), WHAV.

Raised Chörten

The most spectacular addition of the thirteenth-century development of the Alchi complex is the chörten in the middle of the Main Temple's courtyard (444).[265] This double chörten is not standing on the ground, but has been raised on six pillars right in front of the temple's entrance (22, 26, 31, 32, 455). Additionally, these pillars support two beams leading from the walls flanking the entrance to the original pillars of the veranda on the temple side, on one side even supporting a roofing. Thus, the chörten is located on the central axis leading from the entrance to the complex towards the temple. Therefore, the visitor entering the courtyard passes right underneath this chörten and receives its blessings before he enters the veranda of the temple.

Although again two-fold, with a smaller chörten painted yellow today inside the main one, the structure of the chörten now differs from the earlier ones, as does the style of the paintings in its interior. The outer chörten now actually has two superimposed painted chambers, the upper one considerably smaller than the lower one (456). While the upper storey appears











461 White Buddha Vairocana performing gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*) depicted on the east wall. CL 1998 (93,22), WHAV.

462 White Buddha Akṣobhya flanked by two Bodhisattvas on the east side of the south wall. CL 1998 (93,24), WHAV.

463 Buddha Ratnasambhava on the west side of the south wall. CL 1998 (93,29), WHAV.

at least partially round on the outside, it is square in the interior. On both levels a central window marks the orientation of the chörten towards the entrance to the complex, nominally the south. The shape of the inner chörten is obscured by massive layers of yellow paint, and this structure does not have a painted chamber in its base.

The top chamber is again roofed with a lantern ceiling of five levels (458). Its central panel does not appear to be original and the current motif, an orange circle on an otherwise plain board reminds of the lotus rosettes used in some earlier ceilings such as the third storey of the Sumtsek (821) or the inner chörten chamber of the Palden Drepung Chörten (221). However, the two bottom levels each feature small central offering goddesses which have been painted separately and pasted on the panels.[266] While these cannot be identified individually on the basis of the documentation, it is clear that they are most likely an assembly of Buddha Akṣobhya, who must have once been represented in the centre of the ceiling.[267] Otherwise, the ceiling is covered by non-figurative textile patterns executed in muted shades of orange, white and black.

In the upper chamber of this chörten, Buddha Śākyamuni flanked by two Bodhisattvas is represented on the north wall, the wall on the side of the entrance to the Dukhang (459). As in the Lotsawa Lhakhang, he is flanked by a hierarch, presumably again Drigungpa, on the left side wall (west; 457) and Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara on the right side wall (east; 460). Drigungpa is white-skinned, directed towards the Buddha, and flanked by two Bodhisattvas, the one on the Buddha's side being Maitreya. Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara is represented frontally, but it is unclear from the documentation if he is flanked by Bodhisattvas as well. The window on the fourth wall, the south wall, is flanked by two more teachers (458), possibly the successors of Drigungpa in the western Tibetan lineage. Underneath them are four standing monks with begging staff and bowl (456).

The lower level is occupied by the Five Buddhas placed according to their directions (461), with the central Buddha Akṣobhya (462) flanking the window on the south wall together with Ratnasambhava (463). A white Vajrapāṇi painted above the window protects the space. The Buddhas occupying a wall for themselves are further flanked by repeated Buddha representations performing the same gesture as the main one. Interestingly, Buddha Akṣobhya is painted white, supporting a funerary context for the establishment of this chörten.[268]





464 The simple exterior of the Lhakhang Soma belies its art historical importance. HN 2003.

465 Detail of the lay followers in the donor scene; 1983.

The interior chörten is not open at its base, as was the case in previous examples. Again, we can assume that it houses the relic of a revered teacher of the time, the placement of the chörten emphasising his local importance and suggesting a direct relation to the founders of the main monuments of the complex.

The paintings are of higher quality than those in the other contemporaneous chörten, and their style has no link to the earlier Alchi paintings. Even the colour palette, now favouring red, differs considerably. Instead of the western Himalayan idiom recognisable to an increasingly lesser degree in all the monuments discussed so far, this chörten is painted in an eclectic style with elements of both the northeast Indian (Sharri) and Nepali (Beri) styles favoured in contemporaneous artworks in central Tibet, in particular in the Kagyü schools.[269] The usage of those styles expresses the need for linking the Tibetan Buddhist tradition to South Asian predecessors also in visual terms.

Several other single or double chörten have been built added over time within and beyond the sacred enclosure. While some of these can still to be attributed to a comparatively early period on the basis of their respective shapes, others may have been added considerably later. However, none of them allows us to determine when exactly they have been added as they have no accessible interior decoration.





466 The wooden door of the Lhakhang Soma is complex, but no carvings were applied to it. HN 2003.

467 The capitals follow the earlier ones with minor stylistic changes visible in the rendering of the lotus petals. CL 2000 (63,26), WHAV.





468 The central feast panel of the donor depiction; 1983.

469 Detail of the monastic community in the donor scene; 1983.

Lhakhang Soma

Sometime towards the middle of the fourteenth century the Lhakhang Soma was added to the complex (464, 472). Architecturally it is a simple single celled structure with two columns along the central axis of the building propping up two beams and making space for a central chörten (275–277). The small wooden door has a multi-layered structure that reminds of earlier doors, but is undecorated (466). Equally, the construction of the plain ceiling above the beams is remarkably complex. The columns, their carved capitals (467), and the lion brackets reference the earlier monuments, but the base became much more simple. In addition, the column is not fluted at its very bottom, the transition being carved in a way that makes it appear as if the fluted part is growing out of a lower round stem (471).

Art historically its paintings are evidence for a new area in both in style and iconography. Even though we have seen central Tibetan art influencing the Alchi painting from the Sumtsek onwards, the new motifs were first integrated in the western Himalayan idiom (Sumtsek to the Tashi Gomang Chörten) and then reproduced by poorly trained painters that attempted to synthesise them with the local tradition (Lhakhang Soma to the Twin Chörten). Only with the Raised Chörten, and the gateway chörten in Alchi Shangrong,[270] detailed knowledge and training in both the Sharri (Eastern Indian) and Beri (Nepali) styles is recognizable. With the Lhakhang Soma a local school has fully embraced this new idiom, its Ladakhi predecessors being the three-storeyed temple at Wanla, the Senggé Lhakhang in Lamayuru, and locally the temple of Alchi Shangrong (see below).[271]

In terms of iconography the new topics are concentrated on the main wall, which features a rich array of highly esoteric deities associated with the Kagyü and Nyingma schools, the latter taking an important position. Nevertheless, the temple is also remarkable for its references to the earlier monuments, in particular the Dukhang. Nothing demonstrates the continuity and change better than the donor depiction, the composition of which follows that of the Dukhang closely. As there, it is centred on a scene of feasting, with the lay followers on the one side and a monastic assembly on the other, but there are subtle differences throughout. Now the central scene is showcasing the offerings and the distribution of meat and drink (468). The local ruler heads the lay followers, wearing a helmet and holding an axe as signs of his status (465). The noble ladies in the row underneath the male now wear a square headdress that may well be a remote predecessor of the *perak* (*pe rag*), so typical for Ladakh. The monks, now wearing the standard Tibetan monastic robes with a sleeveless lower vest, do





470 The four-armed Mahākāla above the entrance. Chiara Bellini, 2011.

471 View of the left side wall with the three main mandalas painted in a hierarchy of size. Note also the carving of the lower end of the pillar; 1983.

not perform a ritual but simply attend the feast (469). Note the three pointed crown some of them wear, most likely a distorted version of the Kagyü meditation hat (*sgom zhva*), as it is also worn on the only large portrait of a lama in the Lhakhang Soma (see 299 and below). Other iconographic references to the earlier Alchi monuments are mentioned in the chapter on this temple (page 309 ff.).

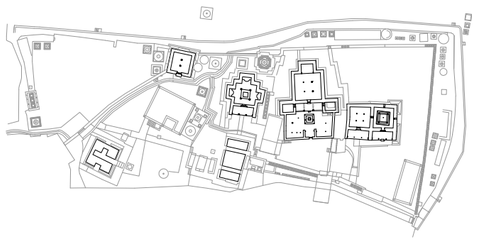
The new religious context is also apparent from the representation of Mahākāla (470). His depiction—with a Cakrasaṃvara above flanked by four more four-armed Mahākāla in the colours of the surrounding Buddha families, his four-armed red consort below, and an animal-headed retinue—still has to be identified precisely, but likely goes back to transmissions of this deity via Pakmodrupa Dorjé Gyelpo (1110–1170).[272] Importantly, the native deities that were directly in his retinue in the earlier monuments, are now in a secondary position outside the assembly proper. Exactly the same iconography is found in the temple of Shangrong, which helps to clarify some of the iconographic details.

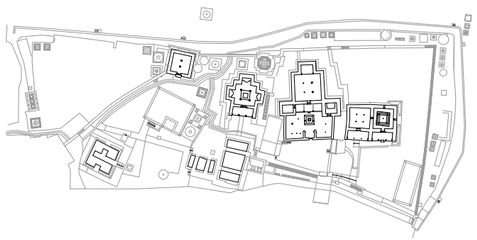
Curiously, Vairocana is in the centre of the five esoteric Buddhas above Kālacakra (295), but all of the highest esoteric deities on the main wall are commonly classified with the vajra family, and thus Buddha Akṣobhya. While the five esoteric Buddhas together fill the spaces on the left side wall (293), on the right side wall (300) and the entry wall (470) expansive areas are filled with Buddha Akṣobhya only. Clearly then, he is considered the main Buddha at this stage, both implicitly through the aspiration deities associated with him and explicitly through his many depictions.

As noted in the main text on the temple, the Śākyamuni composition on the main wall, and the presence of Drigungpa in its upper right corner of that wall (297, 298) demonstrate the continuity of the presence of this school in the Alchi context. However, with his immediate

472 In an eleventh phase, the last one differentiated here, the Lhakhang Soma was added on the village side of the complex. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

473 The complex continued to be changed considerably over time, and even more so in the last decades. Numerous chörten were added around the Sumtsek, among them the twin structure to the side of the Twin Chörten. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.









474 The complex of Alchi Shangrong, with the temple on the left side of the rock ridge covered by chörten. CL 2000 (64,21), WHAV.

475 Entry wall of the Alchi Shangrong temple with the eighty plus *mahāsiddha* to the left of the entrance and the Mahākāla above it. CL 2009 (digitally merged).

teacher Pakmodrupa represented in a large portrait instead of Drigungpa, the importance of the school is also played down in favour of a more generic Kagyü association.

To assess this situation, a comparison to the more or less contemporaneous temple of Alchi Shangrong is useful (474). The latter is painted by a workshop very close to that of the Lhakhang Soma, and its murals are of slightly higher quality, but also much more severely damaged with entire sections completely lost. However, the basic iconographic scheme of the two temples is similar. Roughly speaking, both temples house aspiration deities and their assemblies on the main wall, mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* on the left wall (471), and the Medicine Buddha(s) on the right wall (300).

However, while Shangrong has only aspiration deities on the main wall, with the top-centre position occupied by Kālacakra, in the Lhakhang Soma Buddha Śākyamuni takes centre stage in a composition with the seven Tārā in the bottom row (273). In addition, the Shangrong temple privileges the esoteric transmission over the exoteric one, replacing the life of the Buddha with a representation of the eighty plus *mahāsiddha* in a form specific to the Drigung school (475).[273] Generally, there are more minor references to the Drigung school throughout the temple, including several possible representations of Drigungpa, but there is no large teacher portrait. Padmasambhava and his eight manifestations are represented as secondary figures on the entry wall to the right of the upper edge of the Mahākāla panel.

Thus, the two temples leave the impression that in neither case there is a strong interest in adhering to or emphasising a particular Tibetan Buddhist school. They rather emphasize the teachings, some of which may be school related. The representation of Pakmodrupa and Padmasambhava in the Lhakhang Soma are, thus, not meant to mark a sectarian attribution, but to signify the roots of the respective teachings they are associated with.

Iconographically, the development of the Alchi temple complex documents the gradual shift from the predominance of the older esoteric cycles, in particular the Yoga Tantra corpus, to those of the new schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the Niruttarayoga Tantras. Visually this transition can be followed in the Alchi temples as a gradual shift from Buddha Vairocana to Buddha Akṣobhya as the central focus of the decoration. In fact, all Alchi monuments in the western Himalayan style are transitional monuments leaning towards one Buddha or the other, and it is only with a change in painting style that the transition is completed. The decreasing quality of the Alchi murals from monument to monument can be taken as evidence that this shift coincided with a considerable economic downturn that ultimately





476 View of Alchi Tsatsapuri with the temple complex in its centre. CL 2005 (75,05).

477 Ruins of a massive kumbum chörten in the fields close to the Alchi Shangrong complex, 1983.

brought the Indo-Tibetan painting style that is characteristic for the earliest monuments in the western Himalayan region to an end.

Continuous Changes

By the time the Lhakhang Soma was constructed donor attention at Alchi has already shifted away from the Choskhor. The chörten and temple of Shangrong are evidence in this regard. On a projecting rock south of the sacred area the three temples of the Tsatsapuri complex where constructed at least a century after the Lhakhang Soma (476). Further, in the fields not far from the Shangrong temple are the ruins of a large kumbum chörten with painted cells (477). This massive construction must have been erected in roughly the same period as well.

The monastic complex of Alchi Choskhor continued to be altered over time, especially through the addition of numerous chörten throughout the complex, probably erected for successive high teachers that stayed at the monastery. In contrast to those discussed above, they either do not contain paintings, or they are not accessible at all and can only be assessed on the basis of their outward appearance. Judging from the shape of the chörten, quite a number of them are of considerable antiquity, and some may even pre-date the Lhakhang Soma. For example, between the Palden Drepung and the Twin Chörten another pair of gateway chörten has been added (479), the shape of which is very similar to that of the Twin Chörten, but they do not have an interior chörten anymore. Another chörten to the side of the Sumtsek, attached to the wall of the building in front of the Lhakhang Soma, replicates the five pinnacle structure of the Palden Drepung Chörten (480). In both cases the new structures are of smaller size than the ones they resonate with, indicating less affluent times at their construction. The references to the earlier buildings nevertheless indicate a fairly early date, most likely after their respective references and before 1400.

Two other chörten represent two distinct early types. Immediately to side of the second five pinnacle chörten is one of similar proportions, but without the corner structures (480). Its shape—essentially a double-tiered throne with a door on the front side of the upper throne and a multi-cornered superstructure—conforms to a chörten type found all over Ladakh, some of which are painted in the interior of the upper base with murals datable to the thirteenth century.[274] At Alchi this chörten is hidden behind a tree preventing to photograph it properly. The second early type is prominently placed at the edge of the complex between the Main Temple and the Sumtsek (331, 478, also prominently visible on figure 9). Its restored

478 Chörten with cross-shaped throne and complex superstructure. CL 2000 (6058), WHAV.







479 The pair of chörten immediately adjacent, but at an angle to the earlier double chörten.

480 View of the two early chörten adjacent to the so-called Kangyur Temple within the Alchi Choskhor. Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

481 Murals on the left side of the Sumtsek's veranda with Padmasambhava in the centre, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) in the upper left corner, and Milarepa in the bottom centre. CL 2000 (56,39), WHAV.

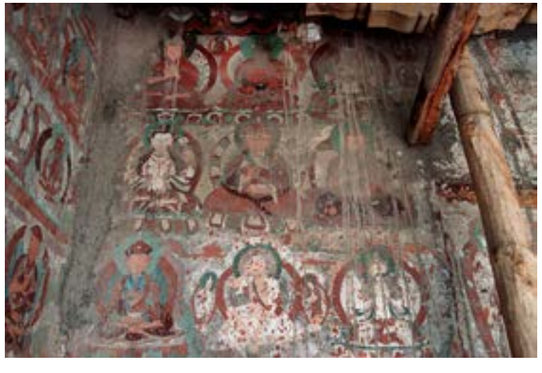
482 Buddha flanked by four Bodhisattvas in the recess above the door to the Sumtsek. CL 2000 (56,38), WHAV.

double tier base is also based on squares, but there are flat projections on each side making it cross-shaped with the edges of the square projecting between the arms of the cross. The upper level of the throne has a window towards the south, and the superstructure continues the basic shape of the base, but is badly corroded.

Other smaller chörten are found both within the complex and along the circumambulation path, many of them in a shape that eventually became the standard Tibetan chörten type from the fifteenth century onwards. Together, these chörten document the continuous usage and maintenance of the complex.

Also the oldest structures of the complex continued to be maintained, as is demonstrated by a sixteenth-century inscription added on a previously empty panel in the Maitreya niche of the Sumtsek (616). This inscription records a restoration the extent of which is far from clear, especially in its relevance for works done in and other buildings of the complex.[275] Another fragmentary inscription of a similar type in the courtyard of the Main Temple has so far remained unstudied.

Repairs of different types are noticeable throughout the complex. In the Main Temple, the entire roof must have been replaced at some stage, and the courtyard area has been changed considerably over time. Inside the Sumtsek, it is the sculptures that have suffered most and needed repair. Some of the less decorated surfaces of the large Bodhisattva sculptures have been repainted, and the bottom sculptures have almost entirely been replaced in two of the









483 The tower-like structure of the Maitreya Temple to the right of the Dukhang as seen from the roof of the courtyard. CL 1998 (90,17), WHAV.

484 The large four-armed sculpture of Maitreya within the chapel surrounded by murals. CL 1998 (90,18), WHAV.

three niches. Speculations that the inscription refers to the lineage in the top storey or the entire top storey, however, have no merit (see page 723 ff.).

A noteworthy addition are the murals in the ground floor veranda of the Sumtsek. Of these the Buddha flanked by four Bodhisattvas on the recessed area above the door of the Sumtsek appears to be earlier (482). The flanking Bodhisattvas loosely compare with those added to the side of the veranda (405), but either their repainting has been much less faithful to the original or they are a case of a stylistic quotation. As they are, these murals cannot be earlier than the fifteenth century and likely are considerably later. The murals to the sides of the veranda are curiously disorganised (481). Rather than reflecting a particular iconographic programme, prominent figures of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon have been placed side by side. They also cannot be contemporaneous in their entirety, as is most clearly indicated with the Milarepa image in the bottom centre. But their largely uniform colour scheme and condition speaks of a single restoration phase that brought them into their current state. It is likely, that some of these obvious changes have been part of the restoration mentioned in the inscription.

Maitreya Temple

One of the most recent architectural changes to the complex was the expansion of the tower like structure to the right side of the Main Temple's entrance (472, 483). Originally, this tower must have mirrored the one on the opposite side in size, as indicated by the murals of the courtyard (399). Today's structure shares the side wall with the original veranda wall, but is expanded towards the front and the outer side. It is unclear when this extension took place, but it must have gone hand in hand with a rededication of this space for a large Bodhisattva image. The 'enormous standing four-armed Maitreya'[276] occupying the temple and the mural paintings surrounding it are very recent (484). Architecturally, there is no indication that this expansion has been done at an early stage, as was the case at Mangyu and Sumda, but it





485 Restoration of the courtyard in 2003. A careful look at this image reveals that excessive height of clay used for the courtyard's roof and the disintegrated plastic sheets within it. CL 2003 (9564).

486 The new lantern for the courtyard surrounding the Raised Chörten. Martina Rössel 2005.

would not be surprising if the change in function of this tower happened earlier than is at evidence today.

With this most recent alteration to the core of the monastic complex, we distinguish twelve major phases for the development of the Alchi complex, excluding the numerous additional undecorated chörten (473).

Recent Changes

Obviously, this study of the monuments in the Alchi Choskhor and its surroundings still leaves many questions open, some of which may never be resolved. Since the documentation on which this study is based has been done in the early two thousands—our cut-off date is 2003—alterations to the complex have continued at an exhilarating pace. These works appear to be driven predominantly by the Archaeological Survey of India, who spends considerable money on the complex almost every year. Among these changes the following are most noteworthy:

- A temporary roof of green PVC- and tin-sheets covered the Dukhang in 2003 (324).
- All wooden members of the verandas of the Sumtsek, the Lotsawa Lhakhang and Jampel Lhakhang were cleaned and painted with a glossy transparent varnish (2004). Figures 408 and 409 demonstrating their appearance after that cleaning, while otherwise earlier documentation has been preferred.
- The same year the roof of the courtyard and the beams supporting the Raised Chörten have been redone (485), and
- subsequently the area in the middle of the courtyard has been roofed with a lantern covered by transparent PVC-sheets encasing the throne of the Raised Chörten (486).
- A massive paving of the complex' circumambulation path (2003–04) was accompanied by
- replacing some of the walls surrounding the complex through fencing along the circumambulation path (2004–05; 487).
- The addition of a door (488) and the movement of the fencing from the inside of the circumambulation path to its outside (488; before 2015),
- this included the separation of chörten at the corners of the complex that traditionally were part of the circumambulation (490).
- Most recently, the three chörten at the beginning of the circumambulation path were replaced by concrete versions (2017).









487 The new circumambulation path and first fencing of the compound replacing parts of the earlier boundary wall. CL 2005 (0271).

488 The door locking off a part of the circumambulation path. The multi-cornered chörten visible through the door can also be recognised in 487 and 489. CL 2015 (0775).

489 The movement of the fence to the outside of the circumambulation path. CL 2015 (0776).

490 The *lhato* and chörten outside the circumambulation path but originally integral part of it. In 2019 the wall was provisionally broken again at this corner to enable circumambulation of those structures again, but one had to walk over a slope of loose rocks. CL 2017 (1181).

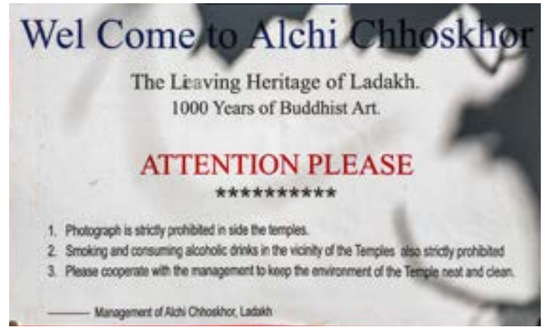
And this list only includes the major changes that are immediate apparent, and not all the minor alterations to the outer surface of the structures, or the, in a material sense, 'concrete' attempts to regulate the drainage and visitor paths throughout the complex. In addition, the so-called Kangyur Temple (491), effectively a house within the monastic complex that houses a collection of the Buddha's words (*bka' 'gyur*) and is administered separately, has been rebuilt in 2010 and expanded by another floor 2016–17.

Whatever one may think about the aesthetic behind these measures, they do not consider the religious use of the complex. Further, the repeated works across the complex increasingly obscure the legibility of the architectural development, and obviously affect the authenticity of the complex and its structures. More worryingly, all the architectural measures taken do not address the main issue of earthen architecture in the region, excessive roof weight. In the contrary, the almost complete covering of the original window to the niche of the Dukhang (309), the additional roof height visible on top storey of the Sumtsek (760), or the height of the courtyard's roof revealed during restoration (485) are tell-tale signs that this issue has rather been exacerbated through recent work.

To our knowledge, no archaeological work that could contribute to a better understanding of the interrelationship of the buildings in the complex has been undertaken, and no documentation of what has been done is accessible.[277]

Fortunately, no major works have been done on the paintings and sculptures in the interior of the temples since the 1980s. It is said that these spaces are the responsibility of Likir Monastery. The chörten are somewhat in-between, and regardless of their historical value do not get the same protection as other structures, consequently the *in situ* site map does not point them out (491). In fact the passage of the Palden Drepung Chörten is regularly used as





491 Board with map of the complex demonstrating the secondary importance of the painted chörten to the management. CL 2015 (0782).

492 Welcome board with an ominous typo that was subsequently corrected. CL 2019 (1270).

wood or building material storage, making it temporarily inaccessible. Fortunately, both the Palden Drepung and the Tashi Gomang Chörten have been conserved in the early 1990s by the Save Alchi Project, and thus have not visibly deteriorated since.

From a heritage management and research point of view, the distinctions made between the interiors and the exteriors, the core buildings and their surroundings, is unfortunate and ultimately detrimental to the entirety of the monastic complex. After all, as this chapter demonstrates, the architecture is an important and integral element needed for the proper interpretation of the evidence provided by the paintings and sculptures in the interiors. Further, it is the peripheral monuments that have proven vital for a better understanding of the main monuments and for an assessment of the complex as a whole.

It can only be hoped that future works take a more comprehensive approach to the maintenance of the complex that not only considers exterior and interior together, but also makes sure that the religious usage of the complex is not adversely affected. While Alchi has become a tourist hotspot, it is still used by locals, and these should not be deprived of the possibility to circumambulate the complex in the traditional manner. Without such a more comprehensive approach to maintenance the ominous typo on the welcome board to the complex photographed in 2019 (491) may well become a reflection of reality.

We hope that this chapter has demonstrated that the Alchi Choskhor preserves much more than two fantastic temples. Taken at face value, its architecture, art and inscriptions provide unique insights into a flourishing early Ladakhi Buddhist culture carried by a local noble family that not only built its monuments but also used and maintained them over centuries.

Appendices

The appendices provide background information on some of the Alchi inscriptions and the detailed iconography of some of the mandalas as they are depicted at Alchi.

The Pearl Garland Composition

This is the translation of the main inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten. Roger Goepper (1993a) contains a study of the first part of this text, while Amy Heller and Shawo Khacham (2018) have translated its second part. This re-translation is based on a new edition of the entire text that is being published separately (Luczanits forthcoming).

Homage

Om, may this be auspicious!
From the sky of the non-originated *dharmakāya*
the unobstructed *saṃbhogakāya* appears like a
cloud and the active *nirmāṇakāya* comes like incessant rain. I praise the Sugata of the three times! 1

The twelve branches of the scriptures,[1] the
Tripitaka, the four classes of tantra, the factors conducive to awakening[2] and so forth,
[I respectfully praise] the holy Dharma. 2

… … …
… … …

1 According to Dudjom Rinpoche (1991) vol. 2, p. 162, 169, these are *sūtra* (*mdo sde*), aphorisms in prose and verse (*dbyangs bsnyad*), prophetic declarations (*lung bstan*), verses (*tshig bcad*), purposeful expressions (*ched brjod*), frame-stories (*gleng gzhi*), extensive teachings (*shin tu rgyas pa*), tales of past lives (*skyes rabs*), marvellous events (*rmad du byung*), narratives (*rtogs pa brjod pa*), fables (*de lta bu byung ba*), and established instructions (*gtan phab*).

2 Here I quote the respective entry in Duff (2016): '*byang chub phyogs mthun gyi chos sum cu so bdun* <noun>phrase> "The thirty-seven factors conducive to enlightenment". Translation of the Sanskrit [NDS] "saptatriṃśhad bodhipākṣhikā dharmaḥ". Acc. [NDS] they are: 1) *dran pa nyer bzhag bzhi* "four applications of mindfulness"; 2) *yang dag spong ba bzhi* "four authentic abandonments"; 3) *rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi* "four legs of miracles"; 4) *dbang po lnga* "five faculties"; 5) *stobs lnga* "five powers"; 6) *byang chub kyi yan lag bdun* "seven limbs of enlightenment"; 7) *'phags lam yan lag brgyad* "the eight branches of the eightfold noble path" q.v. [KPC] gives the same groups but has the altern. spelling of 2) as *yang dag par spong ba bzhi*.'

doing this …
I pay homage to the monastic communities. 3

Superior son of the Buddhas of the three times,
precious teacher, who accomplished the spontaneous existence of awakened activities, Lord Drigungpa, I pay homage to you and praise you. 4

Having paid homage to Buddha, Dharma,
monastic community and teacher,
I am writing this partial record
of accumulations of some merit. 5

Setting the Stage

Supported by a massive golden base,
Mount Meru and the seven mountain ranges,
the four continents and the eight minor continents, on the best among these continents,[3] 6

southern Jambudvīpa … …
an excellent place with a range of snow mountains
on one side, Upper Ngari,
projecting at its side, Lower Ladakh … 7

here at Alchi …
I myself, monk of the Dro [clan], Tsültrim Ö,
due to the impurity of my former
prayers, was born in this land, where the
three bad rebirths accumulate. 8

Having obtained the precious human body, and
having been ordained when I was a crybaby, I
bowed to the feet of the preceptor, I eliminated the mental elaborations a bit and trained in
the three trainings as they are expressed. 9

The small amount (of merit) previously accumulated
… …
even as I gathered wealth and enjoyment,
Thinking of those low in capacity, 10

I gave towards the precious teacher.
Thinking to accumulate some merit,

3 This verse references the Buddhist cosmos and its main parts, zooming in towards Jambudvīpa, the Rose-apple Continent. It is traditional to place one's region into the wider cosmos in this context.

as root of relative virtue,
I made supports of body, speech and mind. 11

Body Supports

Concerning the making of supports for the body, I
built the temple Pile of Jewels (Rinchentsek).[4]
To repay his kindness, I built
a shrine for the Rinpoche (i.e., Drigungpa).[5] 12

For the sake of my two parents
and to accumulate merit for myself
I built about ten bigger and smaller temples
… … … 13

… made arrays of more than thousand
figures of the Sugata …
I made arrays of ten thousand figures of
the Bhagavat Sugata Akṣobhya, 14

and arrays of two thousand figures
of the Bhagavat Amitābha.
Also of figures of Mañjughoṣa
I made arrays of about two thousand.[6] 15

To attain awakening in one kalpa,
I made the thousand Buddhas of the [bhadra]kalpa.
I made images of the protectors of the three
families. All the temples and chörten, and … 16

… … …
… … …
I made figures of Tārā and other goddesses,
whatever came to mind.
About these are the supports of the body,
at the root of relative virtue. 17

4 As Goepper (1993), n. 15, has suggested, Pile of Jewels or Rinchen Tsekpa (*rin cen brtsegs pa*) is the original name of the Sumtsek.

5 The usage of the term *gdung khang* implies that this structure originally contained some form of relic of Drigungpa. Given that this shrine is mentioned between temple constructions and that there is a dedication to Drigungpa in the Sumtsek itself, one may assume that this shrine, whatever its shape, was inside the Sumtsek and was later replaced by the present chörten. One may even go so far as to interpret the Sumtsek as built for this very purpose.

6 One thousand of each of the three, Akṣobhya, Amitābha and Mañjughoṣa are represented in the Sumtsek, and they are listed here in their relative hierarchy within the temple. An additional thousand Akṣobhya are in the chörten with this inscription. It is unclear if any of the monuments built shortly after are to be counted here as well.

Speech Supports

Thinking to make supports of speech
on very rare paper,
not looking at price and value,
I produced fourteen volumes of the extended, 18

six volumes of the middle, and one volume of the abridged version [of the *Prajñāpāramitā*]. I made the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, the *Prajñāpāramitāsañcayagāthā*, and the *Bhadracarīpraṇidhānarāja* of gold.
Of the blessed words, I made a golden *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*. 19

[Even] as single son, I, through my wealth,
at a time difficult to obtain … [7]
O wonder, …
I made prints of the words …
So much about the supports of speech made. 20

Mind Supports

As for making supports of the mind, taking as a model the self-manifest Śrī-Dhānyakaṭaka [stupa], as it exists in central India, I made the chörten Palden Drepung [= Śrī-Dhānyakaṭaka]. 21[8]

Taking as a model the Tashi Gomang
made by the incarnate precious teacher (i.e., Drigungpa), I made a Tashi Gomang
of one-hundred-thousand [doors]. 22[9]

7 It makes little sense in this context that the author speaks here of a single son of his, as it does not relate to this section at all and contradicts the author's early ordination. I thus interpret *nga'i bu cig* as referring to the author himself, but I am aware that this is problematic.

8 This stanza refers to the stupa in which the Buddha revealed the Kālacakra and other tantras, which has been suggested to have been located somewhere in northeastern India, the Amarāvatī stupa of the same name can be excluded in this regard (see in particular Macdonald (1970)). There are several spellings for the name of this stupa, the one at Alchi, which should end consistently in *phung*, appears to be an older variant for the more commonly used *spungs*. I am interpreting this verse as referring to the chörten containing the inscription itself, and thus call it the Palden Drepung Chörten.

9 This stanza refers to the stupa Drigungpa made for the relics of his teacher Pakmodrupa Dorjé Gyelpo (phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po; 1110–1170) at Drigung monastery, which is different from the so-called Tashi Öbar (*bkra shis 'od 'bar*) made for the same teacher at Densatil (*gdan sa mthil*). See, for example, Roerich 1988,

... living up to ...
without caring for food, wealth or hardship, ... with large body measurements ...
... ...
... made as support of mind. 23

Wisdom Accumulation[10]

Thinking to accumulate wisdom, through assembling the non-composites etc.
From the chant master, held by a learned teacher, via the precious paternal uncle, to the teachers, preceptors and instructors, I successively requested cultivating the mind [of *bodhicitta* teachings] and initiation. 24[11]

They granted oral instruction on the creation and completion stages [of tantric meditation], entrusted my mind with profound instruction, introduced the Great Seal (*mahāmudrā*), ... gift ...
not doing 25

Aspirations[12]

As I made images of the five esoteric Buddhas[13]
... [as supports] of the body,
may I be born ...
endowed with the five wisdoms like them. 26

As I made images of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, may I be born as the first in the retinue of all the Buddhas of the ten directions. 27

As I made arrays of images of the Bhagavat Sugata Akṣobhya, may I be born at the feet of Akṣobhya in the eastern realm of Abhirati. 28

As I made arrays of images of Bhagavat Amitābha, may I be born at his feet in the realm Sukhāvatī. 29[14]

As I made images of the thousand Buddhas of the fortunate aeon and the protectors of the three families, may I be born in the inner circle of Mañjughoṣa, Maitreya and so forth. 30

As I made images of all the bodies of the Sugata, Tārā and ... goddesses, may the revered master (Drigungpa) and others guide me to the realm of the sky farers (i.e., *ḍākinī*). 31[15]

Having cultivated the unity of the emerging and completion stages and realised the great bliss of non-duality of method and wisdom may I obtain the supreme and ordinary siddhi.
Meditating on the three levels of fierce, may I appease the inner and outer obstacles. 32

Through initiation into contemplation, the sleeping, eating and excretion practices and so forth, may I be protected from all deterioration, and may my obscurations from bad karma be purified. 33

By making feast gatherings of all the protectors and *ḍākinī* and offering *torma* (*gtor ma*) at every full and new moon for six times, may the signs of accomplishment become real. 34

Through continuously taking refuge to the refuges of the three jewels, the lama and the assembly of aspiration deities, may I be blessed without interruption. 35

Through obeying to whatever is said by teachers, preceptors and instructors, and not going against the words of parents, may the enemies and obstructors be kind. 36

Through [generating] affectionate love and firmly steering loving kindness towards all sentient beings of the six types of migration, may I [experience] ... and loving kindness. 37

Wishes for Those Involved

May the suffering and difficulties by all humans and domestic animals for making all these temples and chörten purify their obscuration and bad karma. 38

May they be free of unfortunate rebirths and obtain the higher realms and liberation.
Having obtained the ranks of humans or gods, may they meet [again] with the Buddhist teaching (Dharma). 39

Wishes at Passing

As for me, when it is time to go, when inner and outer breath are to be severed, may Buddha Akṣobhya appear in person in the sky in front [of me]. 40

Moreover, may the Tathagata, having appeared in person, grasp me ... ... heart.
May I then be reborn instantaneously at the feet of Bhagavat Akṣobhya, without experiencing the appearance of a *bar do*. 41

Moreover, having been reborn at the feet of the Bhagavat, may I encounter the holy Dharma.
Moreover, having encountered the holy Dharma, may I comprehend the meaning of non-arising. 42

Through my root of virtue and amassing the two accumulations (of merit and wisdom) in this way, may the aspirational prayer offered thus be truly accomplished. 43

Conclusion

This is a partial record of making supports of body, supports of speech, and supports of mind, and assembling a bit of merit. 44

... ...
... written in support of the prayer
If there should be mistakes in this poetic composition, may the wise ones be patient. 45

The 'Pearl Garland Composition' completed.

Deities of the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu Mandala

This mandala consists of either fifty-three or fifty-seven deities, depending on whether there are separate gate-keepers for its two palaces. It is distinguished from the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala through its geometry and in one variant through all but the five Buddhas holding a wisdom sword as second attribute in their right hands.

The names listed are from this source and compared with Vilāsavajra's *Nāmasaṃgīti* commentary NMAA (Tribe, 2016) and T2533 as well as the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgītiguhyavadvidhivṛttijñānadīpa* by Smṛtijñānakīrti, who also translated the text (T2584). The description of the deities is based on the depiction in the Alchi Dukhang.

There are two main iconographic versions of this mandala both of which occur at Alchi, one with Mahāvairocana/Vajradhātu Vairocana in the centre (Dukhang, page 71 ff.) and the other one with Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha in the centre (Sumtsek, page 668 ff.). If Vairocana is in the centre of the mandala, all secondary deities except for the five esoteric Buddhas hold a sword in the right hand and their distinctive attribute in the left.

Inner Palace or Square

Centre

1 Mahāvairocana/Vajradhātu Vairocana – Nampar Nangdzé, rnam par snang mdzad: four-faced, white body-colour; gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*, *byang chub mchog gi phyag rgya*)

Inner circle of eight petals

In the cardinal directions are the four other esoteric Buddhas read from the east clockwise.

2 Akṣobhya – Mikyöpa, *mi bskyod pa*: blue; earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*)

3 Ratnasambhava – Rinchen Jungden, *rin chen 'byung ldan*: yellow; gesture of granting a wish (*varadamudrā*)

4 Amitābha – Nangwa Tayé, *snang ba mtha' yas*: red; gesture of meditation

5 Amoghasiddhi – Dönyö Druppa, *don yod grub pa*: green; gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*)

In the intermediary directions are the four mothers of the families.

6 Sattvavajrī – Semma Dorjéma, *sems ma rdo rje ma* / Dorjé Semma, *rdo rje sems ma*: blue, holds vajra

601 and the extensive discussion in Czaja (2013), 379–383, which in my opinion conflates this stupa with a record that must describe the pantheon of a later stupa identical to those of Densatil (see also the different discussions on the same source in Luczanits (2010) and Czaja (2010)).

10 So far the text was concerned with the accumulation of merit, now it focuses on wisdom. With these the two accumulations, *tshogs gnyis*, required for buddhahood are covered.

11 I read this stanza as a reference to his early teachers, the learned chant master (*umdze*), the paternal uncle that led the family monastery (possibly Kalden Shérap, the founder of the Dukhang), and other learned local teachers.

12 This section has two main parts, aspirations resulting from the making of body supports, that is merit accumulation, and aspirations resulting from religious practice, that is wisdom accumulation.

13 I translate *rgyal ba rigs lnga* a bit more freely as 'five esoteric Buddhas'.

14 That Abhirati is listed here before the otherwise more popular Sukhāvatī conforms to the importance of this realm in the Alchi monuments.

15 This verse leads to aspirations resulting from the practice, the terminology clearly referring to Highest Yoga Tantra practices.

7 Ratnavajrī – Dorjé Rinchenma, *rdo rje rin chen ma*: yellow; has a wish-fulfilling jewel as symbol

8 Dharmavajrī – Dorjé Chöma, *rdo rje chos ma*: red; has a red lotus

9 Karmavajrī – Dorjé Lema, *rdo rje las ma*: green; has a *viśvavajra*

Outer circle of sixteen petals

The sixteen Mahābodhisattvas from the east clockwise, each holding a sword in the right hand and the distinctive attribute in the left.

10 Vajrasattva – Dorjé Sempa, *rdo rje sems pa*: white; holds a five-pointed vajra at the heart

11 Vajrarāja – Dorjé Gyelpo, *rdo rje rgyal po*: yellow; holds vajra hook

12 Vajrarāga – Dorjé Chakpa, *rdo rje chags pa*: red; with arrow and bow

13 Vajrasādhu – Dorjé Lekpa, *rdo rje legs pa*: greyish green; vajra-fist in front of chest

14 Vajraratna – Dorjé Rinchen, *rdo rje rin chen* / Vajragarbha – Dorjé Nyingpo, *rdo rje snying po*: yellow; holds a wish-fulfilling jewel

15 Vajrasūrya – Dorjé Nyima, *rdo rje nyi ma*: sun coloured; holds a vajra sun circle

16 Vajradhvaja – Dorjé Gyeltsen, *rdo rje rgyal mtshan*: blue; has a banner of the wish-fulfilling jewel

17 Vajrahāsa – Dorjé Zhépa, *rdo rje bzhad pa*: white; holds a garland of teeth (*so'i phreng ba*)

18 Vajradharma – Dorjé Chö, *rdo rje chos* / Vajranetra – *rdo rje sbyan*: red; holds lotus

19 Vajratīkṣṇa – Dorjé Nönpo, *rdo rje rnon po*: blue; holds sword and book

20 Vajrahetu – Dorjé Gyu, *rdo rje rgyu*: yellow; holds a wheel

21 Vajrabhāṣa – Dorjé Mawa, *rdo rje smra ba*: red; holds a vajra tongue (*rdo rje lce*)

22 Vajrakarma – Dorjé Lé, *rdo rje las*: greyish green; holds *viśvavajra*

23 Vajrarakṣa – Dorjé Sungwa, *rdo rje srung ba*: yellow; holds a small coat of mail

24 Vajrayakṣa – Dorjé Nöjin, *rdo rje gnod sbyin*: of black body-colour; has a corpulent body; grasps a large tooth

25 Vajrasandhi – Dorjé Khutsur, *rdo rje khu tshur*: yellow; half fist palm up at side of body, no attribute recognisable

In the corners of the inner palace

Four inner offering goddesses, all holding sword in the right hand.

26 Lāsyā – Gekmo, *sgeg mo*: blue; both hands in vajra-fists at the hip

27 Mālā – Trengwama, *phreng ba ma*: yellow; holds a garland of jewels (*ratnamālā*)

28 Gītā – Luma, *glu ma*: red; holds a lute (*vīṇā*)

29 Nṛtyā – Garma, *gar ma*: green; makes dance-gesture

Additionally, four gate-keepers may be added here in case this inner part is conceived as a palace and not simply as a square, but even in the former case the gates may be empty.

Outer Palace

Bodhisattvas of the Fortunate Aeon

All hold a sword in the right hand and the family attribute in the left.

East: blue, holding a vajra

30 Maitreya – Jampa, *byams pa*

31 Amoghadarśin – Tongwa Dönyö, *mthong ba don yod*

32 Sarvāpāyañjaha – Ngensong Tamché Jongwa, *ngan song thams cad sbyong ba* / Ngensong Kündren, *ngan song kun 'dren*

33 Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati – Nyangen Münpa Tamché Ngépar Jompé Lodrö, *mya ngan mun pa thams cad nges par 'joms pa'i blo gros*

South: yellow, holding a jewel

34 Gandhahastin – Pökyi Langpo, *spos kyi glang po*

35 Śūraṃgama – Pawar Drowa, *dpa' bar 'gro ba*

36 Gaganagañja – Namkhé Dzö, *nam mkha'i mdzod*

37 Jñānaketu – Yéshé Tok, *ye shes tog*

West: red, holding a lotus

38 Amitābha – Öpakmé, *'od dpag [tu] med [pa]*

39 Candraprabha – Dawé Ö, *zla ba'i 'od*

40 Bhadrapāla – Zangskyong, *bzang skyong*

41 Jālinīprabha – Drabachengyi Ö, *dra ba can gyi 'od*

North: green, holding a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)

42 Vajragarbha – Dorjé Nyingpo, *rdo rje snying po*

43 Akṣayamati – Lodrö Mizépa, *blo gros mi bzad pa*

44 Pratibhānakūṭa – Poppa Tsekpa, *spobs pa brtsegs pa*

45 Samantabhadra – Küntu Zangpo, *kun tu bzang po*

In the corners of the outer palace

Four outer offering goddesses, all holding sword in the right hand.

46 Dhūpā – Dukpama, *bdug ba ma*: blue; holds incense burner

47 Puṣpā – Métokma, *me tog ma*: yellow; holds a plate of flowers

48 Ālokā / Dīpā – Marmema, *mar me ma*: red; holds a plate with a flame

49 Gandhā – Jukpama, *byug pa ma*: green; holds a sweet-smelling conch (*dri'i dung chos*)

In the gates

Four gate-keepers, each holding a sword in the right hand and the distinctive attribute in the left.

50 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: blue; holds goad

51 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, *rdo rje zhags pa*: yellow; holds noose

52 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, *rdo rje lcags sgrog*: red; holds a black noose instead of the usual chain

53 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: greyish-green; holds a bell

Deities of the Trilokavijaya Mandala

Names after Ānandagarbha's, *Rite of the Glorious Conquest over the Three Worlds Drawn from the Compendium of Principles Tantra*, *Śrītrailokyavijayamaṇḍalavidhiāryatattvasaṃgrahatantroddhṛtā*, *dpal khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga 'phags pa de kho na nyid bsdus pa'i rgyud las btus pa*, P3342 (T 2519), translated by Rinchen Zangpo, iconographic details as depicted at Alchi and Mangyu.

Inner Palace

Only the deities in the central circle are peaceful, all others are wrathful and stand with their left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍha*).

Central Circle

1 Mahāvairocana/Vajradhātu Vairocana – Nampar Nangdzé, *rnam par snang mdzad*: white; four-headed, fourth head on top, all white; gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*); seated on pair of lions

Surrounded by the four mothers of the families

2 Sattvavajrī – Dorjé Semma, *rdo rje sems ma*: blue; right hand raised in first at side, left at him holds stem of lotus carrying a vajra

3 Ratnavajrī – Dorjé Rinchenma, *rdo rje rin chen ma*: yellow; right hand raised at side holding a jewel, left at hip

4 Dharmavajrī – Dorjé Chöma, *rdo rje chos ma*: red; right hand raised at side holding a lotus, left at hip

5 Karmavajrī – Dorjé Lema, *rdo rje las ma*: green; right raised at side in *vandanamudrā*, left at hip holds stem of lotus that carries the crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)

Circles in the Cardinal Directions

Wrathful forms of the four surrounding Buddhas, each of them surrounded by four of the Mahābodhisattvas, the primary one represented underneath (that is in front of) the Buddha, the second to this right, the third to his left, and the fourth on top (behind).

6 Trailokyavijaya – Jikten Sumlé Nampar Gyelwa, *'jig rten gsum las rnam par rgyal ba* / Vajrahūṃkāra – Dorjé Humdzé, *rdo rje hUM mdzad* (standing in for Akṣobhya – Mikyöpa, *mi bskyod pa*): blue; four-headed and eight-armed; performing *vajrahūṃkāramudrā* with main pair of arms, the others hold, in functional pairs: sword and vajra, arrow and bow, elephant goad and noose; trampling on Maheśvara (Śiva) and Umā

7 Ratnahūṃkāra – Rinchen Humdzé, *rin chen hUM mdzad* (wrathful form of Ratnasambhava, *rin chen 'byung ldan*): yellow; the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*), left at hip; horses

8 Dharmahūṃkāra – Chökyi Humdzé, *chos kyi hUM mdzad* (wrathful form of Amitābha – Nangwa Tayé, *snang ba mtha' yas*): red; opening lotus at his heart (gesture of Vajradharma instead of meditation); peacocks

9 Karmahūṃkāra – Lékyi Humdzé, *las kyi hUM mdzad* (wrathful form of Amoghasiddhi – Dönyö Druppa, *don yod grub pa*): green; the gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*), left at hip; *garuḍa*

Sixteen Mahābodhisattvas

As all deities are wrathful, the full version of their names are preceded by *krodha*, as indicated with the first name only.

East:

10 [Krodha] Vajrasattva – Dorjé Sempa, *rdo rje sems pa*: blue; vajra upright in palm of hand in front of the chest, left at hip

11 Vajrarāja – Dorjé Gyelpo, *rdo rje rgyal po*: yellow; right hand as if holding a vajra in front of chest, left with elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*) at side

12 Vajrarāga – Dorjé Chakpa, *rdo rje chags pa*: red; right in front of chest, left raises bow at the side

13 Vajrasādhu – Dorjé Lekpa, *rdo rje legs pa*: green; performing a mudrā with both hands in front of the chest

South:

14 Vajraratna – Dorjé Rinchen, *rdo rje rin chen*: yellow; both hands at side, right one holding jewel

15 Vajrasūrya – Dorjé Nyima, *rdo rje nyi ma*: red; right hand holding sun-disk at side, left at side

16 Vajradhvaja – Dorjé Gyeltsen, *rdo rje rgyal mtshan*: blue; right holding tiny banner, left at side

17 Vajrahāsa – Dorjé Zhépa, *rdo rje bzhad pa*: white; right in front of chest, left holding garland of teeth at side

West:

18 Vajradharma – Dorjé Chö, *rdo rje chos*: red; right hand with lotus raised at side, left at side

19 Vajratīkṣṇa – Dorjé Nönpo, *rdo rje rnon po*: blue; sword held in the right hand in front of chest, left at side

20 Vajrahetu – Dorjé Gyu, *rdo rje rgyu*: red; right hand in front of body, left at side

21 Vajrabhāṣa – Dorjé Mawa, *rdo rje smra ba*: yellow; right hand with wheel held at side, left at side

North:

22 Vajrakarma – Dorjé Lé, *rdo rje las*: green; right raised above the head, left held at side

23 Vajrarakṣa – Dorjé Sungwa, *rdo rje srung ba*: yellow; right hand holds tiny coat of mail in front of chest, left at side

24 Vajrayakṣa – Dorjé Nöjin, *rdo rje gnod sbyin*: black; right hand in front of body, left at side, both holding long tooth

25 Vajrasandhi – Dorjé Khutsur, *rdo rje khu tshur*: yellow; both hands with vajra-fist joined around a vajra at the side of the body

Circles in the Corners

Inner offering goddesses

26 [Krodha] Lāsyā – Gekmo, *sgeg mo*: blue; both hands in fists held at the hip

27–30 four goddesses playing small cymbals (*cha lang*)

31 Mālā – Trengwama, *phreng ba ma*: yellow; right hand raised at side, left with palm up at side holding garland

32–35 four goddesses playing tambourine (*rnga zlum*; *maṇḍalika*)

36 Gītā – Luma, *glu ma*: red; playing a lute (*vīṇā*)

37–40 four goddesses playing flute (*gling bu*)

41 Nṛtyā – Garma, *gar ma*: green; right arm swung around head, the left arm in front of the body

42–45 four goddesses playing a waisted drum (*rnga rked nyag*; *mukunda*)

Gates of the Inner Palace

Four wrathful gate-keepers

46 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: blue

47 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, *rdo rje zhags pa*: yellow; noose in the right hand raised at the side, left at hip

48 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, *rdo rje lcags sgrog*: red; right hand in front of chest, left with vajra-chain

49 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: green; bell in the raised right hand, left at side

Outer Palace

The outer palace consists of two distinct squares, the inner one representing the standard assembly of the second palace, while the outer one contains the converted pan-Indian deities.

Inner Square

Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon

East: blue, holding a vajra

50 Maitreya – Jampa, *byams pa*

51 Amoghadarśin – Tongwa Dönyö, *mthong ba don yod*

52 Sarvāpāyañjaha – Ngensong Tamché Jongwa, *ngan song thams cad sbyong ba* / Ngensong Kündren, *ngan song kun 'dren*

53 Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati – Nyangen Münpa Tamché Ngépar Jompé Lodrö, *mya ngan mun pa thams cad nges par 'joms pa'i blo gros*

South: yellow, holding a jewel

54 Gandhahastin – Pökyi Langpo, *spos kyi glang po*

55 Śūraṃgama – Pawar Drowa, *dpa' bar 'gro ba*

56 Gaganagañja – Namkhé Dzö, *nam mkha'i mdzod*

57 Jñānaketu – Yéshé Tok, *ye shes tog*

West: red, holding a lotus

58 Amitābha – Öpakmé, *'od dpag [tu] med [pa]*

59 Candraprabha – Dawé Ö, *zla ba'i 'od*

60 Bhadrapāla – Zangskyong, *bzang skyong*

61 Jālinīprabha – Drabachengyi Ö, *dra ba can gyi 'od*

North: green, holding a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)

62 Vajragarbha – Dorjé Nyingpo, *rdo rje snying po*

63 Akṣayamati – Lodrö Mizépa, *blo gros mi bzad pa*

64 Pratibhānakūṭa – Poppa Tsekpa, *spobs pa brtsegs pa*

65 Samantabhadra – Küntu Zangpo, *kun tu bzang po*

Outer offering goddesses

66 Dhūpā – Dukpama, *bdug ba ma*: blue; holding an incense burner with curved handle across the body in the right hand, the left underneath

67–70 four goddesses playing trumpet (*ru dung*, *zangs dung*, both of which could also refer to a conch as musical instrument)

71 Puṣpā – Métokma, *me tog ma*: yellow; right hand in front of chest, left hand holding a plate with colourful filling, probably meant to represent rows/strings of different coloured flowers

72–75 four goddesses playing a kettle drum (*rnga bo che*, *paṭaha*)

76 Dīpā – Marmema, *mar me ma*: red; right hand holds plate with white cone on top, left at hip

77–80 four goddesses playing a latticed drum (*rnga dra ba can*, *timilā*)

81 Gandhā – Jukpama, *byug pa ma*: green; right hand held above conch, which the left holds across the body

82–85 four goddesses playing a waisted drum (*dhakkā*)

Outer Square

Converted pan-Indian deities arranged clockwise from bottom right corner and grouped by functions of decreasing importance. While they are listed by gender in the root text, the commentary describes them as pairs depicted together with Śiva explicitly embracing Umā. The latter is not the case in the Alchi Dukhang depictions but does occur for the main deities at Mangyu.

The list below first lists the standard names as they occur in the texts consulted, the main one as it occurs in the STTS, and their Buddhist names after conversion. Thus, the latter are their actual names in the mandala.

East

Gods of the highest spheres: called Spell-Kings – Vidyārājyaka – Rikpé Gyelpo, *rig pa'i rgyal po* & Vajra-Queens – Vajrarājanikā – Dorjé Gyelmo, *rig pa'i rgyal mo*

86 Maheśvara (Śiva) – Wangchuk Chenpo, *dbang phyug chen po* / Mahādeva – Lha Chenpo, *lha chen po* / Rudra – Drakpo, *drag po*) = Krodhavajra – Trowö Dorjé, *khro bo'i rdo rje* = Vajraśūla: white; corpulent with snake in hair; third eye on forehead; four-armed, right hand in front of chest holding vajra, second one in the gesture of adoration (*vandanamudrā*), left hands with trident (*triśūla*) and tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*); seated on yellow bull

87 Umā – Uma, *u ma* = Krodhavajrāgni, Tromo Dorjémé, *khro mo rdo rje me*: yellow with third eye on forehead; vajra and the gesture of adoration (*vandanamudrā*) right, skull-cup (*kapāla*) and tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) left; seated on yellow bull

88 Nārāyaṇa / Viṣṇu – Khyanjuk, *khyab 'jug* = Māyāvajra – Gyume Dorjé, *sgyu ma'i rdo rje*: three-headed with side heads of boar and lion barely recognisable; light green with the side heads bright blue and red; vajra and disk in the right hands, lotus and conch in the left; seated on *garuḍa*

89 Rukmiṇī – Rukma, *rug ma*[16] = Vajrasauvarṇī – Dorjé Sermo, *rdo rje ser mo*: four-armed; yellow; attributes and vehicle like Viṣṇu

Mangyu: green; vajra and staff; seated on *garuḍa*

90 Sanatkumāra / Kārtikakumāra – *gzhon nu kā rti ka*[17] = Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: red; six-headed and four-armed; the heads in two tiers of three; vajra and staff in the right hands, cock and bell in the left hands; seated on peacock

91 Ṣaṣṭhi – Drukdenma, *drug ldan ma* = Vajrakaumārī – Dorjé Zhönnuma, *rdo rje gzhon nu ma*: like male

92 Brahmā – Tsangpa, *tshangs pa* = Maunavajra – Tuppé Dorjé, *thub pa'i rdo rje*: yellow; four-headed and four-armed; the fourth head represented on top; vajra and stuff in the right hands, string of beads (*mālā*) and flask in the left; seated on pair of geese

93 Brahmāṇī – Tsangma, *tshangs ma* = Vajraśānti – Dorjé Zhiwama, *rdo rje zhi ba ma*: has only two arms holding vajra and flask, otherwise same as male

94 Indra – Wangpo, *dbang po* = Vajra Weapon – Vajrāyudha – Dorjé Tsöncha, *rdo rje mtshon cha*: yellow; holding vajra and club; seated on elephant

95 Indrāṇi – Wangmo, *dbang mo* = Vajramuṣṭir – Dorjé Khutsur, *rdo rje khu tshur*: like male

16 Rukmiṇī, the daughter of a king, is considered an incarnation of Śrī. The choice of Rukmiṇī ('adorned with gold') as spouse of Viṣṇu may be guided by two factors, the occurrence of Śrī as independent goddess and an emerging Kṛṣṇa-cult.

17 This second form of the name makes clear that Sanatkumāra is here simply meant to stand for Kumāra, one of the standard names of Skanda or Kārtikeya.

Mangyu: yellow; vertical third eye on forehead; holding vajra and trident; seated on elephant

Gods who wander in space: called Vajra-Wrathful – Vajrakrodha – Drowo Dorjé, *khro bo rdo rje* & Vajrakrodhinī – Drowo Dorjé, *khro bo rdo rje*

96 Amṛtakuṇḍalin – Dütsi Khyilpa, *bdud rtsi 'khyil pa* / Sūrya – Nyima, *nyi ma* = Vajrakuṇḍala – Dorjé Khyilpa, *rdo rje 'khyil pa*: red; wears coat and boots; holds vajra and lotus topped by sun-disk; seated on horse chariot

Mangyu: red; bearded with coat and boots; vajra right and left at thigh; two lotuses appear from the shoulder, the one above the left hand holding sun-disk

97 Amṛtā – Mibamchi, *mi 'bam ci* = Vajrāmṛtā – Dorjé Michiwa, *rdo rje mi 'chi ba*: except for the dress same as male

Mangyu: except for dress like male; holds the lotus blossom topped by a sun-disk in her hand

South

98 Indu / Soma / Candra – Dawa, *zla ba* = Vajraprabha – Dorjé Ö, *rdo rje 'od*: white with yellow shading; wears coat and boots; holds vajra and lotus topped by crescent; seated on two geese

Mangyu: white; dressed with coat and boots; holds vajra and moon disk on lotus; seated on two geese

99 Rohiṇī – Rohima, *ro hi ma*[18] = Vajrakānti – Dorjé Madang, *rdo rje ma dangs*: except for dress like male; seated on one goose only

100 Mahādaṇḍāgra / Penpa, *spen pa*[19] = Vajradaṇḍa – Dorjé Yukpa, *rdo rje dbyug pa*: blue; right holding vajra at side, left with the name giving staff; sits on what looks like a short legged pig-like creature with shield on back, supposed to be a turtle (*rus sbal*)

101 Daṇḍahāriṇi – Yukdzinma, *dbyug 'dzin ma* = Daṇḍavajrāgrā – Dorjé Yukchokma, *rdo rje dbyug mchog ma*: same as male

102 Piṅgala / Mikmar, *mig dmar*[20] = Vajrapiṅgala – Dorjé Sermuk, *rdo rje ser muk*: red; right holds vajra at side, left has severed head lying on palm; sits on a throne

Mangyu: red; right hand with vajra, left holds severed head lying on palm; seated on a pair of pots

103 Jātāhāriṇi – Kyewa Trokma, *skye ba 'phrog ma* = Vajramekhalā – Dorjé Kechingma, *rdo rje rked 'chings ma*: same as male

Gods who live in the sky: called Lords of Hosts – Gaṇapati – Tsokkyi Dakpo, *tshogs kyi bdag po* & Gaṇikā – Tsomo, *gtso mo*

104 Madhumatta / Topzang, *stobs bzang*[21] = Vajraśauṇḍa, Dorjé Langpöna, *rdo rje glang po'i sna*: white; elephant-headed; holding vajra and plough; sits on elephant

18 Rohiṇī is the star most loved by Candra, all of which are his wives.

19 The Tibetan translation interprets the Sanskrit name as standing for Saturn – Śanaiścara – Penpa, *spen pa*, and the iconography follows this interpretation. However, the Sanskrit indicates that this and the following deity were originally understood as the attendants of Sūrya, Daṇḍī and Piṅgala.

20 The Tibetan translation interprets the deity as Mars – Maṅgala – Mikmar, *mig dmar*, and the iconography follows this interpretation.

21 The Tibetan name does not directly translate the Sanskrit but both names and the plough held in the hand of the deity actually reference Balarbhadra (*stobs bzang*), the brother of Kṛṣṇa also

105 Māraṇī – Söma, *gsod ma* = Vajravilayā – Dorjé Juma, *rdo rje 'ju ma*: same as male

106 Madhukara – Drangtsi Jépa, *sbrang rtsi byed pa* = Vajramālā – Dorjé Trengwa, *rdo rje phreng ba*: green; right holds vajra at side, left with flower garland, sits on pair of blue birds, which has been interpreted from the texts as representing a cuckoo[22]

107 Aśanā – Zawama, *za ba ma* = Vajrāśanā – Dorjé Zawamo, *rdo rje za ba mo*: same as male

West

108 Jaya (Jayakara) – Gyelwa, *rgyal ba* = Vajravaśī – Dorjé Wang, *rdo rje dbang*: yellow; right hand in front of chest with vajra, left with *makara*-staff or elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*); seated on grey cow like animal[23]

109 Vasanā – Gowama, *mgo ba ma* = Vajravasanā – Dorjé Tagoma, *rdo rje rta mgo ma*: same iconography as male but red

110 Jayāvaha – Gyelwar Jépa, *rgyal bar byed pa* = Vijayavajra – Dorjé Nampar Gyelwa, *rdo rje rnam par rgyal ba*: white; elephant-headed; holding vajra in the right hand and trident in the left; seated on small grey animal with long tail (rat?)[24]

111 Rati – Gawama, *dga' ba ma* = Vajravaśā – Dorjé Gamo, *rdo rje dga' mo*: same as male but trident replaced by tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*)

Gods who live on earth: called Messengers – Dūta – Ponya, *pho nya* & Messengeresses – [Vajra] Dūtī – Ponyamo, *pho nya mo*

112 Kośapāla – Norjin, *nor sbyin*[25] = Vajramusala – Dorjé Towa, *rdo rje tho ba*: yellow; vajra in the right hand and club in the left hand; seated on throne

113 Śivā – Zhiwamo, *zhi ba mo* / Śaṃkarī = Vajradūtī – Dorjé Ponyama, *rdo rje pho nya ma*: same as male but tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) instead of club

114 Vāyu – Lunglha, *rlung lha* = Vajrānila – Dorjé Lung, *rdo rje rlung*: blue; holds vajra and flag; sits on a deer

115 Vāyavi – Lungmo, *rlung mo* = Vegavajriṇī – Dorjé Gyokma, *rdo rje mgyogs ma*: same as male

116 Agni – Mélha, *me lha* = Vajrānala – Dorjé Mé, *rdo rje me*: red; bearded and matted hair; four-armed, holding vajra and staff in the right hand, vase and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*) in the left; seated on goat

known as Balarāma, who drunk of alcohol (*madhumatta*) threatened to divert the Yamunā River with his ploughshare. Except for the elephant, the iconography of this deity fits Balabhadra as he occurs in the Dharmadhātu mandala at Nako. Of course these names are also fitting attributes for an elephant, *madhumatta* referring to his intoxicated state in must.

22 The iconography of Madhukara and Jayakara appears to have been mixed up in one of the sources, as in the Dharmadhātu mandala it is the latter who holds a flower garland.

23 The iconography of this deity as represented at Alchi best fits Madhukara, who in the Dharmadhātu mandala has a *makara*-banner (*makaradvaja*, *chu srin gyi rgyal mtshan*), but also a bird vehicle (parrots).

24 This deity stands for Vasanta (*dpyid kyi lha*) in the Dharmadhātu mandala, who there holds a sword. This Alchi depiction fits the four Vaishnava deities the least.

25 Kośapāla, 'treasurer', is an epithet of Kubera who occurs as such later on, and thus cannot be meant here.

117 Āgnedhryā – Mémo, *me mo* = Vajrajvālā – Dorjé Barwamo, *rdo rje 'bar ba mo*: same as male

North

118 Kubera – Lüngen, *lus ngan* = Vajrabhairava – Dorjé Jikpa, *rdo rje 'jigs pa*: blue; holding vajra and staff; seated on human

119 Kuberī – Lüngamo, *lus nga mo* = Vajravikaṭā – Dorjé Khyorma, *rdo rje 'khyor ma*: same as male but holding noose instead of staff

Gods who live underground: called Servants – Ceṭa – Dren, *bran* & [Vajra] Ceṭī – Drenmo, *bran mo*

120 Varāha – Pak, *phag* = Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: yellow; holding vajra and *makara*-banner; seated on *nāga*

Mangyu: boar-headed; blue; holding vajra in the right hand and sword in the left; seated on *nāga*

121 Vārāhī – Pakmo, *phyag mo* = Vajramukhī – Dorjékha, *rdo rje kha*: blue; seated on corpse

122 Yama – Shinjé, *gshin rje* = Vajrakāla – Dorjé Dü, *rdo rje dus*: grey; holding vajra and staff; seated on bull

123 Cāmuṇḍā – Tsamuṇḍī, *tsa muṇḍī* = Vajrakālī – Dorjé Düma, *rdo rje dus ma*: same as male

124 Pṛthvīcūlika – Tsukpüsa, *gtsug phud sa* = Vajravināyaka – Dorjé Gekkyi Tsowo, *rdo rje bgegs kyi gtso bo*

125 Gaṇapati – Tsokkyi Dakpo, *tshogs kyi bdag po*: white; elephant-headed; vajra and air in the right hands, trident and ? in the left; seated on white sheep(?) with a black area around the eye

Mangyu: white; elephant-headed and four-armed; vajra and staff in the right hand, trident and tusk in the left; seated on sheep with black area around eye

126 Cchinnanāsā – Nachenma, *sna can ma* = Vajrapūtanā – Dorjé Dülma, *rdo rje rdul ma*: white; vajra in the right hand and trident in the left; seated on rat(?)

Mangyu: blue with elephant head; holding vajra right and a scaled conch-shaped object in the left; seated on grey animal with long tail (rat?)

127 Varuṇa – Chulha, *chu lha* = Nāgavajra – Lüdorjé, *klu'i rdo rje*: white; with hood of eight snakes; seated on *makara*

Mangyu: white; hood with eight snakes; holding vajra and noose; seated on green *makara*

128 Vāruṇi – Chulhama, *chu lha ma* = Vajramakarī – Dorjé Chusinma, *rdo rje chu srin ma*: yellow; hood with eight snakes; holding vajra and noose; seated on *makara*

Mangyu: white; hood of three snakes; moustached; holding vajra and *makara*; seated on *makara*

Four mother goddesses - *mātṛkā – ma mo*[26]

129 Bhīmā – Jikma, *'jigs ma* / Jikpa Chö, *'jigs pa mchod*[27]: yellow; holds vajra and red lotus; seated on throne

Mangyu: dark blue; wrathful with third eye on forehead; holding sword in the right hand and a shield in the left

26 The same four goddesses appear in this succession in the Śākyasiṃha mandala as described in NSP 22, but their iconography differs. There is considerable variation in the Tibetan version of the names of Bhīmā and Durgā.

27 Tibetan Dikma, *bsdigs ma*, in NSP 22. This goddess appears to be a form of Bhairavī and her main quality is to evoke fear, a quality not at all expressed in Alchi.

130 Śrī – Pelmo, *dpal mo*: white; vajra in raised right hand and lotus topped by jewel in the left; seated on throne

131 Sarasvatī – Yangchenma, *dbyangs can ma*: green; four-armed, holding vajra and lotus in the right hands, book and staff in the left; seated on throne

132 Durgā – Kadokma, *dka' bzlog ma* / Katup Dokma, *bka' thub bzlog ma*: green; vajra in right hand at side, left with sword and shield held at the side, the sword appears to have something at its tip; sits on throne

Mangyu: four-armed and wrathful; green; vajra in main right hand and discus, square shield and sabre in the left hands

Outer gate-keepers: wrathful, standing with left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍha*)

133 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: blue; right hand in front of chest, left with elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*)

134 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, *rdo rje zhags pa*: yellow; vajra in right hand in front of the chest, left with noose

135 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, *rdo rje lcags sgrog*: red; right raised at side, left holding a fragment of what appears to be a noose

136 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: green; bell in right hand, left at side in gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*)

Deities of the Dharmadhātu Mandala

The Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrīmaṇḍala has three palaces and an outer ring of protective deities.

Central Palace

1 Mañjughoṣa – Jampéyang, *'jam pa'i dbyangs* / Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrī: white; four-faced, other faces yellow, red (top) and blue; eight-armed: the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*), sword and book, arrow and bow, vajra and bell

Eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas

Surrounding the main image and all of the same iconography, yellow with a wheel in the right hand held at the sides and the left on the lion-seat. Listed here with the deities in the cardinal directions from the east, followed by those in the intermediate direction from the northeast clockwise:

2 Mahoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Chenpo, *gtsug tor chen po*

3 Patroṣṇīṣa – Tsuktorduk, *gtsug tor gdugs*

4 Tejorāśyuṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Zijö Pungpo, *gtsug tor gzi brjod phung po*

5 Vijayoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Namgyel, *gtsug tor rnam rgyal*

6 ? Vikiraṇoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Nampar Torwa, *gtsug tor rnam par 'thor ba*

7 Udgatoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Gyenjung, *gtsug tor gyen 'byung*

8 Mahodgatoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Gyenjung Chenpo, *gtsug tor gyen 'byung chen po*

9 Jayoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Gyelwa, *gtsug tor rgyal ba*

Seven Treasures of a Universal Monarch

The central circle is surrounded by small medallions featuring the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) of a universal monarch. A lotus is added as an eights symbol to achieve an even number (117–124).

Four Secondary Buddhas and Their Retinue, the Sixteen Mahābodhisattvas

Eight-armed forms of the four surrounding esoteric Buddhas, and their Mahābodhisattvas from the east clockwise.

10 Akṣobhya – Mikyöpa, *mi bskyod pa*; texts call him 'great aggression' and his faces are described in different moods, not visible in the Alchi Dukhang; Vidhi does not give their colours: blue; faces blue, white, red (top) and yellow; sword and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*), vajra and bell, arrow and bow; hook and noose

11 Vajrasattva – Dorjé Sempa, *rdo rje sems pa*: white; with vajra and bell, latter held at the sides

12 Vajrarāja – Dorjé Gyelpo, *rdo rje rgyal po*: yellow, with elephant goad

13 Vajrarāga – Dorjé Chakpa, *rdo rje chags pa*: red body-colour, shooting an arrow

14 Vajrasādhu – Dorjé Lekpa, *rdo rje legs pa*: green; gesture with both hands in front of the chest

15 Ratnasambhava – Rinchen Jungden, *rin chen 'byung ldan*: texts call him 'Great Passion'; colours of heads differ (black, white, red); yellow; heads yellow, blue, red (top) and white; holding vajra and wish-fulfilling banner, sword and bell, arrow and bow, elephant goad and noose

16 Vajraratna – Dorjé Rinchen, *rdo rje rin chen*: yellow body-colour; holds a triple jewelled in both hands above the head

17 Vajrasūrya – Dorjé Nyima, *rdo rje nyi ma*: sun-coloured; holds a sun in both hands in front of the chest

18 Vajradhvaja – Dorjé Gyeltsen, *rdo rje rgyal mtshan*: sky-blue; holding victory banner

19 Vajrahāsa – Dorjé Zhépa, *rdo rje bzhad pa*: white; holds a garland of teeth (*so'i phreng ba*)

20 Amitābha – Öpakmé, *'od dpag med* / Öpaktu Mépa, *'od dpag tu med pa*; text calls him 'Great Desire': red; heads red, blue, white (top) and yellow; holds vajra and bell, sword and lotus, arrow and bow, elephant goad and noose

21 Vajradharma – Dorjé Chö, *rdo rje chos*: red; right hand opens the petals of a lotus held in the left at the heart

22 Vajratīkṣṇa – Dorjé Nönpo, *rdo rje rnon po*: yellow; holds sword in the right and Prajñāpāramitā book in the left

23 Vajrahetu – Dorjé Gyu, *rdo rje rgyu*: yellow; holding a wheel in the right hand; left hand above thigh

24 Vajrabhāṣa – Dorjé Mawa, *rdo rje smra ba*: red; holding a tongue in the right hand, the left rests on his lap

25 Amoghasiddhi – Dönyö Druppa, *don yod grub pa*; text calls him 'Great Wrath': dark green or black; heads dark green, blue, red (top) white (partly repainted); holding vajra and bell, sword and bow, arrow and noose, hook and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*); the pairing of the attributes is a bit unusual here and probably artistic license

26 Vajrakarma – Dorjé Lé, *rdo rje las*: dark green; holding a *viśvavajra* in both hands above his head

27 Vajrarakṣa – Dorjé Sungwa, *rdo rje srung ba*: yellow; holds a coat of mail with both hands

28 Vajrayakṣa – Dorjé Nöjin, *rdo rje gnod sbyin*: black and wrathful; hands in front of chest

29 Vajrasandhi – Dorjé Khutsur, *rdo rje khu tshur* (repainted): white; hands in front of chest and at the hip

Four Consorts

The female counterparts of the esoteric Buddhas: these are represented with the same colours and attributes as their respective male consort; Ratnasambhava is without consort.

30 Locanā – Chenma, *spyan ma*: like Mañjughoṣa

31 Māmakī – Mamaki, *mā ma kī*: like Akṣobhya

32 Pāṇḍarāvasinī – Gökarmo, *gos dkar mo*: like Amitābha

33 Tārā – Drölma, *sgrol ma*: like Amoghasiddhi

Four Wrathful Gate-keepers

34 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: white; stands with right leg stretched (*ālīḍha*); holds goad in the right hand and performs a vajra gesture in the left

35 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, *rdo rje zhags pa*: yellow; left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍha*); holds vajra noose in both hands

36 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, *rdo rje lcags sgrog*: red; stands with knee apart (*vaiśakhapada*); hands at the sides of the body, chain not painted

37 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: green; left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍha*); bell in the right hand in front of the chest, left at the side

Second Palace

The assembly of the second palace consists largely of female personifications of a Bodhisattva's accomplishments.

Twelve Stage Goddesses (bhūmi)

All two-armed with a vajra held in the right hand in different postures and the distinctive attribute in the left

38 1 Intentional Conduct Stage – Adhimukticaryābhūmi – Möpé Chöpé Sa, *mos pas spyod pa'i sa*: red; red lotus

39 2 Extremely Joyous Stage – Pramuditābhūmi – Raptu Gawé Sa, *rab tu dga' ba'i sa* (repainted): white; right palm up at side and left at hip; clearly not the original iconography; the goddess is described as red and holding a wish-fulfilling jewel

40 3 Stainless Stage – Vimalābhūmi – Drima Mépé Sa, *dri ma med pa'i sa*: white; white lotus

41 4 Light Maker Stage – Prabhākārībhūmi – Öjépé Sa, *'od byed pa'i sa*: red; white disk (described as sun disk) on lotus

42 5 Radiant Stage – Arciṣmatībhūmi – Ötrowé Sa, *'od 'phro ba'i sa*: light green; blue lily

43 6 Very Difficult to Conquer Stage – Sudurjayābhūmi – Shintu Jangkawé Sa, *shin tu sbyangs dka' ba'i sa*: yellow; holds white object (described as emerald) in hands folded in mediation (in this case the iconography of the goddess prevents her from holding the usual vajra)

44 7 Manifest Stage – Abhimukhībhūmi – Ngöndu Gyurpé Sa, *mngon du gyur pa'i sa*: yellow; book on lotus

45 8 Gone Far Stage – Dūraṅgamābhūmi – Ringdu Songbé Sa, *ring du song ba'i sa*: blue; crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) on multi-coloured lotus

46 9 Unwavering Stage – Acalābhūmi – Miyobé Sa, *mi g.yo ba'i sa*: white; vajra on lotus

47 10 Good Intelligence Stage – Sādhumatībhūmi – Lekpé Lodrökyi Sa, *legs pa'i blo gros kyi sa*: red; blue lily with sword (there is a horizontal stroke above the lotus that likely was meant as the blade of the sword, but it has not been completed; its relationship to the lily blossom is awkward)

48 11 Cloud of Dharma Stage – Dharmameghābhūmi – Chökyi Tringyi Sa, *chos kyi sprin gyi sa*: yellow; book with cloud above it

49 12 Light of Buddha – Buddhasamantaprabhā – Sanggyékyi Künduö, *sangs rgyas kyi kun tu 'od*: red; holds image of Buddha on lotus

Twelve Perfection Goddesses (*pāramitā*)

All two-armed except for Prajñāpāramitā, who is four-armed; all with a jewel held in different postures with the right hand and a distinctive attribute in the left.

50 1. Jewel-Lotus Perfection – Ratnapadmapāramitā – Rinpoché Pemé Paröltu Chinpa, *rin po che pad+ma'i pha rol tu phyin pa*: red with crescent on lotus

51 2. Perfection of Generosity – Dānapāramitā – Jinpé Paröltu Chinpa, *spyin pa'i pha rol tu phyin pa*: red; holds 'an ear of grain and jewels'

52 3. Perfection of Discipline – Śīlapāramitā – Tsültrim Paröltu Chinpa, *tshul khrims pha rol tu phyin pa*: white; holding an 'aśoka flower' twig

53 4. Perfection of Patience – Kṣāntipāramitā – Zöpé Paröltu Chinpa, *bzod pa'i pha rol tu phyin pa*: yellow; white lotus

54 5. Perfection of Perseverance – Vīryapāramitā – Tsöndrükyi Paröltu Chinpa, *brtson 'grus kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*; yellow; blue lily (colour is described as emerald).

55 6. Perfection of Meditative Absorption – Dhyānapāramitā – Samtengyi Paröltu Chinpa, *bsam gtan gyi pha rol tu phyin pa*: blue; white lotus

56 7. Perfection of Wisdom – Prajñāpāramitā – Shérapkyi Paröltu Chinpa, *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*: yellow; four-armed, with the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) with the main pair of arms and holding lotus and book

57 8 Perfection of Skilful Means – Upāyapāramitā – Tapkyi Paröltu Chinpa, *thabs kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*; green; vajra on top of lotus

58 9 Perfection of Aspiration – Praṇidhānapāramitā – Mönlamgyi Paröltu Chinpa, *smon lam gyi pha rol tu phyin pa*: blue; holds a word on top of a blue lily

59 10 Perfection of Strength – Balapāramitā – Topkyi Paröltu Chinpa, *stobs kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*: red; holding a book

60 11 Perfection of Knowledge – Jñānapāramitā – Yéshékyi Paröltu Chinpa, *ye shes kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*: white; bejewelled twig

61 12 Perfection of Vajra-Action – Vajrakarmapāramitā – Dorjé Lékyi Paröltu Chinpa, *rdo rje las kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*: green; holding lotus

Twelve Control Goddesses (*vaśitā*)

All two–armed with a lotus in their right hand held in different positions.

62 1 Control over Life – Āyurvaśitā – Tséla Wangwa, *tshe la dbang ba*: red; Buddha image on lotus in the left (the Buddha is not clearly recognisable as it is painted rather cursorily)

63 2 Control over Mind – Cittavaśitā – Semla Wangwa, *sems la dbang ba*: white; vajra on white lotus

64 3 Control over Material Needs – Pariṣkāravaśitā – Yojéla Wangwa, *yo byad la dbang ba*: yellow; holding a jewel

65 4 Control over Karma – Karmavaśitā – Léla Wangwa, *las la dbang ba*; red; with crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*; should be emerald colour according to Vidhi and NSP)

66 5 Control over Birth – Upapattivaśitā – Kyéwala Wangwa, *skye ba la dbang ba*; of variegated colour; holds coloured twig

67 6 Control over Miraculous Abilities – Ṛddhivaśitā – Dzuntrülla Wangwa, *rdzu 'phrul la dbang ba*; green; sun-disk on lotus

68 7 Control over Intention – Adhimuktivaśitā – Möspala Wangwa, *mos pa la dbang ba*: white; ear of lavender flower

69 8 Control over Aspiration – Praṇidhānavaśitā – Mönlamla Wangwa, *smon lam la dbang ba*: yellow; holds blue lily

70 9 Control over Wisdom – Jñānavaśitā – Yéshéla Wangwa, *ye shes la dbang ba*: blue; sword over blue lily

71 10 Control over Dharma – Dharmavaśitā – Chöla Wangwa, *chos la dbang ba*: white; vase on lotus

72 11 Suchness – Tathatā – Dézhin Nyima, *de bzhin nyid ma*: repainted red without attribute

73 12 Buddha's Awakening – Buddhabodhi – Sanggyékyi Jangchupma, *sangs rgyas kyi byang chub ma*: yellow; wheel on to of jewel banner

Twelve Spell Goddesses (*dhāraṇī*)

All two-armed holding a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) in their right hands.

74 1 Sumatīdhāraṇī – Nordengyi Zung, *nor ldan gyi gzungs*: yellow; jewel branch in the left

75 2 Ratnolkādhāraṇī – Rinchen Drölmé Zung, *rin chen sgrol ma'i gzungs*: red; jewel banner(?)

76 3 Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī – Tsuktor Nampar Gyelbé Zung, *gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ba'i gzungs*: white; ? (vase)

77 4 Mārīcīdhāraṇī – Özer Chengyi Zung, *'od zer can gyi gzungs*: red; ? (needle and thread)

78 5 Parṇaśabarīdhāraṇī – Ritrö Loma Chengyi Zung, *ri khrod lo ma can gyi gzungs*: green; leaf(?)

79 6 Jāṅgulīdhāraṇī – Dukselmé Zung, *dug sel ma'i gzungs*: white; ? (ear of flowers)

80 7 Anantamukhādhāraṇī – Gota Yépé Zung, *sgo mtha' yas pa'i gzungs*: green; vase on lotus

81 8 Cundādhāraṇī – Kula Jémé Zung, *sku la byed ma'i gzungs*: white; ? (vase with garland)

82 9 Prajñāvardhanīdhāraṇī – Shérap Pelbé Zung, *shes rab 'phel ba'i gzungs*: white; lotus with ? (sword)

83 10 Sarvakarmāvaraṇaviśodhanīdhāraṇī – Lékyi Drippa Tamché Nampar Jongbé Zung, *las kyi sgrib pa thams cad rnam par sbyong ba'i gzungs*: red; ? on lotus (vajra)

84 11 Akṣayajñānakaraṇḍādhāraṇī – Yéshé Mizépé Zamatokgi Zung, *ye shes mi zad pa'i za ma tog gi gzungs*: red; ? (jewel vessel)

85 12 Sarvabuddhadharmakoṣavatīdhāraṇī – Sanggyé Tamchékyi Chökyi Dzödang Denpé Zung, *sangs rgyas thams cad kyi chos kyi mdzod dang ldan pa'i gzungs*: yellow; ? (casket)

Four Female Gate-keepers

Four goddesses named after four cognitions of a Bodhisattva, the four *pratisaṃvid* (*so so yang dag par rig pa bzhi*), all seated in *sattvaparyaṅkāsana*.

86 E Individual, Right Cognition of Dharmas – Dharmapratisaṃvid – Chö Soso Yangdakpar Rikpa, *chos so so yang dag par rig pa*: red; vajra goad (described as holding a noose as well)

87 S Individual, Right Cognition of Meaning – Arthapratisaṃvid – Dön Soso Yangdakpar Rikpa, *don so so yang dag par rig pa*: yellow; holding noose with jewel ends (described as emerald colour)

88 W Individual, Right Cognition of Definitive Words – Niruktipratisaṃvid – Ngespétsik Soso Yangdakpar Rikpa, *nges pa'i tshig so so yang dag par rig pa*: red; a wire noose with jewel ends (should be lotus ends and could be meant as chain)

89 N Individual, Right Cognition of Confidence – Pratibhānapratisaṃvid – Poppa Soso Yangdakpar Rikpa, *spobs pa so so yang dag par rig pa*: lost

Four Inner Offering Goddesses

In the corners of the second palace from southeast.

90 Lāsyā – Gekmo, *sgeg mo*: yellow; both hands in vajra-fists at hip

91 Mālā – Trengwama, *phreng ba ma*: red; garland of jewels (*ratnamālā*)

92 Gītā – Luma, *glu ma*: red; plays a lute (*vīṇā*)

93 Nṛtyā – Garma, *gar ma*: green; dancing with both arms

Third Palace

Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Fortunate Aeon

East

94 Samantabhadra – Küntu Zangpo, kun tu bzang po: yellow; right with the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*), left holds red lotus topped by a sword

95 Akṣayamati – Lodrö Mizépa, blo gros mi bzad pa: partially repainted: white; sword in right hand, white lotus in the left

96 Kṣitigarbha – Sényingpo, sa'i snying po: yellow; touching the earth with the right hand, red lotus with twig on top in the left

97 Ākāśagarbha – Namkhé Nyingpo, nam mkha'i snying po: bright green; rains jewels with the right hand and holds a wish-fulfilling jewel banner in the left

South

98 Gaganagañja – Namkhé Dzö, nam mkha'i mdzod: yellow; red lotus with jewel in the right hand, twig in the left

99 Ratnapāṇi – Chakna Rinpoché, phyag na rin po che: dark green; large triple jewel in the right hand, and crescent on red lotus in the left

100 Sāgaramati – Gyatsö Lodrö, rgya mtsho'i blo gros: white; conch in the right hand, sword in the left

101 Vajragarbha – Dorjé Nyingpo, rdo rje snying po: blue; vajra in the right hand held at side, book in the left in front of chest

West

102 Avalokiteśvara – Chenrézikkyi Wangchuk, spyan ras gzigs kyi dbang phyug: white; white lotus in the right hand, red lotus in the left (according to the description he should have Amitābha in the crown and perform the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) with the right hand)

103 Mahāsthāmaprāpta – Tuchenpo Toppa, mthu chen po thob pa / Tuchentop, mthu chen thob: yellow; sword in the right hand, red lotus in the left

104 Candraprabha – Dawé Ö, zla ba'i 'od: repainted: white; sword in the left hand, sun on red lotus in the left

105 Jālinīprabha – Drabachengyi Ö, dra ba can gyi 'od: red; crossed vajra (viśvavajra) in the right hand, moon disk on red lotus in the left

It appears that at Alchi the iconography of this last two Bodhisattvas is mixed up, as it is Jālinīprabha who is described with sword and sun-disk.

North

Three of the northern Bodhisattva are damaged through water intrusion, and have been covered by mud at the time of the documentation, their description in square brackets has been complemented from the text.

106 Amitaprabha – Öpaktu mépa, 'od dpag tu med pa: [white; crossed vajra (viśvavajra) and vase on lotus]

107 Pratibhānakūṭa – Poppa Tsekpa, spobs pa brtsegs pa: [yellow; snapping the fingers, sword on lotus]

108 Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati – Nyangen Münpa Tamché Ngépar Jompé Lodrö, mya ngan mun pa thams cad nges par 'joms pa'i blo gros: [red; vajra and lance]

109 Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin – Drippa Tamché Nampar Selba, sgrib pa thams cad rnam par sel ba: blue; sword in the right hand, banner in the left, likely had a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) on top

Eight Wrathful Deities

Four in the corners listed first, and four in the gates.

110 Northeast Corner: Trilokavijaya – Khamsum Nampar Gyelba, khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba: blue; four heads and eight arms; side heads white and red, top Buddha head yellow; *vajrahūṃkaramudrā*, sword and bow, arrow and noose, goad and vajra; standing with left leg stretched on Maheśvara (Śiva) and Umā

111 Southeast Corner: Vajrajvālānalārka – Dorjé Métar Barba, rdo rje me ltar 'bar ba; dark grey; four heads and eight arms; all heads grey and wrathful; vajra and tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), sword and bow, arrow and bell, wheel and noose; tramples on Viṣṇu

112 Southwest Corner: Herukavajra – Dorjé Trantung, rdo rje khrag 'thung; blue; four heads and eight arms; side heads yellow, white (top) and red, all wrathful; vajra and tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), skin of Mahābhairava held above head, arrow and bow, two skull-cup (*kapāla*); stands left leg stretched on Brahmā (here red) and consort

113 Northwest Corner: Paramāśva – Tachok, rta mchog: not preserved in Alchi Dukhang [green; four heads and eight arms]

114 East: Yamāntaka – Shinjéshé, gshin rje gshed; blue; six-headed, six-armed and six-legged; all heads wrathful, blue and in two tiers; goad and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*), sword and bow, arrow and bell; standing on buffalo, legs in different postures

115 South: Prajñāntaka – Shérap Tarjé, shes rab mthar byed; yellow; four heads and eight arms; all heads wrathful, side heads

blue, red (top) and white; noose and goad, vajra and bell, sword and lance, arrow and bow; dancing

116 West: Padmāntaka – Padma Tarjé, pad+ma mthar byed: red; four heads and eight arms; all heads wrathful, with side ones blue, yellow (top) and white; iron shackles in both hands in front of chest, vajra and bell, sword and noose, arrow and bow; standing with both legs bent

117 North: Vighnāntaka – Gek Tarjé, bgegs mthar byed: not preserved in the Alchi Dukhang [blue; four heads and eight arms]

Eight Goddesses

While the Vidhi describes four goddesses each in the corners and gates of this level, their spaces are already occupied by the wrathful deities listed below. Therefore, the Alchi Dukhang mandala depicts the eight goddess, the four outer offering goddesses and four sense offering goddesses, flanking the protectors in the gates.

East

118 Gandhā – Jukpama, byug pa ma: green; holding conch

119 Vajra Form – Vajrarūpā – Dorjé Zukma, rdo rje gzugs ma: yellow; holding mirror in her right hand

South

120 Puṣpā – Métokma, me tog ma: yellow; holding plate of flowers

121 Vajra Sound – Vajraśabdā – Dorjé Drama, rdo rje sgra ma[28]: blue; playing a vīṇā

West

122 Dhūpā – Dukpama, bdug ba ma: green; holding incense burner

123 Vajra Smell – Vajragandhā – Dorjé Drima, rdo rje dri ma: dark green; holding conch[29]

North

124 Dīpā – Marmema, mar me ma: not preserved [red; holding lamp]

125 Vajra Taste – Vajrarasā – Dorjé Roma, rdo rje ro ma: not preserved [variegated colour; holding taste-vessel]

Outer Circle

The deities in the outer protective circle can only partially be identified. The text is not very precise in this regard, but attributes groups of deities with the respective guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*). Listed here from bottom right corner clockwise.

Eastern Quarter

From the northeastern corner clockwise:

126 Īśāna – Wangden, dbang ldan: white, on orange bull, trident and skull-cup (*kapāla*), two more in veneration above head, local lady on lap

127 m. dark-grey, corpulent, three faces, third eyes, sides green and white, r. *vandanamudrā* and sword, l. skull-cup and at hip

128 Mahākāla – Nakpo Chenpo, nag po chen po: green, corpulent, with third eye, trident and lotus/skull-cup (*kapāla*)

28 Vidhi has Vajratārā – Dorjé Drölma, rdo rje sgrol ma, which makes less sense in terms of consistency, the naming thus follows NSP.

29 NSP replaces her with Vajrasparśa holding a garment and listed last.

129 Nandikeśvara – Gajé Wangchuk, dga' byed dbang phyug: green with drum on knee

130 Kārttikeya – Zhönnu Kartika, gzhon nu kārti ka: m. six faces and six arms, orange red, on peacock, two in veneration above head, mālā and white cock, stick with crescent, bell(?)

131 m. dark grey, corpulent, on cushion, with trident and skull-cup (*kapāla*), boots

132 m. white, corpulent, on cushion, with trident and skull-cup, boots

133 m. dark-grey, corpulent, on cushion, with stick and skull-cup

134 m. white, corpulent, on cushion, with stick and skull-cup

135 Brahmā – Tsangpa, tshangs pa: orange-white, on birds, four arms, two in veneration above head, others without attributes

136 Brahmāṇī: orange-white, on birds, four arms, two in veneration above head, others without attributes

137 repainted; sword in left hand original

138 repainted at place of loss;

139 Viṣṇu – Kyapjug, khyab 'jug: blue -green; on *garuḍa*; three faces, boar and lion(?); four arms, right with sword and disk, left lost

140 Viṣṇu's consort ?

141 f. blue-green on lotus

142 f. orange red, on cushion, with vase

143 Balabhadra – Topzang, stobs bzang: white;[30] on elephant with sword

144 m. blue-green on goat with daṇḍa

145 m. orange red, lalita on lotus, with utpala

146 m. white, lalita on lotus, with lotus

147 Indra – Gyajin; brgya byin: orange-red; with local female; on elephant; white object in right hand, third eye

148 m. green, lalita on lotus, offering bowl

149 m. green, lalita on lotus, namaskara

150 m. white with orange shading on cushion

151 m. orange red, lalita on lotus, book on red lotus

152 m. white, on lotus with varada

153 m. green, on throne, four arms, right at side and in front of breast, left at hip and at side with skull-cup

154 m. white, *lalitāsana* on ?, stick with banner right, disk left

155 ?

156 m. white, on waves or cloud, four arms, right with arrow and sword, bow in left above head, skull-cup at knee

157 m. light green, lalita on lotus, holding mālā in both hands

158 m. white, lalita on lotus holding cymbals

159 m. greenish-blue, lalita on lotus, holding sword

160 m. orange red, lalita on lotus, holding sword

Two of the celestial bodies – *graha* – Zachen, *gza' chen*

161 Sun – Sūrya / Āditya – Nyima, nyi ma: red; fully dressed, on horse-cart, holding sun disk on lotus

162 Moon – Candra – Dawa, zla ba: white, fully dressed, on goose, holding crescent on lotus

30 Described black in Vidhi.

Seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions – *aṣṭāviṃśati nakṣatra* – Gyukar nyishu tsagyé, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad*

163 Eta Tauri – Kṛttikā – Mindruk, smin druk: f. beige [yellowish-green], on lotus, holding lotus

164 Aldebaran – Rohiṇī – Narma, snar ma: f. orange red; on throne, holding lotus

165 Lamda Orionis – Mṛgaśirā – Go, mgo: f. dark grey, semi-wrathful, on white bird (goose or swan), attribute lost

166 Alpha Orionis – Ārdrā – Lak, lag: f. white, on ram(?), holding a trident

167 Beta Geminorum – Punarvasu – Napso, nabs so: f. white on lotus, holding a red lotus at heart with both hands

168 Delta Cancri – Puṣyā – Gyel, rgyal: f. green, on lotus, holding a long-necked vase

169 Alpha Hydroe – Āśleṣā – Kak, skag: f. white, on snake holding a snake

Southern quarter

170 Agni – Melha, me lha: orange-red, four-armed, matted hair and beard; string of beads (*mālā*) and flask in outer hands, inner ones in front of chest and at head of consort seated on his lap, wears local dress

Eight great ascetics (*ṛṣi*) – Drangsong Chenpo Gyé, drang srong chen po brgyad

171 emaciated ascetic, red, lalita on cushion; stick in left hand

172 emaciated ascetic, red, lalita on cushion; book in right hand, left on cushion

173 emaciated ascetic, yellow, lalita on cushion; umbrella in right hand, left on knee

174 emaciated ascetic, yellow, seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion; hands in the gesture of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*)

175 emaciated ascetic, white, lalita on cushion; twig in right hand

176 emaciated ascetic with hair bound to turban, red, lalita on cushion; bowl in right hand; left at chest

177 emaciated ascetic with bun, red, seated with legs crossed at the ankles on cushion; both hands at sides, left palm down

178 emaciated ascetic with bun, yellow, kneeling sideways on skin; holding string of beads in right hand

Five of the seven mothers – *saptamātṛka* – Mamo dün, *ma mo bdun*

179 Indrāṇī – Wangpoma, *dbang po ma:* yellow, three-eyes; four arms; seated with legs crossed at ankles on elephant; holding skull-cup (*kapāla*) and club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*) in inner hands; as if holding vajra and *vandanamudrā* with outer hands

180 Māheśvarī – *dbang phyug chen mo* / Raudraṇi – Drakpoma, *drag po ma*: white; three-heads, side ones red and blue, all three-eyed; four arms, holding skull-cup (*kapāla*) and club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*) in inner hands; as if holding vajra and *vandanamudrā* with outer hands; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on yellow, three-eyed bull

181 Kaumārī – Zhönnuma, *gzhon nu ma*: red, six heads, three on top of three, all three-eyed; four arms, holding skull-cup (*kapāla*) and club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*) in inner hands; as if holding vajra and *vandanamudrā* with outer hands; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on peacock

182 Vaiṣṇavī – Kyapjugma, *khyab 'jug ma*: green; three-heads, side ones yellow lion and blue boar, central one three-eyed; four arms, holding skull-cup (*kapāla*) and club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*) in inner hands; as if holding vajra and *vandanamudrā* with outer hands; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on yellow *garuḍa*

183 Brahmāṇī – Tsangpama, *tshangs pa ma*: yellow; three-heads, all three-eyed; four arms, holding skull-cup (*kapāla*) and club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*) in inner hands; as if holding vajra and *vandanamudrā* with outer hands; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on two geese

184 Yama – Shinjé, *gshin rje*: dark grey; right hand raised without attribute and left embracing consort on his lap; sitting in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on a bull, who is blue

Two of the seven mothers – *saptamātṛka* – Mamo dün, *ma mo bdun* – and Bhṛṅgin: I have not found an evident relationship between Yama and the seven mothers

185 Vārāhī – Pakmo, *phag mo*: dark blue with wrathful face and hair standing on end; holding a fish in the right hand at the side and a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in the left; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on corps who has his hands folded in veneration

186 Cāmuṇḍā – *tsa muṇ ḍi* / Gajéma, *dga' byed ma*: red emaciated and wrathful; dagger in right hand and freshly cut head in left; seated in relaxed fashion on a corpse

187 Bhṛṅgin – Bhringgi Riti, *b+hr-i ng+gi ri ti*: white emaciated ascetic; right palm up in front of chest, left at head of consort on his lap; second consort standing behind him; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion[31]

Two of the celestial bodies – *graha* – Zachen, *gza' chen*

188 Mars – Maṅgala – Migmar, mig dmar: red; dagger in right hand and freshly cut head in left; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on elephant

189 Mercury – Budha – Zalak, bza' lhag: yellow with shading; arrow in right hand and bow in left; seated with legs crossed at the ankles

Seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions – *aṣṭāviṃśati nakṣatra* – Gyukar nyishu tsagyé, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad*

190 Maghā – Chu, mchu: yellow; lotus in right hand, left in *vandanamudrā*; seated on lion

191 Pūrvaphalgunī – Dre, gre: bright green; seated in meditation on lotus

192 Uttaraphalgunī – Bo, sbo/dbo: green; holding red lotus in right hand and left at side; seated on black cow

193 Hastā – Méshi, me bzhi/me bzhi nag pa

194 Svātī – Sari, sa ri: white; holding a scarf in a bow above the head; seated on lotus

195 Viśākhā – Saga, sa ga: black; holding stick right and book left

196 ?

Eight Demons – rākṣasa – srin po flanking Nairṛti in the southwest: All *rākṣasa* are male, semi-wrathful, dressed and booted, and

31 *Vidhi* groups Bhṛṅgin together with the seven mothers and also the consort is mentioned there.

most of them seat in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on a cushion. Except for Rāvaṇa, who heads them, they cannot be identified individually.

197 yellow; dressed and booted; holding sword and shield

198 Rāvaṇa – Langka Drinchu, lang ka mgrin bcu (ten-necked lanka): greyish-blue; with nine heads, the top one of a donkey, the other ones in tiers of three wrathful heads; dressed and booted; holding sword and shield; seated on a corpse.

Western Quarter

199 Nairṛti – Srinpö Dakpo, srin po'i bdag po: black; four-armed; holding sword and shield, arrow and bow; consort on his lap; seated on corpse

200 white; with sword and shield

201 blue; with sword and shield

202 red; with lance and shield

203 black; with arrow and bow

204 yellow; with spear

205 black; with sword and shield

Two of the celestial bodies – *graha* – Zachen, *gza' chen*

206 Jupiter – Bṛhaspati – Purbu, phur bu: white; right hand at hip, book in the left; seated on vase

207 Venus – Śukra – Pasang, pa sangs: white; vase in the right hand in front of chest, left at hip; seated on vase

Seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions – *aṣṭāviṃśati nakṣatra* – Gyukar nyishu tsagyé, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad*

208 Delta Scorpio – Anurādha – Lhatsam, lha mtshams: dark-green; vase in right hand and left in *vandanamudrā*; seated on lotus

209 Antares – Jyeṣṭha – Nön, snron: white; vajra in right hand; seated on elephant

210 Lambda Scorpii – Mūlā – Nup, snrubs: white

211 Delta Sagittari – Pūrvāṣāḍhā – Chutö, chu stod: black

212 Sigma Sagittari – Uttarāṣāḍhā – Chumé, chu smad: red (pale according to the Vidhi)

213 Alpha Aquilæ – Śravaṇā – Drozhin, gro bzhin: white

214 Abhijit – Jizhin, byi bzhin: dark (green in Vidhi)

Eight great *nāga* accompanying Varuṇa, all of them male and with the lower body of a snake. Actually there are nine such snake deities, two of them repainted. Since it is uncertain if these two replaced a single one there originally, all nine are listed below.

215 Varuṇa – Chulha, chu lha: seated on a *makara* and holding a conch and a pāśa

216 Ananta – Tayé, mtha' yas: red

217 Vāsuki – Norgyé, nor rgyas: yellow

218 Takṣaka – Jokpo, 'jog po: black

219 Karkoṭaka – Topkyigyü, stobs kyi rgyu: white

220 Padma – Padma, pad+ma: white

221 Mahāpadma – Padma Chenpo, pad+ma chen po: black

222 Śāṅkhapāla – Dungkyong, dung skyong: white with shading (repainted)

223 Kulika – Rikden, rigs ldan: red (repainted)

224 Unidentified *nāga*, white

225 Earth Goddess, yellow holding a vase in her left hand; she is represented as an upper body wearing a skirt (no legs are shown).

Eight Asura (?) accompanying Vāyu in the Northwest: Only the first four are named in the Viddhi, they are described as holding sword and shield and other weapons. The sixth and seventh Asura are placed so closely together that it can be concluded that the remaining space occupied another two.

226 Vemacitrin – Takzangri, thags bzang ris; grey

227 Bali – Topden, stobs ldan; white

228 Ptahlāda – Rapga, rab dga'; dark blue

229 Vairocana – Nampar Nangjé, rnam par snang byed; red

230 white

231 yellow

232 lost

233 lost

Northern Quarter

234 Vāyu – Lunglha, rlung lha: dark; seated on stag, holding a lance with a flag in the left hand.

The following two deities are depicted with the same symbolism as Vāyu, more research is needed to assure their identity.

235 Black deity on stag holding a scarf looping around his head.

236 Red deity on stag holding a flag in the right.

Eight *garuḍa* kings: they are not named in the text and only the variegated colour of their bodies is described. All identical, of variegated colours and hands folded in front of the chest.

237 Garuḍa king

238 Garuḍa king

239 Garuḍa king

240 Garuḍa king

241 Garuḍa king

242 Garuḍa king

243 Garuḍa king

244 Garuḍa king

245 Eclipse – Rāhu – Drachen, sgra gcan; reddish black; wrathful head only with snake around his neck

Five of the eight *yakṣa*, each holding a citrus fruit in the right and a mongoose bag in the left.

246 Yellow

247 Blue

248 Yellow

249 Red

250 Yellow

251 Kubera – Lüngenpo, lus ngan po; yellow; four arms, two of them raised in worship above the head, one at chest, the other embracing consort on his lap; consort in local dress; seated on man raising one hand in *vandanamudrā*

Three of the eight *yakṣa*

252 Red

253 Green

254 Yellow

255 Hārītī – Trokma, 'phrog ma; seated and in local Tibetan dress flanked by two partially dressed youth

256 Pāñcika: green, four-headed (fifth to be imagined in the back), holding a flask in the left hand; seated sideways and looking up towards Hārītī

257 Gaṇapati – Tsokdak, tshogs bdag: white, elephant-headed, and four-armed

Two of the celestial bodies – *graha* – Zachen, *gza' chen*

258 Saturn – Śanaiścara – Penpa, spen pa; black; emaciated; stick in the right hand, left at side; seated on turtle

259 Comet – Ketu – Jukring, mjug rings; dark blue; club in right hand, left oat side; lower body as snake

Seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions – *aṣṭāviṃśati nakṣatra* – Gyukar nyishu tsagyé, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad*

260 Beta Delphinum – Dhaniṣṭhā – Möndru, mon gru; the identification of smon gru and mon gre is mixed up in the consulted literature; black; holding sword in right hand, left at side; seated on lotus

261 Lambda Aquarius – Śatabhiṣā – Möndré, mon gre; yellow (?)

262 Alpha Pegasi – Pūrvabhādrapadā – Trumtö, khrums stod (?)

263 Gamma Pegasi – Uttarabhādrapadā – Trummé, khrums smad; yellowish white, seated on snake

264 Zeta Piscum – Revatī – Namdru, nam gru; white; white lotus in right hand, left sideways; seated on horse

265 Beta Arietis – Aśvinī – Takar, tha skar; white; holding flower blossom in right hand, left at thigh; seated on lotus

266 Arietus – Bharaṇi – Dranyé, bra nye; green; holding stick with head in the right hand, left held sideways; seated on cow or buffalo

Four *gandharva* of which only the first one can be identified.

267 Pañcaśikha – Tsukpü Ngapa, gtsug phud lnga pa; yellow playing a string instrument (*vīṇā*), seated on cushion

268 red deity with hand at side, seated on cushion

269 white deity with hand in front of chest

270 green deity with hand raised at side

271 black deity with third eye; holding skull-cup (*kapāla*) in right hand, left rests at raised knee

Four wrathful gate-keepers

272 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, rdo rje lcags kyu; white krodha, left stretched with aṅkuśa

273 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, rdo rje zhags pa; yellow; left leg stretched (pratyālīḍha); noose not painted

274 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, rdo rje lcags sgrog; red

275 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, rdo rje dril bu; green; right leg stretched (ālīḍha); hands held as if holding vajra and bell

Deities of the Sarvavid Mandala

This list of deities is based on the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala of the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamahāmaṇḍalasādhana*, T 2630 (P3457))[130] the only extant canonical text that accounts for all the deities depicted in the Alchi Dukhang version of this mandala. With the exception of the Buddhas, repainted deities are not described.

Inner Palace

Central Circle Divided into Nine Compartments

Five Buddhas:

1 Centre: Sarvavid Vairocana – Künrik Nampar Nangdzé, *kun rig rnam par snang mdzad*: repainted; one-headed (instead of the usual four); meditating; lion vehicle.

2 East: Buddha Sarvadurgatipariśodhanarāja – Ngensong Tamché Yongsu Jongwé Gyelpo, *ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i rgyal po* / Ngensong Jongwa, *ngan song sbyong ba*: repainted; white, the gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*), no vehicle

3 South: Buddha Ratnaketu – Rinpoché Metok, *rin po che'i me tog* / Rinpoché Tok, *rin po che tog*: repainted; blue; performing the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*)

4 West: Buddha Śākyamuni – Śākya Tuppa, *shā kya thub pa*: repainted; orange-red and meditating

5 North: Buddha Vikasitakusuma – Métok Chenpo Gyépa, *me tog chen po rgyas pa* / Métok Chergyé, *me tog cher rgyas*: green; the gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*); pair of *garuḍa* to the side of the lotus throne

Four goddesses:

6 SE: Buddhalocanā – Sanggyé chenma, *sangs rgyas spyan*

7 SW: Māmakī – Mamaki, *mā ma kī*

8 NW: Pāṇḍarāvasinī – Gökarmo, *gos dkar mo*: red; holding lotus blossom on the palm of the right hand held towards the centre of the mandala, left at the hip

9 NE: Tārā – Drölma, *sgrol ma*: green, holding a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) in the right hand towards the centre of the mandala and the left at the hip

Second Circle

The sixteen Mahābodhisattvas arranged clockwise from the north-east petal.

10 Vajrasattva – Dorjé Sempa, *rdo rje sems pa*: white, vajra held upright on the palm of the right hand, left at hip

11 Vajrarāja – Dorjé Gyelpo, *rdo rje rgyal po*: yellow; holding an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*) in the right hand, left at hip

12 Vajrarāga – Dorjé Chakpa, *rdo rje chags pa*

13 Vajrasādhu – Dorjé Lekpa, *rdo rje legs pa*

14 Vajraratna – Dorjé Rinchen, *rdo rje rin chen*

15 Vajrasūrya – Dorjé Nyima, *rdo rje nyi ma*

16 Vajradhvaja – Dorjé Gyeltsen, *rdo rje rgyal mtshan*

17 Vajrahāsa – Dorjé Zhépa, *rdo rje bzhad pa*

18 Vajradharma – Dorjé Chö, *rdo rje chos*

19 Vajratīkṣṇa – Dorjé Nönpo, *rdo rje rnon po*

20 Vajrahetu – Dorjé Gyu, *rdo rje rgyu*

21 Vajrabhāṣa – Dorjé Mawa, *rdo rje smra ba*: red; holding a red tongue with the right hand, left at hip

22 Vajrakarma – Dorjé Lé, *rdo rje las*: green; hold crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) in the right in front of the chest, left at hip

23 Vajrarakṣa – Dorjé Sungwa, *rdo rje srung ba*

24 Vajrayakṣa – Dorjé Nöjin, *rdo rje gnod sbyin*

25 Vajrasandhi – Dorjé Khutsur, *rdo rje khu tshur*

In the Corners

Four inner offering goddesses:

26 Lāsyā – Gekmo, *sgeg mo*: white; both hands in vajra-fists at the hip

27 Mālā – Trengwama, *phreng ba ma*

28 Gītā – Luma, *glu ma*: red; plays a lute (*vīṇā*)

29 Nṛtyā – Garma, *gar ma*: green; makes dance-gestures with both arms

In the Gates

Four peaceful gate-keepers in the colours of the directional Buddhas:

30 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: white

31 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, *rdo rje zhags pa*: blue

32 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, *rdo rje lcags sgrog*: red

33 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: green; holding bell in the right hand, left at hip

Second Palace

Inner Square

Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Fortunate Aeon in individual iconography.

East:

34 Maitreya – Jampa, *byams pa*: orange, *nāgakesara* twig and flask

35 Mañjuśrī – Jampel, *'jam dpal*: orange, sword and book

36 Gandhahastin – Pökyi Langpo, *spos kyi glang po*: yellow, repainted

37 Jñānaketu – Yéshé Tok, *ye shes tog*: blue, repainted

South:

38 Bhadrapāla – Zangskyong, *bzang skyong*: white, jewel

39 Amoghadarśin – Tongwa Dönyö, *mthong ba don yod* / Dönyötong, *don yod mthong*: white, red lotus

40 Akṣayamati – Lodrö Mizépa, *blo gros mi bzad pa*: white, bejewelled flask

41 Pratibhānakūṭa – Poppa Tsekpa, *spobs pa brtsegs pa*: yellow, triple jewel

West:

42 Mahāsthāmaprāpta – Tuchenpo Toppa, *mthu chen po thob pa* / Tuchentop, *mthu chen thob*: white, sword

43 Sarvāpāyañjaha – Ngensong Kündren, *ngan song kun 'dren* / Apāyañjaha – Ngensongdren, *ngan song 'dren*: white, ?

44 Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati – Nyangen Münpa Tamché Ngépar Jompé Lodrö, *mya ngan mun pa thams cad nges par 'joms pa'i blo gros*: white, holding a staff the top of which is not preserved

45 Jālinīprabha – Drabachengyi Ö, *dra ba can gyi 'od*: red, holding a net

North:

46 Candraprabha – Dawé Ö, *zla ba'i 'od*: white, crescent

47 Amṛtaprabha – Dütsi Ö, *bdud rtsi 'od*: white, flask held in both hands in front of chest

48 Gaganagañja – Namkhé Dzö, *nam mkha'i mdzod*: yellow holding casket

49 Samantabhadra – Küntu Zangpo, *kun tu bzang po*: yellow; triple jewel(?)

Sixteen matchless Bodhisattvas in the iconography of their direction.[32]

East, all white and holding a vajra:

50 Sarvāpāyañjaha – Ngensong Tamché Jongwa, *ngan song thams cad sbyong ba* / Ngensongjong, *ngan song sbyong* / Ngensongjom, *ngan song 'joms*

51 Münpasel, *mun pa sel*

52 Dukngel Jomjé, *sdug bsngal 'joms byed* / Dukngeljom, *sdug bsngal 'joms*

53 Sitsodröl, *srid mtsho sgrol*

South, all blue and holding a triple jewel:

54 Rinchendzö, *rin chen mdzod*

55 Gewé Lodrö, *dge ba'i blo gros*

56 Döntünyi, *don mthun yid* / Döntün Yiö, *don mthun yid 'od*

57 Drenpé Topchok, *dran pa'i stobs mchog*

West, all red and holding a white lotus:

58 Gewé Jungné, *dge ba'i 'byung gnas*

59 Lekpétok, *legs pa'i tog*

60 Sipé Tsodröl, *srid pa'i mtsho sgrol*

61 Dewé Jungné, *bde ba'i 'byung gnas*

North, all green and holding a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*):

62 Tsöndrü Midokpa, *brtson 'grus mi ldog pa*

63 Yöntendzö, *yon tan mdzod*

64 Tétsom Yinyur, *the tshom yid myur* / Tétsomyur, *the tshom myur*

65 Ngaro Nyenpa, *nga ro snyan pa*

Four outer offering goddesses

66 Dhūpā – Dukpama, *bdug ba ma*: white; holds large incense burner with both hands

67 Puṣpā – Métokma, *me tog ma*: yellow; appears to hold to small flowers in the hands raised at the sides

68 Dīpā – Marmema, *mar me ma*: red; holds plate with burning cone inside in the right hand, left hand at hip

69 Gandhā – Jukpama, *byug pa ma*: green; holds conch in the left hand and spreads the fragrance with the right hand above it

Outer Square

Sixteen Hearers (*śrāvaka*); for some of the names mentioned Sanskrit equivalents still need to be identified.

East

70 Nanda – Gawo, *dga' bo*

71 Rāhula – Drachendzin, *sgra gcan 'dzin*

72 Śāriputra – Sharibu, *shā ri'i bu*

73 Subhūti – Ranjor, *rab 'byor*

South

74 Maudgalyāyana – *maud gal bu* / *mod gal gyi bu*

75 Udāyin – Charka, *'char ka* / *'char ka bzang*

76 Niruddha – Magakpa, *ma 'gags pa*

32 For most of these Bodhisattvas the Sankrit name could not be established.

77 Kauṇḍinya – kauṇḍanyi / kaudinya

West

78 Upāli – Nyébakhor, *nye ba 'khor*

79 Āśvajit – *rta thul*

80 Gavāṃpati – Balangdak, *ba lang bdag*

81 Ānanda – Küngawo, *kun dga' bo*

North

82 Mahānāma – Mingchen, *ming chen*

83 Kuvera – *nor sbyin*

84 Pūrṇa – *gang po*

85 Kāśyapa – Ösung, *'od srungs*

Twelve Solitary Buddhas (*pratyekabuddha*)[33]

East

86 Dungwa Selwa, *gdung ba sel ba* / Dungsel, *gdung sel*

87 Nangwa Tsekpa, *snang ba brtsegs pa*

88 Jikpar Jépa, *'jigs par byed pa* / Jikpar Mépa, *'jigs par med pa*

South

89 Pawo Dülwa, *dpa' bo 'dul ba*

90 Shérap Gyokchen, *shes rab mgyogs chen*

91 Ribogyel, *ri bo rgyal*

West

92 Mawé Drachen, *smra ba'i sgra chen*

93 Khaḍgaviṣāṇakalpa – Seru Tabu, *bse ru lta bu*

94 Dukchenjom, *dug chen 'joms* / Dukseljom, *dug sel 'joms*

North

95 Dzuntrül Chertön, *rdzu 'phrul cher ston*

96 Senggédra, *seng ge'i sgra* / *seng ge lta bu*

97 Yinyur, *yid myur*

Eight wrathful ones

In the gates, clockwise from the east:

98 *Trailokyāloka – Jikten Sumnang, *'jig rten gsum snang* / Jiktennang, *'jig rten snang*: white, left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍa*), lotus and gesture of threatening(?) [vajra in text]

99 *Trailokyavinaya – Jikten Sumdül, *'jig rten gsum 'dul* / Sumdülwa, *gsum 'dul ba*: blue, left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍa*), club and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*)

100 *Trailokyābhaya, Jikten Sumjik, *'jig rten gsum 'jigs* / Sumjikpa, *gsum 'jig pa*: repainted; red, right leg stretched (*ālīḍa*), lotus and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*) [trident in text]

101 *Trailokyāntaka, *'jig rten gsum mthar byed*: green, left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍa*), sword/club and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*)

In the corners, clockwise from southeast:

102 Amṛtakuṇḍalin – Düdtsi Khyilwa, *bdud rtsi 'khyil ba*: white, left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍa*), vajra and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*) [crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) in text]

33 The Sanskrit equivalents for most of their names could not be found, and it remains unclear where this group derives from. The names used here are also found in many of the later Tibetan sources on this mandala.

103 Nīladaṇḍa – Béchön Ngönpo, *be con sngon po*: blue, left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍa*), axe and ? [sword in text]

104 Acala – Miyowa, *mi g.yo ba*: red, left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍa*), sword and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*)

105 Hayagrīva – Tamdrin, *rta mgrin*: red, additional horse-head, left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍa*), sword and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*) [lotus in text]

Continents

Flanking the gates of the mandala are three continents each, the larger central one named below to the left of the gate, and the smaller outer ones to the right. A deity couple occupies the large continent and attendants the smaller one. The consorts mentioned in the text are not recognisable as such.

East: Videha – Lüpakpo, *lus 'phags po*: white, semi-circular

Indra – Gyajin; *brgya byin* with Desokma, *bde sogs ma*, another name for Indrāṇī – Wangpoma, *dbang po ma*

South: Jambudvīpa – Dzambuling, *'dzam bu gling*: blue, trapezoid

Brahmā – Tsangpa, *tshangs pa* with Brahmāṇī – Tsangma, *tshangs ma*

West: Godāniya – Balangchö, *ba glang spyod*: red, circular

Maheśvara (Śiva) – Wangchuk Chenpo, *dbang phyug chen po* with Durgā – Kadokma, *dka' bzlog ma*

North: Uttarakuru – Draminyen, *sgra mi snyan*: green, trapezoid

Viṣṇu – Kyapjug, *khyab 'jug* with Śrī – Pelmo, *dpal mo*

Outer Protective Circle

The deities in the outer protective circle can only partially be identified. The text is not very precise in this regard, but attributes groups of deities with the respective guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*).

Eastern quarter from northeast corner

106 Īśāna – Wangden, *dbang ldan*: white; snake in hair and third eye; four-armed; string of beads (*mālā*) and trident at hip, outer arms ?; spouse in local dress on lap; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on yellow bull

Twelve of at least fourteen animal-headed *yoginī* – Nenjorma, *rnal 'byor ma*.[34] The first two of these deities precede Īśāna and thus are listed at the end of this list.

107 f. green, animal-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with skull-cup

108 f. bright green, corpulent, on cushion, with sword and skull-cup

109 f. yellow, animal/fox-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with skull-cup and sword

110 f. dark, bird-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with sword and skull-cup

111 f. grey, dog-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with skull-cup and sword

34 The text simply refers to them as 'mothers' *mātṛkā* – Mamo, ma mo. However, the term here is to be understood much more broadly, as these *mātṛkā* are clearly different from those referred to by the same term in the Dharmadhātu mandala and animal-headed.

112 f. yellow with dark head and hands, canine(?)-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with skull-cup and sword

113 f. bight green, horse-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with sword and skull-cup

114 f. frontal, yellow, ghost-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with skull-cup and sword

115 f. yellow, canine-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with sword and skull-cup

116 f. orange, canine-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with sword and skull-cup

117 f. yellow, bird-headed, corpulent, on cushion, with sword and skull-cup

118 f. grey, canine-headed, corpulent, on cushion, ?

119–126 eight figures lost before bottom centre

Bottom centre

127 Indra – Gyajin; *brgya byin*; details lost[35]

128–132 five figures lost following bottom centre

Seven male deities alternating placed on cushion or lotus. It is unclear what group of beings these represent.

133 m. orange, on cushion, argumentation gesture and ?

134 m. green, on lotus, argumentation gesture and red blossom

135 m. green, on cushion, sword and hand at side

136 m. dark-grey, on lotus, white blossom/wheel and hand at chest

137 m. orange-red, on cushion, triple jewel and hand at chest

138 m. yellow, on lotus, hand at side and snake

139 m. bright, on cushion, hand at chest and triple jewel

Two of the eight celestial bodies – *graha* – Zachen, *gza' chen*[36]

140 Venus – Śukra – Pasang, *pa sangs*: red, on lotus, sword at thigh and book at side

141 Mars – Maṅgala – Migmar, *mig dmar*: red, on cushion, jewel at side and hand at chest

Seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions – *aṣṭāviṃśati nakṣatra* – Gyukar nyishu tsagyé, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad*, all of which are female.

142 Eta Tauri – Kṛttikā – Mindruk, *smin druk*: red, seated on vase, holding lotus (with jewel on top?)

143 Aldebaran – Rohiṇī – Narma, *snar ma*: bright green; seated on bull; holding triple jewel

35 The text associates Indra with the highest pan-Indian deities, including Maheśvara (Śiva), Viṣṇu, Bhṛṅgin, Nandin, Kārtikeya, Gaṇapati, Mahābala, all of which would have been seated immediately flanking Indra and thus are lost. It may well be that some of these could still be identified on-site. However, the text also mixes the lunar mansions in the lists, which are also mentioned separately, and it is thus unlikely that it is the direct base for the depictions of this deities. In fact, all of Ānandagarbha's commentaries on this particular mandala are quite casual in the precise attribution of the deities in this circle and studying the divergences between these and their implication on depictions is beyond the scope of this publication. What they have in common, though is, that the eight types of beings beginning with the demi-gods (*asura*) are represented.

36 Identified by position and succession in text only.

144 Lamda Orionis – Mṛgaśirā – Go, *mgo*: red; seated on cushion; right hand at chest, left holding trident

145 Alpha Orionis – Ārdrā – Lak, *lag*: yellow; on antelope(?); at thigh and holding a lotus

146 Beta Geminorum – Punarvasu – Napso, *nabs so*: red; seated on cushion; hand at heart and holding a triple jewel

147 Delta Cancri – Puṣyā – Gyel, *rgyal*: green, on dark bird, at thigh and holding a triple jewel on crescent

148 Alpha Hydroe – Āśleṣā – Kak, *skag*: bright green, seated on snake, at thigh and holding a snake

Southern Quarter

149 Agni – Melha, *me lha*: orange-red, four-armed, matted hair and white beard; string of beads (*mālā*) and jewel staff in outer hands, inner ones white disk in front of chest and ? (embracing consort) seated on his lap, wears local dress; seated on goat

Eight great ascetics (*ṛṣi*) – Drangsong Chenpo Gyé, *drang srong chen po brgyad*; all are emaciated and seated in some form of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on a cushion covered by a skin.

150 green; right at chest and left holding fire

151 red; right at chest and left holding lotus blossom

152 yellow; right at side and left holding offering plate

153 dark blue; right holding trident at thigh and left holding book

154 green; right at chest and left holding offering plate at side

155 red; right with axe and left with offering plate

156 dark blue; right at side and left holding offering plate with triangular objects

157 red; right at chest and left holding white lotus blossom

Five of six corpulent goddesses, likely *rākṣasī* – Sinmo, *srin mo*; all seated with the legs crossed at the ankles on cushions and usually holding their attribute towards the centre of the mandala.[37]

158 dark grey; snake held in both hands, the snake-heads on the palm of the left

159 green; right at thigh and left holding white lotus

grey; left holding *ankuśa* at thigh and right with *tarjanīmudrā*

160 *Kālī – Nakmo, *nag mo*: grey; left holding curved knife and left with severed head

161 yellow; left at thigh and right holding white lotus blossom

162 Yama – Shinjé, *gshin rje*: dark blue; four-armed and booted; rosary and *yamadaṇḍa* with fresh head in the inner hands, outer ones with cymbals and harp; sitting in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on a grey water buffalo

One of the six corpulent goddesses, *rākṣasī* – Sinmo, *srin mo*

163 dark grey; left holding axe at thigh, right in fist at thigh

Two of the eight celestial bodies – *graha* – Zachen, *gza' chen*

164 Jupiter – Bṛhaspati – Purbu, *phur bu*: yellow; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on cushion; right in *tarjanīmudrā* in front of chest, left holding a book

37 The text names several goddesses associated with Yama, such as *Vajrakaumārī (Dorjé Zhönnuma, *rdo rje gzhon nu ma*), Namdruma (*nam gru ma*), but except for the one identified below, which is tentative, it is unclear who of them could be represented by which deity.

165 Sun – Sūrya / Āditya – Nyima, *nyi ma*: red; seated with legs crossed at ankles on horse that rests on lotus; right holds sword at thigh, left holds white lotus

Seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions – *aṣṭāviṃśati nakṣatra* – Gyukar nyishu tsagyé, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad*, all of them sit with their legs crossed at the ankles.

166 Alpha Leonis / Regulus – Maghā – Chu, *mchu*: yellow; seated on lion; right hand with sword, left holding lotus

167 Delta Leonis – Pūrvaphalgunī – Dre, *gre*: white; seated on black water-buffalo; right in *tarjanīmudrā* and left holding red lotus[38]

168 Beta Leonis – Uttaraphalgunī – Bo, *sbo*: green; seated in meditation on throne

169 Delta Corvi – Hastā – Méshi, *me bzhi*: yellow; seated on horse; right with sword at thigh, left with lotus

170 Spica Verginis – Citrā – Nakpa, *nag pa*: green; seated on a peacock; right in *tarjanīmudrā* at chest, left holding triple jewel

171 Arcturus – Svātī – Sari, *sa ri*: red; seated on cushion; right with sword, left holding lotus

172 Alpha Librae – Viśākhā – Saga, *sa ga*: white; seated on goat; right with curved knife at thigh, left with severed head

Four of ten demons – *rākṣasa* – Sinpo, *srin po*

173 red; corpulent; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion; holding sword and severed head

174 blue; corpulent; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion; holding sword and lotus

175 white; corpulent; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion; holding sword and lotus

176 Rāvaṇa – *lang ka mgrin bcu*: greyish-blue; with nine heads, the top one of a donkey, the other ones in tiers of three wrathful heads; dressed and booted; holding sword and shield; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on a throne

Western Quarter

177 Nairṛti – Srinpö Dakpo, *srin po'i bdag po*: black; four-armed; dressed and booted; consort on his lap; holding curved sword and shield, arrow and bow; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on man with the hands joined in veneration gesture (*namaskāramudrā*)

Six of ten demons – *rākṣasa* – Sinpo, *srin po*

178 grey; with sword and red lotus; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion

179 green; right at chest as if holding sword, red lotus; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion

180 grey; sword and hand raised at side palm inwards; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion

181 dark blue; sword and hand raised at side palm inwards; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion

182 white; axe and hand on thigh; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion

183 grey; sword and skull-cup (*kapāla*); seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion

Two of the celestial bodies – *graha* – Zachen, *gza' chen*

38 Relative to the Dharmadhātu mandala, the iconography of this and the following lunar mansion is reversed.

184 Moon – Candra – Dawa, *zla ba*: orange with white head; both hands in front of chest, no attribute recognisable; seated with legs crossed at ankles on pair of geese

185 Comet – Ketu – Jukring, *mjug rings*: dark grey; right at hip, left raised without attribute (lost); lower as cloud, *makara* tail

Seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions – *aṣṭāviṃśati nakṣatra* – Gyukar nyishu tsagyé, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad*

186 Delta Scorpio – Anurādha – Lhatsam, *lha mtshams*: repainted; red; seated with legs crossed at ankles on lotus

187 Antares – Jyeṣṭha – Nön, *snron*: red; right at hip and white lotus; seated on horse

188 Lambda Scorpii – Mūlā – Nup, *snrubs*: green; sword and red lotus; seated on red earless animal

189 Delta Sagittari – Pūrvāṣāḍhā – Chutö, *chu stod*: partially repainted, male(?); yellow; right at hip, left new; seated on bird

190 Sigma Sagittari – Uttarāṣāḍhā – Chumé, *chu smad*

191 Alpha Aquilæ – Śravaṇā – Drozhin, *gro bzhin*

192 Abhijit – Jizhin, *byi bzhin*

193 Varuṇa – Chulha, *chu lha*: repainted; four-armed; spouse on lap; seated on a *makara*

Eight great *nāga*

194 Ananta – Tayé, *mtha' yas*: red

195 Vāsuki – Norgyé, *nor rgyas*: yellow

196 Takṣaka – Jokpo, *'jog po*: black

197 Karkoṭaka – Topkyigyü, *stobs kyi rgyu*: white

198 Padma – Padma, *pad+ma*: white

199 Mahāpadma – Padma Chenpo, *pad+ma chen po*: black

200 Śāṅkhapāla – Dungkyong, *dung skyong*: white

201 Kulika – Rikden, *rigs ldan*: yellow

Three male deities

202 dark grey; corpulent; lotus and at hip; seated legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

203 green; corpulent; flag and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*) in front of chest; seated legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

204 white; corpulent; crescent and at hip; seated legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

Two demi-gods – *asura* – Lhamayin, *lha ma yin*

205 red; corpulent; dressed; sword and in front of chest; seated legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

206 dark grey; corpulent; dressed; sword(?) and shield; seated legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

207 Vāyu – Lunglha, *rlung lha*: dark blue; four-armed; consort on lap; seated on stag

Northern Quarter

One male deity

208 yellow; corpulent; right holding a wheel and left at thigh; seated with legs crossed at ankles on cushion

Eight *garuḍa* kings in pairs of two side by side

209–216 human torso on bird body with wings; head and lower arms dark blue; chest and upper arms red; lower body yellow; feet white

217 Earth goddess Pṛthivī / Bhūdevī – Sélhamo, *sa'i lha mo*: yellow; only skirt underneath hip; vase raised in right hand, left at hip

Eight Jambhala / *yakṣa*

218 dark blue; corpulent; holding fruit at knee and mongoose bag at thigh; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

219 yellow; corpulent; holding fruit at knee and mongoose bag at thigh; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

220 green; corpulent; holding fruit at knee and mongoose bag at thigh; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

221 dark blue; corpulent; holding fruit at knee and mongoose bag at thigh; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

222 red; corpulent; holding fruit at knee and mongoose bag at thigh; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

223 green; corpulent; holding fruit at knee and mongoose bag at thigh; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

224 yellow; corpulent; holding fruit at knee and mongoose bag at thigh; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

225 red; corpulent; holding fruit at knee and mongoose bag at thigh; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

226 Lord of Wealth – Chungwo Dakpo, *'byung bo'i bdag po* = Kubera – Lüngenpo, *lus ngan po*: yellow; four-armed; one at chest, the other at hip holding a club, outer hands raised in praise and holding a ringed mace; consort in local dress on his lap; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on horse

Two of the eight celestial bodies – *graha* – Zachen, *gza' chen* (identified on basis of text)

227 Saturn – Śanaiścara – Penpa, *spen pa*: blue; one hand raised at side the other in front of chest, no attributes; seated with legs crossed at ankles on lotus

228 Mercury – Budha – Zalak, *bza' lhag*: red; hands in veneration gesture (*namaskāramudrā*) in front of chest; seated with knees raised and legs crossed at ankles on cushion

Seven of the twenty-eight lunar mansions – *aṣṭāviṃśati nakṣatra* – Gyukar nyishu tsagyé, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad*

229 Beta Delphinum – Dhaniṣṭhā – Möndru, *mon gru*: yellow; corpulent; holding lotus in the right, left at hip; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion[39]

230 Lambda Aquarius – Śatabhiṣā – Möndré, *mon gre*: blue; corpulent; holding axe at hip and left at side; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

231 Alpha Pegasi – Pūrvabhādrapadā – Trumtö, *khrums stod*: red; corpulent; holding skull-cup (*kapāla*) and left at hip; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on goat

232 Gamma Pegasi – Uttarabhādrapadā – Trummé, *khrums smad*: yellow; corpulent; holding jewel(?) and left at hip; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

233 Zeta Piscum – Revatī – Namdru, *nam gru*: grey; corpulent; holding vajra and left at hip; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on horse

39 The identification of *smon gru* and *mon gre* is mixed up in the consulted literature

234 Beta Arietis – Aśvinī – Takar, *tha skar*: green; corpulent; holding curved knife at hip and skull-cup (*kapāla*) in front of chest; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on cuckoo (bird with ears)

235 Arietus – Bharaṇi – Dranyé, *bra nye*: blue; corpulent; stick with head and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*); seated with legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

Eight male deities; these are seated in pairs of two side by side, the left one being described before the right one.

236 red; hands in front of chest and at side; seated with knees raised and legs crossed at ankles on cushion

237 yellow; hands holding stick and at chest; seated with one knee raised and legs crossed at the ankles on lotus

238 red; holding curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and severed head; seated with one knee raised and legs crossed at the ankles on lotus

239 green; holding curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and the left arm rests on the knee; seated with one knee raised and legs crossed at the ankles on mat

240 yellow; holding curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and skull-cup (*kapāla*); seated with legs crossed at the ankles on mat

241 dark blue; curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and skull-cup (*kapāla*); seated with one knee raised and legs crossed at the ankles on lotus

242 green; hand in front of chest and flag held at hip; seated with one knee raised and legs crossed at the ankles on lotus

243 red; right raised in the gesture of adoration (*vandanamudrā*) and left in front of chest; seated with one knee raised and legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

Two of at least fourteen animal-headed *yoginī* – Nenjorma, *rnal 'byor ma*

244 dark blue; cow head; skull-cup (*kapāla*) and trident; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

245 yellow; canine head; trident and skull-cup (*kapāla*); seated with legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

Four wrathful gate-keepers

246 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: white *krodha*, left stretched with *aṅkuśa*

247 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, *rdo rje zhags pa*: yellow; left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍha*); noose not painted

248 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, *rdo rje lcags sgrog*: red

149 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: green; right leg stretched (*ālīḍha*); hands held as if holding vajra and bell.

Deities of the Śākyasiṃha Mandala

While the assembly inside the palaces of this mandala is relatively consistent and thus do not identify a distinct source, the derivation for the outer rim of deities could not be established. Their identification thus remains tentative. Iconographic details at Alchi are only reproduced insofar as they can be considered original. Explanations in square brackets are based on NSP 22. The representation of Prajñāpāramitā on the eastern petal of the central lotus is unique to the Alchi monuments and adds an additional deity to the core assembly of the mandala.

Central Palace

Central eight-petalled lotus

1 Śākyasiṃha – *shākya seng ge*: partially repainted; white, red robes, teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*)

2 Prajñāpāramitā – Shérapkyi Paröltu Chinma, *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin ma*: on eastern lotus petal: partially repainted; white, four arms

The eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas on the eight spokes of a wheel. All are depicted bejewelled and they differ from those in the Dharmadhātu mandala. Those in the cardinal directions are seated with legs fully crossed on lotus and, if preserved, the respective vehicle is represented behind the legs:

3 Vajroṣṇīṣa – Dorjé Tsuktor, *rdo rje gtsug tor*: damaged; white; earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*)

4 Ratnoṣṇīṣa – Rinchen Tsuktor, *rin chen gtsug tor*: partially repainted; blue; gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*); horse vehicle

5 Padmoṣṇīṣa – Padma Tsuktor, *pad+ma gtsug tor*: damaged; red; gesture of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*)

6 Viśvoṣṇīṣa – Natsok Tsuktor, *sna tshogs gtsug tor*: partially repainted; green; gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*); *garuḍa* vehicle

Those in the intermediary directions are seated with legs half crossed on lotuses, and are listed from the southeast clockwise:

7 Tejoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Ziji, *gtsug tor gzi brjid*: repainted; red; gesture of argumentation (*vitarkamudrā*) [supposed to hold a sun]

8 Dhvajoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Gyeltsen, *gtsug tor rgyal mtshan*: repainted; red

9 Tikṣṇoṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Nönpo, *gtsug tor rnon po*: blue; with sword and book

10 Chattroṣṇīṣa – Tsuktor Dukkar, *gtsug tor gdugs dkar*: white; with umbrella

Four inner offering goddesses in the corners of the inner palace listed from the southeast:

11 Lāsyā – Gekmo, *sgeg mo*: white; both hands in vajra-fists at hip

12 Mālā – Trengwama, *phreng ba ma*: yellow; garland of jewels (*ratnamālā*)

13 Gītā – Luma, *glu ma*: repainted; red

14 Nṛtyā – Garma, *gar ma*: repainted; white

Four peaceful gate-keepers

15 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: damaged; white

16 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, *rdo rje zhags pa*: blue; noose held in both hands, left at hip

17 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, *rdo rje lcags sgrog*: damaged: red

18 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: lost

Second Palace

Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon represented in individual iconography.

East:

19 Maitreya – Jampa, *byams pa*: repainted: orange, no attributes [yellow; with nāgakesara and flask]

20 Amoghadarśin – Tongwa Dönyö, *mthong ba don yod*: orange; with lotus in the right hand, left hand at hip [yellow, lotus with an eye]

21 Apāyañjaha – Ngensongchong, ngan song sbyong / Sarvāpāyañjaha – Ngensong Kündren, *ngan song kun 'dren* / Apāyañjaha – Ngensongdren, *ngan song 'dren*: damaged; white, ? [white, holds goad with both hands]

22 Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati – Nyangen Münpa Tamché Ngépar Jompé Lodrö, *mya ngan mun pa thams cad nges par 'joms pa'i blo gros*: orange yellow; holding staff, left at hip

South:

23 Gandhahastin – Pökyi Langpo, *spos kyi glang po*: white with green shading; holding white conch in the right hand, left hand at hip

24 Śūraṃgama – Pawar Drowa, *dpa' bar 'gro ba*: white; sword held upright in the right hand, left hand at hip

25 Gaganagañja – Namkhé Dzö, *nam mkha'i mdzod*: yellow; holding casket at thigh; left in the gesture of argumentation (*vitarkamudrā*)

26 Jñānaketu – Yéshé Tok, *ye shes tog*: blue; right held at side, left holding banner at hip

West:

27 Amṛtaprabha – Dütsiö, *bdud rtsi 'od*: white with orange shading; bejewelled flask held at the side, left hand at hip

28 Candraprabha – Dawé Ö, *zla ba'i 'od*: repainted; white [lunar orb on lotus, left at hip]

29 Bhadrapāla – Zangskyong, *bzang skyong*: white, object held at side; left at hip [flaming jewel]

30 Jālinīprabha – Drabachengyi Ö, *dra ba can gyi 'od*: repainted; red [vajra-cage, left at hip]

North:

31 Vajragarbha – Dorjé Nyingpo, *rdo rje snying po*: repainted: white [blue lily (*utpala*), left at hip]

32 Akṣayamati – Lodrö Mizépa, *blo gros mi bzad pa*: repainted; red [white; holding nectar vessel with both hands]

33 Pratibhānakūṭa – Poppa Tsekpa, *spobs pa brtsegs pa*: repainted; white [red; pile of jewels on lotus, left at hip]

34 Samantabhadra – Küntu Zangpo, *kun tu bzang po*: repainted; red [golden; bouquet of jewels, left at hip]

Four outer offering goddesses

35 Dhūpā – Dukpama, *bdug ba ma*: white; holding an incense burner

36 Puṣpā – Métokma, *me tog ma*: yellow; holding a garland in both hands (same as Mālā)

37 Dīpā – Marmema, *mar me ma*: repainted; red

38 Gandhā – Jukpama, *byug pa ma*: repainted; white

Four peaceful gate-keepers

39 Vajrāṅkuśa – Dorjé Chakkyu, *rdo rje lcags kyu*: damaged; white; handle of *aṅkuśa* only

40 Vajrapāśa – Dorjé Zhakpa, *rdo rje zhags pa*: blue; noose held in both hands, left at hip

41 Vajrasphoṭa – Dorjé Chaktrok, *rdo rje lcags sgrog*: repainted: red

42 Vajraghaṇṭa – Dorjé Drilbu, *rdo rje dril bu*: repainted; blue

Surrounding Circle

Much of this outer circle is lost, but it is certain that it is again organised around the guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*).

East

43 Indra, lost

44 lost

45 lost

46 damaged; orange red

47 damaged; male; yellow

48 Soma / Candra – Dawa, *zla ba*: white; seated on geese

One of three ascetics (*ṛṣi*)

49 white; emaciated; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

Agni triad in the southeast:

50 female; red; holding lotus(?); seated on goat

51 Agni – Melha, *me lha*: red; four-armed; attributes damaged; seated on goat

52 female; yellow; holding staff in the right hand and fire in the left; seated on goat

Two of three ascetics (*ṛṣi*)

53 white; emaciated; holding umbrella in the right hand, left palm up towards mandala; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

54 yellow; emaciated; holding *tridaṇḍa* in the right hand, left rests on the knee; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

One of six demons (*rākṣasa*)

55 dark blue; wearing bodice; holding sword in the right hand, left palm up towards mandala; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on cushion

Yama triad in the south:

56 female; dark blue; right hand in front of chest, left at hip holding club with a head attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*), seated on buffalo

57 Yama – Shinjé, *gshin rje*: dark blue; four-armed; hand in front of chest as if holding vajra, and stick with head on it, outer hands with cymbals and gesture of praise (*vandanamudrā*); seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on water-buffalo

58 female; red; club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*) held at hip, left at side; seated with legs crossed at the ankles on water buffalo

Three of six demons (*rākṣasa*)

59 yellow; booted; holding sword and shield; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

60 m. red; booted; holding sword and shield; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

61 m. black; booted; wearing jacket; holding sword and shield; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

Nairṛti triad in the southwest:

62 female; black; holding sword and shield; seated with the legs crossed at the ankles on corpse

63 Nairṛti – Srinpö Dakpo, *srin po'i bdag po*: black; dressed and booted; holding sword and shield; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on corpse

64 female; red; holding sword and shield; seated with the legs crossed at the ankles on corpse

Two of six demons (*rākṣasa*)

65 red; dressed and booted; holding sword and shield; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

66 yellow; dressed and booted; holding sword and shield; seated in the posture of royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on cushion

One of at least two snakes (*nāga*)[40]

67 lost

Varuṇa triad in the west:

68 partially repainted: female; white; snake hood; right in front of chest, left at side; seated on white *makara*

69 Varuṇa – Chulha, *chu lha*: white; snake hood; four arms; conch in lower left hand; seated on white *makara*

70 female red; snake hood; seated with the legs crossed at the ankles on green *makara*

One of at least two snakes (*nāga*)

71 white; with snake hood and tail

The remaining deities in the northern half are repainted, and it is assumed that their number mirrored those on the southern half.

Of the gate-keepers only two are preserved, both of the colour of the direction, armoured and with the same attributes. It is thus unclear if they are meant to represent the Four Great Kings, as assumed in the identification below:

95 lost

96 Virūḍhaka – Pakkyépo, *'phags skyes po*: blue; armour and boots; holding sword and shield

97 Virūpākṣa – Mikmizang, *mig mi bzang*: red; armour and boots; holding sword and shield

98 lost

40 This assumes that the previous pattern is followed here too with one snake before the guardian of the direction and his female companions and at least one, but presumably more, after.

Notes Choskhor

Preface

1 First discussed in Goepper (1990).

2 The full study including the edition of the text will be published elsewhere.

3 See also the accompanying inscription in Vitali (2012), p. 131–133, that makes this continuation explicit.

The Historical Background

4 The previous version of this his text originally was in the Sumtsek volume, but it has been substantially modified. While some parts of the original text by Roger Goepper and his references are still contained in this text, it has been necessary to revise it to a degree that makes it impossible to still retain his name as a co-author.

5 On the history of Ladakh see Francke (1904, reprint 1981); Petech (1977).

6 Dolichocephalic skeletons discovered at several different sites in Ladakh, some near the capital of Leh, were first identified as the remains of an original Dardic population by Francke (1926, reprint 1972), p. 68–69. Place names of several settlements in Ladakh derive from the Dardic language; ibid., p. 67. See also A. and P. Keilhauer (1980), p. 23–25.

7 Konow (1929), p. 79–81. On this short 'Khalatse Inscription' and a full list of references see https://gandhari.org/, #CKI0062 (accessed May 6, 2020). It is contested if this inscription refers to Vima Kadphises, the father of Kaniṣka, but its date implies so.

8 On the shifting trade networks see in particular Neelis (2011).

9 On the Palola Ṣāhi see in particular von Hinüber (2004) and numerous subsequent works by this author on additional bronzes. Neelis (2011), p. 171–179 offers a convenient summery of the importance of this kingdom.

10 The confederation of several small kingdoms under the name of Zhangzhung corresponds roughly to western Tibet with Mount Kailash at its geographical centre, and with the area round Tholing (*mtho lding*) as its cultural and religious base. It had its own language and is regarded as a homeland of the Bon religion before being integrated into the wider Tibetan civilisation during the seventh century CE. See Tucci (1956), p. 71–75; Hoffman (1956), p. 32–33; Soerensen (1994), p. 453; Kapstein (2006), p. 54–55.

11 Yang *et al*. (1984), p. 47.

12 Goepper (1996), p. 11, asks the question if the soldiers stationed were local or foreign, pointing out that Denwood in his analysis of the inscriptions favoured the second theory (Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980) 2, p. 161–163), but answering this question also depends on the date assumed for the inscriptions, and those vary. On the Alchi rock inscriptions, see also Orofino (1990) and in particular Takeuchi (2013). The latter dates them to both the imperial period and the time of the west Tibetan kingdom.
Unfortunately many of the inscribed boulders at the Alchi bridge, easy to reach from the road, have been destroyed in the recent decades to make building material.

13 Petech (1977), p. 14–16; Jahoda & Kalantari (2015), p. 79–83.

14 Vitali (1996), p. 196–207; Dotson (2012), p. 180–86.

15 See Jahoda & Papa-Kalantari (2009), the rock engravings at Alchi in Takeuchi (2013), as well as the Alchi inscriptions Denwood (1980).

16 Francke (1972) 2, p. 95 and p. 168–169; Petech (1977), p. 14–24; Soerensen (1994), p. 451–452; Vitali (1996), p. 196–207; Jahoda & Kalantari (2015), p. 84–89.

17 Here I follow and simplify the analysis in Jahoda & Kalantari (2015), p. 84–89.

18 On the different ordinances and decrees of Yéshé Ö see Karmay (2009; 2014, 2014a, 2014b), the latter offering a summary of his life in a recently discovered text, the *Extended Biography of Yéshé Ö* (*ye shes 'od rnam thar rgyas pa*).

19 E.g., in the versions published by Tucci (1988) or Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980) 2, p. 83–116. For a recent reassessment of what we know about Rinchen Zangpo see van der Kuijp (2018a, 2018b).

20 Devers et.al. (2016), Martin (2018).

21 Vitali (1996), p. 301–316; Karmay (2009a.

22 Chattopadhyaya (1967), Decleer (1996), Eimer (1977, 1979, 2003), and Gray (2020).

23 Translated in Chattopadhyaya (1967), p. 525–535, Eimer (1978), Sherburne (1983), Davidson (1995a).

24 Snellgrove (1987), p. 485 ff.; Kapstein (2006), p. 95–100.

25 Well-known examples for early Kadampa art are the Ford Tārā or the so-called Four Kadampa Deities. For examples see Béguin (1990), no. 3; Kossak & Singer (1998), nos. 3, 5, 11; Jackson (2011), p. 66–79; Durham (2016).

26 The Sanskrit text ed. by Lokesh Chandra, Delhi (1987).

27 Toh. no. 479.

28 Heller & Khacham (2018), p. 539–40 and Heller (2018), p. 403–404, where this association is even taken as providing an eleventh-century date for the earliest Alchi monuments (compare the study of Nils Martin on The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek, page 781 ff.). On the ruler Bardé/Wangdé and his times see Vitali (1996), p. 335–345.

29 Here I take a stance that differs from that offered by Martin in his interpretation of The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek, page 781 ff., who rather tries to reconcile the diverging accounts.

30 Petech (1977), p. 17–21.

31 Goepper & Poncar (1996), p. 14.

32 On the remains of Nyarma see in particular Devers (forthcoming).

33 Panglung (1983).

34 On Basgo see Luczanits (2005), p. 70–73; on Leh Choskor, as it is spelled there, see the yearly reports 2015 to 2017 of the Mission Archéologique Franco-Indienne au Ladakh (India) (MAFIL) led by Laurianne Bruneau (www.mafil.org; last accessed May 14, 2020).

35 Petech (1977), p. 18. Interestingly, on the shore of the Indus opposite Spituk a burned out cave with the remains of murals of the early Alchi period has been noticed more recently (see van Ham 2011).

36 On the ancient trade routes see Devers (2017).

37 See in particular inscriptions nos. 1, 2 and 3 in Denwood (1980).

38 This has already been suggested by Goepper (1996), p. 11.

39 See Devers (2017).

40 On Sumda Chung see Luczanits (2004), 175–190, as well as recent restoration reports by NIRLAC and the World Monuments Fund. On Sumda Chen see Vohra (1993, 2005), whereby the C14 date of the wooden Maitreya image has been misread, its correct reading aligning with the date of Alchi. Thanks to H. Poell for pointing this out to me.

41 On the diverse monuments of Mangyu see Linrothe (1994, 2011); Luczanits (2004), p. 155–174; van Ham (2010); Martin (forthcoming).

42 The first study of this text accompanying the lineage in the Sumtsek is Goepper (1990). A number of subsequent scholars, most recently Denwood (2014) and Bellini (2019), have doubted that the inscription is contemporaneous with the monument, but have not offered viable alternatives considering all aspects of the lineage and the accompanying text. See also The Sumtsek Lineage Paintings and Their Implications for Dating, page 723 ff.

43 For the inscription in the Great Stūpa or Palden Drepung Chörten see Goepper (1993), Heller & Khacham (2018), and the reassessment of the entire text in Luczanits (forthcoming), the translation of which is included in the Appendix (The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff.).

44 Here my interpretation of this verse differs from that of Nils Martin in his translation of the text, which attributes the dedication to Tsültrim Ö himself.

45 Petech (1978), p. 313–325; Petech (1988a), p. 355–361; Vitali (2003), p. 70–74.

46 On the destruction of Buddhism in Northeast India see Verardi (2011), on Kashmir and the Mongols see Jahn (1956); Jahn (1980), p. 11, 56; Digby (2007), p. 116; Jackson P. (2017), p. 213–14. Jonarāja records a Mongol invasion only later, but his account on the early kings is only focused on their personalities and major intrigues, see the extremely informative study and translation of Slaje (2014).

47 About the style of the Lhakhang Soma see Singer (1991), p. 131–135.

48 Inscription no. 10 according to Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), 1, p. 79–80; 2, p. 149.

49 Petech (1977), p. 26–30.

The Layout of the Sacred Area

50 A detailed description of the layout together with plans is given by Khosla (1979), p. 54–56. See also Klimburg-Salter (1997), p. 64–69, and the detailed documentation on Tabo at https://archresearch.tugraz.at (accessed June 4, 2020).

51 Even though the Jampel Lhakhang is more directed to the east than the earlier temples in the complex, its iconographic programme implies a southern orientation (see page 297).

52 This description is based on its appearance in the 1990s. More recent changes to the exterior of the complex have now almost entirely obscured the historical layers of the complex.

53 This concept goes back to the so-called Cārya Tantra, and the three Bodhisattvas represent the Buddha, vajra and lotus families, that is groups of deities representing the same qualities acting as antidotes to the three poisons (*triviṣa*, *dug gsum*), ignorance, desire and aversion. The older three chörten have recently been replaced by versions in concrete.

54 This first research travel by Christian Luczanits, Wolfgang Heusgen, and Holger Neuwirth was made possible by the mediation of Christian Luczanits and the financing of Edoardo Zentner, who later founded the Achi Association.

55 Throughout, the fieldwork and research on Buddhist architecture of the western Himalayas at Graz University of Technology was generously funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) within the framework of five projects between 1999 and 2019.

The Main Temple

56 Previous studies on the Dukhang include

57 Information on this donor is found in several inscriptions spread throughout the monument, in particular inscriptions nos. 1, 2 and 3 as presented in Denwood (1980). A reassessment of these inscriptions especially with regard to their religious context is overdue.

58 On the identification of this Bodhisattva see page 226 ff.

59 To list only the most comprehensive and recent studies on this subject: for the door of Kojarnath see Luczanits (1996), Neumann & Neumann (2008); for the door of Udaipur, Lahaul, see Noci 1994; for the fragmentary door at Lachuse, Ladakh, see Poell, (2013) or Poell (2014), for the fragmentary door at Nako see Ziegler (2008). Poell (2005) focuses on doors in Ladakh.

60 Here is a detailed description of the four Bodhisattvas and the rational for their respective identification: The bottom left Bodhisattva is white, holds sword and book (on flower) as well as a bow with one of the left hands (the arrow is missing). These attributes as well as the four goddesses around him identify him as Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī. The top left Bodhisattva is white and except for the book in his upper left hand none of the attributes are clear. The one at the breast possibly once held a vajra, and I take the bottom left attribute as bell (rather than vajra), which makes Vajrasattva a suitable identification. The Bodhisattva in the top right is orange and his left attributes are a book and a lotus. These alone suffice to identify the Bodhisattva as Avalokiteśvara whose upper right hand may have once held a string of beads (*mālā*) while the lower right in front of the chest is unusual. Finally, the bottom right Bodhisattva is orange and his bottom left hand is extended to the side of the knee, once holding a flask, the only clue to identify him as Maitreya. The club like object held in front of the chest would then be a *nāgakesara* twig while the fourth attribute is unclear.

61 The arrangement of the goddesses around Mañjuśrī appears to be the same in the Dukhang paintings but differs in the Sumtsek, but they may still be the same group. It may well be that the four goddesses on the Dukhang door have to be read from top to bottom and left to right, which results in Mālā (Puṣpā), Dhūpā, Ālokā, Gandhā, a regular alternative succession of the four outer offering goddesses in textual sources. See also the section on the offering goddesses page 754 f.

62 For a detailed study of this representation of the Buddha's life see Poell (forthcoming).

63 In Tāranātha's *rin 'byung* this deity is referred to as the Knife Mahākāla in the Tradition of the Great Paṇḍita of Kashmir (*mgon po gri gug ka che pan chen lugs*), referring to Śākyaśrī. This text is partially translated in Willson & Brauen (2000), no. 371. Indeed a more rudimentary description of the deity ascribed to Śākyaśrī is found in the Tengyur (*nag po chen po'i sgrub thabs*), among other *sādhana* that describe a four-armed form.

64 Willson & Brauen (2000), p. 354 (no. 371).

65 Notably, the *nag po chen po'i sgrub thabs*, a much more rudimentary text attributed to Śākyaśrī (1994), does not attribute the deity to a Buddha.

66 See the current designs of such an altar in contemporary manuals such as theg mchog rdo rje & karma byang chub rdo rje (2012), p. 176, or phun tshogs rdo rje (2009), p. 166.

67 See Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), p. 40.

68 *Rin 'byung*, p. 212–15; Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), p. 40; Willson & Brauen (2000), no. 396.

69 *Rin 'byung*, p. 216–18; Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), p. 32; Willson & Brauen (2000), no. 398. The identification of the Sumtsek goddesses has to be revised accordingly, as Goepper unfortunately identified the peaceful goddess wearing the peacock cape as Rematī. Bellini (2019), p. 250, de-constructs this identification.

70 Additional support for the identification of this goddess as Rematī is given by a caption accompanying a four-armed form of the goddess holding tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), mirror dagger and snake (noose) above the door of the Bardzong cave, see Pritzker (2000) and Zhang Changhong (2016), fig. 24, inscription S8. There she is followed by the peacock feather cape goddess, which has lost its caption. At the site of Mangdrak, now destroyed, a similar four-armed from of Rematī, holding sword, mirror, tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) and snake (noose), follows the peacock cape goddess and is captioned *ma mo srog thig*, see Bellezza (2015). Clearly the identity and iconography of the goddess is still rather fluid.

71 See dpal ldan ye shes (1975–78); Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), p. 36. The identification of the Alchi goddess representing Dorjé Chenmo is suggested in Vitali (1999), plate 1 with the depiction of the goddess based on the Alchi Sumtsek, and Bellini (2019) albeit on the basis of the assumption that the myth of her being Rinchen Zangpo's tutelary deity has a factual basis, on this see Jahoda (2006), p. 38–40.

72 The fluidity of the interpretation of the Peacock Cape Lady is demonstrated by the double caption in the Mangdrak cave, Bellezza (2015), where she is (first?) called *tshe bdag mo* as well as *rdo rje chen mo*. In this representation she holds a golden vase and a draped arrow (*mda' dar*) in addition to the vajra. This depiction, as well as the representation of the Tabo Gönkhang (see, e.g., Jahoda (2006), fig. 7 or Bellini (2019), fig. 15) prove, that the Peacock Cape Lady eventually becomes identified as Dorjé Chenmo. The somewhat artificial name 'great vajra lady' also indicates such a derivation for this goddess.

73 The division of function between the protective goddesses as it is proposed here can still be recognised at Tabo, see Jahoda (2006), p. 32–34.

74 Both, the goddess depicted in the Tabo Main Temple—see Klimburg-Salter (1997), p. 78, fig. 38, 39; and Luczanits (1999), p. 114—and the one converted by Rinchen Zangpo at his birthplace Radni—see Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 93, 107—are referred to as *sman mo*. On this group of goddesses see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), p. 198–202.

75 On the Mamo goddesses see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), 269–273.

76 See note 72 above on her association with life, which is also suggested by the surrounding of the goddess and her retinue. Interestingly, a British Library document from Dunhuang, IOL Tib J 716, already records a *ma mo chen mo* and her retinue in this life bestowing function (see Dalton & van Schaik (2007), 296, section 3; http://idp.bl.uk).

77 See Flood (2009) and Papa-Kalantari (2010) for the broader associations of this image.

78 Papa-Kalantari (2010) identifies the Royal Rider with Pehar. As in the case of the Peacock Cape Lady, in my opinion this identification rather takes away from the unique character of the Alchi depictions than contributing to its understanding.

79 Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), p. 318, beginning his section on the *dgra lha*. On the issues with the spelling and meaning of the term *dgra lha/dgra bla/sgra bla* see, e.g., Gibson (1985) and Berounsky (2009). The spelling preferred in this publication is supported by the caption of the first male protector above the door of Bardzong cave, which reads *dgra bla dmag*, see Zhang Changhong (2016), p. 68 and (2018), p. 593. See also Sørensen, Hazod & Gyalbo (2005), p. 268–279, who document a similar integration of local deities at Khra 'brug.

80 This is mandala no. 5 in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 39–40, fig. 20.

81 The goddess Prajñāpāramitā is prominent among the Alchi murals. There is an at least partially repainted four-armed form in the centre of the Śākyasiṃha Mandala in the Dukhang, while three more six-armed versions are extent in the courtyard, on the middle storey of the Sumtsek (685) and in the Tashi Gomang Chörten. The variation in the representation of the six-armed Prajñāpāramitā indicates that her iconography does not derive from a canonical source. Indeed, no six-armed form of the goddess appears to be

recorded in the canonical Sanskrit and Tibetan sources, and depictions are restricted to the western Himalayan region only. De Mallmann (1986), p. 305–307, notes that earlier identifications of a six-armed goddess as Prajñāpāramitā have been erroneous, and Chandra (2003), p. 2674–2689, has only the ones known from this region as evidence for South Asian examples. Interestingly, Conze (2000), p. 90–91, lists two Chinese sources (nos. 39 = T259, and 40 = T1152 in his list) translated around 1000 CE that describe a golden six-armed form of this goddess. In T259, the goddess does not teach but holds attributes in all hands, the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) replaced by arrow and bow, and the lower left hand holds a wish-fulfilling jewel (*cintāmaṇi*), the latter certainly also a possibility for the Alchi representations. The goddess of T1152 performs the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*). Both are said to be surrounded by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which are listed.

82 The iconographic details of the four Buddhas in monastic dress in the cardinal directions of the Prajñāpāramitā mandala are as follows: E blue and teaching gesture, S lost, W red, right hand at hip and left at the side, possibly holding a lotus, N green with hand in front of the chest, likely in the gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*).

83 The iconographic details of the four goddesses in the intermediate directions are as follows: SE lost, SW lost, NW red holding lotus, NE green holding a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*).

84 The attributes of the Bodhisattvas could not be discerned on the basis of the available documentation.

85 This mandala has been described as 'small mandala of Akṣobhya' in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 31, and identified as a Trailokyavijaya mandala in Linrothe (1999), p. 208–09, on the basis of a section of the Chinese translation of the STTS by Dānapāla that is part of the Trilokavijayamahāmaṇḍala. Linrothe also directly compares the eastern circle of the latter with this mandala, but the deities surrounding Trailokyavijaya there actually differ. To me, the identification of this mandala is far from straightforward, as I did not succeed to find a text directly describing it. The interpretation offered in this publication takes it to represent the Ekamudrā mandala of the entire Trilokavijaya section. In the STTS its main deity is called Vajrahūṃkāra (see also Kwon (2002), 185–188, but Trailokyavijaya is preferred here to be able to name the eastern deity of this mandala Vajrahūṃkāra and to maintain consistency with the Trilokavijaya mandala. On the source of this mandala see Trailokyavijaya Mandala, page 773 f.

86 On the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* see Wayman (1985), and Davidson (1981) and (1995).

87 On the diverse commentaries on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* see Weinberger (2003), p. 159–161. Kimiaki Tanaka (2018), p. 163, identifies the Alchi mandala as the earliest representation of *Saṃkṣiptakūla Mañjuśrī mandala as described in the *Collection of All Tantras* (*rgyud sde kun btus*), vol. 6, and depicted as mandala 41A of the set (e.g., bSod nams rgya mtsho & Tachikawa (1989, 1991)). However, I prefer a more generic name, as there is no consistency in this regard, and we do not know how it was called in the twelfth or thirteenth century.

88 For the lack of iconographic details in commentaries on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* see, for example, Tribe (2016), chapter 5. The commentary that establishes the relationship of the mandala depiction in the Alchi Dukhang with the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* is Toh 2584 (rgyud ngu 045), the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītiguhyavadvidhivṛttijñānadīpa* (*mtshan brjod gsang ba dang ldan pa'i sgrub pa'i thabs kyi 'grel ba ye shes gsal ba*) by Smṛtijñānakīrti (late tenth century), who also translated the text. His description of the mandala differs in a number of ways from the Alchi depiction, and thus cannot be its direct source.

89 Other representations of the Buddha's life to the left of the entrance are those of the Lhakhang Soma (Life of the Buddha, page 316 ff.) and the Śākyamuni Temple at Mangyu, van Ham (2010), 92–95. The other common location, equally accounting for the liminality of the subject, is a frieze along the bottom of the painted areas.

90 The description of the Buddha's life in the lower rows is largely based on notes taken *in situ* and compared with the photographic documentation available.

91 See in particular Alafouzo (2008; 2014), Flood (2005; 2009, Chapter 2; 2017); Papa-Kalantari (2007; 2008; 2010).

92 The hand raised palm up in the direction of the one praised or adored is particularly popular in the western Himalayas and appears to derive from Kashmir. A famous example is the mid-ninth-century royal portrait at the Avantiswami temple, published among others in Fisher (1989b), figs. 3–5; Siudmak (2013), pl. 208, 209. It is also used for the pan-Indian deities surrounding mandalas at Alchi

93 Flood (2017), p. 231, 251.

94 I therefore think the conclusion from the depicted physiognomy that there is a Turk in the Dukhang, as proposed in Alafouzo (2008, 2014), is far fetched.

95 A *khatak*, often also simply pronounced *kata*, is a ceremonial scarf used across the Himalayas at both secular and religious occasions as a sign of greeting and salutation, and to cover gifts and offerings. The scarfs may be of different colours, white being most frequently used, and they are covered with auspicious symbols and texts.

96 The importance of the yak hunt in the depictions of the Alchi group of monuments has first been recognized by Nils Martin (forthcoming) in his study of the donor depictions at Mangyu.

97 That the yak hunt is allegorically used for warfare is apparent from *Queen Sad mar kar's Songs* as they are meticulously analysed in Uray (1972).

98 Nils Martin (forthcoming) suggested a similar layering on the basis of his study of the Mangyu donor depiction, but he references it back to the royal house of west Tibet.

99 See in particular Flood (2009) with chapter 2 using the drinking scene and the Royal Rider at Alchi as examples.

100 Rather than seeing these depictions as an anomaly for the Alchi group of monuments, it is their absence in the Tabo Main Temple that is unusual. There this absence reflects the programmatic nature of the establishment of Buddhist institutions in the Purang-Guge kingdom by ordained rulers.

101 This is mandala no. 1 in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 34–38, fig. 19, where it is not named as such. The full name of the mandala is Trilokavijayamahāmaṇḍala or Trailokyavijayamahāmaṇḍala, the latter referencing its main protagonist rather than the activity represented through this mandala. Thus, the former spelling is preferred in this publication, also distinguishing this mandala from the one above the door. This mandala is the equivalent to the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala in chapter one of the root tantra (STTS).

102 On the subjugation and conversion of Śiva in the STTS see in particular Snellgrove (1981), p. 39–43, and Davidson (1995b).

103 For a study on the role of pan-Indian deities in Buddhism see Seyfort Ruegg (2008).

104 For the sixteen dance offerings see Kwon (2002), 164–166. Essentially they replicate the actions represented by the Mahābodhisattvas and they may this be considered their consorts.

105 See Nihom (1998).

106 In particular in the Dharmadhātu mandala as presented in NSP 21, where they are referred to as the Balabhadra group, see Chandra & Sharma (2015), p. 204.

107 On Bhīmā see de Mallmann (1986), p. 117, and her depiction in Lerner (1984), no. 61 (a). Temples dedicated to this goddess are known from Kashmir (*Nīlamatapurāṇa*) and Pinjore, Haryana.

108 For the Trilokavijaya mandala at Mangyu see van Ham (2010), p. 98–109. To demonstrate the differences, the iconography of the deities at Mangyu has been included in the list of Deities of the Trilokavijaya Mandala, page 410 ff., whenever possible.

109 See Powers (1995), chapter 9. This relationship is tentatively proposed as the number twenty-two rarely occurs in any other context in the Tibetan canon.

110 The latest attempt in identifying the goddess is Chandra (2007), who also summarizes all previous attempts.

111 While I have become aware of this form of Tārā through searching for six-armed forms of the goddess in the ACIP Library 2017, an easier accessible description is found Willson (1986), p. 149–152. Note that the description specifies that the string of beads are held at the heart and that the flower is a blue lily (*utpala*) which is usually associated with green forms of the goddess. In another description her flask attribute is particularly emphasized and referred to as 'white flask' (Beyer (1978), p. 335, 'Tārā great and calm …'). Elsewhere the flask is said to contain the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*).

112 The attributes still recognisable are, clockwise from the bottom right hand, *aṅkuśa*, arrow, sword, bell(?), bow, gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*, ?).

113 On this complex issue see Kapstein (2000), chapter 8.

114 This is mandala no. 2 in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 38–39, where it is already identified as such.

115 The depictions at the former three sites have so far been only partially studied: see in particular Klimburg-Salter (1999), Luczanits (2008a), and Wangchuk (2009). On Dunkar and a comparative discussion of the different representations of this mandala see Dharmadhātu Mandala, page 765 ff.

116 Mandala no. 21. Chandra & Sharma (2015), p. 179–209, utilizing the critical edition of the text by Lee (2004), p. 65–78.

117 See Lee (2004), p. xvi–xix. The *Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrīmaṇḍalavidhi* (DVMV) used is cited under the Tibetan sources in the bibliography. The alternative name for the text is *Gaganāmalasupariśuddhadharmadhātujñānagarbha* (*nam mkha' dri ma med pa shin tu yongs su dag pa chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes kyi snying po*).

118 Conceptually, the common set of Yoga Tantra gate-keepers serves to draw into the mandala rather than protecting it (see page 755).

119 It is unclear if this is the case of the male counterparts also, as these are mostly depicted on the damaged eastern part of this circle. At least in some cases there seems to be a curious doubling of the goddesses, once the goddess is represented immediately to the side of the god and then she is again depicted among the seven mothers. This is definitely the case for Brahmāṇī.

120 This is inscription no. 1 in Denwood (1980), where it is transcribed and partially translated.

121 The summary offered here simply follows Denwood, but does not do justice to the complex nature of this multi-layered poetic text that would deserve to be restudied.

122 This is inscription no. 4 in Denwood (1980), who just summarizes its content in a paragraph. This edition is superseded by Tropper (1996), where it is also compared with the canonical version and translated.

123 This depiction is studied in Goepper (1999), who also refers to the accompanying inscriptions and captions. The captions and depictions on the left wall are also studied and described in detail in Tropper (1996). The summary offered here is based on these sources as well as on the translation of the *Akṣobhyavyūhasūtra* from the Chinese in Chang (1983) and its canonical Tibetan version.

124 Goepper (1999), p. 19–20, identifies the central figure as possibly representing the Bodhisattva Ratnaketu, but cannot explain his presence in this location.

125 This interpretation derives from the caption immediately above the scene, which has been misunderstood in Goepper (1999).

126 The distinct colour scheme of the five esoteric Buddhas is particularly important for the identification of early representations of the five esoteric Buddhas, which more often than not derive from the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*.

127 The textual situation of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* is complex, as two different versions of the root tantra have been translated at different times and stand side by side in the Tibetan canon; versions A and B in Skorupski (1983). Tanaka (2018), p. 161–162, maintains that the earlier version (Toh 483, Q116, Skorupski's version A) has the Sarvavid Vairocana mandala as its main mandala, while in the later version (Toh 485, Q117, Skorupski's version B, which he also translated) it is the Śākyasiṃha Navoṣṇīṣa mandala. This later version was only translated in the mid-13th century (see Weinberger (2003), p. 145-146), that is after the depiction of both mandalas at Alchi, but earlier commentaries on the tantra, such as T 2624 (P 3450) ascribed to Buddhaguhya, include both main mandalas. For lists of relevant sources including commentaries see, for

example, Skorupski (1983) and Weinberger (2003), p. 139–157, and on its problematic transmission in Tibet van der Kuijp (1992). Skorupski's seminal study demonstrates the diversity of the texts and the variety of interpretation in terms of the mandalas deriving from it, but does not cover all the iconographic variations. For this study most of the texts listed in Weinberger have been explored with regard to heir iconographic details.

128 The exception is the outer circle of pan-Indian deities in the outer circle of the Śākyasiṃha mandala, which is too damaged to be reconstructed in its entirety.

129 This is mandala no. 3 in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 39, where it is already identified.

130 This is text T 2630 (P3457): *Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor chen po'i sgrub thabs*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamahāmaṇḍalasādhana*, ascribed to Ānandagarbha and translated by Smṛtijñānakīrti, who flourished in the late tenth century and is credited with numerous translations.

131 There are two main versions of the five esoteric Buddhas in the Sarvavid mandala described in the canonical sources, one in which all Buddhas sit in meditation and hold the attribute of their respective family and the other with all Buddhas performing distinct gestures. The vehicles and other details are only occasionally described. The *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* (T 2630) counts among the latter and here, too, conforms to the Dukhang depiction.

132 All canonical sources consulted which describe iconographic details specify that Tārā holds a blue lily (*utpala*), but the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* (T 2630) simply states that the four goddess have the iconography of their family (p. 117B). Ānandagarbha also refers to them as 'mothers of the families' (p. 113B).

133 The wrathful deities can either be read in pairs by direction, a reading the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* (T 2630) implies, or with the first four occupying the gates and the second four the corners, which conforms better to the names and to later Tibetan interpretations. However, in both cases this results in rather unusual individual iconographies for some of the deities. In the reading adopted, for example, Acala is in the northwestern corner, but this deity is red instead of the usual blue.
For their identification I used the text of the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* (T 2630), p. 114B–115A, but employed the distribution of deities as it is common in later depictions. The text describes the deities in pairs flanking each of the doors and thus distributes them differently.

134 The celestial bodies and constellations are listed by direction in the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* (T 2630), p. 115B-116A.

135 In the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* (T 2630), p. 115B, these are summarily referred to as *mātṛkā* (Mamo, *ma mo*).

136 The names of these goddesses provided in the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala* (T 2630), p. 115A, are Dorjé Zhönnuma (*rdo rje gzhon nu ma*; *Vajrakaumārī), Namdruma (*nam gru ma*), Nakmo (*nag mo*; *Kālī), and Dorjé Lugugyü (*rdo rje lu gu rgyud*) who begin a longer list. The same set of goddesses also appears in the *Mahāmantrānudhāranisūtra-śatasahasraṭīkā* (*gsang sngags chen mo rjes su 'dzin ma'i mdo'i 'bum 'grel*; T 2692), p. 250A, in the retinue of Yama. This text was included in an early set of scriptures dedicated to the Five Protective Goddesses (Pañcarakṣā; see Hidas (2012), p. 24, n. 16), and also shows other parallels to the deity lists in the *Liturgy of the Great Mandala*.

137 In the Trilokavijaya mandala Vajrakaumārī (Dorjé Zhönnuma, *rdo rje gzhon nu ma*) is the name taken on by the six-headed Ṣaṣṭhi (Drukdenma, *drug ldan ma*) after her conversion to Buddhism.

138 For one account of the different forms of awakening see Lessing & Wayman (1968), chapter one.

139 For a broad discussion of this stupa-type including a relevant Harwan tile see Fisher (1989).

140 See the detailed discussion in von Schroeder (2001), 100–105, as well as the two Palola/Paṭola Ṣāhi bronzes in which a Buddha is flanked by two stupa (ibid., 114–15 (22A–B) and the Rockefeller bronze in the Asia Society, New York, Buddha of Saṃkaraseṇa (von Hinüber (2004), Nr. 15, Abb. 6 and Linrothe (2014), fig. 1.28 for the most recent publications).

141 See Luczanits (2004), 246–47.

142 At Alchi, the four goddesses are represented with Mañjuśrī on the Dukhang door, and in the courtyard, with the main representations of this Bodhisattva in the Sumtsek, both in painting and sculpture, and with the painted representation on the back wall of the Jampel Lhakhang. The beautiful depiction of this Bodhisattva on the left wall of the Śākyamuni Temple at Mangyu (van Ham (2010), p. 79), in contrast, does not have these goddesses.

143 On the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* see Wayman (1985) as well as Davidson (1981) and (1995), the quote being from Davidson (1981), verse 150, which is X.8 in the much less convincing translation of Wayman.

144 Chandra (1999–2005), p. 2219–2221, no. 66, lists the four-armed form of *Sādhanamālā* 82 as Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī, where he is described red. This is, thus, an alternative form to the orange one at Alchi and a red form is also represented in the Lhakhang Soma. For the three-headed form of Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī see de Mallmann (1986), p. 254, Bühnemann (2003), no. LC 64, and Chandra (1999–2005), p. 2220–2222, no. 67. For a peculiar Newar form also called Nāmasaṃgīti but associated with Vairocana, rather than Mañjuśrī see Pal (1985), no. P5c, Chandra (1999–2005), p. 2405–2406, no. 66, Bühnemann (2012), no. 220. On Himalayan Art Resources (http://www.himalayanart.org/) this deity is associated with the *Māyājālatantra* and designated as 'Manjushri, Mayajala Tantra' (accessed July 13, 2020).

145 This identification is based on notes taken *in situ*: accordingly, the right hands hold a string of beads (*mālā*) and perform the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*), while the left hands appear to hold stūpa and flask respectively. The height of this medallion is 17.5 cm.

146 For the upper left hand I have noted down that it may hold a bowl.

147 This is mandala no. 4 in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 39.

148 For the description of this mandala as it occurs in one version of the tantra see Skorupski (1983), 19–31. In the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (NSP 22), it is this mandala that stands for the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*), and it is simply called the Durgātipariśodhana mandala, and the central Buddha is referred to as Śākyasiṃha Mahāvairocana. The alter Tibetan tradition commonly calls this the Navoṣṇīṣa mandala, referring to the nine Buddhas in the centre (no. 39 among the Ngor mandalas). See also note 127.

149 Tanaka (2018), p. 162–63, takes her as consort to Śākyasiṃha.

150 For a detailed account on the Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas see Tanaka (2018), p. 36–37.

151 In this reading the male deity before the triad of Yama is interpreted as another demon (*rākṣasa*). It could equally be a male attendant to Yama.

152 This number assumes a symmetrical composition between the southern half and the northern half, which is largely lost.

The Palden Drepung Chörten

153 Originally this text was planned to be fully based on Goepper (1993) and co-authored by him, to acknowledge his pioneering contribution. However, the length of the original study and the considerable progress in research since then, including his own work on the Sumtsek, made this unfeasible, and the text has been rewritten almost in its entirety. However, Goepper's work is still very much integrated into the text including a good part of his references.
The stupa is numbered J1 by Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, 77–78, and called Chöten 3 in Khosla's 1979 plan. It is about 37 m southwest of the Sumtsek and 33 m west of the two smaller entrance chörtens set up as twins marking the western most end of the more tightly clustered early buildings in the sacred area.

154 Khosla (1979), 54.

155 Khosla (1979), pl. 24, shows the state before restoration.

156 Goepper (1993), p. 118. This idea was shared was shared with Goepper by the late Johanna van Lohuizen-de Leeuw after examining the stupa. Anyhow, similar temple buildings appear in the painting adorning the dhoti of the colossal Avalokiteśvara in the left niche of the Sumtsek. This is also reflected in one of the names for the stupa provided by Alchi monks: *mgo lnga mchod rten*, 'stupa with five spires', corresponding to a Sanskrit *pañcaśiras*.

157 With these words Kak (1971), p. 113, describes the ceiling of the small masonry temple in Pandrethan.

158 The inscriptions were discovered in 1983 by Jaroslav Poncar while photographing the interior of the stupa and were subsequently copied by Konchok Panday. Goepper (1993) published the first part only, while Heller & Khacham (2018) published its second part. A major misreading in the original copy of the text and a lack of consideration for the text's structure in the latter study made a new edition and translation indispensable (Luczanits forthcoming). For the reassessment of the inscription the original reading by Konchok Panday published in Goepper (1993) has been compared with more recent photographs. Particularly helpful were infrared photographs of the inscription made by Sreekumar Menon in 2016.

159 There may actually have been three separate inscriptions on the northern beam, the middle part of which has lost all traces as it has been used to hang *kha btags*. On the left are the remains of two inscriptions, a mantra written in *dbu can* beginning with the introductory phrase *ōm kra' shis par gyur* of which only eight more syllables can be read after a gap. It is doubtful that it can still be recognised. The second inscription is written in four regular lines of the same semi-cursive *dbu med* that is used throughout the early inscriptions.

160 The same name is used in the Sumtsek inscription no. 7 as presented in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), 2, p. 138, 148.

161 Stanza 13: *sku'i rten du bzhengs pa ni // lha gang rin cen brtsegs pa bzhengs // drin la lan gyis blan pa'i phyir // rin po che la rdung khang bzhengs //*

162 On this stupa see Hahlweg (1965) and in particular the detailed study by MacDonald (1970). Goepper, referencing Bareau (1967, 1967a), noted already that this may be an allusion to the famous stupa in Amarāvatī or another sacred spot further to the north popular with Tibetan pilgrims.

163 Stanza 23–25: *thugs kyi brtend tu bzhengs pa ni // 23 rgya gar dbus na bzhugs pa yi // rang 'byung dpal ldan 'bras phung gi // de'i dpe' la byas nas ni // mchod rten dpal ldan 'bras phungs bzhengs // 24 sprul sku bla ma rin po ches //bkra shis sgo mangs bzhengs pa yin // de yi dpe' la byas nas ni // 'bum ther kra shis sgo mangs bzhengs // 25* – 'As for the erections of supports for the mind, taking as a model the Svayambhū-Śrī-Dhānyakaṭaka stupa, as it exists in Central India, I made the chörten Palden Drepung/Śrī-Dhānyakaṭaka. Taking as a model the Tashi Gomang made by the incarnate jewel teacher, I made a Tashi Gomang of one-hundred-thousand [doors].'

164 Stanza 4: *dus gsum sangs rgyas thams cad kyi // sras mchog bla ma rin po che // 'phrin las lhun grub rdzogs mdzad pa'i // rje ['bri] 'gung ba la phyag 'tshal bstod //* 'Superior son of the Buddhas of the Three Times, Jewel Teacher, who accomplished the spontaneous existence of awakened activities, Lord Drigungpa I pay homage to and praise.'
Curiously this verse has been misread when the inscription was copied and published first, but both the context and the *rje* beginning the fourth verse (ignored in the original copy) in this stanza as well as the remaining traces of the second syllable make the reading secure. Nils Martin, who studied the inscription independently, also recognised the mention of Drigungpa here.

165 Originally expressed in Goepper (1990).

166 See, for example, the summaries in Czaja (2010), p. 199–200, or Czaja (2013), p. 83–85. In this connection I contest on iconographic grounds the direct link Czaja makes between this stupa and a catalogue of the imagery on such a stupa that fully aligns with later monuments at Densatil; see Luczanits (2010).

167 In the dedicatory inscription Tsültrim Ö explicitly states that he made ten thousand images of this Buddha, thereby giving this Buddha a prominent position. Also in the Sumtsek the western wall of the ground floor is covered with Akṣobhya images.

168 In the conception proposed here the base for identification is the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathagatas Tantra (Sarvatathāgatat attvasaṃgrahatantra).* Apparently due to their irregular succession Goepper only noticed four of the five Bodhisattvas, not mentioning the *ratnakula*. He used the individual descriptions in Bhattacharyya (1968), p. 51, 53, 55, 73, 74, for their identification, where also this distinctive form of Samantabhadra that epitomises the Buddhas of the STTS is recorded.

169 Goepper (1993), p. 137, already proposed to read the ceiling as a mandala, but did not analyse its deities on the vertical surfaces.

170 Kak (1971), pl. 66; Fisher (1989a), figs. 9, 14. Also the Kashmir influenced temples of neighbouring regions show this motif; see for example Postel, Neven & Mankodi (1985), figs. 39, 46.

171 Gopper (1993a), p. 137, describes the two textile patterns at level six and seven as heraldic flowers and a pattern of dots, possibly imitate the dyeing technique of *plangi*.

172 Goepper(1993), p. 137, records a fragment of corner section with the small head of the Buddha from the top layer and compares those to Mangyu, referencing Matsunaga and Katō, op. cit., pl. V-2. This would indicate that four Buddhas surrounded the central Vairocana in the top panel, which is quite possible as the central Buddha would have to be directed towards a cardinal direction and the opening remaining in the ceiling today is oriented towards the intermediary directions (348). In any case, these Buddha representations would not be part of the mandala deities, but they would rather emphasize the cosmic character of Vairocana and the mandala more broadly, as is the case in the Tashi Gomang Chörten.

173 An exception is the eastern gate, which is painted white. However, since the southern gate is yellow this cannot be taken as a hint towards a direct link with rituals of *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*).

174 Repeated accidental whitewashing has done considerable damage to the paintings. Goepper (1993), p. 137, notes that it may also be partly hollow in its upper part.

175 On the international reoccurrence of this motif see Crowden (2016).

176 In his article on the Great Stūpa, Goepper (1993), 138, followed the traditional identification of the Tibetan teacher as Rinchen Zangpo (in reference to Snellgrove & Skorupski 1977, p. 79) and suggests the *mahāsiddha* to be identified as Nāropa, as according to legend he was also a teacher of Rinchen Zangpo.

177 It is the latter aspect, the relationship of the Alchi group of monuments to the general development of Tibetan Buddhism that is entirely ignored by the those promoting an eleventh-century date for the Alchi monuments.

178 Previously published in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), pl. XI; Goepper, Poncar-Lutterbeck & Poncar (1984), pl. 8.

179 The identification has been suggested in Linrothe (2006), p. 364–366, Linrothe (2007), and Linrothe (2008), p. 97–99, purely on visual grounds. On the variations in depictions of Padampa Sanggyé see, for example, Linrothe (2006), p. 362–366, and Martin (2006).

180 On the *mahāsiddha* representation at Alchi Shangrong see Luczanits (2015), p. 247–250.

181 On the Bardzong cave see Pritzker (2000), Tsering Gyalpo (2014), and Zhang Changhong (2016, 2018), the latter two also publishing its inscriptions.

182 This identification has already been suggested on the basis of the depiction in the Tashi Gomang Chörten (previously Small Stūpa) and other evidence; see in particular Luczanits (2006b) and (2014).

183 Goepper (1993), p. 140–41, specifically refers to Tapa Sardar in Ghazni, datable to the eighth century CE. as a more direct predecessor.

184 Alchi also preserves a small wooden chörten of this form, see Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 43, fig. 26.

The Tashi Gomang Chörten

185 The double structure consists of Khosla's Chöten 1 and 2; Snellgrove & Skorupski's J 2 and 3. On the teacher depiction in this chörten see Luczanits (2006b).

186 The last of these repairs have been done by the Save Alchi Project (see preface) and the Archaeological Survey of India.

187 The fragmentary text has been identified and studied in detail in Tropper (2010).

188 I calculated altogether 986 representations of Buddha Akṣobhya on the four walls: 272 Buddhas on the northwest wall with the Prajñāpāramitā mandala, 226 Buddhas on the northeast wall, which also has three windows, 228 on the southeast wall with the Avalokiteśvara mandala, and 260 on the southwest wall. Since the lower level of the lantern ceiling also contains images of Akṣobhya, presumably nine on all four sides, they easily reach one thousand representations.

189 Despite the absence of a lotus, there are good reasons to identify this figure as a form of Avalokiteśvara, such as the white colour, the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*), and most importantly the assembly around him, which has its closest parallels in diverse assemblies of Amoghapāśa. In addition, a very similar form holding a lotus in the fourth hand instead of the branch in the vase occurs as the 159th deity among the 360 deities (see Chandra and Bunce (2002), no. 159; Chandra (1999–2005), p. 454–55, no. 56) and is called of Padmavikāsana Avalokita (*spyan ras gziṅs padma dbang 'byed*). I take the Alchi representation as a variant of this deity but do not use this name in the main text as I could not trace it anywhere else, neither in its Tibetan nor in its Sanskrit form. At Alchi, the same deity is first represented on the bottom left of the Maitreya niche in the Alchi Sumtsek, Ṣaḍakṣara-Lokeśvara being represented on the bottom right.

190 Here is a description of the four deities based on their appearance in the mandala only: The eastern deity, Amoghapāśa, is standing in *ālīḍha*, is pinkish in colour, holds a noose in the main hands, and a vajra and weapon ring (disk?) in the outer ones. The deity in the south, usually Hayagrīva, also stands in *ālīḍha* and is pinkish, but has a strong red shading that largely is lost today. He holds sword and vajra topped staff in the right hands and gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*) and noose in the left. The dark blue deity identified as Ekajaṭā occupies the west, stands in *pratyālīḍha*. She holds a curved knife (concluded from the position, as the attribute is lost or never has been drawn) and skull-cup (*kapāla*) in the main hands, and sword and *utpala* in the other two. I first thought, this deity has erroneously been shown male, as there is no trace of breasts, but the fall of the necklace shows that those must have been there once. The goddess in the north also stands in *pratyālīḍha*. She is of greenish grey colour, with red shading, and plays *viṇā* with the main arms, shooting an arrow with the other two. The latter is usually Bhṛkuṭī, but nothing about her iconography is known from other depictions or descriptions of this goddess.

191 The four outer offering goddesses are Dhūpā/bDug ba ma offering incense, Puṣpā/Me tog ma) offering flower blossoms, Dīpā/Mar me ma offering light, and Gandhā/Byug pa ma offering perfume. The four gate-keepers are Vajrāṅkuśa/rDo rje lcags kyu, Vajrapāśa/rDo rje zhags pa, Vajrasphoṭa/rDo rje lcags sgrog, and Vajrāveśa/rDo rje 'bebs pa.

192 For a detailed study of this particular form of Prajñāpāramitā see Luczanits (2016).

193 On the innermost level or top layer of the lantern ceiling the knot, fish and umbrella can be recognised. The level underneath is much better preserved and each of the goddesses is flanked by two symbols each:
East: goddess with wheel flanked by wheel and queen.
South: yellow goddess flanked by horse and general.
West: white goddess flanked by umbrella and triple jewel.
North: yellow goddess with conch flanked by elephant and minister.

194 The deities of this level are distributed as follows:
East: Tejoṣṇīṣa, red with disk; teaching Buddha; Vajroṣṇīṣa, white and earth-touching on elephant.
South: Dhvajoṣṇīṣa, white with banner; teaching Buddha; Ratnoṣṇīṣa, blue with the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) on horse.
West: Tīkṣṇoṣṇīṣa, red with sword; teaching Buddha; Padmoṣṇīṣa, red, mediating on peacock
North: Chatroṣṇīṣa, blue with banner; teaching Buddha; Viśvoṣṇīṣa, dark with the gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*) on *garuḍa*.

195 The inner place of the mandala is concluded with peaceful gate-keepers flanked by two of the offering goddess each:
East: Nṛtyā; eastern gate with Vajrāṅkuśa; Gandhā.
South: Puṣpā; blue gate-keeper Vajrapāśa; Mālā.
West: Gītā; red gate-keeper with chain, Vajrasphoṭa; Dīpā.
North: Dhūpā; blue-green gate-keeper with bell, Vajrāveśa; Lāsyā.
The outer palace features the deities in the following succession:
East: Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati, orange with red shading and a stick in the hand; Apāyajaha, white, with aṅkuśa; gate-keeper Vajrāṅkuśa; Amoghadarśin, orange-red, with white lotus; Maitreya, orange-red with twig; only on this side the deities are arranged right to left.
South: Gandhahastin, dark green with conch; Śūraṃgama; orange-red with vase; blue gate-keeper with noose, Vajrapāśa; Gaganagañja, red with box; Jñānaketu, blue with banner.
West: Amṛtaprabha, white with flask held at side; Candraprabha, white with crescent on lotus; red gate-keeper with chain, Vajrasphoṭa; Bhadrapāla, red with jewel; Jālinīprabha, red with blue cloth; Vajragarbha, green with crossed-vajra; Akṣayamati, white, holding vase with both hands; green gate-keeper with hand at side (bell?), Vajrāveśa; Pratibhānakūṭa, orange-red with jewel; Samantabhadra, orange-red holding twig with jewels.

196 Read clockwise from the entrance in the west there are a pair of lions for Vairocana on the west side, a pair of *garuḍa* for Amoghasiddhi in the north, a pair of elephants for Akṣobhya in the east, and a pair of horses for Ratnasambhava in the south. The dedication of the inner chörten to Amitābha is surprising and may be related to the representation of the Amoghapāśa mandala on the south wall of the outer chamber.

197 The measurements at the bottom of the painted chamber are 60, 65, 62, and 65 cm measured from the side on which Drigungpa is represented clockwise.

198 This relationship is discussed in detail in Luczanits (2006b) and in its broader context in Luczanits (2006a) and (2011).

199 This blue Buddha appears to be performing the gesture of argumentation (*vitarkamudrā*) with the right hand and holding a begging-bowl in the left just beneath the other hand. That the Buddha may represent the Medicine Buddha is indicated through the gesture and the comparison to other early Drigung paintings, where this Buddha appears most often in this very position.

200 Tilopa holds a fish and Nāropa a skull-cup, the iconography of them largely conforming to that of the Sumtsek lineage (766).

201 Regardless of how one reads the lineage the last figure is one of the two *mahāsiddha*. Thus, a *mahāsiddha* must be considered as the immediate teacher of the central image, and it could well be that this lineage also refers to Padampa Sanggyé.

202 The triad probably represents what is today called 'The Lineage of Profound View,' which passed from the Buddha Śākyamuni to Nāgārjuna and eventually entered Tibet with Atiśa, the eminent Indian scholar who went to Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century and had a wide-ranging influence on Buddhism there. For a more comprehensive discussion of the iconography of the siddhas see Luczanits (2006c).

The Jampel Lhakhang

203 This temple has previously been studied in Khosla (1979), p. 59, 65–68; Snellgrove & Skorupski (1979), p. 71–76; Pal & Fournier (1982), plates ML1–4; Luczanits (2004), p. 148–154.

204 See the detailed discussion of the Bodhisattva's colours in Luczanits (2004), 150.

205 See the excellent translation of the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*) in Davidson (1995) and the partially translated commentary by *Vilāsavajra* in Tribe (2016), p. 47–49, and 137 specifically discussing Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva.

The Lhakhang Soma

206 This name has been used in all more detailed pioneering studies of the monuments, such as Khosla (1979), p. 54–57, 63–64; Snellgrove & Skorupski (1979), p. 64–70, and Pal & Fournier (1982), p. 56–59, plates LS1–37. Exceptionally, a board documented in 2010 to the side of the temple's door called it Kagyur (Kanjur) Lhakhang (*dka' 'gyur lha khang*), and at that time books were indeed stored there. Usually this name is used for the building in front of it.

207 This attribution follows the chronology as proposed in in Luczanits (2015), in particular p. 244–246.

208 While in a presentation of the main monuments the change appears sudden, a much more gradual development of economic and religious change is recognisable through the consideration of a number of chörten added to the complex in the interims period. This is outlined in the chapter The Development of the Sacred Area, page 345 ff.

209 Early studies utilizing the evidence of the Lhakhang Soma extensively are Pal & Fournier (1982) and Béguin & Fournier (1986). The relationship of the Ladakhi paintings to central Tibetan bronzes of the thirteenth and fourteenth century led scholars to first attribute such bronzes to the western Himalayan region, an attribution still occasionally found today.

210 This situation may also have a political and sectarian connotation, as in the case of the Lhakhang Soma the Kagyü school affiliation of the murals cannot be denied at all (see the Introduction on the present management situation of the monastic complex).

211 The mutilation of Mahākāla's face apparently meant that hardly anyone appears to have photographed the deity with publishing in mind.

212 The most important comparisons used to interpret this depiction of the Buddha's life are: an excellent study on an inscribed version of the Buddhas Life in the Lhato Lhakhang (*lha tho lha khang*) in Alchi Tsatsapuri, which in part copies that of the Lhakhang Soma in Martin (2011), and a captioned Guge painting already published by Tucci (1949), II, p. 351–359, and III, pl. 24–26, and today in a private collection.

213 Martin (2011), scene II.1.; I, p. 38, 53; II, fig. 15, p. 47–48, identifies the scene as representing the adoption of the newly born by Mahāprajapatī, both protagonists represented twice, the inscriptions accompanying the representation not helping much. I rather see it as a more generic scene in which the newly born is received by the nurses, the second one holding a child merely indicating their profession. See also Tucci (1949), II, 352, 7 b.

214 The standard reading that the deity is inside the temple and the Bodhisattva outside, used by Martin (2011), scene III.2., is contradicted by the fact that the figure outside is sitting on a human figure, a fact that cannot be simply explained away as representing a deity accompanying the Bodhisattva.

215 On this scene see Martin (2011), scene VI.5., I, p. 40–41.

216 See Martin (2011), scene VI.6, I p. 41, for two possible interpretations of this depiction. It is the teaching gesture that is most puzzling here.

217 The clue to this interpretation is in a caption cited in Tucci (1949), II, p. 353, no. 41, which Tucci did not take as a reference to the other vehicles.

218 In Gandhāran *parinirvāṇa* scenes this meditating monk is commonly identified as Subhadra, the Buddha's last convert, and he is depicted facing different directions. See, for example, Zwalf (1996), nos. 230, 231 (with excellent summary of the different identifications in the description of 230); Bhattacharyya (2002), nos. 114, 263, 311, 365, 456, 508, 545; Luczanits (2008b), Abb. 9, nos. 178, 192.

219 I am listing these here, as they can be read as concluding the central square, which usually is drawn as a palace and has four separate gate-keepers.

220 Naming the *lokottara* mandalas of this cycle beyond the main ones is far from straightforward, as it is not clear which commentarial tradition is being followed in the Lhakhang Soma. There are considerable deviations in the commentaries which also result in quite different versions of the respective mandala in the different traditions, the Amitāyus mandala being one example for that. For comparable depictions of this mandala see, for example, HAR no. 979; bSod nams rgya mtsho & Tachikawa (1991), no. 30. See also Skorupski (1983), p. 63–68, for the description in one version of the root text. I do not provide the Sanskrit for mandala names based on deity names, as with the exception for the diacritics it would be identical to the English version.

221 For descriptions of these two mandalas in the root text see Skorupski (1983), p. 42–49, 74–75. They conform to bSod nams rgya mtsho & Tachikawa (1991), nos. 29 and 31.

222 This mandala conforms to bSod nams rgya mtsho & Tachikawa (1991), no. 32.

223 The names of the *laukika* mandalas are straightforward as they are often listed in the commentaries. Here the most generic variants have been chosen, usually without the numbers of deities of the group as these may vary in some cases, as with the guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*) or the Bhairava, a group of fierce divinities ultimately referencing Śiva. These mandalas conform to bSod nams rgya mtsho & Tachikawa (1991), nos. 33–38.

224 Red forms of Mañjuśrī beyond those multiple coloured ones at Alchi are rare. The two-armed form of *Sādhanamālā* 57 has a blue lily (*utpala*) only, and the three-faced Nāmasaṃgīti form has the same attributes and can be either orange or red (SM 82).

225 For an in depth discussion of this theme see Luczanits (2015), p. 250–55. On Drigungpa and the seven Tārā see Könchog Gyaltsen (1986), p. 33–34, 66–67, or Chenga Sherab Jungne (2014), p. 105, the actual prayer being available online.

226 See in particular Czaja (2013).

227 See, for example, Kossak & Singer (1998), nos. 32, and Czaja & Proser (2014), nos. 20–23.

The Development of the Sacred Area

228 This chapter is based on Luczanits & Neuwirth (2010) but expands it greatly in terms of the art historical analysis of each of the monuments and their interrelationship. It includes many *in situ* observations made during diverse research visits to Alchi monastery and comparative sites done in cooperation with architects of the University of Technology in Graz, Austria, led by Holger Neuwirth, a teamwork that started with a first visit to the region in 1998.

229 Khosla (1979).

230 Both monuments are not yet sufficiently studied. For Mangyu see Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 22, Linrothe (1994), Luczanits (2004), p. 155–174, van Ham (2010), and Linrothe (2011). For Sumda Chung see Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 61–69; Luczanits (2004), p. 175–190, and Wangchuk (2009).

231 Some of the relevant chörten are the focus of Luczanits (1998), other are referenced below when they are included into the discussion.

232 See Klimburg-Salter (1997), fig. 51 and Luczanits (2004), fig. 239.

233 See, for example, Vitali (1996), p. 110–111, 116–17.

234 See the section on Speech Supports, page 407f., in the *Pearl Garland Composition* of the Palden Drepung Chörten, and the mention of texts in The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek, page 781 ff.

235 See Luczanits (2004), p. 175–90.

236 See, for example, Klimburg-Salter (1989), figs. 62–64, 89, 90, 92, 97, 101, 104, 105; Whitfield (1996), figs. 4, 345 (cave 272), 23 (cave 249, painted only), 49 (cave 428, painted only), and many more painted examples throughout. Note that in caves the lantern is often made to look like receding but actually does not recede much as in the case of a construction in wood.

237 See, for example, Pandrethan: Fisher (1989a), fig. 9; Lakṣaṇādevī temple, Bharmaur: Postel, Neven & Mankodi (1985), fig. 39. Examples for early wooden mosques are found in Noci (2006).

238 See Poell (2014), fig. 8.23.

239 For example, in 1994 these spaces were actually empty, and in 1998 we documented the Avalokiteśvara deposited with other wooden sculpture fragments at a different location.

240 See Faccenna & Filigenzi (2007), pl. 61, for the different bracket types used in Gandhāran architecture.

241 The apotheosis of Śākyamuni, summarising his entire teaching career, is described in the final two chapters of the *Lalitavistara* (chapters 26–27). A visual comparison to this scene that clearly makes that link concludes the *Lalitavistara* section in the depiction of the Buddha's life in the Tabo Assembly Hall. Of course, such depictions are rarely specific enough that they can be directly linked to a particular textual source, and any major teaching scene will resonate with this depiction as well.

242 Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha, with four heads and eight arms and holding four swords and four books, is described in diverse commentaries to the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*). As in Vilāsavajra's commentary translated in Tribe (2016), 134–135, he is most often described with the directional faces in the colours, but there are also descriptions that described him white only. At times a horse head is described to top the central head, which I take as a misunderstanding resulting from the explanation that the fifth head should sit on top like the horse head of Hayagrīva. See also Tribe (2020).

243 We do not have publishable details of these but they are depicted in van Ham (2018), p. 237.

244 The colouring of the heads may well be misconceived. The heads should be coloured according to the directions of the five esoteric Buddhas, and the central Buddha's face should top the lower four. With the back head represented on top of the main head, as common in western Himalayan art, a blue front face should be flanked by yellow and green. The red back head would then be on top of the main face, itself topped by the white Ādibuddha head.

245 The symbolic associations of the deities in the inscription only partially fit this analysis, which I attribute to the poetic nature of the inscription the main purpose of which is to elevate the work of the founder in religious terms. Thus, in contrast to the Palden Drepung Chörten inscription, this one is not authored by the temples founder. For images of the secondary sculptures see Luczanits (2004), p. 137–148, or www.luczanits.net.

246 On this point see in particular example 1 in Luczanits (2003) or Luczanits (2011).

247 The rather confusing order prevented Goepper (1993), p. 136, from recognizing that all five Buddha families are represented here. It also does not allow to decide on the primary Bodhisattva of the group.

248 Goepper (1993), p. 137 and n. 55, assumed that on the outside of the stupa the same vehicles were represented as on the Tashi Gomang Chörten.

249 The term '*kankani* chörten' has puzzled Goepper (1993), p. 140, and led to a range of terminological speculation subsequently clarified in Linrothe (2006a).

250 On the programme of the Densatil stupas see Czaja (2010 & 2013), Czaja & Proser (2014) and Luczanits (2010).

251 On the Gyantsé Kumbum see, e.g., Tucci (1932–41), IV, I, 169 ff.; Lo Bue & Ricca (1990); Ricca & Lo Bue (1993).

252 The detailed study by MacDonald (1970) collects the diverse accounts in their relation to the Kālacakra transmission.

253 In a photograph of Francke (1914), pl. XXXI-b, the dome has a more ancient shape, but even that does not appear to be the original one.

254 The fragmentary images are interpreted in accordance with the Sumtsek, where Vajrapāṇi is twice paired with Acala (335, 336), but the latter cannot be identified with certainty.

255 I am referring to this particular textual source, as only in the version of this text the frame story around Mahāsattva offering his body to the tigress conforms with the Alchi depiction, and also the second story conforms perfectly. Given that I could not identify the stories on the north side on the basis of the same source, I do not consider it absolutely certain that this is what the Alchi painters have used. While found in the Kanjur today, this text is unusual as it is translated from the Chinese, where it has a long history. For a translation of a Mongolian version of the text see Frye (1981), p. 13–19, 142–154; for its early history in China see Mair (1993).

256 For the Tabo Entry Hall depictions see, e.g., Klimburg-Salter (1997), p. 77–89, for those of the Dungpu/Pedongpo cave see Neumann (2002).

257 On this temple see Khosla (1979), p. 59–60, 64–65; Snellgrove & Skorupski (1979), p. 74–75; Pal & Fournier (1982), p. 60–61, plates LL1–6.

258 There is no pilaster on this side in 1998. The current pilaster has most likely been added by the Archaeological Survey of India during their cleaning, repainting and resetting work of all wooden verandas across the complex, which has taken place in 2004.

259 The lineage in this representation compares best to that of the Koelz collection *thangka* in the University of Michigan Museum, which has tentatively been attributed to the third quarter of the thirteenth century (see Luczanits (2015), fig. 11.14).

260 See inscription 11 in Denwood (1980), p. 143, who refers to the fragmentary nature of the inscription (p. 122) and offers a translation of the first four verses (p. 150).

261 For the full argument in much of its complexity see Luczanits (2015), p. 214–233.

262 Except for the images on my website (www.luczanits.net), this structure has not been published previously.

263 See Martin (2001), p. 149–50.

264 See Luczanits (2015), p. 222–230.

265 Except for the article cited below discussing one of its murals, this chörten has not been paid attention to previously.

266 The goddesses in the cardinal direction are on the upper of the lower two ceiling levels, those in the intermediate directions are on the lowest level. The available documentation does not permit the individual identification of the goddesses, but they can be described as follows. They are listed here from the east clockwise: in the east, a white goddess paying a string instrument(?); in the southeast a yellow goddess possibly holding a garland string of beads (Mālā?); in the south an orange goddesses, attribute unclear; in the southwest a white goddess holding a cone-shaped object; in the west a yellow goddess with her right arm raised above her head, a gesture usually indicating dance; in the northwest a white goddess with her hands at the hips, a gesture usually associated with Lāsyā; in the north a red goddess that appears to hold a scarf (touch?); in the northeast a red goddess holding an offering plate. Both the colouring and the scarf held in the hands of one of the goddesses makes clear that this is not the common set of offering goddesses described in Table 7 on page 754 even if their present position would have been mixed up in a historic restoration (for which there is no indication). Also an identification as personifications of the eight auspicious symbols can be excluded if the above observations are correct. Clearly, it would be worth to document this monument in greater detail.

267 In the most common form of Akṣobhya's mandala he is surrounded by eight goddesses personifying the eight auspicious symbols (see, e.g., nos. 14 and 15 of the Ngor mandalas, bSod nams rgya mtsho et al. (1989 and 1991)). Other common representations show him with the other four esoteric Buddhas, their consorts and four offering goddesses. More research is necessary to look into other variations of Akṣobhya's mandala.

268 Representations of Akṣobhya in white are commonly found in contexts in which the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* or one of its commentaries have been the iconographic source, and the usage of these texts indicates a funerary or commemorative context.

269 The painting of Ratnasambhava in this stupa has been discussed in detail in Broeskamp (2014) where she focuses on the Pāla components visible in this painting.

270 For the gateway chörten of Alchi Shangrong, see Luczanits (1998) and the picture gallery on www.luczanits.net.

271 For a justification of this chronology see Luczanits (2015), p. 238–47.

272 There are a number of relevant teaching transmission that relate to this transmission, the most likely of them being Gönpo Jarok Mingchen (*mgon po bya rog ming can*), the transmission of Raven-headed Mahākāla in the Dakpo Kayü and Drigung traditions. As the name implies, the main deity is raven-headed only in name (see Czaja (2010), p. 239–42) and holds sword and tantric-staff in the outer arms, as is the case in the Lhakhang Soma. Other relevant transmissions are those of Jñāna Mahākāla (*ye shes mgon po*) and Dégön (*bde mgon*), the combined practice of Cakrasaṃvara and Mahākāla. An example that combines several of the features is Pakmodrupa Dorjé Gyelpo (2003), which combines several of these features. See Czaja (2013) for the relevance of these ritual traditions within the contemporaneous Pakdru context.

273 See the detailed discussion of this depiction in Luczanits (2015), p. 247–50.

274 See Kozicz (2007), who unfortunately published some of these after learning from me about them. I have been aware of a number of these chörten throughout Upper Ladakh since the 1990s, documenting those in the Tiksé and Nyarma area in 1994, but refrained from publishing them to avoid that they become an attraction of both tourists and looters. I did however show them to my colleagues of Graz University during field research in 2000, in which Gerald Kozicz participated. Of course, these are neither 'the last surviving murals of Nyarma', as Nyarma is further away from these chörten than Tiksé, nor do I agree with the assessment that they predate the Alchi murals. They also would need to be assessed in terms of their inner chronology.

275 The inscription is published in Denwood (1980), as inscription 10. His assessment that it 'seems clear that the temple [i.e., the Sumtsek] was extensively restored' is not really supported by its content. This assessment may well have triggered some of the speculations offered on restorations in the literature on Alchi, e.g., Pal & Fournier (1982), p. 33, or Bellini (2019), p. 249 and figs. 11, 12.

276 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 42.

277 Given the experience with the work undertaken at Tabo, the ASI offices do not have accessible records of the work undertaken, neither for their architectural work nor for the painting conservation.

Volume II
Alchi – The Sumtsek



ALCHI

Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary

Volume II

The Sumtsek

Text by Roger Goepper
Photography by Jaroslav Poncar
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493 Frontispiece: Six-armed, green Mahāśānti Tārā with worshippers on the left side wall of the Avalokiteśvara niche. The five esoteric Buddhas above attribute her to the family of Buddha Amoghasiddhi, who is placed in their centre. Note also the fragmentary Indic inscription along the bottom of the panel.

Table of Contents

Volume I

Alchi – The Choskhor 1
Preface and Acknowledgements 8
Introduction 11
The Historical Background 19
The Layout of the Sacred Area 29
Architectural Documentation 33
The Main Temple 37
The Courtyard 42
The Dukhang 50
The Entry Wall 53
The Left Side Wall 97
The Main Wall 177
The Niche 189
The Right Side Wall 193
The Palden Drepung Chörten 243
The Tashi Gomang Chörten 269
The Jampel Lhakhang 293
The Lhakhang Soma 309
The Development of the Sacred Area 345
Appendices 406
Notes Choskhor 429

Volume II

Alchi – The Sumtsek 441
Preface 448
The Sumtsek 451
The Ground Floor 465
The Sculptures and Murals in the Main Niche 544
The Middle Storey 589
The Top Storey 659
The Ceilings and Their Painted Textile Motifs 673
The Alchi Style 715
The Sumtsek Lineage Paintings and Their Implications for Dating 723
Mapping the Iconographic Programme of the Sumtsek 735
The Alchi Mandalas 747
The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek 781
Observations on the Technology of the Wall Paintings 791
Notes Sumtsek 798
Bibliography 814
Index 832



Preface

Given that Roger Goepper was neither a specialist in Himalayan art nor had he worked much in this area before being confronted with Alchi, the achievement of his writing in the original Sumtsek book is remarkable. With the exceptions of minor details his analysis is still to the point and it was a primary goal of this volume to preserve his text as much as possible.

Thus, the discussion of the Sumtsek in this volume is still Roger Goepper's work, since most of his original text is preserved in it. However, the publication of this volume together with one dedicated to the other temples within the Alchi Choskhor (Volume I) and additional research since the publication of the original Sumtsek volume necessitated some adjustments to the original texts. Major changes had to be made to the introduction. Its first more general historical part has been rewritten and became part of the respective chapter in Volume I (The Historical Background, page 19 ff.), while this volume contains the parts dedicated to the Sumtsek temple itself (The Sumtsek, page 451 ff.).

Otherwise, changes to this volume are either due to the different format of the publication or editorial.[278] Even though the current format is based on the original publication, simply reducing its size, it has turned out to be impossible to replicate those pages in which main text has been provided in caption areas only. This particularly concerned sections of the middle storey, where the images are now spread over additional pages.

For consistency across the publication, the succession of the presentation of the monument's walls has been altered as well. Goepper presented each floor from the entry wall to the back wall, discussing the left wall before the right. Instead, they are now simply presented clockwise, the direction of circumambulation, beginning with the entry wall and ending with the right side wall, just as one would see the murals and sculpture when visiting the temple following the local tradition. An exception is the middle storey, where the separation of the discussion of the central panels above the niches and the ten mandalas has been retained. All architectural plans and diagrams have been replaced by new ones and additional drawings and images have been added where appropriate.

To ease referencing figure numbers have been introduced throughout the two volumes. These proved to be a particular challenge for Goepper's image captions, which often discuss multiple images at once. To maintain the original flow of his text, captions have only been divided up according to the images they discuss where this could be done with ease. The introduction of figure numbers also enabled referencing the images throughout the two volumes. Thus, references have been added where appropriate.

Occasionally, subsequent research contradicts Goepper's original text. In cases this resulted in content changes of his text, his original opinion has been preserved in the footnotes. Clear misunderstandings or minor misinterpretations have also been corrected. In three cases, discussed in greater detail in the introduction to Volume I (page 16), Gopper's original opinion has been retained despite contradicting later research and the discussion of other monuments, as changing these would have amounted to rewriting:

1. Goepper's identification of the two goddesses accompanying Mahākāla above the entrance of the Sumtsek (page 465 ff.) cannot be maintained. It is the wrathful goddess that is to be identified as Rematī, Goepper refers to her as Śrīdevī (Penden Lhamo), and the goddess wearing a peacock feather coat, which Goepper calls Rematī, cannot be identified as such. I prefer to simply call her the Peacock Cape Lady, emphasising that her representation predates her adoption into the Tibetan pantheon as Dorjé Chenmo (see page 53 ff.).
2. The famous six-armed Green Tārā on the left side wall of the Avalokiteśvara niche (page 511 ff.) can now be identified as an independent form of Mahāśānti Tārā (see page 126 ff.).
3. The dark-skinned *mahāsiddha* in the bottom centre of Mañjuśrī's dhoti, which Goepper identifies as Nāropa (page 572 ff.), is to be identified as a representation of Padampa Sanggyé (*pha dam pa sangs rgyas*; see page 259).

All changes and diverging interpretations are documented in additional notes. Occasionally, notes and paragraphs within notes have also been introduced to provide additional references or alternative opinions. These and new captions are marked with my initials at their end.

Christian Luczanits

494 Previous double page: Elephant throne of Buddha Akṣobhya and worshippers to his feet. Particularly noteworthy is the lively depiction of dancers and musicians at the bottom of the panel.

The Sumtsek

by Roger Goepper



495 The front of the three-storeyed Sumtsek clearly shows the eclectic character of the architecture at Alchi. The overall structure of the building with its flat roofs and the heavy whitewashed walls corresponds fully to the Tibetan tradition, whereas the wooden elements of the open porch added to the front are clearly derived from Kashmiri prototypes and most probably were executed by workmen from the Kashmir valley.

496 Seated Bodhisattva, presumably Avalokiteśvara with his identifying attribute lost, carved in wood. The sculptures placed into the triangular gables of the Sumtsek façade are not original to these spaces. CL

Sumtsek (*gsum brtsegs*), the name used for the building today (495), may be translated as 'three-tiered' or 'three-storeyed' and may correspond to a Sanskrit *tripaṅkti* or *trikūṭa*.[279] The original name is perhaps conserved by the inscriptions of the founder of the temple, the priest Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*), where he says that he has erected 'this pile of jewels' (*rin chen brtsegs pa*), together with a tomb for Drigungpa[280] and about ten larger and smaller temples as a symbol of the body (*sku rten*) for the sake of his parents and for the accumulation of merit for himself.[281] Structurally and aesthetically, this building, which is the subject of this volume, is without any doubt the most interesting and impressive example of the architecture in Alchi.

It is difficult to ascertain its original function within the sacred area (*chos 'khor*). Perhaps it served the same purpose as its historical predecessor, the Golden Temple (Serkhang, *gser khang*) in Tholing, one of the undisputed foundations of Rinchen Zangpo in Guge during the early eleventh century CE,[282] which functioned as an initiation hall (*dkyil khang*). Decorated with mandalas, similar to those at the Sumtsek, it was well equipped for such Esoteric Buddhist ceremonies. But apart from their having three storeys in common, the two halls differ considerably in their structure.

The building as such is a strange and fascinating mixture of Tibetan and Kashmiri elements. The wall structure of loam and natural stones and the basic architectural forms clearly follow the autochthonous Tibetan building tradition. On the other hand, all the woodwork added to the facade and the interior is so thoroughly Kashmiri that it may be ascribed to Kashmiri workmen employed by the local priesthood and nobility.

Outward Appearance

The overall width at the base measures about 11.40 metres, the height being nearly the same. The ground floor (*'og khang*) has an open porch added to its front and projecting niches on the other three sides. Each of the three storeys has its own roof (*thog*) constructed of layers of willow sticks covered by cob and accentuated underneath the roof parapets by reddish bands. The uppermost roof is bordered by a low wall (*nya rgyab*) and has a small mud dome in its centre. Rainwater is drained by wooden pipes (*wa*).

Viewed from the front, the whole building exhibits a certain lightness brought about by the open porches in front of the ground floor and the middle storey together with the roof which protects the window in the top storey (504). The horizontal division is furthermore accentuated by the addition of an open architrave above the pillars of the ground floor and

clearly visible reddish-brown bands (*spen chung*) bordered by slightly projecting roof elements at the upper end of each storey (497). Whether the wooden parts of the porch were originally painted with brilliant colours, thereby contrasting to the shining white of the walls, can no longer be verified in the present state of preservation, but it seems highly probable considering the colourful brilliance of the entire interior of the building. The unprotected surface of all wooden elements has been eroded by exposure, whereas the whitewash of the walls is renewed each year by the villagers of Alchi.

Seen from the back, especially from the other side of the shallow ravine behind the sacred area (*chos 'khor*), the cubic Himalayan structure of the building with its whitewashed walls is obvious, but again structurally enriched by the horizontal brownish bands and the roofs of the projecting niches on three sides with their small half-cupolas and the central small dome of the upper storey (9). Viewed from the side, the porch is clearly accentuated by a slightly lower roof-tier and by the separation of the flanking side-walls in the middle storey from the block of the main building (504).

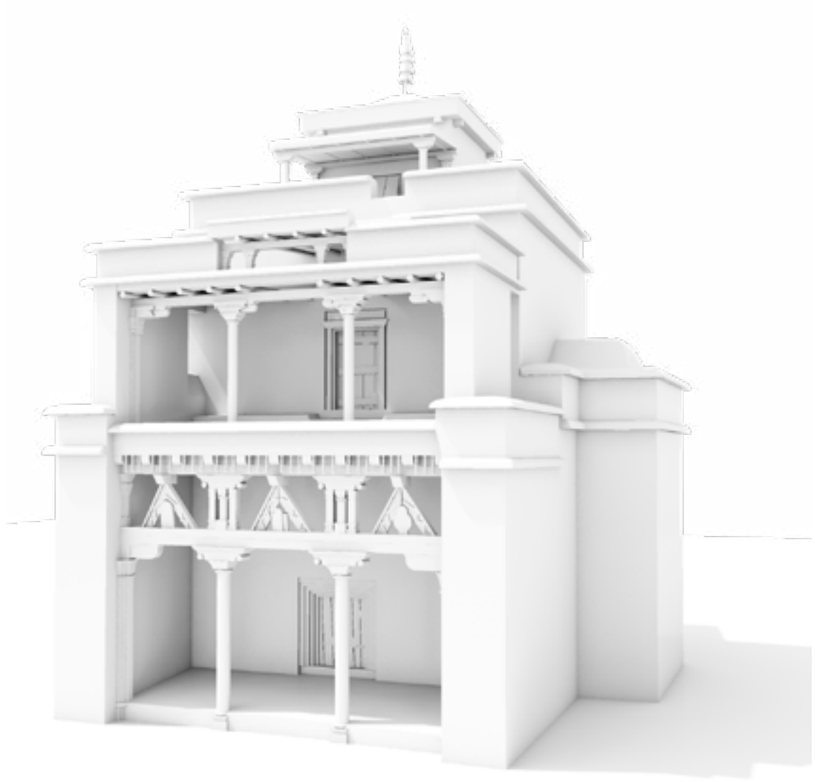
Front Porch

The front porch is 3 metres deep and 8.70 metres wide; it has solid side-walls and is divided by fluted wooden columns (*ka ba*) into three intercolumnia. The capitals (*ka gzhu*) have 'Ionian' volutes richly decorated with carved scrollwork and small figures of protective deities (512). Although such capitals seem to have been rather uncommon in the medieval architecture of Kashmir, they are used already in buildings of the Gandhāran area. They appear, for instance, in the Jandial temple of Taxila, but in a rather simple and more classical formulation and without the rich decoration of the Alchi versions.[283] They support an ornamented architrave in two layers, the open space between these layers being spanned by groups of three combined pillars (513) and triangular pediments with trefoil arches containing wooden sculptures of the Buddha Akṣobhya in the central arch (510), Vajrasattva in the left (511) and another Bodhisattva in the right arch (496).[284]

These framings for icons are a well-known element in medieval Kashmiri architecture between the eighth and tenth century[285], for instance in the Avantisvāmin temple[286] and the small Śiva temple of Pandrethan.[287] It was also used in small wooden shrines of the eighth century which contained ivory sculptures.[288] The projecting ends of the beams supporting the ceiling of the ground floor are carved into the heads and front parts of lions, the precursors of which may be traced back to Gandhāra (Takht-i-Bahi), and with intermediate stages evident in Kashmir.[289]

The Ground Floor

The ground floor (*'og khang*) is entered through a low wooden doorway. The room inside measures 5.40 by 5.80 metres, the height to the ceilings is 3.50 metres. Apart from the entrance wall, all other walls open into niches of about 2.10 to 2.70 metres which house the colossal clay sculptures of Bodhisattvas (503). The ceiling has a square opening in the centre of 2.40 metres, the four corners of which are supported by wooden columns. Like their counterparts at the entrance porch, they are fluted and have richly decorated capitals with central panels



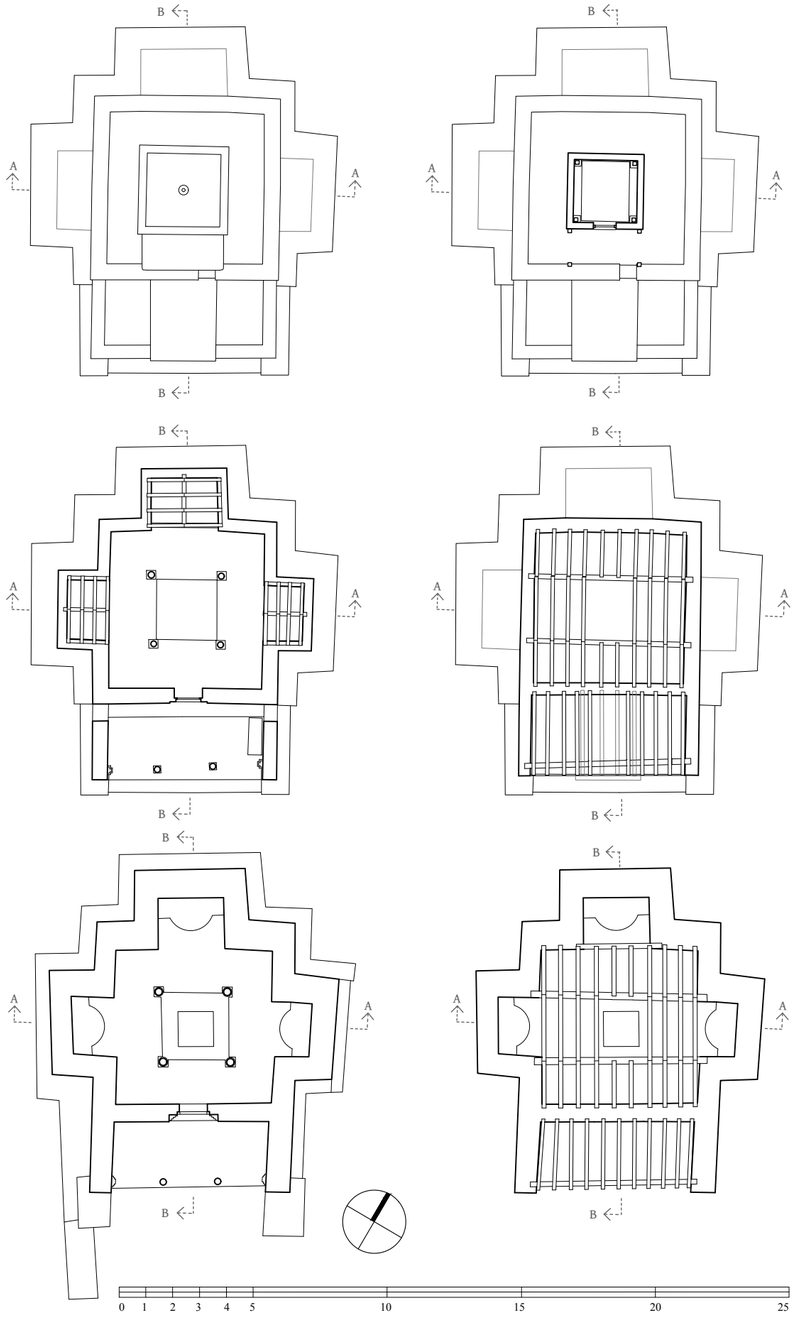
497 Reconstruction of the original outward appearance of the Sumtsek. As apparent from the articulation of the front side the structure is clearly divided into three levels of porch decoration, from the uppermost of which only the posts that once held the veranda roof are preserved. Considering the interior decoration as well, we may speak of three superimposed temples, each with a complete iconographic programme that can be read independent of the whole. This conception may also explain why there are a number of apparent inconsistencies in the overall programme, with the walls at the different levels emphasising similar topics at different sides of the structure. CL

Plan: Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

containing auspicious symbols such as the vase, the jewel-in its typical Alchi version appearing as a flower—a pair of fishes, a lotus, and also the 'endless knot' (516). The scrollwork on both sides of the capitals ends again in volutes which might be distant derivatives of 'Ionian' capitals. The centre of the ground floor beneath the square opening in the ceiling is occupied by a large clay stupa which, in view of its form, seems to be later than the building.

Middle Storey

The middle storey (*bar khang*, 'intermediate hall') is reached by a notched trunk functioning as ladder in the right corner of the porch. The low entrance is also sheltered by a porch with woodcarvings. The inner space is about 8.70 metres wide and the gabled ceilings of the niches reach into this floor so that the heads of the Bodhisattva sculptures are visible. The wooden boards forming the ceiling of the ground floor are covered with a thick layer of earth. Again four columns at the corners of the central opening in the floor support the next ceiling. Their capitals are adorned with figures of four Tathagata (Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava) and their symbols (*viśvavajra, padma, chattra, maṇi*).[291]



498 Top left: Roof plan of the Sumtsek with the different roof areas and parapets.

499 Top right: Plan of the floor-less top storey with the four corner columns and the reconstruction of the former canopy.

500 Middle left: Floor plan of the middle storey with the central wooden construction of the open area and the gable construction of the figure niches.

501 Middle right: The position of the beams on the middle storey and its veranda.

502 Bottom left: Ground floor plan with the main columns of the wooden construction, the three figure niches and the veranda.

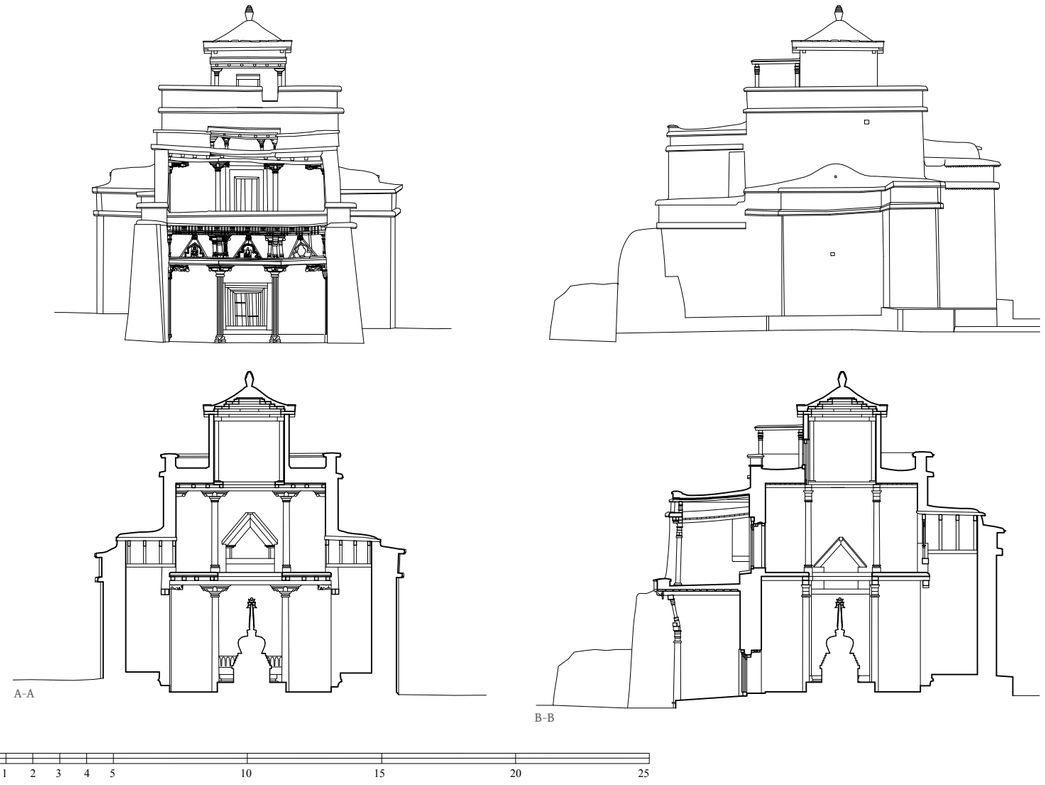
503 Bottom right: Ceiling construction above the ground floor and the veranda.

504 Overleaf top: front and side view of the building as documented.

505 Overleaf left: Cross section of the central area of the Sumtsek showing the spatial development of the three-storeyed interior with the side niches that reach into the upper floor and the central area that opens up to the lantern.

506 Overleaf right: The longitudinal section illustrates the height graduation along the central axis between the verandas and the main niche, as well as the lantern level whose roof area with a parapet allows to be circled.

All plans Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020



Architecture

The three-storeyed Sumtsek is 0.75 metres above the level of the Main Temple, and it is the highest building of the ensemble (9). The structural concept of this central-plan building can be clearly understood both in the ground plan (502) and in the section (505). The floor plan is based on a square interior to which a multi-storey veranda is attached in the southeast. Three figure niches are disposed centrally on each of the three side walls. Nearly all the interior surfaces are painted, the open space in the centre (500, 507, 774) enables visual relationships to all storeys.

The floor level on the ground floor of the veranda is now slightly higher than that of the outdoor area (506). The wooden construction of the veranda divides the façade into three sections (504). The ground floor is subdivided by two central wooden columns and two pilasters on the side walls. Above the first crossbeam there are three carved gables with figural representations and decorative elements. The supporting structure is continued by two three-part central columns and side columns. A main beam bears the transversal beams of the Veranda ceiling, which end in lion heads. The entrance portal to the ground floor with its quadruple stepped frame construction is located in the middle of the wall with a passage height of 1.22 metres.

The ground floor is approximately square, with slightly different lengths and angles of the side walls (502). The length of the wall in the southeast - where the entrance is located - is 5.93 metres, the southwest wall of the left side niche is 5.87 metres long, the northwest wall with the niche





507 Overleaf left: The spatial sections show the structuring of the interior on all three floors. The cross section through the side niches shows the construction of the lantern, and the main niche in the back of the temple.

508 Overleaf right: The longitudinal section along the central axis shows the constructions in the lantern and in the side niches as well as the veranda constructions on each level.

509 Right: The spatial view of the interior shows the four columns on the ground floor and the first floor which define the central open space inside the Sumtsek housing the central stupa.

All plans Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.



of the main figure is 5.97 metres long and the northwest wall with the right side niche is 5.95 metres long. Thus, the biggest difference between the lengths is 15 centimetres. The room height measures 4.15 metres from the floor level up to the lower edge of the ceiling. Four wooden columns in the centre bear the main beams of the ceiling and form the inner square of the room with a side length of 2.43 metres (509). This inner square is kept without ceiling and, one floor higher, opens up into the lantern. In the centre of the square stands a stupa on a pedestal with a side length of 1.33 metres

Three figure niches reaching to the upper floor are disposed centrally in the side walls. The left hand side niche on the southwest side is 2.28 metres wide and 1.66 metres deep, the opposite right side niche is 2.09 metres wide and 1.29 metres deep. The main niche opposite to the entrance is larger than the side niches with a width of 2.54 metres and a depth of 1.95 metres. Its total height, measured from the floor level to the ridge of its ceiling construction, amounts to 6.62 metres; the height of the side niches is 5.65 metres.

The tripartition of the room structure can also be discerned in the height development. In the upper floor the veranda corresponds structurally to that of the ground floor, the peculiarity on this level is the raised middle part of the roof construction (504). Above the main beam and two further central columns, there are smaller double columns bearing the central roof, which is 0.84 metres higher than the lateral roof areas.

On the southeastern wall, an entrance door with a height of 1.34 metres leads to the interior of the upper floor, where four central columns delimit the open space from which one can look down to the ground floor. This gallery with a room height of 3.27 metres can be used to circumambulate the open area. On the northwestern side, an auxiliary construction of diagonally placed round logs was inserted between the columns to support the upper ceiling beam (507). On the middle storey, the heads of the three figures are visible in the niches. From this floor level the height of the openings up to the ridge is 1.70 metres in the main niche and 1.00 metres in the side niches. The roof of the niches consists of a wooden rafter construction inclined at 48° and with more elaborate and decorative design of the main figure niche than above the side figures.

The top storey, too, can only be accessed via the roof. It has a circumferential parapet and can be circumambulated on the outside. This floor was formerly equipped with a canopy, the two wooden front columns of which and two half columns on the southeastern wall are preserved. In the middle of this wall there is an opening with an internally 1.34 metres high wooden construction that can be opened to provide light for the interior. The clay layer on the roof is 0.56 metres higher than the wooden threshold of the opening today, reducing the opening accordingly (760). The interior can be seen, but not entered, as there is no floor. The side walls of the square lantern measure 2.56 metres and have a height of 3.07 metres. Consequently the total room height of the central open space of the temple is 10.90 metres from the upper edge of the floor covering on the ground floor. The four wooden square edged pillars on simple wooden bases in the corners of the lantern are equipped with cube-shaped capitals and cross consoles. The lantern roof construction rests on a circumferential wooden frame and consists of six layers of boards.

The dimensional deviations in the structural execution of the niches and the inner wall surfaces, which can be determined on the basis of the as-built documentation, as well as the deviations of the geometry from the orthogonal angle clearly recognizable in the plans, can be interpreted as typical for this building technique. Massive walls with multiple plaster layers do not permit the same structural precision as, for example masonry construction with hewn stones.

Holger Neuwirth & Carmen Auer





Top Storey

The top storey (*steng*, 'top') is inaccessible since it has no floor at all. A window with a wooden shutter allows ventilation and the influx of light. The interior space is a square of about 3.50 metres, the straight walls being covered by paintings and the ceiling having the lantern structure applied also in the Palden Drepung Chörten and the other gateway chörten, as also in the Four Image Chörten in Mangyu.[292] It consists of six layers of beams, each placed diagonally across the corners of the lower tier, the resulting triangles being closed by boards. These form 'overlapping squares, each of which cuts off the angles of the square below it, and thus reduces the extent of the square to be covered'.[293] This element was transferred from Kashmir where it was used in square masonry buildings of medieval architecture as in, for instance, the small Śiva temple of Pandrethan near Srinagar[294] and the temple in Payar (eleventh century). This kind of false cupola, the structure of which probably has its roots in wooden architecture, possibly originated in Iran and spread over wide areas of the Asian continent.[295] We find it in the cave temples of Bāmiyān (fifth to seventh centuries), in the grottoes of Kizil (sixth to seventh century) and in the cave temples of Dunhuang at the western border of China.

510 Above: The central of the three triangular pediments integrated into the architrave of the Sumtsek's facade contains the Buddha Akṣobhya. He is placed clearly into an axis with other representations of the same Buddha in murals at the inside of the building on the entrance and the back wall, stressing the importance of this figure for the iconographic programme of the Sumtsek and also accentuating the 'orientation' of the building towards the east. Here he is placed inside a trilobed frame typical of Kashmiri architecture and sculpture.

511 Right: Wooden sculpture of the Bodhisattva Vajrasattva in the left pediment of the architrave.[290]

On entering the building through the simple wooden door and having become accustomed to the comparatively dark interior, the viewer is overwhelmed by the richness of colourful paintings covering practically every square centimetre of all walls and ceiling panels, in an incredible *horror vacui*. Although the murals appear superficially to have been untouched down the centuries —the temples in Alchi did indeed soon fall out of use—there are in fact crude repaintings in some areas and later 'accentuations' by retracing contour lines and by retouching coloured areas. Cracks and blisters in the coating of the walls which serves as a ground for the murals are signals of a most precarious state that urgently calls for corrective and conservation measures.



512 The two columns supporting the architrave of the facade are also crowned by capitals ending in volutes at both sides. Since these columns directly flank the entrance into the building, the capitals have sculptures of wrathful deities protecting the portal against evil influences (see also 335, 336). The figure above, considerably weathered and partially covered with plaster, most probably represents Vajrapāṇi. CL

513 Between the pediments with wooden sculptures on the façade of the Sumtsek, groups of three pillars support the upper layer of the architrave below the short roof of the porch. Also in this case, practically all of the ornamental details can be traced back to Kashmiri predecessors where some of them appear on pilasters framing sculptured panels, for instance in Avantisvāmin. Some elements even have earlier predecessors in the art of Gandhāra. The acanthus leaf ornaments on the pillar to the left can be traced to the fragment of the stupa at Sirkap, Taxila.

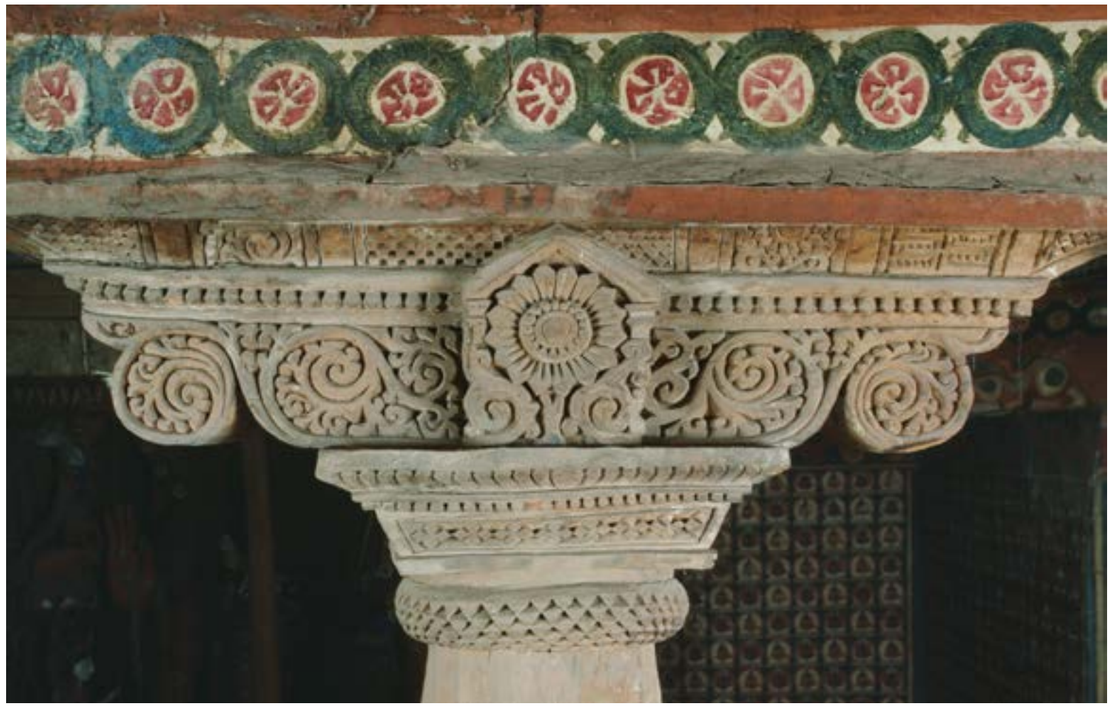






514 The wooden elements integrated into the plastered mud and stone architecture of the temples in Alchi are late exponents of a tradition leading back to Central Asian and to even more western areas. Lions serving as brackets to support beams of the ceiling of the ground floor in the Sumtsek have their prototypes in Gandhāra and more directly in the masonry temples of Kashmir.

515 The two lion brackets flank the Avalokiteśvara niche, their relative position to each other being reversed. The two deities painted behind them are reproduced in figures 537 and 538. CL



516 The 'Ionian' capitals crowning the grooved columns in the same building, with their volutes at both ends, are late offsprings of Central Asian antecedents. In simpler forms, but also executed in wood, they appear already in the third century CE in Loulan and Miran, and in the sixth century in Khadalik. Their models may perhaps be sought in Persepolis or even further to the west in the Mediterranean area, with intermediate stages in Taxila, Gandhāra. The scroll-work carved into the Alchi capitals is directly derived from similar elements in Kashmiri masonry decoration.

The Ground Floor



517 A *sādhana* devoted to this two-armed form of Mahākāla called 'single hero with the knife' (*eka-vīra-kartarīdhara*)[300] states that the deity should be created according to the rules during meditation on Emptiness from the black syllable '*hūṃ*' imagined inside a lotus. The practitioner should then conceive himself as Mahākāla, dark-blue in colour (*kṛṣṇavarṇa*), with two arms and one head, having three eyes and being greatly luminous (*mahājjvala*), holding a knife and skull-cup in his hands. He is decorated with a garland of severed heads (*muṇḍamālā*) and has a crown of five skulls in his brownish hair (*piṅgalakeśa*). With his bare fangs, the ornaments of serpents, and the sacred thread being a snake, he is of terrible appearance (*bhīmabhayānaka*). He has a dwarfish body (*kharvarūpa*) and blood trickles from his mouth (*sravadrudhiramukha*) (*Sādhanamālā* 2, 585, No. 301). Actual size: 145 x 100 cm.

518 Head of the snake serving as the protector's sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*). CI

Apart from the central panel above the door, the eastern entrance wall with its dark blue background is completely covered with one thousand and sixty-three figures of small Buddhas seated in rows on lotus thrones and on elephants as *vāhana* and showing different hand gestures (flanking Mahākāla in figure 517). They have a blue complexion and should therefore be identified as Akṣobhya although their different mudra and the reappearance of hundreds of Akṣobhya on the facing back wall to the northwest are puzzling factors.

Nevertheless, the 'Imperturbable' Tathagata Akṣobhya (*mi 'khrugs pa*) occupies a prominent position among the figures of the Buddhist pantheon represented in the murals of Alchi and his name appears several times in the inscriptions by Kalden Shérap (*skal ldan shes rab*) in the slightly earlier Dukhang and by Tsültrim Ö, founder of the Sumtsek, in which both priests express their wish to be reborn in Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati.[296] Rows of small images of the Tathagata not only cover large areas of the walls inside the Palden Drepung Chörten of Alchi (349)[297] and of other gateway chörten (234) but also the two panels of the back wall in the Sumtsek (587, 592). Lively scenes showing his paradise are depicted on the lower space of the two wall panels flanking the niche with sculptures in the back wall of the Dukhang, their themes clearly identified by accompanying inscriptions (page 177 ff.).[298] At the time that the Alchi temples were decorated with paintings, the Buddha of the East, Akṣobhya, still seems to have played a more important role than Amitābha with his Western Paradise, Sukhāvatī (577). The roots of this situation in the Tibetan area perhaps go back to the seventh century CE, when King Songtsen Gampo (*srong btsan sgam po*) and his wife installed an image of Akṣobhya as the main sacred object in the principal chapel of their newly erected Jokhang in Lhasa.[299]

The prominent theme in the centre of this wall in the Sumtsek is the Mahākāla (Nakpo Chenpo, *nag po chen po,* 'Great Black One' or Gönpo, *mgon po*, 'Protector') in the oblong panel over the entrance door, evidently acting as a protective deity of the interior of the temple (517). Since he belongs to the vajra family (*vajrakula*) of the Buddhist pantheon, his position among the surrounding Akṣobhya is also iconographically justified.

His stout figure is represented in front of a red mandorla with a border of flames, striding to the right in an expressive *pratyāliḍha* stance, trampling on an outstretched yellow bearded male. He is two-armed, has one head and a dark blue complexion, apart from the red palms of his hands. His hair, partly standing on end, is golden yellow. His three eyes are glaring and his mouth exhibits white fangs. He is clad in a richly ornamented skirt with a tiger skin around the waist. Shawls with 'Sassanian' roundels near their ends float down from his shoulders and he wears jewellery around his arms, legs and neck and is crowned with six small skulls.

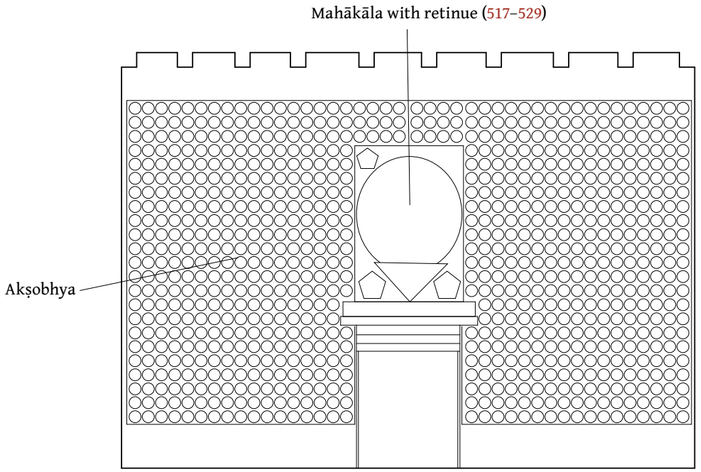
519 Overview drawings of the four walls of the ground floor.

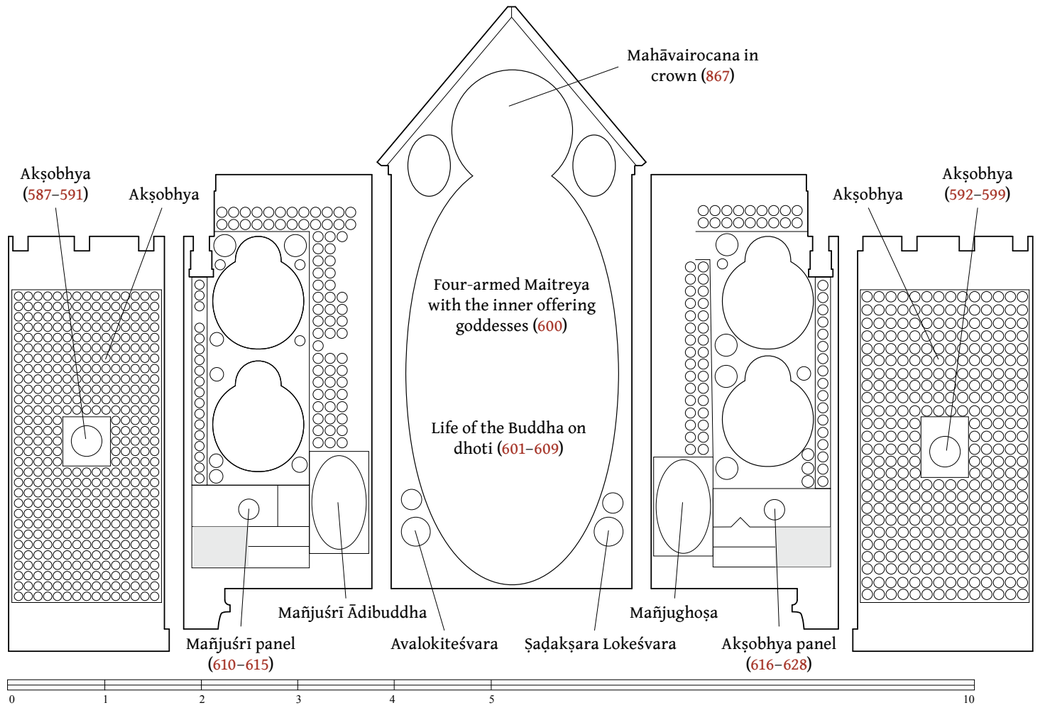
520 Top left: Entry wall

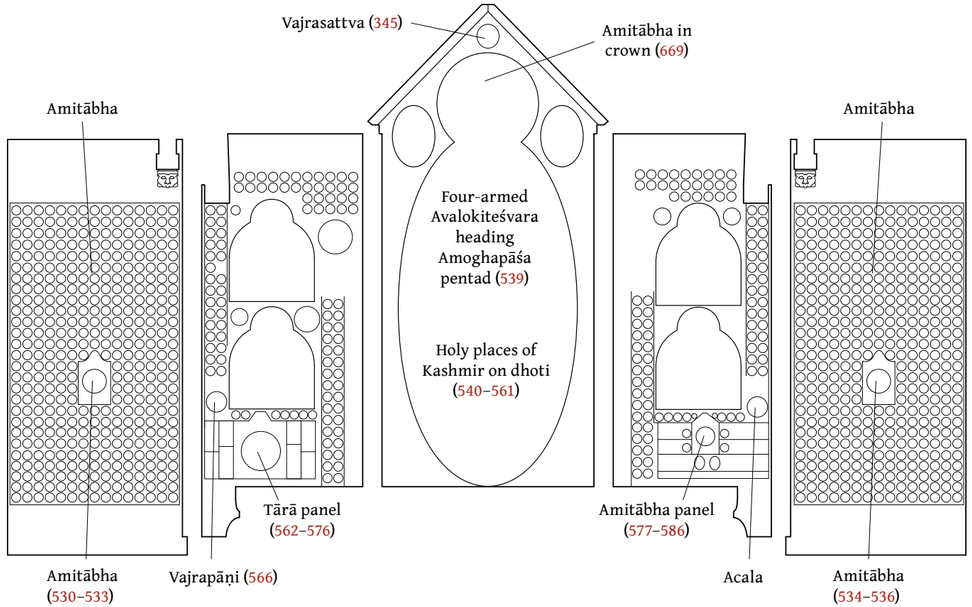
521 Top right: Left side wall with Avalokiteśvara niche.

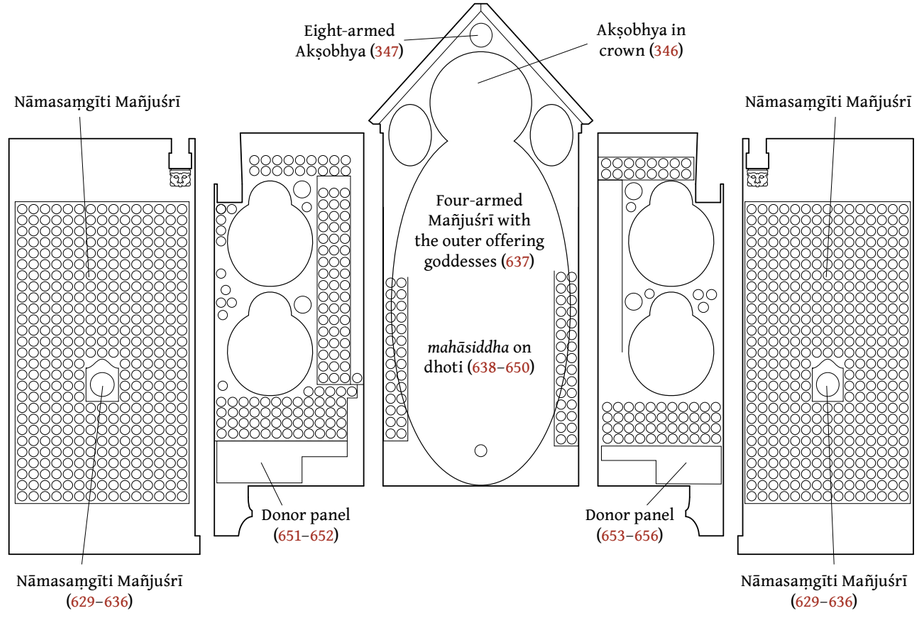
522 Bottom left: Main wall with Maitreya niche.

523 Bottom right: Right side wall with Mañjuśrī niche.









Snakes encircling his body and limbs enhance his ferocious appearance, in all details his representation corresponds to a description in a *sādhana* contained in the *Sādhanamālā* where he is invoked in order to punish those 'who hate their preceptors and are adversely disposed to the Three Jewels'. Mahākāla is supposed to eat them raw, to cut their flesh into pieces and to tear off their heads.[300] Perhaps this specific function as protector of the faith and therefore of the temple may explain the parts of human bodies scattered on the ground.

As his emblems, he is brandishing a knife in his right hand and he holds a skull-cup in his left. The knife (*kartarī, gri gug*) does not yet have the usual form of later Tibetan iconography



524 Although several elements of the orthodox iconography of Śrīdevī (Penden Lhamo), such as the dice and the eye on the back part of the mule, are not represented in this mural, other details are clear indications that it is she who is intended. She lifts a skull-cup, wears severed human heads as ornaments, holds a *khaṭvāṅga*-like staff, has a crescent of a moon in her yellow hair and rides a mule. As in several other cases we see here what will become the codified iconography of later Himalayan Buddhism still in *statu nascendi*. The rendering of her greyish body and face again shows the tendency to give three-dimensionality by the technique of 'shading by dots' (*binduvartanā*).

525 On this detail, note the faded ornamentation in yellow and the nipples depicted as eyes. CL

with sickle-like blade and a handle fixed vertically onto it. Instead it looks like a real knife, its blade being slightly curved and the handle fixed to its end. This seems to be an ancient form of this emblem in use in Northern Indian iconography. We meet it in a representation of Mahākāla of the eleventh century from Bihar and a slightly later figure of the goddess Cāmuṇḍā at the Kāmākhyā temple at Ghauhati in Assam.[301] Both examples are not too far apart in time from our Alchi version. The change of this emblem into its later form used in Tibet must have occurred shortly afterwards.

The triangle below (in front of) the deity represents an altar as it was used for terrible rites (*abhicāruka*) among the group of four kinds of ritual.[302] The altar is here bordered by twenty skull-cups, then by rows of vajras and knives, and it contains in its centre a multi-coloured geometrical arrangement which seems to represent a heap of precious gems of

different colours or even a mountain since it is placed in front of a five-lobed element used in other Alchi murals as an equivalent for clouds. Small plants sprout out of the coloured rocks.

Mahākāla and the altar are placed within a charnel ground (*śmaśāna*) with scattered remains of human corpses consisting of torsos, severed heads, white skulls, hands and feet. Several beautifully rendered wild animals—a leopard, a tiger, a white snow leopard, a lion, foxes, as well as a black buffalo and grey geese—appear in the upper right corner (528). Opposite in the left corner we see a horseman in secular dress holding a sword and a severed human head (527). He wears a kaftan-like coat, trousers and hoots and has a shawl wound as a turban around his head, his attire corresponding to the contemporary fashion of Kashmir, he is accompanied by a similarly clad man carrying a skull-cup and running.

Most interesting, though, are the two female riders flanking the triangular altar at the bottom of the panel. To the left a greyish goddess, with three eyes and flaming yellow hair held together by a crown of skulls, rides a brown mule (524). She wears a tiger skin, the upper part of her body being naked with swelling breasts. Her jewellery is ornamented with severed human heads; the mule is harnessed with snakes. In her right hand she holds a *khaṭvāṅga*, a second leaning against her left shoulder, while the left hand lifts a skull-cup. The small crescent of a moon crowning her coiffure identifies her as an early version of Penden Lhamo (*dpal ldan lha mo*) or Śrīdevī[305] not yet codified into the later orthodox rules of iconography. She is surrounded by four richly clad female figures, dressed like the local noble women whom we meet in several other scenes of the murals. They are riding wild animals, such as a leopard and a *makara*. Perhaps we may see in them precursors of the deities of the four seasons which accompany Śrīdevī in her later orthodox formulation.

On the other side of the triangular altar, a goddess with a blue complexion is mounted on a blue mule (526). She wears a red garment with long sleeves and adorned with roundels containing overlapping back-to-back lions, which appear in a nearly identical form in the ceilings of the Sumtsek as textile ornaments.[303] The most striking feature is her wide cape of peacock feathers. She is crowned and holds a vajra and skull-cup in her hands. Also she is surrounded by four smaller females riding on wild animals, one of the women lifting a rich parasol over the head of the goddess. Although she has on occasion been identified as a secular queen,[304] her position counter-balancing Śrīdevī and her complexion qualify her as a female deity of equal importance to her counterpart to the left. We would be inclined lo identify her with the goddess Rematī[305] who is known to ride a blue mule[306] and who occasionally may wear a cloak of peacock feathers.[307] The two goddesses, Śrīdevī and Rematī, do appear as a pair of rulers over the *kāmadhātu*, the 'Realm of Desire', thereby justifying their representation on this entrance wall of the Sumtsek's ground floor which is more or less still concerned with matters of this earthly existence.[308]

Several features of this panel make it highly interesting for the history of Esoteric Buddhist iconography before it was codified into the rules of later times. The whole arrangement appears with slight variations, for instance reversing the position of the two goddesses, in an earlier formulation also on the entrance wall of the Dukhang (38).[309]

Some of the various basic techniques in the execution of the murals in the Sumtsek of Alchi may be observed on the paintings of this panel. While the dark blue complexion of Mahākāla is applied evenly without any attempt towards chiaroscuro, the lighter colours of the faces and hands of the two goddesses are clearly shaded in order to produce a certain

526 The identification of the deity of blue complexion as the female deity Rematī can only be given with a certain reservation. Supporting the identification are her blue colour and the beautiful cloak of peacock feathers. In this form she appears among the so-called Mother Goddesses (*mātṛkā*, *ma mo*) presided over by Śrīdevī (Penden Lhamo). In contrast to the naked Śrīdevī, she is richly dressed and she holds the two important ceremonial emblems, the vajra and skull-cup (*kapāla*).

Note: Further research into the two attendant goddesses revealed that it is the wrathful goddess that is to be identified as a form of Rematī, while this goddess is better referred to as Peacock Cape Lady.[305] CL







three-dimensional effect. The painter has used, as in several other instances, the technique of grading the value of a colour by placing small dots or short strokes in increasing density, a device called 'shading by dots' (*binduvartanā*).[310]



527 Top left: The man on horseback in the upper left corner above Mahākāla seems to represent a human being about to enter the sacred ground of the cemetery, together with a servant, perhaps with the intention of performing a ritual. He carries a sword and holds a severed human head by the hair. In a similar scene to this, but reversed, above the entrance to the Dukhang, this place is occupied by a mounted king exactly corresponding to the one in the 'royal drinking scene' to the right of the Dukhang entrance.

528 Right: Animals in the upper right hand corner above Mahākāla look as though they are running away from the man on horseback. They are present at the charnel ground (*śmaśāna*) as the spot preferred for certain mediative rituals.

529 Bottom left: The four female figures accompanying Rematī riding different animals may perhaps be identified with the goddesses representing the four seasons (*rtudevatā*), namely the Queen of the Rainy Season (Varśārājñī), of Spring (Vasantarājñī), of Autumn (Saradrājñī) and of Winter (Hemantarājñī) although they do not ride the animals which are associated with them in later codifications. In traditional iconography they are regarded as members of Rematī's entourage.[311]

The Murals on the Left Wall

Although this wall lies to the southwest, it actually represents the western direction as we can deduce from its iconographical scheme. The two parts of the wall flanking the niche with the colossal sculpture of Avalokiteśvara have a dark blue background and are densely painted with rows of eight hundred and fourteen small figures of the Buddha Amitābha, sitting in front of a multi-coloured mandorla on a lotus throne and having two peacocks as his *vāhana*. His complexion is red, he is clad in a monk's garb covering both shoulders, that is either coloured in plain blue or brown, or decorated with a meander of connected *svastika* similar to the motifs on some of the wooden panels forming the ceilings of the Sumtsek (panels 16, 25, 30, 38, 41, 44). The hands are joined to the *dhyānamudrā* and the head shows a prominent *uṣṇīṣa*.

Each of the two parts of the wall has a central panel with a larger and richer representation of Amitābha in the attire of a transcendental Tathagata. They both are seated in front of shining white moon discs on lotus thrones with five peacocks and flanked by elements of their rich thrones.



The face of the example on the left is heavily repainted (530). He wears a Kashmiri style crown and jewels consisting of strings of pearls. His blue garb, covering both shoulders, is decorated with overlapping elephants and *vyāla* in roundels.[313] Two bearded priests in checkered *kaṣāya*, flanked by conch shells with offerings on stands, lie prostrate below on either side, thereby transforming the panel into a ceremonial scene of adoration. The pillars flanking the throne are crowned by many-winged *kinnara*, and above the throne fantastic birds with two bodies and one head, figures with fly-whisks on lions and *apsaras* represented frontally in a

530 Amitābha's throne is furnished with several fantastic elements. The ornamental appearance of the base and capitals of the pillars at both sides is reminiscent of western motifs of a much later date. The two *kinnara* on top of them have stout human bodies, but with eight wings and legs of birds. The upper end of the throne is crowned on top of a central *kīrtimukha* by a blue bud-like element as the typical representation of a jewel used in many instances in the Alchi murals. The tails of the two strange birds, with two bodies but only one common head, and also those of the two white lions, mounted by *kinnara* with fly-whisks, develop into the decorative scrollwork also characteristic for Alchi.[314]

531 Left: The wheel (*cakra*) as the central element of the seven treasures underneath the panel is represented as an ornamental flower.



532



533

Not only is the Tathagata Amitābha characterised as universal monarch (*cakravartin*) by the rich structure of his throne, his ornaments and the adoring deities, but also by the addition of the seven treasures of a universal monarch (*cakravartinām saptaratnāni*) in the panel on the left side of the wall, represented here in a frieze below the main panel in a sequence from left to right: the wish-granting jewel (*maṇi*), the horse (*aśva*), the household minister (*gṛhapati*), the wheel (*cakra*; figure 530), the wife (*strī*), the elephant (*hastin*) and the general (*khaḍga* or *parināyaka*). A relief of the first century BCE from Jaggayapeta in South India had already arranged them around the *cakravartin*.

Height of frieze: 6.5 cm.

grotesque flying attitude are set into rich ornamental scroll work. At the lower end the panel has a frieze with the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) of a universal monarch (530–533).

The panel to the right is similarly organised but better preserved (535). The ornaments in Amitābha's blue garb show mounted bowmen in squares with projecting sides,[315] the throne being bordered by the usual set of animals, one above the other: yellowish elephants, white lions and yellow *vyāla*. Above there are two *kinnara* with red bodies and white faces and hands, both wearing ornamental hats and blowing long trumpets. The one to the left holds also an umbrella, the one to the right a banner. Flying deities, two of them with swelling breasts, two others richly dressed, scatter flowers from conch shells. Below there is a narrow frieze with three deities between pillars reminiscent of the façade of the Sumtsek, and a larger frieze



534 On the left wall panel, the Tathagata Amitābha's face, as well as his hands, joined in the characteristic *dhyānamudrā*, and his feet, are delicately shaded by dotting technique, which leaves prominent parts such as the ridge of the nose, the brows, the upper eyelids, mouth and chin accentuated in a lighter hue of red. The shawl falling from his crown over his shoulders is decorated in the technique of tie-dyeing (*plangi*) appearing quite often in the Alchi murals and still used today in the Himalayan area.

Swirling lines, representing rays of light, ornament the shining white moon-disc (*candra*) as background for the apparitional manifestation of the Buddha.

535 The rich scroll-work crowning Amitābha's throne also here develops as an outgrowth of *kinnara* tails.

with six musicians (536) playing the harp (*vīṇā*),[316] a transverse flute (*vānīcī* or *veṇu*), a stick zither (possibly a type called *ālāpinī vīṇā*), another similar instrument, a cello-like lute (possibly a *sāraṅgī*) and another flute (*vāṃśika*).

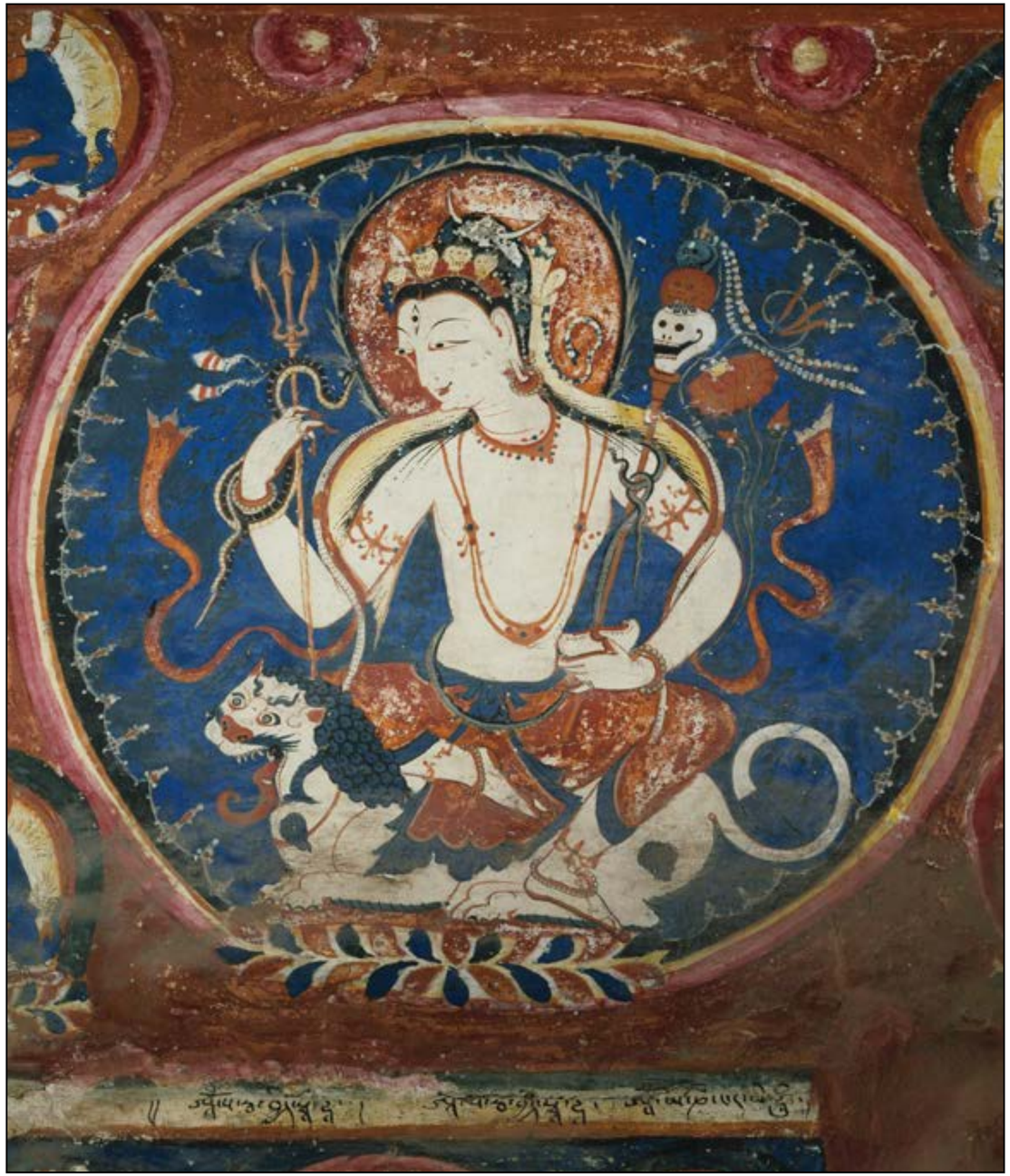
This scene provides evidence that music formed an essential component of contemporary Esoteric Buddhist ritual. Furthermore, dance is represented in a frieze below Akṣobhya on the right half of the back wall adjoining the niche (592, 597–599), and song as a metaphor for music is found personified as a female deity among the four inner goddesses of offering in both the Vajradhātu (705 ff.) and Vajraguhya (734 ff.) mandalas.

536 The architectural structure supporting Amitābha's throne has three panels housing subordinate deities. Two females are presenting flowers and fly-whisks, whereas the central small figure of a *yakṣa* supports with both hands the upper molding of the throne. The latter is the offspring of a Kashmiri iconographic element which can be traced back to bronzes of the seventh century CE.

The six musicians in the frieze below appear to be a courtly orchestra from the palace in Srinagar. They wear diadems and are elegantly dressed in jackets and skirts, their instruments in accord with Indian and not with Ladakhi tradition. Their lively movements are integrated into a rhythmic composition developing from left to right.



537 Painting near the ceiling to the left of Avalokiteśvara's niche: Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī seated on a lion and holding a blue lily with a book on a bowl.[317]

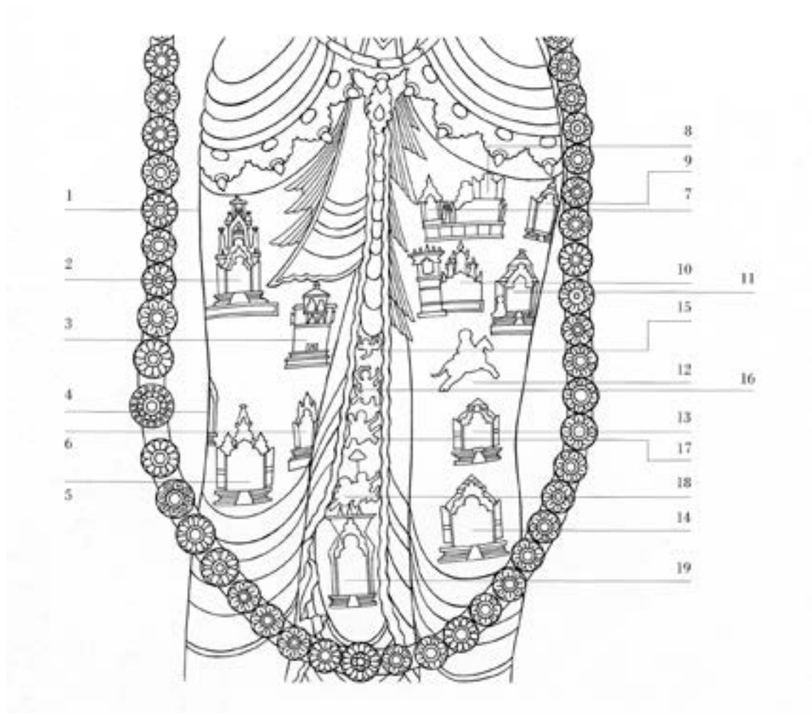


538 Painting near the ceiling to the right of Avalokiteśvara's niche: Siṃhanāda Lokeśvara on a lion holding a trident and a tantric staff.[318]

The Colossal Sculptures on the Ground Floor

The three colossal clay sculptures which almost fill the entire space of the three niches in the ground floor are, according to their size and their position, the main icons of the Sumtsek. The reason why just these three Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara to the left (539), Mañjuśrī to the right (637) and Maitreya to the rear (600), were selected by the priest planning the temple is difficult to ascertain. There is an inscription in the rear niche of the ground floor near the feet of the Maitreya sculpture which may provide an explanation.[319] The text was not written by Tsültrim Ö, the founder of the temple, himself, but by another monk called Drakden Ö (*grags ldan 'od*), and probably slightly later than the actual construction and decoration of the temple.[320] This priest also wrote a eulogy on Kalden Shérap in the Dukhang which he founded.[321] Since, judging from the style of their murals, the erection of both buildings (the Dukhang and the Sumtsek) seems to have been a few decades apart, the priest Drakden Ö could hardly have been a contemporary of Kalden Shérap. On the other hand, formulations used by him in the Sumtsek inscription might suggest that Tsültrim Ö also was no longer living at that time.

According to the text, Tsültrim Ö had this temple built as a 'reliquary for body, speech and mind' (*sku gsung thugs kyi gdun rten*), thereby referring to the 'Three Mysteries' (*triguhya*)



539 The modelling technique of all clay figures in the Sumtsek follows the common tradition used for the execution of Buddhist figures which was spread over wide areas of Central and Eastern Asia. Stability is provided by a wooden framework around which layers of clay are added, the outermost being of the finest quality for the rendering of details.

The clay sculpture of the four-armed Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the left niche has jewellery executed in relief with gilding and colouring. The decoration of his long shawls, although surely repainted, still show textile motifs such as double tie-dyeing (*plangi*) and resist dyeing very similar to those represented on the ceiling panels of the Sumtsek.

The Bodhisattva is surrounded by a retinue of four wrathful deities forming an Amoghapāśa assembly.[322]

540 Scenes depicted on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti

1. Unidentified temple
2. Sadāśiva temple
3. Royal palace
4. Green Tārā temple
5. Mañjuśrī temple
6. Tārā temple
7. Śiva temple with head of Umā
8. Mountain temple of Tārā
9. Temple of Viṣṇu in the form of Vasudeva
10. Buddhist monastery and Hindu temple of Balarāma
11. Śiva temple
12. Royal cavalcade out for a hunt
13. Tārā temple
14. Temple, possibly of Avalokiteśvara
15. Flying goddess offering a jewel
16. Four-armed deity with trumpet and offerings of *torma* (*gtor ma*)
17. Four-armed deity with fly-whisk
18. Couple of deities with banner and umbrella
19. Śākyamuni temple

one of the essential concepts manifesting the teachings of Esoteric Buddhism, and also to the three modes of existence of a Buddha or Bodhisattva.

The inscription says that the figure of Mañjuśrī (637) was set up as a 'repository of the [secret of the] body' (*sku'i rten*) so that the worshippers might learn to overcome all physical impurities and to gain the 'human apparitional body' (*sprul sku, nirmāṇakāya*) with which the Buddha taught and acted in this world.

The sculpture of Avalokiteśvara (539) was formed as a 'repository of speech' (*gsung rten*) which eradicates impurities of speech and helps humans to attain the 'glorious body' (*long sku, saṃbhogakāyā*) in which the Buddha rules his paradise.

The central Maitreya (600) in the back niche functions as a 'repository of the spirit or mind' (*thugs kyi rten*) which removes all spiritual impurities and helps the believer to attain the 'absolute Dharma body' (*chos sku, dharmakāyā*), from which all existence emanates.

If these ideas had really guided Tsültrim Ö when he commissioned the three sculptures, the themes painted onto their dhoti do not in fact correspond in all respects to his stated original intention. The palace and the different temples appearing on Avalokiteśvara's skirt are undoubtedly mundane and do not fit in with the idea of a paradise world as the sphere of the 'glorious body', while the unorthodox figures of the *mahāsiddha* on Mañjuśrī's dhoti could hardly be meant to represent convincingly the 'apparitional body'. Only the scenes of Buddha Śākyamuni's life on Maitreya's dhoti could stand in a certain sense for the 'absolute body', although they would much better match the concept of the *nirmānakāya*. This may lead us to suspect that the speculations by the priest Drakden Ö perhaps are his own interpretation, not really reflecting the intentions of the founder of the temple.

Another reason to doubt Drakden Ö's theory is the sequence of circumambulation inside the temple hall. If it is performed correctly the believer is first confronted with the Avalokiteśvara figure to the left, and only at the end with the sculpture of Mañjuśrī. Avalokiteśvara should then represent the 'apparitional body' to which the scenes on his dhoti would fit perfectly. Perhaps such methodical thinking should not be projected into the mind of a Ladakhi priest of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.

On the other hand, if we take into account the basic religious values expressed and symbolised by the three Bodhisattvas, then the motifs on their dhoti make sense: Avalokiteśvara as the personification of the central Buddhist concept of compassion (*karuṇā*), with mankind still entangled in mundane life, exhibits just this atmosphere of daily life in the paintings on his dhoti. Mañjuśrī as the Bodhisattva of wisdom (*prajñā*) has his dhoti covered with representations of the *mahāsiddha*, examples of masters who have reached just such wisdom. Maitreya as the future Buddha displays on his garment the stations in the career of his predecessor Śākyamuni which he will also have to enact during his future life on this earth.



541 Scene no. 3 with the palace and its surroundings is among one of the most historically important representations found in the Alchi murals. That the central part of the overall composition on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti is occupied by such clearly mundane scenes strengthens the theory that the paintings on this sculpture represent important locations in, and perhaps near, the capital Srinagar and not necessarily mere places of pilgrimage.
Height of building: 21 cm.

The Sculptures and Murals in the Left Niche

The southern[323] or left niche is occupied by the standing sculpture of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, four metres high, modelled of clay over a wooden framework and painted (539). His right foot is set slightly outward and he has four hands showing different mudra, the upper left hand holding the stalk of a lotus flower. Other emblems are missing and it seems as if the hands have undergone retouching. Their palms are painted red whereas the Bodhisattva's body is brilliant white. He wears a five-pointed crown with the five Tathagata, Amitābha as the lord of the family (*kuleśa*) occupying the centre in front, and the customary jewellery. Shawls with decorations imitating *plangi* and batik flow down his sides, a garland of flowers and a sacred thread are draped over his shoulders.

Clay sculptures of four fierce protective deities and two flying goddesses are fixed to the walls of his niche, their artistic quality being rather poor in comparison, for instance, with thematically similar clay images at Tabo in Spiti. The strongly contrasting delicacy of the paintings on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti is therefore especially surprising.

The Paintings on the Dhoti

The scenes painted on to the dhoti of Avalokiteśvara belong to the most interesting representations among the murals in Alchi since they allow us direct insight into the highly sophisticated atmosphere prevalent in Kashmir shortly before Islam took over completely.[324] They also demonstrate the parallel existence of Buddhism and the Hindu religion, sometimes actually placing temples of the two traditions side by side as neighbours. An analysis of these paintings must lead to the conclusion that the artists most probably were Kashmiris intimately familiar with the life-style of the different layers of society in their home country, in spite of some minor mistakes when the painters, obviously Buddhist, were confronted with the details of Hindu iconography. It seems highly improbable that a Tibetan or Ladakhi



543 Left: At the foot of the palace a couple expresses their allegiance to the royals. CL

542 Right: In the uppermost verandah-like open storey of the palace building, the royal couple appear to be engaged in leisurely conversation. Their physiognomies and dress clearly distinguish them from those royal personages intended to represent Ladakhi kings and queens in other Sumtsek and Dukhang murals. Even in a miniature-like painting such as this, we still can recognise motifs of textile ornamentation on the king's jacket which point to Iranian or Central Asian connections. Symbolic of his royal status, the king not only wears a jewelled diadem but also holds a sceptre-like staff in his left hand.

In the storey below another couple in slightly simpler dress represents other members of the royal family, probably the crown prince and his wife. While the woman wears the typical Kashmir shawl around her head and shoulders, the man's head is covered by a white turban, an element reappearing in several Alchi murals which has led some scholars to date such scenes to a later period.



painter or an artist of a later period could have known such details of architecture, fashion and implements of daily or religious use as they appear in these paintings.

The scenes have been numbered (see figure 540), beginning at the top left of the right leg in a downward sequence, then turning in the same way to the left leg and ending with the scenes on the fold between the legs. Our treatment will use this numbering, but will not follow the actual sequence. It will be concerned first with the secular and then the religious themes.

The fourteen buildings depicted have been identified by Snellgrove as places of pilgrimage in Kashmir,[325] but in fact the scenes look like a condensed and idealised map of important buildings spread out over the valley around the capital Srinagar. Some of them can perhaps even be tentatively identified with actual sites. The different scenes on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti are distributed over the available space of the garment without any obvious structural system. They are not enclosed in special geometrical framings as the motifs on the dhoti of the other two sculptures, allowing them to appear more convincingly as decorations in complicated textile techniques. Moreover, the whole arrangement is not 'segmented' as in most other murals in Alchi. These observations suggest that the scenes on this dhoti may be

regarded as parts of one large composition consisting of many spatially interrelated parts. This reading could then underline our identification of the scenes with actual places in one larger geographic area, that is, the valley of Kashmir around its capital Srinagar.

In a central position on the right part of the dhoti we find the only secular building, a tall four-storeyed white house with curtained windows and shutters and with a ladder outside (541; scene no. 3). On the balcony or 'penthouse-like' verandah of the top floor, a royal couple is seated at leisure (542). Both persons have pronounced Indian features and are magnificently dressed, the king's jacket being decorated with 'Sassanian' medallions. Both have



544 King and mounted courtiers out for a hunt (scene no. 12).

The entertainment at the Kashmiri court is not only shown by musicians and an Indian dancer beside the palace, but especially by a hunt on horseback. After the saddled horses have been brought to the palace, the king gallops at full speed surrounded by his courtiers to the hunting grounds. He himself is identifiable by his crown and axe which are emblems of his sovereignty. Directly in front of him, a courtier carries a chained falcon. Footsoldiers accompany the cavalcade, and one holds a parasol over the king as an additional sign of dignity. The whole scene definitely suggests a direct precursor of later Islamic miniature painting.

beautiful diadems. Another less ostentatiously dressed couple on the floor below probably represents the crown prince and his wife. The building is structurally very close to the architecture which we still find today in Kashmir and the Kangra Valley. We may therefore see it as a condensed representation of the royal palace (*rājadhāni*) transferred to its situation in the centre of Srinagar near the Sadāśiva shrine by King Ananta (1028–63). According to its description in the *Rājataraṅginī*, it was built of wood and had many storeys.[326] In the painting the importance of the building is highlighted by the musicians at both sides, the half-naked female dancer throwing a flower and a royal sword-bearer (543). To the left of the palace, a groom is leading three partly saddled horses towards the building (544), accompanied above



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by some soldiers shown in half-profile. Their arrival is announced by a man blowing a long trumpet and by a drummer (541).

To the right of the palace, as a continuation of the scene to the left, the king is now shown amid a cavalcade of courtly horsemen galloping to the hunt with falcons (545, 546; scene no. 12), the king being characterised by his crown and the battle axe which is also the royal emblem in other murals in Alchi.[327] An interesting detail is that nearly all the heads of the court members, even the soldiers and musicians, are surmounted with haloes.

According to the *Rājataraṅginī*, the royal palace was situated near the large and important Sadāśiva temple.[328] On Avalokiteśvara's dhoti (scene no. 2), just above the cavalcade of hunters and adjacent to the palace, we see a large and evidently important Shaivite temple (547). Structurally it is a *pañcāyatana* type of building with a large central tower and four smaller turrets at the corners, rather similar to the structure of the Palden Drepung Chörten in Alchi (page 245 ff.). All the towers are crowned by tridents (*triśūla*) and thereby characterised as Shaivite. The rich framework of the door seems to represent woodwork. Through the open doors we can recognise a pyramidal heap of flowers, most probably covering a *liṅga* on a *yonī* base. A priest in red robes and an ascetic (548), characterised by the caste marks (*tilaka*) on their foreheads and their long hair, are offering sacrifices, accompanied by noble persons and *devatā* flying above the building and holding garlands (549). In front of the temple, two pleasure boats and two swimmers are seen in a canal-like pond. The proximity of this building to the palace allows an identification with the Sadāśiva temple to appear feasible.

An interesting architectural compound consisting of two buildings is shown to the right of the palace on the left leg of Avalokiteśvara (550; scene no. 10). The left half is a three-storeyed house similar to the palace, but with a strange roof crowned by a small *stūpika*. In the open niche of its upper storey stands an image of the four-armed Green Tārā. To the left of the



548 Left: Two different types of Shaivite priests are presenting offerings to the *liṅgam*, covered by white flowers, within the temple. The one to the right, dressed in a bright red coat and his hair tied in a decorative knot, seems to be the person leading the ceremony; to the left a bowing half naked *sādhu* with loose long hair has a basket with offerings dangling from his arm. He is accompanied below by a man balancing a tray with garlands of flowers.

547 Right: The Śiva temple (scene no. 2, *right*) in the direct vicinity of the palace is one of the richest buildings in the whole composition. It stands on a structured plinth with access in the centre. In order to escape difficulties in rendering spatial depth the artist has developed an interesting device for the perspective of the five towers crowning the *pañcāyatana*-type building: he has diminished the back towers in their size and placed them higher up as if growing out of the central pinnacle.



549 Flying *apsaras* presenting garlands of flowers lo the Shaivite temple, noble lay followers are seen praying.

building, a Buddhist priest, seated on a low bench, is offering a white shawl while others pay their respects. Most probably a Buddhist monastery with a chapel for the deity is intended. Tārā also appears in several other sanctuaries on the dhoti (553–555).[329]

The right half of the compound is a Hindu temple behind a fish pond and crowned by three *śikhara*-like towers. The image inside is a large central four-armed yellowish *nāga* king with serpent-like lower part of his body and a *nāga* hood behind his head. He is flanked by two consorts with fly-whisks. This icon can surely be identified with Balarāma, Krishna's stepbrother, who is usually represented in the form of a *nāgarāja*.[330]

To the right of this compound, we find another Shaivite temple (551; scene no. 11), this time in the architectural form familiar from Kashmir with a pyramidal roof in three steps. Again, the open doors reveal a heap of flowers covering a small shrine which would surely contain a *liṅga*. Since the paint has fallen off just at this spot, it cannot be identified anymore. To the left, a priest in while robe with his hair tied up into a turban-like coiffure and a *tilaka* on his forehead sits on a cushion, while to the right a long-haired ascetic is offering flowers.

Above this temple, we have a Vaiṣṇava sanctuary (552; scene no. 9) of the same architectural structure, but containing an image of a standing four-armed Viṣṇu, placing two of his hands on the heads of two smaller figures evidently representing the personifications of two of his emblems (*ayudhapuruṣa*), the wheel (*cakra*) and the club (*gadā*). This iconographic variant of Viṣṇu as Vasudeva was quite popular in Kashmir[331], although often in a four-headed variant (*caturānana*).[332]

To the left of this Viṣṇu temple, two other sanctuaries in close proximity are shown situated in a mountainous landscape with snow-covered sharp peaks and monkeys roaming in the forest. The left of the two buildings is a smaller Shaivite chapel containing a huge female head (553; scene no. 7). Perhaps the Buddhist artist was unsure as to how to represent Śiva's *liṅga* crowned by a head (*mukhaliṅga*)[333] or else he only painted the head of Umā out of the usual Maheśa group which was quite popular in Kashmir. In this combination the head of Umā is shown in profile like the head painted here on the dhoti.

To the right of this chapel, another temple is shown on top of a blue hill with monkeys and other animals in a forest (553; scene no. 8). The image of a standing four-armed Green Tārā is approached by a monk and adored by laypeople and musicians. Below the hill, a group is picnicking among trees. Again, the richly ornamented dresses of all the figures allows a glimpse of the fashion in Kashmir at the time.

Below the royal palace, on the right leg of Avalokiteśvara, there are two Buddhist temples, the elaborate one to the left (557; scene no. 5) with an icon of the ten-armed Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī with yellow complexion seated in royal ease (*lalitāsana*) on a peacock above a lotus pedestal. Musicians surround the building, and from above a divine couple comes floating down from heaven, one of them carrying a tray with *torma*.

The slightly smaller temple behind a fish pond to the right (scene no. 6) has a seated four-armed Green Tārā (554), with a monk offering a conch shell with burning candles or flowers and with flying deities above.

On the left leg below the royal cavalcade, there is another temple with the standing Green Tārā (555; scene no. 13) surrounded by a crowd of worshippers who include layfolk and monks wearing strange round caps covering their ears, the building again with the pyramidal roof of square Kashmiri masonry temples, while to the left, deer rest under a tree.

A similar, though larger, temple below (556; scene no. 14) is occupied by an icon of a twelve-armed Bodhisattva of white complexion and seated in *lalitāsana*. This is the only scene with some damage which makes an identification of the Bodhisattva difficult. By mistake, the restorer has even added the head of a Buddha. Interesting details are the tiny female figure emerging below the pedestal and reminiscent of the earth-goddess Bhū, and also two miniature heads of a leopard appearing at either side. The remaining attributes of the Bodhisattva point to an identification with Avalokiteśvara. Heavenly musicians with all kinds of instruments surround the building, among them a *gandharva* with the head of a horse.

As on the dhoti of the other two clay sculptures, here also the scene regarded as most important is placed at the lower end of the central fold of the garment between both legs. In this case, the essential Buddhist character of the scenes on the dhoti of Avalokiteśvara is stressed by placing at this spot a shrine with a standing gold-coloured Buddha Śākyamuni in a brilliant red robe, his right hand lowered in the bestowing gesture (*varadamudrā*) and dropping from it a jewel, probably the magical Wish-Granting Gem (*cintāmaṇi*) (561; scene no. 19). The building has the same strange roof as the monastery with the Tārā chapel (550; scene no. 10) with three *stūpikas* on top. The importance of this building as the focus or compositional culmination of the whole arrangement is accentuated by several deities flying above its roof (558–560; scenes nos. 15–18), the lowest couple honouring the Buddha with a banner and an umbrella with peacock feathers. Two more *apsaras* below the temple are playing the harp and a stick zither.



550 The direct juxtaposition of a Buddhist temple containing a Tārā chapel in the upper storey and a Hindu temple dedicated to a triad of deities (scene no. 10) expresses the cosmopolitan atmosphere prevalent in the capital Srinagar in the period before the takeover by Islam. This is underlined further by the representation of other Hindu sanctuaries, such as a smaller Shaivite temple (551, scene no. 11) and one for the four-armed Viṣṇu accompanied by personifications of two of his main emblems, the wheel and the club (552, scene no. 9). The buildings represented here correspond to common types of medieval Kashmiri architecture: a multi-storeyed monastery with plastered walls leaving some wooden structural elements visible and with a strangely formed roof, a temple of *pañcāyatana* type, and two temples with the characteristic stepped pyramidal roof.
Height of left-hand building: 17.5 cm.



551 Śiva temple with flower-adorned *liṅga* (scene no. 11).



552 Temple of Viṣṇu in the form of Vasudeva (scene no. 9).

553 With this rare case of an actual landscape representation just below the upper border of Avalokiteśvara's dhoti, we are led either into the outskirts of Srinagar or into its surrounding hills where different sanctuaries are located. Doubtless, the accent here is also on the scenes with figures. Still, the blue mountain is composed of roundish forms for hills and vertical black lines for trees with some roaming monkeys. A striking element is the peaks to the left representing snow-covered mountains in the distance, perhaps the Himalayas. A Buddhist monk is ascending the mountain towards a chapel with an icon of the Green Tārā (scene no. 8) to whom several other temples on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti are also dedicated (554, 555). To the left, at the foot of the mountain again a Shaivite temple (scene no. 7) is shown, this time revealing the uncertainty of the Buddhist painter with regards to correct Hindu iconography. The representation of a Śiva *liṅga* with a human head (*mukhaliṅga*) was most probably intended, but by mistake it was provided with a female head.
Actual height: 25.5 cm.



554 Green Tārā (Śyāma Tārā), in her various forms, is the most frequently represented deity found in the Alchi murals, the White Tārā (Sita Tārā) being totally absent.

The goddess played an important role in Kashmiri Buddhism before being introduced into western Tibet from 1042 CE by Atiśa. As a counterpart or even female manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, she in some ways replaces Prajñāpāramitā in her function as 'Mother of all Buddhas'. The line of transmission of her cult in Kashmir begins at the middle of the eighth century with Candragomin, continued by Ravigupta who was cured of leprosy after praying to Tārā and who composed a hymn of praise (*stotra*) to her. Later on, at about the middle of the eleventh century. Sarvajñamitra also composed a *stotra* to Tārā as the 'Wearer of the Wreath' (Sragdharā). Śraddhākaravarman, the Kashmiri collaborator of Rinchen Zangpo in his translation work, received instructions on her ritual, and the line continues down to the 'Great Paṇḍita of Kashmir' (*kha che paṇ chen*) Śākyaśrībhadra (1127–1225). This may explain the importance given to Tārā in the iconographic programme of the Sumtsek.

555 Among the five temples and chapels containing images of the goddess Tārā, the two illustrated here (scenes 6, left, and 13, right) represent two different types of Kashmir architecture: the one to the left is crowned by *śikhara*-like turrets, the one to the right with a stepped pyramidal roof.





556 Temple of a Bodhisattva, possibly Avalokiteśvara (scene no. 14).

557 Right: Ten-armed Mañjuśrī in his temple (scene no. 5).





558 The flying deities (scenes nos. 15–18), shown one above the other on the central fold of Avalokiteśvara's dhoti, accentuate the importance of the scene below, the temple devoted to the Buddha Śākyamuni (561; scene no. 19). Descending from above and offering different objects of adoration and veneration, they testify to the sanctity of the Buddha as the purpose of all the scenes painted onto the dhoti.

Left, actual height: 20 cm.

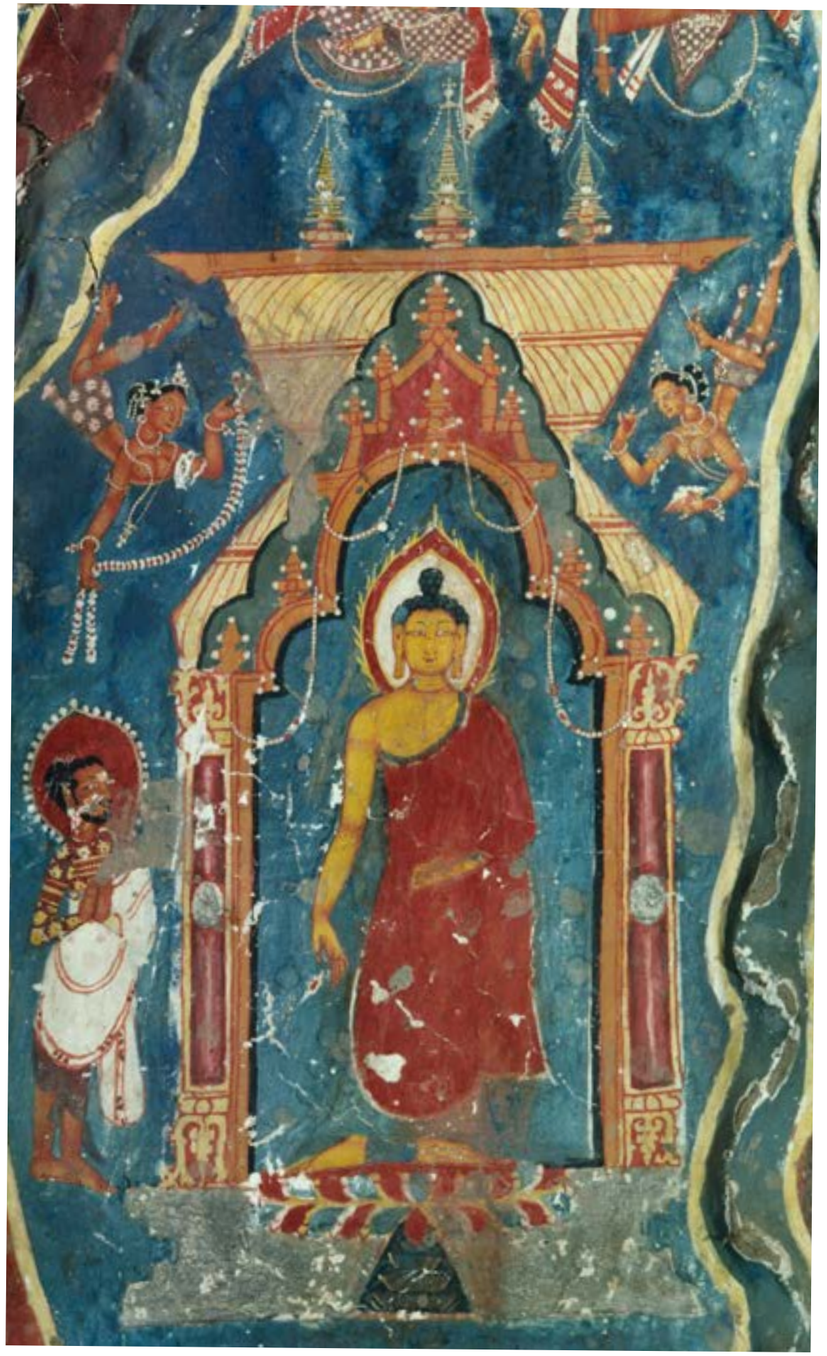


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561 The representations of sanctuaries on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti culminates in this Buddha temple at the lower end of the fold between the Bodhisattva's legs. The standing figure in the simple red garb of a monk, with the right shoulder bare and with an *uṣṇīṣa* clearly set off from the head, surely represents the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. A strange feature is the small jewel dropping down from his lowered right hand. It has no direct parallel in other renderings of the Buddha. The Hermitage of St. Petersburg has a painted scroll of the fourteenth century CE found in Khara Khoto and showing a standing, but in this case crowned, Buddha who in the outstretched palm of his lower right hand holds a Chinese coin.[334] Both elements, the jewel and the coin, may perhaps be explained as symbols for well-being granted by the Buddha to his followers.





562 Although this panel belongs to the best preserved examples of paintings in the Sumtsek, cracks in the surface layer bearing the painting, some even penetrating down to the rough plaster, are further symptoms of the precarious state of conservation of this jewel of Himalayan art. Certain measures taken by the monks of Likir Monastery, who are in charge of the care of the temples in Alchi, and also by the Archaeological Survey of India, have unfortunately proved far from adequate. An overall protection of the buildings against the dangers of rain and a fixing of the inner surfaces of the walls bearing the paintings, to secure them to the walls, are absolutely essential.

Actual size: 68 x 118 cm.

563 Overleaf: Detail of the central six-armed Tārā holding staff with three ends (*tridaṇḍa*) and a book in her upper hands. The goddess can now be identified as Mahāśānti Tārā.[339] CL

The Murals in the Left Niche

The paintings in the lower part of this niche belong to the most beautiful examples of the mural art in Alchi. In fact, technically and stylistically they appear like a transposition of miniature painting on to the walls of a building.

The Left Wall

To the left, above the panel with the five versions of the goddess Tārā (562), there is a red flaming disc with a ferocious blue Vajrapāṇi trampling on an elephant-headed Gaṇapati, holding a vajra and bell as his emblems (566).[335] He is counterbalanced on the right wall by an Acala image, the pair acting as protectors of the niche.

Although the overall composition is segmented, the different compartments are in a subtle way arranged into an internally consistent composition (562). The main theme is the Green Tārā, a deity who also plays an important role in the murals of the first upper floor, and who is here presented in five iconographical variants. The mode of their representation and of their arrangement on the wall panel seems to highlight a difference in religious value of each of the five Tārās.

The two lower figures, turned out of strict frontality, actually seem to look down on the two adoring human figures of a priest (569) and a noble lady (570) who most probably represent the donors of the whole Sumtsek or at least of this painting. The two Tārās are set into a framework clearly symbolising landscapes: below there is a pond of white water, also reappearing above where sharp peaks represent mountains with small trees and backed by clouds. A charming detail is a tiny monkey to the right of the left Tārā stretching out its hands towards her (571). Both Tārās have only two arms.

Above them, the upper two Tārās appear like apparitions in front of luminous haloes. The one to the right seems in particular to float in empty space (575). They are represented in strict frontality and both have four arms. They are flanked by a temple building with a large Buddha (574) and a stupa (576).

The central icon is shown in larger scale and placed in front of a white luminous moon disc. She is equipped with six arms. It seems as if the mural intends to show a hierarchy of religious value comparable to the so-called Three Bodies (*trikāya*) of a Buddha: an apparitional body (*nirmāṇakāya*) in human form, responding to the prayers and the adoration of living beings (lower pair of Tārās); a more transcendental body elevated into transmundane spheres (*saṃbhogakāya*, the upper pair); and a mystic absolute body (*dharmakāya*) as the source or abstract womb of the other forms (central figure). This interpretation follows an ascending sequence of sublimation, but it could also be reversed and read in a descending manner from the centre down as a process of manifestation.

The central figure is a large Green Tārā seated in front of a white moon disc (562). In recent publications she is acknowledged as a kind of hallmark for the quality of the Alchi murals. She sits cross-legged on a lotus base and has six arms, her right hands holding a staff with three ends (*tridaṇḍa*)[336] and a string of beads (*akṣasūtra*) and forming the *varadamudrā*, while her three left hands hold a book (*pustaka*), a decorated vase and form a mudra.

One of the most conspicuous features in this painting is the projection of that eye which is further away from the viewer beyond the outline of the face (563). This technique is applied

in a moderate way already in the eighth-century murals at the cave temples at Ellora and in manuscript illustrations of the eleventh to twelfth century and later on develops into a characteristic of Jain book illumination.[337] Tārā is clad in a dhoti ornamented with mounted bowmen and overlapping animals, and in a tight blue bodice (*kañcuka*) exposing swelling breasts and the belly around the navel. Such seductive garments appear in icons of North Indian and Kashmiri goddesses between about the eighth and twelfth centuries.[338] She has an extremely rich crown and jewellery. She is flanked by blue lotus flowers (*utpala*) on both sides. Her throne shows pairs of elephants and fly-whisk bearers mounted on steering *vyāla*. In the scrollwork above her throne, the five Tathagata appear in small format.

Despite the fact that she has six instead of four arms, the deity corresponds to descriptions given of 'Tārā Saving from Bad States of Existence' (Durgottāriṇī Tārā) in the *Sādhanamālā*.[339]

Implements for the ritual are spread out around an altar in front of her. To the left, a bearded priest in yellow garb and red hat sits on cushions (569), balanced on the right by a noble lady or queen in a red dress and white cape (570). The central goddess is surrounded by four more Tārā figures. Below to the left, there is a standing version in half-profile (571) and, above her, a frontal four-armed goddess corresponding to descriptions of the 'Tārā Granting Possessions' (Dhanada Tārā; 572).[340] To the right there is another standing four-armed Tārā (576), and above a four-armed seated version (575).[341]

In the upper left corner of the whole panel, a standing Buddha in preaching gesture and wearing a robe with a *svastika* meander is placed inside or in front of a temple with pyramidal roof in several layers as found in medieval Kashmiri architecture (574).[342]

The corresponding building in the right corner is a stupa on a multi-layered base flanked by pillars with lions on top (576). Two chains are hanging down from the pinnacle on both sides of the crowning discs, and a small male figure is climbing one of the chains. Flying ribbons adorn the uppermost parasol. The whole structure is reminiscent of votive stupas known from Gandhāra[343] and, very close to the stupas on terracotta plaques found in the ruins of Harwan (Hārvan, Shadarhadvana), Kashmir, probably datable to the third to fifth centuries CE. They show the same typical circle of poles bearing the pile of *chattras* and also the columns crowned by lions flanking the stupa proper on its stepped base.[344] These columns may have their prototypes already in stupas of the first to second centuries CE from Mathurā.[345]

Lastly, the lower corners of the panel contain donor figures: a bearded king, followed by a minister and a young male to the left (573), and a queen with her servant to the right (576). Their apparel, especially the ornamentation of their clothes[346], give them special importance as illustrations for the cultural history of Kashmir.

A narrow white borderline at the bottom of the whole panel contains two lines of a barely legible inscription in early Indian characters which awaits further study (562).[347]







564 In details such as those on opposite page, the minuteness of the artistic execution of many of the best Alchi paintings becomes manifest. They appear to be a transposition of a technique intended for miniature painting on paper or ivory on to walls. Elements such as the jewellery in Tārā's coiffure are precisely drawn with brush lines and then filled in with colour. The tendency to use shading as a way of evoking three-dimensionally is occasionally used here also. Narrow stripes in a slightly darker hue are applied parallel to the contour, a technique called 'shading by bands'(*hairikavartanā*) in Indian painting manuals.

565 Another technique is applied to some parts of the body surfaces, here to Tārā's face and breasts. This technique uses small dots or short strokes in increasing density or in darker hues of the basic colour. This technique called 'shading by dots' (*binduvartanā*) seems to be confined to certain colours such as green and red and it is applied mainly to give exposed parts of the human body a certain volume.

Dangerous cracks also appear here in the painted surface.

566 Right: The ferocious form of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi stamping down an elephant (*gaṇapati*) protects the left niche.





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Left: Here we see details of the two rearing *vyāla* at both sides of the central Tārā's throne. Their hind legs stand on white elephants of which only the heads are visible. Such fantastic creatures belong to the traditional adornments of thrones for Buddhist deities in medieval northwest Indian bronzes. They are here mounted by *gandharva*-like figures who embrace the animals around their necks, are richly dressed and stretch fly-whisks out to the deity.

Right: These two figures directly flank the central Tārā. The queen to the right seems to present a necklace of pearls and jewels to the deity. In front of her, objects containing offerings are set up, among them a precious *kuṇḍikā* flask for sacrificial water. The priest to the left is also surrounded by ceremonial objects and looks down onto a round altar within a square frame. Their position directly adjacent to the main icon surely connects both persons with the founding of the Sumtsek.

Overleaf left: Of the two Tārās to the left of the main icon, the lower one with two arms seems to present a blue lotus flower (*utpala*) either to the couple below or to the central Tārā.

Overleaf right: The four-armed version in front of a mandorla is turned towards the viewer. She corresponds in many respects to the so-called Dhanada Tārā.[348]



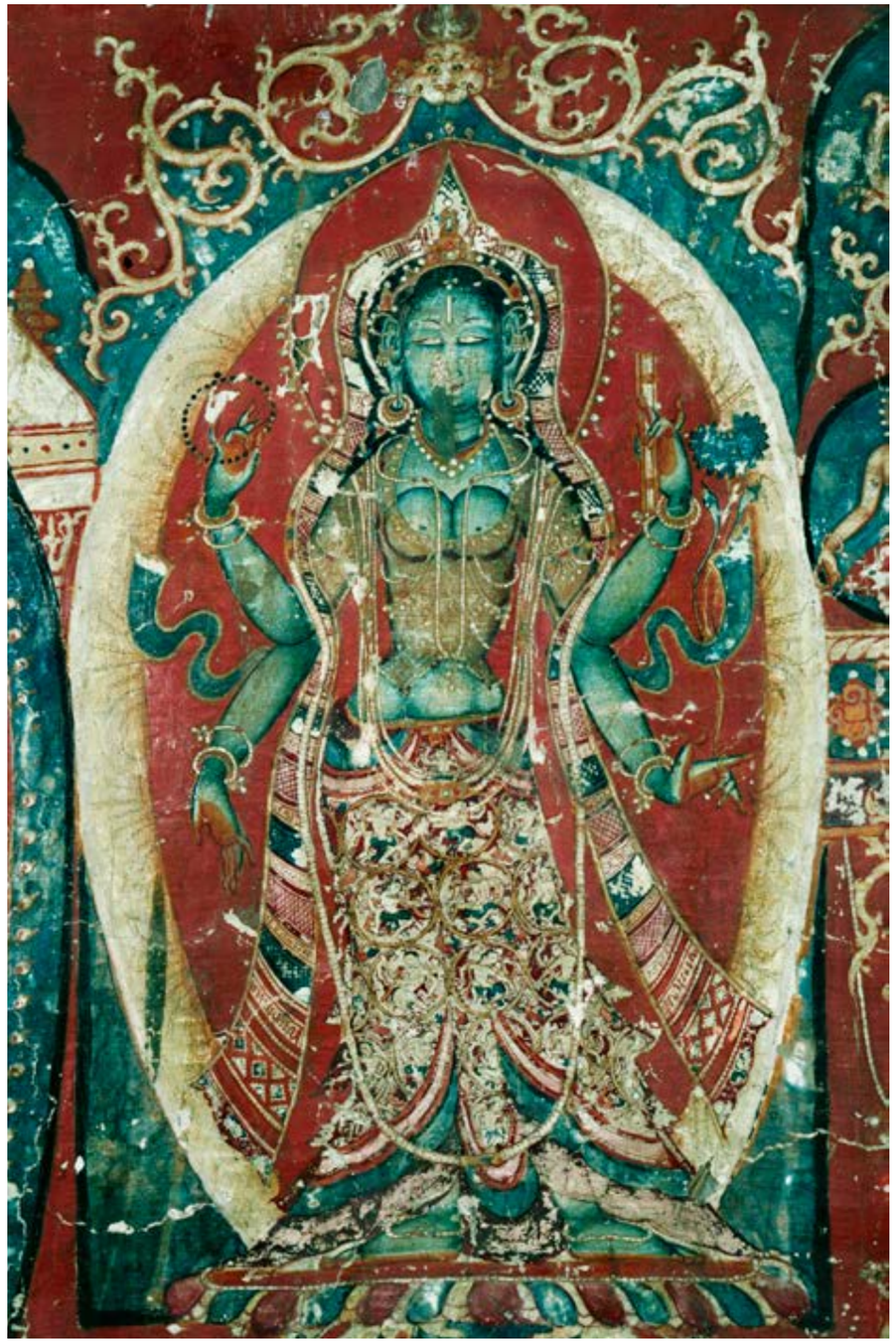
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573 Left: In the lower left corner of the panel a bearded king with a brimmed conical hat and holding a long staff is approaching the scene. A dagger is stuck into his belt and he wears a long kaftan-like coat with checkered ornamentation, the checks being filled with men on horses and elephants. He is followed by a slightly smaller attendant, similarly dressed and equipped, and by a still smaller servant, his coat ornamented with roundels containing overlapping lions as they are similarly represented on the Sumtsek ceilings. Should this painting portray a contemporary Ladakhi king, he surely makes his appearance in the outfit of a Kashmiri royal person.

574 Right: In the upper left corner, above this scene, the Buddha Śākyamuni with yellowish complexion is standing in front of a temple building with the stepped pyramidal roof typical of medieval Kashmiri architecture. A string of pearls floats around his body and his monk's robe covers both shoulders. It is decorated with a pattern of connected *svastika* which we find in a precisely identical form on the Sumtsek ceilings (panel no. 16, see figure 794) and, in a slight variant, on the robe of a monumental clay statue of the Buddha in Wanla.[349]

Actual height: 23.5 cm.



575 To the right of the central goddess we again find two versions of the Green Tārā, the one above also in the Dhanada variant with four arms and holding the appropriate emblems. Here she is represented seated with her legs in the fully locked position (*vajraparyaṅkāsana*) in front of a red mandorla with white border.

576 In accordance with the antithetical system of composition, corresponding to the temple with the Buddha to the left (574), the upper right corner of the panel is occupied also by a building, in this case a stupa which is surely one of the most interesting representations of architecture in the murals of Alchi. In practically all details it corresponds to forms of Kashmiri stupas traceable back to the third to fifth centuries CE, for instance on tiles found at Harwan, including even the flanking pillars crowned by lions. In this Alchi version, two chains are hanging down from the pinnacle which is adorned at the top with flying ribbons. A charming detail is the small figure of a man climbing up on one of the chains.

Parallel to the male royal group in the lower left corner (573), the right one shows two females, both with the long white capes which are so typical of the representation of local noble ladies in the Alchi murals.





577 Due to its position to the right of the of the central panel with Amitābha and near the opening of the niche, the right half of the two groups of deities seems to be accentuated as the more important one. This may be the reason why the Bodhisattvas as Buddhist figures take their position here. The two friezes with the Hindu gods are moved into the farther left corner and therefore are not so easily visible. Nevertheless, the Indian gods occupy the same levels as the Bodhisattvas and seem fully integrated into the Buddhist pantheon by this device. They are easy to recognise, although many of them are dressed in Kashmiri attire, and they document a certain familiarity of the painter with deities of the Hindu religion.

Actual size: 73 x 124 cm.

The Right Wall

Protected by a blue Acala above the upper right corner, this panel has a crowned Amitābha as the main figure in the centre (577). The whole composition is divided into four horizontal friezes with religious value increasing from bottom to top. The lowest band, subdivided into stepped segments, is devoted to the animal world, the wider one above to priests, followed by two friezes now framing the central panel with Amitābha. To the left, they show Hindu deities adoring the Buddha, and to the right, rows of Bodhisattvas. All figures, including the four larger Bodhisattvas at the head of each row, are turned in the direction of the Tathagata. The whole panel is crowned by a group of seven smaller Amitābha images, but here presented as Buddhas without the ornaments of a Tathagata.

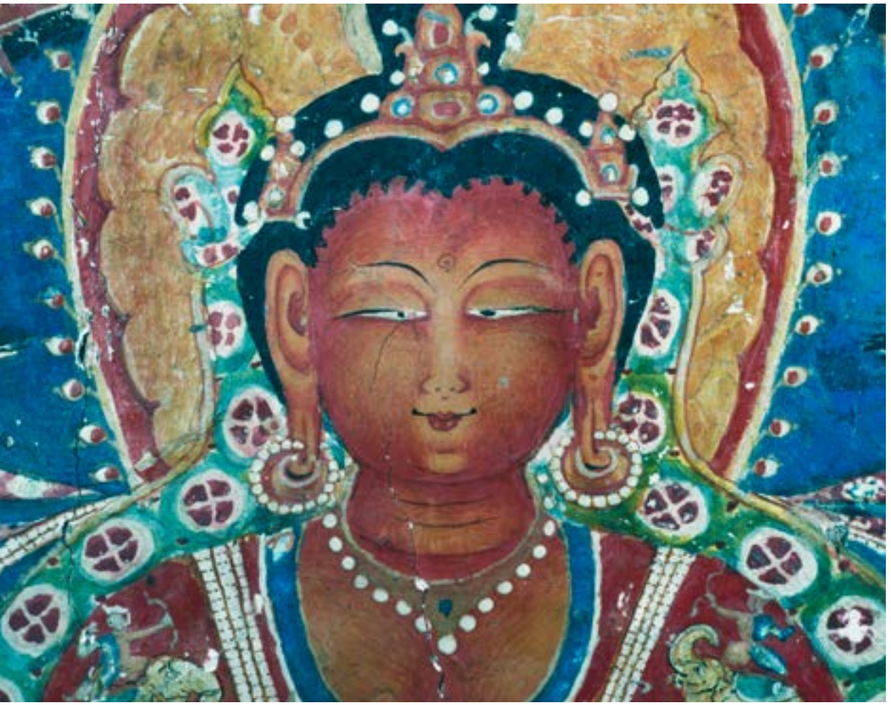
The panel with Amitābha is similar to the central ones on the two walls flanking the niche. Also here in the niche, the Buddha is shown in the opulent regalia of a Tathagata and the throne is richly ornamented (579). Two snake-like *makara* form a kind of portal above, and two four-armed deities crown the whole structure.

This central figure and its two flanking friezes seem to represent Amitābha's paradise, Sukhāvatī, since Bodhisattvas and Indian deities occupy the two upper registers (582, 583). The Buddha is framed on both sides by two Bodhisattvas. At the left, the lower frieze has a yellow four-armed Mañjuśrī, followed by Indian gods: Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Gaṇeśa (580) and Kārtikeya with eleven small monks behind them. In the frieze above a red Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin presides over the adoring group composed of Śiva, Devī, Vāyu (584), Indra and Varuṇa. All of these Hindu gods which have been integrated into the Buddhist pantheon are in some cases recognisable by the colour of their complexion, by their emblems and their *vāhana*.

To the right the lower series begins with a white Padmapāṇi followed by five unidentifiable Bodhisattvas in different colours and with haloes, each accompanied by an additional figure without halo (581, 585). A row of smaller *nāga* and *nāgiṇī* appears behind them (586). The upper group starts with a red Maitreya, also followed by adoring Bodhisattvas, the first one adoring the Buddha in prostration.

The frieze below this upper transcendental sphere contains priests, engaged in a ceremony at a round altar, using many fine implements (582, 583). They are of different ages, those to the left with grey beards, younger ones with black beards to the right. Apart from one who is wearing a yellow robe, they are clad in orange-red robes over a white undergarment, and their heads are covered by conical hats with brims at both sides. They have ornamented socks or shoes and sit on decorated cushions covered with antelope skins (*ajina*). This group is particularly important as it reflects the religious atmosphere of the time. Ceremonial paraphernalia, such as books resting on small tables, conch shells, stands with elegantly curved legs supporting bowls and their offerings, bear witness to the elaborate rituals performed.

A narrow band consisting of stepped panels below the priests contains lively and beautiful groups of different animals including deer, swans and a monkey shaking a tree.

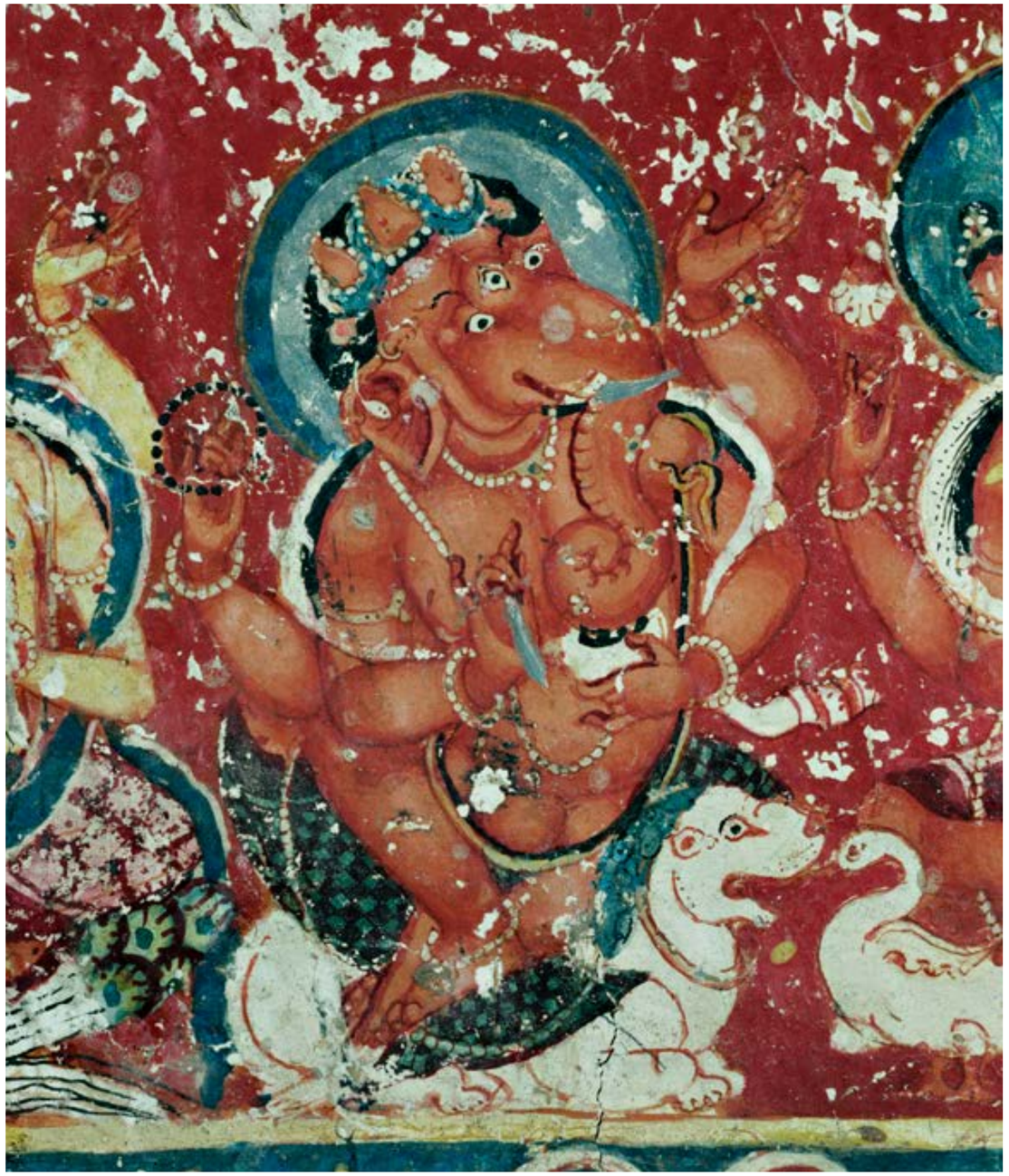


578

579 In this excellently preserved panel, Amitābha is again shown in the attire of a Tathagata. He is crowned with a jewelled diadem and wears a deep red robe covering both of his shoulders and ornamented with bowmen mounted on elephants, an ornament that we find in similar versions on the ceiling panels of the Sumtsek, The ribbons flowing down from his diadem are dyed by the typical double tie-resist technique which is also to be found on ceiling panels (for instance panels 19 and 22). The white lotus serving as his throne is supported by five blue peacocks. The fantastically embellished throne has several interesting details, especially the two green *makara* with their snake-like bodies forming a kind of *toraṇa* at the top. Decorative elements reminiscent of leaves project from their bodies. In place of the usual lion head (*kīrtimukha*) at the pinnacle, a strange white creature with wings holds a siring with pearls. Above the throne two deities, one bearded and one young, are seated on lions and hold pointed jewels.

Right: actual size: 43 x 31 cm.





580 The Hindu god Gaṇeśa, fourth figure in the central row to the left.



581 A green Bodhisattva holding a lotus with jewel, second figure in the central row to the right.



582



583



Previous pages: the two sides of the assembly flanking Buddha Amitābha. On the left the Bodhisattvas are headed by Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin and Mañjuśrī, on the right by Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara. CL

584 Left: Most of the Hindu gods to the left of Amitābha are easily identifiable. The crowned elephant head of Gaṇeśa (580) has three eyes. The white lion as his *vāhana* corresponds to traditional Indian iconography, as does the string of beads (*akṣamālā*) as well as the skull-cup (*kapāla*) held by two of his four hands.

In the case of the wind-god Vāyu (this page) the iconography is not as clear: his complexion should be blue, not brown as in our painting. The gazelle (*mṛga*) is appropriate to him, as his *vāhana*, and the emblem in one of his hands could be explained as the indispensable staff (*daṇḍa*) or banner (*dhvaja*). Nevertheless, his most characteristic emblem, the wind sack (*vātapuṭa*), is missing. It seems as if the painters were not in all respects familiar with Hindu iconography.[350]

585 Top right: The Bodhisattvas in the two friezes to the right of Amitābha (581) seem to be anonymous, although they are represented with different hues of complexion and holding different emblems. Each of them is accompanied by a slightly smaller male figure without a halo. Together they seem to portray persons with a Buddhist background within the entourage of Amitābha's paradise world.

586 Bottom right: Creatures such *nāga* are also integrated into this sphere; they appear as half-figures behind the margin above the Bodhisattvas, each of them accompanied by his *nāgiṇī*. Small snakes curling up behind their heads characterise their serpent nature.





The Murals on the Back Wall

The two walls to the side of the large Maitreya sculpture are decorated with seven hundred and twelve small images of the Buddha Akṣobhya, but here, in contrast to the entrance walls, all of the figures exhibit the same earth-touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) and wear the same red robe, covering only the left shoulder. The Akṣobhya are seated on white elephants as their appropriate *vāhana* and have, alternately, red and white haloes arranged in a diagonal sequence as a means of structuring the composition. Again each part of the wall has in its centre a panel with a larger and richer version of the Tathagata. The left panel was badly damaged by rain running down the wall and was repainted to a large part during the 1980s (588). Here five white elephants support the throne and two small priests in a prostrate position adore the Buddha. Below there are two friezes, the upper one with subordinate deities (589), the lower one with charming representations of different animals (590, 591).



587 The right half of Akṣobhya's throne is well preserved and exhibits the usual structure which can be traced back to northeastern Indian bronzes. Its centre is occupied by a pair of *gandharva* trying to mount the *vyāla* of the throne structure. The red male is waving a fly-whisk (*cāmara*) towards the Tathagata. He is crowned and wears a tight jacket decorated with roundels containing overlapping lions, a typical device of the painted copies of textiles on the ceiling panels of the Sumtsek. The female is probably holding a long flute. The naked upper part of her body is represented in an awkward position, the right arm crossing both of her breasts. In the bluish border of Akṣobhya's halo, four-armed flying female deities are waving offerings.

588 Right: The Akṣobhya panel on the left side was partially repainted in the 1980s. CL





589 Left: The upper frieze below the Akṣobhya panel had seven minor deities set into compartments between architectural pilasters. The three to the left have been obliterated by the seepage of rain water running down the wall from the ceiling. The central four-armed figure seems to support the structure above with two hands; one is playing a *vīṇā*-like guitar, another is riding a white lion. This series seems to be an additional symbol for Akṣobhya's paradise, Abhirati, expressed by the whole composition.

Right: The lower frieze still preserves five fine groups of animals. From right to left, there are a white swan, a grey hawk, a pair consisting of a sheep and a white horse, another with a lion and an elephant and lastly one with a mongoose and a snake.[351] The left part is also destroyed by seepage of rain water.

An interesting detail is the elements above the dome-like upper margin of the frieze: sharply pointed bluish forms represent mountains with small trees in between. They are backed by white clouds against a blue sky. These abstract depictions of a landscape, reappearing in several other murals at Alchi, seem to be related to similar devices used in contemporary paintings on cloth from Khara Khoto as a backdrop for religious scenes.[352]



590

591



592 The panel with Akṣobhya on the right half of the back wall has an extremely rich ornamentation.

Actual size of panel: 64 x 49 cm.

Right: Near the lower corners, two flying female deities are shown swimming in empty space in a quaint attitude which can also he found in murals at Dunhuang near the western border of China. They swing chains with globes attached at their ends, much like Catholic incense burners but which may represent jewels.

A second pair, this time four-armed, appears in the two upper corners (595 f.), holding fly-whisks in addition to the incense burners. Four more goddesses of the same kind are shown directly over Akṣobhya's moon-disc, two of them holding a golden tray with pyramidal *torma* as offerings.



593

594





595 Upper portion of Akṣobhya's throne with heavenly musicians and flying *apsaras*.



596

The right panel has also had some repairs to the face and chest of the Buddha, but is otherwise well preserved (592). Akṣobhya is seated in front of a white moon-disc, the golden border of which has ornaments in light pastiglia relief, on a throne with five elephants. His throne is flanked by the usual set of animals on both sides (elephants, lions, *vyāla* with fly-whisk bearers, pairs of winged dwarfs perhaps representing *kinnara*, and *makara* mounted by figures blowing long trumpets forming a kind of *toraṇa*). Flying female deities carry offerings inside and outside the scrollwork at the top.

A priest in the garb of a Śrāvakayāna[353] monk with an almsbowl and *gandharva*-like figure



with a blue face and hands, both with fly-whisks, sit below on either side of a round altar. On both sides are placed decorated vases and conch shells containing offerings.

In a horizontal frieze below, nine men in Indian dress, two of them with drums, are dancing with somewhat grotesque movements (597–599).

Whereas the two central wall panels to the left represent the western Sukhāvatī Paradise of Amitābha, the two main fields of these back walls symbolise Abhirati, 'High Pleasure', the corresponding eastern paradise of Akṣobhya which plays an important role in the iconographic programme on several walls in the temples at Alchi, for instance on the back wall of the Dukhang (156–161).

597 Within the elaborate ritual of the tantric school of Buddhism dancing appears as a possible constituent in addition to music. Both activities are personified among the four inner offering goddesses by the figure of Vajragītā (Vajra Song) and Vajranṛtyā (Vajra Dance; see below page 638).

In this frieze a rather ecstatic form of dance is represented, performed not by women, but by nine men. Their bodies are shown in extreme agitation, one of them even performing a kind of somersault. Two men provide the rhythm with hand-drums.

The overall composition of the nine figures appears well constructed, the movement starting at both outer ends and moving rhythmically through the whole group. In spite of their rather grotesque stances, nothing appears unnatural.

This scene, together with others such as the frieze with the musicians, bears testimony to the close familiarity of the artists active in the Alchi temples with the different aspects of Kashmiri culture, which a purely Ladakhi painter could have hardly acquired.

Actual height of figures: *c.* 4 cm.



598

599



The Sculptures and Murals in the Main Niche

The niche in the back wall has the tallest of the three Bodhisattva sculptures, a Maitreya of 4.63 metres in height (600). His head reaches far into the first upper floor and can only be observed clearly through its triangular opening (674). His body is red, the head being gilt and with the Buddha Vairocana as *kuleśa* on the front of the five-pointed crown (867). He forms different mudra, and is attended by four goddesses and two flying deities on the side walls.[354]

The Paintings on the Dhoti

The scenes painted within roundels depict stages in the life of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni as the predecessor of Maitreya, who will have to pass through similar phases after his future incarnation in a human body (608).

The three uppermost, medallions on both sides of the dhoti seem to have no obvious connection to Buddha's life, but only show stupas and some figures. The next three triads of roundels on the right leg are concerned with Śākyamuni's existence in the Tuṣita heaven before his birth on earth. He is here adored by his future successor Maitreya on whom he confers a diadem. In the fourth group we see the elephant descending to the dreaming queen Māyā and Śākyamuni's birth, followed in the series below with scenes after the delivery, such as the bath by *nāga* kings (601–603). The next set contains scenes from the Buddha's youth such as the care by his aunt Gautamī and the visit of the Rishi Asita. The lowest and partly damaged set shows the boy with his father and at school.

The triad of medallions at the bottom of the left leg continues the scenes of education whereas the next set above represents the contests of the young prince: a running match, wrestling and fighting with a sword, followed in the next band above by horse-riding, archery and the throwing of the dead elephant (604).[355] Other scenes of Siddhārtha's life as a prince continue above where he is shown riding an elephant, and also of encountering a monk who leads a funeral procession, probably a condensed representation of the events which led to his renunciation of worldly life. He is shown with his wife Gopā and being advised by a four-armed deity to leave the empty palace where Gopā nurses his son Rāhula.

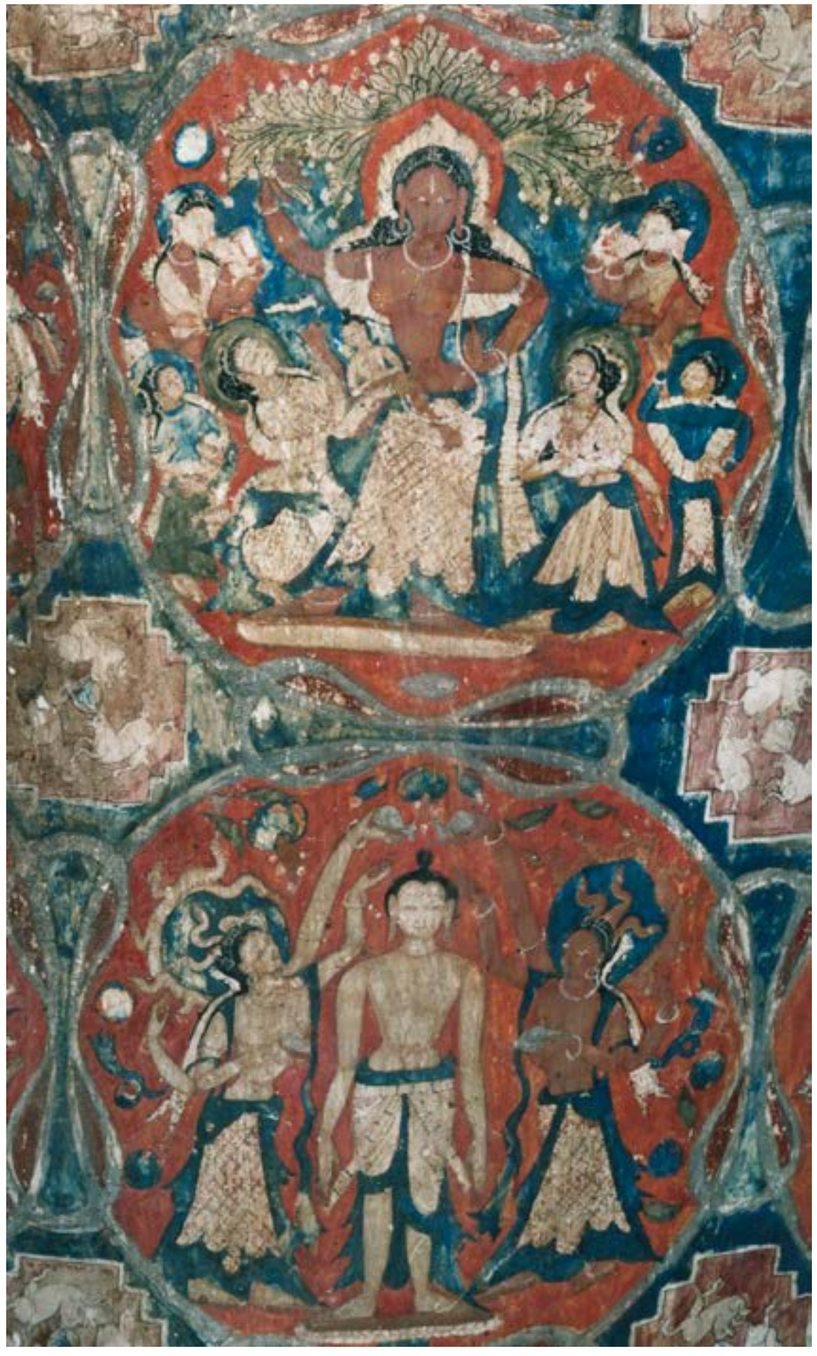
The fourth triad of roundels from the top shows Siddhārtha on his horse Kaṇṭhaka being carried away by four deities (605), the cutting of his hair in front of a stupa, adored by his groom Chandaka, and the riderless horse returning to the mournful ladies at the palace. Above, the prince is first seen washing his clothes, then seated as an emaciated ascetic in a stage-like landscape (606), and is finally portrayed preaching after his awakening under the bodhi tree, surrounded by Bodhisattvas.

In the topmost group of medallions, we see Sujātā offering the milk of three cows to the Buddha, the Enlightened One being exposed to the seduction of Māra's daughters (607) and lastly the Buddha seated on a rock encircled by a snake and preaching to a group of monks. The usual gazelles are missing in this representation of the first Sermon. A damaged medallion to the right with stupas may have depicted Śākyamuni's cremation.

600 Among the three sets of wall paintings in Alchi representing the life of Buddha Śākyamuni,[356] this one on Maitreya's dhoti has the strongest Indian-Kashmiri character. Its more than sixty scenes are composed within the space of red circular medallions. The empty spaces between four such medallions are decorated with three or four deer-like animals, the three long ears being shared by all of them together, forming a triangle in the centre.[357] The sequence on the dhoti begins below the belt on the right leg; the succeeding scenes are arranged in opposite directions downward through the horizontal groups of three discs, then turn to the left leg, ascend in the same way upward, and end in a downward movement on the central fold between the legs.

As in other sequences representing the life cycle of the historical Buddha, here also the artist has concentrated his interest on the earlier phase of the biography before the awakening, since more colourful events fall within this period of Śākyamuni's earthly existence.

For the arrangement of the life and the scene numbering see the overview drawing in figure 608. CL



601 The upper of the two scenes on both of these pages shows the birth of prince Siddhārtha. In full accordance with descriptions in texts on the life of Buddha, his mother Māyā stands underneath an *aśoka* tree, grasping one of the twigs with her right hand while the prince, already equipped with an *uṣṇīṣa* and his hands joined in a praying gesture, makes his appearance out of her right hip. He is received by a lady in Kashmiri outfit, balanced by a similar figure to the right and with other persons watching or blowing the conch shell. The upper part of Māyā's reddish body is naked. A white scarf flows down from her head (no. 9).

The scene below represents the prince, here already fully grown, being bathed or lustrated by the two *nāga* kings Nanda and Upananda. The four-armed kings are characterised by twisting snakes projecting from their heads and by haloes. Both pour water from *kuṇḍikā*-like flasks on the prince's head (no. 10).

Diameter of roundels: 15 cm.

Overleaf: Four important stages in the career of Śākyamuni are depicted from left to right. In the left roundel, the prince in Kashmiri dress and accompanied by a servant wearing a turban is about to smash the small figure of a white elephant, which he holds by his hind legs. Curtains hang down from above. The scene represents the victory of the prince over an attacking elephant.

The next scene shows Siddhārtha on his horse Kaṇṭhaka, being secretly and silently carried away from his palace by four deities which support the horse's legs.

Further to the right, the emaciated future Buddha sits as an ascetic meditating on a flat rock in an abstract landscape, typical of the Alchi style.

The last roundel contains the scene of Śākyamuni's temptation under the bodhi tree by demons and Māra's dancing daughters, the Buddha overcoming these dangers by the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*).



602

603





604 Siddharthā throwing the dead elephant out of the city (no. 19).[359]



605 The prince secretly leaving his palace (no. 33).

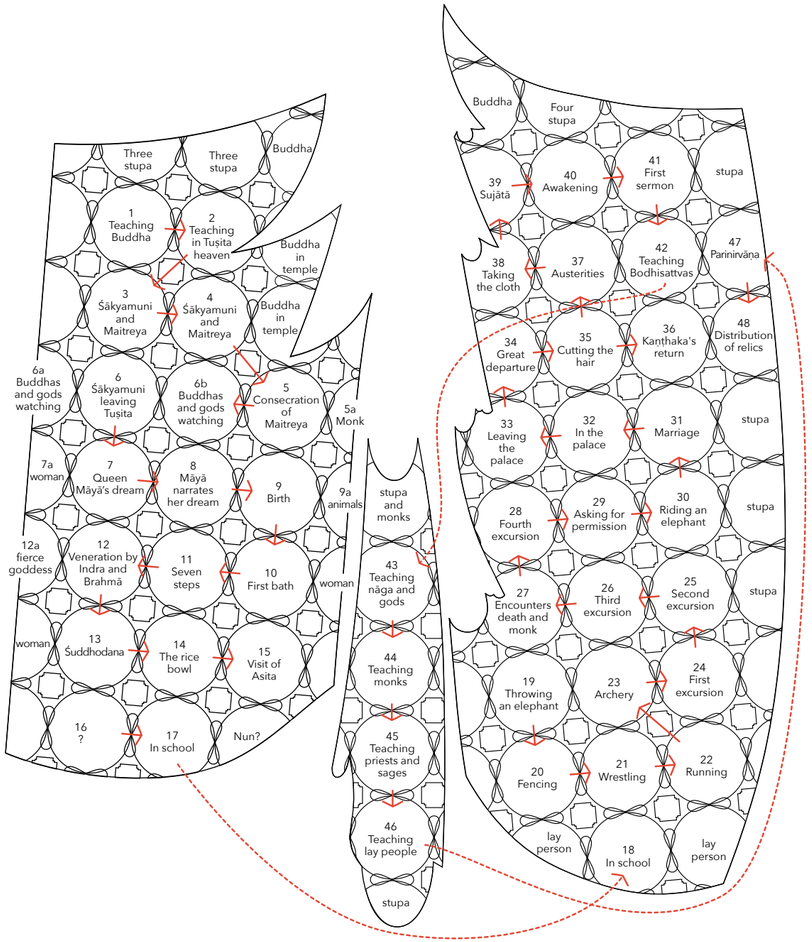


606 The emaciated Siddhārtha meditating (no. 37).



607 Śākyamuni's temptation by the daughters of Māra (no. 40).

The activity of promulgating the Dharma to different living beings, to the *nāga*, to monks of the Sangha and to average layfolk, is shown in the roundels of the central fold (609). At the bottom, two *apsaras* venerate a stupa which probably holds the Buddha's relics.



608 Key to the organisation of the Buddha's life on the dhoti of Bodhisattva Maitreya.[358] CL

609 Between Maitreya's legs the awakened Buddha, seated on an hourglass-shaped throne that symbolizes Mount Meru, teaches different audiences arranged in a social hierarchy from top to bottom. In the upper two medallions seen here the audience are gods, *nāga* (no. 43) and monks (no. 44).[360] CL

The Murals in the Back Niche

The murals on the lower parts of the two walls reveal an interesting mixture of religious and secular themes. The two large panels near the front both have inscriptions which were probably written at later dates over the original texts which have been obliterated.[361]

Left wall

On its right half, near the far end of the niche, is shown a five-headed and ten-armed form of Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha, corresponding to a similar figure of Mañjuśrī, Mañjughoṣa of the Dharmadhātu mandala, with four heads and eight arms on the opposite wall of the niche.[362]

A four-armed yellow Mañjuśrī seated on a rich lion throne is again presented as the central figure in the topmost frieze (610, 611). To his right and below, there are adoring monks, above them noble ladies present offerings, accompanied by an emaciated creature, perhaps a *preta*, and three *nāga*. To the Bodhisattva's left we also see worshipping monks and deities of the Indian pantheon such as Śiva and Brahmā.

To both sides of this central group, scenes represent events which might be related to the founding of temples in Alchi. To the left, four priests are approaching a four-armed Mañjuśrī. Below them a lady and a young man are ascending a ladder in front of a chapel-like building (613). To the right, a similar lady is presenting a white shawl and a lotus flower to a temple, while a man is sitting behind her in front of three stupas and ritual objects (614).

Below the main panel, to the right of the inscription, there is a group of five seated priests and two lay persons and another group of four ladies together with one servant and children.

Right Wall

In the upper field, a yellow Akṣobhya is seated on his throne, flanked by two Bodhisattvas and attended by adoring monks and a royal lady with her servant (616). To the left, we see a beautiful stupa between trees and a crouching deer (623). Below, two monks are proceeding from an open door and ascending a ladder (627). To the right, there is a paradise-like garden with three trees, two geometrically shaped ponds, deer, a parrot and a peacock (625, 628). Below, a woman looks out of a window, a man is climbing a ladder and a monk steps out of a building (626).

The two friezes beside the inscription have a large priest with white hair and beard on a seat with antelope skin, surrounded by ritual objects in front of an altar (618) and accompanied by six other priests in smaller scale (620). The lowest band contains six tantric priests (621, 622).[363]

The details of these scenes offer invaluable material for the study of rituals and ceremonial implements used around the early thirteenth century.[364]



610

611 A rectangular panel found on the left wall of the back niche is filled with an inscription written in semi-cursive (*dbu med*) script, the contents of which is of importance for the history of the Sumtsek and for an interpretation of its large clay sculptures.[365] Since the inscription was not written personally by the patron (*yon bdag*) and monk (*dge slong*) Tsültrim Ö who is named as the founder, but by a certain Drakden Ö (*grags ldan 'od*) at some later date, we cannot be sure whether his interpretations really correspond with those of the founder (see above page 484).

The text begins with an invocation of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī who is actually represented above the inscription, and goes on to a description of the four stages of human life. It then gives the name of Tsültrim Ö and explains the meaning of the three large clay sculptures as reliquaries of body, speech and mind (*sku gsung thugs kyi gdung rten*). Strangely, the sequence used to enumerate the Bodhisattvas runs counter-clockwise, therefore being contrary to the usual sequence of circumambulation.

Overleaf: Above left: a bearded priest, seated amongst a set of ritual implements, is about to perform a ceremony for the Bodhisattva. He wears the usual yellow garb over white undergarments and a brimmed conical hat.

Below left: a lady has stepped out of the door of a white-washed building. She has handed over a tray with ribbons to another woman who is ascending a ladder, probably in order to present this gift to the monks.

Above right: A seated man dressed in a red kaftan and white cape amid plates of offerings. With a gesture he seems to urge the woman in front, who carries a lotus bud and a scarf or garland of pearls in both hands, to enter the wooden building, probably a temple. Short ladder-like stairs lead to an open door, and the roof is crowned by pinnacles. A tray filled with scarves, and three stupas above, emphasize the religious atmosphere.

Below right: This scene again represents a white-washed building with a wooden portal-like structure. A young man has emerged from the open door and is about to climb the ladder. In his It'll hand he holds a garland which he will probably present to the lady above.



612 A priest about to perform a ceremony.



613 Lady bringing gifts to the temple.



614 A noble couple amid buildings of a religious compound with stupas.



615 Young man with a garland attempting to climb a ladder.



616 In contrast to the other inscriptions in the Sumtsek, the one on the right side of this wall in the niche is written in headed (*dbu can*) script.[366] It is of a much later date, composed during the reign of King Tashi Namgyel (*bkra shis rnam rgyal*, reigned *c*. 1555–1575) and is concerned with restoration work on the Sumtsek, even naming those in charge, among them a lady who prepared turquoise for the paint, a fact that testifies to the role played by women in the building and maintenance of the temples in Alchi, which may be reflected also by their appearance in several murals.

617 The main icon in the upper register is the Tathagata Akṣobhya, recognisable by the elephant as his *vāhana* and the earth-touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) of his right hand. Strangely enough, he has here a yellow complexion rather than the usual blue as we see it on the walls flanking the niche. His golden robe, covering only the left shoulder, and also his halo have ornaments in light pastiglia relief. The structure of his throne differs from those of other Tathagata in the Alchi murals: the superimposed animals at both sides are absent and instead four tiny figures nearly touch the Buddha in adoration.





618 Among the group of priests on the right wall of the niche, one is depicted in larger size. He has white hair and beard and is seated on an antelope skin, his body being covered by a wide orange-coloured robe. Whereas the other priests wear the typical conical hats, the brim of his cap is upturned and has a stepped border at the rear end. He is placed on a wooden bench under a throne-like stepped wooden canopy crowned by small *stūpika*. Around him are arranged all the paraphernalia for the ritual.

Three priests sit behind him, three more face him. They all have their hands hidden under their coats as if engaged in meditation (lower right).

The Buddha Akṣobhya himself is framed by adoring persons of different social ranks, including monks, nobles with their female partners and also youths holding strands of jewels (upper right).



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621 Several details of this mural are of particular interest, especially the group of six tantric priests in the lowest register. Some of them do not wear the usual garb of a Buddhist monk, but are clad in kaftan-like coats held by a belt. All of them are crowned by a diadem with three points similar to those worn by deities and Bodhisattvas in sculptures or paintings of Kashmir, including the murals of Alchi. A curious feature are the ball-like elements on both sides vaguely reminiscent of the headgear typical of the so-called mountain priests (*yamabushi*) of the Shugendō Buddhist school in Japan. The tantric character of the priests here is obvious by the mudra they are forming with their hands, including the so-called vajra-fist (*vajramuṣṭi*) and the emblems of the vajra and bell (*ghaṇṭā*). No comparable representations seem to be known from other places in Ladakh or Kashmir.

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623 The niche also contains some fine representations of stupas within a landscape setting. One of them is framed by trees with a white altar in front flanked by two pairs of gazelles (upper right). The whole setting probably represents the compound of a monastery, some of its buildings shown in the frieze below (see the following double page).

624 Also in this mural a noble lady with a wide red cape, accompanied by a servant, is offering a string of pearls.





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As on the opposite wall of the back niche, here also temple buildings with whitewashed walls and structural elements such as doors and windows executed in carved wood are represented on this mural with Akṣobhya.

626 Below right: Again a man is ascending a ladder in order to present his string of jewels to the group above, while a woman is watching from a window.

627 Below left: On the opposite side, two monks have stepped out of an open door; the one on the ladder carrying a garland of flowers, the other one holding a book under his arm.



628 Upper scenes: Whereas in many cases landscape is only hinted at by very small elements added to the border of thrones or panels, we see here a more extended representation of a monastic garden. Two ponds of rectangular shapes with lines representing waves and with flowers are shown directly from above, whereas the framing trees are seen strictly from the side view. Their foliage is delineated in deliberately different shapes and colours. Again two groups of deer or gazelles are resting in the peace of the park, birds such as a parrot and a peacock (625) adding life to the top of the trees. In such scenes, the Alchi painters were not bound by the rules of iconography and were therefore able to produce charming and intimate motifs.







629 As in other arrangements of 'one thousand' images of the same figure when represented in different colours, the Mañjuśrī images are likewise distributed in a sequence resulting in a diagonal row of figures in the same colour on the two parts of the wall to the right in the ground floor of the Sumtsek. Whereas in most other cases, for instance on the wall of the Palden Drepung Chörten, this system is followed very strictly, here on the left half of the right wall, there appear some inconsistencies interrupting the diagonal arrangement, especially near the larger central panel. Whether this fact should be interpreted as a sign of inconsistency in planning the overall layout by the painters or just the result of a certain negligence during the actual painting process makes no real difference since it is not visually disturbing and avoids monotony in overall effect.

Left, actual height: c. 3 m.

630 Detail of the central panel to the right of the niche.

Overleaf: the two central panels to the left and right of the niche on the right side wall.

The Murals on the Right Wall

The two parts of this wall (figuratively to the east since it is opposite Amitābha) are covered with rows of seven hundred and twenty-eight small figures of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (629), who is also present in the colossal sculptured icon in the niche of this side (637). In contrast to the other two walls with niches, in this case the same representative of the pantheon occupies the entire wall space. Another difference is that the Bodhisattvas are not represented in the same colour. The five different colours of their complexion correspond to the symbolic colours of the five Buddha families (*pañcakula*): blue, white, red, yellow and green (629).

Again, in the centre of both parts of the wall, the same figure reappears in larger scale within a richly decorated panel (631, 632). In front of a blue disc, the golden border of which is decorated in pastiglia relief (630),[367] the yellow Bodhisattva is seated on a throne with two white lions. He has four arms, holding in his hands a sword and an arrow (right), a lotus flower with a book and a bow (left). Each hand is accompanied by a small disc containing a miniature goddess symbolising the active force of the hand and its emblem. This form of the Bodhisattva seems not to be widely documented in the usual *Sādhana* collections. Perhaps he may be identified with the so-called 'Sharp-witted Mañjuśrī', Tīkṣṇa Mañjuśrī (*rjam dpal rnon po*, Chinese: Minjie Wenshu).[368] The Bodhisattva wears a richly coloured dhoti and shawls, his golden crown and halo are also decorated in pastiglia relief. There are differences in the extremely fine ornamentation of the two thrones with their flying deities, musicians and animals (633–636): the example on the left wall showing the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*) on the base of the throne (631), and the example on the right the eight auspicious symbols (*aṣṭamaṅgala*; 632). Both panels represent the art of Alchi at its best.

The seven treasures are, from left to right: the lotus (*padma*) which in this representation takes the place of the elephant (*hastin*); the horse (*aśva*); the queen or wife (*strī*); the wheel (*cakra*); the minister (*mantrin* or *gṛhapati*); the general (*parināyaka*); the jewel (*ratna* or *cintāmaṇi*).

The eight auspicious symbols can be traced back to Indian art of the Kuṣāṇa period, which developed later into different sets for Hinduism and Buddhism. Here we have the set widely used in Buddhist art: from left to right, the lotus (*padma*); the conch (*śaṅkhā*); the banner (*dhvaja*); the endless knot (*granthi*); the wheel (*cakra*); the umbrella (*sitātapatra*); the jar or vase (*kalaśa*); the pair of fish (*matsyayugma*).

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Above: Whereas the painters of the Alchi murals are comparatively familiar with a realistic representation of some animals such as horses and elephants, their rendering of lions tends to be heraldic. Details such as the mouth with dagger-like teeth, the glaring eyes and the moustache are exaggerated and stylised. These traits are also quite obvious in the lions as *vāhana* in the two central panels with Mañjuśrī.

Left: But even in the representation of flying *apsaras* around the throne, there appear certain inconsistencies, revealing the fact that the painters followed preformed traditional clichés without being directly influenced by the actual physical appearance of a naked female body. The unnaturally twisted position of the four-armed *apsaras* descending from above results in the strange fact that both the groove along the spine on the back of the deity and also the navel on her belly are shown simultaneously. Earlier iconographic examples of this twisted posture can be found, for instance in the pairs of *vidyādhara* in the four corners of the masonry ceiling in the small Shaivite temple of the tenth century CE at Pāndrethān south of Srinagar. It is quite common for flying deities in murals from other areas of Buddhist painting and for figures outside mandala representations in Alchi (see 731 f. and 752 ff.).



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The Sculptures and Murals in the Right Niche

The right niche is filled with the clay statue of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, about four metres high and standing quite erect (*samabhaṅga*), with a yellowish complexion, the face being gilt (637). His four hands also exhibit, different mudra and are also probably considerably remodelled. Possibly the statue represents the iconographic variant called Tīkṣṇa Mañjuśrī who occupies the central panels of the flanking walls. Dress and ornaments correspond to those of Avalokiteśvara. He is attended by four coquettish goddesses and flying deities above.[370]

The Paintings on the Dhoti

The dhoti of Mañjuśrī is divided into panels for decoration by diagonal rows of coloured squares crossing over each other. All the panels, totalling eighty-five, are occupied by human figures in different colours characterised by their apparel as *mahāsiddha*. A larger additional *mahāsiddha* is represented frontally at the lowest end of the central fold between Mañjuśrī's legs (650). He corresponds in all details exactly to the *mahāsiddha* on the eastern wall inside the inner stupa of the Palden Drepung Chörten[370] and has been identified convincingly as Nāropa (956–1040). Due to his prominent position within the whole set on the dhoti and his larger size, he has been given special emphasis which corresponds to the importance he has within the Drigung school lineage. This is clearly documented for Alchi by the paintings of priests bearing inscriptions in the top storey (766).[371]

The other eighty-five *mahāsiddha* are engaged in different activities, some alone or else accompanied by consorts or acolytes with whom they are conversing (638–649). Some are seated in meditation on antelope skins, in one case surrounded by flames, others are shown in ecstatic dance while some are carrying instruments of daily work such as a hoe or a pestle. A few siddhas are represented with richer clothing and jewellery and appear to belong to higher levels of society (639, 642). The whole group as such quite vividly documents the tantric belief that beings like the siddhas who have reached a certain high degree in their spiritual development are no longer bound to the restrictions valid for the average Buddhist monk or priest.[372] It is quite difficult, and not always possible, to identify each of the figures with individual *mahāsiddha*.[373] The figure framed by two large fish is probably Mīnapa (Mīnapāda; 641),[374] and another one in a grotesque dancing position accompanied by two acolytes may be Jalandhara,[375] while another one carrying a hoe is surely Koṭāli (638).[376] Many of the representations have cartouches below them which were probably meant for identifying inscriptions, but regrettably, they are all empty. These vividly rendered figures differ stylistically and also in their technical execution from the scenes on the dhoti of the other two Bodhisattvas. Although their bodies are modelled by shading they appear rather flat and the details are drawn with thin and sometimes shaky black lines. This has led Snellgrove to the conclusion that they may have been executed later.[377] We believe that the siddhas may have been over-painted, but that the original forms and details have been preserved since they correspond perfectly with other paintings in the Sumtsek.

Whereas Nāropa[371] is here represented in exactly the same form as inside the Palden Drepung Chörten of Alchi, within the series of nine patriarchs on the entrance wall of the top storey he is shown in second position, but still clearly in the guise of an Indian

637 The clay sculptures of this niche are clearly of lesser artistic quality when compared to the paintings. The female deities attached to the side walls of the niche are far inferior to similar sculptures in the temple of Tabo in Spiti. Moreover, the main figure of Mañjuśrī is itself rather clumsily modelled. It is a lucky coincidence that during restorations in modern times the repainting was restricted to the bare parts of the body, sparing the scenes on the dhoti to a large extent. The gilding of the face and the repainting of the eves also seem to be comparatively recent.

It is quite possible that the emblems originally held by all three Bodhisattvas in the niches were lost during such repair works. Their empty hands look strange and unfamiliar.





638 Left: This detail shows one of the comparatively few *mahāsiddha* who can be identified with some certainty. The hoe shouldered by a naked man of green complexion, dancing between a tree and a squalling acolyte, identifies him as the *mahāsiddha* Koṭāli who was found by his master-to-be while digging at a hill with his hoe in order to build himself a home, but who was informed by the *ācārya* that he should transform his labour into a spiritual digging. Thereafter Koṭāli began meditating and became one of the siddhas.

Actual height: 12 cm.



639 Below: The illustration represents a *mahāsiddha* who still wears his mundane dress: a short white jacket and dhoti, his head being adorned by a diadem and his hair tied into a large knot. With a lively movement he is instructing a naked pupil, both of them sitting beside a tree.

Actual height: 12 cm.

640 Opposite: The illustration shows a larger portion near the upper part of Mañjuśrī's left leg with siddhas of different types and engaged in various activities.





641 The brown *mahāsiddha* can again be identified by the two fish standing on their tails and flanking him in the shape of a mandorla. The story tells us that he originally belonged to the caste of fishermen and that he was drawn into the water while catching a large fish which then swallowed him. The fish then came near a magic temple submerged under water where the Hindu god Maheśvara (Śiva) was instructing his wife. The man inside the fish listened to the god's instruction and was initiated by him. After meditating for twelve years inside the fish he was finally released and taught people for a long time. He was named Mīnapa (Mīnapāda) after the fish (*mīna*).



642 We again have one of the *mahāsiddha* appearing in his secular attire and teaching a pupil.

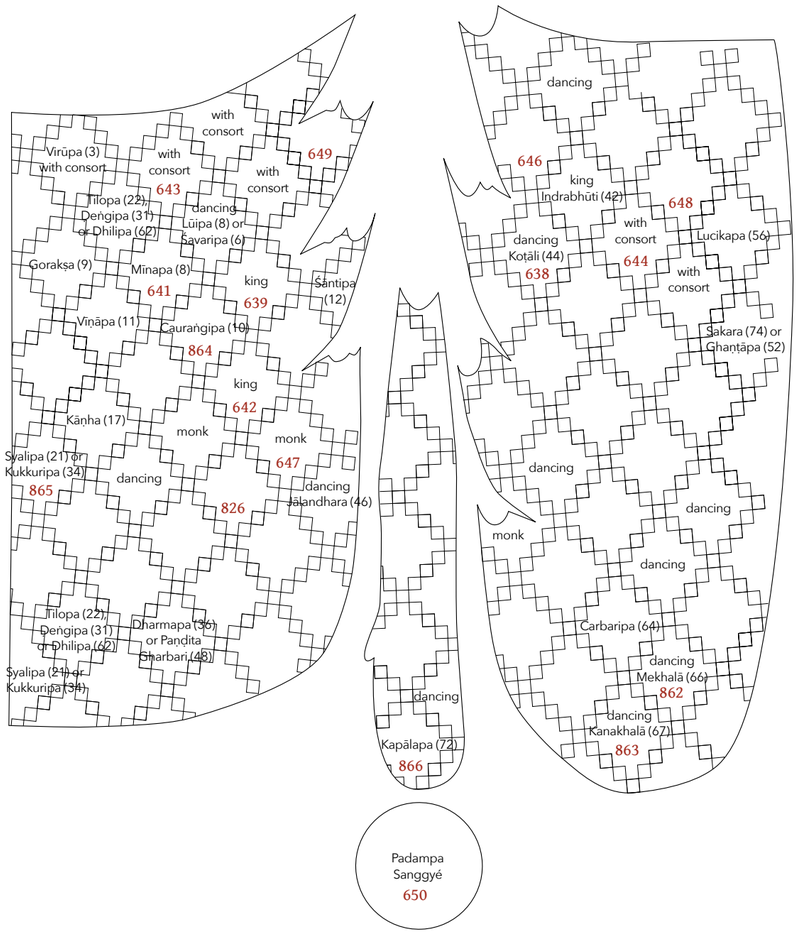
These illustrations show two scenes with siddhas embracing their naked female partners. Together with some others of similar character, these are the only scenes in the early Alchi murals with a slight erotic touch. Tantric texts repeatedly stress the necessity for a sixteen year old female partner to play the role of 'wisdom' (*prajñā*) for adepts of tantric practices. However, on Mañjuśrī's dhoti the couples are never shown in sexual union (*yuganaddha*) unlike several deities in the Lhakhang Soma (page 335 ff.).



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645 Schematic drawing of the Mañjuśrī dhoti with the potentially identifiable *mahāsiddha* and references to the depictions in this publication. The spelling of the names and the numbers behind them derive from Abhayadattaśrī's compilation. The drawing also singles out those with a female consort sitting on the male's leg, royal figures, dancing *mahāsiddha* and monks. CL

Note on the *mahāsiddha*

The *mahāsiddha* on the dhoti of Mañjuśrī sculpture in the Sumtsek of Alchi constitute one of the many critical themes coordinated by its planners in constructing the overall meaning of the shrine. Recognition of all of the *mahāsiddha* still eludes us. Despite the many studies of Alchi and on *mahāsiddha* that have been published since Goepper's text, little progress has been made; only the identification of the large image at the bottom centre has been settled as Padampa Sanggyé (650). The present reconsideration allows us to nearly double the number of proposed identifications, to around twenty of the *mahāsiddha*.[378]

As indicated on the accompanying drawing (645), the proposed identifications match *mahāsiddha* who appear in Abhayadattaśrī's compilation of verses and narratives of eight-four *mahāsiddha*. On the drawing, the numbers given for the proposed identifications are those followed by most recensions and translations of the text.[379] With the expanded identifications, clusters of consecutive or adjacent figures have surfaced. One example of such clusters is Mīnapa (8; 641), Gorakṣa (9), Caurāṅgipa (10; 864) and possibly Vīṇāpa (11) found together at the upper left in the drawing. Elsewhere, Carbaripa (64), Mekhalā (66; 862), and Kanakhalā (67; 863) are contiguous with each other. These suggest an implied order that corresponds at least roughly with the order of the text, though the entire sequence has yet to be deciphered.

Among the newly identified *mahāsiddha* is Virūpa (3) in the upper left. He points to the sun to stop time in one of his iconic narratives and embraces a consort. Two of the *mahāsiddha* hold pestles to extract oil from sesame or make rice flour, as Tilopa (22), Dhilipa (62) and Ḍeṅgipa (31) employ in their narratives. A standing figure may be either Lūipa (1) or Śavaripa (5), depending on how one reads the two white lines along the left shoulder of the figure as either fish intestines or the bow of Śavaripa.[380] In general, most of the proposed identifications on the left side of the dhoti are relatively early in the sequence.

The right side includes Koṭāli (44; 638), and Lucikapa (56) surrounded by flames as he is at the Gyantsé Lamdré Lhakhang.[381] Also on that side, below Lucikapa, is either Sakara (74), or Ghaṇṭāpa (52) whose crossed arms hold the vajra and bell in the same configuration in many later examples, admittedly while embracing a consort.[382]

It is striking how many of the identifiable *mahāsiddha* are also accepted in the Brahmanical Śaiva tradition that came to be known as the Nāthapantha. This might be explained by the familiarity of the artists with the stories, representations and living representatives of these long-haired practitioners in Kashmir, a noted centre for both Buddhist and Hindu Tantra. Among these securely identifiable *mahāsiddha* who are famous in both dispensations are Matsyendranātha (Mīnapa), Gorakṣanāth, Caurāṅgipa, Carbaripa, Jālandhara, and Kāṇha (Kṛṣṇācārya), while Kapālapa, the skull-bearer, holds the very attribute after which the Kapālika Śaiva order is named. Even Virūpa legends circulate in Indian Śaiva traditions.[383]

Certain patterns emerge requiring further elucidation. Between five and seven male yogis interact with female consorts. The uncertainty derives from the difficulty in determining the sex of the much smaller consorts. In the Abhayadhatta set, there are famously four female *mahāsiddha*, only two of whom have been identified to date. Is it possible that we should understand one or two of the female consorts of male yogis as the missing female *mahāsiddha*? Four monks appear in orange robes; two are solitary and have both shoulders covered as if in meditation. The other two monks each have one shoulder uncovered and gesture to a disciple or attendant, neither of whom are themselves in monastic robes. Three royal figures dressed in a white short-sleeved open vest with embroidered *ṭirāz*-armbands, colourful dhotis and white turban-like crowns. Each has an attendant on his left, and one of them must be Indrabhūti (42). A green-robed standing figure wears a *paṇḍita*'s pointed cap, identifiable as either Dharmapa (36) or the *paṇḍita* Gharbari (48).

More than half the *mahāsiddha* have an attendant, disciple or consort next to them. Only two have been noticed to have more than one such companion: one yogi on the left side has both a female consort seated on his left thigh and a seated disciple next to them, while the dancing Jālandhara has two accompanying disciples, one on either side. This might be intended to reflect that ten of the eighty-four *mahāsiddha* were Jālandhara's disciples.[384] Once the entire sequence is deciphered, perhaps other observable distinctions will also fall into place. Meanwhile, it is clear that the artists were familiar with the varieties of *mahāsiddha* types (laymen, ascetics, royalty, monks, males and females) and many of the emblematic *mahāsiddha* anecdotes which have come down to us.

Rob Linrothe



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These four illustrations show *mahāsiddha* of different kinds engaged in typical activities. One seems to be attended by his pupil who is stroking his feet (646), while the reddish pupil in the scene below is about to take care of his master's long hair (648).

Another *mahāsiddha* appears in the attire of a traditional Buddhist monk accompanied by an acolyte (647), the scene below representing a master sitting in an ecstatic pose on a tiger skin (649).

650 Right: The most important position in the whole composition on the dhoti of all three Bodhisattva sculptures is the lower end of the central fold between the legs. Here it is occupied by a *mahāsiddha* represented frontally (*abhimukha*) and in larger scale. He sits in a squatting attitude (*utkuṭāsana*, *tsog pu'i 'dug stangs*) his legs being secured in their position by a band (*yogabandha*). He has curly hair and slightly squinting staring eyes and appears to be naked, apart from a long cape of white fur draped over his shoulders. In his right hand he holds the leaf of a plant, in his left a staff-like object, probably a flute. Offerings are placed on either side of him. Of finer execution, but in a much worse state of preservation, the same figure appears on one of the walls in the inner stupa inside the Palden Drepung Chörten (222), also in a prominent position. The *mahāsiddha* has been convincingly identified as Nāropa (956–1040) by whom the tantric tradition was conferred to the line of Tibetan patriarchs as they are represented in the top storey of the Sumtsek.

Contrary to Goepper's identification expressed in the main text and above, this *siddha* is to be identified as Padampa Sanggyé.[171] CL

mahāsiddha, facing his master Tilopa (766). The smaller figure of the transcendental Bodhisattva Vajradhara is seen floating in space between the two masters. In Nāropa's biography he functions as a symbol of the Absolute Body (*dharmakāya*), 'appearing in the sky … and opening Nāropa's mind'.

Possibly the tubular white flute (*nāḍa* or *nāḍī*) in his left hand, here as well as in the picture of the Palden Drepung Chörten, should be taken as a reference to Nādapāda, the Sanskrit form of his name.

The Bengali master Nāropa (956–1040) played an important role in the formation of that



branch of tantric Buddhist religion which penetrated western Tibet and Ladakh at about the time when the Sumtsek was being erected. In his youth Nāropa received teachings in Kashmir, returning to that country later in his life after separation from his wife. Three years later he moved to Pullahari where he became Marpa's teacher; the latter is represented directly behind him in the top storey of the Sumtsek (766). He was also active at the Buddhist theological centre of Nālandā in Bihar, northeast India. Only late in his life did he meet his master Tilopa. According to legend his mortal remains were preserved at a monastery in Zangskar, the country directly bordering Ladakh to the south.



651 The scene shows a king and his two wives toasting each other; the king and the queen to the right holding cups, another cup being presented by a servant from below, while another servant behind holds a flask for replenishing. From both sides, servants bring boxes with food, whilst some food is already set up in open containers. Below, the royal group courtiers are attending the party, one of them holding a white bird. It is regrettable that many details are restored in such a poor manner since this scene would have allowed us a glimpse into the daily life at the court of a Ladakhi king.

652 The haloed queen to the back of the central king. CL

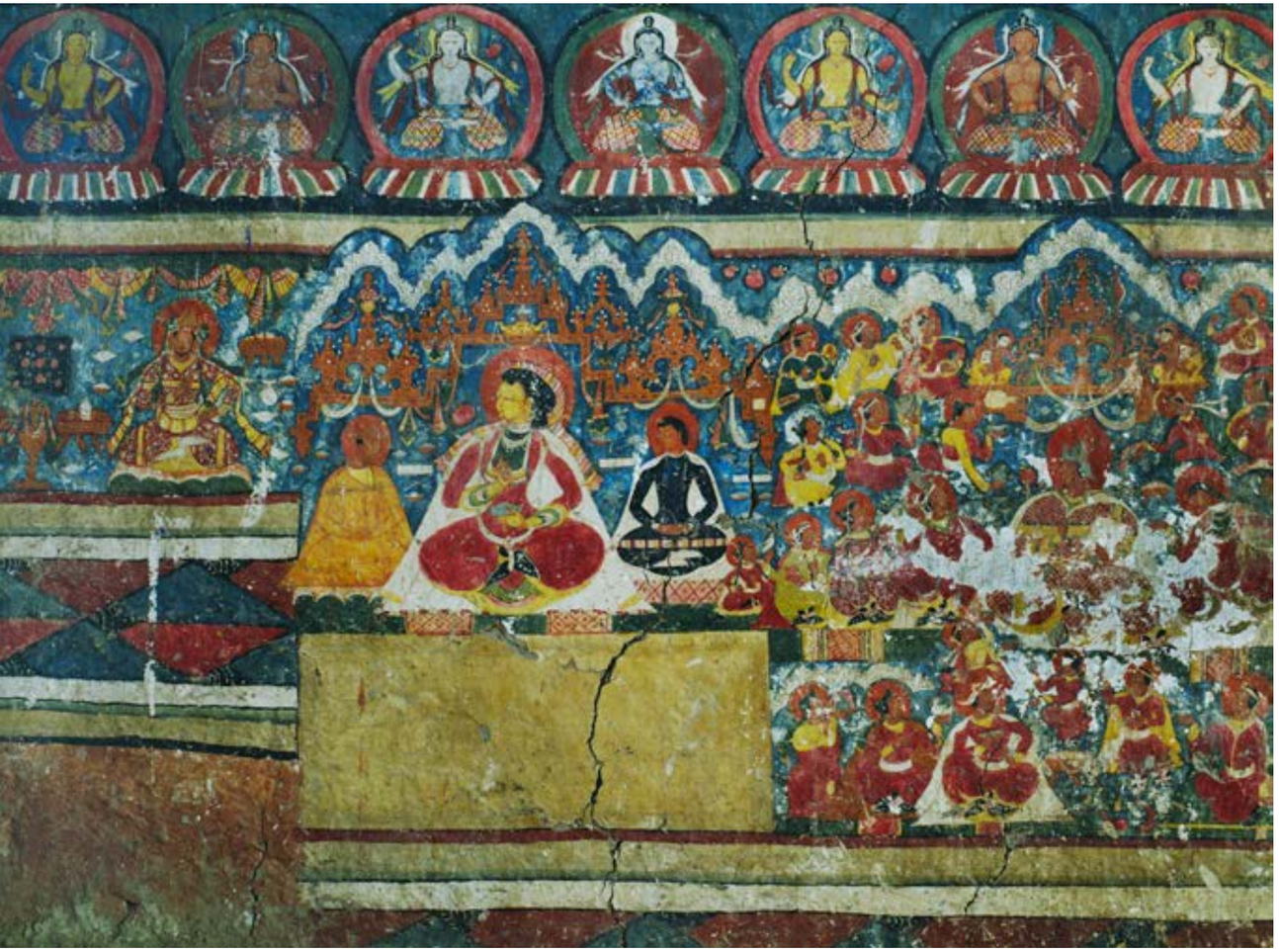
The Murals in the Right Niche

The paintings on the lower parts of the two side walls of this niche differ thematically from those in the other niches since they do not represent figures of the Buddhist pantheon, but show persons of the secular sphere and allow us a glimpse into the atmosphere in which the temples were created.



Left Panel

It is to be regretted that large parts of the original paintings showing a royal banquet comparable to the so-called 'royal drinking scene' in the Dukhang (68)[385] have been destroyed and restored in a rather clumsy way (651). This applies especially to the central figure, a seated king whose reddish brown dress was decorated with roundels containing *vyāla*. Originally he probably held an axe and not a piece of paper as we observe today. He is flanked by two identically clad queens each of whom is accompanied by a small child (652). The group is



653 The lady wears a plain blue undergarment, and a long-sleeved, reddish-brown dress reaching to her ankles. Her black boots are covered with white embroidery. She has rich jewellery, probably of silver, and from her thick black hair an ornamented shawl flows down her back. She has a yellowish complexion and holds a conch shell which probably contains essences for sacrifice. The whole figure is covered by a white cape.

The priest facing her wears a tight yellow garment with long sleeves and is wrapped in an orange coloured cape or mantle which is transparent, probably indicating gauze or thin silk. He is beardless and wears the usual pointed and brimmed hat.

The youth behind has a reddish complexion and short curly black hair. He is clad in a tight black robe like that of a Jesuit and wears a white cape and white boots, his legs being secured in their squatting position by a *yogapaṭṭa*.

surrounded by servants and placed in front of decorative architectural elements, probably of carved wood, behind which appear bands of clouds. Below this main group and in a frieze to its right there are groups of priests in apparel of the kind usually found at Alchi.

Right Panel

Here the central group is in a much better state of preservation (653). It consists of three persons, a queen in the middle with a priest in smaller scale in front of her and also a smaller young man, probably her son, behind. It is highly probable that the central lady is directly connected with the erection of temples in Alchi, the priest in front of her possibly representing the actual founder, Tsültrim Ö (654). Beneath them is a blank field which may originally have had a dedicatory inscription, or which may have been intended for one. Behind the group we again see a throne-like ornamental structure of wood, backed by bands of white clouds. To the left, there is a frieze with tantric priests seated between ritual objects and performing apotropaic mudra such as the vajra-fist (*vajramuṣṭi*). They wear richly ornamented dresses with long sleeves and three-pointed crowns with strange blue balls on either sides.

The right part of this wall is filled with a banquet scene similar to that on the opposite wall and which also shows some damage. Again a central king is flanked by two ladies and surrounded by officials and servants.

To the left of the front row we find a small male figure in red garb and another larger figure in ornate dress, each with a white bird, probably a hawk. Above, a servant pours wine from a flask into a cup which is offered to the king, while in front of him, two nobles, one with white cape and brimmed hat, backed by another falconer, the other with a greenish-blue coat draped over his shoulders, toast the king. *Gandharva* are seated on lions at both sides of the richly carved wooden frame of the throne.





654 Priest facing the queen, possibly Tsültrim Ö, founder of the Sumtsek.

655 Young prince seated behind and to the right of the queen (opposite).

656 The queen holding a red lotus and a bowl. CL





The Middle Storey



657 Like Mahākāla on the corresponding wall on the ground floor, Yamāntaka is placed within a charnel ground (*śmaśāna*) with parts of human corpses and wild beasts. Again there are two goddesses below, the left one riding a white horse and in this case benign, therefore not identical with the Śrīdevī (Penden Lhamo) in the painting of the ground floor. The right goddess corresponds to Rematī[305] with her cloak of peacock feathers as seen in the painting below. More fierce goddesses riding different animals are surrounding Yamāntaka (663–668).

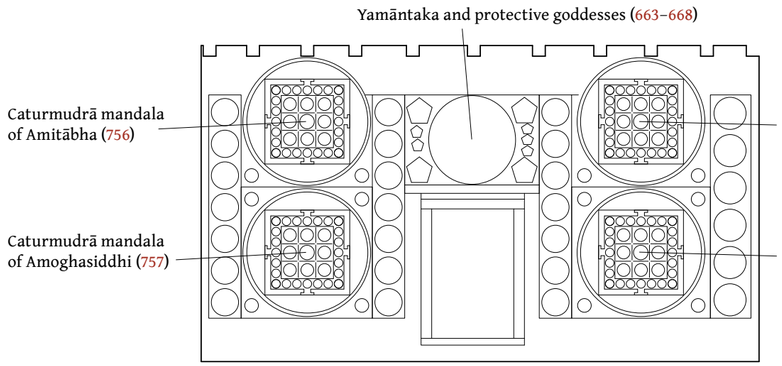
658 Detail of Yamāntaka's tiger skin. CL

The murals on the ground floor of the Sumtsek, as we have seen, are concerned with many narrative elements and appear to be directly concerned with religions life within the human sphere. Donors and founders are shown engaged in the adoration of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities. The scenes portrayed on the dhoti of the three sculptures confront the viewer directly with various aspects of human religious activity. As depicted on the statue of Avalokiteśvara (539), temples and holy places represent areas where believers may perform their worship; on the Mañjuśrī statue the *mahāsiddha* led the way of the tantric path (637), and the life of the Buddha was recorded on the Maitreya statue as the true way to awakening and salvation (600). These various themes present possibilities available for spiritual development to humans and serve as visual media for a glimpse into the higher religious realms into which devout believers endeavour to enter.

The murals in the middle storey now transpose the viewer into this higher sphere of existence. Some have a clearly soteriological character, showing deities, Bodhisattvas and even the Buddha as guides and helpers on the path towards spiritual development.

Already the protective god over the entrance exhibits an intensified dynamic force in comparison to the Mahākāla in the ground floor (657). The central panels of the two side walls above the triangular openings for the heads of the large Bodhisattva sculptures complement each other thematically by vividly expressing the enactment of Compassion (*karuṇā*) as the essential Buddhist virtue, on the one side by the male Avalokiteśvara (669), and on the other by the goddess Tārā (690), both in any case closely related figures of the pantheon. The same scenes appear, moreover, painted on the back wall of the Four Image Chörten at nearby Mangyu.[386] This balance of male and female figures may perhaps also underlie the two structurally identical mandalas, one occupied by male and the other one by female deities, on the right wall of this storey in the Sumtsek, and this may also be reflected by the emphasis on noble ladies amongst the figures of donors.

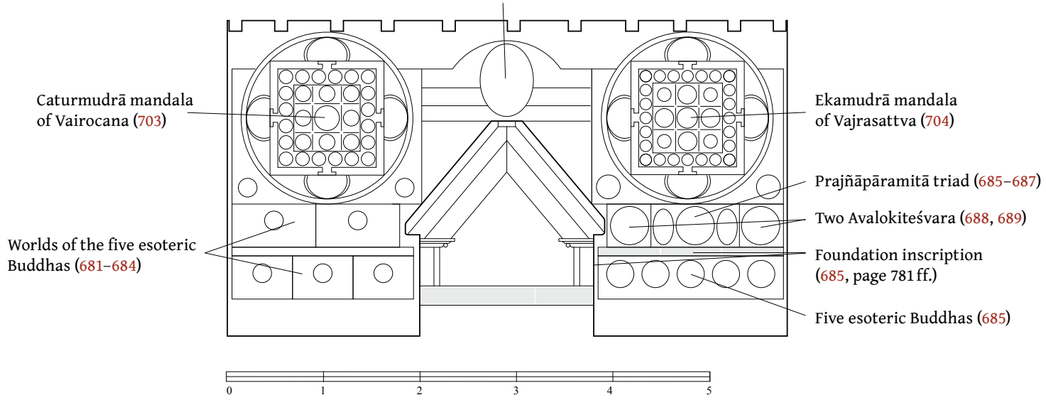
The representation of the preaching Buddha Śākyamuni in the central panel of the back wall (676) may also be interpreted in a soteriological context. Whereas Avalokiteśvara and Tārā on the side walls help hungry ghosts (*preta*) and ordinary human beings in danger, Śākyamuni is surrounded by rows of adepts of a different character. Apart from Indian gods, there appear noble lay people, priests and Arhats, and also Bodhisattvas. All adore the Buddha, apparently wishing to follow his teaching and ultimately to attain buddhahood for themselves as well. The panel on the back wall would, according to this interpretation, act as a focus or culmination of the soteriological themes on the other walls.

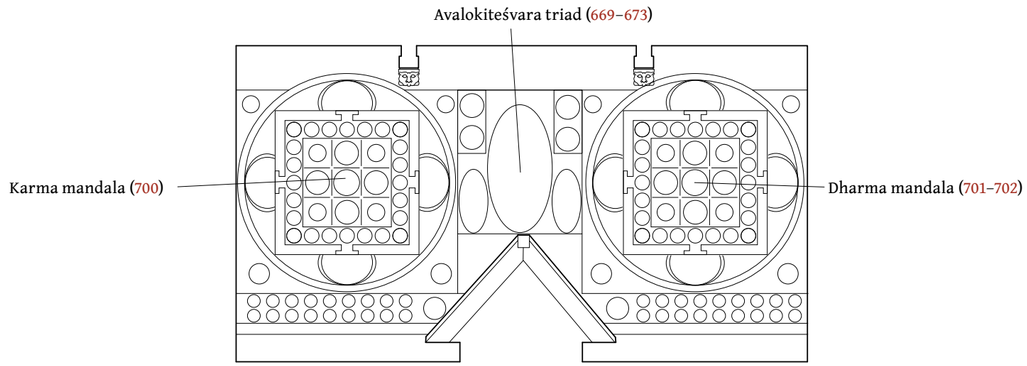


659 Entry wall of the middle storey.

660 Main wall of the middle storey.

Teaching Śākyamuni (676–680)

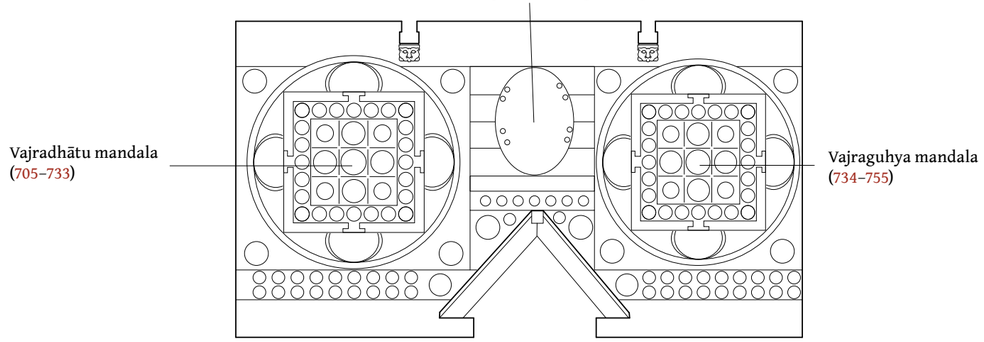




661 Left side wall of the middle storey.

662 Right side wall of the middle storey.

Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers (690–699)





663 The ferocious guardian Yamāntaka over the entrance to the middle storey.

He has a retinue of four larger goddesses in the corners and an early version of the Five Sisters of Long Life (Tséring Chénga) in smaller size between them (right). CL



664

The central figures on the four walls may stand as representatives of the three families (*trikula*) of the Buddhist pantheon: Yamāntaka for the vajra family, Avalokiteśvara and Tārā for the lotus family and Śākyamuni logically for the Buddha family. In this function they could be interpreted as a condensed allusion to the complicated mandala structure occupied by so many deities of different character.[387]

Apart from these overtly didactic themes, the walls of the middle storey of the Sumtsek are covered by ten mandalas which transpose highly philosophical and mystic speculations of tantric Buddhism into visible form. Inaccessible to the average visitor of the temple and to be entered only from outside over a steep ladder, this upper room was probably used for instruction into more esoteric themes and for initiation ceremonies by priests or advanced followers of the Buddhist religion.

Central Panel of the Entrance Wall

Above the door we find again a rectangular panel with a fierce protective deity, the panel being framed by two vertical rows of seven Buddhas making different mudra (657, 663).

In this case, the central deity is the fierce blue Yamāntaka or Yamāri with six heads, six arms and six legs, trampling on two tiny figures placed on a prostrate bull over a lotus. His right hands holds a hook, sword and arrow as emblems, his left hands a noose, bell and bow. In all details he corresponds to the variant of Kṛṣṇa-Yamāntaka or Yamāntakavajra as he is described in ritual texts.[388] Since he belongs to the vajra family with Akṣobhya as its chief, his position on this wall is iconographically justified.

Text no. 274 in the *Sādhanamālā* is devoted to him where he is characterised as angry (*krodha*) and 'of very ferocious appearance' (*atibhayānakākāra*). Some of his emblems, for instance the bow and arrow, differ from those given in the text; furthermore, he wears no crown so that the figure of Akṣobhya as lord of the family (*kuleśa*) is missing.

The colour of his body may vary according to his function within different rituals. In the bluish-black (*kṛṣṇa*) version he presides over ceremonies of attraction (*ākarṣaṇa*), but also over terrible rites (*abhicāruka*). We find him in the same manifestation within a mandala in the Dukhang of Alchi (see Dharmadhātu Mandala, page 134 ff.) as well as at Sumda.

Four of the Five Sisters of Long Life (Tséring Chénga, *tshe ring mched lnga*) in the retinue of Yamāntaka. These are the white Tékar Drozangma (*gtad dkar 'gro bzang ma*) riding a sea-monster (*makara*; 665), the red Miyo Lozangma (*mi g.yo blo bzang ma*)riding a tiger (666), the blue Tinggi Zhezangma (*mthing gi zhal bzang ma*) riding a *kyang* (668), and the red Chöpen Drinzangma (*cod pan mgrin bzang ma*) riding a hind (667). The sea-monster eventually gets replaced by a dragon, indicating a cultural translation in the final formulation of this group of goddesses. CL



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669 Central panel above the head of the sculpture of Avalokiteśvara with an eleven-headed and twenty-two-armed form of the same Bodhisattva flanked by goddesses. CL

Overleaf: details of the hungry ghosts underneath Avalokiteśvara. CL

Further overleaf: The two goddesses flanking the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara are white and green, reminding of the two forms of the goddess Tārā, but they merely hold offerings towards the Bodhisattva, rather than attributes distinguishing them. CL

The Central Panel on the Left Wall

The central motif on the left wall above the triangular opening for the head of the Avalokiteśvara sculpture is another version of this Bodhisattva, namely his eleven-headed form, Ekādaśamukha-Avalokiteśvara (669). This main figure and also the two flanking goddesses holding a bowl of offerings and garlands (672, 673),[389] have a strong Indo-Kashmiri flavour. The white Bodhisattva, standing in an elegant *tribhaṅga* pose, has the usual 'tower' of eleven heads in different colours, but strangely enough, he is also equipped with eleven pairs of arms, the uppermost two hands holding a vajra and bell, the other ones different emblems. Above, he is framed by four Tathagata, perhaps different forms of his 'spiritual father' Amitābha, and two heavenly musicians.

It is tempting to see the very unusual eleven pairs of hands in analogy to the eleven heads, setting the spiritual qualities of the heads into activity. To our knowledge no *sādhana* describing this peculiarity has been transmitted. Anyway, the basic qualities of compassion (*karuṇā*) and loving-kindness (*maitrī*) embodied especially by Avalokiteśvara and expressed by the invocation 'Save me' (*tāraya māṃ*) in one of his *sādhana*,[390] are illustrated in the two triangular fields below this panel by the grotesque figures of emaciated and pot-bellied *preta* desperately imploring the Bodhisattva to save them from their miserable situation (670, 671). Although some details differ from the corresponding *sādhana*,[391] one is tempted to identify this icon with the 'Lord of the World Satiating the Hungry Ghosts' (Pretasantarpita Lokeśvara). In this function, he is clearly the counterpart to the Green Tārā as savioures on the opposite wall, both figures being the paradigmatic incorporation of the central virtue of compassion (*karuṇā*). In fact, the variant of Avalokiteśvara saving from eight kinds of danger (*aṣṭabhayatrāṇa*[392]), transmitted in an eleven-headed version, with the eight fears being subdued by different protective deities,[393] seems to have acted as prototype for Tārā in this manifestation.



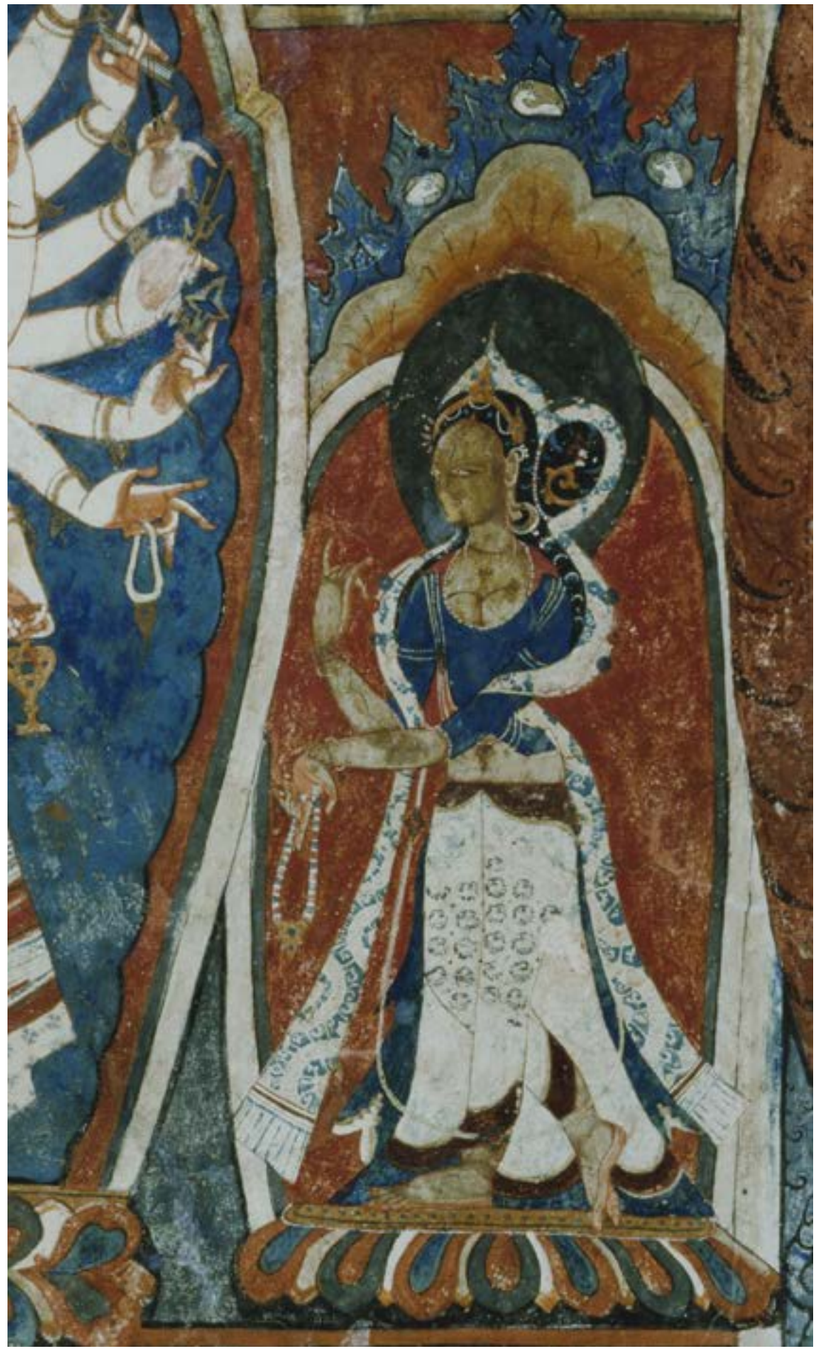
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The Panels on the Back Wall

Whereas the side walls in the first upper floor of the Sumtsek have only one main motif apart from the mandalas, the back wall has three: two framing the opening through which the head of the Maitreya sculpture is visible and, above this opening, a third, whose location and theme reveal it to be the apogee of the iconographic programme (674).

A typical stylistic feature of the mural art at Alchi is that of segmented composition over large wall surfaces, appearing here in one of its most successful examples.

To the left there are the five paradise worlds of the Tathagata (681–684), the Buddhas themselves being repeated in the lower frieze on the right side, whereas in the frieze above, a central Prajñāpāramitā is flanked by two eleven-headed Avalokiteśvaras (685).

The importance of this wall is further indicated by a long inscription in nine lines on the horizontal beam spanning the opening of the central niche. It is damaged in several parts and therefore not completely legible. At the end of the last line it is characterised as a 'saying' (*gsung*) of the monk (*dge slong*) Tshultrim Ö. The Tibetan title is given as *Mirror of Poetry* (*snang ngag me long*), the Sanskrit equivalent (*Kāvyādarśa*) written in a corrupt manner. This text[394] was composed by Daṇḍin and translated into Tibetan by Śrīlakṣmīkara and Songtön (*song ston*). To the right of this inscription, there is another one in three columns of semi-cursive (*dbu can*) script with a poem containing flowery salutations. A similar narrow panel between the paradises on the other side, surely meant to be inscribed, has remained empty.

The right side wall of the niche has a probably slightly later inscription by a monk named Gar (*'gar*) with information about Tsültrim Ö, the founder of the Sumtsek.[395]

As in several other instances within the Sumtsek murals, here also we find on the back wall of this floor the usual statement of Buddhist belief, the well-known *ye dharma* formula, some mantras and auspicious sentences such as 'ōṃ may all be well' (*ōṃ bkra shis par gyur cig*), written in cursive Tibetan script (*dbu med*) within bordering lines below the two mandalas.



674 The plate on the opposite page provides an impression of the structure of the two upper stories of the Sumtsek. At the corners of the opening in the ceiling, four fluted pillars with richly decorated 'Ionian' capitals support the recessed walls of the top storey which has no floor.

The panels of the ceiling are painted with ornaments imitating the decorations of textiles (see below, page 673 ff.).

On the top storey, one can observe the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala with Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha covering the back wall.[397]

675 A charming detail is the 'grinning' lion face crowning the pediment of the niche in which the head of the colossal Maitreya sculpture is visible. The crown of the Bodhisattva is decorated at the front by the golden image of Buddha Vairocana.[397]

676 The central figure on the back wall panel is identifiable as the historical Buddha Śākyamuni not only by his golden complexion and his preaching gesture (*dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*), but also by the tiny figures of his seven human predecessors (*saptamānuṣibuddha*) integrated into his high halo (677). Śākyamuni has the unusually high *uṣṇīṣa*, characteristic of the Alchi style, and slightly squinting eyes. His red robe is decorated with golden star flowers in light pastiglia relief, the border of his cloak being ornamented with a blue band of unnatural flowery scrolls.

On both sides, flying two-armed *gandharva* are holding a three-layered decorative umbrella and a similarly structured fan or fly-whisk composed of peacock feathers as emblems of majesty.

Near the upper end of the throne two Hindu gods adore the Buddha, Brahmā to the left on his *vāhana*, the white swan (*haṃsa*), and Indra to the right, identified by his symbolic animal, the white elephant Airāvata (678). Instead of the vajra, his normal emblem, he is here holding a trident in one hand and a lotus with an unidentifiable object, perhaps a jewel, in another of his four hands. Two smaller deities above present a conch shell (*śaṅkhā*) and a lotus.

Although the Buddha is rather clearly identifiable as Śākyamuni, that is, the human Apparitional Body (*nirmāṇakāya*), the whole setting lets it appear possible that he may be also regarded as a personification of the transcendent *dharmakāya*, that is, as Vairocana.

The two triangles below this panel, on the two side walls occupied by *preta* and Buddhas, contain here the figures of priests, some of them characterised as aged men by their white hair and beards (679, 680), and of a noble lady accompanied by her son and a servant. Again the soteriological aspect of the mural is stressed by these persons striving for initiation into higher regions of the Buddhist faith.

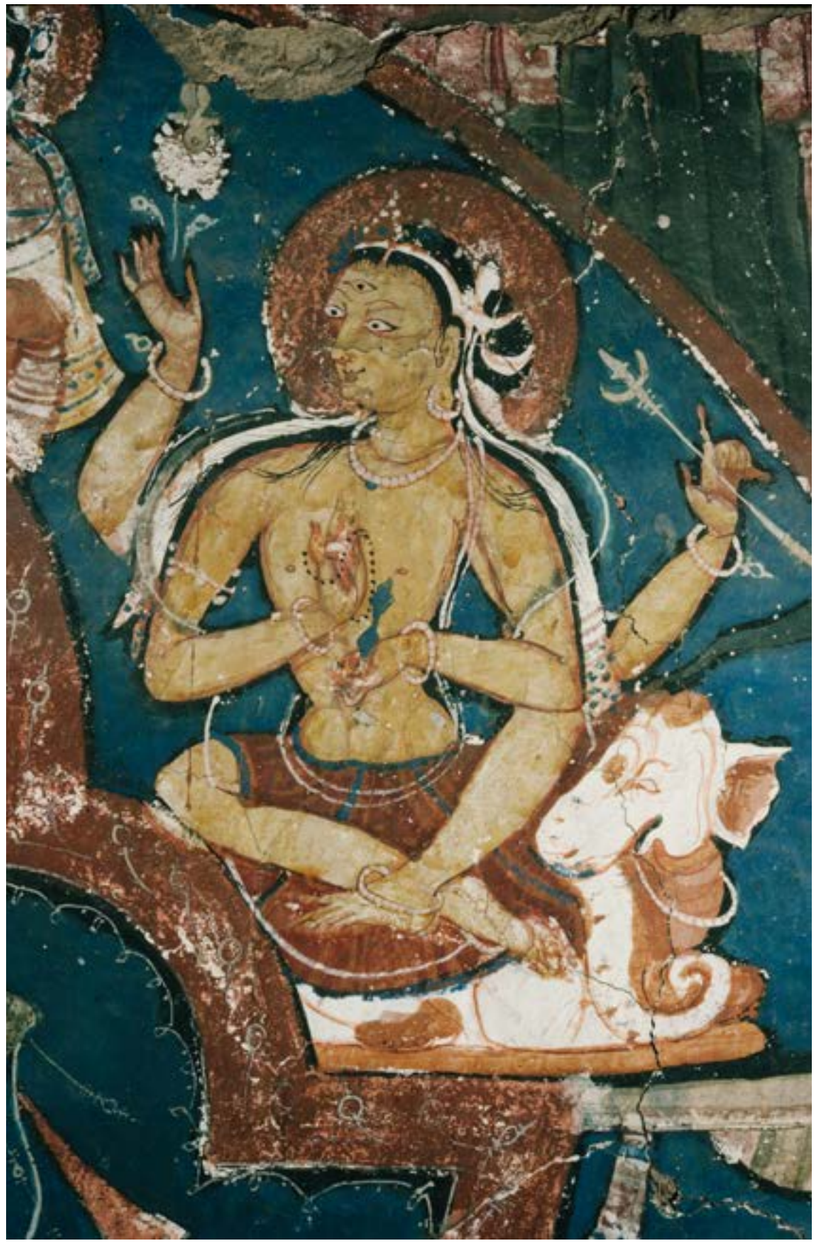


677 Left: As the focus of the murals on the walls of this upper floor, the central panel above the opening of the niche in the back wall shows the historical Buddha Śākyamuni engaged in the promulgation of his teachings. A large congregation, composed of persons of quite different descent and arranged in superimposed rows, four to the left and three to the right, surround the large central figure. Underneath, two white lions support the Buddha's lotus seat, while two small four-armed *nāga* pay their respects, flanked by a couple of nobles.

The lowest row to the left has four lay-folk, noble in appearance, in a smaller size than the rest. They are balanced on the right side by four slightly larger Hindu gods, headed by a white Śiva with snakes, the crescent of a moon in his coiffure and holding a trident (*triśūla*) as his characteristic emblem (right). The rows above, two to the left and one to the right, are occupied by eleven monks altogether, probably representing the Buddha's personal disciples, most of them holding the alms bowl (*pātra*) and a staff (*khakkhara*), but also by two lay persons in royal attire and presenting lotus flowers. The uppermost group consists, on both sides, of nine Bodhisattva-like figures, all of them with their hands in the praying gesture (*añjali*).

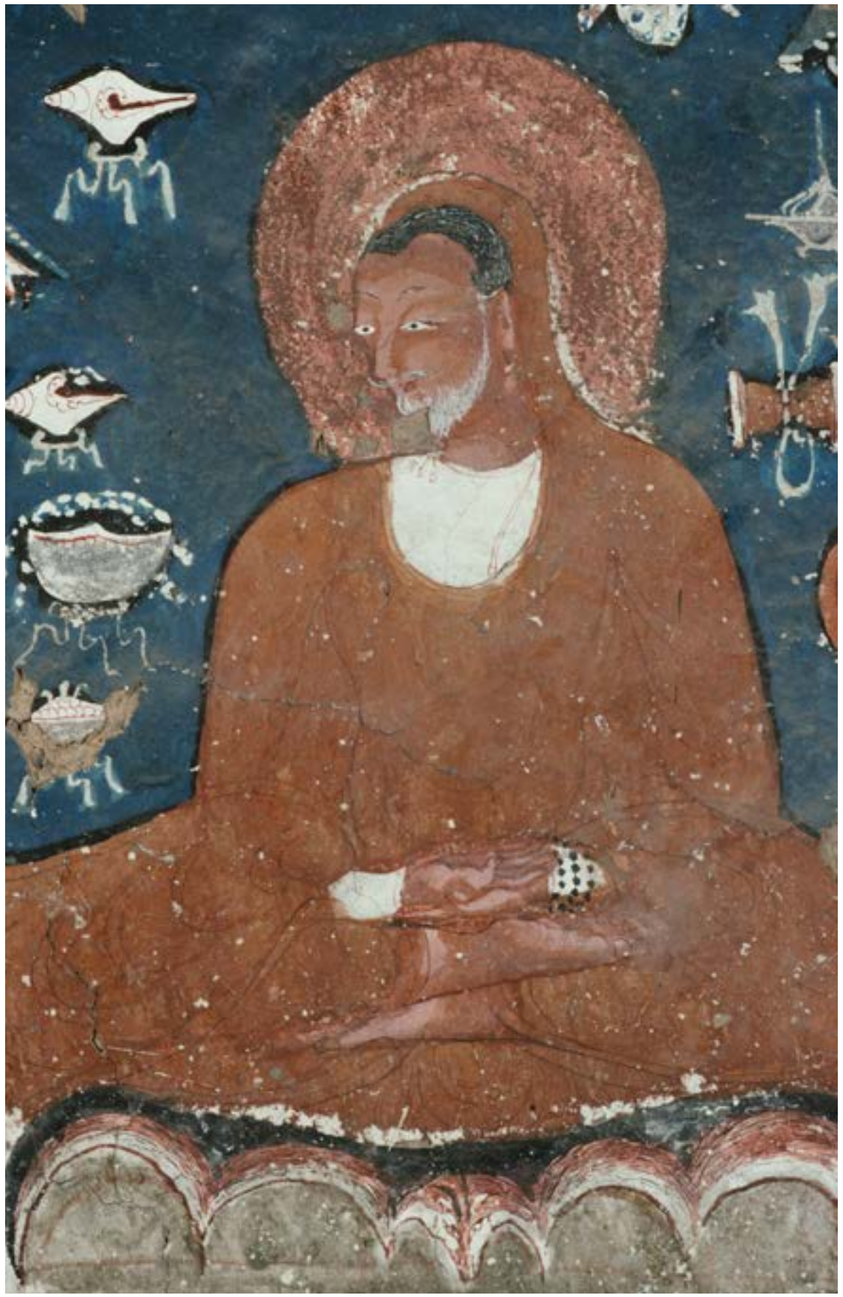
Following the intermediate stages shown by the other murals, in this composition are represented all those in direct proximity to the Buddha being motivated by the sermon of Śākyamuni to strive for awakening and salvation, the essential goal of the Buddhist religion.

678 Four-armed Indra seated on the white elephant Airāvata as attendant to Śākyamuni. CL





679 Two elderly priests flanking an altar.



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The lower left half of the back wall, underneath the mandala and beside the opening for Maitreya's head, is divided into five rectangular fields in two superimposed rows. The backgrounds are covered with different colours corresponding to the Tathagata to whom the field is dedicated. The panels are condensed representations of the paradises of the five Tathagata, beginning in the upper left corner with that of Akṣobhya coloured blue (681), followed by the white one of Vairocana (683).

The lower frieze begins with the red area for Amitābha in the left corner (682), with the yellow paradise of Ratnasambhava to its right (684). The green panel of Amoghasiddhi (not illustrated) near the opening of the niche has suffered considerably.



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The paradise scenes are abstract landscape representations, the spatial depth being rendered by superposition of rows of figures without reducing their size. Different kinds of trees with schematised foliage and ponds, represented by geometric shapes seen strictly from above and filled with wavy lines symbolising water, evoke a natural setting.

The central Tathagata, clearly characterised by the iconographically correct mudra and seated on thrones, are surrounded by two upper rows of Bodhisattvas and a lower series of monks, priests and nobles flanking square black altars, thereby suggesting a ceremonial atmosphere. A strange feature is the pair of white swans (*haṃsa*) on which the two priests beside the altar in Akṣobhya's paradise are seated.



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685 The lower right half of the back wall underneath the mandala is decorated with two friezes separated by a band with a long inscription (685).[398] The lower frieze is filled with a repetition of the five Tathagata, again surrounded by different types of devotees.[399] The paintings are in a bad condition, rendering detailed investigations difficult. The reason for the repetition is unknown.

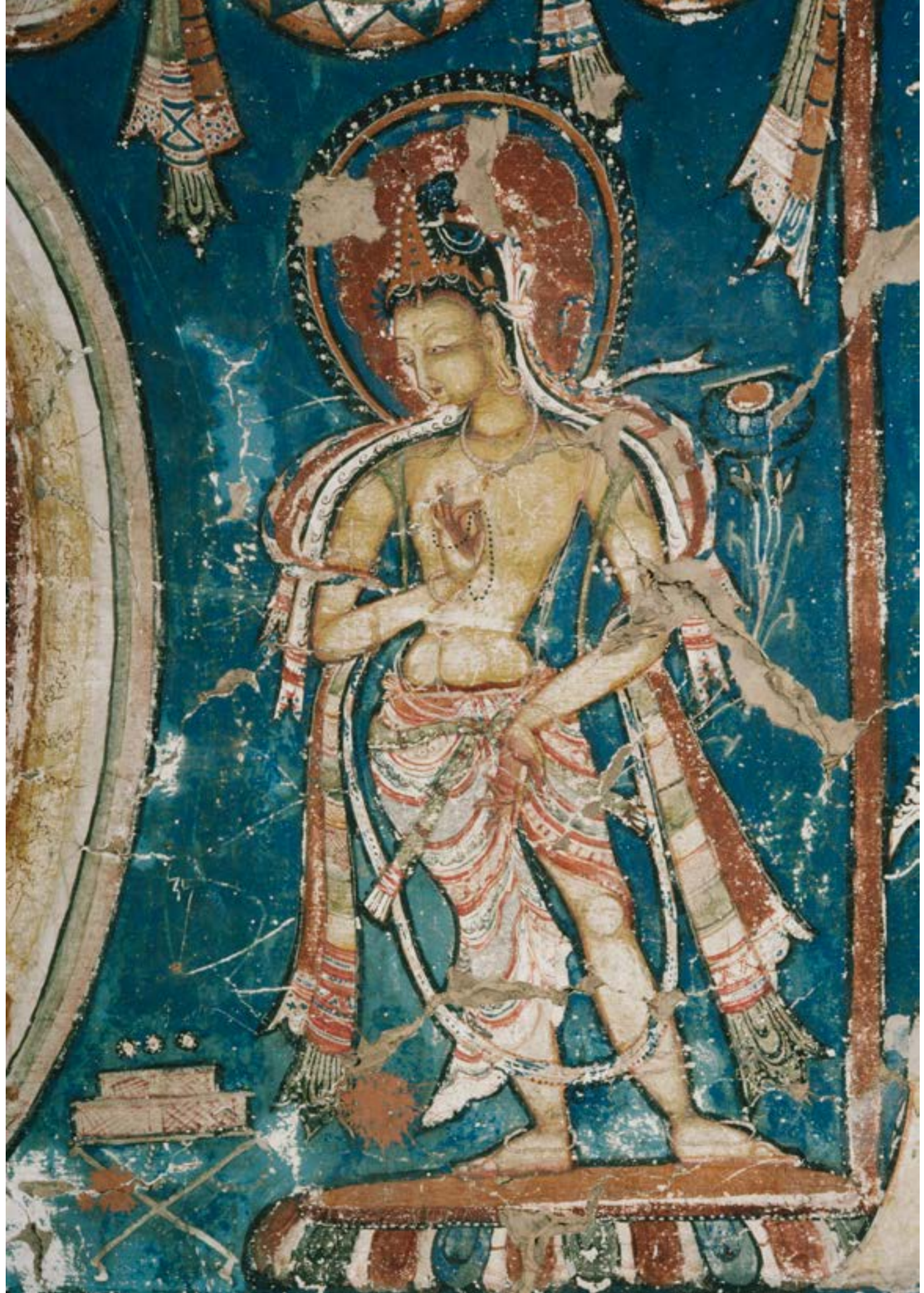
The upper frieze is dominated by a central white female deity with six arms and seated on two lions. She has been identified as Prajñāpāramitā. The emblems in her hands correspond to those of the Green Tārā in the left niche of the ground floor, hinting at a close relationship between the two goddesses. She is flanked by the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī in an elegant *tribhaṅga* pose and with a strong Indian flavour of style (following spread).[400]

686 Overleaf left: Red Avalokiteśvara to the right of Prajñāpāramitā.[401]

687 Overleaf right Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī to the left of Prajñāpāramitā.[402]









688 The two outer ends of the frieze are occupied by two interesting versions of the eleven-headed Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Both have eleven pairs of arms like the white Avalokiteśvara in the central panel of the left wall. No *sādhana* are known either for the red Bodhisattva to the right or for his blue companion to the left. However, there exist many still undocumented manifestations of this figure of the pantheon.[403] Apart from the emblems, mainly weapons, both of them hold sun and moon discs in their upper hands, usually regarded as characteristic of Central and East Asian versions of the Bodhisattva.[404]

The figure to the left is entirely blue, and his eleven faces show fierce expressions (*krodha*). Although versions of Avalokiteśvara with a blue complexion are known, for instance the Māyājālakrama-Āryāvalokiteśvara[405] as well as versions with several fierce faces,[406] the Alchi example differs in all respects. He is venerated below by two small *nāga*.

689 The red manifestation to the right has heads of different colours, all of them with a benign expression. He is adored by the small figures of a noble lady and her son. In all details the Bodhisattva differs from other known red manifestations such as Rakta-Lokeśvara[407] or Padmanartteśvara.[408]

Perhaps the two figures symbolise two antithetic, but here amalgamated, aspects of Avalokiteśvara's characteristic quality of compassion (*karuṇā*), one helping and sympathetic, the other protective and averting. A considerably later version, based on the *Padmajāla-mūlatantra*[409] and represented in the fifteenth century Kumbum chörten at Gyantsé,[410] perhaps combines the two aspects in one figure by investing the Bodhisattva with three white heads in the centre, four red ones to the right and three blue ones to the left, although the coloured faces all have a fierce expression.

The Central Panel on the Right Wall

In a corresponding position on the opposite right wall and in a similar religious function as Avalokiteśvara, we have a magnificent painting of the Green Tārā in her form as 'saviouress from the eight kinds of fear or danger', Aṣṭabhayatrāṇa Tārā (*sgrol ma 'jigs brgyad skyob*; 690).[411] The parallelism of the two deities is accentuated by the fact that there also exists an Avalokiteśvara as 'saviour from the eight kinds of fear or danger'. In this Sumtsek painting of Tārā, tiny female projections of the goddess act as her helping hands. Earlier versions of this form of Tārā, datable to 750–850 CE, are already present in the sculpture of Ratnagiri, Orissa,[412] and in the wooden sculpture of western Tibet or Himachal Pradesh in the eleventh century.[413] A *sādhana* describes her as a two-armed goddess in this function.[414] But she may also be multiplied into eight manifestations, each of them in charge of one special fear.[415]

Here in the Sumtsek the deity is standing upright, has eight arms and is sumptuously dressed in a long skirt decorated with geometric ornaments similar to those on tile floors in Islamic architecture. A tight bodice accentuates her breasts, and shawls flow down over her shoulders. A rich 'Kashmiri' crown is placed on her head. At both sides of her feet, a noble lady and her small son are shown in adoration.

That the two figures, Avalokiteśvara and Tārā, in their parallel soteriological function were popular in Ladakh at the time, is documented by the fact that they appear, probably even painted by the same group of artists, beside each other on a wall in the Four Image Chörten at Mangyu.[416]

In Alchi, the Tārā scene is surmounted by forms symbolising a hilly landscape with white clouds. The base is formed by a wide lotus pedestal below which the seven treasures (*saptaratna*) of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*) are shown between pillars. The triangular fields flanking the opening for the head of the Mañjuśrī sculpture contain four Buddhas and scrollwork.

The eight dangers arranged around Tārā's halo again allow us an intimate glimpse into the atmosphere of daily life of ordinary people in Kashmir. These scenes have led some authors to the belief that the paintings were executed much later and that they reflect the Moghul painting style of the Islamic period.[417] But a comparison with the other murals in the Sumtsek must lead to the conclusion that these scenes are also painted in the original style. Moreover, the appearance of the same theme in Mangyu tends to corroborate an early date for the Sumtsek version.

Since the men in these scenes—not a single woman is exposed to these perilous situations—represent the usual inhabitants of Kashmir, we gain a direct insight into the contemporary style of dress. The presence of turbans by no means indicates a later date during the Muslim takeover of the Kashmir valley, but on the contrary demonstrates that features generally regarded as typical for Islamic culture were already present and transmitted at earlier periods in northwest India.

The degree of movement with which these figures are depicted demonstrates the ability of the painters to represent scenes outside the restrictions of Buddhist iconography in a much more realistic manner.



690 The goddess Green Tārā as 'saviouress from the eight kinds of fear or danger', Aṣṭabhayatrāṇa Tārā. CL
Right, actual size: 217 x 161 cm.

Overleaf: Details of the gestures performed by Tārā. CL



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696 The scenes in the Sumtsek show the situations of danger in two stages: the actual threat and the liberation from that threat. The eight dangers, arranged opposite each other in an ascending sequence at both sides of Tārā are:[418]

1. Attack by a lion (*siṃha*, *seng ge*): a white lion is jumping at a man with turban who is running away in terror (698); above, the lion is escaping and a man sits peacefully.

2. Attack by an elephant (*hastin*, *glang po*): a saddled elephant reaches for a man with his trunk, then turns away from the praying person (699 bottom right).

3. Threat by fire (*agni*, *me*): Two fireballs roll against a human being (697) while another one is released and praying to Tārā.

4. Attack by a snake (*nāga*, *klu*): with looped body and spitting poison, a serpent jumps at a fleeing man; above, a snake creeps away from a man holding a string of beads in prayer (699 top right).

5. Menace by a robber (*cora*, *mi rgod*): a soldier with helmet and holding a dagger grasps a man in civilian clothes by his hair (bottom left 695); another man, above, released from danger is praying.

6. Imprisonment (*daṇḍa*, *chad pa*): a squatting man in handcuffs with his feet bound is guarded by two soldiers with swords and shields (bottom right 696), another one is apparently free and worships the goddess.

7. Danger by water (*jala*, *chu*): a dragon-like *makara* (top left 694) has put his long trunk around a person fleeing in terror; another *makara* turns away from a man offering a flower to the goddess.

8. Horror by demons (*ḍāka*, *mkha' 'gro*): two naked demons, one apparently a female, with black hair standing on end, scare a running man, while another person is sitting peacefully beside the head of Tārā (top right 696).



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700 The basic structure of most of the mandalas in the Sumtsek follows the same system. Formally it is based on the concept of a royal city with the palace at the centre, or of a world arranged according in the four heavenly directions around a central sacred mountain crowned by the city of the gods. The religious value of the different constituent areas decreases from the centre towards the outside through the surrounding belts or bands.

The centre itself is occupied by the lord (*vibhu* or *cakreśa*), surrounded by the main inner square (*garbhapuṭa* or *abhyantaramaṇḍala*) housing the deities who are intimately connected with the central lord. They occupy the main directions and the corners (*kuṇa*, *gru*) in the intermediate directions. Generally the eastern direction (*pūrva*, *shar*), through which one enters the sacred area, lies at the bottom (*adhaḥ*), with west (*paścimā*, *nub*) as zenith (*ūrdhvam*) at the top, south (*dakṣiṇā*, *lho*) to the left and north (*uttarā*, *byang*) to the right. The surrounding second band (*dvitīyapuṭa*) is arrayed with deities of lower rank within the iconographic hierarchy, continuing in the following bands down to the outermost ring (*bāhyapuṭa* or *bāhyapaṭṭikā*). At the centre of its four sides there are arched gates (*toraṇa*, *rta babs*) with portals (*dvāra*, *sgo*) occupied by protective deities and with ornamental superstructures (*niryūha*, *sgo khyud*). This usually square nucleus of the actual mandala is in most cases surrounded by a protective circle, generally in the form of a vajra enclosure (*vajraprakāra*, *rdo rje'i ra ba*) and by a ring of flames or a fringe of lotus petals (*padmāvaliparikalpitacakravāṭa*).

This basic system applies for the left Vajradhātu mandala on the left wall (no. 1; 700) and to the one on the left half on the back wall (no. 3; 703) as well as to the Vajrasattva mandala to its right (no. 4; 704).

This mandala represents the Karma mandala of the Vajradhātu. CL

The Esoteric Buddhist character of the murals in Alchi culminates in the mandalas of which ten are painted onto the walls of this middle storey of the Sumtsek. If the building really was used for initiation ceremonies the mandalas must have served as the appropriate icons.

The hierarchic structure of these pictures with the complicated interrelation of their many figures could be used by the teacher to introduce the pupil into the doctrines of tantric Buddhism. By letting the initiate enter mentally into the mandala, his spiritual eye (*cittacakṣus*) is opened and the veil of ignorance (*avidyā*) and delusion (*moha*) is removed. Commenting on one of the basic tantric texts, the famous Indian Yoga Tantra monk Ānandagarbha of the late tenth or early eleventh century from Magadha quotes the following mantra which clearly describes the process in a concentrated formulation:

'Oṃ, Vajrasattva will now perform for you the opening of your eye. Now open your all-comprehending eye: the supreme Vajra Eye' (*oṃ vajrasattvaḥ svāyam te adya cakṣūdghaṭanaḥ. tatpara udghaṭaya te sarvacakṣum: vajracakṣur-anuttaraṃ*).[419]

The complicated notions embodied in the figures of the mandala are difficult to grasp by an abstract 'visualisation without characteristics' (*animitta-bhāvanā*, *mtshan ma med pa bsgom pa*), therefore the mandala serves as a medium for 'visualisation with characteristics' (*sanimitta-bhāvanā*, *mtshan ma dang bcas pa sgom pa*). The iconographic details are invested with mystic meaning and offer the adept the possibility of identifying himself with the appropriate figure of the mandala. By mudra and *mantra* he draws the Buddha, even Vairocana, into his own person and unites with him.

Besides the mystic result, the process of realisation of the icon may also lead to the attainment of magical faculties (*abhijñā*, *mngon shes*), since the mandalas serve as icons for the four kinds of ritual which may also be used for positive or negative effects.

For the sake of convenience we will follow in our numbering of the mandalas that used by Snellgrove, Skorupski and Matsunaga,[420] but we will treat them in a different sequence. The accent will be on an analysis of the Vajradhātu mandala appearing in several versions on this floor of the Sumtsek.

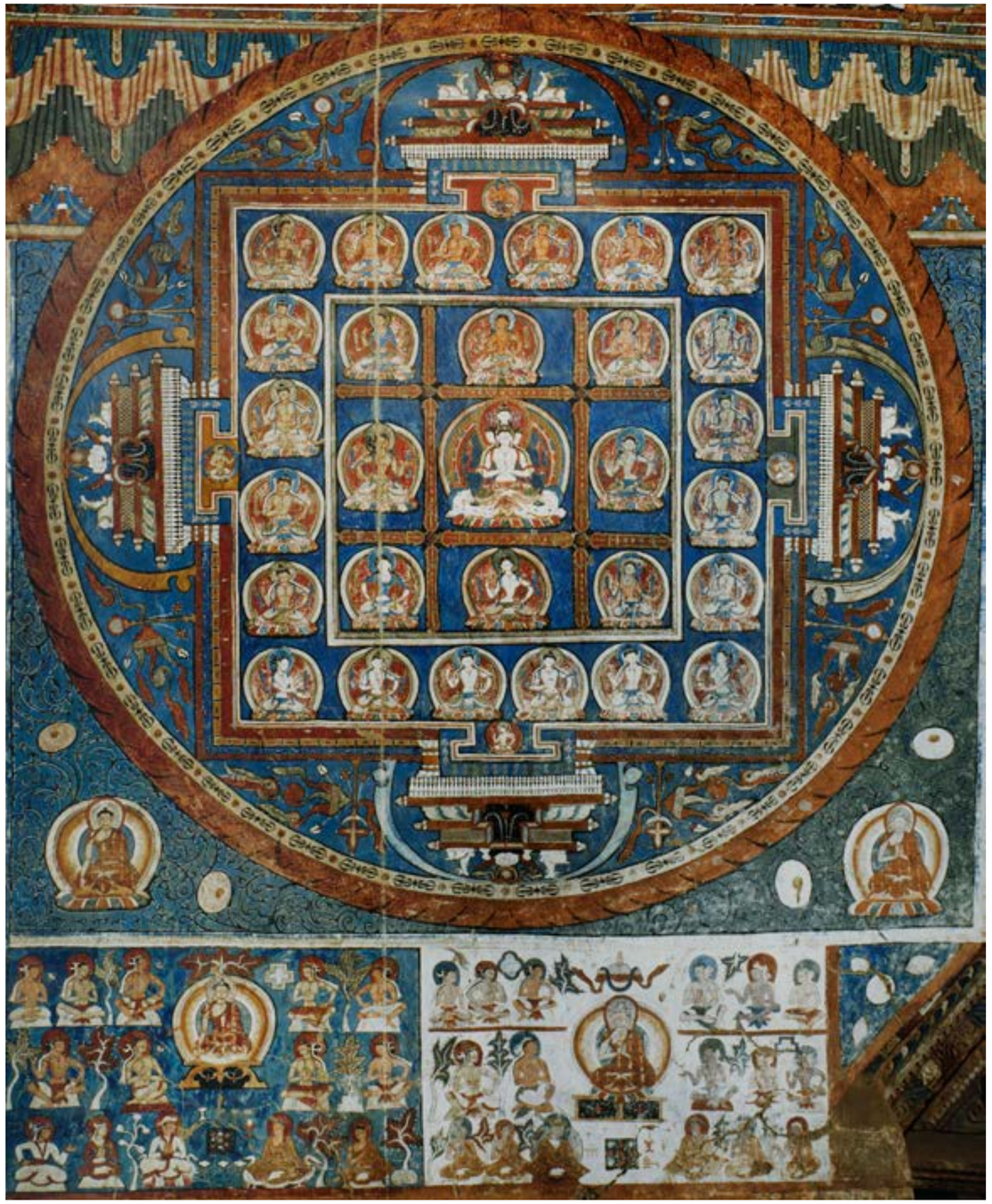


701 Above: Vajragandhā, the goddess representing the offering of fragrance; lower right corner of Mandala no. 2.

702 Opposite: Dharma mandala of the Vajradhātu (no. 2) on the left wall of the middle storey.[421]

703 Overleaf left: Caturmudrā mandala of Vairocana (no. 3).[422]

704 Overleaf right: Ekamudrā mandala with Vajrasattva as the central figure (no. 4).[423]







Vajradhātu Mandala[425]

Tathagata

1. Mahāvairocana
2. Akṣobhya
3. Ratnasambhava
4. Amitābha
5. Amoghasiddhi

Goddesses

6. Locanā
7. Māmakī
8. Pāṇḍarāvasinī
9. Tārā

Sixteen Mahābodhisattvas

10. Vajrasattva
11. Vajrarāja
12. Vajrarāga
13. Vajrasādhu
14. Vajraratna
15. Vajratejas
16. Vajraketu
17. Vajrahāsa
18. Vajradharma
19. Vajratīkṣṇa
20. Vajrahetu
21. Vajrabhāṣa
22. Vajrakarma
23. Vajrarakṣa
24. Vajrayakṣa
25. Vajrasandhi

Gate-keepers

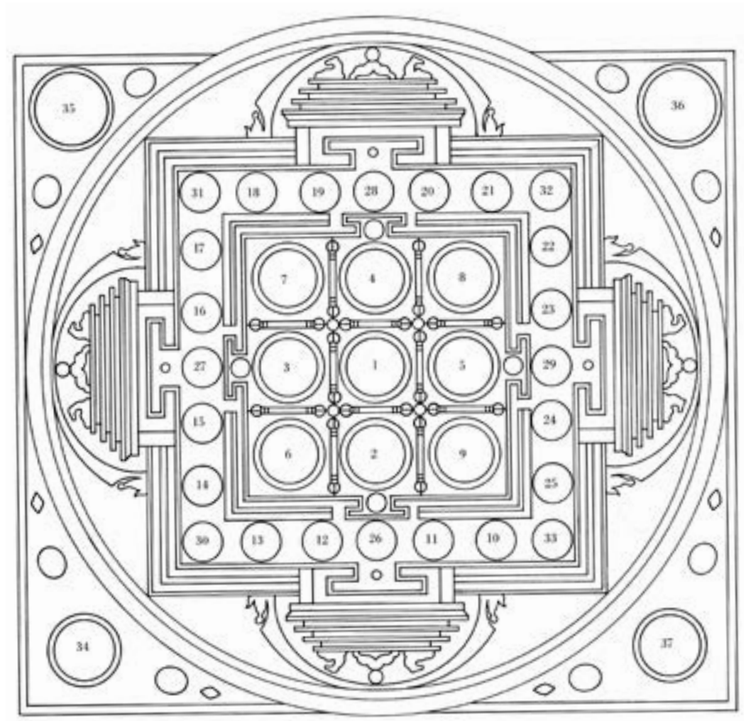
26. Vajrāṅkuśa
27. Vajrapāśa
28. Vajrasphoṭa
29. Vajraghaṇṭa

Inner Offering Goddesses

30. Vajralāsyā
31. Vajramālā
32. Vajragīti
33. Vajranṛtyā

Outer Offering Goddesses

34. Vajradhūpā
35. Vajrapuṣpā
36. Vajrālokā
37. Vajragandhā



705 Vajradhātu mandala (no. 5)

706 An answer to the question as to why the Vajradhātu mandala is repeated four times in the murals on this floor of the Sumtsek is difficult to find. Two absolutely identical examples are neighbours on the left wall, each measuring 215 cm in diameter (nos. 1 and 2), a smaller and slightly simpler one (no. 3) balances the Vajrasattva mandala (no. 4) on the back wall, and the fourth on the right wall (no. 5) evidently is forming a pair with the identically structured Vajraguhya mandala to its right (no. 6).

Vajradhātu Mandala (no. 5)

Several, often quite different versions, of this Mandala of the Vajra Sphere (*rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor*) as the visual symbol of the transcendental spiritual cosmos of Buddhist Tantrism are transmitted in the Himalayan area and in East Asia, based on different versions or translations of the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathagatas Tantra* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*). In Japanese Shingon of the eighth century the early translation of the first part into Chinese by Amoghavajra (705–774) under the title *Kongōchō-kyō* (*Vajraśekharasūtra*)[426] was used; the full text was only translated later by Dānapāla (Shihu) between 1012 and 1015 (Taishō Canon vol. 18, no. 882). The Vajradhātu mandala as we find it in Alchi was based on the Tibetan translation of the full text of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* (*de kho na nyid bsdus pa*)[427] by Śraddhākaravarman and Rinchen Zangpo, and to an even larger extent on a commentary to this text entitled 'Spreading Light on the True Reality', *Tattvālokakarī* (*de kho na nyid snang bar byed pa*, Toh. 2510),[428] composed in the late ninth or early tenth century by Ānandagarbha (Künga Nyingpo, *kun dga' snying po*)[429] and also translated by Rinchen Zangpo. The version of the mandala described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* has a more complicated structure with more figures[430] as does the one transmitted in Japanese Shingon.[431]

The basic type of the Vajradhātu mandala in Alchi is composed of thirty-seven figures with the Vairocana (Nampar Nangdzé, *rnam par snang mdzad*)[425] as the central Lord (*vibhu*, *gtso bo*; 707). The nine squares of the central area (*garbhapuṭa*) are separated from each other by elongated gilt vajras in slight pastiglia relief. The squares in the main directions of the compass are occupied by the remaining four Tathagata (708–711). The squares in the corners house the four accompanying goddesses (*prajñā*; 712–715). In the corners of the surrounding outer field (*dvitīyapuṭa*), we see the four inner goddesses of offering (*pūjādevī*, *mchod pa'i lha mo*; 722, 724–726). The central points of this outer field are guarded by doorkeepers (717–720) symbolising the stages of bringing the deities down from their transcendental abodes into the mandala and also standing for the four kinds of rituals. The intermediate spaces of this outer field contain the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas of the four families, four on each side (729, 730): the vajra family below, the *ratna* family to the left, the *padma* family above and the *karma* family to the right. In the corners outside the circle around the mandala proper with its four doors we see the four outer goddesses of offering (721, 723, 727, 728).

Among the mandalas painted onto the walls of the middle storey of the Sumtsek, three correspond exactly to the description just given:[432] mandalas no. 1 and 2 on the left wall (700 and 702) and mandala no. 5 and 6 on the right wall. Underneath these mandalas, there is a horizontal frieze with the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon.[433]

In mandala no. 3 (703) on the back wall all the figures of the inner square, apart from Vairocana,[425] are female. The central Vajrasattva of mandala no. 4 (704) on the same wall is surrounded by eight goddesses, the doorkeepers in this case also being female. Below this mandala, we find in the left corner a white god on a lion, holding a trident (*triśūla*) and a skull-cup with a *khaṭvāṅga*, his similarly white female partner to the right seated on a buffalo and holding a string of beads (*akṣamālā*) and skull-cup with trident. They have been identified with Avalokiteśvara, although not very convincingly, because of the Shaivite emblems.[434]

707 Through the esoteric meaning of its structure and its figures, the Vajradhātu mandala is a cosmic symbol in the widest sense. Beyond, it also expresses basic concepts and speculations of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism and portrays the ritualistic activities of devotion and offering. It must be regarded as an ideal visual means for esoteric initiation.

Ānandagarbha describes the central Vairocana as having a white complexion and four heads, the one in front facing east. He makes the 'fist of wisdom' (*jñānamuṣṭi*) by placing the index finger of his left hand into the fist of the right, and is seated with his legs in the fully locked position on a lotus throne placed on two lions. He is adorned and wears a jewelled crown.[435]

Actual size of square: 32 x 32 cm.





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Left: The fields directly adjacent on all four sides to the central Vairocana are occupied by the other Tathagata or Jinas as the transcendental Buddhas whose paradises are painted onto the back wall of this storey (681–684). Since the Vajradhātu mandala has to be entered from the east, the blue Akṣobhya resides at the bottom, the yellow Ratnasambhava as southern representative at the left, the red Amitābha as lord of the western paradise above and the green Amoghasiddhi as Buddha of the north at the right. All of them exhibit their characteristic mudra. Together with the central Vairocana, the five Tathagata represent the five Kinds of Wisdom (*jñāna*), the five Kinds of Initiation (*abhiṣeka*) and also other pentads which are so typical in Esoteric Buddhist speculation. In the small portals directly neighbouring the Buddhas, there appear four protective deities in miniature formal who are not named in the usual texts. Since they hold the same emblems as the large guardians in the outer portals, they should probably be interpreted as duplicates of these main guardians in smaller size.

Right: The four corners of the central area are occupied by four of the five female partners of the Tathagata, who are usually termed their 'wisdoms' (*prajñā*), symbolising the four essentials for liberation (*vimokṣamukha*). The white Locanā or Sattvavajrī in the lower left corner (southeast), who actually belongs to Vairocana, is moved into this place adjoining Akṣobhya. For her emblem she is holding a wheel (*cakra*). The upper left corner (southwest) is occupied by the yellow Māmakī as 'wisdom' of Ratnasambhava, holding a jewel that is largely lost.[435] The red Pāṇḍarāvasinī in the upper right corner (northwest) is the companion of Amitābha and has the appropriate lotus flower as emblem. The green Tārā as partner of Amoghasiddi occupies the lower right corner (northeast) and holds a cruciform vajra (*viśvavajra*).



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The Vajradhātu mandala not only expresses the speculative notions of Esoteric Buddhist thought, but also symbolises the acts and means of sacrificial activities in the shape of female deities. That they are represented as females should probably be attributed to the fact that the Sanskrit term for 'sacrifice' or 'offering' (*pūjā*) has the feminine gender. Since the goddesses are not embodying pure religio-philosophical notions but activities, some of them, especially those of the outer circle, are not shown in strict frontality, but turned in half-profile towards the centre of the mandala. They stand for the mutual veneration between the occupants of the mandala, and also of the practitioner towards the sacred figures.

The four inner goddesses of offering are still integrated into the mandala proper, occupying the corners of the outer frieze. The lower left corner shows the white Vajralāsyā (*rdo rje sgeg mo*; 724). Since 'dance' as ceremonial activity is represented in the opposite lower corner Vajranṛtyā (726), this name should probably be translated in a more general sense as 'Joy', because she may also be identified with the goddess Rati, whose name has this meaning. She bears no emblems, but rests both of her hands, forming fists, on her hips. She symbolises the consolidation of the mind of awakening (*bodhicitta*).

The upper left corner is taken by the yellow Vajramālā (*rdo rje 'phreng ba*; 722), the 'Garland', who in Alchi holds a jewel in both hands. She expresses the embellishment of the ritual.

In the upper right corner, we have Vajragītā (*rdo rje glu ma*; 725), the 'Song', holding a lute (*vīṇā*) as an appropriate emblem, and thereby figuratively expressing the sound of ceremonial intonation and the virtue of predication.

Vajranṛtyā (*rdo rje gar ma*; 726), the 'Dance', occupies the lower right corner and has her arms in agitated movement, symbolising worship by dance.

The outer offering goddesses, here reproduced in the larger exterior squares, represent the actual materials or objects used as sacrifices. Vajradhūpā (*rdo rje bdug spos ma*; 723) or 'Incense' in the lower left corner outside the mandala square holds a barely visible incense burner. She is meant to remove impurities.

The 'Flower', Vajrapuṣpā (*rdo rje me tog ma*; 721), above, presents a tray of flowers and symbolises the decorative value of perfection.

Vajradīpā or Vajrālokā (*rdo rje mar me ma*; 727), the 'Lamp', in the upper right corner stands for the light of knowledge, illuminating the darkness of ignorance. In our case, she is also holding a tray with flowers instead of her traditional symbol.

Vajragandhā (*rdo rje dri chab ma*; 728), the 'Fragrance', produced for instance by sandalwood powder, signifies the purification of mind. She is holding a conch-shell containing fragrant essences.

716 The portals of the mandala are protected by four Guardian Deities symbolising the means by which the deities are attracted to the mandala and also to the person of the practitioner (*catvāri saṃgrahavastūni*), but they also stand for the four basic kinds of ritual. At the lower portal we have the blue Vajrāṅkuśa (*rdo rje lcags kyu*), the 'hook' to guide elephants, who attracts the holy figures and symbolises the appeasing rite (*śāntika*), whereas to the left the yellow Vajrapāśa (*rdo rje zhags pa*), the 'noose', guides them into the mandala and stands for the rite for prosperity (*pauṣṭika*). The red Vajrasphoṭa or Vajraśṛṅkhala (*rdo rje lcags sgrog*), the 'chain', situated in the upper portal and actually holding a thin white chain in this painting, binds the deities and keeps them inside the sacred area of the altar or mandala. He also represents the dominating ritual (*vaśīkaraṇa*). To the right, the green Vajraghaṇṭa (*rdo rje dril bu*), the 'bell', lets the sound of joy for the ceremonial success spread into all directions and is the symbol for the subjugating ceremonies (*abhicāruka*). Taken together the four deities symbolise the basic stages of an esoteric ritual.

Of the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas of the present fortunate aeon (*bhadrakalpa*) arranged in groups of two at both sides of the Door Guardians in the outer band, only two are reproduced here. To the left there is Vajrasandhi or Vajramuṣṭi (729), the 'fist', representing 'unification' or 'possession of all virtues'. He occupies the second position from below in the right outer mandala zone. He is moving his arms in an agitated manner, his hands by no means clenched into fists as required by the Bodhisattva's name, again a sign of the uncertainties of the Alchi artists in regard to iconographic rules.

To the right, Vajrasādhu (730), 'excellence' or 'powerful effectiveness', residing in the lower mandala zone symbolises 'satisfaction' (*tuṣṭi*). He lifts both of his arms above his head in a gesture of joy.



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The smaller squares show the four inner goddesses of offering in their actual position within the mandala, beginning at the lower right and continuing in a clockwise sequence. The same applies to the four outer goddesses of offering reproduced in the larger squares.



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729 The Bodhisattva Vajrasandhi or Vajramuṣṭi. Actual diameter of circle: 13 cm.



730 The Bodhisattva Vajrasādhu.



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Left: Two elegant *apsaras* with four arms underline the transcendental character of the mandala. They have three eyes and are represented with bare upper parts of the body and the typically grotesque flying position.

Below left, actual height: 30 cm.

731 Right: The western or upper portal of the Vajradhātu mandala is protected by the red Vajrasphoṭa or 'chain' with the blue Bodhisattva Vajratīkṣṇa, 'sharpness', holding a sword to the left and the yellow Vajrahetu or 'cause' with a wheel (*cakra*) to the right.

The superstructure (*niryūha*) of the T-shaped portal has the character of a rich palace entrance. All parts and projecting beams bear colourful decoration. The top is crowned at the centre by a grotesque white lion-like creature (*kīrtimukha*) with strings of jewels coming out of his mouth. Below there is another fantastic lion mask flanked by two elephant heads in profile. At both sides of the upper lion figure, two white gazelles may still be a faint suggestion of the park where Buddha Śākya-muni preached in Benares. The two sickle-like blades coming out of the mouths of *makara* at the two sides of the *niryūha* are the points of a cruciform vajra (*viśvavajra*) as the cosmic symbol supporting the whole mandala. A circular fence of vajras (*vajraprakāra*) and another one of flames separate the mandala from secular surroundings.

Vajraguhya Mandala

1. Vajradhātvīśvarī
2. Vajravajriṇī
3. Ratnavajriṇī
4. Dharmavajriṇī
5. Karmavajriṇī

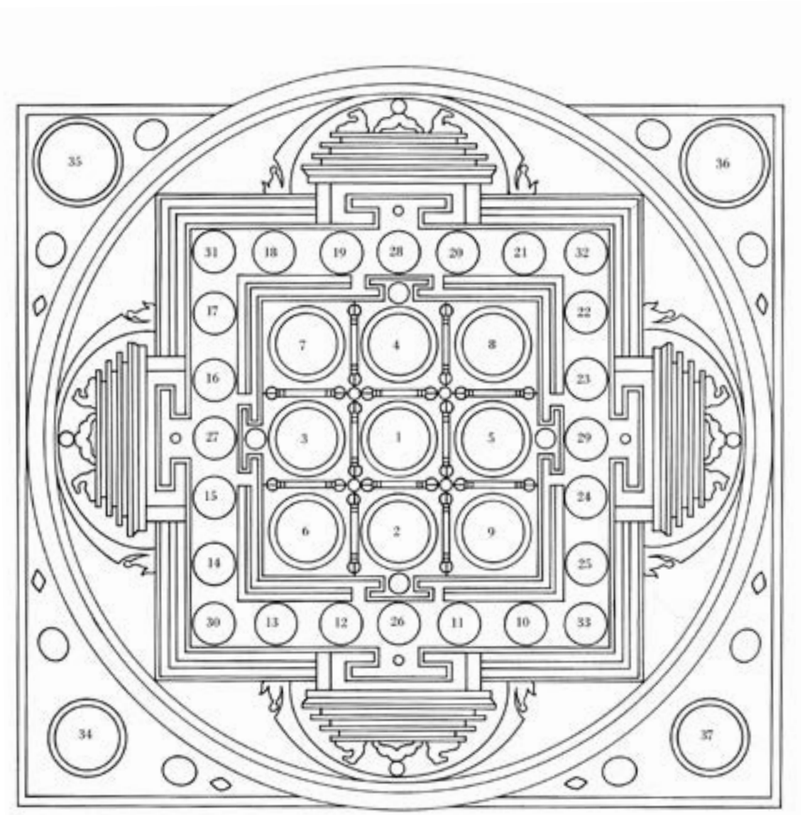
6. Sattvavajrī
7. Ratnavajrī
8. Dharmavajrī
9. Karmavajrī

10. Samantabhadrā
11. Ratirāgā
12. Tathāgatāṅkuśī
13. Sādhumatī
14. Ratnottamā
15. Ratnolkā
16. Dvajāgrakeyurā
17. Hāsavatī
18. Vajrāmbujā
19. Ādhāraṇī
20. Sarvacakrā
21. Sahasrāvarttā
22. Siddhottarā
23. Sarvarakṣā
24. Tejaḥpratyāhāriṇī
25. Dhāraṇīmudrā

26. Guhyāṅkuśī
27. Guhyapāśā
28. Guhyasphoṭā
29. Guhyaghaṇṭā

30. Vajralāsī
31. Vajramālā
32. Vajragītā
33. Vajranṛtyā

34. Guhyadhūpeśvarī
35. Guhyapuṣpā
36. Guhyadīpā
37. Guhyagandhā



734 Vajraguhya mandala (no. 6)

735 Drawing of the Vajraguhya mandala

The fact that this mandala has exactly the same structure as the Vajradhātu mandala on the same wall, but that all figures, including the five Tathagata and even Vairocana in the centre (736), are unmistakably represented as females has led several scholars, including the present author, to declare them variants of the occupants of the Vajradhātu mandala in female form. Lokesh Chandra and S.D. Singhal have recently shown that this mandala is actually based on the second chapter of the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra* and should therefore he called Vajraguhya mandala or Dhāraṇī mandala,[437] 'Mandala of the Adamantine Mystery' or 'Mandala of the Mystic Vessels or Spells'.

The goddesses are in fact consorts of the male Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Vajradhātu mandala as it is described in the first chapter of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and the commentary entitled the *Tattvālokakāri*.

The second chapter of the *sūtra*[438] describes how the Lord (*bhagavān*) Vajrapāṇi, as the spiritually active character, enters into a special profound mental concentration (*samādhi*) and merges with the Universal Essence (*samarasa*). In the shape of the Vajra Holder (*vajadhara*), he issues the Knowledge of the Vajradhāraṇīs of all Tathagata into all spheres of the universe. This is then transformed into images (*bimba*) which are urged to enter the mandala, accompanied by the exclamation: 'Ah, the Mind of Enlightenment's (*bodhicitta*) well-wishing for all living beings! That which has acquired the state of steadfastness (*dhīra*) by the rules of religious discipline (*vinaya*) will now be transformed into the shape of women (*strīrūpa*).'

Thereafter the figures of the Vajradhātu mandala enter their special forms of *samādhi* and formulate their 'Own Highest Knowledge' (*svavidyottamā*) in a magic formula (*dhāraṇī*), which becomes manifest in the shape of a goddess. The term 'Knowledge' (*vidyā*) is here clearly applied in its double tantric meaning: as mystic wisdom and as the technical term for the female partner of a tantric god or of the practitioner.

One after the other, the five Tathagata project their consorts as their 'Knowledge' (*vidyā*) or 'Wisdom' (*prajñā*) into the proper position of the mandala by pronouncing their names. Then again Vajrapāṇi manifests by magic formulas the tetrads (*catuṣṭaya*) of the Bodhisattva's partners into the outer field of the mandala. They are called 'Mystic Vessels' or 'Holders' (*dhāraṇya*), again using a technical term in its double meaning: as magic formula and as consort.

Lastly, he projects the four guardians of the portals and the eight female representatives of sacrifice and offering into their proper positions in the mandala. All of its icons now have a female appearance.

736 The centre of the mandala is occupied by the white Vajriṇī or Vajradhātvīśvarī, the 'Mistress of the Adamantine Sphere', created by a magic spell containing her name and littered by Vairocana as the Lord (*vibhu*) of the Vajradhātu mandala. Like him, she has four heads, makes the same *jñānamuṣṭimudrā* and is seated on a throne of two lions. The text of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* also calls her Buddhamudrā, 'Seal of the Buddha',[439] using another tantric term with several meanings: *mudrā* applied here in the sense of 'mystic consort'.

The execution of the figure is extremely fine, although there may be some retouching in the outlines. The lateral faces show the characteristic protrusion of the furthermost eye.





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Left: The consorts of the four Tathagata surrounding the central figure display the same mudra and have the same colour as their lords. Like all the other icons in this mandala, they also have been created by the male partners with the magic spells (*dhāraṇī*) which enunciate their names. The blue consort of Akṣobhya is called Vajravajriṇī, the yellow one of Ratnasambhava is Ratnavajriṇī, followed by the red Dharmavajriṇī and the green Karmavajriṇī. Small versions of the gate-keepers again appear in their portals.
Diameter of circles: 24 cm.

Right: There are four companions to the main figures: the white Sattvavajrī, the yellow Ratnavajrī, the red Dharmavajrī and lastly the green Karmavajrī. In contrast to the partly naked main figures, they are all clad in tightly fitting bodices (*kañcuka*). Their attributes correspond to those of their partners in the Vajradhātu mandala.



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The four inner and the four outer goddesses of offering are here arranged in the same sequence as in the Vajradhātu mandala (no. 5; see 721–728). The emblems they are holding do not in all cases correspond to the symbolic meaning of the deity.



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The portals of the Vajraguhya mandala are similar to those of the other mandalas on this floor of the Sumtsek. They have the same richly decorated superstructures (*niryūha*), crowned by a fantastic lion head and a pair of gazelles.

Instead of the flying *apsaras* with bare upper parts of their body, the portals of this mandala are flanked by figures in rich garments. Their whole appearance is very similar to four pairs of angel-like deities in the corners of the ceilings of the Palden Drepung Chörten (205, 212–215).[440]

They have bodies of different colours but white faces, they are four-armed and have their hair tied into large knots held by bands of a diadem. Their costumes consist of ornamented short and tight jackets, loin cloths and elegantly decorated high boots. Apart from rosaries and other emblems, all of them swing a strange umbrella-like object which emits clouds of coloured bands, possibly representing a kind of incense burner. Their whole appearance suggests that they are modelled on members of the royal court in Srinagar.



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Apart from four mandalas on the side and back walls of this floor which are identical formulations of the Vajradhātu mandala (nos. 1, 2, 3, 5), the similarly structured and related Vajraguhya mandala (no. 6) and the one with Vajrasattva as lord (*vibhu*), the wall panels flanking the entrance are decorated with four mandalas, two on each side, measuring 135 cm in diameter.

One above the other, we have mandalas of Akṣobhya (no. 9; 758) and of Ratnasambhava (no. 10; 759) to the right, and of Amitābha (no. 7; 756) and Amoghasiddhi (no. 8; 757) to the left, all of them heavily damaged by water leaking through the roof, especially the two to the left. The Buddhas are clearly characterised by their mudra and the colour of their bodies.

All these mandalas are constructed in the same way with a central inner square (*garbhapuṭa*) containing nine figures with one of the Tathagata as the 'Lord of the Circle' (*cakreśa*) in the middle. The outer frieze (*dvitīyapuṭa*) is occupied by sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, four on each side, with four goddesses at the corners (*koṣṭha*) and four more in the portals. The portals are richly decorated and crowned by the usual pair of deer. Like a fence, a circle of vajras (*vajraprakāra*) and of flames surrounds the whole arrangement which in its basic structure is similar to the Vajradhātu mandalas.

No text is known on which the combination of these four mandalas and of their structure could be based. Since Vairocana as the Lord of the main mandalas on the other walls is apparently the culmination of the iconographic scheme on this floor, the addition of the four other Tathagata at the entrance wall seems logical and plausible.



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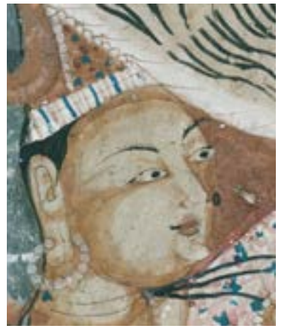
759



760 Since the inscriptions on this wall panel were composed or actually written by Tsültrim Ö, the founder of the Sumtsek, the erection and decoration of this building must have taken place in the decades around the year 1200 CE. But even if the names were added later, as some scholars believe, we would arrive at about the same date if we count the years covering a lineage (*sampradāya*) of nine priests in a master-pupil succession beginning with the Indian *mahāsiddha* Tilopa in the first half of tenth century.

Note the increase in roof height from the original level indicated by the door's threshold.

The Top Storey



761 Detail of Dhanada under Ucchuṣma-Jambhala's feet.[445] CL

Three of the walls of the top storey of the Sumtsek are also decorated with mandalas, whereas on the fourth wall, to the front with the window, three protective deities and two groups of priests are represented (762).[441]

The Entrance Wall

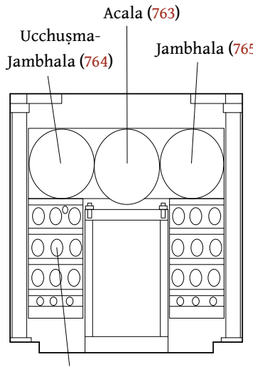
Three magnificent representations of tutelary deities are to be found on a broad horizontal frieze spanning the whole wall over the opening of the window (760). In the centre there is a blue Acala (*mi g-yo ba*) striding in forceful *pratyāliḍha* attitude, one leg bent, the other stretched, and stamping upon an elephant-headed Gaṇapati (763). He wears a tiger skin as a skirt and snakes as ornaments. The crown encircling his flaming yellow hair bears human skulls. He projects six tiny auxiliary deities into his halo surrounded by flames. As traditional emblems, he brandishes a sword (*khaḍga*) in his right hand and a noose (*pāśa*) in his left.

He is flanked by two versions of the Indian God of Wealth. To his right (left for the viewer) the greyish Ucchuṣma-Jambhala[442], with a mongoose (*nakula*) in his left hand and a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in his right, tramples on a prostrate Dhanada[443] wearing a Kashmiri style dress and boots (764). Ucchuṣma-Jambhala has three eyes, also wears a tiger skin around his waist and is crowned with human skulls. His circular halo is composed of different coloured bands.

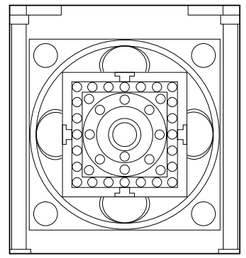
To the left of Acala (the right for the viewer), the yellow Jambhala rests in the at-ease pose (*līlāsana*) on two white lions with blue manes (765). He has only two eyes, his expression being less fierce than that of the other two gods. His dark hair is held by a three-pointed Kashmiri crown from which white ribbons are floating. He wears a skirt and jewellery. Instead of holding a skull-cup, his right hand makes the *varadamudrā*, the gesture of bestowing grace, but he also has a mongoose as his emblem in his left hand.

The representation of these gods is unique among the Alchi murals apart from a small Acala in the left niche of the ground floor.

The two panels beside the entrance are decorated with friezes showing rows of priests. Whereas the panel to the right is occupied by anonymous figures (767), the one to the left has inscriptions identifying all of the figures by name (766). This series of Indian and Tibetan monks with high ecclesiastical ranks is of utmost importance for the dating of the Sumtsek and of its murals. The last priest to the left in the lower row (see detail above) is named as Drigungpa (*'bri gung pa*), the famous Jikten Gönpo (*'jig rten mgon po*, 1143–1217), founder of the Drigung sub-school of the Kagyüpa.[444]

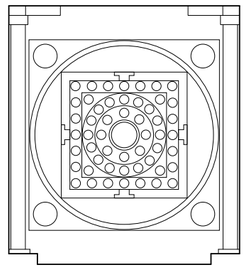


Drigung Kagyü lineage (766)

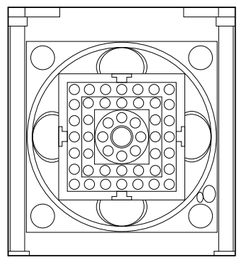


Left wall: Śākyasiṃha mandala (768)





Main wall: Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala (770)



Right wall: Prajñāpāramitā mandala (772)

762 The four walls of the top storey; the entry wall top left, the left wall top right, the main wall bottom left, and the right wall bottom right. CL

763 The pictorial execution of these comparatively large muscular gods clearly demonstrates the use of some basic technical devices found in the Alchi murals.

Whereas the body of Acala in the centre is painted all over in the same hue of dark blue without any attempts at shading, those of the greyish Ucchuṣma-Jambhala (764) to the left and the yellow Jambhala to the right (765) exhibit a pronounced modelling of their muscular bodies. The recessed parts are tinted band-like in a darker hue of the basic colour without taking any lighting into account. This shading device is purely representative, and does not evoke the illusion of volume. The technique is clearly restricted to certain colours such as red, yellow, green and grey, but is never applied to dark blue or white, as is shown by the flat bodies of the white lions as the seat of Jambhala, in contrast to the two yellow figures found beneath Acala and Ucchuṣma-Jambhala.

The heavy black contour lines bordering the flames of Acala's halo and the ornamental round flowers in the background are probably later additions to enhance the effect of the figures. They are also used in several other scenes of the murals at Alchi, where they often add a certain heaviness which is not apparent in unretouched parts of the murals where the delicate original lines are still visible and the paintings have retained their elegant lightness.[446]





764 The protective deity Ucchuṣma-Jambhala on the entrance wall of top storey.



765 Jambhala, the god of wealth, on the entrance wall.



766 The right half of the wall beside the window shows nine priests in three rows. Some have white hair and beards, some wear conical hats, but all are clad in the same orange-yellow garment. They cannot be identified by inscriptions, but their style and appearance correspond exactly with the priests on the back wall in the middle storey. Three smaller priests are shown below. Whereas the paintings on the other side show the patriarchs of the lineage of religions scholars established in India and Tibet, the priests on this wall seem to represent local clergy. Later over-painting of the background and the contour lines accounts for the silhouette-like effect of the figures.

The inscriptions accompanying the representations of the nine priests on the left wall panel begin with a short eulogy stating: 'I, the monk called Tsültrim Ö ... ' (*bdag dge slong tshul khrims 'od ces bgya ba...*). and then names the represented figures as his refuge; first the small blue Vajradhara (*rdo rje chang*) placed slightly above the upper triad, and then the nine priests beginning with the two dark-skinned Indian siddhas in the upper row, and then followed by seven Tibetan priests, who, one may note, are shown with plain white complexions.[447]

Arranged in a sequence from the upper right to the lower left corner of the wall panel, the priests are:

1. Tilopa, the famous tantric master from Bengal, later classified as first patriarch of the Kagyüpa Order;[448]

2. Nāropa (*c.* 956–1040), his pupil and teacher of several famous masters;

3. Marpa (1012–1096), the actual founder of the Kagyüpa Order;

4. Milarepa (*mi la ras pa*, 1040–1113), the famous poet and pupil of Marpa;

5. Dakpo chenpo (*dwags po chen po*) or Gampopa (*sgam po pa*, 1079–1153);

6. Dakpo Ön (*dwags po 'on*) who can be identified with Dakpo Gomtsül (*dwags po sgom tshul*), also called Gompa Tsültrim Nyingpo (*sgom pa tshul khrims snying po*; 1116–1169);[449]

7. Dakpo Ön chungba (*dwags po 'on chung ba*) who can be identified with Dakpo Gomchung Shérap Jangchub (*dwags po sgom chung shes rab byang chub*; 1130–1173);[450]

8. Pakmodrupa (*phag mo gru pa*, 1110–1170) who studied under Gampopa;[451]

9. Drigungpa Jikten Gönpo (1143–1217) who founded the sub-sect of the Kagyüpa Order named after his monastery.[452]

Importantly, these 'portraits' of the nine historical priests find their stylistic and formal counterparts in other figures of the Sumtsek murals. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that they can only have been executed at the same time as the other paintings.[453]

These facts must lead to the conclusion that Tsültrim Ö, the founder of the Sumtsek and the commissioner of its murals, must have been a contemporary or an immediate follower of Jikten Gönpo, which means that he must have been active around the end of the twelfth to the beginning of the thirteenth century CE. The lineage (*sampradāya*) also testifies to the predominance of the Drigungpa sect not only in Ladakh generally,[454] but also at Alchi with its castle and temples.

767







768 Left wall mandala.

769 Central Śākyasiṃha.

Left Wall

A mandala covers the entire space of the left wall. It corresponds to the Śākyasiṃha mandala in the Dukhang (198)[455] and has the white Buddha Śākyasiṃha as the central figure placed in the middle of an eight-petalled lotus flower. On the petal below, there is a six-armed Prajñāpāramitā in much smaller scale. In the cardinal and the intermediate directions of the surrounding ring, there are the eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas[456] and in the corners outside the ring, four inner goddesses of offering. The outer square is constructed in a similar way to the Vajradhātu mandala. In the corners outside the protective circle, four forms of Avalokiteśvara are engaged in different activities, such as preaching to hell beings, a hungry ghost, to other animals (884) or fighting the demi-god Rāvaṇa (885).[457]





770 Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala on the back wall.

771 Central Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha.

Back Wall

The icon filling the space of the back wall is a Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala with a delicately painted white four-headed and eight-armed Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha occupying the central position and bordered by a golden ornamental circle in light pastiglia relief.[458] It is similar to the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala in the Dukhang (52).[459] Mañjuśrī is surrounded by two circles, the inner one with the four Tathagata seated on their respective *vāhana* and accompanied by their *prajñā*. The outer circle contains sixteen Mahābodhisattvas. The additional enclosing square has sixteen more Bodhisattvas, the gate-keepers on each side and the goddesses of offering in the comers.[460] Outside the protective circle, the corners of the wall space are occupied by four Buddhas encircled in lotus flowers.





772 Right wall mandala.

773 Central Six-armed Prajñāpāramitā.

Right Wall

The mandala on the right wall again corresponds with slight variations to an example in the Dukhang (49). The central six-armed Prajñāpāramitā[461] is encircled by four more *pāramitā* in the cardinal directions and the four Tathagata only in the intermediate positions, whereby the female aspect again seems to be accentuated. The tiny figure of an adoring lady and a smaller priest in the lower corner outside the mandala may underline this supposition.[462]

The doorkeepers and the eight goddesses of offering take their usual positions in the central parts and the corners of the surrounding two squares, the remaining spaces of which are filled with Buddhas.

The Ceilings and Their Painted Textile Motifs



774 View from the front right corner of the Sumtsek ground floor into the middle storey. To the left, the pinnacle of the clay stupa in the centre of the building can be seen. The umbrella-like textile canopy above was presented by David Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski when they were studying the temples of Alchi during the seventies. The structure of the ceilings, with their wooden panels painted to represent textiles and their different motifs, is clearly visible.

775 Detail of panel 36 reproducing a dying mistake. CL

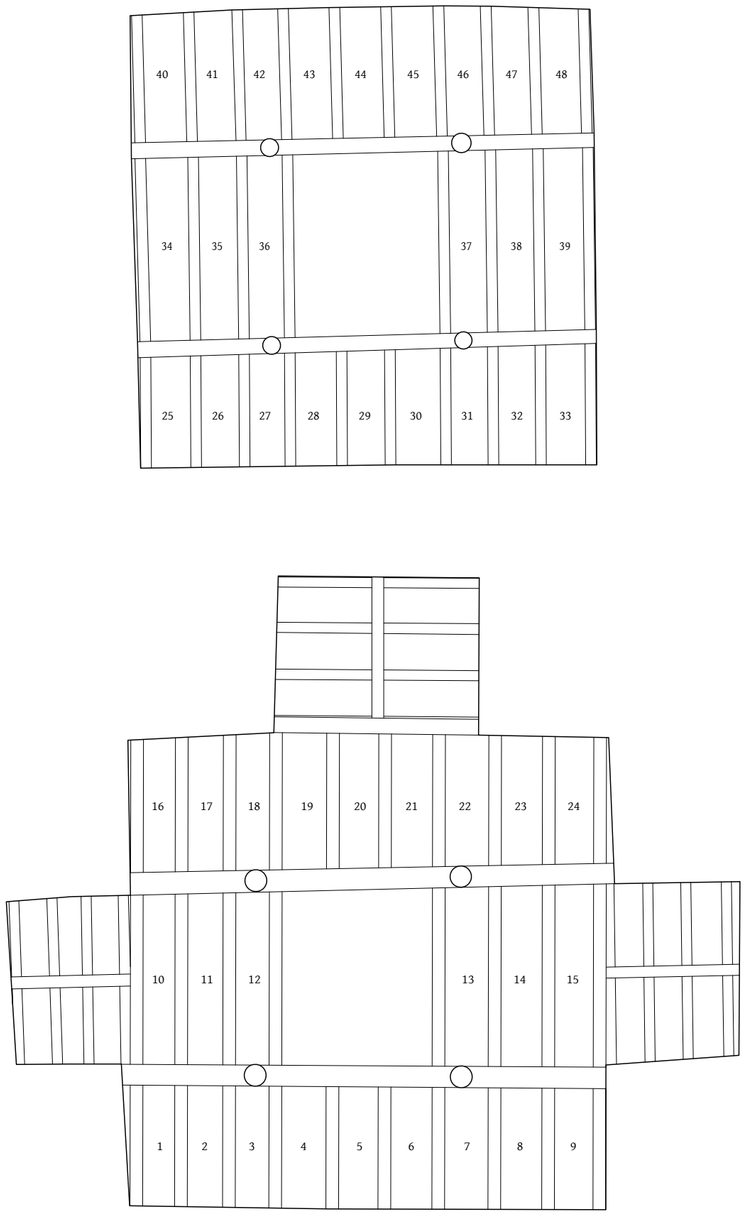
The ceilings of the ground floor and the middle storey in the Sumtsek are divided by wooden beams into forty-eight oblong panels[463] grouped into three successive rows from the entrance to the back wall.[464] When looking up to the ceilings, the first impression is that they are covered by real textiles. Weaving and dyeing techniques have been realistically represented by the painters who decorated the wooden panels. Similar panel decorations are preserved in other contemporary temples of Ladakh, for instance at Mangyu and Sumda, but not exhibiting the same rich variety of motifs and not as well preserved as in the Sumtsek.

The copying of textiles in paint on the ceilings may derive from the custom of fixing actual pieces of cloth under the ceilings of Ladakhi buildings, partly as embellishment but also for the practical reason of preventing dust or mud particles of the ceiling construction from falling into the rooms below.

Several panels clearly evoke the technique of tie-resist dyeing (*plangi*, Tib. *phrug*), either in one single step in one colour (panel no.7) or in two steps resulting in two colours (nos. 19, 37). This comparatively simple technique is used in the Tibetan area down to the present century.[465] Tie-resists can be combined with other dyeing techniques (nos. 9, 14, 24, 34, 39). Resist dyeing (batik) by applying wax with a stamp or a brush can be discerned in panels no. 36 and 42, whereas dyeing with mordants is shown by panels nos. 33, 39, 48. We can also make out examples of stitching and embroidery. Several examples must represent brocade (nos. 3, 4, 8, 15, 18, 21) or the complicated technique of lampas (nos. 6, 11, 23, 43). All of these techniques were widely used in medieval India and Kashmir; most were common in the western and southern regions of Asia and could easily have been transmitted over wide areas along the extensive trade routes.

Some of the motifs appearing in the panels have a long history. For instance the overlapping back-to-back animals regardant (looking backward; panels no. 9, 14, 18) may be traced back to Graeco-Iranian silverware of the second century CE with later examples in Sassanian silver of the sixth to seventh centuries as intermediate stages. In the Alchi panels, the overlapping animals may be of the same kind, such as lions (panel 11), but also quite different creatures such as elephants and *vyāla* (panels 9 and 18). That such delicate motifs are repeated on the dresses of figures in the Sumtsek murals[466] underlines our assumption that the ceiling panels copy textiles which actually existed at the time in Kashmir or even in Ladakh.

One of the most common motifs on the ceilings are roundels (panels no. 6, 11, 23, 27, 43), sometimes with pearled borders, and often containing horsemen performing the ‘Parthian’ shot with bow and arrow. This ornamental device can be found in several variations along



776 Key to the numbering of the ceiling panels with textile motifs of the ground floor (below) and the middle storey (above). Drawing Neuwirth & Auer, TU Graz 2020.

the Silk Road, from Western Asia to China and Japan. It is probably not necessary to derive this motif from a direct influence by Sogdian or Islamic art in the Ghaznavid empire,[467] since it may easily be seen as a common device of the cosmopolitan and eclectic Kashmiri culture. Moreover, 'Sassanian' animals (panels nos. 26, 27, 43) or Indian female dancers with sword and shield (panel 23) are also set into such roundels, again underlining the 'internationalism' in the Kashmir and Ladakh region.

The most common decorative devices on the ceilings are horizontal stripes in different colours containing rows of running animals (panels nos. 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 21), superficially reminiscent of the friezes on the so-called 'moonstones' (*candrakhaṇḍapāsāṇa*) in front of staircases in Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa of Sri Lanka, although there different animals follow each other in the same row.

A pan-Asian character is also exhibited by connected *svastika* used to fill the spaces of panels (nos. 16, 25, 30, 38, 41). In the seventh century we can find them on the Dhāmekh Stupa at Sārnāth and even earlier in architectural stucco decorations of Ctesiphon to where they may have been transmitted from the Hellenic and Roman area.

That these imitations of textiles must date from the same time as the other paintings in the Sumtsek is substantiated by the fact that most of the motifs also appear on garments worn both by figures of the Buddhist pantheon and also by people in the secular scenes of the Sumtsek murals.

That they reflect the cosmopolitan cultural and artistic atmosphere in medieval Kashmir is documented by a fragmentary square masonry pillar found in the courtyard of the Avantisvāmin Temple near Srinagar, datable to the ninth century, which shows roundels with earlier variants of some of the important motifs on the Alchi ceilings.[468] A detailed evaluation and analysis of these painted ceilings together with similar examples at Sumda, south of Alchi, will surely fill a gap in the history of Indian and Kashmiri textiles. The motifs and their compositional structure belong to a completely different ornamental tradition than that of other early painted ceilings in western Tibet, for instance in Tabo or Guge.[469] There is also hardly any obvious connection with the decorative patterns on later Indian or Kashmiri textiles.

In recent times, several actual textile specimens with comparable motifs have found their way out of Tibet into Western collections which may add convincing evidence for a clearer picture of the 'international' character of the fascinating northwest Indian and Kashmiri civilisation in medieval times.







777 Panels 1, 2, 3.

778 Left top: From panel 3.

779 Left bottom: From panel 1.



780 Panels 4, 5, 6.

781 Right: From panel 4.





782 From panel 6.

783 2





784 From panel 6.

785 2

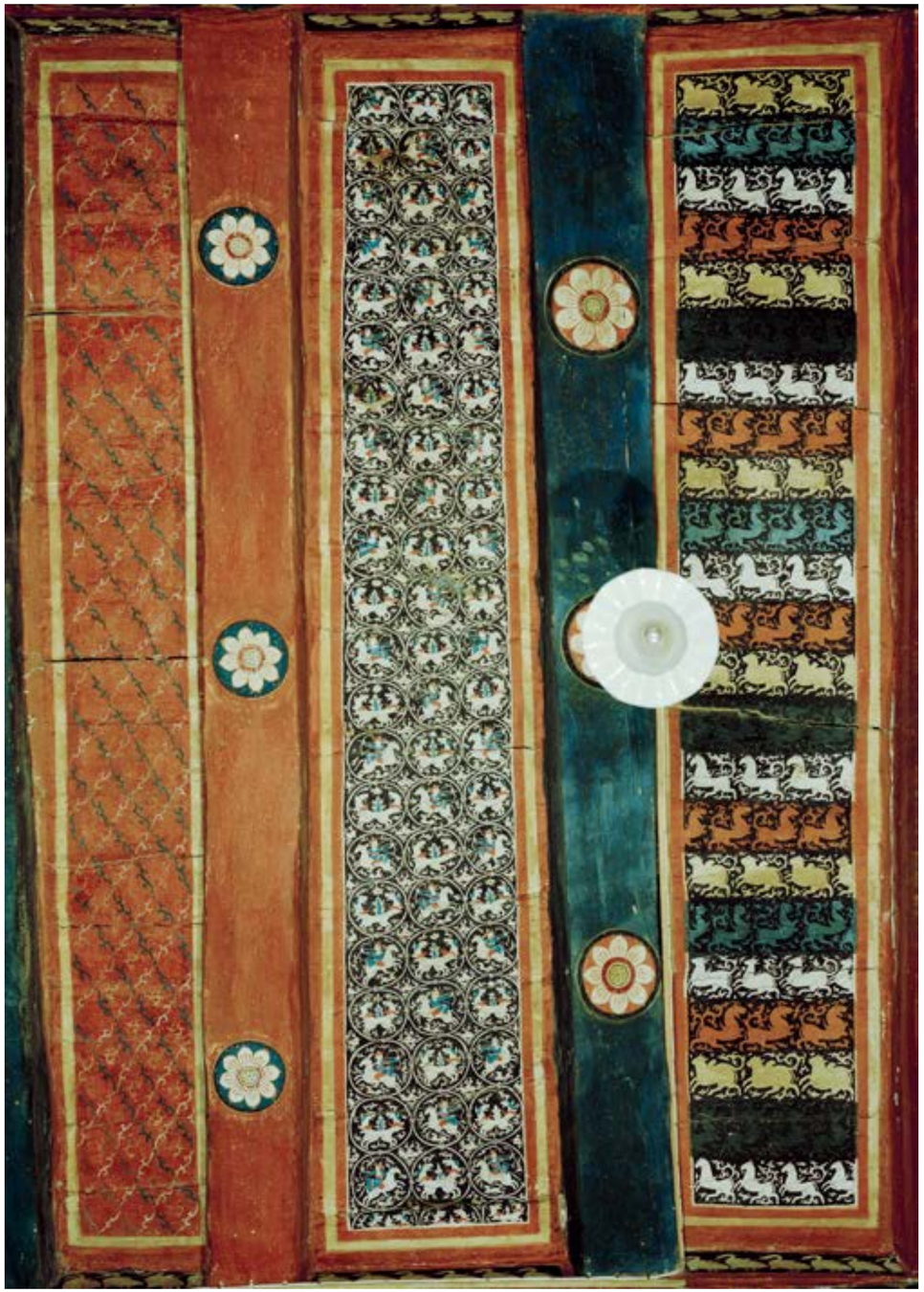


786 Panels 7, 8, 9.

787 Right: From panel 9.

788 Overleaf left: Panels 12,11,10.

789 Overleaf right: From panel 11.



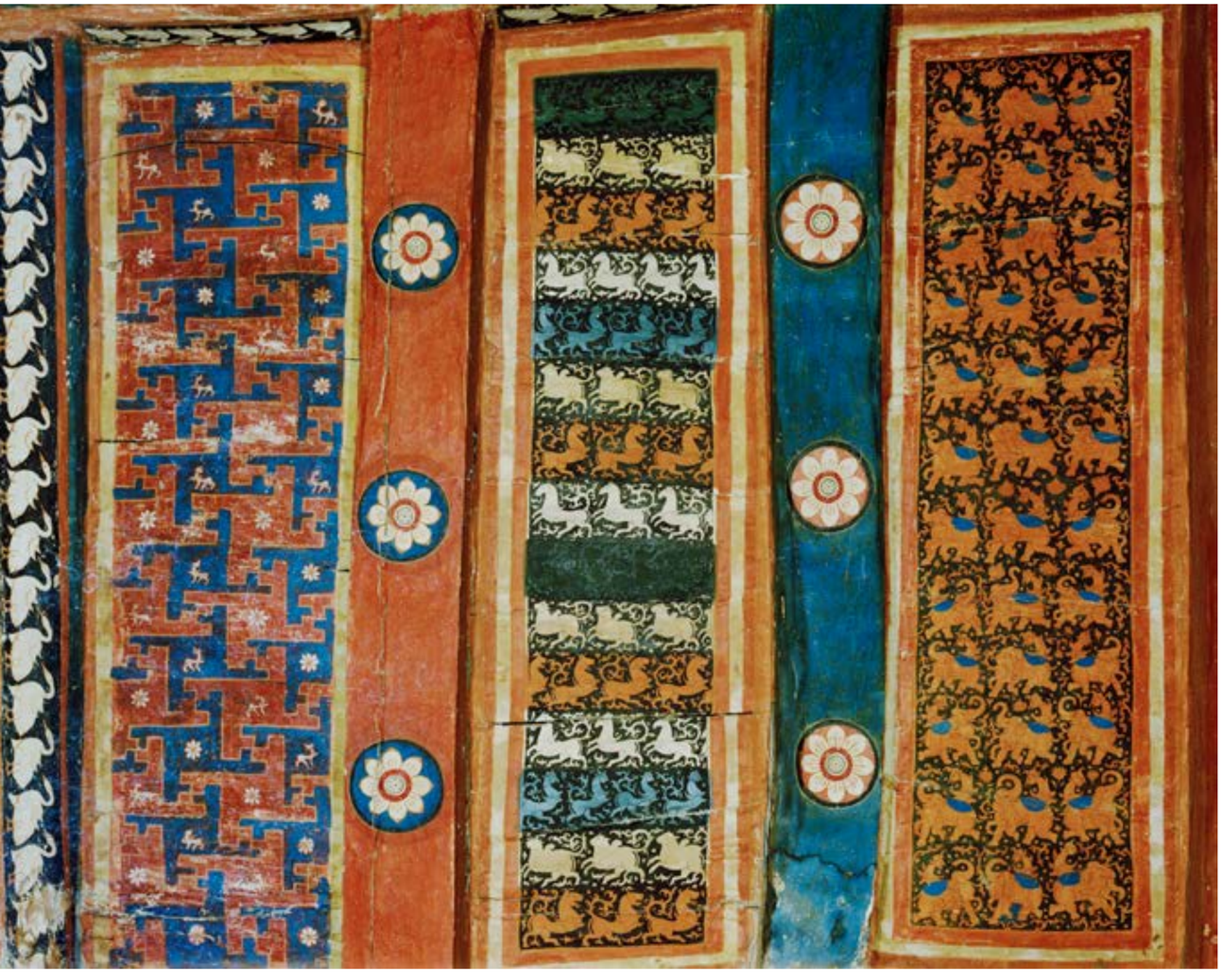




790 Panels 15, 14, 13.



791 Right: From panel 14.



792 Panels 16, 17, 18.



793 From panel 18.



794 From panel 16.



795 Panels 21, 20, 19.



796 Panels 24, 23, 22.

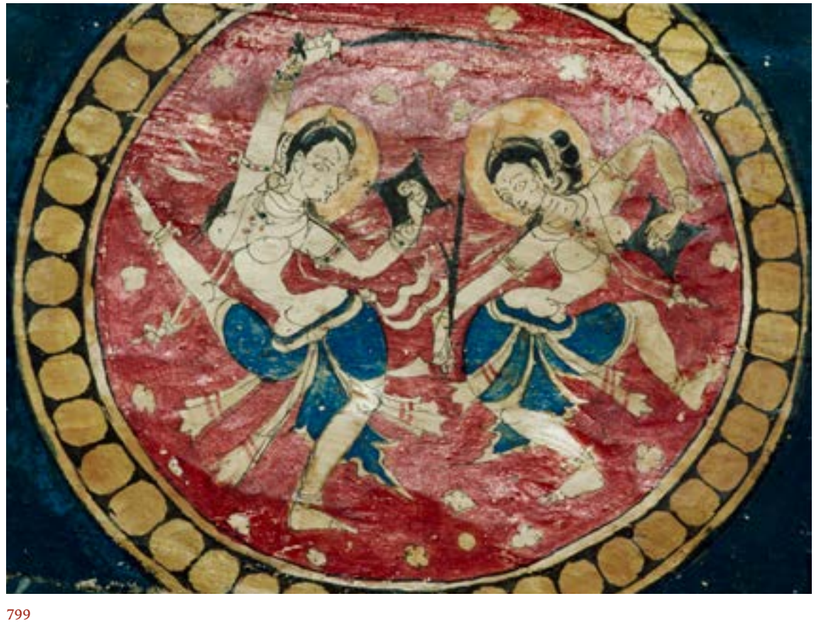


797



798

From panel 23.



799



800



801 Panels 27, 26, 25.



802 From panel 26.

803 Overleaf left: From panel 27.

804 Overleaf right: From panel 27.





805 Panels 30, 29, 28, 27.



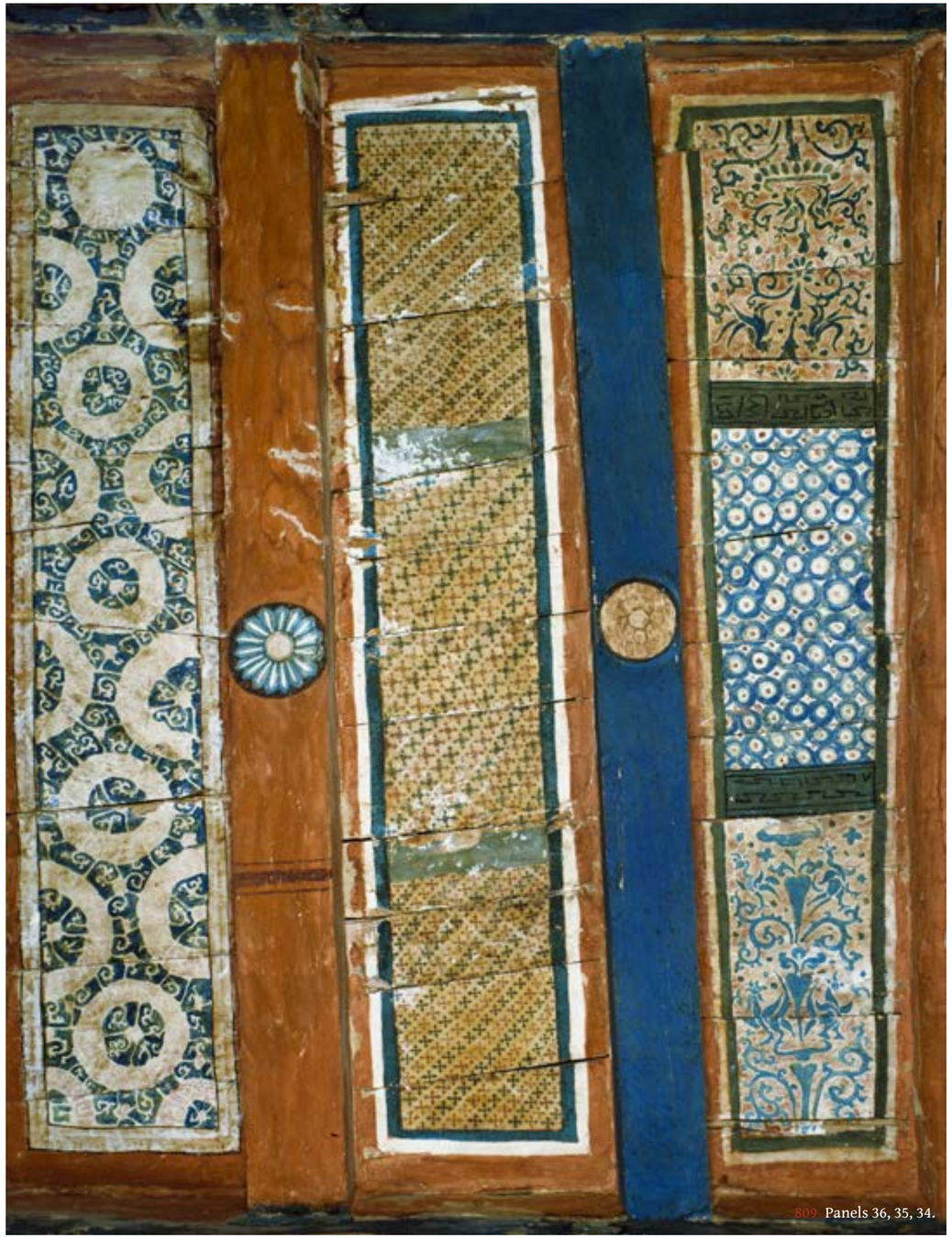
806 Panels 33, 32, 31.

807 Overleaf left: From panel 32.

808 Overleaf right: From panel 33.







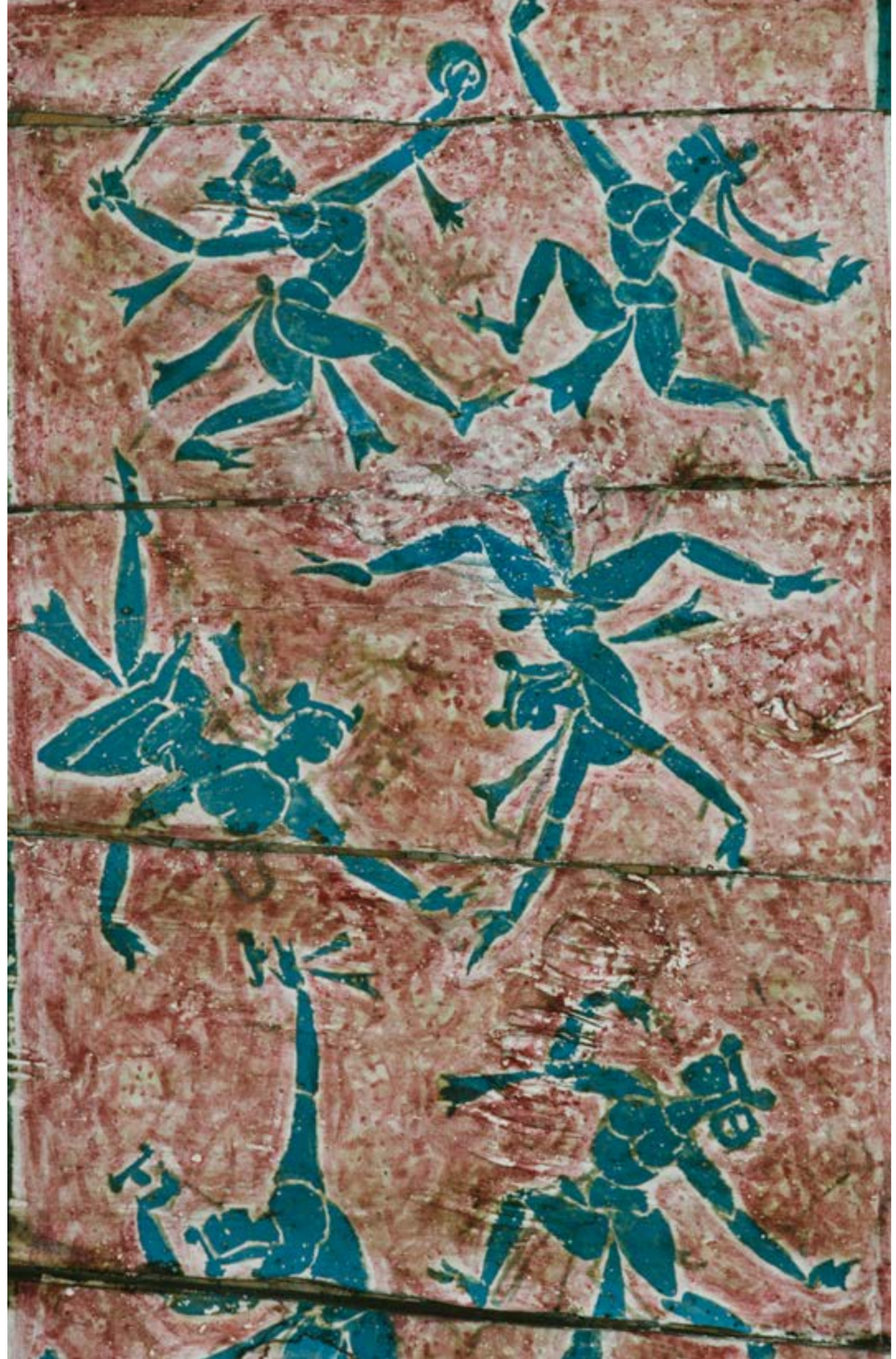
809 Panels 36, 35, 34.



810 Panels 39, 38, 37.



811



812



813 Panels 43, 42, 41, 40.



814 Panels 45, 44.



815 From panel 44.

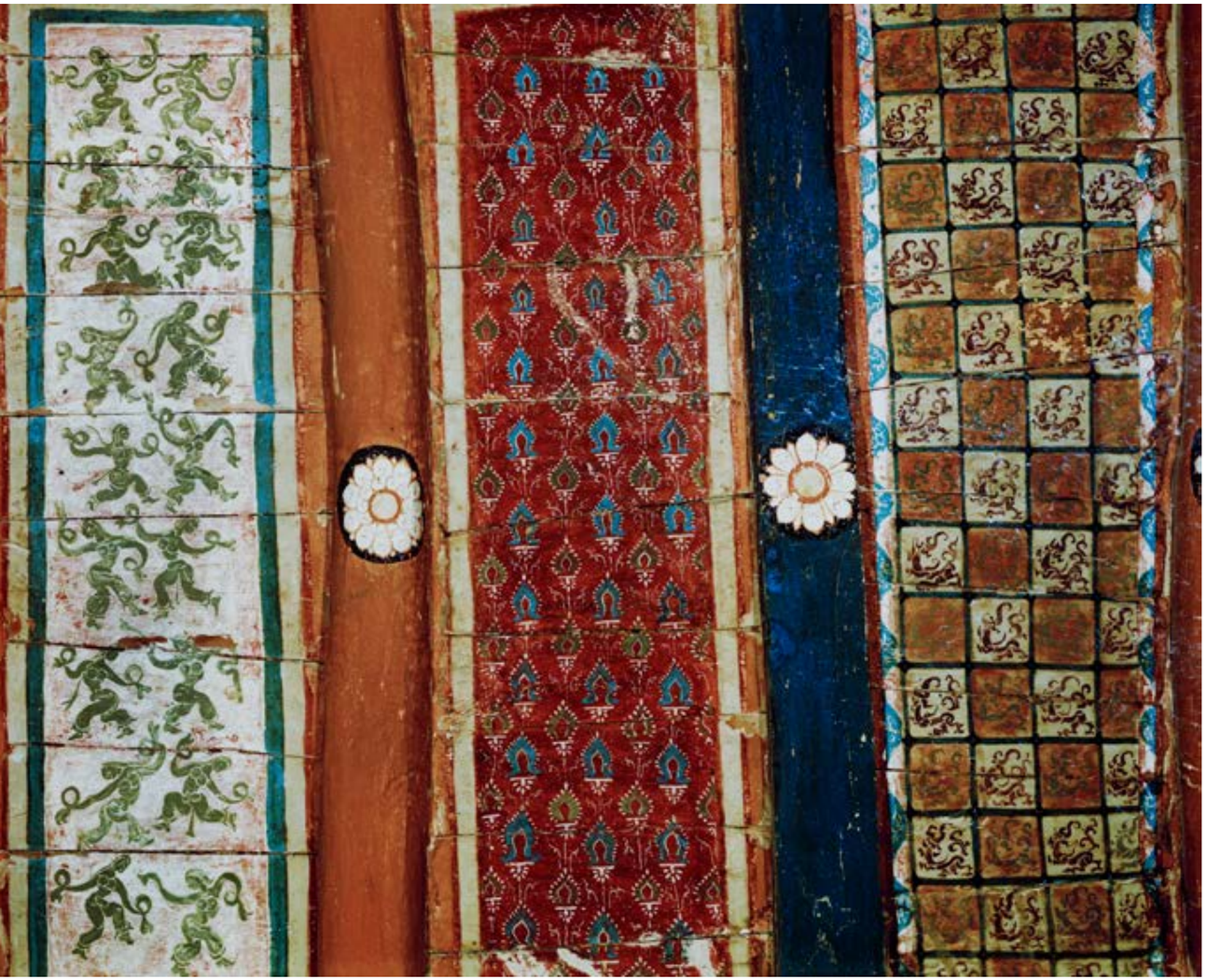


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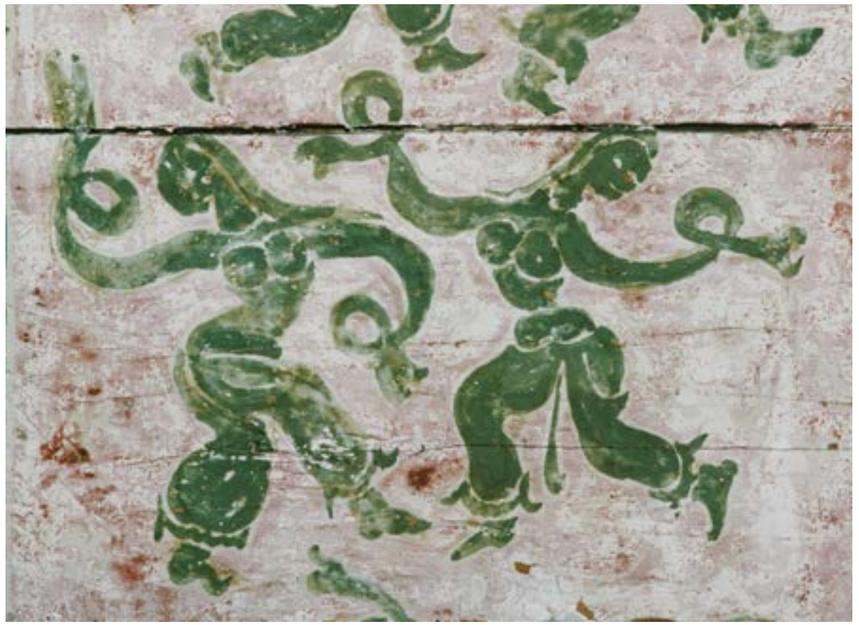
From panel 43.

817





818 Panel 48, 47, 46



819

820



From panel 48.



821 Detail of a rider performing the Parthian shot in one of the corners of the second level of the lantern ceiling. CL

822 Six level lantern ceiling of the Sumtsek with a central lotus and painted textile patterns. Note the disturbance of some panels through a restoration. CL



The Alchi Style

by Roger Goepper



823 The delicately shaded face of Buddha Amitābha on the ground floor of the Sumtsek. CL

824 Quickly outlined faces of glory (*kīrtimukha*) with vajra tops terminating the beams of a mandala gate on the third floor of the Sumtsek. CL

Hitherto, observations on the stylistic peculiarities of the murals in the Sumtsek have been made in the course of their descriptions. However, a systematic summary of their characteristics, especially in comparison to other murals in the early artistic milieu of western Tibet, is also necessary.

Characteristics of Style

The Buddhist art of this region offers many complicated problems concerning the diversity of regional styles and the lack of reliable dates or of detailed information in historical texts. A special situation exists in regard to the wider region around Alchi, including the temples of Mangyu and Sumda, in that their murals may only be vaguely linked to the later development of Tibetan painting. A first attempt to define the painting styles in Alchi was undertaken by P. Pal,[470] treating the murals in the Sumtsek and the Dukhang as one stylistic entity, although minor differences may even be observed among the paintings of the Sumtsek. Slight, but obvious, variants exist between the murals of the Dukhang, those of the Sumtsek and of the Palden Drepung Chörten (formerly Great Stūpa)[471] which may be ascribed not only to the difference in time for their execution, but also to diverse groups of painters. A sharp break in regard to style and sectarian iconography exists between the murals in these earlier temples and the probably only slightly later New Temple (Lhakhang Soma) which may be related to the tradition of Khara Khoto or even Nepal.[472]

Characteristics of Composition

The first impression after entering the Sumtsek is the striking contrast between the simple outer appearance and the richness and the *horror vacui* of decoration inside. At the same time, the paintings covering all the walls seem well structured, even if they appear on occasion to be seemingly monotonous repetitions in detail. For instance, the diagonal arrangement of different colours in the series of 'one thousand' Mañjuśrī images on the right wall (629) has a unified and homogeneous texture as a result, and echoes the theme in the larger central panel.

The segmentation of the wall space into separate panels, for instance on the back wall in the middle storey (674), which form autonomous compositions in themselves and which Pal compares with the arrangement of *thangka* paintings on cloth, is another device bringing order into walls completely filled by paintings. Different symbolic colours used for the backgrounds for the paradises of the five Tathagata clearly set them off from each other.

Hierarchic Grouping of Figures

A tradition common to Buddhist painting all over Asia is the hierarchic structure of the separate panels or compositions, with a central icon accentuated by size and position and surrounding figures in smaller size and often arranged in rows one above the other. A typical example is the left wall of the left niche with the five versions of the Green Tārā (562). Compared with the fine balance of the constituent elements in these compositions, including donor figures and representations of architecture, the paintings in the Lhakhang Soma really look as if they derive from the composition in *thangka* (273, 294, 298).[473] Another example of well-balanced composition in the Sumtsek is the panel with Mañjuśrī as the central figure on the left wall of the main niche (611). Here, curtain-like textiles painted above the scenes give the figures the appearance of actors on a stage, while accentuating the scenes as 'paintings'.

The superposition of figures usually underlines the difference of hierarchic or ecclesiastic rank of the various layers, for instance placing Bodhisattvas above monks or priests. At the same time such superposition stands for a representation of spatial depth, which may also be suggested in a non-illusionistic manner by the overlapping of groups of figures, which are not, however, reduced in size.

Whereas narrative scenes such as the survey over Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati on the back wall of the Dukhang (156–161) or the heavily damaged vita of Śākyamuni on the left part of the entrance wall in the Dukhang (64–67) and in the Lhakhang Soma (281–288)[474] are usually arranged in horizontal friezes as if from scenes in a comic book, the version on the dhoti of the Maitreya sculpture in the back niche of the Sumtsek presents the scenes as transpositions into a decorative context, isolating them into separate units, the sequence of which is not obvious at first sight (608). This striking phenomenon may perhaps be seen in context with the general interest in textiles to be observed throughout the Sumtsek murals.

Richness

The most obvious stylistic characteristic of the Sumtsek murals is their richness, combined with voluptuousness and a certain sensuality which most probably reflects the radiation of the taste of the courtly culture in the Kashmir valley into the nearest religious centres of Ladakh. The execution of details and the feeling for an effective use and distribution of brilliant colours exhibits a high degree of sophistication not to be observed in other Buddhist centres of the western Himalayas such as Tabo or Guge.

A comparison between the Amitābha and Akṣobhya panels on the walls of the ground floor (535 and 592) documents exquisite taste in placing a red figure on a blue halo and vice versa in order to produce a decorative effect, combined with the minuteness of certain details such as the ornaments on the robes, as well as with an imaginative play of fantasy in decorative elements such as the *makara* at the back of the throne with floral sprouts growing out of their bodies. The absolute highlight of these devices is the panel with the five Green Tārās in the left niche (562–576). This becomes quite obvious when one compares the precision and refinement exhibited by the bodice (*kañcuka*), the crown and the ornaments of the dress with that of the goddess Dhūpā representing the Perfection of Wisdom in a west Tibetan manuscript of the eleventh century CE,[475] although the difference in size of the paintings in question has to be taken into account when comparing them.

Characteristics of Technique

As in most schools of Buddhist painting in Asia, it is also a common device in Alchi to fill areas defined by a contour line evenly with one colour, allowing the forms as such to appear flat. Hence, the ornamentation of such areas as the decor of garments is also designed absolutely two-dimensionally without any foreshortening or modelling to suggest the roundness of the object.

In several cases we have pointed out two different modes to represent three-dimensional volume, especially of parts of the human body. They seem to be restricted in their application to certain basic colours. One is the shading of receding parts by dots (*bindu-* or *vinduvartanā*) in a darker hue of the basic colour, which seems to be applied mainly to figures with red and green complexion such as Amitābha (823) and Tārā (563). This device appears to be a transposition from miniature painting on to the larger space of a wall and is often accompanied by an additional accentuation of the outline.

The second technique is the shading by bands or stripes (*hairikavartanā*) in a darker hue, mostly along and parallel to the outline of a form (564, 824). It is quite widespread in many areas of Buddhist wall painting, for instance in Tabo and even in China.

In rare cases the shading is complemented by a highlighting (*ujjotana*) of prominent facial features with white strokes, for instance in the 'portraits' of local monks inside the Palden Drepung Chörten (223).[476]

The precious effect of golden areas such as haloes (111, 610, 771) or the vajras bordering areas in a mandala (87, 112, 172, 707, 736) is sometimes enhanced by representing decorative elements in low pastiglia relief.

In several cases the colour of backgrounds, especially if blue, has been heavily repainted, and contours have not only been redrawn in fine dark and sometimes shaky lines, but often also by rather thick ones affecting the lightness of the originals.

Representation of Landscape and Architecture

Landscape is used for two different functions in the Sumtsek murals: either as decorative allusion, or as a stage for figures or scenic events.

In our treatment of the Tārā panel in the left niche (562) and of other scenes, we have defined the allusive function of stalagmite forms of rocks crowning an iconic representation (571, 576). Often combined with bands of white clouds they evoke the impression of a landscape setting, corresponding to Kenneth Clark's definition of a 'landscape of symbols'.[477] This device must have been widespread in the North Indian painting tradition since we find it in a Prajñāpāramitā manuscript of the twelfth century in Bengal,[478] but also in paintings of the same period from Khara Khoto.[479]

When landscape elements are combined to form a stage for the activities of figures, they are invested with a representational function. In the murals of Alchi these elements by no means reflect the surrounding local landscape, but appear as romantic transpositions of a

Kashmiri atmosphere. The roundish forms of forested mountains crowned by a Tārā temple on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti (553) have sharp snow-covered peaks as a background, faintly hinting at the distant Himalayas. In the representations of paradises or temple gardens, elements of nature such as trees and ponds are arranged in a rhythmic order, using different modes of perspective for the different elements: the trees with their deliberate variation of foliage are seen strictly in elevation, like the figures between them, whereas the geometric shapes of ponds are always shown in plan view from above and separated from the baseline as if floating in space (623, 628), a fact which has led to a misinterpretation of some forms.[480] Such representations which reappear in Akṣobhya's Abhirati paradise on the back wall of the Dukhang (159) are clearly different from landscape settings in the murals of Tabo where figures are placed between the overlapping forms of mountains and are therefore integrated into their natural surroundings.[481] In this case the representation may have been directly inspired by the surrounding mountainous landscape. The landscape setting of Śākyamuni's vita in the Red Temple (*lha khang dmar po*) of Guge follow a tradition differing from both Alchi and Tabo.[482]

Similar differences of artistic tradition between the centres of mural-painting in western Tibet and Ladakh exist in the representation of architecture. Judging from the local surroundings prevalent in Alchi, the paintings on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti showing architecture appear highly 'exotic'. Temple halls, chapels and stupas, but also palaces are reflections of existing contemporary buildings in the Kashmir valley, drawn by the artists from memory. By contrast, the murals in Tabo[483] and in the White Temple of Guge[484] generally depict architectural forms as they actually existed in their respective areas.

Representation of Human Figures

The human figures appearing in the Sumtsek murals can be grouped into three different types: secular figures of an 'exotic' type, representing non-Ladakhi persons; secular figures of local appearance such as donors and priests; and iconic figures of the pantheon, such as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and so on, for which the rules of iconography provide a grid.

Comparable to the representations of architecture, the 'exotic' type of figure is shown in Kashmiri attire, clearly illustrated by the royal and noble persons on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti. This is most obviously in evidence in the scene of the king's outing for a hunt (545), but commoners in the scene with Tārā as saviouress from eight kinds of danger (Aṣṭabhayatrāṇa Tārā) also wear Kashmiri clothes (690–699). Their short dresses, long-sleeved jackets, tight trousers, turbans or diadems and richly decorated high boots are clearly different from the local dress. The queens and ladies of the 'exotic' type also correspond to an Indian model. Their seemingly 'Islamic' attire, comparable to miniature paintings, has led some authors to a later dating of such scenes.

In contrast, figures in local attire have a more Central Asian touch. For instance, kings, in the famous 'royal drinking scene' on the entrance wall of the Dukhang (68),[485] but also those flanking the five Tārās in the left niche of the Sumtsek (573) wear long kaftans, trousers and short boots, and have a different hair style with long curly strands down to the shoulders. The ladies nearly always have a wide white cape covering their shoulders, over a tight red dress with long sleeves, soft low boots and necklaces consisting of several strands (68, 653, 656). It

is interesting to note that a similar distinction between 'exotic' and local types appears also in the murals of Tabo and Guge.[486] While the apparel of local men differs considerably from that in Alchi, that of the women is fairly similar as examples from the Red Temple show.[487]

In the representation of priests a certain difference between foreign that is Indian or Kashmiri and even central Tibetan personages (766), and members of the local clergy also seems to have been stressed. Ladakhi priests are mostly clad in white or yellowish robes reaching up to the neck, below a wide yellow cape often consisting of half-transparent material, their heads being covered by hats of a conical form or else with upturned brims (618, 654, 767). These priests do not appear in the murals of Tabo and Guge. Also quite unique is the group of tantric priests with their extraordinary outfit (621).

Difficult to explain is the fact that many human figures in the Alchi murals are clearly provided with haloes in the same manner as the deities. This applies not only to priests, but also to non-religious personages such as kings and ladies, and even to figures of seemingly secondary importance. There is no apparent system for the addition of haloes since, for instance, king and queen in the palace on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti are without haloes whereas the prince below has one, and yet his wife does not (541). Musicians and servants in the surroundings of the palace again are emphasized by this symbol. A halo in connection with non-iconic personages does not appear in secular scenes or in the representation of founders or donors in Tabo, but it is used in rare instances in the murals of Guge.

Broadly speaking, the form of iconic figures of the Buddhist pantheon are governed by rules of iconography, although some Bodhisattvas such as the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara (669, 688, 689) and deities such as Śrīdevī (524) and Rematī (526)[305] do not yet correspond in all respects to the rules as we know them from later Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. Instead they seem to follow undocumented local, probably north Indian or Kashmiri traditions. Even some minor details such as the knife held by Mahākāla (517) differ from the later orthodox forms.

In general, the types of iconic groups are clearly differentiated, following the traditional scheme. Buddhas as *nirmāṇakāya* are represented as monks in their typical garb, although sometimes quite colourfully (677), with short hair and a high and slender *uṣṇīṣa* which is in contrast to the narrower and round shape of this feature in the murals of Tabo. Tathagatas as the *saṃbhogakāya* and Bodhisattvas are similar in their appearance, with well-proportioned and almost athletic bodies, modelled by band-like shading (708–711). They have oval faces with high foreheads and, when represented frontally, with squinting eyes. In contrast, comparable figures in the Tabo murals have broad faces, a low forehead and normal eyes.

Female figures are painted in a similar way, their femininity accentuated by the rich dress and their full round breasts. The execution is comparatively soft and artistic, whereas comparable figures in Tabo are presented with a much more linear treatment. The bodice (*kañcuka*) worn by many of them enhances their feminine appearance. The depiction of this garment in the wall paintings of the Red Temple in Guge preserves the tradition formally, but is much more mannered.[488] The sophisticated atmosphere of Alchi has vanished. In any case, the artistic transmission from Northern India or Kashmir to Guge seems to have taken a route which did not cross Ladakh.[489]

A few other usually minor traits also distinguish the iconic style of Alchi from that of the other western Tibetan centres. One of them is the representation of haloes. Whereas in the Sumtsek they are mostly plain and single-coloured with ornamental borders, in the murals of

Tabo they often have coloured centrifugal rays of serpentine lines, a feature which reappears in the murals of the caves in Phyang (*'phyi dbang*)[490] which in general are stylistically closer to Guge and Tabo than to Alchi.

A distinct feature at Alchi is the occasionally exaggerated mannerism of a strongly protruding eye of those figures shown in half profile (563). This can be traced back to Indian cave paintings of the eighth century and survives in Jain miniatures until comparatively modern times. In Guge it is applied in a less accentuated form and is absent in the murals of Tabo.[491]

Decoration of the Ceilings

As has been demonstrated above, one of the most striking characteristics of the Alchi style at the Sumtsek is the decoration of ceiling panels as painted, often illusory, representations of textiles (774). Such ceilings also exist in the small chapel of the Jampel Lhakhang (253–272) and the Palden Drepung Chörten (212–219) at Alchi, but with slight differences in motifs and execution. The thirty-two panels radiating fan-like from the centre of the Jampel Lhakhang are in style and form closer to the hitherto unpublished examples in Sumda in Zangskar than to those in the Sumtsek, perhaps as a result of slightly different periods of execution by different groups of painters.

Compared to the wide 'international' span of motifs in the Sumtsek, comprising Indian, Iranian, other Near Eastern and even reflections of late Hellenistic elements, the ceilings of the other western Tibetan temples in Tabo and Guge have a much more homogeneous character based on traditions completely different from those found at Alchi.[492]

Conclusions

It is no light task to identify common denominators which satisfactorily explain all details of the murals as elements of a comprehensive pattern embracing the varied representations found on all three storeys of the Sumtsek. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that Tsültrim Ö when commissioning the adornment of the temple did not have an overall meaningful scheme for the different themes he introduced. Regrettably, his few inscriptions give only a rough notion of the significance for him of the three colossal sculptures and they only mention the paintings incidentally.[493]

Snellgrove has pointed out certain iconographical inconsistencies in the themes on the ground floor where the right-hand wall would normally be reserved for the Buddha Vairocana but which, repeating the clay sculpture in the niche, portrays the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī instead.[494] He may have been tempted to an over-interpretation by explaining the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara and the Prajñāpāramitā (or Tārā) on the two side walls of the middle storey as embodiments of Sarvavid Vairocana, symbolising his Means (Compassion) and Wisdom.

Khosla sees a difference of iconographic value between the lower level with its multiple images and the two upper storeys with their mandalas,[495] an observation which is developed in more detail by Matsunaga who explains the murals and the sculptures on the ground floor as representative of Mahāyāna or common and universal Buddhism (*tsū-bukkyō*). The middle storey with its ten mandalas evokes the realm of Esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*). Furthermore, he interprets the three central mandala figures on the top storey (Śākyamuni, Mañjuśrī, Prajñāpāramitā) as a sort of distillation of the Vajradhātu mandala since they are all transformations (*hengekyō*) of Vairocana as he is found in universal Buddhism. By means of these interpretations he is able to offer a comprehensive programme for all the Sumtsek paintings: they demonstrate the spiritual ascent from a common universal Buddhism on the ground floor, to the sphere of esoteric speculation and ritual on the middle storey, and end finally in a synthesis of esoteric and common Buddhist concepts on the topmost storey.[496]

That the temple may in any case be viewed as a three-dimensional mandala is stressed by Denwood who says in respect of multi-storeyed buildings, such as the stupa of Samye and the three-storeyed seventeenth century temple at Tango (*rta mgo*) in Bhutan, that they express a 'move from the earthly to the transcendental plane upwards rather than horizontally.'[497]

A highly detailed systematisation, embedded within a wider context, has been sketched out by Robert Linrothe,[498] and is now presented in the present volume in a more elaborate form (see Mapping the Iconographic Programme of the Sumtsek, page 735 ff.). It has the advantage that it explains the meaning of even the smaller scenes and throws light on seemingly inconsistent iconographic traits within the whole setting.

That the paintings on the ground floor are closely related to the human sphere and to the aspirations of the average Buddhist seems self-evident to the present author. Themes such as that of the temple-founding in the right-hand niche, of actual places of pilgrimage as shown on Avalokiteśvara's dhoti (539 ff.), of the *mahāsiddha*'s unconventional means for the attainment of awakening portrayed on Mañjuśrī's dhoti (637 ff.), and of the Buddha's activities in this world on Maitreya's dhoti (600 ff.), all support this emphasis.

The fervent belief in the saving powers of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is demonstrated in the paintings of Mañjuśrī (611) and Tārā (562), in the back and the left-hand niches, which are closely associated with donor figures of kings and queens. Moreover, even the colossal sculptures of the three Bodhisattvas may be so understood. The aspirations of the pious Buddhist generally culminate in the wish to be reborn either in Amitābha's paradise of Sukhāvatī (left wall and niche; 577) or in Akṣobhya's paradise of Abhirati (main wall and niche; 616).

Still accentuating the interdependence of the mundane with the transcendental sphere, the side walls of the first upper floor prominently portray the compassionate activity of Avalokiteśvara saving *preta* (669) and of Tārā to the aid of humans in highly perilous situations (690). Preaching to all categories of living beings, a golden Śākyamuni centrally positioned on the back wall, further contributes to this idea (676).

The five Tathagata in their paradises, also on the back wall (674 ff.), represent a yet higher transcendental level which develops into the very means for initiation into the secrets of this esoteric tradition: the mandalas covering the walls of this floor.

The mandalas on the topmost storey differ from those below since they vary in their Vajradhātu speculation. That the paintings of the lineage of masters who created and transmitted this special esoteric teaching are confined to this inaccessible level, far removed from the casual visitor to the temple, may perhaps underline the explicit secrecy of this tradition.

All of these attempts to find a common denominator for the distribution of themes over the walls of each storey of the Sumtsek are fascinating in themselves, but must remain speculative until more extensive textual sources are, hopefully, brought to light.

The Sumtsek Lineage Paintings and Their Implications for Dating

BY ROB LINROTHE[499]

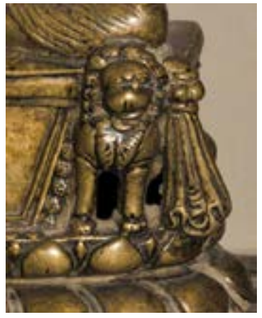


825 Top storey lineage to left of window (detail of 766).

826 A *mahāsiddha* in conversation with a disciple.

Among the arguments that the learned proponents of an eleventh-century date for the Sumtsek deploy is that the lineage paintings on the top storey (825; see also 766 in comparison with 767), 'like their present accompanying inscriptions, are not original'.[500] On the other hand, the lineage paintings and their inscriptions are what convinced Roger Goepper that the Sumtsek could not have been built before the period in which Drigungpa Jikten Gönpo (1143–1217), identified among the lineage figures, attained prominence. It seems essential, then, to determine the status of the lineage paintings. Do they belong to the same period as the rest of the paintings at Sumtsek, or were they added later, perhaps at the time of the sixteenth-century repairs under Tashi Namgyal? By comparing granular elements of the composition of the lineage figures with painting on the ground floor and the middle storey, we should be able to discern whether they were part of the same painting campaign. In fact, I believe this hermeneutical approach will demonstrate that the lineage paintings are virtually identical, in all important respects, to the paintings on the other storeys in their specific character and methods of structural formulas for depicting various objects and figures. The particularity of the painters' habits and tics are too close to have been executed by a different school of painters working a century or more later. Thus they are all of a single date (with some later minor repainting), though this in itself neither refutes nor establishes a date in either the eleventh or the late twelfth–early thirteenth century. However, when coupled with the iconographic evidence and that of the lineage, an eleventh-century date for the murals—for which there is no solid historical or inscriptional evidence, as is the case for the late tenth–eleventh-century Tabo—is untenable.

In this essay I compare details of the lineage paintings on the top storey with those on the ground floor and the middle storey. These comparisons focus on the *way* of painting, as well as the manual and optical routines employed to represent specific features. In this I am not implicating iconography per se, but simply the particularity of the paintings' forms. For example, if a throne for a Bodhisattva or a Buddha requires a pair of lions as determined by the theme, artists can sculpt or paint the lions in various forms, which will vary over time and place, and also across workshops. Within a particular workshop, however, such themes tend to adhere to a honed and satisfying formula. It is visually clear when certain objects are related—when they rhyme with each other, so to speak—and when they do not. Compare, for example, the lions on Kashmiri Buddhist metalwork. The lions illustrated in 827 and 828 are not particularly related, but those in 827 and 829 are—notice the resemblances in the chest, the lines at the shoulders, and the simple, rounded muzzle. One of the two lions that are related comes from a sculpture that is in a public collection in the United States (827); the





827 Top left: Detail of lion throne; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Bodhisattva Maitreya, acc. no. 66–22, Kashmir, brass & silver, *c.* eighth-ninth century; photo RL 2013.

828 Top right: Detail of lion throne; Chemre Monastery, Ladakh; photo CL 2013.





829 Bottom left: Detail of lion throne; Chemre Monastery, Ladakh; photo RL 2013.

830 Bottom right: Detail of lion throne; Alchi Sumtsek (detail of 633).

other is in a monastic collection in Ladakh (829). Even when we compare a painting with a sculpture, for example 828 and 830, it is clear that these are at least loosely related, closer to each other than to either 827 or 829. Most of the comparisons I will present from the Sumtsek are like this, what Didi-Huberman refers to as 'trivial details',[501] the internalized, nearly automatic conventions of repeatedly rendered shapes shared by artists with the same workshop training, tradition, and habits of representation.

Compare the painting of a monk in the top storey lineage (832) with an *apsaras* from the middle storey (831). The similarities include the use of both black and red lines for drawing shapes. Also similar are the shape of the nimbi, the egg-like shape of the faces above long necks, the use of thick black lines for outlining, and a three-quarter view of the face. As we will see, sometimes the further eye extends beyond the outline of the face, although in these two faces it does not.[502]

Figures 833 and 834 depict a monk in the same lineage and another female figure from the middle storey. Their eyes do extend beyond the outline of the face, and in both a 'C' shape defines the visible nostril. Note the shape of the eyes and eyebrows, the use of red at the hairline, the way only half the mouth is drawn. These elements are also found in an image of Śiva on the ground level (835, 837). Note the asymmetricality of the shoulders in his depiction and figure 832: one short, one long; one sloping, the other relatively straight. Again, the shapes and shared angles of the nimbi in relation to the tilt of the head are identical, though









831 Top row, left to right: Top storey *apsaras*; Vajradhātu mandala of the *Nāmasaṃgīti* (detail of 770).







832 Pakmodrupa in the top storey lineage.

833 Head of Drigungpa in the top storey lineage.

834 Goddess in the middle storey (detail of 747).

835 Middle row, left to right: Śiva in the Avalokiteśvara niche on the ground floor (detail of 577)







836 Detail of *mahāsiddha* on the Mañjuśrī dhoti on the ground floor (detail of 826).

837 Head of Śiva (detail of 835).

838 Bottom row, left to right: Hand of monk in the top storey lineage; the right figure in the bottom row of 825.

839 Hand of Śiva in figure 835 turned upside down, ground floor.

840 Hand of Ratnasambhava in middle storey mandala (detail of 709).

typically (and understandably, as discussed below) murals on the ground floor have more detail than those on the floorless, suspended top storey.

Hands are equally revealing (838). Red paint was roughly added to the interior of the palms and figures, and the arms and hands were outlined in black or red (839). The same can be seen on the middle storey (840).

Even the faces of the *mahāsiddha* on the Mañjuśrī sculpture's dhoti on the ground floor do not look substantially different, despite the greater use of modelling (836). Compare, for example, the angle of the neck on 836 with that of a monk in the lineage (833).

A number of objects found on different storeys were painted in strikingly similar ways, for example the fish held in Tilopa's hand on the top storey (841), and those on a throne-pedestal








841 Top row, left to right: Fish held by Tilopa in the top storey lineage; the right figure in the top row of 825.

842 Pair of fish among the eight auspicious symbols on Mañjuśrī's throne on the ground floor (631).

843 The *mahāsiddha* Matsyendra-nāth/ Mīnapa flanked by fish on Mañjuśrī's dhoti on the ground floor.

844 Bottom row, left to right: Skull-cup held by Tilopa in the top storey lineage; the right figure in the top row of 825.

845 Skull-cup held by Śrīdevī Rematī on the ground floor (524).

846 Skull-cup held by Cāmuṇḍā, Spituk Gönkhang, *c.* fifteenth century; photo Rob Linrothe, 1983.

on the ground floor (842). The fish eyes on both are enclosed by two circles, not one, and the shape of the bodies with their wide, lined tails are identical. On the dhoti of Mañjuśrī, is a much larger and more detailed fish for Mīnapa—I will return to the *mahāsiddha* at the end of this essay—but despite the more elaborate form, the fish still has an almost untapered body (843). It curves with a similar arc as the others, and has the same crescent shape behind the pupil. The fish painted on the ground floor and top storey share the same template.

Hands holding skull-bowls are also worth examining, a minor motif that a later painter engaged in repainting (in the traditional sense) probably would not consider worthy of close emulation. In this comparison of Tilopa on the top storey lineage (844) and a wrathful figure on the ground level (845), there are some differences in the left hands. While fingernails are not delineated on the top storey, the placement of each finger, even the position of the crooked little finger, is identical. The size, scale, and angle of the bracelet on the wrist are also analogous. A nearly matching pattern is at work in another painting on the ground floor, showing the same position of each of the fingers (517). Of course there are many ways to depict a hand holding a skull-bowl up to the chest—the *c.* fifteenth-century painting from Spituk of Cāmūṇḍā (846) follows a very different model—but the ones on different floors of the Sumtsek are all the same. Such details suggest rather emphatically that we have the same group of artists. It is therefore difficult to claim a substantial difference in date—based on what evidence?

Examine the Vajradhara/Vajrasattva from the inscribed lineage (847) and a similar Bodhisattva figure from one of the mandalas, also on the top storey (848). Their nimbi and thrones differ, but in both, we see the tilted angle of the legs as if from above, but the torsos frontally.





847 Left to right: Vajradhara in form of blue Vajrasattva at the beginning of the top storey lineage; in the top row between the *mahāsiddha* of 825.

848 Bodhisattva Jñānaketu in the Śākyasiṃha mandala in the top storey (768).

849 Vajrasattva of the Vajradhātu mandala on the right side wall of the middle storey (705).

In order to make the blue Vajradhara/Vajrasattva stand out from the blue background, he is outlined in black, whereas the Vajra-Bodhisattva is against an ochre nimbus. However, the placement of the earrings, necklace, bracelet, and anklets are identical, as are the swallow-tail headdress scarves reaching to the elbow along the proper right shoulder, and the double widow's peak at the centre of the hairline. Moreover, the way the crown is tied to the head, the smudge of red at the lips, and the pea-shaped pupils floating in a sea of white are very close. Surely even the most sceptical can grant that the artists who painted the lineage were working from the same prototype used for the other walls of the top storey. What of the mandalas on the middle storey (849)? They prove remarkably similar.

It is also worth establishing that the compositions on both sides of the window on the top storey arranging the inscribed lineage (766) and the uninscribed 'assembly' (767) were done by the same group of artists. For example, the upper cloth banners or curtains are composed of the same patterns (850 & 851). While the swags of curtains with swallowtail, asymmetrically splayed ends are not truly identical to those on the ground floor (852), the simulated tie-dye patterns of small blue motifs against a red background are the same (see also 621 & 627 in comparison). So too are the precise forms of the conch, slit at one end, concentric circles on the other, and the wavy-legged tripods that serve as support (851 & 853).

Having shown that *all* of the painting on the top storey is of a piece with the contentious inscribed lineage, including the monks in the uninscribed assembly, we are justified comparing examples of the latter with monks depicted elsewhere in the Sumtsek. The colour of the robes in a comparison of similar figures on the ground floor and top storey is not the same (854 & 855), but the distinctive way the robe's proper right side closes over the left is, as are the hats, beards, eyes, nimbus shape, and placement of the ritual implements, including conches on miniature tripod stands. Different monks from ground floor and top storey reinforce these comparisons and extend them (856). One can just barely discern the arms and right sides of both men through the illusion of thin, transparent fabric. The hats in both cases are outlined in white, though on the ground floor they also tend to use black, as in another example of monks from the ground floor (582, 583).






The Mañjuśrī roundels on the ground floor (631, 632) and the Yellow Jambhala above the uninscribed assembly on the top storey (765) both feature lion mounts (857–859). The gaping mouth of each lion, the curling tongue, the position of the claws of both legs, the whiskers and upper jowls, the eyebrows, the lining of the lower lids with red pigment, the blue fringe of fur lining the closer leg, even the two lines at the elbow, all point to the same tradition of image making and do not support some notion of later copying.

To be sure, there are differences, especially between the top and bottom storeys. But one should not mistake those differences for differences in date. The ground-floor paintings are generally of higher quality and greater detail than those on the middle storey, and especially those of the top storey. However, one can account for these differences in many ways other than a presumption of considerable gaps in date and/or workshop identity. The architectural context of the paintings is critical in this regard. Although the top storey is iconographically essential to the overall structuring of meaning of the programme, the fact that its murals cannot be seen except from some distance below (860) may have affected the selection of artists within the workshop to work on it. Alternatively, the fact that the artists knew their work would be seen from farther away and with less illumination as the other storeys may have caused them to reduce the detail and time lavished on the murals. No one seems to have noticed or at any rate recorded the lineage and its inscriptions before Poncar, Panday, and Goepper, which tells us something about its visibility, even when one could regularly enter and see them from the middle storey (861).

If we assume, for the moment, that all three levels were worked on simultaneously, then the master artists would have been selected to work on the dhotis of the ground floor, which are the most accessible and manifest such astounding detail, and the junior or less experienced painters would have been assigned the work at the top.[503] Alternatively, if we assume that the painting proceeded from bottom to top, the most expensive pigments and the gold for pastiglia, which is much more prevalent on the ground floor than on the top storey, would certainly have been lavished where it could be most appreciated. Even accepting that some kind of scaffolding had to have been built in order to paint the walls of the top storey, the precarious conditions under which the painters worked while suspended two storeys above probably limited the time and effort expended. Scaffolding was likely made of swaying, lashed-together poplars and braided creepers similar to pre-modern bridges in Ladakh.

850 Left to right: Banner in top storey, lineage on the left side, middle register, between centre and left figures (detail of 766).

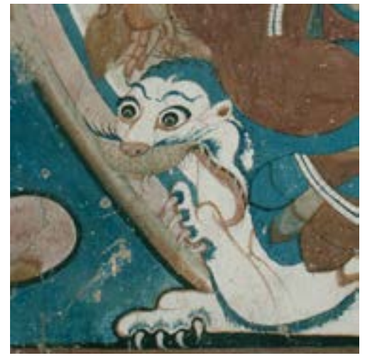
851 Banner in top storey, assembly on the right side, middle register, between centre and left figures (detail of 767).

852 Banner on the ground floor, Maitreya niche, right side wall, Buddha Akṣobhya's paradise (detail of 626).

853 Detail of conch on tripod stand, Mañjuśrī panel, ground floor (detail of 631).








854 Top row, left to right: Monk from ground floor, Mañjuśrī panel, left side wall of main niche (611).

855 Monk from top storey, right side of entrance, middle row, right figure (767).

856 Monk from ground floor, Akṣobhya panel, right side wall of main niche (616).

857 Bottom row, left to right: Detail of Mañjuśrī's lion, ground floor (632).

858 Detail of Jambala's lion, top storey, entry wall, top right (765).

859 Detail of Mañjuśrī's lion, Mañjuśrī panel, ground floor, left side wall of main niche (611).

It would have been prudent of senior artists to entrust their well-trained youthful assistants with this acrobatic task. The most senior, most experienced artists (or for that matter calligraphers and patrons) might not have been eager to oversee the work in progress by clambering up to the top storey. This would account for any differences that exist between the murals on the ground floor and those on the top storey, as much as or more than positing different workshops or dates given the basic similarities just established.

The positing of different dates could actually be somewhat disingenuous, if it is motivated by a desire to discredit the very evidence that undermines the eleventh-century dating, as I will now discuss.

I have attempted to demonstrate that the top storey paintings are from the same group of (Kashmiri) artists who painted the rest—that the paintings are, as Goepper argued, of a piece. I cannot accept that they are 'a crude later forgery' or a 'pious fraud'.[504] The visual evidence of the integrity of the forms on all three levels does not resolve the disagreements over the date, but it eliminates the validity of the suggestion that the Sumtsek was founded and painted in the late eleventh century but that the lineage paintings were 'forged' at some later date. Yet the formal argument remains an important premise for an iconographic argument





860 View of the top storey and its lantern ceiling from the ground floor in natural light. CL 2000 (58,12), WHAV.

861 View of the Prajñāpāramitā mandala on the right side wall of the top storey from the middle storey in natural light. Note the inscribed lineage at the right side of the picture. CL 2000 (58,22), WHAV.

that does, in fact, undermine the earlier dating. When we include the iconographic evidence of the lineage, it is impossible to justify an eleventh-century date.

Examining the lineage depictions alone—and disregarding the identifications supplied by the inscriptions, which indeed may be later additions however well informed—there is still little room for doubt: the painters of the Sumtsek understood a lineage consisting of two Indian *mahāsiddha* followed by two Tibetan laymen succeeded by a Tibetan monastic lineage. This is exactly the standard pattern of the Kagyü lineage series: the Indian *mahāsiddha* Tilopa and Nāropa, then the lay Tibetan Marpa, his student Milarepa (the latter two in this case wearing white cotton meditation robes),[505] and then the monk Gampopa (1079–1153) and his successors such as (in the Drigung lineage) Pakmodrupa (1110–1170) and Drigungpa Jikten Sumgön (1143–1217), etc. Even the lineage only through Gampopa brings us into the twelfth century, well past the date preferred by the proponents of the earlier attribution. My main argument has been that the paintings on the top storey are contemporary with the paintings on the other storeys.[506] If that is correct, and given that the iconographic evidence of the lineage paintings indicates that the date of the paintings of the Sumtsek cannot be eleventh century, then the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century date indicated by the lineage paintings must be about right.

Additional iconographic points can be made concerning the date of the Sumtsek. Others have argued that the paintings must have been created before the thirteenth century, but in my opinion the full Abhayadattaśrī set of eighty-four *mahāsiddha* on the dhoti of Mañjuśrī (637–650) cannot be so early as the late eleventh. According to Matthew Kapstein, Abhayadattaśrī's narration on the eighty-four *mahāsiddha* was heard and translated by Minyak Tsami lotsawa Möndrup Shérap (*mi nyag tsa mi lo tsa ba smon grub shes rab*) in eastern India 'perhaps during the early part of the twelfth century,' although the short songs were compiled by Abhayadattaśrī's teacher Vīraprabha.[507] The specific iconographic forms that the Sumtsek paintings







862 Mekhalā or Kanakhalā, Mañjuśrī dhoti, ground floor.

863 Mekhalā or Kanakhalā, Mañjuśrī dhoti, ground floor.

864 Caurańgipa, Mañjuśrī dhoti, ground floor.

reflect could not have been based on the songs alone, however. According to Dowman, part of the collection was also translated by Abhayākaragupta, working with Tsami Sangye Dragpa (*tsa mi sangs rgyas grags pa*) in eastern India (Bihar or Bengal); Abhayākaragupta died in 1125.[508] In fact, Dowman maintains it is possible that Abhayadattaśrī and Abhayākaragupta may be the same person. At any rate, each colophon of the texts says that it was 'narrated' by the Great Guru Abhayadattaśrī and that Möndrup Shérap translated it in India in the late eleventh or early twelfth century. Möndrup Shérap 'was born in AD 1069, had visited India before 1090 and lived a long life in the twelfth century'.[509]

Even if the Kashmiri artists working at Alchi were not dependent on the Tibetan translation, and a text on eighty-four *mahāsiddha* had circulated into Kashmir before it was translated into Tibetan, they certainly could not have painted it before it was composed. Much more time has to be estimated for the Kashmiri artists to come to know it, travel to Ladakh, and propose the inclusion into the Sumtsek, or, alternatively, for these teachings and this text to circulate into Ladakh to the point where Tsültrim Ö (or his local, Kashmiri, or central Tibetan collaborators) could have integrated it into his design. Much more likely would be for this text to have been circulating in Kashmir, in Ladakh, and in Drigung circles in central Tibet and Kailash in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. For make no mistake, this is the exact set of Abhayadattaśrī, not the Vajrāsana set of *mahāsiddha*, or a generic grouping.

Among those who can be identified with certainty, too many are found only in the Abhayadattaśrī set, among them Mekhalā and Kanakhalā (862 & 863), who are unmistakable since they cut off their own heads and dance while holding them in their hands. Another is the Nātha siddha Caurańgipa (864), whose hands and feet (visible around him) were amputated before he was healed by Mīnapa (or Matsyendranāth, who appears in both main systems; 843), and Gorakhnāth, who appears again only in the Abhayadattaśrī group. How can they all be accounted for in the late eleventh century? Could Nāropa, who died in the mid-eleventh,[510] have been integrated into the set of eighty-four in time to be transmitted from Magadha to Kashmir to Ladakh within just a decade or two of his passing? That is very difficult to accept. As Luczanits has shown, there was considerable interest on the part of early Drigung teachers and artists to portray the *mahāsiddha*.[511] Thus this theme actually adds an early Drigung element into the iconographic complex of the Alchi Sumtsek, which weakens the argument that

the Sumtsek has an exclusive focus of the Yoga Tantra and thus must be pre-Drigungpa.[512] In fact, many of the *mahāsiddha* are associated with the *niruttara* (i.e., *anuttarayoga*) or Highest Yoga Tantras, such as Kukkuripa, who appears on the dhoti (865), and the sisters Mekhalā and Kanakhalā (862 & 863), not to mention Indrabhūti, and other *mahāsiddha* depicted on the dhoti carrying skull-bowls and skull-tipped staffs (866). Finally, I must mention the *mahāsiddha* image that I have argued is not Nāropa, as had been tentatively assumed by Goepper, but Padampa Sanggyé, who died in the early twelfth century though his reputation grew only in the succeeding century (650).[513] As Luczanits shows in other chapters in this volume, Padampa Sanggyé also appears in the Palden Drepung Chörten.

Visual, textual and iconographic evidence lead to the same conclusion. The lineage inscriptions may have been added later, but the paintings and the *mahāsiddha* point us in the right direction if we can surrender the attachment to an early date. One presumes that there were in effect four or five different groups collaborating on the Sumtsek: local Ladakhi wealthy and learned patrons, local builders, a group of Kashmiri painters, a group of wood carvers—perhaps from Lahaul, Kashmir, or Ladakh—and representatives of the Drigung teachers from central Tibet or Kailash. The unity of the paintings, sculptures, and inscriptions is not monolithic, which is not surprising for such a complex, densely interwoven combination of architecture and other arts. This is less a reflection of disparities in successive dates of production than the inevitable result of such varied groups collaborating on a monumental project. Without an a priori commitment to an early date, there is no need to assume pious fabrication, forgery, or the rejection of inconvenient inscriptions and paintings.

I do not fully understand why the earlier date remains attractive for a number of Western scholars, even in the face of the evidence supporting the late twelfth–early thirteenth century. It strikes me as possibly an honourable combination of respect for traditions (local and scholarly), and a romantic preference for the peerless, legendary status of the eleventh century in western Himalayan history. I recognize, empathize with, and salute a certain nostalgic value in clinging to the eleventh-century date, but I cannot endorse it. Locally, Alchi is uniformly attributed to the famous translator Rinchen Zangpo (*rin chen bzang po*; 958–1055).[514] It is always wise to take local knowledge seriously, as it often proves suggestive if not precise. Moreover, one must be wary of falling into the stereotypical belief of Orientalists that one knows better than the local believers and historians, and to inform them of the mistakes in the history of their own legacy. The current issue is a classic instance of the Orientalist's predicament, for in Ladakh and Zangskar—indeed, in most of the regions of the western Himalayas—almost all early sites are attributed to Rinchen Zangpo. This is a convenience, an instance of religious 'memory', not history. It cannot be taken as a literal fact unless he was indeed superhuman. One of his spiritual biographies claims that he created 108 temples, including three in one day which were in three different regions (Purang, Guge, and Ladakh).[515] This is rather an example of the 'big man' fallacy on the part of pious locals—of attributing something ancient to the best-known exemplar from early times, and, in this case, to bask in the locally reflected glory of that personage.[516] But on the part of the historian, it is the '*fallacy of the prevalent proof* which makes mass opinion a method of verification'.[517]

Additionally, there seems to be a kind of sentimental preference and attachment among some historians and Tibetologists to the eleventh-century creative ferment, revival, and





865 Kukkuripa or Syalipa, Mañjuśrī dhoti, ground floor.

866 A *mahāsiddha* carrying skull-bowl and skull-tipped staff, possibly Kapālapa, Mañjuśrī dhoti, ground floor.

transformation of the western Himalayas into an independent source *for* central Tibetan Buddhism, rather than a recipient of central Tibetan formulations. Another factor might simply be a wistful loyalty to what one's revered teachers believed. The Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci, to whom so many Tibetan specialists are attached, wrote early in his career that Rinchen Zangpo 'cannot be disassociated from that great building activity that took place around 1000 A.D. in these regions'. He adds that the ubiquitous local association with Rinchen Zangpo is done '[r]ightly or wrongly, we do not always know'.[518] Late in his career he more explicitly, if inchoately, linked the Alchi Sumtsek to the eleventh century, to the period of Rinchen Zangpo.[519] Since Tucci's reputation (rightly or wrongly) approaches that of Rinchen Zangpo in terms of legendary status, abandoning his opinion might seem to some a kind of betrayal. Conservativism can be a healthy antidote to change for its own sake, but it can also blind us to evidence contradicting long-held and cherished opinions.

Tabo, the celebrated late tenth-century complex, the Dukhang of which was renovated and repainted around 1040, has a history that more closely fits its locally accepted legendary profile. The Tabo Dukhang is indeed a site that features Yoga Tantra (and cultic Mahāyāna) teachings and it has direct connections to Rinchen Zangpo. Certainly, there are similarities and overlaps with the Dukhang and the Sumtsek at Alchi. But there are enough differences, in conception, execution, and thematic programme, to make it difficult to believe that such relatively adjacent sites would have such different Buddhist teachings under the oversight of the same eleventh-century teachers. The very additions that those clinging to an eleventh-century date decry as later impositions are actually appropriate for their time when placed in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. They show the appropriate balance of continuity with the heritage of eleventh- and twelfth-century Buddhist art at Tabo and the Alchi Dukhang, as well as changes reflecting the latest developments penetrating Ladakh from Kashmir in the west and from Guge, Kailash, and central Tibet in the east.

The lack of concrete data supporting an early date, especially in the face of such strong formal and iconographic evidence supporting a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century date, must encourage us, as difficult as it may be, to accept the later date and *move on*.

Mapping the Iconographic Programme of the Sumtsek

BY ROB LINROTHE[520]



867 The head of Bodhisattva Maitreya, the main image of the Sumtsek, is gilded, while his body is red. He wears a five Buddha crown centred on Mahāvairocana with four heads and the gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*). While this Buddha is bejewelled, the Buddhas flanking him are wearing monastic robes. Above the head of the Bodhisattva is a large lotus blossom, a decorative feature typical of late Kashmiri art.

868 Heads of Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha on the main wall of the Sumtsek's top storey (771). Note that the jewellery and attributes are made in pastiglia and gilded.

> What is important is to recognize the limits of that explanation, especially when its complexities multiply. And not to assume, without further evidence, that the meanings were always clear to an artist's audience.
>
> Theodore K. Rabb (2018), 112.

Located in that 'excellent place in the range of Snowy Mountains', the three-tiered structure known as the Sumtsek continues to be a magnet for tourists and scholars alike. The incendiary beauty of the fresh colours in its murals is matched by the breathtaking finesse of their exacting details. Seen as an integrated whole of architecture, sculptures, and paintings, the Sumtsek is an astonishing accomplishment miraculously preserved. Clearly it was the product of artists who, with the ardent encouragement of their patron, spared no expense of time or materials. But what pious ends do these spectacular fireworks illuminate? What intentions are given such glorious form? In short, what does the Sumtsek mean in its entirety?

The sheer quantities and relational complexities involved discourage attempts at a unified interpretation of the whole. Instead, there is a temptation to break the Sumtsek into smaller, more manageable thematic units; to treat, for instance, the three statues on the ground floor as one such grouping, the ten mandalas on the middle storey, and the three mandalas on the top storey as separate aggregations of meaning. That results in considerable insight, but one is ineluctably drawn to see the three storeys as part of an interrelated programme. Among the conceptual obstacles to an interpretation of the whole are the intermingling of sculptural and painted media, and the varieties of compositional formats including triadic icons, pentadic and nine-section mandalas, diachronic narratives, and the profusion of classes of beings. The richness itself tends to overwhelm attempts to analyse the underlying unity beneath the complex network of iconographic relationships. Christian Luczanits, Holger Neuwirth, and others building on the collaborative work of Roger Goepper, Jaroslav Poncar, and Konchok Panday have brought the study of the Sumtsek to a new phase, to which this republication gives eloquent witness.

It might be time to reconsider the overall iconographic programme, and in what follows I offer one interpretation. This remains a preliminary reductive outline, which perhaps overly stresses the unities at the expense of the complexities. My reading is premised on a few interpretative principles and assumptions:

1. Vertically, spatial hierarchy is analogous to spiritual hierarchy. Going up in space implies a metaphysical ascension.

2. Horizontally, relative centrality possesses greater iconographic weight than that accorded to relatively peripheral locations. Large deities along the central axis thus 'govern' a composition or wall.

3. The wall directly across from the entrance wall is the most consequential position in the temple, and this remains true at all three levels.[521]

4. There is a strong symmetrical force and a weaker pairing force. The former is basically triadic, linking three walls (excluding the entrance wall), whereas the latter tends to link walls that face each other.

5. There is an intelligible plan,[522] which carries out the intentions of the founder, Tsültrim Ö (*tshul 'khrims 'od*) or his representatives.

6. This plan utilises basic Mahāyāna and Esoteric Buddhist organisational themes, notably the *trikāya*, the *traidhātuka,* and the *triguhya* (body-speech-mind).[523] Two of these tropes also figure prominently in inscriptions associated with the Sumtsek or its founder.

7. The metaphorical structures that vivify dedication inscriptions take visual form in the Sumtsek. There are three inscriptions, written by or for Tsültrim Ö, which are crucial for justifying the proposed interpretation. Two appear in the Sumtsek itself, and one of these has been newly studied and translated by Nils Martin (The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek, page 781 ff.). The third was discovered by Jaroslav Poncar inside the Great Stūpa (here referred to as the Palden Drepung Chörten) at Alchi, and has since been re-deciphered and retranslated by both Amy Heller and, in this volume, Christian Luczanits (The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff.).[524] In general, it can be said that in these literary efforts, the inscriptions related to Tsültrim Ö and the Sumtsek tended to be elegant if straightforward coordinations of complex parts into unified wholes. The same tendency is found in the visual compositions in the Sumtsek.

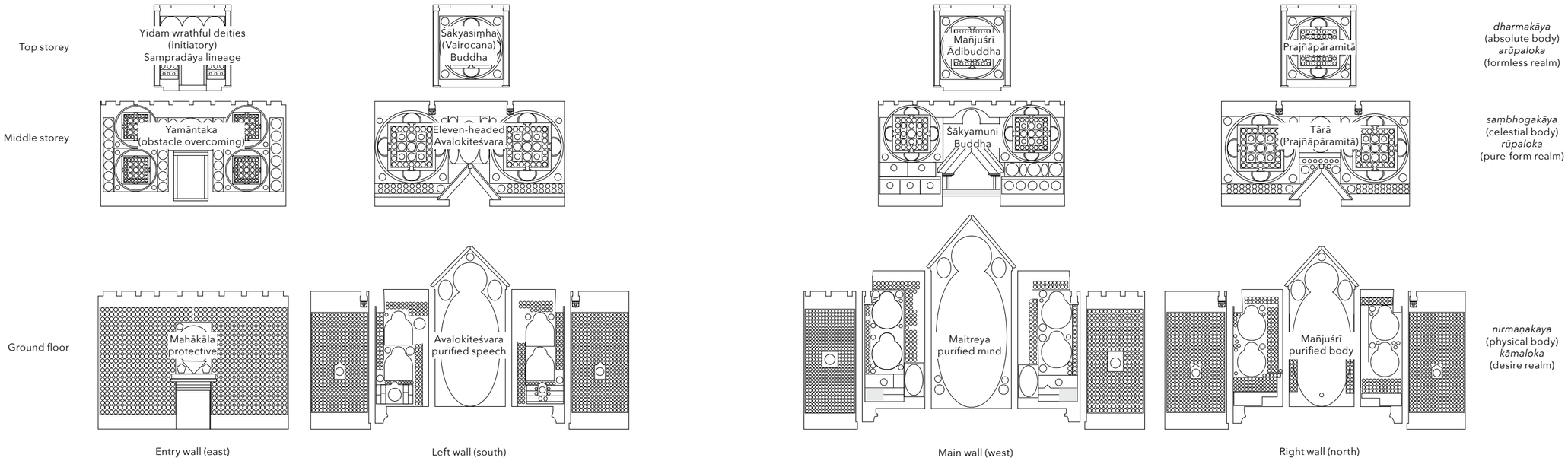
One key to an understanding of the overall programme of Alchi is the identification of four core types of deities: Buddha (in a multitude of forms); male Bodhisattva (mainly Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī); female deity (notably Tārā and Prajñāpāramitā); and wrathful deities. Those four classes of deities play an organisational role in the Sumtsek and at other comparable sites,[525] and each may loosely be considered to govern one of the four walls of the Sumtsek at one or more levels.

The entrance, or east wall,[526] is the most consistent, in that wrathful deities appear along the central axis on all three storeys (see figures 519, 657, 760). On the ground floor, the central mural depicts Mahākāla, a protector deity, situated directly above the entrance, evidently with an initial apotropaic function (517). Mahākāla is surrounded by body parts and the predatory inhabitants of charnel grounds, as well as Mahākāla's 'messengers'—black crows, wolves, yaks, and the like. Below Mahākāla are two female wrathful protectors (524, 526) riding horses with iconographic characteristics both local and imported; each has a retinue of smaller females riding various animals through the *śmaśāna* field. A male rider with a single attendant is above (527). The central mural of the east wall on the middle storey is Yamāntaka standing on his buffalo, also in a *śmaśāna* with a similar group of local female demigods (657). Yamāntaka has a higher status than Mahākāla in the Yoga Tantra texts of Esoteric Buddhism. Since he is a personification of the transformative, obstacle-destroying powers of the Buddhas, a vertical row of seated Buddhas line his composition surrounding the small door below.[527] Farther outside his panel are four mandalas with four of the five esoteric Buddhas at the centre (756–759). There is a significant presence of wrathful deities on the east wall of the top storey as well (760). The largest images on that wall are three wrathful deities, including the blue Vighnāntaka-Acala (763), flanked by wealth deities, the greyish Ucchuṣma-Jambhala (764) and the yellow Jambhala (765).[528]

Below the three wrathful deities on the back wall of the third storey is a *saṃpradāya*, or lineage account, of *mahāsiddha* and important teachers, nine of whom are identified by the controversial inscriptions above and below them (766).[529] Goepper was the first to argue that they allow us to date the Sumtsek to the early thirteenth century, since the lineage stretches down to the time of its construction. Significantly, the wrathful deities at the Sumtsek are predominately confined to the east wall; they hardly figure as the central figures of the paintings of the other walls. Therefore, despite the presence of other, interrelated motifs on the three levels of the entrance wall, we can consider the whole entrance wall as organised around the wrathful deities. They contribute protection, higher initiations into Yoga Tantra type practices of inner transformations, and, with the exception of Jambhala, can be considered *yidam* with special associations with the lineage teachers depicted immediately below them on the top storey.

The first two storeys of the main (west) wall of the Sumtsek, opposite the entrance, are correspondingly given over to the Buddha, again in a variety of forms. The large clay sculpture on the ground floor is the Bodhisattva Maitreya (600, 867), the Future Buddha, and his garment is decorated with scenes from the life of the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni.[530] Hundreds of images of Akṣobhya Buddha are arranged in rows on the walls to either side of the niche (592), and, as Luczanits points out (page 358), Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati is on the proper right wall of Maitreya's niche (616). Goepper has demonstrated that their presence is suitable for the west wall since, although Akṣobhya is usually associated with the eastern direction, 'in stupas he is represented mostly on western walls, facing his appropriate cardinal direction, the east'.[531] In a significant parallelism, the multiple Akṣobhya images are facing more than a thousand images of Śākyamuni painted on the entrance (east) wall surrounding the Mahākāla above the door. It is also worth noting that Akṣobhya is the hypostasis of Śākyamuni, originating as a kind of crystallization of Śākyamuni Buddha in his *māravijaya* form, seated under the bodhi tree at the moment of awakening with the *bhūmisparśamudrā*.[532] Directly above the head of the Maitreya sculpture, which reaches into the middle storey, we find Śākyamuni Buddha painted on the wall (676, 677). To his right are scenes of the five directional Buddhas in their paradises (681–684). To his left are smaller images of Bodhisattvas and female deities, along with additional seated Buddha images (685). There is a mix of adorned and unadorned forms of the Buddha, in that the mandalas flanking the central Śākyamuni feature Mahāvairocana (703) and Vajrasattva as an *ādibuddha*, or primordial Buddha (704). Thus, the west wall at the first and second levels [ground floor and middle storey] places greatest emphasis on Buddha forms, and are so governed. In an unexpected form, as we will see, this emphasis on various forms of the Buddha continues on the topmost level as well, as was recently recognized.

The two side walls (south and north) are dedicated to the two other classes of deities, the male Bodhisattvas and the female deities. The south wall of the ground floor has the monumental statue of the four-armed Avalokiteśvara with the renowned images of royal patronage on the dhoti (539). The crowned Amitābha Buddha, the head of Avalokiteśvara's lotus family



(*padmakula*), is repeated on the walls to either side of the niche (530). Above Avalokiteśvara's head on the middle storey is the eleven-headed form of Avalokiteśvara (669). Therefore, the south wall on the ground floor and middle storey is presided over by Avalokiteśvara.

On the north wall, the statue of a standing Mañjuśrī has images of the *mahāsiddha* on his garment (637), while a seated form of Mañjuśrī appears over 700 times on the walls on the sides of the niche (629). Painted above his crown on the middle storey is an image of an eight-armed Tārā in a version of her *aṣṭabhayatrāṇa* forms, a savioures from the eight dangers that are depicted around her (690).[533] I and others earlier identified her as an amalgamated form of the female deities Tārā and Prajñāpāramitā mainly because of the book she holds, which is more characteristic of the latter than the former, as well as Prajñāpāramitā's affiliation with Mañjuśrī.[534] Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, holds as one of his defining characteristics the philosophical text called the '*Perfection of Wisdom*', or '*Prajñāpāramitā*', which would make her Sophia, or the personification of his wisdom. However, subsequently Allinger and Chandra have demonstrated that some forms of Tārā are also known to hold a book (though which book is not identified), so I have had to revise this identification.[535] Nevertheless, the north wall on the middle storey has a particularly high concentration of female manifestations, since one of its two mandalas is made up entirely of female emanations of the five esoteric Buddhas (734).[536] This female theme continues into the top storey, where the single mandala on that wall has male Buddhas at the cardinal directions but a female Prajñāpāramitā at the centre (772).

The top storey, the smallest of the three, is actually a clerestory. It has no floor, so the wall paintings can be seen, though with some difficulty, from the floor below (860, 861). Each of the four walls is governed by one of the four types of deities featured on the ground floor and middle storey. The north wall, as I just mentioned, has the mandala with the female Prajñāpāramitā at the centre (772). The west wall has a single mandala with what appears to be a form of Mañjuśrī at the centre (770), and the south wall has a single mandala with an adorned form of the white Vairocana Buddha in the centre (768). The three mandalas of the top storey thus feature forms of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva, and the female deity, while the wrathful deities are emphasized on the entrance (east) wall.

Let us now try—on the basis of the inscriptions, our interpretive principles, the visual structures, and the basic iconographic grammar of Esoteric Buddhism—to suggest ways in which all three storeys and the four walls are tied together. Horizontally, each of the three levels of the Sumtsek has a discrete cohesive programme. The ground floor is quintessentially triadic, dominated by the three Bodhisattva statues: Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Maitreya. One way to understand them is through 'the basic religious values expressed and symbolised by the three Bodhisattvas' (page 486): Avalokiteśvara with compassion, Mañjuśrī with wisdom, and Maitreya as future buddhahood. But if we take seriously the part of the inscription associated with the founder but not directly by him, we find a different interpretation—not necessarily contradictory, but subtler. It suggests that together these three signified the purification of body, speech, and mind.[537] Avalokiteśvara, strongly identified with his liberating mantra *ōṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*, is comfortably associated with purified speech. Maitreya

is aligned with the purified mind, and Mañjuśrī is here construed in such a way as to signify the purified body. 'Construed' is the operative word: as the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, he would seem to be equally affiliated with purified mind. But Maitreya, whose dhoti is filled with scenes from the Buddha's life and who will be a Buddha in the future, is inextricably linked to buddhahood, and since buddhahood equals the enlightened mind, that role is already taken. Mañjuśrī can fill the role of the purified body if his wisdom is, in a sense, bodied forth into this world through the agency of the *mahāsiddha*, the (semi-)historical perfected ones. The *mahāsiddha* stand for the attainment of wisdom and for its availability in this earthly realm.[538] Interestingly, the early Esoteric Buddhism of early ninth-century China, based largely on teachings contained in the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhisūtra*, the *Tattvasaṃgrahatantra*, and the *Susiddhikarasūtra*, also linked Mañjuśrī to the *nirmāṇakāya*. The *Susiddhikarasūtra* (a Tibetan translation of which was included in the late eighth-century Dankar catalogue) assigned mantras and *siddhi*s (accomplishments) to the *trikula*, the three families, the Buddha (supreme), the *padma* (middle), and the vajra (lower). In turn, they were associated with the *trikāya*, the three bodies of the Buddha. The third mantra was '*a ra pa can na*', the first five letters of the *siddhām* sequence of letters, a mantra long synonymous with Mañjuśrī, and so, as at the Alchi Sumtsek, Mañjuśrī was associated with the *nirmāṇakāya*. Already at that time, the '*mantra* of the lower category was the focus of the cult of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī'.[539]

The *mahāsiddha* on Mañjuśrī's dhoti represent wisdom brought into the body, into the world. Indeed, among them are weavers, boot-makers, and farmers (638). They anchor Mañjuśrī's identity with the purified body. The emphasis on this world is actually a subtext throughout the ground floor. It is present in the scenes from the life of the Buddha on Maitreya's dhoti, for these are past and future embodiments of the Dharma-body (*dharmakāya*) in this world. And Avalokiteśvara's dhoti is filled with images of purified speech: Kashmiri kings and princes are offering worship before shrines containing Buddhist images. In the context of the paintings on the middle and top storeys, the ground-floor paintings are mainly depictions of this mundane world. Perfected though it might be in the persons of the *mahāsiddha*, sanctified through the presence of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and idealized in pious kings, this storey can be understood as focused on the physical, material world, the *kāmaloka*. In the *trikāya* system mentioned in one of the founder's inscriptions, it can be associated with the realm where the *nirmāṇakāya* manifests.

By contrast, the middle and top storeys reflect increasingly abstract spiritual realms. The middle storey begins as a continuation of the ground floor—quite literally in that the heads of the ground floor Bodhisattvas extend into the level of the middle storey. The murals around these sculptures, however, introduce auspicious and protective tokens, paradises of the Buddhas, and ten mandalas. These may represent more advanced practices and visualizations that provide physical protection and benefit through the mediation of Bodhisattvas like Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara, the Saviouress Tārā, and the Perfection of Wisdom, Prajñāpāramitā. The ground floor's emphasis on royal patrons and the human realm has given way to glimpses of the otherworldly paradises of each of the five esoteric Buddhas, the destruction of inner obstacles in Yamāntaka and higher initiations represented by the mandalas, perhaps even the ten *bhūmi* or stages on the path to full awakening. It begs association with the realm in which the *saṃbhogakāya* manifests, the celestial realm of the *rūpaloka*, the realm of pure form. If, as is now generally accepted, the deity above Mañjuśrī's head is Tārā, then

the pairing with Avalokiteśvara on the opposite wall creates a north-south axis stressing compassion and the rescuing of those in danger. On the other hand, if she is seen as a Tārā-Prajñāpāramitā hybrid, then the three walls (main [west], south, and north) create a trinity of Buddha, compassion and wisdom.[540]

It is not impossible that originally the ground floor was used mainly by monks, royal patrons, and lay people for devotions. The middle storey with its bevy of mandalas and its awkward access via a narrow gallery-catwalk, was probably used only by monks or other practitioners for initiation ceremonies. And the top storey, with no floor at all, is made up of three primary mandalas, one on each of the three primary walls, as if to suggest an even more radically austere and ethereal realm—the formless, absolute realm of the *dharmakāya*, the *arūpaloka*. No one has physical access to that level. But on the entrance wall of the top storey we find once again a few of the *mahāsiddha* and their monastic progeny reflecting the evolution of Esoteric Buddhist lineages in the Himalayas: transmission from Indian *yogins* to lay Tibetans who fostered monk disciples. They have entry because they are accomplished in the advanced teachings. In contrast to the *mahāsiddha* on the dhoti of Mañjuśrī on the ground floor, who play a collective role in legitimising Mañjuśrī's identification with the purified body—and embody the accessibility of Mañjuśrī's wisdom in this realm—here the specific Drigung lineage is being emphasized. This is the visual *saṃpradāya*, or lineage account, beginning with the deity Vajradhara holding the attributes of Vajrasattva,[541] followed by Tilopa and Nāropa (766), who figure among the eighty-four *mahāsiddha*. Subsequent to these Indians depicted with darkened skin, we find Nāropa's Tibetan disciple Marpa and his disciple Milarepa, then Gampopa, and so on down to Jikten Gönpo, the late twelfth-/early thirteenth-century founder of Drigungpa sect of the Kagyüpa order. As Goepper and Luczanits have shown through this lineage and the newly recognized initial part of the inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten (Great Stūpa), Jikten Gönpo must have been the aspirational teacher of the temple's founder.[542]

This then is an outline of the three storeys as separate realms. While there are distinctions to be made that particularise each storey, there are also significant attempts to interlace the three. For instance, the crowns of the ground-floor statues reach into the middle storey, and above the crowns are themes that iconographically connect the two levels: Buddha above Maitreya, eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara above Avalokiteśvara, and a doctrinally more important wrathful deity (Yamāntaka) above a protector wrathful deity along the entrance wall. Less clear is the shift from the sculpture of Mañjuśrī to the eight-armed compassionate saviouress Tārā above his head, although when we include the top storey, the emphasis swings back to wisdom in the form of the Prajñāpāramitā mandala (772). With that, we also have a pivot to female deities on the north wall, including the extraordinary mandala based on the second chapter of the *Tattvasaṃgraha*, the Vajraguhya mandala (734). It must be noted that two of the recognizable *mahāsiddha* on Mañjuśrī's dhoti are female—Mekhalā and Kanakhalā (862, 863)—and two more females, Maṇibhadrā and Lakṣmiṅkarā are yet to be identified in the set. On the other hand, the torque from Mañjuśrī as a male embodiment of wisdom on the ground storey of the north wall to the female deities on the middle and top storeys presages the rotation of a special form of Mañjuśrī as *ādibuddha* himself. On the top storey, he clicks into place on the main [west] wall (770, 868), as discussed further below. The top storey continues the mandalas that are such an important part of the middle storey

murals, and reinforces the connection of wrathful deities with the entrance wall, as well as the connection of the female deities on right wall of the middle and top storeys. Finally, the inclusion of the *mahāsiddha* in the lineage on the east wall of the top storey (766), below the trio of wrathful deities, in a sense completes a cycle, returning us to the ground floor: Tilopa and Nāropa in the lineage also belong to the set of 84 *mahāsiddha* associated with Vajradhara as the source of the teachings the *mahāsiddha* practice.[543]

Thus the horizontal wefts are interwoven with vertical warps, linking each storey to the others. Considering the whole as a complete fabric, we can suggest that the ideological structure of the Sumtsek corresponds to a progressive spiritual journey or ascension. The ground floor relates to initial Mahāyāna practice, and the early stages in the purification of body, speech, mind. The human realm, the *kāmaloka*, is emphasized, filled with monks and royal patrons worshipping images, narratives of Śākyamuni's life (and Maitreya's), and actual encounters with *mahāsiddha* practising and teaching. In the paintings around the niches are various forms of the Bodhisattvas creating opportunities for the generation of merit by making offerings to the teachers and the teachings, and behavioural models of the lesser gods doing the same. The first upper floor exposes the purified, celestial aspects of the phenomenal realm, the *rūpaloka*, and reveals the ten mandalas that embody the idealized structures of ritual and wisdom available to the initiated.

As for the top storey, three of the four walls are given over to three mandalas. This is an austere, sublime realm of concentrated Esoteric Buddhist teachings at the highest, most abstract level, the *arūpaloka*, penetrated only by the lineage masters, enlightened ones who have transmitted the teachings. Yet this ultimate destination of the spiritual journey brings us back to the beginning, to the human realm where these lineage masters begin again the cycle of purification and ascension. The opening verse of Tsültrim Ö's dedication inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten at Alchi resonates as if a literary correlate to the Sumtsek's visual embodiment of this essential vertical stacking of the three storeys-as-realms:

> Ōṃ, may this be auspicious!
> From the sky of the non-originated *dharmakāya*
> the unobstructed *saṃbhogakāya* appears like a cloud
> and the active *nirmāṇakāya* comes like incessant rain.[544]

The parallel is there, but the literary version reverses the direction of the journey, describing it not from the aspirant's point of view (bottom to top), but from that of the Tathagata.

An important question remains, however. Why, on the top storey, has Mañjuśrī been shifted to the prestigious west wall, and Vairocana Buddha rotated to the south wall? As already described, on the ground and middle storeys, the west wall was linked to the purified mind or 'Buddha' wall, while the south wall references the purified speech or Avalokiteśvara wall. Now, at the uppermost level, a mandala of the Buddha appears on the purified speech wall (governed on the ground floor by the Avalokiteśvara sculpture), a mandala of Mañjuśrī is located on the 'Buddha' wall (governed on the ground floor by the Maitreya sculpture), and a mandala featuring Prajñāpāramitā appears on the north wall (governed on the ground floor by the Mañjuśrī sculpture). Of course, it was inevitable that Mañjuśrī had to be moved or removed once the decision was made to continue into the top storey the north wall's accent on female deities. But placing Mañjuśrī on the most important wall also meant displacing the Buddha from his 'natural' position at the centre of a triad, so there must have been an important justification. Otherwise, Mañjuśrī could merely have been moved to the south wall and the Buddha retained on the west wall. That would have resulted in a satisfying triad of Mahāvairocana Buddha surrounded by the male Bodhisattva embodying wisdom on his right, and the female personification of wisdom on his left, facing the wrathful transforming wisdom deities. It also would have meant that the entire west wall, at all three levels, would have been consistently governed by Buddha forms (Maitreya as future Buddha, Śākyamuni as historical Buddha and Vairocana as cosmic Buddha). In one sense, however, it remained the Buddha wall, since, as De Mallmann points out, in the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara mandala, the very version found here, 'the Master of the Circle, who here is Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvara Mañjuśrī, assimilated to Mahāvairocana'.[545]

Other evidence supports this conflation and Mañjuśrī's pre-eminence in this context. Texts in circulation at this time also lavish great distinction on the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. A text belonging to the same phase of Esoteric Buddhism represented by the Mahāvairocana mandalas, the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (*Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī*), commends Mañjuśrī in the highest terms: 'Being Mahāvairocana, he is buddha; he is a great sage with profound sapience, …'[546] Mañjuśrī is treated in this text as a paramount deity, in a manner that could justify his placement at the centre of a triad, with Vairocana in the form of Śākyamuni wearing a monk's robe next to him. Moreover, Mañjuśrī's placement on the top storey's west wall locates him directly above Śākyamuni Buddha on the central axis of the middle storey, and it is Śākyamuni who recites the 'Litany of Names' in the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. That text was 'one of the most popular liturgical works of later Indian Buddhism … recited daily by monks and laymen in India'.[547] Rinchen Zangpo himself made it available in western Tibet by translating it, and Tsültrim Ö explicitly mentions it as having had a copy in gold made in the Palden Drepung Chörten inscription.[548]

Anthony Tribe identified the particular form of this seated eight-armed Mañjuśrī holding texts in his left hands and swords in his right at the centre of the mandala (770, 868) as corresponding to the description found in a commentary to the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* by the ca. late eighth to early to mid ninth century Indian Vilāsavajra, who seems to have been from or at least based in Nālandā.[549] In his text, Vilāsavajra writes 'It should be understood that "Mañjusrī, the best of the glorious" [quoting the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*] [is] the gnosis-being who dwells in the heart of all the Tathāgatas.'[550] Tribe goes on to suggest that 'we should identify the Sumtsek *maṇḍala*-lord (*cakreśa*) as Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha, and the *maṇḍala* as possibly that of chapters 4–5 of the [*Nāmamantrārthālokinī*; i.e., Vilāsavajra's commentary].'[551]

That Mañjuśrī was held in particularly high esteem by the founders of Alchi is also attested by the fact that a small chapel was singularly devoted to him (see The Jampel Lhakhang, page 293 ff.).[552] Although some of the paintings on the walls of the single-storey shrine are repainted, the core of the badly repaired four-sided Mañjuśrī sculpture in the middle 'doubtless belongs to the foundation of the temple'.[553]

It is possible, however, to offer a further explanation which is even more specific to the Sumtsek site and its founder. The inscription within the Palden Drepung Chörten associated with Tsültrim Ö describes the various pious activities he has performed to construct symbols of the purified mind, speech, and body.[554] He writes that as a symbol of the purified mind, he created the stupa containing the inscription. To embody symbols of purified speech, he has

produced multiple volumes of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* and other texts, including, as already mentioned, the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*.

Among the symbols he has dedicated to the purified body, Tsültrim Ö first lists the (temple?) 'Pile of Jewels'. On the basis of this name's recurrence in one of the Sumtsek inscriptions, Goepper identified 'Pile of Jewels' as the original name of the Sumtsek.[555] Another inscription inside the Sumtsek (the one cited earlier) explicitly equates Mañjuśrī with the purified body. If we put those two symbolic postulates together, logically we get the following iconographic syllogism:

> If Sumtsek = Purified Body
> and Purified Body = Mañjuśrī
> then Sumtsek = Mañjuśrī

Mañjuśrī comes to epitomise the entire Sumtsek structure. In that case, moving him to the main wall of the third storey was part of a larger strategy of creating an interlocking programme of symbolic forms. Since the Tsültrim Ö inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten refers to the Sumtsek, it should not surprise us that the iconographic 'visual text' of the Sumtsek corresponds. The top storey of the Sumtsek can be understood as a visual restatement of the offering-vow described in the Palden Drepung Chörten inscription. It does so with considerable precision and economy: the Buddha mandala on the south wall represents fulfilment of the vow dedicated to the purified mind (the relic-animated stupa = Buddha being a hallowed equation in Buddhist thought), the Prajñāpāramitā mandala on the north wall represents fulfilment of the vow dedicated to purified speech (since she personifies the *Perfection of Wisdom* text) and Mañjuśrī's mandala represents the fulfilment of the vow dedicated to the purified body, and standing for the Sumtsek in toto.

Very interesting implications are revealed in the symbolic syntax of Tsültrim Ö's dedication inscriptions and structures. On the one hand it is clear that complex iconographic elements are (or at least can be) coordinated into unified programmes, which the present attempt at interpretation has tried to sense. On the other hand it is clear that the Sumtsek itself is part of a metaplex that is only one unit within a larger iconographic programme, one which nevertheless depends on the same order of Buddhist metaphor. Fully understanding the Sumtsek, both at the level of an independent stand-alone statement and as one 'phrase' within a larger syntactical venture, will require the metaphorical unpacking of all the buildings within the Alchi temple-complex. This remains a desideratum still beyond our grasp, despite the considerable progress presented in this revised edition which would gratify Roger Goepper, Jaroslav Poncar, Konchok Panday, David Snellgrove, Tadeusz Skorupski, and Philip Denwood, each of whom have made substantial efforts to understand Alchi's history. Their extraordinary dedication and insights have paid great dividends, and all those interested in this rich site owe them a profound debt of gratitude.

The masterly vision of the designer(s) of the Sumtsek, of which I have given only a provisional outline, has melded a profusion of teachings, artistic formats, structural possibilities, and the demands of a donor's personal vision into a unified sanctuary. This accomplishment can be compared with only a few other monuments whose manifold doctrinal expressions of great complexity are harmoniously disciplined by a tightly structured system. The rare parallels that come to mind are Borobudur in Java, Samye and the Kumbum chörten of Gyantsé in Tibet, Elephanta in India, the Wu Liang shrine in eastern China, and the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. This publication, with its rich harvest of plates and detailed unpacking, will no doubt have considerable impact in establishing for the Sumtsek the degree of esteem it deserves.

The Alchi Mandalas

by Christian Luczanits



869 This finely shaded four-headed and eight-armed form of Trailokyavijaya is the actual main image of the Trilokavijaya mandala. Holding vajra and bell in the hands crossed in front of his chest he performs the *vajrahūṃkāra* gesture. His other attributes are, in pairs from top to bottom as depicted: sword and bow, arrow and vajra, and elephant goad and noose. The god tramples on Maheśvara (Śiva) and Umā, the foremost of the deities converted to Buddhism in this mandala.

870 Above: Ritual mandala with incense burner and offerings represented between the two priests underneath Mahāśānti Tārā in the middle of the left wall of the Alchi Dukhang (103–106).

The mandalas in the earliest monuments of Alchi monastery are of utmost importance for the history of Esoteric Buddhism in the Himalayas. On the one hand, a considerable number of them are unique or represent a unique version—and thus interpretation—of the respective ritual tradition, on the other hand the mandalas have been created at the verge of a major shift in their public presentation. Most Alchi mandalas derive from or relate to textual sources that in the most common classification of tantras are designated as Yoga Tantra or lower. This fact accounts for the conservative nature of Buddhism in the area, which can be read as a legacy of the Purang-Guge kingdom. This is in line with the fact that the founder of the Dukhang was educated in Nyarma, a monastery the foundation of which goes back to the time of king Yéshé Ö, who along with his nephew famously took position against unorganised esoteric teachings. However, by the time Alchi was built in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, Highest Yoga Tantra teachings and practices were on the verge of becoming public. At Alchi, this is clear from some verses in the inscription of the Palden Drepung Chörten, which has been composed by its founder Tsültrim Ö. The same monk of the Dro clan also founded the Sumtsek, and in both monuments takes refuge to Drigungpa.

The many Alchi inscriptions, most of them published by Philip Denwood in the pioneering work of Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), only talk in general terms about the iconographic programs depicted and do not provide any clues on the sources used. From the study of the monuments it is also clear that Alchi preserves unique iconographic forms of deities not preserved in any of the Sanskrit or Tibetan sources that have come down to us. The same is true for the mandalas, for which written or oral commentarial traditions to the actual tantras would have been used. The identification of the mandalas thus depends on an interpolation connecting the actual tantras and Indian commentaries on them to the respective depictions, while later Tibetan commentaries may actually be misleading because of the continuous reinterpretation of Yoga Tantra mandalas in the light of Highest Yoga Tantra teachings. In fact, Alchi itself documents a major shift in interpretation between the Dukhang and the Sumtsek. It is this shift, and the intention to provide better access to the Alchi mandalas that motivated this dedicated chapter.

Another motivation for the chapter is to bring the Alchi mandalas in a broader regional context and show the interrelationships and differences between different versions of the same mandala. This comparative perspective allows to better assess the idiosyncratic nature of mandala depictions of the time, almost each of them preserving an interpretation with unique characteristics. Sometimes the same mandala is simply depicted with different geometric proportions between its composite parts, while in other cases they are clearly

different commentarial interpretations of the same root text, which can only occasionally be identified with precision. These differences document a fluidity of interpretation in an area that, in the light of later uniformity, belies the perception that mandalas are fixed entities. They also document a highly dynamic religious environment that wanted and could afford to emphasize distinction. In the case of the Alchi group of monuments, including Mangyu, Sumda Chung and other largely ruined monuments in the closer vicinity that have been decorated in the same style, the diversity that has already been observed in the sculptural styles[556] are equally pronounced in the depiction of the mandalas. This is even more remarkable given the close proximity of these depictions in spatial and temporal terms.

The following discussion takes the mandalas of the Alchi Dukhang as its point of departure. These mandalas are chronologically earlier and stand at the very beginning of a major conceptual transformation that is documented in Alchi itself. They also clearly relate to and build on a western Himalayan tradition deriving from the Purang-Guge kingdom and its influential translator Rinchen Zangpo. However, the Dukhang is closer to the later temples of Alchi than to any monument that can securely attributed to the eleventh century. It thus is integrative part of the group and simply reflects an early stage within it.

The Dukhang mandalas immediately introduce some of the more unusual characteristic for the Alchi mandalas, which represent a mature stage in the development of the Buddhist mandala depiction.[557] At this stage, the geometry of these mandalas is fully developed, but minor features within it, such as the colour scheme or the usage of the crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) underlying the mandala palace are not yet systematically applied across all mandalas.

In the following, I summarize the main features of the Alchi mandalas and discuss the issues that are the foundation for the interpretations offered in this publication. First, the Dukhang mandalas are used to introduce the concept of Buddha families and the most common deity groups depicted in Yoga Tantra mandalas. Then the Alchi mandalas are compared and discussed on the basis of the tantra they are connected to, which establishes their commonalities and demonstrates the developments in their interpretation. When suitable, a list of all the deities in a mandala is provided as reference in the appendix.

Buddhas and Families

Through the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathagatas Tantra* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*) the Yoga Tantras establish the notion of the five esoteric Buddhas, which occupy the centre and the cardinal directions around it.[558] The symbolism associated with them becomes pervasive for all later mandala depictions, in particular with regard to the colour scheme employed. Conceptually, the five Buddhas stand for five forms of wisdom, the central one encompassing those of the other Buddhas. Thus, in the early conception, the central Buddha Vairocana encompasses the other Buddhas, and actually all the deities of the diverse mandalas in the *Compendium of Principles*.

The secondary Buddhas occupy the cardinal direction, and each of them presides over a family (*kūla*) of Bodhisattvas, goddesses, and wrathful deities, who represent qualities related to that of the primary Buddha. These deities occupy the same principal direction and at times reference the family through their colour and attributes. For the Yoga Tantras, the latter is particularly true for most of the primary deities of a group, such as the primary Bodhisattva among the four Bodhisattvas surrounding each of the Buddhas. Table 1 lists the most important visual characteristics associated with the five esoteric Buddhas and their families.

Table 1: The five esoteric Buddhas

Direction	Buddha and family	Colour	Gesture (*mudrā*)	Conveyance (*vāhana*)	Symbol
Centre	Mahāvairocana Buddha family	white	gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*)	lion	wheel (*cakra*)
East	Akṣobhya vajra family	blue	earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*)	elephant	vajra
South	Ratnasambhava jewel family	yellow	gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*)	horse	jewel (*ratna*)
West	Amitābha lotus family	red	gesture of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*)	peacock	lotus (*padma*)
North	Amoghasiddhi *karma* family	green	gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*)	bird-man (*garuḍa*)	crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)

In most mandalas the central Buddha faces the rising sun in the east, the eastern direction thus being the bottom of the mandala. Buddha Ratnasambhava and his family, occupying the south, are thus to the left of the main Buddha. His family's characteristics are referenced with both the goddess Ratnavajrī, the 'mother' of his family, and Vajraratna, the principal Bodhisattva of this direction. Both are yellow and hold the family attribute, the jewel (*ratna*), in their hand. Also the gate-keeper of the southern gate is yellow, regardless of the mood or gender he/she is represented in, but the attribute is the noose. A particular clear example is offered by the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala in figure 52, where all deities in the southern direction are yellow. This example, and the Trailokyavijaya mandala in figures 50 and 51, also show that the deities of the southwestern corner of the mandala may also carry the family symbolism. Essentially, the entire southern quarter, including the southwestern corner, may emphasize the family colour, which therefore can also be referred to as directional colour (52).

In terms of the colour scheme of the Alchi mandalas, it is noteworthy that the quarters within the mandala palaces are not yet distinguished by family colour. Instead, the preferred background is blue, which only occasionally is alternated with red, and the directional colours are only used for the T-shaped spaces inside the mandala doors and occasionally on the central circle.

Only some of the Dukhang mandalas show the prongs of the crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) underpinning the palace architecture and framing the gateways, while it is almost always employed in the Sumtsek, the exception being the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala on the main wall of the top storey (770). In both monuments the prongs are also coloured in accordance with the respective directional Buddha, as is the case in later mandala depictions.

The underlying system relating to the five esoteric Buddhas is visible in most Alchi mandalas to different degrees, but there are also numerous inconsistencies. In part these stem from the fact that the root tantras on which the depictions are based were originally developed independently of each other. Most importantly, there is a second system of five Buddhas within the Yoga Tantras that is also represented at Alchi, namely the system of the main mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*)

and their variants. In this system, the Buddhas around Vairocana not only have different names, but the colours of the eastern and southern Buddhas also differ, the eastern one being white and the southern one blue. In the Dukhang this system is represented by the mandalas on the right side wall (see figure 167 on how this affects those deities and elements of the mandala that carry the directional colours).

To complicate matters further, each of the two mandalas of this tantra is presided by a different form of Vairocana and surrounded by Buddhas of different names. In the Sarvavid mandala, the central Vairocana is usually four-faced and sits in meditation. In the Alchi Dukhang version Vairocana has only one face, matching earlier representations preserved in Dunhuang, but given the relative proportion of the head this may well be the result of a restoration. Further, the eastern Buddha is commonly described as sitting in meditation. Alternatively, this gesture may also be used for all Buddhas.

Table 2: The five esoteric Buddhas of the Sarvavid mandala.

Direction	Buddha and family	Colour	Gesture (*mudrā*)	Conveyance (*vāhana*)	Symbol
Centre	(Sarvavid) Vairocana	white	gesture of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*)	lion	wheel (*cakra*)
East	Sarvadurgati-pariśodhanarāja vajra family	white	gesture of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*)	elephant	vajra
South	Ratnaketu jewel family	blue	gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*)	horse	jewel (*ratna*)
West	Śākyamuni lotus family	orange-red	gesture of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*)	peacock	lotus (*padma*)
North	Vikasitakusuma *karma* family	green	gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*)	bird-man (*garuḍa*)	crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)

In the Śākyasiṃha mandala the central Vairocana is crowned and teaching. and is most frequently referred to as Śākyasiṃha, he thus has to be understood as a higher manifestation of Śākyamuni. The Buddhas surrounding him perform the usual gestures of the five esoteric Buddhas, but they are designated as Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas of the respective family.

Table 3: The five esoteric Buddhas of the Śākyasiṃha mandala.

Direction	Buddha and family	Colour	Gesture (*mudrā*)	Conveyance (*vāhana*)	Symbol
Centre	Śākyasiṃha (Vairocana)	white	the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*)	lion	wheel (*cakra*)
East	Vajroṣṇīṣa vajra family	white	earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*)	elephant	vajra
South	Ratnoṣṇīṣa jewel family	blue	gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*)	horse	jewel (*ratna*)
West	Padmoṣṇīṣa lotus family	red	gesture of meditation (*dhyānamudrā*)	peacock	lotus (*padma*)
North	Viśvoṣṇīṣa *karma* family	green	gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*)	bird-man (*garuḍa*)	crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)

Other inconsistencies that make Yoga Tantra mandalas particularly varied derive from the development of Esoteric Buddhism in general, which is reflected in different interpretations of the Yoga Tantras. In this connection, it is important to keep in mind that the root tantras are rarely explicit enough to provide the details visible in a mandala representation. Instead these details are provided by commentaries on the root texts, which may interpret those texts in a variety of ways and under the influence of prevalent teachings. Yoga Tantras, thus, may be interpreted in the light of the Highest Yoga (*niruttarayoga*) Tantras, which soon surpassed them.

A particular telling example is the case of the main goddesses of the *Compendium of Principles*, the four great symbols (*mudrā*). They symbolise the four perfections (*pāramitā; pha rol tu phyin ma*) listed in the table below, and thus are most often referred to as 'perfections' (*pāramitā*) in the sources. In the original conception of the mandala these four goddesses are the retinue of the central Buddha Vairocana and occupy his central circle (79). Bearing the colours and attributes of the surrounding Buddhas, they are the primary expression of the families, and symbolically generate those together with Vairocana as 'mothers of the families' (*rigs kyi yum*).[559] To emphasize this conceptual distinction as it is expressed through the placement of these goddesses in the central circle of Vairocana, I refer to them as the 'Four Mothers'.

In the concept of the goddesses as 'mothers of the families' from the *Compendium of Principles*, Vairocana encompasses the surrounding Buddhas and is superior to them, as is occasionally shown through distinguishing him from the others in form, dress and/or jewellery, as is the case in the crown of Maitreya in the Sumtsek (867). In the Dukhang this relationship between Vairocana and the surrounding goddesses is most clearly expressed in the sculptural Vajradhātu mandala assembly in the niche (163) and the Trilokavijaya mandala (79).

Table 4: The four mothers of the families

Direction	Family	Perfection	Colour	Attribute
East	Sattvavajrī	Knowledge pledge of all Tathagata (*sarvatathāgatajñānasamayā*)	blue	vajra
South	Ratnavajrī	Great consecration (*mahābhiṣekā*)	yellow	jewel (*ratna*)
West	Dharmavajrī	Vajra dharmahood (*vajradharmatā*)	red	lotus (*padma*)
North	Karmavajrī	All worship (*sarvapujā*)	green	crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)

In the perception of *Secret Assembly Tantra* (*Guhyasamājatantra*), a Highest Yoga Tantra that also has the five esoteric Buddhas as its main deities, each of the Buddhas is accompanied by a consort, which are occasionally also termed mothers of the families. In this concept the five esoteric Buddhas, thus, are more equal to each other, and the primary goddesses are their wisdom-consorts (*prajñā*). This concept informs the Dharmadhātu mandala (109) that combines a Yoga Tantra base with some of the symbolism of the *Secret Assembly Tantra*. Accordingly, the four primary goddesses are represented on the level of the surrounding Buddhas in the corners of the inner palace, and the first of them, now called Locanā, in the southeast corner references Vairocana through her white colour. Thus the colour of the goddesses, and in the case of the Dharmadhātu mandala also their iconography, references the associated Buddhas. Thus, when the first goddess—usually occupying the southeastern

corner—references the central Vairocana rather than a Buddha on its level, I call the goddesses the 'four consorts', short for wisdom-consorts (*prajñā*). In this case, the goddesses are also referred to by different names.

Table 5: The four consorts of the Dharmadhātu mandala

Direction	Family	Colour	Attribute
Southeast	(Buddha-) Locanā	white	wheel
Southwest	Māmakī	blue/yellow	jewel (*ratna*)
Northwest	Pāṇḍarāvasinī	red	lotus (*padma*)
Northeast	Tārā	green	crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)

In visual terms it is the relationship of the four goddesses to the surrounding Buddhas, and their respective colours and attributes that informs about the interpretation used. For example, in the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala of the Dukhang (52) the goddesses are on the same level as the surrounding Buddhas, but their colours and attributes are still those of the surrounding families, they thus are more likely understood as mothers than consorts. This is also confirmed by the texts this mandala can be linked to as the goddesses' names are still reference the families.

The interpretation of the Vajradhātu mandala in the Sumtsek (705) takes a step further, by relating the first goddess to the central Buddha through her white colour. Nevertheless, the goddesses hold the respective family attribute, the white goddess holding the wheel of Vairocana's family. This means, that both the mother concept and the wisdom-consort concept are implied iconographically, with the latter one being predominant. Given that the first goddess does not represent the vajra family anymore, Goepper was right to use the consort interpretation for identifying the goddesses (705).

The last example also reveals another problem, once the goddesses around Vairocana are reinterpreted as consorts of the surrounding Buddhas the issue arises that there are only four goddesses for five Buddhas. As we have seen with the Dharmadhātu mandala (109) and the Sumtsek Vajradhātu mandala (705), then the southeastern goddess, Locanā, is associated with the central Buddha, Vairocana, and takes on his white colour. This also means that one of the secondary Buddhas remains without goddess in matching colour. In Alchi that may be Ratnasambhava, as in the Dharmadhātu mandala (109), or Akṣobhya, as in the Vajradhātu mandala of the Sumtsek (705).

The Alchi mandalas are so important because it is the biggest body of mandalas preserved that documents the range of these interpretations within a span of approximately half a century. The changes from the earlier representations in the Dukhang to those in the Sumtsek also imply that they were made at the verge of a marked shift towards the public promotion of the Highest Yoga Tantras. These obviously were well known before but rarely used in the decoration of a public monument.

Groups of Deities

The complexities in the interpretation of Yoga Tantra mandalas we have discussed so far mostly pertain to the main deities. Otherwise most Yoga Tantra mandalas include standard sets of deities which can be considered their main building blocks. These may be represented in different gender and mood—and their names may change with that—but their iconography is consistent enough that they can always be recognised if considered as a group. In the following the main such groups are discussed and its deities with their main iconographic features listed.

The three most consistent such sets are those that make up the core assembly of thirty-seven deities of the Vajradhātu mandala, the five esoteric Buddhas and the four mothers surrounding Vairocana forming its centre. The additional groups of deities are the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas, four inner and four outer offering goddesses, and four gate-keepers. It is important to note here, that all these deities symbolise qualities of or actions towards the central Buddhas. Accordingly the practitioner, when evoking the deities during ritual, is equally performing these actions. These actions can be expressed in alternative ways and they may alter according to the mood of the deity, and thus also the deity's name changes in different texts, but the principal symbolism remains the same.[560]

As Vairocana is surrounded by four goddesses referencing the four surrounding families, each of the other Buddhas is surrounded by four Bodhisattvas the first of which also references the family. The names of the Bodhisattvas denote symbolic qualities and all of them begin with the word vajra. This prefix denotes the superior form of these qualities—imagine 'super-' added to the denoted quality—but also stands for the Buddha and vajra families. I have previously referred to them as vajra-Bodhisattvas but now call them simply the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas as the root tantra does, as their prefix can be altered to that of another family. These Bodhisattvas can occur in peaceful and wrathful form, depending on the mood of the Buddha they accompany. In the case of the Vajraguhya mandala of the Sumtsek they are also represented in female form (734). Table 6 lists them from the east, the circle of Akṣobhya, clockwise using the male names.

Table 6: The Sixteen Mahābodhisattvas

Direction	Bodhisattva	Colour	Attribute	Comment
East	Vajrasattva	white	holds vajra in front of chest and bell at hip	rarely takes on the blue colour of his family
	Vajrarāja	yellow	holds an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*)	here understood as sign of a king (*rāja*)
	Vajrarāga	red	holds bow and arrow	conforms to Kāma, the god of love (*rāga*), or the western Cupid
	Vajrasādhu	green	both hands in vajra-fist	exclaims 'well-done' (*sādhu*)
South	Vajraratna	yellow	holds a jewel (*ratna*)	
	Vajratejas	red	holds a sun (*sūrya*)	Vajrasūrya is an alternative name
	Vajraketu	blue	holds a banner (*dhvaja*)	Vajradhvaja is an alternative name
	Vajrahāsa	white	holds a garland of teeth	attribute symbolising a smile (*hāsa*)
West	Vajradharma	red	opens a lotus blossom in front of his heart	a form of Avalokiteśvara
	Vajratīkṣṇa	blue	holds sword and book	referencing Mañjuśrī and the cutting of ignorance through wisdom
	Vajrahetu	yellow	holds a wheel	here symbolising cause (*hetu*) and effect

Direction	Bodhisattva	Colour	Attribute	Comment
	Vajrabhāṣa	red	holds a tongue	referencing speech (*bhāṣa*)
North	Vajrakarma	green	holds a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*)	
	Vajrarakṣa	yellow	holds a coat of mail	symbolising protection (*rakṣa*)
	Vajrayakṣa	black	holds his fangs	often dark blue is used instead; may be represented corpulent and wrathful
	Vajrasandhi	yellow	combines (*sandhi*) his two vajra-fists	

Occasionally the four main Bodhisattvas representing the families are used alone, and in subsidiary mandalas of the Vajradhātu cycle that centre on one of the four surrounding Buddhas only the group associated with that Buddha is used. The latter is the case for the mandalas on the entry wall of the Sumtsek's middle storey (756–759).

Another standard group are the eight offering goddesses which are usually located in the corners of the mandalas. Among these one distinguishes the inner and outer offering goddesses, symbolic names that can also be read with regard to their relative position within the mandala. In the *Compendium of Principles*, where these goddesses derive from, the inner offering goddesses are Vairocana's offering to the surrounding Buddhas, while the outer offering goddesses are their offerings in return.[561]

As with the Mahābodhisattvas their names are often preceded by the word vajra, but they are listed below without that prefix as they are employed also beyond the Yoga Tantra. The mandalas centred on Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva on the main wall of the Sumtsek's middle storey both feature only these goddesses surrounding the respective main image. These goddesses, too, can be represented peaceful and wrathful. The following table lists them as that are most commonly shown and arranged, each group on the same level from the southeast clockwise.

Table 7: The Eight Offering Goddesses

Sub-group	Goddess	Colour	Attribute	Comment
Inner offering goddesses	Lāsyā	white / blue	both hands in fists held against her hip	she offers her coquetting charm (*lāsya*)
	Mālā	yellow	holds garland (*māla*) of jewels	
	Gītā	red	plays a lute (*vīṇā*)	offers a song of praise (*gīta*)
	Nṛtyā	green	makes a dance (*nṛtya*) gesture with her arms	
Outer offering goddesses	Dhūpā	white / blue	holds an incense burner	offers incense (*dhūpa*)
	Puṣpā	yellow	holds flower blossoms (*puṣpa*)	
	Ālokā / Dīpā	red	holds a lamp	offers light (*dīpa*)
	Gandhā	green	holds a sweet-smelling conch	offers fragrance (*gandha*)

At Alchi, the representation of these goddesses is not always entirely clear if we assume a clockwise disposition from the lower left corner. Dhūpā commonly holds an incense burner, but the goddess in her position may also be represented holding a plate with a heap that transmits smoke, an alternative version of her attribute, or a bowl with a flame, which is the attribute of Ālokā (241, 321). Equally, Puṣpā commonly holds a plate full of flower blossoms, but occasionally also a garland without any indication that it consists of flowers (198, 317), otherwise the attribute of Mālā. In these cases, I decided to identify the goddesses by their attribute and mention for whom they stand for, to preserve those anomalies.

While one aspect of the symbolic function of these goddesses, the offering towards the main deities of the mandala they represent, is obvious, there is also a deeper layer of meaning associated with them. In particular the group of the inner offering goddesses can also be understood as mothers of the Buddhas or consorts.

The last core group to mention are the four gate-keepers, which can take on both genders and also different moods. In the Alchi mandalas they are often peaceful and they may be represented for every level of the mandala, even if that is not described in the associated texts, and it is unclear if their double representation is actually counted when the number of deities in a mandala is mentioned in a source. In this publication every figure is counted.

Table 8: The Four Gate-keepers

Direction	Gate-keeper	Colour	Attribute	Comment
East	Vajrāṅkuśa	white / blue	holds an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*)	invites the Tathagatas with the vajra hook
South	Vajrapāśa	yellow	holds a noose (*pāśa*)	makes the Tathagatas stay
West	Vajrasphoṭa	red	holds a chain	binds the Tathagatas with the vajra fetter
North	Vajraghaṇṭa	green	holds a bell	making the Tathagatas settle

This group is characteristic for the Yoga Tantras but is also used beyond. The symbolism of the gate-keepers makes clear that in the Yoga Tantras they are not there to protect the palace from the outside but to quite literally 'trap' the Buddhas inside. This makes also clear why they can be represented in both genders and different moods.

If we review the tables above, it becomes apparent that often the eastern deities are represented white. Incidentally, this conforms to the colour of the eastern Buddha in the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations*, the second set of five Buddhas mentioned above. Could it be that this concept informs the colour of those deities? Regardless how that may be, it would not be a straightforward process, as the southern direction does not show a similar preference for this alternative scheme. Further, northern deities are often described to be of variegated colour, probably to reflect their family symbol the crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) which has a different colour in each direction, but this is rarely depicted. In other words, the lists above are to be seen as guides to identify the deities rather than strict iconographic characteristics. There is, in fact, considerable variation in depicting the deities that have their reasons in the individual interpretation, but I do not know of a case in which the above details cannot be used to positively identify them.

Two more sets of deities used in the interior of the Alchi mandalas are worth mentioning here because of their frequent occurrence, namely the eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas and the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon (*bhadrakalpa*). Of these the former directly surround the central deity, but their nature and identity vary. For example, in the Dharmadhātu mandala

they surround the central Mañjughoṣa and they are all alike, while in the Śākyasiṃha mandala those in the cardinal directions take the place and iconography of the surrounding Buddhas, but are named as *uṣṇīṣa* of the respective family, such as Vajroṣṇīṣa for the Buddha in the east. As their name implies they are symbolic depictions of the Buddha's cranial protuberance (*uṣṇīṣa*), which, as we know from numerous such stories has the power to illuminate the entire cosmos and release beings of their sufferings. Symbolically one may thus take them as representatives of these rays emitted in all directions. That in the Dharmadhātu mandala all the *uṣṇīṣa* deities hold a sun points in that direction. There they are clearly part of the central Buddha family. Also in the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* the *uṣṇīṣa* deities emerge from a mingling of light rays with a mantra, but their names imply that they stand for the four families resounding the central Buddha. They are also described as Buddhas.[148]

The sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon (*bhadrakalpa*) expand on a group of eight Bodhisattvas already popular in early Esoteric Buddhism and in the context of the Yoga Tantra represent a more conventional form of Bodhisattva. While their names and succession varies according to the mandala they can occur in two distinct iconographic forms, both of which are used in the Alchi mandalas. On the one hand, they may be represented with individual attributes and colours, on the other hand they may be shown with the colour and holding the symbol of their respective family. In the latter case there are four Bodhisattvas of identical iconography in each direction. Their iconographic details are usually taken from the primary Mahābodhisattva of the family.

Keeping these basic groups and the symbolism of the Buddha families in mind, the Alchi mandalas are relatively easy to decipher. In the following, different versions of the mandalas deriving from the same root source are compared to each other.

Vajradhātu Mandalas

The sculptural configuration in the niche of the Dukhang represents the assembly of the main Vajradhātu mandala, the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala (164). Of this assembly, the five esoteric Buddhas headed by the four-faced Vairocana and the four mothers surrounding Vairocana are represented in sculpture, while the other deities were once depicted in painting but are only partially preserved and/or visible (see figure 165). We may assume that the paintings included the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas, the eight offering goddesses, sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon and four gate-keepers. These are the thirty-seven core deities of the Vajradhātu mandala expanded by the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon (*bhadrakalpa*), which in this case were represented with the colours and attributes of their respective family. Thus, the mandala most likely had an assembly of fifty-three deities.

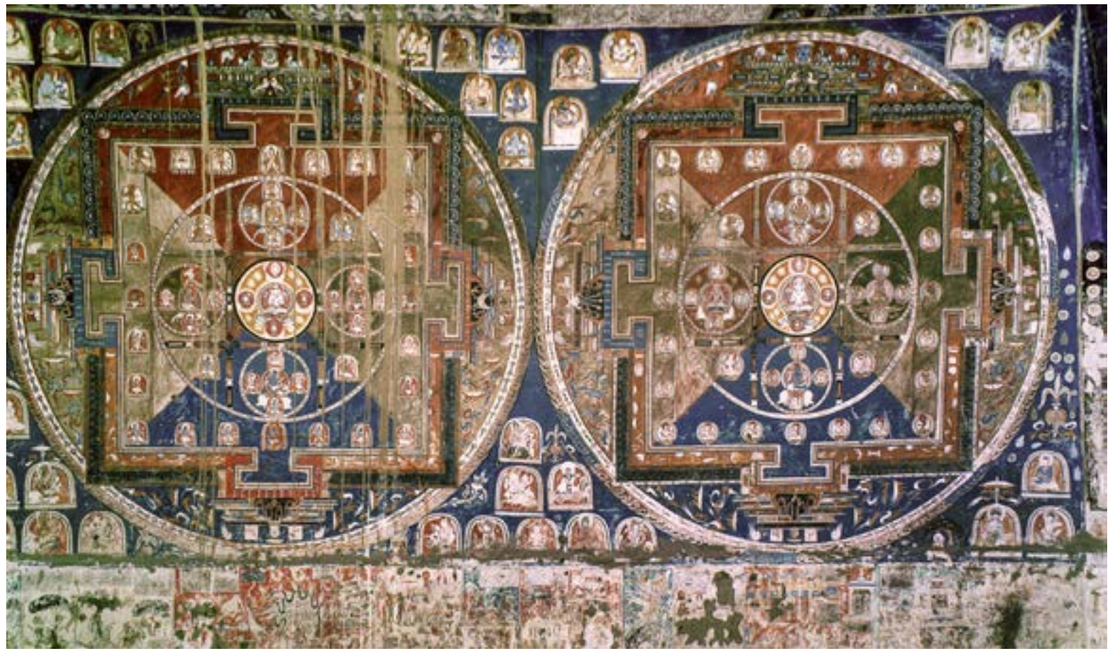
The same assembly also occupies the main niches of temples at Mangyu and Sumda Chung. In the latter the entire core assembly of thirty-seven deities is represented in sculpture and miraculously well preserved (871). Here, too, there are remains of paintings underneath the sculptures that indicate that all fifty-three deities of the assembly were depicted. In addition, teachers and at least one divine couple taking refuge the assembly are found underneath the sculptures on the main wall.



871 Core assembly of the Vajradhātu mandala, Sumda Chung. CL 2009 (3271).

If the Vajradhātu mandala would have been painted in the Dukhang, it would look similar in arrangement to that of the Two-armed Maitreya Temple at Mangyu, which is extremely poorly preserved,[562] or the Guhyasamāja Cave at Dunkar (872),[563] with five circles within the central palace accommodating the five esoteric Buddhas and their respective retinue, and an outer palace with the additional Bodhisattvas. However, at Alchi the background would be uniformly blue, and only the doors would be painted in the colours of the respective families, while at Dunkar the entire quarter is painted in that colour. Further, in Alchi the four goddesses around Vairocana are always depicted in human form, while at Dunkar they were represented as the family symbols.

The Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala is the main mandala of the first section of the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathagatas Tantra* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*) and represents the entire corpus.[564] In the Sumtsek all six mandalas of this first chapter are represented and complemented by the four mandalas on the entrance wall representing the other four Buddha families. Thereby the representations take the assertion of the root tantra, that all mandalas have the same structure as the *mahāmaṇḍala* literally, and achieves this by varying



872 The Vajradhātu (right) and Trilokavijaya (left) mandalas on the left side wall of the Guhyasamāja Cave at Dunkar. Each of the mandalas has fifty-three deities, but in the latter all figures surrounding the central Vairocana are wrathful.

the usage of the less important groups of deities. In the following the mandalas are discussed in the succession they occur in the root tantra.[565]

The Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala itself is shown on the left of the right side wall (705). In this variation of the mandala the central palace is divided into nine compartments, that feature nine deities, the five Buddhas and four goddesses, which are now to be interpreted as the wisdom-consorts (*prajñā*) of the Buddhas. Accordingly the colour of the southeastern goddess, now to be called Locanā, is white and he holds a wheel. She thus is associated with the central Vairocana. Four gate-keepers complement the assembly of the inner palace. The outer palace contains the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas, the four inner offering goddesses and another set of gate-keepers identical to the inner ones. This means that the mandala still comprises of thirty-seven deities, but to achieve this within the new geometry of the mandala results in a doubling of the gate-keepers and the removal of the four outer offering goddesses, which are now shown in the corners outside the mandala proper. The sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon are represented underneath the mandala in two rows.

The flexibility at operation with the main mandala is characteristic for all the middle storey mandala depictions. The second mandala on the right side wall is called Vajraguhyavajramaṇḍala—short Vajraguhya mandala—or Dhāraṇīmaṇḍala (734). As the latter name implies this is a version of the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala in which all deities are female. Usually represented as symbols (*mudrā*) only, the goddesses can be understood as the secret consorts of the respective male deities in the main mandala complemented by the usual female offerings. While the main mandala represents the body form, this is the mind form of the mandala. In naming the deities, Goepper followed the traditional designation for the goddesses around the five Buddhas, but their iconography indicates that they would be better named Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍarāvasinī, and Tārā, as in the main mandala. Probably intended as a visual pun, the gates of the all-male mandala on this wall are attended by flying goddesses, while those of the all-female mandala have booted gods to their sides.

The Vajrajñānadharmamaṇḍala, or short Dharma mandala, on the right side of the left wall (702) is almost identical to the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala opposite it (705). Except for the four consorts not being frontal and Vajradharma being represented white instead of red—both colours possible from the description—there is no substantial difference between the two depictions. The minor differences observable here may be due to the different painters that worked on the two side walls, as their stylistic details are different as well. The root tantra implies that here the deities are to be drawn on vajras, but this is not the case at Alchi. This is the speech form of the mandala.

In the mandala on the entrance side of the left wall all but the central five Buddhas are female, including the gate-keepers and Mahābodhisattvas (700). This is the Vajrakāryakarmamaṇḍala—short Karma mandala—which represents action. Here all deities surrounding the Buddhas are understood to represent offerings towards them, thus their female depiction.

On the main wall there are two mandalas of similar appearance and the same number of deities, but here the inner square has no gates. The mandala on the left side is centred on the four-faced Vairocana, who is surrounded by the four mothers and the four inner offering goddesses (703). Confusingly, here the eastern mother whose hands are depicted as if holding vajra and bell, and thus is to be called Sattvavajrī, is white, probably to maintain consistency with the interpretation of the main mandala. With the inner offering goddesses back in the inner square, the outer offering goddesses can move into the mandala again. The sixteen Bodhisattvas in the outer square are now not the Mahābodhisattvas but the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon, those in the east represented white, that is in the iconography of Vajrasattva. With the four peaceful gate-keepers in the doors this mandala has an assembly of thirty-three deities only. It represents the so-called Vajrasiddhi Caturmudrāmaṇḍala—short Caturmudrā mandala—which is considered the essence of the previous four mandalas. More commonly this mandala comprises only of the four central deities, Vairocana with the four mothers represented as the four symbols of the four families.

This mandala has its four counterparts on the entry wall, where four mandalas, one dedicated to each of the secondary Buddhas, are structured in the same way (756–759). The only difference between these mandalas from that of Vairocana are the deities in the cardinal direction around the Buddhas. While in the case of Vairocana, these are the four mothers, the other four esoteric Buddhas are surrounded by the four Mahābodhisattvas of their respective family. These are the deities which in the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala form the circles in the central palace (872). Thus, Akṣobhya is surrounded by the four Mahābodhisattvas of his circle, the eight offering goddesses are in the corners, the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon occupy the outer square, and four gate-keepers occupy the gates. These are, thus, the Caturmudrāmaṇḍala of the respective families. As in the case of the Vairocana mandala the eastern Bodhisattvas in the outer square are white. Again these are assemblies of thirty-three deities each.





873 The Vajradhātu mandala on the right side wall of the Śākyamuni Temple at Mangyu. CL 1994 (36,36), WHAV.

874 The Trilokavijaya mandala in the Mangyu Vairocana Temple differs in structure from that in the Alchi Dukhang. CL 1994 (two images digitally merged), WHAV.

Returning to the main wall, the mandala on the right side of the main wall is dedicated to Vajrasattva, who is emanated by Vairocana in the Ekamudrā mandala, also called the Mandala of the Perfect Comprehension of the Mahāyāna (704). The former name implies that this mandala is represented by a single deity, Vajrasattva. However, to keep the full structure of the mandala, he is surrounded by all the eight offering goddesses, the inner ones in the cardinal directions. To fill the corners of the outer square, the outer offering goddesses are repeated in them. Of the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon the eastern ones are now blue, and there are two peaceful gate-keepers at each door, the smaller ones inside the gate being female. This mandala, thus, has again thirty-seven deities.

Vajrasattva is here the principal deity, as at the beginning of the *Compendium of Principles* all the deities of the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala, with the exception of the five esoteric Buddhas, are emanated by him. However, at Alchi the depiction also alludes to Vajrapāṇi's subjugation of Maheśvara, as Śiva and Pārvatī (Umā) are represented in the bottom corners outside the mandala (704). That the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon of the eastern direction are represented in blue further emphasizes the importance of the vajra family in this context.

Another version of the Vajradhātu mandala is found on the ceiling of the outer chamber of the Palden Drepung Chörten (348). With all core deities represented within a single palace, this variant closely aligns with the version at Dunkar (872), but at Alchi the eastern gate is painted white instead of the expected blue.

At Mangyu, we have two fragmentary painted Vajradhātu mandalas, one on the right side wall of the Śākyamuni Temple (873) and one on the right side wall of the chapel of the two-armed Maitreya.[566] Both have the same structure, but the Śākyamuni Temple mandala has an additional outer square the origin of which can only be established through detailed



875 Trailokyavijaya in the eastern circle of the Mangyu Trilokavijaya mandala is represented with two arms only, while the one in the Alchi Dukhang is eight-armed (869). CL 1994 (42,18), WHAV.

documentation and textual comparisons. Remarkably, both versions combine the vajra circle surrounding the core assembly, as we find it at Dunkar (872), with an inner palace, the walls of which are painted above it. In this case, the vajra circle includes the four inner gate-keepers that occupy the doors of this palace. The colour scheme of these mandalas likens those at Alchi. Thus, the Vajradhātu mandalas of Alchi and Mangyu derive from two different interpretations of the same root source. Their difference in geometry demonstrates how fluid these interpretations still were by the early thirteenth century.

Trilokavijaya Mandala

The mandala on the left side of the left wall of the Dukhang (77) represents the second most important mandala from the *Compendium of Principles*. It is the equivalent to the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala in the second part of the text, but now it focuses on the vajra family and on wrathful manifestations against the background of the forced conversion of Śiva and other deities to Buddhism, which is played out in two distinct chapters of this part. The conceptual relationship between the two mandalas is best expressed in the Dunkar Guhyasamāja Cave, where the two mandalas are identical in structure (871). There, each of the mandalas has fifty-three deities, but in the Trilokavijaya mandala all figures surrounding the central

Vairocana are wrathful. The pan-Indian deities converted to Buddhism are shown in the corners outside the mandala proper.

The depiction in the Alchi Dukhang is much more complex than the one at Dunkar as it expands the core assembly and adds the deities converted to the mandala (77). Structurally the mandala has two palaces, the central one evenly divided into nine compartments, with an eight-armed Trailokyavijaya occupying the eastern circle (869). Each of the nine compartments features a circle of five deities, as each of the offering goddesses gets four attendants playing musical instruments. The outer palace contains two squares, in the inner one of which are the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon and the outer offering goddesses with their attendants in the corners. The converted pan-Indian deities occupy the outer square, and they are arranged clockwise beginning with Śiva in the northeastern corner. In this mandala the gates are flanked by the prongs of the crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) supporting the palace. A full list of the deities of this mandala with the iconographic details as they occur in the Alchi Dukhang is provided in an appendix (page 410 ff.).

The same expanded version of the mandala is also depicted on the right side wall of the Vairocana Temple at Mangyu, but there the distribution of the deities within the two palaces differs (875). In this case the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon and the accompanying offering goddesses have been moved into an outer square of the central palace, and only the converted pan-Indian deities occupy the outer palace. Also the distribution of the latter deities within the mandala differs, and individual deities are represented differently from those at Alchi. In particular, Trailokyavijaya is here only two-armed (875) and Śiva and Pārvatī (Umā) are represented directly underneath him in the middle of the eastern direction.[567] Clearly then, also the Trilokavijaya mandalas at Alchi and Mangyu represent two distinct interpretations of the same mandala.

Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu Mandala

Another version of the Vajradhātu mandala, featuring the same deities, derives from commentaries to the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*). At Alchi, this mandala is found twice, namely on the entry wall of the Dukhang (52) and on the main wall of the Sumtsek's top storey (770). That I bring them together here may at first glance be irritating, as the two mandalas are centred on different deities, but even in the much later *Collection of All Tantras* (*Gyüdé Küntü*, *rgyud sde kun btus*) these two options are recognised.

The Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala in the Dukhang is found on the right side of the entry wall (52). In this mandala the interior palace contains two concentric circles around the centre, which is occupied by a four-faced Mahāvairocana performing the gesture of highest awakening (*bodhyagrīmudrā*). The inner circle around Vairocana, forming an eight-petalled lotus, is occupied by the secondary Buddhas and the four mothers. The outer circle contains the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas, and the four inner offering goddesses and four peaceful gate-keepers complement the assembly of the inner palace. The outer palace houses the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon in the respective colour of their family, the four outer offering goddesses and another set of gate-keepers. The mandala thus comprises of fifty-seven deities. A full list of the deities of this mandala with the iconographic details as they occur in the Alchi Dukhang is provided in an appendix (page 409 ff.).



876 Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha to the right of the two-armed Maitreya in his chapel at Mangyu. In this depiction, the additional heads represent three of the surrounding Buddha families, while the top head is that of Mañjuśrī. CL 1998 (114,32), WHAV.

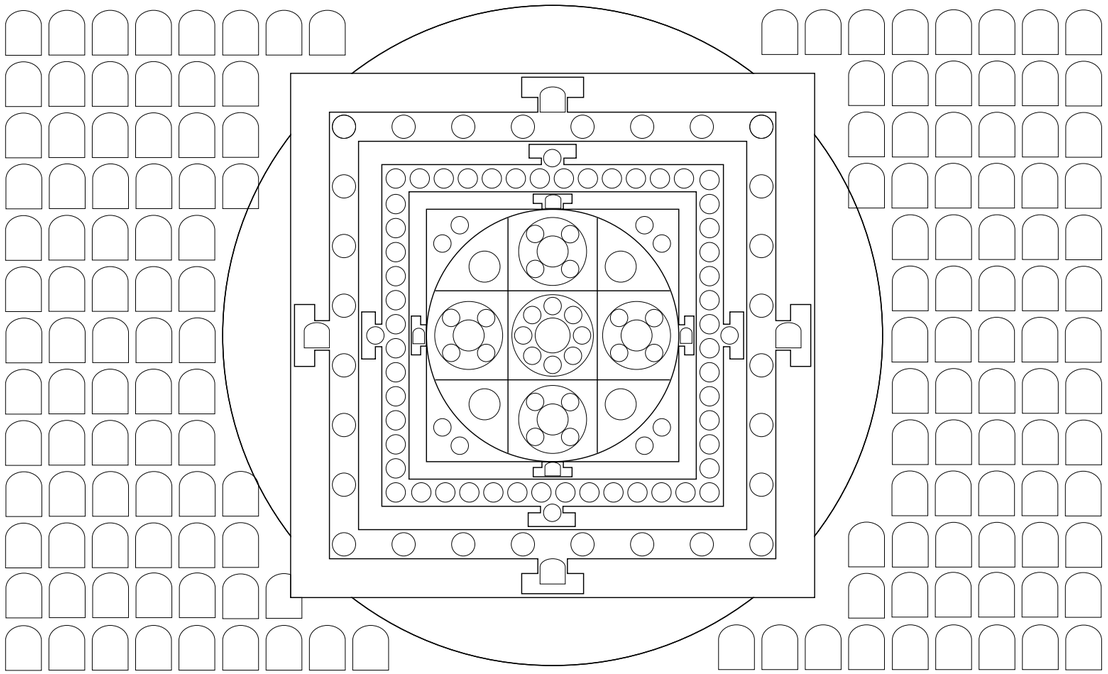


877 Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha on the left side wall of the Lalung Serkhang with the four-faced Mahāvairocana represented below and Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva above the main image. The original murals complete the Assembly of the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala.

What distinguishes this mandala from a regular Vajradhātu mandala is the geometry of the inner palace, which places greater emphasis on the central Buddha. Further, in the Dukhang mandala all deities except the five esoteric Buddhas hold a sword in the right hand as a second attribute. In this context, the sword references the wisdom sword of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

Exactly the same structure is replicated in the mandala of the Sumtsek, but here the inner palace has no gates. There is, thus, no place to replicate of the four gate-keepers, and this version of the mandala has only fifty-three deities. Further, the main deity is now Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha, who has five heads—only four of them depicted with the fifth to be imagined at the back—and eight arms, holding swords in each of the right hands and books in each of the left hands. In the generation of the mandala Ādibuddha is visualised at the heart of Vairocana before the other deities are generated. The Sumtsek version of the mandala also differs in the secondary figures, as none of them holds a sword as an additional attribute. It is also remarkable, that it is the earlier Dukhang version that has the prongs of the crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) flanking the mandala gates, while the Sumtsek version has none.

It may well be that the two mandalas derive from different commentarial sources, and there are good indications in this regard, such as the different number of deities. However, the differences between the two mandalas can to a large extent also be explained visually. In the Dukhang representation, the sword used as an additional attribute for the secondary



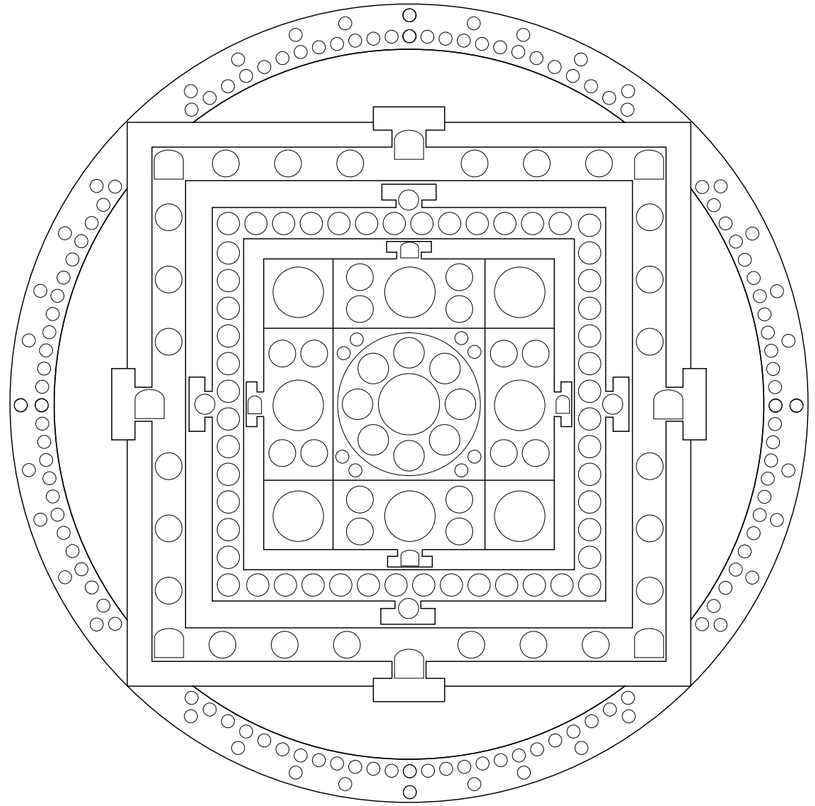
878 The structure of the Dharmadhātu mandala in the Nako Lotsawa Lhakhang, with the pan-Indian deities outside the mandala proper.

figures identifies the mandala, while in the Sumtsek mandala the depiction of Ādibuddha makes this device unnecessary. Thus, the Vajradhātu mandala can also be considered the main topic of the Sumtsek, but it is a Nāmasaṃgīti version that presumes a Buddha superior to the five esoteric Buddhas that takes the most prominent position.

In Mangyu, too, there are two versions of this mandala documenting the fluidity of its appearance and main deity. The one in the Śākyamuni Temple is identical in position and iconography to the one in the Alchi Dukhang.[568] The geometry of the mandala differs considerably, as here the Bodhisattvas in the second palace are also placed against an additional concentric circle overlapping with the central palace. Another variant found on the right side wall of the Two-armed Maitreya Chapel is in a deplorable state today. Here it oddly is Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrī who occupies the centre, while mandala's geometry and iconography are otherwise identical with that of the Alchi Dukhang. The mandala is placed opposite the Vajradhātu mandala from the *Compendium of Principles* mentioned above, and thus takes precedence over it. Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha is one of the deities depicted on the main wall, and there he is shown with all five heads, two stacked on top of each other, albeit in an unusual colour arrangement (876).

The identification of the Alchi mandalas also helps to better understand the sculptural configuration on the left side wall of the Lalung Serkhang, which can now be identified as

879 The structure of the Dharmadhātu mandala in the Assembly Hall of Sumda Chung, with the pan-Indian deities in the circle around the mandala palace.



focusing on Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha (877). Further, the Lalung inscription clarifies that the three figures shown along the vertical axis represent Mahāvairocana at the bottom, Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha in the middle and Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva at the top, with each higher manifestation visualized at the heart of the previous one.[569] As many of the repainted secondary figures hold a sword, we may assume that the sculptures represent the core of the Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala, the assembly of which was completed by the murals. The iconography of this wall, thus, re-enforces the relationship between the Lalung Serkhang and the Alchi group of monuments proposed earlier.[569]

Dharmadhātu Mandala

Coming back to the Alchi Dukhang, the second most important mandala in the temple in terms of placement is the Dharmadhātu mandala immediately to the left of the main niche, on the right side of the left wall (109). In the Nako Lotsawa Lhakhang and the Main Temple of Sumda Chung, this mandala is also found in the same position, while it has moved to third position in the Guhyasamāja Cave of Dunkar. In this cave the two Guhyasamāja mandalas



take the main position and the Vajradhātu mandala moves to the left side (872). The Dharmadhātu mandala also occupies the ceiling of the Eight Buddha Cave there (880). A full list of the deities of this mandala with the iconographic details as they occur in the Alchi Dukhang is provided in an appendix (page 414 ff.).

The structure and content of this mandala have already been explored in considerable detail in the Dukhang chapter (page 134 ff.), it is thus sufficient here to focus on the relationship of this mandala to other representations. This mandala relates closely to the Vajradhātu mandala, as its central square is also divided into nine compartments. However, in this case the central compartment is much more dominant and features a full lotus with nine deities, the central Mañjughoṣa, standing in for Vairocana, surrounded by the eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas. With the exception of the five Buddhas, which are iconographically distinct, the other deities of this central square are identical to the core assembly of the Vajradhātu mandala, a fact that has been used in the conception of the Tabo Assembly Hall where the two mandala assemblies intertwine.[571] The outer offering goddesses are in the corners of the middle palace as the corners of the outer palace are occupied by wrathful deities.

While at Tabo the Dharmadhātu mandala is only depicted in form of its deity assembly, in all other cases the mandala palace is depicted. Among these there are two distinct types of representation, one in which the fourth assembly, the pan-Indian deities that submit to the Buddhist deities of the mandala, are shown outside the mandala proper. This type is found

880 The Dharmadhātu mandala on the ceiling of the Eight Buddhas Cave at Dunkar. In this version, the pan-Indian deities of the outermost assembly are incorporated within a fourth mandala palace.

at Nako (878), in the Guhyasamāja Cave of Dunkar, and on the main wall of a ruined temple at Saspol Tse, where only the right side of the outer assembly is preserved. Of these the representation in the Guhyasamāja Cave of Dunkar is somewhat ambivalent, as a fourth palace is indicated around this outermost assembly. In the Tabo Assembly Hall, this group of deities occupy the entry hall, and thus are spatially removed from the other deities of the mandala. This location, then, represents an earlier stage in the conception of the Dharmadhātu mandala. In the second type, represented at Alchi, Sumda Chung (879) and the Eight Buddhas Cave at Dunkar, the pan-Indian deities of the mandala have been moved within the fire and vajra circles surrounding the mandala, and thus within its purified space. Here, too, the Dunkar mandala is exceptional not only through its representation on the ceiling, but also because the outer deities are shown within a fourth mandala palace (880). Further the walls of the smaller Cave 3 at Dunkar had the assembly of the Dharmadhātu mandala painted on it, only the deities of the right wall including Ratnasambhava and Amitābha largely preserved, it thus could be called the Dharmadhātu Cave.

Sarvavid Mandala

The right side wall of the Alchi Dukhang is dedicated to two mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*), the Sarvavid mandala (167) on the more prominent left side and opposite the Dharmadhātu mandala, and the Śākyasiṃha mandala on the right (198). While the two mandalas are clearly complementary in this case, any one of them may stand in for the entire cycle of mandalas this tantra contains, which is depicted in full in the Lhakhang Soma (page 327 ff.).

In many ways, this mandala is very close to the Vajradhātu mandala, and consequently elements of the two mandalas have been mixed up in both history and modern times. In history this most often happens in the replacement of the five Buddhas distinctive for the Sarvavid mandala with those of the Vajradhātu mandala. In modern times the usually four-faced Mahāvairocana is often referred to as Sarvavid Vairocana, a name that does not occur in the Vajradhātu literature. In the Alchi Dukhang the two mandalas are clearly distinguished, and the representation of the Sarvavid mandala retains all its characteristic distinctions, namely the meditation posture of the central Saravavid Vairocana, the distinctive colour scheme of the five Buddhas, the addition of an outer palace housing solitary Buddhas (*pratyekabuddha*) and monks or hearers (*śrāvaka*), and an integrated outer circle with pan-Indian deities worshipping the Buddhist deities of the mandala. In addition mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* are often also distinguished by the integration of elements of the cosmos within the mandala. This is expressed through the depiction of the continents around the sides of the mandala palace and of four realms of rebirth in the corners around the circle of the mandala. A full list of the deities of this mandala with the iconographic details as they occur in the Alchi Dukhang is provided in an appendix (page 421 ff.).

In the composition of temples roughly contemporaneous to Alchi, one of the two main mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* usually takes the third position in the iconographic hierarchy. For example, in the Nako Lotsawa Lhakhang, the Sarvavid mandala is represented on the right side wall, and it was represented in the same position at

Sumda Chung. In the Śākyamuni Temple at Mangyu, the Sarvavid mandala is represented on the left wall, and the Vajradhātu mandala on the right wall, reversing their usual hierarchy.

Structurally, early depictions of the Sarvavid mandala are fairly consistent. Within the inner palace are two circles, the inner one divided into nine compartments and featuring five Buddhas and four goddesses. The outer circle houses the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas. The outer palace features two squares, the outer ones of those with solitary Buddhas and monks, which is unique to this mandala. While later versions of this mandala, such as the one of the Lhakhang Soma (289), feature four gate-keepers in each of the gates, those of Alchi and Mangyu only have one such gate-keeper. The structure of the earliest depiction at Nako is, however, unique insofar as the inner palace has two concentric circles of deities around Vairocana—we cannot be entirely sure if this reflects the original appearance as the inner palace is repainted—and three squares in the second palace, separating the solitary Buddhas and monks from the gate-keepers, which are three at each gate. In addition it separates the celestial bodies (*graha*) and lunar mansions from the other pan-Indian deities, representing the latter in the circle surrounding the palace and the celestial bodies flanking the mandala proper beyond the representations of the four realms of rebirth.

Śākyasiṃha Mandala

The second mandala on the right side wall of the Alchi Dukhang (198), fully called the Śākyasiṃhanavoṣṇīṣa mandala, can equally serve as the main mandala of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations*. Structurally, it has two palaces with two concentric circles inside the central palace. Of these the central circle has Śākyasiṃha in the middle of an eight-petalled lotus, which in Alchi has the goddess Prajñāpāramitā represented on its eastern petal. In the outer circle are the eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas, and in the outer palace sixteen Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon. Eight offering goddesses and four gate-keepers complete the assembly of this mandala. A full list of the deities of this mandala with the iconographic details as they occur in the Alchi Dukhang is provided in an appendix (page 426 ff.).

The Śākyasiṃha mandala in the top storey of the Sumtsek (768) is identical to that of the Dukhang, but as it now is the main mandala of the cycle it also contains the continents around the palace and the four realms of rebirth. The continents are represented by two pairs of deities flanking the gates, which can be identified as the respective guardians of the directions. Thus Agni and an identical female form are shown for the southeastern direction (883), and Yama and consort for the south (880). Also the realms of rebirth are represented in an unusual manner, as each depiction is presided by a four-armed Avalokiteśvara (884, 885). The four medallions, thus, combine the miraculous qualities of Avalokiteśvara with the realms of rebirth that are traditionally represented around the main mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations*. The interpretation of both the guardians of the directions and Avalokiteśvara among the gods reveal a strong Shaivite connection of these depictions, with Avalokiteśvara representing Śiva in the realm of the gods.

Another version of this mandala occupies the ceiling of the Tashi Gomang Chörten (229, 246). In this case the central Śākyasiṃha is surrounded by female personifications of the eight auspicious symbols, the outer group of them further flanked by the seven treasures of a universal monarch. This version thus prefigures variants of this mandala in which the petals



881 This mandala assembly can now be identified as the Śākyasiṃha mandala. The larger central Buddha is surrounded the eight Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas, one in each direction performing the gesture of one of the esoteric Buddhas. The figure directly underneath Śākyasiṃha can be identified as Prajñāpāramitā, even though she is only two-armed in this representation. Thus the square around the main deity represents the inner palace of the mandala, while the deities of the outer palace are arranged in a second square around them, the four gate-keepers easily recognisable by their U-shaped halos. Photo: E. Ghersi, 1935; IsIAO, Tucci Photographic Archives, P.3291.

surrounding Śākyasiṃha are occupied by symbols, as is the case in the cave of Bardzong (889).

The Śākyasiṃha mandala is also represented on the right wall of the ruined temple of Saspol Tse, and among the caves of Dunkar, where it is found on the ceiling of the Dharmadhātu Cave (Cave 3), it is the only mandala of this tantra cycle represented. In this mandala the symbols of the four surrounding Buddha families are drawn on the petals of the central lotus.

Regarding earlier versions of this mandala, the fragmentary mandala assembly on the main wall of the Tabo Assembly Hall is no longer a candidate, as the identification of the full Dharmadhātu mandala there leaves only space for a nine-deity assembly and one of the secondary figures is a red goddess holding a lotus. However, a now lost mandala assembly documented in 1935 at Mangnang likely also dating to the mid-eleventh century can be securely identified as representing the Śākyasiṃha mandala, the goddess immediately underneath the Buddha likely representing Prajñāpāramitā (881). The assembly differs from that at Alchi in the four goddesses represented in the corners of the inner square, their meaning is not entirely clear but they replace the gate-keepers of the inner palace at Alchi. All eight offering goddesses are represented in the corners of the outer square.





882 That the left wall mandala derives from the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* can be deduced not only from its assembly of main deities, but also from the secondary topics presented on this spread.

To the left are two of the eight pairs of pan-Indian deities flanking the mandala gates. These deities represent the continents in each of the cardinal directions and depict the respective directional guardians, in the case of the southern gate Yama and his consort, which is shown in identical iconography, are represented above the gate.

883 Below the southern gate is Agni and his consort. The iconography of these deities revealing a Shaivite connection, as almost all of them appear to hold a trident as one of their attributes.

884 In the corners outside the mandala proper are four medallions representing four realms of rebirth as areas of the activity of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, shown white and four-armed in all cases. In three of them he is seated on the throne and beings of the three lower realms take refuge to him, hell beings in the lower left, a hungry ghost in the upper left, and animals in the upper right represented here.

885 Finally, in the lower left corner Avalokiteśvara represents the gods and fights the head of the demigods (*asura*), Rāvaṇa. This depiction thus stand for the upper two realms which are also less desirable than the human realm.





Besides the two main mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations*, the Lhakhang Soma contains the entire set of twelve mandalas of this cycle. As the two main mandalas follow those in the Dukhang very closely, we can take this as representing the local interpretation of the cycle. The same may be true for the full cycle represented in the Shangrong temple, but no detailed comparison has been made in this regard. Subsidiary mandalas of the cycle are said to be represented in the Vairocana Temple of Mangyu left and right of the main niche, but except for the Mandala of the eight great *nāga* none of the others can be found in this tantra or any of its commentaries.[572]

Prajñāpāramitā Mandalas

In the Śākyasiṃha mandala, the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is represented underneath the Buddha on the central circle. Around the corner of this depiction in the Alchi Dukhang is a large mandala dedicated to the goddess herself (49). However, while all other mandalas of the Dukhang can be traced as deriving from the Tibetan canonical sources, this one cannot. Actually, all three mandalas dedicated to this great mother (*yum chen mo*) of all Buddhas found within the Alchi Choskhor appear to have no direct textual parallels. They are also strikingly different to each other, each representing a distinct interpretation of the goddess in relation to the five esoteric Buddhas.

Among the three versions the one in the Dukhang is the most conventional, as here the goddess is surrounded mostly by Buddhas in monastic robes and Bodhisattvas. The central lotus also features four goddesses holding the symbols of the surrounding families, indicating that Prajñāpāramitā stands in for Vairocana within a Yoga Tantra context. This forty-five-deity mandala thus contains five goddesses including Prajñāpāramitā, twenty-four Buddhas, twelve Bodhisattvas, and four gate-keepers. The number of Buddhas in the mandala and their distribution remains, however, puzzling and makes it impossible to name the deities individually.

The forty-nine-deity Prajñāpāramitā mandala in the top storey of the Sumtsek is structurally identical to that of the Dukhang, but uniquely gives precedence to the goddesses on the central circle (772). Here the four mothers occupy the cardinal directions and replicate the six-armed form of the central Prajñāpāramitā. They hold their family attribute in their upper right hands, while the other hands replicate the gestures and attributes of the central goddess, as far as they are drawn. The four secondary Buddhas, beginning with Akṣobhya in the southeast, are placed in the intermediate direction and thus to be understood as consorts to the goddesses. That these Buddhas are not represented in the Dukhang is indicated by the additional four Buddhas in the outer square, that restores their original number of twenty-four. Further, a comparison between the Dukhang and Sumtsek versions, also makes clear that these twenty-four Buddhas have no established iconography. Further, eight of the twelve Bodhisattvas are replaced by the eight offering goddesses, while the remaining four hold the attributes of the respective family. Curiously, the relative positions of the family Bodhisattva and the gate-keeper have been switched in the eastern and western quarters, the one on the inner square holding the attribute of the respective gate-keeper.

The Dukhang and Sumtsek versions of the Prajñāpāramitā mandala thus likely derive from the same background, but the Sumtsek version shows a surprising degree of further development that likely is individual. In both cases, the mandalas are visually paired with the Śākyasiṃha mandala, it is thus quite probable that the ritual of her mandala was also used in a funerary or commemorative setting. The latter is also indicated by the third mandala represented in the Tashi Gomang Chörten (241), where it is paired with an unusual version of an Amoghapāśa mandala (236). In this seventeen-deity mandala Prajñāpāramitā is surrounded by the four secondary Buddhas in their *saṃbhogakāya* form, the eight offering goddesses, and the four gate-keepers.

The prominence of Prajñāpāramitā in this form is unique to Alchi, but an increase in her popularity can be observed in twelfth-century monuments of the region. At Nako, there are two sculptural representations of the goddess; in the Lotsawa Lhakhang to the side of the main niche and in the Lhakhang Gongma she is the main deity. In both cases the goddess presumably was always two-armed and performing the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) and she is surrounded by Buddhas in monastic robes only. A closer comparison to Alchi is offered by the sculptural configuration in the Lalung Serkhang, where the goddess is four-armed and surrounded by the secondary Buddhas and the four mothers of the families.[573] This latter representation, thus, shares elements with the Alchi representations, but focuses on the core deities only.

Besides the mandalas, Prajñāpāramitā is frequently depicted at Alchi, further attesting to the importance of this deity for the site. The goddess occupies the most important position on the wooden door, the *lalāṭabimba*, of the Dukhang (315) and together with Tārā, Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara, she is singled out in the courtyard (399). On the main wall of the Sumtsek's middle storey she is she juxtaposed twice with the five esoteric Buddhas, once across the wall to the other side of Maitreya's head and once in her own panel, where she thrones above them (685). The six-armed form of the goddess is also found at Mangyu, where she is on the *lalāṭabimba* of the door to the Śākyamuni Temple and is paired with Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha on a wall of the Four Image Chörten. There and in the Dukhang at Sumda Chung she is also represented opposite the eight-armed Green Tārā, another common grouping. However, only on a wall of a ruined chörten at Sumda Chung she is also represented in the centre of a poorly preserved mandala, where she is surrounded by eight Buddhas in monastic robes only.

Trailokyavijaya Mandala

The final mandala of the Alchi Dukhang remaining to discuss is the Trailokyavijaya mandala above the door. The mandala has already been identified as such on the basis of Dānapāla's Chinese translation of the *Compendium of Principles* (STTS; see note 85 in Volume I), but this identification has not been explained in greater detail. Rather than interpreting it as an abbreviated form of the main mandala, I take it to represent an Ekamudrā mandala similar to those described by Amoghavajra. According to Amoghavajra's interpretation the seventeen-deity mandala is based on having attained the mantra of Vairocana, and its assembly consists of the four Pāramitā around the central deity, the eight offering goddesses and the four gate-keepers.[574] Of these the Pāramitā conform to the Mothers of the Families, and one would expected them to be female. Instead, the deities representing the families in the Dukhang mandala are male. Thus, the version of the Ekamudrā mandala in the Dukhang

differs considerably from that in the Sumtsek discussed above (page 760), the two mandalas being based on entirely different interpretations of the same source text through the usage of different commentaries. Further, no direct comparison to the Dukhang Trailokyavijaya mandala has been preserved elsewhere.[575]

In general, early western Himalayas mandalas focusing on wrathful deities are rare. Within the Alchi group, the three in the Vairocana Temple at Mangyu are most interesting, but still need to be identified properly.[576] Other interesting examples are a five-deity assembly of Vajravidāraṇa on the entry wall of the Assembly Hall of the Tabo Main Temple,[577] two fragmentary mandalas on the entry wall of the Lhakhang Gongma at Nako,[578] and another Vajravidāraṇa mandala on the entry wall of the Guhyasamāja Cave at Dunkar,[579] to name only the most important. However, none of them directly relates to the Alchi Trailokyavijaya mandala.

Amoghapāśa Mandalas

The final group of mandalas that needs to be considered are the two versions of the Amoghapāśa mandala found at Alchi. The earlier version is the five-deity Amoghapāśa assembly represented in the Avalokiteśvara niche of the Sumtsek through the clay sculptures (539), which is identified as such in the founding inscription of the temple (page 788). This configuration is unique insofar as all secondary deities are represented wrathful and female wearing skirts underneath the tiger skin. This includes Amoghapāśā and Hayagrīvā—both names written in their female form here—represented on the left side wall of the niche. The second version, found in the Tashi Gomang Chörten (236), is equally idiosyncratic. It shares with the Sumtsek Assembly that all deities are wrathful, but now only two of the deities are female. In both cases the name giving deity occupies the east, while a four-armed form of Avalokiteśvara takes the central position.

While I have identified the latter as such earlier, without the hint from the inscription I would not have dared to identify the assembly in the Sumtsek as the five-deity assembly of Amoghapāśa. There is, of course, considerable diversity in early representation of Amoghapāśa assemblies—especially noteworthy are three paintings from Dunhuang today in the Musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet (MG 26466, EO 1131, and EO 3579)[580]—but the iconographic deviations of the two mandalas at Alchi are still bewildering. Tibetan canonical textual sources in which the name giving deity, Amoghapāśa, is a secondary figure occupying the east only partially reflect this diversity.[581] Comparing the two Alchi mandalas with each other and other early representations of the assembly as well as two texts of praise attributed to Candragomin, the *Amoghapāśapañcadevastotra* (T2720) in which all secondary deities are four-armed and the *Avalokiteśvarastotra* (T2731),[582] allows for assessing them better in this regard. This also enables to reconstruct the most likely attributes the Sumtsek sculptures once held.

In both Alchi versions and the *Avalokiteśvarastotra* the central Avalokiteśvara is four-armed, while the *Pañcadevastotra* describes a two-armed main deity. From the gestures of the main sculpture in the Sumtsek his attributes may be reconstructed as string of beads (*mālā*) and the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) for the right hands, and lotus and flask for the left hands. Due to the position and remaining gesture of the upper right hand it is unlikely he



886 Five-deity Amoghapāśa assembly on the right side wall of the Lotus Family Cave at Phyang. Unfortunately all main deities of this assembly have been mutilated. At the bottom the sun-god Sūrya and the earth-goddess are placed opposite the only donor assembly of the cave.



887 A thirteen-deity Amoghapāśa mandala on the left side of the entry to the Guhyasamāja Cave at Dunkar. In this mandala, the common five deities are joined by the eight offering goddesses.

held a noose there, as most central images in the Dunhuang paintings do. The main image in the Chörten mandala (236) only shares the gesture of giving, while two more hands are joined in meditation and the fourth hand holds a vase with a twig growing from it. Given that this form of Avalokiteśvara is also depicted in the Sumtsek and closely related form of it is recorded among the 360 icons,[189] one has to assume that this represents a distinctive form of Avalokiteśvara. However, despite several attempts, I have not succeeded in tracing the source of this deity.

In the five-deity assembly red Amoghapāśa, the name giving deity, occupies the east, holding the noose as one of his attributes. In the Sumtsek Amoghapāśā is only two-armed, which is unique to this depiction.[583] In the four-armed version of the Tashi Gomang Chörten mandala, Amoghapāśa holds the noose with two hands, while the others hold a vajra and a ring-shaped wheel or discus. Of these the vajra is a common attribute, also held in two of the three Dunhuang paintings and mentioned in both *stotra*, while the wheel is not held in any other version, but it is described in the *Pañcadevastotra* for Hayagrīva. Instead, the *Avalokiteśvara-stotra* describes an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*) and a (red) lotus for the left hands, which are also found in MG 26466 and EO 1131. In fact, in all three Dunhuang paintings a lotus is held in one of the four hands. The most likely attributes for the Sumtsek Amoghapāśā would, thus, have been a noose in the right hand and a lotus in the left. In MG 26466 Amoghapāśa is represented wrathful, and in EO 1131 he is furrowing the brows, indicating that the wrathful nature of this deity at Alchi has a broader commentarial base. There is no other female version, though.

In the south is Hayagrīva, who in the Sumtsek is female and in the Tashi Gomang Chörten lacks the additional horse head. In the latter he holds a sword and a vajra-topped staff in the right hands, and he performs the gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*) and holds a noose with the left hands. Of these the gesture of threatening is always one of the attributes, and



888 The Vajradhātu mandala on the left side wall of the Bardzong cave. Note that the eastern Buddha Akṣobhya is white. Photo Tom Pritzker 2007.



889 The Śākyasiṃha mandala on the right side wall of the Bardzong cave, opposite the Vajradhātu mandala. Here the four lower realms of rebirth flank the mandala. Photo Tom Pritzker 2007.

the sword replaces the more commonly depicted and described club. The vajra-topped staff can be seen as alternative to the vajra, which is held in two of the Dunhuang versions (MG 26466 and EO 1131) and is described in the *Avalokiteśvarastotra*. Both texts also mention a lotus for one of the left hands, which is also found in all Dunhuang paintings. Considering these variations and the position of the hands as they are found today with the Sumtsek Hayagrīvā, her right hands most likely held the club and a staff, while the left hands could have held a lotus and a wheel.

In the west is the goddess Ekajaṭā, who in both Alchi versions is four-armed as well. In the Sumtsek she is the only sculpture preserving an attribute, a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in the upper left hand. In the Tashi Gomang Chörten her attributes are the curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and a skull-cup held in front of the body as well as sword and blue lily (*utpala*). That this deity is meant to be female, is only apparent from the fall of the necklace, which implies breasts the outlines of which possibly have never been drawn. In both *stotra* the goddess is described eight-armed, and in neither case all four attributes as the occur in the chörten are listed among the eight. However, a form of the goddess identical to the Chörten depiction is described in another text that expounds a closely related mandala assembly, the *Sādhana of Wisdom Wheel Khasarpaṇi* (*dpal kha sar+pa Ni ye shes kyi 'khor lo'i sgrub thabs*; T2757).[584] Incidentally, this is the only text I have come along in which all four secondary deities around Avalokiteśvara are described as being four-armed. Of the Dunhuang mandalas only EO 3579 shows the goddess with eight arms, while in the other two she has four arms. In MG 26466 she is wrathful and holds a club, a sword, an axe and a noose, only the sword overlapping with the chörten depiction. Given the skull-cup in the upper left hand of the goddess in the Sumtsek, I tend to ascribe the same attributes as in the chörten to this representation. The way the skull-cup is attached to the outstretched hand also sounds a warning that the position of the hands of these sculptures may not be reliable indicators for the nature of the attribute.

The fourth deity occupying the north is commonly Bhṛkuṭī. However, in the Tashi Gomang Chörten this goddess shoots an arrow with her upper arms and plays a *vīṇā* with her lower arms. None of these details are found with this goddess in the literature associated with Avalokiteśvara or in the Dunhuang paintings. In the Kālacakra literature, however, the goddess holds bow and arrow besides a club and performing gesture of threatening (*tarjanī-mudrā*). Even if we accept that the Alchi depiction is influenced by this more wrathful conception of the goddess, the *vīṇā* cannot be explained. It is the contradictory nature of the attributes that makes it most likely that this depiction is an anomaly, be it a genuine mistake or transmission that had no traction for this reason. From the position of the arms it appears unlikely, that the goddess in the Sumtsek held the same attributes. From the comparisons I would expect a more regular form of the goddess here, such as a club and a string of beads (*mālā*) in the right hands, and lotus and vase in the left. These attributes are described in T2720 and T2757, and T2731 only diverges in one attribute from this, they are supported by the position of the hands, and are also comparable to the Dunhuang depictions, which always show a peaceful goddess.

This excursion in the details of the Amoghapāśa mandala demonstrates how incredibly rich the ritual tradition around this deity once has been. Only some of it eventually made it into the Tibetan canonical literature. There is no other representation of this mandala among

the Alchi group, and the two west Tibetan examples, one on the right side wall of the Lotus Family Cave at Phyang (886)[585] and the other to the left of the entrance to the Guhyasamāja Cave at Dunkar (887),[563] are in line with the most common tradition of the five-deity assembly represented by the *Amoghapāśapañcadevastotra* and associated in the Tibetan tradition with Bari Lotsawa Rinchendrak (*ba ri lo tsA ba rin chen grags*, 1040–1112).[586]

Beyond Alchi

This survey of the Alchi mandalas in comparison to other early western Himalayan monuments reveals a number of remarkable facts crucial for understanding the religious environment of the time. There is a marked shift in the religious interpretations from the Dukhang to the Sumtsek, the latter incorporating many more hints towards Highest Yoga Tantra teachings underlying an otherwise largely conservative programme. The distinct interpretations of the same teachings found across the Alchi group of monuments, including Mangyu and Sumda Chung, speak of a fluid religious environment in which family or clan financed monks compete with each other in expressions of public devotion and religious interpretation. The comparison of the same mandalas across the group and the individuality of each monument are an expression of this fluidity. Particularly telling are the comparisons between Alchi and Mangyu, where the variations in the mandala design align with the sponsor- and leadership of two competing families, the Dro and the Mer (*smer*). In both cases well-educated monks from those families played a leading role.

Compared with earlier and roughly contemporaneous western Himalayan monuments the Alchi Group mandalas are usually more consistent with their later Tibetan versions, but they are still far away from the systematic approach to their depictions that probably took hold only with the increasing popularity of the Vajrāvalī cycle and the Kālacakra Tantra. Even though the latter text may well have been known at Alchi by the time the Sumtsek was built, see the Palden Drepung Chörten, page 363 ff., and even though the Sumtsek's founder expressed his worship for Drigungpa, the mandala depictions build on the local tradition originally established with the Purang-Guge kingdom. It is thus not surprising, that there is considerable consistency with the main themes depicted in these monuments, where major reinterpretations are expressed in subtle differences only. But there are also a considerable number of unique mandalas across the Alchi monuments the sources of which must have been weeded out as inauthentic when the Tibetan canon was established. Traces of these interpretations are occasionally found in Chinese sources, as is the case with the Prajñāpāramitā mandala of the Alchi Dukhang, but the Alchi depictions represent further developed interpretations.

This study has focused on the earliest Alchi mandalas only, those post-dating the two early chörten being addressed in the Lhakhang Soma and Development chapters. However, it is important to note that even after the rise of the central Tibetan Kagyü schools in the western Himalayas the monuments in the region continue to maintain their individual interpretations for at least another two centuries. This study could, thus, easily be expanded to, for example, demonstrate the different interpretations of the Yoga Tantra mandalas in the individual monuments in the light of the new emphasis on Highest Yoga Tantra teachings. However, the differences then lie in details only and a survey would rather obscure these individual differences than make them apparent. In the following I demonstrate this on the basis of one example.

In the cave of Bardzong, a Vajradhātu mandala and a Śākyasiṃha mandala flank the main wall in the expected hierarchy.[587] However, the otherwise conservatively represented Vajradhātu mandala incorporates an element of the Sarvavid mandala by representing the eastern Buddha Akṣobhya white even though the family colour blue is used for this quarter. In the Śākyasiṃha mandala, in contrast, the eastern quarter is white, indicating that here Śākyasiṃha is understood as standing in for Akṣobhya and not Vairocana. Further it includes eight symbols drawn on the petals of the lotus, those in the cardinal directions being the family symbols, while those in the intermediary directions are four types of jewellery. Are these standing for the four surrounding Buddhas and their consorts? It is not the goal to solve this question here, but it is clear that both mandalas have been interpreted in a distinct manner that builds on and diverges from the usages recorded for them above in this chapter. I take these changes to indicate that the Vajradhātu mandala here also stands for the Sarvavid mandala and likely is being used in a commemorative context. This would align with the Medicine Buddha assembly that occupies the side walls.

As in this example, the later variations on the mandalas deriving from the *Compendium of Principles* and the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* often represent attempts to reconcile the ritual systems of these tantras with the need to account for the theoretical prominence of the former in the light of the ritual prominence of the latter. In fact, the original ritual of the Vajradhātu mandala eventually falls out of practice entirely, and is replaced by the ritual of Sarvavid Vairocana. Thus when the 'Vajradhātu ritual' has been reintroduced at Tabo Monastery two decades ago, actually the Sarvavid Vairocana ritual has been used, as only this system continued to be practiced. It is thus no wonder that Tucci in his pioneering scholarship on the western Himalayan monuments followed this lead and interpreted the mandalas from this perspective, as apparent in his usage of the name 'Sarvavid Vairocana' also for the Vajradhātu Vairocana. The Alchi mandalas, however, precede that process and document the last stage in the history of Tibetan Buddhism at which the ritual systems of these two Yoga Tantra are still fully retained.

The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek

BY NILS MARTIN[588]



890 The foundation inscription of the Sumtsek begins on the right side wall of the niche revealing the head of Maitreya, and continues on the long panel between two friezes of painting immediately to the right of it. There it is divided into three successive sections, as if three book folios would be lying beside each other (detail of 674; see also 685).

891 This detail demonstrates the poor condition of parts of the inscription, which still can be read from detailed photographs. The bottom line of the text in the image—there is an additional line underneath—begins the final section concerned with Tsültrim Ö, who is mentioned here by name.

The inscription called the *Garland of Butter Lamps* on the middle storey of the Sumtsek (*gsum brtsegs*) in Alchi is of utmost importance for understanding the history of the Alchi group of monuments. This lengthy praise of Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*) and some of his ancestors provides background on the foundation of the Sumtsek.

The *Garland of Butter Lamps* has been partially edited and translated by Philip Denwood (1980) and re-examined recently by Amy Heller and Shawo Khacham (2018) and Heller (2018). However, sections of the text have been regarded as separate inscriptions, and its first part was merged with another inscription that continues on the same panel. Crucially, a large section of the text remained unedited and untranslated. Consequently, previous historical interpretations based on the studied parts only are misleading.

This contribution, thus, makes the full text of the *Garland of Butter Lamps* available for the first time and proposes a new interpretation of key sections. Preceding the translation of the text, the inscription is first presented with regards to its material and compositional aspects. Then, the genealogy of Tsültrim Ö is reconsidered, and the foundation of the Sumtsek is set in context to the extent the Garland of Butter Lamps makes that possible.

The Inscription

On the basis of a careful examination of Poncar's photographs, which has been done in collaboration with Christian Luczanits, three inscriptions can be identified in the vicinity of the gabled opening revealing the head of Maitreya on the main wall of the middle storey:

- An inscription in headless script (*dbu med*) of ten or eleven lines covers the left two-thirds of the face of the beam supporting the pilasters of the gable in front of Maitreya's head. Its last two lines occupy the entire length of the beam below another text.[589]
- The text on the right third of the same beam is an acrostic of thirty-two verses in headed script (*dbu can*) written in eight lines and four columns. The key to reading this text and a colophon, counting together sixteen verses in headless script, is written in nine lines on the adjoining wall of the niche. The text is written by the monk of Gar (*'gar*), possibly a clan name.[590]
- The third text is the *Garland of Butter Lamps*, the beginning of which is written above the key and colophon of the previous text and the following parts beyond the corner on the main wall.

The *Garland of Butter Lamps* is by far the longest inscription of the Sumtsek, comprising 124 verses of nine syllables—with the exception of the seven-syllable verses 41 to 46—and an

authorial colophon in prose and a scribal colophon in verse. It is written in four parts and fifty-three lines on two yellowish panels with orange borders. The first part of the inscription occupies a narrow panel on the right wall of the gable, immediately above the key and the colophon of the acrostic inscription.[591] The last three parts are arranged side by side on a long panel covering all the length of the right side of the main wall, above the representation of paradise scenes.[592] As in two inscriptions of the Dukhang (*'du khang*), the transition from one part to the next is marked by letters in headed script in alphabetical order (*ka*, *kha*, and *ga*), which are written at the end of the respective part and repeated at the beginning of the next part.

Like the other inscriptions of the Sumtsek, the *Garland of Butter Lamps* has suffered from various alterations and damages over the centuries. At a number of places the written layer has flaked off, at others splashes of red paint mask the text. In addition, a clumsy filling of a nearby crack covers the first syllables of a section of the first part. The parts on the main wall are in places extremely abraded. There, orange rules can be recognised along the top of the letters.

The text follows compositional rules shared by most Tibetan Buddhist donation inscriptions in the western Himalayas, and is highly formulaic. The inscription opens with an auspicious formula and a praise to the Three Refuges and to the religious master(s). It continues with setting the Sumtsek within a cosmological and geographical framework. A large section is then dedicated to the patrilineal genealogy of its patron, Tsültrim Ö, and the Buddhist deeds performed by some of his ancestors. It is followed by a brief account of his life and qualities leading to the foundation of the Sumtsek. The temple is then praised for its qualities, and the signification of its architectural and iconographic features are explained in a play of numbers. The inscription ends with an aspirational prayer, after which follow the colophons of the author, the teacher Tséden Shérap (*rtse ldan shes rab*), and the scribe, the monk Ngödrup Shérap (*dngos grub shes rab*); their names not recorded in any other inscription. There, the inscription is called the *Garland of Butter Lamps* and described as a 'commentary on the way the Dro (*'bro*) monk and spiritual teacher Tsültrim Ö founded this great chief-temple for the benefit of his three paternal uncles.'

The *Garland of Butter Lamps* can be considered the foundation inscription of the Sumtsek, as it is the only one to discuss its construction and qualities at length. Its date cannot be established with certainty, but it was most likely composed during the lifetime of Tsültrim Ö, presumably soon after the completion of the temple.

Genealogy of Tsültrim Ö

The patrilineal genealogy of Tsültrim Ö is illuminated by the hitherto unpublished parts of the *Garland of Butter Lamps* (v. 29–95). The genealogical section opens with a comparison of illustrious ancestors of Tsültrim Ö, the two supreme Dro (*'bro*) siblings(?), with the sun and moon, two gendered stars in Tibetan Buddhism (v. 31–34). It continues recounting the great deeds of the good tiger(s) (*stag bzang*) of the Dro of the bird horns(?) from Purang (v. 35–40), which previous studies have taken to be a single man named Takzang (*stag bzang*).[593] However, a comparison with a foundation inscription in Kanji[594] makes it possible to reconstruct that the good tigers are actually two close relatives who acted respectively as the brother-in-law

or maternal uncle (*zhang drung*) of the ruler[595] and as the ruler's wife or mother (*jo cung/jo bo chung sa* in Kanji).[596] Eventually, the migration of a Dro clansman to Nyarma, his appointment as a councillor of *podrang* Wangdé (*pho brang dbang lde*), and his military and administrative duties as far as Staktse and Kanji, in Purik, are narrated (v. 41–46). Overall, this part of the genealogical section of the *Garland of Butter Lamps* appears to be concerned exclusively with a brother and a sister, designated successively as the two supreme Dro siblings(?) and the good tigers of the Dro of the bird horns(?), among whom the brother would have become a councillor of the *podrang* Wangdé. The reliability of this passage and its exact relation to the patrilineage of Tsültrim Ö is unclear due to the break that follows after the praise of the Dro councillor and to the exceptional composition of the last verses in seven syllables instead of nine.

The genealogical section of the *Garland of Butter Lamps* continues with two otherwise unknown spiritual teachers of Sumda—a father and his eldest son—whose filiation with the two supreme Dro siblings(?) is unclear. The father, whose name begins with Jangchup (*byang chub*), married a noblewoman from whom he begot three sons (v. 47–48). The eldest was Zhiden Ö (*zhi ldan 'od*). Very prosperous, he would have established religious foundations in Sumda (v. 49–56). Previous studies have erroneously proposed to identify him with Kalden Shérap (*skal ldan shes rab*), the patron of the Dukhang, on account of the latter's birthplace and munificence.[597]

Then, Zhiden Ö's nephew (v. 57–84) is praised in the inscription as the blazing lamp of the teaching and the best of all living beings, a great scholar well-versed in the Three Collections (*tripiṭaka*) and a master of the four classes of tantras holding the vajra (v. 64–65). His name, however, is nowhere to be found, presumably because it was sufficiently famous by the time of the inscription that it was thought there was no need to mention it. Previous studies have generally mistaken this unnamed spiritual teacher for Tsültrim Ö himself, as they considered the first part of the *Garland of Butter Lamps* as a separate inscription necessarily ending with him.[598] However, the genealogical section continues after the unnamed spiritual teacher with his nephew, the great spiritual teacher Tsültrim Ö (v. 85). The former, thus, must have been one of the three paternal uncles to whom Tsültrim Ö dedicated the foundation of the Sumtsek (v. 108).[599] A comparison with the inscriptions of the Dukhang, founded by Kalden Shérap, sheds light on his identity. The education cited above (v. 64–65) recalls the religious education received by Kalden Shérap. His alleged attainment of the pure realm of Akṣobhya for the benefit of living beings (v. 70) also seems in line with the aspirational prayer made by Kalden Shérap himself in a Dukhang inscription.[600] What is more, another Dukhang inscription mentions that Kalden Shérap was from Sumda,[601] the same place where the *Garland of Butter Lamps* situates Zhiden Ö and his father.

This identification is confirmed by a comparison of the Buddhist sponsorship attributed to the unnamed paternal uncle of Tsültrim Ö in the *Garland of Butter Lamps* (v. 71–80) with that attributed to Kalden Shérap in the inscriptions of the Dukhang.[602] In both one finds the foundation of an especially sublime temple for the benefit of (a) paternal uncle(s), the command of numerous recitations of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, and the establishment of a meditation centre. In both the present inscription (v. 72–74) and the inscription no 5 of the Dukhang[603] the commissions of an ensemble of Akṣobhya, the 1,000 Buddhas of the good age, and 108 images are enumerated, in the same order. These images must correspond to the murals of

the Dukhang, with the pure realm of Akṣobhya and the 1,000 Buddhas of the good age recognizable on the walls adjacent to the main niche.

Implications for Dating Alchi

In terms of dating the Alchi group of monuments the *Garland of Butter Lamps* confirms that the Alchi Dukhang was built about a generation before the Sumtsek by Tsültrim Ö's uncle.[604] Just as important is the mention of *podrang* Wangdé (*pho brang dbang lde*) as the king under whom the male Dro sibling served as a councillor after he migrated to Nyarma (v. 42–44).[605] This king is not only known from the *Garland of Butter Lamps* but also from the foundation inscription of a temple in Mangyu.[606] There, he is mentioned in the section of royal genealogy that precedes the genealogy of the patron(s) of the temple. In contrast with Tsültrim Ö, the patron(s) of the Mangyu temple belonged to the Mer (*smer*) clan, which also appears to have originated from west Tibet. An in-depth comparison of the two inscriptions, however, suggests that the temples in Alchi and Mangyu, as well as the related monuments in Sumda Chen and Sumda Chung, were founded in the same political context, some decades apart at most, confirming previous art historical assessments. Counting an average duration of twenty years per generation, the temporal gap between the reign of the *podrang* Wangdé and the Alchi Dukhang is, thus, at least forty years, and the Sumtsek followed it a generation later.

The *podrang* Wangdé is the only person mentioned in the inscriptions of the Alchi group of monuments that may be identified with a historical figure known from other sources: namely Wangdé (*dbang lde*), the king of Guge (late-eleventh century). According to the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari* (*mnga' ris rgyal rabs*), which contains the most detailed genealogy of the kings of Guge, Tri Tashi Bardétsen (*khri bkra shis 'bar lde btsan*), better known as Wangdé, was the youngest of the four sons of Tsédé (*rtse lde*; r. *c.* 1057/1060–1080/1088).[607] He descended on his paternal side from the scion of the central Tibetan Pugyel (*spu rgyal*) dynasty Kyidé Nyimagön (*skyid lde nyi ma mgon*), who migrated to the Upper Dominion (*mnga' ris stod*) at the beginning of the tenth century.[608] Wangdé was enthroned at age thirteen between 1083 and 1092[609] and ruled over Guge from Dungkar. Maryül—including the monastery of Nyarma—may have been part of his dominions, too, since his father Tsédé would have reconquered a large extent of land down to Baltistan sometime after his own father lost it in a catastrophic campaign to the west.[610] Wangdé, however, died young and before his father Tsédé, and after his reign ensued a period of great internal and external turmoil in Guge, which the paucity of the sources reflects.[611]

However, the identification of *podrang* Wangdé with Wangdé, the king of Guge, is not without problems. Firstly, according to the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari*, neither the Guge king Wangdé nor his father Tsédé appears to have been born from a queen of the Dro clan, which contrasts with the account of the *Garland of Butter Lamps* that the good tigers acted respectively as the true brother-in-law (/maternal uncle) of the ruler and as the latter's heir-producing wife (/mother).[612] Secondly, in none of the literary sources available so far the Guge king Wangdé bears the title *podrang (pho brang*; lit. 'of the palace').[613] This title has been interpreted in different ways,[614] but it seems to have been applied to male members of the royal family who did not hold full control over secular affairs, either because they were too young or they turned towards religion. As such, it might have designated the Guge king Wangdé, whose ephemeral reign extended through his teenage years. Thirdly, none of the successors of *podrang* Wangdé named in Mangyu present a straightforward correspondence with the successors of the Guge king Wangdé as recorded in the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari*. This, however, is not surprising, as the few decades following the reign of Wangdé constituted a period of great turmoil. Even if the kings of Guge had managed to maintain their sway over Maryül until the reign of Wangdé, this dominion would have fallen in the hands of others soon after his passing.

Even if we accept the identification of the ancestral *podrang* Wangdé with the king of Guge bearing the same name, the Alchi Dukhang could only date to about 1140 at the earliest, and the Sumtsek would be another generation after that. Thus, the late-eleventh-century dating proposed recently by van Ham and Heller[615] in reference to *podrang* Wangdé as the king of Guge cannot be reconciled with the genealogies outlined in the foundation inscriptions of the Dukhang at Mangyu and the Alchi Sumtsek. In fact, it is based on a conflation of the genealogy of Tsültrim Ö that obliterates at least three generations. To sum up, the *Garland of Butter Lamps*, a full translation of which is offered below, provides a considerable body of new information about Tsültrim Ö and the Sumtsek.

Translation

Oṃ May it be auspicious!

1 From the very essence of the sky, being non-conceptual and free
of elaboration, the southern clouds of impartial compassion condense, whence the elixir of immortality rains down. Homage to the Buddha who thus generates the harvest of the virtues of living beings!

5 From over the mountain of liberation, being the completely pure expanse
of reality, the sun of the eight paths of accomplishment of the nobles rises, whence the light rays of the teacher's speech spread in the ten directions. Homage to the sacred religion that clears the ignorance of living beings!

9 The tree-trunk of the thought of awakening is grown by compassion,
whence the branches, leaves, fruits, and flowers of the qualities cleanse the longing of living beings. Homage to the monastic community that grants the ranks of god and human, the path of the nobles, and its fruits!

13 In the terrifying wilderness of cyclical existence, the way that frees
from being blind by ignorance used to be lost. Homage to the religious master(s) who teach(es) the path of liberation that opens the eyes to those who have been wandering perpetually and for a time without beginning!

17 In the southern Rose-Apple Continent (*jambudvīpa*), best of continents,
pervaded by the light of *vaiḍūrya* gems, shaped like a chariot of 6,500 *yojana*, where abound great sites famous for possessing [spiritual] qualities, [such as]

Vajrāsana (Dorjéden, *rdo rje gdan*) where the Victor found supreme awakening, and Rājagṛha (Gyelpökhap, *rgyal po'i khab*), source of the immaculate elixir,

23 in the snowy country to the north of the Rose-Apple Continent, a region of high mountains and pure earth, Pugyel (*spu rgyal*) Tibet,[616] filled with accomplished masters (*siddha*) endowed with the thought of awakening, in the upper dominion (Ngari tö, *mnga' ris stod*),[617] source of numerous learned and righteous [monks],

27 in Ladakh of Lower Maryül,[618] here in Alchi, this large chief-temple (*gtsug lag khang*)[619] of piled jewels[620] was commissioned with the spiritual teacher Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*) as its patron.

30 The branch of(?) the great and aristocratic Dro (*'bro*) clan [to which he belongs is as follows]:

31 [As,] in the middle of the azure sky, the sun and moon are resplendent; on narrow earth, the two supreme Dro (*'bro*) were siblings(?). Being aware of the significance of emptiness, they did not need to undertake any studies. The Dro clan being exalted, they did not need to present(?) their credentials.[621]

35 Special among the Dro (*'bro*) of the bird horns(?)[622] of Purang, navel of the earth and best of regions,[623] were these good tigers. The man acted as the true brother-in-law/maternal uncle (*zhang drung*) [of the ruler] (?),[595] and the woman as the [latter's] heir-producing wife/mother.[596]

38 They(?) submitted their outer enemies and protected their inner child-like subjects. They pleased the lord(s) and honoured the supreme religious master(s) [by placing the latter] above their heads. They achieved things[624] such as establishing (a) temple(s), (a) religious community(ies), and so forth.[625]

41 At that time(?), as if emerging from the lake or descending from the glacier,[626] [the man?] settled at Nyarma of Upper Maryül[627] and he acted as the councillor of the *podrang* Wangdé (*pho brang dbang lde*). He ... the fort of Staktse[628] and he divided Kanji[629] into upper, middle, and lower parts.[630]

47 The spiritual teacher of Sumda,[631] Byang chub ..., married a noblewoman, and three sons were born to them.

49 The eldest son was the spiritual teacher Zhiden Ö (*zhi ldan 'od*). Because of his impartial compassion, he came for the benefit of living beings to Sumda, [comparable to] the supreme(?) place, the joyful Akaniṣṭha (Ogmin, *'og min*) heaven. Endowed with learning and righteousness, the power of his blessings was great.

53 The wealth god Vaiśravaṇa (Namtösé, *rnam thos sras*) conferred riches [upon him]. He was very wealthy and dispensed(?) food and goods. The best friend of all the miserable and poor, [he took] the place of father and mother [to them]. As for the great works of the Body [that he performed],[632] he commissioned the making of 100,000 [images](?) as well as (a) temple(s)(?).[633]

57 As for his nephew, the great spiritual teacher,[634] he was the blazing lamp of the teaching and the best of all living beings.

59 He was kind-hearted towards the humble and respected his religious master(s) [by placing the latter] above his head. He engaged in the threefold wisdom[635] and cut off the outer and inner misconceptions. He set many disciples onto the path of liberation. When the teaching of the protector of living beings, the Lion of the Śakyas, was on the verge of declining, he planted the victory banner of the religion.

64 He was a great scholar well-versed in the three collections (*tripiṭaka*) and a master of the four classes of tantras[636] holding the vajra.[637]

66 Thanks to the essence of the oral instructions [that he received], his faculty of wisdom developed. He was free from the limits of conceptual elaboration [such as] arising and cessation, eternalism and nihilism. He remained in an inexpressible, inconceivable, and indescribable innate state. In just one life, he obtained the supreme accomplishment. He went to the pure realm of Akṣobhya for the benefit of living beings.

71 For the sake of his paternal uncles, he founded an especially sublime temple. He commissioned Ajitanātha [Maitreya][638] and an ensemble of Akṣobhya;[639] the pleasure grove(?) where reside the thousand [Buddhas] of the good age;[640] and 108 [images] especially sublime [with regards to] their dimensions.[641]

75 [Also,] he established [an endowment of] lands [with a capacity of] 100 *khal* of barley [per year], as well as a religious community(?).[642]

76 He made [a manuscript of] the 20,000 verses (*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprājñapāramitā*) and he had it recited[643] twice 100 times. He had the 100,000 verses (*Śatasāhasrikāprājñapāramitā*) recited twice 100 times; and the 8,000 verses (*Aṣṭasāhasrikāprājñapāramitā*) recited more than 1,000 times.

79 Having supported translators and *paṇḍita*, he turned the wheel of the Dharma. He repeatedly attended meditation centres(?), and later established [one?] completely(?).

81 His great works [with regards to] ... the religion(?) are innumerable and(?) countless. To summarize, whatever riches he possessed he abandoned to the Dharma. Without any regards to ..., he acted in order to guide others.

85 His nephew, the great spiritual teacher Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*), having accumulated extensive [merits] in his previous lives, was [born] of high extraction, [with] a good body and a wonderful... Because of his solid(?) faith, he has served the sacred religious masters. Thanks to his karmic fortune, he has received profound teachings. [He has acted as] the protector [who] keeps(?) ... the religious tradition.

91 Intelligent and compassionate, his understanding of how to benefit living beings is great. His mindfulness of past and future is extensive and his aspiration is high. Though an expert in accumulating(?) riches, his willingness to dispense food and wealth is great.

94 To look at the conduct of his body, it is as if unruly, [but] to examine and investigate [further], the nature of his mind is fully disciplined.

96 In order to attain a pure realm, he commissioned an ensemble of Akṣobhya.[644] Because of(?) his faith ... he helped ... Having understood that [one's] possessions are wavering, without essence, he gave away a lot of food and cattle without regret. Thus, he founded [this] especially sublime large(?) chief-temple.

101 Its building technique is excellent and its roofs and walls are solid. Its wood is good and its carpentry especially beautiful. Its paintings(?), whose pigments are extracted from precious(?) azurite and vermillion, as well as gold, are good, and how wondrous is its value!

105 Having purified [this] three-storeyed temple [from] the conceptual thoughts [of] the three realms [of existence],[645] cleansed the three pure realms[646] [of] the obscurations of the three doors,[647] and meditated [on] the three niches(?) [as being] the three doors of liberation,[648] [Tsültrim Ö] dedicated the three kinds of virtues(?)[649] to his three paternal uncles.

109 The five-deity [assembly of] Amoghapāśa [Avalokiteśvara][650] is the sign of the fivefold wisdom.[651] Maitreya and Mañjuśrī[652] are the signs of compassion and emptiness. The eight goddesses[653] [are of] the nature [of](?) the eight liberations.[654]

112 The eight walls of the lower [storey][655] are considered equal to the eight [worldly] concerns.[656] The four walls of the middle [storey][657] purify the four types of meditative absorption.[658] The four walls of the upper [storey][659] are meditated as the four immeasurables.[660]

115 The twelve great corners[661] are the twelve factors of the path of provisions.[662] The twelve small corners[663] are the six perfections[664] and the six objects to be renounced. The twelve great pillars(?)[665] are understood as the twelve links of dependent origination.[666] The ten short pillars[667] are the signs of the ten powers of the sage.[668] The ten mandalas[669] represent the ten stages of the nobles.[670] The two upper floors[671] are the two [provisions of] method and wisdom.

121 Because of the merits [arisen out of] the commission of this chief-temple, may myself and all the sentient beings, [as numerous] as the space [is vast], swiftly obtain complete awakening, and each and everyone [of us] work immeasurably for the benefits of living beings.

This so-called *Garland of Butter Lamps*, being a commentary on the way the Dro monk and spiritual teacher Tsültrim Ö founded this chief-temple for the benefits of his three paternal uncles, has been composed by the teacher Tséden Shérap (*rtse ldan shes rab*).

— It is [now] complete. —

125 Thanks to whatever merits have arisen out of the writing [of this text] by the monk of Śākyamuni Ngödrup Shérap (*dngos grub shes rab*), may myself and all sentient beings obtain the great unsurpassable awakening!

— Oṃ auspiciousness! —

Observations on the Technology of the Wall Paintings

by Karl Ludwig Dasser[672]



892 The depiction of Siṃhanāda Lokeśvara, a form of Avalokiteśvara with characteristics of Śiva, still provides clues of the original quality of these paintings through its fine lines and the raised pastiglia elements, such as the flames of the halo and the attributes.
Diameter of the halo c. 49 cm.

893 Vignette of the Dukhang with Akṣobhya's vehicle the elephant.[673]

In the 'Save Alchi' project, which was supported by the monks of Likir Monastery, the Archaeological Survey of India and the Fachhochschule Köln (Cologne), it was possible in the summer of 1991 to inspect for the first time the technology of the wall paintings in the Sumtsek, which have been dated to the period around 1200, and to assess both the extent of the damage and its causes. The object was to draw up a conservation concept aimed at preserving these valuable wall paintings. The inspections were carried out with the aid of small scaffolding, and using special lamps, binocular magnifiers and microscope. The results are available in written and photographic records and in drawings.

The three-storeyed Sumtsek temple is built on a foundation of boulder stones from the Indus and is a wooden beam construction with clay brick walls and a loam plaster. The examination of the wall paintings in the Sumtsek concentrated mainly on the middle storey and, there, specifically on the representation of Akṣobhya in the left-hand mandala on the right wall (708). Even though the technical structure noted here applies in principle to the other murals as well, there are differences, chiefly in the artistic execution. Several painters, or even different schools, have been at work here. The paintings on the wooden panels of the beam ceilings have not yet been examined in detail to establish their structure.

Support and Render

The clay brick walls were first carefully prepared before paint was applied. A rough coating of loam mixed with grass, straw, some small stones and pieces of willow rod, to obtain a better bond and resistance to cracking, was then given a fine layer of clay a mere one millimetre thick before being smoothed with flat stones, a process still in use today (897). The scientific investigation revealed a binder mixture of proteins (glue) and carbohydrates (starch) on the surface of this layer of loam, which it also penetrated. This is evidently a size designed to lower the absorbency of the clay for the application of gypsum priming to follow. Hence, the layer of loam itself was worked without the addition of binders. The thin white priming layer on top, about 0.5 mm thick, consisting mainly of calcium sulphate (gypsum) with additions of silicate fillers (alumina), served as ground for the paintings and was normally applied in two layers. The binder is again glue and starch.[674]

Preparatory Techniques

This white ground was now subdivided into various panels for painting. The dimensions were usually marked in reddish ochre with a brush or incised with a pointed instrument (e.g., nail,

horn). The vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines, particularly those for the outlines of the large mandalas, were drawn with rod and brush, while the circles were in most cases incised using compasses or a string and sharp implement (895). Next, the figures and ornaments were traced in yellowish or reddish ochre based on models with dimensions defined by century-old traditions.[675] At defective areas where the paint has been lost, the underdrawing can be observed quite frequently. Owing to the natural weathering of the layers of paint, this underdrawing can still be seen very well in the courtyard of the Dukhang, where the paintings are roughly contemporaneous with those in the Sumtsek (894).

No traces of the original outlines on the fine layer of loam, such as we find described in old Indian text sources, have been discovered as yet in the Sumtsek.[676] A sample of the layers of paint from the Palden Drepung Chörten however, shows a coat of paint in red ochre on this layer of loam even before the white priming was applied. This might be an indication of the technique described in the sources.



894 Underdrawing of a Bodhisattva figure in reddish ochre. Main Temple, courtyard, entry wall, northern section.

Pastiglia Applications

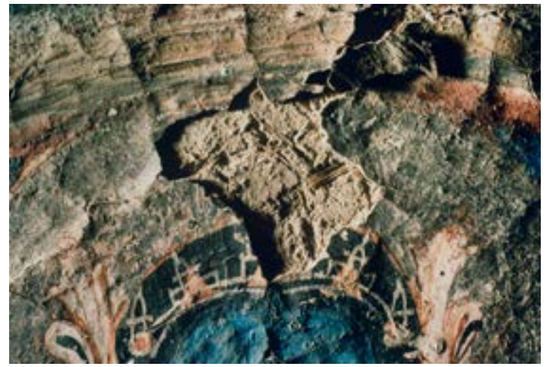
One remarkable feature in the Sumtsek is the frequent use of the pastiglia technique, found also in Ancient Egyptian sarcophagi, and used here to model framing and decorative elements such as crowns, jewellery and details like eyes or fingernails (892).[677] Like the priming, the white compound consists of gypsum mixed with clay as filler, the binder of glue with added starch, and was applied in several layers with brush or painting horn, as is clearly indicated by cross-sections of samples.[678] This was followed by the painting proper, though, more frequently, the coatings contained metal (gold or tin powder; figures 892 & 896).

Painting Technique

Painting was in well-defined stages. The first step was the initial painting for flesh colours, garments and backgrounds in the primary colours. Next came the shaping of the three-dimensional forms with areas of light and shade, partly with glazing colour, then the drawing details, e.g., eyes, mouth, nose or jewellery and ornaments in the garments. The final stage involved the strong contours in dark, often black shades. Even though this basic scheme was defined by long tradition, considerable differences can be noted in both the technical and the artistic execution.







895 Circular incisions in the circle of fire in the mandala with the representation of Akṣobhya. Sumtsek, middle storey north wall, detail of the left-hand mandala.

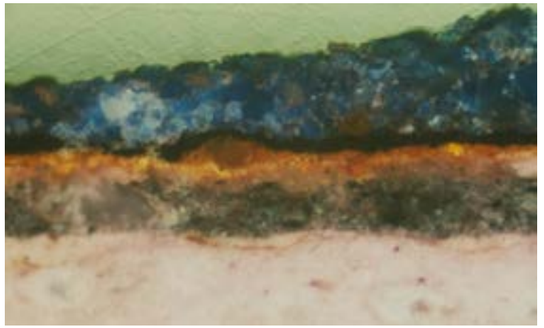
896 Crown of the Green Tārā in pastiglia technique, photo in raking light. Sumtsek, middle storey, north wall.

897 Left: Defective area in the halo of Akṣobhya. Pieces of straw and wood in the rough-cast loam layer. Photo in raking light (detail of figure 708).

This can be seen, for example, in the overall sequence of the processes in the Akṣobhya of the left-hand mandala on the right-hand side-wall on the first upper floor of the Sumtsek (708):

- Fine, smoothed layer of clay on the rough first plaster coating
- Application of an initial primer of animal glue and starch
- White gypsum priming layer
- Incision of the circle, and markings by brush
- Underdrawing in reddish ochre
- Frame (vajra) in pastiglia technique
- Layout of circle (underpainting)
- Red underpainting of background
- Initial colouring of the blue body
- Initial colouring of the green garment
- Initial colouring of the grey garment with pattern
- Application of white for the elephants and the veil
- Modelling of the body with dark and light blue shades
- Execution of final drawing in brown and black, on dark colours with white
- Reddish lacquer coating in background on the cinnabar underpainting





898 Cross-section of a paint sample from the red background panel of Akṣobhya. Sumtsek, middle storey, north wall.
Structure: clay layer, white priming, cinnabar red.
Magnification 200-fold.

899 Cross-section of a paint sample from the border area separating the circle from the blue background in the image of Akṣobhya.
Structure: white priming, red traces of the underdrawing, grey (white mixed with lampblack), a fine whitish layer, yellow orpiment, orange-red lacquer-like layer, dark-brown lacquer-like layer (outer contour of the circle), azurite with blue to greenish - blue pigment crystals.
Magnification 200-fold.

- Tin powder coating in the halo
- Coating of gold in the framing vajras on the previously applied reddish glaze
- Principal outlines in black
- Execution of the final details, e.g., filigree-like jewellery, emphasizing the dark shadows and bright areas.

Pigments

With the permission of the monks of Likir and the Archaeological Survey of India, it was possible to obtain pieces of debris, i.e., fallen flakes of paint lying on the ground below the paintings, and loose particles from damaged areas, and have these examined in the natural-science lab of the Fachhochschule Köln (Cologne), by the chemist in charge, Prof. Dr Elisabeth Jägers. The materials employed were identified using microscopic, microchemical and physical-chemical methods (infrared spectroscopy). The layers of paint are shown in cross-sections of samples and in microphotographs of these sections made in normal incident light and with UV fluorescence. To obtain evidence of the binders, various histochemical staining methods were used.[679]

In order to record the wide colour spectrum in the Sumtsek's painting work, and in order, above all, to examine in more detail the question of under-painting and final glazing as well as the use of lacquers, selective samples need to be obtained. This would be a great help in view of the need to secure and preserve these paintings.

Pigments Identified So Far

White:	gypsum (calcium sulphate)
Red:	red ochre
	iron oxide red
	cinnabar (naturally occurring red mercuric sulphide, 898)
	red lake (not further defined)
Yellow:	yellow ochre
	orpiment (yellow, naturally occurring arsenic sulphide)
Blue:	azurite (basic copper carbonate that occurs as a natural mineral, 899)





900 Detail of the highly-endangered Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala on the west wall of the top storey, Sumtsek (770). The 1984 photo shows the crack filled with loam from an earlier measure.

901 1990 photograph of the same area as in figure 900. The crack has widened dangerously, and all the loose loam filling has fallen out.

	indigo (proved in the Palden Drepung Chörten, and certainly used in the Sumtsek as well;
	a dark blue dye obtained from the indigo plant)
Black:	lampblack
	charcoal (proved in the Palden Drepung Chörten)

Metal Applications

Gold:	gold powder and binder applied by brush
Tin:	tin powder (pulverized metal foil with big flakes) and binder, applied by brush

Binder

The binder of the highly water-sensitive white priming and the pastiglia substance consists of protein (glue) and carbohydrates (starch). The pigments are bound in the mainly protein-containing binder with additions of carbohydrates in varying quantity ratios. The carbohydrates can be identified in places as starch, and in other places as the gum or sap of plants.[680] Hide glues are possible as protein-containing binders. The starch comes from cereal grains or plant roots.[681]

Damage and Causes of Damage

Knowledge of the materials, their composition and the nature of their use are prerequisites for an assessment of the damage that has occurred and which we have recorded and defined in catalogue form. The most frequent damage takes the form of large and small cracks, blisters and deformations in the plaster, large areas of loose plaster, endangered layers of paint, losses of painting layers and impairment of the painting from contamination, mechanical damage and splashes of lime. Among the main causes of damage are static changes in the structure, water, neglect, as well as inexpert handling, above all in the local lime-washing work on the temples. The wooden vestibule in the Sumtsek has inclined forward in the course of time and has been given several supports and it is essential that the statics of the building

be checked. A very serious danger is the inward bulge of the west wall on the top storey with its mandala dated to *c.* 1220, which is completely intact apart from a few splashes of lime. A collapse of this wall, which may be expected at any time, would also mean considerable damage to, if not a total loss of, the adjacent wall paintings with the recently discovered inscription so important for the dating of the temple.

Our present knowledge indicates that, in this area, the wooden structure was erected first, followed by the brick lining and the plaster work. At the access hatchway, the wall is only 18 cm thick. Since the clay brick walls presumably contain no wood reinforcing elements or stiffening with reeds, this being our initial assumption, the serious bulging of the west wall owing to the effect of vibrations or the wind will in due course reach a break point, and the wall will suddenly collapse. The fact that dangerous movements are taking place is shown by the documentary photos we have taken. The vertical crack which was still filled with loam in 1984—a safety measure performed at an earlier date—had widened dangerously by 1990, and all of the loose loam plugging has fallen out (900 & 901). There is an urgent need for a thorough examination and consolidation of this area.

Conservation Concept

An examination of the prevalent techniques as well as the signs of damage was carried out in the other temples and stupas of the Sacred Enclave, and formed the basis for the formulation of a conservation concept. This required a number of preliminary experiments. We tested the local materials, which have been used for centuries and whose behaviour in structures is already known, in a number of experiments on the spot and in the laboratory of the Fachhochschule Köln. Since the paintings in the Palden Drepung Chörten, as is proved by inscriptions, derive from the same period as those in the Sumtsek and also display comparable signs of damage, conservation work was started here in the summer of 1993.

The unique wall paintings have survived in such quantities that only long-term conservation concepts can be regarded as feasible and capable of implementation. In fact, only a well-considered procedure soundly backed in every respect can promise success. It would be completely wrong to pick out specific objects and for the time being to exclude others on the grounds that they are considered less important. In any measures to be planned, the temple complex at Alchi must always be viewed as a work of art in its entirety.

If the temple complex is to be preserved in the long term, continuous care and maintenance are required. It is crucial that the roofs be examined to ensure that they are watertight, and that checks be made of the drainage pipes and other possible damage that may have occurred owing to the ageing process down the years. This includes the annual lime-washing of the façades to protect the layers of loam plaster. This will reduce penetration by moisture, since water is one of the major enemies of both loam structures and wall paintings. On the other hand, it must be noted that inexpert lime-washing can do more harm than good. For example, the previously intact wall paintings in the Palden Drepung Chörten are completely bespattered with lime from lime-washing work with rags in the inner stupa. Removing these splashes of lime is extremely difficult and time-consuming. Steps must be taken to prevent such clumsy lime-washing work. The paintings must be covered first with a sheet or cloth, and the lime-washing itself done with brushes.

The survival of this world-class monument, whatever institutions participate in its preservation, will depend on its ongoing care and maintenance by its owners, the monks of Likir Monastery.

Notes Sumtsek

Preface

278 Editorial changes include: plural removed from Sanskrit words, hyphens and capitals removed from Tibetan transcriptions, spelling and capitalization of Tibetan and Sanskrit terms, the former following The Tibetan & Himalayan Library system of phonetic transliteration (http://www.thlib.org). CL

Introduction

279 Tucci (1951), p. 180.

280 Here I replaced 'together with a tomb for an unknown Rinpoche' with 'together with a tomb for Drigungpa', as the new reading of the Palden Drepung Chörten inscription does make it clear who the unknown Rinpoche is (see The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff.). CL

281 Dedicatory inscription in the Palden Drepung Chörten or Great Stūpa, see Goepper (1993), p. 114.

282 Tucci & Ghersi (1934), p. 326 and fig. 239; also Mortari Vergara and Béguin (ed.) (1987), p. 277 and fig. 114; Li Gotami Govinda (1979) 2, p. 151.

283 ASI Annual Report 1912–13, Calcutta 1916, pl. XXXIV b and XXXIX a; see also Khosla (1979), p. 57.

284 In the original text Goepper had the side figures mixed up and proposed Prajñāpāramitā as a possible identification for the sculpture now identified as Vajrasattva, which can be excluded. It is unclear why he thought that one of the images represents Maitreya, but these figures have changed location over time and his notes may not have reflected the situation as it is preserved in the documentation. See also the discussion of the veranda in the development chapter (page 355 ff.). CL

285 See the drawing with comparisons in Khosla (1979), p. 73, drawing 14.

286 Sahni (1917), pl. XXVII, d and e.

287 Kak (1971), pl. LXIV.

288 Czuma (1989), p. 58, fig. 1–2; p. 60, fig. 5–6. Cf. also the synopsis in Khosla (1979), p. 73, fig. 14.

289 For instance in Parihasapura; Sahni (1918), pl. XXXVII.

290 The identification of the Bodhisattva has been added to this caption. CL

291 They differ from the usual symbols for the Tathagata. Similar decorations appear on columns in the early Senge Sgang [Senggé Lhakhang] of Lamayuru; Khosla (1979), pl. 52.
Goepper consistently uses Tathagata for the five esoteric Buddhas, the term has thus been retained for his texts. CL

292 Linrothe (1994), p. 93, figs. 4 and 4a.

Here I replaced Goepper's 'stupa-like building' with 'Four Image Chörten'. CL

293 Kak (1971), p. 113.

294 Kak op. cit.

295 Brown (1976), p. 158, 161; von Le Coq (1925), p. 31–32 and figs. 231 ff.

296 See Denwood's translations in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), 2, p. 144 (inscription no. 1) and p. 147 (inscriptions nos. 5 and 6).

297 Goepper (1993), figs. 3 and 7.

298 Detail in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), 1, fig. 23.
Goepper (1999) is a subsequent study of these depictions. CL

299 Vitali (1990), p. 75, 78.

300 Sādhana no. 301 in the *Sādhanamālā*, 2, p. 585; cf. also Bhattacharyya (1969), p. 345.
Another sādhana related to this form of Mahākāla is quoted with the description of Mahākāla in the Dukhang (page 53). CL

301 See Huntington & Huntington (1990), no. 16 and fig. 5, p. 113.

302 Peaceful (*śāntika*) with round altar; augmenting (*pauṣṭika*) with square altar; subjugating (*vaśīkaraṇa*) with flower-like altar; and *abhicāruka* with triangular altar. For the function of these four forms in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism cf. Goepper (1995a), p. 183–208.

303 For instance in panel no. 11 of the ceilings on the ground floor (788).

304 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 40; Pal (1982), p. 45, calls the greyish goddess Rematī and identifies the blue figure as 'queen … obviously a hierophant'. Genoud (1981), p. 55, is uncertain whether to call her 'une divinité protectrice' or 'un personnage royal'.

305 The identification for the two goddesses as proposed by Goepper is mistaken, but it is unfortunately impossible to adapt the text to parallel my identification of the same deities in the Dukhang as Goepper's entire argument in this section is built on these identifications. In my reading the fierce goddess actually represents a form of Rematī, which herself is a form of Śrīdevī, while the lady in the peacock cape should remain unidentified—I thus refer to her as the Peacock Cape Lady—until a local name is found. She eventually becomes interpreted as Dorjé Chenmo, another form of Śrīdevī, but this identification should not be employed here. For the full argument see page 53 ff. CL

306 Tucci (1949), 1, p. 218–219.

307 Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), p. 270. She may also have an umbrella or a panoply of peacock feathers; ibd., p. 25, 26, 32, 33. The identification with Mahāmāyūrī offered by Tsering Dorje, Kyelong, can hardly be substantiated.

308 Tucci (1949), 1, p. 218–219.

309 Pal & Fournier (1982), pl. D 25.

310 Chakrabarti (1980), p. 87.

311 Chandra (1991), 1, p. 113–114, nos. 154–158.

312 Chandra (1991), 1, p. 327, no. 872.

313 An excellent example of this motif, but without roundels, appears on panel no. 18 of the ceilings in the ground floor of the Sumtsek and in a different combination in no. 14, see p. 241–243.

314 In this caption and another one I replaced Goepper's '*kalaviṅka*' with '*kinnara*', the term he refers to the same creatures in the main text. CL

315 Mounted bowmen executing the 'Parthian Shot' from their galloping horses are represented in several panels of the ceilings in the Sumtsek, e.g., nos. 4, 6, 11 etc.

316 For the different types of *vīṇā* see Sadie (1983), 3, p. 728–735; for early Indian musical instruments in general see Marcel-Dubois (1941).

317 The identification of this Bodhisattva added to the caption is based on his pairing with Siṃhanāda Lokeśvara on the opposite side and the hand gesture, which is taken as a variant of the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*). The begging bowl (*pātra*) underneath the book occasionally occurs in western Himalayan bronzes of this Bodhisattva; see, for example, a four-armed bronze published in Pal (1975), no. 55 and Reedy (1997), no. K59, or three west Tibetan examples, two in von Schroeder (2001), pls, 51A and 51C, and one I photographed in the Chicago Art Institute (I could not locate the bronze in the online collection catalogue; accessed August 13, 2020). Thus, this seems to be a peculiar western Himalayan form of the Bodhisattva the background of which would be interesting to explore. CL

318 Taking on many of the iconographic characteristics of the Hindu god Śiva, this image was identified by Goepper as such. However, the red lotus held in the right hand besides the staff and the skull-cup (*kapāla*) identify the Bodhisattva as Avalokiteśvara, many forms of which take on attributes of Śiva. That the Shaivite attributes are so prominent, is again a western Himalayan feature. CL

319 Inscription no. 6 in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 48, and Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 135–137 and 147.

320 Characteristics of orthography, not using, for example, the reversed 'i', point to a slightly later date.

321 No. 3 in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 145–146.

322 This last sentence has been added to point out the existence of the secondary sculptures. For a detailed account of the surrounding sculptures see Luczanits (2004), p. 137–148. The foundation inscription clarified that the five deities together form an assembly of Amoghapāśa (see page 788 and Amoghapāśa Mandalas, page 774 ff.). CL

323 As stated before, the orientation of the buildings in Alchi does not correspond exactly to the heavenly directions.

324 During a stay in Alchi during summer 1983, the author had the chance to study these themes in detail together with the late J. van Lohuizen De Leeuw. She has left notes which she intended to develop into an article on this dhoti, but was unable to finish it before passing away. Much of the information given here is based on these notes.

325 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 51.

326 Stein (1979) 2, p. 451–452.

327 For instance the so-called 'royal drinking scene' in the Dukhang (see figure 68).

328 Stein (1979) 1, p. 283; 2, p. 451–452.

329 Among them, scene no. 1 at the upper left side and difficult to photograph.

330 Cf. Sahai (1975), p. 76.

331 For instance Pal (1975), nos. 9 and 10.

332 Ibid., no. 84; Pal (ed.) (1989), p. 81, fig. 5.

333 In this case one could think of the Śiva-Jyeṣṭheśvara temple formerly situated on the Gopādri Hill (today: Takht-i Sulaimān) south of Srinagar; Stein (1979) 2, p. 453. Cf. also the *liṅgam* of Baramula (Varāhamūla), Kak (repr. 1971), p. 154 and pl. LIX.

334 Pjotrowskij (ed.) (1983), p. 235, cat. no. 59.

335 De Mallmann (1986), p. 415.

336 Goepper identified this attribute as 'staff with hook (*aṅkuśa*)', but it is clearly a *tridaṇḍa*, a staff with three ends. CL

337 Cf. Pal (1982), p. 54.

338 Klimburg-Salter (1982), p. 109, cat. no. 42; p. 183, no. 102; also Pal (1975), p. 181, no. 67; p. 183, no. 68.

339 No. 111; Tib. *ngan song las sbyong ba'i sgrol ma*. Perhaps because of the six arms, Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 56, has identified her with Prajñāpāramitā.
An alternative identification of this goddess as Mahāśānti Tārā is proposed with the depiction of the same goddess in Dukhang (page 126). CL

340 See *Sādhana* no. 107; *Sādhanamālā* 1, p. 219; also Bhattacharyya (1968), p. 231. Tib. *sgrol ma nor sbyin ma*.

341 Also corresponding to *Sādhana* 107; *Sādhanamālā* 1, p. 219.

342 Similar buildings appear on the dhoti of the Avalokiteśvara sculpture in the same niche.

343 See Fisher (1989), p. 17–22; esp. the bronze example from Gandhāra (Peshawar Museum), fig. 3.

344 Kak (1971), p. 107–108 and pl. XVII. An interesting synopsis of this stupa type is given by Nishikawa (1966), p. 84, fig. 7.

345 Fisher (1989), fig. 6.

346 Again some of the ornaments reappear in the ceilings of the Sumtsek.

347 I have documented this text in detail and sent it to a number of scholars, but unfortunately none of them could get much out of what remains of this text. CL

348 Bhattacharyya (1963), p. 231.

349 Matsunaga & Katō (1981), p. 209, pl. V-25.

350 In my opinion, the attribute Goepper is missing here, the *vātapuṭa*, is actually represented, as neither a staff (*daṇḍa*) nor a banner (*dhvaja*) can explain the represented attribute. A *vātapuṭa* is often a staff with a cloth attached to its top, as it's the case here. CL

351 I have changed fox to mongoose here, the latter being a much more likely identification for an animal paired with a snake. Kashmiri bronzes often show natural enemies side by side which turn peaceful in the presence of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. CL

352 M. Pjotrowskij (ed.) (1993), cat. nos. 9–11.

353 Here I replaced the derogative term Hīnayāna with the more neutral Śrāvakayāna. CL

354 As the founding inscription clarifies (page 788), the attendant goddesses in the Maitreya niche are four of the eight offering goddesses, presumably the four inner ones (see page 754). CL

355 Here Goepper's original identification 'and the victory over Nālāgiri, the attacking elephant' has been replaced by 'and the throwing of the dead elephant.' CL

356 On the dhoti of Maitreya in the Sumtsek, on the left side of the entrance wall in the Dukhang, and in the Lhakhang Soma.

357 It is hardly anything more than a coincidence that the motif of similarly arranged hares appears among the sculptures in the courtyard of the Gothic cathedral of Paderborn, Germany, which is nearly contemporary with Alchi.

358 Drawing after Luczanits (1999), which also provides a more detailed account of the depiction of the Buddha's life in the Sumtsek. CL

359 This caption has been replaced. Goepper erroneously identified this scene as 'Siddhārtha's victory over the elephant Nālāgiri.' CL

360 To make space for the drawing and to represent the central teaching scenes this picture has been included here as well. CL

361 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 48 and 2, p. 135 ff. with good photographs, transcriptions and translations; inscr. no. 6 on the left wall, and no. 10 on the right.

362 Here I have added the identification of these two forms of Mañjuśrī and also corrected the description of the latter. Of these Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha, usually having eight arms, derives from the *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*), and Mañjughoṣa from the *Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrīmaṇḍala* (see the analysis of the Sumtsek in the development chapter, page 355 ff.). CL

363 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 59 calls them 'a row of layfolk'.

364 Here I changed the end of the sentence from 'around the end of the twelfth century', since it contradicted Goepper's own dating. CL

365 Transcribed and translated by Denwood in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), 2, p. 135–137 and p. 147.

366 Denwood in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), 2, p. 140–142 and p. 149.

367 Goepper did not call the relief work in the paintings pastiglia, but following Dasser's contribution I have added the term where appropriate. CL

368 Cf. de Mallmann (1986), p. 254; Clark (1937), 2, p. 201 (no. 6A42), p. 264 (no. 157).

The name proposed by Gopper is an option, but does not explain the forms in multiple colours. Everywhere else in this publication this form of Mañjuśrī is referred to as Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī, in reference to its source (see page 228). CL

369 As the founding inscription clarifies (page 788), the attendant goddesses in the Mañjuśrī niche are four of the eight offering goddesses, presumably the four outer ones (see page 754). CL

370 See Goepper (1993), p. 138 and fig. 13.
See also The Palden Drepung Chörten, page 243 ff. and The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406f.

371 Goepper's argument in terms of identifying this *mahāsiddha* as Nāropa makes sense but has two main problems. The Nāropa represented in the lineage is of different iconography and the identification does not explain the function of this *mahāsiddha* on Mañjuśrī's dhoti and in the two chörten. Instead, the *mahāsiddha* is to be identified as Padampa Sanggyé, who died in Tibet in 1117. See the discussion of this siddha in the chapter on the Palden Drepung Chörten. Again, so much of Goepper's text builds on his identification, that it could not be replaced with the new, more current identification. CL

372 Concerning siddhas, see Grünwedel (1916); Robinson (1979).

373 Linrothe has identified some of them in a paper read at the Sackler Gallery. He kindly provided the author with the unpublished text.
See Linrothe (2001) for the published version. I have not checked if Goepper's original identifications reproduced here actually agree with Linrothe's published work. CL

374 Grünwedel (1916), p. 152.

375 Grünwedel (1916), p. 189.

376 Grünwedel (1916), p. 187.

377 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 53.

378 The progress on this front was the result of a collaboration and exchange of views between Linrothe and the principal force behind this monumental two-volume study, Christian Luczanits.

379 Dowman 1985.

380 Lūipa is being proposed by the author and Śavaripa by CL.

381 See von Schroeder (2006), p. 127; identification proposed by CL.

382 See Himalayan Art Resources item nos. 9030, 99222, 52548512 (http://www.himalayanart.org/, accessed May 12, 2021).

383 Mallinson (2019).

384 Dowman (1985), p. 250.

385 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1970), pl. XVIII; Pal & Fournier (1982), pl. D 23.

386 Linrothe (1994), p. 98–99, figs. 11 and 12.
Here I replaced Goepper's 'entrance stupa' with 'Four Image Chörten'. CL

387 This theory was formulated by Linrothe (1992), p. 329.

388 *Sādhanamālā* 2, p. 546: *Sādhana* no. 274; cf. also Bhattacharyya (1958), p. 177–178. *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p. 21. De Mallmann (1975/1986), p. 467. See also the detailed treatment by Linrothe (1992), 1, p. 327 ff.

389 Goepper identified the attributes of the two goddesses as 'holding a conch-shell and a string of beads', both clear misreadings. The identification of the attributes has thus been replaced. CL

390 De Mallmann (1967), p. 66.

391 *Sādhanamālā* no. 43, p. 89. See also Mallmann (1967), p. 100.

392 Chandra (1987), 1, p. 288, no. 761.

393 Ibid., 1, p. 245–247, nos. 631–638.

394 Toh. 4301.

395 No. 7 in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 138–139 and p. 148.
There are a number of misinterpretations in Goepper's account of the inscriptions in this area going back to the original reading of Denwood in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980) cited above. Inscription 7 as presented by Denwood is found on the side wall of the niche and actually consists of two distinct inscriptions.
The upper part is the first quarter of the actual founding inscription of the temple which continues around the corner between the murals in three distinct text panels. This text is authored by the teacher (*ston pa*) Tséden Shérap (*rtse ldan shes rab*) and written by the monk Ngödrup Shérap (*dngos grub shes rab*) who adds his dedication in an additional stanza. Denwood's inscription no. 8 contains excerpts of the final lines of this inscription, which has been studied in detail by Nils Martin (page 781 ff.).
The lower part, commencing at the upper edge of the adjoining beam refers to the inscription on the beam and explains the different ways it can be read. It is this second part that is written the monk Gar. CL

396 Here I have replaced 'Dharmadhātu Mañjuśrī' with 'Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha'. CL

397 Goepper misinterpreted the depiction in Maitreya's crown as a vase: '*The crown of the Bodhisattva is decorated at the front by a vase as his characteristic symbol (samaya).*' CL

398 The central text panel contains the part of the foundation inscription that previously remained unstudied. The inscription is presented in full in Nils Martin's contribution to his volume (page 781 ff.). CL

399 It is unfortunate that this fanciful representation of the five esoteric Buddhas is so poorly preserved. Being directly underneath the foundation inscription, it also contains the most elaborate donor depiction on this level of the Sumtsek clustered around Buddha Akṣobhya on the left side of the frieze. CL

400 The identity of the two Bodhisattvas has been added to this description. CL

401 This image is new to this publication. I identify this Bodhisattva as a red Avalokiteśvara, as the triple jewel topping his lotus references the wish-fulfilling jewel this Bodhisattva is often associated with this Bodhisattva; see Bautze-Picron (2004), p. 235–236. CL

402 The identification of the Bodhisattva has been added to the caption. CL

403 de Mallmann (1986), p. 114.

404 Pal (1982), p. 22.

405 de Mallmann (1967), p. 54, no. 10; Bhattacharyya (1968), p. 139.

406 Pal (1982), p. 16, fig. 8; p. 20–21, figs. 12–14.

407 Bhattacharyya (1968), p. 138; Mallmann (1967), p. 180–181.

408 Bhattacharyya (1968), p. 133–135.

409 Toh. 681.

410 Ricca & Lo Bue (1993), pl. 32.

411 On this form of Tārā, see Karmay (1975), p. 104; Beyer (1978), p. 229–230; Davidson (1981), 1, p. 40.

412 Fabri (1974), p. 71–72 and pl. LIX; Sawa (1982), p. 173, fig. 26; Uhlig (1981), p. 110, pl. 6.

413 Pal (1989), p. 121, fig. 7; Lerner (1984), p. 80–81, cat. no. 28.

414 Text no. 99. *Sādhanamālā*, 1, p. 207–208. Illustrated in Chandra (1987), 1, p. 101, no. 104.

415 Raghu Vira and Chandra (1972), part 20, p. 291–293.

416 Linrothe (1994), p. 94, fig. 6 and p. 98–99, figs. 11–12. Also difficult to recognise in Matsunaga & Katō (1981), pl. V,2.
In this sentence I replaced Goepper's 'entrance stupa' with 'Four Image Chörten'. CL

417 For instance Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 56.

418 The texts describe several different sets of eight dangers, partly external as in Alchi, partly internal; cf. Tucci (1949), III, 2, p. 161–162; also Davidson, op. cit. and Beyer (1978), p. 229–230.

419 Quoted by Toganoo (1982), p. 256.

420 Snellgrove and Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 61–64; Matsunaga (1981), passim.

421 Here I replaced 'Vajradhātu mandala' with 'Dharma mandala of the Vajradhātu'. CL

422 This caption replaces the original one which said 'Another version of the Vajradhātu mandala.' CL

423 Here I replaced 'Mandala' with 'Ekamudrā mandala'. CL

424 Originally this caption read: 'A version of the Vajradhātu mandala (no. 3) following the tradition of the *Durgatipariśodhana Tantra*.' which is clearly not correct (see the interpretation of the different versions of the Vajradhātu mandala in the Sumtsek page 756 ff.).

425 Here the name of Vairocana has been adapted replacing the original 'Sarvavid Vairocana' to reflect the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas Tantra* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*) fully. Calling 'Mahāvairocana' of the Vajradhātu 'Sarvavid Vairocana' is the result of the conflation of the five Buddha systems of the STTS and the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*) in the later Tibetan tradition (see page 767). CL

426 Taishō Canon vol. 18, no. 865.

427 Sanskrit text published by Chandra (1987), description of the mandala, p. 19–20, English translation of the relevant verses by Snellgrove (1987), p. 215–216; Tibetan version: Toh. 479.

428 This was demonstrated by Toganoo in his fundamental work: *Mandara no kenkyū*, p. 201 ff. See also Lim (1964), p. 334–335.

429 Assuming this was a genuine mistake, I altered Ānandagarbha's dates from 'the late tenth or early eleventh century' by a century. While this important tantric author cannot be dated securely, the late ninth and early tenth century are most commonly assigned to him. CL

430 Bhattacharyya (1949), p. 54–57; Skr. text, p. 44–47.

431 Among the many publications cf. the analytical book by R. Sawa (1972).

432 An excellent synopsis in parallels for all figures of the Sumtsek Mandalas is given by Matsunaga (1981), 1, p. 62–63. A comparison of the figures in Mandalas no. 1, 2, 5 and 6 is shown by illustrations, op. cit., 1, p. 66–75.

433 I have moved the last sentence from the following paragraph to this one, as it does not apply to mandalas 3 and 4, as mistakenly said in the original. Further, I have specified that these are the Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon. CL

434 Matsunaga (1981), 2, p. 101, pl. II,5o.

435 Quoted by Toganoo (1982), p. 229.

436 Goepper stated here that the goddess is 'holding a conch-shell (śaṅkhā) instead of the usual jewel' by interpreting the shape of the loss of paint layer as the attribute. In fact, the blue traces above the paint loss are the remains of her jewel attribute. CL

437 Chandra (1995), p. 167–175.

438 Edition of the text by Chandra (1987), p. 34 ff.

439 Text edition by Chandra (1987), p. 35.

440 Goepper (1993), fig. 9.

441 The paintings on this wall have been treated by the author in (1990), p. 159–169.

442 I have added Jambhala to the name Ucchuṣma in all cases, to make clear that this is a form of the wealth deity Black Jambhala, and not the protector Ucchuṣma. See also Willson & Brauen (2000), no. 317, where a *sādhana* of Black Jambhala is ascribed to a *paṇḍita* of Kashmir. CL

443 He matches the description in text no. 295 in the *Sādhanamālā*, cf. also Bhattacharyya (1968), p. 179.
Dhanada means 'wealth giving', and the figure is described spitting jewels, an aspect not depicted at Alchi. The deity is also not *ūrdhvaliṅga* as described.

444 This paragraph originally began the caption text on this page. CL

445 I have replaced the small image of Pagmodrupa published in the original volume, as this teacher is represented in larger size in two other figures, and replaced it with this detail of Dhanada.

446 I would rather see the outlining of some of the figures as another technical devise used occasionally by the painters, as it is also found in other monuments of the Alchi group, in particular in the tower murals and some of the later monuments. It is most prominently used in the Mangyu Four Image Chörten (see Linrothe (1994), Luczanits (2004), p. 170–174, and van Ham (2010), 138–157). CL

447 The same distinction between the two nations is used in the 'portraits' of four patriarchs inside the so-called Great Stūpa. See Goepper (1993), figs. 13–16.
These images are reproduced in figures 221–226. See also The Pearl Garland Composition, beginning on page 406. CL

448 H. Hoffmann (1956), p. 137–141.

449 Goepper originally identified this figure with Dakpo Gyaré (*dwags po rgya ras*), named as teacher of no. 7 in the *Blue Annals* (Roerich (1988), p. 132). The more plausible identification offered now follows the suggestion of Jackson (2002), p. 164. CL

450 Goepper originally identified this figure with Sangye Dagchung (*sangs rgyas dags chung*) in the *Blue Annals* (Roerich (1988), p. 132). The more plausible identification offered now follows the suggestion of Jackson (2002), p. 164, the two teachers following Gampopa being relatives that succeeded him as abbots of his monastery. See also Davidson (2005), 282–290. CL

451 Roerich (1988), p. 552–563.

452 Op. cit., p. 596–601.

453 See the detailed study of the lineage details by Rob Linrothe in his contribution on this lineage depiction in support of this point (page 723 ff.).

454 L. Petech (1978), p. 313–325. Here Alchi is not named.

455 For a description see Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 39.

456 Snellgrove & Skorupski, loc. cit., calls them directional Buddhas.

457 In have altered the iconographic details of this description throughout, from the identification of the main deity, called 'Śākyamuni or Vairocana' originally, via the Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas, called 'eight Bodhisattva like figures', originally, to the identity of the Bodhisattva surrounding the mandala in the corners and his activities. These medallions combine the miraculous qualities of Avalokiteśvara with the realms of rebirth that are traditionally represented around the main mandalas of the *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Transmigrations* (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*). All four medallions feature a white, four-armed Avalokiteśvara. In three of them he is seated on the throne and beings of the three lower realms take refuge to him, hell beings in the lower left, a hungry ghost in the upper left, and animals in the upper right. Finally, in the lower left corner Avalokiteśvara represents the gods and fights the head of the demons, Rāvaṇa. The latter thus stand for the upper two realms which are also less desirable than the human realm. CL

458 His emblems do not correspond completely with the description in *Sādhana* no. 62, *Sādhanamālā* 1, p. 128; Bhattacharyya (1968a), p. 103–104.
Again, I have adapted both the identification of the mandala, which was called a 'Dharmadhātu mandala', and the identification of its main deity, which was described as 'Mañjuśrī in the variant called Dharmadhātuvāgiśvara'. The first paragraph of this note refers to this original identification. I originally also interpreted this mandala as a variant of the Dharmadhātu mandala (Luczanits 2004). CL

459 Snellgrove & Skorupski, op. cit., p. 38–39.

460 The structure is much simpler than that of the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramandala described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, op. cit., p. 60–68.

461 In their description Snellgrove & Skorupski, loc. cit., call her Sarvavid like Prajñāpāramitā and mix up the surrounding figures.

462 This is a misreading of the inscribed teaching scene in the lower right corner. There, two monks in local monastic dress sit opposite each other, The one in the brown dress seated on a high cushion, the one in white dress seated lower and depicted smaller. The caption in two lines under the main figure as published in van Ham (2018), p. 357, reads something like:
//bla dags po la phyag 'tshal \ zhing sbyabsu 'chi'o // //
I take refuge and pay homage to Ladakpo.
The caption may be contemporaneous with the depiction, but is poorly written with *sbyabsu* instead of *skyabsu* and the actual object of refuge unclear. One could either interpret it as abbreviation for *bla ma dvags po*, which would make it a reference to Gampopa and his successors mentioned in the inscription directly opposite it, or as *bla dags po*, the one from Ladakh with the *po* possibly signifying a particular person. This latter reading would align with the local monastic dress, but another Sumtsek inscription spells the name of the region as *la dags*. Thus, neither of them is completely satisfying.
Heller's reading resulting in Lama Gampo can, however be excluded, but the first option above would align with the interpretation that this is a reference to Gampopa, even though the dress does not. CL

463 Our numbering begins in the left corner of the ground floor when entering and ends in the right back corner of the middle storey.

464 They have been treated by in Goepper (1993a and 1995b).

465 A. Bühler (1972), vol. I, p. 252–255.

466 For example, in the dress of the goddess Rematī [i.e., the Peacock Cape Lady] over the entrance to the ground floor, see figure 526.

467 F.B. Flood (1991), p. 31–33.

468 Published for the first time by D.R. Sahni (1917), pl. XXVII b.

469 The ceilings in the temples of Tsaparang (Guge) have lately been published in extenso by the Administrative Committee of Archaeology of the Tibet Autonomous Region (1991) 1, p. 262–284; 2, pl. 31–41. The only motif directly comparable to Alchi are the connected *svastika*, 1, p. 278, fig. 159,4.

The Alchi Style

470 Pal and Fournier (1982), p. 46–59.

471 For the stupa see Goepper (1993).

472 At the time of the original publication, there were limited reference points Goepper could rely on. Here he refers to what for a while was considered an international style of Buddhist paintings prevalent in the thirteenth and fourteenth century across a wide region (see, for example, the papers collected in Klimburg-Salter, Allinger & Steinkellner 1998). In the meantime this notion has been further refined, distinguishing an east India derived style from a Nepal derived one (Jackson 2010; 2011), both of which are present at Alchi from the Raised Chörten (see page 394 ff.) onwards. CL

473 In fact, several of the Lhakhang Soma compositions have direct comparisons in *thangka*, some of them referenced in the Lhakhang Soma chapter. CL

474 Genoud & Inoue (1981), pl. 18; Pal & Fournier (1982), pls. 34–35.

475 Pal & Meech-Pekarik (1988), pl. 37.
Goepper originally referred to this illumination as representing 'a Prajñāpāramitā in a western Tibetan manuscript of the twelfth century CE', with both the identification and the attribution slightly mistaken. See also the collection catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (https://collections.lacma.org/node/246457) for a full set of references as well as the important observations in Harrison (2007) on the manuscript this folio belongs to. CL

476 Goepper (1993), fig. 16.

477 Clark (1956), p. 17–30.

478 Pal & Meech-Pekarik (1988), pl. 16.

479 Pjotrowskij (ed.) (1993), p. 126–127, no. 11.

480 Klimkeit (1979), p. 375–399.

481 Tucci (1988), III, 1, pl. 32.

482 Tucci (1988), III, 2, pl. 125; Jin Weino (ed.) (1991), vol. 32, pl. 91.

483 Tucci (1988), III, 1, pls. 29–32.

484 Jin Weino (ed.) (1992), 3, pl. 135.

485 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), pl. XVIII; Goepper & Poncar 1984), pl. 32.

486 Jin Weino (ed.) (1991), 2, pl. 115.

487 Jin Weino (ed.) (1989), 1, pl. 33.

488 Jin Weino (ed.) (1991), 2, pls. 83–84.

489 See Luczanits (2014; 2018) for more detailed accounts on aspects of this transmission. CL

490 Administration Commission of Cultural Relics of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (1994), pl. 5.

491 It is not the case that the further eye is absent in Tabo, it is just much less conspicuous and not always applied. Further, its application differs from that in Alchi, see for example Klimburg-Salter (1997), figs. 26, 108, 110–112, 119, 129, 138; van Ham (2015), p. 142–147. CL

492 More recent studies on this subject include Wandl (1996; 1997; 1999; 1999a), Papa-Kalantari (2000; 2002), and Kalantari (2016). CL

493 Obviously, the information found towards the end of The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek, page 781 ff. was not available to Goepper. CL

494 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), 1, p. 53.

495 Khosla (1979), p. 61.

496 Matsunaga (1981), p. 118.

497 Denwood (1972), p. 49 and 51.

498 Linrothe (1992), p. 330.

The Sumtsek Lineage Paintings and Their Implications for Dating

499 An early version of this essay was presented at a workshop I organized at Northwestern University in April 2014 titled 'The Date of the Alchi Sumtsek Murals: 11th or 13th Century?' Though any errors that remain are my own, it benefitted from the discussion of the generous participants, among them Chiara Bellini, Philip Denwood, Amy Heller, Gerald Kozicz, Christian Luczanits, and Jaroslav Poncar. The workshop was supported by the Myers Foundations, Northwestern's Weinberg College of Art and Sciences, the Asian Studies Graduate Cluster, and the Department of Art History.

500 Denwood (2014), p. 162. Heller also draws attention to discrepancies between the images and the inscriptions and to the 'uncertain correlation between the depictions of the figures and the names assigned to them [which] has led to further doubt that this inscription [i.e., these inscriptions] was made at the time of the foundation of the Sumtsek'. Heller (2018), p. 405.

501 Georges Didi-Huberman speaks of 'the breach of survivals, into the currency of a historical fact ... the capacity of "trivial details" to make sense, or rather, be symptoms'; Didi-Huberman (2002), p. 64. In the context of Chinese painting, Jerome Silbergeld refers to an analogous approach, 'concentrated less on those aspects of the art that were foremost in the consciousness [of the artist or copyist] ... and more on elements that lay beyond his immediate awareness'. Silbergeld (1987): 853.

502 Denwood writes that the facial type found on the lineage paintings, 'a white face, with the further cheek protruding beyond the nose, is not seen elsewhere at Alchi'. Denwood (2014), p. 163.

503 The same might be said for the calligraphers, junior ones being more familiar with the printing of *dbu chen* than the cursive of *dbu med* that is found there, although this is not an argument that the inscriptions were added at the time the paintings were executed. I can accept Denwood's (and others') doubts about them, even though the first seven figures of the painted lineage are recognizable without inscriptions, as is discussed below.

504 Denwood (2014), p. 164, 166.

505 Early images of both Marpa and Milarepa within lineages vary widely, even at Alchi (as in the Small Stupa and the Lotsawa Lhakhang). Early examples of the lineages from central Tibet include the footprint *thangka* at the Rubin Museum, examined along with other early examples in Jackson (2015), p. 75–99, and Luczanits (2015), p. 214–259. Heller and Khacham (2018) propose that the Marpa and Milarepa portraits instead represent 'the ancestor of Tshul khrims 'od and Skal ldan Shes rab', (p. 544) only on the basis of the resemblance of Marpa wearing 'long sleeve v-neck collar white robes cinched at the waist' to an insecurely identified donor depiction ('presumably king Lha lde') inside a stupa at Tholing. The fact that the standard lineage of Tilopa and Nāropa followed by Marpa as a layman and Milarepa as a white robed yogin followed by Tibetan monks, the precise correspondence of which the proposed re-identification interrupts is not discussed, nor why Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*) would be depicted next to Nāropa (as Marpa always is). The proposed re-identification raises more questions than it purports to answer but appears to be in the service of rejecting the lineage paintings and inscriptions to preserve an earlier dating. Nevertheless, in the essay by Heller and Khacham (2018), there is some movement forward towards recognizing a later date for the Sumtsek. After actually demonstrating the error in Denwood's reading of a Dukhang inscription which led him to date the Dukhang in error to the mid-eleventh century, the authors abandon Denwood's now 'moot chronological framework' of associating it with 'Brom ston. They retain his assessment that the lineage inscriptions are a later forgery, but now accept the early 12th century as a possible date for the Alchi Dukhang, with the Sumtsek founded 'shortly' after that. Thus a twelfth century date now seems plausible to them.

506 I do not include the inscriptions on the left lineage, which may be later, or, for that matter, the physical structure of the Sumtsek, which may be earlier (although not its painted programme, including that on the three oversize sculptures).

507 Kapstein (2006a), p. 52.

508 Dowman (1985), p. 385; on Abhayākaragupta, see Bühnemann (1992), p. 120–127.

509 Dowman (1985), p. 386.

510 Wylie (1982), p. 691.

511 Luczanits (2006b); Luczanits (2015).

512 Denwood cites Heather Stoddard and Lionel Fournier to support his understanding that the 'iconographic program of the [Sumtsek] temple is pre-Drigungpa'. Denwood (2014), p. 164.

513 Linrothe (2007); Linrothe (2009).

514 As is pointed out in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 91, n. 21, the biography of Rinchen Zangpo composed in 1976 by Lobzang Zodpa explicitly attributes the founding of Alchi to Rinchen Zangpo. In the book produced by the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies and Likir Monastery in 2009, Nawang Tsering wrote, 'Historically, Alchi is the first monastery built by Rinchen Zangpo around the first millennium in Ladakh'; Tsering & Arya (2009), p. xx.
Skalzang Dorjey (2016), p. 25, writes: 'One of the fascinating architecture [sic] of the 10th century in Ladakh is three tiered temple (Sumtsek) at Alchi. It reflects composition skill of Kashmiri painters and craftsmen. The builders and designers of this monastery had been summoned by a person, none other than the Lotsava, Rincehn-bzang-po.'

515 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 91. For a recent reevaluation of the biographies of Rinchen Zangpo and his actual contributions, see van der Kuijp (2018a, 2018b).

516 Analogously, Hindu villagers in eastern India today invariably attribute damage to religious sculptures to Bhaktiyar Khalji (d. 1206), in which there is no basking, only blaming. Jerome Silbergeld, in discussing attributions of paintings to well-known painters of the past, refers to the '"great man theory"—namely, the view that most significant stylistic innovations are the product of great individuals rather than the result of collective endeavour, sudden historical events rather than gradual evolutionary processes', Silbergeld (1987), p. 857.

517 Fischer (1970), p. 51 (emphasis in original).

518 Tucci (1988), p. 10.

519 For the most part, Tucci refers to Alchi as a whole, not to the Sumtsek specifically. In several of his works, he mentions Alchi in relation to Mangnang but notes that the Alchi paintings, while clearly in the Kashmiri mode, are later than Mangnang. In one of his late works (1973), he notes that at Alchi, 'at least three periods can be identified. The first of these appears to be contemporary with Rinchensangpo [sic]', and he cites a detail in Singh (1968), p. 47, which depicts the top two registers on the right panel of the left niche on the ground floor of the Sumtsek (see this volume figure 583); Tucci (1973a), p. 181. He then suggests that the famous 'drinking scene' of the Alchi Dukhang (see this volume figure 68), also illustrated in Singh (1968), p. 63, belong to Alchi's second period, 'which can be dated to the 14th century'. His third period 'is represented by frescoes [sic] in which the influence of the illuminations in Moghul manuscripts is very evident'. Tucci (1973a), p. 181. Since no Alchi illustrations are cited, it is difficult to determine to what at Alchi he was referring. He attributes the Lhakhang Soma paintings to the decline of the first period when that school was 'worn out'. In sum, the Dukhang, which is generally accepted as earlier than the Sumtsek, is taken by Tucci to be much later, and the Sumtsek, which is generally accepted as later than the Dukhang, is placed in the eleventh century, while his date for the Lhakhang Soma is not clear. Although Tucci's contributions to the study of Tibetan history are unaffected by this misreading of visual evidence, it is all too typical of his garbled art history, a discipline in which he was not trained.

Mapping the Iconographic Programme of the Sumtsek

520 This essay, originally drafted in 1995 and published in 1996, is very much an artefact of that stage of our knowledge of Alchi and western Himalayan religious and art history. Much more is now known about the so-called Alchi Group of sites. Nevertheless, I have maintained the basic structure and made only minor revisions and additions, despite having been given the opportunity to fundamentally rethink and rewrite it in the light of findings by Christian Luczanits and others in the intervening twenty-four years. Elsewhere in this revised edition, Luczanits's own intriguing reinterpretation of the iconographic programme of the Sumtsek, based on new insights and rereadings of the inscriptions in the Sumtsek and the Palden Drepung Chörten (formerly known as the Great Stūpa), makes a strong case for new and different sets of relationships between and along the three levels in the building. In particular, he argues for regarding the *trikāya* (or, as Goepper understood it, *triguhya*) reference in the inscription near the Maitreya sculpture as a reference to that sculpture alone, not to the three monumental sculptures. I have elected to retain much of my original version for several reasons.
First, I believe the essay forms a useful index of one stage in the ongoing initiative of interpreting the impressive albeit overwhelming complexity of the site. Like the late eighth- to mid-ninth-century Borobudur, the largest extant Buddhist monument in the world, Alchi has inspired a great deal of popular and academic writing. Yet, also like Borobudur, nothing like a consensus on the ultimate intentions of the makers has been (or is likely to be) reached. At both sites there is a surfeit of tantalising evidence that there had been a coherent plan or meaning, even though it is subtle and profound enough to sustain multiple readings of the programme that are not mutually exclusive or contradictory. That alone could define it as a classic or a masterpiece.
The second reason is my belief that an overall plan was conceived, and that it was legible to at least some members of its original intended audience. My interpretation of the plan did not claim to penetrate or to present that plan in its entirety; it provided tools for thought, not claims for closure, and opened up possibilities for extending and rethinking the programme—as Luczanits has successfully done.
Third, in recognizing something of the structure of its visual language, the slightly revised original version does a measure of justice to the outstanding achievement of all of those people who created, maintained, and, yes, studied it over the centuries, especially Roger Goepper, Jaroslav Poncar, successive generations of Likir monks, and now, indisputably, Christian Luczanits.
Like many complex monuments, the Sumtsek can be interpreted in many different ways by contemporary specialists, in the same manner as Borobudur. Some scholars have passionately argued that Borobudur is ultimately a mandala; others, a stupa; and still others, Sumeru. Some believe that the lower galleries provided for the gradual accumulation of merit and wisdom while the upper terraces provided opportunity for subitist sudden enlightenment; that the four galleries work as cause, the upper terraces as result; that the *trikāya*—alternatively, the *caturkāya* by adding the *bodhimaṇḍakāya*—were variously deployed within the structure; that the upper terraces with the 72 stupas were meant to provoke visions of *dharmakāya*, or mantric sounds of the *cakrāsara*; were arranged to suggest the Sanskrit phonemes, or the solar and lunar mansions and stars; that the structure was a venue for offerings, a *digvijaya*, a site for *abhiṣekha* or the coronations of kings, or a funerary monument to one king; that the structure reflects five cakras and the two 'winds' or breaths of internal yogic anatomy; and that it is pre-tantric, prototantric, early or fully-fledged tantric. The list goes on.
One tendency I have resisted is to generate meaning through computing numbers, a mode of analysis to which some scholars of Buddhism are prone and to which the Sumtsek is vulnerable. For example, in the case of Borobudur: 'Two is the number of aspects of enlightenment which are fully mastered by a Bodhisattva of the seventh stage. *Daśabhūmikasūtra* mentions 37 factors of enlightenment, three liberation doors, four means of salvation, and four powers. By adding six *pāramitā* to the list, I obtain 54 aspects of enlightenment which are mastered by a seventh stage Bodhisattva. These 54 aspects are symbolically depicted in the form of 54 buddha statues on each of the eight directions [at Borobudur]'. [Intentionally not identified; similar approaches have been applied to Angkor Wat and to Dunhuang caves.] Speculating in this ultimately arbitrary mode in the case of the Sumtsek, one might try to correlate the ten mandalas painted on the middle-storey walls with the ten stages (*bhūmi*) of the Bodhisattva path. Not stopping there, one could add the three mandalas on the top storey, the three large sculptures of the ground floor, and the twelve and nine human teachers in the two lineage paintings on the top storey and

come up with thirty-seven, the number of the deities in the basic Vajradhātu mandala!

521 This is widespread in Buddhist temples, including those in East Asia. See Seckel (1989), p. 53.

522 While this is the fundamental assumption, it is not made without consideration of alternatives to intended symbolism vs. significance, such as those argued in Bagley (1993).

523 The *trikāya* or 'three bodies' of the Buddha are: the *nirmāṇakāya* ('transformation body', the physical, phenomenal body), the *saṃbhogakāya* (the 'bliss', enjoyment, or celestial body) and the *dharmakāya* (the absolute body). See Herman (1983), p. 223–227. The *trailokya* (triple-world) consists of the *kāmaloka* (World of Desire), the *rūpaloka* (World of Form) and the *arūpaloka* (Formless World); cf. Snodgrass (1985), p. 329–331. For a discussion of the *triguhya* triad of Body-Speech-Mind, cf. Snellgrove (1987), p. 208.

524 The Sumtsek inscriptions are translated and discussed in Goepper (1993), p. 111–143, and in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), Vol. II; the Great Stūpa (Palden Drepung Chörten) inscription is published in Goepper (1990), p. 159–169. See also Heller (2018), p. 405, and Luczanits, 'Palden Drepung Chörten,' and 'Pearl Garland Composition,' in this publication.

525 Cf. Linrothe (1994), p. 92–102. They are also dominant in texts that Goepper and others have shown to be particularly relevant to the interpretation of the Sumtsek, notably the *Compendium of Principles of All Tathagatas Tantra* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra*).

526 The Sumtsek is not perfectly aligned along the cardinal directions, so the direction assigned to each wall is somewhat imprecise. Here I follow the convention used by Goepper in this book and in Goepper and Poncar (1984): the entrance wall is the east wall, the opposite (main) wall is west; the wall on the left as one enters is the south wall, and the wall on the right is the north wall.

527 Yamāntaka is also particularly associated with Mañjuśrī, originating in early Esoteric Buddhism as the latter's attendant. Cf. Linrothe (1992), p. 151–178, 292–336; and Linrothe (1999), p. 62–83, 162–192. I will discuss below that Mañjuśrī comes to epitomize the Sumtsek as a whole, and here that may have determined the choice of Yamāntaka rather than Trailokyavijaya or other prominent wrathful deities.

528 The other location where a composition of a wrathful protector occurs is in the left niche on the ground floor. Against a vibrant red backdrop, the blue, big-bellied Vajrapāṇī Bodhisattva (figure 566), holding the vajra in his raised right hand and a bell in his lowered left, tramples on Vināyaka, a demon who is a symbol of obstructions. It is often assumed to be Gaṇapati (that is, Gaṇeśa), but that is not the case; it should be distinguished from the latter, and referred to as Vināyaka. In some Buddhist sculptures from eastern India, the form taken of the figure underfoot is an elephant, not an elephant-headed demigod. See Linrothe (forthcoming), p. xvii, xviii, figs. 4 and 20.7.

529 Goepper (1990), p. 159–169. See the discussion of these elsewhere in this volume, including The Sumtsek Lineage Paintings and Their Implications for Dating, page 723 ff.

530 Luczanits (1999), p. 30–39.

531 Goepper (1993), p. 135. Goepper later discussed at some length the depiction of Abhirati Pure Land of Akṣobhya; see Goepper (1999), p. 16–21.

532 Cf. Snellgrove (1978), p. 135, 274.

533 Allinger (1999), p. 40–44.

534 Goepper also correctly identified the figure above the sculptural Mañjuśrī's head as Aṣṭabhayatrāṇa Tārā, the 'Saviouress from the Eight Kinds of Fear or Danger'. This is certainly supported by the inclusion of figures who appeal to her for salvation from disaster, as well as the set of objects she holds (though the book, not unheard of in Tārā imagery, is less common for her), and by the similarity of the image to the one in Mangyu, as he points out on page 618 (1996, p. 158). The case for seeing her as an amalgamation with Prajñāpāramitā was also accepted in Snellgrove & Skorupski (1977), p. 56; Khosla (1979), caption to pl. 36; and Pal and Fournier (1982), caption for 'S 65'. One visual characteristic which supported such an identification is that the female deity above Mañjuśrī's head is greyish green, unlike the rich green colour of the painted Tārā images in the Avalokiteśvara niche on the ground floor. Nor are the supplicants conceptually unique to Tārā. As Edward Conze has pointed out, 'It is the function of Prajñāpāramitā to save people, and that makes her close to Tārā, the popular saviouress'. Conze (1967), p. 251. This relationship between Tārā and Prajñāpāramitā is also apparent in an image of the latter found on the main wall of the middle storey (and again at the centre of her mandala on the top storey), where she is depicted as light-coloured, sitting on two lions, and, as Goepper points out, holding the same emblems as those in the Green Tārā on the ground floor, 'hinting at a close relationship between the two goddesses', page 612.

535 Allinger (1999), p. 43–44; Yashaswini Chandra (2007), p. 72–77.

536 The Vajrasattva mandala has all female deities in the inner square except Vajrasattva (704), which is also the case for the Vajradhātu mandala on the west wall (700).

537 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 147–148; Heller (2018), p. 402–403.

538 See also Linrothe (2001), p. 191–208; Linrothe (2006); Linrothe (2007), p. 65–71; and the discussion of these elsewhere in this volume on The Sumtsek Lineage Paintings and Their Implications for Dating, page 723 ff.

539 Hunter (2004), p. 74, 80. The Japanese monk Enchin (814–891) received teachings from Esoteric Buddhist teachers in Amoghavajra's lineage in China, and cites the latter and the *Tattvasaṃgraha* with regard to 'the teachings of all the tathāgatas [that] are subsumed in this five-syllable mantra, and that this mantra benefits sentient beings by causing them to bring to perfection the highest wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*), and by fulfilling all vows, especially the vow to realize the stage of the tathāgata'. Hunter (2004), p. 83. This could be read as a succinct explanation for the *mahāsiddha*' connection to the sculpture of Mañjuśrī.

540 By extension, they can simultaneously be read as figural equivalents of the *triratna*: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; the identical triad is found in Nepal, cf. Conze (1967), p. 256.

541 For textual examples of the identity of these two names and deities, both of which refer to integrative deities, see Linrothe (2014a).

542 Goepper (1990), p. 163–165.

543 Linrothe (2006), p. 225.

544 Goepper (1993), p. 112; see also The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff.

545 De Mallmann (1968), p. 43; Mañjuśrī 'assimilé à Mahāvairocana' (1964), p. 76.

546 Davidson (1995), p. 109. See Davidson (1981), p. 1–69. At the Kumbum chörten of Gyantsé, Mañjuśrī appears in a form associated with the *ādibuddha*, as 'the primordial and eternal Buddha from which all the buddhas emanate'. Ricca and Lo Bue (1993), p. 62.

547 Davidson (1995), p. 104.

548 Tucci (1988), p. 47; Goepper (1993), p. 114, n. 17; The Pearl Garland Composition, page 407, verse 19.

549 Tribe (2016), p. 22–28.

550 Tribe (2016), p. 50.

551 Tribe (2016), p. 88; also Tribe (2020). See also Luczanits' discussion of this Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu Mandala, page 762 ff.

552 The Jampel Lhakhang is now connected to the so-called Lotsawa Lhakhang, though according to Luczanits's studies it was originally an independent structure with a conical roof like the Sumtsek, see The Jampel Lhakhang, page 293 ff.

553 Snellgrove & Skorupski (1980), p. 75.

554 Goepper (1993), p. 114–115; this volume The Palden Drepung Chörten, page 243 ff. and Luczanits, The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff. The importance of the body-speech-mind trope for whoever inscribed it is shown by its inclusion in his dedication formula repeated ten times on the entrance wall of the top storey to identify the lineage portraits; see Goepper (1990), p. 163.

555 Goepper (1990), p. 161; Goepper (1993), p. 114–116.

The Alchi Mandalas

556 See the chapter on the Alchi Group in Luczanits (2004).

557 On the development of the early Buddhist mandala see Luczanits (2008) or the more detailed account offered by Tanaka (2018).

558 On the development leading to the five esoteric Buddhas see Tanaka (2018), p. 23–27.

559 On these four goddesses see Snellgrove (1981), p. 31, or Kwon (2002), p. 56. The designation *rigs kyi yum* is used by Śākyamitra in his *Kosala Ornament*.

560 The most detailed account on these deities including a translation of their generation at the beginning of the STTS is found in Snellgrove (1981).

561 See Tanaka (2018), p. 137–140, who offers a detailed account of the origin of this group and its variations.

562 In this chapel the goddesses and Bodhisattvas surrounding the five Buddhas in the five main compartments of the inner palace are represented in their respective corners and the circle surrounding them overlaps with the inner palace. My documentation of it is found in the Western Himalaya Archive Vienna (WHAV).

563 On the caves of Dunkar see, among others, Pritzker (1996), Namgyal (1998), Unnamed authors (2008), Neumann & Neumann (2014), Kelzang Yéshé (skal bzang ye shes) (2017), vol. 1, p. 36–81. Note that I name the caves after their main subject depicted on the wall facing the entrance. The Guhyasamāja Cave is more commonly referred to as cave no. 1 or cave no. 2.

564 See also the description of these mandalas in Weinberger (2003), p. 62–69, and Kwon (2002).

565 For a summary of identification attempts of these mandalas by Japanese scholars see Tanaka (2018), 147–148 and note 425.

566 For depictions of the mandala in the Śākyamuni Temple see van Ham (2010), p. 68–73.

567 For images of individual deities and the central section see van Ham (2010), p. 10, 98–109.

568 For images see van Ham (2010), p. 86–91.

569 The identification of the top figure as Jñānasattva and the overall reading of the three figures as discussed in Tribe (2020), p. 551–555, is fully supported by the Lalung inscription the author was not aware of. There (Tropper 2008, verses 60–64) the three are listed as representations of the three bodies, verse 62 obviously referring to Vairocana in this context.

570 See Luczanits (2004), p. 93–106. A date in the second half of the twelfth century for the Lalung Serkhang can also be supported on the basis of the Lalung Serkhang inscription, as laid out in detail in Laurent (2019), p. 164, n. 19.

571 A contribution by Christian Luczanits to a commemorative volume dedicated to Helmut Krasser lays out this relationship in detail. The article titled '*Mandalas Intertwined – Why Minor Goddesses in the Tabo Main Temple Matter*' is currently forthcoming.

572 The suggestions made by van Ham (2010), p. 105–119, in this respect are mere guesswork.

573 These configurations are discussed in detail in Luczanits (2004) in the sections on the respective monument and the iconography chapter.

574 See Kwon (2002), p. 185–188, and wherever a seventeen-deity mandala is mentioned.

575 Obviously, this is the most problematic identification offered in this publication, not only source used are unlikely to have been known in the region of Alchi as well as the imperfect match. I am sure a better identification can be found in future research.

576 The 'identifications' offered for two of them in van Ham (2010), p. 105–119, are misleading and not more than uneducated guesswork.

577 See Klimburg-Salter (1996), diagram 7 and fig. 112, showing the best preserved secondary deity. The identification of this assembly is being proposed in a short study.

578 For descriptions of the mandalas on the entry wall of the Nako Lhakhang Gongma see Luczanits (2016a), p. 35–36.

579 To my knowledge, no attention has been paid to this five-deity mandala on the entry wall of the Guhyasamāja Cave yet. On the publications referenced see note 563. This mandala directly compares with the one at Tabo and is identified in the same study, a third version being partially preserved in a cave at Phyang.

580 The most important comparisons from Dunhuang are three scroll paintings in the Musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet, namely MG 26466 (see Giès & Cohen (1996), no. 283), EO 1131 (Giès & Cohen (1996), no. 282; Heller (1997), 87, 100, fig. 84); EO 3579 (see Giès (1994), I, no. 99; Giès & Cohen (1996), no. 284). On a detailed study including these paintings in Japanese see Tanaka (2000).

581 On the Indian and Tibetan textual sources on Amoghapāśa see in particular Meisezahl (1967). For this study his paraphrasing has been compared with the respective Tibetan sources.

582 Of these texts T2720 is paraphrased in Meisezahl (1967), p. 473–475, while T2731 is not included in his thorough study, possibly because its name does not identify the text's content. These two texts appear to be the most relevant for the iconographic details found at Alchi. Given the differences in iconographic detail, one wonders if the attribution of both texts to the same author can be correct.

583 Of course, that Amoghapāśā is two-armed could also be the result of a restoration of the sculpture, but given how the arms of the other deities are joined, it is unlikely that this could have been done without distorting the remaining arms more than is the case.

584 There is no Sanskrit title for this text, which describes the five deities forming a mandala together with sixteen offering goddesses and four gate-keepers.

585 The name chosen for this cave is new and based in the identification of its content, which will be discussed in a future article. As with other caves, I name this cave after its main topic. On this cave—often referred to simply as 'the eleventh-century cave' or 'cave of the offering goddesses' and numbered Phyang 79 in Chinese literature—see, for example, Neumann (1998), the relevant assembly in fig. 12; Kelzang Yéshé (skal bzang ye shes) (2017), p. 12–23, Ekajaṭā and Bhṛkuṭī visible along the left edge of figure 12 of this section.

586 See, for example, Meisezahl (1967), p. 475–477; Willson & Brauen (2000), no. 105.

587 On the Bardzong cave see Pritzker (2000), Tsering Gyalpo (2014), and Zhang Changhong (2016, 2018), the latter two also publishing its inscriptions.

The Foundation Inscription of the Sumtsek

588 I am indebted to Christian Luczanits who not only encouraged me to prepare this translation of the *Garland of Butter Lamps*, but also provided me with good photographs of its last three parts, and contributed to improve significantly the reading of some passages in the last draft of this paper. My thanks also go to Charles Ramble for his guidance in the reading of the inscription, and to Quentin Devers, Bettina Zeisler, and Amy Heller for discussions about its historical background with me. I am also grateful to Philip Denwood, Amy Heller, and Kurt Tropper for having helped me to locate early photographs of the *Garland of Butter Lamps* in private archives when I was looking for comparisons with the inscriptions of the Dukhang (*'du khang*) in Mangyu, as well as to Helga Uebach, Jaroslav Poncar, Sreekumar Menon, Noor Jahan Chunka, and a private collector for having accepted to share with me their precious photographs. This research was assisted by a dissertation fellowship received in 2017 from The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhist Studies administered by the American Council of Learned Societies.
A more detailed study of this inscription with an edition of the Tibetan text is forthcoming.

589 Its colophon may correspond to Denwood (1980), inscription no 9.

590 Its key and colophon constitute the end of Denwood (1980), inscription no 7.

591 This text corresponds to the beginning of Denwood (1980), inscription no 7.

592 The second part of this text corresponds to the summary of the iconography of the nearby Dukhang in Heller (2018), and the fourth part to Denwood (1980), inscription no 8. I am presently unable to locate the inscription in 5 lines supposedly authored by the monk Drak Ö (*grags (ldan) 'od*) mentioned by Heller (2018), p. 403.

593 See Denwood (1980), p. 148, 153; Heller (2018), p. 404; and Heller & Khacham (2018), p. 539–540.

594 That is, the foundation inscription of the Kanji Tsuklakkhang (*gtsug lag khang*) studied by Tropper (2015). Note, however, that my edition and my translation of the verse 79 slightly differ from those of Tropper (2015), p. 157; trans. p. 168.

595 According to Dotson (2004), n. 12, this title attested in three Old Tibetan documents designates a true maternal uncle of the Tibetan emperor (or a suitable replacement, such as a brother-in-law) holding the position of a councillor, in opposition to the honorific *zhang blon* designating a simple councillor. See the west inscription at Zhé Lhakhang (*zhwa'i lha khang*), l. 6 (Iwao, Hill, and Takeuchi 2009, p. 17; Richardson 1985, p. 46–47); the manuscript PT 1071, l. 4 (Richardson 1990); and the wooden slip M. I. ix. 15 (Thomas 1935, vols 2, 353). In reference to the last two documents, Richardson (1985, 47), by contrast, proposed that *zhang drung* might have designated 'one in constant attendance on the *btsan-po* – a minister-in-waiting or lord chamberlain.'
Later instances of this title can be found in materials associated with the western Tibetan confederation. In the donation inscription of the twelfth-century temple of Lalung, edited and translated by Tropper (2008), it appears twice (v. 11; 23). In the first passage, it designates the foremost councillor of an unknown deceased king named Dorjé Dé (*rdo rje lde*; my interpretation of v. 4), immediately after the mention of the latter's mother and queen (*btsun mo*; v. 9–10). In the second, it forms a semantic compound together with *btsun mo*, which is placed by order of importance after the mention of the deceased king's mother but before that of his councillors. These associations of *zhang drung* with both the king's wife and his councillors tend to validate the hypothesis of Dotson. In the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari* (*mnga' ris rgyal rabs*; p. 52; trans. p. 108), *zhang rung* (probably a misspelling for *zhang drung*) designates a councillor of Guge carrying secular and religious affairs on behalf of the renunciant king Yéshé Ö (*ye shes 'od*). On account of Yéshé Ö's marriage with a Dro (*'bro*) Séngkar (*seng dkar*) clanswoman from whom he begot two sons, mentioned in the same source (p. 51; trans. p. 107), this *zhang drung* might have been a Dro (*'bro*) clansman.
For additional references on *zhang drung*, see Tropper (2008a), n. 220; (2015), n. 260; Martin (2018), p. 209.

596 The formulaic phrase *jo bo chung sa* / *jo cung* cannot be found in Tibetan dictionaries but its signification is clarified by the context. Since the title *zhang drung* designates a true (or classificatory) brother-in-law or maternal uncle to the ruler, *jo bo chung sa* must be a related title based on royal female kinship designating the heir-bearing wife of the ruler or the mother of the royal heir. This interpretation is confirmed by the correspondence of *jo bo chung sa* with *btsun mo* ('queen') in the foundation inscription of the Tsuklakkhang in Kanji (v. 79–80), as well as the similar association of *zhang drung* and *btsun mo* in the foundation inscription of the Lalung temple (v. 23; see the previous note).
In case of a matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, this term could be a synonym of *sru chung*, 'the daughter of one's mother's brother', discussed by Childs and Quintman (2012), p. 43. It seems more likely, however, that the first kings of the western Tibetan confederation preferred a system described by Dotson (2004) with regards to the Tibetan empire, in which a pattern of rotation between a few wife-giver clans was observed. On this account, *jo bo chung sa* might simply stand for *jo bo chung ma*, 'the wife of the ruler'. See also Martin (forthcoming). I thank Charles Ramble for exchanging with me about this subject.

597 See Denwood (1980), p. 153; Heller (2018), p. 404.

598 See Denwood (1980), p. 153; Heller (2018), p. 404. My own affirmation, in a previous contribution (Martin 2018, p. 209–210), that the Dro (*'bro*) councillor of *pho brang* Wangdé (*dbang lde*) was the great-grandfather of Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*), is due to the same mistake.

599 Note that it might be in reference to the placing of their ashes inside the three monumental statues of Maitreya, Avalokiteśvara, and Mañjuśrī that the monk Drakden Ö (*grags ldan 'od*) designated the latter as *gdung rten* in the inscription no 6 on the ground floor (v. 70). See Denwood (1980), p. 135–137, l. 16; trans. 147.

600 Denwood (1980), inscription no 1, v. 116–148, p. 123–126, l. 10–12; trans. 144.

601 Denwood (1980), inscription no 2, v. 41, p. 127–128; trans. 144–145.

602 Denwood (1980), inscription no 3bis, v. 37–39, p. 129–130, l. 14; trans. 146.

603 See Denwood (1980), p. 134; trans. 147.

604 Goepper (1996), p. 18, proposed one to two generations.

605 The name of this king was misread by Denwood as *dbang lnga* and misunderstood as a toponym.

606 See Martin (forthcoming). In this comprehensive presentation of the donation inscription and the inscribed donor scenes of the Dukhang in Mangyu, I explore the correlation between these two types of materials and try to unveil the identity of the kings and patrons represented therein.

607 Vitali (1996), p. 73; trans. p. 125.

608 See also Tshe ring rgyal po (2005), p. 36–37. The threefold argumentation of Vitali (1996), p. 339–340, according to which Wangdé (*dbang lde*) was a usurper from a collateral branch must be discarded. Contrary to Vitali's first argument, Wangdé does figure among the offspring of Tsédé (*rtse lde*) as outlined in the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari* (p. 74). In his translation, however, Vitali (1996), p. 125–126, mistakes the short exposition of the line of Sengdrak (*seng grag*), Tsédé's eldest son, for the offspring of Tsédé and, therefore, he leaves aside Tsédé's third and fourth sons, Tsa me dwi ṭa and Wangdé, as supernumerary. Vitali's second argument lies in the apparent contradiction that, according to the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari* (p. 74–75; trans. 126), Wangdé both succeeded Tsédé—whom Vitali believed to have ruled until his death—and died before his father (Tsédé). The title *bla chen* attached to Tsédé in the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari* (p. 72; trans. 123), however, might indicate that the latter retired from secular power to the benefit of one of his sons. Finally, according to Vitali's third argument, the claim of the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari* (75; trans. 126) that Wangdé was the rightful heir of Tsédé would betray 'the fact that his right to rule had not gone undisputed by historians.' (Vitali 1996, 340) This claim, however, should probably not be understood in reference to Wangdé's enthronement, but in the context of the quarrel that broke out between Wangdé's son, Sönamtsé (*bsod nams rtse*), and his uncle Wang Ö (*dbang 'od*), who assured the succession of Wangdé but was apparently reluctant to leave the throne to his nephew when the latter came of age to rule in his turn. It aims to legitimate the parricide of Sönamtsé, who eventually murdered Wang Ö.

609 On the dating of Wangdé's accession, see Vitali (1996), p. 337.

610 See Vitali (1996), n. 526; Martin (2018), n. 61.

611 See also Petech (1997), p. 239.

612 See Vitali (1996), p. 68, 74; trans. p. 121, 126. Only Wangdé's grandfather and great-grandfather, Ödé (*'od lde*) and Lhadé (*lha lde*), whose maternal lines are unknown, may have been born from queens of the Dro (*'bro*) clan, as were the two renunciant sons of Yéshé Ö (*Royal Genealogy of Ngari*, 51 ; trans. 107).

613 In the colophons of the translations of two Sanskrit works that he sponsored, Wangdé (*dbang lde*) is attached among other epithets that of *mi yi bdag po* ('master of men'), whereas in the *Chos 'byung of Yar lung Jo bo* (125–126), composed in 1376, he bears the secular title *mnga' bdag* (see Vitali 1996, p. 341; n. 533; Petech 1997, p. 238).

614 Tucci (1956), p. 52, n. 1, proposed that *pho brang* 'is the title of the second son in a ruling family' in reference to Zhiwa Ö (*zhi ba 'od*) and Ösung (*'od srung*), whereas Richardson (1971), p. 434, added that the designation of Ösung as *pho brang* 'may indicate that the person, although regarded as heir presumptive, was not a prince of the royal blood.' As remarked by Karmay (1980), p. 4, however, none of these hypotheses are completely satisfactory, as Ösung appears to have held primogeniture and Zhiwa Ö to have been of royal blood. Vitali (1996), n. 459, further suggests that *pho brang* might be a religious title, at least in the case of Jangchup Ö (*byang chub 'od*), to whom it was attached in consequence of his ordination according to the *Royal Genealogy of Ngari* (*mnga' ris rgyal rabs*; 62; trans. 115). Jahoda and Kalantari (2015), p. 87, concur with his hypothesis, postulating that, from Jangchup Ö onward, this title 'was clearly reserved [...] for those (male) members of the royal family

who, after their ordination, had the duty to protect this realm as members of the palace or from the palace (*pho brang*).' Jangchup Ö, they proposed, 'seems to have implemented the *podrang* function [...] from 1026 until his death in 1078 (holding between 1037 and 1057 at the same time also secular power) upon which he was succeeded by this [sic] younger brother Zhiwa Ö (1078–1111).' This hypothesis, however, does not seem to apply well either in the case of Ösung.

615 See van Ham & Heller (2018), p. 34, and in the same publication Heller (2018), p. 404.

616 That is, the cradle of the Tibetan empire.

617 That is, the westernmost part of the Tibetan plateau where Kyidé Nyimagön (*skyid lde nyi ma mgon*) migrated in the tenth century, including Purang. It is yet to determine whether the term *mnga' ris stod* was introduced together with its counterpart *mnga' ris smad* in order to distinguish between the dominions held by the descendants of Kyidé Nyimagön, on the one hand, and those of his brother Thri Tashitsekpapel (*khri bkra shis rtseg pa dpal*), on the other (Wangdu 2008), or whether it reflects older administrative units.

618 On account of the probable inclusion of Nyarma (about 51 km east of Alchi) within Upper Maryül (*mar yul stod*) in verse 43, the geographical terms *smad* ('lower'/'eastward') and *stod* ('upper'/'westward') should be understood here in reference to the course of the Indus River rather than to the cardinal directions. Thus, the area formerly known as Ladakh was but a part of the lower (i.e., western) subdivision of Maryül, a region intersecting with present-day Ladakh. On the changing locations of Maryül and Ladakh, see also Howard & Howard (2014), p. 89; Devers (2014), p. 194–196; Martin (2018), n. 105.

619 On the use of the term *gtsug lag khang* in contrast to *dgon pa*, *chos skor*, and *lha khang* in four Tibetan texts, see Tropper (2016), 15. For the etymology of *gtsug lag*, see Hahn (1995).

620 As already noted by Goepper (1993), n. 15, from a passage of the *Pearl Garland Composition* of the Palden Drepung Chörten in Alchi (v. 48; see also The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff. and Luczanits (forthcoming), stanza 12), this epithet might be the original name of the Sumtsek (*gsum brtsegs*): 'pile of jewels', or 'precious storeyed [building]'.

621 In reference to members of an aristocratic clan such as the two supreme Dro (*'bro*) siblings(?), the term *yig tshang* or *yig gtsang* (also *yi ge*) could take on two main significations:
First, as in three catalogues of the 'Section on Law and State', contained notably in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, the *Chos 'byung* of Khépadeu (*mkhas pa lde'u*), and the *Chos 'byung* of Deujosé (*lde'u jo sras*) and presented in detail by Dotson (2006, 3.5.3b; 3.5.5; 3.6.3), *yig tshang* can indicate 'texts' composed by 'wise men' (*mdzangs*), i.e., councillors from aristocratic clans (*zhang blon*). According to Dotson (2006), p. 122–123, these 'texts' may be related to the clan histories attributed to the group of 'nine great [councillors], ten with the ring' (*che dgu ring bcu*) by another source.
Second, as in several other catalogues of the 'Section on Law and State' (Dotson 2006, 3.2.2; 3.2.5; 3.3.1b; 3.3.5; 3.5.3b; 3.5.4) and most Old Tibetan documents, *yig tshang* can indicate an 'insignia', worn on the shoulder, distinguishing by its size and material the rank and position of the wearer in the administration. It is, too, closely associated with councillorship, the position and estates going along with the possession of an insignia being passed down hereditarily. To leave room for a broader interpretation of *yig tshang* either as insignias or as charters issued together with the endowment of the latter, I follow here the translation 'credentials' proposed by Pritzker (2017, 24). In any event, *yig tshang* seems to denote here a secular activity.

622 Given its position in the couple of verses 35–36, the term *-y- ru* could either indicate a place in Purang unknown to me or a quality of the Dro (*'bro*) clan. The second possibility seems more elegant as it would confer to each verse a distinct semantic field. Among the possible conjectures, *bya ru* ('bird horns' or 'bird feathers') stands out for its sacral and royal connotations in Tibet.
In the Old Tibetan funerary text from Dunhuang PT 1194 (l. 38–52, partial trans. in Stein (1971), p. 414, bird feathers (*bya ru*) are taken from the upper part of the left wing of a vulture (*rgod*). They are equated with the *khyung ru*, which might be interpreted either as the feathers or as the horns of a *khyung* since that mythical bird of prey was early represented with horns (see for instance Bellezza 2013, p. 68; 2017, p. 26–30). In a couple of other funerary manuscripts from Dunhuang (PT 1134, l. 118; PT 1136, l. 28), bird feathers are to be attached or planted upon the head of the psychopomp horse so that the dead can reach heaven. Huber (2013), p. 279, attests that bird feathers have retained that funerary function until today in a priestly form of Bon (*srid pa'i lha bon*).
In later texts, the term *bya ru* denotes essentially a crowning ornament. Such *bya ru* are found atop Bon stupas instead of the Buddhist sun and moon finial, but also appear on top of Buddhist stupas in a few Buddhist texts (see Martin 2010, p. 119–123); other instances can be found in the *gSung 'bum* of Longchenpa (*klong chen pa*; *klong chen rab 'byams pa dri med 'od zer*; W1KG4884) and Künga Rinchen (*kun dga' rin chen*; W23892; searchable on the BDRC website). In this case, horns—as opposed to feathers—are clearly intended. In the context of institutionalized Bon (*g.yung drung bon*), *bya ru* made of precious materials also crown deities, priests, and a group of eighteen mythical kings of Zhangzhung, some of whom located in Purang (see Martin 2010, p. 124–133; Vitali 1996, n. 217; 2008). It is, moreover, worn by one of the 'nine great [councillors], ten with the *ring*' (*che dgu ring bcu*) listed in the *Chos 'byung* of lDe'u jo sras (see Dotson 2006, p. 119). Both Martin and Vitali identify *bya ru* as a horned rather than feathered headgear. They also suggest that the *bya ru* used as crown ornaments ultimately derived from Sassanian models of royal iconography transmitted to western Tibet through Brusha and neighbouring regions (Martin 2010, p. 133–137; Vitali 1996, p. 161–163; 2008, p. 392–395).
According to Vitali (1996), p. 163, the *bya ru* must have remained a prestigious attribute in western Tibet at least until the 'Buddhisation' of the society encouraged by the renunciant king of Guge Yéshé Ö (*ye shes 'od*; 947–1019/1024). Most interesting is the mention of one court priest (*mchod gnas*) *cha ru ba* (emended to *bya ru ba* by Vitali) in between the royal monk of Guge Jangchup Ö (*lha btsun byang chub 'od*; 984–1078) and the lesser translator of Purang (*pu rangs lo chung pa*; i.e., Drakchok Shérap (*grags mchog shes rab*)) in the lineage of *Śrī Guhyasamāja*. Another version of this lineage has *mchod gnas phya ru ba* (see Yamamoto 2012, p. 357). It may testify of the enduring sacral if not royal connotations of this attribute at the court of the West-Tibetan kings well into the eleventh century.

If Vitali (1996), p. 163–164, rightly notes that the West-Tibetan kings were never portrayed wearing horned headdresses in the donor scenes of the temples associated with them, this does not necessarily hold true for clan leaders. In the donor scene painted on the north wall of the cella in the Main Temple or Tsuklakkhang in Tabo (*c.* 1042), two lay donors wear hats whose brim appears to be fixed on the front and back and turned-up on the sides, as if to resemble curved horns (see Klimburg-Salter 1997, fig. 151). In contrast to the other types of hats represented in the same scene, a continuous fringe borders the brim, which may be interpreted either as feathers or as a shaggy fur. Similar horn-like hats are worn by Dro (*'bro*) and Mer (*smer*) clansmen in the donor scenes of the temples in Alchi and Mangyu (see Martin forthcoming). The representations of the Dukhang (*'du khang*) in Alchi are especially interesting insofar as the treatment of the grey brim differs from that of fur hats and the two sides of the brim are separated from each other by two white curves. Further research is needed to clarify whether these are indeed bird horned hats.

623 For an inscription authored by a member of the Dro (*'bro*) clan at Cogro, in Purang, see Jahoda and Papa-Kalantari (2009).

624 Lit. imprints.

625 These three verses follow the literary topos of the Three Deeds of a ruler (*mdzad pa gsum*), slightly different definitions of which can be found in the *Chos 'byung* of Khépadeu (*mkhas pa lde'u*) and in the *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* of Tsuklak Trengwa (*gtsug lag 'phreng ba*; 1504–1566); see Dotson (2006), p. 324; 327; trans. p. 329; 330.

626 These are possibly references to Mapam Yumtso and Gang Tise, i.e., Mount Kailash and the lake in front of it.

627 The ruined religious compound of Nyarma is located a couple of kilometres south of Tiksé and about 51 km east of Alchi. Its chief-temple is the most important religious monument dating to the period of the western Tibetan confederation in terms of size and political significance in Ladakh. Tibetan historical sources concur that it was founded either by the renunciant king of Guge Yéshé Ö or by the *lo tsā ba* Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055). On this site, see also Panglung (1995); Kozicz (2007a); Devers (forthcoming).

628 Staktse (*stag rtse*, lit. 'the peak of a tiger') is a common metaphorical name for a fort. Yet, to find it associated with the deeds of 'good tigers' is perplexing. One may suspect that the name of the fort metaphorically referred to its occupants, as in the inscription of Balukhar. The phonetic spelling *stags tse*, however, may indicate that this original reference was no longer understood by the time of the inscription. To the best of my knowledge, there is only one place named Staktse possessing a notable fort in Ladakh. It is located on the right bank of the Sengelungma River about 60 km west of Alchi and could notably be reached after a four-day walk from that place by way of Sumda Chen, Wanla, and Kanji or Henasku crossing over the Timti Pass or the Photu Pass. As exemplified by a schema of Devers (2018), p. 39, the topographical situation of the fort of Staktse, on a natural crag looking over a strategic crossing-place, is comparable to those of Alchi Khargok, Balukhar, Khaltse, and Kharul, all of which appear to have been occupied by West-Tibetan military personnel in the eleventh century.

629 This verse is ambiguous as *kan gzhi* could either designate the place that was divided into three parts by the Dro (*'bro*) councillor or a further territorial division (*ling bcad*). Regardless of its function in the verse, the signification of *kan gzhi* is, moreover, disputable. Spelled as such, it may indicate the bank(s) of a river. As a misspelling for *kan bzhi*, it may alternatively indicate the four banks divided by the confluence of three streams, and therefore relate to the subsequent *sum mda'* (lit. 'the junction of three elements', see n. 631). To complicate the matter, there is one village in Ladakh called Kanji whose etymology would derive from the four banks (*kan/rkan bzhi*) divided by the two streams joining the Kanji River, an affluent of the Sengelungma River, at that place (personal communication of Kakapa Konchok Thinlas, 2016; see also Stoddard (2007), 254). The name of the village, however, is spelled differently in the foundation inscription of the Tashisumtsek (*bkra shis gsum brtsegs*) in Wanla (Tropper (2007), v. 36: *kan ji*) and in that of the Kanji Tsuklakkhang (Tropper (2015), v. 62: *kan 'ji*), both datable to the first half of the fourteenth century. Kanji is located about 52 km west of Alchi and 16 km southeast of Staktse. It is a three-day walk from Alchi by way of Sumda Chen and Wanla and a one-day walk to Staktse over the Timti Pass and crossing the Sengelungma River below the mighty fort of Bodkharbu. The village itself does not contain any monument securely datable before the fourteenth century but a temple showing reused mid-eleventh-to-late-twelfth-century woodcarvings stands in the upper lateral valley of Lachutse cultivated by the villagers of Kanji.
In comparison to the previous verse starting with the toponym Staktse, I have favoured here the hypothesis that *kan gzhi* is a place name too. On account of the geographical proximity between the present villages of Staktse and Kanji, moreover, I propose to identify the two places associated with the councillor as the latter. Another hypothesis suggested to me by Quentin Devers (personal communication, 20/07/2019) is that *kan gzhi* could refer not to the village of Kanji specifically but to the whole valley of the Sengelungma River, as the latter is also called by the name of its affluent the Kanji River. In that event, the tripartition of the valley would distinguish between the village of Kanji and its surroundings above, the area of Staktse in the middle, and the confluence with the Indus River at Sanjak below. This hypothesis, however, seems at odds with the very local flavour of the tripartition of Kanji according to the geographical section of the foundation inscription of the Tsuklakkhang in Kanji (v. 63–68).

630 On account of their distinct versification, the seven-syllable verses 41 to 46 might be excerpted from another composition.

631 In Ladakh the toponym *sum mda'*, akin to *sum mdo* (lit. 'the junction of three elements'), usually designates the confluence of either three rivers/valleys or only two making three with the downstream part. There are two ancient villages bearing that toponym south of Alchi: Sumda Chung and Sumda Chen. Both are located at the confluences of couples of streams and can be reached after a full-day walk from Alchi. They also contain Buddhist monuments datable to the twelfth century, making them probable identification for the place where the ancestors of Tsültrim Ö (*tshul khrims 'od*) were active. Of the two, Sumda Chen must have been the more important, as suggested by its name 'Greater Sumda' and the presence of several ancient fields and a large fort looking over the valley, indicated to me by Quentin Devers in 2014.

632 On the translation of *rgya ma* as 'great [works]' with regards to Buddhist patronage, see Vitali (1996), n. 547, and Tropper (2007),

n. 250; (2015), n. 268. The foundation inscription of the Dukhang in Mangyu (v. 127–130) attests to the tripartition of *rgya ma* depending on their association with Body, Speech, or Mind.

633 This verse is ambiguous as *'bum* could either indicate the large number of great works of the Body achieved by Zhiden Ö or stand for an object of Buddhist sponsorship. In that case, *'bum*, or *'bum ther*, could refer to a manuscript of the *Śatasāhasrikāprājñapāramitā* or to a number of recitations (Tucci 1980, 157) or clay images (*tsha tsha*), possibly incorporated inside a stupa or another type of deposit (*tsha 'bum*). Among these objects, only clay images of deities could be considered properly as supports of the Body. In comparison with the use of *'bum ther* in the foundation inscription of the Dukhang in Mangyu (v. 89; 128) and in the *Pearl Garland Composition* of the Palden Drepung Chörten in Alchi (v. 95; see The Pearl Garland Composition, page 406 ff. and Luczanits (forthcoming), stanza 22), 'a stupa of 100,000 images of deities' could also be intended, whose classification within the category of the great works of the Body could tentatively be explained by the painted or sculpted images contained inside it. To leave room for either of these interpretations, I translate *'bum* loosely here.

634 For his identification as the spiritual teacher of the Dro (*'bro*) clan Kalden Shérap (*skal ldan shes rab*), the patron of the nearby Dukhang, see Genealogy of Tsültrim Ö, page 782 f.

635 That is, the wisdom derived from learning, reflection, and cultivation; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 1068.

636 These are the Action, Engagement, Yoga, and Unsurpassed Yoga Tantras (i.e., Highest Yoga Tantras); see Dalton (2005).

637 Possibly an allusion to the deity Dorjé Chang (*rdo rje 'chang*, Vajradhara), whose position is prominent in the teachings of the Kagyü (*bka' brgyud*) schools.

638 A clay sculpture of Maitreya is contained in the tower-like structure attached to the front right side of the nearby Dukhang, the Maitreya Temple. Luczanits & Neuwirth (2010), p. 80–83, place the addition of this structure immediately after the foundation of the Dukhang in their chronology of the Alchi sanctuary, while they place its extension at its very end. I thank Christian Luczanits for suggesting the reading *mi 'pham mgon* to me.

639 The paradise of Akṣobhya is represented as a bottom register on the side-walls adjoining the niche of the nearby Dukhang.

640 This group of Buddhas is represented on the side-walls adjoining the niche of the nearby Dukhang.

641 The comparison of this list of Buddhist sponsorship with that found in the inscription no 5 of the nearby Dukhang (Denwood 1980, p. 134; trans. p. 147) helps to interpret the meaning of the 108 images mentioned here. In the list of the Dukhang, the 108 images come as the last items (*rtsa rgyad la sogs pa'i rten bzhengs pa dang |*) after the mandala assemblies, the ensemble of Akṣobhya, the thousand Buddhas of the good age, and Maitreya. The number 108 is not used there to indicate the countless number of images altogether commissioned by Dro (*'bro*) Kalden Shérap (*skal ldan shes rab*), but to refer to a specific ensemble, distinct from those aforementioned. One may think of a group of 108 Buddhas or Bodhisattvas.

642 This endowment of lands, together with the implantation of a religious community, might have been necessary for sustaining the religious activities carried out in the temple.

643 Ladakhi dialect: *sil ces*, 'to recite, especially by reading' (Norman 2015, 407).

644 This could refer either to a mural of Akṣobhya in his paradise, such as that immediately below this part of the inscription, or to a thousand-Akṣobhya composition, such as those in the nearby Palden Drepung and Tashi Gomang chörten.

645 That is, the realms of desire, form, and formlessness; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 923.

646 Presumably the three storeys of the temple.

647 That is, body, speech, and mind; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 922.

648 That is, emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 972–973.

649 Presumably the three roots of virtue; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 457.

650 That is, the sculptural ensemble of the left niche.

651 That is, the wisdom of Dharmadhātu, mirror-like wisdom, wisdom of equality, discriminating wisdom, and all-accomplishing wisdom; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 614.

652 That is, the main statues of the back and right niches.

653 That is, the two sculptural groups of four female deities flanking the statues of Maitreya and Mañjuśrī in the back and right niches.

654 Including three stages pertaining to the realm of form, and five stages transcending it; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 74–75.

655 These may correspond to the three couples of side-walls adjoining the niches plus the two side-sections of the entrance wall on the ground floor.

656 That is, the preoccupation with gain and loss, pleasure and pain, praise and blame, and fame and disgrace; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 72.

657 That is, the walls of the middle storey.

658 That is, either the four stages of meditation associated with the realm of form or to the four refined stages associated with the formless realm; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), 256–257.

659 That is, the walls of the top storey.

660 That is, loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and impartiality; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 59.

661 These may correspond to the side-corners of the central square room of the ground floor plus the side-corners of the two upper storeys.

662 That is, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four perfect endeavours, and the four bases of magical powers; see Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen (2015), p. 465.

663 These may correspond to the side-corners of the three niches.

664 That is, giving, morality, patience, effort, meditative absorption, and wisdom; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), 733.

665 These may correspond to the two groups of four pillars supporting the ceilings of the two lower storeys plus the two couples of pillars supporting the two levels of the portico.

666 That is, ignorance, predispositions, consciousness, name and form, the sense-bases, sensory contact, sensation, thirst, grasping, existence, birth, and old age and death; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), 669–670.

667 To build on my tentative identification of the ten great pillars(?) in n. 665, the ten short pillars may correspond to the two central threes of short pillars above the main pillars of the first level of the portico plus the two central couples of short pillars above the main pillars of its second level.

668 Probably corresponding to the tenfold knowledge of a Buddha; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), p. 94–95.

669 That is, the mandalas painted on the walls of the middle storey.

670 That is, the ten highest stages of the Bodhisattva path; see Buswell & Lopez (2014), 218–220.

671 Lit. the upper and top [floors]. These may correspond to the second level of the portico, plus the former low portico leading inside the top storey, of which only posts remain today.

Observations on the Technology of the Wall Paintings

672 This is a reproduction of the text as it has been published in the original Sumtsek volume. Since then, there are a number of further studies on the technology of western Himalayan wall paintings that complement this pioneering study, among them Bogin (2005), Bayerová & Gruber (2010), Gill, Rendo & Menon (2014), Bayerová (2018). Besides editorial changes the bibliography has been integrated into the general bibliography.

673 Images and captions on the first page have been added by Christian Luczanits.

674 Jägers (1996).

675 Chakrabarti (1980), p. 94–107; Jackson & Jackson (1988), p. 45–67.

676 Chakrabarti (1980), p. 75.

677 Straub (1984), p. 170–172.

678 Jägers (1996).

679 Jägers (1992, 1993, 1996).

680 Jägers (1996).

681 Jackson & Jackson (1988), p. 20; p. 23, note 8; p. 86.

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DVMV - *Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrīmaṇḍalavidhi*

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Index

A

Abhayadattaśrī 578, 579, 730, 731
Abhayākaragupta 14, 15, 134, 731
abhicāruka 469, 594, 638
Abhirati, Buddha Akṣobhya's paradise 177–187, 290, 349, 358–360, 380, 408, 465, 537, 542, 716, 718, 721, 737
Acala 290, 332, 356, 357, 360, 369, 370, 423, 467, 511, 525, 659–661, 737
Adhimukticaryā 146
ādibuddha 737, 741
  See also Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha
Āditya or Sūrya, sun god 119, 122, 218, 413, 418, 425, 775
Āgnedhryā 116, 414
Agni, fire god, guardian of the southeast 116, 122, 154, 158, 210, 214, 233, 413, 419, 424, 428, 768, 770
Airāvata 604, 607
Akaniṣṭha heaven 226, 786
Ākāśagarbha 151, 417
Akṣayamati 117, 410, 412, 417, 422, 427
Akṣobhya 44, 53, 98, 100, 140, 146, 177–187, 189, 190, 247, 265, 269, 272, 273, 284, 285, 290, 297, 343, 346, 347, 358–364, 366, 367, 369, 372, 383–392, 395, 398, 399, 407–409, 411, 415, 448, 452, 453, 458, 465–467, 478, 534, 539, 552, 559, 564, 590, 594, 610, 633, 637, 651, 656, 716, 737, 749, 752, 783, 784, 787, 791, 793
  white 395, 779
Akṣobhyavajra 335, 359
Akṣobhyavyūhasūtra 177–187
Alchi Choskhor 11–14, 17, 23, 26–35, 37, 240, 345–347, 400–405
  courtyard 26, 30, 32, 34, 37–43, 345, 346, 350, 352, 355, 369, 372–380, 390, 394, 401–404, 792
  Dukhang 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 22–24, 27, 30, 37–241, 347–352, 373, 403, 465, 470, 473, 484, 542, 583, 594, 666, 668, 670, 715, 716, 718, 733, 747–752, 756, 761–770, 772, 773, 778, 782–785, 791
  Jampel Lhakhang 12, 26, 29–34, 50, 60, 293–307, 345, 346, 350, 366–376, 380, 382, 385, 403, 720
  Lhakhang Soma 8, 12, 24, 26, 30–35, 60, 83, 126, 233, 240, 309–343, 397–400, 400, 577, 715, 716, 767–769, 778
  Main Temple 8, 23, 30, 32–35, 37–241, 345, 346, 347–355, 364, 372–380, 394–396, 401, 402, 455, 792
  Maitreya Temple 27, 38–41, 402
  Mañjuśrī Temple
    See Jampel Lhakhang
  Palden Drepung Chörten 12, 29, 32–35, 240, 243–267, 269, 284, 286, 363–367, 389, 395, 400, 404, 406–409, 458, 465, 492, 567, 572, 581, 715, 720, 760, 792, 795, 796
  Raised Chörten 30, 32–35, 37–41, 346, 352, 364, 390, 394–396, 397, 403
  Sumtsek 8, 11–17, 23–35, 37, 50, 53, 56, 60, 67, 71, 126, 178, 226, 228, 233, 240, 246, 254, 259, 260, 262, 269, 271–274, 286, 290, 293, 297, 309, 316, 333, 345, 350, 354, 355–364, 366, 371–376, 381, 384, 385, 395, 397, 400, 401, 403, 404, 451–713, 715–721, 723–733, 735–745, 747, 749–753, 757, 762–764, 768, 772, 772–776, 781–789, 791–796
  Tashi Gomang Chörten 19, 29, 32–35, 50, 67, 240, 254, 259, 269–291, 335, 355, 364–367, 382, 384, 391, 405, 774
  tower 30, 37–41, 43, 346–348, 352–355, 376, 380
  Twin Chörten 34, 270, 271, 391–393, 398, 400
  veranda of the Main Temple 30, 37–46, 345, 348–352, 374–376, 378–380, 402
Alchi Lönpo Chörten 12, 23, 30, 364, 387–391, 391, 393
Alchi Shangrong 26, 259, 313, 341, 345, 397–400, 772
Alchi Tsatsapuri 26, 345, 400
Allinger, Eva 738
Ālokā / Dīpā, offering goddess 46, 102, 350, 388, 410, 412, 418, 422, 427, 633, 638, 754
Amarāvatī 365
Amitābha 44, 146, 149, 190, 247, 286, 290, 293, 297, 343, 359, 360, 367, 372, 376, 383–385, 387–389, 407, 409–412, 415, 417, 453, 465, 467, 474–481, 488, 525–534, 597, 610, 633, 637, 656, 715–717, 721, 737, 749, 767
Amitāyus 327, 332
  White Amitāyus 341
Amoghadarśin 285, 410, 412, 422, 427
Amoghapāśapañcadevastotra 778
Amoghasiddhi 44, 190, 196–198, 247, 283, 343, 385, 387, 409, 411, 415, 444, 453, 590, 610, 633, 637, 656, 749
Amoghavajra (705–774) 634, 773
Amṛtā 119, 413
Amṛtakuṇḍalin 119, 413, 423
amṛta, nectar of immortality 126, 129
Ānandagarbha 196, 410, 627, 634
Ananta (1028–63) 490
Anurādhapura 675
Aparajita 290
apsaras, flying celestial nymph 359, 474, 495, 496, 540, 550, 570, 644, 654, 724, 725
  See also flying goddesses
Archaeological Survey of India 17, 33, 382, 403, 511, 791, 794
Arthapratisaṃvid 148, 417
arūpaloka 739, 741, 742
Arya, Aditya 12
Asita 81, 316, 322, 544
Assam 469
aṣṭamaṅgala, eight auspicious symbols 254, 297, 375, 567
  banner 207
  conch 373
  lotus 50, 206
  pair of fish 210, 567, 726
  personifications 285, 768
  wheel 285
asura, demi-gods 164, 193, 196, 216, 240, 425, 770
Aśvinī, lunar mansion 158, 421, 426
Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982–1054) 21, 290
Avalokiteśvara 29, 46, 75, 149, 240, 272–275, 290, 332, 354, 356, 357, 359–361, 369, 370, 379, 381–383, 388, 389, 417, 451, 466, 496, 504, 589–591, 594, 618, 634, 667, 719–721, 736–742, 768, 770, 773–776, 788, 791
  four-armed 350, 357, 467, 532
  Rakta Lokeśvara 322, 612–614
  Ṣaḍakṣara Lokeśvara 98, 126, 133, 290, 335, 336, 382, 383, 384, 393–396, 466
  Siṃhanāda Lokeśvara 43, 483, 791
  thousand-armed 375, 376
  twenty-two-armed 98, 126–127, 597–601, 616–617
Avantisvāmin 452, 460, 675

B

Balabhadra 122, 418
Balarāma 484, 495
Bāmiyān 356, 458
Bardé, *'bar lde* 21
Bardzong 259, 769, 779
Bari Lotsawa Rinchendrak, *ba ri lo tsA ba rin chen grags* (1040–1112) 778
Basgo 22
beneficial to see (*mthong ba don ldan*), a composition 309, 335
Beri, Nepali painting style in Tibet 309, 396, 397
Bhadracarīpraṇidhānarāja 407
Bhaiṣajyaguru 290, 343
Bhīmā 122, 414
Bhṛṅgin 158, 166, 419
Bhū / Bhūdevi / Pṛthivī, earth-goddess 164, 216, 222, 426, 496
bhūmi, stages of a Bodhisattvas career 134, 146, 415–416, 740
Bhutan 721
Bihar 469, 581, 731
Bodhgayā 46, 226, 316
  Vajrāsana 786
bodhicitta 408, 638, 648
Bodhipathapradīpa, *Lamp for the Path to Awakening* 21
Bodhisattva
  Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon 71, 97, 102, 105, 149, 193, 200, 233–235, 254, 327, 384, 412, 427, 634, 656, 755–762, 768
  sixteen Mahābodhisattvas 71, 100–102, 134, 193, 200, 254, 327, 333, 372, 384, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 634, 638, 669, 753, 756, 758, 759, 762, 768
  sixteen matchless Bodhisattvas 193, 200, 422
bodhyagrīmudrā, gesture of highest awakening 71, 72, 98, 317, 395, 409, 411, 735, 749, 762
bodice 71, 139, 428, 512, 618, 651, 716, 719
Borobudur 744
bracket 50
  lion bracket 37, 40, 44, 50, 311, 349, 350, 352, 357, 369, 370, 374, 375, 397, 462
  voluted 357, 358
Brahmā 102, 110, 206, 210, 412, 417, 418, 423, 525, 552, 604
Brahmāṇī 110, 158, 164, 412, 418, 419, 423
Brenner, Harald 10
Bṛhaspati (Jupiter) 218, 420, 424
Buddhabodhi 146, 416
Buddha families
  See *kula*
Buddhas
  Buddhas of confession 339
  Buddhas of the three times 46, 406
  five esoteric Buddhas / five Tathagata 21, 44, 46, 72, 97, 134, 189, 193, 228, 290, 297, 336, 343, 349, 350, 360–362, 364, 370–373, 381, 398, 408, 444, 488, 512, 590, 610, 612, 637, 648, 715, 721, 736, 738, 740, 748–752, 756, 757, 760, 763, 764, 772, 773
  seven Buddhas of the past 604
  Uṣṇīṣa Buddhas 134, 137, 233, 285, 333, 414, 427, 750, 755, 766, 768
Buddhasamantaprabhā 146, 416
Buddha's life 46, 53, 67, 81–83, 228, 316–325, 380, 466, 544–552, 589, 740
  awakening 44, 46, 83, 226, 316, 544, 737, 786
  birth 46, 81, 82, 316, 320, 544, 546
  first sermon 46, 122, 316
  parinirvāṇa 46, 81, 83, 316, 324
Budha (Mercury) 166, 419, 426

C

Caityapradakṣiṇagāthā 269
Cakrasaṃvara 313, 335, 337, 339, 398
Cāmuṇḍā 117, 158, 166, 414, 419, 469, 726
Candra, moon god 119, 122, 413, 418, 425, 428
Carbaripa, *mahāsiddha* 579
Cauraṅgipa, *mahāsiddha* 579, 731
Cchinnanāsā 122, 414
celestial bodies
  See *graha*
Chandra, Lokesh 648
Chandra, Yashaswini 738
Changspa 365
conch 230, 329, 350, 373, 410, 412, 417, 418, 420, 422, 427, 428, 474, 478, 495, 525, 542, 567, 585, 604, 638, 727, 728, 754
  conch trumpet 129, 206, 546
consorts 71, 134, 158, 337, 361, 415, 423, 495, 572, 648, 651, 751, 752, 755, 758–760, 772, 779
continents 193, 196, 207, 210, 406, 423, 767, 770, 785
  See also Jambudvīpa and Uttarakuru

D

ḍākinī 408
Dakpo Gomchung Shérap Jangchub, *dwags po sgom chung shes rab byang chub* (1130–1173) 665
Dānapāla 634, 773
Daṇḍahāriṇi 105, 413
Daṇḍavajrāgrā 105, 413
Daṇḍī 122
daśakrodha, ten wrathful deities 146, 152
Ḍeṅgipa, *mahāsiddha* 579
Densatil, *gdan sa mthil* 335, 337, 364, 365
Denwood, Philip 13, 721, 744, 747, 781
Dhanada 659
dhāraṇī 134, 146, 416–417, 648, 651
Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrīmaṇḍalavidhi 134
Dharmahūṃkāra 68, 100, 102, 411
dharmakāya 360, 406, 511, 581, 604, 739–742
Dharmameghābhūmi 146, 416
Dharmapa, *mahāsiddha* 579
Dharmavajrī / Dharmavajriṇi 98, 410, 411, 647, 651, 751
Dhilipa, *mahāsiddha* 579
Dhūpā, offering goddess 46, 102, 119, 230, 285, 350, 410, 412, 418, 422, 427, 633, 638, 716, 754
Dhvajoṣṇīṣa 285, 427
Dhyānapāramitā 148, 416
Didi-Huberman, Georges 724
dikpāla, guardians of the directions 122, 158, 210, 225, 233, 238, 327, 418, 423, 427
Dīpā
  See Ālokā
Dorjé Chenmo, *rdo rje chen mo* 15, 22, 27, 56, 57, 60, 449
Dowman, Keith 731
drabla, *dgra bla* 60, 315
dragon 594
Drakden Ö, *grags ldan 'od* 484, 486, 555
Drigung (*'bri gung*) school/tradition 12–14, 25–27, 246, 259, 265, 290, 309, 335, 341, 346, 347, 361, 367, 372, 383, 385, 390, 393, 399, 572, 659, 660, 730–732, 741
Drigungpa Jikten Gönpo, *'jig rten mgon po* (1143–1217) 12, 14, 19, 25–27, 246, 259–267, 286, 290–291, 329, 335, 338, 361–364, 367, 382–384, 389–396, 398–399, 406–408, 659, 665, 723, 725, 730, 732, 741, 747, 778
drinking scene 53, 54, 85, 87, 90, 94, 473, 583, 718
Dro (*'bro*) clan 14, 20, 23, 37, 94, 406, 747, 778, 782–785, 786, 789
Dromtön Gyalwe Jungné, *brom ston rgyal ba'i byung gnas* (1005–1064) 21
Dunhuang 356, 458, 539, 750, 774–777
Dunkar 134, 758–760
  Dharmadhātu Cave (Cave 3) 767, 769
  Eight Buddhas Cave (Cave 2) 766, 767
  Guhyasamāja Cave (Cave 1) 757, 758, 761, 765, 767, 774, 775, 778
Durgā 120, 122, 414, 423

E

Elephanta 745
Ellora 512

F

Fachhochschule Köln 10, 791, 794, 796
Five Sisters of Long Life
  See Tséring Chénga
Flood, Barry Finbarr 94

flying
Buddha 269, 278–279, 285
deities 206–209, 243, 250–253, 284, 506, 604, 654–655, 759
deities with crown 46, 369
goddesses 488, 539–542, 572
See also *apsaras*
Four Great Kings 240, 327, 333, 428

G

Gaganagañja 116, 200, 410, 412, 417, 422, 427
Gampopa, *sgam po pa* (1079–1153) 361, 665, 730, 741
Gaṇapati 122, 164, 172, 360, 413, 414, 421, 511, 659
Gandhā 46, 102, 350, 410, 412, 418, 422, 427, 628, 633, 638, 754
Gandhahastin 285, 410, 412, 422, 427
Gandhāra 452, 460, 462, 463
gandharva 421, 496, 534, 585, 604
Gaṇeśa 178, 290, 525, 528, 532
See also Gaṇapati
Garland of Butter Lamps 781–789
garuḍa / *kinnara*, bird man 44, 158, 164, 169, 189, 198, 210, 216, 286, 357, 358, 366, 387, 411, 412, 418–421, 425, 427, 474, 478, 542, 749, 750
gate-keepers 46, 67–69, 75, 97, 116–117, 216, 240, 273, 284, 285, 345, 384, 385, 409, 410, 428, 633, 753, 755, 756, 759, 763, 768, 772, 773
animal-headed 337
female 134, 148, 417, 651
peaceful 67, 71, 193, 200, 233, 254, 285, 422, 427, 669, 759, 760, 762
wrathful 68, 97, 134, 149, 164, 274, 327, 332, 333, 411, 414, 415, 421, 426
Géluk (*dge lugs*) school/tradition 14, 27
Ghaṇṭāpa, *mahāsiddha* 579
Gharbari, *mahāsiddha* 579
Ghauhati 469
Ghaznavid empire 675
Ghuya Gangpa Püntsok Gyatso, *ghu ya sgang pa phun tshogs rgya mtsho* 26
Gilgit 19, 226
Gītā, offering goddess 77, 102, 388, 410, 411, 417, 422, 427, 543, 638, 647, 754
Goepper, Roger 10–16, 22, 53, 243, 246, 361, 363, 406, 407, 448, 723, 728, 729, 732, 735, 737, 741, 744, 752, 758
Gompa Tsültrim Nyingpo, *sgom pa tshul khrims snying po* (1116–1169) 665
Gorakhnāth, *mahāsiddha* 731
Gorakṣa, *mahāsiddha* 579
graha, celestial bodies 158, 166, 210, 216, 218, 332, 418–421, 424–426, 768
Guge 14, 20, 26, 451, 675, 716, 718–720, 732, 733, 784, 785
See also Purang-Guge
Guhyasamājatantra 134, 335, 359, 360, 751
Guru Drakpo, *gu ru drag po* 335
Gyantsé, *rgyal rtse* 365, 579, 616, 744
Gyüdé Küntü, *rgyud sde kun btus* 762

H

van Ham, Peter 12, 785
Hārītī 164, 172, 421
harmika 228, 258, 286, 388, 392
Harwan 226, 512, 523
Hayagrīva 339, 341, 423, 775
heaven
See Akaniṣṭha, Trāyastriṃśa, and Tuṣita.
Heller, Amy 12, 13, 406, 736, 781, 785
hell, realm of rebirth 193, 194, 196, 667, 770
Hemantarājñī 473
Hevajra 335, 339
Himachal Pradesh 356, 618

I

indigo 795
Indrabhūti, *mahāsiddha* 579, 732
Indra, guardian of the east 102, 158, 177, 178, 180, 210, 319, 412, 418, 423, 424, 428, 525, 604, 607
Indrāṇī 158, 160, 419, 423
Indus River 8, 19, 23, 24, 27, 29, 30, 33, 293, 347, 791
Īśāna (Śiva), guardian of the northeast 158, 210, 216, 418, 423

J

Jackson, David 16
Jaggayapeta 476
Jain 512, 720
Jālandhara, *mahāsiddha* 579
Jambhala 170, 228, 290, 426, 659, 660, 663, 728, 737
See also Ucchuṣma-Jambhala (Black Jambhala)
Jambudvīpa, continent 206, 406, 423, 785, 786
Jangchup Ö, *byang chub 'od* 21
Jātāhāriṇi 105, 116, 413
Jayakara 122, 413
Jayāvaha 112, 122, 413
Jñānaketu 410, 412, 422, 427, 727
jñānamuṣṭi 634
Jokhang 465

K

Kadam (*bka' gdams*) school/tradition 21, 27
Kagyü (*bka' brgyud*) schools/traditions 15, 25, 309, 329, 335, 338, 341, 361, 396–398, 730, 778
Kailash, mountain 26, 731–733
Kālacakra 335, 336, 398, 399
Kālacakra literature 265, 365, 777, 778
Kalden Shérap, *skal ldan shes rab* 19, 22–24, 37, 87, 90, 92–94, 177, 260, 263, 465, 484, 783
Kāmākhyā temple 469
kāmaloka 739, 740, 742
Kanakhalā, *mahāsiddha* 579, 731, 732, 741
kañcuka
See bodice
Kangra 490
Kāṇha, *mahāsiddha* 579
Kanji 782, 783, 786
Kaṇṭhaka 320, 544, 546
Kapālapa, *mahāsiddha* 579
kapāla, skull-cup 53, 54, 56, 160, 272, 273, 274, 313, 338, 341, 412, 417–419, 421, 423–426, 465, 469, 470, 532, 634, 659, 726, 776, 777
Kapilavastu 316, 322
Kapstein, Matthew 730
Karmahūṃkāra 68, 100, 102, 411
Karmavajrī / Karmavajriṇī 98, 410, 411, 647, 651, 751
Kārtikeya 102, 412, 525
kartṛkā 53, 54, 213, 216, 218, 372, 426, 776
kaṣāya, monk's robes 260, 474
Kashmir 20, 23, 26, 94, 126, 139, 158, 210, 226, 243, 254, 356, 451, 452, 458, 462, 467, 470, 488–509, 512, 562, 581, 618, 673–675, 716, 718, 719, 724, 731–733
Kashmiri artists 20, 87, 488, 543, 675, 729, 731
Kaumārī 158, 160, 216, 419
Khacham, Shawo 406, 781
Khadalik 463
khakkhara, begging staff 200, 202, 260, 607
Khara Khoto 509, 537, 715, 717
khaṭvāṅga, tantric staff 54, 57, 105, 152, 313, 338, 341, 412, 413, 417, 469, 470, 483, 634, 733
Khorchak, *'khor chags* 20, 44
Khorkyong, *'khor skyong* 20
Khorré, *'khor re* 20, 21
Khosla, Romi 346, 720
kinnara
See *garuḍa* / *kinnara*, bird man
kīrtimukha, face of glory 266, 369, 474, 526, 644, 715
Kizil 356, 458
Konchok Panday 735, 744
Koṭāli, *mahāsiddha* 572, 574, 579
Krodhavajra 102, 105, 412
Krodhavajrāgni 102, 105, 412
Kṛttikā, lunar mansion 158, 419, 424
Kṣitigarbha 150, 417
Kubera, guardian of the north 122, 164, 170, 171, 216, 225, 414, 420, 426
Kukkuripa, *mahāsiddha* 732, 733
kula, family
Buddha families 67, 68, 78, 98, 137, 189, 247–249, 265, 362–364, 398, 567, 634, 748–752, 757, 763, 769
kuleśa, lord of the family 488, 544, 594
lotus family, *padmakula* 43, 330, 376, 378, 384, 737
mothers of the families 67, 71, 72, 97, 189, 254, 409, 411, 751, 773
three families 78, 594, 740
See also protectors of the three families
vajra family, *vajrakula* 53, 98, 100, 360, 398, 465, 594, 760, 761
Kuṣāṇa 19, 567
Kuśinagara 46
Kyidé Nyimagön, *skyid lde nyi ma mgon* 20, 784

L

Lachuse 44, 356
Ladakh 17, 19–27, 81, 243, 397, 400, 562, 581, 618, 665, 673, 675, 716, 718, 719, 724, 728, 731–733, 786
Lower Ladakh 19, 24, 27, 406
Lahaul 44, 732
lalāṭabimba, central door motif 44, 773
lalitāsana, sitting posture of royal ease 221, 418–420, 424–426, 428, 495, 496
Lalitavistara 354
Lamayuru Senggé Lhakhang 313, 397
Langdarma, *glang dar ma* 20
lantern ceiling 244, 245, 247–254, 260, 269, 271, 284–286, 293–297, 355, 362–364, 366, 369, 371, 385, 387–392, 394, 395, 457, 458, 712, 730
Lāsyā, offering goddess 102, 146, 410, 411, 417, 422, 427, 754
Leh Choskor 22
Lhadé, *lha lde* 21
Likir Monastery 12, 14, 17, 22, 27, 30, 50, 404, 511, 791, 794, 797
liṅga 492, 495, 498, 500
Locanā / Buddhalocanā 139, 200, 415, 421, 633, 637, 751, 752, 758, 759
Loulan 463
lozenge band 249, 272, 352
Lucikapa, *mahāsiddha* 579
Lūipa, *mahāsiddha* 579

M

Machik Lapdrön, *ma cig lab sgron* 309
Madhukara 122, 413
Madhumatta 105, 122, 413
Magadha 627, 731
Maghā, lunar mansion 166, 218, 419, 425
Mahādaṇḍāgra 105, 413
Mahākāla 15, 43, 53–68, 71, 85, 94, 290, 312–315, 349, 354, 370–372, 379, 384, 385, 398, 399, 418, 465–473, 589, 719, 736, 736–738, 738
Mahāmāya 335, 338, 339
mahāmudrā 408
mahāsiddha 360, 382, 383, 467, 486, 589, 723, 726, 730
eighty plus 363, 399, 572–581, 730–733
Maheśvara
See Śiva / Maheśvara
Māheśvarī 158, 160, 419
Maitreya 41, 200, 285, 317, 354, 356–361, 380, 381, 388, 389, 395, 401, 408, 410, 412, 422, 427, 484, 486, 525, 534, 544, 602, 724, 735, 737, 739–743, 751, 773, 781, 787, 788
four-armed 46, 228, 335, 350, 402, 466
six-armed 532
makara, sea-monster 78, 120, 189, 266, 267, 305, 414, 420, 425, 428, 470, 525, 526, 542, 594, 622, 644, 716
Mālā, offering goddess 46, 76, 102, 233, 350, 410, 411, 413, 417, 422, 427, 633, 638, 647, 754
Māmakī 140, 146, 200, 415, 421, 633, 637, 752, 759
Mamo, *ma mo* 15, 57
mandala
Akṣobhya mandala 385
Amitābha mandala 371, 384, 590, 656
Amitāyus mandala 327, 332
Amoghapāśa mandala 272, 274, 290, 366, 384, 393, 774–778
Avalokiteśvara mandala 384
Cakravartin mandala 327
Caturmahārāja mandala 327, 333
Caturmudrā mandala 590, 628, 759
Dharmadhātu mandala 46, 122, 126, 134–175, 200, 210, 240, 349, 358, 359, 365, 414–421, 427, 552, 743, 751, 752, 755, 756, 765–770
Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrīmaṇḍala
See Dharmadhātu mandala
Dharma mandala 591, 628–629, 759
Dikpāla mandala 327, 333
Ekamudrā mandala 590, 628, 760, 773
Guhyasamāja mandala 335, 765
Karma mandala 591, 627, 759
Mahābhairava mandala 327, 333
Mahādeva mandala 327
Mahāgraha mandala 327, 332
Mahānāga mandala 327, 332
Nāmasaṃgīti Vajradhātu mandala 71–79, 358, 409–410, 602, 660, 668, 749, 752, 762–765, 795
Navoṣṇīṣa mandala
See Śākyasiṃha mandala
Prajñāpāramitā mandala 67, 240, 273, 281–283, 366, 660, 670, 730, 741, 744, 772, 772–773, 778
ritual mandala 129–131, 228, 329, 747
Śākyasiṃha mandala 37, 67, 233–240, 284, 290, 327, 333, 426–428, 660, 666, 727, 750, 756, 767–770, 773, 777
Sarvavid mandala 37, 102, 134, 158, 193, 196–225, 233, 327–331, 421–426, 750, 767–768, 779
Trailokyavijaya mandala 68–69, 773
Trilokavijayamahāmaṇḍala
See Trilokavijaya mandala
Trilokavijaya mandala 46, 68, 97–123, 125, 126, 134, 254, 410–414, 747, 751, 761–762
Vairocana mandala 370, 372
Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala
See Vajradhātu mandala
Vajradhātu mandala 15, 21, 37, 46, 71, 97, 98, 134, 149, 189–191, 199, 240, 254, 265, 347, 349, 361, 364, 409, 591, 627, 633–644, 648, 651, 652, 656, 667, 721, 727, 751–753, 756, 756–764, 757, 758, 767, 768, 776, 777, 779
Vajraguhya mandala 361, 591, 633, 647–655, 656, 741, 753, 758
Vajraguhyavajramaṇḍala
See Vajraguhya mandala
Vajrajñānadharmamaṇḍala
See Dharma mandala

Vajrakāryakarmamaṇḍala
See Karma mandala
Vajrakrodha mandala 327
Vajrapāṇi mandala 327, 332
Vajrasattva mandala 627, 633
Maṅgala (Mars) 122, 166, 419, 424
Mangyu 15, 24, 122, 346, 402, 410–413, 673, 715, 748, 756, 761–764, 768, 778, 784
Four Image Chörten 458, 589, 618
Śākyamuni Temple / Dukhang 760, 768, 773, 785
Two-armed Maitreya Temple 757, 763
Vairocana Temple 760, 761, 762, 772, 774
Mañjughoṣa 134, 137, 139, 146, 359, 407, 408, 414, 415, 466, 552, 756, 766
Mañjuśrī 29, 44, 134, 137, 200, 226–231, 290, 293, 295, 297, 300, 302, 330, 357, 359, 359–361, 369, 372, 375, 381, 391, 422, 466, 467, 482, 484, 486, 525, 532, 552, 555, 567, 572, 618, 715, 716, 720, 721, 726, 728, 736, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 753, 763
Arapacana Mañjuśrī 44
Mañjuśrī Ādibuddha 297, 358, 359, 360, 361, 409, 466, 552, 602, 668, 669, 739, 743, 763, 765, 773
Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva 297, 763, 765
Nāmasaṃgīti Mañjuśrī 43, 46, 196, 228, 230, 293, 350, 358, 359, 369, 370–372, 378, 467, 773
ten-armed Mañjuśrī 495, 504
Tīkṣṇa Mañjuśrī 567, 572
Mañjuśrīkīrti 134
Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, *Root Tantra of Mañjuśrī* 309, 335
Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti, *Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī* 71, 228, 230, 297, 358, 359, 360, 407, 743, 744, 762
Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgītiguhyavadvidhivṛttijñānadīpa 409
Māra 81, 316, 375, 376, 544, 546, 549
Māraṇi 105, 122
Markha valley 23
Marpa, *mar pa* (1012-1096) 337, 581, 664, 665, 730, 741
Maryül, *mar yul* 20, 22, 23, 26, 94, 784–786
Mathurā 512
mātṛka, mother 97, 164
saptamātṛka, seven mothers 158, 160, 166, 210, 216, 419
Matsunaga, Yūkei 627, 720
Matsyendranāth, *mahāsiddha*
See Mīnapa
Maudgalyāyana 202, 422
Maunavajra 110, 412
Māyā 80–83, 316, 318, 319, 544, 546–547
Māyāvajra 108, 412
Mekhalā, *mahāsiddha* 579, 731, 732, 741
Menmo, *sman mo* 15, 57
Menon, Sreekumar 17
Mer (*smer*) clan 25, 778, 784
Meru, Mount 210, 406, 550
Milarepa, *mi la ras pa* (1040–1113) 380, 401, 402, 665, 730, 741
Mīnapa, *mahāsiddha* 572, 576, 579, 726, 731
Miran 463
Möndrup Shérap, Minyak Tsami lotsawa, *mi nyag tsa mi lo tsa ba smon grub shes rab* 730, 731
Mongols 26

N

Nāgārjuna 290
nāga, snake 164, 178, 189, 216, 233, 324, 332, 352, 354, 414, 420, 425, 428, 495, 525, 532, 544, 546, 550, 552, 607, 616, 622, 772
Nairañjanā River 316
Nairṛti, guardian of the southwest 164, 216, 222, 233, 238, 419, 420, 425, 428
Nako 37, 134, 767, 773
Lhakhang Gongma 773, 774
Lotsawa Lhakhang 764, 765, 767
nakṣatra, lunar mansion 158, 166, 210, 216, 218, 332, 419–422, 424–425, 768
Nālandā 581, 743
Nāropa, *mahāsiddha* 16, 290, 449, 572, 581, 664, 730, 731, 732, 741, 742
Nepal 715
Ngari, *mnga' ris* 20
Ngari Khorsum, *mnga' ris skor gsum* 20, 21, 94
Upper Ngari, Ngari tö, *mnga' ris stod* 406, 786
Ngödrubgön, *dngos grub mgon* 26
Ngödrup Shérap, *dngos grub shes rab* 782, 789
nirmāṇakāya 360, 385, 406, 486, 511, 604, 719, 739, 740, 742
Niṣpannayogāvalī 15, 134, 634
Nṛtyā, offering goddess 77, 102, 120, 285, 410, 411, 417, 422, 427, 543, 633, 638, 647, 754
Nyarma, *nyar ma* 20, 22, 23, 27, 243, 348, 747, 783, 784, 786
Nyetang, *snye thang* 21
Nyingma 335, 341, 397

O

Ödé, *'od lde* (c. 996–1024) 21
offering goddesses 46, 102, 148, 350, 372, 384, 387, 388, 395, 762
eight 254, 285, 337, 382, 384, 633, 754, 756, 759, 760, 769, 772, 773, 775
inner offering goddesses 68, 71, 97, 102, 134, 146, 193, 200, 233, 284, 327, 333, 361, 410, 411, 417, 422, 427, 466, 478, 543, 634, 638, 640, 652, 667, 754, 755, 758, 759, 762
outer offering goddesses 46, 67, 68, 71, 97, 102, 148, 149, 152, 193, 200, 228, 233, 273, 327, 332, 333, 361, 410, 412, 418, 422, 427, 467, 634, 638, 640, 652, 753, 754, 758, 759, 760, 762, 766
sense offering goddesses 149, 418
sixteen 336, 337
Ösung, *'od srung* 423

P

Padampa Sanggyé, *pha dam pa sangs rgyas* 16, 243, 259, 260, 286, 309, 329, 360, 364, 449, 579, 581, 732
Padmasambhava 310, 335, 341, 399, 401
Padmoṣṇīṣa 427, 750
Pakmodrupa Dorjé Gyelpo, *phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po* (1110–1170) 246, 310, 329, 335, 341, 361, 393, 398, 399, 665, 725, 730
Palgyigön, *dpal gyi mgon* 20–22
Palola Ṣāhi kingdom 226
pañcāyatana 243, 366, 492, 496
Pāñcika 164, 172, 421
Pāṇḍarāvasinī 200, 415, 421, 633, 637, 752, 759
Pandrethan 254, 452, 458
pan-Indian deities 37, 97, 98, 102, 120, 122, 152, 193, 210, 213, 233, 240, 412, 762, 764–767
pāramitā, perfections of a Bodhisattva 134, 146–149, 416, 670, 751
parinirvāṇa
See Buddha's life
Pārvatī
See Umā
pastiglia 98–101, 139, 379, 542, 559, 567–571, 604–606, 634, 668–669, 717, 728, 735, 791–793, 795
Payar 254, 458
Peacock Cape Lady 16, 56, 57, 60, 313, 385, 449, 470, 589
Pearl Garland Composition 246, 406–409
Persepolis 463
Phyang, Guru Lhakhang 26
Phyang, west Tibet 720
Lotus Family Cave 775, 778
pigments 728, 788, 794–795
azurite 788, 794
cinnabar 793, 794
gold 139, 407, 728, 788, 792, 794, 795
organic 376
orpiment 794
tin powder 792, 794, 795
vermillion 788
Piṅgala 105, 116, 122, 413
plangi, tie-dying technique 478, 484, 488, 673
podrang, *pho brang* 21, 23, 783–786
Polonnaruwa 675
Prajñāntaka 148, 152, 417
Prajñāpāramitā, goddess 240, 290, 426, 503, 590, 602, 720, 721, 736, 738–742, 768–770, 773
four-armed 146, 148, 233, 330, 333, 383, 416, 427
six-armed 43, 44, 46, 67, 273, 281, 350, 378, 612, 666, 670, 671
Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya 407
Prajñāpāramitā literature 246, 354, 738, 744, 783, 787
Prajñāpāramitāsañcayagāthā 407
Pratibhānakūṭa 117, 410, 412, 422
pratisaṃvid, right cognitions of a Bodhisattva 146, 417
pratyekabuddha 193, 200, 203, 327, 423, 767–768
preta, hungry ghost 53, 193–196, 589, 597
protectors of the three families 29, 369, 375, 383, 407, 408
Pṛthvīcūlika 122, 414
Pullahari 581
Purang 20, 23, 26, 732, 782, 786
Purang-Guge kingdom 20–22, 348, 747, 748, 778
Purik 783
Pūrvaphalgunī, lunar mansion 166, 419, 425
Puṣpā, offering goddess 102, 148, 233, 282, 350, 410, 412, 418, 422, 427, 633, 638, 754

R

Rāhu, eclipse 158, 169, 420
Rāhula 544
Rājataraṅginī 490, 492
Rājgir / Rājagṛha 46, 786
rākṣasa, demon 164, 216, 218, 221, 222, 233, 419, 425, 428
rākṣasī, demoness 210, 213, 216, 238, 424
Raktayamāri 313
Rati 112, 122, 413, 638
Ratnahūṃkāra 68, 100, 102, 411
Ratnaketu 200, 421, 750
Ratnapadmapāramitā 146, 416
Ratnasambhava 44, 75, 102, 144–146, 189–191, 247, 350, 385, 387, 388, 395, 409, 411, 415, 453, 590, 610, 633, 637, 651, 656, 749, 752, 767
Ratnavajrī / Ratnavajriṇī 98, 189, 410, 411, 647, 651, 749, 751
Ratnoṣṇīṣa 427, 750
Rāvaṇa 164, 216, 221, 420, 425, 667, 770
Rematī 15, 16, 56–60, 290, 385, 448, 449, 470, 473, 589, 719, 726
Reting, *rva sgreng* 21
Ribba 44
Rinchen Zangpo, *rin chen bzang po* (958–1155) 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 27, 56, 259, 354, 356, 385, 410, 451, 503, 634, 732, 733, 743, 748
ringed mace 210, 225, 426
Royal Genealogy of Ladakh, *la dwags rgyal rabs* 22
Royal Genealogy of Ngari, *mnga' ris rgyal rabs* 354, 784, 785
Royal Rider 60–63, 87, 315, 473
ṛṣi, eight great ascetics 154–161, 160, 210, 214–216, 233, 419, 424, 428
ṛtudevatā 473
Rukmiṇī 108, 412
rūpaloka 739, 740, 742

S

Sadāśiva temple 484, 490, 492
Sādhanamālā 14, 465, 469, 512, 594
Sakara, *mahāsiddha* 579
Śākyamuni 46, 196, 200, 202, 226, 233, 284, 290, 309, 317, 335, 343, 354, 358, 360, 372, 378, 382–385, 388, 389, 390, 392, 394, 395, 398, 399, 421, 484, 486, 496, 506, 509, 521, 544, 546, 549, 589, 590, 594, 604, 607, 644, 716, 718, 721, 737, 739, 742, 743, 750, 760, 764, 768, 773, 789
Śākyasiṃha 193, 233, 284, 285, 366, 427, 666, 667, 738, 750, 768, 779
Śākyaśrī (1127–1225) 53
saṃbhogakāya 273, 317, 360, 406, 511, 719, 739, 740, 742, 773
Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra 126
Samye 721, 744
Śanaiścara (Saturn) 122, 421, 426
saptaratna, seven treasures of a universal monarch 134, 144, 254, 285, 297, 414, 474–478, 567, 618, 768
Saradrājñī 473
Sarasvatī 122, 414
Sārnāth 46, 122, 323, 675
Sarvadurgatipariśodhanamahāmaṇḍalasādhana, *Liturgy of the Great Mandala of the Purification of All Bad Migrations* 196, 200, 210, 216, 421
Sarvadurgatipariśodhanarāja 200, 421, 750
Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra, *Tantra for the Purification of All Bad Migrations* 97, 158, 193, 196, 226, 233, 284, 290, 327, 349, 399, 749, 755, 767–769, 770, 779
Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati 234, 410, 412, 417, 422, 427
Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgrahatantra, *Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas Tantra* 21, 97, 98, 189, 634, 648, 740, 741, 748, 751, 754, 757, 760, 761, 764, 773, 779
Sarvavid Vairocana
See Vairocana
Saspol Tse 767, 769
Sassanian 465, 490, 673, 675
Sattvavajrī 98, 409, 411, 637, 647, 651, 751, 759
Śavaripa, *mahāsiddha* 579
scroll painting, *thang ka* 290, 335, 367, 393
shading 62, 226, 715
binduvartanā, shading by dots 469, 473, 478, 515, 717
hairikavartanā, shading by bands 515, 717
ujjotana, highlighting 352, 717
Sharri, northeast Indian painting style in Tibet 309, 396, 397
Shérap Gyokchen 203, 423
Shey 243
Shingon 634
Singhal, Sudarshana Devi 648
Śiva / Maheśvara 53, 97, 98, 102, 105, 120, 152, 178, 210, 411, 412, 417, 423, 452, 458, 484, 492, 495, 498, 500, 525, 552, 576, 607, 724, 725, 747, 760–762, 768, 791
See also Īśāna
Skanda
See Kārtikeya
Skorupski, Tadeusz 11, 349, 627, 673, 744
skull-cup
See *kapāla*
śmaśāna, charnel ground 53, 57, 64, 470, 473, 589, 736
Smṛtijñānakīrti 409
Snellgrove, David 11, 349, 489, 572, 627, 673, 720, 744
Sogdian 675
Songngé, *srong nge* 20
Songtsen Gampo, *srong btsan sgam po* 465
Spituk 22, 726
Śraddhākaravarman 21, 503, 634
śrāvaka, hearer (monk) 200, 767
sixteen 193, 327, 422
Śrī 119, 122, 414, 423
Śrīdevī 56, 57, 448, 469, 470, 589, 719, 726
Srinagar 481, 486, 489, 490, 496, 500, 570, 654, 675

Śrītrailokyavijayamaṇḍalavidhiāryatattvasaṃgrahatantroddhṛtā 410
Staktse 783, 786
Stok 243
stupa / chörten, *mchod rten* 29, 126, 226, 228, 240, 272, 316, 365, 381, 389, 453, 456, 457, 511, 512, 544, 552, 555, 557, 563, 673, 743, 744
  descent from the gods type, lhabap chörten, *lha babs mchod rten* 37, 258, 265, 269, 364, 388, 392, 523
  Dhānyakaṭaka stupa, palden drepung chörten, *dpal ldan 'bras spung mchod rten* 246, 365, 407
  eight stupas 81, 83, 324
  gateway chörten 23, 30, 269, 271, 363–365, 386, 397, 400, 458, 465
  kankani chörten, *kaṃ ka ni mchod rten* 364, 386, 390
  kumbum chörten, *sku 'bum mchod rten* 364, 400
  many auspicious doors type, tashi gomang, *bkra shis sgo mang* 246, 269, 364
Sujātā 46, 81, 316, 544
Sukhāvatī 149, 360, 408, 465, 525, 542, 721
Sumda, *gsum mda'* 23, 24, 783, 786
  Sumda Chen, *gsum mda' chen* 24, 784
  Sumda Chung, *gsum mda' chung* 15, 24, 349, 748, 756, 757, 765, 767, 768, 773, 778, 784
Sungma, *srung ma* 57
Śūraṃgama 116, 235, 285, 410, 412, 427
Sūrya, sun god
    See Āditya
Susiddhikarasūtra 740
svastika design 90, 94, 129, 255, 260, 302, 474, 512, 521, 675
Syalipa, *mahāsiddha* 578, 733

T

Tabo 20, 29, 37, 44, 134, 488, 572, 675, 716–720, 723, 733, 779
  Main Temple 20–22, 60, 348–349, 774
    Assembly Hall 766, 767, 769
    Entry Hall 379
Tango 721
Tārā 199, 200, 407, 408, 415, 421, 467, 484, 495, 496, 503, 511–523, 589, 594, 597, 618, 633, 637, 717, 718, 720, 721, 736, 738–741, 752, 759, 773
  Aṣṭabhayatrāṇa Tārā, Drölma Jikgyékyop, rescuing from the eight dangers 591, 618–625, 718, 738
  Dhanada Tārā, Drölma Norjinma, Tārā Granting Possessions 512, 517, 523
  Durgottāriṇī Tārā, Ngensonglé Jongwé Drölma 512
  Green Tārā 126, 290, 360, 484, 495, 511–523, 612
    rescuing from the eight dangers 597
  Mahāśānti Tārā, Great Peace Tārā 16, 98, 126, 129, 444, 449, 511–514, 747
  seven Tārā 309, 335, 399
  twenty-one 126
Tashigön, *bkra shis mgon* 20
Tathatā 146, 416
Taxila 452, 460, 463
Tholing 20, 21
  Dukhang Dzamlinggyen
    See Red Temple
  Red Temple, *lha khang dmar po* 14, 27, 718, 719
  Serkhang, *gser khang* 44, 451
Tiksé 22
Tilopa, *mahāsiddha* 290, 579, 581, 659, 664, 725, 726, 730, 741, 742
ṭirāz, bands with pseudo-Kufic script 60, 62, 87, 132, 166, 579
torma, *gtor ma* 408, 484, 495, 539
Trailokyavijaya 68, 98, 100, 152, 411, 747, 761, 762
Trailokyavinaya (Jikten Sumdül) 203, 423
Trapuṣa and Bhallika 316, 324
Trāyastriṃśa heaven 46, 177, 180
tridaṇḍa, staff with three ends 126, 129, 428, 511
triguhya 484, 736
triśūla, trident 105, 172, 412–414, 418, 419, 423, 424, 426, 483, 492, 604, 607, 634, 770
Tséden Shérap, *rtse ldan shes rab* 782, 789
Tsédé, *rtse lde* 21, 784
Tséring Chénga, *tshe ring mched lnga*, Five Sisters of Long Life 60, 592, 594
Tsering, Nawang 12
tsha tsha, clay mouldings 243
Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) 14, 27, 401
Tsültrim Ö, *tshul khrims 'od* 12, 14, 24, 25, 37, 240, 246, 260, 262, 356, 363, 367, 372, 406, 451, 465, 484, 486, 555, 585, 586, 602, 659, 664, 665, 720, 731, 736, 742, 743, 744, 747, 781, 782–786, 788, 789
Tuṣita heaven 46, 81, 316, 317, 544

U

Ucchuṣma-Jambhala (Black Jambhala) 659, 660, 662, 737
Udaipur 44
Udāyin 203, 422
Umā 98, 102, 105, 120, 152, 158, 411, 412, 417, 484, 495, 747, 760, 762
underdrawing 792–794
Uṣṇīṣavijayā 327
Uttarakuru, northern continent 210, 423

V

Vairocana 21, 134, 193, 317, 336, 347, 358, 361, 364, 367, 372, 380, 385, 387, 390, 395, 398, 399, 544, 604, 610, 627, 637, 720, 738, 739, 742, 748–753
  Mahāvairocana / Vajradhātu Vairocana, four-faced, *bodhyagrīmudrā* 4, 44, 46, 71–73, 98, 189, 254, 349, 350, 358, 359, 361, 362, 381, 387, 388, 409, 411, 466, 590, 602, 633–635, 648, 735, 737, 743, 749, 754, 756, 759, 762, 763, 765, 767, 779
  Sarvavid Vairocana, meditating 193, 196, 198, 327, 421, 720, 750, 767, 779
Vairocanābhisaṃbodhisūtra 740
Vaiśālī 46
Vaiṣṇavī 158, 164, 419
Vaiśravaṇa 787
Vajrabhairava 126, 414
Vajrabhāṣa 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 754
Vajradaṇḍa 105, 413
Vajradhara 290, 343, 581, 664, 726, 727, 741, 742
Vajradharma 71, 75, 247, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 753, 759
Vajradhātviśvarī / Vajriṇī 647, 648
Vajradhvaja / Vajraketu 144, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 753
Vajraghaṇṭa / Vajrāveśa 102, 117, 171, 277, 283, 410, 411, 412, 414, 415, 421, 422, 426–428, 633, 638, 755
Vajrahāsa 75, 144, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 753
Vajrahetu 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 644, 753
Vajrahūṃkāra 68, 98, 105, 411, 432
vajrahūṃkāramudrā, gesture 98, 411, 747
Vajrajvālā 116, 414
Vajrajvālānalārka 152, 417
Vajrakāla 117, 414
Vajrakālī 117, 414
Vajrakarma 247, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 754
Vajrakarmapāramitā 146, 416
Vajrakaumārī 216, 412
Vajraketu
    See Vajradhvaja
Vajrakuṇḍala 119, 413
Vajramakarī 120, 122, 414
Vajramekhalā 105, 116, 413
Vajrāmṛtā 119, 413
Vajramukhī 122, 414
Vajrānala 116, 413
Vajrāṅkuśa 78, 102, 122, 285, 410, 411, 414, 415, 421, 422, 426, 427, 633, 638, 755
Vajrapāṇi 29, 68, 97, 98, 290, 332–335, 356, 357, 360, 369, 370, 383, 395, 460, 467, 511, 515, 648, 760
Vajrapāśa 102, 116, 144, 164, 276, 410, 411, 414, 415, 421, 422, 426–428, 633, 638, 755
Vajrapiṅgala 105, 116, 413
Vajraprabha 119, 413
Vajrapūtanā 122, 414
Vajrarāga 139, 140, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 753
Vajrarāja 139, 140, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 753
Vajrarakṣa 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 754
Vajraratna 71, 75, 105, 144, 247, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 749, 753
Vajraśabdā 148, 418
Vajrasādhu 140, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 638, 643, 753
Vajrasandhi 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 638, 642, 754
Vajraśānti 110, 412
Vajrasattva 44, 46, 71, 75, 102, 140, 200, 247, 290, 333, 335, 336, 350, 359, 360, 380, 389, 390, 410, 411, 415, 421, 452, 458, 467, 590, 627, 628, 633, 634, 656, 726, 727, 737, 741, 753, 754, 759, 760
Vajraśauṇḍa 105, 122, 413
Vajrasauvarṇī 108, 412
Vajrasphoṭa 78, 102, 410, 411, 414, 415, 421, 422, 426–428, 633, 638, 644, 755
Vajrasūrya / Vajratejas 144, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 753
Vajratīkṣṇa 75, 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 644, 753
Vajravajriṇī 647, 651
Vajrāvalī 14, 778
Vajravaśā 112, 122, 413
Vajravilayā 105, 122, 413
Vajravināyaka 122, 414
Vajrayakṣa 410, 411, 415, 421, 633, 754
Vajrayoginī 337
Vajroṣṇīṣa 285, 427, 750, 756
valance 29, 53, 249, 284, 352
vandanamudrā, gesture of adoration 85, 105, 160, 225, 411, 412, 418–421, 426, 428
Varāha 122, 414
Vārāhī 122, 158, 166, 414, 419
Varśārājñī 473
Varuṇa, water god, guardian of the west 122, 164, 216, 233, 414, 420, 425, 428, 525
Vāruṇi 120, 122, 414
Vasanta 122
Vasantarājñī 473
vaśitā, controls/powers of a Bodhisattvas 134, 146, 416
Vāyu, wind god, guardian of the northwest 122, 164, 216, 413, 420, 425, 525, 532
Vijayavajra 112, 122, 413
Vikasitakusuma 196, 198, 200, 421, 750
Vilāsavajra 409, 743
Vīṇāpa, *mahāsiddha* 579
Vīraprabha 730
Virūḍhaka 235, 428
Virūpa, *mahāsiddha* 579
Viśākhā 218, 419, 425
Viṣṇu 102, 108, 152, 210, 412, 417, 418, 423, 484, 495, 496, 499, 525
  Vasudeva 484, 495, 499
Viśvakarman, the divine artist 98, 126, 132
Viśvoṣṇīṣa 427, 750
vyāla 474, 478, 512, 517, 534, 542, 583, 673

W

Wangdé, *dbang lde* 21, 23, 783–786
Wanla 23, 26, 374, 375, 397, 521
Wiesel, Georg 10
Winterberg, Horst 10
Wu Liang 745

Y

yakṣa 164, 172, 178, 216, 420, 426, 481
Yama, god of death, guardian of the south 117, 122, 158, 164, 194, 210, 213, 216, 233, 235, 238, 392, 414, 419, 424, 428, 768, 770
Yamāntaka 60, 98, 126, 152, 290, 417, 589–595, 736, 738, 740, 741
Yamī 238
Yéshé Ö, *ye shes 'od* 20–21, 747

Z

Zangskar 581, 720, 732
Zhangzhung 19, 20
Zhiden Ö, *zhi ldan 'od* 23, 783, 786
Zhiwa Ö, *zhi ba 'od* 21