

it seems evident from the above sources that a special relationship existed between the *Sūtra*2 and the Mahāsaṅghika Schools.

On the basis of the above sources, Kasyap's associations with the Mahāsaṅghika School is established and further support the popular presumption that Mahāyāna was gradually developed in the Mahāsaṅghika Viharas in the valley of Andhra Pradesh.

Conclusion

The textual contents of these Sūtras do not correspond to each other. *Sūtra*2 and *Sūtra*3 explicitly deal with Mahāyāna doctrine, particularly the theory of the *Tathāgatagarbha* at length and condemns the doctrines of Śrāvakayāna.

The probable argument is that if the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism existed and flourished parallel with the Theravada school during the lifetime of the Buddha, then one would expect that doctrinal controversies and arguments would have occurred. In such a case, the Pali Sūtras compiled after the passing away should also have recorded the doctrinal criticism of Mahāyāna, as it is contained in Mahāyāna sūtras such as *Sūtra*2. But, as far as I know, no such criticism of Mahāyāna is recorded in the Pali Sūtras, except in a few later commentaries. This indicates that the Mahāyāna had not taken the definite shape of a separate school in parallel with the Theravada school at the time of the compilation of the Pali Sūtras.

Thus, this finding does seem to give credence to the popular stand of the modern scholars to the effect that Mahāyāna is a later development based on the earlier teachings of the Buddha.

On the Earliest Mandalas in a Buddhist Context

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For the West, the mandala, *kyilkhor* (*dkyil-'khor*) in Tibetan, is probably the most fascinating expression of Tibet's visual culture. Certainly it is the best known. The western mind is familiar with certain aspects of the mandala and unfamiliar with other aspects. It is often said that the mandala is a geometric configuration in which the circle dominates. In fact, circle and disk are two of the meanings of the term mandala. In the West, one thus speaks commonly of a mystical circle.

It is the shape of the mandala in the Tibetan tradition that dominates the imagination. This mandala has a square palace in a circle made of fire, *vajras* and lotus-petals. Variations are less apparent in the circular element where charnel grounds or the disks of the cosmos may be added to the other three elements. Within the square of the outer palace, the variety is considerably larger due to the use of different combinations of circular, square—additional palace structures—and triangular elements filling the principal square. The principal shape of the Tibetan mandala, which I call the standard Tibetan depiction, is highly systematised.

After a more general reflection on the mandala, I will look at some of the major elements making up the standard Tibetan mandala depiction and discuss what I know so far about their history. This brief study is not intended as a comprehensive treatment of the topic but

¹ This survey profited considerably from a seminar for graduate students that I gave last spring in Berkeley. While I wish to thank all participating students—Wen-shing Chou, Amanda Goodman, Nancy Lin, Iwona Tenzing und Uranchimeg Tsultem—for the lively discussions, I am particularly grateful to Amanda Goodman for bringing some of the Dunhuang drawings to my attention. The article was compiled under a research grant of the Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI), Nepal.

simply outlines some of the major questions future studies may explore in greater detail. I also restrict my discussion to Buddhist expressions of the mandala; a complete discussion of the history and early shapes of the mandala would take Hindu examples into account as well.

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The earliest full depictions of Buddhist mandalas in the Himalayas do not seem to display an absolute confidence in how the mandala is to be constructed in its entirety, although the principals seem clarified. In the earliest mandalas preserved in wall paintings, those of the Nako Translator's Temple (Lo-tsa-ba lHa-khang) attributable to the early 12th century (Luczanits 2003; 2004: 77–88), the corners of the outer palace walls project beyond the surrounding fire circle. In addition, the complete fourth assembly, comprised of the Four Great Kings, Hindu and pan-Indian deities serving as protectors, and four gate-keepers, are placed outside to the left and right of the mandala proper (Figure 1).

Mandalas on scroll paintings (thangkas) may be slightly earlier than those in the murals, but none of the supposedly early ones can actually be dated.² In contrast to the murals, that to some extent must have been made for public or semi-public display, thangkas may have been originally made for private use only.³ The earliest mandala thangkas are predominantly dedicated to deities classified in the Tibetan system among the Mother-Tantras of the Anuttarayoga-Tantra class, but there is also one early Vajradhatu mandala from a private collection among them (Pal 2003: 115). The anomaly of this mandala is that the fire circle actually projects beyond the canvas of the thangka, opening the realm of the mandala to outside influence.

If we ask what mandalas looked like prior to those discussed so far, we face the problem that pre-eleventh or twelfth century Buddhist mandalas do not exist in Tibet or in India. But we do have drawings from Dunhuang depicting mandalas, and we have the twin mandala set of the Garbha and the Vajradhatu that became established in the late eighth century in Japan.⁴ The earliest paintings and drawings of this set definitely

2 Early mandalas are mostly dedicated to Cakrasaṃvara, like the one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 10; Leidy and Thurman 1997: 70–74, no. 13; Luczanits, in press-a: figs. 4.16 and 4.17), the Goenka Collection (Pal 1984: 11) and an unspecified private collection (Kossak and Singer 1998: 2).

3 A case in point is the Vajrayoginī mandala (e.g. Kossak and Singer 1998: no. 20) made as personal image (*thugs dam*) of Sangye-ön (Sangs rgyas dbon; 1251–1296), shortly called ...npo (dBon-po).

4 This mandala set going back to Kūkai (774–835) is not preserved in the original but in many later copies, the earliest of which is a version drawn in gold and silver on dark ground, the Takao Mandalas of 824, and a coloured version in

give us some idea of an earlier stage of the mandala, even though one cannot directly conclude from them about an earlier period in India.

While the Shingon mandala set may be regarded as the outcome of a specialised local tradition, the Dunhuang drawings actually show a wide range of variety on the mandala theme. Only some of those differences will be discussed here.⁵

In principle, it is the esoteric nature of the teachings involved that accounts for the absence of early art-historical evidence in this regard. We are actually faced by the interesting fact that laying down such teachings in writing as well as in art meant that the secrecy of the topic was to some extent already given up. However, the early texts on the topic are far from being explicit. Commonly written in verses, they simply hint at the subjects they are discussing rather than explaining them, thus making an interpretation of them rather tricky.

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From the very beginning, the principal integrative parts of the mandala are the ritual space used for the mandala ritual and the deities invited to this ritual space.

The commonly square purified ritual space is transformed into a mandala by the application of divisions of fixed proportions within it. It is this outlining of the mandala with the help of coloured strings that in textual descriptions takes up a considerable portion of the mandala description.⁶ The ritual space thus makes up what one may call the geometric mandala. It serves as a receptacle for the deities and is thus understood as both their habitation and their support.

The assembly of deities invited to this habitation are then the inhabitants of the mandala, the supported ones, and are best called the mandala assembly. From the very beginning, there appears to be a strong hierarchy within this assembly. While in some cases this hierarchy may be expressed less explicitly, it is often maintained that the central deity comprises all the secondary ones which in turn are understood as representing only a certain aspect of the main deity. This strong hierarchy is also expressed in the Tibetan definition of the mandala, where *dkyil* is understood as referring to the central deity

the KyōōGokoku-ji (Tō-ji), known as Shingon-in, from the late ninth or early tenth century (well published in Ishimoto 1978 and Ishimoto et al. 1977). On the wider background of this set cf. e.g. Grotenhuis (1999: chapters 2–4).

5 This said, it also needs to be noted that despite the fact that one has to be cautious with concluding back to the Indian heritage, the Shingon set and the Dunhuang drawings of esoteric Buddhist topics share a great affinity to Indian painting that sets them apart from representations of other topics.

6 For a practical application, cf. e.g. Kohn (1997: 380–383).

and 'khor to its entourage. It is also clear from this definition that the central deity alone may represent the whole mandala.

* * *

Assemblies that are meant to comprise the deities of a mandala are found already in India. These assemblies of deities may be in stone and thus likely for public use, possibly structuring the whole arrangement of a temple, or for a more private use in the form of bronzes. However, especially with regard to the earlier forms of tantric Buddhism, it is probably impossible to ascertain whether or not the cult underlying the depicted deities actually included the use of a mandala. One may take Cave 6 of Ellora as an example. Cave 6 essentially represents a three-family configuration of the Buddha flanked by Avalokiteśvara and an early form of Vajrapāṇi, extended by the later addition of Tārā (on Avalokiteśvara's side) and Mahāmayūrī. Although the latter goddess points towards an early stage of tantric practice (cf. Schmithausen 1997), the additional deities represented in the Cella opposite the donors and the fact that Mahāmayūrī does not belong to the original composition makes it unlikely that Cave 6 represents a mandala-based configuration.⁷

Later caves of Ellora, in contrast, have configurations that are associated with mandala practice. In these representations, the core three-family configuration of Cave 6 is extended by six more Bodhisattvas (Caves 11 and 12), resulting in a configuration that likely comprises a mandala assembly (cf. Chandra 1988; and Malandra 1993: 75–90).⁸ Such an understanding is certainly supported by the representation of the Buddha surrounded by the 8 Bodhisattvas in a configuration of nine squares, as found in Ellora Cave 12 (Figure 2).⁹

7 For a plan and the basic three-family configuration, see Fergusson and Burgess (1880 (r1969): plates LX, LXI) or Malandra (1993: 27, Text fig. 2-1). Given that one of the principal features of a mandala assembly is an emphasized hierarchy between the central image and the secondary one, it can also be concluded that the nine identical teaching Buddhas represented on the side walls of the Cella represent a mandala as has been assumed by Malandra (1993: 26–30). Similarly, the circular dome shaped ceilings with a central seated Buddha and standing Buddhas around it, as found, among others, in Kakrak, Fōladi and Bamiyan (e.g. Higuchi 1983: vol. I, plates 2-1, 8-1, 31, 57-1, 65, 70-1, 119, 120-1, 125-2, 129-1, 141–143; Klimburg-Salter 1989: figs. 25–27, 30) can thus not be understood as representing mandalas *per se*.

8 On the group of eight Bodhisattvas in Indian art, see also Bautze-Picron (1997) and Yoritomi (1990).

9 Thus, with regard to these assemblies, the title of Malandra's detailed study of the iconography of the Buddhist caves of Ellora, "Unfolding a Mandala," does make sense; however, I would see the development as somewhat later.

An exceptional certain case is a Nalanda bronze of Vairocana in the National Museum in New Delhi. This bronze clearly has the main image of a mandala, namely Mahāvairocana of the Vajradhātu mandala, as can be proven on the basis of the symbols of the surrounding Buddha-families represented on the throne cushion around the seated image. In other versions of this mandala, the symbols are replaced by goddesses holding them.¹⁰

The earliest mandala usage in India, thus, can only be demonstrated on the basis of an assembly of deities that can be associated with a ritual text describing the usage of a mandala in the course of the ritual associated with this assembly.¹¹

* * *

Considering that the assembly is an integrative part of the mandala that can also stand for the whole, the concept of a "horizontal mandala," as it has been coined and used for depictions of mandala assemblies in early western Himalayan painting and sculpture, is clearly unnecessary and has to be avoided.¹² Not only has this term been coined on the basis of very specific horizontal arrangements of mandala assemblies, such as the core deities of the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇjuśrī mandala among in the mid-eleventh century paintings of the Tabo Assembly Hall, but its usage may erroneously indicate that the shape of the arrangement of the deities in the assembly actually makes up a different mandala.¹³

10 On this image and its comparisons, cf. Luczanits (2004: 204–09). Such a representation also makes clear that even among the principal group of five Buddhas underlying the standard Tibetan mandala depiction, there is a hierarchy between the central Buddha and the four surrounding one, a hierarchy that is clearly expressed in art as well (id. 209).

11 That the line between the usage of a ritual involving the idea of a mandala and prior ritual activity is not so easy to draw can, for example, be gathered from Yukei Matsunaga's study on the history of Tantric Buddhism on the basis of the Chinese texts (Matsunaga 1978: vii–xix). The rituals said to be described in a fourth century text in association with Mahāmayūrī, drawing a protective boundary line and cleansing with cows' urine (p. xi), already indicate a developed ritual but not the usage of a mandala, while fully developed mandalas are described in mid-seventh century text in connection with five Buddhas (p. xiv–xvi).

12 The term has been coined by Klimburg-Salter (Klimburg-Salter 1999; 1997: 109–119, figs. 117 (reversed!), 118, diagrams 7, 10) and has been used by me as well (Luczanits 2004).

13 In fact, there is no rule on how a mandala assembly has to be arranged, but from the earliest examples on, it is clear that the relative position of the deities is considered in the arrangement.

Early five-deity configurations, one central deity surrounded by four secondary ones, in India and Tibet have the secondary deities frequently represented at the sides of the main image. This does not mean that the secondary deities are supposed to be placed in the intermediate directions of the mandala.¹⁴

* * *

A Tibetan invention appears to be the distribution of a mandala assembly across a series of thangkas, as is frequently the case with main mandalas of the Vajradhātu and Durgatipariśodhana cycles. In the case of these mandalas, one thangka each is dedicated to the central Buddha Vairocana and the Jinas of the directions with their respective quarters (see Luczanits, in press-b).¹⁵

* * *

It is clear from the description of early mandala rituals, especially from the well studied *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (Lalou 1930, 1936; MacDonald 1962; Wallis 2001, 2002) and the *Vairocanābhisaṃbhodi* (Chandra 1990; Hodge 2003; Wayman 1992), that the assembly of deities is not necessarily organised symmetrically and/or geometrically around the centre. Furthermore, not all geometric spaces of the mandala need to be occupied by deities.¹⁶

Rather surprising, however, is the observation that even when the concept of the mandala becomes more systematised in configurations of five or nine main deities—four or eight around a central deity—the symmetry between the mandala assembly and the geometric mandala was established only gradually.

This can be concluded from some of the Dunhuang drawings. Of particular interest is drawing P2012 of the Musée Guimet in Paris (*Dunhuang bao zang* 112, 96–102). There, four mandalas for different types or purposes of ritual are depicted. While in general it is clearly the concept of the five Buddhas that underlies the mandalas in this set (Figure 3), the last two more wrathful assemblies actually have ten main deities. Nevertheless, the mandala with which they are associated still has a circle of eight blades (Figure 4).

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¹⁴ It is such a reading that appears to underlie the concept of a horizontal mandala.

¹⁵ In these configurations, too, the Bodhisattvas surrounding the Jinas are commonly flanking the main image and thus appear to be in the intermediary directions.

¹⁶ See the frontispiece drawing in MacDonald (1962) or some of the mandalas in the mandala set of Ngor (bSod-nams-rgya-mtsho and Tachikawa 1989: nos. 2, 4, 20).

The Dunhuang drawings are interesting in many regards. What is particularly striking about them is the variety of mandalas and mandala-like configurations found there. In the following, I will look at some of the varied examples.

A Mandala in the British Museum shows Avalokiteśvara and a donor in a central lotus circle and a related text written in a spiral around it (Figure 5). This centre is cordoned off by a row of vajras outside of which are two palaces with Bodhisattvas, Nagas, symbols and gate-keepers in front of the indicated gates (see Whitfield 1982: I, figs. 50–52).

Another mandala in the Musée Guimet shares with the previous one a central deity accompanied by kneeling donors and the circle they are shown in encircled by a text, this time Chinese (Figure 6). Highly unusual here is the emphasis on symbolic representations including haloed Buddha heads and hands, hands in clouds, etc. That this mandala is not (only) a fancy local invention is indicated by the inclusion of Hindu deities as protectors in the fourth assembly (second square from the outside). Among others, one can recognise Iṣāṇa, Brahmā, Kārttikeya, Hārītī, Gaṇeśa and probably Agni.

A third example of a larger series, *Dunhuang bao zang* 132,477b, is intimately connected with the fourth mandala of the P2012 set, since its interior deities—ten identical wrathful gods, four offering gods/goddesses and four gate-keepers—are the same as those of the mandala assembly there (Figure 8). The representation of these deities reveals another issue that may be characteristic for the Dunhuang drawings in a more general sense. It is obvious that these deities are not drawn as visualisation “supports” but rather to clarify the gestures to be made in accordance with the different deities involved. Thus, it may be assumed that a good deal of the Dunhuang mandala drawings do not represent ritual mandalas but are rather instructional.

That this is valid for mandala depictions as well can be concluded from another drawing published in *Dunhuang bao zang* (132,356b), where the decoration of the mandala is only exemplarily indicated.

That the representation of deities also has an instructional purpose I have worked out on the basis of the Vajradhātu mandala as well. There, the representation may clarify rather tricky objects and symbols held by the sixteen vajra-Bodhisattvas. It certainly was not very clear from the beginning how a vajra-tongue is to be imagined or a garland of teeth. The representations of such details offered in the early western Himalayan paintings and sculptures are quite varied.

* * *

All of the Dunhuang drawings of mandalas and mandala-like themes have one thing in common: they are squares, whatever other differences there are. Frequently, the square consists of one or several palace walls with gates. The Dunhuang drawings share this feature with the twin mandalas of the Japanese Shingon school mentioned already. In these cases, the square of the palace represents the outer edge of the mandala. Not infrequently, a chain of vajras marks this outer periphery.

One may see those mandalas as incomplete or abbreviated depictions of the topic, but there are indications that also in India the original mandala was indeed square. First of all, the earliest descriptions of the mandala describe only a square.

The mandala is square with four gates adorned with four tympana.¹⁷

He [the wise one] should draw it with a pure mind,

So that it is completely square,

with four gates and archways,

together with extensive portals.¹⁸

In addition, the earlier square shape much better reflects the origin of the mandala as purified and protected ritual space to which the deities are to be invited.¹⁹ The somewhat simpler visualised ground for the deity assembly may be imagined square as well.²⁰

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A consistent element in the Dunhuang drawings are the vajra-adorned crescents (*rdo rje rin chen gyis spras pa'i zla ba phyed pa*) in the corners of the palaces (Figures xxx).²¹ They are said to symbolise

17 *Vajramahābhairavatantra* (Siklós 1996: 28).

18 *Mahāvairocanottaratantra* VII,37 (Hodge 2003: 426). Other examples are *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhitāntra* II,19 and XVI,5 (Hodge 2003: 102–106, 314), the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (MacDonald 1962: frontispiece plan of the mandala described in chapter 2) and the *Hevajratāntra* I,10,19–20 and II,5,50–51 (Farrow and Menon 1992: 129, 254–55, on Snellgrove's pioneer translation, see note 34). In the *Savarodaya*, the form of the mandala remains unclear, but there are no descriptions of round elements (Tsuda 1974: chapter XVII).

19 *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, chapter 2 (MacDonald 1962: 100–101; Wallis 2002: 132). A similar square ritual space serves in the *rDo rje 'jigs byed kyi rtog pa'i rgyud* for the fire offering (Siklós 1996: 59–60). Even in a fairly modern ritual such as the Mani Rimdu, the square of the ritual space guides the ritual throughout (Kohn 1997: Figures 8.1–8.4, 8.7, 8.16, 8.17).

20 E.g. English (2002: 227–49). Often the texts are not explicit enough.

21 In the *Samvarodaya*, vajra-jewels (*vajraratna / rdo rje rin chen*) are described (Tsuda 1974: xvii, 35).

the thought of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*).²² On the basis of their position in the corners and occasionally also to the sides of the doors,²³ they may be interpreted as serving the grounding or fixation of the mandala palace walls. However, I have not yet come across an explanatory description of this element.

Commonly, arrows and/or ritual daggers (*k'la*) are used to stake out the mandala ground.²⁴ In the mandalas of P2012 (Figures 8), all three elements are present, the arrows staking out the ground, the *k'la* to the sides of the door and the crescent-vajras in the corners of the mandala.

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What then is round about the mandala? Since the mandala is described within the square, it must be the central round element to which the deities are invited that is termed mandala along with its deities. In his *Dharmamaṇḍalasūtra* [*sKyil 'khor gyi chos mdor bsdu pa*], a mnemonic verse-text of the second half of the eighth century systematically enumerating the different parts of the mandala and their symbolism,²⁵ Buddhaghūya describes four such centres, the lotus,²⁶ the wheel,²⁷ a cut of circle²⁸ and the triangle. Further, wrathful deities are occasionally shown in a circle of knife-blades. Buddhaghūya also states that these shapes serve different rituals, namely pacification, prosperity, subjugation and destruction (Lo Bue 1987: 221–24). A differentiation in the shape of the mandala according to different types of ritual certainly also underlies the four mandalas drawn in P2012 (Figures 3, 4 and 8).

Such an understanding of the term mandala is also supported by the fact that the assembly of deities, too, conforms to the interior of the mandala palace. This interpretation also explains why the fourth

22 Siklós (1996: 28–29).

23 Siklós (1996: 28–29, 80); Tsuda (1974: xvii–35).

24 E.g. *Mahāvairocanottaratantra* VII,28 (Hodge 2003: 424); for the practical application, cf. (Kohn 1997: 373–74, figs. 8.2, 8.16). In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, chapter 2, the square sacred ground is staked out with wooden posts that also serve to attach the five coloured threads all around the square (MacDonald 1962: 100–101; Wallis 2002: 132).

25 Lo Bue (1987). Buddhaghūya, alias Buddhagupta, was one of the most important commentators on early tantric texts and flourished in the 8th century.

26 See *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhitāntra* II-22 (Hodge 2003: 105).

27 E.g. *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* (Skorupski 1983: 27, 311).

28 The literal translation of *zla gam gru chad gzhu dbyibs* is still unclear to me, but given the similarities in usage, one may assume that Karmay (1988: 44B) reproduces the described shape.

assembly of the Nako Dharmadhatuvagisvaramaṅjuśrī mandala is actually represented outside the mandala proper (Figure 1). These non-Buddhist protective deities, who also occur in the Shingon mandala set, have from the very beginning been thought of as residing outside the palace and protecting it.²⁹ In Nako, this notion is still manifest, while in later versions of the same mandala these deities are represented in a band on the interior of the fire circle around the palace (Figure 9).³⁰

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The process of adjustment and systematisation is also visible in the marvellous Cakrasaṃvara mandala of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 10). The general form of the mandala represented there reminds one of the description in the *Samvarodaya* that also prescribes a six-armed central deity.³¹ The *Samvarodaya* says that the mandala is adorned with the eight charnel grounds in the middle of the vajra-cage (vajrapaṇjaramadhye, Tsuda 1974: XVII, 36). In the following verses, the charnel grounds are described in detail, and it is stated that they are crowded with yogins and siddhas (id. XVII, 36–45).

Indeed, in the painting, a vajra-chain surrounds the charnel grounds in a rectangle. Inside of this, the actual mandala is represented, now with a full vajra and fire circle around the palace. As Tsuda notes, the 13th century Sakyapa scholar Buton (Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub; 1290–1364), commenting on the *Samvarodaya*, reverses the relationship of *vajrapaṇjara* and charnel grounds on the basis of the understanding of his time. No wonder then, that in the Tibetan depictions the charnel grounds are sometimes represented inside and sometimes outside the vajra and fire-circles. However, either way, they are an integrative part of the mandala and much less representative of the ground in which the mandala has to be established, as is seen in the Metropolitan Museum thangka.

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The charnel grounds themselves are another interesting element that shows considerable change through time. Most of the elements described for them, regardless how much the textual sources diverge

29 Similar configurations are known from Dunkar cave 1 and Saspol-tse (only the right-hand part of the fourth assembly is preserved).

30 This type of representation is found in the Assembly Halls of Alchi and Sumda as well as on the ceiling of cave 2 in Dungkar (Luczanits 2004: fig. 132; Pritzker 1996: fig. 18).

31 To be sure, the 8-deity mandala of Cakrasaṃvara in The Metropolitan Museum of Art thangka follows the description in *Sadhanamala* 250 (see Chandra 2003: 695–99) while the *Samvarodaya* describes a 14-deity mandala (id. 697).

concerning their names, are comprehensive parts from the earliest textual sources onwards. The Mahāsiddhas, however, are seldom described and commonly not specified for them.

In Tibetan painting, there is a particular group of eight siddhas that occupies the charnel grounds. It is thought that this particular group has become prominent because of their representation in the charnel grounds. However, in a study dedicated to this group of eight siddhas, I have tried to demonstrate that the issue is more complex (Luczanits, in press-a).

As in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Cakrasaṃvara mandala, crowds of siddhas are an integrative part of early charnel ground depictions. However, it is not a group of eight distinctive siddhas that is represented heading those assemblies. Such a distinctive group as it is found in Tibetan painting can be traced back to the environment of the pupils of Phagmodrupa (Phag-mo-gru-pa, 1110–1170) with Jigten-gonpo ('Jig-rten-mgon-po, 1143–1217) or Drikung Rinpoche and his school taking a special role in canonising this group.

However, it is not the Drikung group that finally becomes canonised in Tibet, but a Sakyapa variant of it where Virūpa replaces Padmavajra among the eight.³² In addition, Virūpa takes the position in the western charnel ground, which in common mandala depictions is represented on top. This shift may well be explained by the political predominance of the Sakyapa school in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and the special role of this school in the systematisation of Tibetan Buddhism. The resulting group commonly has Indrabhūti in the bottom charnel ground (east) and features clockwise: Ḍombīheruka, Nāgārjuna, Ghaṇṭapa, Virūpa, Lūyipa, Kukkuripa, and Saraha.

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The same period and context is also responsible for yet another canonisation, namely the orientation of the secondary mandala deities. While it is clear that the main deity mostly faces east, the orientation of the other deities has been disputed. In the Shingon twin mandala, western Himalayan art and painted mandala assemblies, all deities face in the same direction as the main deity (Figure 11).³³

This may also occur in the Dunhuang drawings, but there is no consistency in this regard.³⁴ Later Tibetan mandala depictions follow

32 Curiously, in the Drikung group, Virūpa has been auxiliary to Indrabhūti in the group of eight.

33 This way of representation can be seen as a continuation of mandala assembly depictions (Figure 2).

the Metropolitan Cakrasaṃvara mandala (Figure 10) in that they represent the secondary deities facing the main image.³⁵

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The relationship of visualised mandala to depiction may account for another element that comes into the mandala at a fairly late stage, namely the *viśvavajra* as foundation of the mandala palace. Although a canonical element of the standard Tibetan depiction and later descriptions, this element is neither mentioned in the root texts I have looked at and referred to here, nor does it occur in the Dunhuang mandalas I have surveyed.

In the earliest examples of western Himalayan art, such as the Nako mandala referred to already, it is also not represented. By the time the monuments of Alchi and Dunkar were painted with different Yoga-tantra mandalas, the prongs of the *viśvavajra* only occasionally appear to the sides of the doors.³⁶

Since the *viśvavajra* is a regular element in the visualised mandala, but not described with the outlining of the mandala, it too appears to have been included in the latter in the course of its systematisation.

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It is unclear to me when the mandala actually became round on the outside. Buddhaguhya's *Dharmamaṇḍalasūtra* may well already assume a round exterior, but his formulation is too abbreviated to be clear.³⁷ By the time the Tibetans absorbed mandala rituals on a great

34 Note that in Figure 5, all deities face the central one while in Figure 6 all surrounding elements face outwards.

35 As I have been informed by Jeff Watt, Sakya Pandita discusses this point in detail in one of his communications.

36 Among the four major mandalas in the Alchi Dukhang, the Trailokyavijaya mandala does not have prongs. In Dunkar, the prongs are not depicted.

37 Generally, the terminology in which the mandala is described needs to be scrutinised in a separate project. Surrounded or embraced does not necessarily mean circular, as interpreted in the secondary literature arguably under the impression of the Tibetan mandala, and the metaphor of the wheel and its parts which is sometimes used may also be understood symbolically. However, the usage of wheel terminology may be an indicator of the period and context in which the mandala became round outside. A case in point is Snellgrove's translation of the *Hevajratāntra*, where he interprets *puṭa* / 'phar ma as meaning circle (Snellgrove 1959: 170), a translation I have not found in any of the relevant dictionaries. Consequently, his translation of *Hevajratāntra* II.5.50–51 gives the impression that the text actually describes a circle around the square palace. Taking the other occurrences of the word into account, *puṭa*, from *puṭ*–grasp, embrace, occurs in the descriptions of an inner and an outer group of deities inhabiting the mandala and defines their relative position. Farrow and Menon (1992) translate the word as enclosure/enclosing.

scale during the “later diffusion”, the mandala may thus well have been round already. It is this form that then was canonised by the eleventh century scholar Abhayakaragupta in his eminently influential trilogy featuring the the *Vajrāvalī* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.³⁸

Abhayakaragupta placed particular emphasis on the Kālacakra mandala, a mandala that had just become known in his time.³⁹ The Kālacakra includes and represents a cosmological system that postulates that the foundation of the cosmos consists in increasingly solid circles or disks stacked on top of each other. These circles forming the foundation of the universe are represented on the outside of the Kālacakra mandala just inside the fire-circle (Brauen 1997: xxx). Due to this intimate relationship with the imagination of the cosmos, the Kālacakra mandala had to be round outside. Thus, it may well have been the Kālacakra mandala that finally led to the shape of the standard Tibetan mandala depiction as we know it.

* * *

However, rudimentary this survey is, it is clear that the mandala assembly, the visualised mandala, the ritual space with the mandala drawn into it and the standard later depiction as it has been systematised in the Tibetan tradition are separate entities that should not be confounded with each other, especially when working with early textual and visual sources. Certainly, these different forms of the mandala have influenced each other over time, but it should not be taken as given that they all correlated with each other from the very beginning. In this perspective, it would certainly be worthwhile to study the historic development of the mandala anew.

The conception that the mandala has all its elements from the very beginning is, in fact, not only contradictory to human nature and development, but to the very tradition that established the usage of mandalas. After all, the mandala, drawn and visualised, is only a means for a practitioner that still has to be trained.

* * *

38 The third text is the *Jyotirmañjarī* that deals with the *homa* rituals. Until now, none of these eminently important texts, probably finished in the first decade of the 12th century (Bühnemann 1992: xvi), has been translated. However, they are integrative part of a number of studies (Bhattacharyya 1981; Bühnemann and Tachikawa 1991; Lee 2004, 2003; de Mallmann 1986; Mori 1997). On the important Tibetan mandala sets based on the *Vajrāvalī*, see e.g. Leidy and Thurman (1997: 21, 22, 24–26); Huntington and Bangdel (2003: 306–326) and Heller (2004).

39 Martin Brauen's study of mandalas (1997) largely depends on the Kālacakra mandala as well.

When taking things up as the object of mind,
even the unagitated lord is brought down.
The circle of the mandala brings wholly to ruin
the Buddhas, the world,
all the goddesses and wrathful protectors.⁴⁰

* * *

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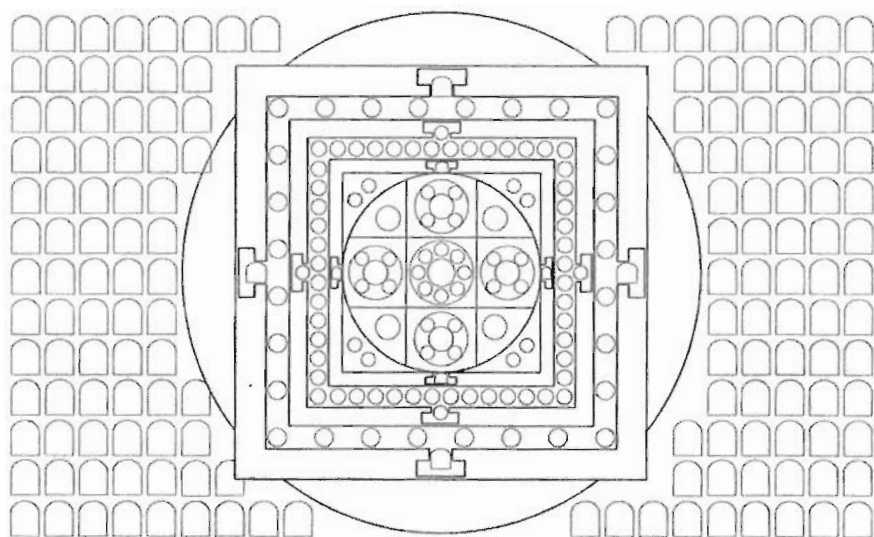


Figure 1: Schematic drawing of the Nako Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇjuśrī maṇḍala, C. Luczanits.



Figure 2: Mandala assembly of eight Bodhisattvas surrounding a Buddha, Ellora, Cave 12, photo: C. Luczanits 1998 17,43, WHAV.

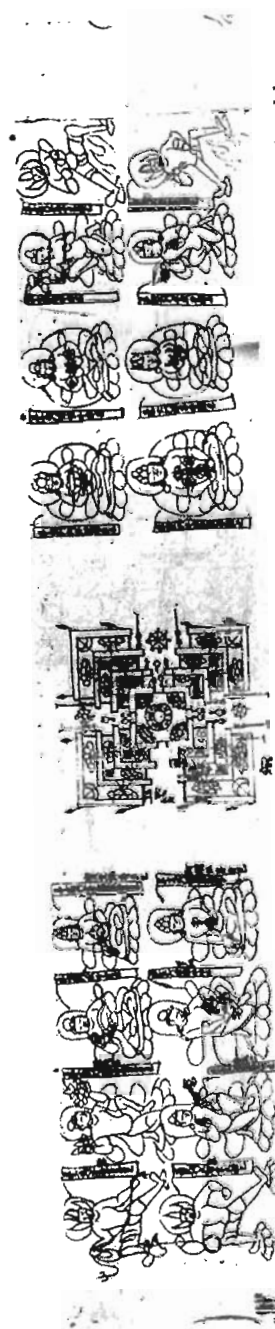


Figure 3: The first mandala and its assembly of P2012: four Jinas, four secondary Jinas, for offering gods/goddesses and four gate-keepers flanking the mandala (after *Dunhuang bao zang* 112,101-102).

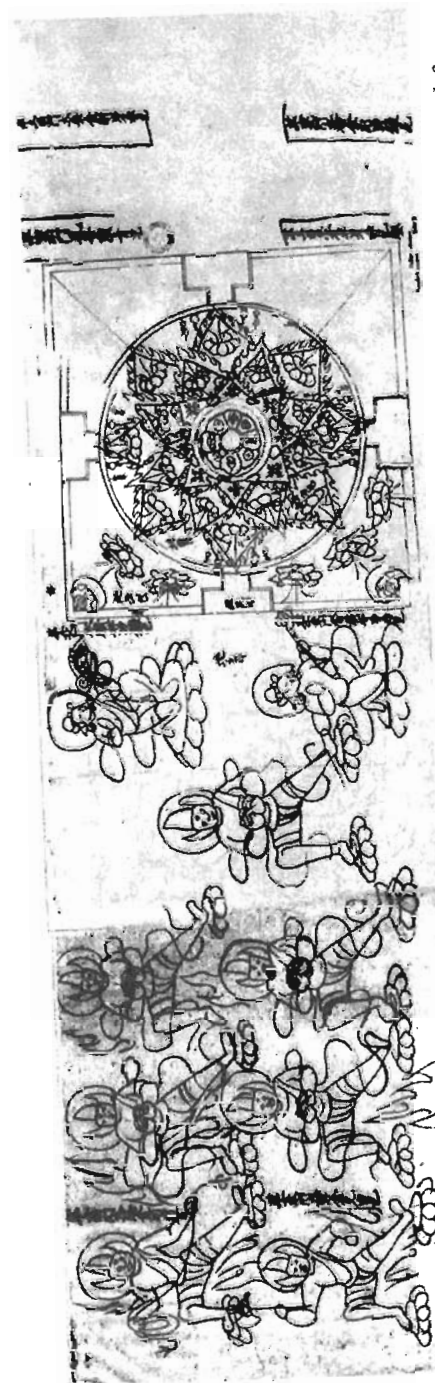


Figure 4: The fourth mandala and its assembly of P2012: four offering gods/goddesses, ten wrathful Jinas and four gate-keepers (only those on the left depicted; after *Dunhuang bao zang* 112,97-99).

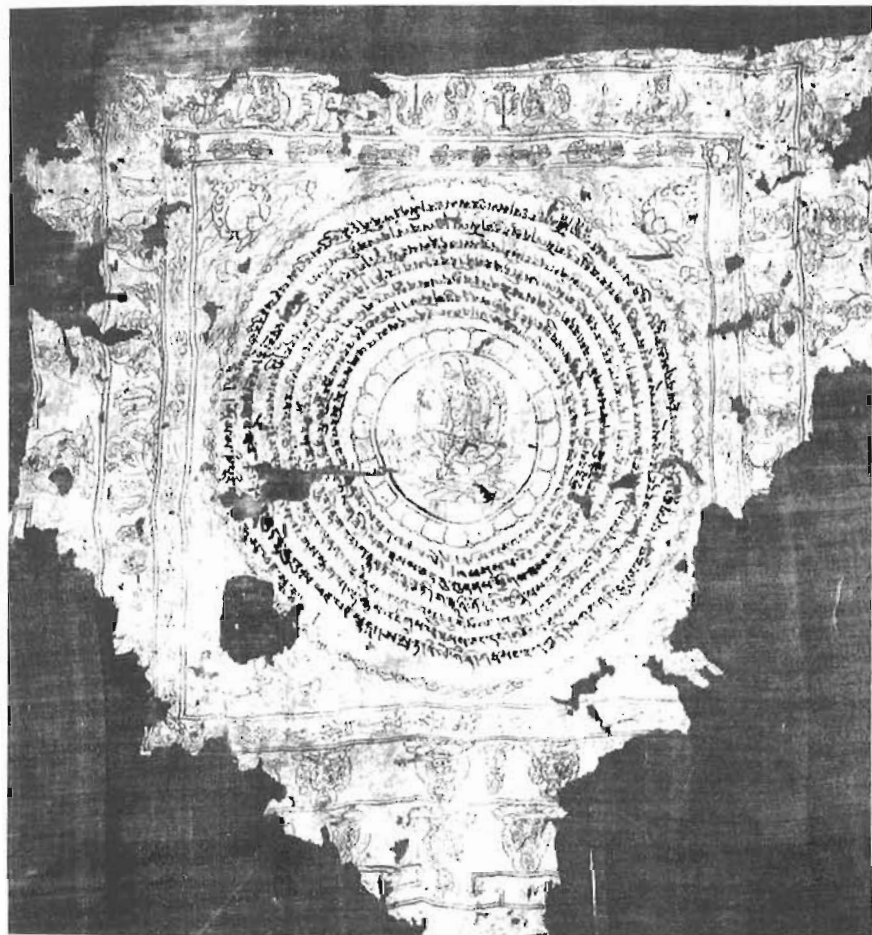


Figure 5: Avalokiteśvara Maṇḍala (after Whitfield 1982: I, fig. 50).



Figure 6: Maṇḍala with wrathful deity (after Giès 1994: I, 50).

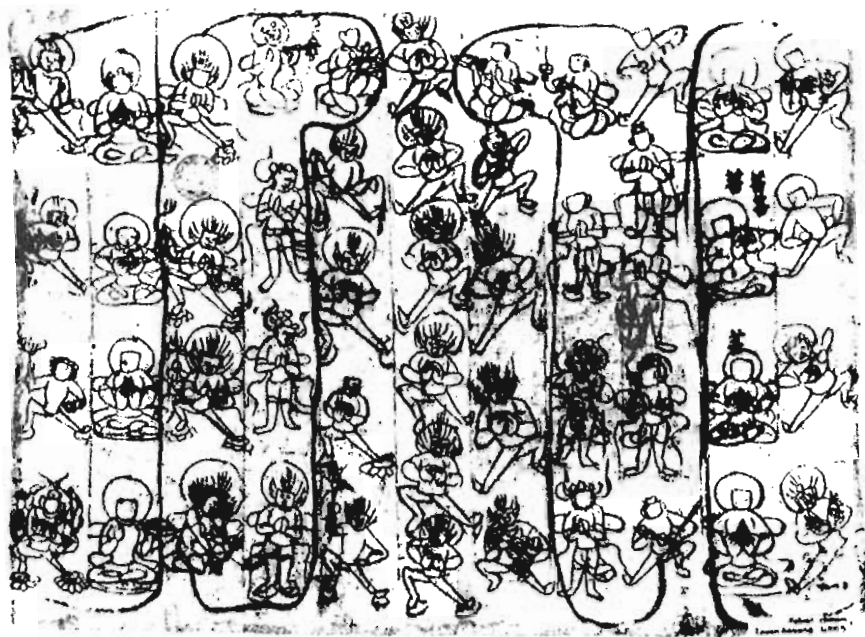


Figure 7: Maṇḍala assembly with ten wrathful deities in the centre
(after *Dunhuang bao zang* 132,477 bottom).

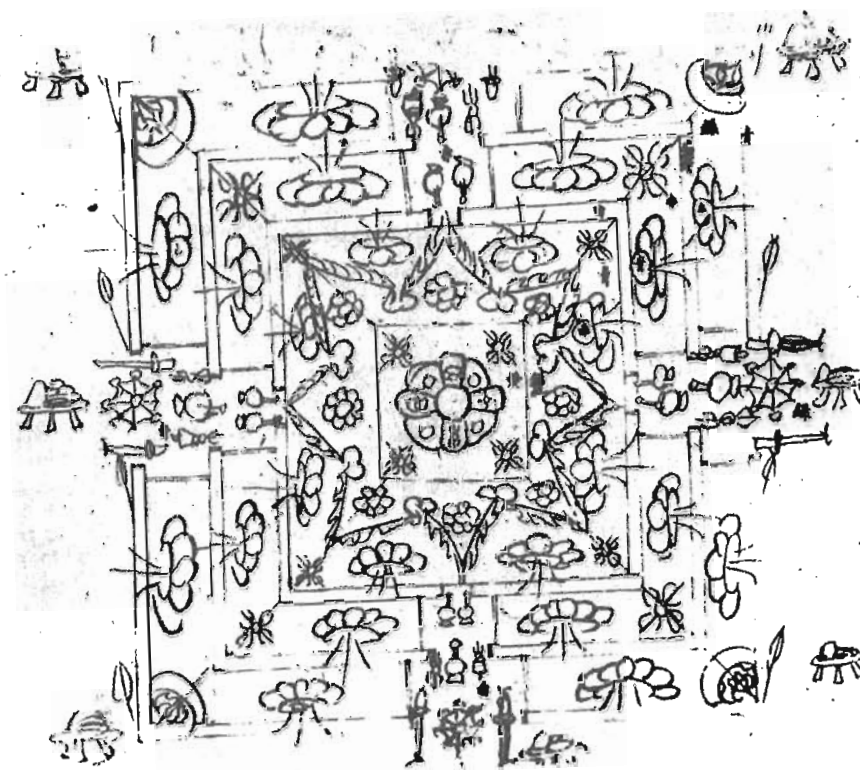


Figure 8: The third maṇḍala of P2012
(after *Dunhuang bao zang* 112,98 bottom)

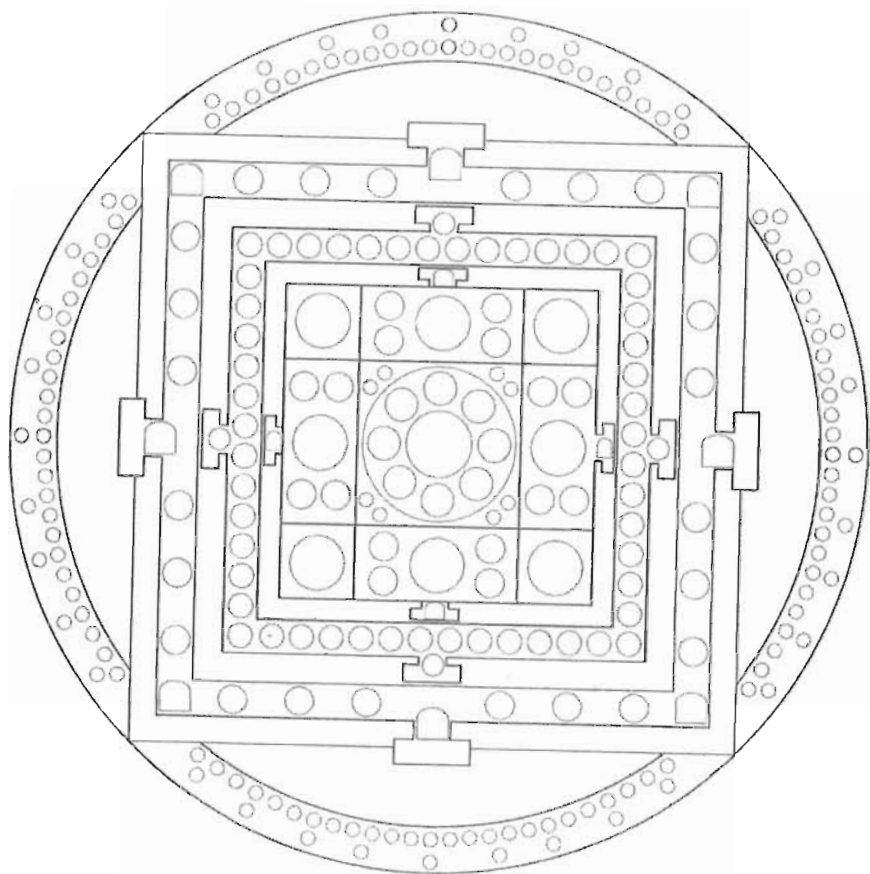


Figure 9: Schematic drawing of the Sumda, Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramañjuśrī Maṇḍala, C. Luczanits

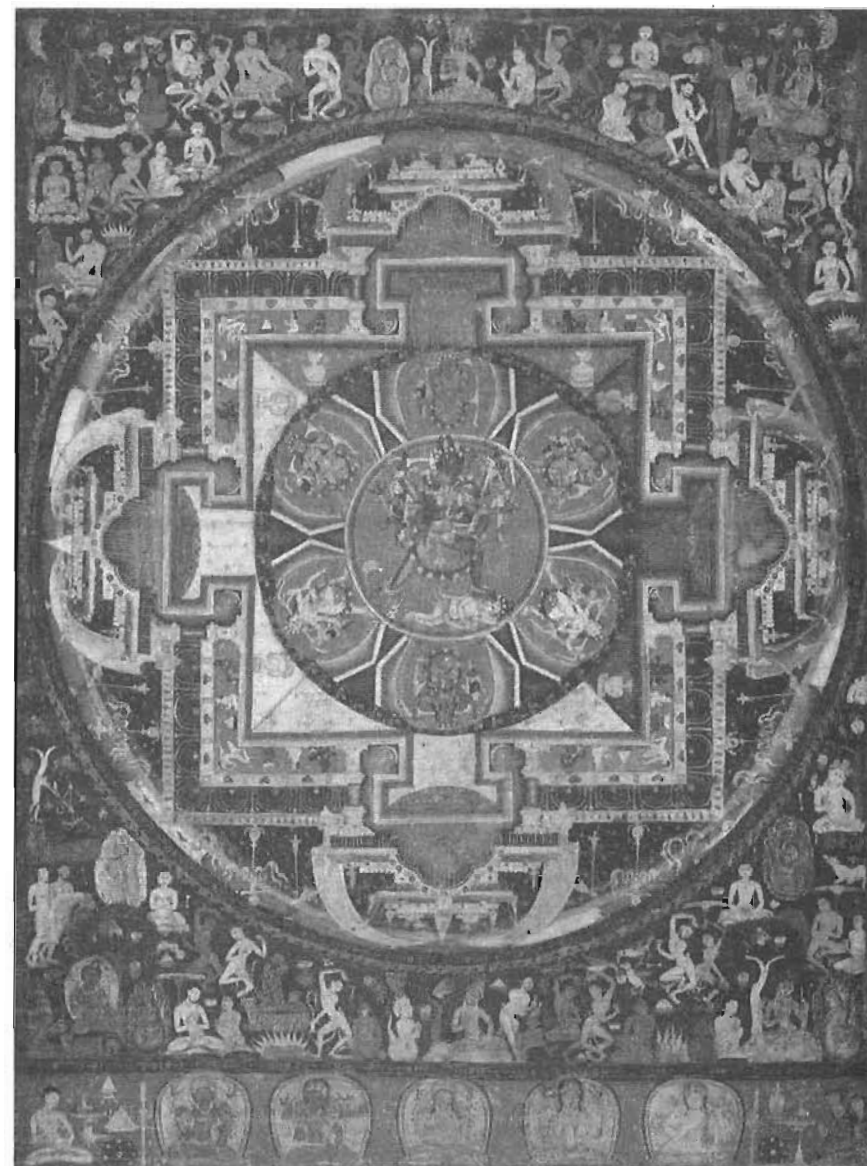


Figure 10: Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund (1995.233)

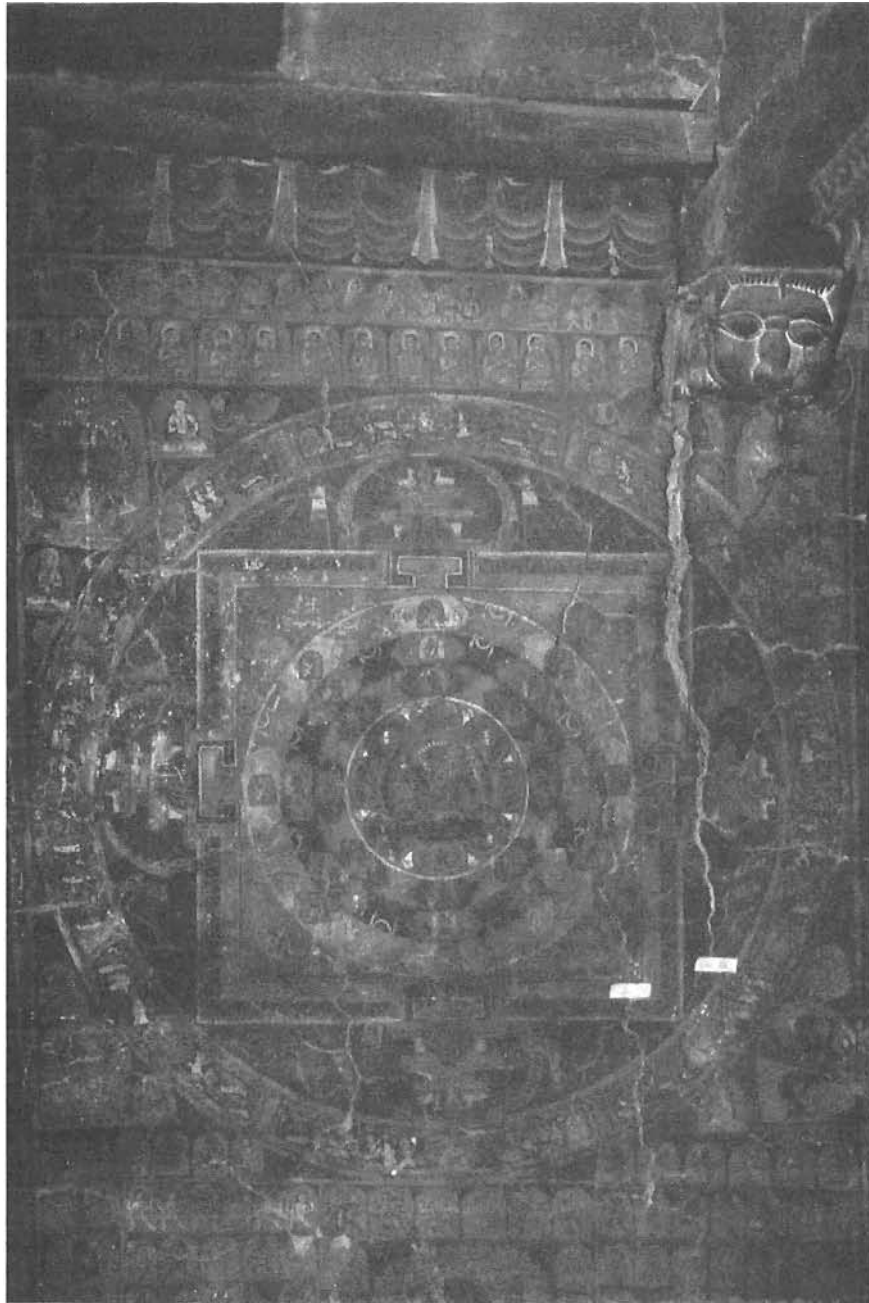


Figure 11: Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala, Wanla, photo: C. Luczanits 2003 10,12

Practice and Meditation

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Preface

This publication is a collection of papers presented at the four-day "International Conference on Mahayana Buddhism: History and Culture" organized by Tibet House at India International Centre of New Delhi in November 2005. The inspiration for this conference had come from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's keenness to promote a scientific and comprehensive study of the various aspects of Mahayana Buddhism including the history, art, literature and symbolism.

Mahayana Buddhism has thriven on logic and analysis, profound exercises in Shamatha and Vipashyana, and a relentless scientific scrutiny and study of the mind. It does not fight shy of the tests of contemporary scientific investigation and sees no reason why open-minded scientific inquiry should ignore the findings that the Mahayana tradition holds dear.

Eminent scholars and participants from sixteen countries gathered to explore 'synchronical' possibilities in order to gain insights. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has very kindly gave the inaugural address and Ven. Bhikkhu Pasadika, Hon. Prof. at Phillips-University Marburg, Germany the Keynote Address. Prof. Dr. Michael Hahn, Phillips-University Marburg, Germany; Prof. Jose Cabezon, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA; Prof. M. Darrol Bryant, University of Waterloo, Canada; Prof. Linnart Mall, University of Tartu, Estonia; Prof. Dr. Shunzo Onoda, Bukkyo University, Japan; Prof. Deborah Klimburg-Salter, University of Vienna, Austria; Dr. Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner, Museum of Indian Art in Berlin, Germany; Dr. Christian Luczanits, University of Vienna, Austria; Prof. Ram Shankar Tripathi and Prof. Geshe Yeshe Thabke from Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath; Prof. Ramesh Chandra Tiwari, Chief Editor of the Encyclopedia of Himalayan Studies; Prof. Hari Shankar Prasad, University of Delhi; Dr. Wangchuk Dorjee Negi and Dr. Jampa Samten from Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath; Dr. Mathew Varghese, University of Madras and others were the speakers of the conference.