

country names and frontiers (available in any modern atlas) they were to illustrate the geopolitical situation of the region as it existed at a point in history relevant to the Collection – say, the 9th or 12th centuries. As well as providing visual support for the text, revised maps could also mark the main areas of the subcontinent from which Indian influence on Southeast Asia emanated, and the trade routes along which it travelled. Notwithstanding such minor blemishes, this volume remains a significant contribution to the history of the arts of Southeast Asia from the perspective of a scholar trained in Indian art.

T.C. White



*Buddhist Sculpture in Clay: Early Western Himalayan Art, Late 10th to Early 13th Centuries*, by Christian Luczanits. Serindia Publications, Chicago, 2004. xiv+351 pages, 323 illustrations, mostly in colour.

Although the tradition of unfired polychromed clay images is very much alive in the Indian subcontinent, almost

nothing survives from antiquity except Buddhist sculptures in the monasteries and temples of the Western Himalaya. Some of this exciting material is today in the Indian Himalaya and others across the border in Tibet. For over four centuries, generations of unknown Indian and Tibetan artists worked with local clay to produce some of the most beautiful sculptures of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, gods and demons that are marvels of human imagination and dexterity.

The material has been familiar to the scholarly world for almost a century, but only in the last quarter of the 20th century have the temples and gompas of the Western Himalaya with their abundance of artistic riches begun receiving the attention they deserve. Although not as visually dazzling as Serindia's lavish production on the Alchi temple complex by Roger Goepfer and Jaroslav Poncar, this is the first scholarly monograph on the subject and a most comprehensive one. The major blemish is in the front matter where the binders (the book was printed and bound in China, which also shows in the quality of reproductions, even when some of the photographs used are by Poncar) have mixed up the pages, at least in this reviewer's copy.

The plan of the book is straightforward, art-historically sound, and unencumbered by theoretical mumbo jumbo. The style of writing is simple and lucid, and the analyses of the temples and sculptures are amply illustrated. After an introduction that defines the spatial and temporal parameters of his subject, Christian Luczanits devotes a short chapter to the technique of manufacture of the sculptures with reference to Indian and Tibetan literature. Additional discussion of construction technique is included in chapter 3 along with iconographic style and composition as well as ornamentation and frames. A comparative analysis with the techniques used in present-day India, especially West Bengal where the tradition still flourishes, would have been enlightening.

In chapter 2, the author gives us a detailed substantive art-historical analysis of the major surviving monuments, site by site. Within the historical context, each monument and its sculptural remains are discussed fully, striking a balance between styles and iconography. The survey includes such well known establishments as Tabo, Alchi, and Sumda but also many other minor and little known sites mentioned only in passing in previous literature. The method is sound, the documentation meticulous, and the discussions authoritative. Especially significant is his discussion regarding the dating of the structures at Alchi (pp. 125–48), where he further substantiates the chronology suggested by Goepfer.

Chapter 4 provides a brief survey of post-13th-century monuments at Guge in West Tibet as well as in Kinnaur and Ladakh in India. This is followed by useful appendices on Tabo and Sumda mandala sculptures and inscriptions in the Nako Translator's Temple, extensive notes and the usual scholarly apparatus.

The rather cumbersome title notwithstanding, this is a major scholarly work of enormous significance to all who are interested in esoteric Buddhist religion as embodied in the elegant and colourful images that have miraculously survived the ravages of both nature and man sheltered in the rather unpretentious structures of the Western Himalaya.

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