

Reinventing the Wheel of Time:
An Art History of the *Kālacakra* Tantra

By

Jon Ryan C. Soriano

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History of Art

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Patricia Berger, Chair
Professor Whitney Davis
Professor Jacob P. Dalton

Summer 2023

Abstract

Reinventing the Wheel of Time: An Art History of the *Kālacakra* Tantra

by

Jon Soriano

Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Patricia Berger, Chair

This dissertation is an art historical analysis of a set of objects related to a ritual corpus of Tibetan Buddhism known as the *Kālacakra* tantra. Objects are tracked according to distinct socio-cultural conditions, each of which developed into differing interests regarding the *Kālacakra* tantra, interests distinct from the purposive and functional norms of Tantric Buddhism itself. The dissertation thus attempts a somewhat different methodology from other historical narratives regarding Buddhist art by moving beyond iconographic interpretation to analysis of how a common iconographical matrix is serially adapted into divergent forms and functions across distinct social formations in time and space. Field research and embodied analysis are prioritized.

Individual chapters attempt to isolate individuals and social formations for focused analysis. The introduction covers some background by focusing on the earlier, established dissemination of the *Kālacakra* tantra during and immediately after Yuan dynasty patronage of the tantra following the thirteenth century. This patronage was borne out by art from the Sa-skya sect of Tibetan Buddhism, in which *Kālacakra* imagery was subsumed into standardized ritual practices. This chapter also introduces common themes linking the subsequent parts of the dissertation, such as the sacrality and iconic presence common to works of Buddhist art. The second chapter focuses on how the seventeenth century Ganden Phodrang of the Geluk sect in central Tibet attempted to standardize *Kālacakra* imagery. A guidebook produced by the regime was an assertion of secular control bound to the the position of regent. The third chapter discusses the invention of a *Kālacakra* Hall for the Qing imperial capital in Beijing, and how the this hall reflected the multi-ethnic and identity-based values that the Qing court used to assert its power through the hall. The fourth chapter discusses the eighteenth century development of Labrang Monastery and its *Kālacakra* Hall. The large, relatively autonomous Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Amdo, in a region in halfway between central Tibet and the Qing capital Beijing, defined its hall in terms of its local population. A brief conclusion reconsiders the totality of works.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|--------|
| LIST OF FIGURES | iii–iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | v |
| CHAPTER 1: CONVENTIONS | 1–33 |
| 1.1. Overview | 1 |
| 1.2. Distinguishing Potential Form-Classes | 5 |
| <u>1.2.1. The <i>Thangka</i> Format</u> | 5 |
| <u>1.2.2. Formal Aspects</u> | 9 |
| <u>1.2.3. Diagrammatic <i>Mandala</i> Depictions</u> | 11 |
| <u>1.2.4. Ngor-Style <i>Thangkas</i></u> | 14 |
| 1.3. <i>Kālacakra</i> and its Iconography | 16 |
| <u>1.3.1. Institutionalization through the <i>Vajrāvalī</i></u> | 16 |
| <u>1.3.2. <i>Kālacakra</i> in the <i>Vajrāvalī</i></u> | 23 |
| <u>1.3.3. The <i>Kālacakra</i> tantra itself</u> | 26 |
| <u>1.3.4. <i>Kālacakra</i> <i>Mandala</i> Iconography</u> | 30 |
| 1.4. Chapter Summaries | 32 |
| CHAPTER 2: EXACTITUDE | 34–62 |
| 2.1. Form | 34 |
| 2.2. Material | 37 |
| 2.3. Iconography | 40 |
| <u>2.3.1. Nudity</u> | 42 |
| <u>2.3.2. Grids</u> | 44 |
| <u>2.3.3. Ordering</u> | 46 |
| 2.4 Trajectories | 48 |
| <u>2.4.1. The <i>Handbook's</i> Rhetoric</u> | 48 |
| <u>2.4.2. Functional Precedents</u> | 53 |
| <u>2.4.3. Icons</u> | 55 |
| 2.5 Historical Context | 57 |
| CHAPTER 3: AMBIVALENCE | 63–78 |
| 3.1. Introduction | 63 |
| 3.2. Methods | 63 |
| 3.3. Positioning | 65 |
| 3.4. Mongols | 68 |
| 3.5. Flattening | 70 |
| 3.6. Adaptability | 72 |
| 3.7. Conclusion | 77 |
| CHAPTER 4: AUTONOMY | 79–101 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 79 |
| 4.2. Methodological Overview | 80 |
| 4.2. Painting | 82 |
| <u>4.2.1. Approach</u> | 82 |
| <u>4.2.2. World Picture</u> | 84 |
| <u>4.2.3. Precedents</u> | 88 |
| <u>4.2.3.1. Yuan <i>Abhidharma</i></u> | 89 |
| <u>4.2.3.2. <i>Cosmological Scroll</i></u> | 90 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 4.2.4. <u>Note on Dating</u> | 92 |
| 4.4. Presence | 92 |
| 4.5. Perimeter | 97 |
| 4.5.1. <u>Circumambulation</u> | 97 |
| 4.5.2. <u>Autonomy</u> | 99 |
| 4.6. Conclusion | 101 |
| CHAPTER 5: RETURNS | 102 |
| FIGURES | 104 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 149 |

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1.1.a. *Kālacakra maṇḍala* from *Vajrāvalī*, Ngor Monastery.
 Figure 1.1.b.: Detail of Fig. 1.1.a.
 Figure 1.2.a.: Modern *Kālacakra maṇḍala thangka*, covered.
 Figure 1.2.b.: Modern *Kālacakra maṇḍala thangka*, rear.
 Figure 1.2.c.: Modern *Kālacakra maṇḍala thangka*, uncovered.
 Figure 1.3.: *Taima Mandala*, early 1300s.
 Figure 1.4.a.: First of two *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, the *Kongōkai* or vajra realm.
 Figure 1.4.b.: Second of two *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, the *Taizōkai* or womb realm.
 Figure 1.5.: *Vairocana Maṇḍala* from dated to the eleventh century.
 Figure 1.6.: Detail from center of Fig. 1.1.a.
 Figure 1.7.: Ngor *Kālacakra maṇḍala* dated to the 1300s.
 Figure 1.8.: "Four Mandalas of the Vajravali Cycle," circa 1450.
 Figure 2.1.: Nude *Kālacakra* model.
 Figure 2.2.: Contemporary model book page.
 Figure 2.3.: Detail of *Prajñāpāramitā* of Java.
 Figure 2.4.: Contemporary model book page, wear.
 Figure 2.5.: Aniconic limestone drum-slab from *Amarāvati*, circa first century.
 Figure 2.6.: Dunhuang sketch, 150 *TAQ*.
 Figure 2.7.: Sketchbook excerpt, fifteenth century.
 Figure 2.8.: Sketches from around 1500.
 Figure 2.9.a.: A-lci mural, circa 1400 *TPQ*.
 Figure 2.9.b.: A-lci mural, detail, circa 1400 *TPQ*.
 Figure 2.10.: Sa-spo-la mural, circa 1400 *TPQ*.
 Figure 2.11.: General contours of figures in 2.9 (green) and 2.10 (purple).
 Figure 2.12.: Early Ngor *Kālacakra thangka*, dated to 1300s.
 Figure 2.13.: Early Ngor *Kālacakra thangka*, dated to 1400s.
 Figure 2.14.a.: Pages from *Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho*, *White Beryl*, 163–164.
 Figure 2.14.b.: Detail of 2.14.a.
 Figure 2.15.: Sa-skya tortoise divination manuscript..
 Figure 2.16.: Modern *Srid-pa-ho* painting.
 Figure 3.1.: Map of Yonghe Gong.
 Figure 3.2.: Yonghe Gong proportional architectural groundplan.
 Figure 3.3.: View from interior of *Kālacakra* Hall, facing west into central area.
 Figure 3.4.: Yonghe Gong hall bracketing.
 Figure 3.5.: Hall of Mental Cultivation, Forbidden City.
 Figure 3.6.: *Kālacakra-Viśvamātā* in *Kālacakra* Hall.
 Figure 3.7.: *Kālacakra maṇḍala* from early twentieth century.
 Figure 3.8.: *Sūtra* Hall "雍和宫经堂" from early twentieth century.
 Figure 4.1.: Public map of Labrang Monastery.
 Figure 4.2.: Illustration of Labrang Monastery, dated to early twentieth century.
 Figure 4.3.: Labrang Monastery *Kālacakra* Hall mural.
 Figure 4.4.: Labrang *Hevajra* Hall plans.
 Figure 4.5.: Yuan dynasty silk tapestry.
 Figure 4.6.a.: "Cosmological Scroll," detail of overlay.

Figure 4.6.b.: "Cosmological Scroll," detail of cosmos.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the top, I would like to thank my dissertation advisor Pat Berger for getting me to the point where I can finally submit my dissertation. I have attempted to describe some of how she has influenced me academically in the body of the dissertation itself, as well as in other writings, but here I want to add that I am lucky to have had her support for the duration of my time as a graduate student at UC Berkeley and that she has shaped a lot of how I perceive the university as a whole and the concept of Berkeley as a place. I believe some of her other students think of her in terms of Avalokiteśvara, but I prefer Mañjuśrī, especially with how this dissertation got done. It was a pleasure working with Whitney Davis, a scholar whose classes I enjoyed taking, whose work is a source of insight, and whose advisement has always benefitted me. Jake Dalton has become more of an Avalokiteśvara for me, particularly for his compassion and patience with some of the harebrained ideas I have thrown out there and my all too gradual assimilation of the Tibetan language.

There are so many other people in academia that have helped me get to this point, that I cannot possibly list them all. This is especially because I have been a graduate student for so long, and have worked with lots of different institutions. Moving chronologically, when I was at Cal State Long Beach, Professor Kendall Brown, Professor Jeffrey Broughton, and Professor Feng-ying Ming opened up the possibilities of scholarship and higher education for me. When I was studying ethnology at Cheng-chi University, Professor LAN Mei-hua 藍美華老師 and Professor David Holm were astoundingly supportive of my academic interests and helped me find my way through. When I got to Berkeley I was shocked by how brilliant everyone was. They are still brilliant, but I have become less shocked. I took all the classes I could, but ended up taking a lot more classes with Pheng Cheah, Greg Levine, Winnie Wong, and Brian Baumann, because I admire the work they do. I still remember and appreciate the support and advice that I have gotten from a lot of scholars who were peers at one point or other: William Ma, Patricia Yu, Mary Lewine, Kuan Hwa, Michael Kowen, Leslie Huang, Hannibal Taubes, Lawrence Z. Yang, Ramón de Santiago, Meghan Howard, Linh Vu, Khenpo Yeshe, Rosaline Kyo, Stacey Van Vleet, and other great folks who were or still are at Berkeley. Outside Berkeley, Ling-wei Kung and Wei-chieh Tsai have also been wonderfully supportive.

Regarding other institutions, the Berkeley Art Museum and its collections have been an integral part of my time at Berkeley, and it was a joy to work with Julia White and Lynne Kimura as a curatorial intern and in a lot of other capacities. The Tang Center for Silk Road Studies and the Dunhuang Foundation made my fieldwork in China possible. The Dunhuang Academy made me feel very welcome, as did certain monks at Labrang, Nyanthok, Serdri, and Shachung Monasteries in Amdo, all places where I wish I could have spent more time.

I have committed myself to life as a householder, though, and my wife Hsiao-wen and daughter Lila deserve my greatest appreciation for putting up with me studying (Buddhist) art this whole time.

CHAPTER 1: CONVENTIONS

1.1. Overview

A *Kālacakra maṇḍala* painting (depicted in Fig. 1.1.a.) was produced for Ngor E-waṃ Chos-Idan Monastery (currently in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China) in the middle part of the fifteenth century, making it one of the earliest extant depictions of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* available. The painting was produced by professional Nepalese artists sponsored by the abbot and founder of the monastery Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (Ngor-chen Kun-dga' bZang-po, 1382–1456), who dedicated the painting in memory of the ritual specialization of one of his teachers.

The image depicted on the painting comes from a larger set, a collection of varied *maṇḍalas* intended to standardize disparate modes of ritual practice. The *Kālacakra maṇḍala* and certain other *maṇḍalas* could thus be made more effectively manageable relative to the great range of extant *maṇḍalas*. The style of the painting thus conforms to those of the other *maṇḍalas* from the set: the same colors are applied in similar proportions, a decorative vegetal scroll subtly fills gaps, and the compositional layouts are arranged so that the large circular shape in the center is flanked by small niched figures on its upper and lower registers. The *Kālacakra* painting differs from the other paintings in its set primarily in the arrangement of its interior parts and in the identification of individual deities and other figures.

Given the qualities of this *maṇḍala*, it is clear that by the time of this intricate painting's production, an institutional and standardized understanding of what the *Kālacakra* tantra itself is and of how it is to be visualized had already been cultivated among Tibetan Buddhist practitioners, across a range of sects and affiliations, for centuries. Familiarity with the system of *Kālacakra*, itself developing since the twelfth century and inculcated through ritual as well as scholarly practices, must have defined how the painting was seen, what practitioners saw in it, and the ways the painting was understood to function, at least for the members of the Ngor Monastery's community who had access to it. Still, such knowledge did not necessarily proscribe individual modalities of how to behold this painting, such as aesthetic or even comparative art-historical modes of seeing, which could contrast a painting's qualities with those of analogous paintings—formalist and other kinds of comparisons were certainly in mind among the individuals who saw this and a range of tantric images as regular parts of their lives.¹ Throughout the history of this painting and the art relevant to it, interactions between viewers and the art in question must have been constituted by both institutional horizons and individual perceptions.² This introduction attempts to outline a fifteenth-century modality of perceiving this *maṇḍala* painting and how such perception related to the *Kālacakra* tantric system itself, in terms of institutional function and its relative art historical positioning. As an introduction it does so with the broader purview of reconstructing the conditions of vision and conceptualization that shaped the art of the *Kālacakra* at this early point, for comparison with

¹ Tibetan writings about art have been composed over a period several centuries, and a core selection of texts is outlined and partially translated in David Jackson's *A History of Tibetan Painting* (Wien: Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 1996). A discussion of the specific stylistic valences of this painting is discussed below.

² As Whitney Davis has suggested, two modalities of viewing are inherent in art historical interpretation, which compares the fundamental visible aspects of phenomena with historically and contextually situated perceptions, a duality known as "bivisibility"; this concept has been adapted here to account for slight institutional and individual adaptations to bi-vision within bivisibility; see Whitney Davis, *Visuality and Virtuality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 99.

later periods. Broadly, this dissertation seeks to position this moment in relation to later moments in the development of art relevant to the *Kālacakra* tantra, with later moments considered in subsequent chapters. Such moments are themselves marked by complexities in the changing conditions of interaction between viewers, institutions, and the actual art of the *Kālacakra* tantra.

The Ngor *Kālacakra maṇḍala* thus serves as an orientation point, by means of which to conceptualize a larger art history of which this object is a determinative part. The dissertation analyzes a selection of objects defined by their functionality within the expanding corpus of the *Kālacakra* tantra. Analysis considers objects in relation to their conditions: the distinct and complex historical regimes of religious practice and vision within which objects were produced and maintained, as well as the limits and interstices of these regimes. The goal of analysis is to track how the historically changing manifestations of the *Kālacakra* tantra's art related to the circumstances of its function, the effects of changing material circumstances on this development, and the distinct practices of envisioning that interplayed with basic functional and material conditions. The period considered in the dissertation lasts from the tantra's appearance in the eleventh century through to a moment just prior to the waning and collapse of the Qing empire (1636–1912) and its sponsorship of the tantra in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The latter moment marks a period of transition to a post-imperial model of governance more aligned to the modern form of the nation-state, thus significantly different from and more complex than the religious and imperial regimes that shaped the conditions within which the tantra initially developed. These earlier conditions, with their concomitant ideologies and praxes, have closer affinities to the qualities of the tantra discussed here than do those of global modernism, under which the range of functional regimes and paradigms within which art appears is well beyond the scope of this study (this divide is addressed in more detail at the dissertation's conclusion). The art history outlined here thus proceeds in relation to a set of historical moments, conventionally defined by art's function in relation to certain material and ideological conditions, and responding to Asian imperial centers and their peripheries, particularly the region extending from northern India to the imperial centers in and around Beijing, China, where the *Kālacakra* tantra circulated.

Thus, the Ngor Monastery painting serves the larger goals of this dissertation in both its historical singularity as one of the oldest extant works of art to deploy the ritual iconography of *Kālacakra* and in the painting's relationship to later works relevant to this tantra. This relationship is not only evident in the painting's basic chronological dating and locational provenance, positioned in relation to the historical expansion of Buddhism, but moreover in how the painting's form, materials, and wider social contexts functioned in relation to the complex of thoughts and visions surrounding the painting. The Ngor *Kālacakra* painting serves in concert with subsequent works to construct a kind of art historical "shape," a model of a certain passage of time manifested and evident in the historically adaptable forms of relevant objects, these objects in turn intertwined with the necessities and interests of changing historical circumstances.³ One primary benefit of adopting the Kublerian conceptualization of "shape" is that the resultant art history is not bound by a fixed formulation of history in its broader sense.

³ The concept of a "shape of time" is derived from the theories of George Kubler, particularly in his *The Shape of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962). While the concept of shaping a temporal duration by means of a series of relevant objects has been integral to structuring this dissertation, compared to Kubler's vision, the art in consideration here is less focusedly determined by strictly formal considerations, though common formal aspects are one factor in considering a shape for the history of art relevant to the *Kālacakra* tantra.

That is, the shape outlined here is not inherently prescribed by any rigid teleological form, such as that of an overall tendency towards perceptual verisimilitude, a canonical telos in art historiography, as exemplified in the theories of Ernst Gombrich.⁴ Moreover, such an art historical shape does not present a fixed trajectory of continuous advancement or corruption, obeying the dictates of progressivist technological modernity. Neither is this historical shape a totalizing stasis and ossification of culture.⁵ The appearance of art objects in a given sequence (Kubler uses the term "series") must appear "stochastic" relative to broader teleological impositions on the overall history of art, but such sequencing is indicative of the possibility of art to shape its own passage of time.⁶ As further suggested by Kubler's text, discontinuous sequencing presumes the fact of the relativism of time, challenging the subsumption of art history, broadly, within a larger field, a realm within which the history of art is grounded, such as realism or modernity.⁷ Kubler's concept of "shape" allows for varying modalities of formal succession to structure time, in addition to the creation of wholly new shapes of time following the appearances of "primary objects." The art of Buddhism, and in this particular instance, a certain set of objects defined by their function relative to the *Kālacakra* tantra, is marked by a degree of openness and complexity in terms of its historical shaping, not predetermined according to any fixed formulation of what comprises "reality".

The sequence of objects identified in this dissertation expands slightly from Kubler's principle of series determined by "form-class," the fundamental classificatory category by which such series are individuated. Kubler's text asserts that form-classes address functional "problems," the example he provides being "segmented structures with rib vaults," whereas the forms of objects chosen for this dissertation sometimes serve multiple functions and address multiple problems, as has regularly been the case with objects of art more generally.⁸ Nonetheless, the objects selected herein can be conventionally classified as historical iterations of Buddhist art serving the more specific function of perpetuating practices and motives specific to the unique canonical dictates of the *Kālacakra* tantra, a Buddhist religious system with tendencies distinct from other Buddhist religious systems, tendencies that will be outlined shortly. The shared functional properties of this series of *Kālacakra* objects among distinct social groups and over subsequent centuries is notable specifically because of the range of adaptations to the art made by individuals and groups, certainly in relation to different material and ideological conditions, while perpetuating the structuring principles defined by the *Kālacakra* tantra.

⁴ See Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon, 1977).

⁵ Such historical forms, teleological and ossified, have been standard in art history following at least G. W. F. Hegel's pronouncements regarding certain cultural expressions as advancing towards a telos of philosophical consciousness, and others not. See his *Aesthetics*, translated by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

⁶ The term "stochastic" used here is an adaptation of one category of formalism defined by Whitney Davis in *A General Theory of Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁷ Criticism of Kubler as "missing the point," regarding a relationship to reality, is presented in an art historiographical survey by Christopher Wood, *A History of Art History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). This criticism appears to disregard the grounding reality of relativism, whereas Kubler's discussion of astronomical time is certainly a direct response to the scientific relativism of time. For instance, Kubler writes, "The rest of time emerges only in signals relayed to us These signals are like kinetic energy stored until the moment of notice when the mass descends along some portion of its path to the center of the gravitational system," *Shape*, 15.

⁸ Kubler discusses form-classes in *Shape*, 32–3.

More generally, the history of art, including the series analyzed in this dissertation, is defined by an inherent potential for dynamic changes in the formal iteration of its objects in time despite or in addition their functional stasis; fields of forms, and their subfields, such as the one identified here as circumscribed by the *Kālacakra* tantra, are not completely beholden to a singular, monolithic, and unchanging religious or ideological institution or ritual functionality, and are instead more thoroughly historical in their adaptability. Objects themselves fluctuate as material and ideological "forms of life."⁹ These fluctuations can in turn shape other aspects of peoples, societies, and their environments, in addition to subsequent forms of art in series.

The structure of the dissertation thus adapts a kind of Kublerian series, determined by the repeated instantiation of certain functional images from the *Kālacakra* tantra, to assert a temporal shape, an art history. In doing so this dissertation also does not seek to reify and essentialize the functionality identified for the series of objects selected. Analysis attempts to move beyond a tendency in scholarship, art historical and otherwise, which groups varied works of Buddhist art and culture to isolate an essential definition of a particular type of religious experience. For instance, in a historiographical analysis of scholarship about "Tantric Buddhism," a category of Buddhism that subsumes the *Kālacakra* Tantra and much of Tibetan Buddhism, Christian Wedemeyer characterizes scholarship on the topic as fixated on distinguishing Tantric Buddhism from other forms of Buddhism through the topos of transgression.¹⁰ The focus on transgression as the defining feature of Tantric Buddhism derives from a more fundamental fixation, as scholars "all concur that, ultimately, transgression in Indian [and Indian-derived] esoteric Buddhism does not in fact make sense," thus inducing a continual fixation to rationalize transgression in scholarship, rather than account for the religion in its totality.¹¹ The Buddhological scholarship that has been invaluable to this dissertation is often rigorous in focusing on defining a singular religious conceptual construct, such as transgression in tantra, by surveying works to gain a more complete understanding of such fixed constructs. This dissertation rather attempts to track possibilities of complex art historical change in the perpetuation of a conventional functional orientation within *Kālacakra*. One notable model for this dissertation's structural openness has been the work of Patricia Berger, so that, for example, in her monograph on high Qing dynasty imperial sponsorship of Buddhist art in the eighteenth century, the structure of the monograph's analysis is shaped by the inherent "plurality" of imperial identity.¹² Such plurality necessitates engagement with Tibetan, Chinese, Manchu, and other forms of socio-cultural orientation to historicize the multifaceted forms and formats of art sponsored by the court according to its multiple and sometimes interwoven interests.

In an somewhat analogous way, this dissertation attempts to move beyond static continuities in Buddhist art. However, as a diachronic examination of art relevant to the *Kālacakra* tantra, certain continuities are unavoidable; for instance a standard iconography and fixed formats have certainly endured with the main concepts and practices of the overall religion of Tibetan Buddhism, and are exemplified in objects such as the *Kālcakra maṇḍala*. These continuities are moreover structured by Buddhist concepts relevant to the function of Buddhist art, such as its iconicity, sacrality, and ritual positioning. To be sure, these three concepts are

⁹ Richard Wollheim used the phrase "forms of life" to indicate the openness of the category of art and of individual works; see his *Art and Its Objects* 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Christian Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² See Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003); the term "plurality" appears on page 5.

outlined in this chapter as a ground from which the art of the *Kālacakra* tantra extends according to its own trajectories, interpreted variously. While this dissertation attempts to focus on difference, it does not deny continuity over time, but simply tracks the possibilities and extent of divergence and adaptation as integral to the overall shape of this art history.

The method of investigation applied here also has the more specific effect of showing how the ideological constructs within the *Kālacakra* tantra itself, with its complicated cosmological, soteriological, or ontological assertions, and despite the specificity of these claims, did not completely limit development in the formal expression of its art. Oppositely, the *Kālacakra* tantra has been subject to continual artistic appropriation, adaptation, and innovation according to the interests of varied artists and regimes. Such adaptations have determined the structure of the dissertation of the whole (described in fuller detail below), such that individual chapters focus on points of divergence from the standards identified in this chapter. Ultimately, the structure of the dissertation attempts to point at the possibility of unending formal variability in art, and not merely for art in our current episteme of art markets and continuous commodification, but for art more broadly conceived.

The discussion of the Ngor painting in this introduction thus serves as an exemplary groundwork for the trajectory of the dissertation as a whole, in that the painting instantiates a type of object perpetuated in a formal sub-series integral to the overall context of the *Kālacakra* tantra itself and contemporary with the tantra's own overall historical religious development, as this format of painting and the practice of Buddhist tantra are bound by an enduring purpose, scope, and function: that of perpetuating a sacral image and its concomitant ritual compartments. The Ngor painting is particularly representative of how the practices and interests of the Buddhist institution determined art.

As such, the identification, description, and contextualization of the objects selected for examination in this dissertation are also intended to bridge gaps among academic disciplines relevant to the dissertation, which include art history, but also Buddhist studies as a subfield of religious studies, and the literary-focused methodological models of area studies or cultural studies such as sinology, Tibetology, and Asian studies more broadly. Art certainly remains bound to its contexts. As a dissertation written intentionally within the discipline of art history, this introduction will also hopefully serve to make the remaining dissertation comprehensible as a continuum of objects given the cultural specificity of Tibetan esoteric Buddhist forms of life, and the art of the *Kālacakra* tantra as its own entity within that continuum. This grounding thus makes up the first part of this introductory chapter, providing the basis for a later section of this chapter that outlines the dissertation as a whole.

1.2. Distinguishing Potential Form-Classes

1.2.1. The *Thangka* Format

Some fundamental art historical features of the Ngor painting serve to lay out generalities about the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist art, understood in terms of its ritual formats and forms, and the function of this art within the context of the religion of Tibetan Buddhism. These generalities ground the more specific functions of art from the *Kālacakra* tantra, which will be analyzed in turn. In short, a primary and integral function of this art is to intensify the perception or belief of a sacral, iconic presence, and the discussion of format that follows asserts that format is integral to the perception and conceptualization of icons in Tibetan art.¹³ Historically, the

¹³ The term *icon* is used here according to the semiotic theories of Charles Sanders Peirce, which assert that a representation (for instance, a painted depiction) features some "likeness" of the actual subject, for instance, a holy

categorization of a functioning iconic presence as an object of art has led to misinterpretations that unduly objectify or dissociate icons from both their inherent religious identification and the communities in which they function.¹⁴ Despite this history, the analytical methods of art history do not necessarily replace religious identification and contextualization, but may serve to methodically account for part of the life of a given icon: that of its material substrates, the stuff intentionally manipulated by artists in the necessary production of an icon, production that occurs at a moment prior to the investment of the icon with power. In most cases, a material substrate is inherently part of the icon, in addition to any empowerment, in the same manner that human beings are inherently made of carbon and other elements arranged in a regulated form. While the religious presence of Buddhist icons has been discussed in a range of scholarship and Buddhist texts,¹⁵ analysis in terms of format assists in concretizing this relationship between material and presence, such that the functional properties of the Ngor painting and other assemblages can be understood more systematically.

The Ngor painting instantiates an artistic format known as a *thangka* (or *thang-ga*), which has been used as a vehicle for iconic presence in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition for much of the religion's history. The format thus serves as a certain mode of imaging, one that is bound to vision and a two-dimensional plane upon which an icon is depicted. As David Summers has asserted, "virtual spaces [in this case that of the iconic image configured by the painted surface of the *thangka*] always presuppose determinate real surfaces . . . [such that] representation of virtual space . . . is always united with a format . . . which is thus prior to any representation."¹⁶ Effectively, depicted images, including those on *thangkas*, should first be understood within the structure of their material conveyance, and such a structure can be classified according to its own conventional qualities that differentiate it from others and that determine various properties of their conveyed images, such as the range of perceptual possibilities available to the image. The format of the *thangka* thus enables a ground of perceptual possibilities and conventions for perceiving iconic presences, as these are understood within the Buddhist frame within which the *thangka* functions. Formats provide inherent cultural and perceptual presumptions that determine the depicted images they convey. Of course, Tibetan Buddhism includes a number of formats used to convey iconic presence.¹⁷ The *thangka* is privileged here because the format itself affords a high degree of contextual precision relative to statues and other formats that are

being from the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon). See Peirce's *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 2. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 56; and Albert Atkin, "Peirce's Theory of Signs," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2013 Edition)*, edited by Edward N. Zalta,

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/peirce-semiotics/>.

¹⁴ Charles Lachman provides a concise survey of this history and the debate between art and icon in his article "Buddhism: Image As Icon, Image as Art," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts*, edited by Frank Burch Brown (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), 367–378.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Janet Gyatso's essay "Image as Presence," in Valrae Reynolds, et al., *From the Sacred Realm* (Munich: Prestel, 1999), for an overview of this topic. Buddhist texts often explain the process of empowering objects; for an example, see note 59 below.

¹⁶ David Summers, *Real Spaces* (London: Phaidon Press, 2003), 53.

¹⁷ The text of Valrae Reynolds, et al, *Catalogue of the Newark Museum Tibetan Collection, Vol. III, Sculpture and Painting*, 2nd ed. (Newark: Newark Museum, 1986) is largely structured around the formats of Tibetan Buddhist art and thus provides a general account of the art according to format. Note that the surfaces of a number of other formats, such as statues, are also frequently painted, but their painting is secondary to their mode of depiction, which is sculptural.

often decontextualized and dissociated from their original spatial positioning and arrangements in the modern collection of such objects in museums and other collections. For instance, a brass statue of the main deities of the *Kālacakra* tantra collected in the Newark Museum is stylistically attributed to eleventh century Kashmir, but little else can be concretely claimed about other aspects of the statue, such as its relation to any programs of ritual or information regarding the identity and interests of its patrons.¹⁸ In comparison, the two-dimensional format of the *thangka* inherently accounts for a mode of vision, as well as a distinct perception of space, in the properties of the *thangka*'s depicted content—this is especially true for depictions of *maṇḍalas* as projections of space and environment, as will be discussed below.

Thangkas are only one of the main formats used to present two-dimensional depictions within Tibetan Buddhist religious ritual, the two most common other formats being wall murals (*ldebs ris*) and illuminations of religious manuscripts (*dpe ris*). Both the format of a *thangka* and its depicted content are primarily determined by Tibetan Buddhist ritual conventions, just as ritual determines so many aspects of Buddhist practice as a whole.¹⁹ These ritual conventions are suffused into Buddhist art, such that there are ritual programs for a great range of formats. The process of depicting images on *thangkas* also is also guided by rituals, both in their stages of production and in their function within sacred sites. Ritual thus also determines many of the *thangka* format's material qualities, which consist of a fixed range of substances, their standardized applications, mounting arrangements, intended methods of handling, and intended modes of display. These qualities are evident in combination on a completed *thangka*, the Tibetan classificatory term for the assemblage of this format. As a two-dimensional format, *thangkas* are though there are certainly divergences, so that individual features may sometimes be omitted. For instance, most *thangkas* feature a figural depiction of a Buddhist icon, though they may also lack any figural image and only contain script, as in the syllabic representations of icons, again, as determined in ritual necessities.²⁰

Thangkas are also often held in non-Buddhist collections after having been removed from ritual use, so that the term *thangka* specifically refers to a format not necessarily determined from its position in space, and regardless of whether it is used ritually after its production. Certainly, *thangkas* functioned as gifts and moved beyond religious spaces throughout the history of the format. The Ngor painting in question is from a private collection, and has been used for museum exhibition; it has also been published as "Kalachakra Mandala" in the catalog for the 1998 to 1999 exhibition *Sacred Visions* at the Metropolitan Museum; and the painting is available on the Himalayan Art Resources website, with both sources only reproducing a photograph of the frontal, rectangular painted portion of what clearly remains a *thangka* painting,

¹⁸ In addition to some discussion of this statue, there is a picture of it; see Reynolds, *Sacred*, 217.

¹⁹ An overview of the ritual and material construction and deployment of the *thangka* format is presented in David Jackson and Janice A. Jackson, *Tibetan Thangka Painting* 1st ed. (Boulder: Shambhala, 1984), though its discussion is primarily focused on painted *thangkas*, as opposed to those produced with other materials. The points analyzed in this dissertation's account of the format address the format's role in categorical functionality. The centrality of ritual to South Asian religious traditions, on which Buddhism is grounded, has been discussed extensively by Frits Staal, among others; see Staal's *The Science of Ritual* (Poona, India: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1982).

²⁰ An example of a syllabic *thangka* associated with the *Kālacakra* tantra is available at the Himalayan Art Resources website <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/35662>. In Buddhist ritual, the representation often undergoes a process by which it is actualized to be regarded as the presence of the subject itself. Thus some *thangka* paintings may not depict a likeness of the subject, for instance replacing the subject with a textual-phonetic representation, which would be categorized by scholars following Peirce, *Essential*, as an "index," rather than an icon.

despite its functional appreciation as an object of art dissociated from its format.²¹

In general, a painted or textile *thangka* provides a means to support or instantiate the sacrality of the represented form. Such emphasis on sacrality is more clear in comparison with analogous objects that have a similar format. While the qualities of the *thangka* format may vary, it is especially analogous to that of East Asian hanging scroll paintings, and comparison between the two formats better defines the *thangka* in its adaptations to its sacral functionality. Both *thangkas* and East Asian hanging scrolls consist of a depiction on paper or cloth, and while these depictions are most often painted, they can also be embroidered or woven, or even printed. This initial surface is affixed onto a matrix of framing papers and textiles that surround and extend in a rectangle beyond the edges of the image's compositional surface, and the image thus mounted onto a matrix of cloth can be rolled into a scroll with the support of affixed rods on its upper and lower ends.²² These material properties make it evident that both *thangka* and other hanging scroll paintings are clearly derived from a common format distinct from, for example, mounted paintings on canvas in the Western tradition.

Distinctions between the formats serve to better mark the features of sacrality manifested in the *thangka*. That is, the representation of sacrality through format further structures the perception of the depicted content of the painting. For example, *thangka* mountings are generally more variegated than other hanging scrolls, in that they often incorporate more color-saturated and richly patterned textile arrays, with contrasting cloths, which flare outward as they approach the upper and lower ends of the mounting, in a kind of hourglass-shaped contour. The visual distinctiveness of the mountings might be contrasted to a long-established and pervasive interest in a concept often translated as "blandness" (Chinese 平淡) throughout the visual practices of Chinese painting and in the overall display of hanging scrolls.²³ Chinese hanging scrolls have a tradition of muted colors and standardized, rectangular arrangements on their mountings, which accentuate the simple, grayscale contrasts of the ink monochrome painting and calligraphy privileged by Chinese literati elite.²⁴ Despite movements away from literati precedents in depicted subject matter, such as in the case of figural icons from the Chinese Buddhist tradition mounted in this East Asian style, mountings remain intentionally bland. Patricia Berger has suggested that in the overall history of the *thangka* format, the contours of later *thangkas* have adopted a more rectangular, rather than hourglass, shape. Such a change perhaps indicates more intensive exchanges between Chinese art practices and Tibetan ones.²⁵

Further, *thangkas*, unlike nearly all East Asian mounted scrolls, often have the opposite

²¹ Steven Kossack and Jane Casey Singer, *Sacred Visions* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998). The painting is listed as plate 47.b. and is in the Michael Henss collection.

²² In addition to the general account of *thangka* format and ritual in Jackson and Jackson (1984), op. cit., an earlier influential account that has informed this one is presented in Giuseppe Tucci's *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Rome: Libreria Dello Stato, 1949), 267–9; more recent publications have added to the generalist account, such as Kossack and Singer, *Sacred*.

²³ The theorization of "blandness" as an important feature of Chinese art and aesthetics is ascribed to canonical Song dynasty artists such as Su Dongpo (1037 to 1101), and has more recently been discussed in Zhiyi Yang's "The Making of Spontaneity in a Work of Art," in *Dialectics of Spontaneity* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

²⁴ Fundamental principles regarding the format of Chinese painted scrolls are outlined in Jerome Silbergeld's *Chinese Painting Style* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

²⁵ More research is certainly required for a conclusive account of the history of *thangka* mounting formats overall, and is beyond the point regarding sacrality being asserted here, though the flared Tibetan-style mounting is still in common use and has not had considerable effect on Chinese-style mountings.

side of their depictional substrate—the cloth or paper on which the image is depicted—left exposed for the addition of sacral or commentarial marks, which are positioned in such a way as to fashion a positional bond with individual figures depicted on the obverse. The heightened sacrality of these figures requires *thangka* mountings to often include a curtain cloth to cover the depiction, as accords with esoteric dictates. Together, these material properties provide *thangka* paintings with a sense of heightened visual presence beyond the depicted content, a sacrality that is supplemental to the content of the images depicted. Certainly, if a depicted image is curtained, the format provides a sense of presence without the image itself even being visible. This is not to say that the completed, covered *thangka's* function was primarily visual, as many *thangkas* spend much of their existences rolled up in storage, but that the format of the *thangka* is inherently visual because the display of the *thangka* format was integral to considerations of how the *thangka* is to be materially constructed.

The mounting of a modern *Kālacakra maṇḍala* painting in Fig. 1.2.a. and Fig. 1.2.b. may be taken as a standard example of these qualities. While the mounting is conventional, it still contributes to how the specific object is perceived and understood. In addition to the array of fabrics, the inscription of the Tibetan syllable *aum* (also transliterated *om*) on the obverse of the image adds a dimension of incantatory power to its specific position on the larger *thangka* that somewhat transcends the distinction between the front and back sides of the painting, so that a kind of sacred intensity condenses on that point on the material substrate as a whole. (The specific incantatory power of Tibetan syllables such as this one is discussed below.) Despite the *thangka's* relatively recent production, older *thangkas* have analogous mountings that emphasize sacrality and presence.

Photographs of the Ngor painting occlude several of these basic means of understanding the broader art historical position and sacral properties of the *thangka* format. For instance, the photographs lack evidence of its mounting or any marks on its rear, as well as its ritual position in space or the proximate paintings and other works of art with which individual paintings are displayed in ritual spaces. Modern appreciations of the artistic qualities of hanging scroll paintings normally translate into similar photographic reproductions that privilege painted depiction over format and material bases. Such obscuration is standard in reproductions of Buddhist paintings, and is likely derived from standard modes of viewing paintings and pictures from outside Tibetan Buddhist traditions. For instance, the relative lack of variance in East Asian hanging scroll mountings, in which the material conditions of display are less relevant to what is depicted, may contribute to a similarly aestheticized perception of *thangka* paintings separate from their format. Such reproduction methods have led to criticisms of classifying the paintings as art, rather than through their ritual context.²⁶ However, variances in the depicted content of *thangka* paintings can still be served by the analytical methods of art history, without detracting from their ritual purposes.

1.2.2. Formal Aspects

The photograph of the Ngor painting still formally indicates that the painting is in the sacral *thangka* format, as the specificity of the depicted forms is innately dependent on the *thangka* format. The rigorous symmetrical geometry of linear shapes that coalesce into a circular

²⁶ Similar arguments are made repeatedly in the writings of scholars such as David Jackson, *The Nepalese Legacy in Tibetan Painting* (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2010); Ernesto Lo Bue's "Iconographic Sources and Iconometric Literature in Himalayan Art," in *Indo-Tibetan Studies*, edited by T. Skorupski (Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1990), 171; and others.

structure spread across much of the painted surface, the frontal depictions of individualized figures and relevant imagery positioned within this structure, and the colorful ornamentation filling the entirety of the compositional space make the painting comparable to other *thangka* paintings of diagrammatic *maṇḍalas*. Diagrammatic *maṇḍala* forms are normally intended to depict an overhead rendering of an architectural environment combined with canonically-determined figures depicted frontally and arrayed schematically to assist with these figures' clear identification and hierarchical positioning in relation to a center. The flat and symmetrical circle thus serves as a geometric ground through which the remaining forms are organized.

The resulting depiction is thus mixed in terms of the viewer's perspective, with frontalized figures, often rotated such that the center point serves to orient them gravitationally, juxtaposed with an overhead vantage point. The effect of such a combination is a mode of viewing which prioritizes a kind of disembodied, conceptual legibility rather than any privileging of a certain subject's line of sight or a virtualized viewpoint from a perspective in space. For instance, the rectilinear forms depicted on the painting reflect the various parts of an architectural assemblage consisting of a floorplan mixed with decorative features configured in such a way that is impossible to view from a single standpoint, were the intended architectural form to be reconstructed as a standing structure in real space (see discussion of *maṇḍala* iconography below). Despite this avoidance of individualized perspective, the kind of legibility operative in a diagrammatic *maṇḍala* remains primarily visual, in that the interpretation of figures and positions on a plane is determined by a kind of visual logic, and less bound to the kind of textual legibility necessary to track written language. What is primarily necessary in comprehending the formal configuration of diagrammatic *maṇḍala* is a kind of secondary mapping or architectural cognitive process, in which the depicted geometrical plan conceptually or virtually overlays the ground plane of real space relative to the consciousness of the interpreter, with this imagined ground plan and its directional orientations cognized prior to the optical rendering of the visual details of the scenic site from a fixed position in space. Rather than imposing a sense of what figures should look like optically in such a space, what is established as a result of this diagrammatic process is instead a kind of non-visual sense of directionality and position, of how certain positions in space are intended to relate to each other. This is not to say that more overt visual representation is disavowed in all such diagrams; it is certainly important as a secondary or tertiary feature for some diagrammatic *maṇḍalas*, not only to include recognizable depictions of ritual figures, but also to represent specific architectural features.

Thus, the diagrammatic *maṇḍala* form can be understood to operate across a range of senses and cognitive processes that are complementary to vision, such as the kind of tactile or intuited sense of orientation and directionality in which objects are understood to be arrayed along a planar ground in reference to a central node or a reference point, such as one of the cardinal directions.

The combination of senses, visual and positional, required in the ritual comprehension and functionalization of diagrammatic depictions in *thangkas* serves to incorporate a more holistic perceptual ideal, which is a manifestation of sacrality specific to Tibetan Buddhism and its interests. The *thangka* format, which incorporates the means to occlude direct visual perception of an image through its curtain, yet with a format inherently intended to evoke sacral power, is tied to a multisensory, even imagined and cognitive, perception of the image. The whole object, its format and depiction, evokes a response that is intended to transcend vision. That is, vision is only a partial and sometimes occluded means in the holistic perception and

comprehension of a *thangka* painting within Tibetan religious practice. Format, and visual form, broadly, is circumscribed by the idea of iconic presence and the orientation of the perceiver in relation to that presence.

1.2.3. Diagrammatic *Maṇḍala* Depictions

The diagrammatic *maṇḍala* is one historical form of envisioning a *maṇḍala* that becomes integral to Tibetan Buddhist art. The term *maṇḍala* is itself rather complex, and a range of scholarly and ethnographic literature tracks artistic manifestations of *maṇḍala* forms and formats across discrete cultural groups in South, Southeast, East, and Central Asia.²⁷ Given this multiplicity, the most useful definition of the term "*maṇḍala*" for this study, given the term's highly varied applications in varied settings, is a general one: the Tibetan-language translation of the Sanskrit term *maṇḍala* as *dkyil-'khor* suggests that any form with a defined center (*dkyil*) and circular periphery (*'khor*) around this center is a *maṇḍala*. The generality of this geometrical arrangement allows for a diversity of instantiations, so that while the Ngor *maṇḍala* painting maintains fidelity to the ritualized forms mandated by the religion, the painting also differentiates itself in its other qualities, for instance, the refinement and play in its formal features.

Art historically, earlier depictions of *maṇḍalas* were not necessarily differentiated according to their elements, but reflected the generality of the term. Some of the earliest extant examples of visualized *maṇḍala* forms suggest that the *maṇḍala* was understood as essentially a social arrangement, as indicated by relief sculptures found on the side walls of Ellora Cave 6 (circa 600) and Cave 12 (circa 700), currently located in Maharashtra, India. These rock-cut reliefs each consist of nine iconic figures (either Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, given their heavy robes) facing forward, seated cross-legged, and distributed into a rectangular configuration of three rows and three columns. These relief *maṇḍalas* effectively miniaturize and symmetrically organize similar larger statues arrayed differently elsewhere in their cave environments. What is implicit in the arrangement of the *maṇḍalas* is a selective grouping and ordering of figures, as well as the likelihood of a hierarchy, as the other statues in the cave are organized according to a central figure and a set of eight subsidiary figures placed adjacently. The *maṇḍala*'s shape and specific number of figures suggests the same set has been reoriented in a more diagrammatic manner translated to the flat surface of the wall. While these rectangular reliefs lack historical context explicitly identifying them as *maṇḍalas*, they are identified as such in modern scholarship, given their relation to the general historical development and periodization of tantric practices and rituals.²⁸ The relative isolation of these reliefs on otherwise unembellished walls of their respective caves further suggests the starkness of their ritual function in fulfilling the conceptual dictates of the *maṇḍala* form as manifesting a kind of holistic or grouped iconic presence.

Though this ninefold rectangular array of figures does not have many extant derivatives,

²⁷ Some of this scholarly literature includes Giuseppe Tucci's *Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala* (London: Rider, 1961); John Strong's "The Moves Maṇḍalas Make," *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies* 12.2 (1996): 301–312; Christian Luczanits's "On the Earliest Mandalas in a Buddhist Context," in *Mahayana Buddhism*, edited by Darrol Bryant and Susan Bryant (New Delhi: Tibet House, 2008): 111 to 136; Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis's *Japanese Maṇḍalas* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999); Michelle C. Wang's *Maṇḍalas in the Making* Sinica Leidensia, Vol. 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2018); and Martin Brauen's *The Mandala* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997). Brauen's text focuses on *Kālacakra*, and will be discussed in greater detail below. The Sanskrit term *maṇḍala* has varied etymological claims.

²⁸ Geri Hockfield Malandra, "The 'Archaeology' of a Maṇḍala," *Ars Orientalis*, 15 (1985): 67–94.

it is reiterated over time, for example in 1043 during the Khitan Liao dynasty at the Chaoyang North Pagoda, currently in Liaoning Province, northeastern China.²⁹ At Liaoning, the nine-figure *maṇḍala* appears twice, once on an interior wall of a four-foot tall stone reliquary box inside the pagoda, and again on one of the surfaces of a miniature pagoda that was inside the box (pagodas are East Asian iterations of the *stūpa*, a Buddhist monumental reliquary). According to the matched scripture of the *Sūtra of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas Maṇḍala*, the Liaoning *maṇḍala* can be contextually identified as a hierarchical arrangement of eight named figures who have yet to fully achieve status as Buddha around an ambiguously identified central Buddha. The formal arrangement of this hierarchy suffices to establish a kind of minimum of diagrammatical two-dimensional *maṇḍala* depiction as an ordering of icons across horizontally and vertically.

The development of extant, contextually identifiable painted *maṇḍalas* must occur between the production of the Ellora and Liaoning *maṇḍalas*. Accordingly, Ernesto Lo Bue identifies the "earliest known text describing the conventionalized *maṇḍala* as we know it today [with a spatial array of rotationally symmetrical deities]" as the "*Dharmamaṇḍala-sūtra* by Buddhaguhya (740–802)," such that presumably such symmetry was reflected in contemporaneous painting practices.³⁰ Among extant objects that reflect a tendency for diagrammatical symmetry at this period, one of the earliest examples is the renowned ninth-century *Taima Maṇḍala* (in Chinese characters, 当麻曼荼羅) hanging scroll, which is currently at Taima-dera in Nara, Japan (though it is no longer in reproducible form—the Cleveland Museum has a fourteenth-century copy of the now-degraded earlier scroll; see Fig. 1.3.). The *Taima Maṇḍala* did not picture a diagrammatic, overtly geometrical array in its composition, and instead depicted a centrally-positioned Buddha (Amitābha) within a more fully virtualized perspectival, recessional rendering of Chinese-style palace architecture set in the mythical Pure Land of Sukhāvātī. However, this perspectival rendering has led Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis to claim that despite its established historical designation as a *maṇḍala*, the Taima painting should be identified as a transformation tableau (Chinese 變相, Japanese 変相), a separate functional category of Buddhist picture serving as a didactic illustration of scenes from scripture. The transformation tableau is commonly associated with the art of the Dunhuang, a Central Asian desert oasis with many private Buddhist cave shrines constructed between *circa* 400 and 1400.³¹ Despite this assertion, the *Taima Maṇḍala* has been recognized as a *maṇḍala* for a very long time, and it clearly depicts figures encircling a central a Buddha, despite its perspectival representation. However, the use of perspective for figural placement differentiates this type of *maṇḍala* from the more rigidly diagrammatic examples discussed.

Likewise renowned hanging scrolls contemporaneous with the *Taima Maṇḍala*, the *Ryōkai Maṇḍala* (兩界曼荼羅, a set of two *maṇḍalas* depicting two distinct realms; Fig. 1.4.a. and Fig. 1.4.b.) at Tō-ji in Kyoto, Japan, feature overt pictures of circles to symmetrically organize their compositions. As such, these latter hanging scrolls are the earliest known diagrammatical *maṇḍalas* in hanging scroll format, and must have been continuous with broader Buddhist painting practices in the East Asian Tang empire (618–907; the religious institution supporting the *Ryōkai Maṇḍala* must have extensively replicated a form Buddhism practiced in

²⁹ Youn-mi Kim, "The Hidden Link," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013): 117–170.

³⁰ Lo Bue, "Iconometric," 177.

³¹ Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese*, 66. Transformation tableaux are discussed in Wu Hung's "What Is Bianxiang?" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52:1 (1992): 111–92.

the capital of the Tang), as well as the South Asian Pāla empire (750–1161), both of which sponsored Buddhism and its works at imperial and local levels, with many examples of three-dimensional sculptural icons still extant.³² While there is evidence of more general Buddhist painting and printing from this early period, other examples of painted, diagrammatic *maṇḍalas* from these two historical empires are unavailable.

One painting representing what appears to be an intermediary between the basic grid plan of Ellora and the diagrammatic *Ryōkai Maṇḍala* is a vertically oriented painting on cloth from Dunhuang.³³ This painting comes from the very famous Dunhuang Cave 17, which contained a cache of manuscripts that had been sealed from the external world from about the eleventh century to the early twentieth century, preserving much of the manuscripts' material conditions. The painting can be divided into two scenes, with a narrow lower register depicting a ritual proceeding and the more spacious upper portion featuring a diagonally-oriented set of five deities, identified as the main figures of the *Vajradhātu Maṇḍala*. The *Vajradhātu Maṇḍala* is also the form depicted on one of the pair of *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, and thus the both the Dunhuang painting and the *Ryōkai Maṇḍala* appear to share the same iconographical source. However, the lower register of the Dunhuang painting provides more social context for the *maṇḍala*, as it consists of various human figures either performing or observing the ritual that manifests the figures above. The lower register is primarily depicted so that figures are viewed frontally beside ritual implements, whereas the diagonal array above has frontal figures arrayed according to a spatial reorientation of the ground plane vertically: figures that would have been seen sitting around a central figure in recession from a frontal standpoint are instead arrayed in the shape of an 'X'. Apart from the basic left-right symmetry of the five figures and their equidistant positions relative to each other, there is no other geometrically diagrammatic principle or organization in the same manner as the highly ordered *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, which exhibits extensive geometrical shapes blocking out the entire surface of the composition. The areas between and around deities in the Dunhuang painting are simply filled with isolated Buddhist adornments such as flowers and ribbons, and lack any attempt at comprehensive architectural or spatial programs that mark later works. Thus, the compositional arrangement of the Dunhuang painting, coupled with its probable dating strongly suggest that it was produced prior to the overtly diagrammatic sensibilities apparent on the *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, or that it was created outside an institutional framework that mandated diagrammatic imagery.

One of the earliest examples of the diagrammatic *maṇḍala* outside Japan is thus the *Vairocana Maṇḍala* (Fig. 1.5.), a *thangka* that Jane Casey Singer has stylistically and iconographically dated to around the eleventh to twelfth centuries.³⁴ Several of the formal qualities of the *Vairocana Maṇḍala*, such as the large size, centralized position, and exact symmetry of the prominent circle, as well as this shape's relation to the primary central figure,

³² In a note to his article on Esoteric Buddhism in China, Robert Sharf doubts the early dating of the *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, especially certain aspects of the *Maṇḍala* such as its dual pairing and nine-part structural division. See his "The Buddha's Finger Bones at Famensi and the Art of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism," *Art Bulletin* 93:1 (March 2011), note 11, 55–56. However, since the popularity of the tantra from which the *maṇḍala* is derived is associated with this period, one may still accept the comparison provisionally.

³³ Listed in the Musée Guimet as MG 17780, this painting is dated to around the year 900.

³⁴ Jane Casey Singer, "Painting in Central Tibet, ca. 950-1400," *Artibus Asiae* 54:1/2 (1994): 87–136; a photograph is included as Fig. 13 on page 105. Masahide Mori suggests earlier *maṇḍalas* were ritually destroyed soon after creation, see Masahide Mori, *Vajrāvalī of Abhayākara Gupta: An Edition of Sanskrit and Tibetan Versions* (Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2009), 2.

come to typify a great range of *thangkas* depicting *maṇḍalas*, establishing a standardized combination of form and format bound by Tibetan Buddhist ritual. These standards are clearly continuous among the Ngor *thangka*, the *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, the *Vairocana Maṇḍala*, and historical iterations of Tibetan Buddhist diagrammatic *maṇḍalas* generally, as opposed to other kinds of *maṇḍalas*. (Note that portraits of the primary deity of both *Ryōkai Maṇḍala* and *Vairocana Maṇḍala* Vairocana without a diagrammatical *maṇḍala* had been common in Buddhism for several centuries by the time the paintings were produced, and the painting is specifically notable for its synthesis of a familiar arrangement of figures into the two-dimensional, circular diagram.)

The historical diagrammatization of the *maṇḍala* form reflects a tendency towards the more rigorous and comprehensive application of symmetrical and more broadly geometrical principles into two-dimensional depiction. Such a tendency clearly had the functional property of making the *maṇḍala* form more systematically reproducible according to standardized processes of measurement, orientation, and compositional positioning, with decorative and artistic properties adapting to such functionality. This tendency also complicated the subsequent historical development of iconic images in that rather than any fidelity to representing visual a perception of an iconic figure, the diagrammatic *maṇḍala* maps spatial relationships that must be conceptualized in a more complex manner than that of immediate vision.

1.2.4. Ngor-Style *Thangkas*

The painting style of the Ngor *maṇḍala* is clearly more intricate and detailed than the earlier *Vairocana Maṇḍala*, reflecting not only continued development intrinsic to an increasingly complex religious system, but also the possibility of stylistic variance. While the Ngor painting certainly has a distinct iconography that separates it from earlier *thangkas*, its stylistic features stand out as more clearly discernible, especially to those unfamiliar with the iconographical differences between the two tantric systems. The style of the Kālacakra *thangka* is, however, not any more complex than any of the set of Ngor *maṇḍalas* within which it was intended to appear. That is, the painting has a specific stylistic resemblance to several paintings very evidently from a single set but distributed across a range of collections, with the earliest published image of this set being "Four Mandalas of the Vajravali Series," in Rhie and Thurman catalog from 1991, with relevant works from the set published in three other sources.³⁵ In addition to published works, museum collections of paintings in this set include objects collected at the Kimbell Museum, the Rubin Museum; and the Philadelphia Museum.³⁶ Analysis of these paintings indicates they form one common subset of *thangkas* within a broader set of paintings stylistically identifiable by their association with Ngor Monastery.

The Ngor paintings' common relationship as a set local to the Ngor monastic institution is preeminently apparent in their stylistic details. Subsequent to an overall fineness in their

³⁵ The first mentioned painting is available as catalog number 73, Marilyn M. Rhie and Robert Thurman, *Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1991), 226–229; a set of three paintings is published in Kossack and Singer, op. cit.; another painting, catalog number 61 "The Mandala of Manjuvajra" is on page 169 of Amy Heller and Ashmolean Museum, *Early Himalayan Art* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2008). These are all attested in their respective publications as from the same specific set related to a single sponsor discussed below. Though the site is outdated at the time of this writing, the Himalayan Art Resources website collects links to some available works here: <https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=1212> .

³⁶ Collected in the Kimbell as AP 2000.01; in the Rubin as C2007.6.1 (HAR81826); (the latter painting's title slightly varies: "Four Hevajra Mandalas of the Vajravali Cycle"); and in Philadelphia as 1994-148-635.

ornamentation, one notable detail is in the uppermost registers of all of the paintings in the set, including the *Kālacakra Maṇḍala* which feature a row of seated figures of the same small size relative to the proportions of the composition as a whole. Each of the individual figures in this row sits within architectural niches precisely matched with each other in size and shape (the Tibetan term for these niches is *sgo khyim*, or domicile portal, and the basic architectural form is common in South Asian representations of icons; Fig. 1.1.b.). More specific to this set of paintings, decorative golden columns separate individual niches from each other, with each column extending upwards from a bejeweled golden *bum-pa* (the Tibetan-language term for a type of vase that is commonly used in Tibetan Buddhist tantric ritual), with one style of *bum-pa* for each painting. These columns rise into blue lotiform capitals, and these blue capitals serve to distinguish this set of paintings from other paintings in the Ngor style with similarly niched, colonnaded registers. The blue lotus petals differentiate this set from other Ngor paintings with nearly identical niches and other shared facets of style, also attributed to the same period and location, with examples such as the "Thangka with Four Mandalas of the Vajravalī Cycle," collected at the Seattle Art Museum, but which lacks the blue lotuses and certain other details.³⁷ The blue capitals of the Ngor set support individual half-circular arches above the figures, and this arch shape also differentiates the set from similar paintings at Ngor and elsewhere, which have other architectural forms. Additional decorations above the arches likewise differ among groups of paintings, despite their pervasive similarity.

Incidental decoration throughout the paintings also distinguishes the set given its fineness, and such decoration is especially apparent in areas that would otherwise be a flat color—for instance, areas of the painting in between diagrammatical shapes and otherwise unarticulated by iconography are filled with decorative floral roundels composed in an unmodulated and fine colored line against a slightly darker ground color. This floral pattern is a highly-refined expression of Nepalese (Newar) style ornamentation at the time, and perpetuates Buddhist decoration from earlier periods and regions. The decoration with roundels can be contrasted to the flat fields of color that mark the four sectors of the aforementioned Tibetan *Vairocana Maṇḍala* from the eleventh to twelfth century. The analogous sectors of the Ngor *maṇḍalas* keep the overall color intended, but with a subtle decorative texturing that complements the ritual propriety of the flat colors, enabling more complex appreciation of the object, from either a more intimate viewing distance at which the details become apparent, or as flatter color fields from afar. The art of this decorative technique must have added value to the Nepalese style of painting and the particular artisans who committed to this level of intricate detail over large surfaces of the painting. As has been suggested by the range of Ngor *thangkas*, there are variants of this intricately florid style of Nepalese *thangka* painting, though they are primarily associated with Ngor Monastery, indicating continuous, regular sponsorship and appreciation of a dedicated group of artists for the purposes of the Monastery.³⁸

The ornamentation of the Ngor paintings contrasts with the roughly contemporaneous incorporation of East Asian-style conventions of horizontal, quasi-recessional landscape into

³⁷ Similar *thangkas* attributed to Ngor are distributed across a numerous range of collections. For instance, the Metropolitan Museum in New York owns what appears on stylistic grounds to be an earlier painting in featuring the same *Vajravalī* subject "Mandala of Jnanadakini" (1987.16), which likewise features small figures set in remarkably similar niches, but the arch above each figure is split into three lobes, and, more generally, the manner of depiction in the painting is less restrained than the style of the later set, especially in its use of color and in the expressiveness of the figures themselves.

³⁸ The Ngor painting tradition is outlined in Jackson, *Nepalese*.

thangka painting, following the stylistic innovations of Tibetan artist Menla Dondrup (sMan-bla Don-grub, who was active in the middle of the fifteenth century) and his more immediate predecessors. This so-called Menla style of painting placed conventional symmetrical arrays of frontalized figural icons into blue and green open spaces, often embellished with clouds and mountainous terrain, landscapes that replaced the relatively flattened architectural and vegetal frames typical of Nepalese-style paintings.³⁹ This Menla landscape-style would become dominant among Tibetan Buddhist paintings in later periods, somewhat analogous to other trends following the dynastic periodization of the region, in which Mongol imperial control and its prominent sponsorship of Nepalese art transitioned towards regional hegemony during the subsequent Ming dynasty and their reassertion of Han-centric values. The predominance of landscape *thangkas* thus coincides with a more general reassertion of Chinese cultural values after the Yuan period, and the phenomena appear related. The Ngor paintings preserve a kind of stylistic anachronism compared to Menla tendencies, and the Nepalese-style maintained at Ngor and a few other institutes recedes as a whole by the 1600s.⁴⁰ In both cases, Nepalese and Menla styles maintain analogous religious functions and diagrammatic arrangements despite formal and stylistic difference.

Nepalese stylistic elements in Tibetan Buddhist painting attest to a certain degree of cosmopolitanism beyond Tibetan ethnicity in Tibetan Buddhist art and its ways of life, which connected a range of groups adjacent to Tibetan society. The blue-petalled Ngor paintings also feature variously placed inscriptions in standard Tibetan script, which mark figures and other iconography, identifying individual portraits and titles that further differentiate each of the paintings. The presence of Tibetan script indicates the extent to which Tibetan patronage interacted with Nepalese ritual production as well as the close interaction between the Tibetan Buddhist religious institution and the Nepalese artists it patronized.

1.3. *Kālacakra* and its Iconography

1.3.1. Institutionalization through the *Vajrāvalī*

Beyond its specific Nepalese stylistic features, the Ngor set is defined by its common alignment under a standardized ritual matrix, such that each individual painting functions within a single, uniform process of ritual events, despite each of their different tantric systems. One program of standardized rituals is thus imposed onto the entire set of paintings, so that the rituals performed to enact the sacral functions of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* can proceed in a manner that conforms with the rituals used with the other *maṇḍalas* in the set.⁴¹ This standardization clearly results from a synoptic ordering of extant tantras, and is grounded on a scriptural text that can position itself synoptically. The text is called the *Vajrāvalī*, and it compiles 26 distinct *maṇḍalas* from varied tantras, describes the processes of constructing each distinct *maṇḍala*, in addition to

³⁹ The Ngor *maṇḍalas* fit loosely within Heather Stoddard's stylistic classifications of Nepalese paintings after the Yuan dynasty; see Stoddard's "Early Tibetan Paintings," *Archives of Asian Art* 49 (1996): 26–50, especially pages 40–43. The Menla or *sMan-bri* style is discussed in Amy Heller's *Tibetan Art* (Milano, Italy: Jaca Book), 177–178.

⁴⁰ D. Jackson, *Nepalese*, 51.

⁴¹ Joona Repo asserts a difference between "set" and "series" in the production of Tibetan paintings: the "set" of images is closed and fixed, whereas the "series" is open. A grouping of reincarnated hierarchs is a "series" because of its perpetual continuity into the future, whereas the *Vajrāvalī* paintings comprise a "set" because the maximum is fixed at 42. See Repo's "Distinguishing 'Set' from 'Series' in Tibetan Painting," *Archives of Asian Art* 64:1 (2014): 59–73.

asserting a standard ritual program that each *maṇḍala* should conform to. (The term *Vajrāvalī* is Sanskrit for a string of *vajras*, the *vajra*, as an adamant scepter, being a synecdoche for an individual system of tantra.) The position of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala*, both its theoretical positioning within the *Vajrāvalī* text, and its physical manifestation at Ngor Monastery, indicates that the *Kālacakra* tantra was being brought into a larger process of standardization and canonization within the Tibetan Buddhist religious system—at the time of its compilation into the *Vajrāvalī*, the *Kālacakra* had yet to be fully incorporated into the religion's art and ideology to the degree that it would be in subsequent periods. As such, the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* as it appears in the *Vajrāvalī* marks the *Kālacakra* tantra's early formal assimilation into Buddhism at an institutional level, without the later ideological effects of the tantra evident in later periods.

The historical assimilation and standardization of the *Kālacakra* tantra within Buddhist institutions is evident given the context in which the *Vajrāvalī* was produced. This text was originally composed in reference to the *maṇḍala* rituals at Vikramaśīla monastery, one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in the world prior to the collapse of Buddhism around 1200 CE in the monastery's area of Bihar and throughout the region of what is now north India. In Masahide Mori's introduction to his critical edition of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts of the *Vajrāvalī*, Mori provides a succinct account of the position of the *Vajrāvalī* in relation to this monastery and Buddhism as a whole:

The Vikramaśīla monastery was the central monastery of Tantric Buddhism in India during this period [of the eleventh century], and it seems certain that [the abbot and author Abhayākaragupta's *circa* 1100] work reflects the routine style of the rituals of his time. . . . The *Kālacakra-tantra* was compiled in the first half of the 11th century and, by this period, all the significant tantric texts and traditions were already well established. The [*Vajrāvalī*] thus informs us of Buddhist rituals in their most developed form, and is one of the most authoritative works on the final stage in ritual developments in Indian Buddhism.⁴²

The importance of the *Vajrāvalī*'s set of ritual *maṇḍalas* is clear as a compilation of what must have been the most significant systems of tantra within the preeminent institutional Buddhist center during the twelfth century.

The continued support of Tantric Buddhism and the institutional traditions of later Indian Buddhism became central to the development of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in subsequent centuries.⁴³ Support for Tantric Buddhism in addition to earlier Mahāyāna traditions characterizes Tibetan Buddhism as a whole and distinguishes it from other major types of Buddhism, such as Mahāyāna Buddhism and Theravāda Buddhism.⁴⁴ One of the essential

⁴² Mori, *Vajrāvalī*, 1. The complete title of the text in Sanskrit is *Vajrāvalī nāma maṇḍalopāyika*, which might be translated "*The Line of Vajras: An Approach to Maṇḍalas*." Accounts of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* description in the *Vajrāvalī* are provided in Yong-Hyun Lee "Abhayākaragupta's *Vajrāvalī* and the *Kālacakra maṇḍala*" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2003) and on a webpage by scholar Edward Henning "The *Kālacakra maṇḍala* according to the *Vajrāvalī* of Abhayākaragupta," Edward Henning, accessed August 9, 2023, http://www.kalacakra.org/mandala/vvali_km2.htm.

⁴³ An account of this process is provided in Ronald M. Davidson's *Tibetan Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ General accounts of tantra in Tibetan Buddhist context are available in David Snellgrove's *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987); Alexis Sanderson's "Vajrayāna," in *Buddhism into the Year 2000* (Bangkok and Los Angeles: Dhammakāya Foundation, 1995), 89–102; Alex Wayman's *The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism*, (London: Routledge, 1973). Historical accounts in Ronald Davidson's *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) and his *Tibetan Renaissance*, have been very helpful for my analyses.

differences between these Buddhisms is tantric practitioners' belief in the possibility of achieving Buddhist enlightenment or *nirvāṇa* directly through a defined set of secret ritual practices, rather than through the accumulation of merit as in the two exoteric Buddhist systems of Mahāyāna or Theravāda (or, in Mahāyāna terms, an insight-based cognitive transcendence of merit-accumulation according to *Prajñāpāramitā* epistemology).

Tantric practice is thus defined by sets of highly-formalized esoteric rituals that lead to the immediate manifestation of enlightenment as a Buddha, as well as other kinds of empowerments and practical effects derived from ritual. These efficacious, secret rituals precisely define both Buddhist and non-Buddhist tantra as distinct from other religions.⁴⁵ To take a prominent example, an important type of ritual in tantra is the recitation of secret *mantra*, *mantra* being formulaic incantatory speech acts, which are understood to produce some kind of physical effect in the world through their recitation.⁴⁶ These secret *mantras*, transferred between a teacher-adept and a privileged disciple, often serve as one integral type of ritual within a broader grouping of ritual performances systematized to effect what scholars describe as "metempsychosis" or "deity-yoga" (the latter a direct translation of the standard Tibetan terminology *lha'i rna-'byor*), the practice of replacing the consciousness and identity of the practitioner with that of an enlightened and powerful deity (Tibetan *lha*), such as a Buddha. Many major Tantric Buddhist systems are differentiated by the specific enlightened being upon whom this exchange is directed, so that the *Kālacakra* tantra is centered on the figure of *Kālacakra*, the earlier *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* tantra is centered around around the cosmic Buddha Vairocana, the popular *Cakrasaṃvara* tantra is centered on Saṃvara (also known as Heruka), and so on.⁴⁷

The dissemination of *Vajrāvalī* rituals to Ngor Monastery exemplifies how later Indian Buddhist developments, notably the standardization of *maṇḍalas* and *maṇḍala*-based practices, such as *Kālacakra* rituals, at the level of the major religious institution, were perpetuated into Tibetan Buddhism and into its monasterial structure. Ngor Monastery itself leads its own Buddhist institutional system, that of the predominant Ngor subsect of the Sa-skye sect of Tibetan Buddhism, one of four major Tibetan Buddhist monastic institutions, each with its own transmitted ritual systems. The Sa-skye sect rose to great heights of administrative power and material wealth during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) under the direct patronage of the

⁴⁵ Non-Buddhist tantra was formative for Buddhist tantra, but an account of this relationship is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Buddhist tantric systems can be understood as having a standardized ritual structure upon their institutionalization at monasteries and within recognized teaching lineages. In Davidson's account, this process involved a translation of local South Asian practices into an exhibition of institutional, clan-based aristocratic power; see Davidson, *Tibetan*. Nonetheless, a quote from Sanderson, "Vajrayāna," 92, regarding such formation states that "almost everything concrete in the system [of "Yoginī tantras"] is non-Buddhist in origin even though the whole is entirely Buddhist in its function." In the quote, Sanderson is talking specifically about so-called *Yoginī* tantras, and their assimilation into a Buddhist enlightenment functional framework. There must be strong formal resemblances across the spectrum of tantric practices.

⁴⁶ The term "*mantra*" is derived from pre-Buddhist Vedic ritual practices of stabilizing the world through the correct recitation of sacred speech. Such an effect coincides with J. L. Austin's theory of "speech acts" in *How to Do Things with Words* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975). The classification of *mantra* as a speech act is explored in A. C. S. McDermott's "Toward a Pragmatics of Mantra Recitation" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 3:3/4 (September 1975), 283–298.

⁴⁷ Other tantras also use the term "Heruka" for other individual figures.

ruling emperors and court.⁴⁸ The Yuan court is also known to have sponsored Sa-skya sect monks to disseminate *Kālacakra* texts and their teachings, notably to Mongol nobility, as discussed by Leonard van der Kuijp in his study of relevant Yuan-sponsored Buddhist publications.⁴⁹ The Ngor Monastery was not established until a few decades after Mongol imperium, in the 1400s, but the monastery perpetuates the Sa-skya religious institution as it had been established under imperial patronage. Further, the monastery is the seat of the sect's Ngor abbots and their lineage, which historically sought to reorient the sect towards a closer adherence to ritual propriety, which included "stricter monastic rule . . . [and a] fervent revival of the Sakya School's monasticism and religious practice."⁵⁰ This reorientation appears to be a response to the "backlash" from other Buddhist groups after the fall of the Yuan dynasty and the privileges Yuan patronage bestowed on the Sa-skya sect.⁵¹

An account of Ngor's system can be gleaned from descriptions of Ngor in two sources. One is the encyclopedic analysis of Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese religious doctrines by Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma (more familiarly, Thuken) around 1800.⁵² The other is a record of the foundation of Ngor E-wam Chos-ldan Monastery found in the biographies of Ngorchen, the founder of Ngor Monastery.⁵³ The system of religious teaching and practice at Ngor Monastery intentionally propagated the extant Sa-skya ritual system as a whole, which the Thuken categorically divides into "*sūtra*" and "secret *mantra*" teachings.⁵⁴ The former "*sūtra*" division indicates what is familiarly known as the exoteric teachings of mainstream *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, including fundamental philosophical and ethical tenets such as *Madhyamaka* philosophies of emptiness, *Prajñāpāramitā* wisdom literature, and *Vinaya* monastic regulations. The latter "secret *mantra*" teachings refer to Buddhist tantra more generally, as the recitation of *mantra* incantations for empowerment is both an "accelerated path" within Buddhist tantric

⁴⁸ A historical account of the rise of this sect is provided in Davidson, *Indian*. Davidson tracks the Sa-skya sect's institutional development from the tenth century, leading into its privileged position in the Yuan period.

⁴⁹ Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, *The Kālacakra and the Patronage of Tibetan Buddhism by the Mongol Imperial Family* (Bloomington: Dept. of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University, 2004), 9–11.

⁵⁰ D. Jackson, *Nepalese*, 177.

⁵¹ Ronald Davidson, "Reflections on the Mahesvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skya-pa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (JIABS)* 14/2 (1991): 221.

⁵² This individual's title Thuken (Thu'u-bkwan) refers to a reincarnation-lineage derived from a local clan currently in Qinghai, China; note that the this title appears directly related to the Chinese ethnonym for the local group around where the Thuken was based, the *Tu zu*, i.e. the Monguors. Roger R. Jackson, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2009) is a translation of a well-known text abbreviated as the *Thu'u-bkwan Grub-mtha'* or the "*Thuken's Account of Doctrinal Systems*." The phrase "philosophical systems" is a translation of the Tibetan term *grub-mtha'*, the doctrinal tenets that determine one school of thought from another, as opposed to philosophical categories according to Western standards. Tsepak Rigdzin's *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology* (Dharamsala, India: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1986) glosses the term as "*siddhānta*." This *Grub-mtha'* is an encyclopedic compendium describing an array of thought traditions, with the bulk of the text devoted to Tibetan traditions such as the various schools of Buddhism, as well as other traditions, such as Bön, Confucianism ("*ru*"), and others. The Tibetan text is Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma, *Thu'u-bkwan Grub-mtha'* (Gansu: Gansu Minzu Chubanshe 甘肅民族出版社, 1984).

⁵³ An account of the monastery's foundation is translated in Jörg Heimbrel and Lumbini International Research Institute, *Vajradhara in Human Form* (Lumbini, Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2017), 249. Heimbrel works from Ngorchen's biographers Sangs-rgyas Phun-tshogs and Mus-chen.

⁵⁴ Jackson, *Crystal*, 179.

practice.⁵⁵ In the juxtaposition of *sūtra* and *mantra*, the latter also becomes a synecdoche for tantra as whole. The Thukten recognizes Ngorchen as a historically exceptional exegete of tantra, and further identifies the Ngor lineage as primarily focused on tantra.⁵⁶ Ronald Davidson adds that the abbot's career was periodically dedicated to an institutional "apologetics" of tantra in response to doctrinal challenges from outside the Sa-skyā sect.⁵⁷

Rae Dachille's monograph on exegetical correspondence and debate between Ngorchen and a patriarch of another Tibetan Buddhist sect that had only recently been formed, the sect of the Geluk-pa (dGe-lugs-pa), makes clear that institutions had to maintain legitimate authority, grounded on doctrinal argumentation, to perpetuate Buddhist tantric teachings.⁵⁸ Rather than specializing in *Kālacakra*, monks in the Sa-skyā sect and its Ngor subsect are known as specialists in a ritual system derived from the Heruka tantra and called *Lamdre* (*Lam-'bras*), which Ronald Davidson translates as "Path and Fruit" (while Cyrus Stearns translates it as "Taking the Result as the Path").⁵⁹ The ritual system is built exegetically atop the primary rituals connected to the Heruka tantra, a tantra familiar to a large range of Tibetan Buddhist tantric practitioners, though a specialization in *Lamdre* entails a mastery of its own unique set of tantric rituals distinct from the originating tantra. This type of specialization and the different institutional valuations of individual tantric systems are a significant means of differentiating Tibetan Buddhist sects and subsects. Based on Ngorchen's position as abbot and the content of his correspondence, *Lamdre* was a major curricular focus at Ngor Monastery, whereas the legitimacy of their focus, and thus the monastery's authority, was called into question by challenges from the Geluk-pa.⁶⁰

Despite specialization, the rituals of *Lamdre* structurally resemble those of a number of institutional Tibetan Buddhist tantric systems, including *Kālacakra*, for instance, in their inclusion of a fundamental set of ritual forms, including *maṇḍalas*. For a great range of canonical tantric systems, three of the most basic, structuring components of such practices are *mudrā*, or embodied sign formation; *mantra* recitation; and the production of diagrammatic *maṇḍalas*.⁶¹ These three ritual forms are aligned to articulation of the body, vocalization, and mental faculties, respectively. These three are often aligned together in the Tibetan phrase for "body, speech, and mind" (*lus-ngag-yid* or Sanskrit is *kaya-vak-citta*), and they form the basis of volitional subjecthood in much Buddhist thought.⁶² That is, the combination of bodily, vocal, and conceptual practices in a single individual constitute that individual's presence and subjecthood. The intentional correspondence of these three faculties according to those of a model figure, the aforementioned "deity" of deity-yoga, allows the practitioner to achieve metempsychosis. In the tantric assertion of the innate relationship between mind and *maṇḍala*, a

⁵⁵ Rae Erin Dachille, *Searching for the Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 14.

⁵⁶ R. Jackson, *Crystal*, 179.

⁵⁷ Davidson, "Reflections," 221.

⁵⁸ The Geluk-pa exegete is one of the sect's major patriarchs Khedrup Je (mKhas-grub rJe dGe-legs dpal-bzang, 1385–1438). His correspondence with Ngorchen regarding tantric practice is a major theme in Dachille, *Searching*.

⁵⁹ Cyrus Stearns, *Taking the Result As the Path* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006).

⁶⁰ Dachille, *Searching*, 5.

⁶¹ For instance, these are present in Stearns, *ibid.*: *mantra* is discussed on 403, *mudrā* on 401, and *maṇḍala* on 399.

⁶² One of the earliest iterations of body, speech, and mind as a tripartite group (under the formula for "energy" towards "right exertion") datable to the fifth century is found in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*, Vol. 3., translated by Louis de La Vallée-Poussin and Leo Pruden (Fremont: Jain Publishing Company, 1991), 1025.

relationship in which the faculty of mind as a whole is reinscribed according to a designated *maṇḍala*, the form of the *maṇḍala* is fundamental to Tantric Buddhist ritual as a whole.

The combination of the diagrammatic *maṇḍala* form onto the format of the *thangka* painting functions not merely to translate the ideational *maṇḍala* realm envisioned through the mind of the practitioner into visible form, but the combination of this form with the material format of the object functions to manifest a sacral and iconic presence of a tantric deity for practitioners. The *thangka* is itself an icon. Such presence is especially evident given the previously mentioned syllabic inscriptions added to the reverse sides of *thangka* paintings, oriented behind the positions of significant figures within the *maṇḍala*. Such inscriptions are ritual consecrations (the relevant Tibetan term *rab-gnas* may also be understood as "empowerment," the inscriptions serve to empower) of the figures depicted on the front through the deployment of written *mantras*, thus establishing a concretized connection between the power of ritual speech acts (the *mantra*) with the intentionalized faculty of mind (the *maṇḍala*), and thus integrating the format's material substrates with its forms. A conduit thus runs from the front of the painting to its back, from text to figural form through the material. For instance, the aforementioned inscription on the reverse of the modern *Kālacakra maṇḍala* in Fig. 1.2.b. is the well-known *mantra* "om ā hūm" in Tibetan script, with each syllable stacked in a vertical array relative each other, and occupying a small central region in the overall rear plane. The "om ā hūm" *mantra* is a type of *dhāraṇī* or coded speech that appears frequently throughout Tibetan and other systems of Buddhism.⁶³ This particular *dhāraṇī* consists of syllables that each function effectively as a part of the body of a deity.⁶⁴ As this mantra is not specific to the *Kālacakra* tantra, its presence reflects a standard method of consecration used in a range of Tibetan Buddhist rituals to transform a relatively mundane object into an empowered icon consisting of actualized parts of the deity in an analogous manner to relics. Thus the diagrammatic *maṇḍala* *thangka* painting functions in the same manner as other forms of sacred Buddhist art.

Thus empowered, the figures on diagrammatic *maṇḍalas* make present a complex range of deities beyond the historical Buddha, each with its relevant surrounding *maṇḍala*. *Heruka*, *Kālacakra*, and a few other tantric systems are further categorized together by Tibetan religious institutions, and earlier South Asian ones, into a single group distinct from other tantras according to the common properties of their two major stages in the overall ritual process of deity-yoga: a generation stage (*bskyed-rim* in Tibetan) and a completion stage (*rdzogs-rim*). Davidson describes the generation stage thusly:

⁶³ Ronald Davidson's "Studies in Dhāraṇī Literature I" *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37/2 (2009), 97–147, differentiates *dhāraṇī* from *mantra* in that the former is a more general "function term denoting 'coding'"; that is, *dhāraṇī* is a general term for meaningful, coded speech. Confusion arises in that *dhāraṇī* are often not composed of words but sets of syllables, wherein each syllable can serve as a symbolic device for a certain concept within a given belief system, as is the case with "om ā hūm," discussed in the following note.

⁶⁴ While each of the syllables in this *mantra* are certainly empowered, their meaning is interpreted variously depending on the system of interpretation. Lee Seonyong cites a Korean Buddhist scripture (in Chinese script) entitled the "Commentary on the Three Siddhis Altar" ("三悉地壇釋") that may be understood as a general deployment of the *mantra*, in which the three inscribed syllables function as the crown of the head, the mouth, and the chest of the Buddha, and thus their placement on a painting serves to "transform a painted image into an object of worship as the dharma relic of the Buddha that signifies enlightenment"; see Seonyong Lee, "The Pokchang Ritual for Buddhist Paintings," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 28 (2019), 217–254. Slightly variant systems are presented in a range of Buddhist texts, but they serve to activate the painting itself.

[Generation-stage practice] constituted a complex series of visualizations in which the world was dissolved and replaced by a perfect cosmopolis of Buddhist deities in an impenetrable citadel, with the meditator envisioning himself as the central divinity. The new world, a *maṇḍala*, was a spiritualized feudal environment with the meditator as the lord. . . the self-visualization of the meditator as divine following his consecration . . . was a ritual application of the medieval doctrine that a newly coronated . . . king became divine by means of the rite.⁶⁵

The circular, diagrammatical form common to painted *maṇḍalas*, such as those within the *Vajrāvalī* set, is a clear depiction of this "cosmopolis" with its central deity and encircling forms depicting symmetrical architecture and populating figures. As the names of the stages imply, the generation stage forms the basis for the completion stage, the latter involving a series of "psychosexual yogic meditations" that result in becoming the deity.⁶⁶ Jacob Dalton writes about the historical periodization and grouping of these psychosexual rituals as a single doxographical classification according to innovations in Buddhist tantric ritual, so that in South Asia by the eighth century: "the Mahāyoga [a historical classificatory name for such tantras, used by various groups] practitioner visualized the *maṇḍala* at the point of sexual union between himself and a ritual consort."⁶⁷ Depictions of sexual union, interpreted variously, thus become central to the relevant *maṇḍalas* of this *Mahāyoga* set of tantras, and standardized sexual couplings are depicted both in the centers of visualized *maṇḍalas* and in other iconic portraits of deities without their surrounding *maṇḍalas*. Thus, at the center of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* is Kālacakra, the deity, embracing the consort deity Viśvamātā in fulfillment of *Mahāyoga* classificatory principles (Fig. 1.6).⁶⁸

While psychosexual generation and consecration stage rituals present a historical development relative to earlier tantric practices, such as those involving Vairocana, *Mahāyoga* tantras themselves became more complex over the course of several centuries, as did subdivisions of their associated class of *Mahāyoga* tantras.⁶⁹ Names for this set change historically according to individual authors: Abhayākaragupta and many subsequent scholars identify them as *Yoginī* tantras. The Sanskrit term *yoginī* suggests the prominent roles of female practitioners of yoga in these tantras. The definition of the root "yoga" within the feminine nominalizer "*yoginī*" is suggested by the Tibetan translation of the term for yoga as "attainment of tranquility" (*rnal-'byor*), this state of tranquility being a standard telos in Buddhism related to the extinguishment of suffering in *nirvāṇa*. *Yoginī* tantras also often feature female deities and heterosexual coupling rituals in their depictions. The later Geluk-pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism identifies a very similar class of tantras as "unsurpassed yoga" (*rnal-'byor bla-na-med-pa*, sometimes translated from Tibetan into Sanskrit as *yoganiruttara*) tantras and applies further

⁶⁵ Davidson, *Tibetan*, 36.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37, describes four stages, largely derived from "the Indian mythology of the sacramental power of withholding or ingesting semen" coupled with the manipulation of the interior of the practitioner's anatomy. A historical study of some of the major features of this system of practice is presented in David Gordon White's *The Alchemical Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁶⁷ Jacob P. Dalton, "A Crisis of Doxography" *JIAS* 28, 1 (2005): 115–181.

⁶⁸ Anecdotally, I have seen one tantric Tibetan Buddhist sculpture of a female-female coupling, otherwise the central deities are paired as male-female.

⁶⁹ This complex doxographical history is outlined and critically theorized in Dalton, which asserts ritual as a primary criterion in Tibetan classifications. Dalton, *Crisis*, 152, note 84.

subdivisions to this group, such as mother tantras or father tantras.⁷⁰ Despite terminological differences in classification, the relevant set of *yoginī*-related tantras themselves, including *Kālacakra*, remained in highest regard among major Tibetan Buddhist institutions and exegetes. This class has contained the central tantras of the major sects historically.

The rituals among overlapping *Mahāyoga*- and *Yoginī*-classed tantric systems thus have a kind of inherent structural resemblance. The tantras' structural properties, including their processes of *maṇḍala* production and deployment, are found within the specific rituals of the Ngor lineage's specialization in *Lamdre*, as well as in *Kālacakra* rituals and the ritual systems of certain other tantras that appear in the *Vajrāvalī* system, which also collects tantras beyond the *Yoginī* class. Individual tantric systems are differentiated by their more specific methods and concepts. In *Lamdre*, for example, the unique concept of "Result as Path" serves as an ideological core to its array of rituals, while details such as the exact syllables and effects of each *mantra* incantation are specific to a respective system. These specifics indicate some of the possibilities of how complex and differentiable distinct Buddhist tantric systems can be while sharing a common structure.

1.3.2. *Kālacakra* in the *Vajrāvalī*

The monastic teaching, training, and practice program undertaken at Ngor Monastery must have been sufficiently rigorous as to not merely focus on *Lamdre*, but include within its larger curriculum the ecumenical and synthetic scope of the *Vajrāvalī* system as a secondary specialty within the monastery. As mentioned, the *Vajrāvalī* system is primarily a compilation of *maṇḍala* descriptions and rituals from varied tantric systems. The text itself does the work of standardizing rituals concerned with the production and consecration of *maṇḍalas*, and the rituals of 26 distinct *maṇḍalas* are synthesized into a homologous set of about 50 ritual processes that could be used for each of the relevant *maṇḍalas*. Thus, the painted *Vajrāvalī maṇḍalas* themselves, that is, their production and their inherent connection to Ngor Monastery, indicate the degree to which Ngor Monastery was invested in the *Vajrāvalī* system.

Extant paintings of the *Vajrāvalī maṇḍalas* as a set are preeminently connected with Ngor in art historical publications and museum collections.⁷¹ This also means that the earliest *Kālacakra maṇḍala* paintings are associated with Ngor. In fact, there is another *Kālacakra maṇḍala* painting currently in a private collection (Fig. 1.7.) that is dated to the 1300s, decades prior to Fig. 1.1.a. However, the specific Ngor *Vajrāvalī* set that includes the relevant *Kālacakra maṇḍala* is significant as it was commissioned by Ngorchen himself. The painting was made "To fulfill the wishes of his deceased teacher" Sa-bzang 'Phags-pa gZhon-nu bLo-gro (1358–1412), who transmitted the *Vajrāvalī* teachings to the Ngor abbot, and was one of a few of the abbot's primary teachers.⁷² This set of paintings thus not only perpetuates the system of the *Vajrāvalī*, but also memorializes the relationship between the abbot and his teacher, as well as the longer lineage in which this esoteric teaching was passed down, from Abhayākaragupta onwards.

⁷⁰ A primary classificatory text for tantras according to the Geluk sect is Khedrup Rje's *Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras*: mKhas-grub dGe-legs dPal-bzang-po, *rGyud sde spyi'i rnam par bzhag pa rgyas par bshad pa* (Lhasa: *ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang*, 2016). The text is translated in Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman, trans., *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems* 2nd ed., by mKhas-grub rJe dGe-legs dPal-bzang (New York: S. Weiser, 1980).

⁷¹ In addition to the relevant paintings in collections cited above, D. Jackson, *Nepalese*, dedicates his eighth chapter to Ngor paintings

⁷² *Ibid.*, 184–187.

In addition to commemorating the close relationship between teacher and students, the assertion of lineage grants Ngorchen and the institution authority in the deployment of *Vajrāvalī* rituals as a continuity with Indian precedent.⁷³ In their sponsorship by the Ngor abbot, the paintings clearly attest to the institutional position of *Vajrāvalī* rituals and art to be transmitted within the highest levels of the monastery, in addition to and complementary with other ritual systems at the monastery, such as *Lamdre*. Moreover, it is clear that the *Kālacakra* tantra, including its art, was assimilated within this matrix as one among several institutionally-legitimated tantras at a major tantric center of Tibetan Buddhism in a formative period of its history prior to the hegemony of the Geluk-pa sect in subsequent centuries.

The standardization of *maṇḍala*-related rituals was certainly the goal of the *Vajrāvalī* text at the time it was initially composed, and one can safely presume that this goal went beyond the intent of just the named author of the *Vajrāvalī*. The text reflected a larger institutional goal of mastery over what must have been an otherwise highly complicated array of ritual systems, with varied degrees of systematization for each. The 26 *maṇḍalas* included reflect different classes of tantra, *yoginī* and otherwise, with the description of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* serving as the final *maṇḍala* of the set.⁷⁴ The construction of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* itself is concretely described in the *Varjāvalī* text.⁷⁵ Its description there is so valuable that *Kālacakra maṇḍala* paintings and rituals have been continuously derived from this it, as it is the clearest extant text that describes the *Kālacakra maṇḍala*.⁷⁶ This fidelity to the *Varjāvalī* was certainly the case with the Ngor painting.

The somewhat privileged position of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* in the *Varjāvalī* text, final among the 26 *maṇḍalas*, is due to its much more complicated, and thus longer, instructions relative to the other *maṇḍalas*. Its inclusion must have been determined by at least two factors, the *Varjāvalī* author's own interest in *Kālacakra* and *Kālacakra*'s relative historical position compared to other tantric systems at the time of the *Varjāvalī*'s composition. Abhayākaragupta wrote voluminously, and though the *Varjāvalī* is singled out because of its immediate relevance to the art of the *Kālacakra* tantra with its concrete description of the associated *maṇḍala*, the *Varjāvalī* is only one volume in a set of three works on the standardization of *maṇḍala* production and consecration, a set which also includes a volume titled *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, which contains descriptions of individual figures within the *maṇḍalas*, and another text titled *Jyotirmañjarī*, which is related to the *homa* fire ritual embedded within the relevant tantric ritual procedures and derived from very early precedents in South Asian religions.⁷⁷ The *Vajrāvalī* is not one of Abhayākaragupta's major works, and it seems to be a practical text primarily to contribute to tantric systematization. In terms of voluminousness, his most extensive commentaries are on two other tantric systems, *Āmnyāmañjarī* on the *Samputa* tantra and

⁷³ A similar argument regarding Ngorchen's legitimation strategy is presented in Dachille, *Searching*, 64–65

⁷⁴ Mori's critical Sanskrit text of *Varjāvalī maṇḍala* descriptions runs in Mori, *Vajrāvalī*, 186–222.

⁷⁵ The description is provided as a critical edition in both Sanskrit and Tibetan in Mori, *Vajrāvalī*, 207–222.

⁷⁶ Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim recounts a later ritual developed by ICang-skya Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-chos-ldan (1642–1714, the first or sometimes second person in the ICang-skya Qutuy-tu reincarnation lineage) around 1700 that was derived from the account of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* in the *Vajrāvalī*; see "The *Kālacakra* Empowerment as Conducted by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche," in *As Long as Space Endures*, edited by Edward Arnold (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2009).

⁷⁷ A fuller description of the *homa* ritual is provided in Richard K. Payne, "Homa: Tantric Fire Ritual," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (Oxford University Press, date of access 7 Apr. 2023,

<<https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-82>>).

Abhayapaddhati on the *Buddhakaṭapāla* tantra.⁷⁸ Treatises by him dedicated to other tantras, such as two treatises on *Kālacakra* and another two on *Samvara*, were a relatively minor part of his oeuvre, which also included works on exoteric Buddhism, as well as other topics.⁷⁹ Abhayākaragupta was certainly in the teaching lineage of *Kālacakra* and mastered the tantra,⁸⁰ but he also mastered others, and his career appears rather ecumenical with regard to tantric systems and Buddhism on the whole. The privileging of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* may be understood within his broader interests in inclusivity, comprehensiveness, and systematization.

The specific need to include a more extensive description of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* among Abhayākaragupta's selection of *maṇḍalas* attests to its broader circumstances, particularly to the position of the *Kālacakra* system within Tantric Buddhist institutions, and especially the system's relatively recent assimilation within institutional canons. By the year 1100, various tantras had already been part of institutional Buddhist practices for several centuries. In contrast to the *Kālacakra* tantra and its *maṇḍala*, the aforementioned ninth-century *Ryōkai Maṇḍala* pair is derived from the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* tantric system, which appeared in the late seventh century and is one of the earliest tantric systems to be disseminated across different regions and Buddhist groups, such as in Japan and Tibet.⁸¹ Tibetan Buddhist institutions have classified this tantric system prominently in the Yoga-tantra class, and the tantra's *Vajradhātu maṇḍala*, depicted at a great range of Buddhist sites across Asia, is included in the *Varjāvalī* as the nineteenth *maṇḍala* of the set.⁸² The *Vajrāvalī* thus compiles long-established tantras with later tantras into a common set, so that a standardized ritual program can be applied to a range of tantras. Such a compilation clearly serves institutional needs in its streamlining ritual processes for smoother functioning and easier replicability. Likewise, the creation of such a set effectively solidifies the categorical identification of *Kālacakra* as a legitimate Buddhist tantric system alongside the established *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* system and others, in that the set is ascribed a structural homology of ritual processes across its range of tantras.

This process of institutional assimilation is not necessarily due to any consciousness of the historicity of the *Kālacakra* tantra itself on the part of the Abhayākaragupta or the monastic institution, but may be the result of varied factors. The historical periodization of the tantra as it was understood in the 1100s can be divided into two types, and it would have been straightforward for Buddhist practitioners to accept one of these types of history: the history presented in the received *Kālacakra* literature itself. The tantra asserts its own parity with earlier tantras in that it associates the *Kālacakra* tantra's origin to its oration by the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, who modern scholars have dated to sometime between 600 to 400 BCE.⁸³ However, despite this claim, a second type of history is evident in that the earliest specified calendrical dates within *Kālacakra* literature and can be calculated to within the eleventh century. This latter dating forms the basis of multiple modern scholars' claims that the *Kālacakra* tantra itself first historically appears in the early to middle eleventh century (though the exact year is

⁷⁸ Mori, *Vajrāvalī*, 2.

⁷⁹ According to Mori, his two main works are the longer commentaries *Āmnāyamañjari* and *Abhayapaddhati*, on tantric systems more well-known in his specific period and region. *Ibid.*, 4–6, provides a synopsis of his known writing.

⁸⁰ His *Kālacakra* lineage is discussed in Yoeli-Tlalim, "Empowerment," 416–417.

⁸¹ Dating for this tantra is based on Steven Weinberger, "The Yoga Tantras and the Social Context of Their Transmission to Tibet," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* 23 (2010): 134.

⁸² The *maṇḍala* is described in Mori, *Vajrāvalī*, 269–272.

⁸³ Damien Keown, *Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

contentious).⁸⁴ Moreover, Abhayākaragupta's encounter with the tantra presumably lacked the same amount of exegetical literature that had already existed for established tantras, and made the tantra more of a target for further commentarial explication and standardization. Thus the description of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* in the *Vajrāvalī* is longer and more thorough than those of many others in the text. The *maṇḍala*'s description must have served to make *Kālacakra* more accessible to practitioners and thus propagated the continuation and valorization of *Kālacakra* ritual practice, especially into Tibet.

Despite the spread of *Kālacakra* tantra among a range of Tibetan Buddhist groups, the oldest painted *Kālacakra maṇḍalas* are connected to Ngor Monastery, and Ngor appears integral to this initial stage of the presence of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* in painted form. The *Kālacakra maṇḍala* was thus of some value to Ngor Monastery. One indication of the prominence of the *Kālacakra* diagrammatic *maṇḍala* is in the relative size of its painted form, especially compared with the *Vajradhātu maṇḍala* from the same *Vajrāvalī* set (Fig. 1.7.). The painted, diagrammatic *Vajradhātu maṇḍala* is collected in the Rubin Museum, and its specific decorative features, such as the aforementioned blue lotus petals, mark it as belonging to the same set as the *Kālacakra thangka*. A significant difference between the paintings, however, is that the *Vajradhātu maṇḍala* is positioned on the upper left of the composition as only one of four distinct *Varjāvalī maṇḍalas* on a single mounted *thangka*. The *maṇḍala*'s individual size has been reduced relative to the one depicted in the *Kālacakra thangka*. Given its smaller dimensions, the *Vajradhātu maṇḍala* is also abbreviated: it lacks the thousand "great beings" (*mahāsattvas* in Sanskrit) often positioned on one of the peripheral enclosures of the tantra's primary *maṇḍala* form. An example of this mass of great beings on a painting similar to the Ngor *Varjāvalī* set in question is collected in the Metropolitan Museum where the thousand miniscule *mahāsattvas* comprise a middle frame surrounding the center portion of the picture.⁸⁵ The *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* tantra's set of a thousand *mahāsattvas* is a canonical part of its *maṇḍala*, and even with the great effort it would take to paint them, the mass of figures appears in many relevant painted *maṇḍalas*, such as the *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, so it is clear their omission was intentional. The depicted iconography on the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* is thus comparatively denser and more complete.

1.3.3. The *Kālacakra* tantra itself

While the *Kālacakra* tantra was clearly being assimilated into a standardized ritual schema for tantra more generally, the distinctiveness of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* in the *Vajrāvalī* reflects the some of the distinctiveness of the content of the *Kālacakra* tantra itself relative to earlier tantras and the larger tantric tradition. The *Kālacakra* tantra's ritual program is certainly structured according to the ritual innovations of the *Yoginī* class of tantras, in that parts of the tantra's canonical texts are dedicated to generation and completion stages, and these stages

⁸⁴ John Newman suggests that the *Kālacakra* tantra should be dated to "10xx," see his "A Brief History of the Kalachakra," in *The Wheel of Time* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1985). According to Edward Henning's *Kālacakra And the Tibetan Calendar* (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, 2007), the year 1027 is derived from his calculations based on syncretic readings of *Kālacakra* commentaries and their equations for deriving dates.

⁸⁵ Accession Number MDH.038 was lent to the Metropolitan by the Kronos Collections.

follow similar psychosexual processes as means of enlightenment. However, the topics and content of the tantra's textual corpus extend significantly beyond those of other Buddhist tantras, both inside and outside its class, making the tantra historically unique. The literature within the system of the *Kālacakra* tantra tends towards an encyclopedic comprehensivity, which is not only evident in the topics discussed within the primary texts of the tantra, but also in the very wide range of commentarial texts written throughout the tantra's existence, on topics seemingly distant from simply the rituals required for deity-yoga. For instance, one of Abhayākaragupta's commentaries on *Kālacakra*, called *Kālacakrāvātāra* ("*Introduction to Kālacakra*"), is essentially about calculating calendrics.⁸⁶

As commentaries on the tantra have continually been written over the course of many centuries, it is useful to provisionally divide *Kālacakra* literature into categories to account for their variation and identify their overall structure. One principle for such a structural grouping is evident in the organization of the tantra's primary texts, as these texts establish categorical topics for subsequent commentaries. The two primary texts in the system are, first, the *Kālacakra* "*Abbreviated Tantra*" (Sanskrit *Laghutantra*), and second, the main commentary on the tantra, entitled "*Stainless Light*" (*Vimalaprabhā*).⁸⁷ The former text's appellation as "abbreviated" stems from a mythical claim to the existence of an unabbreviated *mūlatantra* (*mūla* is "root" or *rtsa-ba* in Tibetan) enunciated by the historical Buddha in "twelve-thousand verses," recorded, but lost.⁸⁸ The *Laghutantra* only has about 1000 verses, but it is purported to maintain the essential teachings of the root text, as the *Laghutantra* was composed by a king from the legendary and idealized polity of Śambhala, who was also an early member of this tantra's ritual lineage as it was transmitted from teachers to disciples.⁸⁹ This compositional history aligns with the canonical structure of other major Buddhist tantric systems, which are generally grounded on the text of a root tantra attributed to a mythical author, though authors of other tantras do not normally have governmental affiliations. A root tantra outlines the principle rituals for a given system. Root tantras also generally invoke esoteric language that requires a lineal, expert teacher's personal explication, not only to function properly but to simply be made comprehensible. The *Kālacakra Laghutantra* thus serves the function of a root tantra, but is made more coherent with the explication of the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary, without which, as Vesna Wallace states, "it would be practically impossible to understand not only the broader implications of the *Kālacakratantra*'s cryptic verses and often ungrammatically corrupt sentences but their basic meanings."⁹⁰ The *Vimalaprabhā* is also attributed to a king of Śambhala, though from a later generation. The primary texts divide themselves into five main

⁸⁶ Edward Henning's website provides an outline: <http://kalacakra.org/kavatara/kavatara.htm>.

⁸⁷ The Tibetan *Laghutantra* is translated from Sanskrit to Tibetan in Bu-ston Rin-chen Grub, trans., *mChog gi dang po'i sangs rgyas las phyung ba rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal dus kyi 'khor lo zhes bya ba*, D0362, rgyud, ka 22b–128b; D1346. *Stainless Light* is Puṇḍarīka, *bsDus pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po dus kyi 'khor lo'i 'grel bshad rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi rjes su 'jug pa stong phrag bcu pa bcu gnyis pa dri ma med pa'i 'od ces bya ba*, D0845, D1347, toh: 1347. In his translation of the *Stainless Light*, Gavin Kilty suggests the term "condensed" for *Laghutantra*; see his translation *Ornament of Stainless Light* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004).

⁸⁸ A concise version of this story is provided in Newman, "Brief."

⁸⁹ Vesna Wallace provides a good, close account of many of the intertextual relationships between *Kālacakra* and other tantras, as well as their commentaries. Wallace makes clear that the composition of the *Kālacakra* took into account many earlier tantric and non-tantric Buddhist scriptures. See *The Inner Kālacakratantra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁹⁰ Wallace, *Inner*, 3–4.

chapters according to subject; following Wallace's translations, these chapters in order cover "the world system," "the individual," "initiation," "*sādhana*" (Sanskrit for "methods of accomplishment"; it refers to the tantric generation stage) and "gnosis" (the completion stage).⁹¹ These chapter descriptions are then subdivided into a range of topics within each chapter.

Structurally, these chapter divisions taken as a group exemplify a kind of historical development in tantric systems. In light of the larger history of Buddhist tantra, *Kālacakra*'s characterization as a later Buddhist tantric system signals a kind of closure in the range of tantras propagated by Buddhist institutions, so that the number of tantras become a fixed and canonical set. After the appearance of later systems such as *Kālacakra*, a subsequent development in the history of Buddhist tantra was that systems of rituals and practices were derived as extensions from the range of the established canon of tantras, rather than appearing as wholly new tantric systems. For instance, the aforementioned *Lam-'bras* system is explicitly derived from the *Heruka* tantra, in that it positions itself relative to the canonicity of the *Heruka* tantra. This process of derivation from canonical tantras is also the case with the development of the two major Tibetan lineages within *Kālacakra*, *Rwa* and *'Bro*, which are differentiated by their distinct interpretations of the tantra.⁹²

Kālacakra's historical identification as a later system, and particularly its differentiation from earlier systems, is evident in its chapters' philosophical expansion from the ritual generation and completion stages of the *Yoginī* class. The distinctive qualities of this expansion must have contributed to the continuous and widespread dissemination of this specific tantra, as opposed to many other possible tantric systems, such as several tantras collected in the *Vajrāvalī* that have not been disseminated or commented on to a comparable degree as the *Kālacakra* tantra. The *Kālacakra* tantra may be understood as more philosophical in a Hegelian sense, insofar as the tantra's chapters and their subdivisions appear systematically determined by a kind of rational ordering, specifically for the purpose of providing a more thorough, quasi-encyclopedic account of the array of factors involved in comprehending reality in its totality. Of course, there are enormous divergences between Hegelian-derived philosophy and *Kālacakra*, a major one being that the *Kālacakra* system's ultimate telos remains Buddhist enlightenment according to tantric metaphysics, rather than philosophy itself.⁹³ Despite this telos, the content of the *Kālacakra* tantra does not limit itself to the kind of embodied ritual processes that comprise much of other tantric systems, and is much more expansive in scope.

More concretely, at its base, the structure of ritual in *Kālacakra* is continuous with earlier tantras in its later chapters, and the range of topics expands in its earlier chapters. Ritual processes comprise much of the "*sādhana*" and "gnosis" chapters of the tantra, which essentially perpetuate the two aforementioned *Yoginī* ritual stages of generation and completion. Rituals also make up the third "initiation" chapter, which outlines a sequential preparatory ritual program, in which the construction of the image of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* is embedded (which, in turn, is significantly expanded in the *Vajrāvalī*). The fourth chapter on "*sādhana*" then integrates the constructed *maṇḍala* into a wider range of ritual practices, such as the mentioned *homa* fire ritual. The "gnosis" chapter treats metempsychosis itself, as it is achieved by the practitioner, and expands this discussion to define this state in greater depth, as Buddhist

⁹¹ Ibid., 21.

⁹² Giacomella Orofino provides details comparing the two lineages in *Sekoddeśa* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1994).

⁹³ Hegel's system is summarized in his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*, translated and edited by Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

enlightenment according to the tantric faculties of body, speech, and mind.

The chapters dedicated to "the world system" and "the individual" expand well beyond the scope of the tantra's basic ritual core and more clearly distinguish the *Kālacakra* system historically from other tantras. The differentiation of these first two chapters from the last three also establishes a categorical division between the focusedly soteriological rituals presented in the latter chapters versus the relatively material accounts in the former. As is somewhat clear from their titles, the chapter on "world system" differs from that of "the individual" in that the former describes the cosmos of phenomena outside the individual body of the practitioner, while the latter presents the life cycle of a practitioner, from gestation to maturity and possibly unfavorable death, including both physiological and psychological accounts, as well as a disputation of competing worldviews inside and outside the Buddhist doctrinal belief system.⁹⁴ Both chapters must have collected the most ideologically advanced positions available to the authors at the period when the text was composed. For instance, the chapter on "the individual" clearly takes advantage of dominant discourses within Buddhist institutions to assert its own doctrinal authority. Though less clear in the *Laghutantra*, the *Vimalaprabhā* specifically adopts core *Madhyamaka* positions on the centrality of emptiness in its refutations of competing views, stating directly, "The extensive and diverse philosophical systems of heterodox groups are to be repudiated by means of the *Madhyamaka*, which has many authoritative treatises."⁹⁵ *Madhyamaka* discourses and logic have continuously been integral to exoteric Buddhist institutions in the Tibetan and East Asian traditions to today, and their integration into the *Kālacakra* system is further evidence of its expansion from tantric ritual.

Beyond the Buddhist institution, both "the world system" and "the individual" chapters are more broadly formulated according to a larger eleventh century historical milieu. As such, *Kālacakra* formulations of phenomena are frequently distinct from the same processes as understood in later periods. An example of this distinction relevant to the art historical trajectory of the tantra is the first chapter's account of astronomy, in which the astral system described resembles a geo-centric model of the cosmos, similar to the Catholic cosmological model used prior to the theorization of the Tychonic geo-helio-centric cosmos and the Galilean model of the solar system, which were both accepted following the seventeenth century.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, *Kālacakra* differs from these other cosmological models in at least two ways. First, the *Kālacakra* system is open to other local cosmological formulations not centered on *Kālacakra*, and in this way is inherently relativist.⁹⁷ To be sure, even the system originally propounded in the *Kālacakra* tantra is distinct from the much earlier, canonical Buddhist account of the cosmos described in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, a text composed around the year 400 and frequently cited in Buddhist texts thereafter.⁹⁸ For instance, differing measurements of the size of the cosmos or "world realm" in the two systems are explained in terms of their "conventionality" and relative "taught sentient beings the measurements of this world realm in accord with their differing dispositions, and as he taught them, so they appeared in accord with their variety of

⁹⁴ "Unfavorable death" precludes enlightenment.

⁹⁵ Wallace, *Inner*, 250.

⁹⁶ Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968).

⁹⁷ A basic summary of *Kālacakra* cosmological views on how multiple cosmoses can coexist alongside each other is presented in Brauen, *Mandala*, 21; but the question is complicated and the response from *Kālacakra* doctrine seems to unfold in later exegesis; also see Chapter 4, note 13.

⁹⁸ Louis de la Vallée Poussin and Leo M. Pruden, translators, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu* in four volumes (Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1988).

karma." ⁹⁹

Second and relatedly, the central reference point in the *Kālacakra* cosmos is not at a planetary or astral scale, but at the level of the individual practitioner. This vast scalar divergence is rectified in the *Kālacakra* system itself, which asserts certain formal continuities and even alignment among the physical cosmos, the individual practitioner, and a numinous other realm. Namely, *Kālacakra* cosmology is arranged according to "outer," "inner," and "other" categories in accordance with the content of the individual chapters, with "other" referring to the metaphysics of enlightenment in the later ritual chapters.¹⁰⁰ These three categories are moreover configured as *maṇḍalas*, which reinforces the general definition of a *maṇḍala* provided above, as a conceptual formal arrangement, like a circle, rather than tied to any singular and essential material or social construct. The three *maṇḍalas* in the *Kālacakra* system refer to the cosmos, the human body, and what can be understood as a psychically-constructed environment that has soteriological effect, all of which have a figure of *Kālacakra*, the deity, residing at their central points.¹⁰¹ An example of this formal continuity is that astral bodies are positioned within the "outer" *maṇḍala* to coincide with the positions of certain visceral systems in the "inner" *maṇḍala*, again aligned with one concentric ring of the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* presented in Fig. 1.1.a. above.

Such historical innovations in the history of tantra certainly necessitated exegesis, which Abhayākaragupta and a succession of subsequent authors continuously offered over the course of centuries, leading to an extensive commentarial tradition. However, by the period when the Ngor *maṇḍalas* were being produced in the fifteenth century, development in the art of]*Kālacakra* appears undifferentiated from tendencies in Tibetan Buddhism as a whole, such as the development of regional styles or the sponsorship of Nepalese artists. There is little evidence that the *Kālacakra* tantra itself could determine the development of its art, as it does in later moments. It is precisely the *Kālacakra maṇḍala*'s assimilation into the more general institutional practices of tantra, both at Vikramaśīla and at Ngor, that exemplify its historical position relative to Buddhism as a whole.

1.3.4. *Kālacakra* Mandala Iconography

As such, the depicted content of the Ngor *Kālacakra maṇḍala* painting reflects its basic position within the *Vajrāvalī* and the general interests of the monastic institution within which it functioned, as opposed to it being a visual manifestation of the *Kālacakra* tantra's principles and practices *ex nihilo*. However, while the painting is intended to conform to institutional precedents, the fundamental iconography depicted on the *maṇḍala* still reflects the content of the *Kālacakra* tantra and can certainly be differentiated from the other Ngor *maṇḍalas* in the *Vajrāvalī* set. These iconographical differences indicate certain tendencies relatively unique to the tantra and suggest the directions that later art relevant to the *Kālacakra* tantra will take.

For instance, one of the main differences in the depicted *Kālacakra maṇḍala* relative to others from the Ngor set is its more prominent assertion of mathematical exactitude, especially in the repetition of basic horizontal and vertical lines that structure the architectural forms presented

⁹⁹ Kilty, *Ornament.*, 151.

¹⁰⁰ "Outer," "inner," and "other," follow John Newman's translation of the first chapter of the *Kālacakra* tantra in his dissertation "The Outer Wheel of Time" (PhD. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987), 336. This translation incorporates information from the *Laghubtantra* and *Stainless Light*, and thus has been helpful in dealing with esoteric language.

¹⁰¹ Wallace, *Inner*, 66.

throughout the composition.¹⁰² Taking Davidson's claim of "feudal" power as a fundamental idiom that pervades the ideological structure of Buddhist tantra, one instantiation of such an ideology is reflected in the visualization of palace architecture as one's immediate environmental surroundings for the process of deity-yoga.¹⁰³ A range of imagery from the painted *maṇḍala* illustrates this deployment of architecture, including how the central figure in the *maṇḍala* is ensconced within a purported center of territorial power, frequently a palatial architectural complex oriented symmetrically around a central ruler. This palace is called *kūṭāgāra* in Sanskrit and *khang-pa brtsegs-pa* in Tibetan.¹⁰⁴ The orientation of forms in *maṇḍalas* emphasizes comprehensive symmetry around a center point. The *Kālacakra maṇḍala* is especially distinct from other tantras in its triple repetition of such palace architecture, which occupies a much more extensive part of the composition as a whole, especially compared to the other *Vajrāvalī maṇḍalas*. This repetition effectively multiplies the assertion of architectural presence, making architecture more prominent within the tantric ritual, and calling attention to the numeration through the repetition of forms. Examination of the painted *maṇḍala* reveals the form of a square-shaped frame repeated three times at different scales, with all of the three square forms centered around the midpoint of the composition. The corners of the largest of these square frames extend to the edge of large circle that fills the compositional space, and the smaller frames fill up the interior spaces. On the centers of each of the four sides of the squares are positioned spaces depicting frontalized architectural renderings extending outwards from the edges of the frames towards the exterior circle. Each of these forms is known as a gate or, more specifically, *torāṇa*, and each contains three exposed storeys and a decorated rooftop.¹⁰⁵ The *torāṇa* forms depict the upper decorative parts of a portal as viewed from the front, and serve to mark entrances to interior spaces of the palace. The portals orient how the square frames are viewed, such that each of the frames are not merely viewed as geometric forms, but are incorporated into a complex and multidimensional rendering of ornamented architecture. Apart from the *torāṇa*, the square frame itself is intensively decorated into multiple layers extending the length of the frame and consisting of varied colors and patterns divided into respective layers. Each of these layers is identified with an individual architectural function, so that the square frames consist of layers representing walls, a ledge (*stegs-bu*, *vedika*), a register of jeweled bricks (*rin-po-che'i pha-gu*), an area for decorative garlands (*dra-ba dang dra-ba phyed-pa*), pipes (*rin-chen shar-bu*), and a parapet (*mda'-yab*).¹⁰⁶ Proceeding inwards from the outer square towards the center of the composition, the square frame with its three-storeyed buildings on each of its four sides is repeated two more times in slightly diminished scale, so that the miniaturized frames are each nested within the other. The three square frames of the tripartite architectural site within which the *Kālacakra* deity is manifested each translate a *maṇḍala* of body, speech, and mind, respectively, from largest to smallest, thus emphasizing the homology among the three volitional faculties and their interdependence.

¹⁰² An overview of basic lines used in the construction of sand and painted *maṇḍalas* in the *Vajrāvalī* system is provided in Masahide Mori, "The *Vajrāvalī* of Abhayākaragupta" (PhD. diss., University of London, 1997), 74.

¹⁰³ See note 55.

¹⁰⁴ Mori, *Vajrāvalī* (diss.), 73.

¹⁰⁵ Detailed iconographical identification of the layers depicted in the *torāṇa* and walls is presented in *ibid.* 75–79. The Tibetan term for *torāṇa* is *rta babs*. The *torāṇa* has been integral to Buddhist art throughout its history. For instance, at around the first century, layered and decorated *torāṇa* at each of the four cardinal direction mark the entrances to the circumambulatory walkway around the Great *Stūpa* at Sanci, India.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* and Henning, "Kālacakra."

Sets of circles symmetrically positioned among the architecture contain the hierarchy of attendant figures relative to the central deity, the figure of which is also placed in a small circle at the center of the composition. A distinguishing quality of the Kālacakra *maṇḍala* is that many of the peripheral circles themselves are meant to contain multiple figures, so that smaller hierarchies of social arrangements are nested within the larger hierarchy organized by the main Kālacakra deity. This symmetrical nesting thus reiterates the repetitive and somewhat fractal nature of the Kālacakra *maṇḍala*, within which miniature forms are homologous to larger ones. There is a mathematical logic in the precision used to arrange forms at increasingly smaller scales, and such logic extends to the conception of forms at varied scales and distinct worlds. There is an inherent standardization throughout the forms and shapes of observable phenomena, amounting to a more radical account of the cosmos than the immediate families and basic architecture portrayed.

The intense symmetry throughout the painting is somewhat relieved by the division of the compositional plane into four quadrants equally divided by diagonal lines running from the four corners of the composition. Each quadrant is marked by a base color in the intermediary zones not containing square architectural frames or circular figural arrays. The upper quadrant reflects the west and has a yellow ground; running clockwise, the northern quadrant is white, east is blue, and south is red. This division provides the painting with a more comprehensible directional orientation, such that one's position in the center is clear as to where individual figures and ornamentation are positioned. Thus the colors contribute to the overall clarity and exactitude of orientation and positioning from a standpoint imagined within the *maṇḍala*.

Thus despite the Ngor Kālacakra *maṇḍala*'s conformity to standards defined by its artists and patrons, the iconography of this *maṇḍala* itself points to certain tendencies distinct among other tantras, namely the emphasis on mathematical exactitude, especially in terms of the repetition of homologous forms at larger and smaller scales. The Kālacakra *maṇḍala* seeks to apply a greater systematization and conformity to different scales of perception, such that macrocosmic arrays conform to microcosmic ones, bringing the entirety of the cosmos into greater order. This is a scalar order. This orientation or tendency of the Kālacakra tantra toward increasing exactitude and conformity will become more of a determinative factor in the production of later works of art relevant to the Kālacakra tantra and will do so in a manner distinct from the Ngor painting.

1.4. Chapter Summaries

Subsequent chapters follow the deployment of Kālacakra concepts in later works of art and the different trajectories along which such art was produced.

The second chapter presents a moment from the regime of the Dalai Lama's regent Desi Sangye Gyatso (sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho, 1653–1705), during which the philosophical tendencies of the Kālacakra tantra begin to determine the production of art more generally, as evidenced in an iconometric handbook sponsored by the Desi and produced for elite artists within his regime. This moment reflects an assimilation of the Kālacakra tantra at the level of governance and the adaptation of the tantra's ideological tendencies towards exactitude and quantification for the assertion of greater degrees of control by the regime over more and more parts of everyday life. The handbook is analyzed in terms of its inherent qualities and is positioned relative to the other relevant works from the history of Buddhist art, as well as the wider work of the Desi's regime.

The third chapter relates the assimilation of the Kālacakra tantra and its tendencies into

the regime of the Qing empire. The Qing empire's ideology was bound to the multicultural identity of its rulers. In terms of the *Kālacakra* tantra, the Manchu court's fidelity to both Chinese and Mongol precedents caused them to reimagine *Kālacakra* tantra on their own terms. This reimagination entailed constructing and sequestering the tantra within a Buddhist monastic system of their own invention, but also decentering tantric soteriology to fit their own agenda. This was made especially evident in fieldwork and study of the Yonghe Gong temple in Beijing.

The fourth chapter discusses the relatively unfettered and autonomous development of the *Kālacakra* worldview at Labrang Monastery. Labrang is geographically located at a significant distance from the institutional centers of Tibetan Buddhism in Lhasa and Beijing, surrounded by difficult terrain and wilderness. This relative isolation allowed both an intensification of *Kālacakra* ritual and practice as well as adaptation to its specific local community, with its large nomadic population. Fieldwork was also integral in appreciating these connections.

The fifth chapter concludes with analysis regarding the overall shape thus formed by the varied instantiations of the *Kālacakra* tantra, as well as developments in subsequent periods.

CHAPTER 2: EXACTITUDE

2.1. Form

To almost any viewer, the picture in Fig. 2.1. must appear very busy, if not incomprehensible, with its preponderance of fine lines obscuring the depicted figures to near abstraction. Viewers presumably work to parse together what must be the most sensible form in the picture, in the upper middle part of the composition myriad features gather around two individual faces that have their eyes interlocked with each other. A more prominent first face is depicted from the front and tilts diagonally to the viewer's left, eyes gazing downward towards the profile of another face immediately below and slightly overlapping the former face's jawline. There is an intuitive geometry to their relationship. The chins of the two figures appear as though attached at a single point, and their faces extend radially from the nexus, the second face in profile extending from chin to forehead in what can be intuited as a straight line from which curved facial features play out, the average of this line set at a stark right angle relative to the diagonal tilt of the first face. Conformity to this angle contorts the head in profile, its crown is oriented to a slightly downward diagonal—the figure's head is tilted backwards relative to the body. Despite contortion and geometrical rigidity, this facial interaction was certainly intended to convey a sense of intimacy between the two figures, an idealized form of such intimacy. This contrast of intimacy and geometry goes beyond the figures' faces, extending throughout the various parts of the figures, which are further complicated by numerous superhuman features. For instance, the two primary faces are nested within repeating facial profiles to either of their sides, symmetrically arrayed to emphasize the contours of the centered gazing couple. Each of the two figures thus possesses four individual faces. Such multiplication continues for each of their arms: the frontal figure has twelve sets of arms, while the lower figure has four. Their radially extending arms and gesturing hands appear to blend into single masses, coalescing into two symmetrical semicircles to either side of their upper bodies. The couple is nude, and their single set of embracing arms seem out of place within the center of the figural mass, yet they clearly stand in mutual embrace, with their nudity almost able to contribute to the sense of intimacy, were it not for the formality of their postures. The overlapping contours of their lower extremities effect a kind of supernatural merging of the two figures, with the curvatures of their outer thighs, kneecaps, and shins so precisely matched that appreciation of figuration and volume are undone by a pervasive exactitude, the figures instead appearing as curved line forms paralleled to seemingly a millimeter apart, mathematical in their meticulous postures.

These formal and geometrical tendencies are complemented by the most obscuring aspect of the picture, the pervasive rectilinear grid of red and blue lines that demarcate a territory for the figural depiction on the compositional surface, save for a few fingers which extend beyond the grid's right edge. This grid as a whole is a vertically-oriented rectangular plane divided into larger blocks of blue lines and smaller ones of red. The red grid is especially fine, with 130 mostly parallel horizontal lines and approximately 120 vertical lines. The effect of this fineness is an intensive assertion of the spatial presence of the grid itself as a distinct entity, separate from and overlapping the figures. The figures themselves are asymmetrically positioned to the upper right section of the grid, and thus their centrality to the plane of the grid and the overall composition is displaced. The assertive visual presence of the grid thus competes with the figures for the viewer's attention. Upon recognizing the distinction between figures and grid, a viewer is forced to resolve their relation to each other, and the act of looking becomes complicated, such that senses of intimacy or even the basic identification of the figures is relegated as secondary to grounding a basic mode of looking. Is it a representational depiction or

a mathematical plane?

The viewer may further recognize anomalies within the grid. What initially appears as an exacting regularity somewhat frays upon close examination. Many of the horizontal blue lines are not evenly distributed, though they sometimes serve to mark intersections with specially articulated areas on the figures. A more delicate inexactitude appears in that, while the distances between the great majority of blocks are mostly square, many are rectangular, as several of the red and blue horizontal lines are not evenly spaced. The grid has thus been generally conceptualized as mathematically exact, but depiction does not meet this exactitude. That is, exactitude is a concept imposed on the picture due to a more general act of looking, but such exactitude can only be validated to a certain degree. The precision of the grid is supplementary to its more basic depiction, and it signals or represents the concept of exactitude, without necessarily functioning for that purpose, beyond its general features.

Such inexactitude appears especially anomalous given the precise alignment between the figural bodies and another order of red lines. These other red lines are differentiated from those of the grid because of their better integration with the posturing of the figures' bodies, these lines functioning iconometrically to structure how the parts of each figure are arrayed onto the composition. The difference is that these diagonal and semi-circular lines conform better to the figure's innate geometry. One slightly diagonal straight red line runs through the length of the couple's spines, an array of symmetrical lines organizes the facial features of the main figure, and two sets of concentric semicircles fan out multiple elbows and palms. Many of these lines appear to deviate from the relative conformity of the grid. For instance the red spinal line starts at a blue intersection with the buttocks, but extends into an unmarked space.

The differentiation between the grid and the more overtly iconometrical lines exhibits two geometrical, organizational orders in the constitution of the overall picture, both of which exist separate from the figures. There is a depiction that simply signals the presence of geometry, and another depiction that actually functions geometrically, in conforming the two bodies to their underlying geometric order. The former asserts the presence of an intensifying, geometrically quantifiable field, which is meant to subsume any objects within its borders. The other order presents an iconometrical ground-lining or structural principle for the figure itself. This latter order attempts to conform to the encompassing grid yet is marked with excesses not reconciled by the grid. There is an evident rupture between how the depicted image had been conceptualized and how the parts of the picture actually function.

This chapter asserts that the appearance of this difference of orders marks a unique art historical moment in both the development of *Kālacakra* imagery and more broadly in the perceptual practices, visual and otherwise, among the social group within which this picture originally circulated, a group that asserted ideological authority throughout a range of Tibetan religious groups.¹⁰⁷

Depicted is the main iconic form of the *Kālacakra* tantra, two figures which had conformed to a relatively standard iconography and iconometry established within the overall ritual traditions of *Kālacakra*, which itself had been institutionally established for several centuries prior to the creation of the illustration now discussed.¹⁰⁸ As a tantric deity, the figure is

¹⁰⁷ "Image" is a more general term not limited by constraints of format or materiality, whereas "picture" refers to an instantiation of an image produced to be seen as such; these concepts are adapted from Davis, *Visuality*, 6–7.

¹⁰⁸ For example, Bu-ston Rin-chen Grub (1290–1364) provides a description of the *Kālacakra* deity in *Dus 'khor sgrub thabs bsdu pa rin po che'i snying po*, in *The Collected Works of Bu-ston*, edited by Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1965–1971; bdr:W22106).

comparable to other relevant figures, especially in terms of iconometric standards with established precedents in the history of Buddhist art for more than a millenium by the time of this picture's production. Canonical texts such as the *Citralakṣaṇa*, originally dated to around 700, provided the earliest precedents for iconometric formulae used to conceptualize the artistic production of icons, with the *Citralakṣaṇa* providing measurements for different classes of conscious beings, such as gods, demi-gods, and *siddhas*.¹⁰⁹ In such a system, measurement was a means of classifying hierarchy. Further, analysis of the physical measurement of statues produced prior to the appearance of such iconometric texts has even revealed a systematic application of proportions historically that suggests iconometric standards prior to specific scriptural referents, for instance among Mathuran Buddhist statues dated to the fifth century.¹¹⁰ There has been continuous use of iconometric guides for icon production into our own times, as evidenced by the many iconometric pamphlets found among practicing Tibetan Buddhist artists (Fig. 2.2.). However, the intentional assertion of these metrical standards as their own kind of visual presence, and their formation within a coordinate field, particularly into one with increasingly divisible units that function somewhat apart from the figures themselves, is historically unique to a moment during which the propagation of the *Kālacakra* tantra and concomitant ideas and practices were ascendant. This moment is distinct from the institutional deployment of *Kālacakra* art discussed in the previous chapter and begins to more distinctly shape the larger art history of the *Kālacakra* tantra.

The specificity of this development in the art of the *Kālacakra* tantra is analogous with the simultaneous expansion of institutional hegemony over many aspects of Tibetan Buddhist life in the period of the Ganden Phodrang (Tibetan *dGa'-ldan Pho-brang*), the administrative governmental body of the Geluk-pa sect of Buddhism. More specifically, this moment coincides with the regime of Desi Sangye Gyatso (1653–1705), his position as "Desi" (*sDe-srid*, sometimes translated "regent") understood in distinction from the position of the Dalai Lama: within the Ganden Phodrang, the Desi served as the main governmental administrator, whereas religious authority was accorded to the Dalai Lama.¹¹¹ The picture in question is part of an expanding synoptic vision of life systematized within the domain of the Ganden Phodrang, life that increasingly asserted the priority of a mode of knowledge that could map and territorialize its expanding terrains, effectively nullifying the distinction between sacred and mundane space and enabling the Geluk sect to better assert the expansion of its dominion. Such a vision was certainly shaped by the continued reception of the *Kālacakra* tantra and a more thorough assimilation of its concepts, relative to the earlier period of the tantra's institutional assimilation, as in the *Vajrāvalī*.

To investigate the development of this epistemic vision, the chapter addresses the immediate physical and visual qualities of the depicted figures through an analysis of the format, materials, and formal organization of the picture, in relation to its position within the codex that contains it. These qualities reveal numerous distinctions between the manner in which the figure

¹⁰⁹ Dating for the *Citralakṣaṇa* is provided by Lo Bue "Iconographic," 190. See the translation in Berthold Laufer, B. N. Goswamy, Anna L. Dallapiccola, and Nagnajīt, *An Early Document of Indian Art* (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1976). Despite its significant status, the text does not contain any specifically Buddhist persons or beings and is derived from a Hindu textual canon. Note also that the term *siddha* refers to a human who has gained some supermundane perfection.

¹¹⁰ See John Mosteller, "The Problem of Proportion and Style in Indian Art History," *Art Journal* 49:4 (Winter, 1990), 388–394; this text analyzes the physical dimensions of early Buddhist statues for proportional measurements.

¹¹¹ See Ian MacCormack, "Buddhism and State in Seventeenth-Century Tibet" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2018).

is presented and earlier Buddhist deployments of relevant depictions, including earlier iterations of the ritual icons of the *Kālacakra* tantra. Among these objects, the distinction between orders described above is emblematic of a broader art historical change in the process of producing icons, in an assertion of centralized authority claimed by the Ganden Phodrang. A later part of the chapter then discusses the larger historical context in which the picture and codex functioned: they are positioned in relation to the broader ideological agenda of the Desi's regime. Analysis of more broad tendencies of artistic and ideological production under the Ganden Phodrang indicates that the specific interests of the *Kālacakra* tantra, as distinct from the tendencies of other Buddhist tantras and other modes of vision, provided a useful ideological model, which the Ganden Phodrang adapted to better assert their vision of Tibetan Buddhist life as a whole. This new vision subsequently subsumed even the iconic sacrality of Buddhist art, a sacrality that defined the earlier art of the *Kālacakra* tantra as discussed in the previous chapter and that remains important to Buddhist art as a whole.

2.2. Material

Given its format, the circulation of this picture must have originally been limited to elite members of the Geluk sect, who could legitimate the object's production and deployment. Its availability to current audiences appears derived from the peculiarity of the object relative to current viewers. The photographed drawing of the coupled *Kālacakra* deities and grid is reproduced from one leaf in a codex produced around 1687 entitled "*Illustrations of Measurements: A Refresher for the Cognoscenti*", which is the direct translation of its Tibetan title (*Cha-tshad kyi bris dpe—dPyod-ldan yid gsos*). Currently collected in the Tibetan Autonomous Region's Regional Archives the codex was first photographed sometime after 2005 and has been made widely available through its reproduction in a scholarly publication from 2014. The 2014 monograph reproducing the codex was edited by scholars of Tibetan religion and history, who also provide a handier title for the thing: "*Handbook of Tibetan Iconometry*" (hereafter called "*Handbook*").¹¹² The *Handbook* is primarily devoted to the compilation of preparatory iconometrical diagrams relevant to certain Tibetan Buddhist ritual practices (described below). In addition to providing a thorough photographic reproduction of the original manuscript, the 2014 publication also transliterates the short inscriptions on each page of the 1687 *Handbook*, as well as relevant sections of an accompanying text also produced in 1687, the *Vaidūrya G.ya' Sel* (translated *Polishing Beryl*, this text is also discussed in greater detail below).¹¹³ The editors' introduction to the 2014 book primarily focuses on biographical and bibliographical information about the Desi and his work's relevance to the *Handbook*, since he claimed authorship of it and *Polishing Beryl*. Nonetheless, the pictures and text showcase the abilities of a set of elite artists from the period responsible for its inscription: draftsman Lho-brag Sku-skye Nor-bu rGya-mtsho, calligrapher Rgyal-rtse 'Jam-dbyangs dbang-po; and scribe Ngam-ring Sangs-rgyas Chos-grags.¹¹⁴ The introduction also offers useful citations of Tibetan iconometrical treatises, but there is little data, analysis, or interpretation concerning the material or visual qualities of the *Handbook*, let alone its art historical position.

Extended visual analysis and examination of the reproduced 1687 *Handbook* attests to a number of features not addressed in the 2014 publication that certainly contribute to its

¹¹² Christoph Cüppers, Leonard W. J. Kuijp, Ulrich Pagel, and Dobis T. Gyal, *Handbook of Tibetan Iconometry* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹¹³ Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, et al., *The Vaidurya G.ya' Sel of Sde-Srid Sangs-Rgyas-Rgyamtsho, Together with the Snyan Sgron Nyis Brgya Brgyad Pa* (New Delhi: Taikhang, 1971).

¹¹⁴ Cüppers, et al., *Handbook*, 5.

singularity, particularly regarding the *Handbook's* art historical features and its broader functional considerations. The *Handbook's* material qualities are remarkable, as they exemplify the creative potentialities of resources and labor available to elite sponsorship in Tibetan society at that time, resulting in an object unique within Tibetan art history. In terms of both its materiality and content of the *Handbook* presents itself as an anomaly, specifically in that, unlike the paintings discussed in the previous chapter, the pictures in the *Handbook* are not explicitly sacred religious or ritual objects, despite how the manifold material features of the object themselves indicate the object's contiguity with objects used in religious ritual, and more specifically, how these features define the object's position as an authority over the production of ritual objects and the content of canonical texts themselves. This complexity in positioning the object relative to more institutionally established ritual objects is evident not only through the visual and formal tendencies of the figures presented throughout the codex and exemplified in the depiction described above, but also through how the organization of the *Handbook* as a whole was conceptualized, in that it was intended to conform to a larger institutional ideology that sought to order an increasingly totalizing picture of life and knowledge within its society and world, in a systematic manner according to the precedent set by the *Kālacakra* tantra.

The prestige devoted to the facture of the *Handbook* is clear on a number of factors, even before taking into account what is inscribed on its pages. It is first of all distinct in its large, bound format, which appears unrelated to the standard loose-leaf, *dpe-cha*-style woodblock printing on paper used for the vast majority of texts, illustrated and otherwise, throughout the history of Tibetan religious practice: "The pages [of the *Handbook*] . . . are made from treated, polished canvas sheets measuring *ca.* 80 x 40 cm each. The sheets are folded in the middle and sewn into smaller units or books (*ldab*) to yield a square format of 40 x 40 cm".¹¹⁵ The format of the *Handbook* is essentially that of a codex, as cloth pages are bound to a spine and secured with a hard outer cover. This type of binding is a pronounced departure from the history of not only Tibetan manuscript culture, but the larger South, Southeast, and East Asian manuscript traditions from which it is derived, all of which are traditions continuously used for texts of varied kinds, including those produced by religious groups. The basic format of the South and Southeast Asian palm leaf manuscript is at least two thousand years old, given the evidence of some of the earliest fragments of this format dated to around the second century, inscribed in Sanskrit and found along the so-called Silk Road in Kizil, China.¹¹⁶ The format of the Tibetan *dpe-cha* is continuous with this broader derived from such early manuscript formats, in the basic commonalities of their individual pages' long, horizontal orientation and loose-leaf binding, with pages sometimes bound by strings poked through holes in symmetrical central areas of the leaves. The format is itself associated with a great degree of sacrality and veneration.¹¹⁷ The form of these long manuscripts is symbolically familiar to Mahāyāna Buddhists as a primary attribute signifying the wisdom of Buddhist icons such as Mañjuśrī and Prajñāpāramitā, as represented in artistic manifestations of these two figures throughout history, in which the figures are depicted holding palm leaf manuscript bundles (Fig. 2.3. presents a well-known thirteenth-century Prajñāpāramitā with a manuscript bundle just over the figure's right shoulder). Given the *Handbook's* sewing and proportions, the object clearly appears to simulate binding

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁶ Eli Franco, "The Oldest Philosophical Manuscript in Sanskrit," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 31:1/3 (2003), 21–31.

¹¹⁷ On the sacrality of such manuscripts, see Jinah Kim, *Receptacle of the Sacred: Illustrated Manuscripts and the Buddhist Book Cult in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

formats from western regions beyond Asia, and particularly the codex, which had been in common circulation throughout western regions from the time of Roman empire.¹¹⁸ The *Handbook's* physical differentiation from the standard format of Tibetan manuscripts suggests an intentional separation from the sacral power and connotations of the *dpe-cha* towards what must have been a relatively unfamiliar format. While there are historically-anomalous examples of smaller and simpler Tibetan codices at tenth-century Dunhuang,¹¹⁹ the large-format codex may also have been influenced by relatively more recent Tibetan exchanges with Westerners, such as the Jesuit missions to Tsaparang in the first half of the 1600s.¹²⁰ Unlike other codices, however, the edges of the pages of the *Handbook* are clearly fraying, again pointing to a relative disinterest or unfamiliarity with making the object more durable, but also indicating that individual leaves were prepared in the same manner as cloth *thangka* paintings prior to mounting, with the substrate canvas first bound by its outer margins onto a rack or "stretcher" (Tibetan: "*rkyang shing*") for the application of a flat ground atop which ink and paint were applied, after which the canvas was cut down to size.¹²¹ A stretched canvas as prepared for *thangka* must have supported the very fine hand-illustrated and written content evident throughout the codex, allowing for direct artist inscription unmediated by reproduction onto woodblock, which had otherwise been standard in Tibetan manuscript printing for several centuries.¹²² The overall format of the *Handbook* thus suggests a purposive intervention onto prior formats of both religious scriptures and *thangkas* in order to select and apply specific qualities made possible within their production, notably the facilitation of the art and content to be depicted. In comparison, the sacral presentation and display inherent to *thangka* paintings, as discussed in the previous chapter, is noticeably diminished. The fraying pages contrast with the meticulous mounting along the edges of *thangkas* that maintain their durability despite their continuous ritual usage and storage. While leaves feature illustrations on one of their sides, there are no inscribed *dhāraṇī* on reverse sides to activate the figures through the pages, and the material does not serve a ritual function in the same manner as objects marked by ritual inscriptions such as the well-known Sanskrit *dhāraṇī* that begins "*Ye dharmā hetu . . .*" found on many Tibetan Buddhist icons. The codex format is anomalous in its difference from established formats, thus in its perception and in its handling it requires a kind of attention to format that was in itself part of the appreciation of the objects itself. Pages are bound, and thus the viewer is less free to manipulate and control the view of the individual pages. The codex format, particularly the weight and size of this codex, restricts the possibilities of viewing because of the boundedness of each page to the overall format, thus making the viewer conform to a type of looking. The size of the codex and its single-sided binding requires a different mode of handling and perception of the pictures themselves, in which pages cannot be isolated or manipulated without considering the placement of the whole object. Pictures must be viewed sequentially while resting on a fixed surface. The codex is inherently functional as a kind of reference or collection in a manner that other formats of Tibetan Buddhist art, such as *thangka* and *dpe-cha* are not. The codex is intended to be

¹¹⁸ Examples of the earliest codices from the early part of the first millennium are discussed in Colin Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), 28.

¹¹⁹ Jacob Dalton provides an overview of such codices in *Conjuring the Buddha* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023), 17.

¹²⁰ C. Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia 1603-1721* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1924).

¹²¹ The process of preparatory mounting onto a rack is discussed in Jackson and Jackson, *Thangka*, 16–18.

¹²² Early examples of Tibetan xylographs are datable to just before the Yuan dynasty; see Sam van Schaik "The Uses of Early Tibetan Printing," in *Tibetan Printing*, edited by Hildegard Diemberger, Franz-Karl Ehrhard, and Peter Kornicki (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 171–172.

instrumentalized as a whole and in its totality detracts from the iconic presences evoked by the picturing of icons in traditional Tibetan Buddhist art.

The lack of subsequent works from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition in the same format of the *Handbook* also suggests that its deviation from sacral norms reflected a specific moment within the history of Tibetan Buddhist art, one of new possibilities of synthesis and experimentation that would not exactly match the needs or interests of the religious institution as time progressed. Aspects of the format became neglected, particularly the care and quality inherent in the preparation of the material substrates of the object. Subsequent examples of diagrammatic handbooks have certainly been made since, but these have been more focused on direct, practical functionality for artists, and thus are smaller, lighter, and more simply constructed out of less valuable materials. The handbook from a current artist consisting of simply bound papers is representative (Fig. 2.4.), and serves to indicate the additional effort that went into the *Handbook*. Here the deterioration of the paper becomes inherent to the appreciation of the object itself, and its ephemerality is reminiscent of other Buddhist works such as sand *maṅḍalas* or *tsatsa*, which are simply wrought and intended to have a foreshortened durability.

2.3. Iconography

Thus the format of the *Handbook* reflects a moment of experimentation and adaptation, at the same time that it presents a measured exhibition of the possibilities of institutional resources. Much of the depicted and written content of the *Handbook* reflects a highly intentional and carefully scrutinized doctrinal position that also reflects its specific period, as well as its institution. Apart from its two-page long introductory and concluding texts composed by the Desi and inscribed by Sangs-rgyas Chos-grags in a very controlled and legible headless-style (*dbu-med*) of Tibetan calligraphy,¹²³ most of the pages in the book are dedicated to finely rendered linear depictions set in grids. These pictures are grouped into three primary sections: (1.) figural icons and ornamental attributes (more than 178 individual illustrations), (2.) scripts (more than 53 types, with several examples of scripts written on individual pages), and (3.) plans for reliquary mounds or *mchod-rten* (14 examples). These sectional divisions are based on traditional Tibetan Buddhist conventions that divide "arts" (*bzo-rig*; literally, "knowledge of facture") into a tripartite set of "supports" (*rten*) for soteriological enlightenment. Each of these three supports corresponds to the standard volitional faculty that subjects can cultivate for various, often tantric, ends, namely, body, speech, and mind. These have been the fundamental components of Tantric Buddhist ritual practice from its early history around the middle of the first millenium (as described in the previous chapter). Their subsequent extension to categorize artistic production into figural icons, script, and reliquary mound architecture, respectively, can be dated to at least the thirteenth century, when the categories were assimilated such that they could be applied in fields beyond tantric practices.¹²⁴ The adaptation of these categories into sections of the *Handbook* fixes its position into a more general Buddhist ideological matrix, within which Tantric Buddhist concepts were a normative part, and indicates the degree to which this matrix remained institutional under the regime of the Desi.

Many of the diagrams in the first "body" section of the *Handbook* are exactly illustrations of figural bodies relevant to the institutional regime of Buddhist soteriology, and as such include

¹²³ *dBu-med* is a slightly fancier and more formal standard script of the Tibetan language, as opposed to *dbu-chen*, which is the most common script.

¹²⁴ For dating, see Giuseppe Tucci and Lokesh Chandra, *Stupa* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1988), 25.

historical figures central to normative Buddhism even prior to the development of Tantric Buddhism. As such, the figure of the historical Buddha is given pride of place, followed by the popular Mahāyāna Buddha Amitāyus (Tibetan: *Tshe-pag-med*), and subsequently an assortment of tantric *yi-dam* icons, the primary icons in their respective tantras. At odds with this iconic grouping, however, this first section also contains figures with no direct relevance to soteriological practices, such as that of a nude, sexless, and unenlightened figure;¹²⁵ isolated sashes that might serve as attributes to other figures;¹²⁶ or even blank grids without any object.¹²⁷ The *Handbook's* contents are primarily collected as an iconometrical reference with precise and standardized models for depictions of not merely icons such as divinities, but a range of both iconic and incidental material phenomena that have significant precedents in the production of Tibetan Buddhist art. As such, the *Handbook* is a synopsis of what patronized artists were directed to depict, though still organized following hierarchical Buddhist norms of classification, so that figures with more prestige are presented first and in greater detail. The diverse collection of forms is the primary basis of the *Handbook's* content, which is only secondarily made to fit into more rigid categorical divisions. The mix of immediate, practical function for illustrators and a kind of categorical oversight in organization positions the *Handbook* in between its practical and religious functionalities.

Lacking an index, the *Handbook* uses inscribed titles for each of the illustrated pages to provide the actual categorical classifications within each of the three main sections, and these titles can be further divided into major headings and specific captions. The first section on "body" arts classifies figures into eight major figural types ("*thig-chen*") derived from textual precedents such as the aforementioned *Citralakṣaṇa*. Mostly all of the depicted figures have a major heading stating its figural type along with its major iconometric proportions based on a unit of measures ("finger" or "*sor-mo*", the smallest unit of measure in the *Handbook*). Notably, the initial two figural types are in the 120 *sor-mo* range ("*sor-mo brgya nyi-shu pa*"; save a single variant figure of the Buddha marked as 125), whereas the third type is 120.5 *sor-mo* ("*sor-mo brgya dang phyed nyi-shu pa*"; it also has extra heads), while the subsequent five figural types have progressively decreasing measurements, followed by a final type devoted of postures.

Within this figural typology, the specific collection and organization of the figural icons and ornamental attributes depicted in the *Handbook* positions its content more concretely within the sectarian doctrines of the Geluk system of Buddhism, as advanced by the Ganden Phodrang government and its hierarchical doxography of ritual systems.¹²⁸ As in earlier precedents, measurements serve hierarchical distinctions. The figures are arranged so that after the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, a range of iconic figural divinities prominent within Geluk-pa doxography are given positions of prominence. For instance, an iteration of *Guhyasamāja* (*gSang-ba 'dus-pa*), the highest ranked tantra in the sect, is the fifth divinity in the series and ranks within the first iconometric type. The nude *Kālacakra* icon described above is classed in the second figural type, and appears as the seventh figural icon overall, immediately following *Śamvara* (*bDe-mchog*), another important Geluk icon within its concomitant tantric system. This section of the *Handbook* ends with a set of divinities and historical exegetes not classified within the given typologies, such as Asaṅga (*Thogs-med*) the *circa* fourth century patriarch of *Yogācāra* (*rnal-'byor spyod-pa*), a disciplinary subdivision of Mahāyāna Buddhism primarily focused on

¹²⁵ Cüppers, et al., *Handbook*, Plate 195, 210; the inscribed title for the figure is "*mi gos-med*" or "unclothed person."

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, Plate 225, 245.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Plate 206, 226.

¹²⁸ On Geluk-pa doxography of tantras, see Chapter 1, note 70.

metaphysics.

The ordering is clearly based on priority, and the initial Śākyamuni illustrations make sense, as almost any Buddhist tradition would grant priority to the historical Buddha in ritual actions. The importance of Śākyamuni extends beyond the figure's position in the *Handbook*, though, as the depictions of this figure expand into an exposition on exactitude itself, and the limits to which it is deployed at the time. Repeated depictions of Śākyamuni, as well as a selection of his individuated body parts, appear as the first eight pages of illustrations. It is clear that the image of the historical Buddha was to be afforded a level of exactitude in its depicted measurements that was necessary to its understanding as a sacred icon, and that such exactitude was expanded to include parts of the Buddha, in contrast to the depictions of other figures. No other divinity is afforded as extensive a set of portrayals. The first two illustrated pages start with seemingly Vitruvian forms of the Buddha in overlaid seated and standing postures modeled for bas relief ("*bur sku*"; Plate 10), followed by an almost identical figure on the second page modeled for two dimensional reproduction ("*bris pa*"; Plate 11; convergence with the Vitruvian man is discussed in Section 1.3 below).

2.3.1. Nudity

Similar to the figures from the *Handbook* mentioned at the start of this chapter, the Buddha in these first two illustrations is nude, though the genitals that would presumably appear in his standing position are seemingly occluded by the overlaid positioning of his legs in seated lotus posture. This degree of nudity is an aporia in the history of normative Buddhist iconic depiction. Buddhist art is formulaic in terms of nudity, in that its icons rigidly conform to certain iconographical precedents set early in the history of this art, during the transition from aniconic to iconic production in the early part of the first millennium.¹²⁹ Any recognizable portrait of the historical Buddha is distinctly not nude, and it is precisely the fact of the Buddha not being depicted as nude, and instead wearing simple clothing, that distinguishes depictions of him from non-Buddhist figures. For instance, light drapery distinguishes the Buddha from statues of the *Tīrthaṅkara*, the central icon of Jainism, given the otherwise very similar stylistic depictions and iconographical attributes that mark the esteemed figures, particularly during the first few centuries of their production in South Asia, when the two religions were first making their iconic forms. Mathuran Jain and Buddhist figures share the same postures, body types, facial features, and hair.¹³⁰ Nude Buddhist icons only rarely appear and serve as tantric deities other than Buddhas. Such nude deities have iconographical standards, such as depictions of the mostly nude female divinity Vajravārāhī (*rDo-rje Phag-mo*) that appear from at least the eleventh century. Yet even with such iconographically nude icons, ornamentation in the form of jewelry or handheld items are essential for complete iconographic representation.¹³¹ Standard iconic forms of the Buddha and most other Buddhist divinities are decidedly not nude, in that their apparel and ornamentation present essential markers of proper representation and identification, and thus iconic presence. Clothing on the Buddha is thus similar in status to that of the Buddha's

¹²⁹ An overview of scholarly literature and debates regarding this transition is provided in Ashley Thompson, "In the Absence of the Buddha," in *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture*, edited by Rebecca M. Brown and Deborah S. Hutton (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 398–420.

¹³⁰ Early sculptures of the Jain Tīrthaṅkara are available in numerous collections in India, as well as in the Metropolitan Museum (see accession number 1992.131) and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.85.55). Buddhist sculptures from Mathura are well known.

¹³¹ Himalayan Art Resources has an image of this figure dated to the eleventh century: <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/35845>.

Great Marks (Sanskrit *mahāpuruṣa lakṣaṇa*, Tibetan *mtshan dpe*), in that both are essential to identifying the figure relative to other icons in and out of the religion. Thus the Buddha's draped robe is an essential visual marker to the identification and iconic presence of the Buddha.

The drawing of a properly clothed Buddha subsequently appears in the *Handbook* (Plate 13), and this pattern of first showing a nude version of a divinity followed by the same divinity in normal array applies to almost all of the major divinities in this section of the *Handbook*. According to the text of the codex itself, the headings inscribed by Sangs-rgyas Chos-grags precisely title the nude divinities as "unadorned" ("*rgyan-med*"). The distinction between unadorned and unclothed is more than just an application of reverential terminology from Tibetan grammar onto the figures, it instantiates an assertion that defines adornment as separable from the iconic figures themselves, and instead positions their subjecthood and visual presence at another level. Especially notable is that the term for "naked" or "nude" ("*gos-med*," literally "unclothed") is reserved for the aforementioned anonymous person, who is also unique in lacking a clothed version.¹³²

The placement of nude and, mostly, sexless divinities prior to their adorned forms effectively asserts that the corporeal bodies of the divinities are isolatable and distinct from their adornments, and further as somewhat of more essential value than the adorned forms, given their earlier positions throughout the codex. (Sex parts appear regularly on female-gendered nudes, but only appear on male-gendered figures in copulation or on Bhairava, '*Jigs-byed*, also known as Yamāntaka, *gShin-rje-gshed*, whose iconography sometimes includes an erect phallus.) In these pictures, status as unadorned does not detract from the identity of the divinity. To be sure, because the nude figure is placed prior to its adorned form, this priority coincides with an implicit priority of the corporeal body ("corporeal" is used here to distinguish this form of the body from other Buddhist nomenclature such as "subtle bodies") and its physical presence over the adorned form and attributes. The priority of corporeal presence over presence marked by secondary attributes is a decisive reversal from the earliest art historical demarcations of the Buddha, in what modern scholars refer to as "aniconic images."¹³³ These familiar aniconic depictions include biographical scenes from the Buddha's life in which the corporeal body is wholly replaced by metonymic attributes symbolizing the Buddha, such as the Bodhi Tree and platform whereupon the Buddha was enlightened (Fig. 2.5.). In the diagrammatic nudes of the *Handbook*, the Buddha is reverted to a mundane and essentially humanoid corporeality, and in so doing is objectified: the depicted body of the Buddha becomes a means for the artist to imagine and subsequently convey a properly idealized corporeal form in the production of an icon.

A justification to this claim of a reversal of function might be that, for artists, the depiction of nude figures and their ordering of the figures prior to adorned ones systematized the artist's stepped, procedural construction of the iconic figure, through their visualization of proportions in corporeal structure prior to full depiction. Such visualization concretizes their mental imaging of the figure and streamlines the process of depiction. To qualify this point, the intensive conceptualization of all aspects of this codex strongly suggests that the ordering of unadorned and adorned figures was also intentional beyond artistic practice. Indeed, artistic practice in Tibetan Buddhism is inseparable from the religious and ideological conditions that ground it. Artists would still have had to visualize some structuring whole of the icons corporeal body and its implicit measurements prior to the act of depicting its other attributes in order to ground the image with a convincing sense of soteriological efficacy, if not iconic presence.

¹³² See note 55.

¹³³ Thompson, "Absence," 410.

Iconometric measurements are dictated in scripture, and some degree of fidelity to scripture is implicit in the production of icons. Indeed, the assertion of the diagrammatic, iconometric presence of a corporeal body seems to be a logical telos of tantric practice, as such a body concretizes orderly ritual exactitude over the symbolic representationality that pervaded earlier Buddhist art.

While art historical convention dictates that the figures so far described are nude, it may be less than historically accurate to impose a terminological distinction between "nude" and "non-nude" on the specific set of tantric figural icons depicted in the *Handbook*. These tantric icons are often identified by their specific antinomian practices relative to normative Buddhist proscriptions against, for instance, sexual acts. The nude Kālacakra in sexual union with the consort Viśvamātā (Tibetan *sNa-tshogs-yum*) presented above is one of several such figures in the *Handbook* depicting active copulation, as specified in the tantras of its class.¹³⁴ Compared to its standard iconic image,¹³⁵ there are few attributes that could be identified as functional clothing, save a tiger skin loosely wrapped around the waist of the rear figure and a long, flowing sash, both of which do little to clothe the coupled figures, but rather contrasts and highlights the contours of their nude bodies. In these and several other images, the attributes are clearly better classified as adornments rather than clothing. Further, the example of the esoteric, tantric figures appears to establish precedence over the titling of historically exoteric figures such as the Buddha Śākyamuni. The nude Buddha appears reclassified as "unadorned" to rectify the seemingly unprecedented nude image of the figure in the *Handbook*, suggesting the predominance of tantric discourse over Geluk-pa Buddhist practices as a whole.

The presentation of nude deities thus changes the codex's overall function relative to the standard iconic and sacral uses of figural depiction that define standard Buddhist art. This nudity is part of the larger ideological regime that sought to expand authority over processes tangential to the religious beliefs of Buddhism and the religion's soteriological goals, as mentioned earlier.

2.3.2. Grids

The introduction of unadorned, nude figures among the pictures in the codex is complemented by another quality shared among the pictures collected, namely the fineness and control of line quality in the drawings themselves. Certainly, the lines of the grid and geometrical guides are fine enough to still appreciate the contours of the figures, such that the ink lines that compose these figures are clearly unwavering and confident hand-drawn curves that play with the rigidity of the grid, seemingly unencumbered by it. There are few straight lines among the contours of the figure, appearing only on shins and sections of wrist. These black figural contours are drawn in a range of smoothly modulating widths according to individual body parts, so that major body parts consist of thicker lines than, for instance, the very fine mass of lines comprising the hair streaming down from Viśvamātā's head or the lines separating the faces of palms from the flesh around them. Many lines taper to finely controlled points, such as the three wrinkles on Kālacakra's neck which each terminate on different grid lines. These factors suggest not only well trained artistry, but also the use of an East Asian-style brush-pen that facilitates such modulation and curving, as opposed to the nibbed stylus used for much traditional Tibetan calligraphy. Mistakes are few, and lines that have been drawn erroneously are made less visible, as in certain lines running almost parallel to forearms and

¹³⁴ Namely, these are tantras of the *yoginī* (Tibetan *ma rgyud*) and unexcelled-yoga (Tibetan *rnal-'byor bla-na-med-pa'i rgyud*, Sanskrit *niruttara-yoga* or *yoga-niruttara*) classes.

¹³⁵ See Cüppers, et al., *Handbook*, Plate 39.

Viśvamātā's forehead. One of the leftmost fingers has had the area adjacent to it completely blanked of gridlines, presumably because this is the only area that required extensive revision, and thus some treatment to the cloth. Assertion of artistic agency appears exactly in the balance of precise, naturalistic expression in curving and playful contour lines contrasted with the exactly imposed iconometrical guides, the latter paradoxically never becoming fully apparent in the actual icons. The production of figures derived from these iconometric forms thus occludes many levels of artistic proficiency and expression in this play, whereas the codex somewhat revels in it and is explicitly a record of such interaction.

As is clearly evident in any history of Buddhist figural art outside the *Handbook*, the grid is inessential to the completed icon, and only serves to provide accurate measurements from which the grounding typological height and other lengths can be derived. Theoretically, even without a grid, if the resulting figure was proportionally correct from simple line measurements, there would be no need for a grid. The assertion of the fine network of gridlines seems almost pedantic and is omitted in the iconometric depictions of the Buddhas of the Five Families of the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* tantric system, placed later in *Handbook*, which use a greatly simplified line schematic more convincingly overlaid on the significant points of respective figures.¹³⁶ For the *Handbook's* Kālacakra image and related figural icons, the grid exists as a separately ordered space of iconometric authority, onto which the figure is intended to conform in theory. This individuation of the grid from the figure itself is further corroborated by its details. Examining the vertical distribution of horizontal lines, along the left edge of the grid there are a series of informal marks that are used to determine the regular spacing of the red horizontal lines of the grid, inscribed with a straightedge. In many places, the marking lines do not conform to the red lines, so that the distances between red lines is often unevenly distributed. This incongruity may partly be explained by the iconometric system of the Kālacakra, which asserts that the first figural type is composed of 125 *sor-mo* finger-measures divided into ten larger units of measure, each unit known as a "face" (or *zhal*)—each *zhal* is thus composed of 12.5 *sor-mo*.¹³⁷ This fractional unit is seemingly resolved in the grid by making one unit in each *zhal* more vertically rectangular than the others (this is unlike the 125 *sor-mo* Buddha, in which each single unit is given its own red line, and halves are bisected by blue lines). However, even with this system, many of the other units are still unevenly measured. This lack of uniformity usually has little effect on the figures because the fine grid divisions are unnecessary to most of the depiction, which could simply be drawn with the gross measurements of blue-lined *zhal*. Precise measurement is seemingly only necessary for the face, as in the *Handbook's* depictions of the historical Buddha's face.¹³⁸ However, even in this picture, the vertical *sor-mo* measure does not account for the geometry of face's diagonal tilt, which should make the vertical facial measurement shorter. Indeed, this *zhal*, which extends from the figure's crown's peak to its chin, is slightly longer than other *zhal*, meaning the face has been lengthened beyond its canonical proportion. Asymmetries can be found elsewhere: palms vary in length and the leaning *tribhaṅga* posture skews the vertical measures. More simply, the grid measurements often do not account for the iconometry of the image.

A distinction can thus be made between the asserted measurements of the fine grid and the actual measurements of the figure. Such a distinction between the two orders makes more

¹³⁶ Ibid., Plates 218–222.

¹³⁷ An English translation of a summary of basic *Kālacakra* iconometry is provided in Jamdon Kongtrul Lodro and Gyurme Dorje, *The Treasury of Knowledge* Vol. 6, Parts One and Two (Boston: Snow Lion, 2013), 188–189.

¹³⁸ Pictures of disembodied faces and their parts can be found on Cüppers, et al., *Handbook*, Plates 14–16.

sense if the grid is understood on its own as a prior assertion of a more basic and essential rule of measurement, separate from the power and presence of the icons themselves. The grid posits the existence of a quantifiable field that exists before the body-supports (*sku-rten*), the icons themselves. The grid forms the groundwork upon which the visual realm of Buddhist soteriology can manifest itself. The depiction of such a field as its own entity (prior to the existence of icons) is itself an act implicitly based on the idea that space, including the space of icons, exists prior to the icons and is inherently quantifiable.

Given the assertion of a prior quantifiable field, the art that comes about as a result of this ground is almost totally an art of lines adapted and measured so that they gracefully conform to the mathematical regularity of space. There is as yet no thought to the massing of colors nor any indication of how the figures themselves are to be colored (despite earlier canonical requirements for coloration). The variant colors in the figural illustrations of the codex only serve to categorize line functions, rather than contribute to the identities or iconicity of the figures themselves. Likewise, there is no sense of texture or surface other than that formed by the geometrical patterns of line. The figures themselves are essentially and necessarily composed of lines rather than, for instance, substantial organs or symbolic attributes. This essential linearity and geometry of the figures extends from the necessity of numerical exactitude. The afterword uses the term "*thig rtsa*" or "root line" to indicate this ultimate derivation of forms and figures from a fundamental linearity. Further, the *Handbook* privileges the nude icon because it not only affords more directly unmitigated conformity to the exact linear measurements provided in canonical sources, but it also permits the coincidental conformity of extra-canonical body parts to this quantifiable field. The effect is that the entirety of a given icon's physical body has a tendency toward mathematical regularity, and this regularity is upheld as a standard.

2.3.3. Ordering

Beyond the individual drawings of the icons, the overall collection and organization of tantric figures reflects a broader conceptualization of how iconic reproductions were intended to be deployed. The codex reflects something of the overall position of figural depictions in Tibetan Buddhist religious practice, as determined by the Ganden Phodrang that sponsored the codex. Clearly, the ritual forms selected for the codex were intended to guide subsequent depictions of icons under the Ganden Phodrang's purview. As such, the conscious selection and ordering of tantric icons demonstrates a structuring and valuation of iconic forms in the institution's vision of religious practice.

Remarkably, this vision is derived from the Kālacakra tantra itself, which is pervasively influential within the *Handbook's* ordering. The most overt source for the overall structuring of the *Handbook* is another work attributed to the Desi and produced at the same time, the aforementioned *Polishing Beryl*, a text that serves as a subsidiary commentary to an earlier work by the Desi, which was itself derived from the Kālacakra tantra.¹³⁹ The *Handbook* is largely organized according to the Desi's collected statements in the art (*bzo-rig-pa*) section of *Polishing Beryl*. The *Handbook* states as much in its afterword, which attempts a concise explanation of the *Handbook's* purport: "To . . . clarify erroneous positions . . . , this enlightened text collects its gross and fine measurements of body parts from the views in the . . . *Polishing Beryl* . . . , so that

¹³⁹ The full Tibetan title of *Polishing Beryl*, *bsTan bcos Bai-dūr dKar-po las dris lan 'khrul snang g.ya' sel don gyi bzhin ras ston byed ces bya ba'i glegs bam gnyis pa bzhugs so*, designates the text more specifically as a commentary on criticisms posed on the text of an earlier work of the Desi's entitled "*White Beryl*" (*Vaiḍūrya dKar-po*), a treatise on astronomy derived from the Kālacakra tantra and discussed below.

average artisans in Lhasa will have a clearer model of iconometry compared to difficult ancient models"¹⁴⁰ The *Handbook* is thus intended to visually explain iconic images to artists in as clear a way as possible, in a manner that *Polishing Beryl* does not.

The overall ordering of types of figures must have been conventional by the time of the codex's production, though statements regarding these conventions point to the prominent position of the Kālacakra tantra. In its introduction to notes on the eight figural form types presented in the *Handbook*, the Desi's *Polishing Beryl* states ". . . as to [the first of three sections on the art of] the body-supports [that is, figural icons], there is no division into emanation and enjoyment [bodies], and for most iconometry, Kālacakra emanation iconometry is to be put forward, in general, using 112-unit [*sic*: this appears to be a typo and should be "120"] finger-measures."¹⁴¹ Thus, many of the measurements for figural icons are derived from iconometry in the Kālacakra tantric corpus. Certain sections are more specific, as in the measurements of the unenlightened man positioned in the seventh figural type, which, according to the *Polishing Beryl* text, is derived from the text *Stainless Light (Dri-med 'od)*, the primary commentary of the Kālacakra tantra.¹⁴² However, the iconometry is not completely systematized. For instance, *Polishing Beryl* iconometry also borrows from a range of sources: the text states that the second class-type, is "based on iconometry provided in the *Samvarodaya* [or *Cakrasamvara*, tantra]."¹⁴³

The specific selection of figures within each of the eight figural types is derived from the *Kālacakra* tantra, but subsequently posits something of its own positional schema for iconic figures beyond the scope of the *Kālacakra* tantra itself. The three tantric figures in the first figural type appear to be generalized figures applicable to different tantric systems. Namely, these are Vajrasattva (*rDo-rje sems-dpa'*, a generalized tantric deity connected to the *vajra* form), the coupled Immortal Three-Bodies (*'Chi-med sku gsum*, the apotheosis of a Buddhist metaphysical concept), and Guhyasamāja, respectively.¹⁴⁴ The second figural type consists of only three figures, which are major tantric divinities more specific to the Geluk-pa sect: there is Kālacakra, the two drawings of which are interrupted with two different versions of Śaṁvara and one of Hevajra (*Kye'i rDo-rje*). The grouping of three tantric divinities coincides with standard Geluk tantric doxography elucidated by writers such as the sect's early patriarch Khedrup Je (mKhas-grub rJe dGe-legs dpal-bzang, 1385–1438), who classifies these three specific tantras (among others) within the mother tantra (*ma rgyud, yoginī*) class of unexcelled-yoga tantras (*rnal-'byor bla-na-med-pa'i rgyud, niruttara-yoga or yoganiruttara* tantra).¹⁴⁵ The unexcelled-yoga tantras are the highest ranking class of tantras defined by the Geluk-pa system, which further subdivides them into Father and Mother Tantras. In the *Handbook*, the icons from

¹⁴⁰ Tibetan: "phyogs 'di'i log rtog rnam gsal zhing mtshan nyid dang ldan par go sla la rgyun rnam dag mi nyams pa'i ched bsTan bCos Bai Ḍūr dKar Po'i Bu dPe dGag Lan 'Khrul Pa'i G.ya' Sel gyi nang ltar thig rags zhib tshang ma 'dzub mo ri ston du bstar ba mthong bas nag po 'gro shes 'di ni | phyogs 'di 'dzin zhing mos pa ri mo ba lha sa dge bsnyen gyis cha tshad kyi skor la rnying pa rnam bris dpe nas len pa las go dka' ba dang . . ." Cüppers, et al., *Handbook*, 7.

¹⁴¹ Tibetan: ". . . sku rten de la yang sprul longs la dbye ba yod med dang cha tshad kyi skor spyir cha tshad dus 'khor du sprul sku'i cha tshad rags pa sor mo brgya bcu gnyis su bshad pa," *ibid.*, 353.

¹⁴² This unenlightened man appears in *ibid.*, Plate 195. Tibetan: "thig chen bdun pa Dri Med 'Od las," *ibid.*, 361.

¹⁴³ Tibetan: "thig chen gnyis pa sDom 'Byung las," *ibid.*, 356.

¹⁴⁴ For a discussion of the generality of Vajrasattva as a tantric deity adapted to multiple roles, see Rob Linrothe, "Mirror Image" *History of Religions* 54:1 (2014): 5–33.

¹⁴⁵ Under the Geluk rubrics of Khedrup Je, Mother Tantras exposit knowledge, while Father Tantras exposit means, as knowledge and means are commonly dichotomized in Buddhist philosophy; see Lessing and Wayman, *Introduction*, 267.

father tantras are divided into different iconometric types, so that only Guhyasamāja appears in the first type, whereas Bhairava, another figure from the Geluk-pa father tantras, is placed in the fifth type, as fits the figure's specific iconometric classification. As such, the doxographical ordering of figures is subject to the *Handbook's* typological reordering, in which a certain figural iconometric logic is imposed on standard doxography, resulting in a uniquely ordered system with respect to larger institutional standards.

Issues between doxography and typology are resolved thoughtfully in another part of the codex. The section on figural body-supports includes several pages of iconic figures included even after the presentation of eight figural types. The subsequent icons start with fully-adorned figures of the Buddhas of the Five Families, the set of iconic figures associated with the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* tantra, doxographically positioned by the Geluk-pa system in the yoga tantra class, and described above as lacking the overlaying fine *sor-mo* grid placed around the other figures. This set of Buddhas of the Five Families also lacks heading titles. Their status as Buddhas should have merited their ranking in the first of the *Handbook's* formal types alongside other depictions of Buddhas. However, it is likely that the Five Buddhas' diminished doxographical ranking within the Geluk-pa system left them somehow outside classification into the eight types of the *Handbook*. Nonetheless, a need for their iconometric standardization must have necessitated their placement in the *Handbook*, likely because of the frequency of this set's appearance throughout Buddhist art, such as on the *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, discussed in the first chapter. As the figures are unlisted, the position of these later images in the *Handbook* seems to exceed the proscriptions of the Desi's overarchingly detailed system.

On the whole, the *Handbook's* iconography points to its functionality beyond Buddhist ritual *per se*, its pictures are functional objects rather than icons. They ultimately serve the ritual and sacral ends of Buddhist art, yet distinctly mark themselves as neither sacred nor objects of worship. As the pictures are more clearly identified as objects, their artistry—that is, their formal qualities and the processes involved in their depiction and viewing—is valued in itself and on a scale that exists somehow outside that of Buddhist sacrality and iconic presence. Such value not only stems from the objects' function, but also their position in connection with their producers: the uniqueness of its overall conceptualization as ascribed to the Desi and the meticulous and fine qualities of creation by a team of named artists.

2.4 Trajectories

2.4.1. The *Handbook's* Rhetoric

To get a better sense of the position of the codex relative to the art historical trajectory of the Kālacakra tantra, this section moves from analysis of the codex's visual properties to outline the how codex is positioned relative to wider art historical narratives and the more general continuum of objects with similar functions. That is, on one hand, the text of the *Handbook* positions its own visual content within its own assertion of a Buddhist art history. On the other hand, such an art historical narrative is different from the art history revealed by direct comparison between the pictures collected by the *Handbook* and the extant field of Buddhist art understood by modern scholars, especially in terms of form and format. The *Handbook* perpetuates a continuity of Buddhist art by using the rhetoric in its foreword and afterword to situate itself within a cyclical and traditionalist history of Buddhist iconic production. However, the *Handbook* marks a divergence from earlier Buddhist art, in that its depictions function themselves to integrate and impose more literalist interpretations of iconometry onto Buddhist art, in collaboration with the broader ideology of the Ganden Phodrang.

The foreword and afterword of the *Handbook* work to position it within its own declared history of Buddhist image production. The positing of art as a historically changing phenomenon is relatively rare in Tibetan texts prior to the Desi.¹⁴⁶ While the account in the *Handbook* is relatively brief, its nine-syllable metered verses include a synopsis of the history of Buddhist soteriological art, in addition to a section in homage to various higher divinities and a discussion outlining the purport of the *Handbook*. The foreword begins with several lines of homage to a range of figures in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon, much in the same manner as Tibetan Buddhist texts generally. However, the forward transitions to presenting a series of statements identifying and honoring major historical agents in the development of Buddhist art, figures usually neglected in most Buddhist texts. This account attempts a degree of comprehensiveness by first invoking the story of South Asian King Bimbisāra of Magadha, who is conventionally dated as contemporaneous with the historical Buddha and credited with sponsoring the first portrait of the Buddha: "The first figure painting was born: / 'The Essence of the Formed' [a literalist translation of Bimbisāra] cultivated the water-born image [a picture copied from the Buddha's reflection in water]."¹⁴⁷ This art history then addresses socio-cultural differentiation in the gradual transference of art from South Asia to Tibet.¹⁴⁸ Most notably it does so by identifying a Tibetan painting style developing as distinct from that of Nepalese painting. According to the text, "Nepalese painting and other [styles]" had been present among Tibetans since the rule of Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo in the seventh century, followed by a Tibetan artistic lineage of "Men-Khyen" (now "*sman ris*") said to derive from one Dowa Dragyel (*rDo-ba bKras-rgyal*).¹⁴⁹ The foreword goes on to praise the central recipient of this lineage Menla Dondrup (*sMan-la Don-grub*), a fifteenth century Tibetan artist credited with establishing a widely-recognized style of painting associated with his name: "From Mentang arose the one known as the 'Manifestation of all Purposes' [which plays on the name Dondrup]."¹⁵⁰ This Menla-style comprises paintings that replaced of architectonic backgrounds with horizontal outdoor landscape scenes.¹⁵¹

Even grafted onto the earlier section of homage, the praise and mere invocation of such specifically art historical figures and movements allows the *Handbook* to assert a more nuanced historical consciousness of a specifically Tibetan Buddhist art, and, further, within the class of Tibetan artists, a lineage-based history of individual artists. While figures such as the relatively recent Menla Dondrup go undated in the *Handbook*, the identification of individual named artists representing a larger socio-cultural grouping of Tibetan art is a clear development from earlier texts. Such a narrative can be compared to descriptions of artists as a class of anonymous workers who are characterized as little more than aggregations of specified ritual practices. This latter characterization of artists as craftspeople had been the precedent in the doctrinal tantric exegeses that were available in translation from Sanskrit or from earlier Tibetan writers. Such descriptions can be seen in a range of tantric ritual manuals, such as those related to the Guhyasamāja tantra, again, the most highly ranked tantra in the Geluk-pa system, and persist into

¹⁴⁶ D. Jackson, *History*, 44–56, surveys historical Tibetan texts on painting and identifies about a dozen, none predating the Desi's writings.

¹⁴⁷ Tibetan: "*dang por Bris kyi sKu ru byung ba yang | gzugs can snying pos bskyed bsrings chu len ma*," Cüppers, et al., *Handbook*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ "*Rig 'byung rgya gar gnas nas bsil ljong[s] 'dir*," *ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴⁹ Tibetan: "*gangs can mi rje Srong bTsan dus nyid nas | bal ris la sogs tshul 'dir mig gi dkyus | rna bar 'gong ba rim brgyud rDo Pa dag | bKras rGyal las dgyes sMan mKhyen ring lugs smad*," *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Tibetan: "*sMan Thang las 'khrungs Don kun Grub khyod bsngags*," *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ See discussion of Menla in Chapter 1.

Menla Dondrup's own fifteenth century treatise on art "*The Wish-Granting Gem: A Treatise on the Proportions of Images of the Sugata*."¹⁵² In this work, the author only identifies broad cultural influences such as Chinese and Nepalese styles without referring to specific artists or periods.¹⁵³

As mentioned, on one level the claims in the foreword and afterword express deference to earlier generations, in keeping with the perennial manifestations of Buddhist divinity. For instance, an epithet for the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is mentioned as contributing to Menla Dondrup's status.¹⁵⁴ Another means by which the text venerates certain figures is explicitly visual: prestige terms are inscribed in red rather than the normal black ink. For example, in the manuscript's rendering of the quote just mentioned, the terms "*Don*" and "*Grub*" are in red (red terms have been capitalized in transliteration), whereas other terms are black, such as the reference to Mañjuśrī or even the term "*kun*" (or "all") positioned between the two parts of Dondrup's name as a pun and to fill out the meter. The red text establishes a differential, subtextual order from the content of the black text. Black text privileges semantic meaning and metered regularity, while red reconfigures the text into a series of more personally affective instances of veneration, in its invocation of personal names and objects, such as "*Don . . . Grub*" or the terms "*bLo . . . bZang . . . rGya mTsho*" divided over the first few lines of the foreword, which can be recombined into the personal name of the Fifth Dalai Lama. In addition to divine figures, also in red are the names of books, such as the *Handbook* itself ("*dPyod lDan . . . Yid . . . gSos*"); general terms for iconic art ("*bris . . . sku*"); and the institution of the Ganden Phodrang ("*dga' . . . ldan pho brang*").¹⁵⁵ The use of differential markings within text, such as the color red or additional diacritics, has a long precedent in Tibetan scriptural practice and has been used variously, for instance, to mark topics, puns, and quotes,¹⁵⁶ but its application in the *Handbook* is systematic. Not all persons named in the text appear in red, for example, in the afterword the name of Trulku Ngalasik (sPrul-sku Nga-la-gzigs) appears in black.¹⁵⁷ The application of red for certain figures over others appears to indicate Buddhist lineal affinities and more immediately relevant objects related to the Desi as the purported author of the text.

While the black text provides a broader overview of Buddhist deferential hierarchies that becomes inclusive of the field of art, a subtext of names and objects indicated through red ink presents the more direct personal and material conditions that mark and ground the content of the *Handbook*. The sequence of these names again establishes priority in a manner like the ordering of images in the *Handbook*. The Fifth Dalai Lama's name and title as "gracious teacher" (*drin-chen bla-ma*) in bright red at the start of the text thus positions that him as central to conceptualizing the *Handbook's* production. Such positioning reinforces the institutional hierarchy of the Ganden Phodrang as a whole, with the name of the Dalai Lama serving to legitimate the authority of the *Handbook's* content regardless of that figure's actual involvement. Indeed, the Fifth Dalai Lama had already passed away in 1682. The Fifth Dalai Lama's actual, material effect in producing and authoring the *Handbook* was thus of less significance than the

¹⁵² The Tibetan title is "*bDe bar gshegs pa'i sku gzugs kyi tshad kyi rab tu byed pa' i yid bzhin gyi no*."

¹⁵³ see D. Jackson, *History*, 104, and Philip Denwood, "The Artist's Treatise of sMan bla don grub," *Tibet Journal* 21/2 (1996): 24–30.

¹⁵⁴ Tibetan: "*smra ba'i lhas bzung shes rab lus rdzogs pa'i . . . Don kun Grub khyod bsngags*," Cüppers, et al., *Handbook*, 7.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ This was a suggestion by scholar of Tibetan Buddhism Meghan Howard.

¹⁵⁷ This individual is also known as sPrul-sku 'Phreng-kha-ba, a sixteenth century artist who composed at least two treatises on art, see his biography in D. Jackson, *History*, 181–182.

invocation of his name.

Such invocation exemplifies seventeenth-century Tibetan Buddhist legitimation practices, in which authorities grounded current circumstances on past precedents, effectively legitimating current traditions across time—doing so was an established discursive method, as it fit within the widely accepted practice of locatable reincarnation, in which an individual could be identified as an emanated reincarnation (*sprul-sku*) of an earlier figure.¹⁵⁸ This practice of identifiable reincarnation was adopted and institutionalized throughout Tibetan religious society as an effective means of determining succession in positions of leadership. Reincarnation lineages were applied throughout Gelugpa offices, most notably in the position of the Dalai Lama. The position of the Dalai Lama was technically established to stabilize religious authority in conjunction to the secular/military authority of the Tümed Mongol ruler Altan Khan, one of several competing Mongol khanates in the sixteenth century.¹⁵⁹ Altan granted the title of Dalai Lama to a preexisting Gelugpa reincarnation lineage of the abbot of Drepung (*Bras-spungs*) Monastery in Lhasa, and thus actually conferred the third Dalai Lama, incorporating two earlier reincarnations. Altan's great grandson was selected as the fourth Dalai Lama. The term *dalai* is the Mongolian translation of "oceanic" or "horizontal", a term related to the extent of imperium within the model of Buddhist patronage provided by earlier figures such as Kubilai Khan and 'Phags-pa Lama in the thirteenth century.¹⁶⁰ Alongside more mundane roles such as leading the Geluk-pa sect of Buddhism, being religious advisor to a secular ruler or khan, and holding the abbotship of Drepung Monastery and the Ganden Phodrang within it, the Dalai Lama is also the reincarnation of Chenresig (*sPyan-ras-gzigs*) or Avalokiteśvara, the well-known *bodhisattva* of compassion.¹⁶¹ Religious authority is ultimately legitimated through identifiable reincarnation according to a precedential divine ranking system that distinguishes discrete institutional roles and relationships for individual members. The text of the *Handbook* works to reiterate this authority.

The position of Dalai Lama as guru, or direct teacher, was the ultimate point of authority within such a system, which only subsequently names the historical Buddha (with the epithet "*thub dbang*" or "king of subduers") and other Buddhist divinities. The Desi's role as so-called "regent" to the Dalai Lama afforded him the ability to exploit this ranking system. Whereas the text deploys the Dalai Lama's name, the Desi had covered up his death in 1682 and had been governing as if he was still alive.¹⁶² The *Handbook* was thus completed during the Desi's *de facto* rule. The act of naming the Fifth Dalai Lama in red at the start of the *Handbook* thus not only binds the *Handbook* with the more pervasive religious and institutional system that conferred authority according to a fixed trans-historical hierarchy, it exploits this hierarchical authority by using it to assert a mode of artistic production and visual practice in which certain

¹⁵⁸ Such reincarnation rituals were institutionalized in Tibetan Buddhism around the thirteenth century with the reincarnated position of the Karmapa of the Karma Kagyu; see Peter Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 18.

¹⁵⁹ The political structure of khanates from this period was a kind of federated aristocracy, see the discussed in David Sneath, *The Headless State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

¹⁶⁰ See Leonard van der Kuijp, "The Dalai Lamas and the Origins of Reincarnate Lamas," in *The Tibetan History Reader*, edited by Gray Tuttle and Kurtis Schaeffer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 336–339.

¹⁶¹ The identification of the Dalai Lama as Avalokiteśvara is associated with the Fifth Dalai Lama's enthronement in Lhasa around 1645, and continued assertions in subsequent decades; see Sam van Schaik, *Tibet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 123.

¹⁶² The historical incident of this cover-up is well-known, see *ibid.*, 129. A recent work on the Desi that reorients analysis of his work less towards power politics and more towards its reworking of extant cosmological influences is Ian MacCormack, "Buddhism and State in Seventeenth-Century Tibet" (PhD. diss., Harvard University, 2018).

art historical figures and their associated works become vested with an adjacent position of authority. For instance, given the prominence of the Menla Dondrup's name also in red, he was of special interest. Menla Dondrup's art and his associated painting style would have been widely extant at the center of the Ganden Phodrang in Lhasa, and thus the style served as a clear local precedent from which to continue and expand the same style of image production from the central position of Lhasa. Certainly, the Menla style is dominant throughout the latter history of Tibetan painting after this period, at least partially due to sponsorship by the Ganden Phodrang.

In addition to the *Handbook's* implicit institutionalization of a certain art historical narrative with a current style of painting, the text also explicitly asserts its purport relative to the established processes of depicting icons. Revisiting a quote from the *Handbook* mentioned above, it is intended "To . . . clarify erroneous positions . . . so that average artisans in Lhasa will have a clearer model of iconometry compared to difficult ancient models . . ." ¹⁶³ In its claim that "ancient models" are insufficient for the propagation of standard religious images, the *Handbook* somewhat acknowledges its divergence from an earlier class of objects with the same purport, that of models of icons as opposed to the icons themselves. Despite the *Handbook's* invocation of a history of Buddhist art centered around iconic production, there is awareness of rupture from the past, though this rupture is largely minimized and subsumed by labeling ancient models as "difficult". Such criticism is grounded on a unique position from which the author of the *Handbook* views these earlier works. The the Ganden Phodrang certainly had textual descriptions of iconometry and iconography in canonical texts and other works concerning the production of art available to it. In addition to much older texts such as the *Citrakāṣṇa*, these texts must have included iconometric pronouncements in sources scholar Ernesto Lo Bue identifies as primary to iconometrical standards throughout Tibetan society: the *Pratimālakṣaṇa sūtra* (circa tenth century), the *Mahāsaṃvarodaya* tantra, and the *Kālacakra* tantra. ¹⁶⁴ There were also later iconometrical treatises derived from these texts, such as Menla Dondrup's own treatises on art, but these differ significantly from the account in the *Handbook*. For instance, in the case of Menla's text, there is hardly any attempt to account for art prior to that of Menla himself. ¹⁶⁵ With recourse to the canonical authority of such texts, the *Handbook* seeks to reposition itself over a field of objects—models for the production of icons—that otherwise goes unmentioned in the history of Buddhist art narrated by the *Handbook*, and is of negligible authority in comparison to the canonical iconometry texts themselves.

In sum, the *Handbook* positions itself as an authority by asserting a particular continuity of Buddhist art from the historical Buddha to recent Tibetan development, then softly critiquing the methods used to propagate this art. Notably, this authority also positions the *Handbook* in a kind of rift between the overt religious power invested in the icons themselves and the hierarchical authority attached to the person of the Dalai Lama and his lineages. The *Handbook* is obliquely connected to both, extending its authority through its positional proximity someplace between the two. Such a position somewhat resembles the competing visual orders of the *Handbook* described above, in which the assertion of a coordinate plane and the representation of the icon work in combination.

¹⁶³ See note 32.

¹⁶⁴ Lo Bue, "Iconographic," 195. Discussion of scholarship on the probable dating of *Pratimālakṣaṇa sūtra* is provided in Charles Willemen, "The Buddhist *Pratimālakṣaṇa*," *Pacific World* 3:9 (Fall, 2007): 151–168.

¹⁶⁵ Philip Denwood summarizes the contents of Menla's iconometrical text entitled "*bDe bar gshegs pa'i sku gzugs kyi tshad kyi rab tu by ed pa' i yid bzhin gyi nor bu*, or 'The wish-granting gem: a treatise on the proportions of images of the sugatas,'" Denwood, "Treatise," 25.

2.4.2. Functional Precedents

While the *Handbook's* text asserts a distinct position of authority, its pictures position the *Handbook* into historical continuum defined less by such authority than a certain function. This functional classification follows the terminology provided in the *Handbook* itself, such as "model of iconometry" and "difficult ancient models." Models for the production of Buddhist art and icons were clearly made prior to the *Handbook*, and despite the claim that they were "difficult", these models were still successfully used in the production of Buddhist art for several centuries. Any claim of their difficulty must be conjectural to some degree, not only because of the temporal divide between when such a claim was made and when the earlier models were used, but also because of the distinct positions of who made the claim and of the "ancient" artists themselves. For a clearer understanding of the *Handbook's* overall position relative to art history, its claims must be understood in comparison to the actual models supposedly improved by the *Handbook*, as well as the larger continuum of relevant objects in its class, precedents as well as objects produced after the circulation of the *Handbook*. Accordingly, this section examines this continuum according to three modalities: first, through a historical series of Buddhist preparatory sketches that had an analogous function to the *Handbook*; second, extant historical icons themselves, of which some must reflect the use of preparatory models, or at least some relationship to the use of models, as evident from the icons' specific forms and circumstances; third, some examples of objects produced after the *Handbook* that attest to changing practices and perceptions in subsequent periods. Through comparison with the pictures and diagrams in the *Handbook* itself, it is clearer that the intended improvements to ancient models were derived from interpretation of the *Kālacakra* tantra itself. Moreover, the application of the tantra in this manner must have also been guided by a sense of the more general tendencies appropriate to the *Kālacakra* tantra, and which are implicit to adaptation towards the norms of the *Kālacakra* tantra. Art production under the Desi was marked by increased institutional oversight and control over the artistic process, which had a clear effect on the format and function of a range of subsequent objects.

While there are precedents for models of Buddhist icons that did not themselves function as icons, reliably historicizing such earlier models and their art historical development is difficult given the overall disinterest in the preservation of such models for much of Buddhist art history. Thus, there is a general lack of evidence, especially in earlier periods. The earliest examples of such models must be the sketches found in the sealed Dunhuang Cave 17 (discussed in the first chapter), given the exceptional durability of the documents found in the cave. Sarah Fraser has written an extensive, focused analysis of these sketches, stating that "For the most part, the Dunhuang drawings are ephemeral notes from the process of painting and appear to be personal notations without patrons, student followers, or an audience in mind. Rather, they are working notes for the artist."¹⁶⁶ Presumably, non-extant models from the same period or earlier, produced outside of the Dunhuang cave, were also private and ephemeral, such that they were not meant to be preserved beyond their immediate function in relation to an artist's individual tasks. The Dunhuang manuscripts thus may be taken to exemplify regional East and Central Asian practices in Buddhist art production from the period of the eleventh century and likely longer. A more general ephemerality among models might be one factor in the material construction of the handbook on its more durable substrates.

Examining one of the model sketches from Dunhuang further elaborates some of the differences between this class of older model drawings and those in the *Handbook*. Fig. 2.6. is a

¹⁶⁶ Sarah Fraser, *Performing the Visual* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 111.

photograph of a paper manuscript from Dunhuang meant to be used with a pounce to initially lay out a figure on a wall in preparation for mural painting. The format of this sketch also allows for relatively exact and repeated reproduction of the figure. The manuscript consists of a sheet of paper on which a brushed line drawing of a Buddha is sketched in black ink. The figure's identity as a Buddha is evident given the figure's very clear iconography. For instance, the cranial protuberance atop the figure's head is commonly identified by the Sanskrit term *uṣṇīṣa* and is one of the standard *lakṣaṇa* or physical signs of identity as a wisened Buddha. An assortment of other indicators common to images of the Buddha are also clear: the figure's robe, posture, haloes, and lotus throne together are common in depictions of the Buddha. Regularly spaced along each of the ink contour lines of the figure are pinholes. As this object was intended to reproduce the figural form of the Buddha, some material would have been pressed through the holes to transmit a preparatory dotted form of the Buddha onto walls, upon which dots could easily be connected through line drawing.

There is an inherent degree of exactitude in this format. The drawing of the figure was made to fit snugly within the outlined box-shaped border near the edges of the paper, indicating that the scale of the Buddha was intentional relative to the wall space on which it was to be reproduced. Moreover, the circular lines of the haloes surrounding the head and body of the Buddha appear symmetrically formed without any hesitations in the movement of the brush along their contours, suggesting the use of an aid such as a compass in their production. The mathematical exactitude of the circles is reflected in the positioning of the Buddha, as the centers of the haloes coincide with the center of the face and chest of the Buddha, respectively. There are, however, no geometrical guidelines that determine the proper iconometry of the figure, either in terms of standardized measurement or in the division and relation of parts to the whole, as was evident throughout Fig. 2.1. Such guidelines were evidently unnecessary for these depictions on artists' personal sketches, as these forms had an inherent viability as iconic, such that their function as models was not hindered. The figure of the Buddha within the haloes is also largely symmetrical, though this symmetry does not suggest anything rigidly iconometric beyond the care of a competent artist. This figure is marked by a sense of directness, familiarity, and ease with the brush that does not suggest any attempt at conformity to established measurement. Line widths and curves are somewhat brusque, as in the unaffected lines depicting the hair and ears of the figure, and shapes are simple, as in the lozenge that defines the contour of the head. The depicted lotus throne and canopy set is sized to adapt exactly within the border of the compositional box, and its parts, such as its foliage, are not symmetrical and seem to only serve in filling space. The addition of a grid or extra guidelines would have been superfluous given the inherent simplicity of the form overall. A resultant icon reproduced on a shrine wall, in a similar manner to many other caves at Dunhuang, would have perpetuated such simplicity.

Other model drawings have been identified from between the period after the sealing of Dunhuang Cave 17 and the production of the *Handbook*. These also lack iconometric guidelines. Figs. 2.7. and 2.8. reproduce manuscripts that collect model drawings dated around the middle to late fifteenth century. Since these drawings are collected and distributed in a codex and a loose-leaf *dpe-cha*-style manuscript, respectively, they do not have pinholes nor function with pounces, and can thus be understood as more functionally analogous to the drawings in the *Handbook*. They are pictorial references meant to guide the production of pictures on other surfaces, presumably at different scales. Despite their functional similarities, Fig. 2.7. and 2.8. differ in the formality and precision of their drawings, reflecting individualized artistic approaches to the creation of iconic forms. Lines on Fig. 2.8. are much more controlled and

detailed in comparison with Fig. 2.7. For example, there is a greater degree of distension in the face and hair of Fig. 2.7., compared to the fine lines and careful positioning of the facial features and even hair curls of figures in Fig. 2.8. These fine lines are somewhat enabled by the use of sized fabric drawing surface, similar to that of the *Handbook*. The fineness of depiction in the drawings of Fig. 2.8. are almost superfluous. For instance, despite the unfinished depiction of the Buddha's throne in its upper right corner, the surfaces of the depicted Buddha's robes are thoroughly decorated with the individual patches from which the robe is said to be constructed, such that the patches are all roughly the same size, yet in their attempt to conform to both the curvature of the Buddha's body and the individual creases of the robe as it bunches itself together, the patches form into varied shapes. Presumably, the stylistic difference between these two model manuscripts was translated to the icons derived from them, such that icons could likewise be formally differentiated according to the stylistic propensities of individual artists.

These two fifteenth century examples also lack the guidelines of the pictures in the *Handbook*. The artists of the two models appear to have had no use for geometric, diagrammatical scaffolding in transferring their images onto iconic formats. The individual figures depicted in Fig. 2.8. especially appear to conform to not only the iconographic richness of individual figures' ornamentation, but also the rigid compositional standards of the *Handbook*, for example in the left-right symmetry and precise positioning of the distinctive parts of each of the depicted figures' faces, such as the those of the Buddha and those of the tantric deities. Such precise model drafting suggests that overt diagrammatic guidelines measuring the various parts of iconic figural forms was not only extraneous to the production of icons and their models, but further, that iconic production without overt measurement could be condoned by Buddhists and their institutions for ritual use, regardless of the formal differences and iconometric inaccuracies of individual artists relative to canonical texts.

While the few examples of extant model drawings from periods before the seventeenth century do not preclude the possibility of rigorously iconometric Buddhist model drawings similar to those of the *Handbook*, they do illustrate what the *Handbook's* vague claim of their "difficulty" pertains to, as they vary in style from artist to artist and lack overt references to measurement and iconometric statutes. There is also an issue of durability, though this issue seems to be a factor of the variance among individual artists' models. Clearly, one of the primary interests of the Desi and whomever else was responsible for the production of the *Handbook* was to standardize and regulate the production of Buddhist icons to conform to a common model. Fidelity to iconometric standards appears almost secondary to standardization. Given the disconnect between grid and figure in the *Handbook* itself, and given the quality of certain older sketches such the one photographed in Fig. 2.8., iconometric rigor even seems to be less of an ideal for the production icons than it was a means of asserting the authority of the *Handbook* relative to other models that could have an equal degree of fineness and durability.

2.4.3. Icons

Ritual icons produced prior to the *Handbook* also attest to the relative iconometric freedom accorded to artists. This is evident on a few extant examples of the two embracing main deities of the *Kālacakra* tantra, the same deities depicted in Fig. 2.1. Photographs of relevant murals from two Tibetan Buddhist ritual sites in Ladakh, India, provide some evidence of the broader art historical development of *Kālacakra* imagery in the period prior to the creation of the *Handbook* at the Ganden Phodrang. These earlier murals fit largely within the general shape of art historical development tracked in this dissertation, in that the figures play a subordinate role

in the collection and organization of tantric systems more generally, rather than asserting their own system of ritual practice, art production, and ideological tendencies. The mural programs of these two sites in Ladakh were sponsored by the 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud, a minor lineage of the large bKa'-brgyud sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Using inscriptions and style as evidence, Chiara Bellini has dated the mural programs associated with 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud sponsorship in Ladakh to sometime after the year 1400, during an intermediary period when ritual concepts and practices from the recently established Geluk sect were being incorporated by other sects, yet prior to the expansion of the Desi's broader program.¹⁶⁷ Photographs from the Lha-khang So-ma subtemple of the A-lci Monastery in Ladakh present the *Kālacakra* deities as tantric icons of significant size, relative to the large array of smaller and larger Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities, and others covering the surfaces walls inside the temple wall (see Fig. 2.9.a. and Fig. 2.9.b.). This arrangement of worthies resembles the ordering and classification of different Buddhist systems in the work of Abhayākaragupta and Khedrup Je (mentioned above), among others. The embracing *Kālacakra* and *Viśvamātā* deities are painted in a rectangular niche, similar in size to the niches other figures arranged around a larger Buddha on the center of the wall. The size of the niche with the *Kālacakra* deities is the third-largest, after that of the Buddha and some Bodhisattvas, but the prominence of the tantric deities' niche is clear relative to the much more numerous smaller figures filling up the remaining space on the wall. Looking at the *Kālacakra* deities themselves, the figures can still be clearly identified by their iconographical traits, such as the rear figure's twelve sets of arms and four heads. The bodies' proportions are remarkably distinct, however, from those of the same figures in the Handbook. One salient detail is the greater height and size of the rear figure's head relative to the rest of the deity's body; a less prominent detail is the exaggerated length of the parts of the bent leg relative to the other—that is, one leg is significantly longer than the other. It is evident that the figure was drawn onto the wall with much more attention paid to iconographic representation versus standardized proportion and iconometry.

Another *Kālacakra* icon is depicted in the nearby Sa-spo-la caves (Fig. 2.10.), likewise sponsored by the 'Bri-gung and painted among figures analogous to the ones in the previous mural. This *Kālacakra* figure again has a large head relative to its body, though the deity's arms extend further out from the torso, and the figure's legs are closer in length. Fig. 2.11. overlays a simple contour outline of each mural's figures, each in their own color, with the heights of the two figures roughly matched and their feet positioned in the same spaces. It is evident that despite their common sponsorship, dating, and positioning in the same vicinity of Ladakh, no measures were undertaken to match the lengths of the bodies' varied parts, nor the angles of their articulation. The value of the *Kālacakra* deities at these sites is the assertion of their presence relative to the collected array of figures throughout each of the temples. This presence is marked by iconographic fidelity rather than iconometric exactitude.

Portrait-style *thangka* paintings of *Kālacakra* and *Viśvamātā* in the Nepalese style dated to the 1300s and 1400s are also extant. These are connected to Ngor Monastery sponsorship given the close affinities among Ngor, the Nepalese style of art sponsored there, and the monastery's affinity to *Vajrāvalī* more generally, which served as the ground for *Kālacakra*

¹⁶⁷ Chiara Bellini "The Paintings of the Caves of Sa spo la in Ladakh," in *From Mediterranean to Himalaya*, edited by Dramdul and Francesco Sferra (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue Chubanshe 中國藏學出版社, 2014). Bellini's work expands from the more general account in David Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski, *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh* (Warminster, Eng.: Aris & Phillips, 1977), 79–80, which provisionally dated the murals more generally to sometime after the eleventh century. The Desi's program is discussed below.

imagery. The current status of these paintings as individual objects in separate collections disconnected from the original spatial and ritual environments that housed them makes systematic analysis of their functions relative to analogous paintings at Ngor more difficult. Nonetheless, the depictions in Fig. 2.12. and Fig. 2.13. also clearly vary from each other in form, not only in the later figures' elongated body parts and overall vertically oriented postures, but also in the paintings' distinct decorative tendencies. While both feature extensive decoration throughout their compositions, the earlier painting has stronger color contrasts, evident, for instance, in the facial features of Kālacakra, with eyebrows and other parts highlighted more extensively in whites and reds that appear more striking on the blue ground of the face. Some degree of difference in the ritual functionality of the two paintings is also suggested by the unique sets of figures surrounding the central deities. The earlier painting serves a more memorial and organizational function, as the top register of figures above Kālacakra include the Ngor abbot Abhayākaragupta on the left and other historical Indian and Tibetan monks proceeding to the right and into the next row. Other figures on the painting include deities from the other tantric systems in the *Vajrāvalī*, such as a series of Herukas. Fig. 2.13. appears to depict figures from the *Kālacakra maṇḍala* itself, as the majority of figures are ornamented tantric deities in coitus. As such, the latter painting is more closely related to the rituals of the *Kālacakra* tantra itself and presumably functioned accordingly. In terms of form, the more overtly decorative qualities of the older painting suggest that artists could differentiate the formal qualities of icons, their shapes, measures, and decorations, according to how a painting functioned.

The different forms of these icons further suggests that prior to the Handbook, iconometry, or at least fidelity to iconometric standards, could be manipulated according to the intended purposes of an icon and the individual practices of an artists. Portrayal of the *Kālacakra* deities in itself did not determine the formal configuration of a painting, but in the example of Fig. 2.13., Kālacakra ritual might have inspired a more subdued, controlled, and regular mode of depiction. These qualities in particular are also more pronounced in the depiction of figures in the *Handbook* and would fit better with the Desi's larger program.

2.5 Historical Context

The changes in iconic production asserted by the *Handbook* were part of a much larger ideological program sponsored by the Desi and undertaken in the works of the Ganden Phodrang. The Desi was in a very good position to implement such a program, and his position of power relative to the history of the Ganden Phodrang and the Geluk-pa sect is well known. Ian McCormick provides a concise biography:

Sangyé Gyatso was the scion of a local aristocratic family, groomed for rule from an early age by the Dalai Lama himself. In 1679, he was designated as "Desi" During the [Dalai Lama's] decline, Sangyé Gyatso increasingly assumed responsibility for all aspects of governance. He took complete control upon the Dalai Lama's death in 1682 and oversaw the selection and upbringing of the sixth Dalai Lama¹⁶⁸

The Desi had a specific agenda beyond control of extant institutions. The Desi worked extensively on this agenda, originally with the Fifth Dalai Lama, but more intensively in the years after the Dalai Lama's death, given the Desi's greater powers. Kurtis Schaeffer has noted:

¹⁶⁸ McCormack, "Buddhism," 1.

[This agenda] sought to systematize Tibetan cultural life and practice . . . through writing, systematizing bodily practices in the form of medical treatises, spatial practices in ritual manuals, time in the form of astrological writings and the institution of an officially sanctioned New Year, administrative practice in the form of rules for court servants, and religious discourse in the form of polemical, historical, and philosophical writings. . . . the corpus of writing left by the Dalai Lama and his regent represents the boldest attempt ever to create a broad cultural hegemony in Tibet.¹⁶⁹

This attempt at a hegemony was carried out on many levels. In addition to the sponsorship of architecture and other art, there was prodigious textual output. The reception of the Desi's writings throughout Tibetan Buddhist society easily positions him as major figure within the vast exegetical tradition of the religion. One distinction of this output is that unlike much extant Tibetan writing from earlier periods, his texts frequently attempted to encompass subjects that had not been brought within mainstream Tibetan Buddhist religious discourse. Such writing is represented by the *Beryl (Vaidūrya)* series of volumes, of which he claimed ultimate authorship, despite his certainly sponsoring the work of a range of experts in respective fields and appropriating their work for the texts, as befit his position in that society.¹⁷⁰ The primary *Beryl* texts are *Yellow Beryl*, *Blue Beryl*, and *White Beryl*, covering religious institutional history, medicine, and astral sciences, respectively.¹⁷¹ There are also *Red Beryl* and *Black Beryl* texts on magic and curses, as well as auto-commentaries such as the *Mirror of Beryl* for *Blue Beryl*, and the aforementioned *Polishing Beryl*, most of which is devoted to commenting on contentious points from *White Beryl*, rather than the topic of art.¹⁷² Gyurme Dorje describes the orientations of *Blue Beryl* and *White Beryl* especially: "minor rituals . . . are emphasised not for the sake of spiritual enlightenment or emancipation from the sufferings of cyclic existence, but to determine far more mundane matters: natal horoscope, rites of passage marital compatibility, material success, or the ritual avoidance of impending tragedies."¹⁷³ The Desi's position, not quite a spiritual leader like the Dalai Lama, appears to have pushed his individual agenda towards the mundane. Art (more properly, "*bzo-rig-pa*") as a topic for commentary is relegated to minor sections in the later parts of the *White Beryl* and *Polishing Beryl*. Comments on art comprise one chapter in the extensive *Polishing Beryl*, which totally has more than 1,000 pages primarily structured around issues related to astronomy and divination. The importance of mathematical exactitude in astronomy and its affiliated disciplines such as cosmology, astrology, calendrics, and others, thus determines the Desi's assertions regarding the construction of art, inasmuch as the exact measurement of the physical cosmos is to be translated into microcosmic depictions of its aspects.

Given this context, the *Handbook* fits within the Desi's wider agenda that fixed the many aspects of mundane life within a standardized conceptual framework and exacting system of measurements, in a general assertion of normative rules and law at various scales, all under the oversight of the Desi. Regarding the orientation of this hegemonic assertion, analysis by Janet

¹⁶⁹ Kurtis Schaeffer "The Fifth Dalai Lama," in *The Tibetan History Reader*, edited by Gray Tuttle and Kurtis Schaeffer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 356.

¹⁷⁰ As E. Gene Smith and others have pointed out, the Desi probably had others do much of the composition of these works for him. E. Gene Smith and Kurtis R Schaeffer. *Among Tibetan Texts* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), .

¹⁷¹ The text of *White Beryl* used is Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, *Phug lugs rtsis kyi legs bshad mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan bai dūr dkar po'i do shal dpyod ldan snying nor* (New Delhi: T. Tsepel Taikhang, 1972), Buddhist Digital Resource Center, "The Buddhist Digital Archives," accessed August 10, 2023, <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW30116>.

¹⁷² Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, et al., *G.ya' Sel*.

¹⁷³ Gyurme Dorje, Bsod-nams Dpal-'byor, Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, and Smin-gling Lo-chen Dharma-śrī, *Tibetan Elemental Divination Paintings* (London: John Eskenazi in association with Sam Fogg, 2001), 11.

Gyatso identifies the Desi's medical writing and its relevant art as exemplifying a moment characterized by an epistemic shift, a leaning away from Buddhist metaphysics and towards an understanding of the world defined by a closer engagement with observable aspects of the physical world.¹⁷⁴ This shift is clearly comparable to the concurrent movements elsewhere, such as the theorization of the coordinate plane by René Descartes in the 1600s, though Gyatso is careful not to conflate European and Tibetan modes:

[Tibetan terms for such knowledge, like *rig-pa* or *dpyad-pa* are] kinds of investigation that aim to foster critical and often empirically based ways of investigating and knowing about the world. But certainly neither term includes everything that the modern notion of science denotes, in either kind or degree. What is more, both *rig pa* and *dpyad pa* are used frequently in Buddhist contexts to denote critical ways of knowing with transcendent or spiritual aims.¹⁷⁵

Engagement with the Desi's treatments of art in the *Handbook* and elsewhere likewise suggests that rather than completely reorienting Tibetan Buddhism towards an appreciation of the phenomenal world through observation, the Desi's representations of the world, including visual representations, were to be bound to received canonical descriptions, which included vast cosmologies comprised of their own exacting measurements and proportions. In terms of the cosmology put forward in *White Beryl*, the system is definitively grounded on the *Kālacakra Abbreviated Tantra* and its commentaries.

Under the Desi, work was to be done in legitimating the centrality of this traditional cosmology and defining a proper orientation to it. The task of exegesis in the text of the *White Beryl* was precisely to rectify the truth of canonical texts with current phenomena, for example to provide more exact calendrics, and to mathematically integrate this calendrical system with other systems, such as that of traditional China. A simple overview of the contents of the *White Beryl* manuscript can point to its aims. The text has 35 chapters, but can be more generally divided into four parts, the first of which consists of eleven chapters, which start by paying homage to the *Kālacakra* tantra, then proceeds to update extant calendrical computations according to advances in the *Phug-pa* (also called *Phug-lugs*) system of calendrics.¹⁷⁶ The *Phug-pa* system was itself established in the 1400s as its own kind of rectification grounded on the *Kālacakra* tradition, and became one of two primary methods of calendrical calculation within Tibetan society.¹⁷⁷ The second part of the *White Beryl* text consists of eleven chapters dedicated to the mechanics of astrological prognostication, and it surveys a range of astral systems, Buddhist and otherwise. For instance, the Hindu text of the *Swarodaya tantra*, the most prominent source for integration into the Desi's system, is treated in some depth, as are Chinese and native Tibetan systems. The next twelve chapters treat more practical ends of prognostication, including marriage, illness, and funerary concerns. The final chapter treats the five disciplines of knowledge ("*rigs gnas lnga sogs kyi le'u*"), one of which is the aforementioned topic of art (*bzo-rig*).¹⁷⁸ Thus, while the *Kālacakra* tantra remains fundamental to the Desi's text, the text then opens to seemingly competitive systems, while still reserving pride of place for the

¹⁷⁴ Janet Gyatso, *Being Human in a Buddhist World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁷⁶ *White Beryl's* title "*Phug lugs rtsis kyi legs bshad mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan bai dūr dkar po'i do shal dpyod ldan snying nor*," positions the text specifically as a commentary of the *Phug-lugs* tradition.

¹⁷⁷ For some background in *Phug-pa* and the other system of *mtshur-phu* or *mtshur-lugs*, see Edward Henning, *Kālacakra And the Tibetan Calendar* (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, 2007), 2–4; and Dorje, *Elemental*, 15–16.

¹⁷⁸ Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, *Phug lugs rtsis*.

Kālacakra tantra as a kind of ground.

Relative to the *Handbook*, *White Beryl* is primarily textual, in that its illustrations are infrequent and not integral to the purport of the text. Some of the manuscript's illustrations do, however, work to conceptualize and order disparate astral systems, and even to visually integrate them into a single whole. Fig. 2.14. reproduces two leaves scanned from a standard manuscript version of *White Beryl*, on which are depicted magic squares, composed of arithmetically matched lines of numbers on a nine-square grid (inscribed with Tibetan digits); and these magic squares surround a central tortoise.¹⁷⁹ The leaves are intended to be seen arranged close to each other, such that the two combined leaves depict a complete picture of the front and rear parts of the tortoise. The tortoise itself is key to the integration of systems, as it serves as a Buddhist cosmogenic image upon which the Bodhisattva of wisdom Mañjuśrī is attested to have inscribed significant markings, collecting and arranging them into something like a map on the flat side of an overturned tortoise's shell.¹⁸⁰ Several scholars have identified this tortoise in relation to much older Chinese precedents, especially given the tortoise shell's centrally positioned magic square. The tortoise and magic square combination is, according to traditional Chinese conventions, associated with the mythical, prehistoric culture hero Yu the Great (大禹) who saw the numerically decorated tortoise appear near the Luo River.¹⁸¹ The *White Beryl* illustration is clearly derived from the image of this Chinese tortoise, in that the Desi's tortoise shell not only has the square, but has also gained, in concentric frames around the central magic square, depictions of the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac, a set of Chinese trigrams, and other esoteric divinatory markings, all of which are elucidated in the text of the *White Beryl*.

The function of the tortoise image in the *White Beryl* manuscript is clearly to assimilate divergent divination systems and their symbols into a composite image and narrative grounded in common stories about the ancient past.¹⁸² Yet as an illustration, this composite tortoise retains its diagrammatic function in the ordering of the various symbol systems, as well as its inherent function as an illustration of content elucidated in the text and not as any icon in itself. The picture of the turtle appears alongside mathematical diagrams and charts of various kinds, and the manuscript does not differentiate the ontological status of its figures, not isolating some as icons and others as illustrations. The tortoise is not marked in the manner of the icons discussed in the first chapter. In this way the picture of the tortoise thus functions in an analogous manner to the illustrations of Buddhist figures in the *Handbook*.

However, the image of the composite tortoise does serve as a kind of model. It is a form copied onto other formats, and this process of copying can be used to understand a significant characteristic of the form's dissemination into broader Tibetan Buddhist society. Considering the notoriety of *White Beryl* throughout Tibetan society after its composition, the Desi's text is very likely integral to the popular dissemination of the tortoise's image.¹⁸³ In fact, the Desi's text presents a systematic expostulation of how the tortoise image and its surrounding magic squares

¹⁷⁹ Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, *Phug lugs rtsis*, 163–64.

¹⁸⁰ The tortoise is discussed in Béla Kelényi, "The Cult of Good Luck," in *Demons and Protectors* (Budapest: Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Art, 2003), 50–51. The Tibetan name of this tortoise is "*mahā gser gyi rus sba!*" or the "great golden bone-tortoise."

¹⁸¹ Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, "A Tibetan Image of Divination," in *Imagining Chinese Medicine* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 436.

¹⁸² Note that the *White Beryl* text identifies the tortoise as itself a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, thus further casting the narrative within a larger Buddhist world system. See Dorje, *Elemental*, 46.

¹⁸³ See Gyurme Dorje's discussion of the sources for the Desi's account in *White Beryl*, *ibid.* and *ibid.*, 53–59.

are to be used in divination.¹⁸⁴ The Desi's divination technique was notable enough to have been disseminated beyond the domain of the Ganden Phodrang. For instance, about sixty years after the Desi's death, Sa-skya sect patriarchs commissioned a very finely crafted, fully painted manuscript illustrating the tortoise divination, attributed to a named monk-artist bSod-nams dPal-'byor.¹⁸⁵ One of the central pictures of this manuscript is that of the tortoise and squares, spread across seven manuscript folio pages (Fig. 2.15.). In addition to the fundamental diagrammatic layout of the magic squares and esoteric symbols on the body of the tortoise, the illustration is notable for the extensive decorative program and coloration throughout the compositional space. For instance, swirling water and cloud forms do much to mitigate the diagrammaticism of the illustrations' functional parts. Such decoration seems to be an immediate reaction to the visual tendencies and interests of the Desi's original manuscript, which minimized the decoration of its highly technical charts and graphs. The visual expressiveness of the Sa-skya manuscript should also be contrasted with the dry and mechanical precision of the illustrations in the *Handbook*, wherein gridlines and quantification serve as their own kind of decoration.

While the Sa-skya manuscript was very clearly meant to valorize the process of tortoise divination through its combination of functional charts and sumptuous decorative program, the tortoise image was also copied for other functional purposes. Pictures of this reptile have become commonly accepted features in many Tibetan households. Such pictures are, to my knowledge, only available as works produced in the centuries after the *White Beryl* text. Known as a *Srid-pa-ho*, such pictures are reproduced on single sheets of paper or cloth and used for talismanic effect. As Kelényi writes of the *Srid-pa-ho*, "It usually hangs on the door in order to keep evil spirits out of the house, but may also be carried in wedding processions from the house of the bridegroom to house the bride. It is sometimes placed directly on the cradle of the newborn baby."¹⁸⁶ As such, many viewers must lose much of the iconographic meaning in the tortoise's discrete symbols. Fig. 2.16. presents an example of a *Srid-pa-ho* attributed to the nineteenth century and collected in the Rubin Museum.¹⁸⁷ The tortoise plays a somewhat diminutive part of the composition as a whole, which collects various Buddhist and mundane figures around a central palatial compound. The tortoise has lost much of its symbolic imagery, save for essential features such as the magic square, trigrams, zodiac, and its overall orientation, instead serving in itself as an auspicious not at all meant to be used in the process of prognostication.

Given these examples, the epistemic shift asserted by the Desi may thus be more generally characterized as a short-lived assertion of principles derived from the *Kālacakra* tantra, such as exactitude and a more rigorous effort to quantify the phenomenal world. Political factors, such as Mongol military incursions into and the administrative ineffectiveness of the Sixth Dalai Lama, stopped the Desi's agenda from continuing, but the textual and artistic works he sponsored and produced are still valued. While the *Handbook* appears to have largely been relegated to storage throughout its history, it does present an especially pronounced iteration of an ordering derived from the *Kālacakra* and applied to the visual realm. The influence of the *Handbook's* call for more exacting iconometrical standards is palpable. Even though most subsequent model books lack the very extensive grid lines of the *Handbook*, they do feature

¹⁸⁴ Divination undertakes a series long mathematical formulae with large parts comprised of taking the year and time of one's birth and fixing them to Chinese calendrics associated with the sexagenary cycle and various elemental forces. The process is summarized in *ibid.*, 64–117.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁸⁶ Kelényi, "Cult," 49.

¹⁸⁷ The Rubin Museum's accession number for this object is C2002.30.8.

invariably include more basic guidelines, with the depiction on Fig. 2.2. being somewhat more thoroughly ordered than most.

CHAPTER 3: AMBIVALENCE

3.1. Introduction

The *Kālacakra* tantra has had a continuous place in the imperial capital of Beijing since 1744, about eight years into the reign of the Qianlong Emperor (1735–1796), the Manchu ruler of the Qing empire (1636–1912). From the outside, this place is a nondescript subsidiary building in the monastery complex known as the Yonghe Gong (in Chinese 雍和宮, translated "Palace of Eternal Harmony"), which was itself originally a princely palace constructed in 1694 for the enjoyment of the Yongzheng emperor (1678–1735) and eventually used to hold his coffin for a period after his death. Qianlong completely rededicated his father's place into a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in 1744, at which time the array of individual buildings were each adapted to different Buddhist functions. This reorganization took place under the direction of the imperial State Preceptor (國師) the Third Zhangjia Hutuktu (lCang-skya Qutuy-tu, a reincarnation lineage¹⁸⁸) Rolpay Dorje (Rol-pa'i rDo-rje, 1717–1786), an ethnically Monguor monk of the Geluk-pa sect, Qianlong's childhood companion, and Qianlong's personal "root" lama (*rtsa-ba'i bla-ma*), who conferred *Kālacakra* initiations over Qianlong,¹⁸⁹ and oversaw innumerable other Buddhist projects at the court, including translations of the vast Buddhist canon into both Mongolian and Manchu languages. The *Kālacakra* Hall thus stands as a sign of their degree of interest in this tantra.

This chapter examines how the *Kālacakra* Hall at the Yonghe Gong complex was assimilated into a Qing imperial paradigm, which domesticated the *Kālacakra* tantra by selectively determining the position of the tantra relative to the larger purposes of the empire, and which parts of the tantra were relevant for the operation of the site.

3.2. Methods

Any study of an object produced during Qianlong's reign and especially sponsored by the emperor himself demands a methodological openness to multiple perspectives, or even perhaps multiple epistemes. This is certainly due to the nature of the multiethnic Qing empire, with Manchu rulership over a traditionally Chinese imperial state that sponsored specialists from a diversity of religions and ethnic groups at its court. However, this methodological openness had not quite been valued in modern scholarship generally until the late 1990s with the publication of a series of scholarly works that could incorporate not just the vast Chinese-language corpus of historical source texts from the period, but also texts in Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian, and other languages. Such methodological openness is certainly intertwined with the fundamental understanding that such multiculturalism was also integral to how the Manchu court itself conceptualized its rulership. So-called New Qing History since the late 1990s has been fairly extensive, with some complaints regarding the overprivileging of difference between minorities and majority. However, evidence is clear regarding the importance of variance in identity at that time, with Pamela Crossley's *A Translucent Mirror* serving as a monument of this New Qing scholarship, as it provides a convincing account of the simultaneous multiplicity of identities

¹⁸⁸ The lineage's title is lCang-skya Qutuy-tu, a half Tibetan half Mongolian title (Mongolian Хытарт), "lCang-skya" derived from a place near the lineage's base monastery of dGon-lung in Qinghai Province, China. Rolpay Dorje's biography was written by the Third Thukun: Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma, *lCang skya rol pa'i rdo rje'i rnam thar* (Lanzhou, China: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun, 1989). The Chinese translation of the biography is by Qingying CHEN 陈庆英 and Lianlong MA 马连龙, trans., *Zhangjia Guoshi Ruobi Duoqi* 章嘉国师若必多吉 (Beijing, Zhongguo Zang Xue Chubanshe 中国藏学出版社, 2007). A useful English biography is provided in Smith and Schaeffer, *Among*, 133–146.

¹⁸⁹ James Hevia, "The Scandal of Inequality," *positions* 1/3 (February 1995): 109.

presented by the Qing court in their words and policies.¹⁹⁰ In more recent historical studies, multilingual methodological openness has been adapted towards further understanding of central Asian social groups and policies in their interactions with empire and environment.

One reason Crossley's work remains convincing is that the ideology of multiplicity is reflected rather translucently in the art relevant to the Qing court. Patricia Berger's study of Qianlong's sponsorship and production of Buddhist art in *Empire of Emptiness* and other works exemplifies this, in that the study better accounts for the inherently multicultural religion of Buddhism, which assimilated forms and practices from much of Asia, in the understanding Qianlong's overall reign.¹⁹¹ Likewise, art historical scholarship itself serves as a further expansion of the methodological openness necessary to understand the Qing dynasty. Berger's study is certainly not limited to purely visual materials, and the analysis of, for instance, stela texts, is integral to understanding the sites where the stelae are deployed.¹⁹²

The trajectory of this dissertation chapter moves in another direction, as Qianlong's rulership and state ideological tendencies are analyzed to track the further deployment of the *Kālacakra* tantra and its relevant art. Given earlier scholarship on the Qing, it is clear that Buddhist art sponsored by the court was adapted or instrumentalized to some degree, and despite whatever level of personal belief in the doctrines of the religion was actually held by Qianlong and other members of the court. A certain Qing court agenda would thus be evident in the positioning and articulation of a court-sponsored *Kālacakra* Hall in Beijing. Given this premise, I visited the site of the Yonghe Gong in 2017 and 2018 to conduct art historical fieldwork, consisting in close observation of the building and its surroundings. In the span of more than 200 years, the site has undergone a remarkable history, such that a few decades after the collapse of the Qing, Premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) enacted policies to preserve the site through the Cultural Revolution, so that it functions today as both a popular tourist site and semi-functioning Buddhist temple. In visiting the site I took solace in the relatively meager renovations to the *Kālacakra* Hall compared to other parts of the complex adapted from earlier architecture, such as the museum and ticket booth. The *Kālacakra* Hall is identifiably Buddhist and dedicated to the *Kālacakra* tantra, so perpetuates its function from the eighteenth century.

This is primarily a study of the *Kālacakra* Hall, whereas previous scholarship has focused on the site of Yonghe Gong as a whole. In addition to Berger's text, one of the most notable works is the incomplete set of volumes by Ferdinand Lessing, wherein what is published only arrives at the Tantra Hall (密宗殿) before it can get to the *Kālacakra* Hall.¹⁹³ Despite this, Lessing's text has the tremendous benefit of having been grounded on his research in the 1920s and 1930s, during which the site retained what might be considered more of its feudalistic aspects. There is a fullness of iconic forms in his descriptions that is not matched by the present state of the sites described. During fieldwork I generally ask monks at temples whether there are texts that account for the often crowded and complex placement of icons within a ritual spaces, such as inside temples, to which the monks reply that there are, though no one has offered me an actual iconographical text, and each site I visit is arranged differently. There are, however, certain tendencies to be noticed. Regarding research on historical documents related to the site, the work of Lai Huimin and Wang Xiangyun have been very helpful.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Pamela Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁹¹ Berger, *Empire*.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 35–36.

¹⁹³ Ferdinand Lessing, *Yung-Ho-Kung* Vol. 1 (Stockholm: Elanders boktryck, 1942).

¹⁹⁴ Especially helpful were Huimin LAI 賴惠敏 and Shuya CHANG 張淑雅, "The Yung-ho Temple in the Ch'ien-lung Era" / "清乾隆時代的雍和宮," *Gugong Xueshu Jikan*《故宮學術季刊》23/4 (2006): 131–64; and

3.3. Positioning

Having been a princely palace, the Yonghe Gong complex somewhat resembles a diminished version of the enormous courtyards and buildings symmetrically and hierarchically arrayed along the main axis of the Forbidden City, which was the actual seat of the emperors just a couple miles to the southwest.¹⁹⁵ The immensity of the Forbidden City's architecture (especially when traversed in its current function as the Palace Museum) is still effective at convincing modern viewers of the outsize power of the imperial institution relative to homologously formed architecture at smaller scale.¹⁹⁶ The architecture of the Yonghe Gong is closer in scale to several other venerable religious complexes in Beijing and China, such as the Quanzhen Daoist White Cloud Temple (全真道白雲寺) just southwest of the Forbidden City and established during the Yuan dynasty.¹⁹⁷ These religious sites are each comprised of five axial courtyards flanked by buildings and leading progressively northward to a main hall. This path through the set of enclosed, successive courtyards with buildings on each of their edges is an elite domestic layout of some antiquity and is commonly known as a *wujin sihe yuan* (五進四合院), sketchily translated as a "five-entrance, enclosed-courtyard [domicile]."

This arrangement of buildings reflects certain traditional social practices in Chinese society that were guided by conceptual binaries. Such binaries reflected broader social configurations. Specifically, the southern entrance of the overall domicile was its more public face, whereas the rear was private and dormitory; second, the eastern side of the domicile was understood as masculine and the western side feminine, such that each side housed its respective family members and guided their associated social responsibilities.¹⁹⁸ These binaries were grounded in implicit norms and power configurations that structured the operation of society, such as patriarchy and an individual family's openness and obligations to society. As such these domestic architectural values were also perpetuated at the Forbidden City as a means of validating the imperial court's fidelity to the proper ordering of the world. Jianfei Zhu's analysis reveals the directional logics of the Forbidden City: Zhu identifies historical changes in the positions of court administration from the Ming to Qing dynasties, such that in the Qing and especially under the Qianlong empire, conventions were reinforced, and more subtle orientations started to develop. In Qianlong's time, palace ladies and eunuchs were positioned to reside on the western side of the Forbidden City, whereas varied governmental ministers and military officers were positioned in the east. Likewise, more powerful figures also had closer access to the emperor in the north, such that greater power entailed a higher level of privacy and secrecy. Zhu also identifies a more subtle diagonal movement given analysis of the elevations of the city and modes of access to outside areas, such that officials gradually descended from the center towards the southeast specifically, even if the fundamental social positioning of the court was

Xiangyun WANG's "The Qing Court's Tibet Connection," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 60/1 (2000): 125–163; and "Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1995).

¹⁹⁵ A more technical translation of the Chinese for Forbidden City (紫禁城) might be "Violet Forbidden City" named after a mythical name for the North Star "Violet Concealment" (紫微); Jianfei Zhu *Chinese Spatial Strategies* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 103.

¹⁹⁶ Jianfei ZHU provides a detailed analysis of the scalar properties of the Forbidden City's architecture, *ibid.*, 97–118.

¹⁹⁷ Xun LIU has a concise early history of this Daoist temple in "Immortals and Patriarchs," *Asia Major* 17/2 (2004): 186.

¹⁹⁸ A relevant account of domestic architecture is provided in Robert Hans van Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), 143.

oriented in terms of traditional architectural orientations.¹⁹⁹

Directional concepts were also certainly multilayered. In a dissertation on tantric concepts in the arrangement of the Yonghe Gong, Kevin Greenwood also asserts that a Chinese imperial distinction between the directions left and right was operative in the arrangement of the Yonghe Gong site, a distinction pithily stated as "letters to the left, military to the right" (文左武右).²⁰⁰ This phrase is a summation of imperial rulership, which utilizes both political and military means in exerting power, with clear separation between the two sides. This idea also organized the physical arrangement of officials when standing in relation to an emperor. Officials would adapt to the emperor's privilege of facing south by aligning political and governmental officials in the east, while the military officials are on the west. The basic properties of directional valuation could be used to fit various social functions.

At Yonghe Gong a careful selection of Tibetan Buddhist disciplines were intentionally grafted onto the binary dimensions inherent to the domestic architectural format of the site, and the resulting overlay is somewhat complex, but retains implicit social ordering. In tracking the buildings along the edges of the overall site by moving south to north, the buildings transition in theme from general to specific, culminating in buildings dedicated to individual sacred worthies at the northern ends of the space. The second courtyard in from the southern entrance containing the inconspicuous *Kālacakra* Hall (identified at the site as 數學殿, a term discussed below) must have been organized according to disciplines of monastic specialization, as other courtyards either lacked specialized structures or served primarily to accompany the a courtyard's central northern building housing more general Buddhist icons such as the Bodhisattvas Maitreya (manifest in the form the round Budai 布袋) or Avalokiteśvara.

The differentiation between western and eastern halls is less clear, as there is an anomaly in claiming that the west side is more exoteric and the east esoteric. The *Kālacakra* Hall on the left side of the second courtyard is just north of the Sūtra Recitation Hall (講經殿). Matched with the *Kālacakra* Hall on the opposite east side is a Hall of Medicine (藥師殿) to the north and a more general Tantra Hall to its south, both of which feature very similar architectural properties to the opposite side. The Sūtra Recitation Hall fits its conventional designation as the site of exoteric, mainstream Mahāyāna scriptural study and recitation, just as Sūtra Halls function throughout much of the Buddhist world. Tantra is thus represented by the Tantra Hall, and given the hall's position to the east, tantra would be hierarchically privileged over exoteric Buddhist practice, just as traditional social conventions in China were patriarchal: the Tantra Hall is on the masculine side of the complex. The privileged position of the Tantra Hall directly reflects the enlightenment soteriology within tantric belief systems, wherein tantra is conceptualized as a more immediately effective means of becoming an enlightened Buddha and achieving the telos of Buddhism as a religion. Tantra's dyad with exoteric Buddhist practice also reflects the doctrines of Geluk-pa Buddhism, which synthesized esoteric and exoteric Buddhisms into a single system.

The classification of the Tantra Hall and others as their own entities distinct from the Sūtra Hall is derived from the institutionalization of what is conceptualized in Tibetan as a *dratsang* (*grwa-tshang*), a unit developed within the fifteenth century Geluk monastic system to subdivide disciplinary specializations into more manageable social groups, particularly distinguishing tantric practices from more general exoteric training.²⁰¹ A *dratsang* is sometimes

¹⁹⁹ Zhu, *Spatial*, 145–148.

²⁰⁰ Kevin Greenwood, "Yonghegong" (PhD. diss., University of Kansas, 2013), 49.

²⁰¹ Georges Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 49.

translated as "college" given its affinity to a specialization in higher education, as opposed to the *vihāra*, which would thus be analogous to a university.²⁰² The specificity of the term as Tibetan is significant as it does not apparently have a Sanskrit or Chinese derivation, unlike, for instance the Sanskrit term *vihāra* or monastery, which is *dgon-pa* in Tibetan. The Chinese transliteration of *grwa-tshang* is *zhacang* (扎倉), a term adopted during the Qianlong reign.²⁰³ In Chinese language, individual buildings at the Yonghe Gong hall are otherwise regarded as *dian* (殿), a term that might be generously be translated as temple, but is more akin to a palatial hall, given the functions of the buildings before the site was converted to Buddhism.

Returning to the *dratsang* structures in this second courtyard, the Hall of Medicine at the northeast is the most privileged of the set. Medicine, as conceptualized in Geluk-pa Tibetan Buddhism during the eighteenth century, was grounded on the canonical scripture known as the *Four Tantras* (*rGyud bZhi*), a twelfth-century text in four volumes covering the classification and treatment of diseases, as well as other medical considerations, all of which is couched in a tantric discourse.²⁰⁴ This positioning of the Hall of Medicine behind the esoteric Tantric Hall on the privileged east side of the courtyard, appears to identify the hall according to its tantric categorization, despite the empiricism inherent in Tibetan medical practices of the period.²⁰⁵ However, *Kālacakra* is also fundamentally a tantric system, and one that was especially highly ranked in Geluk doxography. Stacey van Vleet has observed that the Fifth Dalai Lama recategorized the *Four Tantras* from their earlier classification as a lower "Action" or Kriya tantra: "the Fifth Dalai Lama stated, the *Four Tantras* should be practiced as . . . the 'generation of the 'four empowerments' according to the various lineages of the Medicine King,' a reference to the Highest Yoga Tantra (*anuttara yoga tantra*) class [in the Geluk-pa system]."²⁰⁶ It appears as though the *Kālacakra* Hall was placed in its position relative to the other buildings because of its characterization as mainly relevant to an outer, observable world of astronomy and calendrics versus the world of inner bodily cultivation propounded in the *Four Tantras* and tied to tantric personal-empowerment.

A second reason behind the western placement of the *Kālacakra* hall can perhaps be attributed to an invocation of the aforementioned military-political division in traditional Chinese power dynamics. There seems to be an obvious association being made at the site between the *Kālacakra* Tantra and warfare. Patricia Berger has outlined two major ideological dynamics in the organization of icons in the Yonghe Gong as a whole. The first is the site's orientation towards the future, in that the major icon of the rear central hall is Maitreya, the Buddha-to-be.²⁰⁷ Progressing north through the monastery eventually leads to the future, presumably rationalizing southern areas enshrined with historical figures such as Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Geluk-pa sect, and the practicable functions of the *Kālacakra* Hall and Hall of Medicine in the present and nearer future. Second, iconography around the rear western side of the Yonghe Gong is

²⁰² Dreyfus disputes this use *dratsang* as "college" because early Geluk *dratsang* were configurationally more akin to universities. However, the *dratsang* were later physically sequestered within distinct monasteries such that each comprised a distinct building within a monastery, as they do at the Yonghe Gong. Ibid.

²⁰³ Lai and Chang, "Temple," 2.

²⁰⁴ Barbara Gerke provides an structural overview of the *Four Tantras* text in "The Art of Tibetan Medical Practice," in *Bodies in Balance*, edited by Theresia Hofer (University of Washington Press, 2014) 16–31. This volume itself is dedicated to the culture of the medical tradition in Tibetan Buddhism.

²⁰⁵ Gyatso, *Being*, 11.

²⁰⁶ Stacey Van Vleet, "Medicine as Impartial Knowledge," in *The Tenth Karmapa & Tibet's Turbulent Seventeenth Century*, edited by Karl Debreczeny and Gray Tuttle (London: SerIndia, 2016), 284.

²⁰⁷ Berger, *Empire*, 116–122.

dedicated to warfare, as it contains "a tower devoted to Yamāntaka, the enemy of death and patron protector of Beijing, where monks chanted every day and where Qianlong kept his own weapons and sent his high officials to offer sacrifice during times of war."²⁰⁸ The site's northwest also once held a statue of Guan Yu, the third century "euhemerized Han Chinese general" identified as a war god.²⁰⁹

While military weapons are described in the *Kālacakra* tantra, one particular section in the first chapter of the *Laghutantra* describes the movement of time eventually arriving at a future war between a certain Buddhist kingdom of Śambhala and a group of foreign apostates. Iain Sinclair summarizes:

"The prophecy states, in brief, that the kingdom of Sambhala will ultimately be invaded by a *mleccha* ["barbarian"] army (Kālacakra [*Laghutantra*] 1.157–160). At that time, the future *cakravartin* ["wheel-turning"] ruler of Sambhala, Rudra Cakrin, will engage in battle, assisted by Hindu gods, and will lead his army to conquer the *mlecchas*. Rudra Cakrin's victory will usher in a new age in which the Vajrayāna safely prospers (Kālacakra 1.160–165)."²¹⁰

Rosenwein relates a straightforwardly psychological interpretation of this prophecy: "Composed in the eleventh century, the story represents a Buddhist fantasy of retaliation against the contemporary Muslim invaders of northern India."²¹¹ It is notable that the *Kālacakra* Hall at Labrang was set opposite a Hall of Medicine, since if the latter is understood as a discipline of preserving the human body, the *Kālacakra* tantra might be characterized by the rather antinomian characteristic of perpetuating warfare. If tantric systems are to be characterized by singular antinomian traits, a major one for *Kālacakra* would be the the larger world-historical scale of such pronouncements relative to the smaller focused sociality of tantras such as *Guhyasamāja* ("Secret Family"). While this is perhaps a notable characteristic of the tantra, the relevant textual corpus of *Kālacakra* is, of course, encyclopedic, such that there are also methods prescribed for preserving the human body.

3.4. Mongols

It is clear that even following its conversion into a dedicated Buddhist site, the Yonghe Gong was a highly adaptable space that served many functions that changed over time. Given its designation as a monastery, such functions were ostensibly the perpetuation of Buddhist teachings and rituals, but many functions intentionally went beyond explicitly religious concerns. One main function of the site was certainly the recording and propagation of certain messages from the Qianlong emperor. As Pat Berger points out, Qianlong certainly had strong affinities to the site, as it was his birthplace and also a memorial to his father, the Yongzheng emperor.²¹² The multilingual stelae recording his words proclaimed the emperor's thoughts from different perspectives, but there is, at least in the Chinese account of the 1792 "Lama Shuo," a clear statement that imperial sponsorship of the Geluk-pa, including the running of the Yonghe Gong as a Geluk-pa institution, was a means to better position the Qing dynasty relative to the wider Mongol population. In Patricia Berger's translation of Qianlong, he writes, "By patronizing the Yellow Church [the Geluk-pa] we maintain peace among the Mongols. This being an important

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 118.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Iain Sinclair, "War Magic and Just War in Indian Tantric Buddhism," *Social Analysis* 58/1 (spring 2014): 161.

²¹¹ Barbara Rosenwein, *Anger* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2020), 17.

²¹² Berger, *Empire*, 116–117.

task we cannot but protect this (religion). (In doing so) we do not show any bias, nor do we wish to adulate the Tibetan priests as (was done during the) Yuan dynasty."²¹³ Regardless of the vicissitudes or propagandistic aims in Qianlong's statements regarding Mongols and the Geluk-pa, evidence shows that during Qianlong's reign, the Qing dynasty provided extensive material resources and support to expanding Mongol participation in Geluk-pa Buddhism. Yonghe Gong thus functioned as a center for the training of Mongolian monks into the Geluk-pa sect. To be sure, the expansion of Mongolian Buddhist monasticism is intertwined with the rising dominance of the Geluk-pa sect. While a number of Mongols converted to Tibetan Buddhism during the Yuan dynasty, conversion became more significant only after the consecration of the Third Dalai Lama (1543–1588) under the supervision of Tumed (Mongolian Түмэд) Mongol Altan Khan (1507–1582) in the late sixteenth century.²¹⁴ (Note that the appellation "*dalai*" is itself not Tibetan but a Mongolian word meaning "oceanic" or "horizontal" in terms of vastness.) This Third Dalai Lama was the first living Dalai Lama, as earlier notable individuals were posthumously identified as pre-incarnations, thus giving the position a stronger sense of its own history. Under Altan Khan and subsequent rulers, Mongol conversion was encouraged at both elite and popular levels. Yonghe Gong itself served as a centralizing hub for an expanding Mongolian monastic population, as more than a thousand Mongolian monks trained there during its more flourishing periods.²¹⁵ The qualities of this expansion make this social phenomenon distinct from Yuan dynasty court patronage of Tibetan Buddhism, which was limited not only in terms of the number of actual Mongol patrons with access to Buddhist monastics, but also in terms of the duration of that patronage, given the brevity of institutional support offered by the Yuan court, roughly from the appointment of 'Phags-pa as State Preceptor (國師) in 1260 to the end of the dynasty in 1368. The latter institutional expansion of Mongolian Buddhism lasted from Altan Khan's time to even after the end of the Qing dynasty.²¹⁶ Support from the Qing dynasty and the Yonghe Gong may have in fact been a way to support the larger phenomenon of conversion beyond Qing dominion and ingratiate the Qing dynasty to Mongols participating in the Geluk-pa institution, rather than being intended to manage the Mongolian population outright.

Significantly, the layout of the monastery in the manner of Chinese domestic architecture is not incommensurate with what by that time had already been assimilated as Mongol religious architecture. In her survey of Inner Mongolian monasteries, Isabelle Charleux points this out:

"Une logique unique gouvernait leur ordonnancement dans l'ensemble des monastères. Cette organisation générale incorpore des éléments architecturaux chinois et mongols, qui ne présentent aucune incompatibilité avec le culte de rite tibétain, de même que la yourte et les plans qui s'inspirent des campements princiers. ... une majorité des monastères de Mongolie méridionale ont adopté un plan chinois

²¹³ Ibid., 35. The relevant passage in the "*Lama Shuo*" is "興黃教, 即所以安衆蒙古, 所繫非小, 故不可不保護之, 而非若元朝之曲庇諂敬番僧也"; Wikisource, "*Lama Shuo*" "喇嘛說," accessed August 10, 2023, <https://zh.wikisource.org/zh-hant/>.

²¹⁴ Discussed in my "Nomadic Buddhism in 16th Century Mongol Society" "十六世紀蒙古社會游牧佛教之研究" (MA thesis, National Cheng-chi University, 2013). There is also a distinction to note between "Mongol" and "Mongolian," as the latter term represents social development into a more modern ethnic identity assumed by the Mongolian people by the eighteenth century. Prior to this, Mongols might be defined by filiation to the Mongol Empire, as in Altan Khan's genealogical claims of relation to the court.

²¹⁵ Lai and Chang, "Temple," 3.

²¹⁶ Post-Yuan Mongol conversion to Tibetan Buddhism is outlined in Walther Heissig, *The Religions of Mongolia*, translated by Geoffrey Samuel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 26–27.

divisé un plusieurs cours entourées d'une enceinte"²¹⁷

Chinese-style architecture did not hinder Tibetan Buddhist practice, and by the time of the Yonghe Gong's establishment, southern Mongols were likely accustomed to seeing and interacting with Chinese-style courtyard architecture as monastic. As such, the conversion of the Yonghe Gong into a Tibetan Buddhist monastery appears to have been an adaptation to preexisting Mongolian customs, customs which were certainly familiar to the Qing court. The identification of the architecture as Chinese does not prevent it from simultaneously being identified as Mongol.

For example, after converting to Buddhism, Altan Khan established the monastery Ikh Zuu (Mongolian Их зүү, "Big Temple") around 1580 for the purpose of housing a statue of the Buddha in the model of the seventh century Jo-bo statue in Lhasa, one historically recognized for its fidelity to the form of the historical Buddha.²¹⁸ Ikh Zuu was thus one of the earliest architectural structures established by the nomadic Tumed Mongols in their assimilation of sedentary practices, and the geographical fixing of this monastery fostered the growth of the area around it into the city of Hohhot (Mongolian Хөх хот, "Blue City"), now the capital of Inner Mongolia. The monastery's architecture may thus be considered as definitive of Mongol architecture, or at least Tumed Mongol architecture, insofar that it is a kind of progenitor of architecture in its region and social group.

Nevertheless, Chinese architectural influences at the monastery are clear. While areas to the sides of the original monastery have expanded, the main part of the monastery follows a central axial line running north and south and is laid out in the *wujin sihe yuan*-style with buildings surrounding successive courtyards. The architecture of the buildings is in the same Chinese style featuring yellow-tiled curving roofs with central gables and lower hips on the edges. These roofs sit on posts and lintels, though without the extensive bracketing found on imperial buildings. Walls fill spaces between columns at the perimeter. It is evident that in sponsoring the construction of this monastery, Altan Khan did not have architects working in any Mongol tradition sedentary, domestic architecture to hire, as his ruled population was primarily nomadic; he instead relied on Chinese architects who were clearly working in a Chinese idiom of fixed residence that could be adapted to the collection of icons. The temple is somewhat distinct, though, in that unlike Chinese courtyard architecture, there is a larger building occupying much of what would be the middle of the rear courtyard. Presumably the architects could adapt their designs to the purposes of their sponsor when necessary. Charleux's study provides a series of monasteries in Inner Mongolia that likewise conform to the same courtyard style, but with slight adaptations. She typologizes monasteries in terms of their plans and the architecture of individual buildings, such that they can be considered on a continuum between Chinese and Tibetan forms.²¹⁹ Suffice to say there are a number of temples sponsored by Mongols that perpetuate the Chinese style of architecture evident in the Yonghe Gong, such as the nearby Siretu Temple (席力图召) established not long after Ikh Zuu.

3.5. Flattening

Whereas the architecture of the *Kālacakra* Hall and the Yonghe Gong complex as a

²¹⁷ Isabelle Charleux, *Temples Et Monastères De Mongolie-Intérieure* (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2006), 167.

²¹⁸ Isabelle Charleux, "The Mongols' Devotion to the Jowo Buddhas," *Artibus Asiae* 75/1 (2015): 99.

²¹⁹ Charleux, *Temples*, 167–260.

whole can be categorized as both Chinese and Mongol, the interior of the hall follows its own sensibilities that do not fully coincide with any single, fixed socio-cultural formation. Certainly, as the larger complex is committed to the Mongol community of Geluk-pa Tibetan Buddhist monks, aspects of the interior perpetuate the doctrines and visual tendencies of this group. Like many other dedicated Buddhist temples, the space is defined by icons, primarily in the form of statues placed on tables or specialized vitrines, either along the back walls or side walls. Yet the arrangement is unique among Buddhist sacred spaces, as the icons are placed in conformity with the relatively odd ground plan of the site, which is in the shape of the letter "T": the top of the horizontal bar of the letter can be understood as the entrance that leads into the building from the courtyard (Fig. 3.1. presents the entire complex with current site annotations, while Fig. 3.2. represents the interior space of the hall more proportionally).²²⁰ Put in other words, upon entering through the hall doors, there are wings to the the left and right of the hall, and a central section that extends westward to the rear of the building. The T shape presumably reflects the architecture inherited from the princely palace—there do not seem to be any drastic differences in either the architectural form of the *Kālacakra* Hall or its position in its courtyard relative to other buildings in the Yonghe Gong, which suggests that the building is in more or less the same shape as when the site was originally dedicated. Like the other halls, the *dratsang* had to adapt the distribution of icons and decoration to a preexisting architectural format that originally served a radically different function.

The plan of the hall is remarkable precisely because of the expanded width of the initial entrance area. If this width is perceived in combination with the relatively shallow western extension or depth of the hall, the resulting perception flattens out the view of the entire space relative to someone standing at the entrance and looking towards the west. Depth is foreshortened. The viewer meets a kind of visual impasse or *cul de sac*, which prevents further engagement with the site. All of the aspects of the hall are more or less available to the viewer near the entrance, and there is no impetus for a viewer to physically move around within the space (Fig. 3.3. is photographed from near the entrance pointed west). While the ground plan of the site is not completely determinative of such flattening, a few other factors contribute to this sense of two-dimensional, static legibility. Simple waist-high metal fences around the extensions of the hall reinforce the immobilizing arrangement of the interior, such that wall surfaces feel restricted. Presumably the fences protect statues from tourists by allowing a berth of several feet, though the attendants at the site did not have qualms with my entering fenced areas for closer research. Also, the statues of the rear are themselves placed within architecturally designed furnishings, glass vitrines embedded in wooden structures with curving gabled roofs that mimic the Chinese/Mongol architecture outside and are arrayed to be viewed through their front panels. The central vitrine is the largest and houses a seated gilt-bronze Tsongkhapa at its center. Tsongkhapa is thus honored and boxed in such a way that it is difficult to view his statue from the side. Additionally, the walls lack any thangka or murals, things frequently encountered at other Tibetan Buddhist sites. The walls are mostly painted in a cream color above the lower brown area, and a layer of brightly painted *dougong* (Chinese 斗拱; "cap and block") roof bracketing above the cream-colored wall is short enough not to be noticed.

The most visually arresting factor that flattens of depth of the interior is the placement of inscriptional plaques on the four columns in the middle of the hall. Inscriptions are in Tibetan script, yet the plaques have a vertical orientation and are very narrow, so that they fit snugly onto the hall's four narrow central columns. Such an orientation results in an odd reading experience,

²²⁰ Fig. 3.1. is from Niu, *Yonghegong*, 94. Fig. 3.2. is on the back cover of Lessing, *Yung-ho-kung*.

as Tibetan orthography and writing moves from left to right in rows placed one below the other, which is also how English language text works. The Tibetan inscriptions are so narrow as to be disorienting. For instance, the column in Fig. 3.3. features eight rows of Tibetan text, with two syllables per line. Tibetan words are short enough so that there is a large amount of negative space around the eight rows. The words themselves are written to be exceptionally legible, in a standard and basic *dbu-chen* script with none of the flourishes that style the works of esteemed writers. The Tibetan is plainly textual and seems to have no aspirations to sacrality or even decoration. The inscriptions are poetic verses divided so that each column has two lines of seven syllables each, though their order of columns is unclear. The most sensible order appears to be from rear left column (1.), to rear right (2.), to front left (3.), and finally to front right (4.):

1. As ruler of the Dharma bTsong-kha-pa's [*sic*] Dharmic methods grow,²²¹
2. By pacifying the mark of evil, may total harmony be accomplished.²²²
3. [Realizing] self and other through the three times [of past, present, and future], relying on the combination [of wisdom and merit],²²³
4. May the teaching of the victor Lobsang Drakpa [Tsongkhapa] blaze through time.²²⁴

The final reference to time is apropos given the *dratsang*, though the poem as a whole is full of Buddhist platitudes (the poem is so generic that there is a good chance of a punning somewhere between the lines that I cannot recognize, as frequently occurs with Tibetan poetry). The overall aim of the poem's meaning is to glorify Tsongkhapa's teachings, though the initial syllable in his name uses a variant spelling that emphasizes the "onion" part of "man from the onion field" which is the direct translation of the patriarch's name (onion fields are somewhat common in A-mdo). As suggested by the materials, the poem and its substrate are not quite sacred in the same way that the nearby statue of Tsongkhapa is.

The text might be contrasted to the decorative *dougong* bracketing visible throughout the insides and outsides the halls, as it carries a repeated Tibetan inscription in a fanciful, sometimes gold-burnished, and almost illegible *Lan-tsha* script (an adapted Nepalese script) oriented horizontally across the face of a beam—it reads "*Oṃ ma-ṇi pa-dme hūṃ hrīḥ*," a line which is copied ubiquitously throughout the Tibetan cultural sphere as it is a *mantra* recitation of an appellation for the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as "the jewel in the lotus" surrounded by empowered seed syllables *oṃ* and *hrīḥ* (Fig. 3.4.). The levels of ornamentation, including the bracketing itself, are compounded in a manner more reminiscent of Tibetan Buddhist art more generally. Coupled with the semantic function of the script, the ensemble surely evokes a Tibetan notion of sacrality in art. It does so without any reorientation of reading direction as in the interior plaques. The *dougong Lan-tsha* is in many ways the opposite of the interior inscriptions, despite their shared language.

The poetry may be more favorably compared to the Chinese vertical inscriptions liberally placed throughout the other parts of the monastery and throughout the Chinese cultural sphere more generally. Large paired vertical calligraphic scrolls inscribed with a poetic couplet are known as *duilian* (Chinese 對聯), and they are regularly used to frame a central object, such as a portal, a statue, a painting, an interior space, or anything suitably scenic. Such framing provides

²²¹ "Chos kyi rgyal po btsong [*sic*] kha pa'i // chos tshul rnam par 'phel ba la //"

²²² "bGegs kyi mtshan ma zhi ba dang // mthun rgyen ma lus tshang bar shog //"

²²³ "bDag dang gzhan gyi dus gsum dang // 'brel bii [probably ba'i squeezed together] tshogs gnyis la rten nas //"

²²⁴ "rGyal ba blo bzang grags pa yi // bstan pa yun ring 'bar gyur cig //."

the central object with poetic commentary that heightens its aesthetic value, as proficiency in poetry and calligraphy were determinative of status among the traditional scholar-official class of government bureaucrats in imperial China. This was certainly the case in the Qing dynasty, and Qianlong's own aesthetic chambers in the Forbidden City, the Hall of Mental Cultivation (Chinese 養心殿), had several rooms with *duilian* in Chinese script framing the seats of the emperor (Fig. 3.5.). The poetic framing of the gilt bronze Tsongkhapa in the *Kālacakra* Hall indubitably held the same valence, even though the poetry was written in Tibetan. Notably, the *Kālacakra* Hall is the only hall in which I have seen Tibetan script written in the style of *duilian*, so that all the other *duilian* around statues at Yonghegong are in Chinese script.

While Ferdinand Lessing's 1942 iconographical account of the Yonghe Gong complex did not quite arrive at the *Kālacakra* Hall before it was left incomplete, the text does provide the title of the hall from the early twentieth century as Lessing encountered it. The hall is identified as "Dus-hkor Sgra-snyan-dngags," a Tibetan name Lessing translates as "Kālacakra's Hall of Grammar and Poetry."²²⁵ This title has apparently been forgotten in more recent accounts of the site, as the most common contemporary title of the building is Hall of Mathematics (Chinese 數學殿). Taking the latter half of Lessing's Tibetan phrase as poetry (*snyan dngags*), the first part of the phrase seems less to be "grammar" than "sounds" (*sgra*), and as such may be referring to discourse regarding the *Kālacakra* mantra, which is known as the Ten-Part Power (*rnam-bcu dbang-ldan*): ten mutually distinct syllables of Sanskrit each symbolize one part of the *Kālacakra* cosmos. Combined into a single mantra, the entire cosmos is invoked.²²⁶ As such the study of basic sounds could serve as a means of comprehending the entirety of the *Kālacakra* cosmos. However, the "poetry" suggested remains unclear—it could be referring to the basic language of the text in the *Laghutantra*, which requires regular exegesis given the opacity of its tantric language overall. However, the play of words on the columnar inscriptions more strongly suggests not only a more general appreciation of the varied parts of the encyclopedic tantra, but its incorporation into a more traditionally sinic mode of appreciating text that values poetry as inherently related to scholarship.

3.6. Adaptability

The flattening effect that the interior of the *Kālacakra* Hall has on viewers is an imposition on what should be a space conducive to group study and ritual performance of the *Kālacakra* tantra, as would be expected of any Buddhist community focused on a single monastic discipline. Theoretically, if this *Kālacakra* Hall were to be positioned outside of the matrix of halls specifically selected for the Yonghe Gong, the *Kālacakra* Hall should be classified as tantra, rather than *sūtra*, with regard to monastic specialization. Certainly, *Kālacakra* ranks especially high as an "unsurpassed yoga" (*rnal-'byor bla-na-med-pa*) tantra within the Geluk system. The singularity of specialization at the hall should, moreover, provide autonomy from any subsuming disciplinary categorization. The careful planning of site locations and the close proximity of different disciplines within the Yonghe Gong made such reclassification unavoidable. Both placement in the courtyard and directional mandates positioned *Kālacakra* along lines of textual study and more traditional, gradual soteriology. Altogether, the choices made in the operation of the *Kālacakra* Hall had the effect of diminishing the priority of tantric practice and thus undermining the telos of the tantra.

²²⁵ Lessing, *Yung-ho-kung*, xx.

²²⁶ See Eric Huntington, *Creating the Universe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 51; the ten syllables are also discussed in Newman, "Outer," 428–430.

The alignment of these factors indicates that there was a degree of agency in redetermining how *Kālacakra* was to be deployed, relative to the institutional mandates of the Ganden Phodrang in Lhasa, as well as fundamental Geluk-pa religious doctrine. That such redetermination could reconfigure the physical space of the *Kālacakra* Hall without transgressing Buddhist conventions, is a testament to some facility with the structure of Buddhism. Coupled with the Qing court's general sponsorship of the Yonghe Gong complex, it is difficult not to assume that the court's agenda in concert with that of the state preceptor Rolpay Dorje were enacted in this manifestation of the *Kālacakra dratsang*. Wang Xiangyun has summarized Rolpay Dorje's biography regarding his involvement with the site.²²⁷ In this text the Qianlong emperor is said to have been in conversation with Rolpay Dorje, saying, ". . . But there has never been a monastic college [*dratsang*] in the capital. If we two, the patron and the lama master, set up monasteries including several monastic colleges to teach Sutras and Tantras, we can revive Buddhist teaching."²²⁸ This statement seems to have been uttered at a moment when the emperor was unconcerned with the complex issues of rulership that he would address in his stellar inscriptions at the Yonghe Gong site itself.²²⁹ However, if the statement is taken as representing something of Rolpay Dorje's vantage point, it asserts that the two were responsible for the establishment and structuration of the "monastic colleges" at the Yonghe Gong, one of which is the *Kālacakra* Hall. The quote also signals a moment of innovation, as not only were there no *dratsang* in Beijing, the *Kālacakra* Hall there appears to have been one of the earliest *dratsang* actually dedicated to *Kālacakra* tantra, as other monasteries in central Tibet and elsewhere treated the *Kālacakra* tantra within the more general category of tantra and tantric specialization. Regarding *dratsang* chronology, in a letter written in 1982 from the bKra-shis Lhun-po Monastery to scholar David Reigle, the monastic administrator asserted, "It was about two hundred and thirty-eight years from right now that Kalacakra College of Tashi Lhunpo was established by the Sixth Panchen Lama, Palden Yeshe [(1738–1780)]."²³⁰ The Panchen Lama was an especially fervent proponent of the *Kālacakra* tantra, and gave Rolpay Dorje his initiation into it.²³¹ This places the Lhasa *Kālacakra Dratsang's* establishment to the year 1744, which is the same year as the establishment of the Yonghe Gong.

Rolpay Dorje does provide his own synopsis of the conceptualization behind the Yonghe Gong *dratsang* system. The site would have "four monastic colleges (*grwa-tshang*): 'philosophy' (*mtsan-nyid*), 'tantra' (*rgyud*), 'arts and sciences' (*rig-gnas*), and 'medical' (*sman-pa*)."²³² The key term in this quote as relates to the *Kālacakra* tantra is *rig-gnas*, which may be derived from the compound *rig-pa'i gnas*, "knowledge of *rig-pa*"—*rig-pa* being a concept discussed in the previous chapter as something like a Buddhist form of empirical knowledge, one that subsumed the category of art. Significant in the four-part division of topics is the structuration of individual categories that simultaneously distinguish themselves from each other, but that also form a holistic unity in their combination, a unity that defines what for Rolpay Dorje must have been an ideal curriculum for monastic development. That medicine is considered separate from general knowledge or *rig-gnas* apparently means that it was especially favored. The lack of specific

²²⁷ Wang, "Buddhism," 92–98.

²²⁸ Ibid., 93.

²²⁹ See Berger, *Empire*, 34–36.

²³⁰ The monastery in question was reestablished in India after issues with Chinese governance in the middle twentieth century. David Reigle, "The *Kālacakra* College at Tashi-lhunpo," accessed August 10, 2023,

<http://prajnaquest.fr/blog/the-kalacakra-college-at-tashi-lhunpo/>.

²³¹ Chen and Ma, *Zhangjia*, 197–98.

²³² Wang, "Buddhism," 93.

acknowledgement for the *Kālacakra* tantra or particular topics within the tantra likely indicates that its respective hall was intended for broader cultivation, perhaps something like humanistic study. This broadness moves toward some clarity in the adaptability of the *Kālacakra* Hall over time, such as its associations with disparate fields of knowledge such as poetry or mathematics. Likewise, the soteriological purport of the *Kālacakra* tantra is ignored, coinciding with the hall's architectural and interior arrangement. Thus, the *Kālacakra* Hall's relatively erratic functional adaptations have a basis in Rolpay Dorje's broad vision of the site. In addition to the adaptations discussed above, the hall has several other anomalies relative to ritual life that obfuscate its purposiveness in relation to the propagation of the *Kālacakra* tantra.

One anomaly is the centrality of Tsongkhapa in the space of the hall. Tsongkhapa's specialized tantric exegesis is mainly dedicated to *Guhyasamāja*, which is evident in one of his most notable works "*A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages*" (*Rim lnga rab-tu gsal-ba'i sgron-me*).²³³ *Kālacakra* as a topic is present among his other commentaries, but taken together with his writings on certain other tantras like *Cakrasaṃvara*, they constitute a minor part of his substantial oeuvre.²³⁴ There should have been little reason to focus on Tsongkhapa in the hall except to somewhat dilute the centrality of *Kālacakra* tantric practice towards a more general recognition of the breadth of Geluk-pa scholarship and history, of which Tsongkhapa is the exemplar. That Tsongkhapa was iconically centered in other buildings at the Yonghe Gong seems not to have been an issue in his positioning at the hall, as his icon apparently serves different purposes.

The emphasis on Tsongkhapa's central presence is curious relative to the other large objects in the hall that should be the centers of attention, but that are obfuscated by the arrangement of the site around Tsongkhapa. For instance, there is a very large statue of the central deities of the tantra, *Kālacakra* embracing *Viśvamātā*, in the left wing of the hall. The visible parts of the statue are what indicate that the statue is a three-dimensional iconic iteration of the same figures depicted in Desi Sangye Gyatso's *Handbook*. At roughly five feet high, the *Kālacakra* and *Viśvamātā* are significantly larger than the Tsongkhapa statue, and they are also placed in their own vitrine. Despite its commanding size, the statue is oriented to face the courtyard, such that views of the statue from the entrance are minimized (Fig. 3.6.). There is also a large cloth placed over the statue to hide it in the manner of curtains that shroud sacred *thangka* paintings, though visible facial iconography and context make it identifiable. Interestingly, the deity's position to the left is somewhat analogous to the arrangement of the icon in the *Kālacakra* Hall in Labrang Monastery, Gansu, though the Labrang mural is closer to the rear of its rectangular hall.²³⁵ This large statue is the only *Kālacakra* icon placed along the walls that otherwise feature dozens of figures from the Geluk-pa pantheon. The organizational schema and ordering of these statues with respect to each other is rather opaque to interpretation. For instance, a wooden display case to the left of the *Kālacakra* icon features a row of figures including *Nāgārjuna* (a figure connected to both *Madhyamaka* philosophy and, within Geluk-pa doctrine, the *Guhyasamāja* tantra), *Śakyamuni*, a *Vajrasattva*, and others.

While *Kālacakra* is marginalized, one of the clearest assertions that the space still functions as a *Kālacakra* Hall is a three-dimensional model of the architectural palace imaged in

²³³ This is Gavin Kilty's translation of the title. Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa, *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages*, translated by Gavin Kilty (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2013).

²³⁴ This oeuvre is described in Robert Thurman, et al., *The Life and Teachings of Tsong-Khapa* (Gangra, India: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1993).

²³⁵ See Chapter 4.

the *Kālacakra maṇḍala*, albeit obviously at a much smaller scale than an actual building. This *maṇḍala* is about a couple feet tall and is placed on a table in the center of the hall. The *maṇḍala*'s relatively large size occupies most of the space between the hall's four interior columns. This *maṇḍala* is placed into its own glass vitrine, in a similar manner to many of the iconic statues in the hall. The *maṇḍala* itself is apparently made of wood and painted with gold and other colors. Its basic form of three blocks of diminishing sizes, stacked to resemble a pyramid, iconographically aligns it with the tripartite formation of the subject from body, speech, and mind, as discussed in *Kālacakra* discourse. While the central position of this *maṇḍala* appears to set it as an object for veneration, such that practitioners could theoretically circumambulate around it, there is little room for circulation given the size, shape, and arrangement of the hall's interior. Given that the goal of *Kālacakra* soteriology is to position oneself within the palatial architecture depicted in *maṇḍala*, the miniature diorama at the center of the hall should serve the same ritual and sacral function as the painted *Kālacakra maṇḍala*. Its glass vitrine, however, seems to mark it as an object for studious observation rather than for the kind of ritual practices reserved for icons and sacred objects that are usually covered up, in the manner of the icon nearby.

At minimum, the presence of both the three-dimensional *maṇḍala* and the *Kālacakra* icon legitimates this building's designation as a *Kālacakra* Hall, even if their ritual functions are unclear and despite the other diverse anomalies. However, the presence of *Kālacakra* iconography does not undo Rolpay Dorje's pronouncement regarding the site as dedicated to the cultivation of a quasi-humanistic broadness of knowledge in terms of *rig-gnas*. The hall is certainly adaptable. While two large *Kālacakra* objects are in the hall now, there is an implicit difficulty in fixing most of the objects currently collected in the hall to earlier historical periods there. The *maṇḍala* does appear to be a fixture, as one photograph from the early twentieth century also shows it, albeit with a different vitrine (Fig. 3.7.). In a survey of the Yonghe Gong by Niu Song published in 2001, the author likewise mentions the three-dimensional *maṇḍala*, as well as the statue of Tsongkhapa. However, there is further description of other objects in the hall interior that are no longer there: "[inside are] astronomic instruments like the armillary sphere and the celestial globe that were made in the period of Emperor Qian Long. . . . There are many Thangkas hung on walls depicting . . . figures . . . typical of Tantric Buddhism."²³⁶ None of these other objects were in the hall during my visits to the site in 2017 and 2018. The suggestion that there were more paintings is convincing as, as it suggests something of an even earlier state of the site, as Lessing's descriptions of the areas he observed are marked by their recognition of a more crowded iconic display reminiscent of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries generally.²³⁷

The presence of astronomical tools in the hall is curious, and points more specifically to the ambiguity regarding the hall's function. The contemporary Chinese title of the site is "Hall of Mathematics (數學殿), a name that offsets the tantric valence of *Kālacakra* by emphasizing how this tantra has been utilized by historical Buddhist exegetes such as Desi Sangye Gyatso in *White Beryl*. However, the Yonghe Gong as a whole remains a Buddhist monastery and at its conversion was completely dedicated to that function. Objects placed in Buddhist monastic spaces are defined by the objects in themselves being Buddhist—that is, objects in Buddhist temples and monasteries invariably serve a Buddhist ritual or soteriological purpose. This is true

²³⁶ Song NIU 牛颂, *Yonghegong* 雍和宫 (Beijing: Zhongguo Minzu Sheying Yishu Chubanshe 中国民族摄影艺术出版社, 44).

²³⁷ Lessing, *Yung-ho-kung*.

even for the Tibetan verses on the hall's columns, which work to glorify Tsongkhapa as a kind of guru (or *bla-ma*), an integral position in the proper undertaking of tantric practice. Astronomical tools are neither ritual implements nor soteriological aids, and thus they are not found in Buddhist sites more generally. Relatedly, much of *Kālacakra* astronomical calculation is primarily mathematical. For the *Kālacakra* calendar, plotting out future dates and times required working through a series of complex mathematical equations. The complexity of the math involved still meant that this work could take have taken several months.²³⁸ Not many coordinates gathered from the observation of astral bodies, such as solar longitude, are necessary to calculate the system.²³⁹ Thus, large astronomical tools, such as a celestial globe or armillary sphere, are unnecessary for the *Kālacakra* system. Adding the simple fact that the hall is not very big, the hall does not appear to be a space conducive to the congregation of monks, either for the purpose of doing mathematics or for any kind of group work. The interior of the *Kālacakra* Hall might be contrasted with an early twentieth century image of the Sūtra Hall next door to it (Figure 3.8), which seems more dedicated to monastic assembly. The *Kālacakra* Hall instead resembles something along the lines of a museum for the display of antiquities.

Armillary spheres and other astronomical measuring devices were more prominently displayed elsewhere in Beijing, at an imperially sponsored observatory known as the "Platform for the Observation of Images" (觀象臺), which was less than five miles south of the Yonghe Gong and originally constructed in the Yuan dynasty, but updated with newer astronomical tools in 1669.²⁴⁰ The work of astronomy was run through a government bureau known as the Astronomical Office (欽天監), which was in place for throughout several dynasties, but whose personnel expanded substantially during the Qing period, given the diversity of calendrical systems asserted by both traditional Chinese and Jesuit mathematicians, as well as the thoroughly multi-ethnic governance established by the Manchus.²⁴¹ The intention that mathematical and astronomical work be done at the *Kālacakra* Hall appears ambivalent, especially in comparison to the work of the dedicated Astronomical Office across town. What is more clear is that the canonical texts of the *Kālacakra* tantra were continuously recited in the monastery, a practice much more in line with the less ambivalent purport of the Sūtra Recitation Hall.²⁴²

3.7. Conclusion

Rolpay Dorje and the Qianlong emperor both took initiations into the *Kālacakra* tantra and were thus not only familiar with the tantra, but were invested within its tantric soteriological system at a personal level. Such investment did not prevent their adaptation of the *Kālacakra* tantra in their design for the institution of the Yonghe Gong and its function of indoctrinating a population of Mongolian Buddhist monks. The *Kālacakra* Hall had a specific role in the Yonghe Gong's specific monastic curriculum by offering something that the study of exoteric Buddhism (provided by the Sūtra Recitation Hall), esoteric Buddhism (in the Tantra Hall), and medicine (in

²³⁸ Henning, *Calendar*, 1.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁴⁰ A historical summary of the Astronomical Office is provided in Pietro Corradini, "The Chinese Imperial Astronomical Office and the Jesuit Missionaries," *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 68, 3/4 (1994): 339–350. More technical information regarding the office's work is provided in Joseph Needham and Wang Ling, *Science and Civilisation in China* Vol. 3: *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1959).

²⁴¹ A more thorough account of court-sponsored Jesuit mathematicians is provided in Catherine Jami, *The Emperor's New Mathematics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁴² Berger, *Empire*, 121.

the Hall of Medicine) did not. Rolpay Dorje appears to have seen the *Kālacakra* Hall as a kind of finishing school. The material and visual qualities of the site point to its museum like qualities and a kind of ambivalence relative to the tantra itself. Certainly, the *Kālacakra* tantra itself was studied somewhere in the monastery, but the extent of specialization in the tantra at the hall is unclear. Rolpay Dorje's own position regarding the *Kālacakra* tantra was partially revealed during the Sixth Panchen Lama's visit to the Yonghe Gong in 1780. The Panchen gave the imperial court several gifts, including a set of weaponry intended to help defend Buddhism during the war foretold in the *Kālacakra* tantra. Approached by the Panchen regarding this war, Rolpay Dorje remained evasive. He made a joke to defuse the situation, saying that if the emperor, the Panchen, and himself were reincarnated during the war in Śambhala, he would be too exhausted to fight after all the affairs he had to manage in this life.²⁴³

²⁴³ Thanks to Patricia Berger for pointing this story out. The story appears in Rolpay Dorje's biography. His line translated into Chinese is as follows: "... 此生此世, 与朝政有关的各种事务使我心烦意乱, 香巴拉的战事又起, 千万别让我参与此事!" 班神听后, 又笑了起来"; Chen and Ma, *Zhangjia*, 281.

CHAPTER 4: AUTONOMY

4.1 Introduction

Walled corridors zigzagging the Labrang Monastery (*bLa-brang bKra-shis-'khyil*) complex were disorienting for me.²⁴⁴ Laid out in a seemingly endless series of passageways, flanked by single-storied, whitewashed walls high enough to obscure any sense of the surrounding natural environment, the monastery denies visitors within it a sense of orientation to a single point or landmark. In my initial wandering, the monastery became a completely enveloping, homogeneous mass, and it took an inordinate amount of time for me to even find a map of the site as I hiked through it (though I found it on the second day; see Fig. 4.1.).

This experience of disorientation is useful in recognizing an important structural aspect that defines the functioning of the site. There is a contrast: on one side are the sensorial qualities of the quasi-exterior thoroughfares within the larger boundaries of the monastery—thoroughfares which serve as quiet conduits that interconnect the parts of the monastery and create for it a singular architectural unity comprised of sparse and undifferentiated visual properties, providing a general sense of the monastery as a whole. Moving through the monastery in this way made me more accustomed to the unfamiliar, strange organization of its passages, which local monastics were well accustomed to and traverse with ease and fluency. On the other side are the hidden interiors just beyond these walls, hidden destinations within the monastery complex. These sites are comprised not only of private monastic residences and administrative buildings, but also and especially the few, often unmarked, and somewhat asymmetrically distributed temples that define the monastery as a religious center. Happening upon one of the temples is reorienting; once found a kind of world reappears to the entrant in its architectural and artistic fullness, made all the more remarkable because of the contrast between these places and the winding, blank, and circuitous spaces between them.

The stark separation between passages and temples makes each temple stand out all the more as its own complex and center. Understood within a certain classificatory type, the interior spaces of Tibetan Buddhist temples throughout history are often overwhelming in their visual effects, totally and densely covered by their collections of figural icons in all kinds of sizes, shapes, colors, and postures, each ornamented to achieve a larger visual resplendence. A great range of major sites from the Buddhist religion's larger history also exemplify such artistic tendencies, with landmarks such as the Mogao caves in Dunhuang, the A-lci Monastery, the Jo-khang Temple in Lhasa (originally established in the seventh century),²⁴⁵ and the Gyantse Kumbum (*rGyal-rtse sKu-'bum*, established in the fifteenth century) of Shigatse (*gZhis-ka-rtse*, also established in the fifteenth century).²⁴⁶ Each of these sites boast fantastically decorated interior spaces despite the great differences among the individual sites, temples, and shrines at each respective location. Of course, any Tibetan Buddhist temple is more than the sum of its collective iconography. Each temple is a spatial arrangement of iconic presence and ornamentation, adapted to the purposes of a community of people, both clergy and laity, who make continual decisions as to how the space will function both communally and individually.

This chapter fixes itself on one particular site within the varied temples of Labrang Monastery in an attempt to identify a kind of differentiation between, on one hand, a mural at the

²⁴⁴ Andreas Gruschke translates the Tibetan title of the monastery as "dwelling site of the Lama where good luck is accumulating"; see his *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces* Vol. 2. (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001), 27.

²⁴⁵ Gyurme Dorje, *Jokhang* (London: Edition Hansjorg Mayer, 2010).

²⁴⁶ Giuseppe Tucci and Lokesh Chandra, *Gyantse and Its Monasteries* (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1989), 351–353.

site depicting the cosmos according to the proscriptions of the *Kālacakra* tantra, a mural that functions both as a figural presence and a diagrammatically functional object, and on another hand, a kind of complex array that constitutes the monastery and that shapes, to some degree, the assertion of the *Kālacakra* tantra there. Both the mural and the world around it seem aligned in that the mural's arrangement reflects how whomever composed it conceptualized the organization and circulation of their physical environment and world. As will be explained in greater detail, this resemblance between image and world helps elucidate how art is conceptualized and produced in relation to the specifics of life of around the temple. The mural's visual depiction provides its local observers a more immediate mode of understanding and empathizing with the totality of the cosmos and environment, while the mural's material array is perceived less visually but rather in terms of the complex of spatial and embodied engagements familiar to ritual practitioners of circumambulation. Mural and environment operate in a kind of homeostatic circuit specific to the locality of the monastery.

This chapter is organized so that its first part discusses the mural and its second part discusses the surrounding space. The discussion of the mural includes its description, analysis, and basic art historical comparanda. The subsequent part discusses the mural's position in the space of the monastery and the reciprocal effects of its overall architecture and environment. Combined analysis of the two is left for last. Appreciated as a whole, the depiction of the *Kālacakra* cosmos reflects a relative freedom of local innovation unavailable to other sites.

4.2. Methodological Overview

This chapter is less concerned with reasserting a connection between art and a single, broad, and cohesive ideological program than with tracing certain local and regional tendencies as these are intertwined in art. The structure of the chapter reflects the different methods used to investigate these tendencies. There are three main sections organized by different scales of observation, all of which are grounded in embodied experience, with an expanding purview from section to section. That is, the general approach of this chapter is grounded in fieldwork and perception, art historical and otherwise, though certainly informed by historical Buddhist contexts. The first section is a more immediate investigation of the mural itself based on its direct observation. I start with description grounded in a phenomenologically-oriented, embodied vision of the mural and its qualities, using close looking and analysis of its parts to identify certain pictorial tendencies that distinguish it from earlier art of the *Kālacakra* tantra. This analysis moves to a more traditional art historical comparison with other relevant works at roughly the same scale of individual looking.

The second section moves to an architectural analysis also grounded on direct observation, but also comparisons with other sites encountered through fieldwork, as well as various contexts. Rather than isolating a view (of the mural) from a specific standpoint as the basis of investigation, architectural analysis incorporates movement of the observer in space, which privileges directional and embodied perceptions. Such perceptions better approximate actual Buddhist ritual practices such as circumambulation, and so provides an analysis that is more responsive to the embodied experiences of actual Buddhist practitioners at the site. In addition, this section is also shaped by my interactions and interviews with Tibetan Buddhist monks living at various *Kālacakra* sites around China, and fieldwork generally. The third section provides a more general account of material life around Labrang monastery, while also noting consistencies among the three scales of analysis. These consistencies help to form a general idea about the qualities of art relevant to the *Kālacakra* tantra at Labrang Monastery, thus

allowing for the complexity integrated into the mural.

Whereas traditional art historical analysis of the mural in question might be limited to the edge of the depicted surface of the picture, a more general observation derived from ethnographic thick description not merely places the painting more concretely within its specific site-based context at a certain moment, but further potentially blurs any boundaries among the scales used to identify specific objects in isolation. Instead the painted surface and the depiction on the painting become integral parts of the life of the world around the mural. The mural can be understood both at the scale of a discrete picture iconographically comparable to other depicted images similar to it, as well as its integral position relevant to individual observational experience, observed social phenomena around the mural, and any evident environmental factors. In effect, such description attempts to understand the picture at multiple scales simultaneously to explore the concept of scale.

Given the overall art historical frame of this study, the fieldwork component is the most distinct and as such deserves some explanation. As the chapter is an exploration of scales, anthropological ethnography theoretically provides the possibility of exploring beyond vision as a delimiting factor in understanding art. Moreover, an opportunity of this type of fieldwork is that a more anthropologically informed type of art historical fieldwork has the potential to be more precise than art historiography because its recognition of limitations regarding historical claims. The point of such fieldwork is not to reconstruct an iconographic array, but to examine how the visual and perceptual world of the monastery on its own terms. Fieldwork foregrounds the embodied functioning of art and thus perceptual interpretation of the site as a means of coming to some kind of mutual understanding of the site between individual perceptions and those of others. Fieldwork is also integral for standard art historical practices of focused, close, and sustained looking at objects, as well as interaction with the communities around objects.

Of course, earlier writings about the site serve as the basis for more careful fieldwork and analysis. In addition to the canonical and exegetical texts of the *Kālacakra* tantric system, several other sources were useful in the analyses presented here. At the scale of the mural, Eric Huntington's monograph *Creating the Universe* surveys images of Buddhist cosmoses as they are presented in writing and art, and the survey offers a general account of their diversity primarily through studies of their iconographic qualities and ritual deployments synchronically, as they are understood in normal Buddhist practice.²⁴⁷ As suggested in the introduction, complete methodological alignment of art historical work around deciphering meaning and reconstructing ritual, as well as perhaps patronage, may deny the broader possibilities of art historical engagement with the objects in question, engagements of viewers and proximate environmental factors at different levels and throughout time—to use an anthropological analogy, the emic properties of the art. A method focused on iconography and ritual does not account for the "life" of things in their fullness and complexity.

Otherwise, the most relevant writing and scholarship have been surveys of Labrang Monastery as a whole, because texts have not worked at the scale of the *Kālacakra* Hall or the works within it. Scholarship has tended to focus on conventional historical development, such as historical politics and ethnographic accounts of community, for example in the works of Paul Nietupski and others.²⁴⁸ More anthropological and non-academic texts have also provided

²⁴⁷ Huntington, *Creating*.

²⁴⁸ See Paul Nietupski's *Labrang Monastery* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2011) and *Labrang* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1999); Rinchen Dorje, "Establishing Lineage Legitimacy and Building Labrang Monastery as 'the Source of Dharma,'" *Religions* 12/491 (2021): 1–42; Ling-Wei KUNG "The Transformation of the Qing's

wealths of data about Labrang, and these are often grounded on personal fieldwork and direct experience with Buddhist ritual.²⁴⁹ Chinese-language sources also provide information not offered in Western-language scholarship, such as the discussion of local architectural history in Dan-qu's study.²⁵⁰ Given these writings, this chapter attempts to utilize anthropological methods within a more art historical orientation.

Fieldwork at the site was conducted at Labrang and around Gansu and Qinghai in the summers of 2017 and 2018, during which I visited the region looking for *Kālacakra* sites based on correspondence with the scholar Gray Tuttle, who shared his monastery databases. Major A-mdo monasteries that I visited and refer to for comparanda include Rong-bo, gNyan-thog, Bya-chung, gSer-khri, sKu-'bum, dGon-lung, and Chu-bzang.

4.2. Painting

4.2.1. Approach

As had become very evident from moving and looking through the monastery, the layout and architectural styling of its passageways are disorienting and work to obscure the presence of several of dedicated, individual architectural sites that are necessary to the functioning of the monastery, such as its varied temples and ritual centers. Despite my disorientation, the visual conformity of the passageways seems to connect the monastery as a whole distinct from the outside area, a town unevenly occupied by streets and buildings that seem to have developed outwards from the initial encampment of the monastery in 1709. The monastery grounds themselves have expanded to measure nearly 500,000 square meters and extend lengthwise in an oval shape one kilometer long, along a section of the Xia River (Fig. 4.2. reveals how some of the environment around the monastery was perceived in the early twentieth century). The river valley is in a mountainous part of Gansu Province, China. Labrang is roughly equidistant from Beijing 800 miles to the northeast and Lhasa 800 miles to the southwest. As such, Labrang's middle position is relatively difficult to reach from either metropole. The monastery presents a distinct opportunity to examine a situation in which the imperial and hegemonic cultures of those metropolises had less determination in the monastery's development historically, including its forms and functions.

Accordingly, entering temple space in the monastery requires another reorientation, not only from the monastery passageways, but also from the cultural expectations of Beijing or Lhasa. While certainly within modern China's borders, Labrang is also positioned along what is conventionally known as the old Silk Road and in the Tibetan geographical region of A-mdo. There, Tibetans not only speak a dialect distinct from that of the standard at Lhasa, but also historically crossed paths with a range of other ethnic groups and religious traditions that have settled in mountainous pockets throughout the region. These interactions have often lead to conflict, in addition to cultural exchange. The relatively mountainous terrain of the locality is conducive to pocketed encampments developing in relative isolation from others. A good amount of diversity was apparent in my travel through the region. For instance, passing through nearby territories, I encountered localities almost singly populated by individual ethnic groups

Geopolitics," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 45 (2018): 132–34; Max Oidtmann, "Amdowas Speaking in Code," in *Forging the Golden Urn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 157–193; and Gray Tuttle, "Building up the Dge lugs pa Base in Amdo," *Zangxue Xuekan* 藏学学刊 7 (2012): 137–38.

²⁴⁹ See Joseph Rock, *The Amnye Ma-Chhen Range and Adjacent Regions* (Rome: Is. M.E.O, 1956); Gruschke, *Monuments*, and Gyurme Dorje, *Tibet Handbook* (Riverside Court: Footprint Handbooks, 1998).

²⁵⁰ Dan-qu 丹曲, *Labuleng si Zangchuan Fojiao Wenhua Lungao* 拉卜楞寺藏传佛教文化论稿 (Lanzhou, China: Minzu Chubanshe 甘肃民族出版社, 2010).

such as the Salar and Monguor peoples, in addition to varied Tibetan Buddhist sects. Nietupski also provides an account of the site's historical political and social development, including conflict with nearby Tibetan groups, Han Chinese groups, and Hui Muslim Chinese groups throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁵¹ To a certain degree, the history of ethnic and religious conflict in the region surely contributed to the differentiation between the passageways of the monastery and the walled compounds that contain individual temples and other ritual structures. There is a defensive and secretive dimension to all the layers of walled enclosures throughout Labrang, in addition to other aspects of the environment.

The appearance of the world opened by the temple is striking, then, with its murals, decorations, and art. This is especially apparent in the approach to the *Kālacakra* Hall. A reorientation is provided to the visitor upon entering the vestibule to the main hall interior. The large mural paintings in the vestibule serve as an overwhelming synoptic overview of the world according to the *Kālacakra* tantra and also as a kind of initiation for that other world. One of the large murals in this vestibule represents the cosmos in its totality (Fig. 4.3.), yet it is only one mural from the program of murals that surround the space of this vestibule, which in turn is only a partial facet of the larger system of art throughout the hall. All of this art works toward the overall functioning of the temple complex, wherein the mural has very specific functions. Positioned at the border between the hall's interior and exterior, one of these functions is analogous to that of the map of the monastery that I had encountered, as a tool for orientation to the world asserted by the *Kālacakra* tantra. The map functions as part of the hall and marks the liminal transition from the unmarked territory into a realm in which the cosmology of the *Kālacakra* tantra is the rule, and it functions in asserting the fundamental structure of this cosmology. The cosmological mural works within a system of nested realms carefully separated from each other and requiring privileges to move further towards the interior.

The positing of a world that is perhaps incommensurate with others requires this kind of seclusion and privacy, as well as a unique set of protocols for entry. In the approach to the mural from outside the compound, a series of scenic transitions contributes to a kind of revelatory effect of standing in the vestibule. Because I am not a monk nor had special monastic access to the *Kālacakra* Hall, I had to first accustom myself to the hall's schedule. For a few hours in the week, the doors leading from the compound's walled exterior along the passageways are opened, and visitors such as myself may enter through a front portal enclosure designed in the regional A-mdo style, consisting of two wooden columns on each side, decoratively carved architraves, and inset large wooden double-doors, all of which are carved with untreated wood. The portal leads to an open-air courtyard, past which is the hall itself, built atop a wide stone platform a few steps high.

The expansive space of the vestibule itself makes it more than a passage into the main hall, but a containing space in its own right. Fig. 4.4. provides a schematic plan of the *Hevajra* Hall of the same monastery, but the plan serves the purpose of outlining the analogous parts of the *Kālacakra* Hall, the main features of which are similarly planned. The exterior wooden portal entrance is on the right side of the birdseye plan and the portico/entrance is in the center. Like many other buildings in the northern hemisphere, the entrance is oriented to the south, and curtains along the vestibule's entrance protect it from the sun. The vestibule's ground plan is shaped like the letter "T", so that the entrant initially passes two floating wall sections on either side that extend inwards towards the entrant like the teeth of a mouth, while a pair of large doors

²⁵¹ Nietupski, *Monastery*, discusses nineteenth century conflicts on 130–134; Muslim conflict in the twentieth century is covered on 154–160.

enclosing the hall's main interior function like the passage to the esophagus.

Whereas the building's outer walls are simply covered with a flat brown paint and minimal decoration, the vestibule has a set of flat wall surfaces, each of which is entirely covered with an individual mural. The mural in question is thus part of the program of wall paintings and painted wooden decorative carvings that cover the wide, quasi-interior space of the vestibule. The large size of the mural program envelops the viewer, with each mural extending from its base a couple feet above the floor to the roof bracketing several feet above the visitor. The specific mural depicting the cosmos directly faces the entrant on the edge of the right tooth—the viewer simply takes a step into the entrance of the vestibule and turns right to see it. This mural alongside a relatively simple depiction of a sword on its opposite wall, mark the transition from outer to inner space.²⁵² With its width narrower than its height, the cosmos painting taken on its own apart from the vestibular program is itself monumentally vertical, roughly four feet wide and eight feet high.

The large format of the composition accompanied by its surfeit of iconographical detail and minute forms seem to confront and confound. There is no gradual transition from the blank exterior to the intensity of collected figures and forms in the vestibule. Parsing out all the constituent parts depicted on the mural would, at least, require a substantial commitment of time and effort, as well as a ladder, given the great height of the mural. An ideal viewer already initiated into the *Kālacakra* tantra and its world might be able to clearly identify the form depicted as a schematic overview of its cosmos, but even supposing that all of the painting's parts are in clear view and presuming an ideal viewer with fluency in the complexities of *Kālacakra* cosmology, a thorough appreciation of all the painting's parts would necessitate a kind of commitment to the image more suited to a study hall or scholars' quarters rather than an entranceway. In beholding the entirety of the mural rather than its discrete parts, one of its functions must be as a familiar and commonly shared entry marker for orientation towards the world of the *Kālacakra* tantra, a reminder of the larger purpose of the site.

4.2.2. World Picture

The picture very intentionally derives its many parts from textual referents in the *Kālacakra Laghutantra* and its commentaries, specifically from the first chapter describing the outer world, the physical cosmos that exists beyond the individual practitioner's body.²⁵³ To briefly outline the image depicted, an ordered arrangement of stacked realms comprises the base layers of the cosmos, upon which the perceptible world sits. Each of the base layers is devoted to a single element. These elements are somewhat analogous to the Aristotelian elements that were said to comprise the physical world, though in *Kālacakra* cosmology these elements form into realms the shape of enormous cylindrical disks. The realms are derived from the basic elements of wind, fire, and water, placed in proportionate measurements one above the next. Imagined in three dimensions, a cone shape forms as they get smaller in size. Rendered on the mural each of these elemental disks is accorded its own discrete ringed area, and each area has a painted representation of the unique substance of the realm covering its surface. For instance, the fire realm is a circular ring with an interior decorated with lapping flames. The shape of the elemental rings is depicted from a vantage point above them and so appear as flattened, concentric rings. Just inside the elemental rings and thus atop them are the subsequent parts of

²⁵² Buddhist traditions interpret the sword as a mark of wisdom that can cut through ignorance and associate the symbol with the Bodhisattva Mañjusri.

²⁵³ See Chapter 1 for descriptions of the text.

this cosmos: there is a space containing the elliptical orbit-lines of the *Kālacakra* astronomical system, with its ten major astral bodies; next, the positions of the nine continents are depicted inside the astral system, with each continent represented by a unique geometric shape. These elemental and planetary topographies coalesce inwards towards a midpoint, from which the reverse-conical world of Mount Meru, with its vertical subdivisions into an ordered state, extend upward and outward over the base realms, clearly differentiated from their flatness by its frontality.²⁵⁴

The complexity of the depiction's iconography is mitigated by its major formal feature: the organization of the painting into a fairly simple and rigid geometrical forms and diagrammaticism, which serves to make its parts more iconographically legible. The mural is very evidently derived from the compositional portrayal of the diagrammatic *maṇḍala*. The circle serves as a primary shape that grounds the overall compositional surface, differentiating the cosmos from its background. The circle's midpoint sits at approximately the center of the overall rectangular surface of the painting, and the circumference of the outer contour of the concentric circles extends just slightly beyond the rectangular surface's two side edges. This highly symmetrical organization of forms is derived from the underlying compositional structure of diagrammatic *maṇḍalas*.

Clear division between parts is a major goal of the composition. Each of the concentric rings is clearly distinction as black boundary outlines distinguish between the individual colors and unique patterns of each ring. The middle area is composed of brightly colored geometric line patterns and simple shapes. Extending from the midpoint upwards is an approximately 30 degree sector containing an isosceles triangle overlaid atop the circle. It is clear that geometric formal configuration, as presented in the circle and triangle, is integral in the compositional structure and visual conceptualization of the painting as a whole, serving not only for its producers to spatialize and depict canonical iconography, but to reinforce the separation of each part.

There are a couple of anomalies in the overall perspectival logic of the depiction. These anomalies come from the art historical newness of the picture relative to the received tradition of diagrammatic *maṇḍalas*. One simpler anomaly is that a number of compromises have been made to emphasize separation and legibility at the cost of fidelity to scriptural measure and iconometry. The purport of the mural is thus notably different from the exactitude demanded from, for instance, the work of Desi Sangye Gyatso. On the mural, the triangular form is discontinuous with the plane of the circle, so that Meru and its divisions are depicted as viewed from its side, in contrast to the overhead view that collapses the layered cylinders of the base elements into a flat circle. This mixed perspective serves to enable a greater degree of iconographic density in the picture and emphasizes its central values of iconographic comprehensiveness and legibility. A clearer break from the demands of exactitude is that the proportions of the cosmos are not exact. For instance, while the elemental realms are clearly concentric and symmetrical, their diameters do not coincide with the proportional relationships defined in the *Kālacakra* tantra. The inner portions containing the earth and its continents are larger than they should be relative to the elemental realms.²⁵⁵ Thus the parts of these inner portions are exaggeratedly large. The adaptations in the scale of components in the mural

²⁵⁴ Meru is discussed further below.

²⁵⁵ The outer elemental realm measures 400,000 *dpag tshad* (Sanskrit: *yojana*) in diameter and the earth's diameter is 100,000 *dpag tshad*. Brauen states that one *dpag tshad* is equal to about six million kilometers; see Brauen, *Mandala*, 53.

compromises proportionality for the sake of abundance, such that the mural attempts to squeeze in as many cosmological components on the painted surface as can fit. The amount of surface area devoted to each component and its parts also suggests an emphasis of the recognizability of these parts from a greater range of vantage points. Many parts are colored distinctly and given enough compositional area to make their individual surface colors and patterns distinct. Thus individual forms are manipulated to assist a viewer with their identification, such as the circular tracks of astral bodies or the basic geometric shapes of the flat green continents.

The other anomaly is iconographic. There is a depiction of a "background" to the cosmos. The rectangular verticality of the overall composition leaves two spaces immediately beyond the circular cosmos, above it and below it. Taking earlier diagrammatic *maṇḍalas* as precedents cannot assist in the proper depiction or decoration of such a background, as *maṇḍalas* have had a more diminutive scope; they normally serve as representations of architectural space. For instance, the *Vairocana Maṇḍala* depicted in Fig. 1.5 has spaces beyond the circle decorated with images from the wider world, including trees, animals, and other people. Depicting the image of the cosmos presents the artist with a metaphysical challenge.

The ritual logic of Tibetan Buddhist art and architecture, which extends painted forms in vestibule of the *Kālacakra* Hall, demands a fullness of iconography over the entirety of a compositional space. On the mural, there is an excess remainder of space beyond the circle that was perceived with a kind of *horror vacui*. A complete picture could preserve the distinction between the blank exterior of the hall with its interior. However, according to the *Kālacakra* tantra, the space beyond the cosmos is comprised of ether or void.²⁵⁶ In its emptiness, the extra space on the wall provided opportunities for creative adaptation according to the agency of the iconographer/artist. The upper space aside from the triangle of Meru is left simple. It is painted in a flat dark blue, while a set of simple decorative clouds, now patinated gray, sit at the upper left edge near a red supporting beam that extends out of the wall surface. The lack of forms in much of this blue mass indicates the space was filled provisionally, likely as a way of responding to the difficult question of what exists beyond the cosmos. The dark blue suggest the firmament, as in the night sky, in its distinction from the color of the ground.²⁵⁷ Of course, there are no astral bodies in this blue field because the astral bodies are already depicted in the domain of the circular cosmos. Elsewhere on the composition, also pictured in dark blue are some of the backgrounds to the elemental rings. Formally then, this blue has a function of highlighting the contours of forms depicted within it. Used this way, blue comes to represent void more directly, and achieves its own kind of positive presence in the composition, as a kind of figure in itself.

Unlike the upper blue region, the area below the circle is an off-white ground with figures, objects, and a partial landscape, parts of which float seemingly ungrounded in the two-dimensional space of the composition. The contrasting colors of off-white and blue come to compose their own dichotomous world beyond the cosmos of the *Kālacakra*, structurally

²⁵⁶ How texts treat what is exterior to the *Kālacakra* cosmos is a tricky question. Scholar Edward Henning quotes the nineteenth century Tibetan exegete 'Ba'-mda' dGe-legs in asserting a *dharmodaya* realm that extends somewhat beyond elemental realms, but that in itself is composed of "space"; see "Wrathful Kālacakra and Vajravega," accessed August 10, 2023, <http://www.kalacakra.org/mandala/domchen.htm>. Other cosmoses would presumably be enclosed in their own *dharmodaya* realms.

²⁵⁷ Brian Baumann describes the traditional view of the firmament thusly: "The fixed background that rules the movements of the stars was known figuratively as 'the firmament. The firmament was likened to a dome The celestial poles were likened to a 'pole.' . . . [The firmament is divided] into four equal spheres. These four spheres when reflected onto the earth in geography are known as islands, continents, or four separate oceans." See Brian Baumann, "By the Power of Eternal Heaven," *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 35 (2013): 233–284.

enveloping it. Such an assertion is unique to this specific painting and only arises given the contemplation of the cosmos as a whole, a topic other artists working in a Buddhist episteme did not usually need to confront.

The lower space below the main circle features a set of depictions that appear supplementary to the purport of the image. In following the forms of the elemental circles, viewers may notice that there are extra semicircular rings that are not replicated in the upper half of the circle. There seems to have been a visual logic of perpetuating even more circles beyond the main depiction to fill out this otherwise undefined space. These extra rings are identified in small cartouches as two hells, whereas the elemental rings themselves need no annotation. *Kālacakra* cosmology asserts several more canonical hells than the two depicted, but these are omitted in the mural. Below these extra half-rings is a roughly depicted landscape scene with hell figures of various sizes floating in an off-white field that may thus be interpreted as a sky above some simplistic mountain landforms. The visual iteration of this landscape has the effect of dissociation, as two disparate perspectives of worlds appear on the same image. The two extra hell semicircles appear to serve as a creative transition between worlds, since they reiterate a similar flame pattern as some of the elemental realms, while also including scattered human body parts within the flames, reinforcing their identification as hells. One might surmise that the extra depictions of hell, since not presumably intended for the otherwise symmetrical and diagrammatic purport of the main part of the picture, provided a space for producers of the image to react to the cosmos' formal rigidity and conceptual rigor with images of their own creative expression, in a kind of macabre play of figural imagery. Whatever the reasoning behind these playfulness in these depictions of hell, the extra landscape imagery is validated as it perpetuates the cosmological schema of the main circular form, as the bottom landscape is an extension of the canonical hells present within the elemental rings of the cosmos.

The unique visual tendencies of the image indicate the relative freedom or isolation of the mural and its processes of production from the more rigid artistic controls of centers at Lhasa and Beijing. Likewise, the painting's assertion of a kind of realm beyond the *Kālacakra* cosmos suggests that its producers at Labrang were imagining the cosmos for themselves. Such imagination also implies that the institution of the monastery, including its *Kālacakra* Hall, was itself open and even conducive to such individualist thought. The mural still perpetuates common Buddhist values in its formal qualities, such as in the emphasis on legibility through the distinct outlines separating forms and adaptation of scales. Such legibility suggests that one function of the mural was to explicitly be looked at and deciphered by viewers, rather than serving as an empowered sacral presence that needed to be covered up like other formats of Buddhist art. The forms and format of the mural even suggest its function as a heuristic aid, and in this function, more focused on the basic representation of concepts from canonical texts and rituals rather than representing their accurate iconometric features. The image imposes fixed, basic geometrical shapes to an array of very diverse components at widely varying scales, from the elemental to the social, that are not regularly positioned together outside of scripture accounts.

Another common Buddhist quality of the mural is its emphasis on the shape of the circle. The result of this shape's formal imposition is to posit a unified and symmetrical visual coherence out of the diverse component parts of the cosmos. The mural asserts that the cosmos is visually comprehensible as a simple shape.

4.2.3. Precedents

Looking beyond this specific mural, its function as a didactic map of the cosmos places it in an art historical series that is distinct from that of the diagrammatic *maṇḍala* discussed in Chapter 1. The image represented on the mural can be categorized among other depictions of the cosmos in Buddhism. Depictions of the cosmos are unconventional in that they are not ritually determined—that is, their visual aspects are not predetermined with the same degrees of rigor and formality as *maṇḍalas* or iconometric forms. While scriptures outline the measures and component elements of the cosmos, they do not specify how to depict them, so that such visual interpretation is left to the artist. Nevertheless, there are conventions to the depiction of the cosmos in Buddhism, which develop historically and shape the formal configuration of the Labrang mural. While Eric Huntington's book is less concerned with historical development than in synchronic analyses, such as of iconography and ritual, the book's penultimate chapter ends with a presentation of "touchstone paintings in history," a useful overview of thirteen murals of the cosmos from Buddhist sites around Asia.²⁵⁸ These touchstones begin from a fifth century murals in the Ajaṅṭā Caves in India, then moving through later works in Kizil, Dunhuang, western Tibet, central Tibet, and Bhutan. The resultant mural history is mainly concerned with chronological organization according to the relatively stable dating of earlier sites, such as an early fourteenth century mural at Zhwa-lu Monastery and fifteenth-to-sixteenth century one at mTho-lding Monastery. The surveyed murals primarily represent the cosmos presented in the Mahāyāna Buddhist *Abhidharma*, a systematic account of Buddhist metaphysics and cosmology initially elucidated around the year 400 by the Gandharan Buddhist monks Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, as well as others. The cosmos described in the *Abhidharma* is known as *Cakravāla*. The *Cakravāla* posited in early *Abhidharma* texts has remained canonical throughout much of historical Mahāyāna Buddhist discourse to the present, and so there is little historical development to analyze regarding the components or arrangement of this cosmos. Only a couple unspecifically dated modern depictions of the *Kālacakra* cosmos from Bhutan.

In terms of categorical function, Huntington divides mural paintings of the cosmos into two types: "threshold murals" or "interior murals."²⁵⁹ The former are positioned at the entrances to Buddhist sacred architecture in the manner of the Labrang mural, whereas the latter appear in the interiors of shrines and temples. Huntington adds more generally, "Given the variety of such images, they are difficult to categorize succinctly."²⁶⁰ That is, there is a great degree of variety to the ritual and non-ritual uses of such paintings, sometimes even at individual sites, such that sitedness itself and local actors determine the murals' functions despite their standard positions within architecture. It thus appears as though the image's deployment in space is also free from any scriptural proscriptions or guidelines.

Huntington adds, "While Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* [the main account of *Cakravāla* cosmology, among other things] is a standard part of monastic curriculum in Tibet and rather accessible to a literate monk, the Wheel of Time [*Kālacakra*] is abstruse and rarely studied."²⁶¹ *Kālacakra* is certainly less prominent than, for instance, the tantras that Khedrup Je assigns higher in his Geluk-pa classification system, such as *Guhyasamāja*.²⁶² Depictions of the

²⁵⁸ Huntington, *Creating*, 208–225.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 190–191.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 191.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁶² See Chapter 2, note 68.

cosmos specific to the *Kālacakra* tantra are likewise comparatively rare, and thus even more difficult to fix in terms of categorical function at the general level. The mural should be interpreted individually, according to its inherent properties, to understand its function according to individual sites. There are still local and regional tendencies that can be isolated. For instance, during my temple fieldwork in A-mdo, murals of the *Kālacakra* cosmos served as threshold murals reserved for vestibules of *Kālacakra* Halls, such as at Labrang and Rong-bo Monastery, but not all such halls specializing in the *Kālacakra* tantra have depictions of the cosmos, as in Bya-khyung and Ser-dri Monasteries.

4.2.3.1. Yuan *Abhidharma*

As might be intuited, conventions in the depiction of the *Kālacakra* cosmos must have been derived from images of the *Cakravāla*, the most pervasive Buddhist cosmological system, given the length of time between the appearances of the *Cakravāla* and *Kālacakra* systems. This derivation is not merely pictorial, but evident even in the common structural elements of the *Kālacakra* cosmos outlined in scripture. Huntington writes that the *Kālacakra*'s system "borrows from Vasubandhu, Jain texts, and other sources" (though individual processes of borrowing are not examined in his study).²⁶³ Both structural elements and formal tendencies are evident when comparing works of art. A well-known silk tapestry, square and 33 inches wide (Fig. 4.5.) presumed to have been created for the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) court in the fourteenth century provides an early, fine, and well-preserved example of an archetypal model of not only the layout of the *Cakravāla* system, but also conventions for the depiction of the cosmos distinct from the renderings outlined in Huntington's text.²⁶⁴ The Yuan *Cakravāla*'s similarities with the Labrang mural include a central Mount Meru positioned in the middle of a circular expanse, this expanse's division into four colored sectors, and the symmetrical arrangement of continental islands within the circle. The repetition of such features in the *Kālacakra* tantra clearly indicate filiation between the two systems, and point to the earlier conventions that centered the cosmos around a single mountain.²⁶⁵

Notably, the two pictures emphasize highly symmetrical circular forms that contrast and give centers to the rectilinear compositional planes of the pictures. The shared emphasis on circles is notable because the Yuan tapestry was produced relatively early in comparison to the earliest extant *Cakravāla* painting cited in Huntington's book, a mural in the second-floor interior of the *Prajñāpāramitā* ("Perfection of Wisdom," a major Mahāyāna Buddhist telos) shrine at Zhwa-lu Monastery, a major Tibetan Buddhist site.²⁶⁶ The perimeter of the cosmos in Zhwa-lu is oblong and the overall composition is uninterested in geometrical cohesion relative to its focus on the clear visibility of its individual figures, such as the royalty in each of its continents, as well as its decorative figures, such as fishes and other sea creatures. This focus coheres with the location of the inner mural in close proximity to the iconic presences within the shrine.

As such, the precision of the Yuan tapestry suggests closer filiation with the construction of diagrammatic *maṇḍalas* and their inherent ritual efficacy and sacral power. The picture's fidelity to proportion is also reminiscent of the measured lines and compositional structuration of iconometric icons. For instance, one of the *Cakravāla* cosmos' differences from that of the

²⁶³ Huntington, *Creating*, 46.

²⁶⁴ At the Metropolitan Museum, accession number 1989.140.

²⁶⁵ Frits Staal compares early Vedic myths and bowerbirds to later mountain mythology. See Frits Staal, "The Centre of Space," in *Concepts of Space, Ancient and Modern* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1991), 83–98.

²⁶⁶ Huntington, *Creating*, 216–217.

Kālacakra is the inclusion of a square-shaped set of seven concentric mountain ranges lying in the ocean between the central Meru and the continents, ranges that do not exist on any *Kālacakra* map—the positioning of these squares on the tapestry precisely follows the proportions of the *Cakravāla*, in that the edges of this square terminate at the midpoint between the center of the cosmos and its circumference, following canonical measurements.²⁶⁷ Such this degree of exactitude is curious given the lack of iconic figural presence or even ritual contextual clues to be derived from the format and iconography of the tapestry. The work appropriates Buddhist conventions for its own enigmatic functions.

The differences between the Yuan tapestry and the Zhwa-lu mural point to the degree of creative agency artists working in this early period could assert, given the relatively open functional purport of cosmological images. Artists were clearly invoking other idioms of representation to more fully picture the *Cakravāla* cosmos, given this openness. As a whole, the Zhwa-lu mural's tendency away from symmetrical, measured compositional organization and towards the representation of figures in their environments invokes the idiom of landscape painting, somewhat reminiscent of the floating figures and terrains at the bottom of the Labrang mural. At Zhwa-lu the ovular rendering of the *Cakravāla* cosmos is itself embedded within a conventional landscape, as the background depicted around the ovoid cosmos consists of horizon line, clouds, trees, buildings, and horse riders. Thus, the mural seems to fall back on the idiom of landscape rather than attempt to respond to the metaphysical question of empty space.

In terms of pictorial conventions invoked on the Yuan tapestry, beyond the edge of the cosmos are decorative imagery, floriated scrolls and auspicious Buddhist symbols on a blue ground, perhaps invoking the constructedness of the cosmos within a space more amenable to human scale. Other parts of the tapestry show the absorption of Chinese motifs and symbols in filling out the *Cakravāla*. Frontal depictions of mountains in the mode of Chinese landscape painting—outlined and layered peaks in blue and green on a white background—are repeated in each of the continental shapes. Two circles just left and right of Meru's base are the silver moon and red sun, respectively. The silhouette of a black bird in the red sun is an allusion to ancient Chinese myths.²⁶⁸

The Labrang *Kālacakra* cosmos is thus notable for the distinctive realization of its representation, one factor of which is its iconographical density, which displaces not only landscape and decorative conventions (except for in the lower register below the circle), but also rigid diagrammaticism for the sake of inclusion. For instance, the middle rings of the circle are complicated by the accretion of *Kālacakra* iconography, as not only are more astral bodies added to the image relative to the *Cakravāla*, but their revolutions over time is tracked and substantiated, such that the each of their tracks are themselves outlined in different colors in a middle ring of the mural, overlapping and obfuscating the depiction of quadrants and continents.

4.2.3.2. *Cosmological Scroll*

The utter complexity of the *Kālacakra* cosmos has necessitated varied attempts at depicting it. A cosmological scroll currently in the Rubin Museum and dated to the sixteenth century presents a more proportional rendering of the cosmos than the Labrang mural. As such it faces the complexity of the system directly and is an attempt at systematic expostulation through visual means. The 19-inch-high horizontal cloth hand-scroll format provides space for the

²⁶⁷ Ibid. 35–37.

²⁶⁸ The image appears, for instance, in the tomb of Lady Dai (interred around 168 BCE) at Māwángduī, China. The bird is the last survivor following the hunt of mythological archer Hou Yi.

depiction of eight discrete illustrations, which distribute groupings of cosmological components. As such, the scroll is able to distinguish between the vastly different scales of its individual illustrations, including cosmic arrays, city plans, and physiologically annotated male bodies. Each illustration combines finely measured diagrammatization and detailed annotations in Tibetan script. The scroll also presents objects rendered from both frontal and overhead perspectives. The varied scales and perspectives come at the cost of the integration of discrete parts—in the tantra itself scales are intended to be integrated. The scroll responds to the notion of integration by offering in one of its illustrations an abbreviated elevation chart of the cosmos in canonical proportion with the outline of a nude Buddha without genitals superimposed over it, combining imagery from two of the other illustrations (Fig. 4.6.a).

The separation of the cosmos into discrete forms is the the most radical difference from the Labrang mural and depictions of the cosmos more generally. Separation presents the cosmos in a schematic and systematic manner, similar to the drawing of the Buddha in Desi Sangye Gyatso's *Handbook*. This handscroll's sixteenth century dating is more remarkable in that it prefigures the empirical tendencies and quantifying impulses evident throughout the reign of the Desi. The scroll's exactitude reflects tendencies inherent to the *Kālacakra* itself.

The metrological accuracy of the scroll image is partially due to the material basis of the image: the handscroll format was derived from Chinese manuscript practices intended for close-range viewing, reading, and study by an individual viewer who could manipulate the object at will to accommodate viewing it both broadly and in detail. The scroll allows for more careful consideration and so provides a more rigorously measured diagram of the cosmos (Fig. 4.6.b.). Elements and realms are depicted at correct scales: for instance, elemental circumferences reduce proportionally as the diameter of the outer ring at 400,000 *dpag tshad* collapses to 300,000 in the subsequent ring, then 200,000 and 100,000 respectively; the diameter of the outer wind-element circle is four times that of the inner earth-element circle.

Such visual and geometric fidelity puts certain limits on the type of content that can be depicted in the space of the composition; the elements must be accorded adequate space on the manuscript such that other spaces must be relatively vacant, thus preserving the accuracy and legibility of what is depicted. Decoration is omitted or minimized to serve the purpose of identification, such as the depiction of lapping flames sequestered within the fire realm. The *horror vacui* encountered throughout Tibetan Buddhist ritual spaces and sacred objects does not affect the content of the scroll, and combined with the unconventional format, the scroll function in explicitly ritual or sacred contexts.

This unconventionality highlights the Labrang mural in contrast. As discussed, the *Kālacakra* tantra aligns the cosmos to the human body of the tantric adept, in a system of mutual resonance between body and cosmos. Such an alignment is diagrammed in the scroll with the figure of the Buddha superimposed onto the cosmos. In this illustration, the cosmological layers map onto individuated vertical spans of the human body, with higher spans accorded advanced merit. This mapping has precedents, for instance in Vedic mythology with the identification of Puruṣa, a giant man whose parts compose the cosmos.²⁶⁹ A more resonant precedent is the "correlative thinking" and "sympathetic resonance" present throughout traditional pre-Buddhist Chinese cosmological thinking, and that also defines Chinese Buddhism in its distinction from

²⁶⁹ Some relevant Vedic texts are surveyed in Wendy Doniger, *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1988), 27–28.

other forms of Buddhism.²⁷⁰ "Correlative thinking" asserts a correspondence in energetics between phenomena at variant scales, the natural cosmos and individual physiological phenomena. Given the historical appearance of the *Kālacakra* tantra in the eleventh century and the relatively fluid interregional flows of material and ideas throughout Asia at that time, especially along the overland and maritime channels of the so-called Silk Road, the concept of macrocosmic correlation would certainly have been accessible throughout the Buddhist ecumene. *Kālacakra*, in contrast to earlier Chinese models of correlation, provides a division of the human body into identifiable parts associated with specific point in the human body, while in contrast the Chinese system grounded on the idea of spheres or "orbs" of varied human potentialities grounded on a system of energetics (*qi* 氣) largely invisible to the human eye and normal sensory perception.²⁷¹

Returning to the correlative illustration on the Rubin scroll, the depiction is again useful in highlighting contrasts with the Labrang mural. The Rubin illustration attempts to rigorously express how systematic, precise, and mathematical the *Kālacakra* system but only suggests at the extensive network of scalar correlations through the superimposed illustration. This contrasts with the overall integration and unity of the components in the Labrang mural, which discards much of this mathematical precision of the scroll for completeness and a sense of containment. Not only are the components kept densely packed, the fundamental shapes that structure the whole are simple and twofold, and the shapes' contours combine into a single circle-triangle form, the organizing force that structures the iconography within it. Such cohesion suggests Wölfflinean terminology such as the "closed form" of the cosmos pictured relative to the overall surface of the mural and the landscapes below it. The singularity of the cosmos depicted at Labrang suggests a form of presence.

4.2.4. Note on Dating

The mural's depicted content is unique, not just to the site, but to mural paintings throughout Gansu and Qinghai. The structural reinforcement of the upper part of the wall suggest it was painted before renovations in 1979.²⁷² The particularities of the landscape on the bottom of the picture coupled with the overall weathering of the picture suggest it is older, created sometime between the building's construction in 1763 and incursions at the site in the early and middle twentieth century.

4.4. Presence

The overall architectural setting of the cosmological mural is integral to understanding its purpose and function. The site is an integrated whole, in which the parts of the hall ultimately sustain the knowledge and practices of the *Kālacakra* tantra. The mural contributes to the site and is itself defined to some degree by the site, including its architecture.

Constructed in 1763, several decades after the monastery's establishment in 1709, the

²⁷⁰ Robert Sharf includes a discussion of the terms such as "sympathetic resonance," a translation of *ganying* 感應, and especially in relation to Chinese Buddhism; see Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002). Jinhua Jia provides a recent account of the general history of the concept; see Jinhua Jia, "From Human-Spirit Resonance to Correlative Modes," *Philosophy East and West* 66/ 2 (April 2016): 449–474.

²⁷¹ See discussion in John Hay, "The Human Body as a Microcosmic Source of Macrocosmic Values in Calligraphy," in *Theories of the Arts in China*, edited by Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 74–102.

²⁷² Gruschke, *op. cit.*, 33.

Kālacakra Hall was established under the direction of dKon-mchog 'Jigs-med dBang-po (1728–1791), the second Jamyang Shyeba ('Jam-dbyangs bZhad-pa). "Jamyang Shyeba" is the title of a reincarnation lineage originating with 'Jam-dbyangs bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje, a monk from A-mdo who spent much of his career in central Tibet before returning to A-mdo to found Labrang Monastery. The second Jamyang Shyeba sought to prevent the *Kālacakra* tantra lineage's "imminent danger of being extinct at Labrang," and built the hall in response.²⁷³ The *Kālacakra* Hall architecture was constructed to conform with the earlier architectural style established by other temple compounds within the monastery, such as the much larger Sūtra Hall, which specialized in exoteric Buddhism. The monastery functioned in a similar manner to a university, with varied specializations. As in the Yonghe Gong, the Tibetan title for specialist halls like the *Kālacakra* Hall and five other halls at various parts of the monastery ground is *dratsang*. Unlike the Yonghe Gong, the *dratsang* at Labrang reflect distinct Buddhist concepts and practices in their configurations.

The shared architectural form among these sites is itself derived from an accretion of historical developments from a range of Buddhist architectural forms. Central to these developments is the organization of the Buddhist community and the establishment of a space that responds to this community. Such an arrangement is evident at the *Kālacakra* compound and other structures throughout Labrang Monastery, at sites that are both specialist and generalist, such as the *dratsang* and even the large main Sūtra Hall. A general example of this layout has been provided in Figure 4.3. The common layout of the sites perpetuates a much older architectural model that developed during the initial organization of South Asian Buddhist monastic communities into fixed, sedentary encampments. This sedentarization accompanied a fundamental shift in Buddhist practices from the earliest peripatetic phases of the monastic community to their eventual congregation into durable, shared architectural spaces more than a thousand years before the Labrang *Kālacakra* Hall.²⁷⁴ In this type of architecture, the largest and most central part of the monastic compound functions explicitly for the assembly, as a place for group cultivation and ritual performance. Certainly, the canonical Buddhist textual tradition has continuously asserted the centrality of the triple jewel of Buddha; *dharma*, understood as the teachings associated with the Buddha; and the *saṃgha*, the community of Buddhist practitioners, in the formation of Buddhism itself as a unified whole, beyond however individual Buddhist groups identified themselves. Organization into community is integral to all Buddhism.

The centrality of assembly, and the particular embodied and perceptual practices of early Buddhists are made more evident through comparison with the remains of South Asian Buddhist cave sites, which must serve as analogous models of much more ubiquitous monastery sites throughout South Asia before the waning of Buddhism across the subcontinent starting in the twelfth century. One notable example of such architecture is Ellora Cave 5, carved circa the year 500, its general functions are similar to other contemporaneous caves at Ajanta and elsewhere, and must have been indicative of similarly formed monastic sites from even earlier periods that no longer survive. Cave 5 is cut in the *vihāra*-style, in that the central area and main function of the space is for monastic assembly. The central hall itself is a rather cavernous 117-foot hall with a central peristyle consisting of 24 columns.²⁷⁵ Small rooms or cells that served as the modest residences of individual monks are carved repeatedly along three of its interior wall faces and a

²⁷³ Dorje, "Lineage," 26.

²⁷⁴ A useful survey of this Buddhist monastic architectural history is provided in Gajin Nagao 長尾雅人, "The Architectural Tradition in Buddhist Monasticism," *Studies in History of Buddhism* (1980): 190–208.

²⁷⁵ James Burgess, *A Guide to Elura Cave Temples* (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1926).

slightly larger room on the far end of the hall was dedicated to a central sculpture of a Buddhist icon.²⁷⁶ While *vihāra*-style architecture is common to a great range of Buddhist sites, Cave 5 uniquely distinguishes itself from other Buddhist architecture in that it uniquely preserves two rows of benches running the length of the inner peristyle and carved out of the cave's stone, whereas other early Buddhist sites are emptied of such furnishings. Architectural planning binds the lives of individual monks to the communal assembly at its center.

My fieldwork at *Kālacakra dratsang* in A-mdo also included observations of monastic residences relative to the sites. Monks responsible for the halls resided in rooms attached to *dratsang*. At Labrang, a residence was embedded along the eastern wall within the rectangular perimeter of the overall *Kālacakra* compound. Like the *vihāras*, the entrance to this residence leads to site's inner courtyard. Inside, the room was sparsely furnished with a platform for bedding and a desk for study. Such architecture minimizes the individual aspects of monastic life in comparison to participation and action within the central communal areas.

While the monastic residence at the Labrang *Kālacakra dratsang* is not directly connected to the interior of the hall, this interior still perpetuates the formal layout of the *vihāra*. At the *Kālacakra* compound, moving through the vestibule and past building's main doors leads to the main interior space, which is a large rectangular hall supported by four rows of five columns that extend to the space's rear. The *Kālacakra* compound can thus be differentiated from other temple buildings within the Labrang monastery complex in terms of its slightly smaller size. The interior columned area is arrayed with rows of benches, oriented similarly to Ellora Cave 5. At Labrang these benches and a single throne-like lectern on the west nearer to the rear wall are used facing inwards towards an imagined center line. The lectern is dedicated to the Jamyang Sheyba. This array of seating establishes a historical continuity in the function of *vihāra*-style structures as sites centered around fixed, continuous gatherings of monastic groups and their orientation towards the group as a whole. According to my discussions with current monks, this assembly center is for group cultivation on *Kālacakra* practices, such as a significant amount of textual memorization and ritual performance. Dan-qu provides a much more detailed account of the curriculum in the hall, which included calendrical computations.²⁷⁷

Tibetan Buddhist monasteries have historically perpetuated this *vihāra*-style, as exemplified in the oldest, central section of the Jo-khang Monastery in Lhasa, established in the seventh century and named after an iconic statue the Jo-bo Rin-po-che housed at the site from its inception. The central section of the Jo-khang is a three-story *vihāra*, and the current, larger structure of the building is a result of the gradual expansion from this central structure over the centuries.²⁷⁸ Notably, what were likely the individual monastic cells surrounding the main halls of the original base structure have been converted into niches or "chapels" dedicated to the placement of more icons, and icons even populate some of the interior assembly area of the Jo-khang. The increasing presence of icons and the layouts devoted to multiple icons in chapels appears to be derived from early South Asian *vihāra* sites that included multiple images of Buddhas and other icons in a rear central niche, as is evident at multiple caves in Ellora and Buddhist sites elsewhere.²⁷⁹ The multiplication of icons certainly follows the need to

²⁷⁶ While not Ellora, Walter Spink's description of Buddhist monastic caves transition from "dormitory to worship hall" at Ajanta circa 466 through the addition of a few statues certainly must have been analogous to processes at Ellora; see Spink's "How the Monks Lived," Chapter 3 in *Ajanta* Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 68.

²⁷⁷ Dan-qu, *Labuleng*, 162–174.

²⁷⁸ Dorje, *Jokhang*, has the fullest art historical account of the site, with comparisons to South Asian *vihāra* and a reckoning of the temple's icons.

²⁷⁹ See Note 33.

accommodate the continually increasing pantheon of Buddhist icons characteristic of Mahayāna and Tantric Buddhist expansion, such as the institutionalization of multiple tantric systems in Abhayakaragupta's *Vajrāvalī*.

The division of *vihāra* architecture into a large central hall centered around group convocation, an array of icons, and a rear sanctum for privileged iconic placement is sufficiently ubiquitous among Tibetan-style Buddhist monasteries to the extent that these features define the Tibetan-style Buddhist monastery style as a whole and mark it, for instance, as distinct from Chinese and East Asian monastic halls.²⁸⁰ Divergences from this architecture among Tibetan Buddhist monasteries only seem to appear because of the influence of Chinese-derived architectural models, noted in the previous chapter.

In keeping with the architectural style of Tibetan monastic halls, figural icons cover the interior walls of the main hall, with murals on three walls and inset statues along the rear north wall; thangka paintings also hang on certain columns and other areas. A single doorway in the north wall leads to an inner sanctum that runs along the northern side of the building, narrowly arrayed east to west. The northern wall of this sanctum is thoroughly arrayed with large *stūpas*, and smaller statues, photographs, and other items of worship, with a crowned gilt statue of a seated Śakyamuni Buddha about three feet in height presiding in the center. The inner sanctum appears clearly derived from the primary rear sanctum of earlier *vihāra* architecture (though the incorporation of a primary shrine is itself a reflection of the historical synthesis of aspects from caitya/shrine architecture of early Buddhism) and the niches of the northern wall of the assembly room more clearly replicate *vihāra* cells compared to the paintings on the east, west, and south walls, which are historically distinct from earlier *vihāra* models in their complete two-dimensionality.

The dozens of icons along the inner walls of the large assembly hall are too numerous to provide a detailed analysis of each of their positions without reorienting the topic of this chapter section, but described generally, the icons coordinate with the primary function of *vihāra*-style architecture as intended for sanctified religio-social assembly. Like statues in older *vihāras*, they function to make the Buddhist worthies present in the space. The rear wall is composed of a dense array of niches for figural statues and miniature *stūpas* of various sizes from a few inches to a few feet in height. The niched statues, mostly in gilt bronze, are diverse in form and status, and do not replicate the ordering at the Yonghe Gong *Kālacakra* Hall; the Labrang statues include Buddhas and tantric figures, as well as historical personages, with the Jamyang lineage especially privileged: the sixth Jamyang is enthroned in a central niche, and five previous incarnations are placed in a row on the upper left of the wall, above a four-armed, Mañjuśrī, Śakyamuni, and other icons. Notably, the rear wall also includes figures not explicitly relevant to *Kālacakra* practice, such as the seventh-century Chinese Princess Wencheng (文成), wife of Tibetan King Srong-btsan sGam-po (though there is no apparent statue of the King). Rather than a canonical ordering, the statues surely reflect the local interests of the *Kālacakra* ritualists.

The three other walls contain mural paintings of Buddhist icons in various sizes, save for a large anomalous tantric icon painted on cloth in the northwest corner. Among the murals, various large Buddhas and associated icons in different sizes appear on the left and right walls, while the front, interior wall on the south includes large wrathful and protective deities. The organization of these diverse Buddhist icons evidence the multiple criteria for determining positional hierarchy in the hall. The higher status of three-dimensional sculpture compared to

²⁸⁰ Charleux, *Temples*, provides a thorough account of Chinese-style and Tibetan-style monastery plans in comparison. Chinese-style temples are discussed in the previous chapter.

painting is clearly evident, as the statues replicate the directional position of the Śakyamuni and stūpas in the inner sanctum relative to visitors entering from the south. There is also a clear hierarchy among the painted figures on murals, as major icons are depicted at a scale approaching the dimensions of an actual human being. The painted Kālacakra-Viśvamātā duo form one of the largest and most elaborately depicted figural scenes in the hall and appear on the western left wall closer to the rear of the building. While statues are certainly privileged over paintings, given the large size of the Kālacakra-Viśvamātā figures, coupled with their central position within the *Kālacara* tantric ritual itself, it is somewhat obvious that the northwest position is one of central attention and honor, and that the icons are hierarchically arrayed not only in terms of their size relative to each other, as smaller figures are placed at the edges of larger ones, but also from the figures' north-to-south coordinates on the architectural surfaces of the hall.

This general organizational principle is clearly analogous to that of many *thangka* paintings, if the paintings were to be laid flat on the ground, in that their main subject is in the center, while higher and lower classed figures are arranged by size and by privileging the upper left of the composition. Notably, the numerous large Buddhas depicted on the east wall are about half the size of the Kālacakra-Viśvamātā pair, which is approximately the size of an average human adult and which stands a few feet above the floor, giving the embracing deities some prominence relative to not only the other icons but also to the height of most human viewers, who are essentially immersed within a singular, idealized vision of a Buddhist assembly. (The Kālacakra-Viśvamātā depiction is also notable in that it is decorated more extensively than other images and is one of the finest examples of mural painting I encountered in China outside of Dunhuang.)

The selection of iconic images for the interior of the hall must structure the relative position of the mural program in the vestibule, which operates exterior to the hierarchical assembly of icons and ritualists in the interior, as well as in a kind of directional opposition to the northern, more sanctified area of the structure. The overall iconographic thematization of this vestibule is clearly distinct from that of the interior iconography, as the vestibule primarily collects large, scenic images of the external world, while the interior is composed of a select grouping of icons seemingly without reference to any specific locality. In addition to the aforementioned cosmological mural on the right lip of the outer wall, the two primary murals in the vestibule expand on the wall surfaces to the immediate left and right of the doorway and depict landscape maps of the Buddha's abode at Jetavana and the *Kālacakra* cosmos's central kingdom of Śambhala, respectively. This is a combination of two Buddhist communities, the left mural depicting the site of one of the historical Buddha Śakyamuni's first *vihāras* and the right a Buddhist polity described in the texts of the *Kālacakra* tantra: "a vast kingdom with 960 million towns that was transformed into a Vajrayāna territory after thirty-five million of its brāhmaṇic sages abandoned the brāhmaṇic practices prescribed in the Vedas, such as sacrificial killing and the like, in consequence of receiving the *Kālacakra* initiation from the king Yaśas, an emanation of Mañjuśrī."²⁸¹ The combination brings to mind the assertion in the *Kālacakra* tantra that the historical Buddha originally recited the unabridged version of the *Kālacakra* tantra during his life, but also that the site of the *Kālacakra* hall is intended to replicate the sacrality of the two territories.

The two maps and cosmos are accompanied by pictures on the remaining vestibular walls

²⁸¹ Vesna Wallace, "Śambhala As a Pure Land," Chapter 3 in *Pure Lands in Asian Texts and Contexts*, edited by Georgios Halkias and Richard Payne (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019), 744.

that are much more prevalent in the vestibules of Tibetan Buddhist temples more generally: depictions of the four directional guardians or *lokapāla* and the *bhāvacakra* or life-wheel, a six part circle embedded within the torso of a demon figure, which illustrates stages of rebirth or *samsāra*.²⁸² Images of the four masculine, military guardian figures positioned just outside temples are common to historical temples throughout Asia, Buddhist, Hindu, and others. The relative ubiquity of the *lokapāla* and *bhāvacakra* depictions indicates at least an iconographic standard for vestibules. Together, the murals perpetuate the more general distinction between images intended for exteriors versus the interiors of temples. This distinction extend from the logic of many *thangka* compositions, so that the depiction of the external worlds in the vestibule is analogous to the addition of landscape elements in the background or outer margins of pictures that primarily function as iconic portraits of one or a group of Buddhist figures, with the depicted landscape as supplemental to figural depiction.

Another likely factor in the distinction between the iconography of the vestibular, exterior paintings at the hall versus that of interior paintings is the organization of chapter divisions within the primary *Kālacakra* texts, the abbreviated *Laghutantra* and subsequent commentaries, in that the texts are structurally organized to distinguish the exterior world treated in the first chapter of the *Laghutantra* from the interior world treated in the second.²⁸³ This textual distinction in mural placement is most likely a logical adaptation of textual content onto a prior, extant distinction in the positioning of figural icons at temple sites, the main distinction between internal and external space being, namely, a separation of mundane reality of the external world and its military and political forces from the pure and sanctified presence of Buddhist worthies, a distinction also relevant to *thangka* painting compositions.

The cosmological mural thus has two simultaneous and seemingly contradictory functions within its position in architectural space relative to the larger *dratsang*: (1.) its depicted content is primarily mundane: its position in the vestibule and the composition's diagrammatical arrangement indicate a clear understanding of the aspects of the world that are external to the core assemblage and revered presences that sanctify the main parts of the hall; (2.) understood in its relation to the *Kālacakra* tantra as a whole, the collected parts of the cosmos cohere into a single presence that is figural in the same manner as the *lokapāla* and *bhāvacakra* depictions also in the vestibule, in that the depicted form stands for a complete, organismic system correlative with the individual body of an idealized *Kālacakra* practitioner, clearly meant to be seen and interpreted as such. Thus the cosmological mural has its own presence, identity, and position of power relative to the viewer.

4.5. Perimeter

4.5.1. Circumambulation

Thus far, analysis of the Labrang mural has been based on its visible aspects. That is, this study has largely presumed a fixed viewer able to see the mural clearly and totally from a privileged viewpoint. Also presumed is that the sight of the object forms the basis from which the viewer can then identify the *Kālacakra* cosmos and recognize it as having a status analogous to the other icons. As discussed, this is because for the *Kālacakra* tantra, adept and cosmos are intertwined and enable the generation of a transcendent being, which is the goal of the tantra. Sight of the cosmos should have a similar effect to sight of the body of the icon.

²⁸² "Thresholds" or vestibules are discussed in Huntington, *Creating*, 191–204; Stephen Teiser also discusses the iconography of the *bhāvacakra* in *Reinventing the Wheel* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

²⁸³ See Chapter 1.

However, the ritual of circumambulation, or *pradakṣiṇā* in Sanskrit, reconfigures how the mural is perceived: in understanding this ritual's application at the site, the visibility of the mural is no longer a necessary component of its purpose. The mural loses its singular meaning and becomes a material component incorporated into a general recognition of a revered space.²⁸⁴ For scholar Amita Sinha, circumambulation is "an ancient spatial practice of walking in a clockwise direction to demarcate a field of energy."²⁸⁵ The recipient of veneration is not merely an object isolated somewhere within a perimeter but the overall space defined by both the object of veneration and the immediate space of which the object is a part.²⁸⁶ The recipient is thus both venerated and spatially reconfigured by this process.

From the embodied perspective of the practitioner, circumambulation is a ritual process that structures a relationship between the practitioner and a recipient, usually a relationship defined by worship or veneration.²⁸⁷ In the process of revolution, the ambulator continuously asserts the relative presence, centrality, and fixedness of the recipient. In Buddhist and pre-Buddhist practice observed, the process of circumambulation consists of the practitioner first perceiving the position of the recipient of worship; the practitioner subsequently reorients their own body relative to the recipient and moves forward with the recipient kept to the right. The practitioner can perceive directional orientation through vision, touch, proprioception, or another means, as circumambulation is only determined by the intentional act of moving one's body around the recipient. In this bodily demarcation of space, no part of the circumambulation is necessarily visual, or at least the visibility of the recipient is unnecessary to complete the ritual.

Veneration through clockwise circumambulation must be one of the oldest continuous rituals in Buddhism. The practice is pre-Buddhist, mythically derived from imitation of the sun's movement across the firmament, as understood by geocentric paradigmatic beliefs.²⁸⁸ Circumambulation has historically been an integral practice throughout Buddhism from its earliest monuments. Aniconic *stūpas* serving as reliquary memorials exemplify the earliest strata of Buddhist art and are essentially designed as objects primarily intended for proprioceptive engagement through circumambulation. The practitioner walks around a volume, the physical *stūpa* as an abstract heap, that covers the recipient relics or other venerated object, and that practitioner is purposefully denied a visual representation of the recipient. Famous extant early *stūpas* such as the ones at Sanci from the early first millennium provide fenced corridors encircling the *stūpa* specifically to facilitate the practice of circumambulation.

A great number of Buddhists still regularly circumambulate Buddhist sites, and many can be seen doing so around individual sites within Labrang Monastery, as well as around the monastery as a whole. Objects of circumambulatory veneration are manifold throughout the monastery, such that distinct paths for circumambulation are intentionally set into architecture. This collection of set paths reflects a fundamental quality regarding the organization of the

²⁸⁴ A wealth of quotes from source texts in Vedic, Buddhist, Hindu, and other canons is provided in Padma Sudhi, "An Encyclopaedic Study on Circumambulation," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 65: 1/4 (1984): 205–226.

²⁸⁵ Amita Sinha, "Circumambulation," Chapter 7 in *Cultural Landscapes of India* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 87.

²⁸⁶ In referring to the recipient of circumambulation, the term "object" is used loosely, as veneration can be directed towards a subject or object.

²⁸⁷ Given the range of Sudhi's comparanda, analysis regarding a more general function of circumambulation is open: "Almost in every instance in which an explanation is given, it is represented as a rite intended to ward off sinful influence or to abstract propitious influences in the interest either of those who perform the circumambulation or of the person or the thing placed in the centre," Sudhi, *Study*, 207.

²⁸⁸ Sudhi cites the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, a pre-Buddhist text, *ibid.*

monastery as a whole: that the layout of such paths avoids any single centralized space to order or encapsulate the monastery. The paths of circulation allow the ambulant some agency in identifying the recipient of veneration, though the monastery architecture establishes its own circumambulatory paths for people to follow. Paths are arranged at varied scales, with the largest path continuing around the front half of the monastery, leaving the second half up to individual interpretation as the monastery is lapped. Paths are also available around certain temples and again within sections of a temple. The paths are neither concentric nor symmetrical and their positional distributions and shapes highlight the apparently stochastic individuality of different sites positioned within the overall monastery grounds. Such positioning is what made me feel so lost when I first arrived. The monastery's layout thus determines the paths of circumambulation.

4.5.2. Autonomy

Such a distribution of sites throughout Labrang Monastery is distinct relative to many landmark monasteries throughout Buddhist history. Sites like the Jo-khang (discussed above) or bSam-yas Monastery (an important site for Tibetan Buddhist doctrinal history) perpetuate architecture designed around a central node, for instance, a single icon or a *vihāra*.²⁸⁹ The designs of *mahāvihāras*, as revealed in their ruins of such sites as Odantapurī or Nālandā, are built around such nodes in highly symmetrical and regular layout plans. Odantapurī *mahāvihāra* was the model for bSam-yas Monastery in its massive, rotationally symmetrical design around a four-winged central structure. Nālandā, also a historically well-known site that propagated a variety of distinct Buddhist monastic disciplines simultaneously, was initially established in the 800s, and the site's current ruins reflect its expansion up to the twelfth century. Its gradual development maintained a very regular string of similarly-formed, adjacent *vihāra*-style halls, each of which was presumably dedicated to a specific monastic discipline.²⁹⁰ Neither of these layouts adhered to Labrang, which was derived from the style of Drepung Monastery (Bras-spungs dGon-pa) near Lhasa, established in 1419 and one of the four main Geluk monasteries.²⁹¹ As Melvyn Goldstein writes, "Drepung was organized in a manner that resembled the segmentary structure of classic British universities like Oxford in that the overall entity, the monastery, was a combination of semi-autonomous subunits know as [*dratsang*]."²⁹² This degree of autonomy in architecture likewise characterizes Labrang Monastery.

One possible factor in the preference for autonomous architecture at Labrang is that the Tibetan population in the regions around Labrang contains a large nomadic pastoralist population. This community was somewhat clear on my trip to and from the monastery, as many nomadic tents could be seen along the countryside. Their connection to the monastery was also evident during the costumed ritual '*cham* dances conducted in the large courtyard to the front of the Sūtra Hall.²⁹³ At the event hundreds of local laypeople dressed in Tibetan finery rode and

²⁸⁹ The eponymous Samye Debate was between representatives of Chinese versus South Asian Buddhism; see Pasang Wangdu, Hildegard Diemberger, and Per K. Sørensen, *Dbā' Bzhed* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000).

²⁹⁰ A description of the site at Nālanda is provided in M. B. Rajani, "The Expanse of Archaeological Remains at Nalanda," *Archives of Asian Art* 66: 1 (2016), 1–23.

²⁹¹ Gruschke states that "The layout of Labrang . . . is that of a monastic city since its founder [the First Jamyang Shyeba] had the model of Drepung in mind," *Monuments*, 30.

²⁹² Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein, "The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery," in *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 20.

²⁹³ One '*cham* such dance is extensively described in René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Walter Graf, and Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang- rgya-mtsho, *Tibetan Religious Dances* (Varanasi: Pilgrims, 2007).

parked their motorcycles in the monastery to view the ritual. These people were identified as nomads by those at the monastery. Dan-qu's study on local architecture around Labrang also privileges tents as the earliest types of domiciles in the area, citing archaeological work that establishes a chronology of fixed structures only appearing 3000 years in the past, with the mixing agricultural practices with nomadic pastoralism as means of subsistence.²⁹⁴ Local nomadic practices are thus a viable mode of life in the area, and have survived the sedentarization of nearby cities. The nomadic mode is defined by a semi-autonomy of movement, dependent on regular access to necessities such as pasturage and water. Thomas Barfield bases his account of nomadic "autonomy" on the decisions individual households can make with respect to choices in movement, types of labor, and social affinities.²⁹⁵ Nomadic pastoralist lives are also characterized not by being randomly peripatetic, but in the establishment of fixed cycles of migration depending on access to pasturage.²⁹⁶

That the monastery might favor a nomadic sense of disaggregated autonomy in its planning more than a rigidly centralized structure is not unlikely. The architectural layout of Labrang appears better adapted to the practices of autonomous movement inherent in nomadic livelihood. In addition to the local nomads' patronage of individual halls and sites, several of the specialist monks that I spoke to came from local nomadic families and still continuously interact with them. The arrival of the local nomadic community at the monastery was especially notable since they easily accessed the courtyard with their motorcycles despite it being near the middle of the overall monastery grounds. Despite the labyrinthine design of the corridors, they provided easy access to the monastery for the local community, who could navigate the monastery without issue. The formality of more rigidly planned monasteries would seem to have prevented this level of ease.

The position of the *Kālacakra dratsang* is, like other compounds in Labrang Monastery, defined by a degree of autonomy relative to both the monastery as a whole and the other sites in it. Its asymmetric position relative to the larger monastery, as well as its independent access to the intertwining passageways are isolating. However, the hall's architecture itself is conventional for halls throughout the monastery. The two specified circumambulatory paths within the compound of this *dratsang* are also conventional. One path is inside the main hall and runs between the interior walls with their icons on one side and the peristyle on the other, within which are the aforementioned benches for assembly. The other circumambulatory path runs along the exterior of the hall and the compound's boundary wall, which separates it from the rest of the monastery and its corridors. One presumably does not circumambulate around the outside of the exterior wall of the monastery, nor the enshrined objects of the inner, rear sanctum of the main hall, because their paths are blocked.

Despite their overlap, the two circumambulation routes each configure a different kind of space and thus these spaces reflect different ritual intentions. The outer path has no icons or much else to look at, save matching inner and outer walls. This path is more inclusive, as it encompasses the vestibule and other parts of the hall, and it is more accessible to varied practitioners, who do not have to enter the hall itself. This path venerates and thus sacralizes all of the materials within the hall as a single unit, so the picture of the *Kālacakra* cosmos becomes one aspect of a larger spatial configuration, ultimately defined by the *Kālacarka* hall itself, understood as a whole and with all of its functions in propagating the *Kālacakra* tantra. The

²⁹⁴ Dan-qu, *Labuleng*, 247–255.

²⁹⁵ Thomas Barfield, *The Nomadic Alternative* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993), 15.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

interior path specifically isolates the assembly space without the community of icons surrounding it. However, in being surrounded by icons and inside the hall, positions are somewhat reversed, so that outer icons empower and valorize the space in which the ritual act of circumambulation occurs. The two paths serve to reinforce the distinction between sacred assembly space of the interior and the worldly exterior.

Historically, Buddhist sites often operate according to a sensorial logic of contrast, so that the visual arrangement of individual sites can often be contrasted with surrounding landscapes and environments to produce a certain effect: the intensive iconographical programs and almost hallucinogenic colors filling the interiors of many Dunhuang caves, for instance, should be contrasted to the Gansu desert that surrounds them, to better appreciate the overall perceptual and cognitive goals of the sites, as sacred and soteriological. Each temple site has environmental conditions with which it interacts. This contrast is heightened in the layout of the two circumambulatory paths, which configure the in two different ways, giving it two simultaneous functions and identities. Combined with the autonomy of the hall itself relative to the larger monastery, circumambulation practices serve to continually reorient perceptions of Buddhist sacrality and presence to suit the needs of individual practitioners.

4.6. Conclusion

The picture of the *Kālacakra* cosmos, understood in both its formal qualities and material being, is bound to the larger life of Labrang monastery. The relative autonomy of the monastery enabled a depiction of the *Kālacakra* cosmos that could be adapted to its own interests. The production of the mural was completist in its collection of cosmological iconography to configure the larger whole, but in order to be completist, individual scales were reformulated and correct iconometrical proportions were sometimes ignored. While other monasteries in A-mdo maintain *Kālacakra dratsang* sites, Labrang's is uniquely preserved—as Andreas Gruschke writes, despite efforts to damage Tibetan Buddhism in China during the twentieth century, "the assembly and temple halls [at Labrang Monastery] remained mainly intact, while monk's quarters were torn down as was the grand Kumbum chörten [transliteration of *chos-rten* or *stūpa*]" ²⁹⁷ Finding *Kālacakra* halls in A-mdo was difficult because of the small percentage of surviving sites compared to earlier periods, and even surviving sites were changed. For instance, at another major Geluk monastery in A-mdo, Kumbum Monastery (sKu-'bum Byams-pa-gling), which was the birthplace of the primary Geluk-pa patriarch Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) and is still a major pilgrimage destination, the architecture of the *Kālacakra* hall appeared to have been extant from the earlier period, but the hall's interiors had been denuded of any paintings or related imagery. Rongwo Monastery (*Rong-bo dGon-chen*) in the famously arts-centered region of Reb-gong, A-mdo, also has a mural of the *Kālacakra* cosmos outside its *Kālacakra* Hall, but this painting was clearly modern, given its bold color palette. Notably, the Reb-gong mural was very focused on filling the compositional field of the mural with regular patterns more than the details of the cosmos itself, perhaps reflective of the self-consciousness of art as a local industry there.

²⁹⁷ Gruschke, *Monuments*, 30.

CHAPTER 5: RETURNS

One of the larger conceits of this dissertation has been its attempt to refute any simplistic and unidirectional narrative of art historical development over time, whether that narrative is defined by progress, degradation, or stasis. In so doing, analysis brought forth a set of adaptations to Buddhist art and specifically *Kālacakra*-related art, and these adaptations were made for complex assortment of reasons. In terms of the adaptations themselves, under Desi Sangye Gyatso's Ganden Phodrang regime, there was a concerted effort to map out and establish something analogous to a territorial control over aspects of life that had yet to be managed. The connection between such an effort to an underlying drive within *Kālacakra* discourse is clear, in that the *Kālacakra* tantra similarly differentiated itself from previous Buddhist discourses in its claims regarding fields of knowledge not yet well defined within earlier Buddhist metaphysics. One such field is astronomy, but certainly other types of knowledge were asserted, such as geography or even physiology. With this mapping impulse abetted by doctrinal precedents in *Kālacakra*, the Desi could proceed towards a kind of secularism that fit better with his specific position as regent, rather than lama. As such, the assimilation of *Kālacakra* discourse by the Desi was, to some degree, bound by the division of managerial labor among the Geluk-pa into spiritual and secular orders, the former being the domain of the lamas, the later the Desi's.

In terms of the Qing court's relationship to the *Kālacakra* tantra, it is likely too much to say that they went in a completely different direction from the Desi and assimilated *Kālacakra* in an utterly original and unrelated fashion. Certainly, there are aspects of the Qing assimilation of the tantra that are unique. There is not, at the Yonghe Gong at least, a clear motivation towards exactitude and quantification. There is not even a clear assertion of the *Kālacakra* tantra itself, as opposed to the Desi's intensive application of *Kālacakra* specialist literature in the production of exegetical tomes such as *White Beryl*. The Qing court's assimilation of *Kālacakra* appears superficial or even empty. In the design of the monastery, *Kālacakra* was a name that could be used to identify and differentiate a given space, without distinguishing a clear function or purport for the space itself. If anything, the Yonghe Gong space was dedicated to cultural interweaving, such that Chinese scholarly aesthetics could somehow coincide with *Kālacakra*-grounded erudition. Nonetheless, despite these possible cultural assertions at the site, the Qing court must have been highly conscious of the Desi's work, and their interpretation of *Kālacakra* discourse as perhaps a little bit analogous to an empirical science was surely influenced by the Desi's work in that direction. The Qing court must have also realized, then, that the *Kālacakra* tantra could be exploited, to some extent, for power and expanding authority, over Mongolian monks or whomever else.

Power is absolutely a significant continuity, then, among sponsors and producers of *Kālacakra*-related art. Labrang Monastery is thus a special case in this regard, as the spheres of influence around Lhasa and Beijing have potentially less gravity there, relatively speaking, as Rolpay Dorje and lots of other Buddhist hierarchs and patrons in Beijing, Lhasa, and elsewhere had very deep connections to the A-mdo region. My impression might be too subjective, but there is something about the visuality and materiality of its landscape that is somehow less of a reflection of authoritarian control. Such a claim must be tempered by an appreciation of history, however, as attempts at authoritarian control have been repeatedly and regularly asserted in the throughout the region, likely for as long as people have been living there. It is hard to imagine, though, a mural of the cosmos painted directly on the walls of the Yonghe Gong. Fieldwork has led me to observe that contemporary Buddhist art in the A-mdo region has been defined by the hanging of large painted banners on the insides of temple and monastery spaces rather than

paintings on walls directly. There was one such banner among the majority of mural paintings inside the *Kālacakra* Hall at Labrang, whereas newer Tibetan Buddhist temples such as Wutun Upper Monastery (吾屯上寺) in the town of Reb-gong (also known as Tongren 同仁) only had such interior banners. The banners are perhaps to some extent an effect of the denuding of so many nearby Tibetan Buddhist sites throughout the twentieth century, such as the historically important monasteries nearby, such as sKu-'bum and dGon-lung. Likewise, the banners respond to the more recent attempt to rapidly restore Buddhist visual culture in the region, with monasteries like Bya-khyung being completely rebuilt from the ground up. Behind or away from all this, though, is the idea that Labrang has had a kind of durability away from things, and thus was able to develop its paths and its nodes in a more gradual and meaningful way, for instance, in a way that makes sense to the local nomadic community. Its murals seem to persist despite regional tendencies otherwise. In terms of art and the *Kālacakra* tantra, the monks have been left to make with the tantra what they will, and there is a sense of a wholeness or weight to the figure of the cosmos, despite its aporias and messy planning. Perhaps, though, in its variegated and complex fullness and in its presence, the art has not changed all that much

Another conceit of this dissertation has been to assume that the objects and sites analyzed are bound to a separate epoch from roughly 200 years ago and earlier that have miraculously persisted in to the present, and that despite being from this epoch, the objects under consideration evidence enough variety to adequately separate them from the art of the more recent epoch within the last 200 years or so, marked by factors rather obvious to people living today, such as greater global interconnectedness, the development of nationalist identities distinct from imperial or religious ones, and the stronger influence of market forces with their concomitant technological advancements. Developments in this period are manifold and complex, and despite certain forces being obvious to perceive, the different analytical powers to sensitivities to treat questions of agency and consumption, or shifting nationalist sentiments relative to the power of the state, might be beyond my ken. Rather than analyze, perhaps this epoch might more simply be suggested by a very basic juxtaposition of two objects also relevant to the *Kālacakra* tantra: (1.) the 1974 rock-fusion album "Crawling to Lhasa" by the German band named Kalacakra; and (2.) the 1994 album "Tibetan Buddhist Chant" by Monks Of The Namgyal Monastery, with its four tracks entitled "Kalacakra."

FIGURES

Figure 1.1.a. *Kālacakra maṇḍala* from *Vajrāvalī*, Ngor Monastery version, Ngor-chen inscribed set, circa 1420; in private collection, <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/88706>.

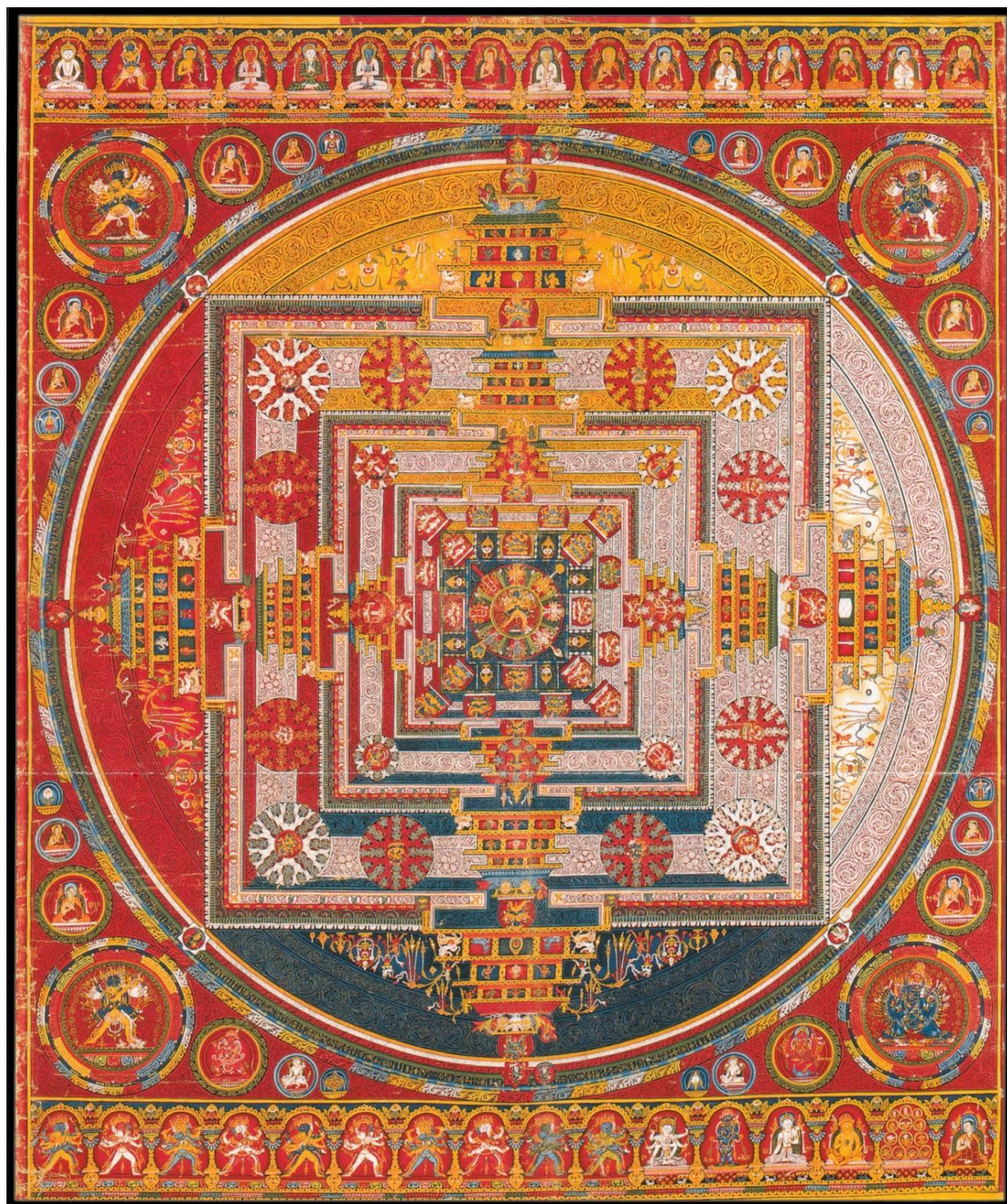


Figure 1.1.b.: Detail of Fig. 1.1.a.



Figure 1.2.a.: Modern *Kālacakra maṇḍala thangka*, covered.



Figure 1.2.b.: Modern *Kālacakra maṇḍala thangka*, rear.



Figure 1.2.c.: Modern *Kālacakra* maṇḍala *thangka*, uncovered.



Figure 1.3.: *Taima Mandala*, early 1300s; Cleveland Museum 1990.82.



Figure 1.4.a.: First of two *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, the *Kongōkai* or vajra realm; Tōji.

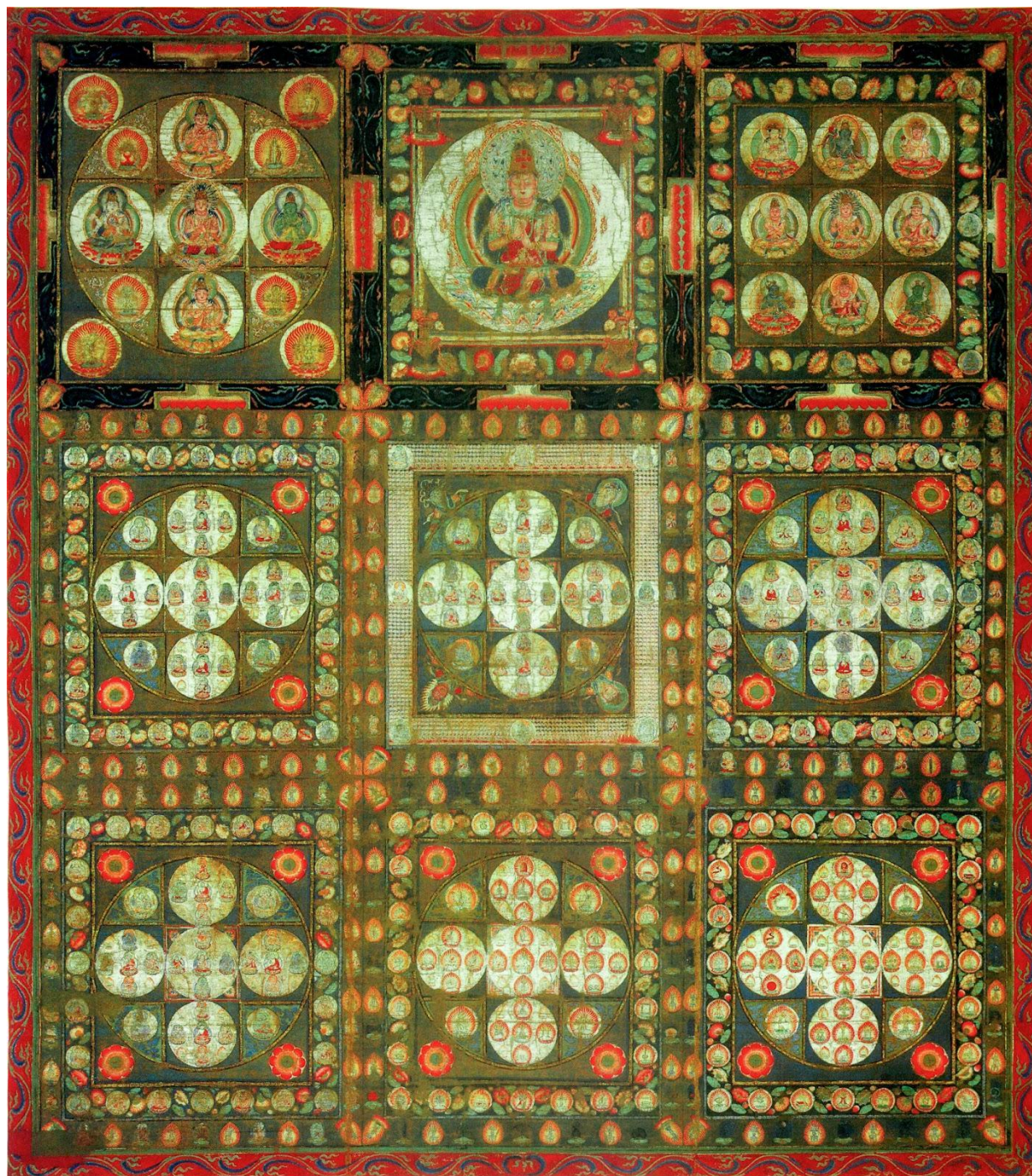


Figure 1.4.b.: Second of two *Ryōkai Maṇḍala*, the *Taizōkai* or womb realm; Tōji.

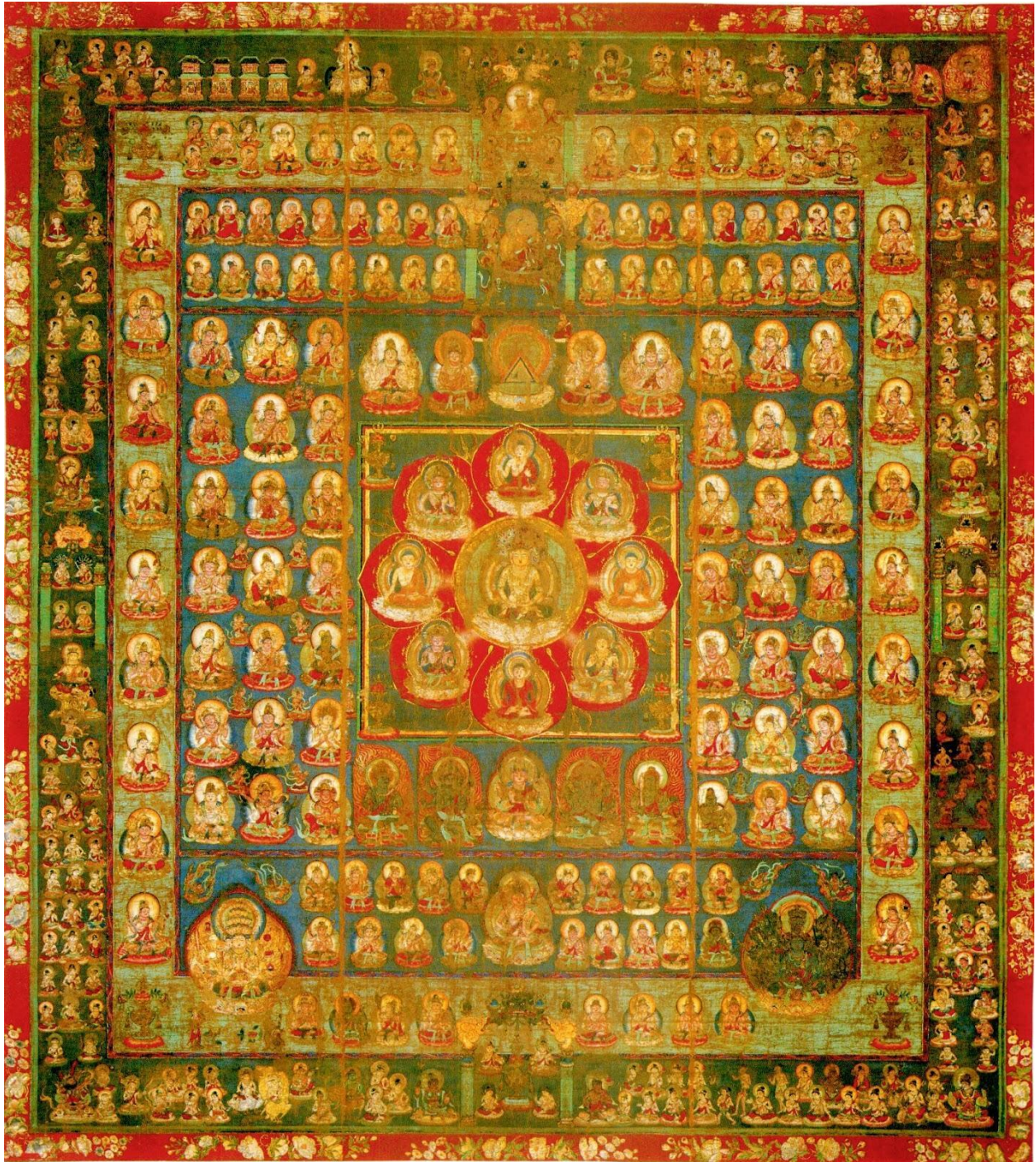


Figure 1.5.: Vairocana *Maṇḍala* from dated to the eleventh century; from Singer, "Sacred."



Figure 1.6.: Detail from center of Fig. 1.1.a.



Figure 1.7.: Ngor *Kālacakra maṇḍala* dated to the 1300s; private collection, HAR55694, <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/55694>.



Figure 1.8.: "Four Mandalas of the Vajravali Cycle," circa 1450; Rubin Museum C2007.6.1, HAR81826.



Figure 2.2.: Model book page from contemporary Rebkong monk-painter Jiaobajia.



Figure 2.3.: Detail of Prajñāpāramitā of Java with horizontal manuscript on lotus over statue's left shoulder, thirteenth century; National Museum of Indonesia.



Figure 2.4.: Model book page from contemporary Rebkong monk-painter Jiaobajia.



Figure 2.5.: Aniconic limestone drum-slab from Amarāvati, circa first century; British Museum, 1880,0709.79.



Figure 2.6.: Dunhuang sketch, 1050 *terminus ante quem*; from Fraser, *Performing*.



Plate 14. Pounce. P4517.2. Ink on paper with perforations. Ninth or tenth century. 24.0 cm x 14.8 cm. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, © BnF.

Figure 2.7.: Sketchbook excerpt; from Lowry, "Fifteenth."

FIFTEENTH CENTURY SKETCHBOOK



A19

A20

A21

109

Figure 2.8.: Sketches from around 1500; <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1985.191>.



Figure 2.9.a.: A-lci mural, circa 1400 *terminus post quem*;
https://alchi-treasureofthehimalayas.com/Alchi_-_Treasure_of_the_Himalayas/Lhakhang_Soma.html.



Figure 2.9.b.: A-lci mural, detail, circa 1400 *terminus post quem*, ; Huntington Archive.



Figure 2.10.: Sa-spo-la Cave 3, Ladakh, circa 1400 *terminus post quem*; Rob Linrothe RL03591.



Figure 2.11.: General contours of overlaid Figures 2.9. (green) and 2.10. (purple).



Figure 2.12.: Early Ngor *Kālacakra* *thangka*, dated to 1300s; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston #67 821, <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/87223>.



Figure 2.13.: Early Ngor *Kālacakra* *thangka*, dated to 1400s; private collection, <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/30695>.



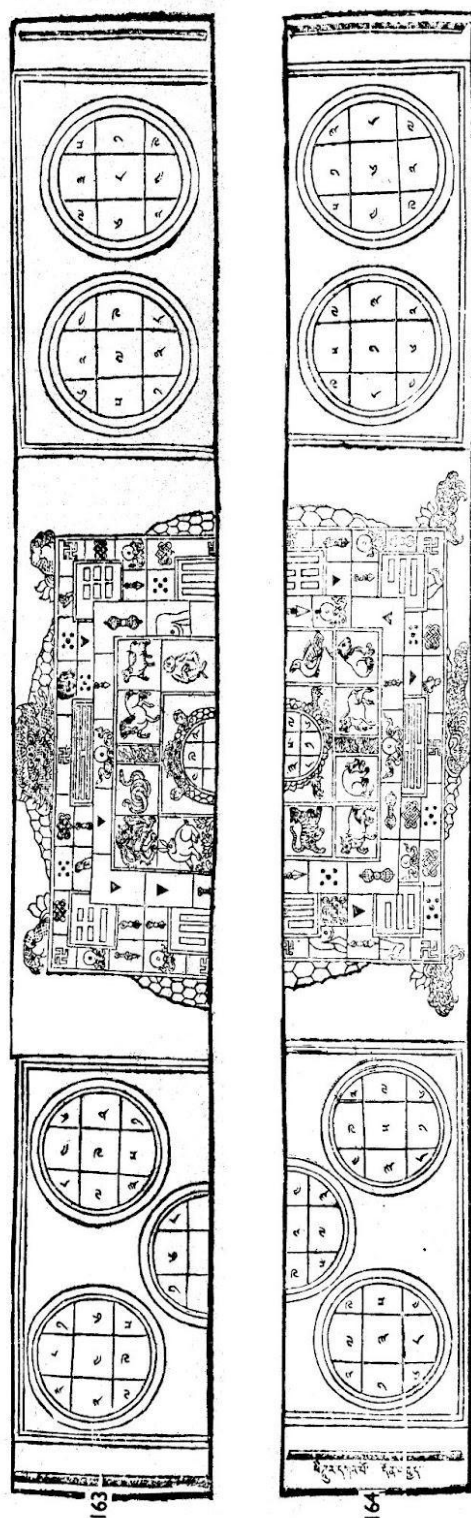
Figure 2.14.a.: Xylographic loose folios; Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, *White Beryl*, 163–164.

Figure 2.14.b.: Detail of 2.14.a.

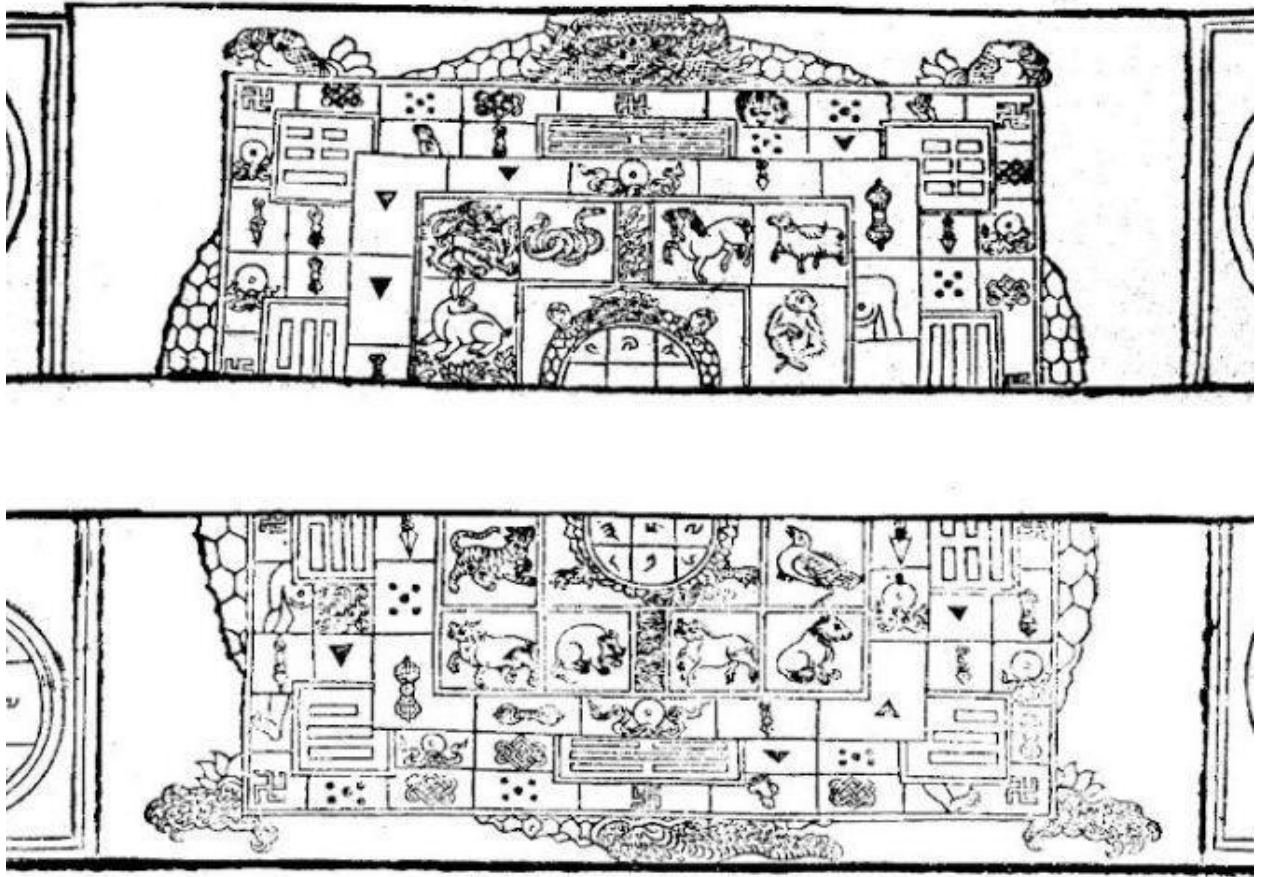


Figure 2.15.: Sa-skya tortoise divination manuscript; Dorje, et al., *Elemental*.

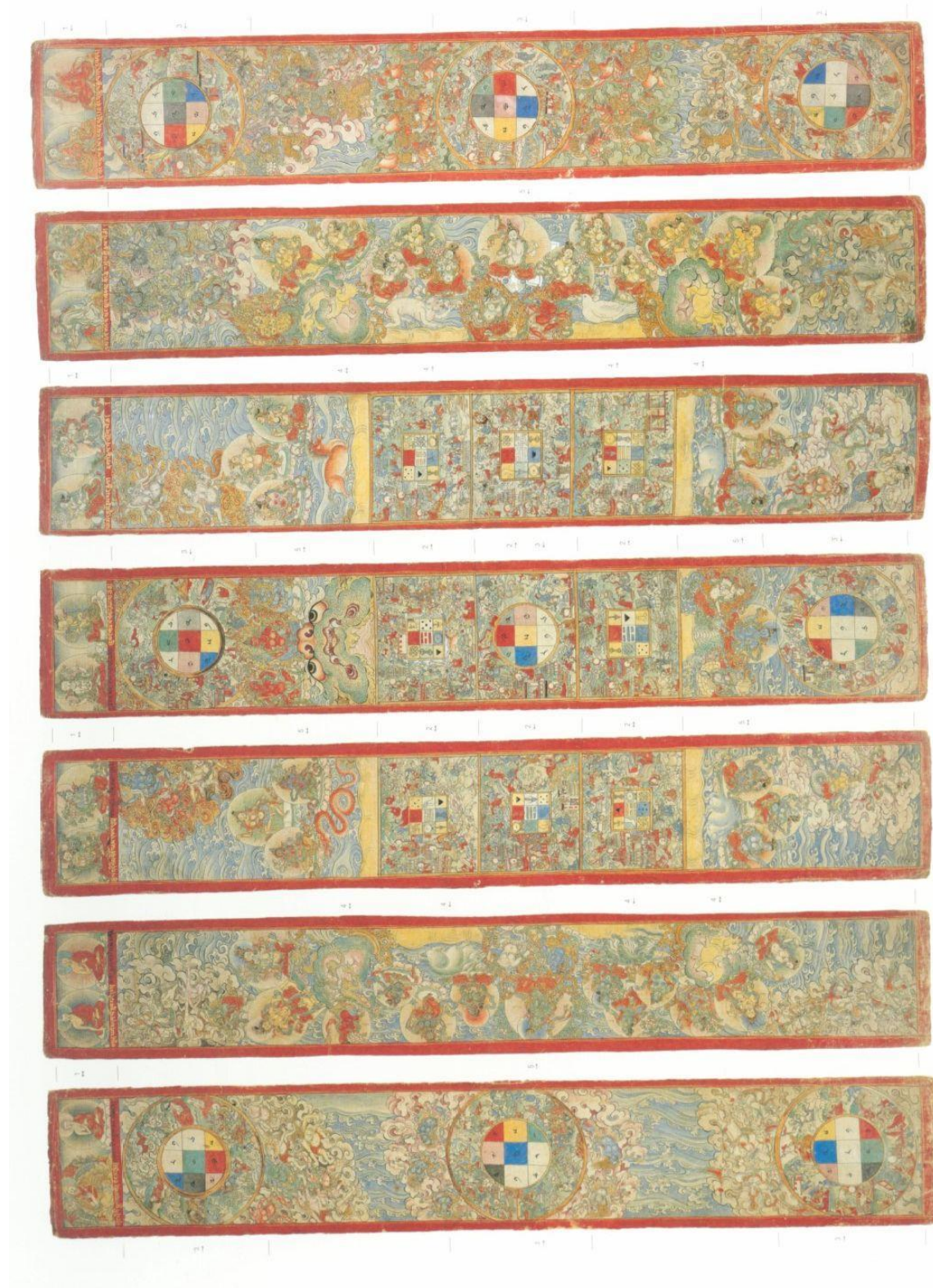


Figure 2.16.: Modern *Srid-pa-ho* painting; Rubin Museum C2002.30.8,
<https://www.himalayanart.org/items/65166>.



Figure 3.1.: Map of Yonghe Gong; Niu, *Yonghegong*.



Figure 3.2.: Yonghe Gong proportional architectural groundplan—*Kālacakra* Hall is marked "15"; Lessing, *Yung-ho-kung*.

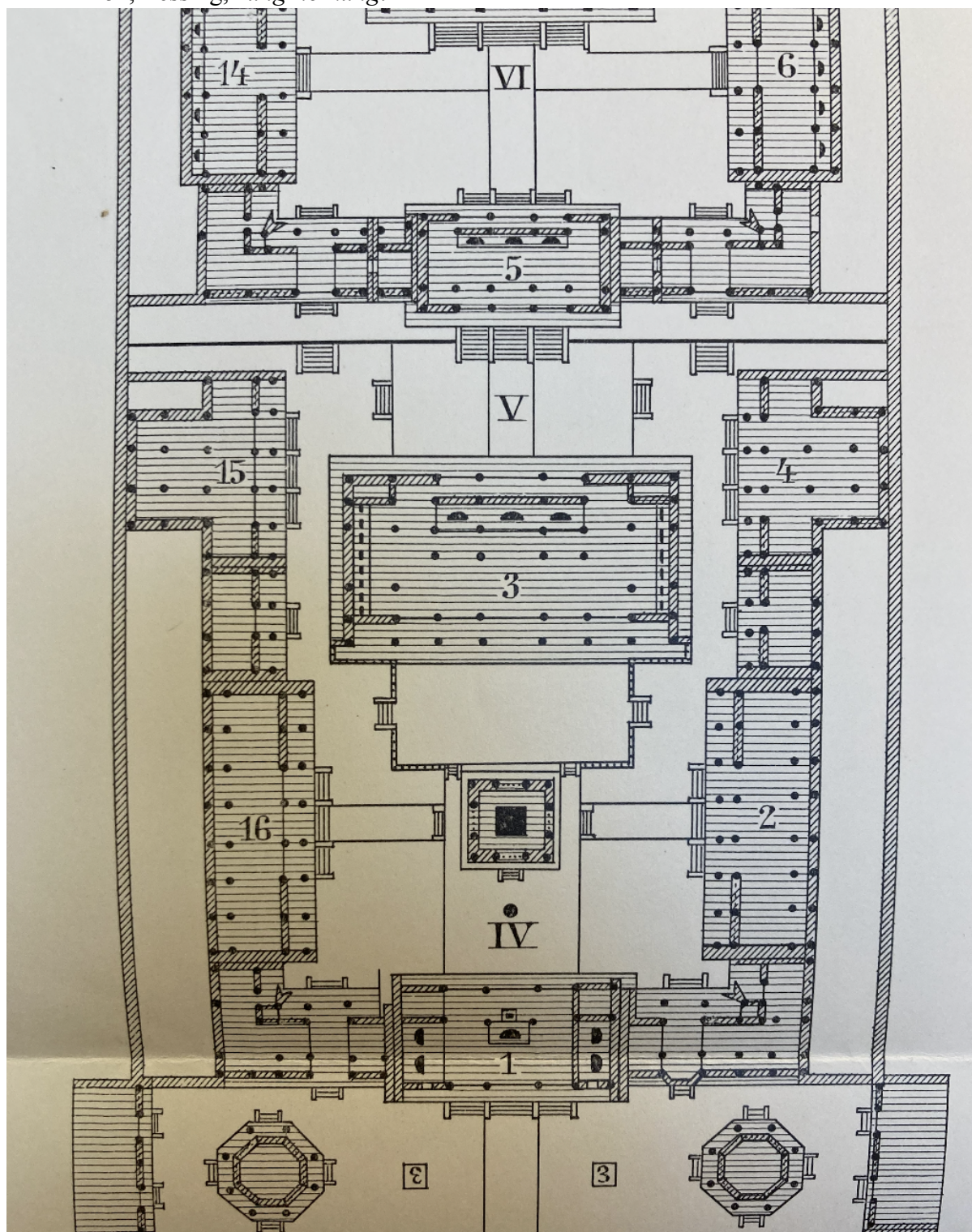


Figure 3.3.: View from interior of *Kālacakra* Hall, facing west into central area; 2017.



Figure 3.4.: Yonghe Gong hall bracketing; 2017.



Figure 3.5.: Hall of Mental Cultivation, interior; from Wikipedia:

[https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/养心殿#/media/File:Cité_interdite_les_chambres_de_la_suite_impériale_\(5\).JPG](https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/养心殿#/media/File:Cité_interdite_les_chambres_de_la_suite_impériale_(5).JPG).



Figure 3.6.: Kālacakra-Viśvamātā in *Kālacakra* Hall.



Figure 3.7.: *Kālacakra maṇḍala* from early twentieth century; "China Digital Library" (中华数字书苑), <http://www.apabi.com/>.

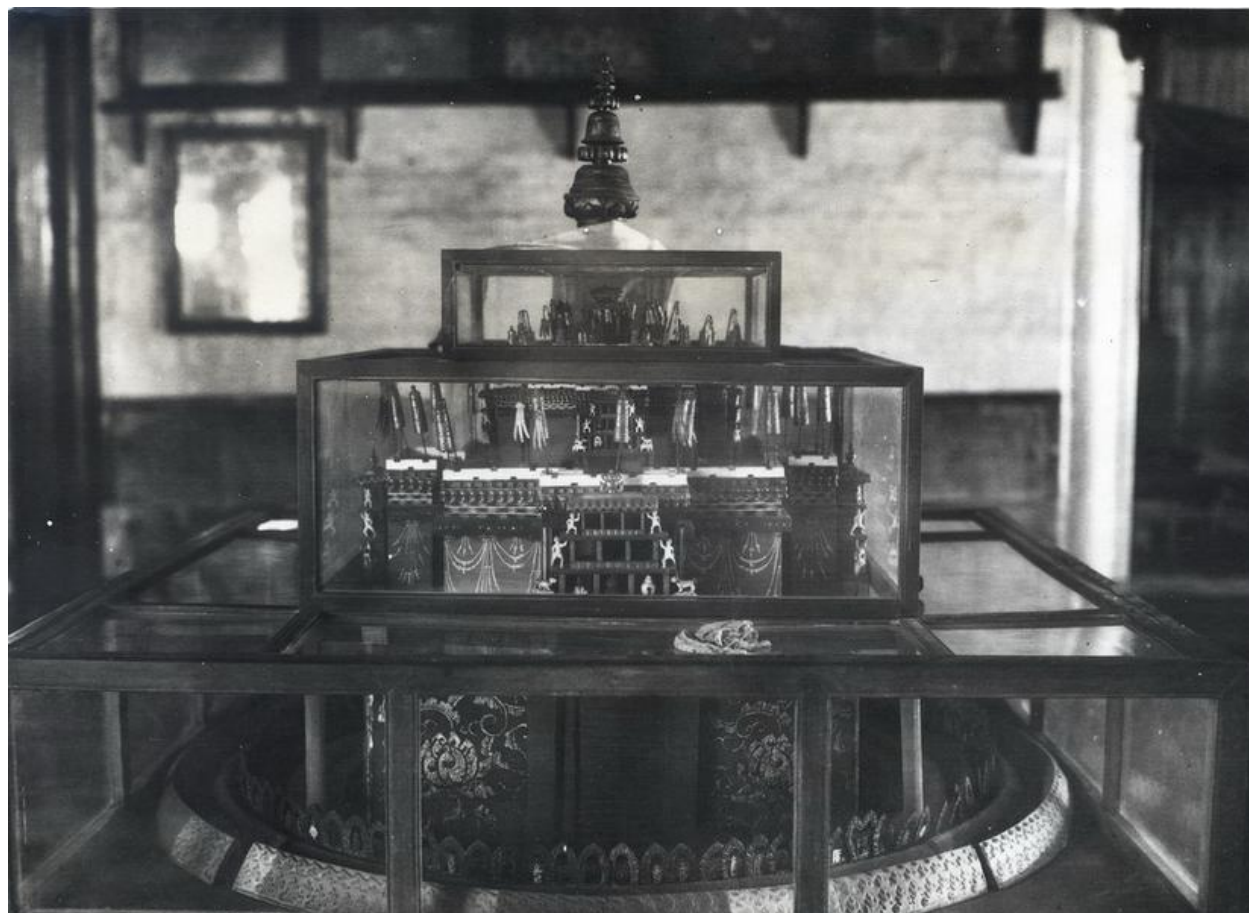


Figure 3.8.: *Sūtra* Hall "雍和宫经堂" from early twentieth century; "China Digital Library" (中华数字书苑), <http://www.apabi.com/>.

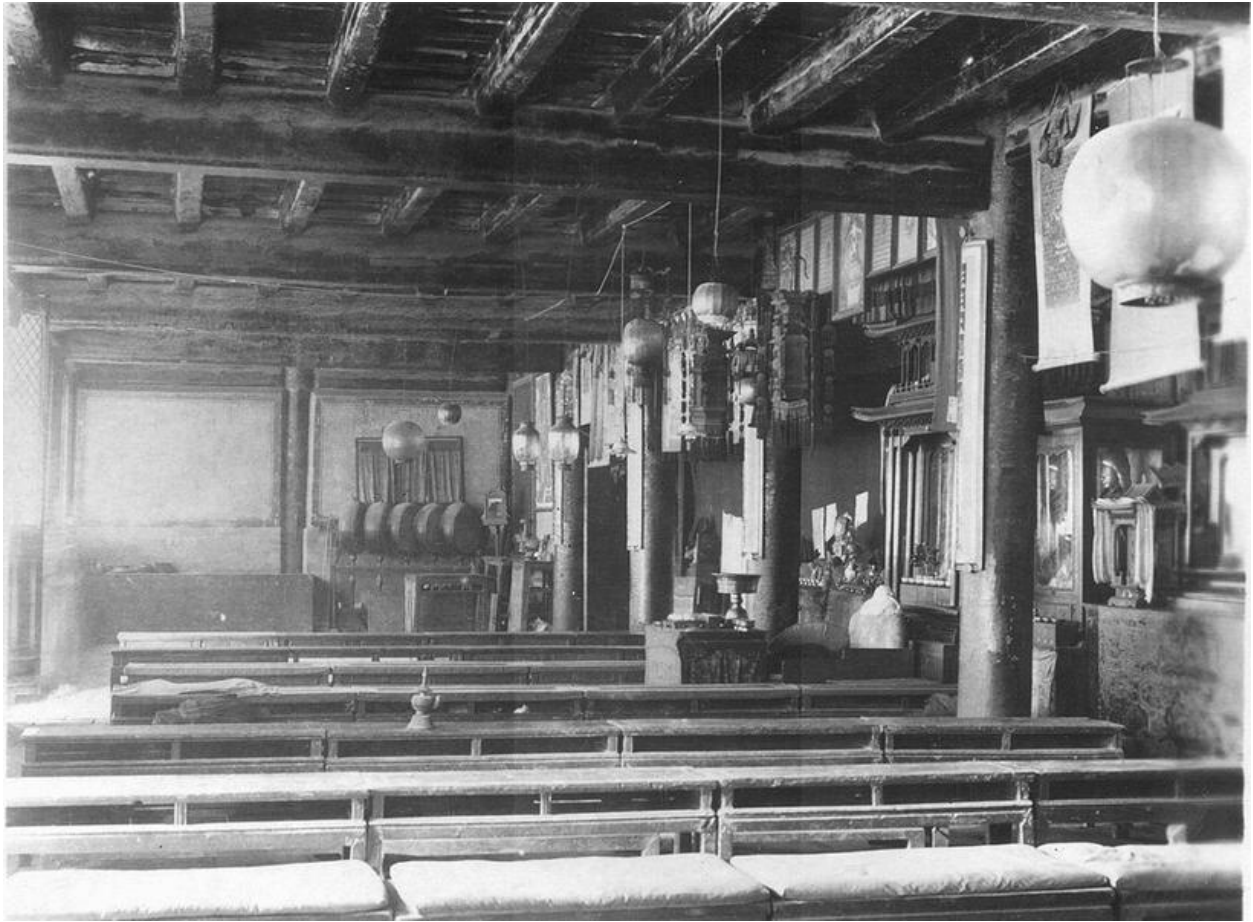


Figure 4.1.: Public map of Labrang Monastery; 2017.



Figure 4.2.: Illustration of Labrang Monastery, dated to early twentieth century; Rubin Museum, <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/1097>.



Figure 4.3.: Labrang Monastery *Kālacakra* Hall mural; 2017.



Figure 4.4.: Labrang Hevajra Hall plans; from Qi GAO, et al., "Dratsang."

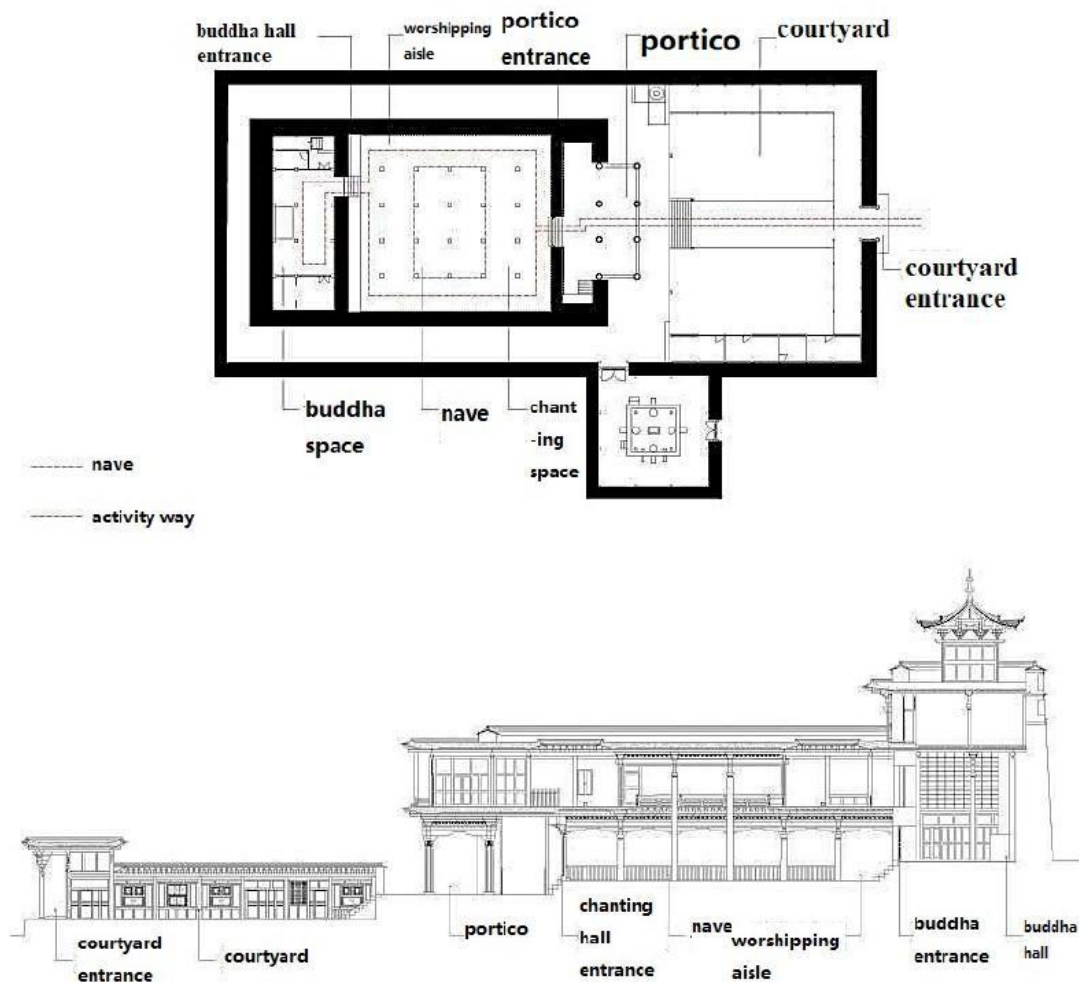


Figure 4 The main space of Hevajra dratsang.

Figure 4.5.: Yuan dynasty silk tapestry; Metropolitan Museum 1989.140



Figure 4.6.a.: "Cosmological Scroll," detail of overlay; Rubin Museum C2009.9.

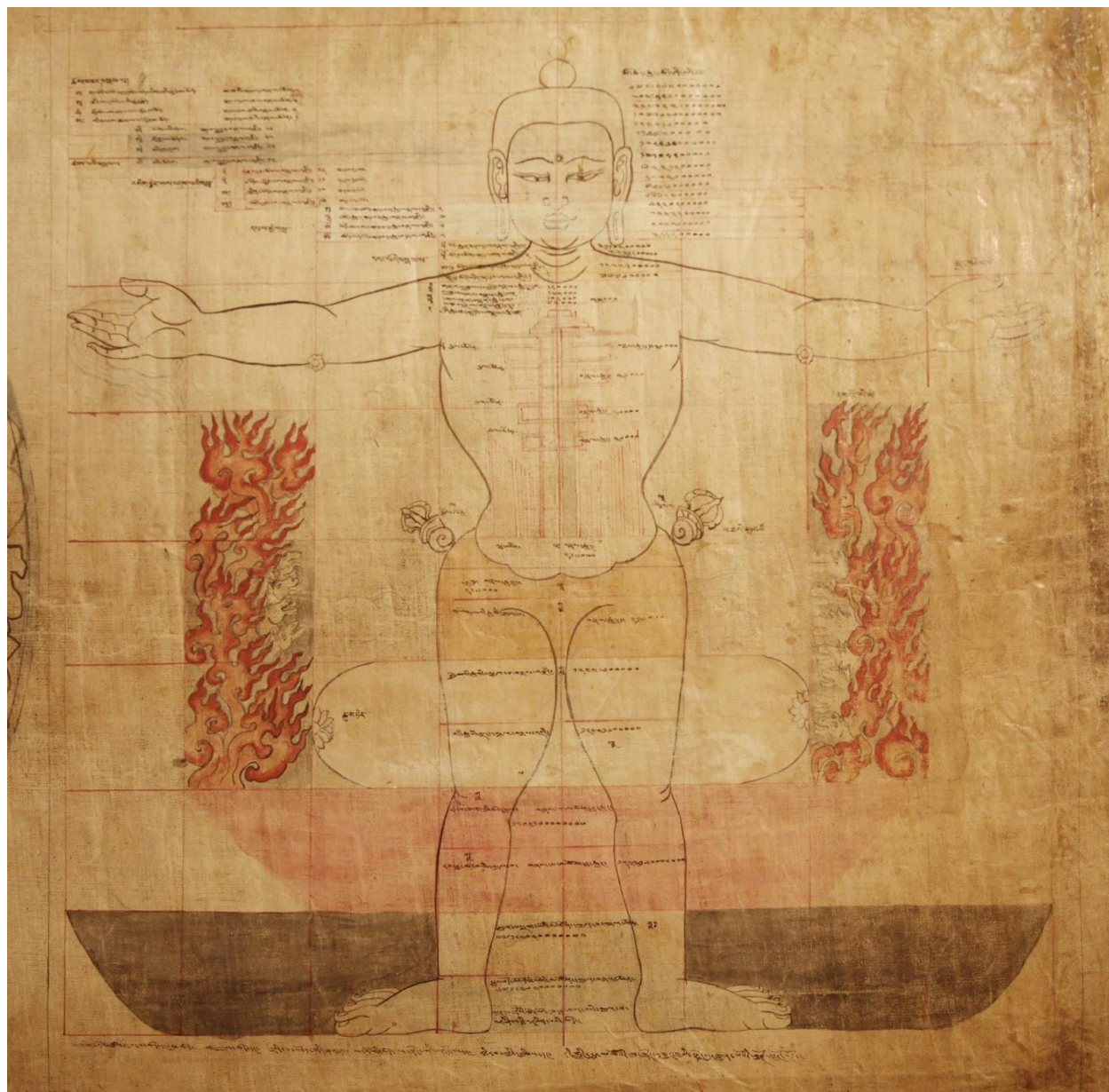
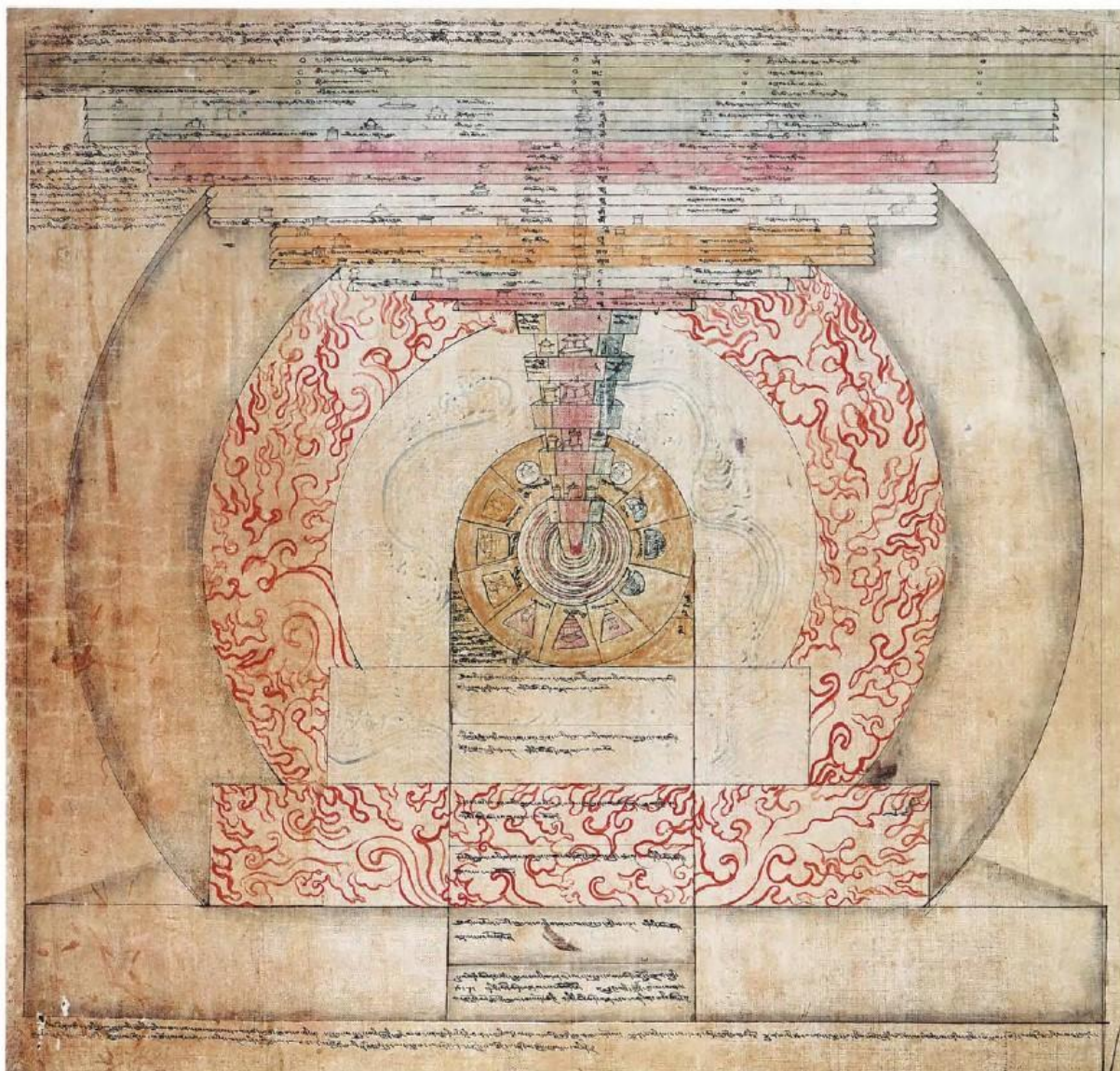


Figure 4.6.b.: "Cosmological Scroll," detail of cosmos; Rubin Museum C2009.9.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atkin, Albert. "Peirce's Theory of Signs" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2013 Edition)*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Accessed August 10, 2023. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/peirce-semiotics/>.
- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Barfield, Thomas. *The Nomadic Alternative*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993.
- Baumann, Brian. "By the Power of Eternal Heaven." *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 35 (2013): 233–284.
- . *Divine Knowledge*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Chandra, Lokesh, and Raghu Vira. *Kālacakratantra and Other Texts*. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1966.
- Bellini, Chiara. "The Paintings of the Caves of Sa spo la in Ladakh," in *From Mediterranean to Himalaya*, edited by Dramdul and Francesco Sferra, 215–246. Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue Chubanshe 中國藏學出版社, 2014.
- Berger, Patricia. *Empire of Emptiness*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003.
- . "Lineages of Form." *The Tibet Journal* 28, 1/2 (2003): 109–46.
- . "Preserving the Nation." In *Later Days of the Law*, edited by Marsha Weidner, 89–125. Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994.
- Brauen, Martin. *The Mandala*. Boston: Shambhala, 1997.
- Burgess, James. *A Guide to Elura Cave Temples*. Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1926.
- Bu-ston Rin-chen Grub. *Dus 'khor sgrub thabs bsdus pa rin po che'i snying po*. In *The Collected Works of Bu-ston*, edited by Lokesh Chandra (bdr:W22106). New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1965–1971.
- Bu-ston Rin-chen Grub, trans. *mChog gi dang po 'i sangs rgyas las phyung ba rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal dus kyi 'khor lo zhes bya ba [Kālacakra Laghutantra]* (D0362, rgyud, ka 22b–128b; D1346). Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 2006–2009.
- Charleux, Isabelle. *Temples Et Monastères De Mongolie-Intérieure*. Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2006.
- . "The Mongols' Devotion to the Jowo Buddhas," *Artibus Asiae* 75/1 (2015): 83–146.
- CHEN Qingying 陈庆英 and MA Lianlong 马连龙, trans. *Zhangjia Guoshi Ruobi Duoji* 章嘉国师若必多吉. Beijing, Zhongguo Zang Xue Chubanshe 中国藏学出版社, 2007.
- Corradini, Pietro. "The Chinese Imperial Astronomical Office and the Jesuit Missionaries." *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 68, 3/4 (1994): 339–350.
- Crossley, Pamela *A Translucent Mirror*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Crossley, Pamela Kyle, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton, eds. *Empire at the Margins*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Cüppers, Christoph, Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, Ulrich Pagel, and Dobis T. Gyal. *Handbook of Tibetan Iconometry*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Dachille, Rae. *Searching for the Body*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.
- Dalton, Jacob. "A Crisis of Doxography." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (JIABS)* 28, 1 (2005): 115–181.
- . *Conjuring the Buddha*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2023.
- . *The Gathering of Intentions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

- Dan-qu 丹曲. *Labuleng si Zangchuan Fojiao Wenhua Lungao* 拉卜楞寺藏传佛教文化论稿. Lanzhou, China: Minzu Chubanshe 甘肃民族出版社, 2010.
- Davidson, Ronald. *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- . "Reflections on the Mahesvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka." *JIAS* 14/2 (1991): 197–235.
- . "Studies in Dhāraṇī Literature I." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37/2 (2009), 97–147.
- . "The Litany of Names of Manjushri" In *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honor of R.A. Stein*, edited by Michel Strickmann, 1–69. Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises.
- . *Tibetan Renaissance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Davis, Whitney. *A General Theory of Visual Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- . *Visuality and Virtuality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- de la Vallée Poussin, Louis, and Leo M. Pruden, trans. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu* in four volumes. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988.
- Denwood, Philip. "The Artist's Treatise of sMan bla don grub." *Tibet Journal* 21/2 (1996): 24–30.
- Doniger, Wendy. *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1988.
- Dorje, Gyurme. *Jokhang*. London: Edition Hansjorg Mayer, 2010.
- . *Tibet Handbook*. Riverside Court: Footprint Handbooks, 1998.
- Dorje, Gyurme, bSod-nams dPal-'byor, Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, and sMin-gling Lo-chen Dharma-śrī. *Tibetan Elemental Divination Paintings*. London: John Eskenazi in association with Sam Fogg, 2001.
- Dorje, Rinchen. "Establishing Lineage Legitimacy and Building Labrang Monastery as 'the Source of Dharma.'" *Religions* 12, 491 (2021): 1–42
- Dreyfus, Georges. *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- . "Where do commentarial schools come from? Reflections on the history of Tibetan scholasticism." *JIAS* 28, 2 (2006): 273–297.
- Ekvall, Robert Brainerd. *Fields on the Hoof*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.
- Elverskog, Johan. *The Jewel Translucent Sūtra*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Fraser, Sarah. *Performing the Visual*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Gao, Qi, Zhiheng He, Jinming Zhang, Da Yong Jiang. "The Study of Space Mode about Dratsang Buildings of Labrang Monastery in Gannan Area." Accessed August 10, 2023. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:198962702>.
- Gerke, Barbara. "The Art of Tibetan Medical Practice." In *Bodies in Balance*, edited by Theresia Hofer, 16–31. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014.
- Goldstein, Melvyn. "The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery." In *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet*, edited by Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein, 15–52. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Gombrich, Ernst. *Art and Illusion*. London: Phaidon, 1977.
- Greenwood, Kevin. "Yonghegong" PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2013. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

- Gruschke, Andreas. *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces* Vol. 2. Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001.
- Gyatso, Janet. "Image as Presence." In *From the Sacred Realm*, edited by Valrae Reynolds, et al., 30–35. Munich: Prestel, 1999.
- . *Being Human in a Buddhist World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- Hatchell, Christopher. *Naked Seeing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Hay, John. "The Human Body as a Microcosmic Source of Macrocosmic Values in Calligraphy." In *Theories of the Arts in China*, edited by Susan Bush and Christian Murck, 74–102. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Aesthetics*. Translated by T.M. Knox. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- . *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*. Translated and edited by Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Heimbel, Jörg, and Lumbini International Research Institute. *Vajradhara in Human Form*. Lumbini. Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2017.
- Heissig, Walther. *The Religions of Mongolia*. Translated by Geoffrey Samuel. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Heller, Amy. *Early Himalayan Art*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2008.
- . *Tibetan Art*. Milano, Italy: Jaca Book, 1999.
- Henning, Edward. *Kālacakra And the Tibetan Calendar*. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, 2007.
- . "The Kālacakra maṇḍala according to the Vajrāvalī of Abhayākara Gupta." Accessed August 9, 2023. http://www.kalacakra.org/mandala/vvali_km2.htm.
- . "Wrathful Kālacakra and Vajravega," accessed August 10, 2023. <http://www.kalacakra.org/mandala/domchen.htm>.
- Hevia, James. "The Scandal of Inequality." *positions* 1, 3 (February 1995): 97–118.
- Jackson, David. *A History of Tibetan Painting*. Wien: Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 1996.
- . *The Nepalese Legacy in Tibetan Painting*. New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2010.
- David Jackson and Janice A. Jackson. *Tibetan Thangka Painting*. Boulder: Shambhala, 1984.
- Jackson, Roger, trans. *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*. Original Tibetan by Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2009.
- Jami, Catherine. *The Emperor's New Mathematics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Jia, Jinhua. "From Human-Spirit Resonance to Correlative Modes." *Philosophy East and West* 66, 2 (April 2016): 449–474.
- KAM Tak-Sing 甘德星. "The dGe-lugs-pa Breakthrough." *Central Asiatic Journal* 44 (2000): 161–176.
- Kelényi, Béla. "The Cult of Good Luck." In *Demons and Protectors*, 47–78. Budapest: Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Art, 2003.
- Keown, Damien. *Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- mKhas-grub rJe dGe-legs dPal-bzang-po. *rGyud sde spyi'i rnam par bzhag pa rgyas par bshad pa*. Lhasa: Ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang, 2016.
- . *dPal dus kyi 'khor lo'i 'grel chen dri med 'od kyi rgya cher bshad pa de kho na nyid snang bar byed pa*. In *The Collected Works of the Lord mKhas-grub rJe dGe-legs-dpal-bzan-po*, vols. 2–4 (kha-nga). New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Gurudeva, 1980.

- Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas, 'Jam-mgon. *Myriad Worlds*. Translated by the International Translation Committee. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1995.
- Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas, 'Jam-mgon, and Gyurme Dorje. *The Treasury of Knowledge* Vol. 6, Parts One and Two. Boston: Snow Lion, 2013.
- Kilty, Gavin. *Ornament of Stainless Light* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004).
- Kim, Jinah. *Receptacle of the Sacred*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Kim, Youn-mi. "The Hidden Link." *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013): 117–170.
- Kossack, Steven, and Jane Casey Singer, *Sacred Visions*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998.
- Koyré, Alexandre. *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.
- Kubler, George. *The Shape of Time*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.
- Kung, Ling-Wei. "The Transformation of the Qing's Geopolitics." *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 45 (2018): 132–34
- LAI Huimin 賴惠敏 and CHANG Shuya 張淑雅. "The Yung-ho Temple in the Ch'ien-lung Era" 清乾隆時代的雍和宮. *Gugong Xueshu Jikan* 故宮學術季刊 23, 4 (2006): 131–64.
- Laufer, Berthold, B. N. Goswamy, Anna L. Dallapiccola, and Nagnajīt. *An Early Document of Indian Art*. New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1976.
- Lee, Seonyong. "The Pokchang Ritual for Buddhist Paintings." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 28 (2019), 217–254.
- Lee, Yong-Hyun. "Abhayākaragupta's *Vajrāvalī* and the *Kālacakra*maṇḍala" PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2003. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Lessing, Ferdinand. *Yung-Ho-Kung* Vol. 1. Stockholm: Elanders boktryck, 1942.
- Lessing, Ferdinand, and Alex Wayman, trans. *Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras*, original Tibetan by mKhas-grub rJe dGe-legs dpal-bzang. The Hague: Mouton, 1968.
- . *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems* 2nd ed., original Tibetan by mKhas-grub rJe dGe-legs dpal-bzang. New York: S. Weiser, 1980.
- Linrothe, Rob. "Mirror Image." *History of Religions* 54, 1 (2014): 5–33.
- Liu, Xun. "Immortals and Patriarchs." *Asia Major* 17, 2 (2004): 161–218.
- Lo Bue, Ernesto. "Iconographic Sources and Iconometric Literature in Himalayan Art." In *Indo-Tibetan Studies*, edited by T. Skorupski, 171–197. Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1990.
- Lowry, John. "A Fifteenth Century Sketchbook (Preliminary Study)." In *Essais Sur L'art Du Tibet*, edited by Ariane Spanien Ariane and Yoshiro Imaeda, 83–118. Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1977.
- Luczanits, Christian. "On the Earliest Mandalas in a Buddhist Context." In *Mahayana Buddhism*, edited by Darrol Bryant and Susan Bryant, 111 to 136. New Delhi: Tibet House, 2008.
- MacCormack, Ian. "Buddhism and State in Seventeenth-Century Tibet." PhD diss., Harvard University, 2018. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Malandra, Geri. "The 'Archaeology' of a Maṇḍala." *Ars Orientalis*, 15 (1985): 67–94.
- McDermott, A. C. S. "Toward a Pragmatics of Mantra Recitation." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 3, 3/4 (September 1975): 283–298.
- Mori, Masahide. "The *Vajrāvalī* of Abhayākaragupta." PhD diss., SOAS University of London, 1997. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- . *Vajrāvalī of Abhayākaragupta*. Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2009.

- Mosteller, John. "The Problem of Proportion and Style in Indian Art History." *Art Journal* 49, 4 (Winter 1990): 388–394.
- Nagao, Gajin 長尾雅人. "The Architectural Tradition in Buddhist Monasticism." In *Studies in History of Buddhism*, edited by A.K. Narain, 190–208. Delhi: B. R. Publishing, 1980.
- Nebesky-Wojkowitz, René de, Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, Walter Graf, and Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang- rgya-mtsho. *Tibetan Religious Dances*. Varanasi: Pilgrims, 2007.
- Newman, John. "A Brief History of the Kalachakra." In *The Wheel of Time*, edited by Geshe Lhundub Sopa, Roger Jackson and John Newman, 51–90. Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1985.
- . "Eschatology in The Wheel of Time Tantra." In *Buddhism in Practice*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, 284–89. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- . "The Outer Wheel of Time." PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Nietupski, Paul. *Labrang*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1999.
- . *Labrang Monastery*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011.
- NIU Song 牛颂. Yonghegong 雍和宫. Beijing: Zhongguo Minzu Sheying Yishu Chubanshe 中国民族摄影艺术出版社, 2001.
- Oidtmann, Max. "Amdowas Speaking in Code." In *Forging the Golden Urn*, 157–193. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Orofino, Giacomella. *Sekoddeśa*. Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1994.
- Orofino, Giacomella, trans. *Naropa's Sekoddeśatika*. Milan: Adelphi, 1995.
- Payne, Richard. "Homa: Tantric Fire Ritual." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. Accessed August 10, 2023. <https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-82>.
- Peirce, Charles Sanders. *The Essential Peirce* Vol. 2. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Puṇḍarīka. *bsDus pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po dus kyi 'khor lo'i 'grel bshad rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi rjes su 'jug pa stong phrag bcu pa bcu gnyis pa dri ma med pa'i 'od ces bya ba* [*Stainless Light*]. (D0845, D1347, toh: 1347.) New Delhi: Delhi karmapae chodhey gyalwae sungrab partun khang, 1976–1979.
- Qianlong Emperor. "Lama Shuo" 喇嘛說. Wikisource. Accessed August 10, 2023. <https://zh.wikisource.org/zh-hant/>.
- Rajani, M. B. "The Expanse of Archaeological Remains at Nalanda" *Archives of Asian Art* 66, 1 (2016): 1–23.
- Reigle, David. "The Kālacakra College at Tashi-lhunpo." Accessed August 10, 2023. <http://prajnaquest.fr/blog/the-kalacakra-college-at-tashi-lhunpo/>.
- . "The Kalacakra Tantra on the Sādhana and Mandala." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Series 3*, 22, 2 (2012): 439–463. Several emendations to Vesna Wallace's translation of Chapter Four.
- Repo, Joona. "Distinguishing 'Set' from 'Series' in Tibetan Painting." *Archives of Asian Art* 64, 1 (2014): 59–73.
- Reynolds, Valrae, et al. *Catalogue of the Newark Museum Tibetan Collection*, Vol. III, *Sculpture and Painting*, 2nd ed. Newark: Newark Museum, 1986.

- Rhie, Marylin, and Robert Thurman. *Wisdom and Compassion*. San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1991.
- Rigdzin, Tsepak. *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*. Dharamsala, India: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1986.
- Roberts, Colin, and T. C. Skeat. *The Birth of the Codex*. London: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Rock, Joseph. *The Amnye Ma-Chhen Range and Adjacent Regions*. Rome: Is. M.E.O, 1956.
- Rosenwein, Barbara. *Anger*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.
- Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho. *Phug lugs rtsis kyi legs bshad mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan bai dūr dkar po'i do shal dpyod ldan snying nor [White Beryl]*. New Delhi: T. Tsepal Taikhang, 1972. Buddhist Digital Resource Center. "The Buddhist Digital Archives." Accessed August 10, 2023. <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW30116>.
- . *The Vaidurya G.ya' Sel of Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas Rgya-mtsho, Together with the Snyan Sgron Nyis Brgya Brgyad Pa*. New Delhi: Taikhang, 1971.
- Sanderson, Alexis. "Vajrayāna." In *Buddhism into the Year 2000*, 89–102. Bangkok and Los Angeles: Dhammakāya Foundation, 1995.
- Schaeffer, Kurtis. "The Fifth Dalai Lama." In *The Tibetan History Reader*, edited by Gray Tuttle and Kurtis Schaeffer, 348–362. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Schwieger, Peter. *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- Sharf, Robert. *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.
- . "The Buddha's Finger Bones at Famensi and the Art of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism." *Art Bulletin* 93, 1 (March 2011): 38–59.
- Silbergeld, Jerome. *Chinese Painting Style*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982.
- Sinclair, Iain. "War Magic and Just War in Indian Tantric Buddhism." *Social Analysis* 58, 1 (Spring 2014): 149–166.
- Singer, Jane Casey. "Painting in Central Tibet, ca. 950-1400." *Artibus Asiae* 54, 1/2 (1994): 87–136.
- Sinha, Amita. "Circumambulation." In *Cultural Landscapes of India*, 87–98. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020.
- Smith, E. Gene, and Kurtis Schaeffer. *Among Tibetan Texts*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001.
- Sneath, David. *The Headless State*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Snellgrove, David. *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston: Shambhala, 1987.
- Snellgrove, David, and Tadeusz Skorupski. *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*. Warminster, Eng.: Aris & Phillips, 1977.
- SONG Jiongrui 宋炯瑞 (Jon Soriano). "Nomadic Buddhism in 16th Century Mongol Society" 十六世紀蒙古社會游牧佛教之研究. MA thesis, National Cheng-chi University, 2013.
- Spink, Walter. "How the Monks Lived." In *Ajanta* Vol. 1, 66–118. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Staal, Frits. "The Centre of Space." In *Concepts of Space, Ancient and Modern*, edited by Kapila Vatsyayan, 83–98. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1991.
- . *The Science of Ritual*. Poona, India: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1982.
- Stearns, Cyrus. *Taking the Result As the Path*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006.
- Strong, John. "The Moves Maṇḍalas Make." *JLBS* 12, 2 (1996): 301–312.
- Summers, David. *Real Spaces*. London: Phaidon Press, 2003.

- Stoddard, Heather. "Early Tibetan Paintings." *Archives of Asian Art* 49 (1996): 26–50.
- Sudhi, Padma. "An Encyclopaedic Study on Circumambulation." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 65, 1/4 (1984): 205–226.
- Teiser, Stephen. *Reinventing the Wheel*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006.
- ten Grotenhuis, Elizabeth. *Japanese Maṇḍalas*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.
- Thompson, Ashley. "In the Absence of the Buddha." In *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture*, edited by Rebecca M. Brown and Deborah S. Hutton, 398–420. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Thurman, Robert A. F., Sherpa Tulku, and Library of Tibetan Works & Archives. *The Life and Teachings of Tsong-Khapa*. Gangra, India: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1993.
- Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma. *lCang skya rol pa'i rdo rje'i rnam thar*. Lanzhou, China: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun, 1989.
- . *Thu'u-bkwan Grub-mtha'* (Gansu: Gansu Minzu Chubanshe 甘肃民族出版社, 1984).
- Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa. *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages*, translated by Gavin Kilty. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2013.
- . *Dus kyi 'khor lo'i sbyor ba yan lag drug gi rdo rje'i tshigs su bcad pa*, page 52 (recto) of *rJe thams cad mkhyen pa tsong kha pa chen po'i bka' 'bum thor bu*, W486. Zi-ling: mTsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987.
- Tucci, Giuseppe. *Theory and Practice of the Maṇḍala*. London: Rider, 1961.
- . *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*. Rome: Libreria Dello Stato, 1949.
- Tucci, Giuseppe, and Lokesh Chandra. *Stupa*. New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1988.
- . *Gyantse and Its Monasteries*. New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1989.
- Tuttle, Gray. "Building up the Dge lugs pa Base in Amdo." *Zangxue Xuekan* 藏学学刊 7 (2012): 137–38.
- van der Kuijp, Leonard. *The Kālacakra and the Patronage of Tibetan Buddhism by the Mongol Imperial Family*. Bloomington: Dept. of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University, 2004.
- . "The Dalai Lamas and the Origins of Reincarnate Lamas." In *The Tibetan History Reader*, edited by Gray Tuttle and Kurtis Schaeffer, 335–347. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- van Gulik, Robert Hans. *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur*. Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958.
- van Schaik, Sam. "The Uses of Early Tibetan Printing." In *Tibetan Printing*, edited by Hildegard Diemberger, Franz-Karl Ehrhard, and Peter Kornicki, 171–92. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- . *Tibet*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Van Vleet, Stacey. "Medicine as Impartial Knowledge." In *The Tenth Karmapa & Tibet's Turbulent Seventeenth Century*, edited by Karl Debreczeny and Gray Tuttle, 263–291. London: SerIndia, 2016.
- Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*, Vol. 3. Translated by Louis de La Vallée-Poussin and Leo Pruden. Fremont: Jain Publishing Company, 1991.
- Wallace, Vesna. "Śambhala As a Pure Land." In *Pure Lands in Asian Texts and Contexts*, edited by Georgios Halkias and Richard Payne, 744–761. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019.
- . *The Inner Kālacakratantra*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

- . *The Kālacakratāntra* [Translation of Chapter Two, based on Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Mongolian sources]. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2004.
- . *The Kālacakra Tantra* [Translation of Chapter Four, based on Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Mongolian sources]. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2010.
- Wang, Michelle C. *Maṇḍalas in the Making*. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- WANG, Xiangyun. "The Qing Court's Tibet Connection." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 60, 1 (2000): 125–163.
- . "Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing." PhD diss., Harvard University, 1995. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Wangdu, Pasang, Hildegard Diemberger, and Per K. Sørensen. *Dbā' Bzhed*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000.
- Wayman, Alex. *The Buddhist Tantras*. London: Routledge, 1973.
- Wedemeyer, Christian. *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Weinberger, Steven. "The Yoga Tantras and the Social Context of Their Transmission to Tibet." *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* 23 (2010): 131–166.
- Wessels, C. *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia 1603-172*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1924.
- White, David Gordon. *The Alchemical Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Willemsen, Charles. "The Buddhist *Pratimālakṣaṇa*." *Pacific World* 3, 9 (Fall 2007): 151–168.
- Wollheim, Richard. *Art and Its Objects* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Wood, Christopher. *A History of Art History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.
- Wu, Hung. "What Is Bianxiang?" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52, 1 (1992): 111–92.
- Yoeli-Tlalim, Ronit. "A Tibetan Image of Divination." In *Imagining Chinese Medicine*, edited by Vivienne Lo and Penelope Barrett, 429–440. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- . "The Kālacakra Empowerment as Conducted by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche," in *As Long as Space Endures*, edited by Edward Arnold, 414–448. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2009.
- Yang, Zhiyi. "The Making of Spontaneity in a Work of Art." In *Dialectics of Spontaneity*, 54–85. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Zhu, Jianfei. *Chinese Spatial Strategies*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.