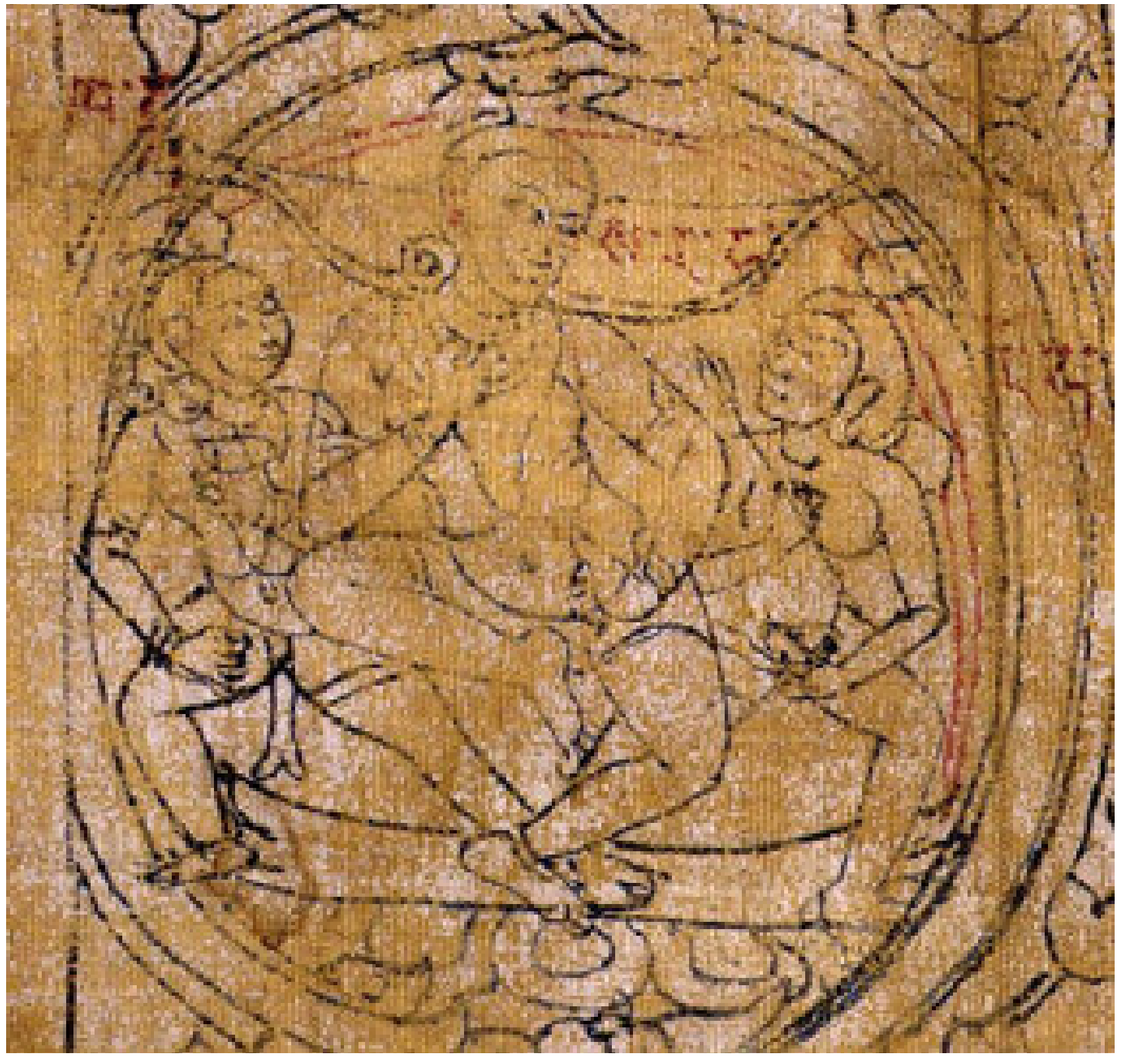

Acknowledgments: Although this is a fairly short article, it would not have been possible without the support of several institutions and many individuals. I would particularly like to express my gratitude to The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Department of Asian Art for a half-year Andrew W. Mellon Art History Fellowship. It was during this period that most of the research formulated here has been done. In this connection I want to thank specifically Marcie Karp and her team for making the fellows' arrival and stay in New York so unproblematic and even educating. My interest in the eight siddhas developed when the Austrian Research Funds (FWF) generously supported my research in Ladakh and other regions of the western Himalayas and I continued to collect material pertaining to it throughout a three-year research grant from the Austrian Academy of Sciences (APART). These grants enabled visits to the Musée national des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, regular research at the Museo Nationale d'Arte Orientale in Rome, to numerous other museums as well as a number of private collections. To all of them I would like to express my gratitude for their patience with, as a colleague has recently expressed it, an "iconographically obsessed" person. My gratitude also goes to Amy Heller and Jeff Watt for their unceasing willingness to share information and opinions. Finally, I am grateful to Rob Linrothe and the Rubin Museum of Art for including me in this exciting project.

Fig. 4.1
Saraha
Cat. no. 6, detail

The Eight Great Siddhas in Early Tibetan Painting

CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS

As mediators between the divine and the common, the mahāsiddhas have an exceptional and multivalent position in the esoteric traditions of India and Tibet. The notion of the siddha as ideal practitioner won ground and acceptance in India when Tibet started to adopt Buddhism in the Imperial Period (seventh to ninth century). Around the turn of the first millennium, when Buddhism became firmly established in Tibet, nonmonastic Esoteric Buddhist traditions were already widely, although not unanimously, accepted and in many cases highly regarded.

The siddhas are the mediators on the side of mankind; the deities they mediate are subtle manifestations of absolute Buddha nature. The siddha commonly renounces the world, meditates and practices at more or less secluded places or charnel grounds, and in this way creates the condition for a revelation. The deities appear to the siddha and reveal particular practices to him — most are male — that help him to reach enlightenment in this very life. The siddha then passes the revelation he received and his experiences to his

disciples, establishing a direct teaching lineage that eventually enters Tibet and commonly occupies the top row in Tibetan depictions.

The earliest examples of siddha depictions in Tibetan art include a fairly frequently depicted group of eight siddhas, a group that with slight variations continues to be represented today (see Jackson essay).[1] In the earliest paintings, this group of eight siddhas is commonly shown to the sides of the main image. The earliest examples are attributable to the early thirteenth century and, most frequently if not exclusively, to a Kagyüpa (bKa' rgyud pa) context. The Kagyüpa, a name that stresses the oral transmission of a teaching from teacher to pupil, focus on meditative training, the subschools differing in which deities and practices are emphasized.

Essentially the same siddhas inhabit the charnel grounds of maṇḍalas, in particular those of the Anuttarayoga tantra class, the highest class of tantras in Tibetan classifications. These charnel grounds are represented at the edges of the sacred sphere of the maṇḍala and thus, like the siddhas themselves, are on the threshold of divine and mundane.[2] In the early depictions both the group as a whole and the individual siddhas are shown in a number of variations that indicate that the concept of the group is still in the process of formation.

JÑĀNATĀPA AND THE EIGHT GREAT SIDDHAS

In 1987 the Friends of Asian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acquired a masterpiece of early Tibetan painting (Cat. no. 7). It shows a siddha accompanied by a succession of teachers in the top half and eight more siddhas in the lower half. The siddha in the center of this *tangka* is of wealthy origin, as is suggested by his marvelous jewelry, which derives from the bone jewelry of wrathful deities, thus expressing the twilight nature of a siddha. He holds a horn at the side of his mouth and a bejeweled casket topped by a lion.

The teachers in the top half of the *tangka* are a succession of abbots of the monasteries of Taglung (sTag lung; founded 1180) and Riwoche (Ri bo che), all identified by captions. This lineage commences to the left of the top center siddha with Phagmodrupa (Phag mo gru pa; 1110–1170) who is referred to as Buddha-Jewel (*bde gshegs rin po che*) in the caption. The eight lesser branches of the Kagyüpa school derive from him, among them the Taglung school. The founder of this school and the monastery providing its name, Taglung Thangpa chenpo (sTag lung Thang pa chen po bKra shis dpal; 1142–1210) is shown to the right of the top center siddha. Exceptionally in this painting, but in accordance with his usual portrayal, he is shown frontally and performing the teaching gesture.

Taglung Thangpa is followed by the successive abbots of Taglung monastery up to Sangye ön (Sangs rgyas dbon; 1251–1296), shortly called Önpo (dBon po), to the left of the throne back. Önpo was abbot of Taglung only for one year (1272–73), when a conflict forced him to leave the see and move to eastern Tibet, where he founded Riwoche monastery in 1276. His successor at Riwoche, Orgyen gönpo (O rgyan mgon po Rin chen shes rab dpal bzang po; 1293–1366), is the last figure depicted in the lineage. The lineage suggests a date for this painting in the second or third quarter of the fourteenth century.[3]

The central figure is to be identified as a previous incarnation of Önpo, a siddha called Jñānatāpa who was born into a warrior caste family in Dakka, Bangladesh.[4] As narrated in the Önpo's hagiography, written by the Taglung scholar Ngawang Namgyal (1571–1626) in 1609, Önpo had a recall of his previous lives at the age of five and narrated them to his teacher in a long poem. Jñānatāpa had a religious teacher named Avagarbha, whose secret name was Lalitavajra, depicted in the top center of the painting. Lalitavajra, in turn, is the second main disciple of Tilopa, the siddha who commences the common lineage of all Kagyüpa schools. He thus links Önpo via a back door to the root of the tradition his school is associated with.[5]

This unusual painting demonstrates the crucial function siddhas have for the Tibetan Buddhist schools, all of which were firmly established by the mid-fourteenth century. For the Tibetans, the siddhas and the direct lineage deriving from them ensure the link of a practiced teaching to Indian Buddhism and in this way proves the teaching's authenticity. In this *tangka* three such connections are expressed, one of which is implied by the Taglung lineage in the top. This lineage, which is shared by all Kagyüpa schools, commences with the Buddha Vajradhara followed by the siddhas Tilopa and Nāropa. The second, more unusual, connection is expressed by Jñānatāpa, the previous incarnation of Önpo, and his teacher Avagarbha (alias Lalitavajra). This reincarnation not only reinforces the first one by linking Önpo and his Taglung branch more directly to the root of the Kagyüpa tradition, but also reveals that Önpo has received the original teachings of Tilopa in an exceptionally comprehensive manner since he received them from both main disciples.[6] The latter point can be assumed alone from the fact that all prominent Tibetan teachers of the time attempted to receive initiations to the same deities and teachings from several different teachers and across schools, a fact that also accounts for the variations and interrelations in the depictions of the eight siddhas. The group of eight siddhas shown in the lower third of the Jñānatāpa painting represents a third link to authentic teachings. The possible nature of these teachings is one of the main issues discussed below.

THE EIGHT SIDDHAS

On the Jñānatāpa *tangka* the eight siddhas are also identified by inscriptions, making this painting one of a small group that allows for establishing the identification and iconography of these siddhas and thus enables us to identify them on *tangkas* without captions as well.[7] Of the three other known paintings identifying the siddhas, one is in the Rubin Museum of Art. In this extremely important footprint *tangka* of the Drigungpa ('Bri gung pa) school not only the siddhas, but also their attendants are identified (cat. no. 6).[8] A book-size *tangka* of the Jucker collection showing six teachers in the center, several of them Kagyüpa, has the siddhas identified on the back.[9] Finally, a rather coarsely painted portrait of an unidentified teacher of the Drugpa ('Brug pa) Kagyüpa school has captions written on the front of the painting.[10]

In the following the eight siddhas are introduced in the order in which they occur on the Jñānatāpa painting; their iconography is given as it is found on this and comparable paintings; and the most important teachings they are connected with according to different sources are also given.[11]

The great Brahmin Saraha is best known for his spiritual anthologies (the *dohā*) which had enormous influence on Tibetan literature (see Kapstein essay). In early depictions he most commonly dances, holding bow and arrow, the bow frequently horizontally on his back with the head and the back of a carcass attached to its ends (Fig. 4.1, Cat no. 76).[12] Alternatively, he also may hold a skullcup drum (*ḍamaru*) and a vase, the latter often also held in addition to the arrows. In more detailed paintings two female consorts flank Saraha. On the Rubin drawing they are identified as Brāhmaṇī (braṃ che mo) and *ro ha*,[13] the latter holding an arrow in the right hand (Fig. 4.1). While the *dohā* trilogy certainly represents the most important "teaching" of Saraha, he is also associated with the deities Cakrasaṃvara and Buddhakapāla.

Saraha and his songs are fairly well studied.[14] Concerning the stories about him, in one, the radish girl tale, Saraha, after years of contemplation, asks for the radish stew he had requested before contemplation. As the girl complains, Saraha realizes that he remained attached to worldly matters. In the arrowsmith tale, which in its earliest version predates the radish tale by almost two centuries, Saraha achieves realization when seeing the fletcheress aiming with her newly made arrow, symbolically representing "non-duality aiming into the heart of dualistic grasping".[15] Interestingly, the early representation of the siddha does not fit any of these tales closely. Instead, the depictions recall stories of the hunter Śavaripa, also called the younger Saraha, as becomes especially clear from the carcass attached to the bow (Cat. no. 76).

Indrabhūti is an enlightened king who has shown that it is possible to reach spiritual accomplishment without renouncing worldly pleasures. Being a king, he is always fairly easy to recognize due to his jewelry and

1 The same author has already discussed this topic in an earlier article; David Paul Jackson, "Some Karma Kagyupa Paintings in the Rubin Collections," in *Worlds of Transformation. Tibetan Art of Wisdom and Compassion*, ed. Marilyn M. Rhie and Robert A. F. Thurman (New York: Tibet House New York in association with The Shelly and Donald Rubin Foundation and Harry N. Abrams, 1999).

2 Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 303–4.

3 As is apparent from comparative examples, the painting could have been done in the lifetime of the last figure depicted or shortly after his demise. Orgyen-gönpo was still a child when he officially assumed the see of Riwoche; practically he became abbot in 1336 (Amy Heller, personal communication, 2004). Peter Schwieger, "The Lineage of the Noble House of Ga-Zi in East Tibet," *Kailash* 18, nos. 3&4 (1996): 122–23, mentions an interimship but does not give a date for Orgyen-gönpo actually assuming the see.

4 Jane Casey Singer, "Taklung Painting," in *Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style*, ed. Singer and Philip Denwood (London: Laurence King Publ., 1997), 65–67.

5 Obviously, the *tangka* is highly charged with political information, but this aspect cannot be discussed here.

6 By the fourteenth century, the concept that the original teaching becomes spoiled and thus weakened in the course of a long succession from teacher to pupil was well established. Direct visions of siddhas who established the tradition, as well as reincarnation, enable the purification of the original teaching.

7 Iconographic descriptions of the siddhas are rather late, with the possible exception of the *Realization of the Eighty Adepts (Grub thob brgyad cu'i mngon par rtogs pa)* composed by a certain dPal gyi sde/* Śrīsena in Kathmandu in the year 291, which in Nepali Samvat chronology would be 1162 (after Kurtis R. Schaeffer, "Tales of the Great Brahmin: Creative Traditions of the Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha" Ph.D. diss, Harvard University, 2000, 80–81; according to Toni Schmid, the year 251 would be 1122; see Schmid, *The Eighty-Five Siddhas, vol. 7. Ethnography* (Stockholm: Statens Ethnografiska Museum, 1958), *viii*.

8 This drawing on silk is the focus of Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, "Lama, *Yidam*, Protectors," *Orientations* 35, no. 3 (2004): 48–53. The painting is also accessible on the web: HAR 65205.

9 Hugo E. Kreijger, *Tibetan Painting: The Jucker Collection* (London: Serindia Publications, 2001), no. 18. Beside the siddhas, this painting is extremely interesting for its highly unusual iconography which, despite all figures accompanied by captions, is not clarified yet.

10 *Indian and Southeast Asian Art Including 20th Century Indian Painting*, sale cat., Christie's, New York, 19 September 2001, no. 67. Actually it should be possible to identify the teacher. The caption for the central teacher reads *bla-ma \ bsdan sa pa* (possibly for gdan sa pa), and at the back a teacher *pha(?) Ratnasiddhi* is evoked. These two names did not provide a clue for identifying the main figure, but the longer inscriptions at the back and the captions visible on the painting that have not been read may provide it.

11 The teachings of the siddhas mentioned serve solely as examples and are summarizing the occurrence of the siddhas in the following sources: Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*; Keith Dowman, *Masters of Enchantment: The Lives and Legends of the Mahasiddhas* (London: Arkana, 1989); Dowman, *Masters of Mahamudra: Songs and Histories of the Eighty-Four Buddhist Siddhas* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985); Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen, *The Great Kagyu Masters: The Golden Lineage Treasury*, ed. Victoria Huckenpahler (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publication, 1990); Gö Lotsawa ('Gos lo-ts_-ba gZhon-nu-dpal; 1392–1481), *The Blue Annals, Deb-Ther Sngon-po*, trans. George N. Roerich (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988); Glenn H. Mullin, *Readings on the Six Yogas of Naropa* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1997); James B. Robinson, Buddha's Lions: *The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas* (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1979); Jampa Mackenzie Stewart, *The Life of Gampopa: The Incomparable Dharma Lord of Tibet* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1995).

12 On Saraha as a dancer see Schmid, *Eighty-Five Siddhas*, 33. In the manuscript illustration of cat. no. 76, previously published in S. L. Huntington and J. C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pāla India 8th–12th Centuries and Its International Legacy* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1990), 112a, the siddha is depicted in the same way as in many examples among the Eight Great Siddhas. One of the accompanying females is red and plays a flute, while the other is blue and carries some (hunted?) bird on her shoulder.

13 Should this be reading *do ha*?

14 Herbert V. Guenther, *The Royal Song of Sarah: A Study in the History of Buddhist Thought* (Seattle–London: University of Washington Press, 1969); Schaeffer, "Tales of the Great Brahmin".

15 The earliest version dates to the eleventh century (Schaeffer, "Tales of the Great Brahmin," 29.)

Fig. 4.2

Fig. 4.3

crown. He is commonly shown seated sideways on a throne or mat and frequently has a consort, his sister Lakṣmīkarā, on his lap. On the Jñānatāpa *tangka* he is exceptionally shown as a Tibetan king, dressed in a heavy coat and wearing a turban (see p. 201). Indrabhūti is associated with the cycles of Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara, and Guhyasamāja.[16]

Nāgārjuna is known as the second Buddha and in early depictions frequently also shown as such. In reference to his name (*nāga* meaning "snake-spirit"), he eventually is depicted with a snake-hood, as in the Jñānatāpa painting (Fig. 4.2).[17] According to the examples surveyed here, this shift in iconography takes place in the first half of the fourteenth century. In the context of the Drigung school, it is clear that Nāgārjuna is identified with the doctrine of emptiness and thus the second-century Buddhist scholar of the same name. A tantric Nāgārjuna is associated with the *Guhyasamājatantra*.

Padmavajra is one of the most outspoken proponents of the esoteric path.[18] It is thus not surprising, that the Jñānatāpa painting shows him in union with his consort (Fig. 4.3). Both this unification as well as the gesture of his arms signify Great Bliss, the nonduality of wisdom and method. In earlier paintings, however, Padmavajra's iconography is far from standardized. He can be represented as a siddha as well as a monk and has no identifying attribute. Most commonly, he is represented with the right hand raised at the side of his body toward the center. In a late Riwoche drawing he holds a lotus (*padma*) in this position.[19] Among others, Padmavajra is associated with tantras of Hevajra, Guhyasamāja, and

16 According to Snellgrove, the following siddhas are closely connected with the *Hevajra-tantra:* Saroruha, two Indrabhūti (an earlier and a later one), Mahāpadmavajra, and Kṛṣṇa or Kāṇha (David L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study*, 2 vols., London Oriental Series, Vol. 6 [London: Oxford University Press, 1959], 1:12–15.). According to Gö Lotsawa ('Gos lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu-dpal; 1392–1481) one of Phagmodrupa's main pre-incarnations in India was Indrabhūti, who is also referred to as Lawapa (La-ba-pa; see Gö Lotsawa, *Blue Annals*, 553). Lawapa is connected with the clear light, dream and *bardo* teachings of the Six Yogas (Mullin, *Readings on the Six Yogas of Naropa*, 25).

17 I have previously assumed that these iconographies refer to two different Nāgārjunas, the tantric Nāgārjuna and the early Mahāyāna scholar to whom the doctrine of emptiness goes back. However, the depiction of Nāgārjuna in the Drigung group speaks against this hypothesis. In Schmid, *The Eighty-Five Siddhas*, 26–27, Nāgarjuna is described as monk.

18 Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 250–57.

19 Huntington and Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, 114d.

Fig. 4.4

Fig. 4.5

Buddhakapāla.

Ghaṇṭāpada or Drilbupa (Dril bu pa) is commonly shown making a gigantic leap through the air, flying being one of the accomplishments of a siddha (Fig. 4.4). Frequently a cloud is represented underneath his feet or even behind him. He holds *vajra* and bell in his raised hands, the latter giving him his name. Only in the Jucker painting does he appear dancing, and he only holds one of his attributes, probably the bell, in the raised right hand. Ghaṇṭāpada is associated with the Kālacakra and a Cakrasaṃvara cycle.

Ḍombi Heruka invariably sits on a pregnant tigress, often holding a skullcup and occasionally a snake (Fig. 4.5). He is associated with Hevajra and diverse mother tantras.

Kukkuripa, too, can easily be recognized due to his dog companion. He commonly embraces the dog at the neck, while in the Jñānatāpa *tangka* he is shown dancing with the dog (see p. 201). Kukkuripa is associated with Mahāmāyā, Guhyasamāja, and Buddhakapāla.

Finally, Lūipa is famous for nourishing himself from leftovers, most notably the entrails of fish thrown away by fishermen. He is identified by the fish and its entrails that he holds (see p. 201). He is occasionally also shown as a monk and is associated with teachings on Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī.

Fig. 4.2
Nāgārjuna
Cat. no. 7, detail

Fig. 4.3
Padmavajra
Cat. no. 7, detail

Fig. 4.4
Ghaṇṭāpada
Cat. no. 7, detail

Fig. 4.5
Ḍombi Heruka on the tigress
Cat. no. 7, detail

THE DRIGUNG GROUP

While the Jñānatāpa *tangka* discussed so far is representative of the Riwoche branch of the Taglung school, the footprint *tangka* of the Rubin Museum is crucial for the depiction of the eight siddhas within the Drigungpa (’Bri gung pa) school (Cat. no. 6). Like Taglung Thangpa, Jigten gönpo (’Jig rten mgon po; 1143–1217), who founded the Drigung school, was a prominent pupil of Phagmodrupa. He and his school are named after the place where he founded a monastery in 1179.

The uppermost row of this *tangka* represents the standard Kagyüpa lineage up to Phagmodrupa in the top center. Immediately below him, Drigungpa follows Phagmodrupa in appearance, both being identified by captions. The central part of the *tangka*, with the deity Cakrasaṃvara between footprints, is flanked by the eight siddhas. The most notable differences to the siddha depictions discussed so far are the triads in which the upper two siddhas are represented. Fortunately, besides the siddhas, their companions are also identified by captions, shedding light on their most enigmatic representations.

The upper left siddha is Indrabhūti, the king, who is here represented with a spiritual consort and sister, Lakṣmīkarā (Fig. 4.7). Surprisingly, Indrabhūti is accompanied by another siddha, namely Virūpa, who raises his hand to interrupt the sun in her course, the sun being indicated by a red circle.[20] The connection of these two siddhas to each other and the teaching this composition may signify remains unclear to date.

In the upper right corner Buddha Śākyamuni is flanked by Nāgārjuna to his proper right (Fig. 4.8). To his proper left is Atiśa, the famous Indian scholar who went to Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century and had wide ranging influence on Buddhism there. Drigungpa himself was considered an incarnation of Nāgārjuna. The triad, however, most likely represents what is called the Lineage of Profound View, the teaching of emptiness, which passed from Buddha Śākyamuni to Nāgārjuna and eventually entered Tibet with Atiśa.

Fig. 4.6

From a spiritual point of view, the most important elements of this drawing are the footprints. Recent research and the nature and iconography of this drawing on silk make it plausible that these are the footprints of Drigungpa himself, allowing the attribution of the *tangka* prior to his death in 1217.[21] Its history, captions, and inscriptions thus make it one of the most informative sources for early Tibetan painting.

Surprisingly, the depiction of the eight siddhas on *tangkas* of the Drigungpa school is so distinctive and consistent that it allows for the identification of a whole group of early paintings that earlier could not otherwise be identified with any certainty. The most important of these paintings give an idea of the range and importance of this group, especially when viewed according to a working chronology that considers not only the lineage and the siddhas, but the overall composition.[22]

Fig. 4.7

Almost contemporary with the Rubin drawing is a teacher depiction at Alchi monastery, Ladakh, Northwest India. Although most of the elements of this depiction could be identified on the basis of the Rubin drawing, it is the triad featuring Nāgārjuna that shows their interrelationship best (Fig. 4.6).[23]

The rendering of the siddhas also identifies a stylistically and technically highly unusual *tangka* in the Pritzker Collection that is dedicated to a teacher following Drigungpa (Fig. 4.9). Although the prominent representation of the three jewels, referring to the Buddha, his teaching, and the monastic community, is a common feature of these paintings, it is particularly emphasized here with almost every decorative element made up of them. The triple jewel may also symbolize Drigungpa himself, who is also known under the name Rinchenpel (Rin chen dpal), “Magnificent Jewel.”[24]

Fig. 4.8

Another footprint *tangka* centered on Cakrasaṃvara has the same composition as the Rubin drawing, but two more teachers continue the lineage on the top of the painting.[25] Finally, one panel of the extensive pantheon painted on the walls of the three-storied temple at Wanla in Ladakh also has the same group of siddhas depicted, with only one side of them preserved (Fig. 4.10). Uniquely, there is a four-armed Mañjuśrī in the center of the composition, a deity that does not even occur among the secondary figures on the other paintings.[26]

What is particularly fascinating about this group is its stylistic diversity and wide geographical range. Changes in composition and the exchange and addition of secondary deities may well reflect the changes in the early religious practice within this school from about 1200 to the mid-fourteenth century.

20 The captions identify all three of them (from left to right): *’bir ba pa* for Virūpa, in # *bo de* (the # sign standing for an illegible character) for Indrabhūti, and leg# *rmin* for Lakṣmīkarā. The captions have been misread and misinterpreted in Klimburg-Salter, “Lama, *Yidam*, Protectors,” 51. The red circle of the sun makes it clear that the red and black drawings are contemporary.

21 Kathryn Selig Brown, “Early Tibetan Footprint Thang Kas, 12–14th Century,” *The Tibet Journal* 27, nos. 1 and 2 (2002). Both, Pagmodrupa and Drigungpa have written on the practice of making footprints of venerated masters. The veneration of the masters feet is one of the most profound expressions of the teacher-pupil relationship

22 Currently I am preparing a detailed study of this group.

23 Christian Luczanits, “Alchi and the Drigungpa School of Tibetan Buddhism: The Teacher Depiction in the Small Chörten of Alchi,” in *Long Life Without End: Festschrift on the Occasion of Rogert Goepper’s 80th Birthday*, eds. Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch, Antje Papist-Matsuo and Willibald Veit (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag, 2005, in press).

24 Note that almost all examples of the Drigungpa group have a triple jewel represented in the center of the throne.

25 Klimburg-Salter, “Lama, *Yidam*, Protectors,” fig. 2; Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes* (Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council, 1982), pl. 111. That there is a chronological difference of two generations between the Rubin drawing and this example has not been recognized in Klimburg-Salter’s recent article comparing the two paintings. The additional deities represented immediately below the siddhas also indicate a time gap. Similarly a *tangka* recently exhibited in Chicago and Washington, DC, adds more deities at the sides, among them the goddess Uṣṇīṣavijayā, the personification of a Buddha’s cranial protuberance. The Drigungpa affiliation suggested by Amy Heller on the basis of the *mantras* on the back of this *tangka* can thus be supported by the siddha depictions. See Pratapaditya Pal, *Himalayas: An Aesthetic Adventure* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago in association with the University of California Press and Mapin Publishing, 2003), 203, 91–92.

26 Other paintings of the Drigungpa group known to me so far are: one of the earliest *tangkas* of the Koelz Collection in the Museum of Anthropology in Anne Arbor, Michigan (Carolyn Copeland, *Tankas from the Koelz Collection*, vol. 18 of Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia [Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1980], 98), a *tangka* in the collection of Navin Kumar (Pratapaditya Pal, *Tibet: Tradition and Change* [The Albuquerque Museum, 1997], 23), one in Tibet (Shuli Han, *Xizang Feng Ma Qi, Xizang Yi Shu Cong Shu* [Beijing: Ren min mei shu chu ban she, 1995], 295), and a repainted *tangka* of Milarepa (cf. Rob Linrothe, Christian Luczanits, and Jeff Watt, “Turning a Blind Eye,” *Orientations* 35, no. 5 [2004]) in the Rubin Museum of Art, C2002.24.5 (*Himalayan Art* [cited], no. 65121). Finally, the teacher depiction of the Translator’s Temple in Alchi also belongs to the Drigungpa group of paintings.

Fig. 4.6
Buddha Śākyamuni flanked by Nāgārjuna and Atiśa
Small Chörten, Alchi Monastery, Ladakh, India, early 13th century
Mural
Photograph by C. Luczanits (WHAV CL98 104,49)

Fig. 4.7
Indrabhūti, Lakṣmīkarā and Virūpa
Cat. no. 6, detail

Fig. 4.8
Buddha Śākyamuni flanked by Nāgārjuna and Atiśa
Cat. no. 6, detail

Fig. 4.9

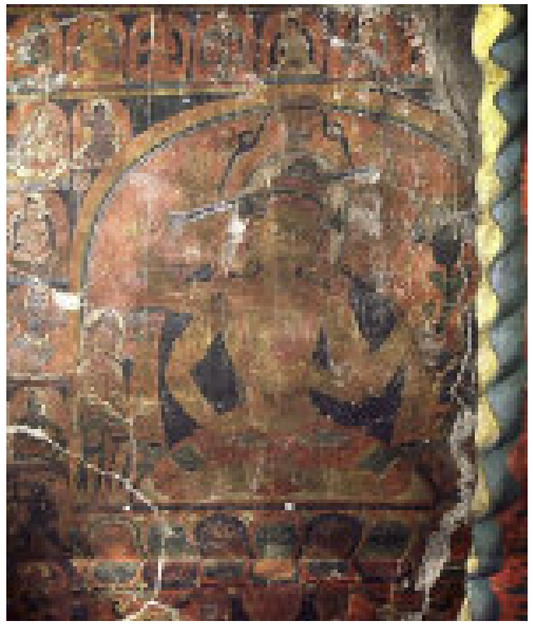

Fig. 4.10

TAGLUNG DEPICTIONS

In contrast to the Drigung paintings, Taglung and Riwoche paintings, which account for most of the earliest Tibetan *tangkas* known so far, do not show the same consistency in depictions of the eight siddhas. Of six depictions known besides the one from the Metropolitan Museum discussed above, the earliest is dedicated to Sangye Yarjön (Sangs rgyas yar byon; 1203–1272) who preceded Önpo as abbot of Taglung (Fig. 4.11). The arrangement and the individual iconography of the siddha depictions on this painting are also those closest to the Drigung compositions.[27]

Three more *tangkas* with the eight siddhas depict not only Önpo himself as the main figure, but also his previous Indian incarnation Jñānatāpa among the secondary figures. One of these *tangkas* bears the record that the painting received a consecration by Önpo and is thus to be placed within his lifetime (1251–1296), preferably to his period at Riwoche (1276–96).[28] On this painting Jñānatāpa is represented above the siddhas along the left border.

The other two *tangkas* are iconographically very similar and probably are to be attributed to the first half of the fourteenth century. These are the extremely delicate painting in the Musée national des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet[29] and a *tangka* possibly still in Tibet (Fig. 4.12).[30] The date derives from the inscriptions on the back of the Guimet *tangka*, which mention two additional religious personages, albeit not yet identified, following Önpo.[31] Remarkably, the uppermost siddha representations on these paintings visually refer to the Drigung group. The second personage attending Indrabhūti, however, is obviously not Virūpa, since this siddha is represented in the left corner above the rocks, just opposite Jñānatāpa.[32] The siddha triad in the upper right corner depicts Saraha with two consorts.

Also from the same context derives an exceptional consecration pantheon that has been extracted from a metal image.[33] Today, this pantheon can easily be attributed to Riwoche, since Jñānatāpa is shown among the teachers. Besides numerous teachers, tutelary deities, and bodhisattvas this pantheon also contains the eight siddhas, each of them clearly identifiable. In this group Padmavajra holds a lotus and Saraha is seated and holds an arrow.[34]

On Taglung and Riwoche *tangkas*, the iconography and succession of the siddhas changes from painting to painting and no canonical representation was established within this school until the mid-fourteenth century.

The art-historical evidence so far indicates that a canonical group of eight siddhas featuring Padmavajra first appears among the pupils of Phagmodrupa. Particularly telling in this regard is the small *tangka*

27 Another rather early Taglung representation of the eight siddhas is found on a *tangka* sold at Sotheby's, 17 June 1993 (no. 41). I thank Jane Casey Singer for sending me a color copy of the backside of this painting.

28 Private collection; Singer, "Tibetan Art," 58–59, fig. 41. Obviously, placing the painting into Önpo's lifetime on the basis of this record is hypothetical, since the record of a consecration abiding in a particular object could also have been added at a later stage. I also do not follow Singer's attribution off all the objects bearing a consecration inscription of Önpo to his abbotship at Taglung (1272–73). I consider it much more likely that earlier objects had to be re-consecrated in Riwoche because they have been taken away from Taglung by Önpo in the course of a conflict. The high number of objects bearing this inscription (Singer mentioned seventeen in her 1997 publication) make them appear like an inventory mark of objects belonging to Riwoche.

29 Ibid., 62, fig. 43.

30 Shuli Han, *Xizang Yi Shu Ji Cui (Tibetan Arts / Han Shuli Zhu)* (Taibei Shi: Yi shu jia chu ban she, 1995), 317–20.

31 Possibly, these are personages in charge of Riwoche in the interim period, when Orgyen Gönpo was not yet able to serve as abbot. I am grateful to Nathalie Bazin of the Musée Guimet for making it possible to read the inscription on the back of this painting as well as to Amy Heller for the communication on this inscription.

32 On the Guimet piece, the sun disk is clearly visible.

33 Huntington and Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, no. 114.

34 Ibid., 114d.

Fig. 4.9
Drigung teacher flanked by the eight siddhas
Central Tibet, second quarter of the 13th century
Distemper on cloth
23¼ x 22½ in. (59.1 x 57.2 cm)
Pritzker Collection
Photograph by Hughes Dubois, Brussels

Fig. 4.10
Four-armed Mañjuśrī
Three-storied Temple of Wanla, Ladakh, India, early 14th century
Mural
Photograph by C. Luczanits (WHAV CL98 72,05)

Fig. 4.11

Fig. 4.12

of the Jucker collection. If the current interpretation of the ordination names on the back of this painting is correct, then it features Phagmodrupa and three of his roughly contemporary pupils, Taglungpa, Drigungpa, and the first Karmapa, who died in 1193.[35] The iconographic forms of the siddhas in this painting are not as telling as those in the Drigung group, and in the case of Lūipa and Padmavajra (the two seated siddhas on the right side), they are not clear at all. Both are brightly colored and do not hold distinctive attributes. The upper siddha performing a teaching gesture is identified as Lūipa, the lower one, raising the right hand at the side as if offering something, as Padmavajra.[36]

As David Jackson shows, it is the Karmapa school that has brought the Kagyü tradition of the eight siddhas to the present day (see Jackson essay).[37]

35 The interpretation of this particular *tangka* faces a lot of problems since many of its elements are unusual and the interrelation of the two central characters, Vairocanavajra and possibly Padampa Sangye, to each other as well as to the Kagyü teachers remains tentative. Further, the identification of Drigungpa and the first Karmapa remain problematic. The third Karmapa has the same ordination name as the first one, but no lineage known to me goes from the Phagmodrupa, via Taglung Thangpa and another intermediary to the third Karmapa who lived 1284–1339. Furthermore, the origin of the lineage in the upper row is unclear. Obviously, all the problems concerning this *tangka* can only be covered in a separate publication.

36 Possibly, there was once a lotus in his hand as on the Taglung drawings.

37 See also Jackson, "Some Karma Kagyupa Paintings."

38 Eighty is the number in the inscription, although there are actually eighty-two squares with siddhas around the central image. It may not be accidental that the number eighty (ten times eight) has been used.

39 The inscription is transcribed in Pal, *Himalayas*, and mentioned in the earlier publications of this piece: Steven M. Kossak, "Sakya Patrons and Nepalese Artists in Thirteenth-Century Tibet," in *Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style*, ed. Jane Casey Singer and Philip Denwood (London: Laurence King Publ., 1997), 30–34; and Kossak and Jane Casey Singer, *Sacred Visions: Early Paintings from Central Tibet* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 136–38.

40 To revitalize a more sceptical view of the early Sakya–Mongol relationship, I refer to an old article of Turrell V. Wylie, "The First Mongol Conquest of Tibet Reinterpreted," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 37 (1977).

THE NINTH SIDDHA

In both the Drigung group and some of the Taglung examples, a ninth siddha, namely Virūpa, is represented in a secondary position. Although it remains unclear why in the Drigung group Virūpa is placed to the side of Indrabhūti, it may be in part because of his general importance. Virūpa received the Path and Fruit (*lam 'bras*) teachings from the goddess Nairātmya and composed, though he may not have actually written them down, the Vajra Verses (rDo rje tshig rkang) that entered Tibet with Drogmi Shakya yeshe ('Brog mi Śākya ye shes; 993–1077?). These teachings were then transmitted to the founders of the Sakya (Sa skya) school, where they remain its core teachings. It is thus not surprising that this school emphasizes Virūpa among the mahāsiddhas, as is best demonstrated by the beautiful *tangka* of The Kronos Collections (Fig. 4.13, detail of Cat. no. 26).

On this painting Virūpa is surrounded by eighty or so other siddhas.[38] Seated in a relaxed fashion on a mat placed on the rocky floor, Virūpa raises his hand toward the sun while a barmaid serves him a drink in a skullcup. This scene alludes to a story in which Virūpa arrested the sun in its course until the king paid for his consummation of alcoholic drinks. This is also the form of Virūpa found on the Drigung and Taglung paintings. With Vajrayoginī, Hevajra, and Cakrasaṃvara shown in the rocks above the siddha, the painting also shows the tantric cycles with which Virūpa is associated. An inscription on the back of the painting records that it was consecrated by Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), allowing it to be attributed to the second quarter of the thirteenth century.[39]

Virūpa occurs as an independent siddha on the later Taglung paintings depicting Önpo. One reason Önpo did not succeed in keeping the see of Taglung was that his rival Maṅgalaguru (bKra shis bla ma; 1231–1297) could count on the support of Sakya Paṇḍita's successor in Sakya, Phagpa (*chos rgyal* 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan; 1235–1280). Önpo's successor at Riwoche, Orgyen gönpo, was brought as a small child from Taglung to Riwoche to reestablish the link to the mother monastery of Taglung. One may thus read the representation of Virūpa on these paintings as an expression of the reconciliation between the two branches of Taglung and the increasing influence of the Sakyapa school on both.

Fig. 4.13

Spreading all over the Tibetan-speaking world, as is exemplified by the Drigung paintings of Alchi and Wanla mentioned above, the Drigung school gained enormous economical and political power early in the thirteenth century. In the second half of the thirteenth century, however, the Sakyapa, cooperating with the Mongol rulers who established the Yuan dynasty in 1279, practically became rulers of Tibet.[40]

Fig. 4.11
Portrait of Sangye Yarjön, Third Abbot of Taklung
Central Tibet (Taglung Monastery), third quarter of 13th century
Distemper on cloth
12¼ x 10 in. (32.4 x 25.4 cm)
The Kronos Collections

Fig. 4.12
Portrait of Önpo
Eastern Tibet (Riwoche Monastery), first half of 14th century
Distemper on Cloth
After Han Shuli, *Xizang Yi Shu Ji Cui (Tibetan Arts / Han Shuli Zhu)* (Taibei Shi: Yi shu jia chu ban she, 1995), 317–20.

Fig. 4.13
Virūpa
Cat. no. 26, detail

Fig. 4.14

Fig. 4.14, detail

While the Taglungpa cooperated with the Sakya, the Drigungpa competed with them and eventually found themselves the weaker party, suffering a raid on Drigung monastery in 1290.

CHARNEL GROUNDS

The eight great siddhas are today thought of as being of eminent importance because they inhabit the eight charnel grounds represented on the periphery of many maṇḍalas.[41] Continuous reminders that all life and matter will perish, the charnel grounds are ideal places for the spiritual practice of siddhas.

In the most commonly represented version of the siddhas occupying the charnel grounds, Virūpa is prominently represented in the western (top) charnel ground, replacing Padmavajra among the group of eight.[42] In the resulting group of eight siddhas, each is associated with a certain charnel ground and direction. The most common grouping commences with Indrabhūti in the bottom charnel ground (east) and features clockwise: Ḍombī Heruka, Nāgārjuna, Ghaṇṭāpa, Virūpa, Lūipa, Kukkuripa, and Saraha. This group is found with most maṇḍala depictions. Among the individual siddhas, only Saraha is depicted in a considerably different way from the examples introduced above. He is seated and holds an arrow as if aiming with it, an iconography that now clearly refers to the arrowsmith tale.[43]

The association of a certain siddha with a particular charnel ground was established in the course of the fourteenth century.[44] The earliest securely dateable group of maṇḍalas with this representation of the siddhas on them is a Vajrāvalī series commissioned in the memory of Lama Dampa Sonam Gyaltsen Pelzangpo (bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po; 1312–1375), the fifteenth abbot of Sakya monastery (Fig. 4.14).[45] Thus, it is in the Sakya school that the canonical version of the eight siddhas in the charnel grounds was created. This also accounts for the replacement of Padmavajra by Virūpa and Virūpa's prominent placement in the western charnel ground.[46] This composition of the group eventually was so influential that it replaced the original Kagyüpa composition even within the branches of this school.[47]

Fig. 4.15

The earliest depictions of charnel grounds with siddhas are found with maṇḍalas dedicated to Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī. In the representations that can safely be attributed to the thirteenth century or earlier, however, the siddhas shown in the charnel grounds appear even less consistent than in the paintings discussed above.

For example, in a Vajrayoginī *tangka* in a private collection that on the basis of inscriptions can be attributed to the mid-thirteenth century or even earlier (Fig. 4.15),[48] only the two siddhas associated with animals, namely Kukkuripa at the bottom, and Ḍombī Heruka at the top, can be identified with certainty. The charnel grounds are not divided up either.[49] It is remarkable that none of the siddhas is jeweled, as Indrabhūti would be, and none of them wears monk's dress.

Although commonly, a higher number of siddhas is identifiable, each of the early Vajrayoginī,[50] Cakrasaṃvara, and Hevajra maṇḍalas appears to present its own version of the siddhas. Particularly explicit are a small *tangka* of Cakrasaṃvara (in a private collection) and a lotus maṇḍala of Hevajra (in the Rubin Museum), in which all siddhas can be identified, among them Ḍeṅgipa and Virūpa (cat. no. 5).[51]

SIDDHAS IN COMMUNITY

The connection between the eight charnel grounds and the eight siddhas appears first to be made in the *Śmaśānavidhi*, a text dedicated to the charnel grounds and attributed to Lūipa.[52] There the siddhas are not named but referred to as a group, namely the Eight Great Siddhas (*grub chen brgyad*). Another allegedly Indian textual source connects particular siddhas and their communities with certain cremation grounds.[53] The system presented in this text is inconsistent, incomplete, with a deity taking the place of the eighth siddha, and has no comparison, but it is remarkable for connecting the siddhas and their communities not only with a charnel ground, but also with certain teachings.

In two of the earliest maṇḍala depictions preserved, the beautiful Nepalese painting from the Metropolitan Museum of Art being one (Fig. 4.16), the charnel grounds are crowded with siddhas.[54]

41 Jackson, "Some Karma Kagyupa Paintings," 94.

42 This group is the focus of Helmut F. Neumann, "Cremation Grounds in Early Tibetan Maṇḍalas," *Orientations 33*, no. 10 (2002).

43 On the Taglung consecration drawings mentioned above, Saraha is represented in a similar manner.

44 It seems impossible currently to give a more precise date for this canonization, but it may well have taken place as a by-product of Butön's (Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub; 1290–1364) gigantic systematization of Buddhist literature.

45 The background of this series is summarized in Amy Heller, "The Vajravali Maṇḍala of Shalu and Sakya: The Legacy of Buton (1290–1364)," *Orientations* 35, no. 4 (2004). It is interesting to note that the murals at Shalu appear to be solely dedicated to Yogatantra themes. I have not found a single maṇḍala with charnel grounds in the extensive documentation of the site generously provided by Lionel Fournier. I do not exclude the possibility that there are maṇḍalas with the canonical representation of the siddhas in the cemeteries that predate this series of about 1375, but I did not find any that can be dated on more than stylistic grounds.

46 Interestingly, Virūpa also takes the western position on the Goenka Collection Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍala* (Pratapaditya Pal, *Tibetan Paintings. A Study of Tibetan Thankas Eleventh to Nineteenth Centuries* [Vaduz: Ravi Kumar, 1984], no. 11). Could this be an early Sakya painting?

47 For example, in an inscribed manuscript painting of the Karmapa school the siddhas are shown in the following succession: Indrabhūti, Nāgārjuna, Virūpa, Saraha, Ghaṇṭāpa, Kukkuripa, Lūipa, Ḍombipa (*Tibetan Manuscripts, Catalogue 25* [London: Sam Fogg Rare Books and Manuscripts, 2001], no. 16). In the Cakrasaṃvara maṇḍala at Wanla, an early fourteenth-century Drigung monument in Ladakh, the succession of the siddhas conforms to the Sakya representation, but it is Padmavajra who occupies the western charnel ground.

48 This painting definitely can be attributed to Önpo's Taglung years since it bears an inscription of Önpo mentioning himself with his teacher. Furthermore, on the front a gold inscription identifies the painting as representing the personal deity (*thugs dam*) of Önpo. The short lineage ends with Taglung Thangpa's successor as abbot of Taglung, Kuyelwa (sKu-yal-ba Rin-chen-mgon; 1191–1236). I do not follow Singer in attributing the painting to Taglung Thangpa's time because an inscription mentions that the image has been consecrated 108 times from Taglung Thangpa to Önpo. Obviously this has been believed and advertised at the time when that inscription was added, but that alone does not prove that the image in fact dates to the Taglung Thangpa's time. See Kossak and Singer, *Sacred Visions*, 96–99; Singer, "Tibetan Art," 56–58, 294.

49 Of the other siddhas the one to the left of Ḍombī Heruka may represent Virūpa, but no sun is recognizable, the siddha standing in the top right corner may be Ghaṇṭāpa, but he has no attributes and does not fly, and the dancing siddha bottom right, again without attributes, may be Saraha.

50 For example: the Vajrayoginī in the collection of Lionel Fournier, where one may additionally identify Ghaṇṭāpa (south), Indrabhūti (northwest or northeast) and Padmavajra (east; see Gilles Béguin, Art *Ésotérique de L'himâlaya: La Donation Lionel Fournier* [Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990], no. C); and a more differentiated Vajrayoginī in an unnamed private collection (see Kossak and Singer, *Sacred Visions*, 100–101). The latter painting is interesting since it shows a teaching lineage commencing with Vajradhāra and Indrabhūti in the top rows instead of the generic Kagyü lineage. Also the siddhas in the charnel grounds are more differentiated and can be identified as follows, starting in the east (bottom) clockwise: Indrabhūti, Saraha, Ḍombī Heruka, Nāgārjuna(?), Kukkuripa, Lūipa, another monk siddha (for the missing be Ghaṇṭāpa), and Padmavajra. The unusual *tangka* in the Goenka Collection is published too poorly to allow a more detailed analysis. Some of the siddhas are fairly well identifiable (Pal, *Tibetan Paintings*, no. 16).

51 For the private collection *tangka* see Pal, *Himalayas*, no. 117. In this unusual depiction there is a clearly differentiated siddha in each charnel ground, but only few of them are among the eight great siddhas: Indrabhūti is represented NE, Kukkuripa South, possibly Ghaṇṭāpa West and possibly Lūipa NW. For the lotus maṇḍala see Robert N. Linrothe, "Lords within a Lotus: An Eastern Indian Hevajra Maṇḍala," *Orientations* 35, no. 3 (2004): 40–47.

52 Richard Othon Meisezahl, *Geist und Ikonographie des Vajrayāna-Buddhismus* (Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1980), 39, v.28.

53 Davidson, Indian *Esoteric Buddhism*, 304–05. Davidson calls this text, the *Uḍḍiyānaśrīyoga-yoginīsvabhūtasambhogaśmaśānakalpa* (short *Śmaśānakalpa*) attributed to a certain Birwa and thus likely to Virūpa, relatively late.

54 A similarly crowded cemetery is found in another Indian heritage *tangka* of a private collection (Kossak and Singer, *Sacred Visions*, no. 2).

Fig. 4.14
Nine-Deity Buddhakapāla Maṇḍala
Central Tibet, ca. 1375
Distemper on cloth
32⅔ x 28½ in. (83 x 72 cm)
Collection Lionel Fournier

Fig. 4.15
Vajrayoginī Maṇḍala
Central Tibet (Taglung Monastery)
Distemper on cloth
27½ x 22 in. (70 x 56 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 4.16

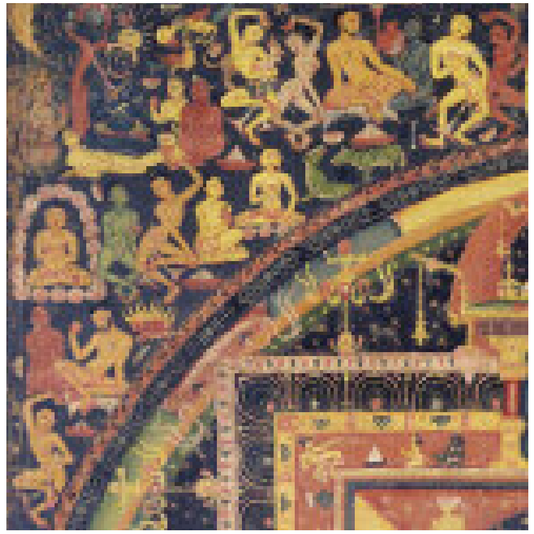

Fig. 4.16, detail

Some of them may well be identified with the Eight Great Siddhas. The sheer number of siddhas, however, and the repetition of the same types shows that this depiction derives from a concept that is completely different from the version that became canonical in the Tibetan traditions.

As in the Vajrayoginī *tangka* (Fig. 4.15), none of the siddhas on this painting is represented in monk's dress, as Nāgārjuna and Lūipa sometimes are, and there is also no king among them. Instead all are represented as world-renouncers engaged in different practices (Fig. 4.16, detail). This representation emphasizes the community and its practices in the charnel ground rather than the individual and his teaching. It is thus reminiscent of the so-called tantric feasts, or *gaṇacakra*, that have taken place at charnel grounds within siddha communities. This practice may well have contributed to the representation of the siddhas in the charnel grounds in the first place.

THE TIBETAN INNOVATION

Such feasts may have taken place at some stage in Tibet as well, but by the beginning of the thirteenth century, the main concern that connected the siddhas to the charnel grounds had already taken a new form. By that time lineages commencing with a deity and some siddhas became a standard motif in the paintings. They reflect a major concern, that of proving the authenticity, the authoritative Indian derivation, and thus the superiority of the teachings that one practices.

Although each of the eight siddhas is associated with a number of teachings, several of them overlapping, it remains unclear what they represent within the group of eight and as a group. Certainly, they do not stand for a single lineage or teaching, but they may represent a corpus of important tantric teachings that played a major role at the time of the establishment of the Drigungpa school, and among the pupils of Phagmodrupa in general.

All Kagyüpa traditions share the generic lineage commencing with Tilopa and Nāropa, a lineage that accounts for the main teaching of the school, the Six Yogas. Other esoteric teachings, such as the practices of certain tantras dedicated to Cakrasaṃvara, Vajrayoginī, and Hevajra, or the spiritual anthologies, all of which are of great import in the Kagyüpa schools as well, originated with other siddhas and entered Tibet by way of numerous lineages. In some way the eight siddhas may originally have stood for such side lineages of the Kagyüpa traditions, auxiliary lineages that were received by Phagmodrupa and were given to his prominent pupils.

The examples collected above certainly demonstrate that the association of the siddhas with a certain charnel ground is not why a particular group of siddhas attained its prominent position but may account for their number. Rather, the siddhas chosen to represent the siddha communities in the charnel grounds were chosen on the basis of the teachings for which they stand. The connections made in the *Śmaśānakalpa*, which is perhaps the only textual source, between charnel ground, a leading siddha, his community, and a range of teachings certainly points in this direction as well.

As is evident from their hagiographies, Tibetan masters collected teachings from numerous teachers and across schools. For each tantra, each school documents numerous such lineages. It has always been an enigma to me how it comes about that while the Saskya school differentiates more than a dozen lineages for Cakrasaṃvara alone and distinguishes them on its paintings, the Kagyüpa schools can share a single generic lineage for all its teachings without differentiation. The answer may be that it did not do so originally, but that in times when the authentic origin of a teaching was highly contested, the eight siddhas became a prominent theme, exactly because they accounted for some of the other teachings the school practices.

If this is indeed a fact, then it leads to another enigma. Why is the function of the siddhas no longer known and why is it not recorded in the literature?[55] Obviously, I am unable to answer this question decisively, but I may share a scenario that would account for the known facts. We can assume that, as the paintings demonstrate, the development of the Kagyüpa schools did not end in the thirteenth century but continued at a breathtaking pace into the fourteenth century before it slowed down.[56] This development undoubtedly also changed the emphasis in the teachings with which the schools identified, certainly those that were considered secondary to the main teaching. The siddhas, too, remained of paramount interest with verses and stories about them invented, altered, and extended, and their names conflated and exchanged (Saraha and Śavaripa are an obvious case). There are lists of approximately eight siddhas, containing six or so of the ones discussed above, but also mentioning others such as Maitripa. Such lists are easily altered and brought up to date. Secrecy may also have played a role, with only those initiated into the whole corpus of teachings actually knowing what all the siddhas stand for. Nevertheless, I do think that references in this regard can and will be found.

Eight siddhas representing their communities in the charnel grounds and the association of siddhas with certain teachings and certain charnel grounds do have their Indian heritage. The Tibetan innovation was the systematization of these concepts and the subsequent alteration of this system according to new needs, patterns that are visible in many aspects of early Tibetan Buddhism.

55 I have already asked numerous experts in Tibetan literature, including David Jackson, Dan Martin, and Gene Smith, if they know of references on this point.

56 Both the Drigungpa group of paintings and the Taglung paintings show evidence of the disappearance of deities that are prominent at first and the emergence of new ones. Padmasaṃbhava and possible Padampa Sangye appear on the late Riwoche paintings discussed above, and so on.

Fig. 4.16
Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala
Central Tibet, ca. 1100
Distemper on cloth
33 x 23 in. (83.8 x 58.5 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund (1995.233)