



CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS  
2015

THE INTERIOR DECORATION OF

WANLA

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## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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Besides the short note cited above on the Wanla castle, the place is not mentioned in the Ladakh chronicles. In general, extremely little historical information about the temple—or the site it is located at—is available from sources outside that preserved in the monument itself.

As most early monuments in the region, the Wanla temple, too, is traditionally ascribed to the great translator Rinchen Zangpo (Rin chen bzang po; 958–1055). However, this tradition alone and the fact that the temples under concern are often quite different from one another make the accuracy of this attribution unlikely. In fact, there are only two Ladakhi monument that quite safely can be attributed to the life time of Rinchen Zangpo, namely the monastery of Nyarma near Tiksey in the upper Indus valley, and possibly a temple ruin near the village of Basgo.<sup>1</sup> However, even in these cases, it can not be considered certain that Rinchen

<sup>1</sup> On the earliest phase of Nyarma see Luczanits, *Buddhist Sculpture in Clay*, p. 25–30, on the Basgo temple see Luczanits, *The Early Buddhist Heritage of Ladakh Reconsidered*, p. 70–73.

Fig. 01: Ser-khang in Tholing,  
Tucci, Tibet - Archaeologia  
mundi, pp. 86, 90, 223, 235



Zangpo was actually instrumental or otherwise involved in their foundation, as can be concluded from the evidence at Tabo monastery, where Rinchen Zangpo does not occur among the highest monks depicted in the foundation period paintings on the south wall of the Main Temple's entry room.<sup>2</sup>

Since the *Chronicles of Ladakh* even attribute the foundation of the Wanla castle to a period after Rinchen Zangpo's lifetime, the temple certainly is also later. Further, the fact that the chronicles do not contain any information on the temple itself, means that it precedes the historical period the text covers in greater detail, namely the emergence and continuation of the Ladakhi kingdom. As the Alchi group of monuments, and practically all temples in the region attributed to the Great Translator, Wanla thus falls in a period for which external sources are extremely scarce. Indeed, for 12th to 15th century monuments in the Western Himalayan region, the temples themselves are our most reliable, and often only source of historical information.

The placement of the temple within the castle, also recorded in the Wanla inscription (see ###), is historically

<sup>2</sup> Luczanits, *Buddhist Sculpture in Clay*, p. 33–35; Luczanits, *Minor Inscriptions and Captions*, p. 103–13.

significant, since it distinguishes this foundation from earlier ones. Those monuments that can be associated with Rinchen Zangpo and other early foundations of the 11th to early 13th centuries, among them Nyarma and the Alchi group of monuments, have been built in the valley and close to the villages, or even within it. The Wanla temple, in contrast, was placed in the centre of a castle and thus represents an early example of a temple intimately connected with a castle or built as a castle itself, as became common later on. Possibly increasing political and religious strives made it advisable to place a religious monuments in a less exposed location. This led to the development that major newly founded monasteries are separated from the villages, either somewhat hidden in a side valley or widely visible on the top of a hillock. The monastic architecture itself also became increasingly massive and castle-like. Good examples for such monasteries in Ladakh are Basgo (Ba sgo) and Shey (Shel), both early royal seats with later monastic buildings, Hemis (He mis), dugged away in a side valley and, of course, Tikse (Khrigs se). All of these sites are considerably younger than Wanla.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO THE ALCHI GROUP OF MONUMENTS

Closer to home is certainly the Alchi group of monuments, that is the earliest religious buildings of Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda. These monuments certainly preceded the Wanla Temple, as is not only clear from the date of the Wanla castle, but also from the general development of art and architecture in the Western Himalayan region. Despite the admirable efforts of Roger Goepfer to clarify this issue once and for all, his date of Alchi<sup>3</sup>—and with it

<sup>3</sup> See in particular Goepfer, *Clues for a Dating*, and Goepfer, *More Evidence for Dating the Sumtsek*, as well as Goepfer & Poncar, *Alchi*, p. 17–19.

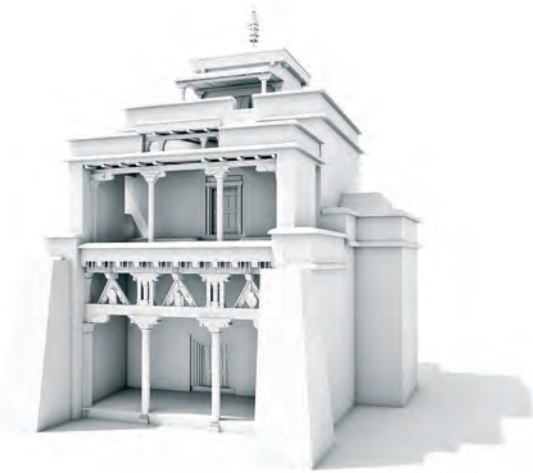


Fig. 02: Reconstruction of the original appearance of the Alchi Sumtsek.

Fig. 03: Reconstruction of the original appearance of the Wanla Sumtsek.

all the associated monuments—is still contested by some. However, in our opinion the evidence for the flourishing of the small Alchi dominion in the period from c. 1150 to 1250 is overwhelming, especially when its art is seen and interpreted in the context of the general development of Tibetan Buddhist art in the Himalayas.<sup>4</sup> This reading attributes the Alchi Sumtsek (gSum brtsegs) to the time around the demise of the founder of the Drigung School of Tibetan Buddhism, Jigten Gönpö ('Jig rten mgon po) or Jigten Sumgön ('Jig rten gsum mgon; 1143–1217), who is depicted and identified at the end of a lineage of the Sumtsek's top floor (Fig. 358). Counter arguments see this depiction and/or their captions as considerably later additions to the temple, a perspective that has to be abandoned on the basis of their peculiar characteristics of this lineage alone.

Not only the geographic proximity, but also the mention of Alchi in the Wanla inscription among the dominions conquered (see p. 22) make it clear that Alchi was within the Wanla realm when the temple inscription, presumably a

<sup>4</sup> Gopper's dating is supported in several publications of Luczanits viewing the problem from different angles, see in particular: *Art-Historical Aspects of Dating Tibetan Art, Example One* (p. 27–37), *Buddhist Sculpture in Clay*, p. 125–95, *The Early Buddhist Heritage of Ladakh Reconsidered*, p. 73–86, *Alchi and the Drigung School, A First Glance at Early Drigungpa Painting*, and *Alchi Sumtseg Reconsidered*.

song of praise (*mol ba*) composed for one of those festive occasions that are depicted in the murals, was composed. In fact, the principal similarity of the Wanla temple to that of the Alchi Sumtsek (see Figs. 353, 354) and numerous other comparisons of details from the Wanla temple to the Alchi group monuments made throughout this book, clearly show that the Alchi Sumtsek may well have served as a model for the Wanla temple. Despite the similarity in general appearance and in some details, however, the technological difference between the two monuments is enormous and indicates a severe break in the cultural environment.

Typologically the three storeyed temple can be traced further back to the famous Golden Temple (gSer khang) of Tholing, in which Rinchen Zangpo is said to have spent the last years of his life,<sup>5</sup> and Central Tibetan monuments such as the main temple of Samye, the oldest building of Shalu monastery—if it had three stories then already—and the temple of Drathang, which is said to have had three storeys as well.<sup>6</sup> Later variants of this type of monument are found

<sup>5</sup> Tucci, *Tibet*, p. 86, 90, 223, 235; Namgyal, *Tuolin Si (Ntho-ling Monastery)*, p. 94. Actually nothing of the Tholing Serkhang as it is preserved today hints towards such an early origin, it is only the wooden door published by Tucci as that of the Serkhang that warrants an early date.

<sup>6</sup> See Heller, *The Paintings of Gra thang*, p. ###.

Fig. 04: The teaching white-skinned Jigten Gönpo in three different depictions. Note the similarities in the hair line. On the west wall of the inner chörten of the Great Stüpa at Alchi.

Fig. 05: Jigten Gönpo in a typical Drigung composition on the main wall of the Lotsaba Lhakhang at Alchi.

Fig. 06: Possibly Jigten Gönpo on the left wall of the Shangrong Temple in the corner between two mandalas.



both locally, such as the eastern temple of the Tsatsapuri complex at Alchi, as well as elsewhere in the Himalayas, such as the highly impressive Mahāmuni and Maitreya temples of Lo Mangthang.<sup>7</sup> This selection of examples certainly suffices to show, that this type of architecture is not affiliated with a certain school of Tibetan Buddhism, but many of the Ladakhi monuments relevant here do have an affiliation to the Drigung ('Bri gung) School.

### THE RISE OF THE DRIGUNG SCHOOL

While the Alchi Sumtsek and related buildings, in particular the two oldest painted chörten there, can be seen as documenting the very first contacts with the just established Kagyü (bKa' brgyud) Schools of Tibetan Buddhism, in particular the Drigung. Wanla documents their success in the region. The Drigung School is of particular importance in the Western Himalayan region. Already during the lifetime of their founder, this school established hermitages in the region of Mount Kailash. As the Alchi Sumtsek lineage depiction documents (Fig. 358), the Drigung have

7 Of these the Thub chen lHa khang preserves only the ground floor, while the Byams pa lHa khang represents a new type focused on a monumental sculpture of Maitreya.

reached to prominence even far beyond Mount Kailash at that very early stage.

The rise and establishment of the Drigung School in the wider western Himalayan area is documented in a number of historical sources.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Western Himalayas remained a place of refuge for the Drigung School when their main seat in Central Tibet came under attack and was destroyed in 1290.<sup>9</sup> The subsequent relevance of their presence in Ladakh throughout the following centuries is documented by numerous monuments, some of which have only become known or identified as such recently.<sup>10</sup> The Wanla temple can also be interpreted as an expression of a Drigung School religious context that is characteristic for numerous Ladakhi foundations from approximately the middle of the 13th<sup>11</sup> to the 15th century. It is in this general environment that the foundation and the decoration

8 Petech, The 'Bri-guñ-pa sect in Western Tibet and Ladakh, and Petech, Ya-ts'e, Gu-ge, Pu-rañ,

9 On the larger historical developments and the role of the Drigungpa as the primary rivals of Sakya hegemony see, for example, ###.

10 Particular noteworthy among the new finds are the Drigungpa paintings at Lingshed, see Linrothe, A Winter in the Field, p. 45–53, and of the third and possibly oldest temple at Alchi Tsatsapuri on the west side of the complex (Alexander, Alchi Tsatsapuri).

11 Among others, these would comprise the early chörten with central Tibetan derived paintings as studied in Lucanits, On an unusual painting style in Ladakh, the new school association of which is apparent from their emphasis on Akṣobhya as the main Buddha of the five *tathāgata*.



of the Wanla temple have to be interpreted in. However, Wanla also demonstrates that recognising or establishing the school affiliation on the basis of the information provided by it is far from unanimous. This is not only due to the highly individualised nature of the monuments under discussion and the varied pantheons of deities they focus on, but also because the evidence at Wanla itself indicates that the school affiliation is actually rather secondary, we will get back to this point later on.

For the time being, it is sufficient to establish a general Drigung affiliation on the basis of a few key themes and iconographies within the expansive pantheon. For Wanla, the most important such key themes are two Drigung specific compositions, one featuring the characteristic group of eight siddhas (see p. ?f.) and one focused on a teaching Śākyamuni that occurs twice in the temple (see p. 199ff.), and a characteristic set of the 84 Mahāsiddhas (see p. 58ff.). Of particular importance is also the representation of the founder of the Drigung School, Jigten Gönpo (1143–1217). At Alchi, his portrait is found in almost all monuments dating after the Sumtsek, where he is the last figure in the lineage (Fig. 358). Examples shown here are from the Great Stūpa (Fig. 355), the Translator’s Temple (Fig. 356) and the temple of Alchi Shangrong (Fig. 357). Remarkably, the receding

hair of Drigungpa can even be recognised in the Sumtsek lineage depiction (Fig. 358).

A comparison further reveals that originally all lineage figures were depicted white-skinned, likely referring to the trope that converting to Buddhism is equal to turning dark/black people white, as is for example referred to in the renovation inscription in the Tabo Main Temple.<sup>12</sup> In later depictions, such as the one of Wanla (Fig. 359), it is Jigten Gönpo alone who occasionally retains this feature, which appears to disappear later. Nevertheless, the Wanla inscription is rather casual on the issue of school affiliation.

### THE WANLA INSCRIPTION

Certainly the most important historical source for the monument is the Wanla inscription itself. It is now available in a comprehensive study by Kurt Tropper,<sup>13</sup> the translation of which is republished here along with some of the most relevant notes (see p. 17ff.). It opens a window on a local Buddhist dominion centred on Wanla that otherwise is only known from local folk songs. The inscriptions pro-

<sup>12</sup> See Steinkellner & Luczanits, *The renovation inscription of the Tabo gTsug lag khañ*, p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> Tropper, *The historical inscription in the gSum brtsegs temple at Wanla, Ladakh*.

Fig. 07: Jigten Gönpo and Phagmodrupa as the last lineage figures in the lantern of the Alchi Sumtsek, all teachers being white-skinned there.

Fig. 08: Phagmodrupa and Jigten Gönpo in the lineage of the painted beam on gallery level in Wanla.

Fig. 09: Phagmodrupa and presumably Jigten Gönpo in the passage of the Senge Lhakhang at Lamayuru.

vides the vague historicity of a source that is more concerned with praising the heroic ruler than to actually provide an account of what happens. It can nevertheless be assumed, that the ruler named Bhagdarskyab ('Bhag dar skyabs) and his sons have been involved in a substantial way with the erection and decoration of the Wanla temple. As Tropper points out (note 38 on page 25), the text does not explicitly state that the hero has founded the temple, but given the emphasis on its buildup and the details described of the veranda (see v. 55f. on page 25), this certainly is the most likely scenario, and thus is assumed here.

Bhagdarskyab is described as the eldest of four brothers, sons of a high official (*blon po*) of an unnamed government, who ruled from the Wanla castle (v. 5f.). He subsequently gained predominance in the region, his dominion including the surrounding valleys as well as Alchi and Kanji, which are explicitly named among other locales (v. 31f.). He even may have been appointed ruler of a wider lower Ladakhi area, including Baltistan and the Nubra area, by the then ruler of Kashmir, which he subsequently brought and held under his power by military means.<sup>14</sup> Although it is likely that the account exaggerates at times, it's principal historical accuracy is confirmed by the comparisons that can be made between the Wanla temple and the monuments of Alchi, Kanji and other places in the region that most likely have been part of the Wanla dominion.

Religiously, the temple is characterised as a Kagyü monument (v. 70f.). Towards the end of the inscription, the youngest of his four sons, who bears a religious name in contrast to his brothers, is described as a Drigung ('Bri gung pa) monk (v. 116f. on page 28). The art speaks an even more ambiguous language, of the many lineage depictions throughout the temple only three hint towards a

<sup>14</sup> To suggest yet another possible interpretation of v. 38f.

more specific Drigung association, namely those in the Maitreya niche, on the painted beam (the detail in Fig. 359) and in the lantern, and the Nyingmapa, whose topics are so prominent in the painted pantheon, are not mentioned at all, even though the main priest in the donor depiction underneath the inscription appears to wear a Nyingma hat (Fig. 34 on page 23).

In terms of art, the inscription mentions Nepali craftsmanship with appreciation (v. 59f.) when talking about the woodcarvings. Even though it is improbable that Newar craftsmen have been involved in the monument, the statement proves the new cultural affiliation away from nearby Kashmir and towards the East. The inscription further enumerates some of the topics represented, and emphasizes the vast pantheon depicted (in particular v. 67f.). Most remarkably, the three local artists, a father with his two sons, all bearing Tibetan names, are also mentioned and praised (v. 85f.).

## THE INTERIOR DECORATION

Further historically relevant information can be gained from the interior decoration of the temple, the details of which do not tally with the inscription in all cases. Of utmost importance are the two feast representations, one of which being in direct association with the inscription. In fact, such a feast and the offerings made at such an occasion is also described in the inscription itself. These colourful renderings are an extremely rich repository for the study of the then current self-perception of the ruling elite, their wider cultural connections and the nature of their dominion.

The prominent display of the martial education of the male population in these depictions, continues the changes in such depictions visible already in the Alchi group of Monu-



ments and confirms the contested character of the dominion that is also communicated by the inscription. In fact, it is the secular, that is largely predominant in these depictions, leaving a surprisingly small area to the monastic world. The representations of artisans in a lion costume also may be read as a reflection of the new orientation towards the East. Further donor depictions throughout the temple are either fragmentary, as the one on the gallery, or rather emblematic. Consequently, the interior does not allow for conclusions on the secular historic connections beyond the area under discussion in the inscription anyway.

On the religious side, the art represents an amazing repository for the history of Tibetan art and Buddhism in the region, that can only be hinted at here and in the description and interpretation of the extensive iconographic program distributed over the three floors of the temple. First of all, the general Kagyü School context for the temple is confirmed by numerous representations of the generic Kagyü lineage in both sculpture and painting. The lineage representations in form of their most significant depictions as sculptures and on the painted beam, each of them 13 figures, also provide the only possible chronological clue on the basis of the temple's decoration (see p. 109f.).

I have shown elsewhere, that the Wanla temple is one of the latest monuments that preserves some of the characteristics of a early Drigung painting.<sup>15</sup> However, these elements have to be considered an eclectic and conservative continuation of the earlier tradition in a very peripheral place.

Typologically, in contrast, the Wanla temple is right at the pulse of time. Its extensive pantheon must be considered as one of the earliest attempts to create an encyclopedic

15 Luczanits, A First Glance at Early Drigungpa Painting.

monument, a temple containing an extremely comprehensive and systematically displayed pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism. Other monuments of that type being Shalu monastery and especially a number of Kumbum chörten, of which the one at Gyantse is outstanding. A similar pantheon is also described in catalogues recording the decoration of the chörten dedicated to Phagmodrupa and Drigungpa, the historical context of which is not entirely clear.<sup>16</sup>

A particular astonishing element of Wanla's decoration is the prominent integration of Nyingmapa themes. This is not only evident in the frequent representation of Padmasambhava, who is found at least once in every floor in a prominent position and among the 84 Mahāsiddhas, an interpretation of Padmākara, but also from the subjects depicted in the main niche (see p. 45ff.), in the dedication of an entire wall of the Ground Floor to the Eight Pronouncements (see p. 87ff.), and in the rather unusual iconographic program of the lantern, in particular its right wall (see p. 164f.). This indicates that at the time the Wanla temple was decorated Nyingmapa treasure (*gter ma*) literature was already widely accepted. Since the general inclusion of Nyingmapa teachings and the recognition of Padmasambhava becomes visible within diverse Kagyü Schools only in the last decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the pronounced emphasis on such teachings in Wanla again hints towards an early to mid 14<sup>th</sup> century date.

## DRIGUNG PAINTING IN LADAKH

As mentioned already, the rise of the Drigung and other so called "New Schools" also resulted in a change of the artis-

16 See Czaja, The Commemorative Stupas at Densathil, and Luczanits, Mandalas of Mandalas, for different interpretations on the same description.

tic environment. In the course of the 13th century new styles of art intimately connected with contemporaneous Central Tibetan art gain predominance while the earlier Western Himalayan idioms, of which the Alchi group of monuments preserves a distinctive Kashmir derived Ladakhi branch quickly fade away.

Early examples for a Central Tibetan style in Ladakh are painted chörten in Lamayuru and Alchi Shangrong, sadly both quite ruined.<sup>17</sup> To these I add the murals of the so-called Karsha Kadampa Chorten.<sup>18</sup> It is likely, that all of these are to be attributed to a Drigung context and I propose a mid-13th century date for them. These monuments may also be taken as evidence for foreign painters working in Ladakh during that period.

Monuments from roughly the late 13th century up to at least the 15th century, in contrast, preserve indigenous paintings styles which may summarily be called early Ladakhi painting styles.<sup>19</sup> These styles share a naive quality but differ considerably in details, colouring and artistic merit.

There are very few chronological clues for the monuments decorated in these styles. The Auspicious Three-storeyed Temple at Wanla certainly counts among the earliest of this group. Of the few chronological indicators it offers are the many lineage representation of which the one of thirteen teachers appears to be the most relevant, since it is found in sculpture (see p. 33ff.) and on the largest lineage representation on the painted beam (see p. 143ff.). If we take the common Drigung throne holder lineage as base, the depicted lineage would only lead up to the 1280ies and

make Wanla a monument of the last quarter of the 13th century.

From the other monuments preserved in the region, the small temple at Kanji, a long days walk across a path to the south of Wanla, is stylistically most closely associated with Wanla.<sup>20</sup> The only chronological clue for Kanji is again a Kagyü lineage represented on the main wall above the three main sculptures. It contains fourteen figures, one more than the average at Wanla (see p. 33ff.). In the Kanji lineage Phagmodrupa, identified by the location in the lineage but actually featuring the hair line of Drigungpa, is emphasised, as only he performs the teaching gesture.

In terms of the iconographic topics represented, there is little at Kanji that resembles Wanla, and there is no specific Drigung School theme. Instead, the walls are exclusively occupied with mandalas of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhana cycle, which in Wanla occupies one of the ground floor walls (see p. ?ff.). A teacher in the back top corner of the left wall, who has a receding hair line as well, actually wears Indian monastic dress under his cape (Fig. 362). The opposite corner is occupied by Padmasambhava (Fig. 361). Further, there are a few deities which can be considered indicators of close relationship, in particular the rare representation of the sapphire blue Sarasvatī with sword and book (###).

#### > Kanji inscription

The teacher depictions can also be taken as a criteria to attribute the Senge Lhakhang (Seng ge lHa khang, 'Lion's Temple') at Lamayuru to this early group as well.<sup>21</sup> There Phagmodrupa has his characteristic beard and presumably faces Drigungpa again. The Senge Lhakhang also

17 See Luczanits, On an Unusual Painting Style in Ladakh.

18 See Linrothe & Kerin, Deconsecration and Discovery, figs. 10, 11a-d.

19 I have first suggested this designation in Luczanits, The Early Buddhist Heritage of Ladakh Reconsidered, p. 89–90.

20 See Vitali, Ladakhi Temples of the 13th-14th Century.

21 Khosla, Buddhist Monasteries in the Western Himalaya, pl. 53; Genoud & Inoue, Buddhist Wall-Paintings of Ladakh, figs. 'Lamayuru' 1–6.



Fig. 10: Padmasambhava in Kanji.

Fig. 11: Teacher wearing Indian monastic dress under a cape; Kanji.

Fig. 12: Sapphire blue goddess Sarasvati with sword; Kanji.

shares a number of more distinctive iconographic themes with Wanla, such as the Amitāyus Paradise with Padmasambhava to his right and the particular group of the 84 Mahāsiddhas. In the Senge Lhakhang the latter take a prominent position and share their peculiar composition with the depiction in the Wanla lantern. It can only be guessed, which version of the two is earlier, but the Senge Lhakhang depiction certainly is more sophisticated. The three temples discussed so far further share the red dominated painting background.

The peculiar set of Mahāsiddhas—along with a characteristic variety and abstraction of the trees used as separators between them—connects the red temples with that of Alchi Shangrong.<sup>22</sup> Its Mahāsiddha depiction is extremely important, since it is the most sophisticated version of this specific group and the siddhas are also identified by captions. Despite the otherwise dilapidated state, it is clear that the Shangrong Temple houses painting of excellent quality. The temple further contains an ancient Drigung composition with the typical siddha representations flanking a central deity or hierarch that is not preserved.

<sup>22</sup> Béguin & Fournier, *Un Sanctuaire Méconnu de la Région d'Alchi*, figs. 3–9.

The colour palette and iconography of the temple differs from the others.

The Lhakhang Soma (IHa khang So ma; “New Temple”) within the monastic enclosure of Alchi<sup>23</sup> contains paintings of the same painting school as on evidence in Shangrong, although of lesser quality. Also the iconography of the two temples is very similar. Roughly speaking the two temples house tutelary deities and their assemblies on the main wall, mandalas connected with the elimination of inferior rebirths on the left wall, and the medicine Buddha(s) on the right wall. However, now the Śākyamuni composition with the seven Tārā underneath, a typical Drigung topic that occurs twice in Wanla in less prominent positions, takes the main position in the temple.

The composition centred on Śākyamuni, now performing the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*), is also the main topic the centre of the northern and best preserved of the three Tsatsapuri Temples<sup>24</sup> at Alchi.

<sup>23</sup> See Snellgrove & Skorupski, *Cultural Heritage of Ladakh* 1, p. 64–70, 79, col. pl. xvii, figs. 55–64; Khosla, *Buddhist Monasteries in the Western Himalaya*, pl. 41; Pal & Fournier, *A Buddhist Paradise*, p. 62, figs. LS1–37; and Béguin & Fournier, *Un Sanctuaire Méconnu de la Région d'Alchi*, figs. 10–14.

<sup>24</sup>



As far as preserved, the ground floor of the northern Tsatsapuri temple was copied in the East Temple of the complex.

The painted cave at Saspol<sup>25</sup> shares some characteristics with the latest temple of the Tsatsapuri complex. Here we are safely in the 15th century, since Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) is amount the teachers depicted.

One of the later monuments is certainly the Guru Lhakhang in Phyang that has recently studied and newly attributed by Erberto Lo Bue.<sup>26</sup> Related painting styles are found in a large number of monuments.

25 (Snellgrove & Skorupski 1980: col.pl.iv, Figs.69~73; Genoud and Inoue 1982: 'Saspol'; Beguin & Fournier 1986: Fig.22

26 Lo Bue, The Gu ru lha khang at Phyi dbang, now attributes the temple to the mid-15th century. Earlier publications on the temple include Genoud & Inoue, Buddhist Wall-Paintings of Ladakh, figs. 'Guru Lha khang'; and Béguin & Fournier, Un Sanctuaire Méconnu de la Région d'Alchi, figs. 19–21, who suggested a 16th century date for the temple.





## INTERIOR DECORATION

CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS

One of the most remarkable features of the three storied Wanla temple is that it preserves an unusual high percentage of its original furnishing and décor, which includes the carving of wooden architectural members, the clay sculptures in the niches, the papier mâché sculptures on the gallery and the murals covering all the walls on all three levels and even include a founding inscription and two extensive donor depictions. Consequently, it is one of the most informative monuments throughout the Himalayas.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

As apparent from the architecture itself and the original name of the temple in the Founding Inscription—Auspicious Three-Storeied (bKra shis gsum brtsegs)—the Wanla temple certainly has been built in reference to the Alchi monuments, particularly the Sumtsek (gSum brtsegs) there (see ###). However, both the architecture and its technical details as well as the decoration, in particular the iconographic arrangements, differ enormously from the Sumtsek. In fact, the Wanla temple reflects a cultural and religious context so different from that of the Alchi group of monuments, that its relative temporal proximity is actually surprising.

The architectural features of the monument have already been discussed in the previous chapter, this section now provides a comprehensive survey of the temple's decoration. The survey includes the woodcarvings, which are also integral part of the architecture.

The monument is clearly structured into three sections placed above each other. On the ground level, the temple is entered via a veranda, the original construction and ornamentation of which, mainly in wood, is still preserved. The second storey is an open gallery entered via a window-like door from the roof of the veranda. The third storey is a lightweight construction lantern simply placed on the ceiling of the temple's second storey (Fig. 1). It has a window-like door on the same side as the other stories and can be accessed from the roof.

Of the three spaces, the ground floor is clearly the most complex part of the building. This floor contains the monuments's main images and most of its extensive iconographic program. The gallery is organised in a much simpler manner and contains a group of lineage sculptures. Its iconographic program appears to reinforce the more general themes also found on the ground floor. The lantern

features a more esoteric program with a number of themes only represented here.

In contrast to the spatial organisation of the architecture, the iconography of the interior is clearly aligned according to the three levels of the building, each level forming an integrated whole and only the lower two levels linked at all through the large sculpture of Avalokiteśvara in the back niche and the lineage apparently made to flank him at the level of his head on the gallery (Fig. 2). Given the complex construction in this area—the ceiling of the gallery lowered above the main image, the opening of the gallery by reducing it to a narrow ledge and the resulting visibility of the images placed on this ledge (see ###)—it is very likely that this interplay of architecture and sculpture was planned from the very beginning. Not accidentally, both the main image of Avalokiteśvara and the sculptures of the Kagyü lineage on the gallery are the only ones mentioned in the inscription (see p. 26, verse 70). Thus, the degree to which the architecture and sculptures complement each other in this case is truly remarkable.

The other sculptures and the paintings then clearly only relate to the respective levels they are found in. The murals further make it clear, that each level is perceived as a temple in itself, a conception that has architecturally been emphasised in so far as all three levels are only accessible from the outside. Given the difficult access through temporary ladders only, the upper levels of the temple were certainly not meant to be approached by a general visitor. Instead, considerable attention has been dedicated mostly to those topics that are visually accessible from below.

## AXES AND HIERARCHIES

There is no doubt, that the temple's furnishing and decoration has been conceived according to the hierarchical inter-

Fig. 13: The superimposed pillars of the ground and gallery levels clearly demarcate the two lower floors. On gallery level the painted beam is clearly visible. The opening on the very top leads into the lantern, the paintings of which can hardly be seen from below.



Fig. 14: The multiple heads of Avalokiteśvara reach into the gallery level and are flanked by the figures of the Kagyü lineage which very likely have been created for the narrow ledge at the back of this level.



relationships of its themes, even if the reasoning behind these is not always readily comprehensible. These hierarchies are mainly expressed in the spatial relationship of the topics to the different parts of the building as well as to each other.

In total, four principal hierarchical—and often also visual—axes can be recognised, which are presented here in order of importance for the overall iconographic scheme. The main hierarchical axis is clearly defined and leads from the main niche towards the entrance of the temple. Within this hierarchy, as well as within smaller units such as a particular wall or the main sculptures, that represented on the proper left, that is to the right of the central topic, takes precedence over that on the proper right.

For the painted decoration on one wall the topics are commonly arranged hierarchically from top to bottom. However, occasionally this hierarchy is complemented or replaced by one from the centre out. The latter is the case when an entire wall is dedicated to one topic only, as is the case with the walls dedicated to the Eight Pronouncements (bKa' brgyad) and the Elimination of Lower Rebirths according the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*, the two walls flanking the Maitreya niche on the ground floor.

Both the principal arrangement of the description of the interior decoration as well as the discussion of smaller smaller spatial units are guided by these hierarchies. Consequently, the description in each of the three sections begins with the main features in the back part of the storey and move towards the entrance. Walls in the same distance of main image and entrance are discussed following each other, the left one first. For example, the two walls flanking the main niche are discussed in this succession. Of the walls flanking the Maitreya niche on the left side of the temple referred to above the one in the back section

to the proper right of Maitreya is discussed much earlier than the one to the proper left of Maitreya, and the iconographic program of the Maitreya niches itself is described between them.

#### LANTERN

Since it is *de facto* not integrated architecturally (see ###) it has been speculated that the lantern is a later addition to the monument.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, from a constructional point of view, the lantern is the latest part of the monument and the haphazard manner in which it was placed on top of an otherwise closed building is indeed unusual, and may indicate that its addition was literally an afterthought. Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why the lantern needs to be considered part of an early overall concept for the temple. Even if this concept may not have been the very original one, it certainly was already developed when the verses of the inscription were formulated, since it refers to a three-storied temple called Tashi Sumtseg (bKra shis gsum brtsegs), i.e. Auspicious Three-storied.

The stylistic and iconographic assessment of the lantern, too, testifies to a construction date close to that of the main structure. Since a major monument such as this one always needs some time to evolve, it is natural that there are minor stylistic changes from level to level. In addition, it is also common that much more effort is made for the decoration of the ground floor, which is readily accessible. In Wanla this is, for example, obvious through the usage of gilding, which only occurs on this floor. Further, very delicate shading is also much more frequent on this floor than on others.

<sup>1</sup> Kozicz, *The Wanla Temple*, p. 130–131.

## WOODWORK

The usage of wooden architectural members in many respect follows that known from earlier monuments in the region, in particular the Alchi group. Practically all of the wooden elements, be it in the veranda, the door or the temples interior, go back to the original conception and are consistent with each other.

## VERANDA

The veranda is a typical two pillar two pilaster construction dividing the porch into three parts, but a massive intermediary beam propped up by them structures the porch also horizontally. While the pilasters have single capitals turned sideways reinforcing a lion console, the pillars have double capitals. The ends of the interrupted beam, carved in the shape of elephants (Fig. 9), support a



Fig. 15: Central part of the veranda construction with a triangular centrepiece and elephant consoles, the top lintel of the door in the background; photo CL09 D5340.

gable carved with a trilobed arch (Fig. 3). The clearance between the intermediary beam and the beam supporting the veranda's roof is partitioned by eight evenly spaced secondary pillars.

Remarkably, most of these elements feature fine wood-carvings, today almost completely obscured by the thick coating of red wash applied over the ages. On the outer side the double capitals have the Four Great Kings carved on them, which could only be identified with certainty, once the covering layer was carefully removed (Figs. 6, 7). In the lower left is the guardian of the North and king of the *yakṣa*, Vaiśravaṇa (rNam thos sras), holding a jewel club in the right and a bag made of mongoose skin in the left. Above him is the guardian of the South, Virūḍhaka (Phags skyes

po) holding a sword (*khaḍga*). Virūpākṣa (Mig mi bzang), the guardian of the West and king of the *nāga*, is represented on the top right holding a snake, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Yul 'khor srung), guardian of the East and king of the *gandharva* is below him holding a lute (*viṇā*). Thus, their iconography is reduced to the bare essentials and their present relative location to each other may indicate that the lower two have been exchanged at some stage. While the larger capitals have a simple lotus blossom carved on the back, the smaller ones are not carved at that side.

The eight small columns standing on the intermediary beam, the ones at the side walls turned sideways (Figs. 4, 8), feature a variety of elaborate decorative patterns as well

Fig. 16: Side of the veranda construction; photo CL98 69,10.

Fig. 17: Center right pilaster with a lotus, one of the symbols of luck, and a complex shaft pattern.

Fig. 18: Two of the Four Great Kings on the right side capitals of the veranda, namely Virūpākṣa and Dhṛtarāṣṭra; photo: CL09 D5253.



as the Eight Symbols of Luck, which are also depicted in the interior (see below).

Not only architecturally, but also in respect to its décor has the veranda its closest precedences in the Alchi group of monuments. The Alchi Dukhang ('Du khang) still preserves the same veranda construction including the gable carved with a lobed arch,<sup>2</sup> and a similar but simpler gable is used for the window in Sumda Chung.<sup>3</sup>

#### DOOR

The expansive door frame has three levels of decoration, the one in the centre being the most important. The outer edge is demarcated by a row of lotus petals. The outer

larger band has eight representations of Buddha Akṣobhya on each side literally bound together by a frame of knotted strings. Akṣobhya is also found in the centre of the bottom lintel, occupying the so called *lalātabimba*. The middle section of the lintel is dedicated to Avalokiteśvara in his most popular form, namely that of Ṣaḍakṣara, his name deriving from the six-syllable mantra that is written on the panel underneath between two stūpas: \*// *ōṃ ma ṇi pad me hūṃ hri* //. It is thus likely that the two other figures on the middle lintel are the two-armed Mañidhara on the left side and the four-armed goddess Ṣaḍakṣarī on the right.<sup>4</sup> A scroll and vajra band conclude the doors decoration at the side of the door.

2 ###  
3 ###

4 This theme reoccurs several times throughout the monument: see p. ###.

Fig. 19: The two great kings on the left capitals.

Fig. 20: Right side pilaster with the pair of fish among the symbols of luck; photo CL09 D5255.

Fig. 21: The end of the intermediary beam carved in the shape of an elephant. Note also the bird within the arch of the gable above.



Fig. 22: The door frame with the mantra of Avalokiteśvara on the lintel and the life of the Buddha on the sides; photo CL98 69,25.



The middle beams show sixteen scenes, eight on each side, from the Buddha's life set into simple but individual architectural frames. The life begins in the top left corner and is to be read anti-clockwise. Still in Tuṣita heaven, the future Śākyauni crowns Maitreya as his successor there (Fig. ###). He then appears as an elephant in a dream of queen Māyā. Māyā gives birth under a tree and the Buddha is bathed by the gods. The Bodhisattva's youth is represented

by the school scene, the arrow contest and the episode in which he tames a mad elephant (Fig. ###). The last scene on this side may show him with his wife (Fig. ###).

The life continues from the bottom right up with the departure from the palace (Fig. ###), the farewell of horse and groom and the cutting of the hair (Fig. ###). The period of ascetic meditation, represented in the next panel, is discontinued with the acceptance of milk rice from the milk-



Fig. 23: First scene of the Buddha's life, the bestowing of the crown to his successor Maitreya in Tuṣita heaven.



Fig. 24: The Bodhisattva as a youth taming the elephant.



Fig. 25: The Bodhisattva sitting with his wife in the palace.



Fig. 26: The great departure from the palace on a horse carried by deities.



Fig. 27: The beginning of ascetic life by cutting the hair, for which a stūpa is being built by the gods.



Fig. 28: The cremation of the Buddha's body concludes the life of the Buddha on the Wanla door.

Fig. 29: A painted lion console to the left of the Śākyamuni niche.



Fig. 30: Capital with a pair of fish, from the Eight Symbols of Luck, and an elephant, from the Seven Jewels of a King, carved on it.



Fig. 31: Painted capital with the umbrella, from the Eight Symbols of Luck, and the wheel, from the Seven Jewel of the King.



Fig. 32: Base of the back left main pillars on the ground floor.



maid Sujatā. The Buddha under the tree stands for the enlightenment, the teaching one for the first sermon and the burning corpse for the *parinirvāṇa* (Fig. ###).<sup>5</sup>

The door, too, finds its closest comparison in Alchi, in particular in the door of the Alchi Dukhang, which is equally elaborate. These are already less elaborate versions of those carved doors that had been used in the earliest western Himalayan monuments. The most important local precedence in this respect are the doors of **Chigtan**, which is only preserved in a photograph,<sup>6</sup> and **Lhachuse**, in a side valley close to Kanji, of which only fragments remain.<sup>7</sup> More or less elaborate early wooden doors are also known from Tabo, Nako, Ribba, Tholing and Kojarnath.<sup>8</sup> The Wanla door here marks the end of a long tradition, since later doors are much simply and commonly only carved with decorative themes.

#### INTERIOR

As in the veranda in the interior, too, beams are supported by consols at their connections to the walls and pillars, the latter with carved bases and capitals. The consols are the traditional grinning male leonine creatures, in Wanla they are rather squarish but nicely painted (Fig. 17). The square bases are crossly simplified square blocks with rectangular cavities at the corners and a ring with projections at the corners on top. Most attention has been given to the capitals, which are commonly double. Of these, the upper capital has three volutes on each side while the lower one has only one.

<sup>5</sup> A more extensive representation of the life of the Buddha featuring the same scenes is painted in the ground floor (see p. ###).

<sup>6</sup>

<sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Luczanits, *Early Buddhist Wood Carvings from Himachal Pradesh*; Neumann & Neumann, *The Portal of Khojar Monastery*; Poell, *Wooden Temple Doors in Ladakh*.



The capitals are also the only wooden elements in the interior that bear iconographic significance. On the ground floor, the four faces of the upper capitals bear the Eight Symbols of Luck, curiously repeating the lotus twice and skipping the jewel instead, an anomaly also found in the veranda. The entering visitor sees the fishes (Fig. 18) and the vase on the capitals in front and lotus and umbrella (Fig. 19) on the capitals supporting the back beam. The backsides of the capitals, the sides facing the main image, then feature knot and banner as well as lotus and conch. Of the two lotuses, the one on the front side has small petals, while the one on the back has eight.

The lower capitals feature the Seven Jewels of a king, but the front right capital does not follow this original concept and has a sword on the front side only. Since there is nothing on the back of this capital and since it appears more massive than the others, it is likely a historical replacement, probably a fairly early one. The front left capital has the elephant on the entrance side (Fig. 18), and the horse on the backside. The back pillar capitals bear the triple jewel (*triratna*) and wheel (Fig. 19) on the front sides, and minister and queen on the back, facing the main image in the back niche.

The back capitals are painted red and golden yellow on their front faces (Fig. 19). Further, a cloth painted with a floral pattern on blue background is glued to the front face of the back beam, and textiles painted in a slightly different tone of blue cover the sides of that beam. These decorations are likely later additions, but the time they may have been added remains unclear.

On gallery level, only the side towards the interior of the front double capitals bear carved symbols, namely a *triratna* above and an endless knot below on both sides (Fig. 21). The consoles holding the same beam are not the usual



Fig. 33: The right side capital on gallery level carved on the side facing the main image with a triple jewel (*triratna*) and an endless knot.



Fig. 34: The backside of the capital in the previous figure, facing the entrance to the gallery, is not carved.



Fig. 35: The backside of the capitals holding the painted beam is completely undecorated.



Fig. 36: The front of the capital holding the painted beam has been painted with a scroll on black ground.

lions, but are carved with three volutes each. The backside beam, which is on a considerably lower level, is held by a simple long capital which has a painted scroll pattern on the front side that may well be original (Fig. 24) since it forms the lower end of the painted beam (see p. ###). Its

and veranda double capitals are used. Of these, the upper capital has three volutes on each side while the lower one has only one.



backside is plain (Fig. 23).

These wooden elements also continue a local tradition but there are also significant changes. The lion consoles are not only typical for earlier monuments but continue to be used in later ones as well. Also the square bases, here crossly simplified, and the voluted capitals can be followed back . If the columns have been fluted originally can not be said with certainty. Less typically, on the ground floor



Fig. 37: Only the ceiling of the main niche and the area immediately in front of it is decorated. This area is constructed as false cassettes with painted textiles pasted into it's squares.

## CEILING

The ceiling is generally made up of plain wooden planks, but the area above the main niche has a colourful false cassette ceiling. While the joints of the beams and crossbeams have been painted directly with lotus blossoms, the squares fields have first been covered with cloth and then painted (Fig. ###), using a technique that appears to have occasionally been used in earlier monuments, such as Tabo,<sup>9</sup> but not anymore in the Alchi group of Monuments, where the painting was applied directly to the ceil-

ing planks.<sup>10</sup> The painted pattern is simple but effective: the squares are divided diagonally creating four triangles painted in alternating colours. A central dark rosette and strips and patterns painted on the triangles make each square a representation of a small baldachin. To our knowledge, there is no comparison for this pattern elsewhere.

<sup>9</sup> See in particular Wandl, *The Representation of Costumes and Textiles*.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., the fabulous ceiling panels of the Alchi Sumtsek in Goepper & Poncar, *Alchi*, p. ###.

Fig. 38: The three main sculptures, represented here in their approximate proportional relationship, form the main iconographic configuration of the temple, a triad signifying the presence of Buddhism at all times. In the centre is Avalokiteśvara, to the proper left is the Bodhisattva and future Buddha Maitreya, and to the proper right Buddha Śākyamuni.



## SCULPTURAL PROGRAM

The interior of the Wanla temple is dominated by the three large standing sculptures in the three niches at the back and the sides. Only in 1996 the original iconography of these sculptures was slightly altered by regilding or repainting their faces, hands and feet. Obviously, in the context of this study, the original iconography is to be considered, the description thus differing from the photographic documentation.

The larger niche in the back, facing the entering visitor, is occupied by the white Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in an eleven-faced and eight-armed form. This ### meters high image gives the temple its present name Chuchigzhal (bCu gcig zhal), meaning 'eleven-faced'. The images in the side niches represent the Bodhisattva Maitreya and the Buddha Śākyamuni. These images are 3.40 meters high.

### AVALOKITEŚVARA

The white main image of Avalokiteśvara has eleven faces in five tiers. All but the wrathful face on the front are gilded today, but only two were so originally, namely the main face and the third above it. The side faces on the first level are practically not visible, but likely were green and red. On the next level the originally white front face is flanked by white and red faces. On the third level the red face is on the proper right and a blue one on the proper left, the main face was gilded originally also. These stack of three heads each is topped by a wrathful blue face and an originally red one, that of Buddha Amitābha, which is gilded today also.

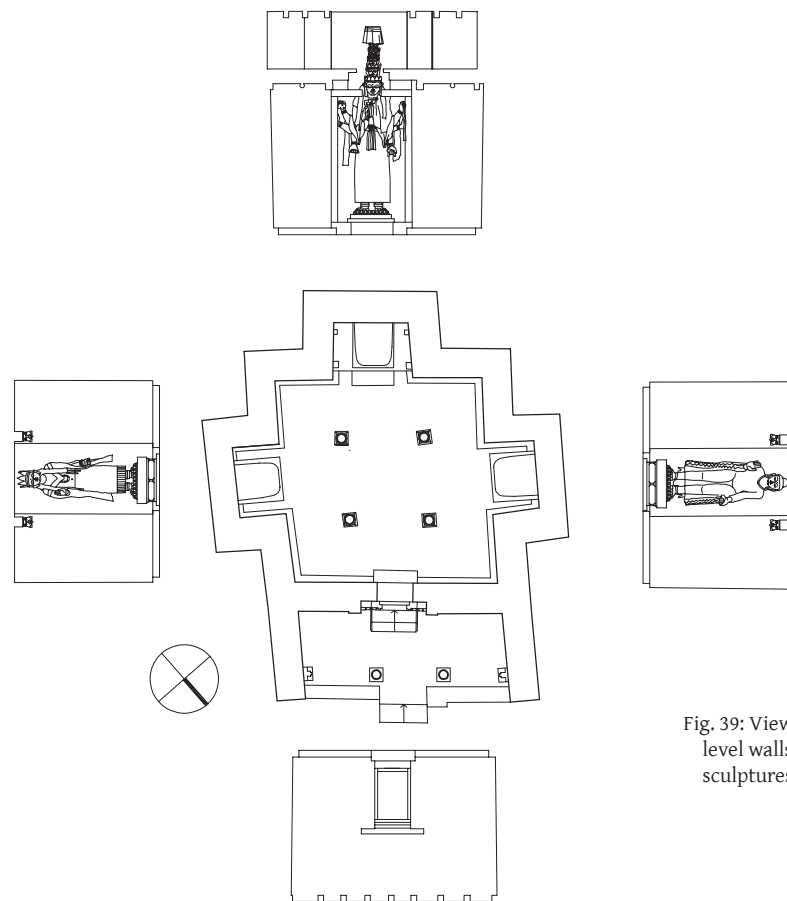


Fig. 39: View of the ground level walls with the three main sculptures.

Fig. 40: The side faces of Avalokiteśvara, still retaining their original colours, are set so far back that they are almost invisible. All front faces have been repainted, only partly retaining the original colouring.



Fig. 41: The lotus held in the upper left hand of Avalokiteśvara is still preserved.



Of the eight arms, the main pair of hands holds a jewel in the veneration gesture (*namaskāramudrā*) in front of the breast. His upper right probably once held a garland, while the upper left hand still holds the stem of his most characteristic attribute, the lotus (Fig. ###). The two middle ones hold attributes, an arrow in the proper right and a bow in the left.<sup>11</sup> The lower hands are in the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) and holding a flask, the latter almost disappearing behind the palm of the hand (Fig. ###).

Curiously, the Wanla inscription mentions that the main image of the temple is a thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara. However, we can exclude that the image as present today was exchanged or transformed at one stage, even if there has been considerable damage to this back niche. The only way thousand arms could have been represented once would be by painting additional arms on the back wall, which is not in its original state anymore. However, it is much more likely, that the main image was always eight-armed and just meant to represent the thousand-armed form. In addition, the iconography of the main image differs considerably from the thousand-armed form painted on the left side wall of Maitreya's niche (p. ###).

In fact, I have not come along a representation of this Bodhisattva in exactly this form, which may either indicate that the Wanla image has been changed considerably over time, or that it represents a rather rare tradition or even local variant. In my experience, the gilding should not be taken as an iconographic sign, such as for a yellow or golden face, but rather as an enhancement that has no iconographic meaning in itself but obscures the actual colour of the part or deity gilded. Consequently there is a considerable range within which this image can be evaluated.

<sup>11</sup> Commonly both are held in the same right proper left hand, and a wheel is held in the right one.

#### MAITREYA

The sculpture of the Bodhisattva Maitreya inside the left-hand niche—to the proper right of the central image—originally was only silver-coloured, but today its face is painted white. His identification is of no doubt, since the central point of his five-pointed crown bears a stupa (Fig. ###). His proper right hand shows the gesture of fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*), while the left, to the side of the body originally held a flask, along with a twig clinging to his lower arm that may be intended to represent the *nāgakesara* branch, a branch of the tree under which he will eventually attain enlightenment. Besides the jewellery, Maitreya also wears an antelope skin, the head of which is discernible on the shoulder (Fig. ###).

The Bodhisattva Maitreya is one of the most popular images in the region and there are a number of very important large size images carved on rocks at diverse sites throughout Ladakh. His iconography is therefore clearly established and the Wanla image shows all the signs characteristic for him. The only unusual feature is his silver colour.

#### ŚĀKYAMUNI

Opposite Maitreya is the monumental image of Śākyamuni in monastic robes. The gilding of his face and hands has been renewed as well. He, too, shows *abhayamudrā* with the right hand, while the left holds the end of his robe. Most remarkable on this image is the dress pattern of intertwined swastika that appears to have been in fashion in the region for a considerable period.

#### TECHNIQUE

The three large images in the temple's niches are made of clay. Their main support is a massive vertical wooden post planted in their high pedestal (Fig. 32). Two horizontal supports are fixed to the back wall of the niche, one at the level of the hip and one at shoulder level (Fig. ###). These posts are even projecting on the outside, as is best visible



Fig. 42: While the face of Maitreya has been repainted in white and his hair in blue, the crown points, with a stūpa in the central point still preserve the original colouring.



Fig. 43: Unusually Maitreya is silver coloured, his shoulder is covered by an antelope skin and he holds the twig of the *nāgakesara*-tree, another of his characteristic symbols, which in this case clings to his lower arm.

Fig. 44: At the back of the large sculptures some details of their construction are visible. The images are built around a massive vertical post. On the pedestal lies the flask attribute Maitreya originally held in his hand.



Fig. 45: Two massive pieces of wood, here the upper one, are used to hold the main beam in place, and additional supports support the arms from the back.



Fig. 46: Some arm supports are attached to the back wall with a more complex construction to support them at the right angle.



in the case of the main image (Fig. ###). Massive supports for the arm are attached to the back wall as well (Fig. ###). Due to the good condition of the sculptures, nothing is known about the way the body has been built up. In comparison to the earlier clay sculptures in the Alchi group of Monuments, in particular those of the Alchi Sumtsek, the Mangyu Maitreya chapels and the Sumda side chapels, the Wanla images are massive and sturdy.<sup>12</sup> In fact, some of the iconographic peculiarities, such as the flask almost disappearing behind Avalokiteśvara's hand and the twig clinging to Maitreya's lower arm are the result of an attempt to make the images as robust as possible.

#### MONUMENTAL TRIAD

The three main sculptures of the temple thus form a triad, the meaning of which being a rather simple one. The central eleven-faced and eight-armed form of the 'Great Compassionate One' (Thugs rje chen po) is invoked for remedy of daily misery and can therefore be understood as relevant, and even acting, in the present. Together with the flanking future and past Buddhas the three sculptures signify the continuity or continuous accessibility of the Buddha's

<sup>12</sup> For images of all these sculptures see Luczanits, *Buddhist Sculpture in Clay*.

teaching, a topic that is also stressed in the immediately accessible paintings.

This rather simple and clear sculptural programme of the Wanla temple contrasts with the intellectually conceived programme of its possible model, the Alchi Sumtsek. There an inscription in the Maitreya niche notes that the three Bodhisattvas of the Sumtsek—Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya in reverse spatial hierarchy—are considered to be representations of body, speech and mind, and that they are set up to help believers to attain the *nirmāṇakāya*, *saṃbhogakāya* and *dharmakāya* respectively.<sup>13</sup>

The colouring of the main images is interesting as well. The multiple face colours of Avalokiteśvara qualify him as supreme Bodhisattva, which is emphasised by the original gilding of two main faces. As noted above, the silver used for Maitreya is unique, but it reminds on the association of this Bodhisattva with the moon, which can be traced back to imagery of this Bodhisattva in Gandhāran art. This is apparent when one also considers the gilding of Śākyamuni that associates the Enlightened One with the sun, a common epithet for the Buddha.

<sup>13</sup> Denwood, *Temple and Rock Inscriptions of Alchi*, inscription 6.





Fig. 47: Unusually Maitreya is silver coloured, his shoulder is covered by an antelope skin and he holds the twig of the nāgakesara-tree, another of his characteristic symbols, which in this case clings to his lower arm.

Fig. 48: Teaching hierarch of the  
Kagyü lineage, presumably  
Jigten Gönpö.



## KAGYÜ LINEAGE

This emphasis on the exoteric Buddhist teaching represented by the main sculptures contrasts with the prominent display of the Kagyü (bKa' brgyud pa) School lineage in both sculpture and painting.

Stylistically roughly contemporary with the clay images is a group of 13 paper-mâché sculptures representing a Kagyü lineage the placement and succession of which certainly is not original anymore. These sculptures were apparently made to be placed on the shallow backside of the gallery flanking the heads of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 2).

The lineage commences with Vajradhara (rDo rje 'chang), who is today placed to the right of Avalokiteśvara's heads (Fig. 37). There he is followed by the two siddhas Tilopa (Fig. 38) and Naropa (Fig. 39). Although it is unlikely that Vajradhara has originally been placed here and the two siddhas could easily have been exchanged over time, their present day succession appears to reflect the original one. The two siddhas, both performing an argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) with the proper right and holding a skull-cup in the left lying on the lap, are of a slightly different colour, one being dark yellow and the other having a slightly darker more brownish hue. This is also the case in some of the painted representations, with the second siddha, Naropa being of a darker hue.

The following lineage figures, Marpa and Milarepa, can be recognised on the basis of their dress. Marpa wears secular dress, a red coat with reinforced shoulders and wide sleeves (Fig. 40). His long hair falls in braids on this shoulders. In the sculpture he shows the gesture of fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*), while in the paintings he commonly teaches. Milarepa (Mi la ras pa) has short curly hair and wears a white robe, even if the colour is not recognizable as such in the sculpture (Fig. 41). In both sculpture and painting he performs the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*),



Fig. 49: Buddha Vajradhara beginning the Kagyü lineage to the left of Avalokiteśvara.

while the left lies on the lap (compare to Fig. 47). Only these lineage figures can be identified with certainty.

The succession of the teachers following Milarepa cannot be reconstructed any more. Most of them are shown with the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*), but one performs the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) and one the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*). This contrasts with the paintings, where the teaching gesture is clearly the most common one, and the earth touching gesture never appears. Nevertheless, it is likely that the teacher performing the argumentation gesture is to be identified either as Gampopa or Phagmodrupa (Fig. 42) and

Fig. 50: The siddha Tilopa performs a gesture of argumentation with the ring finger and originally held a skull-cup in this left hand on the lap.



Fig. 51: Naropa is of a slightly darker hue than the former, performs the regular argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) and also has a skull-cup (*kapāla*) on the lap.



Fig. 52: Marpa, shown from three sides on the opposite page, wears a red secular coat and has long hair falling onto his shoulder.

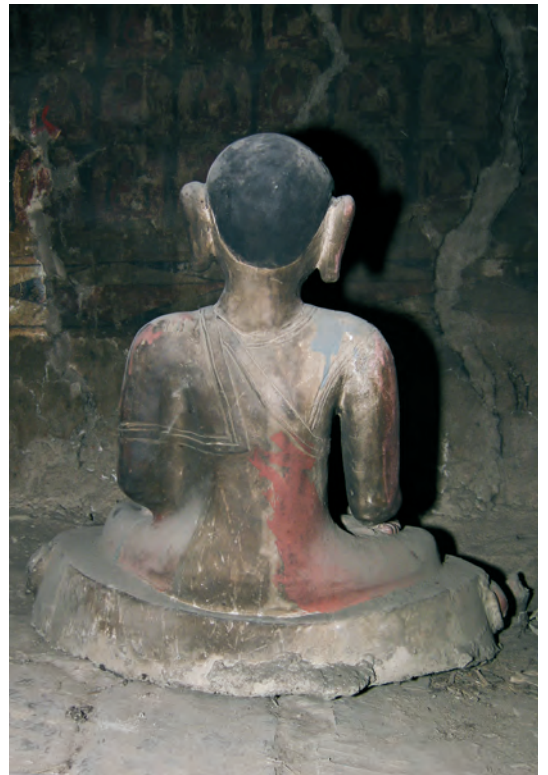
Fig. 53: Milarepa can mainly be recognised on the basis of his bright dress and the curly hair.



Fig. 54: The hierarch with the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) seated to the proper left of Avalokiteśvara is presumably to be identified as either Gampopa or Phagmodrupa.

Fig. 55: The monastics performing the earth-touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*), one of them shown from three sides on the opposite page, can not be identified individually.





the teaching hierarch as the founder of the Drigung school Jigten Gönpo (Fig. 36).

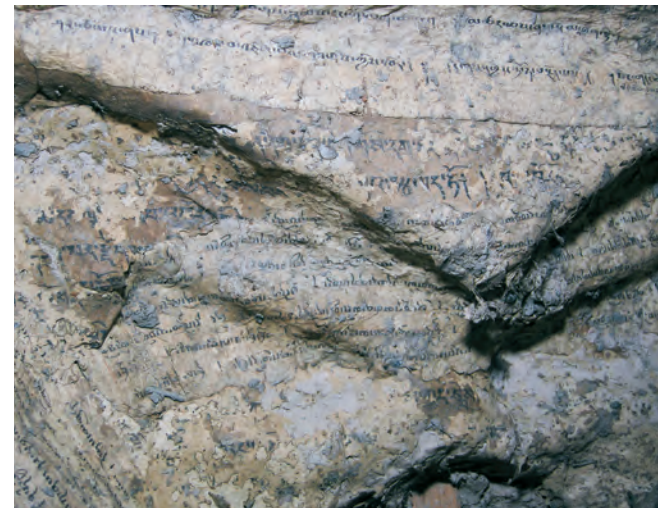
Technically the lineage sculptures are very interesting. The images are hollow, and their body has been made of book pages of varying age (Fig. 44), some of them certainly going back to the establishment of Buddhism in the region, as can be recognised by the orthographic peculiarities of the writing visible inside the base (Fig. 45). The body of the

sculpture is in a prominent position, large size, and the fact that it also numbers thirteen figures, just as the sculptures. This lineage provides some further clues concerning the depiction of the main teachers. Following Milarepa, Gampopa and Phagmodrupa are both shown teaching and directed towards each other, the latter characterised by a thin beard along the chin. More importantly, the following teacher, Jigten Gönpo, is the only figure that is shown with white skin

Fig. 56: The Kagyü lineage sculptures are made of papier-mâché and hollow, the image itself probably being filled with consecratory material.



Fig. 57: The paper used for the sculptures are manuscript pages of different ages, indicating a considerable presence of Buddhism in the region even before the Wanla temples were built.



sculptures is sealed with clay and likely contains relics inserted during consecration (Fig. 44).

Essentially the same lineage occurs numerous times in the paintings, at least once on every floor, but the number of teachers represented is not consistent and ranges from nine to fifteen figures, the latter on the main wall of the lantern.<sup>14</sup>

Among these, the lineage on the painted beam of the gallery is probably to be taken as exemplary, due to its promi-

colour (for these two figures see Fig. 359 on page 5). He is directed towards the former and performs the gesture of argumentation (the full lineage up to Jigten Gönpo is represented in Fig. 199 on page 143). His five successors alternately perform the teaching or argumentation gestures and only the last one of them, presumably the current hierarch, is differentiated by his brighter colour.

Another lineage depiction found on the very top of the left side wall of Maitreya's niche comprises of fifteen figures and captions for a number of the figures. The names for the three lineage hierarchs after Phagmodrupa are given

<sup>14</sup> The lineage of fourteen above the Cakrasaṃvara mandala does not represent the common Kagyü lineage (see p. 122).



Fig. 58: Vajradhara and Tilopa of the lineage on the painted beam.

Fig. 59: Marpa and Milarepa of the lineage on the painted beam.

as follows: rJe ri[n] po che, rGyal ba rin po che, and 'On rin po che. If we compare these names with the lineage of abbots of Drigung monastery in Central Tibet as communicated today,<sup>15</sup> Je Rinpoche (rJe rin po che), “Precious Lord”, would be a very unusual but not impossible designation of Jigten Gönpo (1143–1217). Gyelba Rinpoche (rGyal ba rin po che), “Precious Conquerer”, would be a unique reference to the great scholar Tshüldrim Dorje (*mkhan chen* Tshul khriims rdo rje; 1154–1221), and Öñ Rinpoche ('On rin po che), “Precious Nephew”, could refer to Öñ Sönam Dragpa (dBon bSod nams grags pa; 1187–1234/35), who actually is known by this epithet.<sup>16</sup>

Although no perfect match, it would certainly be possible that the lineage represented at Wanla refers to the abbots of Drigung, the highest lineage of the school. In this case, the five personages represented following Drigungpa in the standard Wanla lineage of thirteen figures would lead up to Thogkhapa Rinchen Senge (Thog kha pa Rin chen seng ge; 1226/27–1284/85) who was abbot of Drigung from 1278/79 to 1284/85. If the lineage is extended by two more

15 See, e.g., <http://www.drikung.org/>.

16 Other candidates for this epithet are Sherab Chungne (Shes rab 'byung gnas, 1187–1241) who also was referred to as 'Bri gung dBon or dBon rin po che (see TBRC P131), which is pronounced in the same way as the title in the inscription or the fourth 'Bri gung gdan rabs Grags pa 'byung gnas (1175–1255; TBRC P132).

figures, as in the longest lineage representations at Wanla, the last one would be Chögoba Dorje Yeshe (Chos sgo ba rDo rje ye shes; 1223–1293), who was abbot from 1286/88 to 1293. This would make Wanla datable into the period from 1280 to 1293, which certainly appears possible.

Sadly, the names in the captions are not specific enough to be certain that this is the lineage represented. rGyal ba rin po che, could refer to Sangye Rinchen (Sangs rgyas rin chen, 1164–1224), a pupil of Jigten Gönpo ('Jig rten mgon po) who went to Lhanang (lHa nang) at mount Kailash, meditated many years there and achieved realization, hence he is also called rGyal ba lHa nang pa.<sup>17</sup> In this case, the lineage would refer to the/a western branch of the Drigung school and the lineage only provides an approximate hint for the temple's date.

The peculiarities of the lineage depictions in Wanla have rather few comparisons. The closest is certainly the lineage depiction of Kanji, where it features 14 figures, the teachers mostly performing *vitarkamudrā*.<sup>18</sup>

> more comparisons

17 See TBRC P15.

18 For pictures see <http://www.achiassociation.org/gallery2/>.

Fig. 60: In the 90ies a bookshelf placed to the sides of the main niche obscured considerable sections of the murals, as here on the wall to the left of the main niche.

Fig. 61: The removal of the bookshelf, here the same wall as in the previous figure, revealed some of the most interesting paintings in the temple and restored some of its original look.





## MURALS

In the early 1990ies most of the murals in the temple were hardly visible due to the thick coating of soot, and until a few years ago bookshelves were flanking the altar in front of the main niche and obscured a considerable section of the murals (Fig. 48). However, the removal of the bookshelves, as well as local<sup>19</sup> and international<sup>20</sup> cleaning efforts along with a detailed photographic documentation now allow for a comprehensive survey of the murals' content.

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

More significantly, the murals are also presented in a new format. Most of the walls are composed of larger deities surrounded by their assembly forming a grid of unevenly distributed rectangles placed next to each other and covering the whole wall surface. The walls are thus composed

as if scroll paintings (thangka) of different sizes would have been pasted on them. Such a distribution of topics is not found in earlier monuments, but is very common in Ladakhi monuments of an age comparable to that of Wanla (###). The most well known example is probably the Lhakhang Soma (lHa-khang So-ma) at Alchi.<sup>21</sup>

> mandalas and assemblies only

> counting of the figures in an assembly

### DESCRIPTION OF THE MURALS

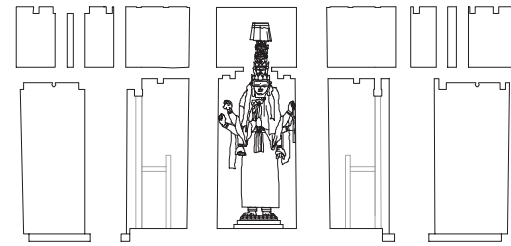
> Beginning with the main niche outwards,

The emphasis on esoteric teachings continues to dominate the back half of the temple, a fact that is emphasised by representing the group of 84 mahāsiddha across the top of the four back walls, the two walls flanking the main niche and the side walls adjacent to it. The mahāsiddha are thus discussed separately after the main niche. Only then the topics represented underneath them are summarized, beginning with the main wall left and right and the back side walls, left and right. The side niches insofar follow the emphasis of division side Then the topics represented on the two halves of the main wall are summarised

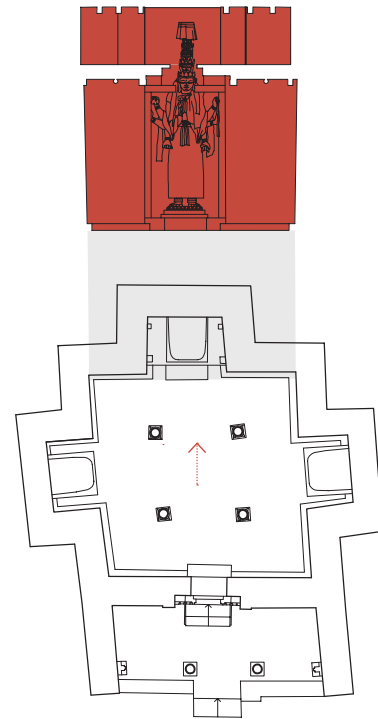
<sup>19</sup> Apparently instigated by visitors the local community started to clean parts of the murals, luckily careful enough that there are no major damages.

<sup>20</sup> Until now only a tiny section has been cleaned by the Achi Association (2004–2005), revealing a donor depiction that was not visible at all before.

<sup>21</sup>



Wandabwicklung



## PAINTINGS ON THE GROUND FLOOR

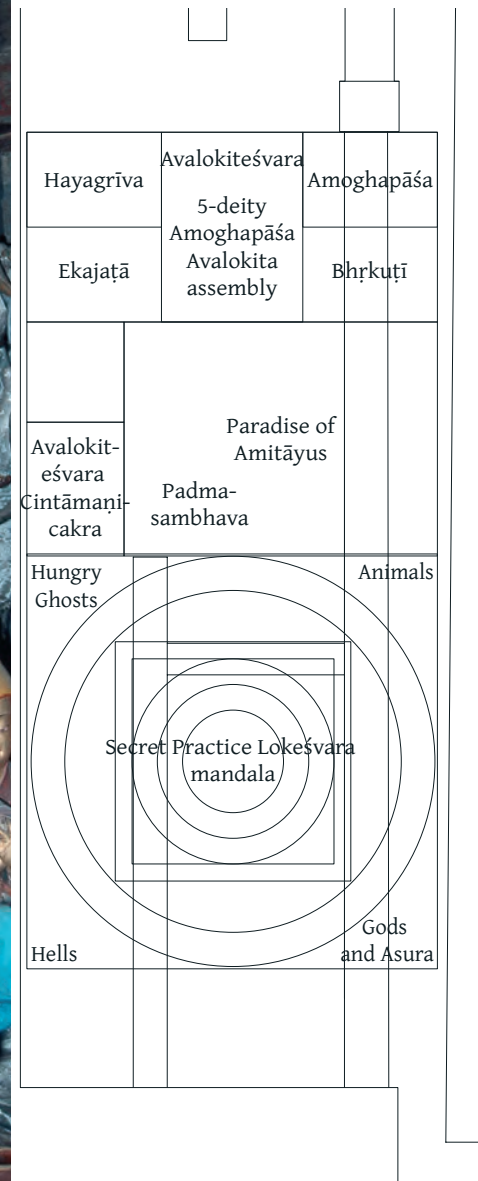
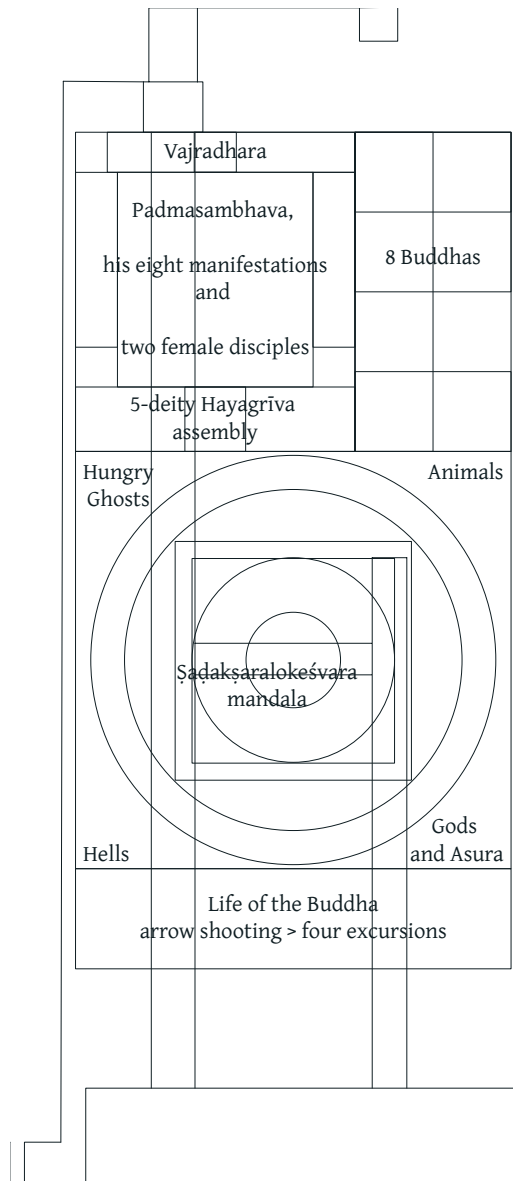
The ground floor has by far the most complex iconographic programme of the temple.

Commonly, it is the wall that defines a particular subject, but there are also a few exceptions on the ground floor, where a particular subject covers a

Only some of the themes, such as the life of the Buddha represented along the back of the temple, are represented in relation to the architecture and its layout.

Certain hierarchies within the programme, such as the depiction of simpler less esoteric topics in the entrance area and more complex esoteric ones in the back of the temple, can be recognized quite immediately, but after a careful study of all topics it is difficult to imagine there was an underlying programme.

Fig. 62: The main image of Avalokiteśvara and the iconographic program of the side walls of his niche.



## MAIN NICHE: FLANKING COMPASSION

Of all the walls in the temple, the niche containing the main image of Avalokiteśvara has been altered the most, resulting in the repainting of the back wall and at the level of the gallery, and severe damages to some murals. In addition, the way the niche was constructed and damages to it required additional supports to be built in, which obscure some of the paintings.

Although the Wanla caretakers have always been extremely supportive of our work, the niche with the main image was inaccessible during most of our visits due to the altar built up in front of it, which includes an image of Achi Chökyi Drolma (A phyi Chos kyī grol ma), the main protectress of the 'Bri gung pa order. Due to these circumstances it has not been possible to study this as carefully *in situ* as in the case of the rest of the temple. Nevertheless the documentation does at least allow a partial reconstruction of the iconographic program there.

### LEFT SIDE WALL: PADMASAMBHAVA AND AVALOKITEŚVARA

One of the most surprising features of the Wanla murals, namely the prominent presence of Nyingmapa (rNying ma pa) teachings is right away being introduced in the main niche. The top section this wall is dedicated to preserves one of the rare early representations of Padmasambhava surrounded by his eight manifestations (Figs. ###) . Since this is a very important image, and it is very hard to see from both photographs and *in situ*, this assembly is described in detail.

The large and beautifully dressed image of the Precious Guru is flanked by the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī, the latter holding the stalk of a blue lily (*utpala*) carrying the book in the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*). Padmasambhava wears the elaborate



dress and the hat of the king of Zahor, in this case, a beautifully patterned red undercoat and an orange and golden upper dress. The delicately patterned hat has an eagle's feather on top and multi-coloured strips of cloth. The Guru holds a vajra in the right hand in front of the breast and a *kapāla* filled with *amṛta* in the left. A thin tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) leans on the left shoulder.

The top row likely features six figures, a central bright blue Vajradhara-like deity embracing a red consort with *vajrahūmkāramudrā*, presumably Padmasambhava as Vajradhara, This *ādibuddha* is flanked by five figures wearing a crown and a heavy coats of different colours. Each

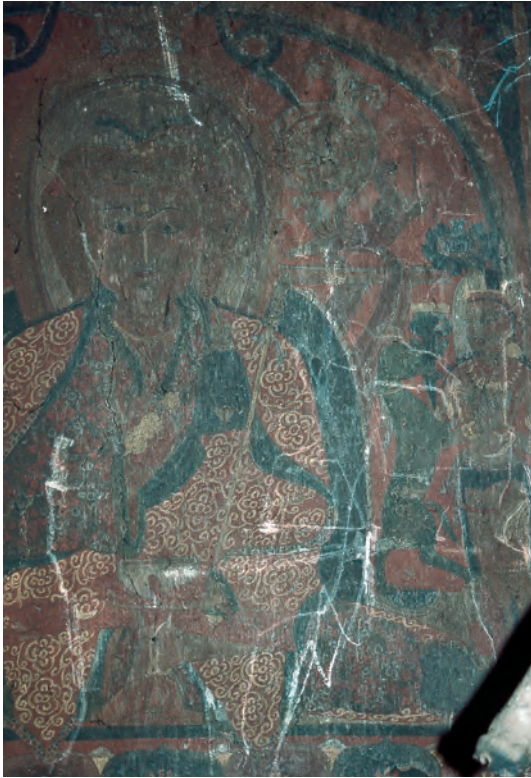


Fig. 63: Padmasambhava and one of his Bodhisattva attendants.



Fig. 64: Face of padmasambhava with a gilded nose line.



Fig. 65: The lotus-born king among the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava and princess Mandarava.

of them has the right hand raised, probably all holding a *ḍamaru*, while the left appears to carry different attributes, such as a curved knife, a torma (*gtor ma*). Although these attributes would be unusual, these most likely represent the *sambhokakāya* forms of Padmasambhava for the five Buddha-families (*longs sku thod phreng rigs lnga*).<sup>1</sup>

To the sides of the Guru are five figures each, the top ones representing his eight manifestations. On the left side we have, from top to bottom: the Ādibuddha (mTso skyes rdo rje or Padma 'byung gnas) embracing his partner, both of the same bright blue colour, probably holding vajra and skull-cup; the Indian paṇḍita (Padma sam bha) wearing a monk's robe and a pointed hat with ear-flaps (*paṇ shva*) and holding a cup filled with golden nectar and performing an appeasing gesture with the left; the royal preacher

1 For comparison see HAR nos. 43–45. HAR no. 403, which is centred on the Vajradhara form of Padmasambhava, shows them in in the upper left area in a mandala like arrangement. I owe this suggestion to Jeff Watt.

of the dharma (Blo ldan mchog sred) wearing the hat characteristic for the Guru along with the royal coat and holding *ḍamaru* and skull-cup; the lotus-born king (Pad ma rgyal po) wearing a turban and a coat and holding *ḍamaru* and skull-cup (Fig. 150, above).<sup>2</sup> On the right side there are: the yogin and protector in the bar do (Nyi ma 'od zer), who wears a short dhoti and the Brahmanic thread and holds a noose and a stick with a skull on top; the Buddha (Śākya seng ge) with *uṣṇīṣa*, a Buddha's robe and earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) and having a rattle-stick (*khakkhara*) to his side; the blue tutelary deity (Seng ge sgra sgrogs) brandishing a vajra in the raised right hand;<sup>3</sup> and finally the conqueror of the demons and their lord (rDo rje gro lod) a brown wrathful deity seated on a tiger, wearing a human skin around the neck and a tiger skin around the hip, with vajra and *vajrakīla* as attributes.

2 Obviously the differentiation of these two kings is tentative.

3 More details are not visible from this deity.

Fig. 66: A *Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara yab yum* flanked by *Maṇidhara* and *Ṣaḍakṣari* in the centre of a mandala.

The fifth figure on each side are most likely the two foremost consorts and female disciples of Padmasambhava, princess Mandarava and Yeshe Tshogyel (Ye shes mtsho rgyal). If they are shown in the usual hierarchy, mandarava would be on the left (Fig. 150, below) and Yeshe Tshogyel on the right. This lighter dressed figure has her hands folded in veneration.

Underneath is a row of five wrathful *yab yum* centred on Hayagrīva, all of them single headed and two-armed. The slightly larger Hayagrīva wears an elephant skin, brandishes a cleaver (*karṭṛkā*) and holds a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in the left embracing his consort. The secondary deities are of different colours (green, ?, red and yellow), wear a human skin and some of them hold a staff besides the cleaver (*karṭṛkā*).

The closest comparison to this representation of the Precious Guru is certainly a thangka in the Koelz collection, which has more deities than are present in the Wanla, but in principal has the same composition of deities and in the representation of the deities itself.<sup>4</sup>

To the right of the assembly of Padmasambhava are four rows of two Buddhas each, probably meant to representing the group of Seven Heroic Buddhas (*Sangs rgyas dpa' bo bdun*) and Maitreya, all of them being shown as Buddhas performing the gestures of the five *jina*.

Underneath is a highly unusual mandala dedicated to the triad of *Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara* flanked by *Maṇidhara* and *Ṣaḍakṣari*, whereby the main image is in addition shown in embrace with *Ṣaḍakṣari* as a consort. This group of deities occupies the centre of a six-petalled lotus on the petals of which the five *tathāgata* are represented with consorts as well, beginning with Akṣobhya in the east. Although the upper part of this central lotus is covered by a later

4 Copeland, Tankas from the Koelz Collection, ###; HAR no. 92019.



Fig. 67: The lower section of the same mandala, with two Buddhas in the east gate and a ring of protective deities.



Fig. 68: The three proper left hands of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the right side wall of his niche with the paintings almost completely obscured.



Fig. 69: Amitāyus with Padma-sambhava to his proper right, sadly almost invisible.



Fig. 70: Left edge of Amitāyus' paradise with gods in the upper section and Buddha triads underneath.

support construction it is clear that the five *jina* are represented approximately in their correct direction, that Vairocana holding a wheel is shown on the upper left lotus petal, and that the figure on the upper right lotus petal is white as well, but his possible identity remains a mystery. Further, there are for vases topped by skull-cups in the corners of the mandala palace and standing Buddhas occupy the gates, the one in the east having two of them, one blue and holding sword and shield. Although the west gate has only one Buddha and the distribution of the Buddhas is therefore unclear, it is most likely that these are the Buddhas of the Six Realms.<sup>5</sup> Outside the mandala palace is a ring of protective deities with the Four Great Kings in the cardinal directions. Certainly also represented here are

<sup>5</sup> Buddhas in gates are rare, a fact that connects this mandala to the Cintāmaṇi Jagadḍāmara ('Gro 'dul yid bzhin nor bu) mandala in the Tantrasamuccaya ascribed to Srong brtsan sgam po, which has a different structure otherwise. See Raghu Vira & Chandra, *Tibetan Maṇḍalas*, p. 268, no. 130.

the guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*), but there are also siddha like figures, on the south side even one seated on a throne and having a consort on the lap, just like the kingsiddha Indrabhūti. In the corners outside the mandala are the different realms of rebirth, the hell in the southeast, the hungry ghosts with a female feeding them in the southwest, the realm of the animals in the northwest and the gods fighting the anti-gods in the northeast.

#### RIGHT SIDE WALL: LOTUS DEITIES

The right wall of the main niche is the one most difficult to describe, besides the problems of access described above, most of the paintings are covered with a thick layer of white dust and thus hardly visible (see Fig. 153). Where this is not the case, at the bottom mandala a deep vertical crack across the centre of the wall has led to severe loss of painting. Again that visible needs to be described in detail.



The murals are divided into three levels. At the very top a white Bodhisattva seated in royal ease (*lalitāsana*) is flanked by two figures on each side. The main image performs the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) with left hand and a kind of argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) with the right, which also holds the stalk of a white lotus. Another lotus bud is represented to the left of the Bodhisattva and may be there for symmetry reasons. In the top left is a four-armed Hayagrīva. He is red and brandishes a stick with a vajra-end with his upper right hand and holds a lotus in the upper left. The lower right hand holds a wheel, the left shows the gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*). Below him is a dark wrathful deity with at least eight arms and an upper garment. The top right hand of the deity brandish-

ing a sword. At the top right is probably another red deity, only one arm of which can be recognised and below it is a off-white dancing female with four arms only the left half of which is visible. In her upper right hand she holds a club, in the one underneath a lotus.

These details are certainly enough to identify this composition as representing the Five-deity Amoghapāśa Avalokita (*sPyan ras gzigs don zhags lha nga*) assembly in the tradition of Bari Lotsawa (*Ba ri lo tsā ba*) / *Atiśa*. In this composition the white central Avalokiteśvara is accompanied by the red four-armed Amoghapāśa (here top right), the red four-armed Hayagrīva (here top left), the blue eight-armed wrathful goddess Ekajaṭī, and the off-white (*dkar śam*) four armed goddess Bhṛkṣuṭī.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 105; HAR no. 65345

Fig. 71: Avalokiteśvara Cintāmaṇīcakra with a vase instead of a wheel.

Fig. 72: The mandala of the Secret Practice Lokeśvara on the right side wall of Avalokiteśvara.

Fig. 73: Secret Practice Lokeśvara and consort and the ḍaḍiṇī of the west above, detail of previous figure.



On the middle level the front side, the right part of the wall, has a large representation of some kind of Amitāyus paradise. The central Buddha is shown in *sambhogakāya* form and holds the vase in the hands joined in meditation on his lap. An elaborate throne back surrounds him and includes on his proper right side a smaller representation of Padmasambhava (Fig. 154). It is unclear if there is a similar figure on the opposite side. Further, rows of seated Buddhas, those flanking with disciples, are represented on all four sides within a common lotus scroll (Fig. 155).

On the back side are probably two figures above each other. On the top is a red Bodhisattva seated in *vajrāsana* with both hands raised on the sides, the proper left one probably holding a twig. Underneath is a standing three-headed form of Avalokiteśvara with a ring in right hand raised at the side and a vase in the hand on the hip (Fig. 156). He is white and has three heads stacked on top of each other, the middle one angry and blue and the top one that of Buddha Amitābha, ascertaining the principal identity of the Bodhisattva. Would it not be for the vase as the second object, this image could easily be recognised as Avalokiteśvara Cintāmaṇīcakra (sPyan ras gzigs yid bzhin 'khor lo), who also is commonly depicted in exactly the same posture.<sup>7</sup> However, it would be curious if it is the name giving attribute is replaced.

The lower section is again occupied by a mandala that likely comprised thirteen deities (Fig. 157). In the centre is a couple of two armed deities, he is off-white, she red and holds a knife in her raised right hand (Fig. 158). The inner circle is occupied by four wrathful deities in the colours of their respective direction. The second circle of eight

represents a mandala of this assembly, and no. 65005 shows the five deities as the central group. Commonly the two wrathful deities are put on the same level but, HAR no. 89758 has Ekajaṭi in the centre of the group.

7 Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 120.

has a variety of deities: in the east is a Buddha performing the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*), while the upper region, as far as it is preserved, is occupied by wrathful deities: a yellow one holding a branch or lotus in the west, red wrathful four-armed Kurukullā in the northwest, a blue krodha with vajra and bell in the north, and a yellow Bodhisattva represented like Vajrapāṇi or Vajrasattva in the northeast. Further, there are eight vases with foliage in the corners and the gates have only symbols, if this can be interpolated from the elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*) represented in east gate. Outside the mandala, there is a representation of the hell in the southeast and the hungry ghosts in the southwest, just as in the mandala on the opposite side.

Most likely this is the mandala of the Secret Practice Lokeśvara ('Jig rten dbang phyug gsang sgrub) in the tradition of Mitrāyogin, who is surrounded by the *ḍākinī* of the four families and a group of eight more deities which include a *muṇi*, Kurukullā and Vajrapāṇi.<sup>8</sup>

To summarize, the iconographic program of this niche is quite unique and solely emphasises deities of the lotus-family. The prominence of Padmasambhava in association with Avalokiteśvara and Amitāyus certainly reminds of the concept of the divine *trikāya* praised by the Nyingmapa treasure finder (*gter bton*) Nyangrel Nyimaözer (Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, 1124–1192), which features Amitābha—here replaced by Amitāyus, which in the context of the Sukhāvati is permissible since their names are interchanged in this source—as the absolute body (*dharmakāya*), Avalokiteśvara as the enjoyment body (*sambhogakāya*) and Padmasambhava as the earthly apparitional body (*nirmāṇakāya*).<sup>9</sup>

8 Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 118.

9 For the importance of this concept in the Tibetan world see Kapstein, *Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet?*, 23–25.







### TOP OF THE BACK SECTION: GREAT ADEPTS

Before continuing with the back wall, a depiction needs to be addressed that links all four walls in the back of the ground floor and reinforces their esoteric iconography. On the very top of these walls different *mahāsiddha* are represented side by side. As with the life of the Buddha discussed below, the row of siddhas begins immediately to the right of the Maitreya niche, continues in the direction of circumambulation along the four corner walls and ends to the immediate left of the Śākyamuni niche.

There are only 78 siddhas depicted, considerably deviating from the common number of 84, and they are not evenly distributed either. The four walls have 19, 20, 23 and 16 *mahāsiddha* respectively. Most interesting is the beginning of the group which informs about the relationship of this depiction to others (Fig. 159). Comparing the depiction with a number of lists enumerating the 84 *mahāsiddha*, it turns out that none of them conforms to the depiction here, although some of them are fairly close.<sup>10</sup>

Instead, the siddhas are represented in a succession that seems to be peculiar to the more or less contemporary Dri-gung associated monuments of Ladakh. In this connection

<sup>10</sup> Lists of *mahāsiddha* have generously been provided by Jeff Watt and Rob Linrothe from their work on 'Holy Madness'.

it is extremely fortunate, that the *mahāsiddha* representation in the badly damaged temple of Alchi Shangrong has been provided with captions that allow a fairly complete identification of the siddhas represented and also clarifies the sometimes peculiar iconographies. This depiction provides the basis for the identifications offered here.

This particular list of siddhas unusually begins with Āryadeva, represented as *paṇḍita* with a flask to his side. Nāgārjuna is shown as Buddha seated in front of a colourful snake hood. The bright skinned Lūyipa sucks the entrails of a fish lying on a begging bowl. Saroruhavajra teaches a female kneeling in front of him. The *paṇḍita* holding a book is presumably Śāntideva. Padmavajra holds a lotus, referring to his name, and a cup in front of the breast, while Vajraghaṇṭapāda holds vajra and bell in the same position. Ḍombhiheruka is seated on a tigress and brandishes a snake. Kukkuripa holds a bowl and embraces a white dog. The bright-skinned siddha with *yogabandha* and holding a cup is likely Buddhajñāna.

Nalendrapa kneels (flies?) and raises a sword and holds a red cup in his left hand. Indrabhūti, seated on a throne and crowned, is attended by a female. The following dancing siddha with cup is identified as Parabadha (Pa ra 'ba dha) in Shangrong, a name for which no possible equivalent could

Fig. 74: The first of the 84 *mahāsiddha*, from left to right, Āryadeva, Nāgārjuna, Lūyipa, Saroruhavajra, Śāntideva, Padmavajra, Vajraghaṇṭapāda, Ḍombhiheruka and Kukkuripa; digitally joined scans of three photographs.



be found in related lists.<sup>11</sup> The following Tilopa should hold a fish in his hand, but only performs the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) and holds a cup. Koṭalipa, holding a hoe (*koṭali*), is again accompanied by a female attendant. The name for the following dancing siddha with cup is not preserved in Shangrong. The *paṇḍita* with his hands in the gesture of veneration (*añjalimudrā*) is the famous scholar Asaṅga. The siddha with flute is Lingbupa (gLing bu pa) and the last one on this wall, dancing and holding an arrow with both hands, is Saraha.

Around the corner, the 20th siddha dancing with a cup can not be securely identified.<sup>12</sup> Candrapa,<sup>13</sup> commonly seated in a grass hut, here only holds a cup as does the following siddha, Śāntipa. Siddha Dīpaṅkara is shown meditating, and Nāropa has his left hand at the stomach<sup>14</sup> and holds a cup. Kṛṣṇacārin, holding vajra and cup, sits on a corpse. The siddha identified as Phagtshangpa (Phag tshang pa) holds a stick and guards a pig. Bhadrapa is shown frontally with an ascetic band around the knees, holding a cup and performing the gesture of argumentation. The hunter

Śavaripa dances with ḍamaru, bow and quiver in front of a female attendant.

The further we proceed in the list of siddhas the more variations are found in their names. The siddha called Madhelha (Ma dhe lha) in Shangrong dances, wears a garment of bone strings, and holds ḍamaru and skull-cup (*kapāla*).<sup>15</sup> A certain Lhigyipa (lHi gyi pa)<sup>16</sup> sits and holds an arrow just like Saraha. Jetari kneels on one leg, holds a cup and supports himself with a stick in the second hand. The following siddha, the name of which is lost in Shangrong, is a weaver.<sup>17</sup> Sāgara sits with the ascetic band around his knees, performs the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) and holds a cup. Jalandhara stands on one leg in a yoga posture in which his hands are joined above the head the fingertips directed downwards. Kamala is seated in meditation. Suvarṇadvīpa is a *paṇḍita* holding a book, and Vīryapa works with a plough and is attended by a consort. Konkana has a massive (bone?) flute in his hands and is attended as well. Pakapala is crouching with an ascetic band and teaches. Tampaka, kneeling on one leg and holding stick and cup, is then the last siddha on this wall.

11 The closest name is Paraheta, who is mentioned by Shama Lotsawa in his *Garland of Pure Droplets* as the 41st siddha.

12 His caption at Shangrong is Ma -ra ba.

13 Likely this is an abbreviation for Candragomin.

14 Embracing a consort in exactly the same position in Shangrong.

15 In Vajrāsana's list the name is given as Mar me lha.

16 This appears to be a variant for Deṅgipa.

17 In Vajrāsana's list Sarakapa occupies this position.



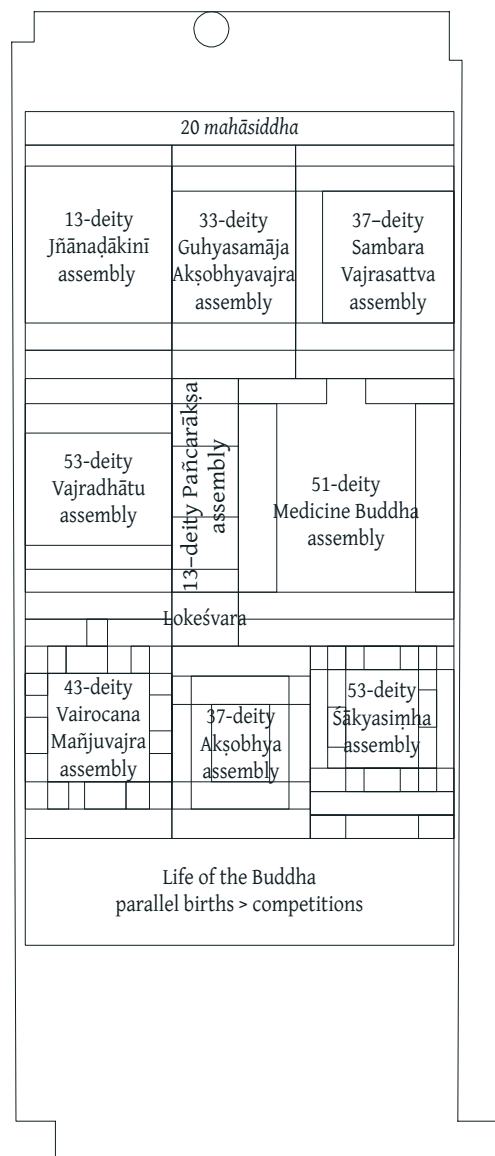
The first siddha to the right of the main niche is lost and two siddhas have been repainted there instead. In Shangrong the missing siddha is Bhinasa, who flies with an axe. The siddha called sMad dkris pa is surrounded by skeletons. Ānandagarbha sits in the diamond seat and teaches, and Candrakīrti is shown as a Buddha (instead of a monk) with a bowl.<sup>18</sup> Candrabhadra crouches holds begging staff and bowl. Sengpa sits against a basket and holds a bell. Of the following three siddha at Shangrong only one is represented in Wanla. He holds a vajra in front of the breast and can not be securely identified with any of the three. sPrin gi shugs can, having the power of the clouds, is shown flying with both hands raised at the sides. The fisherman Mi na ra pa(?)/Myi sha mdzad has a bow of fish around him. Siddhipa rides a lion. Padmakara is shown as paṇḍita with vajra and skull-cup (*kapāla*), while at Shangrong he is clearly identified with Padmasambhava. Nīlapa has his right fist at the hip and holds a bowl. Tsheupa is shown in a meditative posture with both hands placed in fists on the knees. Kumāra holds needle and thread. Dharmakīrti is shown flying in a cloud, holding *ḍamaru* and *kapāla*. Sotaloki is attended by a female, and Avadhūtī is shown as an Indian paṇḍita. After two more siddhas, who currently

<sup>18</sup> In comparison to Shangrong these two siddhas are reversed.

can not be identified follow Caṇḍali seated on a tiger skin and Śākyamitra carrying a basket on his back. The final two siddhas on this wall, a paṇḍita and a seated siddha who in Shangrong has a stūpa at his side, can not yet be identified.

The last group of siddhas then follows on the wall with the Cakrasaṃvara mandala. Since the Shangrong depiction is less and less well preserved in the lower sections, only a small part of the siddhas can be identified here. Of the first five siddhas, all of similar iconography holding a *kapāla*, only the fourth can be identified as Dārikapa. The following siddha, about to behead a corpse with a sword, is not found in Shangrong or in a section lost there. After five more siddhas, featuring a paṇḍita and a Buddha, Virūpa is shown attended by two consorts. He is followed by four more siddhas, one of them a paṇḍita and the last one riding an elephant and thus identifiable as Kalaka.

Fig. 75: A row of geese and a valance of an older type are used on the upper edge of the walls.





**MAIN WALL LEFT:  
VARIED ASSEMBLIES**

The walls flanking the back niche are both dedicated to assemblies only, their emphasis is entirely different, as already apparent by their general layout, but the walls have been related to each other. The Guhyasamāja assemblies of Mañjuvajra and Akṣobhyavajra are the top central topics. The back walls preserve some of the best paintings in the temple, probably also because they have been protected for considerable time by a bookshelf.

Throughout the temple, the upper border is demarcated by a row of birds, probably meant to represent geese, and a valance with *kīrtimukha* (Fig. 161), a motive that can be traced back to the 11th century in the wider western Himalayan region.<sup>19</sup>

Underneath the row of twenty *mahāsiddha* continuing from the back left wall are three mandala assemblies. In the upper left corner is the thirteen-deity assembly of Jñānaḍākinī (Ye shes mkha' 'gro ma) which is based on the *Caturpīṭhatantra* and included in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.<sup>20</sup> The depiction in Wanla is, however, rather unusual and makes it clear that it certainly does not derive directly from the above texts. First of all, the goddess, and actually her whole assembly but one, has not been depicted as being female. She/he is dark blue, semi-wrathful, and has three faces and six arms, the side heads being white and red. Her principle arms are crossed in front of the breast and hold vajra and bell, a gesture that actually indicates the embrace of a female partner. The other right hands hold tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) and axe, the left one a blood-filled skull-cup (*kapāla*) and a sword. The usual lion vehicle is missing. Above and below her are six deities each, seven of them sit-

19 The valances of the Tabo Main Temple are clearly predecessors of the Wanla motif, see e.g. xxx.

20 NSP 4; Raghu Vira & Chandra, *Tibetan Maṅḍalas*, p. 28, no. 4; Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 496.



Fig. 76: A row of geese and a valance of an older type are used on the upper edge of the walls.

ting on a corpse, which are not distributed according to their placement in the mandala but are to be read from left to right, top row before bottom row. The first four deities in the top row stand for the four *ḍākinī* in the cardinal directions, the four animal-headed deities occupy the intermediary directions and the last four deities in the bottom row the four female gate keepers. Obviously the vehicles have been mixed up as well, since in other renderings the corpses are only used for the gate-keepers. Only the deity in the bottom right corner is actually female, it is the gate keeper Kāamboji displaying her vulva.

In the top centre is a 33-deity Guhyasamāja Akṣobhyavajra (Mi bskyod rdo rje) assembly, the main deities in their usual iconography.<sup>21</sup> He is blue, embraces her with *humkāra* and holds the symbols of the four families around him: lotus, wheel, sword and jewel. She is identical with him but of a slightly lighter colour. The secondary deities are

21 Conforms to NSP no. 2.



Fig. 77: A male Jñānaḍakiṇī and her assembly of thirteen.



Fig. 78: Akṣobhyavajra and his assembly of 33.



Fig. 79: Samvara-Vajrasattva and his assembly of 37.

shown in two rows of seven deities each above and below the main deity and four additional ones around the main image. The succession is again from top to bottom, there only seems to be one minor mistake as actually 11 deities are shown in wrathful form in the bottom row instead of the expected ten.<sup>22</sup>

The third group, on the side of the niche, is a 37-deity Samvara-Vajrasattva (bDe mchog rDor rje sems dpa') assembly as explained in the *Samputatantra*.<sup>23</sup> Of the central couple he is three-faced and six-armed again, his side heads are blue and red. He embraces her with *vajrahūmkaramudrā* and holds sword, *aṅkuśa*, *kapāla* and noose. The consort is iconographically identical again but has been differentiated by an orange hue. The seventeen deities of the inner two circles, most of them four-armed, are represented in the

<sup>22</sup> The mandala is described in NSP 2.

<sup>23</sup> NSP no. 3; Raghu Vira & Chandra, *Tibetan Maṅḍalas*, 26–27, no. 3; Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 474. On HAR this form is called *Samputa Vajrasattva*.

upper part, those four with more than four arms in the mandala occupy the intermediary directions of the inner circle. In the bottom section are the 16 Offering goddesses of the outer two circles and the four eight armed gate keepers. Except for the *tathāgata* around the main image all deities in the assembly should be female, but there is no indication of this. In addition, the distribution of the deities appears rather random.

On the next level there is a large 53-deity assembly of the Vajradhātu mandala. In this variant, the white Buddha Vairocana is four-headed and eight-armed, his main hands joined in the gesture of highest enlightenment (*bodhyāgrī*) and two joined in meditation. The remaining ones hold rosary (*mālā*), arrow, wheel, bow. Here the other 4 *tathāgata* are actually actually distributed around the main deity by direction, as are the other groups of deities, the 16 vajra-Bodhisattva, the four inner offering goddesses, the 16 Bodhisattva of the *bhadrakalpa*, the four outer offering



Fig. 80: Samvara-Vajrasattva and his consort, note the line on the nose and the gilding in general as well as the shadig of the female.



Fig. 81: Vajradhātu Vairocana with four heads and eight arms.



Fig. 82: The Pañcarākṣa assembly with Pratisarā in the centre.

goddesses and the four gate-keepers, the one of the east being white.<sup>24</sup>

Represented on a narrow strip to the right of the previous one is the of a thirteen-deity Five Protectresses (Pañcarākṣa, bSrung ba lnga) assembly with Pratisarā (So sor 'brang ma) as the principal goddess. Mahāpratisarā is orange and has four faces—side heads white and red, top head blue—and 12 arms, the principal ones in the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*). Her other right arms hold wheel, an unusually shaped jewel(?), a vajra and a sword, and the lowest hand in the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*)

<sup>24</sup> NSP no. 19; e.g. Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 498.

also holds an arrow. In her left hands vajra, noose, trident, another straight staff (likely the axe) and the conch can be recognised, but not the bow, who could only be held in addition to one of the other objects.

Below the main image the white Mahāsahasra(pramardanī) (sTong chen ma) has four faces and ten arms, the blue Mantrānusāriṇī (gSangs sngags rjes su 'dzin) four heads and twelve arms.<sup>25</sup> The goddesses represented above have both three faces and eight arms, on the left is the red Śītavatī (Bsil ba'i tshal) has three faces and eight arms, and the green Mahāmāyūrī (Rma bya chen mo), who can

<sup>25</sup> In NSP 18 this goddess is three-headed.



Fig. 83: The Medicine Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru and his six brothers within an elaborate palace

Fig. 84: Medicine Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru with a flower dress pattern painted in gold.

be recognised by the peacock feather she holds in one of her principal hands. Above and below are eight more goddesses listed here by their respective colour and attribute: green, vajra; orange, banner; orange, hook and noose; blue, axe; white, jewel(?) held in both hands; orange, hook and noose; green, hook and noose; red, hook and noose. Thus the goddesses are again mixed up, with one of the goddesses of the second circle shown in the bottom row, and one of the four gate keepers in the top row.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> In most part the depiction conforms to that given in NSP 18. See de Mallmann, *Introduction à l'iconographie du Tânrisme Bouddhique*, p. 55; Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 503, as explained in the Dhāraṇī Pentagon (gZungs grwa lnga). For a more detailed survey of

Underneath this assembly is the triad of Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara flanked by Maṇidhara and Ṣaḍakṣarī, which is not connected to any other representation here.

On the right side is a wonderful 51-deity assembly headed by the Medicine Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru and his six brothers (sMan bla mched bdun) within an elaborate palace.<sup>27</sup> The central Buddhas, whose dress has been decorated with special care, is flanked by the two Bodhisattvas \*Candra-rocana (Zla ba ltar snang byed) and \*Sūryarocana (Nyi ma

the Ladakhi Pañcarakṣā representations see Mevissen, *Ladakh: The Westernmost Extension of Pañcarakṣā Imagery*.

<sup>27</sup> Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 40–48, according to instructions by Atiśa.

ltar snang byed), representing sun and moon, who in this case only hold white lotuses as attribute. To the sides of the palace are the six other medicine Buddhas, each flanked by two kneeling Bodhisattvas. Together with Śākyamuni, who sits in a stūpa on top of the dome they form the group of Eight Medicine Buddhas. The pinnacle of the palace is flanked by eleven more Buddhas, which are not part of the mandala assembly,<sup>28</sup> and ten additional Bodhisattvas flank the palace underneath along with two teachers wearing pointed hats. Below are the 12 yakṣa generals, all two armed with mongoose bag, the ten guardians of the directions including sun and moon, as well as the Four Great Kings.<sup>29</sup>

Fig. 85: Vairocana Mañjuvajra with three heads and eight arms.

Fig. 86: Buddha Akṣobhya seated on the elephant throne.

Fig. 87: Crowned teaching Buddha Śākyasiṃha on lion throne.

28 Erroneously for the Buddhas of the ten directions?

29 The closest comparison to this composition is thangka in the Koelz

On the next lower level we have on the left a 43-deity Vairocana Mañjuvajra assembly. The main deity is orange and has three faces, the side heads blue and white, and 6 arms. With the right hands he holds sword, arrow and performs the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*), with the left hand he holds blue lily (*utpala*), book and bow. Around him the four *tathāgata* and the eight goddesses of the intermediate directions and the cardinal direction of the second circle are three-faced and six-armed, except for those in the east (bottom), where Akṣobhya and one of the goddesses, Locanā, are eight-armed. One of the four corner goddesses of the second palace assembly should have 26 arms, but is not represented as such. Of the remaining deities only the ten guardians of the gates, two in the east and west, can be collection (no. 9596), see HAR no. 92066.



distinguished clearly, as they are wrathful and distributed around the main assembly.<sup>30</sup>

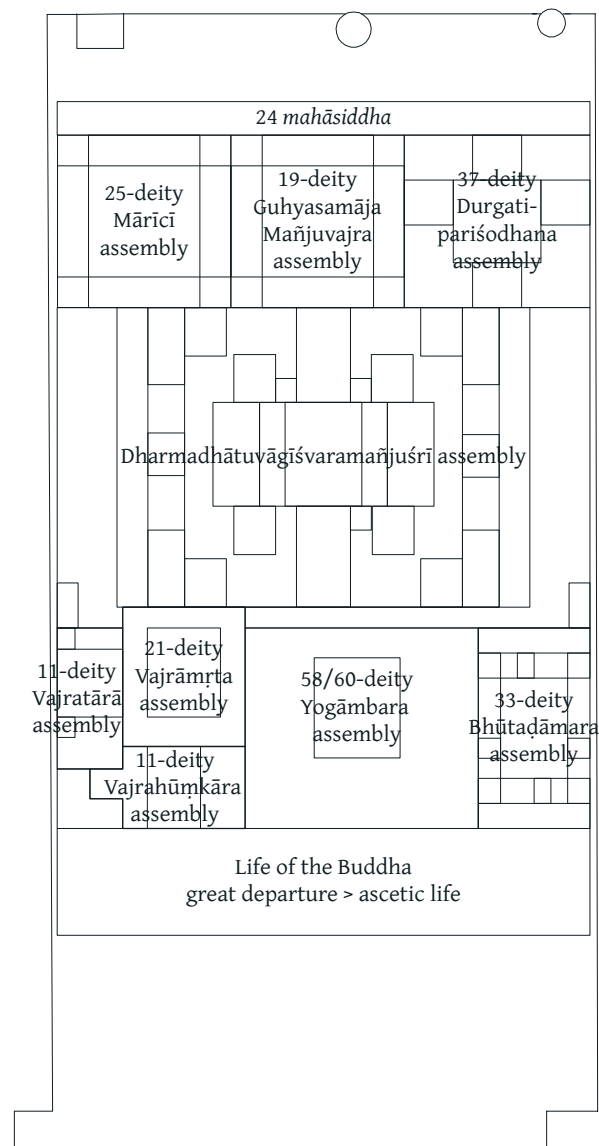
In the bottom centre, is the 37-deity assembly of Buddha Akṣobhya. He is surrounded by the remaining four tathāgata, twelve offering goddesses, 16 Bodhisattvas and four gate-keepers. The Eight Symbols of Luck are painted on the sides of the deities underneath Akṣobhya's throne. Finally on the niche side is a 53-deity assembly with a crowned Buddha performing the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) in the centre. The assembly can be identified as representing the Śākyasiṃha mandala of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* as it is described in the Vajrāvalī-cycle.<sup>31</sup> In this mandala, the Buddha Śākyasiṃha, an epithet of Śākyamuni, represents Mahāvairocana. He heads an assembly of eight *uṣṇīṣa*-Buddhas in the first circle, four of which have the gestures of the regular *tathāgata*,<sup>32</sup> and four holding distinctive attributes, namely sun-disk, banner, sword and umbrella. With the sixteen Bodhisattvas the second circle, the eight offering goddesses in the corners and the four gate keepers, the central assembly of 37 deities is formed. The optional outer protective circle is here represented by twelve guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*)—Sūrya, Candra, Brahmā and the earth-goddess for zenith and nadir—and the Four Great Kings shown in the bottom two rows. The same assembly is depicted in mandala form in the centre of the right side wall on gallery level (see ###).

30 NSP no. 20; e.g. de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 58–60; Raghu Vira & Chandra, Tibetan Maṇḍalas, no. 20; Willson & Brauen, Deities of Tibetan Buddhism, no. 458.

31 NSP no. 22; e.g. de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 62–64; Raghu Vira & Chandra, Tibetan Maṇḍalas, no. 22.

32 The colours of the Buddha in the east and south may differ also—white for the east and blue for the south—, as in the description of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, but are the usual ones in this depiction.

Fig. 88: Main wall right, general view and iconographic key.





## MAIN WALL RIGHT: DHARMA FIELD

The main wall right is dominated by the complex arrangement of deities that comprises the central assembly. These are the deities of the Dharmadhātuvāgiśvaramaṅjuśrīmaṇḍala.

At the very top of this wall, the group of the 84 *mahāsiddha* is continued with 24 of them, the largest group represented on any wall. The top level is then again occupied by three mandala assemblies, the central one of which refers to the left back wall.

On the niche side is a 25-deity Mārīcī assembly, of which all deities are female and seated sideways on their pig vehicles. The orange main goddess is semi-wrathful, has four heads, white and blue and an additional boar head at the side of the white one, and six arms. Her right hands hold vajra, needle and arrow, her left ones the bow, the *aśoka*-branch with a blossom and the thread. She is seated on boar. Her assembly consists of twenty goddesses and four gate keepers, the latter depicted in the four corners.<sup>33</sup>

This is followed by the 19(34)-deity Guhyasamāja Maṅjuvajra (gSang 'dus 'Jam pa'i rdo rje) assembly. The central deity is orange and has three heads, the ones at the sides blue and white. Of his six hands, the main pair is crossed in front of the breast embracing the partner in *hūṃkāramudrā*, his other hands holding sword, and blue lily (*utpala*) and arrow and bow respectively. His female partner is slightly darker and of the same iconography. His assembly consists of fourteen couples with their swords crossed above their heads and 4 wrathful gate keepers, who are single.<sup>34</sup>

In the top right corner is the 37-deity core assembly of the Durgatipariśodhana headed by a form of Buddha Vairo-

<sup>33</sup> NSP no. 17; de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 55–56, 260–61;

<sup>34</sup> NSP no. 1; de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 42–43.



Fig. 89: The sow goddess Mārīcī and a part of her assembly.



Fig. 90: Guhyasamāja Maṅjuvajra and a part of his assembly.



Fig. 91: Core assembly of the Durgatipariśodhana as described in NSP 21 with the distinctive colouring of the Buddhas around the main image.

Fig. 92: Central section of the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṅjuśrī assembly with the eight uṣṇīṣa flanking the main image. The larger deities represent the five jina, the four consorts, and the four inner goddesses of offering.

cana called Śākyaśiṃha (Fig. 176). The central Buddha is bejewelled, orange and teaching, and the two Bodhisattvas flanking him are without attributes and are to be understood as part of his throne frame. On the throne cloth a triple jewel (*triratna*) is depicted. The four *tathāgata* around him are called Vajroṣṇīṣa, Ratnoṣṇīṣa, Padmoṣṇīṣa and Viśvoṣṇīṣa and have the usual *tathāgata* iconography, but the eastern *tathāgata* is white and the southern one blue. The remaining assembly consists of four more uṣṇīṣa deities of the inner circle, here not differentiated from the others, 16 Bodhisattvas, eight offering goddesses and four gate-keepers, who are represented in the corners. The

assembly is systematically organised by direction, but male and females are not clearly differentiated.<sup>35</sup> By far the largest section of this wall, clearly made the central focus of it, is occupied by the huge Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṅjuśrī assembly. With the deities differentiated by size and placed according to the direction in the mandala, this is by far the most complex composition in the Wanla temple. Its iconography, however, appears to be rather straight forward, but can not be explained in detail here.

The main deity is orange and has four heads, the side heads being blue and red and a white top head indicating that this form of Maṅjuśrī is to be associated with Buddha Vairocana. The main pair of his eight arms is in the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*), the upper pair holds sword and book, the middle pair bow and arrow, and the lower pair vajra and bell. He is flanked by the eight uṣṇīṣa deities seated on lions, which form the central circle of his assembly. The *tathāgata* and their consorts, each with four heads and eight arms, are then represented by the larger deities distributed around the central one (Fig. 177). In the inner palace, these are accompanied by sixteen vajra-Bodhisattvas and four gate keepers. The inner offering goddesses, which are also represented in larger size, then already are part of the second palace, which further contains 12 goddesses on each side and four gate keepers. This is approximately what is visible on (Fig. 177).

The third circle then contains the 16 Bodhisattvas of the *bhadrakalpa*, ten protectors, again depicted in larger size and eight offering goddesses. The remaining deities make up the fourth palace and represent a huge protective assembly. Here the guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*)

<sup>35</sup> This assembly conforms to NSP 22; de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 62–64.



Fig. 93: The outer areas of the assembly depict the guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*), prominent Hindu deities, planets, and constellations. The larger deities are from top to bottom: Nairṛti, Yama, Agni, Indra and Viṣṇu.



Fig. 94: Deities of the outer assembly on the proper left side of the main image (north), among them Vāyu, Kubera, Īśāna, Indra again?, Kārttikeya twice, once with consort, great snakes, Hārītī, and planetary deities.



and other Hindu deities are emphasised in the depiction. Of these, the *dikpāla* are shown in the upper half, beginning with Indra in the middle of the left band of larger deities (Fig. 178) and continuing on the right side down (Fig. 179). In the lower section are other prominent Hindu deities, such as Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Kārttikeya etc. Representations of these deities are a veritable treasure of iconography and also include the planets and constellations.<sup>36</sup>

In the bottom there is a group of further assemblies, the distribution of which is by far not as obvious as in most other cases. On the left side is the eleven-deity mandala assembly of Vajratārā (rDo rje sgrol ma; Fig. 180). The central goddess is yellow (golden) and has four heads, white and blue at the sides and a red head at the top. Her eight arms hold a vajra, a noose and an arrow in the upper right, a bow, two different sticks and the blue lily (*utpala*) in the left hands. The lower right is in the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*). The inner assembly of eight consists of four offering goddesses and the four symbols of the Buddha families, wheel, vajra, lotus and sword. The goddess is thus associated with Ratnasambhava. The second assembly then is made up of four guardian-goddesses of the gates, the symbols of the four great wisdom goddesses (*prajñā*), as well as guardians goddesses of zenith and nadir.<sup>37</sup>

Underneath Vajratārā a Buddha teaches a person with a pandita's hat, a square board with a tree of offerings placed on top of it between them.

In the bottom centre left follows the 21-deity mandala assembly of Vajrāmṛta (rDo rje bdud rtsi), which is difficult to recognise since the main deity is not yellow as expect-

<sup>36</sup> This assembly conforms to NSP no. 21; e.g. de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 60–62; Raghu Vira & Chandra, Tibetan Maṇḍalas, no. 21.

<sup>37</sup> NSP no. 16; de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 372; Willson & Brauen, Deities of Tibetan Buddhism, no. 469 (from the *Vajrapañjara*).

ed.<sup>38</sup> Instead, the main deity is dark blue, three-faced—the side faces being white and yellow (instead of red)— and six-armed. With the main hands he embraces his consort Svabhāprajñā with *vajrahūṃkaramudrā*. The other right hands hold wheel and sword, the left ones elephant goad and noose. His consort is green and holds the same attributes, if they are filled in. Her second side head is red. The main couple is surrounded by twelve three-faced and six-armed goddesses, eight of them from the inner circle. The second circle is complemented by an unusual group of four offering goddesses and the four gates are protected by four-faced and six-armed goddesses.<sup>39</sup>

38 NSP 7.

39 For a mandala depiction see HAR no. 58109.

In the middle is an eleven-deity Vajrahūṃkāra (rDo rje hūṃ mdzad) assembly in which all deities are shown in pairs (*yab yum*) and hold a skin at their back. The main deity is blue and three-headed, the side heads yellow and green. Of his six hands the main ones are joined in *vajrahūṃkaramudrā*, embracing the consort Svābhāprajñā, the top hands hold an elephant skin as well as the elephant goad and a tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), the remaining ones probably a noose and a skull-cup (*kapāla*). The secondary deities are six-armed as well and have their consorts standing to their sides.<sup>40</sup>

In the centre of the bottom section is occupied by a 58-deity<sup>41</sup> Yogāmbara (rNal 'byor nam mkha') assembly the deities of which are asymmetrically distributed. In the centre is the semi-wrathful couple of Yogāmbara and Jñānaḍākinī (Fig. 181). He is blue and has three faces, the side ones being white and red. With the six arms he embraces his partner in *vajrahūṃkaramudrā*, holds arrow and bow, the upper pair of arms holds arrow and bow, the lower one an undefined round object (it actually should hold a breast of the goddess) and the *kapāla*. His consort is white and holds a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in one hand.

The inner circle of the assembly is formed by the eight goddesses seated on different vehicles placed prominently around the main couple and the four goddesses on corpses besides those in the cardinal directions. As far as controlled these largely conform to the descriptions. The four goddesses of the second circle are joined by the eight offering goddesses. Outside the mandala proper are eight

40 NSP no. 11. The depiction compares to Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 481, from the *Abhidhānatantra*, which does not describe the skins held in the back.

41 The number of deities in Wanla that appear to belong to the same assembly is actually 60.

Hindu gods and sixteen more deities, all of which sit with their partners.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, in the corner is a 33-deity assembly dedicated to the black four-armed and wrathful deity Bhūtaḍāmara (‘Byung po ‘dul byed; Fig. 182). The fierce god is blue and holds a vajra and bell in the right hands and a hand-drum (ḍamaru) in the upper left, while the lower ones threatens (tarjanīmudrā).<sup>43</sup> He is surrounded by a group of great Hindu gods headed by Maheśvara in the east, who in this case erroneously sits on an elephant. Eight goddesses, depicted like offering goddesses, occupy the second circle. Eight

42 This assembly largely conforms to NSP no. 14; de Mallmann, Introduction à l’iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 53–54, 469–70; Willson & Brauen, Deities of Tibetan Buddhism, no. 495; Ngor no. 87.

43 This iconography diverges considerably from the description in Willson & Brauen, Deities of Tibetan Buddhism, no. 501, in particular the distinctive hand gesture for this deity is missing here.

more great Hindu gods, those commonly comprising the guardians of the directions headed by Śakra in the east, occupy the third circle, and eight further goddesses the fourth one.<sup>44</sup> In Wanla these deities are distributed by direction.

44 This assembly largely conforms to NSP no. 23; e.g. de Mallmann, Introduction à l’iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 64–65; Raghu Vira & Chandra, Tibetan Maṅḍalas, no. 23.

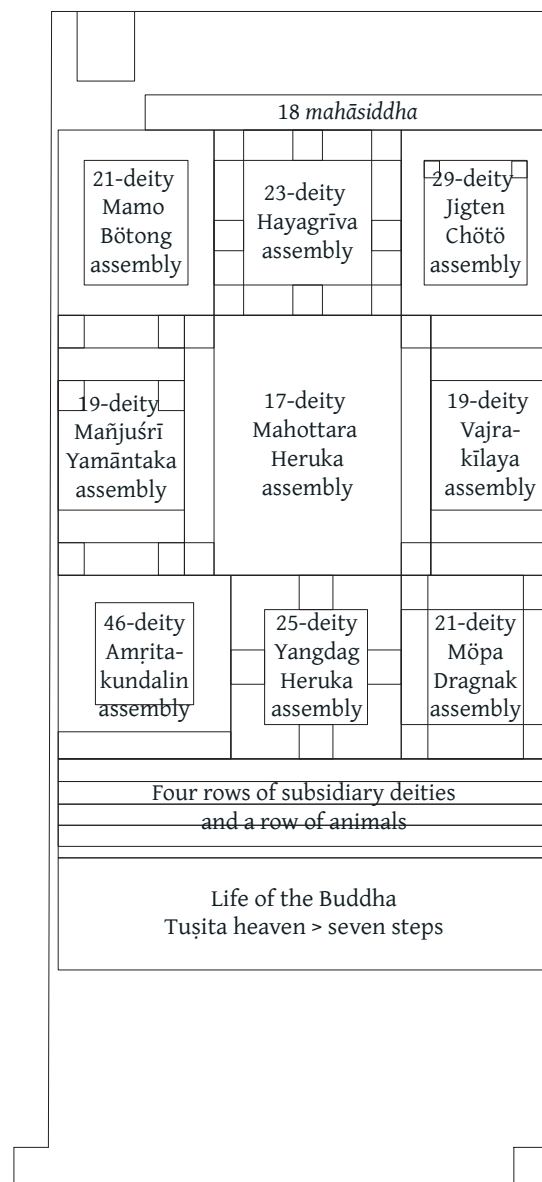
Fig. 95: Eleven-deity mandala assembly of Vajratārā.

Fig. 96: Yogāmbara and Jñānaḍākini, the central deities of a 58-deity mandala assembly.

Fig. 97: The four-armed wrathful deity Bhūtaḍāmara.



Fig. 98: Back wall right, general view and iconographic key for the deities of the Eight Pro-nouncements.





## LEFT WALL BACKSIDE: EIGHT PRONOUNCEMENTS

The back wall of the left side, the wall to the right of Maitreya's niche, is thematic. It is dedicated to the assembled deities of the so called Eight Pronouncements (sGrub pa bka' brgyad) of the Nyingmapa (rNying ma pa) school.<sup>45</sup> Besides the prominence of Padmasambhava and teachings associated with him in the main niche, this wall is the clearest evidence of the importance of Nyingmapa teachings for those who have been involved in planning and deciding on the temple's decoration. The Eight Pronouncements count among the highest teachings of Tibetan Buddhism.

More remarkably even, the eight teachings are even displayed in what is called a mandala arrangement, with the nine assemblies arranged around each other roughly occupying nine squares (Fig. 183). The location of each deity is defined by their relationship to each other. The description thus begins with the principal deity heading the central assembly, then the eastern deity underneath it, the other deities in the cardinal directions, and finally those in the intermediary directions. The eighteen Mahāsiddhas in the top row have already been dealt with above (see p. 58).

Although the principal identification of the walls' topic is clear, there is considerable uncertainty concerning the identification of the single deities. Apparently representations of this cycle have not been studied well yet, and Wanla preserves by far the oldest depiction of this cycle. In addition, the sources consulted do not agree with each other, which is largely due to the fact that this teachings have been commented upon very often and the cycle involved is from the outset a huge textual corpus. The eight pronouncements are said to have been received by

<sup>45</sup> Duff, Ozer, & Schaffranek, *The Illuminator*, suggest the translation "Eight Logos of Practice".

Padmasambhava from eight *vidyādhara*, knowledge holders of the Nyingmapa school.<sup>46</sup> They have then first been revealed by the treasure finder Nyangrel Nyimaözer (Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, 1136–1204).<sup>47</sup> It must be his discovery or the one of his incarnation, Guru Chöwang (Gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug, 1212–1270) that underlies the Wanla representation.

The main difficulties in the identification are twofold. First of all, there are only eight cycles of teachings, and thus eight deities, that are distributed in nine fields, the last one apparently being complemented in different manners. Secondly, for spatial reasons, the assemblies represented with the respective main deities are abbreviated in the Wanla depiction, and it appears that those deities of the assemblies that did not fit into the nine square arrangement have been represented in the rows underneath. Since the complexities of this cycle would be a study in itself, the following identification mainly draws on the iconography of the main deities and the core assemblies around them.

For the Wanla depiction, the most likely solution to reconcile for the problem of eight deities and nine assemblies is, that the central deity represents Mahottara Heruka (Che mchog He ru ka), and that he is conceived beyond the eight surrounding deities (Fig. 184).<sup>48</sup> Consequently, the more common form of Yangdag Heruka (Yang dag He ru ka), deity

<sup>46</sup> For a more detailed history of the origin of these teachings and their relationship to Padmasambhava see Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, 31–38.

<sup>47</sup> TBRC P364.

<sup>48</sup> This reading is partially confirmed by much more recent examples such as HAR no. 800 and no. 73464, where Mahottara is surrounded by the main deities of the Kagye, most of them identified by captions. However, in these examples Mahottara Heruka appears to be identified with Amṛtakunḍalin (bDud rtsi yon tan) who is not represented otherwise. Instead a deity called Bla ma rig 'dzin, a white wrathful deity that appears to stand in for the knowledge holders that received the teachings, is added as ninth deity. In this way, the five transcendental deities occupy the centre and the cardinal directions, and four worldly ones the intermediate directions.

Fig. 99: Seventeen-deity assembly of Mahottara Heruka in the centre of the mandala like configuration of the Eight Pronouncements.



Fig. 100: In the east is a 25-deity core assembly of Yang dag Heruka, who is black, three-faced, six-armed and four-legged.

of the mind and wrathful form of Vajrapāṇi, who is also called Viśuddha Mind (Yang dag thugs), must be the deity in the east, that is underneath the main deity. This deity is also called Chemchog occasionally, since he is the principal deity of the Eight Pronouncements and represents enlightened mind. In the south is Mañjuśrī Yamāntaka ('Jam dpal gshin rje shed), the wrathful Mañjuśrī and deity of the body, consequently also called Body Mañjuśrī ('Jam dpal sku) in this context. In the west we have, as is to be expected the wrathful Hayagrīva, the wrathful form of Avalokiteśvara understood as deity of speech.<sup>49</sup> Vajrakīlaya (rDo rje phur ba) in the north is considered the deity of action and the wrathful form of the Bodhisattva Nīvaraṇaviṣkambhin (sGrib pa rnam sel). The fifth of the so called transcendent deities of the Kagye is Amṛtakunḍalin (bDud rtsi 'khyil ba) who represents the enlightened qualities (yon tan) and is thus also called Amṛta Quality (bDud rtsi yon tan). He is considered the wrathful form of Samantabhadra (Kun tu bzang po)<sup>50</sup> and represented in the southeastern corner of the configuration.

The remaining three deities are considered worldly. In the southwest corner is an unusual representation of Mamo Bötong (Ma mo rbod gtong), the wrathful form of Ākāśagarbha (Nam mkha'i snying po), sorceress deity of calling and dispatching. In the northwest corner is the lord of Worldly Offerings and Praises ('Jig rten mchod bstod), considered the wrathful form of Kṣitigarbha (Sa'i snying po). Finally, the northeastern corner is occupied by Mōpa Dragnak (Mod pa drag sngags, "Curses, Wrathful Mantra"), wrathful form of Maitreya and the deity of wrathful man-

49 For this reason he may alternatively be called Padma gsung.

50 Although in this context it is the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra among the Eight Bodhisattvas or Eight Close Sons (Nye ba'i sras) who is meant, his identification with the Nyingmapa Ādibuddha may well have led to the identification of Amṛtakunḍalin with Mahottara Heruka.

Fig. 101: Mahottara Heruka is wrathful, dark brown in colour and has twenty one heads, forty two arms and six legs.

tras. In the following the depiction of these main deities and their mantras is being described in greater detail.

It is said, that in the more common arrangement with Chemchok identified with Amṛtakunḍalin and a Lama Rigdzin assembly in the southwest, that together these assemblies comprise of a total of 406 deities.<sup>51</sup> The Wanla depiction, in contrast, contains 240 deities (without consorts) in the main assemblies and 104 or 108 deities in the bottom rows excluding the separately represented animals.<sup>52</sup>

In the centre of the wall is the impressive image of Mahottara Heruka (Che mchog He ru ka) heading an assembly of seventeen deities.<sup>53</sup> This impressive deity is wrathful, dark brown in colour and has twenty one heads (Fig. 186), forty two arms and six legs. His heads are stacked in tiers of three, each central one brown, the right ones white and the left ones red. All his hands hold a being, which are explained as Samantabhadra father and mother, they are shown in the main hands (Fig. 186), the five Buddhas and their consorts, eight male and eight female Bodhisattvas, six emanated sages, as well as four male and four female door-guardians,<sup>54</sup> and he is trampling different animals (elephant, lion, *makara*, horse, tiger etc.). His red consort has nine heads and eighteen arms. They are flanked by 12 wrathful deities with skins on their back and four wrathful couples, three-headed and six-armed, are represented in the corners (Fig. 184).<sup>55</sup>

51 The only source that speaks in greater detail about the mandala arrangement and their number of deities found so far is online (<http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Kagyé>). According to this source the total number of deities, including a sets of complementary ones is 725. The number of deities given for each of the assemblies is referred to in the footnotes below.

52 For a spiritual interpretation of this cycle see: Trungpa, *The Lion's Roar*, 306–19.

53 His full assembly comprises of 36 deities when he is identified with Amṛtakunḍalin.

54 Jamyang Dhondup, *The Eight Practice-Instructions*, p. 61.

55 For comparative depictions see HAR no. 265,





Fig. 102: Hayagrīva is in the West and heads a core assembly of twenty three deities.

The assembly of Yang dag Heruka in the east consists of 25 deities (Fig. 185).<sup>56</sup> The central deity is black, has 3 faces, six arms and four feet. The secondary heads are white and red respectively. His main pair of arms hold a ritual vajra and skull-cup (*kapāla*), the upper arms a trident and a human figure and the lower arms a hand drum (*ḍamaru*) and a noose. As most of the other main deities in this group he wears a human and elephant skin as a cape and has wings. He is embraced by a consort with two arms, holding trident and a skull-cup. His assembly is dominated by four *yab yum* deities in the colours of the secondary families around him, which are of similar iconography as the main

<sup>56</sup> His assembly is said to have 58 deities.

deity. Further, there are twenty more deities in his core assembly, all but eight animal-headed.

In the south, the direction of death, is a nineteen deity assembly of Yamāntaka (gShin rje gshed).<sup>57</sup> The central deity is again wrathful, three-faced—with white and red side faces—, six armed and four-legged (Fig. 190).<sup>58</sup> His principal colour is yellow, while his spouse is orange. In the principal arms he holds a human figure and a skull-cup (*kapāla*), the upper arms brandish a sword and hold a trident, the lower ones hold trident and human figure again. He has wings and wears a cape of elephant and human skin. His consort is orange and embraces him holding a skull-cup. To the immediate left of the couple is a dark blue and wrathful attendant holding an axe to his right hand. Two bulls are represented underneath the lotus the central couple stands on.

In his assembly are four six-armed and four-legged deities in *yab-yum* and with attendant, just as the central figure and presumably together with him representing the five Buddha families. Then there are ten wrathful couples around this core group, the male wearing an elephant skin. The four deities in the corners, apparently guardians of the gate, are without consort and animal-headed.

Hayagrīva (*rTa mgrin*) in the West, that is the top centre of the wall, heads a core assembly of 23 deities (Fig. 187).<sup>59</sup> He is red, three-headed—the side heads being white and blue and there is a triple horse head on top—, and six-armed. In the main pair of hands he holds vajra and bell in front of his breast, but not crossed, embracing his partner. The upper hands hold the elephant and human skins spread behind the back as well as a staff with skulls and ending

<sup>57</sup> This assembly is said to comprise 59 deities.

<sup>58</sup> This detail can not be seen clearly in the documentation.

<sup>59</sup> His full assembly is said to contain 58 deities.

Fig. 103: Hayagrīva is red, three-headed, and six-armed. For the jewellery and attributes gilding has been applied to the main deities on this wall.



Fig. 105: In the south is a nineteen deity assembly of Yamāntaka, the wrathful form of Mañjuśrī.



in a vajra, presumably meant to represent a trident, and a skull-cup (*kapāla*). The middle arms hold a noose and a black—the only attribute not rendered in gold—ring shaped object, possibly a chain. With his four legs he tramples on two *nāga*. He has wings at his back and embraces a consort. This consort is of the same colour and holds knife(?) and *kapāla*.<sup>60</sup>

His assembly mainly consists of *yab-yum* deities of the same iconography headed by four of them placed in the cardinal directions and of the colours of the four Buddha-families. Of the fourteen further deities of similar iconography twelve are red and only the ones flanking the central deity at the bottom are dark. In the corners are the four gate-keepers common for Yoga Tantras.

In the north is the 39-deity Vajrakīlaya (*rDo rje phur pa*) assembly (Fig. 191).<sup>61</sup> The central wrathful deity is black and has again three faces, 6 arms and 4 legs. The side heads are white and red. The deity is easily recognizable since he holds a ritual dagger (*kīla*) with both hands in front of his breast embracing his consort. The upper hands hold vajra and flame/fire besides the elephant and human skins, the lower arms vajra and tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*). His consort is green, and holds trident and skull-cup (*kapāla*).

The core assembly of the main couple consists of four *kīla*-deities represented alone and ten *kīla*-deities in embrace with consort and attended by two small flanking divinities each. Four animal-headed gate keepers occupy the corners.

Amṛitakundalin (*bDud rtsi 'khyil ba*) and his core of 46 deities occupies the southeast of the composition. Again, the male of the central couple is dark blue and has three faces,



Fig. 104: In contrast to later depictions, Mamo Bötong is understood as goddess and heads an assembly of twenty one goddesses.

60 This iconography largely conforms to the identified representation of Hayagrīva on HAR 73464.

61 This assembly is said to contain 74 deities.

six arms and four legs. More details of his iconography are not visible from the documentation, but it is clear that he has wings and wears the two skins. Further, his consort appears to have six arms as well.

The central couple appears to be surrounded by four main deities in the cardinal directions with three animal heads and six arms each. There is a second regular dark wrathful three-headed, six-armed and four-legged deity on the top and the bottom to the side of the main deity there. The remaining deities in the assembly are two-armed and of varying colours.

The twenty one-deity assembly of Mamo Bödong (Ma mo rbod gtong) is highly unusual. The central goddess is white and semi-wrathful (Fig. 189). She wears a turban, bodice and decorated skirt, brandishes a vajra in the right hand and holds a bell in the left in front of the breast.<sup>62</sup> She is surrounded by twenty goddesses that liken the main one their colours alternating orange and white.<sup>63</sup>

In the northwestern corner is a 29-deity assembly of the lord of Worldly Offerings and Praises, Jigten Chötö ('Jig rten mchod bstod; Fig. 193).<sup>64</sup> The main deity is again three-headed, with the side heads being white and red, six-armed and four-legged, trampling on two figures. He has wings, wears the usual two skins and embraces a brighter coloured two-armed consort with the main hands holding vajra and skull-cup (*kapāla*). Characteristic for this deity are the garlands of heads which are held in all other hands. His consort only holds a *kapāla*. The central couple

62 Despite the name, Mamo Bödong is commonly depicted as a male wrathful deity with tree heads, six arms and four legs and embracing a six-armed consort as well (see e.g. HAR no. 800, bottom left).

63 The assembly of Mamo Bödong is said to be of 70 deities.

64 Identified as such on HAR 800 and as Dregs 'dul on HAR 73464. In the latter case the name refers to the the *dregs pa'i sde brgyad*, the eight classes of haughty gods and spirits and their thirty commanders, to be tamed ('dul ba).



Fig. 106: Vajrakīlaya heads the 39-deity assembly in the north.



Fig. 107: Right side of the bottom rows of deities which complement the core assemblies represented above. Note the four goddesses riding multi-headed animals in the second row from the top.

is surrounded by a charming group of 28 goddesses riding different animals (Fig. 193).<sup>65</sup>

Finally, the bottom right assembly features twenty one deities centred on Möpa Dragnak (Mod pa drag sngags).<sup>66</sup> In terms of faces, hands, and feet, the central couple shares its iconography with most of the other deities in this group. All three heads are of the same colour, black, in this case, and the consort is dark green. The available documentation does not allow to identify the attributes held in the hands clearly, but it is clear that the main pair of hands holds vajra and skull-cup (*kapāla*) and the side hands presumably all hold hearts as in the much more recent comparative depictions. The twenty wrathful deities around

him are of different colours, hold different attributes and commonly wear an elephant skin.

Underneath these nine assemblies are four rows of 26 or 27 mostly wrathful deities each and a row of animals (Fig. 192). Among them are many animal headed deities, a group of four deities riding multi-headed animals, a group of protectresses riding horses following one with a peacock feather cape, four armoured deities, groups of yoginī. Their groupings and distribution is not entirely clear from the documentation available. However, it appears clear that at least the majority of these deities complements the assemblies represented above them, but at the current stage of research it is impossible to assign the respective deity groups to a particular assembly above. Given the unique nature of this depiction, a more detailed study of this wall certainly would be greatly rewarding.

<sup>65</sup> This assembly is said to comprise of 32 deities otherwise. The only identified thangka of this topic on HAR, no. 461, has 30 deities surrounding the main couple, including Rahula, and eight further furies in the bottom row.

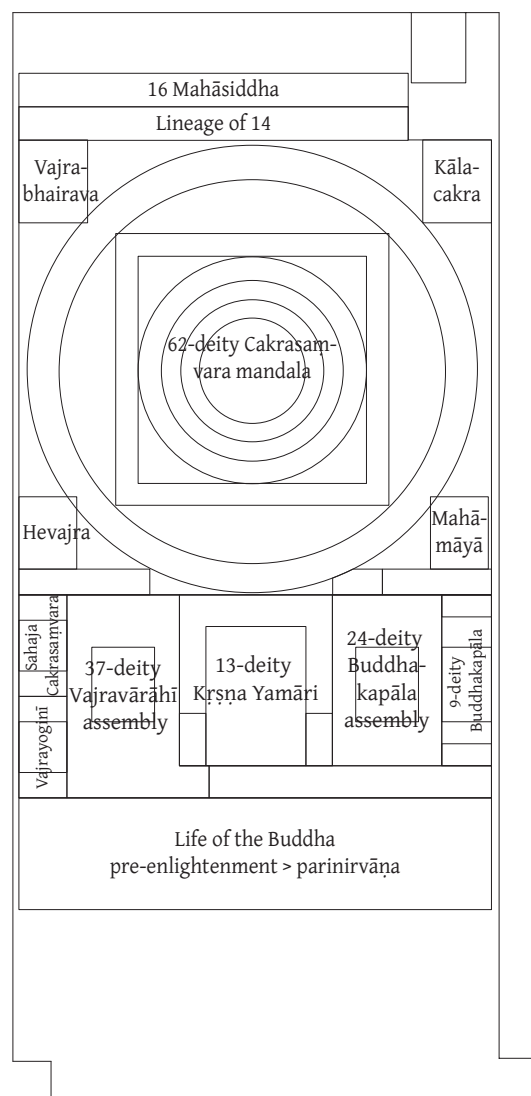
<sup>66</sup> His assembly is said to have 20 deities.





Fig. 108: Jigten Chötö, the lord of Worldly Offerings and Praises, heads a group of 28 goddesses in the northwest corner.

Fig. 109: General view of the back wall on the right side, the wall to the left of Śākyamuni's niche, and iconographic key.



## RIGHT WALL BACKSIDE: MANDALA WALL

Underneath the top row of sixteen *mahāsiddha*, concluding the group of c. 80 beginning on the opposite wall, the upper section of the wall is dominated by a large Cakrasaṃvara mandala. This is the only full mandala representation on the ground floor that is visible to a visitor, the others two in the Avalokiteśvara niche are not visible from outside the niche, due to the altar. Between the *mahāsiddha* and the mandala is a lineage of 14 figures, which likely is dedicated to the Cakrasaṃvara transmission. Vajradhara and two siddhas, both holding skull-cups, are followed by eleven identical Tibetan teachers all performing the teaching gesture. In the common Kagyü lineage Marpa and Milarepa would be distinguished. In any case, the lineage is too generic to be of any help in identifying the teaching tradition the Cakrasaṃvara mandala is based on.

The whole width of the wall is used for the common 62-deity mandala (Fig. 195) with the central pair of the twelve-armed and four-headed Cakrasaṃvara (‘Khor lo bde mchog) embracing his partner Vajravārāhī (rDo rje phag mo) surrounded by 60 secondary deities (Fig. 197).<sup>68</sup> The main secondary deities are all four-armed, as is the case in the particular variant of the mandala associated with the *mahāsiddha* Lūyipa and in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.<sup>69</sup> As is common for early mandala representations in the Western Himalayas, the deities of the mandala are all represented upright, and not directed towards the centre, as is the case in later and Central Tibetan representations. This is particular apparent with the four corner goddess, where their two-parted colouring, actually resulting from their intermediary position, is not readily understandable

<sup>68</sup> In the case of this mandala the central two deities making up the central couple are traditionally counted separately.

<sup>69</sup> NSP no. 12; e.g. Raghu Vira & Chandra, *Tibetan Maṇḍalas*, no. 12.



Fig. 110: 62-deity Cakrasaṃvara mandala surrounded by four yidam deities.

(Fig. 196). Further the colouring of the mandala quarters indicates that Vairocana is still considered the primary Buddha for this representation. Also the musical instruments and diverse offerings represented in the walls of the mandala palace are a feature continuing earlier local representations.

The eight cemeteries are depicted between the lotus and vajra circles and have the usual elements, including at least one prominent *mahāsiddha* in each direction, even though there seems to be a mix up in their distribution. Starting from the east (bottom) the following siddhas are recognizable without doubt: Indrabhūti in the east, Ḍombhīheruka

Fig. 111: Deity of the mandala's southeast corner.

Fig. 112: Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī, the central couple.

Fig. 113: Padmavajra in the western cemetery of the mandala.

in the south, Padmavajra (of red colour) in the west (Fig. 198), Kukkuripa (green) in the North and Ghaṇṭapāda/Dril bu pa in the northeast (Fig. 200). Of the other siddhas two are dancing and one kneels, holding a skull-cup (*kapāla*). In each corners around the mandala is a major yidam, a

The top left corner has Vajrabhairava as 'lonely hero' (*ekavīra*), white Vajrasattva and a teaching siddha, possibly Padmavajra or Vairocanavajra (Fig. 202). The top right corner, somewhat distorted by the lion bracket there, features a Kālacakra *yab yum*, Samantabhadra—blue and



Fig. 114: Hevajra, Padmasambhava and Agni, as guardian of the southeast.

Fig. 115: Vajrayoginī and Dril bu pa in the northeast corner.

Fig. 116: The white clad teacher and the two types of *dakini* underneath in the northeast corner.

minor deity and a teacher. The bottom left corner is occupied by a eight-headed, sixteen-armed and four-legged Hevajra *yab yum*, a sole representation of Nairatmyā assembly and Padmasambhava, the latter with his common attributes vajra, *kapāla* and *khaṭvāṅga* (Fig. 199). Underneath are six two-armed *yoginī* in a row with different colours and attributes.

meditating but bejewelled—and a siddha with a skull-cup (Fig. 203). A curious feature is, that the arms of Kālacakra are split at the wrist to make four hands out of two arms for each colour.

Finally, in the bottom right corner (northeast) is Mahāmāya/sGyu ma chen mo with four faces and four arms and a consort (Fig. 204), the main deity unusually dancing on the right leg instead of the left. Vajrayoginī (Fig. 200)

and a teacher clad in white (Fig. 201) complete this corner. As on the other side there are again six dancing *ḍākinī* in a row underneath, the first two of which are two-armed, the last multi-coloured, while the others have four faces and four arms and a distinctive attribute in the upper right hand (Fig. 201). These latter four *ḍākinī* likely form the five-deity mandala assembly of Mahāmāya, who is directly above this group.<sup>70</sup> Consequently it is most likely that the

assembly, the main deity embracing his partner with *vajrahūṃkaramudrā*. The four *ḍākinī* around them have four arms holding knife and skull-cup at the heart and *ḍamaru* and *khaṭvāṅga* at the side. The two above the main couple are yellow and red, the ones below blue and green. Underneath is a Vajrayoginī assembly that curiously comprises of six deities instead of the usual five. The goddess is red, dances on a corpse, has a knife in the raised right hand and



Fig. 117: Vajrabhairava and the teaching siddha in the southwest.



Fig. 118: Kālacakra and the siddha with kapāla in the northwest.



Fig. 119: Mahāmāya in the northeast corner.

eight other goddesses, six to the right side of the mandala and the last two to the left that form a nine-deity assembly with Hevajra in the lower left corner, which is also represented on the right side wall of Maitreya's niche.<sup>71</sup>

The lower section of this wall is crowded with different related mother-tantra assemblies. Occupying a narrow vertical strip to the left are two small assemblies above each other (Fig. 205). Above is a Five-deity Sahaja Cakrasaṃvara

skull-cup at her heart. The five *ḍākinī* around her are of the colours of the five Buddha families, a white one being squeezed between the lower two goddesses. These deities are again all four-armed and of the same iconography as the ones accompanying Cakrasaṃvara.

However, the lower left of this wall is dominated by a 37-deity assembly of Vajravārāhī/rDo rje phag mo, the last two deities continuing the bottom row to the right (Fig. 205). The goddess dancing on a corpse now has her distinctive sow-head projecting from her proper right side. The

70 NSP no. 9; Raghu Vira & Chandra, Tibetan Maṇḍalas, no. 9, where the main deity stands on the left leg as all others.

71 NSP no. 8; e.g. Raghu Vira & Chandra, Tibetan Maṇḍalas, no. 8.

Fig. 120: The 37-deity assembly of Vajravārāhī and the two small assemblies of Sahaja Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī to the left of it.



*ḍākinī* in her assembly are again four-armed and hold the usual attributes.

The central assembly represents a variant of the 13-deity Kṛṣṇa Yamāri (gShin rje gshed dgra nag) assembly as it is handed down in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.<sup>72</sup> The main deity is black—as his name refers—, three-headed (the side heads being white and red) and six-armed. He holds the symbols of the four secondary Buddha families in addition to knife and skull with which he embraces the consort Svābhaprajñā, who is two-armed (Fig. 206).<sup>73</sup> While the couple is trampling on humans their vehicle, the bull, is represented underneath the lotus. The twelve couples of his assembly are represented around the halo of the main deity, while the four deities flanking the lotus and the row underneath do not belong to it. To the sides of the legs of the main deity is a not yet deciphered inscription in a Devanagari-related script.

The association and meaning of the four deities flanking the lotus of Kṛṣṇa Yamāri remains unclear so far. The upper ones are not related at all, since to the left is a dark blue wrathful couple and to the left a frontally represented Bodhisattva who appears to hold a vase or flask in front of his breast (Fig. 207). The lower deities are clearly related to each other, since both hold two stūpas. The one on the left is dark green and wears secular dress with turban and boots, the one on the right is bull-headed, of red colour, and also wears a long coat (Fig. 207). Both appear to have a tail which is visible between their parted legs.

The third large assembly is formed by the twenty four deities in the retinue of Buddhakapāla (Sangs rgyas thod pa)

72 NSP 15; see de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 54.

73 More commonly the consort has six arms and the same attributes as the male. See, for example, HAR nos. 40170, 58189, 79105, 102266.

assembly, who is one-faced and four-armed.<sup>74</sup> Embracing a red consort Citrasenā he holds curved knife (*karṭṛkā*) skull-cup (*kapāla*) as well as hand-drum (*ḍamaru*) and tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*). The four blood-filled skull-cups in the fields above and below the main image occupy the intermediary directions of the inner circle. The assembly is completed by 20 dancing yoginī represented around them and four gate keepers in the corners, which are curiously male in this case.

On the right edge is the nine-deity Buddhakapāla (Sang rgyas thod pa) assembly with the secondary deities represented in groups of four above and below the main couple.<sup>75</sup> The main deity is dark, dances with the right leg on a

corpse, wears a human skin at the back and embraces his red partner with the hands holding curved knife (*karṭṛkā*) and skull-cup (*kapāla*). The hand-drum (*ḍamaru*) and the tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) are his other attributes. The main deity thus has the same iconography as in the larger mandala assembly.

Just below the last three assemblies is a row of 12 wealth deities. The row begins to the left with Vasudhara, Jambhala and four-armed Gaṇapati (Fig. 207) seated on lotuses, while the following nine deities all hold a mongoose in the left hand and sit on a vehicle, in all but one case a green horse. The exception is Kubera, the sixth image in the group, who sits on a white lion. Special attention has been dedicated to the colours of the deities and their attribute in the right hand, they are as follows: yellow and jewel or fruit, red and casket (Fig. 207), yellow and banner (Kubera), white with sword and shield in one hand, white and vase of plenty, dark blue and sword, dark green and jewel or fruit, dark blue and spear with checkered flag, and yellow with a large unrecognizable object.

74 NSP no. 13; e.g. Raghu Vira & Chandra, Tibetan Maṅḍalas, no. 13.

75 NSP 10; e.g. Raghu Vira & Chandra, Tibetan Maṅḍalas, no. 10.

Fig. 121: Kṛṣṇa Yamāri, the main deity of the central assembly in the bottom section of the wall. Note the four line inscriptions to the sides of his legs.

Fig. 122: Two of deities flanking the lotus of Kṛṣṇa Yamāri, the lower one bull-headed, dressed in a secular coat and holding two stūpa, and three of the wealth deities in the bottom row of the wall: Gaṇapati, Jambhala and a red deity holding a casket.

Fig. 123: The upper portion of the 24-deity Buddhakapāla assembly with the blood filled skull-cups (*kapāla*) shown above and below the central dancing couple.



Fig. 124: Location of the Buddha's  
life on the ground floor.



## BOTTOM OF THE BACK SECTION: LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

Another topic beginning on the wall otherwise dedicated to the Eight Pronouncement is the Life of the Buddha, which continues in clockwise direction around the back half of the temple. The life is depicted chronologically along a strip at the bottom of the walls, the single scenes separated from each other by the background colour, red and dark green alternating, and pictorial elements such as trees and buildings. Otherwise following the distribution of the Mahāsiddhas, this topic also occupies the left side wall of Avalokiteśvara's niche, it then jumps to the back wall right and ends on the back wall of the right side just to the side of the Śākyamuni niche (Fig. 180).

On the back wall on the left side, immediately to the right of Maitreya's niche, the life begins with a scene showing the Bodhisattva, seated frontally on a throne, teaching the gods in Tuṣita heaven. Then follows a narrow panel of dark background showing the Bodhisattva seated sideways with gods kneeling in front of him (Fig. 210). This refers to the request of the gods to remain in heaven. Instead of granting this request, the Bodhisattva, again shown seated

sideways, consecrates the future Buddha Maitreya as his successor in heaven by bestowing a crown to the person kneeling directly in front of his throne, the god holding a conch likely referring to the simile of the conch surpassing all other musical instruments (Fig. 210).

At the time of conception, the Bodhisattva appears his future mother Queen Māyā, lying sideways on a bed, in a dream as an elephant, here painted dark/grey with a red trunk against a red cloud (Fig. 211). To the side of the elephant accompanying gods descend from heaven as well. The frontal teaching Bodhisattva to the side of the queens bed may refer to his miraculous stay in his mother's womb. In the following birth scene, the Bodhisattva is shown twice, once emerging from his mother's side and underneath it received by two gods on a piece of cloth. Merged to a single scene, the Bodhisattva is bathed by two gods hovering above him and performs the seven steps in the cardinal directions, each step represented by a lotus blossom. At the bottom of this scene two of the parallel births



Fig. 125: Before the last rebirth, the gods requesting the Bodhisattva to remain in Tuṣita heaven, he consequently crowns the Bodhisattva Maitreya as his successor.

Fig. 126: The conception of the Buddha is accompanied by an unusual representation of a teaching Bodhisattva, probably referring to the Bodhisattvas miraculous stay in his mother's womb.

are represented in form of two seated women with their respective child (Fig. 212).<sup>67</sup>

Around the corner are further parallel births, one human—a women giving birth at that moment—and the others among the animals. Of the latter each parallel birth is represented by a larger animal on the left looking towards the birth scene and smaller one of the same species behind it (Fig. 213). There are horses, elephants, goats(?), cows, pigs(?), lions and tigers. The birth cycle is concluded by the visit of the sage Asita, who predicts that the infant, seated on the lap of his father, will become either a Buddha or a ruler of the world (*cakravartin*) to the infant. Immediately after the prediction the sage dies, mourned by another sage, presumably his nephew Nalada, in the depiction. The four figures in the lower section of this panel—two small ones in dialog on a large throne, and two larger ones directed towards them—is not yet interpreted.

The youth events are then set against a red background again. The first scene shows the Bodhisattva in school,

<sup>67</sup> In the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* the parallel births of four kings are mentioned, as well as additional births including the horse Kanthaka (see Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha*, p. 16-17).

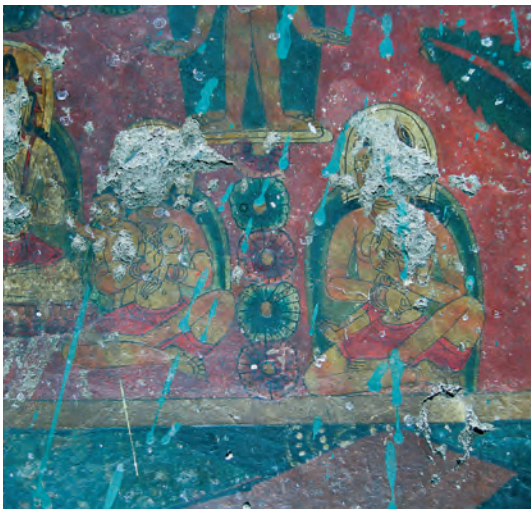
holding a book in his hands. In the scene below, he communicates with an ascetic, sharing the same lotus seat with him. The meaning of the Bodhisattva's attribute is unclear in this case. The following panel shares the background and is separated by two trees above each other. The upper scene refers to the story of the Bodhisattva youth throwing a mad elephant beyond the city gate and in the depiction this event continues into the area with dark background. The elephant first storms out of the city towards the Bodhisattva standing in front of it, he is then held by the Bodhisattva, the actual throwing not being depicted, and finally lies on his back in front of the throning Bodhisattva who appears to explain to Devadatta, who enraged the elephant, what has happened.

The lower scene then begins the competitions, which usually take a considerable portion of the Buddha's life, since they best show the superiority of the Bodhisattva in worldly matters. In these the Bodhisattva is superior in wrestling, swimming, the competitors shown in a square pool, and arrow shooting. An introductory scene emphasising the special nature of the bow the Bodhisattva uses

Fig. 127: Two women holding a child each at the bottom of the scene showing the seven steps of the newly born Bodhisattva.

Fig. 128: A women giving birth and different animals with their offspring referring to the parallel births at the time the Bodhisattva was born.

Fig. 129: Among the contests in the Bodhisattvas youth, the story of the bow the Bodhisattva uses is emphasised.



ends the events on this wall. In an upper section the bow is shown in a city and a local hero is approaching, in the lower one the large bow has to be carried by four people (Fig. 214).

The actually arrow shooting contest is only shown around the corner in the Avalokiteśvara niche. This scene is damaged considerably and is divided into three horizontal levels. Above two figures appear to be communicating, below it sits the Bodhisattva aiming at a row of trees, the bow not being recognizable, and at the bottom his competitors standing in a row shoot off their arrows. Beyond the obscuring pillar the water source the Bodhisattvas arrow has opened miraculously is indicated by a stream and a stūpa erected at that point.

Separated by a large tree from the preceding last scene of the competitions, two palace scenes follow on this wall (Fig. 215). In the first one the Bodhisattva teaches his harem in the uppermost floor of his large palace. The second palace is surrounded by the four excursions the Bodhisattva takes from there, each indicated by a chart represented immediately to its side. To the left of the palace the Bodhisattva

meets the old man, supported by his walking stick, and the sick lying one lying on the ground. To the right of the palace is the meeting with the monk, obscured by a support for Avalokiteśvara's lower arm, and death, shown by a dead body carried away by mourners (Fig. 216). The centre of the palace is obscured by another supporting pillar.

The story than continues on the right back wall with the events of the great departure. The Bodhisattva is again shown teaching in the upper chamber of a palace, which is now heavily guarded by soldiers wearing armoury and holding sword and shields on both sides. However, the Bodhisattva manages to depart on a horse carried by four genii within a multicoloured cloud, his groom Chandaka actually seated on the back of the horse. In the lower section, a whole group of riders, some with the same armoury as the guards and some with local dress, seems to accompany him (Fig. 217, right). The upper section immediately following the departing Bodhisattva shows the return of the horse and groom, Chandaka and Kaṇṭhaka, with the Bodhisattva's crown and their reception by the women of the harem (Fig. 217, top centre). The horse Kaṇṭhaka appar-



Fig. 130: Parts of the two palace scenes, the left one of which shows the Bodhisattva teaching his harem. Between the palaces are two of the four encounters, those with an old man and a sick person.

Fig. 131: To the right of the palace, in the far back corner of Avalokiteśvara's niche, are the encounters with the death (below) and the monk (above), the latter only partly visible on this photograph.

ently then commits suicide by drowning himself in a pond, a scene that is juxtaposed with the Bodhisattva cutting his hair immediately above it (Fig. 217, left). In the latter scene, the white Indra seems to kneel besides the Bodhisattva seated on a throne and the stūpa built around the hair is depicted to the right of it.

The time of ascetic practice receives relatively little attention, with only one scene showing the fasting Bodhisattva undisturbed by the two youth poking his ears with sticks. Underneath this scene, beyond a river separating it, the maid Sujātā prepares the milk rice with which the Bodhisattva is to break his fast. Sujātā then seems to be shown again as deity with teaching gesture to the side of the fasting Bodhisattva.

From then on, the Bodhisattva is depicted as a Buddha. In the last three scenes on this wall the Buddha sits sideways on a throne receiving a gift each time (Fig. 218). In the upper left the god Brahmā offers him an alms-bowl, probably replacing the Four Great Kings in this function. In the upper left it is a monkey that offers a bowl filled of honey and then drowns in a well shown to the feet of the Buddha.

In the larger lower scene the two merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika, accidentally passing by with their caravan, offer bowls of food. Here the Buddha holds a lotus bud.

The first scenes on the Cakrasaṃvara wall are rather puzzling. Two of the show the Buddha standing with a monk each and the lower one has him communicate to three more Buddhas (Fig. 219). This is followed by the victory over Māra, and thus the enlightenment in an elaborate panel (Fig. 220). Māra's colourful host, animal headed and demonic creatures some of them riding on something, is half attacking half fleeing, his dancing daughters reveal their genitals before being turned into furies and Māra himself, of green colour, attacks in the bottom left and is mused about his defeat in the bottom right.

The following panel focused on the Buddha seated on a large lotus in meditation, surrounded by six monks, two of them shown larger flanking the stalk of the lotus, likely refers to the first sermon, even if it has nothing of its conventional characteristics, such as the wheel flanked by the two deer. A similar composition is then shown the defeat of the heretics through the miracle of multiplication. The

Fig. 132: From the great departure to the cutting of the hair, the return of the groom with the horse represented inbetween.

Fig. 133: Still before enlightenment, but already represented as a Buddha, the Bodhisattva is depicted meeting Brahmā, the merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika, and accepts honey from the monkey.



teaching Buddha is flanked by four of his multiplications, while the defeated heretics put their hands against themselves. It is very likely that the way the central Buddha is depicted in these two scenes was actually mixed up.

The final panel against a dark background shows the Buddha's final nirvana (*nirvāṇa*; Fig. 221). In the larger left scene the Buddha already rests on a bed and is mourned by a monk, a god, a demon and a *nāga*, representing the different beings. Underneath three more monks are shown in communication. On the right side the body of the Buddha is being cremated, mourning monks surrounding the crematory. A white band on top of this scene contains the outline of the eight stūpas which have been erected on top of the Buddha's ashes, while the bottom scene shows five monks meditating, the central one shown from the backside.

While conventional in many parts, the Buddha's life in Wanla also contains unusual scenes, which appear to be based on local interpretation rather than the canonical sources.

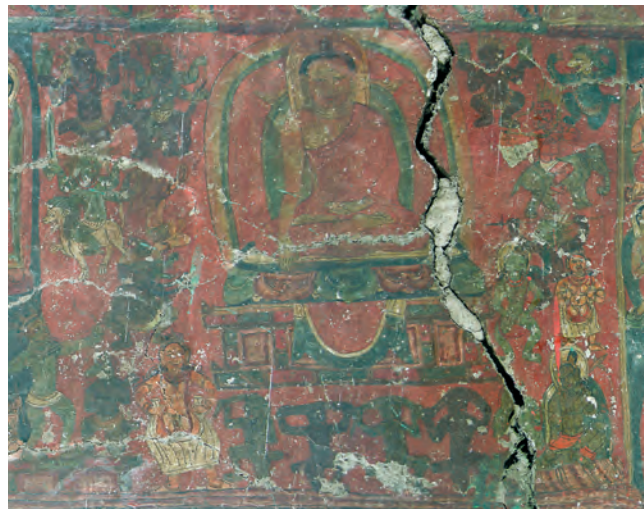


Fig. 134: Two unusual scenes preceding the actual awakening.

Fig. 135: The enlightenment and victory over Māra, his daughters and his army.

Fig. 136: The final scenes of the Buddha's life: the attainment of nirvana, the cremation of the body and the distribution of the relics in eight stūpas.

Fig. 137: General view of Maitreya in the temples' left hand niche and the iconographic key to the side walls of this niche.

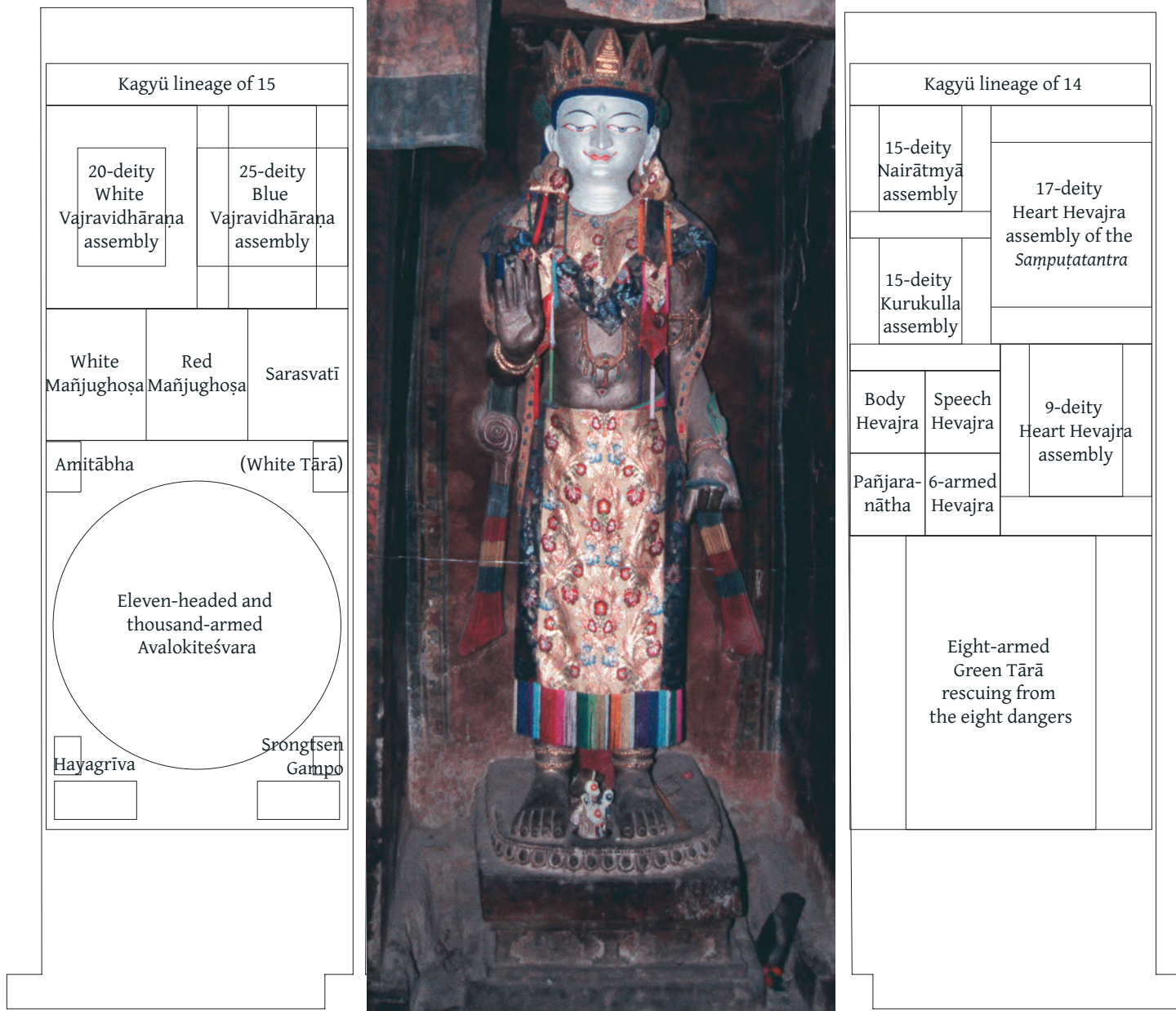




Fig. 138: Flying booted divinity in colourful cloud blowing a trumpet to the left of Maitreya's nimbus, the edge of which is formed by lotus petals.

Fig. 139: The deity to the right of the nimbus blows a conch and together they hold a scarf behind the image. On the right side wall a section of the painted murals has broken out and the remaining ones are in precarious condition.

### LEFT SIDE NICHE: FLANKING THE FUTURE

The left side niche is occupied by the monumental image of the Bodhisattva and future Buddha Maitreya, the iconography of which has already been discussed in detail above (see p. 110f.). The niche and its paintings are almost perfectly preserved, although painted plaster on the right side has completely separated from the wall itself and is in imminent danger.

The back wall of the niche is painted in relation to the the large sculpture occupying it. There is a large halo with red background and a nimbus, the background of which is white today. The edge of both is formed by differently coloured lotus petals. Besides the nimbus flying attendant deities are painted on each side, the left one blowing a trumpet (Fig. 223), the right one a conch (Fig. 224). In the other hand they together hold a scarf that unfolds behind

the nimbus. Both are booted, have a multi-coloured cloud behind them.

The iconographic program painted on the side walls of Maitreya's niche is extremely varied. While the top sections on the two walls are dedicated to high tantric cycles which are not related to each other, the lower half is dedicated to a single deity of compassion each. To the proper right of Maitreya is the thousand-armed form of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 226) and to the proper right green Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers (Fig. 239).

### LEFT SIDE WALL: PROTECTORS OF THE THREE FAMILIES

The top section on Maitreya's proper right side, the left side wall of the niche, is fairly hard to read due to the soot and dust layer covering the murals and the angle they have to be viewed. At the very top the generic Kagyü lineage is represented by fifteen figures, of which the seventh is lost. This lineage is actually even inscribed and the names, as

far as legible, are given as follows: rDo rje chang, Ti lo, Na ro, Mar pa, Mi la and sGa[m] bho ba. The following figure is lost and of the ones behind the loss only the first three have been inscribed. These three additional names read: rJe ri[n] po che, rGyal ba rin po che, 'On rin po che. For a discussion of these names and their implication see p. 118f. All the monastic lineage figures appear to be shown teaching.

On the top are two assemblies of Vajravīdāraṇa (rDo rje rnam 'joms), the Vajra Crusher, both identified by inscription.<sup>76</sup> On the left side is a semi-wrathful, white and corpulent form of the deity, holding the vajra at the breast and the bell at hip, is accompanied by nineteen stand-

ing wrathful deities of different colours (Fig. 225). On the border line underneath the lotus of the main image this assembly is identified as such: “refuge to and veneration of the deity-assembly of Vajravīdāraṇa”.<sup>77</sup> The right assembly has 25 deities and shows the main image in dark blue standing wrathful form holding the same attributes. The main image is flanked by 12 guardians of the directions, —beginning with Indra on the bottom left, and ending with Candra, Sūrya, Brahmā and an additional deity, possibly the earth goddess—, eight goddesses on the top and bottom, and the Four Great Kings in the corners. This assembly is simply inscribed as *rdo rje gnam 'joms*, repeating the same spelling as in the other inscription.

Fig. 140: 19-deity assembly of white Vajravīdāraṇa holding vajra and bell.

Fig. 141: Eleven-headed and thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara.

Fig. 142: Unusually Avalokiteśvara holds a small Buddha Amitābha in two of his hands joined in meditation in front of his belly.

<sup>76</sup> The main deities most closely conform to Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 211 and 212.

<sup>77</sup> *rdo rje gnam 'joms kyi lha tshogs la phyag mthsal zhing skyabs su mchi'o*





Fig. 143: White Mañjuḥṣa of the Wisdom Wheel.

The following level features a row of three deities, the identity of which is rather puzzling. To the left a white Bodhisattva brandishes a sword in the right hand and holds a vase with leaves in the left hand on the lap (Fig. 228). The figure in the middle a red Bodhisattva, also brandishes a sword but holds the stalk of an *utpala* with a book on top in the left. The third is a goddess of blue colour holding a sword at the side and a book in the left at the hip.<sup>78</sup> Most likely, the male deities are different forms of Mañjuḥṣa, the white Mañjuḥṣa of the Wisdom Wheel ('Jam dkar shes rab 'khor lo), who usually holds a wheel in the left hand (Fig. 228), and the red Mañjuḥṣa Lion of Debaters ('Jam dbyangs smra ba'i seng ge), who is usually accompanied by the sapphire blue Sarasvatī holding the same attributes. She is depicted as the third deity here.<sup>79</sup> The thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara has a green, a white and a red face in each tier at alternating places, the green one in the centre of the second tier (Fig. 226). This is the most frequent form the faces are represented, but this iconography differs considerably from that of the main image (see p. 109f.). Unique is also the emphasis on 12 main arms, two of holding a small figure of Amitābha in the meditation gesture (*dhyānamudrā*; Fig. 227).<sup>80</sup>

In the corners around Avalokiteśvara are four deities, in the upper corners Buddha Amitābha and a white goddess seated in *lalitāsana*, presumably White Tārā. In the bottom corners are Hayagrīva and king Srongtsen Gampo (Srong brtsan sgam po). The latter wears the same type of dress as is used for Marpa and a turban with the proportionally huge head of Buddha Amitābha above it (Fig. 229). The importance of this icon of Avalokiteśvara is fur-

78 This goddess is also represented in Kanji, where she appears to be associated with Mañjuśrī.

79 See Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, nos. 188–89.

80 No closely related forms of Avalokiteśvara could be found so far.



Fig. 144: The first Buddhist ruler of Tibet considered an incarnation of Buddha Amitābha, king Srongtsen Gampo, to the side of Avalokiteśvara.



ther emphasised by the representation of the practitioners (*sādhaka*) with their ritual paraphernalia to both sides of the feet.

#### RIGHT SIDE WALL: HEVAJRA AND TĀRĀ

On this wall, the upper section is not as clearly divided as on the opposite one. On the very top is again a representation of the generic Kagyü lineage, this time comprising 14 figures. Again all monastics are shown with teaching gesture.

In the uppermost area are three deity assemblies, at the back two with solitary females in the centre above each other. At the top is a 15-deity Nairātmyā (bDag med ma) mandala assembly which is also inscribed as such under the main figure.<sup>81</sup> The dark blue central *yoginī* dances and holds a curved knife and a skull-cup (*kapāla*). She is surrounded on three sides by fourteen *yoginī* of identical iconography.<sup>82</sup>

Underneath her is an assembly of the same number dedicated to the goddess Kurukullā, equally identified by inscription.<sup>83</sup> She is red, four armed, two of them engaged in shooting an arrow. Her retinue of red *yoginī* surrounds her on three sides as well. Both assemblies are associated with the *Hevajratantra*.<sup>84</sup>

In front of the two goddesses is a 17-deity mandala assembly of Heart Hevajra as described in the *Samputatantra*, again identified by caption (Fig. 231).<sup>85</sup> This form of Hevajra

81 \*|| bDag myed lha mo bco lnga'i lha tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo skyabs su mchi'o|. 82 This assembly conforms to the variant assembly for Nairātmyā in NSP 6. See de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 47-48, where also the following Kurukullā assembly is shortly mentioned.

83 \*|| ku ru ku la lha mo bco lnga'i lha tshogs la phyag 'tshal zhing skyabs su mchi'o.

84 See Willson & Brauen, Deities of Tibetan Buddhism, nos. 467 and 468.

85 dpal bsam bu dwa nas bshad pa'i bgyes ba rdo rje mtshon cha'i lha tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo



Fig. 145: The head of Green Tārā, whose face has been drawn twice.

has eight faces—first right head white and the first left one red and a blue one on top of the row of seven—sixteen arms and four legs. He embraces his partner holding a sword/stick and trident in the main hands crossed behind her back. Of their assembly of sixteen four-armed yoginīs four are three-faced, a yellow and a red one, at the edges of the seven yoginī in the top row and a black and a green one (Fig. 232) represented at knee level within the halo of flames. These are the gate keepers, of which the green *Siṃhāsya* certainly misses the superseding lion-head prescribed in the text.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> This conforms to NSP 5,B (see de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 46–47). Except for the main attributes, which are vajra and bell, the attributes of the side hands conform to the description of the Heart Hevajra (sNying po Kye rdo rje) of the *Samputatantra* as translated in Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 470.

Underneath this special form of Hevajra is the more common form, the Heart Hevajra (sNying po Kye rdo rje) of the *Hevajratantra*, leading an assembly of nine deities (Fig. 233). This form is easily recognizable by the skull cups he holds in the row of hands, in an assembly of fifteen deities. He is dark-blue, has eight faces, sixteen arms and four legs, as the previous one, and holds two skull-cups in the hands embracing his partner. They main deities are flanked by eight yoginī.<sup>87</sup> Underneath Heart Hevajra are six dancing goddesses, representing the personifications of the six sense offerings (Fig. 233).

On this level the back side has a group of four deities side by side, three of them representing the body, speech and mind

<sup>87</sup> Same as Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 461.

Fig. 146: 17-deity assembly of Heart Hevajra as described in the *Samputatantra*.

Fig. 147: Three-faced and four-armed green yoginī in the retinue of Heart Hevajra.

Fig. 148: Nine deity Heart Hevajra of the *Hevajratantra* and six goddesses offering to the senses.



forms of the deity as described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*<sup>88</sup> or the *Hevajratantra*.<sup>89</sup> In the upper left corner is the two-armed Body Hevajra (sKu Kye rdo rje; Fig. 234). He holds a vajra in the raised hand, a skull-cup (*kapāla*) marked with a vajra, clearly indicated by a yellow dot on top of the cup,

88 de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tânrisme Bouddhique, p. 183-4.

89 Willson & Brauen, Deities of Tibetan Buddhism, nos. 462-4, where the deities head nine-deity assemblies.

in the hand embracing the partner Nairātmyā (bDag med ma), and a tantric staff under the elbow of his left arm (*khaṭvāṅga*). Speech Hevajra (gSung Kye rdo rje), having three faces<sup>90</sup> and four arms, is represented on the top right (Fig. 235). He holds the same attributes as the previous one, but has no staff and his other two arms embrace the partner, who is now the Vajravārāhī (rDo rje phag mo) who is

90 In Willson & Brauen, Deities of Tibetan Buddhism, no. 463 he has only one face.



Fig. 149: Two-armed Body Hevajra with consort Nairātmyā.



Fig. 150: Four-armed Speech Hevajra with consort Vajravārāhī.



Fig. 151: Pañjaranātha, the protector of the tent.



Fig. 152: Six-armed Hevajra with consort Vajraśṛṅkhālā.

painted red in this case.<sup>91</sup> The next form of the same deity, shown under the previous in the bottom right is three-faced and six-armed (Fig. 237). Two arms holding vajra and bell embrace the partner Vajraśṛṅkhalā (rDo rje lu gu rgyud ma), the two upper ones hold the curved knife and a stick with a skull (*yamadanda*), while the middle ones, who should hold arrow and bow, are empty and are placed as if

91 A variant of this form is the so-called.

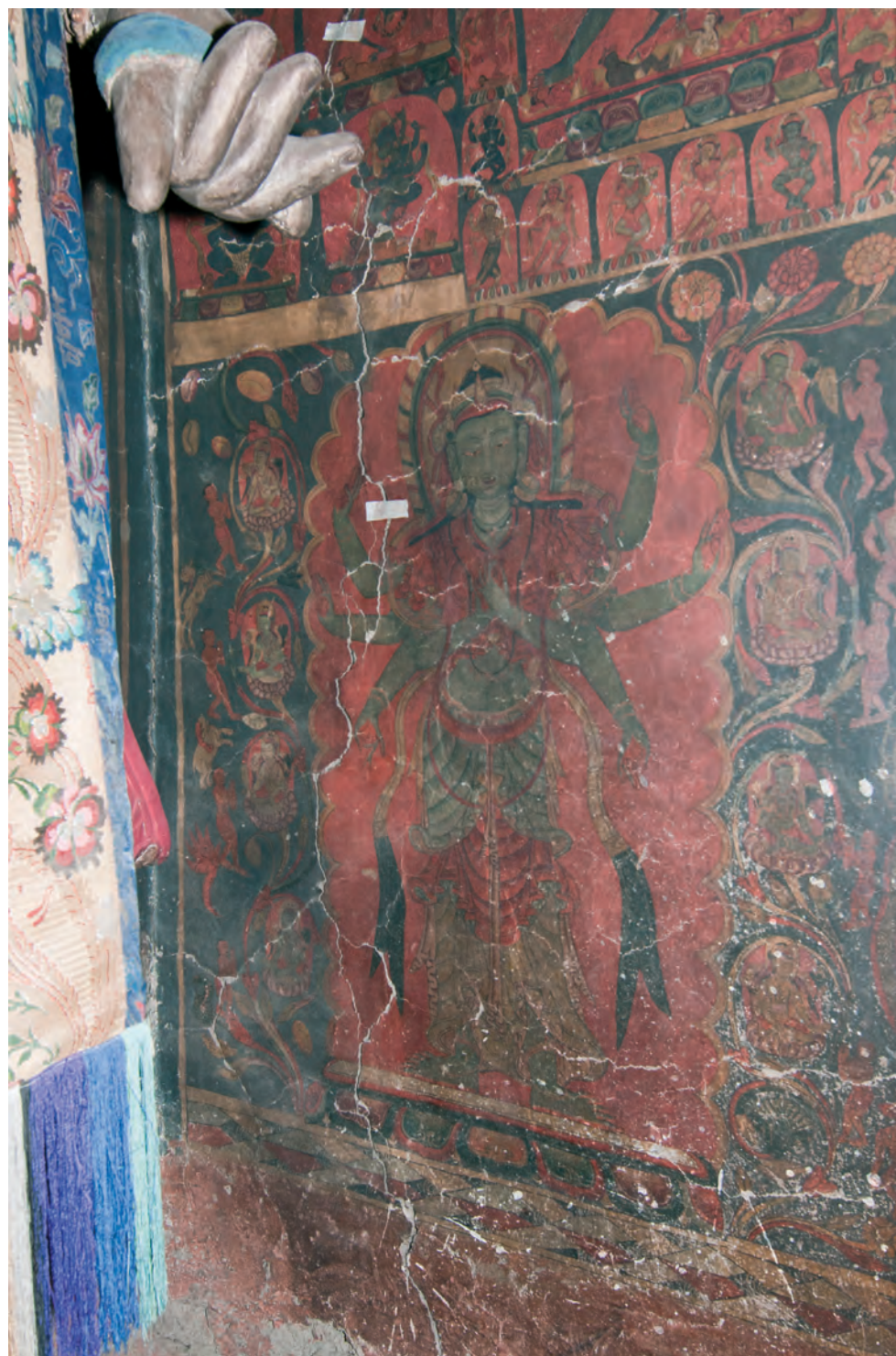
Fig. 153: Green Tārā rescuing a devotee from a snake.



Fig. 154: Eight-armed Green Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers.

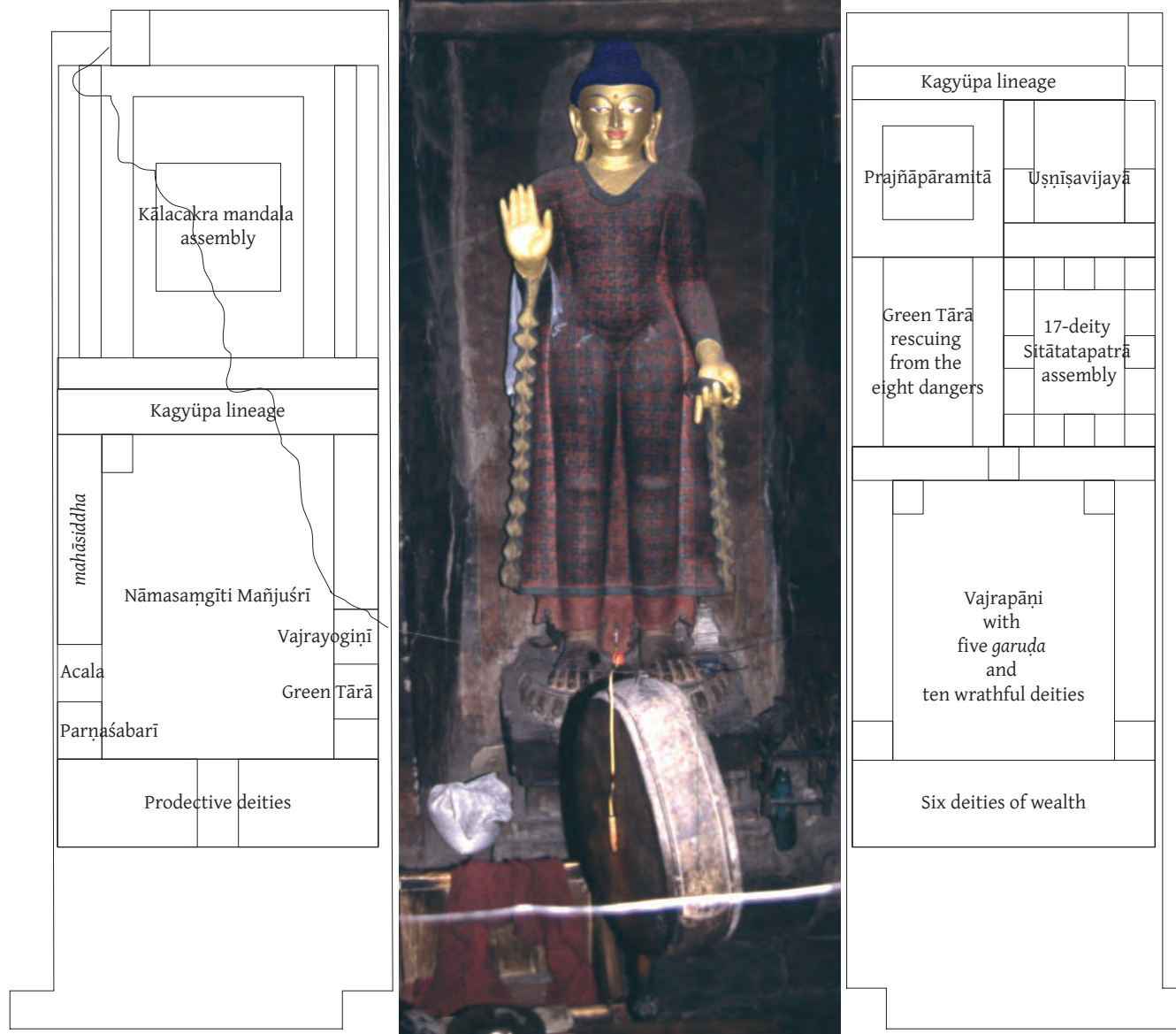
holding the scarf.<sup>92</sup> In the bottom left is finally a deity that is not associated with the Hevajra cycle, namely the protector Pañjaranātha (Gur mgon po), the so called Protector of the Tent (Fig. 236).

The bottom level has a large and beautifully painted rendering of Green Tārā rescuing from the eight kinds of fears (Fig. 239). The goddess bejewelled and dressed in elaborate garments has eight arms, the main ones in the teaching gesture in front of her breast. None of her hands holds an attribute, but they are directed towards the dangers depicted to the side of her mandorla. She is then repeatedly shown seated and appeasing in front of a devotee, who just escaped a danger represented below him. The dangers can easily be identified: to the left of Tārā, on the back side of the niche we have, from top to bottom, the dangers of lion, elephant, fire and snake (Fig. 238). To the right there is warfare, imprisonment (represented by a men size chain), water and demon. This form of Tārā is repeated in smaller size on the right side wall of the Śākyamuni wall.



92 The common attributes in the upper hand are the trident and the skull. This is the so-called Mind Hevajra (Thugs Kye rdo rje) in Willson & Brauen, *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, no. 471.

Fig. 155: General view of Buddha Śākyamuni in the temple's right hand niche and the iconographic key to the side walls of this niche.





## RIGHT SIDE NICHE: FLANKING THE BUDDHA

The right side niche is occupied by the monumental image of Buddha Śākyamuni, probably standing for the past Buddhas in the iconographic program of the temple (see p. 112f.). This niche has suffered a considerable loss in the upper section of the left wall (Fig. 241).

Both walls have a single topic occupying the lower half, in this case a seated four-armed Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and the wrathful Vajrapāṇi. These deities may well have been chosen to complement those emphasised in Maitreya's niche (see p. ?), since together they represent the Protectors of the Three Families (*rigs gsum mgon po*) complemented by Green Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers. In both niches the topics chosen for the lower half are not connected to the remaining iconographic program of their wall.

The niche's main wall is painted in relation to the large sculpture. Both halo and nimbus are outlined by a vajra band and a band of stylised flames. As for Maitreya, there are two flying divinities flanking the nimbus. Here the left one is white and blows a conch and the right one is bright green and holds a flower.

### LEFT SIDE WALL: KĀLACAKRA AND MAÑJUŚRĪ

As indicated also on the drawing with the iconographic key to the wall, the whole back part of the upper assembly is lost (Fig. 240). Nevertheless, the remaining section, a triangular section representing the lower left corner of the original composition, still allows to conclude that the upper section was occupied by a the large assembly of the Kālacakra mandala (Fig. 242). Of the main deity, only the two right legs of main deity and consort as well as the lower right arms, blue and red are preserved. In the lower left corner a lotus is painted, probably standing for one of



Fig. 156: Of the Kālacakra assembly in the upper section of the left side wall the whole back section is lost.

the four symbols around the central circle of the mandala, although one would expect a jewel here.

The eight standing three-headed and four-armed deities of the innermost circle are distributed in the cardinal and intermediary directions around the main deity. Between them and extended by the rows above and below are the 24 seated couples of the inner palace, the skull-cups of the inner square shown in the extension rows. The deities of the second palace, couples surrounded by eight in the cardinal and intermediary directions are distributed in the vertical rows flanking the core assembly, and those of the third palace are at the edges of the composition. Of the latter, the presiding deities seated or standing on different vehicles are shown in a row above each other as well.

The bottom of the composition further has a row of dancing goddesses with different offerings, of which eight are preserved. If their composition was symmetrical and

Fig. 157: The remaining section of the Kālacakra mandala assembly shows the few remains of the main image, the vertical organization of the outer palaces and the row of dancing *yoginī* underneath.



Fig. 158: The four-armed Nāmasaṃgī Mañjuśrī with the Kagyü lineage above and five siddhas to the left of it.



across the whole width of the wall, then there were fourteen such deities.<sup>93</sup>

The lower half is then dedicated to a large seated image of Nāmasaṃgī Mañjuśrī (Fig. 243) representing the painting with the most clear reference to early art of the Drigung School.<sup>94</sup> On top of the panel was a lineage of which only the left side is preserved. Since Milarepa is found in the centre of the composition, it can be concluded that this lineage only featured nine or ten figures, the shortest lineage found in the temple. The Bodhisattva is orange, sits cross-legged, brandishes a sword in the upper right hand and holds the stalk of a blue lily (*utpala*) topped by a book in the left hand before his breast. The other pair of hands hold an arrow at the hip and a bow at the side. He is flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas holding an *utpala*, the one to his proper right pinkish and the other one blue.

Originally, the image was flanked by the eight great siddhas characteristic for early paintings of the Drigung School, and two additional figures in the corners above the halo of the main image. Of these only the ones on the left are preserved. In the corner above the nimbus is a naked dark skinned siddha raising his right arm towards the sky (Fig. 244). Possibly, this figure is meant to represent Padampa Sangye, who occurs as subsidiary teacher in later Taglung painting,<sup>95</sup> since Virūpa, who also occurs in this position on early Taglung paintings,<sup>96</sup> is represented together with Indrabhūti.

The four siddhas along the edge of the panel begin with the triad of a white Indrabhūti with his spiritual consort and sister Lakṣmīkarā on the lap and a crouching bluish

<sup>93</sup> On a painting of the Garuda Virtual Museum, HAR no. 81451, the inner core assembly of the mandala is complemented by 12 offering goddesses at the bottom.

<sup>94</sup> See Luczanits, A First Glance At Early Drigungpa Painting.

<sup>95</sup> See Linrothe, Strengthening the Roots.

<sup>96</sup> See for example Luczanits, The Eight Great Siddhas, p. 87–88.

gray Virūpa to his back (Fig. 244). The latter can clearly be identified by his arm raised towards the sun represented immediately above it and to the side of Indrabhūti's nimbus. Directly underneath Ḍombiheruka is seated on a tiger performing the teaching gesture and holding a skull-

In the bottom row a central vase on top of a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*), from which the lotus supporting the main image emerges, is flanked by three figures on each side (Fig. 246). To the left a seated four-armed, black Mahākāla, with the usual attributes and the sword held upright to



cup (*kapāla*) in front of his breast. The bluish-gray Saraha dances to the rhythm of the hand drum he plays with his right hand, while the left holds a bow across the shoulder in place. Finally, the green Kukkuripa is stroking a small white dog seated between his legs.

Underneath the siddhas are two more deities on each side. On the left side, immediately underneath Kukkuripa the dark blue Acala (*Mi gyō ba*) yields his sword. Underneath him is the yellow, three-headed (the side heads white and green) and six-armed goddess Parṇaśabarī (*Lo ma gyon ma*; Fig. 245). She holds a vajra and a bundle of leaves in the upper hands, arrow and bow in the middle ones and an axe and a noose in the lower ones. On the right side are the dancing red Vajravārāhī above, a seated Green Tārā with lotuses represented on both sides in the middle, and a much smaller orange seated attendant god or Bodhisattva holding a fly whisk.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Except for the fly whisk holder, all these additional deities occur on

the side, is followed by two *krodha*, the first one dark blue and holding a wheel and the second one black and holding a vajra (Fig. 246). On the other side of the vase are the red Hayagrīva brandishing a club (*daṇḍa*, Fig. 246), a yellow *krodha*, possibly *Amṛtakunḍalin* (*bDud rtsi 'khyil pa*), with a club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*), and the dark blue vajra yielding Guhyapati (*gSang bdag*) a form of Vajrapāṇi.

#### RIGHT SIDE WALL: MAJOR GODDESSES AND VAJRAPĀṆI

As the corresponding wall in the opposite niche the murals on the right side wall are organised in three distinct levels and topped by a lineage. Of the latter, the first eight figures are represented to the left of Uṣṇīṣavijayā's stupa pinnacle and at least two more figures have continued it on

other early Drigung paintings as well, with Acala and Vajrayoginī counting among the earliest additions. In Luczanits, *A First Glance At Early Drigungpa Painting*, I have erroneously identified the yellow six-armed goddess as Marīcī.

Fig. 159: Indrabhūti with Lakṣmīkarā on the lap and Virūpa to his back to the left and, possibly, Padampa Sangye to the right.

Fig. 160: The yellow, three-headed and six-armed goddess Parṇaśabarī to the left of the throne.

Fig. 161: The vase on a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) underneath Mañjuśrī's throne flanked by

Fig. 162: Assembly of Prajñāpāramitā surrounded by twenty two Buddhas.

Fig. 163: Seven deity assembly of Uṣṇīṣavijayā with the goddess seated in a stūpa.

Fig. 164: Uṣṇīṣavijayā with Vairocana above and the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi to her sides.



the right, only one of them preserved. The lineage here thus comprises of eleven or twelve figures. All monastics are shown teaching again, but Jigten Gönpo, the last figure before the stūpa, appears to be distinguished by his characteristic hair-line.

The top two levels then have two goddess assemblies each. In the top left corner is four-armed yellow Prajñāpāramitā surrounded by twenty two Buddhas, seven above, eight flanking and seven below (Fig. 247). The goddess is seated cross-legged, performs the teaching gesture with her main arms and hold rosary and book in her other arms at the sides. Although the teaching gesture is generally prescribed in the known Indian textual sources,<sup>98</sup> in Himalayan art it is rather seldom depicted and more frequent in the western Himalayas.<sup>99</sup> While it is rather common, that the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is surrounded by Buddhas in *nirmāṇakāya* form,<sup>100</sup> I have not come along any compari-

98 See de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 305-7.

99 See, for example, the Prajñāpāramitā of Lalung (Luczanits, Buddhist Sculpture in Clay, fig. 99) and HAR nos. 902, 57862. This form further occurs in Kanji and the Wa chen cave, where she holds a vajra in the right hand. More typical are the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) and meditation for the main hands of the goddess.

100 For Prajñāpāramitā surrounded by eight Buddhas, commonly understood as the representing the Eight Medicine Buddhas, see the Nako Upper Temple (Luczanits, Buddhist Sculpture in Clay, fig. 83, together with the painted Buddhas there are 30) and her most frequent mandala depic-

tion for this particular configuration. Also the significance of their number remains unclear.

On the top right is Uṣṇīṣavijayā seated in front of a stūpa (Fig. 248) placed on a large lion pedestal. The goddess is white, three-headed, the side heads being yellow and blue, all heads feature a third vertical eye and are of the same mood. Of her eight arms, the main hands in front of the breast hold a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) and a noose, the upper pair of hands hold an image of Buddha Amitābha and perform the gesture of fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*) towards the side, the middle pair holds arrow and bow, and the lower hands performs the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) and holds a flask. The white teaching Buddha represented in front of the stūpa's *harmikā* attributes her to the family of Vairocana. As is prescribed by the *Sādhanamālā*,<sup>101</sup> the goddess is flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas, white and blue, representing Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi and two divinities with vases fly above. The assembly is completed by the four wrathful deities to the sides, who are

tion (e.g. HAR nos. 146, 868, 902, 89798); for Prajñāpāramitā surrounded by then Buddhas, presumably the Buddhas of the ten directions, HAR no. 68876.

101 SM 211 and 212; see de Mallmann, Introduction à l'iconographie du Tāntrisme Bouddhique, p. 389-90.

named as Acala, Ṭakkirāja, Nīladaṇḍa and Mahābala in the *sādhana*.

On the level underneath the left corner has once more a standing Green Tārā rescuing from the eight dangers. Although much smaller, this representation has the same composition and iconography as the one in Maitreya's niche. The goddess has again eight arms, the main ones in the teaching gesture in front of her breast. Although the goddess has holds attributes in this representation, these can not be recognized from the available photographic documentation. Small seated forms of the goddess are repeated to her side in front of a devotee escaping a danger. As far as they can be recognised, the dangers appear to be in the same position as well.

To the right of Green Tārā is a seventeen-deity Sitātatapatrā (gDugs dkar mo) assembly, the central goddess being white, with all three faces of the same colour, and eight-armed, holding an umbrella and a banner in the main pair of hands (Fig. 250). The remaining right hands hold vajra, arrow and axe, and the remaining left perform the gesture of threatening (*tarjanimudrā*) towards the sky, bow and noose. Except for the missing attribute in left upper hand, which would be a wheel, this main deity conforms to that of the Mitrayogin mandala.<sup>102</sup> There are four principal Bodhisattvas of the colours and with the attributes of the four Buddha families around her in the cardinal directions, the eastern one, Vajrasattva/rDo rje sems pa, being white. These are flanked by a Bodhisattva and an offering goddess each (assuming that the two females in the north are an error), and in the corners are four wrathful gate keepers, again in the colours of the directions.

<sup>102</sup> See HAR nos. 79037 and 90167 with wheel and vajra in the upper hands, but reversed on the two examples.



Fig. 165: Seventeen-deity assembly of the goddess Sitātatapatrā.



Fig. 166: Vajrapāṇi with five garuḍa and ten wrathful deities.

The bottom of the wall features a large image of Vajrapāṇi standing with the left leg stretched (*pratyālīḍha*), brandishing a vajra with the right hand and holding a bell in the left at the hip (Fig. 251). > Head (Fig. 252). Two small *krodha* are represented to his side within the halo, the one on the left black and brandishing a sword, the one on the right bright blue and shooting an arrow.

The protector is surrounded by quite a wide range of deities the relation to the main image of which is not always clear. Most important among them are the five *garuḍa* distributed around the main deity, each of them with a snake in its peak. There is a white one in the centre of the top row, just above Vajrapāṇi's head, a yellow and a red one are represented in the top corners above the halo of flames, and a dark blue and dark green one in the bottom corners to the side of the lotus the main image stands on. Further, the ten flanking *krodha*, five on each side, likely also belong to the core assembly.<sup>103</sup>

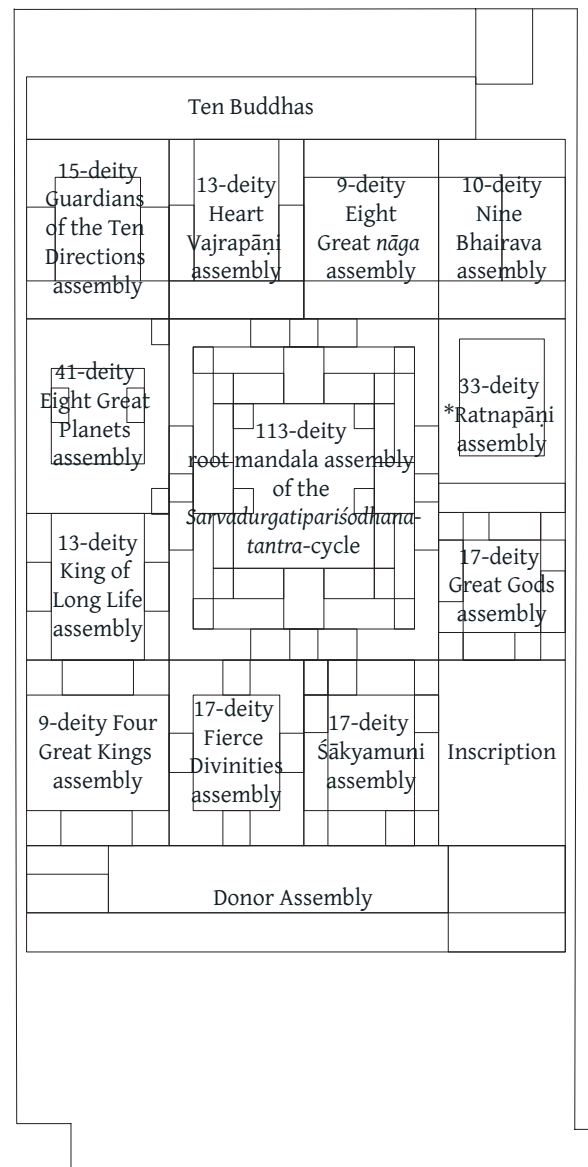
Otherwise the top row appears to be occupied by deities not directly associated with the main image. Read from left to right there are the Buddhas Ratnasambhava and Amitābha followed by Mañjuśrī and Śaḍakṣara Lokeśvara to the left of the central *garuḍa*. To the right are Vajrapāṇi, Vajravārāhī, Vajrasattva and the Medicine Buddha. The bottom row underneath the lotus of the main image is then dedicated to deities of wealth. There are, again from left to right, a king like deity holding a vase in both hands in front of the breast, Gaṇapati, Jambhala, Kubera, seated on a lion and holding a banner, Vasudharā and Black Jambhala.

103 There are only two comparative images in HAR, no. 100047 representing an interesting variant and no. 82025 an in situ photograph including ten *krodha*.

Fig. 167: Head of Vajrapāṇi.



Fig. 168: Front wall left, to the left of the Maitreya niche, dedicated to the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tantra-cycle* general view and iconographic key.





**LEFT WALL FRONT SIDE:  
ELIMINATION OF LOWER REBIRTHS**

The front section of the temple seems more dedicated to the immediate concerns of the lay follower of Buddhism, one major concern certainly being that of rebirth. This concern is directly addressed by the front left side wall, which contains the mandala assemblies of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*-cycle that goes back to the 8th century. The side walls here also contain a very informative textual and visual record of the people responsible for the temple and its decoration. On this wall, directly to the left of Maitreya's niche is the inscription panel the translation of which is included in this volume (see p. 17ff.). The bottom section of the wall then contains a large donor depiction (see below).

Similar to the wall dedicated to the Eight Pronouncements on the opposite side of Maitreya's niche, the murals are organised from the centre out. The centre is occupied by the root mandala of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*-cycle, the central deity of which is Sarvavid Vairocana (Kun rig rNam par snang mdzad), white with four faces and seated in meditation on a lion throne (Fig. 254). Around his main assembly are eleven subsidiary mandala assemblies deriving from the same cycle. The organisation of these mandalas does not follow the succession in the canonical sources in any way and also the details of the separate assemblies differ considerably from those recorded in the secondary literature.<sup>104</sup> Since no hierarchy could be recognised in the arrangement the assemblies are described from top to bottom.

The central assembly of 113 deities (see Fig. 255) is organised by direction and identified by a caption on the bottom border separating the inner assembly from the



Fig. 169: Sarvavid Vairocana, the main deity of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*-cycle depicted in the centre of the wall.

outer one.<sup>105</sup> Sarvavid Vairocana is accompanied by four goddesses shown immediately around his halo and representing the consorts of the Buddhas around the main deity (Fig. 254). The four Buddhas, larger than the other deities, are shown in the cardinal directions around the main image. They have the gestures and vehicles of the common five *tathāgata*, but the Buddha in the east, Sarvadurgatipariśodhanarāja (Ngaṅ song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba'i rgyal po), is white and Buddha Ratneketu (Rin po che tog) in the south is blue. The red meditating Buddha in the west is Śākyamuni (Śākya thub pa) and the green Buddha in the north Vikasitakusuma (Me tog chen po rgyas pa). The sixteen vajra-Bodhisattvas of the inner

104 Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*.

105 The caption reads: “the root-mandala of the *bhagavat tathāgata* Vairocana”—*bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa mnam snang rtsa ba'i dkyil 'khor lags so*.

Fig. 170: The root mandala assembly of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*-cycle.



assembly are then represented clockwise around the main image beginning in the bottom right corner. In the corners are four offering goddesses. On the next level are the Bodhisattvas of the Fortunate Aeon, in this case as many as 32,<sup>106</sup> and four more offering goddesses. The gate keeper of the inner palace are again represented according direction and is shown in the centre of the four gate keepers that occupy each gate of the outer palace. The outer palace

106 This reminds of the 32 Bodhisattvas of the fortunate aeon depicted in the Tabo Ambulatory (see Klimburg-Salter, *Tabo*, p. 155–67 and Luczanits, *Minor Inscriptions and Captions*, p. 147–59).

further houses the sixteen *śrāvaka* and twelve *pratyekabuddha*.

At the very top of the wall is a row of ten Akṣobhya Buddhas, the only representation that has no immediate connection to the cycle represented here.

In the top left corner is a fifteen-deity assembly centred on Vajrapāṇi, the central deity being black, wrathful and holding vajra and bell. He is surrounded by ten Bodhisattva-like figures—six of them on top and flanking the head of the main deity, four at the bottom of the assembly, and some holding attributes—and the common four wrathful gate-keepers flanking the main deity. It is only the number of deities that allows for identifying this assembly as representing the mandala of the guardians of the ten directions (*dikpāla*). Usually these are quite distinctive due to their *vahāna*, which are not represented in this case.<sup>107</sup>

In the top left centre is the thirteen-deity Heart Vajrapāṇi mandala assembly, presided by a white form of Vajrapāṇi holding vajra and bell in hands raised at sides (Fig. 256). The assembly is identified by a caption underneath the main image's throne as follows: “refuge to and veneration of the assembly of Heart Vajrapāṇi's mandala deities.”<sup>108</sup>

The assembly consists of the four secondary Buddhas, all white with the gesture of fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*) and the left at the knee (possibly meant to represent the gesture of giving, *varadamudrā*), four offering goddesses and four gate keepers, distributed from top to bottom in this case.<sup>109</sup>

107 Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 51–53. For comparison see HAR no. 74023 (bottom right mandala).

108 \*| *phyag na rdo rje thugs dkyil 'khor gyi lha tshogs la phyag 'tshal zhing skyabs su 'chi'o.*

109 The same mandala is represented on HAR no. 763 (Rubin Museum of Art). Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 42–49, describes different gestures for the four white Buddhas.



Fig. 171: The 13-deity Heart Vajrapāṇi assembly presided by a white form of Vajrapāṇi.

Fig. 172: The Eight Great *nāga* assembly

Fig. 173: Mandala assembly of Vajrapāṇi with the nine *bhairava*.

In the centre of the nine-deity mandala assembly with the Eight Great *nāga* Vajrapāṇi is seated, wrathful and again holds vajra and bell, the latter held in the gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*, Fig. 257). The group is identified by a caption reading: “Veneration to the mandala of Vajrapāṇi surrounded by the Eight Great Snakes.”<sup>110</sup> Each of the *nāga*-kings is accompanied by a consort.<sup>111</sup>

The top right corner has curiously two main deities side by side, but their relationship is clarified by the caption, since Vajrapāṇi is accompanied by nine *bhairava* (Fig. 258).<sup>112</sup> To the left we have the wrathful, dark Vajrapāṇi brandishing a vajra and holding a bell at the breast. To his side is the central *bhairava*, shown as a wrathful couple with attendant, the male deity holding a trident (*triśūla*) and the breast of his consort. She sits on his thigh and has no attributes and also the attendant is without attribute. Eight similar couples, the female sitting on the thigh of

110 \*/ *phyag na rdo rje la klu chen po bryad kyis skor ba'i dkyil 'khor la phyag 'tshal lo.*

111 Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 56–58. Representations of this mandala are comparatively frequent, and it is found in both wall paintings (e.g. Mangyu Vairocana Temple, main wall right, lower mandala) and on thangkas (see, for example, HAR no.

112 The caption reads: “refuge to and veneration of the mandala deity assembly of Vajrapāṇi surrounded by the nine Bhairava” \*/ *phyag na rdo rje la 'jigs byed dgus skor ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi lha tshogs la phyag 'tshal zhing skabs su mchi'o.*

the male, make up the assembly, each of the males holding a different attributes. In the upper row these are axe, jewel(?), bow and arrow, and vajra, and in the lower row, some stick, sword, ?, and dagger.

In the centre left is the 41-deity of Vajrapāṇi surrounded by the eight great planets and the 28 lunar mansions (Fig. 259). The main deity, identified with Trailokyavijaya according to the text, is seated in *lalitāsana* and holds vajra and bell. To his sides are the symbols of the four families, vajra, jewel, lotus and *viśvavajra*, they are not counted as deities here. Comparing the depiction with the descriptions published by Skorupski the eight planets and the lunar mansions can not be distinguished and their arrangement reconstructed in detail. The four gate keepers are again represented by symbols, two each in the top and bottom right corners.<sup>113</sup> Underneath the previous one to the left of the central assembly is the thirteen-deity mandala assembly of the king of long life, Aparimtāyuhpuṇyajñānasambhāratejorāja (Tshe dang bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs dpag tu med pa'i gzi brjid kyi rgyal po), who is depicted in the iconography of Amitāyus. The Buddha is red, sits in meditation on

113 Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 51–56. In note 40 Skorupski records a variant with the four symbols around the main image, but the Vajravarma descriptions of the deities are too far of from the Wanla paintings.

Fig. 174: Vajrapāṇi in the centre of the eight great planets and the 28 lunar mansions.

Fig. 175: The unusual 33-deity \*Ratnapāṇi mandala assembly.



a peacock-throne and holds a vase in his hands joined in meditation on his lap. The secondary deities are depicted to his sides and are arranged from top to bottom. On top are the four Bodhisattvas headed by Vajrapāṇi, these are followed by four offering goddesses, and at the bottom are the four wrathful gate keepers.<sup>114</sup>

To the top right of the main assembly is a 33-deity \*Ratnapāṇi mandala assembly, the central Buddha being orange, performing the argumentation gesture

(*vitarkamudrā*) with the right hand in front of breast and holding a flaming jewel in the left (Fig. 260). He is surrounded by the four *tathāgata* in *saṃbhogakāya* form, with the white Vairocana in the east and the exception that the southern *tathāgata* is represented in monk's robes. Further, there are the four goddesses of families (two of them not represented female), eight Buddhas in *nirmāṇakāya* form, and eight offering goddesses. Four gate-keepers are shown side by side in the bottom row flanked by four animals—pig, snake, frog(?) and bird—to on each side in the corners of that row.

114 For comparable depictions see, for example, HAR no. 979. For variants of this mandala see Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 63–68.

Underneath it, just above the inscription panel, is a seventeen-deity mandala assembly of Vajrapāṇi surrounded by the great gods, a barely visible caption above the inscription panel identifying the group (Fig. 261).<sup>115</sup> Vajrapāṇi, called Trailokyasaṃgraha in this mandala, is again wrathful, and brandishes a vajra with the right hand while his left holds a bell in the gesture of threatening (*tarjanīmudrā*). The canonical sources describe only four great gods, their consorts and four gate keepers.<sup>116</sup> In Wanla these are represented around the main image, with the respective main god in the centre. Of these only Śiva in the east—white and holding a trident—can be clearly identified. In the corners are four additional gods, three of them recognizable. In the lower right corner is Kumāra (gZhon nu), red with six-heads and holding a trident, in the lower left a red god shooting an arrow, that is Kāmadeva ('Dod lha) and in the upper left corner Gaṇapati (gTshog bdag), white and holding an axe.

115 Although very little is legible of this caption, *lha chen*/great gods is clearly there.

116 Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 61–63.

In the centre of the nine-deity assembly of the mandala assembly of the Four Great Kings, depicted in the bottom left corner, is again a wrathful Vajrapāṇi with vajra and bell, the latter held at the hip (Fig. 262). Four vases flank the main deity, the Four Great Kings, dressed in armour, are represented in the centre above and below the main image and are flanked by four seated gate keepers in the corners.<sup>117</sup>

In the bottom centre is a seventeen-deity fierce divinities assembly centred around an equally wrathful Vajrapāṇi. Here the gate keepers are emphasised by being depicted in the centre around the main deity. They are joined by twelve fierce divinities, three in each corner, of different colours and holding different attributes.<sup>118</sup>

The bottom right mandala is dedicated to Buddha Śākyamuni, dressed in monk's robes, of golden colour and teaching. golden, teaching (Fig. 263). He is surrounded by

117 The mandala of the Four Great Kings is also represented on HAR nos. 335, 74023 (bottom left mandala), 86926. In Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 49–51, no gate keepers are described for this mandala.

118 For comparison see Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 368–370.

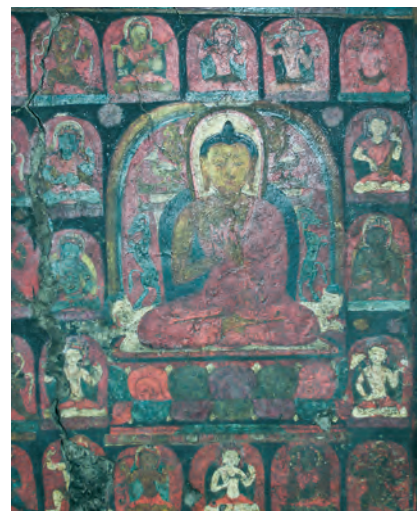


Fig. 176: Vajrapāṇi surrounded by twelve great gods.

Fig. 177: Assembly of Vajrapāṇi and the Four Great Kings.

Fig. 178: 17-deity Śākyamuni mandala assembly.



eight Bodhisattvas headed by Vajrapāṇi and the remaining one having the word *uṣṇīṣa* as part of their name. The group is distinctive for the Bodhisattvas in the intermediate directions, which hold characteristic attributes, such as wheel, banner, sword and umbrella. The assembly is complemented by four offering goddesses and four wrathful gate keepers.<sup>119</sup>

Besides the Śākyamuni assembly is the large panel containing the inscription translated by Kurt Tropper in a separate chapter to this book (see p. 17ff and Fig. 26 on page 32).

#### FRONT LEFT WALL DONOR ASSEMBLY

and at the bottom is a large donor depiction showing a secular feast assembly on the left and a religious assembly

119 This appears to be a core assembly of this mandala, which at times is depicted in a much more elaborate fashion. For variants on this mandala see Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 37–38, for comparison see HAR no. 74023 (top right mandala).

on the right in two rows (Fig. 29 on page 20). The top row is dominated by the large secular assembly seated in front of a curtain that changes its colour at the main figure, the ruler Bhag dar skyab, who is identified by caption on the yellow band defining the row underneath him (Fig. 25 on page 17). The ruler holds an axe in his right hand and a flower in his left. His hat with a round top and a wide upturned rim as well as his are signs of status. In front of him is a three-footed ceremonial table filled with cups and meat. Opposite him a younger noblemen cuts a piece of meat with a knife. He probably is the youngest secular son of Bhagdarskyab (Fig. 30 on page 22).

The left half with a red curtain represents the male section. There are seven figures seated cross-legged behind Bhagdarskyab, their dress and attributes indicating an increasingly lower status. The first holding the same attributes and wearing the same dress as the ruler and the second, holding bow an arrow but otherwise dressed



similarly as the previous ones, probably represent his first two sons mentioned in the inscription. The following five males wear simpler turban like headdresses and hold different weapons of decreasing technology—a rider's pick, bow and arrow and a simple club—and have a dagger tucked underneath their belt. Even the two smaller standing figure at the very end of the group have bow and arrow and a dagger.

The war like character of the assembly on the male side is further emphasised by the onlookers behind the curtain which also hold diverse weapons. Five armoured warriors with sword and shield and two falconers are shown above the main figures.

The right side of the curtain has a yellow background and is besides the turbaned youth seated opposite the ruler predominantly female. There are four larger females—slightly diminishing in size from the centre out—and a small standing one. The first one is served a cup by a kneel-

ing servant in a red coat and has a three-footed ceremonial table in front of her (Fig. 33 on page 23). Behind the curtain a large group of women attends.

The corner section to the left of the secular assembly is divided into two levels (Fig. 32 on page 22). In the upper row three people in servant's dress accompany two seated dogs, the first one holding a chain and the last one probably cutting a piece of meat. Behind them are two musicians in red coats, one playing a banjo-like instrument. Underneath two grooms attend to two horses.

The row underneath the secular assembly is dedicated to entertainment and food preparation. The right half has a long row of dancers in white and red robes swinging their arms in a way that their long sleeves form loops. One red dancer watching them has his arms pendant with the sleeves almost reaching the floor. The dancers dance to the rhythm of two barrel-drums and the clapping of the last dancer. On the right side is the food preparation, three servants cut meat from a large meat plate, one prepares to carry a plate full of goods, another one pours barley beer (*chang*) out of large pots with the help of a hose (Fig. 31 on page 22), and the one behind him offers a cup to the seated ruler above him. Three more seated servants rest and two stand and hold a peculiar type of staff.

To the right of the secular assembly, underneath the inscription, is the religious one of much smaller size but similar composition. Again a group of seated figures is set off by a curtain. In the centre a hierarch, with a hat similar to that of Padmasambhava and haloed, is seated on a throne. He is wrapped in a white orange cape and his hand performs a teaching gesture. In front of him is a three-footed ceremonial table piled with objects covered by a ceremonial scarf (*ka btags*) and on the edge of the throne stands a ceremonial flask. A kneeling young monk offers

him a cup on a saucer, possibly representing the youngest son of the ruler, Śākya rgyal mtshan, who is said to have “touched the lotus feet of the *dharma*-master(s)” of the Drigung (‘Bri gung) school (Inscription {116}, see p. 28). Above the table a ritual mandala is painted entirely out of perspective (Fig. 34 on page 23).

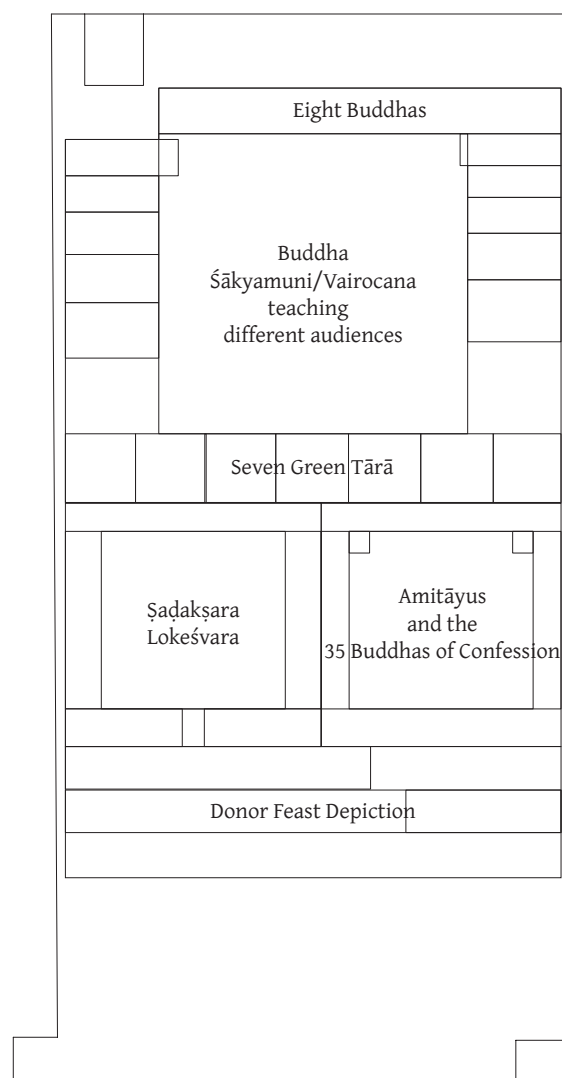
The central group is accompanied by four seated monks with their hands in the veneration gesture (*namaskāramudrā*) seated on a common mattress, the first of them elder and haloed, like the main teacher. Behind the curtain a group of musicians play different instruments; trumpets, conch, cymbals, barrel-drum and the banjo-like instrument.

In the bottom row the religious assembly has its own food and drink attended by monks. While one monk pours barley beer (*chang*) out of three large pots covered with a ceremonial scarf (*ka btags*), two others bring a large junk of meat. In the far right corner three hatted monks play long trumpets reaching to the floor in the characteristic manner (Fig. 35 on page 23).





Fig. 179: Front wall right, to the right of Śākyamuni's niche, general view and iconographic key.



### RIGHT WALL FRONT SIDE: THREE ASSEMBLIES

Contrasting with the crowded wall dedicated to the many assemblies of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* this wall has only three assemblies, two of them well known from early Central Tibetan thangka painting. Further, also on this side is a large donor depiction, which has only recently been revealed by the cleaning of this wall and complements that on the opposite side representing a secular feast.

The whole top is occupied by an assembly of a large central teaching Buddha (Fig. 266), yellow and wearing monk's robes, surrounded by an audience that clearly represents different types of development on the Buddhist path and is structured hierarchically (Fig. 267). The dominating Buddha figure is flanked by the Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, both yellow. Maitreya has a stūpa in the crown and holds a *nāgakesara* twig with a flask while Mañjuśrī can be recognized by the blue lily (*utpala*) with a small book on top. In the top row, are eight more Buddhas of the same iconography as the main image and framed by rocks (Fig. 265). Deities in multicoloured clouds venerate these as well as the central Buddha.

To the sides of the main image different types of audience are shown in six tiers (Fig. 267). The highest level is occupied by four more Buddhas on each side, which perform gestures of argumentation and hold an *utpala* each. Given that they are distinct from the other Buddhas, they probably are meant to represent *pratyekabuddha*. Underneath them is a level of eight monks (*śrāvaka*), four on each side, seated sideways and performing the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) as well. These are followed by three rows of, except for the colours, indistinct Bodhisattvas mirroring each other. The bottom row, emphasised by the larger space dedicated to it, has a white Avalokiteśvara mirroring each other in posture on the inside and two



Fig. 180: Valance and four of the eight Buddhas on the very top of the wall seated within rocky frames.



Fig. 181: The central teaching Buddha has been identified as either Śākyamuni or Vairocana.

Fig. 182: The central Buddha teaches different types of audiences from the *pratyekabuddha* and *śrāvaka* above to specially emphasised Bodhisattvas below.



distinguished deities outside. Of the latter the left one is yellow, performs the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*) and has a row of blossoms hovering above her, while the one on the right is blue is wrathful and raises the right hand holding a noose. This figure is damaged here, but from comparison it presumably held bow and arrow in the left hand. The composition is concluded at the bottom with a row of seven identical seated Green Tārās.

While this composition is well known by now, the exact meaning of it and the identity of the main Buddha is contested. A detailed discussion of this composition including its importance in the local context follows after the description of the second example in Wanla, in the centre of the left wall on gallery level (see ###).

Of the two lower assemblies the left shows Śaḍakṣara Lokeśvara flanked by Maṇidhara and Śaḍakṣarī (Fig. 270) in a rocky landscape, presumably meant to represent his seat Mount Potalaka (Fig. 271). Unusually, small representations of Hevajra and Vajrayoginī are depicted above Maṇidhara and Śaḍakṣarī and within the lobed arch formed by the rocks. In the rocks the five *tathāgata* are shown in monk's robes and with Vairocana in the centre, making him the primary Buddha and not as one would expect Amitābha, who presides Avalokiteśvara's family. Between the rocks and Buddhas hunter couples chase deer. On the right, probably after a successful hunt, the hunter carries his bow across the shoulder (Fig. 269), reminding of the usual depiction of the *mahāsiddha* Śavarīpa.

On the top of the composition is again the usual Kagyü lineage, now comprising of twelve figures. After the two siddhas holding skull-cups (*kapāla*) all teachers except Milarepa are shown with the teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*).

To the sides of the rocky cave are four symmetrical four-armed Bodhisattvas, each directed towards the outside. Commonly, they hold a white lotus in the upper hand on the main image's side, and reach out with the gesture of giving (*varadamudrā*) with the lower outer hand, while the other two hands hold varying attributes. The white Bodhisattvas on top otherwise hold fly-whisk and book on the left and a wheel(?) and an ear of buds(?) on the right (Fig. 269). The left yellow Bodhisattva holds another flower and possibly a jewel, the one on the right performs the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) and holds a more complex twig. The red Bodhisattvas hold an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*) and snake, as well as noose and banner respectively. Finally the green Bodhisattva on the left has a tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) and a noose, and the right one possibly holds a vajra and a casket like object (Fig. 270). In addition, two fly-whisk holders are seated to the sides of the lotus.

At the bottom we have another row of eight protectors in an arrangement that is typical for early Drigung painting. In the centre is again a vase on top of a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*), now flanked by two kneeling *nāga*. The eight protectors are, from left to right, the two four-armed deities of Mahākāla and Gaṇapati, five *krodha* of different colours and brandishing different attributes, and finally the *yakṣī* Remati (*gnod sbyin Re ma ti*), a two-armed form of Śrīdevī brandishing a sword and holding a mongoose bag.<sup>120</sup>

To the right of this assembly is the so-called 36-deity assembly of Amitāyus, the main Buddha being flanked by the standing Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi, both also holding a fly-whisk besides their usual attribute (Fig. 272). The main Buddha is red and holds a vase in the

120 On the different forms of Śrīdevī see the respective outline page on HAR.



Fig. 183: At the bottom of the characteristic configuration are seven representations of Green Tārā.



Fig. 184: In the rocky landscape is a hunter couple reminding of the hunter Śavaripa, to the sides are four-armed Bodhisattvas of different colours.



Fig. 185: Ṣaḍakṣarī and two more of the four-armed Bodhisattvas.



Fig. 186: Śaḍakṣara Lokeśvara  
flanked by Maṇidhara and  
Śaḍakṣari in a rocky landscape.

hands joined in meditation on the lap. This central group is surrounded by the 35 Buddhas of Confession dressed in monk's robes. They have the colours and perform the gestures of the five *tathāgata*, but the gesture is often not in accord with the respective colouring.



Fig. 187: Amitāyus flanked by the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāni and surrounded by the 35 Buddhas of Confession.

#### FRONT RIGHT WALL FEAST ASSEMBLY

At the bottom of the wall is the second large donor depiction in the temple (Fig. 36 on page 24). In composition it differs considerably from that on the opposite wall (see p. ?f.), although a considerable number of the same elements reoccur. Here the depiction is strictly divided into three rows.

In the top row about two thirds on the left side are dedicated to a large assembly around a ruler and a monk seated in front of a large screen (Fig. 37 on page 26). The ruler holds arrow and bow while the monk sits in meditation. Between them is a three-footed ritual table. Nine more males are collected behind the ruler while on the monk's side are the complementary ten females, headed by the wife of the ruler immediately behind the monk. There is a smaller ritual table between them as well. The composition makes the monk a part of the family, and it is likely that he is the son of the royal couple and thus their youngest son. The caption that once identified him is sadly illegible today. The heads of male and female spectators, among them a group of armoured soldiers behind the ruler, are depicted behind the screen.

To the right of the screen a row dance is shown, as it is still customary in the region today. Tightly interlocked, seven males in long coats dance in front of seven females, the central couple kissing each other (Fig. 38 on page 26). The females in the second half of the row wear rich jewellery, including a large turquoise on top of the head, and the characteristic long capes (Fig. 41 on page 27). The three males at the end of the row probably represent unmarried youth.

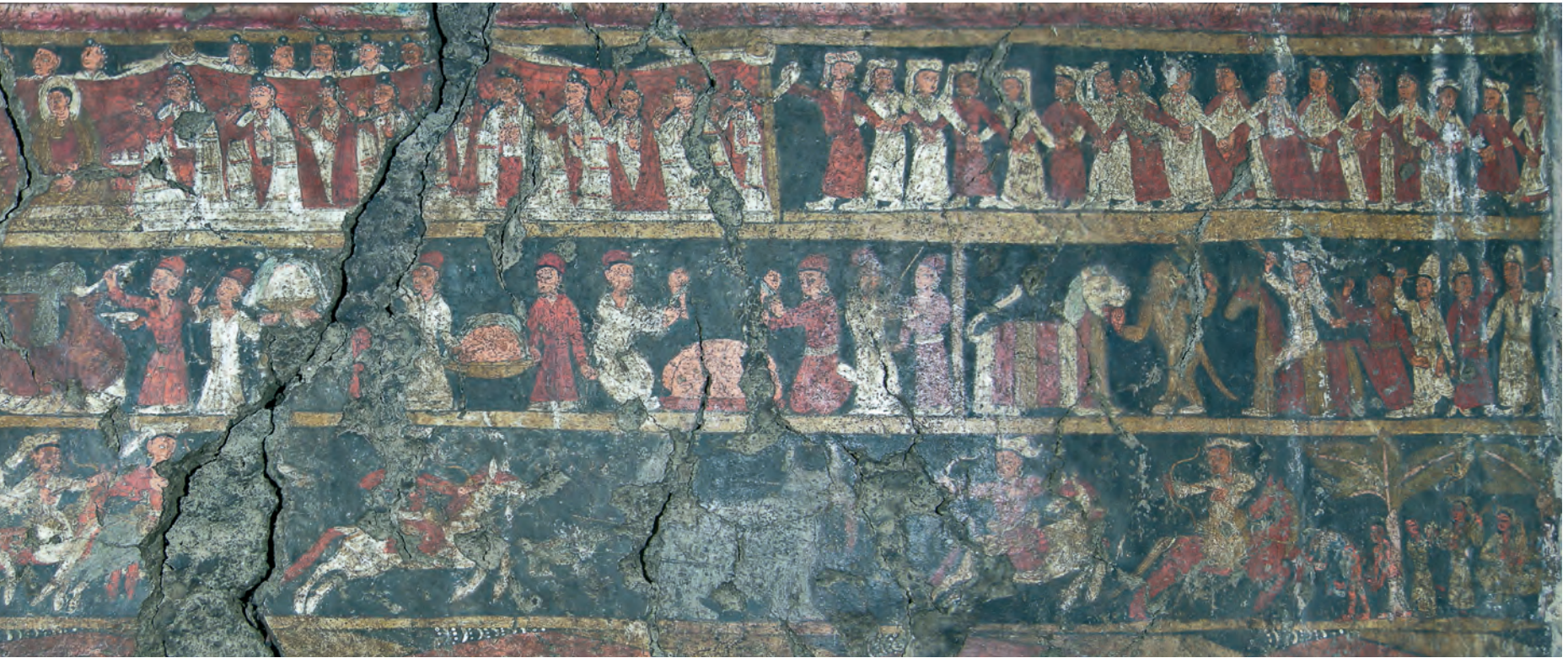
In the second row the left side shows the distribution of food and drink. In the centre are three large pots of *chang*, the content of which is distributed by servants, which are



distinguished by their round red hats. Along with two turbaned males a group of servants, two of them with a staff, approach the *chang*-pots from the left. In the right section more servants divide and distribute large quantities of meat. While this depiction complements the assembly above it, the much smaller right section of the second row complements the entertainment element represented by the dance above it. Here we have a group of entertainers, a part of them in the guise of a lion a monkey and a horse, as can be recognised by the boots of these animals (Fig. 42 on page 27). Their conical white hats represent a third type of headdress.

The third row then shows a competition in martial skills with eight horse riders targeting a large artificial gray animal that is both horned and tusked. Those who have passed the target already are shooting backwards in the manner of the Parthian shot (Fig. 40 on page 27).





On the left end a small group of musicians stands around a ritual table with *gtor ma* like objects on them, two of them distinguished as tantric priests, since they wear pointed crowns (Fig. 39 on page 26). A small group of musicians, playing cymbals, a kind of guitar and a harp, as well as two acrobats further emphasise the entertainment aspect of this row.

Fig. 188: Iconographic key of the Entry Wall with the Mahākāla panel immediately above the entrance.

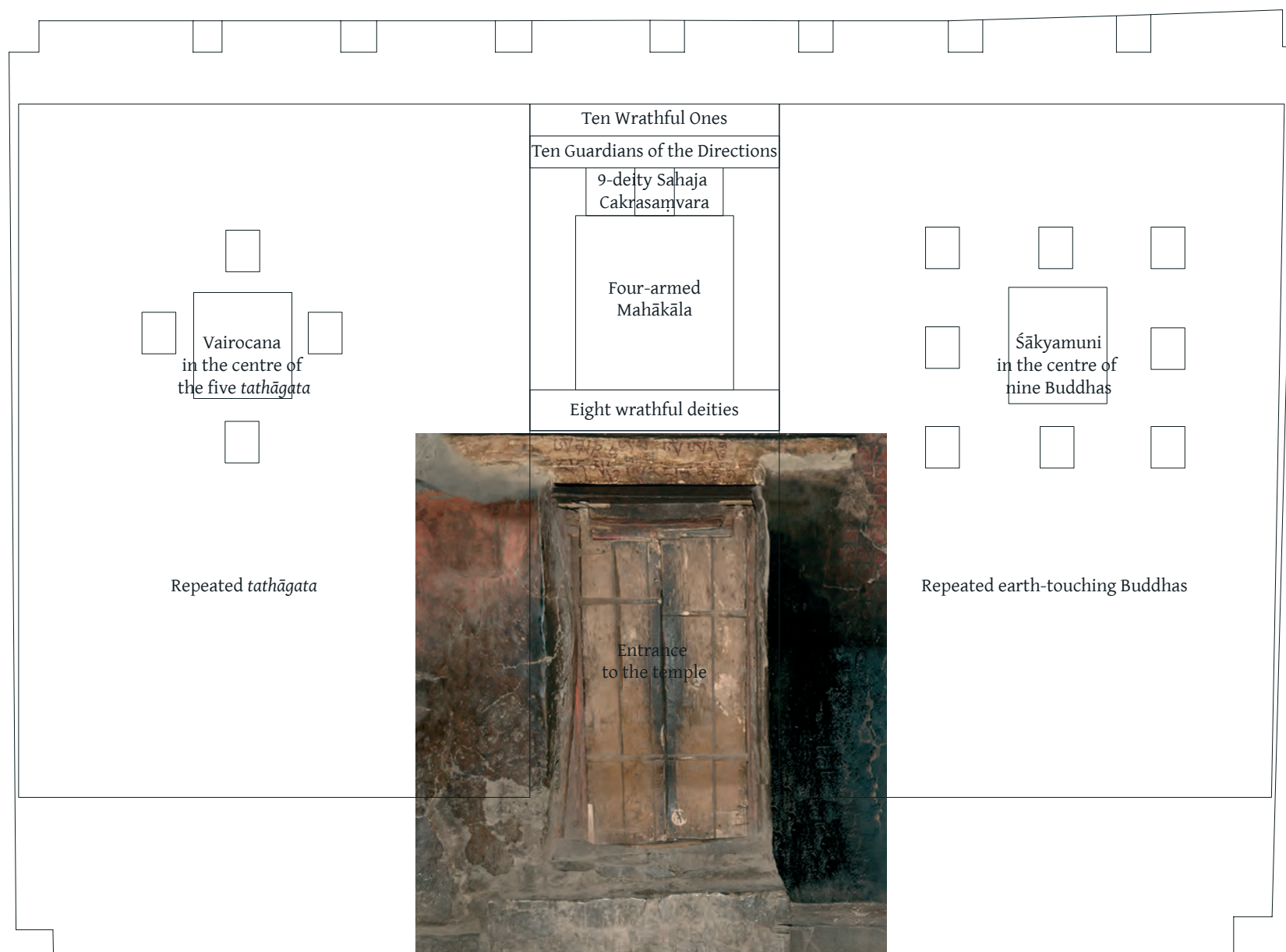




Fig. 189: The ten wrathful deities and the ten guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*) on top of the entry wall above the entrance.

## ENTRY WALL: GREAT BLACK ONE

The entry wall, a considerable portion of which has broken out to the left of the entrance, has a group of protective deities centred on a four-armed Mahākāla above the entrance and otherwise is occupied by repeated Buddha representations (Fig. 273).

### ABOVE THE ENTRANCE

The Mahākāla panel above the entrance is unusually complex when compared to earlier examples in the region, in particular those of the Alchi group of monuments.<sup>121</sup> Besides the dominating four-armed image of the Great Black One, Mahākāla, accompanied by riders there are additional groups of deities above and below him (Fig. 275). The exact interrelationship of these deities to the main image is not yet clear.

At the very top are two rows of groups of ten deities each, featuring the ten wrathful deities above and ten guardians of the directions (*dikpāla*) below (Fig. 274). Of these, the ten wrathful deities (*krodha*) are not clearly differentiable, since the attribute they brandish is often not distin-

guished and their colours do not suffice to identify them individually.

In contrast the group of ten directional guardians (*daśa-dikpāla*) is their clearest representation of this topic in the temple (Fig. 274). The guardians are arranged in the usual succession from left to right with the deities for zenith and nadir at the beginning and end. The deity beginning the row and guarding the zenith most likely represent Brahmā, who is yellow and sits on a goose. The slight uncertainty concerning the identity of the deity derives from the unusual attributes he holds, which at first glance looks like a moon disk, but actually has a drawing on it that can not be clearly identified. Śakra or Indra (dBang po), is yellow, sits on an elephant and holds a thunderbolt in this right hand. Agni (Me lha), guardian of the southeast, is red, sits on a goat and holds a fire. Yama (Shin rje), is blue, sits on a buffalo, and brandishes a club with a skull attached to its top (*yamadaṇḍa*). Nairṛti/Rākṣasa (Srin po), blue and wrathful, brandishes a sword and sits on a corpse (*vetāla, ro lang*s). The water god Varuṇa (Chu lha), is white, sits on a sea-monster (*makara, chu srin*), and holds a (snake?) noose. The wind god Vāyu (rLung lha) is blue, sits on a deer (no antlers can be recognised) and his characteristic attribute, the flag, looks like a fly-whisk here. The follow-

121 See, for example, Goepper & Poncar, Alchi, p. 30–37, 150–53, 211–215.

ing yellow Kubera (Lus ngan) sits on a horse and holds a yellow fruit. Īśāna (dBang ldan) is white, sits on a bull and holds a trident, and finally, Bhūdevī (Sa lha mo) is yellow, her lower body is a lotus blossom, and she holds a vase. She concludes the group and guards the nadir.

While these uppermost two group of protective guardians perfectly fit in the position above the entrance, the one immediately underneath is puzzling in this context. Just above the head of Mahākāla—and actually already flanked by his retinue—is a nine deity assembly of Sahaja Cakrasaṃvara (bDe mchog lhan skyes; Fig. 275, top centre). The central couple, Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī, has the common iconography, their retinue is male and animal-headed, each of them holding curved knife (*karṭṛkā*) and skull-cup (*kapāla*). The heads of the retinue figures are not immediately recognisable individually, but the top right deity appears to have the head of a *garuḍa*, as it has both a peak and horns, and others are those of a dog, a pig, two birds and two other carnivores.

The central dark blue Mahākāla is four-armed, holds a curved knife (*karṭṛkā*) and a skull-cup (*kapāla*) in this main arms in front of the breast and an upright flaming sword and a tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) in the hands at the sides (Fig. 275). Four birds fly around his head and two kneeling deities offer him a skull-cup each. In the bottom row he has a retinue of eight more figures, all of which are animal-headed and holding his main attributes. Beginning from the left a lion-headed deity is followed by five bird-headed ones, a two-armed form of Śrīdevī brandishing a sword, Rematī, and one more deity which is obscured by soot.

Interesting are the riders flanking the protector on both sides, which extend a component that is already present in the Alchi depictions, namely the inclusion of what are probably local divinities into the protective pantheon of

Mahākāla (Fig. 275). The upper two riders on both sides are turbaned males and hold sword and noose except for the top right one, who holds a falcon. Dogs appear to be in their company as well. Underneath are three female riders on each side, all but one in local attire. The only exception is the top right goddess, who is blue, semi-wrathful, wears a peacock coat, and rides a blue horse. She holds a vajra and a skull-cup (*kapāla*), and an umbrella is held above her from the back by an attendant figure.<sup>122</sup> Four of the other females ride white deer, but the bottom left one rides a dark blue bird, and all of them either hold a cup in the raised hand, those on the right side, or hold the empty hand in the same manner. Other birds accompany the females as well.

#### THOUSAND BUDDHAS

To the left and right of the entry and the central protector panel are symmetrical compositions of a small group of larger Buddha surrounded by small ones (Fig. 273).

In the centre of the left wall composition the five *tathāgata* are represented in *sambhogakāya* form, with a large Vairocana—white, four faced and the hands joined in the gesture of highest enlightenment (*bodhyagrī mudrā*)—flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas in the centre (Fig. 277).<sup>123</sup> He is surrounded by the other four *tathāgata* in the respective direction and with the common colour, gesture and vehicle (Fig. 278).<sup>124</sup>

The remaining wall is filled with 33 rows of a maximum of 30 Buddhas each, as preserved above the entrance (Fig.

122 This goddess is known from earlier depictions at Alchi, where she has been identified as Rematī (see Goepfer & Poncar, Alchi, 34–35), an identification that appears not possible here, because of her presence among the deities in the retinue underneath.

123 The main Buddha is at a distance of ten columns from left and 19 rows from bottom and the panel he occupies is five Buddhas high and six wide.

124 The secondary *tathāgata* take the space of four smaller Buddhas each.



Fig. 190: The panel dedicated to the four-armed Mahākāla above the entrance features further a nine-deity assembly of Sahaja Cakrasaṃvara above the main image, eight additional protective deities below it, and four male and six female riders to the sides.

276). The Buddhas are in the colours of the five *tathāgata* and perform their gestures as well (Fig. 278). Vairocana in the centre, is flanked by Akṣobhya and Amitābha immediately to his sides and Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi on the outside. The Buddhas are set off by one field in the

next row, forming diagonals of the same Buddha across the walls, as is customary in earlier monuments as well. If the section at the damage also had 30 Buddhas per row and the space of additional fifteen Buddhas is taken up by the T of the entrance cross-beam, this side of the wall contained 929 Buddha images, besides the five main ones.<sup>125</sup>

Fig. 191: General view of the wall to the left side of the entrance before cleaning.

Fig. 192: The central Vairocana in the centre of the left entry wall section.

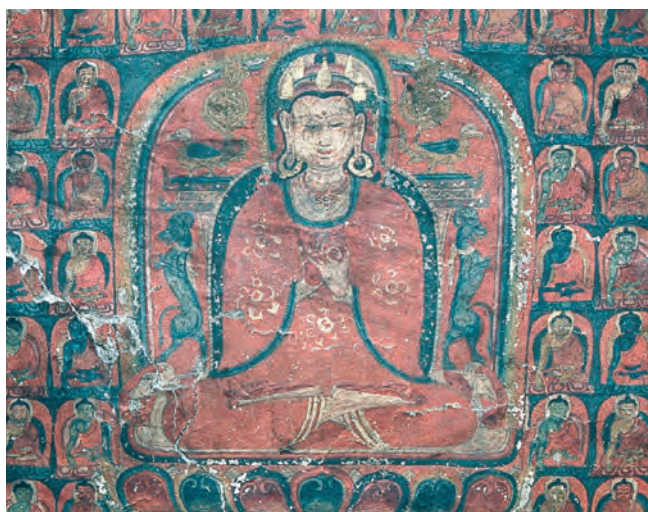
Fig. 193: Amitābha and repeated Buddhas in the colours and performing the gestures of the five *tathāgata*.



125 If symmetrical to the other side, the T formed by the entrance cross-beam occupies the space of 5 x 3 Buddhas.

The composition of the right hand wall is similar to that of the left one (Fig. 279). Here the central Buddha presumably represents Śākyamuni performing the teaching gesture (Fig. 280).<sup>126</sup> He is skin-coloured, crowned and jewelled and wears a monk's robes. He is surrounded by eight more Buddhas in monk's robes, their gestures and colours

126 The main image is 11 columns from the right side and at a height of 19 rows from bottom. The image itself occupies 6 Buddhas in height and width.



giving no clue to their identity (Fig. 281).<sup>127</sup> It thus remains unclear who is meant to be represented by this group.

127 These eight secondary Buddhas occupy the space of 4 smaller ones each.



Fig. 194: General view of the wall to the right side of the entrance.

Fig. 195: The central Buddha Śākyamuni in the centre of the left entry wall section.

Fig. 196: Repeated Buddhas with the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*).

On this side of the wall are 34 rows of 31 Buddhas each and most of the Buddhas perform the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*). Also their organization is less consistent than on the other side and the distribution of their colours is not connected to that of the five *tathāgata*. The diagonal organisation of these Buddhas is less consistent as well. The Buddhas number approximately the same as on the other side, since the rows must be shorter to the side of the entrance than above, where they are completely preserved.









Fig. 197: Right section of the gallery in 1990, before any cleaning or restoration work. The mandala on the central wall of this side is practically hidden by thick layer of soot on top of it.

## PAINTINGS ON THE GALLERY

In comparison to the ground floor, the decoration of the gallery is of much simpler composition, since each wall section is dedicated to a few deities or a single subject only. Spatially, however the gallery is rather complicated due to the lower ceiling level in the back section which is bridged by a beam carrying a painted wall facing the visitor entering the temple on this level from the roof of the veranda (Fig. 187). The painted beam also marks the shift from a narrow ledge along the walls in the area of the lower ceiling level in the back of the temple to a real gallery in the front area with the higher ceiling level.

As for the ground floor, the description of the painted program begins with Avalokiteśvara's niche in the back section and moves towards the entrance, even if the iconography on this floor does not necessitate this procedure. In fact, much of what is left from the back area of the gallery has to be attributed to a historic restoration and it is unclear in how much the painted program there still reflects the original. It is, however, remarkable, that the decoration of these sections is much simpler than that of the rest of the temple. The only largely unchanged sections of this part are the side walls immediately behind the painted beam, which are only partially restored. The painted beam, certainly belonging to the foundation period of the temple, is discussed separately at the beginning of the front part that shares the higher ceiling level.

There are no side niches at this level, since those are of ground floor height only, but the walls on top of these

Fig. 198: View from the entrance of the gallery. In 1990 the murals on the painted beam where hardly visible.



niches are iconographically emphasised. Both repeat a topic that has already been represented in the ground floor of the temple.

Finally, the four walls of the front section follow a similar decoration concept, probably meant to represent a single theme, even if there are some contradictions to this assessment.



Fig. 199: View from the entrance of the gallery after the restoration of the painted beam.





Fig. 200: The walls of the back section on gallery level: the walls of the Avalokiteśvara niche above, the back walls left and right of the niche in the centre, and the back side walls below.

## BACK SECTION OF THE GALLERY: TEACHERS AND BUDDHAS

Entering the gallery, the visitor faces the heads of Avalokiteśvara flanked by the sculptures of the Kagyü lineage seated on the narrow ledge along the all the back walls and only interrupted where the heads of the man image are (Fig. 110 on page 91). Above the lineage figures the walls are painted, a considerable part of it not original but from a later restoration, as is already apparent by the much brighter colours of some of the paintings in these sections. It is unclear, how much of the original painting program is preserved in the Avalokiteśvara niche, but what is represented appears consistent with the location and the rest of the program (Fig. 188).

On the back wall a hierarch, teaching and facing towards the main image, is painted on the left side (Fig. 189), and Buddha Vairocana on the right side (Fig. 190). The representation of the latter is complemented by the Buddhas Akṣobhya and Ratnasambhava on the left, and Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi on the right (Fig. 191). On each side the first mentioned Buddha is represented on the backside of

the niche's side wall, corresponding to the usual hierarchy in the display of the five *tathāgata*.

If this configuration reflects the original, which is not unlikely, the teacher may represent a high Kagyü hierarch. In terms of composition, this hierarch is considered equal to the Buddha presiding the five *tathāgata*, Buddha Vairocana.

The walls flanking the niche are equally repainted, again largely following the older iconographic program there. On the projecting wall sections immediately to the sides of the niche housing Avalokiteśvara are two teaching hierarchs. The one to the left is white skinned and may thus be identified as Jigten Gönpo (Fig. 193). He looks towards the one on the opposite side. The latter is skin-coloured and has a marked beard along the chin, reminding of early representations of Phagmodrupa (Fig. 194). Obviously these can also be considered tentative identifications.

On the recessed section of the wall left of Avalokiteśvara's niche an unusual red, two-headed, standing form of this Bodhisattva shares the same throne with a seated representation of Padmasambhava (Fig. 192), thus indicating

Fig. 201: The teaching hierarch to the proper right of Avalokiteśvara's head.

Fig. 202: Buddha Vairocana to the right of Avalokiteśvara's head.

Fig. 203: The Buddhas Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi on the right side wall of the Avalokiteśvara niche, immediately to the side of Vairocana in the previous figure.





Fig. 204: Left section of the left wall with a standing red form of Avalokiteśvara sharing the lion-throne of a seated Padmasambhava.

Fig. 205: The wall to the left of Avalokiteśvara's niche on gallery level with a possible representation of Jigten Gönpo on the projecting wall section.



that this form, too, goes back to a Nyingmapa tradition. In this special form the Bodhisattva has a the head of Buddha Amitābha represented above his main head, that also has the characteristics of a Buddha. In his right hand the deity, dressed in a short *dhotī* only, holds a garland (*mālā*) in front of his breast, while the pendant left holds a flask.<sup>1</sup>

The representation of Padmasambhava on this floor differs considerably from that at the ground floor, especially with respect to the colours used and the textile patterns on the different parts of his dress. However, details of his dress—the dress clasp used to hold his upper garment together at his shoulder, the folding of the dress around his knee and the helmet like hat closely enveloping the head—all are features that indicate a 14<sup>th</sup> century date for this representation as well.<sup>2</sup>

On the recess right of the main niche a Buddha performing the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) and

1 A deity of the same iconography is in the centre of HAR, no. 901. There, it is the vase that is held in front of the breast. I am grateful to Jeff Watt for this reference and the discussion on this iconography.

2 Suitable comparisons are the Amitāyus thangka of an unnamed private collection (see Kossak & Singer, *Sacred Visions*, no. 29). The closest comparative representation of Padmasambhava is again that in the Koelz Collection, Ann Arbor (HAR, no. 90019).





holding a begging bowl is surrounded by further Buddha representations (Fig. 195). He is the result of a repainting as many of the surrounding Buddha images also which appears later than that of Padmasambhava. Apparently at some stage a larger section of this wall was severely damaged needed to be repainted. The only section remaining original is the left column of Buddhas the original section extending in the top row area. Apparently the remaining Buddha representations were then used to reconstruct something alike the original composition. Thus, the repainted surrounding Buddhas imitate the original style while the central Buddha is quite different from them in the perception of the dress. However, even this repair must have been a fairly early one, since his dress bears the closest resemblance to 15th-century Buddha representations. Today eight Buddhas flank the central one and the top row features 6 more Buddhas. As can be seen from the bottom left Buddhas the original composition featured the Buddhas of the Six Realms at the bottom. The remaining original composition can not be decided on with an certainty, but to have the Seven Buddhas of the Past represented on



Fig. 206: The wall to the right of Avalokiteśvara's niche on gallery level with a possible representation of Phagmodrupa on the projecting wall section.

Fig. 207: This composition originally may have represented Śākyamuni with the Seven Buddhas of the Past on top and the Buddhas of the Six Realms at the bottom.



Fig. 208: Śākyamuni, surrounded by the 35 Buddhas of Confession.

the top would fit perfectly into the programs found on this floor (see , below).

Further, also the back third of the side walls are to be counted to the back section of the gallery level. This area still shares the same lower ceiling.

On the left side is again a composition around a central Buddha (Fig. 196). The uppermost row has been painted directly on a wooden cross beam that aligns with the wall, as can be seen by the slightly distorted area of the upper two Akṣobhya representations on the right side. The central Buddha is yellow, performs the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) and sits on a lion throne. He is attended by two standing Buddhas, the one to his proper right is white and the one to the left blue. Both raise the hand closer to the central Buddha in the gesture of fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*) towards him.

The central triad is surrounded by 33 or 34 Buddhas in different colours and performing different gestures. Of these the four in the centre of the uppermost row are flanked by two stūpas on each side. Of these, the right stūpas are only preserved in their outlines, but those on the left remained. They are white, have only slightly differing compositions and faces painted on their dome. The Akṣobhya Buddha to the left of the stūpas may be part of this central group as well. The second row consists of nine Buddhas and ten Buddhas each flank the composition at the sides.

This group differs from the repeated representation of Buddha Akṣobhya depicted to the sides of this wall, since repeated Akṣobhya representations are used throughout this floor to fill intermediary spaces. In the corner on the right side are two columns of two Akṣobhya Buddhas each, fourteen altogether, and a single column is on the left side. The central group most likely represents the 35 Buddhas of Confession, but this is only the case if the additional

Akṣobhya directly to the left of the top left stūpa-group is counted among them. In fact this Buddha occupies a sector that in terms of symmetry actually should be part of the central composition. This composition, with the central Buddha being part of the group, differs considerably from the representation of the same topic on the ground floor (see p. ?). This identification does not explain the presence of the four stūpas in the uppermost row.

To the left of this wall, under the painted beam, are four more representations of Buddha Akṣobhya above each other and of a considerably larger size as those on the wall itself.

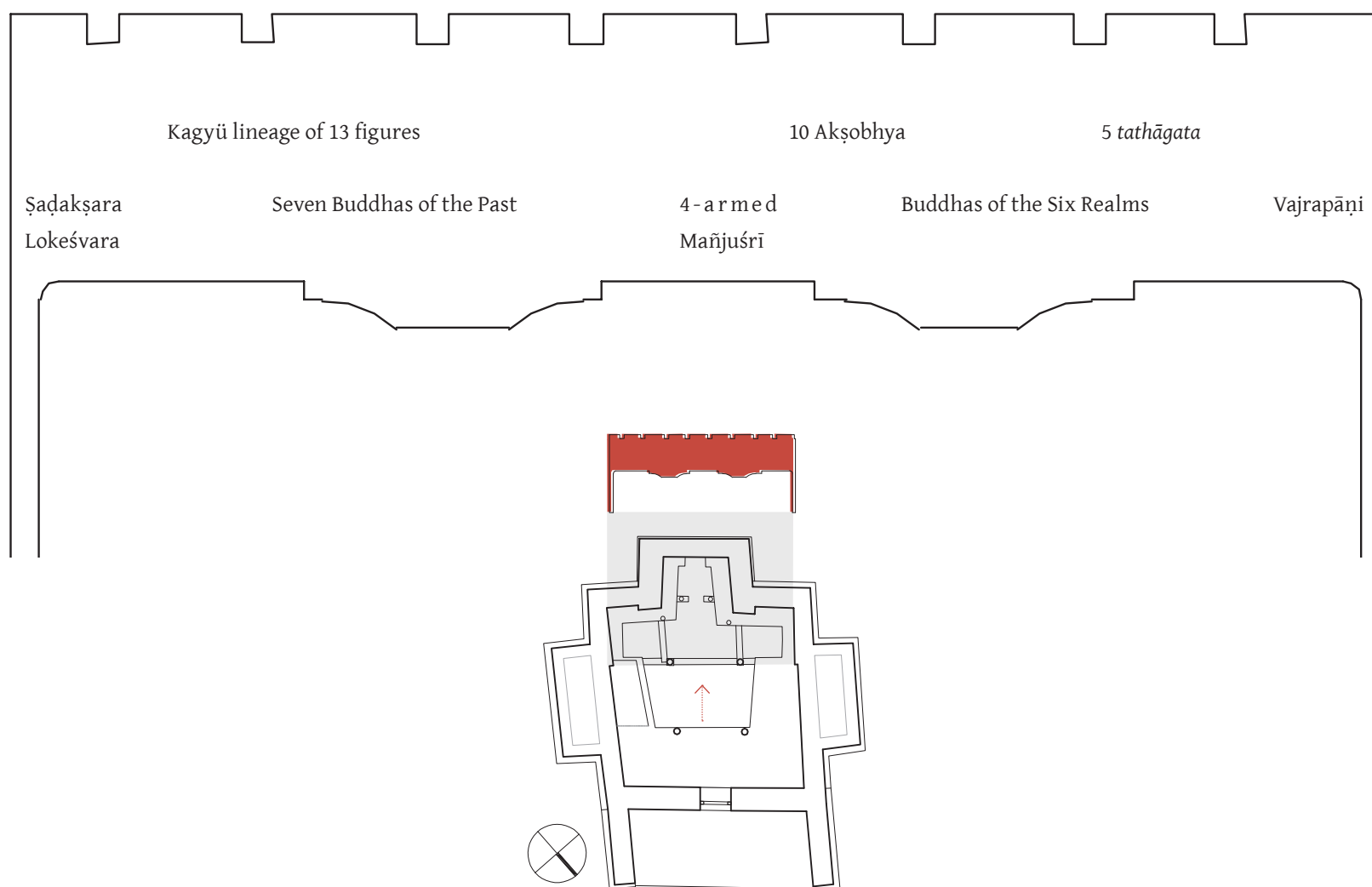
The back side wall on the right, the wall opposite the one with the 35 Buddhas just described, has a white Amitāyus flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas. To his proper right is Bodhisattva Maitreya, orange, and to the left the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. The latter sculpture has partly broken out after 2003 and only the head is preserved in a fragment that has been reapplied by restorers from the Achi Association. The central group is flanked by six Buddhas on each side surrounded by a common scroll that derives from the vase held by the central Buddha. The identity of the main deity hardly leaves any doubt, since his hands are joined in meditation and he holds a vase in them. That his colour is white appears to be unique.

To the right of this wall under the painted beam, three standing Buddhas are directed towards this assembly and thus may have to be read with it.



Fig. 209: A white Amitāyus flanked by Maitreya and Mañjuśrī and twelve Buddhas emanating from his vase.

Fig. 210: Iconographic key and location of the painted beam separating the higher front section from the lower back section of the gallery.





## PAINTED BEAM: MORE TEACHERS AND BUDDHAS

The back section is set off from the one in front by a wall placed on a massive beam, which makes up for the difference in height between the two sections. The front surface of the beam and wall on top of it is covered with murals. This area is thus referred to as 'painted beam'. Due to the excessive load from the stone wall placed on top of it and the increasing roof load, the beam has broken on one side but this apparently happened with little movement and the paintings are preserved almost in their entirety.

Underneath the common goose and valance on top of the wall, there are two rows of figures of different sizes, the top row measuring half the height of the bottom one. On the top left the row of smaller figures begins with another representation of the common Kagyü lineage, this time consisting of thirteen figures and almost reaching the centre of the beam. Since there would be no apparent spacial reason to shorten or expand the lineage as in other spaces where the lineage occurs this is taken as the standard lineage of the temple.

Following the lineage figures the row is continued with ten repeated representations of Buddha Akṣobhya, the five *tathāgata* beginning with Buddha Vairocana to be read

from left to right. Two more Buddhas, a skin coloured performing the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) and a white one showing the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) conclude the row.

The row of larger figures has the protectors of the three families represented in the centre and on the outer ends of it. In the centre is the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in the four-armed form of Nāmasaṅgīti. He is dark orange, brandishes a sword with the upper right hand, the upper left holds the stem of a blue lily topped by a book in front of the breast, the lower left holds an arrow at the hip and the lower right a bow in the outstretched arm. Also Avalokiteśvara beginning the row on the left is four-armed. He is in the ṣaḍakṣara-form of the usual iconography (see ###). Vajrapāṇi on the right end of the row is shown two-armed and wrathful, brandishing a vajra with the right hand and holding a bell with the left at the side.

The left half, the area between Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī, has seven Buddhas in different colours and performing different gestures. Likely these represent the Seven Buddhas of the Past, beginning with the remote Buddha Vipasyin and ending with the Buddha of our age Śākyamuni. Read from left to right, the Buddhas are represented with the following colours and gestures: white

Fig. 211: The first eight figures of the thirteen figure teaching lineage on the painted beam: Vajradhara, followed by the two siddhas Tilopa and Naropa, the lay person Marpa, the white-glad Milarepa, the monk Gampopa, the bearded Phagmodrupa and the white Jigten Sumgön; digitally merged picture of three photographs, CL 1998 76,31–33 (WHAV).



Fig. 212: Bodhisattva Śaḍakṣara Lokeśvara as one of the Protectors of the Three Families and the first of the Seven Buddhas of the Past.



Fig. 213: Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī as the central figure of the Protectors of the Three Families.

and teaching gesture (*dharmacakramudrā*); yellow and argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*); blue and earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*); green and gesture of fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*); red and earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*); red and argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) and finally skin-coloured and teaching (*dharmacakramudrā*) again.

On the right half are the Buddhas of the Six Realms which

we have met with in a mandala of Avalokiteśvara's niche. These Buddhas are a Nyingmapa topic deriving from the Rinchen Terzö, volume *da*,<sup>3</sup> and they accompany Śaḍakṣara Lokeśvara in his mandala (see ###). The six realms refer to the six types of existence in the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*). Thus these Buddhas are occasionally found in depictions of the six realms of rebirth in the Wheel of Life (*bhavacakra*, *srid pa'i 'khor lo*). Since this representation is complete and

<sup>3</sup> For comparative examples see <http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=1881>.

and clearly visible, the Buddhas are being described in detail here.

The Buddha of the heavenly realm of the gods is white and plays a string instrument (*viṇā*), the attribute obviously referring to heavenly entertainment pleasures. The Buddha of the realm of the demigods (*asura*) is blue and holds sword and shield, his attributes referring to the warrior nature of the demigods and their continuous

The Buddha of the hell realms is blue and holds fire and water (Fig. 203).



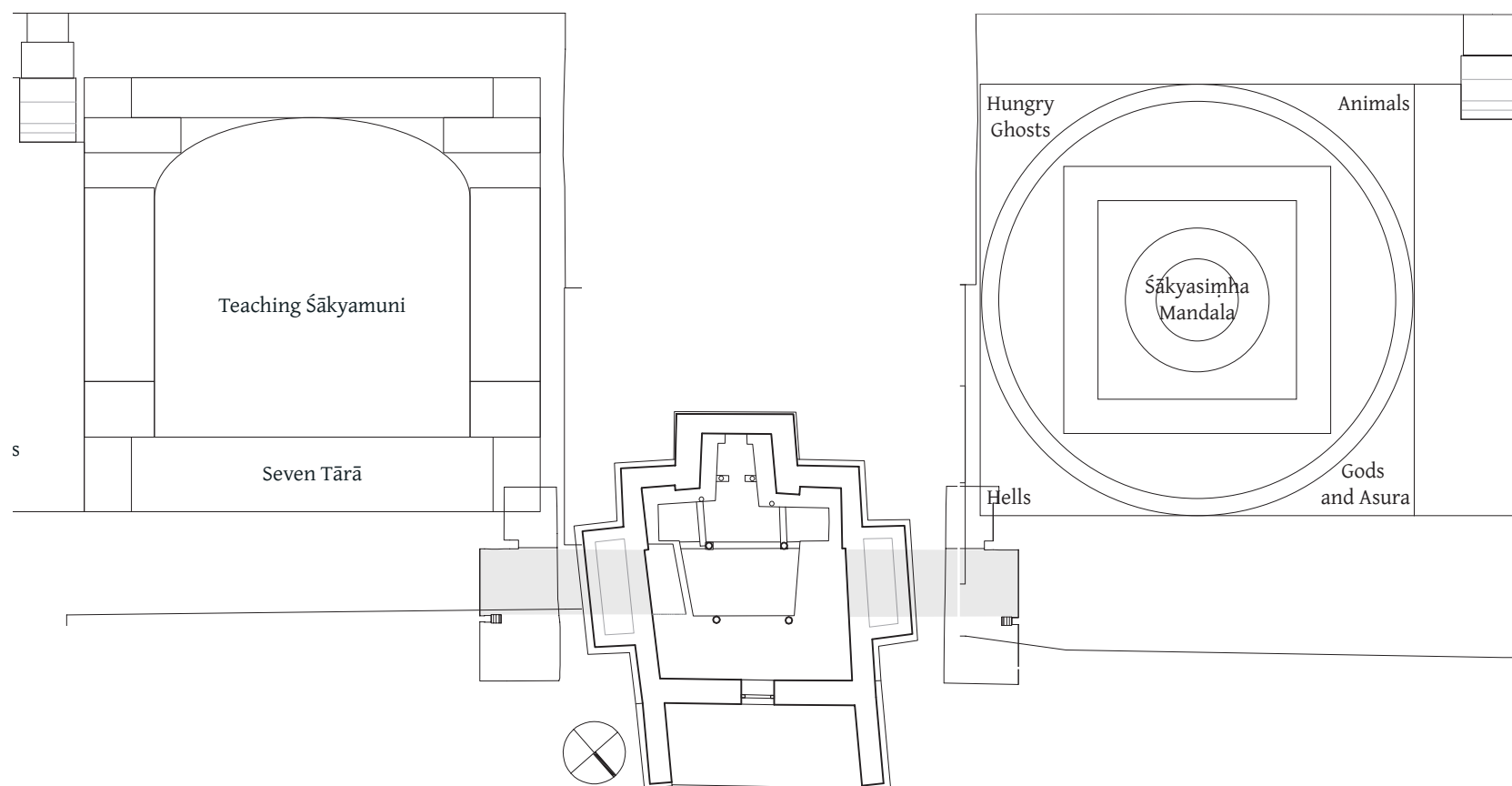
fight with the gods (*deva*). The Buddha in the realm of the humans is yellow and holds begging bowl and staff. He signifies that this realm is fortunate insofar as it is the only one where Buddhism can be practiced. The next Buddha is yellow, performs the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) with the right hand and holds a book in the left. He is the Buddha of the animal realm. The red Buddha with the gesture of fearlessness (*abhayamudrā*) and holding a miniature shrine at the side resides in the realm of the hungry ghosts (the last two Buddhas are represented in Fig. 202).



Fig. 214: The Buddhas ### of ###

Fig. 215: Buddha ### of the Buddhas of the Six Realms, and the wrathful Vajrapāṇi among the Protectors of the three families.

Fig. 216: The two central side walls on gallery level: location and iconographic key.





## CENTRAL SIDE WALLS: ELIMINATION OF LOWER REBIRTHS AGAIN

The central wall section of the side walls immediately to the side of the painted beam received special attention since they are at least partly visible from the ground floor. It is here that the most complex depictions and also the only mandala representation of the gallery level are found (Fig. 204). Both topics are in some way associated with the cycle of the Elimination of All Low Rebirths (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*), but their exact derivation remains unclear so far.

The central topic of the wall above Maitreya's niche on the left is dedicated to a topic that already is represented on the ground floor. In fact, with the comparative assembly on the top of the wall to the right side of Śākyamuni's niche these two depictions almost face each other. The two representations are very similar to each other, and there is no need to repeat a detailed description here (see p. 7f.). However, there are also interesting deviations which may well indicate that the two depictions were not done by the same artist. The panel has been damaged by water intrusions in the past and sections of the composition have been repainted in quite recent times following the original (Fig. 205).<sup>4</sup>

As on the Ground Floor the central teaching Buddha is flanked by the two Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Mañjuśrī and a varied audience represented in hierarchical order from top to bottom at the sides. The bottom row of the sixteen Bodhisattvas and deities to the sides has again two white Avalokiteśvara depictions mirroring each other in posture on the inside and two characteristic deities outside. In this depiction the female with the blossom halo has been damaged and repainted (Fig. 206), but the wrathful

<sup>4</sup> In fact, cleaning work done in 2009 clarified that some a considerable part of the original paint layer is preserved underneath.

deity on the right is perfectly preserved. He holds a noose in the right hand raised towards the central Buddha and bow and arrow in the left (Fig. 209).

The following tier, however, is not found in the Ground Floor depiction. On throne level, just to the side of the crouching deities supporting the throne platform there is a group of six figures in two rows on the left, the left figures of which have been damaged and are repainted (Fig. 207). The upper three figures are within a common rock formation, there is a central teaching Buddha and a dancing siddha to his proper left. In the lower tier is a teaching monk in the centre and a Bodhisattva with the veneration gesture to the left. To the right of the throne a secular donor in local dress takes the pride of place (Fig. 210) and immediately underneath him is a local female (Fig. 211). In contrast to the Ground Floor representation and most of the comparisons the seven Tārās shown in the bottom row of the composition are not identical, but differently coloured. Except for one Tārā that has been repainted entirely their colours are preserved (from left to right): yellow/orange, green, ?, green, white, green, and yellow/orange. The Tārās are flanked by a monk with red hat on the left (Fig. 208) and the female donor on the right (Fig. 211).

This composition is well known from thangka paintings and due to some of its predominant motives can be associated with the Drigung School. Comparative paintings are not only found in a number of scroll paintings,<sup>5</sup> but also in several other monuments of Ladakh that share strong regional features with Wanla.<sup>6</sup> These comparisons con-

<sup>5</sup> Pritzker collection (Heller, *Tibetan Art*, pl. 58); Collection of Barbara and Walter Frey (HAR no. 69100); Private collection (Wisdom Calendar 1992, May).

<sup>6</sup> Variants of this composition are the main topic of the Alchi Lhakhang Soma, the northern temple in Alchi Tsatsapuri and the Guru Lhakhang in Phyang, and it is also in a prominent position on the left side wall of the Senge Lhakhang in Lamayuru.



Fig. 217: Śākyamuni flanked by Maitreya and Mañjuśrī and a varied audience.

firm that there is some variation in the way the topic is represented, even with the Buddha representation. Alternative to the teaching gesture, the Buddha may also perform the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*).<sup>7</sup> These examples appear to be later than their comparisons, as they also show considerable deviations in the general

<sup>7</sup> This is the case in the on the private collection thangka as well as in the temples of Tsatsapuri and Phyang.

composition. Except for the Guru Lhakhang examples, which represents the latest depiction of the topic, there is little variation in the top section. On the Frey collection thangka the Bodhisattvas and deities at the sides actually were once identified by captions, which sadly are only preserved in fragments. Nevertheless, these captions confirm the identity of the deities on the level of the Buddha's lotus as Avalokiteśvara (*sPyan ras gzigs*) and Tārā (*sGrol ma*) on the left, while those on the right are too fragmentary. The Lhakhang Soma depiction shows that the six figures to the right of the throne are meant to inhabit the same rock formation, and that there Buddhas are accompanied by two siddhas each. This area and more frequently that on the opposite side is commonly may be used for donor depictions as well. The comparative examples further show that the seven Tārās at the bottom are frequent in the earlier examples with the teaching gesture, but may be replaced in others, one example replacing them with a simple scroll and one with seven Medicine Buddhas framed by such a scroll. Only in the Senge Lhakhang the Tārās are also of different colours.

Although the exact identity of the composition can not yet be identified the composition allows for a fairly precise localisation. Commonly, the central Buddha is identified as Śākyamuni, but occasionally it has also been labelled as Buddha Vairocana.<sup>8</sup> However, as already hinted towards by the yellow colour used for the Buddha, the alternative representations showing him with the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*) confirm the identification as Śākyamuni. Further, the varied assembly with Buddhas, *pratyekabuddha*, monks and, very likely, the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Fortunate Aeon (*bhadrakalpa*)—here Bodhisattvas flanking the main image have to be counted

<sup>8</sup>

with them while those on the outside of the bottom row are subsidiary deities—indicate an association with the cycle for the elimination of lower rebirths. The origin of the group of Seven Tārās is not yet identified either, but there is a practice of Seven Tārās attributed to Drigungpa.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, one may even conclude, that the whole composition may be a reference to Drigungpa as a Buddha, since none less than the First Karmapa Düsum Khyenpa is said to have seen him this way, flanked by Maitreya and Mañjuśrī and surrounded by Bodhisattvas.<sup>10</sup> This interpretation would also explain the common occurrence of the flaming triple jewel in the centre of the throne and some of the other features that link this group closely to representations of Drigung hierarchs.<sup>11</sup>

In the centre of the right wall is a mandala of the *Durgatipariśodhana* cycle focused on the Śākyasiṃha form of Vairocana (Fig. 218). The central Buddha is white, wears monk's dress, and performs the gesture of teaching (*dharmacakramudrā*; Fig. 213). His head, which presumably was crowned once, is lost to a massive horizontal crack dividing the mandala in half. The two attendant figures, as well as the *garuḍa* above, are part of his frame and thus iconographically insignificant. The Buddha sits in the centre of an eight petalled lotus with the other four *tathāgata* seated in *saṃbhogakāya* form in the cardinal directions. Except for the white Vajroṣṇiṣa (Fig.

Fig. 218: Tārā and Avalokiteśvara.

Fig. 219: Six figures in a rock like setting.

Fig. 220: A monastic donor and a yellow/orange Tārā.

Fig. 221: Bodhisattva and wrathful deity.

Fig. 222: Male donor in local dress.

Fig. 223: Yellow/orange Tārā and a female donor in local dress.



9 Gyaltzen, Prayer Flags, ###.

10 Gyaltzen, Prayer Flags, ###.

11 See Luczanits, A First Glance at Early Drigungpa Painting.



Fig. 224: Local lady in the world of the hungry ghosts.



Fig. 225: White teaching Buddha Śākyaśiṃha in the central circle.



Fig. 226: World of the animals.



Fig. 227: Different kinds of suffering in the hells.



Fig. 228: White Vajroṣṇīṣa, taking the place of Akṣobhya, in the east of the central circle.



Fig. 229: Gods and demi-gods (asura) in permanent combat, and a monk in a tower.

216) taking the place of Akṣobhya, the Buddhas in the cardinal directions are of the common iconography.

In this mandala these *tathāgata* are part of the eight Uṣṇīṣa surrounding the main image. The deities in the cardinal direction are named after the symbol of the family, Vajroṣṇīṣa, Padmoṣṇīṣa, Ratnoṣṇīṣa and Viśvoṣṇīṣa. Tejoṣṇīṣa in the southeast is red and holds a solar disc. Continuing clockwise, Dhvajoṣṇīṣa is yellow and holds a banner (*dhvaja*), Tīkṣṇoṣṇīṣa is blue and holds a sword, and Chatroṣṇīṣa is white—more precisely the colour of jasmine—and holds an umbrella (*chatra*). This inner circle is concluded by a row of vajras. Outside the circle, the corners of the inner palace are occupied by four of the eight offering goddesses, in this case Dhūpā (who is doubled instead of Lāsyā), Mālā, Gītā and Nṛtyā, the offering goddesses of incense, garland, song and dance respectively.

The second palace then features the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the *bhadrakalpa*, who are shown with individual col-

ours here. In the east are the yellow Maitreya (Byams pa) with a *nāgapuṣpa* twig, the yellow Amoghadarśin (mThong ba don yod) holding a lotus, the white Sarvāpāya(ñ)jaha (Ngan song kun 'dren) with an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*), and the white-yellow Sarvaśokatamonirghātamati (Mya ngan mun pa thams cad nges par 'joms pa'i blo gros) brandishing a club. In the south are the white Gandhahastin (sPos kyī glang po) actually holding vajra and bell instead of the expected conch, the white (crystal coloured) Suramṅama/Śūramṅama (dPa' bar 'gro ba) brandishing a sword, the yellow Gaganagañja (Nam mkha'i mdzod), who is said to hold a lotus with dharma-treasure but is not preserved in this depiction, and the blue Jñānaketu (Ye shes tog pa) holding a banner. In the west we have the moon coloured Amitaprabha (Od dpag med)/Amṛtaprabha with a vessel of ambrosia (*amṛta*), the white Chandraprabha (Zla 'od) holding a lotus topped by a crescent, the orange Bhadrāpāla (bZang skyong) with a jewel on a bud, and the red Jālinī-

prabha (Dra ba can gyi 'od) holding a vajra instead of a vajra-net. Finally, in the north there are the greyish-blue Vajragarbha (rDo rje snying po) with a vajra on an *utpala* flower, the white (jasmine coloured) Akṣayamati (Blo gros mi bzad pa) holding the vase of knowledge, the red Pratibhānakūṭa (sPobs pa brtsegs pa) with a jewel on a blossom and the yellow (instead of blue) Samantabhadra (Kun tu bzang po) holding a twig instead of a cluster of jewels. Obviously, these deities would not be identifiable from the depictions alone, would they not be relatively close to the description in the associated textual source, the description in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*.<sup>12</sup> In the corners of this palace are the other four offering goddesses, namely, Dhūpā/Incense, Puṣpā/Flower (her garland of lowers not differentiable from that of Mālā in the inner square), Dīpā/Light, actually holding a bowl, and Gandhā/Scent, holding a conch. Further, there are the four gate keepers typical for the Yoga Tantra mandalas.

In the corners of the mandala the different types of rebirth to be avoided are depicted. In the lower left corner are the hells, where the beings are tortured in different ways (Fig. 215). Particular remarkable is the plowing of the tongue, that is depicted here as well. In the upper left corner the emaciated bodies of the beings reborn as hungry ghosts are depicted. Remarkably there is also a red lady dressed in local garbs seated on a lotus and surrounded by a mandorla, who holds a vase shaped object in her right hand. She may represent a local protectress attending to the hungry ghosts (Fig. 212). In the animal realm in the upper right corner, too, there is a person attending the animals, the most remarkable of which is a mixed creature with a *makara*-head (Fig. 214). Finally, the lower right corner

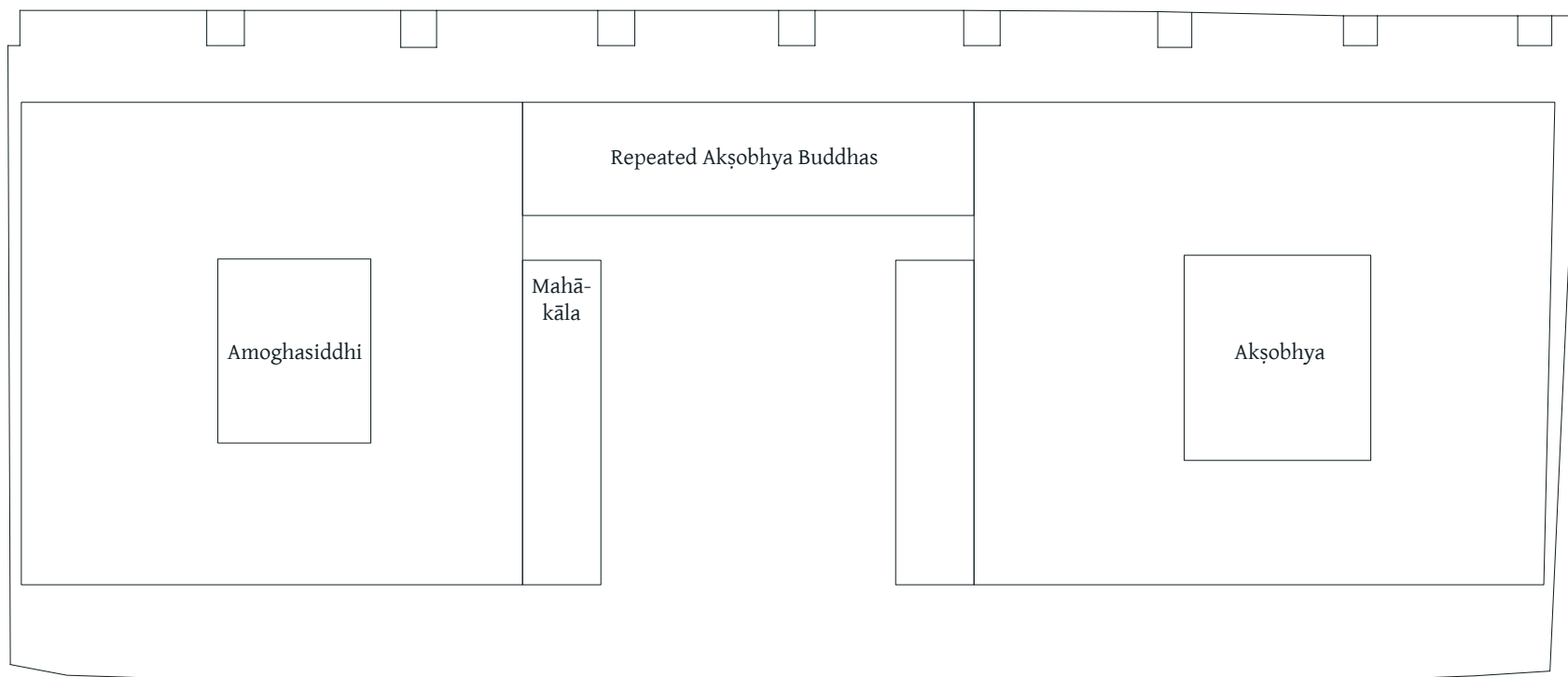
<sup>12</sup> The Bodhisattvas conform largely to the descriptions in Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, p. 29–31.



Fig. 230: Mandala of Śākyasiṃha in the form of Vairocana of the *Durgatipariśodhana* cycle.

makes clear that also the realms of the gods and the demigods (*asura*) are not worthy goals do to their continuous engagement in fighting for predominance. The depiction shows Indra riding his elephant Airāvata engaged in combat with four *asura* clad in armour (Fig. 217). Between them is a house with a monk meditating over a book, possibly hinting towards the only real alternative in the case of rebirth, the human realm.

Fig. 231: On the entry wall wall, Amoghasiddhi occupies the wall to the left of the entrance, Buddha Akṣobhya the wall to its right.



## ENTRANCE SECTION: FOUR JINAS IN TWO MODES

Although the decoration of the entrance section on gallery level is iconographically rather simple it is also curiously inconsistent. In the centre of each of the four walls making up the corners flanking the entrance are the four secondary Jinās surrounding a central Vairocana that is not depicted. While their succession and even their absolute directional position has been adjusted accordingly, two of the Jinās, namely Amitāyus (instead of Amitābha) and Akṣobhya, are represented in monastic robes and flanked by Buddhas, the two others, Amoghasiddhi and Ratnasambhava, are bejewelled and flanked by Bodhisattvas. Traditionally, one understands the former as being shown in their worldly manifestation, their emanation body (*nirmāṇakāya*), and the latter in their more elevated state, their body of enjoyment (*sambhogakāya*). Nevertheless, it is the former, namely Amitāyus and Akṣobhya, who are also known for having created their own Buddha fields, namely Sukhāvati and Abhirati. It is further confusing, that the Buddhas surrounding the central ones differ from case to case as well. Since the walls in this section have to be read together, I begin the description with Buddha Akṣobhya immediately to the right of the entrance when facing the wall and then move clockwise around (Fig. 219). Akṣobhya Buddha is blue, performs the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*), sits on an elephant throne and is dressed in monastic garb (Fig. 220). He is attended by two Buddhas, clearly recognizable by the *uṣṇīṣa*, holding a fly whisk. Due to their attribute, they may be understood as *pratyekabuddha*. The central panel is surrounded by 162 Buddhas in 12 rows, which curiously are of varied iconography with no clear principle of organisation recognizable. To the left of the Buddha most show *abhayamudrā* (or possibly *vitarkamudrā*), while to the right all perform



Fig. 222: Buddha Akṣobhya flanked by Buddhas with fly-whisks.



Fig. 233: Buddhas of different colours performing the the earth touching gesture (*bhūmisparśamudrā*).

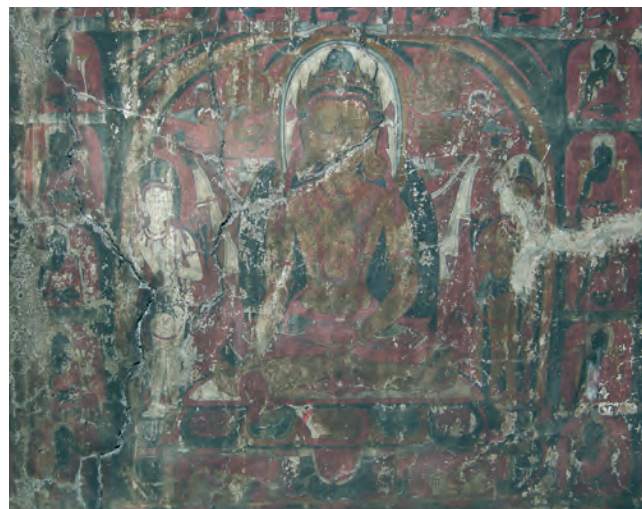
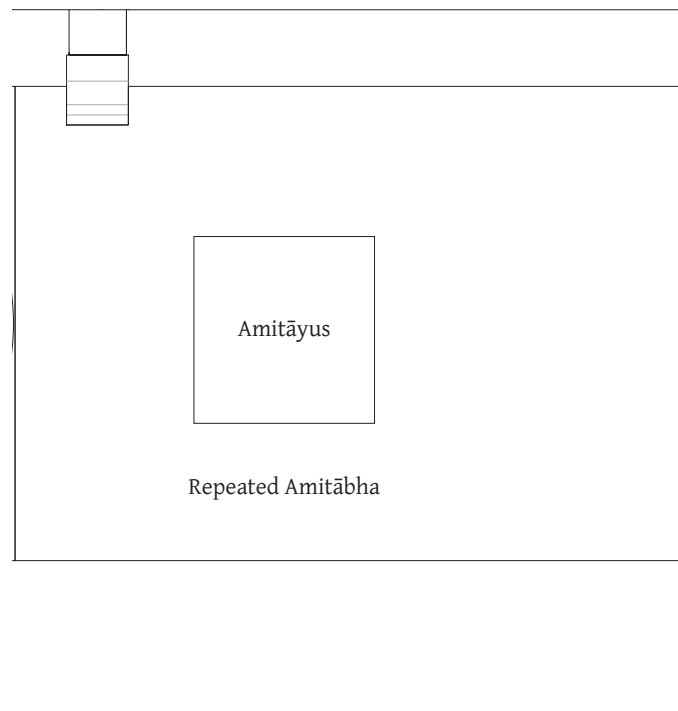
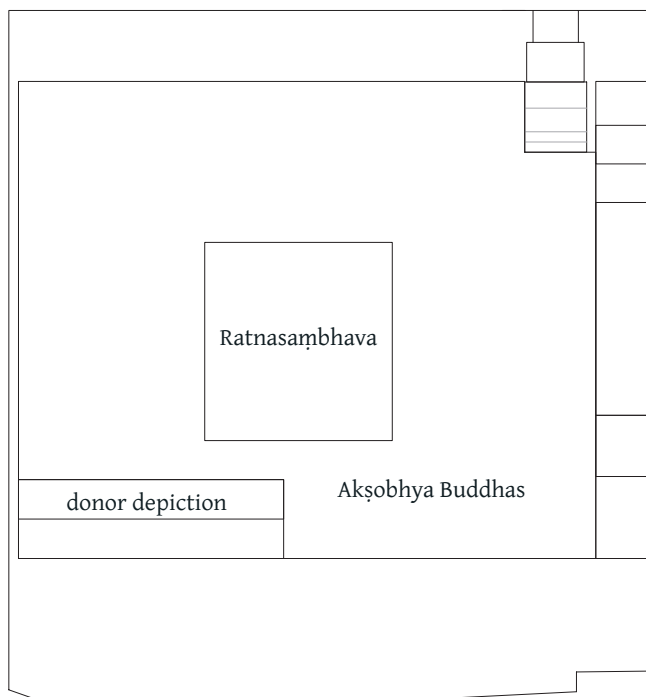


Fig. 234: Tathāgata Ratnasambhava flanked by two Bodhisattvas and surrounded by repeated representations of Akṣobhya.

Fig. 235: The two side walls of the entry section, where each of the walls has a central Buddha. The left side wall has Ratnasambhava in the centre, the right side wall Buddha Amitāyus.





*bhūmisparśamudrā* (Fig. 221). The Buddhas are shown in at least four different colours and no clear organising principle is recognizable in this respect either.

The central Buddha of the left side wall of the entrance section is then Ratnasambhava, who is more orange than yellow due to extensive shading (Fig. 222). His iconographic details are entirely consistent and he is flanked by a white and orange Bodhisattva, both holding a flower bud of similar colour at its stalk. Ratnasambhava is surrounded by 137 blue Akṣobhya Buddhas only, the space of 14 figures being occupied by a donor depiction in the bottom left corner (Fig. 223).

The donor panel in the lower left corner of the Ratnasambhava wall only became evident through the cleaning of the wall in Summer 2010. Distributed over two rows, the depiction is consistent with those in the ground floor, but extremely fragmentary.

The top row houses the male ruler and his male entourage of five seated in front of a curtain on the left. As far as preserved, the figures hold an axe in their right hand and a drinking cup in the left. They wear a kaftan like dress with a dagger stuck in the belt and a heavy mantel covers their shoulders (Fig. 224). In the left corner are further two standing servants. On the right are three monastic per-

sonages of which the main figure wears a peculiar red hat with a small top and a wide rim, and the ones behind him pointed yellow hats (Fig. 225). These sit outside the curtain but have a red mandorla. Between the ruler and the monks is a three-footed offering table covered with a white scarf from which two servants serve drinks to both sides.

In the bottom row five females sit underneath the monks on the right side, the first of them being served a *chang* by a servant kneeling on one knee. Instead of the usual red hat, this one wears a white hat with a rhomboid pattern (Fig. 226). Behind him, in the centre of the lower row are large *chang* pots and another offering table. On the left side of this row are further servants and a group of musicians, of which only a drummer is recognizable.

The wall opposite that of Ratnasambhava is dedicated to the red Buddha Amitāyus flanked by the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi (Fig. 227). The peacock as his vehicle and the 189 red meditating Buddhas surrounding him on this wall indicate that here the vase holding Buddha Amitāyus replaces Amitābha among the five Jinas. Around the corner of Amitāyus and thus on the entry wall to the left of the entrance the central Jina is Amoghasiddhi, who like Ratnasambhava is shown in *saṃbhogakāya* form and flanked by a white and an orange Bodhisattva with a

Fig. 236: The donor depiction on the wall of Ratnasambhava is extremely fragmentary. The ruler wearing a white coat is only fragmentary, but the figure behind him appears to wear the same type of dress in different colour.

Fig. 237: The monks are represented by a hierarch wearing a red hat and two with pointed yellow hats.

Fig. 238: The females are served as well, in this case the servant wears a hat with a net pattern.

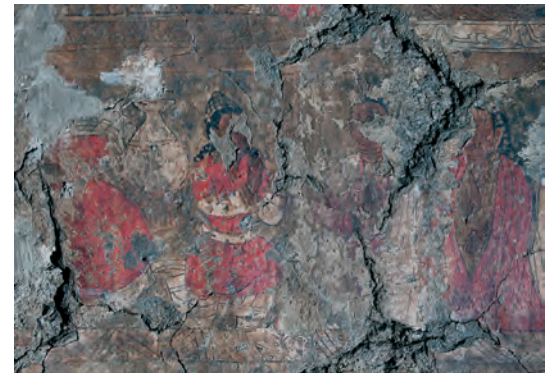


Fig. 239: Buddha Amitāyus flanked by two Bodhisattvas and surrounded by repeated representations of Amitābha.



Fig. 240: The Buddhas in the form of the five Jinas centred on Vairocana surrounding Amoghasiddhi.



Fig. 241: Tathāgata Amoghasiddhi flanked by two Bodhisattvas.



white blossom each (Fig. 229). The Jina is of the usual iconography, performing the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya-mudrā*) and seated on a *garuḍa* throne, and a crossed vajra (*viśvavajra*) on the cloth of his throne emphasises his identity. The surrounding 136 Buddhas are now representing the five Jinas with their individual colours and gestures in an arrangement that repeats the same Buddha across diagonals (Fig. 228).<sup>13</sup>

Directly above the entrance is no protector figure, but there are three additional rows of 13 blue Akṣobhya representations each. Reading the Buddha sections of the entrance wall together, the Buddhas Akṣobhya and Amitābha are certainly emphasised, reminding on their earlier historical occurrence as presiding directional Buddha-fields. Also the identification of Amitābha with Amitāyus can be taken as a reference in this respect, since in Pure Land literature these two are not differentiated. However, it is unlikely that their iconography reflects such ancient concepts. It is much more likely that the monastic dress has been chosen to enable the cross-identification with Śākyamuni and Amitāyus respectively.

The protective deities, the four-armed Mahākāla and his retinue, are squeezed into small strip to the left and right of the entrance, one deity represented above the other. The top left position is occupied by Mahākāla (Fig. 230), who is of the same iconography as the one in the ground floor, and also his retinue is comparable (see p. ?f.). Underneath Mahākāla are six deities in pairs of two, beginning with the one-lion faced deity yielding a sword and a raven-headed one holding a curved knife and presumably a skull-cup (*kapāla*). Underneath these are two more raven-headed deities, but those in the bottom row differ from those rep-

<sup>13</sup> This arrangement is also found in the Alchi Sumtsek on the entrance and Mañjuśrī walls and in several other later temples with the so-called thousand Buddha motive.

resented in the row underneath Mahākāla in the ground floor, who are raven-headed as well. In the gallery the first one is green and possibly has a reptile head with a white rim that makes it look like a blossom, the second one is brightly coloured, but otherwise too obscured to be identified.

To the right of the entrance are those deities in the retinue that flank the main deity in the ground floor. On the top is a two-armed, blue wrathful goddess with curved knife (*kartṛkā*) and skull cup (Fig. 231). She occupies the position Rematī has on the ground floor. Underneath her is the blue goddess with the peacock feather coat, who wears secular dress here as well (Fig. 232). She holds a vajra and a skull cup, rides a bluish horse, and is attended by a female umbrella holder in a long dress. Underneath her are two female riders on deer, one red with an unrecognizable attribute and skull cup, the other yellow and holding an elephant goad (*aṅkuśa*) in the left hand. Further down are four male riders on horses and holding weaponry in two rows.



Fig. 242: The four-armed Mahākāla on the top left side of the entrance.



Fig. 243: A two-armed blue protectress riding a mule on the top right side of the entrance.



Fig. 244: Blue protectress wearing a peacock feather coat and riding a horse.

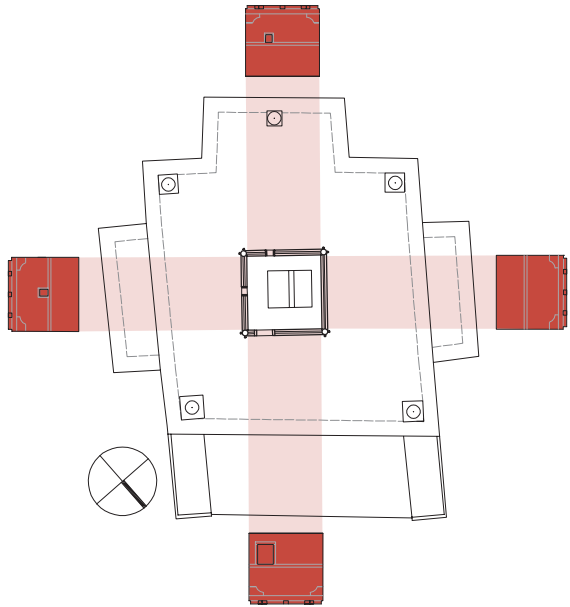
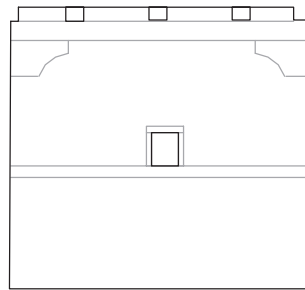
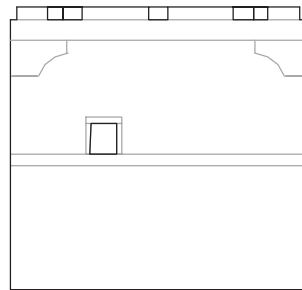


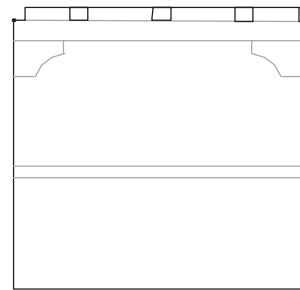
Fig. 245: The walls of the lantern with the considerable losses indicated.



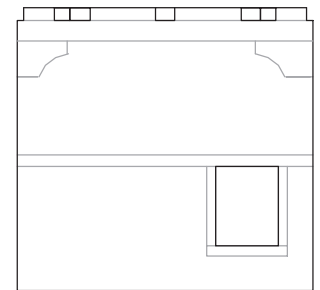
Right wall (south east)



Main wall (south west)



Left Wall (north west)



Entry wall (north east)





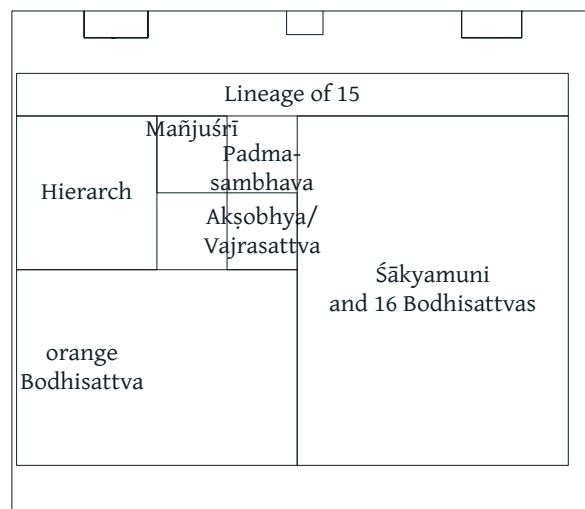
Fig. 246: Repeated Akṣobhya Buddhas in the top row of the entry wall.

## PAINTINGS IN THE LANTERN

As mentioned above, the lantern is a light-weight construction simply set on top of the gallery's ceiling. In fact, the width of the corner console equals that of the wall and the painting has been applied directly to the surface of the wood (Fig. 234). Nevertheless, both the inscription calling the temple 'three-storied' and the murals within the lantern indicate that this third floor is not much younger than the rest of the building. In contrast to the gallery, the decoration of the lantern is not related to the decoration in the lower floors. Instead, the lantern has to be interpreted as a miniature temple itself. This also indicates that unlike today the paintings probably were not visible from below originally (see p. 92).

Due to the rather fragile construction of the lantern and its exposed position, the murals inside have suffered considerably (Fig. 233) and only a part of its iconographic program can be reconstructed with some certainty. It is apparent from these remains, that the iconographic program differs to some extent from that in the lower floors, in particular due to the emphasis on rare esoteric themes. Slight differences in the detailing of themes also found in the lower floors, such as the representation of Marpa's coat (Fig. 236) or the unique arrangement of the top row of the 84 *mahāsiddha*, indicate that the painters working in the lantern were not identical with those working below. In this sense, the attribution of all paintings to a father and his two sons may be a simplification.

Fig. 247: Main wall of the lantern, general view and iconographic key.



## LANTERN BACK WALL: TEACHERS AND BUDDHAS AGAIN

The back or main wall of the lantern is iconographically less emphasised than one would expect. It may nevertheless be that the representation of the teaching Buddha flanked by the 16 Bodhisattvas of the Fortunate Aeon (*bhadra kalpa*) on the right half of the wall is to be considered the main topic (Fig. 235). The asymmetric composition of the wall also indicates that the small window opening present today may well be original.

The top of the back wall is again occupied by the generic Kagyü lineage, in this case comprising of 15 figures, the last of which is not preserved. The representations of Marpa and Milarepa can be taken exemplary for the slight difference in style of the lantern paintings (Fig. 236). More coarse in its outlines Marpa is shown wearing a cape over his coat, a feature not seen elsewhere in the temple, and (erroneously?) his hands are joined in the gesture of veneration. Milarepa, in contrast, is represented with the white dress common throughout the temple.

Underneath the lineage, the left half of the wall features single figures in uneven distribution. In the top right corner a white-skinned teaching hierarch is emphasised. He occupies the same space as the three deities and the window to his side. The two top figures of these are the four-armed Mañjuśrī of the *Nāmasaṃgīti* and Padmasambhava in a representation similar to that on the gallery level, but certainly earlier than the repainting there (Fig. 237). Underneath Padmasambhava is a blue couple, the female sitting on the lap of the male and embracing him with one arm. The iconographic details of this couple are not recognizable anymore, but the frequent occurrence of such couples throughout the lantern is one of its characteristic features. Due to its colour and the main deity of the couple may be identified as Akṣobhya or Vajrasattva. The

fourth space in this section is occupied by a small window today.

Underneath the widow, the original plaster layer is entirely lost to water damage, but to the left of it, in the bottom left corner of the wall, the remains of a large orange deity



are recognizable, holding the left hand towards the knee and the right in the argumentation gesture in front of the breast. Both Mañjuśrī and Maitreya are possible identifications of this figure.

The fairly well preserved right half of the wall is dedicated to a single composition centred on a large white, teaching Buddha, presumably Śākyamuni, seated on a lion throne (Fig. 238). He is attended by two standing Bodhisat-

vas, orange to his right and white to his left, but without attributes. The secondary images are framed by a lotus plant deriving from a vase in the centre underneath the main image. There are eight seated, teaching Bodhisattvas to the sides and four monks are represented in the scroll



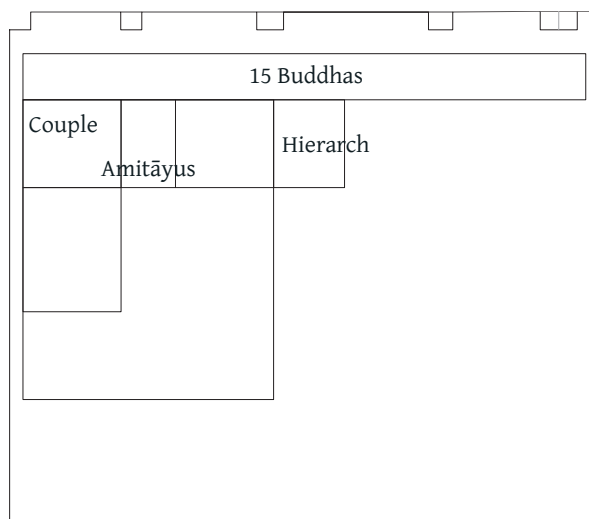
underneath the Buddha's throne.

Fig. 248: Marpa, Milarepa and Gampopa as part of the generic Kagyü lineage on the top of the lantern's main wall.

Fig. 249: Nāmasaṃgiti Mañjuśrī and Padmasambhava.

Fig. 250: Teaching Buddha, presumably Śākyamuni flanked by the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Fortunate Aeon.

Fig. 251: Left wall of the lantern, general view and iconographic key.



### LANTERN LEFT WALL: MOSTLY LOST

Very little is preserved of the left side wall, and what is left can not be interpreted with any certainty. On this wall, much of the painted plaster layer has broken off historically, and a photograph of 1998 reveals not only the original construction of the lantern walls, but also that the window on this side is likely original as well (Fig. 75 on page 53).

Again there is a single row of probably 15 figures on the very top. In this case these are Buddhas of variegated iconography beginning with one performing the earth touching gesture in the top left corner (Fig. 239). Similar Buddha representations also remain to the right of the window, and underneath these nothing else has been preserved on this side. Directly above the window a teacher is represented looking towards these Buddhas. Of this unidentified hierarch only the head is preserved.

To the left of the window a larger area of original painting remained, and due to its composition it is likely that what is left belongs to a single assembly. That this can not be stated with any certainty, is mainly due to the very varied deities in this assembly. Iconographically the clearest of these is the Amitāyus represented in the top centre of the composition, which also marks the western direction (Fig. 241). He is flanked by four white Bodhisattvas, the two left ones holding a vase in the hands joined in meditation, only the outlines of which are preserved, and a white bud. Those on the right hold an incense burner as well as begging staff and bowl. The southern deity is bright coloured, sits sideways and performs the argumentation gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) and has the left hand raised towards the centre. There are also remains of the northern deity, but these are just enough to confirm the composition of this section.



In the top left corner, the southwest of the assembly, is a white, three-headed and six-armed deity with the spouse seated on his left leg (Fig. 240). Of the side heads, only the red of the proper left head is preserved, and no attributes have been painted. Also the northwestern deity, shown in



the top right corner of the composition, is without attributes. This deity is two-armed, has his right hand raised at the side and the left one at the hip (Fig. 242). His most likely attributes would be vajra and bell. Underneath the corner deities a row of additional secondary deities mainly features seated couples is preserved, with the female sitting on the left leg of the male. This can possibly taken as indication, that the main deity of the assembly is a similar couple.

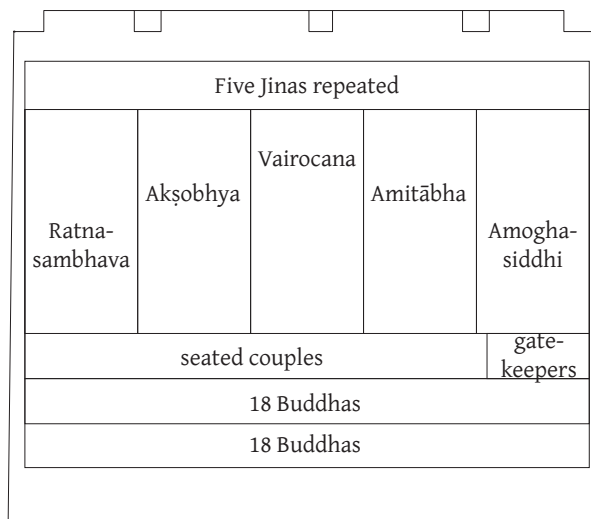
The remains of this rather confusing assembly thus point towards a rare, possibly Nyingmapa derived composition. No similar assembly has been found to date.

Fig. 252: A white three-headed, six-armed deity with a consort on the lap occupies the southwest of the composition.

Fig. 253: Amitāyus flanked by four white Bodhisattvas occupies the west of the composition.

Fig. 254: A two-armed deity raising the right arm occupies the northwest of the composition.

Fig. 255: Right wall of the lantern, general view and iconographic key.



### LANTERN RIGHT WALL: FIVE JINAS

In contrast to the other walls in the lantern this one is windowless and features a single iconographic main topic occupying the whole wall, namely the five *tathāgata* in an unusual esoteric form (Fig. 243).

Again there is a row of Buddhas on top of the wall, this time the group of the five Jinas in monastic robes is repeatedly represented. The group is centred on Vairocana, who performs the gesture of highest enlightenment (*bodhyagrī-mudrā*). Presumably, the group has been repeated three times with two or three additional Buddhas shown in the top right corner.

The main group of deities, covering the centre of this wall then shows the same Buddhas in a more esoteric form. Here they are represented in their body of enjoyment (*saṃbhogakāya*) each with a consort seated on his left leg. In their right hand the Jinas hold the symbol of their respective family, while the left, embracing the consort at the hip, holds a bell. A bell, symbolising female wisdom (*prajñā*), a term that also refers to the esoteric consort, is held by the goddesses as well. In the centre Buddha Vairocana, holding a wheel (Fig. 245), is flanked by Akṣobhya (Fig. 244) and Amitābha respectively. Only in the case of Ratnasambhava, where the goddess has a reddish tone a significant difference in colour is made between male and female.

The couples sit on elaborate thrones featuring their respective vehicles at the base, only that of Ratnasambhava being preserved, and the six ornaments framing the backrest. Of the latter, only the bird above the elephant and below the *śaraba* is unusual. The very top has a *garuḍa* with circular horns holding the tails of snakes in his hands. The Jinas are elaborately bejewelled, wear a helmet-shaped crown and a striped *dhotī*.



Fig. 256: Akṣobhya with his consort on the lap holding a vajra and a bell.



Fig. 257: Vairocana with his consort on the lap holding a wheel and a bell in the centre of the composition on the right wall.

Underneath the five Jinas are three more rows of eighteen figures. Of these, the uppermost likely complements the central assembly, since it features more seated couples and four wrathful couples in the colours of the four secondary families, presumably representing the gate keepers of the assembly. Since the latter are represented in the right corner, it is likely that this row has to be read from left to right.

This representation of the five Jinas is extremely rare and somewhat archaic, going back to a famous Dunhuang mandala assembly, that shows the five Jinas with consorts

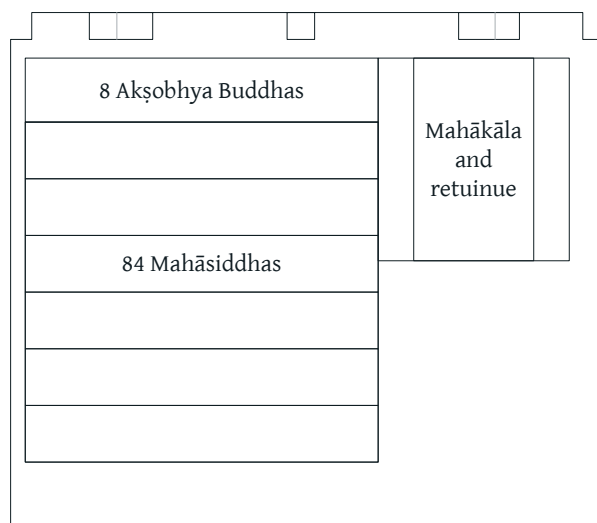
seated side by side.<sup>1</sup> It is also represented on a set of Tsakali paintings from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which dates to approximately the same period. A rare scroll painting dedicated to a similar couple is the Vajrasattva in the Musée Guimet (no. MA 1089), who is almost of the same iconography as the Akṣobhya in Wanla, but sits on a lion-throne.<sup>2</sup>

The two bottom rows are then filled with Buddhas of varied iconography.

1 See, e.g., Giès, *Les arts de l'Asie centrale*, I-47 or Giès & Cohen, *Sérinde*, no. 280.

2 See, e.g., Kossak & Singer, *Sacred Visions*, no. 42. The throne and the eight Bodhisattvas accompanying him in my opinion make the identification as Vajrasattva more likely.

Fig. 258: Entry wall of the lantern, general view and iconographic key.



## LANTERN ENTRY WALL: GREAT ADEPTS AND PROTECTION

It is the entry wall that clarifies that the lantern is a temple closed in itself. The small opening is actually a door protected by Mahākāla and his retinue. To the left of the door are horizontal registers, the uppermost of which houses eight Akṣobhya Buddhas and the remaining ones the 84 Mahāsiddhas in an interesting composition (Fig. 246).

The emphasis on Buddha Akṣobhya (Fig. 234), here in the form of eight successive representation, is found throughout the monument.

The Mahāsiddhas occupy six registers above each other (Fig. 246), and in the uppermost row they are grouped in clusters of four or five figures around a larger central one. As far as can be ascertained, the principle succession and iconography conforms with the siddha representation on the ground floor (see p. 58f.), but the iconographic details are not as clear in this case as there and in the Alchi Shangrong temple that served as a basis for their identification. As generally the case throughout the temple, the rows are to be read from left to right.

In the first group of the top row the central siddha is Nāgārjuna, represented as teaching Buddha seated in front of a multi-coloured, six-hooded snake. To his right are two paṇḍita, one of them likely Āryadeva, to his left a naked siddha, possibly Luyipa. Nāgārjuna is directed towards a Tibetan priest kneeling with the palms joined in front of two books stands (Fig. 247). The following group has Padmavajra in the centre, who holds a cup in front of the breast (Fig. 248). He is surrounded by the paṇḍita Śāntideva, Saroruhavajra, Ḍombhiheruka and Vajraghaṇṭapāda. In the following group Nalendra brandishing his sword is emphasised (Fig. 249). He is surrounded by Kukkuripa, Buddhajñāna, Indrabhūti and likely Asaṅga, the paṇḍita with his hands in front of the breast. The central danc-

ing red siddha holding a cup of the larger last group on this level is Parabadha (Pa ra 'ba dha). He is surrounded by Tilopa, Koṭalipa, Saraha, Candrapa seated in his grass hut, the red meditating Dīpaṅkara and two more not clearly distinguishable siddhas with cups. Thus, there are approx-

be actual historical personages seen as continuing the tradition, as it appears to be the case in Shangrong, or simply variations on the theme filled in by the artist. From the recognizable sections the rendering of the siddhas in these lower rows appears to be rather cursory.



imately 23 siddhas depicted in the top row.

The second row commences with Kṛṣṇacārin, hear black and seated on the corpse, Phagtshangpa and Bhadrapa followed by the dancing Śavaripa. The following siddhas, Madhelha, Lhigyipa, Jetari, the weaver, Sāgara, Jalandhara, Kamala, Suvarṇadvīpa, Vīryapa, Konkana, Pakapala and Tampaka are of exactly the same iconography as in the ground floor depictions. There are 16 siddhas in this second row. Interestingly, it is only the comparison, that allows the attending consorts to be identified.

The third row is not preserved at all, and very little can be recognized in the lower two rows before cleaning. These rows continue to show the siddhas in the more conventional form, one after the other. Further, it is clear that the conventional group of Mahāsiddhas already finishes in the fifth row, with both Virūpa and the elephant riding Kalaka clearly recognizable. Thus, the siddhas in the sixth row represent a complementary group of siddhas, which may

Above the door we have a third variant of Mahākāla and his retinue (Fig. 246). In this case, the four-armed main protector is embracing a bright blue consort holding a curved knife (*karṭṛkā*) and a skull-cup (*kapāla*), the latter in the hand embracing the partner (Fig. 254). Curiously her head is shown turned back and facing the viewer. They are seated within a densely inhabited cemetery, mainly birds and beasts of prey feeding on parts of the corpses there. They are flanked by a retinue of mainly bright blue guardians, only the upper ones of which are clearly visible. The protector on the top left wears a long coat with a long sword attached to its back, brandishes a stick or spear with a checkerboard flag and holds a noose (Fig. 250). The following two ride horses, the upper one shooting an arrow (Fig. 252), the lower one animal headed and yielding a similar flag as the first one. Of the two riders underneath, the upper one sits on a snow-lion.

Fig. 259: The 'second Buddha' Nāgārjuna surrounded by three siddhas, Āryadeva and Lūyipa among them, and a Tibetan teacher.

Fig. 260: Padmavajrasurrounded by the *paṇḍita* Śāntideva, Saroruhavajra, Ḍombhiheruka and Vajraghaṅṭapāda.

Fig. 261: Nalendra brandishing his sword surrounded by Kukkuripa, Buddhajñāna, Indrabhūti and likely Asaṅga.

Fig. 266: Four-armed Mahākālā with consort.



On the right side, the top two protectors are raven-headed and ride large birds (Fig. 251). Underneath them is the nine-headed Rāhula with eyes all over his body (Fig. 253). He is followed by a white glad rider in local dress holding a checkerboard flag as well. The last figure here appears to be a similar rider in red.

Fig. 262: Blue protector with a long coat.



Fig. 263: Raven-headed protector riding a bird.



Fig. 264: Blue protector riding a horse.



Fig. 265: The nine-headed Rāhula.



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#### INDEX

#### PICTURE CREDITS

##### Abbreviations

- HN     Holger Neuwirth  
CL     Christian Luczanits  
JP     Jaroslav Ponchar  
CA     Carmen Auer  
MR     Martina Rössl

WHAV   Western Himalayan Archives Vienna

