As mediators between the divine and the common, the mahāsiddhas have an exceptional and multivalent position in the esoteric traditions of India and Tibet. The notion of the siddha as ideal practitioner won ground and acceptance in India when Tibet started to adopt Buddhism in the Imperial Period (seventh to ninth century). Around the turn of the first millennium, when Buddhism became firmly established in Tibet, nonmonastic Esoteric Buddhist traditions were already widely, although not unanimously, accepted and in many cases highly regarded.

The siddhas are the mediators on the side of mankind; the deities they mediate are subtle manifestations of absolute Buddha nature. The siddha commonly renounces the world, meditates and practices at more or less secluded places or charnel grounds, and in this way creates the condition for a revelation. The deities appear to the siddha and reveal particular practices to him — most are male — that help him to reach enlightenment in this very life. The siddha then passes the revelation he received and his experiences to his

The Eight Great Siddhas in Early Tibetan Painting

CHRISTIAN LUCZANITS

As mediators between the divine and the common, the mahāsiddhas have an exceptional and multivalent position in the esoteric traditions of India and Tibet. The notion of the siddha as ideal practitioner won ground and acceptance in India when Tibet started to adopt Buddhism in the Imperial Period (seventh to ninth century). Around the turn of the first millennium, when Buddhism became firmly established in Tibet, nonmonastic Esoteric Buddhist traditions were already widely, although not unanimously, accepted and in many cases highly regarded.

The siddhas are the mediators on the side of mankind; the deities they mediate are subtle manifestations of absolute Buddha nature. The siddha commonly renounces the world, meditates and practices at more or less secluded places or charnel grounds, and in this way creates the condition for a revelation. The deities appear to the siddha and reveal particular practices to him — most are male — that help him to reach enlightenment in this very life. The siddha then passes the revelation he received and his experiences to his
disciples, establishing a direct teaching lineage that eventually enters Tibet and commonly occupies the top row in Tibetan depictions.

The earliest examples of siddha depictions in Tibetan art include a fairly frequently depicted group of eight siddhas, a group that with slight variations continues to be relevant today (see Jackson essay). In the earliest paintings, this group of eight siddhas is commonly shown to the sides of the main image. The earliest examples are attributable to the early thirteenth century and, most frequently if not exclusively, to a Kagyü (bKa’ rgyud pa) context. The Kagyüpa, a major school of Tibetan Buddhism, is most commonly understood as having been founded by a teaching from teacher to pupil, focus on meditative training, the sub-schools differing in which deities and practices are emphasized.

Essentially the same siddhas inhabit the central grounds of manacles, in particular those of the Atuṣṭāyana tantra class, the majority of the outer chakras. These central grounds are represented at the edges of the sacred sphere of the mandala and, thus, like the siddhas themselves, are on the threshold of divinity and mundane. In the early depictions both the group as a whole and the individual siddhas are shown in a number of variations that indicate that the concept of the group is still in the process of formation.

JÑAÑATĀPA AND THE EIGHT GREAT SIDDHAS

In 1987 the Friends of Asian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acquired a masterwork of early Tibetan painting (Cat. no. 7). It shows a siddha accompanied by a successor of teachers in the top half and eight more siddhas in the lower half. The siddha in the center of this image is of wealthy origin, as is suggested by his marvellous clothing and the presence of attendants. The teacher reads a text aloud, while the other is blue and carries some objects in his right hand. The eight lesser branches of the Kagyüpa school derive from them both from main teachings.

1 The same author has already discussed this topic in his book "Essential Mahāmudrā: The Inner Teachings of Tilopa in an Exceptionally Comprehensive Manner," published by the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, 1999. In this publication, the author provides a detailed analysis of the iconography of the siddhas and their relationship to the teacher. The author also explores the historical context and the spiritual significance of these figures in Tibetan Buddhism.

2 By the fourteenth century, the concept that the original transmission of the Mahāmudrā lineage was held by Tilopa in the year 251, as calculated from the birth year of the Buddha, was widespread in Tibet. This calculation is based on the idea that Tilopa was born in the year 1122, according to Kurtis R. Schaeffer, "The Mahāmudrā Lineage and Its Transmission," in Schaeffer and Schreiber, eds., "The Mahāmudrā Lineage and Its Transmission," 1989, 65–67.

3 As is apparent from comparative examples, the painting might date from the mid to late thirteenth century, a time when the Mahāmudrā lineage was still very much alive and its teachings were widely disseminated. A painting from the first half of the thirteenth century is known from the gallery of the Taglung scholar Ngawang Namgyal (1571–1626) as well as from the gallery of the Taglung scholar Ngawang Namgyal (1571–1626), which had enormous influence on Tibetan literature and art. The great Brahman Saraha is best known for his spiritual anthologies (the dik†) which had enormous influence on Tibetan literature and art. The great Brahman Saraha is best known for his spiritual anthologies (the dik†) which had enormous influence on Tibetan literature and art. The great Brahman Saraha is best known for his spiritual anthologies (the dik†) which had enormous influence on Tibetan literature and art.
and bell in his raised hands, the latter

Nāgājīrṇa is known as the second Buddha in early depictions frequently also shown as such. In reference to his name (ṣnake-spirit”), he eventually is depicted with a snake-hood, as in the Jñānānanda painting (Fig. 4.2). According to the examples surveyed here, this shift in iconography takes place in the first half of the fourteenth century. In the context of the Drigung school, it is clear that Nāgājīrṇa, who is also referred to as Lawapa (Lawap a gZhon-nu-dpal; 1392–1481) one of the Eighty-Five Siddhas, is connected with the clear light, dream method. In earlier paintings, however, Padmavajra’s iconography is far from standardized. He can be represented as a siddha as well as a monk and wearing a turban (see p. 201). Indrabhūtiga is associated with tantras of Hevajra, Guhyasamājī, and Cakrasaṅkha and diverse mother tantras. Finally, Līpīta is famous for nourishing himself from leftovers, most notably the entrails of fish thrown away by fishermen. He is identified by the fish and its entrails that he holds (see p. 201). He is occasionally also shown as a monk and is associated with teachings on Cakrasāṃkha and Vajravātra.

17 There are previous assumptions that these iconographies refer to two different Nāgājīrṇas, the earlier and the later Nāgājīrṇa referred to when the doctrine of emptiness goes back whereas the depiction of Nāgājīrṇa in the Dīnpa painting speaks against this hypothesis. In schol., The Eighty-Five Siddhas, 26–27, Nāgājīrṇa is described as monk. 18 Evans, Indian Esoteric Buddhism, 204–57. 19 Acconci and Haytington, Leaves from the Budhi Tree, 1146.
THE DRIGUNG GROUP

While the Jñāntipa tangka discussed so far is representative of the Rimo branch of the Taglung school, the footprint tangka of the Rubin Museum is crucial for the depiction of the right eight siddhas within the Drigungpa (Bri gung pa) school (Cat. no. 6). Like Taglung Thangka, Jyutgan guru (Jig rten mgon po; 1143–1217), who founded the Drigung school, was a prominent pupil of Phagmodrupa. He and his school are named after the place where he founded a monastery in 1179.

The uppermost row of this tangka represents the standard Kagyupa lineage up to Phagmodrupa in the top center. Immediately below him, Drigungpa follows Phagmodrupa in appearance, both being identified by captions. The central part of the tangka, with the deity Cakravajra between footprints, is flanked by the right siddhas. The most notable differences to the siddhas depictions discussed so far are the triads in which the upper two siddhas are represented. Fortunately, besides the siddhas, their companions are also identified by captions, shedding light on their most enigmatic representations.

The upper right corner Budda Śīkyāmuni is flanked by Nāgājātu to his proper right (Fig. 4.8). To his proper left is Atiśa, the famous Indian scholar who went to Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century and had wide-ranging influence on Buddhism there. Drigungpa is a disciple of Nāgājātu.

The triad, however, most likely represents what is called the Lanscape of Profound View, the teaching of emptiness, which passed from Buddha to Nāgājātu to his proper right (Fig. 4.6). To his proper left is Atiśa, the famous Indian scholar who went to Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century and had wide-ranging influence on Buddhism there. Drigungpa is a disciple of Nāgājātu.

From a spiritual point of view, the most important elements of this drawing are the footprints. Recent research and the iconography of this drawing on silk make it plausible that those are the footprints of Drigungpa himself, allowing the attribution of the tangka prior to his death in 1217.27 Its history, captions, and inscriptions thus make it one of the most informative sources for early Tibetan painting.

Surprisingly, the depiction of the eight siddhas on the top of the Drigungpa school is so distinctive and consistent that it allows for the identification of a whole group of early paintings that earlier could not otherwise be identified with any certainty. The most important of these paintings give an idea of the range and importance of this group, especially when viewed according to a working chronology that considers not only the lineage and the siddhas, but the overall composition.28

27. The captions identify, at times, from three to nine feet on its right side. It’s likely that the one in the upper center is flanked by Nāgājātu and Buddha Śākyamuni. The captions are written in gold ink on a green background. The top row of the captions is written in gold ink on a green background and, in the middle of the composition, a deity does not even occur among the secondary figures on the other paintings.

28. What is particularly fascinating about this group is its stylistic diversity and wide geographical range. Changes in composition and the exchange and addition of secondary deities may well reflect the changes in the early religious practice within this school from about 1200 to the mid-fourteenth century.
TAGLUNG DEPICTIONS

In contrast to the Drigung paintings, Taglung and Riwoche paintings, which account for most of the earliest Tibetan tangkas known so far, do not show the same consistency in depictions of the eight siddhas. Of six depictions known besides the one from the Metropolitan Museum discussed above, the earliest is dedicated to Sanga Yarjön (Sangs nyas yar byon; 1205–1272) who preceded Önpo as abbot of Taglung (Fig. 4.11). The arrangement and the individual iconography of the siddha depictions on this painting are also those closest to the Drigung compositions.27

Three more tangkas with the eight siddhas depict not only Önpo himself as the main figure, but also his previous Indian incarnation Jñānātipa among the secondary figures. One of these tangkas bears the record that the painting received a consecration by Önpo and is thus to be placed within his lifetime (1251–1296), preferably to his period at Riwoche (1276–96).28 The other two tangkas are iconographically very similar and probably are to be attributed to the first half of the fourteenth century. These are the extremely delicate painting in the Musée national des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet29 and a tangka possibly still in Tibet (Fig. 4.12).30 The date derives from the inscriptions on the back of the Guimet tangka, which mention two additional religious personages, albeit not yet identified, following Önpo.31 Remarkably, the uppermost siddha representations on these paintings visually refer to the Drigung group. The second personage attending Indrabhūti, however, is obviously not Vīrūpa, since this siddha is represented in the left corner above the rocks, just opposite Jñānātipa.32 The siddha reigned in the upper right corner departs Vīrūpa with two converses.

Also from the same context derives an exceptional consecration pantheon that has been extracted from a metal image.33 Today, this pantheon can easily be attributed to Riwoche, since Jñānātipa is shown among the teachers. Besides numerous teachers, tutelary deities, and bodhisattvas this pantheon also contains the eight siddhas, each of them clearly identifiable. In this group Padmasambhava holds a lotus and Saraha is seated and holds an arrow.

On Taglung and Riwoche tangkas, the iconography and succession of the siddhas changes from painting to painting and no canonical representation was established within this school until the mid-fourteenth century.

The art-historical evidence so far indicates that a canonical group of eight siddhas featuring Padmasambhava first appears among the pupils of Phagmodrupa. Particularly telling in this regard is the small tangka

27 Another rather early, Taglung representation of the eight siddhas is found on a tangka sold at Christie’s, 27 June 1998 (lot 406). I thank Jane Casey Singer for sending me a color copy of the backside of this painting.

28 Private collection; Singer, “Tibetan Art,” 88, fig. 41. Obviously, placing the painting into Singer’s timeline on the basis of this record is hypothetical, since the record of a consecration into Önpo’s lifetime on the basis of this record is hypothetical, since the record of a consecration inscription of Önpo to his abbotship at Tārglung (1272–73). I consider it much more likely that earlier objects had to be re-consecrated in Riwoche because they have been taken away from Taglung by Önpo in the course of a conflict. The high number of objects bearing this inscription (Singer mentioned seventeen in her 1997 publication) make them appear like an inventory mark of objects belonging to Önpo.

29 Ibid., 62, fig. 43.

30 Ibid. Rang, Rang Drups & Gwa (Samdrup Arts / Nan Shei Zhu; Nanhe Shi; 7) also give the back (c. 1320, 531–2).

31 Possibly, these are personages in charge of Riwoche in the interim period, when Orgyen Gönpo was not yet able to serve as abbot. I am grateful to Nathalie Bazin of the Musée Guimet for making it possible to read the inscription on the back of this painting as well as to Amy Heller for the communication on this inscription.

32 On the Guimet piece, the sun disk is clearly visible.

33 Huntington and Huntington, Leaves from the Golden Tree, no. 214. For this inscription, see Huntington and Huntington, Leaves from the Golden Tree, no. 214. For this inscription, see Huntington and Huntington, Leaves from the Golden Tree, no. 214.

For making it possible to match the inscription on the back of this painting as well as to Amy Heller for the communication on this inscription.

33 Huntington and Huntington, Leaves from the Golden Tree, no. 214. For this inscription, see Huntington and Huntington, Leaves from the Golden Tree, no. 214.

For making it possible to match the inscription on the back of this painting as well as to Amy Heller for the communication on this inscription.

34 Ibid., 1146.
of the Jacker collection. If the current interpretation of the ordination names on the back of this painting is correct, then it features Phagmodrupa and three of his roughly contemporary pupils, Taglungpa, Drigungpa, and the first Karmapa, who died in 1193. 35 The iconographic forms of the siddhas in this painting are not as telling as those in the Drigung group, and in the case of Lipa and Padmasambhava (the two seated siddhas on the right side), they are not clear at all. Both are brightly colored and do not hold distinctive attributes. The upper siddha performing a teaching gesture is identified as Lipa, the lower one, raising the right hand at the side as if offering something, as Padmasambhava. 36

As Derral Jackson shows, it is the Karmapa school that has brought the Kagyu tradition of the eight siddhas to the present day (see Jackson essay). 37

35 The interpretation of this particular tangka faces a lot of problems since many of its elements are reused and the identification of the two central characters, Vairocanavajra and Padmasambhava, in each other as well as to the Kagyu teachers remains tentative. Further, the identification of Lipa and the first Karmapa remains problematic. The third Karmapa has the same indication name as the first one, but no image known to far goes from the Phagmodrupa, or Taglung Tangga, and another elementary to the third Karmapa who died 1294–1321. Furthermore, the absence of the Lungri in the upper row is unclear. Obviously, all the problems concerning the tangka can only be covered in a separate publication. 36 Possibly, there was once a statue in his hand as in the Taglung drawings. 37 See also Jackson, "From Karma Kagyupa to Sakya--Mongol Relationship, I refer to an old article of Steven M. Kossak, "Sakya Patrons and Nepalese Tibetan Art: Himalayas, 11th–13th Centuries," ed. Jane Casey Singer (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977). Hevajra, and composed, though he may not have actually written them down, the Vajra Verses (rDo rje tshig rkyang) that entered Tibet with Drigung Shakyam yoso (‘Brog mi Sākya ye shos; 903–1077). These teachings were then transmitted to the founders of the Sakya (Sa skya) school, where they remain its core teachings. It is thus not surprising that this school emphasizes Vairupa among the mahāsiddhas, as is best demonstrated by the beautiful tableau of The Kronos Collections (Fig. 4.11, detail of Cat. no. 26). On this painting Vairupa is surrounded by eighty or so other siddhas. 38 Seated in a relaxed fashion on a mat placed on the rocky floor, Vairupa raises his hand toward the sun while a barmaid serves him a drink in a skullcup. This scene alludes to a story in which Vairupa arrested the sun in its course until the king paid for his consummation of alcoholic drinks. This is also the form of Vairupa found on the Drigung and Taglung paintings. With Vajrayogini, Hevajra, and Cakrasamvara shown in the rocks above the siddha, the painting also shows the tantric cycles with which Vairupa is associated. An inscription on the back of the painting records that it was consecrated by Sakya Pañjila (1182–1255), allowing it to be attributed to the second quarter of the thirteenth century. 39 Vairupa occurs as an independent siddha on the later Taglung paintings depicting Onpo. One reason Onpo did not succeed in keeping the see of Taglung was that his rival Mangala (BKa’ shis bla ma; 1211–1291) could count on the support of Sakya Pañjila’s succes sor in Sakya, Phagpa (sde’ zag Phag pa Blo gros rgyal me’dan; 1253–1280). Onpo’s successor at Rinoshe, Ogyen gipto, was brought as a small child from Taglung to Rinoshe to reestablish the link to the mother monastery of Taglung. One may thus read the representation of Vairupa on these paintings as an expression of the reconciliation between the two branches of Taglung and the increasing influence of the Sakya school on both. Spreading all over the Tibetan-speaking world, as is exemplified by the Drigung paintings of Alchi and Wula mentioned above, the Drigung school gained enormous economical and political power early in the thirteenth century. In the second half of the thirteenth century, however, the Sakya, cooperating with the Mongol rulers who established the Yuan dynasty in 1279, practically became rulers of Tibet. 40

38 Eighty is the number in the inscription, although there are actually eighty-two squares with siddhas around the central image. It may not be accidental that the number eighty (ten times eight) has been used.


40 It is a very important clue in the only Sakya-Mongol relationship. I refer to an article of Steven M. Kossak, "The First Mongol Empress’s Quest of State Bestowment," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 67 (2017). In both the Drigung group and some of the Taglung examples, a ninth siddha, namely Vairupa, is represented in a secondary position. Although it remains unclear who in the Drigung group Vairupa is placed to the side of Indrabhuti, it may be in part because of his general importance. Vairupa received the Path and Fruit (snyan lugs) teachings from the goddess Nairajmya and composed, though he may not have actually written them down, the Vajra Verses (rDo rje tshig rkyang) that entered Tibet with Drigung Shakyam yoso (‘Bro’g mi Sākya ye shos; 903–1077). These teachings were then transmitted to the founders of the Sakya (Sa skya) school, where they remain its core teachings. It is thus not surprising that this school emphasizes Vairupa among the mahāsiddhas, as is best demonstrated by the beautiful tableau of The Kronos Collections (Fig. 4.11, detail of Cat. no. 26). On this painting Vairupa is surrounded by eighty or so other siddhas. 38 Seated in a relaxed fashion on a mat placed on the rocky floor, Vairupa raises his hand toward the sun while a barmaid serves him a drink in a skullcup. This scene alludes to a story in which Vairupa arrested the sun in its course until the king paid for his consummation of alcoholic drinks. This is also the form of Vairupa found on the Drigung and Taglung paintings. With Vajrayogini, Hevajra, and Cakrasamvara shown in the rocks above the siddha, the painting also shows the tantric cycles with which Vairupa is associated. An inscription on the back of the painting records that it was consecrated by Sakya Pañjila (1182–1255), allowing it to be attributed to the second quarter of the thirteenth century. 39 Vairupa occurs as an independent siddha on the later Taglung paintings depicting Onpo. One reason Onpo did not succeed in keeping the see of Taglung was that his rival Mangala (BKa’ shis bla ma; 1211–1291) could count on the support of Sakya Pañjila’s successor in Sakya, Phagpa (sde’ zag Phag pa Blo gros rgyal me’dan; 1253–1280). Onpo’s successor at Rinoshe, Ogyen gipto, was brought as a small child from Taglung to Rinoshe to reestablish the link to the mother monastery of Taglung. One may thus read the representation of Vairupa on these paintings as an expression of the reconciliation between the two branches of Taglung and the increasing influence of the Sakya school on both. Spreading all over the Tibetan-speaking world, as is exemplified by the Drigung paintings of Alchi and Wula mentioned above, the Drigung school gained enormous economical and political power early in the thirteenth century. In the second half of the thirteenth century, however, the Sakya, cooperating with the Mongol rulers who established the Yuan dynasty in 1279, practically became rulers of Tibet. 40
While the Taglungpa cooperated with the Sakya, the Drigungpa competed with them and eventually found themselves the weaker party, suffering a raid on Drigung monastery in 1290.

CHARNEL GROUNDS

The eight great siddhas are today thought of as being of eminent importance because they inhabit the eight charnel grounds represented on the periphery of many mandalas. Continuous reminders that all life and matter will perish, the charnel grounds are ideal places for the spiritual practice of siddhas.

The earliest depictions of charnel grounds with siddhas are found in two of the earliest Vajrayogini paintings from the early Sakya period. In both cases the charnel grounds are faultlessly located to the right of the siddhas. The earliest depiction of charnel grounds with siddhas is the Vajrayogini mandala from the Bönpo Kangyur (late 12th-early 13th century) showing the eight charnel grounds with siddhas in their traditional positions along the perimeter of the mandala. The eight great siddhas are today thought of as being of eminent importance because they inhabit the eight charnel grounds represented on the periphery of many mandalas. Continuous reminders that all life and matter will perish, the charnel grounds are ideal places for the spiritual practice of siddhas.
Some of them may well be identified with the Eight Great Siddhas. The sheer number of siddhas, however, and the repetition of the same types shows that this depiction derives from a concept that is completely different from the version that became canonical in the Tibetan traditions.

As in the Vajrayogin treasure (Fig. 4.15), none of the siddhas on this painting is represented in monk’s dress, as Padmasambhava and Lampa sometimes are, and there is also no king among them. Instead all are represented as world-renunciates engaged in different practices (Fig. 4.16, detail). This representation emphasizes the community and its practices in the charnel ground rather than the individual and his teaching. It is thus reminiscent of the so-called tantric feasts, or ma nakalpa, that have taken place at charnel grounds within siddha communities. This practice may well have contributed to the representation of the siddhas in the charnel grounds in the first place.

THE TIBETAN INNOVATION

Such feasts may have taken place at some stage in Tibet as well, but by the beginning of the thirteenth century, the main concern that connected the siddhas to the charnel grounds had already taken a new form. By that time lineages commencing with a deity and some siddhas became a standard motif in the paintings. They reflect a major concern, that of proving the authenticity, the authoritative Indian derivation, and thus the superiority of the teachings that one practices.

Although each of the eight siddhas is associated with a number of teachings, several of them overlapping, it remains unclear what they represent within the group of eight and as a group. Certainly, they do not stand for a single lineage or teaching, but they may represent a corpus of important tantric teachings that played a major role at the time of the establishment of the Drigungpa school, and among the pupils of Phagmodrupa in general.

All Kagyüpa traditions share the generic lineage commencing with Tilopa and Naropa, a lineage that accounts for the main teaching of the school, the Six Yogas. Otheroteristic teachings, such as the practices of certain tantras dedicated to Cakrasavara, Vajrayogini, and Hevajra, or the spiritual anthologies, all of which are of great import in the Kagyüpa schools as well, originated with other siddhas and entered Tibet by way of numerous lineages. In some way the eight siddhas may originally have stood for such side lineages of the Kagyüpa traditions, auxiliary lineages that were received by Phagmodrupa and were given to his prominent pupils.

The examples collected above certainly demonstrate that the association of the siddhas with a certain charnel ground is not why a particular group of siddhas attained its prominent position but may account for their number. Rather, the siddhas chosen to represent the siddha communities in the charnel grounds were chosen on the basis of the teachings for which they stand. The connections made in the Śūnatāloja, which is perhaps the only textual source, between charnel ground, a leading siddha, his community, and a range of teachings certainly points in this direction as well.

As is evident from their hagiographies, Tibetan masters collected teachings from numerous teachers and across schools. For each tantra, each school documents numerous such lineages. It has always been an enigma to me how it comes about that while the Sakya school differentiates more than a dozen lineages for Cakrasavara alone and distinguishes them on its paintings, the Kagyüpa schools can share a single generic lineage for all its teachings without differentiation. The answer may be that it did not do so originally, but that in times when the authentic origin of a teaching was highly contested, the eight siddhas became a prominent theme, exactly because they accounted for some of the other teachings the school practices.

If this is indeed the case, then it leads to another enigma. Why is the function of the siddhas no longer known and why is it not recorded in the literature? Obviously, I am unable to answer this question decisively, but I may share a scenario that would account for the known facts. We can assume that, as the paintings demonstrate, the development of the Kagyüpa schools did not end in the thirteenth century but continued at a breathtaking pace into the fourteenth century before it slowed down. This development undoubtedly also changed the emphasis in the teachings with which the schools identified, certainly those that were considered secondary to the main teaching. The siddhas, too, remained of paramount interest with verses and stories about them invented, altered, and extended, and their names conflated and exchanged (Saraha and Saratara are an obvious case). There are lists of approximately eight siddhas, containing six or so of the ones discussed above, but also mentioning others such as Matripa. Such lists are easily altered and brought up to date. Secrecy may also have played a role, with only those initiated into the whole corpus of teachings actually knowing what all the siddhas stand for. Nevertheless, I do think that references in this regard can and will be found.

Eight siddhas representing their communities in the charnel grounds and the association of siddhas with certain teachings and certain charnel grounds do have their Indian heritage. The Tibetan innovation was the systematization of these concepts and the subsequent alteration of this system according to new needs, patterns that are visible in many aspects of early Tibetan Buddhism.