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Leaves from the *Bodhi* Tree: The Art of Pāla India (8th-12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy

Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington

Since the time of Śākyamuni Buddha's enlightenment at Bodhgayā in the sixth century BC, countless pious visitors to the site have departed carrying with them dark, shining leaves from the sacred *bodhi* tree. Safeguarded in pockets, books, scraps of cloth and other makeshift presses, these precious treasures are living links with the physical body of the Buddha, for it was under the predecessor of this very tree that the great sage meditated and attained enlightenment.

During the Pāla period, approximately the eighth through the twelfth century, Bodhgayā and numerous other Buddhist sites in the eastern Gangetic region of South Asia, corresponding to the modern states of Bihar and West Bengal in India and the neighbouring nation of Bangladesh, became such prominent religious centres of the Buddhist world that pilgrims and devotees from the far corners of Asia flocked to the region for religious instruction and pilgrimage. Carrying away with them the teachings and practices of Buddhism, like leaves from the *bodhi* tree, these pious lay devotees, monks, merchants and scholars helped transplant Pāla period Buddhism abroad, where it took root and flourished in its many regional variants.

Hinduism, which rose to prominence in the late Pāla period, was also exported from India, but in a more limited and selective fashion. Less easily transplantable than Buddhism, since Hinduism is embedded in a complicated social system that is inextricable from the tenets of the religion, Hinduism spread to neighbouring regions in a less dramatic though no less important way.

The attractiveness of Pāla culture to those from other lands is not difficult to comprehend, for the period exemplifies one of India's most brilliant phases of intellectual and artistic activity. Representing the culmination of centuries of complex philosophical and religious speculation, the intellectual developments of the period are eminently rich. Economic prosperity and relative political stability provided a hospitable setting for lavish patronage of religious institutions and artistic creations inseparable from the meditative and ritual practices.

As a corollary to the transmission of Buddhism and Hinduism abroad, much of Pāla period culture was also transplanted, as may be seen most tangibly in the art and architecture of the Pāla-influenced regions, particularly Nepal, Tibet, China, Myanmar (formerly Burma), Thailand and Indonesia. Such artistic influence occurred in several ways. In some cases, foreign travellers to India brought away with them the memories of the temples, shrines and images they had seen in the Pāla lands, and their descriptions must have enabled artists in their own

countries to fabricate works based on Pāla concepts. Many of the travellers also physically transported objects of Pāla manufacture back to their homelands, including images, manuscripts and other works of art which later inspired artists in their home countries. In addition, Indian monks went to other countries, often by royal invitation, to promulgate Buddhism, and Hindu priests migrated abroad to found Hindu colonies, thus further stimulating the transmission of Pāla period religion, art and culture. Finally, in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries when Pāla period culture was destroyed primarily due to the entry of Muslims into the Indic region, an exodus of Indians — mostly Buddhist monks seeking refuge in other Buddhist countries of Asia — led to a final burst of Pāla cultural influence abroad.

Though sharing an indebtedness to the Pāla heritage, the artistic traditions of Southeast Asia (primarily Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia), the Himalayan region (mainly Nepal and Tibet) and China (see Fig. 1) are each distinctive, reflecting a melding of indigenous elements with forms introduced from India. The differences between these artistic siblings clearly document the various and highly specific paths by which Indic culture was transmitted abroad, as well as the cultural, religious and political predilections of the peoples of Asia and their different reasons for looking to Indic culture as a model.

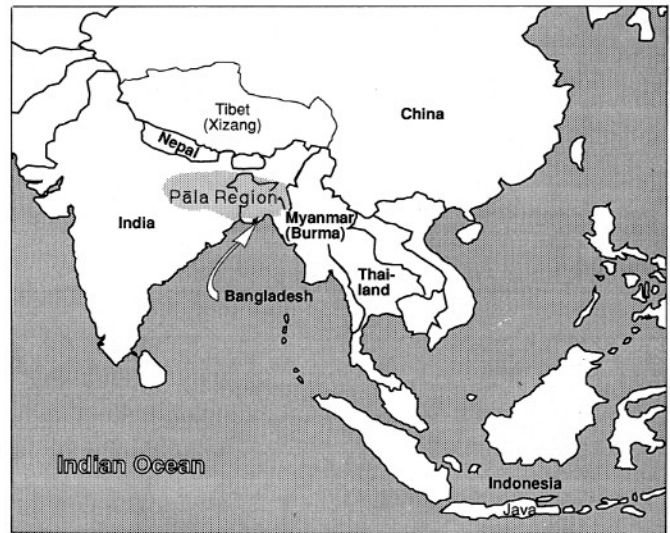
By exploring what may be called the Pāla international style, questions about cultural diffusion and influence in the transmission of artistic modes are raised. 'Pāla influence' was experienced in highly specific and deliberate ways; the story of the dissemination of Pāla culture, therefore, differs for each region and must not be conceived in monolithic terms. 'Influence' is all too often seen as a contagion or virus-like phenomenon that can only be rejected by a potential recipient with difficulty. However, if a metaphor must be drawn to characterize the nature of cultural influence, perhaps it should be likened to a signal that is emitted but not always heard, and if heard not always heeded. That is, although some unsolicited or unconscious influence undoubtedly occurred due to cultural interactions arising from trade and missionary activities, it must be asserted that during the Pāla period those who looked to India for inspiration were not passive recipients of India's cultural charisma. Rather, they were on the whole deliberate seekers who aggressively chose to select and adapt concepts, products, technologies and other phenomena to serve their own purposes. Thus, it is important to understand precisely why a Tibetan king would send to India for the renowned Indian teacher Atīśa; or why a king of what is now Indonesia would make a ma-

jor donation to the famed Nālandā monastery in eastern India; or why a king of Myanmar would refurbish the great Mahābodhi Temple at Bodhgayā, for their reasons differed widely. Yet they were all consumers of Pāla period culture and not passive recipients of its radiance. The cultural and religious heritage of these foreign lands undoubtedly played a major role in determining not only the reasons for contact with India but how Indian influences would be assimilated and ultimately transformed.

A simple glance at the varying artistic traditions which were influenced by Pāla culture verifies that not all inspiration from the Pāla idiom was manifested in the same way. In some cases, Pāla models were copied so closely that art historians often disagree vehemently as to whether a given piece is in fact Pāla in origin or a version of the Pāla style produced elsewhere. In other cases, artistic traditions, while absorbing a distinctive imprint from Pāla art, are highly original creations, using the Pāla model only as a point of departure. It should be noted that closely copied works are by no means inferior, as one might infer from a twentieth-century perspective in which originality is the measure of artistic worth. Rather, these works of art reflect the fact that Buddhists throughout Asia looked to the Indian examples as the authentic sources to be emulated. To them, the objects that we today call works of art were not merely decorative items but vital components of their religious quest; and to Buddhists outside India, India was the source of authentic Buddhist images and authoritative Buddhist texts. To the latter, the Pāla kingdom represented not just Indian Buddhism, but the religion at its most genuine, for the Pāla territories contained the nucleus of the Buddhist religion, Magadha, the homeland of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. Pāla period works of art, therefore, were in many cases looked to as models of authenticity in terms of both style and subject matter.

In some areas of Asia, the Pāla influence had a longlasting effect, and traces of the Pāla idiom are visible in art dating as late as the eighteenth century. This was the case in Nepal and Tibet, and also China, where a Pāla revival took place under the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-95). Elsewhere, however, such as Indonesia, the essence of Pāla period art was quickly transformed and even abandoned as new cultural directions emerged.

Thus far, it has been difficult to determine whether any important influences from other regions of Asia stimulated changes in Pāla period art or culture, although in light of the significant international activity of the period, it must be assumed that some occurred. But whether or not one can trace the footsteps of internationalism in Pāla period art itself, it is clear that without the brisk international activity of the period, Pāla culture, particularly Buddhism and its art, might not have prospered as it did. For, in spite of the prominence given to the Pāla lands by Buddhists outside India during the Pāla period, the region, by virtue of its thriving Buddhism, was an anomaly in the by then otherwise almost totally Hindu world of ancient India. The kings of the Pāla line were in fact not all Buddhists, but, perhaps out of political necessity as well as deference to the fact that their territories contained the Buddhist holy land, Buddhism flourished under their rule and survived until Muslim incursions to the region at the end of the twelfth century brought their protection abruptly to an end;



(Fig. 1) Map of Asia showing Pāla territories and Pāla-influenced regions

by the early thirteenth century, Buddhism was virtually extinguished in India. When speaking of internationalism, then, we are referring to a vigorously interactive dialectic, for at the same time that Pāla culture was being dispersed, it was also nourished, perpetuated and ultimately preserved by its emulators.

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, when Pāla period culture was extinguished in India, it was because the seeds of Pāla culture had been spread and had taken root elsewhere in Asia that Indian exiles found welcoming hosts abroad. Scattered throughout Asia during the Pāla period like leaves from the *bodhi* tree, and further nurtured when Indian Buddhists fled their homeland to seek refuge in those foreign lands, the Pāla traditions continued, though not on Indian soil.

Pāla Period Art

From the eighth through the twelfth centuries, the culture of the eastern Gangetic region of South Asia underwent a florescence of religious and artistic activity under the tolerant and benevolent rule of the kings of the Pāla dynasty and other minor local rulers. Culturally diverse, yet unified politically during much of this period, the Pāla territories contained, on the one hand, the ancient region of Magadha in southern Bihar, which had been a seat of Indic culture for nearly 1,500 years by the time the Pālas assumed power, and on the other, the cultural region of Bengal (corresponding to the Indian state of West Bengal and the nation of Bangladesh), which had only recently been brought into the mainstream of Indic culture. Not surprisingly, Magadha played the role of leader in the establishment of the Pāla art style, primarily during the first half of the Pāla period, until about the tenth century. By the late Pāla period, however, artistic centres in Bengal were thriving, and many of the most important productions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were created in Bengal workshops. As a corollary to this geographical shift, much of early Pāla period art was created in the service of the Buddhist establishments of Magadha while, in contrast, the later Bengal productions were primarily Hindu, reflecting the strength of that religion in Bengal.



As is generally true of the material remains from any culture, the surviving objects are usually those made in the sturdiest, most-enduring materials and, thus, Pāla period art survives mainly in stone and metal sculpture. A few extant manuscripts on palm leaf and other objects in ephemeral materials, such as wood, shell and ivory, however, offer tantalizing evidence of the richness of artistic traditions in other media.

The typical Pāla-style stone sculpture is carved of a greyish to grey-black, densely grained stone (most commonly schist or phyllite), which is found in the region. Stone sculptures have a characteristic slab or stele format with flat backs which reflect their usual placement in niches as part of the iconographic programme of the brick temples once prevalent in the Pāla territories. In the first part of the Pāla period, until about the tenth century, the images had rounded stele tops (see Fig. 5), while in the late Pāla period, around the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the shape was pointed at the top (see Fig. 4). The stele slab was often decorated so that it served as a halo for the central figure as well as a background for the elements of the composition (see Fig. 4).

Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha who lived in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, spent most of his life in the Magadha region and adjacent territories in Uttar Pradesh to the west and it is not surprising that images of this Buddha constituted the most popular subject matter in the Buddhist art of the Pāla period. Eight events in the Buddha's life were especially prevalent. (For a detailed discussion of the eight events in art, see articles by John C. Huntington in *Orientalism*, November 1985 and February, March, July and September 1986 issues, and for the *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya*, see April and August 1987 issues). The most important of these events was the Māravijaya, that is, Śākyamuni's defeat of the god of death, Māra, just prior to his enlightenment at the sacred site of Bodhgayā.

A splendid example of this subject is a stone sculpture in the collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (Fig. 2). The Buddha-to-be sits cross-legged on a lotus pedestal that rests atop a throne. His right hand reaches down in the earth-touching gesture (*bhūmisparśa mudrā*), signifying the moment at which he calls the earth goddess to witness his right to enlightenment, thereby defeating Māra. Depicted above his head is a bough from the sacred *bodhi* tree under which this event took place. The vigorous carving of this image exemplifies the work of the best Pāla artists; the richness of the detailing is contrasted with the smooth, polished surface of the Buddha's body and every element is carved with precision and crispness.

A second stone image, now in the collection of The Asia Society, New York, (Fig. 3) shows five of the eight great events. The largest Buddha in the centre is again shown at the moment of the Māravijaya, the prominence of the



(Fig. 3) Buddha surrounded by Buddha life scenes
Probably from Nālandā, Bihar, India, Pāla period,
c. mid to late 10th century

Grey stone
Height 70.5 cm
The Asia Society, Mr and Mrs John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection
(1979.36)
Photograph by Otto E. Nelson

event being indicated by the size of this figure in relation to the other four as well as its centrality. The standing Buddha to the proper right of the central figure represents the Buddha's descent from Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, where he had gone to preach to his deceased mother; the standing Buddha to the proper left of the central image shows the Buddha taming the mad elephant Nālāgiri which had been set loose by the Buddha's evil cousin Devadatta in an attempt to murder the Buddha. The two seated Buddhas flanking the head of the central figure represent the Buddha's first teaching (proper right) and the offering of the monkey (proper left). In each case, the scenes are highly abbreviated, and lack the identifying features commonly present in depictions of these events. For example, the taming of Nālāgiri scene usually includes a small elephant at the feet of the Buddha. Here, however, only the specific hand gestures and postures of the figures distinguish the various scenes, although by this period the subject matter

(Fig. 2) Śākyamuni Buddha (Māravijaya scene)
Perhaps from Northern Bengal, Dinajpur district, Pāla period,
c. 11th century
Grey-black stone
Height 100.5 cm, width 49.5 cm
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection
Gift of Paul Mellon (68.8.15)



was so well codified in art that there can be no mistake about the identification of the events.

In this example, the central Buddha wears a crown and necklace in a convention that became popular during the Pāla period. While at first glance these ornaments might seem to contradict the Buddha's ascetic nature and belie the fact that he had abandoned all concern for material goods in his spiritual quest, the crown and jewellery are in fact symbols of spiritual attainment, not worldly wealth. The particular configuration of the crown, with its characteristic triangular sections, was popular in Magadha and, based on that model, became a characteristic of other Pāla-dependent artistic traditions.

Hindu images from the Pāla period became most numerous during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One of the most popular deities depicted in the Hindu repertoire was Sūrya, the sun god, seen in a remarkable example now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Fig. 4). A celestial deity, Sūrya originated outside India, probably in the Iranian area, but was assimilated into the Hindu pantheon at an early date. As might be expected, Sūrya is associated with life-giving and life-renewal; he is also believed to drive away sickness and evil dreams.

In this image, Sūrya is shown in his usual two-armed form, with each hand holding the stem of a fully opened lotus blossom. The pedestal is his chariot, drawn by seven horses representing the seven days of the week. His charioteer, the legless Aruṇa ('dawn'), is placed above the central horse and in front of Uṣas, the goddess of dawn in Vedic mythology. The two male figures flanking Sūrya are the bearded, pot-bellied Piṅgala and the youthful Daṇḍa. Piṅgala, who is the sun god's scribe, carries a pen and inkpot while Daṇḍa appears as a warrior with sword and shield. Sūrya's two wives also stand by his side and, in keeping with the practice of hierarchic scaling, are shown smaller than Sūrya's male attendants. The complexity of the image, with all members of Sūrya's retinue depicted, is characteristic of late Pāla period works. The presence of additional iconographic elements, such as the planetary deities along the sides of the backslab and the flying celestials at the top, further enrich the surfaces of the image. The figure of the sun god himself is carved almost in the round and is detached from the backslab in a manner also typical of late Pāla works. Emphasis on elaborate, crisply carved details is characteristic of this phase of sculpture.

An image of the goddess Mārīcī in the collection of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (Fig. 5) shows the Buddhist version of a solar deity, for Mārīcī is the goddess of dawn. Although this divinity is not an unexpected member of the Buddhist pantheon, she is nevertheless known only from a few surviving examples of the Pāla artistic repertoire. In this example, the goddess stands in



(Fig. 5) Mārīcī

Probably from southern Magadha (Nawada or Gaya district), Bihar, India, Pāla period, c. 10th century
Grey stone

Height 73.8 cm, width 34.2 cm

Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection (B63 S10+)

her characteristic *ālīḍha* ('jumping') pose. Like Sūrya, Mārīcī has a celestial chariot, though hers is drawn by seven pigs rather than horses. Scholars are in disagreement over the meaning of the pig as a symbol in this deity's iconography, although its importance here is further underscored by the two profile faces of pigs flanking her central face. The six-armed goddess holds in her right hands a *vajra*, an arrow and a branch with an *aśoka* flower (*Saraca indica*); in her left hands, she carries a noose, a bow and a threaded needle (with which she is said to sew up the eyes and mouths of the wicked). Less richly ornamented and less detailed than later works, such as the Sūrya image discussed above, this image is typical of examples dating from about the tenth century.

(Fig. 4) Sūrya

'Gaṅgā Sāgarī' (Sagar island), West Bengal, India, Pāla period, c. 12th century
Blackish stone

Height 159.5 cm, width 82.5 cm

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Gift of Mrs N.R. Norton, Mrs Richard Waln Mairs, Mrs Edwin N. Benson Jr, and Mrs William A.M. Fuller in memory of Mrs Jones Wister (27-9-1)



(Fig. 6) Mahākālā
Probably from Bihar, India, Pāla period, c. 12th century
Grey-black stone
Height 58.4 cm
Collection of Samuel Eilenberg

Much of the imagery in Pāla period art is concerned with Tantric practices in which deities of a fierce (*krodha*) nature play a prominent role. A powerful image of Mahākālā (Fig. 6) shows the main characteristics of these wrathful gods, including his bulging eyes, flame-like hair and skull ornaments. While fierce deities might seem to be intended to frighten devotees, the angry nature of these gods is in fact merely an expression of the vigour and intensity with which one should pursue religious goals. Highly complex and symbolic, Tantric imagery can only be fully understood by those initiated into the associated religious practices. Images of *krodha* deities are well known in the Pāla artistic and textual repertoires and, based on the Pāla model, became especially popular in the art of the Pāla-dependent regions of Nepal and Tibet.

Perhaps unique among the artistic remains of the Pāla period is an image of the Hindu sage (*ṛṣi*) Agastya (Fig. 7). Popular primarily in the art of southern India rather than that of the Pāla lands, Agastya's cult spread to Southeast

Asia, particularly Indonesia, and also to Nepal. Agastya's right hand is posed in the *vyākhyāna mudrā*, a gesture of teaching or discourse, and holds a rosary (*akṣamālā*). The gesture of discourse is characteristic of Agastya, for he is said to represent the power of teaching, particularly of grammar, medicine and other sciences. The rosary, a standard attribute of *ṛṣis* in Indic art, suggests their religious role, for the rosary is used as a counting device in the recitation of prayers. Agastya's left hand holds a water pot, another object commonly associated with *ṛṣis*. The sage's pointed beard and matted hair are also well-known characteristics of *ṛṣis* in Indic art.

This image exemplifies the style of twelfth-century Pāla art, typified by the complex form of the double lotus pedestals upon which the central figure and his attendants stand, the accentuated postures of the female attendants, and the elaborate and tall headdress worn by Agastya himself. The careful attention to detail, as seen in the rendering of the jewellery, hair and garments, is also characteristic of this late phase.

The surviving metal images of the Pāla period represent a diverse body of materials, displaying a range in styles reflective of the numerous workshops that flourished during the period. While a few images made of silver or gold are known, the vast majority of metal pieces are made of alloys of which copper is a principal component.



(Fig. 7) Agastya
Probably from India, perhaps eastern Bihar (Monghyr or Bhagalpur district) or southern West Bengal, Pāla period, c. 12th century
Grey-black stone
Height 66 cm
Collection of Mr and Mrs Willard G. Clark



(Fig. 8) Mañjuśrī
Probably from Nālandā, Bihar, India, Pāla period, c. 9th century
Metal (probably bronze)
Height 20.5 cm, width 11.5 cm
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City
Gift of Fred and Grace Kaler in honour of Laurence Sickman
(75-32/4)



(Fig. 9) Viṣṇu and his consorts
Probably from south-eastern Bangladesh, Pāla period,
c. late 9th or early 10th century
Metal
Height 25.4 cm, width 17.8 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago
Gift of Kate S. Buckingham Fund (1985.222)

The variety in styles of the Pāla period may be seen by comparing a metal image of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in the collection of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Fig. 8) with a depiction of the Hindu god Viṣṇu and his consorts in the Art Institute of Chicago collection (Fig. 9). The Mañjuśrī image is easily recognizable as a product of a ninth-century workshop in the vicinity of the Buddhist monastery at Nālandā, one of the most illustrious institutions of its day. This may be determined by comparing it with documented images found at Nālandā that are inscribed and dated. The Viṣṇu image is undoubtedly the product of a workshop in the Bengal region, most likely south-eastern Bengal, and probably dates from the late ninth or early tenth century. In spite of the fact that the two works are of nearly the same date, they are astonishingly dissimilar, for the south-eastern Bengal image is strikingly simple while the Nālandā piece is more ornate. Similar distinctions between stone sculptures may also be made,

indicating that within the Pāla regions, numerous workshops flourished contemporaneously.

Metal images of the Pāla period are often extraordinary technical achievements. An image of the bodhisattva Maitreya in the collection of Mr and Mrs John Gilmore Ford (Fig. 10) displays the finest technical skills of the Pāla craftsmen. In this example, a favourite Pāla technique was employed, that is, the use of metal inlay to provide a multicoloured appearance to the work, as seen for example in the silver inlay representing the bodhisattva's jewellery. Unlike most small Pāla period metal works, which are usually cast in one piece, the figure and the base were created separately. The richness of the detailing on the base and the shape of the bodhisattva's body and its ornamentation indicate that it was produced in the late Pāla period, probably the twelfth century. Although some have claimed that the late style represents a deterioration of the early phase, there is no more eloquent proof of the falseness of



(Fig. 10) Bodhisattva Maitreya
India or Bangladesh, Pāla period, c. 12th century
Metal (probably bronze) with silver and copper inlay
Height 18.7 cm
Collection of Mr and Mrs John Gilmore Ford

that assertion than this example.

Literary evidence indicates that painting was one of the most important artistic media of the Pāla period, but hardly a handful of paintings survive from what was once a major corpus. Aside from the fragments of mural paintings found recently at Nālandā, only manuscripts on palm leaf are known. However, literary evidence, including the description by a twelfth-century Chinese author who recorded the practice of using cloth painting at Nālandā, indicates that a cloth-painting tradition also flourished. Therefore, it may be assumed that paintings on cloth — the forerunners of the *paṭa* of Nepal and the *thangka* of Tibet — constituted a major artistic form of the Pāla period. The format of these paintings and the style of their mountings are unknown, however.

The palm leaf used for the manuscripts of Bihar and Bengal comes from the talipot (*Corypha umbraculifera*), a tall, showy, fan-leaved palm tree. Sections of the fan-shaped leaves were cut away from the ribs, providing long, narrow strips about five to eight centimetres in width and 50 to 55 centimetres in length. Leaves were written upon, illustrated, and then strung together on a cord and placed between a pair of covers, usually made of wood, although other materials such as copper or ivory might also have been used.

Most manuscripts probably did not have illustrations, and those that did had only few, usually arranged three to a page and placed either at the beginning, in the middle,



(Fig. 11a) *Birth of the Buddha*; (Fig. 11b) *Teaching Buddha*
Possibly painted at Nālandā, Bihar, India, Pāla period, c. late 11th century (possibly dated to reign of Vigrahapāla III)
Pigment on palm leaf

Each: height 6 cm

The Asia Society, Mr and Mrs John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection (1987.1)

or at the end of the text. Details of two paintings on palm leaves now in the collection of The Asia Society (Figs 11a and 11b) demonstrate the major characteristics of this tradition at its finest. As is typical of Pāla manuscript illustrations, the artist's palette was dominated by six colours: red, yellow, blue, green, black and white. The selection of these colours was probably not based on aesthetic considerations alone, for by the Pāla period a highly elaborate system of colour symbolism had developed. Colours are generally applied in a flat, unmixed fashion, although there is sometimes a suggestion of shading in the skin tones of the figures. Most forms in the compositions are outlined, sometimes in black but often in the same colour scheme as the figure or compositional element being outlined. Faces are normally shown in a three-quarter view, except in the case of Buddha images, which are often depicted frontally. The painted figures are very lively and more animated than their sculptural counterparts, perhaps reflecting the freedom accorded by the use of an artist's brush rather than a sculptor's chisel. In spite of their miniature format, these vivid renderings exemplify the sophisticated colouristic and compositional schemes and skilled draftsmanship of the Pāla painters.



(Fig. 12) Plaque showing Māravijaya and other Buddha life scenes
Burma, c. 12th or 13th century
Beige pyrophyllite
Height 18.7 cm, width 13 cm
University Art Museum (Arthur M. Sackler Museum), Harvard
University
Purchased through the Louis Sidney Thierry Memorial Fund
(1979.328)

The practice of copying manuscripts is very ancient in India, and as the Buddhist religion spread to other regions of Asia, the textual tradition also followed. Many foreign missions to India had as their principal objective the collection of religious texts and thus Pāla period manuscripts were often carried to these other regions, where undoubtedly their paintings inspired local artists. Therefore, in spite of the fact that few Pāla paintings survive and little is known about the origins, development and variations of the styles, other evidence indicates that paintings were highly influential in the transmission of the Pāla style to other regions of Asia. That paintings closely related to the Pāla style have been found in Myanmar and are well known in the art of Nepal and Tibet is, therefore, not surprising.

The Pāla Style Abroad

In studying the transfer of both religion and art forms to other regions of Asia, certain seminal questions are posed. What were the factors that led to the spread of religion and art to the corners of Asia? What were the means of dissemination? What were the peculiarities of each of the regional manifestations and how did the Pāla tradition meld with the local heritage? Why did Pāla influence persist for so many centuries in some places, but

die out within a hundred years in others? By examining these issues and others, notions of cultural diffusion and dissemination during the Pāla period may be better understood.

In general, scholars discuss the phenomenon of influence from the point of view of the originator rather than the recipient, and words such as 'Indianization' are often used to describe the complex dialectic of cultural exchange and transmission that actually occurred. The strength of the local culture and the selective manner in which it adopted Indic cultural forms must also be considered, however, for they greatly affected the way in which these adopted Indic forms were in turn integrated into other cultures. Because of these diverse factors, the Pāla-derived traditions are highly individualistic, in spite of their relationship to their Pāla ancestors.

Southeast Asia

Pāla cultural influence in Southeast Asia spread in two ways: overland, primarily to Myanmar and Thailand (and presumably to Cambodia), and overseas, to Myanmar, southern Thailand and Indonesia. The strongest Pāla influence is visible in the artistic traditions of Myanmar and the island nation of Indonesia (mainly Java). So great was India's cultural impact on Southeast Asia that it has been compared with the Hellenization and subsequent Romanization of the Mediterranean region and western Europe. Although this cultural phenomenon had begun centuries before, the Pāla period represented the culmination of the spread of Buddhist and Hindu culture to Southeast Asia.

Much of this expansion was inextricably related to the trade and commerce that flourished in the Indian Ocean region between China, Southeast Asia and India as well as to the fortunes of dynasties that controlled these valuable sea routes, such as the kings of the little-known kingdom of Śrīvijaya and the southern Indian Cōla kings. Some Pāla influence reached Myanmar as the result of direct border contacts between Bengal and Myanmar. However, Buddhist practice in Myanmar also placed great emphasis on Bodhgayā, the site of Buddha's enlightenment, and Myanmar activity at that site is well documented. For example, an inscription at Prome Shwehsan-daw Pagoda in Myanmar reveals that King Kyanzittha of Myanmar helped to restore and sustain the great temple at Bodhgayā shortly before 1098. Similarly, the fact that a replica of the Bodhgayā temple was built at Pagan in the thirteenth century further emphasizes the importance of Bodhgayā to the Myanmars.

A number of small stone plaques, such as an outstanding example now in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University (Fig. 12), provide especially intriguing evidence of contacts between Myanmar and Pāla India. Generally called *andagu* plaques, after the Myanmar name for the type of stone of which they are carved, some scholars have contended that they are in fact of Pāla manufacture but had been transported to Myanmar. While it is true that numerous small stone and metal images of Pāla manufacture have been found outside the Pāla lands, these plaques seem to be of undoubted Myanmar manufacture since not a single one has actually been found in the Pāla lands. Furthermore, although the iconography of the plaques is clearly derived from a Pāla source in the



emphasis on the Māravijaya scene in the centre surrounded by other Buddha life scenes, the presence of additional scenes in the composition relates strongly to an iconographic pattern that developed in Myanmar alone. That is, in addition to the usual central scene depicting Buddha overcoming Māra, the forty-nine days of meditation following his enlightenment are also depicted in a typical Myanmar configuration. In style, however, the figures are clearly derived from the Pāla idiom.

Pāla influence on the art of Indonesia, mainly Java, is evident almost exclusively in the medium of metal imagery, as paintings from the period have not survived and both architecture and stone sculpture seem to follow a different history. Contacts between the Indonesian region and Pāla India are documented by the well-known copperplate inscription found at Nālandā monastery dated the year 39 of the Pāla king Devapāla (c. 850). The plate records that King Bālaputradeva, ruler of Suvarṇadvīpa, bestowed a grant of five villages for the upkeep of the monastery built at Nālandā by King Bālaputradeva himself. This document also reveals that Bālaputradeva was a member of the Śailendra dynasty; his grandfather was a ruler of Yavabhūmi (Java), while he himself ruled Suvarṇadvīpa (Sumatra). Because of this known association between King Bālaputradeva and the monastic site of Nālandā in Magadha, metal images from Java are often compared with examples from Nālandā, and indeed there is a strong resemblance between many of them. However, other

(Fig. 13) Maitreya as the Buddha of the Future
Central Java, Indonesia, 9th century
Metal (probably bronze)
Height 37.2 cm

Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, Netherlands (1403.2844)

stylistic sources are also probable for the Javanese materials, such as the eastern Bengal region around Chittagong, where metal images of a distinctive style were found.

One of the most magnificent of all the known Javanese metal images is a representation of Maitreya as the Buddha of the Future now in the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Leiden (Fig. 13). Although highly reminiscent of Pāla period metal works in its overall configuration, including details of the throne and halo, the image does not have an exact counterpart in the repertoire of surviving images from the Pāla domains. Some elements, such as the two seated lions flanking the rear part of the throne, are not found in Pāla art and either derive from another artistic source or are the original creations of the Javanese artists. In other Javanese examples as well, unusual features suggest that the artists were highly original and free in their modification of Pāla originals. This is in contrast to the Tibetans who sought to copy the Pāla prototypes faithfully, trying not to depart from the Indic originals.



(Fig. 14) Cakrasaṃvara with Vajravārāhī and the deities of his *maṇḍala*
Nepal, probably Kathmandu valley, Malla period, c. 15th century
Opaque watercolours on cotton cloth
Height 94.5 cm, width 73.4 cm
Collection of Mr and Mrs John Gilmore Ford

The Northward Transmission

Two major factors contributed to the expansion of the Pāla artistic styles into the Himalayan regions of Nepal and Tibet, and subsequently into Inner Asia and China. The most important was the ongoing Buddhist interaction between Pāla India and the Himalayan regions, which involved travels by Indian monks to these other regions as well as visits to the Pāla regions, viewed as the Buddhist homeland, by monks and monk pilgrims from the Himalayas. The second factor was the proximity of Nepal to the Pāla regions and the cultural interactions that naturally resulted from this geographic situation.

Nepal

The kingdom of Nepal was the near neighbour to the north of the Pāla lands and, although isolated to some extent because of its mountainous terrain, had been part of the Indic cultural fold for centuries by the time the Pāla dynasty rose to power. The historical details of the transmission of the Pāla artistic idioms into Nepal are unclear and any study of the problem is dependent upon

analysis of the stylistic resemblance between works of art produced in the two traditions. At first, Nepal's already well-established artistic schools were not strongly affected by Pāla art, for Nepalese artists learned the Pāla style primarily to be able to create works of art for Tibetans who wished to have them in the authentic Indian style. But eventually, some features of Pāla art were incorporated into the Nepalese repertoire, and concomitantly the Pāla-style works they created began to have Nepalese features.

A painting of Cakrasaṃvara in the collection of Mr and Mrs John Gilmore Ford (Fig. 14) is a beautiful example of the Nepalese interpretation of the Pāla school, although one that already shows the addition of Nepalese elements.

(Fig. 15) Tārā and Bhṛkūtī
Kathmandu valley, Nepal, Malla period, c. 1435
Wood with polychromy
Tārā: height 107 cm, Bhṛkūtī: height 117.5 cm
Private collection



Despite there being no comparable paintings left from the Pāla region, surviving murals at the Lha-khang Soma at Alchi in Ladakh, Kashmir, India were directly modelled after Pāla prototypes, and these, in turn, are strongly related to the Cakrasaṃvara painting particularly through 'discretionary' elements not dictated by iconographic concerns. While the painting shows a continuation of the Pāla iconographic conventions and exhibits a number of details that relate directly to the Pāla style, the overall impression differs from what would be expected in Pāla India. For example, the greatly increased elaboration of detail, the youthful appearances of the faces, and the complexity of the composition are typical features of the Nepalese style.

Numerous surviving examples testify that the Pāla stylistic influence was felt most strongly in the medium of painting while other media in Nepal were less profoundly affected. For example, a pair of mid-fifteenth-century wooden figures of Tārā and Bhṛkūtī (Fig. 15) illustrate how Pāla iconographic conventions were reinterpreted with the addition of Nepalese discretionary elements. Tārā and Bhṛkūtī are the female companions of one of several forms of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara; in Nepal, most frequently though not invariably, it is Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. The two standing figures would have flanked a larger sculpture of the central deity and are generally envisioned as the female hypostases of his compassion (Tārā) and his wisdom (Bhṛkūtī). There may well have been other subsidiary figures making the group a pentad or even a septad. While the postures and arm positions of the figures are iconometrically Pāla, the details of the ribbons, sashes and lower garments, the low relief rendering of the breasts, along with details of the painting of both the hair and the lower garments are all Nepalese. Thus the wooden figures are very much a composite developed from the addition of Pāla elements into the artistic milieu, wholly integrated into the Nepalese artistic vocabulary and yet self-consciously holding onto Indic iconographic traditions.

Tibet

The initial transmission of Pāla-style Buddhism and art into Tibet is well documented in the biographies of Atīśa, the great abbot of Vikramaśīla monastery who travelled to Tibet in the mid-eleventh century (1042-54). Atīśa, whose influence revitalized Tantric Buddhism in Tibet in what is known as the Second Propagation, is generally credited with having introduced the Pāla style into Tibetan art. But other factors, including the presence of Nepalese artists working in Tibet and extensive exchange of teachers with Pāla India, further strengthened the influence of Pāla art on Tibet.

Although the transmission of Pāla styles and iconographies into Tibet is well known from historical records, it is difficult to define the early Tibetan styles and to demonstrate their chronological and regional developments. Indeed, the most serious lacuna in Tibetan art-historical studies is the lack of standardized stylistic definitions. Fortunately, the Tibetans themselves have a well-established 'traditional history of Tibetan art' that is easily applied to extant images in both painting and sculpture. Based on traditional history as well as regional and chronological criteria, such definitions for the Pāla-

related idiom have only recently been presented by these authors for the first time (Dayton, 1989).

In their enthusiastic importation of Buddhism during the Second Propagation, the Tibetans considered eastern India, especially Magadha, to be the primary source of all things Buddhist, including artistic images, iconographies and painting styles. From an early date, works of art in the Pāla style were produced primarily by Tibetan artists. However, there was also an ongoing tradition of bringing Newari artists from Nepal to Tibet to produce works for the Tibetans since it was believed that these artists, especially the painters, were able to closely replicate the Pāla style. The importance of the Newari artists to the transmission of Pāla styles to Tibet is almost immeasurable, for they were like parts of a venturi tube in the flow of Pāla art styles north — what came into Nepal as a modest flow went forth to Tibet as a torrent. Not only did the Newaris create works of art in Tibet but they must also be credited with the training of Tibetan artists in the Pāla style. During the late eleventh and most of the twelfth century, they were not the only source of Pāla influence in Tibet, for Tibet was still in contact with Pāla India. But by the thirteenth century, with the brutal Muslim destruction of Pāla period monasteries in Bihar and Bengal, the Nepalese became the only source of the Pāla style.

In Tibetan literature, the term for works of art in the Pāla style is 'Shar mthun', literally, 'East agreeing (with)', or '(Style) agreeing (with the) east(ern Indic school)'. The Tibetan term refers to eastern India as a generic whole without reference to geographic or stylistic subdivisions, and thus traditional Tibetan nomenclature lacks the subtlety of definition necessary for modern technical stylistic analysis. Accordingly, it is necessary to modify the term with the designations 'Early', 'Transitional' and 'Late', although it must be understood that the categories overlap considerably. In spite of the developments over time, it is likely that artists in each of these phases believed that they were strictly following the Shar mthun style.

The Shar mthun idiom is well documented by a number of small sculptures in stone which have survived. By no later than the end of the eleventh or the early twelfth century, these remarkably crafted, truly exquisite miniature carvings were being produced in a variety of stones. Predominantly made of a very fine grained, yellowish-white stone, these carvings are often a *tour de force* of carving skill and sculptural conceptualization. A representation of Guhyasamāja Mañjuvajra now in the collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 16) is characteristic of this medium. Based on their extraordinary resemblance to Pāla period images, some scholars have suggested that such images are of Pāla origin, but a detailed analysis indicates that they are Tibetan. That the images have created so much discussion as to whether they are Tibetan or Indian is, indeed, a compliment to their Tibetan carvers, who were attempting to replicate the Pāla style as closely as possible. While many elements, such as the lotus pedestal, are virtual replicas of comparable forms in Pāla art, details of the jewellery, crowns and facial features indicate that such images were crafted outside the Pāla region.

A painting of Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā in the collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 17 and cover) is unique in its exquisite detailing which is almost beyond the limits of unaided visual examination. The details of the gem encrusta-



(Fig. 16) Guhyasamāja Mañjuvājra (Tib. gSang 'dus 'Jam rdo rje)
Tibet, Early Shar mthun style, c. 12th century
Fine-grained, yellow-beige stone (phyllite?)
Height 7.3 cm, width 4.7 cm
The Cleveland Museum of Art
Edwin R. and Harriet Pelton Perkins Memorial Fund (87.44)

tions, foliated designs, figurative representations on the architecture and the iconography are all rendered so tiny that they are nearly invisible to the casual observer.

The painting displays a combination of Pāla, Nepalese and Tibetan features but has been attributed to the Nepalese tradition by most scholars. However, a lengthy inscription in the Tibetan script and language on the back of the painting is a consecration prayer normally used by the bKa' gdams sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore, it is evident that the painting was made in Tibet for Tibetan consumption. However, its strong relationship with Nepalese-style painting suggests that there are two possibilities regarding its authorship: it may have been produced by a Nepalese artist in Tibet or it may have been created by a Tibetan painter trained by a Nepalese artist in the Nepalese style. Regarding the first possibility, the Tibetan elements are within the limits of variation known to have been available to Nepalese artists. It is well established that the Nepalese artists did what was essentially 'contract' work for the Tibetans and made every effort to copy the necessary styles and iconography to meet the needs of their patrons. This would account for the front-facing animals, the Tibetan Buddhist robes of the patron and other Tibetan details. Regarding the second suggestion, it is possible that a Tibetan artist had integrated Tibetan elements into an already mixed style consisting of Pāla and Nepalese components. Although it can probably never be proven one way or the other, one factor suggests that the latter is the case: while the Nepalese are also

masters of miniature painting, Nepalese paintings do not normally approach the minuteness of detail seen in this painting. Yet in much of Tibetan art of the period, including the stone sculptures discussed above, as well as manuscript illustrations and paintings, there is a similar emphasis on detail. The miniaturization in this painting is, therefore, far more in keeping with the thirteenth-century Tibetan artistic milieu than that of Nepal. For this reason and because of the mixed eastern Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan elements and the Tibetan composition itself, it may be suggested that the painting is of the Transitional Shar mthun school.

Another Transitional Shar mthun piece is a metal image of Sita Mañjughoṣa (Fig. 18), or more properly, 'Sita Mañjughoṣa according to the Teachings of Śākyaśrī', the Kashmiri *paṇḍita* (scholar), if one translates the Tibetan name literally. This lost wax-cast image is a masterpiece of the wax modeller's art, in the subtle modelling of the facial features and anatomy, as well as the crisply defined jewellery and accessories. The crown is so sharply defined as to appear, even under close examination, that it is a separate piece gently resting on the bodhisattva's head rather than cast as part of it. A comparison with numerous images that may be identified as products of workshops in the gTsang district of Tibet reveals that this work may well have been made in gTsang in the late thirteenth or the fourteenth century. It is notable that the best gTsang-district workshops were able to produce images of this quality for some three hundred years, from the mid or late thirteenth century well into the sixteenth century.

Another factor that enters into the discussion of Tibetan art is the ongoing influence from China, which strongly affected the Shar mthun style. One of the most spectacular images to demonstrate the amalgamation of the Chinese influence with the Pāla-derived style is the Śyāma Tārā image in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (Fig. 19). Astonishingly elaborate, the image represents the pinnacle of Tibetan craftsmanship and sculptural artistry. The main figure of Tārā and her two male attendants are clearly derived from the Pāla stylistic lineage, thus affirming the stylistic designation 'Late Shar mthun'. However, Chinese elements may be seen in portions of the lotus base, the swirling waters surrounding the stalk of the lotus, and the use of the parcel-gilding technique in which only portions of an image are gilded.

The large lotus throne upon which Tārā is seated is made up of three different types of lotus petals. The upper set of petals is elaborated only with a copper inset in the centre and a thin line of gold around the edge of the petal. The middle petal consists of a trefoil with a single sub-petal in the centre and is a type that seems to have developed either in China or in Khams (in eastern Tibet) and brought back to central Tibet in the fourteenth century. These petals are also ornamented with a copper inlay in the centre of the sub-petal and with a line of gold around the trefoil. Below them is a flower of gilded petals that is actually part of the major casting for the base; an unidentified substance fills the joint between the silver image and the pedestal. New syntheses such as this were the forerunners of the more familiar Sino-Tibetan style and were the product of a little-known period of self-confidence and experimentation on the part of Tibetan artists that occurred from the fourteenth to early sixteenth century.



(Fig. 17) Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā (Tib. sGrol ljang ma)
Tibet, Transitional Shar mthun style, c. mid 12th to early 13th century
Opaque watercolour on cotton
Height 52.1 cm, width 43.2 cm
The Cleveland Museum of Art
Purchase from the J.H. Wade Fund by exchange (70.156)



(Fig. 18) Sita Mañjughoṣa According to the Teachings of Śākyaśrī, the Kashmiri *paṇḍita* (Tib. 'Jam dbyangs dkar po Kha che Pañchen lugs) Tibet, gTsang district, Transitional Shar mthun style, c. end 13th or 14th century
Brass with silver inlays (untested) and inset turquoise, chased detailing
Height 27 cm, width 20 cm
Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection (70.62)



(Fig. 19) Śyāma Tārā (Tib. sGrol ljang ma)
Tibet, Late Shar mthun style, c. 14th century
Silver with parcel gilding, gold, silver and copper inlays, copper alloys, fire gilding (all untested); chased and chiselled detailing; originally set with stones
Height 22.2 cm, width 15.2 cm
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, The Williams Fund (84.74)

The Sino-Tibetan School

Beginning in the twelfth century, there was a period of Nepalese influence culminating in the Tibetan Bal ('Nepalese') school. While based on the Nepalese understanding of the Pāla tradition, the style contained additional elements from Nepalese art. It was encouraged in Tibet by the presence of Nepalese artists and disseminated widely among Tibetan artists, especially those in the gTsang district, who considered themselves painters in the Nepalese style ('*Bal bris*'). During the thirteenth century, it became one of the predominant styles and began to feed influence back into Nepal.

As these artistic developments were taking place, the political arena in northern Asia was in constant turmoil due to the Mongol conquest of virtually all of the Asian heartland between 1206 and 1279. During this period, the Tibetans sent envoys to the various Mongol camps to sue for peace. In particular, a mission was sent to Prince Godan, who in 1260 became Kublai Khan, ruler of the Mongol empire. The mission, which took place in 1251, included the head of the Sa skya sect and his nephew, 'Phags pa. Through a series of debates culminating in the 1258 debates of the Daoists and the Buddhists, 'Phags pa rose to eminence in the religious life at the Mongol court. He subsequently returned to Tibet to build a golden *stūpa* at the request of Kublai Khan. Among the workmen recruited for this task were eighty Nepalese artisans, one of whom was the prodigy Anige. Summoned to return to the Mongol court in 1269, 'Phags pa took the twenty-five year old Anige with him. In less than two years, Anige had risen to unprecedented power at the Mongol court and was appointed to the position of minister responsible for religious works of art. By 1279, when the Mongol Khan had proclaimed himself the 'Son of Heaven' and thereby the proper ruler of China, Anige was ensconced in the Mongol bureaucracy as the head of the ministry of arts and crafts. His early training in the Tibetan Bal school led to the extension of the Pāla stylistic idioms into the Chinese cultural sphere with a sureness and authority that can only be accounted for by his direct involvement with the work itself. Ultimately, the ministry that he established and its direct Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) descendants were to affect the production of Buddhist art for the next



(Fig. 20) Śaḍaḅṣarī Avalokiteśvara (Tib. sPyan ras gzigs yi ge drug pa) China, Sino-Tibetan, mixture of Late Shar mthun and Chinese schools, Mongol empire or Yuan period, c. late 13th or early fourteenth century
Silver with parcel gilding; the base may be gilt bronze or other alloy of copper (untested)
Height 14 cm
Collection of Mr and Mrs John Gilmore Ford

seven hundred years.

In spite of the fact that creations by Chinese artists in the service of the Tibetan Bal tradition must be ranked among the finest products of religious art anywhere in the world, they have not received their appropriate recognition within traditional Chinese scholarship. The school had a long and involved history, including a little-known Pāla revival under the Qianlong emperor. No sculpture or painting by Anige himself is known to have survived. However, a silver image of Śaḍaḅṣarī Avalokiteśvara in the collection of Mr and Mrs John Gilmore Ford (Fig. 20) shows what such a product might have been like. One of the most elegantly beautiful of all Sino-Tibetan metal images, the body convention and facial features remain close to their Pāla ancestors while many of the techniques and the detailing are decidedly Chinese. The vigorously modelled facial features and upper body contrast sharply with the subtle undulating folds of the drapery in a very complex combination of stylistic elements. The almost naturalistic folds of the drapery are based on Chinese prototypes of the Mongol empire (1206-79) and Yuan (1279-1368) periods.



(Fig. 21a) Detail of Figure 21

While it is impossible to determine the origin of the piece, the quality of workmanship, the accuracy with which the Pāla conventions have been continued, and the great precision with which the parcel gilding has been done all suggest the imperial ateliers of the Mongols, possibly under the direct supervision or even including actual work by the Nepalese master Anige.

In China, although iconographic and stylistic elements derived from the Pāla tradition were preserved, the forms were often adapted to media that were strictly Chinese, as seen in a *kesi* textile showing Cakrasaṃvara (Fig. 21). *Kesi* textiles, long known for their incredible detailing and virtually perfect craftsmanship, were a natural continuation of the East Asian textile tradition in the service of Buddhism. The *kesi*, or slit-weave technique, is distinctive insofar as where the colours of the design change, an internal selvage is formed. This produces the characteristic slits that appear at first examination to be tiny breaks in the fabric. In areas where the effect of shading is desired, 'dovetail-tapestry' techniques are used. In this technique, the colours are interwoven across the same (and sometimes several) warp threads leaving no slit. The Chinese *kesi* artists raised the slit-weave technique to the level of the finest-detailed pictorial representations anywhere in the world. Close inspection of the fabric (Fig. 21a) reveals that not a single thread of the entire surface is out of place. Stylistically, the image of Cakrasaṃvara is derived from the Pāla tradition and is a direct descendant of the Bal school in southern Tibet (gTsang). Apart from the technique, which is quintessentially Chinese, and some minor elaborations to the petals of the lotus pedestal, little that is of Chinese influence has been added to the Pāla-derived convention.

These fabrics became the archetype of Buddhist textiles in the Tibetan realm, and are renowned and admired among Tibetan artists to the present day. Moreover, they are the source of much of the Chinese stylistic impetus that directly affected Tibetan painting for generations after their introduction into Tibet.



(Fig. 21) Cakrasaṃvara (Tib. dPal 'khor lo sdom pa, also known as bDe mchog)
 China, Sino-Tibetan Bal style, Yuan dynasty,
 c. 1333 or 1360-64
 Silk *kesi*
 Height 126 cm, width 72.5 cm
 Collection of Dr Wesley and Mrs Carolyn Halpert



(Fig. 22) Bodhisattva
China, Sino-Tibetan style, Ming dynasty, c. 15th century
Copper, fire gilding and blue pigment
Height 45.8 cm
The Newark Museum
Gift of C. Suydam Cutting (50.146)

Chinese Buddhist art after the Yuan dynasty suffers much the same lack of appreciation in scholarly opinion as that of the Yuan. Yet, under the ongoing patronage of both the Ming and Qing courts, Buddhist sculpture of the highest quality continued to be created. Among the identifiable Ming examples is a bodhisattva in the collection of The Newark Museum (Fig. 22). One of the very few surviving examples of this spectacular idiom, this stylistically complex image is representative of the Chinese court synthesis and represents the culmination of Pāla influence abroad. During the early Ming, and especially under the Yongle (r. 1403-24) and Xuande (r. 1426-35) emperors, the bKa'rgyud sect received imperial patronage at the highest level. Presently known records are unclear as to whether imperially commissioned images were the product of the same office originally under Anige's direction during the Mongol empire and Yuan periods or not. However, these

images are so finely crafted in every respect, richly enhanced by multiple layers of fire gilding and superbly detailed in every way, that they may well have been the products of imperial workshops.

Stylistically, the figure exhibits features and conventions from Pāla India, Nepal, Tibet and, of course, Ming China. The basic anatomy of the figure with its *tribhanga* ('thrice bent') posture, soft, fleshy treatment of the skin surfaces, and a few details of the crown may be traced to Indic prototypes, presumably filtered through Nepalese craftsmen. However, the crown and jewellery have received the direct benefit of Nepalese influence. In contrast, much of the jewellery (such as the pendants hanging from the necklaces), the billowing scarves and sashes, and the facial features are the result of Chinese addenda and interpretations. However, such a conscious division of elements on the part of the artists is not implied. On the contrary, it must be assumed that Chinese craftsmen, probably working under the iconographic or iconological tutelage of either Tibetan or Nepalese artisans, were probably aware of making a 'foreign-style' image, possibly even considering it 'Indian'; but the Sino-Tibetan stylistic synthesis, having begun in the pre-Yuan Mongol empire period, was so complete that they were also simply making their own type of image.

While the Pāla period was not the only phase of India's rich history to affect the artistic and cultural traditions of other regions of Asia, the transformations it engendered throughout Asia were both widespread and enduring. Brought to a close prematurely in the land of its birth, Pāla culture continued to thrive in the artistic traditions of the regions it had once nourished.

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The exhibition 'Leaves from the *Bodhi* Tree: The Art of Pāla India (8th-12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy' has been organized by The Dayton Art Institute and will be shown at the following venues: The Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, Ohio, 11 November 1989 to 14 January 1990; The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland, 17 February 1990 to 15 April 1990; The Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey, 19 May 1990 to 26 August 1990; The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, The University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 9 October 1990 to 2 December 1990. A comprehensive, fully illustrated catalogue has been written by Guest Curators Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington. The exhibition has been funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, The India Foundation of Dayton, David R. Nalin, The Merck Company, a private donor and an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities. Research assistance for the catalogue was provided by The Ohio State University Office of Research and Graduate Studies and The Ohio State University College of the Arts. A scholarly symposium relating to the exhibition, funded by the Ohio Humanities Council, will be held at The Dayton Art Institute on 11 November 1989.

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Suggested further reading

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