



ULRICH VON SCHROEDER

**BUDDHIST
SCULPTURES
OF THE
ALAIN BORDIER
FOUNDATION**

VISUAL DHARMA PUBLICATIONS LTD.

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Published by
Visual Dharma Publications Ltd., Hong Kong
for the Alain Bordier Foundation, Gruyères/Switzerland

First Edition, 2010

Distribution Alain Bordier Foundation
CH 1663 Gruyères/Switzerland
www.tibetmuseum.info

© Text: Ulrich von Schroeder

© Photographs: Alain Bordier Foundation

Photography: Björn Arvidsson

ISBN-10: 962-7049-14-X
ISBN-13: 978-962-7049-14-2
EAN-13: 9789627049142

Cover: Mañjuśrī
Nepalese School in Tibet; 13th/14th century
Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 145

Back: Gruyères/Switzerland

Vajrapāṇī
Nepal: Transitional period; 950–1050
Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 1

Frontispiece: View of the Tibet Museum of the
Alain Bordier Foundation inside
the chapel of St Joseph at Gruyères

Production: Urs Thoenen

Editor: Don Dinwiddie

Printed by: burger)(druck, 79183 Waldkirch/Germany

Notes on Romanization

Sanskrit words are transliterated into Latin alphabet with diacritical marks.

The transliteration of Tibetan words into Latin alphabet used for this publication follows the method proposed by Turrell Wylie. Phonetic rendering of words is restricted to a few place names.

ཀ	ka	ཁ	kha	ག	ga	ང	nga
ཅ	ca	ཅ	cha	ཇ	ja	ཉ	nya
ཏ	ta	ཏ	tha	ཌ	da	ཎ	na
པ	pa	པ	pha	བ	ba	མ	ma
ཅ	tsha	ཅ	tsha	ཌ	dza	མ	wa
ཉ	zha	ཟ	za	འ	'a	ཡ	ya
ར	ra	ལ	la	ཤ	sha	ས	sa
ཧ	ha					ཨ	a
ཨ	i	ཨ	u	ཨ	e	ཨ	o

Introduction

The purpose of this book is to give the reader an insight into the development of Tibetan Buddhist sculptures illustrated with statues selected from the collection of the Alain Bordier Foundation. These sculptures, mostly hereto unpublished, represent only a small part of this important collection, carefully assembled during the last twenty-five years. The Buddhist art collection of the Alain Bordier Foundation comprises about three hundred sculptures and paintings. The majority of the sculptures were manufactured in Tibet. On the other hand, the collection also comprises statues that had been manufactured in the Buddhist cultures surrounding Tibet – especially those located in the Himalayas, including Nepal, and those in North-Western and North-Eastern India, Burma, and to a lesser extent Central Asia and China. These cultures all influenced the development of Tibetan Buddhist art styles at various times and to various degrees. To understand the evolution of Tibetan art styles, consideration must be given to the art of all the cultures surrounding Tibet.

At the time of the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet during the 7th century, there were no trained Tibetan artists who could manufacture the statues and paintings needed for Buddhist practice. This vacuum led to the importation of foreign artists, as well as craftsmen with the skills needed for constructing temples and monasteries. In addition to the Newārs of Nepal there were also artists from other countries active in Tibet, especially from North-Eastern India and Kashmir. Each of these foreign artists practiced their crafts according to the styles in which they had been trained in their homeland. Predictably, the Tibetan novices imitated the particular styles practiced by their teachers. Ultimately, this resulted in the development of different Tibetan art styles that were an amalgam of the various foreign influences modified according to Tibetan sentiments. The art styles in Western Tibet initially depended primarily on inspiration from the neighbouring Buddhist traditions flourishing in the greater areas of Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir, and Swat (Uḍḍiyāna) in North-Western India. Southern and Central Tibet (gTsang and dBus), were more under the artistic influence of the North-Eastern Indian art traditions in addition to the influence from Nepal. Eastern Tibet (Khams), next to the Chinese province of Sichuan, and North-Eastern Tibet (Amdo), bordering the Chinese province of Gansu, nevertheless developed art styles similar in many aspects to those prevalent in Southern and Central Tibet. Chinese influence is more visible in the painting traditions of Eastern Tibet than in its sculptures.

The sculptures illustrated in this book are all in custody of the Alain Bordier Foundation and are exhibited in the Tibet Museum at Gruyères in the French part of Switzerland. The selected statues, all which are Buddhist, originate from the following particular style areas: North-Western India comprising the Swat region (Uḍḍiyāna) (**Plates 1–2**), the Paṭola-Śāhi kingdom of the Gilgit area (**Plate 3**), Kashmir region (**Plate 4**); North-Eastern India: Pāla schools (**Plates 5–6**); Burma (Myanmar): Pagan period (**Plate 7**); the kingdoms of Nepal (**Plates 8–10**); the Khāśa Malla kingdom of Western Nepal (**Plate 11**); Nepalese schools in Tibet (**Plates 12–13**); Tibetan traditions of gilt copper sculptures (**Plates 14–16**); Tibetan traditions of brass sculptures (**Plates 17–20**); Indian and Nepalese miniature stone sculptures (**Plate 21**); Tibetan portable wood sculptures (**Plate 22**); and Chinese sculptures of the Ming and Qing dynasties (**Plate 23**).

There exist many different ways by which a group of art objects can be categorized. Perhaps the most obvious classification is a division according to style, if this is the main objective of a study. Advocates of this approach argue correctly that theirs is the only method that examines the evolution of styles. Exhibition catalogues often employ another method of classification based on the iconography of the deities. It allows the visitor or reader to compare representations of a deity from different time periods and cultures. However, this method can lead to confusion over both dates of manufacture and artistic style. This publication is therefore organized according to style, but in both the chapter texts and sculpture entries there is also information about both techniques of manufacture and iconography, among other concerns.

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North-Western India: Swat Region (Uḍḍiyāna)

The Gandhāra region in the north-western corner of the Indian subcontinent and adjoining Hindukush was an early and important Buddhist centre together with Mathurā located further east in Northern India. Both areas formed part of the extensive domain of the Kuṣāṇa empire (1st–3rd century). In the middle of the 5th century the Buddhist centres of Gandhāra were destroyed by the Hūṇas (Hephthalites), though they spared the Hindu institutions. To the north of Gandhāra, in the greater Swat region, Buddhism continued to be practiced until the end of the 10th century when the Yāmīnī Muslims, hailing from Afghanistan, wiped it out. The Swat region is identical with the legendary Uḍḍiyāna, associated with the development of tantric Buddhism.

Until relatively recently many Tibetan monasteries owned large collections of religious artefacts comprising Buddhist sculptures, paintings, and manuscripts. Metal statues of Tibetan origin naturally were the most numerous among the sculptures. But there were also statues originating from the various Buddhist cultures surrounding Tibet, most prominently from Nepal, but also from Kashmir and Swat in North-Western India, North-Eastern India, Burma, and China. Recent field studies in the principal Tibetan monasteries have established that the largest groups among the 7th/8th century Buddhist statues originating from the Indian subcontinent are those from Kashmir and the Swat region, with only a few from North-Eastern India. With this in mind, the hypothesis that North-Eastern India played a primary role during the “first propagation” of Buddhism in Tibet (*sNga dar*) during the imperial period (c. 600–842) perhaps needs to be revised: the influence of North-Eastern India has probably been exaggerated and the influence of Swat and Kashmir has not been taken sufficiently into consideration with regard to the “first propagation” of Buddhism in Tibet.

The two illustrated sculptures originate from the greater Swat region and represent both Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi – or “Avalokiteśvara with a lotus in the hand”. The larger of the two statues is shown in the bejewelled transcendental form and is one of the finest metal sculptures of the Swat region ever to have been published (**Plate 1A**). The smaller image shows Padmapāṇi in the *siddhi*-like ascetic form, distinguished by its long hair and very few ornaments (**Plate 1B**). As indicated by the shiny surface, both statues have been, until recently, part of the collection of some unknown monastery in the Western Himalayas or Tibet. Their appearance is distinctly different from statues that have been excavated in the Swat Valley and Kashmir.

References to metal sculptures of the Swat region

Ulrich von Schroeder. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume One: *India & Nepal*, pp. 23–52, pls. 1–11.

1A. Bejewelled Form of Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi North-Western India: Swat Region (Uḍḍiyāna); 7th C

Brass; hollow cast. Eyes and *uṛṇā* are inlaid with silver, the pupils filled with a black lacquer-like paint. Height: 23.5 cm.

This Bodhisattva represents the bejewelled aspect of Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi in the transcendental existence of *sambhogakāya*. He is seated in the attitude of ease (*lalitāsana*) on a double lotus pedestal composed of broad petals, and rests the right foot on a lotus flower (*padma*). Padmapāṇi holds with the right hand, displayed in the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya-mudrā*), a rosary (*akṣamālā*). In the left hand he holds, in accordance with his name, the stalk of a lotus flower (*padma*), originally attached to the left shoulder, that is now broken off. He is clad in a cloth modelled with folds and tied around the waist with a beaded belt, and carries over the left shoulder the hide of an antelope. He wears bejewelled ornaments, namely a pair of earrings, two necklaces, a pair of bracelets, the “investiture with the sacred thread” (*yajñopavīta*), and a small effigy of Amitābha in the crown of hair (*jaṭāmakuṭa*) decorated with strands of jewels.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 15]

1B. Ascetic Form of Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi North-Western India: Swat Region (Uḍḍiyāna); 7th C

Brass; hollow cast. Eyes and *uṛṇā* are inlaid with silver, the pupils filled with a black lacquer-like paint. Height: 10 cm.

Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi is shown as an ascetic in the *nirmāṇakāya* aspect, denoting the manner in which a Bodhisattva appears in the worldly existence of *saṃsāra*. He is seated in a particular yogic posture on a lotus pedestal composed of broad petals. He displays with the right hand the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya-mudrā*) and holds with the left hand the stalk of a lotus flower (*padma*) attached to the left shoulder. Padmapāṇi is only sparsely clad in a narrow cloth that drapes between the legs, and which is attached to a string worn around the waist. Note the small effigy of Amitābha attached to the matted crown of hair (*jaṭāmakuṭa*) with long strands falling over the shoulders and the back. Padmapāṇi is shown here in the *siddhi*-like ascetic form distinguished by his long hair and very few ornaments, which are restricted here to a beaded necklace, the “investiture with the sacred thread” (*yajñopavīta*), and bracelets.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 16]



Plate 1

North-Western India: Swat Region (Uḍḍiyāna)

Among the Indian sculptures of the Alain Bordier Foundation are two statues of the type identified as “meditative or pensive form of Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi” – the “lotus bearer” – both seated in the *vāmārdhaparyāṅka* attitude with the left leg pendant. No textual reference has yet been found for the kind of gesture displayed with the right hand. Nevertheless, the undoubtedly pensive, and perhaps sorrowful, attitude may perhaps depict the Bodhisattva as the “lord of great compassion” (*mahākāruṅika*). The “pensive gesture” is also associated with a meditating form of Avalokiteśvara. Presumably indebted to Graeco-Roman influence, this type of Bodhisattva manifested itself on the Indian subcontinent for the first time during the Kuṣāṇa dynasty (1st–3rd century AD) in the art of Gandhāra, and also in Mathurā. The continued worship of this type of Bodhisattva is documented by a number of 7th to 9th century rock-carvings in situ in the lower Swat valley, which had earlier formed part of the Gandhāra region. The iconographic type of Bodhisattva images displaying the “pensive gesture” spread from India to China, and further to Korea and Japan.

One “pensive Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi” shown here is in the *siddhi*-like ascetic *nirmāṇakāya* aspect, distinguished by long hair and very few ornaments. This denotes the manner in which a Bodhisattva appears in the worldly existence of *saṃsāra* (**Plate 2A**). The other Avalokiteśvara statue represents the bejewelled aspect of the transcendental existence of the realm of *sambhogakāya* (**Plate 2B**).

The popularity of the “pensive Bodhisattva” is documented by dozens of metal sculptures made in North-Western India and the adjoining Himalaya regions between *circa* the 6th and the 11th centuries. The earlier statue with its graceful posture and compassionate expression reflects in every aspect the characteristics of the Gupta style (4th–6th centuries) (**Plate 2A**). The sensuous face with full lips crowned by the voluminous matted hair resembles some of the Gupta and Post-Gupta sculptures and wall paintings of Ellora and Ajantā in the Deccan. The lustrous patina of both statues is the result of ritual devotion by generations of Buddhist monks in Tibet where these statues were objects of devotion for more than one thousand years.

References to the iconography of the “pensive Bodhisattva”

Ulrich von Schroeder. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume One: *India & Nepal*, pls. 7, 8, 48A, 50A–B, 51D–E, 53, 54, 55, 56A.
E. Hsiang-Ling Hsu. 2002. “Visualization Meditation and the Siwei Icon in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture”, *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. LXII, No. 1, pp. 5–32, 17 figs.

2A. Ascetic Form of Pensive Avalokiteśvara North-Western India (Post-Gupta Style); 6th Century

Brass; hollow cast in one piece. Height: 14.5 cm.

The ascetic *siddhi*-like form of Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi is shown here in the “meditative or pensive attitude”. He is seated with the left leg pendant (*vāmārdhaparyāṅka*) on an oval-shaped wicker stool. Leaning to the side, the right elbow placed on the right knee rests on a pillow. He supports with the fingers of the right hand his inclined head with a sorrowful expression. The left hand, resting on the left thigh, holds the stalk of a lotus flower (*padma*) blossoming beside the left shoulder – a symbol of purity and fertility. Avalokiteśvara is clad in a cloth tied around the waist and draped down the front. He has a voluminous and elaborately fashioned crown of matted hair (*jaṭāmakūṭa*), with curly locks falling on both shoulders and at the back. The jewellery of the ascetic is restricted to one necklace with an attached pendant, and a pair of bracelets. The separately cast nimbus earlier inserted at the back of the seat has been lost. Attached to the front of the wicker stool are two lotus flowers as rests for the feet.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 176]

2B. Bejewelled Form of Pensive Avalokiteśvara North-Western India: Swat Region (Uḍḍiyāna); 7th C

Brass; hollow cast in one piece. The eyes are inlaid with silver; the lips are inlaid with copper. Height: 12.2 cm.

This Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi also displays the “meditative or pensive attitude”, but is instead represented in a bejewelled form. Avalokiteśvara is also seated with the left leg pendant (*vāmārdhaparyāṅka*) on two cushions placed upon a decorated oval throne, which is mounted upon a single lotus pedestal with a stepped rim. The right hand displays the “pensive gesture” that characterizes Avalokiteśvara’s “meditating or pensive attitude”. He holds with the left hand the stalk of a lotus flower (*padma*) blossoming at the left shoulder. Padmapāṇi is clad in a cloth tied around the waist and carries a shawl around the shoulders and tied around the arms with the ends falling upon the pedestal at the back. He wears princely ornaments, namely a one-pointed crown in front of the elaborately arranged hair, reminiscent of the fan-shaped turban of Gandhāran sculptures, and decorated in front with a small effigy of Amitābha, earrings, a necklace, and ornaments at the upper arms and wrists.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 92]



Plate 2

North-Western India: Paṭola-Ṣāhi Kingdom

Some of the finest Buddhist bronzes known can be attributed to the Paṭola-Ṣāhi dynasty, located in the Baltistan/Gilgit area of present day Northern Pakistan. Between the 6th and the early 8th century they were part of the confederation of kingdoms of Bolōr. This was a strategically important region in the armed struggle between the Chinese and Tibetans for control of the trade between Central Asia and North-Western India. The political alliance between the Paṭola-Ṣāhi and China facilitated the cultural contact between India and the Buddhists of Central Asia, especially among the Śāka people some of whom had settled in the Khotan area. The existence of the dynasty of the Paṭola-Ṣāhi of Gilgit was at first only known through the colophons of the famous so-called “Gilgit manuscripts” found in 1931. Secondary sources of information were the rock inscriptions of Hatun and Hodar. Accounts written by Korean and Chinese Buddhist pilgrims further confirmed that the population of the Paṭola-Ṣāhi kingdom were Buddhists with numerous monasteries and a great number of monks. In the middle of the 8th century, the Trakhāns, a dynasty of Turkic descent, replaced the rule of the Paṭola-Ṣāhi.

In recent years an increasing number of Buddhist bronzes have come to light that can be attributed to the Paṭola-Ṣāhi on the basis of their Sanskrit inscriptions. Other statues without inscriptions can be attributed to the Paṭola-Ṣāhi purely on stylistic grounds. The origin of most Paṭola-Ṣāhi bronzes is not known; however there can be no doubt that most of them had at some point been in the custody of Tibetan monasteries. The Alain Bordier Foundation owns an inscribed Paṭola-Ṣāhi bronze of Śākyamuni as “world sovereign” (*cakravartin*), which was originally commissioned by the Śāka monk Hariṣayaśasya in 678/679 AD (**Plate 3A**). The other statue depicts Buddha Śākyamuni in monastic robes. Based on the stylistic and technical characteristics, this Buddha was probably cast in the Kashmir region in the first half of the 8th century. The shining surface of the metal is the result of daily ritual worship over an extended period of time (**Plate 3B**).

References to the Paṭola-Ṣāhi kingdom in Northern Pakistan

Ulrich von Schroeder. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume One: *India and Nepal*, pp. 46, 53, 56, 62–67, 76, 106, 110 ff., 176 ff.

3A. Buddha Śākyamuni as “World Sovereign” North-Western India: Paṭola-Ṣāhi of Gilgit; Dated 678/679

Brass; hollow cast. Eyes and *uṣṇā* are inlaid with silver and the lips are inlaid with copper. Height: 22 cm.

This crowned Buddha represents the historical Buddha Śākyamuni as “world sovereign” (*cakravartin*). He is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a decorated cushion placed on a rectangular open-work throne supported at the front by a pair of griffins – now partly broken – and an atlant between a pair of lions; the whole is placed upon a stand with a moulded rim. The back of the pedestal is decorated with a pair of geese (*haṃsa*) placed between two pillars with “Indo-Corinthian” capitals. Although shown in the monastic form, the Buddha has bejewelled ornaments, namely a three-leaved crown, a pair of circular earrings, a beaded necklace, and bracelets. With his hands he displays the “gesture of the wheel of the doctrine” (*dharmacakra-mudrā*). The upper monastic garment has folds and covers only the left shoulder. The border of the lower garment is also visible. At the two corners in front of the pedestal are small kneeling effigies of the donors, holding their hands in the gesture of respectful adoration (*namaskāra-mudrā*). According to the inscription, this statue is the gift of Surabhi and the Śāka monk Hariṣayaśasya, who is shown on the left side. The female donor on the right represents Surabhi, perhaps the mother or another relative of the monk.

There is a dated dedicatory Sanskrit inscription of two lines in *Śāradā* script: / **saṃ (5)4 deyadharmo yaṃ / sri-surabhiya / tathā sārddhaṃ / śākabhikṣu hariṣayaśasya /**.

“In the year 54. This is the pious gift of (the woman?) Surabhi together with the Śākabhikṣu (Śāka monk) Hariṣayaśasya”. [O. von Hinüber]. The year is given as 54 of the Laukika era, which is equal to the year 78/9 of an unknown century; an exact date can therefore only be made on stylistic grounds. Compared with other published statues, the most likely date would be: 624/25 + 54 = 678/9.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 11]

3B. Historical Buddha Śākyamuni North-Western India: Kashmir Region; 700–750

Brass; hollow cast. The eyes are inlaid with silver and the pupils are filled with a black lacquer-like paint. Height: 12 cm.

The historical Buddha Śākyamuni is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) and was originally attached to a separately cast pedestal, probably of rectangular shape. The Buddha displays the “gesture of the wheel of the law” (*dharmacakra-mudrā*). The upper monastic garment is rendered with a few folds and covers only the left shoulder. The border of the lower garment is also visible. Originally, a nimbus was attached at the back.

In Buddhism there does not exist a term such as “human Buddha” or “mortal Buddha”. The historical Buddha Śākyamuni represents one of the “seven Buddhas” (Skt.: *sapta-buddha*). He represents also one of the “Buddhas of the past” (Pa.: *pubbā buddha*), or “former Buddhas” (Pa.: *atīte buddhe*).

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 42]



Plate 3

North-Western India: Kashmir & Related Traditions

The greater region of Kashmir, located in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent, represents another region with a long tradition of Buddhism, although Hinduism was for most of its history the predominant religious conviction. The importance of Kashmir in the development of Buddhism in Central Asia and Tibet has long been acknowledged, particularly through the work of monk-translators. With regard to the development of Tibetan art during the “first propagation” of Buddhism in Tibet (*sNga dar*) (c. 600–842), artists hailing from Kashmir were among the foreign artists employed by Tibetan patrons. During the “second propagation” of Buddhism in Tibet (*Phyi dar*) from the late 10th century onward, especially in the sPu rangs-Gu ge kingdom of Western Tibet, again the Tibetans employed artists from Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

The Alain Bordier Foundation has a number of Kashmir-style images in its collection. Among them is a rare parcel gilt silver statue of the Ādibuddha or “Primordial Buddha” Vajrasattva, allegedly discovered in China in the greater Dunhuang region (**Plate 4A**). However, the style of the image is clearly more closely related to the arts of Kashmir than those of Central Asia or China. Vajrasattva is depicted in the noble attitude (*sattvaparyāṅkāśana*). The noble posture, which is common in South India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia, is rarely encountered in the Northern Buddhist countries where its occurrence is usually restricted to deities forming part of a Maṇḍala. The statue of Vajrasattva is distinguished by the presence of small effigies of the five transcendental Buddhas (Tathāgatas) in the crown (*pañcatathāgatamakuṭa*), namely from left to right: Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Vairocana, Amoghasiddhi, and Akṣobhya. This feature does not occur with all representations of Ādibuddha. The bottom of the pedestal is partly open and reveals consecration material including folded papers presumably written with *mantra* formulas. This statue was possibly the principal image of a three-dimensional Vajrasattva Maṇḍala.

The iconography of a religious statue is often an indication about the ethnic and religious affiliation of the patron. This is the case with the youthful goddess representing Śyāma-Tārā – a form of the “green Tārā” (**Plate 4B**). This form of Tārā does not occur in the corpus of Kashmiri art but was popular in Tibet. Therefore it is almost certain that this image was commissioned by a Tibetan patron of Western Tibet – as indicated by the iconography, although cast by a Kashmir artist – as indicated by the style and technical properties. Both images are encircled by an aureole with the head set against a nimbus decorated with rays. This type of aureole is typical for the Kashmir styles of the 10th and 11th century and is not encountered among earlier Kashmir statues.

References to metal sculptures of the Kashmir region

Ulrich von Schroeder. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume One: *India & Nepal*, pp. 53–210, pls. 12–66.

4A. “Primordial Buddha” Vajrasattva Kashmir Style in Central Asia (?); 10th/11th Century

Parcel gilt silver alloy; hollow cast in one piece. Inset with one coral and turquoise. Height: 13.8 cm.

Vajrasattva, slightly bent at the hip and neck, is seated in the noble attitude (*sattvaparyāṅkāśana*) on a single lotus pedestal with an upper beaded border mounted upon a square stepped pedestal. He holds with the right hand the five-pronged diamond sceptre (*vajra*) in front of the chest and with the left hand the prayer-bell (*ghaṇṭā*), which are the traditional attributes of Vajrasattva and Vajradhara. The primordial Buddha is clad in a cloth tied around the waist and secured with a belt, and wears a shawl carried over the left shoulder and tied around the chest. He wears princely ornaments, namely a crown decorated with small effigies of the five Tathāgatas, a pair of earrings, a necklace with a pendant, and two pairs of bracelets at the upper arms and wrists.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 249]

4B. Śyāma-Tārā – the “Green Tārā” Kashmir Schools in Western Tibet; 11th Century

Brass; hollow cast in one piece. Eyes are inlaid with silver. The bottom of the pedestal is not sealed. Height: 14.5 cm.

The goddess represents Śyāma-Tārā, a form of the “green Tārā”. She is seated in the attitude of ease with the left leg hanging down (*vāmārdhaparyāṅka*) on a circular single lotus base placed on a rectangular, stepped pedestal. The goddess holds the right hand in the gesture of charity (*varada-mudrā*); the left hand is raised holding the stalk of a flower blossoming above the left shoulder, which, according to the *sādhanas*, is a blue lily (*nilotpala*) and not a lotus (*padma*). Tārā is clad in a cloth tied around her hips leaving her stomach bare, and wears a shawl over the shoulders. She is adorned with ornaments, namely a three-pointed crown, a pair of earrings, a necklace, two pairs of bracelets, and anklets. A small effigy of the male donor kneels beside the pedestal.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 125]



Plate 4

North-Eastern India: Pāla Schools

The Pāla empire (*circa* 750–1200) was a Buddhist dynasty that ruled over a large kingdom in the north-eastern part of the Indian subcontinent covering the present-day areas of Bihar and West-Bengal. Despite a definite fondness towards Buddhism, the Pāla rulers seem to have shown tolerance and impartiality towards the adherents of other faiths, such as Hinduism and Jainism. The sovereigns of the Pāla dynasty are of considerable significance for the development of Buddhism in India. Through their generosity to Buddhist monasteries, Indian Buddhism, especially in the later forms of Mahāyāna, reached its final zenith. The monasteries of Bodhgayā, Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, and Odantapurī became the centres of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhist studies and practice. These universities not only attracted students from all over India and the Himalayas, but also from Tibet and places as far away as China. Indian missionaries to foreign countries, and visitors from abroad, took palm-leaf manuscripts of Sanskrit Buddhist texts well beyond the Pāla empire. Some of the Buddhist scholars and students carried, in addition, small-sized metal sculptures and stone carvings as well as paintings on cloth and palm-leaf. This explains the impact of Pāla art styles in every country with a Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. The area of influence comprised not only the Himalayas and Tibet, but also Burma and other regions of Southeast Asia, and even countries as far away as Central Asia and China. The influence was not restricted to Buddhist teachings and art styles, but also had an influence on the architecture of monasteries and temples. Eventually however, as a result of the expansion of Islam, monastic Buddhism was wiped out throughout the whole of Northern and North-Eastern India by the end of the 12th century.

The artistic remains of Bihar and Bengal dating from the 8th to the 12th century are generally referred to as Pāla art. The majority of the art objects that have survived are stone and metal sculptures. A great number of Pāla schools metal statues were excavated at the monasteries of Nālandā and at nearby Kurkihār in Bihar. Metallurgical examinations revealed that the majority are cast in brass – an alloy of copper and zinc – and left ungilt. Bronze – an alloy of copper and tin – was seldom used in Northern India because of the rarity of tin. Gilt metal statues such as the illustrated Buddha are extremely rare in the Pāla art (**Plate 5A**).

One of the objects illustrated here represents a three-dimensional Maṇḍala cast in the shape of a lotus flower (*padma*) (**Plate 5B**). It presumably represents the Five-Deity Maṇḍala of Buddha Śākyamuni as described in the *Trisamayavyūha*. The Maṇḍala is constructed in such a way that the closed object represents the bud of an eight-leaved lotus flower. The images thus only become visible when the lotus flower is open. Originally, there were separately cast objects attached to each of the eight lotus petals, but they are now all lost. As described in the *Trisamayavyūha*, there would have been two male and two female attendant deities attached to four of the petals: Vajradhara, Vajradhāra, Anantadāraka, and Anantadārikā. The other four lotus petals would have been ornamented with Buddhist emblems. The workmanship is in accordance with the late Pāla schools of North-Eastern India during the 11th/12th centuries.

5A. Historical Buddha Śākyamuni North-Eastern India: Pāla Schools; 12th Century

Gilt brass; hollow cast. The pedestal is not sealed. Ht: 14 cm.

Buddha Śākyamuni shown in monk garments of the *nirmāṇakāya* aspect, is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāsa*) on a double lotus pedestal. He rests the left hand in the lap and extends the right hand in the gesture of touching the earth (*bhūmisparśa-mudrā*). The upper monastic garment is rendered without folds in a transparent manner and covers only the left shoulder in addition to the folded shawl.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 164]

5B. Five-Deity Maṇḍala of Buddha Śākyamuni North-Eastern India: Pāla Schools; 11th /12th Century

Brass; solid cast in more than ten parts. Height: 14.6 cm.

Buddha Śākyamuni is identified here as Trisamayavyūhamuni. He is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāsa*) on a double lotus pedestal in the centre of a Maṇḍala shaped like a lotus flower. The image is only visible when the lotus flower is open. The Buddha displays the “gesture of the wheel of the law” (*dharmacakra-mudrā*). The upper monastic garment (*uttarāsaṅga*) is rendered without folds and covers both shoulders.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 115]



Plate 5

North-Eastern India: Pāla Schools

During the “second propagation” of Buddhism in Tibet (*Phyi dar*) from the late 10th century onward, Tibetans followed the forms of Buddhism practiced in the monasteries of the Pāla empire of North-Eastern India (circa 750–1200). Tibetans were among the many visitors from all over the Buddhist world who came to India in search of the original teachings of Śākyamuni. Some visitors were simply pilgrims visiting the “eight great places” in the life of Śākyamuni: namely Lumbinī (“birth”), Bodhgayā (“enlightenment”), Sārnāth (“first sermon”), Śrāvastī (“miracles”), Sāṅkāśya (“descent from the Trāyastriṃśa heaven”), Rājagṛha (“taming the wild elephant”), Vaiśālī (“gift of the monkey”), and Kuśinagara (“death”). Others came in search of Sanskrit Buddhist texts intended for translation, unaware that their activities would preserve these texts. A large number of Indian Buddhist texts are nowadays only known through their translations in Tibetan and Chinese, their original Sanskrit versions being lost. This transfer of knowledge depended also on the intense labour of many Indian scholars who worked in Tibet and other Buddhist countries. There, in collaboration with local scholars, countless Buddhist Sanskrit texts were translated. Tibet and China became the recipients of a multitude of Indian Buddhist texts, especially those concerning later developments within the Mahāyāna tradition. In addition to the monk scholars, trained artists from India were also active in Tibet. After the destruction of monastic Buddhism in North-Eastern India, artists from Nepal came to predominate in Tibet.

The two illustrated brass statues are examples of the devotion by Pāla artists towards perfection, manifested in the subtle distinctions in the depiction of the different Vajrayāna deities, encompassing a whole spectrum of transcendental aspirations: the angry and fearful Acala fighting the enemies of Buddhism (**Plate 6A**) or the restrained erotic sensuality expressed by the Mahāśrī-Tārā (**Plate 6B**). The craftsmanship and the extensive finishing work, including inlay work with silver and copper, of the late Pāla schools resemble more the work of jewellers than the craft of metal workers. Pāla statues that were objects of devotion in Tibet have retained a shining surface, whereas statues excavated in India usually do not have this polish.

References to metal sculptures of North-Eastern India

Ulrich von Schroeder. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume One: *India & Nepal*, pp. 211–320, pls. 67–110.

6A. Acala – the “Immovable One”

North-Eastern India: Pāla Schools; 11th/12th Century

Brass; hollow cast in one piece: figure closed, pedestal open. The separately cast aureole is lost. The image is extensively inlaid with silver and copper and decorated with engraved ornaments. The hair has traces of a red pigment, which is an indication that this image was an object of devotion in Tibet. The bottom of the pedestal is not sealed. Height: 12 cm.

The fearful two-eyed form of Acala is trampling on the defeated corpse of Gaṇeśa, laid upon a double lotus pedestal. Acala is stepping to the right with the right leg bent and the left straight (*pratyāliḍhāsana*). He brandishes in the right uplifted hand the sword (*khadga*) as a symbol of “cutting through ignorance”, and holds with the left hand, displayed in the gesture of threatening (*tarjanī-mudrā*), the noose (*pāśa*), which is an attribute of primarily wrathful deities, to catch the enemies of Buddhism. Acala is dressed only in a tiger skin (*vyāghracarma*) tied below his protruding belly. He wears a pair of circular earrings, a necklace, and two bracelets. The crown and the “investiture with the sacred thread” (*nāgopavīta*) are composed of snake emblems. A ribbon-like scarf encircles the statue with swirling ends on both sides. The tiger skin draped between the legs increases the stability of the image. Images of Acala are always shown in a fearsome attitude and he represents one of the ten Khroda protector deities in various Maṇḍalas.

The Sanskrit word Acala means “mountain” or literally “immobile”, which is perfectly symbolized by the rock-shaped pedestal. This image was manufactured in one of the casting centres of North-Eastern India during the 11th or 12th century. Of special interest is the composition of the rock-shaped pedestal surmounted by mountains and a double lotus pedestal (*viśvapadma*).

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 35]

6B. Mahāśrī-Tārā – “Tārā of Great Fortune”

North-Eastern India: Pāla Schools; 12th Century

Brass; hollow cast. Inlaid with silver and copper. Ht: 11.3 cm.

The goddess, identified by her gesture as Mahāśrī-Tārā, is seated in the attitude of ease (*lalitāsana*) on a cushion placed upon a double lotus pedestal, and rests the right foot on a lotus flower (*padma*). She displays the “gesture of the wheel of the law” (*dharmacakramudrā*) and holds with the left hand the stalk of a lily (*utpala*) attached to the left shoulder. Attached to the right shoulder is possibly a lotus (*padma*). The Tārā is clad in a decorated cloth tied around the waist. She is lavishly bedecked with ornaments, namely the jewelled hair, a pair of circular earrings, a necklace and ornaments on both upper arms, as well as a pair of bracelets. Mahāśrī-Tārā is the only Tārā displaying the *dharmacakra-mudrā*.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 24]



Plate 6

Burma (Myanmar): Pagan Period

In historic times, the first people to consolidate political and economic power in Burma were the Pyu. They established a number of small city-state kingdoms, of which Śrī Ksetra was the most powerful. The Pyu first practiced Theravāda Buddhism, but later came under the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism radiating from Bihar and Bengal in North-Eastern India. In the middle of the 9th century, the Pyu kingdom lost its dominance and the city of Pagan emerged as the capital of a powerful kingdom that would eventually rule the whole of Burma. By the mid-12th century most of peninsular Southeast Asia was under the control of two adversaries, the Pagan kingdom and the Khmer empire. Pagan came to an end in 1289 when the Mongols captured the capital and most of the kingdom, installing a puppet ruler in Burma. Later Burma was divided into four major political forces: Upper Burma, Lower Burma, the Shan States, and Arakan. Little has been published about the cultural relationship between Tibet and Burma – both Buddhist countries. However, the discovery in Burma, especially in Arakan, of a number of metal statues that resemble not only Tibetan but also Chinese works of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) document the existence of a cultural relationship along the trade route between Burma, Tibet, and China.

The art and architecture of the Pagan kingdom during the 11th and 12th centuries was in many aspects heavily influenced by the Indian Pāla culture. This was naturally more in regard to the culture of Mahāyāna Buddhism than to that of the Theravāda Buddhism also practiced in Pagan. Among the countless visitors to the holy places of India were Burmese pilgrims and monks. Written records testify to Burmese restorations of the Mahābodhi Stūpa at Bodhgayā before 1098 by a King Kyanzittha of Pagan, and again by a Pagan ruler between 1295 and 1298. That second time the Burmese erected a brick Buddha inside the sanctum of the Mahābodhi to replace the original stone Buddha dating from the 10th century which had been removed prior to the Muslim invasion of northern India at the end of the 12th century, and was only reinstalled in the late 19th century. Between the 14th and 19th centuries, a Burmese style brick statue thus occupied the sanctum of the most sacred existing Buddhist temple. This explains why numerous Tibetan and Nepalese paintings illustrating Śākyamuni installed in the Mahābodhi Stūpa depict an image resembling Burmese Buddhas with short necks. The same phenomenon also affected many Nepalese and Tibetan sculptures depicting Buddha statues copied from the Mahābodhi image (**Plate 11B**). Although many representations of crowned Buddhas are known in the art of Pagan, images inlaid extensively with silver and copper are rare (**Plate 7A**).

The differences in style between North-Eastern Indian Pāla style Buddhas and those of the Pagan kingdom are relatively subtle, and can be found especially in the treatment of the faces, the upper torso, and shoulders. The illustrated miniature stone statue of Buddha Śākyamuni documents an early transitional phase in the development of the Pagan style based on the traditions of the North-Eastern Indian Pāla schools (**Plate 7B**).

7A. Buddha Śākyamuni as “World Sovereign” Burma (Myanmar): Pagan Period; 12th Century

Bronze alloys of different colours; hollow cast. Extensively inlaid with silver and copper. Height: 11.2 cm.

The crowned Buddha is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a cushion placed upon a stepped pedestal. He rests the left hand in the lap and extends the right hand in the gesture of touching the earth (*bhūmisparśa-mudrā*). The monastic garment is rendered without folds in a transparent manner and covers the left shoulder only. He is bedecked with extensively inlaid jewelled ornaments. This crowned Buddha represents the historical Śākyamuni. The crown emphasizes his aspect as “world sovereign” (*cakravartin*). Such images are often erroneously identified as the transcendental Buddha Akṣobhya who, however, is never shown with monastic garments.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 5]

7B. Historical Buddha Śākyamuni Burma (Myanmar): Pagan Period; 11th Century

Fine-grained yellowish-beige stone (possibly phyllite), known in Burma as “andagu”. Height: 9 cm.

The Buddha is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a double lotus pedestal. This statue originally formed part of a stele depicting the eight major events in the life of Śākyamuni known as the “eight great illusory displays” (*aṣṭamahāprātihārya*): The birth at Lumbinī; the defeat of Māra (*māravijaya*) at Bodhgayā; the first sermon at Sārnāth; the “miracle or great illusion” (*mahā-prātihārya*) at Śrāvastī; the descent from the Trāyastriṃśa heaven at Sāṅkāśya; the taming of the wild elephant Nālāgiri at Rājagṛha; the gift of honey by a monkey at Vaiśālī; and the death of Śākyamuni (*mahāparinirvāna*) at Kuśinagara.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 105]



Plate 7

Kingdom of Nepal: Licchavi & Transitional Periods

The former kingdom of Nepal represents in many aspects a passage between the Indian subcontinent in the south and the plateau of Tibet in the north. From ancient times tribes of different linguistic and cultural background have inhabited Nepal. The heterogeneous population is a mixture of Indo-Aryan immigrants from India and others of Mongolian strains from Central Asia. Within the scope of this publication about Buddhist sculptures, we are mainly concerned with the Newārs who inhabit the towns and villages of the Kathmandu valley. Although the Newārs claim descent from the Śākya clan to which the historical Buddha Śākyamuni belonged, they are not a homogenous ethnic group. Whereas their language, Newāri, belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese language group, their script is of Indian origin – first *Gupta* later replaced by *Devanāgarī*. The general religious and cultural pattern of the Newārs reveals a strong and continuing influence from India. The majority of the Newārs are Vajrayāna Buddhist, while others adhere to various Brahmanical sects. The term “Nepalese or Newār artists” used in the context of this publication refers almost exclusively to the Buddhist Newārs of the Kathmandu valley, who are artistically very creative people. They have occupied since earliest times important positions as craftsmen and traders, an alliance that was very conducive to the spread of their artistic endeavours to Tibet, and eventually up to China and Mongolia. The countless temples and shrines serving the religious aspirations of the population are almost exclusively built by the Buddhist Newārs. Since the end of the 14th century, the population of Nepal has been divided into occupational castes. Among them were masons and carpenters, carvers of stone, wood, and ivory, painters, and specialized metal workers, and the greatly gifted craftsmen that were responsible for the manufacture of gilt copper statues.

The two illustrated copper statues represent two Buddhist deities, in particular the male Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi (**Plate 8A**) and the goddess Tārā (**Plate 8A**), both dating from the Transitional period (*circa* 880–1200). Both deities stand in a slightly bent attitude, still erroneously described over and over again as the *tribhaṅga* posture – a Sanskrit term that is not used for a particular posture or stance in any ancient Indian text. Another blunder, which frequently occurs, is with respect to the identification of the flower attribute held by the Buddhist goddess Tārā. Few writers seem to be aware that the Buddhist goddess Tārā never holds a lotus flower (*padma*), but instead always holds a water lily (*utpala*). The lotus flower is the attribute of Hindu goddesses. The flower of the illustrated goddess can clearly be identified as a water lily, as indicated by the narrow petals. Another fiction is the strict separation into Buddhist and Brahmanical deities, ignoring that many Buddhist deities are of Brahmanical and Vedic origin. This is also the case of Vajrapāṇi who holds a diamond sceptre (*vajra*) (**Plate 8A**). This attribute originated in the West where it was known as a thunderbolt and was the attribute of Wotan and Zeus. Later this symbol migrated to India and became the symbol of the Vedic god Indra and was subsequently transformed into the diamond sceptre (*vajra*) of Vajrapāṇi.

8A. Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi Nepal: Transitional Period; 950–1050

Copper with remains of gilt; hollow cast. Height: 41.5 cm.

This image represents Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi – the “one with the diamond sceptre in the hand”. He is standing in a gracefully balanced slightly bent attitude on a circular stand with two tenons attached underneath. He displays with the right hand the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya-mudrā*) and holds with the left hand a five-pronged diamond sceptre (*vajra*). The Bodhisattva is clad in an ornamented cloth tied around the waist with a belt and a sash about the thighs. He wears princely ornaments, namely a three-fold jewelled crown, two earrings of different shape, a necklace with attached pendants, ornaments on the upper arms, bracelets, and the “investiture with the sacred thread” (*yajñopavīta*).

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 1]

8B. Buddhist Goddess Tārā Nepal: Transitional Period; *circa* 11th Century

Copper with remains of gilt; solid cast. Height: 24.2 cm.

This goddess, identified here under the general term Tārā, is represented gracefully in a slightly bent attitude, and was earlier attached to a separately made pedestal. She extends the right hand in the gesture of charity (*varada-mudrā*) and the left hand holds the stalk of a lily (*utpala*) attached to the left shoulder. The Tārā is clad in a cloth decorated with floral ornaments and tied around the waist with a beaded belt. She is bedecked with jewelled ornaments, namely a small three-pointed crown, a pair of circular earrings, two necklaces – the short one with attached pendants, bracelets at upper arms and wrists, and anklets. The Tārā has a smooth surface due to extensive ritual worship.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 41]



Plate 8

Kingdom of Nepal: Early Malla Period

With the end of Nepal's first dynasty, the Licchavi (c. 400–879), there was an extended period of internal dissension and anarchy in the Kathmandu valley, and the absence of any royal inscriptions or their own coinage may indicate political domination by the Indian Pāla monarchs, or other Indian rulers. This Transitional period only ended around 1200 with the foundation of the Malla dynasty (c. 1200–1482) by Arimalla (reigned 1200–1216). In 1346, a Muslim army succeeded in invading the Kathmandu valley and systematically desecrated and destroyed all its sacred temples and shrines, plundering and burning the villages and towns. Nevertheless, the people of the valley eventually succeeded in rebuilding most of the temples. After the death of Yakṣamalla (reigned 1428–1482), the Malla kingdom was divided among his three sons. This led to the establishment of three rival Malla kingdoms in the valley, ruled from the cities of Bhatgaon, Kathmandu, and Banepa, and then subsequently from Bhatgaon, Kathmandu, and Pāṭan. The Mallas ruled the valley until 1768 when the invading Gurkhas overthrew them and established the Shah dynasty, which lasted until 2008.

The destruction of monastic Buddhism in North-Eastern India at the end of the 12th century at the hands of the Muslims also had far reaching consequences in Nepal. The annihilation of Buddhism in Bihar and Bengal caused a great influx of refugee monks to the Buddhist monasteries of the Kathmandu valley. The arrival of these immigrants was in many aspects beneficial for Nepal because among the refugees were many eminent Indian Buddhist teachers who had salvaged a great number of valuable Sanskrit manuscripts and probably also many small metal and stone statues of Buddhist deities. Among these displaced Indians were presumably also a number of skilled image-makers and painters. With this influx of Indian teachers and monks the crowded Nepalese monasteries – mostly located in the cities of Kathmandu and Pāṭan – became the most important centres of Vajrayāna studies, not only for Tibetans, but also for Buddhists from all over Asia.

The illustrated copper statue of Kubera or Jambhala was made by a Newār artist (**Plate 9A**). This is an unusually large image of the “god of wealth”, who is usually depicted as a small icon and is popularly worshipped by Hindus as Kubera and by Buddhists as Jambhala. As indicated by the intact gilding, this image was in the custody of a Tibetan monastery and had seldom been touched. In a Newār temple or private shrine of the Kathmandu valley, daily ritual washings and handling of the image would have meant little if any of mercury gilding would have survived. The turquoise and lapis lazuli also indicate that the image was instead made for a Tibetan patron, and not for a Newār patron who would have instead preferred rubies and rock crystal. Judging by the selection of precious stones, the Sita Acala was also made for the Tibetan market (**Plate 9B**). But because both statues are otherwise in a pure Newār style, they are not classified as products of the Nepalese schools in Tibet, which were adjusted to Tibetan requirements in many more respects than simply the selection of precious stones (**Plates 12–13**).

9A. Kubera or Jambhala – the “God of Wealth”

Nepal: Early Malla Period; 13th Century

Gilt copper; hollow cast. Inset with rubies, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and other precious stones. Height: 20 cm.

Jambhala, another name of the Brahmanical god Kubera, is seated in the attitude of ease (*lalitāsana*). He was originally attached to a separately cast lotus throne. The right hand of Jambhala is lifted, while the left hand holds a mongoose (*nakula*) resting on the left knee. The mongoose is the jewel-spewing attribute of Kubera, Jambhala, Vaiśravaṇa, and other deities associated with the cult of prosperity. Jambhala, the “god of wealth”, is related to Kubera, a Yakṣa of early Buddhism who later became transformed into Lokapāla Vaiśravaṇa, the guardian of the northern direction.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 137]

9B. Sita Acala – the “White Immovable One”

Nepal: Early Malla Period; 14th Century

Copper with traces of gilt. Inset with rubies, turquoise, and other precious stones. Height: 16 cm.

Sita Acala, or “white Acala”, is shown kneeling on a double lotus pedestal. He brandishes in the right uplifted hand the sword (*khaḍga*), and displays with the left hand the gesture of threatening (*tarjanī-mudrā*). Acala wears princely ornaments, namely a crown, a pair of earrings, a necklace, ornaments on the upper arms, the “investiture with the beaded sacred thread” (*ratnopavīta*), bracelets, and anklets. On the back of the pedestal is the name of the deity scratched in Tibetan *dBu can* script: || *mi ga gyo ba* || for Mi g.yo ba. This inscription was later added in Tibet.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 66]



Plate 9

Kingdom of Nepal: Early Malla Period

Any study of Nepalese sculptures and paintings reveals that the Pāla art schools of North-Eastern India had a lasting influence upon the development of styles in Nepal. The same was the case with regard to the art of Tibet, China, and Southeast Asia – actually in all countries where Mahāyāna Buddhism was practiced. The fact that most of the Newār artists of the Kathmandu valley were practicing Vajrayāna Buddhism similar to the ideology propagated in North-Eastern India caused the Newār craftsmen to be especially receptive to Pāla aesthetics. However, this does not presuppose that Newār artists were blindly duplicating such Indian models. Despite similarities in the modelling there is no risk of confusion because the Pāla statues are usually cast in brass and inlaid with silver and copper, while the Newārs preferred gilt copper statues studded with precious stones. Distinction exists also with regard to the hair, garments, and jewelled ornaments – the design had to be in agreement with the current practice. It is also important to remember that the jewellery of the deities would have been identical with the jewellery and crowns employed in religious rituals by the local priests. With the wiping out of monastic Buddhism in Northern India at the end of the 12th century, the flow of new religious and artistic concepts from there came to an end. From that time onwards, all changes in style among the workshops of Nepal were locally inspired.

The evolution of styles is a gradual change that only becomes evident when comparing statues of identical iconographies dating many years apart. Also, it must be kept in mind that styles can only develop in an artistic environment where the different workshops work closely together and where copying from each other is the rule and not the exception. In the last two hundred years or so in Nepal, it has been more the use of matrices that have modified styles than the cooperation between the various workshops and artists. Matrices not only save time during the production of wax models, they also enable a workshop to reproduce exactly a particular model whenever a new order is placed. It seems that before two hundred years ago, Newār craftsmen never applied matrices. Otherwise it would be easily visible among statues forming part of a group.

One of the particularities of Nepalese temples and shrines is the existence of large wooden sculptures as a whole group. One such example is illustrated here and identified as Mahāśrī-Tārā (**Plate 10A**). Although this goddess is described in the iconographic compendium *Sādhanamālā* as being in the “posture of royal ease” (*rājalīlāsana*), it is the particular gesture of this statue that supports the identification as Mahāśrī-Tārā, because she is the only Tārā described in the text as displaying the *dharmacakra-mudrā*. Buddhist statues with unusual iconographies are often restricted to a particular community or a particular sect. This is the case with Vasudhārā (**Plate 10B**), a Buddhist deity popularly worshipped in the Kathmandu valley as the goddess of fertility and abundance. The worship of Vasudhārā never gained much acceptance among the Tibetans, and images of her are therefore rare there and in most cases imported from Nepal and often for personal use of Newārs living in Tibet.

10A. Mahāśrī-Tārā – “Tārā of Great Fortune”

Nepal: Early Malla Period (c. 1200–1479); 15th Century

Wood with original painted decoration. Height: 71.5 cm.

This goddess is presumably Buddhist and likely represents one of the numerous forms of the Buddhist goddess Tārā. Identified here as Mahāśrī-Tārā, she is seated in the attitude of ease (*lalitāsana*) on a double lotus pedestal and was originally resting the right foot on a lotus flower. Clad in a cloth tied around the waist and a blouse with sleeves, she displays the “gesture of the wheel of the law” (*dharmacakra-mudrā*). According to the *Sādhanamālā* (*SM*), Mahāśrī-Tārā is the only Tārā displaying the *dharmacakra-mudrā* and represents a form of the “Green Tārā”. Although Mahāśrī-Tārā is described as being in the “posture of royal ease” (*rājalīlāsana*), it is the *dharmacakra-mudrā* that supports such identification.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 97]

10B. Vasudhārā – “Goddess of Fertility”

Nepal: Early Malla Period (c. 1200–1479); circa 1300

Gilt copper; solid cast. Inset with precious stones. Ht: 18.4 cm.

The six-armed goddess represents Vasudhārā and is seated in the attitude of ease (*lalitāsana*). She is clad in a cloth tied around the waist with a belt and a shawl placed over the left shoulder and tied across the chest. The upper right hand displays the *buddhaśramaṇa-mudrā* (?) and the upper left hand holds the manuscript (*pustaka*) of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. The middle pair of hands holds the gem bundle and the rice bundle. The lower right hand displays the gesture of charity (*varada-mudrā*). The lower left hand holds the vase (*kalaśa*). She wears jewelled ornaments. The cult of Vasudhārā is very popular in the Kathmandu valley, whereas only very few Tibetan images are known.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 106]



Plate 10

Western Nepal: Khāśa Malla Kingdom

From the late 11th to the middle of the 14th century the Khāśa Malla ruled over Western Nepal and subsequently also over large areas of Western Tibet. It appears that this Aryan tribe entered Western Nepal from Northern India. Their capital was in Señjā (Tib.: Ya tshe), modern Jumla, located in the Karnālī River basin in Western Nepal. According to an inscribed stele discovered near Dullu in Western Nepal, the Khāśa/Ya tshe empire had two successive dynasties, of which the Sanskrit names of the first end with -pāla, followed by a list of kings whose names end with -malla. A number of gilt copper and silver alloy statues have come to light in recent years that according to their Sanskrit inscriptions in *Devanāgarī* script were commissioned by Khāśa Malla patrons. The workmanship of these statues reveals many similarities with works originating from the Kathmandu valley. There is every reason to assume that the Newārs of the Kathmandu valley made up a substantial portion of the artists working for Khāśa Malla patrons. Nevertheless, the statues produced for the Khāśa Malla, when compared with works from the Kathmandu valley, show sufficient differences to enable a distinction between the two traditions. Some of the stylistic features also recall the Pāla art of North-Eastern India. However, this influence was probably transmitted by the artists from the Kathmandu valley, who were themselves influenced by the Pāla schools. During the 10th/11th centuries, artists from Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh mainly cast the Buddhist statues of Western Tibet. Later during the Khāśa Malla rule, Newār artists were increasingly active in the sPu rangs-Gu ge kingdom and other areas of greater mNga' ris in Western Tibet. According to Tibetan sources, during the reign of Ripumalla, the Khāśa Malla kingdom extended its territory to the south. The increased contacts with India resulted in an increased influence of Hinduism. During the earlier part of their reign, the Khāśa Malla had a greater bias for Buddhism.

The art of the Khāśa Malla kingdom is documented by two examples. The first one represents a portrait statue cast in silver of an unidentified Tibetan tantric master (**Plate 11A**). He wears the garments of a wealthy lay tantric practitioner made of Chinese brocade tied with a belt intricately inlaid with copper and gold. An outer pleated cloak is worn over the shoulders and covers the back. The silver statue possibly represents a member of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud theocracy. This order dominated the political and religious affairs of Western Tibet until the 17th century. The other statue made of gilt copper represents a crowned Buddha, namely the historical Buddha Śākyamuni in his aspect as "world sovereign" (*cakravartin*) (**Plate 11B**). Such images are often wrongly identified as Akṣobhya – one of the five Tathāgatas – who also wears a crown and has his hand in the *bhūmisparśa-mudrā*, but Akṣobhya is never shown with monastic garments. Some stylistic features, such as the ear ornaments and the incised marks on the fingers of the right hand of the silver master, indicate that both these statues forms part of the corpus of works that were most probably cast by Newār artists for patrons of the Khāśa Malla kingdom.

References to metal sculptures of the Khāśa Malla

Ian Alsop. 1994. "The Metal Sculpture of the Khasa Malla Kingdom", *Orientalism*, Vol. 25, No. 6, (June 1994), pp. 61–68, 12 illus;

Ian Alsop. 1997. "Metal Sculpture of the Khasa Mallas", *Tibetan Art*, edited by J. Casey Singer and P. Denwood, pp. 68–79, figs. 50–60.

11A. Master of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud Tradition Western Nepal: Khāśa Malla School; 14th Century

Silver statue inlaid with copper and gold. Height: 25 cm.

The unidentified master cast in silver is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a gilt copper lotus throne. Giving the impression of deep contemplation, the tantric master rests the left hand in the lap and extends the right hand in the gesture of touching the earth (*bhūmisparśa-mudrā*). An unusual feature of this statue is the chignon, which is an indication of his high status as a religious teacher. This feature is also an indication, that the subject was a tantric lay practitioner and not member of a monastic order.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 246]

11B. Buddha Śākyamuni as "World Sovereign" Western Nepal: Khāśa Malla School; 14th Century

Gilt copper; hollow cast. Height: 24.9 cm.

Buddha Śākyamuni wearing a crown as "world sovereign" (*cakravartin*) sits in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*). Resting the left hand in the lap, he extends the right in the gesture of touching the earth (*bhūmisparśa-mudrā*). The upper monastic garment is transparent without folds and covers only the left shoulder, in addition to the folded shawl. He wears no jewelled ornament besides the crown, but note the lotus flowers attached above the ears. Also, the *uṣṇīsa* is surmounted by a jewel (*cūḍāmaṇi*).

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 184]



Plate 11

Nepalese Schools in Tibet

In the 7th century during the reign of King Srong btsan sgam po, Tibet first came into contact with Buddhism – five hundred years later than its neighbours. According to tradition, the first Buddhist images were carried to Tibet as part of the dowry of his Chinese wife Wencheng. Bhṛkuṭī – his supposed Nepalese wife – allegedly also brought Buddhist statues from Nepal with her. When the first Buddhist temples and monasteries were built, the Tibetans depended on foreign craftsmen, and these first foreign artists active in Tibet were Newārs from Nepal. Their involvement in the construction of the Jokhang temple in Lhasa in the 7th century is documented by literary references and woodcarvings of great artistic merit in the Nepalese style. Though based on Indian prototypes, the Jokhang temple also resembles Newār architecture. At the time of the building of the Jokhang temple, relations between Nepal and Tibet were particularly close, so that one exiled heir to the Licchavi throne, accompanied by a large entourage, sought refuge in Lhasa. With the help of the Tibetans, he returned to Nepal and ultimately took up the crown as King Narendradeva (reigned c. 643–679). It is well-documented that Nepalese artisans played an important role in Tibet since the “first propagation” of Buddhism (*sNga dar*). Artists from North-Eastern India and Kashmir were also employed. However, following the destruction of Buddhism in Northern India at the end of the 12th century by the Muslims, the active role of Indian artists rapidly declined. As a result, from the time of the Early Malla dynasty (*circa* 1200–1482) onwards, Newārs were the principal foreign craftsmen active in Tibet.

The term “Nepalese schools in Tibet” is applied to sculptures and paintings executed by Newār craftsmen in a *Nepalese style*, but modified to the specifications of Tibetan patrons. The term implies nothing about the workshop’s location, which could have been in Tibet or in Nepal. It can be assumed that the workshops in the Kathmandu valley, such as those in the cities of Pāṭan and Kathmandu, were able to manufacture statues according to the requirements of Tibetan customers. Such specifications might have been iconographic matters or aesthetic aspects, such as garments, jewellery, hair, or physiognomy. Tibetans classify sculptures exclusively according to style, and not according to the ethnic background of the artists. Two statues that can be attributed to the Nepalese schools in Tibet are illustrated here. The gilt copper images of Ratnasambhava (**Plate 12A**) and Vajradhara (**Plate 12B**) were made for Tibetan patrons, as indicated by the choice of inset stones, in particular turquoise, coral, and lapis lazuli. If commissioned by a Newār, the statue would have been inset with rubies.

12A. Form of the Transcendental Buddha Ratnasambhava Nepalese Schools in Tibet; 15th Century

Gilt copper; hollow cast in one piece. The ornaments are inset with turquoise, coral, and lapis lazuli. Height: 21 cm.

This Buddhist statue represents a form of the transcendental Buddha Ratnasambhava (Tib.: Rin chen ’byung ldan). He is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) and was originally mounted upon a separately cast lotus pedestal. The right hand holds a jewel (*ratna*) in front of the chest; the left hand a prayer-bell (*vajraghaṅṅā*) forming a pair with the diamond sceptre (*vajra*) surmounting the hair.

A related statue in the Ford Collection holds in the right hand the flaming wheel (*cakra*). This attribute is associated most prominently with Vairocana, whereas the jewel (*ratna*) of the illustrated statue is the attribute of Ratnasambhava. It appears the two images are part of a group of the five transcendental Buddhas or Tathāgatas; the other three would have been Amitābha, Akṣobhya, and Amoghasiddhi.

Compare with an image from the same group of statues

Pal, P. 2001. *Desire and Devotion. Art from India, Nepal, and Tibet in the John and Berthe Ford Collection*; p. 206; no. 118: Bodhisattva holding bell and flaming wheel. Nepal, 15th century.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 208]

12B. “Primordial Buddha” Vajradhara Nepalese School in Tibet; 14th Century (?)

Gilt copper; hollow cast in three parts. The ornaments are inset with turquoise. Height: 20 cm.

Vajradhara (Tib.: rDo rje ’chang) is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a double lotus pedestal. The hands are crossed in front of the chest, holding a diamond sceptre (*vajra*) and a prayer-bell (*vajraghaṅṅā*). An image of Ādibuddha or “Primordial Buddha”, when depicted with this gesture, is generally identified as Vajradhara. In the front of the pedestal is a Tibetan inscription in *dBu can* script: **bla ma dam pa bsod rnam [nams] rgyal mtshan pa’i rten rdor [rdo] rje ’chang la na mo. “Sacred object of Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan. Salutations to Vajradhara!”** This statue was the personal image of Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan, possibly the *Sa skya* teacher of that same name (1312–1375) [Andreas Kretschmar].

The “old translation tradition” (*sNga bsgyur*) of the *rNying ma* order identifies the Ādibuddha with Samantabhadra, the “new translation traditions” (*gSar ma pa*), namely the *bKa’ brgyud*, *Sa skya*, and *dGe lugs* orders, identify him with Vajradhara or Vajrasattva.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 194]



Plate 12

Nepalese Schools in Tibet

The contacts between Nepal and Tibet were not restricted to craftsmen. Newār scholars played an important role in the transmission of Buddhist teachings to Tibet and many Tibetan monk scholars visited the Newār monasteries in the Kathmandu valley. The destruction of the Buddhist monasteries in North-Eastern India by the Muslims at the end of the 12th century further increased the prestige of the Kathmandu valley as a centre of Buddhist studies, where the same traditions were practiced as had once flourished in India. Often both traders and craftsmen, Newārs were especially famous as metalworkers. In addition to their activities as goldsmiths and silversmiths, they were also sought after for the casting of sculptures, while others were active as wood and ivory carvers, painters, etc. Some worked in Tibet only for a certain period of time, whereas others settled there. The largest Nepalese communities resided in Lhasa in Central Tibet, with many other smaller pockets of Newārs throughout the country. In addition to the pure Newārs, known as Bal po, there were many Kha cha ra descendants of mixed marriages between Newār men and Tibetan women – though these were rather traders than craftsmen. Of course one cannot always determine whether an object was made in the Kathmandu valley and subsequently exported to Tibet, or whether a Newār craftsman made it in Tibet. But the iconography is often an indication whether an image was made for a Tibetan or a Nepalese patron.

By far the most famous Newār artist who ever worked abroad was A ni ko (1244–1306) who was sent in 1261 at the age of sixteen to Tibet as the head of a group of eighty Newār craftsmen. This was at the request of 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280), throne-holder of Sa skya monastery in Southern Tibet. A ni ko, together with a group of Newār artisans, later followed 'Phags pa to China where they entered into the service of Kublai Khan (1215–1295), ruler of China (1260–1295) and suzerain of the Mongol states and of Tibet. Kublai Khan's satisfaction with A ni ko's works led in 1273 to his appointment as the “supervisor-in-chief of all classes of artisans”. A ni ko's activities were greatly responsible for the Nepalese and Tibetan influence upon Chinese Buddhist art during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), but not related to the influence during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) (Pl. 23A). The gifted Newārs have long been famous for their ability to fashion sheets of copper into a desired shape, which would then be fire gilt. One of the embossed statues illustrated here represents Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in the attitude of royal ease (Plate 13B). The other embossed image is of the Indian Mahāsiddha Nāropa, abbot of the famous Buddhist University of Nālandā in Bihar (Plate 13B). He was a pupil of Tilopa (988–1069) and a great practitioner of various *tantras*, especially those concerning Saṃvara, Hevajra, and Kālacakra.

References to sculptures of the Nepalese Schools in Tibet

Ulrich von Schroeder. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume Two: *Tibet & China*, pp. 911–993, pls. 215–235.

13A. Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī Nepalese Schools in Tibet; 13th/14th Century

Gilt sheet of hammered copper. The back is painted with red lacquer and the hair with a black pigment. Height: 26.5 cm.

Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Tib.: 'Jam dpal) is seated in the attitude of royal ease (*rājalīlāsana*) on a single lotus pedestal. The right hand is raised in the gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya-mudrā*), the left hand is resting on the left knee. He wears princely ornaments, namely a jewelled crown, a pair of earrings, a necklace with attached pendants, the “investiture with the beaded sacred thread” (*ratnopavīta*), and one pair of bracelets at the wrists. Stalks of blue lilies (*nīlotpala*) flank both sides of Mañjuśrī. The flower above the right shoulder carries a sword (*khadga*), and the flower above the left shoulder a manuscript (*pustaka*). Sword and manuscript are the classical attributes of Mañjuśrī.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 145]

13B. Mahāsiddha Nāropa (956–1040) Nepalese Schools in Tibet; 18th Century

Gilt sheet of hammered copper. The rear is painted with red lacquer and the hair with a black pigment. Height: 12 cm.

The great Indian Mahāsiddha Nāropa rests in the attitude of royal ease (*rājalīlāsana*) on a cushion covered with a tiger skin. The human skin that he holds with his raised hands identifies him as Nāropa. He wears a cloth tied around his hips and wears beaded bone ornaments at the upper arms, wrists and ankles, a necklace and two beaded chains worn across the chest and attached in front and back to a circular ornament (*channavīra*). This is close to the “six ornaments” (*ṣaṣṭmudrā*) worn by male tantric Buddhist deities, missing the bone apron. Nāropa had among his pupils a number of Tibetans. One of them was Mar pa (1012–1097), the founder of the *bKa' brgyud* tradition in Tibet.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 188]



Plate 13

Tibetan Gilt Copper Sculptures

The most obvious characteristic of Tibetan metal sculptures is the distinction between the “gilt” and “non-gilt” traditions. This distinction developed out of the traditions introduced and applied by the foreign artists working in Tibet since the introduction of Buddhism in the 7th century, from whom the Tibetan artists learned the craft of casting statues. The gilding of statues was a tradition cultivated especially by Newār artists. They were also trained and accustomed to produce works in many different styles, depending on the particular requirement of their patrons. That’s why it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between works for Tibetans done by Tibetan craftsmen and those manufactured by Newār artists for Tibetan patrons. Indeed most of the images illustrated in this section on “Tibetan gilt copper traditions” were actually cast by Newār craftsmen. However, it is the style and not the ethnic background of the artist that determines whether an image is to be classified as “Nepalese”, as “Nepalese schools in Tibet” (**Plates 12–13**), or as belonging to the “Tibetan gilt copper traditions” (**Plates 14–16**). The criteria for an image to be thus classified is the extent to which the iconography and stylistic features reflect the requirements and sentiments of the Tibetan patrons. If the features of a statue are predominantly Tibetan, it is justified to classify it as Tibetan art regardless of whether a Tibetan or Newār artist produced it. For a statue to be attributed to the “Tibetan gilt copper traditions”, therefore, depends upon its style and not on the ethnic background of the artist.

Alloys, such as copper, brass, and bronze, have quite different metallurgical properties or specifications, which require different finishing techniques. Unalloyed copper, which is the preferred medium of Newār craftsmen, is not only the softest of the three basic metals, but also has the most difficult casting properties, since it tends to shrink considerably during solidification and is highly porous. Therefore, the entire surface of the image must be hammered to achieve a smooth and even exterior. Brass and bronze alloys have a greater stability that permits thinner castings and in addition are much less porous. Unalloyed copper statues require the most time-consuming finishing, but the malleability of this metal also produces the most rewarding effects in modelling and finishing.

The gilt statue of Mañjuḥṣa is a good example that displays the effects of careful finishing (**Plate 14A**). The ornaments of this image are very precisely shaped and extensively inset with turquoise, coral, lapis lazuli, and one ruby. There is also some silver inlay, which occurs only rarely among gilt copper statues – though it is quite common with unglilt brass statues. The blue lilies (*nīlotpala*) attached to both shoulders support the two major attributes of Mañjuśrī, consisting of the sword (*khadga*) and the manuscript (*pustaka*). Mañjuśrī, clad in a cloth tied around his waist with a belt, sits on a pedestal sealed with a copper plate decorated with the *viśvavajra* emblem. He wears princely ornaments, namely a helmet surmounted by a half *vajra*, a five-fold crown, a pair of circular earrings, necklaces with attached pendants, bracelets at upper arms and wrists, finger rings, the “investiture with the sacred thread” (*yajñopavīta*), and ornaments at the anklets and the feet. It is a puzzle why the lotus pedestal of this statue is cast in two parts. It is possible that some problems occurred during the casting process, which made it necessary to cast the lower part of the pedestal separately and to add a sword made of silver.

14A. Bodhisattva Mañjuḥṣa Tibetan Gilt Copper Traditions; circa 1400

Gilt copper; hollow cast in two parts. Inlaid with silver and inset with turquoise, coral, lapis lazuli, and one ruby. Height: 30.5 cm.

Mañjuḥṣa (Tib.: ’Jam pa’i dbyangs) – the “gentle voice” is a form of Mañjuśrī (Tib.: ’Jam dpal). He is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a double lotus pedestal. The two hands form the “gesture of the wheel of the doctrine” (*dharmacakra-mudrā*). The hands hold the stalks of blue lilies (*nīlotpala*) attached to the shoulders and supporting the attributes of Mañjuśrī.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 76]

14B. Historical Buddha Śākyamuni Tibetan Gilt Copper Traditions; circa 1300

Gilt copper; hollow cast in one piece. The separately cast lotus pedestal is lost. Height: 34 cm.

The Buddha is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) and was originally mounted upon a separately cast lotus pedestal. The left hand rests in his lap and he extends the right hand in the gesture of touching the earth (*bhūmisparśa-mudrā*). The upper monastic garment (*uttarāsaṅga*) is rendered with a few folds and covers the left shoulder only.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 90]



Plate 14

Tibetan Gilt Copper Sculptures

In the course of time, different forms of Buddhism have developed and these can be divided in two principal schools. The orthodox forms of Buddhism, also known as Southern Buddhism, are still predominant in Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The later forms are known as Northern Buddhism and are practiced predominantly in Tibet, other Himalayan regions, China, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan. The many different traditions within Tibetan Buddhism are all based on Northern Indian traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism, incorporating the *Sūtra*-teachings and the *Tantra*-teachings. With regard to Tibetan Buddhism, it is the *Tantra*-teachings, popularly known in Sanskrit as Vajrayāna, Tantrayāna, or Guhyamantrayāna, which gained greatest acceptance. The first Buddhist tradition to reach Tibet was the “old translation tradition” (Tib.: *sNga bsgyur*) of the *rNying ma* order, transmitted during the Tibetan imperial period in the 8th and 9th centuries. The *bKa’ brgyud*, *Sa skya*, and *dGe lugs* orders all developed from the 11th century onward and are part of the “new translation traditions” (Tib.: *gSar ma pa*). The Indian traditions of Vajrayāna Buddhism had developed esoteric rituals called *tantras*, many of which were transmitted to Tibet. They focused on *maṇḍalas* and related rituals as part of complex and challenging esoteric systems, and are a domain reserved for specialized adepts. Especially popular were the *tantras* of Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara (**Plates 15A, 19B**), Hevajra (**Plate 21B**), Kālacakra, and Yamāntaka (**Plate 19A**). The *tantras* were only written down after having been transmitted orally, sometimes for hundreds of years. Although methods may differ among the various sects, all practitioners have the same goal of attaining the state of nonconceptual insight. Tantric practitioners are aware of male and female aspects. The male principle of energy and skilful means is manifest through the aspect of the masculine Heruka deities (**Plates 15A, 19, 21B**). The female quality of wisdom is represented by Ḍākinīs and Yoginīs (**Plate 15B**); often acting as the consorts of the Heruka deities (**Plates 15A, 19, 21B**). The Heruka deities and their consorts are naked except for the *pañcamudrā* ornaments carved of human bone and symbolizing the qualities of the five transcendental Buddhas (Tathāgatas). Lay Buddhists and monastic novices practice more easily accessible tantric meditations that focus more on benevolent deities such as Avalokiteśvara or the Goddess Tārā.

The two illustrated tantric sculptures of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī are almost certainly the products of Newār artists working for Tibetan patrons. The Newār succeeded in matching Tibetan taste to such an extent that such artworks must be labelled Tibetan. As mentioned, the “Tibetan gilt copper traditions” are entirely determined by Tibetan patronage and not on the origin of the artist. The leading role of the Newār craftsmen in Tibet can evidently never be overestimated, at least with regard to Lhasa during the 19th century. The French priest, Father Huc, recorded that the Newār were the only metal workers active in Lhasa during his visit in 1845. It is the style, and not the ethnic background of the artist, which is the crucial factor for an object to be labelled Tibetan.

15A. Cakrasaṃvara United with Vajravārāhī Tibetan Gilt Copper Traditions; 15th Century

Gilt copper; hollow cast in several parts. The separately cast lotus pedestal is lost. The ornaments are inset with turquoise. Height: 28.5 cm.

Cakrasaṃvara (Tib.: ’Khor lo sdom pa) steps to the left with the left leg bent and the right one straight (*ālīḍha*). The four-headed and twelve-armed Cakrasaṃvara holds a five-pronged diamond sceptre (*pañcasūcika-vajra*) and a prayer-bell (*vajraghaṅṅā*) in his principal hands. These are crossed in front of the chest to embrace his consort Vajravārāhī (Tib.: rDo rje phag mo). She holds a ritual chopper with a *vajra* handle (*vajrakartrikā*) and a skull-cup (*kapāla*), and has her legs wrapped around the hips of Cakrasaṃvara. Both are naked except for the *pañcamudrā* ornaments carved of human bone.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 187]

15B. Vajrayoginī – the “Diamond Sceptre Yoginī” Tibetan Gilt Copper Traditions; 16th Century

Gilt copper; hollow cast in two parts. The ornaments are inset with turquoise. The bottom of the pedestal is not sealed. The statue is sealed at the back with a copper plate. Height: 24 cm.

The goddess Vajrayoginī (Tib.: rDo rje rnal ’byor ma) or “diamond sceptre Yoginī”, dances with her left foot (*pratyālīḍhāsana*) on a corpse laid on a double lotus pedestal with a beaded border. She wears a five-fold crown composed of skulls. The goddess is nude except for the “five ornaments” (*pañcamudrā*) carved of human bone, and wears a garland of severed heads (*muṅḍamālā*). She wields with the right hand a chopper with *vajra* handle (*vajrakartrikā*) and holds with the left hand a skull-cup (*kapāla*). The staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), originally held in position with the left arm, is lost.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 196]



Plate 15

Tibetan Gilt Copper Sculptures

One of the distinctions of Tibetan art is the great number of portrait sculptures of Buddhist teachers. Of course, there can be no doubt that teachers are essential in preserving a particular tradition by passing on the teachings from one generation to the next. This is not only essential for the continuation of Buddhism, but also for other religious traditions. However it somehow seems a paradox that Buddhist practitioners commissioned statues of their teachers who believed in the impermanence of all manifestations, and whose goal was the dissolution of the ego. In Tibetan Vajrayāna Buddhism, the teacher is regarded as the fourth and highest refuge. Thus he incorporates the three other refuges, the Buddha (the initial teacher), the Dharma (his teaching), and the Saṅgha (his community). For individual students, the portrait images of teachers are a great help in the visualization process during guru yoga practice, and which sometimes involves entire lineages of teachers.

Of particular interest are images of teachers known as *nga dra ma*, or “it looks like me”. These are portrait sculptures believed to have been made during the lifetime of the masters and to have received their approval. Another class is composed of those rare sculptures known as *nga dra ma phyag mdzod*, or “it looks like me ... made by his hands”. In most cases only one statue was produced after a particular teacher had died. Such sculptures often incorporate individualized features belonging to the deceased master. But for the most famous and revered teachers, countless statues were produced, and often long after their death. Among these personalities are founders of religious traditions, founders of monasteries, abbots, and lineages holders. Most famous among this type of statue are those of re-incarnate teachers such as the Black Hat Karma pas, Paṅ chen Lamas, and Dalai Lamas. Such codified series usually suffer from stereotyped features devoid of any individualized portrait qualities.

When taking a closer look at the larger of the two illustrated statues (**Plate 16A**), there are individualized features which indicate that this work is a real portrait of a master who had reached at least an age of seventy years or older. Could it be that this statue is a *nga dra ma*, “it looks like me”, made during the subject’s lifetime? If not, then it must have been made shortly after his death. The fact that the statue of this anonymous Tibetan teacher is life-size indicates that he was without doubt an important teacher, well respected during his lifetime and after. The foliate design of the monastic garment indicates that this statue was made not later than the 15th or 16th century, and perhaps dates earlier than that. When viewing this large and unique sculpture, the humbleness and great compassion of the portrayed teacher reveals a Buddha-like nature. It is not just the size that makes this statue great, but also the artistic realization. Much smaller in size, the portrait statue of Chos kyi rje grags pa ’byung gnas dates from the 16th or 17th century and is nonetheless also artistically remarkable (**Plate 16B**). Even though the name of the master is inscribed, it has not been possible to identify him with a known master. Further studies may perhaps yield an identification.

16A. Portrait of an Unidentified Great Teacher Tibetan Gilt Copper Traditions; 15th/16th Century

Assembled from several cast parts and sheets of embossed gilt copper. Size: 95 x 86 x 65 cm.

This large statue represents an unidentified elderly teacher with distinct individual features. He is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) and was originally placed upon a separately manufactured lotus pedestal. With the right hand, the teacher displays the gesture of argumentation (*vitarka-mudrā*) and rests the left hand in the lap. He is clad in a voluminous array of monastic garments decorated with floral patterns. Judging by the size of the statue, the subject must have been an important teacher. However, without any inscription it is not possible to identify him. The pattern on the garment endorses a dating to the 15th or 16th century.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 185]

16B. Portrait of Chos kyi rje grags pa ’byung gnas Tibetan Gilt Copper Traditions; 16th/17th Century

Gilt copper; hollow cast. The bottom of the pedestal is sealed with a gilt sheet of copper. Height: 29.5 cm.

This bearded smiling monk with distinct individualized features is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a single lotus pedestal and displays the meditation attitude (*dhyāna-mudrā*). He is clad in a voluminous array of monastic garments decorated with floral patterns. The pedestal is inscribed at the front in Tibetan *dBu can* script: // Chos kyi rje grags pa ’byung gnas la na mo //, “*Veneration to Chos kyi rje grags pa ’byung gnas*”. It has not been possible to identify him with a known master. Parts of the inscribed name are similar with the names of several known teachers. The prominent beard might in the future help to identify him.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 231]

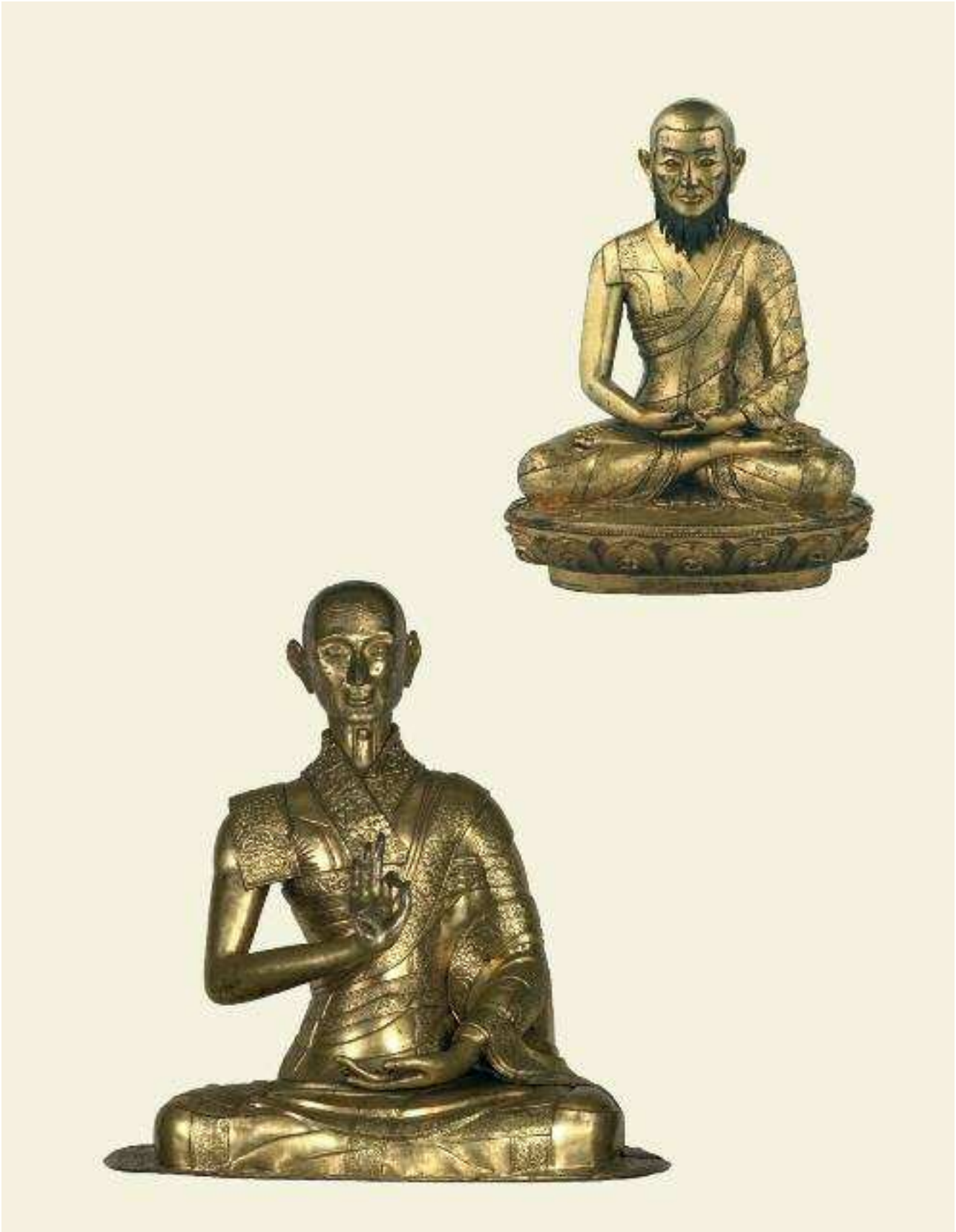


Plate 16

Tibetan Brass Sculptures

During the introduction of Buddhism in the 7th century, missionaries from India, Nepal, Khotan, and China brought the first Buddhist sculptures and paintings to Tibet. Because no Tibetan craftsmen were capable at that time of producing sculptures and paintings of Buddhist deities, foreign artists had to be commissioned. These foreign artists practiced their crafts according to the different styles in which they had been trained in their native countries. Their Tibetan apprentices in turn imitated the style of their teachers, but gradually modified them to match Tibetan sentiments better. Also in regard to the metal alloys, the Tibetans followed the methods of the foreign craftsmen. As mentioned earlier, alloys such as copper, brass, and bronze have quite different metallurgical properties or specifications that require different casting and finishing techniques. Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc, and has a greater stability than alloys of almost pure copper.¹ In the case of hollow statues, less metal is therefore needed if the statue is cast in brass than in the comparatively soft copper. The type of alloy also affects the finishing work, as brass is less porous than almost pure copper, and this greater solidity renders the process of polishing and engraving more difficult.

Another characteristic of brass statues is the use of contrasting colours of metals in inlay ornamentation. Soft and malleable metals such as gold, silver, and copper are especially suited for this purpose. This technique of inlaying was especially used on the eyes and *ūrṇās* with silver, and the lips with copper, and is derived from the traditions of artists of the Swat and Kashmir regions (**Plates 1, 2B, 3, 4B**), the Pāla schools in North-Eastern India, and Burma (Myanmar) (**Plates 6, 7A**).

The illustrated transcendental Buddha represents Akṣobhya rendered in a Tibetan style, but echoing influences from both North-Eastern Indian and Nepalese art (**Plate 17A**). The goddess represents a form of the “green Tārā”, known as Śyāma-Tārā or “dark Tārā” (**Plate 17B**). This image is one of the earliest known images of a seated Tārā modelled in a Tibetan style in which the North-Eastern Indian influence is only faintly recognizable. The pedestal is fashioned in the shape of a cushion, which was already the case with some of the images cast during the imperial period (c. 600–842). As is usually the case with artworks made during the formative stage of a new tradition, they do not yet display any definite style. These two statues reflect the attempt of a Tibetan, and not a foreign craftsman to create a beautiful deity according to Tibetan liking. It can be taken for granted that the Tibetan artists spent many hours studying and discussing the infinite stylistic variations of the Buddhist statues in their monastic and temple collections. This was part of the learning process. Among the countless statues in the Tibetan monasteries, it was especially the metal sculptures of Indian, Nepalese, and Kashmir origin that were held in the highest esteem by the Tibetans.

¹ Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, was hardly used in Northern Indian, Nepal, and Tibet because of the lack of tin.

References to Tibetan brass sculptures

Ulrich von Schroeder. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume One: *India & Nepal*, pp. 1084–1219, pls. 282–336.

17A. Transcendental Buddha Akṣobhya Tibetan Brass Traditions; 12th Century

Brass; hollow cast. The face has remains of painted cold gold. The separately cast lotus pedestal is lost. Height: 25.3 cm.

This bejewelled image of a transcendental Buddha is identified by the gesture as Akṣobhya (Tib.: Mi bskyod pa), one of the five Tathāgatas. He is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) and was earlier attached to a separately cast lotus pedestal. Akṣobhya rests the left hand in his lap; the right hand is extended in the gesture of touching the earth (*bhūmiśparśa-mudrā*). The Tathāgata is clad in a cloth tied around the hips and wears jewelled ornaments.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 203]

17B. Śyāma-Tārā – the “Green Tārā” Tibetan Brass Traditions; 12th Century

Brass; hollow cast. Inlaid with silver and copper, and inset with turquoise and coral. The pedestal is sealed with a piece of wood. Height: 39 cm.

Śyāma-Tārā or “green Tārā” is seated in the attitude of ease (*lalitāsana*) on a cushion and extends the right hand in the gesture of charity (*varada-mudrā*). With the left hand in the gesture of argumentation (*vitarka-mudrā*), she holds the stalk of a flower that originally blossomed above the left shoulder. Tārā is clad in a cloth tied around the waist with a belt and she wears jewelled ornaments.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 120]



Plate 17

Tibetan Brass Sculptures

Of all the sections in this publication, it is the present one about “Tibetan brass sculptures” that is perhaps the most complicated with regard to the definition and classification of styles. The tradition of casting statues in brass alloys entered Tibet from two sources, namely the greater area of Kashmir in North-Western India (**Plates 1–4**), and the dominions of the Pāla rulers of Bihar and Bengal in North-Eastern India (**Plates 5–6**). The influence of the art of Kashmir was especially felt in Western Tibet where, up to the 12th century, many artists from Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh worked for Tibetan patrons. As pointed out earlier, the monasteries of North-Eastern India between the 8th and the 12th centuries were centres of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhist studies and practice, and attracted students from all over Asia. This explains the diffusion of Pāla art styles in every country professing Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nevertheless the impact of the Pāla art traditions most strongly influenced Southern and Central Tibet (gTsang and dBus), an area that was also affected by the Nepalese influence. The statues illustrated in this section of “Tibetan brass sculptures” give an idea about the range of variations in styles (**Plates 17–20**). These statues reflect to various degrees the assimilation of stylistic influences from North-Western India, North-Eastern India, and also Nepal. There seems to be no limit on the stylistic variations in Tibetan art, and the range of styles is far greater than can be documented here with a few illustrated examples. With regard to foreign craftsmen working for Tibetan patrons, it must be recalled that Indian artists, as we have noted earlier, disappeared from the scene some time during the early 13th century as a result of the Muslim devastation of monastic Buddhism in Northern India. In spite of the disappearance of Indian craftsmen, the countless statues of Indian origin in Tibetan temples and monasteries have continued to be a source of artistic inspiration for Tibetan artists to the present day.

This large image of Avalokiteśvara represents a Tibetan work assimilating many different influences (**Plate 18A**). The stylistic features combine a strong masculine body that recalls earlier works of Kashmir origin and a subtle echo of the North-Eastern Indian Pāla tradition. The finishing work is excellent; the eyes and *ūrṇā* of all three heads are inlaid with silver, and the lips, nails, and crowns with copper. The garment is extensively decorated with a pattern created by inlaid pieces of silver and copper, in addition to engraved ornamentation. The jewelled ornaments are inset with numerous circular pieces of blue turquoise and red coral. The other illustrated image represents Ratnasambhava – the “jewel-born” transcendental Buddha – and is a very good example of a Tibetan artistic tradition with many related sub-styles, each of them assimilating the different influences to various degrees (**Plate 18B**). Once this Buddha might have formed part of a group of the five Tathāgatas, comprising Akṣobhya, Vairocana, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava, and Amoghasiddhi.

18A. Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara Tibetan Brass Traditions; 12th/13th Century

Brass; hollow cast in several parts. Inlaid with silver and copper. The separately cast upper eight heads are lost. The ornaments are inset with turquoise and coral. Height: 58.5 cm.

This form of Boddhisattva Avalokiteśvara is known as Ekādaśa-mukha Avalokiteśvara, or “Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara” (Tib.: sPyan ras gzigs bcu gcigs zhal). Avalokiteśvara is shown fully upright in a symmetrically standing attitude. The principal pair of hands displays the gesture of perfect salutation with the hands joined, but slightly hollowed (*añjali-mudrā*). The remaining three pairs of arms are evenly distributed in a circular shape. Avalokiteśvara is clad in a precious cloth tied in a decorative manner around the waist with a belt. He wears an engraved translucent shawl placed upon both shoulders. Avalokiteśvara wears princely ornaments composed of five-fold crowns, circular ear-pendants, two beaded necklaces, and ornaments on upper arms, bracelets, and anklets.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 54]

18B. Transcendental Buddha Ratnasambhava Tibetan Brass Traditions; 14th Century

Brass; hollow cast. Inlaid with silver and copper. The ornaments are inset with pieces of turquoise and coral. The bottom of the pedestal is not sealed. Height: 42.3 cm.

The transcendental Buddha is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a double lotus pedestal with beaded borders. He displays with the right hand the gesture of charity (*varada-mudrā*) and the left hand is placed in the lap. Ratnasambhava is clad in a cloth tied around the waist. He is covered with princely ornaments, namely a five-fold crown with a *kīrtimukha* emblem in the centre, in front of the tall knot of hair (*jaṭāmakuṭa*) with a jewelled tip, a pair of circular earrings, two necklaces with attached pendants, ornaments at the upper arms, bracelets, and anklets. An ornamented ribbon-like scarf encircles the Buddha.

On the back is a *mantra* engraved in Tibetan *dBu can* script:
// OM ĀḤ HŪM //

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 32]



Plate 18

Tibetan Brass Sculptures

Tibetan Buddhist statues and paintings were never produced for purely ornamental or aesthetic reasons, but are regarded as visually rendered conceptions of divine beings. Such figurative realizations serve as objects for spiritual evocation through a worship ultimately aimed at identification with the chosen deity. The practitioner is not only familiar with the *sādhana* and the *mantras* associated with a particular deity, but understands the full meaning of the symbolic values attached to the colours, attitudes, and gestures. Sculptures and paintings were made according to explicit rules of iconography and iconometry or proportions. Of all types of sculpture, it is the casting of multi-armed tantric deities that is the most complex. Such was the case with the statues of Vajramahābhairava embracing his consort Vidyādhārā (**Plate 19A**) or of Cakrasaṃvara united with his consort Vajravārāhī (**Plate 19B**). None of the statues in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon surpasses the complexity of Vajramahābhairava with his nine heads, thirty-four arms, and sixteen legs. The Indian iconographic compendiums *Sādhanamālā* and *Niṣpannayogāvalī* contain no description of Vajrabhairava. Nonetheless he is listed among the deities in the Tibeto-Mongol pantheon and is one of the great protector deities (*yi dam*) of the *dGe lugs* order.

In order to serve as an object of worship and veneration, any religious object requires formal consecration. This is regardless of its intended use in a temple or as the personal object of a monk or a lay practitioner. In the Buddhist context, this is not restricted to images and paintings but also conferred on books, *stūpa* reliquaries, and temples. In Tibet, three types of consecration can be distinguished, namely *Sūtra*-style, *Tantra*-style, and a combination of the two. Statues and paintings are regarded as receptacles of the Buddha's "body", books and *mantras* as receptacles of his "speech", and *stūpas* as receptacles of his "mind". This explains why Buddhist temples usually contain, in addition to images and paintings, books and *stūpa* reliquaries. The first part of the consecration ritual is the filling of the receptacle with relics. Over the centuries, and especially after the decline of Buddhism in India, many of the Buddhist rituals in Tibet were modified. In Tibet, hollow representations of seated deities were, at least from the 11th century onward, filled with relics and sealed at the bottom of the pedestal with a piece of metal. Among the substances placed inside hollow statues are sacred texts and hand-written or block-printed *mantras* for the invocation of the depicted deity. Especially among the earlier brass statues, the bottom of the lotus pedestal is sealed with a piece of wood. In case of damage, the consecration should be renewed; or it can be done whenever considered necessary. Due to a shortage of flowers, the offerings of the Tibetans consist largely of incense sticks, butter for lamps, clean water, and white scarves. Other traditional ways of rendering veneration are *gTor ma* offerings, made of ground barley powder mixed with coloured butter.

19A. Vajramahābhairava – “Vajra who Inspires Fear” Tibetan Brass Traditions; 15th/16th Century

Brass alloy; hollow cast in two parts. The face is painted with cold gold and the hair with a red pigment. The bottom of the pedestal is sealed with wood. Height: 23.8 cm.

Vajrabhairava (Tib.: rDo rje 'jigs byed) is shown with nine heads – the principal one being the head of a buffalo, thirty-four arms, and sixteen legs. Stepping to the right with the right legs bent and the left ones straight (*pratyāliḍhāsana*), he is trampling on numerous and various beings placed upon a circular double lotus pedestal. He holds in the principal right hand a ritual chopper (*kartrikā*) and with the principal left one a skull-cup (*kapāla*), and he embraces his consort Vidyādhārā (Tib.: Rig 'dzin bryad) who holds the same attributes as his principal hands. The other hands of Vajrabhairava hold a great variety of other attributes.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 10]

19B. Cakrasaṃvara United with Vajravārāhī Tibetan Brass Traditions; 15th Century

Brass alloy; hollow cast in two parts. All faces have remains of painted cold gold and the hair traces of a blue pigment. The bottom of the pedestal is sealed. Height: 13.5 cm.

Cakrasaṃvara (Tib.: 'Khor lo sdom pa) is stepping to the left with the left leg bent and the right one straight (*ālīḍhāsana*), trampling on the prostrate bodies of the Hindu deities Bhairava and Kālarātrī placed upon a double lotus pedestal. The two principal hands of the twelve-armed Cakrasaṃvara hold a five-pronged diamond sceptre (*vajra*) and a prayer-bell (*ghaṇṭā*), with the hands turned inwards and crossed over the chest he embraces his consort Vajravārāhī (Tib.: rDo rje phag mo). She holds a ritual chopper (*kartrikā*) and a skull-cup (*kapāla*) and has her right leg wrapped around the waist of Cakrasaṃvara.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 148]



Plate 19

Tibetan Brass Sculptures

The principal Tibetan workshops engaged in the casting of metal statues were located in the primary commercial centres and near large monasteries. In Southern and Central Tibet this meant at Shigatse, Gyantse, and Lhasa. As the largest town in Tibet, Lhasa had several workshops of which by far the most important was the one at the foot of the Potala palace. In Eastern Tibet (Khams), the principal casting centres were in the neighbourhood of Chamdo, Derge, and Dargyab. The important casting centres of North-Eastern Tibet (Amdo) were located at the two main monastic centres of Labrang and Kumbum. It was primarily the monasteries that needed statues, but also the wealthy upper class were customers. Statues could not be purchased in Tibet, they always had to be commissioned and manufactured on request according to specification. Tibetan artists, unless they were attached to a particular monastery, worked either in their homes or travelled wherever their skills and services were required. The mobility of the artisans was instrumental with regard to the proliferation and diversification of art styles.

Only rarely is it possible to attribute a Tibetan sculpture to a particular workshop. An exception might be the statue of Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361), an eccentric monk from Dolpo (**Plate 20B**).¹ There exist two almost identical images of Dol po pa in the Jokhang Collection at Lhasa.² The three statues of Dol po pa are of almost identical size and are also very similar in many other respects. Such resemblance can only be explained by the employment of reusable matrices. The difference in the ornamentation, however, is an indication that the wax models obtained from the matrices were imperfect and the statues needed to be finished individually by hand. These statues represent examples of the Byang lugs, or “northern style”, of western gTsang in Southern Tibet, north of the gTsang po river. This style is distinguished by a strong realism and often includes ornamentation in the relief work. Ornamentation that is in many respects similar decorates the robe of an image of Thang stong rgyal po (1361–1485 or 1385–1464), who according to its inscription made the statue himself.³ All four statues certainly belong to the same artistic tradition, and one might be tempted to attribute the three statues of Dol po pa also to the workshop of Thang stong rgyal po. Considering that Thang stong rgyal po was born in the year of Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan’s death, and that he is considered to be a reincarnation of the latter, such an assumption would not be farfetched. The workshop of Thang stong rgyal po was probably at Ri bo che in western gTsang where he built a huge Stūpa between 1449 and 1456. The four statues may represent examples of the Byang metal-working tradition, which is distinguished by a strong realism and includes ornamentation in relief work. This style was possibly established by the king of the Byang principality located in the La stod Byang region in Western gTsang.

1 Stearns, C. 1999. *The Buddha from Dolpo: A Study of the Life and Thought of the Tibetan Master Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen*.

2 von Schroeder, U. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume Two: *Tibet & China*, pp. 700, 717, 915, 1126, 1202, pl. 328C-F.

3 Weldon, D. and Singer, J. C. 1999. *The Sculptural Heritage of Tibet: Buddhist Art in the Nyingjei Lam Collection*, pp. 184–185, no. 46.

20A. Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216) Tibetan Brass Traditions; circa 15th Century

Brass; hollow cast. Inlaid with gold, silver, and copper. The bottom of the pedestal is sealed with a sheet of copper decorated with the *viśvavajra* emblem. Height: 13.4 cm.

According to the inscription, this image represents Grags pa rgyal mtshan. The great *Sa skya* teacher is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a double lotus pedestal. The hands are crossed over the chest and turned inwards (*prajñālingābhinaya*) holding a diamond sceptre (*vajra*) and a prayer-bell (*ghaṅṭā*). He is clad in an array of ornamented garments that appear to be of Chinese origin. On the backside of the pedestal is a Tibetan inscription in *dBu can* script: // *lha btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan la na mo* // “*Hail to lHa btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan*”.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 79]

20B. Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361) Brass Traditions in the “Northern Style”; circa 1400

Brass; hollow cast. Extensively inlaid with silver and copper. The bottom of the pedestal is sealed with a plain sheet of copper. Height: 16.3 cm.

The identification of this statue as Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361) is based on the portrait-like nature of the face. He is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a double lotus pedestal; he rests the right hand on his leg, and in the left he holds a rosary (*akṣamālā*). Dol po pa wears a hat and is clad in an array of monastic garments worked in an unusual relief fashion decorated with floral and geometric patterns. On the front of Dol po pa’s robe is the Kālacakra anagram (Tib.: *mam bcu dbang ldan*) written in *Lañcana* (Skt.) or *Lañ tsha* (Tib.) script.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 177]



Plate 20

Indian and Nepalese Miniature Stone Sculptures

North-Eastern Indian Pāla style sculptures and paintings are perfect examples to demonstrate how art styles can expand concurrently with religious teachings. Within the present context our interest is restricted in particular to miniature stone-carvings from North-Eastern India and Nepal, illustrated with two examples from the Alain Bordier Foundation. One of the stone carvings depicts Kapāladhara Hevajra embracing his consort Nairātmyā, and can be attributed to the Pāla style of the 11th/12th centuries (**Plate 21B**). The other statue depicts a form of Acala and represents an example of a stone-sculpture made by a Newār artist for a Tibetan patron during the 13th century (**Plate 21A**).

The stone-carvings of North-Eastern India are important in charting the evolution of Buddhist iconography and art styles during the Pāla period (8th–12th centuries). During this period, the Buddhist monasteries of North-Eastern India and Bengal, such as Bodhgayā, Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Odantapurī, to name a few, were the foremost centres of Mahāyāna studies. Here foreign monks and translators from all countries that practiced esoteric forms of Buddhism pursued their studies. This included visitors from Burma and Southeast Asia, the Himalayas – including Nepal and Tibet, China, and even Xi Xia in Central Asia. When these monks returned to their homes, often having been away for many years, they carried with them illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts and often also small sculptures made of metal, stone, wood, or simply clay, and presumably paintings on hemp cloth. These objects brought from India all played a part in the diffusion of Pāla art styles. All over the Buddhist world and until the present, religious objects of Indian origin have been highly venerated and often served as models for the manufacturing of statues and paintings. But such sculptures and paintings – even when outright copied – will rarely be mistaken for Indian works of art, because more often than not some of the decorative elements – such as garments, jewellery, or hairstyle – have been modified to local traditions. With the destruction of monastic Buddhism in North-Eastern India at the end of the 12th century by the Muslims, the monasteries of the Kathmandu valley in Nepal became the new leading centres of Mahāyāna studies, and Nepalese art the new standard. From the 13th century onward it was the Newār artists who became the dominant force not only in Tibet but also in countries as far away as China and Mongolia.

21A. Acala – the “Immovable One” Nepalese Schools in Tibet; 13th Century

Fine-grained beige stone (possibly phyllite) with painted decoration.
Size: 25.7 / 15.4 / 7.2 cm.

This statue represents the fearful three-eyed form of Acala (Tib.: *Mi g.yo ba*). Placed on a double lotus pedestal, he rests on his right knee and left foot. Acala holds in the right raised hand his principal attribute, the sword (*khaḍga*), as the symbol of “cutting through ignorance”. He holds with the left hand, displayed in the gesture of exorcism (*kaṛaṇa-mudrā*) with the index finger and small finger erect, the noose (*pāśa*), an attribute mainly of wrathful deities used to catch the enemies of Buddhism. Acala is dressed in a cloth tied around the waist. He is decorated with jewelled ornaments, namely with a three-fold crown in front of the helmet, a pair of circular earrings, a broad necklace with attached pendants, and ornaments at the upper arms, wrists, ankles, and feet, and the “investiture with the sacred thread” (*yajñopavīta*). Acala wears over the shoulders a ribbon-like scarf with swirling ends hanging down at both sides. The image is encircled by an open-worked flaming aureole. The name Acala means “mountain” or literally “immobile”, and he is always shown in fearsome attitude and represents one of the ten Khroda protector deities in various Maṇḍalas.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 113]

21B. Kapāladhara Hevajra United with Nairātmyā North-Eastern India: Late Pāla Style; 11th/12th Century

Fine-grained dark grey stone (possibly phyllite) with traces of painted decoration. Height: 12.3 cm.

This image depicts the sixteen-armed form of the *Yi dam* Hevajra with eight faces and four legs, known as Kapāladhara Hevajra (Tib.: *Thod pa kyai rdo rje*), and joined as a pair (*yuganaddha*) with Nairātmyā. Hevajra steps to the left with the left legs bent and the right ones straight (*ālīḍha*), and is trampling on the struggling bodies of the four Māras prostrate on the double lotus pedestal. Hevajra holds in his eight right hands skull-cups (*kapāla*) containing small effigies of an elephant, a horse, an ass, an ox, a camel, a man, a griffin, and a cat, acting as guardians of the eight directions. The skull-cups (*kapāla*) in his left hands contain small effigies of deities, namely Pṛthivī (earth), Varuṇa (water), Vāyu (air), Tejas (fire), Candra (moon), Āditya or Arka (sun), Yama or Antaka (death), and Dhanada (wealth). The two principal hands of Hevajra, turned inwards and crossed in front of the chest (*prajñālinganābhinaya-mudrā*), embrace his consort Nairātmyā (Tib.: *bDag med ma*). She holds in her principal hands a ritual chopper with a *vajra* handle (*vajrakartrikā*) and a skull-cup (*kapāla*), and has her left leg wrapped around the hips of Hevajra.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 229]



Plate 21

Tibetan Portable Wood Sculptures

When Buddhist monks or lay practitioners travel on pilgrimages or on more worldly matters, they usually carry with them portable shrines filled with ceremonial objects. Some of these shrines, known in Tibetan as *ga'u*, are receptacles made of metal that can be closed with a tight fitting cover; or they can be made of wood with one or two doors. Such portable shrines usually contain small statues of a Buddhist deity made of metal, stone, wood, or clay, selected according to personal preference. Statues carved of wood have a few advantages over sculptures cast in metal or carved in stone. Not only were wood sculptures less expensive, they were also less heavy to carry. For patrons with limited funds, wood sculptures were thus the ideal choice.

The white sandalwood sculpture carved in high relief on the left can seem problematic until you realize that it is not actually a work more than one thousand years old as suggested by the style, but much later. This male Buddhist statue stands on a lotus pedestal in front of an oval aureole decorated in low relief with various personages, including musicians and riders incorporated into the floral background (**Plate 22B**). In a naive way this sculpture resembles the styles of metal statues cast in the Swat and Kashmir regions during the 7th/8th centuries (**Plates 1–2**). But contrary to the first impression, this statue is actually the work of Chos dbyings rdo rje (1604–1674) – the Tenth Karma pa. This enigmatic image has proved difficult to identify. Due to the monastic garments, one is tempted at the first glance to identify the image as a Buddha wearing a cape over the shoulders. But the small effigy of Amitābha attached to the hair is an iconographic characteristic exclusively encountered with Bodhisattvas, and in particular with images of Avalokiteśvara, who is never represented with monastic garments. This woodcarving thus depicts a composite deity incorporating characteristics of Buddha and Avalokiteśvara. The style and enigmatic character of this statue fits the growing number of sculptures attributed to the Tenth Karma pa Chos dbyings rdo rje (1604–1674), who was from a young age an accomplished painter and sculptor, and who had a lifelong fascination for Kashmir sculptures.

The second woodcarving depicts Buddha Śākyamuni in the gesture of touching the earth (**Plate 22B**). This gesture is by far the most frequent to be encountered in Theravāda and Mahāyāna forms of Buddhism, and is in memorial of the defeat of Māra by the historical Siddhartha during the process of enlightenment. The pointed upper corners of the throne back are a feature characteristic of Tibetan works of art made, in most cases, not later than the 14th century – regardless of whether they appear on a sculpture or in a painting.

References to sculptures and paintings by the Tenth Karma pa

Ulrich von Schroeder. 2001. *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*. Volume Two: *Tibet & China*, figs. XII–18–25, pls. 191–194.

Ulrich von Schroeder & Heidi von Schroeder. 2009. *Tibetan Art of the Alain Bordier Foundation*, pp. 48–49, pl. 18.

22A. Bodhisattva Dressed as a Monk – Carved by the Tenth Karma pa Chos dbyings rdo rje (1604–1674)

White sandalwood (Tib.: Tsan dan dkar po) carved in four parts.
Size: 25.8 x 9.8 x 6.2 cm.

The Bodhisattva stands in a very slightly bent attitude on a single lotus pedestal supported by a pedestal decorated with caves inhabited by different animals. The statue wears monk garments of the kind usually encountered with representations of Buddha. However, the hair with a diadem decorated with an effigy of Amitābha instead points to a representation of Avalokiteśvara. The right hand pointed to the right, holds a flywhisk; the lowered left hand a water vessel. This woodcarving depicts a composite deity that incorporates characteristics of Buddha and Avalokiteśvara. A donor couple kneels in respectful attitude beside the lotus pedestal. The statue is set against an intricately decorated nimbus.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 199]

22B. Historical Buddha Śākyamuni Tibet: Early Monastic Period; circa 13th Century

White sandalwood (Tib.: Tsan dan dkar po) with remains of painted decoration. Size: 16.3 x 11.5 x 2.1 cm.

Buddha Śākyamuni (Tib.: Śākya thub pa) is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāśana*) on a double lotus pedestal supported by a stand decorated with scrolls. He rests the left hand in the lap and extends the right hand in the gesture of touching the earth (*bhūmisparśa-mudrā*). The upper monastic garment is rendered without folds in a transparent manner and covers only the left shoulder in addition to the folded shawl. Note the jewel (*cūḍāmaṇi*) crowning the cranial protuberance (*uṣṇīṣa*). Behind the Buddha is an aureole; his head is set off against a slightly pointed oval nimbus. Earlier the uncovered parts of the Buddha were all painted with cold gold, of which only a few traces remain.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 175]



Plate 22

Sino-Tibetan Style/ Tibeto-Chinese Style

Since the dawn of history, Tibetans and Chinese had their own cultures characterized by different languages, scripts, religions, and cultures in general. Nevertheless the proximity of Eastern Tibet (Khams) with the Chinese province of Sichuan, and North-Eastern Tibet (Amdo) bordering the Chinese province of Gansu, resulted in a cultural exchange between Tibetans and Chinese. However, the Tibetan forms of Buddhism, which follow Indian models, never became popular among the Chinese. Similarly, there was never much interest by the Tibetans in the Chinese forms of Buddhism, such as the Chan sect or Jingtū sect also known as “Pure Land School”. On the contrary, among the rulers of China, regardless whether they were Mongols, Manchu, or Han Chinese, there often existed an interest in Tibetan Buddhism, initially as a tool for political interference, but eventually as a personal religious passion. This was a reoccurring phenomenon during the Yuan (1279–1368), Ming (1368–1644), and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties that a “patron and priest” relationship would exist between the spiritual leaders of Tibet – acting as spiritual mentors – and the secular emperors of China – acting as patrons. Many gilt Buddhist statues were presented by the Chinese emperor to visiting Tibetan dignitaries during the Yongle period (1403–1424) and also during the Xuande period (1426–1435) (**Plate 23A**). These statues, created to resemble Tibetan statues according to a Chinese interpretation, were cast in the Imperial workshops of China with the help of reusable matrices, a method practically mandatory in China for the production of any metal objects.

Any similarities between Tibetan and Chinese art is often indiscriminately termed “Sino-Tibetan”, regardless of whether a Tibetan sculpture or painting reflects Chinese influence, or a Chinese object resonates Tibetan influence. This mutual influence made itself manifest in two entirely different art forms that can only be distinguished by using the terms *Tibeto-Chinese* for Tibetan influence in Chinese Buddhist art (**Plate 23A**) and *Sino-Tibetan* relating to Chinese influence in Tibet Buddhist art – a rare phenomena of which no example is illustrated in this book. Chinese stylistic influence on Tibetan art is more or less restricted to depictions of Buddha Śākyamuni with the sixteen Arhats / Lohans and the four Lokapālas. During the Qing dynasty, the Imperial workshops produced copies of many Tibetan, Nepalese, and Indian statues in the Imperial collections. One of them represents the *Rigs gsum mgon po*, or “protectors of the three spiritual families”, composed of Mañjuḥṣa, Avalokiteśvara, and Vajrapāṇi (**Plate 23B**). In the collections of the Palace Museum in the Forbidden City (Zijin Cheng) in Beijing are a number of replicas made during the Qing dynasty of which the original Tibetan, Nepalese, and Indian statues have also survived. Although very well done, the replicas can clearly be distinguished from the more ancient originals.

23A. Amitāyus – Buddha of “Infinite Light” Tibeto-Chinese (Ming Dynasty: Yongle); 1403–1424

Gilt brass; hollow cast. The bottom of the pedestal is sealed with a sheet of brass. Height: 15 cm.

Amitāyus (Tib.: Tshe dpag med) is seated in the diamond attitude (*vajraparyāṅkāsa*) on a double lotus pedestal. With the hands in the gesture of meditation (*dhyāna-mudrā*), he holds a long life vase (*kalaśa*) filled with the elixir of immortality (*amṛta*). Amitāyus is clad in a cloth tied around the waist and a ribbon-like scarf is placed over the shoulders and falls down over the arms to the pedestal. He wears princely ornaments, namely a five-fold crown in front of the knot of hair (*jaṭāmakuṭa*) with a jewelled tip, a pair of circular earrings, two necklaces with attached pendants, and ornaments at the upper arms, wrists, ankles, and feet.

The top of the pedestal is inscribed with the six-character Yongle mark: “*Da Ming Yongle nian shi*”. An image of a transcendental Buddha displaying the *dhyāna-mudrā* is usually identified as Amitābha (Tib.: ’Od dpag med), and if holding a long life vase named Amitāyus.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 114]

23B. “Protectors of the Three Spiritual Families” Tibeto-Chinese (Qing Dynasty): Pāla Style; 18th C

Brass; solid cast several parts. The images are fire gilt while the stand is left un gilt. Height: 27.5 cm.

Represented is a trinity of male Mahāyāna deities composed from left to right of Mañjuḥṣa (Tib.: ’Jam pa’i dbyangs), Padmapāṇi (Tib.: Phyang na padmo), and Vajrasattva (Tib.: rDo rje sems dpa’). They stand in a slightly bent attitude on lotus flowers carried by three stems growing out of the semicircular stand below. Padmapāṇi, a form of Avalokiteśvara, is slightly larger and positioned in the centre. He extends the right hand in the gesture of charity (*varaḍa-mudrā*) and holds in the left hand the stalk of a lotus flower (*padma*). Mañjuśrī, to his proper right, holds the right hand, turned inwards, in front of the chest, while the left hand holds the stalk of a blue lily (*nīlotpala*) surmounted by a manuscript (*pustaka*). Vajrasattva, to the proper left of Padmapāṇi, holds in the right hand a diamond sceptre (*vajra*) while the left hand holds the stalk of a lily (*utpala*) supporting a prayer-bell (*vajraghaṅṅā*). The centre image is encircled by an aureole surmounted by a Stūpa.

[Alain Bordier Foundation; ABS 112]



Plate 23

GLOSSARY

The Sanskrit terminology used for the descriptions of attitudes (*āsana*), gestures (*mudrā*), and attributes are, with few exceptions, those used by Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann in *Introduction à l'iconographie du tântrisme bouddhique* (1975). They are identical with the terms used in the Sanskrit iconographic compendiums *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (*NSP*), *Piṇḍīkrama-Sādhana* (*PKS*), and *Sādhanamālā* (*SM*).

A

abhaya-mudrā (Skt.) –	<i>sKyabs sbyin phyag rgya</i> (Tib.) («kyabjin chagya»): “gesture of reassurance, fearlessness, protection”; the characteristic gesture of Tathāgata Amoghasiddhi
Ādibuddha (Skt.) –	Dang po'i sangs rgyas (Tib.) («dangpo sangye»): “Primordial Buddha”, the <i>dharma-kāya</i> aspect of a Buddha
akṣamālā (Skt.) –	<i>bGrang phreng</i> (Tib.) («drangtreng»): “garland made of <i>akṣa</i> fruits, wreath of <i>akṣa</i> fruits”; rosary composed of a various number of beads made of different materials such as pearls, coral, wood, bone, or fruits, etc.
ālīḍha (Skt.) –	signifying heroism; standing attitude of stepping to the left with the left leg bent and the right one straight, or a dancing attitude on the right leg with the left leg raised and bent [for stepping to the right see <i>pratyālīḍha</i>]
amṛta (Skt.) –	“nectar, ambrosia”
añjali-mudrā (Skt.) –	Sanskrit literally meaning “two handfuls gesture”. <i>Thal mo sbyar ba</i> (Tib.) («talmo jarwa»): gesture of respectful salutation and adoration with the two hands joined palm to palm, but slightly apart, and held before the chest
ardhaparyāṅka (Skt.) –	“half-throne attitude”: attitude of which sitting, standing, and dancing variations exist; synonymous with <i>pratyālīḍha</i>
aṣṭamahāprātihārya (Skt.) –	“the eight great illusory displays” or “the eight great miraculous events”; title of a Buddhist text known only through a 10 th century Chinese translation, relating to the “major events in the life of Śākyamuni” which took place at the “eight great places” (<i>aṣṭamahāsthāna</i>)
aṣṭamahāsthāna (Skt.) –	“eight great places”; the eight great places in Śākyamuni’s life; namely Lumbinī, Bodhgayā, Sāmāth, Śrāvastī, Sāṅkāśya, Rājagṛha, Vaiśālī, and Kuśinagara
aṣṭamaṅgala (Skt.) –	<i>bKra shis rtags brgyad</i> (Tib.) («tashi dagye»): “collection of eight auspicious objects”. These are interpreted in many different ways in Hindu, Jaina, and Buddhist traditions. According to Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhism, they consist of the <i>cakra</i> , <i>chattra</i> , <i>dhvaja</i> , <i>kalaśa</i> , <i>matsyayugma</i> , <i>padma</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , and <i>śrīvatsa</i> (Skt.)

B

bhadrāsana (Skt.) –	“auspicious posture”, signifying sovereignty; posture of Vaśyādhikāra-Tārā (<i>SM</i> 92). Used to describe the sitting attitude with both legs pendant
bhūmiśarśa-mudrā (Skt.) –	<i>Sa gnon phyag rgya</i> (Tib.) («sanön chagya»): “gesture of touching the earth”; resting the left hand in the lap, extending the right hand in the gesture of touching the earth; the characteristic gesture of Tathāgata Akṣobhya

Bodhisattva (Skt.) –	<i>Byang chub sems dpa'</i> (Tib.) («changchub sempa»): “a being directed toward complete enlightenment”. The Mahāyāna doctrine considers the Bodhisattva status a higher goal than that of the <i>arahatta</i> (P.) of the Theavādins. For a Bodhisattva, the liberation of all beings is more important than his personal attainment of <i>nirvāṇa</i> . Bodhisattva is a Sanskrit masculine noun. Female Bodhisattvas do not exist in Indian Buddhist literature. In contrast, Tibetan Buddhism does distinguish between male and female Bodhisattvas
bodhyagrī-mudrā (Skt.) –	<i>Byang chub mchog gi phyag rgya</i> (Tib.) («chang chub chog chagya»): “gesture of highest enlightenment”; holding in the right hand the outstretched index finger of the left hand; gesture of Tathāgata Vairocana; often wrongly named <i>bodhyaṅgī-mudrā</i>
Bon (Tib.)	<i>Bon</i> is a religious tradition of Indian origin. A later and different form of <i>Bon</i> developed in Tibet that has a monastic form with many similarities to Buddhism
brass	metal alloy of copper and zinc
bronze	metal alloy of copper and tin
buddhapiṇḍī (Skt.) –	“multiplication miracle”: one of the miracles of Śākyamuni at Śrāvastī [see also <i>mahāprātihārya</i> , <i>yamakprātihārya</i>]

C

Cakravartin (Skt.) –	<i>'Khor lo bsgyur ba' i rgyal po</i> (Tib.) («korlo gyurwey gyalpo»): “world-sovereign”
cakra (Skt.) –	<i>'Khor lo</i> (Tib.) («korlo»): “wheel, disc”; symbol associated by the Buddhists with the “wheel of the doctrine” (<i>dharmacakra</i>); for Hindus it is a discus as a warrior symbol and symbol of the sun
cūḍāmaṇi (Skt.) –	<i>cūḍāmaṇi</i> (P.): “crest jewel”; name of a jewel worn on top of the head; perhaps shown as a flame on the head of Buddha

D

Ḍākini (Skt.) –	mKha' 'gro ma (Tib.) («khandroma»): “she who goes through the sky”; female embodiment of intrinsic awareness, often serving as a muse or messenger of the tantric practitioner
ḍamaru (Skt.) –	<i>Cang te' u, Da ma ru</i> (Tib.) («changdeu, ḍamaru»): “double drum”; attribute; a small drum-shaped like an hourglass
Devanāgarī, Nāgarī (Skt.) –	script used for writing Sanskrit and Hindi in Northern India
dharma (Skt.) –	<i>Chos</i> (Tib.) («chö»): “doctrine, law, practice, justice, religion”; name for the Buddhist teaching
dharmacakra (Skt.) –	<i>Chos kyi 'khor lo</i> (Tib.) («chökyi korlo»): “wheel of the doctrine”; symbol of Buddha’s teachings

dharmacakra-mudrā (Skt.) – *Chos 'khor phyag rgya* (Tib.) («chökor chagya»); “gesture of the wheel of the doctrine”; variously depicted gesture combining two hands held before the chest [see also *dharmacakra-pravartana-mudrā*]

dharmacakra-pravartana-mudrā (Skt.) – *Chos 'khor bskor ba'i phyag rgya* (Tib.) («chökor korwey chagya»); “gesture of setting in motion the wheel of the doctrine”; depicted identically with the *dharmacakra-mudrā*; should exclusively be used in the context of Śākyamuni commemorating the first sermon at Sāmāth and not in the case of every image of Śākyamuni in the teaching pose, and never for other deities or images of teachers!

dharmakāya (Skt.) – *Chos sku* (Tib.) («chöku»); “dharma body”; name of one of the “three bodies” (*trikāya*); name of the ultimate state, represented by the “primordial Buddha”, also known as the Adibuddha [see also *nirmāṇakāya* and *sambhogakāya*]

dhyāna-mudrā (Skt.) – *bSam gtan gyi phyag rgya* (Tib.) («samten gyi chagya»); “gesture of meditation”; symbolizing mental unfolding; position of hands during certain meditation methods; a term to be used only if both hands are placed in the lap; the characteristic gesture of Amitāyus and Tathāgata Amitābha; synonymous with *samādhi-mudrā* [N.B. the left hand alone cannot display the *dhyāna-mudrā*]

E

“emanational Buddha” – describes the *nirmāṇakāya* aspect of a Buddha such as Buddha Śākyamuni and the group of “seven emanational Buddhas” (Skt.: *sapta-buddha*), “Buddha of the past” (Pa.: *pubbā buddha*), or “former Buddha” (Pa.: *atīte buddhe*)

G

Garuḍa (Skt.) – Khyung (Tib.) («kyung»); interpreted as “devourer”; mythical bird. Vehicle (*vāhana*) of Tathāgata Amoghasiddhi, Vajrapāṇi, and the Hindu god Viṣṇu; originally regarded as a kind of bird; later half bird, half man; chief enemy of the snakes (*nāga*) [the meaning of Khyung in the Tibetan context and of Garuḍa in the Indian mythology is very similar, but in Tibetan art the Khyung is often horned]

ghaṇṭā (Skt.) – *Dril bu* (Tib.) («dribu»); “bell, prayer-bell”; female principle of the transcendent void as a symbol of absolute wisdom [see also *prajñā*]. [N.B. when the bell is surmounted by a *vajra*, it is called *vajraghaṇṭā*]

H

Hīnayāna (Skt.) – Theg dman (Tib.) («tekmen»); “Little Vehicle”: a derogative term used by the followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism or “Great Vehicle” for the orthodox form of Buddhism with texts in Pāli, stressing the ideal of *arhattva* (“Arhatship”), predominant in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam; synonymous with the terms Theravāda (P.) and Sthāviravāda (Skt.) (“School of the Elders”) [see also Mahāyāna]

J

ajāmakuṣa (Skt.) – “crown of matted hair”; applied in the case of the hair fashioned with a tall knot

K

kalaśa (Skt.) –

Bum pa (Tib.) («bumpa»); “water-pot, water-jar”; filled with the elixir of immortality (*amṛta*); associated with fertility

kapāla (Skt.) –

Thod pa (Tib.) («tōpa»); “skull-cup, alms bowl of the tantric practitioners”; attribute of tantric deities

karaṇa-mudrā (Skt.) –

“skilful gesture”; gesture of exorcism with index finger and small finger erect, while the thumb presses the two remaining fingers against the palm of the hand

khaḍga (Skt.) –

Ral gri (Tib.) («raltri»); “sword”; attribute, especially of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and Tathāgata Amoghasiddhi, which in Buddhism signifies “pure knowledge” and symbolizes the “destruction of or cutting through of ignorance”; sometimes shown in a pair with a shield (*khetaka*)

kīrtimukha (Skt.) –

“fame-face”; decorative motif with the face of a grinning lion from whose mouth issues forth beaded tassels or other elements

kuṇḍīkā (Skt.) –

or **kuṇḍī**; *sPyi blugs* (Tib.) («chilug»); “water-jar”; attribute in the shape of a water-jar with a narrow neck or a pitcher with a pipe; characteristic attribute of Maitreya, Avalokiteśvara, and Kurukullā.

L

lalitāsana (Skt.) –

“attitude of ease”, signifying beauty and serenity; sitting attitude with the bent left leg flat on the pedestal and the right leg hanging down; not to be confused with *rājatilāsana*, where neither of the legs is hanging down. [N.B. with the left leg hanging down see *vāmārdhaparyānika*]

lokapāla (Skt.) –

Jig rten skyong (Tib.) («jikden gyong»); “regent” or “guardian” of a quarter of the universe; also known as *caturmahārājikas*: Dhṛtarāṣṭra (east), Vaiśravaṇa (north), Virūdhaka (south), and Virūpākṣa (west)

M

mahāparinirvāṇa (Skt.) –

Yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa (Tib.) («yongsu nyangen ley depa»); “the passing away into final *nirvāṇa*” of the Buddha Śākyamuni at Kuśinagara (Kasia, Uttar Pradesh, N. India) [see also *nirvāṇa*]

mahāprātihārya (Skt.) –

“great miraculous event” at Śrāvastī (Gonda district, Uttar Pradesh, N. India) comprising of the *yamakaprātihārya* and the *buddhapiṇḍī*

Mahāsiddha (Skt.) –

Grub chen (Tib.) («trubchen»); “great perfected one, endowed with supernatural faculties”; name of a historical group of eighty-four Indian Tantric adepts

Mahāyāna (Skt.) –

Theg pa chen po (Tib.) («tekpa chenpo»); the “Great Vehicle”; form of Buddhism with texts in Sanskrit, stressing the ideal of the Bodhisattva and predominant in the Himalayas and Tibet [see also Hīnayāna and Theravāda]

makara (Skt.) –

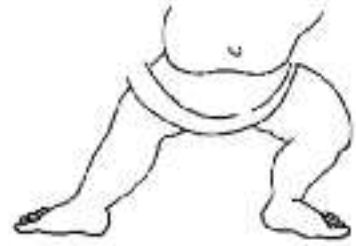
Chu srin (Tib.) («chusin»); mythical creature, half crocodile and half dolphin

mālā (Skt.) –

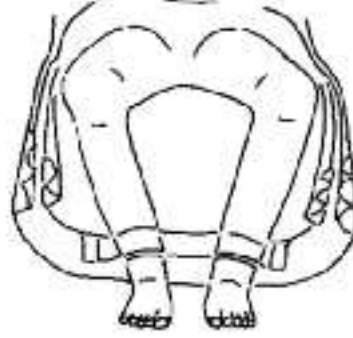
Phreng ba (Tib.) («trengwa»); “wreath, garland, rosary”; used during the recitation of prayers and *mantras*



pratyālīḍha
(standing variation)



ālīḍha
(standing variation)



bhadrāsana



pratyālīḍha
(dancing variation)



ālīḍha
(dancing variation)



lalitāsana



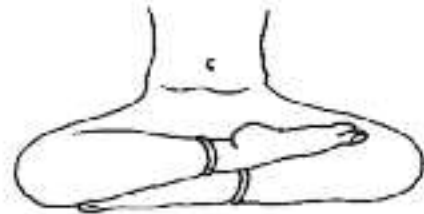
vāmārdhaparyāṅka



rājālīāsana



vajraparyāṅkāsaṅa



sattvaparyāṅkāsaṅa



vitarka



dharmacakra



abhaya



bhūmisparśa



dhyāna / samādhi



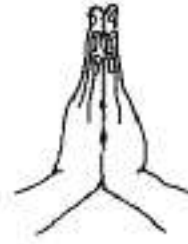
varada



añjali



kaṭaka



namaskāra



buddhaśramaṇa / vandanābhinaya



prajñāliṅganābhinaya



karaṇa



bodhyagrī



trailokyavijaya / vajrahūmkāra



tarjanī

Maṇḍala (Skt.) –	<i>dKylil 'khor</i> (Tib.) («kyilkor»): “circle”; psycho-cosmic diagram, mystic diagram of the cosmos; Maṇḍalas are used in all Indian religions	Niṣpannayogāvalī (Skt.) –	collection of <i>sādhana</i> s describing the appearance of 26 Maṇḍalas [<i>Vajravālī</i> transmitted in versions containing 28, 42, 45, 55, etc. Maṇḍalas]; compiled by Mahāpaṇḍita Abhayākara Gupta of the Vikramaśīla monastery during the early 12 th century
maṇi (Skt.) –	<i>nor bu</i> (Tib.) («norbu»): “jewel” [see also <i>ratna</i>]	P	
“Mānuṣibuddha” (Skt.) –	“human or mortal (<i>mānuṣya</i>) Buddha”; term invented by Hodgson in 1828; does not occur in traditional Buddhist texts	padma (Skt.) –	<i>Padma</i> (Tib.) («pema»): lotos (Greek and German); lotus (Latin and English) (Lat. <i>Nelumbium speciosum</i> , <i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>); a particular water flower with rather broad petals; can be of any colour except blue; associated with purity and creative fertility; for white lotus see <i>puṇḍarīka</i> ; for blue flowers see <i>nīlotpala</i>
Māra (Skt.) –	<i>bDud</i> (Tib.) («dü»): “destroyer, tempter”; personification of evil and death; synonymous with <i>kāma</i>	Pāli (P.) (Skt.) –	language of the Theravāda Buddhist scriptures
māravijaya-mudrā (Skt.) –	gesture symbolizing the “defeat of Māra”; synonymous with <i>bhūmiśarpa-mudrā</i>	prajñā (Skt.) –	<i>Shes rab</i> (Tib.) («sherab»): “wisdom”; the quiescent female principle in tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism [see also <i>upāya</i> , the name of the male principle]
mudrā (Skt.) –	<i>Phyag rgya</i> (Tib.) («chagya»): “joy to give”; gesture with a ritual and symbolic meaning. Each of the five fingers is associated with a natural element as follows: thumb with water; index finger with ether; middle finger with earth; ring finger with fire; little finger with wind (air)	prajñāliṅganābhinaya-mudrā (Skt.) –	“embracing the <i>prajñā</i> gesture”; gesture with the hands turned inwards and crossed before the chest, the right hand holding the <i>vajra</i> , the left holding the <i>ghaṇṭā</i> , sometimes embracing the consort. Symbolizes fusion of the polarities (<i>nirvāṇa</i> / <i>saṃsāra</i>) of the sexes (<i>prajñā</i> / <i>upāya</i>)
muṇḍamālā (Skt.) –	“skull garland”: attribute of wrathful deities	pratyālīḍha (Skt.) –	<i>g.Yas bskum g.Yon brkyang</i> , etc. (Tib.) («yegum yumgyang»): “standing as in violent fight”, signifying fierceness and destructive mood; attitude of which sitting, standing and dancing variations exist. Standing variation: stepping to the right with the right leg bent and the left one straight. Dancing variation: on the left leg with the right leg raised and bent; synonymous with <i>ardhaparyānika</i> [for stepping to the left, see <i>ālīḍha</i>]
N		pustaka (Skt.) –	<i>Glegs bam</i> (Tib.) («legpam»): “manuscript, book”: often representing the manuscript (<i>pustaka</i>) of the <i>Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra</i>
nāga (Skt.) –	<i>Klu</i> (Tib.) («lu»): “snake”; snake-like demigods, protectors of the waters and the treasures of the earth; mostly depicted as theriomorphic cobras with several heads [<i>nāga</i> = male; <i>nāgā</i> and <i>nāginī</i> = female]	R	
nāgakeśara (Skt.) –	nāgavr̥kṣa (Tib.) <i>Klu shing</i> («lushing»): “snake wood”; name of a tree (Lat.: <i>Mesua Roxburghii</i>). The Bodhisattva Maitreya often holds as an attribute a branch or a flower of this tree, which is actually Maitreya’s Bodhi tree	rājatīlāsana (Skt.) –	“attitude of royal ease”; sitting attitude with one knee raised and the other flat on the pedestal; not to be confused with <i>lalitāsana</i> where the right leg is hanging down
nāgapuṣpa (Skt.)	(“snake flower”). Bodhisattva Maitreya often holds as an attribute a branch of <i>nāgapuṣpa</i> (“snake flower”)	ratnopavīta (Skt.) –	“beaded sacred thread made of jewels”
nāgopavīta (Skt.) –	“sacred thread in the form of a snake”	S	
namaskāra-mudrā (Skt.) –	<i>Thal mo sbyar ba</i> (Tib.) («tarmo jarwa»): “salutation gesture”: gesture of respectful salutation and adoration with the hands firmly joined palm to palm and held before the chest [N.B. If the palms are slightly hollowed, this gesture is known as <i>añjali-mudrā</i>]	sādhana (Skt.) –	<i>sGrub thabs</i> (Tib.) («druptab»): “method for realization”; name of a practice of worship used for the invocation of deities of Buddhist- and Hindu Tantrism
nīlotpala (Skt.) –	<i>Utpal sngon po</i> (Tib.) («Utpal ngönpo»): “blue water lily” (Lat. <i>Nymphaea stellata</i>); blue water lily with narrow petals; synonymous with the blue <i>utpala</i> ; attribute of most forms of Mañjuśrī and the green and white forms of Tārā and their assistant deities [N.B. The water lily (<i>utpala</i>) is a flower of the night and related to the moon; whereas the lotus (<i>padma</i>) is a flower of the day and thus related to the sun] [see also <i>padma</i>]	samādhi (Skt.) –	<i>Ting nge 'dzin</i> (Tib.) («ting nge dzin»): “meditation, concentration of the thoughts”: highest stage of <i>yoga</i>
nirmāṇakāya (Skt.) –	<i>sPrul sku</i> (Tib.) («tulku»): “emanation body”; one of the three bodies (<i>trikāya</i>); denoting the manner in which a Buddha appears in <i>saṃsāra</i> ; the “emanational Buddhas” such as Buddha Śākyamuni and the group of “seven emanational Buddhas” (<i>sapta-buddha</i>) [see also <i>dharmakāya</i> and <i>saṃbhogakāya</i>]	saṃbhogakāya (Skt.) –	<i>Longs spyod rdzogs pa' i sku</i> , <i>Longs sku</i> (Tib.) («longjō dzogpeku, longku»): “enjoyment body”; name of one of the three bodies (<i>trikāya</i>); denoting the manner in which a Buddha appears beyond <i>saṃsāra</i> in a pure form; for example as the five “transcendental Buddhas”, the Tathāgatas [see also <i>dharmakāya</i> and <i>nirmāṇakāya</i>]
nirvāṇa (Skt.) –	<i>Mya ngan las 'das pa</i> (Tib.) («nyangen ley depa»): “extinction of suffering”; liberation from the cycle of rebirths by extinguishing all desire [see also <i>mahāparinirvāṇa</i>]		

Sanskrit (Skt.) –	ancient Indo-Aryan language; the sacred scriptures of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Hinduism are written in Sanskrit and Prakrit
Śāradā (Skt.) –	North-Western Indian script, developed in the 8 th century from <i>Brāhmī</i> script
sapta buddha (Skt.) –	<i>Sangs rgyas rabs btun</i> (Tib.) («sangye rabdün»); namely Vipāśyin, Śikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kāśyapa, and Śākyamuni
saptaratna (Skt.) –	<i>Rin chen sna bdun</i> (Tib.) («rinchen nadun»): “seven jewels” characterizing a “world sovereign” (<i>cakravartin</i>)
sattvaparyāṅkāśana (Skt.) –	“noble [posture]”: particular meditation attitude with the right leg placed upon the left leg with only the sole of the right foot visible. Common in South India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia, but rarely encountered in Northern India, the Himalayas or Tibet.
Stūpa (Skt.) –	mChod rten (Tib.) («chöden»): “top, summit”; structure of a more or less hemispherical shape and erected over relics; mostly associated with the <i>mahāparinirvāṇa</i> of Buddha Śākyamuni at Kuśinagara (Kasia, Uttar Pradesh, N. India); synonymous with <i>caitya</i>

T

Tantrayāna (Skt.) –	“ <i>tantra</i> vehicle”: name of a Tantric form of Mahāyāna Buddhism; synonymous with Vajrayāna
Theravāda (P.) (Skt.) –	for Sthaviravāda (Skt.); “School of the Elders”; the only surviving school of early Buddhism, with texts written in Pāli; practiced in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam; synonymous with Hīnayāna (“Little Vehicle”)
tarjanī-mudrā (Skt.) –	<i>sDig ’dzub</i> (Tib.) («dikdzub»): “threatening finger gesture”; the index finger is erect, the remaining fingers form a fist
Tathāgata (Skt.) –	bDe bzhin gshegs pa (Tib.) («dezhin shekpa»); term referring to the group of the five “transcendental Buddhas” in the <i>saṃbhogakāya</i> aspect: Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. Also an honorary title of Śākyamuni and other “emanational Buddhas”

“**transcendental Buddha**” – describes the *saṃbhogakāya* aspect of a Buddha [see *trikāya*, Tathāgata]

trikāya (Skt.) –	<i>sKu gsum</i> (Tib.) («kusum»): “three bodies”; describes three aspects of the Buddhas in Mahāyāna Buddhism: <i>dharmakāya</i> , <i>saṃbhogakāya</i> , and <i>nirmāṇakāya</i>
triratna (Skt.) –	<i>dKon mchog gsum</i> (Tib.) («könchog sum»): “triple gem”; describes the threefold refuge of Buddhism: <i>buddha</i> , <i>dharmā</i> , <i>saṅgha</i>

U

upāya (Skt.) –	<i>Thabs</i> (Tib.) («tab»): “method”; the active male principle in Tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism; [see also <i>prajñā</i> , the name of the female principle]
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ūrṇā (Skt.) –	<i>mDzod spu</i> (Tib.) («dzöpu»): tuft of hair between the eyebrows; one of the thirty-two auspicious signs of Buddha
uṣṇīṣa (Skt.) –	<i>gTsug tor</i> (Tib.) («tsuktor»): “turban”; cranial protuberance on the top of the head; one of the thirty-two auspicious signs of a Buddha
utpala (Skt.) –	“water lily”: water flower of various colours [see also <i>nilotpala</i>]

V

vajra (Skt.) –	<i>rDo rje</i> (Tib.) («dorje»): generally interpreted as “diamond sceptre”; male principle; the transcendent diamond which cannot be destroyed
vajraghaṅṭā (Skt.) –	<i>rDo rje dril bu</i> (Tib.) («dorje trilbu»): “ <i>vajra</i> -bell, <i>vajra</i> -prayer-bell”; female principle of the transcendent void
vajrakarikā (Skt.) –	<i>rDo rje gri gug</i> (Tib.) («dorje trigug»): “ <i>vajra</i> ritual chopper”; ritual chopper with a handle of a half <i>vajra</i> , attribute of mainly wrathful deities, often shown together with a skull-cup (<i>kāpala</i>)
vajraparyāṅkāśana (Skt.) –	“ <i>vajra</i> posture” signifying deep meditation and introspection: sitting attitude with crossed and interlocked legs with both soles of the feet upwards; synonymous with <i>dhyānāsana</i> , which, however, is never used in the <i>Sādhanamālā</i>
Vajrayāna (Skt.) –	“diamond vehicle”: name of a Tantric form of Mahāyāna Buddhism; one of the left-handed forms of Tantrism (<i>vāmācāra</i>); synonymous with Tantrayāna
vāmārdhaparyāṅka (Skt.) –	“left half throne”; sitting attitude with the bent right leg flat on the pedestal and the left leg hanging down; more or less restricted to Mañjuśrī [N.B. with the right leg hanging down see <i>lalitāsana</i>]
varada-mudrā (Skt.) –	<i>mChog shyin gyi phyag rgya</i> (Tib.) («chokjin gyi chagya»): “gesture of charity or gift-bestowing”
viśvavajra (Skt.) –	<i>rDo rje rgya gram</i> (Tib.) («dorje gya tram»): “all- <i>vajra</i> , <i>vajra</i> with prongs pointing in the four directions”: two crossed diamond sceptres
vitarka-mudrā (Skt.) –	“gesture of argumentation”; the <i>Sādhanamālā</i> uses <i>vyākhyāna-mudrā</i>

Y

yajñopavīta (Skt.) –	“sacred thread”
Yoginī (Skt.) –	term used for female Yoga practitioners

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Epilogue

With this publication *Buddhist Sculptures of the Alain Bordier Foundation* the author aims at giving the reader an insight into the development of Tibetan Buddhist sculptures. Anyone who likes to learn more about Tibetan art and various aspects of Buddhism may also consult the publication *Tibetan Art of the Alain Bordier Foundation*, which contains eighteen essays that shed light on different features of Buddhism from the point of view of the development of Tibetan art. The book is illustrated with eighteen statues and paintings from the Alain Bordier Foundation, and gives an idea of the spectrum of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist art.

Readers who would like to know more about Tibetan art and its evolution should consult other publications by this author: *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, the only monograph on the stylistic development of metal sculptures in the Indo-Tibetan region; *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*, illustrating in two volumes more than 1100 previously unpublished sculptures discovered in Tibet during fourteen expeditions; and *108 Buddhist Statues in Tibet: Evolution of Tibetan Sculptures*, which contains a DVD with digital pictures of more than 500 sculptures photographed in Tibet.

Reflections

One year after the opening of the Tibet Museum in Gruyères I am very pleased to present our second publication. It was fortunate that Ulrich von Schroeder agreed to write this book about the evolution of Tibetan sculptures illustrated with objects of the Alain Bordier Foundation. I hope that this book gives insight not only into the evolution of Tibetan sculptures but also about Buddhist art and its meaning in general.

Many visitors to the Tibet Museum have so far been able to ingest the quiet strength issuing from the Buddhist objects, although often without understanding the subtle meanings of the symbols despite their universal value. But it is perhaps even more important to awaken in them an interest and I hope that the two publications illustrated with objects from the collections of the Tibet Museum will supply answers to some of their questions.

It is true that Tibetan art is almost without exception the work of anonymous artists, of men who had sought perfection. Tibetan Buddhist art – sculptures as well as paintings – have a religious function and were not made for mere aesthetic reasons. With the Tibet Museum I aimed at creating a calm space where introspection is possible – a place where the spirituality inherent in everyone may awaken – whatever the visitor's religious affiliation. This is in harmony with the Buddhist non-dual approach to life that invites us to contemplate emptiness in form – and form in emptiness [*“Prajñāparāmitā Sūtra”*].

I dedicate all renderings of beauty assembled in this museum to the Tibetans and all other sentient beings, voicing the hope that all attain confidence, equilibrium, happiness, and spiritual unfolding.

Alain Bordier

Gruyères, May 2010