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"Celestial Architecture: Donor Depictions in the Spatial Iconography of the Alchi Dukhang/Ladakh" (2 Bände)

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Note on Transliteration

Tibetan has mainly been rendered in a phonetic form to facilitate the reading process, with the Wylie transliteration in brackets. For Persian/Iranian terms I have used diacritics generally accepted for oriental languages (Encyclopaedia of Islam). When different terms of place names are used, I have tried to put all the variants in brackets. These variants are only given where the respective term appears in the text and in the index for the first time.

When Sanskrit, Tibetan and Persian terms occur in the text, they are italicized, sometimes with a brief explanation in English. For Tibetan personal names and places I have used the form in which they are presented by Tibetans. Buddhist terminology is given in Sanskrit rather than in Tibetan to make the text more accessible also to readers unfamiliar with Tibetan. Some Sanskrit terms which have entered common parlance, such as mandala or stupa, are not italicized. Common names of places or sites such as Ajanta, Sanchi, are also rendered without diacritics. The endings and transliterations of Russian terms and names are sometimes inconsistent and differ greatly, for example Marshak, Marsak.

Illustrations

Black and white illustrations (Figures) are arranged throughout the text while color plates are put in a second book. Illustrations (Figures) are listed below and Plates in Vol. 2. A great part of the architectural plans and diagrams are by J. Harrison and R. Khosla, Ch. Luczanits (who generously allowed the publication) and by myself; photographs were taken by J. Poncar and Ch. Luczanits, L. Fournier, R. Linrothe and myself today collected at the University of Vienna (WHAV) complemented with images from my private collection. The latter contains previously unpublished images mainly accumulated in privately financed field research together with colleagues from other disciplines during the last two years.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

After the suppression of the Tibetan central rule, in the 10th century the aristocratic elite founded new religious and political centres in the diverse religious and cultural landscape of the Western Trans-Himalaya, helped by the Ladakhi aristocratic Dro Clan that had already become influential during the Tibetan empire in the 8th to 9th centuries. Their political authority was secured through their control of the monastic centres that they endowed. The political-religious ideology of the new Buddhist ruling powers can clearly be seen in the courtly portrayals decorating the temples they founded. This can be reconstructed especially while examining examples of this genre found in the Dukhang (Assembly Hall, ca. mid-12th cent.) of Alchi/Ladakh with which this study is primarily concerned. Although the depictions of donors are of great importance when studying their religious and political intentions, and indeed such depictions are important for the early phase of Western Tibetan art altogether, the studies that have already been published about the Alchi temple (Snellgrove/Skorupski 1977 and 1980; Pal/Fournier 1982; Goepper 1995 and 1996; Luczanits 1998) have not presented any deeper analysis of this aspect of the paintings in the Alchi Dukhang.

The wealth of material in the scenes of courtly and monastic life and the rich textiles, garments and luxurious objects portrayed therein offer an excellent basis for a comparative study of the various strategies used by kings or princes to legitimize not only their worldly powers, but also their religious authority, presented as divinized kings or closely related local protector deities. Effectively all painting in Tibet is Buddhist and thus is surrounded with an aura of religiosity. At the same time, the spiritual authority of the Buddha has been depicted through royal symbols of sovereignty. Courtly depictions in Buddhist temples always refer to the life of Śākyamuni at the royal court until his 'awakening' and departure from the court, as well as to long-ago stories of virtuous kings and their wives whose Buddha nature was released through their exemplary merit. The present study focuses on the concept of the strategies of donors as one component of the path to liberation and its 'religious implications'. A new approach is proposed towards the definition of pictorial modes of donor depictions as a part of the Buddhist system of iconography which attires the temple whole.

The relationship to the 'divine/time-transcending' is connected, among other things, to the locally prevalent mounted heroes and deities related to the equestrian, knightly culture with its symbols of martial power and protection. The emergence of this class of protector deities, who will later be among the most important protectors in the whole of Tibet hitherto eluded interpretation of the early Buddhist art of the region. The mounted noble-man reflects a distinctive autochton cultural stratum and religious landscape of the Indo-Iranian border area before Tibetanization of the region in the 10th century, as will be proposed for the first time in this study.

A detailed comparative study deals with the symbols of power (regalia, thrones, group portraits) in each region and their artistic and historical models, especially of textiles and garments, as well as with the complex thematic arrangements of scenes of courtly life that were inspired by the eastern Iranian courtly elite. The attempt has been made to determine how these elements were used as a part of the temple's pictorial programe and path towards liberation with the help of visual idioms in religious art and Buddhist concepts of the 'ideal ruler' and his virtuous qualities. In particular, the function of official and private celebratory banquets and drinking scenes in the trans-regional cultural and religious context will be presented.

Until now, the fact that the paintings of Alchi depict East Iranian courtly donors and luxury art has generally been removed from its cultural-historical context, or only seen in connection to Kaśmīr, at that time a leading artistic and religious centre. Thus the attempt is made to put this narrow viewpoint into perspective and to reconstruct the region's symbolism of sovereignty by studying textual and artistic sources. In addition, depicted will be the religious climate in which a complex and multifaceted dialogue took place between the new Buddhist elite – the Ladakhi Dro clan temple donors – and the various autochthon cultural streams in the border areas of Tibet and India/Eastern-Iran. It is a proposal to classify the different components of this dialogue and to understand the symbolism of the courtly scenes in the general context of the Western Himalayan Buddhist iconography and sovereignty ideology, and in the special context of their relation to local guardian deities.

Until now, most of the religious features, especially the gender specific roles played in courtly scenes, have not been examined. Indeed, not only do women appear in written sources connected to the building of temples as donors with considerable financial power, in Alchi they present a considerable component in the self-representation of the courtly elite. By examining donor inscriptions and other textual sources, the religious and political intentions of the donors are better understood.

From the earliest times, the 'majesty' of the Buddha has been expressed with precious garments and jewellery. In the art of the Western Himalaya, this notion was linked to the textile culture of the Silk Road, especially of the eastern Iranian 'courtly art of power and luxury', as can be seen in the paintings and textiles found in Buddhist places of worship in Central Asia and of those that reached Ladakh through monks, diplomats and traders. The aura of power and wealth that is attached to courtly garments made of valuable cotton or silk as well as other luxury objects that were traded in this region, is not only seen in courtly scenes, but is also carried over to the attire of the Buddha. Textiles function not only as a medium of secular representation and legitimization of the ruling elite, but also of the 'religious' authority of the gods and heroes. The interpretation of the individual motifs of the Iranian-influenced or Iranicate luxury art in relation to the overall composition in the temple provides a new methodological approach towards the understanding of these elements as a part of Buddhist ideology.

With regard to the symbolism of space and the function of material culture and luxury art in Buddhist temples, the depiction of textiles, clothing and elements of architecture, ephemeral thrones, celestial palaces and ceiling paintings are particularly informative. Worship, veneration, attiring, veiling the Buddha and revealing His secret nature by means of cloth are virtually innate qualities in both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions of India, playing a large role in Buddhist concepts of space and the temple conceived as substitute of the Buddha-body. Attention is drawn to portraying valuable textiles, banners, honorary canopies, parasols and other luxury objects; such textiles are an important part of the concepts of virtuous merit and worship, the 'clothing' of the Buddha and the celestial palace he is dwelling in and the definition of the Buddhist sacral space.

Because of the lack of early textual sources on architecture and the connected religious concepts, paintings, especially the depiction of textiles on the ceilings and in the wall paintings – indeed the real and virtual attire of the temple – are of particular importance as they illuminate the historical and architectural development of the Buddhist temple in the region

and the shifts that occurred in the symbolism of its space.[1] The starting point for the interpretation of concepts of Buddhist space is the notion of the ultimate reality without form and the perception of existence of the Buddha beyond temporal and spatial confines. Among the different strategies to visualize this concept, and undermine the temple as architectural boundary textiles, umbrellas, honorific covers and ephmeral settings play a prominent role as can be seen in the early temples of the region such as Tabo. In later temples such as Alchi and Dunkar notion of transcendence of worldly realty is communicated through the opening of the ceiling to heaven. The attempt at analyzing the motifs in the ceiling ornaments has enabled a completely new reading of their function as part of the iconographic programme and images of mythical topography and cosmological concepts of Buddhist world system. As being proposed, the ceiling ornamentation is not only imitative of textiles but can be interpreted as a Buddhist cosmological vision. A new approach will be proposed in support of an interpretation of the ceilings in the early art of the Western Himalaya as allusions to Buddhist heavens and as centre of metaphysical notions about the creation of the universe in the Buddhist doctrine. In this concept of space, the temple transcends the constructive boundaries of architecture and opens the ceiling decoration to heaven. Its decorations thus serve as a metaphor for meditation and as an aid for the path to liberation and the awareness of formlessness.

This study offers the first examination of the religious, devotional and artistic as well as architectural-historic and textile-historical context of the pictorial material of courtly depictions, textiles, garments, the surrounding architecture and the 'textile attire' on the ceiling in Alchi. I analyse in addition the socio-historical environment, the Tibetan 'living culture', of the Western Trans-Himalaya and the local Indo-Iranian border area in order to explain the wall paintings and their functions in both the worldly and religious contexts.

The original proposal for present study came from Prof. Roger Goepper (former Director of the Museum for East Asian Art in Cologne), who was one of the first Western scholars to study the Alchi depictions of textiles in depth. Following the completion of my Master's thesis on the ceiling paintings of the Sumtsek in Alchi, he invited me to Cologne and steered me towards the research I then undertook for several years while participating in a project funded by the Austrian Science Fund directed by Prof. D. Klimburg-Salter, whose colleagues gave me further encouragement for my work.

The aims and methods of this dissertation go far beyond the original scope of my participation in this research project and include the first overview of the large body of courtly depictions and illustrations of luxury art in the Dukhang of Alchi as well as a reconstruction of

[1] My work from 2002 to 2005 on the restoration project of the early Buddhist temples in Nako (Himachal Pradesh), during which I documented and classified the historical ceiling paintings and made suggestions, together with the Viennese art conservators, for their reconstruction, allowed me to gain an important further dimension, namely a technological perspective of these artistic works, and gave me an empirical basis for art-historical analysis. This trans-disciplinary work and the detailed investigation of art objects on site under the direction of Prof. Ernst Bacher and the architect Romi Khosla were very important and motivating for all of my work, for which I am very grateful. The analysis and reconstruction drawings were the basis for the reconstruction of the ceiling paintings that was undertaken from 2005 to 2006 under the direction of Prof. G. Krist (University of Applied Arts, Vienna, Restoration Department) with the assistance of K. Kohler and S. Beseler.

At this point I would like to thank my Indian and Tibetan friends and colleagues in Himachal Pradesh and New Delhi for their on site support of my work, especially the architect S. Berry, Hukam Chand Negi and O.P. Negi, who has regrettably already passed away.

its artistic and cultural-historical context through the use of textual sources, inscriptions and research results and methods from neighbouring disciplines, in particular cultural anthropology and the history of textiles and of architecture. I am particularly grateful for the many suggestions I was given by Univ. Doz. Dr. J. Ebert, especially concerning relevant Buddhist literature. The analysis is based for the most part on the excellent and as yet unpublished photo collection of Prof. J. Poncar, who has very generously made it available to the international scholarly community, the extensive documentation of Dr. Ch. Luczanits as well as the documentation I made in my own field research conducted in Ladakh, Kinnaur and Spiti (made possible in part through funding from the Austrian Science Fund – FWF as well as through a 'Stipendium für eine kurzfristige wissenschaftliche Arbeit im Ausland', awarded by the University of Vienna for archival research at Rome, London and the Western Himalaya in 2002)[2]. Additional as yet unpublished material was collected on private research trips to Tibet, India, China, Iran and Afghanistan.

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Previous Research

The temples in Ladakh[3] and northernmost Himachal Pradesh (regions of Spiti and Kinnaur) and their original interiors, which date from the early phase of Buddhism (10th-13th century), have survived almost in tact as a result of being used continuously in rituals over the centuries and

[2] A number of these trips were undertaken in the framework of the interdisciplinary research project "The Cultural History of the Western Himalaya", sponsored by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) at the Institute for Art History of the University of Vienna, under the direction of Prof. Klimburg-Salter. The directors of the various parts of this project were: epigraphs, Prof. E. Steinkellner (Institute for Tibetology); manuscripts, Prof. H. Tauscher (Institute for Tibetology); and architecture, Prof. Neuwirth (University of Technology, Graz). I would like to thank Prof. Steinkellner for offering so much help and his support for the publications.

[3] Ladakh was added to the modern Indian state in 1947. Ladakh itself "*...has never been a subject to the Dalai Lama's government*" as it had not been affected by the general Tibetan cultural penetration until the 10th century. The majority of the population in Ladakh are Tibetan speaking and Buddhism is still flourishing there, while most Tibetans in Baltistan are Muslim.

their isolated locations. Since the beginning of the last century attempts have been made to reconstruct the unique cultural history and monastic traditions of the region, focusing on the local temples with their superb original decorations and their libraries, providing important historical material for many disciplines.

In 1909[4] A.H. Francke of the Moravian mission to Ladakh was essentially the first western scholar to draw scientific attention to the survival of old Buddhist temples and traditions in the area. Several decades later, G. Tucci and L. Petech became the leading experts of the Western Himalaya region focusing on Spiti-Kinnaur and Western Tibet in the 1930´s. D. Snellgrove and T. Skorupski followed in the 1970´s, collecting extensive textual and photographic data on the cultural heritage of Ladakh - with special interest in the Alchi temples and their inscriptions. The 1980´s and 1990´s saw R. Goepper and R. Linrothe publishing their first studies on the Alchi temples in which they interpreted the iconography of the interior programm. The most extensive studies in recent years on the Alchi school of temples are those by C. Luczanits (2004), who provided a detailed analysis of its artistic and historic dimension together with a history how the 'Alchi artistic school' evolved. Instead, I have concentrated on donor depictions, material culture and textile depictions (2002, 2007a,b).

The Western Himalaya regions of Spiti, Kinnaur and Western Tibet, due to their location near the Tibetan border and the sensitive political situation, were restricted areas almost inaccessible to foreigners for many years. Therefore, extended field research in Spiti/Kinnaur began only at the end of the 1970s when travel restrictions were relaxed. Extensive studies on local sites enabled the publication of in-depth monographies on the temples at Tabo by the Vienna research group under the auspices of E. Steinkellner (E. Steinkellner 1996; D. Klimburg-Salter/ Ch. Luczanits/ E. Wandl/ L.Petech 1997; L. Petech/ Ch. Luczanits 1999). However, comparative analysis and attempts to reconstruct the different artistic schools and their chronological sequence constitute a relatively new approach.

Research in the Himalaya is constantly increasing with regard to research topics, disciplines and methods. This has been reflected in the multi-facetted programmes of international conferences on Ladakh and Tibet in recent years. I present here only the research lines which are considered in this text.

Regarding the religious-political dimension, D. Snellgrove provided reflections on the concepts of kingship in the Indian tradition and the question of how royal and spiritual spheres shared signs of power and legitimation in Tibetan esoteric Buddhism as early as the 1950´s. Studies on systems of rule in Western Tibet were further elaborated by L. Petech, R. Vitali, K.H.-Everding, G. Hazod, P. Soerensen while Ch. Ramble, G. Halkias and H. Stoddard have recently provided new approaches with regard to the study of Western Tibetan systems of nation - building. However, in general an integrated analysis, refining our understanding of the function of early Buddhist establishments in the Western Himalaya and their artistic programmes and the role of the royal and aristocratic donors is only at the beginning, also transdisicplinary analysis of historiography, religious history and art historical evidence, has been the subject of very little research so far. Several art historians have drawn attention to the significance of donor depictions for the historical reconstruction of Western Himalayan art and culture (Tucci, Snellgrove, Pal, Klimburg-Salter). Preliminary classifications of donor depictions, material culture and luxury art in early Western Himalayan art were by Stoddard (1977), who placed the costumes worn in lay imagery at Tabo and Alchi in a wider historical and social context, giving

[4] Ibid.

insight into how Tibetan dressing habits had evolved since the time of the old Tibetan monarchy. Further investigations on donor depictions and representations of textiles -mainly based on studies at Tabo - are by Klimburg-Salter (1997) and Wandl (1997), focusing mainly on the Northwest-Indian component in Western Himalayan art (for recent research on this topic see also Heller 2006). P. Pal, R. Goepper and F.B. Flood are among the first western scholars to discuss textiles depicted on temple ceilings as an important genre in the art of Ladakh. However, a comparative analysis with other regions of this artistic tradition has been in generally little used as a methodological approach for the research of textiles and their function in the symbolism of space in Buddhist temples (see also Ch. Papa-Kalantari 2007b).

Ch. Jahoda specialised on the reconstruction of the cultural history of female protector deities (*sungma*) in the Western Himalaya and their relation to the Royal Lamas of Tabo, integrating local sources, cults and oral history. Indigenous traditions, mounted knights and Central Asian gods in 'Western Tibetan Exile', reflecting the pre-Buddhist religious landscape of Ladakh before the 'Tibetization' of the region including related cultural zones in Eastern-Iran and Northern Pakistan, hitherto eluded interpretation.

Various scholars have discussed the phenomenon of the Iranianising art at Alchi from different perspectives. The study of the Iranicate component was initiated by G. Tucci (1973) who emphasized the wide nexus of artistic contacts of the region in this period, drawing historical links back to the time of the old monarchy and its influence in Central Asia. He considered the royal scenes to be the work of Tibetan painters established in Kaśmīr, perhaps following Iranian models from Central Asia. He was also the first Western scholar to draw attention to the importance of lay images at Tabo. Nako. C. Genoud (1981) in his 'Buddhist Wall Painting of Ladakh' and Pal/Fournier (1982)[5] were among the first Western scientists who conducted preliminary investigations of the donor depictions at Alchi. A detailed description of specific Iranicate courtly elements such as the 'Royal Hunter' from the perspective of the evolutionary history of Western Central Asian art was presented by Flood (1981) and Goepper (1996), focusing primarily on the ceiling depictions in the Sumtsek.

Sims/ Marshak in their *'Peerless Images. Persian Painting and its Sources'* (2002) have given a classification of the primary themes of Iranian imagery such as *razm-u-bazm* ('fighting and feasting') and their characteristics, allowing the spread of Iranian art outside its political borders in Central Asia to be defined. They identified specific Central Asian-Iranian traditions of costumes and textiles in the Alchi depictions as well as thematic choices.[6] The importance of Boris Marshak's work lies in the fact that he classified some primary themes of Iranicate art and their profusion in Central Asia. He also integrates the Alchi donor depictions in the great corpus

[5] Pal was one of the first art historians who attempted to interpret the formal characteristics and the possible meaning of the drinking scene as a part of the overall iconographic scheme. He proposed that Iranicate elements in the drinking scene as well as on the ceilings of the Sumtsek might be interpreted as symbols alluding to paradise, adopted in the Buddhist sphere. One can identify various Iranicate themes and types of composition; however a comparative study and reconstruction of the context demonstrates that the adoption in other cultural, religious technical and artistic traditions, a change of forms and their original function and values can be seen.

Also Vitali assumes the adoption of Iranicate mode of donor depiction in the Western Himalaya, including Tabo, maybe reflecting earlier cultural strata in the region, but without further elaboration.

[6] They vaguely conclude that the donors resemble the Seljuk figural style practiced in Iran and neighbouring land, and the seated prince may actually have been an "Indo-Iranian who married to a local Tibetan family". However, the author also recalls that by this time the Turkic garments developed for their practicality by riding peoples of the steppes were worn all over the Central Asian and Islamic world.

of East-Iranian art. In particular, Marshak's observations gave impetus to the need to define a stratification of post-Sāsānian, Sogdian and later Iranicate components and concepts of kingship and sovereignty in the art of Alchi, which cannot be reduced to the famous 'drinking scene'. A study of these elements within the context of Buddhist art in the Western Himalaya in order to understand their artistic, religious and social content has not yet been undertaken.

In general, the previous methodological approach, based on the isolation of a few elements – though giving insight into the evolutionary history of some of the most important themes of Iranian imagery – is somewhat problematic. The main task here is to reconstruct the specific function of Iranicate courtly art within the cultural, artistic and Buddhist religious context in which it is embedded. Moreover, in-depth scholarly debate, combining perspectives of Tibetan, Central Asian and Iranian studies, is only in its infancy.

Among the architectural historians, Romi Khosla, Roland M. Bernier, and John Harrison are pioneers providing preliminary analysis of Himalayan architecture and historical topography while Yanagi, Goepper, Klimburg-Salter, and I reflected on the function of decorated ceilings in early Buddhist art of the Western Himalaya. Niels Gutschow and Marc Dujardin (together with H. Diemberger, and G. Hazod) have published general studies focusing on architectural and anthropological research, and an assessment of the sacred landscape concentrating on Central Tibet, Nepal and Ladakh. The multi-disciplinary research programme initiated by Niels Gutschow and others culminated in the book '*Sacred Landscape of the* Himalaya' (2003, ed. Gutschow et alia). But with regard to the art- and architectural history of the Western Himalaya, including Baltistan, between the 10th and 13th century, we still face the problem of the lack of interdisciplinary research by whom to integrate art and architectural history with the study of the relevant Tibetan sources which deal with Tibetan concepts of sacred spaces and their models.

The conclusions of most previous studies on donor depictions and Iranicate elements (in particular at Alchi), material culture, and textile depictions and their role in the overall programme, are somewhat problematic. This is due to the lack of primary material and studies on Iranicate elements and the art of ornament at Alchi as an isolated phenomena based on single motifs or scenes. Systematic fieldwork in conjunction with the study of the extensive photographic documentation by J. Poncar and Ch. Luczanits and architectural research allows a detailed analysis of all lay depictions at Alchi and a more differentiated reading of the courtly art of Alchi in its artistic and historical context and as part of the overall iconographic programme and ordered world as visualized in the temple.

2. WESTERN HIMALAYA: GEOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND HISTORIC SETTING

2.1. Geographic Setting, Economy and Trade

The geographic focus of the present study lies on a region in the western Trans-Himalaya, and in Ladakh (in T. La dwags) in particular which is today part of the state of Jammu-Kaśmīr, India, in the westernmost part of the Tibetan highland. It should be understood as the historical landscapes of Western Tibet (Map.1-2).[7] The region stretches from the area of Purang/Guge (Western Tibet/Ngari, presently China), where the Indus and Sutlej rivers have their sources, together with some adjacent side valleys deeper inside the Himalayan mountain ranges in India's province of Himachal Pradesh, and crosses to Ladakh in North-western India and further west to the landscapes of Baltistan, Gilgit and Chilās in Northern Pakistan. The Indus (T. Tsangpo), flowing there in essence from east to west, forms the 'lifeline' of the whole region, which is more or less a high barren plateau of high mountainous 'character', lying at altitudes ranging from some 4.000 m in the east, i.e. in Guge, to 3.500 m in Ladakh and 3.000 m in Baltistan. A much smaller 'lifeline' or artery of communication is provided by the Sutlej river, which – 'breaking through' the Himalayan mountain range on its way into India – connects Guge with the regions of Spiti (Tabo lies on c. 3.050 meters) and Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh.

To the north of the Western Trans-Himalaya the high wall of the Karakoram mountain ranges form a nearly un-surmountable barrier between Ladakh and Baltistan on the one hand and the important cultural centres in Central Asia on the other, Khotan in particular (Map. 3). To the west the somewhat lower mountain ranges of the Pamir and the Hindu Kush allow much easier communication between these regions, including Gilgit in the south. To the west and south of the defined Trans-Himalayan region, i.e. in Western Cis-Himalaya, is the culturally rich landscape of Kaśmīr.

During the golden age of trade and pilgrimage along the Silk Road and its branches between Central Asia, India, and Tibet in the first millennium A.D., and to a somewhat lesser extent in the first centuries of the second millennium, a wide network of difficult and often dangerous mountain tracks deveolped, walked on by merchants, Buddhist pilgrims, itinerant craftsmen and others. Some of the tracks crossed passes, up to of 5.580 m high, which is the altitude of the feared Karakoram pass. The traffic lead to the establishment of a number of small principalities or even kingdoms and also of Buddhist monasteries along the 'tracks', offering assistance and protection in return for donations. Naturally, the network facilitated close ties with Buddhist centres in Kaśmīr and along the southern fringe of the Tarim Basin in Central Asia, in particular to those located in the oasis of Khotan.

Among all the mountain statelets and kingdoms in the Western Himalaya and Trans-Himalaya which existed then or came into existence later, those founded in the 10th to 13th century in Purang/Guge (monasteries at Khorchak/Khojarnath, Tholing, Tsaparang and Dunkar), in Spiti and Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh (monasteries at Tabo, Nako and Lalung) and in Ladakh (monasteries at Alchi, Sumda, Mangyu and some previously little studied foundations) are the focus of the present study. These monasteries, their interior decorations and religious artefacts (including manuscripts, sculptures and religious implements) reflect a distinctive religious, political and artistic phase in the region, when a new religious-political

[7] For a detailed discussion of the physical, geographic and climatic characteristics of the Western Himalaya see also Everding 2002: 253 ff.

system in the context of the so-called 'later spread of Buddhism' (T. *phyi dar*) was developing in Western Tibet at the behest of the Kings of Guge. In this area a distinctive Buddhist culture emerged in Ladakh, resulting from the long-distance cross-cultural exchanges at a time which was controlled by local rulers. The main focus of the study is the reconstruction of its religio-political and artistic environment, starting from the cultural sub-stratum of autochtonous beliefs in martial and mythical beings, local spirits and systems of power in greater Ladakh, all of which were deeply rooted in both the folk and courtly traditions of the region.

Accordingly, as geography and trade dictated the cultural dynamics in this region, the art of the Western Himalaya and in particular greater Ladakh cannot be isolated from the interactions taking place along the relevant branches of the Silk Road.[8] In addition, the close neighbourhood of the culturally dominant Kaśmīr as an important centre of both Hinduism and Buddhism and thus also of pilgrimage was a significant contributor to the formation of the Trans-Himalayan 'second spread of Buddhism'.[9] In general, the religious and cultural landscape of historical Western Tibet is embedded in the greater environment of Buddhism in India, Tibet and Central Asia, characterized by close cooperation between Tibetan and Indian teachers.[10]

Several branches of the trans-continental routes of the Silk Road (connecting Chang'an, the long time capital of China, via the oasis states of Central Asia with the Mediterranean), leading through the Buddhist centres of Khotan, Yarkand and others and across the Pamir and Karakoram passes to India, crossed Ladakh,[11] unlike today when it is seen as a remote region.

> "...but for most of its history, it was the nodal point of whole complex of trade routes; and this fact ... made of its capital Leh an important entrepot for the trade between the Punjab and Chinese Central Asia... Though Ladakh was off the line of the classical Silk Route, the Leh-Yarkand trail represented one ot the Silk Route feeders and silk was an important commodity of the trans-Karakoram trade in both directions: yarns coming from Yarkand to be woven in the Punjab, and Banaras brocades being exported to Central Asia."[12]

These dynamics of transcontinental trade and demand in luxury goods in Tibetan religious and secular culture (which are in-separably connected) have to be seen as an aspect of the cosmopolitan appeal which Tibet acquired during the time of the Tibetan Cultural Empire in Central Asia (7th to 9th c.), an the refined material wants associated with the aura of luxury, status and beauty in competition with Central Asian rulers, which enjoyed grandeur at that time.

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[8] In particular the Buddhist culture of Chilās/Baltistan, and of Khotan which remained Buddhist at least up to the 10th century and later with Chinese-style kingdoms of Xixia, in close interaction with the thriving centre Kaśmīr is relevant for the reconstruction of the early religio-political culture and art of Ladakh and the Western Trans Himalaya in general. In contrast, the strongest ties in the earlier phase of this period in the Western Himalaya, i.e. at Spiti-Kinnaur existed with North-western India (important in this context are inter alia Chamba Lahaul, and Lower Kinnaur with an important early tradition of wooden temple architecture).

Furthermore the cultural interaction with the contemporary Buddhist art of Central Tibet, where the royal patrons - descendants of the Old Tibetan royal line - of these temples originated, are of importance in this context.

[9] The alleged transfer of Kaśmīri artists to Western Tibet is recorded in the biography of Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (Cf. Snellgrove/Skorupskt 1980: 83 ff.).

[10] Cf. For a description of the 'religious landscape' of this period see Luczanits 1998, 2004.

[11] The Chinese monk Fa-hsien (Fa-Hien, Faxian) travelled from China to India, through Gansu corridor and went also to Dunhuang, Khotan, Gandhāra. Cf. also Giles 1923; Legge 1965 (repr. 1886), and Beal 1969 (repr. 1884).

[12] Rizvi 1999: 20.

> Giuseppe Tucci has put it as follows: "Tibet had at the beginning an economy closed in on itself, hunting, pastoralism and agriculture, which could develop only slowly through a system of irrigation. The conquests in Central Asia, and the wars against China, extended not only the political and cultural horizons, but also the economic horizon. The penetration of Tibet into Central Asia, which owed its prosperity principally to trade, awoke new economic interests and brought about new social orientation. The monastery did not only own property, it was also involved in trade".[13]

It would be important to know more about the patterns of communication and trade between Western Tibet, India and Central Asia. However, the study of trade links, which will help to better understand the historic routes of transmission, is only at the beginning. McKay states in his introduction to the 'History of Tibet' concerning the economic factors and commercial commodities in Western Tibet, "... *we face the problem of the absence of economic histories of Tibet and the limited sources available for such studies.*" [14]

Important information on the trade routes connecting Tibet and China is available from the time of the Tibetan empire (7th to 9th century). One of the earliest sources documenting the cosmopolitain situation and the volume of luxury goods imported into Tibet is the Zhol doring (T. rdo rings; pillar) below the Potala Palace in Lhasa (c. 764), "*...which records a yearly tribute of fifty thousand pieces of silk from the Chinese emperor Suzong (r. 756-63) to the Tibetan ruler Trison Detsen, [Trhisong Detsen]*"[15] (cf. 'Table of Tibetan King', Appendix). Also images of high Tibetan dignitaries, such as that of Minister Gar comfirm the cosmopolitan appeal of the robes of state in this period.

The great importance of the long-distance trade at the time[16], which also had great impact on the Trans-Himalayan region, is evidenced by the role of Sogdian merchants and their trans-continental trade relations. As heirs of the post-Sāsānian/Eastern-Iranian culture of royalty and luxury and as '*the nation of traders and shopkeepers*'[17], they were among the most gifted 'brokers' who not only controlled and expanded trade along the Silk Road and its branches, but were also the main mediators of Iranicate art with its courtly symbolism and Western Central-Asian aesthetics of luxury art.

The Tibetans actively participated in this rewarding exchange of luxury goods, both at the time when they ruled the Southern Route of the Silk Road and the important artistic and mercantile centre of Khotan, and when for over fifty years they occupied Dunhuang with its huge cave temple complex.[18] They then had access to Sino-Sogdian luxury items, which combined Iranian and Chinese elements, and which were traded in particular by Sogdian merchants. In particular luxurious textiles found or depicted in the temples of Tibet document these wide-ranging economic contacts.

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[13] Tucci 1970: 11.

[14] McKay 2003: 3.

[15] Reynolds 1990: 88.

[16] Petech 1977: 12.

[17] Frye 1984: 357. This trade did not only induce the profusion of highly priced silk fabrics co-notated with luxury and prestige in particular but also of the Sogdian hybrid pantheon and courtly symbolism. Persian and Chinese historical texts related to their activities in Central Asia, as well as stone images and wallpaintings in Ladakh and Kaśmīr reflect this situation at least up to the time of consideration in this study.

[18] Cf. Beckwith 1987a.

The presence of Sogdians at the Chinese Court of the T'ang is well documented in written sources.[19] Sogdian inscriptions at Drangtse demonstrate that Sogdian merchants found their way into the interiors of Tibet and that they may have also established trade colonies there.[20] Numerous Sogdian inscriptions were found in Ladakh and along the Indus. One of them, found at Drangtse (Ladakh), mentions a Sogdian, probably a diplomat/merchant, who came from Samarkand around the year 210 of the Islamic era most probably: "*Im Jahr 210... kam der Samarkander... Nosfarn als Botschafter zum Tibetischen Khagan*".[21]

The depiction of a man in Sogdian dress venerating a stupa (Pl. 54) bears one of the many inscriptions discovered along the Indus near the bridge at Thalpan. The presence of Sogdians is also documented in Kaśmīr, which had a great impact on the regional style of luxury art. The contacts between Kaśmīr and Tibet provided a major impulse in the evolutionary history of a distinct Western Himalaya artistic culture.

Probably due in part to Sogdian merchants and their trade relations, the kingdom of Khotan constituted a particularly important trading partner with Ladakh, offering close contacts with Sogdia, Kaśmīr, China and Tibet and providing a great variety of goods including jade, horses, silk, wine etc.[22] Khotan's great cultural diversity manifests itself also with Buddhist deities amalgamated with Iranian royal symbolism and local beliefs.[23] Tibetans ruled Khotan during the time of the old monarchy (8th to 9th centuries), whereby Khotan retained its kings and officials with strong relations with Tibet and Dunhuang. In the 9th century Khotan had strong links with the kingdom of Dunhuang, culminating in the marriage alliance between the then king of Dunhuang, Coa Yuanlu, and a Khotanese princess.[24] Due to the Arab advance Buddhist monks fled to Tibet as early as in the 8th century. They fled in even greter numbers two centuries later, when in 1006 Khotan was conquered by the Turkic Kharakhanids[25] and the Khotanese ruler embraced Islam.[26]

Gandhāra – 'the Gateway of India', was another centre of trade with long-distance commercial and cultural contacts as documented by *Aṣṭādhyāyī* by Paṇiṇi: „... *Eastern India had mercantile contacts with Madras, Kaśmīr and allied states since the time of Paṇiṇi...As regards articles of trade, at first blanket, wool and woollen products should be mentioned, because Gandhāra region was*

[19] Sogdian are described in a text as "*...a people employed in trade, fond of music and wine*" (M. Compareti, 2005: www.cais-soas.com/CIAS/Art/SogdianPearl. html).

[20] Uray, 1983; cited after Linrothe, at press.

[21] Uray 1983: 406.

[22] See Cat. Whitfield (2004) for a a catalogue of trade product of Khotan (which also includes Iranian glass, glass was little known during the T'ang and Gond 7th-12th century, and has been imported from Persia and the Merditerranean. Glass was much used by Buddhist communities (ibid. 157); a depiction of Avalokiteśvara (ibid: p. 280) might depict a flask of glass; was used as an important ritual implement, representing also the drink of immortality.

See also the 2004 article by Skjaervo in the same catalogue for the political situation in the first millennium and Khotanese documents and Chinese records of the kings of Khotan as well as economic documents from the time of the Tibetan rule of Khotan; as well as Takeuchi in the same volume on documents of Tibetan military administration of Khotan.

[23] Documents attest a strong Buddhist presence from the time of the great Indian king Aśoka and a thriving Buddhist society (Skjaervo 2004: 34).

[24] Ibid. 137

[25] Ibid.

[26] Gombrich/Bechert 1984: 107.

famous for its wool since the Rgvedic period."[27] The Pali literature often used Gandhāra for 'Kassamira', probably the modern Kaśmīr; thus Gandhāra may have covered the region from Swāt to the Jehlam-river.[28] This region "*...has played an important part as being the intermediate stage through which Indian civilisation and art reached Khotan and the adjourning territories of Chinese Turkestan.*"[29]

Gujarat and Rajasthan were also important weaving and trade centres, where Buddhism had flourished since earliest times. The trade ports in these regions had contacts with the whole Indian Ocean world from Arabia to Indonesia. Various types of Indian printed textiles - presumably light-weight cotton fabrics – are depicted in the Western Himalaya temples providing indirect evidence of artistic exchange and maybe also trade contacts with the famous textile producing centres in Northwest India.[30]

Persian geographers, travellers and scientists give accounts of the trade between Tibet and Muslim countries and commercial dynamics during this time. According to the geographic treatise by Hudūd al-'Ālam (10th century), "*Everything Indian is imported (P. uftadh) into Tibet and from Tibet re-exported to Muslim countries. There are gold-mines in Tibet, and from it come much musk, black foxes, grey squirrels (P. sanjab), sable martens (P. samur), ermine (P. qaqum), and khutu-(horns). It is a place of few amenities. Its king is called Tubatt-khaqan and he has great numbers of troops and arms.*"[31]

The more local trade with rock salt, yak tails and wool (both sheep's wool and goat's wool) was also economically important. Ladakh was an important channel through which high quality goat wool passed from Western Tibet to Śrinagar and to Lhasa.[32] The fine goat wool of the *rha* (white goat) was (and still is) produced in the high pastures of the Western Himalaya for international trade. According to Tsering Gyalbo, the goats live at altitudes above 4.600 metres and are looked after by nomads. This results in the high quality of the wool ('lena', T. *le na;* or 'soft gold'), known as 'cashmere' or 'pashm/pashmina' (after the Persian word for wool/'pashm') in the West.[33] Of course, there was also much local trade between neighbouring and also distant communities with different economic bases, e.g. with nomadic herds-people who were rich in livestock, wool, pashm and meat. They met their trading partners at fixed points, where regular fairs came to be established such as the famous one at Gartok in Western Tibet, north of the Holy Lake Manasarovar.[34]

In addition, goldmining provided much income in the region at least during the establishment of the new kingdoms in the Western Himalaya. According to *Ngari Gyalrab* (T. *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*), the '*Religious History of Western Tibet*', Yeshe Ö for example demanded compensation in gold after a clash with Drogmi (T. 'Brog mi, i.e. Dards from Indo-Iranic

[27] Ghosal 2004: 42; cf. also Agrawala: 1963, for the history of India according to Paṇiṇi.

[28] Ibid: 35.

[29] Smith (Spear, ed.) 1988: 195.

[30] Wandl 1996, 1999; Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2007.

[31] Hudūd al-'Ālam (ed. Bosworth) 1970: 92.

[32] On the wool-production and trade in western Tibet see Jahoda (unpublished Dissertation) 2003: 175-181.

[33] Only the wool of the white goat (T. *rha*), is commercially used. The shearing is in summer and only certain trained and skillful workers of certain communities, are able to extract the soft and fluffy hair out of the fur (Tsering Gyalbo, verbal communication, January 2007).

[34] Rizvi 1999: 14; for a description of life of nomadic herds-people of western Tibet see Goldstein/Beall 1990.

borderlands) and received the Dontsewang [T. Don rtse wang] gold-fields. "*With the gold which was extracted from there he built his temples Nyangral Chöchung [Nyang ral chos 'byung]*".[35]

There are reports on the trade of luxury and other items up to recent times. In Captain Samuel Turner's 'Account of an embassy visit to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet'[36] one reads that among the goods Tibet imported via Ladakh from China were brocades and other silks, tea, tobacco, porcelain, silver bullion and furs. From Bengal Tibet imported coarse cotton cloth, rice, pearls, corals and otter skins, and from Kaśmīr saffron and dried fruit were traded.[37]

Similarly, the cultural and commercial exchange between the Buddhist establishments in the Western Himalaya and pilgrimage places in Northern and even Eastern India has lasted up to the present. An example for such contacts is given by the traditional mercantile ties between the Muslim Kasim family, one of the most important producers of precious Buddhist silk brocades (*göchen*, T. *gos chen*) in Benares - with Varanasi as an important centre - and monasteries in Spiti (Tabo[38]) and Ladakh.[39] This trade may go back to earlier times as indicated by the kind of precious fabrics depicted on Pāla-sculptures (Pl. 35), resembling also many ornamental designs in Western Tibetan temples.

To sum up, the complex and far-distance trading patterns between India and Central Asia had a deep effect on the artistic and cultural exchange in this region and it is mainly the art of this region from which we can best assess this complexity. The most important region from the viewpoint of this study is Ladakh due to its central location in the corridors of trade linking India, Tibet and Central Asia, and due to the unique 'cosmopolitan' artistic and cultural expression as a result of that position. The local monastery at Alchi, situated on the bank of the Indus river some 70 kilometres to the west of Leh,[40] perfectly documents the great role of Ladakh in the trade connections between Kaśmīr and Central Asia, leading especially in the 12th century to a specific cultural and artistic diversity.

The great importance of Alchi may have been due to the monastery's location next to an important bridge across the Indus, where probably heavy customs duties were collected from trade caravans travelling e.g. from Kaśmīr to Leh in a fashion similar to that described by Sir Walter Lawrence in the late 19th century:

> "The ascent to the Zoji La (11.300 feet) from Kashmīr is very steep, the descent to the elevated table-land of Tibet almost imperceptible. For five marches the route follows the course of the Drās river, through a desolate country of piles up rocks and loose gravel....the track leaves the Drās river, and turns in a southerly direction to Kargil, a delightful oasis. Then the road abandons the valley and ascends the bare mountains. The dreary scenery is compensated by the cloudless pale blue sky and the dry bracing air so characteristic of Ladākh. Through gorges and defiles the valley of Shergol is reached, the first Buddhist village on the road. ...later the Indus is crossed by a long cantilever brigde, and the road runs along the right bank through the fertile oasis of Khalsi, then through

[35] Vitali 2003: 58.

[36] Turner, 1806: 381-4 London; cited after Rizvi 1999: 10.

[37] For further studies of trade patterns in Ladakh and Tibet see Rizvi 1995; for patterns of internal Tibetan trade see Rizvi 1996.

[38] Papa-Kalantari 2007b.

[39] For the trade network between Benares and Ladakh up to the present see Ahmad 2005. Cf. also Papa-Kalantari 2007b.

[40] The majority of Ladakhis are Tibetan Buddhists, while the majority of the remainder is Muslim Shia.

the usual desert with an occasional patch of vegetation to Leh, the capital of western Tibet and of western Buddhism and the trade terminus for caravans from India and from Central Asia."[41]

2.2. Early History of the Western Trans-Himalaya (ca.600-mid 11th century): the Kingdom of Shangshung (T. Zhang zhung, C. Yang-t'ung)

The early history (first half of the first millennium A.D.) of the Western Tibetan region and Ladakh in particular is little known. At least a great part of these regions seems to have belonged to the rather mythical kingdom of Shangshung, which may have included also areas in northern Tibet.[42] From the formative period of the Great Tibetan empire around 600 this situation changed.[43] Relations between the royal house in Central Tibet and the Western regions appear for the first time at the beginning of the 7th century, when the Shangshung King Lig-mi-rhya, who married the sister of Songtsen Gampo (T. Srong btsan sgam po; died 649/650), who was the first emperor of the period of the Dharma kings (T. chos rgyal)[44] (see Appendix). Shortly afterwards, the king of Shangshung was dethroned, and in the third quarter of the seventh century (653) this kingdom was incorporated into the Tibetan empire.[45]

As a result of the integration of Western Tibet into the Central Tibetan kingdom, the region was called Ngari Khorsum (T. mNga' ris skor gsum: 'Herrschaftsraum mit drei [Verwaltungs]kreisen'; i.e. 'three circles'). According to Tucci, the following regions belonged to the 'three circles' (T. *skor gsum*), with Lhasa as the capital: 1. Purang (T. Pu rang, etc.), Maryül (T. Mar yul), Zanskar (T. Zangs dkar); 2. Li (Khotan), Drusha (T. 'Bru zha, Gilgit)[46], Balti (T. sBal ti; Baltistan); 3. Shangshung (T. Zhang zhung) Khri te stod and smad.[47] However, the geographic

[41] Lawrence (Imperial Gazetter of India) 1983: 10-11.

[42] Cf. Tucci 1956: 91-92, 104-105, Petech 1997: 230f.

An early glimpse on the political history is found in a Kharoshti inscription near Kalatse (T. K'a la rtse) bridge on the Indus, demonstrating that around the first century Ladakh was related to the Kuṣāṇ Empire.

[43] On the historic link between Central Asia and Tibet see Beckwith (1987a,b), Kvaerne (1995: 253), Gombrich/Bechert (1995).

[44] The two other Dharma Kings of Tibet were Thrisong Detsen (T. Khri srong lde btsan (r. 754-797/802?), who invited Buddhist teachers (Śāntaraksita) and tantric masters (Padmasambhava) to Tibet. On his initiative the first monastery (Samye [T. bSam yas]) was built and Buddhism became state religion. The third great Dharma King was Trhitsuk Detsen (Relpachen), [T. Khri gtsug lde btsan (Ral pa can)], (r. 815-838); his reign can be associated with the peak of the 'first spread of Buddhism' in Tibet (T. *bstan pa snga dar*) (dates after Golzio 1984; cf. 'Table of Kings' in this volume).

[45] Cf. Petech 1997: 230. Cf. also the *'dBa sbzhed'* (Washe), a famous Tibetan historiographic manuscript, containing a royal narrative concerning the bringing of the Buddha's doctrine to Tibet, describes the subordination of the Shangshung ruler as follows: "*The king of Zhang Zhung, gNya' zhur lag rnig, worshipped the compassionless gods Gye gdo and Mu thur and Bon funerals (bon shid) were performed in the four systems of the Zhang zhung region. For this reason the Zhang zhung kingdom was lost and then (its) castles rTse mtho, rGod lting and so on passed under the rule of sPu rgyal*" (Wangdu/Diemberger 2000: 102, line 30a).

[46] The two routes most frequented between Cenral Asia and India to the east of Afghanistan passed through Gilgit. One led to Kapiśa via the valley of Chitral, the other via Swāt towards Gandhāra (Naudou 1980: 33-34).

In 740 Gilgit (Brusha) came under Tibetan control. „*We then hear of the campaigns undertaken by Lalitāditya Muktāpīda- the king of Kaśmīr who was counselled by an evidently sinicized 'Tochara' (Tuhkhara/Tusara) minister known as Cankuna- against the Tibetans, for which purpose Lalitāditya gained in 747 the support of Chinese forces operating in little Po-lü (presumably Gilgit, Balor) under the command of Kao Hsien-chih...*" (Ruegg 2003: 124).

[47] Tucci 1956: 73; cited after Everding 2000 II: 265.

term Ngari Khorsum (as well as Shangshung) is used for different regions in Tibetan sources, which are discussed in more recent literature.[48]

During the period of the Tibetan Empire in Central Asia with Lhasa as its centre Tibet had close political, cultural and economic ties with Western and Eastern Central Asia, especially Khotan and T'ang China.[49] Tibetans had conquered territories in Eastern Central Asia (Eastern Turkestan or Chinese Central Asia) in the second half of the 7th century, marking the first period of Tibetan domination over the Tarim states and control of the profitable main East-West trade routes "*...which was then a dynamic, integral part of the highly civilized Buddhist heartland of Eurasia*".[50]

In 729 the Tibetan army even advanced into Western Turkistan (Western Central Asia). With the help of allies, the Khorāsānians and the Türgiś, the Tibetans drove the Muslim Arabs, who had just conquered the region and defeated a large Chinese army, almost entirely out of Sogdiana, with only the city of Samarkand remaining in Arab hands.[51] The Tibetans even established marital allies with the Türgiś.[52]

The control over regions in Eastern Turkestan was important also with respect to the trade routes via the Pamirs and the Western Himalaya leading to India. In order to secure that control, alliances were formed with the important local rulers in the region of the Karakoram and the Pamir.[53] The King of Bolor (A. Balūr; probably Baltistan, to the west of Ladakh, today Northeastern Pakistan) was awarded a Chinese title in 717, indicating the king's acceptance of Chinese domination and protection. Between 740 and 750 the Tibetans conquered the kingdom of Bolor, which probably also included the area of Gilgit.

"*In the fall of 740, they gave the lady Khri ma lod as a bride to the Lord of Little Balūr. This secured Tibetan sovereignty of Balūr, and, added to the submission of several other neighbouring countries, it indicated a growing Tibetan influence in the Pamirs. Among these territories were Wakhan .... Yet without a strong Western Turkic ally, the Tibetans could hardly face both the Arabs and the Chinese in the struggle for Central Asia.*" Shortly afterwards the Tibetan presence in Baltistan and Gilgit ended with the advance of Chinese forces: "*In 747 a Chinese force ascended the inhospitable Pamirs and conquered the settlement later known as Dar-e Tubbat or 'Gate of Tibet'. The Chinese then pushed down into the Gilgit*

Tibetans called the Western Himalaya region traditionally sTod (high region) (cf. also Beckwith 1987: 203). 25. The Western Himalayan region is called Tö (T. sTod, lit. upper region) in Tibetan. In Old Tibetan Töchog (T. *stod phyogs*) or Tö (T. *stod*), which literally means 'upper' is the usual word for 'west' (cf. also Beckwith 1987: 203). An important source for the reconstruction of the location and population in Tibet are Early Islamic sources.

[47] Beckwith deals with the question of the Arabian-Tibetan wars between 785-815, citing Arabian sources, in which the subortination of the 'Tibetan' Kabul-Shāh is reported. But he studies on Arabian-Tibetan relations are still in its infancy (Rona-Taś 1985: 54).

[48] Cf. also Vitali 1996, 2003; Beckwith 1987.

[49] In wallpainting at Dunguang from the period of the 5 Dynasties, painted around 920 (cf. Whitfield 1996, Vol 1: figs. pp. 115-117) are the portraits of a Khotanese king and Chinese dignitary (the son of Cao Yijin, with his family), who consolidated his power to the north and east through political marriages with the Khotanese king (cf. Whitfield 1996, Vol. 2: 224).

[50] Beckwith 1987: 37.

[51] Ibid. 110. In 751, in Western Turkestan the Chinese army was defeated by Arabs Ziād ben Zāli in the battle of Talas (Ibid. 1987: 139).

[52] Ibid. 111.

[53] Beckwith 1987: 87.

area...referred to as 'Little Bolor' in Chinese sources. This name was given to the Gilgit area after 'Great Bolor', or Baltistan fell into the Tibetans in or around 722 A.D".[54]

Thus in the 8th century during the time of Chinese progress, parts of Western Tibet and Turkestan as well as Kaśmīr became partof the 'Celestial Empire of China'. From the Chinese annals we learn that the "*first embassy from Kaśmīr arrived at the Imperial court in or shortly after AD 713... in the year 720 Tchen-tho-lo-pi-li, ruler of Kaśmīr, the Chandrapida of the Kaśmīr chronicles, was accorded by imperial decree the title of king*".[55]

However, the dicisive Arab defeat of the Chinese in the Talas valley in 751 soon prompted the Chinese to relinquish their hold on Little Bolor, and the Chinese episode in present northern Pakistan thus came to an early end.[56]

With the advancing Muslim armies from the eighth century onward and the socio–political disturbances caused by it, the major routes of communication between Central Asia and India were pushed into the Pamirs and even further to the east.[57] This must have greatly encouraged long-distance trade of material goods and communication of ideas passing through the Western Himalaya and Ladakh in particular.

In the second half of the 8th century the Tibetan advanced far into Eastern Central Asia by conquering Dunhuang (under Trhisong Detsen).[58] After a 10-year long siege wich ended in 781, they gained control of the Turfan oasis, and later conquering Qocho in 790, and Khotan in 791. The Chinese regained control of Dunhuang in 848 and Khotan became again independent around 851.[59]

The end of the period of Tibetan dominance in Central Asia coincided with internal troubles, as then the king Lang Darma was assassinated and his succession was disputed. In this power-struggle a general of the Dro clan[60] (founders of the Alchi temples in the 12th c.) may have been involved, who had strongholds in Shangshung.[61] This man played a decisive role in the establishment of Buddhist kingdoms in the Western Himalaya from the 10th century onwards (see below).

The territory of the old kingdom of Shangshung was fragmented after the collapse of the Tibetan monarchy in 842. In the early 10th century Kyide Nyimagön (T. sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon, a member of the old dynasty founded a new state there. "*His three sons dPal gyon mgon, bKra śis mgon and lDe gtsug mgon,...divided their paternal intheritance and founded the kingdoms of Ladakh, Guge and Puraṇ (see below)*".[62]

Accordingly, from the 10th/11th century a side branch of the West Tibetan kingdom known as the 'Western Dominion' (T. sTod mNga'-ris) developed in Ladakh. Although the kingdom of

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[54] M. Klimburg 1982: 32.

Great and Little Bolor are also called Great and Little Tibet until present.

[55] Stein 1899; cited after Francke 1986: 34; for the pre-modern history of Kaśmīr see also Kulke 1981.

[56] M. Klimburg 1982: 32; cf also Beckwith 1987: 123-124. But Tibet loses to Chinese arms, during 753, when Chinese military governor invaded great Bolor, and it appears that the last Tibetan presence in the Pamir region had been rooted out in this phase (ibid: 141).

[57] M. Klimburg 1982: 25.

[58] Whitfield, Vol. 2: 341.

[59] Beckwith 1987: 155.

[60] A Dro can also be associated with a minister (T. *blon*), who was appointed to that position in the dragon year in the 8th century (ibid. 106).

[61] Ibid. 169.

[62] Petech 2003: 33.

Ladakh 'Maryül' (T. Mar yul, lit. 'Low Country') is historically a side branch of the Western Tibetan region of Ngari Khorsum (mNa' ris skor gsum), the geographical position, politics and economy made it a distinct unit in the history of the Himalayan countries.

From an account by Hui-ch'ao, a Korean pilgrim, who travelled from India to Central Asia in 727, we get a glimpse of that country, which – according to Petech[63] - perhaps also included Baltistan:

> "To the north-east of Kaśmīr, separated from it by fifteen days of march through the mountains, lie the kingdoms of Great P'o-lü [Po-li-lo/P'o-lü, according to Chinese sources; Bolor/ Bolūr according to Arab sources, Baltistan; in contrast to Little P'o-lü, used for Gilgit in Chinese sources], Yang-t'ung (Zhaṇ-Zhuṇ) and So-po-tz'u (?).[64] Those three kingdoms are under the suzerainty of the Tibetans. The clothings, language and customs are completely different ... There are monasteries and monks and the people venerate faithfully the three jewels ... the population consists of Hu, therefore they are believers".[65]

Petech thought that the term 'Hu' was applied to the Iranian populations of Central Asia in the 8th century and thus could have included the Dards of Ladakh. The account by Hui-ch'ao confirms that Great P'o-lü (Baltistan, in contrast to Little P'o-lü, which was used for Gilgit), and thus most probably also Ladakh located to the east Great P'o-lü were under suzerainty of Tibet in that period.[66]

According to the Persian geographical treatise, the *Hudūd al-'Ālam*[67] composed in 982/83, the people of Tibet were chiefly merchants, living in tents (P. *khaya*) and felt-huts (P. *khargah*), and all of them were 'idolaters'. He further stated that *"one of the marvels of Tibet is that whoever visits it, without any reason, becomes (of) smiling (countencance) and merry hear until he leaves that country"*.[68]

For the reconstruction of the cultural geography of medieval western Tibet, the regions denominated in the *Hudūd al-'Ālam* (*H.-'A.*) as the 'Transoxianian Marches', situated to the east of Transoxiana[69] and bordering Tibet and 'Hindustan', are of special importance. According to the Persian account this geographic area includes various regions and communities in the mountains - dominated by small kingdoms inhabited by Tibetans, Indians[70] and Turks, who were partly described as warlike - and was connected with Kaśmīr by trade routes.[71] At Vakhān, where Zoroastrians probably lived as well as some Tibetans, there is a village in which a gate stands on a mountain, called in Persian *dar-i Tubbat*: 'Gate of Tibet'.[72] Hsuen Tsiang (Si-yü-ki), describes Hun t'-to as the capital of Hu-mi (Vakhān): "*In the great vihāra of the convent there was*

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[63] Petech 1977: 10.

[64] Probably 'Tubbat' (i.e. Tibet) according to J. Ebert, verbal communication,XI.2007.

[65] Haneda Toru 1957: 618, cited after Petech 1977: 10.
(Hui-Ch'ao Wang –wu-T'ien-chu-kuo ch'uan, Haneda Toru, (ed), Kyoto 1957: 610-29).

[66] Cf. Petech 1977: 10.

[67] Hudūd al-'Ālam (ed. Bosworth) 1970: 92.

[68] Ibid: 92.

[69] The whole province of Transoxiana is called *bāzurgān*, i.e. 'place of merchants' (Ibid: 38) in the *H.-'A.*

[70] Bosworth 1970: 121.

[71] For a map see Ibid: 261.

[72] Ibid. 39.

was a canopy of gilt copper suspended over a stone statue of Buddha."[73] The text later says that 'Andrās', probably 'Dras' (with Buddhist images of Kaśmīr-style and a mounted horse-rider (Pl. 166; containting Tibetan inscriptions), near Śrinagar in the Indus basin on the road leading up to Gilgit, is *"... a town in which live Indians and Tibetans. From it to Kaśmīr is a journey of two days. ... the houses are all villages and stations of caravans..."*. It is probably the same town which al-Bīrūnī the Persian geographer and scientist in his famous account on India (*Ta'rik al-Hind, History of India*; c. 1030) said was the 'Gate of Kaśmīr', the last place in India.[74]

Bolor is also a part of the region of 'Transoxianian marches and its towns', in the *H.-'A.* described as a vast county where the king, the Bulūrīn-shāh declared that he was son of the sun, and that there was no salt except that imported from Kaśmīr.[75] Bolor (Bulūr) is differentiated from Bolorian Tibet, which is mentioned in the 'discourse on the country of Tibet'[76], a province of Tibet adjoining the borders with Bolor.[77] Bolorian Tibet corresponds to Great Bolor (Pu-lu in Chinese sources[78], Baltistān), as apposed to lesser Bolor (Gilgit).[79]

In general, the descriptions in the *H.-'A.* indicate a strong presence of Tibetans in various regions to the Northwest (such as Vakhān in the Hindu Kush), the West (Andrās on the border to Kaśmīr) and North of Bolorian Tibet/Ladakh dominated by the different political areas of Chīnistān and Hindūstān. Khotan - famous for raw silk (P. *qaz*) and jade - lying to the North of Bolorian Tibet and linked with the latter through trade routes –remained Buddhist up to the 10th century and may have been one of the most important areas of trans-cultural exchange between Western Tibet and Chinese dominated areas. The King of Khotan even had the title 'Lord of Turks and Tibetans' (P. *'azīm al-Turk wal-Tubbat*)[80]. The notion of sacred kingship in combination with a hybrid Buddhist pantheon may still have been a dominant feature in the religious culture and language of self-representation of the ruling elite up to the 10th century. The strong presence of (Buddhist) Turkic communities in the whole region including Kaśmīr can be considered as one of the major factors of the cultural homogeneity with regard to to eastern-Iranicate signs of rank up to the 12th century in Ladakh.[81] Kaśmīr[82] was linked with

[73] Stein, A. 'Serindia', 1921: 60-71 (Vakhān), and 'Innermost Asia', 1928, 863-71.; cited after Bosworth 1970: 367.

[74] Ibid. 370.

The spelling of the name Al-Bīrūnī, is in Bosworth 1970: Bīrūnī.

[75] Ibid. 121.

[76] Bosworth 1970: 93.

[77] The order of enumeration of the different provinces is not systematic, making the interpretation of the position and confines of the different regions difficult. Exemplary is the the descriptions of Rang-Rong in the east followed by Bolor in the extreme west, the former is described as a province of Tibet adjacent ot Hindustan and Chinistan, where peple live in tents, and Tubbat Khaqan levies poll-taxes (Bosworth 1970: 93; 257).

[78] Chavannes 1903: 149.

[79] Some authors include in Bolor Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit Panyal, Yasin Chitral and probably the tract now known as Kafististan, and exclude it from Baltistan (Bosworth 1970: 369).

[80] The king of Khotan appears as an autonomous ruler over a population costisting of Turks and Tibetans in the Chinese political area. Khotan had not lot its local dynasty also during the Tibetan ascendency. Khotan was an important trading post and famous for its production of silk and procucts of jade. (cf. Barthold, 234, 85). The 'Toghuzghuz country' mentioned in the Hudūd al-'Ālam is lying to the north between Kashgar and Khotan, (west of China and north of Tibet) are populated probably Uyghurs. In this region lie many Sogdian villages (Bosworth 1970: 266).

[81] P. Pal pointed on the presence of Turks in Kaśmīr (1982: 26) up to the time considered here (12th c.) and D. Klimburg-Salter (1989: 31) on the presence of Cańkuna, Lalitāditya's main advisor, who was a Turk, at the court of

Transoxiana and China by routes running through Bolor and Vakhān, which also reached Khotan where there were also many Sogdian villages.[83] The descriptions in the *H.-'A.* document this co-existence of Tibetan Buddhists, Turks/Uyghurs, Muslims and Zoroastrians in the various Trans-Himalayan regions, linked by trade and pilgrimage, which formed the basis for the fascinating cultural synthesis and hybrid religious landscape characteristic for the early art of Western Tibet and Upper Ladakh in particular.

After the collapse of the old Tibetan monarchy in the year 842, Ladakh was no longer connected politically with central Tibet, but probably maintained its trade relations. The cultural landscape of Ladakh, as described above, was a component of the Indo-Iranian borderland throughout these centuries. It had a distinctive Buddhist socio-political tradition when a new wave of 'Tibetization' of Ladakh started with the migration there of the ruling class from central Tibet in the aftermath of the foundation of the West Tibetan kingdom in the 10th century.

2.3. The Culture of the Indo-Iranian Borderland (ca.700 - 1200)

Due to its geographic position, Western Tibet and, above all, 'Tibetized' Ladakh, had close contacts with the Eastern Iranian and Iranicate-Buddhist world throughout history. "*Kaśmīr was around 1000 one of the places where Buddhism profoundly prospered. Its geographical situation, at the boundaries of India, of Persia and of Central Asia, was destining it to play a great role in the spreading of Buddhism*".[84]

Gilgit and Baltistan (today denominated as the 'Northern Areas' of Pakistan) together with the Pamirs formed a corridor between India and Central Asia as well as between Northwest India and Iran, partially leading through Kaśmīr. The region of Gilgit and the valley of Swāt (probably the Indian Uḍḍiyāna)[85] were important centres of Buddhism. During the period when Ladakh had close ties with the kingdoms of Khotan and Bolor (now Gilgit and Baltistan) in particular, Tibetans in Upper Ladakh were most probably receptive to the Buddhist art and royal symbolism dominant at this time in Bolor (cf. 7.3).

The following survey aims at presenting some of the findings of the scientific evidence of this cultural zone of transmission which are relevant for the reconstruction of the cultural environment of Alchi painting from the 11th to 13th century.

2.3.1. Kingdoms and Buddhist Statelets in the Northern Areas of Pakistan ('Greater Kaśmīr') and Ladakh

The Himalaya range of mountains separates Tibet from India, but in the west there are many corridors through which strong influence by the Kuṣāṇs, Eastern Iranians, Turks, Indians as

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Kārkota kings in the early eighth century according to the *Rājataraṅgiṇi*. "*He is considered to have been an important patron of Buddhist art*".

[82] According to the Hudūd al-'Ālam Qashmir/Kaśmīr is a large and pleasant land with numerous merchants, its king depends on the Raja of Qinnauj and possesses many idol-temples to which the hindus come on pilgrimage (Cf. Bosworth 1970: 92).

[83] Albērūnī [*Ta'rik al-Hind*, History of India], (see below) describes the cultural landscape as follows: "*Kashmīr lies on a plateau surrounded by high inaccessible mountains. The south and east of the country belong to the Hindus, the west to the various kings, the Bolar-Shāh and the Shugnan-Shāh, and the more remote parts up to the frontiers of Badhakhshān, to the Wakhān-shāh. The north part of the east of the country belong to the Turks of Khotan and Tibet*" (Sachau 2002: 193).

[84] Naudou 1980: 2.

[85] The location of Uḍḍiyāna (probably Swāt) is much disputed (see on this topic Naudou 1980: 35).

well as Muslim invaders reached that area.[86] Across the Pamirs the most direct trade routes between India and Central Asia ran: "*... geographically and culturally, the three subcontinents of South, West and Central Asia all meet in the Pamir. Accordingly, this high mountainous region may be considered Asia's most prominent meeting place or frontier area, depending on one's perspective, deserving its haughty Persian epithet bām-e dunyā or 'the roof of the world'.*"[87] And as M. Klimburg put it, defining this cultural zone as follows:

> „From the historical viewpoint, the West Asian cultural sphere once included Iranian-dominated areas north of the Hindu Kush such as Baktria, Transoxania, Sogdiana, and Ferghana. Iranian medieval traditions have denominated this Eastern Iranian frontier region in Central or Inner Asia as Turan to distinguish it from Iran proper. Central Asia also includes this region, especially since sucessive migration of Turco-mongol peoples have changed its ethnic character".[88]

The trade routes across those mountains furthered the diffusion of Buddhism into Central and East Asia and they aslo led to the development of strong Buddhist centres in Gilgit and in the Swāt valley. As M. Klimburg stated, "*Only substantial income from trade would have induced the local communities to take responsibility for the construction and upkeep of bridges, ferries, and galleries inside gorges, and for the creation of inspiring Buddhist monuments.*"[89] Buddhist rock sculptures and engravings at Gilgit, Skardu and in the Swāt valley[90], in Ladakh and Zanskar[91], Sogdian inscriptions and Buddhist stelae of various periods attest to the importance of the Upper Indus, Gilgit and Ladakh as significant areas of transmission of goods as well as ideas and concepts carried by merchants and monks.

The Swāt valley in particular, probably the ancient Uḍḍiyāna, and the Gilgit area called Drusha [T. 'Bru zha] in ancient Tibetan texts, were also famous for non-Buddhist, local traits of protector deities, magic traditions and occult forces such as the cult of the *dākinīs* and local tutelary gods. According to Hsuen-tsang (Xuanzang), they induced local Buddhist monks to adopt some concepts in their 'art of using charms' which were "*diametral to any form of higher learning*".[92] Padmasambhava - the great master of enchantments and supernatural events - is believed to have been born there in a miraculaous way.[93]

"*In Gilgit (Bru-zha) some of the features of Tibetan pre-Buddhist religious (later referred to as Bon), especially those relating to its systematization under Iranian and Buddhist influcence, may have*

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[86] During the time of Francke, the pioneer of Tibetan studies in the Western Transhimalaya, the interrelation between these regions received a wider recognition, but currently this fascinating cultural area of transmission is seldom a subject of serious scholarly debate. Unfortunately, no general reconstruction of the history of the Western Transhimalaya exists to date. Also the ethno-history of Ladakh and its early political situation and institutions prior to the establishment of the Central Tibetan royal dynasty is hardly studied.

[87] M. Klimburg 1982: 25.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid: 32.

[90] Tucci 1958: 279-328

[91] Cf. Francke (1914) *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 2 vols, Calcutta; Linrothe, A Summer in the Field, *Orientations, 30, no. 5, May*, 1999: 57-67.

[92] Beal 1968: I, 120; cited after M. Klimburg 1982: 30.

[93] M. Klimburg 1982: 3.

developed."[94] A comparable phenomenon is observed in the survival of ancient pre-Buddhist traditions and diverse local archaic features such as protector spirits, which are still practiced in other comparatively small and inaccessible areas in Jammu-Kaśmīr and Himachal Pradesh.[95] Images of riderless horses at Thalpan (on the Indus), Chaghdo (Baltistan, c. 10th c.), Dras (Ladakh, including Tibetan inscriptions; cf. Pl. 166, Pl. 167) and in the Western Himalaya may be evidence of common traits of this pre-Buddhist stratum and local deities. They were integrated into the Buddhist political-religious system in the Baltistan-Ladakh region before the period of Tibetization of Ladakh in the 10th/11th centuries (cf. chapter 7.1).

The 5th to the 8th century, and in some areas even later, saw the period of the great flourishing of Buddhism in the area, which then was largely integrated in the cultural world of Kaśmīr, with the Patola/Palola Shāhi probably representing the most prominent dynasties of the region.[96] These rulers were known for the splendour of the court, and they spread of Iranicate symbolism, a characteristic feature in the later temples at Alchi. The luxury art shown by the Buddhist bronzes produced under the rule of that dynasty (featuring proud donors with arms and a specific attire with naturalistic details: sumptuous costumes, pearl necklaces, and richly decorated crowns etc.; (cfr. Pl. 225, Pl. 226), attest to the economic importance of the region. The local monastic institutions profited from sponsorship by the local nobility and the many traders and Buddhist pilgrims. The stylistic characteristics of the locally found or represented luxury items and in particular of textiles bear evidence to a direct connection across the Pamirs between the Sogdian towns and the political and cultural centres of northern Pakistan as well as Ladakh and Kaśmīr.

The material culture of the different Shāhi dynasties such as the Patola or Palola Shāhi in the Gilgit area bears a strong resemblence to that depicted in the early Buddhist art of Ladakh, as first observed by Pal.[97] The Buddhist culture in Northern Pakistan (in particular stone images along the Indus[98]), Ladakh (Mulbek, Dras, Shey[99]) and Western Tibet[100], as well as new findings in Baltistan, provide important evidence for cultural interactions between Western Tibet and Baltistan as late as the 10th/11th century.[101]

Furthermore, many rock inscriptions provide not only epigraphic references to various early hill states and small kingdoms, but also glimpses of the early cultural/political systems with their models to manipulate power and authority (see below). One of the inscriptions located near the Indus-bridge at Thalpan, mentions Vaiśravaṇasena as 'glorious', the ruler of Chilās (4th/5th century)[102], and praises him as "*the subduer of enemies and great king of the land of the Daradas*".[103] The Hatun rock inscriptions in Hunza contain a record of a local ruler, referring to the reign of the Patoladeva Shāhi; he bears the title Shāhanshāi, which "*...may suggest the*

[94] Ibid.

[95] See also Jahoda 2006.

[96] Cacopardo/Cacopardo 2001: 27.

[97] Pal 1982: 28; cf. also D.Klimburg-Salter 1987.

[98] Cf. Hauptmann 2004.

[99] Cf. Snellgrove 1977, figs. 3-5.

[100] Jahoda/Papa-Kalantari, in preparation.

[101] Cf. Also Hauptmann 2005.

[102] V. Hinüber 1989: 59-60.

[103] V. Hinüber 2004: 102.

presence of certain Iranian traditions in the Ishkoman Valley probably brought by immigrants from Wakhan."[104]

The situation in the regions of ancient Drusha after the collapse of the Tibetan empire in Central Asia in the 9th century is difficult to reconstruct. According to Jettmar, with refernce to the short-lived Chinese and Tibetan occupation of Gilgit, the Darada Shāhi rose to power as robbers. "*The Tibetans had local supporters and dependants who previously had caused great embarassment to the Chinese occupants posted in the Gilgit valley. They systematically robbed the caravans, which brought supplies from Kaśmīr. The Darada Shāhi participated in this rewarding cooperation, thus increasing their own power. In this way they filled the gap left by the Tibetan retreat and became lords of Gilgit, supported by the remaining Tibetan troops and dignitaries*".[105]

After the defeat of the Palola dynasty,[106] which probably led to a temporary decline of Buddhism in the region Chilas/Gilgit, a new and illiterate ethnic interlude took place as documented in countless rock engravings, which even betray anti-Buddhist attitudes. Their status insignia are ceremonial axes and sun (disc?) or, rather, shields. Interestingly, the axe is also found as a status symbol of the aristocratic rulers depicted in the Alchi Dukhang. "*Möglicherweise bildet sich nun die politische Struktur heraus, die zu den bekannten Talrepubliken und Kleinfürstentümern (mit meist turkstämmiger Oberschicht) im Indus und Gilgitgebiet führte. Münzen oder Inschriften fehlen für diesen Zeitabschnitt. Auch ist die Quellenlage ansonsten eher bescheiden*".[107]

The ruling elites in Baltistan remained Buddhist[108], as documented by both a few Tibetan sources and local historiographies[109] and scarce artistic remains. These small kingdoms may have adopted the earlier Iranicate cultural traditions and the *lingua franca* of status culture in the region. Their rulers were probably Buddhists of Iranian/Turcic or Tibetan ethnic background.[110] There are Muslim-Tibetan communities in Baltistan up to present.

The possiblility of a Tibetan ethnic background was recognised by Beckwith, who argued that, „*...of all the Central Asian territory conquered by the once powerful Tibetan Empire such as the Lop Nor region, ...and parts of the Pamirs, remained under local Tibetan control*".[111] It is likely, therefore, that the Western Himalaya regions kept close contact and cultural exchange with the statelets in Northern Pakistan (Pamirs, Gilgit, etc.), in particular with Baltistan, after the defeat of the Palola Shāhi. In particular, the Dards of Ladakh may have had exchange with their neighbours in Baltistan.

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[104] Tsuchiya 1999: 359; the auther further proposes that this title is close to the Iranic 'Shahanoshao' appearing in Kanishka's gold coins.

[105] Jettmar, 1996; he further states "*They were attractive to the local nobility because via their ancestral lands in the Nilam valley they could direct war parties and whole armies against Kasmir, a land of fabulous riches.*"

[106] The Followers of the Palola Shāhi, the Kabul Shāhi and the Hindu Shāhi, shifted to the west, one of their centres was Kabul; there is also numismatic evidence of their reign (cf. Abdur Rehman, 'The last two dynasties of the Śāhis', Islamabad 1979). I am endebted to Dr. Martin Bemmann (University of Heidelberg) for this information. Cf. also Kuwayama 1994 on the history of the Turk Shāhi and Kabul Shāhi.

[107] Dr. M. Bemmann (Arbeitsstelle der Kommission der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 'Felsbilder und Inschriften am Karakoram-Highway') verbal communication: X. 2007.

[108] Artistic remains in Baltistan can be traced back to the 15th century: images of Bodhisattva on the walls near Skardu wer patronized by the last Buddhist king (Bemmann, verbal communication, 20.XII.2007).

[109] Cf. also Francke 1992, vol. I: 102 ff.

[110] The dominance of Buddhist beliefs in that area is indicated also by John Biddulph, who in his *'Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh'* claims that before the 13th century, when the Makpons ('commander-in-chief' in Tibetan) usurped the sovereignty, Baltistan was Buddhist. However the written records are not extant anymore (Biddulph 1971: 144).

[111] Beckwith 1987b: 172.

The power struggle in the Pamirs and the growing impact of the Muslim advance might have weakened the network of trade and pilgrimage routes across the Pamirs and throughout the Gilgit-region. This may have led to a migration of Buddhists of Khotan and communities along these routes to Kaśmīr and and the Western Trans-Himalaya. However, the Islam invasion did not profoundly affect the communities in that high mountainous region for many centuries, as they were able to maintain their specific local cultural identity, partially polytheistic and Buddhist identity for many centuries to come.[112] Furthermore, Beckwith believed that the Tibetan Buddhists maintained some political and cultural influence over the region even after the disintegration of the Tibetan empire in the 9th century. All this helped to spread power concepts of Buddhist rulers and also the hybrid pantheon in Iranicate-Central Asian cultural and religious traditions by intermediaries into the local Buddhist statum in the Western – Transhimalaya. Some of these concepts presumably adopted and passed-on by the Palola-Shāhi can be traced back to the courtly Buddhist art of the Hindu Kush (Bāmiyān, 'Dokhtar-e Noshirwān'[113]) and of Sogdia (Pendjikent, Balalyk-Tepe etc.) in the west. They can be discerned in the art of Ladakh up to the 12th century in the east (cf. 7.3.-7.5)

The cultural centre 'Kaśmīr', not only affected by the Muslim advance but also by the Hindu revival, continued to be important while some of its artistic schools may have looked for and found new sponsors in the Western Himalaya, as shown by the murals at Alchi and other places.

2.3.2. The 'Dardic Communities' in Ladakh and Historic North-west India

As just stated, courtly images at Alchi might reflect an autochtonous, pre-Tibetan cultural stratum closely related to the princely statelets of the Dardic linguistic zone to the west of Ladakh.[114] The Dards of Ladakh belonged to the dominant ethnic community in the Baltistan-Gilgit-Ladakh area. The Buddhists among them, known as 'Brog-pa (Drogpa; a term used for Buddhist Dards),[115] may have had a specific affinity to their neighbours in northern Pakistan who had strong eastern Iranicate features.

Status seeking hunting and giving of 'feasts of merit' as well as shamanistic rites my well have been the main characteristics of the culture of the Dards as suggested by Jettmar[116], but probably only after the decline of Buddhism, i.e. in the centuries after Islamization. Jettmar also

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[112] The most outstanding example is the long survival of the culture of the Kafirs in the Hindu Kush in northeastern Afghanistan and Chitral (Pakistan), cf. M. Klimburg 1999.

Ancient customs survived in the Hindu Kush also among the Shina-speaking people (Northern areas, Chila, Gilgit, etc.) have been studied by Bidduph (1971: 91) who documented the customs related to ancient weapons such as battle-axes among various tribes. Axes were produced on occasion of weddings and are part of the ceremonial up to present (verbal communcation, Bemmann, 2007). The axes are of different shapes according to localty, some of them being inlaid with silver of having engraved patterns (cf. Biddulph 1971: figures on p. 90); the similarities with the symbols of status at Alchi are striking.

[113] The small cave is north of Bāmiyān, Afghanistan, therein a painting of a complex architectureal setting is depicted, containing the image of an enthroned monarch, framed by various animals, probably alluding to the aspect of the deity as creator god (Cf. M. Mode 1996; as well as M. Mode 1992 regarding thee identification); cf. also chapter 'drinking scene'. Cf. also Godard (et alia) 1928; Girshman 1962: 318.

[114] Papa-Kalantari 2007a; based on previous suggestions by Pal 1982; However, Pal did not define the political and cultural context of this exchange.

[115] Brog-pa is also used by Ladakhi for the Dard neighbours, irrespective of whether they are Muslim or Buddhist (Vohra 1989: 37).

[116] Jettmar 1980: 69.

assumed that the popular beliefs of Gilgit and Swāt had a direct influence on Tibet.[117] Adding to this idea, even the pre-Buddhist royal traditions in Shangshung may have developed in close relationship with eastern Iranian royal customs of the Dardic nobility, as evidenced in the regalia mentioned in scriptural sources.[118] Thus, the Dards may have been important transmitters of ideas and traditions.

These Dards or Daradas, speakers of the northwest Indian Prakrit language called Dardic by Morgenstierne[119], must have been the leading ethnic community in the large Gilgit/Chilas area. Therefore, this large area has been proposed by some as 'Dardistan', as a distinct ethnic unit with a certain cultural homogenity.[120] However, in literary texts the Daradas were associated with different ethnic groups.[121] The Daradas have been mentioned by Indian and European authors also in relation to Kaśmīr and Ladakh (see above).

Early information on the Dards is available already,and Classical Greek and ancient Sanskrit sources were already documenting their existence as an ethnic group from antiquity: *„Herodotus, providing a list of the ethnic groups in the seventh satrapy (Gandhāra) of the Achaemenian empire, includes the Daradas as being equally subject to tribute*".[122] They were known to Ptolemy, Strabo, and Pliny as Derdai, Darada, or Dardae- and to Pliny as the possessors of significant gold resources: "*fertilissimi sint auri Darde ('the country of the Dards produces much gold')*".[123] We know that gold was and still is found in the upper Indus valley and was traded by this people.

In the Mahābhārata, we find the Daradas as one of the various tribes residing between Mt. Meru and Mt. Mandara, bringing sacks full of gold as a tribute; they were also appreciated for their martial qualities.[124] The Daradas are also mentioned in documents on Indian Buddhism, e.g. in the Candragarbhasūtra, translated in the 6th century by Narandrayasas who was from Uḍḍiyāna. The mentioned source also enumerates the various protective deities in the region of the Dards (Ch. T'a-lo-t'o), who specifically protect the various kingdoms and their prosperity.[125] The first translator of this sutra from the 3rd century, the Chinese, Tchou Fa-hou, tells us that

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[117] Indeed, local female deities, and the close relation to the donors and kings recall the female spirits riding wild animals in Swāt.

[118] Vitali (1996: 162) lists among the insignia of the kings of Guge the 'Khrom (i.e. Iranic) lightning crown with white horns' mentioned in the Ngari Gyalrab, which he compares with the charu (T. *bya.ru)* traditionally worn by the Shangshung kings and also by Bon masters. Vitali assumes that the charu (T. *bya.ru*) was of Iranic origin. Infact, crowns with animal heads on the top are a feature found in donor depictions of bronzes from Gilgit (cf. Cat. 1982: fig. 10); the attribute was possibly tranferred into Buddhist iconography, as a head-emblem of specific deities; such as the attribute of the horse in the crown of a Hayagrīva from Swāt (?), cf. Cat 1982: fig. 20).

[119] Morgenstierne 1973.

[120] Dani (1989); I am endebted to Dr. Jürgen Frembgen (Museum für Völkerkunde, München) for this information and the discussions on this fascinating issue.

Keay, J. (1993: 23 ff.) in his *'The Gilgit Game, The Explorers of the Western Himalayas 1865 95'* (Karachi: Oxford Universtiy Press) described the romantisation of 'Dardistan' and the admiration of its unique tribal 'Indo-Aryan' culture by 19th century Western explorers and scientists as well as the apocalyptic vision of their decline in the eyes of Dr. Leitner who visited Gilgit in 1866: "*...the fairies and prophetesses of Dardistan are silent, the Tham of Hunza no longer brings down the rain, the family axes are broken, the genealogists have been destroyed and the sacred drum is no longer heard....history now marches rapidly towards the common disaster. Finis Dardarum*" (Ibid. 29-40).

[121] See also R. Vohra 1989.

[122] R. Vohra 1989: 6.

[123] M. Klimburg 1982: 29.

[124] Vohra 1989: 7.

[125] Ibid: 9.

„...the Buddha, ravaged with joy, emitted rays which lit up all the four regions of the world and innumerable Buddhas manifested themselves".[126] In the territory of the Daradas 15 Buddhas appeared this way as mentioned in this source. According to Rohit Vohra, this enumeration is interesting insofar as the mentioned places are on the routes along which Buddhism travelled to Central Asia and China passing through the Indus territory and then over the Pamirs.[127]

> However, "the extension of the Dards into Ladakh has been taken up by certain authors, but as yet we we possess no overwhelming evidence to connect the Daradas of antiquity with the ethnic group present identifyable as the Dards. At different times the terminology Darada could have been used as a geographical designation. Thus Daradadesa of Sanskrit texts, Bolor of the Muslim sources, P'o-lü of the Chinese annals referred to a region where several ehnic goupes could have mingled. A precise geographical delimination of the area is not possible over such a large span of time. It no doubt changed its character depending upon the centralising tendency under a powerful ruler, while the very nature of terrain was more conducive to the existence of valley republics. Thus when the central control lapsed fissiparous tendencies manifested themselves leading to fission in isolated mountain valleys where local rule of chieftains held sway".[128]

With regard to the religion of the ancient Dardic populations in Ladakh (mainly in the area of Dras and Da), Francke suggests that *„...it was probably a form of Buddhism which was prevalent in the days of emigration from Gilgit, the many stone images without date which are found all over Ladakh testify to this, and many of them show a particularly strong resemblance to these found about Gilgit"*.[129] More recent studies on the religious history are by Vohra, who also assumes that the inhabitants of the Buddhist Dard villages might have migrated for different reasons and not only from one place, though perhaps they originated from the area around Gilgit ('Brog-skad). "*They settled for some time in different areas in Baltistan and Nubra before finally raching mDa, Garkun or Hanu*".[130]

2.3.3. The Dardic and Turkic Princes in Northern Pakistan

Some time between the 5th and the 8th century the Patola or Palola Shāhi dynasty established itself, but it was probably only one of the dynasties that the Kaśmīri called 'kings of the Dards'.[131]

After the disintegration of the Palola Shāhi dynasties in the 8th century, Darada is mentioned sporadically. This corresponds to the time of the Tibetan supremacy in the region of

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[126] Levi 1905: 282 284; cited after Vohra 1989: 9.

[127] Vohra, ibid.

[128] Ibid: 10.

[129] Francke 1999: 31-32. Francke (ibid.) recorded a song of the Dards in Ladakh, describing the the route of immigration from Gilgit, and the entourage of the 'Lion-king of Gilgit' during a feast before a hunting in which men with arrow and bow appear, reflecting the martial, protective culture also observable in the donor depictions of Alchi.

[130] Vohra 1989: 18.

[131] Cacopardo/Cacopardo 2001: 91. They consider reasonable to suppose that the name of the Palola is reflected in the geographic terms Po-lü, Po-lu-lo, Po-lu-lai used by the Chinese authors of the Tang period, a term which probably corresponds to Bolor, Balur or Bilaur of the Muslim sources.

Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit between the 8th and 9th century. Following the disintegration in the 9th century, the Darada may have once again asserted themselvs.[132]

Accordingly, in the 11th and 12th centuries, the Darada chiefs began to appear as powerful rulers: the *H.-'A.* [133] includes, among the regions of the world a Bolorian Tibet (the Chinese P'o-liü), which *"...is a vast country (P. [Persian] nahiyati-st azim) with a king who declares that he is the son of the sun (P. ma farzand-i āftāb-im)...He is called Bulurin Shāh".*[134] In Kalhaṇa's (Kalyāna) *Rājataraṅgiṇī* [135] frequent Dardic raids into Kaśmīr are described. As Jettmar states, "The lords of the Daradas and those ruling as their north-eastern neighbours were integrated in the same tradition, and used the same Iranian title 'Shāhi'.

The 'Shaka itinerary' describes Chilas as a *„...'great city' with many buildings, apparently a part of the same Buddhist kingdom as Gilgit...this kingdom is most probably the same as the one mentioned by al-Bīrūnī (Ta'rik al-Hind; History of India], written in the first half of the 11th century, who names 'Gilgit, Aswira (Astor?) and Shiltas' as towns of a single state whose 'king has the title Bhatta-Shāh' and whose people, the Bhattavaryan, plagued Kaśmīr with their inroads"*[136], *"... that these people were none but the ones that the Kaśmīr called Darada has become clear since Jettmar".*[137]

According to Albērūnī, to the west of Kaśmīr[138] one finds 'various kings, the Bolar-shāh and the Shugnān-shāh' and, in the more remote parts up to the frontiers of Badakhshān, the 'Wakhān-Shāh'.[139] The north and part of the east of the country belong to the Turks of Khotan and Tibet. Albērūnī [*Ta'rik al-Hind*, History of India] described the cultural situation at the borders of Kaśmīr and the dominance of Turcic tribes as follows:

> „The river Sindh rises in the montains Unang in the territory of the Turks, which you can reach in the following way: -Leaving the ravine by which you enter Kashmīr and entering the plateau, then you have for a march of two more days on your left the montains of

[132] Vohra 1989: 15.

[133] Hudud a-Alam [P. Hudūd al-'Ālam] (1970: 121); cited after Dani 1989: 30.

[134] It is possible that his sign of sovereignty where shields and probably also the axe, both are depicted in stone carvings of the dynasties, which followed the Palola dynasty (cf. Jettmar 1996: 84).

A curious legend related to the descendence of this king is recorded by Hsuen-Tsiang: *"A Chinese princess betrothed to the king of Persia (Po-la-ssu) was on her way to join her fiancé. For fear of some troubles which brocke out at theat time the princess was placed on some inaccessible peak and there became enceinte from a knigth who, at noon, came down from the sun. The attendants dared not continue their jouney whith the princess which remained on the paeak and became the founder of the local dynasty...which is known under tha name of Bolor"* (Bosworth 1979: 370); cf. also Marquart, *Das Reich Zabul*, 251.

[135] Kalhaṇa names several Darada rulers and the military conflicts in which they were engaged: *Acamaṅgala (Rājataraṅgiṇī viii: 167)* during the reign of *Ananta* of Kaśmīr: 1028-1063, who had a victory over the Dards, *Vidhyadhara Shāhi* during the reign of *Harṣa*, end of 11th centruy, Jagaddala during Uccala, *Maṇidhara* (*Rājataraṅgiṇī*, viii, 614) during the reign of *Sussala*, at the beginning of the 12th c, and *Yaśodhara* up to the mid of the 12th century (*Rājataraṅgiṇī*, viii, 2454 ff).

[136] Sachau 2002 (Albērūnī): 195; Albērūnī's work *Ta'rikh al-Hind* (The History of India) is an account of relgion, philosophy, literature and geography of India, written about A.D. 1030. He was a born 973f in the territory of modern Khiva, which was under the dominion of the Ghaznavids. Albērūnī lived in the time of Mahmud of Ghazni and his son and successor, Ma'sud, but there is no evidence that he was in the service of the state or court in Ghazna (Sachau 2002: preface XIII).

[137] Cacopardo/Cacopardo 2001: 92.

[138] The south and east of the country belong to the Hindus accoring to the Persian geographer. Sachau (Albērūnī) 2002: 193.

[139] Ibid.

> Bolor and Shamilān [name of the landscape of the Upper Indus between Shatial and Chilas[140]], Turkish tribes who are called *Bhattavaryān*. Their king has the title *Bhatta-Shāh*. Their towns are Giglit, Aswira and Shiltās and their language is Turkish. Kashmir suffers much from their inroads".[141]

Concerining the linguistic and ethnic characteristics of the Kaśmīri people, Varahāmihira, the Indian astronomer, who lived around 500 A.D., mentions the Daradas living on the border of Kaśmīr. The latter may constitute a linguistic substratum of people who speak Kaśmīr today.[142]

Kalhaṇa reports in detail the later Darada, such as the *Bhattavaryān*, the brother of the former King Harṣa of Kaśmīr (around 1100) who took assistance from the Dard ruler Jagaddala.[143] In the 12th century various struggels for power with the Kaśmīri are reported. So, thus the landed gentry must have had a considerable amount of military power.

Stein[144] even connected the name of Bhatta Shāh with the ethnonym Bhutta or Buta applied to Western Tibetans[145] and Balties.

However, the materials at present available do not allow postulating a continuity from the Buddhist dynastic art of the Palola Shāhi to the later kingdoms and the one of the Bhattashāh, although the Shāhi title may be reflected in the name. The local communites after the Palola were illiterate (partly anti-Buddhist) and their chieftans left stone-images along the Indus featuring horse-riders, shields and axes as signs of sovereignty (cf. Pl. 168). These symbols of power were proably the models for the later (from the 9th/10th c. onwards) Buddhist rulers of small kingdoms of Dardic and Turcic or even Tibetan origin, who were active in this region after the defeat of the Palola and sponsored monuments.[146] Some artistic remains survived from this period bearing striking similarities to the courtly art at Alchi.[147] The strong Sodgdian merchant class was in competition with the local aristocracy and active all over in the region, from Samarkand to Lhasa - with its distinctive martial and courtly arts.[148] All these signs of power were integrated into the refined Buddhist religio-political visual statements of the aristocratic elite. The evolutionary history of this religio-political landscape documents the complex stratigraphy of dynasties and local rulers of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Geography and trade as well as the presence of Buddhism in this region dictated to a certain extent a cultural homogeneity in this region, as reflected in the early courtly art of Lower Ladakh.

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[140] Cf. Jettmar 1985: 28.

[141] Cf. Sachau 2002: 194-95.

[142] Kak 1933: 11. Concerning the linguistic substratum of the Kaśmīr-speaking people Kak reports, analyzing medieval sources: "...*the (valley is) ethnologically ... distinct not only from the Indians of the plains, but also from Gujars, Khakhas, and Bombas, who inhabit the neighbouring hills. The substratum of their language, after its Sanskrit superstructure has been removed, appears to be akin to Dardic, which under various names and forms is spoken by the Kanjutis of Hunza and Nagar, Kafirs of the Karakoram, and other tribes inhabiting the great mountain barrier which separates North-western India from Central Asia*" (Ibid: 4).

[143] *Rājataraṅgiṇī viii: 209; cf.* Vohra 1989:16.

[144] Stein 1928: 7-9.

[145] For the question of this word for 'Tibetans' also cf. Emerson 1984: 95-133.

[146] Dr. Bemmann, verbal communication 11.2007.

[147] Interestingly, comparable images of sovereignty can also be found at Lalung in Spiti, adopted by the local rulers in the 12th century.

[148] M. Klimburg 1982: 27.

The concepts of state, the legitimacy of the Turkic dynasties in Transoxania (Western Turkestan) and the relations with the inhabited oasis states dominated by Sogdians have been studied by P. Finke. The Sogdians were in a vassal-like relationship to their Turkic masters, who mostly preferred to remain nomads living far away in the steppes. "*In fact, they very much profited from their favoured position as merchants and cultural brokers during the Turkic perod. The 'Pax Turcica' within an empire extending from the Caspain Sea to the borders of China, meant a great increase in trade opportunities, in which the Sogdian took a prime position*".[149]

Finke also analysed the changing ideologies concerning the relationship between the sovereign and their subjects, partly derived from the idea of the 'heavenly mandate'.[150]

> "The outline of this state had a lasting influence on the history of Central Asia and it served as a model for all succeeding polities. The rule of the sacred clan was partly legitimised by the so-called cult of heaven (*tengri*), with a single supreme deity that had granted the emporor the power to subdue others. At the same time, the early encroachment of other religions, in particular Buddhism, Nestorianism and Manichaesim, was also having an impact. The Sogdian were again important brokers in this respect.[151]

A comparable situation of cultural amalgamation of Tibetan linguistic and political origins and local Eastern-Iranian/ Turkic 'culture of power' – with a powerful position of the clan-leader - may have existed also in Western Tibet.It probably adopted the systems of legitimation and patterns of the earlier dynasties in the Western-Transhimlaya (Palola and later princely rulers). These systems were adapted to the local situation and lifestyles and accepted by its population, which may also have been adopted by the aristocratic rulers such as the Dro clan, who founded the Alchi temples. This concept of relation between ruler and its subjects stands in contrast to the systems of legitimation of the royal lamas in Guge, who were mainly based on the concept of the 'King of Religion' (S. *dharmarāja)*- referring to older models of sacral royalty during the time of the old Tibatan monarchy- and the close relation to Buddhist institutions.[152]

This political and cultural situation of 'transition and oscillation'[153] and small statelets ruled by local chieftains in Baltistan and Gilgit may have also characterized the early history (prior to the 'Tibetization') of Ladakh, when a member of the old Tibetan dynasty retired to Western Tibet and built up a new state there in the early 10th century. The territory of the old kingdom of Shangshung was „... *practically abandoned to itself after the collapse of the monarchy in 842*".[154]

The symbols of authority of their aristocratic allies may reflect this cultural and political situation, comparable to that of the Shāhi-rulers and later local rulers of probably Dardic and Turkic origin in Baltistan, but no artistic remains are extant to underpin this hypothesis.

Francke mentions a small ruler of a Dard colony in Khalatse. He thought he had identified several Dard castles, with one of them possibly situated near Khalatse. These remains would attest to a somewhat higher level of autochtonous culture in the region. These local authorities

[149] Fincke 2006: 112.

[150] Ibid.110.

[151] Ibid.113.

[152] Cf. also Ramble 2006: 149.

[153] These terms are adopted from Jettmar 1989b: 65.

[154] Petech 2003: 33.

may have co-existed with the Buddhist rulers in the region, who were subordinate to the king of Leh from the 10th century onwards.[155]

The members of the famous Dro clan at Alchi, represented as proud feast-givers in a distinctive Eastern-Iranian manner, may have signalled - with Western Tibet as their possible home country - a distinctive autochtonous identity vis-à-vis the Tibetan style descendants of the former monarchic rulers who dominated Ladakh from the 11th century onwards. The strong and lasting courtly and religious culture and language of power of the Indo-Iranian borderland is reflected in these paintings, which contrast to the signs of power of the 'Religious Kings' of the Guge kingdom (cf. chapter 7.2.). Thus, the pictorial evidence of donor depictions in the early temples of Alchi are an important source of the visual idoms and signs of sovereignty of the small Iranicate-Buddhist statelets in the 12th century and the changing socio-political situation up to the 13th century.

2.4. The Foundation Period of Buddhist Kingdoms in the Western Trans-Himalaya (10th c.)

After the collapse of the empire of 'Great Tibet', when Tibet was politically split and was going through a dark period, temples were closed, texts were hidden and Buddhist masters went into exile.[156] However, in the western regions, due to the initiative of exponents of the old dynasty and powerful patrons, who had founded there a number of monasteries and religious monuments, a period of cultural and economic prosperity started from the 10th century onwards. This period came to be known as the 'second diffusion of Buddhism' (T. *phyi dar*).

Kyide Nyimagön (T. Nyi ma mgon) and scions of the Dro clan founded the Purang-Guge kingdom in the middle of the 10th century in the region of Purang (T. Pu hrang, Western Tibet/ China), south of the holy mountain Kailash.[157] The following generation is represented by Yeshe Ö (947-1024) who ruled the whole western Himalayan region including parts of Upper Ladakh. At that time the centre of the kingdom was moved from Purang to Guge, with Tholing (mTho-

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[155] Francke, 1906: 238; for further early studies on the Dards in Inner Asia and Ladakh see: Francke A.H., 'The Dards at Khalatse in Western Tibet', *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1, 19, 413-19;

An important survey on the Dardic culture is by Clarke, G. 1977: 'Who are the Dards? A review of the ethnographic literature of the north-western Himalayas'. *Kailash* V/4. Further works on this issue are by Müller-Stellrecht, I. (1973) *Feste in Dardistan*, Wiesbaden Vohra, R. (1987) Ethno historicity of the Dards in Ladakh-Baltistan: Observations and Analysis, in Uebach, H./Panglung, J. eds, *Studia Tibetica, vol. 2*, Munich 529-46; Vohra, R. (1989) *The Buddhist Dards of Ladakh*, Ettelbruck;

Vohra, R. 1989a, *The religon of the Dards in Ladakh*, Ettelbruck; Dani A.H. (1989) *History of the Northern Areas of Pakistan*, Islamabad; Frembgen, J. 1985, *Zentrale Gewalt in Nager (Karakorum), Politische Organisationsformen, ideolgische Begründungen des Königtums und Veränderungen in der Moderne*. Beträge zur Südasienforschung, Südasien-Institut, Universität Heidelbert, Stuttgart; Jettmar, K. (1980) *Bolor and Dardistan*, Isalmabad; Jettmar, K, 1995, The Dards and connected problems: Giuseppe Tucci's last contribution, in B. Melasecchi (ed), *Giuseppe Tucci, nel centenario della nascita*, Rome: 35-54; Cacopardo & Caopardo (2001) *Gates of Peristan*, IsIAO, Rome.

[156] Stoddard 2004: 55. The destiny of Lang Darma and his two sons 'Od srung and Yum brtan is recorded in a prose by Nyang ral (Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, 1124-1192), 1988, *Chos 'byung Me tog snying po'i sbrang rtsi'i bcud*, Lhasa. „*The btsan po Glang Dar ma had two queens, elder and younger, but he was assassinated before seeing his sons, so they were left sadly, each one beeing guarded by her minister. The law of the Dharma, which was like a silk knot was untied. The golden yoke of the Royal Law was broken. The people of Tibet were like a sheef of barley untied. The great monk, Bran ka dPal gyi Yon tan was killed, so the Phya and g.Yang (gods) of Tibet were weakened. Sons did not listen to their fathers. Subjects did not listen to their lords. Servants did not listen to their masters. Tibet fell into splinters...*" (Nyang ral 1988: 446-447; cited after Stoddard 2004: 84).

[157] Luczanits 2004: 25.

gling) in the Sutlej canyon as the main capital.[158] The western Tibetan kings and their aristocratic allies propagated a specific type of Buddhism, which was also in opposition to previous indigenous tantric practices. They founded monasteries, temples and other religious monuments all over the western Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan region and animated the subjects in their domains to support the Buddhist establishments.[159]

The outstanding personalities were Yeshe Ö (T. Ye shes 'od, 959-1024), Rinchen Zangpo (T. Rin chen bzang po, 958-1055) and Atiśa (982-1054). Yeshe Ö, his grand nephews Changchub Ö (T. Byang chub 'od, r.ca. 1024-1057) and Phothrang Zhiba Ö (T. Pho brang Zhi ba 'od, who were active in the second half of the 11th century) and played leading roles as patrons.

> "The royal monk (Ye shes-'od) and the translator Rinchen Zangpo together embarked upon the foundation of a series of chapels (*lha khang*) and monasteries. In the same year 996 Ye shes-'od built Tholing (which became the national temple of Guge) and Tabo. Some years later Rinchen bzang po (who had an important school of translators) founded Nyarma in the early period the chief religious and cultural center of Maryul, while Khor re, Ye shs od's younger brother and successor build Kha char (Khojarnath) the main shrine of Purang. Ye shes 'od rules a sort of ecclesiastical principality comprising Guge and Spiti, under the suzerainty of the kings of Purang".[160]

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[158] Ibid: 27.

[159] Contemporary Ladakh borders Tibet to the east and Lahaul and Spit to the south, Kaśmīr to the west.

The following is a list of the major establishment of this period (10th – 13th century), which are referred to in the text. The regions are listed from east (south of the holy mountaing Kailash) to the West Kinnaur/Spiti, and then to the North Ladakh/Baltistan and the foundations there are given in roughly chronological sequence.

- Purang: with Khorchak (Kha char, Khojarnath) as the centre of the earliest period of the Purang-Guge kingdom (10th century). The temple at Khorchak is credited to Yeshe Ö; from this period are an elaborate wooden doorframe and remains of exquisite 10th/11th century wallpaintings (the latter are to my knowledge unpublished).

- Guge: with Tholing as the centre of the Guge-kingdom under Yeshe Ö (10th/11th century), Tsaparang, and minor foundations such as Mangnang (11th c.) and Dunkar (12th c.), as well as other little studied foundations along the Indus to the north of Guge in the region of Rutok (Cf. Gyalbo 2007).

- Kinnaur: with Nako in Upper Kinnaur (foundation of a local prince), and Ribba in Lower Kinnaur (the latter is prior to the Guge-kingdom).

- Spiti: with Tabo, as a royal foundation by Yeshe Ö, as well as monasteries founded by local aristocracy such as Lalung), on the Sutlej leading westwards lies the region of Lahul and Chamba (with important religious centers and pilgrimage places such as Udaipur, a foundation prior to the Purang-Guge kingdom.

- Ladakh: one of the earliest foundations, associated with Rinchen Zangpo is Nyarma, attributed to king Yeshe Ö, foundations from a later generation are the temples sponsored by the Dro clan belonging to the Alchi-group of monuments in Lower Ladakh: Alchi, Sumda, Mangyu. The latter region is related to various earlier Buddhist remains preceeding the Guge-kingdom in Baltistan, and in Chilas; historically Ladakh and Baltistan formed a political unit. In the whole of the historic Western Tibetan cultural sphere a strong central Tibetan religio-political orientation is observable from the 13th century onwards.

Preliminary reports and documentations of the Western Tibetan Buddhist establishements in Ngari (TAR) are mainly by the Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci. Prof. T. Gyalbo, together with other scholars such as Ch. Luczanits (University of Berlin) and Prof. R. Linrothe (New York) are among the first scholars to systematically document and interpret the early artistic remains of these regions.

[159] Gyalbo 2006.

[160] Petech 1999: 3.

The building activity of Yeshe Ö (T. Ye shes 'od) is also evidenced in epigraphy, namely in the inscription in the Tabo temple on the occasion of its restoration, providing the probable date of 996.[161] The inscription confirms also the religious character of his rule.

The local centres of Buddhism generated translation activities and the formation of different artistic schools; the cultural and religious ties with Kaśmīr were particularly strong in this period. The most influential Buddhist translator and teacher was Rinchen-Zangpo, who was born in the horse year 958 in Rani (T. Rad nis; Rongchung area). He was also renowned as a great founder of monasteries and temples in Guge and in Ladakh. The Tibetan text of his biography (composed by a disciple), which has been edited by Snellgrove/Skorupski[162] gives important information on his life and the monasteries he founded as well as on the local spirits he bound on oath when the temples were consecrated.[163] These spirits were understood to have promised the protection of the Buddhist religion and of the possessions of the temples (cf. 7.1.).

> "Atiśa was one of the principal Indian masters to whom was due the propagation of the Buddhist dharma in Tibet. „He was born in eastern India (Sahor/Za hor) c. 982, and he became a renowned master at the Vajrasana (i.e. Bodh Ghayā) and later at the monastic university of Vikramaśīlā. From Vikramaśīlā he was invited, at the command of the royal house of the kingdom of western Tibet (mŃa ris), by the the Tibetan scholar and translator Nag tsho Tshul khrims rgyal ba [Nagtsho Tshulthim Gyalba], (born in 1011) to accompany him back to mŃa' ris [Ngari], where he arrived in 1042 ...".[164]

While Rinchen Zangpo was inaugurating in Western Tibet Buddhist thought, the invitation of one of the leading Indian masterns of Buddhism was also considered necessary:

> "...also because at that time – as is attested for example by the ordinance of Ye ses od [Yeshe Ö] and (Shiba Ö) Zi ba od [Zhiba Ö] – very dubious and indeed dangerous practices, purportedly deriving from the Tantras and the Mahāmudrā were spreading in the kingdom of mNa ris. When Atiśa met Rin chen bzaṇ po [Rinchen Zangpo] at Tho ldiṇ (Tho liṇ, [Tholing]), the Great translator's monastic residence, one of the first topics to be discussed by these two masters is indeed reported to have been problems posed by the exegesis of the Tantra texts and the correct practice of the Mantrayāna".[165]

"*During this period the country became the starting point for the renovation of Buddhism in the whole of Tibet...The impetus which he (Atiśa...) and his royal hosts had Tibet to the second diffusion (phyi dar) of Buddhism had its culmination in the religious conference (T. chos 'khor [chökhor]) convened at Tholing by king rTse lde ([Tsende], ca 1060-1090) and his uncle Zi ba 'od [Zhiba Ö]. All the foremost scholars of Tibet attended*".[166]

[161] These inscriptions are published in Petech/Luczanits 1999.

[162] Snellgrove/Skorupski (1980) '*The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*', Vol. II.

[163] Ibid: 93.

[164] Ruegg 2003 (repr. of 1984): 127.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Petech 1999: 2-4.

According to Petech, at the end of the 10th century, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Tibetan monarchy after 842, two kingdoms, Purang-Guge and Mar yul (Maryül, Upper Ladakh) became separate political entities as part of one dominion.[167]

After having lost hold of Central Tibet, the power and the royal insignia as well as the temple of Samye (T. bSam yas) were handed over to Trhide Songtsen (T. Khri lde srong btsan), two descendants of Ösung (T. 'Od srungs, the son of Langdarma, who reigned in the 9th century during the last phase of the old Central Tibetan kingdom) and who migrated to the west entering the territories of the ancient Shangshung (T. Zhang zhung) kingdom. One of them was Nyimagön (T. Nyi ma mgon) and his sons. Soon after in 912 (a terminus post quem) and with the help of old aristocratic families, who had played a decisive role during the old monarchy – including the Dro who dominated parts of Ladakh - Nyimagön (T. Nyi ma mgon) founded the large kingdom of Ngari Khorsum (T. mNar`ris skor gsum) in the Western Himalaya.[168] Nyimagön, according to the Ladakh Gyalrab (T. *La dwags rgyal rabs, Royal Annals of Ladakh*), married a Dro-lady (Drosa Khorkyong, T. 'Bro za 'Khor skyong) from Purang-Guge (T. Pu hrang), and then had three sons.[169]

2.4.1. The Royal Lama (*lha bla ma*) Yeshe Ö (T. Ye shes 'od)

In the third quarter of the 10th century, Srong nge (i.e. Yeshe Ö, Ye shes 'od), who was a devout Buddhist, ascended the throne of Purang-Guge. Then known as the 'royal lama' (*lha bla ma*), Yeshe Ö issued his Kashog chenmo (T. *bka`shog chen mo*) with instructions concerning his rule in accordance with Buddhism. *"The event marked the beginning of bstan pa phyi dar [Tenpa chida] in mNga`ris skor gsum (Ngari Khorsum) in its formulation as stod lugs ('system of Upper West Tibet')."*[170]

The aim of Yeshe Ö and later generations of the royal house was the local reformation of Buddhism, the adoption of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism and the organization of the ecclesiastical establishment. Prospects of speedy salvation must have attracted all classes, comparable to the spread of Buddhism in China.[171] In an edict issued by Yeshe Ö (chötsig, T. *chos rtsigs*, 'religious edict' carved in stone), he established chöthim *(tib. chos khrims)* and gyalthim *(T. rgyal khrims)*: 'religious and civil law'. This law gave priority to religion over secularism. He opposed Tantric practices and the unorthodox behaviour of contemporary Buddhists.[172] On the other hand, Rinchen Zangpo (the charismatic teacher and great translator) studied elements of the Shangshung culture and Yeshe Ö was a lineage holder of Terma (T. *gter ma)* of Bon po origin.[173]

2.4.1.1. Worldly and Divine Order During the Time of the Tibetan Monarchy and in Western Tibet

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[167] Ibid: 2.

[168] Petech 1997: 231.

[169] Vitali 2003: 54; for this passage in the royal annals see also Vitali (1996: 167); further Petech 1977: 15ff; Vitali (1996) has dealt in his 'The kingdoms of 'Gu.ge Pu.hrang' with the history of mNga`ris skor gsum from the foundation to the advent of the dGe lugs pa. His 2003 article added an important component, the chronological table (*bstan rtsis* or *lo thig*), which are often contained in Tibetan works of historical nature. The *bstan rtsis* records dates, periods and important historical events.

[170] Vitali 2003: 56.

[171] Cat. 2001: 12.

[172] Karmay 1979; Petech 1997: 237.

[173] Vitali 2003: 57.

A short overview related to the political and religious ideology during the formative period of the Tibetan kingdom of the early sacred kings (Purgyal, T. *sPu rgyal Bod*, 'Gottkönige') up to the Dharma kings (Chögyal, T. *chos rgyal*, 'Gesetzeskönige') from the 7th to the 9th century[174] helps to elucidate some concepts and values of the ruling elite and - in particular - the close relation of worldly and divine order at the time. These older values and ideals of rule can be compared with those of the heirs of the early monarchs, who migrated to Western Tibet. Such a comparison can be made due to the fact that the West Tibetan kingdoms claimed their continuity from the time of the old monarchy, as can be concluded inter alia from the paintings of courtly culture.

In Everding's view, the claim of the Western Tibetan kingdoms to have descendence from the great dynasties of Central Tibet is a construct of historiography and the main theme of their self-representation aimed at legitimizing the Western Tibetan rulers:[175]

> "Gu ge, sPurang and Ladakh reached the peak both with regard to wealth and cultural transfer in the 10th century, which is to be seen as essentially linked to the rulers' self representation as patrons of Buddhism. The, as one may say, almost hagiographic chronics are unanimous in titulating the Western Tibetan kings as the sTod kyi mgon gsum, 'the three patrons of the high altitude region', thus referring to the ancient kingdom of Gu ge and its strategical representation as sacred political space. By using the mixed[176] appellation mNa' ris skor gsum, the upper three districts of Ngari, or more literally the three districts of the Royal Domain, the intention of referring backward to the Tibetan Empire was quite explicitly both an act of symbolic politics and environmental control. The legitimation of power, which the three 'kingdoms' encoded in the historiography of continuity (the Tibetan Empire) and geography of "upper places", was to become a model to any subsequent incarnation of power in Tibet" [Translation from the German original by the author].

2.4.1.2. 'Sacred Kingship' During the Time of the Old Tibetan Empire

Indigenous Tibetan myths on the origin of sacred kings[177] describe them as coming from the sky; this early dynastic period can be associated with Tö lharab (T. stod lha rabs), the history of the genealogy of the gods and the descent to the world of humans.[178] The first kings allegedly descended from heaven on a holy mountain.[179]

> "The agnatic descent was patronised by the Phya deities (the founding ancestor of godly origin), the cognatic succession referred to Mu, the Lady of Heaven. All other known

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[174] Cf. Tucci 19950a, Haarh 1969, and for recent studies see Karmay 1994; Vitali 2003; Ramble 2006; Sorensen, Hazod/Gyalbo 2007.

[175] Everding 2000, II: 330.

[176] In fact, the term has both a linguistic sense, referring to the 'upper dialect' (stod skad), as well as a symbolical geographical/dynastical connotation (royal domain). See on this David Germano, Cultural Tibet, http://www.thdl.org/xml/showEssay.php?xml,THDL, May 15 2004.

[177] Cf. Tucci 1950a, 1950b; Haarh 1969; Hazod, Sorensen/Gyalbo 2007.

[178] 'Geschichte der Götterfolge und Herabstieg des Gottes in die Welt der Menschen': Hazod 1998, unpublished manuscript. Cf. also Hazod, Sorensen/Gyalbo 2007.

[179] See also Ramble (2006: 132) on the royal accession in the myth of the fist Tibetan kings, recounted in an early Bonpo work. In this work an intercesssor divinity calls the prospective divine ruler.

families had similar genealogies. The agnatic seniority of the Kha-rag Nyos line is represented by the white bird (ancenstor) descending upon a mountain, in order to correspond to the people's search for a ruler."[180] [Translation from the German original text by the author].

The integration of Buddhism as a state religion during the second phase of the dynastic period did not put an end to the concept of the divine origin of kings; it finds continuity in the Bodhisattva idea of the kings and this period was termed: Bar ngadar (T. *bar mnga' dar)* 'Rise and spread of the royal power'.[181] According to this concept, the first Dharma king Songtsen Gampo (T. Srong btsan sgam po; c. 609-649), who was the founder of the Great Tibetan empire, was associated with the cult of Avalokiteśvara; he posthumously was conceived as a reincarnation of the Bodhisattva and spiritual son of Buddha Amitābha.[182] The oldest source in which Songtsen Gampo is mentioned as Avalokiteśvara is the *dBa' bzhed* (Washe, 7th or 8th century).[183] According to this text, the people of Khotan (Liyül, T. Li yul) venerated Songtsen Gampo as Avalokiteśvara.[184] Ramble thus concludes: "*The fact is...that Buddhism provided the Tibetans with many of the prerequisites for an empire; the dotrine itself came as a part of a package that included literacy, legislation and, perhaps most important, the ideal of the wheel-turning monarch whose territorial conquests are coextensive with the range of the Dharma.*"[185]

Further written sources, as recorded and published by Tucci in his 'Tibetan Painted Scrolls',[186] provide genealogies of the Tibetan nobility in the Western Himalaya, thereby reflecting the important role of the original tribes in Tibetan cosmogony and their sacral character. When in the 8th century Padmasambhava changed the patrons of the country by subjugating local demons, "*these primitive deities did not disappear: some remained as the ancestors of the nobility, as for instance in the case of the family of Yar klungs [Yarlung] of the the Phag mo gru pa [Phamotrupa]. Others turned into Buddhist gods and by an ideals conversion were given the charge of protecting the temples or of presiding over the sanctity of vows.*"[187]

The parallel goals of worldly power and religious supremacy during the old Tibetan monarchy[188] are reflected in the symbolism of Samye (bSam yas), as pointed out by Tucci:

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[180] Stein 1993: 250.

[181] Ibid; the third period is termed 'disintegration of the kingdom'. The king appears as the guarantee of abstract qualities, *mnga' thang* (majesty), *chos* (religion), *dbu rmog* (charisma), *chab srid* (temporal political authority): [pr. Ngathang, chö, umog, chab]; these qualities were important for central Tibetan principalities, partly in continuation of the Indian models of the *dharmarāja* and *cakravartin* (Prof. Charles Ramble, verbal communication; cf. also Ramble 2006: 129).

[182] Cf. Cat. 2006: fig. Kat. 81.

In the later tradition also the Dalai Lamas were considered re-incarnations of Avalokiteśvara, the most important protector of Tibet.

[183] dBa' bzehd; cf. Wangdu/Diemberger 2000.

[184] Cat. 2006: 432.

[185] Ramble 2006: 130.

[186] Tucci 1949: 711 ff.

[187] Ibid: 729.

A comparable role of local protectors, namely as mediators between the Buddhist establishment and the community at Tabo is discussed by Jahoda 2006.

[188] During the time of the Yarlung, the divine world was imagined after the pattern of the human attempting to divide gods into three different categories: kings, queens and ministers.

> "Buddha took the place of the bTsan (early gods), but the ruler equally remained the intermediary between his people and the religious world. That is why bSma yas was built; it was build as a cosmos, with its four great contintents. ... as in that projection of the universe which is the mandala. It was a new world substituted for the old one; it was a rebuilding of the universe which did not exclude, but contained as subordinates, the ancient gods. It centered round the king who was newly invested by a baptism with water miraculously procured by Padmasambhava."[189] Further Tucci states: "This means that there is a connection between the bTsan ... and the bTsan po ... , the title given to the first rulers of Tibet; the bTsan po, king, was the reflection upon earth of the divine bTsan, his representative in the human world, the mediator between him and his subjects. That explains why in the titles of the kinds of Tibet the elements bTsan and lde'u (?), a name peculiar to a class of Bon po, are always met with".[190]

Furthermore, the investigation of the names of the four early tribes shows that they are related to those of gods or demons, indicating the claim to have a deity as an apex ancestor "*whose cult was reserved to the members of the tribe itself and who was consequently worshiped as the presiding god of the group*".[191]

Unfortunately, there are only a few artefacts which document the appearance and signs of sovereignty of the kings during the old monarchy. In a thangka in the Tibet Museum in Lhasa (19th century) three early kings of Tibet, namely Songtsen Gampo (see above), Trhisong Detsen (T. Khri srong lde btsan), and Relpachen (T. Ral pa can), are depicted surrounded by deities charged with protecting the Dharma.[192] They are known as the 'Dharmakings' because of their extraordinary contributions to the establishment and growth of Buddhism in Tibet. Songtsen Gampo, seen as an incarnation of Amitābha, wears an image of that Buddha on his turban (Pl. 223). In a depiction housed at Lhasa, he is accompanied by his two ministers, Thomi Sambotha, who devised the Tibetan alphabet based on the Sanskrit alphabet, and minister Gar Tongtsen (T. mGar stong brtsan), who accompanied Princess Wenchen from China to Tibet (Pl. 220).[193] Trhisong Detsen (ca. 740-98) shows the attributes of Mañjuśrī, while Relpachen (reigned 814-836) wears a vajra on his left shoulder, thus representing Vajrapāṇi. Together the three are manifestations of the Great Lords Rigsum gönpo (T. Rigs gsum mgon po) of Tibet: Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi, *"...representing the compassion, wisdom and the secret power of all Buddhas"*.[194]

While the early concepts of political legitimacy included the notion of the Sacred King who ensured prosperity and fertility by virtue of his identity with the royal ancestors in heaven, later the idea of the alliance of Buddhism and worldly power was superimposed, as I will discuss later.

2.4.1.3. Manipulation of Power and Authority in the Western Himalaya I: The Notion of 'Divine Kingship' and the '*dharmarāja*' (Religious King)

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[189] Tucci 1949, 3 vols: 728.

[190] Ibid. 727.

[191] Ibid. 714.

[192] They consist of a local protector deity (Palden Lhamo, T. dPal ldan lha mo), Begtse (T. Beg tse), the fierce worldly protector, Mahākāla and Vaiśravaṇa, Yama and Rahu, chief of the planetary deities.

[193] Cf. Cat. Tibet: fig.5.

[194] Cat 2003 - 'Tibet. Treasures from the Roof of the World': 37.

When studying some features of the religious connotation of the Tibetan kings from early times, as also reflected in various pictorial presentations in the region, a continuation of the ideals of rule and the notion of the 'King of Religion' (*dharmarāja*) and the 'Wheel-turning Ruler' (*cakravartin*) can be observed to a certain extent. "*These models afforded the kings the political power that had been denied them by the more archaic model of sacral royalty. But the fact that the kings were ruling on behalf of the dharma meant that they functioned under the aegis of a higher-order law than their own power.*"[195]

The concept of the alliance between Buddhism and worldy rule during the time of Thri Song Detsen, under whom the first Buddhist monastery was built,[196] and the idea of secular offices vested in the clergy are favourably discussed in the Tibetan Royal chronicle (Washe, T).[197] From then onwards Buddhism offered the rulers an important tool for the cultural bond between the community and the new religious and political institutions.[198]

Such close ties between religious authority and worldly power are best reflected in the figure of Yeshe Ö. Tibetan Buddhists considered this king to have borne a Bodhisattva likeness to the early kings, and in the 11th century a Sakyapa (T. Sa skya pa) writer claimed that the advent of Yeshe Ö was even predicted by the Buddha.[199] He introduced the notion of monastic royalty in the region in order to legitimize his sovereignty. That system of legitimation of the idea of secular offices should be taken over by the clergy– besides the religious commitment, which was not disputed – has been described in a recent study by Ramble:

> "Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, the tenth-century descendant of the founder of the kingdom of Guge-Purang (in Western Tibet) was ordained as a monk and yet continued to hold his royal office – a precendent that was followed by his two sons. As is well known, Tibetan historiography of the Second diffusion (post-tenth century) attributes to some of the early kings a greater measure of Buddhist piety than the facts, such as we know them to be, bear out. A recently-discovered manuscript, the *'Phag thang ma* is one of the three known catalogues of Buddhist works translated into Tibetan during imperial times (probably from the 11th century), is illustrated with miniatures of five of the emperors, all represented as being clothed in monkish robes. ... The dynamic between Buddhism and royalty is epitiomised (in the Washe): the king is delighted by the ascendancy of Buddhism, which will set him apart from and above his ministers; on the other hand, Buddhism will bring down the civil and military structures of the realm and, ultimately, the monarchy itself. "[200]

The occupation ('Landnahme') of Western Tibet by the descendants of the old monarchy was facilitated by generous or clever deeds, as reported by one of the oldest historiographies, the Na'-bdag Nyang Ral (dated to the end of the 12th century): When sKyid-lde [Kyide Nyimagön], a pious Buddhist, went to Purang, he established the new state mainly by

[195] Ramble 2006: 149. On the thisgnificance of Buddhims and the model of the *cakravartin* for the creation of the Tibetan Empire see also Kapstein 2000, Ruegg 1995.

[196] Ramble 2006: 131.

[197] Wangdu/Diemberger 2000: 103; cited after Ramble 2006: 131.

[198] Papa-Kalantari 2007a.

[199] Karmay 1979: 151.

[200] Ramble 2006: 130-131. I am endebted to Dr. Jahoda for having informed me on this important new publication.

developing the economic potential of the region: „“ [...] *he ensured for himself the benevolence of the inhabitans above all by enhancing the commerce and regulating the distribution of food resources. He was thus accepted by the people as a ruler and was able to introduce the old dynastic rules again ([Gyal Thrim], rgyal krims. After he had gathered an army in Purang, he conquered Guge. Finally he invaded Mar-yul...*“.[201] [Translation from German by the author].

His authority was later strenghtend by his legitimacy due to his royal descendancy and the high prestige it was associated with[202]; he thus did not impose his reign by force, and his rule was for the benefit of others, which is in line with the central principles that emerge form the literature.[203] This ethos of kingship of the new royal and monastic leaders is descibed in the Ngari Gyalrab:

> „Given that the kingdom was in a state of turmoul, the teachings were abandoned for five generations. For 145 years the (religious) doctrine (*gtsug.lag* [Tsug lag]) in this stod mNa'.ris [Tö Ngari]) was Bon, funerary rites (*gshin*) were black, the living ones were practising heretical religions,...During the time when *Chos* was discarded, after 47 generations (of rulers), the incarnated king Sron.nge was born, like a second Pun.ta.ri.ka flower, as a son in the line of the protectors (kings). It is said, that owing to Zhi.ba.'od's [Zhiba Ö] previous prayers and the power of his compassion, the incarnation of the divine race of Byang.chub sems.dab'-s [Changchub semda], the manifestation of the kings of kings on earth, who abandoned worldly life in order to protect human beings, bla.ma Byang.chub sems.dpa' Ye.shes. od was born to emancipate human being in this very mNga'.ris.stod.“[204] The author of the text concludes: “Then since he (Ye.shes.'od, Yeshe Ö) realised that secular power ([Gyal ri] T. *rgyal.srid*) and royal fame, all these, are illusions devoid of substance, the renounced his secular power (*rgya.srid*) for religion and since he left the kingdsom, the royal power (*rgya.srid*) and (his) subjects all that has to be safeguarded, to his elder brother Kho.re, he did not care even for his body and wealth, he uncopromisingly (longed for) Buddhism, which (frees) the mind from wandering in the (materialistic) realm“.[205]

The religious aspect of sovereignty in the tradition of the kings of Guge may have continued until the 13th century, providing a further important argument for the claim to supremacy and legitimacy by the rulers of Ladakh.

Of course, the notion of divine kingship as a close relationship between kingship and Buddhism, is associated with the ideal of the *cakravartin* which is an ancient concept in India. „*We know how popular tradition liked to dwell upon the princely nature of the Bodhisattva, how universal dominion and Buddhahood were conceived as parallel goals, one pre-eminent in the worldy sphere, and the other in the other-worldly.*“[206] With the introduction of Mahāyāna beliefs, the higher worshipped beings were often conceived in regal terms and the benevolent activity of the

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[202] Ibid.

[203] Cf. also Ramble (2006: 132, 148) concerning the principles of Tibetan kingship.

[204] Nga'.ris rgyal.rabs by Gu-ge mkhan.chen; cited after Vitali 1996: 108.

[205] Ibid: 111.

[206] Snellgrove 1959: 204.

Bodhisattva became fused with the notion of magical power.[207] This reciprocal receptiveness of the worldly and the spiritual sphere and the process of their mutual enhancement are observable on all levels of Buddhist imagery in the Western Himalaya, from donor depictions to the image of the supreme being.[208]

2.4.2. The Inauguration of the Central Tibetan Dynasty in Ladakh and its First Kings about 900

The fall of the Tibetan monarchy also marks the beginning of the Ladakhi kingdom. Langdarma (T. gLang da ma), the last ruler of the old kingdom of Central Tibet, is regarded by Tibetan historians as the ancestor of the royal house of the Kingdom of Western Tibet (see Appendix).[209] However, the history of Ladakh and the succession of kings after the murder of Langdarma (T. gLang dar ma) in 842 are much diputed.[210]

> The royal chronicle of Ladakh gives ..."various conflicting accouts of how descendants of the old Tibetan royal family established themselves in the different provinces if of the old empire, including the west ... the statement that certain descendants of the last Tibetan emperor Lang Darma migrated to the west in the 10th centuy, if true, can be interpreted in various ways. The western areas may already have been Tibetan in culture, making the acceptance of a new ruler of Tibetan stock quite natural. Alternatively, the new ruler, presumably helped by a significant fighting force of Tibetans, could have taken over an essentially non-Tibetan area, which was only later thoroughly Tibetanised. Then again, the events referred to could have actually been massive folk movements of Tibetans, led by the rulers named, settling largely empty territories or swamping some pre-existing population".[211]

Historians agree that one of the sons of Langdarma, Ösung (T. 'Od srungs), was the father of Pelkortsen (T. dPal 'k'or btsan, end of the 9th century, beginning of 10th century (?) who is believed to have founded eight monasteries in Western Tibet.[212]

The Dro clan belonged to the foremost noble families which played a decisive role in the foundation of the new state in western Tibet. Members very often became queens and ministers of the new rulers, who were descendants of the former great Tibetan kings. *„According to the*

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[207] Ibid: 205. Snellgrove even assumes a rite of royal consecration to future Buddhahood, reflected also in the phenomenon of the 'bejewelled Buddha' (Snellgrove 1959: 205).

[208] In general, the study of the ethos of rulers in the Western Himalaya would be a rewarding subject of future research as well as the comparison with the ideals of 'Dharma kings' during the time of the old monarchy. Cf. on this topic also Snellgrove 1959; Karmay 1979; Ramble 2006.

[209] Petech 1977, Ruegg 2003: 129, Francke 1999: 58.

[210] Cf. also Ramble (2006: 133) on the rigicide in the period of sacral royalty in Tibet. *„Although contemporary evidence suggests that the king was a devout Buddhist, the killing is justified in later histories on the grounds of his persecution of the very religion he was supposed to be protecting"*.

Francke (1999: 58) comments the local Ladakhi historigraphy of the early Tibetan kings of Ladakh as follows: *„On most inscriptions the Ladakhi kings call themselves „descendants of Nya Thri Tsanpo (T. gnya khre btsanpo), the first king of Tibet, whose date is about 200 of 300 B.C. but although these kings are very proud of belonging to the family of the Great kings of Tibet, they do not wish to be reminded of the fact that their special ancestor, after whom their dynasty branched off from the Central Tibetan dynasty, was Langdarma, the famous „Julian the Apostate" of Buddhism"*.

[211] Denwood 1995: 383.

[212] Petech 1977: 15.

central Tibetan texts, the Cog-ro lady gave to sKyid-lde Ni-ma-mgon [Kyide Nyimagön], three sons. The second and third sons divided among themselves the paternal territory, giving origin to the kingdoms of Guge and Purang. The first-born, usually called dPal-gyi-mgon [Palkyi Gön], took Ladakh; it seems that his father bequeathed him a theoretical right of sovereignty ...".[213] However, the newly founded kingdom in the 10th century did not yet include Ladakh, whereby lower Ladakh *"...was devided into small independent chiefships".*[214]

The chronology of the later kings and its successors as well as their ethnic background is still difficult to establish. Concerning the extension of the kingdom in the 11th to 12th century (e.g. during the reign of king Lha c'en Utpala), "*...who appears like a forceful ruler and conqueror*"[215] and whose name may indicate an Aryan-speaking clan, the geographic horizon revealed in the sources point to a „*...temporary paramountcy over most of western Tibet (probably including Gu-ge) and almost the whole of Baltistan. If there is any historical foundation to this text [Ladakh Gyalrab], Ladakh was for a short time the greatest power in the Western Himalayas".*[216]

2.4.3. The Dro Clan (T. 'Bro clan) in Ladakh

The time of the greatest expansion of Ladakh was also the period of the building activities of the Dro clan (T. 'Bro clan), one of the most important aristocratic families throughout the history of the Tibetan empire,[217] which then establiehd itself in Western Tibet and became the donor of the temples at Alchi.

This famous aristocratic clan was among others very powerful under the king Trhisong Detsen (T. Khri srong lde btsan) and his successors. Its members often occupied the position of chief/great minister (lönpo chen po, T. *blon po chen po*). Dro Chungzang Ormang (T. 'Bro Chung bzang 'or mang) was probably appointed as the great minister in the Dragon year (728-29), according to Beckwith.[218]

Scriptural sources from Tibet's imperial period indicate that members of the 'Dro family were also active in Central Asia. Dro Trhizu Ramshag (T. 'Bro Khri gzu' ram shags) is known to have participated in the invasion of the western regions; in 791 or 792 he probably subjugated Khotan and levied taxes on the Khotanese.[219]

The clan may well have possessed large estates in the Western Himalaya, which was probably their home country.[220] After the Tibetan empire's disintegration, which, according to Petech, did not mark the disruption of the old kingdom but rather a transfer of actual power from the ruling dynasty to the older aristocracy,[221] leading members of the clan moved

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[213] Ibid: 17.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Ibid. 19.

[216] Ibid: 18.

[217] Cf. also Demieville: 25-30.

[218] Beckwith: 1987: 106.

[219] „*Thus began a long period of Tibetan rule over Khotan and the neighbouring region of the southern route through eastern Central Asia*" (Beckwith 1987: 155).

[220] Vohra 1995: 220.

[221] Petech stated: „*...even if none of its members dared to assume the royal titles...The actors of the play were, with but few exceptions, the old noble families [among them the Dro] that had conditioned the monarchy since the sixth century...*" Petech: 1994: 656; cited after Stoddard 2004: 86.

westwards and played a decisive role in the revival of Buddhism in Guge[222] and the establishment of new kingdoms in the Western Trans-Himalaya.[223] It was their influence, which caused Nyimagön's line of royal descendants to take refuge in Purang[224]. They also had close matrimonial alliances with the Guge kings (e.g. one of the wives of Yeshe Ö was a member of the Dro clan), and their members appear as wealthy patrons of temples, bridges and forts at Alchi. A Dro lady is documented as the founder of the famous cave temples at Dunkar. The clan's influence may aslo have been based on their political and military role in the Western Himalaya and Central Asia.[225]

Accordingly, Dro members had political power in Purang as eatly as the 9th century.[226] Their important role in the 10th century was described by Petech as follows:

> Nyi ma mgon [Nyimagön], (who had created the Western Himalaya state) "...was nothing more than a high-born adventurer...however, there were the scions of two families of the highest nobility, Cog-ro, and Pa-tshab, who had played a role during the last two reigns of the monarch. Even more important was the 'Bro clan, which had been practically the premier noble family during the twilight of the old regime: a 'Bro lady was the mother of the last two Tibetan emperors Ral-pa-can and Lang-dar-ma ... A more substantial element of strength accrued to the family from the fact that its original home was Yang-t'ung, i.e. Zhang-zhung. ...There is a possibility that the creation of the West Tibetan kingdoms was due to the initiative of this clan, which invited Kyid-lde Nyi-ma-mgon [Kyide Nyimagön] to their country in order to give a cover of legitimacy."

As was the case in Purang-Guge, a theocratic aristocracy may have been the leading power in Ladakh (with a monastic member of the Dro clan as the founder of the Alchi Dukhang, T. 'Du khang). However, the paintings at Alchi reflect different forms of religious and worldly supremacy, based on autochtonous systems of power, as discussed below.

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[222] Members of the rulers in Ladakh may be depicted in the scene of the enthroned Changchub Ö at Tabo (Assembly Hall); there the inscriptions inform us about a person from Rum, which is probably situated in Ladakh (Dr. N. Howard, verbal communication; I thank Dr. Jahoda fort his information).

[223] Sources on the move of the old Tibetan aristocratic clans westwards and the names of the most prominent among them in a list of the *Kathang Denga* (T. *bKa' thang sde lnga*; among them the Dro) can be found in Tucci's 'Tibetan Painted Scrolls' (Tucci 1949: 737 ff). The best example is that of a minister bestowed with considerable power was the legendary minister Gar (T. mGar). We have a picture of him on a banner of Silk from Dunhuang of the king Songtsen Gampo and his son, who reigned in the second half of the seventh century: "*... doch die Regierung [blieb] in den erprobten Händen von mGar. So, wie die Dinge lagen, bedeutete dies eine dauernde Schwächung des Königtums und das Aufkommen einer erblichen Ministerwürde, die aber nicht soweit kommen konnte, die sakral bedingte Dynastie zu verdrängen*" (Petech, unpublished manuscript: 317).

[224] Vohra 1995: 220.

[225] „*Of all the effects of the Tibetan expansion, the most long-lasting was not primarily political, but rather cultural in nature. The late Tibetan empire, its successor states in Ling chou and Soling (Hsi-ning) and finally the Tangut Empire, were all strongly Buddhist states, powerful enough to resist the encroachment of Islam. They allowed Buddhist clerics to pass through and cross-fertilize, for example between Tibet and the Buddhist centers of Wu t'ai Shan. Tibetan Buddhist activity in the colonial areas just outside Amdo continued uninterrrupted after the breakup of the empire. There was quite a lot of Buddhist activity in Sha chou (Tun-huang) even after the Chinese recapture of the city in 848. Tibetan monks were to be found in the armies of the two feuding ministers Blon Gun-bzer and Zan Pi-Pi [the name of the Dro-clan in Chinese], at the same time*" (Beckwith 1987 b: 7).

[226] Vitali: 169.

The building activity and ethos of rule of the Dro clan in Alchi is documented in epigraphy. Two monks, Kelden Sherab (T. sKal ldan shes rab) and Tshulthim Ö (T. Tshul khrims 'od), are recorded in inscriptions as having respectively founded the Dukhang (T. 'Du khang) and the Sumtseg (T. gsum brtsegs). Inscriptions inform us further that Kelden Sherab was educated in Nyarma. The date of the Sumtsek (T. gSum brtsegs) was established by Roger Goepper together with Konchuk Panday[227], and further supported by Luczanits[228] on the basis of stylistic and iconographic evidence as late as the 12th or early 13th century.

On the entrance wall of the Dukhang at Alchi we find painted compositions based on concepts of royal assemblies and courtly culture as signs of sovereignty. This points to a conscious continuity in the tradition of the kings of Guge as well as a distinctive Eastern-Iranian Buddhist cultural orientation in Western Himalayan art.[229]

> "But then the old nobility [the Dro clan] vanished from the picture and perhaps died out, and what remained was the undisputed legitimacy of the royal dynasty, which local tradition, as voiced by the chronicle and even more by the Ladakhi epigraphy, recongnized as a true uninterrupted continuation of the monarch of Sron-btsan-sgam-po [Songtsen Gampo]".[230]

2.4.3.1. Manipulation of Power and Authority in the Western Himalaya II: The Foundation of 'State Institutions' in Ladakh

Local political, geographic and economic factors generated a cultural environment with specific characteristics in the westernmost regions of Tibet. One may term this cultural zone as the Indo-Iranian borderland, represented in particular by elements of the Buddhist Eastern-Iranicate courtly tradition at Alchi and comparable with that in Western Central Asia, Hindu Kush and Northern Pakistan. This cultural synthesis was also a dominant feature in the contemporaneous art and culture of Kaśmīr. Some elements of the material culture of Alchi have already been compared and associated with those found in Northern Pakistan and Kaśmīr[231], but without trying to define the religio-political, historical and artistic context, and the process of interaction and transmission.

The Dro clan was among the leading noble families who built new states, as„ ... *a political act in the struggle going on within the Tibetan aristocracy*".[232] The clan had already been active in the Tibetan Empire, and it probably had its origins in the Western Himalaya, so that it might have re-established itself there again. The land may have previously been owned by different clans including not only the Dro-family, but also by the Dard kings. These feudal societies may later have been the basis of the formation of small states or dominions. „*According to the Chinese texts, the 'Bro clan was original of the old kingdom of Yang-t'ung*[233]*, which (at least in part) corresponds to*

[227] Goepper 1993.

[228] Luczanits 1989, 2006.

[229] On the history of the Dro clan see also: Demieville, *Le Concile de Lhasa*, I, Paris, 1952: 25-30.

[230] Petech 1977: 16.

[231] Pal 1982, D. Klimburg-Salter 1987.

[232] Petech 1977: 16.

[233] T'ang-shu, 216b.7a; transl. Pelliot 134-135 (cited after Petech 1977: 15)

Zhang Zhung [Shangshung] in its widest sense (West and North Tibet); and presemably they owned estates there".[234]

During the time of the foundation of the Alchi sacred site both indigenous local systems of power and newly found Buddhist institutions may have constituted important factors in the process of the formation of new political centres and strategies of legitimation in the region. The adoption of Central Asian and Iranicate signs of sovereignty characteristic for the Alchi donor depictions does not only reflect the fashion of the time, but also the religio-political systems in this region with distinctive modes of 'manipulation of power'.[235] This mode is a result of the social organization and political and religious institutions of the westernmost regions of Tibet. The artistic and inscriptional evidence reflecting the ethos of rule and power structure at Alchi is comparable to other systems of 'hill-feudalism' of the neigbouring regions, as will be shown, and those in Northwest India and Eastern Iran in particular (7.3.). However, cross-cultural comparisons of the formation of states within that area and the pertinent manipulation of power are still lacking.[236]

While the inscriptional evidence during the reign of the Palola Shāhi, which coincided with a strong Buddhist tradition, documents the ethos of rule and signs of supremacy in Northern Pakistan (Gilgit), the political situation in later phases is less clear. Tibetan supremacy had put an end to the Palola, as already stated. Parts of this community retreated to west (Gilgit), but remained subordinate to Tibetans, a fact which is also documented by a marriage between the ruler and a Tibetan princess.[237]

Later rulers were called Darada-shāhi, and 'kings of Tibetans' (probably Tibetan vasalls), who became independent after the collapse of the empire. According to O. v. Hinüber, there is scarcely any archaeological and inscriptional evidence from the 9th century onwards, which may give some information on the manipulation of power in the region.[238]

A stratum of 'anti-Buddhist' tribal cultures (probably Turcs) of the 9th-10th century left traces in the upper Indus Valley: rock images show axes, sun disks (or rather shields) and some images of powerful chieftains. This strong, apparently Iranicate, cultural stratum may have been the basis and models of legitimacy for the later Dardic and Turcic ruling princes of the region. However, the style and symbolism show a very reduced repertoire, contrasting with the varied and refined Buddhist art of the Palola Shāhi. Nevertheless, these pictorial status items of strong tribal cultures appear to have found their way into the Buddhist art of Alchi albeit in a refined way (cf. chapter 7.3.).

One of the important source of inspiration for self-representation of the ruling elite in the Western Tans-himalayan region is the aristocratic 'Weltanschauung' and martial and courtly culture of luxury art of the Sogdians (mainly a merchant class), with a codified repertoire of status symbols (textiles, robes, precious objects such as silver goblets) and rituals (such as the banqueting) associated with splendour and luxury. This luxury culture characterizes images and scenes of secular and religious content, which reciprocally enhance each other. The beliefs

[234] Petech 1997: 15-16.

[235] This term was adopted from Maconald, 1987: 3.

[236] In particular the comparative analysis of texts in stone inscriptions prior to the time of the establishment of the kingdom of Ladakh and those in the later monasteries would also be a rewarding subject of future research; e.g. one finds parallels with regard to the modes of self-representation of the ruling elite, which might provide an indirect evidence of the state organization.

[237] Jettmar 1985: 28.

[238] O. v. Hinüber, verbal communication.

are characterized by a specific hybrid pantheon and animal symbolism, integrating Zoroastrian, Hindu and Buddhist thoughts. Sogdians settled between Transoxiana in the West, and Tibet (Lhasa) and China in the east and Sogdian merchants were also active in Ladakh, Kaśmīr, and Khotan as evidenced in inscriptions and in the Persian historiography Hudūd al-'Ālam. They probably were not only mediators of luxury art and their symbolism but also had an impact on the religious landscape in these regions (see 7.1.).

In general inscriptional evidence in early structures in Ladakh is still little studied. Denwood provided a translation of the rock inscriptions and archaeological remains at the Fort Balukhar (three miles from Khalatse, Ladakh), datable from the 8th – 9th century, which can be associated with the period of Tibetan occupation in the wider region including Khotan.[239] Inscriptions along the Indus and in Ladakh emphasize the sponsoring ruler as a builder of bridges and forts to protect the trade routes; this function of inscriptions, which commemorate the foundation of forts and building of bridges as a mode of self-representation, is also found at Alchi. The texts seem to be an "*...eulogy of the fort, of a common enough type with close poetic parallels in the temple inscriptions at Alchi...'a fort, unchanging and everlasting, being a good example ...'.*"[240]

With regard to the function of the fort, it "*...was probably, as Francke suggested, a control post and collecting point for customs duties. The trade route from Kashmīr to Central Asia through Ladakh is undoubtedly very ancient and geography dictated that it must cross the Indus at, or near, this point. Building a fort and a bridge together would have ensured that no traveller avoided the necessary control*".[241]

The lack of textual material prior to the Tibetan historiography and the complex ethnic situation, typical for a region on the crossroad of transcontinental routes, makes it difficult to reconstruct the socio-political situation before the establishment of Buddhist institutions.[242]

There are several reasons for this situation. Most importantly, there is little textual material from this period due to the fact that the 'Royal Chronicles of Ladakh' were written by Tibetans Buddhists, who focused mainly on the question of legitimation by genealogical means with little interest in local history.[243] However, these 'Royal Chronicles of Ladakh'[244] provide

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[239] Denwood/Howard 1990.

He was one of the first scholars to analyze the typology of texts and tried to reconstruct their greater 'historical environment'.

[240] Snellgrove proposes this interpretation in his analysis of the inscription at Balukhar. (Snellgrove/Skorupsky 1980: 86).

Denwood/Howard (1990: 82) further suggests "*...the inscription commemorates the building of a fort either modeled on some fort in the Khotan region, or built by some person associate with such forts*" and associates the rock inscriptions near Alchi with the Tibetan army personnel of Tibetan-occupied Chinese-Turkestan and Khotan in particular (Ibid. 85). One of his suggested translations reads as follows: "*Here is built with great might a never-changing and everlasting fort, which is the 'Tiger-...', the daughter-fort born from Khri-shor-'bum-rdugs, which is the fort at mDogcod, born from the centre of the azure mansion!*" (ibid.).

[241] Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980: 85.

[242] Exemplary for the necessity of trans-disciplinary research to reconstruct the history of Ladakh is the question of the location of 'Rum' - whose representatives are depicted in scene of the enthroned Changchub Ö at Tabo (Pl. 187), which is a subject of current research. N. Howard suggested on occasion of the 'Ladakh Conference, Rome 2007' to locate this small kingdom in Ladakh, based on new archaeological finds there (I thank Dr. Jahoda for this information). The images of Tabo would thus probably represent the earliest depiction of a Ladakhi ruler in a Western Himalaya Buddhist temple.

[243] Denwood 1995: 283.

[244] Francke 1914, 1926: 35.9.-10.

some information on the situation of pre-10th century Ladakh and the impact of mythic heroes. Thus, they tell us that the ancient rulers of Ladakh prior to Nyimagön were descendants of Gesar, the great epic hero and a living spirit of probably Turcic origin well known in Ladakh and Northern Pakistan, and the whole of Tibet.[245]

However, in early records and in oral tradition of the various rulers of the area, in Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit, there are references to descent from Gesar. In historical documents, *„Phrom gesar is mentioned in the Prophecy of the Li country (i.e. Khotan), compiled during the 9th and 10th century."*[246] *"... We know that the rulers of Khotan, Skardu, ... Gandhāra*[247] *... and Kaśmīr*[248] *... had intimate relations with each other. In the Tibetan texts concerning Khotan and the Rājataraṅgiṇī there is evidence of marital ties between the rulers of these kingdoms..."*.[249]

These regions are thus closely related with regard to their mythic repertoire concerning the descendency of kings from great epic heroes. However, it is not clear if this tradition is really autochtonous, due to the fact that in Eastern Tibet similar legends are recorded.[250] However, the role of mythic heros, local spirits and the notion of charismatic kingship are important also in another context, namely with regard to a local protector deity on horse-back, who appears in the early Buddhist culture of Ladakh. The courtly images at Alchi are therefore not only important for the reconstruction of the Tibetan systems of legitimation in the early phase of the 'Second Diffusion of Buddhism' in the region, but also for the relgio-political symbolism reflecting a distinctive Buddhist religious and cultural landscape prior to the Tibetization of the region as well as pre-Buddhist local myths and images of power in the Indo-Iranian borderland of Gilgit, Baltistan and Kaśmīr.

2.5. International Culture of Luxury in the Art of the Western Himalaya: Attempt at Reconstructing its Historic Horizons

This west-east move of Iranicate, Indian and Central Asian ideas and goods reached the western Trans-Himalaya when the new centres of Tibetan Buddhism were founded there, generating diversified and refined material wants. There is ample indirect evidence of trade in luxury items such as silver objects, jewelry, precious paraphernalia, ritual implements and sumptuous textiles in the medium of painting in the Buddhist temples of Ladakh. Luxury textiles in particular were attractive objects for religious and representative use in the monastic centres as well as by the ruling elite and their allies, who in turn increased their status and power.

Buddhist texts which make reference to donations of silks, votive umbrellas, jewels, incense and other precious items document their importance as a part of popular piety from earliest times. There is ample evidence for the practice of offering textiles in ceremonial and devotional rituals: scarves and banners are held by deities above the supreme being in depictions on the ceilings or bound on pilasters on heavenly thrones. Piles of fabrics are shown at Tsparang, documenting donations from the founders or aristocratic sponsors of the temple and are held by offering genies at Tabo. Furthermore, the donation of precious fabrics is mentioned in inscriptions at Wanla (see chapter 5.).

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[245] Vohra 1995: 216.

[246] Thomas, Pt. I: 73-74; Emmerick 1967; cPl. 187ited after Vohra 1995: 218.

[247] Sachau 1910, Vol.II: 10, cited after Vohra, ibid.

[248] M.A Stein, 1973: 13-290; cited after Vohra, ibid.

[249] Vohra 1995: 218.

[250] Jahoda, verbal communication.

In general there is little scientific evidence to support the existence of Gesar as a historical personality.

All this generated a ritual and symbolic depth associated with material culture, and textiles in particular. Thus, the religious and artistic history of the region cannot be isolated from the material culture and economy; the reciprocal enhancement of these spheres is typical of the art of the Silk Road and Tibet.

As already stated, Tibet with Lhasa as the centre had expanded its political and cultural horizons during the time of the Great Tibetan Empire in Central Asia, refining its language of status and power matching the high status of the Dharma Kings. The royal centres then stood in competition with the various kingdoms along the Silk Road. In particular, the culture of precious garments associated with the aura of luxury and beauty was an important medium of representation and status.

Naturally, the aura and power associated with luxury items traded in the region were also transferred into the realm of Buddhist temples, where precious fabrics honour and embellish the sacred. Textiles are offered to deities as an act of popular piety and used as signs of status and legitimacy of the Buddha in complex rituals of consecration, signalling legitimacy and sovereignty in the spiritual realm.

Monasteries, which had great demand for luxury items such as religious paraphernalia, profited from the donation of precious textiles and other luxury items as offerings to the temple. These donations were part of their income, and in particular precious textiles even had the status of an international currency. In this way, Tibetan temples became one of the most important repositories of medieval silks, and on the basis of these early textiles the history of medieval cloths is currently being re-written.[251]

The paintings of Shalu monastery in Central Tibet (

Pl. 109) for example - related to the early phase of Tabo with regard to iconography and style - as well as a rare set of Tibetan costumes made of Sogdian (Pl. 55) and Chinese silks from the T'ang period provide important evidence for the presence of early Sino-Sogdian textiles in Tibet; these luxury objects might represent Tibetan courtly robes. The pattern of the latter can be traced back to Sāsānian ornamental art depicted in Taq-I Bustān. Reynolds describes the presence of Central Asian luxury art in Tibet as follows: "*A few of the textile fragments to have surfaced in recent years may actually date from the T'ang period, and portraits of royal figures and deities in Tibet which are ascribed to the 7th to 9th century show them clothed in figured silks of T'ang style*".[252]

As already stated, due to their position on branches of the Silk Road, the seemingly isolated regions of Kinnaur, Spiti and Ladakh also functioned as a crossroads for the trade in luxury goods of both the Buddhist and Islamic world and for the transmission of artistic themes and motifs associated with these highly valued items.

Monasteries contributed much to the commercial exchange with diverse Buddhist centres along the Silk Road. Not only the courtly elites of that time, but also the learned Buddhist pilgrims of dignitaries coming from Kaśmīr to Western Tibet and monks travelling from the Western Himalaya to neighbouring commercial and Buddhist centres were transmitters of luxury objects in the historic period. A convincing example of the wide nexus of trade from Dunhuang to Kinnaur and pluralism of pictorial modes in the Western Himalaya in general is the depiction of a Chinese-style Vaiśravaṇa at Nako as a heavenly protector[253] of the entrance

[251] Reynolds 1997.

[252] Reynolds 1990: 89.

[253] The image is itherto unpublished to my knowledge.

wall of a 12th century temple at Nako (Pl. 182). The image was possibly modelled after a silk banner from Central Asia (Pl. 183).

Indirect evidence of trade contacts or at least the presence of luxury items from Northwest India can be found in the textile depictions on the ceilings and wallpaintings of Western Himalayan temples. Textile depictions at Tabo[254] and Alchi [255] have been compared with products from Gujarat and Rajasthan by various authors. These regions were important centres of Buddhism and the cotton textile industry. The earliest extant printed cotton fabrics of this region are dateable to the 9th/10th century (cf. Pl. 40).[256] Specific types of decorated cotton cloths from this region, used for covers and to embellish interior spaces and possibly ceilings also could be identified, which may have been used as models for painted ceilings in other temples of the Western Himalaya region such as Nako[257] (Pl. 39).

Gujarat was an important producer of cotton yarns and cloths and was part of international trade with one of the most important ports in the world of maritime trade. Naturally, the kingdoms at this time must have profited greatlydue to custom duties and taxes levied for this trade.

Tāranātha, a Tibetan Historian of the 17th century, gives a well-founded account of these regions in his 'History of Buddhism in India', when he describes the old Western Indian Style[258], thus including the Buddhist art of Gujarat.[259] Tāranātha claimed that Buddhist art spread in the Gupta period from North-India to Nepal and to Northeastern India on the one hand, and to the west, Northwest and to Kaśmīr on the other hand.[260] The latter may thus be one of the sources of inspirations for Buddhist art in the Western Himalaya from earliest times. The evolutionary history of Buddhist art in Tibet is much more complex than described in Tāranātha's account and so it is possible that the intention behind this alleged transfer was primarily a strategy for legitimising a tradition.

Eastern India also had an equallly high status for Tibetans as centres of Buddhist teaching and pilgrimage and as an area which produced precious cotton fabrics and religious cloths. This was particularly true in the centres along the holy river Ganges which were linked with Kaśmīr and Central Asia by pilgrim routes.

Sharma has put this situation as follows: "*Religious ideology was a potent force providing cohesion and identity to trading communities...*".[261] Varanasi (Kāśī) was famous for weaving fine quality clothes and probably silk fabrics, as stated in the *Mahāvaṇika Jātaka* from about 2nd century BC.[262] However, no early silks are extant to support this thesis. It is important emphasize the importance of religious artefacts as media for the transmission of the 'culture of textiles'. Besides, it was perhaps mainly through the channels of pilgrimage that bronzes decorated with ornaments of fine fabrics and ritual textiles found their way to Northwest India,

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[254] Wandl 1996.

[255] Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2007b.

[256] Cf. also Barnes 1996, 1997; Wandl 1999, Papa-Kalantari 2007b.

[257] Papa-Kalantari 2007b.

[258] Tāranātha (1981) D. Chattopadhyaya (ed. and translation), Tāranātha's history of Buddhism in India, Calcutta; cf. also D. Klimburg-Salter 1999/2000; Papa-Kalantari 2000.

[259] There are little remains of this art; examples have been photographed and documented by Erich Allinger, and published by D. Klimburg-Salter in the article cited above.

[260] Tucci 1973: 143.

[261] Sharma 2004: 133.

[262] Jātaka No. 493,IV.352.; cited after Sharma 2004: 1.

Kaśmīr and to Western Tibet. One of the forces behind the detailed depiction of such robes on deities in Western Himalayan temples may have been, as stated above, connected with the idea of legitimation and power, transferred from the homeland of the Buddha to the newly founded temples in the mountain regions (cf. chapter 5.).

A glimpse at the refined material needs of the time under consideration of various populations in Kaśmīr is given in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa (or Kalyāna), i.e. a chronicle of the Kings of Kaśmīr from the seventh century onwards written in the 12th century.[263]

No production of silk or cotton in Kaśmīr, but texts and sculptures and wall paintings document the wide-ranging exchange due to trade and pilgrimage, which brought Kaśmīr into contact with luxury items from different regions, East-India, Khotan, the Sogdian towns in central Asia and also the refined culture of Muslim textiles and robes, as important signs of rank and prestige.

This preoccupation with sumptuous textiles and costumes, decorated with an endless variety of designs in different techniques, is also one of the most fascinating components in the art of Alchi, reflecting the importance of commercial exchange with Kaśmīr, Northern Pakistan and Ladakh during this period and which resulted in an astonishing cultural diversity.

Different types of garments made of homespun wool (robes, shawls, belts, leggings, shoes) are still produced in Himachal Pradesh, including the areas of the Western-Transhimalaya. They attest to a long and refined local weaving tradition, which is probably also documented in the historic paintings of donors in the Buddhist temples of this region. No early texts document that Himachal Pradesh and Kaśmīr had their own textile productions or weaving centres. However, one can assume that the commercial and religious centres in Himachal Pradesh and Kaśmīr – which were trading posts for wool and many other textiles between India and Tibet - may have participated in this rewarding business, as reflected in the rich tradition of trade and religious fabrics, decorated with various stitching techniques, partly used as canopies, flags and draperies behind idols in the hill states of Himachal Pradesh[264], the famous Chamba *rumals* (cf. 4.3.5.) and *kānthā* (Pl. 27), also related to the refined tradition of embroidery work of ritual fabrics in Kaśmır.[265] These traditions may have even already existed during the time under consideration; the ceilings decorations and textile patters at Tabo (such as large lotus medallions) and Alchi, may provide indirect evidence for this hypothesis.

Extensive economic and cultural contacts between Kaśmīr and the Buddhist centres in the Western Himalaya probably existed even before the advent of the Dro clan, but the influence on the early courtly culture of the Ladakhi kingdom is little discussed. During the reign of king Lha

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[263] Pal 1982: 35. Kalhaṇa (Stein, transl. 1961) gives an account on the refined courtly culture of 12th century Kaśmīr. He mentions *"...a short coat of variegated colour worn by high officials"* while the women wear a long gown, which covers the whole body and they are also have boots (Pandit 1958: 339, after Pal 1982: 34). These costumes are also found on Kaśmīr style and Gilgit bronzes as well as in the wallpaintings in the Western Himalaya, and Ladakh in particular. This type of dress must have been common among the leaders and rulers of small chiefdoms of mountainous regions to the North of Kaśmīr and probably also in Ladakh. There exists a second type of costume, which must have been in fashion at time in Kaśmīr, more adapted to the Indian climate, consisting of a *dhoti* and woven shawl (S. *uttarīya*). This kind of dress is worn by high officials kings and ordinary men in the wall paintings of the Sumtsek; while the lower garment wrapped like a skirt and a tight-fitting blouse, emphasizing the breast, are shown as attire of deities in the Sumtsek, also mentioned by Kalhaṇa as dress of women.

[264] Rumals are mainly produced in Chamba, Kangri, Mandi, Kulu /Himachal Pradesh, India.

[265] Cf. Goepper 1996, 1997 who described the different techniques to decorate textiles as depicted at Alchi, and which were probably traded in this region.

c'en Utpala in the 11th to 12th centuries Ladakh reached its greatest extension, as already stated. It was not only the greatest power in the Western Himalaya - including Guge and Baltistan – which probably resulted in a refined culture of status and representation, but the name Utpala may also indicate an Aryan-speaking clan of non-Tibetan origin, with close cultural and ethnic ties to the courtly culture of Kaśmīr and Northern Pakistan, as already stated above.[266]

With the Ghaznavid raids in Northern India (from the beginning of the 11th century onwards), Buddhists from various regions including Kaśmīr may have fled to the mountain regions, bringing with them refined material needs and signs of rank, influenced also by objects traded by Central Asian and Muslim merchants, with which they had been in contact earlier.

In general, the early paintings and sculptures in Western Himalaya temples and the bronzes from Kaśmīr and Gilgit are among the most important sources for the reconstruction of Indian luxury art and items traded in northwest-India. Mediated via painters from Kaśmīr and portable objects, the motifs and surface patterns of Kaśmīr, northwest-Indian and Pāla aesthetics are among the most dominant ornamental themes in these temples. They reflect the varied and rich Indian culture of decorated cotton textiles[267], which were considerd as prestigious as silks. In addition, the motifs in these temples reflect the cultural diversity and receptiveness in this region, integrating Indian, Kaśmīr, Sogdian and Estern-Iranian aesthetic values, peculiar to the art and material culture in the region on the cross-road of trans-continental paths.

The fusion of Eastern-Iranian royal symbolism and Buddhist art had a long tradition in this region, as shown inter alia on stone carvings on the Avantisvamin temple (Avantipur, Kaśmīr) and Buddhist bronzes from Kaśmīr and Gilgit. Iranicate features have been integrated into the Buddhist symbolism of ornament at different times, which were then transferred into the medium of painting as shown at Tabo and Alchi.

The strong presence of Islam from the 10th century onwards in Central Asia might have reduced the volume of trade between Central Asia and India, but the painting in this region and the Iranicate influences are indirect evidence that Central Asian luxury goods reached Tibet up to the 13th century via various channels, probably through Kaśmīr. Sogdians also participated in this trade: "*The Sogdians, [in the time of the Arab expansion in Central Asia] were quick to see the commmercial advantages in cooperation between the Sogdian merchants and textile specialists among the Arabs is a fascinating example of Sogdian secularism and practicality*".[268]

The later Alchi paintings (around 1200, cf. Pl. 57) reflect this later phase of post-Sāsānian aesthetics which reached Ladakh.[269] These aesthetic values may be related to Eastern Iranian and Muslim textiles, and the courtly style of Ghaznavid art in particular, demonstrating that luxury art transcended confessional bounderies.

The Ghaznavids were the heirs to Persian culture at this stage as their territory stretched eastward close to Kaśmīr. As J. Naudou[270] states, the Turkic Ghaznevids encouraged Iranian culture, holding court with the magnificence of Iranian monarchs, and patronized by the *Shāh*

[266] Pal was one of the first scholars to propose this possible link (1982: 28).

At the present state of historical research, this assumption must remain speculative. Also the definition of the different layers of this historical palimpsest: Kaśmīr, Sogdiana/Eastern-Iran and Tibetan have hitherto not been analyzed in detail.

[267] Cf. Wandl 1997; Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2002.

[268] Frye 1984: 357.

[269] This style is characterized by complex ‚post-Sāsānian' figural motifs organized in specific geometric surface patterns.

[270] Naudou 1980: 23.

Nāmeh (Book of Kings, comprising 60,000 couplets), the history of pre-Islamic Iranian kings. A popular theme in Firdausi's text is the princely hunt (e.g. Bahrām-Gur). "*The Perso-Islamic Samanids had established a court culture in their capital, Bukhara, in the old Iranian tradition that constituted the initial horizon for the Ghaznevid dynasty in their quest for legitimacy and prestige within the greater Islamic world*".[271] Thus from the 12th century onwards, especially after the shift of the Ghaznevid capital from Ghazni to Lahore, we may assume that the Ghaznevid dynasties and their successors also had a great impact particularly on the art and culture of Northwestern India including Kaśmīr.[272]

> "Historian recount, and archaeological investigation confirm, the exceptional brilliance of its material civilization. ... [Mahmud the Great] assumed all the privileges of a medieval ruler, offering munificent patronage to countless literary figures, and building palace complexes and places of worship that were constructed of finely fired brick and ornamented with beautifully carved panels of white marble, moulded tiles, and, apparently, also painting. In Balkh, says the poet Farrukhi, alcoves in the Palace were decorated with paintings of Mahmud shown either in battle, a javelin (spear) in his hand, or holding a goblet at a feast."

At Lashkari Bazar Iranian attire with suspended swords, purses and hanging strips of metal or cloth can be seen. Thus, it is no surprise that the Ghaznavid courtly splendour had a significant impact on the aesthetics of luxury art and courtly culture in the whole region including Ladakh and Tibet.

In their basic appearance the Ghaznavid sultans remained to a large degree Turkic *condottieri*, whereas at Alchi the regal attire had features that differed consistently from the Ghaznavid type. In the palace of Masʿud III at Ghazni, we also find further themes of courtly imagery comparable to those in the Dukhang, namely depictions of the royal hunt on a marble slab[273] and similarities to the ornamentation of textiles depicted on the ceiling of the Sumtsek (T. *gsum brtsegs)*. However, the pictorial evidence is not generally significant enough to allow us to postulate a genetic link.[274] The later Western Central Asian stratum of Iranicate influence on the art of Tibet is attested by Tucci[275] in his comment on the ornamental characteristics of a metal Chörten (T. *mchod rten)* in the monastery of sPos khang, which might have stemmed from Kaśmīr where he detected elements of Ghaznavid art[276].

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[271] Pancaroglu 2005: 72.

[272] Cf. Holt et al. 1970: 156.

A detailed comparative analysis of Ghaznevid art and its successors will be necessary in order to define more precisely how this cultural stratum was adopted into the concepts and aesthetics of Western Tibetan Buddhist art.

[273] Allchin/Hammond 1978: fig. 6.11.

[274] Significant commonalities in themes (mounted falcon hunters, horsemen and trappery in accordance with Sāsānian, Sogdian and Ghaznevid practices) can also be found in the Eastern Iranian Nishāpur (Neyshābur), Khorāsān, which was ruled in the 10th century by an Iranian dynasty (The Samanids were the first native dynasty to arise in Irân after Muslim Arab conquest). This art shows a blending of Iranian and Turkic aesthetics and represents the earliest body of Iranian painting of the Islamic period that survived (for images cf. Sims/Marshak 2002: 26).

[275] Tucci 1975: 193.

[276] Tucci (Ibid) states: "*The attention is drawn upon two other bronze made Tschöten: the first with a kind of lion figure, refers to an Iranian cultural realm (fig. 167), the other shows relations to Islamic Art by virtue of its quadratic ornamental style,*

While the ornamental styles may have been influcened by Muslim aesthetic and luxury art, we can assume that a distinctive courtly culture with Eastern-Iranian symbols of power and rank survived in the mountainous regions of Pakistan (Baltistan, Chilas) and Ladakh.

During the 11th and 12th century – probably replacing to a large extent the former dominant role of the Sogdians – Uygurs, Chinese-style dynasties such as the Xixia and Jin and later the Mongol empire controlled the trade routes connecting Central Asia and Tibet.[277] They played an important role in the dissemination of Central Asian luxury art and post-Sasanian aesthetics in Tibet. The Tanguts established an imperial government with the dynastic name Xixia (Western Xia) in the area around Dunhuang in 1038. As fervent Buddhists they founded cave-temples in Yulin, reflecting the importance of Tibet as an innovative centre of Tantric studies in the 11th and 12th centuries.[278] Due to the close ties of the Tanguts with Tibet, one can assume that many silks preserved in Tibetan temples have come to Tibet from or via the Tangut Empire.

> "The Tanguts could not themselves make use of all the silk they acquired (mostly from China), so they traded considerable quantities and used it also as tribute and as gift. Also like the Khitans, they became ardent converts to Buddhism, which put them in contact with the neighbouring region of Tibet. A people of Tibetan and Turkic origin, Tanguts were influenced by the Indic-Tibetan, Chinese and Turko-Mongolian cultures, and the multicultural state they establish was noteworthy for its attempt to fuse Tibetan Tantric and Chinese Māhayana Buddhism. Their adherence to Buddhism would prove central to both the silk industry and the silk trade".[279]

The Tangut Empire established Buddhism as a state religion in 1038 and by the 12th century, Tibetans and Tibetan texts were part of the Tangut Buddhist religious institutions. This process may have already begun during the time of the dissolution of the Tibetan empire in Central Asia in the 9th century leading to the migration of Tibetan monks.[280]

> "Envoys of the Tibetan Karmapa sect visited the Tangut emperor in 1159 and founded a temple. Mongol advances in Central Asia between 1205 and 1227 destroyed the Tangut state, but many aspects of the special religious connections between the Tanguts and the Tibetans were adopted by the new rulers. By the mid 13th century, the Mongols were in control of all the former Tangut terrritoires and indeed of all of Asia. The silk trade was an important financial aspect of this control, as well as a means for the Mongols to assert their imperial authority and cultivate religious leaders."[281]

This period of fusion of Western Central Asian aesthetics (e.g. textile culture of Iran, such as Rayy) and Buddhist artistic and religious values is also reflected in the ceiling paintings and the

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remembering of ghaznavid tradition to be more precise (fig. 167): Its ornament could be reminiscent of the Ghazna Mausoleum" (translation by the author).

[277] Krahl 1998: 187. Due to the rejection of foreign (e.g. Sasanian) influence and and the loss of influence of china on the trade routes, the filed was open to Uygur and Tangut states. *"The treaty of 1044 obliged china to send the Tanguts 50.000 taels of silver, 130.000 bots of silk and 30.000 catties of tea annually"* (Reynolds 1995: 91).

[278] Cat. 2003: 132.

[279] Watt/Wardwell 1997: 12.

[280] Reynolds 1995: 190.

[281] Reynoleds 1995: 91.

textile depictions of the Alchi Sumtsek (c. 1200-1220). The medallion designs, in particular, also document the importance of Buddhist monasteries as commissioners of precious textiles. It is also possible that due to political upheavals from the 11th century onwards trade was reduced. However, ornamental art and aesthetic values developed in different media and may thus have been transmitted via other portable objects (such as sculptures or ritual implements of metal manuscripts) as well.

In general, the symbolism of the Tibetan-Tangut culture of textiles and ritual cloths of this period may have been later adopted by the Mongols; the symbolism of the 'golden robe' of the Mongol emperor as a robe of honour probably developed in close relation to the Buddhist silks which had been traded earlier in this region.[282] These images at Alchi may thus be an important evicence of pre-Mongol luxury textiles exported to Tibet or rather the adoption of their aesthetics because the motifs basically remain in Indo-Tibetan. It is interesting to note that lampas-weave gold and silk brocades from the 13th century reflect this type of texile culture, recently came out of Tibet.

The cultural ties with the Tanguts are best documented in the cave temples of Dunkar (around 1200), but examples of this tradition can also be found at Alchi, as will be shown below.[283]

The fusion of Tangut aesthetics and Iranicate ornamental values is then shown in the textile art of Mongol period. These fascinating cultural dynamics reflected in the ornamental and material culture in the early art of the Western Himalaya then gave then way to a dominance of Central Tibetan religious culture from the 13th century onwards.

This ample presence of textiles, ornaments and robes, embellishing the deities and donors, and defining the sacred space in the Western Himalaya connects the early temples (10th – 13th centures) in the region with the Buddhist art and culture of the Silk Routes.

In this early period of the formation of the Trans-Himalayan Buddhist cultures and that of Ladakh in particular, the heritage of Eastern-Iran, transmitted there by Iranian merchants and Buddhists from the Hindukush and western Central Asia was consciouosly integrated and adapted to local Buddhist ideology. Richard Frye has put it as follows: *„One may tentatively suggest that the end of the Sasanian empire saw the torch of Iranian culture and learning move eastward to settle in Transoxiana and Bactria, until the Mongol conquest of the thirteenth century returned that torch to western Iran, to Persia. Although so little known, the Eastern Iranian world must not be forgotten in any assessment of the heritage of ancient Iran.“*[284]

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[282] Cf. also 'Two Silk Textiles of Gold of the Early Mongol Empire', Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Vol 74/10, 1992; Cf. M. Ritter, online-publication. I am endebted for the discussions on this topic to Dr. Markus Ritter, Academy of Sciences, Department of Iranian Studies, Vienna.

[283] Cf. also D. Klimburg-Salter 2001.

[284] Frye 1984: 357.

3. ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL SETTING: THE SYMBOLISM OF MATERIAL CULTURE IN TIBETAN ART

3.1. Tibetan Art: General Remarks

Rock carvings, excavations of large monuments and burial sites of monumental scale attest to the fact that artistic activity has been present in Tibet for millennia. Buddhism also flourished in the Western Himalayan regions from earliest times. Rock images, inscriptions in stone and burial sites containing hitherto little studied historic material and artefacts attest to the fact that Buddhism was already present in this region during the time of the Great Tibetan empire, and Buddhism in Ladakh even may go back to the time of Kuṣāṇa. However, early Tibetan sources dealing with art in the region mainly reflect religious art and the political myths related to the first 'religious kings' in the 7th century. According to these legends the origins of early Tibetan art can be found in the Chinese school of painting, which one of the two wives of the king Songtsen Gampo (T. Srong gtsan sgam po; ca. 620-649), a Chinese princess (Wen ch'eng), brought from China in the mid of the 7th century, together with the famous statue of the Jowo, the most sacred image of Tibet. The same tradition claims that Bhṛikutī, who was daughter of a Nepali King and the incarnation of Tārā and the first wife of Songtsen Gampo, was a devout Buddhist and brought many sacred images and expert Newari craftsmen with her as part of her dowry and built the Ramoche, the first temple of Lhasa.

Early texts such as the Washe (T. sBa bzed, c. 8th c.) attest to the fact that Tibetans had an awareness for distinctive styles during the time of the Tibetan Empire, for example Nepali, Pāla-India, Khotanese, Kaśmīr, and also including a distinctive Tibetan style of artistic expression. One example of the latter style may be seen in an image on a silk banner at Dunhuang, which reflects a sense of naivety typical for folk art, and may have been introduced there around 900 (cf. Pl. 3a).[285] These different styles were consciously chosen to communicate the ideology of the ruling elite. The religious-political intention behind the conscious use of artistic modes and models during the time of 'nationbuilding' in Tibet was possibly the claim for legitimacy of the transfer of the Buddhist doctrine to Tibet and the formation of a large Buddhist state. The transfer of authentic images of the Buddha related to specific sacred sites is also documented in a famous banner showing different images of the Buddha from Dunhuang[286] (7th-8th c.).

The alleged transfer of a foreign school to Tibet is also symptomatic of the general difficulty of the study of Tibetan artefacts from the viewpoint of art history.[287] While the classification of Tibetan art is commonly based on iconographic aspects, the definition of the artistic tradition on the basis of stylistic analysis is a relatively young discipline in the scholarly debate on the art of Tibet.[288] This situation is partly due to the considerable lack of dated objects and inscriptions.

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[285] For an image see Whitfield 2004: 220.

[286] Whitfield 2004: fig. 36. The image possibly represent faithful drawings of actual sculptures, one of them with strong Gandharan features (ibid. 285).

[287] A Tibetan style is mentioned in the Washe (sBa bzed). The text describes the construction of the early Tibetan temples from the imperial period. There we learn that Samye (T. bSam yas) the first Buddhist monastery founded in Tibet in 775 A.C. was built using three styles: the stories of the main temple were decorated in the Tibetan, Chinese and Indian style (Karmay 1975: 4).

[288] Goepper 1989: 12; cf. also Karmay 1975, Denwood/Singer 1997; Allinger 2003.

There are several historical texts, dealing with the theory and praxis of Tibetan painting[289], which lead to the assumption of 'conservatism', 'scrupulous respect' in the transmission of teaching, and the over-emphasis on the function for ritual use and worship of painting in the analysis of Tibetan arte-facts.

> Jackson has put this position as follows: "Within the general framework of compositional types and principles of design, the painter depicted most of the particular elements in his paintings in ways that were governed either by canonical authority of by strong artistic tradition. Indeed, there was very little place in the painting for individual, original creation. ...Originality of conception was thus not required. ... The main chance for an artist to express his own sensibilities was in the decorative parts of the painting, such as the landscape and the detail of ornamentation. Even there, however, his treatment often became stereotypes."[290]

The analysis of Western Himalaya art shows a completely different picture: the consciousness for specific artistic traditions, strongly inspired by Kaśmīr, Northern Pakistan (the ancient Bolor), Central Asia and Tibet are exemplary for a multitude of styles, innovative processes, subtle calibrating of the needs of donors and religious concepts, and individuality and virtuosity of artists. In particular the genre of material culture and ornament was a component in painting which allowed the artist variety, creativity and even humour. Only skilled masters were able to achieve new solutions within the given canon, which was also a sign of luxury and veneration in the service of the Buddhist goal of ultimate salvation.

In contrast in the West, Tibet has always entirely been imagined in terms of "*...great physical and temporal distance*",[291] 'timeless' and thus 'nameless', "a lost world of spirituality and traditionalism"[292], a mystified remnant of a lost world.[293]

In contrast to the early images transported to the West, extracted from their historical, social, and artistic context by travellers and scholars which formed the basis for early creativity in Tibet, the paintings of the Western Himalaya can be studied in monuments in their artistic and cultural environment.

However, the complex dialectic between local and foreign traditions and the mobility of artists contribute to the difficulty of defining the artistic context in the Western Himalaya; wide-ranging economic and cultural contacts (also due to pilgrimage) and different socio-political and geographic situations as well as ties between monastic institutions and sects in the Western Himalaya led to a great diversity in styles and schools. Due to these factors, and the fact that the region was accessible only from the 1980's onwards, the study of the evolutionary history, stylistic development and chronology within this period is still in its infancy.

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[289] Cf. Jackson/Jackson 1984a.

[290] Ibid.: 42.

[291] Fabian, cited after Harris 1999: 17.

[292] Harris, ibid.

[293] This myth of Tibet provided the ideal 'empty vessel' in which different dreams and concepts generated by the western world could be poured. The attractiveness to identify with the myth of Tibet in the West is mis-used by both researchers and policy makers and their own political interests up to present.

The question of the existence and evolution of a distinctive early Tibetan style is the subject of controversial debate.[294] Certainly, Tibet gained a 'cosmopolitan' appeal during the time of the Tibetan Empire in Central Asia and of the occupation of the city-oases such as Khotan and Dunhuang along the Silk Route, from mid-seventh century until 850 CE.[295] As an important source for Central Asian aesthetics, the early Western Tibetan art can thus be assumed due to the contacts with the Central Tibetan culture (strongly influenced by Central Asian art during the old Tibetan monarchy). This Central Tibetan culture which was brought to the Western Tibetan regions by the dynasties, which established new kingdoms from the 10th century onwards and merged with autochtonous Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions.

In this phase – commonly denominated as 'the second diffusion of Buddhism' -important impulses came from famous Buddhist centres in Kaśmīr, Gilgit and Swāt, which could still provide Buddhist scholars, yogins and artists,[296] as well as a rich courtly culture, in particular in Kaśmīr. Buddhist culture with distinctive stylistic idioms related to folk traditions was also a strong cultural force in the mountain regions of Baltistan (the ancient Bolorian Tibet according to the Hudud al-Alam, where Buddhist rulers reigned up to the 15th century and where Tibetans live up to present). Ladakh and Baltistan formed a cultural unit, which is today divided by political borders.

In Kaśmīr[297], after the Karkota (630-850), the Utpala reigned up to the 11th century. Later the Lohara reigned up to the 14th century. There is ample evidence of cultural and religious exchange with Kaśmīr in scriptural sources such as the biography of the 'Great Translator' Rinchen Zangpo. Greater Kaśmīr had close ties with Central Asia (Sogdia, Khotan, China and Eastern Iran and with the Turkic statelets in Northern Pakistan) as well as India (such as Pāla art). This exchange resulted in a fascinating cultural diversity of this art, which did not survive in Kaśmīr painting proper, but is reflected in particular in the art of Alchi.

Tibetan literary tradition identifies Kaśmīr ('Kha che' according to Tibetan literary sources) as one of the four areas, which influenced the development of Tibetan art. Since no early contemporary Kaśmīri painting has survived, this attribution is not conclusive. The evidence of early Tibetan art in the Western Himalaya shows a much more complex image. We can thus assume that the claim of a Kaśmīri origin mainly provided the authority and authenticity for these sacred images.

It is also possible that the Tibetan term 'Khache' could have been applied to the group of Indian provinces situated to the west of Tibet and to the south of Baltistan, situated at the extreme northwest of the Indian domain in one of the clusters of economic paths in Asia.

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[294] See H. Karmay (1975) for a concise survey on the early history of Tibetan art.

[295] The cultural and artistic relations and reciprocal receptiveness between dynastic art of Western Tibet and Central Asia and Khotan in particular are found in Tibetan culture very early on; on the level of formal and stylistic elements and signs of authority and power; Rona-Ṭaś emphasizes for example in his studies the close relation between the old Tibetan kingship and the Central Asian Turks (1955: 355). Important accounts on Turks can be found in old Tibetan annals and chronics. After the conversion of the Turkic dynasties to Buddhism these contacts get even more intense. The Uygurs founded Buddhist kingdoms such as Khocho in Eastern Turkestan and Kansu. These close contacts with the Buddhist Uygurs, and the 'Hor' in particular are also reflected in Western Tibetan sources, and will be relevant for the reconstruction of the history of specific local protective spirits such as Pehar and Gesar. Various other themes of Iranicate-Buddhist art in Khotan, Sogdian, Gandhāra and Kaśmīr will be discussed with regard to the possible religious co-notations of courtly art in Ladakh.

[296] Gombrich/Bechert 1995: 259.

[297] Kou-che-mi or Kia-che-mi-lo after the Chinese sources, Ka-che in Tibetan and Kaśmīr or Qaśmīr in the Arabic transcription.

Despite historical crises, this region may have preserved its originality benefiting fully from the cultural place as well as economically from various exchanges between Central Asia and India.[298] In this cultural zone, a vibrant culture emanated from a complex interaction between Kaśmīr as an important centre and small kingdoms and chiefdoms.

I would like to briefly mention one aspect of this complex interaction between different cultural zones in this region: as an example I would like to take a look at the different layers of the setting of deities or Tathagātas in the Sumtsek, or rather the shrine-like abodes they are residing in (Pl. 239). The crowded environment, set in a strict architectonic structure (with 'Seven Jewels' in the bottom zone), which frames the central halo is comparable with a type of religious imagery from Dunhuang; one example being an Avalokiteśvara, painted on a banner (c. 10th century).[299]

Other comparable features are small discs containing cosmological symbols. But the most important feature is the shared aesthetic values can be observed in the focus on the supra-mundane quality of the image in both examples; the rendering of the central deity at Alchi, which almost emanates out of the concentric gold-plated halo, as well as the luxury dresses and other precious objects and jewels, emphasizing on trans-mundane beauty and splendour. While the overall aesthetic qualities have shared values with Buddhist centres along the Silk Road, the architectonic frame and the mythical creatures which reside in the heavenly abode have a strong Indo-Tibetan flavour, comparable with the art of Greater Kaśmīr including Northern Pakistan.

Michael Meister studied two phases of regional schools of temple architecture in the Salt range (Upper Pakistan) and the artistic interaction in this region. He studied the temples patronized by the Hindu Shāhis in the ninth and tenth century, among them the temple of Amb Sharif. In earlier studies these monuments were often associated with the Kaśmīr architectural tradition. However, the ornamentation such as cinquefoil entries and blind windows and foliated relief crowning the arches is distinguished from the Kaśmīr style, the latter bearing strong similarities with the shrine-like frames at Alchi mentioned above.

In addition, the curvilinear superstructure is different from the peaked pyramidal roofs of Kaśmīr, the Hindu Shāhi architects responding rather creatively to Kaśmīr style at Malot and Mari in the 10th century.[300]

These powerful Hindu Śāhi patrons had close marital ties during the Utpala, and took refuge in Kaśmīr during the time of expansion of the Ghaznavids in the 11th century.[301] The early

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[298] *"It is open to the outside world through certain difficult corridors, the gates (dvāra or draṅga) of which speak Kalhaṇa, al-Bīrūnī and the Chinese pilgrims. It communicates with the states of Upper Punjab and India through Baramula and the valley and also through various passes.... The Zōjī-lā pass is not only the* gateway *to Ladakh, a Tibetanised province in the 7th century, it is the departure point of the difficult route across the Karakoram towards Khotan, the most Indian of the oases of Central Asia. Through Uraśā and through Śardi, Kaśmīr is in communication with Gilgit, the Irano-Indian borders, and also the tracks most frequent between Indian and China, through Swāt and Chitral"* (Naudou 1980: 28-29).

[299] Cat. 1996, Tokyo: 216.

[300] M. W. Meister carried out excavations together with the Pakistan Heritage society, Peshawar, on the west bank of the Indus, in Pakistan (Meister, unpublished manuscript, 'Fig Gardens of Amb-Sharif, Folklore and Archaeology': 7); cf. also Meister, M. 2000.

[301] Meister (online-publication, 11.2007: 'Temples Along the Indus', http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/arth/meister/expedtxt.html). At that time the great fortress at Nandana on the eastern flank of the Salt Range fell to Mahmud of Ghazni, who sought to control the significant routes across the Panjab leading toward Multan and Delhi (ibid.).

artistic heritage in the region of Punjab is also important with regard to architectural ornament and its symbolism in early Western Himalaya temples (Pl. 120).

Niches and shrine models on the walls reflect an elaborate and distinctive ornamental culture, which also later found continuity in Muslim architecture in the region. Interestingly, monuments and temples from Northern Pakistan and Swāt and their decorative forms in particular, bear parallels with architecture in the Hindukush (Swāt) and the Western Himalaya. These are still little studied.[302]

This ought to demonstrate how problematic it is to equate without critique the rich and varied artistic and cultural phenomena in the Western Himalaya solely with the heritage related to the Kaśmīr rulers who were without doubt powerful and influential. Instead, the process of this interaction and the regional economic, political and ecclesiastical context from which creative responses to the culture of Greater Kaśmīr emanated should be reconstructed.

Despite the Muslim expansion in the region, in particular from the 9th/10th century onwards, Kaśmīr still remained an important centre of Buddhism. However, the Ghaznavid sultans, heirs of post-Sāsānian Iran, and the art of Khorāsān, who encouraged the Shāh-nāmeh by Ferdousi, and later the Ghourides, may have had a strong impact on the language of luxury art and royal symbolism in Northern Pakistan and Kaśmīr and thus also in Ladakh.

Another example of the strong ties between Ladakh and Northern Pakistan is the case of Baltistan. A short comparative study aims at refining our perception of the complex cultural stratigraphy and artistic interaction in this region. M. Klimburg defined a distinctive style which was also belonged to Muslim architecture in Baltistan, in contrast to other regions in Northern Pakistan. The former is comparable to Buddhist architecture found in Ladakh as well as to Hindu shrines in Kinnaur and Kaśmīr. "*Communication with Ladakh, mainly along the Indus, was easier than with any other adjoining cultural and political entity. There were also important influences from Iran... Khotan and Yarkand...*". This is evidence that Baltistan – despite its geographic position between the highest mountain ranges of the world – is not a secluded region, but a channel of communication with other regions, closely linking Ladakh with India and Central Asia.

Characteristic features of the tomb of Mir Mukhtar at Kiris[303] are complex wooden constructions (made of Himalayan cedar, 'deodar') on a centralized ground plan, with a two-storied structure and a veranda set before the front of the entrance (cf. also Pl. 67, showing a Khanqah at Tagas/Baltistan). The interior impresses the onlooker by taking her/him through the stories, leading the gaze of the onlooker upstairs to ceilings decorated with ornament. Pilasters and capitals with 'ionic' volutes[304] - which stand in sharp contrast to Indian capitals - and lantern roofs are further elements in this region, which add to a shared aesthetic idiom with the Western Himalaya. The remarkable richness and variety of ornamental forms in the woodcarvings of the interior decoration[305] at Kiris is a further element which bears striking parallels with the ornamental style of the Alchi Sumtsek.

We can thus assume that Baltisan - where Tibetans still sharing a common dialect with the Ladakhi – and parts of the Western Himalaya, in particular Upper Ladakh, define a distinctive

[302] Cf. Scerrato/Taddei 1995, and Flood.

[303] Klimburg 2004: fig. 144, p. 157.

[304] Ibid. fig. 157 (central pillar in the audience hall of Shigar palace).

[305] Cf. an image of the frieze on the front and inside Chakchan mosque, Ibid. fig. 147, 148.

cultural zone. This zone is only today divided by both political borders and by religious groupings.

In later periods of the early Buddhist artistic phase in the region (1150-1220), strong cultural interactions in the Western Himalaya with regions dominated by Uygur Buddhists as well as Chinese style dynasties in eastern Central Asia are also observable, such as Jin and the ancient kingdom of Xixia (Hsi-hsia; with Kharakhoto as an important centre, where a Tibetan style of painting can also be identified). These Buddhist centres might have been suppliers of luxury art to the western Tibetan temples in the 12th and 13th centuries, satisfying their diversified and refined material wants, as can be seen from the elaborate depictions of ornament. In addition, they also were possibly also mediators of a distinctive 'cosmonizing' symbolism of space shown in the cave temples at Dunkar (c. 1150-1200 c); (see chapters 5. and 6.).

From this cultural interaction a complex genesis of diverse schools and styles emerged with distinctive Western Tibetan characteristics. New iconographic themes in the art of Alchi can be observed from the 13th century onwards, reminiscent of Central Tibetan thangka paintings of that time, reflecting also a new cultural and religious orientation.[306]

3.2. Early Cultural and Artistic Heritage of the Western Trans-Himalaya: Ladakh-Baltistan-Gilgit

The westward expansion of the Tibetan empire, from the 7th to the 9th centuries, brought Ladakh into contact with the Buddhist art and culture in adjacent regions very early on, followed by a 'Tibetisation' of parts of the society.

Ladakh was under Tibetan sovereignty from the 7th century onwards and was probably also actively involved in Tibetan expansion. During the same period "*...Tibet controlled or exacted tribute in the Pamirs, notably from 720-740 the kingdom of Bolōr (now Gilgit). In 740, a Tibetan princess was sent to cement the alliance with the Gilgit royalty. Earlier, a mission from Gilgit had presented tribute in central Tibet*".[307]

Moreover, due to geographic factors and trade connections Ladakh cannot be isolated from the regions to the west in Northern Pakistan. The various petroglyphs and inscriptions located along the ancient trade routes in Northern Pakistan show the historical importance of the Upper Indus and the Gilgit river valley (part of the ancient 'Little Palūr', Bolōr or P'o-lu'i, Po-lulai according to Chinese sources) as an ancient traffic route and its role „*...as a link in an east/west direction from Kaśmīr /Tibet to Bāmiyān, but also in a north/south direction between Pamir and Darel, the very direction in which Fa Hsien must have travelled.*"[308]

The animal style rock carvings along the Indus river system cutting several gateways into the high mountain ranges, which had been discovered in the 1970's by Jettmar, gave impetus to a detailed study of the ancient artistic remains in the Pamirs[309] documenting the various cultural influences, "*... which penetrated the mountain ranges from west to east, that is, from Iran and Transoxania through the highlands of Central Asia into Indian subcontinent*".[310]

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[306] Cf. Luczantis 2006.

[307] Heller, Cat. 2006.

[308] Haruko Tsuchiya (1999: 355).

[309] Cf. also Jettmar 1996.

[310] Hauptmann 2004: 21.

The presence of Buddhism is documented by various Buddhist sites in the western Trans-Himalaya such as the famous Gilgit manuscript. Other evidence of such presence is provided by places of Buddhist pilgrimage, and in particular by a large statue of a Bodhisattva Maitreya, 24 metres high and made of carved and gilded timber. It was described by Fa Hsien, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim around 400 CE, as follows, "*The kings of the (surrounding) countries vie with one another in presenting offerings to it*".[311]

Important evidence of early Buddhist heritage in the region is a great number of rock reliefs, typically depicting Bodhisattva and Buddhas and partly sharing stylistic characteristics. These have been discovered in Gilgit, Baltistan (Pakistan[312], cf. Pl. 168), Ladakh and Western Tibet, The images from post-Shāhi period (9th to 10th century) also include ibexes, hunting scenes, mounted horsemen with shield and axes, comparable to the language of power in the early courtly art of Ladakh. Despite this fact, the early history of Buddhism in Ladakh and Western Tibet remains little studied. [313]

Inscriptions (in Kharoṣṭhī, Brāhmī, Tibetan, Sogdian, Chinese) along the Indus and Gilgit rivers are also important for the reconstruction of the religious-political situation in this region, providing references to various hill states and kingdoms. "*In the east, the powerful state of Great Palūr (equivalent to the later Bolōr from Tibetan annals) occupied the area of Batistan, including Astor; in the west, the other important principality was 'Little Palūr' (according to later Tibetan sources called Bruźa), covering the area of Gilgit,... Because of its strategic position at the gateway to India this region also played a key role in the Chinese-Tibetan power struggle during the seventh and eighth centuries*".[314]

From the fifth to the eighth century this area was dominated by the Palola Shāhi, who called themselves Darada kings (Alam bridge) at Chilas. The Daradas were probably the ruling lords of the Indus Valley.[315] Inscriptions and epigraphic evidence from a series of so-called Gilgit bronzes with their dedications – partly translated by Oskar v. Hinüber - give a glimpse of their political systems, cultural orientation, and their models to manipulate power and authority.

Narrative records of the T'ang Shu and Tibetan annals document the struggle between Tibetan and Chinese, when Tibetan armies invaded Bolōr between CE 720 and 745.[316] The presence of Tibetans in Gilgit is, inter alia, documented by Tibetan inscriptions in a Buddhist mountain sanctuary of Shigar in Baltistan and on the river of Gilgit.[317] At the time of Tibetan control of Ladakh and the region of Bolōr in the West, Ladakh certainly was receptive not only to Buddhist art and its royal symbolism of the courtly centres but also to the rich spirituality found in this mountainous region. Various historical texts describe the splendour of the court of the Shāhi princes of Northern Pakistan in historical Northwest India and the Kabul Valley who were particularly receptive to Iranicate symbolism, a characteristic feature at Alchi. Material culture like sumptuous textiles and costumes depicted on bronzes are important

[311] Haruko Tsuchiya 1999:353-54.

[312] These artistic remains are currently documented and analyzed by a Research Unit at Heidelberg 'Rock Carvings and inscriptions along the Karakorum Highway'.

[313] John Bellezza primarily documented and studied pre-Buddhist culture and archaeology in Northern Tibet (Changthang, T. *Byang thang*), in particular stone images.

[314] Hauptmann 2004: 31.

[315] Ibid.

[316] Beckwith 1987: 30.

[317] Hauptmann 2004: 35.

evidence of the strong impact of the language of luxury art of Gilgit and Kaśmīr on the courtly culture of Ladakh (see below). The kings of Kaśmīr were also related to the Shāhi-dynasties through marital and political alliances and may have been the mediators of the Iranianising royal symbolism in the art of Ladakh. The Turcic Muslims of Ghazni, during the period of their expansion, may have expelled some Shāhi dynasties to the hill districts Northern Pakistan while others probably went into exile at the court of Kaśmīr.

At a conference in 2005, Denwood suggested that Tibetan expansion brought the art of the Patola Shāhis to an end and encouraged and sponsored the spread and production of the Buddhist rock carvings along the Indus.[318]

Signs of sovereignty in the region can be seen in inscribed sculptures with donor depictions. They merit special attention in this study, as does the refined aristocratic culture of status mediated via Sogdian merchants in Baltistan and Ladakh.[319] Documents from the 'Renaissance Phase Buddhism' from the 10th century onwards can be found in recent discoveries in Baltistan (Fig.26) and the early art of Ladakh in the Alchi Dukhang.

Francke was a pioneer in the study of Buddhist and pre-Buddhist culture in Ladakh, Kaśmīr and Baltistan. He documented inscriptions at Mulbeck[320], a region where the Dard population may have originally dominated, and where the Dards built castles and forts. Sogdian inscriptions, identified by Fancke at Drangtse,[321] document the importance of Ladakh as a region of international trade.

Francke[322] and Snellgrove/Skorupski[323] were among the first western scholars to present surveys on the early Buddhist heritage of Ladakh, while Bellezza focused on the early artistic heritage and rock art in Ladakh and the Changthang area. Luczanits gave a selection of exemplary monuments and objects of the early Buddhist heritage of Ladakh in his 2005 article, including stone steles (*rdo-ring*) and stupa, some of which may pre-date the West-Tibetan kingdom. [324]

In the early Buddhist culture of the Western Trans-Himalaya different styles can be identified. A Kaśmiri, Indo-Tibetan inspired 'courtly style', with deep round reliefs, can be found on rock images. Dras (near Śrinagar, with Tibetan inscriptions, showing Maitreya, Avalokiteśvara and a horse-rider (Pl. 166, Pl. 167) and Mulbek (Maitreya, 8th-9th century) belong to this group. This is in contrast to a visual idiom characterized by shallow carving, unmistakably influenced by folk art and comparable to the 'Tibetan paintings' (c. 9th century) at Dunhuang. Examples of this 'Trans-Himalayan-Tibetan' s tyle can be found along the Indus, at Manthal near Skardu (Baltistan, c. 9th century) and at Shey in Ladakh (9th or 10th century; featuring the 5 Jinas and donor depictions in the bottom zone, dressed in caftans and offering lotus flowers comparable to the courtly art at Alchi).[325] Characteristic of the figural style of deities are hieratic, stiff bodies (feet turned outwards) focusing on decorative elements such as

[318] European Association of South Asian Archaeology, London 2005, verbal communication.

[319] Papa-Kalantari 2007.

[320] Francke 1906.

[321] Francke 1925.

[322] Francke 1914; 1926.

[323] Snellgrove/Skorupski 1977; 1980.

[324] Luczanits 2005; for recent studies on the early Buddhist heritage of the Western Himalaya see also Orofini 1990.

[325] Image in Snellgrove/Skorupski 1977: 11.

linear dresses and jewellery. Frescoes at Baltistan belong to the same phase (Skardu). The latter is a style which developed far from courtly centers and can found in Baltistan, Ladakh and Western Tibet from 8th to 10th century, before the region was Tibetized. This early Buddhist stratum formed the basis for the new Buddhist religious foundations from the period of the newly founded kingdoms in the region of Guge during the 10th century, and in particular Ladakh (which was a part of this kingdom). According to scriptural evidence, the monuments of the earliest phase are situated at Nyarma[326] (situated south of Tiksey), which are related to the activity of Rinchen Zangpo, and Basgo.[327] These monuments are partly ruined and have received no attention.

In contrast, the early monuments from the Alchi school of Painting (Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda), datable between the middle of the 12th and beginning of the 13th centuries, have been the focus of – due to their exquisite wall paintings and relatively good state of preservation - greater attention.

However, there is no integrated study of the early archaeological remains, including petroglyphs, inscriptions in bronzes to be used as historical sources for the reconstruction of the cultural history of the upper Indus area (the Western Trans-Himalaya with Baltistan and Ladakh). Equally, there is no cross-cultural comparative analysis of the small states and their artistic heritage.

3.3. Alchi: The Sacred Site

From the 10th/11th century onwards a great number of Buddhist monuments were patronized in the region of Ladakh: The 'Alchi group of monuments' - which can be associated with the famous Dro-clan, wealthy aristocratic patrons, who had estates there, while the region of Upper Ladakh was temporally controlled by the Guge kings and their successors (Pl. 1). This school with distinctive stylistic and iconographic features includes various early temples in the villages of Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda Chung (in Zanskar). These monuments and their interior decorations (in almost perfect condition) are among the most refined and complex artistic expressions of Buddhist art and art in general, bearing witness to the culture and its visual expressions in a period when Buddhism was still flourishing in the remote mountain region of the Western-Trans-Himalaya, while cultures of the lower areas were being deeply transformed by the advancing forces of Islam and Hinduism.

The density of monuments surviving in a small area "*...of Lower Ladakh that can be attributed to a relatively short historical period is unique not only in the region but probably throughout the Himalayas. At each of the three sites [Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda Chung] several temples were decorated by workshops deriving from the same artistic background, and what survived is only a part of what was originally erected there.*"[328]

Alchi – one of the most refined artistic expressions of Buddhist culture throughout the Himalayas - lies on the Indus, 64 km west of Leh and 7 km south of Saspol. The longitudinal orientated complex is enclosed by a wall and lies on a terrace which slopes down towards the Indus. Three entrance stupa (T. *ka ka ni mchod rten*) among them the 'Great Stupa' and six smaller sanctuaries constitute a sacred compound (chökhor, T. *chos 'khor*) separate from the village (Pl. 1).

[326] Cf. Gerald Kozicz 2007.

[327] Cf. Luczanits 2005 for a description and images.

[328] Luczantis 2004: 125.

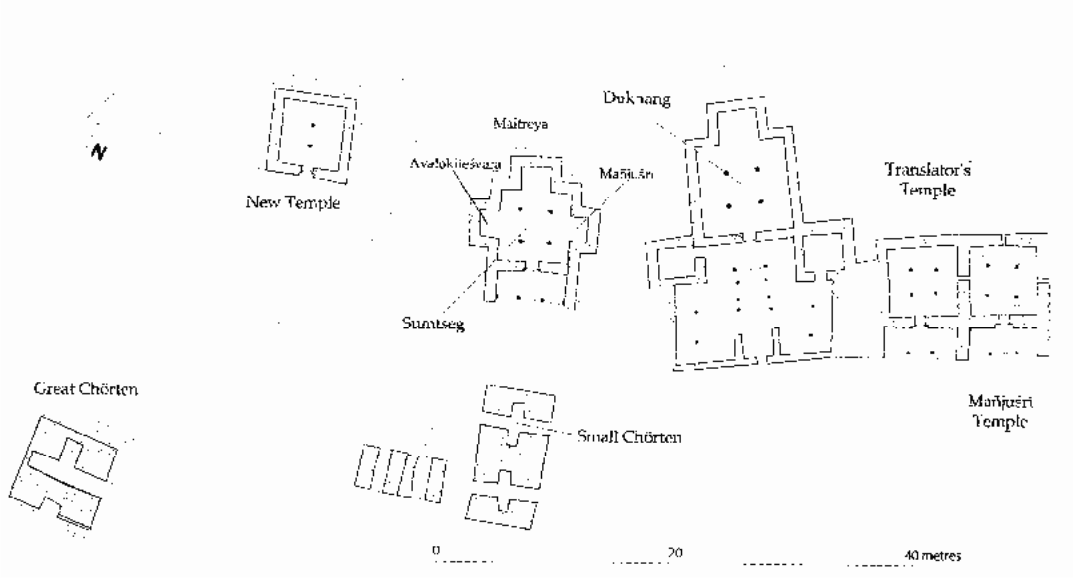


Fig. 1: Alchi sacred site (after Luczanits 2004: fig. 136)

The original conception of the compound cannot be completely reconstructed due to later additions and alterations to the buildings.[329] Today, five structures dominate the compound; among these the Dukhang and the Sumtsek contain images and sculptures from the early artistic period (mid. 12th to 13th century); (

Fig. 1,

Fig. 2).

The Sumtsek is a part of Chökhor, the sacred compound at Alchi, which is situated at the top of a slope above the Indus (Pl. 1). The structure dominates the individual religious buildings of the complex, which are positioned on an east-west axis, on account of is striking, three-storied form and the fact that it is taller than all the other buildings. However, it is probable that Sumtsek was not conceived as the liturgical centre of the complex, as was the case with the

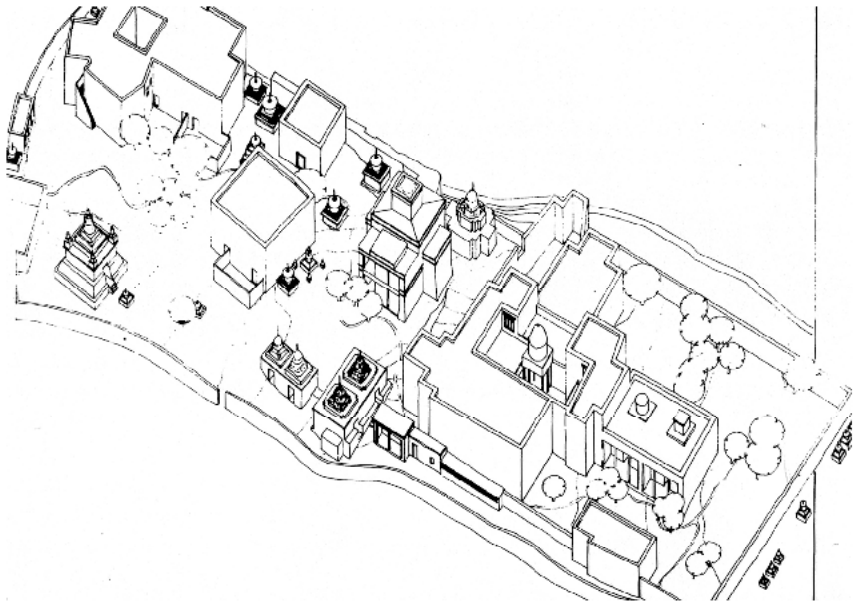


Fig. 2. Alchi sacred site, plan DiMattia (after Vergara/Béguin 1987: 182)

[329] Goepper 1993: 111.

three-storied temple at Samye (T. bSam yas).

The function of the different buildings is still not clear: in the hierarchy of sacred spaces, the Dukhang is generally the most important. This single-storied building is probably the oldest of the compound. The Sumtsek lies higher than the Dukhang and dominates the compound with its three-storied structure.

Alchi has a less symmetric conception than the more regular compound of Tabo, which is constructed on a central axis above a roughly rectangular ground plan. The Dukhang has a central position there. The 'Golden Temple' of Tholing, is – comparable to the Sumtsek - a three-storied building, but it is positioned in the centre of a mandalic ground plan.

The Sumtsek, also described as a 'pile of jewels' in inscriptions, is the centre of the compound and may also reflect the idea of the temple as the central point of the Dro clan's domain and of sacred order in general. Cosmologic ideas, which developed in this period, led to a strictly defined structure of space in the temple. One may speculate that these systems which are precisely formulated regarding architecture and sacred space may have also applied to the collection of sacred dwellings as a whole. However, further investigations are necessary to strengthen this hypothesis.

Besides, the evolutionary history and connection between the different buildings of this tradition - including associated monuments in Mangyu, Sumda – remains a matter for future research. A study of the functions of these different monuments would also be important with regard to the question of the iconographic programme and the function of the temples in the overall context.

Concerning the building technique, the monuments follow the tradition of the local vernacular architecture. Their construction techniques are clearly dictated to by the harsh climate, sysmic disturbances and difficult terrain. They have a simple exterior consisting of cube-like forms. The materials are mud-bricks, rubble stone and timber. In contrast to the austere looks of the walls, the entrance stands in front of the Sumtsek and the Dukhang, which was probably originally painted. Through a small door one enters a space of stunning visual complexity and colourful splendour. These interior space are filled with light using brilliant and intensive colour. In fact, the use of gold (T. gser), on pastiglia relief, is further evidence of this tendency (Pl. 2). Fully developed and unified artistic themes are found at Nako and Alchi, covering the interior spaces and generating an impression of incredibly colourful celestial palaces. On a symbolic level, gold represents the colourless light and represents the absolute consciousness and complete dissolution of the mirage of existence.[330]

The complex evolutionary history of painting styles is still little studied. One mode of painting in the Dukhang shows unique features with a strong Central Asian flavour, comparable to the early phase of the Tabo temples. Striking parallels between offering deities in the mandala in the Dukhang and those at the Uygur Buddhist temples at Bäzäklik are observable, in the form of flying genies with rather corpulent bodies, hovering on cloud-like scrolls, with additional clouds on their heads which appear like crowns. Further parallels can be seen in their attire, such as the boots worn by some deities in a group of sculptures in the same temple (central deity on the Main wall), as can also be seen in the early phase of Tabo (c. 1000, with strong Central Asian features). This figural style, emphasizing the plasticity of the body, contrasts to both the style of the sculptures in the temple and to the rather planar style of figures found in the temples of Nako (c. mid 12th century), reminding us of book illuminations.

[330] Tucci 1949: 286.

Therefore, the work of different groups of artists in the Dukhang can be assumed to have been influenced by climatic conditions, which allowed them to work in the temple only for a short period every year.

3.3.1. Dating

According to local tradition, Alchi is one of the 108 temples of the Great Translator Rinchen Zangpo (958-995). However, only in the ruins of Nyarma (near Tikse)[331] in Ladakh is there historical evidence which points to the involvement by the famous translator. The compound of Alchi is attributed to the monk Kelden Sherab (T. sKal ldan shes rab), who was born in Sumda and studied in Nyarma. The noble monk, who was - according to the inscription - an important religious master at Alchi, donated the Dukhang and its interior decoration[332]. There are no dates concerning his life. However, he must have preceded the priest Thsültrim Ö (T. Tshul krims 'od), who left a sign of his existence in the Great Stupa. Both donors are members of the famous Bro clan. Roger Goepper dated the Sumtsek on basis of a genealogy with an inscription in the third storey, according to which the temple was constructed between 1200 and 1220. The last priest in the lineage, identified by Goepper, is the Drigungpa (T. 'Bri gung pa 'Jig rten mgon po) who was born in 1143 and died in 1217.[333] Researchers agree concerning the dating of the Dukhang. It being older than the Sumtsek means that it was presumably constructed around the middle of the 12th century.

The observations concerning donor depictions and luxury art in the Dukhang and Sumtsek support Roger Goepper's dating of the monuments.

Due to the fact that we have no secure dating for the founding of the Dukhang, we need to rely on comparative stylistic analysis for the reconstruction of its chronology. A terminus ante quem is the certain dating for the Sumtsek: 1200-1220, and the depictions are certainly later than those from the renovation phase of Tabo around 1042.

That time would have elapsed between the iconographic programme of Tabo and Nako can be assumed, featuring fully developed mandala, and a certain vertical tendency in the symbolism of space (see chapter 6.). The emergence of selected naturalism in the medium of donor depictions is a new element found at Nako, probably demonstrating that Nako and the Alchi Dukhang were built in the same period, different artistic schools working on each of them.

Remarkable stylistic and artistic differences between the Dukhang and the later foundations at Alchi, for example the Sumtsek at Alchi and various temples and stupa at Mangyu and Sumda – which also belong the 'Alchi school of painting' - can be observed. These differences increase strikingly with regard to iconographic complexity, interrelation of different media, and symbolism of space, so a certain chronological distance to the earlier Dukhang can be assumed. The Dukhang can tentatively be placed between the beginning to the middle of the 12th century.[334] This assumption is further supported by the genesis of donor depictions, reflecting earlier Eastern-Iranian sources in the Dukhang, while the temples at Mangyu and the Sumtsek document a later Indo-Tibetan interpretation of the 'original' mode.

3.3.2. Iconographic Programme

[331] Cf. Kozicz 2007.

[332] Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980, II: 146.

[333] Goepper 1990: 165. The translations are the result of a co-operation between Prof. Goepper and the Ladakhi scholar Konchuk Panday.

[334] A dating of Alchi Dukhang in the middle of the 12th century has also been suggested by Luczanits 2005: 74).

The Dukhang consists of a roughly rectangular, pillared hall, measuring 7,5 m x 7,9 m, with a niche (3.3 x 2,4 m) on the back wall[335].

The interior decoration shows a network of different media, which intermingle into a iconographic whole: paintings on the walls (depicting different classes of deities, mandalas and narrative cycles), sculptures and woodcarvings. This multitude of genres merging into a conceptional unit is characteristic for both the art of this region and of the Silk Road in general. Unfortunately, the original design for the ceiling is no longer extant, but one may assume that it was also decorated with depictions of textiles as well as ornaments and figural elements typical of this period.

The iconography of the Dukhang has never been discussed in detail. The iconographic programme is based on Mahāyāna (the 'Great' Path), the path of commitment to the goal of salvation from suffering for all beings, and in particular the later esoteric phase of Buddhism which came to be known as Vajrayāna (the 'Adamantine Way'); (Fig. 3.)

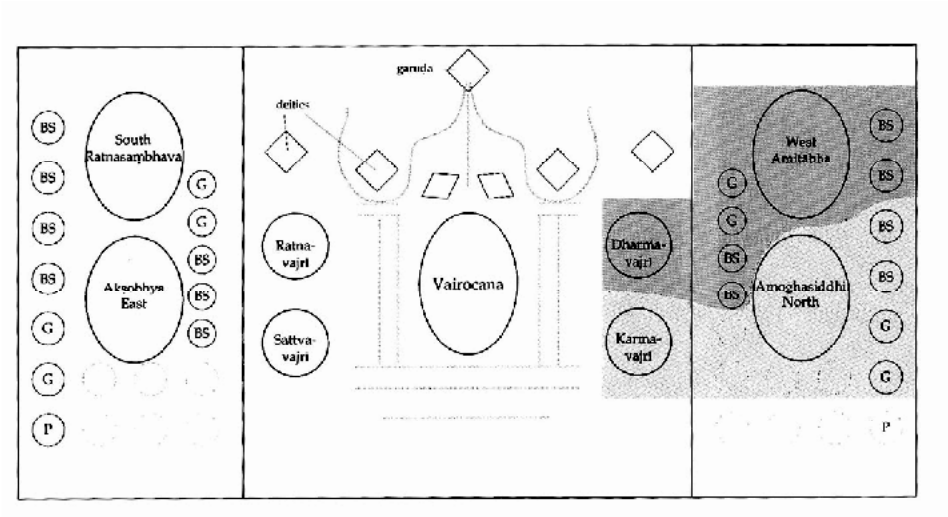


Fig. 3: Alchi, Dukhang, cultic centre (after Luczanits 2004: 144)

This universalistic view resulted in the plurality of Buddhas, who have already reached a high state of divinity and are residing in the various directions of the universe.[336] Thus a religious cult was devoted not only to the Buddha Śākyamuni, but to other Buddhas as well: Amitābha ('Boundless light') of the western quarter, Ratnasaṃbhava ('Source of Jewels') of the south, Akṣobhya ('Imperturbable') of the east, Amogasiddhi ('Infallible Success') of the north. This five-fold arrangement forms a mandala with Śākyamuni holding the central position; in this system he is characterized as 'Vairocana' (Sanskrit: 'Resplendent').[337]

Vajrayāna Buddhism is a ritually and visually complex form that builds on the belief that the ultimate Buddha–nature resides within all beings waiting to be discovered. Accordingly the function of religious art of this period has been defined as follows:

> "Als besonderer Zweig dieser Form des Buddhismus (des Mahāyāna-Buddhismus) ist es der Vajrayāna-Buddhsimus, der sich vor allem in der religiösen Kunst Tibets spiegelt.

[335] For the history of construction of the temple see C. Luczanits 2005: 127 ff.

[336] Snellgrove; Cat. 1982: 66.

[337] Ibid.

> Diese Kunst will nicht als Vergegenwärtigung heilgeschichtlicher Ereignisse oder Geschichte von Heiligen verstanden werden. Ihr Anspruch ist es, selbst ein Initiationsweg zu sein, der dem Meditierenden letztlich "Befreiung" verheißt. Nicht ein ästhetisches oder kritisch hinterfragendens Verhältnis zum Bild, wie wir es gewohnt sind, is hier gefordert, sondern, vor allem in der Mandala-Meditiation, eine Idenifikation mit der im Zentrum des Bildes dargestellten Gottheit. Diese ist im Grunde nur eine Chiffre, ein verschlüsseltes Bild für die im Menschen verborgene, von ihm freizusetzende Buddha-Natur".[338]

A follower of the Vajrāyana, receives empowerment before the tantric meditation practices; these rituals are analogous to the coronation of a king with dominion over the mandala of a specific class. *„Similarly, in the tantric ritual the adept is empowered as a buddha, with dominion over a circle of buddhas, each from a different buddha family. Once empowerment has taken place, the adept can practice maeditation techniques of identification with the buddha at the centre of the mandala."*[339]

Linrothe was one of the first Western scholars to reconstruct the complex visual structure and grammar of esoteric Buddhism in the early art of the Western Himalaya as reflected in the different components interwoven into a conceptional unit in the Alchi Sumtsek.[340]

The hierarchy of sacred space in the Dukhang is horizontal – corresponding to the rectangular plan and possibly monastic use - in contrast to the vertical hierarchy of space in the Sumtsek with various cosmic allusions.[341]

A development in the symbolism of space is reflected also in how the donor figures are positioned differently. While they are placed at Sumtsek along the walls of the whole ground level of the temple, the donor figures in the Dukhang in contrast are concentrated on the entrance wall, also reflecting the different cultic functions of the buildings. However, also in the Dukhang, a vertical hierarchy is observable on each wall, analogous to contemporary thangka depictions.

A constant feature in the western Himalayan temple's interior decorations is the compositional unit of the life of the Buddha and donors on the entrance wall. As this corresponds to the system and hierarchy of the *trikāya* ('Three Bodies of the Buddha'), these themes can be attributed to the *nirmāṇakāya* (T. *sprul sku*, 'Transformation Body'), the sensual conceivable manifestation of a Buddha created for his appearance on earth. This juxtaposition is also used to transport religious as well as political ideas. The donors are equated with the Buddha and his spiritual career and are shown as 'examples' for the spiritual path towards higher enlightenment and are part of the cosmologic order in the temple (cf. assembly frieze; Pl. 249).

In the lower part on the left wall there are scenes of the life of the Buddha while the consecration frieze is depicted on the right-hand side of the entrance wall. These two sections of the walls are positioned in bilateral symmetry to each other. This compositional scheme of protector deities above or in the portal and donor depictions and the life of Buddha on two opposed walls in the entrance wall can also be found at Dunkar and corresponds to the sacred order and hierarchy as expressed in the Esoteric Buddhist system of *trikāya*. We find a large

[338] Essen-Thingo 1989: 14.

[339] Whitfield 2004: 210.

[340] Linrothe 1995 (in Goepper 1996).

[341] Prof. Rob Linrothe (1996) was one of the first Western scholars who proposed the possible 'decipherment' of the complex iconographic structure of the Alchi Sumtsek.

donor panel and a Buddha-cycle covering the whole wall flanking the door in both temples. At Dunkar these two themes show comparable iconographic schemes and of particular note is the life of the Buddha shown in a Tibetan environment, with Śuddhodana in his palace reminiscent of a tent (comparable types of enthroned monarchs are also found in images of the Buddha-to-be in Tuṣita heaven); the same setting is shown also in a scene depicting the throne of the Tibetan monarch, and is a further indication of the conscious equation of the career of the Buddha with that of the noble donors.

Mahākāla (T. mgon po) is depicted (Pl. 155) above the entrance attended by a noble horse-rider and local protector deities. The deities above the portal - together with the donor depictions – have an apotropaic function. Mahākāla is flanked by a vertical row of Buddhas on both sides. The entrance wall shows images of the life of the Buddha (on the left side of the portal, viewed from inside) on the lowest wall panel, while on the right side, donors and courtly scenes accompanied by inscriptions are depicted. Above these narrative images large mandala cover the upper section of the wall. The iconographic programme of the side-walls in the main hall consists of different mandala of the Vajrādhatu[342]. The niche on the opposite wall, containing the cultic centre, shows a composition of a Vairocana-configuration, four female deities and offering genies. The Jinas are depicted on the side-walls.

The configuration follows the well-known concept of the five Jina- or Dhyani-Buddha. Vairocana is in the centre of the Jinas and has the function of a *dharmakāya* Buddhas (Adibuddha).[343] The *sambhogakāya* Buddhas ('Body of Enjoyment') are around Vairocana and the emanations of the Adi-Buddha represent aspects of the latter.

The *trikāya* system is mentioned in the inscriptions of the Sumtsek (the lowest floor), which contain the paintings of donors. The latter can be associated with the *nirmanakāya*, related to the physical, material world, the *kama-loka*.[344]

The complex network of iconographic relationships in the Alchi Sumtsek (ca. 1200-1220) has been discussed by Rob Linrothe[345] and the possible utilisation of Buddhist organisational themes like *trikāya*. These themes are reflected in the vertical hierarchy of space in the temple from the mundane to the celestial realm in the uppermost floor, and *triguhya* (body, speech and mind) which is also formulated in inscriptions. This system is also reflected in the symbolism of a ceiling depiction. "*The metaphorical structure, which vividly portrays dedication inscriptions, take visual form in the Sumtsek...In general it can be said that in his literary efforts, the Thsülthim Ö (the founder of the Sumtsek) preferred elegant if straightforward coordination of complex parts into unified wholes. The same tendency is found in the visual composition in the Sumtsek.*"[346]

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[342] Luczanits 2005: 129.

[343] According to the *Guhyamsamāja-tantra* Vairocana defines himself as follows: "*Mein Geist ist bar jeder Kenntnis von der Existenz, geht keinerlei Verbindung mit der Materie ein, noch mit dem objektiv oder subjektiv Wahrnehmbaren, er ist unerschaffen und in seinem Wesen leer wie alle dharmas*" (cited after Lavizzari-Rauber 1986: 125).

In the *trikāya* system mentioned in the inscriptions of the Sumtsek the lowest floor, bearing the paintings of donors can be associated wit the *nirmanakāya*, related to the physical, material world, the *kāma-loka* (Linrothe, 1996: 270).

[344] Ibid.

[345] Linrothe 1996: 269 ff.

[346] Cited after Linrothe, ibid.; Kloetzli discussed the notion of 'Body, Speech and Mind', also visualized in the Buddhist temple in his 'Buddhist Cosmology' (1997: 69): "*Another fact about the 'sāhasra-cosmology' [the cosmology of thousands] which cannot fail to strike us, is the manner in which the cosmos is made to correspond to various parts of the Buddha's body. The passage cited from the Visuddhimagga shows various portions of the cosmos associated with the thought of*

A significant element in the overall programme of the Western Himalaya temples is donor depictions, whereby a change in the use of images of power and authority can be observed. The royal lama at Tabo is seated on the throne as the protector of the dharma and flanked by subordinate figures, thereby reflecting a strict social order and hierarchy, as well as the religious character of kingship in the early art of this region. The hieratic mode is appropriate for the sacral character of kingship in the tradition of the 'Dharma Kings' of Tibet. At Alchi, in contrast, donor depictions reflect the different ideals of rule of the aristocratic elite in the region. The different modes of self-representations, 'political myths' and 'models of morality' in Western Himalaya culture, which reflect an artistic and ideological process of transformation, are discussed in chapter 7.2.

The main emphasis is on martial qualities, courtly pomp and worldly splendour with much interest in 'selected naturalism' in the depiction of precious cloths and insignia and luxury art. This was characteristic for this later period of construction of the Alchi temple.

This emphasis is characteristic of art along the Silk Road. The donor depictions of Kucha (Kuča, Chinese Turkestan) are to be particularly noted, such as the rich and varied wall paintings of Queen Svayaṃprabhā and her aristocratic entourage (Māyā Cave, 7th century):

> "While all this seems entirely Buddhist, the simple row of standing donors as well as its rhythmic array into several rows ... is an ancient Iranian device based on aesthetic patterns of heraldic symmetry. Figures and faces were executed by stencils and were not true portraits. The donor's identities could therefore be determined only by differences in headgear, weapons, styles of clothing and perhaps also by the patterns of the gowns, and by reading the inscriptions above or below the pictures, which recorded names and titles"[347].

An attempt to present a unified description of this complex iconographic programme of the Alchi Dukhang as a whole is an aim of future research.

3.3.3. On the Relationship Between Paintings and Inscriptions in the Western Himalaya

Francke[348] was among the first Western scholars who collected epigraphic evidence in Ladakh; the most important historical inscriptions of the main temples in Alchi are recorded and translated by Philip Denwood[349], while Goepper concentrated on the inscribed lineage depiction in the Sumtsek, which he had discovered, and translated it together with the Ladakhi scholar Konchuk Panday.[350]

Philip Denwood was one of the first western scholars to investigate and study the inscriptions in the Alchi Dukhang in the 1970's (Fig. 4). Unfortunately, only a part of them were

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the Buddha....The birth realm of the Buddha impresses us as being a statement about the body of the Buddha and is almost certainly an attempt to define the relationship between the physical universe and the body of the Buddha. ...In the Mpps, for instance, we find a threefold division of the universe similar to that in the Visuddhimagga. There we read that in the Buddha there are three secrets: that of his body, that of his voice and that of his thought. The secret of the Buddha's body is that it may appear being any size...sometimes it is infinite (ananta), immense (apramāna) like space (ākāśa)". The different systems of cosmology in Tibet are discussed in his appendix 'Bibliographical resources'.

[347] Ebert 2006: 105.

[348] Francke 1914, 1926.

[349] Denwood 'Temple and Rock inscriptions of Alchi', in Snellgrove 1980;

[350] Goepper 1990; see also Luczanits 2006.

published in 1977 and the documentation and translation of the remaining unpublished texts have never been found. In general, the translations by Denwood reflect a preliminary analysis of the texts. Unfortunately, since this time no further philological studies have been done so there are no scientific commentaries or in-depth analyses of the text. Kurt Tropper was one of the first scholars in the West to provide a thorough analysis of the inscriptions on the main wall containing the Akṣhobya sutra.[351]

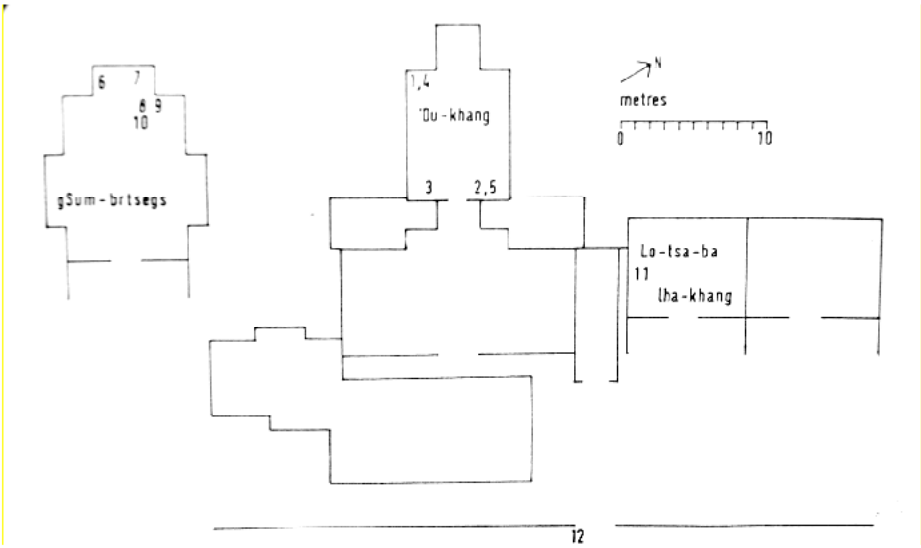


Fig. 4: Alchi, inscriptions (after Snellgrove 1980: 118).

E. Steinkellner raises the question of this interrelation in his '*A short guide to the Sudhana (T. Nor bzaṇ) frieze in the temple of Ta Pho*'.[352] He finds no exact correspondence between these two major components of the frieze: painting and inscriptions. "*Paintings display concrete facts that can be made visible; they are selective on spatial grounds, and they are allusive on the same grounds. The inscriptions transport a text that is concrete only in its setting, its main part being mostly abstract and not easily visualized...*".[353] The two components are closely related in their content, but do not match directly according to the author. Complementing this study on the relation between text and image, it will be suggested that these scenes are a component of a narrative in the temple which also includes the donors.

Very little research has been carried out on the relationship between image and text in the Dukhang at Alchi and in particular on the change in the narrative structure of painted religious epics, which contrast to the earlier Tabo Main temple.

In general, at Alchi inscriptions relate to the particular buildings in which they are found and also to the images and iconographic themes in the temple. In the Dukhang and Sumtsek inscriptions can be found in various positions on the walls. A verse passage in the inscription '1' of the Dukhang for example, which can be attributed to Kelden Sherab (T. sKal ldan shes rab), the founder of this temple, reads that "*...the merits of founding the temple and composing the verse*

[351] Tropper 1996. However, also this translation remained fragmentary due to the lack of complete documentation of the inscriptions. I wish to thank Dr. Tropper for his information on the inscriptions and his commentaries on the present state of research.

[352] Steinkellner (1996) *A short guide to the Sudhana (Nor bzaṇ) frieze in the temple of Ta Pho*, Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien

[353] Steinkellner 1996: 6.

may result in the rebirth of living beings in Akṣobhya's heaven, along with other benefits (lines 10-12)"[354]; Inscription '4' is a description of Akṣobhya's heaven and its delights, which are offered – according to Snellgrove - to the donor as well. The latter inscription is appropriately sited in depictions of this heaven on the same wall.[355] Donor inscriptions also refer to the respective images, forming a compositional and conceptional unit; both media, text and image, mainly express the noble lineage, the ideology and good deeds of the donors for the benefit of the community.

This further underlines that both text and image are – besides their undoubted religious dedication - important media of self-representation and 'political myths' of the elite.

It can be assumed that a high religious dignitary and the donor were the authors of the design of the overall programme, or that they had at least an important role in its design, as mentioned in the inscriptions.

Another difficulty in interpreting the inscriptions is the phenomenon of the conscious use of 'archaic' styles in wall painting as a means of legitimacy; a phenomenon termed by J. Ebert as ('Spolien'), and also discussed in recent research.[356] This little studied phenomenon in Western Himalaya art is also observable in the medium of painting: at the entrance to a cave temple at Dunkar one finds a panel with inscriptions and a donor depiction from a later period, paraphrasing the original mode of composition and style.[357] To my knowledge, studies of this kind are still in their early stages in this region.

3.3.4. Some Observations on Style and Technique at Alchi (12th -13th centuries)

As has already been stated Tibetan, Indian (in particular Buddhist centres in historic northwest and eastern India) as well as Central Asian artistic traditions were important sources of inspiration for the early Western Tibetan style from the 10th to 13th centuries. According to Tibetan sources, the Kaśmīr style (T. Kha che) was the basis for the development of a distinctive artistic tradition in this region. However, this attribution is problematic due to the fact that no paintings from Kaśmīr proper have survived. Kaśmīr was a famous centre of Buddhist learning and the emphasis on this artistic exchange can be interpreted as a means to legitimize the new religious foundations in the Western Trans-Himalaya during the time of the second diffusion of Buddhism. Furthermore, the Tibetan term Khache may have been used for larger regions including areas to the West of Ladakh and south of Baltistan, where small chiefdoms (Hindu Shāhi and Dardic princes) dominated. The 'courtly language' in Buddhist art probably developed in close interaction with the Eastern-Iranian art of this Indo-Iranian borderland, including Northern Pakistan and probably the Iranicate Buddhist art of Khotan; these regions were culturally, economically and politically connected even before the Tibetisation of the region in the 10th century. An orientation of early Western Tibetan foundations towards monastic centres, and related to Chinese style Buddhist dynasties in Central Asia, is also observable. This reflects the cultural diversity and pluralism of cultural interaction during this period. Furthermore, it also documents the dangers of narrowly equating the diverse and

[354] Cited after Snellgrove/Skorupsky 1980: 120.

[355] Ibid. 121.

[356] Cf. recent studies by Lore Sanders.

[357] A parallel concept is reflected is the 'Renaissance phase' of painting in the Western Himalaya from the 15th century onwards, thereby consciously using older styles to claim legitimacy and continuity.

refined art of the Western Trans-Himalaya from the 10th century onwards with the almost lost artistic tradition found in the area corresponding to present day Kaśmīr.

This fascinating artistic and cultural exchange in Western Tibet lasted until the 13th century. Then a strong Central Tibetan influence becomes observable, which had a lasting impact on the doctrine, iconography and style.

Different distinctive schools of painting are to be found in the early Buddhist monastic traditions of the Western Trans-Himalaya, dateable from the late 10th to the early 13th century. While the Tabo paintings reflect what can be termed as an Indo-Tibetan Buddhist art with strong connections with early Central Tibetan iconography and images of authority, the Alchi Dukhang and the Sumtsek belong to the latest and most refined artistic expressions of Buddhist temple architecture in this region. The latter can be identified as the mature results of a synthesis of Western Tibetan Buddhist values and the artistic language of the Indo-Iranian borderland.[358]

Significant differences with regard to style and complexity of the programme between the two earliest temples at Alchi[359] can be observed. Furthermore, different styles or groups of painters can be identified in the Dukhang. Close examination of the site of the Dukhang paintings and its internal chronology will be an important task of future research.

The following is a short description of the form and style of the paintings in the Dukhang, with particular emphasis on donor depictions on the entrance wall.

The concept of different modes of figural representations according to the classification of deities belongs to the tradition of Indian religious imagery. The Buddha is shown frontal and hieratic, representing an ideal and abstract realm; he is 'lifted beyond the human plane'; in general Bodhisattvas are shown in more human-like motions and naturalistic settings, while the donors are generally represented in a 'mundane/courtly environment'.[360] However, different modes of representing sovereigns in early Western Himalaya temples, from rather iconic to mundane styles, are consciously used to communicate specific religious ideals of the rulers.

Images of courtly figures and their entourage in the Alchi Dukhang are mostly represented sitting in three-quarter view. They have simplified, standardized silhouettes and are shown with a small number of gestures, suggesting interaction. The impression of monotonous rows of figures is balanced by the very varied depiction of sumptuous cloths, ornaments, jewellery, and other objects, all signalling individuality.

The dominant colours used to depict figures in the Dukhang are different shades of red for the complexions (ranging from white for faces and hands with red outlines to dark, brownish reds). Red is also a dominant colour for costumes, together with white, while black is used for details. The background of the scene is shown in blue; no green can be seen.

The palette of pigments in the Dukhang is restricted in contrast to the colourful and 'warm' feeling of the paintings in the Sumtsek. In the Sumtsek a more complex technique with multiple layers of painting is applied. The rich palette (including gold) permitted the artist to show the

[358] See Papa-Kalantari 2007a,b.

[359] Cf. Goepper 1996, Papa-Kalantari 2000.

[360] Cf. also Seckel (1982) for a refined description of the form, style and meaning of these different modes.

beauty of the most precious silks and luxurious cotton textiles. The differences in the use of precious pigments may also be an indication of the influence of donors and the hierarchy of temples within the sacred compound. The Sumtsek with its emphasis on courtly symbolism may also have signalled the prestige and representational needs of the aristocratic Dro clan, while the Dukhang may have been primarily reserved for ecclesiastical functions. The continuing cultic use of the Dukhang to the present day has also resulted in the darker appearance of the Dukhang (in particular oil lamps generate a dark layer of dust and oil on the painted surface).

Figural depictions of lay people at Alchi show different chronological stages of strong features of Kaśmīr origin. Elements of perspective are characteristic for the figural style of deities which are only applied to details, such as, torsos where a strongly articulated upper chest and a rather ornamental treatment of the body is observable. Features of the body are modelled and articulated as separate entities. These characteristics aim at giving plasticity and a certain movement to the figure. Faces with slightly bulging eyes, almond-shaped and protruding, are further elements of this ornamental treatment.

Outline and contours of the figures as well as facial features in the donor depictions are drawn in a graphic manner. Light and shade is used in a rather conventional way. The face of a warrior in the Dukhang is drawn in red graphic lines (Figure chapter assembly: Pl. 252, Pl. 253). The centre of the painted nose, cheeks, etc., corresponds to the white ground layer of the painting surface and is thus left 'void'. In this way the image or motif is rendered on unpainted ground, which is prepared as a neutral surface. Its existence is made visible due to the shading and dark outlines, which might be interpreted as the ever-changing optical phenomena. The figures in the Dukhang donor depictions at Alchi emerge from the ground; they are not placed on it. Shading and light is used primarily to give the face certain plasticity.

Apart from any symbolic meaning which may be attributed to such painting techniques - which is highly hypothetical – they may have been used to permit the economic use of expensive pigments. The 'voice' of the neutral ground can be found from earliest times and can also be detected in the ceiling paintings of Nako, which I was able to examine in detail together with conservation experts (cf. Chapter 'Ceilings', 6.). In the Translator's temple of Nako the use of expensive pigments, broader palettes of colours, and multiple layers of paintings are discernable,[361] corresponding to the more complex execution of the painting in this temple. The unpainted white ground is less visible than in the Gong ma-temple, where a smaller palette of colours is used, and the ground has a dominant role in the definition of forms. This difference in execution may furthermore signify a certain difference in the hierarchy of the temples, as well as the lower status of donors in Nako in general – as compared to the royal foundation of Tabo - and the Gongma in particular.

The study of the impact of portable objects on the painting style in early Western Himalaya art is still in its infancy. For instance, comparable techniques can be found in the famous black-ground thangkas (T. *nang-tang*). The earliest examples of this technique are dateable to the Tibetan period of Dunhuang (8th c.), when the bodies of the main figures are left 'in reserve', with the dark colour of the background coming through as the skin of the deity[362].

[361] Cf. S. Bogin 2006.

[362] Cf. Linrothe 2004: 33: Prof. Rob Linrothe has compared this type of painting with the earliest paintings of Guge, where terrifying deities are painted dark blue and black on red background. Later figures stand on black background, surrounded by a halo of flames.

Furthermore, interesting parallels between techniques to decorate textiles and painting techniques (both in depictions of textiles and in wall paintings; cf. chapter 6.) are observable, which lead me to the question of possible parallels or at least a certain reciprocal receptiveness between the different media.[363] It is not impossible that early paintings on cloth such as thangka, or textiles decorated with different techniques used for printed cloths, might have lead not only to a profusion of motifs, styles and iconography, but also to a transfer of technology and painting techniques. Cotton cloths were used as important carriers of images and texts in India and Central Asia from the very beginning. A list from Dunhung set up by the administrator Zhao Shilao of the monastery Longxin[364] during the time of the Tibetan occupation (781-848) contains various types of paintings on cloths.[365] A reciprocal exchange of different functions of textiles as carriers of painting or literature and wall-painting can thus be assumed. Comparative analysis of complex paintings on cloths from the India and Central Asia, which were easily portable, may help to define more precisely the evolutionary history and technology of the early Buddhist paintings in the Western Transhimalaya. Also the question of the use of colours and techniques and their symbolism in the art of the Western Himalaya is little studied.[366]

The treatment of space is essentially two-dimensional, with figures organized in rows. However, interaction between the figures in one section and between different registers generate a certain inner unity of the composition and suggest depth. A certain perspective is also achieved through colour and light: in the scene of the enthroned couple a lighter colour is shown in the foreground and a darker one in the background.

The arrangement of figures on a monochromatic background, and the introduction of interaction to solve 'problems' in group depictions is comparable to Sogdian paintings in Balalyk Tepe and Panjikent, as is the emphasis on decorative details, costumes and attributes dispersed in the background to define the narrated events.[367] I will use the term 'selective naturalism' for this phenomenon in the Western Himalaya.

It can be assumed that the interior decoration of one temple cannot have been executed during one season.[368] It is clear that different painters or schools of painting were active in the Dukhang. However, the sequence of the execution has yet to be studied.

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[363] I wish to thank Prof. Ebert for the discussions on this topic, the information on related studies and her support in the evaluation and interpretation of Chinese and Uigur sources in general.

[364] Pelliot 3432.

[365] Among the objects in the list are: "... *une peinture ancienne sur coton do Mo-lou representant Kouan-che-yin,...bordee d'un lisere de coton teinte*" (Raschmann 1995: 89). I wish to thank DDr. J. Ebert for this information.

Cottons for different purposes were of foreign production in Turcic Central Asia and various texts document the high value of specific fine cotton cloths in the region of Merw (ibid.). That printed cotton cloths had the status of luxury textiles in the Indian cultural sphere is inter alia evidenced in the use of textile ornaments in the interior decoration of the early Western Himalaya temples; comparable fabrics are also depicted on metal sculpture from the Pāla period and from Kaśmīr and Gilgit.

[366] See also K. Kohler 2005, unpublished M.A.-thesis.

[367] Kossolapov/Marshak (1999: 49). The authors provide an interesting outline and comparative analysis of painting style and techniques in Central Asia and Serindia (including Khotan).

[368] This corresponds also to our experience during the renovation work in Nako: The harsh climate and remote position, with hardly resources available on the spot, made a continuous work during a longer period very difficult. Of course we can assume that pilgrimage and economic activities at Nako during the time of the construction of

3.4. On the Symbolism of Material Culture in Tibetan Art

The depiction of luxury art in Buddhist temples is closely linked to the religious system of achieving merits through donations. In Buddhist thought, the categories of worldly benefits (S. laukika) and spiritual attainments (S. lokattara) are perceived as interdependent means on the path towards enlightenment.[369] A case in point is demonstrated in the inscription at Wanla.[370] It states that the donor obtained his wealth due to the collection of merit in a previous life[371] and illustrates the close relation of wealth and spiritual goals:

> "Thinking of (his) next life, he accomplished a great work in this way: On square Mount Meru, where the elements are heaped up successively, he beautifully decorated with ornaments of many jewels the square divine mansion of a shrine having the mark of *viśvavajra*. The tip he thoroughly adorned with the top(-ornament) of a wish-fulfilling jewel...(At) the lower stratum he set up an excellent arrangement, assemblies of deities, new and old. The middle storey (is) like a model of the Vijayanta (Indra)-palace (and) the top floor is one that is like a model resembling a celestial mansion. The Bkra shis gsum (b)rtsegs (i.e. the felicitous three-storied [temple]) of Wanla, oh, it is amazing.[372]"

Moreover, the text provides a possible interpretation for one function of donor scenes in the temples of the region: "*He (the donor) organized felicitous banquets for his visiting factionaries. He removed sufferings of hunger and thirst of those not in a position for sensual enjoyments. He was famous throughout (for his) approach of unlocking (his) material wealth. (His) giving for the noble dharma was utterly amazing*".[373]

The donors at Alchi represent wealth as a sign of both spiritual efficacy and worldly supremacy, illustrating the inscription's statement that wealth is conceived as a result of merits in former lives, and is used by the donor in order to benefit others. The ideal of wealth might allude to Vaiśravana, the heavenly king as protector of the world. The notion of the ruler as protector of the dharma and god of wealth can also be found in an inscription saying, "*...a teacher of Sumda was the founder of the Sumtsek, both patron and monk, he arrived in Alchi to vanquish external enemies and protect internal subjects, he was richly endowed with the good, very wealthy, he was also munificent, like mother and father to the poor, his nephew the great teacher planted the victory banner of the dharma...*". The strong and lasting force in interchangeable emblems and ideals of worldly rule and spiritual supremacy continues up to the Dalai Lamas, as can be seen inter alia by the precious and monumental scale of the ritual objects housed in the equally monumental, mountain-like Potala, constituting expressions of genuine 'art of power' ('Machtkunst').[374]

The universal concept that worldly and spiritual benefits are understood as parallel goals is reflected in Tibetan culture from the earliest times in the appearance of the wish-fulfilling

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the temple flourished and living conditions were thus more adapted for foreigners visiting the place or working there.

[369] Linrothe 2004: 19.

[370] Ladakh, ca. 13-14th c.

[371] Tropper 2006: 126 f. Interestingly, in this inscription (line 72) the temple is called a palace (in Tibetan '*po brang*', which is a term also used for the 'royal tent'.

[372] Ibid: 135-138.

[373] Ibid: 141.

[374] On occasion of an exhibition at Bonn 2006 various precious ritual implements from the Potala/ Lhasa were presented for the first time in the West (cf. Cat. 2006).

jewel. When such a jewel is held by the precious minister, or a gem-spitting mongoose of Vaiśravana, it alludes to the quality of the holder to provide worldly benefits. Thus, in their function as material and spiritual benefactors, protector deities in Tibetan Buddhism are often shown with attributes reflecting luxury and wealth, with wealth conveying the necessary means to pursue spiritual goals.

Thus, when the temple is adorned with luxury textiles, it as meant as the glorification of the supreme being as well as the act of offering material wealth and renunciation of the mundane world.

3.4.1. On the Function of Luxury Art in Painting

The depiction of material culture is a controversial and complex issue and has various functions closely related to Tibetan culture. In Vajrayāna the worldly realm expresses a clear division of distinctive realms of existence (*trikāya*). Another important aspect, as has been discussed, is the conscious use of different modes, such as Indian mode juxtaposed to local environment as a means to indicate the legitimacy of the Buddhist tradition in Tibet. The depiction of the local living culture enforces the idea of the possibility of attaining the spiritual goal by every human. I suggest reconstructing the language of stylistic idioms related to different cultural landscapes, and defining the diversity of *visual modi*, which are consciously used like a ciper ('chiffre') to communicate specific religious and political messages. Nako, heavenly temples in the Gongma, show elements of local architectonic culture, while the depiction of protectors such as Vaiśravaṇa (king of the North) displays a distinctive vocabulary of Central Asian protectors of regions outside this cultural realm, suggesting also a landscape, which is to the north of India (Pl. 182).

There are various examples of the analogy of coronation of kings, the Buddha and the follower of Vajrayāna as has been stated and the transfer of precious robes has various functions associated with empowerment in the spiritual realm. Paradigm cases are Śākyamuni dressed in royal garb referring to his princely nature and final birth before Enlightenment and Maitreya, the Future Buddha, residing in his palace in Tuṣita heaven as described in the *Mahāvastu*. However, the function of luxury art in the medium of painting also has an artistic force which has been little discussed. The depiction of material culture and ornament in the art and culture of the Western Himalaya can be extended to artistic values like virtuosity, variety, refinement, and also humour [375].

A paradigm is the art of ornament in the Western Himalaya. A juxtaposition of ornamental themes is characteristic for the depiction of ornament and luxury art on the ceilings of Tabo (Dukhang), imitating luxury textiles on the ceilings of the main hall and figural iconographic themes, which dignify the cultic centre of the cella. At Alchi, in contrast, a greater illusionism and unity of the overall experience of the ceiling decoration is achieved, which seem to mimic a baldachin. On the level of imitation of textiles almost a *trompe l'oeil* effect is achieved, and one has the impression of a unified textile cover, but this is only one dimension of this artistic

[375] It has become almost a taboo for art historians dealing with non-European religious artifacts to discuss 'purely aesthetic values', accordingly it has become a dogma to keep distance to so called Western criteria to describe art such originality, individuality, creativity and innovation (which is thought to be a purely Western, teleological concept). However, the unquestioned adoption of what we perceive as 'Eastern values'; such as repetition of iconographic systems, subordinated to religious rituals, humble 'stepping back' (Zurücktreten) of the individual, or 'art as meditation', appears to be yet another type of stereotypes.

expression. I have shown elsewhere that the Alchi paintings do not only mimic textiles. They are an artistic expression of their own, representing a high degree of refinement and variety.[376] The ceiling depictions are the result of a subtle calibration of ornamental values, Buddhist themes and iconography. They are the result of a purely artistic process, the mature visual achievement of a religious culture. The visual culture of ornament at Alchi is in itself an expression of luxury in the service of the ultimate goal of salvation.

It is clear that only well-trained, experienced masters were able to transcend the boundaries of a given canon finding new solutions creatively. Thus this process is itself a luxury. The artistic, political, social, and economic values of luxury are subject to the dynamics of history and can only be understood in the context of the environment in which they are embedded.

3.4.2. Individuality and Naturalism

Alchi shows a great love of luxury with a delicate presentation of figures adorned with precious costumes, sumptuous garments, jewellery and the lavish use of gold and precious pigments. All this has the purpose to celebrate wealth, beauty and splendour and 'feast the eye of the viewer'. This tendency can be compared to the art during the period of the International Gothic Style, characterized by richness, skill, and variety of the visual world as an expression of luxury[377]. One aspect of luxury art in painting is what E. Gombrich termed 'selective naturalism'.[378] This notion is also very useful for defining the attitude of the artists in the Western Himalaya region with regard to, for example, the ceilings of the Sumtsek decorated with paintings of textiles. It was a great achievement to paint ornamental and figural motifs, alluding to 'textiles' rather than fixing real cloths on the ceilings, as had been done in the Dukhang of Tabo. The depictions at Alchi are rendered with such a naturalistic sophistication that a kind of *trompe l'oeil* was achieved, indicating that whether painted or real, the depictions were considered as luxury objects in their own right.

In this context the depiction of nature in Himalayan painting is an important, but little studied topic. It can also be regarded under the heading of 'selected naturalism' in early Buddhist paintings of the region.

Of course 'selective naturalism' has a long and lasting tradition in Buddhist art and culture in general. In particular, the depictions of trees in Indian religious imagery show a stunning naturalism, such as in Bharhut, Sanchi, and Kyzil (Chinese Turkestan)[379]. Specific places and events in the life of the Buddha are related to trees and monuments, and also pre-Buddhist beliefs and holy places have survived in this genre. A fine example is the Bodhi tree, described by the Chinese Pilgrim Huen Tsiang (Book VIII) as follows:

> "In the middle of the enclosure surrounding the Bodhi tree is the diamond throne (Vajrāsana). In former days when the Bhadra-kalpa was arriving at the period of perfection (*vivarṭṭa*), when the great earth arose, this (throne) also appeared. It is in the

[376] Papa-Kalantari 2000: 5.

[377] Cf. E. Gombrich 1999.

[378] Ibid: 92.

[379] Cf. also the work by M. Zin (2003) 'Ajanta, Handbuch der Malereien' (2 Vol); cf. also the review of Zin (2003) by the author in 2006 (Indo-Iranian Journal: 49). A very useful and detailed work on this subject is by another student of Prof. Schlingloff: R. Syed (1990) *Die Flora Altindiens in Literatur und Kunst*, München. I wish to thank Dr. Thomas Kintaert for this information.

middle of the great *chilicosm*, it goes down to the limits of the golden wheel (the golden circle), and upward it is flush with the ground, it is composed of diamond...In this the thousand Buddhas of the Bhadra-kalpa have sat and entered the diamond *Samādhi*, hence the name of the diamond throne.[380] "

Trees and architectural elements (such as the shape and surface decoration of the temple of Bodhgayā) functioned like thrones and reflected specific events in the life of the Buddha and thus places of pilgrimage in early Indian art; they also replaced images of the Buddha in the un-iconic phase of Buddhism, thus conceiling the sacred and representing the secret of the Buddha's form-less body. In later phases (cf. manuscripts from the 12th century, Bengal and Bihar[381]), such thrones probably did not refer to actual places of pilgrimage, but can rather be read as a condensed *chiffre* for religious ideas, the sacred abode and the transcendent realm (Pl. 195). They also have a more decorative character, alluding to a different genre of luxury art, such as metalwork in gold, as suggested by Eva Allinger.[382] I also found parallels to textile art; thus the thrones express luxury and have a honorific function, enhancing the super-natural splendour of the heavenly realm. In particular illuminated manuscripts from Gujarāt in the 12th century (one may also compare book-covers from Nepal and Bengal) show painting techniques and ornamental motifs, which strongly recall different modes to decorate textiles (such as reserve techniques).[383] This reciprocal receptiveness of values represented in luxury textiles and the medium of painting are characteristic for early Indian painting. These are also a constant feature in the early Buddhist art of the Western Himalaya.[384]

One such example of 'selective naturalism' in the Western Himalaya sphere is the depictions of trees, shown in different renderings on the entrance wall of the Dukhang at Alchi. They define the realm of the 'Buddha-life' and possible specific places of his spiritual path. The painting of important places, such as trees, but also stupa, shrines, and temples, signifies the commemoration of specific events in the spiritual career of the Buddha from the side of the worshipper or donor, thus reflecting the personal path towards salvation. In paradise scenes in the Sumtsek, trees define - together with water ponds - the heavenly environment. In a painting of the Green Tārā on the main wall of the Gongma-temple of Nako a naturally designed tree, together with various birds, monkeys and other exotic animals, represent the heavenly realm of the deity.

The detailed and naturalistic rendering of the beautiful horse of the princely donor in the Dukhang at Nako is equally natural. The unbridled horse has various Buddhist co-notations, related to important events in the life of the Buddha and the 'awakening'. The animal at Nako is fully bridled and has a carefully decorated saddle, recalling the description of Śākyamuni's

[380] Beal, S 1969: 116.

[381] Losty 1986: p.8; The Prajñāpāramitā Manuscript from Bihar is dateable to the mid. 12th century according to E. Allinger, verbal communication.

[382] Allinger, in preparation.

[383] Cf. Cat. 1994 (Pal, P. ed.): Fig. 61.

The interest in textiles is also be found in the early Indian art of Ajanta (cf. Zin 2003, vol. 2: Plate 1), an in the art of Gandhāra, where precious textiles define the settings of deities and thrones of the Buddha (cfr. Figure).

[384] I am indebted to DDr. Jorinde Ebert, for the discussions on this issue, which gave the impetus to a further elaboration of these observations.

precious horse in Buddhist Texts.[385] A person, probably the servant, holds the reins of the horse called 'the intelligent four-footed king' in the inscription of Wanla. The horse's head has an almost human-like expression of deep adoration for the owner, the enthroned princely donor. One is inclined to compare this image, which attempts to show privileges of courtly life by using selected naturalistic motifs, with the painting of '*The Adoration of the Magi*' (ca. 1423) by Gentile da Fabriano (Uffizi), attributable to the period of the International Gothic around 1400, and which was painted for the powerful merchant Palla Stozzi[386].

Gombrich also applies his definition of selective naturalism in Gothic art to visual delights in a general sense, extending to motifs found "*... interesting or amusing, including the appearance and the behaviour of yokels and clowns, ...clearly there were always new motifs to be found and new worlds to be conquered, and the development of the next decades suggest that these new conquests awarded increasing prestige, eclipsing the earlier admiration for cheerful splendour*".[387] This type of joyful expression in painting has its equivalent in the ceiling depictions of Dunkar (T. Dun dkar), which feature acrobats, swirling animals, atlantes in playful positions and figures sharing parts of their bodies. Such depictions of luxury in all its variety of the visual world condensed into a selected naturalism must have appealed to skilled masters, who were probably trained in this genre, as can be seen from the textile depictions in the illuminated Poo-manuscript.[388]

At Nako and Alchi, the depiction of courtly scenes, as well as protector and benefactor deities, gave the artists and donors the opportunity to represent courtly culture and signs of status popular in this cultural zone. Besides, these representations are the act of the renunciation of worldly riches and thus of 'awakening'.

In a world, where luxury items not only had an enormous symbolic impact, but were valued as much as gold, both the artist and the donor were interested in an illusionist rendering, reflecting the splendour of religious and worldly power in the meticulous workmanship of the material goods of monasteries and donors.[389] Thus, weavers of sumptuous garments were most probably as respected as painters of 'luxury' frescos.

As Jorinde Ebert pointed out, early donor depictions in Central Asia are not true portraits. Accordingly, costumes, weapons, jewels and material culture in general defined persons as individuals[390] and the frequently found co-existence of different cultural orientations reflected in costumes expressed marriage alliances or political events associated with the donor.[391]

Communication between the cultural centres in Central Asia and Kaśmīr allowed luxury objects and motifs, ideas and religious items such as Thangkas, other religious paraphernalia, and drawings on paper and sketches to be transported from one place to another. That donors and monasteries were in contact and exchanged a wide variety of goods, including luxury art and

[385] Conze 1959: 39 ff.

[386] The theme of the adoration of the kings gave the painter welcome opportunities for the display of splendor and variety in the sumptuous robes of the Magi and the pomp of their train" (Gombrich 1999: 82).

[387] Gombrich 1999: 107.

[388] Allinger 2006.

[389] I am grateful to late Boris Marshak, who taught this important aspect of the art of the Silk Road to me.

[390] Ebert 2006: 105.

[391] J. Ebert, verbal communication, XII. 2007.

mobile material culture, can thus be surmised. In due course painting became an art reflecting the international luxury art of the Silk Road.[392]

3.4.3. Paradise and the World

The Alchi donor scenes show a refined society fond of luxury and noble pleasures: Horse-riding with members of the court; feasting of the enthroned monarch, festively attired with extravagant and pretentiously long sleeves; a more intimate banquet of the noble couple; or the pomp of their train and festive throng with the masters of ceremony offering precious vessels. The glamorous world of the wealthy patron is an evocation of courtly life in a period celebrating wealth, beauty, and love as religious endeavours. Thus, if not taken literally, but as a part of a devotional programme, the temple's image is also the depiction of the monarch received in paradise, the splendour of his courtly environment glorifying the joy of life, which has been changed into the glorification of a religious paradise. However further studies on the concepts and cosmological speculations in Tibetan Buddhism of this period are necessary, to underpin this possible interpretation. In his interpretation of the Alchi paintings (in which he raised various important questions), P. Pal[393] suggesting reading the images of the courtly world as images of paradise in general, partly related to the Iranian cultural sphere. Apart from his 'nostalgia' for paradise, the cross-religious comparison of 'images' and concepts of paradise in Iranian, Islamic[394] and Buddhist spheres is somewhat problematic, and the themes at Alchi have certainly to be interpreted in their Buddhist environment.

Several passages in the inscriptions of the Dukhang utter the hope that the merits of founding the temple and composing the verse will result in the rebirth of all living beings in Akṣobhya's heaven.[395] Scenes showing Akṣobhya' s paradise are depicted in the panels on the back wall of the Dukhang, documenting that the 'Buddha of the East' still seems to have played an important role, while Amitābha with his 'Western Paradise'[396] dominated in Central Asia.[397] Accordingly, Akṣobhya wears the most sumptuous cloth in the temple: his golden robe is decorated with star-shaped patterns in light relief, which are golden-plated.

The 'Paradise of Amitābha', the faith which results in rebirth in the pure land of the East, and the related techniques of meditation and visualization all need further research.

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[392] The phenomenon of stylistic movement with shared artistic and aesthetic values has been termed the 'Tang international style', described in the work of Rhie 1988; further by Allinger/Klimburg-Salter 1998: 'Inner Asian International Style 12th -14th centuries'. In contrast to this unifying classification I rather propose to definde the characteristics of the individual styles and to reconstruct the cultural, political and artistic networks of interaction.

[393] Pal 1982: 30ff.

[394] Blair and Bloom (1991) have dealt with Images of paradise in Islamic art: "*The closest parallel to the religious image of the heavenly garden is the secular paradise of the Islamic palace*"(Ibid. 106). Illustrations of the king and his courtiers or royal couples in banqueting scenes (Ibid. fig. 46a) often show them in a garden with flowering trees, silken carpets and cushions, fruits and drink, and running water described in the Koran, combined with scenes of music-making or the hunt. According Blair and Bloom these paintings can be interpreted on three levels: "*...they illustrate a specific narrative, they reflect the traditions of courtly love and they evoke the heavenly garden, with its chaste and beautiful inhabitants*". Such images, which consciously equate the earthly paradise of the Islamic court with the heavenly garden were often included as frontispieces and as illustrations to manuscripts of poetry (ibid.: 107).

[395] Snellgrove/Skorupsky 1980: 120.

[396] For studies on the concepts and texts related to the 'Western Paradise' cf. Kloetzli, W.R. 1997 (153); Lubac (1955), Lamotte (1958): 360-67.

[397] According to Geopper (1996: 31) this situation may go back to the seventh century, "*...when king Srong-btsan sGam-po [Songtsen Gampo] and his wife installed the image of Akṣobhya as the main sacred object in the principal chapel of their newly erected Johang in Lhasa*".

However, it is significant that in the mature system of Esoteric Buddhism in the Sumtsek, the Tathāgata, such as the Amithāba, are dressed in the most sumptuous robes, associated with royalty in the Eastern-Iranian sphere and probably made of gold. The latter are comparable to early Mongolian silks, which were the privilege of the ruler (Pl. 239). Some examples of these types of textiles also occur on ceilings. A close interrelation between the Eastern-Iranian language of courtly culture in the temple and the symbolism of the paradises, in which the deities reside, can thus be seen, transforming the temple into the celestial palace of the Buddha.

4. LUXURY ART IN INDIAN AND TIBETAN CULTURE

4.1. Luxury art and Courtly Symbolism in Early Buddhist Culture

The great interest in luxury art and textiles is a consistent element in early Western Himalaya art, providing an insight into the various functions of precious textiles, religious paraphernalia, vases and vessels, silver objects and jewellery, all of which define the sacred space in the Buddhist temples. Precious textiles in particular are of great importance for the historical reconstruction of the cultural, religious, and artistic tradition in this region. Textiles plays an important role in Buddhist ritual and consecration ceremonies and the great variety of textiles and antique ritual garments depicted in Tibetan Buddhist temples show the great demand for textiles and their role as a major and important commodity from early times[398]: "*From the histories of the Buddhist clerics and princely families, it is clear that one of the popular ways to gain religious merit was to donate fine silk for the use of an esteemed teacher of a Buddhist monastery*".[399]

Due to their position on the Silk Roads, the seemingly isolated regions of Kinnaur, Spiti, and Ladakh, functioned as a crossroads for the transmission of luxury goods of both the Buddhist and Islamic traditions, as well as for the artistic themes and motifs associated with these highly valued items. I have shown elsewhere[400] that it is from the evidence contained in paintings of sumptuous textiles in Western Himalayan temples from the 10th to 13th centuries that one can best assess the cultural synthesis of Indo-Tibetan, Sogdian, Chinese, and Iranian artistic values. This synthesis forms the complex background to the evolutionary history of early courtly culture and Buddhist art in this region.

A proposed classification of distinctive Indian and Central-Asian textile styles also elucidates the conscious use of luxury art and courtly symbolism as signs of status and legitimacy adapted to the indigenous taste of the royal and aristocratic rulers. These regional elites established "*...their political authority through control over the local monastic centres they patronized*".[401]

However, luxury textiles and ornaments appearing in paintings in the Western Himalaya temples do not only reflect complex contemporary trade connections and devotional practice. They are also important media of religious representation and signifiers in the complex esoteric system of Buddhism.[402] The religious and textual background of the temple's dressing has hitherto been little studied.[403]

4.1.1. The 'Golden Robe' and the 'Jewelled Crown' of the Buddha

Luxury objects generally serve to depict a high social position in both worldly scenes and in 'power and legitimacy' in the sphere of gods and heroes. Sumptuous textiles also express

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[398] "The disorganized political structure if Tibet from the eleventh to the early thirteenth centuries makes it difficult to determine the status of trade there. If we consider the extraordinary growth of local principalities and of Buddhist establishments...we can guess at the appetite for luxurious silk garments and furnishing..."(Reynolds 1997: 189).

[399] Ibid.

[400] Papa-Kalantari 2002, 2007b.

[401] McKay 2003: 7.

[402] Cf. on this topic Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2003, 2007.

[403] E.g. in the exhibition catalogue *'Klöster öffnen ihre Schatzkammern'* (2006, Kulturstiftung Ruhr-Essen, Villa Hügel) this aspect hardly discussed.

transmission of religious authority and thus continuity in Buddhism from very early on. A paradigm for the phenomenon of luxury art associated with power and legitimacy is the 'jewelled Buddha' dressed with emblems of royal supremacy, such as a cape adorned with jewels and pearls[404]. Another example is the golden robe of the Buddha:

> It is "...held that the Buddha had received from his foster-mother Mahāprajāpati a garment of golden tissue; at the moment of attaining *nirvāṇa* he entrusted it to Kāśyapa, his disciple, who should give it to Maitreya, the future Buddha. Kāśyapa goes to the mount of Kukaṭṭapādagiri[405] [in the country Maghada]. The mountain opens in front of him and he awaits the coming of Maitreya in the mountain. The continuity of the Buddha within manifestation is thus transmitted from Śākyamuni to Maitreya".[406]

This demonstrates, that in the Buddhist world precious robes had a function similar to royal insignia, and thus power and legitimacy which could be transmitted in an act of investiture.

In this context, the '32 marks of a superior being' (*mahāpuruṣa)* of the Buddha are worth mentioning. Although the Buddha was not represented in human form until around the 1st century C.E., the physical characteristics of the Buddha are described in the Pali canon. The characteristics comprise the *ūrṇā*, the *uṣnīṣa*, and the body, which was golden-coloured, as well as '80 minor marks'; some of these characteristics have been used symbolically in many of his representations. The golden colour of his body and the golden robe of the Buddha, just discussed, may reflect interconnected concepts, signs of royal/ superior beings described in Buddhist texts. The gilding of sculptures and ritual dressing with a golden cape made of silk continues to be part of the devotional practice in Buddhist temples.

Moreover, jewellery, and the crown in particular, are associated with the notion of supremacy and continuity in Buddhist doctrine in early Buddhist texts, informing us that before the future Buddha of our age has left as a Bodhisattva Tuśita –heaven, he invested the Buddha of the next age Maitreya:

> "...er (setzte) dem Bodhisattva Maitreya einen Juwelenkrone (T. *phrog zhu*) auf das Haupt und ermächtigte ihn zu seinem Regenten, Stellvertreter und Nachfolger..., der von nun an die Götter unterrichten sollte und später als fünfter Buddha in dieser Welt erwartet würde. Aufgrund dieser Ermächtigung wird Maitraya auch als Regent Maitreyanatha (T. *rgayal thsab byams pa mgon po*) bezeichnet".[407]

The notion of continuity and authority associated with luxury textiles and signs of royalty is an ancient concept in the Buddhist doctrine, which continues to hold true today. It is shown in the ritual of young monks in Burma, dressed in Śākyamuni's princely clothes on the occasion of their ordination (Pl. 6).[408] During the 'lower ordination' in Burma - where children become full-time adult monks, after spending only about a week in the monastery[409] - the novices don

[404] Mus 1929: 276.

[405] Beal (1969, repr. of 1884) Vol. 2: 142-143; cited after Kramrisch 1939: 146.

[406] Kramrisch 1939: ibid.

[407] Cat. 2006: 250.

[408] I wish to thank E. Allinger for this information.

[409] Bechert/Gombrich: 1984: 34.

the yellow (golden) robe, jewellery and a crown, thereby alluding not only to Śākyamuni's royal rank but also to the religious legitimacy of the golden cloth. The "*...proud fathers carry their young sons to the ceremony, where, imitating the Buddha, they will put off their rich clothes and receive the few possessions that a monk is allowed.*" [410]

These examples aim to document that diverse rites of Buddhist initiation in which precious cloths and jewellery play an important role are related to a constant feature in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism: the notion of a continuous master-and-adept relation from Buddha Śākyamuni up to the present.[411]

This notion of legitimacy inherent in sumptuous garments and jewellery may have been adopted in the complex hierarchic system of Esoteric Buddhism (see below) and may allude to the power and sovereignty in the realm of the transcendental Buddhas in the Alchi Sumtsek, the Tathāgata, and the set of Five Buddhas making up the mandala. On the back wall of the temple a panel with the Tathāgata Akṣobhya is shown, set in a particularly rich configuration (Pl. 3).[412] The deity wears a golden robe and the offering deities hold a five-pointed crown comparable to the act of offering as well as of investiture. The offerings include jewels, necklaces and fly whisks. Musicians and dancers are placed on the bottom, while a deity and a monk are engaged in a ritual, flanking a mandala and large ritual flasks. A second example depicts the main icon on one of the walls of the Sumtsek's ground storey:[413] the deity also wears a golden robe, a crown and is decorated with sumptuous jewellery. The ornament on the robe and on the halo is executed in *pastiglia* technique (light relief made of clay), which is also gold-plated, emphasizing the effect of luxury and supra-mundane beauty.

Another important example regarding the possible use of royal luxury textiles is the depiction of an Amitābha in the Sumtsek, wearing presumably a specific type of golden robe, which was a royal privilege under the Mongols. The connected medallions with overlapping animals placed on the darker ground are significant in both examples, recalling famous gold-lampas from ca. the 13th century, which have been recently found in Tibetan temples.[414] However, at Alchi the deities wear a monastic dress, the *saṃghāṭi*. Thus, the sovereignty of the Tathāgatas, residing in their transcendent realm, is indicated by the more elaborate design of the cloth, the golden robe and the jewellery (partly using motifs also shown on dresses of the aristocratic elite, who founded the temple), which contrasts to the 'jewelled' type of Buddha wearing specific royal garments like a cape. In Tibet and the Western Himalaya the central deities in the temple continue to today to be adorned with precious capes of golden brocade. The possible meaning of this significant difference will be discussed below.

4.1.2.The 'Jewelled' Buddha

[410] Ibid; When entering the Sangha, a Sri Lankan man is wearing 'pre-ordination robes', consisting according to Bechert/Gombrich (1984: 35) of traditional finery of a Kandyan nobleman; Having renounced the world, the monk in Thailand is usually wearing the white robe of lay piety and later the saffron robes (ibid.).

[411] Cat. 2006: 250.

[412] Goepper 1996: Fig. on p. 120.

[413] Cf. Goepper 1996: fig. on p. 138.

[414] Cf. Watt/Wardwell: fig. 44.

It is not impossible, that this synthesis of worldly splendour and religious power, inherent in the 'golden dress of the Buddha', which may be alluded to in such depictions, has been later adopted by the Mongols, enhancing the symbolism of their imperial insignia.

One important and related dimension of luxury art appears to be its function as a medium of legitimacy and representation both in worldly scenes as well as in the sphere of gods. A paradigm for the phenomenon of luxury art associated with power and legitimacy is the 'jewelled Buddha' / Buddha paré dressed with emblems of royal supremacy, recalling signs of royal consecration, as proposed by Snellgrove.[415]

The Buddha paré wears a monastic dress, but he is also adorned with a three-pointed cape decorated with jewels and pearls and sometimes the Buddha also wears a crown. This ancient concept of the 'jewelled Buddha' is widely reflected in the art of the Hindukush showing characteristic royal regalia such as the cape and the crown adopted from the Sāsānian cultural sphere.[416] However, other signs of investiture such as ribbons adorning heavenly thrones may have also been adopted in such depictions (see chapter 6.).[417] The question of the religious and political ideology behind this concept has been raised by various authors; one of the first being Maurizio Taddei, but it will not be discussed here in any detail.

It is interesting to note what has been by Ebert[418] in this context that the Tibetan Emperor and Tibetan dignitaries at Dunhuang wear long robes with cloud-like capes or collars, also indicating a sign of rank in the Tibetan sphere, as was the custom in Kuča. We may thus assume that royal regalia and costumes, and the cape in particular were important signs of worldly and spiritual supremacy adapted to religious systems of hierarchy and legitimacy, as reflected in the well-known cape of the jewelled Buddha, so popular in Central Asia and Kaśmīr.

A comparable concept has been probably employed in the *abhiṣeka* scene of the Buddha-to-be in the Tuṣita heaven before his miraculous birth, as already mentioned.[419] These emblems of royal supremacy as a sign of authority for both the king and the Buddha, demonstrate that the universal dominion of a king (ideal of the *cakravartin*) and Buddha-hood were conceived as parallel goals. The type of Buddha adorned with royal regalia can thus be interpreted mainly as a sign of investiture and continuity.

In the temples of the Indo-Iranian-Buddhist sphere (with Alchi as a last example of this cultural synthesis) no depictions of the jewelled Buddha is to be found to my knowledge. However, the idea of precious garments and jewels in royal as well as Buddhist rites of initiation

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[415] Snellgrove 1959 (see below).

In Persia pearls have been a part of the royal regalia as can be seen from the crown, necklaces, and also the costumes have been adorned with pearls, which are worn by kings during the investiture (e.g.at Taq-i Bustān; cf. Cat. 1984: Pl. 37). Thus not only robes but also jewels are signs of royal power, which might have later been adopted into the Buddhist sphere; one example is the Buddha in Fondukistān (housed in the Musée Guimet; cf. Hackin 1959: fig. 192) with a cape decorated with jewels and pearls (cf. also Kogler 2005).

Further signs of Buddhist devotionals practice combined with Iranian signs of investiture are ribbons on heavenly thrones found Central Asia (Bāmiyān, Kakrak), which can be traded back to scenes of investiture in Sāsānian Iran (cf. ribbons on architectural elements at Taq-i-Bustān containing the enthroned king (cf. Cat. 1984: Pl. 35).

[416] Cf. also Higuchi 1983, Klimburg-Salter 1989, Taddei 1992, Klimburg-Salter 2006.

[417] Papa-Kalantari 2007 b.

[418] J. Ebert (2004) has shown, that specific types of garments in Manichean culture, the *segmentum* or brocade, are important indicators of rank in Manichean hierarchy, which are also shown in religious paintings on cotton from the Turfan oasis featuring a ceremony (Ebert 2004: 82). In a Manichean text the segmentum/brocade can even be associated with the 'payment of rank', thus the reduction of rank in the case of misbehaviour (ibid.).

[419] Cf. Kramrisch 1939 ; Klimburg-Salter 1989: 60-64; Klimburg-Salter 1988: 189-214.

was combined with the idea of investiture in the Iranian royal sphere[420], continuing earlier models. However, this symbolism was adopted in the esoteric system of Buddhism rather as a sign of consecration and legitimacy in the transcendent realm, the *saṃbhogakāya*, where the Tathāgata-Buddhas reside.

Specific garments associated with royalty, or at least with Inner Asian luxury art are also shown in the art of Kaśmīr, for example ornaments on the throne of a Buddha[421] and Pakistan[422] as well as on the ceilings of Tabo and Alchi, demonstrating the varied and widespread language of luxury textiles as signs of sovereignty in the Buddhist religious sphere.

A further expression of this strong and lasting force is depictions of a Buddha dressed in possibly Tibetan royal garments at Drathang (11th c.), as well as monumental Bodhisattvas sculptures (11th century) in temples of the Tsang region (Central Tibet), such as Yemar,[423] dressed with the garments of the Tibetan dharma kings. This demonstrates that specific dresses - associated with royalty - were used by the ruling elite to support the notion of the princely origin of the Buddha as well as divine origin of the ruling monarch.

The intimate relationship between kingship and Buddhism, royal and monastic law, is best illustrated in the figure of Yeshe Ö (T. Ye shes 'od), the royal lama (T. *lha blama*) of Tabo, who wears a kind of Tibetan *chuba* and a monastic robe.

Therefore, both luxury robe and jewellery/crown in the Buddhist world are associated with the notion of continuity and 'investiture' often combined with royal cult, and thus emphasizing their symbolism.

4.1.3. 'Śākyamuni King' in Tibetan Culture

One may not only associate signs of sovereignty and investiture with depitictions of luxury art in a Buddhist temple but may also want to see a link to the luxury world where the Buddha himself had been born, as well as the Future Buddha preaching in Tuṣita-heaven, where the Buddha to-be is garbed in rich dresses of a king and adorned with jewels. According to Buddhist teaching in the *Mahāvastu* he descends from heaven to the earth for the last time inorder to meet gods and humankind.[424]

In the Jokhang of Lhasa the sumptuous silk brocade cape '*namsa*' of the Jobo - the most important Buddhist icon of Tibet - is called birthday's cloth alluding to the noble origin of Buddha, the 'Śākyamuni King' (Pl. 5).[425] Thus the Tibetan interest in material culture and luxury art in particular, appears to emphasize the general notion of the noble origin of the Buddha.

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[420] The latter had a strong tradition of god-like kings and royal cult; thus enhancing the religious dimension of legitimacy of this symbolism in the Western Himalaya.

[421] Cf. Pal 1975; Papa-Kalantari 2006.

[422] Bronze sculptures from Gilgit show this ornamental style, further rock carving in the Indus valley featuring the Buddha in a Mandorla with beaded border and gems in the cardinal points alluding to royal luxury textiles from Central Asia; verbal communication M. Klimburg.

[423] Cf. Rhie 1997.

[424] Mahāvastu 1960: 148. This also documens the funtion of signs of worldly power and majesty equated with that of the king of the dharma.

[425] During my field study in Tibet in the winter of 2006/2007 I had the occasion to participate in a private ritual of donation of gold to the Jobo in Lhasa. According to my informant, the monk Penpa Sandrup, the specific ritual of gilding the statue and the renewing of its jewellery and luxury robes is only performed on Tuesdays. On that day the birth of his Holiness and the birthday of the 'Śākyamuni King' are celebrated. The precious brocades are removed from the sculpture of the 'Jobo' before the process of gilding. They are then used to bless the pilgrims,

Of course, when looking at the emphasis on courtly culture and wealth in Tibetan art in the depictions at Alchi in particular, the spiritual career of the Buddha, the courtly status of his family and his renunciation of worldly beauties come to mind; this hypothesis is further supported by the inscription in the Great Stupa at Alchi, where it says:

> "In this excellent place in the range of Snowy mountains one region of the country is Upper mÑa-ris (mÑa ris stod), the especially selected Lower Ladakh (La dvags smad)...here in Al-lci, I myself, a monk of the 'Bro (clan), Thul 'khrims 'od...I have received the three teachings....After I had realized that the riches and possessions accumulated by me eventually (will vanish?)... I offered them to my jewel-like teachers. For the wholesome roots (*kuśala-mūla*) I made symbols (*rten rnams*) of Body, Speech and Mind. As symbol of the Body I made the following: I have built this (temple) Pile of Jewels (*rinchen brtsegs po*)."[426]

The biography of the donor thus emphasizes the merits he achieved in former lives as well renunciation of this world and orientation towards higher truths, thus following the example of Śākyamuni.[427] Interestingly, at Dunkar, the life of the Buddha is shown in a Tibetan environment with strong parallels to the courtly life shown in donor depictions. This choice of Tibetan settings may also emphasize the aim of the donors and the equation of their life with the spiritual career of the Buddha.

4.1.4. Attiring the Mandala: On the Function and Symbolism of Textiles in Mature Esoteric Buddhism

One important aspect of robes and material culture in early Mahāyāna is their function as symbols of the spiritual development as well as continuity, and so the development over time, e.g.: the renunciation of Śākyamuni from the courtly sphere, the transfer of the golden robe to the future Buddha Maitreya, and the bejewelled Buddha, which can may be associated with the ritual of consecration and thus also an act of transfer of power.[428]

The situation is more complex in the Esoteric system of cosmology in Vajrayāna – Buddhism, where textiles, robes and jewellery define hierarchy, indicating the authority in the transcendent realm of the dharma, the state of consciousness in the Buddhist universe. In this system the central Buddha has the most complex dresses, often in gold, adorned with motifs associated with royalty and wearing a crown and jewellery. Furthermore, he is often shown sitting on a sumptuous shrine-like throne encircled by a halo.

In general, in the Esoteric system of Buddhism Buddha Śākyamuni in shown in the *Nirmāṇakāya*-form (T. *sprul pa'i sku*, the apparitional or emanational body of a Buddha), the worldly

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which means. This means, that the holiness of the deity inherent in the brocade, is transferred to the pilgrim. On this occasion the devotees offer gems from old and precious jewellery for the crown of the statue, which is – only symbolically - integrated into the latter.

[426] Goepper 1993: 113; the text was translated by Prof. Goepper and the Ladakhi scholar Konchuk Panday.

[427] Accordingly, in the life of the Buddha, depicted on the dhoti of a monumental sculpture in the Alchi Sumtsek, prince Siddhartha, leaving secretly the palace on his horse is shown in local courtly garb, while in the other scene he is depicted wearing Indian cloths.

[428] Interestingly, this type of the bejeweled Buddha, in particular the cape, which occurs often in Bamiyan and Kaśmīr, is only depicted once in Western Himalayan sculpture, and never in the clay sculptures (Luczanits 2004: 240).

manifestation of the Buddha: "*...a fragile temporary body in which the Buddha manifests himself in our world*" .[429] Traditionally the Buddha is clad in monk's robes consisting of three parts (S. *tricivara*): a lower garment '*antaravāsa (ka)*', the upper garment '*uttarāsaṅga*' and a mantle or heavy scarf (*saṃghāti*). This dress is used for the historical Buddha and the worldly manifestation of a Buddha in general.[430]

The inscription in the Sumtsek says that the figure of the Mañjuśrī is meant to help the worshipper to overcome all physical impurities and to gain the human apparitional body (T. *sprul sku*; S. *nirmanakāya*) with which the Buddha taught and acted in this world.[431]

The scenes on the *dhoti* (skirt) of the three monumental sculptures in the Alchi Sumtsek are depictions of this realm: 1. Avalokitesvara decorated with possibly depictions of pilgrimage places in the region including Greater Kaśmīr; 2. Maitreya, with scenes from the Buddha-life; and 3. Mañjuśrī featuring Mahāsiddas[432] engaged in different activities. Images of various Buddhist and Hindu sanctuaries and pilgrimage places on the *dhoti*, which even show the king riding out for hunting in what was probably Hindu-Shāhi dress, and images of significant scenes of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni and Mahāsiddhas, all perfectly fit into the concept of the 'apparitional body' (*nirmanakāya*), containing images of the mundane world.

The different images of religious places, Buddha life, and religious masters, represent virtually all significant religious phenomena in the worldly sphere, and are interwoven into the Bodhisattvas skirts as an act of symbolic unification of the mundane world.[433]

In contrast, the Tathāgatha (a fully enlightened Buddha) is depicted in *Saṃghogakāya*-form, the 'glorious body' (T. *long sku*), which is meant as the state of the Buddha in which he rules his paradise[434], while the absolute 'dharma body', (T. *chos sku*) is the form, from which all existence emanates[435]; this position is taken by Vairocana in the Western Himalaya Buddhism. However, Vairocana is often depicted as the 'primus inter pares' among the Five Tathāgathas in the early Western Himalaya temples. He is the main Jina of the five Buddhas. According to Christian Luczanits, the subordination of the four Jinas surrounding him is usually underlined by more abundant ornaments of Vairocana and his lager size.[436]

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[429] Luczanits 2004: 353.

[430] Ibid. 240.

[431] Goepper 1996: 48.

[432] The 'realized Tantric practitioners' are historical figures, who lived between the 8th and 12th centuries, which were the main instigators of revealers of the Buddhist Tantras (Beer 2003: 254).

[433] This phenomenon of robes of deities decorated with significant Buddhist scenes may be also linked to the long and diverse history of cosmological Buddhas (see below).

[434] An example is a almost life-size sculpture of Maitreya of copper and silver with a decorated *dhoti* from North-East India from the Pāla period, probably decorated with the 'thirteen ornaments of the *sambhogakaya*' from 11th to 12th century (Pl. 35), which probably reflects luxury textiles of cotton in fashion during the reign of the Pāla or Sena dynasties in Eastern India. These examples show that precious cotton cloths with complex patterns were of high value and might have had an equal status like woven silks in Central Asia. One type of textiles found on deities at Tabo might document this type of luxury textiles of cotton in the medium of painting; Cf. an image of a Bodhisattva at Tabo dressed with a dhoti, decorated with alternating rows of flowers and lozenges, divided by horizontal bands; cf. Klimburg-Salter 1982: Fig. 30.

[435] Ibid.

[436] For an image see Luczanits, 2004: p. 45. Vairocana at Tabo is understood as the *Saṃghogakāya* of Śākyamuni: in the Tabo Vajradhātumandala, his dress is a simple *dhoti* of the Buddha and jewelry, including crown and ribbons (Ibid. 209).

The depiction of the Tathāgathas clad with golden robes or other dresses made of luxury textiles at Alchi recalls the 'Thirteen Ornaments of the *sambhogakāy'* (T. longs spyod rdzogs pa'i rgyan cdu gsum) in later texts, consisting inter alia of 'Five Dresses of Silks' (T. dar gyi chos gos lnga), the uppermost element being a robe decorated with motifs in gold.[437]

Vairocana and the other Tathāgatha at Alchi do not wear royal dresses but a monks robe decorated with symbols recalling the most sumptuous luxury textiles, alluding to royal signs of authority and their motifs may bear Buddhist symbolism, also found on the ceiling decoration. The language of textiles and their ornaments are thus precisely and consequently applied to transmit the different states, or bodies (S. *trikaya*, T. *sku gsum*) of Buddhahood in the complex cosmological system of Esoteric Buddhism.

Christian Luczanits described some aspects of this system and the related religious literature in early Western Himalaya art in the chapter entitled 'Dressing of a Mandala Sculpture' in his 2004 standard reference book[438]. Based on Ānandagarbha's description of the Vajradhātumahā-mandala this system can be defined as follows: "*According to him, Vairocana wears an upper and lower garment of silk (dar-la'I stod-gyogs dang smad-gyogs) and is consecrated with a jewelled crown ... and ribbons. ...the Tathāgatas are contemplative, ornamented with all ornaments, are of pacific aspect and smile.*"[439]

The author suggests that there are no strict uses of dresses, but robes and jewellery are used depending on the function of the deity in the respective configuration in the temple.

The royal symbolism and most complex fabrics are thus used for the robes in the realm of the Jinas at Alchi essentially reflects the notion of initiation and legitimacy in the transcendent realm of the five Buddha-family.

In other texts of Tantric literature Vairocana is described with a golden body, crown and royal garb[440], which resulted in a common praxis of depictions with the attire of a Tibetan king.

The use of courtly dresses for Vairocana and attending Bodhisattvas is also a characteristic element in 11th century painting and sculptures of Drathang in the Yarlung valley, Central Tibet. "*Die Auffassung von Vairocana als Universalherrscher deckte sich mit dem Anspruch auf Vorherrschaft und dem Legitimationswunsch der vergöttlichten Herrscher Tibets und fand so ihren Ausdruck in der Darstellung Vairocanas im Gewand tibetischer Könige bereits zu Begin des 9 Jhs.*"[441]

In the Alchi Sumtsek these symbols of worldly power, like sumptuous cloths - partly reflecting Sāsānian royal symbolism - are used to express the authority of the transcendental Tathāgata Buddhas[442]. In addition, symbols of the *cakravartin* are depicted in his throne and of protector deities.

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[437] Cat. 2006: 622-623.

[438] Luczanits 2004: 239 ff.

[439] Ibid. 240.

[440] Cat. 2006: 429.

[441] Ibid.; Vairocana is shown at Drathang in Tibetan cloths with boots, surrounded by eight figures of Bodhisattva who also have courtly garbs. This kind of courtly garment is also shown in a stone relief with inscriptions of the 9th century. Vairocana is depicted there in *Saṃghogakāya* with the attire of a Tibetan king. In the tantric literature Vairocana is described with golden body, crown and royal garb, and Buddha Śākyamuni in his *Nirmaṇkāya*-form or worldly manifestation of the Buddha (ibid.).

[442] Cf. Tathāgata Amitābha, for an image see Goepper 1996: 39.

Snellgrove was one of the first Western scholars who pointed out the importance of royal symbolism in Tantric Buddhism in his 1959 article but its function in the Western Himalaya paintings has not yet been defined. Snellgrove well described the ancient relation between kingship and Buddhism and how universal dominion (the ideal if the *cakravartin*) and Buddhahood "*... were conceived as parallel goals, one pre-eminent in the worldly sphere, and the other in there other-worldly*".[443] He assumes that a form of royal consecration had been already adopted in the 7th century. In Mahāyāna, the higher beings, who were worshipped, were often conceived in regal terms.[444] The consecration of Śākyamuni to Buddhahood is described in the *Mahāvastu*.[445] In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*[446], where the consecration of the mandala is described, the *cakravartin* is to be placed at the centre, who is like a great king with his palace, and his decorations are those of a great being who is crowned and adorned with all adornments, and it is written as follows: "*His lower garment is of fine cloth and his upper garment of cloth of various colours*".[447] The text also informs us about ceremonies of consecration with many parallels to rituals used for worldly sovereigns: "*They spread the great canopy, they set up flags and banners of victory, they hold the white umbrella over his head and wave white flywhisks*".[448] In a later stage of Mahāyāna, this place is taken over by Vairocana, the transcendent form of Śākyamuni, and possessor of universal dharma-sovereignty in the system of the five families.[449]

The tantric *abhiṣeka* include the washing and other rituals applied in consecration ceremonies of statues, which were closely related to the investiture of kings. Various tantric texts reflect the ritual allusion to the *abhiṣeka* of the king, which were applied in tantric rituals of the adept entering the mandala, the crown having the most important function.[450] These rituals are still practiced referring to the empowerment of the Five Buddhas, into whose lineage he now enters: "*Symbolically, the abhiṣeka of the vase is the coronation of the student as a prince or princess, a would-be king or queen of the mandala. It signifies the students graduation from the ordinary world into the world of continuity, the tantric world*".[451]

This constant phenomenon in this region might relate to the ancient Buddhist concept of the jewelled Buddha[452], a type of depiction of the Buddha decked with royal garments and other ornaments associated with royalty on his throne as already stated.[453] However, no deities with characteristic capes, decorated with pearls (comparable to Sasanian royal cloths) found on Kaśmīr bronzes or other elements of dresses associated with royal rank can be identified in the art of the Western Himalaya. So the symbols and motifs on the monastic dresses associated with luxury garments seem to have a slightly different function in the later complex Esoteric system

[443] Snellgrove 1959: 204.

[444] Ibid.

[445] *Mahāvastu* (1949-56); cited after Snellgrove 1959.

[446] A Tibetan text related to the Mandala of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* has been transl. by Mcdonald 1962.

[447] Snellgrove 1959: 207.

[448] Ibid.

[449] The *Tattvasaṃgraha* (Narthang Kangyur) is an important work related to this theme also relevant for the period of the early Western Himalaya temples (Ibid. 209).

[450] Luczanits 1993: 88.

[451] Trungpa, Cat. 1982: 230, cited after Luczanits 1993: 88.

[452] Mus 1929; Snellgrove 1959, Klimburg-Salter 1989: 109; Taddei 1992: 457.

[453] Cf. also Mus 1929: 276, who proposed, that this type, widespread in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Kaśmīr (cf. Pal 1975: fig. 30) appears to be connected with northeast Indian prototypes, such as the image in the Mahabodhi temple at Bodhgayā illustrating early Buddhist rituals of donating textiles and jewellery to the Buddha image.

of Buddhism. I have suggested that while the jewelled cape of the Buddha can be associated with a sign of rank and investiture, indicating continuity and temporal order, luxury textiles have an important role to play in the definition of the hierarchy of deities in the mandala, symbolizing rather spatial order in the art of the Western Himalaya, with the central deity dressed in the most sumptuous garments and decorated with jewels associated with royalty. The ornaments found on these garments as well as motifs defining the throne of the central deity are also depicted on the ceilings. This may also be an important indication of the meaning of the ceiling's decoration, which also stands for the Buddha in impersonal form and the realm beyond worldly limitation.

Precious robes (S. *chivara*, T. *gos*) and jewels and their qualities as one of the seven secondary possessions of the *chakravratin* deserve special attention also in later ritual practice in Tibetan Buddhism. Brocaded garments, woven from finest silks serve as the outer robe of a lama, and various ritual paraphernalia and even deities are dressed in such robes in Buddhist temples up to present.

> Traditionally the robes of the *cakravartin* possess: "...the material qualities of being light, soft, finely woven, durable, fragrant, clean, and always unstained. In summer they are cool, and in winter warm. They also possess the magical qualities of removing hunger, thirst, fatigue, and illness, and are impervious to the attack of weapons, fire, water, wind, insects, dust, and the corrupting influence of curses." [454]

Banners, jewellery and sumptuous textiles associated with high rank (e.g. minister, precious queen) as well as other emblems of the *cakravartin* (seven jewels and secondary possessions) are also important elements still used in the ritual of consecrating the mandala in Tibet.[455] Various texts reflect this tradition which is closely related to royal investiture in the Indian cultural sphere.

A telling example of offerings of the possessions of the *cakravartin* combined with precious textiles as a part of the Buddhist ritual is a miniature votive umbrella from Ačigh Iläq (c. 7th century)[456] featuring symbolic depictions of the six of eight of the '7 or 8 jewels' painted on ramie.[457] All this shows a glorification of the royal sphere as well as the renunciation of it, which has been a component of devotional practice and rituals of consecration from earliest times.

Images of flying deities organized in a row of pearled medallions (with cornucopia-like elements in the interstices, Pl. 75[458]) on the Tabo ceilings of the cella hold jewels and different parasols. The whole ceiling composition with auspicious symbols in the corners indicate a mandalic layout, whereby the offering genies are orientated towards the central icon in the cella, maybe indicating rituals of consecration. The embellishments of the mandala portals in the wall-paintings at Nako and Alchi with textiles, fans and ritual implements probably also reflect such rituals. This important ritual function and symbolism of textiles and luxury art

[454] Beer 2003: 43.

[455] Ibid: 86.

[456] Ebert 2006: figs. 77, 78; who I wish to thank this information.

[457] Further studies of contemporary ritual texts are necessary to refine this theory.

[458] The peals have white outlines with colored centers, indicating reflections of the light. Each of them has a black dot, which may be read as the fixing element. A comparable configuration of pearls as offering is held by a tantric deity, depicted in the transition zone from the hall to the cella in the Tabo Main temple (cf. for an image Klimburg-Salter 1997: fig. 20).

associated with royalty and consecration in the realm of the Tathagata is most relevant for the interpretation of the ceiling' programme as an intrinsic component of the symbolism of sacred space.

4.2. Luxury Art as Worldly and Spiritual Power at Alchi

The double symbolism of luxury art and ideals of worldly and spiritual leadership is best documented in motifs depicted on various painted textiles of sculptures and on images of deities as well as on the ceilings of the Sumtsek: Horse riders (partly in Parthian shot), lions and elephants in combat, dancers, complex ornaments alluding to luxury textiles from various places in Central Asia and India. This medium is exemplary for the reciprocal enhancement of the royal and religious sphere in a symbolism characteristic for the complex system of Esoteric Buddhism at Alchi.

The various functions of material culture and luxury art on different levels of Buddhist iconography and classes of deities, as well as in narrative images, are a fascinating and little studied issue.

Various paradise scenes, depicted in the Dukhang and the Sumtsek of Alchi, are exemplary. An image of Amithāba's paradise residing in his heavenly palace shows Bodhisattvas and Hindu deities organized in different superimposed registers.[459] Below the transcendental sphere are priests engaged in a ceremony. Amitābha wears a crown, necklace and a sumptuous cloth decorated with hunters or bowmen mounted on elephants; the textile clearly refers to sumptuous luxury garments, which are also depicted on the ceilings of this temple (Pl. 239). In the complex system of Vajrayana Buddhism, different types of textiles and dresses play a significant role in the definition of the hierarchy and order from the mundane to the sacred; the function of luxury art here is clearly to enhance the splendour of the heavenly realm of Amitābha. The luxury cloths may even be read as a sign of supra-mundane power and legitimacy, comparable to the golden cloth and jewellery, which are a sign of investiture in very early Buddhist tradition. While the golden cloth expresses a temporal continuity of the Buddhist tradition (from Śākyamuni to the future Buddha Maitreya)[460], the precious garment of Amitābha decorated with gold threads expresses his superior spatial position in the Buddhist cosmos and the transcendent realm he resides in[461].

Susan Huntington[462] has even associated this depiction of Amitābha in the Alchi Sumtsek dressed in luxury garments with the notion of investiture, reflecting his sovereignty in the paradise he resides in. She assumes that the robes represent real textiles; they might reflect the privileges of aristocracy in Kaśmīr, and are thus also used as a sign of Amitābha 's privilege, in his function as ruler of Sukhāvatī (pure land), but without further elaboration and giving examples for this assumption. Various symbols and traditions of sovereignty have been integrated which precisely define the mandalic system of the Five-Buddha-family, as will be shown below.

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[459] cf. Geopper 1996: p. 86.

[460] Cf. Kramrisch 1939a.

[461] Further images of paradise are in the upper storey of the Sumtsek, executed by different artists than the murals of the ground floor, thus also the 'language of ornament' differs. The paradise environment is defined by an abstract landscape, with different types of trees and ponds in the typical geometric shape; cf. Goepper 1996: 166-167.

[462] Huntington 1985: 379.

A comparable phenomenon of shared values in religious and worldly spheres can be observed in 19th century China, as has been pointed out by J. Ebert[463]. She discussed a stunning example of luxury cloths associated with prestige and power in a religious context, namely a sumptuous priestly robe from the 'Museum für Völkerkunde', Berlin, made of silk and decorated with extremely fine embroidery. The precious garment shows stars featuring cosmological symbolism on the back, probably reflecting universal order. This type of luxury cloth has characteristics comparable to a famous dragon robe from the Qing Period, as its dragon symbolism on the back can be interpreted as a diagram of the universe, reflecting the sovereignty of the emperor and the universal order of his rule

4.2.1. Fabrics Symbolizing the Transmission of Worldly and Religious Power in India and in the Muslim World

Various texts describe the use of robes and jewellery during the consecration of a king in the Indian cultural sphere.[464] The *Viṣṇudharmottara-purāṇa*[465] describes the ceremony of consecration, in which jewels, an umbrella and flywhisks adorn the king, dressed with a white robe. Comparable ceremonies have also been adopted in the sphere of Buddhist rituals, as will be shown below.

Specific garments used as signs of authority are found in India and Indonesia up to recent times. Ritual textiles in Indonesia, such as *patola* (double ikat[466]), strongly influenced by early Indian textile production from Northwest India or Pakistan - were used as wall-covers or flags, but also as signs of rank. The high prestige of such *patola* textiles is reflected in the traditional usage of this type of garment as signs of the legitimacy of local rulers. After the ceremony of transmission the ruler was even given the title '*patola ratu*'.[467]

Specific textiles indicating signs of rank and authority adopted from the Muslim world may also be alluded to on the ceilings of the Western Himalaya temples of Alchi. One ceiling plank shows overlapping animals, interrupted by bands containing pseudo-inscriptions, which show arch-like elements and E-shaped designs, which do not recall Devanagari script nor Tibetan letters, but rather Kufic signs (Pl. 133). This motif, which recalls *ṭirāz* strips[468] in the Muslim and probably also in the Hindu-Shāhi courtly sphere, induced me to take a brief look at the cultural context of this type of design in the Western Himalaya and its possible symbolism.

Also ritual textiles and other early precious garments from the Indian Ocean trade often have horizontal bands, with different motifs and ornaments inserted between; such systems of decoration can also be found on the ceilings at Tabo (Pl. 116). One comparable example is an Indian block-printed cotton textile from Gujarāt, traded with Sulawesi (eastern Indonesia, radio-carbon dated A.D. 1400)[469]. However, paintings of textiles containing texts in the

[463] Ebert 1989.

[464] Cited after Luczanits 1993: 78.

[465] The dating is uncertain and may range between 600 and 900, the text probably stems from Kashmir or Punjab (Luczanitzs 1993: 78).

[466] A type of garment whose production requires much technical skill.

[467] Cat. 1995: 27.

[468] *Ṭirāz* is a Persian word for embroidery, a band with texts or decorative motifs, which was in general a prerogative of rulers or members of the court, or also a term of the workshop, where it was produced.

[469] Cf. Barnes 2005: fig. 2.2.; the textile is housed in the Ashmolean Museum.

horizontal bands are only to be found in the temple of Alchi.[470] This example demonstrates that it is not impossible that such textiles, found on the Alchi ceilings with lines of texts alluding to *ṭirāz* strips, were produced in India very early on. However, we may assume, that this symbolism was common parlance in various traditions of Muslim and probably also Shāhi communities in neighbouring regions and was transmitted via items of trade, which may also have reached Ladakh.

Muslim courtly centres had "*... enormous stores of textiles and garments for gifts and tribute, a large part of a family's wealth was in cloth; taxes were received in cloth. Robes of Honour were used by Islamic rulers for gifts to subjects. The court had total control over the manufacture of luxury textiles and only those who enjoyed the favour of the ruler had access to them.*"[471]

Consequently, the high status of luxury textiles and their symbolism as robes of honour may have been consciously adopted to enhance the beauty and sumptuousness of textiles on the ceilings at Alchi indicating legitimacy in the sphere of the transcendent Buddhas (cf. chapter 6 ('Ceilings').

It is significant to note that *ṭirāz* bands on fore-arms are also found on the dresses of donors (e.g. shown in the donor depictions of the Dukhang (see below), and may be signs of ranks adopted from the Islamic sphere or may at least reflect a parallel phenomenon in the courtly culture of Kashmir, Northern Pakistan and Ladakh.[472]

We may thus assume that at Alchi the idea of transmission of power and legitimacy inherent in cloths decorated with lines of texts (*ṭirāz*) – although also developing much older models of Indian systems of decoration - was integrated in the symbolism of sovereignty in the Buddhist realm.

4.2.2. Cosmopolitan Taste and Local Style at Alchi: Textiles as Symbols of Status and Legitimacy

Precious garments with motifs in the international language of luxury art contribute to the rich and splendid overall atmosphere in the Sumtsek (T. *gsum brtsegs)*. I have shown elsewhere[473] that the ornamental culture of Ladakh is an artistic milieu, which created a rich variety of mature stylistic expressions; in fact the vitality of this art lies in the very notion of mutation and variation.[474] A proposed classification of distinctive Indian and Central-Asian textile styles is given in the chapter 5 ('Luxury textiles') which explains the conscious use of textile motifs as symbols of status and legitimacy adapted to the indigenous taste of the ruling elite. The capacity to blend the given elements, thereby focusing on pattern and arrangement, is a

[470] There exist Indian textiles from a later period, which may echo Islamic garments, such as the famous elephant silk (Louvre), which is known as the 'Shroud of St. Josse', datable to before 961, and stemming probably from Khorasan, Iran. The line of Kufic script on the Iranian silk is also reflected in the *patola*, paraphrasing the Iranian silk, which was found in eastern Indonesia. The latter has lines of text in Indian Devanagari script in the design (cf. Guy 1998: 90).

In general, the organization of small-scale patterns in horizontal bands is a characteristic feature of Indian textile production. In some Indian textiles, are bands bearing also inscriptions, but the date of the earliest examples showing this theme is unknown to me (cf. Pfister 1938; images on p. XX).

[471] Reynolds 1995: 89.

[472] A depiction of the transmission of the K'ila to the Ghaznavid ruler documents the strong cultural force of this tradition in this region (cf. Encyclopaedia of Islam: 'Ghaznavids' and 'K'ila').

[473] Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2002.

[474] Boris Marshak (verbal communication) has compared this fascinating creative profusion with that displayed by the verses of the Shāh-nāmeh.

phenomenon typical of a rich and highly developed artistic milieu.[475] The distinctive qualities of elaboration and variation at Alchi enhance the sacredness of a ritual space in this artistic tradition. In fact, variation is an expression of luxury. On the other hand, religious content and Eastern Iranian ornament associated with luxury enhance one another, and in this function ornament is of itself a means of religious symbolism. There is a constant and close relationship between textile reflections of status and legitimacy of kingship and those of Buddhist supremeness in Tibetan culture and particular in Western Himalayan art. The intimate relation between royal and monastic law corresponds to an ancient local relationship between kingship and Buddhism and is best illustrated in the figure of Yeshe Ö, the royal lama (*lha bla ma*) of Tabo. This emphasis on courtly symbolism is specifically characteristic for the latest artistic phase of this painting tradition, and the Sumtsek in particular.

The co-presence of the religious and courtly spheres are to be observed in the Buddhist cave paintings of Central Asia very early on, e.g. in the art of Kyzil (Eastern Turkestan, e.g. in the 'Māyā cave, zone 2') and Bāmiyān (ceiling of the 38 m Buddha-niche). At Alchi we find this notion on various levels, especially on the painted wooden ceilings with their depictions of dancers, hunting scenes, animals in combat and predatory animals: all these themes can also be found in roughly contemporary Fatimid art. This fascinating co-presence is not unusual in this period and can also be found in the Capella Palatina from the same period in Palermo, Italy, built by the great Hohenstaufen monarch Frederick II, ruler of Sicily and Normandy.

Sumptuous textiles and their motifs in the Western Himalaya painting express holiness in their function as honorific and ritual clothes as well as the status and legitimacy of the ruling elites who founded the temples. Their patterns and motifs, expressing supra-mundane luxury, beauty and wealth, became an integral part of the visual aesthetic and artistic tradition of this region. In fact, these paintings became luxury objects in their own right. It can therefore be concluded that the pluralism in the ornamental styles is not only a result of chronological and functional factors but is also based on different textile models in the Western Himalaya reflecting the social background of the founder and the artistic milieu in which these arte-facts were produced.

However, in general this fusion of luxury art and Buddhist symbolism has an ambivalent symbolism. It can be interpreted as symbols of legitimacy and glorification of the worldly riches, but also as offerings of material goods and thus the material world from which Siddhartha and thus also the aristocratic donor dismissed.

4.3. Buddhist Ritual and Votive Textiles and their Depiction

4.3.1. Conceiling and Revealing the Sacred: From Symbol to Textile

Several paintings at Tabo, Nako and Alchi provide insight into the various purposes of textiles; they appear not only as the costumes of lay people, as exquisite garments dignifying kings and gods but also as votive textiles and banners dressing the throne of the Buddha: they are bound on pilasters (Pl. 20), or hung on stupas and temples Pl. 24 Honorific textiles such as ceremonial tents, baldachins, umbrellas, or draperies not only embellish but also define the ephemeral spaces.

As seen in the reliefs of Amarāvatī (Pl. 8a) and Gandhāra (Pl. 9), textiles define the sacred space from very early on, illustrating the strong and lasting force of the an-iconic

[475] Trilling 2003.

representation of the Buddha. The Buddha's presence after his birth is indicated at Nāgārjunīkoṇḍa (3rd c.) by an umbrella and flywhisk, while four *lokapāla*, the guardians of the four directions, shown in offering mode, hold a textile with imprints of the 'First 7 Steps' (Pl. 9 a). The textile conceils the sacred[476] and it is also alluding to the act of veneration and unification of the universe, such as the substances in the bowls of the guardians of the Four directions fusing to one, which is held by the Buddha. At Bhārhūt scenes of the adorartion of the Buddha are shown indicated by an umbrella, empty throne, imprints of the feet, and wheel of law, the textile on the throne is decorated with imprints of the hands and flowers (Pl. 8).

The quality of textiles, honouring, delineating, protecting and conceiling the holy remains a constant force in Buddhist culture today. While the symbols for the Buddha are meant to lift him beyond the human plane, the textile functions like a veil, making the holy un-accessible to the human gaze. This protecting or veiling function is already shown in a Gandhāran relief, as just mentioneld. Similarly, when his Holiness the Dalai Lama moves from his summer residence to his winter residence today, he is not allowed to be looked at and therefore a textile is held in front of him.[477] Moreover, in Burma the monk/lama is hidden by a silk fan during the sermon (Pl. 10) and a fan is positioned in front of the monumental Buddha statue at Ayutthaya/Thailand (Pl. 21). A similar concept can be found in the thin veils protecting and covering the thangka (scroll paintings), which are unveiled during the ceremony.

The constant Buddhist concept of ornament transmitting the idea of the Numinal, and transcendence of worldly-limitedness as well as the secret of the Buddha's body has a long tradition in Indian and Tibetan history. In early Buddhist art it found an expression in the visual idiom of material culture symbols and abstraction. Maurizio Taddei[478] described the function of an-iconism in the art of Gandhāra. He concludes that the juxtaposition of narrative scenes and the absence of the Buddha in anthropomorphic form is one of the main artistic achievements of this period. Symbols and signs represented the Buddha without the illusion of physical reality. Only later did this distinction become blurred. In the art of Gandhāra the symbolism of objects and symbols on the throne associated with the Buddha were fused with the textile cover and various other elements of ephemeral architecture and honorific covers such as the umbrella. At Gandhāra the textiles, shown on the thrones of the Buddha[479] reflect late antique features, such as valances falling down on the front side of the furniture,[480] while the motifs on these fabrics often recall Indian textile ornament, with rows of small-scale patterns. Some motifs such as the lotus rosette are also often found in depictions of the empty throne in the earlier an-iconic phase of Buddhism.[481]

This means that ornament, textiles and honorific covers represent both the numinous and define the heavenly abode from the earliest phase of Buddhism.

Contrary to Taddei's theory, I suggest that the an-iconic position *did* find continuity in the visual art of ornament and textile symbolism in later Buddhist culture, particularly in Tibet. This artistic force of an-iconic representations of the Buddha and the culture of luxury textiles

[476] I wish to thank Dr. J. Frembgen for discussions on a related phenomenon in the Muslim world.

[477] I must thank Dr. Kurt Tropper (University of Vienna) for this information (5. 2005).

[478] Taddei 1993.

[479] Textiles, with a strong late antique flavor also adorn the bed in Parinirvārṇa scenes in Gandhāra (Swāt) art.

[480] Cf. Ebert 1985: fig.20.

[481] In the art of Mathura (c. 2nd century) the throne is defined by a wooden chair with a round pillar placed in the back, replacing the body of the Buddha and textiles draped on it, which hang down in the front and can be read as the visual equivalent of the Buddha's garments (cf. Glasenapp 1926: Fig. 26.)

along the Silk routes enhance each other, contributing to the extraordinary sense of variety in ornamental culture and visual splendour of early Western Tibetan interior spaces.[482]

I propose that the ancient concept of an-iconic representation in Buddhist art, in which narrative scenes are positioned in conscious contrast to the empty throne, adorned with ornaments and elements which celebrate the Buddha in the state which transcends personal form, is used as a metaphor to communicate the notion of the overcoming of physical reality/form ('Überwindung der Realität') was continued in the later art of ornament and symbolism of ceilings in Buddhist temples. The ceiling is of course the ideal place to transmit the ideal of transgression ('Überwindung') of worldly limitedness ('Befreiung von den Banden der Endlichkeit').[483]

4.3.2. The Textile Attire of the 'Cosmological Buddha'

In general, the organization of Buddhist scenes as surface patterns, as shown in particular at Alchi, is not unusual in Buddhist art of Central Asia, and some of the most famous examples are the ceilings of the cave temples at Kyzil. This phenomenon may be related to the images of 'cosmological Buddhas' in Central Asia, whose bodies or rather surfaces of the robe are covered with specific symbols. Examples of Cosmological Buddhas can be found in Central Asia Dunhuang,[484] Kizil[485] and Khotan.[486] They show important cosmological and biographical scenes, which are simultaneously depicted.[487] An example from Balawaste (6th c.) features the sun and moon, horse, *vajra* and jewel-like elements.[488] The dresses may reflect the concept of oneness in Buddhism: the Buddha is a receptacle of the phenomenal world. It is based on the idea of unity of Buddha and the world in which he incarnated himself for the last time to free the sentient beings from the chain of endless rebirths.[489]

This way of decorating the Buddha's body strongly calls to mind scenes of the Buddha-life and places of pilgrimage on the skirt *dhoti* of the monumental sculptures in the Sumtsek. The ornaments on the skirt feature allusions to pilgrimage places, scenes form the worldly life of the Buddha, and Mahāsiddhas. All these scenes are comparable with Central Asian sculptures and paintings of the cosmological Buddha, with biographical representations of Śākyamuni. However, while the cosmological Buddha also bears allusions to the trans-mundane realm, this is so in the case of the *dhoti* at Alchi. The latter skirts exclusively show scenes related to a specific aspect, namely worldly existence, consistent with the vertical hierarchy and the different spheres in the iconographic programme of the temple.

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[482] This force is also one of the impulses behind the decoration of ceiling with various ornamental designs and figural motifs. All these ceiling decorations are thus meaningful, constituting a component of the warps-and wefts, which link the parts of the iconographic program to a visual and religious whole (see below).

[483] "*Denn in Wahrheit ist ein Buddha keine im Raum und Zeit erscheinende Realität sondern ein Ideal, das Spiegelbild des reinen, von allen Trübungen des Leidenschaft freien ewigen Prinzips der Erlösung, eine Personifikation der leidenschaftslosen Weltüberwindung*"(Glasenapp 1946: 215-216).

[484] Cf. Dunhuang, Cave 428, illustrated in Howard: 1986: fig. 15.

[485] Ibid. fig. 26.

[486] Howard 1986: fig. 60.

[487] The Cosmological Buddha has been interpreted by A. Howard as a depiction of Sakyamuni, and the scenes on the dhoti may incorporate the iconographic program expressed in the wall paintings of the temple (Howard 1986: 111).

[488] J. Ebert, verbal communication 11.2007. For an image see Bussagli 1963: fig. on p. 55.

[489] Howard 1986: 113.

The various ceiling decorations in Central Asia, such as at Kyzil featuring surface patterns which integrate Buddhist themes and cosmological symbols in combination with painted textiles, reflect this constant force in Buddhist art. The ceilings programme at Alchi is related to this Central Asian concept, alluding to the trans-mundane realm in the cosmological concept of the Tathaghata-Buddhas. To summarize, the textile cover of the colossal statues of the Sumtsek and the ceiling recalls the monastic robe of the cosmologic Buddha. The dhoti in the Sumtsek bears virtually all aspects of the path of liberation. The same concept is also shown in the upper boundaries of the temples at Kyzil, there similar surface patterns are shown with figural scenes, covering a geat part of the upper boundary of the temple. These textiles symbolically cover the Buddha, represented by the temple, which is the receptacle of the Buddhist world system and substitute of the Buddha-body. Jorinde Ebert has put it as follows: "*[Der stupa] wurde zu einem dauerhaften Ersatz für den sterblichen Körper, in dem nun eine geheimnisvolle Kraft verewigt wird.*"[490] In this sence the stupa and the temple are symbols of His existence beyond physical form, attired, wrapped, conceiled and reveiled with textiles.

4.3.3. Votive Textiles and Luxury items in Buddhist Devotional Practice

Various types of precious textiles have an important role to play in the Buddhist ritual of the veneration of the Buddha and sacred monuments associated with him, such as stupa from earliest times. They appear not only as exquisite garments and jewellery, distinguishing kings and gods and defining their ephemeral abodes, but the depictions of textiles on the ceilings and in the wall paintings of the early Western Himalaya art provide an interesting insight into the uses of precious fabrics and votive objects made of textiles.

Various Buddhist texts mention the ritual of offering textiles, banners, parasols and robes illustrating this custom in the Buddhist tradition from earliest times[491]: We find a statement on the offering of textiles and parasols by Maitreya in his speech to his adepts in the *Maitreyavyakarana*:

> "Śākyamuni has seen all of you, he, the best of sages, the saviour, the world's true protector, the repository of the true Dharma. It was he who has set you on the path to deliverance, but before you could finally win it you have had to wait for my teaching. It is because you have worshipped Śākyamuni with **parasols, banners, flags,** perfumes, garlands, and unguents that you have arrived here to hear my teaching. It is because you have offered to the shrines of Śākyamuni unguents of sandalwood, or powdered saffron, that you have arrived here to hear my teaching. It is because you have always gone for refuge to the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *saṃgha*, that you have arrived here to hear my teaching. ...It is because you have given gifts to the , drink, food, and many kinds of medicines-that you have arrived here to hear my teaching. It is because you have always observed the Sabbath days that you have arrived here to hear my teaching."[492]

The *Maitreyavyakarana* also documents the high value which has been given to silks and precious textiles in Buddhist culture from earliest times. With regard to the question of the power and miraculous gifts of the Future Buddha, the Lord replied to Śāriputra:

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[490] Ebert 1985: 41.

[491] Cf. also Ebert 2006.

[492] *Maitreyavyakarana*, Transl. by Edward Conze, in his *Buddhist Scriptures* (Penguin Books, 1959), pp. 238-42.

> "India, this island of Jambu, will be quite flat everywhere, it will measure ten thousand leagues, and all men will have the privilege of living on it. It will have innumerable inhabitants, who will commit no crimes or evil deeds, but will take pleasure in doing good. The soil will then be free from thorns, even, and covered with a fresh green growth of grass; when one jumps on it, it gives way, and **becomes soft like the leaves of the cotton tree**. It has a delicious scent, and tasty rice grows on it, without any work. **Rich silken, and other, fabrics of various colors shoot forth from the trees.** The trees will bear leaves, flowers, and fruits simultaneously... ." [493]

This description of grass soft like cotton trees and silks shooting out of branches recalls images of thrones of the Buddha at Bāmiyān, with scarves growing out from the ground, sensually floating in the midst of a paradise-like landscape of various flowers (Pl. 15).

The softness of the leaves of the cotton tree and the rich silken fabrics mentioned in this text also recall the association of precious textiles with the most intense sensory pleasures in later Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The offering of touch (S. *sparha*, t. *reg-bya)* is often represented as a precious colored silk ribbon[494]. In early Western Tibetan culture cotton cloths may have had the same status and aura of sensual pleasure and wealth as silks. Cottons can be of remarkable fineness and were and are still considered equally precious. The variety and profusion of Indian cotton textiles depicted in Western Tibetan temples is evidence of the high quality of printed cotton fabrics in this region. Precious fabrics are thus not only an act of offering wealth and expressing the desire to please enlightened beings, they also symbolize a gesture of sensual renunciation on the part of the donor.

Moreover, deeper levels of the symbolism behind material are found in the *Mūlasavāstivāda Vinaya*. One story recounts how a woman who offered her brother - a Brahmin and Pratyekabuddha - food for three months and gave him a present of cloth for a robe, and a knife, needle and a thread. "*Für ihr Verdienst wünschte sie sich dereinst einen Verstand, scharf, wie das Messer schneidet, tief, wie die Nadel sticht und ein Unterscheidungsvermögen, glatt, wie der Faden durch den Stoff läuft.*"[495] The wife of the Brahmin was Śāriputra, who was in possession of supreme wisdom (*prajñā*). It is interesting to note that specific aspects associated with female activities and the powerful essence associated with textiles, needles and threads, are transferred into the religious sphere and so metaphorically including female aspects in the ultimate goal of salvation.

The earliest written account in the Western Himalaya that mentions silks and other items of high value as donations to the temple can be found in the inscriptions in the temple at Wanla (Ladakh, c. late 13th -14th century):

> 'Thirty-seven of the intelligent kings of the four footed animals, (that is) stallions, (all) of the same size, were also given. The extensive (amounts of) gold, silver, silk (,) garments

[493] Ibid (emphasis by the author).

[494] They are mainly represented as offerings to the peaceful deities and lineage gurus (Beer 2003: 27; a further offering is also the sense of sound). They are traditionally placed below the deity's lotus seat or throne, but they may also be depicted as separate symbols, or held as offerings by the cloud-borne celestial gods. In many Buddhist rituals these five symbolic offerings are momentarily presented as an offering to the presiding lama". (Ibid.).

[495] *Mūlasavāstivāda*, 19,1,6(42a); cited after Panglung 1981: 5.

(was/ and) a little bit more than that, the yaks, sheep, mdzo, etc,...are inconceivable; the material things, the woollen clothing, etc, it was heaped up like a mountain'.[496]

A painted donor scene flanking Amitāyus in the Red Temple of Tsaparang (16th c.) probably depicts the offering of luxury items by local aristocracy on the occasion of the consecration of the temple (Pl. 16). Piles of silk or multi-coloured garments are placed next to the altar; in addition, bundles of wool, jewels, corals, chang, meat and horses can be identified as offerings to the sacred dwelling. The luxury objects depicted at Tsaparang were most probably used for ritual objects and decorative purposes in the temple.

The paintings in the early Western Himalaya temples indicate that monasteries must have been generous commissioners of silk banners and other religious textile artefacts. Such banners of silk, but also canopies and other ritual coverings from the T'ang Period, during which Tibetans controlled large areas of Central Asia (c. 787-848), have been found in Dunhuang.[497] Votive umbrellas have also been found in Kuča (Fig. 27). It can be assumed that the holiness and virtue of the sacred space and the deities adorned by precious textiles passed into these cloths, resulting in the common Buddhist practice of reusing the donated silks of earlier devotees. Accordingly, the motifs on these garments were reproduced in other media and became part of the visual aesthetics and ornamental culture of the region, embellishing and dignifying and defining the abode of the Buddha.

4.3.4. Attiring the Buddha and the Stupa in Central Asia and Western Tibet

The evidence of textiles in Buddhist rituals are manifold. Various examples of pious worshippers, offering textiles, flags, parasols and robes are described in *the Mūlasavāstivāda Vinaya*.[498] The symbolism of the flags as offerings to the stupa and other religious monuments[499] and to deities can be reconstructed based on Buddhist texts such as the *Maitreyavyakarana*, already mentioned. Depictions of textiles and flags (S. *pataka*) are a consistent component in Buddhist imagery from earliest times.

A book cover from Gilgit in Pakistan, roughly datable to the 9th-10th century[500] is a rare example of early painting in a region once strongly influenced by Kaśmīri Buddhism. It shows a donor scene flanking a Bodhisattva, whereby the female devotee is offering a shawl or length of cloth to the deity. Comparable scenes are also to be found at Bāmiyān and Balstistan.

Textile banners are offered to images of deities, as can be seen in Eastern India (cf. Pl. 19), and Central Asia, such as Dunhuang.[501] Textiles are knotted on thrones or pilasters of the Buddha (Bāmiyān, Tabo, Lalung), offered by donors to the stupa (Chagdo: Pl. 18; Alchi) or deities

[496] Tropper, 2006: 141.

[497] See Whitfield 2004: 279.

[498] The latter is a collection of rules for monks and nuns based on stories by the Buddha during his time, which is extant in a Tibetan translation. The Tibetan translation of the MSV is of great importance for the study of the Vinaya and its stories; cf. Panglung 1981.

[499] At Bodhgayā pilgrims offer banners and umbrellas which are hung above the seat of the Buddha, the *vajrasana* up to present, while the seat is adorned with lotus flowers.

[500] Illustrated in Pal 1988: 52.

[501] Cf. also Jera-Bezard, R./Maillard, M. (1985) 'Origine et montage des banniéres peintes de Dunhuang'. Arts Asiatiques XL: 83-91.

(Gilgit manuscript), and positioned at the entrances of mandala[502] (see chapter 6.). Precious banners are depicted on the ceiling as offerings by flying genies at Tabo.

Various banners and umbrellas of silk survived in the cave temples of Dunhuang (Pl. 14), which they were used as votive objects and were attached to pagodas as depicted in various images in the cave temples. Banners are made of silk, with a triangular piece on the top, showing not only depictions of deities, but also images of animals, heavenly creatures[503] and floral designs are often found; one example shows musicians with the body of a bird, playing the *pipa*, "*...suggesting that they were intended to show birds and musicians dwelling in the western paradise*".[504]

Various other uses of honorific textiles such as umbrellas (S. *chatra*, T. *gdugs*), banderoles (T. *phan rtse*),[505] flags (*mdung-dar*)[506], ribbons[507] attached to parasols of peacock feathers (T. *rma bya'i mdongs*)[508], and mirrors, are shown in the depictions of deities[509] in the uppermost row, flanking Amitābha in the Sumtsek at Alchi.[510] Among them is a male figure, prostrated, who is offering a votive scarf to the main deity.

The ribbons bound around columns in the throne depictions in Central Asia and Western Tibetan temples deserve specific attention: the celestial palaces of Dunhuang, Tabo, Lalung show ribbons knotted around the columns or draped around the uppermost part[511]. At Bāmiyān they grow out of branches between flowers, as reported in the Maitreya-texts. An image of the Bodhisattvas on the entrance wall at Tabo (Pl. 17) shows floating banners, shawls or ribbons, pearls, jewels and bells, hanging on the heavenly throne of the deity. Shawls bound on columns

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[502] Banners floating in the air are hung on the uppermost part of stupas at Alchi, probably also indicate the element of the wind and air, In Hindu architecture the flags are used to signal the wind, alluding to the notion of the temple as cosmos (cf. M. Meister, online-publication: *'Unity and Gravity of Elemental Architecture'*) and thus of heaven. The offerings of banners to the stupa as a veneration of the supreme being may have also been transferred to the 'architecture' of the mandala. In the Nako Upper Temple and Alchi (Sumtsek) long banners with floating ends decorating the portals are based on the ancient symbolism associated with precious cloths. They may also allude to with the wind, water, and earth representing the lowest level of the complex concept of the mandala as a diagram of the entire universe.

[503] Whitfield 1990: fig. 46.

[504] Ibid: 70.

[505] Triple banderoles are found in western Himalayan temples up to present, adorning ritual implements, and they may also hang as an ear pendant on sculptures, or appear as a hanging architectural adornment on the pillars.

[506] The flag is also known as a military standard, often held by the indigenous warrior deity of Tibet and Mongolia (Beer 2003: 135).

[507] Combinations of offerings and textiles, which are bound around 'eight auspicious symbols' depicted in a mandala of the five Jinas at Dunhuang (9th century).

[508] The peacock in Buddhism is a vehicle of Amitābha, the red Buddha of the west, "*whose peacock throne was one the symbol of the Indian dynasty and the great Buddhist emperor Ashoka*" (Beer: 178-9). In Indian tradition the peacock is an enemy of poisonous creatures, this power of peacocks may have been adopted in Vajrayana Buddhism, where feathers adorn the attire of female protectress deites.

[509] On of them has a tree as an attribute, maybe the wish-granting tree (S. *parijata*, Tib. *dpag-bsam gyi shing*) from Hindu-mythology, which is said to blossom at the summit of Mount Meru in the centermost of Indra's five paradise gardens (Beer 2003: 193). Trees also define the environment in the paradise scenes in the Dukhang and in the Sumtsek. The wish-granting tree or flowering branches emanating probably silks, can also be adorned with silk and hanging jewels (maybe depicted on the bottom zone of thrones of the Buddha at Bamiyan, of silks in trees and grass soft as cotton tree also speak Maitreya texts cited above).

[510] Geopper 1996: figs. on p. 92-93.

[511] Cf. also seminar report, seminar held by Dr. J. Ebert (2001), University of Vienna.

are also to be found both on heavenly thrones of the bejewelled Buddha at Kakrak (Cave 43)[512] and Bāmiyān (Cave complex C)[513] and on deities and religious figures at Dunhuang, combining wooden architecture and sumptuous garments. In addition, flying deities are holding ribbons above the Buddha on the ceiling of the 38-metre Buddha niche[514], illustrating the fusion of Iranian royal symbolism of investiture and Buddhist devotional practice in Buddhist iconography in Central Asia and the close relation of religious to worldly supremacy.[515]

These cloths might be adoptions of royal symbolism associated with investiture in the Iranian world such as the famous ribbons on Sāsānian monuments at Taq-i Bustān, Iran, combined with Buddhist rituals (Fig. 5). These elements are reminiscent of the intimate relationship between the royal symbolism and the language of textiles in Central Asia, precisely integrated and adapted as signs of sovereignty of the Buddha. The co-existence of the Iranian language of kingship and Buddhist iconography in the Western Himalaya is best illustrated in the art of Alchi.[516]



Fig. 5: Taq-i Bustān, Iran (ph. Ch. Papa-Kalantari 2006)

Textile banners, in particular, play a prominent role in the veneration of the stupa[517] (T. *mchod rten*),[518] i.e. the veneration of the eight places, commemorating the major events in the spiritual career of the Buddha. The material used here was often silk.[519]

The famous Gilgit manuscripts bear important scriptural[520] and visual evidence[521] of the cult of the stupa and rituals venerating the stupa with flags, umbrellas, banners, perfume/incense and garlands, and the accumulation of merits through circumambulation of the stupa.[522] An illuminated page of the manuscript shows a depiction of donors offering a textile[523],

[512] See Higuchi 1983: Platte 144.

[513] See also Taddei 1992 on this topic.

[514] Taddei 1992: Figure 55.3.

[515] Papa-Kalantari, at press.

[516] Flood 1991, Papa-Kalantari 2007a.

[517] The stupa enshrines the physical relics of the Buddha. "*Two sets of 8 great stupas were built shortly after the parinirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha. One set was known as the Tathagata stupas of eight sacred places which commemorated the eight major events of his life*" (Beer 2003: 188).

[518] Bareau: 1962: 245, Matsumura 1985: 124.

[519] Bareau ibid; cited after Thewalt: ibid.

[520] Thewalt, ibid.

[521] Papa-Kalantari 2007b.

[522] „*Having done reverence to the stupa of (Sakyamuni) with umbrellas, flags and banners, perfumes, garlands and ointments, they indeed come into my (Maitreya's) presence*" (Matsumura 1985: 134, from the *Maitreyavyakarana*; cited after Thewalt, ibid).

[523] Cf. also the Buddhist painting of Chagdo (Baltistan): Hauptmann 2005.

In the latter a male person offers a length of textile, which is held in his left hand while his right hand may hold a flower of incense burner. The image is in a pictorial ensemble of symbols of the chakravartin below the veneration of a stupa.

A bundle of silk is shown as an offering at Tsaparang, maybe rather an offering to the temple than to a specific deity or as a part of a ritual (Luczanits, verbal communication, 2005).

documenting this ancient custom, and also illustrating the high status of precious fabrics in cultures along the Silk Road.[524]

One story in the *Mūlasavāstivāda Vinaya* reports the son of a king venerating a stupa with an umbrella: "*Einst errichtete der König einen grossen, schönen caitya for the Buddha Kāśyapa. Der mittlere Sohn des Königs verehrte diesen mit einem Schirm*".[525]

Long floating textiles are shown fixed on stupa in early reliefs at Bharhut, Sanchi, or Mathura.[526] Cloth umbrellas and banners continue to be donated at Bodh-Gayā (Gaya), above the place of enlightenment of the Buddha (Pl. 11). In Thailand and Cambodia large banners of golden tissue are offered to the Buddha and are draped around colossal statues and stupas (Pl. 21, Pl. 22).

The depiction of votive textiles is also a recurring feature in the art of Central Asia[527], such as Dunhuang and the Western Trans-Himalaya. Banners made of simple lines are tied around the uppermost part of the stupa in depictions of stupas at Chilas. Textiles are even sometimes tied around bells (S. *ghanta*).[528] Umbrellas (T. *gdugs*) are also depicted in votive images at Chagdo (Baltistan, 10th c.). Real votive umbrellas of ramie have been found at Kuča (7th c. features the Seven jewels of the *cakravartin*)[529] (Fig. 27). The symbolism of offerings of umbrellas and textiles in combination with the '7 or 8 jewels' is also found at Chagdo and is of importance for the interpretation of donor depictions at Alchi (see chapter 7.5.).

An astonishing detail which documents the act of offering a ritual scarf to the stupa is shown in a depiction in the Alchi Sumtsek (Pl. 24).[530] In this image a beautiful stupa (which has been compared with the stupa at Harvan, Kaśmīr), which certainly depicts an important place of pilgrimage commemorating the Buddha, is shown with a pinnacle adorned with various long ribbons or scarves floating in the wind. The fabrics, which must be of considerable size, are decorated with small geometric elements suggesting cotton textiles. Some of these patterns are also found as decorative motifs on the Alchi ceiling. A detail worth mentioning is a man climbing up a rope or chain, carrying on his back a large piece of cloth, which can be taken to be a ritual textile for offerings in the Buddhist painting at Chagdo (Baltistan) the focus is also the

[524] The Buddhist votive images of Chaghdo may represent such a ritual of veneration: they show a man holding a length of textiles, others hold incense burners, and many flowers are dispersed in the foreground. A banner, or flag is held by another person, which may be interpreted as a representation one of the seven jewels, namely the minister. One donor is pointing upwards like in donor depictions at Alchi.

[525] MSV 62, 14 (149 b); (cf. Panglung 1981: 176-177).

Another passage of this text describes merchants on a trip on the sea, who reached an island full of jewels, they erected a stupa of sand when they got in trouble, and they decorated the stupa with many jewels (MSV 136, 4,6 (41a); cf. Panglung 1981: 23-24): The wife of a rich merchant donated her necklace of pearls to the stupa of the Buddha Kāśyapa (MSV, 2,5 (217b); cf. Panglung 1981: 82).

[526] Franz, 1965: fig. 4,19.

[527] Cf. an image at Dunhuang, fig. 165.

[528] Thewalt; online-publication: www.thewalt.d/stupa (20.12.2007, 17.00).

Bells are meant to disseminate with the sound the *dharma*, this may be the reason why texts are put on small metal plaques, hung on the clappers of bells on the roof of the Jokhang at Lhasa. Thewalt (ibid.) assumes that at stone carvings of stupas at Chilas textiles are depicted, which were fixed to enforce the movement of the bell and thus also the sound.

[529] Ebert 2006: figs. 77-78, this example is today in Berlin.

[530] The stupa is a detail of an image of a Tārā in the ground floor; for the overall-composition see Goepper 1996: 84.

veneration of important stupa or pilgrimage places, showing a man with an offering of textiles in his hand.

It is clear that it is the potency of ritual cloths, adorning and honoring sacred images, sacred monuments and heavenly abodes, which made them so attractive as actual hangings in the temple and as 'virtual textiles' depicted on the ceilings of the temple. On a symbolic level, textiles honour and wrap the Buddha[531], for which the temple, conceived as his heavenly palace, is a substitute conceiling and revealing the secret Buddha-body without showing Him in personal form. Accordingly textiles not only decorate the temple, they bear the notion of the numinous existence of the Buddha, as do the textiles on the empty throne in the uniconic phase of Buddhism.

4.3.5. Ritual Textiles and Aesthetic Spaces in Contemporary Tibetan Temples

The veneration of the stupa and the Buddha with textiles and precious objects reflecting the idea of offering and renouncing worldly riches had enormous impact on the aesthetic spaces in Tibetan culture. In Thailand worshippers offer large strips of textiles which are bound around the stupa or monumental images of the Buddha, as already stated[532], while in Tibet the offering of jewellery and gold and small scarves of silk (*katak*) is common (Pl. 7).

In addition, precious brocades were offered which became an important component in the aesthetics of Tibetan Sacred spaces. Western Tibetan Buddhist art in particular was receptive to the symbolism of precious commodities from Central Asia, such as textiles and robes, drinking vessels of silver[533] and porcelain[534] were also seen as having an 'aura' of luxury and spiritual authority in this region.

The long history of honouring, decorating and thus dignifying the Buddhist temple with sumptuous draped cloths has contributed to the very 'textile-conscious'[535] tradition of Tibetan culture in the Western Himalaya that has lasted up to modern times. Religious hangings such as baldachins ülep (T. *u lep*), round banners of silk gyaltsen (T. *rgyal mtshan*), triple banderoles thantse sumpa (T. *phan rgtse gsum pa*) and thangkas define the sacred space of Buddhist monuments (Pl. 25). Richly patterned silk brocades with gold and silver threads Gyaser (T. *gya ser*), exquisite damasks in ritual colours, and fine embroideries adorn pillars, doors and ceilings. They cover holy texts, altars and thrones and they are woven into other media in early Buddhist art from its very beginning in the region in the 10th century. These media include ornaments on wooden portals, patterns on metal sculptures and wall paintings. Even the clay figures of deities on the walls can be 'dressed' in precious cloths of silk to mark particularly important ceremonies such as the Kālacakra ritual at Tabo Monastery, Himachal Pradesh, in 1996. In 2004, I had the privilege of seeing exquisite textiles, made into costumes which were worn during masked dances (T. 'cham) at Tabo Monastery. The masks and dresses help the dancers to generate a chosen deity who is present in the dancer's own body.[536] Venerable Geshe Sonam Wangdü, the Abbot of Tabo, later told me that some of these silk textiles were made by

[531] J. Ebert, verbal communication, 3.2008.

[532] The offering ritual and dressing of the Buddha at Thailand and Cambodia are impressive public events. I wish to thank Prof. Lehner for sharing his extensive photo documentation on these rituals with me.

[533] Cf. Goepper and Poncar 1996: figure on page 110, Papa-Kalantari 2007a: Figures 1-3.

[534] Rob Linrothe, verbal communication.

[535] Barnes 2005.

[536] Gombrich/Bechert 1995: 243

the Muslim Kasim family, weavers of Buddhist cloths at Varanasi, a traditional centre of silk brocade-making in India.[537]

In Central Tibet the textiles hangings often come from the 'Namse-treasure houses' (called after the god of wealth) in the Potala. These houses contain large quantities of offerings by rich donors which were then used to sew temple hangings. "*Gyetnan Namgyal, der oberste Hofschneider des 13. u. 14. Dalai Lama berichtet, dass er für die zwei Jahre dauernde Restaurierung des textilen Tempelschmucks im Kloster Samye Brokate aus einer dort verhandenen Sammlung verwendet wurden, die über Jahrhunderte hunweg aus Schenkungen entstanden war.*"[538]

These textiles and other items of material culture, embedded in Buddhist ritual and traditions of popular piety in Tibet until the present day, are an important component in the definition of aesthetic and ritual spaces within the temple. Draperies and canopies constitute the ephemeral abodes of deities in processions in Himachal Pradesh and textiles of different kinds are also an important element in ritual practice in the temple, such as in local Buddhist ritual practice of creating complex altar-like ensembles in temples.

On the occasion of a religious ceremony held by the Dalai Lama in 1998 at Tabo the sculptures in the Main Temple were dressed with precious fabrics, whereby the main deity was adorned with the most sumptuous dress in the shape of a royal cape (*namsa*) with a cloud-like border made of embroidered brocade, recalling ancient signs of investiture in Central Asia, also depicted in the image of the 'bejewelled Buddha'; further the deity is decorated with jewellery of different kinds.

The throne positioned in front of the main deity - according to the hierarchy of space in the temple – is reserved for His Holiness and is richly decorated with precious brocades sewn to a patchwork cloth.[539] The back of the seat and the pillow are covered with gold-coloured silks, while banners of luxury textiles are hung on the pilasters symmetrically on each side of the throne. A photographic image of His Holiness[540] – containing almost the 'potency' of an icon or real person – is put on his seat indicating his 'virtual' presence. On the frame of the image honorific shawls (T. *katak/kha btags*) of silks are draped like an offering to a real person or deity. This ensemble of the cult image on a textile throne of ephemeral quality, decorated with flowers in vases, *torma* (T. *gtor ma*[541]), silver cups, music instruments, and other ritual implements forms a sacral space interacting with the real space of the temple.[542] This ensemble may even acquire the status of a sort of altar.

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[537] For further information on this point cf. Ahmad 2005.

[538] Cat. 2006: 546. Interestingly the catalogue does not mention the ritual and textual background in Tibetan culture in which the use of precious fabrics is embedded.

[539] According to the hierarchic order in the temple, the throne of the head lama of the monastery is situated to its left side and is lower in height.

[540] One also often finds the abbot's and the monk's robes draped in a conical shape on the seat in their absence.

[541] The *torma* is a sacrificial cake, symbolizing the ritual offering, and is generally made from dough and butter, but the ingredients depend on the class of deity; eg. for wrathful deities tormas may contain black tea or even alcohol (Beer 2003: 212-13).

[542] Cf. also J. Frembgen 205; 171.

This ritual space is protected by masks generating the power of fierce deities as well as shields hung on the pillars near the entrance.

The phenomenology of ritual space and its dynamics in Western Tibetan culture is a subject of current trans-disciplinary research by the author and colleagues from the Tibetology.

Using such strategies to generate and honour sacred space in a temple, textiles play an important role. Such offerings are practiced on different levels: from the simple personal interaction with the deity such as offerings of plastic bangles, scarfs (*kataks*), incense sticks, paper money, butter lamps to complex rituals of consecration in Vajryāna Buddhism (including canopies and precious banners as described in ritual texts such as the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* recalling the royal '*abhiṣeka*' ceremony). All these elements reflect the vividness, sense of joy and beauty, constituting an important aspect of the cultic dimension of Buddhism.

The interaction with the deity through textiles is of particular interest in this context. It may symbolize the donation of a precious ribbon or textile, that is the owner's wealth to the deity as well as the transfer of a blessing from the deity to the practitioner. Such a process can be observed at Lhasa, when pious Buddhists offer their wealth (precious old jewellery, brocades, gold) to the Jobo. The lama then adorns the Buddha with these offerings. When the *namsa* (royal cape of Śākyamuni king) is removed during the gilding of the statue - executed by monks wearing a mask to protect from impurities - a priest touches the heads of the pilgrims with the dress, thereby transferring the blessing and power from the deity to the worshipper. This process of offering and charging the robe with blessings, functions like a transformer.[543] One can thus speak of a 'textile's cult' in Tibetan culture, comparable to the beneficial power ('Segenskraft') of manuscripts in this cultural sphere (Pl. 264).

Inspired by Jürgen Frembgen's analysis of the potency of material culture in popular piety of Sufism[544], I could also observe in Tibetan Buddhist culture a close relationship between the devotion at holy places and personal piety at home, "*...both dimensions are often linked by powerful material objects*".[545] I had occasion to observe a practitioner with an image of a tutelary deity, representing a new cult in the whole of Tibet, whose temple is near Lhasa. The worshipper carried it around the Jobo at Lhasa, ritually 'charged' the image with the power of the sacred image of Śākyamuni and legitimized the recently established worship of the latter for private devotion.

The sacralization of the houses in the Western Himalaya with altar-like ensembles of images and textiles and their strict order of space are also an expression of the spiritual orientation within the sacred order, as well as the communication with the 'holy/sacred' in private devotional practice.

Ceremonial scarves, *kataks* (*T. kha btags*), are exemplary for the potency of material culture and textiles in particular. They are exchanged by lamas and devotees on ceremonial occasions. These scarves are charged with 'sacred power' due to their presence in temples and the contact with the religious dignitaries during religious rituals.[546]

Although various rituals of consecration and veneration (such as shawls hung on pilasters of heavenly thrones, making offerings to deities holding precious porcelain, jewellery, banners, and to dancers and musicians placed on the throne base) are depicted in the wall-paintings, in discourse on the cultural history of the Western Himalaya, this varied ritual dimension and symbolic depth of material culture of this region remains little studied.

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[543] Dr. Jürgen Frembgen (Direktor der Islamischen Sammlung, Museum für Völkerkunde München) used this useful metaphor describing a comparable use of textiles in Sufi ritual in Pakistan (Vienna, December 2007).

[544] Cf. Frembgen 2005: 271.

[545] Ibid. 271.

[546] Such ritual scarves are put on cars to protect form dangers, and even on self-made toys of children in Western Tibet, made of iron thread, which mimic simple wheeled vehicles. The movement of these textiles in the air provides a continuous communication with the numinous.

4.3.6. Ceremonial Fabrics in India and Tibet

As stated previously, all this must be seen in the wider context of a long and lasting Indian (Buddhist and non-Buddhist) tradition of defining the sacred space with ephemeral fabrics considered as one of the main inspirational sources for such ornamentalisation in temples. This important function of material culture is also attested by ephemeral abodes of cloths shown in depictions of both donors and protector deities at Tabo, and on the ceilings, where painted textiles are shown achieving an almost *trompe-l'oeul* effect. Among the ritual textiles in the Western Himalaya many specimens reflect Central Asian luxury art[547], while others appear to have been ceremonial textiles imported from Gujarat and other parts of Western and Eastern India or produced in India for the Western Himalayan temples.[548] The latter type is raising questions as to the ritual use of ceremonial textiles and their symbolism in the Indian world.

This short overview also gives the opportunity to point out that the study of material culture and luxury art in the Western Himalaya is not restricted to the value of textiles as an expression of an elite in court locations. It advocates the idea that there is no clear distinction between craft and art in India and Tibet; they are all manifestations of the same experiences and 'Weltanschauung', mediated via texts, rituals and oral tradition. It is therefore my aim to show how different cultural practices regarding ritual textiles and their fabrication by different cultural and social strata, which are possibly also relevant in the ordered world of the temple in Esoteric Buddhism.

This short description also aims at pointing out the importance of traditions which are not recorded in texts for the reconstruction of cultural and artistic heritage of the Western Himalaya and the role of women in rituals related to such traditions. These ritual textiles raise a question as to the symbolism of the material – from the thread to the banner - in the living culture of this region.

4.3.7. Ritual Embroideries in India and Himachal Pradesh

The various functions of ritual fabrics in Hindu tradition are described by Mehta[549], who discusses pictorial cloths in Gujarat known as *pacheḍī* or *candarvo* used among the Vāghrī[550] population:

> "...Dalit groups, rather than Hindu castes, form a great majority of Indian rural society. Among them the Vāghrī of Gujarat, a scheduled caste...They live in hamlets apart from the Hindu settlements, have since olden times been excluded from the Hindu temples, but turn to Mātā, the mother goddess, as their protectress... . Ceremonies for Mātā are held out-doors, in the open ground near the huts... . The time of the goddess is the deep night. Her small shrines contain no effigy, but sometimes a wooden board painted red, a row of cowries, or a trident. At the time of a sacrifice ceremony, stretched cotton cloths tied to a simple structure of bamboo poles, delimit a sacred space around the shrine. These pictorial cloths are painted and printed all over with the various iconographic forms of

[547] Papa-Kalantari 2007a, b.

[548] Wandl (1997) gives a detailed analysis of possible Indian sources of printed textiles, she focused on techniques, and made comparisons with surviving examples from Egypt, further she presented a classification of costumes and defined their different ethnical background. Cf. also Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2003;

[549] Mehta 1996: 17.

[550] Cf. Cat. 1982b: "*Tempeltücher für die Muttergöttinnen in Indien. Zeremonien, Herstellung und Ikonographie gemalter und gedruckter Stoffbilder in Gujarat*", Museum Rietberg, Zürich.

> Mātā, as well as with deities and scenes from the Purānas and from the vernacular tradition...During the year, *pachedīs* are most hidden and stored away in pots or wooden chests, and a special ritual is performed before taking them out and opening them on the occasion of a ceremony."

Ritual embroidery also plays an important role in the *pahari* (mountain) culture of Himachal, as discussed by Aryan[551] (Pl. 27):

> "Embroideries were stitched by all pahari women in the villages of the Hill states of Chamba, Kangra, Mandi, Kulu and others irrespective of caste and creed. The embroideries are the equivalents of the ritual Kantha in Bengal and include hangings, *rumals*, prayer gloves, ceiling covers, flags, manuscript wrappers, hand fans. *Rumals* were used as covers for offerings to deities and for gifts exchanged on weddings and festive occasions. Numerous *pahari* miniatures depict women carrying trays of offerings to Krishna or Devi covered with such embroidered *rumals*. Sometimes they were hung behind idols enshrined in temples."[552]

The designs show figural or ornamental motifs around a central lotus or a circular motif enclosing deities. Similar centralized configurations can also be found in the ceilings imitating textiles in the cella of the main temple at Tabo, and thus a cultural link with Himachal appears possible.[553] Also, the synthesis of Hindu and Buddhist traditions is a feature not unusual in the various regions of Himachal Pradesh, including the Western Himalayan cultural sphere.

Textiles are also often found in the Gönkhang (T. *mgon khang*) of more recent Tibetan temples, where they cover fierce deities; these fabrics are even used to define a sacred space on the occasion of certain rituals in the temple.[554]

In this context, another group of Indian ritual textiles needs to be mentioned, namely ceremonial banners in Indonesia. These were produced in Gujarat and were even exported to the Arabian world; the earliest examples date to the 13th century. Such ritual cloths called *maa'* in Indonesia, feature trees, temple dancers und hunters and were hung behind high dignitaries during ceremonies (Pl. 26). The ritual use, their monumental size (c. 5x1 meters) and repertoire of motifs make them an important comparative material for the ceiling's textiles in the Western Himalayan temples (see below). However, nothing is known about the ritual use of this type of cloth in Northwest-India, where they were produced. Only wall-paintings such as those at Pagan (Burma, 11th to 13th c.) are important indirect evidence of interior decoration of temples

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[551] Aryan 1993: 97 ff.

[552] Aryan informs us that embroidered cloths were hung on the bare walls of the *pahari* homes in absence of mud wall paintings. The earliest example of a *pahari* embroidery is a wall hanging, probably 16th century. Until a few years ago, this hanging was preserved in a Sikh shrine, *gurdwara*, at Una and was displayed on the walls of the circumambulatory passage on festive occasions (Aryan 1993: 104).

[553] Textiles defining and protecting the sacred are a constant and world-wide phenomenon. Emile Mâle (1978: 341-342) has described the function of cloths in medieval European churches: *"In Gaul, from Merovingian times [5th to 8th centuries], Eastern tapestries were the most magnificent ornaments of Christian basilicas. They were hung before the doors and between the columns; they enclosed the sanctuary making it inaccessible like the holy of holies"* (I thank Sue Andrew for this reference).

[554] Ch. Jahoda, in preparation.

with large hangings and canopies (see below), similar to the early Western Himalayan temples of roughly the same time.

These examples ought to demonstrate the strong impact of ritual textiles and their function as ephemeral abodes honouring and defining the sacred abode. However, the material and the manufacture of ritual cloths have much deeper connotations, which will be elaborated on in the following.

4.3.8. The Inherent Symbolism of Textiles: From Thread to Banner

4.3.8.1.The Power of the Thread in Esoteric Buddhism

Mathew Kapstein[555] discussed the ritual art of the *paṭa* – a painted fabric and forerunner of the Tibetan thangka – in Pāla Buddhism and its legacy in Tibet. In his fascinating text he advocates a broader, holistic view on the wider physical, symbolic and conceptual dimensions of fine art:

> "Indian and Tibetan Buddhists may have seen this similarly, and so spoke of *śilpaśāstra*, the arts and crafts, as being divisible into the arts of body, speech and mind. Painting, sculpture, and architecture were thought of as the primary arts of body; poetics and drama, the primary arts of speech, and philosophy and meditation, the primary art of mind, all being regarded as aspects of a complete world-constructing project".[556]

He believes that in the process of creation of Buddhist icons in the Esoteric traditions of Pāla Buddhism and in Tibet, artist and dharma master and possibly also king or patron were collaboratively engaged, contributing to a holistic world-constructing enterprise.[557] As an example, he discusses the instructions for the creation of painted fabrics (*paṭa*) described in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (MMK), written in North-western India during the eight century. He gives a fascinating insight into the ritual dimension of the production of a religious artefact, giving a broader view both of its significance and value and of the symbolism of the material of the thread and the cloth to be painted later. The prominent role of women in this process is also discussed in detail. The fabric is itself a part of the manufacture of the painted *paṭa*, and starts by gathering cotton wool, which is 'pure' or clean. It has then to be further purified by persons who are adherents of esoteric Buddhism; the adept must then find a virgin girl belonging to the higher castes:

> "On an astrologically auspicious day, causing her to dress in pure and fresh garments, he takes her to a pure location where the sky is cloudless and there is no wind, and have her bathe there. After she has dressed he sanctifies her with protective mantras. Purifying the cotton wool once more, he calls upon the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to consecrate the thread that will be spun from it."[558]

Kapstein identifies the process of spinning of the thread as an essential pattern in the text, in which one finds higher levels of order brought out of previous disorder.

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[555] Kapstein 1994.

[556] Ibid. 244.

[557] Ibid. 245.

[558] Ibid. 247-8.

> "Because, in several important dimensions at least, esoteric Buddhist practice is a way of ordering the entire world, it is clear that the gathering of cotton and the spinning of the thread are not to be understood solely as utilitarian acts in the service of a ritual practice with which they enjoy no inherent relationship; there is no distance here between craft and ritual- we are engaged at all times in the weaving of a world".[559]

Kapstein argues that the Tibetans probably did not concern themselves with the manufacture of cotton thread and fabric, "*...yet the spinning of the ordered thread of the Buddhas dharma out of the rough wool of the worldly life was for that no less the fundamental theme that governed the practice of their ritual arts.*"[560]

The author suggests with his text a plausible frame for our conception of the ritual dimension of artistic production and religious culture in Esoteric Buddhism in general, and a valuable perception of the phenomenon of textiles, garments and dresses as a constituent part of iconography in Western Tibetan temples.

4.3.8.2. From Thread to Banner in India and Tibet

Stella Kramrisch reflects on the symbolism of ritual textiles in Hindu and Buddhist culture, focusing on *kanthās*, stitched rags of white, thickly quilted cloths, often featuring centralized designs and lotus flowers recalling mandalas or yantras, and often sewn together by Bengali women from saris[561]; comparable traditions can be found in the Chamba *rumāls*.[562] She reflects on the process of producing the patched cloth as follows: "*Wholeness as a state of being is symbolized by the wholeness of the cloth, which is a re-integration*".

The *kanthās*, which are spread on ceremonial occasions and given as presents on festivals, are the work of women who design and stitch them:

> "They are drawn with powdered rice paste, on the mud floor and from the basis of the ritual.... These rites are performed exclusively by women, by matrons...and young girls...or by priests on behalf of women...men cannot draw the Ālponas nor do they embroider the Kanthās. ...they are unable to explain it. The total stock of the designs is entrusted to the memory of the women. ...this ignorance of knowledge implies a correctness in doing things, an infallibility which is evident. It results in a display, in a manifestation where everything has its place in relation to the whole. The work of the hand in the Ālpona forms part of the ritual of the Vrata".[563]

The 'Patches robe' (*saṃghāṭi* [literally joined together]) worn by the Buddhist monk and by the Buddha is also to be understood in this sense. The monk's robe is described as made of

[559] Ibid. 249.

[560] Ibid.

[561] Kramrisch 1939: 144.

[562] The Kashmir shawl share according to Kramrisch with the *kanthā* the life tree, the circular centre, and the demarcation of the four corners, however the range of symbols is small, the store of memory depleted. These textiles were primarily made for princes and court during the time of the Moguls, and are produced up today (Ibid. 153). The precious wool for the Kaśmīr shawls is mainly imported from the Western Himalaya.

[563] Ibid. 142

material from the rags dispersed in the dust heap and from pieces picked up in the bazaar, whereby the manufacture of the robe had to be completed within twenty-four hours.[564]

Kramrisch thus interpreted the garment or cloth as a symbol of the manifestation of wholeness in integrity recalling the wrapping of sacred texts written on palm leaves in brightly coloured pieces of cloth.[565] The *kanthās* are also used as wraps and covers for objects and the body.

A comparable phenomenon of linking the ultimate and the contingent part is, according to Kramrisch, the "*...thread tied around a branch of a tree and its remaining portion around the right wrist of the worshipper who utters the following mantra: 'O Laksmi, do not go away, do not go away, I tie you with this sacred thread'.*"[566] Regarding to textiles used in sacred dwellings in India, I had a personal experience reflecting on the same symbolism of fabrics when I was visiting a Hindu temple in Bhubaneśvara, and I asked a Hindu priest about the function of the flag on the top of the temple besides that of indicating that the building is in ritual use (Pl. 90). The priest answered that, "*Flags link humans with heaven!*". The inherent symbolism of textiles and banners associated with the element of air and atmosphere in Hindu and Buddhist tradition will be discussed further below.

The ritual act of offering a silk shawl, *katak*[567], to a deity may have a comparable function, namely the donation of a piece of his cloths linking him with the gods and returning the part to the whole. In Tibetan Buddhist tradition the offering of a *katak* on occasion of a private ceremony by the feast-giver is very common. In the western Himalaya the feast-giver may even donate a traditional headdress as a gift to honour his guest, and confirming with this act the symbolic integration of the latter into the community.

Prayer flags, rags hung on bridges and trees, and fabrics offered to the mountain spirits in the Himalayas have shared functions, disseminating the *dharma* and linking humans to the heavens and sphere of gods (Pl. 29). According to Kramrisch, the rag offering is also an indication of joining the part to the whole on the side of the divinity and "*has its corresponding action in the taking away of a rag from the heap as a token of the wholeness into which it has been re-constituted and in which the wearer now is wrapped.*"[568] This tendency is deeply rooted in Buddhist concepts of 'wellbeing' through order; the German word 'Heil', is even linked more closely to the terms 'whole' and 'holy', reflecting comparable concepts of sacred order.[569]

Kramrisch's subtle observations on the material symbolism and unifying force of textiles focus on the issue of wholeness and continuity both in a space-related and temporal dimension[570]; the

[564] *Mahāvagga* VIII 142 (Beal, Catena 216); cited after Kramrisch 1939: 144.

Interestingly also Sufi masters and saints wear a cap made of patchwork (sewn together from triangular patches in the colours red, green white) and the dress is also made of rags collected from the waste.

[565] Ibid.: 146.

[566] Ibid. 146.

[567] Kataks are donated up to present and may correspond to the colors of the Five Buddhas, or the particular Buddha family to which the deity belongs (Ibid.).

[568] Kramrisch: 147.

[569] Cf. also M. Eliade.

[570] Another aspect of integration and wholeness associated with textiles may be mentioned in this context. It is the Tibetan concept of generating blessings and wellbeing through continuous movement in time, exemplary are

latter has been discussed previously in the 'golden cloth' transmitted from Śākyamuni to Maitreya, symbolizing the continuity of Buddha-hood.[571] This symbolism of fabrics in Buddhist culture can also be transferred to the dimension of wholeness of space and Buddhist cosmology in the Himalaya, as will be discussed below.

During field research in Himachal Pradesh, my attention was drawn to banners on houses at Tabo featuring the colours of the four directions (yellow, red, blue, green, including a white flag often positioned above the entrance (Pl. 28).[572] In Nako I also find found poles with such banners in the centre of the sacred compound (an equivalent of the *stambha,* the pillar explaining the organization of the universe in ancient Indian cosmology[573]) and in specific places in the village. My investigations suggest that the flags are positioned in a specific order on the buildings and can thus be seen as an equivalent of the colours of the four directions of space, corresponding to the symbolism of colours in the mandala in esoteric Buddhism. This distribution of coloured textiles on specific places in the village and on houses may thus be an adoption of the mandalic layout on the level of a three-dimensional building or village level, integrating the single space of the house into the whole of the ritual ensemble of the village (consisting of mani walls, stupa and other religious places).[574] However, in accordance with current research, all this indicates that textiles found in local vernacular architecture, and in particular flags in the colours of the four directions positioned on the corners of the roof, play an important role in the symbolism of space characteristic for the sacred landscape of the Western Himalaya.[575] With these banners the house, the village or regions are re-integrated into the whole of ordered space in the cosmos.

4.3.8.3. Unity and Variety: The Woven Ceilings of the Western Himalaya

The re-integration of the whole, like the Buddha's *saṃghāṭi* (mantle or scarf of a Buddha's or monk's robe), is a useful metaphor for the ceiling depictions in the Western Himalaya.

A paradigm case of the unifying dimension of textiles is best illustrated in the *dhoti* of the monumental clay sculptures in the Sumtsek, decorated with different scenes of the life of the

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the *lungta*, religious texts on flags placed on exposed spots like mountain peaks, bridges, on houses, are activated in the wind; thus the blessing do not emanate due to the pious action of the practitioner, but through movement induced by outer forces such as the wind or the heat above the cooking place in a Tibetan house. The same effect can be achieved even by typing the religious text into the computer, which is activated by the processes in the machine. All this bears the idea of continuity in time necessary for wellbeing and establishment of sacred order.

[571] Balls of variegated thread, plaited or twisted as a core of five colours is an attribute of Sri Devi. "*...this ball is described as embodying the essence of all wrathful weapons and magical powers or spells. With this weapon Shri Devi binds all demonic enemies with invoked curses of subjugation and destruction*" (Beer 2003: 158).

Thread binding is also popular in contemporary Hindu tradition, when sisters tie protective threads around their brothers' wrist. Tibetan protection cords are commonly made from red thread, and five-couloured threads have a specific function to protect from planetary influences. "*Coloured threads are also used in the construction of the complex thread-crosses (Tib. mdos), which function as a temporary abode for a deity, or as a trap for malevolent spirits*" (ibid.: 159).

[572] I am indebted for the various inspiring discussions to Mario Wallner.

[573] Vatsyayan 1997: 11.

[574] A detailed study of the colour scheme and the spatial organization would be a rewarding topic for future research.

[575] According to local belief, the colours have the following meaning: blue stands for sky, white for cloud, yellow for earth, red for fire, green for water (Thinley Dorje, Tabo, verbal communication.) Round banners are positioned on the roofs of temples, e.g. at Khojarnath they represent local protectors, placed according to the relative position of the deity inside the temple (the colours stand for specific peaceful and fierce deities).

Buddha, places of pilgrimage, or Mahāsiddhas. Thus, virtually all of the most significant religious events and places of the mundane world are interwoven into the skirts, which cover the Bodhisattvas and are placed in the different directions of space in the temple. This concept is closely related to the images of cosmological Buddhas, depicted by different symbols and scenes on the robe.

The single elements are interwoven in different surface patterns, organizing and unifying the scenes, which constitute the fabric of the Bodhisattva's skirt. Such concepts are also a common strategy to integrate single scenes of a theme into a whole, as seen on the ceiling depictions in central Asia, and in Kizil in particular.

On the Alchi ceilings a variety of Buddhist motifs, creatures from different worlds and pre-Buddhist religious experiences, courtly culture and luxury art are unified in a textile cover, which links the parts with the whole. If we transfer the concept of the 'Patches robe' of the Buddha to the level of textiles defining the sacred space, the interior programme of the temple can be understood as a dense fabric, symbolizing a unified world of wholeness, of rule and order. The wholeness as a state of being is symbolized by the wholeness of the cloth, which is a re-integration like the (*saṃghāṭi*) worn by the Buddha.[576] This also corresponds to the tendency towards a unified symbolism of space reflecting the complex visual and religious system of mature esoteric Buddhism in the Sumtsek at Alchi.[577]

[576] An interesting type of a patches robe is a 'Myriad Buddha cape' in the Newark Museum (Reynolds 1990: Fig 5.). The cloth is made of silk and decorated with embroidery depicting Buddhas. The cloth is stitched in a way, that the edges of the patches can flap open; typical of a certain type of high lams garment worn in Tibet (ibid: 93). Another piece is housed in the Cleveland museum of Art (ibid.: Fig.10). However their function is unknown; these textiles are never worn by clerics; they are representing the robe of the Buddha, the *saṃghāṭi*. In the corners inside the borders are two guardian kings indicating a centralized plan; the whole composition is reflecting the concept of Myriad Buddhas, found in India, Central Asia and also at the Alchi Sumtsek; like in other temples in this period, the programme at Alchi is centring around Vairocana Buddha and the cosmic symbolism of Esoteric Buddhism associated with him. These cloths are yet another example of cosmologic symbolism associated with the characteristics of textiles.

[577] Cf. also Linrothe 1996.

5. PAINTED LUXURY TEXTILES IN THE WESTERN HIMALAYA TEMPLES: NEW RESEARCHES

> "...few materials have acquired such a mystique, such an aura of luxury and value, that a whole complex of trade routes was named after it - the Silk Route...".[578]

5.1. Previous Research

Paintings of precious garments, robes of lay people, attire of deities and ephemeral dwellings made of textiles, constitute a significant aspect in the historical reconstruction of early Western Himalayan art. They reflect the complexity of artistic and cultural interaction within early Buddhist temples in the Western Himalaya.

P. Pal and L. Fournier[579], and R. Goepper[580] were among the first scholars to point out the importance of textile depiction and ceiling decoration in the art of Alchi. Goepper focused on the various weaving techniques reflected in the ceiling decoration and on the evolutionary history of some of the complex figural depictions, such as mounted horsemen as well as their possible symbolism (see below). E. Wandl[581] tried to identify the possible textile models at Tabo (Spiti). The ornamental style of textile motifs of one phase found on costumes depicted in the Main Temple of Tabo (c. 1050) has been compared by her with resist-dyed cottons from western regions of the Indian subcontinent, in particular Gujarat and Rajasthan[582], suggesting strong interactions between Spiti and the North-Western Indian regions. Another group of complex geometric motifs at Tabo such as those found on the attire on sculptures from the earliest phase in the temple, on the backdrops of deities and high dignitaries (Pl. 33), and on the ceilings, has hitherto eluded interpretation with regard to origin and symbolism.

The latter types of ornaments can be compared with textile representations on Pāla sculpture (Pl. 35), as well as Kaśmīr-style (Pl. 37) sculptures, indicating that such fabrics also represented in the later Alchi temples may well have been also produced in other parts of India. It is also possible that these 'textile decorations' and ornaments were mediated via Buddhist portable sculptures or other religious objects such as manuscripts. The adoption of these motifs found on holy images or in manuscript illuminations from India, i.e. the symbolic transfer of the potency of such 'divine fabrics' to the newly founded temples, embellishing and honouring the sacred space, may have also emphasized the legitimacy of the newly established tradition there. There is also ample written material and evidence of trade contacts between Eastern-India and Kaśmīr in Indian sources, but no early examples have yet come to light.

The classification of various types of Indian textile depictions in different phases of this artistic period, such as in Nako (beginning to mid. 12th century), Dunkar and Alchi (mid 1150-1220), which have hitherto not been studied in detail, expands our knowledge of the varied and refined culture of Indian printed cotton textiles and their uses in a Buddhist temple. For

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[578] Rizvi 1999: 6.

[579] Pal/Fournier 1982.

[580] Goepper 1982, 1995.

[581] Wandl 1997, 1999.

[582] Wandl 1997.

example, large-scale Gujarati ceremonial textiles[583] from Egypt to Indonesia, (the earliest date from the 13th century, some of them were used as canopies[584]), which were produced for Indian Ocean trade, show complex figural motifs such as sacred trees or plants, female dancers and hunters mounted on horses and elephants. These Indian ceremonial fabrics provide an additional important, and previously little studied type of textiles, recalling in their motifs, style and possible function the later Alchi ceiling depictions (c. 1200).[585] Interestingly, their size (5 x 0,9 metres[586]) fits into the panels of the Tabo and the later Alchi ceilings: each cloth strip fixed between the beams at Tabo measures about 2,2 by 0,7 metres. The Tabo ceilings also show characteristic borders with different, smaller ornamental elements organized in bands, which interrupt the overall design (Pl. 116). These elements are also characteristic of Gujarati ceremonial banners, where they appear as decorative bands on end-panels (see below).

Not only the different functions and purposes of textiles reflected in such paintings in the Western Himalaya, but also the various other models of ornamental forms and their symbolism in a Buddhist temple have been little studied to date. The textile depictions on dresses in the early temples of Tabo[587] - showing mainly small-scale patterns organized in rows and restricted colours (blue, red and white) - have to be distinguished from the ceiling patterns in that temple[588], probably depicting furnishing fabrics and ceremonial cloths for offerings and decorations of temples. The Tabo ceilings in the main hall featuring complex motifs such as large lotus flowers with cornucopia-like elements filled with jewels in the interstices, vases, stylized (maybe sacred) trees, large lotus rosettes, and architectural ornament such as shrine-like niches; all these elements embellish sacred space and honour the supreme being, as well as assuring the worshipper continuous prosperity and well-being (cf. chapter 6.). On the transition zone between walls and the ceilings, there are rows of *kīrtimukha* with strings or pearls in their mouths and bells (Pl. 80), which are connected to form a valance-like strip of cloth hanging down from the ceiling cover. Such *kīrtimukha* with their demon-like masks are found in many Indian temples, functioning as apotropaic elements, repelling evil from the temple (see below). Thus, all these motifs not only recall complex printed or woven designs on fabrics but also ornaments found in other media such as on wooden ceilings of temples in Himachal Pradesh or Buddhist bronzes from Kaśmīr and Gilgit. Accordingly, the ceiling motifs depicted on textiles at Tabo, which are fixed between the beams do not only have a space-filler function. In particular, each motif on the ceilings of the sanctuary (which is also the highest point in the temple) and

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[583] Cf. Guy 1998, Barnes et al. 2002 for images of ceremonial cloths in the Tapi collegion: fig. on p. 19. See also the article by Barnes in this volume on the various ritual functions of textiles such as *Pichwais* (decoration for shrines, which are hung behind the three dimensional image of Krishan) in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

I wish to thank Prof. Linrothe for this information on the important ensemble of Indian textiles in the Tapi collection.

[584] Cf. Guy 1998: fig. 143.

The temples of Pagan (beginning of the 13th c.) are a striking example, demonstrating the use of precious textiles as temple furnishings and ceiling covers (cf. Ibid.: fig. 60). Textile paintings on ceilings can also be found Tamilnadu, 17th century, indicating, that cloths are frequently used in Indian temples as ceiling canopies, and "Replicating them on painted ceilings was a pan-Indian practice" (ibid. 32).

[585] I am endebted to Dr. Ruth Barnes from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and Dr. Khan-Majlis from the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Köln (thanks to Prof. R. Goepper) for the discussions and valuable information on this issue.

[586] Cf. Guy, J. 1999: fig. 10; this example from Gujarat measures 0,94 per 4,98 m.

[587] Papa-Kalantari 2000.

[588] Cf. also Wandl 1999: 20.

the geometric ornaments above the main temple are meaningful, reflecting the rich and varied tradition of ceiling decorations in Hindu and Buddhist temples and their symbolism.

Various scholars have already drawn attention to a specific complex surface pattern, namely large medallions on the ceilings of Tabo, which is one of the most prominent ornaments associated with Central Asian/post-Sāsānian luxury art.[589] This design shows beaded medallions, which contain eight-petalled lotus flowers corresponding to the eight spokes of the *dharma* wheel. This intricate design - also shown on Kaśmīr-style bronzes - possibly reflects the influence of Sogdian and other Central Asian woven silks. Watt/Wardwell were among the first Western scholars to observe the strong interrelation between Sogdian luxury art and Indian ornamental culture in Kaśmīr.[590] But the specific role and symbolism of the medallion textile, which is used to decorate the abodes of high dignitaries, deities and as honorific cover on the ceilings in Western Himalaya temples, appears to elude interpretation (see below).

The different types of textiles on dresses and on the ceilings at Tabo (c. 1000-1050) document a synthesis of Indian, Central Asian and Eastern-Iranian artistic and ornamental values, typical for the cross-cultural interactions in this region and the art and the cosmopolitan milieu of Kaśmīr, Northern Pakistan and Western Tibet in particular. As already stated, these artistic values reflected in the early Western Himalayan temples were not only adopted from textiles, but also from other portable objects such as sculptures, metal objects, portable shrines and paintings on clothes, assimilating and translating their symbolism into the sacred sphere of the Buddhist temple. Furthermore, specific types of ornaments have different functions in the wall-paintings and the ceiling programmes of the temple, reflecting the symbolism of space and ritual functions in the sacred abode (see chapter 6.).

The chronologically later art of Alchi (c. 1150-1220) – in addition to the earlier Indian and Sogdian ornamental culture observable at Tabo – shows a distinctive stratum of Eastern-Iranian orientation, indicating the position of Upper Ladakh as a part of the Indo-Iranian cultural landscape. Extensive medallions and complex surface patterns containing horse-riders, royal hunters, women fighting with shield and sword, animals in combat, rampant lions, which are depicted on all levels of donor depictions, ornaments and ceiling paintings, are characteristic of this ornamental style around 1200, reflecting the courtly and martial culture of the Indo-Iranian borderland and Kaśmīr.

Various scholars have noticed the appearance of Inner Asian luxury art and Iranian courtly symbolism in the depictions of textiles and ceiling ornaments at Alchi. But the respective models have never been studied systematically. Tucci[591], Snellgrove,[592] Pal and Fournier[593] were among the first Western art historians to discuss this controversial issue. Flood[594] focuses on the main themes of Iranicate art in Central Asia found in the Alchi Sumtsek (T. *gsum brtsegs)* ceilings, giving a detailed description of the medallions which contain royal hunters and female martial dancers on the ceiling of this temple. He offers rich comparative material on the filiations of post-Sāsānian motifs from the Near East to China providing a fascinating insight into Iranian royal symbolism and the profusion of post-Sāsānian aesthetics in Central Asia and

[589] Watt/Wardwell 1997; Heller 2006; Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2007a,b;

[590] Watt/Wardwell 1997, Reynolds 1997a, Papa-Kalantari 2000, Heller 2006.

[591] Tucci 1974, 1975.

[592] Snellgrove 1980.

[593] Pal/Fournier 1982.

[594] Flood 1991.

Ladakh. In various publications Roger Goepper[595] defined the different textile techniques reflected in such paintings and the evolution of some of the most prominent textile motifs at Alchi. In his articles published between 1993-1996 he has drawn attention to the Iranianising royal themes of hunt and overlapping rampant lions. As the art of Kaśmīr shows comparable themes on stone carvings in the Avantisvāmin temple in Avantipur (Pl. 51), he concluded that the Alchi textiles were produced in Kaśmīri workshops, thus assuming that these paintings display evidence of a contemporary courtly tradition in Kaśmīr.[596] Though no traces of this tradition or of any early Kaśmīri silks are known to date, his important finding demonstrates that Western Central Asian luxury textiles with Iranianising royal imagery were traded in this region and were introduced into the religious Buddhist imagery.

The analysis of the chronological layers (from 10th to 13th century) of different textile types and ornamental styles at Alchi aims at reconstructing the complex stratigraphy of the art of Alchi. The multitude of textile models ranging from India, Sogdia, to Chinese Central Asia and Eastern-Iran, reflecting the complex religious and cultural interaction in this region, facilitates the understanding of the wider artistic and cultural context.

First of all, this comparative analysis advances a more refined interpretation of the important genre of textile and figural-ornamentals depictions at Alchi, in contrast with the narrow 'Kaśmīr- or Indian-textile labelling' of this complex phenomenon in previous research.

There are differences in the art and ornamental style of the early Western Himalaya temples and in the Dukhang as well as in the later phase of the Alchi School of painting in the Sumtsek. The study of the local development and the internal dynamics of the 'Alchi-school of painting', the identification of different workshops, the sequence of the execution of the interior art programme of a temple (due to the short working period in this region), and the classification of painting techniques is still in its infancy. A detailed analysis and investigation on site would of course also be important with regard to the interpretation of the overall iconographic programme and the analysis of the symbolism of costumes and textiles in particular. The reconstruction of this important dimension of the artefacts together with conservation experts is an object of future research.

5.2. Methodological Remarks

The language of ornament in the Western Himalaya and in the paintings on temple ceilings of the region in particular clearly reflects luxury textiles from different artistic and cultural traditions. These various styles in the Western Himalayan temples mirror the history and the diversity of Indian and Central Asian textile culture between the 10th and 13th century, and the cosmopolitan taste of luxury fabrics, which were traded in the region, and of which only few actual examples are documented.

The aim of this study does not only focus on proposing ultimate sources of Western Himalayan textiles and luxury items depicted in the Alchi paintings and in related monuments of the region.[597] The purpose is rather to unravel the different strata of ornamental traditions,

[595] Goepper 1995, 1996.

[596] Goepper 1995: 67.

[597] This diversity of styles and motifs induced many scholars to pose the question of the ultimate source for the luxury textiles in the Western Himalaya painting: India, Kaśmīr, Central Asia or Western Tibet? (Watt/Wardwell 1997, Goepper, Wandl 1997, Heller 2006, Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2007a,b).

which may co-exist in one single temple, in which various chronological phases of textile fashions and artistic schools reflecting different 'ornamental styles' can be observed. A similar phenomenon can be seen in the Tocharian and Sogdian murals of Kizil and Pendjikent, indicating various ornamental phases and preferences of the donors.[598]

Due to the process of adopting these models into the media of painting and Buddhist iconography, the relationship to their original appearance became blurred. Thus, the definition of an 'ultimate source' remains speculative. Therefore, it seems more prudent to define and classify distinct ornamental styles rather than proposing exact textile models. Such observations give us indirect evidence of common artistic traditions with specific textile production centres and their profusion and translation into other media.

Subsequently I shall submit my findings regarding the artistic process of the assimilation of textile models into the medium of painting to serve specific ritual tasks and Buddhist iconography. The interpretation of the Alchi ceiling depictions in my 2002 article, representing an artistic genre of its own in this region, with different functions in the paintings and religious meanings, has been generally accepted.[599] Furthermore, the analysis of these different functions of textiles and their iconic value can be integrated in the complex structure of Esoteric Buddhism in the Western Himalayan region.

In general, the visual art of ornament in the Western Himalaya has been very little studied to date. In my 2002 article I have tried to point out that the imitation of textile motifs is only one aspect of the complex evolution of ornamental tradition at Alchi. The Austrian scholar Alois Riegl (1893) stressed the importance of the study of ornamental styles in his work *'Stilfragen. Grundlegung zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik'*. Oleg Grabar (1995) demonstrated in his '*Mediation*

A newly discovered silk (cf. Heller 2006) shows a border with rows of pearls. Between them connected lozenges are shown consisting of heart-shape bands. The lozenges contain eight-petalled lotus-rosettes, which lead A. Heller to the assumption of an early silk production in India because the organisational principle recalls Indian aesthetics (with characteristic dots in the interstices). These features remind one group of designs at Tabo, as has been suggested by the author. Alternating bands with rosettes and heart-shape designs can also be found on bronzes from Gilgit. This type of silk may have been produced in India; however, at our present state of research, there is no evidence of a silk production in the 10th -11th century Kaśmīr or North-Western India, thus the ultimate source of this fragment must remain unclear.

Heller, 2006 proposed to define the Tabo material culture and the intricate designs found in the murals - through comparing with Central Asian textiles depicting in Kaśmīr bronzes - as a reflection of primarily Indian textile producing centers. This emphasis on the possible origins of a tradition in India or elsewhere - from which no secure examples exist - distracts the attention from the co-presence of different cultural and artistic forces characteristic for the early Buddhist art in the Western Himalaya.

[598] Cf. Raspopova 2006; Marshak 2006.

Concerning the methodological framework dealing with complex artefacts along the Silk Roads J. Ebert, dealing in particular with donor depictions in the Tarim basin and Kizil states: "*Many examples of Tocharian weapons, clothing, and headgear suggest Sasanian influence; many examples of Uygur weapons and clothing include Chinese traits; and the murals indicate many more cultural influences. 'Sasanian-' or 'Chinese-influenced' is not a sufficient description of the hybrid clothing and textiles of the Tarim Basin, where the coexistence of different cultural currents and traditions is a major distinguishing feature of the period between the third and tenth centuries*". She further states, that at present conclusive classification of painted textiles into Parthian, Sasanian, post-Sasanian, Chinese, and so forth, is premature since "*... very few physical textiles exist to compare with the paintings*" (Ebert 2006: 101).

[599] Cf. review of my 2002 article by Prof. R. Linrothe 2004.

of Ornament'[600] the autonomy of this genre while the 'fallacy of the space-filler decoration interpretation' was stressed by Linrothe.[601]

It will be shown that depictions of textiles motifs on dresses, as ephemeral dwellings and ceiling covers, do not only mimic material culture and precious fabrics. A careful analysis of the models and their transfer to the medium of painting unravels a purely artistic process of adoption, transformation and variation, adapted to a purely Buddhist '*Kunstwollen*', iconography and symbolism of space.

In general, luxury art and material culture seems to be a separate, autonomous topic. However, the synthesis of two sources of knowledge, textile science and art history, provides a basis for a trans-disciplinary analysis. This approach, furthermore, provides new dimensions and empirical data and information on the artefact and raises innovative questions, which allow an evaluation from different perspectives.

But most important, it is from the evidence of sumptuous textiles shown in paintings in Western Himalayan temples from the 10th to 13th centuries that one can best assess the cultural synthesis of Indian, Indo-Tibetan, Chinese, Central Asian and Iranian artistic values which form the complex background to the evolutionary history of early Buddhist art in this region.

In the following I will focus on selected ornamental traditions of Indian or Indo-Tibetan textile and ornamental culture in the Western Himalaya temples, which have been little examined to date, mainly focusing on the ceiling depictions (with one exception of a previously unidentified type of fabric in the early art of Tabo). This focus has two reasons. Firstly, the textile depictions on the attires have already been discussed with regard to their characteristics and their possible Indian provenance, while the ceiling textiles are still little studied. The study of ceilings textiles provides important information on the various purposes of textiles in a Buddhist temple and the process of their translation into the medium of painting. Secondly, in later temples the differences between patterns and techniques of decorating fabrics as depicted on dresses and on the ceilings are blurred. Consequently, the results of the classification of specific types of textiles are characteristic of both spheres.

5.3. Indian Cotton Textiles in the Western Himalayan Temples of Tabo and Nako

When looking at the early ceilings in Western Tibetan temples, the overall impression is that of Indian fabrics fixed between the beams. Following Wandl's[602] line of argumentation, I draw attention to various ornamental types in later temples such as Nako and Alchi, which can be compared with early North Indian textiles[603] and I will try to define the different functions and models of these depictions: trade textiles, ceremonial clothes and other ornamental traditions, while their possible symbolism will be discussed in chapter 6.

Fine cotton and linen fabrics have traditionally been India's speciality, adequate for climatic conditions and religious requirements.[604] India had important weaving centres of cotton which developed in and around the capitals of kingdoms, holy cities or trade centres. Some passages in early Indian literature also mention silk fabrics which were considered inferior in quality to

[600] Grabar 1995.

[601] Linrothe 2004: 168, in the review cited above, where I focused on this issue.

[602] Wandl 1996; 1999.

[603] Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2007a,b.

[604] Buddhist monks preferred cotton and silks were only used for religious ceremonies.

Chinese silk.[605] Also Hiuen Tsiang who visited Varanasi and stayed in Sarnath in the 7th c. makes no mention of this alleged silk industry, while he *does* mention the weavers of Mathura who produce "...a fine striped variety of cotton".[606] Various examples of early Indian textiles found in Egypt and Indonesia document that in particular fine Gujarati fabrics were in highly valued from earliest times and they were traded in the whole Indian Ocean area. A few early fragments of Indian trade cotton textiles have survived in museums in Europe and India, most of them excavated in al-Fusṭāṭ, the old capital of Egypt[607] and along the shores of the Red Sea; the earliest examples date from the 9th century.

We also have indirect evidence of the high prestige attributed to Indian textiles, with intricate designs used for the robes of deities represented in the art of Pāla-India, Kaśmīr, Gilgit, and the Western Himalaya, as well as Tibetan-influenced art at Dunhuang. These designs probably depict precious cotton textiles. Typical design features are alternating rows of rather small-scale motifs in characteristic colours of red, blue, white, yellow. The motifs often consist of simple lozenges, medallions and also figural designs.

In early temples of the Western Himalaya, such as at Tabo, a rather faithful imitation of Indian textile models can be assumed, probably mediated through textiles as offerings, ritual furnishings and trade fabrics for dresses but also through other portable objects, sculptures, manuscripts and paintings of holy images. In this early phase ornaments were painted on real textiles (a coarse cloth) probably reflecting an older tradition of decorating temples and their ceilings with precious fabrics, while in later temples ceiling compositions were directly painted on the wooden boards, giving way to a gradual 'emancipation' of this genre to such artistic expression.

A distinctive type of complex ornament can be identified in the oldest temples at Tabo (Main Temple), which has been little discussed to date. It can be found on the *dhotī* of the earliest phase of sculptures in the Tabo temples (sanctuary/cella, around 1000 AD) (Pl. 32), clearly reflecting Indian aesthetics. A comparable scheme of surface pattern can also be found on the ceilings of the Assembly Hall in the same temple (Pl. 34), showing intricate designs with parallel rows of alternating patterns, such as lozenges, medallions, mythical creatures; their patterns probably imitate luxury textiles of cotton produced in Eastern India.[608]

A comparable decoration can be found on the *dhotī* of an almost life-size sculpture of Maitreya made of copper and silver from North-East India (Pāla period, 11th to 12th century); (Pl. 35)[609]. As already stated, the adoption of the famous textile tradition of East-India – the home of the Buddha – may have also legitimized the transmission of Buddhist ideals and teachings to the Western-Himalaya, as it does until present[610].

An early though simpler version of this textile type is also shown in the *dhotī* of Mañjuśrī in a painting on silk with a Tibetan inscription from Dunhuang[611] (ca. 9th-10th c.), reflecting

[605] Agrawala 2003: 9; According to a 7th century Indian manuscript Varanasi enjoyed a high reputation as producer of the best silk, but no examples are extant.

[606] Ibid: 16.

[607] Barnes has argued this in her 1997 article.

[608] This type or alternating rows of ornamental elements can also be found at Konarak (Orissa), in particular on the *dhotī* of a monumental Surya image (c. 13th c.).

[609] According to the text in the catalogue (Potala Lhasa, 154 cm, Cat. Tibet 2006: 247ff.), the deity is decorated with the '13 ornaments of the *Sambhogakāya*.

[610] Cf. the chapter on trade contacts between Benares and Tabo/Alchi in the introduction.

[611] Cat. 1982: pl. 58, p. 132.

probably the earliest style of paintings made for Tibetans or the late Buddhist style from the Gangetic plane.[612] It is thus clear that Tibetans chose Indian textiles for the depiction of the robes of Buddhist deities from very early on, as also indicated by the Washe (cf. 3.1). The juxtaposition of Indian clothes and indigenous/Tibetan/Central Asian garments is also in line with the conscious use of specific modes of depictions in Tibetan art, as described in the same Tibetan source. Accordingly, deities are mainly shown dressed in robes and designs of Indian origin, while lay people are represented wearing Tibetan clothes fashionable at the time. The use of modes of ornament, or specific types of textiles and ornamental styles, is successively further refined in later temples. On the one hand, figural textiles have a more prominent position. They are not restricted to the ceiling of the sancta sanctorum alone, but dispersed on the whole ceiling. On the other hand, one can find different types of textiles – from simple patterns to intricate designs – which are consciously used to define the hierarchy of deities within the complex system of the esoteric Buddhist pantheon.[613]

What we find in the early phase of Tabo is a palimpsest of different ornamental traditions and textile models, partly recalling Western-Indian trade textiles and ceremonial textiles for furnishings from Gujarat (see below), but also recalling ornamental tradition mediated through holy images, portable objects and manuscripts[614].

As stated above, the textile depictions on the wall-paintings and on the attires of sculptures cannot be equated with the ceiling designs at Tabo. Selected examples of the latter, reflecting different weaving traditions and luxury textiles in Central Asia, will be discussed further below.

Shifting now to the ceilings of the earliest historical phases (I, II) at Nako (Fig. 13, Pl. 39), I will focus on rare examples of textiles comparable to resist-dyed cottons from the western regions of the Indian subcontinent, in particular Gujarat and Rajasthan. A widely-used design at Nako's[615] 'Upper Temple' is composed of running animals in horizontal stripes divided by floral borders and different types of stylized trees which can be compared to Indian examples (Pl. 40 probably echoing shrines or sacred places from the spiritual biography of the Buddha. These motifs probably imitate patterns on cotton fabrics in characteristic colours achieved by different reserve techniques, such as resist-dyeing; examples of this type of design with

[612] Ibid. 132.

This figural style is also found on early depictions of deities in stone stele recently discovered in Western Tibet, which are yet unpublished.

[613] The robes of royal and donor figures at Alchi reflect different types of luxury garments decorated with royal symbolism. These types of textiles and their symbolism was then also transferred into the spiritual sphere and was used for the robes of the central Tathagata in the mandala, probably representing robes of honor and sovereignty in the realm he is residing in.

[614] Cf. in particular the superb textile depiction in the Poo-Manuscript; Klimburg-Salter 1994; for an extensive publication of the images in the Poo-manuscript and an in-depth analysis of the artist-school relation as reflected in these paintings see Allinger 2006.

[615] The village of Nako (3600 m above the Spiti-river, Himachal Pradesh, India) belongs to the Kinnaur District which today borders Tibet and was once linked with Tholing in the east and Tabo in the north through pilgrimage and trade routes. Buddhist temples from the 11th/12th century with their almost original interior program survived there. Due to the sensitive political situation, research was almost impossible in the region until the 90-ies. Hitherto only few historical and art historical studies on Nako and almost no studies on the refined and varied ceiling programs in these temples (Di Mattia 1998, Papa-Kalantari 2007) have been published to date, although the ceiling paintings provide important evidence of the decoration of temples with textile motifs and other ornamentation from the foundation period (c. 12th c.).

characteristic white motifs on a coloured ground (mostly blue and red) are also to be found in textiles used for the pillows or seats of deities in wall paintings: one example shows simple small-scale ornamental elements organized in stripes which are repeated in alternating patterns, cf. Pl. 38).

One type of ornament at Nako featuring running animals (elephants, which are a sign of worldly and spiritual supremacy, and other mythical and hybrid creatures such as a winged lions with heads of birds, probably of Hindu- or Buddhist mythology) recalls the decoration of an Indian cotton fabric at Oxford from Gujarat (9th century, found at al-Fustat/Old Cairo); Pl. 40.[616] It shows elephants and riders on horseback organized in rows, with horizontal stripes filled with foliage or wine-leaves; the ribbons attached to them may indicate that they have mythical connotations. The coarse fabric decorated with rather large motifs suggests a specific use for furnishings. The textile may thus be a rare example of an early religious cloth. There are also later (c. 13th century) examples of specific ritual fabrics, which were commissioned for high religious establishments and used as a 'backdrop' at ceremonial feasts, as shown in early ritual cloths from Gujarat, exported to Indonesia, as already stated. Such textiles with characteristic figural motifs may have been the models for the ceiling paintings in the Western Himalaya and the later ceiling paintings at Alchi in particular (see below).[617]

A second category of early Indian textiles with intricate designs may be depicted in the Lotsawa Lhakhang (T. *lo tsa ba lha khang*, 'Translator's temple') (Pl. 41**).** The mythical creatures are in style, execution and organizational principle somewhat different from those just described in the smaller 'Upper Temple'. We can thus assume that different artists were active in these two temples and so their artistic background and textile models varied significantly. Moreover, the painting technique is in general much more refined in the Translator's temple showing rich pigments and subtle shading. This temple may thus have been the ritual centre of the sacred compound. An example of a recently discovered early silk of Tibetan provenance, woven in the so-called samite technique (a weft-faced compound twill structure), shows Hindu and Buddhist mythical creatures such as a winged *vyala*/makara uniting attributes of both lion and elephant in a single body (Pl. 42). Other motifs on the same panel at Nako show peacocks, *makara*, winged horses, and bulls with cloud-like ends and foliate tendrils comparable to similar creatures on the ceilings at Ajanta (Pl. 129). Hybrid creature such as the *makara* (mythical sea animal with an elephant's trunk) is also a constant feature in northwest Indian temple architecture, and is often found carved in stone such as at Mahuā (for the possible iconographic content see the next chapter 6.).[618] I will come to the interpretation of the symbolism of selected motifs in the next chapter.

Some of the planks in the Translator's Temple featuring composite creatures also share surface patterns with this type of complex textile, namely motifs, organized in chequerboard patterns. The rather large dimensions of the single motifs in both the real fabric and the painted example are also remarkable, indicating that specific religious textiles for ritual use and embellishing and defining the sacred were produced. This type of silk textile has been found in Tibet and may be of Indian origin, as proposed by S. Cohen. However, with the present state of research and due to the lack of material, it is too early to define the ultimate sources of these

[616] This peace is of great importance due to the fact, that it is the earliest dateable Indian export textile.

[617] The Sumtsek paintings provide an astonishing document for the ritual of offering of large banners to holy monuments; therein a stupa is adorned with ritual textile by a temple servant. Thus the 'virtual ceiling' may be have been inspired by this specific type of ritual textiles uses as offerings to sacred monuments.

[618] Śiva temple, Northwest-India; cf. Meister/Dhaky 1988: fig. 279.

types of textiles, also depicted in Western Himalayan temples.[619] The palette of colours at Nako (blue, red, white) suggests that all these motifs may also imitate techniques to decorate cotton fabrics.

The present state of research suggests that a cotton industry of complex resist-dying existed in various parts of India, which had a high status comparable to that of complex woven silks and that an early production of religious fabrics and ceremonial hangings for temples can be assumed, the earliest examples of this type of fabric being from the 13th century, but the tradition may well have been much older. However, the impact of early Buddhist images and portable objects appears to have been underestimated in the study of the ornamental art of the early art of this region (see below). Comparative study and classification of costumes and intricate ornaments on Eastern-Indian and Indo-Tibetan bronzes[620] as well as illuminated manuscripts would thus be a rewarding subject of future research in order to improve our understanding of the transfer of ornamental themes and textiles between the various textile-producing centres in India and the Western Himalaya. Besides, new archaeological and historical fragments from Tibetan and Central Asian temples, which might yet come to light, will help to reconstruct this component of Indian textile history, for which the Western Himalaya temples provide important pictorial evidence.

5.4. 'Luxury Textiles' Defining Heavenly Abodes: Indirect Evidences Gained from Buddhist Bronzes and Paintings

As already stated, the textiles used for the robes of deities cannot be equated with the textile ornaments on the ceilings. In general, these two types of textiles may have different models and functions.

When looking at the textile culture at Tabo and Nako, the dominant impression is that of Indian aesthetics with specific ornamental values found in printed cotton textiles and on Eastern Indian and Kaśmīr bronzes. However, designs reflecting complex-woven luxury textiles from Eastern Iran/Sogdia are also observable; these two types of fabrics are distinguished on bronzes from Kaśmīr and Gilgit. Due to the fact that no specimen of the early Indian or Kaśmīr production of the latter type of complex garments, probably of cotton or silk (?), has survived, the wall paintings are important evidence of this lost tradition.

It is plausible that the depictions of this type of intricate garments in the Western Himalaya temples are mainly based on models from portable objects whose symbolism and functions were likewise adopted. Kaśmīr's ornamental art clearly betrays central Asian models. Most of these motifs have specific functions in the temple: the more 'monumental' designs associated with the aura of luxury, such as beaded medallions, were used for embellishing thrones and ephemeral settings (comparable to thrones of royal lama at Tabo). But they are also shown on the ceilings at Tabo, embellishing and honouring the supreme being, in contrast to small-scale patterns in rows which are primarily shown on costumes at Tabo.

This tradition might go back to comparable decorations on the seats of the Buddha in Kaśmīr and Central Asia. A similar phenomenon probably used Sogdian silks for decorating the cushion (pearl roundels with ducks) of a *parinirvāṇa* Buddha and can be seen at Dunhuang.[621]

[619] Cf. also Cohen 1997: fig. 3.

[620] Cf. v. Schroeder 1981.

[621] Cf. Ebert 1985: fig. 79.

This tendency and the reciprocal exchange of aesthetic values between Buddhist sculpture, textile ornament and decorative motifs and their translation into the medium of painting and symbolism of space is a constant force in the art of the Western Himalaya.[622]

In addition, the textile and figural depictions on ceilings (e.g. above the Tabo sanctuary/cella, and dispersed on the whole ceiling in later temples) strongly reflect the decorations of thrones and frames of deities of Kaśmīr, Gilgit and Western Himalaya bronzes. Thus, they are clearly meant as representations of the heavenly abode, transferred into the sphere of the temple and the symbolism of space combined with earlier concepts of ceilings compositions in Hindu and Buddhist architecture (cf. chapter 6.).

This also demonstrates the autonomy of this genre of ornamental art as a specific artistic expression in the art of this region, which cannot be reduced to the imitation of real textiles alone, but rather a reciprocal exchange of different media can be assumed. In particular, the ceiling depictions have to be seen as embedded in a complex genesis of Indian ceiling decorations and honorific coverings.

5.5. The 'Sogdian/Indo-Iranian' Group of Luxury Textiles

5.5.1. Sogdian Ornamental Style and Intricate Patterns in the Sculptural Buddhist art of Kaśmīr, Northern Pakistan and Upper Ladakh

Textiles and ornaments reflecting luxury art have played a specific role in Buddhist and Hindu sculpture of the region since earliest times. The paintings at Tabo and Alchi reflect these different chronological and artistic phases of both Indian aesthetics and Iranicate-style courtly symbolism in the Western Himalaya. The first phase appears to be strongly inspired by Kaśmīr ornamental art. The ornamental culture in Kaśmīr art strongly reflects Indian and Central Asian aesthetics, and the sophisticated culture of decorated cotton textiles as well as complex woven silks.[623]

Goepper identified different techniques of manufacture and decoration of textiles (such as resist dying, stitching, brocades and lampas) and pointed on the 'international character' of some motifs. Furthermore, he pointed out the importance of these depictions as a mirror of a phase in the history of Indian and Central Asian textiles, which is still poorly documented.[624] Following Goeppers line of research, I will attempt to define more precisely the artistic and cultural environment of selected motifs and ornamental traditions, and the process of translation to the medium of the temple.

Some of the most prominent examples in the Art of Alchi are the post-Sasanian repertoire of royal hunters and mythical animals framed in beaded roundels. The Avantisvāmin example with its beaded medallions containing horse-riders and rampant lions carved in stone is one of the earliest proofs of an advanced and refined ornamental culture in Kaśmīr of strong post-Sasanian/Sogdian or Chinese-Central Asian flavour. In the medium of metal sculpture the aesthetics of luxury textiles is also reflected, such as the nimbus and ornamental aureole in

[622] Accordingly, the development of ornamental styles and change of taste is found in the different media of a certain period. Thus the later temples of Alchi reflect decorative schemes found on contemporaneous Kaśmīr-style bronze.s The thrones of the deities show a visual complexity, comparable to the ornamental culture in the Alchi Sumtsek.

[623] Wandl 1997 extensively published on this topic, focusing on the art of Tabo; see also Papa-Kalantari for studies in this field in the temples of Alchi (2000, 2009) and Nako (2007).

[624] Goepper 1997: 148.; cf. also Goepper 1993, 1995, 1996.

London ()[625], the famous Avatāra frame in Śrinagar (Pl. 99) and many more in the Oasis of Turfan. In particular, the motif of pearled borders on the Avatāra-frame (circa 10th c.) recalls a long ornamental tradition in Central Asia. Furthermore, the London frame has an ornamental band consisting of characteristic knots in the middle of the flower buds and foliage. These knots organize a continuous row of Buddha figures and they are also an ornament on the throne of a Lokeśvara from Kaśmīr or Pakistan (Pl. 48). Medallions with knots in the cardinal points (where they touch) are also often found as a design pattern in the textile depictions in the Sumtsek (Pl. 49). On Maitreya's *dhotī* in the Sumtsek around sixty scenes representing the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni are arranged within medallions; the knots in this example form bows (in the interstices are deer or hares sharing ears and forming an animal swirl).[626]

The famous Pasadena bronze sculpture and a Kashmir-style bronze housed in the Potala (Pl. 44) demonstrate the transfer of sumptuous textiles such as beaded medallions associated with early Eastern Iranian luxury culture into the medium of Buddhist iconography, which is a constant feature in the region. Iranicate courtly culture is reflected in the sculpture both in the signs of sovereignty of the donor depiction, a Palola Shāhi king, as well as in the depiction of the throne of the Buddha; the latter also shows 'signs of status and power' associated with the Iranicate courtly sphere, underlining the sovereignty of the Buddha in the spiritual sphere. Beaded medallions containing rosettes are found on a cushion for the Buddha's seat of various bronzes attributable to this dynasty.[627] This type of medallion textile clearly had an elevated status in the Buddhist context and this function was also transferred to the representations on the ceiling of Tabo (Pl. 43), Nako and Alchi (Pl. 52).

The bronzes from Northern Pakistan are important due to the fact that they bear inscriptions and dates related to the rule of the Shāhi dynasties. The ornaments found on such bronzes attest to the fact that these cultures adopted courtly symbolism in the tradition of Eastern Iranian/Sogdian courtly art. Among them were the Palola Shāhi, who chose the Iranian title '*ṣahānu ṣāhi*' in the tradition of the Kuṣāṇa kings, corresponding to *(mahā)rājātirāja*.[628] Nothing is known of silk production in these regions. However, due to the location of Gilgit along the trade route linking India and Central Asia, the region became a trading post where such highly priced items were admired and thus integrated in the language of luxury art. Due to the mobility of sculptures, not only textiles, but also religious artefacts related to the Shāhi dynasties in Kaśmīr and Pakistan such as bronzes, must be considered as a possible medium for the profusion of courtly symbolism in the Western Himalaya.

A possible Sogdian-derived ornament in the shape of heart-shaped leaves on the *dhotī* of a bronze sculpture may also be attributable to the Shāhi dynasty.[629] Such ornaments organized in bands are a popular motif framing medallions of Sogdian textiles.[630] However, the overall ornamental scheme of the Shāhi bronze garment is possibly Indian, with horizontal rows of small-scale patterns and alternating designs in each row.

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[625] Pal 1975: fig. 44.

[626] Goepper 1996: figure on p. 127. The animal wheel is also constituting a common design pattern in Dunkar; see below. One panel (panel 11) on the ceiling of the Sumtsek (Goepper 1996: 136) shows medallions with small knots in the cardinal points, while the overall characteristics of the design is reminiscent of early 13th century *kesi* from Eastern Central Asia or Iran.

[627] v. Hinüber 2004: fig. 35., fig. 7.

[628] v. Hinüber 2004: 109.

[629] Ibid: fig.4.

[630] Jerusalimskaya 2000: see figure on p. 85.

An 8th century bronze in Kaśmīr style in the Norton Simon Museum Pasadena of stunning quality and visual complexity provides an important comparative example for Western Himalaya textile depictions both at Tabo and Alchi. The ornament shown on a cushion, positioned on the seat of a Buddha, reflects the aesthetics of a group of Eastern-Iranian textiles called by Sheperd, 'Zandaniji'; but this term is much discussed[631] (Pl. 46). Horizontal rows of medallions, which contain palmettes growing out from a centre in four directions and featuring small leaves in the interstices, are characteristic (cf. also the ornamental style of Hindu Shāhi bronzes). This early group of Eastern Iranian-derived ornaments shows complex geometric or floral patterns as represented on the ceilings of the main hall of Tabo as well as in designs containing animals found in Alchi. Large medallions with lions are found on the caftan in the Dukhang while other animals of prey on the Sumtsek ceiling belong to this type of ornament. Another characteristic is roundels with large pearls in their frames, which are not connected in the cardinal points. The medallions contain rather autonomous figural depictions, with characteristic motifs such as horse-riders, warriors in combat and mythic animals (Pl. 50). This compositional principle contrasts to later small-scale medallions, organized in inter-connected patterns, diminishing the iconographic meaning of the image. The latter type of ornament reflects later Indian and Iranicate Central-Asian aesthetics (Pl. 57).

P. Pal[632] was one of the first scholars to link the courtly cultures of Buddhist dynasties in Kaśmīr and Pakistan with the donor depictions at Alchi.[633] However, the evaluation of the political and socio-religious context provides a much more complex picture, which contrasts to the 'Palola-derivation' of the courtly art at Alchi in previous studies. Various later rulers of small kingdoms may have upheld the heritage of Indo-Iranian royal symbolism up to the 11th –

[631] Various authors have convincingly shown that the style and the motifs on the so-called Zandaniji-silks stand in sharp contrast to the style found on Sogdian objects. The textiles wrapped in a cotton on which this name has been found, thus cannot be equated with the Sogdian town Zandaniji.

[632] Pal 1982: 27-29.

[633] Pal 1982: 27ff. stated: "*In contemporary or slightly earlier Kaśmīri bronzes, several princely donors are portrayed wearing similar costumes, and one of them may well have been a member of the ruling family of Gilgit. Such long coats are also worn by the Sun-god in Kaśmīri images, in at least one of which one encounters a rich border with a floral design and a hem adorned with pearls that somewhat echoes the luxuriance of Alchi Style I embroidered silks. Turban-like headgears are also seen to adorn the heads of donors in Kaśmīr, while in one bronze the cushion on which the Buddha sits is embroidered with roundels with pearl borders enclosing floral patterns....Obviously the artists used their knowledge of the courts in Kaśmīr, of the opulent silks and brocades that the Shāhis and the Dard princes wore*". Klimburg-Salter (1987: 702) also assumed that the models were adopted from Shāhi Princes in a region commonly referred as to Bolor, including the pre-Islamic regions of Gilgit and Baltistan and equates the dresses with Shāhi donor depictions on bronzes with those on a manuscript. However there is no evidence, that 300 years after the fall of the Palola dynasties, the fashion of costumes and their attributes at Alchi were still the same.

While the high boots, kaftans and belts with daggers at Alchi bear some similarities with images of the Palola Shāhi on bronzes of Pakistan (cf. v. Hinüber 2004), the short kaftans and boots are the common attire of Turkic and eastern Iranian tribal areas in Central Asia (Samanids in Iran, Ghaznavids in Afghanistan). Different dynasties such as the Shāhi of Kuṣāṇa royal culture wore them, as did the kings of Khotan. Significant differences between the Shāhi royal figures and the noble figures at Alchi have to be mentioned in this context, which in the latter point to a distinctive Tibetan tradition. Characteristic elements of the Tibetan robes are observable in the donor depictions at Alchi, in particular the long sleeves are a contrasting element. The turban-like hair dresses consist of a simple band and the noblemen at Alchi wear characteristic earrings made of turquoise and pearls. All these features also occur on images of a minister at Dunhuang and demonstrate the continuity of Tibetan attire from the time of the old Tibetan Monarchy and their adoption as sign of sovereignty in the Western Himalaya (cf. chapter 'drinking scene'; 7.3.).

12th century in a wider region of the Western Trans-Himalaya of Greater Ladakh. During the advent of Islam, Dardic and other populations partly left monumental remains in Pakistan and Kaśmīr and took refuge in various parts of India.[634] In particular, artists may have found new wealthy patrons in the Western Himalaya, contributing to the artistic diversity and richness in the region. In addition, due to the geographic position, parts of ancient populations of the Indo-Iranian borderland, who lived in the mountain regions of the Hindu Kush, could preserve their older traditions of Eastern-Iranian courtly culture longer than anywhere else as evidenced by stone images in Ladakh and newly discovered wall paintings in Baltistan, which point to a continuous Buddhist cultural stratum before the Tibetization of Ladakh in the 10th century. The Alchi depictions and the courtly art in particular thus reflect a continuous stratum of Eastern-Iranian Buddhist art and culture in the region.

There is ample evidence of an Eastern Iranian tradition of textiles and luxury art reflected in the art of Kaśmīr and the indigenous courtly culture in the Western Trans-Himalaya. The Avantisvāmin medallions and textile depictions on the Kaśmīr-derived bronzes at Pasadena during the Shāhi dynasties in Pakistan as well as during the renaissance of Buddhism in the Western Himalaya, are important evidences for the profusion of luxury textiles of originally Western Central Asian or Sogdian origin up to the 13th century. These examples also document trade of this type of sumptuous garments along the economic paths between Western Central Asia, leading to Kaśmīr and Ladakh-Baltistan via Sogdia or Khotan, and ultimately also further into Central Tibet.

5.5.2. Sources for a Sogdian Group of Textile Depictions at Tabo and Alchi

Sogdian merchants were the main representatives of Iranian and post-Sāsānian culture in Central Asia. Sogdian nobles were themselves Iranians and active throughout Central Asia. Their influence can be traced as far south as Ghazni.[635] Inscriptions attest to the fact that they were present in Ladakh only two centuries before the founding of Alchi[636] and Ladakh had already had previous contacts with Iranian-influenced cultures during the time of the Tibetan expansion into the Tarim Basin from the 8th century onwards.[637] The Iranicate culture of status (including folk traditions) of the autochtonous elite in Ladakh-Baltistan as well as the sophisticated language of luxury art in this region were probably upheld by the courtly establishments of Buddhist and non-Buddhist rulers up to the 10th-11th century as shown in the early art of Alchi.

Accordig to Janet Rizvi, "*On most of this section of the route from Dunhuang to the Pamirs, the men who actually conducted and staffed the caravans were mainly Sogdian, subjects of the Kuṣāṇ Empire from the region of Samarkand*"[638], and they were an important element in central Asian trade for several centuries. At Drangtse in Ladakh, petroglyphs with Sogdian inscriptions from the ninth century are found.[639]

> "Sogdian merchants of Central Asia, some of whom also served as administrators, colonized strategic points along the principal trade routes. Through their presence and

[634] Cf. Alberuni (Sachau 2002).

[635] Flood 1991: 31.

[636] Francke 1925: 367, Flood 1991: 25.

[637] Pal/Fournier 1982: 28-9.

[638] Rizvi 1999: 6.

[639] Cf. Vohra, 1992: 920-9

> contacts, Sogdian culture was transmitted throughout Central Asia. Not surprisingly Sogdian silks and silks woven with Sogdian motifs have been found at Dunhuang, Khojo ([Gaochang] Near Khara Khoja), Turfan and Dulan. In the Khotan-oasis moreover, some of the textile patterns depicted in late sixth century paintings found at Balawaste bear similarities to those in the somewhat later Zandaniji II goup[640]. ...Sericulture and silk weaving in the Khotan oasis are known to have been introduced from China prior to the Tang period. At the same time, Khotan had close cultural and economic ties to Sogdiana. Some of the deities that appear in the Buddhist art of Khotan, for example, were adopted from the Sogdian pantheon, while Sogdian texts found in Khotan and in the upper Indus valley document Khotans strategic location on the trade routes connecting Sogdiana with India".[641]

This also demonstrates that Sogdian merchant-diplomats initiated and expanded not only the transfer of material goods but also colonized strategic points along the principal trade routes, bringing also along with them religious concepts and the hybrid pantheon of local protectors in particular.

Khotan lies in relative geographic proximity to Kaśmīr and Ladakh, whose art at the time was probably most characterised by the fusion of Iranicate courtly symbolism and Buddhist iconography, as well as by the idea of charismatic kings and their powerful protectors, but unfortunately only few examples of this art have survived (cf. 7.1.). Khotan was also famous for its silk production, and so it might be one of the various sources of Sogdian aesthetics in wider regions in the Western Himalaya, including Kaśmīr and Pakistan. The importance of silk production in the region is also attested by a depiction of the god of sericulture. The 'silk deity' from Dandan Oilüq, British Museum (referring to the introduction of silk weaving in Khotan), wearing a Central Asian caftan and holding a cup, also reflects the fusion of Iranicate courtly symbolism and Buddhist iconography, typical of this region and the early art of Alchi.[642]

A silk of probably Sogdian origin (in former research denominated as Zandaniji) can be compared with textile depictions in the oasis of Khotan, at Balawaste, featuring "*...roundels with pearl borders enclosing concentric circles, rosettes, cross-shaped motifs, volutes, and motifs resembling double axes*".[643] This type of characteristic decorative scheme of the Sogdian textile featuring floral and geometric motifs can also be found in textiles depicted on a Kaśmīr style bronze from Pasadena and on the ceiling of the Tabo main temple, as has been stated above. The Alchi textile depictions are an important source of different types of Eastern Iranian and Sogdian luxury garments, a tradition from which little material evidence has survived in Khotan or India.

Contacts between Khotan and Tibet have a long tradition. The Tibetan chronicle Washe (T. sBa bzhed, 7th or 8th c.) informs us that king Thitsuk Detsen (T. K'ri gtsug lde brtsan) admired an artist from Khotan, who was known as 'king of the art of Khotan'.[644] According to this source,

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[640] As already stated above, the identification of a specific corpus of Sogdian luxury art such as textiles and metal objects is subject of scholarly debate due to the fact that the style of the textile objects commonly associated with the Sogdian style (and the so called 'Zandaniji-group' in particular) differs somewhat from that in the wall-paintings in Pandjikent etc. See on this controversial issue Sheperd 1981, 2000; Belenitzkii/Marshak 1981; Compareti 2005.

[641] Watt/Wardwell 1997: 23.

[642] For an image see Bussagli 1963: p. 57.

[643] Watt/Wardwell 1997: 23; for the Khotanese pattern see Gropp 1974, p. 87, and for the Sogdian comparison ibid: fig. on p. 33.

[644] Cited after Tucci 1973: 144.

this Khotanese artist worked in Tibet together with his three sons. In addition, the art of Khotan is evidenced in the inscription of Iwang.[645] This textual source also documents an awareness of different styles and Buddhist traditions[646] consciously used as models in the early art of Tibet:

> "Unter den verschiedenen künstlerischen Strömungen erwähnen sie [die Quellen] auch jene, die die Uighuren eingeführt haben. In den Bildern von Westindien sind die von Kaśmīr miteingeschlossen, während, nach einem berühmten tibetischen Schreiber Pemakarpo (T. Pad ma dkar po), die Bilder aus der Zeit der Könige der tibetischen Dynastie dem Einfluß des Stils von Li (Khotan) folgen".[647]

Flood argues that the North-western route to eastern Central Asia led via Ladakh to Khotan, Kashgar and Kucha, and along this path Iranian influence might have penetrated into Tibet. "Among the foreign communities resident in Central Tibet in the eighth century were communities of Khotan, including a considerable number of Khotanese artisans".[648]

The study of trade contacts between Tibet, Kaśmīr, Sogdiana and Khotan will be crucial in elucidating this possible historic link.

5.5.3. The Early Sogdian and Indo-Iranian Group of Textiles at Alchi

The models of the early Iranianising phase can be found in Kaśmīr art of the 8th century (Avantisvāmin Temple, Avantipur), as first discussed by Goepper[649] (Pl. 51**).** The medallions on stone carvings at the Avantisvāmin temple contain a horseman riding a lion-like animal with pearls around the neck. The right arm of the horseman is stretched out, probably holding a dagger. The mount of the hunter clearly represents a mythological figure comparable to kings riding fabulous creatures in royal Iranian imagery.[650] The royal hunt depicted in such scenes reflects royal status and presents an intrinsic part of Sāsānian court ritual and iconography[651]. Furthermore, such depictions had semi-divine status in their original context.

The Avantisvāmin temple shows horse-riders and overlapping lions in beaded medallions, alluding to Sogdian ornamental styles. While the frame in the Sumtsek roundels, depicting this theme (Pl. 52) can be associated with this rather archaic medallion style, the compositional unit of warrior or rather hunter-like horse-rider and overlapping lions in combat also remind us of the complex luxury textiles of India and Eastern-Iran (see below)[652]. Its iconography stands in the tradition of the Sāsānian royal hunter. One example of such a type of textile, representing

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[645] Ibid.

[646] This phenomenon of models from different Buddhist traditions is also evidenced in roll-paintings at Dunhuang (cf. chapter 3.).

[647] Ibid: 177.

[648] Flood 1991: 32.

[649] Goepper 1995, 1996.

[650] Cf. a lion-hunting scene on a silk from Syria in: Wilckens 1992: fig. 37.

[651] Flood 1991: 23.

[652] The dense ornamental fillings in the Alchi roundels with 'Parthian riders' are also reminiscent of contemporary ceramics of the Iranian world. One example of this widespread type of luxury art in Central Asia stems, which originated in Rayy in the 12th century, displays characteristic floral scrolls growing out of the frame (I thank Dr. M. Ritter for this observation). Many paintings on ceramics of this type display birds and animals of prey as space fillers such as in the interstices of the Alchi medallions. Luxury objects like lustre ware are easily portable and might have functioned like precious garments as a medium of dissemination; however no such ceramics have been found in Tibet to date.

the Sāsānian King Bahrām V. Gur (420-438) and housed in the church treasure of the Saint Calais in France, was probably brought there from Byzantium in the 9th century[653]. The popularity of such themes up to the 11th century in the larger region of Northern India was ensured by the Ghaznavid court, where among others Firdausi's famous Book of Kings, the Shāh-nāmeh, was finalized under the king Mahmud the Great (time).

With regard to the ornamental characteristics of the Avantisvamin example, specific themes and details can also be found on early Sogdian and Eastern-Iranian silks. A significant element of a group of early silks found at Antinoe (ca. 7th century) is monumental mythical creatures or animals of strong heraldic appearance adorned with jewellery, such as pearls around their necks, or ribbons (*patif*) identifying the animals as sacred.[654] This element is comparable to the jewellery around the neck of the Avantisvāmin lion. Sacred animals have a long tradition in the Iranian world as emblems of royal dignity and power also shown in wall-paintings at Samarkand (Pl. 169).[655] Another characteristic feature is presented by diamonds or jewels in the sections where the medallions touch. Textiles with such elements have been depicted in ornaments shown in the Sogdian towns of Panjikent and Balalyk tepe, eastern Turkestan and Dunhuang. Many of the Sogdian and T'ang Chinese silks with Sogdian-style patterns (6th-7th century) were produced at a time of 'cosmopolitan culture' in China, integrating various skills and artistic styles of Central Asian peoples.[656] During this period the technique of 'weft face compound twill' ('Seidenschüsse'), a western method of weaving[657] was introduced, which allowed monumental medallions, such as large flower medallions, denominated as *karahana*; the latter type can be found on a child's pants (inner face) from Tibet and on the ceilings of the early Central Tibetan temples of Shalu.[658]

The large Sogdian medallion designs containing rather stiff heraldic animals (which contrast to the vivid representation of the mounted horseman at Kashmir) and symbols, as well as sacred animals, can be found on the textile of the Sogdian coat found from the same ensemble in the Cleveland Museum (Pl. 55).

The Indian, Turkic and Iranic people living in these regions adopted the repertoire of Post-Sāsānian ornamental culture[659] and used many of their motifs as emblems of aristocratic nobility.[660] This type of luxury cloth was also transferred into the medium of Buddhist bronzes of Kaśmīr and Northern Pakistan.

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[653] Wilckens 1991: fig. 36.

[654] Cf. Wilckens: fig. 23.

[655] Cf. also Jettmar 1985: 23.

[656] Watt/Wardwell 1997: 23.

[657] This technique can be described as follows: "*A weave employing a main warp, a binding warp, and a weft composed of two or more series of threads, usually of different colors. By the action of the main warps, only one weft thread appears on the face, while the others remain on the reverse. The binding warps bind the wefts in passes, and the ground and pattern are formed simultaneously. The entire surface is covered by weft floats, which hide the main warps*" (Watt/Wardwell1997: 214).

[658] The latter type of Chinese Central-Asian textile featuring large medallions with a central flower or clusters of flowers circled by rings of flowers and blossoms, which is one of the most popular ornament of T'ang aesthetics.

[659] Wilckens 1991: 37.

[660] Khorāsān, with the commercial centers Merw and Nishapur, had an important silk production up to the mid 13th century, when the Mongols invaded the region. This textile industry was renown for its highly prized silks, one example of which is a *samitum* with heraldic animals (elephants) and has a 10th century inscription (it was used as a cover for a relic in Paris, cf. Wilckens 1991: fig. 43). This ought to show, that luxury textiles with monumental emblems of courtly culture were in use up to the 13th century in Western Central Asia.

Goepper concluded in his 1997 article that the patterns of ceilings in the areas of Spiti and Guge have nothing in common with those of Alchi.[661] This is only true for the later type of textiles with extensive interlocked medallions in the Sumtsek, whereas the earlier textile style in the Dukhang bears resemblances to Sogdian ornamental culture also found on Kaśmīr bronzes and on the ceilings of the Tabo main temple. The differences in these two temples rather illustrate the chronological development and dynamics of Indian ornamental culture from the 10th to 13th century.

The group of early Western Central Asian luxury textiles in Kaśmīr, Tabo and Alchi, depicted especially in paintings at Alchi in the 10th to the 13th century, are strongly reminiscent of Sogdian painting and East Iranian luxury art (cf. ceilings).

Among the most prominent East Iranian or Iranicate motifs are post-Sāsānian medallions or pearl roundels: the various variants of this type or ornament are an equivalent to the complex stratigraphy of Central Asian components shown in the scenes of courtly life in the Dukhang.

One early example of this type of ornament is shown on the caftan of a nobleman in the royal drinking scene (Pl. 210); a comparable dress is worn by the horse-rider/protector in the Mahākāla composition. Large roundels in blue colour with rampant lions in the the background colour of the garment can be found in the costume of both noblemen - in one case simple crosses in the interstices are shown - whereas birds are depicted between the medallions of the horse-rider's garment. In the drinking scene the directions of the lions alternate, which is typical for textile decorations caused by weaving, in contrast to the printed decoration of cotton textiles with reserve techniques.

Another example of this type of early Eastern-Iranain/ Post-Sāsānian garment can be found on the ceiling panel on the upper storey of the Sumtsek (T. *gsum brtsegs*),[662] which shows self-contained patterns with religious or secular imagery (mounted noblemen in hunting scenes, and female martial dancers) in large roundels and ornamental interstices reflecting a rather archaic type of medallion decoration Animals of prey (presumably deer), or rather sacred animals in beaded medallions also belong to this group (Pl. 52.).[663] In this style ornamental motifs are to be seen as meaningful in the religious or secular context.

The female martial dancers with shields and swords at Alchi find an equivalent in a presumably Sogdian silk found at Moscevaja Balka.[664] Typical for textiles decorated with weaving techniques is the reduplication of the motif along the middle axis; but this technique can also be easily achieved by using printing blocks (see below). The stylistic rendering of the figures and details on the level of motifs at Alchi is purely Indian as shown in a Jain-manuscript from the 12th century.[665] The duelling scene possibly reflects widespread epics of heroes in Iran (such as the Shāh-nāmeh) or Eurasia, where the combat of heroes is a popular theme in the decoration of Sogdian metalware[666], but one is also reminded of martial dances in Baltistan (see below). The same type of female martial dancers or 'Amazons' as Flood[667] labelled them is also found on a completely different type of textile depiction, which imitate Indian printed fabrics.

[661] Goepper 1997: 148.

[662] Goepper 1996: Panel 23.

[663] cf. image in Goepper 1996: 258.

[664] Cat. 1996 München: fig. 92 (cf. also Papa-Kalantari 2000).

[665] Doshi 1985: Abb.21, cf. also Flood 1991: 29 and Papa-Kalantari 2000 for Indian comparisons.

[666] Marshak 2002: fig.12.

[667] Flood 1991: 29.

The latter type is also found on Indian ceremonial cloths (see below), demonstrating the creative combination of different motifs and techniques of decorating textiles to achieve an illusion of precious textiles fixed on the ceilings. Warriors in bilateral symmetry organized in a medallion can also be found in wall paintings of the Sumtsek[668], e.g. in the interstices of a mandala, outside the protective circle. According to Goepper[669] they represent Bodhisattvas engaged in different activities, one of them fighting a fierce blue deity. Marital dancers also come into mind, mentioned in folk songs of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which Francke recorded (cf. chapter ceilings/6.).

This detailed analysis ought to demonstrate the complex process of adoption of ornamental motifs, textile motifs and local elements of iconographic depth in the medium of painting. In this process a transformation of the content and meaning takes place, resulting in purely indigenous artistic expression in the service Buddhist ideas.

5.6. Later Indian and Eastern Iranian Aesthetics at the Alchi Sumtsek Around 1200: Cosmopolitan Taste and Local Design

Ladakh was especially receptive to the international language of luxury art. At Alchi, and in the Sumtsek in particular, in contrast to temples in Spiti, Kinnaur, and Ngari, there is strong emphasis on courtly culture with themes of music, dance, hunting, partly displaying a strong Eastern-Iranicate flavour with regard to ornamental style and emphasis on royal symbolism. The fact that courtly symbolism is not restricted to scenes of lay imagery alone, but is shown on ceilings and wall-paintings both in religious and lay imagery, is significant for the ornamental culture of this phase.

In the Sumtsek we find both archaic Sogdian-style medallions which had already lost their popularity in the Central Asian textile industry around 1200, but survived in the medium of painting as an independent genre. The medallions contain the ancient 'Royal lions hunters' and female martial dancers, as already stated. This early style, in contrast to another group of textiles in the Sumtsek and more similar to contemporary dresses, is characterized by decorations with extensive medallions (Pl. 56). Characteristic for this style is the effect of repetition that allows the arrangement of the configuration to function as ornament while at the same time diminishing the religious-symbolic explicitness of the imagery[670]. The innovators of complex surface patterns at that time included not only Western-Central Asian artists in Central Asia and Khorāsān[671], but also Indian artists who were receptive to patterns in fashion, which were traded along the silk routes and in maritime Indian-Ocean trade which connected India with the Arabian world from the earliest times. One of the earliest examples of a

[668] Goepper 1996: 219.

[669] Ibid.

[670] This later phase is reflected in the reduction of the importance of the signs of Central Asian kingship, and the renaissance of Indian-Buddhist and Kaśmīri visual modes to express hierarchy and authority. This tendency is in accordance with later post-Sasanian metal-ware showing images of royalty from the 9th to the 13th centuries, (e.g. under the Samanids and Seljuk dynasties, with important centers of metal work in Northern Iran and Khorassan). In this period the 'royal hunt' looses its heroic character, and monarch with goblet, shows a diminishing of the social significance; the hunt of the king transformed into the image of the 'Beizjagd', thus without danger for the ruler (Marshak 1986: 354). The falcon hunter is also depicted on the *dhotī* of a monumental sculpture in the temple, signaling royalty.

[671] The lion hunter has made the transition from the powerful single image of the Fig. ruler in combat to an endlessly repeated decorative motif.

distinctive medallion style around 1200 can be found on an Eastern-Iranian or Mongolian silk (Pl. 57). This organizational principle and choice of motifs (rampant lions) is also observable in contemporaneous ornamental culture, as reflected in the ceilings of the Alchi, displaying extensive medallion/interlocking circles, often connected by scrolls or leaves. The former type of simple rows of medallions in the Eastern-Iranicate tradition needs to be differentiated from the rather 'Indian type' of tendril design ('Ranken') or interlocking circles, with pairs of *haṃsa* or peacocks in the interstices. This fusion of ornamental values maybe reflects the dynamics of exchange betewwn Indian and Muslim weaving tradition in the trade centres of Gujarat, which also made textiles for export and thus adopted ornamental values of different cultural centres in the West. It is also possible skilled artists creatively combined local Buddhist and courtly motifs with different textile traditions and techniques to decorate fabrics.

Another frequent type of surface patterns is the organization of unframed motifs in rows or in bilateral mirror-like symmetry. One type of panel, featuring dancers, animals in combat, hunters, which are unframed and organized in rows, recalls ceremonial banners from Gujarat produced for the Indonesian market; these banners are also an important comparison with regard to their function as furnishing, as already stated. One example of these large banners (c. 14th century) measures almost 5x1 meters[672]. Another piece[673] features a mirror-image pair of dancers printed from a single block, recalling temple Indian dancers (*devadasi*)[674]. The dancers are comparable to the female martial dancers at Alchi.[675] However, the 'amazons' at Alchi are holding shields and swords (Pl. 50). Most important, the technique of decorating textiles is comparable to cotton fabrics: white figural elements appear on colored ground, recalling block-printed mordant dyed cottons, in characteristic colors: blue, red, white.

Some of these martial dancers partly holding offering bowls, which are found on panel 39 (Pl. 139), combining Indian techniques of printing textiles and their motifs with specific Buddhist ideas, namely offering deities, are also found in the throne depictions.

Hunting scenes are also a common theme of ceremonial banners from Gujarat, dateable to the 14th century. They were hung behind high dignitaries on the occasion of ceremonies. The latter shows riders on elephants and on horseback accompanied by their shield-bearers. Comparable to hunters on panel 33 (Pl. 141) is also the color scheme with black background, and motifs in red and blue. However, the Alchi examples emphasize the royal hunt, the 'prestigious' lion hunt which was a prerogative of the ruler (though these lions are reduced to an almost space-filler like scale; the idea behind may be the same), which contrasts to the hunt of deer and other animals of prey depicted on the Gujarati example. Furthermore, the local costumes in the Alchi depictions differ from Central Asian caftans, characterised by two-horned caps or simple turbans which are also found in the donor depictions. Some images of the dancers with swirling scarves, which also imitate the same Indian resist-dying technique, possibly betray the local culture of Greater Ladakh (dressed with boots, caftans and turban-like headgear); (panel 23, Pl. 138).

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[672] For comparison: the size of a panel at Alchi is around 60 x 180 cm.

Cf. for an image Guy 1998: fig. 137; it shows a landscape of trees.

[673] The ceremonial cloth is block-printed, from Gujarat for the Indonesian market found in Sulawesi (16th-17th c.); cf. Guy: fig. 144.

[674] Such dances in the Dekkan were recorded by the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle in the 16th c. (Ibid.: 110).

[675] Guy 1998:110.

All these themes of royal entertainment and performances of music and dance on occasion of a religious ceremony or royal reception can also be found on Indian ceremonial clothes.[676] Of course the cultural significance and ritual efficacy of such clothes used in India and Indonesia can not be equated with the Alchi ceiling textiles. However, it is important to note that figural clothes which are related in form and style bore or achieved such a status in other regions, which may have been connected with Kashmir and the Western Himalaya through trade.[677] It is also possible that Indian weavers produced post-Sasanian ceremonial textiles with the tastes of the Ladakhi elite in mind.

Unframed motifs were also popular in the luxury art of the Chinese-style and later Mongolian dynasties in Central Asia. A Mongolian Kesi,[678] dating from the 13th century, provides another possible example for the ornamental styles around 1200, comparable to complex figural patterns at Alchi. Panel I.18 shows hybrid animals (gryphins) overlapping with lions. An example (Panel I.4) of this type features a mounted horseman; in both pieces the background is filled with flowers and leaves as well as tendrils growing out of the animals. The Mongolian textile shows walking lions in gold colour with raised paws und widely opened mouths. The ornamental scheme is comparable: the animals are woven into dense tendrils of leaves, connecting flower stalks and large blossoms or palmettes. Out of the lion's head grow coral-like red branches. Further characteristics, shared by both examples, are the alternating directions of the animals in each row and other light-coloured motifs, which are set against the black background. These motifs, which are unframed in contrast to western Central Asian medallions, are of the type found in Chinese textile traditions such as brocades of the Liao and Jin. A later example of this tendency is the Mongolian silk just described.

5.6.2. Golden Jin Costumes and other Chinese-Central Asian Luxury Textiles

An enthroned nobleman depicted in the Sumtsek (Pl. 203) is shown with all his regalia, wearing his most precious cloths, headdress with crown-like brim, and a long red caftan decorated with mythical creatures in ochre or gold.[679] This type of ornament with unframed mythical creatures recalls the royal costumes of the Jin dynasty (Pl. 145); they show fabrics of a monochrome ground colour with small repeated designs in gold.[680] The interest in mythical creatures on such

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[676] *"Maa' clothe acquired a central place in Toraja belief, featuring in the local creation myths which centre around deified ancestors who are screened in heaven by a curtain of maa'"* (Guy: 86-87).

[677] A contrasting element is the lack of decorative border on the narrow ends of the panels, which are found in the Gujarati cloths and also in the ceiling paintings of Tabo. In the latter this element results in an almost a trumpal-type effect of real textiles. However, at Alchi the panels are framed by borders in two different colors, of the blue and red, or white, panels 38 has a border with wave-like elements: such borders on the long edge are typical for ritual clothes from Gujarat. Also the color scheme: red, blue white is often found on figural textiles of Alchi and Gujarat

[678] See Papa-Kalantari 2007a; The technique is also called slit-weave tapestry ('Gobelin'). Concerning this technique see: Cammann 1948, 1951, 1962; Linrothe commented this method of decoration that it 'rivalled painting in the subtleties of modulated colour' (Linrothe 2004: 31).

[679] The upper cloths (caftan) is probably made of silk or wool, under that a lightweight fabric with small dots is visible. Females also wear two layers, one cloak and a cape. A two-pointed cap is also worn by a priest facing the queen. Goepper proposes to see in this figure Tsulthrim Ö, the founder of the Sumtsek (Goepper 1996: 114).

[680] The robes of a royal couple found in their grave in Chengzi village, Juyuan county, Jin period (2nd half of the 12th century), seems to have been adorned with decorative borders along the sleeves and above the hem containing a non-Chinese script (Krahl 1998: fig. 11). Such borders are also shown on the Alchi robe.

royal garments are also typical for the Chinese dynasties during the Jin, Jiao and Tangut periods. According to Kira Samosyuk, these figures from the Jin period represent either members of the court or perhaps even the imperial family itself, since under Tangut law, citizens were not permitted "to wear military apparel or regalia with gilded ornamentation or woven with gold thread".[681]

Further evidence of influence by Chinese Central Asian textiles can be found in motifs, which mimic clamp-resist dyed fabrics, which was a wide-spread technique during the T'ang period.[682] This type of textiles is found on several sections of the ceilings of Sumtsek (Pl. 63). One panel consists of candelabra-like ornaments[683] composed of a multiple lotus base with birds flanking the middle axis in bilateral symmetry (Pl. 60). The images of intertwined and opposed animals are a popular element in the art of Dunkar (Pl. 64). Ornamental thrones like those at Alchi are also found in wall paintings at Dunkar as a throne basis of deities (scrolls growing out of the stem are characteristic, forming a complex composition of vegetative ornament). The same type of complex lotus throne can be found on a Kesi (silk tapestry) thangka featuring a green Tara from Karakhoto (13th century) in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg (Pl. 66); a further example is the depiction of a green Tara in the Ford collection (Pl. 65) from the 12th century. Significant parallels are also present in the mushroom-like leaves of the lotus flowers shown in the Karakhoto example and in Dunkar. The motif of two animals sharing one head found in such lotus thrones is also a common feature in Dunkar (one example being two elephants with one head).

Luxury art of the Chinese-style Jin and Tangut (Xia) dynasties has been a little studied component in the ornamental art at Alchi in the Western Himalaya. These dynasties had a considerable impact on the culture of ornament in the region due to the fact that the local Buddhists communities had close cultural ties with Tibet and traded in luxury goods (Significantly most traces of these textile traditions are found in Tibet). It is important to note, that the motifs on these precious textiles were also chosen for their religious-cosmological content which was adapted to the local ornamental language and symbolism of space, as will be seen in the next chapter.

To sum up, the Buddhist Central Asian style during the Chinese-style dynasties of Xia (Hsia), Jin, Liao (11th to 13th centuries) reflected in the art of Dunkar contrasts to Alchi, the latter showing rather Western Central Asian motifs of different types: the first phase is dominated by Sogdian aesthetics with simple floral rosettes, as well as large roundels with animals and hunting scenes; while the second phase shows complex surface patterns in the Sumtsek reflecting a later textile tradition corresponding to Indian, and Eastern Central-Asian/Mongolian[684] textile traditions and ornamental styles at the beginning of the 13th century (see also chapter ceiling textiles). On a stylistic level, these types of composition reflect Indian aesthetic values, while on an iconographic level, the motifs display local Iranicate courtly symbolism and Buddhist iconography.

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[681] Samosyuk 1993: 86; cited after Krahl 1998: 186.

Due to the great esteem of fabrics woven in gold and other luxury cloths among the Tanguts it is not surprising that painters portray Bodhisattvas and the Buddha himself as dressed in such robes (cf. Piotrovsky, no. 43, 52, 57). A comparable tendency is also shown in the religious paintings at Alchi.

[682] Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2002.

[683] Alchi Sumtsek, panel 34; cf. Goepper 1996 p. 254.

[684] The latter show a fusion of Iranian and Chinese Central Asian motifs and aesthetic values.

5.6.3. Historic Background and Possible Sources of the Later Ornamental Style in the Sumtsek

The Islamization of Khotan in the 11th century quickly led to the end of the Iranicate Buddhist art on that part of the Silk Road, constituting the possible source of early Central Asian courtly culture at Alchi and the Dukhang in particular. However, the study has provided evidence of a strong local Eastern-Iranicate stratum of courtly symbolism in interaction with Sogdian language of luxury art, which provided the cultural stratum of post-Sasanian art in the Western Himalaya up to the 13th century. Furthermore, the interaction with different cultures, which produced (or were mediators of) Iranian-inspired luxury art including the Ghaznavids, the Chinese dynasties of the Tanguts and the Jin in this later period around 1200, has contributed to the long persistence of the Eastern-Iranicate visual aesthetics, and they also introduced new vocabulary of luxury art. Additional evidence for these contacts with Tangut Buddhist centres is provided in the art of Dunkar.

We have almost no remains from the courtly art of Kaśmīr in the 12th century, but it has been shown that Eastern-Iranian luxury art has influenced Kaśmīri art on various levels and from very early times. Textile depictions on bronze sculptures[685] provide further comparative material. Later Kaśmīr-style sculptures produced in or for the Western Himalayan region, comparable to the later Alchi style, demonstrate a continuity of this tradition up to the 12th/13th century.[686]

It has been suggested that Kaśmīri, Sogdian and Chinese Central Asian art and Mongolian luxury textiles are some of the various strata of the different stages of Iranicate-inspired ornamental art in the Western Himalaya. The rich Indian culture of complex cottons participated in the dynamics and evolution of ornamental values, associated with luxury textiles in Muslim and other Western countries, related through trade. These interactions point to a system of cultural contacts in the region and complex dynamics of compositional schemes of luxury textiles.

I propose the thesis that this distinctive style at Alchi primarily reflects Indian textile models which were assimilated and adapted to the local Iranicate-Buddhist taste, in a reciprocal relationship with Kaśmır courtly culture and other heirs of Iranicate art such as the Turkic-Ghaznevids (11th c.) and later Central Asian dynasties. Alchi is thus the last example of Eastern Iranian Buddhist culture that flourished with close links to the wide range of Indo-Tibetan artistic schools existing in the Western Himalaya at the time.

The late Indo-Iranian style at Alchi contrasts with the ornamental culture of the Western Tibetan temple at Dunkar, reflecting the Buddhist Central Asian style during the Chinese-style dynasties of Xia, Jin and Liao (11th to 13th centuries).

However, a common tendency can be observed which unites the different Western Himalayan temples in their ornamental culture and interest in the depiction of textiles, namely that different ornamental traditions and visual aesthetics were assimilated and translated into

[685] See Flood 1991: 33; Goepper 1995.

[686] Cf. Cat. 2006: 261.

ritually significant motifs of iconographic depth. How these motifs narrate[687] the concepts of sacred space in the sphere of ornament, as do the paintings running around the walls, will be a focus of the next chapter.

[687] This concept of the potential of textiles as texts can be found in the 2002 article by Totton: 'Virtual cloth in a Javanese candi' (in Barnes 2002).

6. ATTIRING THE TEMPLE: EVOLUTIONARY HISTORY OF CEILING DECORATIONS IN WESTERN HIMALAYAN TEMPLES (10TH – 15TH C.) AND THEIR ARTISTIC SYMBOLISM[688]

6.1. Exchange and Interaction between Architecture, Ephemeral Settings and Textile Symbolism in Sacred Dwellings

6.1.1. On the Genesis of Temple Architecture and Concepts of Space in Early Western Himalaya Buddhist Art

The evolutionary history of ceiling decorations in early Western Tibetan Buddhist temples reflects the dialectic and super-imposition of different architectonic expressions and concepts of sacred space: built architecture, ephemeral settings and ceremonial fabrics of cotton and silk. This multitude of concepts is embedded in the rich and refined tradition of painted ceiling composition in Indian and Central Asian temples. Ceiling decorations in Western Himalayan temples have mostly been regarded as decorative, while I propose to integrate these elements into various concepts of space and possibly also related to Buddhist cosmonizing ideas of the ordered world. A brief survey will look on the strategies to communicate the hierarchy of space and three bodies (*trikaya*) of the Buddha in the temple, from the worldy manifestation to the realm beyond form. Various cosmic allusions and the visualisation of mythic geography in the later phase of this tradition will be presented, based on earlier studies on the 'Dome of Heaven' in Western Art by K. Lehmann[689] and A. Soper, who was the first Western scholar who proposed a celestial interpretation of ceilings in Asian temples such as Ajanta, Kyzil and Dunhuang, followed fourty years later by O. Grabar[690] in his 'From Dome of Heaven to Pleasure Dome', the royal space in the Muslim world and A. Schimmel describing the numinous emptiness expressed in the dome.[691]

The various artistic sources and religious concepts relevant in this context cannot be separated from the structural logic and symbolism of space of the early Western Himalayan temples in the region, which may have triggered or even dictated the use of textiles. Characteristic of the building techniques of Western Himalayan temples (partly including also regions of Baltistan in Northern Pakistan and Chamba/Lahaul on the border to India) is the massive cube-like shape of the single structure.[692] At Nako (Fig. 6) a narrow door is the only articulation in the wall structure to admit daylight, revealing a sacred space of incredible richness and colourful splendour.

The simple buildings of the Western Himalayan Buddhist temples are in general a blend of foundations of rubble stone, walls mud/rammed earth, timber and mud roofs. The inner space

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[688] I wish to thank Dr. Ch. Luczanits (University of Berlin) and Architect Romi Khosla (New Delhi) and various discussions on this topic and their motivating and productive criticism. I profited much from the extensive exchange with Prof. Dr. J. Ebert and Prof. E. Lehner with regard to the structure of this theme.

[689] K. Lehmann, The Dome of Heaven, Art Bulletin 29 (1947): 225-248.

[690] O. Grabar 1990. Further studies are by S. Francoeur (unpublished PhD-thesis 1998) dealing with the ceilings at Ajanta, Ch. Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2007b (Western Himalaya); D. Klimburg-Salter 2001 (Dunkar).

[691] Schimmel, A. Inner and Outer Space in Islam (in: 'Concepts of Space Ancient and Modern', ed. K. Vatsyayan 1991, New Delhi. Concepts of Space in the Indian world were discussed by Maxwell and Meister in the same volume.

[692] This type of religious dwelling in Ladakh, Spiti and Kinnaur is windowless.

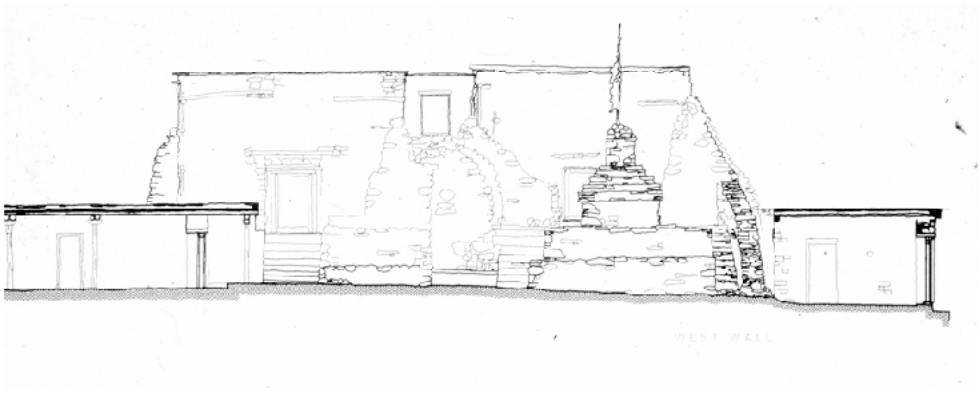


Fig. 6: Nako, Gongma temple (left), (courtesy R. Khosla 2003)

is spanned across at Tabo (Fig. 9), Nako (Fig. 7; Pl. 70) and in the Alchi Dukhang[693] in three bays, each of which is supported by rows of columns. Beams and rafters rest on these walls and columns. The boards are positioned between the rafters that are painted on their underside.[694] The ceiling constructions are made of a pressed layer of clay, and beneath this, twigs laid on water-repellent birch bark.

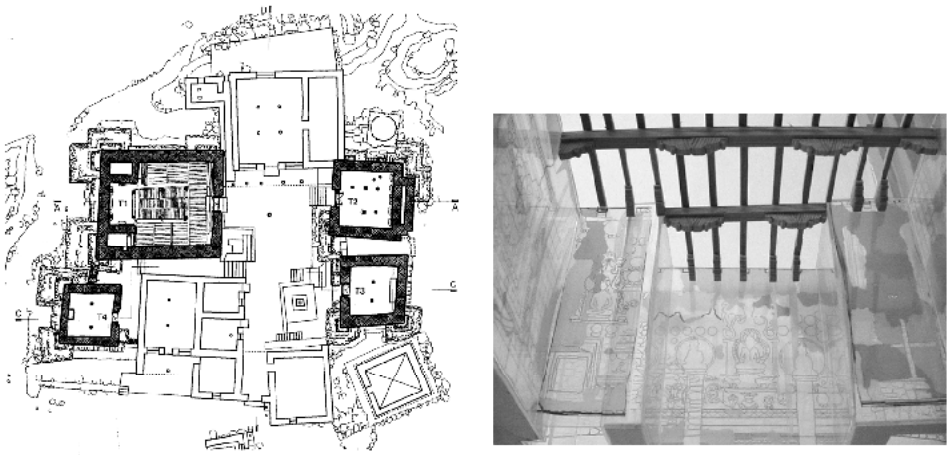


Fig. 7: Nako, Sacred Site and model of the Translator's Temple (courtesy Romi Khosla, 2003)

In Ladakh we find examples of more complex types of temples, with multi-storied centralized interior spaces. In these temples the horizontal boundary often shows 'lantern-ceilings' as found in the cf. Sumtsek (Pl. 74) and Baltistan and many other places in Central Asia. The ceiling construction of the Alchi Mañjuśrī Lhakhang (*c.* 1220[695], Pl. 72), and the later Guru Lhakhang at Nako, (14th c., Fig. 10[696]) are remarkable for their ceiling constructions alluding to a honorific cover. In the Alchi Mañjuśrī Lhakhang four pillars support diagonally laid crossbeams on which there are rafters and planks arranged, radiating from the centre like an umbrella. We find here a concept where space is emanating from the centre and a fusion of the devotional

[693] The structures at Nako and Alchi are now in a fragile condition and their preservations is urgent.

[694] Cf. K. Kohler 2005.

[695] Luczanits, 2004: fig. 160.

[696] The plan is by J. Harrison, 1999 (WHAV).

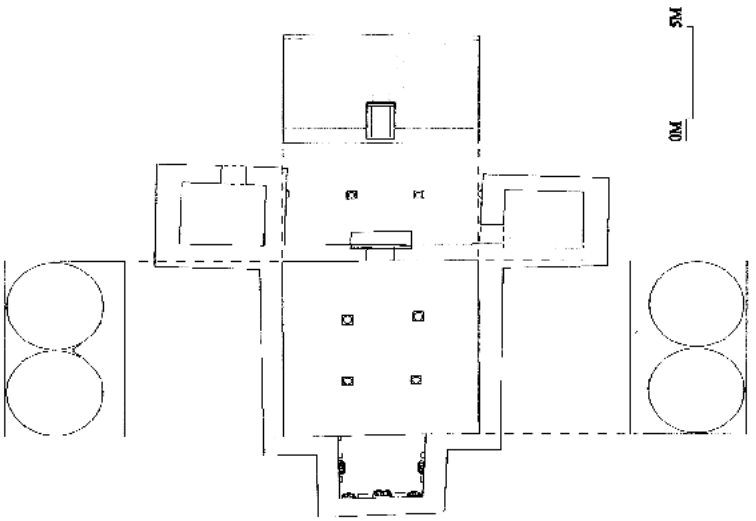


Fig. 8: Alchi, Dukhang, ground plan (plan courtesy G. Kozicz)

centre of the monument and the ceiling. The pillars and crossbeams are the structure of the celestial palace, in which the Buddha resides. Thus, built architecture is not a container for the images, but the main image is the centre of a virtual space, integrating the different directions of space into an ordered universe. The umbrella-like ceiling alluding to ephemeral spaces and signs of spiritual and worldly sovereignty further undermines the boundaries and structural logic of built architecture.

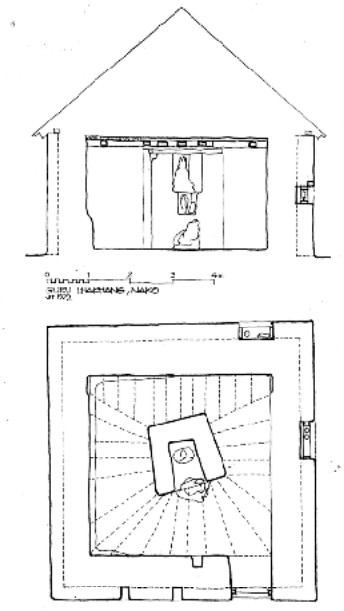


Fig. 10: Nako, Guru Lhakhang, c. 14th c., (courtesy J. Harrison 1999, WHAV)

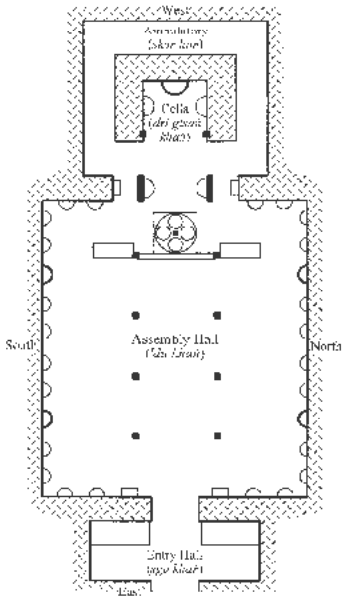


Fig. 9: Tabo, Main Temple, ground plan (after Luczanits 2004: 34)

This concept can be compared to a specific type of cave temples at Dunhuang[697], displaying a central pillar, which functions as a throne for the deities flanked by guardians of the four directions. In temple 428 heavenly musicians and wind gods are shown on the base, supporting the structure like atlantid-dwarfs and virtually lifting the configuration form the worldly plane to the heavenly sphere.

Rieger-Jandl pointed out that in general the use of holy numbers[698], precise proportional and harmonic systems[699] illustrate that myths and religious purposes are of much more importance than structural requirements: *"Holy numbers, like 84 or 108 are constantly reappearing in the portions and measurements but also in actual figures or elements.,..108 anguli is the height of a Buddha,.. 108 beams make up the ceiling of the great assembly halls."* The interaction between myths, abstract concepts of space, ephemeral dwellings and actual building processes in Western Himalayan Buddhist architecture is a fascinating and little studied issue. What concerns the evolutionary history of Western Himalayan temple architecture is the fact that we still face the problem of the lack of studies, which integrate the viewpoints of architectural, art and religion historians.[700]

One of the earliest examples of Western Himalaya ceiling decorations in the period from the 10th to 13th century is paintings above the sanctum in the Tabo Main temple (Fig. 9, Pl. 75); one of the earliest foundations of the Guge-kings from the 10th century). Stylistically, its images above the sanctum are closely related to the deities in the early wall painting of the Gokhang (T. sgo khang, Entry Hall). In contrast to the chronology of Tabo proposed in earlier studies[701], the paintings might be datable to the foundation phase of the temple during the Purang-Guge kingdom (end of 10th c.).

The early ceiling composition of the cella in the Tabo Main Temple belongs to the tradition of Indian temple architecture and incorporates motifs from wooden ceilings in Himachal Pradesh, such as Kinnaur, featuring a lotus medallion in the centre circled by flying genies. The Tabo Main Temple also shares a similar concept regarding the symbolism of sacred space with the temples in the region that include Lahaul[702] (Pl. 77) and Chambā, namely a movement from the fore-hall (a space covered with a centrally organized ceiling culminating in a lotus rosette) to the sanctum. In the latter regions, Buddhism was already established during or even before the time of the Guge kingdom, as documented in the temple at Gumrang, possibly providing important evidence on the use of textiles in the tradition of wooden architecture.

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[697] Early examples from Dunhuang are found in cave 285 and 254 (plan: Whitfield 1996, II: p. 278); from the Western Wei period 428, Northern Zhou; both 6th c., cf. Ibid I, p.45); These seats of the Buddha are flanked by pillars with 'textile covered knobs' on which rest bows recalling awnings /'Markise'.)

[698] Rieger-Jandl 2005: 95. For a discussion of the construction techniques in contemporaneous culture of Ladakh see also Lehner/Rieger-Jandl 2002 and Rieger-Jandl 2002.

[699] Cf. Kozicz 2007.

[700] R. Khosla is still a pioneer in this respect.

[701] The establishment of two different phases contrasts to earlier studies by Klimburg-Salter 1997: 173, who placed the two different systems of ceiling decorations into the same painting phase (11th century).

[702] Cf. Widorn 2001; Luczanits 2004: 107 stated: *"Owing to its location between Kullu, Chamba, Ladakh and Spiti, Lahaul has always been of strategic and economic importance for its neighbours"; "The temple at Gumrang is of simple construction, made of stone walls interspersed with wooden beams. It is a nearly square building with four pillars forming another square in the middle and supporting a flat roof"* (Ibid. 108).

The use of textiles may have been triggered in this whole region inter alia by the construction technique just mentioned, namely simple structures of mud walls or, as shown at Gumrang, walls made of stones on which wooden beams rest. These contrast to temples covered with a carved wooden ceiling as shown at Udaipur, just mentioned (Pl. 77). In addition, These painted ornaments on the ceiling of Gumrang may reflect the rich and varied contemporary textile traditions of the region, famous for the production of fabrics and ritual textiles (*rumals*, which also include canopies; cf. 4.3.5.) until the present day. Such religious fabrics or their translation to the medium of painting, were probably one important artistic and ritual force behind the adornment the coffers between the constructive elements of the ceilings (see below).[703] A similar concept with regard to motifs and style can be found on the ceiling above the sanctum from the earliest phase of painting in the Tabo Main temple, where – in contrast to later temples - actual textiles were used as a surface ('Bildträger') for the paintings.

One practical reason for covering ceilings with cloth is clearly to protect the temple from dust falling from the roof, as is still the practice in private buildings of the Western Himalaya, as proposed by Goepper.[704] However, actual textiles affixed between the beams can only be found on the ceilings at Tabo, whereas at Nako and Alchi the ornaments are painted directly onto the wooden planks.

At Grotto D in Bāmiyān (Fig. 12) an illusionist wooden ceiling displays depictions of textiles affixed between the beams and rafters. The 'coffers' of the ceilings at Bāmiyān and early cave temples at Ajanta[705] (Fig. 11) imitate wooden constructions and the decoration of the space between the 'beams' combines architectural ornament, figural motifs and textile patterns. At Ajanta, in addition, a rosette of concentric circles indicating the honorific umbrellas and the element of air above is depicted above the sanctum, transforming the ceiling into an honorific cover and opening it towards heaven. A similar concept is found on the wooden ceiling of the Jhokhang at Lhasa, displaying a lotus rosette in the centre, but the association with an umbrella/canopy is less explicit there (Pl. 82).

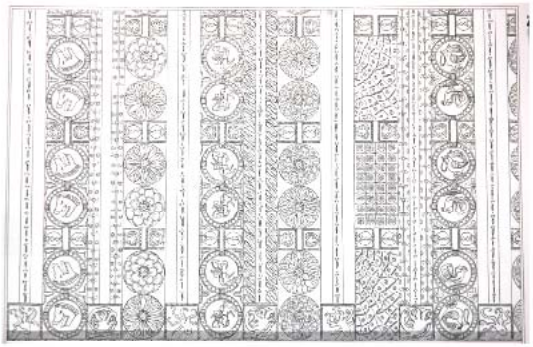


Fig. 12: Bāmiyān, ceiling reflection Cave D, reconstruction (after Otavsky 1998)

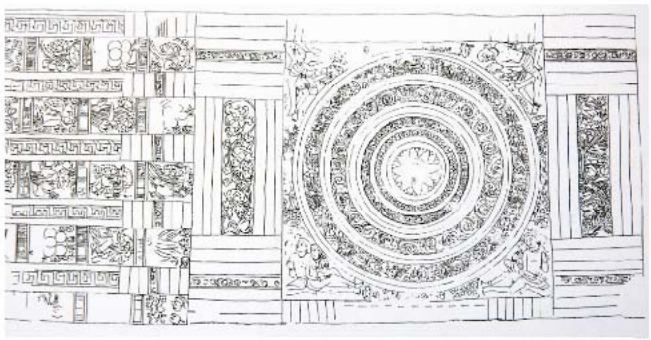


Fig. 11: Ajanta, ceiling, Cave II (after M. Zin 2003: Vol. 2: 8)

[703] The decorative repertoire of Gumrang, strongly recalling the depictions on the cella ceiling at Tabo is an indication for this assumption.

[704] Goepper 1996: 225.

[705] See also the drawings in M. Zin 2003.

At Tabo we find a similar fusion of wooden construction in textile motifs combined with a demarcation of the sanctum with a different ceiling design, but the dominance of textiles patterns and lengths of cloths is more evident at Tabo. When looking at the ceilings of Tabo, Nako and Alchi, the predominant first impression is of a unified textile cover, hung between the beams; one might therefore explain this as an allusion to the symbolism of an honorific canopy, as Yanagi[706] (referring to the ceilings at Alchi) and later also Klimburg-Salter[707] proposed, which protects the main deity and defines its sacred space in various cultural contexts.[708] In contrast to this earlier hypothesis of a symbolic representation of a unified honorific cover or canopy, I propose a juxtaposition of different symbolisms of space in the Assembly Hall and the sanctum. The ceiling of the Assembly Hall combines the local tradition of wooden temples, with honorific textiles inserted between the beams and Indian types of architectural ornament depicted on the border between the ceiling and the wall and between the beams. The latter motifs clearly refer to the superstructure of Indian temples. This fusion of structural and decorative elements is also shown in the ornamental organization of the roof in early Indian stone temples –though not postulating a direct genetic link- with stepped bosses[709] ('Stufenzinnen'), (Bateśvar, see Pl. 79), festoons, valances and *kīrthimuka* (face of glory) appearing as articulating elements of the outer and inner surface of the temple. This wooden ceiling embellished with textiles above the Tabo Main Hall contrasts to the sanctum featuring lotus medallions, indicating the cultic centre and opening the ceiling to the heaven.

A comparable juxtaposition can be found at Ajanta, featuring ceiling decorations which mimic wooden coffers (partly showing textile motifs) and large lotus rosettes with cosmologic allusion (Pl. 81).

The artistic impulse behind the phenomenon of textile ceiling decorations above the Tabo Assembly Hall are specific ceremonial textiles rather than the concept of a single canopy, which usually covers the main deity. The strips of cloth shown on the ceiling of Tabo neatly fit into the spaces between the rafters, recalling Indian ceremonial textiles with regard to dimension and organization of motifs, with 'end panel's featuring small-scale patterns (Pl. 116), rather than a singly canopy. Furthermore almost no repetition of motifs can be observed on the different panels. Thus a diversity of ornaments is consciously intended, perhaps indicating the wealth of offering of different single precious banners to the temple.[710]

In contrast to the sanctum, on the ceiling of the Main Hall of the Tabo Dukhang one only finds non-figural ornaments in the motifs, recalling textile decoration. However, this undeniable association to honorific textiles is certainly not the only impulse behind the careful depiction of these elements. The motifs display distinctive Hindu and Buddhist iconography, which are also characteristic of early Indian architectural ornament. Stylized shrines, lotus rosettes with eight representing the *dharma*, vases, stylized trees alluding to nature and paradise-like environments are among the various significant elements. All these elements at Tabo have a distinctive Buddhist and non-Buddhist iconographic value of their own, often alluding to wealth and abundance: e.g. the vase (T. *gter gyi*, S. *bumpa*) is one of the eight

[706] Yanagi 1988 (Kokka).

[707] Klimburg-Salter 1997.

[708] Furthermore the author (1996: 485) assumed Indian models for this decorative concept.

[709] Stepped bosses are also at Udaigiri, and Bamiyan. At Sārnāth a curved line below simulates a ribbon (Meister 1976: 412).

[710] This diversity cannot be equated 'patches-canopies', which are known to us from Dunhuang, because one motif runs through the whole panel, like on a single banner or scarf.

auspicious symbols, the 'vase of the inexhaustible treasures', which remains perpetually full and can be interpreted as an offering to the deities of the temple. In addition, festoons of votive banners probably made of silk, bells emanating jewels, and pearls hung on the uppermost border of the assembly hall (Pl. 80)[711] recall Indian architectural ornament indicating wealth and abundance (see below).[712]

With regard to the symbolism of space at Tabo a conscious juxtaposition of various decorative concepts can be seen; namely an iconographic ensemble in the sanctum, featuring celestial beings, offering deities and non-figural designs above the Assembly Hall and purely ornamental themes above the Assembly hall. When moving from the main hall to the sanctum, textiles and ornaments thus 'narrate' the symbolism of space. This potency of ornament in a Buddhist temple has been little studied.

Compared with the ceilings at Tabo, the figural depictions on the chronologically later ceilings at Nako are not restricted to the ceiling above the sanctum.[713] We find figural depictions, such as mythical creatures (Pl. 131), stylized trees and purely ornamental motifs (Pl.122) scattered across the whole ceiling in both early temples at Nako today (unfortunately many of the paintings are overpainted). Thus, this strict horizontal tendency of the textile motifs at Tabo, leading from the hall to the sanctum and 'narrating' sacred space, became blurred, reflecting the evolution of symbolism of space in this later phase.[714]

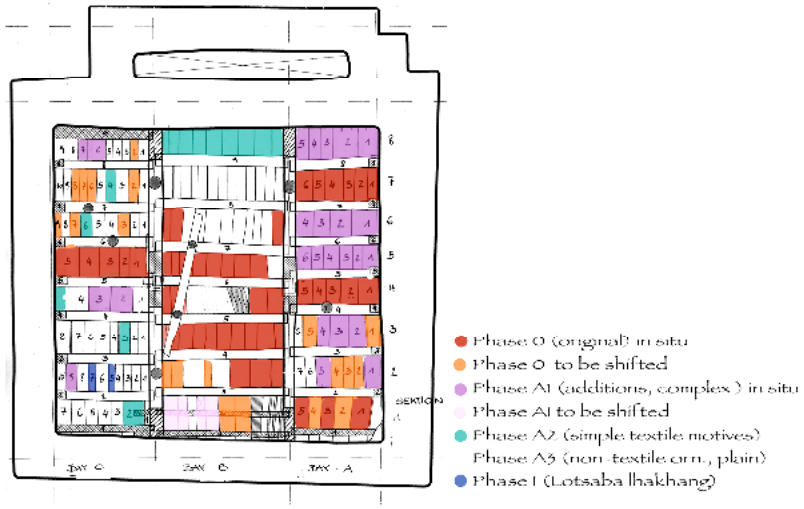


Fig. 13: Nako, Gongma Temple, ceiling reflection: classification of chronology and reconstruction plan (Ch. Papa-Kalantari, K.Kohler 2003) based on drawing by RKDS (Romi Khosla Design Studio, New Delhi)

To summarize, at the Tabo Main temple roughly two phases with different symbolism of space can be identified: 1. The early phase (10th – 11th c.) shows a juxtaposition of hall and sanctum. These two spaces show different types of ceiling decorations. Exemplary for this

[711] Cf. Klimburg-Salter 1997 fig. on 194.

[712] For further images see Bateśvar, in Meister 1976: fig. 23, ff.

[713] Of course the original program of the temple is not known to us.

I wish to thank Arch. S. Berry (New Delhi, Nako Research and Preservation Project) for the helpful discussions on this subject.

[714] However no 'original' programs of the later assembly halls are extant (The temple's ceiling of Lalung, c. m. 12th c. features exclusively ornamental motifs).

'horizontal' hierarchy of spatial order are the narrative scenes running around the wall, emphasizing the horizontal movement and perception of the sacred space while circumambulation. The second phase (11th c.), in contrast, is characterized by a later addition of an image in front of the older sanctum, namely a four-fold Vairocana in 3-dimensional form as a clay sculpture, shifting the devotional centre from the sanctum to the centre of the building and thus undermining the earlier horizontal movement.

In the later temples of the region this different symbolism of space and the centralized concept are further developed, with the cultic centre positioned in the apse and large painted mandala covering the sidewalls. At the Lotsaba lhakhang at Nako (Translator's temple, ca. mid. 12th c.) and the Dukhang at Alchi (Fig. 3) the earlier three-dimensional main image forming the cultic centre at Tabo is translated into a two-dimensional configuration, positioned in a niche of the temple, as is the case in the other temples of the compound. This scheme is also followed at the Alchi Dukhang, with sidewalls covered by two-dimensional mandalas, displaying the fully developed Vajrayāna iconography.[715]

At the Lalung Serkhang ('Golden Temple'; c. mid. 12th c.), the ground plan is almost rectangular[716] corresponding to the centralized plan of the iconographic programme, with sculptures of the Buddha on the main wall and Bodhisattva on the sidewalls. These clay images are interwoven into a dense system of moulded lotus tendrils, virtually covering the whole wall of the temple and leading to a unified impression of a celestial palace, the abode of the Buddha. The ceiling in the Lalung Serkhang (mid. 12th c.), which is a component of this unified system, is organized in a centralized grid of wooden panels in two levels and is decorated with ornamental designs, with the centre as the highest point of the temple.[717]

In the Dunkar (c.1200) cave temples the ceiling programme is not dictated by built architecture, with its constructive logic alone. The interior decoration of the various caves display a greater variety of ceiling compositions, some of them imitating wooden constructions, while others show different centralized mandalic plans.[718] However, the depiction of textiles is a constant feature in all these temples, from the 10th to the 13th century.

The architectonic form of the Alchi Sumtsek (Pl.74, Figs.14-16) is one of the last and most refined achievements of the complex genesis of sacred spaces in the region. The Sumtsek can be considered as the mature result of the vertical tendency previously described, towards a mandala-like symbolism of sacred space; this different function is also reflected in the ceiling decorations. The temple is a freestanding, centrally organized building, which is erected on an approximately cross-shaped ground plan. Entering through a low door, one emerges into a room whose sides are extended by three alcoves each containing a colossal clay statue of a Bodhisattva.

At the centre of the room is a Chörten (T. *mchod rten)*. The symbolism of space may be related to monumental Chörten, with lantern-ceilings such as the Great Stupa at Alchi (Pl. 71) and Mangyu.[719]

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[715] Klimburg-Salter 1987: 693 has given a short description of the overall iconographic program in the Alchi Dukhang.

[716] Cf. Khosla 1979: 49 for a ground plan.

[717] Khosla, 1979: fig. on p. 24.; for a more recent study and ground-plan see Luczanits 2004: fig. 104.

[718] Cf. for a preliminary discussion of the various ceiling concepts see Papa-Kalantari 2000, Klimburg-Salter 2001.

[719] '4-image-chörten', Luczanits 2004: fig. 185.

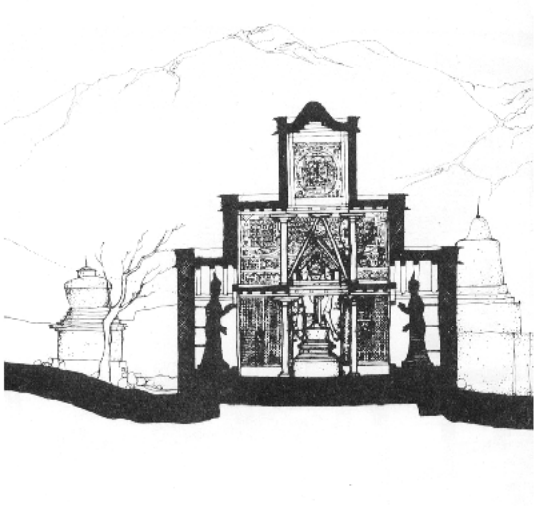


Fig. 16: Alchi Sumtsek (after Khosla 1979)

The interior of the building consists of three communicating/interconnected spatial units, one on top of the other. The only division between the floors is a ceiling between the ground floor (I) and the first upper level (II). The third level (III) is enclosed by a lantern roof (Fig. 15). The representations on the ceilings initially evoke the impression of textiles, attached to the panels, and display a wealth of ornamental and figural representations: royal hunters, marital dancers, mythical creatures, and ornamental themes recalling Eastern-Iranian language of luxury art.

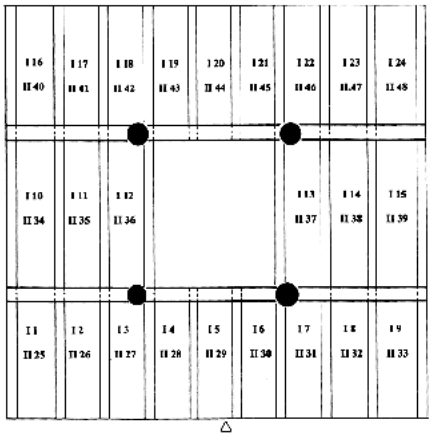


Fig. 15: Alchi, Sumtsek, ceiling reflection (with roman letters giving the floor number), plan after Ch. Papa-Kalantari (2000)

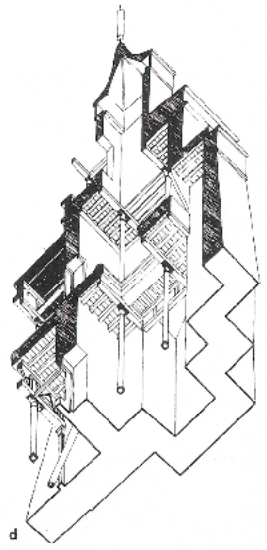


Fig. 14: Alchi, Sumtsek, axonometric perspecttive, DiMattia (after Vergara, Béguin 1987: 124)

In ceiling depictions at Alchi different iconographic themes are integrated into a homogenous whole, alluding to an illusionist textile cover, which is the achievement of a refined and advanced pictorial tradition. This translation of textile motifs and honorific covers into the sphere of Buddhist iconography and symbolism of space is one of the most fascinating phenomenon in the later art.

The Alchi ceilings reflect the general tendency in the art of the later Western Himalaya temples to 'weave' iconographic components into a conceptional unit within the complex grammar of Esoteric Buddhism.[720] The ceiling's programme is thus an integral part of the complex iconographic fabric, covering the whole temple.[721] This change in function, visual aesthetics and symbolism of space as reflected in ceiling decorations and textile depictions

[720] Cf. also Linrothe 1996.

[721] The complex visual structure and grammar of mature Esoteric Buddhism reflected in the iconography of the Sumtsek is discussed by Linrothe 1996.

which narrate, delineate and map sacred space constitute the central aspect of my study. Furthermore, I will briefly expand on changes in visual aesthetics from the 13th century onwards, as a result of which an illusionist opening up of temple ceiling constructions appears to replace the earlier textile coverings, as seen especially in the temples of Tabo and Nako.

6.1.2. Ephemeral Architecture and Textiles Defining Sacred Space in India and Tibet

6.1.2.1. Ephemeral Settings and Honorific Covers

As already stated, real textiles are fixed between the beams at Tabo, indicating an older tradition of covering the ceiling with fabrics in the region. In contrast, the decorative program is directly painted on the wooden ceilings in later temples of the region,. Thus, a process of translation of the original textile cover to the medium of painting took place, probably because of lack of adequate textiles. However, it is also evident that artistic demands changed as a result of which the ceiling decorations became an element of the unified programme of the painted overall programme of the temple.

Despite the translation of textile motifs to the medium of painting, the illusionist rendering of a 'textile cover' is a constant phenomenon of ceiling decorations in the region. In addition to the original functional purpose of textiles and their depiction on ceilings, a strong cultural impulse can be assumed behind this phenomenon, namely the rich and varied traditions of ephemeral spaces and honorific covers. One model may be the use of fabrics in Indian temple architecture, such as ceremonial textiles put behind the deity or above the sanctum to form a protective canopy. Moreover, textiles were possibly hung on wooden pilasters before the shrine (*garbagrha*) to protect the worshipper from the sun, as already stated. The open spaces with flat roofs in front of stone temples in India may indicate this tradition, and may copy earlier wooden constructions which were covered with ritual textiles.[722]

A specific type of Central Indian stone temples copies wooden pavilions[723] and shows interesting protruding roofs with straight and curved awnings ('Markise, Plane', 'Nase'), recalling valances made of fabrics. At the temple of Padhavali (c. 9th c.)[724] this valance-like element is also found inside of the temple, indicating that the wooden prototypes probably also used textiles, translated into stone.[725] Besides, many details of the exterior decorative organization (*jala*, screens with simple surface patterns) and its ornamental variety recall textile designs.[726]

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[722] Also the valances adorning the panels on the ceiling in the Sun Temple at Modhera/Rajasthan may be an indication for this assumption. It is also possible, that in Indian wooden or stone temples textiles were fixed between the constructive members of the ceilings, recalling this tradition.

[723] M. Meister discusses in his 1976 article a type of temple central India that which persists up to the 10th century consisting of a pillared pavilion. This lithic temple mimics wooden pillars and planks. The façade consists of pillars filled with decorated slabs of stone, engraved with decorative medallions, *pūrṇa-ghata*, vine- lotus, and animals with foliate feathers.

In particular the Bateśvara temples (North of Gwalior; end 8th c.) is characteristic for the decorative qualities, featuring niches with superstructure of ornamental *gavākṣa* motifs, while the uppermost border shows a flat-edged awning, extending beyond the sanctum to shade the entry. This protrusion shows valances, which probably mimic textile, or other elements leading the rain from the roofs outside of the temple.

[724] Meister 1976: fig. 26.

[725] While it is difficult to decide, if this motif mimics real architectonic or textile models or is purely ornamental, the allusion to a textile, covering the shrine is obvious.

[726] Interestingly Meister does not discuss this possibility in his article.

We can assume a reciprocal exchange between architectural ornament and textiles with regard to function and motifs in temple architecture from earliest times. These motifs achieved a specific iconic depth through their translation into architectural ornament (see below). The valances and festoons on the uppermost border of the wall at Tabo and the ceilings decorated with textiles featuring floral and geometric designs certainly reflect various earlier traditions of ephemeral spaces translated into Indian temple architecture.[727]

Of course, the Western Tibetan temples are an expression of a completely different public and monastic practice, and even reflect a specific teaching tradition.[728] Buddhist ritual and liturgy in the Western Himalaya demanded space for assemblies and solid buildings, adapted to the harsh climate, as seen in the earliest phase of architecture at Tabo. However, these temples display a continuation of the ancient protective and honorific function of votive textiles and its interaction with architecture, adapted to this cultural environment: large shades ('Vorhänge') are used to protect the verandas from wind and sun, and big awnings hung above the large thangka and temporarily attached to the façade have the same function. Furthermore, endless variations of outer embellishments of Tibetan temples with fabrics exist: they are hung on roofs, above windows honouring the abode of the Buddha and private houses thus transforming the village to a sacred space.

6.1.2.2. Ceremonial Textiles in India and Tibet

Unfortunately, little is known of the history and function of early Indian ceremonial clothes and hangings in temples, while various examples survived in Indonesia and in the Arabian world (cf. Pl. 26). They feature specific motifs like tress and temple dancers. The earliest examples of this rich tradition in ritual and worldly representation can be dated to the 13th century.[729] Indirect evidence of the function of such ceremonial fabrics in India and the tradition of decorating temples with ceremonial textiles is observable in Pagan (Burma, 11-13th c.) and also in India. The paintings document that textiles were hung on the walls and were also used as canopies.

Canopies and ceremonial textiles defining sacred spaces are still a strong element in the living culture of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh (cf. chapter 4.3.). This tradition is probably not only reflected in the textiles on the ceilings, but also in the ephemeral settings, which are a constant feature in the early depictions of royal lamas and local deities at Tabo. In the entrance hall depictions of the Yeshe Ö show him seated under a baldachin, while a textile hanging is draped behind the royal lama in the main temple delineating his throne. The abodes of Western Himalaya tutelary deities such as Dorje chenmo/Winyu min can be seen at Tabo entrance wall (Pl. 33).[730] This type of representation probably relates to the ephemeral settings that define sacred spaces of the Buddha in Gandhāran art. These ephemeral abodes - together with other

[727] Also the many motifs found on Hindu and Jain temples, which define the outer 'fabric' and symbolism of the temple, later translated into the Buddhist realm, suggest close interactions between the symbolism of space between Hindu and Buddhist architecture in the evolutionary history of temples in the region (see below).

[728] Luczanits 2004: 21; the author also points on the fact, that this tradition is no longer practiced in any of the present day Tibetan Buddhist schools.

[729] J. Guy (1998) described how such textiles with hunting scenes were used as ceremonial backdrops for rulers, clan leaders and other dignitaries in Indonesia, using Gujarati ceremonial cloths. According to him *"The subject recalls a description by the thirteenth century Chinese commentator on the international trade, Zhao Rukua: the ruler of Gujarat, he noted, possessed 'over four hundred war-elephants and about one thousand cavalry horses'; 'when the king goes about the rides and elephant: on his head he wears a cap. His followers ride on horseback and carry swords.'"*

[730] I wish to thank Prof. Rob Linrothe for making me aware of this likely relation.

signs of worldly and religious supremacy - have then been adopted in royal symbolism as shown in the depiction of the 'divinized' Yeshe Ö at Tabo.[731]

This honorific function of textiles also seems to be alluded to on the ceiling, appearing in the shape of valances on the uppermost section of the walls or as elaborate imitations of patterned clothes between the beams. Some of the textile objects mentioned, such as umbrellas, flags and textile draperies, carry religious connotations while also being symbols of secular rule, as can be seen in painted courtly scenes in many Western Himalaya Buddhist temples.[732] This reflects the constant close relationship between textile reflections on the status and legitimacy of kingship and those of Buddhist supremacy in Tibetan culture and – above all - in early Western Himalayan art.[733]

The evolution of ceiling decorations in Western Himalayan Buddhist temples combined earlier traditions of ceiling decorations in India and ephemeral architecture with the protective and honorific function of textiles, flags and umbrellas in Buddhism, venerating the stupa and the Buddha, as described in early Buddhist texts.

6.1.2.3. Buddhist Votive Textiles

Representations of temples, architectural thrones, and shrines as abodes for deities in Western Himalayan wall-paintings[734] and sculptures in clay provide important evidence of the use of textiles in Buddhist rituals. At Lalung and Nako detailed architectural thrones, which probably copy wooden constructions and elements of local architecture, illustrate this ancient tradition. There is a variety of evidence that precious textiles adorned the heavenly palaces in India and Central Asia. The thrones of deities represented as temples at Dunhuang, Tabo, Lalung show ribbons knotted around the columns[735] or draped around the uppermost element of the roof (Pl. 20). Such textiles illustrate the worship of these thrones or temples, which are originally associated with specific important events during the life of the Buddha. Therefore, the donation of precious cloth is also a commemoration of these events. The construction, veneration, and circumambulation of the stupa, has the same function by which the eight great deeds during the life of the Buddha are commemorated.[736]

At Nako textile motifs are translated into painted architectonic elements, i.e. inserted between the constructive members of the heavenly abode (Pl. 85, 86), as in the mandala palaces at Dunkar (Pl. 93) and Alchi. In the celestial palaces at Alchi (such as that of Akṣobhya, Pl. 3), they are hung on the horizontal elements of the wooden structure or inserted into the arches of the heavenly abodes, as do the ceiling decorations in the Western Himalaya. In this way the ceilings can be understood as the heavenly palace adorned with precious textiles.

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[731] Cf. Papa-Kalantari 2006: plate 6.

[732] Ibid.

[733] Papa-Kalantari 2006.

[734] Such representations are constant feature in the religious art the region and can be traced back to comparable depictions on facades or in the temples in India and in Central Asia. On the Kueraiya Bir stone temple architectonic niches are shown, containing deities (cf. Meister 1976: figs. 20-21); at Lalung, the recessing roofs with an *amalaka* top, recall ornamental shrines on the façade of temples in Orissa (cf. for an image Donaldson 1976, fig. 49).

[735] Cf. also seminar report K. Chatrny/S. Prosoroff: *'Säulen und Kapitelle an Nischen früher Buddha-Plastiken'*, Seminar held by Dr. J. Ebert: 'Wandmalereien der Höhlen von Dunhuang, WS 2001/02' for a reconstruction of the 'hidden knobs' and cape-like textiles covering the uppermost elements of a specific type of pilasters at Dunhuang.

[736] Rieger-Jandl 2005: 92.

Just as the celestial palaces in the wall paintings and sculptures are adorned with ribbons and honorific fabrics draped on the wooden members, the textiles on the ceilings allude to the precious fabrics of silk and cotton which characterize the heavenly abode, of which the Maitreya-texts tell us[737].

These texts also describe the offerings of votive banners and umbrellas/ parasols (S. *chatra*, T. *gdugs*) to the Buddha and sacred buildings. This act of donation of long decorated textile banners and umbrellas is even illustrated in votive images of Baltistan and representations of a stupa at Alchi. An example of a votive umbrella, decorated with eight textile motifs (Fig. 27), has been found at Kuča (7th century).

The various textiles, depicted in architectural thrones in the Western Himalayan temples, lead to the assumption that monasteries must have been large repositories of precious fabrics used for various purposes. They were used as ephemeral thrones for deities as depicted in the wall-paintings and specific large fabrics were offered to honour and embellish the temples. The latter type of votive banners were probably also used to adorn the panels between the beams on the ceiling. The illusionist paintings of long strips of cloth with characteristic end-panels featuring small-scale patterns on the Western-Himalayan ceiling recall early ceremonial fabrics from Gujarat, found in Indonesia and the Arab world.

Other early texts[738] provide evidence that among the various Buddhist votive textiles, there were also textile covers and ephemeral structures of fabrics offered by pious Buddhists. Such textiles must also have been used to protect the worshippers while circumambulating around the stupa or for ceremonials in front of a shrine or portable images.[739] Many of these ritual and functional purposes of textiles were translated into the symbolism of space in the Western Himalayan temples at different stages of time.

6.1.2.4. The Umbrella/Parasol, the Canopy and the Flag in Buddhist Sacred Space

The Indian treatise on architecture *Mayamata*[740] states, that "*...the centre of a house, a hall, a light building or pavilion should have a canopy which may be made of various materials.. (other religious manuals) include the canopy (vitāna) that needs to be installed above the pavilion (mandapa)*". In the Buddhist tradition, the symbolism of the umbrella or parasol (S. *chatri*) defining the throne of the Buddha and adorning the stupa is closely related to the honouring function of the baldachin or canopy. Hsuen Tsiang (Si-yü-ki), describes a Buddhist *vihara* in the town of Vakhān which houses a canopy of metal, indicating the honorific function of the canopy and its use in the temple in the Buddhist culture of this region from earliest times.[741] The Japanese scholar Prof. Yanagi[742] was one of the first scholars to suggest that the textile depictions on the Alchi ceilings allude to Buddhist tradition of canopies placed above deities, followed by a similar

[737] At Bamiyan, such textiles emerging out of the ground between flowers demarcate the celestial abode of the Buddha.

[738] J. Ebert (in preparation), verbal communication 16.1. 20008.

[739] A contemporary evidence of this practice are stone pilasters positioned around a stupa in Sri Lanka for textiles to be draped on the occasion of the ritual circumabulation (I must thank E. Allinger for this interesting information; verbal communication 6.2004).

[740] 'Indian Treatise on Housing, Architecture and Iconography', transl. B. Dagens, 1985, New Delhi, (c. 11th c.).

[741] Bosworth 1970. A baldachin/canopy is also found at Lhasa, and induced Klimburg-Salter (1996) to interpret the ceiling of the early temple at Tabo as a honorific cover (cf. Ibid. fig. 200). But it is not known, when the canopy was installed there and which purpose it has.

[742] Kokka, 1988 (I wish to thank A. Heller for this information).

interpretation for the ceiling of the Tabo Main Temple by Klimburg-Salter.[743] S. Francoer mentioned passages in the *Mayamata*, indicating the use of textiles and canopies in the fore-halls of temples in the Indian tradition. [744]

The symbolism of the canopy derives from the protective and honorific function of the umbrella, one of the main symbols of secular and religious authority of the *cakravartin*, who is the universal ruler.

In addition to the well-known attributes of the cakravartin, ritual texts describing the royal consecration ceremony of the Universal ruler are pertinent. In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* we read about the process: "*They spread the great canopy, they set up flags and banners of victory, they hold the white umbrella over his head and wave white flywhisks*".[745] Given the fact that in later Mahāyāna *rituals* this place is taken over by Vairocana, the transcendent form of Śākyamuni, it cannot surprise that the temple's cover, conceived as a celestial palace, also alludes to a canopy used in the ceremonies of consecration in the realm of the dharma-sovereignty.

In addition, the umbrella also has protective functions in a more general sense and stands for the firmament. Accordingly, in Buddhist cosmology the umbrellas on the stupa represent the element of the air or heaven. At Ajanta (Fig. 12) this symbolism had already been clearly transferred to the ceiling, where the painted umbrellas both dignify the sacred and represent the atmosphere and therefore heaven (Pl. 94). The umbrella indicating the element of the air is related to the flags on Hindu temples. In Hindu architecture the flags are used to signal the wind, alluding to the notion of the temple as cosmos (Pl. 90).[746]

On depictions of stupa at Chilas flags or banners are made of simple lines and are also bound on bells (*ghanta*). These bells are meant to disseminate the sound of the dharma, explaining why texts are put on small metal plaques, hung on the clapper ('klöppel').[747] The *lungta*, rows of small textiles in five colours, were fixed in auspicious places such as mountain tops, and temples also had the function to disseminate the teaching of the dharma.

Bands floating in the wind are also a constant element in the depiction of deities in the Western Himlaya and Central Asia, indicating the element of air, and thus alluding to heaven, in contrast to the worldly sphere. In the depiction of the Mahākāla at Alchi (Pl. 152), different kinds of ribbons and shawls are knotted on the crown and shoulders respectively and floating textile bands swirl in the air, indicating power, movement and atmosphere.[748] The floating band surrounding the deity allude to the heavenly sphere, like the colours of the rainbow forming a halo and defining the sacred abode. The textile bands and umbrellas have a similar function, like the flags on the roofs of Hindu temples or ribbons knotted around the uppermost parts of the stupa.

Apsara in Central Asian and Western Himalayan temples often display long shawls indicating the same ancient association of textiles with the element of air. The ribbons of fine

[743] Cf. also Klimburg-Salter 1996 on this topic.

[744] Francoeur, Style and Workshop at Ajanta, unpublished PhD-thesis 1998: 244.

[745] Snellgrove 1959: 204.

[746] Online-document: M. Meister, '*Unity and gravity of elemental architecture*'.

[747] Thewalt (online) assumes that at stone carvings of stupas at Chilas also textiles were fixed to enforce the movement of the bell and thus also the sound.

[748] The higher status of protecting deities is underlined by ribbons bound on demons, maybe yaksa attendants of Vaisravana or local mountain deities, and even on the elefant's trunk at Dunkar (Cf. Neumann 2002).

cloth are also knotted around the eight auspicious symbols in the outer frame of a mandalic configuration on a banner of Dunhuang.[749] They indicate the different spheres of the ideal cosmos, with wind, fire, water in superimposed layers, and elements of increasing solidity in the centre (see also Pl. 84).[750]

It is interesting to notice that canopies carried for Christian processions in Austria are colloquially called 'Himmel'[751], which means heaven. Given the importance of textiles, umbrellas and baldachins in defining and dignifying the realm of the Buddha, it cannot surprise that they were integrated into the corpus of 'heavenly architecture' of the region and transferred to the symbolism of space and ceiling decoration in particular.

In the evolutionary history of ceiling decorations, the cave temples of Dunhuang are also exemplary for various functions and religious symbolism of textiles and ephemeral buildings in the Buddhist architecture. Whereas the cave temples in Ajanta and the ceilings decorated with textile patterns at Bāmiyān generally copy wooden constructions, and seemingly solid walls support a wooden ceiling, walls and ceilings in Dunhuang are separated where the constructive system of the pagoda-like roof depicted in the centre alludes to super-imposed umbrellas. The latter are a translation of the *chatri* on the *stupa* in the medium of built architecture. This dominance of the ephemeral and dignifying quality of honorific covers gives the holy dwelling a completely different character. This ephemeral quality bears the Buddhist notion of the transience and impermanence in the representation of sacred space. The pagoda-ceilings at Dunhuang represent the element of air, and thus have the same function as the umbrellas on a stupa. They both protect, honour, and dignify the open space to the heaven as can be seen from the motifs and cosmological symbolism. In this function Central Asian ceilings compositions are comparable with ceilings at Alchi and Dunkar, which are populated by airborne deities and mythical creatures of the heavens and the underworld (see below).

6.2. Narrating, Delineating and Mapping Sacred Space

6.2.1. Narrating Space at Tabo: From Textile Dress to the Lotus Throne (10th to 11th c.)

Ceiling decorations decorated with textile motifs do not only reflect the importance of precious fabrics in ritual and religious praxis, they also have an important role to play in the symbolism and hierarchy of sacred space in India and Central Asia from earliest times.

As already stated, one of the oldest examples of Buddhist ceiling decoration in the Western Himalaya during the time of the Guge-kingdom is to be found at Tabo, 10th century. There, painted cloths are fixed between the beams in the sanctum (cella and ambulatory) for the ritual circumambulation (S. *pradakṣiṇa*) at the Main Temple, the so-called Tsuglakhang (T. gtsug lag khang) at Tabo (Fig. 9). These figural depictions above the sanctum (the sanctum is the shelter or sacred enclosure of the main image) contrast to the assembly hall decked with textiles attached between the wooden beams, which stem from a slightly later artistic phase (c. mid 11th century). The latter features solely non-figural ornamental motifs and auspicious symbols such as the vase of plenty, trees and shrine-like niches, which can also be found in all of the later temples of the same artistic tradition such as Nako, Dunkar and Alchi. What we find on the ceilings above the different spaces in the Tabo main temple is an ambivalent approach, namely the juxtaposition of purely ornamental themes and auspicious symbols above the Main Hall

[749] See Cat. 1982: pl. 61.

[750] For the cosmological systems in the *Abhidharmakosa* see Luczanits 2006b: 73-74.

[751] Sigrun Fröhlich, verbal communication, 1. 2000.

(Dukhang), while Buddhist figural themes such as airborne offering deities[752] alternating with lotus medallions are to be found above the sanctum (ambulatory and apse). These deities above the sanctum - holding umbrellas, banners, and bowls filled with jewels - are oriented towards eight-petalled lotus rosettes in full bloom representing the Buddha in a non-personal form, the ultimate goal of salvation. In the interstices blossoms recalling cornucopia-like motifs are placed, emanating jewels on the Buddha as well as on the worshipper (Pl. 97, Pl. 98).

These paintings above the sanctum at Tabo (ambulatory and apse), featuring symbols of the Buddha and celestial beings, reflect an ancient decorative system in Indian and Central Asian art and indicate the presence of the Buddha without presenting him in personal form. Not only in Buddhist built architecture at Ajanta, Bāmiyān, Dunhuang and Kuča but also on embroidered canopies made in Himachal Pradesh, the lotus plays a central role, often placed in the centre of the whole composition of the ceiling programme or of the ritual textile. Besides, extremely fine lotus blossoms with celestial *gandharva* at the corners cover the wooden ceiling above the fore-hall in the Kaśmīri-influenced temple at Udaipur (Pl. 77), which is based on a centralized plan; a similar decorative programme – though the religious context is different - can be found in the Tabo ambulatory paintings, thus also adapting the function of architectural ornament on ceilings in earlier traditions. The naturalistic lotus rosettes alternating with flying offering deities there are comparable to the motifs, organized in lotus scrolls which are found in other media such as the ornamental frames of Kaśmīr bronzes, as already shown.

Thus, the Tabo main temple and in particular the cella represent an early stage in the history of the Western Himalayan Buddhist ceiling depictions and their symbolism of space, leading the worshipper from the hall to the sanctum. While there are exclusively ornamental depictions above the assembly hall, alluding to an illusionist textile cover inserted between the beams, in contrast, a figural programme, featuring lotus flowers flanked by offering deities, is depicted above the sanctum. This telling juxtaposition corresponds to the movement of the worshipper from the hall to the sanctum with the lotus in the centre. The overall ceiling programme at Tabo, as it is presented to us today, is thus 'narrating' space.

The decorative scheme above the sanctum connects the deities on the main walls, with the actions and meanings in the narratives running around the temple in the lowest zone of the walls, with the flying genies, offering garlands, jewellery, and textile banners to the central deity of the temple. All these offerings, actions, and meanings are ordered to the attainment of the ultimate goal of salvation, enlightenment.

In addition, we find auspicious motifs in the corners, which are a further indication of a strict centralized plan in the sanctum's ceiling program, alluding to cosmological concepts of space, which has a long tradition in Indian architecture. Characteristic elements at Tabo are figural images (offering deities) which allude to the Buddhist heaven as well as depictions of the eight auspicious symbols (S. *aṣṭamaṅgala*) in the corners (Pl. 101-103). There are significant parallels with regard to the layout of early mandala depictions from Dunhuang featuring these symbols flanking the portals (Pl. 104).[753] These parallels still need do be examined in detail. It is important to note that these significant elements in the corners of the ambulatory of the Tabo ceiling are presented in a centralized configuration and thus allude to a mandalic structure of sacred space, with the Buddha sculpture, the focus of worship, in the centre.[754]

[752] This type of 'genies' is also found in the medium of sculpture in the sanctum.

[753] Cf. Whitfield 2004: 209.

[754] See also Kramrisch 1939.

On the ceiling of the Main Hall we find various allusions to architectural decoration often found on the *śikhara*, the superstructure of Indian temples, often also adopting their auspicious and wealth-bestowing symbolism. It is interesting to note, that the different strategies to visualize the 'upper spheres' of the sacred dwelling in the Indian sphere, as shown on the outer surface and the *śikhara* in particular, are transferred into the inner space in the early Western Himalaya temple. In later temples these motifs derived from architectural ornament of a certain iconic depth become mostly decorative.

In this way, a clear distinction between the sanctum (cella and circumambulatory) and the main hall is achieved which reflects the way the monument is seen and comprehended in motion towards the sacred enclosure and circumambulation (S. *pradakṣiṇā*), comparable to a classical Hindu temple.

5.2.2. The Celestial Palace (11th-13th c.)

The ceiling composition above the Assembly Hall (Dukhang) at Tabo – as already stated- stems from a later period than that of the sanctum and is related in concept and motifs to the temples at Nako, Dunkar and Alchi. This composition reflects a different concept of ceiling compositions in the region. The complex and varied surface compositions in this phase recall luxury textiles as well as decorative forms found in other media, such as the architecture of Indian temples and also the depictions of heavenly thrones of the wall-paintings and sculptures.

Another difference between Tabo, Nako and the later temples of Alchi is observable: at Tabo the motifs on the ceiling paintings can not be equated with those on the walls, as the various complex forms of decoration on the ceiling, such as beaded roundels and other patterns, which are familiar from woven textiles, only occur here and not as decorations on the costumes in the murals. Thus one may assume that these representations at Tabo also differentiate between the symbolic functions of various types of textiles; for canopies, textile hangings defining the abode of deities and royal donors, complex textiles, which had a high status as luxury objects, can be seen, whereas deities usually wear Indian dresses. Moreover, one may assume that fabrics with a certain weight and durability such as silk textiles with woven decoration would have been considered suitable. These characteristics are evident, for example in silk textiles with woven decoration whose preciousness made them appear suitable for honouring persons or as ritual decorations for sacred spaces. Such complex silk textiles have been identified on the ceilings at Tabo. This function of luxury garments corresponds to the motifs found on the cushion of a Buddha on a Kaśmīr-derived bronze[755]. In contrast, at Alchi no clear distinction between textiles on the ceilings and those in the wall-paintings can be observed, and different types of textiles and ornaments are rather used to 'map' the hierarchy of deities in the temple (see chapter 4.1.4.).

We thus find in the later phases a synthesis of the idea of luxury textiles and honorific covers defining and embellishing sacred space and motifs with 'iconic depth'. Specific ceremonial fabrics were probably produced for the temples adequate to these complex demands. However, the fact that paintings are directly on the wooden planks rather suggests a translation and

[755] A significant fact should be mentioned here: between the ceiling beams of the assembly hall at Tabo lengths of cotton or linen have been put up and used as the ground for paintings with representations of textiles. The motifs contrast to those at Alchi displaying mainly ornamental and floral decorative elements. However to my knowledge, there was no continuation of the practice of using real textiles in Western Tibet. At Alchi the paintings have been executed directly on the wooden panels.

assimilation of textile themes and ornaments on other portable objects into the medium of painting, adapting different fashions of luxury textiles and other portable objects, which were traded in the region. The textiles and patterns associated with the aura of luxury were then subordinated to distinct Buddhist concepts and iconography of space. Among these motifs are symbols of distinctive iconographic significance such as vases of plenty, trees and shrine-like niches but also various fabulous animals and creatures of the different heavens, which also define the celestial abode of the Buddha.

The lotus in pearl-roundels (S. *padma*), depicted among the various motifs above the Dukhang and associated with luxury textiles in Central Asia and Kaśmīr, is also found on the ceiling of the Tabo assembly hall, and at Nako (Pl. 107). However, in contrast to the lotus in the sanctum featuring the simulacrum of the Buddha, the lotus shown in the assembly hall has stronger ornamental qualities and the iconographic aspect is less explicit. This integration of the lotus into a textile design diminishes the earlier iconographic significance of the lotus. The latter design can be associated with luxury textiles in Central Asia and Eastern Iran in particular. This early group of ornaments, often used to adorn the Buddha's seat in Central Asian and Kaśmīr-style Buddhist art, is transferred to the ceilings of the main hall of Tabo thus dignifying the sacred space. We find here a fusion of the honorific function of a precious textile and the symbolism, indicating the presence of the supreme being in impersonal form, which is also a central theme in the Tabo sanctum. At Dunkar the *padma* containing an offering deity is translated to a cloud-like rosette (Pl. 111).

In the later temples, such as Nako, Dunkar and Alchi, a part continuation of the ornamental tradition of the Tabo Assembly hall can be observed.[756] However, ornaments and figural elements on the ceilings of early Western Himalaya Buddhist temples have a slightly different role to play in the experience of sacred space and religious meaning than at Tabo. As stated above, this change can be related to the evolution of later temples in which a fundamental change in the symbolism of space and interior decoration can be observed. In later temples, in addition to longitudinal spaces, probably mainly used as Assembly halls for monastic liturgy, we find dwellings such as the Serkhang of Lalung which tended towards a centralized plan, with the Buddha on the main wall and Bodhisattva on the sidewalls. Also, in the three-storied Sumtsek the whole programme is integrated into a mandalic layout and is thus rather conceived as a heavenly palace, contrasting to the horizontal movement at Tabo from the hall to the sanctum. In these later temples rather a vertical movement is observable, with the worshipper in the centre, leading his gaze to the ceiling. The motifs found there are full of allusions to the sphere of the Buddha and his heavenly abode, reflecting this later phase of transformation. This concept of space contrasts to the earlier narrative programme at Tabo featuring a juxtaposition of textile dress above the assembly hall and the lotus throne, signalling the supreme being above the sanctum. In later periods a genesis from the textile dress to allusions to the celestial palace are observable.

For the interpretation of the symbolism of this later phase of ceiling composition a comparison with images of deities and their architectural and animal-thrones in the wall-paintings and sculptures is significant. In the symbolism of architecture, thrones distinguish the celestial from the earthly sphere: a telling juxtaposition can be found in the wall paintings

[756] Unfortunately we face the problem of later overpaintings at Tabo, Nako and Dunkar – possibly due to water intrusions – which may have affected the paintings of the ceiling and partly obscure the complexity of the original motifs.

at Tabo, where the laity are depicted in a Tibetan environment with its characteristic local architecture while enthroned deities appear in fantastic composite dwellings that seem to open a window onto the supra-mundane realm.

In addition, on the beams we find continuous rows of lotus petals forming a horizontal border, as well as stripes of primary colours, a symbol of light and thus heaven on the capitals of the pilasters in both early temples (Pl. 78). The same colour scheme is seen in the haloes of the deities in wall paintings, also alluding to light symbolism and the aura from which the Buddha emanates, as proposed by Giuseppe Tucci.[757]

The three-storied Sumtsek at Alchi[758] displays the latest and most complex iconographic ensemble of this artistic tradition. Iranicate-Buddhist themes of feasting shown as celestial dancers with swirling overlong sleeves are characteristic (Pl. 137), as are divine musicians, equestrian hunters, and archers. Further themes of luxury include roundels with large pearls alluding to wealth and glory of the courtly sphere symbolizing the 'highest level of felicity' in the Iranicate-Buddhist sphere.[759] The animal symbolism at Alchi is a fusion of Buddhist and Eastern-Iranian religious symbolism -which easily subsume- typical for Western Trans-Himalayan art. All these themes are in this religious context alluding to ritual ceremonies of offerings, dance and music to the Buddha[760] Such themes of music are also mentioned in descriptions of the royal consecration ceremony, performed in Esoteric Buddhist rituals, as already stated adopted as signs of wealth and glory in the spiritual realm.

Pal[761] proposed that "*The murals of the Dukhang and the Sumtsek portray the sambhogakāya images of the cosmic Vairocana and other Buddhist deities. As well as resplendent paradise scenes and mandalas that are celestial palaces where the Buddhas reside in all their majesty.*" By equating the ceiling decorations with images of paradise in Sāsānian and Iranian culture, such as enthronement, riders, phoenixes, he concludes that they have been integrated into the symbolism of a Buddhist paradise, but without providing any pictorial or textual comparative material from the Iranian or Tibetan-Buddhist sphere. Complementing his initial hypothesis, I intend to discuss individual elements in their artistic and cultural contexts, and propose that, rather than 'Sasanian influences', it is possible to reconstruct the Iranicate-Buddhist

[757] Tucci 1953: 27.

The symbolic meaning of the throne frames as heavenly abodes and windows onto the supra-mundane seems to be closely related to that of the ceiling. Thus the wooden ceiling can be interpreted in a general sense as magic borderland, a threshold to a sacred, heavenly sphere. It has been shown that allusions to celestial symbolism with offering deities and cosmological structure can be found in the Tabo cella, celestial beings with offerings are also found on the ceiling of the Sumtsek of Alchi. In both cases, the ceiling and the sculptures form a compositional unit, comparable to the ornamental frames of metal sculpture from Kaśmīr. Heavenly connotations or at least allusions to it differ in each region, but are a constituent element in this artistic tradition from a very early stage.

[758] The early architectural tradition of Ladakh has to be viewed in the context of the refined local history of wooden architecture in the Western Trans-Himalaya/Baltistan in exchange with royal workshops in Kaśmīr.

[759] Cf. also Marshak, 2004: 64 for the discussion of these elements in Sogdian art. Many of these themes are also depicted on funerary stone relief commissioned by high Sogdian officials at the Chinese court or ruling families (Ibid.).

[760] In contrast, offering deities in the Dunkar cave temples hold instruments such as the harp; I thank Prof. Linrothe for this information.

[761] Pal 1982: 29-31.

environment in which these elements developed in accordance with Buddhist ideas and concepts of space. [762]

Regarding the motifs, the ceiling paintings exhibit links with various different traditions and media, which fed into a homogenous form of representation and worked into an independent composition, reflecting one of the latest testimonies of Iranicate-Buddhist art in Central Asia and Tibet. This means that these paintings can only be properly appreciated if they are understood not only as a testimony of the material culture of the region, but as an independently developed artistic genre.

The interaction between architecture and painting in the Alchi Sumtsek, in particular the motifs and their disposition within the interior space of the temple, further supports the hypothesis of ceiling decorations as an independent genre. The ceiling textiles are clearly a component of the decoration of the ritual whole. Regularities of pattern types are observable which are symmetrically distributed around the deities in the niches.[763] Specific themes occur exclusively on the upper floors; for example dancing figures with swirling elongated sleeves and figures that fly through the air with sacrificial bowls, recall to a certain extent the *apsara* or celestial beings which have populated the ceilings of Buddhist shrines since early times. Moreover, on the panels of the canopy of a niche in Alchi there are flying deities with *uṣnīṣa* clothed in a kind of monk's robe, which are placed between simple floral dignifying elements and which float towards the monumental sculpture, stylistically identical to the flying Buddhas in the interstices of the lantern ceiling of the stupa chapel at Mangyu (T. Mang rgyu[764]). In this regard there are certain parallels with the representations at Tabo, where complex figural beaded roundels appear on the ceilings of the apse and the ambulatory, containing flying deities with sacrificial offerings.

The symmetric arrangement and concentration of specific themes like celestial beings on the upper levels make it clear that the motifs are arranged according to generic organizational concepts on an iconographic level.

Thus in later phases of ceiling compositions in the Western Himalaya Buddhist temples there is an observable shift in the function of the ceiling decorations, from textile cover to a representation of a celestial palace and even as attire of the Buddha himself, as substitute of the stupa or temple. What appears in the early Tabo ceiling decoration as a textile cover, is in the later temples rather a virtual textile adorning the temple conceived as a celestial palace, as is also seen in the images of heavenly architecture and thrones of deities on the walls. Accordingly, these 'celestial fabrics' are inhabited by flying genies and creatures of the different heavens, and various mythical animals residing on lotus thrones, while vases pour forth lotus flowers and pearls.[765] All these divine creatures, heavenly beings and celestial musicians are also depicted in the thrones of the deities in the wall-paintings. Comparable to the celestial palaces in the wall paintings and sculptures are adorned with ribbons and honorific cloths draped on the wooden members, the textiles on the ceilings allude both to the rituals of veneration and offerings of canopies, textiles and banners to the stupa and the Buddha, as described in the Buddhist texts, as well as to the precious silks and cottons characteristic of the paradise-like

[762] Furthermore it has been demonstrated, that luxury art is used as a subtle language to define the hierarchy in the centralized 'mandalic system' of esoteric Buddhism.

[763] Papa-Kalantari 2002: 107.

[764] Cf. Linrothe 1994: fig. 4, 4a.

[765] See below. Cf. Goepper panel 26 and 29.

environment, of which the same texts give an account. The temple is thereby transformed into a monumental shrine, a heavenly abode. Accordingly, the temple is conceived as the palace of Indra and a celestial mansion, as described in the inscriptions at Wanla.[766]

The inscriptions of the three-storied Wanla temple (Ladakh) reflect the symbolism of space of this type of building in the 14th century: "*(At) the lower stratum he set up an excellent arrangement, assemblies of deities, new and old. The middle storey (is) like a model of the Vaijayanta-palace [the palace of Indra] (and) the top floor is one that is like a model resembling a celestial mansion. The Bkra shis gsum (b)rtsegs (i.e. the felicitous three-storied [temple] of Wanla, oh, it is amazing*".[767]

The tripartite division recalls the description of universe in Buddhist teaching, such as the *cakravāla* system with the 'realm of desire' (*kāmadhātu*, inhabited inter alia by animals, humankind and the gods of desire), the 'realm of form' (*rūpadhātu*) and the 'realm of non-form' (*arūpadhātu*) and also the three bodies of the Buddha (*trikaya*) in which he manifests himself.

The three parts correspond to the stepped path to enlightenment, which is also alluded to in the circumambialtaion of the stupa: "*This traversal of a stupa recalls the meditative walk through a mandala palace, that stepped path to entlightenment on which the disciple progresses from the grossly material via the subtly material to the formless, mental realm, so as to experience eventually hightest bliss and emptiness.*"[768] The auspicious motifs at Tabo, mythical beings and celestial beings recall descriptions of the different realms of the universe thus indicating the temple was conceived as a 'comonized' space.

I suggest that in this artistic period (around 1200) the ceiling is conceived as the abode for the manifestation of the Buddha in impersonal form, a door to the higher truth and perfect metaphor of the notion of emptiness, comparable to the empty throne in the uniconic phase of Buddhism. It reflects the concept of the throne of the Buddha, his celestial palace and the paradise-like environment he resides in, adorned with beautiful textiles, and flying beings from heaven and the underworld, together with musicians, dancers, and flying genies, all offering precious gifts. While in early temples the lotus stands for this ultimate goal of salvation, depicted in the centre of the composition or sacred space, the whole ceiling is an expression of this goal in later periods[769]. The throne-like environment on the ceiling is the adequate place to illustrate this transgression ('Überwindung') of worldly-limitedness.

The ceiling of the Sumtsek is a universe of figural depictions and naturalistic animals, which define the celestial abode in wall-paintings. What is unified in the *toraṇa* becomes an autonomous signs on the ceiling, incorporated in textile designs. In both media the figural depictions show a tendency towards expressive powerful movement (fighting elephants, roaring lions; Pl. 56) suggesting the power and beauty of nature, through actions such as enthusiast devotion (music and dance, Pl. 137), and ceremonies reflecting the sensual aspect of rituals and the joy of life. I suggest that these scenes such as heavenly dancers, warriors and equestrian archers depicted on the ceilings have also a deeper religious connotation, and allude to the ceremonies and actions honouring the supreme being and activating the transgression of worldly limitedness through ritual actions and sensual experience.

The ceiling depictions at Alchi reflect the precise synthesis of the honorific values of a canopy cover and religious symbolism associated with sovereignty in the spiritual and royal

[766] Tropper 2006: 138.

[767] Cited after Tropper 2006: 138.

[768] Brauen 1997: 29.

[769] In contrast to the *pantocrator*, in the Byzantine iconography, represented on the ceiling above the sanctum.

spheres. This fusion is characteristic for the mature phase of Esoteric Buddhism in which the temple reflects a mandalic site featuring a complex interlace of different iconographic systems merging to a ritual whole.

5.2.3. The Vault of Heaven[770] in Later Historical Phases at Nako and Tabo (13th -15th c.)

In later phases at Nako the compositional principles of surface decorations on the ceilings change significantly. Comparative stylistic analysis reveals a painting tradition that is closely linked with the evolution of Central Tibetan-influenced art in the Western Himalaya from the 13th century onwards. A local variant of this style emerged during the 13th century in Himachal Pradesh as well as in Ladakh (e.g. Alchi). A previously unknown later painting phase in the Nako sacred compound was discovered jointly with Melissa Kerin[771] during my field research in 2004. It features a panel with characteristic lotus flowers (Pl. 105), which can be related to the wall painting in the Guru lha-khang (c. 14th c. Fig. 10), a small temple located outside the Chökor (T. chos 'khor) inside the village. The chief characteristics of thangka compositions of this stylistic group are axially symmetric compositions with a central figure, two attendants, minor deities in a grid-like overall composition, and a great display in plants and blossoms, lotus (*padma*) and jewellery, all painted in a naturalistic manner. One fragment (Pl. 105.a.), a panel that is now in the storeroom, displays a new type of composition: two auspicious symbols or attributes, leaves and a conch shell against a red, horseshoe-shaped background, with a bright blue padma in the interstice. Furthermore, the motifs are placed on a lotus base and linked by lotus scrolls. The quality of the painting in terms of motifs, execution and technique, is striking. Typical of the similarities with the contemporaneous Central Tibetan painting style is the predominance of a limited palette of contrasting colours.

Interestingly, a completely new concept of surface decoration appears here that is in contrast to the concept of the symbolic honorific textiles of the earlier phases. The organisation of the motifs no longer derives from textile patterns but from the medium of wall or thangka painting. Portable goods such as scroll paintings might have served as models in the early phase of this artistic influence. Their chronology has yet to be established. In this phase re-interpretations of earlier motifs such as crossing circles and lotus medallions are to be found.

The phenomenon of a deliberate use and new interpretation of older stylistic elements can also be found in Phase IV of the Nako temples. This shows parallels with the decorative programmes at Tabo and Tholing from the 15th century onwards, representing an artistic renaissance with regard to technical quality and style. The later Phase IV (15th-19th centuries) displays a further step forward in the development of artistic concepts: here we find figural depictions covering larger segments of the ceiling and seemingly opening the ceiling up towards the sky. This corresponds to the concepts of ceiling decoration at Tabo from the 15th century onwards, e.g. in the Golden Temple (Pl. 106).[772]

As far as the motifs are concerned, we find the mythical bird *garuḍa*, as well as the *nāga*, a serpent spirit, which inhabit the underworld and is associated with the aquatic realm of rivers, lakes and wells. They also crown the thrones found in western Himalayan art, following older

[770] This term is an adoption of a concept put forward by Soper 1947 in his *'The Dome of Heaven in Asia'* and based on the structural analysis of medieval sacred space in Europe by Sedlmayr 1950, repr.1988 *"Die Entstehung der Kathedrale"*; further works on this theme are, Grabar 2000, Klimburg-Salter 2001.

[771] Ph. D. candidate, University of Pennsylvania. I wish to thank her for the inspiring discussions.

[772] Cf. also the Ser Lhakhang (T. gser lha-khang) at Tholing.

traditions [773]. In later phases cosmological symbolism was integrated in the symbolism of space, which – thereafter - led to a symbolic opening to the ceiling, conceived as a vault of heaven.

6.3. Selected Themes and Motifs on the Ceilings of Western Himalaya Temples (10th to 13th c.)

In contrast to the Tabo Assembly Hall (11th c.), early ceilings at Nako (mid. 12th c.) and later temples up to the 13th century from this artistic period not only display auspicious symbols like vases, stylized trees, shrines and ornamental patterns closely related to examples of Indian and Central Asian textile production and architectural ornament but also various figural motifs: divine dancers, musicians, and mythical celestial beings and hybrid creatures of the heavens and the underworld. These complex scenes and mythical animals are associated with royal and spiritual sovereignty, but their symbolism in the iconographic overall programme of each temple has hitherto been little discussed. All these figural paintings have equivalents in the depictions of heavenly thrones and paradise-like landscapes in painting and in the medium of sculpture. Thus, their symbolism can be closely related to those on the ceilings, alluding to the temple as representation of the Buddhist Universe. Within this concept of ceiling decorations various distinctive styles can be identified, corresponding to the artistic schools active in this region between the 10th and 13th century and the diverging cultural centres and material culture they are embedded in.

6.3.1. Auspicious Motifs Signalling Abundance and Wealth Derived from Architectural Ornament

A great palette of decorative patterns are displayed in Western Himalayan temples, alluding to precious textiles of cotton and silk, which embellish and honor the temple conceived as a heavenly palace. The various motifs and surface patterns depicted on them are not only decorative, but meaningful elements in the overall iconographic program of the temple alluding also to the symbolism of architectural ornament on Indian temples and themes found on the roof/*sikara* in particular recalling earlier traditions. Often figural and floral elements are set in pearl roundels (Pl. 107), signaling precious jewels adorning this realm. Shrine-like niches in continuous rows spilling forth flowers and vases have a similar wealth-bestowing function.

Among the single motifs the lotus is one of the most prominent in early Western Tibetan temples. The lotus, which is according to ancient Hindu beliefs related to the waters and the female creating aspect of the absolute[774], was equated with the transcendent Buddha from earliest times.[775] Various variants of the lotus and its religious symbolism can be found in different media. The stylistic and iconographic spectrum ranges from naturalistic rosettes – the simulacrum of the Buddha - as found above the sanctum to ornamental variants alluding to precious textiles.

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[773] In the 'White Temple' (Lhakhang Garpo) at Tholing (c. 15th century) flying deities are depicted in cella; the latter is higher than the main hall.

[774] The lotus is according to ancient Hindu belief related to the waters, which are female, "...*sie bilden den mütterlichen, gebärenden Aspekt des Absoluten, und der kosmische Lotos ist ihr Zeugungsorgan,... seine Personifikation ist die Muttergöttin, welche das Absolute in die Schöpfung hineinschreiten läßt. ... in der Rig Veda ...wird die Lotosgöttin bereits mit ihren klassischen Namen Shrī und Laskhmī genannt*" (Zimmer 1951: 102-103).

[775] "...*und ebenso with Lakshmi die Gemahlin des Hindugottes ist, so ist Prajnaparamita (with the lotus as attribute) der weibliche Aspekt des universellen Buddhas* (Ibid: 112).

The lotus roundels in the Tabo Dukhang (Pl. 43) reflect the aesthetics of a specific group of Eastern-Iranian/Sogdian textiles.[776] This type of medallion is also found on Kaśmīri bronzes, where it is shown on a cushion positioned on the seat of a Buddha (Pl. 44). Horizontal rows of medallions are characteristic, containing small palmettes growing out from a centre in four directions; additional small leaves are in the interstices. This decorative scheme is one of the most popular themes of Sogdian textile culture.

With regard to the ornamental style at Tabo, significant similarities are also found between the monumental full-blown lotus rosettes covering the width of one section, as is characteristic of early ceilings, and decorative elements at Shalu (T. Zha-lu, Pl. 109) in Central Tibet. In the Yum chenmo Temple of Shalu (c. 11th century), we find lotus buds arranged in concentric circles, and three-dimensional blossoms depicted from different perspectives. The latter elements as a compositional unit are comparable to the so-called *karahana* motifs on High T'ang silks (Pl. 108), a design widely used in the Buddhist cave temples of Dunhuang (Pl. 95) in the 8th century and it is probable that portable goods disseminated ornaments of this kind that were associated with luxury[777].

A little studied feature in the ceiling motifs above the sanctum at Tabo is the offering deities set in lotus flowers with specific elements in the interstices, featuring hybrid lotus-like elements (Pl. 98). These elements look like horns filled with a round object, rather than a lotus, recalling cornucopia, the horn of plenty. This ambivalence is typical for the art of Kaśmīr, combining the lotus and the cornucopia, transmitted by the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra. This synthesis of the symbolism of fecundity is also seen in the image of Hārītī; Ardoxso at Kaśmīr (Pl. 235), as well as in a statue of a female divinity at Brār (Kaśmīr) discussed by Hélène Diserens.[778] The artist combined the full-blown lotus flower and linked it to the *pūrṇa-ghata*, the two Indian symbols par excellence of fertility and plenty. In the *Nīlamata Purāṇa*[779], which recounts the mythic origin of Kaśmīr, Kaśyapa asked the goddess to settle there in order to purify the country by the gift of water. Afterwards, springs and rivers in Kaśmīr were personified by a *nadī-devatā*, a female flowing water divinity, who is venerated as a life giving goddess and who can purify from sin. Such symbolism may have been transmitted via metal objects like frames, where different types of lotus scrolls occur. The element found on the ceilings at Tabo is comparable to the offering held by a green Tantric deity, positioned in the passage leading to the apse (Pl. 97)[780]; a transfer of this meaning, namely an offering to the supreme being, can thus be assumed on the ceiling. The images can be interpreted as pearls. On the ceiling the cornucopia of pearls is poured onto the Buddha from the celestial sphere.

This example illustrates the fusion of ancient Indian symbolism of fecundity, wealth and plenty with Buddhist themes, subordinated to the ultimate goal of salvation. It also illustrates that, in particular, ornament was a medium in which various religious experiences, pre-Buddhist, late-Antique and Hindu which were 'active' in the early art of this region, were unified or 'woven' into the ordered space of the temple.

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[776] This type of textiles was previously called 'Zandaniji' after an inscription featuring simple geometric or floral patterns Watt/Wardwell 1997: 23.

[777] A canopy decorated with this motif is particularly remarkable; for an image see Whitfield 2004: 269

[778] Diserens 1993: 72-85.

[779] Kumari 1968: 237-238; cited after Desirens 1993: 85.

[780] For an image of the deity see fig. 20 in Klimburg-Salter 1996.

A related theme is depicted in surface patterns of overlapping circles, indicating coins in the Chinese Central Asian sphere[781], which are a constant decorative theme on the Dunkar ceilings (Pl. 114).[782] While the motif just described is found in various cultural contexts, also in the earlier paintings at Nako (Pl. 113) where they may be purely decorative forms, the meaning at Dunkar may be related to the coin, and thus wealth in Chinese and Central Asian art. Crossing Circles are associcated with royalty in the Iranian Cultural sphere as shown on a metal plate, on the drapery on the ceiling (Fig. 16a).



Fig. 17: Metal plate (after Boris Marshak 1986)

The naturalistic rendering of lotus rosettes, typical for early Central Asian and Sogdian woven textiles of Silks of roughly the T'ang period, lost their popularity in the Sumtsek at Alchi. What we often find there is a variant of the lotus-theme, namely the 'blowing lotus' (on Panel 34, Pl. 60) or the lotus throne, a derivation of the *padmasana*, the seat of the Buddha. From the blowing lotus central and side branches descend on which stand different birds like peacocks in bilateral symmetry, with feathers ending in tendrils, densely filling the whole space. In decorative art this complex system is known from a bronze object from the 11th-12th century[783], where tendrils encircle different animals (the eight miracles) while on the top there is a naturalistic lotus flower with a miniature Buddha inside. Such a complex lotus throne is also found in paintings at Dunkar (Pl. 64). The organisation of motifs on both sides of a candelabra, which is often found on the lotus thrones of deities, is certainly also inspired by weaving techniques, namely mirror-like duplication of motifs on woven brocades. The latter type of textile model is shown in a candelabra-like design at Sumda (Pl. 136).

The lotus in a pearl roundel combines the iconic qualities of the lotus and the use of pearls and jewels in Buddhist devotional practice, indicating wealth and beauty. These pearls are also shown embellishing the heavenly palace, as described in early Buddhist texts. In the later Alchi temples the pearl roundel contains royal themes of hunting and dancing alluding to complex woven silks.

6.3.2. The Vase of Plenty Emanating Flowers/Lotus

At Tabo stylized vases (Pl. 116) are shown on the ceilings of the Dukhang and a naturalistic ritual vase (S. *kalasha*, T. *bum pa*) (Pl. 101) is also shown as one of the eight auspicious symbols positioned in the mandala above the sanctum. The latter type can be compared with the vase held by a Bodhisattva at Tholing (c. 1200) with a frieze of jewel strings and pearls, as commonly depicted on the body of the vase.[784]

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[781] Dr. J. Ebert, verbal communication (9.1. 2008).

[782] One temple ceiling mimics a wooden lantern ceiling.

[783] Auboyer, et. al. 1994: fig. 105.

[784] The flasks as objects of offerings on the ceilings at Tabo, Nako and Dungkar, are also comparable with the precious *kundika* flask for sacrificial water. Similar heart-shaped bottles are used for offerings in the wall-paintings at Alchi (Goepper 1996: 79). The models of the treasure vase is according to Beer (2003: 6-7) the traditional clay water pot in India known as *kalasha* or *kumbha*, with a flat base, round body, narrow neck and fluted upper rim.

While the ritual vase is employed in rituals of ablution and consecration, the *abhiṣeka* ritual of royal inauguration also performed in the consecration of sacred images), the vase of plenty alludes to life, abundance and prosperity:

> "...the top is sealed with a wish-granting tree. The roots of this tree infuse the contained waters of longevity, miraculously creating all manner of treasures. Sealed treasure vases may be placed or buried at sacred geomantic locations, such as mountain passes, pilgrimage sites, springs, rivers and oceans. Here they function both to spread abundance to the environment and to appease the indigenous spirits who abide in these places".[785]

Ornamental, abstract variants of the lotus and lotus-cum-vase recalling textile motifs or decorations on metal objects are shown on the ceiling painting above the Tabo Dukhang and all other later temples from this period. A stylized variant of the theme of the lotus growing out of a vase can be found on the ceiling of the Tabo Dukhang (Pl. 117). Many variations of this theme can be found in different media, often found below the throne of the central Buddha, from which virtually the whole iconographic scheme descends, as in the temple at Lalung.

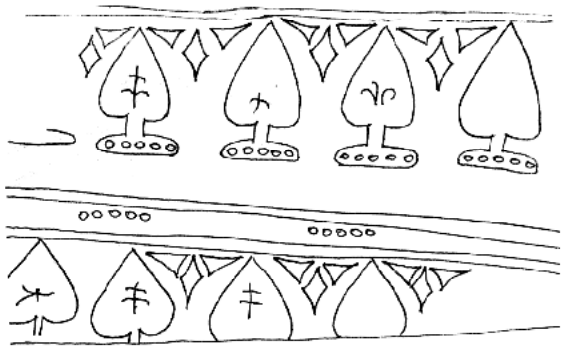


Fig. 18: Nako, Gongma, loose plank showing vase/jewel-tree (drawing Ch. Papa-Kalantari)

At Nako (Pl. 112) and Lalung we find the lotus growing out of the vase combined with the symbolism of the duality, as life-creating force, which is a constant feature in Hindu mythology[786], and also transferred into the Buddhist realm. The two humans integrated in a vase at Nako, from which virtually the whole pantheon in the temple emanates/originates, also reflect this ancient idea of the dual complementary symbolism and (union of male/female principle) as a creating force.[787]

During the pot festival in India, the *Kumbh Mela*, is placed in four sacred sites to commemorate the spilling of the divine nectar of the gods in these places. The treasure vase is also symbol of wealth deities.

Often two birds are depicted on these vases, at Alchi, and Dungkar; at Nako also two humans, in two colours sharing parts of their bodies; the meaning is unknown to me; the dualism of male/female might be one function of this type of depiction (see below).

[785] Beer 2003: 7.

[786] Symbolism of duality in combination with a vase (*pūrṇa-ghata*) is a constant feature in Indian architectural decoration (cf. Svarga-Brahmā Temple, Alampur, 8th century, cf. Kramrisch 1954: fig. 75), Levi-Strauss (1971: 268 ff.) discussed the phenPl. 15omenon of split images, which appears in various cultural contexts.

[787] This concept – as an important aspect of self-representation of powerful chieftains in the Hindu-Kush – has been described and analyzed by M. Klimburg (1976). He documented couples appearing on doors, pillars, and in particular on chairs of honour: *"there is good reason to suggest that the dandaku (ceremonial chair, with characteristic elements on the post possibly symbolizing intertwined couples) ...symbolized the very top rank of a man who had fulfilled all the prescribes requirements as a feast-giver ... in the village of Nishegrom (Waigal). His achievements, it could be followed, were the result of the union of the male and female principle similar to the yab-yum icon of the Tibetan Buddhists. By inference, was the Tantric belief in the dominant life-, wealth, and energy-bestowing principle of sexual union also the main driving force in Kafiristan?*

6.3.3. Tree and Lotus in Niches and Shrines

The surface pattern of the vase-cum-lotus motif found at Tabo was later probably transformed into a tree motif (Fig. 18), inserted in a shrine-like element, recalling Muslim *mihrāb*-niches, in the later art at Nako. This stylized tree motif is one of the most popular themes at Dunkar (Pl. 127) with rows of trees and small flowers or lotus rosettes combined, alluding to a paradise-like landscape, virtually covering the whole ceiling.

Of course the tree has various religious connotations. Different trees indicate specific important episodes in the spiritual life of the Buddha and can thus be equated with thrones, but they are also a general sign of life and abundance.

The *Maitreyavyakarana gives an account of* a paradise-like environment in future aeons:

> " ...The soil will then be free from thorns, even, and covered with a fresh green growth of grass; when one jumps on it, it gives way, and becomes soft like the leaves of the cotton tree... Rich silken, and other, fabrics of various colours shoot forth from the trees. The trees will bear leaves, flowers, and fruits simultaneously;... ." [788]

This description recalls the depictions of heavenly thrones and the celestial environment in which he is set at Dunhuang and Bāmiyān (Pl. 15).

Trees also define the paradise in which the Tathagata-Buddhas reside in the wall-paintings of the Sumtsek, in which the deities are set in abstract landscape representations, with trees of different types, dispersed flowers, and the Buddha covered either by a canopy or a tree indicating his heavenly abode. One of the trees emerges from a geometric pond[789], recalling the rectangular bases of the tree-depictions on the ceilings at Dungkar.

A constant and very common pattern at Tabo, Dunkar and Tholing is tree-like elements in niches with a horizontal base organized in continuous rows. At Tholing there are inscribed pearls in the basis, which are vertically connected forming a continuous band. The niche, often filled with a stylized tree or lotus inside, can be traced back to the 10th century in India. The latter is also a common feature in the decorative patterns of Indian textiles. [790]

At Dunkar the trees inscribed into niches are tall and cypress-like, and the repetition of this pattern alludes to a paradise landscape of tress and flowers, with bands of pearls between recalling the wish-granting trees (S. *parijata*, T. *dpag bsam gyi shing*) "...which may be portrayed within a painted landscape, adorned with flowers, silks, and hanging jewels". [791] The tree-of-life motif thus integrates the ideas of the shrine, the vase and the wish-granting tree.

This surprising correspondence would be interesting enough if discovered in a wider Indian context. However, the proximity of the Swat valley, the Uddiyana of the Indian texts, which is increasingly credited with the main initial stimulus towards the development of Tantric belief, makes it particularly noteworthy. Kafiristan seems to confront us with the survival of concepts characteristic of Uddyana an illustrative case in pint is the survival of the Uddiyana belief in the ḍākinī witches under their present name of dēnik (Bashgal valley) or jēnī (Parun valley): dreaded female spirits...exerting mischievous influence on gods and kings. Similarly, the notion of Uddiyana as a miraculous country, full of magic and occult forces, seems to be still alive in the remarkable reputation of the Laghman area (SW of Kafiristan) as a centre of magic where Kafir shamans and magicians went for further training" (Klimburg 1976: 487).

[788] Ibid.

[789] Geopper 1996: fig. 166.

[790] Cf. Barnes 1997; cat. No. 35.

[791] Beer 2004: 193.

Niches or bows, adorned with strings of pearls, also recall the concept of shrine-like niches on Indian temples, which were originally windows, and later shrines-like elements containing deities, flowers or trees, which are framed by pearls. Such niches may also be related to later naturalistically rendered forms of heart-shaped niches or vases, from which lotus grow with a flower inside and which can be found at Alchi.[792]

At Nako, shrine–like elements show a gabled top (Pl. 123) in which strings of pearls are hung and a central pendant hangs down, which is a common feature embellishing heavenly thrones in Western Himalayan art. These different examples of the niches allude to the symbolism of the ceiling as dwellings of deities and windows connecting the trans-mundane sphere. However, the motif at Nako is obviously a rather crude overpainting of a much complexer theme – a kind of split ('gesprengte') gable or niche – also found at Tabo (Pl. 121) which I propose to read as an ornamental form of architectural decoration found on the outer dress of motifs covering the spires of Indian temples. I put as a comparative example a temple at Kafirkot, without postulating a genetic relation (cf. Pl. 120). Comparative studies with early temple architecture in Himachal Pradesh will certainly bring material of a closer geographic and historic relationship.

One of the sources of the abstract rendering of vase, niche and the tree in a shrine-like motif maybe the earlier *gavākṣa* nishes (**'**cow-eye' or 'ray-eye'), the horseshoe-like window, which is an omni-present feature in Indian temple architecture. According to A. Hardy it retains as its outline the shape of the arch of vegetation of Praktiti (cf. Pl. 118).[793] The *gavākṣa* is also called a caitya hall window, or sun window, admitting the light of the sun, which reaches the caitya or stupa at the far end of the hall (Pl. 119).[794] Adam Hardy has given a typology of this architectonic element and the metamorphosis from the simple bow – inspired by branches, being fixed at the bottom and tied on the head, and decorated with lotus flowers on the top, to vase-shaped masks or *pipal* leaf forms. These forms were later organized as surface patterns, forming complex grids and traceried veils covering the temple, also called *gavākṣa jālas*[795]. Such *gavākṣa* are ornamental forms of both simple huts and shrines, and thus associated with religious images. In this sense they function as a window which directly connects with the deity.[796]

M. Meister, in his 2007 article, not only identifies representations of an architectural world in the medium of stone reliefs of Kanganahalli, which are not extant anymore, but also gives insight into the process by which "*...ritual use could begin to give architectural form iconic depth*". These early Indian examples ought to demonstrate the iconographic 'loaded-ness' of ornamental designs and 'ornamentalised' objects such as symbols of shrines, trees and vases in particular and the constant transgression between different media, architecture, ornament and material culture in the religious art in India and Central Asia from earliest times.

In the ornamental tradition of the Western Himalaya –transmitted not only by textiles, but also by reliefs on metal objects, or miniature shrines - this motif has been combined with the

[792] See Goepper 1996: panel 28.

[793] Kramrisch 1946: 319.

[794] Ibid.

[795] Hardy 2007: 63-82.

[796] Examples at Kanganhalli show niches containing symbols standing for the Buddha such as the Buddha's turban in the uppermost storey of a mansion (Meister 2007: 1-20).

Meister 2007: fig. 5, cf. also fig. 17.

symbolism of various auspicious trees indicating sacred places connected with important historical events in the spiritual career of the Buddha.

6.3.4. Divine Menagerie of Heaven and the Underworld

Animal symbolism is a complex and previously unconsidered subject in early Buddhist art of the Western Himalaya. The various animals found there are associated with creatures, defining the different worlds, but also representing the animals of the heavenly throne (Pl. 128), in which the Buddha resides in all his splendour.

The latest and most complex examples are found in the three-storied temple of Alchi ceilings. The animal symbolism in the Alchi temples is mainly signaling worldly and spiritual supremacy, which can be associated with the animals in the *toraṇa* (T. *rta babs*, archway or gateway, the six-ornament enlightenment throne of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas[797]) – the symbols of the *cakravartin* such as the lion (S. *simha*, T. seng-ge) and elephant (S. gaja, T. glang-chen). These animals are also among the 'eight miracles' (among them also lions and elephants) which define such thrones in Buddhist iconography.[798]

The profusion of Buddhist symbolism and Easter-Iranian symbolism of royalty, in combination with female martial dancers and royal hunters, and lions in combat, is an astonishing feature. These themes reflect a distinctive Eastern-Iranian Buddhist identity in the Western-Himalaya up to the 13th century.

Animals are well known as symbols of the Universal Monarch (*cacravartin*) and are also used in Buddhist iconography. Animals are also widely described in the *jatakas*. In these tales Bodhisattvas often appear as animals, often exhibiting traits of kindness and generosity. The hare is one of the most prominent examples in Central Asian cave temples and is depicted on the centre of the ceiling in at least 17 temples at Dunhung (Pl. 148) and is also found in the wall paintings at Alchi. The hare and his kindness not only plays a prominent role in one of the previous lives of the Buddha but is also a celestial animal, representing the moon. Thus, the lotus containing the image of the harr on the zenith of the ceilings at Dunhuang effectively combines the famous Buddhist legend symbolizing the actions of previous lives of the Buddha leading towards enlightenment, cosmology and symbolism of space in a temple.

Moreover, the celestial thrones of deities in the wall paintings and represented in the medium sculpture show creatures of various heavens, and animals, which are tamed by the Buddha, e.g. in the deer park during the first sermon, thus also signalling his enlightenment. This theme is shown in throne depictions featuring the deer flanking the dharma wheel (also on ceiling). In general, the various animals in the heavenly thrones can be interpreted as animals and tamed creatures in the world of spirits of the different heavens alluding to the sovereignty of the Buddha in his spiritual realm[799].

Composite mythical creatures forming the throne frames and heavenly abodes of deities are a significant feature in Indian, Central Asian and Himalayan art (Pl. 72); one of the richest examples of these can be found at Alchi[800] and on Kaśmīri bronzes.[801] Thrones composed of mythical creatures represent a magic borderland, in which various religious experiences, non-

[797] Among these beings can also be *devas* (young gods) and antelopes (*sharabha*), Cf. Beer 2003: 259.

[798] Cf. Luczanits 2004: 205 ff.

[799] Animal symbolism is a constant feature in Indian art from earliest times, as seen in the various *toraṇa* (ceremonial gateway) at Sanchi.

[800] Illustrated in Luczanits 2005: 149-153.

[801] Pal 1975: fig. 21.

Buddhist and mythical have been integrated into Buddhist iconography and thus 'tamed'. All these elements are 'woven' into the ceiling textile where the symbolism of the textile's material serves as a useful metaphor for this process of re-integration and unification.[802]

Figural motifs in the Translator's Temple at Nako include fabulous creatures of various types with cloud-like or lotus vine tails (Pl. 131); this type of foliate ornament is rendered with great sensitivity and is clearly reminiscent of a strong and lasting force of Gupta artistic values (Pl. 132), recalling the ornamental language of the Dhamek stupa (Sārnāth). The ornament on the surface probably reproduces votive textiles, which were draped around the stupa as is still the practice in Thailand.[803]

There are certain similarities here with motifs on the ceilings at Ajanta. Zin has identified these composite creatures mostly as symbols of wealth, fertility and the blessings they will bring to the visitor of the cave (Fig. 11).[804] Other 'water creatures' in Ajanta have been associated with monsoon symbolism.[805] Some of them closely resemble water demons depicted in a scene with a Bodhisattva and the Eight Perils at Tholing (North-East Temple, c. 12th c.) and the outer mandala of the Translator's Temple (Lotsawa Lhakhang, T. lo tsa ba lha khang), which features scenes of the lower realms in which humans can be reborn. Furthermore, we find a great variety of animals in the (bodhi) trees behind both the Buddha and other deities in the Western Himalaya (Nako, gong-ma: Tārā of the Eight Perils[806]). Their religious meaning has been hardly studied.

A basic cultural concept in India is the way landscape or space has been perceived in India since ancient times:

> "...the Indians distinguish between untamed nature and domesticated space. *Vana*, the jungle, or wilderness, is separated from *kṣetra*, the ploughed land that belongs to the village territory and thus is part of the culture. ...Wilderness can never be totally dominated, not eliminated: it is the mother of culture...What cannot be controlled or domesticated, represents chaos, as opposed to the structured cosmos of agricultural society, and the boundaries between wilderness and culture become more marked".[807]

The forces or spirits from the realm of *vana, nāga, ganas, yakṣas* have their abodes in mountains, trees, springs. "*The nature of all the spirits is ambiguous, for they can either protect or attack. By finding out their likes and dislikes one attempts to turn them into friend and guardians, or at least to keep them in one place*".[808] Mehta further states that the tradition of nature and culture is fluid, and guardian deities are put in charge to protect boundaries between vana and *kṣetra*. The *kṣetrapala* (guardian spirits) watch over settlements and the ploughed land. "*They dwell on the border between nature and culture and belong to both realms.*"

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[802] Local protector deities at Tabo, village guardians, can tentatively be attributed to this category. At Tabo the protectress comes from the wilderness, and becomes guardian of culture against the chaos from outside. In this way pre-Buddhist religious experiences could be integrated into a more formal system of Buddhist order.

[803] Prof. Lehner (verbal communication, 1.2008). I wish to thank Prof. Lehner for the inspiring discussions on this issue and for allowing to consult his extensive archive.

[804] Zin 2003: III.

[805] Vajracharya 2003.

[806] See Allinger 2005: fig. 1; cf. also Poo Manuscript, Folio 1 (cf. Allinger 2006).

[807] Mehra, 1996: Introduction.

[808] Ibid.

The *kīrtimukha,* found on the valances, forming a border between the walls and the ceiling in Western Himalaya temples (Pl. 80) and also forming the uppermost element in the *toraṇa* (throne-like frame) of the deities in the wall-paintings and sculptures, and other mythical creatures which inhabit the ceiling such as *vyala* and *kinnara*, can be interpreted in this sense.

According to the medieval *śilpaśāstras*, the *kīrtimukha* has an apotropaic function repelling evil spirits, and protecting the structure from lightning, while according to Puranic literature it was believed that "*the security of a temple structure depends on the strength and stability of this element and its destruction in any manner signified the collapse of the monument containing it*".[809] Donaldson - mainly focusing on medieval architecture of Orissa, where this motif occurs on the exterior walls and is the major decorative motif on the facades, on the *gaṇḍi* or the spire of the temple - studied related Tantric texts on architecture and defined the symbolism of this architectonic element as carved on the lintel of doorways or friezes of buildings. The work *kīrti*, originally signified and excavated *caitya*-hall, while the large window opening to the interior was called *kīrtimukha*.[810] The *makara*, the crocodile-like aquatic creature, symbolizes the element of water, hence life and growth. It is the antithesis of the terrible 'face of god', suggested by the lion-mask. "*There is thus a dual complementary symbolism, that of Agni-Soma necessary in all acts of creation, kīrtimukha as Sun and Death both generates and devours his children*".[811] The lion-face combined with the *makara* had been integrated into the thrones or *toraṇa* (gateway) of Buddhist deities, as well as linked by strings of pearls falling from their mouths and bells hanging on strings on the uppermost part of the wall in the Western Himalayan temples in the transition zone between wall and ceiling. This symbolism is related, namely guarding the gateway or threshold to the heavenly sphere. In the *toraṇa* different other animals are gathered, alluding to the protective aspects of such hybrid creatures, the act of creation and wealth as well as to the different worlds of Esoteric Buddhism in which these creatures dwell, subordinated to the supreme being.

The pearls obviously allude to wealth bestowing aspects and abundance, and are guarded by the lion-faces. This symbolism of treasures, such as vases, flying genies, lotus blossoms, and cornucopia filled with pearls in the interstices, corresponds to the symbolism of protection, wealth and abundance of Indian temples: symbols and ornamental motives alluding to these qualities are interwoven into a protective veil covering the outer structure of architecture, while these elements are transferred into the medium of the textile cover, defining and protecting the sacred space of the temple in the Western Himalaya.

6.3.5. Hybrid Animal Symbolism at Alchi of the Indo-Iranian Borderland

The animal symbolism on the Alchi ceilings and decorating luxury garments shows heterogeneous traditions: Buddhist animals such as *vyala*, elephants, horses, deer, lions, and also the famous royal hunter (Pl. 141). Many of the creatures on the ceilings are a precise translation/transposition of the powerful animals of the *toraṇa* into the medium of ceiling decoration. Among the various animals defining and honouring the Buddha's throne in the Sumtsek's wall-paintings depictions are the bird-faced mythical creatures (Pl. 133) and *vyala* (hybrid animals with a elephant's trunk). These are also often found in other temples of this period such as Lalung.[812] Various animals such as deer, winged horses, 'Buckelrind' and Indian

[809] Ramacandra Kaulacara, preface: IX-X; cited after Donaldson (1976: 419)

[810] Donaldson, ibid.

[811] Ibid. 420, cf. fig. 2.

[812] Luczanits 2004: 225, fig. 269, p. 147.

hybrid animals bring to mind creatures of Indian mythology, organized in surface patterns recalling brocades.

In addition to the function of animals in Indo-Tibetan iconography, animal symbolism at Alchi also seems to be associated with specific religious values characteristic for Iranicate Buddhist art and typical for the hybrid religious landscape in the region. The winged horse (S. ashva, T. rta), birds, deer in pearl medallions recall divine animals, which are different manifestations of the 'royal glory and good fortune ('farn') that flies to a worthy person' in the Easter-Iranian/Sogdian Buddhist and non-Buddhist cultural sphere. Animals in combat and equestrian hunters are often found on monumental Sogdian memorial buildings/sarcophagi featuring extensive scenes of courtly life and religious symbolism in stone. Animal symbolism associated with Iranicate Buddhist art is also an important aspect of local protective deities, as will be shown below.

At Alchi the single creatures of the enlightenment throne are translated into the medium ceiling decorations, where they are often combined with other animals forming small scenes, in which lions or elephants are often shown fighting. In particular, the fight between lions strongly recalls eastern Iranian luxury art of this period, as has been stated. All these animals and heavenly creatures are rendered with an extraordinary sense of movement and variety with tails ending in scrolls depicting vegetables, functioning as decorative space fillers and connecting the different elements of the composition. One example of this ornamental style in the medium of wall-paintings is shown in the complex shrine-like frame of Mañjuśrī in the ground floor of the temple.[813] These motifs are transferred onto the ceilings, where they are embedded into an overall composition of silk brocades with alternating rows of figures in different colours.[814]

We cannot say at present where these textiles, which recall surface organizations related to sumptuous woven silks from Central Asia and precious India cotton textiles, were ultimately produced, but it is clear, that in Kaśmīr and the Western Trans-Himalaya all these different types of printed textiles and complex woven silks were traded and their patterns were integrated in the honorific function of the painted ceiling. This subtle synthesis of Buddhist themes and decorative systems achieved an almost trompe-l'oeil effect of a canopy-covered temple and is one of the most fascinating aspects of the art of Alchi.

6.3.6. Kingship and Divinized Royalty in Buddhism and Eastern-Iranian art

All the signs of royalty and courtly entertainment alluding to Eastern-Iranian language of the aristocratic elite depicted on the ceilings have a double value, alluding also to the courtly life of Śākyamuni and important themes in his spiritual career. A paradigms case is the royal hunter (Pl.50) who bears a double symbolism, significant for the interpretation of the function of luxury art in a Buddhist temple: he alludes to the sacred hunter, which is a royal prerogative in Iran as well as the Buddhist ideal of Śākyamuni leaving the palace and other important events in the career of the Buddha (Fig.20). The royal horse-rider depicted on the ceiling is thus a paradigm case for the glorification of the worldly sphere as well as the renunciation of it. The Devadata story of the equestrian archer is also most significant in this context. In addition, the royal symbolism may also be associated with the aristocratic clan of Alchi, thus indicating an equation of the donor with Śākyamuni, the exemplar for all humans on the path towards the ultimate salvation.

[813] Cf. Goepper 1996: fig. on p. 99.

[814] Ibid: ceiling panel no. 3, fig. on p. 228.

The decorative organization of such complex scenes alluding to the enlightenment on the ceilings of Alchi can be compared with Central Asian sculptures and paintings of the cosmological Buddha. The latter feature biographical representations of Śākyamuni organized in surface patterns recalling textiles, as already stated. The ceilings programme at Alchi alludes to the enlightenment and the trans-mundane realm in the cosmological concept of the Tathaghata-Buddhas.

Cosmological symbolism is also common in the ceiling decorations of Kyzil, showing surface patterns in which scenes of the Buddha-life are interwoven, thus reflecting a parallel phenomenon of the cosmological Buddha. The ceilings are thus a synthesis of the typology of the interwoven symbols of important events of the Buddha, which is a constant feature in Central Asia, as dresses of the Cosmological Buddha (Pl. 24a) and that on the ceilings's décor, such as at Kyzil, transforming the cave temple's attire to the attire of the Buddha. The motifs found in the Western Himalaya are related to the heavenly beings defining the celestial abodes and shrines in the wall-paintings, such as mythical creatures, dancers, flying offering genies, as well as the symbols shown on the central deities' dress. These symbols represented on the ceiling thus stand for the signs of power and sovereignty in the supra-mundane realm of the Tathagata. The organization of scenes related to the Buddha are also found on the dhoti of the colossal statues in the Sumtsek (24b.)

The Alchi ceiling depictions unite the symbolism of the transcendent realm of the Tathagata and refer to the cosmologic system of Esoteric Buddhism. Of course, the uppermost border of the temple as a swell to the outer-worldly is an ideal place to transmit this symbolism.

The Alchi depictions thus illustrate the high level of iconographic and stylistic dynamics in the reception of Iranian (in the widest sense) themes, characteristic of Western Trans-Himalayan art up to the 13th century. These dynamics in the early art of Ladakh were probably induced/triggered by the Sogdian elite and merchant diplomats, but the fusion of Buddhist art and Iranicate religious and courtly symbolism is a constant phenomenon in Central Asia. This synthesis of Tibetan Buddhist and Iranicate concepts of sacred kingship and courtly symbolism is in particular evident in the donor depictions of the Alchi Dukhang, as will be shown in the next chapter.

The images of courtly culture, luxury art and royal symbolism are consciously used as emblems of kingship as well as signs of religious power. This stands in the tradition of Iranicate Buddhist art in Central Asia, some of the most prominent examples being Bāmiyān and Khotan, whereby royal signs of supremacy were transferred to the Buddhist realm, and even the adoption of Iranian deities into the Buddhist pantheon was not unusual.[815] The attractiveness of these models is due the semi-divine nature of Sāsānian rulers and the animal symbolism, associated with the concept of royal fortune (*farn, xhwarnah*) and thus the divine legitimacy of kingship. Another important component that made these themes so attractive was the aura and renowned quality of the Iranian commodities, with a restricted repertoire of motifs associated with power, luxury and nobility. All these elements indicated the splendour in the supra-natural realm, and were used on the side of the donors as signs of supremacy of the ruling elite, and the glorification of worldly luxury as well as the renunciation of it. These various signs of Iranicate courtly art were integrated into the symbolism of the spiritual supremacy of the Tathagata

[815] Cf. Grenet 2001 on this issue.

6.3.7. Attiring the Mandala

The ceiling textiles, with allusions to the royal sphere and Central Asian luxury art, display the most complex ornaments and sumptuous garments in the hierarchy of dresses in the temple, and can be interpreted as the signs of supremacy in the realm of the Tathagata, as has been stated. Symbols of royalty were therefore adopted as signs of outer-worldly power and sovereignty. Specific Central Asian signs of rank, such as allusions to *tirāz*-strips found on the Alchi ceilings and imitating pseudo-inscriptions in Tibetan or Devanagari, can also be interpreted in this sense. This demonstrates a fascinating super-imposition of concepts and ideas of power and investiture in the Islamic world and the Buddhist realm.

These 'royal' fabrics and precious garments on the Alchi ceiling also allude to the consecration of the central deity in the mandala. As has been stated, these ceremonies bear strong parallels to the royal consecration. Accordingly, the motifs of the luxury textiles, which 'dress' the mandala are also shown as robes of the Tathagatas. The motifs on the robes of the Buddha at Alchi often feature bowmen mounted on elephants, or mounted horse-riders. These animals are a symbol of royalty, but they may also allude to important moments, which determined Śākyamuni's career such as incarnation and renunciation, by means of the symbols of the horse and elephant. Comparable scenes are also found on the dresses of the cosmological Buddhas, such as that from Khotan.[816]

This phenomenon of textiles, consciously used to dress the temple conceived as mandala at Alchi, contrasts to the clear distinction between textile depictions of deities in the Tabo wall paintings and the ornament alluding to auspicious symbols on the ceiling decorations.

6.3.8. Ceremonies and Rituals in the Realm of the Tathāgata-Buddhas: Transcending the Worldly Limitedness at Alchi

Particularly significant for the Sumtsek ceiling are complex scenes of dancers with weapons and offering bowls, horse-riders hunting birds, and lions and equestrian archers. The scenes are images of a celestial palace, the trans-mundane world of the Tathagata, unified in the ceiling programme of the temple, as already stated.

On the ceilings we find a synthesis of the painted decor found in the shrines of the Tathaghatas, thus the paradise they are residing in. Such paradise scenes are shown in the wall paintings, e.g. in the image of Amitābha[817], with various Buddhist deities and Hindu gods, integrated into the whole pantheon and subordinated to the central icon. In other depictions of the Tathagata's realm dancers or musicians, which may have been an important component in Esoteric ritual, are depicted in the lower part, while offering deities are depicted above the central deity. On the ceilings we find offering deities with bowls arranged above deities on the walls and clay sculptures, and ceilings with dancers[818] with ultra-long swirling sleeves depicting music and dance as offerings. Offering deities and music and dance are typical for paradise-like realms in the Buddhist painting of Dunhuang. Many of the paintings in the caves of Dunhuang

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[816] See Howard, fig. 60.

[817] Goepper 1996: fig. on p. 86.

[818] The Alchi dancers have sword and shields; such martial dances are recorded by Francke. Other dancers wear boots and have turbans, and belts, comparable to the costumes of the Baltistan region, where dancers have long scarves swirling in the air. Demonstrating a subtle calibration of ornamental values and Buddhist themes.

Pal (Cat. 1994) compared the female martial dancers with a Jain manuscript (The latter is showing the indebtedness of Gujarati figurative painted textiles to manuscripts, as apparent from the stylization of the facial features). For an images see Papa-Kalantari 2000: fig. 68, after Doshi 1985: fig. 21.

depict scenes of the Western Pure Land, a paradise-like realm where the faithful are born after death. Since Buddhists believe that good music comes from celestial regions, almost every Pure Land picture has *apsara* (flying celestials) playing various musical instruments.[819]

All these themes recall the ritual of royal consecration adopted in Esoteric Buddhism as initiation ceremony as pointed out by Snellgrove. The *abhiṣeka* includes conch-shells and drums making joyous sounds. The worhsipper having bowed before the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas then should say: "*O master I wish to enter upon the performance of the mandala-practices of the buddhas and bodhisaatvas; I wish to attain buddhahood involving universal sovereignty in the dharma. In brief, may I be a Budda.*"[820]

All these elements also including hunting and fighting. In addition, martial dancers may reflect specific rituals and consecration ceremonies of the sacred and royal sphere which could have had deeper connotations. These scenes, depicted in the celestial *toraṇa,* indicate that religious ceremonies or rituals of consecration music, dance, and martial dancers may have played a prominent role. The complex throne of the Tathagata Amithāba's, with musicians on the base may document such rituals, while mythical creatures flanking the throne together with *apsara* (flying genies) and other offering deities are floating in the heavenly realm above.[821]

In general these actions of making music, dancing and other ceremonials, may be interpreted as ceremonies inducing sensual perception.[822] Such actions are a means to transcend the perception of the worldly sphere, as they may have done in actual rituals performed in these temples. [823] Furthermore, all these elements include hunting, fighting and martial dancers reflecting rituals of the sacred and royal sphere, intended to activate the sensual perception and thus the process of transgression of worldly-limitedness.

6.3.9. Towards a Cosmological View

A number of cosmological motifs can be found on the ceilings at Nako, Alchi and Dunkar (Pl. 143, 144), and some examples in textile motifs in wall paintings at Alchi as well. Among these are creatures, such as two birds or crows, forming the dynamic motif of an 'animal whorl' at Nako.[824] Interconnected animals or humans in terms of sharing parts of their bodies, racing around a circle or lotus, are widely used elements in Indian and Central Asian art (e.g. Ajanta, Kizil, Khajuraho, as well as in contemporaneous Jaina temples), making a religious connotation for such motifs probable.[825] At Alchi[826] and Dunhuang the circular 'three hare' motif alludes both to the life of the Buddha and to cosmological symbolism[827] (Pl. 147, 148). The motif derives from

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[819] E.g.: the *pipa*, an Arab lute with pear-shaped body and long neck is depicted there. Also in Dungkar we find Central-Asian instruments like the harp (R. Linrothe, verbal communication, Vienna 2005).

[820] Snellgrove 1959: 207.

[821] For an image see also Goepper 1996: fig. P. 42.

[822] Cf. also Cancik/ Mohr 1988.

[823] In this sense the rituals can be understood as a 'Gesamtkunstwerk.'

[824] However such motifs occur more often on the ceilings of Dung-dkar and Alchi.

[825] Kramrisch 1976: 403.

[826] Goepper 1996: 129.

[827] In a mandala of Avalokiteśvara from the Musée Guimet (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Plate 61) we find in the interstices between circle and outer rectangular frame, a white moon disc on the left side and red sun disc in the right corner. The moon disc displays a tree of immortality flanked by a hare and a frog. In Alchi this animal is often depicted on ceilings and interstices of textile ornaments of the dhoti in the Sumtsek. The mandala is closely related to Alchi and the ceiling decorations of the Tabo cella with regard to iconography and partly also in terms of motifs. Avalokiteśvara with moon and sun is also depicted on a drawing housed in New Delhi, National Museum (ibid: Pl.

the simulacrum of the hare seen in the lunar oceans at full moon: the Śaśa-Jātaka legends relate how in the distant past the Buddha was once born as a hare who compassionately sacrificed his body to feed starving creatures. As a mark of respect Indra drew an outline of this hare upon the moon.[828] The crow and hare are sun-and-moon symbols in the Chinese astrological system and a popular theme in Central Asian rock-cut cave temples, such as Dunhuang.[829] One prominent example found in at least 17 caves features medallions with three hares encircling a centre and set into a fully-opened lotus blossom, their central position in the zenith of ceilings underlining the symbolic force of this astral sign.

One type of pagoda-like roof structure at Dunhuang decorated with ornaments alluding to a baldachin shows that the ceiling is not conceived as an architectural honorific cover representing a boundary but rather as an allusion to Buddhist heavens, indicated by flying deities, clouds and a dragon in the centre. The latter is another example of a celestial creature at the centre of the composition. This demonstrates that the synthesis of the honorific cover and celestial symbolism, as proposed for Nako and later temples in this region, is not a contradiction of the Buddhist symbolism of space. On the contrary, the baldachin as a type would seem to be equated with the heavenly realm. Astrology and cosmology, though mentioned in historical texts and inscriptions, are a difficult and hitherto little studied topic in the cultural history of this region.[830]

Luxury art and cosmological symbolism reflected in the ceiling depictions of Dunkar are one of the most stunning examples of ornamental culture in the Western Himalaya. The chapter aims to define a specific ornamental and artistic orientation, which contrasts to the culture of luxury art in Spiti/ Kinnaur and Ladakh.

Monika Zin[831] assumes that the non-devotional themes on the ceilings of the cave temples in Ajanta are not based on specific religious symbolism and thus provide an understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of the donors and artists. This observation is particularly valuable for some motifs on the ceilings at Dunkar (T. Dung-dkar, roughly 1200, Pl. 143), which are remarkable for their sense of humour and the inventiveness of imagery in their illusionist representation of constructive elements in architecture, such as acrobats holding up the roof in the atlantid pose of yaksa.[832] Comparable figural elements can be found at the Jo-khang in Lhasa and Ajanta,[833] and at *yakṣa* they also often lift up the base of the throne in Kaśmīr sculptures.

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76); in the painting from New Delhi he is holding the discs in his hand). In the circle around the central deity are offering Bodhisattvas are visible, comparable to the cella ceiling at Tabo. Also the 8 auspicious signs are comparable (Cf. also J. Ebert, Habiliationsschrift).

[828] Cowell 1973: 34 37.

[829] Zhang, Rasmussen: www.threehares.net/china.html (2008.1.; 5.p.m.), Sue Andrew: www.plymouth.ac.uk /pages/ view (2005.5.)

[830] Cosmology and Astrology are hitherto hardly studied topics in the culture of the Western Transhimalaya: Wanla-inscription reflect their importance: "*He knew the eclipses of the sun and the moon and so forth, the inner and the outer kalachacra. By calculations of the astrological chart of the elements he ascertained all that appears and exists*" (Tropper 2006: 128).

[831] Zin 2003: 1.

[832] Atlantid dwarf or *yaksa*s, is also characteristic of Orissan temples (Cf. Donaldon 1976) where they have a caryatid function holding up the roof.

[833] Illustrated in Zin 2003: 22.

One of the most surprising artistic inventions for organizing a figural motive in a geometric space is the 'animal wheel', i.e. animals or human figures that share parts of the body can be found in the caves at Dunkar and may allude to cosmological symbolism as well as to representations of the illusion of human perception, which is a constant theme in Indian art, and also found at Ajanta (Pl. 81). At Dunkar the popularity of cosmological symbolsom can be related to Chinese Central Asian concepts of space and is also to be found in luxury art. In contrast to the rather local ornamental style of Nako (despite the fact that printed cottons require a high standard of technical skill), the ornamental style at Dunkar reflects an artistic environment related to courtly culture, where the aesthetics of precious textiles and luxury objects of the Chinese Liao dynasty (907-1125) had been integrated. One comparable fragment of silk shows radiating floral motifs with flying birds and clouds in the interstices.[834]

Another textile-derived ornament at Dunkar strongly influenced by Central Asian textiles during the Jin-dynasty is a silk brocade with a coiled dragon chasing a pearl.[835] It is comparable to the Dungkar ceiling depiction with dragons or *makara*[836], intertwined to fill a rectangular space. Characteristic is the double valance of the tail, which functions as a figural motif as well as a floral ornament. Jin textiles often show animals set against a floral setting. Other dynamic motifs, such as birds in flight as well as confronted animals are to be found. Popular motifs include the swan, shown both in Dunkar and on Jin textiles, and the *djeiran*, a Central Asian antelope which is shown in one example sitting and gazing up the moon.[837] Liao dynasty textiles (907-1125) also show birds encircling a central floral medallion (Pl. 145). In one fragment cloud scrolls occur on the cardinal points, between flying cranes.[838] This decorative scheme is one of the most popular motifs on the ceilings of Dungkar.

Furthermore, Dunkar shows evidence of contact with the Tangut Xixia dynasty, an example of this cultural exchange being a thangka, made of silk tapestry. The Kayiu order of Tibet regularly sent monks to the Tangut Xia court. Given these close ties, a reciprocal artistic influence between Tibet and Tangut aesthetics is not surprising. Particular interest is shown in animals, plants, and trees, in combination with stylized rocks in the tradition of the art in Khara Khoto. Some of these were commissioned by the Tibetan Kadampa order and are housed in the Potala in Lhasa. One was commissioned for the great Sakya historian Gragpa Gyalmtshan (1147 - 1216).[839] These motifs are unknown in earlier western Tibetan art. The famous Green Tārā in the Hermitage Museum has a complex lotus throne, with lotus flowers in various shapes growing out of a long stem (Pl. 66). The same type can be found at Dunkar. Some figural depictions like a standing attendant figure with a short *dhoti* also falls out of the earlier style in Western Himalaya and is rather linked with standing female figures in the cella of Tabo Dukhang, which also has strong Central Asian ties.

The artistic virtuosity of Dunkar adds a specific notion of luxury to the paintings of Dungdkar and thus emphasises the function of ornament as religious veneration. However, the motifs on the ceilings of Dunkar and Nako would seem to have more than merely decorative functions. The animal symbolism at Dunkar stands in the tradition of a Central Asian cave

[834] Watt/Wardwell 1997: 44.

[835] Cf. Ibid, image on p.117.

[836] *Makara* (watermonster) are often shown as guardians of gateways or of two-dimensional mandala (Beer 2003: 78).

[837] Ibid. image on p.115.

[838] Ibid. 44.

[839] Ibid. 92.

temple, making allusions to cosmographic symbolism: flying *haṃsa* in combination with the sun and moon are included in the 35m Buddha niche at Bāmiyān and are a common astral theme in the zenith strips in the caves at Kyzil (Pl. 149).[840] These elements occur consistently up to the 12th century in paintings at Dunkar, in which antelopes (Pl. 143) encircle a star, tigers and lions chase antelopes (here a moon might be depicted at the centre), and ducks connected by a chain of pearls held in their beaks (with possibly a sun depicted at the centre) and a six-pointed star can also be seen.[841] This type of dynamic ornament is comparable to mirrors of the Tang period featuring different mythical creatures representing the 'Four quadrants of the heavens'.

A more direct genetic link might be provided in the ceiling decoration of a hitherto unpublished temple in Ngari[842], where the ceilings allude to heaven with different cosmologic symbols, possibly in the tradition of early ceilings in Central Asia and Dunhuang in particular.

[840] Francoeur 1998: 258; I thank Maximilian Klimburg for this information.

[841] Masterpieces 2001: 200-201.

[842] A small image can be found in the 2007 publication of Tsering Gyalbo: fig.

7. DONOR DEPICTIONS IN THE DUKHANG OF ALCHI: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THIS GENRE AT TABO, NAKO AND DUNKAR

7.1. Iranian Gods in Exile: Signs of Status and Protection of the Dharma in the Western Himalaya

Among the three types of lay depictions on the entrance wall of the Alchi Dukhang, the 'assembly frieze' (unified composition of images illustrating different aspects of royal supremacy and monastic order), the 'enthroned noble couple' (or 'royal drinking scene'), and a noble horse-rider can be observed. The latter has the function of a protector deity subordinated to a Mahākāla (Gönpo, T. mGon po), (Cf. Fig. 19, Pl. 152).

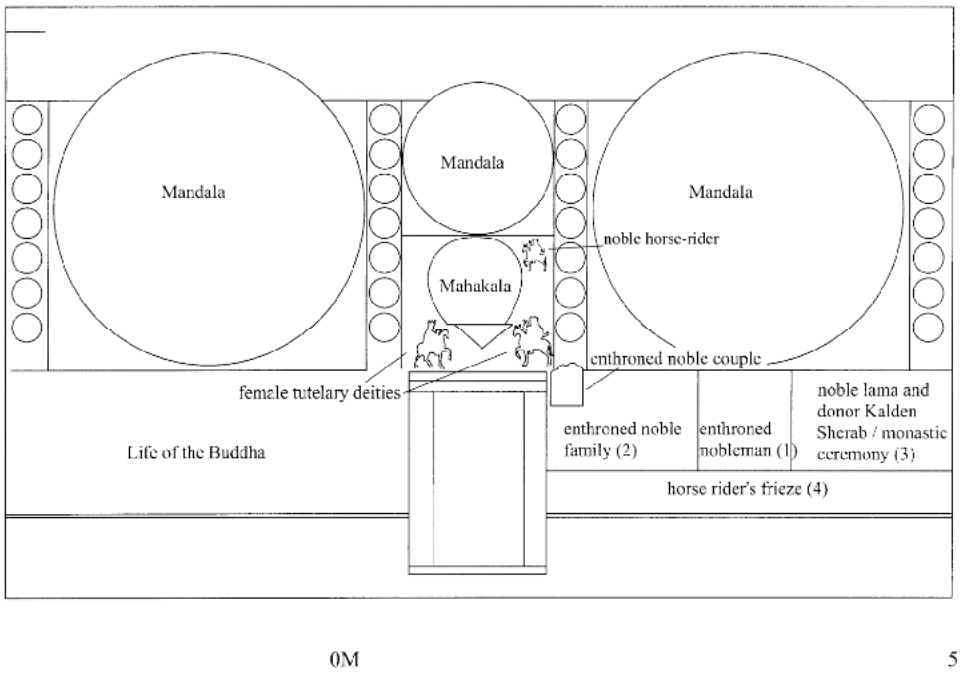


Fig. 19: Alchi, Dukhang, Entry wall (diagram Ch. Papa-Kalantari, G. Kozicz)

These various scenes of banqueting couples, enthroned rulers and scenes of courtly life define a complex and multi-layered spectre of self-representation in the Dukhang. This sequence of narrative and iconic images of the rulers is a unique element in the art of the Western Himalaya. In this set of images, the figure of a noble horse-rider has a significant role. He is an attendant of Mahākāla, a powerful protector of the dharma, but his appearance – the courtly garb, horse and drapery being important signs of status and sovereignty in the region, closely relate him to the aristocratic family who founded the temple. All these elements of courtly material culture play a significant role in the iconography of a specific class of deities - in the world of the local protectors and benefactors. The noble horse-rider is thus a paradigm case for the reciprocal exchange of signs and symbols of the religious and worldly sphere.

While female tutelary deities have already been discussed as an important aspect in the reconstruction of the history of the kingdom in Purang-Guge[843], the function and symbolism of the nobly born horse-rider as attendant of Mahākāla in the Dukhang at Alchi has not yet been a subject of Western scholarly debate.

This study would not be possible without the insight and deep knowledge of Dr. Jahoda on the history, function and ritual of local female protector deities in the Western Himalaya; a tradition, which is alive in the Western Himalaya up to the present. I am also indebted and grateful to Professor Franz Grenet (CNRS, Paris) - a leading expert on Central Asian, Sogdian/Eastern-Iranian iconography - for the discussions, the various comments and helpful criticism on my hypothesis on the identification of the deity.

7.1.1. Ideals of Worldly Rule and Symbols of Power: The Textual Evidence

The establishment of the Western Himalaya kingdoms was accompanied by various military campaigns. Thus military strength was an important aspect of the power and self-representation of all rulers.[844]

The horse is an important emblem of supremacy as well as military power in Tibetan culture. The importance of the horse in Tibet is due to its function in nomadic societies, and the horse and its decoration were a sign of status, prestige and power of the owner.[845]

The signs of worldly power and dignity embodied by the horse-rider at Alchi and his martial character are important aspects of the double function of worldly authority and religious protection, characteristic for early art in this region.

Giuseppe Tucci gives a description of the political aspect of the dynasties in Western Tibet, explaining the double function of religious and political leadership on the occasion of the royal foundation at Tabo.[846] According to Tucci, the title La Lama Yeshe Ö, 'the master of chief of the

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[843] Dr. Ch. Jahoda has extensively published on this topic (2003, 2006, forthcoming). He has also analyzed the process of the different layers of ‚pagan' and Buddhist traditions in the Spiti valley and their relation (2007: 13ff.). Cf. also an unpublised MA-Thesis by K. Rathje (2007).

Lama Govinda (1992: 180-81) has commented this process as follows: *"...rituals, which were known to the magicians, shamans, and ‚sorcerers' of old, i.e. people who had power over the human mind and the key to its hidden forces, were retained even after the advent of Buddhism in Tibet, though modified sufficiently to fit into the general frame of Buddhist ideas and traditions. Padmasambhava, himself a great master of this secret science, made wise use of it and thus fought the Bön shamans, who tried to prevent the spread of Buddhism in Tibet with their own weapons. At the same time he respected the local deities and incorporated them into the Buddhist system as ‚Protectors of the Sacred Law' – just as Buddha Śākyamuni had done with the Hindu deities of his time".*

This process of transformation and subjugation continues up to present. A fascinating example being Drabchi Lhamo, a 'modern' local tutelary deity recently oath-bound in this region, which has an enormous popularity not only in Central but also in Western Tibet. He is worshipped in a temple near Lhasa in order to ensure his benevolence and help in increasing prosperity. Wealthy lay people with concerns regarding their future prosperity give offerings and participate in rituals and oracles. I thank Dr. Christian Jahoda for sharing this information with me and for the possibility to participate in a ritual related to this deity in Lhasa during our field trip in 2007.

[844] During the time of the establishment of new kingdoms in the Western Himalaya in the 10th century Nyima Gön led various military campaigns against Guge, Mar yul and La dawags and subjugated these regions. During these annexations he also clashed against the `Brog mi ('Dards') of Bru sha, sBal ti and Sa sgang (associated with a territory outside the plateau and populated by a tribe of the Indo-Iranic borderlands (Vitali 2003: 55).

[845] The high status of the horse as a means of transport and indication of prestige in central asia is a constant force in the minds of various people up to present, consequently, at Afghanistan the saddles of bycicles are covered with precious embroidered silks and tassels of glass pearls adorning the borders.

[846] Tucci 1935: 22.

gods', was adopted by many of his successors: "*...it probably indicated that the prince had taken religious vows and that, in addition to being the head of the state, he was also the religious head; in fact we know from Pad ma dkar po [Pema Karpo] that Ye-ses od [Yeshe Ö] invested himself with ecclesiastical rank. But that does not necessarily imply a total renunciation of the governing of the realm*". He further states that Yeshe Ö, although having renounced the throne, continued to be the head of the country's armed forces.[847]

However, insignia of worldly rule play a minor role in the depictions of sovereignty at Tabo – where the royal lama Changchub Ö is represented as a deified king - which contrasts to the courtly images at Alchi with their emphasis on insignia, specific costumes and textiles as signs of status and power. Of course, the royal lamas of Tabo are religious dignitaries while most of the members of the Dro clan, represented in the images at Alchi, are lay persons. Therefore, the use of different images of power to claim legitimacy is not surprising.

Petech assumes that the new rulers in Purang-Guge mainly profited from the trade in this region, which they sustained actively. This income, which was also the basis for the establishment of monasteries, secured the livelihood of the local community and guaranteed their subordination and loyalty to the ruler (cf. 2.4.). Thus the different modes of donor depictions in the Western Himalaya Buddhist temples are probably not only an indication of different cultural strata, but certainly reflect diverging political and economic systems, which resulted in a variety of 'images of power'.

An inscription at Wanla (Ladakh) gives insight into the ethos of secular rule in the later phase of the history of the Western Himalaya[848] (13th to 14th c.), in which the aspect of the ruler as protector of the territory plays a major role:

> "From (the) four northern nomad clans he collected tax in the form of milk products in great quantities. Wherever the courageous man went, he was victorious in battle. He acted unrivalled with armies (that were) small, large, middle, the three; all those who had acted as his rivals he gradually brought down in an agreement. He overpowered Sbalti, Brog pa and other little ones."[849]

Written sources from the time of the old Tibetan aristocracy have been preserved, in which the territorial and military division of Tibet at the time of Thrisong Detsen (T. K'ri srong lde btsan) is contained. This text shows that at the times of the royal dynasty, there was a military administration akin to that of the Turks and the Mongols in Tibet. As Tucci[850] states: "*The territory was a military entity which was bound to supply, in case of war, a certain number of warriors under the responsibility of the clan settled in it.*"

The most important source of the symbols of power and authority of the Guge kingdom is the list of royal insignia of kings given in the Ngari Gyalrab. The royal insignia, probably also associated with magical power, are given a prominent position in this text, which lists the treasures of Yeshe Ö's father Tashigön (T. bKra shis mgon/ bKra śis mgon) as his share of the power: "*The horse which makes the tour of the four continents in one day, the turquoise earrings emitting*

[847] Ibid: 23.

[848] Tropper 2006: 132ff.

[849] Ibid: 134-135.

[850] Tucci 1949: 738.

the light fulfilling wishes, the sky sword which cuts the necks of the demons....".[851] The 'horned helmet crown',[852] turquoise earrings, 'armour, magnificently shining like silk', and the 'horsewhip with a long handle' are also among the regalia. This demonstrates that the horse and objects related to horse riding were a constituent part of the royal regalia as were the armour and symbols of power.[853] I suggest that the horses and shields depicted in the last scene of the Sudhana legend in the Main Hall of Tabo be interpreted as the insignia of the royal lama who had renunciated worldly power and wealth before ordination. However, their protective qualities are still present, indicated by the position in close relationship with the deities in the cella.

7.1.2. Horse and Bridle as Status Symbols of Worldly and Religious Power in Tibet

As already pointed out, the horse is an emblem of supremacy ('Hoheitszeichen') and power in Tibet. Horse and bridle even had the status of insignia up to the time of the Dalai Lamas. These were used during ceremonial gatherings when high dignitaries presented themselves in public.[854] The horse could also be used as a throne for high dignitaries or deities in the Tibetan Buddhist realm. "*Wurde zum Beispiel das Staatsorakel im Rahmen festlicher Zermonien vom Nechung-Kloster nach Lhasa überführt, so ritt es in Mönchskleidung hinter einem reich geschmückten Pferd her, auf dessen Sattel die Ritualgewänder in derselben Weise drapiert waren wie auf seinem Thron im Kloster, mit in die Steigbügel gesteckten Stiefeln*".[855]

The precious horse of Tachog Rimpoche (T. rta mchog rin po che) represented royal power, dignity and legitimacy of the *cakravartin* (universal monarch) and it was also a sign of the supremacy of high religious dignitaries and a symbol of the efficacy and power in the world of deities and local spirits, demonstrating the close relationship between worldly and Buddhist signs of authority.

Of course, the 'prototype' of the royal horse-rider in the Buddhist context is Śākyamuni on his faithful horse Kaṇṭhaka. The horse's hooves were carried by celestial beings when he rode out of the palace and gave up the kingdom. Various depictions exist of the hunting prince referring to the courtly life of the Buddha just before His final enlightenment.

Śākyamuni is the model for all Buddhists, but the prince Kaṇṭhaka, in particular, is undoubtedly a pre-figuration and exemplar of the path towards the personal enlightenment and ideal of a monarch. Accordingly, the prince leaving his palace secretly on his horse is depicted as a prince in Western Himalayan courtly garb, as shown on the *dhoti* (skirt) of the colossal sculpture of Maitreya in the Alchi Sumtsek (Pl. 49).[856]

The double symbolism of Śākyamuni leaving the palace on his horse and the ideal of the royal horseman in Sāsānian Iran - who has semi-divine status and is one of the primary themes of Sāsānian luxury art - is a constant feature in the art of the Silk Road. A Sāsānian pearl roundel containing a mounted horse-rider with celestial beings carrying the hooves is depicted

[851] Vitali 1996: 161.

[852] Vitali associates the crown with zoomorphic crowns of probably Sāsānian origin. These elements were adopted by various Central Asian kingdoms as well as by the Shangshung kings (1996: 162).

[853] Ibid: 161. Among the royal insignia mentioned in the Ngari Gyalrab, which (T. bKra.shis.mgon), (Yeshe Ö's father) received were also 'the turquoise earrings heavy and light in weight', 'the sword with a long *g.yag* tip, the Khrom (i.e. Iranic) lightning crown with white horns'. It can be assumed that these royal treasures had a double value as extraordinary objects granting magical power and symbols of royal status (Vital 1996: 161).

[854] Cat. 2006: 447.

[855] Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996: 423; cited after Cat. 2006: 451.

[856] Goepper/Poncar 1996: fig. on p 130.

in the zenith of a Buddhist cave temple at Bäzäklik (Turfan)[857] and in temple No. 6 at Sängim (Fig. 20).[858] The Buddhist paintings in these cave temples bear many parallels with regard to style and iconography. When Prince Siddhartha devoted himself to the search for enlightenment, Kaṇṭhaka died and was thereafter summoned into celestial realms. The depiction of this theme in the centre of the ceiling's cupola is thus an effective position to reflect the symbolism of a heavenly space in a temple. In addition, in some of these temples round openings at the same position of the cupola can be found leading the onlooker's gaze to the open sky, and so the symbolism is clearly related.[859]

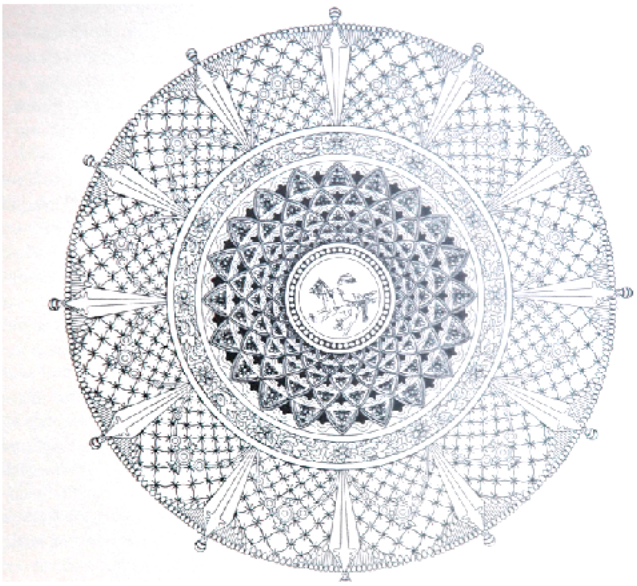


Fig. 20: Cupola, Sängim, temple 6 (after Franz 1986: 63, reconstruction after Grünwedel)

The mingling of the pictorial language of Central Asian luxury and Buddhist symbolism to serve religious ideas as well as political intentions is also observable on the ceilings of the Alchi Sumtsek. Its fusion with luxury art can be interpreted as a glorification of worldly riches which Śākyamuni renounced.[860]

7.1.3. The Mounted Nobleman in the Western Himalaya

Royal warriors, noble horse-riders, dangerous and benefactory protectors: their roles in temples of the region from Nako to Alchi as compared to Shalu (Central Tibet)

A constant feature in early Western Himalaya and the nearly contemporaneous Central Tibetan art is the depiction of donors in pictorial ensembles of protector deities in the Gokhang (T. *sgo khang*, entry hall) at Tabo and at Shalu (T. Zhwa lu). There they are shown together with armed horsemen emphasizing the function of protection and military power of worldly rule (Pl. 160).[861]

In order to understand the function of these images in the sacred dwelling, it is necessary to briefly explain their position in the temple. The temples of the early phases at Tabo (around

[857] Bäzäklik lies in the Turfan Oasis, where Uigur Turks founded the kingdom of Qočo in the 9th century and survived until the 11th century.

[858] Franz 1986: image on p. 63.

[859] I wish to thank J. Ebert for this subtle observation.

[860] The renunciation (T. rab tu byung ba, S. pravarajya, Auszug in die Hauslosigkeit') is of course the significant event in the spiritual career of the historical Buddha.

[861] The Gokhang (T. *sgo khang*, Entry Hall) of Tabo is part of the original ground plan of the main temple, and it can be concluded from the paintings that the super-structure and the sanctum also stem from the founding period around 996. From this early period are also the paintings in the Gokhang and elements of the painting in the cella, such as a green tantric deity in the passage to the sanctum (Klimburg-Salter 1996: 50). In addition, the results of the study of ceiling decorations in the Tabo temple allows an attribution of the painted panels on the ceiling in the sanctum to the early period (Papa-Kalantari 2006).

996) and Shalu (beginning of the 11th century)[862] have a comparable spatial organization as well as iconography (also the decorative scheme of ceilings is comparable, which will be discussed later in greater detail). A horizontal sequence and hierarchy of space is characteristic for the early period represented at Tabo and Shalu, in the form of a row of separate spaces along a middle axis in contrast to later vertical tendencies in the spatial symbolism of a temple.[863] In both temples the entry hall (Gokhang) serves as a separate ritual space closely related to the protector's chapel (Gönkhang). The word of the latter literally means the house of the Lord, e.g. the *Yi dam*, the protective deity of the sect or convent.[864]

It is important to note in this context that in this part of the temple at Shalu donors share pictorial spaces with armed horse-riders comparable to Alchi, where they are concentrated on the main wall. In a large chapel in the Entry Hall at Shalu, positioned on its right and left walls, large donor depictions or images of local dignitaries[865] are shown.[866] The lay people standing in a row are dressed in precious garments and wear a combination of turbans and crowns. They are orientated towards the entrance of the chapel, and so they are subordinated to the Dukhang in their function as donors and protectors. On the inner border of the wall near the opening and on both sides of it are vertical rows of royal horse-riders in aristocratic dresses and turban-like headgear, carrying bows. The royal warriors form the retinue of the royal persons and local dignitaries. Some of them are shown in a fighting position, thus displaying their martial aspect. In this double valance the warriors resemble the noble horse-rider in the Mahākāla composition at Alchi.

In addition, the general layout at Alchi, namely the combination of the noble warrior and the frieze of donors (plus the horse-riders in the lowest zone), is comparable with that at Shalu. However, at Alchi these elements are set into a more geometric layout, comparable with more or less contemporaneous thangka compositions. The position of the lay images are further symptoms of the double function of royal warriors as both retinue of the donor and protectors in a more general sense - at Shalu they have a prominent position in one of the chapels of the Gokhang (Entry Hall). The entrance wall at Alchi with Mahākāla above the portal has an

[862] Cf. Kreijger 1997.

[863] At Alchi colossal statues in narrow temples in front of the entrance of the Dukhang might have substituted the earlier protector chapel. Only few traces are left of these structures, which are currently documented by Prof. Neuwirth, University of Graz.

[864] Tucci wrote in his ‚Tibetan Painted Scrolls' on the Gönkhang (protector's chapel) of Phyang monastery in Ladakh: "*Each sect or monastery has its patron, its terrible defender, the terrific and warlike aspect of the merciful deity who protects the devotees from the dangers of evil powers....The Yi dam rules and guides a host of lesser beings...nearly all aboriginal deities, which Buddhism later accepted, transforming them into the terrible keepers of the Law; many of them are local demons who, after the triumph of Buddhism, were taken on as custodians of the temple built on the place they used to garrison, of its treasures and of its fortunes...Yi dam of mGon-po [S. Mahākāla], surrounded by the pageant of their terrible followers thus reside and receive their cult in the mGon k'an [Gönkhang, protector's chapel], mysterious shrines into which it is very difficult to be admitted...(inside) one has the impression of plunging in bottomless night, into solidified darkness...you think you were looking out over primordial chaos.*"

[865] The main wall with the deities is destroyed.

[866] The protector's chapel is also remarkable for its ground plan A row of three small chapels open to both sides of a middle corridor. The chapels are decorated with paintings of an early period at the beginning of the 11th century (see H. Kreijger 1997); one chapel houses *dikpala*, among them gods of the 10 directions, with weapons and crowns, mounted on different animals. The iconography, and general layout of the images is comparable to the Gokhang (Entry Hall) of Tabo, while the style differs (cf. also chapter 6./Ceilings).

equivalent function. Thus the donors depictions in the Entry Hall of Tabo – besides illustrating a historical moment of consecration and probably also the subordination to the monastic and secular law mentioned in an edict[867] - also seem to imply protective functions (Pl. 157). This additional interpretation is further supported by the *mudra* of the royal lama performing *abhayā*, the hand gesture of protection or fearlessness (Pl. 185, ff.), which is commonly shown on images of the Buddha, where it represents his sovereignty and protective blessings.

7.1.3.1. The Horse-rider at Alchi in the Iconographic Overall Context

The mounted nobleman or noble warrior at Alchi is represented in a pictorial ensemble with Mahākāla (T. mGon po, 'protector'), positioned above the entrance of the temple (Pl. 152).[868] This configuration can also be found in the niche of the portal at Dunkar (T. Dung dkar),[869] replacing the earlier types of female tutelary deities depicted at Tabo.

The prominent position of the Mahākāla painting in Alchi is in line with his role as the *dharmapāla,* the protector of the doctrine, the Dharma, and powerful emanation of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.[870] His image is flanked by a row of seven Buddhas on each side. A mandala is depicted above the Mahākāla. The noble warrior is set outside the halo of Mahākāla, almost emerging out of the dark background, which in later depictions is normally reserved for wrathful deities.[871] On this surface parts of humans are dispersed, together with skeletons and birds with allusions to cemeteries.[872] The opposite side, i.e. the left upper corner of the whole ensemble, is dominated by different mounts of protector deities, namely wolves, roaring leopards and other wild cats. The local tutelary deities riding on

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[867] In this edict, members of the ruling elite (kings, queens and ministers) had to swear on oath to respect this edict (cf. Also Vitali 1996: 209).

[868] Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956: 401-402): "*The worship of the dharmapālas takes place in the so called mgon khang, mostly regarded as the holiest room of a temple. Its entrance is often guarded by stuffed wild yak, leopards, etc., the so-called spyan gzigs, who act as the messengers and guards of the protective deities. ...On the walls hang painted scrolls depicting the dharmapālas and their retinue. These thang ka are usually kept covered b a piece of cloth, which is only removed when a ceremony takes place in the mgon khang... In the corners of the room lean bundles of ancient arms which were used for a long time in warfare and having in this way acquired magic qualities, they were presented to the temple. They are supposed to be the most effective weapons of the guardian-deities.*"

Lama Govinda (1992: 184) gave a vivid description of the throne of the Great Oracle of Dunkar Gompa: "*It was all so utterly fantastic and surprising that we could only stare at the majestic figure that occupied the golden throne and was clad in magnificent brocades and crowned by a jewel-studded golden tiara with the three eyes of the all-seeing spirit....Like a vision of one of the legendary emperors of old, a mighty ruler of a vanished world , resplendent with all the attributes of power...at this moment the full orchestra of radongs and clarinets, cymbals and kettle-drums rose to a crescendo, while the deep voices of a choir of monks chanted invocations to the powerful protectors...*"

[869] The cave temples lie north of Tholing (Western Tibet, TAR) and are still little studied, due to the political and complex administrative situation in this border region between India and China.

[870] "*...in the archetype form of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas their compassion is focused in wrathful form with all its immense power toward helping those adepts are already advanced on the path of enlightenment and Buddhahood*" (Linrothe 2004: 46).

[871] At Alchi dark colours are also used as a backdrop for mandala.

[872] A cemetery background is a typical environment and residence of a mounted protector deity mentioned in the biography of Rinchen Zangpo, namely Begtse (T. *lcam sring*), who was originally probably a Mongol deity. In ritual texts quoted by Nebesky-Wojkowitz Begtse (lCam sring) resides on the *Na ru stse* cemetery, which lies in the north-eastern direction. A most terrible cemetery, where black clouds gather, ferocious animals, who come to gnaw at the corpses lying around. The great ferocious black cemetery birds fly there carrying the brains of the destroyed enemies in their beak. Begtse has a garment of red silk and a cloak made of the brownish skin of a he-goat, he wears a helmet, and can also be depicted riding a horse (Ibid. 1956: 91).

their respective animals are depicted in the lowest zone. The noble horse-rider shown in the upper right zone of the composition is turned to the main deity in his role as the deity's retinue. He is accompanied below by a standing warrior holding a shield, thus representing the noble man's shield bearer. The backdrop is filled with sculls and fragments of bones and black birds alluding to the cemetery-like environment of Mahākāla; the birds might also be an attribute of a specific tutelary deity as will be seen later.

Mahākāla (Gönpo, T. mGon po) is depicted in a flaming mandorla. He treads on a human below a triangular textile cloth bordered by skull vows. He has a dark complexion with his eyes wide open and his hair standing on end holding a *kapala* (skull bowl) and a short knife. According to Linrothe, the attributes, chopper and skull bowl, are distinctive for the Panjarnata ('lord of the tent') tradition, which has strong roots in the idea of protection of the scholastic traditions of the Dharma.

7.1.3.1.1. Warrior-like Aspects and Attributes of the Noble Horse-rider as Protector

In his role as part of a retinue of Mahākāla, the horse-rider is clearly positioned within the demonic world and embodies the qualities of a higher spiritual being. The sceptre (a frequent attribute of protector deities) of the horseman and the shield carried by his retinue emphasize the martial aspect of the figure. It is worth noting that in earlier pictorial representations of donors at Tabo, Dunkar and Nako, no insignia are shown, which relate to the martial aspect of rule, whereas at Alchi weapons such as battle-axe and lance as well as the shield are among the insignia of supremacy.[873]

Shields can be seen tied to a pillar in the Protectors's chapel (Gönkhang, T. mGon kang) of Phyang (Piang) monastery, Ladakh,[874] where they are part of the furnishings. Lionel Fournier has documented shields, bows and arrows in the temples of Tsaparang (Pl. 161).[875] They are made of wickerwork with applications of metal plaques in concentric circles, recalling the design of shields shown in Alchi. Divination arrows as attributes and used for worshipping a *dharmapāla* (T. *chos skyon*, guardians of the teachings) are mentioned by Nebesky-Wojkowitz.[876]

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[873] This is comparable to the function of attributes in the legendary subjugation of protector deities. Likewise historical texts on Mahākāla's summoning as a protector deity exist, in which a banner with secret texts and cloths play a prominent role (Vitali 2001: 7). It also attests to the fact, that attributes become important pictorial formulas to express certain aspects of a deity in later orthodox Buddhism.

[874] Cf. also Linrothe, 2004: fig. 1.46.

[875] Some of these shields are housed in Lhasa, Potala Museum today.

[876] Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1959: 365.

The cult of the *dharmapālas* includes the performance of religious dances (T. *'cham*). The author documented a dance carried out in connection with the worship of the three principal guardian deities of the Himalayan state of Sikkim, which includes armed warriors: *"After the rol 'cham (Music dance) a sword dance follows, performed by either thirteen, fifteen, or seventeen warriors, dressed in colorful garments, with broad bands of silk bound cross-wise over the breast and carrying shields and swords. These warriors represent the retinue of the mountain-god. Their dance, besides its religious meaning – the driving away of the evil forces, which might linger around the place where the dance is held – is also meant as a physical exercise. While the chief dancers representing Gangs chen mdzod lnga and Yab bdud are priests, the sword-dancers are laymen drawn from the noble families of Sikkim"* (Ibid. 402 ff).

Further the author describes dances (T. *'cham*) carried out on the same occasion related to horses: During a specific dance "*three richly decorated horses are conducted by festively dressed attendants....These horses, which are kept in the royal stable without ever being ridden, are regarded as the mounts of the triad of mountain gods....After the two chief dancers have entered the temple, the warriors perform two dances called bya ba(?) and phyi bskor. Accompanied by a band of the king's bodyguard and by attendants carrying banners and leading the three horses dedicated to the mountain gods. They*

Dancers with shields and swords are also depicted on the ceilings of the Sumtsek, integrated in surface-patterns, which allude to printed textiles; however, the same figural style is also found in small images of attending deities on various heavenly thrones in the wall-paintings of the same temple.[877] I suggest that the function of these figures on the ceiling is clearly related to the protective function of martial dancers; in the overall decoration of the ceiling they can be interpreted as guardians of the upper border of the temple, the portal to the heavenly realm.

Mounted horsemen holding axes are furthermore to be found in a great number in the famous rock-images in Northern Pakistan. Comparable engraved images of heroes on horseback with axes can also be found in Ladakh.[878] The horsemen in the images of the Upper Indus are often depicted in pictorial ensembles with shields, signalling specific signs of sovereignty related to the tribal cultures, which appear to have dominated the region after the 9th century. The shields show specific features and are depicted as various circular ornamental forms - probably erroneously - associated by Jettmar with sundisks.[879] In Udaipur (Mirkulā Devī temple; Himachal Pradesh, Pl. 158)[880] shields and arrows are used as ornamental features decorating the entrance portal, executed in a rather archaic style; these elements obviously allude to the same apotropaic function of weapons, which is a common feature in Inner Asian rock art. Interestingly, both axes and shields exist as emblems of power among the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush up to very recently and are often transferred into the ornamental language of wooden architectural elements (Pl. 159).[881]

The shields at Alchi have specific cross-like decorations, which can also be found on a shield held by a demon at Dunkar. Klimkeit associated Manichean religious symbolism with the cross-shaped decoration observable in a drinking scene and in a horse-riders group.[882] Whatever religious connotation this sign may have, the carefully depicted shield is a constant attribute of donors and heroes and thus of great importance as a sign of sovereignty and power in the region.

The depiction of arms and shields is a significant element in the depiction of local protector spirits or mountain deities as well as donors: shields display different designs, the ornament is carefully depicted and seems to be not only decorative.[883] While donors and the royal horse-rider have different designs on their shield (black ground, eight-petalled rosettes in the interstices) in the 'drinking scene,' cross-shaped design with lions in the interstices are also shown, clearly signalling royalty. Similar designs are also found on the dress of the enthroned

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march then thrice around the lha khang singing war-songs. Returning the space in front of the shrine they stage once more a sword dance, whose initial part is known as the dgu bskor" (Ibid: 405).

This not only demonstrates the function of horses of highest breed in the cult of protector deities, but also the close relation of courtly ritual and Buddhist doctrine, the military aspect being a shared goal of both realms.

[877] Cf. Goepper 1996: fig. on p. 99.

[878] Cf. Vohra 1995: pl.2.

[879] Jettmar1985: 26. These symbols can also be found on Gilgit Manuscripts (Ibid. 27).

[880] Cf. also Widorn 2007, unpublished Ph.D. thesis.

[881] These elements are in particular characteristic for the villages in Ashkun and Waigal, cf. Klimburg 2004: Vol. 2, fig. 193.

[882] Klimkeit 1982: 20; cf. also Klimkeit 1979a, 1979b.

[883] The shields of demons and protector deities at Dunkar and Pedongpo show an eight-pointed, star-shape design, or alternating stripes in black and white radiating from the centre.

donor below, thus indicating his prerogative, while the eight-petalled Buddhist lotus may indicate the protection of the dharma. This variety of shields and their prominent function as symbols of status is comparable with that on the rock carvings of the 'battle-axe people' along the Indus. Thus the symbols on the shields may bear iconographic value associated with the power of the owner. They may also indicate a specific identity, certain tribes or families. Interestingly, these specific elements of shields and axes can only be found in the Dukhang of Alchi. This indicates that the signs of rank of a specific historical personality depicted here signal not only the presence of the Dro clan in the region of Alchi, possibly the ideal centre of their domain, but may also aim at symbolically transferring their protective power to protect the temple.[884] These local features and signs of power and protection also merged with the attributes and protective qualities of deities of specific territories.

The noble horse-rider of the Alchi panel with his display of courtly dignity, worldly power and authority stands in contrast to earlier depictions of protector deities on the entrance wall of the temples in the Western Himalaya. However, donors associated with mounted horsemen are a constant feature in the art of this region. Due to his position as an attendant of Mahākāla at Alchi, the high dignitary is represented as a powerful protector of the *dharma* and a warrior against his enemy. This specific type of martial hero at Alchi integrates various attributes of external power and knightly dignity, typical for the vocabulary of sovereignty in the region.

7.1.3.1.2. Eastern- Iranian/Sogdian Culture of the Courtly Cavalier in Ladakh and Northern Pakistan

In addition to his martial aspect, the rider of noble birth at Alchi (cf. Pl. 162) also recalls courtly traditions in Central Asia comparable to those shown in the banquet scene (Pl. Pl. 210). In both depictions the figures are shown in a somewhat heraldic severity, and the focus of both renderings centres on the display of wealth and splendour in the tradition of the aristocratic elite in Central Asia and Sāsānian Iran. However, these two scenes also differ significantly, as the nobleman in the drinking scene holds a battle-axe, while the horseman holds a sceptre or spear - the latter being a leading weapon of local tutelary deities. Furthermore, the noblemen in the assembly scene and the banquet have a nimbus, whereas the horse-rider is without a halo. His precious white horse, probably of the highest breed, is fully bridled with jewellery around the neck and on the reins emphasizing the high status of both the horse and its rider.

The royal figure or nobleman on horseback is a significant and widespread theme in Central Asian art, representing an aspect of the military power in nomadic cultures and the mobility of its court.[885] In a more remote tradition, the religious connotation[886] of the royal hunter, a prerogative of Sāsānian rulers, as well as the semi-divine status of the horse in Sodian culture, stands behind this pictorial scheme. It is important to note here that the heraldic character of the composition and the attire made of luxurious garments associated with royalty demonstrate a distinctive Eastern Iranian cultural orientation in early Western Himalayan art[887]

[884] At Mangyu donors or enthroned lay people hold a scepter, and have a dagger in the belt, comparable to the Alchi Sumtsek.

[885] See Al'baum 1975: pl. 13.

[886] The rider-less horse fully bridled is depicted at Afrasiab, guided by a man with *padams* (pieces of textile before the mouth), an indication of the horse's ritual function and its sacred nature (for images see: www.orientarch.uni-halle.ce/ca/afras).

[887] Among the most detailed studies on this topic are: Pal (1982), Flood (1991), Papa-Kalantari 2006.

mediated mainly by Sogdians. As an example, Volker Thewalt[888] has pointed out the similarities between Sogdian horse-depictions engraved in stone along the Indus (Thalpan bridge) and the bridled horse at Alchi.[889] The horse at Thalpan may also be a symbol of local deity. In the Sogdian religious system integrating Zoroastrian and Buddhist beliefs, the horse had sacred status. Usually the rider-less horse (also found at Tabo and Nako) indicates the pride and power of the owner, but also signals the act of renunciation in the Buddhist sphere.

A comparable bridled horse with his rider, shown with a raised sword and wearing a central Asian caftan, can be found at Dras (Ladakh, near Kargil), where he is part of an ensemble with Kaśmīr style Buddhist sculptures in stone (Pl. 166).

The aristocratic pride of the mounted nobleman and the precious horse he is riding places the image in the culture of the courtly cavalier as depicted in various Sogdian sites such as Afrasiab and Pandjikent (Pl. 165). Sogdian merchants, who were also active in Ladakh, may have been the mediators of these images of power in the region as they established small colonies all the way from Samarkand to China, though they never built a powerful kingdom there.[890]

The warrior-like ideal of Sogdian aristocracy is also reflected in the ideals of the local communities dominated by powerful rulers. The pride and chivalry ('Edelmut') of the cavalier and his martial spirit may correspond to the ideals of the indigenous society of Ladakh and its images of power, prior to the arrival of the Central Tibetan ruling elite. Similar concepts of society and cavalier-like ideals were also characteristic of the 'martial' communities of the local rulers in Northern Pakistan: rock-paintings of warriors on horseback with axes reflect these concepts.[891]

The character of these indigenous societies and the polity in the Western Himalaya during the establishment of the new feudal elites needs further investigation. It is clear that the choice of Eastern Iranian courtly models is not just a question of fashion at a given time, but reflects a cultural stratum remaining from a cross-cultural synthesis and religious pluralism. The image of the horse-rider thus integrates the Sogdian cavalier, reflecting the *Weltanschauung* of the

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[888] Thewalt 1984: 213.

[889] Thewalt also discussed the possible Buddhist content of such rider-less horses, probably co-notating the renunciation of Śākyamuni, to devote himself to the search for enlightenment. The flying horses at the ceiling of Alchi might also have this double-value being both royal riders and the riding Śākyamuni, whose hooves are held by celestial beings so that they shall not wake the sleeping guards. A rider-less horse in flying galopp is also depicted on the torso of a Bodhisattva at Khotan or Balawaste (ibid). For an image of the latter see Bussagli 1963: p. 55.

[890] Gombrich/Bechert 1995: 102.

[891] Pal (1975, 1982) was the first to suggest that the material culture of the Shāhi dynasties in Northern Pakistan might be the models of the courtly culture at Alchi. Cf. Also D. Klimburg-Salter (1987) who does not clarify which period and specific rulers she is referring to. We have no evidence that after the Buddhist Palola Shāhi (whose sculptures show dresses comparable to those found in the murals at Alchi) had been defeated, the local rulers in these regions continued the high standard of courtly and artistic culture of the earlier Shāhi kings. All the more it is known, that the later dynasties may have been illiterate and their artistic remains are rather simple visual statements. Thus it is quite improbable that they hade significant impact on the courtly culture of the emerging aristocratic elites in Ladakh and their Buddhist foundations. Furthermore the refined courtly imagery and symbolism in Ladakh cannot be reconstructed on the basis of the identification of attributes and costumes alone.

For a recent catalogue and discussion of rock images in Northern Pakistan featuring armed horseriders from the post-Palola Shāhi dynasties see Bemman 2005.

aristocratic elite and the powerful martial aspect, peculiar to local rulers in Ladakh and Northern Pakistan.

The royal horse, an emblem of prestige and status in nomadic cultures as well as a sign of sovereignty of the ruling elite, is an additional significant feature at Tabo and Nako, Kinnaur (approximately early 12th century). In the Lotsawa Lhakhang (Translator's temple; west wall) the horse is fully bridled and accompanied by a man on foot to the left of the donor depiction. The cloud-like motifs on the saddle (resembling coarse fabrics made of felt produced in nomadic areas of Central Asia such as Mongolia), together with other characteristic elements such as the horse's bridle and the heavy white boots of the guide (or warrior)[892] with their cross-gartering up to the knee, are presumably reminiscent of Central Asian aesthetics; their their cultural background still needs to be identified.[893] In narrative *Gaṇḍavyūha* scenes (Pilgrimage of Sudhana, T. Nor bzang) in the Tabo Dukhang (T. *'du khang*, Assembly Hall) four bridled horses and shields are depicted; their meaning in this context has never been suggested. It is possible that symbols of the royalty of the royal lamas were integrated into the scene of the spiritual journey of Sudhana. This narrative cycle functions as an exemplar for the spiritual career of every practitioner and that of the ruler in particular. Thus, the horses as signs of worldly rule may allude to the insignia of the kings of Guge as well as an act of renunciation,[894] underlining the request for enlightenment by the royal founders. The presence of horses and shields in close spatial relationship to the sanctum underlines their protective function in the temple.

In contrast to the depiction of a local ruler flanked by his precious horse at Nako, the rider on horseback is representational and heraldic in character at Alchi. The latter might be reminiscent of the famous Sogdian ambassadors in Panjikent and Afrasiab, old Samarkand, as already stated,[895] and - in a more remote tradition - the Sasānian *topos* of the royal horseman.[896] It is also the earliest known depiction in the region in which this theme is soon afterwards placed in a broader iconographic ensemble representing the retinue of the protective deity.

7.1.3.1.3. Cosmopolitan Taste and Local Style: Courtly Costumes and Attributes at Alchi

The noble warrior and some tutelary deities are both shown in courtly garb; the iconographic function and symbolism of the courtly dress seems therefore to be related in this pictorial

[892] The boots might be of wool or felt with footwear consisting of a leather sole and laced leather bands (see Sharma/Singh 1997: fig. A. 26).

At Mazar-Tagh, near the Khotan-river, a quilted shoe of woollen felt with leather patches was found (cf. Whitfield: 1990: fig. 141, ca. 8th-9th century). At this site also Tibetan documents were found thus the items might stem from the Tibetan occupation of the south Taklamakan during the 8th and early 9th centuries.

At Nako men still wear long, thick socks of woven material in combination with (modern) leather shoes on festivities.

[893] At the tenth seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (Oxford 2003) a few contributions dealing with the pre-Buddhist culture in Western Tibet have been presented. The archaeological studies (of residential buildings, burial sites that contain inter alia horses) as well as historical sources suggest a strong impact of a refined pre-Buddhist culture in this region, the mythical Shangshung (cf. Aldendorfer, verbal communication).

[894] Perhaps it reflects the conscious use of local cultural elements, comparable to the Tibetan dresses used in this narrative cycle. Steinkellner 1996 article deals with the iconography and religious content of the frieze and contains useful drawings and a few pictures; for further images of this frieze see Klimburg-Salter 1997: 122ff.

[895] Cf. Al'baum 1975.

[896] Papa-Kalantari 2007a.

ensemble. The dignitary also wears a dress very similar to that of the male figure in the ritual banquet scene. In contrast to the noble horse-rider and the nobleman in the 'royal drinking scene' (= ritual banquet scene), the dress of the protagonist in the assembly scene is a simpler woollen caftan decorated with small birds. The horse-rider's precious robe of silk is laid symmetrically across in front to make a V-neck, secured with a broad textile band. The sleeves are further decorated with tirāz-strips (signs of rank). Following Western Tibetan customs, the nobleman is adorned with a necklace and earrings consisting of alternating pearls and turquoises, which are part of the royal regalia of the Guge-kings, mentioned in the *Ngari Gyalrab*,[897] while a turban with floating ends covers his long braids. Interestingly, these seemingly indigenous elements, such as the long braids and the necklace, are absent in lay imagery of the Sumtsek (T. *gsum brtsegs)*. The coat is decorated like a Sāsānian or Central Asian caftan with large lion roundels and birds (probably ducks, characteristic for decorations on sumptuous Sogdian textiles); such lion medallions strongly allude to Iranian signs of sovereignty, while the combination of coat and baggy trousers and boots are the attire of various nomadic steppe peoples.[898] A famous painting on silk from Dunhuang (housed at the Potala Museum at Lhasa) shows the costume of the Tibetan minister at the T'ang court decorated with Sāsnian pearl medallions with ducks in the centre.

One of the earliest depictions of royal figures of the old monarchy is a sculpture in metal featuring a Dharmaking, ca. 11th to 12th century, from Central Tibet[899]. He wears a crown and the sleeves of the kaftans have borders decorated with a presumably Sogdian silk, decorated with beaded medallions containing ducks, comparable to the dress of the Tibetan minister in the Dunhuang painting. Another sculpture stems from the 13th century and is housed in the Potala Palace collection. It depicts Songtsen Gampo[900] wearing a costume comparable to that of Gar Tongtsen (minister of Songtsen Gampo) depicted on a silk banner from the Tang period: it shows pearl roundels with figural motifs (post-Sāsānian decorative schemes, combined with probably Chinese motifs, namely dragons, symbols of Chinese emperors). Further characteristics of the costumes during the early period are the long sleeves, kaftans with crossed lapels, large earrings, and long braids hanging down over the shoulders.

A depiction of Gar Tongtsen in copper alloy, 13th century[901], shows him wearing a kaftan decorated with cloud motifs on his shoulders, which may be a cape (comparable to the high dignitaries in the Parinirvāṇa-cave at Dunhuang). J. Ebert discussed the function of collars and bell-shaped sleeves in costumes of donor depictions at Kizil (7th century) in her 2006 article and she shows that these elements are distinctive signs of sovereignty in images of the ruling monarchs.[902] In particular, the cape may thus also have been a specific sign of rank in the Tibetan cultural sphere during the time of the Tibetan Empire in Central Asia.[903]

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[897] An image of 1937 with three officials in Lhasa wearing the ornaments said to date from the period of the Ancient Kings is published in Clarke 2004: 22; this special set of jewellery (*ring rgyan*) comprises large corals, turquoises and amber beads and adorns the New Year costumes.

[898] Cf. Knauer 1999; especially paintings from Dalverzin-tepe, 7th century (fig. 18), as well as Kirish (Xinjiang), 8th century (ibid: fig. 19).

[899] The image can be viewed in following exhibition catalogue: Cat. 2006: no. 80, p. 428.

[900] Cat. 2003: 30.

[901] Ibid: 34.

[902] Ebert 2006: 107.

[903] Interestingly the cape of a specific type of bejewelled Buddha popular in the Hindukush and Kashmir also wears a cape, often decorated with jewellry, which is covering the shoulders and also enlarging the silhouette.

Furthermore, earrings, long hair and beard are significant features of the depiction of the Tibetan Minister Gar Tongtsen. All these features are distinctive Tibetan dress elements, also seen in the depictions of donors in the Western Himalaya.

The Central-Asian luxury robes with post-Sāsānian motifs made in Sogdia and China as shown on sculptures of Tibetan monarchs (though from a later period, ca. 13th century) and of Tibetan dignitaries in the wall-paintings from the Tibetan period at Dunhuang demonstrate that this type of dress had courtly status in Tibet at a very early stage. Moreover, a rare set of trousers and coat (ca. 8th century) found in Tibet - probably intended for a little boy of the royal court - was made of Sogdian and T'ang textiles (Pl. 55). All this adds further evidence of the existence of early Eastern-Iranian luxury art in Tibet, of which little remains[904]. The Sogdian textile used for the coat shows paired ducks in medallions with pearls in their beaks. This set stems from a time when Tibet's imperialistic undertakings brought it into frequent contact with both China and Sogdiana. Sogdian textiles from the same period are also models for the ornamental culture in Kaśmīr and a type of ceiling cloths at Tabo (cf. chapter 6.)

Accordingly, the dress ornamented with medallions containing lions in the Dukhang thus seems to reflect these early Eastern-Iranian textile traditions and courtly culture. An important reason for displaying a type of textile to be judged archaic at the time might have been for consciously alluding to the courtly culture and garbs, traditionally used by ministers and dharma kings of the old Tibetan monarchy. By this means, among others, the new rulers in the Western Himalaya might have claimed continuity and thus legitimacy.

The combination of trousers, boots and short caftans are also characteristic elements in the courtly robes of Shāhi kings in Gilgit. The dress at Alchi is also more adapted to riding on a horse and thus it reflects indigenous elements and symbols of status which were present in this region. Accordingly, both horse and dress of the horse-rider point to strong influences of Eastern-Iranian culture, even before the arrival of the Dro clan in this region.

In contrast to those in the assembly scene, the dresses of the male family members of the Dro clan recall the long woollen cloaks also found in the donor depictions at Tabo, and decorated with small-scale patterns. The precious silk robes depicted in the Dukhang also differ from those worn by the nobility in the Sumtsek: there the models for the royal dress are rather contemporaneous (beginning of the 13th century), namely Eastern-Iranian or Mongolian 'silks of gold'.[905]

To conclude, the material culture in the depiction of the noble horse-riders focuses on the display of wealth and courtly dignity in the tradition of the Tibetan courtly culture in Central Asia. However, it also integrates signs of sovereignty of the region: high boots, short dress, v-shaped neck, and insignia point to rulers of hill-states in Northern Pakistan (Gilgit and Baltistan); these insignia were probably also dominant signs of power in Ladakh before the Tibetisation of the region, as can be concluded from the rock-images. Thus, these images of power show a subtle calibration of Tibetan, Central Asian/Sogdian and local signs of royalty satisfying the demands of the new rulers.

7.1.3.2. Martial and Mounted Heroes as Protectors in the Western Himalaya

[904] Watt/Wardwell 1997: 37.

[905] Papa-Kalantari 2006.

In the early Buddhist temples of Ladakh (Alchi, Nyarma[906] and other minor foundations) and also of Dunkar (north of Tholing)[907] male mounted deities are depicted prominently as protectors, positioned above portals, or as attendants of Mahākāla flanking mandala portals. This type of deity contrasts to chronologically earlier temples at Tabo, where female tutelary deities play a central role, while at Nako neither female nor male local protectors could still not be identified. Instead, pan-Indian deities such as Tārā[908] and Prajñāpāramitā have replaced the earlier local female spirits at Nako. These female deities appear as patron deities of the ruling elite.[909]

A mounted male deity appearing in the Buddhist temples in Dunkar and Ladakh whose identity has not yet been verified may have had a specific role related to the history of the foundation phase of these temples.[910] The mounted noblemen in Dunkar and Ladakh might also be the earliest depiction of a class of martial protector deities in the Western Himalaya, who later become prominent pan-Tibetan deities.

7.1.3.2.1. Pehar (T. dPe har):[911] A Hitherto Unidentified Protector Deity of Iranian Origin in Western Tibet?

The mounted layman is shown at Dunkar (T. Dung dkar, Western Tibet, north of Tholing in a side valley of the Sutlej-river, TAR, China) at the entrance (on the inner face of the portal; Pl. 171, and, in addition, in a mandala on the ceiling of the temple (Pl. 170), approximately dateable to around 1200. In both scenes he is set in such a detailed and crowded environment accompanied by different animals and demon-like figures (with long ears or horns and a horse-head comparable to iconography of such creatures in the 'Assault of Māra')[912] that a specific legend or religious text is certainly the basis. A comparable type is also found at Nyarma and Saspotse (datable around 1200), in Ladakh.[913]

In the large mandala painting dominating the ceiling a nobleman mounted on a white ram or goat (the animal is cloven-hoofed and is further identified by twisted horns) flanks one of the Mandala's four entrance doors, protected by a fierce looking guardian deity The iconographic features of the central tutelary deity such as a heavy body, a wrathful face, a skull bowl, a

[906] Pritzker (1998: Fig. 8) published the image of the mounted nobleman at Dunkar, but without proposing a possible identification. Giuseppe Tucci (256) was one of the first Western scholar, who has given a short general description of Dunkar and Piang (T. Phyi dbangd) in his *'Sadhus et Bringands du Kailash'*, dating the caves of Dunkar erroneously into the 15th century.

Further images of the ‚noble protector', in pictorial ensembles with female deities (probably Palden Lhamo, due to the specific white hat with up-turned brim also shown at Alchi, both in the early foundations as well as in the later Lhakhang soma, built in the 13th century) can be found at Nyarma, and Saspotse, in both Ladakhi villages survived little studied Buddhist monuments; in one case protector deities and demons with weapons are shown, comparable to those found at Dunkar, which was also a Dro foundation (cf. Stoddard 2004: 941). This foundation is also a rare case of a female patronage. Interestingly, despite the presence of the Dro clan at Dunkar, Eastern-Iranian elements are absent here. This is a further argument for the hypothesis, that these elements at Alchi reflect a specific cultural stratum, prevalent in Ladakh.

[907] Cf. Luczantis 2004: 133 ff.

[908] Cf. Allinger 2005.

[909] Cf. Papa-Kalantari 2007a.

[910] Cf. Pritzker 1998: fig. 7.

[911] Various spellings are to be found in the texts: Pe kar, dPe har, dPekar, Pe dkar (cf. Tucci 1949: 735).

[912] Māra (T. bdud), who attempted to prevent the Buddha from attaining Enlightenment.

[913] Images of these paintings are unpublished to my knowledge. I am grateful to Dr. Koscizc for sharing his documentation with me.

curved knife, a tiger-skin loin-cloth, and heavy earrings clearly characterize him as Mahākāla, the protector of the *dharma*. To his right the mounted nobleman is positioned, holding a bird and flanked by wrathful warriors with demonic faces.

The mounted hero is represented as a nobleman sitting in a saddle of tiger skin, and a bird flies above him. A demonic warrior holding a bow and arrow follows or approaches him. The arrow is directed either to the horseman or to other demonic figures with a Garuda-like (T. *khyung,* mythical bird) head holding a shield. On the opposite side of the mentioned Mandala gate local tutelary deities are shown. This type of composition clearly defines him as a protector, although the bow and arrow and the hunting dog below seemingly allude to the attributes of a hunter. However, a deeper meaning is also possible as the dog is an attribute of female tutelary deities in Sogdia and in Uygur culture (see below). Dogs were also highly respected by Zoroastrians (Pl. 177).

The images on the ceiling and in the portal at Dunkar seem to represent the same iconic figure. In the Alchi Dukhang (around 1150), Mahākāla seems to have already replaced earlier local tutelary deities, whereby the latter were integrated as attendants of the main protector. The noble warrior became a constant element as a part of the retinue of Mahākāla in this phase too.

In addition, we find on the inner face of the portal of the Cave 1 at Dunkar two rectangular panels containing two superimposed images. One of them depicts the noble warrior, probably a worldly protector or an attendant of Mahākāla, with his armed retinue (Pl. 170). In the lower zone on the opposite side one sees Hārītī with children around her.[914] Unfortunately, these images are in a bad state of preservation and difficult to read.

On the portal the noble warrior is depicted as a warrior in local dress wearing a bow, and in a group below him, men are standing with animal heads carrying shields. On the other side of the portal, directly opposite this scene, a corpulent *yakṣa* type of figure with a bowl in his hand is depicted. It is Mahākāla Panjarnata ('lord of the tent') in Indian dress, accompanied by an image of Hārītī[915] below (Pl. 171).

The mounted horseman is shown with warrior-like aspects. His right arm is raised, and a quiver hangs from his belt filled with bows.[916] He is accompanied by wrathful warriors, showing demonic faces of different animals. With their shields held high and directed towards the entrance, these warriors protect against enemies coming from out-side. Demons holding shields and swords are also found in ensembles of protector deities in the Buddhist sites of Saspotse and Nyarma.[917] The compositional unit of Mahākāla, female protectors and mounted warrior deities in juxtaposition, is a significant feature in all these temples. This scheme can already be found in a unified composition in the Alchi Dukhang.

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[914] The image of Hārītī is comparable in form and style to the same deity in a mandala composition covering one of the walls in the Nako Lotsaba Lhakhang (Translator's Temple).

[915] Hariti is the queen of the „hungry ghost" living in the lower realm. She ate children and was later converted by the Buddha; thereafter she became a protectress of children.

[916] Interesting comporable attributes have been recorded by Francke (1992): a mask representing Agu (hero of the Kesar Sage) has been found at Changspa, the male hero wears a conical hat with turman-like rolled brim comparable to the deity at Dunkar (Ladakh, ibid. I. 102), while at Shargola a male dieiy in wall-paintings (denominated as Satrapa/protector of religion) is dessed as a Tibetan kniht on horse or wild-donkey (rkyang) with arrows in his quiver. According to Francke, the lama said he repesentes the brother of 'Agu Drumba. (ibid: 104).

[917] I thank Dr. G. Kozicz for sharing his photographic material with me.

The identity of this mounted lay figure, as well as the symbolism of his attributes and his mount, have not yet been discussed by Western scholars. These iconographic elements together, such as the features of a nobleman with a bird flying above him and demons or Yakṣa with drawn bow and arrows and a dog below, point to him being identified as Pehar.

Some features of the Dunkar image such as the demonic attendants can be compared with rather unusual depictions of Vaiśravaṇa in Central Asia, e.g. Dunhuang (ca. 10th century) and Bäzäklik (ca. 10th -11th centuries, Pl. 176). In these images Vaiśravaṇa is accompanied by Pehar, who was then shot at with arrows by Yakṣa companions of Vaiśravaṇa, according to a Tibetan legend.[918] Injured by these shots, he was brought to Samye and 'appointed' to the position of an oath-bound tutelary deity of the monastery on the initiative of Padmasambhava. So, in the 8th century Pehar became the protector of Tibet's oldest monastery, which had been founded by Padmasambhava. In a special local temple protectors were invoked in oracle-like rituals and Pehar became one of the main tutelary deities of the Oracle of Samye.[919] This role of Pehar as protector of a monastic institution associated with the ruling elite may also have played an important role in the foundation phase of the early Buddhist temples in the Western Himalaya, as indicated in the biography of Rinchen Zangpo and the edict of Yeshe Ö (see below).

It is possible that the Tibetan legend of the migration of Pehar might have originated from the time of close contact with Khotan, Turfan[920] and Dunhuang with the Tibetan empire in Central Asia. His cult was probably transferred to Western Tibet very early by the local dynastic rulers, probably adopting older Sogdian/ Khotanese, or later Uygur[921] or Xixia[922] features. A stunning adoption and integration of a Chinese Central Asian type of Vaiśravaṇa (T. Namthöse) is shown in a painting featuring the protector of the Upper Temple (Gongma) of Nako (Pl. 182).

The kingdom of Khotan deserves special attention, and not only in this context. Its position on the Silk Road and the related large volume of trade exposed Khotan to a great variety of influences. Accordingly, the kingdom also became specifically known for a religious belief system that worshipped a heterogeneous pantheon of Buddhist and Iranian/Sogdian deities. In addition, the notion of deified royalty associated with the cult of Vaiśravaṇa was well known there, the Khotanese king having claimed descent from Vaiśravaṇa according Xuanzang. Close contacts between Khotan and Tibet existed for centuries since the time when Tibet ruled in Khotan and Dunhuang during the 8th to 9th centuries, thereby allowing Khotan (with strong ties to the Sogdian-Buddhist heterogeneous pantheon) to retain its kings and officials and create strong ties with Tibet and Dunhuang.[923] In later phases cultural exchange with the Buddhist Uighurs in Bäzäklik as well as the Buddhist centres of the Xixia (Hsi-Hsia; Kharakhoto) can be

[918] Cf. Tucci 1949: 734-737; Stein: 246; Grenet 2001.

[919] The Gelugpas, though generally opposed to magic rituals, even raised the oracle–tradition from Samye to a state institution (Govinda 1992: 181)

[920] On the Uigur-Tibetan history see Exsedy, H. 1964; Moriyasu 2006.

[921] Moriyasu (1991, transl. 2006) gave a detailed analysis of Manichean culture and art along the Silk Road. Tibet was in contact with the Uygurs during the Tibetan-Uygur war in Beiting (Bisbalïq), and Buddhism had strong influence on Eastern Manicheism. Furthermore the images of Bäzäklik bear many commonalities with the Alchi depictions.

[922] The investigation of Kharakhoto images of Vaiśravaṇa and his attendants will be a rewarding task of future research and will certainly bring to light more material on this protector so important for the early history of Tibet.

[923] Cat. Whitfield 2004: 137.

assumed, which may have had an important impact on the transmission and transformation of hybrid deities of Central Asia.

Pehar, one of the great warrior heroes in Tibetan mythology, originally the mythical protector of Samye and in later tradition a popular warrior deity of the whole of Tibet, appears not to have been a 'Tibetan' originally. He may have originated from Turco-Iranian peoples from Serindia, as Tucci suggested.[924] According to the legend about his arrival in Tibet, he was originally a tutelary god of the Hor (Uygurs?) and he 'migrated' in the shape of a bird of prey; his origin is also associated with Sogdian immigrants from Northwest-China.[925]

Pehar was possibly seen as a guardian of wealth in Central Asia similar to the Khwarnah (I. 'Xvarenah'), the Iranian protector of royal fortune and wealth, according to F. Grenet.[926] In his '*Avatars de Vaiśravaṇa. Les étapes sogdienne et tibétaine*' he proposed a possible reconstruction of the iconography of Pehar, closely linked to the complex genesis of Vaiśravaṇa in Central Asia. He discussed a specific type of Vaiśravaṇa, based on a fusion of the Indian Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa and the Iranian god of 'Royal Fortune' in the Sogdian Pandjikent.[927]

The Iranian god had a comparable career in Tibet, namely in the figure of the great warrior hero in Tibetan mythology, Pehar. Pehar could thus be the Khwaraneh/Khwarnah/Khwarrah (I. Xvarenah) of the Avestan mythology.[928]

> "Farro, qui dans le Gandhāra s'était fondu dans l'image complexe de Vaiśravaṇa, aurait donc par rapport à lui retrouvé en Sogdiane son individualité. Je voudrais ... suggérer l'hypothèse selon laquelle la même division des taches serait intervenue au Tibet".[929]

One of the earliest images of Pehar as a layman on his mount, comparable to the depiction at Dunkar and Alchi, may exist in the image of Pehar as a man riding a horse in a painting from Khotan. Two 6th century votive plaques from Dandān-Uiliq (near Khotan) depict the deity in the British Museum. One shows a nimbate rider with a goblet and bird (Pl. 178), while the other depicts two figures. One of them is Vaiśravaṇa, while the rider on a dappled horse with a bird might represents Pehar, the tutelary hero of the Turkic Uygurs, according to Whitfied (Pl. 179), "*...who assumed the form of a bird of prey, but was shot down with an arrow by one of Vaiśravaṇa's Yakṣa attendants.*"[930] In both cases the deities are shown mounted on white horses with black dots,

[924] Grenet: 177; cf. also Stein (1951: 246) on the origin of the Hor.

[925] Tucci 1949: 734-735.

[926] Grenet 2001.

[927] Grenet identifies different types of Vaiśravaṇa, who adopted martial aspects of the Iranian god of ‚Royal Fortune' (Kwaraneh). One type came to be known as Bishamon-ten, who was a widespread type of Vaiśravaṇa in Central Asia (the Farro on Kushan coins, with warrior garb, winged helmet, lance in the hand), and who often resembles a Kushan king. (This type is also often shown with flames on his shoulders and standing on a Yakṣa). Ph. Granoff proposed, that this type might originate in Khotan, but the term ‚Tobatso' could also well designate Tibet (Granoff 1970: 144-167).

Based on the identification of a mural featuring a fusion of the Indian Vaiśravaṇa and Iranian god of fortune at Pandjikent (Grenet fig. 6).

[928] Grenet 2001.

[929] Ibid: 177.

[930] Cat. Whitfield 2004: 160.

which probably demonstrates the high value of horses.[931] However, the depiction of Pehar on a ram is not found in the paintings of Khotan, Dunhuang, or Bäzäklik to my knowledge.

As Prof. Grenet proposed, Pehar is the continuation of the Iranian god *„Xvarenah" (Middle Persian Xwarrah, Sogd. Farn, Khotanese Pharrah, which is probably the direct origin of the form Pehar). „... it seems possible to identify him with the god mounted on a ram [at Dunkar]: in the Middle Persian novel 'Kârnâmag î Ardaxshêr î Pâbagân' (ch. 4) this god is explicitly mentioned appearing as a ram."*[932]



Fig. 21: Penjikent, two Sogdian gods on camel and ram (after Grenet 2001: fig. 6)

The symbol of the beribboned ram so frequent in Sāsānian art is generally associated with Khwarnah (Pl. 169).[933] According to B. Marshak, this is also the case in Sogdian art.[934] Grenet identified this god in the paintings of Panjikent as 'Farn'. In these Sogdian paintings he does not appear sitting on a ram, but on a camel, which may be a matter of mere choice. However, the female deity he identifies as Ardikhu, (Avestan Ashi Vanuhi, Bactrian Ardokhsho) and who can be described as Farn's consort, is depicted on a ram (Fig. 21).[935]

Furthermore, the dog depicted below the mounted hero may be related to the mount of a one of two female deities, while the second figure presents a dog - probably her attribute - on a

[931] Argent argues that they might be related to the 'heavenly horses' highly esteemed in China (ibid).

An 18th century depiction of Pehar in human form is a three faced god in human form, riding a white lion; in the centre is god Shing-bya-can, riding a horse and holding an axe surrounded by four companions, belonging to the group of the five kings. They are all wearing courtly dresses with jewelry, a specific attribute being a hat with a wide brim (cf. Lauf, 1978).

[932] Grenet published an edition-translation-commentary of this text: La Geste d'Ardashir fils de Pâbag, éditions ‚à Die', Die, 2003; Prof. Frantz Grenet, personal communication.

[933] The ribbons tied around the neck are a sign of royalty in Sāsānian Iran.

[934] Marshak 299.

[935] Grenet (2001): ‚Avatars de Vaiśravaṇa: les étapes sogdienne et tibétaine', Actes du colloque *La Sérinde, terre d'échanges* (Paris, Ecole du Louvre, 13-15 février 1996): 174.

The ram is a also an attribute associated with royalty at Dokhtar-e Norshevān.

goblet. The typology of the drawing from Dunhuang (datable between the 9th to 10th centuries)[936] bears strong Sogdian features, comparable to the couple identified as 'Farn and Ardoxso' (Ardokhsho) at Panjikent by Grenet, while the costumes are clearly Uygur. With regard to their identification, an association with the female Sogdian deities Nana and Ardoxso has been proposed.[937]

Animal symbolism and horses also play an important role in the cultures along the upper Indus and in particular for those of the small kingdoms in Northern Pakistan.[938] There are rams and goats among the sacred animals, alluding – together with an axe and shield - to protective symbolism.[939] All these features were also important in the culture of status in Nuristan up to very recently. Accordingly, the ram is not only important in the animal symbolism of Sogdiana, and possibly also in that of Khotan, but also in the regions of present Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan, that is the ancient Gilgit and Baltistan.

The flying bird held by a mounted deity at Dunkar would correspond to the Iranian Xvarenah, identified as a hawk in the Avesta.[940] Khwarnah – like Pehar - transformed himself into a bird of prey in order to escape getting captured by the enemies of the kingdom. A Kushana coin reflects this Avestan legend: a standing man in armor, identifiable as King Yama holding a bird of prey.

Furthermore, according to a written source Pehar is supposed to have transformed himself into a white dove when he tried to escape from the war expeditions of an enemy of his king.[941]

The transfer of Pehar to Samye, one of the oldest monasteries in Central Tibet, and his first residence within the borders of the 'land of snows', is explained by various Tibetan sources.

> One legend given by Tucci[942] claims that Namtöse (T. rNam thos sras, S. Vaiśravaṇa) "...had lent his support to prince *Mu rug btsan po*[943] who conquered with the help of this deity China, Hor and *Gru gu*. On the course of one of these war-expeditions Pe har was put to flight. He tried to escape having changed his body into that of a vulture, but he was

[936] Cat. 1996, fig. 180, p. 162 (Pelliot 1906-09, 30,5 x 37,8; Dunhuang, Mogao-ku). I wish to thank DDr. Ebert for this information.

[937] Cat. 1996: 162.

[938] Single depictions of horses even correspond on the level of style with the images of horses at Alchi, as has been shown.

For recent studies on rock images in Northern Pakistan see Bemman 2005. The book is part of a series published by the Research Unit „Felsbilder und Inschriften am Karakorum Highway", of the Heidelberg Akademie der Wissenschaften. The publications contain detailed drawings and photographs adccompanied by painstaking documentary.

[939] Interestingly, rams, men of horseback, lions and camels (?) were depicted on a precious object featuring a ‚golden city', which was sent as a gift by the Tibetan bTsan-po sent to Taizon in 657 (cf. Karmay 1975: 4).

[940] On a Kushan coin the hero *yima* is shown holding a hawk, a symbol of Xvarenah, from the time of Huvishka he is depicted under this form (for an image see Grenet 2000: fig. 8).

[941] Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975: 101.

[942] Tucci 1949, II: 734.

[943] Tibetan texts documented by Thomas, F.W. (‚Tibetan Literary Texts': 296), point to a joint tradition of Vaiśravaṇa and Pehar in Tibet: a Tibetan text speaks of a thangka painting of Vaiśravaṇa at the time of the prince, which was then brought to Tibet (Tucci 1949 II: 735).

brought down by an arrow released by a *yaṣka* in the retinue of *rNam thos sras*. The latter then coveyed *Pe har* to Samye."[944]

One of the earliest depictions of the episode of Pehar's 'migration' reflecting the Tibetan legend was identified by Tucci in a painting from Dunhuang (ca. 9th century, Pl. 173**).** In the Dunhuang image the attendant directs his arrow to Pehar, who appears in the shape of a Garuda (T. *khyung*).

A second important example can be identified in a painting from Bäzäklik (Pl. 176), which shows the Garuda/Pehar not flying above Vaiśravaṇa (who wanted him to be shot down by arrows), but already lying on the ground.[945] One arm is held by a figure with a demon-like head and carrying a sword, while a dog is biting the Garuda's leg to prevent his escape. This image has close parallels to the demons, which accompany the nobleman at Dunkar. Thus Grenet concludes: "*The archer behind the riding god [at Dunkar] may be related to the Tibetan legend of Samdas, illustrated on the scroll from Dunhuang featuring Vaiśravaṇa, who orders a Yakṣa to shoot at Pehar (there depicted as a sort of bat) in order to capture him and make him the guardian of the monastery.*"[946]

While the Dunkar typology is closer to the complex iconography of the royal tutelary deity Pehar in Central Asia, with various elements identifiable at Dunhuang (Yakṣa demons) and Bäzäklik,[947] the iconography at Alchi shows a more 'worldly appearance' comparable to the form found at Khotan[948] and Sodgdiana respectively showing the mounted layman with a bird and the ram associated with Khwarnah. This feature may reflect the local demands and ideology of the rulers to promoting the courtly culture of the region and the intimate relationship between the royal tutelary deity and the ruling clan.[949]

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[944] Tucci 1949, II: 734, note 62; cited after Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975: 101.

[945] Sun Dawei 1989: Fig 144.

[946] Prof. Grenet, verbal communication. I am indebted to Prof. Grenet (Paris, CNRS) for his generosity to share his valuable informations. He encouraged me to define the different layers of this complex process of transmission and transformation in the Western Himalaya.

[947] Neigbours of the Khotanese were the Turkic Uighurs; various objects document a strong cultural exchange between these Buddhist communities. Examples of Khotanese votive plaques featuring images of Pehar riding a horse (Pl. 22) may represent Khotan's Turkic neighbours, or tributaries to Khotan according to Whitfield (1990: 162).

The Uighurs are described in the T'ang annals as steppe people, who "*...have no chiefs, no permanent dwellings, they wander in search of water and pasture. ...They are excellent riders and archers and most rapacious. Brigandage is their livelihood...*" (T'an-shu, Tang annals; cited after Asimov/Bosworth: 1998: 191). Their economic and political life may have developed in close relation to that of the Sogdians, their most important commodity being the horse, which they had to provide in exchange for silk (ibid).

For detailed studies on the Uygurs see: Ecsedy, H. (1964) Uigurs and Tibetans in Pei-t'ing (790-791 A.D.), *AOH* 17: 83-104; and for recent studies: Mackerras, C. The Uighurs, D. Sinor (ed.) (1990) *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, Cambridge et alia: 317-342; as well as Pinks, E. *Die Uiguren von Kan-chou in der frühen Sung-Zeit (960-1028), Asiatische Forschungen 24*, Wiesbaden.

Moriyasu, T. (2006) gave a comprehensive survey on the history of the Uygurs in his "*Die Geschichte des uigurischen Manichäismus an der Seidenstraße*" (German translation of "*A study on the History of Uighur Manichaeism*", Osaka University, 1991, Osaka. He defined the complex genesis of Uygur culture in Central Asia adopting various socio-political and religious systems from Manichaeism to Buddhism and finally converting to Islam.

[948] According to the *Rajatarangini* lose marital ties existed between the rulers of Khotan, Skardu and Kaśmīr (Vohra 1995: 218).

[949] At Nyarma, Ladakh, demons are shown, but they are presented less detailed than at Dunkar.

As the art of Kharakhoto not only influenced the painting style in these temples but may also have been a source of inspiration for them, research in this direction may prove fruitful. A comparative analysis with later depictions of this deity will also be necessary.[950]

For a more refined iconographic analysis of the different components of the mounted nobleman in early Western Himalaya temples and his function in the cultural and religious contexts, an analysis of Tibetan folk epic, songs and oral traditions in the Western Himalaya and Northern Pakistan (Baltistan) will be necessary. In general, oral traditions were not integrated in Tibetan written textual material.[951] The latter primarily reflects the Lamaist ideology, in which local beliefs and religious experiences had been absorbed to serve Buddhist demands and concepts or even marginalized. Folk tales in Ladakh and in the local Buddhist culture of Baltistan strongly reflect the world of local spirits and heroes, in which the mythical King Gesar plays a significant role and from whom various rulers in Ladakh and Zanskar trace their descent and kinship.[952]

The documentation and analysis of these oral traditions with regard to Pehar who is associated with charismatic kingship in Central Asia and other territory and mountain dwelling gods would thus be a rewarding task of future research.

7.1.3.2.2. Pehar in the Western Himalaya: The Scriptural Evidence

During the time of the second diffusion of Buddhism, tutelary deities of non-Tibetan origin played an important role on the occasion of the foundation of temples as described in contemporary sources. One of the most important texts from this period is the religious edict Chötig (T. *chos rtsigs*) issued by Yeshe Ö. In this inscription he sanctioned the priority of religion over secular affairs. According to Vitali[953], the members of the royal family had to swear a solemn oath to this edict. Pehar and Hase Phags pa[954] ('Holy images of Ha.se'; Ha.se' may have been intended to mean Lhasa) were co-witnesses to the oath of Yeshe Ö's edict. Vitali assumed that the transfer to Central Tibet could be credited to the Bro clan;[955] the latter came to sTod, following the withdrawal of the famous family from Central Asia. He further suggested: " *... it seems likely that Ha.se 'Phags pa was brought to West Tibet by members of the Bro clan who left Central Asia in various stages for sTod during the disintegration of the Yar.lung empire, when the Bro clan sided with the lineage from which the kings of mMag.ris.skor.gsum [Ngari Korsum] descended.*"[956] "*Their*

[950] Cf. Huo Wei, Li Yongxian 2000: Fig. 41.

[951] Cf. Research Project Dr. Schuh.

[952] Vohra 1995: 218.

[953] Vitali 1996: 193.

[954] Ha.se is according to Vitali a Tibetan transcription of the Chinese Ho-si, referring to the military district of Kan-su during T'ang times, established in 710 and in this period the deity might have been transferred from Tunhuang to West Tibet (Vitali 1996: 195-196).

[955] The transfer of Pehar from Bhata hor to Samye is described in various sources (cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975: 100).

[956] Vitali, 1996: 202; A passage of the 'chronology' of the Guge kingdom by Vitali (2003) describes this event: In the rat year 988 "...*Ye shes 'od's entourage swore to uphold (the religious and civil law) with a solemn oath in front of the statue of Ha se 'Phags pa, and calling Pe har as witness. lHa bla ma ordered its implementation. Guge blon po Uhang rung circulated the text of the cos rtsig (chötig). He also gathered the headmen and elders from all over the kingdom as well as anyone holding power in his own area. To them he expounded the terms of reestablishment of Buddhism in sTod contained in the chos rtsigs, basing himself in the example of the religious activities of the kings of the Yar lung dynasty who were chos rgyal*

resettling in sTod was the basis of a strategy to recreate a regional kingdom along the lines of the previous political order they had been unable to maintain, rooted on principles of ancient royalty and Buddhism."[957]

The biography of Rinchen Zangpo edited by Snellgrove/Skorupski[958] - which gives a fascinating glimpse of his life (although maybe written by one of his disciples) - contains important information on the history of the monasteries he founded. It describes how local spirits he bound on oath on the occasion of the monasteries' consecration were made to promise the protection of the Buddhist religion and the guardianship of the possessions of the temples.[959]

In this text female spirits are also listed who were bound on oath on the occasion of the consecration of the temple at Rad-nis, his birthplace; these were Dzalamati and her sisters. It is possible that these female spirits are depicted in the mandala on the ceiling in Dunkar opposite the mounted nobleman flanking the central deity of Mahākāla on the other side.[960]

The following passage in the biography is significant to identify the mounted nobleman: "*Putting the Oblate Goat-Skin-Clad under oath*[961]*... he made him work as personal attendant and made him responsible for guarding the possessions of all the temples of Rong-chung. This one is master of the demons and is named Byi.na.ya.ga. Also known as the Goat-Skin-Clad, as Pehar, as Dro and as lCags-betr, they are all one."*[962]

I propose associating the male mounted deities, shown with different attributes and mounts in Western Himalaya Buddhist painting, accompanied by demons, with the protector deity Pehar in the biography. The goat-skin may refer to the ram-vehicle of Pehar. Pehar always appears in a compositional unit of local female protector deities, indicating shared functions of these types of images, which also corresponds to Rinchen Zangpo's text.

The typology of Pehar in the Western Himalaya is consistent in its use of the image of a layman riding on his mount, dressed with royal or aristocratic garments.[963] Horse and courtly dresses

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(chögial). His speech concluded with the communication to the elders of the decision made to reintroduce Buddhism in sTod and an exhortation to abide by it" (Vitali 2003: 57).

[957] Vitali 1996: 207.

[958] Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980: The cultural Heritage of Ladakh, Vo. II: 1980.

[959] Ibid: 93.

[960] *"He had the intention of founding a high-roofed temple at Rad-nis of Kyu-wang, as this was his birth-place, but a local water-spirit named Dzalamati and her three sisters were jealous. ...During the winter he practised coercive rites....he arranged a Guhyasamaja mandala... and in the centre of the mandala he constructed a large homa hearth, where he performed the rite of burnt offerings and as a result Dzalamati and her three sisters appeared before him. Then the Translator calls to all his disciples: "Don't beat your drums for a monument, but stay were you are!" and he went to the head of the field, where the spirits offered their lives to him and he bound them on oat, and they made a firm promise to protect the Buddhist religion....Having offered her life-force, she was known by the secret name of Heavenly Immaculate. She was appointed guardian divinity of the Wondrous Lotus Temple of Radnis and the whole matter was finalized with a coercive rite"* (Ibid. 93).

[961] The text reads: *dge bsnyen ra slag can*; translated also as a religious layman by Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980: Footn. 31.

[962] Ibid.

[963] Concerning the identification of the retinue of "Pehar" at Dunkar also the comparison with attendants of mGon po is important: fierce, raven headed deities appear as attendants of mGonpo according to the style of rGva lotsava (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 46).

M. Hermanns in his ‚Die Nomaden von Tibet' (1949: 50) describes Gur mGon, the ‚lord of the tent', a type of mGon po, who is worshipped especially by the Tibetan nomads (after Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 49). According to

are symbols of high status in this region, reflecting the royal image of Pehar, who was also later called 'King Pehar'. He can be attributed to the group of martial and mounted heroes along with Gesar and Beg-tse. Pehar's white bird might be identified with the image of *'royal fortune'* in Central Asia. He is often accompanied by demonic warriors, possibly representing the retinue of Vaiśravaṇa, who forced Pehar to become a tutelary deity of Tibet. At Dunkar we find a possible early form of this tutelary deity, faithful to the iconographic models in Central Asia (Dunhuang, Bäzäklik, Khotan and Sogdiana) and also closer to the Tibetan legend. Afterwards, he was incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon, depicted with a different and fierce shape.[964]

4.3.2.3.3. Transmission and Transformation: On the Different Appearances of Mounted Protectors in Cross-cultural Zones of the Western Himalaya

The general appearance of mounted deity appearing as knight, possibly Pehar in the Western Himalaya differs significantly, which is probably due to the different artistic schools and intentions of the donors. In addition, it cannot be excluded that different other mountain- or local deities are depicted with specific regional bonds; however, they stand in the tradition of Pehar's iconography and appearance and may also refer to the strong and lasting impact of this mounted hero on the history and culture of Central Asia and Tibet. In later traditions this class of deities is not only associated with Pehar, but also with various mythical heroes and Kesar or brothers of the latter in particular, often showing striking parallels to the early images with regard to attributes (Pl. 174, Pl. 175).[965] Whichever protector deity may be depicted in the Western Himalaya temples, this study has made it clear that this class of male territory gods plays a significant role in the history of Buddhism and culture in the region.

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the text Rin 'byung, rDo rje nag po chen po wears a cloak of silk and a loin cloth of tiger skin. He is accompanied on the right side by a black bird and on the left by a black dog, while in the back runs a black jackal and the place in front is occupied by a black man, while overhead soars a *khyung* (Ibid: 50). The *parivara* (train of the deity) consists of female deities such asl dPal ldan Lja mo. One type of the lord of the tent, or canopy possesses phur bur-feet and *khyung* wings, this form of mGon po is supposed to have been worshiped especially among the Buddhists of Khotan. (Ibid: 51). Unfortunately the author does not describe the mounts of the different lords of the tent in his text. The attribute of the ram as mount of the nobleman at Dunkar is a significant feature, whose attribution would be important for the precise identification of this deity.

[964] Pehar is called later in Tibet also ‚King of Qualities' (T. *yon tan gyal po*). He typically appears in five forms known as the Five Kings (T. *gyal po ku nga*): body, speech, mind, qualities and activities. *„There are numerous legends concerning the subjugation of the worldly deity Pehar, however they are all in agreement that he is not indigenous to Tibet. Oath bound to protect the Buddhist teachings by Guru Padmasambhava and originally practiced by the Nyingma School he has since become a Tibetan national protector becoming popular from the time of the Great 5th Dalai Lama and the Ganden Podrang government"* (Jeff Watt, www.himalayanart.com).

He also is termed Pehar Gyalpo, the Worldly Protector - King Pehar. J. Watt (ibid.) describes one image on a thangka from the 17th century as follows. *„...(the image) shows him wrathful and fierce, with three faces...With six arms the three right hands hold a sword, arrow and hammer. In the left are held a stick, bow and knife. He wears a broad round red hat and rides a white (mythical) snow lion. Dressed in a long flowing orange robe augmented with various coloured layers of garments and Mongolian style felt boots he dwells within the flames of pristine awareness."*

Further J. Watt (ibid.) informs us that accounts of Pehar's early history are found in both Nyingmapa and Gelugpa sources. According to some Tibetan Buddhist scholars, Pehar is the leader of all Worldly Buddhist protectors. According to others, he has already reached complete enlightenment and entered the ranks of the wisdom deities. The worship of Pehar has penetrated all of Tibetan society. However, the main upholders of the practice are predominantly the original Nyingmapas followed by the Gelugpas from the time of the Great 5th Dalai Lama (1617-1682) when they became the spiritual and secular rulers of Tibet.

[965] See also Francke 1992, I, 102, 104. I wish to thank Dr. Jahodo who made me aware of the masks collected by Schlagintweit.

If it is Pehar who is depicted in the early temples just discussed, the attributes are a matter of individual choice. However, the specific typology of Pehar at Dunkar echoing Central Asian iconography may also bear a message, comparable to the legendary travel of objects, such as thangka or masks associated with deities. Such legends often mark the beginning of their transfer and related cults to Tibet. One famous example is the flying leather-mask of Mahākāla, introducing his worship to Western Tibet. We can thus assume that the transfer on the initiative of charismatic figures and their migration in physical form adds additional legitimation to the transmission of the cult.

Accordingly, the unusual depiction of Vaiśravaṇa at Nako in a foreign style of a Chinese-Central Asian warrior (perhaps based on thangka paintings or silk banners) may thus reflect the intention to declare the authenticity of transmission of the image and its effectiveness. The intention at Dunkar behind the faithfullness to the Central Asian models, where Pehar originated, may have been the same.

While at Dunkar the focus lies on the depiction of the migration of Pehar from his Uygur (?) home to Samye, the emphasis at Alchi is on Iranian courtly language, consistent with the donor depictions. The emphasis focuses on Pehar as royal protector and underlines the close relationship of Pehar with the ruling elite and the ideology of the spiritual authority of the rulers in the region and possibly also their 'royal charisma'. Pehar is closely related to Vaiśravaṇa, both of whome guard wealth and treasures. The emphasis on wealth, as the basis for the protection of the community in the region, is an important component of the ethos of rule of the Dro mentioned in the inscriptions. It also reflects the religious pluralism which connected Ladakh with the Eastern-Iranian Buddhist sphere of Khotan, and which was also an important component in the culture of Kaśmīr. This also demonstrates that Iranian features were generally not only attractive due to the 'royal aura', but also due to the religious associations and in particular the notion of deified kingship which existed in the Indo-Iranian-Tibetan cross-cultural zone.

7.3.2.3.4. Mounted Heroes in Successive Phases: The Lhakhang Soma at Alchi and Tsaparang

An example of mounted tutelary deities in later Buddhist tradition at Alchi, in the 13th century (representing a local style based on Central Tibetan models), can be found in the Lhakhang Soma at Alchi (East wall).[966] Two rows of warrior deities with different complexions and with characteristic attributes can be seen there; one of them is riding a red horse and has a bird on the helmet, while the one below sits upon a white horse and has a bird in one hand and a lance in the other.[967] The bird is an attribute also found at Dunkar. The mounted horsemen with armour and birds are depicted in a compositional unit with local protector deities, pointing out their religious function. They correspond to the various attendants in courtly garb also found in the Sumtsek at Alchi. The bilateral symmetry of female tutelary deities and worldly mounted protectors is a constant feature, which is also observable at Nyarma and at Saspotse (both in Ladakh). The Lhakhang soma examples differ from the earlier forms at Dunkar and in the Alchi Dukhang with regard to their general appearance, and they may reflect the type of iconography used for this class of protector deities in a larger regional context. This tendency towards an

[966] Luczanits (1998: 153) has dated these paintings after 1200.

[967] The images discussed here in the Lhakhang soma, are published in Snellgrove/Skorupski 1977 (fig. 64); thereby erroniously identifying the female tutelary deity on the main wall as royal figure, while the noble horse-riders are not identified (ibid.: fig. 2); also the respective murals are not placed on the entrance wall, as the text wrongly states.

integration of the mounted warrior into the pan-Tibetan pantheon is already observable in the Sumtsek at Alchi.

At Tsaparang (perhaps the "Jigs byed' Temple, ca. 15th -16th century) the depiction shows a type of a mounted deity/ Pehar riding a ram closely related to that at Dunkar.[968] He is depicted below an image of Vaiśravaṇa. On the left and right sides Yakṣa are depicted, some of these deities bearing images, which are still being deciphered.[969]

7.1.4. Protector Deities in the Western Himalaya: A Comparative Analysis

The protector deities in the Western Himalaya reflect regional diversity and the changing demands of the Buddhist ritual. They play an important role in the process of legitimation of the rulers in this region, and are important mediators between the worldly and the outer-worldly sphere. The noble-horse-rider is part of the evolutionary history of the important theme of protectors and local spirits in early Mahāyāna art.[970] They embody different aspects of worldly power as well as ideals of tutelary deities and mounted heroes of the region as has been shown. The different strata in the depiction at Alchi can best be appreciated if one recalls the prominent role of earlier protector deities during the time of the establishment of the Western Tibetan kingdom and their close relationship with the ruling dynasty. The central function and evolution of local protector deities in the Western Himalaya will now be discussed and contrasted against a specific type of mounted horse-man at Alchi. In particular, material culture, costumes and textiles consciously used to visualize the close relationship between royalty and local spirits will be discussed.

Furthermore, the possible ritual function of local tutelary deities or patron deities will be discussed, as well as the change of rituals, which coincided with the appearance of Mahāyāna as a pan-Tibetan protector, to whom all earlier local deities are finally subordinated.

7.1.4.1. Female tutelary deities at Tabo: Dorje chenmo (rDo rje chen mo)/Wi nyu myin

One of the earliest examples of pictorial evidence for local tutelary deities (*sungma*, T. *srung ma*) can be found in the figure of Dorje chenmo/ Wi nyu myin at Tabo, depicted in the entry hall (ca. 996) of the Tabo Dukhang (Pl. 192). Written sources relate this goddess to the Rinchen Zangpo, who was according to his biography the founder of Tabo.[971] The central tutelary goddess of Tabo is represented on the West wall, above the portal leading to the Dukhang. She is placed above an assembly of the 'ten guardians of the directions' (among them the guardian of the North in the form of a *yakṣa* on a white horse).[972]

The female deity, identified by the inscriptions, is riding on her stag in the paintings of the entrance hall.[973] She is flanked by eighteen female standing figures; two persons hold poles among them, over which a textile is draped forming a protective screen behind the deity. The

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[968] Huo Wie 2000: fig. 41.

[969] Dr. Jahoda assumes, that a group of mountain deities are depicted at Tsaparang, due to the environments defined by mountains; he made me aware of another inscribed image of this type, which Aschoff (1992) published; he could read: ‚Yang le ber'; the name of this deity is unknown to me.

[970] In general, the phenomenon of this adoption and transformation of different streams into Mahāyāna is a typical notion in this period. It is specific for a period of dynamics between early local traditions, their integration into the Buddhist faith and the dominant force of later pan-Tibetan religious entities.

[971] Jahoda 2006: 12.

[972] 'Assemblies' of female tutelary deities can also be found in the Protectors' chapel at Tabo (15th -16th centuries, cf. Klimburg-Salter 1997: Fig. 57).

[973] Jahoda 2006: 19.

retinue is dressed in presumably local heavy woollen garments with long sleeves, adorned with necklaces and long braids and turquoise jewellery on the forehead. Unfortunately, the central figure is not visible anymore. An inscription gives us her name as Wi-nyu-myin and the text allows an attribution to an indigenous Tibetan deity.[974]

Jahoda's study on the *sungma* (female protective deity) at Tabo in his 2006 article is a careful analysis of the history and significance of a local tutelary deity at Tabo and her cult up to present. His methodological approach integrates pictorial evidence, oral traditions, local cult and literary sources (ritual texts), allowing for a clearer picture of the function of this type of icons. The study also gives insight into the fascinating interaction of local traditions and the impact of pan-Tibetan Buddhist doctrine. While Goepper[975] assumes influences of a strong Kaśmīri local culture on this type of tutelary deities at Alchi, Jahoda adds an analysis of indigenous traditions to the complex evolutionary history of local deities in the region, stating:

> „Although these deities have their place in the context of Buddhism, they are to be understood rather under the aspect of their role for traditional rural communities than from the perspective of Buddhism, its canonical texts and monastic uses. The 'social' uses of the deities quite often transcend their canonical religious significance".[976]

A local deity and her retinue, most probably Dorje chenmo mentioned in later texts, is also depicted on the entrance wall of the Tabo main temple (Pl. 191). Saddled mules or horses are represented at the far left and right side of the figures.[977] The central figure with the protective deity first looks like a donor figure, with Tibetan garments and jewellery. The setting of draped textiles is also comparable to that of the donor depictions near the sanctum, so their function seems to be related. Unfortunately, significant details of Dorje chenmo's face and attributes have been over-painted as a result of restoration by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).[978] However, older photographic images of her specific features, a face with fangs and a wrathful expression are still visible.

7.1.4.2. Female Tutelary Deities at Alchi

The goddesses in Tibetan costumes at Alchi stand in the tradition of local protector deities such as Dorje chenmo/ Wi nyu myin at Tabo, depicted on the wall above the entrance of the Assembly Hall in the Main Temple of Tabo. The two main female protector deities in the Mahākāla composition in the Alchi Dukhang are mounted on horses (Pl. 152-154 The right one is corpulent and has a dark complexion, a wrathful expression with a third eye, and curly hair.[979] The standing female deities in local/courtly costumes at Alchi display fierce features

[974] Ibid: 23. He further attests an ambivalence of a local name and function of the deity and „standard" Buddhist iconography. According to him this is typical for the early period of search and definition of pictorial formulas and iconographic types adequate for both the local concepts and general Buddhist demands (Ibid: 27).

[975] Goepper 1996: 26.

[976] Ibid. 18 (translation by the author).

[977] D.Klimburg-Salter 1997: 95.

[978] One of the last campaigns, which included the paintings mentioned above took place in the 1990-ies.

[979] She is holding a *damaru* (small hand drum) a *khatvanga* stick, scepter who spears the head of defeated evil, represented as dried heads) and rope. She has four arms and a vertical eye on the forehead. The deity clad in local dress and holding a *kapala* is also dark, in addition she has a coat of peacock feathers and a servant is holding an umbrella above her (which might refer to the protective function of textiles draped behind local deities at Tabo).

such as fangs. The fangs are also typical for a local tutelary deity at Tabo (Main Hall). The identities of the two mounted goddesses are still unknown. However, concluding from the preliminary identification of deities in the Sumtsek by R. Goepper (Pl. 163), the left mounted deity in the Dukhang might be Remati (wearing a peacock coat, white hat with up-turned brim, comparable to the headdress of the same deity in the Sumtsek, holding a scull, *vajra* and an umbrella above her). The Tibetan dress below the peacock feathers, the jewellery and headdress reflect courtly culture in the region and recall distinguishing attributes of earlier local deities such as Dorje chenmo/ Wi nyu myin at Tabo. On the right side Palden lhamo of the Mahākāla composition at the Alchi Dukhang might have been depicted.

The deities in the Alchi-Dukhang are comparable to a composition in the Alchi-Sumtsek; in the latter, the protector deities do not yet display all the attributes of the later orthodox iconography, so their identification continues to remain uncertain.[980]

In contrast to Tabo, the local female deities in the Alchi's Dukhang are subordinated to a pan-Indian deity, namely Mahākāla. Various local traditions, such as the horse-rider as protector and female tutelary deities, have been integrated into his cult, thus serving as Mahākāla's attendants.

7.1.4.2. Ephemeral Thrones and Courtly Culture as Reflected in Images of Protector Deities

In the early art of the Western Himalaya lay imagery, material culture and local architecture play an important role as quasi-real settings of religious images; contemporaneous textiles and costumes established a bond with the reality of the worshipper through which he experienced the iconographic programme in a temple depicting an aspect of the sacred order in his world.

A constant element in the early settings of tutelary goddesses as well as of donors is a textile hanging behind the deity, reflecting the high status of ephemeral architecture[981] in this region (Pl. 163). The cloth defines a sacred space or abode of the local protectors (in contrast to deities dwelling on heavenly thrones or shrines). In addition, it may have served as a kind of 'screen' to protect the deity, e.g. Dorje chenmo, from the outer world.

The similarity between the textile drapery behind the royal lama in the Tabo Main Hall and the textile abode of the protector deity on the entrance wall of the same temple can be read as a further indication of the shared goals of protection together with related functions during the consecration ritual.[982]

The conscious use of local, non-Indian costumes and luxury textiles for protector deities is a further significant feature in Western Himalaya art. Precious local textiles are an important medium of local representation, indicating legitimacy and power in this region. Their adoption into the religious sphere thereby symbolized not only local status and authority but also efficacy in the world of the super-mundane deities and Buddhas.

Indigenous dress can thus be read as a sign for the local bonds; i.e. of Dorje chenmo in the region as suggested by Ch. Jahoda.[983] Another function might be the emphasis on signalling a foreign, non-Tibetan deity, who was oath-bound by charismatic teachers such as the local protector at Dunkar, as will be seen. There are various examples of luxurious gowns of Central Asian and Tibetan origin in the depictions of protector deities: lPalden Lhamo, chief guardian goddess of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon and chief protectress of the Gelugpa is characterized

[980] Goepper 1996:33-34.

[981] Cf. also the function of ephemeral architecture in Europe, which has been analyzed by Liselotte Popelka.

[982] Papa-Kalantari 2007a.

[983] Dr. Jahoda, verbal communication, Vienna 7.2007.

by a non-Tibetan attire, namely a flowing dress of silk and precious jewellery.[984] With regard to the emphasis on courtly culture there is an interesting early type of Mahākāla in Lhasa from the 13th century[985] and sculpted in stone. The tutelary deity wears a sumptuous dress of silk brocades, bound by a sash or belt reflecting the frequent adoption of contemporary luxury courtly art in the depiction of powerful protector deities.[986]

The retinue of a Dorje chenmo, described in sources as *'blon po'*, also refers to a high rank or noble origin comparable to that of a 'minister'.[987] The courtly garb of noble protectors in this region might be related to this tradition. A Tibetan text cited by Vitali reads, *"This protectess was (originally) summoned by lo.chen (Rin.chen bzang.po) from Ma gad ha [in India]. He installed (rDo.rje chen.mo) riding on a black horse at mTho.lding, (while [she obviously changed her riding vehicle]) she rode a stag on the way (with) blon.po Remati and Garza.ma, these were three rje.blons-s (i.e. the 'queen' and her two companions)"*.[988] It is important to stress in this context that the text associates these deities with the royal sphere. So, the depiction of Tibetan-style garments for this class of deities would match with the written evidence.

The appearance of the 'local' protector deities in the retinue of one type of mGon po might also be significant: lPal ldan lha mod riding a mule and a group of four gods, who are the 'ministers', appear among these deities (*blon po*).[989]

Texts from the time of the old monarchy period describe the 'ministers' as a class of deities or religious beings in the pantheon before the advent of the Buddhist orthodox system. These sources also document the close relationship of worldly and sacred order; e.g. the gods connected with bSam yas were classified in three groups: five gods [among them king Pe dkar, Pehar], five *yum mo* and five ministers (*blon po*).[990] His qualities and appearance seem to have been assimilated into the new order and Buddhist iconography in various forms. The important position and power of the minister during the Tibetan empire (7th to 9th century) is comparable to the social background of the donors' family, the Dro clan, which was one of the most important aristocratic clans. Members of this clan served as ministers during the time of the old monarchy in Central Asia and enjoyed the religious prestige associated with this role from early times.[991]

In Rinchen Zangpo's biography, Pehar, who is a protector deity in the service of a temple in the translator's native village Rad-nis, is also called the 'Oblate/religious layman'. Thus, the appearance of protectors as noblemen, identifiable in the depictions of mounted figures dressed as noblemen at Dunkar in contrast to the attire worn by deities from the Buddhist pantheon, would make sense.

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[984] Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1959: 27.

[985] Linrothe 2004: 57.

[986] Cf. also Linrothe 2004: 110.

[987] I thank Ch. Jahoda for this information.

[988] Vitali 1999: 24.

[989] Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1959: 39.

[990] Tucci 1949: 728.

[991] Giuseppe Tucci states that there was a considerable rivalry among the families, who had the duty of supplying from among their number the ministers during the first diffusion of Buddhism: *"Their office of the minister was surrounded by religious prestige, but in practice the priestly class of Bon, and the aristocracy, hindered their exercise* of sovereignty" (Tucci, 1980: 3).

Garments reflecting courtly culture in the images of noble horse-riders at Alchi might thus be related to the worldly status of a group of attendants of a specific type of Gönpo as well as to specific local protector deities oath-bound by charismatic teachers.

The analysis of descriptions of Mahākāla's attendants and mounted worldly protectors in ritual texts[992] and in particular in local traditions[993] will thus be of primary importance for a more refined identification of the Alchi horse-rider.

7.1.4.4. On the Ritual Function of Protector Deities at Tabo and in the Western Himalaya in general

Dorje chenmo, who holds a central position in the Assembly Hall at Tabo, was originally a non-Tibetan deity. According to legend, she was subjugated and then brought by Rinchen Zangpo from India to Tabo and made the protectress of the temple. Wi nyu myin (the name of the deity in local tradition), the tutelary deity depicted in the Gokhang (T. sgo khang, Entry Hall) during the foundation period, must have played an important role in the founding of the temple.

The process of transformation related to the founding of a temple is shown by the legendary subjugation of a local water deity by Rinchen Zangpo. The event took place in his home village Rad-nis in Westtibet.[994] As a result the deity became the oath-bound protector of the temple. As in the case of Rinchen Zangpo who used a local deity for consecrating and guarding a temple in his birth village, the function of Wi nyu myin for the founding of the temple of Tabo might have been the same (although no related textual evidence exists). Jahoda[995] assumes that the cult of Dorje chenmo might have been associated specifically with royal foundations. This might also be the reason for the absence of this type of deity at Nako, which was not a royal foundation, but probably patronized by a local prince.[996] In the temples of Nako pan-Indian deities dominate; one example being the image of a 'Tārā of the Eight Perils' as a central deity in the Gongma temple of Nako.[997] This generally stands in line with the dominant role of this pan-Indian deity as protectress in later temples of the Western Himalaya, which may also have had an important role as protector deities during the consecration of the temple.[998] At Alchi the female deities were subordinated to Mahākāla, one of the most important protectors of the *dharma* in later orthodox Buddhism in Tibet.

In addition, deities combining martial and benefactory aspects at Nako (Gongma Temple) play an important role. On the entrance wall of the Gongma Temple of Nako, guardians of the four directions in a specific Central Asian style comparable to examples at Dunhuang were depicted. Only one of them can be seen today. He can be identified as Vaiśravaṇa who was a protector of both the *dharma* and wealth.

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[992] *"A Zangskar Lotsawa Phagpa Sherab, which followed the footsteps of Rinchen bzangpo and other masters from the Second Diffusion of Buddhism, „...journeyed to the lands where the teachings originated to study them directly....He introduced to Tibet te transmissions of Namthöse [Mahākāla]...after translating important texts on these subjets... in Kashmir"* (Vitali, 76). The biography of this master, based on historical literature, is currently beeing written by Vitali, and may provide important material concerning the iconography of this deity in the Western Himalaya in the future.

[993] These ongoing research and field studies are partly conducted together with members of the Academy of social Sciences in Lhasa and Dr. Jahoda, from the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna.

[994] Jahoda 2006: 23.

[995] Verbal communication, Vienna, 2.2007.

[996] Tucci 1935.

[997] Cf. also E. Allinger 2005.

[998] Papa-Kalantari 2007a.

The close compositional relationship between protector deities and donor depictions at Tabo is of a twofold nature: the donors are depicted as subordinated to the tutelary deities in the entry hall; such compositions probably feature the consecration of the temple, and moreover identical settings of ephemeral architecture of the female *sungma* and the royal lama in the Tabo Main Hall demonstrate their close socio-religious ties. Thus we can assume that local protectors must have played an important role during the consecration of the temple.

In addition, because pan-Tibetan female deities had a prominent role to play in the religious rituals at Tabo and also in later temples such as Nako and Alchi, donors would accordingly be subordinated to female protectors. These depictions may indicate a specific religious practice, namely the relation of donor/worshipper – Yidam[999] – central deity, reflecting mature Esoteric practice.[1000]

I have proposed that the paintings and clay sculptures on the main wall of the Nako Gongma temple represent an iconographic ensemble, reflecting such a specific ritual. Its organization in a two-dimensional composition[1001] is a new feature in the Western Himalaya and is shown in Tibetan thangka paintings only in later phases.[1002]

Whether the mounted hero (Pehar, or probably other local/mountain deities) played a role in the consecration of the Alchi and other Western Himalaya temples is by no means certain. However, the fact that the mounted hero/local protector (*sungma*) and the Dro clan at Alchi are closely related, which is emphasized by the use of comparable symbols of wealth and authority, indicates their common role as protectors of both the *dharma* and possibly also the *'royal fortune'*, one effective in the trans-mundane and the other in the mundane world. The knightly ideal of the martial hero, mounted on his horse indicating the wealth and power of the owner, is strongly associated with the *Weltanschauung* of the donor's family. The horse-rider is thus an important mediator between the ethos of rule of the donors and the trans-mundane realm of protectors as well as the sediment layers of ancient culture and spirits.

In conclusion, from the possible ritual relevance of donor-protector relations at the royal foundation of Tabo, one can assume that local protectors also had an important role during the consecration of the later temples, though adopting a different 'language' of power and protection common in this region of the Indo-Iranian borderland in Lower Ladakh.

7.1.4.5. The Rise of Mahākāla (T. mGon po)[1003] in Himalayan Art

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[999] *„Im Vajrayāna beschreitet man den Weg des dharma duch Meditation über eine bestimmte Gottheit, die ‚Meditationsgottheit'...Durch eine Weihezeremonie, die er von seinem Lama erhält, wird der Adept in den Kult einer bestimmten Yidam-Meditation eingeführt und erhält dabei zugleich eine tantrische Ordination, d.h. daß er tantrische Gelübde, ‚Samayas', ablegt, die ihm bestimmte Verpflichtungen auferlegen"* (Cat 2006: 307).

[1000] At Nako two different types of Tārā, one as Saviour against the Perils, appear (with Prajñāpāramitā as main image (Luczanits, verbal communication). The female Bodhisattva (Tārā) at Nako is subordinated to the central deity and related to the donors in the function of a Yidam (personal meditation deity) of the adept.

[1001] Papa-Kalantari 2006: 27.

[1002] Cf. Essen Thingo 1989: 67ff.

[1003] In general there are three groups of wrathful deities with the 'dangerous protectors' as the lowest group (in contrast to enlightened beings), as distinguished by R. Linrothe. These dangerous protectors *„...help to ensure health, wealth, and happiness by delivering the faithful from 'outer' enemies, visible and invisible. They protect particular locales from invasion and pestilence, or cure poisonous snakebites and illnesses. They control the environmental forces and elements in which they are embedded, along with the fates and fortunes of humans"*.

While the origins and sources of Mahākāla are not clear,[1004] his introduction into Tibet is well researched and known as the Panjarnata Mahākāla (Lord of the Pavilion). He was introduced in Tibet after Rinchen Zangpo's second sojourn to India. This saint who had been given orders by his king/monk Yeshe Ö of the Guge dynasty of Western Tibet to bring back a special guardian protectress, was followed by the flying mask of Mahākāla.[1005]

> At Bodhagayā (the site of the enlightenment of the Buddha) "... Rinchen Zangpo received instructions on how to achieve the manifestation of such a deity. At first unsuccessful in summoning the deity in his meditations, he then went to 'the cemetery south west of Bodhgayā, prepared a circle of offerings and prayed. He heard a fearful sound as though two tigers had leapt on a large human corpse and were devouring it.... At twilight on the third day he beheld the form of Mahākāla in the act of trampling upon a dwarf and holding a knife and skull, one above the other, level with his heart, and a *gandi* /short length of wood stick to make a sound held central in his hands'. He stayed for three days in contemplation and when he emerged Mahākāla was visible and he said: 'obtain the instructions (from the lama) and then we shall go to Tibet together in order to protect the doctrine'."[1006]

A congruity exists insofar as the history of the local tutelary deity Dorje chenmo, Pehar, and the archetype of protector Mahākāla, as a legend of migration, plays an important role in both cults of the deities.

The Saskya pa tradition preserves accounts of the cult of Gönpo, including the episode in which Rinchen Zangpo was followed by a mask from India to Tibet and the appeasement of the deity by means of a 'ritual melody': "*When Rin chen bzang po was returning to West Tibet in the year 1000-1001 after his second visit to Kha che and Gyqa gar, a mask of Gur mGonpo flew in the sky after him. Following this event, the mask became known as mGon po'I 'cham sku bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes ('the flying black leather mask being the dancing mask of Mahākāla')*."[1007]

> In general, the 'dangerous gods'... "originated very early as indigenous nature gods in Tibet and were converted to Buddhism after the seventh century. Others, particularly the wealth gods, were brought from India where they originated in sedimentary layers of ancient culture as pre-Buddhist gods....Many of them ride horses, lions, goats or other animals. They tend to wear armour, reinforcing their martial nature. They are guardian warriors who are oath-bound protectors."[1008]

The Yi dam or Gönpo (T. mGon po), protecting deities of sects or convents, often reside and receive their cult in the Gönkhang. Such gods, who protect particular localities, are also called

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[1004] Cf. Vitali 2003 b.

[1005] Vitali 2003a: 60; The description of the journey to Bodhgaya, where Rinchen Zangpo beheld the physical form of Mahākāla and his attributes is translated from the History of the Gur-mGon ('Canopy God') by Snellgrove/Skorupski, in their 'The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh, Vol.2': 99). I thank Ch. Jahoda for this information.

[1006] Snellgrove/Skorupski, 1980, II: 99, after Linrothe 2004:47.

[1007] Vitali 2001: 5.

[1008] Linrothe 2004: 15.

territory gods.[1009] Pehar is such an example, subjugated by Padmasambhava, who bound him by oath to become a protector.

The dangerous protectors are given the duty to protect religion within their domains, "*...but the primary responsibilities are more mundane: to ensure the birth of sons, to protect humans and livestock against diseases and epidemics, to avert accidents and bad omens, and to destroy or contain obstacle-creating demons. ...In the predominantly Gelugpa-dominated system studied by de Nebesky-Wojkowitz they were known as jigtenpai sungma or jigten gyi chokyang (worldly).*"[1010]

7.1.4.6. From Local Tutelary Deity to Pan-Tibetan Protector: The Noble Horse-rider Subordinated to Mahākāla

In contrast to earlier foundations such as Tabo, local protector deities seem to play a minor or at least a different role at Alchi and at the somewhat earlier Dunkar. In the centre of the entrance wall of the Alchi Dukhang the archetype protector Mahākāla as the *dharmapāla* is depicted, who guards the doctrine, the *dharma*. What we find at Alchi is a shift from the emphasis on local tutelary deities to pan-Indian protectors, especially Mahākāla. At Alchi he dominates the tutelary deities and the noble horse-rider next to him also with regard to his size.

At Alchi Mahākāla has replaced the position of the earlier Dorje chenmo, depicted above the entrance at Tabo. One should note here that the *sungma* (T. *srung ma)* of Tabo probably also originated in India and was later summoned by *lo chen* (Rinchen Zangpo) to be a protectress of Western Tibet.

It is important to observe how the subjugation of protectors to serve new demands is a constant element in the history of the foundation of Western Tibetan temples. The 'religious layman', Pehar, mentioned in the biography of Rinchen Zangpo, also belongs to this group of spirits who became oath-bound protectors after having migrated from regions outside of Tibet.

In his function as attendant of the Mahākāla the noble warrior at Alchi may represent the protective aspect of Pehar combined with the fearsome warrior aspect and worldly ethos of the aristocratic rulers.

The compositional qualities of the Alchi protector panel are certainly based on models of a very refined and advanced tradition.[1011] The horse rider stands in the tradition of the Dunkar mounted nobleman, where he has a rather autonomous status with distinctive iconographic features echoing Central Asian models. This feature cannot be found at Alchi where the horse-rider is integrated into the complex layout of the Mahākāla panel (on the entrance wall); the composition represents a later stage of development of iconography, showing a strict symmetrical and grid-like pattern comparable to early thangka depictions. This compositional unity in early thangka images[1012] provides a vague impression of the continuity of this type of composition in later periods.

A thangka from Central Tibet of the Sakya lineage order (established in 1073)[1013] datable to the 13th-14th century is one of the earliest examples of that compositional type which by that time must have already become a standard formula of configuration, showing similarities with

[1009] Ibid: 17.

[1010] Linrothe 2004: 19.

[1011] Cf. also images in Cat. 1982.

[1012] See Figure in Linrothe 2004: 55.

[1013] The life dates of Sakya Pandita are 1182-1251.

the evolution of western Tibetan compositions of protector deities.[1014] The Mahākāla Panjarnata (lord of the tent) in the Rubin Museum is shown in a burning and flaming aura, encircled by jackals, black dogs, crows and vultures alluding to a cemetery. He is flanked by his four major attendants (Palden lhamo riding a mule on the right side); in the right and left borders the 'Keepers of the Ten Regions'[1015] and the *lokapala* (protectors of the four cardinal directions; on the right side Vaiśravaṇa flanking the throne); the *lokapala* are dressed in the attire of contemporary warriors;[1016] donors, warriors and monks are depicted in the lowest zones while the lineage holders of the Sakya order are positioned at the top.

Another Sakya thankga from the Rubin collection (Pl. 156)[1017] also features Mahākāla Panjarnata (12th century, central Tibet). It is one of the earliest known thangkas featuring a geometric grid-like layout and a hierarchy of outer and inner retinues. A figure in warrior garb is shown in the lowest part, while a noble couple set in a two-pointed frame has a relatively prominent position in the whole configuration, and the meaning of this elevated status is unclear. It is important to note in this context that the position of this couple in the sacred order of the thangka is comparable with the position of the royal drinking scene at Alchi. This demonstrates that images of royal donors and courtly scenes play a prominent role in pictorial ensembles of protectors in this period while proving their elevated status in those compositions.

Prototypes of wealth-bestowing deities are Vaiśravaṇa and Kubera, often depicted as attendants of Mahākāla. They allude to the wealth aspect of this deity. The powers of wealth, as shown in the example of a Mahākāla Panjarnata painting of the Sakya tradition[1018], are also emphasized in a Mahākāla sculpture in the Potala from the second half of 13th century, showing the deity dressed in precious clothe and jewellery.[1019] The close relationship between Mahākāla and Vaiśravaṇa is further illustrated in a Tibetan miniature from a manuscript of the 15th century, where four forms of Mahākāla and Vaiśravaṇa appear in the centre.[1020] Vaiśravaṇa is here both a wealth-bestowing benefactor and a protector of the *dharma*.

Does the aristocratic horse-rider, displayed as a proud cavalier with precious attire and a horse of highest breed, and the drinking scene also allude to the wealth aspect of the Mahākāla? Different deities - not only Vaiśravaṇa - with attributes of royal power are a common feature in such compositions. The wealth bestowing qualities of donors are mentioned in the inscriptions and must thus be considered an important aspect of their self-representation. The person who donates his wealth to ensure that the people living in the realm can reach their spiritual goal is also regularly mentioned in the texts.

In this sense such depictions of donors and local protectors of spiritual and worldly fortune not only represent pious offerings but commemorate historic events. The presence of this type of image may be associated with a specific effectiveness ('Wirkungskraft'), namely to bestow blessings ('segensspendend') and generate well-being on the side of the practitioner.

[1014] See Linrothe 2004: 55.

[1015] These deities are also shown in the Entry Hall of the Tabo Dukhang; among them Kubera (riding on horse like in the Thangka).

[1016] Linrothe 2004: 56.

[1017] Ibid: fig. 2.2.

[1018] Ibid: 2.7.

[1019] Ibid: fig. 2.9.

[1020] Linrothe 1999: 137.

A further phenomenon might be relevant in this context, namely the legendary journies of objects, such as thangka or masks representing protector deities. Such legends often mark the beginning of the transfer of specific cults to Tibet. One famous example is the flying mask of Mahākāla,[1021] introducing his worship to Western Tibet. Thus we can assume that deities may 'reside' in artifacts on the request of charismatic figures bearing their super-natural power. Their migration in physical form gives legitimation to the transmission of the cult. This is also true for the medium of 'courtly imagery'. Basically, there is no such distinction between lay and cultic imagery. Therefore, virtually all Tibetan images and texts are religious.

The 'power of images' furthermore resulted in the common practice by worshippers in Tibet of touching paintings of deities and historical figures such as the Dharmakings in temples with their heads, comparable to the 'cult of the book' in Western Tibet (cf. intro).[1022] It is interesting to note in this context that hidden inscriptions on wooden beams below donor-depictions at Turfan also express in their texts the wish that the kingdom may prosper.[1023]

A comparison with contemporary thangka depictions makes it clear that the horse-rider of noble birth is not an isolated scene, but part of an overall composition, defined by a hierarchical order which finds visual expression in a grid-like pattern. The iconographic components reflecting courtly culture on different levels in these compositions can give and important clue concerning the identification of such relations in the Alchi wallpainting.

The nobly born horse-rider can be thus integrated into the huge corpus of local protectors of various kinds in the region, which developed in close relation to oath-bound protectors summoned by Rinchen Zangpo such as Pehar. Previously, only the socio-political function of female spirits such as Dorje chenmo had been attempted, while the study of the important role of mounted heroes in early Western Tibetan Buddhist temples is still in its infancy.[1024]

Mounted warriors as protectors of a territory play a significant role in the temples of Ladakh and Western Tibet (Ngari, TAR), and the prototype for them may have been the mythical figure of Pehar ('King Pe har' in later traditions), a non-Tibetan protector deity originally subjugated to the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Samye, according to Tibetan

[1021] Investigations concerning the transfer of Vaiśravaṇa, closely connected to Pehar, to Tibet and to Western Tibet in particular, would be a rewarding subject of future research.

[1022] *"Bereits Mahāyāna-Sutras kennen einen Buchkult, der dem Buch erlösungswirksame Kräfte zuschreibt. Im Varayāna wird das Buch auch als Weihegegenstand mit großer Segenskraftg aufgefaßt, allein das Tragen (btags gro), Sehen (mthong grol), Berühren (reg grol) und Hören (thos grol) der Texte kann zur Befreiung führen, unabängig davon, ob der Texte verstanden wird oder nicht. Dies hat in Tibet zum Brauch geführt, dass zuweilen Mönche oder auch Laien die Bände des Kangyur und Tanyur in einer rituellen Umschreitung um das Kloster tragen und somit auch den Gläubigen die Gelegenheit geben, die Bücher zu sehen und sie sogar mit dem Kopf zu berühren"* (Cat. 2006: 219).

[1023] Dr. J. Ebert, verbal communication, XI. 2007.

[1024] One aspect of the possible impact of the founders on the temple's program and their relation to tutelary deities should be added here. This example also demonstrates that not only the mounted nobleman is significant for the reconstruction of the iconography and history of protector deities in this region; also the prominent position of the depiction of the tutelary deity Hārītī with children jumping around her, in the portal at Dunkar may be a characteristic feature. It is important to note, that the donor of this temple was a Bro-lady; a female patron is another unusual aspect in the religious and political history of this region. I propose, that this specific iconographic choice may be associated with the female patron, responsible for this emphasis on the 'female power' in the program of Dunkar. This conscious choice of a female tutelary deity may thus be interpreted as another aspect of the manipulation of authority in the region and 'alliance' of donors and protector deities in the Western Himalaya.

legends. Mounted heroes were – and are still today - popular in Baltistan and Ladakh (e.g. King Gesar), and were depicted in Khotan, Dunhuang, and Turfan. The transfer must therefore be connected with the Tibetan dominance in the region during the time of the Tibetan Empire in Central Asia (7th to 9th centuries).

The Alchi horse-rider reflects the martial aspect of a protector while the courtly gowns emphasises the power of the ruler and the knightly pride of the local aristocracy. They reflect the ruler's signs of legitimation in this region in a visual vocabulary harking back to Sogdia/Eastern-Iran and Northern Pakistan, as evidenced in rock-images along the Indus and in Ladakh. Thus he is the embodiment of the ideals of the ruling clan, and representing the ethos of its wealthy donors as protectors of the *dharma*.

The double function of worldly power and trans-mundane order at Alchi is thus seen to stand in an older tradition: In the early murals at Tabo (around 1000 AD) the primary strategy of legitimation is based on the ancient Tibetan concept of combining the function of a worldly ruler and head of a monastic order. This system of ordered society - defined by secular and religious law (T. *chos rtigs, rgayl khrims)* as formulated in an edict and established by Yeshe Ö in 988[1025] - stands in the prestigious tradition of the 'Religious Kings' during the time of the old Tibetan monarchy (cf. 2.4.1.3.); according to this system of authority the rulers at Tabo are shown in the iconic mode, their attires combining the robe of the monk and that of the ruler. In addition, royal donors are shown in compositional units with protector deities, thus emphasizing the ethos of their rule as a religious basis for the community.

In the Tabo Main Temple the double value of worldly power and religious leadership of the royal Lama Changchub Ö is further elaborated, and reflected in the image of a deified king and the equation with the Buddha (with wheel of the *dharma* in the throne) and emblems of royal power: a canopy, flags, banners of victory, and a white umbrella over his head.

At Alchi in contrast, the strategies of legitimacy are adopted from systems of power and signs of royalty in the Indo-Iranian world, engaged for the well-being and protection of the community. These signs emphasise the refined courtly pride of the aristocratic elite in Sogdiana/Eastern Iran, characterizing the appearance both of aristocratic donors as well as tutelary deities.

In addition, the warrior-like symbols used at Alchi are consciously adopted from the repertoire of signs of authority and power in the region: the horse, the image of the powerful ruler as a personification of knight-like ideals, holding an axe in the drinking scene, with the shield-bearer as attendant. All these elements are also shown in rock carvings along the Indus, although in a much reduced and stylized form. Such status features may have been used by the followers of the Palola Shāhi (probably illiterate local rulers) and may have provided the basis for the famous later princes of Turcic origin - the rulers of feudal hill states and petty kingdoms in this region of present northern Pakistan. These rulers probably also integrated sacred benevolent or protective animals in their symbolism of authority, who were venerated in these regions, such as the ram and the goat, depicted at Dunkar, and the horse. Interestingly, horse, goat, axe and shield are the most important signs of power in the culture of the Kafirs in the Hindukush (North-eastern Afghanistan, North-western Pakistan) up to most recent times. The conscious use of this 'indigenous' vocabulary also demonstrates the bond with the local

[1025] Vitali 1996: 209.

community, while Tibetan elements signal the ties to the prestigious history of the Tibetan monarchy and their influential aristocratic allies.

The local protector Pehar, who originated in Central Asia, must have played in important role in the evolutionary history and the high status of mounted heroes in the region. He was summoned by Vaiśravaṇa to protect Samye. On the initiative of Rinchen Zangpo, the 'layman' became protector of treasures at specific locations in the Western Himalaya.

Pehar must have been particularly suitable for this function, as he was associated with the protector of 'royal fortune', the Iranian 'Khwarenah', regarded as the power behind the rule of the monarchs in Central Asia. A comparable situation can be observed in the role of Vaiśravaṇa for the kings of Khotan.

The mounted nobleman at Alchi combines concepts of morality associated with mounted heroes and territory gods in Central Asia and the virtues of charismatic kingship in the Eastern-Iranian world. He is thus an exemplar of virtues used for the protection of the *dharma*. However, the horse-rider also reflects the glorification of worldly riches, which Śākyamuni discarded when leaving the palace on his horse.

With these scenes, which are bound to the courtly sphere of the region as well as to the world of heroes and protectors, the rulers and donors as well as their families are presented as pivots of an ordered temple world. Acting as protectors, wealth bestowing benefactors and donors, they become mediators for others on their path towards Enlightenment.

It has been shown that the image I call 'the noble horse-rider' at Alchi is important for reconstructing the history and role of local protector deities in the region as well as for analysing the strategies for the legitimation of the Bro-clan, the leading aristocratic family during the time of the establishment of new Buddhist centres in Western Tibet, especially Ladakh, in the 11th-13th centuries.

The noble horse-rider appears as a paradigm case for the demonstration of the ethos, ideology and the 'manipulation' of the Buddhist subjects in the region. The visual vocabulary shows a fusion of different components typical for the cross-cultural synthesis and religious pluralism in the art and culture of Ladakh. The components and layers of this type of image and the socio-political dimension can be summarized as follows:

1. The elite is placed in the tradition of the kings of Guge and their patron deities (the local protectress Dorje chenmo) as mediators and powerful allies. Pehar, oath-bound by Rinchen Zangpo, was probably one of the territory gods who took up this socio-political function in later foundations.

2. The mounted nobleman riding a ram with *yakṣa* attendants at Dunkar (which is also associated with the Dro clan, namely a Dro lady who founded at least one temple there) clearly reflects Central Asian models (related to Dunhuang, Khotan, Turfan) and can be integrated into this tradition of local protector deities, spirits and mythic heroes, which is a constant feature of Buddhist culture in the Western Trans-Himalaya.

3. The different layers of the horse-rider's image at Alchi signal a consideration of local myths and traditions as well as power symbols and chivalric/martial culture of rulers of the Indo-Iranian borderland and petty kingdoms in Upper Ladakh and Northern Pakistan in particular.

4. The notion of the charismatic kingship embodied in the horse-rider is a feature which connects the ideas of the aristocratic rulers in the Western Trans-Himalaya with the culture of

Baltistan, Khotan, Turfan and probably - in a more remote tradition - with the deified kingship in Sāsānian Iran.

5. The ideology behind this type of image was to represent the Dro clan as closely connected with a specific protector deity. In this way they legitimated their sovereignty and religious power in the region.

The donors at Alchi, in alliance with local deities, are thus themselves powerful protectors and mediators between the community and the Buddhist pantheon on their path towards the ultimate goal of salvation. In this way the rulers became pivots of the new 'order' of Buddhist faith in the region.

Ongoing studies of textual sources and analyses of local folk epic may reveal further evidence for a more refined interpretation of the identity and function of this tutelary deity in the early history of the Western Himalaya.

7.2. Donor Depictions in the Dukhang of Alchi: A Comparative Analysis with the Temples of Tabo, Nako and Dunkar

7.2.1. The Religious Dimension of Donor-ship in the Buddhist World

A central virtue in Buddhism is the accumulation of merits ('Verdiensterwerb') through donations. Various *Jātakas* praise Buddhist virtues of kings and princes who accumulate merits through generous offerings ('Gabenspenden'). Prince Viśvantara and Sudhana are exemplary for this virtue on the path towards Buddhahood. The *Jātakas* instructed by the Buddha and link the present with stories of his previous lives. The story of Sudhana is also shown in a narrative cycle in the Tabo Assembly Hall, thereby alluding to the pious intentions of the Royal Lamas who founded the temple.

> Stoddard has put it as follows: "Während einfache Dorfbewohner Mönche undNonnen täglich mit Essen versorgten, war es der Weltenherrscher, der 'Cakravartin' - das weltliche Gegenstück des Buddha - der Land erwarb und einen 'Vihāra' für diejenigen errichtet, die der Welt entsagt hatten. In der späten Blütezeit des Buddhismus in Indien (ca. 8. – 12. Jh.) unterstützten königliche Gabenherrn die ausgedehnten 'Klosterumiversitäten' im Norden des Landes - darunter dieberühmtesten in Nalandā, Odantapuri und Vikramaśilā - mit dem Bau zahlreicher Versammlungshallen, Tempel und Hunderter von Wohngebäuden für die Mönche".[1026]

An inscription in the Alchi Dukhang states: "*...this great temple and vihāra has been built with a wealthy patron supplying the means and skillful craftsmen acting as agents*".[1027] The commission of a temple is a means to achieve merits, with artists as agents. Thus, the relationship between donor, monastery, temple and artist has nothing to do with 'Mäzenatentum', but it is rather a part of Buddhist concept of society and its order.[1028] The wealth of the ruler or donor is due to his merits in former lives, and he aims at continuing this path by supporting the *saṅgha* (T. dge 'dun) in its striving for Enlightenment. Furthermore, the Alchi inscription documents that the

[1026] Stoddard 2006: 96.

[1027] Pal 1982: 18.

[1028] Stoddard 2006: 96.

commissioning of religious art with the artist as agent was itself believed to be an effective tool to earn merit (T. bsod nams):

> "Eine Stiftung für den *saṅgha* dient dem Erwerb von Verdiensten, zB. Zukünftiges Glück zu fördern, ...Entscheidend ist die Verbindung zwischen der dargestellten Gottheit umd dem erwünschten Resultat, weshalb der Stifter während des Herstellungprozesses häufig entsprechende Gebete rezitiert. Schließlich werden die sie zur Erleuchtung gelangen."[1029]

Accordingly, one inscription in the Dukhang at Alchi reads that the merits achieved through the donation of images is dedicated to all living beings:

> "Om blessingsl Having made salutations in all reverence to the Three Precious Ones, to my lamas and to my tutelary divinities, I have composed this '(Lamp of) Clear Recollection' in order to generate pure wisdom in myself and others! // In that best of continents, southern Jambudvipa, at his spot, the hermitage of Alchi in sPu-rgyals's Tibet, land of pure ground and high mountains, I have built a precious temple with devoted veneration! ... Beings of the six classes wander about in seemingly endless *saṁsāra*, suffering miseries and delusion. However, a combination of circumstances including the appearance of a lama eventually provided the possibility of release ... Through whatever merit I have obtained in founding a precious temple and composing this 'Lamp of Clear Recollection' may I and the infinity of living beings be born in the excellent pure realm which is called the Great Bliss of the Lord and blessed one Akṣobhya! May all beings come to the attainment of all the attributes of Akṣobhya in full measure!"[1030]

7.2.2. Image or Portrait?

There is no strict distinction between the categories of historical persons, deities, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas in Buddhist art, due to the fact that Buddha was himself a historical person and became an enlightened being due to his former lives. This possibility to attain Buddhahood through the Buddhist path is the concept behind most of the images of historical persons.[1031] The different modes of depictions and classes of images all represent images of the Supreme Being and are a tool for the path of initiation ('Initiationsweg').

In Western Tibetan Buddhist tradition the interest in 'realistic settings' and thus also in 'naturalism' with regard to 'images' of depicted persons is a constant issue.

Differences in the way of depicting hieratic and iconic images of deities and the seemingly greater naturalism in the depiction of lay representations reflect hierarchy and order in the temple, but not necessarily realism of the depicted persons. The aim of the images of different classes, including donors, is to propagate specific religious ideas.

7.2.3. What is Reality, a Person or the 'Self'?

[1029] Ibid: 97.

[1030] Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980: 144.

[1031] Cf. Ronge, V. 'Portraitdarstellungen der tibetischen Könige zur Chos Rgyal-Zeit (8.-9.Jh.)'. Kraatz, M. Meyer zur Capellen/Seckel, D. (eds.) *Das Bildnis in der Kunst des Orients*, Stuttgart: 175-190;

Seckel, 1982: -198.

The following conversation between R. Thurman and His Holiness the Dalai Lama aims at demonstrating the complexity of this issue:

> R. Thurman: You speak about how the Buddha always emphasized the rational pursuit of truth. "He instructed his disciples to critically judge his words before accepting them. He always advocated reason over blind faith." Coming from a late 20th-century belief that there is no truth, only contingent truths, how are we to imagine what the Buddha meant by 'truth' in contemporary terms? / H.H. Dalai Lama: Buddha was speaking about reality. Reality may be one, in its deepest essence, but Buddha also stated that all propositions about reality are only contingent. Reality is devoid of any intrinsic identity that can be captured by any one single proposition -- that is what Buddha meant by 'void-ness.' Therefore, Buddhism strongly discourages blind faith and fanaticism. Of course, there are different truths on different levels. Things are true relative to other things; 'long' and 'short' relate to each other, 'high' and 'low,' and so on. But is there any absolute truth? Something self-sufficient, independently true in itself? I don't think so. In Buddhism we have the concept of 'interpretable truths,' teachings that are reasonable and logical for certain people in certain situations. Buddha himself taught different teachings to different people under different circumstances. For some people, there are beliefs based on a Creator. For others, no Creator. The only 'definitive truth' for Buddhism is the absolute negation of any one truth as the Definitive Truth. / Thurman: Isn't that because it is dangerous for one religion to consider itself the only truth? / Dalai Lama: Yes. I always say there should be pluralism -- the concept of many religions, many truths. But we must also be careful not to become nihilistic. In these four respects there is a new consciousness in the world, a new sensitivity to reality. Based on that, I am confident that the next century will be better than this one."[1032]

According to Eastern beliefs, the self is a structure, through which we perceive the world; if the self is equated with reality it can hinder the human to realize deeper truths. According to Buddhist thought, the 'self is emptiness and emptiness is self.' Though there might be a reality in its deepest essence, all propositions about reality are only contingent. Reality is devoid of any intrinsic identity that can be captured by any one single proposition. This is what Buddha meant by 'void-ness.' The awakened mind is one which has gone over means: the enlightened one, which has done away with views, ideas, and perceptions and which looks upon reality without any obstructions of mind.

7.2.3. Realism and Naturalism in Royal/Lay Imagery

An interesting feature of the narrative cycles, single images of deities, and lay depictions in the Western Himalaya is the material culture reflected in these paintings. What seems like a faithful representation of the 'reality' in Buddhist art has different layers of meaning, which are also discussed in the chapter 'Luxury art' in detail (4.).

One important function of luxury art and their realistic rendering is the depiction of 'portraits' in donor depictions, which are an important tool to communicate the ideology, religious and political values of the ruler. The individuality of the depicted person is not defined by differences in physical qualities (stencils are often used for figures) but by the depiction of their

[1032] H.H. the Dalai Lama in conversation with R. Thurman, in: *'Motherjones online-magazine'* (12.1.2008).

rich costumes, and possibly also by the specific ornaments used and insignia.[1033] While the costumes and their decorations at Tabo do not show a great variety in forms and surface patterns, the situation changes at Alchi, where costumes are clearly meant to depict individuals and relative rank in larger group depictions; this characteristic clearly links the art of Alchi to that of the Silk Road.

The royal insignia mentioned in the Ngari Gyalrab,[1034] such as 'the turquoise earrings emitting the light fulfilling wishes', 'the sky sword which cuts the necks of the demons' and the 'armour magnificently shining like silk' document the enormous value of material objects, which were used to demonstrate supra-natural power and authority. Vitali even assumed that these royal treasures had a double value as extraordinary objects granting magical power and symbols of royal status.[1035] Due to this importance given to material culture, it is clear, that donors and painters had much interest in the naturalistic rendering of costumes, jewels and attributes.[1036]

A different but related function of textiles and costumes can be observed in the spheres of deities related to the temple's founders: local deities and donors are often shown in comparable ephemeral settings of textiles, as is the case in Tabo[1037], and they even wear the same robes at Alchi, which indicates their close relationship. This relationship is an important source of information on the religious and worldly intentions of the rulers (cf. chapter 7.1.).[1038]

Different elements of indigenous 'living culture' have already been been identified as important elements for reconstructing the function of narrative paintings (see below). However, the function of courtly culture in Buddhist iconography of the Western Himalaya is still in its infancy.

Of course, shared symbols of gods and kings are a constant phenomenon in Indian and Central Asian art and culture, Vaiśravaṇa being exemplary, and often adopting royal symbolism. In particular, the god in Khotan may have been regarded as the source of the glory of the monarch of the state and the power and charisma behind his rule, and was dressed in Central Asian attire.[1039]

In my view, in these contexts textiles in the Western Himalaya are meant to communicate the ideology and intentions of the donor/ruler, represented as mediators between the community and the realm of deities, with the local protector deities acting as powerful allies on the path toward enlightenment. Of course, the close relationship of rulers to protector deities also bears the ancient notion of the spiritual line of specific deities, and Bodhisattva in particular, a distinguishing feature of the notion of 'sacred kingship' and 'Religious Kings' during the time of the old Tibetan monarchy. At the same time, the shared robes of donors and

[1033] Ebert 2006: 109.

[1034] Vitali 1996: 5.

[1035] Ibid: 161.

[1036] Specific dresses are also mentioned in historical sources, such as the Ngari Gyalrab, listing a fur of a white lion of the Dro-lady. I thank Ch. Jahoda for this information.

[1037] Papa-Kalantari 2007a. Cf. also Jahoda 2006.

[1038] This demonstrative 'alliance' is in particular specific for the royal dynasty in Purang-Guge as documented in the biography of Rinchen Zangpo.

[1039] Granoff (1970: 167). The author further concludes, that this notion may go back to the Iranian 'khwarnah' or 'Pharro', the embodiment of the kingly glory.

deities signal the local bonds of the local protectors, as suggested by Ch. Jahoda.[1040] Furthermore, the reciprocal exchange of symbols of royal and spiritual power enhance each other's authority in the region. In this way, textiles, robes and ephemeral settings serve to communicate to the local community an interpreted and ordered world. [1041]

In general, different types of costumes and precious textiles at Alchi in the sphere of deities reflect their relative status and position in the strict hierarchy of the Buddhist pantheon. Luxury textiles in particular bear the notion of power and dignity of the sphere of kings, transferred into the transcendent realm of gods, as well as the splendour of their heavenly abodes (cf. chapter 5).

An important feature is the depiction of architecture and ephemeral abodes in lay and religious imagery. Specific types of architectural settings (cf. Tabo entry wall of the Dukhang, Nako, main wall of the Upper temple, Pl. 85) depict heavenly thrones of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas[1042]. The latter are local variants of the 'temple thrones' of the Buddha in the Indian tradition, defining specific places of pilgrimage, such as Bodhgayā, related to his spiritual life.

However - compared to the Indian prototypes - the architectural settings are rendered in a more ornamental way in early Buddhist art in the region. I propose that they are comparable to the costumes and textiles consciously used to define the 'individuality', or rather the function and position of the scene or deity in the hierarchy of the sacred order, that is the Buddhist iconographic system. The culmination of this tendency is the heavenly thrones in the Sumtsek at Alchi, defined by pilasters and architraves decorated with gems and precious textiles, with strings of pearls hung on them, in which the deities reside, each framed by a gold-plated nimbus.

Another typical phenomenon is the depiction of religious narratives (life of the Buddha, Sudhana legend) in a simplified, standardised 'local environment' and the depiction of 'material culture' typical for the Western Himalaya cultural sphere. The depiction of the 'Tibetan landscape' is a constant feature in Tibetan art, and functions as a "*... realer Schauplatz eines visionären Geschehens. Für den Tibeter bedeutet dies, daß das heilwirksame Geschen nicht in einem jenseitigen Bereich, sondern in eigenen Land stattfindet.*"[1043]

Moreover, the different 'modes' of donor depictions are consciously used as a strategy to communicate religious messages and political ideas of the ruling elite, presented as a part of the path of liberation. At Dunkar (Cave II) for instance, the Buddha is shown in Tibetan dress and the environment is symptomatic of this tendency. A scene in the palace with Śuddhodana/Śākyamuni's father is positioned in such a way in the temple that it forms the exact parallel to the enthroned donors on the other side of the entrance. The textile valances defining the space of the central figures are also comparable. The Buddha, set in a local and thus realistic environment from the point of view of the contemporary worshipper, is the prototype or exemplar of the spiritual career of the donor and his family, and thus of every human. Interestingly, in the Alchi Dukhang we find a juxtaposition of the life of the Buddha,

[1040] I wish to thank Ch. Jahoda for the various inspiring discussions on this topic.

[1041] Cf. also Essen/Thingo 1989: 16, who coined this concept with regard to Eastern-Tibetan art.

[1042] These architectural elements probably reflect local wooden architecture, cf. also the Poo Manuscript, (E. Allinger, in press).

[1043] Essen/Thingo 1987: 16.

emphasizing on the role of Mahāmāyā, dressed in Tibetan or local dress (Pl. 248). One scene shows the birth in the Lumbinī-garden. This thematic arrangement scenes with the woman as 'life-creating force' and mother of the Enlightened One is an essential feature recalling the dominant role of women in the donor depictions on the opposed wall of the entrance.

The Washe (T. sBa bzed, Royal chronicle) indicates the manner in which the Tibetan style and other specific styles were used during the construction and decoration of the temple of Samye in the 7th century:

> "The master (Padmasambhava) advised the king to build a temple to Tara first. ...In the temple, the king, the master, a Nepalese artist, and he, these four, discussed. The Artist said: 'Shall the gods be painted according to Indian style, or according to Chinese style?' The master said: 'As Buddha was born an Indian, do it according to Indian style"' The king said: 'Master as I hope that the Tibetans, who are fond of vice, will become believers, let it be done according to Tibetan style.' So the master said: 'Gather together the subjects of Tibet and it shall be done according to the Tibetan style'. From among the assembly of Tibetans, the handsome man called... the beautiful woman Lha-bu-sman of lCog-ro (who was a leading aristocratic clan in the later history of Western Tibet) was taken as a model, and Tara was made on the right. ...then on the 30th day of the month the king assembled all the necessary object and set up two cotton tents (T. *da- gyi gab-rts*) to consecrate the temple and offer payment to the artist. But no-one knew where the artist had gone, probably he was a magic illusion."[1044]

Karmay, a specialist in early Tibetan art in Central Asia and courtly culture, is to my knowledge one of the first Western scholars who defined the symbolism of material culture in Tibetan art. Besides, local environment depicted in wallpaintings in Western Himalaya temples mainly serves to demonstrate that the place is providing the possibility of a personal salvation.[1045]

The depiction of the Sudhana cycle at Tabo is an exemplary case, as already mentioned. It illustrates the spiritual quest of the wealthy merchant son Sudhana (T. Nor bzang), as told in the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*.[1046] At Tabo Sudhana is depicted in Tibetan dress in a Tibetan environment, while only a few depictions show Indian textiles. This contrasts to the Life of the Buddha set in a non-Tibetan environment.[1047] It will be shown that the depiction of the Royal Lama is consequently presented in juxtaposition to the life of Sudhana, indicating a unified religious programme in the temple in which 'lay images' merge.

Karmay's was the first western scholar to point out this constant socio-religious function of distinctive modes of painting in Tibetan art. Therefore, local environment in Western Himalaya

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[1044] Stein (1961: 31); cited after Karmay 1975: 4-5.

[1045] This function of material culture in the Western Himalaya has been discussed by Klimburg-Salter 1987: 687 and P. Pal (1989: 30); Steinkellner 1996. For a detailed description of the narrative structure of the Sudhana cycle and its function in the overall program of Tabo see also Klimburg-Salter 1987: 692.

[1046] On the path towards his goal of ultimate realization, he visits various spiritual friends. Thus movement is an essential feature of the narrative (Cf. Steinkellner 1996: 6). Cf. also a book review of this work by H. Decleer (*The Tibet Journal, Vol XXIV*, No.2: 72).

[1047] Interestingly, the life of the Buddha is set in a Tibetan environment in a cave temple at Dungkar. Thus equating the donor with the spiritual career of the Buddha.

painting underlines the possibility of the ultimate realization of higher truths in the dimension of human life everywhere. [1048]

Interestingly, narrative cycles are condensed on single walls and organized in panels in the Alchi Dukhang, indicating a vertical hierarchy which contrasts to the narratives running virtually around the whole temple in the Tabo Main temple. This evolution with regard to the iconographic programme, the related rituals, and the symbolism of space, which is also reflected in donor scenes, material culture and ornament in the ceilings will be discussed in various chapters.

7.3. The Thrones and Settings of Western Himalaya Royal/Religious Dignitaries and Aristocrats[1049]

7.3.1. Indo-Tibetan Donor Depictions/Consecration Scenes in the Tabo Main temple (T. *gtsug lag khang*)

Tabo is one of the twenty-one minor foundations which Rinchen Zangpo mentioned in his biography. The Main temple (*gtsug lag khang*), which is the earliest temple in the sacred site, is a historical palimpsest of different chronological phases and styles of early Western Himalaya art during the Guge kingdom.

The temple consists of an Entry Hall (Gokhang, T. *sgo khang*), an Assembly Hall (Dukhang, T. *du khang*), and a Cella (T. *dri tsang khang*) with an Ambulatory (Korlam, t. *skor lam*). In the Cella elements of the early foundation phase can be identified, as has been observed by Ch. Luczanits.[1050] This observation can be confirmed on the basis of an analysis of ceilings.[1051] The results demonstrate that the paintings on the upper boundary of the temple do not only give insight into one of the earliest programmes of ceiling decorations in the region but also into the fascinating evolutionary history of this genre as well important aspects of the symbolism of space in early Western Himalaya temples which hitherto had eluded interpretation, as has been shown (cf. chapter 'Ceilings', 6.).

[1048] According to Steinkellner (1996) referring to the 1987 study of Klimburg-Salter, the Sudhana scenes bear the idea of the pilgrim's progress, relevant for every human.

Steinkellner points out, that the notion of mobility, associated with the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet bears the idea of the pilgrim's progress from one spiritual teacher to the other, as described in the chapters of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*.

[1049] D. Klimburg-Salter has presented a general typology of what she defined as the Tibetan assembly scenes in her 1987 article as well as in 1997 focusing on the donor depictions at Tabo. In 1997 (pp. 85-88) she distinguished between three types of non-devotional image: religious and lay historical personages, religious narratives, and genre figures. These three types are classified as narrative depictions in contrast to devotional imagery. A significant type of donor depiction, the 'Great Assembly' was defined by her (1996b: 328) as "*one of the most distinctive iconographic features of the Indo-Tibetan artistic school*", "*an important local institution in which all the principal social groups (...) gathered around the royal lamas or prince. (...) The ideology propagated by such assemblies was clearly central to defining the independent political and social character of the kingdom*", but without further elaboration. Her 1987 text gives a description of compositional principles and characteristic motifs such as elements of Tibetan material culture, as well general observations on the relationship of these scenes to the artistic programme of the temple. Concerning the setting of these scenes, Klimburg-Salter drew attention to the textile drapery behind the protagonist as a consistent feature in this type of imagery. Associated inscriptions indicate that these scenes represent the ruling elite of Purang-Guge (Klimburg-Salter 1996b: 328). A detailed comparative analysis of donor depictions in the Western Himalaya and their symbolism in the overall program has not yet been attempted.

[1050] Luczanits 2005: 36.

[1051] Papa-Kalantari 2007a.

Chronologically the paintings at Tabo can be placed between 996, the date of the founding of the monastery by Yeshe Ö (T. Ye shes 'od), and 1042, when the temple was presumably renovated.[1052] Different monastic scenes have survived, representing different types and functions in this temple, which is one of the earliest Buddhist foundations by the kings of Purang-Guge (besides Tholing, Kojarnath and Nyarma),

In the Entry hall (Pl. 185) very early donor depictions are to be found, dating back to the foundation phase of the temple. The paintings show an assembly of secular and monastic persons seated in horizontal rows with the king (royal Lama) Yeshe Ö in their midst, sitting in the uppermost row. The royal lama (*lha bla ma*) is a descendant of the ancient Tibetan monarchy whose successors migrated to the West in the 10th century. He heads the assembly, flanked by his sons Nagaraja in secular dress, and Devaraja, in monastic dress. The whole scene is centrally organized, and the vertical hierarchy expresses the dignity of the monarch. All this suggests, as already indicated by Christian Luczanits[1053], that the painting represents a record of an important historical moment, namely the consecration of the temple.

The thrones are probably meant to depict rocks and the monarch is further honoured by an umbrella or canopy of luxury textiles. One of the umbrellas is decorated with lotus flowers while the other has a net-like decoration with pearls in the cross sections.[1054] The baldachin strongly recalls images of the Tibetan Emperor (*btsan po*) in cave 158 at Dunhuang from the period of Tibetan occupation (781-848) showing a royal parasol positioned above the dignitary; another example is an image of the Tibetan Emperor in the Vimalakīrti scene in cave 158 (middle Tang period).[1055]

The significance of the thrones of rock/mountain (?) at Tabo is unknown to me. So, a comparative analysis with further evidence of self-representations of the Guge kings will be fruitful with regard to the question of their symbolism.[1056] His sovereignty is further expressed through the sumptuous cloths with ultra-long sleeves, and the arms hanging down. The *mudrā* (hand gesture) is a central element of the interpretation of the function of the depiction; it appears like an expression of religious and political ideology, standing in the tradition of the Indian iconic images. With *the abhaya mudrā* he clearly presents himself as a protector and is a part of the overall composition with tutelary deities, which covers the wall in a transition zone

[1052] Klimburg-Salter 1996b: 323.

[1053] Christian Luczanits 2004: 34.

[1054] This kind of honorific cover recalls a description in the *Mahāvastu* of the sustained canopy of flowers, which stood above the Buddha in the air, garlanded with strips in coloured cloth (cited after Conze 1959: 23).

[1055] After Whitfield 1996: 184

[1056] One example beeing the stone stele of Yeshe Ö in Pooh, which shows a tortoise on the bottom (I thank Ch. Jahoda for this information). Comparative analysis with early royal symbolism shows, that the tortoise was a constant sign associated with royal power during the time of the old monarchy in Tibet. According to literary sources cited by Tucci (1973: 201), the on the grave of Songtsengampo, was a stone sculpture featuring the king. A tortoise of stone was positioned near a tumulus of the Ralpacan, and bears witness of Chinese influence. Further a tortoise of stone was positioned in the courtyard of a temple west of Samye, it was probably basis of a statute of pillar, and stems according to Tucci from the Tang period.

It is possible that this element corresponds with the wide-spread belief in various cultures that earth rests on the back of a turtle. In ancient myth it belonged to the lord of waters and also had a central role in cosmogonic mythe. *"Because of its shape the tortoise is regarded as a symbol of the three worlds. The lower shell of it is this (terrestrial) world, the upper shell of it the eyoner sky, and what is between (the shells) is the atmosphere"* (Patyal 1995: 99).

In post-vedic mythology the tortoise appears to be the incarnation of divine being Visnu.

leading to the main hall. This protective function is also consistent with the position of these paintings in the protector's chapel, below the local tutelary deity.

7.3.2. Images of Divine Royalty at the Tabo Cella

In contrast to the simple type of donor depiction/consecration scene organized in rows in the Entry Hall, the donor depicitons in the cella of Tabo are set in a more unified, condensed scene (Pl. 187), and showing a specific type of throne scene with religious allusions, as has already been proposed.[1057] One of them depicts probably the sovereign Changchub Ö, who carried out a renovation of the main temple in 1042, as recorded in an inscription.[1058] The seond is in the cella and depicts Zhiba Ö in a position of veneration, and can thus be classified as a votive image. A distinctive feature in terms of composition of the former scene is the iconic, hieratic mode of the central figure, which is sitting on a carved throne. This form contrasts to later images of enthroned dignitaries alluding to naturalistic settings.

The symmetrical type of composition at Tabo is comparable to the tradition of the Indian iconic mode of representation. The Royal Lama is placed in front of a textile drapery and is also distinguished by an umbrella. The throne of the royal lama is further defined by a flag (T. *ba dan),* mainly an emblem of war in the Tibetan iconography of symbols, but also by both a sign indicating an auspicious place (T. *dar chen)*[1059] to the left and an umbrella (T. *gdugs*, traditionally a symbol of royalty and protection) to the right.

The decorations or carvings on the pilasters of that throne show a cloud-like ornament; in the centre rectangular, horizontal protrusions are depicted, betraying some similarities with the throne of the donors in the entry hall. All this may indicate mountain like structures. Such structures defining the lowest/earthly sphere of the abode of deities are found on pedestals of Kaśmīr-style bronzes; one of the most elaborate can be viewed in Pal 1975[1060] (cf. also Pl. 44 . In the openings between the constructive elements of the throne there are medallions, which can be read as the wheel of law (*dharma*), with allusions to the lotus flower, which is an emblem of the Buddha. These medaillons are also often depicted on pedestals of Kaśmīr-style bronzes and as the wheel of the *cakravartin*.

All these elements recall the description of the *cakravartin*'s consecration, with banners, an umbrella, and a textile drapery fixed on poles alluding to the canopy which is held above the *universal monarch* during the ceremony.

The protagonist sits on a cushion and wears a Western Tibetan coat of wool with long sleeves (comparable to the contemporary *phyu pa*), black boots and a monastic robe. The attire may be in the tradition of the old kingdom, with overlong sleeves, long robe with wide lapels, made of luxury textiles (this type of dress is also worn by Tibetan Emperor depicted at Dunhuang: Pl. 221; and by high dignitaries at Shalu). Both Yeshe Ö and Bynang chub Ö are represented in close relationship with the monastic order and representatives from various regions; the mode of depiction of Changchub ö (Byang chub od) isolates the protagonist from the entourage, and is meant to lift them beyond the human plane. We will come later to the possible models of this

[1057] Papa-Kalantari 2007a.

[1058] Cf. D.Klimburg-Salter 1997: 87ff; but here descriptions do not include a discussion of the donor depicition as a component of the overall-composition in the temple.

[1059] Beer 2003: 175.

[1060] Pal 1975: fig. 25.

type of depiction. The religious symbolism intends to give them religious and political legitimacy. This close relationship is in the tradition of the Dharmakings of Tibet.

To the left of the lama, the Tabo *saṅgha* Buddhist community, and to his right, lay people who may be members of the ruling elite are depicted, each of them with characteristic head ornaments: similar to Alchi we find the brimmed hat as well as a royal person with a flat, rolled ring or head cloth leaving the crown bare which is also shown in a donor scene at Nako. Both types are comparable to Dunhuang examples of Tibetan royal imagery.[1061] These different attires are probably meant to present the individuality of the persons, rather than a mass of people.

The symbols of authority can be defined as the hieratic and frontal position of the ‚motion-less' monarch, whose gaze is directed at the onlooker. He forms an ideal centre of the whole composition, structured by strict order and symmetry, which may allude to the notion of divine kingship in the tradition of the old Tibetan monarchy, as will be shown below.

Representatives of the kingdom of Guge and the Buddhist *saṅgha* are subordinated to the royal lama. This style also emphasizes the close relation between religious institutions with kingship in order to consolidate their reign and state political legitimacy.[1062] Furthermore, from the history of Gung thang it can be concluded that in particular Lama Yeshe Ö (lHa bla ma Ye shes 'od) enjoyed religious 'up-grading' and veneration ('genoss eine religiöse Überhöhung') [1063] in the whole of Western Tibet. The donor depictions at Tabo and in later depictions share the close spatial relationship to tutelary deities indicating a close relationship in rituals of consecration and veneration as well as with regard to the status in the hierarchy of sacred order in the temple.

7.3.2.1. The Ephemeral Dwellings of Deities and Kings at Tabo

A constant element in the early depiction of the setting of tutelary goddesses as well as that of donors is a textile hanging behind the deity, reflecting the high status of ephemeral architecture in this region.[1064] Located over the main entrance of the Assembly Hall is a scene containing the temple's protectress, Wi nyu myin (rDo rje chen mo), together with her entourage.[1065] It appears that the function and symbolism of textiles in the image of the royal lama are very similar to those of the textiles of the protector deities above the entrance in the Entry hall and in the Dukhang, where a cloth is fixed on both sides on poles and held by the retinue of the goddess. The drapery behind the deity is decorated with rows of Buddhist eight-petalled lotus blossoms depicted frontally, i.e., as rosettes, also found on Kaśmīr-style bronzes.[1066]

[1061] Karmay 1977: fig. 5.

[1062] Everding 2000, II: 327.

[1063] Ibid: 360.

[1064] The frieze depicting the Sudhana legend at Tabo contains lay imagery, namely a royal couple, each of which is seated in a tent-like structure. Cf. also Klimburg-Salter 1987, 1997: fig. 123.

[1065] D. Klimburg-Salter 1997: 93-5; figs 55, 56.

1066 Comparable complex motifs can be found on the ceiling cloths of the Assembly Hall and the ambulatory (D. Klimburg-Salter 1997: 94, 138). I propose that a distinctive type of ritual cloth is depicted, in contrast to textiles used for robes. The cloths defining these throne scenes can be related to Central Asian luxury textiles connotated with royalty and thus are late examples of the Tang International Style in the Western Himalaya. Monumental lotus rosettes interspersed with quatrefoil motifs based on Sasanian motifs are a dominant decorative theme in the Tang caves from the Tibetan Phase at Dunhuang (e.g. Caves 158, 159) as well as in Shalu (Zha lu) monastery (Papa-

Different types of textiles and functions can be classified at Tabo, as has already been proposed[1067]: the designs on costumes in the wall-painting may represent light-weight fabrics of cotton (as has been identified by Wandl[1068]) and perhaps also of silk (cf. chapter 'Luxury Textiles; 5.), while specific intricate designs can only be found on the ceilings and as honorific cloths. Beaded medallions with lotus rosettes (with eight petals, thus bearing specific Buddhist symbolism) are also found on cushions of Kaśmīr-style bronzes as already mentioned.

This type of cloth featuring lotus medallions in beaded roundels, which might copy luxury textiles from Eastern Iran or Sogdia – or at least follows this tradition - obviously has had a specific 'aura' and high status in Western Himalaya painting due to its use for the abode of deities in Kaśmīr and its specific Buddhist symbolism associated with the ultimate goal of salvation and the canopy of lotus flowers sustained above the Buddha as described in the *Mahāvastu*.[1069] Thereafter this type of ornament was chosen to define the abodes for local deities, the royal lama in the assembly hall, as well as the textile cover on the ceiling, honouring the sanctum. A comparable phenomenon of eastern Iranian luxury textiles used for the settings of the Buddha can be found on the cushion of a Parinirvāṇa Buddha at Dunhuang[1070], featuring pearl roundels with ducks; the latter type may depict Sogdian or Chinese post-Sāsānian silks.

The close relation of the different types of cloths in Western Himalaya painting and Buddhist sculpture from Kaśmīr and Gilgit might also be an indication that such a representation of luxury textiles does not only imitate real textiles, but their motifs and symbolism may also have been adopted through portable religious objects.

The cloth defines both the sacred space and the abode of the local protectors (in contrast to deities dwelling in heavenly thrones (cf. Pl. 194, Pl. 197). In addition, the function of the textile hanging behind Dorje chenmo can be interpreted as protecting the deity from the 'outer world', a kind of 'magic screen'. This phenomenon to hide a tutelary deity behind a screen can be still be found in Tibetan temples: e.g. at Tholing and Gyantse specific wrathful protectors in the *mGon khang* are covered with textiles. In addition, a horizontal hanging with painted or embroidered representations of attributes and offerings, such as *torma* in the centre are placed to prevent a direct view of the wrathful demons in the sanctum.[1071]

Ephemeral abodes are also an important element in the religious culture of Himachal pradesh: in Kulu, on festive occasions, faces of local deities which are cast in silver in the shape of a facial mask are carried on richly decorated palanquins Pl. 193 . They are accompanied by dancers and musicians, and are carried in processions through the village. Textiles and umbrellas play a significant role in the abodes of these deities.

The similarity between the textile drapery behind the Royal Lama in the Tabo main hall and the abode of a protector deity on the entrance wall of the same temple can be read as a further indication of the shared goals of royal and spiritual leadership.

Kalantari forthcoming). For images of ceilings, robes and textile coverings of the Tang period see Whitfield 1995: vol.1, 96-103. A further image of the protective deity of the main temples, the goddess Wi-nyu-myin, is depicted in the *mgon khang*, where a textile with plain stripes is draped behind her (for images see D. Klimburg-Salter 1997: fig. 38ff; fig. 55ff.).

[1067] Papa-Kalantari 2000, 2002.

[1068] Wandl 1996.

[1069] Conze 1959: 23.

[1070] Cf. J. Ebert 1985: fig. 79.

[1071] Ch. Jahoda, verbal communication, and article in preparation.

In the donor depiction on the north wall of the Tabo cella[1072] the sovereign, probably Zhiba Ö (Zhi ba 'od), is covered by a textile drapery which is positioned above the protagonist which seemingly represents a tent-like canopy (Pl. 190). The hieratic donor figure is oriented towards the main clay image in the cella to which he is offering a flower, presumably a padma with three buds.[1073] Condensed scenes of donors in veneration and offering position in close relationship to Tara and a mandala configuration in clay as a devotional centre above is shown in the Gongma temple of Nako and in contemporaneous manuscripts.[1074]

Wuth regard to the specific model for the group painting in the Tabo cella, a comparison with a baldachin or rather wooden pavilion draped with cloths at Dunhuang is interesting, although a bed is depicted here. Vimalakīrti with a procession of Tibetan dignitaries below is depicted on this throne. In contrast to Dunhuang, in the painting in Tabo the tightly controlled composition, rigid symmetry, hieratic position, and flanking figures subordinated to the monarch, relate the whole scene to the tradition of iconic mode of religious imagery and recall early texts describing the consecration ceremony of the *cakravartin*. The architectural frame clearly separates the royal lama Byang chub Ö from his entourage and thus recalls the separate canopy-covered throne of a deity. All this is clearly meant to emphasize his double function. Accordingly, the ephemeral architecture at Tabo can clearly be conceived as a heavenly throne. That the royal Lama is seemingly equated with the Buddha, possibly alluding to the age of fortune to come and that he might even have enjoyed a specific worship can also be seen from a later monumental depiction of Yeshe Ö at Tholing.

The art of Gandhāra and its legacy in Kaśmīr is nearer geographically, artistically and historically. Comparable compositions can be found in Gandhāran art featuring discussion scenes (Pl. 188; cf. also a baldachin containing the relics of the Buddha: Pl. 189). One type of discussion scenes in Gandhāran narrative depictions shows the following characteristics: "*...a Bodhisattva in the centre sitting in padmāsana below and umbrella or canopy on a throne with a footstool. He performs abhaya-mudrā with his right hand and holds a flask... in the left. He is attended by seated figures, mostly wearing turbans, of which at least one is usually portrayed in a vague attitude of conversation or discussion*".[1075] The canopy recalls a description of the abode of Dipankara described as sustaining a canopy of flowers which stood above him in the air. It had four pillars and was garlanded with strips of coloured cloth (cf. Pl. 87, Pl. 89).[1076] The architectural setting of the Royal Lama at Tabo, consisting of poles with a baldachin like structure above on a throne, is comparable to the image of an enthroned Bodhisattva in the Taxila Museum.[1077] This shows that this type of throne is an adoption of a kind of 'sacred conversation' with a high status in the iconography of deities.

In this conversation, members of different communities or tribes, such as Rum Guge are depicted. These had settled down in the Spiti (?) (Piti Cog la) area the Tabo temple had become a

[1072] D. Klimburg-Salter 1997: fig. 151.

[1073] For a detailed description of the artistic programme of the Tabo cella see D. Klimburg-Salter 1997: 137-153. The earliest assembly scene with lay imagery in Tabo is presumably to be found in the *sgo khang* of the main temple (cf. D. Klimburg-Salter 1997: fig. 50).

[1074] Papa-Kalantari 2007a for a scetch of the configuration.

[1075] Luczanits (2005) discusses in his article '*The Bodhisattva with the Flask in Gandharan Narrative Scenes - In memoriam Maurizio Taddei*' different types of narrative depictions in Gandharan art.

[1076] Conze 1959: 23.

[1077] Ingholt 1957 fig. 37, after Luczanits 2005: fig. 3

ritual centre for them.[1078] This might be another function of the enthroned monarch, namely to show him as an authority who secures peace, which is demonstrated through the subordination of the different clans to the Buddhist order he established in the region.[1079]

Furthermore, the ethos of kingship is articulated in inscriptions that form a unit with the dynastic paintings. There, the noble donor Byan chub od is considered *"...the king in the dharma, having received the merit due to his renovation work, and his conduct is that of a bodhisattva proceeding towards highest enlightenment"*. His predecessor, the King Yeshe Ö is considered *"...of the lineage of bodhisattvas and born of divine origin, he offered the kingdom for the sake of the dharma"*. To sum up, in the cella the royal lama Yeshe Ö is presented as a deified king, with the symbols of the *cakravartin*. He is presented – in contrast to images of later 'worldly' rulers - without insignia and in a monk's robe, indicating his ordination and renunciation of the mundane world. The throne defines his royal status as well as the palace-like heavenly realm of depictions of the Buddha, which is in contrast to the noble and monastic attendants in veneration. The iconic mode and religious co-notaition ('religiöse Überhöhung') is reminiscent of discussion scenes in Gandhāra. This image of the Royal Lama is to be read in conjunction with the Sudhana-cycle running along the walls of the Main temple, where in the last scene the insignia of Changchub Ö –horses and shields- are depicted alluding also to the spiritual path of the Śākyamuni, his awakening, renunciation of the mundane world and flight to 'houseless-ness'. In this way the worshipper in circumambulation ascends through the different bodies (*kāya*), from the mundane world (*nirmanakāya*) to the awakening and renunciation as represented in the Royal Lama and the *dharmakāya* in the cultic centre.

This mode of deified kingship contrasts to abodes of deities in the temple, which show a different type of throne setting. The latter can be defined as a heavenly throne, recalling important events and places of the life of the Buddha; one example can be found in the entrance of the assembly hall (Pl. 194), which also bears similarities to the architectonic settings of a row of Bodhisattvas at Nako. Scarfs hung on the poles of heavenly palaces at Tabo – alluding to the importance given to the spiritual career of the Buddha - recall such elements in Indian sculpture (Pl. 19); their function has already been defined above as honorific ribbons offered to the Buddha while the lobed arches clearly betray the architectonic tradition of Kaśmīr. An image of the Bodhisattvas on the entrance wall at Tabo shows floating banners, scarfs or ribbons, pearls, jewels and bells that embellish the heavenly abode.[1080] The function of ribbons, banners and umbrellas in Buddhist devotional practice has been present since earliest times and is also obviously depicted in such throne settings. In addition, the celestial palaces described in various sources come into mind, which are made of various precious

[1078] Vitali 2003: 63.

[1079] A similar scene is described in the (*chos rtsigs*) carved in stone with religious and civil law. The royal lama ordered its implementation swearing to uphold it with solemn oath in front of a tutelary deity and Pehar as witness; he also gathered headmen and elders from all over the kingdom as well as anyone holding power in his own area to re-establish Buddhism in the area (Vitali 57).

[1080] Scarfs bound on columns and are also to be found on heavenly thrones of the bejewelled Buddha at Kakrak (Cave 43, see Higuchi 1983: Platte 144) and Bāmiyān (Cave complex C, Klimburg-Salter 1989: fig. 27, see also Taddei 1992 on this topic) as well as for deities and religious figures at Dunhuang that combine wooden architecture and sumptuous garments. Might these textiles also allude to royal symbolism co-notated with investiture in the Iranian world such as the famous ribbons on Sāsānian monuments at Taq-I Bustān, Iran? The co-existence of Iranian language of kingship and Buddhist iconography in the Western Himalaya is best illustrated in the art of Alchi (Flood 1991, Papa-Kalantari 2007a).

things, adorned with thousands of pinnacles, and inside them various heavenly woven materials are spread out, and the temple is further embesllished with banners and flags.[1081]

7.3.2. Thrones at Nako/Kinnaur and Dunkar

Comparable heavenly settings of deities just discussed at Nako may reflect settings of deities in Indian art (cf. Pāla-manuscripts) combined with indigenous architecture (Pl. 195)[1082]. This ambiguity of settings which bears both trans-mundane and worldly qualities is a further example of a phenomenon which can be found in many elements of material culture in the Western Himalaya and is meant royal camp, will also be briefly explored. The paintings at the Nako Translator's temple (T. Lotsaba lha khang); (Pl. 200-202) represent a different status of donors as local princes and also a chronologically later stage in the development of donor depictions, which have been roughly dated to the Mid. 12th century.[1083] One scene is depicted on the lower section of the west wall, below a representation of a female deity, a sculpture of a Prajñapāramitā;[1084] there is also a depiction of Tārā in an elaborate palace above the scene.[1085] Further scenes with lay figures are found on the entrance wall (sadly in poor condition) as well as in the Lha khang Gong ma. In the latter the donors (Pl. 190a) are engaged in an offering ritual on either side of a set of votive objects including lamps, vessels, metal stands (still to be found today in Nuristan) and flasks that are to be found below the depiction of a Aṣṭamāhabhaya Tārā.

This compositional type of offering ritual is common in contemporary book illuminations, e.g., the depiction of a *Prajñaparamita* in an 11th century manuscript from Tholing, as well as in the panels that are placed in the interstices of the *mandala* depictions at the Alchi *'du khang*.[1086]

On the main wall of the Nako Upper Temple (Gongma), the focus of worship is probably a Prajñāpāramitā mandala[1087]. The whole configuration on the wall consists of donors to the left and right of offerings above a tutelary deity, a Tārā of the Eight Perils, and the centre of worship is depicted above by an ensemble of clay sculptures with Prajñāpāramitā. The tendency towards a unified layout, and a vertical hierarchy is comparable to thangka from Dunhuang (Musée Guimet, 9th century), which have already been attributed to a Western Trans-Himalaya group of paintings.[1088] The entrance protectors in the Dunhuang mandala can be compared to the figure of Tārā at Nako in the same position, below the mandalic configuration.[1089]

Furthermore, the mandalic structure of the thangka and eight lucky symbols at the corners recall the configuration on the ceilings of the Tabo cella. Thus a strong influence of such portable objects on the evolutionary history of iconography in the region can be assumed.

[1081] Cf. for example *Sukhavativyuha*, cited after Conze 1959: 235.

[1082] The likely relation to built reality at Nako has been proposed by D. Klimburg-Salter 1997: 216 but without further elaboration.

[1083] Little has been published on the history of the Buddhist temples of Nako to date. Among the more recent works: Luczanits (2003, 2004, forthcoming), Klimburg-Salter (2003), Papa-Kalantari (2004, 2007a, 2007b).

[1084] The study of this sculpture is the subject of an ongoing M.A.-thesis by P. Müller at the University of Vienna.

[1085] Romi Khosla has observed during his assessment of the condition of the Nako temples (Austro-Indian conservation campaign 2002) that there is a continuous frieze with narrative imagery running around the cella.

[1086] The miniature from the Tholing manuscript may be viewed at: http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/exhib/circleofbliss/exhibition.html (V.2006).

[1087] Luczanits 2004: 86.

[1088] Cf. Cat. 1982: Pl. 61.

[1089] This group of paintings is also important as early documents of the Vajradhātumandala, which play an important role in the Western Himalaya (Karmay 1975; Klimburg-Salter 1982: 144).

Another thangka from Dunhuang is also remarkable for donors in vivid scenes, probably reflecting the living culture of the time, positioned on the bottom of larger configurations, featuring Maitreya, 9th -10th century, with donors or noble couples who had been converted by the newly descended Buddha according to Whitfield.[1090] Saddled horses are to the right of the male donors, after their arrival at the palace.[1091] This interest in living culture and quasi-narrative settings of donor depictions is comparable with the enthroned monarch in the Translator's temple, which will be discussed below.

As at Tabo, the subject in the Assembly Hall of Nako adorns the wall adjoining a niche that houses the main icon of Vairocana. The iconic character of the protagonist at Tabo is followed by a more 'naturalistic' type of donor depiction that reflects interesting indigenous features.[1092] According to D.Klimburg-Salter[1093] - following an earlier suggestion by Giuseppe Tucci - a secular figure, a minister or a member of the local aristocracy is depicted; he is sitting on a carved throne in front of a textile drapery while his retinue is arranged in a relatively loose composition around him. His entourage is smaller in scale and organized in such a way that a certain depth of pictorial space is achieved.

The costume of the monarch is carefully depicted: the heavy woollen coat suited to the climatic conditions in this region, a broad belt; underneath this is a second layer, a patterned costume that is visible at the collar and the cuffs of the ultra-long sleeves.[1094] Wall paintings in cave 159 (Middle T'ang, 781-84) from the Tibetan phase at Dunhuang depict a procession of rulers from different ethnic communities. Below the debate of the Buddhist scholar Vimalakīrti on his throne is an impressive portrait of the Tibetan Emperor and his retinue.[1095] The long white coat with broad collars, its sleeves reaching almost to the ground is comparable to Nako.[1096] This type of costume continued to be the prevalent type of Western Tibetan royal dress and demonstrates a certain unity of the Tibetan tradition from early times on. However, various Eastern-Iran-style dynasties such as the Palola-Shāhi might also have worn comparable kaftans as can be concluded from contemporaneous donor depiction in bronzes The headgear

[1090] Whitfield 1990: 46.

[1091] Loosely connected are also configurations in the Alchi Dukang with the preaching Buddha and deity and donors in different registers, but unified setting. An tree is like a clamp binding the registers to a unified setting on the left side, while the upper border is bound together by un umbrella and lateral floating ribbons (comparable to the heavenly thrones of pillars and floating banners on the entrance wall at Tabo).

[1092] The models for the costumes of religious imagery in the *mandala* depictions can be found in Northwest India as well as in the adjoining regions of Chamba, Lahaul and Lower Kinnaur; cf. Sharma, and Sethi 1997. For images of Nako see also Luczanits (2003) and the website of the Nako Research and Preservation Project: http://www.univie.ac.at/fsp-programm/wmf (V. 2006) designed by the author.

[1093] D.Klimburg-Salter 2003: 39.

[1094] It is also possible that the dress is lined with a different fabric so that the collar appears in a contrasting pattern. In the summer of 2004 at Nako, Dr. Kalpana Sahni pointed out that this garment might have been decorated using the Ikat technique. At Nako this pattern is found solely on the donor's dress; this might be an indication of a royal prerogative. Ikat is a technique used widely in textile decoration throughout Central Asia. The earliest examples on the Indian subcontinent can be found in the cave temples of Ajanta.

[1095] Whitfield 1995: fig. 257.

[1096] His retinue is grouped around him and a servant holds an umbrella, the symbol of royalty over his head. A further portrait of the Tibetan Emperor once existed in Cave 158, of which only a photography has survived (Whitfield 1995, vol. 2: 324); this painting had an inscription: *bod hi btsan po*. The robe is patterned with lotus blossoms; the only Tibetan coat with patterns of flowers at Tabo is in the portrait of a nobleman in the entry hall. There *padma* can also be found on the canopy above the 'portrait' of the temple's founder Yeshe Ö.

in the shape of a circular braid of wool is yet another characteristic for Spiti and Kinnaur and can be traced back to royal Tibetan imagery at Dunhuang as well[1097]. An intermediate stage might be represented at Shalu (Zha lu) monastery (in particular the phase from the early period, ca. 11th century) in Central Tibet.[1098]

7.3.3.1. The Tibetan Podrang 'Royal Camp' in the Iconography of Sacred Spaces

The textile hangings at Tabo (the textile drapery as well as the baldachin) and Nako are extremely significant for the interpretation of the historical context of the donor scene. The type of cloth demarcating the space of kings and deities at Tabo can be related to the ephemeral culture of textiles, which is a prominent feature in the iconography of Gandhāran art, as has already been stated.

At the later Nako temple, the details of the poles and the roof with valances on the front edge are carefully depicted and suggest it be interpreted as a tent. The chronologically later Cave 2 at Dunkar (Dung dkar; datable around 1200; Pl. 198) shows a further step in this development in a set of panels with monastic imagery depicted on the lowest section of the west wall. The protagonist of each scene is placed in a large (open) tent with his retinue subordinated. At Dunkar the tent is further used as a pictorial device to connect a group of people.[1099] The textile drapery is the central component of the inner unity of the whole scene both at Nako and Dunkar, whereas at Tabo the ritual space is mainly defined by a hierarchic configuration of persons of differing status and symbols of the *cakravartin*.

As far as the cultural background of the scene is concerned it is the sum of the above-mentioned motifs that points to a possible interpretation. The monarch or hierarch depicted beneath a textile drapery as well as other elements of this set of motifs can tentatively be read as the royal camp, a specific form of mobile residence with a long tradition in Tibetan culture. The tent serves both as the delimitation of royal space as well as its definition. Thus, it can be assumed that the curtain or textile drapery behind the Royal lama at Tabo and the historical persons at Nako reflect contemporary courtly traditions and maybe indigenous ceremonial practices as well as – in a more remote tradition – the culture of ephemeral residence of the old Tibetan Monarchy.[1100]

The tent is only one aspect of the wide range of ephemeral spaces and textile traditions that this region shares with the nomadic and semi-nomadic cultures in Inner Asia and in Western Tibet in particular.[1101] Due to geographical and political factors the court of the Tibetan

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[1097] Cf. Karmay 1977: fig. 5.

[1098] Ch. Jahoda and D. Schüller have documented comparable head ornaments in costumes in Sangla and Kanam villages, Kinnaur, where these hats have are at festivals for local deities.

[1099] We will find a further abstraction of interior space at Alchi, where the valances become almost ornamental.

[1100] Eric Haarh (1969) shows in his 'Yarlung Dynasty' that Tibetans adopted burial practices which were in use in imperial Iran, where the tombs were called 'houses of perfection' and contained tents and precious garments. Fragments of a monumental cloth (probably a tent) have recently been discovered in an Imperial Tibetan tomb (see Heller 1998). For the study of Tibetan funeral customs and royal treasure see Tucci 1950. Giuseppe Tucci reports that the corpse of the king was buried with precious objects and his royal attire; further studies on this topic are to be found in Haarh 1969.

[1101] A further aspect can be mentioned here, namely the function of textiles as a delineation of courtly space in the tradition of the face cover. A face-cover made of silk was found in a Yarlung tomb, and it can be assumed that at the time of the old Tibetan monarchy – comparable to medieval Iranian customs – it was not permitted to look

monarch was mobile. According to Chinese sources, in ancient Tibet both the aristocracy and the laity led a partially nomadic life. The mobile residences made of felt were surrounded by walls and had various social and economic functions.[1102] We know from Dunhuang texts that the Tibetan royal tents which served as summer residences for the Tibetan King were called *fu lu*[1103], a rendering of the word *phru ma* in Tibetan, meaning 'palace' or 'military camp'. According to P. Denwood[1104] the Tibetan word *pho brang* usually translated as 'palace' is associated with the court of a king who moves around seasonally and "*...a centre where diplomatic ceremonies are held and from which official orders are made and issued*".[1105]

The strong and lasting force of this courtly tradition continues up to the time of the Dalai Lamas (Pl. 199). It can therefore be concluded that the symbolism of ephemeral structures that had developed against the background of the 'Tibetan cultural empire' shared the same elevated status as built constructions.

Giuseppe Tucci[1106] suggests there was a strong impact from inherited residential traditions on the development of a specific Western Himalayan vernacular and religious architecture. Western Tibet shares various aspects of textile tradition in architecture with various cultures due to its location on the trade routes, the so-called Silk Roads that connected Tibet with India, China and Central Asia. It is clear that the formal characteristics of the royal camp in particular possessed high status in the 'iconography' of residential traditions. I propose that the mobile residence of the Tibetan court could have served as a model for a pictorial convention in Western Himalayan art. However, these observations are mainly based on pictorial evidence and therefore need to be studied in a more extensive context, including epigraphy, social history and textual analysis.[1107] The ephemeral culture and patterns of spatial order in assemblies and courtly receptions add to the body of concepts of ordered space significant for the cultural landscape of the Western Himalaya.[1108] The study of the close interrelationship and reciprocity between local culture and religion and the artistic tradition is a possible task for future research and will allow for a better understanding of the function and meaning of material culture represented in the art of this region.

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at the king. Even today, when H.H. the Dalai Lama moves between his winter and a summer residences, a textile curtain is draped to shield him (Kurt Tropper has drawn my attention to this contemporary practice).

[1102] A. Róna-Tas has studied the tent camps of the Tibetan court and their function in relation to fiscal policy. In general there is very little new research on this topic to my knowledge. I am grateful to G. Hazod and Ch. Jahoda who discussed this topic with me and supplied me with important bibliographical references.

[1103] Stein 1987: 128.

[1104] Denwood 1990: 77.

[1105] Cf. also Diemberger 2002: 33-58.

[1106] Tucci 1973.

[1107] The volume *'Sacred Landscape of the Himalaya'* (2003, Michaels, Ramble, Gutschow, Steinkellner (eds), Vienna) is an in-depth study of concepts referring to the sacredness of space, landscape and nature in the present-day culture of the Himalaya region. The authors follow a methodology known since the early 1970s as architectural anthropology, however the concept of the royal camp has hardly been described in recent literature. Furthermore, the concept of ephemeral and mobile structures in contrast to solid buildings corresponds to the notion of the numinal in the worldly representation of sacred space as well as the concept of the 'impermanent' in Buddhist doctrine.

[1108] Ch. Jahoda concludes from fieldwork conducted in the Western Himalaya over the past few years that various aspects of nomadic tradition play only an insignificant role in present-day life, e.g. mountain pasture has been given up by the peasant society of the Spiti valley only recently (cf. Jahoda 2003: 309).

At Dunkar we find a complex frieze with various levels as at Alchi, but in contrast to the Dukhang, at Dunkar the whole scene is set in a unified setting in the tradition of ephemeral architecture in Western Tibetan donor depictions. Here the valances function like a huge tent, and the scene is structured by order and hierarchy with an enthroned donor or high dignitary positioned in the centre. In addition, he is also shown on a higher level in the composition. This tendency towards a centralized, unified setting is comparable to the donor depictions in the Sumtsek. Thus, we can also assume a dating around 1200 for Dunkar paintings discussed here.

Whereas the Tibetan Buddhist type of the royal assembly at Tabo is characterized by hieratic and symmetrical compositions, representing trans-mundane, religious qualities (comparable to throne depictions of the Buddha in Gandharan art), donor depictions at Nako show seemingly indigenous elements, probably also reflecting their lower status as local princes or aristocrats. The depiction of the Tibetan Podrang, the 'royal camp', together with other 'naturalistic elements' at Nako and Dunkar are a new feature in donor depictions reflecting a new interest in worldly culture and signs of sovereignty, which may also give insight into indigenous culture and ideals of courtly life of the Western Tibetan rulers in the 12th century.

7.3.4. Iranicate-Buddhist Signs of Sovereignty at Alchi

At Alchi we find the synthesis of local courtly culture as a specific genre in Central Asia in the Tibetan assembly scene as well as the ritual banquet in the tradition of an Iranian ceremonial feast, and a court reception. The latter represents a distinctive cultural orbit in the Western Himalayan region of Ladakh.[1109]

At Alchi new modes of composition and signs of sovereignty are integrated into the pictorial language of donor depictions in the region, also reflecting a change of self-representation and ethos of rule, as will be shown.

In the Dukhang (Pl. 250) the ideals and signs of sovereignty are – to a certain extent - in the tradition of Tabo, with elements of hierarchy and order realised through a horizontal division of bands and symmetry. However, at the same time the tendency towards a fusion of throne depictions and naturalistic elements of a complex scene is further elaborated.

The different settings of the scenes in the assembly frieze are defined by quasi-architectonic frames, which stand in the tradition of earlier depictions in the Western Himalaya. Valances on the top of the assembly frieze, above the uppermost row of figures, document the use of textiles as an embellishment of the ceilings in wooden architecture. They reflect local architectonic traditions and the use of textiles on the ceilings of wooden structures, which continues to be the practice in Ladakh and Baltistan up to the present.

Scenes of the enthroned monarch and noble couple at Alchi are characterized by the main figures, which are depicted in the foreground in a kind of architectonic setting, and attending figures depicted in layers above and below the central scene. The pictorial convention for a group depiction with certain elements of perspective is an element which is also found in earlier depictions at Nako at Dungar. In contrast, the setting is defined at Alchi by a 'screen', representing the courtly realm, and the subordinate smaller figures are positioned above, suggesting that they are in the background of a shared space. This treatment of space shows an ambivalent approach. It permits the integration of both the notion of hierarchy and iconic values as well as an interest in sensual representation of physical reality and interaction between the persons present.

[1109] The conceptual background of donor depictions varies according to the historical context.

The relatively isolated drinking scene (Pl. 210), positioned between the temple's protector and the assembly represents a specific type of throne scene in the thematic arrangement of donor depictions.

The banqueting mode is a new element in courtly imagery, alluding to the spirit of aristocracy in Central Asia. This type of group depiction is integrated and assimilated into the earlier throne depictions, reflecting a different ethos of rule and cultural orientation of the later Western Himalayan temples at Alchi.

The adoption of Iranicate signs of sovereignty resulted in a great variety of expressions for representation. However, these images not only bear mundane content, but religious associations can also be assumed. For example, a gem may be shown in the nobleman's hand, held before his breast, which may me read as an offering or one of the seven possessions of the cakravartin. The same hand emblem is also held by deities associated with wealth and prosperity (see below).

The different types of composition and specific functions of the scene in the assembly and throne depiction calibrated with Buddhist ideals is a central focus of this study and will be discussed in the next chapter.

7.3.5. 'Heavenly Palaces' in the Art of the Sumtsek

Later images of this genre in the Sumtsek (Pl. 204) show a different, markedly Kaśmīr-style orientation with regard to the organisation of 'group depictions'. Characteristic is a complex overall programme and interrelated iconographic themes, which also find expression in the palace-like settings of the depiction. Virtually the whole programme on the inner walls represents a heavenly palace, with strict hierarchy, corresponding to the *trikaya* system of esoteric Buddhism. The programme shows a complex interlacing, interconnectedness and communication between the spheres, this world and higher spheres. [1110]

The throne scenes of the Dro clan in the Sumtsek also reflect a later stratum of Iranicate art in this region around 1200 with regard to material culture. In one scene a male aristocrat (Pl. 203) is framed by a rich throne structure, embellished with jewels and gems, pearl bands, and textiles, on which are sitting heavenly beings riding mythical creatures (comparable to heavenly abodes of deities). There are small figures, resembling offering deities in iconic images, in the interstices between the wooden abode and above the central figure which are donating different objects to the monarch.. The settings are defined by hierarchy and symmetry. Both protagonists and courtiers in the lower row are seemingly acting in a unified space. The backdrop of these levels have the same colour, which stands in contrast to earlier banqueting scenes, with a clear separation in different horizontal sections or stages. The notion of hierarchy is also expressed in the later depictions through the different sizes of the figures according to their status.

The monarch or aristocrat is flanked by two women apparently coming from different cultural backgrounds (this notion brings to mind the role of the two wives of Songtsen gampo). On his left side one is offering a flat cup or plate in obeisance with her upper body turned forward. This makes it clear that this kind of offering is meant as a sign of homage to the ruler, similar to offerings of food to religious persons or the Buddha. The cup is flat like a dish and different to the metal objects in Dukhang and their Sogdian/Sāsānian equivalents. High dignitaries of the court are shown with specific symbols of authority in a register below: the

[1110] Accordingly the temple is described in a later inscription in the Sumtseg as positioned between earth and heaven (Snellgrove, inscription 10: 149).

two pointed cap, cups held in hands, men with shields and swords. A white bird, held by one courtier (which might allude to the royal hunt), is clearly a sign of authority, alluding both to courtly culture as well as to, namely the horse-riding skills of such hunters. These warrior-like aspects are also depicted in the famous frieze with the noble guards at Lashgari Bazar. In addition, various luxury objects define the courtly environment: plates on tripods, with *torma* or food offerings put on them, flasks, bookstands, and caskets with crown like tops embellished with gems.

The function of the banqueting style is different from that in the Dukhang. The latter emphasizes the rich and elegant atmosphere of such scenes in Central Asia and Sogdia in particular, while, in the Sumtsek in contrast, the cup is an emblem of authority like the kaftan with complex patterns. All these elements can be found in courtly scenes in the Lashkari Bazar. However, while the emblems of sovereignty and courtly culture reflect a later stratum of Iranicate art in Central Asia, the 'banqueting' in the Sumtsek is filled with religious and worldly atmosphere, whereby the monarch or aristocrat is set in a complex palace-like environment, consistent with religious imagery in Kaśmīr.

The noble woman is shown (Pl. 214), enthroned and situated between a priest and a nobleman (smaller in size comparable to deities in thangka depictions), in a separate scene. She has a conch shell possibly filled with essences of sacrifice in her left hand and her right arm performs a gracious gesture signaling both devotion and protection. The attire is more streamlined than the Tibetan dresses of earlier donor depictions, reminiscent of Indian or Kaśmīri aesthetics; the scarf on her head as well as her jewellery (which is also worn by a noble lady in the Dukhang) are also more North-West Indian features. The necklace, form of hairdress, and the shawl, forming a pointed diadem-like element in the front of her head is comparable to the characteristics of deities in this temple, such as the goddess Tārā.[1111] Moreover, the middle position and bilateral symmetry tend more to models of religious imagery.

7.3.6. Ornamental Culture Around 1200 in Northwest-India and Ladakh

The throne of the Buddha Amitābha in the Sumtsek is organized as a self-contained panel, crowned by a five-lobed arch. The ornamental values and style show close affinities with the broader cultural areas. The *gavacsa* niches in Buddhist and Hindu architecture of western India, and also Ghurid[1112] architecture of the Indus valley in North-eastern Pakistan[1113], around 1200 (Tomb of Sadan Shahid) are comparable. Dense fillings of scrolls in the upper part of the frame are distinguishing features, and the contrasting colours of red and blue at Alchi are equivalent to an architectural ornament deeply cut into the surface, creating an effect of light and shadow. This fusion testifies to the strong reciprocal receptiveness of Muslim architecture, and Buddhist and Hindu traditions (e.g. Gujarat) and to the fact that the confessional or dynastic boundaries were transcended by the medium of material culture and on the level of style (the same phenomenon can be observed in Hindu and Buddhist sculpture in India very early on).

[1111] Goepper 1996: figure on p. 75.

[1112] The Ghurids were vassals of the Ghaznavids and in the early twelfth century. They became overlords of large areas of eastern Iran, Afghanistan (which was originally their home land), modern Pakistan, and Northern India. The Ghurid architecture integrates elements from the architectural tradition of the Indus valley and Central Asia and Afghanistan, such as epigraphic bands to frame the niches (Flood 2001: 132-137).

[1113] Flood, FG 2001, Ghurid Architecture in the Indus Valley: The tomb os Shaykh Sadan Shahid, *Ars Orientalis Vol 31*, 129-166. fig. 8-9

The typology of the overall composition is comparable to the Kaśmīr style idiom of throne architecture: an approximately contemporaneous example[1114] shows a throne base in two registers, with pilasters and quasi-Corinthian capitals defining the supporting elements of the heavenly palace, and many donors and the wheel of the dharma in the shape of a stylized lotus are shown in the spaces between the elements, and in the centre of the lower register respectively. A comparable configuration can be found in the base of the Amitābha panel featuring the 'Seven Jewels' of the *cakravartin* at Alchi.

The organisation in superimposed registers can also be found in the donor depictions of the Dukhang, in particular in the monastic scenes, with donors below onboth sides of a vase, or *purnaghata*, to be discussed in detail later. Of course this type of composition has a long evolutionary history and is also found in rock carvings in Ladakh.[1115]

A later stage of this visual idiom, with strong parallels to the ornamental style of the Alchi Sumtsek, can be found in a bronze house in the Potala. Due to stylistic characteristics it can be attributed to the Western Himalaya, and may have been produced by Kaśmīr artists.[1116] Dense floral scrolls in the throne and overlapping animals in the base are distinguishing features; all these elements can be found in the wall and ceiling paintings of the Sumtsek.

To sum up the settings of the donor depictions (Royal assemblies and throne scenes reflecting consecration ceremonies, votive images and enthroned local rulers) show a markedly evolutionary history, reflecting a different ethos of rule, religious associations and aesthetic preferences:

In general, the following major types of images of the donor in the Western Himalaya can be identified

1. Historic scenes (Tabo, Entry Hall) possibly depicting the consecration of the temple as suggested by Ch. Luczanits. Royal assemblies show superimposed rows of persons in a static mode. The throne of the Royal Lama and his sons are covered with umbrellas honouring kings. The scene may represent a historical moment in which the donors hold a ceremony, together with protectors as witnesses.

2. Deified Royalty: The depiction of the Royal Lama Changchub Ö in the cella shows the sovereign sitting in a noble and static mode on a throne of draped textiles and an umbrella in the midst of his entourage, wearing a combination of a monk's habit and a Tibetan coat. A closed umbrella, which is an additional banner of royal and religious supremacy, serves to dignify him. The mode of depictions is comparable to 'conversation scenes' in Gandhāran art; one can thus speak of a kind of deified royalty. The throne depiction alludes to Indian hieratic mode: umbrellas, textiles, thrones, which are all features from the un-iconic phase of Buddhism and comparable in a relief of the Buddha in non- personal form, where textiles adorning the throne are decorated with imprints of the feet of the Buddha. In this tradition the emphasis of the setting is on representation of the numinous, ideal space[1117]. The emblems also recall the

[1114] Cat. 2006: 160.

[1115] Snellgrove 1977.

[1116] Cat. 2006: 262.

[1117] This term is adopted from Seckel, D (1962) *Kunst des Buddhismus*, Baden-Baden: Holle, 209.

symbols of the *cacravartin*, including the wheel of the dharma/*cakra*[1118] and may even allude to the consecration of the universal monarch. The ultimate source of this hieratic mode might be 'Parthian frontality'. In the Parthian cultural landscape a formulation was found to represent a figure beyond worldly limitedness, which was possibly later – according to Schlumberger - a model for the depiction of transcendent values in religious imagery.[1119]

This mode is combined with ephemeral architecture which corresponds to the settings of local tutelary deities, possibly also referring to shared ritual traditions. Significant is the language of modes: while the hero in the Sudhana legend is shown in a mundane mode, Changchub Ö has, after renunciation from worldly life – attained a deified state. Thus the images in the temple are set in conscious juxtaposition to each other and clearly communicate the political ideology of the ruler as a part of the spiritual path to the worshipper.

2.a. the donor depiction of Zhiba Ö in the cella cominbes the throne scene with the typology votive images, whereby the donor is shown in veneration, subordinated to the female tutelary deity in the cella.

3. The throne depictions of local rulers at Nako display a new interest in selected naturalism and depiction of the courtly environment of the monarch and his entourage– or rather the environment of a semi-nomadic people, probably in the tradition of the podrang, 'royal camp', which is also later used to define a space for a larger group of people at Dunkar. These scenes show a mingling of living tradition and ideals such as chivalric culture and formal models.[1120] The setting is both worldly – communicating with the viewer- and visionary, referring to abstract values and courtly ideals of the ruler. The compositional units of tutelary deities with donors in naturalistic, courtly environment on the bottom recalls unified compositions at Dunhuang, alluding to paradise-like settings.

4. Courtly scenes of sovereigns and the aristocratic elite at Alchi: pictorial overall compositions show strong Indo-Iranian types of courtly imagery – their ways of interaction are found in Sogdian and Western Central Asian art- mingled with Tibetan features and Buddhist symbolism. In the Dukhang at Alchi Kaśmīr-style thrones contain complex settings of banquets out of door holding precious vessels in the Eastern-Central Asian tradition, bearing also various religious connections in accordance with the ethos of rule, as will be discussed later. The different scenes are understood as elements of a larger ensemble. The compositional unit of the rather isolated banqueting scene of the noble couple with Mahākāla is in the tradition of contemporaneous Thangka depictions. In the group-depictions of lay and monastic dignitaries in the Dukhang different styles of depiction with various functions are shown; their classification is a main focus of the following chapters.

5. In the latest stage of this tradition, that is the Sumtsek, the hieratic enthroned noblemen are placed on heavenly thrones. Such architectonic forms are also found in Kaśmīr style

[1118] Cf. Calcutta, Indian Museum, after Bussagli: p. 180

[1119] This iconic type probably has Parthian models, maybe adopted from depictions of seated kings, but this needs further investigation. The Parthian stratum at Taxila has been analyzed inter alia by Chantal Fabregues, *Iranian Art: Arsacid Dynasty. The Indo-Parthian beginnings of the Gandhara Sculpture 2, online*. I am endebted to J. Ebert for this reference.

[1120] Cf. Filigenzi 2005: 104.

architecture and sculpture. Virtually all the scenes are set in a unified setting, a heavenly palace, with a clear vertical hierarchy.[1121] This organisational principle is comparable to later thangka depictions around 1200, displaying unified palace-like settings and strict hierarchy and order in larger compositional units.

The way to depict the central noble lama is also significant, set in a composition with bilateral symmetry and throne-like setting. The noble lama is set on a throne, with flanking figures, very much in the style of central Tibetan depictions of the Buddha. He is holding a cup which displays a certain ambiguity, it being both a sign of sovereignty and an offering bowl, alluding to depictions of the 'Four Bowls' by the Four *lokapalas* (heavenly kings), donated to the Buddha. A further step of the phenomenon of religious masters depicted as objects of worship is found in the stupa at Alchi.[1122]

A consistent feature of donor depictions in temples from different chronological stages is the adoption of contemporaneous depictions of abodes of deities, or styles of compositions adopted from religious iconography. This reflects a constant notion in this region, the double value of the ruling clans as spiritual authority and worldly power. It also reflects the phenomenon that the spiritual path of the donor is equated with that of the Buddha. The depictions of donors in religious settings is a sign of self-representation, but it also reflects the interconnection between this world and higher spheres. The various allusions to Buddhist ideology in these scenes are the focus of the analysis of the donor depictions at Alchi.

7.4. The 'Enthroned Noble Couple' or 'Noble Banquet Scene' in the Alchi Dukhang

"...although a regime may come into office and maintain itself for some time by sheer force, its stability and continuity are achieved mainly through the symbolism of authority which it manipulates.... that gives it legitimacy by representing it ultimately as a ‚natural part of the universe'' (A. Cohen 'Two-Dimensional Man', London 1974: 31, after Whitney Azoy 1982: 84).

Banquet scenes of noble couples represented in wall paintings at Alchi reflect a widespread topos in Central Asia, featuring diverse styles, settings and forms of interaction between the persons and thereby providing interesting insights into the cultural, political, artistic, and historical context. The documentary evidence of banquet scenes and group depictions of lay and monastic persons in Western Himalayan art is quite abundant and thus provides a good basis for comparative analysis. Although recognized as an important aspect of the cultural history of the emerging elite, the evolutionary history of form and style and socio-religious meaning of these scenes seems to elude interpretation. In particular, the study of the symbolism of the signs of worldly and spiritual power reflected in these images is still in its infancy, especially when it comes to matters of gender, the social standing of men and women and activities they were involved in.

The 'royal drinking scene' or the 'enthroned noble couple' (Pl. 210, Pl. 211) in the Dukhang at Alchi (mid 12th c.) is one of the most famous and controversial examples. G. Tucci[1123] was

[1121] Interestingly also steps lead to the upper realms in order to emphasize the interconnectedness of the scenes.

[1122] Cf. also Luczanits 2006c, who discussed the appearance of central Tibetan iconography in the murals of the stupa.

[1123] Tucci 1973.

among the first Western scholars to point out the historical significance of donor depictions in the Alchi Dukhang and drew attention to the Central Asian character of this scene in its post-Sāsānian/Sogdian elements. Tucci's assumption that the donor depictions in the Dukhang may be "*...the work of Tibetan painters established in Kashmir, since a similar decoration is found at Gyang, perhaps following Central Asian models...*"[1124] was also shared by Snellgrove/Skorupsky.[1125] The latter author published the inscriptions in the two earliest temples of the sacred compound.[1126] Pal/Fournier thought that the courtly model could have been Ghazni.[1127] They further suggested that the material culture reflected in these depictions illustrates Turcic-Iranian courtly art of Kaśmīr. Goepper[1128] suggested in his standard reference book on the Alchi Sumtsek that the courtly culture reflected at Alchi might give insight into the contemporary life of Kaśmīr, but his studies did not include the donor depictions in the Alchi Dukhang.

Various other authors have recognized parallels in details of the costumes with the early Buddhist material culture of small kingdoms in Northern Pakistan (c. 7th-8th c.),[1129] but without reconstructing the possible genetic link to the much later art of Alchi. Pal was the first to relate the Alchi donor dedictions with the Turcic cultural zones without defining the cultural and historic background. D. Klimburg-Salter - following Pal's hypothesis - even relates the donors of Alchi to "*... the images of Buddhist Shāhi princes who presided over the last great Buddhist kingdom in the Trans-Himalaya on the eve of the first wave of Tibetan political change.*"[1130] The last followers of the famous Buddhist Palola-Shāhi were the Hindu Shāhi and Kabul Shāhi, who migrated to the West after the Tibetan advance. The fact that different dynasties continued to use the title Shāhi in later periods in the Western Trans-Himalaya and Kaśmīr is a vague basis for postulating a direct cultural link. Only careful study of archeological and textual sources helps to reconstruct the religious and political landsccape in Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh after the 8th century.

H. Stoddard[1131] and D.Klimburg-Salter[1132] provided preliminary information on the material culture in Western Himalayan art as reflected in donor depictions focussing on the art of Tabo and their formal characteristics of composition. D. Klimburg-Salter has given a first comparative survey of lay depictions in the Western Himalaya describing the huge corpus of lay imagery as 'assembly scenes'.[1133] This term covers only a very limited aspect of the meanings and functions of such scenes, as I will show. Luczanits was the first to interpret a specific type of assembly scenes at Tabo as depictions of historic moments, related to the consecration of the temple.

[1124] Ibid: 181.

[1125] Snellgrove/Skorupski 1977: 40.

[1126] The text in this volume was translated by Ph. Denwood, other inscriptions were translated by K. Tropper 1996.

[1127] Pal/Fournier 1982, 28-29. D. Klimburg-Salter (1987: 695) followed Pal's (assumption, that Turcic-Iranian courtly arts were the ultimate source, but she doubted, that 'iconoclastic Moslems' might have inspired the Ladakhi princes. The various courtly images at Lashkari Bazar demonstrate theat the Ghaznavids had extensive courtly imagery and figural paintings are observable in lay imagery in the whole Muslim world.

[1128] Goepper 1995; Goepper/Poncar 1996.

[1129] Pal 1975, Klimburg-Salter 1987, Hauptmann 2004.

[1130] D.Klimburg-Salter 1987: 702.

[1131] H. Stoddard 1977.

[1132] D.Klimburg-Salter 1987.

[1133] D.Klimburg-Salter: 1996 b: 328.

The art of Alchi continues earlier concepts of self-representation of donors in the Western Himalaya, but also reflects the 'language of power' in the distinctive cultural landscape of Ladakh and the religio-political ideology of a cosmopolitan emerging elite in this region between the 12th and 13th centuries. It also documents a cultural situation in which luxury art and courtly symbolism transcended cultural boundaries in a region which is only today divided by diverse confessional and political borders. Thus, representations of material culture provide a paradigm case for the study of the complex cultural interaction in this region, which is an area of ethnic and religious diversity up to present.

In contrast to ealier studies, aimed at advocating one or another 'ultimate source' or narrow Kaśmīr-attribution, the idea here is to define more precisely the artistic and cultural setting, namely to classify the various visual idioms, artistic forces and often diverging traditions, which co-extisted in this region by looking at the possible Indian and Western Tibetan models of composition as well as at different chronological strata of the Iranianising modes of sovereignty in the courtly art of Alchi. The comparative analysis includes in particular regions which are linked to Ladakh due to historic and geographic factors, i.e. the Buddhist and non-Buddhist cultures along the upper Indus and small kingdoms of Gilgit and Baltistan in Northern Pakistan. It will be proposed that these factors generated a certain cultural homogenity with regard to religious art and royal symbolism in Northern Pakistan, the upper Indus and in Ladakh; we may thus speak of a distinctive Tibetan style of the Indo-Iranian border area.

Regional centres participated in multi-faceted dialogue between regional traditions and foreign influences arriving with Buddhism and from the Silk Road.[1134] The approach of Judith Lerner analyzing Sogdian art in China is similar to the one I propose in my study in order to reconstruct the cultural context, namely to define the distinctive features and different layers of this complex fusion, and the process of adaption and assimilation to meet the demands of Buddhist teachings.

While analyzing the different formal characteristics of donor scenes in the Western Himalaya, different types of composition were already discerned by the author.[1135] It could be shown that courtly images have different functions in the iconographic programme of the temple such as scenes of enthronement placed in close relationship to images of protective deities (partly in positions of veneration), and those of assemblies probably representing the consecration of the temple. The throne scene at Alchi is consistent with earlier images of this type in the Western Himalayan temples, but also display important signs of innovation giving insight into the change of the political and cultural situation as well as the ethos of rule. In general, the process of assimilation and transformation of Eastern Iranian, Central Asian, Indian and Tibetan values, ideas and types is obvious in the Western Tibetan sphere while at the same time creating a specific legitimate identity and so 'updating their own identity' within the specific religio-political context of the region.[1136]

The 'drinking scene' must be embedded into a whole set of courtly imageries in the Dukhang, featuring ensembles of fighting, feasting and religious ceremonials, chivalric culture, banquet scenes, and depictions of sovereignty such as those of enthroned noblemen. The

[1134] Cf. the discussion on Sogdian monuments in China by J. Lerner (2003, 'Eran ud Aneran', online-document).

[1135] Papa-Kalantari 2007a: 172.

[1136] This term is an adoption of a definition used by Schmidt-Colinet, with respect to the courtly art of Palmyra (verbal communication, 11.2007).

banqueting scene is thus only one component in the complex and multi-layered symbolism of the courtly society subtly calibrated with ideals of the Buddhist doctrine.

This ensemble of donor depictions in the Alchi Dukhang consist of the following elements:
A. 'Drinking scene'/'enthroned noble couple
(closely related to the noble horse-rider in the Mahakala panel)
B. 'Courtly frieze' consisting of three autonomous courtly, monastic and private scenes and a horse-rider's panel below:
1. Enthroned nobleman in the centre of the frieze (Fig. 17, Scene 1), with male subordinate figures (exponents of different clans/communities or members of the family)
2. Enthroned noble family (Fig. 17, Scene 2)
3. Monastic ceremony (Fig. 17, Scene 3)
4. Procession of horse-riders (Fig. 17, Scene 4)
The given numbers reflect the relative position of each scene, starting from the centre, moving then to the actual right side (left side to the viewer) of the enthroned monarch, followed by the scenes to his left. The part of the frieze near the door (left part) is unfortunately badly damaged and thus difficult to read.[1137]

7.4.1. The 'Drinking Scene' in the Mahākāla-panel

The drinking scene is positioned between the Mahākāla and the 'assembly frieze' (Pl. 207). On the other side of the portal, the correponding rectangular panel is left empty. Given the fact that this scene belongs to a distinctive type of courtly imagery with specific functions, as will be shown, it can be excluded that the painters just intended to fill the space in this segment of the wall.

The scene has clearly to be read in the larger context of the Mahākāla, flanking rows of Buddhas and the lay and monastic scenes in the lowest zone, which integrate tutelary deities from the region. Donor depictions in compositional units with female deities or protector deities on entrance walls are a constant phenomenon in the Western Himalaya. There is also written evidence in the biography of Rinchen Zangpo who describes the important role of donors and protectors during the consecration of the temple.

The position of the so-called 'drinking scene' is more elevated than the assembly scene, and functions like a clamp connecting the latter with the Mahākāla above the entrance. This elevated position raises the question of a possible religious/protective association. Signs of supremacy and courtly culture of the ruling elite at Alchi alluding to protective and wealth-bestowing qualities may also be an indication of this assumption.

While the overall composition can be compared with thangka from Central Tibet, the figural style of Mahākāla and other features at Alchi betray a strong Kaśmīri influence. This kind of visual complexity is clearly the result of a long evolutionary history. Such a refined tradition might have developed in mutual ecchanges between Kaśmīr, Khotan and the ancient indigenous Buddhist culture of Baltistan and Ladakh. No early thangkas from Kaśmīr or Western Tibet have come to light yet, so speculation as to the ultimate source must remain tentative.

[1137] I will also briefly discuss further depictions of lay people possibly the aristocratic donors, engaged in religious rituals, such as a panel with the preching Buddha in the centre on the main wall of the temple in the chapter dealing the interpretation of the ritual function of the donor scenes.

7.4.2. Description

The relatively small scene measures ca. 44 x 35 cm and is situated - seemingly isolated - near the left corner of the entrance door between a panel of Mahākāla above and the painting of an assembly below. The composition consists of three horizontally organized registers (Pl. 208), which function like stages for the figures: the main scene with a couple and side figures, with several onlooking figures above – comparable to a courtly entourage -, and a lower panel with servants. Warriors with spears and carefully decorated shields and two female attendants probably of noble origin are shown among the upper entourage, while the attending figures below include standing warriors and two kneeling figures, possibly servants. One of them, positioned in the centre of the lower scene, offers a cup with a ribbon-like cloth attached to it to the high dignitary above him, and thus might be interpreted as the cup-bearer ('Mundschenk'). The cup-bearer may have had an important role at the court, being explicitly mentioned in a Western Tibetan historical treatise from a later period (cf. 2.4.1.1.). The cup-bearer, a female attendant and a shield-bearer among the onlookers or entourage transcend the borders of their 'stages' , thereby guiding the viewer to the central scene and connecting the three scenes by generating a kind of scenic interrelation, almost like a snap-shot ('Momentaufnahme'). In addition, this configuration is protected and dignified by an umbrella. These pictorial strategies lead to a certain unity of pictorial space in terms of composition, which can be read (from the bottom to top) as foreground, centre and background, without undermining the ideal centre and dominance of the couple.

The central nimbate persons are larger compared to the entourage; we can thus speak of a selective hierarchy ('Bedeutungsperspektive'), consciously used to emphasize the representational aspect of the protagonists. The nobleman is depicted in regal, relaxed posture comparable to the *lalitāsana*, displaying affection for the wife, who is kneeling and offering a cup in a venerating pose. This type of 'group depiction' thereby aims at honouring the ruler/aristocrat. This style belongs to the tradition of royal imagery in Central Asia, but it is of course also found in religious iconography with a central deity (e.g. images of sitting Bodhisattva) and subordinated attendants.[1138] This type of composition is also related to religious imagery showing donors in the lowest level, subordinated to the central deity in a position of veneration, as has been shown (Pl. 212). However, the couple at Alchi is integrated into a complex festive ceremony.

A comparable general layout and scenic interrelation, with a central figure and attendants positioned on a lower level, can also be found in the earlier donor depictions at Nako (Pl. 200-202). The donor depictions at Mangyu (Pl. 234) and Lalung (Pl. 198) are in the tradition of the Alchi scene, but the layout at Mangyu is more condensed, with men and women sitting in a row and the courtly environment is reduced to some elements of status symbols. The composition and style of the latter painting might represent a later stage of execution by the Alchi school of painting, around 1200.[1139]

[1138] A silver plate found in the Punjab (Marshak 1986: fig. 180) shows a drinking couple, featuring Kubera drinking from a rhyton and his partner, who in a a subordinated position is offering a cup. This example also demonstrates that the fusion of Central Asian dionysic scenes with those of the Indian god of wealth was widespread in Northern Indian iconography.

[1139] At Mangyu in contrast, the couple wears dyed cotton cloths and the queen is further adorned with a light-fabric shawl similar to female figures in the Sumtseg, thus perhaps representing a later chronological stage of painting from Kaśmīr-inspired masters who mixed patterns from India and Central Asia, which they were more familiar with.

At Alchi the protagonist in the centre impresses with his heraldic, frontal position and his broad shoulders signaling power and thus resembling the enthroned monarch in the centre of the assembly scene (Pl. 250). His unique upper dress features large-scale patterns, i.e. large medallions containing lions and is decorated with *tirāz* strips on the arms. This type of lion-ornament is also found in the shield set between his halo and the umbrella and thus may signal a personal sign of rank of the nobleman. The precious kaftan of silk is worn above a lower garment probably made of homespun wool. This woolen robe is also the dress of the entourage worn in the Western-Himalayan region including Baltistan-Gilgit, and remains so up to the present day and may be compared to the Tibetan *chu ba*.[1140]

Medallion robes adorned with *tirāz* strips[1141] are typical of Central Asian luxury garments, found as signs of rank in donor depictions of many Iranianising dynasties, inter alia the Shāhi princes in Northern Pakistan. Large medallions also adorn the early courtly and monastic robes of figural depictions in Central Tibet. However, the models of the latter are probably inspired by Chinese-Central Asian art.

The protagonist at Alchi sits, with one leg flexed and the other hanging down, on a pillow or carpet with small-scale geometric patterns which recall Indian printed textiles. His head is turned to his female companion. He holds a battle-axe with his right hand, while his left hand is bent before his breast in a gracious manner. He is probably holding a jewel, comparable to a scene of this type of Mangyu but this is not certain.

At Alchi the kneeling female protagonist is positioned face to face with the nobleman. Her equal size and position to the mans's indicates her high social standing. She is is turned to the nobleman (likely her husband) offering a stemmed cup, probably filled with wine. Her eyes are directed to the goblet, which she holds in her right hand, the small finger stretched out. Her left hand is bent to her body in a gracious gesture. The extremely long, bell-shaped sleeve of her lower garment covering her right arm is pushed back and hangs down in a long bow. The cape with embroidered ornament forms a bell-shaped silhouette, adding a certain volume and monumentality to her.

On the left side of a high dignitary a kneeling male person of smaller size, probably a member of the sponsoring family is shown with his head turned towards the central nobleman. He holds a pointed battle-axe in his right hand and drinks from a stemmed cup held in his left hand, thus signalling his noble status.

The protagonist is differentiated from his entourage not only by his silk robe but also by the earrings of pearls and turquoises. He wears a simple turban with long ribbons falling down, while the soldiers flanking the place of this ceremony wear different other precious headdresses. At Alchi a wide range of regalia and signs of rule characterize the donor scene demonstrating wealth and authority in the Indo-Tibetan and Eastern-Iranian cultural sphere: i.e. umbrella and fly-whisk belong to the tradition of such depictions in early Western Himalaya culture of Tabo, while shields and battle-axe, weapons and luxury garments of various kinds point to the Eastern-Iranian cultural sphere. A new element in the symbols of power in Western Himalayan Buddhist art is a cup offered by the noble lady, signaling the new social role of women.

[1140] Precious robes of silk are part of festive dresses in Korchak (Western Tibet, TAR) up to present.

[1141] The strips are on the arms.

In contrast to the emphemeral abode of textiles in combination with a wooden throne at Tabo, allusions to an architectonic setting are shown at Alchi. It consists of a five-lobed line above defining the blue background of the central scene and isolating the protagonists from their entourage. In addition, a four-lobed 'arch' demarcates the space for the uppermost layer - and thus the space positioned further away – framing the whole composition. The lobes or 'arches' are a reminder of architectural thrones (although here the architectonic elements such as pilasters are missing) in the throne-depictions with multi-lobed arches in Kaśmīri; this type of setting is a typical feature in the Western Himalaya that defines the space of religious figures. A comparable five-pointed arch on pilasters, framing a clay sculpture, can be observed in the niche of the main wall of the same temple (Pl. 213[1142]). The lobes also differ from ephemeral architecture of cloths and tent-like settings in donor depictions of the chronologically slightly earlier images of this genre at Nako and Dunkar[1143]; recalling nomadic encampments. At Alchi, instead of emphemeral architecture (textile curtains, baldachins, tents), a seat decorated with textiles defines the setting, comparable to the thrones of out-door banquets of Central Asian monarchs, which ultimately goes back to Hellenistic images of the emperor.[1144]

Further contrasting elements at Tabo are emblems of royalty in the Indian sphere such as textile hangings positioned behind or above the royal lama and various flags as well as lotus rosettes on the throne - to be read as both the *dharmacakra* and as the 'weapon' or jewel (S. *ratna*) of the Universal Monarch (*cakravartin*) - honouring and defining the space of the central figure of the Royal Lama as has already been stated. The textiles draped behind the throne at Tabo, which is also mentioned in the rituals of consecration of the *cakravartin* stand in the Indian iconic tradition and the art of Gandhāra in particular, where they play a prominent role in religious imagery. They are also significant elements in the depictions of local tutelary deities suggesting honorific cloths in religious imagery as has already been stated. Thus, their functions seem to be related.

This style is comparable to the typology of Boddhisattva or Buddha images in Gandhāran narrative scenes, termed as 'discussion scenes' by Luczanits[1145], where a canopy defines the sacred realm of the deity (Pl. 191). Numerous variants of this type of image exist. They can be identified as Śākyamuni or Maitreya in Tuṣita-paradise, while others might also represent earthly life in the palace. Isolated scenes are typical with a canopy cover, flanking figures in bilateral symmetry partly performing *anjali mudrā* and attending figures placed in a balcony above.

A later type of setting in the cella of Tabo consists of a rectangular backdrop, crowned with a bow, which forms a neutral space and separates the central image from his entourage (Pl. 190). Textiles are draped above this frame indicating a baldachin spread over the whole scene and thus contributing to the inner unity; this function of textiles is further elaborated at Dungkar. At Nako and Dunkar - in contrast to earlier ephemeral settings - a tent-like structure forms a stage for the protagonist, alluding possibly to local ephemeral structures and nomadic encampments. In these depictions a textile curtain held with poles reflects the importance of ephemeral architecture such as tents and their function symbolizing authority in the region.

[1142] See also Ch. Luczanits 2004: 131.

[1143] D. Klimburg-Salter 1996b: 330-31.

[1144] In the latter tradition the monarch is often shown lying on a bed-like throne, holding a goblet in the style of Hellenistic and Roman art.

[1145] Luczanits 2005.

In the assembly frieze (monastic scene) at Alchi the textiles draped on the upper horizontal border remotely remind one of the functions of textiles demarcating a setting of lay people and deities in earlier painting of the region. However, at Alchi the textiles hung on horizontal members rather recall palaces and temples adorned with precious fabrics, shown in the depiction of palaces in the wallpaintings.

At Alchi, it is primarily the five-lobed 'arch' and thus an architectonic element which generates the inner unity of the setting and ties the people together; at the same time it dignifies the pictorial space due to the ancient religious associations with such arches. An ivory shrine of Śākyamuni (c. 8th c.), in the British Museum with attending *chauri*-bearers (Pl. 212[1146]) and comparable shirnes might have served as models for such compositions. Moreover, the comparision with a throne base of a Kaśmīr-style seated Buddha[1147] can be added. The structured throne-like setting of a group depiction is a typical feature for the composition of the ivory: a five lobed arch tops a complex scene consisting of three layers: the central figure of a crowned Śākyamuni with two flanking persons, the entourage (partly also wearing crowns) of the prince positioned above a three lobed arch, and the entourage placed below. This formula of religious imagery is obviously also adopted for the drinking scene at Alchi.

The adoption of the visual mode of images of Śākyamuni in his princely environment is in line with the courtly theme depicted at Alchi.[1148] This commonality also demonstrates that medieval masters did not invent 'new images"' but adopted visual idioms and related religious and ideological conventions.

The style in the Sumstek shows a further development of this theme with an even stronger affinity with the visual culture of Kaśmīr. The visually complex and dense scene of a king and his two wives show the protagonists residing in a location defined by an architectural frame, a symbol of the wooden throne or palace allowing a view into the royal realm. This can be interpreted as a continuation of the Indo-Tibetan concept of the throne portal as symbol of both the seat of the deity as well as a border to the supra-mundane. This 'architectural ornament' has a built equivalent in the wooden veranda of the Sumtsek, which virtually covers the whole entrance facade; the architectonic and decorative elements clearly stand in the rich tradition of wooden temples which may have existed in Kaśmīr, but the temples in Baltistan attest to the fact that complex multi-storied buildings of wood and verandahs are also found in a much closer regional context, which is historically closely linked to Ladakh. Many ornamental elements of the Alchi Sumtsek are also found in early Hindu and Muslim architecture of later periods, further underlining the cultural homogeneity in the whole Western Trans-Himalayan region.

7.4.3. Costumes, Luxury Art and Insignia as Signs of Status and Power in the Worldy and Spiritual Realms

7.4.3.1. Luxury Objects and Ritual Implements

Not only precious textiles, but also several vessels, stemmed cups and flasks of gold or silver and possibly also porcelain in paintings betray an interest in signalling status and luxury. These

[1146] Cf. Pal 1989: fig. 5.

[1147] Ibid. fig. 35.

[1148] The idea of the future Buddha, Śākyamuni's successor, residing in Tuṣita paradise also bears the notion of continuity and reverence to the fortunate age to come; it would thus be an adequate model for the presentation of the noble donor or members of the ruling clan, as has already been stated.

precious objects not only give insight into the symbols of status and prestige and luxury items traded in this region, but also into the rituals, actions and ceremonies, in which these objects were used. The image clearly indicates a ceremonial gathering in which the couple sits enthroned in the midst of a large entourage, with one attendant probably serving wine from one of the bottles standing in the foreground.[1149]

Cups of silver with feet are specific luxury objects depicted in the famous drinking scenes at Balalyk Tepe (Pl. 215). A similar type of silver goblets as well as metal stands were in use for ceremonial gatherings and feasts of merits (see below) in Kafiristan, present Nuristan (Northern Afghanistan), until the end of the 19th century (Pl. 216) and footed cups also play in important role as a sign of rank in Western Tibetan culture. In the Sumtsek the cups held by donors are not footed but conical in shape and rather recall objects of porcelain. In addition, the assodiation with alms bowls is inherent in the latter type[1150] (S. patra, T. lhung bzed), possibly referring to the guardian kings who presented the Buddha with bowls of gems or stone.

While the shape of the silver cups depicted in the Alchi Dukhang recalls those known from Central Asian paintings as well as from more local cultures, the long-necked vase depicted in the foreground might be an indigenous Tibetan ritual object (cf. Sumstek, Pl. 219). It can be associated with the *kalaśa* (containing the water of long life; T. *bum pa*), which is also one of the eight auspicious symbols in Tibetan Buddhism. The 'treasure vase' often found as a decorative element on the ceilings of Western Himalayan temples has a related function.[1151] Another example is shown in the central scene of the assembly frieze (Pl. 260) which also has the typical heart-shaped body, a long neck and is footed. The same type of flask is shown in the drinking scene, where it is yellow, suggesting that it might made of gold. The white colour in the assembly scenes might be an indication that it is also made of metal, which contrasts to the red vases which possibly indicate stoneware. A beautiful vase of this type is also seen in a depiction of a Bodhisattva at Tholing (Pl. 116).

This shows that religious as well as royal ceremonies show a display of luxury objects associated with status and prestige, which are turned to symbols of power in the worldly and trans-mundane realms.

With regard to the identification of luxury objects and symbols indicating majesty in the worldly and religious sphere, the comparison of the aristocrat at Alchi with a prince or nobleman at Mangyu (Pl. 234) is relevant. The latter is clearly holding a jewel, comparable to the wishfulfilling jewel in depictions of the seven treasures of *the cakravartin* in the Sumtseg.

[1149] The historical treaty Gunthang gyalrabs gives insight into the courtly culture of a somewhat later tradition in the region. It lists diverse officials and their respective funcions during the kingdom of Manyul Gunthang: gSol, cup-bearer; mJal ('Kammerherr'), chamberlain; Yig, secretary; Thab, master of the kitchen, rTa, horse-groom; gDugs 'dzin pa, umbrella-bearer (Everdinng 2000, II: 431).

[1150] See Goepper 1996: fig. on p. 110. In general alms bowls have inverted upper borders (like the lower half of the bird's egg; Beer 2003: 183.).

[1151] The water flask as a symbol of royalty is also used in rituals of ablution and consecration. "*In ancient India the water pot was used to anoint a king during his inauguration.*" This divine function is similarly performed in the bathing of sacred images and implements in rituals known as *abhiṣeka* (tib. dban bskur), meaning empowerment by sprinkling water (Beer 2003: 199). The flask or water sprinkler (kalasha, ril ba) is also a more general symbol of purification and dispenser of compassion – also one of the attributes of Avalokiteśvara – usually covered by a textile; the water is poured out through the narrow spout (in the shape of a finial) for purification (Beer 2003: 198 ff.).

The jewel, which is possibly also being held before the breast by the nobleman at Alchi[1152], is a completely new feature in the iconography of lay depictions in the Western Himalaya. A loosely related phenomenon is also found in donor depictions of Bāmiyān, featuring donors holding or offering necklaces to the Buddha in line with devotional practice. In addition, in the art of the Western Himalaya various associations of the jewel in Buddhist religious symbolism are alluded to.[1153] A jewel is held by the Buddha depicted on the *dhotī* in the Sumtsek, possibly alluding to the jewel of the *dharma* and also indicating his spiritual authority.

The appearance of the jewel as an attribute of one of the attendants of Palden lhamo (Pl. 153), the companion of Mahākāla on the entrance wall of the Dukhang, is significant in this context. The significance of the jewel as an emblem signaling the beneficial and wealth aspect of protector deities in the art of Alchi is thus clear. However, it cannot be definitely stated whether the meaning in the donor depictions is the same, which might be read as a presentation or offering of the wishfulfilling jewel (S. maniratna, T. *nor bur in po che*), one of the seven possessions or jewels (*saptaratna*) of the universal monarch, the *cakravartin*.[1154]

It is interesting to note how the royal insignia and the magical power of jewels in particular have a prominent position in the Ngari Gyalrab (T. mNga ris rgyal rab), which lists the treasures of bKra shis mgon, Yeshe Ö's father, as his share of power. These insignia – 'the eighteen kinds of jewels' - originate from the royal heritage of the Yarlung ancestors and were divided between two brothers when the Yarlung kingdom was split.[1155] In the list of objects owned by the high-ranking members of the Yarlung kingdom there is also a *'ke ke ru* jewel' as a sign of his greatness.[1156] "*The double value of these royal treasures as extraordinary objects granting magical power and symbols of royal status is an interesting subject, which needs to be explored*".[1157] After the disintegration of the Tibetan kingdom a transfer of actual power from the dynasty to the older aristocracy such as the Dro can be assumed.[1158]The signs of sovereignty and their symbolism may also have been transferred. The nobleman holding a jewel at Mangyu might thus allude to the insignia of the Dro-clan and the magical power of the symbols of their rank. The scene at Alchi may emphasize the majesty of the court and a powerful aristocratic sovereign, probably alluding to the glorious tradition of the old Tibetan monarchy with its influential ministers. But the offering gesture may also indicate the renunciation of these worldly possessions alluding to the wealth-bestowing qualities associated with the ruler – which may be also one of the most important aspects of the ruling aristocratic clan's ethos at Alchi.

7.4.3.2. Costumes and Insignia

The noble lady's dress represents a distinctive Western Himalayan fashion consistently appearing in the art of this region including the Buddhist culture of 10th c. Baltistan: a

[1152] The identification at Alchi is not certain. The jewel has probably been scrached away leaving behind a spot in a lighter colour.

[1153] The offering of diadems or necklaces with characteristic ribbons attached to it can be found in the royal and Buddhist iconography at Bāmiyān, related to the Sāsānian theme of investiture. While a remote formal parallel cannot be excluded, the meaning of this hand emblem at Mangyu is certainly another.

[1154] The ancient nobility during the time of the Yar lung dynasty (7th-8th c.), owned nine great and ten long signs of rank, among them the *ke ke ru* jewel and the tiger skin collar (Vitali 1996: 163.).

[1155] Vitali 1996: 161.

[1156] Vitali 1986: 163.

[1157] Ibid.

[1158]Petech 1994: 656.

combination of a gown of wool, silk or cotton, which often shows patterns of different kinds and a cape put on the shoulders. Both types of garment can be still found in the Western Himalayan region. Both the lower garment and the long cape are often made of home-spunn wool in Ladakh, as shown at the Stok palace, which houses a beatiful cape made of strips of woolen fabrics of the Queen of Ladakh. In Himachal Pradesh smaller rectangular pieces of woven and decorated fabrics of wool cover the shoulders today, while in Western Tibet (Korchag, TAR) complex capes of different materials and a fur-frame are decorated with precious silk brocades featuring various religious symbols.

In the donor depictions at Alchi the lower gown of the female robes is often decorated with various types of small-scale patterns in characteristic colours, recalling Indian printed textiles, while the upper cape shows complex figural decoration which recalls woven silks. The upper dresses of the female protagonists often show the most complex designs thus indicating distinctive signs of rank. Both male dressing (a tight-fitting kaftan, in contrast to the wide sleeves of the long dresses at Tabo) and female dresses consist of gown and long cape in the Alchi Dukhang and are closely related to the robes of donors in a Buddhist votive image of Baltistan (10th c.), indicating a continuous tradition in the region and shared signs of status and rank in the Western Trans-Himalayan cultural sphere, which were also the model for the courtly culture of the new aristocratic elite in Ladakh. The shorter kaftan of the Tibetan minister Gar and the Dro-aristocrat at Alchi may also be an indication of rank and hierarchy within the Tibetan dynastic etiquette in the tradition of the old Tibetan monarchy. Therefore, the long dress of the Tabo royal lama, which contrasts to the Alchi donor, is also to be interpreted as reflecting his higher status within the society and hierarchy of the newly founded kingdoms.[1159]

An interesting element can be found in the female dresses of various artistic phases. The lower garment shows a decoration on the neck which can be read either as an application of a textile in a different colour, a kind of bib ('Brusttuch') with a small stand-up collar, or as a rectangular neckline, making visible a lower layer. This 'bib', on which the jewellry contrasts well, is even more emphasized by ornamental borders in different colours, as to be found on the sumptuous dresses of the noble ladies in the Sumstek (Pl. 217). There the ladies' garment is more streamlined and seemingly closer to the aesthetics of robes found on bronzes from Kaśmīr or Northern Pakistan (Pl. 218).[1160] A further difference may be mentioned in this context: in the painting in the Sumstek the upper garment has sleeves resembling a kind of Central Asian kaftan, usually worn only by male persons in the Western Himalaya.[1161]

The braids of the lady in the banqueting scene of the Dukhang are decorated with turquoises and it is possible that they are woven into the hair. The head ornament seems to be an early variant of the *perag* (T. *be rag*) worn in Ladakh and other regions in the Western Himalaya, including parts of Kinnaur and Nepal. Clarke[1162] mentions that the custom of plaiting the hair into the auspicious Buddhist number of 108 braids hanging down to the waist and attaching strings of turquoises to the front braids on either side of the face is a custom that

[1159] I thank J. Ebert for this observation.

[1160] See also the female donor depicted on the famous Rockefeller bronze (Pal 1975).

[1161] It is also possible that the presumably Kaśmīr-trained (?) masters were not familiar with this type of Tibetan dress and rather painted them according to their own imagination.

[1162] Clarke 2004: 20.

continues to our time. He draws a connection between this tradition and the paintings at Tabo and Alchi.

A significant element that distinguishes Alchi from the earlier courtly scenes in Nari (mNga' ris) is the depiction of luxurious garments of the high dignitary or noblemen, which display royal symbolism in the tradition of courtly robes worn by Tibetans in Central Asia. As has already been stated, large-scale patterns and motifs that display Central Asian luxury garments and *tirāz*-strips on the arms are typical of the dress worn by the nobleman at Alchi. The robe is laid symmetrically in front to form a V-neck, secured with a belt. At Mang rgyu, in contrast, the couple wears dyed cotton cloths and the queen is further adorned with a light-fabric shawl similar to female figures in the Sumtsk. This possibly represents a later chronological stage of painting.

The type of robe worn by the noble horse-rider in the drinking scene may be part of the remote tradition of a Tibetan courtly costume at the time of the kings of the *Yarlung* dynasty. Tibetan royal persons and high dignitaries are dressed with precious garments decorated with medallions in Dunhuang, Chinese Central Asia. A scroll painting attributed to Yan Liben (627-673), court painter and official of the Tang dynasty, shows Gar (*mgar*), Songtsen Gampo's famous minister (lönpo, T. *blon po*). In 640 Gar was sent to the Tang capital, Chang'an, to ask the Chinese Emperor for the hand of princess Wengchen, who one year later married Songtsen Gampo. This event is recorded on a silk hand scroll by the Chinese court artist: Gar wears a long robe decorated with pearl roundels (Pl. 220). His medallion cloth probably represents robes of state, documenting the extraordinary value of Sasanian medallions in various civilizations along the Silk Road.[1163]

Following presumably Western Tibetan customs, the donor in the Alchi Dukhan is adorned with a necklace and earrings decorated with alternating pearls and turquoises.[1164] The hair-dress and head-ornament are also distinctively Tibetan, which the minister Gar shares with the noblemen at Alchi: the headdress consists of a simple band encircling the head and long hair. A metal sculpture of Gar[1165] shows him with long hair falling down over the shoulders, moustache, beard and large earrings comparable to those at Alchi. The statue of Songtsen Gampo in Lhasa (Pl. 223) shows him with long braids and large earrings, while the tilted turban characteristic of images of the early kings can also be found in the donor depictions in the mgon khang of Shalu (mid 11th century).

The design of the robe at Alchi (the whole dress can be best seen in the scene with the noble horse-rider) is more streamlined and shorter than the kaftan worn by Gar at Dunhuang and suited to riding on horseback; the latter resembles the attire of donors on Kaśmīr-style bronzes and images of donors in the 10th c. paintings of Baltistan, closely related to the falcon hunter on the Sumstek *dhotī* (with high boots, short kaftan, V-shaped neck and belt; cf. Pl. 224).

Further examples of this type of robe are worn by the donor in the Translator's temple of Nako as well as in Mang nang, where the collar falls back over the shoulders comparable to those of the dress of Tibetan Emperors at Dunhuang (Pl. 221[1166]); kaftan-like coats with

[1163] Reynolds 1995: 89.

[1164] See also Clarke 2004: 22; there an image of Tibetan officials in Lhasa wearing an impressing set of jewellery ring rgyan is shown.

[1165] Cat 2006: fig. 4.

[1166] Cf. Karmay 1977: pl. 8, 10

decorated lapels are the attire of donors on bronzes from Chilas and Gilgit (Pl. 225, Pl. 226)[1167], comparable to those worn at Nako. Furthermore, in the Tabo Nor bzang (S. Sudhana) cycle a third type of dress can be found, with triangular collar. While the cut of the dress in the Western Himalaya shows consistent features, the pearl roundels or medallions with lions[1168] are characteristic motifs on royal garments in Central Asia. They can only be found in Alchi, where the elements indicating high status and sovereignty in Tibetan royal sphere, such as ultra-long sleeves, are less obvious and the costume is more stream-lined and suitable for riders as has already been observed by Karmay[1169]. This also indicates a lower social rank as compared to the long dress of the Royal Lamas at Tabo. By comparison, the dress decorated with simple flower medallions in the Entry Hall of Tabo resembles the cloths worn by the Tibetan emperor at Dunhuang (Pl. 221). Central Tibetan sculptures provide further examples of this type of garment in the medium of religious imagery, but it is not clear if their models come from Eastern Iran or were rather mediated via royal workshops in China. The roundels on gowns in the Western Himalaya clearly represent the aesthetics of Eastern-Iranian/Sogdian luxury textiles.

At Alchi the *tirāz*-strips[1170] (after the Persian word for embroidery) with Kufic pseudo-inscriptions on the forearms allude to Western Central Asian traditions of courtly textiles previously unknown in the Western Himalaya. In the Islamic sphere the term *tirāz* signifies woven bands with Qur'an-inscriptions or ornaments on textiles produced in royal workshops. A *tirāz*-strip is found on the dress of a royal horseman (with crown and battle-axe, the latter is also a sign of sovereignty in the Dukhang) on the *dhotī* of a monumental statue in the Sumtsek. Goepper[1171] rightly suggests reading the depiction on it as a falcon hunter in 'flying galopp'. Strips on the forearms are also found on dynastic dresses during the Palola Shāhi dynasty (Pl. 226)[1172], closely related to those of a crowned person in the hunting scene just mentioned. We thus can assume that this sign of rank played an important role not only in the Muslim context but also in the North-West Indian Buddhist cultural sphere. Early Indian textiles attest to the fact that these signs were integrated into decorations of fabrics very early on (cf. chapter 4.2.1.).

At Alchi the donor's family and some members of the donor's court are shown in their splendid courtly environment, full of precious objects and costumes associated with luxury art traded in the region - Central Asia, Kaśmīr and Tibet. As recorded in inscriptions, wealth is considered a result of merits in former lives[1173], but the amassing of wealth is only legitimate if dedicated to the goals of Buddhism. The display of the glory of the courtly world has thus also to be read as the topos of the renunciation of worldy pomp by building temples and thus dedicating material values to the community.

7.4.3.3. 'Signs of Power and Authority' in Ladakh: A Comparative Analysis with Central Tibet and Northern Pakistan

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[1167] V. Hinüber 2004: Fig.3.

[1168] The lion-ornament on the robe clearly is a wide-spread sign of royalty, however, interestingly the image of a lion with raised 'pranke' is shown together with inscriptions of rulers, whose names contains 'simgha' (lion), cf. Jettmar 85: 24. Thus a specific sign of rank may be implied in this region.

[1169] Karmay 1977: 80.

[1170] *Tirāz, tarāz*; the word means also the places in Persia where they were generally made.

[1171] Goepper 1996: 54.

[1172] v. Hinüber 2004: Abb.7; Figure 37.

[1173] Snellgrove: 146

Among the royal insignia mentioned in the Ngari Gyalrab (T. Ngaris rgyal rab) which bKra shis mgon (Ye shes 'od's father) possessd were 'the turquoise earrings heavy and light in weight', 'the sword with a long g.yag tip', 'the armour magnificently shining like silk', and the 'horse whip with a long handle'.[1174] The insignia of worldly power such as the jewels, arms and shields and the general emphasis on horsemanship at Alchi might allude to the insignia mentioned in the text.

The Ngari rgyal rabs also mentions distinctive Iranicate traditions and symbols of authority during the Shang-shung dynasties such as the 'Khrom' (i.e. Iranic) lightning crown with white horns, which can aslo be found in Eastern-Iranian royal symbolism. According to Vitali[1175], the newly founded kingdoms adopted those regalia.

While the Alchi nobleman's headgear is a simple turban recalling the headdress of the famous Tibetan minister Gar, depicted in a scroll painting from Dunhuang, the soldiers wear different precious headdresses. One attendant in the lower right corner wears a white hat with possibly a brim of fur, while another, depicted above the kneeling male figure, has a particular type of head gear, which the late Boris Marshak[1176] identified as the famous 'two-pointed cap' (Pl. 210) mentioned in Ghaznavid sources and which is possibly also depicted on Eastern-Iranian metal-ware (Pl. 251). A 'two-horned cap' is also known from Tibetan sources, mentioned above.[1177] Such a cap appears to be depicted in the assembly scene, worn by high dignitaries and soldiers. However, it is not clear if these different types of upturned brims, also found in depictions of lay people at Tabo, can be associated with the horned-cap mentioned in Tibetan sources. Moreover, the possible relationship to the signs of rank in Ghaznavid texts has not been studied in detail yet. The interesting and complex issue of the profusion of this type of headgear, also to be found in earlier temples such as in Tabo and Dungkar, needs further investigation.

Shields, battle-axes and other signs of power, which are a consistent element in the culture of the Western Himalya including Balstistan, are fascinating elements in the Alchi-depiction. The dignitary at Alchi holds a battle-axe in his right hand, reminding one of the warrior's cultures in former Kafiristan in Afghanistan. Various weapons are also shown in the donor depictions of the small dynasties of Northern Pakistan. All this suggests warrior-like or 'knightly' ideals of the aristocratic elite, comparable to the synthesis of warrior and aristocracy ideals in medieval Europe, which belongs to the tradition of prevailing signs of sovereignty in a larger area including the neigbouring regions to the west of Ladakh. Most probably the indigenous strata of society had a strong affinity with their Eastern-Iranian neighbours and the small Iranianising dynasties in Northern Pakistan in particular. Moreover, close historic and political relations with these regions existed at the time of the expansion of the Tibetan empire in Central Asia. However, due to the lack of visual and textual evidence the reconstruction of precise genetic links is not possible.

Shields with different ornaments can be round or square in Western Tibet. In general, shields and their designs may have a magic, apotropaic function, but "*tatsächlich tragen sie zum Schutz bei, indem sie die Aufmerksamkeit des Geners wie eine Zielscheibe auf sich und vom unbedeckten*

[1174] Vitali: 51. Interesting are also precious objects of silver mentioned in such texts: "*Phaba.the.se, the son of 'Od.lde, obtained a silver ladle* 'Schöpfkelle' *when he went to dBu.ru*" (ibid.).

[1175] Vitali 1996: 163.

[1176] Boris Marshak, verbal communication 2004.

[1177] Vitali 1996: 161.

Teil des Körpers ablenken".[1178] Shield-like ornaments are represented on chairs of honour in Nuristan. M. Klimburg beliefs that it is unclear if the motifs can be associated with specific clans. However, their apotropaic symbolism is clear and such ornaments are carved into the pillars inside the house.

Battle-axes and shield are also an important element of self-representations and symbols of power in images in stone along the Indus from the post-Buddhist phase in Northern Pakistan, which have been discorvered by Jettmar.[1179] These images reflect the culture of small kingdoms and small states of probably (illiterate) Turcic origin (9th to 10th centuries)[1180], which were dominant in the region after the Palola Shāhi dynasty. The axe and the shield[1181] dominate among this signs, documenting the warrior-like emphasis of their rule and displaying their heroic deeds ('Heldentaten'). Furthermore, the emphasis on animal symbolism is interesting. Among the animals depicted, the single bridled horse, warriors on horseback and in particular the ram deserve attention, which may have a religious/apotropaic function, but this must remain a hypothesis.[1182]

Baltistan obviously remained Buddhist in this period and Jettmar even speaks of a Buddhist renaissance in the 10th century.[1183] The local rulers in this region were most likely the heirs of this courtly tradition and symbolism of power of the earlier rulers this region. The costumes and signs of sovereignty of newly discovered images at Baltistan (Chaghdo) bear astonishing parallels to those of the sovereigs in the Alchi images. We can assume a cultural homogenity of signs of sovereignty, which also included Ladakh.

The culture in Alchi reflects a refined Buddhist milieu of a rich and powerful aristocratic elite, which adopted some elements and signs of power, fused with Tibetan Buddhist

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[1178] Feest/Janata 1989: 207.

[1179] In the 1980-ies a systematic documentation of images and inscriptions in Northern Pakistan was undertaken by the German-Pakistan reseach unit "Felsbilder und Inschriften am Korakorum Highway"/ Academy of Social Sciences, Heidelberg; the main members were: Dr. V.Thewalt, Prof. J. Poncar and Dr. M.S.Qamar, headed by Prof. K. Jettmar; cf. also a work by Prof. E. Ebert (1994 in this context). For a short history of the research in this region see Jettmar 1985: 30-31. For new results and publications of this research unit see Bemmann.

Inscription and stone images of different phases and from different ethnic backgrounds were documented (pre-Buddhist, Buddhist, Sogdian, Manichean, Chinese, Christian, 'anti-Buddhist';

[1180] Cf. Jettmar: 26

[1181] Jettmar read shields depicted at Thalpan-bridge as sun-disks (Jettmar 1985: Plate 24). He even associated this theme with Manichean ideas, related probably to Uighur culture, in which the ruler was equated with the sun. The King in Bolor called himself son of sun, which might be related to such symbols in post-Buddhist stone imagery. But this thesis remains highly hypothetical.

[1182] The ram is a holy animal in Sasanian Iran, also in Sogdian culture; this symbolism associated with royal power '*khwarnah*' was probably fused with autochtonous animal symbolism, which has a long tradition along the Indus. Funerary couches of sogdian merchants found in China document this theme. These animals symbolism related to the notion of divine kingship in the Sogdian/Eastern-Iranian sphere is also a possible feature in the depiction of protector deities at Alchi.

Jettmar observed (29) stylistic commonalites with epitaphs and statues of Turcic rulers (Ch. T'u kiüe/Tujue; T. dru-gu;) of communities in Central Asia. The Turks settled in the Tarim Basin, in the 7th century, were subordinated to Tibetans, later the Uighurs were dominant in this region. They had funerary monuments "Ehrenmahle" (Uray-Köhalmi, History of Inner Asia II, unpublished manuscript: 3), in obelisc-shape describing the life and heroic stories of the diseased. They are positioned on a turtle, and crowned by ram. They had an own language, which was translated into Chinese, the script differs to illiterate Turks who ruled mountain statelets in Northern Pakistan. Cf. also Chavannes (1900); Liu Mau-tsai (1958); Rona-Tas (1991).

[1183] Jettmar 27.

symbolism. The attrictiveness of the Iranicate-Turcic courtly language and symbols to manipulate power for Tibetans in Ladakh was probably due to shared systems of social and political organization, namely the dominance of wealthy landowners who profited much from trade and presented themselves as powerful protectors of the routes in their realms, building forts and bridges. In this regard the mode of self-representation is very similar to that of the Palola Shāhi in Gilgit.

Donors used insignia and weapons to demonstrate their function as powerful leaders of the army represented by shield-bearers and soldiers. The depiction of a woman in the throne scene shows her social standing and her activities, which will be discussed later. In contrast to Tabo, we see weapons as insignia, which underline the warrior-like aspect and protective ethos of rule (also chapter 'royal horse-rider', 7.1.) and correspond to the warrior-like spirit and heroism of the emerging aristocratic elite. This also reflected the notion of the ideal kingship in Central Asia, which contrasted to later images of the ruling elite.

At Nako the rider-less horse indicates woldly power while at Dunkar attendants are shown in the background (placed above the canopy) wearing distinctive bell-shaped helmets and signalling military strenth. This strong interest in 'worldly culture' showing luxury items, weapons and objects related to horsemanship is not found at Tabo. Therefore, different signs of worldly and religious rule are depicted, recalling the symbols of the *cakravartin* (a canopy, the wheel of law, umbrella and flag, etc.) and a type of throne, which is reserved for deities.

Interestingly the last scene of the Sudhana story at Tabo shows the realm of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra with men with four shieds and four rider-less horses depicted to the right.[1184] The story is a topos for the spiritual path and the merits of a prince. Therefore, I suggestinterpreting the horses and shields as the insignia of the Guge-kings, who - after the renunciation of worldly life - became ordained monks and heads of the monastery, and are depicted on their thrones in the cella and so in close relationship with this last scene in the Sudhana story. This detail of worldly culture combines the insignia and signs of status in this cultural sphere with the topos of the riderless horse Kaṇṭhaka after Śākyamuni left the palace and gave up his kingdom. Correspondingly, the life of the Buddha - with the Buddha residing in his heavenly palace in the first scene while circumambulation- is depicted on the right side of the Tabo temple.

Interestingly a rider-less horse and the donor are depicted in a unified composition at Nako, obviously alluding to the same double-symbolism of worldly sovereignty and renunciation from it. Newly found images at Chaghdo (Baltistan) also reflect this symbolism, with images of rider-less horses and other signs of the *cakravartin* which were offered to the stupa. All this demonstrates that these sign of worldly sovereignty were already known in the Western Himalayan Buddhist art of the region before the advent of the new rulers.

7.4.4. Buddhist Devotion and Eastern-Iranian/Sogdian Interaction – The 'Group Depiction' in Alchi and Similar Representations in Tabo, Nako and Dungkar

In early Buddhist painting of the Western Himalaya (10th – 11th c.) the enthroned monarch is represented as a static and iconic image, showing him as a cakravartin in a transmundane realm, which corresponds to the high, divinized status of the royal lamas at Tabo. In Alchi, in

[1184] Steinkellner 1996: 50. See also diagram on p. 61 in this book. Steinkellner also interprets a small inscription in this part of the painting, which can be read as' ri mo mkan', and "...*could transmit the name of the master painter as Dum bu*" (Ibid. 50). This demonstrated the high standing of artists, comparable to the inscription at Alchi assosciating painters with 'agents' of pious the intentions of the donors.

contrast, a couple and an additional person share one pictorial space, whereby the aristocratic lady from the Dro-clan offers (probably) wine to her noble husband. This mode of donor depictions or throne scenes recalling banquet scenes as depicted in Central Asian wall paintings reflects a completely different visual culture and ethos of worldly rule. However, there are significant differences to the Central Asian mode that beg the question why the 'drinking mode' was so attractive to Tibetans in Ladakh and what was its function in this artistic context.

The 'inner unity'[1185] of the composition is characteristic for the Alchi depiction, which is mainly achieved by the intimate interaction between the royal couple. Whereas at Tabo and Nako the definition of spatial order is obtained through structured figural compositions as well as textile covers, baldachins and ephemeral structures of textiles of different types, at Alchi the older tradition of hierarchy and bilateral symmetry is still inherent, though in a reduced form. There the interaction between the acting persons establishes both an inner unity as well as a hierarchy within the pictorial space. In contrast to earlier throne depictions with a static central figure, the centre at Alchi is quasi 'void', and thus the umbrella, positioned between the persons, honours the couple and not just the nobleman. This new emphasis – the intimate relationship between the noble couple - documents a different cultural, political and ideological orientation of the local rulers. Furthermore, the possible religious connotations of this scene differ from comparable donor scenes in the royal foundation of Tabo, as will be discussed later.

Eva Allinger[1186] referred to the related mode of scenic representations in narrative paintings at Ajanta. Stella Kramrisch[1187] speaks of 'magic boxes' with reference to groups of figures that form a pictorial unit through interaction. This ought to demonstrate that this mode of depiction was not unknown in the Indian cultural sphere. This new emphasis on interaction and relationship between male and female members of the clan deserves to be researched closely.

A completely different general appearance and gesture can be found in the assembly scene in the Entry hall (Gokhang; T. *sgo khang*) of Tabo, featuring lay and monastic figures organized in rows. There the royal figures perform the *abhaya mudrā* (gesture of protection), while their attendants are shown in a posture of honouring and offering with *mala* held in their hands. Their appearance alludes to the relationship between deity and worshipper.[1188]

In the Main Temple at Tabo, namely the donor above the renovation inscription, and at Nako (Lotsawa Lhakhang) the scenes are more complex and condensed, characterized by the hieratic position of the noble donor or royal person and the attendants, who are symmetrically arranged: the hieratic middle figure of the royal lama at Tabo is flanked by subordinate persons in a symmetric composition, corresponding to 'Kultbild' as coined by Seckel.[1189]

[1185] The term 'Innere Einheit' ('inner unity') is adopted here from the formal classification of group portraits by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1902).

[1186] Eva Allinger, verbal communication, 6.2005.

[1187] Kramrisch 1983: 3-36.

[1188] The comparison with an image at Tabo (cf. Steinkellner 1996: 1; fig. 45) demonstrates that interaction is not unknown in lay depictions in this cultural sphere. A painting in the Tabo Nor bzang (Skt. Sudhana) cycle represents the city of *Sumanāmukha*. In the lower scene Sudhana is touched by Mañjuśrī, in the upper story of the building a nobleman sits in a representational mode with bent legs, a variant of *mahārāja līlā*, his arms and overlong sleeves hanging down. He is flanked by two female persons, one of whom is kneeling, offering a vessel to the nobleman. It is not clear, wether the offering of food can be interpreted as a symbol of authority comparable to that seen in the banquet scene at Alchi.

[1189] Seckel 1962.

While the notion of hierarchy and symmetry at Alchi, although in a reduced form, reflects the hierarchic Western Himalayan society and belongs to the older tradition just described, the 'Western Central Asian banqueting mode' is a completely new feature in the representation of the donor and the ruling family. It is thus clear that Iranian signs of sovereignty were later adapted to the ideals of the Western Tibetan rulers.

The noble woman in a local Tibetan costume raises the footed cup to the nobleman in a distinct Central Asian manner. The gestures at Alchi can clearly be related to styles reflecting the 'Weltanschauung' of aristocratic elite during the bloom of the Silk Road in Central Asia (see below), but they are also related to earlier styles of interaction and gestures of offering in the religious art of this region.

A close relationship and interaction between the donor and the deity is shown in the cella of Tabo: there the royal figure is depicted in an offering mode and pointing towards the main deity, thus establishing a link between the worldly realm and the realm of deities, while interaction between lay persons is a hitherto unknown element of throne scenes at Tabo.

Depictions of couples in interaction are also known in the spheres of deities in contemporaneous Western Himalayan art, one example being a depiction of Hindu gods, probably Śiva and Parvati, at Dunkar (Pl. 232): there the female person makes an offering gesture with her left hand, or it may also be a sign of veneration with her thumb and forefinger pointed towards Śiva - in contrast to the same theme at Nako (Pl. 233), where Śiva embraces his female partner, but her hands are not shown. The offering gesture in a painting of Śiva with Parvati at Dunkar is comparable to the mode of interaction between the couple at Alchi, while the object, namely the cup offered in a banquet as a medium of interaction, has no parallels in the secular art and relgious art of the Western Himalaya.

However, the banqueting mode at Alchi differs from the Central Asian banquets of nobility in many ways. At Alchi the act of drinking seems is less prominent than in the Central Asian examples, such as those at Balalyk tepe. At Alchi the nobleman is more static and follows the trends of earlier symmetric compositions.

The Alchi painting can thus be interpreted as a social gathering with a certain hierarchy, in which the goblet is a sign of status, while the modes of interaction partly retain Buddhist religious pictorial programmes of the region. The banqueting scene also contrasts to the official reception in the centre of the assembly frieze, where the enthroned nobleman is shown with attendants in bilateral symmetry comparable to post-Sāsānian royal imagery from Sogdia-Khorāsān (Pl. 251).

Various passages praise members of the clan and their wealth extended to others. In this sense the banqueting mode is a sign of this generosity, also mentioned in the Wanla inscription in which the donor is praised as follows: "*He turned the feelings of the region's people...towards the dharma. He organised felicitous banquets for his visiting factionaries. He removed the sufferings of hunger and thirst of those not in a position for sensual enjoyments. He was famous throughout... (for his) approach of unlocking (his) material wealth. His giving for the noble dharma was utterly amazing*".[1190]

The banquet scene can also be interpreted as a representation of the family clan and the values associated with it according to the spirit and concepts of Buddhist society. A comparable function can also be seen in the way of banqueting in the assembly, where the nobleman is shown together with his wife in the midst of their children (see below). A couple, instead of a single person, and the banquet, as a ritual celebrated by the couple, can be interpreted as an

[1190] Tropper 2006: 141.

allusion to the deeper layers of human interaction. In general, when banquetting together with others, the human interrelationship is extended to comprise all the participants, exemplary for the building of a community's identity.[1191] This is, in contrast to the notion of hierarchy and order, a means to establish social unity and interaction. The image of the couple and donation of a lotus from the side of the lady in the Assembly scene particularly recalls the Sumega story which is a topos of marriage and pious offerings to the Buddha, as will be discussed further below.

There are conflicting forces observable in the layout at Alchi, which lead to certain inconsistencies in the composition. This appears to show that different strata and types of composition are at work in the Alchi variant: one aim of the composition is the bilateral symmetry with the nobleman in the centre, in the tradition of earlier Indian iconic modes.[1192] Another aim is the depiction of a common space defined by two persons in gracious interaction, which forms a second important feature in the composition, further underlined by the central bow and the umbrella positioned above the couple.

All this betrays a synthesis of indigenous Indo-Tibetan and Estern-Iranian traditions in line with the important ideal of continuity in Buddhist culture. It also reflects the fact that the artists and designers of the programme at Alchi acted within forces, which generated different schools of a Kaśmīri-Western Tibetan artistic tradition with shared values and visual idioms. These traditions are deliberately adopted and transformed to propagate the claim to sovereignty of the new emerging elites and up-dated to the current fashion and language of rulership in the region.

7.4.4.1. The Eastern-Iranian 'Language of Hand Gestures' at Alchi

In Indian tradition every experience in the world has an expression in the form of gestures and 'body language', both of which are much older than the verbal communication between humans and reflect distinctive archetypes in every culture. In Indian and Tibetan tradition this expression is sealed in the *mudrā* and remembered in rituals.

The emphasis on the interaction between the noble couple performing gracious gestures encouraged me to go into the question of hand gestures and to take a closer look at the possible meaning of the modes of communication in their cultural and artistic environment.

In the banqueting of the noble couple the lady offers the footed cup, holding it with her right thumb and a forefinger in the direction of the nobleman, while the small finger is stretched away. The left hand of both the male and female aristocrats is held before the chest, two fingers are joined (the thumb and middle finger) and the forefinger and small finger are stretched away.[1193] It is not clear whether they are holding a jewel or a flower in their left hands.

[1191] The late R. Nosick proposed a rather technical analysis of love, a pragmatic approach beyond the perception of romantic love. He showed that love is a changing of the identity and borders of a single person, the building of a couple is generating a 'we', in shich the self is transcended. Howeber the 'we/us' can also be conceived as a protective enclosure in the definition of culture by E. Said (1993: XIV).

[1192] This might be the reason why the bows/ arches are not symmetrically arranged, and why those on the man's side are larger. In the lower row the bows are shorter on the right side, while the upper one disappear behind the border of the flanking composition.)

[1193] The left hand of the male, also featuring a stretched-out small finger, and the right hand of the female person at Alchi have the first and fourth fingers gracefully extended into a hand posture related to the *vajra-mudrā*, second finger forming a circle with the thumb. This posture is a variant of the *humkara* gesture of victory over the three worlds (cf. Beer 2003: 228).

Perhaps they are holding nothing. A lotus is certainly held in the right hand of a lady in a banqueting scene in the Assembly (Pl. 257); the possible significance of the lotus-offering in the context of a secular scene will be discussed later in detail.

The hand position in the drinking scene is also shown by a lady in the context of a religious ceremony with the small finger of her right hand stretched away. Therefore, the gesture can also be interpreted as obeisance and veneration in the broadest sense. In a scene already mentioned, featuring Śiva and Parvati at Dunkar, the female person is performing a variant of the offering gesture shown at Alchi, with the thumb and forfinger of her left hand joined together and directed towards Śiva, signaling obeisance.

In addition to the Buddhist language of gestures inherent in the drinking scene, a new emphasis on gracious interaction between two lay persons is observable, which is in the tradition of Central Asian signs of courtly culture.

This combination of hand positions at Alchi differs markedly from modes of donor depictions at Tabo (cella) and Nako (Lotsaba Lhakhang), where the sovereigns display no gestures. There the donors' arms hang down with overlong sleeves covering their hands, while the prevailing *mudrā* of the attendants of the royal lama is that of folded palms (S. *anjali*; T. *thal mo sbyar ba*), the gesture of salutation and adoration. It also contrasts to known Buddhist *mudrā*s in other donor depictions at Tabo, for example, from the *mudrā* of the enthroned noble lama in the Tabo cella, which can be read as a gesture of offering towards the Vajrasattva deity presented in clay, to the *abhaya mudrā* in the Gönkhang performed by the donors.

One component of the Alchi gesture may be understood as expressing a specific aristocratic sign language in the sense of suggested by Y.A. Sher[1194] that Sogdian artists intended to represent with this manner of holding a vessel and hand gesture the aristocratic background of a portrayed person.[1195] The Alchi-school shares this set of representational imagery with the Hephtalite or Turcic donor depictions at Bāmiyān. There donors/or deities hold their hands in a gesture of offering in the soffit of niche 'E'.[1196] This type of hand gesture may derive from Sāsānian imagery[1197] and is further evidence of the adoption of the language of royalty in Buddhist iconography, whereby the courtly symbolism and the act of veneration are enhancing each other. This a very prominent notion at this Buddhist site where various royal Sāsānian elements are integrated. A royal couple in interaction from Fondukistān (near Bāmiyān) in painted clay (ca. 7th-8th century) show elegant gestures, which are important elements of communication and inner unity comparable to Alchi (Pl. 227).[1198]

The image of a king or noble donor holding a lotus in the Sumtsek shows a similar offering gesture with the little finger stretched away. The gestures in the drinking scene at Alchi can be interpreted as an important medium in the sense of representation (in the tradition of Central Asian banquet scenes such as at Balalyk tepe) but also religious expression in the sense of obeisance and veneration.

[1194] Sher 1966: 67, cited in Hayashi 2003.

[1195] A Buddha image at Kakrak/Afghanistan is depicted with the left hand that join two fingers, while the small finger is stretched away (Hayashi 2003: fig. 5).

[1196] For colour photographs see also Tarzi 1977: 9, 27; some black-and-white images are published in: Klimburg-Salter 1989: fig. 15.

[1197] cf. Berghe 1984: pl. 26

[1198] For images see Hackin et al. 1959: 189-191. Of course, the iconographic context in Alchi and Fondukistan differs. Cf. also Kogler 2005.

A donor depiction at Dokhtar-e Nosherwān (c. 8th c.), represented in a small cave north of Bāmiyān, Afghanistan, is also important in this context. There a complex architectural setting is depicted, containing the image of an enthroned monarch, framed by various animals, probably alluding to the aspect of the deity as a creator god.[1199] An interesting detail is visible on a photograph of the donor depictions by M. Klimburg[1200]: a donor on the balcony in the interstices of the painted arches who gestures his hand, the fingers stretched away demonstrating a ring with a seal, an important sign of status and individuality in the Sogdian/Iranian world[1201] and holding a lotus flower, while in the other hand he holds a precious cup filled with offerings. This type of donor depiction is comparable to paintings of (religious?) ritual banquets of unknown function at Balalyk tepe. Such gestures signaling both pride of the Sogdian aristocratic elite as well as religious piety and devotion are significant features also found in the Iranicate Buddhist art of Bāmiyān as well as in the later Buddhist courtly culture of Baltistan and Upper Ladakh. This double value of luxury art and courtly culture as a glorification of worldy wealth and pleasures as well as generosity on the side of the donor and renunciation of worldy goods (including also offerings of textiles, jewels, etc. comparable to donor depictions at Bāmiyān) is a constant feature in the Iranicate Buddhist art of the Western Trans-Himalaya up to the 13th century.

A later stage of development can be found in the depiction of a noble couple at Mangyu where the dignitary is holding a staff or sceptre and a dagger is stuck into his belt (corresponding to the attendant of a high dignitary in the Sumtsek) (Pl. 234). He is also holding a jewel in his right hand while his consort is offering him a cup and he himself is performing a noble gesture comparable to that in the Dukhang. Intimate interaction is absent in this scene. This shows a transformation from a gesture signalling aristocracy and elegant communication in the Dukhang to a marked emphasis on hand emblems (mudrā) and display of the wealth-bestowing aspect of the donor in line with the language of Buddhist ritual offerings and generosity. This is a further indication of a roughly contemporaneous execution of the murals in Mangyu and those in the Sumstek. In this period Central Asian signs of sovereignty and images of the 'heroic' monarch, which had been valid in earlier periods, are less prominent, and the contemporaneous language of courtly life becomes dominant. [1202]

In the approximately contemporaneous depictions of the donor depictions in the Sumstek, the emphasis is on holding objects as a gesture of reverence (Pl. 214), bearing a strong Buddhist religious flavour, while the concept of interaction and the representation of elegance, creating a specific courtly atmosphere, is less prominent. This is another indication of the stronger Northern-Indian-style of expression in the Sumtsek.

Therefore, the drinking scene is unique in its new depiction of human sentiment and personal interaction in the tradition of Eastern-Iranian courtly symbolism. In the Alchi

[1199] Cf. M. Mode 1996; as well as M. Mode 1992 regarding the identification. Concerning the identification M. Mode proposed an attribution as the Sogdian god Xurmazd/Öhrmazd and dated the paintings into the 8th century.

[1200] Also published by D. Klimburg-Salter 1993, but without mentioning the content of the image discussed here.

[1201] The ring might have a seal, and thus represent a symbol of status, popular in particular in the Sogdian sphere and also in other regions of Central Asia. This tradition can be ultimately traced back to Sāsānian royal symbolism also to be found in the Kushanshar and Bactria. Extremely fine carved seals with Fortuna/Ardoxsho and cornucopia are found in the Rosen Collection (for images see Lerner in Cat. 1999: 276).

[1202] Also the fine execution of details while the outlines are rather schematic and grafic 'schablonenenhaft', indicates a chronological proximity.

painting, both the left hands of the couple are held in front of the chest, like an echo, binding the two protagonists together in a shared expression. While this *mudrā* appears as a sublte means of aristocratic interaction, it also generates a unity and intimacy between the two figures.

The hand gestures together with the glances of the two persons form a rectangle with the goblet in its centre as a unifying symbol. It is a very codified form of expressing human sentiment. Nevertheless, it is a mode in which different experiences and values can be integrated. This might be one reason why the drinking mode was so popular during this artistic phase, meeting/satisfying a specific 'artistic aim' ('Kunstwollen'[1203]), namely an interest in the human dimension of expression, without undermining values of hierarchy and representation.

In contrast, at Tabo the hand gestures follow rather a traditional religious symbolism. In the Entry Hall (Gokhang, *sgo khang*) members of the royal lineage perform the gesture of protection or giving refuge (S. *abhaya mudrā*, T. *mi 'rigs pa'i phag-rgya*).[1204] With these gesture the royal donor in the entry hall clearly presents himself as a protector. Some attending figures in this scene are shown with the *vitarka mudrā*, the gesture of argumentation, with thumb and first finger forming a circle. [1205]

The combination of Eastern Iranian signs of courtly culture and Buddhist visual idioms demonstrates that Central Asian types of 'statecraft' or official art as signs of sovereignty at Alchi were finely calibrated to the spirit of the Buddhist ruling clan. It also shows a remarkable transformation of forms and their original function in the new religious, cultural and artistic context. In addition, strong indigenous traditions have contributed to the popularity of such scenes like those of drinking ceremonies on the occasion of public and private gatherings in the Western Trans-Himalaya[1206] and the Northern areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the following I shall attempt to analyze the cultural and artistic context in which such scenes are embedded with the aim of elucidating the function of the drinking scene in the temple of Alchi.

7.4.4.2. The New Role of Women

Donor depictions also inform us about the relationship between male and female members of society and the social order in general. Research on this subject as reflected in the art of this region is still in its infancy.

Differing from the representations at Alchi, the female members of the royal or noble family are positioned outside the throne setting at Tabo and Nako.[1207] The drinking scene at Alchi can be considered as the first portrait of a noble couple in a donor depiction or scene of the donor's family. Here, although the woman is kneeling, and thus subordinated, the female member of the clan becomes a constituent part of the throne scene. With the interaction between them, a new dimension of 'humanity' is introduced into the portrait of the sovereign. Courtly feasts as a genre of representational imagery is in the tradition of the Sogdian imagery

[1203] The term was coined by the Austrian Art Historian Alois Riegl.

[1204] The abhaya-*mudrā* represents the Buddha's protection from all fears and is commonly shown on early statue of the Buddha representing his sovereignty and protective blessing (Beer 2002: 224).

[1205] As a gesture of supplication and adoration this mudra is also commonly made by various devas and nagas who make offerings to the deities (Beer 2003: 227).

[1206] The function of drinking ceremonies in Tibet, as reflected in 'yangtse songs', is to confirm the concepts of society and to renew its order (see below).

[1207] In the assembly hall the donor is shown accompanied with a female person, probably his wife. A certain interaction is observable, however, the donor is mainly orientated toward the main deity offer her a flower.

in Balalyk tepe and Pandschikent, where the members of noble lineage in mercantile oases celebrate their aristocratic 'Weltanschauung', perhaps also symbolizing marriage and fertility. The dignity of courtly banquets is subsumed with Buddhist ideals, as will be shown. The persons of noble birth in tender interaction recall the ideal of loving couples in the medieval courtly art of Europe. Later post-Sāsānian images of sovereignty ('Königsidee') are inherent in this type of depictions.

Ch. Luczanits pointed out that the order and hierarchy in assembly scenes of the Western Himalaya is not arbitrary, "*... the careful layout of this assembly (in the Entry hall at Tabo) indicate that they are in fact intended to represent a historical moment. The seating order of the secular and monastic populace is strikingly reminiscent of that prescribed for the spoken presentation of historical records in Mustang, ...*".[1208] The strict seating order is also present in contemporary assemblies in the region and an important element during social gatherings and feasts. The parallel between historical texts and images of donors in the Western Himalaya is an important source for the reconstruction of social order, status and activities of different members in a community.

The Alchi group depictions may continue this indigenous concept. However, the prominent appearance of women is a new element and thus important with regard to the question of the role gender plays and how roles are specifically assigned according to gender. It is characteristic of group depictions at Alchi that the position of the women is always to the left of the central figure or scene.[1209] In a scene of a preaching Buddha in the Dukhang (Pl. 209) the male laymen are shown looking upwards and thus directly communicating with the upper spheres of monks and deities, while the women are turned to the laymen and look down, thus subordinated to the latter, also generating an inner unity in the whole group depiction. Of course in the Buddhist context the example of the mother is Queen Māyā, giving birth to Śākyamuni. In fact the depiction of the Buddha's birth and first steps are the thematic focus of the uppermost row in the frieze of the life of the Buddha, which is painted in juxtaposition to the donor's frieze.

In the Sumstek we find the first image of a single, independent enthroned woman in the Western Himalaya. Her dignified appearance, jewellery and diadem-like scarf covering the head make her appear like a deity resembling a Tāra image in the same temple. Instead of a goblet as shown in the Dukhang, the female donor in the Sumtsek holds a conch shell, which probably contains essences for sacrifice (Pl. 214).[1210] The prominent role of female members of the clan as donors and their prominent position in iconography is comparable to the north Indian Buddhist dynastic art in Gilgit and Chilās. During the reign of the Palola Shāhi, the wives of rulers were known with their names and they held a variety of titles. In inscriptions at Gilgit and Chilās the queen has the status of a regent and is called Śrī Mahādevī ('Großkönigin')[1211]. Other examples of the autonomy and high status of female monarchs is the famous queen of Kaśmīr, Didda (980-1003), mentioned in a stone inscription of 992, where she is called king: "*...als der König (!) mit*

[1208] Luczanits 2004: 203, Footnote 132; cf. also Jackson 1984.

[1209] In Chinese tradition the left side is the more prestigious position (J. Ebert, verbal communication, 1.2008).

[1210] See also Goepper 1996: 113.

[1211] See also von Hinüber 2004.

Namen Didda (herrschte)...".[1212] Various bronzes demonstrate the role of the female monarchs as donors (cf. also Pl. 218).[1213]

An important cultural component from the Tibetan sphere is relevant in this context, namely the legendary role of the wives of king Songtsen Gampo as devout Buddhists - Princess Wenchen and Princess Bhrikuti Devi of Nepal. The Chinese princess Wencheng, a niece of the powerful Emperor Taizong of T'ang China (7th c.), married Songtsengampo as part of a peace treaty and political alliance. The 'marriage of state' can be considered a success as peace between China and Tibet prevailed for the remainder of Songtsen gampo's reign. During this time the Tibetan empire spread and even stretched to the far western regions of Szechuan in T'ang China.[1214]

It is thought that the Chinese princess brought Buddhism to Tibet. The founding of the temples of Jokhang and Ramoche are attributed respectively to these two princesses, and thus the socio-political role of women during the Tibetan empire must have been considerable. They are also revered as emanations of the Green Tāra and the White Tāra. In the Tibetan cultural sphere this union became an example for the values of the couple, family or clan, associated with security and prosperity.

In a narrative sutra mural in Cave 25 at Yulin[1215], during the Tibetan rule at Dunhuang, Tibetans and Han Chinese sit side by side in a tent, with fruits heaped on long tables. The bridegroom and bride, accompanied by their bridesmaid are falling on their knees and performing obeisance. The groom is Tibetan and the bride is Han. *"The scene is both symbolic and reminiscent of the historic episodes of Princess Wencheng and Prince Jincheng marrying Tibetan rulers".*[1216] This example demonstrates the continuity of this component of Tibetan identity in the medium of painting and also the use of the banquet scene as a mode of representative imagery in this cultural context.

The phenomenon of the veneration of the dharma-king as prototype for the ideal family can be observed in Tibetan culture up to present: the Minister and Ambassador of Songtsen Gampo, Lönpo Gar, is associated with marriage and fertility, due to the fact, that he went to China and brought back with him the future wife of the king. His statues continue today to be worshipped like deities for these qualities.[1217]

Marriage between members of different dynasties or clans was a part of the official policy and important with regard to establishing peace and political alliances, and not only during the time of the Tibetan cultural empire. Naturally, the great models of a clan's power and family values in Tibetan culture were Sogtsen Gampo and his two wives. However, the relationships

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[1212] Ibid: 122.

[1213] Interestingly, while female members of the ruling clans play a dominant role in the iconography of donor depictions, local female tutelary deities, so popular in the royal foundations of the kings of Guge, play a less prominent in these later temples at Ladakh.

[1214] *"The most significant expansion of the Tibetan empire took place in the 8th century under a descendant of Songtsen Gampo, King Trisong Detsen (ca. 755-97). He took advantage of a Tang empire weakened by the revolt of the Turco-Sogdian governor An Lushan and also by attacks from Arab-Turkish forces...(by 783) the Tibetans controlled the oases of Cental Asia, including Dunhuang. In 790 they reached the Amudarya river and the horse-rich region of Ferghana, which marked the furthest point of their expansion to the west, since they were held back by the forces of Harun al-Rashid, calyph of Baghdad"* (Pommaret 2003: 55).

[1215] Duan, W. 1989: pl. 78.

[1216] Ibid: 65.

[1217] Cat. 2006: 43.

and alliances between the king and leading clans were a constant element also during the time of the establishment of the emerging elite in the Western Himalaya. Thus, the role of female members of the dynastic rulers and the marriage policy deserve better attention. The fact that one of the two wives of Yeshe Ö stemmed from the Dro-clan is hardly mentioned in works on the art and culture of this region. It might be significant that during the time of the Tibetan empire the Lön chen (*blon chen*, i.e. great minister) were often descended from this clan and the families of the queen.[1218] The marriage policy of the Guge-kings might thus be part of this old tradition.

In a more remote tradition, the function of the woman as wife of the king is associated with ancient royal and religious symbolism in Indian society. She belongs to the 'Seven Treasures of the Ruler of the Universe' (S. *cakravartinam saptaratnani*). These symbols, such as the queen, the minister in the local dress of Tibetan nobility and the warrior are often depicted on the thrones of deities, one example being a frieze below the depiction of Tathāgata Amitābha (Pl. 239) characterized as the universal monarch in the Sumstek at Alchi.[1219] These symbols are also shown dispersed around the thrones of the 'King of Guge' at Tsaparang (c. 15th c.; Pl. 241). The images of donors and aristocrats who donate the temples often allude to the attributes of the 'jewels of the cakravaritin', and an example can be found at Mangyu, recalling images of the precious minister, also to be found in votive depictions at Baltistan (see below).

Little is known about the influence of women in politics and society in the Western Himalaya. The first princess among the patrons of the early *phyi dar* (second diffusion of Buddhism) was lHa'i me tog, Yeshe ö's daughter, who was ordained. She founded a monstery at Dunkar[1220], but little else is known about her life. Wall-paintings are thus an important source for the reconstruction of the roles of women in society. In religious ritual they had an equal position to men as can be seen in the depiction of the Tāra in Nako, flanked by male and female members of a clan (Pl. 190a). A woman was a founder of a temple at Dunkar, attesting to the fact that female members of the clan must have had control over considerabe material wealth.

The appearance of women in throne depictions at Alchi also documents their prominent function during courtly ceremonials and the important part they played in the self-representation of the sovereigns. Interestingly, the banquet and seating order is also significant in medieval history in Europe: Beatrix von Burgund, a titled empress by marrying Emperor Frierich I Barbarossa in 1156, is shown seated at table together with the emperor on the occasion of official banquets, documenting her status; later the queen's 'insignificance' is also discernible on the basis of the seating arrangements.[1221]

One component of the first appearance of a woman in a Western Tibetan donor scene might be associated with the ideal of the dharma kings and their wives, who became cultural heroes as a result of this marriage. A continuation of this older concept or at least allusions to it would also correspond to the striving for continuity of the ideal of religious kings at Tabo. Furthermore, during the old Tibetan monarchy members of the Dro family were among the most powerful clans. They were one of the great families from which the *blon chen* (great minister) had descended, and from which the queens were chosen:" *...often the family of the queen*

[1218] Tucci 1980: 3.

[1219] Goepper 1996: figure p. 39.

[1220] Stoddard 2004: 93.

[1221] Schmölzer 1990: 208.

and that of blon chen were one and the same".[1222] The Alchi depictions might thus allude to their glorious past during the old Tibetan kingdom and also their prominent position in the dynastic family of the rulers of Guge, claiming their authority and legitimacy based on this fact.

7.4.5. The Artistic, Cultural and Religious Context

The compostion at Alchi contrasts with the hieratic 'Western Tibetan' mode at Tabo. Tabo's formal rigor is adequate for the high religious and political status of the donors as members of the royal family descending from the central Tibetan monarchy, as has already been stated. The composition of the royal lama reflects a kind of deified royalty, while the donors at Nako and Dunkar were probably local dignitaries. In the latter temples a shift from iconic, timeless ('überzeitlich') images to an interest in the courtly environment and in representations of 'knightly' ideals of the ruling clans is observable.

At Nako a new and complex pictorial mode for lay depictions can already be seen (Pl. 200-202). The image of the sovereign is set in a scenic ambiance, and he is depicted residing in his tent after having arrived on horseback, comparable almost to a snapshot. The honorific textile hanging has become a naturalistic architectonic setting, with ribbons fixed on the tent poles. In the lower zone female persons are performing an offer. Signs of dignity are carefully shown, such as on the long Tibetan robe with wide lapels in differing colours. All this indicates the courtly pomp of the contemporary monarch and his mobile residences; probably in the tradition of the Tibetan royal camp (see chapter 'settings', 7.3.). The depiction of a horse is exemplary for the 'selective naturalism', representing the culture of chivalry, a sign of status, featuring an almost human-like expression.[1223] The rider-less horse is a common feature of votive images in Baltistan, signaling both a sign of status and the horse of the *cakravartin*. Donor depictions of this type at Nako show forerunners of the large courtly trains in later examples of this genre, depicting the festivities during consecration ceremonies.

The scenes at Nako and Alchi while showing historic events, perhaps a ceremony on the occasion of the consecration, are at the same time visionary. The throne of the monarch is a part of the overall composition, the ideal courtly realm. The fusion of iconic image in the centre and narrative scenes in the outer zone allude to a visionary world, comparable with the pictorial formulas of devotional imagery at Dunhuang (Pl. 104).[1224] As has already been stated, the image in Alchi, in contrast to the iconic/hieratic type of donor depictions in the Tabo main hall, shows the interest in the courtly environment even more than the related scene at Nako does. It appears at first sight like a genre scene, full of details from contemporary daily life. However, the typology in the Dukhang appears to be in the tradition of the Eastern Iranian banquet scene, the ceremonial outdoor feast of the local aristocracy

7.4.7.1. The Banqueting in Eastern-Iran/Sogdia and Western Trans-Himalaya

Schlumberger states in his '*Der hellenisierte Orient*' that the tendency to give donor depictions the character of images of representation can be observed as early as the epoch of Kaniṣka, when he or princes of his dynasty were represented like Iranian sovereigns in the national dress of their time: "*In Baktrien, Sistan und selbst in Nordindien. Das heißt in dem ganzen ausgedehten Gebiet, das die neuen iranischen Völker aus den Steppen Zentralasiens den baktrischen Griechen entrissen hatten...sind*

[1222] Tucci 1980: 3.

[1223] The whole image recalls the courtly depiction of late gothic art in Italy with its selective naturalism and great interest in luxury art.

[1224] Whitfield /Farrer 1990: fig. 43.

ähnliche Verhältnisse anzutreffen: eine lebendige Kunst im Dienste der augenblicklichen Herren, die deren Erfolge verherrlicht und sie, von den Göttern beschützt, in enger Beziehung zu diesen Göttern, ja vielleicht sogar selbst als Götter zeigt".[1225]

The art of the court in Sogdia can certainly be considered one of the sources of inspiration for early courtly art in the Dukhang of Alchi. There are various examples of aristocratic feasting scenes in the wall paintings of Balalyk tepe. While banqueting kings are manifested in the famous murals of the Sogdian town in Panjikent[1226], the identification of their religious meaning is still a controversial subject of scholarly debate.[1227]

The banquet scene of the noble family at Alchi in a compositional unit with various other signs of royal supremacy reminds one of related images in Central Asia. A comparison with the famous Sogdian paintings at Balalyk-tepe near Termez in Uzbekistan (Pl. 215) – as already done by Tucci - demonstrates how reminiscent the Alchi painting is of the Central Asian type, although one cannot postulate a direct genetic link. Recently discovered Sodian funerary monuments featuring different scenes of courtly entertainment refine our knowledge of the modes of self-representation of the courtly elite, particularly relevant for the identification of the overall composition of the 'courtly frieze' (see below). The early Central Asian wall painting of Balalyk-tepe (7th century)[1228] is particularly important with regard to the modes of interaction and 'Weltanschauung' of Central Asian, Eastern-Iranian/Sogdian aristocracy. It was found in a fortress to the south of Afrasiab (Samarkand) and shows the widespread type of banquet scene of the local nobility, dressed in presumably Sāsānian courtly silks (similar cloths have been found at Antinoë in Egypt). The function of these scenes is much disputed, as it is not known whether they have a mythological, religious or secular content. On a formal level, the characteristic manner of holding the cup and offering or holding fan-like lotus flowers connects the scenes to Alchi, but details such as the armour used differ. In Alchi the dignitary holds a battle-axe, while in Balalyk-tepe the nobleman holds a scepter and wears a belt with a money

[1225] Schlumberger 1969: 189.

[1226] E.g. Sims et al. 2002: fig. 23.

[1227] G. Azarpay, verbal communication (11. 2007), who presently works on this topic.

[1228] Initially L.I. Al'baum dated the site of Balalyk-tepe to the 5th-6th centuries, but now most scholars date the paintings of Balalyk-tepe to the end of the 6th or beginning of the 7th century (Belenitskii and Marshak 1979: 35; Azarpay 1981: 49, 88).

According to Belenickij the fortress **of** Balalyk Tepe is one of the various isolated castles of feudal landowners which emerged before the advent of Isam in the whole of Central Asia. The castle situated fifteen km south of Termez is a small building containing fifteen rooms. A small chamber in the centre, which was used as reception room, shows interesting scenes featuring the banqueting noble elite (Belenickij 1968: 138). „*Die Bedeutung der Szene ist verschieden interpretiert worden. Einige sehen sie als religiöses Ritual an, andere glauben, sie stelle eine romantische Episode aus dem bekannten Bericht in Firdausis Shāh-nāmeh dar: wie die Söhne des mythischen Königs Feridun um die Töchter des Königs Sarw von Jemen werben. Keine der beiden Theorien läßt sich jedoch schlüssig beweisen. Wie die Gemälde von Pendschikent beweisen, waren Bankett- und Schlachtszenen sehr beliebte Themen in der Kunst der aristokratischen Schichten dieser Periode, da sie den Geschmack der „ritterlichen" Feudalgesellschaft besonders ansprachen*" (Belenickij 1968: 139).

"*Bekanntlich waren die reichen Kaufleute, nicht nur die sogdischen, mit vielen Privilegien und mit dem Adelstand versehen, und wurden sogar mit besonderen diplomatischen Missionen betraut. In dieser Zeit spielte die Grund besitzende Klasse der Dihqane eine führende rolle im Aufbau der Gesellschaft. Die Dihqane lebten vornehmlich in befestigten Burgen, jeder mit seiner eigenen Truppe von Gefolgsleiten, die er als Teil der Streitmacht des Fürstentumes in den Kampf führte. In vieler Beziehung erinnern die Dihqane an die Ritter des mittelalterlichen Europa...*" (Belenickij 1968: 115).

purse and a small dagger hung on it.[1229] The Alchi depiction differs from the prototypes of such banquet scenes at Balalyk tepe especially in the following way: while the depiction of a drinking ceremony presumably constitutes the central interest in Balalyk tepe, with men and women equally engaged in the banquet, at Alchi the female protagonist is subordinated to the nobleman, apparently offering him the cup (Fig. 22).[1230]

Another important element that differs from comparable scenes in Central Asia is the presentation of subordinated male figures in the retinue, wearing carefully depicted armour and shields. Only the female attendants are reminiscent of figures in the background at Balalyk tepe. These signs of power at Alchi are a dominant feature in the signs of status in Northern Pakistan, as has been shown, but in particular the protective component of the horse's culture is also found in the temples of Shalu, Nako and Tabo. To my knowledge, the warrior-like and protective aspect of the noble family's entourage is thus absent in the Sogdian/Central Asian paintings. There the culture of the horse rather reflects the knightly ideal of Central Asian aristocracy. The hieratic position and attributes and weapons as insignia recall later depictions



Fig. 23: Alchi Dukhang, banqueting couple, assembly scene (drawing D. Glogowski)



Fig. 22: Balalyk tepe (after Al'baum 1960: fig. 101)

of the enthoned monarch in Central Asia (Pl. 229, Pl. 251). In general the depiction of the enthroned monarch is a feature not common in the art of Sogdia with its emphasis on depictions of aristocracy. Instead, the models for this component can be found in later post-Sāsānian images of Khorāsān, also in line with the Tibetan type of hieratic depictions of sovereigns and deities.

The subordinated position of the woman, the gesture of offering recalling Buddhist attitude of veneration found in various other contexts of votive images, and the symmetry of the composition belong to a certain degree to the tradition of the earlier iconic scheme of Tabo, while the drinking mode is a contrasting element, reflecting earlier cultural strata in Ladakh. This complex stratigraphy demonstates that the visual language at Alchi must be the result of a long process, reflecting the wide-ranging contacts in this region and cross-cultural interaction.

The culture in Ladakh and Northern Pakistan (which formed a geographic and – in earlier periods - political unit) is distinctive for its reciprocal receptiveness with regard to signs of

[1229] Russian archaeologists documented these paintings with pastel drawings before covering the excavations. A later stage survived *in situ* at Panjikent, with a depiction of Sogdian noblemen wearing sumptuous garments, jewellery and armour in a tent (7th-8th c.). Cf. also Ghirshman 1962: fig. 433.

[1230] I thank Ch. Luczanits for sharing this observation with me (5. 2006).

sovereignty. The dominant position of donors in religious imagery, in which they are depicted side-by-side, appearing as protectors or almost like deities, comparable to divinized monarchs in the Sāsānian and Kuṣana cultural empire, demonstrates a close affinity between the ethos of rule in Eastern Iran and the Western Himalaya. In addition, the dominant position of donors in the famous bronzes from Gilgit and the inscriptions emphasize the dominant role of donors as powerful and proud protectors of small kingdoms. The Dro-clan, which originated from the Western Tibetan region, had cultural affinities with Dardic communities and also with Iranicate-style dynasties in the wider regions of Kaśmīr, Balstistan, Gilgit and even Central Asia. In this region a cultural homogeneity of Easter-Iranian Buddhist art existed.

This almost anachronistic looking layer of Iranicate art in the Dukhang also contrasts with a later layer of courtly art in the Sumtsek, reflecting the fashion of the time and possibly influenced by subsequent developments in Kaśmīr and Gilgit. The donor depictions in the Sumstek bear elements which are comparable to courtly culture at Lashkari Bāzār, the winter residence of the Ghaznevid sultans in southern Afghanistan. There, a frieze is painted of standing Turkish guards in the lowest zone of a chamber in the southern palace. They wear a distinctive Turcic attire, similar to that of the donors in the 'Cave of the Sixteen Sword Bearers' at Kyzil, but *"the robes are longer and some of the decorative patterns are quite large, with the distinctive tiraz on the upper sleeve; ... a sword or staff that rests on the right shoulder...there are spaces between the figures, and as a single falcon can be seen to the right of the figure on the dotted kaftan, suggesting the presence of a falconer among their ranks"*.[1231]

Large-scale patterns on the long robes and the indivuality of the persons portrayed by different designs on the dresses is typical for this later Iranicate phase at Alchi and for Central Asian luxury textiles of this period in general. This type of large medaillons with intricate designs is also depicted in the Ghaznavid palace. Moreover, the courtly themes, as signifiers of a noble environment, differ, an example being the *topos* of the falconer (Pl. 224) - also to be found at Ghazni. These courtly themes are also prevalent in the wallpaintings and may be read as a later 'variant' of the earlier noble cavalier and mounted hero in the courtly culture of the Dukhang. Furthermore, a group of textiles on the ceilings and in the wallpaintings with large roundels containing rampant overlapping lions and mythical creatures (see chapter 6.), and which can be associated with Iranian or Mongolian silks with large medallions, point to a later stratum of Central Asian luxury art around 1200.

The appearance of different strata of Iranicate art at Alchi, even in the banquet scene alone, is an indication of a complex process and development of this type of image embedded in the history of Northwest-Indian art. The choice of this specific mode will also lead us to the possible models and their possible origin in religious imagery.

Drinking couples are also evident in silver objects of various regions in Central Asia (Pl. 245, Pl. 246), which are closely related to religious imagery of the hybrid religious landscape in this region. And the borrowing of this subject for Buddhist religious imagery, in particular in depictions of the Vaiśravaṇa - who resides in the North and is therefore shown in a mode of depiction common in regions to the North of India - is not unusual in this cultural area (see below). For the purposes of this research it is sufficient to note that due to their mobility, luxury objects were subject to a profusion of courtly symbolism up to the 13th century: a post-Sāsānian silver cup with gilding and a Sogdian inscription shows a bride and bridegroom at a

[1231] Marshak 2002: 212.

wedding feast together with Indian personages.[1232] The Sogdian models also correspond to the cosmopolitan taste in textiles found on bronzes from Kaśmīr and Gilgit, which show Sogdian patterns, associated with royalty in the Eastern Iranian world.

The ample evidence of Sogdian material culture and hybrid religious iconography in the Western Trans-Himalaya - also reflected in the depiction of the royal horse-rider – raises the question of a possible religio-political component in the drinking scenes depicted in the Buddhist programme of the temple at Alchi.

7.4.5.2.Religious Drinking Scenes: The Vaiśravaṇa-Connection

The socio-religious background of ritual banquets in Western Himalaya art has not yet been reconstructed in detail. In particular its relation to Buddhist religious dionysiac, protective and/or wealth-bestowing qualities might constitute relevant features. The adoption of religious imagery in donor depictions characteristic for early Western Himalya dynastic symbolism encouraged me to search for possible models for the banqueting couple in Buddhist iconography.

The noble couple in the drinking scene is shown in sumptuous clothes, as hosts venerated by their entourage, while the act of drinking or toasting seems not to be as central as in comparable compositions in Central Asia. Furthermore, the kneeling position of the wife and her offering of a cup indicates a subordinate role. Compared to contemporary Iranicate assembly scenes in the Dukhang and in the later dynastic art in the Sumtsek, the drinking scene in the Dukhang is depicted in a rather archaic mode, reflecting earlier types of courtly banqueting gatherings in Central Asia, but also differing from them in many important ways.

7.4.5.2.1. Dionysic and Wealth-bestowing Aspect

On a formal level, the composition at Alchi stands belongs to the tradition of representing palace scenes in Kaśmīr sculpture, in particular scenes showing Śākyamuni in a palace or in a heavenly, paradise-like environment (Pl. 212). The composition at Tabo recalls the palace or throne scenes of Śākyamuni or Maitreya to be found in the art of Gandhāra as has been proposed, and perhaps also adopting its symbolism. It thus seems legitimate to look at different types of group depictions in religous iconography in order to further clarify the possible socio-religious background.

The scene with the enthroned couple at Alchi, the main example in the given context, however small and condensed, is unique in emphasizing the worldly glory of the court. Judging by the position of the scene in relation to the assembly frieze which contains differents types of courtly receptions on the same wall, it was clearly accorded more importance according to the symbolism of space in the temple. Thus, the function of the different donor scenes - enthronement and assembly - in the overall iconographic programme can be considered different. Furthermore, the position of the scene in close proximity to the protector's panel might be a significant feature. All this leads begs question what the banqueting nobleman might have represented at Alchi and why this mode was so attractive to Buddhists in Ladakh.

I would here like to draw attention to the famous painting of the Iranian embassy in the Cave 1 at Ajanta (Pl. 244), identified by Monika Zin, where Vaiśravaṇa, the god of the four directions and protector of the north, dressed in 'northern' garments, or costumes of Central Asian sovereigns, is shown in his Dionysiac aspects, indicated by cups filled with wine and flowers, and with food and money on tables. This assimilation of Western Central Asian symbols

[1232] For images cf. Stavisky 2003: fig. 9.

of wealth and royalty as well as the banqeting mode of the Buddhist faith is here revealed to be a common phenomenon in India and Gandhāra in particular.

. The prototype of a wealth bestowing couple is that of Vaiśravaṇa and Hārītī in Gandhāra and Kaśmīr. A long history of Dionysiac themes in the region associated with prosperity and wealth stands behind it.[1233]

A stunning example of the dynamics of iconography in banqueting scenes in the art of Gandhāra is described by Martha Carter.[1234] She compared folk religion in Nuristan, Afghanistan, with imagery of Dionysiac festivals in Ganhāran Art and proposed that popular deities were assimilated into the rapidly growing Gandhāra Buddhism. She further tries to show that rustic shrines and festivities worshipping those deities existed in the remote valleys of the Hindu Kush (Nuristani and Kalash Kafirs of adjacent Pakistani Chitral) until the last century (Pl. 216).[1235] Large footed cups called *Ürei* played an important role, also used for social gatherings and ceremonies in this region.[1236] It is worth noting in this context that the same precious vessels, which are depicted in great detail at Alchi and still associated with high prestige, resemble the goblets in Nuristan.

The ceremonial drinking party took place (at Indrakun near Wama) during annual feasts of the god Indra in November, surrounding the location where a wooden statue of Indra stood, and over which wine was poured. Representatives of different clans used the silver goblets during this ceremony in an irrigated garden that contained huge stone wine-pressing basins supposedly created in ancient times by the deity.[1237]

The assimilation can be explained also by the *Cacravāla* cosmology of early Buddhism. In this system Mt. Meru occupies the centre of the cosmos. The heaven of the Great Kings of the four directions is above the world of mortal men on the slopes, *lokapāla*, inhabited by creatures associated with drinking. The *trāyastriṃśa* heaven was directly above it, on the top of meru and presided over by Indra, king of the gods. It is not known whether the Kafirs of former times believed in the existence of Indra's paradise on the top of the World Mountain. They did believe, however, that Indra had created a paradisiacal garden on earth, and his annual return was celebrated there once a year with a wine feast.[1238]

7.4.5.2.2. Drinking Feasts in Oral Traditions and Local Culture

The little studied tradition of drinking ceremonies in the Western Himalaya, although its relevance for the historical depictions must remain only speculation for the present[1239], may throw light on certain perceptions and attitudes prevalent in the contemporary local society.

[1233] The latter is subject of extensive scholarly debate, e.g. Rosenfield 1967; Granoff 1970.

[1234] M. Carter 1974.

[1235] Divinities like *yakṣas* or *nagas* were allied to grape cultivation and to wine as their special rasa or amrta substance. They exhibited a dionysiac demeanor as rustic spirits of nature and fertility, shown drinking and reveling in a paradisical environment. These dionysic elements have an own artistic koine of their own only the style deriving from the West.

[1236] Cf. also M. Klimburg 2004.

[1237] M. Carter 1974 postulates a Greater Kafiristan in Kuṣana times where descendents of proto-Indo-Aryan tribes carried on similar cult practices involving Indra or other local deities.

[1238] Indra's heaven like that of the four great kings was envisaged by Gandhāran Buddhists as a realm of Dionysic delights. Such visual elements of Gandhāran Buddhist art were suppressed, however when new ideologies and iconographic programmes evolved in the later Kushana era, possibly the old Dionisiac paradise themes were replaced by representations of the Sukhavati of Amitābha (Carter 1992).

[1239] For further reading on this topic: Das, S.ch, and H.F. Francke 1932.

There are, for example, similarities in the drinking cups called *yangtse*, which are used during ceremonial gatherings in Tibet. The form of the cups, their material and symbolic value, depend on the position of the owner in a particular context of the social unit or family.[1240]

In Western Tibet (Ngari, TAR) specific ceremonial banquets (on the occasion of assemblies, New Year festivities, probably also during marriage feasts) reflect hierarchy and the function of the members in the local society. The concepts behind these feasts are reflected in the oral tradition of this region: a song recorded during a field trip in Senge Kamba is an example of the importance of such banquets as a confirmation of the social order. A specific *yangtse*-song describes the sitting order according to the local social hierarchy as well as the objects used in such ceremonies like the ritual goblet, bows, and the offering cake. Of course, one has to bear in mind that contemporary customs cannot be directly equated with historic paintings. This example only serves to demonstrate that drinking ceremonies and oral traditions such as songs related to these feasts are an important cultural element in Western Tibet up to the present. It also shows the high value of structured settings reflected in ceremonials and songs, which define the social order in this region.

As to the identification of the models for this artistic tradition in Alchi, the study of genre details, such as a comparative analysis of the drinking vessels, will aslo be productive.[1241] The Tibetan *yangtse* resembles the large footed cups in former Kafiristan (Nuristan in Afghanistan), but the decoration of the latter belongs to the tradition of Sāsānian metal ware, today absent in modern Tibet. However, Tucci[1242] attributed a ceremonial Tibetan silver cup to a group of objects showing indirect evidence of Sāsānian art in Tibet to which objects of the courtly culture in central Tibetan monasteries also belong.[1243] This shows that luxury silver ware depicted in the Alchi mural was not unknown in Central Tibet during the time of the old monarchy and it may well have been an indication of royal authority, similar to their Sāsānian prototypes. Be that as it may, the banquet mode at Alchi corresponds to the continuing perception and spirit of the Western Tibetan society, as documented in specific forms of ritualized drinking ceremonies in Western Tibet. In such rituals varous aspects of the ideology of the community and a clear hierarchy and order of society is mirrored and confirmed.

The large stemmed cups once used during ceremonial gatherings in Kafiristan (present Nuristan) in northeastern Afghanistan[1244] recall the footed cups in the Alchi painting. Such monumental goblets were also associated with specific cults of wine on the occasion of ceremonies to honour the 'wine god' Indra.[1245]

7.4.5.2.3. Protection and Dynastic Worship

Dionysiac themes in different contexts, such as Kubera- Vaiśravaṇa, enjoyed great favour as the god of wealth and fertility within the Kuṣana realm, and is therefore of importance also in the

[1240] Prof. Tsering Gyalbo (Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, verbal communication; 12.2006). He was kind enough to record a drinking song together with the team in January 2007 during a field trip in Western Tibet.

[1241] The similarity to excavated metal objects in Balalyk-tepe makes it clear that the forms of cups given in reddish outlines in the paintings at Alchi can be identified as chased work and notches on silver objects. On one panel different cups are arranged around a carafe, below a covered table for offerings.

[1242] Tucci 1973: 182.

[1243] E.g. robes of Bodhisattva at Nesar and Danang; see Tucci 1973: fig. 162, 163.

[1244] Cf. M. Klimburg 2004: 365-386; D.Klimburg-Salter has drawn my attention to the formal parallels with the Nuristani *'Ürai'* (verbal communication, 6. 2003).

[1245] There may have been a 'dionysiac' aspect to these ceremonies, as discussed by M. Carter (1992).

art of Kaśmīr and one of the heirs of the art of Gandhāra. An example of this latter tradition is a famous relief featuring Pharro and Ardoxso. Pharro is the '*khwarnah*' of Iranian tradition, who embodies the concept of 'royal glory' and legitimacy. He also bestows wealth. In Gandhāra Pharro occurs as the Buddhist Kubera/Vaiśravaṇa, and this linkage is consistent and symbolically meaningful.[1246] Conjoining royal legitimacy, good fortune and prosperity of the state with wealth may also be the concept referred to at Alchi; not in the sense of deified kingship, but rather in the sense of an allusion to wealthy couples aimed at glorifying the august reign. When a couple with precious goblets is shown at Alchi engaged in different types of banqueting scenes, perhaps not only the demonstration of worldly authority and power stands behind it, but various religous inferences of the ethos of rule are implied, consciously used as a medium of legitimacy. To transport this notion the aspect of wealth and prosperity is associated with popular protector deities in the region. To answer my initial question this could have been the reason for the choice and popularity of such themes.

Allusions to the notion of the ruler as protector of the dharma and god of wealth can also be found in an inscription: "*...a teacher of Sumda was the founder of the Sumsteg, both patron and monk, he arrived in Alchi to vanquish external enemies and protect internal subjects, he was richly endowed with the god* Vaiśravaṇa, *very wealthy, he was also munificent, like mother and father to the poor, his nephew the great teacher planted the victory banner of the dharma...*". The donor depiction at Alchi thus functions as a visual equivalent of an eulogy ('panegyrisches Gedicht') on the good reign ('gute Herrschaft').

As the emphasis of the drinking scene at Alchi clearly lies on the demonstration of wealth, dignity and military protective strength, it is logical to link it to the ideal of wealth and protection as perceived by Vaiśravaṇa, the heavenly king of the North. The emphasis on the protective qualities of donors and their compositional unity with tutelary deities at the entrance wall is a consistent element in the Western Himalaya Buddhist world of the period. The elevated and rather isolated position of the drinking scene next to the portal, below the Mahākāla, may suggest a connection with Mahākāla's environment. This protective position corresponds to the sacred hierarchy as shown in contemporary thangka depictions. The popularity of Vaiśravaṇa in his function as protector is also attested to at Nako (slightly earlier than Alchi). There an interesting foreign type of Vaiśravaṇa can be identified on the entrance wall of the Gong-ma temple (Pl. 182), and shown like a dynamic, muscular Heracles, complete with club and lion-head on the shoulders, much in the tradition of the art of Dunhuang (Pl. 183). It is published here for the first time to my knowledge. The image of Vaiśravaṇa at Nako may be judged useful for the self-representation of the leading clan. According to Granoff[1247], the god of the North was associated with a cult of dynastic worship and was adopted in Tibet as god of war and divine king. So, rather than an assimilation in the sense of dynastic worship, the noble clan might so represent itself as an embodiment of wealth-bestowing qualities, whereby allusions to the visual vocabulary of Buddhist iconography may emphasize the religious aims of the ruling clan.

The claim of the donor's family to provide well-being and salvation for the community is underlined by associations with the wealth-bestowing and – in particular - protective qualities of deities and modes of representations of such religious themes, which enforce the "power of

[1246] Rosenfield 1967: 96.

[1247] Granoff 1970.

the image". The magical impact of manuscripts is comparable, which unfold their values not only by recitation, but also by being carried around the fields in order to pray for a good harvest, as observed by the author at Tabo and Nako. An inscription composed by the noble monk Kalden Sherab, the founder of the Dukhang, states: „ *I have composed this (Lamp of) Clear Recollection in order to generate true wisdom in myself and others*"[1248] and further below: „*Through whatever merit I have obtained in founding a precious temple and composing this 'Lamp of Clear Recollection' may I and the infinity of living beings be born in the excellent pure ralm which is called the great bliss of the lord and blessed one Akshobhya!*".[1249]

As already stated, the position of the so-called 'drinking scene' is more elevated than the assembly scene and is thus more prestigious. In addition, a noble horse-rider in royal pace as protector above appears to show the same person as in the drinking scene, therfore we can assume that the aristocratic couple is closely related to Mahākāla and his protective function.[1250] This configuration corresponds to later thangka depictions in Tibet (Pl. 156), in which Vaiśravaṇa is shown surrounded by attributes and attendants, such as the king and consort, and royal and military persons, such as warriors on horses. Also, Mahākāla is shown with courtly figures probably meant as attendants.[1251]

7.4.5.4. Religious Mergings of Courtly Themes in Sogdiana and Khotan

A post-Sāsānian looking metal bowl, easily traded anywhere including Alchi, shows a drinking scene of a noble couple in a compositional unit with possibly Vaiśravaṇa in his Hellenizing aspect (Pl. 245). A bird holding a ring in its beak above the couple is a sign of royalty in this cultural sphere, mentioned above. They are also associated with a specific Central Asian tutelary deity, namely 'royal fortune'. Grenet[1252] discusses one type of Vaiśravaṇa based on a fusion of the Indian Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa and the Iranian god of Royal fortune (*khwarnah*). He associates a scene featuring a royal couple engaged in a drinking ceremony at Panjikent[1253] with the Iranian tutelary god, relevant also in the context of local protectore deities in the Western Himalaya (chapter 7.1.). This alone already demonstrates that drinking scenes have a wide range of religious connotations in the Eastern-Iranian Buddhist sphere which are not only associated with the famous Vaiśravaṇa-Hārītī type in Gandhāra with its emphasis on wealth-bestowing aspects.

At Khotan we find a depiction of a mounted horseman holding a cup which has been associated with Vaiśravaṇa by Whitfield and Farrer.[1254] Deities represented as sovereigns are typical for this region which demonstrates a characteristic blending of courtly Sāsānian or Easter-Iranian topics and religious content. This merging of Buddhist and Iranian themes is also

[1248] Snellgrove, 144: inscription 1

[1249] ibid: line 10

[1250] The drinking scene, in the immediate vicinity of Mahākāla clearly reflects an aspect of homage of the donors's family to the main tutelary deity, comparable to Tabo and Nako. Later, the visual mode of this relation is a unified environment, featuring donors in the offering mode flanking the icon, e.g. Tārā in the Sumstek.

[1251] Linrothe compared the Central Tibetan piece with the Sumstek Mahākāla, but with a certain restriction insofar, that they differ in form and style (2004: 47). In terms of style, the dynamic posture of Mahākāla at Alchi, plasticity through subtle shading clearly reveals a close relation to the refined artistic tradition of Kashmir (cf. Pal 1975: fig. 60). He also mentions the problem to identify the status of the noble couple and their function (Linrothe ibid. 50).

[1252] Grenet 2000.

[1253] Ibid. fig. 6.

[1254] Whitfield/Farrer 1990: 162.

characteristic for the religious art in Khotan, as the local art shows a form of god-king partnership characteristic of Sāsānian Iran. The royal cult in Khotan associated with Vaisravana is exemplary. As this stratum of Iranicate modes of depiction from Sogdia and Khotan which were relevant as models for Alchi bearing religious connotations, it is possible that these were assimilated into Alchi's art. The horse-rider – as has been proposed – similarly ties up specific Sogdian heroism while retaining religious ambiguity as the lay protector Pehar.

The claim of the donor's family to provide well-being and salvation for the community is underlined by associations with the wealth-bestowing and – in particular - protective qualities of deities. Associations with representations of related religious themes enforce the 'power of the image'. The royal donor as protectors and deified kings is typical for the region, partly adopting religious iconography. This notion emphasises the martial aspect, the heroism of the cavalier, while the drinking scene depicts the ideal of the wealthy host. This emphasis belongs to the tradition of the wealth-bestowing benefactors. A comparable phenomenon is the equation with the royal founders of alchi with Sudhana in the Alchi main temple. The concept of royal fortune and legitimacy, in great favor in the Sogdian-Buddhist sphere, is perhaps newly validated in images of leadership at Alchi.

The Dionysian theme and the function of the banquet as a cipher ('chiffre') of kingship thus appears as only one component of this gracious scene. In its essence, this distinctive kind of self-representation of the nobleman and his wife may well have served to emphasize their function as guarantors of prosperity for their realm ('Herrschaftsgebiet'), the august rule, as well as last but not least, protectors of the Buddhist doctrine.

7.4.5.4. Abstract Kingship or Religious Sovereignty at Alchi?

The images of courtly culture in the Dukhang show many of the leading ideals of society in Sogdia: the dignity of mounted heroes, the aristocratic elite, the display of wealth and opulence of court elite, with strong relations to a glorious past in Central Asia. Much evidence of direct Sogdian influence exists in the Western Himalaya, Kaśmīr and Gilgit from very early on: Sogdian aesthetics on the level of luxury art, its precious silks and their motifs such as beaded medallions containing rosettes were adopted to serve purely Buddhist themes in the form of eight-petalled lotus configurations, found on Kaśmīr bronzes and on ceilings at Tabo.

As has been shown, Sogdian models can also be identified in the banquet scene with respect to motif and composition. In the assembly scene, different themes of kingship appear side-by-side. There the banquet with servants is accompanied by courtly life scenes (hunting or play on horses). This fusion of courtly themes can be compared to different types of self-representation on Sogdian funerary monuments recently found. Themes of kingship are also depicted in various regions, such as in Khorasan, e.g. on metal from the 8th century onwards (Pl. 251). Marshak believes the latter to be abstract images of kingship and thus a cipher for sovereignty:[1255] "*Die Schale mit dem Festmahl steht am Beginn der traditionellen Königsikonographie, die vom 10.bis 13. Jh. in der islamischen Welt vorherrscht ... Die Erneuerung der Ikonographie ist wahrscheinlich damit verbunden, daß das Königsthema für die sogdische Kunst nicht typisch war. Hier wurden die Szenen mit dem König als Episoden in erzählerischen Malereizyklen eingeführt, hatten aber keine selbständige Bedeutung.*" Royal ideology in Sogdia was, according to Marshak, less important than in Sāsānian Iran and later Central Asian art.

[1255] Marshak 1986: 304-307.

At Alchi, moreover, rather than images of kingship, the images of banqueting sovereigns were chosen for their religious meaning reflecting an earlier stratum of the fusion of royal imagery and religious symbolsim observable in Sogdian art as well as in the art of Kaśmīr or Northern Pakistan. Mythological or religious connotation of courtly imagery is also characteristic for Khotan which was in close contact with Kaśmīr.

This religious ambiguity, typical of Sogdian and Eastern Iranicate-Buddhist art in Khotan, is also found in the image of the royal horseman, who is both an attendant of the tutelary deity and an embodiment of the knightly ideal of Sogdian aristocracy. Sogdian gods may also be found on a silver plate with a couple in banqueting mode and Heracles, mentioned above. However difficult it remains to interpret Sogdian art and its pantheon due to the lack of written sources and ritual texts[1256], a religious undercurrent can be supposed in such scenes.

The banquet scene at Alchi is an individual type of image, which contrasts to other scnes of banqueting couples, and it probably has a religious meaning. Also, as stated before, the isolated and higher position of this scene is a significant feature. Donor scenes infused with religious power and Buddhist iconography is characteristic for the earlier tradition in this region: examples are donors in the mGon khang as protectors, or deified royalty in the Dukhang. Thus, similar religious conotations can be assumed in the cultural and relgious environment of Alchi. It is also not possible – comparable to the depiction of the royal founders in the Tabo Entry Hall, to know whose depiction was included in the later programme of the temple. The drinking scene may allude to a previous generation, underlining the role of the clan and the continuity of their power in the realm. The eulogy on the temple's founder in the Dukhang may also be interpreted in this sense "...he *multiplied greatly the images of the Royal Mother of infinite merits. In pursuance of the request of the Father, he built this great vihara at Alchi, his faith being the main factor and his wealth the secondary one*." The text further describes the noble family and their religious authority as being like mother and father to the poor. [1257] In this retrospective view they possibly achieved a religious up-grading 'Überhöhung'.

7.5. The Assembly Frieze in the Alchi Dukhang

Although, the donor depictions, and the 'enthroned noble couple'/'royal drinking scene' in particular, belong to the most prominent courtly scenes in Western Himalayan art, the assembly frieze, in which lay and ordained members of the famous Dro-clan ('Bro clan) are represented in different courtly and monastic scenes, has not yet been studied in detail.

Moreover, the classification of different types and functions of compositions in this genre has not yet been proposed. The various layers of cross-cultural influences in terms of visual idioms and signs of sovereignty gives insight into the fascinating variety and complex genesis in the early Buddhist art of this region.

As has been stated in the drinking scene – shown in an elevated position - the monarch or aristocratic couple is represented in a kind of throne scene with various allusions to religious iconography, while the assembly scenes possibly depict consecration ceremonies of the temple as suggested by Luczanits.[1258] A combination of a frieze containing different modes of self-representation and an enthroned couple is shown on the entrance wall at Alchi. The latter is subordinated to the protective deity, consistent with earlier depictions of this genre. The 'banqueting noble couple' at Alchi is particular for the fusion of Indian throne scenes and ritual

[1256] Ibid: 299.

[1257] Snellgrove: 146

[1258] Luczanits 2004: .

out-door banquets or representation of worldly supremacy in the Iranianising art of Central Asia, probably also alluding to the wealth aspect of the donors as protectors. In the assembly frieze various modes of private and courtly life are combined to communicate specific ideologies of the ruling elite.

In particular Boris Marshak's classification of primary themes of Iranicate art and their profusion in Central Asia - also integrating the Alchi donor depictions in the great corpus of Eastern-Iranicate art - gave the impetus to define a stratification of post-Sasanian, Sogdian and later/contemporaneous Eastern-Iranian components and concepts of kingship and sovereignty in the art of Alchi.[1259] The ritual feast in the open air is only one component of the language of Iranicate themes of sovereignty depicted in such scenes at Alchi as will be seen; it has been proposed that the noble cavalier is also linked to this topic. However, the reciprocal receptiveness of Buddhist art and Iranicate symbolism in the art and culture of this region is not only observable on the formal level, but also in deeper layers of religious meaning and cult. The evaluation of these different elements within the context of Buddhist art in the Western Himalaya must be undertaken to fully understand their artistic, religious and social content.

7.5.1. Layout and Composition

The courtly and monastic frieze of the entrance wall of the Dukhang of Alchi is one of the most complex and extensive depictions of lay persons in early Himalaya art (Pl. 249, Fig. 17, 24).[1260]

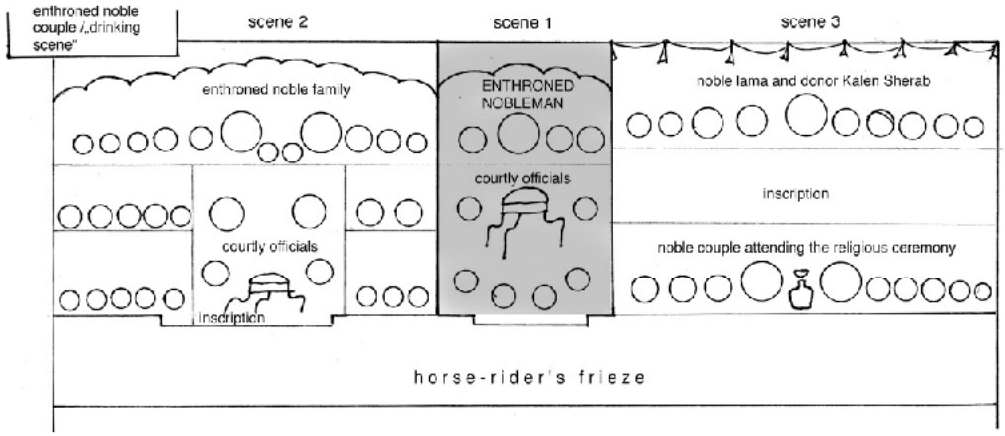


Fig. 24: Alchi, Dukhang, Assembly frieze, diagram Ch. Papa-Kalantari

The general layout of the composition is clearly a continuation of the Tabo Gönkhang (T. mgon khang) painting with lay and monastic persons organized in rows standing in the tradition of early Western Tibetan signs of sovereignty. However, a significant feature of the image at Alchi is the creative assimilation of various pictorial traditions from India, Tibet and Central Asia.

The composition is a complex and multi-layered fusion of modes of representation. This fascinating process of the assimilation of different models to establish a new identity and legitimacy in line with Buddhist ideology, as well as continuity, is a central focus of this study. On the basis of an analysis of all types of lay depictions at Alchi (royal horse-rider, banquet, and

[1259] Marshak 2002: 23-24.

[1260] The detailed documentation and study of lay depictions of the entrance walls at Tabo and Nako is a desideratum of future research, however bad their state of preservation.

frieze) and the integration of the inscriptional material, a more differentiated reading of the frieze in its artistic and historical context can be proposed.

The composition of the entrance wall is divided into three zones. The middle zone is situated above the door with a protective deity in the centre, flanked by two huge mandala-depictions, each covering the whole section of the right and left wall adjacent to the portal. In the lower zone of the left wall there are scenes with the life of the Buddha while the consecration frieze is depicted on the right-hand side of the entrance wall. These two sections of the walls are positioned in bilateral symmetry to each other.

The frieze is located on the bottom zone of the wall and is in a lower position than the single scene with the 'enthroned couple' (Pl. 1). The latter is depicted between the frieze and the portal on a rectangular panel, where the lower part reaches into the frieze, and is thus loosely connected with it. The 'enthroned couple' functions like a bracket due to its position close to the Mahākāla composition (containing the noble horse-rider) and the frieze below. It covers the whole length of the lower part of the wall.

The frieze has to be interpreted as a part of the overall programme of the temple with its major compositional characteristics, namely its position and size in conformity with the mandala above, and with a symmetry showing a central axis subordinated to the latter. The whole composition (ca. 330 cm long) is articulated in horizontally organized and superimposed zones, which function like 'stages' for three different scenes. The oblong frieze can be considered as a structured side-by-side of these different scenes. This type of composition results in a complex configuration of multiple self-contained meeting scenes; each of these assemblies shows a symmetrical type of composition with an enthroned religious or worldly dignitary or couple in the centre.

The overall layout of the frieze bears some parallels with earlier types of throne compositions, which isolate a middle scene featuring the enthroned monarch. A characteristic feature only found at Alchi is that each of the three sections contains a completely autonomous scene, loosely connected with the other scene by means of the general layout, symmetry and hierarchy.[1261]

The image as a whole represents a complex socio-political programme with an ordered structure of monastic and lay people. The middle section and the section to the right show representations of lay scenes engaged in banqueting, positioned in a setting which recalls the architectonic throne of Kaśmīr -style sculpture also found – though only faintly indicated - in the scene of the banqueting couple. One of these two sections is roughly positioned in the middle axis of the overall composition of the wall, dominated by the mandala, and is the central scene of the whole frieze. There (Fig. 17, Scene 1) an enthroned nobleman is depicted, probably the political authority of the region, flanked by two subordinate male sitting figures. One of them holds a battle-axe, and the other one is shown with a cup in his hand, reminding one of an official social gathering in which the sovereignty of the ruler is confirmed. A monumental footed stand is seen in the register below the enthroned nobleman, probably filled with food or objects for offering, around which dignitaries and warriors are positioned.

[1261] Future detailed comparisons with other examples from the 'Alchi-school' such as in Mangyu (e.g.: on the entrance wall of the Śākyamuni Temple) will help to understand the evolutionary history and chronology of this genre in the Western Himalaya.

The scenes on the left and right side are subordinate to the middle section. To the left a courtly feast with a couple in the centre is shown. This scene is comparable to the enthroned noble couple of the drinking scene; both combine a ritual gathering loosely connected with a lower zone depicting offerings or food served by subordinated figures. The dresses on the figures show various ornaments suggesting that the individuality of the participants at the feast and possibly also their social standing is meant rather than a mass of people. The depiction of the lady holding a lotus and children in the midst of the banquet, probably the children of the noble couple, are unique elements in donor depictions in the Western Himalaya.

To the right of the main scene - and thus in a less prestigious position than the banqueting scene – Kalden Sherab, the famous monk and founder of the temple, appears. He was the religious authority of Alchi. He is depicted sitting on a wooden throne in iconic symmetry, flanked by lay and monastic figures. This scene is separated by a horizontal band - containing inscriptions- from a couple with their entourage or family members, which seemingly attend the religious ceremony in the upper row. On the uppermost border of the rectangular space hanging textiles are seen, standing in the tradition of earlier depictions of textiles defining ephemeral thrones.

A continuous band of mounted men - partly with armour - appear as though performing a race in the lowest section of the frieze. The depictions of horses in combination with donor scenes can be found in courtly images at Shalu and Nako, where they are a signs of the authority of the ruler. The horse-rider in the Mahākāla-image in particular documents the pride of the noble cavalier and mounted hero, as has been shown. The depiction of horse-riders with a variety of movements emphasises an aspect of the courtly and knightly ambience of the aristocracy. It also adds an aspect of naturalism to the frieze, which stands in sharp contrast to the static and hieratic mode of the main figure. The horsemen, possibly players on the occasion of a social gathering, move from right to left and thus towards the entrance of the temple. They connect the different sections of the composition, generating to a certain extent a unified environment of the whole frieze.

The settings of the different scenes are defined by quasi-architectonic frames and ephemeral thrones, defined by valances and 'arches' on the top of the frieze. The valances on the top of the monastic gathering (to the right of the middle scene) are evidence of the use of textile draperies decorating the ceilings in houses[1262], while at Tabo and Nako specific ephemeral settings and nomadic encampments are depicted that demarcate assembly scenes. In the other two scenes, in contrast, a multi-lobed upper border demarcates a screen in a unified colour isolating the main persons from the entourage. This border alludes to a space defined by lobed arches, as is typical for Kaśmīri architecture and also used for heavenly thrones (cf. preaching Buddha at the main wall of the Dukhang)[1263].

The visual idiom of superimposed registers to organize a complex group depiction can also be found in a Kaśmīr-style sculpture made of ivory in the British Museum as has been shown. The attending figures in the lower and upper segments are smaller in scale, reflecting their lower status as well as a symbolic perspective, corresponding to the figures – or rather atlants -

[1262] Constrsting to an earlier hypothesis that these valances at Alchi are ornamental variants of the textiles hangings found in the donor-depictions at Tabo (D. Klimburg-Salter 1996b: 319-36).

[1263] Earlier prototypes are to be found in the Tabo Dukhang, entrance wall, where Bodhisattvas are depicted in five-pointed arches, supported by wooden columns (for an image see chapter 'settings').

on the base of the ivory just mentioned. In analogy to the symbolism of thrones in Western Himalayan throne depictions, at Alchi we thus seem to be looking through a portal that allows a view into the courtly realm, a structured and ordered space.

7.5.2. The Enthroned Nobleman (Scene 1)

The main scene (Pl. 250; Fig. 17) is set in a pictorial space, defined by Kaśmīr-derived multi-lobed arches, providing a honorific connotation as well as a way to separate the central figures from the realm of the subordinates positioned above. This setting contrasts to the ephemeral structures in earlier depictions at Tabo, Nako and Dungkar[1264].

The enthroned monarch sits on a floor decorated with a textile pattern with two subordinate persons. The setting appears like a textile-covered platform or a carpet, where people of different status gather, comparable to Central Asian out-door banquets (in contrast to the scene of monastic persons to his left, shown on wooden thrones). The monarch is enthroned in a hieratic mode. He is shown rigid, in iconic frontality.

His sitting position, with one leg hanging down or rather stretched away, recalls the *lalitāsana* type. His bent right arm - holding a battle-axe - supported by his leg, enlarges the silhouette of the figure and emphasizes the static and heraldic character of the image. The left arm with very long sleeves in Tibetan fashion fall over his hand, almost reaching to the ground. This type of Tibetan dress and sign of sovereignty is characteristic of high courtly and aristocratic dignitaries in this region and in Tibet as a whole.

The notion of symmetry stands in the tradition of earlier throne scenes at Tabo, although the socio-political background is different and the combination of political and spiritual leadership characteristic for the royal lamas of Tabo is probably absent at Alchi. A central figure with long hanging sleeves in hieratic position emphasises the transmundane, eternal qualities of the ruler in both compositions. However, the nobleman at Alchi is set in a unified setting - seemingly a large banquet - with attendants who are offering bowls thus generating an inner unity of the group depiction. The different royal emblems and quasi-narrative postures confirm the ruler's sovereignty. The static position, with broad shoulders, large silhouette, and the depiction of armour is a new feature in images of sovereignty at Alchi . All this is very much in the style of Central Asian rulers, one example being a plate from Sogdian-Khorāsān (P. 251; datable to the 9th century). According to Boris Marshak[1265], the plate represents a specific style of royal imagery in Eastern-Iranian imagery - combining narrative and heraldic qualities - which were valid in the whole Islamic world from the 10th to the 13th century; another example shows the monarch holding a goblet with female attendants and musicians.[1266] The plates show interesting features such as the lotus, which may allude to to Buddhist symbolism according to Marshak.[1267] Interestingly, he does not dicuss the Sasanian parallels of the depictions of lotuses and their symbolism (see below).

The static quality of the enthroned monarch holing his weapon is significant for the comparison in this context, which alludes to the image of the victorious ruler. This mode contrasts to the mundane, quasi-naturalistic settings of banqueting couples in Sogdiana (e.g.

[1264] At Dunkar a tent-like structure definines a unified space for a complex group-depiction, with attending figures above; thus the overall composition is representing a later stage of this development is comparable with that at the Alchi Sumtsek.

[1265] Marshak 1986: 304.

[1266] Marshak fig. 30, 9th century (?).

[1267] Ibid. 302.

Balalyk tepe), where interaction is emphasised and the figures are shown in profile, comparable to the enthroned couple in the 'drinking scene'. However, the scene in the Alchi assembly is less heraldic, and more specific than the image on the plate, which may of course also result from the different medium, techniques and size.

The Alchi depiction shows specific emblems of sovereignty: the axe (cf. also a donor on the famous Rockefeller bronze holding a comparable type of weapon and a dagger stuck in the (woollen?) band around his waist[1268]; these features are consistent in donor depictions of the Alchi school of different chronological phases. The iconic character of the main figure is emphasized by the halo, which sets him apart from the surrounding persons and demarcates a distinct status. His high rank is further underlined by what appears at first sight as a drinking ceremony, but which should rather be read as a honorific offer to the sovereign of a drink served in a cup, signalling either the loyalty of subordinates or an official contract with 'foreigners' as described in later sources.

The nobleman wears a long, tight-fitting upper dress bound around the waist with a broad belt. The light-coloured coat is most probably - considering the harsh and cold climate - made of wool, and is delicately decorated with small birds and stylized flowers. The robe also shows significant differences compared to earlier depictions of Western Tibetan dresses in lay scenes. The front part is cut as a single unit with a V-shaped neck at Alchi and does not show the overlapping elements worn at Tabo. The latter is open in the front and the two front parts are shown overlapping, forming a v-shape neck with a wide, decorated collar, very much in the tradition of high Tibetan dignitaries at Dunhuang. While the long sleeves represent a distinctive Western Tibetan feature which can be traced back to the time of the old Tibetan monarchy, as has already been shown by Stoddard[1269], the characteristics of the Alchi dress, featuring long, possibly woollen, and tight fitting costumes with v-shaped necks, recall donor depictions from Kaśmīr and Gilgit. The coats of donors seen on bronze sculptures of different Shāhi dynasties in Northern Pakistan closely resemble the caftans worn at Alchi, and in particular in the Sumtseg. This type of dress – a woollen gown bound around the waist with a long band reflects traditions shared with different populations in the region and can also be observed among non-Tibetan populations in Himachal Pradesh up to the present.[1270]

The upper dress of each of the three male figures of the throne scene is decorated differently, emphasizing the individuality of each person. *tiraz*-strips with pseudo-inscriptions fixed on the arms or woven into the garment are a characteristic feature in earlier donor depictions in the Western Himalaya and a further widespread decorative feature of noble costumes in the tradition of Iranicate courtly dresses (also shown on costumes of Shahi princes in Northern Pakistani bronzes. They were unknown in Central Tibetan garments in the time of the old monarchy. Below the upper dress, another layer, made of white cloth with a round neck is visible. The dignitary wears baggy trousers stuck into pointed black boots. The boots are short, with high lapels on the front and on the back. This type of footwear is worn by all figures

[1268] The famous donor (?) depiction at the Avantsvamin temple is also having a dagger stuck in the belt. However it is much disputed, if a king or deities are depicted in these figures in attitude of veneration.

[1269] Stoddard (1977: 78)

[1270] Cfr. Sharma/Sehti 1997: fig A12; A22. The coths among the Gaddi (Chamba) and Pangwlala (Panagi valley, Chamba) are called 'chola' (over-coat), 'suthan' (trousers).

For a detailed classification and comparative analysis of the design of the dresses depicted in the early Buddhist paintings of Tabo see Wandl 1996.

in the two scenes, regardless of their status. It is also common among aristocratic figures in the Sumtsek. In contrast, in the monastic ceremony and assembly below, all the male and female figures wear white boots, possibly made of coarse wool or felt, which are longer and have dark soles. In the drinking scene to the right of the monarch both types of shoes can be observed, embellished with embroidery.

The headgear of the three protagonists in the throne scene consists of a turban or rather twisted lengths of cloth draped around the head with long ends or ribbons falling down over the shoulders[1271]. The pattern of the turbans resembles Indian printed cotton cloths with small-scale elements organized in rows of different colours (blue, red and white). The headgear of a mounted prince depicted in a painting at Shalu monastery in Central Tibet also consists of a simple turban, but without the ribbons hanging down (Pl. 160). It is interesting to observe that the crown of the Ladakhi king kept in the royal residence at Stok palace resembles the turban-like high headdress of the Dharma-kings. The crown is also adorned with long streamers decorated with tie-resist died patterern, which could be reminiscent of local fashions in headdresses.[1272] The male dignitary in the scene featuring the enthroned couple/'royal drinking scene' and the noble horse rider also wear turbans, whereas the noble men and noble women below the monastic scene (Pl. 259-260), wear hats with horizontal elements which look like wide, upturned brims (it is unclear if this type can be identified with the two-pointed cap listed in the *'History of the Kingdoms of Guge-Purang (mNga' ris rgyal rabs)'*, one of the insignia of the Western Tibetan rulers[1273], as already stated. This type of hat differs from the headgear of the enthroned nobleman in the centre of the frieze. The latter probably reflects the fashion of riding soldiers in mountain regions.

The nobleman has a beard and a moustache. His hair-style with long black braids is distinctively Tibetan: braids are also shown in a sculpture featuring Songtsen Gampo in the Potala. A second hairstyle can be observed among the noblemen, e.g. in scene "3" where the hair is shorter, just reaching to the shoulders, with the ends slightly turned outwards. This style recalls the hairstyle of the ca. 11th century princely horseman at Shalu, and it is also common among lay people at Tabo and Nako. Shoulder-long hair is also shown in images of Tibetan dignitaries at Dunhuang, as has already been remarked by Stoddard.[1274]

Two male figures are subordinated to the 'monarch'. They are clearly distinguished from each other by the different colours and decorations of their robes. The left person is seated higher on a flat, rectangular platform, of which the decorated surface is visible. The man wears a richly decorated upper dress, probably decorated with a tie-resist technique called *'bandani'* in India and the same two-coloured waist-band as the monarch. He holds an axe. His function might have been to represent the military aspect of the ruling clan, or he is a dignitary from another clan.

The various objects in the midst of the courtly train in the lower section of the scene provide valuable insight into the material culture and precious ceremonial objects in this period. The offering of a cup to the 'monarch' by the other nobleman perhaps indicates a drinking

[1271] Similar turbans with floating ends are worn in Eastern Tibet up to the present.

[1272] Cf. Snellgrove/Skorupski 1977: fig. 78. The 'throne' on which the crown is presented today consists of a textile backgdrop framed by multi-lobed arches.

[1273] Vitali 1996: 161.

[1274] Stoddard 1977: 72.

ceremony or rather acknowledges authority or an official agreement. There is a large 3-footed stand in the zone below the nobleman, probably filled with food or offerings. Above him - behind a multi-lobed arch forming a screen-like background - men are depicted with shields and swords positioned like guardians, emphasizing the high rank of the central figure.

A vase, *kundika*, is among the vessels probably filled with wine. It was also used in religious rituals, demonstrating that luxury objects were used in both worldly and religious ceremonials.

The stemmed (silver?) cups of various sizes with fine, probably hammered ornaments, are a characteristic feature only found in the Dukhang. They can be compared with the large stemmed silver goblets once used in Kafiristan (present Nuristan) during ceremonial gatherings, having the significance of status objects in this region. The cups may well have played a role in the religious cult: a cup filled with wine was part of the cult when addressing Indra in Waigal.[1275] Silver cups are also an important element of the cultural history of present Western Tibet; a ceremonial cup '*yangtse*' with inlay of gold is thought to remove poison.[1276] Various ceremonies in this region associated with the goblet have already been described, and would need further investigation. In contrast, the cups for making offerings to deities seen in the Sumtsek are flat plate-like vessels with a pointed lower part, and comparable to contemporary porcelain (P. 203).

A variety of flasks can be seen in donor scenes. One type has a simple round belly and short neck, is red in colour and is thus probably made of clay. A large 3-footed metal stand consisting of a tripod and with a wooden bowl or plate on the top positioned directly below the 'monarch' appears as the centre of the scene. Both the metal stand and the plate in the Dukhang have astonishing equivalents in Kafiristan, Afghanistan, where similar objects were used on the occasion of secular and religious feasts up the end of the 19th century. Comparable objects in Nuristan are commonly used as eating tables.[1277] The table at Alchi is flanked by two kneeling figures in bilateral symmetry, probably servants, holding cups and offering them to the 'monarch' in the upper scene.

It is should be noted that the persons engaged in the offering wear a shawl on their shoulders, which is probably a characteristic attribute of their function (possibly the flasks or cups were covered with these cloths before being used; cf. also ritual flasks covered with cloths in the Sumgsek). Similarly, in the drinking scene already discussed the person filling a cup with a liquid from a bottle holds a scarf below the drinking vessel, indicating the protective function of the cloth.

A large ceremonial space is obviously depicted within these scenes, in which the nobleman acts as a central figure of an official representation with with much food and wine in precious vessels associated with worldly and religious power. In addition to the noble figures of the entourage, seven armed figures are grouped around the middle scene, four on the left side and three on the right side. Some of them are wearing a two-pointed cap, while others have the simple turban wound around the head. The orientation of the armed persons towards the centre and their interaction suggests a certain spatial unity. The ceremonial space is isolated by the borders and the brownish red colour of the backdrop. However, the bottom section shows a small projection, which functions like a basis for the scene (or might have been reserved for inscriptions?). At the same time it connects this scene to the scene below, featuring galloping

[1275] M. Klimburg 1999, Vol.1: 216.

[1276] Verbal communication, Tsering Gyalbo from the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, Lhasa (1.2007).

[1277] M. Klimburg 1999, Vol. 1: 212

horses with riders, further emphasizing the ideal centre. The mounted horsemen are oriented towards the monarch while a continuous band embraces the three scenes forming a certain pictorial unity.

The combination of the three scenes of the enthroned 'monarch', the courtly ceremony with dignitaries (probably stemming from different regions?), and the horse-riders form a complex representation of courtly supremacy in a structured setting. Therein the hierarchic nature of Western Himalaya society and various aspects of its rulers and the functions of their courtly entourage are reflected. The nobleman represents himself as a powerful munificient person in the midst of his entourage thus demonstrating the splendour of his aristocratic court. The protective function of the temple's founder and the ruling clan is documented in inscriptions in the Dukhang and the Sumtsek. In inscription no. 3 (Fig. 4) in the Dukhang, Kelden Sherab's eulogy (positioned below the image of the founder of the Dukhang) describes him as follows: *„May there be victory over the four opposing evils! As for this master of all the dharmas, he covers all, unutterable, like the unborn sky. We salute him who is unchanging and teaches in various ways, we salute him and praise him who has arranged the doctrines. Among the dharmas as unreal as dreams, he protects others, being of Bodhisattva lineage"*.[1278] The inscription no. 6 in the Sumtsek refers to the military power of the clan: "*As sun and moon ornament the sky, so did the tho Bro brothers (?) ornament the earth.... A member of the Dro-clan ('Bro clan) called stag-bzang who wandered from Guge and sPu-rangs (?) arrived at...vanquishing external enemies and protecting internal subjects, (he?) acted as a true ruler and was established as their overlord*".[1279]

The depiction of the nobleman alone signals a lot of authority. He is shown in a hieratic, frontal position, with one arm hanging down, holding an axe, and a dagger is stuck in his belt (axe and dagger recall the culture of status in present Nuristan, as has already been stated) in contrast to the mundane flavour of such banqueting scenes in Central Asia, such as at Balalyk tepe. In this context at Alchi, the cup can be read rather as a sign of sovereignty in the tradition of Iranicate enthroned monarchs in Central Asia fused with Indo-Tibetan hieratic images of royal and religious depictions. A metal plate from Khorāsān (11th century) shows the enthroned sovereign with attending figures engaged in different acts signaling power and authority of the monarch. The heraldic character and the cup as a sign of authority is significant for the comparison. The image of the fighting or feasting monarch is shown in various other Post-Sāsānian examples, demonstrating their validity up to the 13th century. Such metal plates may have possibly been a means for the proliferation of such themes in the Western Himalaya.

Apart from the value as a sign of status, the symbolism of political power associated with cups also refers to historic events. The raised cup may be interpreted as an affirmation of political acts and an acclamation. Such an event during the reign of Khri rgyal bSod nams lde is described in the Gunthang gyalrab, when various leaders met after defeat in a territory, to demonstrate loyalty to the invador, and offered him a cup of porcelain as a sign of respectful obeisance.[1280]

[1278] Snellgrove/Skorupsky 1980: 146.

[1279] Ibid.

[1280] *„Indem zahlreiche Unruhen eintraten, wie dass sich einst lCan[pa], Ser [pa] [und] Ron [pa] vereinten und sPan zin mit ihren Truppen einkreisten, eroberten Truppen seines Ehrwürdigen Ministers im 7. Monat des Pferde-Jahres [1594] in Rag ma [die Festung] sPyod klan bu mkhar. Er führte seine Truppen nach Dol po und die Festung Bla mkhar der Ser pa fiel. Er brachte verschiedene Führer der Ser pa und lCan pa zusammen und hielt sie als Faustpfand in rDzons dkar fest. Indem die lCan pa und Ser pa (tib. lcan ser), nachdem sie sich zu dieser Zeit für mehr als sechs Monate in Man yul sKyid gron aufgehalten hatten, am*

The way to depict at Alchi integrates the hieratic and symmetric throne scenes of Tabo, modernised by Iranicate royal symbolisms and quasi-narrative details signaling sovereignty, power and the strength of the clan. The aristocratic elites of the Dro-clan ('Bro clan) may have shared these signs of authority with other small kingdoms in neighbouring regions; this assumption is likely when one compares the images of donors at Alchi with Buddhist art of the Shahi princes of Northern Pakistan (Gilgit, Chilas[1281]) which was significant for royal and religious imagery and receptive to Eastern-Iranian symbolism. Due to geography and economy the kingdom of Ladakh forms a distinct unit in the history of these Himalayan countries. According to literary sources the Tibetanized Ladakh perhaps once formed a cultural and administrative unit with Baltistan (east of Gilgit) where Iranian populations of Central Asia and the Dards of Ladakh lived.[1282]

The setting in a banquet and the heraldic position reflect widespread signs of courtly supremacy, used as a medium of self-representation of the ruler combined with strong emphasis on his military power, specific for the period of the emerging elite in this region. It cannot be excluded that a specific historical moment may be depicted in this scene, in which the drinking mode representing signs of status may be on the occasion of a peace treaty or alliances.

The central figure in this image is probably a high dignitary from the Dro-clan ('Bro clan) with a prominent political position, perhaps the local ruler, whereas the donor and spiritual authority of Alchi, Kelden Sherab, is set to his left side (which is thus perhaps the more prestigious position). This contrasts to the temple of Tabo, where Yeshe Ö and his sons combine both political and religious authority in the tradition of 'divine kingship' consistent with Tibetan culture. This difference in religious-political organisation of the rule results in the diverging modes of depiction: Chanbchub Ö is represented as an ordained monk and represnts himself as a deified king, reflecting probably his 'Buddhist rule' linked with the idea of the old Tibetan kings and their descent from gods. Iranicate signs of sovereignty are enriched with earlier modes of composition at Alchi; in this mode of depiction his political endeavours in the spirit of Buddhist community values are manifest.

7.5.3. The Enthroned Noble Couple (Scene 2)

In the banqueting scene to the actual right (on the left to the viewer) of the enthroned monarch, and thus in the less prestigious position in relation to the monastic assembly (Fig. 17), two registers are again combined (Pl. 252). The upper register is peopled by a great courtly train, with an elegant noble couple in the centre, honoured by an umbrella, shown in a position which contrasts with the hieratic and frontal image of the single enthroned nobleman. Female and male subordinate figures flank the couple in separate rows. Interestingly, the queen or female members of the clan are positioned in a row below the king seated on a wooden throne at the roughly contemporaneous Dunkar; thus the Alchi type with a throne scene featuring a

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19. Tage des 3. Monats des Schaf-Jahres [1595] eine Porzellantasse als Geste ihrer sich respektvoll unterstellenden Ergebenheit überreichten, nahm er sie im gTsug lag khan von Sel dkar entgegen. Danach stellte er in mNaris [wieder] Frieden her".

Everding 2000, I: 171, line 28.1. I wish to thank Mr. Everding for this reference on occasion of a Tibetology-conference at Bonn (IATS, 2005).

[1281] These regions are also significant for the petroglyphs along the Karakoram Highway between Hunza and Shatial documented and interpreted by K. Jettmar and Ph. Denwood.

[1282] Petech 1977: 10.

couple in interaction is unique. The scene is set - like the enthroned 'monarch' - in a neutral monochrome space defined by lobed lines recalling multi-lobed arches of Kaśmīr origin. A row of persons, positioned above the 'arches' and thus in the background, is seen as if looking at the scene.

In the lower register the courtly entourage is engaged in various banquet ceremonies. On the right side of the banquet area there are two rows of female subordinates: in the upper row two female figures are depicted with an object lying in front of them (a comparable object is shown in the donor scenes in the Sumtsek, identified by Goepper[1283] as a box containing food[1284] - probably made of gold), while warriors are depicted in the lower register.

The noble couple in the centre of the upper register is flanked by a row of men and women respectively, probably members of the clan. The lady as well as all the women in her entourage are represented kneeling, facing towards the noblemen, whereas the men are are seated with one leg bent and the other stretched out, corresponding to the *lalitāsana* seat. The relationship between the couple contains elements characteristic of religious imagery, signalling a clear hierarchy and thus the elevated status of the nobleman.[1285]

Between the couple two smaller kneeling figures, probably children, one male and the other female, appear with their bodies and heads turned towards the man, presumably their father. Their small size in this case would not indicate subordination according to the pertaining practice of social differentiation. Behind the male dignitary a row of armed, male persons is shown, while behind his wife female persons of probably high status are shown, with some of them holding footed drinking vessels with fine carvings.

The nobleman points with his left arm to his wife, while his right arm lies on his leg, with his hand holding an axe. The image reflects strict hierarchy and order within the family, and thus also of the society in general.

The attire of the nobleman and his wife are particularly richly decorated, rendered in great detail by the artist. The viewer's eyes are attracted by a great variety of complex patterns and a multitude of colours shown on the textiles. The man's garb consists of a robe decorated with connected swastika filled with simple flowers and stylized rampant lions in the interstices. A very similar decoration is seen on the monk's robe of a Buddha Śākyamuni in the Sumtsek[1286] as well as on the ceilings of that temple.

The lady's attire consists of a long dress with a long woollen cape on the shoulders. The lady's upper dress has an ornament of cross-like elements on a white ground containing blue birds. The motifs probably imitate weaving techniques or embroidery and can be associated with complex silk weavings, examples of which are known in Central Asia but might have existed also in India. The female persons behind her, in contrast, have a white cape, consisting

[1283] Goepper 1996: 111.

[1284] Cf. also the he the treasure box or casket (S. *nidhana-petaka*, T. *gter sgrom*) in Tibetan iconography, Beer 2003: 203.

[1285] This characteristic stands in a remote tradition of images of male and female Bodhisattvas, showing them sitting on thrones with the consorts smaller in scale and thus subordinated. Also non-Buddhist deities such as Kamadeva with partner at Avantisvamin temple can be added as examples. Four images of Kamadeva (god of love) and his consorts are represented at the Avantisvamin temple (Utpala period, reign of Avantisvamin, (ca. 855-83) dedicated to Vishnu, in a very prominent position, attached to the balustrades at the foot of the stairs leading tho the main shrine.

[1286] Goepper 1996: 83.

of stripes perhaps sewn together. An impressive cape of wool of local production consisting of vertical bands of woven fabric to form a half circle is stored in the museum at Stok palace, the residence of the present Ladakhi Queen.

The colour of the lower dress of the female protagonist is dark red, matching the cape and has typical ultra-long sleeves sleeves, rolled up at the wrists so that the white inner side of the dress is visible. Her elegant black pointed boots are finely decorated with white embroidery. While the other female persons behind the protagonist are without a headdress, the noble lady's headgear shows two layers, a scarf draped around the long hair and a long, lightweight fabric, that functions like a veil (comparable headdresses are worn by noble ladies in Mangyu and in the Sumtsek as well as by donors depicted on Kaśmīr-style and Gilgit bronzes). The lady is further adorned with a forehead ornament showing a big turquoise in the centre, which can be regarded as a distinctive piece of Tibetan jewellery.[1287] The multiple necklaces are also distinctive ornaments, consisting of up to ten rows of alternating pearls and turquoises, as in the case of the noble lady in the monastic scene. This seemingly indigenous element contrasts with the noble lady's jewellery in the Sumtsek, which resembles rather Indian or Kaśmīr fashion (Pl. 217).

The female retinue close to the noble lady is smaller in scale, signalling a lower status. They wear a lower dress that is decorated with a pattern of roundels on dark ground achieved by a technique called resist dying, usually used for cotton and silk cloths. Thus the materials and techniques used for the dress are less 'representative' than the luxurious silk garments worn by the noble lady in the centre.

In the register above figures in warrior garb and female attendants appear to stand in loose communication with the main scene below. Arms and shields (one of the shields has a typical check-board-pattern, often found on armour of different kinds once stored at Tsaparang and now in the National Museum at Lhasa) reach the zone of the royal assembly and thus bind the two scenes together.

A specific intimacy is observable in the scene of the enthroned family, showing tender interaction, with children placed between the couple. The offering by the noble woman in the centre is a feature not found in the 'drinking scene'.. Instead of holding a cup she carries an object in her right hand that can be read as a bud of lotus blossoms, which she seems to offer to the person beside her, most likely her husband. The offering of a lotus blossoms is a distinctive Buddhist symbol and object of devotional practice as well as a sign of marriage and partnership, descrbed in the stories of previous lives of the Buddha (see below). The lotus is also widely used in Central Asian types of enthroned monarchs; the appearance of this theme at Alchi inspired me to look at the possible meaning in this specific context.

Although donors represented as worshippers and holding a lotus are a common feature in Buddhist iconography, the theme in connection with courtly imagery seems to elude interpretation. This is symptomatic of the general lack of study on the role of women in Western Himala dynastic art. The Alchi depictions give ample evidence of women in different types of scenes. Thus, an attempt to classify them and propose an interpretation seems fruitful. In particular the different types of images and contexts, in which the lady holding a lotus is

[1287] The stone in the head-ornament appears to have been scratched away in some cases by visitors, so that the lower, red layer of painting is visible now.

shown, allows conclusions to be drawn on the function of this type of donor depiction in the assembly frieze.

In Eastern-Iranian/Sogdian art, closely related to the Alchi mode of banquet, the lotus as a hand emblem often occurs in images of sovereignty of the monarch, as has already been stated. However, the meaning of the lotus in the Alchi context is little studied.

The meaning of the Sogdian banquet scenes at Balalyk tepe and Panjikent are much debated.[1288] The imagery at Balalyk tepe clearly focuses on wealth and abundance: rings, which are used as seals are presented in elegant gestures, together with other signs of status such as goblets and lotus flowers. It was proposed by Nikolenko[1289] that the murals represented a religious celebration or – jugdging form archaeological findings on the site - a fertility cult. Maybe some of the women are priestesses, though no names of gods have been preserved.[1290] Also at Panjikent aristocrats clearly hold flowers with three branches, which are clearly engaged in banquet scenes. The lotus can also be interpreted as a kind of fan as suggested by Azarpay and thus a sign of prestige, but these objects are clearly also a medium of interaction and expression of the role of the woman and a specific intimacy between the couple. Three branches of lotus flowers are also held by a female donor positioned next to a royal figure at Bāmiyān. In this scene the lotuses can be read as a homage to the king as well as an offering to the Buddha. As another example, a Sogdian bowl (Pl. 245, Pl. 246), cited above, may be mentioned which probably bears a specific gender meaning. The silver cup shows an embossed decoration featuring a couple, which has been interpreted as a marriage scene, in which the lady is holding a lotus to her breast, above the '*royal fortune*' (farn) in the shape of a bird with ring or necklace.

Lotus flowers play an important role as combined symbols of Buddhist devotion and signs of marriage and ideal partnership in the stories of previous lifes of the Buddha.[1291] In additions to the Buddhist background behind the emblem of the lotus in images of the monarch, it will be proposed here that this element in Sogdian art may be a fusion of the related Sasanian symbolism, where the lotus appears in different contexts of Buddhist symbols of marriage and devotion.

Bakker examined representations of women on seals holding a lotus flower in the Achaemenid Empire; she showed that in the Achaemenid period the lotus is not a specifically female attribute. However, it is always the woman who holds the lotus, when she is represented together with a man.[1292] Cups and lotuses are elements of tales about loving couples in Persia, told by Chares of Miletus, the chamberlain of Alexander the Great.[1293] A Sasanian relief[1294] shows

[1288] L. Nikolenko: 'Review of Albaum', Tashkent 1960, Artibus Asiae Vol 25, No.2/3, 1962, 220-223.

[1289] Nikolenko 1962. She propesed the reading of the lotus as mirrors which can be ruled out, Azarpay suggests to identify it as a fan-lotus combination (G. Aarpay, verbal communication, 11.2007) held close to the nose. Judith Lerner thinks it is a fan. She also made me aware that females with tulips are representing spring on Bactrian seals (verbal communication, 11. 2007).

[1290] There have been found glass medallions with the naked images of a goddess of fertility holding a baby, which points to affiliations between local cults with those of Northern Indian (Nikolenko 1962: 221). Furthermore bones of dogs, a sacred animal in zoroastrism, have been found.

[1291] Jorinde Ebert made me aware of the relevant texts, which are of great importance of the identification function of the Alchi donor depictions.

[1292] Bakker 2007: 213.

[1293] Ibid.: 216.

a curvy female, wearing a wide sleeved dress with many folds. She is holding a lotus which may symbolize marriage in this scene.[1295] The image has been related to an earlier version of the story told by Ferdousi, in which a woman selects the hero Goshtap as her husband by giving him flowers.

The theme of the offering of the lotus, found in a story of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara, is of particular importance with regard to the identification of the 'lady and the lotus' at Alchi as suggested by J. Ebert.[1296] In the stories of the previous lives of the Buddhas life, Yaśodharā (who later became a nun) meets Śākyamuni when he was the young Brahmin Sumedha wating for Dīpaṅkara. Sumedha (Ch. Megha) was a Bodhisattva at the time of the Dīpankara Buddha and lived as a hermit. When Dīpaṅkara arrived in his native town, Sumedha prepared the road for him and prostrated himself intending to offer lotus flowers, and then a young Brahmin girl bearing seven stalks of lotus flowers came. He tried to buy the flowers as an offering to the enlightended one, but the king had already bought all of them. She recognized his noble nature and gave the ascetic five stalks against the promise to marry her and kept two stalks for herself to offer to the Buddha (cf. 231a).[1297]

In the famous donor depictions at Bāmiyān (soffit of the 38-m Buddha niche) the divinized king (carrying post-Sāsānian insignia) and the Buddha receive offerings of a lotus, while male figures are holing a necklace with streamers and also ribbons of textiles as offerings. In these donor depictions the flower is always held by a female person (one exeption being a figure subordinated to the king in the opposite row). This example also shows the overlapping contexts of the lotus, as signs of Eastern-Iranian aristocracy, Buddhist worship and possibly also symbols reflecting the relationship between a king and queen or couple in the previous lives of the Buddha as described in the Dīpaṅkara story with Sumedha.[1298] Interestingly in the discussion on donor iconography, the focus is mainly on symbolism of power and authority of men, and not on aspects of the wisdom of women and their specific ideals of devotion in Buddhist traditions.

The meaning of the hand emblem at Alchi is possibly related to the lotus in Buddhist texts such as the story of Sumedha and his wife. The attractiveness of this kind of image is also due to the connotations with royalty in Eastern-Iranian Buddhsit art. This story of a previous life of the Buddha emphasizes pious devotion as well as marriage and partnership as the source of strength on the path towards Buddhahood. The lotus also occurs in Eastern-Iranian and Sodian-Buddhist art as a sign of the self-representation of the noble elite, which can also be associated with marriage, and probably on a deeper layer also with fertility. Besides, it is always the woman who is holding the lotus in depictions of noble couples at Alchi. In addition, the scene shows children in their midst which might be another indication for this interpretation.

In the banquet scene of the frieze, only the lady holds a lotus flower, while both the men and women hold lotus flowers only in the context of monastic scenes, which is an indication for the gender specific meaning of the scene discussed here. The emphasis of the banquet scene recalls Buddhist stories of a pious woman who offered lotus flowers to Buddha Dipankara and to

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[1294] Tang-I Qandil; see Berghe, 1984, Bruxelles: pl. 27.

[1295] Bakker 217

[1296] J. Ebert, verbal communication 1.2008.

[1297] Conze 1959: 22-23. Cf. also *www.freewebs.com/buddhaimages.*

[1298] Often these roles of women in Buddhsit texts reflect fundamental aspects of life, such as man a hero, warrior and protector.

Sumedha – the future Buddha- with the wish to marry him.[1299] On a more general level it alludes to the concept of the ideal harmony between husband and wife among their childen, and the source of wealth and power with an emphasis on the role of the woman as 'a life force'. The lotus fits in with this conception of femininity. The symbolism of female-male duality is also one of the status symbols in the culture of the Kafirs in the Hindukush and found on honour-chairs of high-ranking dignitaries. The female male duality is also found in the depiction of vases at Lalung and Dunkar, and a vase which emanates a lotus is also to be seen between a couple in the monsastic scene of the frieze.

Many different interpretations have been put forward to describe the meaning of the lotus in Buddhist art[1300]. It is a major Buddhist symbol of piety and renunciation, as well as of the doctrine. A consistent feature in art of the Western Himalaya is a lotus rising out of a vase which contains the deities of a whole wall compositon, as can be seen in the Dukhang of Alchi, Lalung and in both early temples at Nako. Of course, the lotus has been adopted by many civilisations as a symbol of rebirth and the circle of live; it is also believed to have fertilizing properties in Egypt[1301]. The theme of fertility associated with the lotus is also widespread in India. The lotus is the symbol of the goddess Lakshmi, related to prosperity, wealth and fertility. Also loving couples are shown among lotuses in Indian art. *Padma* and *kamala* are synonymous Sanskrit terms for the lotus of the female vagina - a potent secular metaphor in Hindu and Buddhist tantra. *Vajra* and *padma* are sexual symbols for the union of form and emptiness, and thus the transcendence of duality[1302], the latter concept – although in a abstact form - being also a common theme in Western Himalayan art.

The art of Gandhara and Kaśmīr is in close cultural proximity to Ladakh, where the couple in intimate interaction holding objects such as cups and lotus, and children jumping around are attributes of protective deities, such as Pancika and Hārītī, symbolizing wealth and fertility. Pancika (a Yakṣa) and Hārītī are the prototype of the 'parents' - closely related to Hellenistic-Iranian ideas of protective couples (Pharro and Ardoxso); the latter is depicted at Avantisvamin with a lotus that recalls the older attribute of the cornucopia. This also demonstrates that the reciprocal receptivity of Eastern-Iranian and Hellenistic emblems of wealth such as the cup and lotus and Buddhist concepts of prosperity and abundance had a long tradition in this type of imagery, particularly in Gandhāra and Kaśmīr.

Hārītī (with many children jumping around) has a prominent position on the portal at Dungkar. Above her Pancika might be depicted, holding a bowl; he is known as the son of a

[1299] The nobleman in contrast is shown as a wealthy feastgiver and protector. The protective aspect of the ruler is expressed in inscriptions; „...*the upper ranks, lionlike, are endowed with conscience and modesty,...young men are brave and handsome, and are sources of all prowess and authority*".Unfortunately the role of the woman is not described in the inscription. One passages in the eulogy of the noble monk states: „*He has multiplied greatly (images of) the Royal Mother of infinite merits*" (Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980: 145). But it is not clear which images are meant, probably images of the female noble ladies in the frieze or in the banquet, but this is uncertain. The loving family is praised in several texts, but not the specific role of the female member of the family.

[1300] It is a major Buddhist symbol of pirioty and renunciation, as well as of the doctrine. A consistent feature in art of the Western Himalaya is a lotus rising out of the vase, which contains the deities of a whole wall compositon, as can be seen in the Dukhang of Alchi, Lalung and in both early temples at Nako.

[1301] Bakker 2007: 212.

[1302] Beer 2003: 9.

protective spirit Pancala, and general of Kubera's army.[1303] The ensembles may thus represent a protective couple. Furthermore, Pancika is an important guardian spirit in the region of Kaśmīr[1304]. However, the type of Hariti/ Ardoxso with a lotus as hand emblem has not yet been identified in Himalayan art.

To sum up, such images of couples which previously denominated 'drinking scenes' are not only signs of sovereignty and protection. The lotus represents the theme of the inspired and pious woman in stories of the previous life of the Buddha. These concepts are emphasized and combined in the Eastern-Iranian Buddhist sphere not only with elegant gestures and tender communication between noblemen and their wives, a constant feature at Balalyk tepe, Bāmiyān and Dokhtar-e Norshirwān,[1305] but also with the theme of homage and loving interaction between the noble couple and forces which generate life.

Women played an important role in the evolution of the power of the clan and a female member of the Bro clan even had a most prominent position as one of the wifes of Yeshe-ö.

According to the Ngari gyalrab, Srong.nge (Yeshe Ö/Ye shes 'od) had two wives and from one of them - Seng dkar ma - he had Devaraja (De bar a dza) and Nagaraja (Na gar a dza).

> „Seng dkar ma is not a proper name but a title deriving from a symbol of rank pecculiar to the Bro-s (the seng.ge dkar.mo'i gong slag; i.e. 'The white lioness fur collar'), which some members of the clan wore as a sign of their greatness.... The clan affiliation of Ye.shes.'od`s wife is doubly significant because... it confirms the close association of the Bro-s with the mNga'.ris skor.gsum royal family in no lesser a case than that of the great Ye-shes.'od....From another queen, whose name is not indicated, Srong.nge had a daughter, lHa'i me.tog.., who became a nun...Ye-shes.'od's women are otherwise hardly mentioned in the sources, but while the names of Zangs.kha.ma and Seng.dkar.ma, respectivley the mother and the wife of Ye.shes. od, were unrecorded, the very existence of a daughter was completely unknown".[1306]

lHa'i me tog, the daughter of Yeshe Ö (Yehe 'od) – in contrast to these two sons, who are well known - *„...deserves better fame, since it appears that she is the founder of the now famous Dung dkar cave temple, in ca. 1000, and thus was the first princess among the patrons of the eary Phyi dar*".[1307]

[1303] Zin: 239.

[1304] Zin: 240. But also an interpretation as Mahakala is possible.

[1305] A noble lady venerating a deity in the Sumtsek holds a string of pearls and a lotus bud as offerings (Goepper 1996: p.143). At Tabo the royal donor depicted in the cella is also holding a lotus, offering it to the main deity on the wall, while the female person, maybe his wife, is set outside the abode of the protagonist (also in Nako female members are not included into the throne setting of the donor depiction).

[1306] Vitali 1996: 178.

[1307] Stoddard 2004: 94; I wish to thank Dr. Ch. Jahoda for having informed me about this important essay Stoddards essay and other articles published in the proceeding of the Lumbini conference (2004) deal with the formation of dynastic lines after the disintegration of the Yarlung empire.

Stoddard, H (2004) Rekindling the Flame. A Note on Royal Patronage in tenth Century Tibet. The Princely Descendants of Lang Dar Ma, the Six Sog mo of Khams, the Ten Men of Dbus Gtsang and the Founding of Temples in Central Tibet in 10th & 11th C., *The Relationship between Religion and State (chos srid zung 'bel) in Traditionals Tibet*, C. Cüppers (ed), Lumbini: 49.

In the Gunthang gyalrab the wife of King Khri rgyal bSod nams lde is praised as well as his marriage policy (in the same passage also a cup is mentioned, which is handed over as a sign of affirmation of political acts and subordination, mentioned above): *"Khri rgyal bSod namens lde vollbrachte zu ihrem Gedächtnis [that of the „Landesherrin" of Mang yul Gun thang, 16th century, comment by the author] unbegrenzte, völlig weiße Tugenden wie (die Errichtung) eines silbernen mChod sdon [chörten], der der auf Schnee fallenden Sonne glich, und als Gemahlin des auf dem Herrschaftsthron sitzenden nahm er von lHun po rtse die (aus) der Familie dPal ldan Sar ka (sic!) ba's (stammende) bDag mo dByans can bsod nams sgron zur Frau. Danach vergrößerte sich seine Macht.*[1308]

The genesis of clan power in Tibet and role of the women in this process after the disintegration of the Yar lung dynasty and the endeavours by their members to promote it during the time of new foundations of Western Himalya will be a rewarding subject of future research.

The ideology and values communicated can be compared with those in the drinking scene, with an emphasis on the family clan engaged in a sumptuous banquet, demonstrating wealth and prosperity in line with Buddhist ideals of piety and generosity. This contrasts to the more official character of the central scene.

The choice of specific types of images as models in the Alchi donor scenes may reflect the power, wealth and protective qualities of the Dro-Clan ('Bro clan); not only on the level of 'outer' emblems and insignia, but maybe also on a deeper lever, alluding to religious power and authority. In this context a comparative survey with Buddhist protective deities in the region associated with wealth, marriage and fertility seems legitimate.

The cup in the context of the symbolism of authority and wealth can be compared with the attributes of the god of wealth; the latter is also mentioned in inscriptions, and the donor and monk are praised as *"...richly endowed by the god Vaisravana, very wealthy, he was also munificent, the best friend of all the poor and like father and mother to them.*[1309] An eulogy of Kalden sherab states: *„Like the excellent vase, you fulfill the desires of all, we praise and salute him who is like a mine of precious stones.*[1310]

However, the attitude towards wealth in the Buddhist world is ambiguous. It alludes to the palace of Śākyamuni, a glorification of the courtly world but at the same time to be overcome ('Entsagung vom Prunk der Welt'). Accordingly, the inscriptions says that it is only legitimate to amass wealth when others benefit from it. Besides, at Tabo inscriptions claim that the kingdom be offered for spiritual goals.[1311]

The question whether the prominent position of the woman and her role in courtly life at Alchi derives from historical reality must remain speculative; only written information would allow a more certain interpretation. Whatever the symbolism might be, the notion of humanity, intimate interaction and interest in 'worldly culture' is a new element at Alchi – probably also

[1308] Everding 2000, I: 171, line 28.

[1309] Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980: 148.

[1310] Ibid: 146.

[1311] Symptomatic is the depiction of the great departure on the zenith of ceilings in Central Asian Buddhist temples (e.g. Bezeklik); They allude to Sasanian imagery of kingship as well as the Great Departure and thus renunciation; the popularity of horsemen on the ceilings of the Alchi Sumtse might also be related to this idea.

transporting the woman's faithfulness to the family or clan. It demonstrates a harmonious world with specific codes of interaction and etiquette within the hierarchy of a feudal system. This mode of interaction reflects a strict order in society, as opposed to the world of '*degeneration, misfortune and disaster*' as described by the monk and founder of the temple[1312]. The clan is described as being munificent and provides protection, and as a result in this "land of pure ground and high mountains" there is "*...little thieving or banditry, and there is no enmity*"[1313] and the patrons and monks are "*...best friends of all the poor and like father and mother to them*".[1314]

The image reflects a complex stratigraphy, characteristic for regions at the merging point of cross-cultural economic paths. In this way, Iranicate art is not just copied, but adapted to specific aims and messages of the Buddhist ruling elite. Moreover, the allusion to religious iconography is not meant as a kind of deified kingship, but rather distinctive Western Tibetan concepts found their expression through the adoption of visual idioms and Buddhist iconography of the region.

7.5.4. The Monastic Ritual or 'Consecration Scene' (Scene 3)

The scene to the left of the central image of the 'monarch'/aristocrat also features two registers (Pl. 259, Pl. 260). The upper register depicts the noble monk sKal-ldan shes-rab (Kelden Sherab), the famous founder of the Dukhang, positioned in the centre. The lower register shows a row of lay people, which may participate in the monastic ritual.

The two registers are divided by a horizontal band, which contains an inscription. Such compositions of the temple's founder and inscriptions below recall an earlier donor depiction at Tabo featuring Changchub Ö. The 'noble monk' is shown in hieratic frontality in the tradition of earlier assembly and throne scenes. He is flanked by a row of ordained figures and two lay persons, seated in a strict and bilateral symmetrical order, turned towards the noble monk and performing different mudra of veneration and offerings. Textile valances hanging from the upper horizontal border recall the earlier ephemeral abodes of royal lamas or deities in the region. The noble monk is the only person in the whole frieze, sitting on a wooden throne, apparently a type of seat reserved for higher religious dignitaries at Alchi.[1315] The monks are seated on pillows while the lay people kneel in veneration. One of them, on the left side, has a string of pearls in his hand, offering it to the religious dignitary.

The noble lama wears a patchwork robe, alluding to the ethos of austerity of monastic life, and a flat hat. He holds his hands in the preaching gesture (*dharmacakra-mudrā*) and is surrounded by ceremonial objects (conches and books on stands) and a round altar within a square frame, the attributes of monastic liturgy or consecration. Some of the monks in the lama's entourage have laid down their hats, and these function as space fillers.

On the second register below the first a courtly setting is represented. The noble couple, turned towards each other, is again engaged in a variant of the ritual banquet. It is flanked by its entourage, facing the couple. The noblemen are dressed in robes similar to those in the scene of the enthroned 'monarch' in the centre of scene 1, while the head ornaments differ in

[1312] Inscription 1; cf. Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980: 144.

[1313] Ibid: 145.

[1314] Ibid: 148.

[1315] A comparable function of thrones defining the status of a depicted person can be observed in the assembly scene of the Dukhang at Tabo featuring a royal lama. In the consecration scene of the entry hall all participants of the royal clan are sitting on thrones, some of which look like stylized rocks.

that both the noble couple and its entourage wear a hat with a wide, upturned brim. This type of hat is similar to that seen in secular imagery at Tabo and Mangnang.[1316]

Compared with the sumptuous, even luxurious looking costumes worn by the aristocratic family in the previous example, the noble couple in the centre of the monastic assembly appears simply dressed.

In the monastic scene a new aspect of the banqueting mode can be seen: in the centre placed between the couple, a vase with a round body - also an attribute of wealth deities - is shown, with a cup placed above. The lotus is shown in full bloom with two lateral blossoms, which appear to grow out of a vase between the noble couple, separating them. The vessels bear a certain ambiguity being objects for Buddhist rituals as well as emblems of courtly representation. Its possible meaning will later be discussed.

Both men and women are shown in postures of offering a lotus, in contrast to the banqueting scene, where the lotus may be a gender-specific sign. This is an indication of the different contexts of the 'banqueting mode. Here it is not the intimate scene of a couple, but an assembly in a religious, official ceremony.

The vase and lotus in their centre recall remotely the theme of duality and unity, which was perhaps also intended in the depiction of a vase in the Upper temple of Nako, featuring two humans with intertwining legs (Pl. 112). A vase by two birds with their beaks towards each other, and from which lotus scrolls containing deities grow, is shown at Lalung serkhang– positioned in the lower zone of the temple. The scrolls virtually cover the whole main wall of the temple.[1317]

The vase at Alchi is also an element which is both separating and unifying (also connecting the different registers). The vase is seen as as an offering and probably also symbolizes duality and the transcendence of duality. It also alludes to the union of female and male, an important notion in Vajrayāna iconography.

The vase may also be read as an overflowing vase, the *purna ghata*, a lucky symbol and Buddhist emblem of offering, but in this context the vase may rather symbolize a banqet and thus possibly wealth and abundance.[1318] Furthermore, trays heaped with food in the banquet scenes document the wealth aspect of the images. Another feature suggesting this interpretation is the jewel or gem held by a nobleman, which is one of the seven possessions of the *cakravartin*, and as a hand emblem it is associated with wealth and prosperity.[1319] A gem is held by the attending figure of Palden lhamo, signaling his protective aspect. There are overlapping contexts in this image, the vase as a religious implement as well as a luxury object which is possibly offered, while the lotus rising from the vase may be read as a sign of the dharma and of fertility and wealth on the side of the donors and on a deeper level even duality and its transcendence.

Of the courtly train only the nobleman in the centre holds a cup as a sign of his rank. The right hand of the noble lady is lifted as if directing the viewer to the preaching noble monk in the first register above, linking the worldly realm to that of higher spheres. As in the monastic

[1316] Stoddard 1977: fig. 10.

[1317] Luczanits 2004: fig. 110.

[1318] The vase on ceilings of Tabo may also be read as a symbol of wealth and abundance.

[1319] Beer 2003: 38.

assembly above, lotus rosettes are held by the figures or placed in the interstices between them, underlining the ceremonial content of the image.

Therefore, the two scenes with banqueting couples in the frieze appear to have different functions in the overall composition. The scene below the noble monk is mainly devotional in content, whereas the other scene shows a private couple in a courtly environment and in the middle of their entourage.

The drinking mode in the monastic scene can thus be read as a honorific gesture towards both the 'monarch' and the noble lama. It may also indicate the participation in a ritual ceremony possibly on the occasion of the consecration of the temple. In the language of 'symbolic hierarchy' the noble family is thus positioned lower than the monastic persons and also more in front and therefore closer to the onlooker or practitioner. In this type of composition the drinking mode is a specific type of veneration consistent with the tradition of Buddhist devotional imagery.

The drinking mode is the unifying element in all four scenes, alluding to the topos of the monarch holding a cup in a banquet which is a symbol of status and authority in central Asia. However, in each scene the function is different, also alluding
to Buddhist styles for religious ceremonies. This leads to the question of why this theme was attractive enough to be shown in a context of presenting the new Buddhist order.

A topos in the *Mulasarvastivada-Vinaya* is the veneration of the Buddha by offering him food. Very often stories are told of kings and ordinary people who demonstrate their conversion by this action. In the Sumtsek the banquet is also associated with the offering of food to the Buddha. Sharing food is an action of unification, as stated by Kramrisch: "*Unification is the action of the 'unique being', the Buddha when on receiving four bowls of offerings, full of barley and honey from the* Mahārajas *of the four quarters of the world, the bowls fuse into one bowl, in his left hand. This is his patra, the begging bowl*".[1320] In Buddhist tradition the layman gives and the "*monk returns the gift a thousand fold by preserving the Doctrine and preaching the way to Enlightenment*".[1321]

The monarch or a man of noble lineage holding a bowl or being offered one is a medium to both show the generosity of the donor and the high status of the person who has received homage. The Buddha provides the prototype and example.[1322] The banqueting mode of the noble family in the Sumtsek convey even more the feeling of the *patra*, as an offering to the Buddha. This demonstrates that the symbols of the aristocratic world not only signify rulership, but also reflect the spirit and concepts of the Buddhist society.

The communication between the couple, e.g. the nobleman pointing to his wife generates an inner unity of the scene and at the same time the female protagonist is directed to the upper scene (contrasting to the mode of interaction in the banqueting ritual). She thus connects the action in the courtly realm with that of higher spheres, the monastic/ spiritual realm. So, the courtly couple becomes an advocate ('Fürsprecher', 'Vermittler') for every human.

The whole scene might represent a specific historic moment, the consecration of the temple, and this assumption is further underlined by the emphasis on the various religious

[1320] Kramrisch 1939a: 144.

[1321] Bechert/Gombrich 1984: 36.

[1322] In the 38 m Buddha niche Buddhas with monastic dress and jewelled dress are represented, on of them has a cup; D. Klimburg-Salter (2006: 538) suggests to read it as a royal drinking goblet and not a *patra*, but without further eloborating this hypothesis.

implements of the whole scene, with the noble family subordinated and thus participating in the ceremony.

7.5.5. The Horse Rider's Frieze (Scene 4)

In the lowest zone a parade of riders on horseback with bow and arch, presumably on the occasion of the consecration of the temple, is depicted (Pl. 261). If we draw conclusions from later assembly scenes in Guge (ca. 15th century) where assemblies are surrounded by scenes with musicians and female dancers, assuming a similar function for at Alchi, the important role of the horse will not be explained. In the nomadic cultures of the steppe and mountain planes, such as the Changthang area, the horse is used as a means of transportation and also as an object of trade[1323]. Besides, it signals the culture of the mounted warrior.

The culture of the horse-rider is reflected in polo and archery, disciplines which are still very popular in Ladak. However, it is not clear to me whether this can be associated with military aspects in connection with the court; the latter function can be associated with the famous Buzkashi in Afghanistan[1324]. Polo play also exists in Northern areas of Pakistan and in Gilgit where small kingdoms existed.

A great number of depictions of warriors and horsemen can be seen on rock carvings along the Indus in Northern Pakistan, some of them bearing Sogdian inscriptions, a language that belongs to the Eastern group of middle Iranian languages. This shows that the visual culture of horse-riders in this region was strongly influenced by Sogdia.

V. Thewalt[1325] assumed a possible ritual function of the images of horsemen and drew parallels between a specific type of bridle on rock carvings at Thalpan Bridge, Sogdian wall paintings as well as the Alchi Sumstek.[1326] Rock carvings in Drangtse near Leh show hunting scenes on horseback with bow and arrow; among the animals of prey there are deer (also to be found on the painted ceiling textiles in the Sumtsek), ibex, and yak; according to A. H. Francke[1327] these depictions are accompanied by Sogdian inscriptions. This demonstrates that Central Asian motifs of the nomad and steppe people existed long before the advent of the Dro-clan ('Bro clan) in the Western Himalaya.

The Nomadic population (Brog pa) of the Changthang (Byang thang) area, where hardly any agriculture can be developed, rely on pastoralism for their way of life and also the hunting of wild animals has been a traditional activity for a long time. This association partly explains the role of animals in mythology and religious beliefs according to J. Bellezza [1328], who studied the role and symbolism of animals in Byang thang culture reflected in rock paintings. In these paintings wild and domesticated animals predominate. He found out that around 80 percent of

[1323] Gansu consits mostly of desert and steppe, its excellent grasslands made it a tradition horse-breeding region the Gansu's famous 'heavenly horses' as well as the major corridor for trade and cultural exchange. Dunhuang is the main centre of the Western Gansu. (Lerner, J, Cat. 'Monks and Merchants'; 24). The book is a recent and informative study on artifacts in North-West China.

[1324] Buzkashi in Afghanistan is a traditional play, which serves as affirmations of the authority or government who organized the event (G.W. Azoy, 1982, „Game and Power in Afghanistan", Philadelphia).

[1325] Thewalt 1984: 211.

[1326] Pal 1975: 5, 8, 44.

[1327] A. H. Francke 1925.

[1328] Bellezza 354.

rock images depict animals.[1329] Replicas of such rock paintings are exhibited at the National Museum of Lhasa, where assembly scenes are also shown. Depictions of horses reflect the high status of horses in pastoral areas, and in the case of mounted horsemen, most hunters are shown with bow and arrow.

Another component of animal symbolism is the sacred status, one example being the wild Yak as a manifestation of territorial deities, documented by Bellezza at gNam mtsho.[1330] The yak is also a mount for a deity belonging to the indigenous pantheon in Ladakh, and seen as a mount for local deities on the entrance wall of the dukhang of Alchi.

Hunters on horse back with bows and attows chasing wild yaks belong to one of the most common themes in rock painting. Yaks are synonymous with wealth, well-being and prosperity. Hunting of yak can also symbolize in some cases an appeasement of local deities. Bellezza assumed that hunting scenes were depicted to ensure success, or after completion of the hunt, as portrayal of virility, luck and thanksgiving[1331]; however without written sources, this interpretation must remain speculative.

The culture of horses is widespread in the plateaus of Western Tibet, but also in montaneous regions, where no horses are in use today: heads of animals are worshipped among the Kalash Kafis in Pakistan, in particular among the Wamas, whereas in Nuristan they are mainly associated with cults of status.[1332]

In Pakistan hunting has a ritual component, and only with the consent of local deities who are in possession of the animals such as the goat, and under their guidance may these animals be hunted. For this purpose every hunter has his own fairy who guides him. Also in Nuristan the local tutelary deity has to be asked for her consent before hunting.[1333]

A comparative analysis of arms and shields will supply further clues concerning the identification of the Alchi type of rider on horseback. At Mangyu (Mang rgyu) a bowman is shown directing his weapon to a yak and thus might represent a hunter (however the scene is in poor state of preservation and needs to be further examined on site), which would be an unusual depiction in a Buddhist context. At the later assemblies at Tsaparang the warrior-like aspect is turned to an image of courtly entertainment, or rather horse racing.

Interestingly, the horses as signs of supremacy at Nako and Alchi Dukhang are absent in the donor depictions of the Alchi Sumtsek; only a falconer on the *dhoti* (skirt) might relate to courtly culture and chivalric ideals in a wider area, including the courtly art of the Ghaznavid palace at Lashkari Bazaar, where such depictions can be found. This corresponds to the later stratum of Iranicate courtly symbolism. By that time the heroic type of the mounted monarch (often shown fighting with wild animals on Sāsānian and post-Sāsānian silver plates) had already lost its significance. However, warriors on horseback have a prominent role on the ceilings depictions of the Alchi Sumtsek.[1334]

[1329] Ibid. 358.

[1330] Ibid. 359.

[1331] Ibid.

[1332] Cf. M.Klimburg 2004.

[1333] M. Klimburg, verbal communication, 12.2007.

[1334] The various elements dispersed in a rather decorative manner with birds as space fillers in the background recall contemporaneous formulation of the theme of the royal hunter, found also on ceramics of Khorassan, as already suggested by Flood 1991, cf. also Papa-Kalantari 2006. Fig. 8).

The whole configuration recalls festivities in present Tibet, the Monlam (Grand summons ceremony) beginning on the third day of the lunar year and initiated by Tsongkapa, the founder of Gelugpa. It can be viewed as a religious rite to pray for good fortune and drive away demons in the lunar New Year. "*It is the custom of some aristocratic families to give alms to Buddhist monasteries and monks on the first day of the Monlam. To receive guests who came to extend New Year greetings, each aristocratic family spent a lot of time decorating its living room as well as the whole residence, in an attempt to brag about its riches*".[1335] H. Harrer wrote in his '*Seven Years in Tibet*' on the lunar New Year festival:

> „When the moon rose in the east, thousands of butter lamps were lit in Jokhang Monastery. With troops clearing the way ahead, the Dalai Lama and numerous government officials strolled on the Barkor Street to watch butter figurines of every description on display. The onlookers, putting both palms together and chanting the scriptures, hoped that the event would bring them good luck. In the wake of the exhibition an 'athletic contest' was staged in the Jokhang square. The Dalai Lama and the Gyaltsab watched the games in the west wing attic of the monastery, while the galleons and other officials in the specially arranged seats. At sunrise two young men, both stripped to the waist, wrestled with each other to start the sports meet...".[1336] "...Finally came the annual horse race, which was probably the most exciting event of all these activities. Its starting line was often set in the suburbs of Lhasa and finished on the level ground beside the Lhalu (aristocratic family) residence, which was also the venue for an equestrian performance. A large number of tents were pitched on the level ground.".[1337]

During Tibetan New year celebrations religious and lay officials symbolically renew and confirm their position as a part of the Buddhist sacred order[1338], the greatest of all Tibetan feasts, which lasts for three weeks.

> "In the evening everybody was seated in the living room and the master received the newly made wine presented by the chungma. On the New Year's day they sat again in the living room in proper order of seniority, and had a ceremonial dinner of barley and zanba. Holding bucket in the air three times to pray fort the protection and blessing of the Buddha, dharma and saṅgha".[1339] "On the morning of the lunar New Year's day all noble officials must have an audience with the Dalai Lama.... accompanied by their personal servants, the noble officials in ceremonial robes rode to the Potala Palace to pay respect to the Dalai Lama. Lining up in proper order, they prostrated themselves before the Dalai with devout reverence. After the ceremony concluded, a play was put on in the palace. **The** Dalai took his seat on a balcony above the stage, which was hidden from the audience by yellow silk curtains while eminent monks, Living Buddhas and local officials watched the performance from the wings....Overall, both a religious and secular atmosphere filled the festival celebration..."

[1335] T. Yangdzom (2006) *The Aristocratic Families in Tibetan History*, Beijing: 247, ff.

[1336] H.Harrer, after Yangdzom 2006: 251-252.

[1337] Ibid: 252, for images see ibid: 250, 251.

[1338] Ibid: p.242

[1339] Ibid: 246.

The close relationship between political matters and Buddhist ritual is reflected in the following description of divinations related to political and religious affairs of noble officials: "*On the following day an annual ceremony was held at the Potala palace, during which the nechung (sorcerer) of Drepung monastery divined by consulting deities. It has been an extremely important religious rite for the local government as it always asked God's favour and practiced divination for major or minor issues. At daybreak the noble officials already got ready to start for the palace. Having prostrated themselves before the Dalai Lama, monk attendants sat on the right side while lay ones to the left according to the official rank*".[1340]

Concerning the style of dresses in the horse's frieze at Alchi, an archer wears a dress very much in the style of the noble horse-rider, a short kaftan (probably of wool), and a lower layer in a light-weight fabric, and baggy trousers, which are stuck into the short black boots. Another is shown with his right sleeve hanging down his back in order to facilitate shooting. Two types of headgear are observable, the simple turbans with ribbons and white caps with horn-like elements or upturned brims.

The scene at Alchi might be interpreted as the performance of a game, maybe archery or horse race on the occasion of the ceremony or assembly (some of them are executing the so-called Parthian shot), but it is also a tournament in which the situation of a battle is playfully exercised.

The scene is a component of images from the warrior-like aristocratic mentality of the society, also reflected in the costumes of the enthroned nobleman and his insignia like the axe and dagger; knightly culture is also famous in the cave temples of Kyzil, Eastern-Turkestan, and images specific to Kyzil and Alchi are the combination of the ethos of the warrior with religious ideals[1341]. The prototype of the chivalric ethos and warrior-like virtues of the ruling elite dominating in the Alchi-depictions is the noble horse-rider in the Mahākāla composition, demonstrating courage and munificience ('Wehrhaftigkeit) for the protection of the dharma. The protective function in the service of Buddhism also legitimizes the use of military power; however, the horse-rider is not carrying the insignia of the ruling elite – battle-axe and dagger - but the sceptre, specific to tutelary deities.

There the courtly ethos (probably after the model of the Sogdian aristocratic world) is combined with religious values, which enhance each other. These religious values probably also derive ('hergeleitet') from the history in the region, namely the lay protector "king" Pehar.[1342]

The combination of warrior ideal and spiritual power can also be observed in the depiction of tutelary deities at Alchi, which - in contrast to earlier images of this type at Tabo - are shown as mounted female goddesses. In addition, they are associated with worldly glory wearing

[1340] Ibid: 246.

[1341] This fusion may be comparable with the so-called 'hunter–king' at Kakrak, Afghanistan - for an image cf. Rowland: 132 - who might also represent a Bodhisattva in the attire of a warrior.

[1342] A comparable phenomenon can be seen in medieval Europe and in the 'Ritterorden' in particular, which amalgamate the knightly ideal with spiritual goals. An image from a pattern book (Freiburg/ Breisgau, around 1200) shows Saint Theodor on horse-back with a companion. He was in the army of emperor Maximinianus, and worshipped as a saint in the Eastern Church (while St. George - the prototype of the warrior against the dragon, meaning the enemy or the evil - was more popular in the West; (Cat. 1990: 12). Cat. 1990, Die Ritter. Burgenländische Landesausstellung, Eisenstadt: Fig. V.37, K. Vocelka, E. Englisch (1990), *Das europäische Rittertum des Hoch- und Spätmittelalters. Lebensform, Aufstieg und Krise einer Elite*: 12-31.

sumptuous courtly dresses in the Sumtsek (cf. Remati, Pl. 163). The powerful protectress stands in contralst to European female heroes of that time, which were venerated for virtues of charity ('Barmherzigkeit') or in their function as healers of illness ('Krankenheilerinnen').

The visual culture of the horse-rider is in the tradition of Sogdian imagery, and in a remote tradition in the image of the hunter and fighter against animals, associated with kingship in Sāsānian Iran and post-Sāsānian Central Asia.

However, the combination of banqueting and fighting or rather riding on horseback performing archery in the Alchi frieze is reminiscent of one of the most popular and wide-spread themes of Iranicate courtly art in Central Asia, which is called 'razm-u-bazm', meaning fighting-and-feasting. The combination of throne-scene and mounted horsemen in superimposed registers is a topos of courtly imagery in Sāsānian Iran, adopting Hellenistic models. The visual model at Alchi might be found in Sogdiana (Panjikent) or later Khorāsān.[1343] In contrast, the later popularity of the 'royal hunter' on the Sumtsek ceiling might rather be related to the influence of the Shāh-nāmeh, the famous book of the kings, partly written at the Ghaznavid court, reflected in the Sumtsek and mediated via Kaśmīr; while the courtly culture like the falconer is also shown in the Ghaznavid palace of Masud. The turcic Ghaznavid court with its pomp and artistic productivity, and also the heirs of Sogdian and Sāsānian Iran, might have had a strong impact on the courtly culture in the whole region.

In the Buddhist context the depiction of the life Śākyamuni in the princely court is a topos in the description of his life. Often this princely life is depicted as a hunter or engaged in archery. In his youth the Buddha learned various sciences and he was master in sport activities such as archery.[1344] Devadatta (the great opponent 'Widersacher' of the Buddha) entered the order of the Buddha but was full of enmity and hatred, but *"..the Buddha did not harbour, on his part, one single feeling of ill-will"*[1345]. One story illustrating his malice was the attack of Buddha with royal archers, which were given by king Ajatasattu to shoot the Buddha. But when the Buddha appeared *'they terrified by the Buddha's majesty'*[1346], they threw away the weapons; some of them converted by the Buddha.

7.5.6. Interpretation of the Courtly Images as Pictorial Ensemble in the Dukhang

7.5.6.1. Comparative Analysis with Sogdia and Baltistan

Various scenes depicting the warrior ideal on the entrance wall are a part of the image of an ideal aristocratic world, which comprises banquets, private feasts and courtly ceremonials, in close relationship to Buddhist ideals and aims. This raises the question of the meaning of these scenes as an ensemble.

I will briefly discuss below the level of overall composition and the idea of self-representation as an ensemble of different images of courtly life in Sogdian culture and how it compares to Alchi. Newly discovered images in stone on Sogdian funerary monuments provide further important comparative material for the different scenes of courtly life at Alchi. In particular the banqueting mode as a sign of sovereignty can be found up to the 11th century.

[1343] See Papa-Kalantari 2007a for images.

[1344] MSV, Panglung 1981: 86.

[1345] Buddhist Dictionary of Pali Proper Names (www.palikanon/com/, 30.1.2008).

[1346] Ibid.

Sogdian mortuary couches, which appeared from 1991-2002 on the market, provide important evidence of the modes of self-represntation of the Sogdian elite in Northern China in the 6th – 7th centuries (Pl. 262-63). These images are also important with regard of the thematic relationship between the different group-depictions on the entrance wall of Alchi. Various authors[1347] studied the decoration on the house-shaped monuments - reminiscent of Chinese domestic furniture - which were luxuriously decorated like those of the highest nobility (Pl. 263). One example disussed by Marshak depicts the head of Sogdian colony.[1348]

Juliano studied the types of composition and spatial organization found on these funerary monuments: single scenes are organized in panels featuring a variety of secular activities including feasts, marriage ceremonies with dancers and musicians, hunts (also hunting lions on horseback,[1349] processions, and entertainments, official meetings concluding an agreement[1350] as well as Zoroastrian religious ceremonies (Fig. 25). Marshak identified on the *Sabao* sarcophagus various scenes of royal luxury, among them the scene of a Sogdian aristocrat banqueting with his wife who was "*...received in paradise where they are as happy as kings and queens*".[1351] In addition, simultaneous presentations of various kindgoms and their rulers are shown. In the lower zone of the Sabao reliefs hunting scenes and mounted archers on horse back[1352] are often depicted comparable to the assembly scene, as well as winged horses, sheep or goats, and galloping ibex or deer. Many represent *farn*, the glory and good fortune of the ruler. This general idea of multiple scenes representing the 'ideal monarch' seems to be also presented at Alchi. Judith Lerner[1353] assumed different periods of the live of the donor carved into the stone slabs, commemorating different events in the sense of a family cult, which also includes the worship



Fig. 25: Sogdian Funerary couch of An Jia (after Rong Xinjiang 2003: fig. 1)

[1347] Juliano/Lerner 1997; Xinjiang 2003; Marshak, B.I. 2004. I wish to thank J. Ebert for the references.

[1348] Marshak 2004: 57.

[1349] Xinjiang 2003, fig. 6.

[1350] Ibid. fig. 4.

[1351] Marshak 2004: 58.

[1352] Ibid. 13.

[1353] Lerner 2005; verbal communication 10.2007.

of patron deity. In this regard there are also close parallels to the relationship of donor and deitiy, the culture of the Western Himalaya.

The thematic arrangement at Alchi is comparable (to be discussed in detail in the next chapter) featuring outdoor feasts, marriage scenes or couples engaged in drinking scenes with dancers and musicians, religious ceremony, hunting and procession. The Alchi panels thus display a complex blend of artistic expression: the conception of single panels, the composition of the setting and the artistic expression in Indo-Tibetan and Kaśmīr courtly style, fused with the primary themes of Eastern iranian courtly imagery and symbols of status and power in nomadic cultures. This complex intercultural discourse, reflected in the donor depiction of the Alchi Dukhang and displaying a multi-layered blending of Indo-Tibetan forms and Eastern-Iranian/Sogdian elements which arrived with diplomats, merchants and Buddhists from the Silk Road, may be termed Tibetan art of the Indo-Iranian borderworld.

Interestingly, figures wear different dresses in the drinking scene and the assembly, indicating their individuality, and maybe different members of the clan are depicted. It is not excluded that an earlier generation is intended in the drinking scene. Future studies will have to go into the questions of who made it and the possible thematic and narrative relationship[1354] betweeen the single scenes. The drinking scene may reflect the ideals of the locally important aristocratic family, in the sense of a visual eulogy, probably commemorating different generations or different activities in the life of the donor, comparable to Sogdian carvings in stone.

The signs of sovereignty and insignia distinguishing the leading members of that clan, represented as aristocratic cavaliers and proud feast-givers/hosts of drinking ceremonies, demonstrating wealth[1355] and military strength, protecting local communities and building forts and bridges, is comparable with the ethos of small kingdoms along the trade routes in the Pamir and Karakorum.

7.5.6.2. Courtly Depictions in Buddhist Votive Images

It will be proposed that the courtly image of the donors at Alchi can be interpreted as a sign of Buddhist ideals and as an image of their role as benefactors 'Tugendverdienste'. The Buddhist ideology in the depiction of donors of this region is comparable to Chaghdo, representing the power of the local rulers with symbols or jewels of the *cakravartin* offered to the stupa.

At Chaghdo (Baltistan), rock paintings[1356] have been recently discovered showing the veneration of stupas (icluding offerings of textiles and umbrellas), (Fig. 26). The donors in veneration are closely related to the female donors at Alchi with regard to costumes consisting of long capes, adorned with rows of jewellery. The male costumes also show parallels such as tight fitting kaftans. The whole scene is filled lotus blossoms indicating devotional practices and the stupa is adorned with banners while a male donor offers a textile ribbon to the stupa.

Offerings of the 'jewels of the *cakravartin*' may be depicted in the image, symbolizing secular and religious authority, represented as riderless horses and elephants with jewels on their

[1354] The assembly frieze shows a central image, thus no chronological reading may be intended.

[1355] Hinüber s. 60, has translated inscriptions during the reign of the Patola Shahi; one ruler has the title 'bestower of wealth' in a Chilas inscription; this mode is comparable to the self-representation of the Alchi rulers as will be shown below.

[1356] Painted in red-brown and ochre on white wash.

backs.[1357] In the mandala offering, which contains the wealth of the universe "*...is the hightest expression of devotion in the Buddhist tradition*".[1358] In the preliminary practices (t. *sngon-'gro*) the mandala offering forms one of the four essential practices of the Vajrayāna path.[1359]



Fig. 26: Chaghdo, veneration of the stupa, painted votive images (after Hauptmann 2004: fig. 28)

The 'jewels of the *cakravartin*' are a glorification of wealth, the possessions of the *chakravartin*, and the sensual pleasures, and the renunciation of it. The donors offer their wealth like the precious minister, who is often depicted with a wish-granting gem or treasury box in his right hand.[1360] Mangyu, shows – interpreting the older ritual drinking mode - an interpretation of the symbolism of bestowing well-being.[1361]

[1357] "*The concept arrose from the Vaishnavite ideal al mahapurusha, or great divine man, endowed with the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor chatacteristics of a divine being ... such a being is destined to become a world leader, and. Ioke the Buddha, there can only be one chakravarting in the work at any one time...the birth of the chakravartin heralds the onset of seven great wealths or abundances that arise in the realn: a wealth of faith, morality, generosity, learning, godd behaviour, modesty and wisdom. At the time of the chakravartin's birth his seven precious jewels or possessions also appear simultaneously: the precious wheel, jewel, queen, ninister, elephant horse and general. The wheel and jewel are symbols of his temporal and spirituala majesty, and the miraculous means of its accomplishment. The horse and elephant, as symbols of inexhaustible speed and strength are his vehicle. The queen, minister and general are his trinity of love, wisdom and power, and thie fidelity she is blessing*" (Beer 2003: 37).

[1358] Ibid: 85. '*In the mandala offering the golden treasure vase is added to the list of the cakravartin's seven possesons to create a directional group of eight precious symbols*" (Beer 2003: 37).

[1359] In complex forms the mandala consists of concentric rings in which the wealths are placed as offerings, among them are the seven possessions of the chakravartin (including the golden treasure vase), the eight offering goddesses, sun, moon, precious parasol and victory banner (Ibid. 85-86); (cf. also the images on the Tabo ceilings above the cella).

[1360] Beer 2003: 40.

[1361] Beer has summarized the symbolism of the precious minister, so often depicted in the iconographic programs of the Western Himalaya temples around 1200: "*The minister desires to only do good works to promote the dharma, protecting a and benefiting all beings. With his divine wisdom he is able to locate buried treasures within a radius of one league, and thus in the service of his lord he increases the coffers of the royal treasury. In his capacity he is also known as*

The cup is thus also a sign of the generosity of the donor, like the wish-granting gem, depicted at Mangyu, and the bowl is also conceived both as a precious goblet, a *pata* (offering bowl).

This interesting fusion of Buddhist and worldly hand emblems is also possibly depicted in the Sumtsek, namely on the *dhoti* of the Avalokiteśvara, with representations of various sanctuaries and pilgrimage places. On the fold between the Bodhisattva's legs a Buddha is shown standing in a shrine and dropping a jewel out of his right hand. He is depicted in the garb of a monk and clearly the historical Buddha is meant here. The unusual scene has been interpreted by Goepper as a symbol for well-being granted by the Buddha to his followers, and compared with a depiction from Khara Khoto which shows a crowned Buddha holding a Chinese coin.[1362] Various Bodhisattva figures, which have not been published, may be depicted with goblets as hand emblems[1363]; the discussion of this symbolism is subject of current research by the author.

The drinking ceremony may be also understood in this sense, namely alluding to wealth acquired and shared to benefit the community, comparable to the act of giving feasts ('Verdienstfestwesen'). Such socially beneficial feasts continue to be a constant cultural component today in societies of Northern Afghanistan and Northern areas of Pakistan. Ritual feasts also have a strong social component in the Western Himalaya. However, their ritual and socio-political implications are still little studied. This symbolism would be in line with the idea that festivities are seen as feasts associated with generous offerings to the community.

In this sense, the depiction of feasting couple, also shown holding a jewel at Alchi, can be interpreted as the wealth donated to the Buddha and thus to the community and the renunciation of worldly goods. The host is a paradigm case of the achievement of merits ('Tugendverdienste') in the region. It glorifies the donor and the ideal of donation, which is a constant notion in previous Buddhist stories.

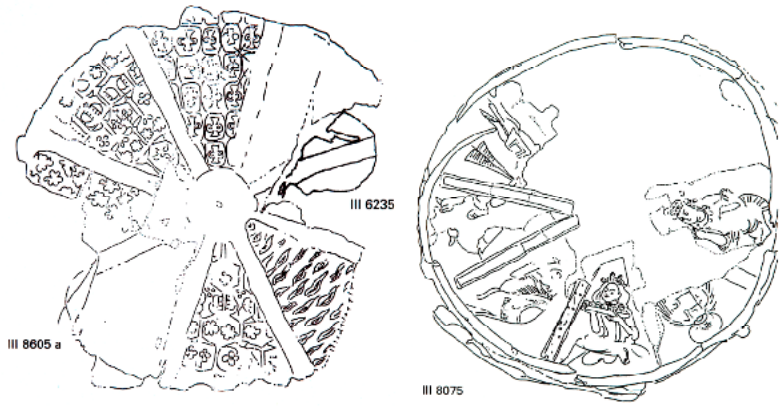


Fig. 27: Kuča, votive umbrella, MIK, drawing J. Ebert before restoration, (2006: fig. 73, 74)

Linking the stories of the previous lifes of the Buddha with with the present history ('Gegenwartsgeschichte') is a constant notion in Buddhist thought as exemplified in the Sudhana legend.

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the minister for home economics. (S. gehapati). A cultured diplomat, he excels at political strategy, affairs of state, social welfare, religious duties, and ethical discipline, clearly understanding and fulfilling the wishes of the chakravartin".[1361]

[1362] Goepper 1996: 71.

[1363] Luczanits, verbal communication (12.2007).

A fascinating example of the fusion of votive objects and the symbolism of the cakravartin is an umbrella from Kuča, showing painted textile motifs, which can also be found on the donor's dresses (Fig. 27).

7.5.6.3. Interpretation of the Thematic Arrangement of Donor Depictions

The following stratigraphy and interrelated systems of interpretations for the decorative schemes merging into the programme of the temple can be proposed:

1. Local signs of sovereignty indicating individuality and rank of the portrayed persons with insignia, armour, shields. The emphasis on the culture of horses, displaying strong local features is also comparable with the signs of power in Baltistan and Northern Pakistan dominated by local kings and aristocratic rulers.

2. The ideals of self-representation and the compositional ensemble of different images of courtly life corresponds to Sogdian imagery on the level of overall composition.

3. These images of courtly life are interpreted as signs of Buddhist ideals.

4.The donor depictions depicted on the entrance wall show the spiritual ascendence through the bodies (*kāya)* on a vertical axis, from the mundane world to the the world of protectors and the mandala on the level of the overall programme of the temple. The position of donor scenes is in close relationship to the images of the life of the Buddha, depicted on the other side of the entrance wall. The 'banqueting couple' has an elevated status presented as wealth-bestowing benefactors and protectors, in close connection to tutelary deities.

This notion of an 'ordered world' - according to the *trikaya* system of Esoteric Buddhism - is expressed along a longitudinal axis at Tabo, leading to the cultic centre in the sanctum, while a vertical emphasis is dominant at Alchi. Accordingly, the worldly aspects of the donors are depicted in the assembly frieze, positioned on the lowest level, while the 'noble enthroned couple', alluding to the wealth-bestowing qualities, links the assembly to the protector panel. The noble horse-rider is depicted in his environment, demonstrating the ideal of the courtly cavalier and local chivalric/martial culture. At Alchi the noble horse-rider is transformed into an image of both worldly and religious value. The vertical tendency and ordered world realized on a surface on the entrance wall is obviously also inspired by contemporaneous thangka depictions.[1364]

The donor depictions are positioned in close relationship to the images of the life of the Buddha on the opposite side of the entrance on the same wall. These images are often closely related with regard to definition of settings to the local courtly environment. Thus, the local aristocracy clearly identify themselves with the princely life of Śākyamuni and his path towards enlightenment. In these types of self-representation other stories of pious Buddhists or princes in the previous lifes of the Buddha also play a prominent role, as can be seen in the Suddhana story at Tabo, leading the worshipper to the image of the royal lama, who renounced secular life, as Buddha himself did. The rider-less horses and shields, possibly insignia of royalty, at Tabo are the last images in the Sudhana legend, and may indicate this renunciation. This notion

[1364] Due to their mobility their visual culture must have had an enormous impact in the evolutionary history of temple decorations.

of renunciation is also inherent in the images of Alchi, such as the images of Chaghdo, where the 'jewels of the *cakravartin*' are offered to the stupa.

The entrance wall represents an interpreted and ordered world: on the lower zone of the entrance wall, the life of the Buddha is represented on the left side and the courtly realm of the donor and the ruling clan is shown on on the right side of the door. The scenes are consciously opposed to each other. The detailed representation of the ideal courtly world alludes to the royal life of Śākyamuni, while the local Western Himalayan environment points to the possibility of personal salvation of every human and gives opportunity to link the abstract idea of salvation to the reality of the local community. In this juxtaposition ('Gegenüberstellung') the noble donors and ruling aristocratic clan equate themselves with the virtues of the world of Kings and pious Budddhists in the previous lives of the Buddha, and their deeds on their path towards the ultimate goal of salvation. It is on-going process[1365] from previous lives to the present history and the donors by which the worshipper is integrated as a natural part into the sacred order. At Dunkar, the Buddha life is set in a Tibetan environment, thereby drawing a conscious parallel between the setting of donors and the palace scene of the Buddha-life.

The 'Buddhist path' is conveyed by circumambulation at Tabo and thus the path of liberation is equated with the motion of the adept in the temple space, whereas - according to the vertical hierarchy in the Alchi school- the Buddha life is concentrated on the entrance wall in the Alchi Dukhang, and the courtly realm opposed to it on the other side of the entrance, whereby the worshipper identifies with the central Buddha of the mandala.[1366]

To summarize, worldly culture at Alchi is represented in a detailed form, whereby the relationship between lay-people is a unique feature, demonstrating also the role of the woman in Western Himalyan society. Here the notion of humanity, intimate interaction is – probably also meant as her faithfulness to the family or clan and also marriage, a paradigm case are Sumedha and his wife in the stories of previous lifes of the Buddha. It also demonstrates a peaceful world, and specific codes of interaction and etiquette within the hierarchy of a feudal system reflect a strict order and harmony in Buddhist society. This recalls a poetic description from the 12th century describing the loss of order after the disintegraton of the Tibetan empire: "*...the lordlings and the subjects were separated (?), on the outside (frontiers) the spy towers were lost. On the inside the parley place was destroyed. The royal law like a golden yoke ["Tragejoch"] was broken. The Buddhist law like a silk knot was undone. The law of men like the string that binds the sheaves of bales was cut. The holy places...degenerated...*".[1367] A characteristic feature in the art of Alchi is the Eastern-Iranian language of courtly culture in dialogue with images of Buddhist virtues and veneration. These features easily subsumise as is shown as early as in the art of Central Asia such as in Sogdiana, Bamiyan and Dokhtar-e Noshirwan and.

[1365] The emphasis on the notion of continuity can also be found in the 'renaissance phase' of Western Tibet, in sites such as Tholing, where Yeshe Ö (Yehe 'od) is depicted in iconic mode like a Buddha, with successors as 'attendant deities', while on the oppositie wall facing the cella Tsonkapa (Gelugpa) is shown, engaged in a religious ritual; this double presentation has the quality of a lineage aiming at the demonstration of legitimacy.

[1366] It is significant to note, that scenes of the courtly life are to be found in various areas of the lower section of the Lotsawa Lhakang at Nako, as has been observed by Romi Khosla (verbal communication) but this needs further investigations.

[1367] mKhas pa lDe'u, cited after Stoddard 2004: 86.

The question arises, whether the Alchi depictions are images of ideals or whether they correspond to social reality? The prominent role of women maybe derived from historic facts, such as the wives of the Dharma-kings who were important figures in the evolution of the Tibetan monarchy and the 'Buddhist Tibetan society' in general. Women also played a decisive role in political alliances in the Western Himalaya and even appear as donors of famous – but previously little studied - temples such as Dunkar in Western Tibet. Nonetheless, the history of the female members of the ruling elite has been marginalized.

There are few historical studies examining the socio-political situation of the society, but some evidence of the ideal of the warrior (describing members of the clan as brave in "*...vanquishing external enemies and protecting internal subjects*"[1368]) and generous hosts/'feast-givers' are found in inscriptions. Furthermore, the list of insignia show the military aspect and culture of the horse. Battles and military interventions were also a political reality at that time (various sources describe the military functions of the Dro-clan in this region before the establishment of the new kingdoms), from which an indigenous ethos of the aristocracy developed. This notion of 'worldly culture', glorified at Alchi, is subtly calibrated with Buddhist ideology. Donor depictions display the act of pious devotion, accumulation of merits and renunciation of worldy riches for the benefit of the community. They are shown in close alliance with the local tutelary deities reflecting the martial chivalric culture of the region in their function as protectors of their domains as well as of the *dharma*.

Basically all painting in Tibet is religious and thus associated with the aura and power of the supra-natural and become themselves meditation supports ('Meditationsbilder'). It is therefore not surprising that the 'mundane world' is conceived from a religious perspective and as a part of the Buddhist ordered world. The images of royalty and mundane power strongly recall Buddhist ideals of the universal monarch and his city made of seven precious things, the virtues and merits ('Tugendverdienste') of personages in the previous lives of the Buddha as well as the royal world of Śākyamuni which he renounced for the benefit of all living beings. They are images of the Buddha nature present in the donors earned and acquired by their protective and benefactorial virtues. These same virtues can be set free in every human.

[1368] Snellgrove/Skorupski 1980: 148.

8. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK ON FUTURE RESEARCH TASKS

Conclusion

The main topic of the present study is the discussion of the complex and multi-facetted dialogue that took place in the Western Transhimalaya between the new Buddhist elite - the Ladakhi Dro clan temple donors - and the various autochton cultural strams in the Indo-Iranian border area in the 10th to 13th century, reflecting the cultural dynamics on the crossroads of transcontinental paths which link (historical) northwestern India, Tibet, China and Middle Asia. Among these cultures, the Iranian world with its aura of power and wealth lent itself particularly well to express both the royal and celestial majesty of the Buddha and the sovereignity of the local rulers und aristocratic donors. Therefore many Iranian items of luxury art found their way into the temples of the western Trans-Himalaya, as in particular in the Dukhang and Sumtsek at Alchi.

Dealing mainly with the wall- and ceiling paintings in early Western Himalaya Buddhist temples, in particular with those at Alchi (Ladakh), with respect to their role in reflecting aspects of ‚attired' celestial palaces of the Buddha and the world of courtly donors, I propose an understanding of the structure and symbolism of the local Buddhist sacred structures. I analyse the dialectic between architecture and textiles as metaphor of religious ideas, constructive logic and local building traditions and I interpret the symbolism of thrones, ephemeral dwellings and architecture as signs of ‚sovereignty' of deities and worldly rulers as depicted in the wall-paintings. Using the metaphor of textiles, I suggest that the complex Buddhist cosmology may be unified in the interior programme of Western Himalayan temples by the 'language' of precious garments, costumes and ornaments – forming the warps and wefts of a complex iconographic tapestry that adorns the interior of the temle. That 'language of material culture' is also found in the presentation of courtly donors.

Spatial symbolism and the role of textiles

Only few early texts on the symbolism of space in Tibetan tradition are translated up to present. Temples and their paintings are thus among the most important evidence of the symbolism of sacred dwellings. In particular the ceiling decorations give insight into the evolutionary history of concepts of sacred spaces in early temples (end of the 10th to beginning of the 13th century) shifting from a textile cover to the cosmological symbolism of the ceiling programs, opening the temple to heaven.

The inherent heavenly symbolism of Buddhist textiles is evident. Banners floating in the air indicate the element of wind and air, alluding to the notion of the temple as cosmos, and prayer flags (*lung ta)*, are best known as bearers and transmitters of the teaching (*dharma*) in Tibet up to the present, while the inherent symbolism of the umbrella is of the sovereignty, protection and veneration of the cakravartin (universal monarch). Since earliest times the Buddha and the stupa, as His substitute, are venerated and wrapped with textiles and honored with parasols, and the notion of textile offering is a wide spread devotional practice. Maitreya texts describe the donation of material goods, textiles and umbrellas as part of Buddhist devotion, adoration and veneration of the Buddha, while various other early sources describe the heavenly palaces decorated with textiles and precious objects. Sumptuous textiles also express transmission of religious authority and thus continuity in Buddhism from very early on, as reflected in the

‚golden robe' the Buddha had received at the moment of attaining *nirvāṇa* and which He entrusted to Kāśyapa, his disciple, who should give it to Maitreya, the future Buddha.

The symbolism of sovereignty of the Buddha inherent in the ephemeral architecture of the throne (i.e. *earth*), covered with textiles and umbrellas (i.e. *heaven*), was connected with the Buddhist notion of what is generally called reality as being without essence. Early Buddhist art tried to visualize this idea through the empty throne, and the honorific umbrella and precious textiles draped on it, conceiling the Buddha and revealing his secret body. The throne indicates both the presence of the Buddha and his absence in physical form, which is the overcoming of reality, and also the renunciation from the worldly realm. The idea of the throne indicating the presence without physical reality is also shown in the empty throne of the Dalai Lama in the Potala. There the golden cape ('Thronrobe' T. *khri ber*) is draped on a seat covered with silk brocades, decorated and venerated with honorific shawls (T. *kataks*), generating an ephemeral sacred space.

In later Esoteric Buddhism the temple - like the stupa - is a metaphor for the three bodies of the Buddha. Accordingly, inscriptions state that the Alchi Sumtsek is a receptacle of body, speech and mind (*triākya*), with the *dharmakāya*, as the absolute body beyond form and human recognition. The Buddha body is attired, covered, protected and venerated with textiles and honorific umbrellas, as indicated by the ceilings's textile cover and the thrones of the Tathāgata, the fully enlightened Buddha.[1]

The temple conceived as the throne or celestial dwelling/shrine/palace of the Buddha is generated by the symbolic representation of the honorific umbrella and the concept of the palace adorned with precious textiles, decorated with various cosmological images of heavenly beings and creatures of the different worlds which dwell in the celestial realm, as also shown in the depictions of heavenly thrones in the wall paintings. At the same time the temple's textile attire alludes to the inherent symbolism of the umbrella and textiles as revealing the true nature of the Buddha without physical reality, recalling the image of the empty throne of the Buddha during the aniconic phase of Buddhism.

The temples in question, in particular the Sumtsek, with their many images of textiles can be seen as the textile attire of the Buddha and the celestial palace or shrine bedecked with precious garments, thus presenting perfect metaphors of the absolute nature of the *dharmakāya*, the body of dharma and true nature of the Buddha beyond form and recognition. The inherent symbolism of the textile is thus also that of unification of the three levels of manifestation, locking the various spheres to iconographic fabric that adorns the interior of the temple. The *dhoti* (skirt) of the colossal statues in the Sumtsek is exemplary and closely connected to the concept of the ceiling decoration recalling the monastic robe of the cosmologic Buddha, which bears virtually all aspects of the path of liberation. These textiles symbolically cover the Buddha, represented by the temple, which is the receptacle of the Buddhist ordered world and substitute of the Buddha body.

The motifs on the painted ceiling has, hitherto seen as only decorative or parts of the symbolic representation of a canopy. I propose that the ornamental designs of the textiles painted on boards, which are inserted between the beams (such as at Tabo and Alchi), are meaningful as a honorific cover and that their repertoire is related to Buddhist and pre-Buddhist ideology bearing allusions to various concepts of cosmonizing Buddhist space. The idea of Buddhist heavens represented in ceilings of Buddhist temples, already developed by A. Soper, is supported by a variety of features. In the earliest example at Tabo strong relations to Indian

temple architecture with regard to the symbolism of space and ceiling motifs can be found. Many themes allude to auspicious motifs signaling wealth and abundance, showering flowers and jewels on the Buddha and the worshipper, such as the vase of plenty emanating flowers, sacred trees with flowers and jewels, cornucopia-like elements emanating pearls and jewels, or shrines recalling sacred places in the wall-paintings. These motifs above the Main Hall contrast to naturalistic lotus flowers alluding to the Buddha and the ultimate goal of salvation in impersonal form leading the worshipper to the sanctum.

At Tabo the mandalic layout above the sanctum (with eight auspicious motivs in the corners of the ceilla ceiling) stands in juxtaposition with auspicious motifs above the main hall, showing overflowing vases, lotus flowers with pearl borders and jewel- or wish-granting trees recalling the realm of desire *kamadhatu* in the cosmological concept of the Buddhist ordered world.

On the ceiling of the Sumtsek at Alchi various celestial beings, dancers representing the sensuous pleasures of music and song, and also the consecration of the *cakravartin*, mythical animals of the different heavens of the Buddhist and Eastern-Iranian world, clearly represent aspects of the celestial throne functioning like windows, which open the ceiling to the sphere beyond human recognition. We later find at Alchi the combination of individual motifs of iconographic value and the concept of the symbolic representation of a honorific umbrella, which honors the temple conceived as a heavenly palace in which the Tathagata resides in his majesty without beeing presented in personal form. The function of the textile depictions in a Buddhist temple indicating the attire of the Buddha merges with courlty luxury art and precious textiles as signs of majesty and sovereignty in Central Asia and Eastern-Iran. The aura and power of luxury art and Iranian courtly culture perfectly communicates the sovereignty of the Buddha in the spiritual realm. This mutual exchange of signs of royal and spiritual power which enhance each other are characteristic of the culture of the Silk roads, which also reached Ladakh with monks, traders, diplomats and pilgrims.
At Alchi we find allusions to celestial beings, mythical creatures of the different heavens, and cosmological symbolism, which also constitute the environment of the palaces in the wall paintings. Many themes such as horse-riders and hunters with arrow and bow translate Central Asian signs of sovereignty into Buddhist themes of the courtly life of the Buddha which he rejected, while heavenly dancers, offering deities illustrate consecration rituals of the cakravartin and the mandala. This integration of figural themes into surface patterns, recalling textiles links the art of Alchi to the cave temples along the Silk Road, in particular Kyzil.

In later images, such as on the Dunkar ceilings, the earlier motifs are translated into images of the universe in motion (e.g. as an animal whorl) inspired by Chinese celestial concepts and luxury art. The images show paraphrases of earlier wealth-bestowing symbols and mythical creatures perceived here as cosmonizing symbols alluding to atmosphere and heaven, featuring chasing antelopes and other creatures circling around stars and pearls, popular in the luxury art and cosmological symbolism of Chinese Central Asia of the Jin and Xixia- dynasties, reflecting close cultural contacts between Western Tibet and various cultures along the Silk route.

Cultural and religious landscape of the Indo-Iranian border area

The symbolism of legitimate sovereignty of the local rulers and sponsors depicted in many wall paintings was studied by analysing both textual and artistic sources. I submit a reconstruction of the different models, the cultural context in which they were embedded, and their religious-political aspects and functions within the religious overall programme. I present the religious climate in which a complex and multifaceted dialogue took place between the new Buddhist elite – the Ladakhi Dro clan temple donors – and the various autochthonous cultural streams and religious landscape in the border areas of Tibet, (historical) northwestern India and eastern Iran. It is an attempt to classify the different components of this dialogue and to understand the symbolism of the courtly scenes in the general context of the Western Himalayan Buddhist iconography and sovereignty ideology, and in the special context of their relation to local guardian deities.

Until now, the fact that the paintings of Alchi depict courtly donors in an ambiance of eastern Iranian luxury art was never studied in its cultural-historical context and its religious implications and connotations. My research allows to propose the definition of early Buddhist art of Ladakh as one of the last examples of a distinctive Iranicate-Buddhist culture, dominated by self-confident, powerful rulers of small kingdoms until the 13th century, possibly even bearing semi-divine status and protected and invested by *‚royal fortune'* (xvarnah, farn), when central Tibet started to get the political-cultural upperhand. The Iranian features of this hybrid Buddhist Tibetan art appear to depend on strong traditions in the larger region to the north, in Middle Asia, termed in Persian sources as Turan in contrast to Iran proper. A fascinating notion is the superimposition of Iranicate signs of courtly pride and sovereignty (such as the drinking cup, and complex interaction in banqueting scenes) translated into images of Buddhist piety and devotion, which is a notion also found in the Eastern-Iranian Buddhist world of Bamiyan and Dokhtar-i Noshirwan in Afghanistan.

A significant sign of power in the larger region including the small hill-states at the time in Northern Pakistan - after the decline of the famous Palola-Shahi in Gilgit - appeas in the emphasis on the culture of horses. These strong local features can also be found in the cultures of the Hindu Kush up to the 19th century where strong local rulers and their horse-related symbols of power survived, a good example being presented by the culture of the Kafirs in the Hindu Kush. This kind of symbolism of sovereignty and power is closely related to that of mounted protector deities, as can be seen in the figure of the noble horse-rider or knight, integrated into the Buddhist order.

Mounted deities and donors

The analysis of hitherto unidentified mounted protector deities throws new insight on the cultural and religious landscape, culture of status, local myths, political power and protection of the subordinate before the Tibetization of the region in the 10th century. A paradigm case of the close relation and reciprocal exchange of symbols of power in the world of deities and rulers is the noble horse-rider at Alchi, which also plays a prominent role in various other temples of the region, but which hitherto has eluded identification. I propose to relate the mounted hero to one of the most popular protective deities in Tibet, Pehar, who migrated from Central Asia to serve as a protector of the monastery at Samye, and who is also mentioned in the biography of Rinchen Zangpo. The model at Alchi may be found in Sogdia and Khotan,

characteristic of a hybrid religious landscape while the ultimate source may have been the Iranian tutelary god and protector of royal fortune, the 'Xvarnah/Farn'.

The superimposition of Iranian signs of royalty and 'Weltanschauung' of the Sogdian elite by Buddhist ideals and virtues places the art of Alchi into the huge body of Iranian-Buddhist art of Central Asia, reflecting the autochtonous cultural stratum in the region and cultural dialogue with the refined art and hybrid religious culture of the Sogdians.

Transmission and transformation in the Eastern-Iranian Buddhist borderland

Donor depictions in the Western Trans-Himalaya are a further element in the art of Alchi, which reflects the dialogue between the dominant Buddhist tradition and the local traditions in the Eastern-Iranicate borderland. The complex, multi-layered composition of donor depictions at Alchi has been discussed as an important medium of representation and expression of authority and order in Buddhist society from the 12th to 13th century. Different cultural and artistic backgrounds, which can be identified in the donor frieze and the drinking scene, generate a new complexity of images of self-representation in the region. Each scene in the frieze has specific messages and represents different ideals of rule and strict hierarchic order in society.

The result is a complex thematic arrangement, with different scenes of courtly life, religious and political self-representation of the ruling clan, and the spiritual leaders among them typical for the complex cultural and religious landscape of the Indo-Iranian borderland. Local signs of authority (battle-axe, shields, costumes and jewelry signaling individual signs of rank) merge with cosmopolitan Iranicate images of authority and interaction - displaying the glory of the Eastern-Iranian aristocratic world. These different layers are assimilated and transformed in the Buddhist realm to an image of both courtly and religious value. The images at Alchi propagate Buddhist values, secured through the endeavour of the clan such as wealth, prosperity, peace, and protection as an adequate basis for the community on their path towards the ultimate goal of salvation. The scene of the drinking couple is a paradigm case for the transmission and transformation of visual models: from a signs of authority and aristocratic 'Weltanschauung' to a sign of offering to the Buddha and renunciation from mundane wealth.

Such feasts reflect the ethos of the ruler, having amassed properties for the benefit of others, which is an important concept in Buddhist thought. The meaning of the scenes might thus be a sign of his generosity, in which he is sharing his wealth with the community. This stands in an older tradition of Buddhist values represented by the monarch, accordingly the Royal Lama of Tabo is praised as "*...king, personification of a god, born of divine race, of the lineage of Bodhisattvas, lord over all black-headed (people) who by (his) perfect innate insight brought the light of wisdom (Ye shes 'od) to the darkness of ignorance, abandoned (his) reign, which is connected with samsara, like a withered garland of flowers because he regarded (it) as an illusion (he) then offered the whole kingdom for the sake of the Dharma...[and] erected there the temple...as a lamp for his kingdom*".[3]

The language of modes reflects different spheres of manifestations of the Buddha, indicating the path of liberation of the adept in the temple. In general donors belong to the ‚worldly sphere', but at Tabo the mode of the royal lama depicted in the cella is presented in conscous contrast to life of Sudhana running around the main wall leading to it. He is represented enthroned like a Buddha in a trans-mundane iconic state, who has overcome the worldly sphere perfectly visualized in his insignia ‚parked' in the narrative of Sudhana. Aristocratic donors at Alchi and Dunkar are shown in conscious juxtaposition to the life of the

Buddha, on complementing walls at the entrance of the temple. Their modes bear various religious implications, reflecting virtues of ‚inspired women' in the previous stories of the life of the Buddha and in particular the benefactoral and protective functions in alliance with tutelary deities. In my interpretation all images in the temple have religious implications, they are meditative aids or may have even been intended as setting free the power similar to that of tutelary deities protecting and supporting the spiritual path on the way to liberation of every meditating individual

Methodology

An important aspect of this work is the proposal of a possible methodological framework to reconstruct the complex stratigraphy of artifacts in this region, which resulted from wide-ranging trans-regional cultural and economic interaction, i.e. the analysis of commonalities and contrasting elements through comparisons with artifacts of the same tradition and the cultural and artistic landscape of larger areas. The reading of the complex donor depictions at Tabo and Alchi as a part of the ordered world in the temple is a new approach in the analysis of 'lay imagery'. The integration of the perspective and research questions of different disciplines such as architectural history, cultural anthropology, conservation research and Tibetology in combination with documentation from field work, on site, and the study of the living culture, local songs, traditions and myths, helps to further refine the reconstruction and analysis of the artistic and cultural context.

Future Research Tasks

Tibetan sources mainly dealt with Buddhist thought and the political leaders who propagated the second diffusion of Buddhist of the region, but not with local beliefs and autochtonous traditions. Visual sources are thus important for the reconstruction of the local culture in Ladakh-Baltistan. The cooperation with experts in Sogdian and Tibetan studies, in addition with the comparative study of depictions of mounted deities in the regions, as well as local oral traditions, ritual texts related to this class of deity will help to define the 'career' of local mounted protectors and horse-riders in Western Tibet. The documentation of smaller hitherto unpublished sites of this period in Ladakh and the analysis of archaeological and inscriptional evidence are necessary to gain a better picture of the early cultural heritage of the region.

A systematic and critical reading of inscriptions at Alchi with regard to the typology of self-representation of the ruling clan combined with textual sources, and royal titles and epithets as reflection of the ethos of rule would be a fruitful desideratum of future research. A clearer picture of patterns, formulas which were used, their characteristics and significance in the wider historic context of the region would be important to further specify the interpretations of the scenes. The joint investigation of the pictorial evidence in conjunction with the textual documents will also allow drawing a more refined picture of the administration, socio-political organization and religion of this region.

Co-operation between Tibetan historians, focusing on art- and architecture, anthropologists and philosophers of architecture, integrating early Tibetan texts on the symbolism and of temples will be fruitful to further refine our perception of the concepts, evolutionary history and stratigraphy of sacred space in early Buddhist temples of the Western Trans-Himalaya.

9. APPENDIX

KINGS/QUEENS OF THE TIBETAN EMPIRE[1369]

620 – 649	Srong btsan sgam po (Songtsen Gampo)[1370]
644 - 648	Gung srong gung btsan (Gungsong Gungtsen)[1371]
649 - 676	Mang srong mang btsan (Mangsong Mangtsen)[1372]
676 - 704	'Dus srong mang po rje (Düsong Mangpoje)/ Khri 'du srong btsan (Trhi Düsong)[1373]
704 – 712	**'Bro Khri ma lod (Dro Trhimalö)/ Queen mother[1374]**
704 – 754	Khri lde gtsug brtsan (Trhide Tsuktsen)/Khri sde gtsug brtsan Mes Ag tshom (Trhide Tsuktsen Me Agtshom)[1375]
754 – 797	Khri srong lde btsan (Trhisong Detsen)[1376]
797 – 799	Mu ne btsan po (Mune Tsenpo)[1377]
799 – 815	Khri lde srong btsan Trhide Songtsen/ Mu tig btsan po (Mutig Tsenpos)/ Sad na legs (Sänaleg)[1378]
815 – 838	Khri gtsug lde btsan Trhitsug Detsen / Ral pa can (Relpachen)[1379]
838 – 842	Glang dar ma (Lang Darma)
842	**COLLAPSE OF THE TIBETAN EMPIRE**

[1369] Table by the author after Golzio 1984 (with additions). I wish to thank Dr. Jahoda for the information on recent literature.

[1370] R. 629.-c. 647 (dates after McKay 2003: 615)., r. 618-641 after Beckwith 1987: 215.

[1371] According to Hazod he "*...died probably at the age of 18 in 646*" (Hazod 2000: 174-76)

[1372] Also known as Mang slon mang rtsan (Manglön Mangtsen), r. 650-676 (after Hazod 2006: 174.); r. 649-677 (Beckwith 1987: 215).

[1373] After McKay 2003: 615, r. 676-704; after Beckwith 1987: 215, 677-704.

[1374] R. 705-712 after Beckwith 1987: 215.

[1375] R. 712-755 (Beckwith 1987: 215); r. 704-c- 754 (Mc Kay 2003: 615).

[1376] R. c. 754-797 (McKay 2003: 615); r. c. 756-797 (Dotson in print 2007).

[1377] R. 797-c.799 (Beckwith 1987: 217); r. c. 797-c. 798 (Dotson in print 2007).

[1378] R. *c.*800-815 (McKay 2003: 615)

c. 802-*c.*815 'Second' reign of Khri lde srong btsan (Trhide Songtsen); Mu rug btsan (Murugtsen) is subordinate to his younger brother, then dies ca.804 (Dotson in print [2007])

[1379] R. 815-c. 838 (McKay 2003: 615).

'THE LAST PHASE OF THE OLD KINGDOM IN CENTRAL TIBET (9TH CENTURY) UP TO ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW KINGDOMS IN THE WESTERN HIMALAYA IN THE 10TH CENTURY[1380]'

Glang da ma (Lang Darma; 838-842)

Khri lde mgon btsan (Trhide Göntsen)[1381]
Yum brtan (Yumten +879?)/ Khri lde (Trhide)

gNam lde 'Od srung (Namde Ösung (+ 905/885)[1382]

dPal 'khor btsan (Palkhortsen+ 923/903)[1383]

sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon (Kyide Nyimagön)

bKra shis brtsegs pa dpal

married a Dro-lady:
Drosa Khorkyong ('Bro za 'Khor skyong)

FOUNDATION OF THE WEST TIBETAN KINGDOM c. 912 (own addition):

dPal gyi mgon (Palkyigön)

bKra shis mgon (Tashigön)

lDe gtsug mgon (Detsugön)

Ye shes 'od (Yeshe Ö, 947-1024) (built Tholing and Tabo c. 996)

(Nephews of Yeshe Ö)
Byang chub 'od (Changchub Ö, r. c. 1024
Phothrang Zhiba Ö (Pho brang Zhi ba 'od)

[1380] After Petech, 'The *Disintegration of the Tibetan kingdom*', *Proceedings of the 6th seminar of IATS*, Fagenes 1992; (both tables adopted from a handout provided by Prof. E. Steinkellner in his lecture '*Einführung in die Geschichte Tibets, SS 01/02*')

[1381] After Vitali 1996: 550.

[1382] R. 840-893 (Vitali 1996: 547).

[1383] R. 893-910 (Vitali 1996: 547); r. c. 905-c. 923 (Petech 1997).

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1998 – 2000	Tutor of various lectures on Asian Art at the Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Univ. Prof. D. Klimburg-Salter, Univ. Doz. Dr. Dr. J. Ebert „Werkvertrag" at the University of Vienna
1997	Volunteer in the FWF research project „Sammlung Johann Caspar Lavater" at the "Porträtsammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek"

Field Research 1998 India (1998, 2003, 2005), Western Himalaya: Ladakh, Kashmir, Spiti and Kinnaur: (2000, 2002, 2004), study trips to Iran (1998, 2004, 2006); Afghanistan (2006), Western Tibet, Xinjiang (Dunhuang) in co-operation with Tibetologists from Vienna and Lhasa (2006)

Grants

Study grant by the Austrian government for my master degree (1998-2000), Leistungsstipendium der Geistes- und Kulturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät (2001), travel grant for field research „Kurzfristige wissenschaftliche Arbeiten im Ausland"/ University of Vienna (2002)

Research interests

Cultural history of the Western Himalaya and neighbouring areas in Central Asia/Eastern Iran with focus on art, architecture and iconography (10th to 17th centuries) | Luxury art, textile history and trade patterns | Function of textiles in Tibetan Buddhist art, architecture and ritual | Ornamental traditions | Methodology | Trans-disciplinary renovation and conservation-research.

Diploma

Die Deckenmalereien des gSum-brtsegs in Alchi (Ladakh). Studie zu den Textildarstellungen eines frühen buddhistischen Tempels aus dem westtibetischen Kulturkreis, M.A. thesis, (2000), Universität Wien, pp. 103.

Invited Lectures

Some Notes on Early Mandalic Themes on the Ceilings of Western Himalaya Buddhist Temples (c.10th – 11th c.), Beijing Seminar on Tibetan Studies, to be delivered in Beijing, 7. 2008.

The Tibetan Pho brang: Some Observations on the Royal Camp in Early Western Himalaya Wall-painting, IATS 2006 conference, Bonn/ Germany.

From Textile Dress to Vault of Heaven: Observations on the Function and Symbolism of Ceiling Decorations in the Western Himalaya Temples of Nako/Kinnaur. European Association of South Asian Archaeology (EASAA), London, British Museum, 2005.

Art of the Court: Some Remarks on the Historical Stratigraphy of Eastern-Iranian Elements in the Art of Alchi (Ladakh). Eighth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS), Oxford, 2003.

Internationale Luxuskunst: Textilien von Byzanz bis China, lecture in cooperation with the exhibition: Fremde – Kunst der Seidenstasse, MAK, Wien, 7.5.2002 (curator Dr. Wieninger).

Textile Representations in a Buddhist Temple: The Ceiling Decorations of the Sumtsek at Alchi, Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS), Leiden, 24. - 30.6.2000.

Publications

Papa-Kalantari (in preparation), Book Review, Zin/Schlingloff, *The Samsaracakra*, Zin/Schlingloff, ed. O.v.Hinüber, *Indo-Iranian Journal*

Papa-Kalantari, Ch. & Jahoda, Ch. (in preparation) ‚Early Buddhist Heritage in the Western Himalaya. A Report from Field Research in the Tibetan Autonomous Region in 2006/07'

Papa-Kalantari, Ch. A. (at press) 'Divine Kingship and Divinely Endowed Wealth. Buddhist Iconography in Secular Imagery of Early Western Himalaya Art'. LoBue, E. & Ch. Luczanits (eds.), *Proceedings of the 11th seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, 2006,* Bonn

Papa-Kalantari, Ch. A. (2007b) 'From Textile Dress to Dome of Heaven: Some Observations on the function and Symbolism of Ceiling Decorations in the Western Himalayan Buddhist Temples of Nako / Himachal Pradesh'. Hardy, A. (ed.) *The Temple in South Asia.* London, The British Academy

Papa-Kalantari, Ch. A. (2007a) 'The Art of the Court: Some Remarks on the Historical Stratigraphy of Eastern Iranian Elements in early Buddhist Painting of Alchi, Ladakh'. Klimburg-Salter, D., Jahoda, Ch. and Tropper, K. *Proceedings of the 10th seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, 2002* - Oxford, Leiden: Brill, 167-228

Papa-Kalantari, Ch. (2006) Book Review: 'Zin, M. Devotionale und ornamentale Malereien. Vo. 1. Interpretationen, Wiesbaden, 2003'. *Indo –Iranian Journal 49*: 191-196

Papa-Kalantari, Ch. A. (2005) 'Painting on Wood: Art Historical Classification of the Ceiling Paintings in the Nako Temple Complex and Re-construction Proposal for the Gongma Temple', *Report of the Nako Research and Preservation Project 2005, submitted to the World Monuments Fund,* New York

Papa-Kalantari, Ch. A. (2002) 'The Ceiling Paintings of the Alchi *gsum brtsegs*: Problems of Style', in Klimburg-Salter, *Buddhist Art and Tibetan Patronage. Ninth to Fourteenth Centuries, Proceedings of the 9th seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, 2000,* Leiden: Brill, 85-113

Radio-Interview, conducted by Dr. U. Schmitzer "Feldforschungserfahrungen in Himachal Pradesh im Rahmen des Nako Preservation Project, Sommer 2002", with Univ. Prof. Dr. D. Klimburg-Salter, sent in Ö1, Dimensionen - Die Welt der Wissenschaft, 18.10.2002, 19.05-19.30.

Exhibitions

Co-Curator of the exhibition „Forschungspfade im Westlichen Himalaya“, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, März 2006.

Curator of the section "The Nako Research and Preservation Project" at the FSP- photo exhibition "Kunst und Kultur im Westlichen Himalaya", 22.11.-17.12, Volkshochschule Floridsdorf.

ABSTRACT in English

This study attempts to present the concepts and symbolism of space in Western Himalayan Buddhist architecture of the 10th to 13th century, in particular that of the early temples at Alchi in Ladakh. It analyses the manifold concepts and strategies expressed in architecture that is based on the Buddhist idea of a world system interpreted, as it were, as the 'Heavenly Palace' and the different bodies of the Buddha. This has been done by studying the architectural-historical and textual data as well as the surrounding architectonic settings in the depictions of deities on their heavenly thrones and of donors in their courtly environment, and, further, by examining the precious textiles and rich ornaments in the wall paintings and on the ceilings. The courtly worlds and the language of luxurious art, material culture and ornament have always been a means for portraying the spiritual authority of the Buddha. These elements lock the various spheres together – from the depictions of the donors to those of the transcending Buddhas – forming a complex iconographic tapestry that adorns the interior of the temple.

The conceptual dynamics of the image of Buddhist space is presented by attiring the temple as substitute of the Buddha in the sense concealing and ‚unveiling/revealing' the secret of the Buddha-body and numinous to a concept in later temples alluding to metaphysical notions about the creation of the universe in the Buddhist doctrine and the stratigraphy of different heavens. In this image sacred space transcends architectural boundaries serving as a metaphor and meditative aid for the awareness of reality beyond form. The methodology has been to compare the different features of religious and artistic expression to architecture, symbolic concepts of space and religious practices that engender sacred spaces. Accordingly, the analysis of the pictorial program attempts to depict the spatial iconography and, at the same time, the religious and political functions in the depictions of the temple donors, who are presented as intermediaries on the path to liberation. The attempt has been made to reconstruct a typology of concepts in the self-depiction of the elite, strategies to legitimize power, of universal order and the meaning of the world, as is manifested in the many temples and their conceptually complex painted decorations.

An important role is played by reconstructing the heterogeneous forces that, from the 10th century, were instrumental in forming the new Buddhist power institutions in Ladakh and in the surrounding regions by the successors of the Central Tibetan dynasties, whose empire, with Lhasa at the centre, had collapsed in the 9th century. The self-depiction of the new local Tibetan rulers reveal specific dynamics attempting to legitimize their position of power through, divine descent and even divinized kingship at Tabo and the protection of local ghosts and spirits, not only portraying themselves as political and religious authorities, but also as guardians of the Buddhist doctrine and supporters and protectors of prosperity. The assignment of religious connotations even to seemingly 'worldly' scenes has been made possible by a comparative analysis of the complex, to some extent Iranian, pictorial programme and thematic ensembles of courtly banquets and drinking scenes in the portrayal of the Alchi patrons. Also depictions of noble guardian deities and divine nobility reveal the heterogeneous autochthonous religious landscape of the Buddhist culture of the Western Trans-Himalaya with its strong components of East Iranian and Sogdian concepts.

Thus, the main body of the study is concerned with the pluralistic process between the local traditions, the regional religious-cultural landscape and the Central Tibetan orthodox doctrines. The overlapping of Iranian courtly themes, hybrid religious concepts and

Buddhist doctrines proves to be characteristic for the Western Trans-Himalaya Buddhist culture, in many ways even 'Iranian-influenced Buddhist culture', at the intersections of the transcontinental routes between Tibet, India and Central Asia. The early temple art in Alchi is unique in its creative incorporation of these components into a clear Buddhist world system supporting the spiritual path on the way to liberation of every meditating individual.

ABSTRACT in Deutsch

Die vorliegende Studie betrachtet den komplexen, vielfältigen Dialog im Westlichen Trans-Himalaya, der zwischen der neuen buddhistischen Elite, dem Dro-Can in Ladakh, und den verschiedenen autochtonen kulturellen Strömungen im indo iranischen Grenzland zwischen dem 10. u. 13. Jahrhundert stattfand.

Dieser Dialog reflektiert die kulturelle Dynamik am Kreuzungspunkt transkontinentaler Handels-und Pilgerwege, die Nordwest-Indien, Tibet, China und Zentralasien miteinander verbanden. Unter diesen Kulturen ist die Iranische Welt mit ihrer Aura von Macht und Luxus von besonderer Bedeutung für die Darstellung der Majestät des Buddha und seiner Autorität in der spirituellen Sphäre, aber auch für die Selbstdarstellung der höfischen Elite. Auf diese Weise fand die 'Sprache' der iranischen Lususkunst den Weg in die Tempel des westlichen Trans-Himalaya, wie vor allem anhand der Malereien im Dukhang und Sumtsek der Tempel in Alchi analysiert wird. Diese Elemente der Luxuskunst und materiellen Kultur verbinden wie Kette und Schuss die verschiedenen Sphären - von den weltlichen Darstellungen der Stifter bis zu jenen der transzendenten Buddhas - zu einem komplexen ikonographischen Gewebe, der das Innere des Tempels bekleidet.

In meiner Analyse dient der buddhistische Tempel und seine Ausstattung als meditative Metapher und Unterstützung auf dem Weg zur Befreiung und Erkenntnis des Formlosen. In Hinblick auf die Darstellung der Realität jenseits der Form kommt der Symbolik von Textildarstellungen und materieller Kultur eine besondere Bedeutung zu. Ausgehend von Darstellungen der Präsenz des Buddha als leerer, stoffbedeckter und mit einem Schirm überhöhter Thron in der anikonischen Phase des Buddhismus und von Schreinen, komplexen architektonischen Einbettungen und himmlischen Palästen, die mit kostbaren Textilien geschmückt sind, und schließlich vom reichhaltigem Ornament der gemalten Textilien, die die Decken des Tempels 'bekleiden', werden die Konzepte von buddhistischem Raum als Darstellung der Buddha-Körper vorgestellt.

Der methodologische Ansatz dabei ist, verschiedene Bereiche des religiösen und künstlerischen Ausdrucks in einen Zusammenhang zu stellen und die Dialektik zwischen gebauter Architektur, symbolischen Raumvorstellungen und religiösen Praktiken der Schaffung von sakralen Räumen zu analysieren. In allen diesen Sphären spielen kostbare Gewebe und Ehrenüberdachungen eine besondere Rolle. Die Entwicklung reicht von der Überdachung und Bekleidung des Tempels mit Textilien im Sinne von Verehren, Beschützen/Verbergen des Buddha und Offenbarung der Buddhanatur hin zu einer Visualisierung von metaphysischen Vorstellungen vom Aufbau des Universums in der buddhistischen Lehre, welche die Decke zu den Sphären jenseits der ‚weltlichen Grenzen' gebauter Architektur öffnet.

Die Analyse der Bildprogramme im Tempel versucht, die räumliche Ikonographie und die zugleich religiöse und politische Funktion der Stifterdarstellungen, die als Vermittler und Teil des Erlösungsweges präsentiert werden, zu erschließen. Es ist der Versuch der

Rekonstruktion einer Typologie von Konzepten der Selbstdarstellung der Elite, Strategien der Legitimation von Macht, universeller Ordnung und Deutung der Welt. Eine wichtige Rolle spielt dabei die Rekonstruktion der heterogenen Kräfte bei der Formierung von neuen buddhistisch-herrscherlichen Institutionen ab dem 10. Jahrhundert in Ladakh und der weiteren Umgebung durch die Nachfahren der zentraltibetischen Dynastien, deren Großreich - mit Zentrum in Lhasa - im 9. Jh. zerfallen war. Die Selbstdarstellungen der neuen lokalen tibetischen Herrscher zeigen eine spezifische Dynamik, die ihre Machtstellung durch göttliche Abkunft und den Schutz durch territoriale Genien und Geistern zu legitimieren sucht. Die Herrscher weisen sich überdies nicht nur als politische und religiöse Autorität aus, sondern auch als ‚divinisierte' Könige, Beschützer der buddhistischen Lehre und Förderer von Wohlstand und dessen Schutz und schließlich als Stufe und Teil auf dem Erlösungsweg der Meditierenden im Tempel. Eine vergleichende Lesung und Analyse der komplexen, z.T. iranisierenden Bildprogramme und thematischen Ensembles von höfischen Banketten und Trinkszenen in den Stifterdarstellungen in Alchi ermöglicht die Bestimmung von religiösen Konnotationen auch von 'weltlich' wirkenden Darstellungen. Auch bei den Darstellungen von adeligen Schutzgöttern und divinisiertem Adel zeigt sich die heterogene autochtone religiöse Landschaft der buddhistischen Kultur des westlichen Trans-Himalaya mit ihren starken Komponenten ostiranischer-sogdischer Vorstellungen.

Im Zentrum der Studie steht somit der pluralistische Prozess zwischen lokaler Tradition, regionaler religiös-kultureller Landschaft und zentraltibetischer orthodoxer Doktrin. Die Überlagerung von iranischer höfischer Thematik, hybriden religiösen Vorstellungen und buddhistischer Lehre erweist sich als charakteristisch für die 'ostiranisch-buddhistische' Kultur am Schnittpunkt transkontinentaler Wege zwischen Tibet, Indien und Zentralasien. Die kreative Einbettung dieser Komponenten in die klare Systematik des buddhistischen religiösen Systems jener Zeit macht die Einzigartigkeit der frühen Tempelkunst von Alchi aus.

Die Studie bietet außerdem den erstmaligen Versuch der Zusammenstellung des großen Corpus an höfischen Darstellungen und Abbildungen von Textilien und Luxuskunst im Dukhang von Alchi und die Rekonstruktion des kunst- und kulturgeschichtlichen Kontextes. Dies geschieht auf Basis der wissenschaftlichen Vorarbeiten zur Kunst von Alchi von Tibetologen und Buddhismusforschern wie D. Snellgrove, R. Goepper, R. Linrothe und Ch. Luczanits, unter Einbeziehung von Forschungsergebnissen und Methoden von Nachbardiziplinen, insbesondere zentralasiatischen und ost-iranischen Studien, Textil- und Architekturgeschichte und Kulturanthropologie. In dieser Studie wird die umfangreiche und unpublizierte photographische Dokumentation von J. Poncar und Ch. Luczanits zu den Stifterdarstellungen des Dukhang in Alchi erstmals klassifiziert und analysiert und so für weitere Forschung zugänglich gemacht. Empirische Daten und Dokumentationen aus eigener Feldforschung und Konservierungsarbeiten unter Beteiligung von Experten aus verschiedenen Disziplinen (Architektur, Konservierungswissenschaft) im Westlichen Himalaya komplementieren die visuellen Quellen. Die Studie berücksichtigt die Erschließung der lokalen Quellen und Inschriften, die tibetische Historiographie und buddhistische Lehrtexte.