

CHRISTIANE KALANTARI

The Art of Khorchag and Khartse in the Fabric of Western Himalayan Buddhist Art (10th–14th Centuries): Questions of Style II

In previous decades many scholars, starting with Giuseppe Tucci in the 1930s, commonly assumed that the early Buddhist art in the Western Tibetan kingdoms from the late 10th to the 13th centuries was dominated by Kashmiri art (called Kha che in Tibetan [T.]),¹ which is reflected in various groups of Kashmir-style artefacts created for the newly established Buddhist elite and attested through sources. My paper, however, argues that mobility and cross-regional routes connected various different borderland principalities in the Western Himalayas, which contributed to the formation of several distinctive Western Tibetan stylistic schools. Recently recovered wall-paintings in Western Tibet may provide some new insights in this respect. In this paper I will focus on questions of these styles, and in particular on the relationships between foreign royal artistic centres in Kashmir, i.e. the Srinagar Valley, as well as Buddhist and Hindu places in Greater Kashmir, including north-western India, and in the southern Himalayas, i.e. Nepal. From these interactions different royal Western Tibetan workshops and local schools emerged with distinctive characteristics. New research documentation of murals from Purang (T. sPu rang, also sPu hrengs, etc.) and Guge (T. Gu ge), with the early royal centre of Khorchag (T. 'Khor chags) and Khartse (T. mKhar tse, Khwa tse, etc.)—the domain of the important Hrugs wer clan

¹ Tucci (1949) associated Western Tibet with a distinct Western Tibetan style (T. Gu ge bris); according to Tibetan tradition, as contained in *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India* (Chattopadhyaya 2000) among other sources, Kashmir (Kha che) was together with India and Nepal the source of a distinctive artistic tradition which influenced the formation of Tibetan art. Kashmir recalls the alleged geographic origin of the style of art, brought in with the Buddhist teachings.

(cf. Heller 2010; Kalantari, forthcoming), who were close allies of the royal line—(see Map) will be presented with the attempt to further elucidate these relations up to the 14th century, a period when new religious-political concepts entered Western Tibet.²

FIRST WESTERN TIBETAN SCHOOL (10TH–13TH CENTURIES)

Phase I (A): Early Local Kashmir-inspired Styles

In the late 10th century a flourishing period of Buddhism started in Western Tibet when religious teachings became intertwined with state ideology. Buddhism was given an important new role as protector of the state which was ruled by the sons of Kyide Nyimagön (T. sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon), descendants of the Central Tibetan Yarlung (T. Yar lung) dynasty, who consolidated a kingdom in Purang and Guge. Many temples, both as buildings as well as in mountain caves, were founded around the royal residences in Tholing and Tsaparang in the 10th century (see Map). Tholing served as a foremost Buddhist centre of the kingdom, and perhaps as the centre of a political *maṅḍala*, as argued by Christian Jahoda (Jahoda and Kalantari 2016).³

² In recent years research has looked more closely on the process of adaption of Kashmir styles (Luczanits 2004a, 2004b, 2015; Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2002) and analysed which variations of that style descend from the Kashmir Valley and which works are an offshoot.

³ The royal elite and members of important clans are prominently represented in the temples they sponsored, and there are even portraits of female founders. The concept of giving material in exchange for spiritual rewards provided women with new roles as supporters of Buddhism and enabled them to assert them-

One of the major early royal foundations, which was founded in 996 by Khorre (T. 'Khor re), the ruler of the kingdom of Purang, is the Khorchag monastery which is situated in Purang county, near the holy mountain Kailas.⁴ The Great Temple (Lhakhang Chenmo [T. lHa khang chen mo]) is known for its magnificent wooden door with side panels,⁵ which is thought to be the oldest of the artworks preserved in the temple (Figs. 1–3B).

The design of the portal, the earliest doorway (ca. beginning 11th century) to survive from Western Tibet (mNga' ris skor gsum), features an extensive iconographic programme, including *maṇḍalas*, scenes from the Life of the Buddha, narrative cycles (Fig. 2) and elaborate ornaments.⁶ As a characteristic feature it prominently depicts themes from the world of *yakṣas*, as well as auspicious symbols and vegetative elements such as lotus vines and foliate motifs, continuously organised along the frames. While the design of the replicas of shrines positioned on the vertical parts of doorways can be deduced from monumental Kashmiri stone temples, such as Martand (Meister and Dhaky 1988: fig. 719; cf. also the portals of Alchi), only the Purang school (another example can be found at Khartse; Kalantari forthcoming), features the characteristic guardian deities such as the *dvārapālas* watching over the entrance and river goddesses in the lower zone, and rising lotus stems above (Fig. 3A, 3B). They are de-

seives in the public domain through the participation at religious and patronage activities, as seen in the temples of Tholing, Tabo, Nako as well as Alchi. All this still takes place at Khorchag today. The portraits at Alchi Dukhang temple show aristocratic couples and donor assemblies; in these women are also affirmed in their gender roles as wives and mothers, thus as paragons of womanly virtues; comparable portraits can be found in Newari manuscripts (cf. a folio in the Pritzker Collection, for an image Allinger and Kalantari 2012: fig. 42, Heller 2009: fig. 136), indicating a shared artistic-religious and political milieu.

⁴ The paintings were first studied and documented in 2007 during field research under the direction of Christian Jahoda and Tsering Gyalpo; further field trips were carried out in 2010 which extended investigations with the help of our Tibetan mentor, abbot Lobsang of Khorchag. The first results were published in Lhasa in 2012 (see Tsering Gyalpo *et al.* 2012). The book serves as a tri-lingual guide to the Khorchag temple complex.

⁵ Or rather façade of a remarkable width, as can be concluded from the singular side panels flanking the frame.

⁶ The Khorchag doorframe consists of jambs alternating with pilasters supporting superimposed lintels on recessive levels; the system of vertical and horizontal elements clearly follows a unified architectural logic. The plasticity of the organization of the different elements recalls a temple-like structure. This architectural value of the overall design can ultimately be traced back to Gupta and post-Gupta art of India. It is comparable to *toranas* found on the Viṣṇu temple of Deogarh, while miniature shrines and iconographic forms can be deduced from the art of Kashmir. At Khartse, in contrast, the architectural logic is absent and a planar, decorative approach towards architectural ornament dominates.

icted in typical miniature shrines as well, which derived from architectural ornament of Kashmir featuring an aedicule with lobed arches combined with pent-roof structures (cf. Khosla 1979). Interestingly, a comparable example is to be found at Gumrang (Lahaul; cf. for images Luczanits 1994).⁷ On the outer jamb there are strings of conch shells or sea-snail horn (*dung dkar*, which lives in the Indian Ocean)—as a fertility-bestowing vessel from the world of water, associated with Kubera (Zin 2003: 214)—combined with stylised auspicious inexhaustible vases (*kalaśa* or *pūrṇaghaṭa*) filled with water and emitting flowers; these objects are frequently depicted on the ceilings of Buddhist monuments at Tabo, Nako and Dungkar.⁸ The river goddesses are reminiscent of temples in north-west India (cf. the image of Gaṅgā flanking the shrine doorway, Viśveśvara temple, Bajaura, Kullu, 10th century; Postel *et al.* 1985: fig. on p. 98), involving nature spirits of fertility and water as the source of all life-bestowing process in the manifest world. This exuberance of nature contrasts to the post-Gandhāra kind of architectural structure of the temple in Kashmir.⁹

Interactions with north-west India in terms of the layout and motifs of Western Tibetan doorways were first described by Luczanits (1996); they can in particular be deduced from an early Buddhist temple's portal at Ribba (Kinnaur; early 10th at latest, thus predating those of the Western Tibetan kingdom as first suggested by Luczanits 1996).¹⁰ However, the cone-like frame and feeling for nature as shown in lotus vines and volutes also reflect interactions with the post-Gupta Nāgara-style traditions of Chamba (cf. rock-cut temple of Masrur); examples in a temporal proximity are the wooden temples of Chattrārḥī, Śakti Devī Temple and the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple (Brahmaur, Chamba); the role of these regions for the formation of Western Tibetan art and in particular of ornament is as yet little studied (cf. also Poell, forthcoming; Kalantari 2016).

If we turn now to the medium of painting, the best examples of early reflections of the art of Greater Kashmir can of course be found in the Tabo entry hall's murals, in particular in those depicting the deities (Fig. 4), the cella figures and ceiling paintings. The early art of the royal foundation of Tabo is datable due to inscription to the

⁷ I wish to thank Heinrich Pöll for sharing this observation with me (08.2014).

⁸ These objects were later integrated in the group of Eight Auspicious Symbols. This set of symbols is prominently depicted on the ceilings above the Tabo sanctum; among them is also the sacred conch emerging from a lotus.

⁹ The *yakṣas* as spirits of life-essence and in particular water cosmology reflect deep layers of Indian religions.

¹⁰ Christian Luczanits proposes that it may be a later creation than previously assumed due to parallels with the Pooh manuscript and Alchi woodcarvings (verbal communication, 08.2014).

beginning of the 11th century. As recently shown by Luczanits (2015: figs. 1, 2), comparative material for this early Western Tibetan style in the medium of sculpture can be found in north-western Indian temples (Ropa, Upper Kinnaur) and in bronzes (mostly in Western collections). I have earlier compared paintings on the ceilings of the ambulatory of this phase—which can be associated with the entry hall’s Kashmir-style paintings—with ornament on the *torāṇas* (tympana or archways) of Kashmiri bronzes (Papa-Kalantari 2007: fig. 20; Kalantari 2016). The early paintings on the transition zone between assembly hall and the sanctum (Fig. 5) reflect an architectural ornament recalling exuberant woodcarvings of temples in Kinnaur (Ribba, 9th century) and in Chamba (Śakti Devī Temple, Chattrārhi) (Postel *et al.* 1985: figs 45–48). Ornament at Tabo shows an increase in complexity towards the sacred space in the sanctum. Thus it is not only decorative, it leads the devotee to the center of the *maṇḍala*. The Tabo paintings show a rather restricted palette, thin layers of pigments and a rather flat figural type; characteristic again is the interest in vegetative ornament, typical of architectural ornament of wooden temples in Himachal Pradesh, which predate Western Tibetan art.¹¹ To sum up, here we find a local style which can be regarded as a Kashmir-style through the filter of regional styles in present-day Himachal Pradesh (historic Greater Kashmir). The Khorchag portal served as model for later temples in the region; however, it appears that the early Western Himalayan style in wall-painting—in particular images of deities—was not retained as surmised by Luczanits (2015), while it was continued in the medium of ornament (for example at Nako, see below). A different stylistic strand, as represented in the Tabo entry hall’s donor images and in representations of local deities, has commonalities with the Cogro stone stele in Purang. Apart from stylistic characteristics, this local idiom features elements of textile and status culture, as seen in courtly imagery from time of Tibetan empire (Jahoda and Papa-Kalantari 2009, Jahoda and Kalantari 2016). A style integrating older layers is also reflected in the donor images of a Tholing *stūpa* but was superposed by styles from Kashmir proper around the mid-11th century (cf. Heller 2010).

Phase I (B): Early Newari Style in Western Tibet Around 1000

Recently, through style-critical analysis, I was able to demonstrate that Nepal was an important source of inspiration and exchange for Buddhist art in Western Tibet from very early on. Rediscovered magnificent early wall-paintings in Khorchag dating to the beginning of the

¹¹ Resonance of motifs can be found in the ornament of Nako (*ibid.*).

11th century (Figs. 6–7) make it possible to identify this Newari background on the basis of stylistic comparisons with dated manuscripts in Calcutta (Library of the Asiatic Society). The paintings in question were discovered in the Khorchag Jokhang temple, the dwelling place of the famous silver statues, the Khorchag Jowo. They constitute the cultic focus of the monastery, establishing it as one of the three major pilgrimage places in Tibet. There one can find singular examples of a style previously unknown in Western Tibet. During field research in 2007 under the direction of Christian Jahoda, behind the present sanctum in the Jokhang ambulatory we discovered several murals which present new material for the re-evaluation of the early art of the region.¹² Though large parts of the paintings are sadly damaged, the characteristics of the iconography and the style are still visible.

The paintings reveal the first known painted *maṇḍala* (Fig. 6, 9, 10) in a geometric configuration in historical Western Tibet. It features a central Buddha with eight Bodhisattvas depicted around him. The configuration is organised as a rosette-shaped geometric space inscribed within a square, which is approximately 1.4 metres wide. These iconographic features are characteristic of configurations of Eight-Bodhisattva *maṇḍalas* which were widespread in India and Nepal up to the 10th century and are often found on stone stelae or in reliefs such as at Ellora, dating to the 7th century.

Details (Fig. 8) show a female deity located on the right-hand section of the wall and a blue-complexioned offering deity, who is depicted in the lower part of the *maṇḍala* (Fig. 9). They are rendered in a sensuous pose with subtle shading and soft modelling of the body. Characteristic features include the plasticity of the body, the interest in its naturalistic movement and the individualised face with curved upper eyelids and high eyebrows. Further distinctive features include the richness of the colour scheme, achieved by using costly pigments, and the material culture such as jewellery with a key motif, namely the high helmet crown studded with semi-precious stones. Noteworthy is also the subtle representation of thin textiles clinging to the body, with the patterns naturalistically following the contours of the limbs.¹³

¹² A small opening on the left-hand side of the assembly hall leads the practitioner to a corridor which today serves as a path for circumambulation (T. *naṅ skor*) leading around the present sanctum. There was once a space behind the central section of the wall that was later filled in with mud bricks and which may have constituted the original apse or sanctum. Village people also remember that this space was referred to as (*dri*) *gtsang khang* (S. *gandhakuṭi*, cella) in former times. A different layout can be found at Tabo, featuring a separate space with sanctum in its core which can be surrounded in a processional pathway.

¹³ The comparison with contemporaneous painting at Shalu in Central Tibet shows the differences to the Newari-style in Western Tibet and its characteristics. Significant features of Shalu (Yum Chenmo Lhakhang paintings, see also

All these elements contrast to the Kashmiri-influenced schools found in this period, with their somewhat graphic characteristics and the rather flat, schematic figural style. They point instead to a cultural interaction with Nepal, as shown by illuminations in a Newari manuscript in Calcutta which is dated to 1075 (Figs. 11–12; folio nos. F.12r and F. 119v; Kalantari 2012a); the murals at Khorchag may predate these illustrations and may date to the foundation period. Due to their mobility, manuscripts were of course important carriers of motifs and styles as well as ideas and—also due to important routes of communication connecting India with Tibet—the exchange with the important religious-artistic landscape of Nepal was probably never completely interrupted.¹⁴ The artistic interaction between these Himalaya border regions is also confirmed by a source, the *Kho char Register* (T. *Kho char dkar chag*), reporting that the silver statue was made in the lower Purang valley by two master craftsmen from Nepal and from India on the initiative of Lshade, the son of King Khorre, in the 11th century and completed around 1220, in the final phase of the finest quality art production in the early Western Himalayan style.

Phase II: Royal Kashmir-style Workshops in Western Tibet

It is well understood that direct associations with artefacts safely attributable to Kashmir proper can only be vaguely postulated; in addition, examples from Kashmir in the medium of painting are no longer extant. However, there is much indirect evidence for such a transfer: Nāgarāja, the son of Yeshe Ö (T. *Ye shes 'od*), was famous as a collector of bronzes imported from Kashmir; in addition, custom-

Keru) are the hard outline and almost no modelling, the half-closed eyes and mouth are drawn onto a boneless, almost transparent shape of the face. The Metropolitan Amitāyus (cf. Kossak and Singer 1998: cat. no. 1 on p. 51)—reminiscent of Bengal art (a good comparison is a stone stele, dated 12th century, for an image see Huntington 1984: fig. 7)—shows similar characteristics and motifs such as the crown and jewellery; the thangka depicts a Buddha and his attendants which are rendered in a gently swaying style imparting the figures with an ethereal quality; all this contrasts to the naturalistic qualities of the Newar style at Khorchag just discussed.

¹⁴ In previous research, interactions with Newari art in Tibet—in the second propagation phase of Buddhism—were commonly placed at the end of 12th century. David Jackson associated this trend with the Sakya-school presence and influence (for summaries on the Beri style see Jackson 2010: 51); but the late 12th century theory appears to be not valid for regions of Western Tibet.

These new finds may also help to correct misdating of other murals, such as that of Mentsün Lhakhang in Mustang. An 11th century dating was proposed for the murals (von der Heide 2011). This needs to be corrected to the 12th/13th century. In future research Newari woodcarvings should also be included as important sources in comparative research. It is not excluded, that Atiśa—who arrived in Western Tibet from India via Nepal in 1042—also brought Newari artists.

made products were created for Western Tibetan sponsors such as the Khartse Jowo (T. *jo bo*), bearing a secondary inscription which, together with a textual source, provides evidence of this practice (ca. end of the 10th/first half of 11th century). The Khartse Jowo is an important witness to the extensive sponsorship and transfer of cult images by Western Tibetan rulers and leading scholars as an element of their display of piety, but also of splendour and legitimisation as a part of the wider religio-political project to establish a Buddhist kingdom instigated by Yeshe Ö. This written source is the biography of the Great Translator Rinchen Zangpo (T. *lo tsā ba Rin chen bzang po*, 958–1055), which informs us that he brought 32 artists from Kashmir (cf. Tucci 1988a, 1988b).

The new stylistic trend which emerged around the mid of the 11th century in the major royal foundation of Tabo and Tholing as well as Khartse was likely inspired by those Kashmir artists recorded in texts. In addition, several little-studied examples of paintings in different media to be found in the Khartse Monastery (T. *mKhar rtse jo bo og dkar phug dgon*; also mentioned as *Go khar monastery*) and in the local Nyag cave are representative of this sumptuous royal style. It is known that Khartse—as the birthplace of the father of the famous scholar-translator Rinchen Zangpo—is an important pilgrimage place, with a famous Kashmir-style bronze statue of a bodhisattva as the focus of worship.¹⁵ The monastery also houses an as yet unpublished group of early wooden ritual panels and an illuminated manuscript folio (see below; Kalantari forthcoming) which represent a characteristic sumptuous figural type typical of Tholing (see below: Fig. 20; cf. for images also 'Phrin las mthar phyin 2001: 97), showing a distinctive hard and graphic line drawing, an interest in a variety of textile patterns and bright colours contributing to a rather schematic figural type.¹⁶ One panel features an image of Vairocana (Fig. 13): he has three heads, a white main complexion, is six-armed, and holds a wheel in his main hands; his other hands hold the symbols of the four other *tathāgatas*: sword, *vajra*, bell, lotus, jewel.¹⁷ The panels feature deities of a Guhyasamāja *maṇḍala*;¹⁸ a topic which was per-

¹⁵ Pioneering research was undertaken by David Pritzker (2000) and Thomas Pritzker (2008); for images see also 'Phrin las mthar phyin 2001.

¹⁶ Cf. also two painted panels in the Pritzker Collection (Heller 2014), ca. 9 cm high. The Khartse panels are very close in stylistic terms, but the upper torsos are covered with tight-fitting blouses whose patterns contribute to the flat, ornamental overall appearance.

¹⁷ The second is Amitābha with a red complexion, in his main hands the lotus flower, and in the others a sword, jewel and *vajra*.

¹⁸ Guhyasamājantra represents a more esoteric variant of *yogatantra* teachings and belongs to the Anuttarayogatantra literature (Luczanits 2004a: 212).

haps not painted in the medium of wall-paintings in the 11th century, but the Khartse example and specimens in the Pritzker Collection (Heller 2014) demonstrate that the cult was already established but in this early phase the objects were perhaps not designed for public display.¹⁹ Such panels may have been used in rituals, creating temporary *maṇḍalas* in the temple.

The murals of the Nyag cave temple at Khartse—located in Tsamda district, to the southwest of Tholing—represent the most important examples of the Kashmir-inspired royal Tholing-style in the valley. The temple's plan is reminiscent of the Tabo main temple (T. *gtsug lag khang*), which can be traced back to typologies of early Buddhist and Hindu temples.²⁰ Characteristic is the reuse of the Hindu temple plan with its horizontal hierarchy leading to the focus of worship in a shrine chamber, or *garbha gr̥ha*, with a processional pathway around it. However, at Khartse this shrine chamber has low walls and thus the idea of an image in the centre of a *maṇḍala* already becomes apparent.

The iconographic theme focuses on the orthodox cult of the Vairocana Buddha. It centres in the cella featuring the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala*. Two painted *maṇḍalas* (T. *dkyil 'khor*) in linear form are represented on the side walls (north and south) and parts of the entrance walls: the less prominent south wall features a Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṅjuśrī *maṇḍala* (T. *chos dbyings gsung gi dbang phyug gi dkyil 'khor*) (Fig. 14) and a Vajradhātu *maṇḍala* which is complemented opposite by a large composition of an assembly of monks with a teaching Buddha in the centre (Fig. 15), reaching to the border of the entrance wall. Images of Indic protectors on the entrance wall complete the iconographic whole in the temple.

In the monumental assembly a large group of monks in local robes are shown flanking the Buddha (Fig. 16). To the Buddha's right is a portrait of a religious dignitary (perhaps the donor) engaged in a ritual, perhaps commemorating the consecration of the reliquary *stūpa* of the great scholar-translator Rinchen Zangpo; in the lower zone one finds a procession of royal donors or devotees paying homage to the Buddha; they are oriented towards an image featuring the Mahāsattva *jātaka*. The paintings are of high quality, thus made by an experienced painter, and they also allow the study

of the contemporary material culture. Characteristic is the feeling for physiognomy and movement of animals comparable to figures and costumes in scenes of the Eight Perils at Tholing (north-eastern *stūpa*, Phun tshogs nram rgyal 2001: figure on p. 123). In particular the elephant with a collar around the neck is similar to that found at the mounted elephants at Khartse. However, in the latter the colour scheme is reduced, with softer strokes but confident lines; at Tholing the figures, although rather schematically rendered, display subtle shading along the sharp graphic contours; the paintings focus on ornamental qualities full of bright colours. The costumes with short jackets and *dhotī*, and the coiffure of curled hair most likely reflect a Kashmiri cultural milieu; the artists were probably familiar with the animals depicted (fully bridled elephants with their mahouts and horses) and riding traditions. The *jātaka* of the Hungry Tigress is represented in a condensed form embedded in a forest-like landscape to the left and a procession to the right; the riders pay homage both to the place where the prince died after he offered his body to the hungry animal and its cubs and to the Buddha in the assembly depicted above; these core elements of the theme are also continued in the Zhag cave, where the forest setting and the adoration scene are integrated in a unified landscape setting (see below, Fig. 32); in both cases the *jātaka* provides a model for moral behaviour and a more favourable rebirth of all humans; the entrances of the temples are a meaningful place for this depiction.

The theme of Buddha assembly is a leitmotif specific to this region. Congregations of gods, holy beings and lay communities listening to the teaching of the Buddha are among the main themes in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Often such assemblies are described at the beginning of the most influential books of the time such as the *Avataṃsaka sūtra* or Flower Garland *sūtra* or in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, and—unlike in India—their depictions can be found at the beginning of the book (such as in a manuscript at Pooh), at the entrance zone of temples (Tabo), invoking and commanding the reader and visitor to follow the Buddhist path. The climax and final chapter of the *Avataṃsaka sūtra* is the *Gaṇḍavyūha*—describing the spiritual progression of Prince Sudhana to attain supreme enlightenment. It provided inspiration for a complete detailed narrative in the Tabo main temple, which is rendered in a temporal, lineal direction towards the sanctum—and designed for public didactic purposes. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* text must have helped to promote the new religious ideas in Western Tibet but was also extremely popular in Borobodur and also in Central Asia, thus in areas where Buddhism was newly established. What is singular is the combination of an assembly with a *jātaka* as a model for moral behaviour of the devotee, here seen in

¹⁹ This theme can be found in the wall-paintings of Dungkar (cave 1), ca. end of 12th/beginning of the 13th century.

²⁰ A basis for comparison is provided by the wooden temple of Ribba (9th century, today sadly destroyed) and the Mirkulā Devi Temple at Udaipur (although the latter is post-dating Tabo; it is situated in the cross-religious zone of Lahaul-Spiti, in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh with its numerous Hindu and Buddhist sacred places).

an Indic environment, while in the later Zhag cave's murals it is in a Tibetan setting.

In the Nyag cave temple at Khartse, as far as the style is concerned, unfortunately parts of the decoration have suffered from chemical processes resulting in a reduced, almost grisaille-like graphic effect as well as in colour alterations.²¹ Characteristic of the deities in the *maṇḍala* (Fig. 17) are the muscular torso of male figures and over-emphasised attenuation of their waists. The best preserved examples can be found in different groups of the Tabo main temple, such as the painted Bodhisattva in the ambulatory (Fig. 18).²² The female deities have fluid, curvaceous bodies featuring tiny mouths and chins (Fig. 19). The hair of female deities is built up with flowers and ornaments, and long strands of hair flow down their backs (cf. female deities in the north-western *stūpa* (*stūpa* I) at Tholing (Fig. 20). In general the representation of the figure is schematic and the faces lack individuality (Fig. 21). Body features such as the eyebrow of the male protector are executed almost ornamentally. Comparable Kashmir paintings have not survived, but the paintings are closely related to the few artefacts preserved from Kashmir, particularly those in bronze. A good example is a Vajrapāṇi which is today in the Cleveland museum (Fig. 22).

A comparison of these paintings with those at Tabo and Tholing (both 11th century) is revealing not only for questions of style but also for workshop processes. Although the figural type at Khartse (cf. Fig. 23) is stouter and more robust, its graphic painting qualities are reminiscent of the courtly art of Tabo (Fig. 18). The difference, of course, lies in the rendering of the surface of the body: at Tabo the rich colours are applied onto the body in a very planar fashion, and also much attention is given to the ornamentation of the nimbus and the patterns of garments giving the figures a very lavish, sumptuous quality. Comparable figural types can also be found at Tholing (11th century) but there the colour palette is different: the pigments are very bright, including the use of yellow. The graphic rendering of the figures appears harder. The type of modelling along contours is almost abstract: at the edges of forms are added harsh shades of lighter or darker colour to suggest three-dimensionality.

²¹ The yellow and green colours have faded (Luczanits, verbal communication 08.2014), displaying a similar pattern of colour damage in the Malakartse Khar *stūpa*, Zangskar, mid to late 11th century; cf. Linrothe 2007. Thus the original appearance and context is difficult to reconstruct. In general a reduced palette is visible today as compared to Tholing and Tabo, but the colour scheme may have once been comparable.

²² At Tabo Kashmiri artists appear to have worked side by side with local schools trained by Kashmiri artists as can be seen for example in rather simply rendered narrative images such as those featuring the Life of the Buddha.

Two main groups can be distinguished at Khartse: the (fragmentary) *maṇḍala* configurations on the entrance wall and the side-walls (south, Group B, Figs. 14, 23) show red, blue, white and black as dominant colours. The *maṇḍala* and the Buddha assembly of the north wall (Group A, Figs. 15–17, 19, 21) are executed in a slightly different colour scheme, and also from the execution and details one can conclude that they may have been created by a different group of artists: instead of bright red we find here a brownish-red (plus little light red in the valances) as well as blue and black. In principle the under-drawings and brushwork remained while the colour pigments have faded. The gods depicted in the typology of Bodhisattvas of the north wall (Fig. 17) appear in a sketchy technique which is perhaps not only a result of colour abrasion but also of an incomplete state, making the painting process visible.²³

The deities are related to the figural style of Tabo, as for example an image of a Bodhisattva (Fig. 18), representing one group of the images of the renovation phase (ca. mid-11th century). As already stated, there are also stylistic commonalities with paintings in Tholing, in particular with those of two early *stūpas* (T. *mchod rten*) around the Gyatsa temple (also called temple of Yeshe Ö), which were probably constructed around 1050. This 'royal Tholing school' represents a graphic, rather schematic figural ideal related to Khartse; but there are also discrepancies: in the latter the setting (nimbus and aureole) are drawn with simple lines and executed with less detail. The bodily proportions also differ: Khartse features relatively large heads in relation to the whole body. The shoulders are smaller, and the faces feature high eyebrows and foreheads. Another difference concerns the line drawing, which is relatively free in the Nyag cave temple whereas at Tabo the brushwork/line drawing is more secure and controlled, e.g. each hair of the coiffure is carefully drawn with strokes of similar thickness, creating an almost ornamental surface pattern; also the shading of the body is reduced at Tabo, adding to the graphic, ornamental character of this style. A characteristic feature at Tabo are eyes in the shape of pikes of lances drawn with sharp lines of black ink. Ornament is another distinctive feature of this site, where we not only find a lavish interest in different patterns as decorations of textiles and ornaments, but also a *horror vacui* of forms with lotus scrolls as space fillers, designed as branches of lotus rhizomes emerging from a cosmic lake. In contrast, at Khartse decorative filling motifs are reduced to auspicious symbols in the interstices. All this documents the fact that, regardless of

²³ First the outlines of the image were established and details were drawn in red and then the painted surface of the face and the figure was applied.

the figural style, which remains in principle identical, there are great differences in terms of lavish creations full of fine, sumptuous details for courtly establishments versus more modest private commissions. An offering deity (Fig. 19) compares closely to a goddess at Tholing (Fig. 20): they share the heavy jewellery on the relatively large head, with the emphasis on ornament, and a figure rendered in a very graphic, schematic fashion, with an almost ornamental conception of the body. Another female image (with instrument) (Fig. 21) is related to Tholing (north-eastern *stūpa/stūpa* I, Fig. 24) betraying a certain naturalistic movement, softer corporeality, and shading, but also there the shading is non-organic and abstract, it does not follow the body naturalistically, but is rather designed to create plasticity. A different development can be found at Nako (see below, Figs. 26 and 27), where a rendering of the figures makes the corporeality and softness of body comprehensible.

The bodhisattva on the south wall (Group B, Figs. 14, 23) shares a basic figural type with that of the Group A (north wall), but the colours, details and the proportions of figures are different to those of 'Group A' (north wall). The figures are rendered with a broad face, with smaller eyes and mouths. The setting is full of decorative details, such as in the elaborate lotus throne. Also the treatment of the surface—which is perhaps closer to original colour impression—is different. The painting above the line-drawing is executed with thick strokes, in general the lines are loose and details rendered in a cursory way, again differing from the graphic, ornamental Tabo style. In the Nyag cave temple we find a shading along contours and modelling of muscular elements; all this shows certain affinities with early 12th century paintings of Nako, but there the modelling creates a soft impression of corporeality, while at Khartse the body shows an ornamental shading and it still resonates more the harder Kashmir-style, thus placing it closer to *stūpa* II (north-east) at Tholing; the latter is characteristic of its interest in shading and a more plastic, naturalistic rendering of the body, and lesser use of ornament as compared with Tholing *stūpa* I (north-west). The proportions at Khartse with an hour-glass shaped upper torso, and sharp modelling has affinities with bronzes at Khartse. The non-organic modelling along contours creates a very hard corporeality, recalling metal sculpture resulting in a puppet-like effect, and Eva Allinger has coined the term 'jointed doll or Gliederpuppe' for this impression. Some of the female offering deities on the south wall have slightly awkward proportions: a very narrow waist, a pear-shaped form of the head with high crown, heavy jewellery, and smaller eyes than those of the deities on the north wall. Again, the shading meant to define three-dimensional bodily elements at Khartse contrasts to the 'ornamental' bodily type of Tabo.

The entrance was once guarded by monumental gatekeepers (*S. dvārapāla*, T. *sgo bsrungs*) which is typical from early on (cf. Tabo, for images see Luczanits 2004a: fig. 18). The paintings of protector gods on the entrance wall perhaps also belong to Group B; the dominant colours are red, blue, black and ochre. The figures represent a hard, graphic style typical of the Kashmiri idiom as found in bronzes of that region. However, thick strokes along the contours make them appear softer than the main deities in the *maṇḍala*. In general the execution is rather sketchy and cursory. Characteristic on the level of figural types are the stout proportions and motifs such as floating scarves which fill the aureoles; all this is found in a very similar fashion at Tholing (north-west *stūpa* I; Phun tshogs nam rgyal 2001: fig. on p. 129). Also sartorial details such as the veil of females recall images in that *stūpa*.²⁴ From the fact that the same details are found at different sites independently of other elements such as the figural style, we can deduce that painters perhaps worked from sketchbooks and with division of labour. Due to the ambitious building activities under royal patronage (and high aristocracy), itinerant master artists of this school may have worked at various sites with groups of craftsmen in a strict workshop hierarchy. In addition, due to the harsh climate, the seasons for work were short, and the working process on one project may have lasted over a longer period.²⁵

In the monumental Buddha assembly (Figs. 15–16) one sees a reduced palette and graphic outlines of the figures. The monks show a simple rendering of faces and almost no individuality. The Buddha is depicted with large, narrow eyes, high eyebrows, and a small mouth, reminiscent of images at Tabo (see Klimburg-Salter 1997: fig. 109). Particularly striking is the singular style of royal processions (horse- and elephant-riders) in the lower zone due to its liveliness, the physicality of the riders, the feeling for nature and animals—all this is a previously unknown facet of the Kashmir-style. The details of the material culture obviously refer to a non-Tibetan environment, recalling objects depicted in the Life of the Buddha at Tabo and in scenes around an image of Avalokiteśvara being rescued from the Eight Perils on one of the walls of the north-eastern *stūpa* at Tholing

²⁴ The deities are represented in separate spaces, and oriented towards the viewer, while at Nako and Dungkhar, figures in dynamic postures, freer, move out of their frame and 'communicate' with one another.

²⁵ A comparable working hierarchy and process has been described by Christian Luczanits for the medium of clay sculptures at Tabo: after shaping the body, the images were extensively decorated with the help of pre-formed objects made with moulds—such as aureoles, jewellery, crowns and strands of hair—which were attached to the main figures a considerable time after the sculpture was finished (Luczanits 2004a: 270ff.).

(Phun tshogs rnam rgyal 2001: fig. on p. 123); in particular robes and turbans, heavy jewellery, high boots and sartorial features such as long, curly hair, moustache etc. look related. However, horses and riders at Tabo are executed in a very planar fashion with great interest in details of costumes and their decorations. Due to the similarity of the subjects and details one may imagine at Tabo a local workshop product, perhaps working after models in the form of drawings. Characteristic singular features at Khartse are also scenes of a *jātaka* and the nature images on the left side of the frieze showing a rich variety of trees and foliage inhabited by all kinds of animals. Such scenes are frequently found in Buddha assemblies in Central Tibet inspired by Indian (Pāla) art, as found at Shalu; but the Khartse trees are more stylised and graphically rendered recalling again comparable themes at Tholing *stūpa* II (see *ibid.*: 123, for images).

To summarise, the Khartse paintings represent a school related to Tholing I and II (second to third quarter of the 11th century), and Tabo (mid-11th century). The elaborate style of the Khartse Jowo, which is closely linked to clay sculptures of Tholing, further strengthens the assumption of a stylistic relationship. Although the figural types of the Nyag paintings compare closely to Tholing and Tabo, the quality is not as high, and the line drawings appear rather loose; this difference is comprehensible if we take into account that the Nyag cave temple was likely a private commission contrasting to the royal background of Tholing and Tabo. On the basis of the joint analysis of stylistic affinities and discrepancies and the position in the iconographic evolution we can imagine a scenario in which master artists—perhaps trained by itinerant master artists from the royal workshops of Tholing—worked in the Nyag temple in different seasons, and perhaps together with local artists around the second half of the 11th century.

As to the dating, the assembly scene and the typology of the monks' portraits are typical of the Tabo renovation period of ca. 1046, and they contrast to the rather archaic images of historical persons in the entry hall at Tabo and in the north-western *stūpa* at Tholing; I would thus propose a slightly later dating for the Khartse assembly than the *maṅḍala*, arriving at a date around the mid-11th century, which would coincide with the death of the Great Translator.

Another variation of the royal style can be found in a hitherto unpublished folio to be found in the Khartse monastery (Fig. 25) which belongs to the Tibetan translation of a *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, and is the second last folio of chapter 75 and 76 (= the last chapter) of the manuscript (information Christian Jahoda). It is decorated with a seated Bodhisattva of superb quality and can be identified—though he has no attributes—based on the text on the folio as

Dharmodgata; this is also corroborated by the mode as preaching scene.²⁶ What is remarkable is the very sumptuous Kashmir-style, with a muscular, heavy body, combined with subtle shading, painterly qualities, and a feeling for physicality. Enhancing the luxurious effect, varnish has been applied to the surface in addition to a grounding, indicating a complex technical process suggesting a royal workshop. The folio displays a variation of an elaborate, sumptuous style, perhaps executed by a master artist responsible for courtly manuscripts for the royal family of Purang Guge; also the technique, including the use of costly pigments and gold, is highly complex. The style recalls the wall-paintings in the Tabo main temple's assembly hall from the renovation period or the Tholing paintings representing a rather graphic idiom with great interest in decorative details. However, in contrast to the latter, the shading at Khartse is rather subtle, an interest in individuality is observable conveyed in a slight smile, recalling the Nako Lotsaba temple's paintings (see below). Thus we find here an overall layout of the type belonging to the Tabo-Tholing Kashmir-style group while the treatment of the body has painterly qualities. This elaborate, sumptuous style best relates to *stūpa* I (north-east) at Tholing (Fig. 24), and a dating to the second half of the 11th can be suggested.

Phase III: The Local Western Tibetan Style

In the 12th century a new, different, distinctively Kashmir-inspired school of equal quality and refinement emerged in Western Tibet. In this period a transformation of temple layouts is observable, with simple rectangular ground plans and main icons in a niche opposite the entrance. There is also a shift observable in *maṅḍala* representations in the temples, namely from expressions in a lineal progression to the sanctum towards a cosmic, diagrammatic arrangement. The first known examples of this new style, which had a remarkable longevity in Western Tibet, are the illustrations in a *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript at Pooh (Kinnaur) and the murals in the nearby Nako temples, also suggesting that these two different media may have influenced each other reciprocally. We find there a Kashmir style with painterly qualities, following a recent study by Allinger and Luczanits (in print). Characteristic are softer outlines and the subtle modelling with blushes of pastel-like light colours resulting in a more organic

²⁶ Another Tabo folio, showing the tower of Dharmodgata and thus the realm of *dharmakāya*, features *stūpas* on the horizontal levels and on the top of the superstructure; the rather unusual elaborate seat at Khartse may allude to his realm.

rendering of the body (Figs. 26, 27). Also an interest in individualised figural types is observable, and the use of gold and silver for ornaments, indicating the pride and wealth of patrons. This style at Nako contrasts to the schematic representations at Tholing with their graphic harshness and their lavish ornamental qualities. Also the workshop process appears to be different at Nako. Perhaps a less complex division of labour was applied, with one master artist responsible for the figures and specialists responsible for the focusing on textile motifs and other decorative details.

Comparative material for this specific style may be found in the thriving cultural centres of Himachal Pradesh, in particular in Chamba and Lahaul. Not only the geographic proximity suggests such an interaction but also the fact that a tradition of Buddhism was established there at least from the 9th century onwards. There are no paintings but numerous refined woodcarvings and bronze sculptures exist such as the Śakti Devī image (Fig. 28), the focus of worship in a Hindu temple of the same name in Chattrārhī. It is rendered in a gently swaying style representing a Kashmir idiom as practised in this region at the periphery of the political domain of the kingdom of Kashmir. Although proportions are exaggerated, the soft modelling imparts the figures with luscious sensual qualities, giving the onlooker a feeling of their physicality. The 9th-century image of Tārā (Fig. 29) from the same temple represents a later example of the Chamba variations of the Kashmir style with its sensuous, haptic qualities. All this contrasts to the harder, graphic, angular forms of Kashmir proper, with its systems of lines and bulges assembled to make a figural whole. (However, I do not propose genetic links but rather impulses to trigger further research in this direction.)

A further distinctive feature of the artistic school at Nako is the interest in thrones and palaces used to define separate compositional units. At Nako the celestial abodes of Bodhisattvas are reminiscent of thrones carved on wooden portals, such as at Udaipur in Lahaul (Hindu temple, Mirkulā Devī,²⁷ Fig. 30). Both compositions feature combinations of niches as thrones for the deities crowned by replicas of temples. However, the way these elements are rearranged and translated at Nako into new visual wholes—including local architectonic forms such as multiple sloping roofs and wooden structures filled with mud walls—is uniquely Tibetan.

Later phases of these stylistic currents can be found in as yet little-studied manuscripts in Western collections as well as in Ladakh

²⁷ The assembly hall has been reconstructed, however the shrine must have had an ambulatory from the outset. This can be deduced from the well-preserved façade and side-walls.

(e.g. Hanle: see Allinger, this volume); they are characteristic of new inventions and variation on the theme of heavenly palaces as abodes for deities. Examples include one illustrated folio in the Cleveland Museum (Fig. 31; see also Klimburg-Salter *et al.* 1997: fig. 224) and a group of folios from one manuscript in the Tucci Archive at Rome (MNAO; this new, as yet unpublished material was first presented by Amy Heller at the SEECHAC 2013 colloquium; see Heller, this volume). These illuminations represent a (singular) Kashmir-Tibetan style with new impulses from Himachal Pradesh; this palimpsest is characteristic of this cross-cultural zone.²⁸

The painterly Western Tibetan style of Nako was continued up to the 12th/beginning of the 13th century, as seen in the cave murals of Dungkar, Phyang and Zhag (Figs. 32–33; see also Tshe ring rgyal po and Kalantari, in print).

The paintings of Alchi demonstrate that Kashmir remained an important reference for Tibetan artists into the early 13th century. The Kashmir-style school transfused by itinerant artists during the Purang Guge kingdom was continued and developed in Ladakh up to the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, when wealthy local rulers from the Dro (T. 'Bro) clan founded the temples of Alchi: A good example is the image of a deity which displays a variation of the earlier ornamental styles (Fig. 34); (cf. for images also Goepper and Poncar 1996) with an emphasis on sumptuous, unrepeated textile patterns. Instead of the idea of vegetative architectural ornament from the world of *yakṣas* and nature spirits alluding to fertility and wealth, here a different approach towards ornament can be observed; I used the term medallion style, i.e. the system of organising elements of iconographic value as surface patterns, frequently inspired by luxury art such as textiles of silk (Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2002). This decorative system of ceilings studded with scenes—often reduced to symbols alluding to *jātakas*—increases the merit-accruing aspect of the donation and it has a long history on the ceilings

²⁸ The overall composition, some architectural elements and costumes can be regarded as Kashmir-Tibetan, while ornament such as lozenge-shaped jewels on the throne, corporeality of figures including half-closed upper eye-lid point to another, perhaps a north-west-Indian artistic milieu. Western Tibetan elements include elements of architecture such as the pilasters, also to be found in Nako Gongma and the nimbus fused with a tree, found in the Māra scene of the Pooh manuscript; but at Nako architecture is heavier, representing solid palaces of wood and mud walls topped with multiple roofs. The heavy pilasters are significant for Kashmir architecture, while the Cleveland examples represent light, airy structures, perhaps of wood. The new features are the interest in vivid, playful depiction of animals and in nature, such as foliate elements at the corners/ends of the horizontal elements of the throne back in the Cleveland manuscript, recalling detailed naturalistic representations of lotus flowers typical of Nepal or Himachal Pradesh (e.g. bronzes from Chamba and Lahaul).

of Buddhist cave temples along the Silk Road. The details of material culture and ornament are refashioned according to the taste of the time. The result is a complex interlacing of Buddhist themes²⁹ and cosmopolitan, Iranicate status culture in the 12th century, as Barry Flood has shown in his paper (see Flood, this volume).³⁰ In this way luxury art (on ceilings and in robes of deities) reflects not only the wealth of the pious donors and augmentation of the merit-achieving act but also an expression of the glory and radiance of the Buddha and his realm of enlightenment.³¹

THE SECOND WESTERN TIBETAN SCHOOL

With the advent of new religious schools in the end of the 12th/beginning of the 13th century in Ladakh, interactions with figural ideals from Central Tibet appear, mainly due to Drigung religious expansion (Luczanits 1998, 2011).³² They are already present in Alchi by 1200–1220, and had contacts with the ruling houses of Purang, Guge and Ladakh throughout the 13th century (cf. Vitali 1996: 372–90, 408–425, 437–41; Petech 1997: 240–42; Luczanits 1998, 2011). Also Khartse and Guge taken as a whole retained its position as a regional religious centre in the 13th century. A distinctive Newar-style became a source of inspiration in the 13th century with the advent of new religious schools/trends such as the Sakya school. The murals of the Tāra temple (13th century) at Khorchag document this interaction. By the end of the 13th/beginning of the 14th century a new Western Tibetan artistic tradition emerged when new Newari trends became dominant models. This period, following the extensively researched early Western Himalayan artistic period, has hitherto been hardly studied.³³ The Bardzong cave sanctuary (T. Bar rdzong 'gog po'i lha

khang) has a key position in this respect and it is also important for the definition of the religious-historic development from the 13th century onwards, due to its epigraphic evidence first documented and edited by Tsering Gyalpo together with Kurt Tropper (cf. Tse ring rgyal po 2014), but the religious orientation of the slightly later Bardzong is not as yet understood (cf. also Pangtha, which was perhaps Kadampa; for images see Neumann and Neumann 2011, 2012).

Although the Bardzong murals (Fig. 35) reflect elements of a style prevalent in contemporaneous Central Tibet (or Nepal through the filter of Central Tibet as will be shown) they continue features of the local tradition of the rich early Western Tibetan 'Kashmir-derivate' heritage such as 1) in the colour scheme featuring a light-blue for the background and a dominance of warm, dark-red or brick-red colours; 2) in the general reduced palette, ornament only shown in the interstices (the figures show a reduced, graphic style with little shading, and it appears freer than in contemporaneous Central Tibet); 3) paintings featuring valances of patches of textiles adorn the uppermost level of the murals; 4) in the traditional topics such as *yogatantra maṇḍala*.

The innovative features reminiscent of Newari styles which were translated in different regions of Western Tibet with the advent of new schools are: axially symmetric configurations with proportionally smaller attending figures, overall-compositions displaying a strict hierarchic order and symmetry with lineages and dominant positions of teachers; the hieratic, static, abstract figural style, shaped according to iconometric rules; horse-shoe or stela-like frames drawn with thin lines; planar, almost diaphanous figurative ideal, endowing the deities with transcendental qualities, the eyes are half-closed, accompanied by attending figures with locked knees, and short trousers under the *dhotī* (cf. an early Pāla-style Tibetan thangka in the MET: Kossak and Singer 1998: pl. 1). The ca. mid-13th century Lhakhang Soma, Alchi, represents a local variation of this stylistic current (cf. Jackson 2010: figs. 6.27-6.28; Luczanits 1998). However, in contrast to these Pāla-style Central Tibetan examples the proportions at Khartse are stout, there is much more interest in elements of nature such as animal and vegetative *toranas* and trees as space fillers; and the style is more cursory. When trying to define the Bardzong murals' style it is useful

(Tse ring rgyal po 2011), Pangtha (T. Pang gra) in Western Tibet (Neumann and Neumann 2011) and Khorchag (Tsering Gyalpo *et al.* 2012); in addition short introductions to single thangkas from this period have been brought forward but without a reconstruction of their context (Copeland 1980, Klimburg-Salter 1997), while Eva Allinger's article (2000) focused on questions of iconography.

²⁹ The whole temple is decorated with elements of iconographic value, frequently alluding to *jātakas*, including also parts of the ceiling which are usually not visible for the onlooker, thus increasing the merit-generating aspect on the part of the donor.

³⁰ Among the most prominent motives are robes decorated with hunting scenes, one of the major themes of Iranian art—these are also depicted on a ceiling textile adorned with pseudo-Arabic inscriptions recalling precious robes of honour, so-called *ki'la* from Islamic courtly workshops.

³¹ See *Prajñāpāramitā* texts for descriptions of splendid Mahāyāna assemblies and Buddha realms, and *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (7th century ritual manual) for the radiance of the throne of the Buddha (as mentioned by C. Luczanits in his talk on representations of Drigung masters as Buddhas at the Third International SEECHAC Colloquium in Vienna).

³² They were also later active at Khartse (Khardzong).

³³ First attempts are a preliminary survey of the Bardzong (T. Bar rdzong) cave by D. Pritzker (2000), a presentation of Wachen cave temple in Tsamda county

to compare them with thangkas perhaps purchased by Koelz and Ghersi in Spiti, roughly dating around 1300 (Allinger 2000; Jackson 2010: 125/6.29).

Most beneficial for comparative analysis is one of two thangkas from the former Ghersi Collection/Rome published by Eva Allinger (2000)³⁴ representing a Tārā of the Eight Perils (Fig. 36):³⁵ it is useful to compare them with paintings featuring the same iconography in the Bardzong (there are also strong affinities with the Pangtha Tārā: Neumann 2011: p. 38, fig. 14): similarities between the two Tārās exist with regard to the figural ideal with a sensuous movement of the body, a round shape of the head, the smiling mien suggesting a submersion in meditation. The contours of the bodies and details of the face are in principle defined by line drawings showing a confident hand. The Tārā from the Ghersi Collection is richly adorned with jewellery highlighted with gold, such as a diadem with small cusps or fleurons along it. She dwells in an elaborate and lively animal and vegetative *torāṇa* with characteristic knobs adorned with full-blown lotus flowers at the end of the horizontal bars; in addition large ribbons adorn the throne, the space inside the throne is covered with a fine red patterned textile mimicking a damask, showing affinities with a Newari manuscript illumination at Calcutta (Fig. 12; folio no. F.119v). Depicted above the landscape of stylised rocks are characteristic trees (see below); such trees are depicted on the sides of the tiers of the temple replica at Khartse. The Tārā image from the Ghersi Collection shows an extraordinary feeling for nature and corporeality reminiscent of Newari-style art, while the Khartse example is flatter, best visible on the *dhotī* which has a pattern which does not follow the surface of the legs, while the diaphanous loin cloth of the Tārā from the Ghersi Collection follows the bodily forms; also the lotus creepers at Khartse appear very hard and graphic, as if cut out of a metal sheet, and they lack the soft and herbaceous character of the model in nature (although one has to bear in mind that the surface and thus also the modelling has disappeared). Flowers are dispersed in the landscape and as space fillers above aureoles. The heavy throne of a trapezoid backrest with horizontal crossbar is studded with jewels and compares well

³⁴ The thangka was recently sold on the US market to an unknown dealer or collector (see footnote below).

³⁵ For an image see also J. Watt, Himalayan Art Resources (www.himalayanart.org), HAR no. 60681. The Amitābha thangka (former Ghersi Collection: cf. *Christies catalogue*) has been published only once in a poor quality by Klimburg-Salter 1997 and the images are thus unfortunately not available for any scientific analysis. In the lower register of the thangka the lineage teachers are identified by inscriptions; among those portrayed are Atiśa and Dromtön.

with the thangka in the Koelz Collection. There are strong affinities with the Tārā in the Rossi Collection, dated to the 14th century; on a stylistic basis a dating to first half of the Bardzong can be proposed. Significant parallels with the Khartse Avalokiteśvara are the multi-lobed arch and the shape of trees above the rocks, consisting of red twigs on which are leaves, placed in front of a dark background foil. As a characteristic feature trees also adorn the interstices above the aureoles of the other gods.³⁶

In contrast to the overtly Central-Tibetan features of that period at Ladakh, many elements at Khartse are distinctive of the Tsamda and Purang regions and of the *thangkas*, which are believed to come from Spiti, such as the animal *torāṇa* with naturalistic lotus flowers in different shapes and a feeling for nature and markers of landscape such as trees consistently used as ‘space-fillers’ above the throne; all this, together with the corporeality of the figures, appears to reflect the heritage of Nepal or rather of Newari-style art in Central Tibet.³⁷ However, they are rendered in a stiffer and more schematic way, lacking the sumptuous, herbaceous forms of scrolls, of sensuousness of the body, and in general the vivid flavour of the Newari art. (Cf. early Newari dated manuscripts in Cambridge and Calcutta, Library of the Asiatic Society, cat. no. A15, f.119v, such as a Green Tārā; also a Tibetan Newari-style thangka from the Kramrisch Collection³⁸ and a 13th-century Tārā in the Cleveland Museum attributed to the Nepalese artist Aniko; see Kossak and Singer 1998: cat. no. 37 on p. 145). The early Newari style from Nepal proper typically features diaphanous textiles, making the body underneath

³⁶ These characteristics can also be found in the perhaps slightly earlier murals of the Tholing Gyatsa temple documented by Ghersi in 1933 (Photo E. Ghersi 1933, IsIAO, Tucci Photographic Archives, Neg.Dep.6097/11; cf. also Phun tshogs rnam rgyal 2001: 61ff).

³⁷ Significant is the exquisite form of the *torāṇa* (archway) of the main hierarch and the feeling for nature and floral elements; the back of the throne is scooped, with a horizontal bar ending in flowers, three jewels adorn each side. The sides of the back are supported by mythical animals: elephant and *śarabha* (mythic animal of Hindu origin: a lion with horns of a Himalayan goat, a horse's body, as a mount of dwarfs). The seat is surmounted by large *makaras*; its fantastic scrolling tails fuse with the tails of snakes, devoured by a *garuḍa*. The thrones of the flanking teachers feature two *nāgas* supporting the throne. Such animal throne backs perhaps reflect the rich early woodcarving tradition typical of Nepalese tympana (doors and windows of sacred buildings) on temples. As marked out by (Gutschow 2011 II: 672) the interest in aquatic creatures such as *makaras* and *nāgas* and water symbolism, as elements ensuring prosperity, is characteristic of Nepal. These elements later became in Tibet the ‘six-ornament throne’ or back-support (Tib. *rgyan drug rgyab yol*) of the Buddha.

³⁸ Kramrisch Collection in Philadelphia (2nd half 12th century; see Jackson 2010: 66).

visible (still to be witnessed to a certain extent in the Tārā from the Ghersi Collection) and featuring a huge amount of small detail, a sense of naturalism, and vividness, and a richness of plasticity, as well as painterly qualities. The Bardzong style, on the other hand—though some motifs were adopted—features a more reduced, hard, graphic style and bodily forms and textiles which in principle are rendered in a planar fashion (one has to take into account that one reason for this impression could well be that shadings on the surface may be abraded today). This may have led to a flattening of the figures, and in general the ornament appears rather repetitive; the fine illustrated folios of this phase reinforce this assumption (cf. Kalantari, forthcoming).

The *torāṇa* of the Khorchag Jowo replica in the Pritzker Collection best illustrates an earlier stage of Newari-Tibetan cultural flow in the region in a period after the Jokhang murals around 1050. Completed around 1220, it represents the latest phase of Kashmir-style art in Western Tibet; the 'original' is claimed to be a joint work by artisans from Nepal and Kashmir (note the animal *torāṇa* with sumptuous foliate *makara* tails and the horizontal bars ending in lotus buds).³⁹ Due to its geographic proximity, the ties with Western Tibet were probably never completely broken.⁴⁰ A good piece for comparison is also the *torāṇas* in the Mentsün Lhakhang in Mustang/Nepal, ca. 12th/13th century.⁴¹ A later phase of interaction with Newari-style art is reflected in the Khorchag Tārā temple (13th/beg. 14th century) as already mentioned. The paintings were perhaps created on the initiative of the Purang ruler Tashi Sonam De in the early 14th century, when Khorchag became Sakyapa; Sonam de was the ruler of Purang and also ruler of the kingdom of Yartse in Jumla, present western Nepal (Kalantari 2012b: 180).⁴² However, in contrast to the Tārā temple, in the paintings from Bardzong, Pangtha and in related thangkas

³⁹ The *Khochar Register* reports that the famous silver statue of Jobo Jampā Dorje (also called Phagpa Jampā Yeshe Sempa), i.e., Jampeyang (Mañjuśrī), was made by the craftsmen Ashwadharma from Nepal and Wangkula from Kashmir. The inscription of the Pritzker triad states it was made by the Tibetan craftsman Namkha Drak.

⁴⁰ Usually it is argued that the Pāla style existed up to 1180 which was later followed by the Nepalese/Newari/Beri style in Tibetan terminology as Nepal found itself to be one of the few surviving centres of Indian Buddhist art, after the Turkic raids. Often it is claimed that the style was commonly patronized by Sakya, as a dominant political force from 13th century onwards; but Jackson (2010: 67) refused this link.

⁴¹ See von der Heide 2011: fig. 2. The images show affinities with the Tholing Gyatsa murals (cf. Phun tshogs rnam rgyal 2001).

⁴² The paintings betray direct interactions with Newari-style art, but with a simpler rendering, a restricted palette, and in a graphic style.

from Western Tibet a distinctive Western Tibetan style appears which is more faithful to the old Western Tibetan heritage, but also features Newari-Tibetan figural values.

Thus instead of 'influences' from outside throwing the Tibetan culture passively into a historic development, rather a pluralism of cultural flows, conscious choices and individual translations can be observed. As presented in this short survey, in the 13th century Western Tibet continued to create its own unmistakably independent art. This art can tentatively be denominated 'Second Western Tibetan Style'. No inscriptions have yet confirmed a dating, but on the basis of style the murals can be tentatively dated to the end of the 13th first half of the 14th century.

To sum up, I propose classifying the arts of Western Tibet of the 11th to 14th centuries as belonging to two schools, the first of them with three phases. This first group features early local Kashmir-inspired styles found at Tabo and Khorchag. The second group, represented by the paintings at Tholing, Khartse, Tabo (and later at Alchi), shows variations of a singular artistic tradition, which can tentatively be termed royal Guge- or Tholing-school. Tholing served as the foremost Buddhist centre of the kingdom and was perhaps the model for a trans-regional style in this domain with sumptuous prestigious qualities suitable for major royal foundations.

The third group is present in Nako as well as other places in later periods such as Dungkar, Phyang and Zhag,⁴³ that is in religious centres at the edges of the Purang Guge kingdom. Their arts feature variations of the courtly style of the first group distinguished by more painterly qualities.

In addition, the early Khorchag paintings demonstrate that from the earliest phases of patronage from the 11th century on, the exchange patterns contributing to the formation of different distinctive Western Tibetan styles were very complex, betraying inspirations also from regions of north-west India and also Nepal. In addition, they provide important new material for re-evaluation of early Newari-inspired art in Tibet. All this enriches the picture of the pluralism of styles and of the cosmopolitan cultural horizons within the

⁴³ These trends were intermingled through the 12th century. The painterly school with its interest in naturalistic movement and shape of the body is also found in Dungkar and Zhag in the end of the 12th century. Characteristic are detailed narrative scenes full of details of the material culture of the time, as shown by examples in the Zhag cave, in particular in the Tiger *jātaka* on the entrance wall. Buddha figures in the main space show some individuality, even a smile of the Buddha. Comparable are also paintings at Dungkar; the different orientation at the level of iconography as described by Christian Luczanits 2004a. At Dungkar the main theme of the *maṇḍala* is expressed in an architectural form.

early Western Himalayan art in the domains of the kings of Purang and Guge. Lasting Newar cultural flows became dominant from the 13th century onwards with the advent of new religious schools. The picture arises of a continuous exchange and translation between the Buddhist cultural centres in the Himalayan borderlands connecting Nepal, Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir and Western Tibet. Thus the input of royal founders, religious masters, Kashmiri artists, and Newari Buddhist models created a complex cultural and artistic palimpsest or superimposition.

This preliminary classification aims to revise the concept of one root (which is generally claimed to be Kashmir) and to show various routes of transfer and translation which triggered the formation of different schools in Western Tibet. It is this interlacing of warps and wefts of schools and itinerant workshops under the supervision of royal patrons and religious masters that contributed to the formation of independent and original Western Tibetan artistic traditions.

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Map: Historical Western Tibet (after Jackson 2010: XIV, with adaptations by C. Kalantari).

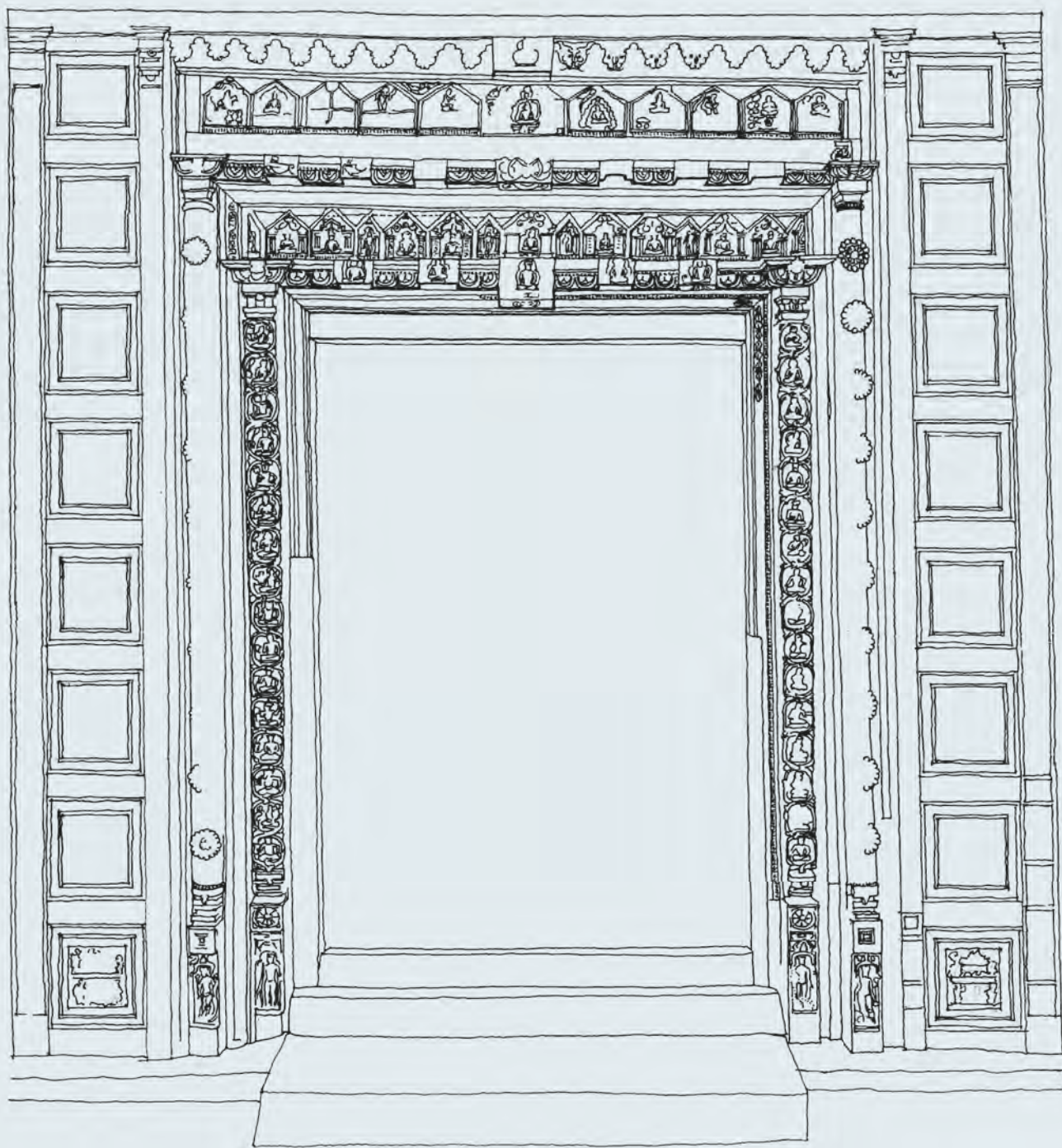


Fig. 1: Khorchag, Lhakhang Chenmo, portal
(drawing: J. Harrison, 2014).

Fig. 2: Scenes from the Life of the Buddha, detail of lintel, Khorchag, Lhakhang Chenmo, portal (photo: C. Kalantari, 2010).



Fig. 3A: Vertical pilaster featuring vases, conch shells and lotus (photo: C. Kalantari, 2010).



Fig. 3B: Vertical pilasters featuring protectors and river goddesses, Khorchag, Lhakhang Chenmo, portal (photo: C. Kalantari, 2010).





Fig. 4: Protective deities, Tabo, main temple, entry hall (photo: C. Kalantari, 2010).



Fig. 5: Ceiling ornament, painting on transition zone between assembly hall and cella, Tabo main temple (photo: C. Kalantari, 2009).



Fig. 6: Khorchag, Jokhang temple, ambulatory, east section of south wall (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2010).

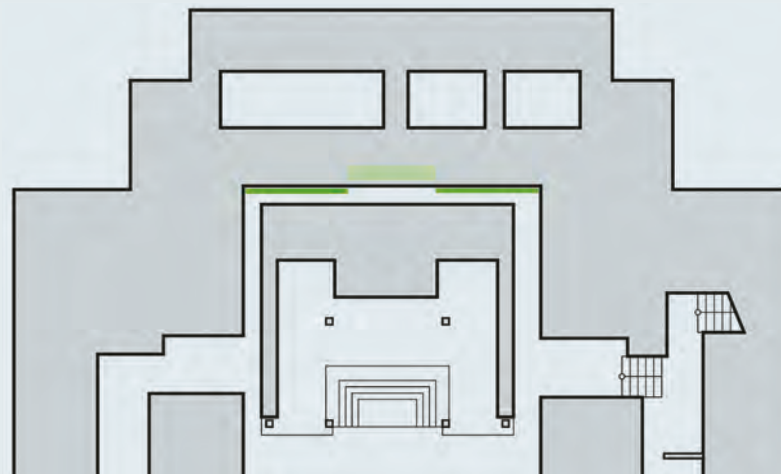


Fig. 7: Ground plan (detail) Jokhang, dark green lines highlighting Newari-style paintings from the 11th century, light-green area marking a possible shallow niche with paintings from the same period (drawing H. Feiglstorfer 2012, with adaptations by C. Kalantari).



Fig. 8: Offering goddess, Jokhang, Khorchag, back wall
(photo: C. Kalantari, 2010).



Fig. 9: Deity inside maṇḍala, Khorchag, Jokhang temple (photo: C. Kalantari, 2009).



Fig. 10: Offering goddess, Jokhang, Khorchag, back wall (photo: C. Kalantari, 2010).



Fig. 11: Newari MS folio (F. 12r), Calcutta (Library of the Asiatic Society, Inv. no, A15), dated 1075.



Fig. 12: Newari MS folio (F. 119v), Calcutta (Library of the Asiatic Society, Inv. no, A15), dated 1075.

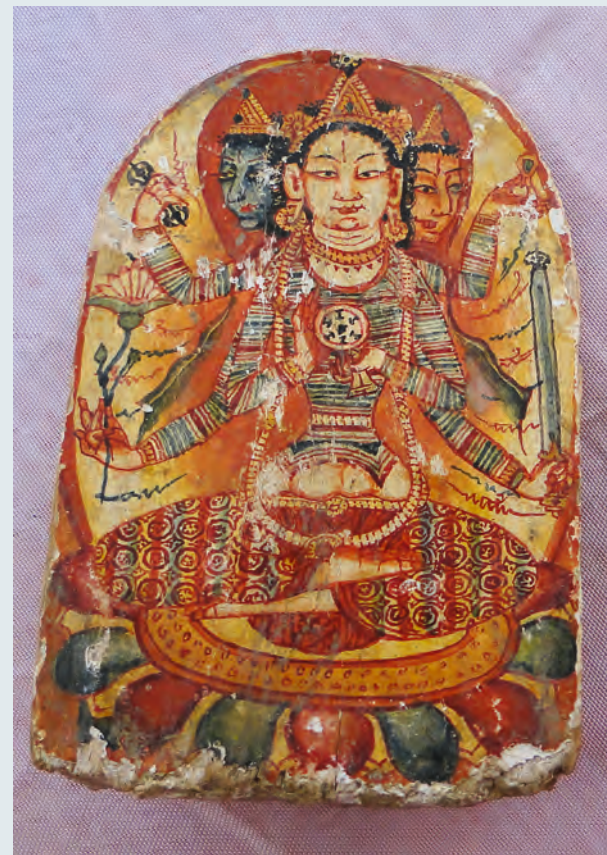


Fig. 13: Ritual panel, Khartse monastery (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 14: *Maṇḍala* on south wall, Khartse, Nyag cave temple (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 15: Buddha assembly, Khartse, Nyag cave temple, north wall (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 16: Royal procession, detail of Buddha assembly on north wall, Khartse, Nyag cave temple (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).

Fig. 17: Bodhisattva, Nyag cave temple, north wall
(photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 18: Bodhisattva, Tabo ambulatory
(photo: C. Kalantari, 2009).



Fig. 19: Offering deity, Nyag cave temple, north wall
(photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 20: Offering deity, Tholing, north-western stūpa
(after Phun tshogs rnam rgyal 2001: 128).





Fig. 21: Offering deity and protector, Nyag cave temple, north wall (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 22: Kashmir-style bronze, Vajrapāṇi (after Pal 1975: Pl. 60).

Fig. 23: *Maṇḍala* on south wall, Khartse, Nyag cave temple (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 24: Avalokiteśvara as rescuer from the Eight Perils, detail, Tholing, north-eastern stūpa (after Phun tshogs rnam rgyal 2001: 124).





Fig. 25: Manuscript folio, Khartse (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 26: Deity outside the *maṇḍala*, Translator's temple, Nako (photo: C. Luczanits, 2001).



Fig. 27: Offering deity outside the *maṇḍala*, Translator's temple, Nako (photo: C. Kalantari, 2009).

Fig. 28: Śakti Devī, Hindu temple in Chattrārḥī, Chamba (after Goetz 1955: Pl. VII).

Fig. 29: Tārā (after Postel *et al.* 1985: fig. 93).

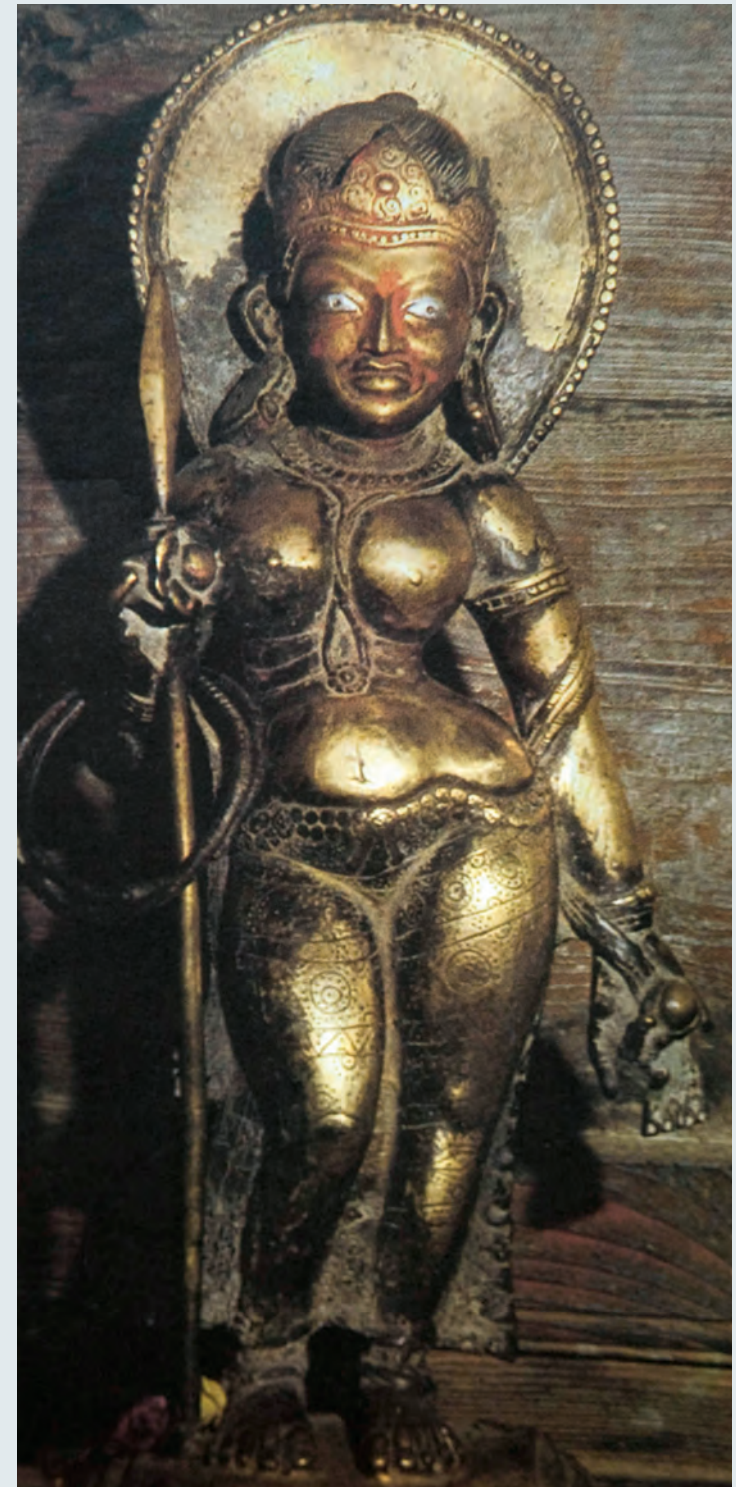




Fig. 30: Yamunā, wooden façade, Mirkulā Devi temple, Udaipur (photo: C. Kalantari, 2002, WHAV).



Fig. 31: Folio of Western Tibetan MS, Cleveland Museum (after Klimburg-Salter et al. 1997: 224).



Fig. 32: Mahasattva *jātaka*, porch of Zhag cave temple, 12th/beg. 13th century (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2009).



Fig. 33: Standing Buddha, on wall featuring Thousand Buddhas, Zhag cave temple, 12th/beg. 13th century (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2009).



Fig. 34: Alchi, Sumtsek temple, 12th/beg. 13th century (after Goepper and Poncar 1996: figure on p. 80).



Fig. 35: Tārā, Bardzong cave, Khartse Valley 13th/14th century (photo: Tsering Gyalpo, 2011).



Fig. 36: Tārā, former Gherzi collection, unknown owner, Western Tibet, 13th/14th century (photo: E. Allinger, 1997).

