The Circle of Bliss

BUDDHIST MEDITATIONAL ART

by
John C. Huntington and Dina Bangdel
The Ohio State University

Foreword
by
Robert A. F. Thurman
Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies
Columbia University

with contributions by
graduate students in the
Department of the History of Art
The Ohio State University

COLUMBUS MUSEUM OF ART Columbus, Ohio

SERINDIA PUBLICATIONS Chicago

Tantra in India

| CATHLEEN A. CUMMINGS

Tantra is common to Buddhists, Jains, and various Hindu sects, such as the Shaivite Kapalikas. Indeed, during the early medieval period there appears to have been little or no sectarianism among Tantric adepts, who might accept initiation in and practice Buddhist, Shaivite, and Shakta methodologies simultaneously.[1] While the metaphysical systems of the Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains explain the fundamental nature of reality, the object of their Tantric literature is to disclose practical—albeit esoteric—methods that could be used to realize that reality. The Tantras do not profess new truths so much as new techniques for realizing the truth. In the Buddhist context, these techniques are considered to be not only effective but also extremely rapid, enabling attainment of release, or transformation to the state of Buddhahood, within a single lifetime.

A number of essential elements help to identify Tantra. These include the use of sacred sound (mantra), sacred diagrams (mandala), and sacred gesture (mudra). We also find an emphasis on truth as resident in and realized through the body, the use of esoteric yoga and ritual practices, and the centrality of the master-disciple relationship. An emphasis on the female principle is another key distinguishing feature of Tantra, as is the use of sexual symbolism. The latter is part of a larger pattern of polarity symbolism, or use of dual pairs to point to nondual truths and states of awareness. Thus, Tantric metaphysical systems conceive of absolute reality in terms of the ultimate nonduality of two aspects or attributes that are expressed in terms of various gendered polarities. These two aspects are conceived of as male and female, god and goddess, right and left, sun and moon, and other gendered pairs. Tantric methods are specifically intended to reunite these dual principles in order to achieve a supreme nondual state.

The dualistic principles of male and female abide within every human body in the form of the left and right nerve channels (*nadi*) of the subtle body through which vital winds course. From this notion comes the practice of esoteric yogic meditation intended to unite the winds of the left and right channels into a single, central channel as a means of attaining the nondual state. Moreover, Tantric Buddhism emphasizes that realization of the fundamental nondual nature of reality is impossible without the attainment of the great bliss (*mahasukha*) that is reached only through the unification of male and female elements and principles within the body. Thus, without the body there could be no great bliss and hence no realization.

In Tantrism, the human body is conceived as a microcosm of the universe. All the pilgrimage sites, or *pithas*, are within the body.[2] Saraha, the famed Great Adept (Mahasiddha) and the first guru, or teacher, of the lineage of Chakrasamvara and Mahamudra, wrote,[3] "I have visited in my wanderings shrines and other places of pilgrimage, but I have not seen another shrine blissful like my own body."[4] One of the fundamental postulates of Tantric texts, both Buddhist and Hindu, is that all the deities, together with the supreme truth, reside in the human body. These writings reiterate that the human body is the best medium through which truth is to be realized.[5] The essential dualities of the phenomenal, mundane world (samsara) and the final cessation (nirvana), as well as wisdom and means, are within the human body, whether in the form of a male and female in union, or simply within the single human body that comprises both aspects.[6]

Chakrasamvara, Nalanda, Bihar, India, 9th century, bronze.

Tantric meditative practices focus on awakening the subtle body within the yogi as the method to attain *shunyata*, the unconditioned state. The subtle body consists of *nadi* (channels that carry *prana*, wind or vital energy) and a set of chakras, points of convergence along these *nadi* channels. In meditative absorption, the practitioner causes the winds or vital energies to rise up through the central *nadi* channel, awakening each chakra in turn, culminating in the awakening of the uppermost chakra and the attainment of the experience of enlightenment. The emphasis on yogic practice centering of the subtle body within every individual is of fundamental importance to esoteric Buddhist practice.

Further, in the nondual outlook of Tantra, the dualism of purity and impurity is collapsed, rendering Tantra famous—or infamous, as it were—for practices considered deviant and spiritually polluting, such as the consumption of meat and alcohol, magical rites involving bones and skulls, association with cremation grounds, and engagement in sexual activity with partners of other castes. The Tantric view is that nothing is impure for one who has a nondualistic outlook, and thus realization can arise out of the most seemingly impure activities.

The teacher-disciple relationship is the cornerstone of Tantric teaching and practice. Tantra is a secret system requiring special initiation, which is bestowed on a disciple by his or her Guru. Moreover, Tantric literature consists of highly technical ritual and yogic manuals that cannot be mastered merely by reading them, but require the direct

aid of a Guru who can introduce the initiate to the Tantras' specific ritual vocabularies. Only those students whom the Guru regards as suitable are accepted as disciples and granted initiation.[7] The guru must have already successfully accomplished the Bodhisattva path and attained the highest level of realization. The disciple views and honors the Guru as the living embodiment of all teachings, all deities, and all Buddhas[8] (see essay, Guru-Disciple Relationship).

The evolution of Tantric Buddhism in India is complex and difficult to trace. There is no single source or even a commonly accepted pool of sources for the times, places, and circumstances of the formation and appearance of Tantric thought and iconography. The questions of when Tantrism arose and when the first texts were written and first images made have not yet been fully answered. Tantric practices, texts, and images seem not to have emerged in tandem but each on its own historical trajectory, making it difficult to establish the chronology of the Tantric movement in a systematic way. However, because Tantric practices are esoteric and secret, there is general agreement that there could well have been a long stage of oral development and transmission before their commitment to written form. The appearance of the texts will be discussed below.

Elements of Tantric practice can be found in the earliest textual and artistic records known from the Indian subcontinent. Tantric characteristics appearing in the context of fertility sects and in the worship of the Mother Goddess are believed to date to pre-Aryan times.[9] The so-called yogin seal from Mohenjo-Daro (ca. 2600–1800 B.C.E.) is often described as a prototype for the Tantric *siddhas* and of the ascetic nature of Siva and therefore seems to point to very early yogic practice. In the *Vedas,* mantras, or aural energy, play a significant role. Similarly, aspects of Vedic ritual, as represented by the *Atharva Veda*, the *Samavidhana Brahmana*, and the *shadvimsha Brahmana*, combine some of the semi-religious, semi-magical practices of the Tantras.[10] By the Vedic period (ca. 1500–900 B.C.E.), the non-Vedic religions of India incorporated the concept of unity in the duality of male and female, represented in anthropomorphic or symbolic form (i.e., *linga* and *yoni*), the practice of yoga in which the human body was conflated with the universe, and the use of mantras in magic spells and rites. Each of these concepts is significant in Tantric literature and practice. One text in particular, the *Atharva Veda*, assumed by most to be an apocryphal Veda, contains visions, meditations, and assumptions that are clearly pre- or proto-Tantric.

Some of these concepts are found in the philosophical texts, such as the *Upanishads* and the later *Puranas* as well as the *Agama* literature. The dates of these texts are not known but the *Upanishads* are conventionally dated to approximately 500 B.C.E., the *Puranas* and *Agamas* to a slightly later date. The ancient *Agamic* texts may be the source of much that appears in the Tantric literature.[11] The *Kamika Agama*, for example, explains Tantra as a class of text that deals with *tattva* (fundamental reality) and mantra (sonic essence), while the authority of the Tantras in religious matters is recognized in the *Bhagavata Purana.*[12]

The Tantras and Tantric Buddhist practices were always esoteric and secret, not meant for general knowledge. There was certainly a long stage of oral development and transmission of the *sadhanas* before their commitment to written form. Esoteric Buddhism developed out of, and as a continuation of, general Mahayana philosophy; it is placed squarely within the framework of Mahayana teachings on emptiness and compassionate motivation. Ideas found in *Prajnaparamita* literature are foundational to both the non-Tantric Mahayana practices and to the later Tantric methodologies. The doctrine of the inherent emptiness of existence, the description of the career of a Bodhisattva as the cultivation of the two great qualities of compassion and wisdom, and the emphasis on the cult of the female principle found in the *Prajnaparamita* texts are all key elements of esoteric Buddhism. The *Prajnaparamita* literature also contains the paraphernalia of worship that is to be found in Tantra, including mantra recitation.[13] What distinguishes the Prajnaparamita/Mahayana from Vajrayana are the special methods and processes used by Buddhist Tantric practitioners to achieve enlightenment within a single lifetime rather than through the extensive cycle of rebirths required to fulfill the Mahayana Bodhisattva path. Both sets of philosophies view the perfection of emptiness, wisdom, and compassionate motivation for enlightenment as essential.

The Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajnaparamita*) literature describes the stages of the Bodhisattva path and the lands and activities of multiple Buddhas. It emphasizes the perfection of wisdom—the understanding that all appearances are empty of inherent existence—as the final perfection of the Bodhisattva path. Perfection of wisdom is attained with cognition of the emptiness of the inherent existence of all things and is personified as the great goddess Prajnaparamita, who is understood to be the mother of all Buddhas. She is also the prototype of the female counterpart, or *prajna,* of the Buddhas. The doctrine of the inherent emptiness of existence, the description of the esoteric career of a Bodhisattva as the embodiment of the two great qualities of compassion and wisdom, and the emphasis on the sect of the female principle found in the Perfection of Wisdom texts are all key elements of esoteric Buddhism. The *Prajnaparamita Sutras* also contain the paraphernalia of worship that are to be found in Tantra.[14] The Sutras are believed to have been in existence by 100 B.C.E.[15]

By the 4th to 5th centuries C.E., various Mahayana schools had developed a greater esoteric Buddhist flavor. In the Madhyamaka tradition the inherently empty nature of every being is likened to the inherently empty nature of Buddhahood. Therefore, since all beings possess a nature undifferentiated from the Buddha-nature, the task of every being is not to "attain" enlightenment but simply to uncover and know their own Buddha-ness, their inherent Buddha-nature. The Yogachara tradition places great emphasis on the practice of yoga—meditative concentration and the withdrawal of the mind from sensory phenomena—as the path to salvation.

A number of *sutras* and *samgitis* related to the Prajnaparamita, Madhyamaka, Yogachara, and other schools within Mahayana Buddhism may be classed as Tantric or proto-Tantric.[16] Among the Mahayana texts bearing a Tantric or proto-Tantric stamp are the *Mahavairochana Sutra;* the *Karandavyuha Sutra*, probably composed before the 4th century C.E.; the *Suvarnaprabhasa Sutra*, first translated into Chinese in 414 to 433 by Dharmaksena; the *Bhaishajyaguru Vaidurya Prabharaja Sutra,* translated into Chinese by Shrimitra between 317 and 322;[17] and the *Manjushri Mulakalpa.* Within *dharani* literature, a class of Mahayanic literature composed between the 4th and 8th centuries, are frequent references to mantra, mudra, mandala, action (*kriya*), and performance (*charya*)—elements by which the Tantric practices are characterized. The earliest extant *dharani* having purely Tantric contents is the *Mahamayuri-vidyarajni*, dedicated to one of the five protective goddesses (Pancha Raksha) and translated into Chinese by Shrimitra and by Kumarajiva between 402 and 412.[18] The Pancha Raksha are wrathful manifestations of the Jina Buddha Prajnas and the translation of a text to them, in 402 to 412, implies an extended period of several stages of development in the Indic context prior to the creation of the *Mahamayuri* text. These texts demonstrate that Tantric elements grew naturally out of those of general Mahayana and were not separate

or foreign to it and that these elements, at least individually, were present in Indian philosophical thought and practice from a very early moment.[19]

Tantric literature is based upon root *tantras*, texts that describe the mandala of a particular deity along with associated practices to be followed by the adept. These root *tantras* are considered to have been revealed by the Buddha himself in his form as Vajradhara. The Tantric revelations were practiced in strict secrecy and were never to be revealed to the uninitiated. Therefore, they may have been in oral circulation for centuries before being committed to writing.

In central India, the Gupta period (ca. 320–500) saw the growing importance of written texts and a season of great creativity in both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. At the same time, in this period, there arose a need for greater order in the Tantric systems, which could be facilitated by production of written texts.[20] The *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, the earliest of the revealed *tantras*, seems to have been compiled during the latter part of this period, that is, the 5th or 6th centuries. Other revealed *tantras* that appear to have been developed by the 8th century include the *Chakrasamvara Tantra*. The *Hevajra Tantra*, *Kalacakra Tantra,* and other texts of the Anuttara Yoga class seem to have been written somewhat later, between the 8th and 11th centuries.

The development of Tantric Buddhist thought and practice clearly gained great momentum in the 7th century, for during this time compilations of Tantric texts were being written and widely disseminated. By this time the great monastic universities of eastern India—Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Uddandapura—were increasingly becoming centers for Tantric study and practice. Chinese monks and travelers of the 7th century, such as Yi-Jing, reported that Tantric practice was underway at Nalanda monastery by the late 7th century.[21] From about the 8th century onward, Tantric Buddhism in India entered a new phase with the emergence of Tantric specialists and teachers, the Mahasiddhas, or Great Adepts. The adepts and scholars of the monastic universities developed a vast body of commentarial literature to explain obscure and difficult aspects of the esoteric teachings. Thus, the texts that form the Tibetan canon are divided into two collections: the revealed texts in the Kanjur and the exegetical literature in the Tanjur. Of more than 4,500 texts that make up this canon, most—some 4,000—are Indian in origin, many composed by the monastic scholars in Sanskrit, from which they were translated into Tibetan.[22] Commentarial literature continued to be composed within the walls of Nalanda and Vikramshila until the destruction of these monasteries in the 12th century. The majority of the extant Indian Sanskrit Buddhist literature today is found in Nepal among the Newar Buddhist community and has been copied into the local orthography of Bhujimol Newar or Nepal Bhasa scripts.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, the Tibetans developed a four-fold classification system for Tantric texts based on the types of practices each contained, especially their relative emphasis on external ritual or internal yoga.[23] The first two classes, the so-called lower Tantras, are the Kriya (Action) and Charya (Performance) Tantras; the two classes of higher Tantras are the Yoga and Anuttara Yoga (Highest Yoga) Tantras. The development from the proto-Tantric Mahayana texts to the Highest Yoga texts, the most complex and esoteric of the Buddhist writings, seems to have taken place in differing contexts in India between about the 4th and 10th centuries C.E. Geoffrey Samuel suggests that practices that would later be categorized as Action and Performance Tantra developed in the established monastic communities and monastic universities of eastern India. Practitioners of Action Tantra conceive of themselves and the deity as separate entities. The Kriya Tantra adept sees her- or himself as the servant of the deity and offers to the deity acts of devotion involving activities of body and speech.[24] The Performance Tantra practitioner utilizes both external activities and internal yoga but continues to visualize the deity as separate from and external to himself.

On the other hand, esoteric Buddhist practices of the so-called higher Tantras—the Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantra classes—seem to have developed outside of the established monastic communities, and their appearance in art occurs somewhat later than that of the lower Tantras. What characterizes these higher Tantras is the practitioner who identifies dynamically with the deity.[25] The practitioner of Yoga Tantra generates a vivid appearance of the deity and then absorbs the deity into himself. In Highest Yoga Tantra the practitioner actively transforms himself into a deity through training and manipulation of the subtle body while in a state of meditative absorption. According to Samuel, Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantra practices were initially confined to wandering ascetics and remained outside of the monastic context for some time.[26] Distinctions between lower and higher Tantric practices began to lessen, with the latter penetrating the monastic setting by the seventh century.[27]

Indian Teachers of Tantra

The rise of the Pala dynasty in Eastern India in the 8th century coincided with and encouraged the growth of Tantric Buddhism and its embrace by the monastic community. During the reign of the Pala dynasty and other local dynasties such as the Senas, between the 8th and 12th centuries C.E., the great monastic universities of Vikramashila, Oddantapuri, and Somapuri were built, while Nalanda Monastery was considerably enlarged. From the mid-8th century onward, several celebrated adeps and Tantric masters, who played a major role in the propagation of Highest Yoga Tantra in India and its transmission to Tibet, became associated with Nalanda. Among them are Nagarjuna, Asanga, Shantarakshita, Rahulabhadra, Kamalashila, Naropa (see Cat. 26), and Padmasambhava (see Cat. 31). Collections of Tantric instructional guides, such as the *Sadhanamala,* contain texts prepared by Nalanda-trained scholars such as Sarahapa, Advayavajra, Ratnakaragupta, and Abhayakragupta. Vikramashila and Oddantapura, too, played host to some of these most venerated Buddhist teachers and yogic adepts of the Pala period. Nalanda was also the location where Atisha, the key figure in the Second Propagation of Buddhism in Tibet, resided for some time before embarking on his lengthy teaching mission to Tibet.[28] The Mahasiddhas Naropa, Abhayakaragupta, Shantipa and *siddha*s such as Dharmapa were also associated with Vikramashila.

A *siddha* is a Tantric Buddhist adept. The term *siddha,* "adept," refers to a Tantric practitioner who is has attained the goal of meditation, an attainment is known as *siddhi.*[29] *Siddhi* is divided into two categories. Mundane *siddhi*s are magical and extrasensory powers, such as the abilities to walk through matter, speed-walk, see realities invisible to others, wield the enchanted sword of wisdom, remember past lives, and know the thoughts of others. These powers are gained through the four modes of ritual action, which accomplish pacification, enrichment, control, and destruction. The remarkable feats performed by the masters of mundane *siddhi*s demonstrate the efficacy of the Buddhist teachings and serve as instructional devices to demonstrate the ultimate nondual nature of reality.

Superior to the attainment of mundane *siddhi* is the achievement of *mahamudra siddhi*, the supreme enlightenment of a Buddha. Those who reached this goal were known as the Mahasiddhas, or Great Adepts. They

included the leading practitioners and scholars of Tantric Buddhism who were responsible for much of the vast commentarial literature surrounding the Tantras. The Great Adepts were men and women from all levels of society, from Brahmins to outcastes. What the Great Adepts had in common was the belief that Buddhahood can most directly and rapidly be achieved through extreme and arcane practices. Their performance of such practices stemmed from the idea that the passions—lust, greed, hatred, ignorance—can be vehicles for enlightenment. Tantric theory holds that if the passions were suppressed they would be free to work their negative power at a subconscious level, but if confronted and transformed, the passions can be transmuted into positive conditions for enlightenment. The Great Adepts frequently did their practices in cremation grounds or in the wilderness, thus placing themselves beyond the bounds of everyday, civilized society. Although the Great Adepts might be wildly unconventional in their lifestyles and religious methods, they did not repudiate the traditional philosophical Mahayana Buddhist teachings. Many among the Great Adepts were great masters and scholars of Mahayana philosophy, such as Shantarakishta, Shantideva, Nagarjuna, and Asanga. Their unconventional and even transgressive behaviors were in fact techniques of self-discipline aimed at inner mastery.

Conventionally, there are considered to be eighty-four Great Adepts, the majority of whom lived between the 8th and 12th centuries, at the apex of Tantric Buddhism in India. The stories of the Great Adepts serve as historical narrative, instructive allegories, and proof of the efficacy of Tantric methods for realizing Buddhahood within the context of earthly existence.

Each of the legends of the eighty-four Great Adepts is an archetype for the perfect esoteric Buddhist practitioner. The structure of the legends is similar, generally beginning with a description of the life and character of the adept before his or her quest for enlightenment, the situation through which he or she requests instruction from a Guru, the initiation received from the Guru, and the method (*sadhana*) through which the adept became a living Buddha within his or her own body. The first encounter with the Guru is generally the pivotal moment in each legend. The following short accounts of three of the Mahasiddhas will clarify the process by which all activity in which a Tantric practitioner engages can be recast into an expression of Buddha-nature.

In most accounts of the eighty-four Great Adepts, Luipa figures as the first in the series. His life story bears many similarities to that of Shakyamuni Buddha. Luipa (see Cat. 27) was born a prince, but he sought only escape from the life of wealth and power. Soon after taking the throne as king he escaped in the night from his palace and became a yogi. Although he was successful in his meditative practices, he could not entirely remove from his heart a trace of royal pride, which was manifested as an attachment to the purity of his food. His discipline, or method of breaking this attachment, was to eat the entrails of the fish caught by the fisherman of the Ganges River. For twelve years he performed this practice, until he was finally able to grasp the fundamental nondual nature of all manifestation. Since the fish guts he consumed were inherently nonexistent, they were no different from a pure and sumptuous feast.[30]

The story of Mahasiddha Shantideva is instructive regarding the nature and power of the attainment of perfect wisdom, or realization of emptiness. Shantideva was a monk at the great academy of Nalanda. He was known as Bhusuku, "the Idler," because he would not learn or recite the scriptures but focused only on eating and sleeping, with the occasional walk to aid his digestion. The abbot of Nalanda finally lost patience with the laggard and ordered that he take his turn at scriptural recitation or be expelled from the monastery. The abbot instructed him to recite the mantra of Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. When Shantideva forced himself to remain awake one night repeating the mantra, Manjushri himself appeared before him and granted him the power of perfect insight. The next day Shantideva was able to prove his attainment of this power before the abbot, the king, and all the monks of Nalanda. As he recited a passage from the ninth chapter of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* concerning the inherent emptiness of all existence, he rose up and dissolved into the sky. After this event, Shantideva left Nalanda, performing further miracles that revealed the fundamental nonduality of all things, including birth and death.[31]

Rahula was one of many Great Adepts of low-caste birth. His legend teaches the efficacy of meditation on nonduality. As he grew to old age, Rahula suffered from senility and a lack of control over his bodily functions, and his family abused him. He began to think only of death and his next rebirth, and he wandered the cremation grounds in search of a guru who might instruct him. Eventually, a yogi instructed Rahula in how to meditate on the mystic seed-syllable "A" as manifested on the crown of his head. He was to visualize a moon disk, a mystic circle, emanating from this syllable. Rahula envisioned all phenomenal existence as entering and dissolving into this moon disk until his perceptions of the reality of such phenomena gave way to the realization of the fundamental nonduality of all things. Upon achieving this realization, Rahula gained the body of a sixteen-year-old youth, and after teaching nondual philosophy to the people of his town, attained the Paradise of the Dakinis.[32]

The Great Adepts played a critical role in the transmission of Tantric Buddhism to Tibet. In Tibet, Tantric texts and practices are considered to be meaningless to an adherent without a transmission lineage, that is, an unbroken lineage of realized masters who communicate the esoteric meaning of the text and perpetuate its tradition. All of the New (Sarma) School transmissions of Tantric Buddhism in Tibet derive from one of the Great Adepts. For example, Tilopa taught the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* to Naropa, who taught it to Atisha, the founder of the Kadam or Gelug school. Naropa transmitted the *Chakrasamvara* and *Guhyasamaja Tantras* to Marpa, founder of the Kagyu school, while Virupa is recognized as the founder of the Sakya order. Indeed, even in Tibetan Buddhism today, the validity of a religious doctrine depends upon whether it has Indian origins or derives from a lineage of teachers that originated with one of the Indian Great Adepts.

Development of Tantric Art and Iconography in India

The first large corpus of extant art of Tantric Buddhism in India appears in approximately the 6th century and relates primarily to the traditions of the Kriya and Charya Tantras. These Tantras largely concern external practices involving extensive use of ritual, mantra, and *dharanis*, as opposed to the more internal, highly structured, meditative rituals of the Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantras, to which the *Chakrasamvara Tantra* belongs. In the Kriya and Charya texts, the emphasis is on Shakyamuni Buddha and forms of the great Bodhisattvas, such as Avalokiteshvara and Tara, particularly in their protective aspects. The art and iconography of this aspect of Tantric Buddhism were closely associated with Buddhist monasteries and communal environments. Certain iconographic innovations occur in Buddhist art with the growth of the Kriya and Charya Tantras. The Buddhist pantheon becomes greatly expanded, and

a proliferation of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and goddesses is seen. The increased appearance and importance of female imagery is an especially important feature of the advent of Tantric iconography. Further, deities are increasingly envisioned within ever more complex images and iconographic programs, including an emphasis on a Buddha triad arrangement with Shakyamuni accompanied by Avalokiteshvara, or one of his forms, and Vajrapani. Avalokiteshvara himself is seen in a wide variety of forms, with multiple limbs and attributes signifying a greater ideological complexity. This form of Tantric Buddhist art can be seen at the cave complexes of the western Deccan from the 6th century on, and in the monasteries of Orissa, Bihar, and Bengal in Eastern India from the 7th century.

The Buddhist caves of the western Deccan, constructed between the 6th and 11th centuries, contain perhaps the earliest-known images that are accepted as being related to Tantric beliefs and practices. Cave 90 at Kanheri, north of present-day Mumbai, dates to the early to mid-6th century.[33] Among the reliefs carved on the walls of the cave are two that display fully Tantric notions. On the left wall of the shrine is a mandala depicting a central Buddha figure attended by two Bodhisattvas, two female figures, and a number of subsidiary deities. In the four corners of the central space are four more seated Buddha figures identical in form to the central Buddha; in the outer space of the relief are eight standing Buddha figures. This relief, as interpreted by John C. Huntington, is a representation of Vairochana Buddha surrounded in the immediate space by the other four Tathagata Buddhas, and in the outer level by the eight Manushi Buddhas.[34] The presence of a mandala is an example of the increasing complexity of iconographic schema, and, in this case, also an example of the explosion of the Buddhist pantheon that resulted from the use of the Kriya and Charya Tantras. If Huntington's interpretation is correct, this relief also demonstrates an understanding of the underlying mandala of Highest Yoga Tantra, that of the five Jina Buddhas who personify the knowledge of a Buddha's enlightenment and impart such knowledge to the Tantric practitioner. Mandalas of the five Jina Buddhas are found on votive stupas at such sites as Ratnagiri and Bodh Gaya in eastern India, but the dates of these are unknown, since the votive stupas are not dated and may have been donated to the site at any time during its fluorescence. If the Kanheri Cave 90 relief does indeed depict the Five Jina Mandala, some of the votive stupas of eastern India with the same theme may date to this equally early period.

Two other early rock-cut Tantric mandalas are found at Cave 6 at Ellora, dated by Geri Malandra to ca. 600.[35] These are carved on the left and right side walls of the cave's shrine and are designed as nine-part square diagrams, with a Buddha displaying the teaching gesture (*dharmachakra mudra*) in each section. Conceptually, it is to be understood that the Buddha figure at the center of the composition generates the surrounding eight figures, and these figures are arrayed four in the cardinal and four in the intermediate directions and are aspects or reflections of the central figure. The mandala is the sacred enclosure of the deity as well as a map of the macrocosm with which the practitioner seeks to identify. The use of mandalas is foundational to all forms of Tantric practice, and the presence of such mandalas here reveals that these practices were in use at Ellora by this early date.

In Kanheri Cave 90 on the right wall of the shrine is a relief of a type that appears in several of the western Deccan caves and is known as the Litany of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Here, Avalokiteshvara, flanked by his two female consorts, Tara and Bhrikuti, is represented as a protector and savior against various types of perils. On an exoteric level, these perils represent imminent physical dangers such as attack by lions or robbers, but they can also be interpreted on a more esoteric level as hindrances to spiritual attainment.[36] Another version of the Litany of Avalokiteshvara, this one also dating to the mid-6th century, is found at Cave 7 at Aurangabad. In both these examples, Avalokiteshvara is presented at the center of an elaborate mandala-like array that reveals the growing elaboration of Buddhist iconography and an emphasis upon the Bodhisattva as the primary object of the practitioner's attention, both characteristics of the Kriya Tantras.

Sculpture at Caves 6 and 7 at Aurangabad reveals further indebtedness to Tantric Buddhist practice in its inclusion of sculptural groups of the Buddha Shakyamuni attended by Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani, a grouping described in one early Kriya Tantra text, the *Manjushri Mulakalpa*.[37] Cave 7 at Aurangabad is also noteworthy for the importance of female imagery in its reliefs. One relief to the left of the central shrine door depicts Tara, the consort of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, flanked by two other female figures attended by dwarves. Another relief, on the left wall inside the shrine, depicts a large image of a dancing woman accompanied by six female musicians. The emphasis on female imagery in this and other western caves reflects a greatly increased importance of the goddess, prefiguring her role in the Highest Yoga Tantras and in opposition to her relatively minor role in Mahayana Buddhism.[38] These images also suggest the growing importance of sexual symbolism in Tantric Buddhism.

The latest Buddhist cave at Ellora, Cave 12, dating to the early 8th century, represents a greatly matured and more confident version of the Kriya and Charya aspects of Tantric Buddhism, elements of which we have seen elsewhere at Ellora, and at Kanheri and Aurangabad, in the preceding two centuries. In the conception and decoration of Cave 12 (also known as Tin Thal) we find strong indications of the trend toward increasingly complex Buddhist iconography. Here we find elaborate deities who are conceived of in systems and in terms of a cosmic ideal that resulted from the impact of the tantras and that is distinct from Mahayana iconography, whose images reflect a focus on the present and on the historical personage of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Cave 12 is a vast, three-storied excavation. Each level of the cave includes a shrine housing an image of Buddha Shakyamuni attended by the two Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani—a grouping seen at Aurangabad as well as in Eastern India during this time period, and specifically linked to the Kriya Tantras. On either side of this central shrine image are carved eight additional Bodhisattvas. The cave also contains five identical mandalas carved in relief on the walls of the cave. As with the rock-cut relief mandala in Cave 6, these are square, nine-part diagrams. Three are located in the cave of the first level and two are in a niche cut between the first and second levels. Each mandala diagram illustrates a central Buddha figure surrounded by eight Bodhisattvas, a pattern that corresponds to the iconographic layout of the shrines on each of the three excavated levels. Clearly, each level of the cave is to be understood as a physical, three-dimensional mandalic space generated by the central deity in its shrine,[39] and the three levels as elements of a single scheme. Each of the three levels of the cave may represent a different, and increasingly higher, level of Buddhist spiritual attainment that mirrors the stages of the Tantric initiate as he or she advances in the practice. The unified, three-level program of the cave also suggests a relationship to the Tantric concept of the Three Buddha Bodies (*trikaya*) schema (see essay, Enlightenment).

In Eastern India, Buddhist communities created large monastic establishments that thrived until the destruction of Buddhism in the 12th and 13th centuries. The most significant of these were the monas-

teries of Nalanda, Ratnagiri, Vikramashila, Oddantapuri, and Somapuri. Unlike the Buddhist caves of the western Deccan, which were probably used primarily in the rainy season when a wandering monk would find travel difficult, the establishments of Eastern India would have been permanent residences for monks. These monasteries also served as major universities for the teaching of Theravada, Mahayana, and even Brahmanical texts, as well as logic, Sanskrit grammar, medicine, and other disciplines. The major establishments, Nalanda in particular, were renowned throughout the Buddhist world, regularly receiving students from China, Korea, Tibet, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Burma.

The monastery of Ratnagiri in Orissa was active from the 7th through the 13th centuries. The site consisted of two large monasteries, a number of small temples, a large main stupa, and hundreds of small votive stupas. As with most of the examples from this period in eastern India, little survives of the original brick architecture of the site, but large amounts of stone sculpture do remain. Examples from Ratnagiri indicate that the site was primarily a locus for Kriya and Charya Tantra activity, including numerous sculptures of Avalokiteshvara, particularly in his Tantric form as Amoghapasha, and an emphasis on Tara and on Shakyamuni Buddha, sometimes as part of the Buddha family triad with Vajrapani and Avalokiteshvara. Evidence for Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantra practice appears to have been well established by the 8th century or earlier (see Cat. 67).

According to Taranatha, the Emperor Ashoka made offerings to the stupa of Shariputra (one of the Buddha's disciples) at Nalanda and erected a temple there in the 3rd century B.C.E. Other scholars connected with Nalanda from early on included the 2nd-century Mahayana philosopher Nagarjuna and the Madhyamaka philosopher of the 4th century, Aryadeva. Archaeological evidence confirms that the great monastery of Nalanda was firmly established by the mid-5th century.[40] By the time the Chinese monk Xuanzang visited the site in the early 7th century, the monastery was a thriving Buddhist center with over three thousand monks in residence. In its early years, Nalanda inspired the development of the Madhyamaka, Yogachara, and Sautrantika schools of Mahayana Buddhism—all of which had significant implications for the development of the Buddhist Tantras. As a result, Nalanda became a center for the cultivation of Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantra practices. By at least the late 7th and early 8th centuries, Yoga Tantras were being taught there. The key Tantras of the Yoga Tantra class, such as the *Sarva Tathagata Tattva Samgraha* and the *Mahavairochana Sutra*, reached China in the early 8th century as the result of missionary activities by Nalanda-trained monks, including Shubhakarasimha, who arrived at the Chinese capital of Chang-an in 716, supplied, no doubt, with mandala diagrams and paintings to aid in teaching the Vairochana-cycle texts.[41] Unfortunately, the existence of such iconographic aides cannot be confirmed, as little artistic evidence of the Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantras survives from the period before the 9th to early 10th centuries, when this type of material began to be more widely sponsored by the monastic centers.

During the Pala period (750–1199), the monasteries of Vikramashila, Somapuri, Oddantapuri, and Jagaddala became major centers of Highest Yoga Tantric practice. While the architecture of these sites, built of brick with stone sculpture inset, does not survive, the many surviving metal and stone sculptures and many manuscripts testify to the types of Buddhism practiced at each site as well as to the development of Vajrayana Buddhism. Several objects in the exhibition illustrate this very clearly (see Cats. 21, 25, 47, 52, 68, 92, and 134).

In a land where most of the literature of Buddhism has been lost, there has been a great scholarly struggle to understand the teachings and the practices of the religion on Indic soil. Regrettably, the survival of "pure" Sanskrit Buddhism in Newar Buddhist practices has been virtually unknown to the scholarly community. This has largely been due to the secrecy about the practices held by the Vajracharyas who steadfastly refused to discuss the details of the religion until recently. Yet the repositories of Sanskrit manuscripts held in the libraries and *bahas* of Nepal have been used to reconstruct "Indian" Buddhism. The most blatant of these is B. Bhattacharyya's *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, which is entirely based on Sanskrit texts surviving in Nepal, the *Sadhanamala* and the *Nishpannayogavali*, which are *still* in daily use there. The authors of this catalogue do not deny this reconstruction, but only wish to point out that Indic Buddhism is alive, well, and being very thoughtfully maintained by the Vajracharyas of the Newar community.

1 Keith Dowman, *Masters of Mahamudra*, 78.
2 Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 87.
3 Dowman, 71.
4 From Edward Conze, ed., *Buddhist Texts through the Ages*, 230.
5 Lal Mani Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India During the Seventh and Eighth Centuries A.D.*, 303; Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, 3.
6 David Snellgrove in *Buddhist Texts through the Ages*, 289–90.
7 Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 232.
8 Dowman, 13-14.
9 Dowman, 3.
10 Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India*, 306–7.
11 Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 20.
12 Joshi, 302.
13 Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, 59.
14 Bhattacharyya, 59.
15 Joshi, 318.
16 Dasgupta, 20.
17 Joshi, 319.
18 Bhattacharyya, 221–22.
19 Bhattacharyya, 222.
20 Dowman, 3–4.
21 David Barton Gray, *On Supreme Bliss: A Study of the History and Interpretation of the Cakrasamvara Tantra*, 399.
22 Ramachandra Rao, *Tibetan Tantrik Tradition*, 30.
23 Powers, 242.
24 Powers, 243.
25 Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 412.
26 Samuel, 412–13.
27 Robert Linrothe, *Wrathful Compassion*, 9–10.
28 Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, 88.
29 Dowman, 4.
30 Dowman, 34.
31 Dowman, 222–28.
32 Dowman, 252–55.
33 Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India*, 263.
34 Huntington, *Art of Ancient India*, 263.
35 Geri Hockfield Malandra, "Ellora: The 'Archaeology' of Enlightenment," 67–94.
36 Huntington, *Art of Ancient India*, 264–65.
37 The *Mahavairochana Sutra* and the *Sarva Tathagata Tattva Samgraha* also describe this grouping. These texts are considered part of the Yoga Tantra class and were certainly in wide use by the early 8th century when their mature forms were translated into Chinese. This same grouping appears in several sculptures at the monastic complex of Ratnagiri and is discussed at length by Nancy Hock, *Buddhist Ideology and the Sculpture of Ratnagiri, Seventh to Thirteenth Centuries.*
38 Hock, 4.
39 See Malandra, 68–69.
40 Huntington and Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, 87.
41 Snellgrove, 323.

Tantra in Nepal

| DINA BANGDEL

Akin to the great Tantric Buddhist centers of Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Oddantipur, Nepal has historically remained a major and vital center and *the* entrepôt for the transmission of Tantric Buddhism into Tibet and for its artistic expression between northeast India and Tibet. The small fertile valley of the Kathmandu, consisting of the three cities of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, is the locus of Tantric Buddhism, where it has shared the religious environment with Hindu practices for at least 2,000 years. Practiced by the Newar community, this form of Buddhism serves as the last remaining legacy of Sanskrit Buddhism still actively followed within a South Asian cultural context. Indeed, the Kathmandu Valley is virtually an open-air museum, with more than 500 Buddhist institutions and numerous temples, giving evidence to the creative genius of the Newars. In fact, the term "Nepalese" art often refers exclusively to the artistic production of the Buddhist Newars of the Kathmandu Valley. Through the centuries, the Newar Buddhist community of artists has also fulfilled major commissions for the royal Hindu patrons, and the Tibetan patrons to this day especially recognize the aesthetic refinement and iconographic accuracy of Newar craftsmanship.[1] Thus, as testified in the Tibetan accounts of the *Blue Annals,* Nepal historically served as a critical foundation of Tantric Buddhism for the Tibetan teachers, who came to the Kathmandu Valley not only to learn Sanskrit but also to receive teachings from the renowned Newar Buddhist masters.

Newar Buddhism as practiced today has developed several unique features not found in other Buddhist communities in Asia. It has an intricate socio-religious structure based on a caste-stratified Buddhist community of married "monks," whereby entrance into the Buddhist faith is entirely hereditary. Two features—the caste-based society and the institution of married monkshood—have been especially problematic for Western scholars, and Newar Buddhism was long seen as a degenerate form of Tantric Buddhism, or as Hinduism in all but name. Nonetheless, the ongoing ritual practices and the complex artistic imagery in religious institutions testify to the vital significance of the Kathmandu Valley as a major center for the transmission and preservation of Tantric Buddhist practice, especially after Buddhism died in India after the 12th century. Nepal's historical connection with Indian Buddhism was particularly strong during the Pala period, when Tantric *siddhas* from northeast India migrated to the Kathmandu Valley after the monastic centers in India were destroyed by the Muslim invasions. From this period on, the Kathmandu Valley preserved and transmitted the Tantric practices of Indian Buddhism through oral teaching as well as written Sanskrit Buddhist literature.

Newar Buddhism does not have an institution of permanent celibacy. Rather, in the tradition of "householder monk" (*grihasta bhikshu*), it follows the paradigm of the great Tantric Mahasiddhas, with two caste groups of Vajracharyas and Shakyas serving as the "monastic" community (*sangha*). Men in both castes receive monastic ordination as a life-cycle passage rite in early childhood, and their ritual status as a monk is repeatedly affirmed through membership in monasteries (*baha*). As a caste group, they are also referred to as *bande* or *bare,* whose etymological root is related to the Sanskrit term *vande* or *vandana,* meaning "those who are worthy of respect," i.e., Buddhist monks. As married householders upholding the Tantric path, they also undertake the mandatory Tantric initiations (*diksha*) as part of the ritual role in the monasteries. Within this hierarchy, the Vajracharya, by virtue of his title as "Vajra-master," holds the position of power as Tantric priest and ritual specialist, while the Shakya's foremost identity is that of a monk. Historically, the Shakya castes of the Valley consider themselves descendants of Shakyamuni's clan of the Shakyas of Kapilavastu, who migrated into the Valley at a very early date. Recalling this honored heritage, they are also formally called Shakyavamsa (descendants of the Shakya lineage) or Shakyabhikshu (Shakya monk).

In contemporary Newar Buddhism, the Vajracharya priest is the teacher, or *guru,* of the community, and the individual who performs the rituals into highest Tantric teachings. As an archetype of the Great Adept (Mahasiddha) and Tantric priest, the *vajra*-master possesses the powers and qualifications to invoke, control, and summon deities for the benefit of sentient beings. Thus, the Vajracharya embodies the ideal of the esoteric and dangerous adamantine path, and empowers and directs the rest of the Buddhist community to function in the mundane world within a Vajrayana framework. More specifically, he embodies Vajrasattva's Form-Body (*nirmana kaya*), as the teacher of higher Tantric rituals and one who has perfected all knowledge and virtues. Elucidating the Tantric role of the Vajracharya, Kathmandu's most respected ritual specialist, Badri Ratna Vajracharya writes:

> As yoga serves as the basis for the Vajracharya's knowledge, his body is the replica of all Buddhas (*sarva buddha kaya)* and various parts of his body are the wings of Enlightenment; the head of the Vajracharya is the head of the Five Kulas [Five Jinas]; his feet are the "seats" of the mundane (*laukika*) world and the light of his body are the secret (*guhya*) deities. Thus, with these qualities of the body is the honored yogin.[2]

Newar Buddhist rituals of the monastic community consist of three categories of life-cycle rites: "making of the monk" (New. *bare chuegu*), "making of the Vajra-master" (New. *acha luegu*), and Tantric empowerment to Chakrasamvara (*diksha*). These rituals are performed in Newar Buddhist institutions called *bahas* and *bahis*, by definition Buddhist monasteries, where the monastic community (*sangha*) traditionally lived. These monuments serve the core centers of Tantric Buddhist activity for the Buddhist community. By the Malla period (13th to 17th centuries), inscriptions referred to the structures as "worldly Tantric monastery" (*samsarik tantric vihara*). The initiation rituals of the Vajracharyas and Shakyas performed at the *bahas* reinforce their roles of Buddhist monks and give the male members the right and duty to serve as the guardian priests (*dyah pala*) of the main shrine of the monastery for a week, two weeks, or month. The length of their service on this rotational basis depends on the number of *sangha* members of the particular monastery. As monks, they have the right to serve in the governing body of elders, who are responsible for the ritual functions related to the monastery.

The second mandatory life-cycle ritual confers on the Vajracharya his ritual status of Tantric priest through the five empowerments. The ritual also alludes to his symbolic status as the embodiment of Vajrasatt-

va, "Adamantine-Being." The series of empowerments are highly symbolic of his ritual status as the teacher of the Tantric path. These include the Water-pot Empowerment, with which the initiate is ritually purified; the Crown Empowerment, during which he wears the Pancha Jina crown as a symbol of the Enlightenment process; the Vajra Empowerment, in which he is given the *vajra,* the symbol of *shunyata;* the Bell Empowerment, in which he is given the bell as a pair to the *vajra,* with both implements symbolizing wisdom/compassion; the Name empowerment, in which he is given the name Vajrasattva, the Adamantine Practitioner; and, finally, Vajracharya Empowerment, in which he holds the *vajra* and bell in *vajra humkara mudra*, in a manner similar to Vajradhara, as the Fully Enlightened Buddha. These empowerments, as Vajracharya's life-cycle rites, are preliminary initiations to Chakrasamvara, and allow him to function as the ritual priest in the secret shrines to the Tantric deities.

Subsequent higher initiations (*diksha*) as part of the life-cycle rites provide esoteric empowerments of Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, although the *ishtadevatas* of the Yogini-class Highest Yoga Tantras, Hevajra/Nairatma and Yogambara/Jnanadakini, are equally significant. Tantric empowerments are mandatory in order to participate in the Tantric rituals performed in the *bahas*.

In its internal structure, Newar Buddhism is said to consist of three hierarchic levels, encompassing the methodologies of Shravakayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism.[3] Shravakayana is the monastic level, in which celibate monkhood remains fundamental to Newar Buddhist ideology. Mahayana serves as the Buddhist householder practice, while the Vajrayana, or esoteric Tantric tradition, remains the highest and most powerful of the three soteriological methodologies. Thus, the internal hierarchy of the Three Ways integrates the apparently opposed ideals of celibacy and restraint of monkshood on the one hand, and the full participation of worldly activities as a householder on another. This complex ideological framework and understanding is also brilliantly integrated in the rituals, pantheon, and iconographic schema of the Newar Buddhist monasteries.[4]

History of Tantra in Nepal

Early epigraphic evidence of Buddhism in Nepal begins in the Licchavi period (4th to 9th century); however, archaeological evidence and oral history indicate that Buddhism was present at a much earlier date. Archaeologically, an astonishingly early and little-known rock-cut site, Gum Vihara, located at the hilltop in Shankhu, shares the sacred confines with the Vajrayogini shrine. All that remains of the original structure is an ancient stone chaitya, a rock hut, and a few excavated caves. Morphologically, the form of the chaitya that is shaped out of natural rock is reminiscent of the ancient Indian stupas at Sanchi, with the characteristic low hemispheric mound. The carefully carved doorway of the rock-cut structure reflects the ancient post-and-lintel construction of the wooden architectural prototype. Similarly, remnants of extremely early rock-cut chaityas are also found half-buried and upside down along the side of the path that leads up to the temple. Given the usual understanding of morphological continuity of rock-cut architecture in South Asia, these would be judged to be pre-Mauryan, ca. 4th century B.C.E., and may literally be the earliest rock-cut Buddhist monuments presently known in South Asia.[5]

Oral tradition recalls the visit of Mauryan king Ashoka to the Valley in the 3rd century C.E. and the establishment of the four "Ashoka" stupas in Patan. Further, the Indian king is said to have married his daughter

Fig. 1. Eastern face of the Svayambhu Mahachaitya.

Charumati to a Nepali prince and formally established the Charumati Stupa and the first monastic institution, Charumati Vihara in Deopatan. In December 2002, a large ca. 12th-century brick, with an accurately copied Mauryan Brahmi inscription of the name "Charumat" on it along with a Bhujimol inscription, was discovered inside the central core of the stupa. The only logical explanation is that in the 12th century a Brahmi brick was discovered during a restoration and was replicated for inclusion in the stupa. It is doubtful if anyone could read the Brahmi and it was probably copied from the original for its presumed talismanic properties. The Brahmi inscription provides strong evidence for the validity of the so-called Ashokan myth and of early Buddhist practice in the Valley.

The uniqueness of Newar Buddhism, however, is the localized cosmogonic myth, which traces the origins of Buddhism in the Valley even earlier, to the period of the historical (*manushi*) Buddhas preceding Shakyamuni. As recounted in the *Svayambhu Purana,* one of the most important religious texts of the Newar Buddhists, the mythic history begins with the visits of the seven Manushi Buddhas, including Shakyamuni, to the Valley, which was at that time a great lake of the Nagas and a sacred *pitha*. From the seed sown by the first Manushi Buddha, Vipashvi grew a thousand-petaled lotus, and from it emerged a radiant beam of light that was the Self-Originated Light-Form (*svayambhu jyotirupa)*—the embodiment of the primordial Buddha. This beam consisted of five rays of light, symbolizing the *kulas* of five Jina Buddhas. Realizing the sacrality of the Light-Form, the subsequent historical Buddhas came to the Valley to witness the auspicious sight. Later, Bodhisattva Manjushri also reached the Valley from the Five-Peaked Mountain (Wu-tai Shan) in China. Seeing that the sacred Valley was filled with water, Manjushri cut the lake with his sword and drained it, making the sacred locations (*tirthas*) in the Valley accessible to all sentient beings who wished to venerate it. Later, the Light-Form was encased in the form of a stupa, seen today as the Great Stupa of Svayambhu (Fig. 1). Indeed, Svayambhu serves as the premier monument for the Newar Buddhists and as the vivifying element of all monasteries in the Valley, with the presence of surrogate replicas of the Great Stupa.

The Newar Buddhist tradition also considers Manjushri to have initiated the first Tantric priest and to have transmitted the Buddhist teachings of the Vairochana and Akshobhya cycles, specifically the *Arya*

Namasangiti Manjushri[6] and *Chakrasamvara Tantras,* hence his principal role in Newar Buddhism as the root teacher, or Adi Guru. It is within this context that we can contextualize the popular iconographic representations of Manjushri, in his form as Dharmadhatu Vagishvara Manjughosha (see Cat. 133).

The teaching transmission of Chakrasamvara practice among the Newar Buddhists is also related to Manjushri and the local cosmogonic myth. Vajravarahi herself, in her esoteric form as Guhyeshvari, "Secret Goddess," transmits the Chakrasamvara/Vajravarahi empowerments to Manjushri, who in turn confers it to the first Vajracharya of Newar Buddhism, Shantikar Acharya. Thus, the Chakrasamvara/Vajravarahi meditations are the fundamental Highest Yoga Tantra methodology of the Newar Buddhist practitioner. Ultimately, the Newar Buddhists understand Guhyeshvari/Vajravarahi is the ontological source for their entire system of Tantric practice, underscoring the centrality of Chakrasamvara methodologies in Nepal. In the contemporary context, the narrative serves as the mythological history of Buddhism for the Newars, as well as a doctrinal basis within which the local practices and socio-religious developments are validated in the larger ideologies of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.

Material remains from the Licchavi period give indisputable evidence of fully developed Tantric practice by the 6th century. Indeed, Licchavi inscriptions, dating from the 5th to 9th centuries C.E. state that there were at least fourteen *viharas* established in the Licchavi period.[7] Although the Licchavi kings were primarily Hindu, inscriptions refer to Buddhist monasteries founded by royal patronage and grants, such as Mana Vihara built by King Manadeva, Raja Vihara by Amshuvarma, the Syengu Baha at Svayambhu Mahachaitya by Vrishadeva, and Gum Vihara, also a royal foundation but without attribution to a specific king.[8] Even at this early date, the *viharas* were often granted large tracts of land, the income of which supported the financial upkeep of these institutions.

Fig. 2. Licchavi Chaitya at Om Bahal, Patan. Upper portion is a restoration after 14th-century

References to Tantric deities in the Licchavi epigraphs provide indisputable evidence of a well-established presence of Tantric Buddhism by this time. For example, the genealogic accounts of Shivadeva (r. 590–604) mention the king refurbishing an image of Vajrayogini and establishing the tradition of the *jivanyasa* consecration once every twelve years, rather than annually.[9] Similarly, a fragmentary inscription of Amshuvarman (606–621) at Svayambhu Mahachaitya explicitly refers to "Vajrayana" and "Svayambhu Mahachaitya." This contextualizes that the Tantric iconography of Svayambhu as the mandala of the five Jina Buddhas was probably extant by the Licchavi period. Furthermore, the presence of the Licchavi-period sculptures of the *kula* symbols at the cardinal points of Mahachaitya's base reinforces this argument. Other epigraphic references of Tantric practice include the 698 inscriptions that mention the consecration of an image of Vajrabhairava in Gorkha, west of the Kathmandu Valley, and the arrangement of a grant for the worship of Vajrabhairava.[10] Furthermore, the remnants of numous Licchavi chaityas with the empty niches that once contained the images of Jina Buddhas testify to the well-established presence of Vajrayana Buddhism in the Valley by this time. The most well-developed Tantric iconography is the 6th- or 7th-century Licchavi chaitya from Om Bahal, Patan, which depicts Vairochana and the four Jina Buddhas within the niches (Fig. 2).

By the 7th century, the excellence of Newar workmanship was recognized when Newar craftsmen were commissioned to build and embellish the Jokhang in Lhasa (see essay, Tantra in Tibet). Indeed, the Nepalese princess Bhrikuti, daughter of Amshuvarma, is said to have taken a number of artists with her to Tibet (see essay, Tantra in Tibet). Furthermore, commenting on the artistry and aesthetic of Nepalese architecture, the Chinese ambassador Wang Xuan Ze, from the Tang dynasty (618–906), thus describes the royal palace:

> In the middle of the palace, there is a tower of seven stories, roofed with copper tiles. Its balustrade, grilles, columns, beams, and everything therein are set with gems and semi-precious stones. At each corner of the tower, there descends a copper water pipe, at the base of which is spouted four golden dragons.[11]

For the most part, the monastic community of the Vajracharya and Shakyas are the Valley's craftsmen: carvers of stone, wood, and ivory; painters; and highly skilled metalworkers, goldsmiths, and silversmiths. In particular, the metalworkers from Nepal are among the finest craftsmen working the Valley. These occupations have led many members of the monastic caste groups to serve as itinerant artists in Tibet, commissioned to work for monasteries throughout Central Tibet, in Lhasa, Shakya, and Samye. Indeed, historically, the Newar artists have been instrumental in the development of the Tibetan painting and sculptural style of the Bal ris and Bal mthun ("Newar-[derived] painting/sculpture"). The beautiful painting of Red Ganapati from Central Tibet (Cat. 152) provides one of the clearest documents of a Newar Buddhist artist working in Tibet. An inscribed sketchbook ca. 1435 belonging to the artist Jivarama specifically mentions that he had worked in Tibet and brought the book back after his stay in Tibet, and indeed the iconographic and decorative elements of the sketchbook and painting are virtually identical. Perhaps the most famous of the Newar craftsmen is Anige[12] (ca. 1245–1306), who went to the Chinese Yuan court with the Sakya hierarch Phagpa in ca. 1260 along with eighty craftsmen. Anige impressed the great Kublai Khan and was commissioned to create a

colossal stupa as well as various metal, dry lacquer, ceramic, and unfired clay images and paintings. Influencing Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian art, he served as the head of the metal-casting division and in 1299 was commissioned by the Emperor to undertake 191 images and 64 paintings. Chinese accounts state that in 1304, 181 images were produced and restored by him. Though little that survives can definitely be credited to Anige's hand, there are two objects from his workshops (Cats. 43 and 45) in the exhibition. Moreover, there are several paintings in the exhibition representing the ongoing aesthetic exchanges between the Tibetans and Chinese, which Anige initiated.

After the Licchavi dynasty, the Transitional (880–1200) and Malla (1200–1768) periods were the most prolific and inspired eras of artistic production, with extensive cultural exchanges with Tibet. The Valley's creative excellence of stone, wood, and metalworking are best exemplied by the complex visual imagery of the Buddhist institutions of the Valley, where shrine façades of the *bahas* are embellished with exquisite *toranas*, elegant strut figures, sculptural decorations, and votive offerings in the courtyards, such as chaityas and mandalas (Figs. 3 and 4). The visual imagery in the major monasteries date from the 14th to 15th centuries, with offerings that continue to be added through the centuries by the pious lay patrons of the community.

Even within this immense artistic creativity, there is a consistency to the themes of imagery in Newar Buddhist monasteries. Structurally,

Fig. 3. Composite details of the Buddha images on the Licchavi chaitya in Fig. 2. Only one of the four Vairochanas is illustrated.

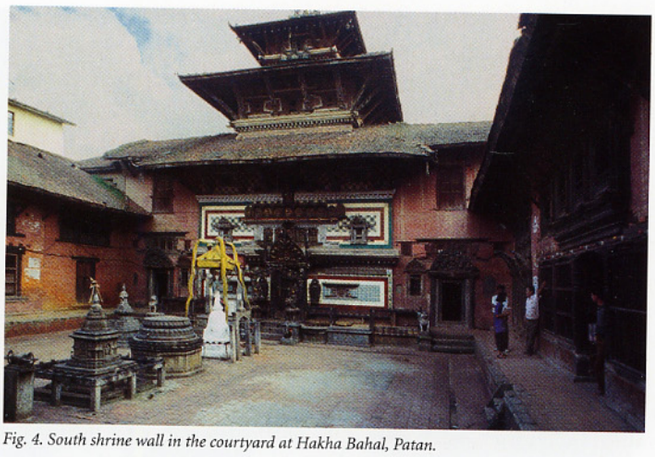

Fig. 4. South shrine wall in the courtyard at Hakha Bahal, Patan.

there are three required components to the monastic architecture: a principal chaitya symbolizing Svayambhu Mahachaitya, an exoteric shrine to Shakyamuni or to the exoteric deities of the Buddhist pantheon, and the secret Tantric shrine, dedicated to the wrathful Vajrayana deities. The shrine and the main image are often lavishly embellished with jewelry, clothing, and other offerings given by the lay community (Fig. 5). The Tantric *agam* shrine contains the images of Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, the principal *ishta devatas* of Newar Buddhism, whose empowerments must be received before the *sangha* member can even enter the shrine or participate in the Tantric rituals.

As illustrated by some of the exquisite examples in the exhibition, the Early Malla (1200–1482) and Late Malla (1482–1768) dynasties were immensely dynamic periods for the production of painting, sculpture, and manuscript illuminations. The inscriptional evidence informs us that many of the patrons were devout lay Newar Buddhists, specifically from the merchant (*uray*) castes, who offered the artworks as token of gratitude and benefaction for all sentient beings. These lay patrons were also skilled traders and many lived in central Tibet and Lhasa, taking Tibetan wives and maintaining a family. Toward the late 18th to 19th centuries, the commissions of these Newar traders who patronized the Tibetan artists created distinctly Tibeto-Newar-style paintings combined with a specific Newar iconography (see Cats. 113 and 114). Indeed, some of the most spectacular pieces in this exhibition highlight the interaction between Newar artists and Tibetan patrons and, conversely, the symbiotic relation of the Newar patrons in Tibet.

Aside from the artistic innovations, the Transitional and Malla periods also witnessed the prolific production of handwritten manuscripts, often exquisitely illustrated. Well-known for their textual conservativeness, these Buddhist texts ranged from the Vaipulya Mahayana sutras to Tantric ritual texts, Tantras, *dharanis*, *sadhanas*, as well as the Doha and Charya (New. *chacha*) songs prevalent among the Mahasiddhas in northeastern India. Hundred of these Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts are still preserved in the Kathmandu Valley and continue to be produced based on the demands of the ritual specialists, even with the advent of modern technology. Newar Buddhist textual tradition has been instrumental in igniting Europe's interest in Buddhism in the 19th century, when the British resident Brian Hodgson took 423 manuscripts from Nepal and presented them to five libraries in Europe and India: the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the College of Fort William, the Royal Asiatic Society in London, the India Office Library in London, and the Bodleian Library in Oxford. In addition, 147 Sanskrit manuscripts were given to the libraries of l'Institute de France and the Société Asiatique de Paris.[13] For

Fig. 5. Torana at Kva Bahal, Patan. In the center is a "dual image" of Shakyamuni/Akshobhya attended by the monks Mogalyayana and Shariputra. Surrounding them are the four other Jina Buddhas and Vajrasattva. Dated 1901, repoussé silver.

textual scholars, these manuscripts are testimony of the last surviving documents of Indian Buddhism. What we reconstruct of Indian Buddhist practices today is gleaned through the thousands of Sanskrit texts that still survive and continue to be used in the contemporary context.[14]

A set of nine texts known as the Nava Grantha comprise the canonical literature of Newar Buddhism, compiled from Mahayana Vaipulya Sutras and Tantras. These are the *8,000 Verse Prajnaparamita, Gandavyuha, Dashabhumikasutra, Saddharmapundarika, Suvarnaprabhasa, Lankavatara, Samadhiraja, Lalitavistara Sutras,* and *Tathagataguhyaka*, better known as the *Guhyasamaja Tantra.* These texts are often recited during daily worship in the monasteries; the *Prajnaparamita* in particular has an important cult as well as an independent deity. Further, among the major Tantric texts preserved in Nepal and extensively in use are the *Namasangiti Tantra* of Manjushri, and exegesis to the incomplete *Chakrasamvara Tantra,* such as *Samvarodaya* and *Abhidhanottara Tantras,* Highest-Yoga class Tantras including *Vajravarahi Tantra, Chatuh pitha Tantra, Hevajra Tantra, Guhyasamaja Tantra, Chandamaharoshana Tantra, Vajrabhairava Tantra, Mahakala Tantra,* and their commentarial literature.

Newar Buddhist Teachers and Transmission of Tantra

The Kathmandu Valley's centrality as a great center of Tantric Buddhist practice is nowhere more clearly evident than in the Tibetan historical accounts of the *Blue Annals*, written between 1476 and 1478 by the well-known Buddhist scholar and translator Lotsaba Zonnupal (1392–1481). Especially from the 10th to 12th centuries we have accounts of the great Indian Mahasiddhas coming to Nepal, staying in the Kathmandu Valley, teaching at Svayambhu Mahachaitya, and transmitting the Tantric initiations to Newar *pandita*s before making their way into Tibet. Similarly, in the Tibetan accounts, there are extensive lineage transmissions of the Tantric teachings, which list some of the great Newar Tantrins who came to Tibet and conferred initiation there. Conversely, as the Nepal Valley was widely known as one the great centers of Tantric practice, we have innumerable references to Tibetan teachers coming to Nepal—to study with a famous Newar teacher and to receive empowerments, to learn Sanskrit, and to translate the texts into Tibetan with the help of the master. Indeed, these textual references testify to the vitality of the Kathmandu Valley around the 10th to 13th centuries, where there was extensive contact and exchange of teachings among the Indian, Newar, and Tibetan Buddhist practitioners. It is interesting, however, that Newar Buddhist tradition has very few historical accounts of the teaching tradition, both its own tradition and its transmission to Tibetan masters.

In the Licchavi period, three great Indian teachers visited Nepal on their way to Tibet during the First Propagation. Shantarakshita (705–762), stayed in Nepal for six years, from 743 to 749 before his sojourn to Tibet during the First Propagation. His disciple, the famous Padmasambhava (717–775) lived in the Kathmandu Valley for four years in a cave at Pharping, which also is famous for the temple of the *ishta-devata,* the Vajrayogini shrine of Oddiayanacharya, "The Teacher of Oddiyana (i.e., Padmasambhava)." At Pharping, Padmasambhava is said to have received the Vajrakila empowerments, which enabled him to subdue the Bon spirits of pre-Buddhist Tibet. For both the Newars and the Buddhists, Padmasambhava's cave and the Vajrayogini temple are two of the major pilgrimage sites in the Valley. Padmasambhava is also said to have taken two female disciples called Shakyadevi and Kalasiddhi as his consorts for the practice of *Atiyoga Sadhana*. The last Indian teacher of the First Propagation was Kamalashila, who lived in Nepal for one year and was known to have worshipped at Svayambhu Mahachaitya.

The Transitional and early Malla periods witnessed an exciting and fertile environment in the Valley for the transmissions of teachings and translations of texts. Not only did Newar teachers go to the great monastic centers in north India, but the Indian Mahasiddhas came to Nepal, bringing the Sanskrit text and transmitting the sacred teaching lineages. Also during this time the Tibetan masters recognized the Kathmandu Valley as a great Tantric center; many came to the Valley to study with the Newar Vajracharyas and to invite them to Tibet.

Among the great Mahasiddhas, Saraha, Naropa, Maitripa, and Luipa are said to have come to the Valley and taken Nepalese disciples. In many of the accounts, they offered *puja* to the great Svayambhu Mahachaitya and conferred Tantric *puja*s at the Shantipur shrine to Chakrasamvara/Vajravarahi. Indeed, Naropa's seven major disciples included Maitripa, Kukuripa, Shri, Shantibhadra, and the two Newars, Paindapa and Chitherpa. The hagiography of the famous Tibetan master Marpa (1012–1097) states that he remained in the Valley for three years and studied the Highest Yoga Tantras under Paindapa, from whom he received the teaching of the *Chatush pitha Tantra* of Yogambara/-Jnanadakini, and Chakrasamvara/Vajravarahi from the *Chakrasamvara Tantra*, and *Vajrabhairava Tantra*. A recently discovered inscription from Ratnakirti Mahavihara (Haka Bahal) confirms Paindapa's empowerment of Marpa at the monastery. Marpa's biography mentions the songs of praise (*charya gita*) he sang in honor of his Newar teachers at Ratnakara Mahavihara as a gesture of gratitude.

By the time the great Atisha (982–1054) visited Nepal, celibate Buddhist monastic institutions there had begun to dwindle, and by the end of 15th century they were completely gone, giving way to the Vajrayana ideal of the married householder tradition. Atisha's visit in 1041 to 1042 is critical to the philosophical development of Newar Buddhism, focusing on the Vairochana-cycle teachings and mandalas, based on the *Sarvata Thagata Tattva Samgraha, Sarvadurgati Parishodhana Tantra,* and the *Namasangiti.* In Nepal it was especially Atisha's teachings that propagated the primacy of *Arya Namasangiti Tantra* and its root mandala, Dharmadhatu Mandala, in Newar Buddhism, since the esoteric form of Manjushri is identified with Vairochana.[15] As a result, the principal theme of the visual imagery of most Buddhist institutions in the Kathmandu Valley incorporates the Dharmadhatu mandala, either as complete mandalas, as strut figures, or in the *torana* iconography. Indeed, Atisha's Tham Bahi itself is referred to as Dharmadhatu Vihara, indicating the significance of the master's teachings.

The last of the famous Indian *panditas* who lived in Nepal and taught in Tibet is Vanaratnapa (1384–1468) (see Cat. 29). After two sojourns to Tibet, Vanaratnapa retired in the Gopichandra Mahavihara (Pintu Bahi) in Patan. The *Blue Annals* extensively recounts his last years in Nepal. One of the most important historical statements of this interaction and exchange between India, Nepal, and Tibet is in the painting from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, whose inscription describes the charitable donations given by Vanaratnapa.

During the Transitional period several outstanding Buddhist masters were born, who would become well versed in Tantric Buddhism. Among these is Vagishvarakirti, known in the *Blue Annals* as "Nepalese Phamthingpa"[16] (Nepalese from Pharping), a famous disciple of Naropa who served the Mahasiddha for nine years in Nalanda. From Naropa, Vagishvarakirti received the teachings of Chakrasamvara and Hevajra. He was also known as a great scholar of the *Guhyasamaja, Kalachakra,* and *Abhidhanottara Tantras.*[17] When he came back to Nepal, Vagishvarakirti is said to have initiated many Tibetan teachers. Most importantly, he is one of the major lineage teachers of the *Chakrasamvara Tantra* in Tibet. The lineage is as follows:[18] Vajradhara, Vajrapani, Saraha, Nagarjuna, Savari, Luipa, Lodon Dorje Dilbupa, Kacchapa, Jalandharapa, Krishnacarya, Guhya, Vijayapada, Tilopa, Naropa, and Vagishvarakirti. The Newar teacher transmitted the *Chakrasamvara Tantra* to Tibet, giving the teachings to the Tibetan teachers. Similarly, other famous Newar Vajracharya teachers include Vajracharya Bharo, "Maimed Hand," also known as Mahakaruna, who transmitted the Vajrabhairava teachings to Rva Lotsaba. Pandita Samantashri is one of the key lineage masters of the Kalachakra tradition in Tibet, in the lineage of Rva, since Rva Chorab was his direct disciple.[19] Of the Vajravarahi practice, Punyakara Bhadra, known by the Tibetan name "Hamu Karpo,"[20] was one of the most important Tantrins of the Yogini Tantras. Several Tibetan masters, including Pyal Kunga Dorje, came to Nepal to study under Punyakara Bhadra and began the specific Vajravarahi transmission to Tibet.[21] Contemporary Newar Vajracharya ritual specialists state that the meditations of Vajravarahi according to Punyakara Bhadra are still practiced in Nepal and Tibet.

Chakrasamvara Practice in Nepal

The historical accounts of the great Newar Vajracharyas provide evidence that the Kathmandu Valley was a great center for the empowerments and transmissions of the Anuttara Yoga Tantras. As indicated by the mythic narrative of the *Svayambhu Purana,* a strong primacy is given to Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, and this esoteric aspect is consistently emphasized in the physical structures of the religious institutions, and its visual imagery in the life-cycle ritual, and even in the Buddhist conception of the sacred landscape. As the esoteric component of Buddhism, the Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi practices in Newar Buddhism are paradigmatic of all Highest Yoga Tantra methodologies.

The presence of the Tantric *agam* shrine dedicated to Chakrasamvara or other *ishtadevatas* of the Highest Yoga class is the third mandatory architectural component for all Buddhist institutions, along with the central Svayambhu Chaitya and an exoteric shrine. Entrance into the Tantric shrine and the rituals connected to it are restricted solely to the initiated members of the *baha sangha.* Confined to highly esoteric Tantric practices, the *agam* rituals and the visual imagery related to Chakrasamvara are performed in secret and are never seen by the general Buddhist practitioners. The Tantric initiations to Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi are mandatory to serve as senior ritual leaders (*aju*) of the *baha,* and are often given as part of the life-cycle rituals. In the contemporary context, the empowerments of Chakrasamvara are elaborate affairs, given once in five or six years. However, major *pujas* such as the Three-Fold Worship (*trisamadhi puja*) of Chakrasamvara, Vermilion Offering Puja (*sindurarchana puja*) and Great Vermilion Worship (*taha sinhapuja*) to Vajravarahi are commonly performed, in which the initiated, and preferably married, members of the monastic castes of the Vajracharyas and Shakyas as well as the laity are invited for the elaborate gatherings. Such *pujas* usually take a week to prepare, including the creation of dust-particle mandalas (*raja mandala*). The *pujas* involve a ritual feast (*gana chakra*), singing of *charya* songs, and performances of *charya* dances.

The most significant ritual texts related to Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi are the *Trisamadhi Yoga* (Three-Fold Meditational Yoga), *Samvarodya Puja,* the Vermilion worship (*sindurarchana puja*), and the *Vajravarahi Sadhana.* In these texts, the yogin is to imagine the mandala of Chakrasamvara in the generation-stage practice called Adi Yoga, "Preliminary Yoga." In the completion stages of the Sukshma Yoga (Subtle Body Yoga), he or she ignites the inner heat as Vajravarahi, and, as the purifying fire destroys the impurities of the inner body, ultimately experiences the bliss of union of white *bodhichitta* and the red drop in the appearance of the radiant light of bliss (*prabhasvara*). These technical meditations may be either long or short, depending on the context in which they are performed. The central focus of the meditations is the generation/visualization of the deities and their identification with the practitioner. The pertinent symbolism and ritual implements are extremely important, since the visual imagery of the Chakrasamvara iconography often pertains to simply symbolic elements, without actually representing the esoteric deities themselves. Thus, only the initiated practitioners are fully aware of the esoteric meanings of such symbols.

On the tenth day of the dark half of each month, a special *puja* known as Dashami Puja (Tenth Day Puja) is performed by the seniormost members of the *baha.* In Newar Buddhism, *dishi puja* is also intimately connected with the cosmogonic myth, as it reenacts and commemorates the secret teaching lineage of the Chakrasamvara cycle from Manjushri to the practicing Vajracharyas, which was given on the tenth day. Similarly, the actual day of commemorating the divine empowerment falls on the tenth day of Margha, and also involves an elaborate ritual at Shantipur in Svayambhu Mahachaitya, the principal shrine in the Valley of Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi.[22]

The primacy of Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi in Newar Buddhism is uniquely articulated through the conception of their sacred geography. Although to the uninitiated the conception is not obvious, Newar Buddhist practitioners understand the Kathmandu Valley as the Chakrasamvara Mandala.[23] Following this construct, the structural form of the mandala is replicated in the sacred geography, with three concentric circles around the Valley, mapping the Body, Speech, and Mind circles of the Mandala. Similarly, the eight major cremation grounds around the Valley are found at the confluence of rivers. Dangerous sites located at the periphery of sacred and profane spaces create the outer boundaries of the physical Mandala, mirroring the cremation grounds outside the Chakrasamvara Mandala. Within this conception, Vajravarahi, as Guhyeshvari, ultimately generates the sacred environment of the Valley. In this context the Newar Buddhist practitioner understands the Goddesses Kumari (Fig. 6) as a hypostasis of Vajravarahi; hence, her ritual presence is mandatory during the *pujas* to Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi.

The Circle of Bliss exhibition, thematically based on the practices of Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, provides a rare opportunity to see Newar Buddhist works that once graced the *agam* shrines and to contextualize their profound meaning within the larger methodologies of Tantric Buddhism, as well as the specific teachings unique to the Newar Buddhist tradition. We have had the immense fortune to encounter some of the great Tantric teachers in the contemporary tradition, who, because of their vision, have allowed some of the esoteric secrets to be revealed to generate a global understanding of their profound messages. The works of art presented in the exhibition will reiterate Nepal's centrality in the transmission and preservation of Tantric Buddhism, which is still actively practiced by the Newar Buddhist community.

Fig. 6. Main shrine image at Uku Bahal, Patan.

1 For example, the great silver doors of the main Shaivite temple in the Nepal Valley, Pashupatinath, were made by a Buddhist, Kuber Singh Shakya (1881–1957). See Mary S. Slusser and James A. Gambrone, "Kuber Singh Shakya: A Master Craftsman of Nepal."
2 Badri Ratna Vajracharya, *Buddhism in Nepal,* 28. Author's translation.
3 See David Gellner, *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest,* passim.
4 See Dina Bangdel, *Manifesting the Mandala.*
5 John C. Huntington and Chaya Chandrasekhar, "Buddhist Monasteries in Southern Asia," I:55–66.
6 Namasangiti is a form of Manjusri, who is equated with Vairochana. In Nepal, Namasangiti is extremely important, and the *Arya Namasangiti* text, from which the deity derives its name, is often recited daily during the morning and evening rituals in the monasteries.
6 Dhanavajra Vajracharya, *Licchavi Kalka Abhilekha,* Preface. For an English translation, see also Dilli Raman Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal.*
7 Dhanavajra Vajracharya, *Licchavi Kalka Abhilekha,* 548–62.
8 Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal,* 127–28.
9 Mary Slusser, *Nepal Mandala,* 272.
10 Pratapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal,* 1978, 7.
11 Pin Yin transliteration of the Chinese characters by which he is known. His name is also commonly spelled Aniko, and Arniko. There is no Newar record of him, only Chinese and Tibetan.
12 For a list of manuscripts, see William Hunter, *Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts Collected in Nepal by Brian Houghton Hodgson, Esq., F.R.S.* For the manuscripts in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, see Rajendralal Mitra, *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal.*
13 For example, the translation of Snellgrove's *Hevajra Tantra* and, more recently, Elizabeth English's work on the 12th-century *Vajravarahi Sadhana* of Umapatideva were conducted using Newar Sanskrit manuscripts.
14 Bangdel, 533.
15 George Roerich, *The Blue Annals,* 287 and 381.
16 *Blue Annals,* 228.
17 Kazi Dawa-Samdup, *The Chakrasamvara Tantra,* xxxv.
18 For Rva lienage of Kalachakra, see *Blue Annals,* 756.
19 *Blue Annals,* 394.
20 For Vajravarahi lineage of Punyakara Bhadra, see *Blue Annals,* 396.
21 Herakaji Vajracharya, ed., *Samvarodaya Dashami (Disi)Puja Vidhi Pustakam,* introduction.
22 Bangdel, 770–800.

Fig. 1. Main shrine image of Shakyamuni Buddha, date uncertain. Kva Bahal, Patan. Photo gift of the guthi of Kva Bahal.

Tantra in Tibet

| JOHN C. HUNTINGTON, DINA BANGDEL

The introduction of Tantric Buddhism in Tibet is recorded in Tibetan chronicles and has been refined and elaborated over the years to the point of almost becoming religious dogma. Indeed, the historical events of the introduction are so "refined" that it appears as if they were pure mythology. However, they are grounded in verifiable facts, some of which have come to light only in recent years. By way of background, the introduction of Buddhism, and inherently, of Tantra into Tibet in this early period will be briefly reviewed here.[1]

Although Tibetans have been recognized in histories of adjacent regions, primarily China, since the second millennium B.C.E., little is known about the early history of Tibet due to the lack of a written history. Prior to the 6th century, "Tibet" consisted of a loosely knit array of nomadic peoples and "valley kingdoms" of varying size, held together by linguistic and cultural traits. Belonging primarily to the Tibeto-Burman language family, there are nearly a dozen dialects and regional variations within the area. The language presently known as "Tibetan" is properly the Lhasa dialect of central Tibet, and, as a result of the political dominance of this region, has become the dominant linguistic expression.

The Later Yarlung Dynasty (ca. 625–842)

Sometime at the end of the 6th or beginning of the 7th century,[2] either under Namri Songtsen (? – ca. 629?) or his son Songtsen Gampo (r. 629–649?),[3] the valley state of Yarlung under the local kings asserted political control over Ü district. They took a distinctive red peak (Mar-ri "Red Mountain") in the central Lhasa Valley, "Place of Deities," just north of the Kyi River as the location of their palace and sacred grounds. Such a prominent peak had undoubtedly been held sacred and for a very long time within the pre-Buddhist, animistic religion. This center would eventually become the renowned Potala palace. Once established in the central district, the Yarlung dynasty began to expand its territorial dominions. From the beginning through the mid-7th century, the Tibetan army under King Songtsen Gampo was able to challenge the eastern enemy, China, under the powerful Tang dynasty, as well as hold its own territorial hegemony. Interestingly, this first period of Buddhist activity took place while Tibet and Tibetans were being organized into military units and taking on a new and, to their neighbors, relatively fearsome aspect as conquerors.

Traditionally, Buddhism is said to have been introduced into Tibet by the two wives of Songtsen Gampo. They are known as the Balza, "Newar princess," daughter of the Licchavi king Amshuvarma (r. ca. 605–621), and the Gyaza, "Chinese princess," or Princess Wenchen, daughter of the Tang emperor Taizong (627–649). King Songtsen Gampo himself was considered to be an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara and the two princesses were similarly believed to be manifestations of his two consorts, Tara and Bhrikuti. Both goddesses are hypostases of Avalokiteshvara in his Amoghapasha Lokeshvara form (see Cat. 48). Because the Balza came to Tibet from what was undoubtedly a longstanding trade relationship with the Licchavi community of the Nepal Valley, her presence was less remarkable, and little note was made in the histories of her coming or of the details of her arrival. However, it is known that she brought with her a large image of Akshobhya Buddha, along with images of Maitreya and Tara. Sometimes, the image is said to have been Shakyamuni Buddha. Since both figures make the earth-touching gesture (*bhumisparsha mudra*) and are iconographically indistinguishable, without knowing the original intention of the makers/consecrators, the identity of the image becomes a moot point. More important in this context is that the account of the images exactly corresponds to the form of Buddhism current in Amshuvarma's Nepal, from a number of Maitreya, Tara, and Shakyamuni images from the Licchavi period that still survive.

To house this image, the Rasa Trulnang Tsukla Khang, later known as the Jokhang "House of Jo[bo]," was built by Newar craftsmen, who were brought from the Nepal Valley for the purpose. Remarkably, sections of the surviving Jokhang confirm this artistic heritage, since it contains both original wooden sculptures and paintings, obviously of Licchavi origin. The sculptures, especially, are stylistically very close to the Licchavi stone sculptures of the 6th and 7th centuries. Even today, the surviving central core structure of the Jokhang is based on the distinctive architectural groundplan of a celled-*vihara* type that was in use during the Licchavi period and survives in the Nepal Valley to the present day. The finest example of this architectural type was the 14th-century Cha Bahi at Deo Patan that survived until very recently (1998–2002) when it was demolished and "reconstructed" as a "proper teaching *bahi.*" The importance of the Jokhang is not to be underestimated since it is both one of the oldest structural temples surviving in Asia, containing the oldest surviving woodwork from the 7th century, and the oldest surviving Newar building.

In the oral narratives of the modern Newar community it is believed that two other images were made at the same time as the Shakyamuni/Akshobhya "Jobo" of the Balza. These images survive in a small shrine at Nag Bahal and as the main image of Kva Bahal, both in Patan (Fig. 1). In the Kva Bahal shrine image, only the original face shows through accoutrements of the "formal vestments" of the image. Since we have seen the image on its annual bathing festival when it is without any garments, we can attest to the apparent stylistic antiquity of the image. As both the Jobo and the Nag Bahal pieces are painted and completely covered with offerings and jeweled garments, it is impossible to examine either one in detail or to make any meaningful comparison to the Kva Bahal image.

Undoubtedly, the oral tradition of the Balza and her image, deeply rooted in the Newar cultural mindset, clearly suggest a local memory of the event. Given the evidence of the Licchavi Jokhang, and the ongoing tradition of the significance of Bhrikuti in Newar Buddhist oral history, there seems little doubt that there really was a Licchavi princess married to the young Tibetan king.[4]

The accounts regarding the Gyaza, the Chinese princess, are much easier to follow. Chinese recorded history is clear on the subject and the Tibetan records also provide a fuller description of the circumstances. Songtsen Gampo's ambassadors had initially requested a princess in the late 630s and were rebuffed by the Tang court. Subsequently the Tibetans attacked the Chinese army in Sichuan province and soundly defeated

them. The next request was met with eventual, albeit reluctant, agreement. The Chinese army escorted Princess Wenchen to the Tibetan border. There she was met by a contingent of the Tibetan army and escorted to Lhasa where she arrived in 641. She too had brought an image of Shakyamuni, which was installed in a new temple, the Ramoche. There are irreconcilably divergent narratives as to which image is in the Jokhang presently and even some concern that the present actual image may in fact be a post-cultural revolution restoration.[5] However, the actuality of the image is not the point. What matters is the notion of the great early image and the Jokhang as the sanctifying center of Tibetan Buddhism.

Two other achievements of Songtsen Gampo, as the great supporter of Buddhism, are the founding of the dynastic palace in Lhasa, where the Potala was eventually to be built, and the sending of Thonmi Sambhota and sixteen other Tibetan scholars to Kashmir to study Sanskrit. Upon his return to central Tibet, Thonmi created a writing system for Tibetan, based on the Sanskrit scripts of both Kashmiri and post-Gupta India. Furthermore, he began a series of translations from Sanskrit into Tibetan—a practice in Tibetan Buddhism that was to last until recent times.

One of the most interesting points in the history of Songtsen Gampo comes from a single comment in the Tibetan historical records: "When Songtsen Gampo died his tomb was made in the form of a mandala to agree with the Tantrins."[6] In other words, Tantra was known and practiced in Tibet, almost a century before its 8th-century "introduction" by Padmasambhava.

The history of Buddhism under Songtsen Gampo's successors is spotty and references are made to a few, now lost, temples here and there. The next king was Mangsong Mangtsen (r. 649–676), a grandson of Songsten Gampo. He was succeeded by his son Dusong Manje (676–704), who was known to have been a Buddhist. His successor was Tride Tsugtsen (b. 697, r. 704–755), better known as Mes Agtshom (Old Hairy), who was also a Buddhist and is known to have built at least three major temples.

Tisong Detsen (r. 755–797) was the thirty-eighth king of the Yarlung dynasty. During his early reign, contending Bön and Buddhist ministers connived against each other for the support of the king.[7] Ultimately the Buddhist faction won and the minister Ba Salnang was sent to Nepal to invite an Indian Buddhist teacher by the name of Shantarakshita to come to Tibet.[8] According to the histories, he was unsuccessful because of the power of the animistic forces in Tibet, especially the Bön deities, who created storms, earthquakes, and the like. Shantarakshita advised Tisong Detsen that only one great Tantric priest that he knew was powerful enough to subdue these negative forces. Ba Salnang was again sent to the Kathmandu Valley, where Padmasambhava (see Cat. 31) was staying, according to both Tibetan and Newar tradition, in the cave above Vajrayogini at Pharping. Padmasambhava arrived in Tibet and, according to one version of the narrative, upon learning of the strengths of the *sadag*, "spirits of the place," went to the great Indian Buddhist monastery at Nalanda in Magadha to learn Vajrakila rituals for controlling negativities (see Cats. 155–157). Thus empowered, Padmasambhava returned to Tibet and subdued them. This is known as the "First Propagation" and was the beginning of Buddhism as a formalized state religion in Tibet. To this day, the Tibetans celebrate this event with danced reenactments of the conversion of the *sadag* and other negative persona in Tibet.

The Indian teacher Padmasambhava, popularly known in Tibet as Guru Rinpoche (Great Precious Teacher), was completely successful in establishing what was essentially a Buddhist state in central Tibet. Shantarakshita was subsequently invited back and was instrumental in designing the mandalic groundplan of the monastery at Samye,[9] although Padmasambhava is often credited with its actual founding. As the root teacher, Padmasambhava created a legacy of twenty-five disciples that included many individuals who contributed greatly to the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. Among the most important of those were his two female disciples, the Indian princess Mandarava and the Tibetan Yeshes Tsogyal, the latter of whom is credited in her biography with enormous numbers of conversions and initiations to Tantric practice. Among the males was Vairochana, the great translator, whose body of translations still constitutes an important collection of Tantric teachings. The length of Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet is debated, and the date of his departure or death is not known. However, by the 8th century, Tantric Buddhism had come to Tibet to stay.

Tisong Detsen's long reign was renowned for many events, two of which profoundly affect Tibetan Buddhism to the present day, while a third had lasting influence for the duration of the Yarlung dynasty. The first was the reclamation of the Kokonor region in the northeast (Amdo, now in Qinghai Province of China) from the Chinese through a massive and legendary campaign. While both sides claimed victory, it was the Chinese court that agreed to pay 50,000 rolls of silk in tribute. Shakabpa, the Tibetan historian, points out that Tsang and Ü district surnames are still found among the nomadic herders of Qinghai.[10] These people brought central Tibetan Buddhism to the northeastern areas of China, where it flourishes today.

The second event was the great debate at Samye.[11] Disturbed by the conflicting claims of the "gradual enlightenment teachings" of the Indian Buddhist tradition and the "sudden enlightenment teachings" of the Chinese Buddhist practice, Tisong Detsen ordered a debate to be held at Samye between the proponents of the conflicting views. This took place over a two-year period (792–794) between the Indian teacher Kamalashila and a Chinese teacher known simply as Heshang, "monk."[12] The Indian school was declared the winner by the king, thereby establishing the form of the religious methodology based on Indian Buddhism as the source that was to be supported by the Tibetan state.

The third event was the 781 conquest of the Dunhuang region in the Gansu province of China. From the evidence of the ongoing Tibetan artistic influences at the Mogao caves near Dunhuang and the representation of actual Tibetan rulers in the caves, it is absolutely certain that the Tibetan artists became acquainted with the traditions of the Tang Buddhist schools of both painting and sculpture and presumably carried this awareness back to Tibet.[13] Because of the constant wars with China, exchanges of ministers, treaties, and a few royal princesses as brides, the Tibetan court and nobility must have been very familiar with Chinese goods, which undoubtedly had a continuing and lasting influence on Tibetan art and aesthetics.

When Tisong Detsen retired in 797, his son Muni Tsenpo succeeded him. Little is known about Muni Tsenpo except that he died shortly after becoming king. His successor was Tide Songtsen, better known as Sadnaleg, who was ruling by 804. During his reign, Buddhism flourished with royal support of ongoing translation projects at Samye. However, as Sadnaleg was very young, the real Tibetan government was basically in the hands of the ministers.

When Sadnaleg died in 815, the ministers chose his third son, Tisug Detsen, as king of Tibet. Usually called Ralpachan (Having [long] Hair), he is known to have Buddhist monks sit on a cloth attached to his long hair as they performed rituals for his benefit. Each of these priests, called "Priests of the King's Head," was awarded seven households to support

him. Thus, Ralpachan established the institution of taxation on behalf of the monastics of Tibet. During his reign, Ralpachan also invited three Indian teachers, Shailendrabodhi, Danashila, and Jinamitra to Tibet. With the assistance of two Tibetan translators, Kawa Paltsek and Chogro Lui Gyaltsen, they established the standardized terms for translation and created the *Mahavyuhapatti*, the first Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary.[14] Ralpachan was murdered in 836 as part of the court intrigue to take over the throne of Tibet by his older brother, Udumtan (?–842), and the pro-Bön faction of ministers.

Udumtan, better known as Lang Darma ([Bad] Behavior of a Bull), began a brutal persecution of Buddhism, which lasted until his murder in 842 by the Buddhist monk Lhalung Palgye Dorje. While there are differing versions of how he approached the king, Lhalung's means of escape is reenacted in dance-mask festivals to the present day. When he came into the city, Lhalung was wearing a black cape and rode a white horse that had been disguised by rubbing charcoal all over it. After the murder, he reversed his cape to its white lining and rode his horse through the river washing off all of the charcoal. When Lang Darma's army went to search for the murder, all that could be seen was a white-robed rider on a white horse on the far side of the river. By his unselfish act, Lhalung Palgye Dorje had saved Buddhism, but he had also brought the Yarlung dynasty to an end.

The Period of the Thirteen Trikor "Throne States" (842–1247)

After the Yarlung dynasty, there was no central government in Tibet and the rule returned to one of contending "throne states," or Trikor. These were essentially the same valley states and nomadic groups that had existed prior to the rise of the Yarlung dynasty in the 7th century but with increased cultural refinement to the mix. Virtually all of the peripheral Tibetan cultural regions had an element of Buddhist practice, small temples, priests, and the ancillary societal obligations inherent in sustaining a monastic environment. However, Buddhism in central Tibet, particularly the Ü and Tsang districts, had apparently been completely suppressed. This history is local and fragmented and therefore very hard to trace. Recent work on the history of western Tibet has raised more questions than answers, especially in terms of a detailed chronology and the interplay of events.[15]

The Rise of Sectarianism in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

In Tibet, the teachings of Padmasambhava and his successors became known as the Nyingma, or "Old [School]," while the teachings of the 11th- and 12th-century wave of influence from primarily Indian teachers was called the Sarma, or "New [School]." This is known as the "Second Propagation." The Sarma teachings of Rinchen Zangpo and the Indian *pandita,* Atisha, were greatly added to by a new and energetic interest in traveling to Nepal and India in order to seek teachings and initiation directly from the Indic masters. It was also during this time that Newar and Indian teachers began to travel into Tibet to teach and participate in the ever-increasing interest and patronage of Buddhism in Tibet.

Three major Sarma schools formed in Tibet: the Kadam, the Sakya, and the Kagyu. In addition, a number of smaller schools formed that combined the teachings of the two periods.

The major schools each have their own history and lineages of teachers, both Indian and Tibetan. However, those lineages of "throne-holders" are somewhat less important than the lineages of the initiations. Thus, the histories of Tibet are often equally concerned with doctrinal transmissions and tracing the authority of a specific teaching as well as the abbots and hierarchs of the school. Each of the schools has variations and a specialized teachings lineage on which it bases its doctrinal authority. Indeed, some of the most important teaching lineages contain individuals from more than one school.

Although there are four major sectarian schools and many subschools of Tibetan Buddhism, from a technical standpoint there is actually very little difference between them. While one may emphasize a certain teaching over another, the teachings themselves are inherently similar and the total "scholastic" differences are a matter of nuances rather than fundamentals.

Nyingma School

Of the four schools, only the Nyingma "Old" [School] is not self-named. "Old" simply refers to any form of Buddhism that predated the period of the Second Propagation (ca. early 10th century onward). However, its followers have consolidated the diverse early traditions into three lineages and nine methodologies, or vehicles (*yana*). The methodologies may be charted as follows:

Shravakayana "The Way of the Hearers"	Pratyekayana "The Way of the Solitary Attainers"	Bodhisattvayana "The Way of the Beings Destined for Enlightenment"
Kriya Tantra "Tantra of Action"	Charya Tantra "Tantra of Performance"	Yoga Tantra "Tantra of Linking"
Mahayoga Tantra "Tantra of Great Linking"	Anuyoga Tantra "Tantra of Highest Linking"	Atiyoga Tantra "Tantra of Superlative Linking" (Dzogchen)

There are three main lineages in the Nyingma school, one for each of the last three categories of Tantra, namely Mahayoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga. The latter is also well known as Dzogchen, which is one of the distinctive teachings of the Nyingma tradition. The three teachings form a layered series of progressive attainments, similar to the threefold methodology found in the Newar Buddhist tradition. The culminating deity is Mahottama Heruka and Krodeshvari, a form of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri (see Cats. 139–141) and is explained in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra.*[16] Both the *Guhyagarbha* and the *Vajrakilaya* are considered the root Tantras of Mahayoga; the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* specifically is foundational for the three teaching methodologies. According to a second version, Padmasambhava's attainment of the *Vajrakilaya Tantra* is associated with the Yanglesho cave at Pharping in the Kathmandu Valley, where he is said to have received his first vision of the Vajrakilaya mandala and from where he then accomplished this practice.

The final meditations in Nyingma practice is Dzogchen (Great Completion), also known as Dzogpa Chenpo, in which the practitioner realizes the absolute, interpenetrating nonduality of appearance and emptiness, as stated by the Dzogchen teachers, essentially what we have

Fig. 2. Depictions of Lalitaditya's Chaitya (left) and Chankuna's Stupa, originally 8th-century constructions at Parihaspur, Kashmir, 11th-century murals, Sum Tsek, Alchi Village Ladakh, Kashmir, India.

termed phenomenon and noumenon. This meditation primarily focuses on the mind realizing that samsaric existence and nirvana are ultimately nondual.

Atisha and the Founding of the Kadam School

In about the mid-10th century, King Khorde of the western Tibetan region of Guge was a very devout Buddhist. To revitalize the teachings of Buddhism, he organized a group of twenty-one selected young men to travel to the great Tantric center, Kashmir, to study Buddhism. In 975 they traveled from the Ngari district (where Guge is located) by way of Kulu into Kashmir to meet the great Buddhist teachers. One of these individuals was Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055). While the details of his stay in Kashmir are not well known, historical references note several major Buddhist institutions there, the most important of which was located at Parihaspur. Since the time of the Kashmiri king Lalitaditya (r. ca. 724–750) during the 8th century, the temple had received royal patronage. Indeed, the great Chaitya of Lalitaditya with its eighty-foot-tall copper-alloy Buddha and the great Stupa of Lalitaditya's Tocharian minister, Chankuna, were the physical centerpieces of Kashmiri Buddhism. These are represented in the details of Prajnaparamita/Tara, found on the south wall of the west niche in the Sum Tsek, Alchi (Fig. 2). Because of its importance, it is likely that Rinchen Zangpo studied at the monastic complex at Parihaspur for at least part of his time in Kashmir.

From his translations and from the wall paintings in surviving tem-

ples, such as the Sum Tsek, that were built following his teachings, it is apparent that Rinchen Zangpo taught a benefactory form of Buddhism, involving the practice of the *Sarvadurgati Parishodana Tantra*, the belief in rebirth in the paradises of Sukhavati and Abhirati, as well as the benefaction by Mahakala and Yama. In particular, it is clear that he taught devotion to a six-armed form of Shyama Tara as Ashtamahabhaya Tara. In this form, Green Tara manifests herself as the savioress of the eight great perils, attacks of elephants, tigers, robbers, and the like, on behalf of her devotees. The year that Rinchen Zangpo returned to Western Tibet from his first trip to Kashmir, 978,[17] is the first year of the restoration of Buddhism, better known as the "Second Propagation." He brought with him a number of Indian teachers and apparently some artists as well. The temples in Western Tibet and Ladakh that were built during Rinchen Zangpo's time of teaching are in a distinct Kashmiri style that leans heavily on styles from western Asia, rather than the eastern Indic versions.

Rinchen Zangpo had a long and successful career both as a teacher and as a translator, and, according to several sources, founded 108 temples throughout Western Tibet. On his return, the King Khorde of Guge retired from the kingship and took the Buddhist name of Yeshe 'Od (Skt. *Jnanaprabha*, "Radiant-light of Transcendental-insight").[18] He subsequently built the famous Tholing monastery near Guge, with the guidance of Rinchen Zangpo.

At the same time, the great Tantric centers of the Nepal Valley and the eastern Gangetic basin fostered a type of Buddhism involving intense yogic transformations and complex meditational sequences that took months to learn and many years to master. According to the Tibetan tradition, this teaching was handed down among a secretive sect of Tantrin teachers, who were known as Mahasiddhas, or Great Adepts. Secret though it may have been, there is ample archaeological evidence that this methodology had taken on a very public side by no later than the 5th or 6th century in the Nepal Valley and by the 9th century in the eastern Gangetic basin. In Nepal, sculptures of the five Jina Buddhas had become commonplace in the Licchavi period, and most of the ancient stupas of the Valley still contain remnants of 6th-, 7th-, or 8th-century images that betray the existence of Tantric practices. In the Gangetic basin, Pala sculptures provide evidence of Tantric imagery, in particular with representations of priests, dressed as Vajrasattva and performing *puja*s with Tantric ritual paraphernalia—a practice found in both Nepal and Tibet to the present day.[19]

In essence, the "secret" practices, presumably initially totally secret and handed down among only a select few initiates, devolved into an empowered priesthood that performed rituals on behalf of both the laity, through merit transfer, and themselves as essentially a "ministry" of public service. By the time the Tibetans came in contact with this methodology, it was well established and well integrated within the esoteric religious structure. While there were (and still are) Tantric Mahasiddha practitioners wandering the countryside, sequestered in remote areas, or living unannounced among the populace at large, the majority had, demonstrably as early as the 11th century, become institutionalized and essentially participated openly in a not-so-secret "secret" practice.[20]

Later in his career, Yeshe 'Od, although a monk, still commanded his army. He was captured and imprisoned by the Muslim king of the Gar-log (probably Gartok in western Tibet), with an order to convert to Islam or be ransomed at a weight of gold equal to his own weight.[21] While his nephew, Byanchub Od, and court did in fact raise a great deal of gold, said to be equal to his body but not his head, the former king ordered them not to give a grain of gold to the king of Gar-log but to seek Indian Buddhist teachers and to support them in their travel to Tibet. With these resources, in 1038, Byangchub 'od sent a young but very learned teacher and translator, Nagtsho (1101–? [after 1054]), to Vikramshila (near Bhagalpur in Bihar, India,) to invite Atisha (982–1054) to come to Ngari and to teach the Tantric methodology. In 1040, Atisha, Nagtsho, and others left Vikramshila and journeyed to the Vajrasana at Bodhgaya. There they performed rich offerings and then journeyed to the Nepal Valley. Atisha spent the year 1041 in the Nepal Valley, where he venerated the Svayambhu Mahachaitya and built Tham Bahi (in Thamel in Kathmandu). In some Western scholarship on Newar Buddhism, Atisha is credited with having introduced Tantric methodologies into the Kathmandu Valley. However, it is clear from recent research in the Nepal Valley that the Buddhist meditational practices that Atisha transmitted to Tibet were already in place in the Valley and had been for a long time.

Atisha began his teachings on arriving in the Maryul district of western Tibet, and eventually encountered Rinchen Zangpo, who was 85 years old. He was converted to the methodologies of Atisha and meditated on them for ten years, finally receiving a (fully realized) vision of the mandala of Chakrasamvara. Atisha stayed in the Maryul area for three years and then met Dromton (1005–1064), who would become his greatest disciple. They met on the road as Atisha was attempting to return to India. Upon finding the road blocked by local rivalries and therefore unsafe, Dromton, a Khampa, told Atisha of the wonders of central Tibet and the need to spread the teachings there. Agreeing, Atisha went to central Tibet, offered many teachings, and worked with Nagtsho on translations of texts and commentaries. After exhorting Dromton to build a monastery, Atisha died in 1054 in Tibet and was memorialized with a great ceremony in 1055. In 1056, Dromton founded Reting in the Miggi Valley of central Tibet. It was the first Sarma "new school" monastery and the founding monastery of the Kadam sect.

Kadam School

The Kadam school, established by Dromton, was a monastic order with a rigorous discipline and scholarly basis. It adhered to the great monastic traditions of Eastern India, and many of the teachings were apparently derived directly from the Indic monastic traditions through Atisha. Early in his career in Tibet, Atisha wrote the *Lam Rim*, a preparatory text for higher meditation. It emphasized the threefold aspects of hearing (the teaching), thinking (about the teachings), and meditation (on the teachings), in order to reach renunciation of the material world, develop the will to enlightenment (*bodhichitta*), and attain the final goal of the null state (*shunyata*). Under the great reformer Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the Kadam School became the Kadam Sarma "New Kadam" school, best known as the Gelug sect.

Sakya School

The Sakya school traces its history to the time of the First Propagation by Padmasambhava. In the 8th century, the prominent Khon family became students of Padmasambhava, and a member of the family was one of the original seven Tibetans to have become monks at Samye. For the next thirteen generations (750–1073), Khon Nagarakshita and his successors in the Khon family followed what was to become known as the Nyingma school teachings. However, at the time of the Second Propagation in the 11th century, Khon Konchog Gyalpo (1034–1102) became a disciple of the famous translator and teacher Drogmi Lotsaba (992–1074), who was

considered an emanation of the Indian *siddha,* Virupa (see Cat. 28). In 1073, he decided to build a temple at Sakya, "Grey/Chalky Place," whereby the school gets its name. Khon Konchog Gyalpo's son was Kunga Nyingpo (1092–1158), also known as Lama Sakyapa or Sachen Kunga Nyingpo. As one of the greatest Sakya teachers, he received initiations of the major Tantric systems, such as the Vajrakila, Chakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja, Yamantaka, Mahamaya, and Panjara Mahakala. Most importantly, he was also initiated by his father into *Hevajra Tantra* and studied with the Lamdre teachers, a fundamental practice for the Sakya school. His father obtained the teachings from Drogmi, who, in turn, had received them directly from an Indian monk, Gayadhara. Drogmi had divided the *Hevajra* teaching into the Tantra and the "pith" and would only teach one or the other to his various disciples. However, desiring further instructions, Kunga Nyingpo sought the root teachings from Zhangton Chobar, who eventually gave him the teachings over four years. The Hevajra teachings are known as the Path and the Fruit (*Lamdre*) and center on the visualizations of Hevajra and Nairatma (see Cats. 142–144).

Lamdre Lineage

Virupa	
Krishnapa and Dombipa	
Damarupa	
Avadhutipa	
Gayadhara (Indian) (994–1043)	
Drogmi Lotsaba (992–1074)	
"Tantra" Khon Konchog Gyalpo[22] (1034–1102) "Pith" Zhangton Chobar[23] (1053–1156)	
Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092–1158)	Five Patriarchs of the Sakya School
Sonam Tsemo (1142–1182)	
Jetsun Dakpa Gyaltsen (1147–1216)	
Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyeltsen (1182–1251)	
Drogön Chogyal Phagpa (1235–1280)	

The Three Schools of Sakya (Sa-Ngor-Tsar-Sum)

There are three "mother" monasteries of the Sakya school. The first is the Sakya Monastery founded in 1073, as described above. The second, Ngor Evam Choden, was founded in 1429 by Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (1382–1457) in Tsang. The Ngor school is famous for its great compilation of mandala cycles of the major Buddhist Tantras and for its patronage of Newar artists, who in essence founded the Bal ri or Newar school of Tibetan painting. Over 200 sub-monasteries of the Ngor school subsequently followed the practice of commissioning these mandala cycles. The third monastery is Phanyul Nalendra in Phanyul, north of Lhasa. Founded in 1435 by Kuntchen Rongten, the monastery became the home of the 'whispered-lineage' of the Tsar school, following the teachings Tsarchen Losel Gyatso (1502–1556). According to the *Blue Annals,* Nalendra was famous for its Newar paintings but was destroyed in the cultural revolution.

Kagyu School

The term "Kagyu" derives from the Tibetan phrase meaning "Lineage of the Four Commissioners" (Ka-bab-shi-gyu-pa).[24] This lineage is 1) the illusory body and transference yogas of the *Guhyasamaja* and *Chatush pitha Tantra,* transmitted through Tilopa, Nagarjuna, Indrabhuti, and Saraha; 2) the dream yoga practice of the *Mahamaya* from Tilopa, Charyapa, and Kukuripa; 3) the clear-light yoga of the *Chakrasamvara, Hevajra,* and other Mother Tantras, as transmitted from Hevajra, Dombipa, and Lavapa; and 4) the inner-heat yoga, Kamadevavajra, Padmavajra, Dakini, Kalpabhadra, and Tilopa.

The root-lineage teacher of the Kagyu school is considered to be the Indian Mahasiddha Tilopa (988–1069), who had received many Tantric teachings from various masters. According to the biography of Marpa, Tilopa is said to have received teachings of the *Hevajra* and *Chakrasamvara Tantra* and the practice of inner-heat yoga (Chandali), known in Tibetan as *tummo,* from Dakini and Subhagni. From Tantric Nagarjuna[25] and Matangipa, he received the practice of the illusory body (*mayadeha)* as described in the *Guhyasamaja* (see Cats. 134–138). He also obtained initiations into the practice of the clear light of bliss (*prabhasvara*) as elaborated in the *Chakrasamvara Tantra* from Lawapa. From Charyapa, he similarly received the initiations of dream yoga. While there are varying details in his biography of the specific transmission teachings, Tilopa eventually condensed these teachings into four principal practices of the Kagyu school. These include the practice of the Great Seal (Mahamudra) or nondual yoga; inner-heat yoga; illusory body, including dream yoga and *bardo*; and clear-light yoga.

Tilopa's primary disciple was Naropa (956–1040), who formulated his teachings into a transmission known as the "Six Yogas of Naropa" (see Cat. 26). These are central to the completion-stage practices of the Kagyu school and later became popular among the Gelug sect as well. Elaborating on Tilopa's four teaching transmissions, Naropa's six yogas are 1) the yoga of inner heat (*chandali*); 2) the yoga of the illusory body (*mayadeha*); 3) the yoga of the dream state; 4) the yoga of clear light of bliss (*prabhasvara*); 5) the yoga of intermediate space (*antarabhava*); 6) the yoga of consciousness transference (*samkranti*).

The great Tibetan teacher, Chogi Lodro, better known as Marpa Lotsaba (1012–1097), and his disciple Milarepa are the Tibetan patriarchs of the Kagyu lineage. Marpa traveled to Nepal and India, where he lived for twenty years, received the teachings from Naropa and his Nepalese disciple Paindapa, and subsequently returned to Tibet. Among these, he received the foundational teaching lineages of the Kagyu school directly from Naropa, specifically the yogas of illusory body and consciousness transference, dream, clear light, and inner heat. He was also initiated into the *Chakrasamvara Tantra,* which became the principal transformative deity of the Kagyu school.

In Tibet, the renowned poet yogin of Tibet, Milarepa (1052–1135), became Marpa's disciple and after an arduous trial was given the transmission. His students included Dakpo Lardye, better known as Gampopa (1079–1153), and Rechung Dorje Drakpa (1083–1161), from whom the Rechung Kagyu lineage derived. His meditation cave in Yarlung became an important place of pilgrimage and at one time an important Kagyu monastery. Since Rechung Dorje was a direct disciple of Milarepa and therefore a "Dharma brother" of Gampopa, he is not listed in the accomplishments of Gampopa's disciples that follows. Among his best-known students is Dusum Khyenpa (1110–1193), who not only established the Karma Kagyu lineage but was also recognized as the first Karmapa Lama. This tradition of the Karma Kagyu lineage continues to the present day with Ranjung Rigpe Dorjey (1924–1981), who was recognized as the Sixteenth Karmapa Lama.

Although well known, the Karma Kagyu is not the only form of Kagyu teachings. There were "four major and eight minor" Dakpo Kagyu schools, which were named after Gampopa's secular name, Dakpo Lardye, "Doctor from Dak." These are:

1. The Kamtsang or Karma Kagyu, founded by the first Karmapa Dusum Kyenpa (1110–1193), who studied with Gampopa. He founded Tsurphu, west of Lhasa, in 1187, which was the seat of the Karmapa Lamas until the mid-20th century.
2. The Tsalpa Kagyu, founded by Zhang Tsondru Drakpa (1123–1193), Dakpo Gomtsul's disciple. Zhang Tsongdru Drakpa's disciple Shang Lama founded Tsal in 1175 and Gunthang in 1187.
3. The Baram Kagyu, founded by Barampa Dharma Wangchuk (1100–?), Gampopa's disciple.
4. The Phagmo Drukpa Kagyu, founded by Gampopa's disciple Phagmo Dru Dorye Gyelpo (1110–1170). He founded Densatil Monastery in 1158, east of the Yarlung valley and just north of the Tsang po River.

Eight smaller sub-sects were later created from the Phagmo Drupa Kagyu. These are:

1. Drikung Kagyu, founded by Kyopa Jigten Sumgon, also known as Kyogon (1143–1212). This "sect" is located in Drigung Valley about 100 miles northeast of Lhasa.
2. Taklung Kagyu, founded by Taklung Tangpa Tashi Pel (1142–1210), who founded the Taklung Monastery (see Cat. 35).
3. Trophu Kagyu, founded by Drogon Gyaltsha (1118–1195).
4. Lingre Kagyu, founded by Lingre Pema Dorje (1128–1188). This school later became known as Drukpa Kagyu Lineage and flourishes in Bhutan in the present day.
5. Martsang Kagyu, founded by Choje Marpa Dondrup (also known as Marpa Rinchen Lodrö). This is also known as Marpa Kagyu.
6. Yelpa Kagyu, founded by Yelpa Yeshe Tsek.
7. Yabzang Kagyu, founded by Gyalwa Yabzang (1169–1207).
8. Shugseb Kagyu, founded by Nyephu Gyergom Chökyi Senge (Chenpo).

The Kagyu schools all recognize the Great Seal (Mahamudra) teachings as the quintessential Tantric Buddhist teaching, concerned primarily with the direct experience of the clear luminosity of the purified mind. There are, however, many preliminary stages of ordinary meditations that precede the Mahamudra. Another distinctive practice of the Kagyu school is Cutting Off (Tbt. *chod*). This system is traced to Dampa Sangye (Cat. 32) and his disciple Machig Labdron (Cat. 33). It is a system of transformative visualizations, during which the physical body, and thereby the material "I," is offered as food to the egoistic entities of the mind. Once it has been systematically devoured, nothing remains but the pure nonself. Followers of the practice are noted for their complete disregard for physical appearances, often appearing as shaggy ascetics, very much like the image of Mahakala Brahmanrupa (Cat. 96), and having thighbone trumpets, pellet drums (Cats. 106a and b), skullcups (Cats. 99–102) and the like. In addition, they are known for frequenting charnel fields, where they confront their basal fears with scenes of death and dying.

Gelug School

Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), known also as Losang Drakpa, is the founder of the Gelug school (Cat. 37). In the 14th century, Tsongkhapa set out to reform the Kadam school tradition; he felt that the monks had become lax in their practices, and the sexual Tantric rituals, at that time practiced physically rather than meditationally, were incompatible with the monastic vows of celibacy. He wrote the *Lamrim Chen Mo* while staying at Reting, the monastery that was founded by Atisha disciple Dromton. Traveling and teaching, Tsongkhapa profoundly influenced Tibetan Buddhism, and the Kadam school in particular, in a highly intellectual and scholarly direction. This movement culminated in his *Essence of Good Explanations* (also *Essence of True Eloquence*), a philosophical study and interpretation of the Madhyamaka and Yogachara schools of Indian Buddhism.

His two principal disciples, Gyeltsap Darma Rinchen (1364–1432) and Kedrup Gelek Belzangpo (1385–1438), were responsible for creating the monastic institutions of Tsongkhapa's systems that led to the formulation of the Gelug order. Je Tsongkhapa also formulated the idea of celebrating a yearly religious festival that would begin at the Tibetan new year, and this "Great Prayer Festival" (Monlam Chenmo) is still celebrated as one of the major religious events of the year. After the initial celebration of the festival, his disciple Gedun Drub (1391–1474) founded the first Gelug monastery, Ganden, just outside of Lhasa, which opened in 1409. It was Gedun who would be posthumously recognized as the first Dalai Lama. The Ganden monastery continued to flourish as a major monastic complex, housing as many as 4,000 monks. The founding of this monastery was followed by the founding of Drepung in 1415 and Sera in 1419, both also near Lhasa. Ganden, Drepung, and Sera served as the three principal monasteries of the Gelug school and were the lineage's primary seats of power. Unfortunately, these great seats of learning were demolished by the Chinese during the Cultural Revolution in 1959.

In subsequent centuries, the significance of the Gelug school quickly rose with notable Tibetan teachers and new monasteries. Tsongkhapa's teaching tradition continued with the institution of lineage of teachers, known as the "Throne-Holders of Ganden." Gyeltsap Darma Rinchen, the primary successor to Tsongkhapa, held this position for twelve years until his death in 1432 and was succeeded by Kedrup Gelek Belzangpo. These two disciples are considered the "spiritual sons" of Tsongkhapa. The Throne-Holders were recognized as reincarnate patriarchs and in the 16th century were given the honorific title of Dalai Lama, "Great Ocean (of Knowledge) Teacher," by the Mongol rulers. This tradition began with Sonam Gyatso (1543–1588), grandson of Altan Khan, one of the most powerful Mongol chieftains, who was given the title of the Third Dalai Lama. After the defeat of the last ruler of Tsang province by Gushri Khan in 1642, the victorious Mongol ruler appointed Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617–1682) the Fifth Dalai Lama, as temporal and spiritual leader of Tibet. Until the 1959 annexation of Tibet by the Chinese, the Gelug tradition served as the principal form of state Buddhism in Tibet, with the Dalai Lama as the spiritual leader and the Potala palace in Lhasa as the seat of learning and government. As the human manifestations of Shadakshari Lokeshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, the tradition of the Dalai Lama continues to the present day, with His Holiness Tenzing Gyatso (b. 1935) as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. With almost a million Tibetans now in exile in the diaspora community of India, Nepal, Europe, and North America, and with the growing awareness of the necessity to sustain the distinctive teachings of Tibetan Buddhism outside Tibet, many eminent Tibetan teachers have gradually opened the secret Tantric practices to the public. Their visions have made possible art exhibitions such as *The Circle of Bliss.*

1 A detailed history of the Yarlung dynasty is available in Erik Haarh, *The Yar-Lung Dynasty.*

2 The details of the debate over early Tibetan history and variations in divers Tibetan histories are beyond the needs of this catalogue. The author has chosen to basically follow Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History,* ch. 2, 23–53, for dates and spellings, except as noted.

3 These dates are far from certain, and other accounts state Songtsen Gampo's birth as 60 years earlier and his ascension to the throne as 58 years earlier. These seem more probable.

4 G. Tucci, in his "The wives of Srong btsan sgam po," 121–30, is the only one to have attempted to cast serious doubt on the existence of the Balza. However, the true strength of the Newar tradition was not available to him at the time.

5 For the modern Tibetan view on the present image see www.tibet.com/Buddhism/jowo-mikyo-dorjee.html.

6 Haarh, 384–91.

7 There are several differing versions of the incidents, all with the same result—that Shantirakshita was invited from Nepal. See Shakabpa, 34–37.

8 It is probably not a coincidence that Shantirakshita, "Protector of Peace," and Shantikaracharya, "Teacher of Peace," the teacher from Gaur who received the first Chakrasamvara initiation from Manjudeva in Nepal, have closely related names. Although probably actually Indian (the Tibetans are very clear on who is Newar *balpo* and who is Indian *gyarpo*), it is very likely that he was a teacher connected with Svayambhu Mahachaitya.

9 Shakabpa, 36–37.

10 Shakabpa, 39–42.

11 See Paul De Demiéville, *Le Concile de Lhasa.*

12 Pinyin transliteration. Other common spellings are Ho Shang, Ha Shang, and on occasion, Hva Shang.

13 Heather Karmay Stoddard in her *Early Sino-Tibetan Art* has brought to light a number of paintings from the end of the Yarlung dynasty that were very likely created under either Tibetan influence (her Figures 2 and 3) or, in one case, inscribed by a Tibetan painter who painted in a completely Chinese manner (her figure 4). Her figure 3 is particularly convincing because the Jina Buddhas in it wear Newar-style crowns, the knowledge of which certainly must have come to Dunhuang through Tibet.

14 Shakabpa, 49.

15 Until more works such as Roberto Vitali's *The Kingdom of Gu.ge Pu.hrang: according to the mNga'.ris rgyal rabs by Gu.ge chen Ngag.dbang grags.pa* are available for more information about the Trikor period, the history of this period will remain out of reach for most scholars and others.

16 See Gyurme Dorje, *The Guhyagarbha Tantra.*

17 This date is irreconcilable with the usual date of his departure for India, 975, and of his presumed stay of seven years. Nevertheless it is the date celebrated and still used as the beginning of the Second Propagation.

18 The following is summarized from Alaka Chattopadhyaya, *Atisa and Tibet,* 283–366.

19 See John C. Huntington and Dina Bangdel, "A Case Study in Religious Continuity," 63–70.

20 Large-scale sculptures of Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, and Heruka are common enough by the 11th century to suggest that something much more open than simply individual imaginary meditations was taking place. Further, the Dharmavamin, Chog Lotsaba, notes that in 1235 the Chakrasamvara temple still survived at Nalanda even after the Turuksha conquest of the region. However, 9th-century metal images for the site demonstrate that the Chakrasamvara practice was already in place.

21 The following is summarized almost exclusively from George N. Roerich, tr., *The Blue Annals.* It is a translation of 'Gos Lotsaba's *Deb ther sngon po,* composed 1476–1478.

22 Khon Konchog Gyalpo is also known as the first Sakya Throne Holder.

23 In the Lamdre lineage, Zhangton Chobar's teacher is Seton Kunrig (1025–1113).

24 See www.samye.org for Kagyu lineage masters.

25 Although modern scholarship has divided Nagarjuna into two, three, and even four individuals of the same name, living at radically differing times ranging from the 1st or 2nd century C.E. to the 8th or 9th century, the traditional Tibetan and Newar teachers hold that it was one person and do not think it at all remarkable that he wrote on both Madhyamika theory and Tantric practices.

Tantra in China

| YING CHUA

Mongol Patronage of Tibetan Buddhism during the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368)

The development of Tantric Buddhism in China during the Yuan period is closely tied to Mongol and Tibetan relations during the period, ushered in by Kublai Khan (1215–1294) and his Sakya Lama, Chogyal Phagpa (1235–1280), for whom he created the high title and powerful post of Imperial Preceptor during his reign. According to traditional Tibetan accounts, the Khan and his Lama were "like the sun and moon in the sky," joined in a campaign to bring all of China under Mongol rule.[1] Under Kublai and Phagpa, Buddhist art soared to one of its global apogees, after the Newar artist Anige (1245–1306) was brought to the Khan's court. His position in charge of the imperial workshops gave rise to one of the most prolific, lavish, and aesthetically refined Buddhist artistic traditions of the world.

In the events leading to this stellar period, Genghis Khan (d. 1227) united the Mongol tribes under his rule and began amassing new territory. Upon his death, the land was granted to his grandson, Prince Godan. It was Godan who first took an interest in the religion of Tibet, summoning the head of the Sakya order, the famed Sakya Pandita, Kunga Gyaltsen (1182–1251), to his court in Liangzhou (presently Gansu province) in 1244. The teacher included two of his nephews, Phagpa and Chagna Dorje, in his entourage, arriving at Liangzhou in 1246.

Sakya Pandita converted Prince Godan to Buddhism after healing the prince who was seriously ill.[2] The Tibetan hierarch then negotiated to spare Tibet any future Mongol invasions in exchange for acceptance of Mongol authority over secular and ecclesiastical appointments in Tibet. The Sakyas were designated as sole representatives of the Mongols, but the actual implementation of this policy and deepening of Mongol-Sakya relationships would come only later, during Kublai's reign.[3] Among the gifts received from the prince, Sakya Pandita was granted a monastery, known as the "Magical Temple of the North," in Liangzhou after he defeated a rival in a magical contest at Godan's court. He died while in residence there, and the temple still holds his relics.[4]

In 1253, Khubilai Kublai (then Prince Kublai) requested Godan to send him Phagpa and Chagna Dorje. The brothers joined Kublai's camp early in 1254, and Phagpa thenceforth remained in Kublai's inner circle. Kublai later patronized other Tibetan hierarchs, most notably Karma Pakshi (1206–1283), the second Karmapa. Karma Pakshi performed many feats of magic at Kublai's court, such as gliding on water, flying in the air, and crushing a boulder. So impressed was the Khan that he declared that although Phagpa was a human incarnation of the Buddha Amitabha, Karma Pakshi was superior in magical powers. Therefore, Queen Chabi requested Phagpa to perform magical feats to uphold the reputation of the Sakya sect. Phagpa agreed and in the presence of the Khan and his ministers cut off his own head, legs, and arms with a sword and transformed them into the five Jina Buddhas. He performed many other miraculous displays as well.[5]

When Kublai ascended the throne as Great Khan and established the Yuan dynasty in 1260, Karma Pakshi was accused of supporting Kublai's younger brother and rival for the throne, Ariq Boke, and was arrested. Karma Pakshi was later reprieved but only after he was kept on a burning pyre for several days and came to no harm. Nonetheless, the Karmapa was banished to Southern China and was not allowed to return to Tibet for another eight years. With this potential rival absent, Phagpa continued to rise in favor at Kublai's court.

In 1260, Kublai appointed Phagpa as State Preceptor and the following year placed him in charge of all Buddhist clergy. In 1264, the Khan granted tax exemptions to the Buddhist monasteries and founded the Zongzhi yuan. He appointed Phagpa as the first director of this important new agency, which was also known as Sakya school Zongzhiyuan (later changed to Xuanzheng yuan). The Lama's duty was to administer Tibet and supervise Mongol relations with the Buddhist clergy. In 1269, Phagpa was titled Imperial Preceptor (*dishi*), literally, "Teacher of the Emperor." As Imperial Preceptor, he was authorized to issue letters and proclamations to the temples and institutions of Tibet, and he advised the Emperor regarding official appointments in Tibet.

Kublai Khan and Phagpa also came to be linked through marital ties, when Chagna Dorje and two nephews married into the Mongol royal family. The Khan offered Phagpa nominal rule over all Tibet. He dispatched the Lama to Tibet in 1264 to help persuade his people to accept Mongol rule and appointed Chagna Dorje as "Head of all Tibet" (*Bod-spyi'i steng-du bkos*). This pattern of religio-political relations prevailed for the remainder of the Yuan period. A member of the Sakya sect, acting as state preceptor and residing in China, supervised the Buddhist clergy throughout the empire and in Tibet. The Mongols also selected a Tibetan official, titled Pon-chen,[6] to live in and administer Tibet.[7]

Thus, the alliance between the Great Khan and Phagpa inaugurated the enduring lama-patron (*mchod-yon*) relationship between Mongol rulers and their Sakya preceptors. This relationship was one of equality and mutual dependence, with each party sovereign in his respective sphere. Phagpa recorded his views on their roles, calling attention to the power of a ruler to diminish suffering and enhance worldly well-being, thus exerting a positive influence complementary to that of a spiritual teacher:

> Spiritual salvation consists in complete deliverance from suffering, and worldly welfare is secular salvation. Both depend on a dual order, the order of religion and the order of the state . . . . The order of religion is presided over by the Lama, and the state by the King. The priest has to teach religion, and the king to guarantee a rule which enables everybody to live in peace . . . . The heads of the religion and of the state are equal, though with different functions.[8]

Although Phagpa enjoyed significant political stature at Kublai's court, his role as spiritual master of Kublai was the pivotal force of their relations. Phagpa first converted the Khan's influential wife, Chabi, administering to her the high esoteric initiations of Hevajra and Mahakala. Only thereafter did he bring Kublai under his religious influence, conceivably assisted by Chabi's encouragement. Kublai received four major Tantric initiations, including that of Mahakala.[9] The Khan took Mahakala as his personal deity (*yidam*) and tutelary. Mahakala's role as a powerful protector and militant persona were not lost on the

Mongol emperor. Phagpa developed elaborate court rituals centering on Mahakala, such as annual processions and parades, designed to destroy demons and protect the state.[10]

One of the most important of these rituals was held in 1274. Phagpa directed Anige, the imperial art director (see below), to create an image of Mahakala for use in a ritual to aid the Khan in his battles against the Southern Song, which finally ceased with the defeat of the Chinese forces in 1280.[11] This image later became important in the political maneuverings of the 17th-century Mongols and increasingly powerful Manchus. By that period, the Mahakala statue had become a key symbol of these leaders' authority to rule, linking them to the deity's powers as well as to the Great Khan.[12]

Kublai assigned Phagpa the task of creating a better and more widely usable script for the Mongol court.[13] The Lama devised an alphabet that he presented to the Khan in 1269, based upon Tibetan, consisting of forty-one letters, many of which were square in shape. Hence, the alphabet is sometimes called the "square script" but is more commonly known as the Phagpa script in honor of its creator. Pleased with Phagpa's alphabet, the Great Khan designated it as the Mongolian script (*mengguzi*) and eventually referred to it as the "State Script" (*guozi*). However, Kublai's subjects did not readily adopt it, nor did it replace the former Uighur script or Chinese characters. Current examples of Phagpa script can be found on seals, coins, paper money, porcelains, and stone inscriptions commissioned by the Mongol royal family. A famous example of Phagpa script is an inscription dated to 1243,[14] important for our theme because it identifies Kublai Khan with the Bodhisattva Manjushri:

> That blessed bodhisattva, the Emperor Secen [The Wise Emperor, i.e., Kublai], possessed vast wisdom, about whom the prophecy was made that there would be someone named "The Wise One from the vicinity of Mount Wutai [Manjushri], who would become a great emperor."[15]

Even during Kublai's lifetime, Phagpa and other Tibetan Buddhists recognized him as an emanation or incarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjushri, as well as a Universal Emperor, or Chakravartin, a Buddhist title denoting a benevolent, virtuous ruler who promotes the well-being, education, and diverse religious paths of all his people. In a work written during that time, possibly by Phagpa himself, translated into Mongol as the *Chaghan Tege* (White Chronicle), Kublai is depicted as both a Bodhisattva and a great ruler.[16] The identification of Kublai with Manjushri is particularly significant in view of Manjushri's role, since at least the Tang dynasty, as China's own Bodhisattva, residing in his sacred abode on Mount Wutai in Shanxi province. This association thus provided Kublai with the religious sanction he needed to secure his sacred authority to rule China.

In his role as a Universal Emperor, Kublai fulfilled his responsibility to promote the cultural expressions of his diverse people by patronizing the various religions represented at his court. During his reign, artistic expression from his imperial workshops rose to unprecedented heights of productivity, and aesthetic refinement was nourished by an international milieu and the leadership of Anige, the prodigious and talented Newar artist.

Anige was introduced into the Yuan court through the auspices of Phagpa. When Kublai summoned Phagpa to build a golden stupa in Tibet in 1260, Phagpa drafted artists from Nepal to assist in the project. Although Anige was only fifteen, he took charge of the hundred artisans and impressed Phagpa with his talents. Upon the completion of the stupa, Anige requested to return to Nepal but Phagpa encouraged him to go to court and meet Kublai. Phagpa initiated the artist in several esoteric

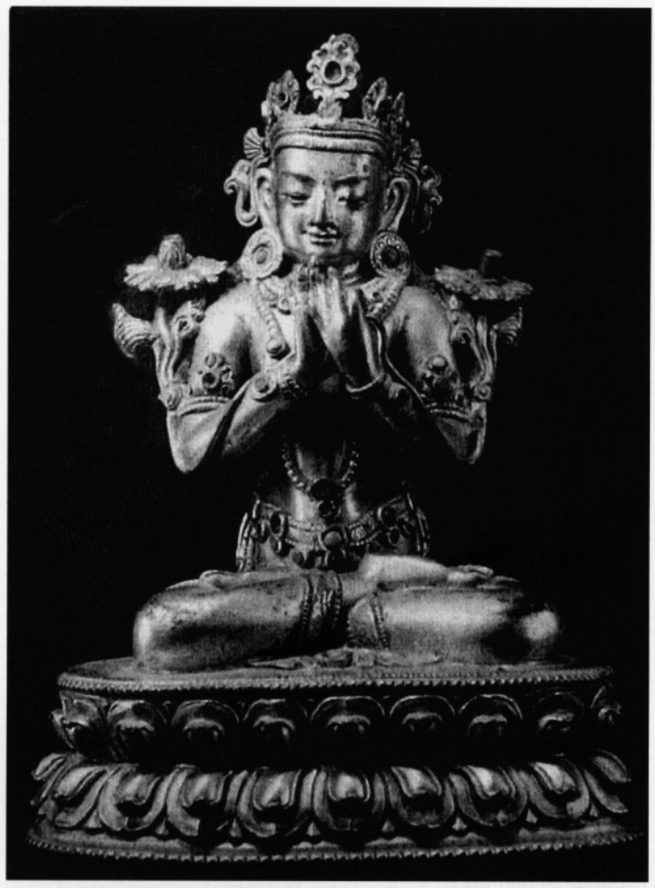

Fig. 1. Manjushri Bodhisattva, gilt bronze, height 7 in. (18 cm), with an inscription dating image to Yuan, the fifteenth day of the fifth month, during the ninth year of the Dade era (1305), dedicated by the family of Gao Quanxin for their parents. National Palace Museum, Taiwan.

Buddhist rites and presented him before the Great Khan. Anige answered Kublai's questions eloquently and with composure, impressing the ruler with his bravery, piety, and skill. The Khan then tested Anige by ordering him to repair a badly damaged Song-period bronze statue. None of the court artists had been able to accomplish the task, because the statue had a complicated system of arteries and veins. When Anige restored it successfully in 1265, the young artist sealed his reputation at the Yuan court and remained in favor for more than forty years.[17]

Anige was placed in charge of the two agencies responsible for artistic production under the Yuan government. In 1273, he was appointed Supervisor-in-Chief of the Artisans of Various Ethnics (*Zhu se renjiang zongguan*). When the position of Supervisorate-in-Chief of Artisans of Various Ethnics (*Zhu se renjiang zongguan fu*) was established under the Ministry of Works (*gongbu*), equal in rank to the other position, Anige was granted this position as well, controlling eleven subordinate units that included the departments of Buddhist Images, Lost-Wax Casting, Casting, Silver (and Gold) Articles, Metalwork, Agate and Jade, Stonework, Woodwork, and Lacquerware. The artisans of different departments often worked together, so that models of images made by the woodwork department would be cast by the lost-wax department, with other artisans making their respective contributions.

The history of the Yuan dynasty, *Yuandai huasuji,* describes the various artistic projects Anige oversaw, spanning an impressive array of Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist commissions, an armillary sphere, and instruments of astronomy. Among his important accomplishments were nine major Buddhist temples, three stupas, two ancestral shrines, one Daoist temple, and innumerable objects for court use and ceremonial

and shrine images.[18] Among his many architectural projects, only the White Stupa at Miaoying Temple (formerly known as Shengshou wan'an si) in Beijing still stands. Noted for its skillful fusion of Indian, Chinese, and Newar building styles, the configuration of Anige's stupa remained influential up to the Ming dynasty.[19]

Anige was also involved in other artistic media, such as the making of woven tapestries and directing the porcelain kilns at the famous Jingdezhen site, modern-day Jiangxi. Appointed as the first imperial supervisor of the kilns, Anige personally visited the site and provided designs for the blue-and-white porcelains used by the Yuan government as gifts to the Near East.[20] Although his output was prodigious, extant examples securely attributable to Anige's hand or immediate workshop are rare, but their number is sure to grow (see Cats. 43 and 45). Surviving Yuan objects also provide a glimpse into the artist's oeuvre. For example, a gilt-bronze image of Manjushri in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Beijing (Fig. 1), dated by inscription to 1305 (a year before Anige's death), is a good example of the style prevalent during Anige's period—combining the Chinese features with the soft modeling of the limbs and shoulders and the ornate jewelry insets of the Newar style.

Beyond the Yuan capital at Beijing, the Mongols also patronized large-scale Buddhist works. For example, Yang Lianzhenjia, the Mongol Director of the Priest of Jiangnan, commissioned in 1292 the famous Tantric sculptural ensemble at Feilaifeng in Hangzhou.[21] From the early 13th through the early 14th century, the massive printing project of the *Qisha Tripitaka*, the complete Chinese Buddhist canon, was carried out by imperial command at Yansheng Yuan, a monastery on Qisha Island near Suzhou. The Yuan court also continued its patronage of Tibetan Buddhism until the end of the dynasty in 1341.

Although Chinese historians in the following Ming dynasty would attribute the fall of the Yuan to the "excesses" of the last Mongol rulers and their "decadent" Lamas, the Ming rulers reaffirmed the Yuan-inspired Lama-patron relationship with Tibetan teachers, motivated by their personal devotion to Buddhism as well as by political expediency.

Patronage of Tibetan Buddhism during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)

In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang (Emperor Hongwu, r. 1368–1398) established the Ming dynasty after successfully driving the Yuan forces from Chinese soil. Political relations between Tibet and Ming China followed the patterns and policies established during the Yuan. Imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism continued, but Hongwu granted greater support to the Chinese Buddhist schools. Under Hongwu, Yuan titles such as Imperial Preceptor were revoked, replaced with titles of lesser status, and granted to very few persons, mainly for political reasons. In Tibet, the Ming court established a hereditary system of local rulership while granting various titles to important monastic hierarchs, thereby creating a dual religious and secular system, with Tibet remaining essentially self-governing.

Beginning with the reign of the Emperor Chengzu (Yongle, r. 1403–1424), religious ties between China and Tibet were strengthened. The number of religious titles granted to Tibetan monks multiplied. The Yongle emperor also emphasized the special union of religion and government in Tibet by affixing the title of "king" (C. *wang*) to Tibetan titles. The Dharma Kings (*fawang*) were mainly religious titles, while those with only *wang* affixed signified the local rulers of particular regions of Tibet. The affixing of "king" (*wang*) to a religious title was unprecedented, and these titles were more prestigious than those granted during the Hongwu era. The religious titles granted during the Yongle reign were divided into eight general ranks, listed here beginning with the highest and noting how many of each could be granted:[22]

1. *Wang,* King (five granted)
2. *Fawang,* Dharma King (two granted: *dabao* ("Great Treasure") and *dacheng* "Great Vehicle")
3. *Xitian fozi,* Son of the Buddha of the Western Heavens [Bodhisattvas Avalokiteshvara and Mahastamaprapta, attending Amitabha] (two granted)
4. *Daguoshi,* Great State Preceptor (nine granted)
5. *Guoshi,* State Preceptor (eighteen granted)
6. *Chanshi,* Chan Preceptor [Teacher of Chan/Zen Buddhism] (innumerable)
7. *Duwang,* City King (innumerable)
8. *Lama,* Phonetic transcription of Lama (innumerable)

The Yongle emperor courted a number of high-ranking Tibetan religious leaders from various sects and granted them titles such as those listed above. Although this was a calculated political maneuver, the emperor's personal devotion to Buddhism cannot be discounted.

Most strikingly, the Yongle emperor's celebrated relationship with the Fifth Karmapa, Dezhin Shegpa, revived the lama-patron (*mchod-yon*) pattern of the Yuan and laid the foundations for further accord between Tibet and China. In 1403, the first year of the emperor's reign, he sent a mission to invite the Karmapa to China, bearing lavish tributary gifts of silver, silk, and sandalwood and a profusely honorific letter written in Chinese characters of gold, signaling his eagerness to secure a Tibetan ally and spiritual mentor, in the manner of his Yuan predecessors. In 1406, Dezhin Shegpa accepted the invitation, sending envoys also bearing presents. The Fourth Karmapa had declined an invitation from the first Ming emperor, so Dezhin Shegpa's acceptance marks the first visit of a Tibetan Lama to the Ming court.

The Karmapa arrived in China in 1406 and was ceremoniously welcomed and lodged at the Huagai Palace in Nanjing. In 1407 he staged a grand funeral ceremony on behalf of the emperor's deceased parents at Mount Wutai. The Lama was awarded with 1,000 measures of gold, rolls of silk and other luxurious textiles, and objects made of precious metals. Dezhin Shegpa granted a series of esoteric initiations and teachings to the monarch (see Cat. 36). The lavish treatment and gifts he received at court and the miracles he wrought during his visit were recorded in Chinese and Tibetan sources and even in long scroll paintings commissioned by the emperor and inscribed in five languages.[23]

Although the emperor was to host other Tibetan teachers, Dezhin Shegpa was the only hierarch to be recognized as the emperor's personal preceptor. Dezhin Shegpa, a Chinese phonetic rendering of the Tibetan "Dezhin Shegpa" for the Sanskrit word Tathagata "Thus-come-gone-one," was granted a lengthy title often shortened to *Rulai dabao fawang,* "Tathagata Great Precious Dharma King." The equivalent of the Yuan title Imperial Preceptor, this was the highest title granted to a Tibetan teacher during the Ming period.

The relationship between Dezhin Shegpa and the emperor marked the beginning of an important phase of the Yongle period, when ties between Tibet and China were renewed through the invitation of renowned Tibetan teachers to the Chinese court.[24] The second highest title, Dharma King, was granted to the Sakya monk Kunzay Shiwa. The Yongle emperor also sent emissaries to invite Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelug sect, to the Chinese capital, but Tsongkhapa declined on grounds of old age and sent in his stead his disciple Sakya Yeshe, who received titles of second and then first rank from the emperor.

The arrival of these Tibetan teachers at the Chinese capital had a great impact on the art of both countries. Many images were exchanged, introducing Chinese stylistic elements to the schools of Tibetan art and vice versa. After the Yongle emperor, later emperors in three successive generations from 1465 to 1521 also evinced deep personal faith in Tibetan Buddhism. Emperor Wuzong (r. 1506–1521) even became conversant in Sanskrit and gave himself the title of *Daqing Fawang*, "Dharma King Great Celebration." He gave as much as 89,000 *jin* of food and tea to Tibetan monks. However, Wuzong draws censure from Chinese historians for his extravagance. According to one account, Wuzong was curious about the "living Buddhas" in Tibet, so he sent an official bearing lavish gifts to invite one to his court. The mission was infamous for its extravagance and failure. The court treasury was much impoverished, although court officials managed to decrease the expenditure of the gifts from the 200,000 units of cash (*tongbao*) originally intended to 130,000. When the mission arrived, the Tibetan teacher was wary of the Chinese ruler's intent and declined to receive the emissary and his massive entourage. The Chinese army threatened the locals, who in turned attacked at night and made off with the treasures. Liu escaped with his life, but the Chinese army was decimated, with several hundred dead and about half injured.

Overall, Wuzong's patronage of Tibetan Buddhism was detrimental to its reputation in Chinese history. Chinese historians have cited the proliferation of Dharma Kings, Sons of Buddhas, and State Preceptors—the granting of titles was accompanied by lavish ceremony and tribute—as cause for the depletion of the national treasury and labor force. Officials who protested Wuzong's renovation of Buddhist temples in the capital and his appointment of Tibetan monks as abbots narrowly escaped death and were banished from court. In some instances they were sent into exile, a policy judged by history as tyrannical.

Tibetan Buddhism remained an active force in the Ming capital and enjoyed the influential patronage of emperors, empresses, and empress dowagers. This patronage continued through the Wanli era (Emperor Shenzong, r. 1573–1619). For example, the emperor's mother, Cishan Empress Dowager, was known for her promotion of Buddhism. Her sobriquet was "Bodhisattva of Nine Lotuses." Other pious ladies include the Xiaoding Empress Li, who built many foreign-style temples within and without the capital with the support of the emperor.[25]

In the fifth year of this era, the Mongol Altan Khan entered Qinghai province with his armies to welcome the Gelug leader Sonam Gyatso, who was teaching in the area of Xining. Altan Khan had already created the title of Oceanic Lama (Dalai Lama) for Sonam Gyatso in 1573. Sonam Gyatso became the Third Dalai Lama, and his two deceased incarnations posthumously became the First and Second Dalai Lamas.

Historical records indicate that Tibetan Buddhism enjoyed a considerable amount of imperial interest and patronage throughout the Ming period. In addition to granting titles and privileges to Tibetan monks and building and renovating temples, the emperors commissioned the printing of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. During the Yongle era, the Tibetan canon was translated and cut and printed twice. This was the early 14th-century *Ganzhu* edition, kept in Narthang Monastery in Tibet, now widely known as the Narthang edition. In 1410 (during the Yongle era), the emperor sent emissaries to the monastery to request the texts, and they were all translated and printed. In addition, the emperor commissioned the inclusion of its section on commentaries on important Buddhist sutras. Altogether six commentaries were chosen to accompany the Tibetan canon, which is known as the Yongle edition. In 1605 (during the Wanli era), there was a reprint of the Yongle edition in black characters, known as the Wanli edition.

These commissions were part of an overall Ming imperial effort to promote Buddhism. Buddhist monks had frequently been sent as friendly emissaries to foreign countries since the beginning of the Ming dynasty. The Hongwu emperor sent monks as far as present-day Central Asia, Sri Lanka, and Japan.[26] Notably, in 1384 (during the Hongwu era), the monk Zhiguang and his disciple Huibian were sent to Nepal bearing gifts of seals, books, sashes, and cash. The king of Nepal, "Madanaluomo," sent envoys to accompany Zhiguang's journey home, also bearing gifts, including a golden stupa, Buddhist sutras, and valuable horses. When they reached the capital in 1387, the emperor returned the Nepalese king's gifts with more in kind. During Zhiguang's time in Nepal, the Newar Buddhist master Mahabodhi(?) (Mohe buti) transmitted the Vajradhatu Mandala to him, and when he returned to China, he translated major Tantric texts.

Despite disparaging accounts in the *Mingshi* regarding the Ming emperors and Tibetan monks, it is clear that Tibetan Buddhism received imperial patronage throughout the period and for genuinely religious motives. Several emperors, notably the Yongle and Wanli emperors, promoted Tibetan Buddhism as enthusiastically as they did the native Chinese schools of Buddhism. In fact, during the Wanli era, Tibetan teachers arrived with such frequency and numbers that in 1569, its final year, an imperial decree was issued to reduce tribute missions to every three years, limit the numbers of their retinue, and specify the routes to be followed.[27] On the whole, research on the native schools of Chinese Buddhism during the Ming dynasty, especially the Chan school, has overshadowed attention to the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Ming China. Moreover, Chinese historians stress the political motivations of the great Ming patrons of Tibetan teachers rather than their religious discipleship and profound personal faith. Therefore, the full story of the religious impact of Tibetan Lamas upon Yongle and subsequent Ming rulers is one that has yet to be told.

Tibetan Buddhism during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)

Beginning with the reign of Emperor Taizu (Manchu name, Nurhaci, r. 1616–1626), the Qing rulers supported Tibetan Buddhism, especially the Gelug sect, for most of their dynasty. Extensive scholarship has been devoted to Sino-Tibetan relations and art during the Qing period in recent years by both Western and Chinese scholars, and the exquisite works of Buddhist art produced during the Qing dynasty included in this exhibition highlight the quality of craftsmanship and integrity of the iconographic forms (see Cats. 40, 42, 62, 156).[28]

The Manchu rulers' initial contact with Tibetan Buddhism was first established through their relations with the Mongols in the period from 1616 to 1644, prior to their conquest of China proper. Although Emperor Taizu was noted to be suspicious of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas,[29] there are also accounts of his warm reception of a Tibetan Lama named Nangsu, the first historically recorded Tibetan monk in Qing accounts. Nangsu visited the Manchu territory in Liaodong and the Mongolian areas many times to spread the Buddhist teachings. In fact, the Lama was so in favor with Emperor Taizu[30] that upon the monk's death in 1621 his relics were placed in a temple in Liaodong upon the orders of the Emperor.[31] In 1630, Taizu's successor, Emperor Taizong (Manchu name, Abahai, r. 1627–1644) built a Tibetan-style stupa in the Lama's name and erected a stele to commemorate his deeds.[32] Although it would seem that Manchu patronage of Tibetan Lamas began with Taizu, it was not

until the reign of Emperor Taizong that Tibetan Buddhism began to flourish in the Manchu territories with large-scale commissions of temples and stupas in their first capital at Mukden (present-day Shenyang).[33]

This series of large-scale commissions of temples and stupas was initiated by the arrival of the legendary gilt image of Mahakala, the wrathful Great Black One, Protector of the Tents, in Mukden. The image was purported to be the very one cast for the Mahakala initiations of the great Kublai Khan and his empress Chabi. It was kept at Mount Wutai until the fall of the Yuan dynasty, when it was moved into the Tangut country and stayed in the hands of successive Mongol leaders. With the arrival of this image to the Mukden, accompanied by the Sakya teacher Manjushri Pandita in 1635, the Mahakala was installed at the center of the capital. The transference of this important Mahakala image to Manchu hands, and with it the transcendent power of the association as well as the political implications of its connection with Kublai Khan, were not lost on Emperor Taizong. The capital was designed in the form of a mandala, and the Mahakala image was housed in the largest Lama temple, Shisheng, which took three years to complete.[34]

A few years later, other temples were also commissioned at the capital, this time belonging to the Gelug sect, which gradually became favored over the Sakyas by Emperor Taizong. In particular, the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama recognized Taizong as a great secular reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom and China's patron Bodhisattva. His divine emanation was predicted by the Third Dalai Lama, and the Emperor was predicted to unite China, Mongolia, and Tibet through the teachings of Buddhism.[35] Thus, through the patronage of Tibetan Buddhism (be it Sakya or Gelug), as the legitimate inheritors of Kublai Khan's legacy and as the secular reincarnation of China's resident Bodhisattva, it would seem that the Manchus were destined to rule Mongolia and China. However, despite the overtly political overtones of their initial patronage, it is nevertheless clear that in the successive reigns of future rulers, the greatest flourishing of Tibetan Buddhism and Sino-Tibetan art would ensue in China, more so than in any other period in Chinese history.

Specifically, the reigns of Kangxi (r. 1662–1722), Yongzhen (r. 1723–1735) and Qianlong (r. 1736–1795) emperors witnessed a great resurgence of Tibetan Buddhist patronage. These rulers' fervent support of Buddhism indicates a strong personal belief in the religion that went beyond the political necessity of keeping harmony between the different ethnic groups in their empire through espousal of the Buddhist Dharma. Among their major commissions were translation projects of important Tibetan Buddhist texts. During the reign of Kangxi, the Tibetan scriptural canon, the *Kanjur,* was published from woodblocks, first in Tibetan and then in Mongolian (1718–1720). Further, in Yongzhen's reign, the *Kanjur* was republished; it is now known as the Beijing version of the Tibetan canon *Xizang Dazang Jing.*

Of the three emperors, Qianlong was most enthusiastic in his patronage of the religion. Raised in an atmosphere of religious piety, the Qianlong emperor had as a prince studied the languages and texts of Tibetan Buddhism. In addition to commissioning translation projects as did his predecessors, he also commissioned many Buddhist artworks. His mother, the Empress Xiaoshen, was deeply devoted to Tibetan Buddhism and the Qianlong emperor fostered her devotions by offering lavish commissions of Buddhist sculptures and paintings on her behalf, for example, during occasions such as the empress's birthday. Among these commissions, many are still extant and they form one of the most impressive collections of Sino-Tibetan art in Chinese artistic milieu.[36]

The childhood friend and classmate of the emperor Qianlong, the Mongolian incarnate Lama Changjia Hutuktu, Rolpa Dorje, was the favorite and trusted Buddhist teacher in the capital.[37] Rolpa Dorje became a learned and important scholar, statesman, and Buddhist teacher at court and was entrusted with affairs of the state as well as religious matters. Rolpa Dorje's life appears almost an equivalent of the earlier great Lama Phagpa's during the Yuan dynasty. Rolpa Dorje's patron-lama relations with Qianlong were celebrated alongside Kublai Khan's and Phagpa's and a list of his earlier incarnations includes Phagpa, emphasizing the analogy of the Manchu rulers as incarnations of Manjushri, just as Kublai Khan was in the Yuan dynasty.

Later, Rolpa Dorje was entrusted with the golden urn from which the slips of paper with the names of the candidates for reincarnation as prominent Lamas would be drawn. This method was devised by the Qing emperors to keep the selection of the incarnations out of the hands of the powerful Mongolian aristocracy and to maintain a level of control over the granting of important positions in Mongolia and Tibet. Qianlong wrote a lengthy essay entitled "On the Subject of Lamas" (*Lama shuo,* 1792) upon the occasion of establishing the golden urn as a method of ascertaining reincarnations.[38] He describes briefly the development of Tibetan Buddhism, the origins and determination of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, and the pros and cons of promoting the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. Most importantly, he promotes the religion, in particular the Gelug sect, as a means of pacifying the Mongols, a position that the Manchu emperors maintained in their official pronouncements regarding their patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. Indeed, the Manchu rulers' Buddhist identity as the incarnation of the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Manjughosha, was not broadcast to their Chinese subjects.[39] As evinced in the Chinese inscriptions on Juyong Gate, the identification of the emperor with the Bodhisattva was justified as an attempt to garner support from the Mongolians and Tibetans.

Scholars have often interpreted these official pronouncements as evidence of the political agenda behind the Qing rulers' patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. Although this may have been the case, the personal devotion of these emperors to the religion must also not be neglected. Their great enthusiasm and genuine interest in Buddhism is evident in the inclusion of the languages and texts of Tibetan Buddhism in the Manchu princes' curriculum, the major translation projects initiated, the innumerable numbers of artworks commissioned (especially in the reign of Qianlong), and the building of temples in major sites such as Mount Wutai, Jehol (the Manchu summer capital), as well as Mukden. Indeed, this level of patronage indicates serious involvement of the ruler and the empire's resources in the promotion of the religion. That the official stance of the Qing toward the Chinese remains so steadfastly political may result from the somewhat tarnished reputation in China that Tibetan Buddhism had garnered by the Qing period. The examples of patronage by the late Ming emperors of Tibetan Lamas were cast in a disapproving light by the Chinese historians and thought to be detrimental to the country (see previous section on Ming). Thus the biases of the audience to whom the Qing rulers were directing these official pronouncements must also be kept in mind.

Of all the Qing emperors, the Qianlong emperor remains the exemplar of a ruler able to merge both political and personal needs in his patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. He successfully utilized the religion to legitimize his family's rule over their empire, to guard, protect and maintain peace within its boundaries, and to provide a means of personal devotion. Through his numerous imperial workshops and architectural workshops, Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, and Manchurian aesthetics were blended almost seamlessly, with strict adherence to quality. The major development of the Sino-Tibetan style during his reign is seen in the imperial patronage of Qing works in the exhibition (see Cat. 40).