The art of Kashmir has long been established as one of the main sources of early Western Himalayan art. There is much evidence to support this, ranging from invitations of Kashmiri artists and collecting Kashmiri works of art in Western Tibet to the regional adoption of a distinctive art style that was inspired by the art of Kashmir. However, except for the collecting of artworks, which is recorded through the addition of inscriptions on imported objects, the available evidence is largely anecdotal, and direct associations with preserved sculptures or paintings can rarely be established. In addition, the variations in early Western Tibetan art raise the question as to which of the works are truly Kashmiri, in other words, directly dependent on artists or art from the Valley of Kashmir and which works are an offshoot.

In my previous study of early Western Tibetan art, that is, art made during the Purang-Guge kingdom, which flourished mainly in the eleventh century, I differentiated three distinct stylistic strands, all of them with some link to the art of northwestern India. One of these strands certainly relates very closely to the art of Kashmir, a conclusion supported by the biography of the Great Translator Rinchen Zangpo (lo tshā ba Rin chen bstan pa, 958–1055), which reports that he once brought thirty-two artists from Kashmir to Western Tibet. In my analysis of the visual evidence that survives from this period, the relevance of this account is overemphasized in the secondary literature ever since Giuseppe Tucci published his groundbreaking study of the life of the Great Translator, essentially claiming a Kashmiri derivation for all early Western Himalayan art. Given the variety within early Western Himalayan art, I have tried to take a more cautious stance; more important I have tried to differentiate art that directly relates to the Srinagar Valley from that which is a product of Greater Kashmir, by which I mean the wider region around Srinagar that may, at least in Tibetan literature, be referred to by the same name. For me the art of the Kashmir Valley is highly distinctive, as Pratapaditya Pal has repeatedly shown.

However, whereas distinct artistic schools and stylistic trends are obvious, some are more closely related to Kashmiri art than others, and their distinction over...
time becomes blurred in the Western Himalayas. This is most apparent through the Alchi group of monuments in Lower Ladakh—and thus close to Kashmir—which likely represents Kashmiri art (or something very close to it) within rather confined geographical and temporal parameters. Rethinking the evidence and taking new finds into account, I recognize that the distinctions I made earlier between three styles of early Western Himalayan art, mainly on the basis of the sculpture preserved in the Western Himalayan region, must be amended to allow for a larger number of principal workshops; greater artistic freedom to adapt or borrow styles, especially in painting; and the continuous cultural and artistic exchange between the regions. Rather than trying to differentiate distinctive styles and naming them—in this regard I do largely adhere to the names I have suggested earlier—I will focus on the relationship between works of art and speculate what they may express in terms of the relationship to Kashmiri art, workmanship, and origin. What is suggested below does not represent a comprehensive picture but is largely based on an attempt to place the works in the exhibition within the larger framework of Western Himalayan monuments and the chronology I developed for them in my study of the clay sculpture of the region.

EARLY REFLECTIONS OF KASHMIR

The first group I distinguish is characteristic of the earliest monuments of the Western Himalayan region. The group’s most important examples are the oldest paintings and sculptures preserved in the Main Temple at Tabo, in the Spiti valley, which are attributed to the foundation of the temple in the late tenth century. These include the sculptures inside and in front of the Cella (Fig. 2.1), the murals in the Entry Hall, and the paintings on cloth attached to the ceiling of the Cella and the surrounding Ambulatory (Fig. 2.2). Characteristics of this group include a certain stiffness in the body, a disproportionate relationship between parts of the body and elongated, stiff limbs, and more freely executed facial features, such as the alignment and symmetry of the eyes. Also noteworthy are the V-shaped upper body and the proportionally large head. Contemporaneous sculptures of this style are also preserved at Ropa, in Upper Kinnaur and in bronze. Good bronze examples of this type include a standing eleven-headed and six-armed form of Avalokiteśvara in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 2.3) and a seated image of the same figure in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Fig. 2.4). These two bronzes also share the extreme projection of the side heads and rather simple jewelry and textile patterns, and the depiction of their dhoti at the level of the belt is somewhat illogical, indicating a copying process rather than an originally conceived work of art. To be sure, there is a considerable difference in quality between the two bronzes, the Cleveland bodhisattva being much more refined than the Los Angeles bronze and in many ways closer to Kashmiri art. A point of interest is that the Cleveland bodhisattva does not wear a sacred thread at all, whereas that of the Los Angeles bronze disappears under the belt line. This detail is crucial; to me it indicates that the artist of this expressive work did not come from an Indian culture familiar with Hindu customs, and so was not Kashmiri but rather local, that is, from a Western Himalayan region. Of the early Western Himalayan styles, this is the least sophisticated and uniform, and each of its examples
has unique characteristics. The style also lacks a clear successor, as only the sculptures of the Golden Temple (gSer khang) in Lalung could be considered a late variant. Earlier I followed Klimburg-Salter, who conflated all early art objects lacking a certain degree of sophistication and associated with a Tibetan cultural context, regardless of whether they derived from Western Tibet or Dunhuang, into a single stylistic group, but with increased refinement in our knowledge and in the classification of Tibetan art, the designation of a "Himalayan style" has lost its meaning. Considering the localized character of this style and the fact that it is limited to the earliest preserved monuments and bronzes dated to about 1000 CE, I continue to call it the early Western Tibetan style. The relationship of this style to that of Kashmir is easily discernible if one compares those works to the a bronze donated during the reign of Queen Diddā (980–1003), a chronological benchmark for the later art of Kashmir, which bears some characteristics similar to this style but is more softly modeled and much more sophisticated in the rendering of the jewelry and textiles (Fig. 2.5). Note how the sacred thread falls above all other clothing and forms an elegant bow across the upper body, and also the intertwined eight-shaped knot that is part of the seat’s decoration. Figure 2.6 represents a rather coarsely modeled variant of the same composition as the Queen Diddā bronze, depicting the six-armed Avalokiteśvara flanked by two goddesses, either two forms of Tārā or Tārā and Bhūkuti, but with the deities now seated on a rock base occupied by animals and accompanied by kneeling donors. Given its similarities to the Queen Diddā bronze and the facial features, this bronze was probably made in Kashmir about the same time. Note that these bronzes share the low forehead and wide open eyes also characteristic of the early Western Tibetan style. Clearly, the art found in the earliest Western Tibetan monuments is not identical to Kashmiri art of the same period but rather reflects a corpus of works from Kashmir in a slightly less sophisticated local form.

KASHMIRI ARTISTS IN WESTERN TIBET

Together, the two Kashmiri bronzes of the seated six-armed Avalokiteśvara (Figs. 2.5 and 2.6) provide a good basis for identifying art possibly made by craftsmen from Kashmir in Western Tibet, and thus provide visual parameters to evaluate the story of Kashmiri artists brought there by Rinchen Zangpo. To me the strongest candidates to support this story have been preserved in two early chörten (Tibetan stupas; mchod rten) around the temple of Yeshe'Od (Ye shes 'od) in Tholing, which were probably constructed in the second or third decade of the eleventh century. As Amy Heller discovered, the bronze from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art discussed above (Fig. 2.4) bears a Tibetan inscription naming the donor, who was also one of the principal donors of the northwestern chörten at Tholing, a fact that certainly supports the early eleventh-century date and a local workmanship.
The depiction of the offering goddess Lāsyā (Fig. 2.7), one of the secondary figures flanking the standing Buddha image on the main wall of the northwestern chörten, compares closely to the goddesses seen on the Kashmiri bronzes illustrated by Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6, with the Queen Dādā bronze more closely related. Despite the differences in medium, details such as the veil and the ornamentation of the hair clearly relate the works to each other. The Tholing chörten paintings are remarkable for their distinctive stylistic features, most notably the straight continuation of the nose line from the forehead (best seen in profile) and the set-back but clearly marked chin, both of which are seen in a similarly prominent manner in Figure 2.7. Long-haired bearded males wearing short, light cotton vests with horizontal bands across the upper arms (Fig. 2.8) and perfectly rendered lively animal figures, the latter ones shaded in red. A more detailed work may also identify some other features as distinctively Kashmiri, in particular certain costumes or textile patterns. But, as we will see, it is likely that many of these distinctive elements entered a pool of motifs that were reused occasionally in later eleventh- and twelfth-century Western Tibetan painting.

COLLECTING BRONZES

The early Western Tibetan style preserved in some of the earliest art in the region and in some exceptional bronzes differs considerably from Kashmiri artworks of the same period that were collected in Western Tibet. Examples include a considerable group of bronzes that by inscription are associated with the son of the Western Tibetan king Ye-shes 'od (Ye shes ’od), known by the Indian name Nāgarāja (NA ga r ā dza). Judging from the bronzes he had in his possession, among them very early and extremely sophisticated works from Gilgit and Kashmir, Nāgarāja was a true connoisseur of Western Himalayan bronzes. These imported early bronzes are of less concern in the present context, however, than those likely produced close to or during Nāgarāja’s lifetime, such as the standing Śākyamuni in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 2.10).

This refined, large bronze is unusually worn around the face, which indicates a pattern of ritual usage over a considerable span of time as is practiced in India. This may mean that it was made and worshiped in Kashmir before it entered Nāgarāja’s collection, but not necessarily. The collector himself and his brother Devarāja were brought up and educated with Indian culture, probably given Indian names, which may indicate that they were brought up and educated with Indian culture, probably in the Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 1966.30 (98.1 x 28.2 cm) Kashmir, late 10th–early 11th century Brass with silver and copper inlay, 38 9/16 x 11 1/16 in. (97.9 x 28.2 cm) Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 1966.30

Kashmiri, in mind. However that may be, the exquisite modeling of the body covered by an almost transparent robe and the elegant trirahula stance, as well as the elongated features, make it more likely that this is a Kashmiri rather than a Western Tibetan work. A Kashmiri origin is also hinted at in the story associated with the famous image of Khartse, an Avalokiteśvara image ordered by Rinchen Zangpo in the memory and size of his father (Fig. 2.11). In terms of sophistication and bodily proportions, this image closely resembles the Cleveland Buddha (Fig. 2.10) and may be a somewhat later product of the same workshop. Two con-
trasting details are particularly noteworthy about these two images, one adding to the sophistication, the other indicating a workshop production rather than the hand of a master. The shape of the halo follows the elegant stance of the figures and is thus leaning in the direction of the side toward which the hip is directed. However, a few details of clothing on both images are rendered in ways that are poorly conceived and contrast with the sophistication of the representation of the body. In the case of the Cleveland Buddha, the lower garment is modeled in a rather schematic manner, and the way the end of the robe is held in the left hand and relates to the garment itself does not make much sense. In the case of the Khartse bodhisattva, similar, less sophisticated details include the ribbons covering the knot behind the ear and the relationship of the upper rim of the garment to the belt.

The strongly V-shaped upper body and elongated limbs of these bronzes relate them to the sculptures of the early Western Tibetan style, but now the upper body is structured in three clearly demarcated parts, a voluminous chest, a relatively straight lower torso, and a pronounced navel area. There are also marked differences, such as the considerably higher forehead area, the complexity and detailing of the jewelry and clothing, and the dominance of the uṣṇīṣa, in case of the Buddha, or crown, in the case of the bodhisattva. Even though these sculptures are likely also products of Kashmiri artists, they represent a strain of Kashmiri art that differs from both the Queen Diddā bronze and the Tholing chörten.

Thus, we have at least three distinct and roughly contemporaneous art schools active in Western Tibet in the first decades of the eleventh century, but even this may be a grossly simplified picture. From the evidence surveyed so far, we may also conclude that, probably for economic reasons, Kashmiri artists were not present in Western Tibet during the first major phase of artistic production in the late tenth century but became directly involved in a second phase through both works imported from Kashmir and working on site in Western Tibet.

The tripartite upper body is a feature typical of the majority of contemporaneous bronzes that bear an inscription referring to Nāgaraja, but most of the smaller ones are stylistically closer to the early Western Tibetan style than the large, more sophisticated works imported from Kashmir. Although it does not bear such an inscription, the seated Bodhisattva Maitreya from the Los Angeles County Museum is an excellent example of the style of many of these smaller works (Fig. 1.35). It combines features from all three groups discussed so far: the facial features of the early Western Tibetan style, the hair of contemporaneous Kashmiri works, the scarf of the Tholing chörten, and the tripartite upper body, as well as the Kashmiri facial features mentioned above. I believe such bronzes are also imported, as only in Kashmir could all these elements come together.

Fig. 2.11
Khartse Avalokiteśvara commissioned by Rinchen Zangpo
Kashmir, early 11th century
Bronze with inlays in copper and silver and painted
Photograph by Thomas J. Pritzker, 1999

Fig. 2.12 (opposite)
Matjūvajra
Himachal Pradesh, 11th century
Leaded copper-zinc-tin alloy with silver inlay, 9 1/8 x 7 1/8 x 5 1/8 in.
(22.2 x 18.1 x 13 cm) with base
Rubin Museum of Art, C2004.14.3 (RAR 65399)
Photograph by Bruce M. White

Land Buddha, the lower garment is modeled in a rather schematic manner, and the way the end of the robe is held in the left hand and relates to the garment itself does not make much sense. In the case of the Khartse bodhisattva, similar, less sophisticated details include the ribbons covering the knot behind the ear and the relationship of the upper rim of the garment to the belt.
Another likely import is a Guhyasamāja Mañjuśrī image of the Rubin Museum of Art (Fig. 2.12). Although clearly related to works from Kashmir, stylistically this image does not fit into any of the groups we have discussed so far. Instead, the highly abstracted triple crescent crown, the facial features with slanting eyes, a prominent nose and bulging lips, and the seat with almost horizontal lotus petals are quite different from the Kashmiri works. This suggests that this bronze should be attributed to a region different from but adjoining Kashmīr, such as areas of Himachal Pradesh.

In my earlier work I used the sculptures (Fig. 2.14) and paintings (Fig. 2.2) representing the local early Western Tibetan style to define a Western Tibetan style, which I saw as a distinct art style and possibly deriving from another northwestern Indian region, such as the area where the Sutlej reaches the Indian plains. I had termed this style Western Tibetan, since most examples are found within or close to the core area of the Purang-Guge kingdom. Furthermore, it is this style that developed into local Western Tibetan painting schools and that is referenced in the art of the later Guge kingdom.

In contrast to the Kashmiri style represented by the Tabo Chorten (Fig. 2.7), all articulations of the body in the Western Tibetan style are very smoothly modeled. In painting, this smoothness is achieved by much more careful outline. In the Western Tibetan style are very smoothly modeled.

Thus by 1042 CE the sculptures (Fig. 2.1) and paintings (Fig. 2.2) represent the local early Western Tibetan style were partially replaced by new ones, which superseded them not only in material quality but also in craftsmanship. It is noteworthy that the origin of the masters and craftsmen who were gathered to renovate the Tabo Main Temple is not mentioned in the inscription.

PIOUS COMMISSIONS

We cannot know if the last works discussed above were bought on occasion or commissioned specifically, but there are clear cases for the latter recorded in texts and inscriptions. Despite its large size, the Kharṣī Avalokiteśvara preserved at Kamru, in the Sangla Valley of Kinnaur (Fig. 2.11),23 provides greater insight into the commissioning of Kashmiri related objects. Amy Heller has considerably improved our understanding of the inscription in her 2008 interpretation, especially in recognizing the misapplied reference to the paṇḍita Virāhabhadra referred to at the beginning of the inscription.24 However, I am deviating slightly from her interpretation with regard to the role of Virāhabhadra. In my reading, the inscription states that, in accordance with a ritual practice established by paṇḍita Vīryabhadra, images of the Protectors of the Three Families, that is the three bodhisattvas Mahājñāna, Avalokiteśvara, and Vaiṣṇāpa, were commissioned by the great minister Lugön (Klu mgon) of the Mer (sMer) clan and his family for the merit of the deceased Shetsen (Shes stsan), former great minister of the Mer clan, ending with the wish that his sins and those of all sentient beings may be purified. Thus, the four-armed Avalokiteśvara must have been the principal image in a triad whose other two images have not come to light. As Amy Heller has summarized, Virāhabhadra collaborated with Rinchhen Zango and was probably active in Western Tibet during the second quarter of the eleventh century. The inscription, however, does not imply that Virāhabhadra was active in making or consecrating the image; it states only that the ritual practice was his.25 This does not change the fact that the appearance of his name allows us to conclude that the bronze was likely made during or shortly after his activities in the Western Tibetan region.

Stylistically this sculpture relates more to the Nāgarāja group of smaller bronzes than to the Kharṣī Avalokiteśvara. In the available photographs, Figure 2.13 is somewhat distorted by the top angle and has to be compared with the photographs published by Laxman Thakur,26 the facial features appear close to Kashmīri works, but the bodily proportions are slightly out of balance, with a massive head atop a powerful upper body on relatively short and thin legs. Given the mention of the Indian scholar and his cooperation with Rinchhen Zango, the bronze was most likely commissioned and made in the region of Tholing.27 To me both the proportions of the figure and the fact that the sacred thread (yajñopavīta) is slightly covered by the belt exclude the hand of a Kashmīri master. It was instead made by a Western Tibetan master trained in Kashmīr or by a Kashmīri. As Amy Heller has noted,28 a local Western Tibetan production is often also indicated by an unfinished back, whereas Kashmīri productions are usually finished all around. However, this fact cannot be used as a criterion in this case, as the back is quite well finished,29 and even in Kashmīri works the back receives much less attention than the front and is occasionally unfinished.

This analysis of works from the Western Himalayas, which I saw as a conservatively inclined tendency that is characteristic of Western Himalayan Buddhism art during the first half of the eleventh century:

- an interest in producing high-quality works of art
- an interest in importing works of different northwestern Indian heritage, especially bronzes
- an interest in custom-made imports
- a continued interest in locally made works based on Kashmīri models.

In my reading, the interest in custom-made imports represents a second phase, possibly triggered by the high-quality works that had been imported earlier. That is the phase when the urge to invite artists directly from Kashmīr must have been strongest. It is in this setting we have to understand the Tabo Main Temple inscription, which dates only forty-six years after the foundation of the temple, assumed to have taken place in 990 CE.
The faces in the Western Tibetan images appear rounder than in the Kashmiri style, and the lips are not wider than the bottom of the nose, only the grooves to the sides of the mouth project this common width (Fig. 2.16). The eyes are relatively narrow, rounded at top and bottom and elongated toward the outside.

More or less contemporary examples of the Western Tibetan style are the few paintings documented by More or less contemporary examples of the Western Tibetan monuments (Fig. 2.16).39 The styles found on this cover unite what I defined as characteristically Kash-miri, visible in the secondary figures on the cover, with elements of the paintings of the Tabo renovation phase, as can be seen in the Buddha figures and the peculiar way their robes are rendered.40 Obviously, it remains unclear how representative the painting on that cover might be, but since similar wide-ranging variations can be seen in the same sculptural style of the time. But if this is the case, where was the workshop that produced these more sophisticated, painterly work from? As mentioned above and as indicated by the book cover, Kashmir is certainly the possible original source for both styles, but like the bronze, the Tabo paintings indicate a more complex origin for the artists. Given that their origin is not mentioned in the inscription, we must consider the Tabo paintings to be the product of two workshops that were dominated by locals or by artists who had already settled in the Western Himalayas. This scenario also explains why it is the main style of Tabo that later dominated Western Himalayan art. Thus, regardless of its ultimate derivation, the designation of this style as Western Tibetan is still appropriate.

Fig. 2.15
Bodhisattva Vajragarbha
Tabo Main Temple, Ambulatory, c. 1040
Photograph by Jaroslav Poncar, 1984 (WHAV, 267)

Fig. 2.16
Book cover with teaching Buddha
Kashmir, late 10th or early 11th century
Pigment on wood, 15 x 5 in. (38 x 7.5 cm)
Private Collection

Fig. 2.14
Bodhisattva Vajrabhairava
Tabo Main Temple, Assembly Hall, south wall (524), ca. 1040 CE
Photograph by Jaroslav Poncar, 1984 (WHAV, 66)

ART AND OBJECTS

Fig. 2.17
Buddhist temple in the northwestern part of the Tabo Assembly Hall, including the life of the Buddha located there. The latter paintings have harder outlines and simpler decorative details, and are thus of lower quality. A comparison of the halos of the goddesses alone makes these differences clear, but the figures themselves are different in almost every detail, including the proportions of the body. When one compares the outlines of the bodies, the shabddi, and the scarf and its relationship to the long pearl garland, there is no doubt that both workshops worked from the same basic scheme. To complicate matters, the works produced by both workshops throughout the monument vary greatly in quality, resulting in a smooth transition between the works produced by the two groups. However, regardless of the finishing the products of the different workshops can be recognized from the rendering of certain details, most tell- ing among them the navel area. In examples of the more sophisticated workshop the navel is set below the double lines marking the waist, whereas in the other workshop it is set between these lines, as is common in early Western Himalayan painting and also the Tholing chörten.

Should then the latter harder and more drawing oriented style be more closely associated with Kashmir? This is certainly a possibility, since it appears to be consistent with the sculptural style of the time. But if this is the case, where was the workshop that produced the more sophisticated, painterly work from? As mentioned above and as indicated by the book cover, Kashmir is certainly the possible original source for both styles, but like the bronze, the Tabo paintings indicate a more complex origin for the artists. Given that their origin is not mentioned in the inscription, we must consider the Tabo paintings to be the product of two workshops that were dominated by locals or by artists who had already settled in the Western Himalayas. This scenario also explains why it is the main style of Tabo that later dominated Western Himalayan art. Thus, regardless of its ultimate derivation, the designation of this style as Western Tibetan is still appropriate.

EARLY BOOK ILLUMINATIONS

A complex origin is also demonstrated by recent work done on the book illuminations acquired by Tucci in Tholing in 1933 and now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.* As Paul Harrison has shown, the illu- minations of five folios discussed here all belong to the
same manuscript, volume three (Ga) of a Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, the Perfection of Wisdom in Hundred Thousand Verses. As usual, the text was written first, and space was left for the illustrations. Only recently, the faint traces of red letters in an Indic script have been noticed at the bottom of each illumination. The traces do not allow identifying the script or deciphering the text, but it is likely that these were working annotations for the painters who filled in the illuminations. This further shows that Indian, most likely Kashmiri, painters were active in Western Tibet and worked in cooperation with local writers and artists on these manuscripts.

As with the Tabo murals, the depictions on the folios are unusually lavish in material, quality, and variation. Folio 41 features a depiction of the offering goddess Vajralāsyā, identified as personification of the Perfection of Charity (Fig. 2.19), and folio 80 illustrates the offering goddess Vajradhūpā, identified as the personification of Perfection of Insight (Fig. 2.20). Together the two goddesses effectively reveal the style of these illuminations and the variety that can be seen in the same manuscript. Compared to the Tabo goddesses, the body of each figure is somewhat slimmer and elongated, as is the face, in which the chin is relatively pronounced. The garments and jewelry are very similar, but the crown elements touch each other and the clothing patterns are more complex and varied. As at Tabo, the goddesses do not wear veils or bodices. Note that with Vajralāsyā the scarf falls the same way as in Tabo, but with Vajradhūpā it simply lies on the shoulder. Further variations are visible in the decoration and edge of the crowns and in the rendering of the hairline, the garland, and the application of the dress pattern onto the dhotī. A unique feature is the casual way in which the fall of the colorful long necklace is rendered in these depictions. The bird-shaped incense burner held by Vajradhūpā provides a glimpse of high-end material culture of the time.

The male figure of Buddha Ratnasambhava (Fig. 2.21) is the only one in the group whose body is represented frontally. Its main features are delineated in crisp lines, but the body itself is delicately modeled through shading. This is particularly apparent in the areas of the chest and navel, but also in the fact that most of the facial features are expressed through shading. The crown is five pointed, and the knots behind the ear holding it are nicely articulated, the one on his left side drawn a bit too massive and lower, and the earrings are standing off at an angle. The large jewel pendants hanging from the necklace over the chest are remarkable and probably hint at the identity of the Buddha. The double-string sacred thread disappears straight into the dhotī. The Bodhisattva Vajrabhāṣa (Fig. 2.22), the personification of Absolute Wisdom, is shown in a more serene and contemplative pose, with the vajra in the left hand and the lotus on the lap. The dhotī is draped in a more flowing manner, and the hair is styled in a traditional fashion with a gem-studded crown.

The images of the goddesses and the Buddha are richly colored, with the use of gold and other metallic pigments giving them a lustrous appearance. The folios are also decorated with intricate patterns and geometric motifs, typical of the artistic style of the period. The attention to detail and the use of vibrant colors create a sense of spiritual and aesthetic beauty that is characteristic of the period.

Fig. 2.17
Red goddess with vajra and red lotus
Tabo Main Temple, Assembly Hall, entry wall, immediately right of the entrance
Photograph by Jaroslav Poncar, 1984 (WHAV, 522)

Fig. 2.18
Blue goddess with lotus and sword
Tabo Main Temple, Assembly Hall, north wall between the Bodhisattva Vajradhāma and Vajrakīrti
Photograph by Jaroslav Poncar, 1984 (WHAV, 530)

Fig. 2.19
Goddess Vajralāsyā, Perfection of Charity
Folio from the Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 Verses
Western Tibet, Tholing Monastery, 11th century
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; Image: 3 ¾ x 3 1/16 in. (9.52 x 7.77 cm); Sheet: 7 ½ x 26 1/8 in. (19 x 66.35 cm)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, purchased with funds provided by the Jane and Justin Dart Foundation, M.81.90.10

Fig. 2.20
Offering goddess Vajradhūpā, Perfection of Insight
Folio from the Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 Verses
Western Tibet, Tholing Monastery, 11th century
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; Image: 3 9/16 x 3 in. (9.1 x 7.6 cm); Sheet: 7 ½ x 26 1/8 in. (19 x 66.3 cm)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, purchased with funds provided by the Jane and Justin Dart Foundation, M.81.90.8
Nothingness, is stylistically identical. He is identified by the red tongue with the tip of a vajra that he holds in front of his body. Expressing a slight movement toward the left, his head is tilted and his body is twisted at the navel in that direction. He too wears a double-string sacred thread that is covered by the dhotī below the level of the belt.

Despite the sophistication of these paintings, their less painterly drawing style—which superficially relates them to the earlier Kashmiri paintings and the second workshop of the Tabo Main Temple—and the notes in an Indic script, the rendering of the sacred thread hints again toward a Western Tibetan workshop responsible for these Tholing manuscript illuminations. This is not surprising if one considers that this manuscript must have been produced in a large manuscript workshop with both Indian and Tibetan monastic scholars and Tibetan writers. As with the Tabo Main Temple, we must assume a workshop in which Indian, probably not exclusively Kashmiri, and Tibetan artists were working side by side, probably within the same workshop. Thus it is likely that these works were produced in a multicultural and multilingual context that appears to be characteristic for the mid-eleventh century. In terms of date, the Tholing manuscript was probably created after the renovation of the Tabo Main Temple but still in the mid-eleventh century.

A fifth illumination of the same Tholing manuscript shows the gatekeeper of the eastern direction, Vajrāṅkuśa (Fig. 2.23), identified as the personification of the Power of Faith. His identifying attribute is the elephant goad (aṅkuśa), the hook of which is formed by the trunk of a makara, a sea-monster. Such makara-headed elephant goads are characteristic of Kashmiri art and become increasingly abstract in later Western Himalayan art and possibly also in Kashmir, as the Alchi group paintings indicate. In this illumination, the combination of strong outlines and shading abstracts the face in an extreme manner. The protector is fanged and mustached, and a single twisted hair is drawn to each side of the mouth. His hair is knotted at the top, stands on end above the ears, and falls in a thick long braid along the sides of the head. A pronounced double line marks the bottom of the chest, and the kneecap of the extended leg is marked by a small ellipse. He wears a scarf knotted around the middle of his upper body and a dhotī, both of which cover his sacred thread. The stylistic features of this gatekeeper are consistent with the seated Vajrapani from Kashmir, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art (see Fig. 1.62).

Despite their unusual captions, the deities in this manuscript are easy to identify, as they are well known from the pantheon of the Vajradhātu, or Diamond Sphere, mandala, the most important and popular subject of early Western Himalayan monuments. The same deities are also represented in another illustrated manuscript, which is partially preserved at Tabo Monastery. There the deities follow an expected sequence, but the deities of the Tholing manuscript appear to be distributed according to a system that cannot be identified on the basis of the few preserved folios.
VAJRADHĀTU DEITIES

Deities of the Vajradhātu mandala are also depicted in Western Himalayan bronzes. An example for a gatekeeper is the wonderful silver image of Vajrasphoṭa (Fig. 2.24) from the Nyingjei Lam Collection. This image shares many stylistic characteristics with Vajrāṅkuśa from the Tholing manuscript, but it is also strikingly different in other ways. In particular, the slim, elongated form, the gaping mouth, and the somewhat abstracted hairstyle seem to indicate a later date for this sculpture, but the adjustment of the flaming mandorla to the movement of the figure links this image to the Cleveland Buddha (Fig. 2.10) and to the Khartse Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 2.11). Many of the other features, such as the band of intertwined snakes as the base for the skull crown, the garland of skulls, the pelt dhotī with its loop across the left thigh, and the way the chain is held in hands pressed against the thigh, remain unique to this sculpture and has no comparison in contemporaneous Western Himalayan sculpture or painting. It may be that this is a Kashmiri sculpture made about 1100 rather than a Western Himalayan work.

The fact that images with this subject can be traced back to Kashmir is demonstrated by a delicate brass work in the Solomon Family Collection that most likely depicts the Bodhisattva Vajrahāsa (Fig. 1.70). The figure holds his hands in front of the body as if holding something stretched between them, most likely a garland of teeth, the attribute of this deity. In the representation of the same deity in the Tabo Main Temple (Fig. 2.25) the hands are not exactly in the same position, but of the Tabo deities with attributes held in front, this one has the hands most widely spaced. Despite their difference in size, the bodies of the Kashmiri and Tabo Vajrahāsa are comparable, but in the smaller image the head is disproportionally large and the simple crown with widely spaced points suggests an earlier date.

Another candidate for the identity of the deity in Figure 1.70 is the Bodhisattva Vajrarakṣa, who usually holds a tiny coat of mail in front of his body in a similar manner (see Fig. 1.73), but with the hands spaced much closer together. A unique representation of this bodhisattva is now in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 2.26), where he actually wears a jacket and holds the ends of it in his hands in front of the body. The jacket thus represents the coat of mail, an extreme variation of the iconography even for Western Himalayan art. Jackets of this type, rounded at the bottom with a wide collar, are not known from Tabo or any other early eleventh-century site but appear to be typical for the paintings of the Nako Translator’s Temple as evidenced in one of the eight Jambhala represented in Figure 2.27.

A goddess of the same set of Vajradhātu deities as the Cleveland Vajrarakṣa is in another private collection. The figure is Karmavajrī, who personifies the symbol of the karma family, with the crossed vajra (vīśva-vajra) she holds in her hands joined in meditation on her lap (Fig. 2.28). Her bodice reveals the nipples of her breasts, and the veil and hair in the back of the head are considerably abstracted, with the veil converting into the scarf at the upper arms. With their elongated body, simplified jewelry, and abstracted crown, these deities of a Vajradhātu assembly in silver represent a stage in the development of Western Tibetan art that is certainly later than Tabo. Their features conform more to those found in the early cave of Phyang, to which I will return below. I attribute them to about 1100 and a workshop in the Western Himalayas, but at this preliminary stage of research, it is difficult to tell if the development visible in Western Himalayan painting, and here applied to sculpture, is something specific to the Western Himalayas or if it reflects a similar development in Kashmir, since we must assume that Kashmiri artists continued to be involved.

BODHISATTVA BRONZES

For me, both Tabo Monastery and the Tholing manuscript document an early stage of the transformation process leading from Kashmiri painting to the distinctive art of Western Tibet. The same transition process in sculpture is visible in what can be considered the most
typical representation of early Western Himalayan art, the standing bodhisattva. We have already discussed a number of such bronzes, most important among them the Khartse (Fig. 2.11) and Kamru (Fig. 2.13) images of Avalokiteśvara. Although the Khartse Avalokiteśvara is likely a product of Kashmiri workmanship, the Kamru bronze probably represents a joint Tibetan-Kashmiri workshop in Western Tibet.

A similar joint workshop may be responsible for the bodhisattva image in the Asia Society collection (Fig. 2.29). In most features this bodhisattva compares closely to the wall paintings of the renovation of the Tabo Main Temple in the mid-eleventh century. This bodhisattva likely represents Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, and he would have had a book on the flower, the stem of which he holds in his left hand. This can be concluded from the braids hanging behind the ear, which go back to Kashmiri imagery of Kumāra and appear to be typical for Mañjuśrī, whose youthfulness is emphasized in both literature and sculpture. On later Western Tibetan bronzes, such as the miniature version of the Khojarnath triad in the Pritzker Collection (Fig. 2.32), braids of this kind appear to become common with other bodhisattvas as well.

Closely following the Asia Society bodhisattva image is the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Fig. 2.30). The sacred thread (actually a string of pearls), the extremely elongated proportions, the flat execution, and the completely unfinished back are all signs of a local Western Tibetan production. These rather distinctive features lead me to attribute the sculpture to the twelfth century.

Considerably more difficult is the assessment of another lotus-holding bodhisattva in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 2.31). Although this is certainly a great object with fine detailing, the sculpture is a Western Tibetan product that introduces a new level of aesthetics. The figure’s scarf is spread across the shoulders at his back, and where it falls beside the body, it is bundled together in an unusually realistic manner. The elaborate necklace with a garland hanging from it is also unusual, as is the fall of the long necklace, which appears to have been inspired by painted examples. The prominent use of the lion-like “face of glory” (kīrtimukha) in the bracelets, the necklace, and the dhotī compares this sculpture to the clay images of the Alchi Sumtsek and Mangyu. While this comparison to sculptures in late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century monuments may seem out of place, there are also two details that link this image to the miniature version of the Khojarnath triad in the Pritzker Collection (Fig. 2.32). All sculptures of this triad share the rendering of the navel with a shadow fold above the actual navel, something not found in earlier sculpture. More decisively, the way the folds of the dhotī are modeled, especially between the legs, is identical in both the main figure of the Pritzker triad and the Cleveland sculpture. In fact, the Pritzker triad main image even shares the kīrtimukha garlands as the bottom pattern on each side of the dhotī. In comparison to the Pritzker triad main image, the Cleveland bodhisattva is more sensually modeled and less pronouncedly Western Tibetan.

What are we to make of this evidence? To me there is little doubt that the Pritzker triad is indeed a miniature version of the famous triad at Kojarnath, which only
was completed around 1220. Of course, the Kojar-nath images are not mentioned in the inscription, and the text gives no historic or regional clue either, but the unusual iconography and the comparison to photographs of the "Three Silver Brothers," the model sculptures at Kojar-nath leaves little room for doubt in this regard. Even independent of this association and the resulting date for the bronze, the elaborate frame of the three images equally attributes the triad to the early thirteenth century. Made by the Tibetan craftsman Namkha Drak, the Pritzker triad thus marks the final phase of the highest-quality art production in the early Western Himalayan style. The Cleveland bodhisattva compares closely in details to the main figure of the Pritzker triad but differs somewhat on aesthetic grounds. In addition, it bears two features that most probably derive from Central Tibetan painting dating to the fourth quarter of the twelfth century or later, namely the fall of the long necklace and the addition of a second lotus flower for reasons of symmetry. Both features are, for example, found on the famous Green Tārā in of the Ford Collection, which can safely be dated between 1175 and 1189. The Cleveland image must therefore also date to around 1200, and it should probably be attributed to a Western Tibetan workshop.

WESTERN TIBETAN VARIANTS

Of the three styles that can be differentiated for the earliest monuments in the Western Himalayan region, it is the Western Tibetan style, fully established by the time of the renovation of the Tabo Main Temple, that remains most relevant from the mid-eleventh to the thirteenth century. We should probably imagine a combination of newly established Western Tibetan art schools working alongside traveling artists of the neighboring northwestern Indian regions, including Kashmir, and a gradual depletion of the excessive means necessary to continue to invite artists and to use the highest-quality materials due to increasingly uncertain political times. Kashmiri art continues to inspire and many of the elements defined above for this school, such as the pointed veil and the bodice for the depiction of the goddesses, became part of a staple repertoire to choose from, with different degrees of importance in the diverse art schools that worked in the region at the same time.
Fig. 2.31
Bodhisattva Padmapani
Western Tibet, 10th–11th century
Brass inlaid with silver and gold, H. 10 1/3 in. (26.2 cm)
Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 1976.70

Fig. 2.32
Miniature version of the Bodhisattva triad of Khojarnath
Purang, Western Tibet, early 13th century
Pritzker Collection
The increasing number of monuments for which documentation is available today very much complicates the discussion of their interrelationship. In addition, we know from well-preserved monuments with larger mural programs, such as the main temples of Tabo, Nako, and Auchi, that a number of quite distinctive styles are found within the same painting program, indicating that different groups of artists or even workshops were involved. It is also clear from the better preserved sites that much more effort was put into the Assembly Hall of a main temple, than into the paintings of a chörten. This fact explains why much more care was taken for the details of the goddess from the Tabo Dukhang (Fig. 2.17) when compared to the northwestern chörten of Tholing (Fig. 2.7), as is especially apparent in the textile and the jewelry. All of these issues affect the conclusions that can be drawn from a stylistic analysis alone. The following observations should thus just be taken as one of the possible historical scenarios that can be imagined based on the available material.

Later variants of the Western Tibetan paintings of the Tabo Main Temple are preserved in the recently discovered chörten of Malakartse Khar in Zangskar (Fig. 2.18) and in a delicately painted but poorly preserved cave in Phyang (Fig. 2.33), both of which are likely to have been completed around 1100. The earliest temples of Nako, which probably date to the first half of the twelfth century, are remarkable for their variation in styles, as can be clearly seen in the paintings of the two side walls of the Nako Main Temple (also known as the Translator’s Temple). Both walls are occupied by a single large mandala of exceptionally high technical quality, but they were apparently produced by different workshops. Consequently, the same deities are depicted with clearly distinctive variations of the same iconography and there are considerable stylistic differences as well (compare Fig. 2.22 with Fig. 2.35). The peculiar headdress in Figure 2.34 may even indicate that the two workshops were working at the same time and that the depiction of the crown on this image resulted from an artist of the south wall being inspired by a depiction on the north wall (Fig. 2.35). Although the Nako paintings are technically sophisticated, their execution was largely done with less attention than those of Tabo.

The fascinating Dunkar caves can be seen as a continuation of the Nako paintings and were presumably painted about 1200. Of these, the open cave (commonly called cave three) is certainly the latest, and in its abstraction of the figures and their ornaments compares well with the small Dungpu cave. There are also a few Western Tibetan thangkas that represent this style, some of them recently published from the Pritzker Collection. The earliest of these probably derive from the second half of the twelfth century.

Some of the later Western Tibetan monuments contain elements that are outside the stylistic development discussed above. Deviating most clearly, in both stylistic and also in technical terms, are the Gumrang sculptures, which in their principal aesthetics are akin to Central Asian sculpture. In Guumang, the broad and heavy “Central Asian” heads contrast with the slenderness of their “Indian” bodies, and the simplicity of their jewelry contrasts with its abundance (Fig. 2.36). Particularly unusual is the high umśa of the Buddha image.

Another noteworthy deviation can be seen in the survival of one of the Four Great Kings, Vaiśravaṇa, above the door of the Upper Temple at Nako (Fig. 2.37). It is a curious fact that although the Four Great Kings were known in India since the earliest Buddhist monuments, as evidenced by the identifying captions at Bhārhat, they did not reach Tibet directly from there but via Central Asia or even China. Consequently, they are always depicted in what I would term a Chinese mode. This mode is always apparent in the warrior gown, which is commonly attributed to the northern, in this case Central Asian, origin of Vaiśravaṇa. At Nako this mode is also clearly recognizable in the mustached face with

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its emphasized cheekbones. The same features are visible in the poorly preserved depictions of the Four Great Kings on the south wall of the Translator's Temple. Likely dating to the first half of the twelfth century, the Nako paintings represent the earliest survival of this mode in the Western Himalayas.

**ALCHI GROUP**

Although the paintings of the Western Tibetan monuments discussed above certainly incorporate features of contemporaneous Kashmiri art, there are indications of a more direct continuation of the painting style preserved in the Northwestern chörten of Tholing. Among the characteristics outlined above is the dramatic shading of the deities in certain colors, such as the blue in the offering goddess Mālā (Fig. 2.38). This shading appears to be achieved by retaining highlights for the exposed parts of the body. Similar shading turns up occasionally throughout Western Himalayan painting, but it becomes particularly prominent in the paintings and, insofar as they preserve their original coloration, sculptures of the Alchi group of monuments. The best sculptural comparison to Mālā is found among the secondary figures in the Vajradhātu mandala of Sumda Chung (Fig. 2.39). The same extreme shading is also characteristic of the paintings at Sumda (Fig. 2.40). Sumda Chung offers a better comparison than Alchi itself, since it is also a secondary monument.

One can recognize a certain consistency between the Tholing Mālā (Fig. 2.38) and the Sumda Chung goddess (Fig. 2.40), but differences are also apparent, in particular in the depiction of the jewelry and the textiles, both of which are characterized by a tendency toward miniaturization in the Sumda Chung paintings. It is this latter aspect for which the Alchi group paintings are particularly well known, and the Alchi monuments preserve the finest examples, as most frequently demonstrated by the highly refined depiction of a six-armed Green Tārā on the left side wall of the Avalokiteśvara niche (Fig. 2.41). As with everything about this depiction, the shading is extremely fine and within the dhotī pattern are minute horseback riders hunting elephants. Thus, the Alchi group of paintings differ considerably from those in other Western Himalayan monuments. The relevant monuments (the best-preserved among them are those of Alchi, Sumda Chung, and Mangyu) appear to have been created within a small geographical area and a rather narrow time frame, from the middle of the twelfth to the first quarter of the thirteenth century. For this attribution I follow Roger Goepper in dating the Three-story Temple, or Alchi Sumtsek (gSum brtsegs), to the early thirteenth century. As with the earlier foundations established at the zenith of the Western Tibetan kingdom, such as Tabo Monastery, the material quality and workmanship preserved in these monuments are outstanding. Among the monuments of this group, the Sumtsek at Alchi is certainly the most sophisticated representative.

A comparison of two depictions of goddesses in the paintings (Fig. 2.41) and sculptures (Fig. 2.42) of the Sumtsek shows that the features earlier identified as Kashmiri are much more apparent in the paintings than in the sculpture of the same period, which only partly preserves its original painting. The Alchi goddess wears a refined version of the pointed veil; her profile with the set-back, but marked chin conforms to earlier Kashmir profiles; and the bodice is now a standard element in depictions of goddesses. The attribution of the Alchi group of paintings to artists from Kashmir is further supported by the depictions of holy places in Kashmir on the dhotī of the four-armed Avalokiteśvara sculpture in the Alchi Sumtsek (Fig. 2.45) and an undeciphered Indic inscription in the same niche underneath the Tārā depiction.
Although they share principal stylistic features, the Alchi group paintings are far from being uniform. On the one hand, general trends can be discerned when comparing paintings in the earliest monuments, such as the Alchi Dukhang, with those in the latest ones, in which the figures become more elongated, the details more miniaturized, and the fonness for minute (textile) patterns reaches a culmination. The sculptures follow a similar trend from more rounded to more elongated. The sculpted goddess perfectly conforms to the Alchi quality Buddhist art in the Kashmir region, and we must expect that Kashmir remained an active artistic center for Buddhist art into the early thirteenth century. However, as with Western Tibetan sculpture, little has been done so far to acknowledge this scenario also in terms of the sculptural production of Kashmir, which is often presented as fading away in the eleventh century. Of course, rectifying this view on the basis of the evidence provided by the Alchi group of monuments requires us to reconstruct the late art production of Kashmir, something beyond the scope of this essay. However, the exhibition does provide some examples to address this question.

One of the characteristics of the Alchi group of monuments is the preponderance of four-armed deities in both sculpture and painting (see Fig. 2.45). Of course, some deities are commonly depicted four-armed, such as Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 2.43) or Nīmasamgiti Mañjuśrī, but for others four-armed forms are far from common and often not clearly identifiable. The two four-armed forms of Green Tārā flanking the six-armed principal image at head level hold the same attributes but are depicted standing and sitting (Fig. 2.45), respectively. They can be identified as depictions of the Wealth-bestowing Tārā (Dhanada Tārā) as she is described in Sādhanamālā 11.11 Iconographically identical is a sculpture of the same goddess from the Solomon Family Collection (Fig. 2.46), in which the goddess holds a chain of prayer beads (mālā) in the upper-right hand and performs the gesture of giving (varadamudrā) with the lower-right hand, while the left hands hold a book and a lotus. The sculpture has been attributed to the Western Himalayas, but Tārā’s face is completely abraded from ritual usage, which has revealed the silver inlay for her eyes, including a rectangular vertical third eye on the forehead. The sculpted goddess perfectly conforms to the Alchi Sumtsek depiction of the seated form of Dhanada Tārā (Fig. 2.46) and is of the same proportions.72 Nevertheless, having a crown with the side points on crescents, a form found in the Tholing chörten (Fig. 2.7) and the contemporaneous Charang sculpture (Fig. 2.9) but not in later Western Himalayan monuments, including Alchi, the sculpture appears to be somewhat older than the Alchi murals. At the other end of the spectrum, the further abstraction from the silver image of Karmavajrī (Fig. 2.8) and the flat lotus certainly date this image later than the eleventh century. Given the crown type, the pendants hanging from the belt, the peculiar sitting posture with the lower foot seen from the top (compare the sitting posture of the goddess on the Queen Dīḍi bronze in Fig. 2.51), I tend to attribute this image to Kashmiri provenance, rather than to the Western Himalayas, and to the twelfth century.73

An identical attribution in terms of workmanship, but probably dating closer to 1200, can be suggested for a painted “Alchi style” book cover with five deities, among them the four-armed, green Dhanada Tārā. Of course, the size of the cover, 22.2 x 69.8 cm, indicates a Tibetan usage rather than a Kashmiri one, and thus the attribution to Alchi, as put forth in one publication, makes sense as a placeholder. Iconographically, too, this cover has much in common with the Alchi group. Note the peculiar way the side heads are set off from the main one and the rather extreme shading.

Continuing with the theme of four-armed deities, we should note that the red Maitreya in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 2.47), cut out from a book folio, also has close ties to the Alchi group of paintings in both iconography and some stylistic features. Its shading, in particular the strong vertical highlight across the nose, the rather delicate crown, high rosettes, and large knots, as well as the textile patterns, all resonate with the Alchi murals, but certainly not as closely as the above-mentioned book cover. In terms of proportions, this Maitreya

KASHMIR CONTINUED

If we accept an early thirteenth-century date for the Alchi Sumtsek and acknowledge that its paintings and sculptures are expressions of Kashmiri art of that time, our notions of the development of the art of Kashmir require considerable rethinking. Then the Alchi group of monuments are evidence of the latest phase of high-quality Buddhist art in the Kashmir region, and we must

CHAPTER TWO

Fig 2.42 Seated red goddess
Alchi Sumtsek, Mañjuśrī niche, upper goddess on right side wall
Photograph by C. Luczanits

Fig 2.43 Four-armed Avalokiteśvara
Alchi Sumtsek, Avalokiteśvara niche, left wall, early 13th century
Photograph by J. Poncar

Fig 2.44 Buddha Aksobhya
Mangyu, Four Image Chörten, early 13th century
(Photograph by C. Luczanits, 1998 (WHAV, 112,13))
The image is certainly closer to the earlier representations in the group, so I tend to attribute it to the second half of the twelfth century. Iconographically, this is a rare form of a four-armed deity for which a related textual source has not yet been identified. The same iconography of Maitreya is used for the main image of the Alchi Sumtsek, where it can also be explained as an attempt to make all main bodhisattvas four-armed.

Another late Kashmiri sculpture commonly attributed to the twelfth century is discussed in chapter 1 (see Fig. 2.47). This image, from the Nyingjei Lam Collection, shows considerable abstraction and simplification in all features and an emphasis on symmetry. This image may also represent Maitreya, but now as the future Buddha teaching and seated with the legs pendant.

These examples should not be understood as indicating that later Kashmiri sculpture can be generally characterized by a decrease in quality. Both the quality and originality of the Alchi murals speak against such a conclusion. Instead, it is to be expected that there are also high-quality sculptures in this later period, an example of which, a bronze from the Potala Palace (Fig. 2.48), has been identified by Ulrich von Schroeder.

Particularly noteworthy in this bronze are the shape of the flames along the edge of the halo, the lotus blossoms above the hair knot, the graphic rendering of the textiles, the tiny antelope skin across the bodhisattva’s left upper arm, the second fold above the navel, and the way the animals are inscribed into the pedestal. The last detail is found only in the most recent paintings of the Alchi group.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to explore the question of identifying late Buddhist art from Kashmir.
 announce the arrival of a new era in Western Tibetan art of the Eight Buddha cave with the mandala ceiling—māja mandalas as the main topic, and the sculptures iconography of the lantern ceiling cave with the Guhyasāi- 

The sculptures and paintings of the Dunkar caves—the most important indicators are the appearance of the Drigung lineage, the representation of Drigungpa, and the prominent representation of the mahasiddhas. These sites introduce a gradual transformation of the content of Western Tibetan monuments, the most important aspects of which can be summarized as follows: 

Among the Five Buddhas, Vairocana becomes fully visible with the representation of the teacher with the characteristics of a Buddha and in contexts that otherwise are used for the Buddha. These depictions are an expression of the practice of guru-yoga, a form of visualization in which the teach-

The exchange of the primary Buddha among the Five Buddhas conforms to the emergence of Anuttarayoga themes in temple decoration, in which the primary Buddha is usually Buddha Akṣobhya. With the emergence of the Anuttarayoga teachings in public representation, such as the decoration of a temple, their primary practitioners and lineage holders, the great adepts (mahasiddhas) are frequently and prominently depicted as well. 

This is also true for the Tibetan lineage holders and the teaching lineage in general. The lineage thus takes the position on top of the painting, even above the teaching represented through the central deity. Consequently, the teacher himself becomes worthy of veneration and is considered a representative of buddhahood. This becomes fully visible with the representation of the teacher with the characteristics of a Buddha and in contexts that otherwise are used for the Buddha. These depictions are an expression of the practice of guru-yoga, a form of visualization in which the teacher takes the place of the deity and thus also the Buddha. These innovations also lead to the introduction of a consistent hierarchy of teacher, personal deity, and protector, which becomes apparent in the composition of a particular iconographic topic, of a wall, or even throughout a monument.

Of course, these changes were introduced gradually and usually only in association with the establishment of one of the new schools of Tibetan Buddhism in the region. But even then older themes remained predominant in many monuments. For example, there are many thirteenth- and fourteenth-century temples throughout the region that still retain the emphasis on Buddha Vairo-cana, such as the Senge Lhakhang in Lamayuru and the Mentsum Lhakhang in Lower Mustang. Thus the new themes do not replace the old ones but complement them, and both old and new themes may take a central position.

Based on the more readily accessible evidence, the art of this period has been interpreted as part of an “international style” as artworks with similar characteristics became known from Burma to Khara Khoto and across the Himalayas. The large number of additional monuments that have come to light in the last decade, however, indicate that this designation is based on the

NEW LOCAL STYLES

The sculptures and paintings of the Dunkar caves—the iconography of the lantern ceiling cave with the Gudhyasamāja mandalas as the main topic, and the sculptures of the Eight Buddha cave with the mandala ceiling—announce the arrival of a new era in Western Tibetan art that is characterized by its link to newly arisen Central Tibetan Buddhist schools and a changing emphasis in the teachings conveyed through the art. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the beginnings of this shift are also visible in the Kashmiri style murals of Alchi, in particular those of the Sumtselk and the two early chörten. Here the most important indicators are the appearance of the Drigung lineage, the representation of Drigungpa, and the prominent representation of the mahasiddhas. These sites introduce a gradual transformation of the content of Western Tibetan monuments, the most important aspects of which can be summarized as follows: 

Among the Five Buddhas, Vairocana and Akṣobhya exchange their positions, the latter becoming the central Buddha. This exchange may well coincide with the introduction of the gateway stupas, which in Tibetan occasionally are called Kanakini stupas, a name that derives from the first syllables of Buddha Akṣobhya’s mantra.

The exchange of the primary Buddha among the Five Buddhas conforms to the emergence of Anuttarayoga themes in temple decoration, in which the primary Buddha is usually Buddha Akṣobhya. With the emergence of the Anuttarayoga teachings in public representation, such as the decoration of a temple, their primary practitioners and lineage holders, the great adepts (mahasiddhas) are frequently and prominently depicted as well. 

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...
misunderstanding that the development in Ladakh was shared by the entire Western Himalayan region. Today the evidence suggests that this is not the case at all and that the regions of Western Tibet and Ladakh under consideration here developed in a different way. Although the styles derived from Central Tibet appear to have predominated in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, particularly in the many monuments associated with the Drigung (‘Brig gung) School, the Western Tibetan style retained a strong presence in its core area. This can be demonstrated first by those parts of the Yeshé ‘Od Temple in Tholing that were restored and newly decorated in the course of the thirteenth century. Much of this refurbishment is said to have been carried out under Thöng Dragpa De (Grags pa lde, 1230–1277) in the third quarter of that century.82 A late thirteenth-century date, as suggested by the Neumanns, appears to be the earliest possible for this style. Remarkably, the iconographic program of this style is extremely conservative. Not only are the Five Buddhas with Vairocana in the center the main subject of the cave, but the entire cave is decorated with conservative themes that indicate a Kadampa School affiliation for it.83 Another exciting new discovery is the cave of Wuchen (‘Wu chen), presented by Tsering Gyalpo at the Bonn conference of the International Association of Tibetan Studies.84 Although maintaining some stylistic features of the earlier paintings, along with the color palette, the iconography of this site entirely derives from new teachings. The Wuchen paintings even preserve depictions of topics not known from elsewhere or that are very rare, such as a mandala dedicated to the bardo (bar do) deities.

Ladakh the Kashmiri style of the Alichu group continued in much less sophisticated variants well into the thirteenth century, as for example at Alichu itself in the paintings of the so-called Translator’s Temple (Lo tshita ba’I Ha khang, Fig. 2.49). Although extremely coarse, the style is reminiscent of the earlier Western Himalayan paintings in traditional style of the drapṣe, the ornamentation and the color palette, but the composition is entirely new and the emphasis in the iconographic topics depicted has changed considerably. Similar quality, or even less sophisticated, paintings are preserved in several stupas of Alichu, such as the one in the Alichu Limpus gar- den (Fig. 2.50), and one each in Mangyu (just at the edge of the temple compound) and Sumda Chang (on the edge above the Assembly Hall). These now feature Aksobhya as the main Buddha, Vairocana being represented on the eastern wall, and often in their iconographic program that hints toward the Drigung School, which certainly was dominant in the region throughout the thirteenth century.

There are a number of other places in Ladakh that preserve paintings comparable to those in the latest Alich group monuments. In addition to a few chortens attributed locally to Ruchen Zangpo, such as those of Basgo,85 Lamayuru,86 and Tikse,87 there are also noteworthy temple ruins, namely those of Siku,88 Saspol Tse,89 and Traklung Kowače.90 Whatever their exact date may be, in the course of the thirteenth century the development in Ladakh separates itself from that in Western Tibet proper and there was no major revival of the Western Tibetan idiom in this region before the later Guge kingdom. Instead, Ladakh developed its own local variant of the painting style derived from Central Tibet that came to the region with the Drigung School. There are numerous monuments dating from the late thirteenth to at least the fifteenth century that are decorated in a style that can summarily be called an early Ladakh style. An analysis of these styles is being presented in Painting Traditions of the Drigung Kagyu School (2014).

At this stage of research, the rather coarse and naive workmanship of many representatives of the continuations of the Western Himalayan idiom and their strongly localized character make it impossible to differentiate distinctive stylistic strands among them. Thus, one may simply speak of local variants of the earlier Western Himalayan styles, in particular the Western Tibetan style and the Alich style, the latter found only in Ladakh and in geographical and temporal proximity to Alich. Thus, even though the Kashmiri-derived Western Himalayan idiom lost its primary status in the course of the thirteenth century, there is enough evidence in Western Tibet that it never really died out there. Instead, its regional continuation may have provided the base for the later revival with the Guge kingdom, the art of which is described in Melissa Kerki’s chapter 3 in this volume.

NOTES

1 For the wider framework, this essay builds on the first half of an earlier study: Christian Luczanits, “Styles in Western Himalayan Art,” in Han Zeng Fu jiao mei xia yue jie 2007 [sic] (Beijing: Han Zeng pu zhi, 2007). I am grateful to David Jackson for originally encouraging me to update and broaden this account for his book The Place of Provenance: Regional Styles in Tibetan Painting (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2013), but because of the complexity of early Western Himalayan styles, I was unable to finish this contribution in a satisfactory manner. Rob Loutrozo’s exhibition project gave me the chance to reexamine the question from a different perspective, the relationship to Kashmir, and on a more direct technical basis. For the iconography, of course, this approach also helped to clarify some of the questions I could not solve earlier, but it obviously does not address the full complexity of the issue at hand. This and many previous studies would not have been possible without the generous support of all those who provided their photographs for research, foremost among them Lionel Fouzier, Roger Goepfer, and Jaroslav Pocnica. Documentation of some of the sites and objects mentioned in this study was provided by Tsering Gyalpo, Rob Loutrozo, Helmut and Heidi Neumann, Christiane Upa Kalamani, and Thomas Töröker and family.


3 This is true regardless of where one places these monuments, temporarily, the so-called drapṣe temple complex, elevated to the early thirteenth century, but there are good arguments for this distinction being the result of the longer period of time between their construction.

4 The most frequently given date for the foundation of Tabo is 965 CE, which is based on the date estimated for the renovation, which took place forty-six years after the foundation of the temple.

5 For more examples, see Deborah K. Lumbang Sultar, Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom (Milan: Skira; New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997), and Christian Luczanits, Buddha Sculpture in Clay (Chicago: Serindia, 2014).

6 See Luczanits, Buddha Sculpture in Clay, 92–96.

7 The technical analyses of the metal used in these two bronzes attributes the Cleveland bronzes to the Los Angeles bronzes to Western Tibet (see Chandrak, Himalayan Bronzes: Technology, Style, and Choice (Newark and London: University of Delaware Press, Associated University Press, 1997), nos. 88 and W.142).

8 Of course, theoretically they could have come from any non-Indic context, such as Central Asia or Tibet, but then the art would reveal characteristics of their place of origin.

9 On Lalung see, e.g., H. Lee. Shuttleworth, Lha-lu tao lun hui lun wen ji, Proceedings of the 3rd International Symposium of Tibetan Art and Archaeology, Oct. 2006, Beijing, ed. X. Jisheng et al. (Beijing Guji, 2009). I am grateful to David Jackson for originally encouraging me to update and broaden this account for his book The Place of Provenance: Regional Styles in Tibetan Painting (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2013), but because of the complexity of early Western Himalayan styles, I was unable to finish this contribution in a satisfactory manner. Rob Loutrozo’s exhibition project gave me the chance to reexamine the question from a different perspective, the relationship to Kashmir, and on a more direct technical basis. For the iconography, of course, this approach also helped to clarify some of the questions I could not solve earlier, but it obviously does not address the full complexity of the issue at hand. This and many previous studies would not have been possible without the generous support of all those who provided their photographs for research, foremost among them Lionel Fouzier, Roger Goepfer, and Jaroslav Pocnica. Documentation of some of the sites and objects mentioned in this study was provided by Tsering Gyalpo, Rob Loutrozo, Helmut and Heidi Neumann, Christiane Upa Kalamani, and Thomas Töröker and family.


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8 For a full available documentation see P. Namgyal, ed. (Tibetan-English Dictionary. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2008).

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CHAPTER TWO

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This statement, of course, assumes that the few early Central Tibetan murals that are preserved and of which documentation is available are representative of the conventions that prevailed there.

There are no image depictions in this case, and the only historical personalities appear to be the four figures painted above the last section of the life of Buddha on the right wall. On the last two pages of plates (1 and 2) when counted from the first map. A picture of its main wall, showing Stakna and eighteenth Arhat bundled by Mamo, and an eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara, is included in Neumann and Neumann, “The Wall Paintings of Pang Gra Phug,” fig. 4.

Besides the two choptens at the foot of the rock with the Bhutanese banner, one of them appears only half preserved and extremely endangered, one third on the slope above the village contains paintings. This chocten was recently restored, sadly without documenting its interior properly and making it available to the scholarly community.

Picture galleries of relevant choptens in Rago and Lamayuru can be found on my website (www.luczanits.net).

While I refrain from doing so for their protection, these have partially published in Gerald Rizzotto, "Documenting the Last Surviving Murals of Neuman," Orientations 38, no. 4 (2007): 30–35, 42–45. Besides these published examples, there are a number of other fragmentary ones that I observed that are inaccessible.


Since this site near Spiski only preserves very fragmentary remains, see Peter von Ham, “Ladakhi Missing Link?” The Murals of Yungang Lingyin, "New Light on the Dunhuang Pictorial Tradition," p. 55–57. The murals identified as “Dagurgoiphodrila” are actually murals of Nalokinsaya Sakyamuni of the Dagurgoiphodrila cycle.