

The Life of the Buddha at Rtag brtan Phun tshogs gling Monastery in Text, Image, and Institution: A Preliminary Overview*

Andrew Quintman and Kurtis R. Schaeffer

Abstract: This essay presents a preliminary overview of a larger collaborative project on the narratives of Śākyamuni Buddha's life based on materials produced by the sixteenth/seventeenth-century polymath Kun dga' snying po, better known as Tāranātha (1575-1634), at Rtag brtan Phun tshogs gling Monastery in the Gtsang region of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. In this essay we introduce (1) Tāranātha's literary works on the Buddha, (2) the mural of the Buddha's life associated with that literature, (3) the complex relationship between text and image, a relationship that is mediated by a painting manual (*bris yig*) written by Tāranātha, and (4) the institutional context in which texts and images were produced. In doing so we hope to demonstrate that an extensively realized portrayal of Śākyamuni Buddha in multiple media was of central importance to the identity of Tāranātha's new monastic seat. Phun tshogs gling was, perhaps more than most monasteries in Tibet, branded with a distinctive vision of Śākyamuni. Tāranātha's emphasis on Śākyamuni as a central organizing principle formed what might be considered a "Buddha Program": a total cultural program consisting of a large body of Tāranātha's writings and religious artwork, as well as attendant practices. It was, in part we suggest, this Buddha Program that consolidated Phun tshogs gling's institutional identity.

* The authors would like to thank Leonard van der Kuijp and Robert Linrothe for their comments on previous versions of this essay.

Introduction

This essay presents a preliminary overview of a larger collaborative project on the narratives of Śākyamuni Buddha's life based on materials produced by the sixteenth/seventeenth-century polymath Kun dga' snying po, better known as Tāranātha (1575-1634), at Rtag brtan Phun tshogs gling Monastery in the Gtsang region of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Tāranātha's construction of Phun tshogs gling began in the wood-rabbit year of 1615.¹ The site would grow to become an extensive complex. It eventually included a central building with a 36-pillared assembly hall that served as the monastery's primary ritual space, surrounded by numerous smaller temples and monastic residences, as well as a walled fortress atop the nearby ridge.

Tāranātha was renowned for his polymathic literary output, which covered philosophical exegeses, commentary on tantric theory and practice, Buddhist history, as well as the narrative literature addressed below. His seat at Phun tshogs gling, which became an epicenter of the Jo nang tradition in Tibet, remains a veritable treasurehouse of Buddhist material culture, perhaps most clearly witnessed in its expansive religious murals. Although converted to the Dge lugs sect during the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, reports from the late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries suggest it remained a thriving monastic community. Sarat Chandra Das notes the visit made by an associate in 1882, "The next day they came to Phuntso ling, where there is a lamasery with five hundred inmates. This was formerly the seat of the Taranath lama..."² Swedish explorer Sven Anders Hedin visited the complex in 1907 and recorded that "two hundred monks belong to the monastery of Pinzoling."³

Scholars of Buddhist traditions in other regions of Asia have explored the synergies between Buddhist temple murals, narrative literature, and the architectural setting and ritual practices of the institutions that helped produce them. Such work has focused on, for example, sites at Ajanta in India and Dunhuang in China.⁴ Since at least the time of Giuseppe Tucci's monumental *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, the institutional and intellectual contexts of murals have been a focus of scholarship on Tibetan art.⁵ The unique Tibetan archive of visual and literary materials extant at Phun tshogs gling allows scholars to explore issues such as the planning and design of visual narratives, the relationships between written and painted life stories, the economies of artistic production in a monastic setting, and forms of institutionally sponsored ritual consecration and worship. In this essay we introduce (1) Tāranātha's literary works on

1 Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Dpal ldan jo nang pa'i chos 'byung*, 57. Cf. Zongtse 1977, 27.

2 Das 1902: 209.

3 Hedin 1910, 1: 416.

4 See, for example: Schlingoff 2000; Whitfield 1990; Whitfield et. al. 2000; Fraser 2004; Ning 2004.

5 Notable examples include, but are certainly not limited to Vitali 1990; Klimburg-Salter and Luczanits 1998; Ricca and Lo Bue 1993; Goepper, Lutterbeck, and Poncar 1984; and of course Tucci 1949.

the Buddha, (2) the mural of the Buddha's life associated with that literature, (3) the complex relationship between text and image, a relationship that is mediated by a painting manual (*bris yig*) written by Tāranātha, and (4) the institutional context in which texts and images were produced. In doing so we hope to demonstrate that an extensively realized portrayal of Śākyamuni Buddha in multiple media was of central importance to the identity of Tāranātha's new monastic seat. Phun tshogs gling was, perhaps more than most monasteries in Tibet, branded with a distinctive vision of Śākyamuni.

Tāranātha's emphasis on Śākyamuni as a central organizing principle formed what might be considered a "Buddha Program": a total cultural program consisting of a large body of Tāranātha's writings and religious artwork, as well as attendant practices. It was, in part we suggest, this Buddha Program that consolidated Phun tshogs gling's institutional identity.

Text: How did Tāranātha Retell the Story of the Buddha?

The Sun of Faith: Structure

Tāranātha's composition, referred to in this essay as *The Sun of Faith* (*Dad pa'i nyin byed*), represents a major contribution to the seventeenth-century Tibetan literary imagination of Buddha Śākyamuni's life. It includes a complete narrative account of the Buddha's final life on Earth, beginning with his residence in Tuṣita Heaven and concluding with his death, the distribution of his relics, and brief accounts of the first two monastic councils. The complete title is *The Sun of Faith That Shines in One Hundred Directions: A Brief Account of the Acts of the Blessed Lord and Glorious Victor Śākyamuni, Lion of the Śākyas, King of the Śākyas, that is Delightful and Meaningful to Behold* (*Bcom ldan 'das dpal rgyal ba shākya thub pa shākya sengge'i rgyal po gang de'i mdzad pa mdo tsam brjod pa mthong bas don ldan rab tu dga' ba dang bcas pas dad pa'i nyin byed phyogs brgyar 'char ba*). The work appears to have been well-known in Tibet, with multiple versions in circulation,⁶ and citations in later literature.⁷

It is likely that Tāranātha developed his Buddha narrative for a number of years prior to composing *The Sun of Faith*. He gave teachings on the life of the Buddha to his patron, Sde pa Phun tshogs nam rgyal (1550-1620) in 1617.⁸ Tāranātha began writing *The Sun of Faith* in the summer of 1621, a bird year. By the winter of that year it was complete. The text is, in his

6 Known editions are listed in the bibliography. Page numbers to Tāranātha's works, including the *Dad pa'i nyin byed*, below refer to the 2008 comparative (*dpe bsdur ma*) edition published by Dpal brtsegs unless otherwise noted.

7 Kongtrul 2010: 89.

8 Zongtse 1977: 351.

words, "a biography of the completely perfect Buddha compiled from the [texts of the] First Turning of the Wheel, primarily the Vinaya, and written in just the right length."⁹

Although Tāranātha describes the work as a "brief account," it is one of the most extensive autonomous treatments of the Buddha's final life authored in Tibet at the time. It has been occasionally referred to by the abbreviated title *The Hundred Acts* (*Mdzad brgya*), although that seems not to have been the primary title by which it was known.¹⁰ Reference to the Buddha's "hundred acts" seems to acknowledge the narrative's extensive treatment of the Buddha's teaching career, which is indeed a distinctive feature of Tāranātha's work.

Tibetan authors have traditionally structured accounts of the Buddha's life story within a framework of twelve acts. While there is some variation among them, the general approach uses the following scheme: (1) descent from Tuṣita Heaven; (2) life in the womb; (3) birth; (4) education; (5) marriage; (6) renunciation; (7) austerities; (8) travel to Bodhgaya; (9) subduing Mārā; (10) enlightenment; (11) teaching; (12) death.¹¹ Early examples of this structure include the extended account included in the *History of Buddhism* by Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364), who may have been a target for Tāranātha's criticism, as discussed below. Tāranātha foregoes this 12-act structure altogether and instead narrates the arc of the Buddha's life over the course of 125 chapters.

The Sun of Faith is comprised of several distinct sections. The introduction (128-136) consists of several brief but important orientations to the work as a whole. It begins with verses of supplication (128-129), followed by a brief prose explanation of the author's intentions (129-130). A verse summary of the Buddha narrative comes next (130-131), followed by a numbered list of chapter titles for the entire work, forming a table of contents to the text as a whole (131-136). Together the verses and the list form a useful mnemonic aid for readers venturing into the main text. The chapters themselves are, somewhat unusually, signaled with chapter number and title (or perhaps more accurately, topic) at the beginning rather than at the

9 Tāranātha, *Rang rnam*, smad cha, 103. *Yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi rnam thar 'dul ba lung gtso bor gyur pa'i 'khor lo dang po las btus pa/ rgyas bsodus 'tsham pa 'di yang dbyar thog de la sgrigs pa yin/ 'jug phran tshogs cig lo 'di'i dgun ka bris/*.

10 See A khu ching Shes rab rgya mtsho's (1803-1875) list of rare texts, where it is referenced as *Tā ra nā tha'i ston pa'i rnam thar mdzad brgyar grags pa* (Chandra 1963, 638). It is worth noting another extended account of Śākyamuni Buddha's life that predates Tāranātha's version. This is the work by Sna nam btsun pa Skal bzang chos kyi rgya mtsho (ca. late 15th century) written in 1494 at the request of Chag Lo tsa ba Rin chen chos rgyal (b. 1447). The work is called *The Supreme Treasury: The Excellent Life of the Lord Buddha, [Being] the Conduct of the One Gone to Bliss Described in terms of [His] Inerrant Acts* (*Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyi rnam par thar pa rmad du byung ba mdzad pa 'khrul med par brjod pa bde bar gshegs pa'i spyod pa mchog gi gter*). Although in some ways comparable to *The Sun of Faith*, Sna nam btsun pa claims to draw on a much broader range of source materials than Tāranātha. See Sna nam btsun pa, *Mchog gi gter*.

11 See Tenzin Chögyel 2015, Kongtrul 2010: 75-91, etc.

end of each (For example: "*don lnga pa mu tig can bden pa la bkod pa ni*"¹²).

The hundred and twenty-five chapters that constitute the main narrative (136-471) cover several distinct periods of the Buddha's life. The Buddha's birth and his activities through the enlightenment, or acts one through ten in the twelve-act system, constitute chapters 1-25 (131-183). His teaching career takes up the bulk of work, spanning chapters 26-117 (183-444), or approximately 80% of the narrative portion of the work. The Buddha's death and cremation, and the distribution of his relics constitute chapters 118-120 (444-453). The final chapters 121-125 conclude the narrative with a discussion of the so-called first and second Buddhist councils (453-471). Tāranātha ends the narrative portion text with a brief resumé of seven stories (*gtam rgyud*) of the spread of Buddhism during and after the Buddha's life (472-473). Concluding verses bring the story proper to a close (473-474), at which point Tāranātha lingers in a colophon to offer thoughts on the process of crafting a Buddha narrative.

The Sun of Faith: *Sources*

The text's colophon (475-477) forms an extended reflection on the author's textual sources for the story and a justification for his approach to composing the Buddha's life story more generally. Tāranātha's reflection here is particularly interesting as it provides a rare account of literary critical reflection on the processes of Tibetan authorship: the determination of valid sources, the adoption of literary voice and style, and imagined reading audience.

Tāranātha uses the colophon to make a number of broad claims about his literary approach. Two issues seem to be critical. First, he wants to carefully demonstrate that competing traditions of the Buddha's life exist within early (Hīnayāna) and later (Mahāyāna) strands of canonical literature. Second, and perhaps more importantly, he presents an interpretive framework that allows him to argue that these literary streams are equally authentic and valid but that they should not be carelessly blended.

Tāranātha begins by acknowledging his explicit reliance on works from the Vinaya as sources for his narrative. He claims to draw on several specific works, including the "Four Collections," the *Karmaśataka* [D340]¹³, the *Avadānaśataka* [D343], and "some minor sūtras as required." The Four Collections (*lung sde bzhi*) are the four compendia known more commonly as the "Four Vinaya Collections" ('*dul ba lung sde bzhi*), which in the Tibetan canonical collections are the '*Dul ba gzhi* [Vinayavastu, D1], '*Dul ba rnam par 'byed pa* [Vinayavibhaṅga, D3], '*Dul ba phran tshegs kyi gshi* [Vinayaṣṣudraka vastu, D6], and the '*Dul ba gzhung bla*

12 Tāranātha, *Dad pa'i nyin byed*, 335.

13 Ui, Hakuji, et. al. *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons*, Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934, no. 340, hereafter "D340", etc.

ma [*Vinaya uttaragrantha*, D7].¹⁴ Our preliminary assessment shows these works, and the *Vinayavastu* in particular, to be key sources for Tāranātha.

An author of a Buddha-life story, Tāranātha continues, must "distinguish between [accounts from the] Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna." The author should thereby decide whether the presentation will accord with the ethos of the Mahāyāna or the Hīnayāna, as understood by Tibetan intellectuals. The former is represented most clearly by the *Lalitavistara* and its narrative, which concludes with the Buddha's first teaching, could be completed by episodes drawn from other Mahāyāna scriptures, such as "stories of the supreme pair [Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana] from the *Mahāsammipāta Sūtra* (D138); stories from the *Pitāputrasamāgamana Sūtra* (D60) in the *Ratnakuta Sūtra*, the great miracles from the *Damamūkanāma Sūtra* (D341), and episodes about his death from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*." For sources from the Hīnayāna tradition, Tāranātha suggests that the *Abhiniṣkramana Sūtra* (D 302) could be augmented by accounts from the *Karmaśataka* and the *Avadānaśataka*.

Tāranātha contends that, while Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna sources are equally valid, they serve different purposes. He therefore forcefully maintains that, in writing the entire arc of the Buddha's life from birth to death, the two traditions should not be mixed: "It is unacceptable to mix the two [types of scripture], for they become muddled, neither one nor the other, which is improper."

Tāranātha is quick to heap praise on Mahāyāna renditions of the narrative. It is superior to the Hīnayāna tradition inasmuch as it is "more extensive [than the Hīnayāna narrative]; an object of inconceivable wisdom; that which appears in the perception of the best disciples; the liberation story of the great esoteric tradition, and so forth." However, the Hīnayāna tradition has a major advantage; it presents the Buddha narrative in human terms, making it more appropriate for ordinary, human readers." It is only the common system that establishes a foundation for various kinds of investigation," Tāranātha argues. The Hīnayāna Buddha narrative focuses on "what was established in the perception common to all ordinary people, the extent of the Buddha's lifespan, the chronology [of his deeds], and the assertions that he went to this place but not that one." By contrast, "The Mahāyāna tradition cannot [serve that function.] It is the domain of the inconceivable. Therefore it is difficult [for this tradition] to ascertain that 'this alone is [the Buddha's] residence, time period, or deeds.'" The Hīnayāna narrative is useful for Tāranātha because it emphasizes chronological sequence over the collapse of temporality, the particular places that the Buddha went rather than the idea that he is at once everywhere and nowhere. If in the Mahāyāna narrative the Buddha's life is beyond ordinary description, in the Hīnayāna narrative precise details of those descriptions are of greatest import. Where the Buddha went, when he went there, and what he did there are, Tāranātha contends, all neatly

14 These sources are repeated in the *Descriptive Guide to Phun tshogs gling*. See Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 176.

documented in "Hīnayāna" sources such as the Vinaya literature. "Therefore," Tāranātha concludes, "the common system [the Hīnayāna] is certainly much more important when talking about the composition of stories about the past (*gtam rgyud*).¹⁵" Tāranātha ends this discussion by adding depth to a common term for narrative, *gtam rgyud*. For him, *gtam rgyud* tells a chronological narrative in which a sequence of episodes clearly describe the "who, what, where, and when" of a given subject's life. Here *gtam rgyud* bears comparison with other Tibetan terms such as *lo rgyus*, and perhaps even the English term "history." Hīnayāna narrative sources are useful for Tāranātha above and beyond Mahāyāna sources because they help him to tell the "history" of the Buddha, or perhaps the story of the Buddha in a more historical register.

In setting forth these assertions, Tāranātha claims to be correcting a mistake made by many Tibetan authors in the past, including an indirect reference that we surmise targets the famous historian and narrative author Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364). Tāranātha writes, "I do not see as very suitable the [presentation] of the one known in Tibet as the Second Omniscient One, since he [composed] the first eleven of the twelve acts according to the *Lalitavistara* [a Mahāyāna text], and he filled out the final act according to the *Vinayaṣudraka* [a Hīnayāna text]." Finally, Tāranātha acknowledges the limitations of Tibetan authors who might seek to draw solely on scriptural sources from the Hīnayāna tradition. He notes, "Here in [Tibet] the scriptural collection of the *śrāvakas* was not transmitted in full, so I have related as much as I have acquired." Our preliminary analysis of the sources of Tāranātha's narrative bears out his claims to have relied on the Vinaya literature, and in particular the *Vinayavastu*, and to be primarily interested in presenting an authoritative sequence of "real-world" encounters between the Buddha and his disciples. This pragmatic approach seems to have been recognized as an important perspective on the distinct traditions of Buddha narrative available in Tibet. Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1812–1899) cites Tāranātha's colophon to *The Sun of Faith* in full at the conclusion of his own story of the Buddha's life set forth in his encyclopedic *The Treasury of Knowledge* (*Shes bya kun khyab*).¹⁵

Image: How Did He Create his Buddha Narrative in Visual Terms?

Historical Overview of Jo nang's Narrative Murals

Rtag brtan Phun tshogs gling has long been identified as an extraordinary repository of Tibetan religious art, although to date no comprehensive survey of this material exists. C. G. Rawling, a Captain in the British Army, provides what is perhaps the earliest description of the Jo nang

¹⁵ Kongtrul 2010: 89.

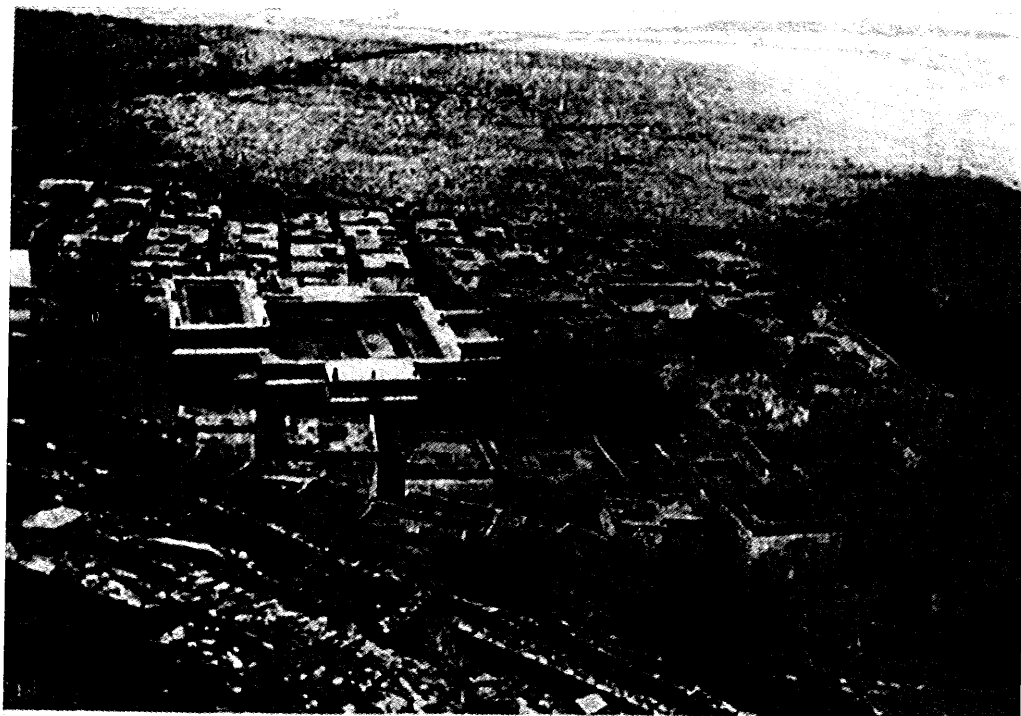


Figure 1. Phun tshogs gling Monastery from the ridge above, ca. 1904. (After Rawling 1905)

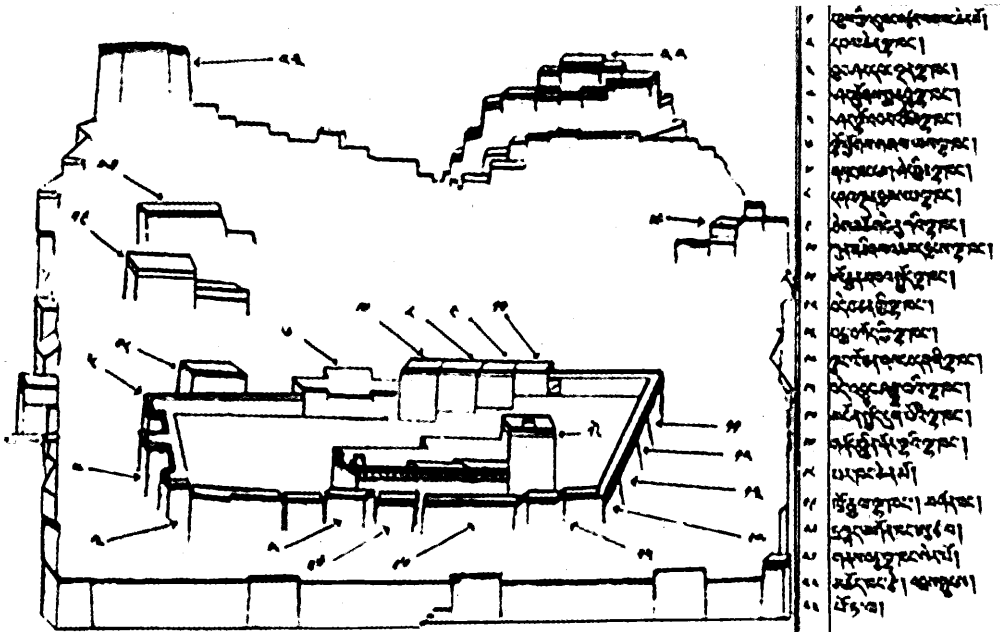
artwork by a European, following his visit to the monastery in 1904 (See Figure 1). He writes, "The walls are covered from top to bottom with frescoes, some beautifully executed, but all representing, in one way or another, the lewd figures so commonly reproduced in all Tibetan temples."¹⁶ Despite Rawling's somewhat Orientalist lens, it is remarkable that the Phun tshogs gling murals had caught the eye of non-Tibetan visitors during the early twentieth century.

Several decades later, Giuseppe Tucci further noted the importance of Phun tshogs gling's murals and provided a brief description of paintings found in several of its temples following "the tour that guides do with visitors."¹⁷ His survey focuses largely on the artwork of the monastery's central building, covering some ten different locations including the main assembly hall and several side chapels. Tucci describes the numerous protector shrines (*mgon khang*) in some detail, rightly highlighting their striking stylistic components. He seems, however, to have overlooked Tāranātha's Buddha life murals altogether.¹⁸ Another recent survey of the

¹⁶ Rawling 1905: 193-4.

¹⁷ Tucci 1949: 196-200.

¹⁸ Tucci 1949: 198.



1. Great Central Assembly Hall (dbus kyi 'du khang gtsug lag khang chen mo)

Figure 2. Great Central Assembly Hall (after Zongtse 1977, 35a)

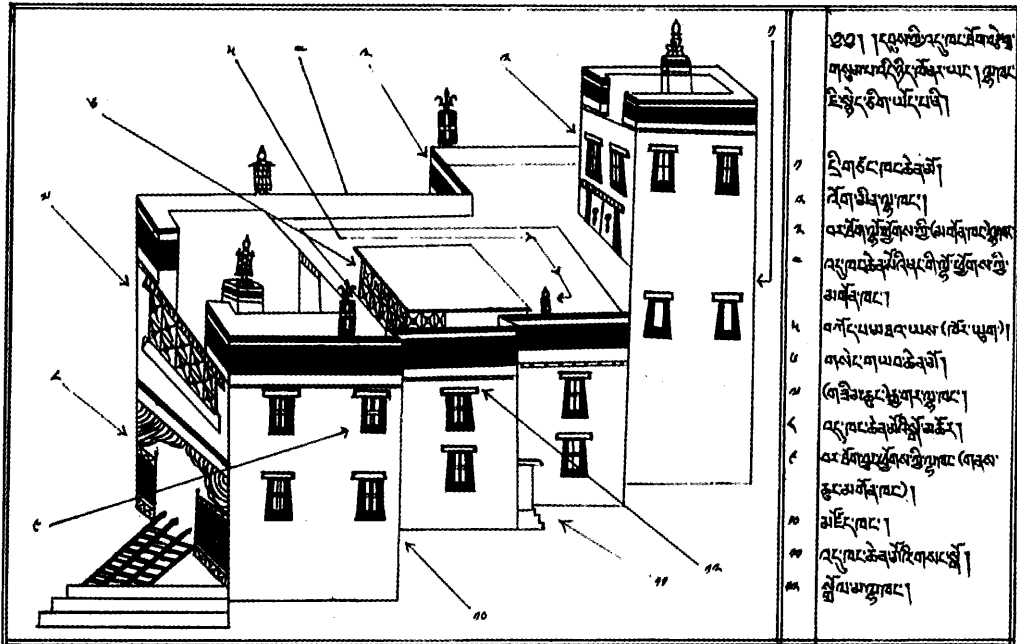
artistic contributions at Phun tshogs gling likewise fails to mention the extensive Buddha life murals.¹⁹

The murals appear to have been designed and executed within a year or two of winter 1621, when Tāranātha completed *The Sun of Faith*. The period between 1618-1622 was a time of tremendous artistic production at Phun tshogs gling. According to Champa Zongtse, whose detailed chronology of the 1610s through the 1630s is based in part on the *Descriptive Guide to Phun tshogs gling* (*Dga' ldan phun tshogs gling gi gnas bshad*), the foundation for the great central assembly hall (dbus kyi 'du khang gtsug lag khang chen mo) was laid in 1615, upon which a 34-pillar hall was built.²⁰ (Figure 2, number 1) In 1616 and 1617 the roof was raised over the central assembly hall and the inner sanctum (*dri gtsang khang chen mo*), while foundations were laid for the surrounding temples. Murals in the great assembly hall, inner sanctum, and Akaniṣṭha temple were finished by 1618.²¹ That year, a group of some twenty Nepali artisans arrived to craft statues of the Seven Tathāgatas for the inner sanctum, a project

19 Henss 2014: 695-704.

20 Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, esp.166ff. Cf. Zongtse 1977: 27-35.

21 Zongtse 1977: 29.



1. Great Inner Sanctum (*dri gtsang khang chen mo*)
2. Akanīṣṭha Chapel (*'og min lha khang*)
3. Middle Floor Southern Protector Chapel (*bar thog lho phyogs kyi (mgon khang) lha khang*)
4. Southern Protector Chapel in the Great Assembly Hall (*'du khang chen mo'i nang gi lho phyogs kyi mgon khang*)
5. Boundless Array Circuit (*bkod pa mtha' yas (khor yug)*)

Figure 3. The Great Central Assembly Hall (after Zongtse 1977, 39a)

completed in 1620.²² In 1619 the murals of the main assembly hall were in production.²³ By 1621 the new temple complex was being populated with statues, images, and murals, and by no later than 1622 the Jo bo Phyogs las rnam rgyal statue was brought from the regional administrative center at Bsam grub rtse to anchor the inner sanctum of Phun tshogs gling. Much of Zongtse's chronology awaits further analysis and corroboration, especially in relationship to the *Descriptive Guide* and Tāranātha's autobiographical writings.

Aesthetic Description

The *Descriptive Guide to Phun tshogs gling*, which is typically included within Tāranātha's collected works despite the fact that its authorship is uncertain, refers to these murals as the "Boundless Design" (*bkod pa mtha' yas*):

22 Zongtse 1977: 29-30.

23 Zongtse 1977: 30; Tāranātha, *Rang rnam*, 34. Cf. Jackson 1996, 186 and 194 n 447.

Regarding the "Boundless Design" on the upper floor [Tāranātha] said, "The utterly amazing life story of our Teacher, the completely perfect Buddha, is based on a compilation from the *Abhiniṣkramana Sūtra*, the *Karmaśataka*, the Vinaya, and the *Avadānaśataka*," and then he explained how to make this and that [scene] accord with the story as much as possible.²⁴

Zongtse likewise refers to the second-floor ambulatory space as the "Boundless Design Circuit" (*bkod pa mtha' yas 'khor yug*).²⁵ (See Figure 3, number 5) This description of the visual narrative echoes the Tāranātha's approach to the literary version described above, an approach valorizing early vinaya literature in favor of Mahāyāna narratives more commonly adopted by Tibetan authors.

Tucci concludes his survey of artwork at Phun tshogs gling by noting, "In the atrium is painted Tāranātha's life. The style, a well-balanced blending of Indian and Chinese manners, may be called a good specimen of that art in which the different inspirations and characters of Tibetan taste met and were harmonized."²⁶ Tucci's description seems applicable to the "Boundless Array" paintings as well.

The aesthetic treatment of the Buddha life murals differs from paintings found elsewhere at Phun tshogs gling, especially those in the first-floor assembly hall and the Akaniṣṭha shrine on the third floor. The Boundless Array murals are less refined and exhibit a light, almost translucent, application of color.²⁷ Their narrative vignettes are complex and highly detailed arrangements, bricolages of individuated figures dressed in varicolored clothing. Human, divine, and demonic figures are represented with great liveliness and attention. We find lush depictions of flora including varieties of trees, flowering vegetation, and grasses. Scenes unfold in and around architectural structures ranging from ornate royal palaces to simple ascetic's huts carefully wrought from tree branches and thatch.

24 Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 175-6: *steng khang bkod pa mtha' yas zhes bya ba di na/ 'o skol gyi ston pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi rnam thar shin tu ngo mtshar ba/ mngon par 'byung ba'i mdo dang/ 'dul ba lung dang/ las brgya pa dang/ rtogs brjod brgya pa sogs las bsodus pa'i bkod pa bzhugs/ ces brjod nas lo rgyus dang bstun ci rigs ci rigs 'di dang 'di'o zhes bshad do//*

25 Zongtse 1977, 54: *'dus khang chen mo'i yang steng bkod pa mtha' yas zhes bya ba'i sdebs zhal khor yug gi bris char 'o skol gyi ston pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi rnam thar ngo mtshar mngon par 'byung ba'i mdo dang/ dam chos 'dul ba lung dang/ las brgya pa dang/ rtogs brjod brgya pa sogs las bsodus pa'i bkod pa/*. This line is an unacknowledged quote from Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 175-6.

26 Tucci 1949: 198.

27 Robert Linrothe has identified this technique as *hang tson*, "lightly filled-in color" or "light wash", as opposed to *dzong tson* or "fully filled-in color." Linrothe, personal communication, 4/16/2016. See also Linrothe 2016 and forthcoming, as well as Jackson 1996: 59.

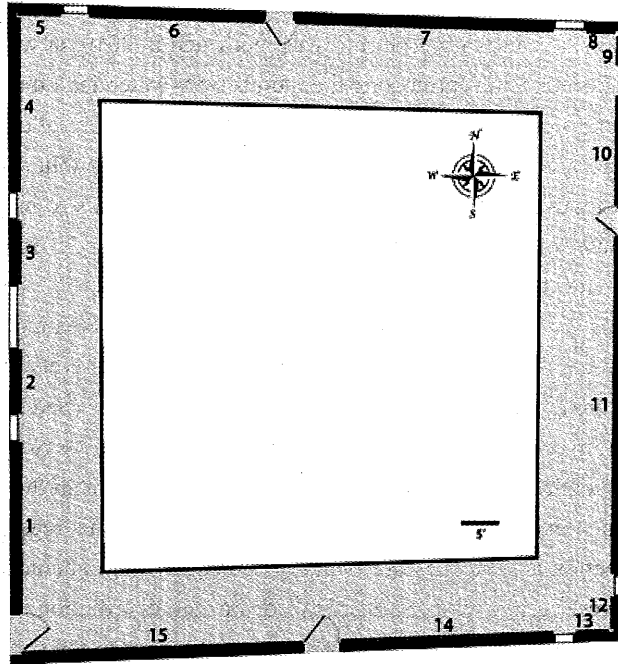


Figure 4. Life of the Buddha Mural Space

Following his visit to Phun tshogs gling in 1919, Kaḥ thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho (1880-1923/25) noted the Buddha life murals and emphasized their extended environmental features: "On the outer surface of the temple are paintings of the hundred acts (*mdzad brgya*) along with the most wonderful landscapes, with an adjoining Trag shad protector chapel."²⁸ Indeed, environmental elements dominate the wall space. Mountains, clouds, rivers, and pastoral ranges, serve to separate narrative episodes. Yet in a context where scenes often proceed in an irregular or nonlinear fashion, these environmental elements also provide visual cohesion across the entire mural scape.

Layout and Plan

The extensive Buddha life murals at Phun tshogs gling are situated in an open-air ambulatory space on the central building's second floor, a courtyard formed by a series of exterior walls. The space is accessed by one of several doors, in the south-west corner (leading to exterior stairs) and the middle of the north wall (leading to the first floor of the assembly hall). The

²⁸ Chos kyi rgya mtsho, Kaḥ thog 2001: 436: *phyi ngos mdzad brgya bris pa yul bkod nyams mtshar ba trag shad mgon khang bcas/*.

mural walls are protected by a partial roof, whose overhang extends out approximately ten feet into the center of the courtyard. The roof was renovated in 2010, at which time a wooden screen was added at its edge, thus protecting the murals from water and other elemental damage while letting in natural light. Although access to the space can be controlled via the two doors, the ambulatory courtyard currently forms part of the monastery's public areas and is used to enter the various second-floor chapels. During Tucci's visit, it seems to have been part of the regular pilgrim's route. In 2011 we similarly witnessed numerous pilgrimage groups walking around the space to view the murals.

The painted narratives cover approximately 277 linear feet, creating some 1450 square feet of painted surface. The mural scape is divided into fifteen discrete "panels" (numbered 1-15), separated by architectural features such as windows and doors (See Figure 4).

The mural narratives closely follow the account in Tāranātha's *The Sun of Faith*. The story begins in the upper southwestern corner of the west wall (Panel 1) with the Buddha's existence in Tuṣita Heaven as Śvetaketu and his designation of Maitreya as his regent. It then continues in a clockwise direction around the four walls of the courtyard, concluding on the southern wall of the south-west corner with the Buddha's death, the distribution of his relics, and the early monastic councils. Although not currently in use, the door in the south-west corner may have once provided access directly to the mural's narrative starting point. The single break in narrative flow appears in Panel 3, located in the middle of the west wall. This segment centers around a large icon of Śākyamuni who appears seated on a lotus cushion and lion throne with his hands in the gesture of touch the earth (*bhūmisparśa mudrā*). He is flanked by his two disciples Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. The left and right registers are filled with forty-two smaller figures that include Jo nang lineage holders, the so-called Six Ornaments and Two Masters, and the guardians of the four directions at the bottom. The emphasis on the figure of Buddha Śākyamuni in Panel 3 echoes the iconographic program of the first-floor inner sanctum (described below), whose space the image's flanking windows overlook. This disruption calls direct attention to the figure of Śākyamuni in the context of the masters associated with the monastery's lineage.

The Buddha's early life—his time in Tuṣita Heaven, his descent, birth, life in the palace, renunciation, defeat of Mārā, enlightenment, and the period immediately following his awakening—are briskly covered in the relatively constrained space of Panels 1 and 2. By far the greatest narrative space in the mural collection is given to stories that occur after the Buddha's enlightenment: these include accounts of his travels, his teaching disciples, and his performing miracles. These depictions cover Panels 4 through 14 and nearly two-thirds of 15. As with Tāranātha's literary work, the Buddha's teaching career constitutes more than 80% of the visual space. The visual narrative concludes in western third of the south wall (Panel 15), with depictions of the Buddha's final days, his death and cremation, the distribution of his relics, and the early Buddhist councils.

Text and Image: Tāranātha's Painting Manual between the Text and the Mural

As we have seen, Tāranātha produced extended narrative accounts of the Buddha's life story in both literary and visual forms. He was also keenly aware of, and deeply concerned with, the relationships between the two. In order to mediate the literary and visual, and effectively translate the former into the latter, Tāranātha composed a scene-by-scene painting manual, presumably to be used by those responsible for executing Phun tshog gling's extended Buddha life murals. The complete title of this work is *A Painting Manual to the Hundred Acts of the Teacher Śākyamuni Written by Rje btsun Kun [dga'] Snying [po] (Ston pa shākya'i dbang po'i mdzad pa brgya pa'i bris yig rje btsun kun snying gis mdzad pa)*. Although the work's colophon is not dated, it informs us the text was composed by Tāranātha at the request of his patron, the prince of Gtsang Phun tshogs nram rgyal, at the Great Palace (Shigatse?).²⁹ The work contains 57 chapters, covering the entire arc of the Buddha's life story as told in *The Sun of Faith*.

To illustrate the relationship between literary narrative, visual narrative, and the instructions within the painting manual, we turn now to one famous episode that takes place during the Buddha's teaching career. The episode, entitled "Establishing Muktālatā in the Truth," appears in Chapter 75 of *The Sun of Faith*.³⁰ This is the story of the Sri Lankan lay woman Muktālatā (Mu tig can), a well-known narrative extant in Vinaya³¹ and *avadāna* literature.³² Muktālatā's tale is a conversion narrative that takes place in two distinct locations: the princess's palace on the island of Singhala and the Buddha's residence in Śrāvastī. It recounts the travels of a group of Buddhist merchants back and forth across the sea as they visit the two central characters. The story is as follows.

Once, a Singhalese princess named Muktālatā heard merchants from the Central Country reciting scripture outside the palace window. A great feeling of peace came over her, so she asked the merchants what kind of music they sang. They replied that the sounds were the words of the Buddha. Muktālatā had never heard the word "Buddha" before, yet it filled her with emotion. As the merchants prepared to return to the Central Country, Muktālatā gave them a letter to offer to the Buddha. Learning of the princesses' interest in him and his teachings, he gave the merchants a portrait of himself to offer to Muktālatā when they returned to Singhala. He further instructed them to display the image in a public space and to explain the painting's

29 Tāranātha, *Bris yig*, 501: *de lta' na ston pa'i rnam thar bris yig 'di ni/ sa la spyod pa'i dbang phyug phun tshogs nram par rgyal ba'i gsung gi bskul nas/ kun dga' snying pos pho brang chen por nges bar brjod pa'o/*.

30 Tāranātha, *Dad pa'i snyin byed*, 335-338. Cf. Taranatha 2003: 298-308.

31 See *Vinayavastu* ('*Dul ba gzhi*'), Sde dge bstan 'gyur D1, vol. Ga, fol. 225a.3-229a.4.

32 See Chapter 7, Dge ba'i dbang po (Kṣemendra), *Byang chub sems dpa'i rtogs pa brjod pa dpag bsam gyi 'khri shing* (Ui 1934, no. 4155): fol. 70b.5-79b.2. Tucci 1949: 449; Kshemendra 2001: 59.

significance to the princess. Returning to the island, the merchants displayed the image upon a throne to great public praise. The princess learned basic Buddhist doctrine from the merchants, in exchange for which she gave them three baskets of pearls to offer to the Buddha, which they did upon their final return journey.

In what follows, we present the story of Muktālatā as depicted in the mural, *The Sun of Faith*, and the *Painting Manual*. As is typical of the mural overall, the visual narrative is spatially embedded within other narratives (figure 5), perhaps the most prominent example of which here is the rainbow bridge that extends over the ocean and over Muktālatā's palace, but that belongs to a different narrative vignette. Here we focus on the scenes pertaining to the Muktālatā narrative, leaving aside the interesting strategies used by the artists to interleave distinct narratives within a single visual space. The mural, the literary narrative, and the painting manual content relate to each other in complex ways. Artists, for example, appear to have arranged events in the Muktālatā story according to geographic rather than temporal order. This means the viewer walking in traditional clockwise fashion first encounters India and then Singhala, even though the literary account begins in Singhala. The valorization of geography over temporality, found elsewhere in Buddhist art, underscores the divergences between literary and visual narrative logic.³³

In order to walk the reader through these relationships, we follow the narrative sequence of *The Sun of Faith*, and incorporate both the mural scenes and the painting manual instructions according to that sequence. However, the *Painting Manual's* sequence of instructions for rendering the narrative in visual form does not adhere strictly to the chronology of events in *The Sun of Faith*. In order to preserve the sequence in *The Sun of Faith*, we have therefore presented the instructions in the *Painting Manual* out of their original order. To compare the two sources, we have assigned numbers to each of the twenty-one distinct instructions in the *Painting Manual* (numbers P1 through P21: "P" for *Painting Manual*). Specifically, out of the twenty-one distinct instructions, numbers P6 through P10 are out of sequence in relationship to *The Sun of Faith*, and are thus placed in the presentation below between P17 and P18 so that they line up with the *The Sun of Faith's* literary narrative.

We have placed these numbers in three places: (1) at the beginning of the instruction as it appears in the *Painting Manual*; (2) its corresponding narrative element within *The Sun of Faith*; and (3) upon the corresponding visual narrative element in the mural scene. Reading the Muktālatā story with this apparatus in mind, it becomes possible to see the creative relationships between the two versions of the narrative, the literary and the visual, relationships that are mediated by the careful instructions of the *Painting Manual*.

³³ Personal communication, Robert Linrothe, 4/16/2016,



Figure 5. Mural location in Panel 11 (Figure 4, no.11)



Figure 6. Overview of Muktālatā Story (viewed right to left)



Figure 7

Sun of Faith

Painting Manual

While the Buddha was living in Śrāvastī, Muktālatā, the daughter of the king of Singhala, rose to greatness. Her intelligence was clear, her mind was honest, and she was skilled in all things.

[P1-2] At this time some merchants from the Central Country had set up camp for the night near the palace of the King. When they awoke at dawn they recited verses from sutras.

[P1] In one area draw a distant island that is bounded by a large shoreline. [P2] In one section of the island draw a mansion, a palace, and a house with leafy vegetation.



Figure 8

Sun of Faith

[P3] Muktālatā heard them through a window, and a feeling of peace came over her. In the morning she asked the King about this, and then [P4] she called to the merchants, "Play that music from the Central Country!" The merchants said, "Lady, this is not music. It is the word of the Buddha!" Never before had Muktālatā heard the name "Buddha," yet no sooner than she heard it now, her hair stood on end with pleasure. What is this word, "Buddha"? she asked.

Painting Manual

[P3] From the palace window a young woman listens. At the edge of the city are many merchants, and at the edge of them several merchants are reciting [verses]. [P4] In the foreground draw the noblewoman and her retinue speaking to the merchants.



Figure 9

Sun of Faith

Painting Manual

[P5] The merchants told her all about him, and she gained a faith without equal. Later, when the merchants had finished their business and were preparing to return to their country, Muktaḷatā gave them a letter to offer to the Buddha. The letter said: "Praised by gods, demigods, and humans,/ Escaped from birth, illness, and fear,/ A renowned leader, famous far and wide,/ Compassionate Sage, please grant a portion of your nectar." The merchants gave the Muktaḷatā's letter to the Buddha, and the Buddha asked the merchants to describe the matter in detail. "When you sail again to Singhala," he Buddha said to the merchants, "you must let me know."

[P5] In another area draw the [woman] entrusting a letter with gifts to the [merchants].

[P6-P10 appear below, between P17 and P18]



Figure 10

Sun of Faith

Painting Manual

[P11] Later, when the merchants had finished trading their merchandise,

[P11] Draw two [scenes of] merchants on their boat in the water; one going here [Buddha] and one going there [Island].



Figure 11

Sun of Faith

Painting Manual

[P12] they went before the Buddha.

[P12] On the shores here, in a country with plains, mountains, forests, and so forth the merchants are giving the letter to the Buddha in a temple.



Figure 12

Sun of Faith

Painting Manual

[P13] Then the Buddha instructed artists to paint his image on cotton canvas. But the artists were not able to capture his features.

[P13] In front of another temple, in front of the Buddha, painters are rendering a likeness of the Buddha on a stretched cotton canvas.



Figure 13

Sun of Faith

Painting Manual

[P14] Then light rays pierced the surface of the canvas in the outline of his body. [P15] The artists then added the color and completed the painting. [P16] As in the tale of King Udrāyana, when they wrote words on the canvas, the words of the noble eightfold path just appeared.

[P14] In another area light rays emit from the Buddha's body, strike the surface of the canvas, and illuminate the shape of his bodily form.

[P15] [The painters] apply the color.

[P16] The scribes write the text upon the top and bottom of the painting.



Figure 14

Sun of Faith

[P17] The Buddha explained the meaning of these words at length to the merchants. Then he said, "Go on to Singhala. Tell the king that this painting is a gift for Muktālātā. When there are large crowds assembled in his land, [he should] display the painting with great ceremony. If Muktālātā questions you on the details of the painting, you should explain them to her."

Painting Manual

[P17] They place the painting in a container, and the Buddha entrusts it to the merchants.



Figure 15

Sun of Faith

[P6] The merchants listened to his instructions and departed. They [traveled to Singhala] and spoke to the King. The king had the country prepared, and arranged countless victory banners raised high.

Painting Manual

[P6] Without interfering with the island surface, draw many merchants revealing the painting of the Buddha, holding it high.



Figure 16



Figure 17

Sun of Faith

[P7-8] Crowds of people gathered to see the image of the painting upon a throne of jewels. With voices raised high, together they proclaimed "Homage to the Buddha!" All were established in faith.

Painting Manual

[7] The woman, the king, and many people make offerings.

[8] In the sky above gods make offerings, and a rain of flowers descends.



Figure 18

Sun of Faith

[P9] Muktālatā considered the twelve links of dependent arising in forward and reverse orders. The merchants recited this three times, though she understood it on the second time. As they recited it the third time Princess Muktālatā became established on the path to enlightenment.

Painting Manual

[P9] In the mansion upright figures clasp their hands in front of a painting. Light emits from the figures.



Figure 19

Sun of Faith

[P10] When the time came for the merchants to return, Muktālātā said to them, "Please pay homage to the Buddha in my name. Ask if he is well, and give these three large bowls of pearls to him. The first is for the Buddha; the second for the Dharma, and the third for the monastic community."

Painting Manual

[P10] In the foreground the woman and her retinue pile many pearls into a container and give it to a merchant.



Figure 20

Sun of Faith

[P18-21] The merchants made this offering as she commanded.

Painting Manual

[P18] In another area the Buddha is in a temple with monks. The merchants offer him the letter and a box.

[P19] The box is opened, and the three shares of pearls are divided.



Figure 21

Sun of Faith

Ānanda asked [the Buddha], "From which rebirth did this happen?" [The Buddha replied,] "Rohikā servant of Mahānāman was born as the King's daughter. This was her good fortune. Now, build a temple with an inner chamber with the portion [of pearls] for the Buddha. Give the dharma's portion to people who are upholding the dharma. Distribute the portion for the sangha evenly among the monastic community."

Painting Manual

[P20] In the background of that country there are oysters holding pearls on the water and the plains, which are filled with precious jewels, and forests filled with elephants.

[P21] The women in the houses must be only noblewomen.

Institution: How Did Tāranātha Reimagine the Buddha in an Institutional Context?

The previous section on Mukṭālatā gives a sense of how Tāranātha's literary and visual narratives worked in harmony to foreground the Buddha's life story at Phun tshogs gling. Tāranātha's *Sun of Faith* and the narrative related murals were impressive achievements. Yet they were not the only buddha-related materials he produced at Phun tshogs gling. Rather, the figure of Śākyamuni Buddha was a persistent and repeated theme in Tāranātha's writing and in his monastery's religious artwork.

Other Literature about the Buddha

Tāranātha wrote no less than ten works of varied length on the Buddha. A thorough analysis of these works in relationship to each other will no doubt reveal both complexity and depth in his portrayal of the founding figure. Even a quick survey shows that he utilized multiple genres of writing to evoke the Buddha. One early work is Tāranātha's *Praise of the Bhagavan Lord of Sages*,³⁴ which he composed in 1600 at the age of 25 in the Ra sa 'phrul snang gi gtsug lag khang. He wrote a manual on iconometry of the Buddha, the *Calculations for Proportions of the Victor's Body, the Source of Well Being*,³⁵ which he taught at Nags rgyal gyi dben gnas, as well as *Instructions for Combining Recollection of the Buddha and Guruyoga*,³⁶ which was written at the request of one Bzang ldan pa Dge slong Kun dga' bde legs. Related to this is the *Brief Explanation of the Sūtra Recollecting the Three Jewels*.³⁷ Finally, he dedicated Chapter Three of his massive, twenty-five chapter anthology of *sādhana*s, the *Sgrub thabs rin chen 'byung gnas*, to various iconic representations of Śākyamuni Buddha.³⁸ More pertinently here, he included in Chapter Sixteen a *sādhana* to the Seven "Hero Buddhas," the Sangs rgyas dpa' bo bdun,³⁹ who are none other than the Seven Tathāgatas who inhabit the inner sanctum at Phun tshogs ling.

The *Rin chen 'byung gnas* was completed in 1608 at Jo nang,⁴⁰ suggesting that Tāranātha had been developing the ritual components of the "Buddha Program" for at least two decades prior to the construction of the monastery. It is tempting to imagine that Tāranātha self-

34 Tāranātha, *Bcom ldan 'das*.

35 Tāranātha, *Rgyal ba'i sku gzugs*.

36 Tāranātha, *Sangs rgyas rjes dran*.

37 Tāranātha, *Dkon mchog gsum*.

38 Tāranātha, *Ye shes rgya mtsho*, 29: 79-126.

39 Tāranātha, *Ye shes rgya mtsho*, 30: 147-150.

40 Tāranātha, *Ye shes rgya mtsho*, 31: 312.

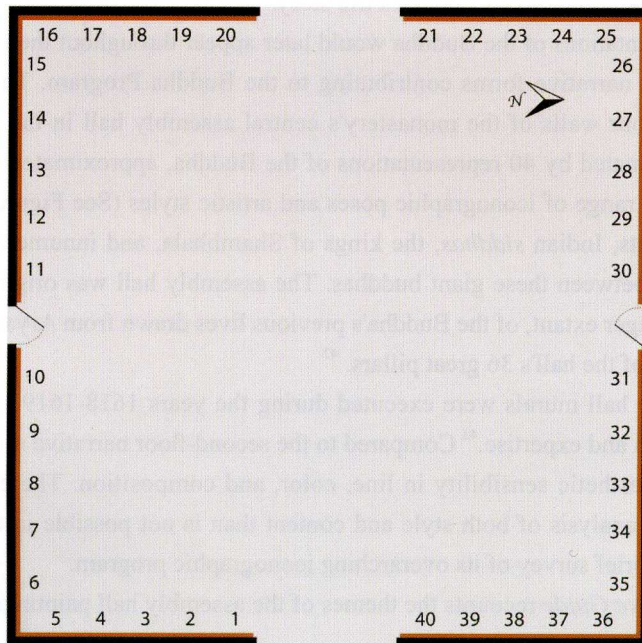


Figure 22: Lower Assembly Hall Murals (not to scale)

consciously developed a "Buddha Program," in the sense we are using this term, throughout the period he created Phun tshogs gling Monastery, though the evidence for this is circumstantial. We have not found explicit reference to such a plan in his writings. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, Tāranātha's writings on the Buddha, spanning at least years 1600 to 1621, make use of narrative, poetry, exegesis, and ritual instruction to engage his audience through aesthetic appreciation, emotional involvement, ritual action, imagination, and intellectual work. When combined with the visual renderings of the Buddha's life that are embedded within an architectural setting that is, in part, designed for ritual activity, the combination suggests a powerful system for bringing the Buddha "to life" within the walls of Phun tshogs gling. This is even more evident if we add to the foregoing the extensive painting and sculpture treating the Buddha elsewhere in the complex.

Buddhas of the Main Assembly Hall

Even before Tāranātha executed the narrative murals described above, he maintained a strong interest in visual depictions of the Buddha's life story. In his *Autobiography*, Tāranātha notes that, at about the time he finished writing the *Painting Manual*, he also commissioned a set of

60 thangka scroll paintings of the Buddha's life story.⁴¹

Visual representations of the Buddha would later appear throughout the monastic complex in both iconic and narrative forms contributing to the Buddha Program. The most extensive of these line the four walls of the monastery's central assembly hall in the *gtsug lag khang*. This space is dominated by 40 representations of the Buddha, approximately 10 feet high and depicted in a wide range of iconographic poses and artistic styles (See Figure 22). Illustrations of the sixteen arhats, Indian *siddhas*, the kings of Shambhala, and innumerable other figures crowd the spaces between these giant buddhas. The assembly hall was originally embellished with scenes, no longer extant, of the Buddha's previous lives drawn from Aryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* and painted on 34 of the hall's 36 great pillars.⁴²

The assembly hall murals were executed during the years 1618-1619 and rendered with great sophistication and expertise.⁴³ Compared to the second-floor narrative murals, they exhibit a highly refined aesthetic sensibility in line, color, and composition. The entire assemblage deserves a careful analysis of both style and content than is not possible in the present essay. What follows is a brief survey of its overarching iconographic program.

The *Descriptive Guide* recounts the themes of the assembly hall paintings in the following way:

The murals in the gallery of the chapel consist of (1) laying out the respective introductory settings [in which the Buddha taught] the so-called "twenty *sūtras* of definitive meaning"; and (2) how the *Kālacakra Root Tantra* and the *Mañjuśrī Root Tantra* were taught. These are enhanced with various examples of the acts of the totally perfect teacher, the Buddha.⁴⁴

Inscriptions for each of the forty buddhas, transcribed in Appendix 1, appear in the lower

41 Tāranātha, *Rang rnam*, smad cha, 89. *Snga sor zhabs drung gong ma da'i dgongs brtad du 'dug pa nged kyis bris yig kyang byas/ yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi rnam thar zhing bkod rgyas pa/ thang ka drug cu skor yod pa yang skabs der grub song/*.

42 Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 174; Zongtse 1977, 52. "On the faces thirty four pillars (which are all but the two great pillars), are arranged [murals] of the acts of the thirty-four rebirths of the Bodhisattva according to the text composed by Master [Ārya]śūra. Additionally, between each *sūtra* scene are depictions of the sixteen arhats and the authoritative dharma kings who went to Shambhala. *Ka ring gnyis ma gtogs pa'i ka ba sum cu so bzhi'i zhu'i ngos la/ byang chub sems dpa'i 'khrungs rabs so bzhi slob dpon dpa' bos mdzad pa'i gzhud dang mthun par bkod/ yang mdo bkod kyi bar bar na bzhugs pa 'di rnams/ 'phags pa'i gnas brtan chen po bcu drug dang/ dpal ldan sham bha lar byon pa'i chos rgyal rigs ldan rnams kyi sku brnyan yin lags/*. The scenes on the pillars no longer remain.

43 Zongtse 1977: 30.

44 Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 174: *nges don mdo nyi shu zhes grags pa'i gleng gzhi so so'i mdo bkod dang/ dus kyi 'khor lo rtsa ba'i rgyud dang/ 'jam dpal rtsa rgyud gsungs tshul dang/ gzhan yang ston pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas nyid kyi mdzad pa'i rnam grangs ni rigs pa dang bcas pa spel nas bkod pa yin pa 'dug*. Cf. Zongtse 1977: 52.

register. Although thirteen inscriptions are illegible or currently inaccessible, the extant 27 generally support the *Descriptive Guide's* account⁴⁵.

The Buddha figure encountered first when circumambulating the hall in the traditional way (Figure 22, number 1) appears to represent the Buddha performing the miracle of taming the mad elephant, perhaps reflecting the origin story of his Jo bo Phyogs las rnam rgyal statue that sits in the inner sanctum. At least three images represent important narrative episodes from the Buddha's life story: teaching dharma to the gods at Jāvlinī (27), teaching his mother in the god realm (37), returning to the world from the god realm (40). The majority of the massive paintings, however, depict the Buddha in the act of teaching the discourses fundamental to the Jonang tradition as transmitted by Tāranātha. These include the texts known as the "twenty sūtras of definitive meaning" (*nges don gyi mdo nyi shu*).

Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1361), revered as the founder of Jo nang's religious tradition, received extensive teachings early in his education at Sa skya Monastery on the so-called five "sūtras of definitive meaning" (*nges don mdo*).⁴⁶ These five texts include:

1. *Pañcaśatikāprajñāpāramitā sūtra*, *Sher phyin lnga brgya pa* (D15)
2. The "Chapter Requested by Maitreya" (*Byang chub sems pa'i bslab pa rab tu dbye ba'i le'u cha gnyis gcig tu byas pa byams zhus su'ang grag pa*), versions contained in *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā sūtra* (D009) and *Aṣṭadāśāsāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā sūtra* (D010)⁴⁷
3. *Ghanavyūha sūtra*, *Rgyan stug po bkod pa'i mdo* (D110)
4. *Praśāntaviniścayaaprāthihāryasamādhi sūtra*, *Rab tu zhi ba rnam par nges pa'i chos 'phrul gyi ting nge 'dzin kyi mdo* (D129)
5. *Ratnamegha sūtra*, *Dkon mchog sprin gyi mdo* (D239)

These would later serve as the foundation for his seminal and controversial philosophical view known as extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*), a system of thought to which Tāranātha became heir.⁴⁸ Dol po pa further expanded this list to form the "ten sūtras of definitive meaning" by adding:

45 Yan Xue (2014) has also examined these murals. It appears she was able to view some inscriptions that were inaccessible or illegible to us. The authors would like to thank Hillary Yao for her assistance Yan Xue's work.

46 Stearns 2010: 12, 316n28. See, for example, Dol po pa's *Zhu don gnam ba* (appended to the *Slob ma la spring ba skur 'debs sgro 'dogs spang ba*), which sets forth his lists of the sūtras of definitive meaning and the *tathāgatagarbha sūtras*.

47 See Brunnholzl 2015, note 20 for an extended discussion of this work.

48 On the tradition of extrinsic emptiness, see for example Hopkins 2006 and 2007, Sheehy 2007, and Stearns 2010.

1. *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama sūtra*, *Gser 'od dam chen gyi mdo* (D556)
2. *Samdhinirmocana sūtra*, *Dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa'i mdo* (D106)
3. *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, *Lang kar gshegs pa'i mdo* (D 107)
4. *Sarvabuddhaviṣayāvatārajñānālokālaṃkāra sūtra*, *Ye shes snang ba rgyan*
(D100)
5. *Buddhāvataṃsaka sūtra*, *Sangs rgyas phal po che* (D44)

Dol po pa also drew upon corpus of canonical materials that laid out a theory of buddha nature (*tathāgarabha*), a collection he categorized the so-called ten "*tathāgatagarbha sūtras*" (*snying po'i mdo*). In Dol po pa's view, these include:⁴⁹

1. *Tathāgaragarbha sūtra*, *De bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo* (D258)
2. *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, *Rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa'i gzungs* (D4000) in Bstan
'gyur
3. *Śrīmālādevī sūtra*, *Lha mo dpal phreng seng ge sgra'i mdo* (D92)
4. *Mahābherī sūtra*, *Rnga bo che chen po'i mdo* (D222)
5. *Aṅgulimālīya sūtra*, *Sor mo'i phreng ba la phan pa'i mdo* (D213)
6. *Śūnyatānāma mahāsūtra*, *Stong nyid chen po'i mdo* (D291)
7. *Tathāgatamahākaruṇānirdeśa sūtra*, *De bshin gshegs pa'i thugs rje chen po*
bstan pa'i mdo (D147)
8. *Tathāgataguṇajñānācintyaviṣayāvatāranirdeśa sūtra*, *De bzhin gshegs pa'i yon*
tan dang ye shes bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i bstan pa'i mdo (D185)
9. *Mahāmegha sūtra*, *Sprin chen po'i mdo* (D232)
10. *Parinirvāṇasūtra and Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*, *Myang 'das chen po* (D119-121).

Taken together, these two groups of ten texts form the "twenty sūtras of definitive meaning" that form the doctrinal basis of Jo nang's religious tradition.⁵⁰ And it is these seminal works that the assembly hall Buddha murals are meant to represent. At present, seven of the twenty texts (noted in bold above) can be identified. The remaining works are likely among those figures with illegible inscriptions.

The assembly hall murals thus form a cohesive set that collectively represent the canonical foundation for Phun tshogs gling's broader monastic institution. Although the texts *per se* do not appear, the murals serve as indexical reminders of their doctrinal content and philosophical

49 Dol po pa, *Zhu don gnang ba*. Cf. Stearns 2010: 316n29.

50 These lists were commented upon and amended by later Tibetan writers, See Brunnholzl 2015: 4-12, for lists according to other traditions.

view, taught by the Buddha of our age. Śākyamuni repeatedly appears in the act giving voice to those discourses that would be marked as *buddhavacana*—"buddha-voiced" or authoritative—for Jo nang's religious transmissions. Systematic integration of this sort between temple art and philosophical view seems to be unusual Tibet, though this requires further comparative research among other extant examples of mural art. What the monumental images of the Buddha in various teaching scenes do do, however, is to connect the Jo nang tradition's persistent concern with establishing an authoritative corpus of the Buddha's key teachings with the artistic effort to integrate the Buddha into the institutional space in multiple ways.

Buddhas of the Inner Sanctum

The Buddha program becomes still more complex as one moves past the murals of the main assembly hall into the smaller central chapel. At the center of Phun tshog gling's ritual space lies the inner sanctum (*dri gtsang khang*), accessed via an entryway on the west side of the assembly hall. The walls of the chamber are covered with impressive murals of tantric deities and a portrait of Tāranātha.⁵¹ But its central images, and thus the main icons of the Phun tshogs gling monastic complex itself, were the seven Tathāgatas (*de bzhin gshegs pa bdun*), representing seven buddhas who span past and present eons. In 1618 a group of twenty Nepali craftsmen arrived to begin working on the series. The first three statues were finished in 1619 followed by the remaining four a year later.⁵² The central image was Śākyamuni, said to have been 23 hand-spans (*mtho*) high. The remaining six were smaller at 12 hand-spans. The seven images were constructed on a grand scale, befitting the principal icons of a large monastic institution. Their production required more than 800 *khal* of copper and some 7,000 *zho* of gold.⁵³ According to the *Descriptive Guide* they were arranged in as follows:

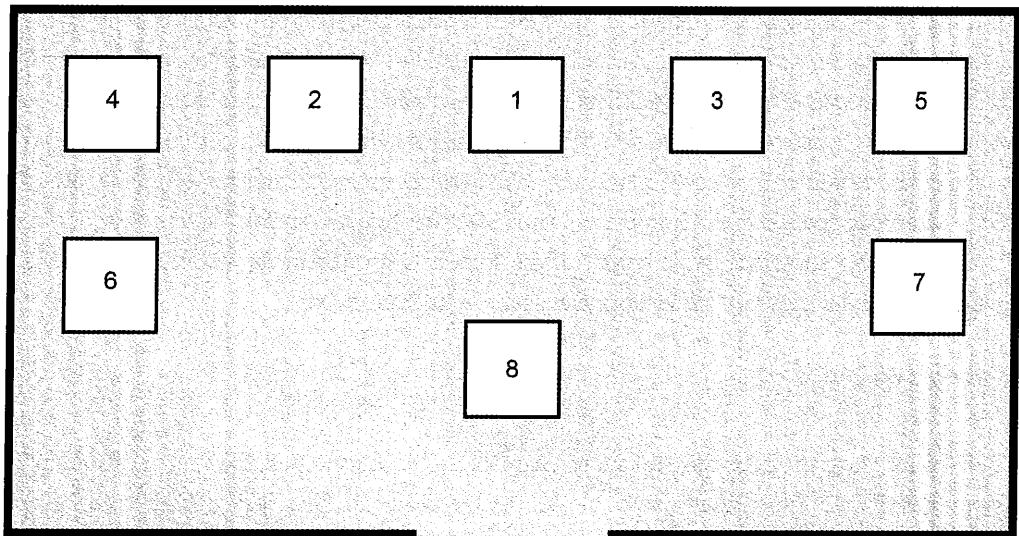
To [Śākyamuni's] right sits Lord Vipāśin. To its left sits Lord Śikhin. To [Vipāśin's] right is Tathāgatha Viśvabhū. To [Śikhin's] left is Krakucchanda. These are facing east. The ones to the right are facing north. To their right facing north is *sambuddha* Kanakamuni; to their left facing south is *sambuddha* Kāśyapa.⁵⁴

51 The *Descriptive Guide* (173-4) lists the following murals: (1) 5-deity Kālacakra; (2) Dark Cakrasaṃvara in the tradition of Zhabs together with the 4 yoginīs; (3) Vajravega; (4) Vajrabhairava; (5) Guhyasamāja-Mañjuvajra; (6) Vajrayoginī; (7) the Great Omniscient One [Dol po pa]; (8) Pañjara Mahākāla yama-yami; and (9) Vaiśravaṇa; as well as an image of Tāranātha as a "practitioner of the six buddha families" (*rgyal ba rigs drug sgrub pa po'i tshul du rje btsun nyid kyi sku 'dra*).

52 TDates are after Zongtse 1977: 30-31. Cf. Tāranātha, *Rang rnam*, 64.

53 Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 170.

54 Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 169-70.



1. Śākyamuni, 2. Vipāśin, 3. Śikhin, 4. Viśvabhū, 5. Krakucchanda, 6. Kanakamuni, 7. Kāśyapa, 8. Jo bo Phyogs las nram rgyal

Figure 23. Inner Sanctum Statues (not to scale)

Tāranātha describes his rationale for this iconography in the following way (figure 23):

In terms of how the Buddha's teachings actually existed in India, the tradition of making statues of the seven tathāgatas and praying to them was very widespread. I have set them up here so that this distinctive tradition may be seen in a widespread way.⁵⁵

Indeed, iconography of the seven *tathāgatas* was widespread in India, both in traditional Buddhist literature and visual culture.

In the center of the room sat the monastery's most precious relic, a Jo bo Śākyamuni statue called Phogs las nram rgyal, "All Victorious" (figure 23, number 8). The image was a gift of Tāranātha's patron Phun tshogs nram rgyal and arrived at Jo nang Phun tshogs gling in 1621. Tāranātha's *Descriptive Guide* sets forth the icon's miraculous origins in India and its subsequent links to the Tibetan imperial court during the time of Srong btsan sgam po. Tāranātha likewise compares the image with two other great statues of Tibet's imperial period: Ra mo che's Jo bo Mi bskyod rdo rje and the Lha sa 'Phrul snang Gtsug lag khang's Maitreya

⁵⁵ Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 169.

Dharmacakra (Byams pa chos kyi 'khor lo). A more detailed account of the Jo bo Phyogs las nram rgyal will be provided elsewhere.⁵⁶ It is sufficient here to note this Śākyamuni image was understood as conferring upon Phun tshogs gling a religious legitimacy on par with those of the great institutions of Lha sa.

Buddhas of the Akaniṣṭha Chapel

On the third story of Phun tshogs gling, seated above its Inner Sanctuary, lies the Akaniṣṭha Chapel (*'og min lha khang*) (See Figure 3, number 2). The space is dedicated to a representation of the highest level of the Form Realm (*gzugs kham*s) according to traditional Buddhist cosmology. Its central icon was a lifesize image of Amitāyus (*tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa*). The statue was consecrated in 1626, during a period of great drought, and following the ritual it is said to have rained for many days. For this reason, the image was given the name "Amitayus Who Brings the Nectar of Rain" (*tshe dpag med bdud rtsi char 'bebs ma*)⁵⁷ The walls of the chamber are covered with murals that include a variety of iconographic representations, in addition to a large portrait of Dol po pa. As the *Descriptive Guide* informs us, the wall murals also include a representation of the Buddha's life: "Along the room's upper register is an arrangement of the Buddha's life story, depicted in twelve acts."⁵⁸ Thus at the uppermost point in the monastery's architecture, in the chapel that is itself rendered as the Buddhist pure realm called "Below None," we find the Buddha's life set forth in its entirety.

Conclusion

The Buddha Program

As described above, we suggest that Tāranātha championed Śākyamuni Buddha as a major motif at Phun tshogs gling in order to form a powerful organizing principle that would bind distinct spaces, practices, imagery, and intellectual traditions within a relatively unified whole. We have referred to this work as a "Buddha Program." The Buddha serves as the focus for a wide range of narrative, poetic, and ritual texts within his collected works, including *The Sun of Faith* and the *Painting Manual*. He is found on all three floors of the central building: the assembly hall, the Boundless Array circuit, and the Akaniṣṭha chapel. We likewise find

⁵⁶ See Quintman forthcoming.

⁵⁷ Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 177-8; Zongtse 42.

⁵⁸ Tāranātha, *Gnas bshad*, 177.

repeated convergences between texts and images: The Boundless Array murals illustrate story of *The Sun of Faith* in vivid detail, while the *Painting Manual* serves to help translate the literary into a visual field. The *sādhana* of the Seven Hero Buddhas brings into a ritual sphere the monastery's primary religious iconography of the Seven Tathāgatas. The massive Buddha images of the central assembly hall evokes the canonical scriptures that serve as a foundation for Phun tshogs gling's religious transmissions. The Buddha's life becomes a repeated theme in which the Buddha is represented in multiple ways: teaching the fundamental texts of the monastery's religious tradition; travelling in India within an extended narrative replete with hundreds of characters; existing as but one of many buddhas of past and present cosmic eons; anchoring the institution as a powerful and miraculous statue connected to the formation of the Tibetan empire; and living his life once again near (in visual terms, at least) the realm that forms the summit of material existence in Buddhist cosmology.

References

Tibetan and Chinese Language Sources

Dge ba'i dbang po (Kṣemendra)

Byang chub sems dpa'i rtogs pa brjod pa dpag bsam gyi 'khri shing. Sde dge Bstan 'gyur; Mdo 'grel (Ke), fols. 1-366. Ui 1934, no. 4155.

Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa (1920-1975)

Dpal ldan jo nang pa'i chos 'byung rgyal ba'i chos tshul gsal byed zla ba'i sgron me. Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1992.

Chos kyi rgya mtsho, Kaḥ thog Si tu (1880–1923/1925)

Si tu pa chos kyi rgya mtsho'i gangs ljongs dbus gtsang gnas bskor lam yig nor bu zla shel gyi se mo do. Sichuan: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2001.

Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1361)

Zhu don gngang ba. In *Gsung 'bum*. 10 vols. New Delhi: Shedrup Books, 1992. Vol. 5 [Series vol. 7]: 343-46.

Sna nam btsun pa Bskal bzang chos kyi rgya mtsho (late 15th century)

Mchog gi gter. Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyi rnam par thar pa rmad du byung ba mdzad pa 'khrul med par brjod pa bde bar gshegs pa'i spyod pa mchog gi gter. Zi ling [Xining]: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1994.

Tāranātha (1575-1634)

— *Dkon mchog gsum. Dkon mchog gsum rjes su dran pa'i mdo don cung zad bshad pa.* Pe cin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008: 24 [*Mes po'i shul*

bzhag 76], 286-310.

- Rgyal ba'i sku gzugs. Rgyal ba'i sku gzugs kyi cha tshad bstan pa bde skyid 'byung gnas*. Pe cin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008: 26 [*Mes po'i shul bzhag* 78], 499-532.
- Bcom ldan 'das. Bcom ldan 'das thub pa'i dbang po la bstod pa*. Pe cin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008: 32 [*Mes po'i shul bzhag* 74], 1-7.
- Dad pa'i nyin byed. Bcom ldan 'das thub pa'i dbang po'i mdzad pa mdo tsam brjod pa mthong bas don ldan rab tu dga' ba dang bcas pas dad pa'i nyin byed phyogs brgyar 'char ba*. [See Taranatha 2003 for a complete translation into French].

Editions

- Pe cin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008: 32 [*Mes po'i shul bzhag* 74], 128-477.
 - New Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 1971: 1-384 [192 folios]. Blockprint: no place, no date.
 - Leh: C.Namgyal & Tsewang Taru, 1982-1987. Gsung 'bum 12: 13-344 [166 folios]. Blockprint: Rtag brtan phun tshogs gling.
 - 'Dzam thang dgon: [s.n.], 199-. Gsung 'bum 16: 15 - 341 [164 folios]. Blockpring: 'Dzam thang dgon.
 - Bir, H.P.: Zogyam and Pema Lodoe, 1977: 105-488 [192 folios]. Dbu can from the library of Tokden Rinpoche of Ladakh.
 - Gnas bshad. Dga' ldan phun tshogs gling gi gnas bshad*. Pe cin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008: 34 [*Mes po'i shul bzhag* 76], 128-477.
 - Rang rnam. Rgyal khams pa tā ra nā thas bdag nyis kyi rnam thar nges par brjod pa'i deb gter shin tu zhib mo ma bcos lhug pa'i rtogs brjod*. Pe cin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008: 1-2 [*Mes po'i shul bzhag* 43-44].
 - Ye shes rgya mtsho. Ye shes rgya mtsho'i sgrub thabs rin chen 'byung gnas*. Pe cin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008: 29-31 [*Mes po'i shul bzhag* 71-73], 128-477. See also New Delhi: Chophel Legdan, 1974: 1, which includes a useful table of contents.
 - Sangs rgyas rjes dran. Sangs rgyas rjes dran dang bla ma'i rnal 'byor gyi man ngag zung du 'jug pa*. Pe cin [Beijing]: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008: 2 [*Mes po'i shul bzhag* 44], 291-296.
- Yan Xue 阎雪 . 2014. "Xizang ganden pengcuolin si dajingtang bihua tiji shidu yu yanjia 西藏甘丹彭措林寺大经堂壁画题记识读与研究 [A Study on the Murals of Gtsug lag khang in Dga' ldan Phun tshogs gling]." *Zhongguo zangxue* 中国藏学 (China Tibetology 3:160-169
- Zongtse, Champa Thubten. 1977. *History of the Dga'-ldan-phun-tshogs-glin Monastery*. Göttingen: Champa T. Zongtse.

European Language Sources

- Das, Sarat Chandra. 1902. *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*. London: J. Murray.
- Fraser, Sarah Elizabeth. 2004. *Performing the Visual: the Practice of Buddhist Wall Painting in China and Central Asia, 618-960*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Goepper, Roger, Barbara Lutterbeck, and Jaroslav Poncar. 1984. *Alchi: Buddhas, Goddesses, Mandalas : Murals in a monastery of the Western Himalaya*. Köln: DuMont.
- Hedin, Sven Anders. 1910. *Trans-Himalaya: Discoveries and Adventures in Tibet*. 3 vols. London: Macmillan.
- Henss, Michael. 2014. *Cultural Monuments of Tibet*. München: Prestel Verlag.
- Hopkins, Jeffrey. 2006. *Mountain Doctrine: Tibet's Fundamental Treatise on Other-Emptiness and the Buddha-Matrix*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.
- 2007. *The Essence of Other-Emptiness*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.
- Jackson, David. 1996. *A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Tibetan Painters and Their Traditions*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Klimburg-Salter, Deborah E., and Christian Luczanits. 1998. *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom: Early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalaya*. New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson.
- Kshemendra. 2001. *La Liane Magique: Les Hauts Faits du Bodhisattva*. Padmakara Translation Committee, Translators. Saint-Léon-sur-Vézère: Éditions Padmakara.
- Linrothe, Robert. Forthcoming. "'Utterly False, Utterly Undeniable': The Akaniṣṭha Shrine Murals of Takden Phuntsokling Monastery."
- 2016. "Siddha and Sociality: A Seventeenth-Century Lay Illustrated Buddhist Manuscript in Kumik Village, Zangskar (A Preliminary Report)," in *Visible Heritage: Essays on the Art and Architecture of Greater Ladakh*, edited by Rob Linrothe and Heinrich Pöll, 169–202. New Delhi: Studio Orientalia.
- Ning, Qiang. 2004. *Art, religion, and politics in medieval China : the Dunhuang cave of the Zhai Family*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Quintman, Andrew. Forthcoming. *Putting the Buddha to Work: Śākyamuni in the Service of Tibetan Monastic Identity*.
- Rawling, C. G. 1905. *The Great Plateau: Being An Account of Exploration in Central Tibet, 1903, and of the Gartok Expedition, 1904-1905*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Ricca, Franco, and Erberto F. Lo Bue. 1993. *The great stupa of Gyantse: a complete Tibetan pantheon of the Fifteenth Century*. London: Serindia.
- Schlingloff, Dieter. 2000. *Ajantā: Handbuch der Malereien = Handbook of the Paintings*.

- Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. Reprint edition, *Ajantā: Handbook of the Paintings*, 3 vols. New Delhi: IGNCA, 2013.
- Sheehy, Michael. 2007. "The Gzhan stong Chen mo: A Study of Emptiness According to the Modern Tibetan Buddhist Jo nang Scholar 'Dzam thang Mkhan po Ngag dbang Blo gros grags pa (1920–1975)." PhD diss., California Institute of Integral Studies.
- Stearns, Cyrus. 2010. *The Buddha from Dolpo: a study of the life and thought of the Tibetan Master Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltsen*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications. Revised and Enlarged Edition.
- Taranatha. 2003. *Le Soleil de la Confiance: La Vie du Bouddha*. Padmakara Translation Committee, Translators. Saint-Léon-sur-Vézère: Éditions Padmakara. [Complete Translation into French of Tāranātha, *Dad pa'i nyin byed*].
- Tenzin Chögyel. 2015. *The Life of the Buddha*. Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Translator. New York: Penguin Classics.
- Tucci, Giuseppe. 1949. *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*. Rome: La Libreria Della Stato. Reprint, Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 1980.
- Ui, Hakuji, et. al. 1934. *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons*. Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934. no. 1956
- Vitali, Roberto. 1990. *Early Temples of Central Tibet*. London: Serindia Publications.
- Whitfield, Roderick, Susan Whitfield, and Neville Agnew. 2000. *Cave temples of Mogao: art and history on the silk road, Conservation and cultural heritage*. Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Getty Museum.
- Whitfield, Roderick. 1990. *Caves of the thousand Buddhas: Chinese art from the Silk Route*. New York: George Braziller.

Appendix 1: Assembly Hall Mural Inscriptions

xxx = unclear or abraded inscription

No.	Inscription	Canonical Text	In list of 20 definitive sutras?
1	xxx btul ba'i bkod pa bzhugs.ho mañ ga lam	Subduing [the elephant?]	narrative?
2	bden tshags pa'i bkod pa bzhugs.ho	?	
3	om swa sti cho 'phrul chen po'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho	Prātihārya-nirdeśa sūtra (D066)	?
4	om swa sti 'phags pa sprin chen po'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho mañ ga lam	Mahāmegha sūtra (D233)	yes

5	om swa sti yab sras mjal ba'i mdo bzhugs.ho mañ ga lam	Ārya-pitāputrasamāgamana- nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra (D060)	?
6	om swa sti 'phags pa blo gros mi zad bstan pa'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho	Āryākṣayamatīnirdeśa-nāma- mahāyāna-sūtra (D175)	?
7	'phags pa gser 'od dam pa'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho	Ārya-suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra (D556)	yes
8	xxx 'khor bcas spyān drangs pa'i bkod pa bzhugs.ho	?	narrative?
9	illegible		
10	illegible		
11	illegible		
12	om swa sti mdo sde zab mo dgongs pa 'grel ba'i bkod pa	Samdhinirmocana sūtra (D106)	yes
13	om swa sti bcom ldan dus kyi 'khor lo'i rtsa ba'i rgyud gsung pa'i bkod pa bzhugs.ho	Kālacakra Root Tantra	no
14	om swa sti 'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho/ chos zab mo kun la khyab cing snying po'i don rtogs par gyur cig/ mañ ga lam	Ārya-tathāgatagarbha-nāma- mahāyāna-sūtra (D258)	yes
15	no inscription		
16	illegible		
17	om swa sti 'phags pa lang kar bshegs pa'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho/ / mañ ga lam	Ārya-laṅkāvatāra-mahāyāna-sūtra (D107)	yes
18	om swa sti bcom ldan 'das ston pa nyid 'dus pa'i xxx mngon par xxx bkod pa bzhugs.ho mañ ga lam	?	?
19	om swa sti 'phags pa xxx xxx	?	?
20	illegible		
21	illegible		
22	illegible		
23	illegible		
24	illegible		
25	inaccessible		
26	illegible		

27	om swa sti 'bar ba'i phug tu lha rnams la chos gsungs pa'i bkod pa bzhugs.ho/ mañ ga lam		narrative: teaching dharma to the gods at Jāvlinī
28	om swa sti rgyal chen bzhi bden pa la bkod pa bzhugs.so mañ ga lam	?	Narrative?
29	illegible		
30	om swa sti ston xxx xxx spre'u'i xxx	?	?
31	xxx xxx mchog tu bkod pa bzhugs. ho/ mañ ga lam	?	?
32	om swa sti yon tan dang ye shes bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho/ mañ ga lam	Ārya-tathāgataguṇajñānācint yaviṣayāvatāranirdeśa-nāma- mahāyāna-sūtra (D185)	yes
33	om swa sti gzungs kyi dbang phyug rgyal po'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho/ mañ ga lam		
34	rma bya chen mo'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho (Inscription has been newly written)	Mahāmayūrīvidyārājñī (D559)	?
35	om swa sti 'jam dpal rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi mdo bkod bzhugs.ho/	Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūla-tantra (D543)	no
36	om swa sti mdo sde myang 'das chen po'i mdo bkod bzhugs.ho shu bham/	Ārya-mahāparinirvāṇa-nāma- mahāyāna-sūtra (D120)	?
37	om swa sti lha'i gnas su yum la chos gsungs pa'i bkod pa bzhugs.ho mañ ga lam		narrative: Buddha teaching mother in heaven
38	om swa sti 'jam dpal rnam par 'phrul ba'i bkod pa bzhugs.ho mañ ga lam	Mañjuśrīvikurvāṇaparivarta sūtra (D097)	?
39	om swa sti phags pa dkon mchog sprin gyi mdo bkod bzhugs.ho mañ ga lam	Ārya-ratnamegha-nāma- mahāyāna-sūtra (D231)	yes
40	om swa sti lha'i gnas nas slar yang 'jam bu'i gling du byon xxx xxx		narrative: Buddha returns from heaven

◆ Author: Andrew Quintman, Yale University; Kurtis R. Schaeffer, University of Virginia.