

A First Glance at Early Drigungpa Painting^①

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Recently a number of paintings became accessible that allow for an identification and discussion of one aspect of early Drigungpa ('Bri-gung-pa) school of art. These paintings share a number of details in iconography and motifs that serve to identify them despite their, sometimes severe differences in style. These markers are independent of the main topic of the respective painting, which can be footprints, portraits of Drigungpa and his successors or, exceptionally, a deity. What is more, the group enables one to relate *thangkas* and murals from a number of different places, some as remote as Ladakh in the western Himalayas. All

① The discovery of the identifying characteristics of early Drigungpa painting is one of the results of a six-month (1. 12. 2003-31. 5. 2004) research period at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which was supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Art History Fellowship. I am grateful to Roger Goepper and Jaroslav Poncar for providing all their documentation on Alchi for my research and to Amy Heller for her unstinted willingness to share her material and ideas with me. Further, this study would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of a number of private collectors and institutions, in particular Tom Pritzker, the Museum of Anthropology at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and The Rubin Museum of Art.

paintings of the group known to me so far can be assigned to the period from ca. 1200, when the Drigungpa school became dominant in Tibet, to ca. 1350, with the latest examples apparently preserved in Ladakh.

This contribution introduces the pieces known to me according to a working chronology that considers not only the lineage and the siddhas, but the overall composition. The descriptions are more detailed for the earlier examples, since these are crucial for placing the series in historical context. I then introduce the marker that allows for the attribution of the paintings to the Drigungpa school, along with other major characteristics shared by the paintings in the group. Finally, related paintings likely belonging to the same group are shortly mentioned.

Early Drigungpa Paintings

The *Cakrasaṃvara* / 'Khor-lo-bde-mchog and footprint drawing on silk in the collection of the Rubin Museum of Art is one of the earliest Drigungpa paintings (Figure 1; catalogued under the acc. no. C2003. 7. 1; details available at *Himalayan Art*: no. 65205).^① This painting is of great religious and historical importance not only because of the footprints of Drigungpa or Jigten—gönpo ('Jig-rten-mgon-po, 1143–1217) himself, as has been described by Klimburg-Salter following Kathryn H. Selig Brown's work, but also because it contains the key to defining the group of early paintings that now can safely be attributed to the Drigungpa school.

The uppermost row of the Rubin Museum drawing represents the standard Kagyüpa (bKa'-brgyud-pa) lineage up to Phagmodrupa (Phag-mo-gru-pa rDo-rje-rgyal-po, 1110–1170) in

① See also Klimburg-Salter (2004).



Fig. 1 Drigungpa's footprints and drawing on silk. Rubin Museum of Art, New York.

the top center. Immediately below him follows Drigungpa, who founded the Drigungpa school and was a prominent pupil of Phagmodrupa. He and his school are named after the place where he founded a monastery in 1179. Drigungpa follows Phagmodrupa in appearance, both are shown frontally and performing the teaching gesture, and both are identified by captions. Drigungpa is flanked by the ten main deities of a variant or even early version of the Guhyasamāja-Akṣobhyavajra / gSang-'dus Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje mandala, with the female forms represented on the more prominent left side and their respective partners in a

position mirroring them.^① From a spiritual point of view, the most important elements of this drawing are the footprints. Recent research and the nature and iconography of this drawing on silk make it plausible that these are the footprints of Drigungpa himself, allowing the attribution of the thangka to prior to his death in 1217.^② The central part of the thangka, with the deity Cakrasaṃvara between the footprints of Drigungpa, is flanked by the eight siddhas. As usual, the lower edge of the composition is then dedicated a number of protective deities. Its history, captions, and inscriptions thus make this thangka one of the most informative sources for early Tibetan painting.

The composition with a central focus, a lineage at the top, and protectors at the bottom reflects a Tibetan compositional convention that likely was only fully developed in the second half of the 12th century and that would later remain a principal feature of Tibetan painting. This composition reflects the hierarchy within the triad of teacher (*guru / bla-ma*)— chosen divinity (*iṣṭadevatā / yi-dam*)— and protector of Buddhism (*dharmapāla / chos-skyong*). As I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere (Luczanits 2003: Example One), this hierarchy and the iconography

① The captions on the Rubin Museum drawing identify the deities in the following way: Samayatārā (*dam tshig sgröl ma*) the consort of Amoghasiddhi, Pāṇḍaravāsini (*gos kar mo*), the 'white-dressed one', Buddhacocanā (*sangs rgyas sbyan*), Māmaki (*ma ma gi*), and Samantabhadri (*kun tu bzang mo*). Then, mirroring the goddesses are five male deities whose names have a quality to be overcome as the first part of their name and vajra as the second. The qualities are the five conflicting emotions (*pañcakleṣa; nyon-mongs lnga*), also known as the five poisons (*dug-linga*). From left to right the deities are Delusion-vajra (*moha / gtī-mug; ti mug rdo rje*), Hatred-vajra (*dveṣa; zhe sdang do rje*), Pride-vajra (*māna / nga-rgyal; ngar rgyang rdo rje*), Desire-vajra (*rāga; 'dod chags rdo rje*) and Envy-vajra (*īrsyā/ phra (g)-dog; 'phrang dog rdo rje*). For the association of the Guhyasamjāa deities with the poisons see, for example, Matsunaga (1978:6–9) or Wayman (1977:124–26).

② See in particular Selig-Brown (2002).

of the teacher developed alongside reflects the public elevation of the teacher from a pious practitioner to an enlightened being. Consequently the representation of the teacher orients itself on the Buddha image. In addition, all the paintings under discussion share the group of eight (or nine) *mahāsiddha*, who are depicted at the sides of the painting in a form that is peculiar to the Drigungpa school. This point will be discussed in greater detail below.



Fig. 2 Drigungpa in the Small Chörten in Alchi, Ladakh. photo: C. Luczanits 2005, DSCN3739

Practically contemporary with the Rubin Museum drawing is a teacher depiction in what I call the Small Chörten in Alchi, Ladakh, Northwest India (Figure 2). Although this depiction is stylistically highly unusual, most of its elements could be identified on the basis of the Rubin Museum drawing (see Luczanits in press-a). In this painting, the central teacher is depicted in 3/4

profile and flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas, the first feature weakening the identification of the teacher with the Buddha, whereas the latter emphasizes it. Further, *Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara* / *sPyan-ras-gzigs Yi-ge-drug-pa* and *Green Tārā* / *sGrol-ma-ljang-khu* flank the head of the teacher, who most likely is again *Drigungpa*. The lineage on top of the painting is unusual since it diverges from the common one and since the immediate predecessor of the central teacher is a *siddha*.^① Further, along the sides are represented nine *siddhas*, some exhibiting unusual iconography.

The stylistically and technically highly unusual *thangka* of the Pritzker Collection can also be assigned to the *Drigungpa* group of paintings (Figure 3).^② *With an additional figure in the lineage, the teacher in the center must have followed Drigungpa. He, too, is flanked by two Bodhisattvas, and two additional deities occupy the corners at the sides of the central teacher's head. Further, Acala / Mi-g.yo-ba and Vajrayoginī / rDo-rje-rnal-'byor-ma are added to the sides below the mahāsiddha.*

The same two additional deities are also represented on three other footprint *thangkas* centered on *Cakrasaṃvara* which follow the Rubin Museum footprint drawing in composition. One of the *thangkas*, in a private collection, provides chronological evidence in the form of two more teachers in the corners on both sides of the halo of the central teacher (Figure 4).^③ These very likely continue the lineage and represent successors of *Drigungpa*, and thus make the painting two generations later than the Rubin Mu-

① Both the *siddha* in the center above the teacher as well as the *siddha* on the far right may represent the immediate predecessor of the central teacher.

② Previously published in Kossak and Singer (1998; no. 17). See also the technical analysis of this painting in the same publication (Bruce-Gardner 1998).

③ Klimburg-Salter (2004; fig. 2; 1982; pl. 111).

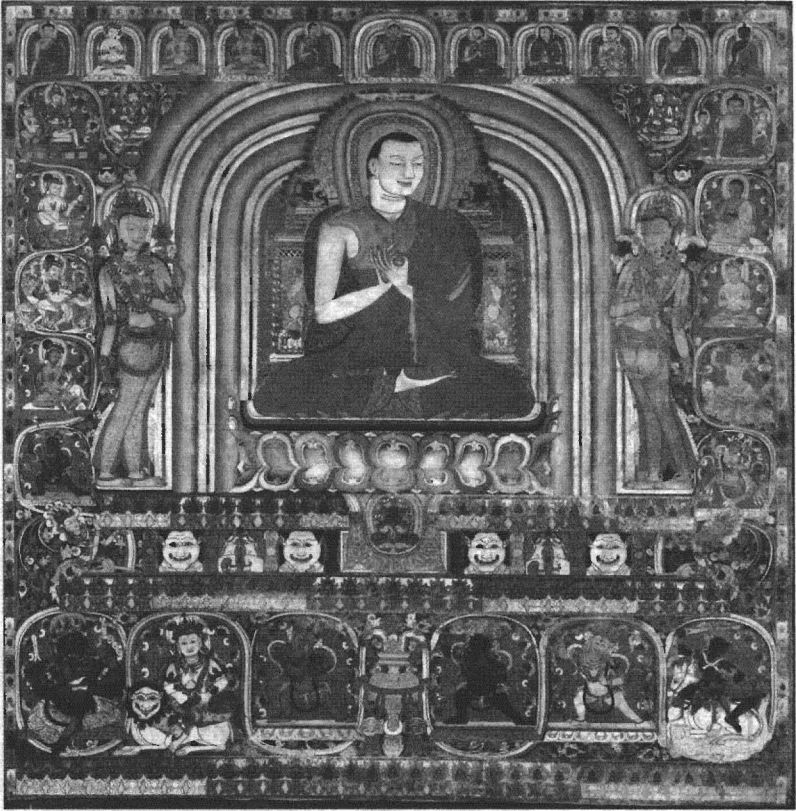


Fig. 3 Hierarchy following Drigungpa. Pritzker Collection; photo; Hughes DuBois

seum drawing. ①

A footprint thangka on embroidered silk, again in the Pritzker Collection, has Drigungpa set off from the others by representing him just above Cakrasaṃvara (Figure 5). ② The painting

① Although Klimburg-Salter (2004) essentially compares the Rubin Museum drawing to the private collection footprint, the two generation gap between these paintings has not been recognized by the author.

② This thangka has recently been published in Selig Brown (Selig Brown 2004: 39).

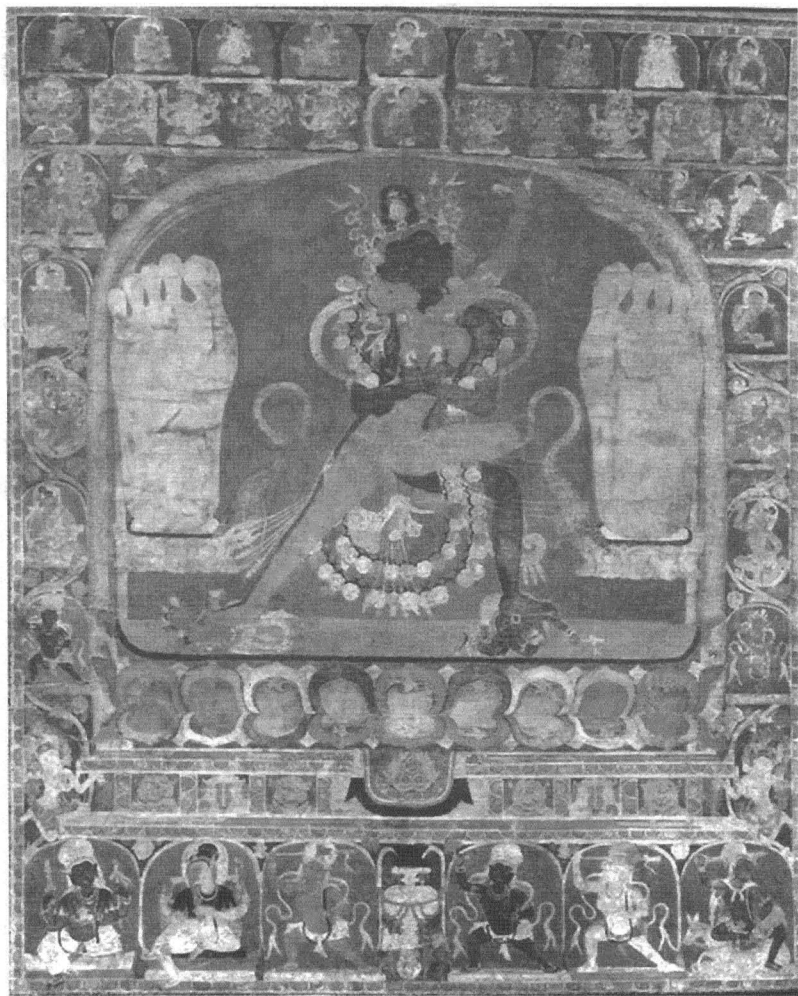


Fig. 4 Cakrasamvara thangka with footprints. Private collection; after Klimburg-Salter 1982, 111.

on this thangka may not be contemporary with the footprint itself, since originally only the compositional outlines visible between the deities were done. The deities themselves represent a stage where the iconography of all details were not completely clear any more. Further, the Pritzker footprint thangka displays

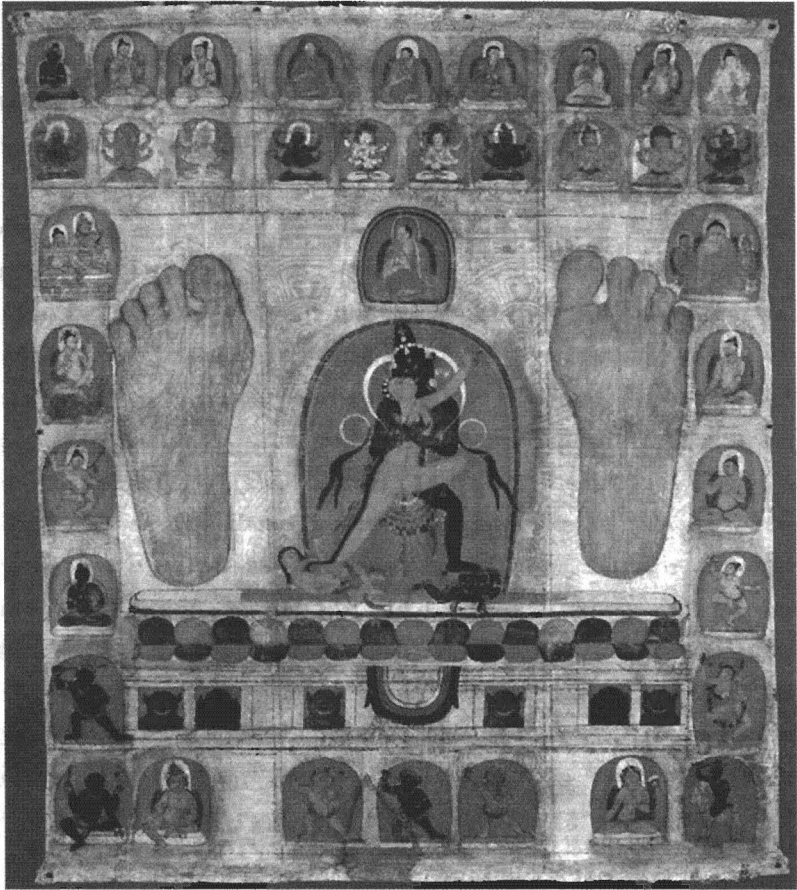


Fig. 5 Footprint on embroidered silk, Pritzker Collection; Photo; Hughes DuBois.

an unusual lineage, with an enigmatic siddha represented to the right side that unlikely is part of the lineage. ①

The same lineage succession, with the exception of the sid-

① The lineage on the Pritzker Collection footprint most likely reads from the two siddhas Tilopa and Naropa to Marpa and Milarepa represented immediately to the right of the central figure. To the right of the central Phagmodrupa is the grey-haired Gampopa.

dha, is also represented on a McCormick Collection footprint thangka, where Bhaiṣajyaguru / sMan-bla and what appears to be White Tārā / sGrol-dkar are represented following the lineage (Selig Brown 2004: 40). The McCormick Collection thangka also shares the representation of a red goddess among the protective deities in the bottom row with the Pritzker footprint. On the former, this goddess holds an elephant goad (*an̄kuśa*) and a blue lily (*utpala*), attributes that largely conform to the description of the rarely represented Red Tārā / sGrol-ma-dmar-mo (see Willson and Brauen 2000: 139).^①

Further examples are focused on Drigungpa hierarchs. A teacher representation in the REE Collection, a Swiss private collection, is dedicated to a hierarch painted two or three generations after Drigungpa (Pal 2003: no. 132). Since the inscription on the back of this thangka refers to Drigungpa, it may well be that Drigungpa is represented twice on this painting, once set off by the white background in the lineage and a second time as the main figure.^② A later date is also suggested by the deities added to the bottom of the siddhas, namely the fierce green Amṛtakunḍalin/ bDud-rtsi-'khyil-ba (see Chandra 1986: 249) and Uṣṇīṣavijayā/ gTsug-tor-rnam-par-rgyal-ma.

A thangka in fairly poor condition in the Koelz Collection in the Museum of Anthropology at Ann Arbor, Michigan, is of a similar age or somewhat later (Copeland 1980: 98). On this painting Acala, Cakrasaṃvara, Vajrayoginī, and Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara are shown just underneath the lineage and above the *mahāsiddha*, while Marīci / 'Od-zer-can-ma and White Tārā occupy the position underneath the *mahāsiddha*.

① It is unclear if the goddess represented on the Pritzker Collection footprint painting also held an *an̄kuśa* originally.

② The important inscription of this painting is now published in Heller (2005).

Originally in a similarly poor condition was a recently repainted *thangka* of Milarepa (Mi-la-ras-pa, 1040–1123), now also in the Rubin Museum of Art (Acc. No. C2002.24.5; available at *Himalayan Art*; no. 65121).^① This *thangka* also shares most of the additional deities of the Koelz Collection *thangka*. In my assessment, an unusual asymmetric representation of Drigungpa on a *thangka* in the collection of Navin Kumar (Pal 1997: 23) has likewise been repainted. This evaluation is based on the quasi-naturalistic face of the main image, iconographic misunderstandings in the representation of some of the minor deities, especially the figure flanking Indrabhūti in the upper left corner holding a skull cup in its raised hand and the red goddess in the bottom row, and the unusual color scheme. Nevertheless, the paintings iconography reflects an original that is approximately contemporaneous with the Koelz Collection *thangka* and the Rubin Museum Milarepa.

The gravest misunderstandings are found in the representation of a hierarch on the main wall of the Alchi Lotsaba Lhakhang, which likely goes back to the late 13th or early 14th century (Luczanits in press-a: fig. 9). Very likely it is again Drigungpa that is represented there. Since the rendering of the minor deities around the hierarch is often completely unclear, I only occasionally refer to this representation in the comparisons.

Finally, one panel of the extensive pantheon painted on the walls of the Three-storied Temple at Wanla in Ladakh also has to be assigned to this group (Luczanits 2002). Uniquely, there is a four-armed Mañjuśrī/ 'Jam-dpal in the center of the composition, a deity that does not even occur among the secondary figures on the other paintings.

This group of early Drigungpa paintings is particularly fasci-

① On the repainting of this *thangka* see Linrothe, Luczanits, and Watt (2004).

nating for its stylistic diversity and for the wide geographical range covered by the examples. Nevertheless, with the exception of the Alchi depictions all follow a stylistic mode reflecting Central Tibetan paintings of the period. Given that the Drigungpa from the very beginning established a stronghold around Kailash as well (and Alchi is one proof of this) it can be assumed that a painting style derived from Central Tibet was established in West Tibet as well. As the 13th-century renovations of the Tholing Gyatsa show, this style replaced the distinctive Western Himalayan art preceding the Drigungpa advent. The two representations of Alchi considered here are exceptions in as much as the painting style used for them is distinctly Western Himalayan. Nevertheless, even in Alchi there are monuments decorated in a Central Tibet derived style, in particular the New Temple (Lhakhang Soma).^① In other words, there may be no real distinction between Central and West Tibetan Drigungpa art during the 13th century.

Changes in composition and the exchange and addition of secondary deities may well reflect the changes in the early religious practice within the Drigungpa school from about 1200 to the mid-14th century. Such changes are also indicated by the obvious alterations and misunderstandings visible in the later examples. The religious background of the paintings thus requires further detailed research.

In addition, it currently is unclear what the chronological clues found within the lineage depictions mean in absolute terms. Due to the wide geographic range of the depictions, it cannot simply be assumed that the hierarchs represent the lineage of the

^① Further, a number of chörten are painted in styles more closely related to contemporary Central Tibetan painting, such as the chörten inside the Assembly Hall's courtyard and the Shangrong chörten (see Luczanits 1998).

abbots of Drigung monastery. In this lineage, the third generation abbot after Drigungpa (rje sPyan-snga Rin-po-che, 1175–1255, abbot from 1234 to 1255), held the see until 1255. If all examples referred to this lineage, the succession and changes indicated above would all fall within a fairly short period. Some examples, especially the Pritzker and McCormick footprints as well as the REE thangka, appear to indicate that the lineage need not necessarily lead up to the contemporaneous hierarch. Thus, even a late-13th-century painting may merely portrait the core lineage leading up to Drigungpa. Further, the later depictions considered here, such as that at Wanla, demonstrate that similar compositions were produced on into the 14th century. For the western Himalayas, it may well be that the lineages depicted are those of local hierarchs at Mount Kailash.

The Marker: Eight Plus One Siddhas

As diverse as this group is stylistically, the compositions and choice of deities are comparable. With the exception of the Wanla depiction, the paintings introduced above are only concerned with two themes, the footprints of the teacher and the teacher himself. Both themes relate to Drigungpa or one of his successors.

The marker that allows for identifying the paintings as a group and associating them with the Drigungpa school is the representation of the Eight Great Siddhas at the sides of the paintings. These eight siddhas are represented on paintings of other Kagy pa schools as well, but their depiction on Drigungpa paintings proved to be highly distinctive and consistent. ①

① For the wider context of the representation of the Eight Great Siddhas see Luczanits (2006).

The upper left siddha is always Indrabhūti, the king, who is here represented with a spiritual consort and sister, Lakṣmīkarā. Surprisingly, Indrabhūti is accompanied by another siddha, namely Virūpa, who raises his hand to interrupt the sun in its course, the sun often indicated by a circle. The connection of these two siddhas with each other, and the teaching this composition may signify, remains unclear to date.

The upper right depiction is consistently Buddha Śākyamuni flanked by Nāgārjuna to his proper right and Atiśa (Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna; 982-1054), the famous Indian scholar who went to Tibet in the middle of the 11th century and had a wide-ranging influence on Buddhism there, to his proper left. Drigungpa himself was considered a reincarnation of Nāgārjuna. The triad is very likely meant to represent what is called the Lineage of Profound View, the teaching of emptiness, which passed from Buddha Śākyamuni to Nāgārjuna and eventually entered Tibet with Atiśa.

The other siddhas, too, are consistently represented in the same position and with similar iconography. On the left side, Indrabhūti is followed by Ḍoṃbiheruka, who invariably sits on a pregnant tigress, the dancing Brahmin Saraha, often accompanied by two female attendants,^① and Kukkuripa, who can easily be recognized by his dog companion. On the right side, the top triad featuring Nāgārjuna is followed by Lūyipa, famous for nourishing himself from the entrails of fish, Padmavajra, iconographically the least distinctive siddha of the group,^② and Ghaṅṭ

① Although the iconography of this siddha rather refers to the stories today associated with Śavaripa, the younger Saraha, the captions consistently identify the figure as Saraha. On the Rubin Museum drawing the attendants of Saraha are identified as Brāhmaṇi (*braṃ che mo*) and Roha (*ro ha*).

② In the early iconography Padmavajra may simply have held a red lotus, referring to his name.



Fig. 6 A Drigungpa hierarch surrounded by monks of his school, after Han Shuli 1995, 295.

apāda or Drilbupa (Dril-bu-pa), who commonly is shown making a gigantic leap through the air and holding vajra and bell in his raised hands.

The presence of the siddhas serves to identify a thangka

photographed in Tibet that shows an enormous assembly of monks arranged around a much larger hierarch (Figure 6). There, the distinctive siddhas are represented flanking the halo around the head. It may be assumed that it is again Drigungpa who is depicted in the center.

Other Major Characteristics

Besides the distinctive depictions of the siddhas, the paintings discussed contain a number of other characteristics that frequently occur in early Drigungpa school painting. If we take the thangka just introduced (Figure 6) as an example, it contains two such additional characteristics, the Triple Jewel (*triratna*, *mkon-mchog-gsum*) and the *nāga* flanking the throne.

The Triple Jewel

In early Drigungpa painting, the Triple Jewel is frequently shown on the cloth in the center of the throne.^① On the Rubin Museum drawing three Triple Jewels occupy this position. As on the last thangka, the Triple Jewel also frequently emerges from the mouth of the *makara* on the back of the throne.^② Further jewels are frequently part of the scroll framing the secondary images and often terminate the scroll to the side of the halo^③. The

① The Triple Jewel in the center of the throne is not depicted in the Small chörten in Alchi, the Pritzker and McCormick Collection footprint thangkas, the Rubin Museum Milarepa and the Kumar Drigungpa and the Wanla Mañjuśrī panel.

② This feature is found in the Pritzker Collection hierarch thangka, the REE Collection hierarch and in form of three single jewels on the Koelz Collection example and the Rubin Museum Milarepa.

③ This is the case in the Rubin Museum drawing, the Pritzker Collection hierarch, the private collection footprint, the REE Collection hierarch and in form of a single jewel on the thangka photographed in Tibet.

Triple Jewel may also decorate the dress of the hierarch. ①

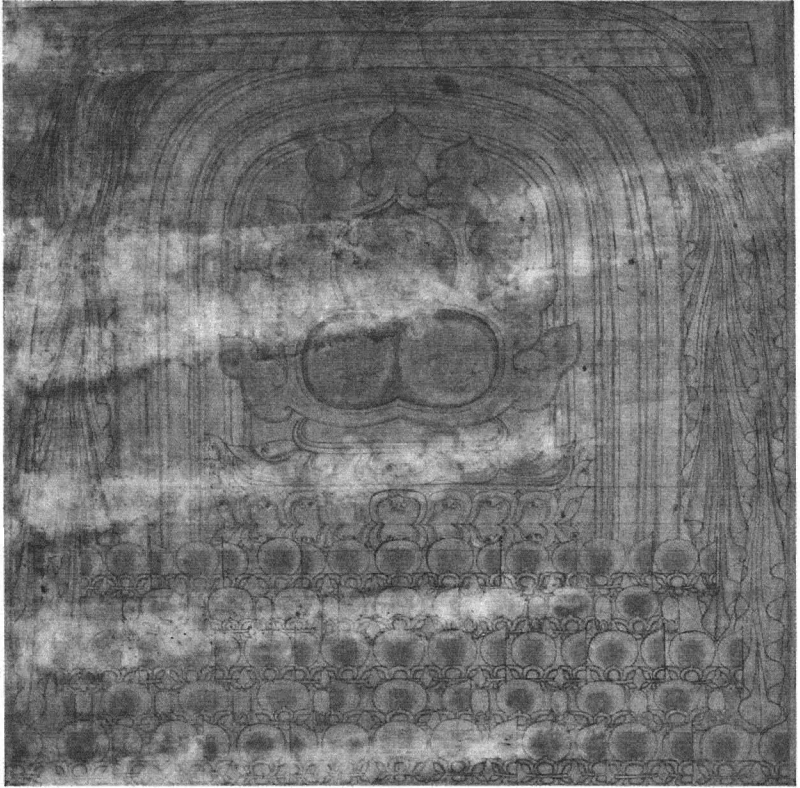


Fig. 7 A large Triple Jewel on a five-tiered jewel throne, back of the hierarch thangka from the Pritzker Collection, photo Hughes DuBois

Although the prominent representation of the three jewels, referring to the Buddha, his teaching, and the monastic community, is a common feature of these paintings, it is particularly emphasized on the Pritzker Collection thangka, with almost every decorative element made up of them. In this context, the

① Triple Jewels appear to decorate a part of the undergarment of the Pritzker Collection hierarch (best visible on the left shoulder) and are placed in the center of rosettes on the REE Collection hierarch's mantel.

Triple Jewel and jewels in general may again symbolize Drigungpa, who is also known under the name Ratnaśrī / Rin-chen-dpal: 'Magnificent Jewel'.^① On the Pritzker Collection thangka the identification of the hierarch with the Triple Jewel is further emphasized in the drawing on the back, where the position of the hierarch is taken by a large portrayal of the Triple Jewel on a five-tiered jewel throne (Figure 7).

The *Nāga*

The base of the throne, almost consistently featuring two highly stylized frontal lion faces flanking an elephant face, is frequently lifted by two *naga* represented at its sides.^② On the Rubin Museum drawing these are identified as the snake-kings Anavatapta / Ma-dros-pa^③ and Apalāla / Sog-ma-med.^④ While on the earlier examples the *nāga* are of the same size as the other secondary figures, they become less emphasized in later examples.

Usually there are no *nāga* represented as part of the throne back. Where they do occur, namely in the Kumar thangka and the Wanla Mañjuśrī, their rendering clearly derives from Nepalese painting established in Tibet by the Sakyapa school in the course of the 13th century.^⑤

① It is by this name Drigungpa is referred to in the inscription of the REE Collection hierarch (see Heller 2005).

② Exceptions are the Small Stupa painting in Alchi, the Pritzker and McCormick Collection footprints, the Kumar thangka, and the Wanla Mañjuśrī.

③ Caption: *ma gros pa*.

④ On Apalāla, who is venerated as a deity of wealth, see Willson (2000)

⑤ It appears that what is called the six ornaments of the throne, with the *naga* underneath the central garuḍa being one of them was only established in the course of the 13th and 14th centuries and clearly under Nepalese influence. On early variants of throne-frames and throne-backs see Luczanits (2004).

The Vase and the Scroll

The central throne frequently emerges from a vase with a *viśvavajra* base that also generates a scroll framing the secondary images along the bottom and at the sides. In the Small Chörten in Alchi the vase and *viśvavajra* are reversed and the stem arising from the vase only supports the lotuses of the central hierarch and the Bodhisattvas flanking him. Both elements are absent from the Pritzker Collection footprint thangka, while the McCormick Collection footprint has no vase and a truncated scroll framing only the side figures. The Kumar thangka lacks both elements, while in Wanla the vase supports only the throne of Mañjuśrī.

Buddhas and Other Deities in the Upper Section

The lineage on top of the early Drigungpa paintings is commonly flanked by at least two additional deities, most frequently two Buddhas including the Medicine Buddha *Bhaiṣajyaguru / sMan-bla* represented in the right corner. Additionally, Bodhisattvas and goddesses may be represented in the corners just below the lineage. The positions and identity of these deities seem less standardized than the other features discussed so far.

The Rubin Museum drawing has four images flanking the lineage on top: an unidentified Bodhisattva likely representing *Vajrasattva / rDo-rje-sems-pa* and *Akṣobhya / Mi-bskyod-pa* on the left and the earth-touching *Śākyamuni*^① and *Bhaiṣajyaguru* on the right. The Alchi Small Chörten has *Amitābha* and a blue Buddha with begging bowl, possibly meant to represent the Medicine Buddha, flanking the lineage. In the corners below the lineage are *Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara* and *Green Tārā*. The Pritzker

① In the caption the figure is identified as *brtan gc/tso'*.

Collection hierarch has Śākyamuni on the left and Ratnasambhava and the Medicine Buddha on the right. In the corners of the halo are Vajrasattva and a form of Avalokiteśvara holding a red lotus. There is similar variation in the other paintings. ①

In the Koelz Collection and Milarepa thangkas deities that earlier were in the lower section are shown in the top part of the painting. Both have Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī represented in the upper section. The Koelz thangka further has Acala and Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara represented above the *mahāsiddha*, while the Milarepa painting has Mañjuśrī and Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara.

Flanking Standing Bodhisattvas

Of the hierarch thangkas all but one, the asymmetric Kumar thangka, show the central hierarch flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas. In the Alchi Chörten they are Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī. In the Pritzker thangka the left Bodhisattva holds two Triple Jewels, continuing the main theme of the painting, while Mañjuśrī is represented on the right. In the REE, Koelz and Milarepa thangkas, the Bodhisattvas are Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya / Byams-pa.

Standing Bodhisattvas flanking a hierarch are comparatively rare on paintings outside the Drigungpa school. In Taglung and

① The private collection footprint features Amitāyus and the Medicine Buddha flanking the lineage, while the Rubin Museum Milarepa has the same two represented in the right corner. The McCormick Collection footprint has a Medicine Buddha and a Bodhisattva, Vajrasattva or Avalokiteśvara, in the top right corner. The Pritzker Collection drawing also has a white Bodhisattva in the top right corner and a siddha to its side that does not belong to the lineage. The REE Collection thangka has the Medicine Buddha to the right of the lineage and Vajrasattva and Akṣobhya in the corners. In the Kumar painting only Akṣobhya is additionally represented in the upper section, while the Wanla representation has no such deities.

Riwoche paintings, it is mainly Önpö (dBon-po; Sangs-rgyas-dbon; 1251-1296) who is depicted flanked by Bodhisattvas. Interestingly, the same paintings also display a certain familiarity with the Drigungpa representation of the *mahāsiddha* (see Luczanits 2006).

Chosen Divinity

Judging from the footprint thanngkas, the major chosen divinity (*yi-dam*) in the early depictions is the two-armed form of Cakrasaṃvara with consort of the so-called five-deity mandala. Further, the footprint thanngkas also show the five Buddhas and their consorts in a form that closely relates to the Guhyasamāja-Akṣobhyavajra mandala. Remarkably, it is the female form that is emphasized on these paintings and the wheel holding Vairocana / rNam-par-s nang-mdzad^① and his consort Samantabhadri / Kun-tu-bzang-mo occupy the central positions.

On the hierarch depictions Acala and Vajrayoginī first take a prominent position underneath the *mahāsiddha*. These two deities are also represented on the footprint thanngkas from the collections of Pritzker and McCormick. In the Koelz Collection painting the two-armed Cakrasaṃvara joins the two deities along with Ṣaḍakṣaralokeśvara, who is already prominently represented in the Alchi Chörten.

Further deities set off from the row of the protectors on the later paintings are: Uṣṇīṣavijayā (REE hierarch), the yellow, three-headed and six-armed Marīcī (Koelz, Rubin Milarepa, Wanla Mañjuśrī), Green Tara (Alchi Chörten, Rubin Milarepa), White Tārā (Koelz) and the green Amṛtakuṇḍalin (REE).

Protectors

① In the caption he is identified as Delusion-vajra / gTi-mug-rdo-rje.

The protectors at the bottom are another distinctive feature of early Drigungpa painting. Most significantly, there is always a group of protectors standing in a posture with the right leg bent (*pratyālāḍha* / *g. yas-bskum g. yon-brkyang*) and brandishing a distinctive attribute in their raised right hand, while the left performs a threatening gesture with the index raised (*tarjanīmudrā* / *sdigs-mdzub phyag-rgya*). This group is commonly situated in the center of the bottom row, where it flanks the vase. Frequently there are four such protectors, one of whom, Acala / Mi-g. yo-ba, is often placed on the left side below the *mahāsiddha*. In the Rubin Museum drawing the four protectors in the bottom row are identified by captions (from left to right) as Amṛtakuṇḍalin / bDud-rtsi-'khyil-pa, Hayagrīva / rTamgrin, Guhyapati / gSang-bdag, and Acala. Of these, Amṛtakuṇḍalin, Hayagrīva and Guhyapati commonly form a triad on the other paintings, with the blue Guhyapati (Vajrapāni) in the center flanked by the red Hayagrīva to his right and the yellow Amṛtakuṇḍalin to his left. The identification of the yellow protector as Amṛtakuṇḍalin, which is based on the comparison to the Rubin Museum drawing, can not be considered certain since this deity is commonly green and identified with the north, the region of Amoghasiddhi. On the REE Collection thangka, a green protector brandishing some object in his right hand (a *viśvavajra*?) and holding a bell at his hip in his left hand, is represented below Acala on the left side.^① Iconographically, this deity conforms to the representation of Amṛtakuṇḍalin in Chandra (1986: 249).

There are, of course, other points of divergence as well.

① I earlier thought that the five protectors as they occur on the REE-thangka may allude to the five Buddha families, an opinion that can no longer be upheld in view of the double representation of the vajra-family.

For example, in the Alchi Chörten depiction Hayagriva is replaced by Yama / gShin-rje, clearly recognizable by his mount, a bull, and occupying the central position among the seven protectors there. It is the only depiction of this deity in the discussed group.

The seated four-armed Mahākāla is commonly shown in the bottom right corner. Curiously, in the Rubin Museum painting he is identified in the caption as the Raven-headed form (Bya-rog-ma), obviously erroneously. In the Pritzker Collection footprint thangka and the Kumar thangka the deity has his main hands not close together in front of the breast but rather holds the skull cup in his left hand close to his knee. ①

Mahākāla is followed by a deity of wealth, namely either Jambhala / Dzam-bha-la or Gaṇapati /Tshogs-bdag, both of whom are represented and identified on the Rubin Museum drawing. ② With Jambhala in the Alchi ChÖrten, on the Pritzker Collection hierarch and footprint and in the Alchi Lotsaba depiction, and Gaṇapati in the remaining paintings, no logic is recognizable in the choice of deity.

The bottom right corner is occupied by Remati (in the Rubin Museum drawing identified as such) who is rendered in different forms in the paintings. Although she is generally two-armed she is shown four-armed on the Rubin Museum drawing. The goddess consistently brandishes a sword in her right hand, while the left most frequently holds a mongoose bag, associating her with wealth and the *yakṣa* (gNod-spyin Re-ma-ti). In contrast, the Alchi depiction portrays her as the head of the demons (bDud-mo

① The rendering of Mahākāla in the McCormick Collection footprint thangka looks rather odd, especially the position of the right hand holding a sword.

② The spellings on the Rubin Museum drawing are: *'dzampa lha* and *tshogs bdag*.

Re-ma-ti).

The red goddess with a blue lily (*utpala*) depicted on the Pritzker and McCormick footprints and the Kumar thangka to the side of Remati is rather curious. Only on the McCormick Collection thangka are further iconographic details of this goddess visible; there she holds an elephant goad (*an̄kusa*) in her right hand, while her left one also seems to hold something besides the stalk of the lily. This deity may well represent the Red Tārā of the Sakya tradition (see Willson and Brauen 2000).

Further Drigungpa Paintings

The discussed paintings represent a rather small group exhibiting considerable variety in stylistic and iconographic features. Nevertheless, their major and minor characteristics help to link paintings focused on other themes than hierarchs and footprints with the Drigungpa school.

Most notable among these is a group of Buddha depictions, one of which Amy Heller identified as Vairocana (Heller 1999: 58). Regardless whether this identification turns out to be correct or not,^① the key to these depictions has to be searched in Drigungpa sources. If we take the Buddha depiction in the Pritzker Collection that Amy Heller used in her discussion as an example, it becomes clear that this thangka displays a number of the minor characteristics discussed above, most notably the emphasis on the Triple Jewel and the *nāga* supporting the throne.

These markers alone would certainly be too circumstantial, but the same composition is found among the murals of the New Temple or Lhakhang Soma in Alchi and the Three-storied Tem-

① In my opinion, this identification can only be positively supported if the whole composition the teaching Buddha is set in can be satisfactorily explained.

ple of Wanla, where it is depicted twice (Figure 8). That Alchi became a Drigungpa monastery in the early 13th century is known from inscriptions in the Sumtsek and the depictions in two early chörten, especially the one discussed above.^① For Wanla, the Drigungpa association can be established from its inscription.^② Further, in all cases seven Green Tārās are placed side by side at the bottom of these compositions reminding of the practice of Seven Tārās attributed to Drigungpa (Gyaltsen 1986).

A Drigungpa association may also be established for another unusual representation published in *Sacred Visions* (Kossak and Singer 1998). Here again it is the Triple Jewel in the center of the throne and to the sides of the vajras at the bottom of the painting that clinch the connection. Further, this painting shares a number of features with the back of the Pritzker Collection hierarch, and its back is similarly ornate.^③

Obviously, not all paintings sharing one of the minor markers established above can securely be assigned to the Drigungpa school. A case in point is another large thanangka in the REE Collection showing a hierarch holding a flower-like Triple Jewel at its stem (Pal 2003). It is, of course, tempting to identify this teacher as Drigungpa as well. However, none of the other elements of this painting really support such an identification. Similarly, the white-haired hierarch on a thanangka of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA M80 188; Pal 1990: pl. 9) cannot be assigned to the Drigungpa school on the basis of the

① See Goepper (1990, 1993), Goepper and Poncar (1996) and Luczanits (in press-a, in press-b).

② See Luczanits (2002) and Tropper (in press).

③ Kossak and Singer (1998). In a private communication Tom Pritzker has expressed his opinion that his hierarch and the depiction of the Buddha in *Sacred Visions* no. 15 may belong to the same school.

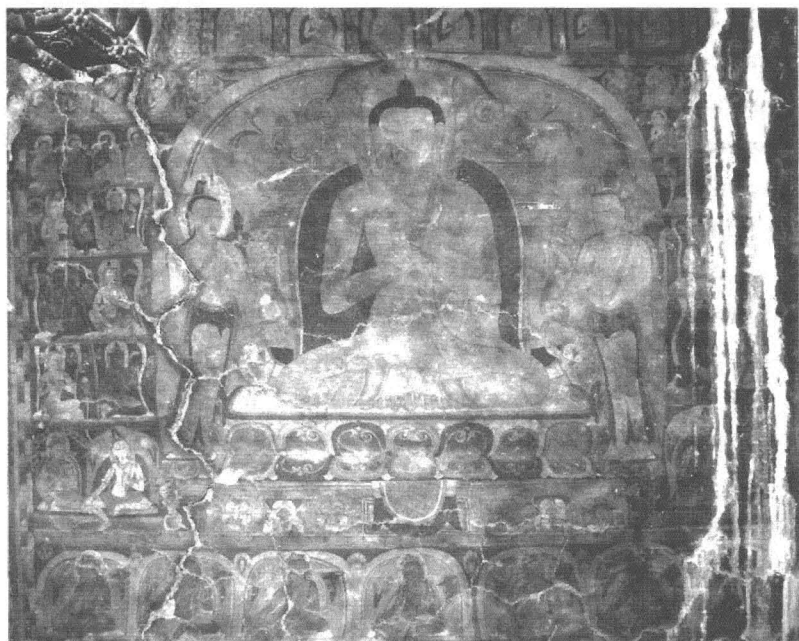


Fig. 8 Teaching Buddha with Seven Tārās at the bottom, Three-storied Temple, Wanla. Photo: C. Luczanits 2003 16, 19

Triple Jewel depicted on the throne alone.

Conclusion

The corpus of early Drigungpa painting introduced here is still small and may only represent one aspect of the art associated with this school. It nevertheless serves as a substantial source of information on the early religious practices within this school. The emphasis on the footprints and the teacher conforms to the deification of the school's founder that is evident in the textual sources. The corpus also points up the importance attached to the teacher and meditation within this school. Further, the group demonstrates that Drigungpa teachings spread to the far

west during Drigungpa's lifetime and had a great influence there. However, as the title suggests, this is not more than a first glance at these paintings, which can certainly yield much more information, especially when the paintings are compared in detail with contemporaneous textual sources.

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