

King Srong btsan sGam po Revisited: The royal statues in the Potala Palace and in the Jokhang at Lhasa. Problems of historical and stylistic evidence

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Hardly any other Tibetan sculptural images are more popularly known, however less safely identified with regard to their historical authenticity and stylistic determination than the painted clay statues of King *Srong btsan Sgam po* (phonetic: Songtsen Gampo, 605?–649, r.629–649) (1) and of his retinue in the Potala Palace and in the Jokhang temple at Lhasa. Problems of physical condition such as overpaintings and restorations (Potala) or the replacement by modern replicas after complete destruction (Jokhang) have considerably contributed to the difficult problem of their individual chronology. While no serious attempt has been made so far to define the historical identity of the royal statues in the Jokhang more precisely (2), the usual dating of the Potala images in modern Chinese picture albums and scholarly publications as well as in some Western academic essays refer to *Srong btsan sGam po*'s own period or generally to the *sPu rgyal*



dynasty of the 7th through 9th centuries (3). Except this popular chronology, which for many years never seemed to have been questioned, only some brief suggestions have been made to attribute the Potala kings and queens possibly to the 14th century, connecting them without further specific arguments and references with the general cultural and artistic activities under *Ta'i si t'u Byang chub rGyal mtshan*, the founder of the *Phag mo gru* dynasty (1302–1364) and the real ruler of *dBus gTsang*, “who encouraged Tibetan nationalism and fostered a new appreciation of the monarchic period during the mid-14th century.”(4)

It is the purpose of this paper to establish a more precise historical and stylistic profile for these principal statues of King *Srong btsan sGam po* and his entourage with the help of religio-historical and iconographic considerations, a few text sources, some relevant data of architectural history, and of specific stylistic criteria in comparison with several related clay and metal images, which became known only during the last years.

The origin of the idea to represent the Tibetan king as an incarnation of a Bodhisattva or, as it is written in the Blue Annals (5), of “Avalokiteshvara in the form of a king”, has been widely discussed in modern Tibetan studies. Was the concept of a “Bodhisattva King” already developed during the period between the 7th and 9th century or, as some scholars believe (6), about two hundred years later at the time of the Second Diffusion of the Doctrine (*phyi dar*)? Any answer to this question is associated with the origin of the Avalokiteshvara cult in Tibet, and with regard to the early *sPu rgyal* dynasty on *Srong btsan*



sGam po's actual commitment to Buddhism. A discussion of these topics leads us necessarily to the basic problem of how authentic are with regard to the 7th through 9th century the varioust extsources , which were either compiled only during the *phyi dar* period or, if composed earlier, have come to usat least partiallyas redactional versions of the 11th and 12th centuries? And above all the kings of Tibet were not seen as historical beings, but as manifestations of the divine. And consequently we have to read hagiographical accounts instead of biographies, with oftenly much more fiction than facts.

There is sufficient textual and even some archaeological evidence for the specific veneration of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in Tibet already in the 8th and 9th century, before it became a popular cult at the time of Atisha (982–1054) .

Canonical Tibetan texts for this cult were available by 812 and 824 (7) , and it would be difficult to believe that the essential role with which Avalokiteshvara is credited in the Samye “Chronicle of the sBa’Clan” , *sBa bzhed*, of (in its core part) the late 8th century, can be explained only by the later text version of the post-dynastic centuries. Most probably however the predominant veneration of this Bodhisattva, with whom Tibet had been more and more associated, was not a general “cult” at the time of the *sPu rgyal* dynasty, but limited to the royal court and its wider entourage.

The association of the legendary Mount Potalaka, the sacred abode and paradise of Avalokiteshvara, with the present site of the Potala Palace is certainly not a later creation of the 11th or 12th century, however goes back doubtlessly to the monarchic period. (8)



And according to various texts there is no reason to question the veneration of Avalokiteshvara as the Lord of the *dMar po ri* hill in Lhasa already at the time of the Religious Kings (*chos rgyal*), to which with much probability the principal image of the Potala Palace, the still existing wooden statue of Arya (*Phags pa*) Avalokiteshvara in the *Phags pa Lha Khang* whose emanation was *Srong btsan Gam po* can be attributed by its early Nepalese style, no matter whether the present sculpture is the original one or a later replica.(9)

This next to the *Jo bo Shakyamuni* in the Jokhang most sacred Buddhist image in Lhasa and its vast legendary and historical tradition alone may confirm the central role of this Bodhisattva in early Tibet. Other examples of a royal Avalokiteshvara cult in the dynastic period were, as recorded in the *sBa' bzhed* chronicle (whose core part dates to around 800), the central statue of Avalokiteshvara Khasarpani in the *Arya pa lo gLing* at Samye, datable to ca. 779, and the original wall-paintings in the same sanctuary illustrating the *Karandavyuha-sutra*, "the mythological cult-text of Avalokita par excellence" (10). And according to the same almost contemporary text source even an effigy (*skudra*) of King *Srong btsan sGam po* made from sandalwood and covered with silver was installed here.(11) So far the murals and banners at Dunhuang of the Tibetan period (781–848) can be regarded as reflections of the early art traditions in Central Tibet they may give further evidence of this Bodhisattva's special veneration.

The idea of the "Bodhisattva King", literally documented for King *Khri srong lDe btsan* (phonetic: Trisong Detsen) in some mid-



9th century texts and as a title recorded in Khotanese texts of the same period(12), is closely connected with the pre-Buddhist concept of divine kingship and with the heavenly origin of the Tibetan kings. In a late 8th century text from Dunhuang *Srong btsan sGam po* is described as “the son of the gods (*lha sras*) , the king divinely manifested”. (13) A similar inscription on a *rdo ring* at *Phyong rgyas* township (near the royal tombs) of ca.797 praises King *Khri srong lDe btsan* as “the supernaturally wise divinity”(H.Richardson) or “the divinely manifested grand Bodhisattva”(R.A.Stein). (14) Another inscription on the eastern stone pillar /*rdo ring*) at *Zwa’l Lha khang*, about 80 km northeast of Lhasa and datable to 812 mentions “le roi saint et divin”(15), “the supernaturally wise divinity (*phrul gyi lha*), the ruler (*btsan po*) *Khri lde Srong btsan*” (r.ca. 798–815). And similarly honoured is King *Khri srong lDe btsan* (742–797) on the *Phyong rgyas rdo ring*: “All men gave him the name *phrul gyi lha Byang chub chen po*” , “the Great Enlightened Supernaturally Wise Divinity”. (16) The same epithet can be found for King *Srong btsan sGam po* on the *sKar chung rdo ring* at *Ra ma sgang* village near Lhasa(17), and for King *Khri gtsug lDe btsan* (r.815–838) on the famous Sino-Tibetan Treaty Pillar in front of the Lhasa *gTsug lag khang* from 822. (18)

Thus the Tibetan ruler has been regarded already during his lifetime as a “God Incarnate”(*phrul gyi lha*)(19), a “son of the gods” (*lha sras*) and as their “divinely manifestation”. This indigenous concept of the king’s divine nature was the appropriate base for epithets like “great religious King”(chos rgyal chen po) or dharma raja such as for King *Khri srong lDe btsan* (r.755–ca.797) in the *Phyong rgyas rdo*



ring inscriptionn of ca.797 (20) , when under the increasing influence of Buddhism the “son of the(pre-Buddhist)gods”was about to become a “descendant of the Bodhisattva, the god who reigns over man”.(21)And one may recall once more the precious statue of Arya Avalokiteshvara in the Potala Palace, known as *Phags pa sPyan ras gzigs*, in which that Bodhisattva had manifested himself in human form already during Tibet’s earliest history, like a thousand years later at the same place, in the person of the Fifth Dalai Lama.

It is within this context that some other important archaeological finds of early Tibetan provenance have to be interpreted, which may contribute to the idea and praxis of sacred kingship and of a “Bodhisattva ruler” in the dynastic period. A so far unpublished mandala painted on silk in the “Tibetan Dunhuang style” of the 8th or 9th century said to have been found recently in the Doulan area of northeastern Tibet (Qinghai Province) depicts in the center a crowned Vajra-holding deity dressed in a Tibetan royal robe, “blessing” a monk kneeling in front of him, a scene which in fact appears to be a kind a impowerment and initiation ceremony (Sanskrit: *abhiseka*, Tibetan: *dbang skur orrab gnas*). (Figure 1) A similar central composition is illustrated by a ca. 9th century silken Avalokiteshvara mandala in the Tibetan style from Dunhuang now preserved in the British Museum, London. (22)

It has been pointed out that the Chinese title for King *Srong btsan sGam po*, *Bao wang*, “King of Jewels” or “Precious King”, with



which the Tang emperor *Gao Zong* at the beginning of his reign (r.649–683) honoured the Tibetan ruler, might have contributed to the posthumous recognition of the Tibetan sovereign as an embodiment of Avalokiteshvara, the emanation of Amitabha, with whom the “King of the West” another “relative” of *Bao wang* was associated. (23)

This documents at least from a different eye-view the identification of Srong btsan sGam po with Avalokiteshvara in a general

sense already in the course of the earlier monarchic period, though not necessarily during the proper lifetime of this king.

The divine king of pre-Buddhist Tibet had gradually merged in the foreign Indian notion of a god-incarnate to become on earthly manifestation of the new principal protector deity of early Buddhist Tibet, Avalokiteshvara, with whom the Land of Snows has been identified since then. (24)

The concept of the Tibetan king of being an emanation of a

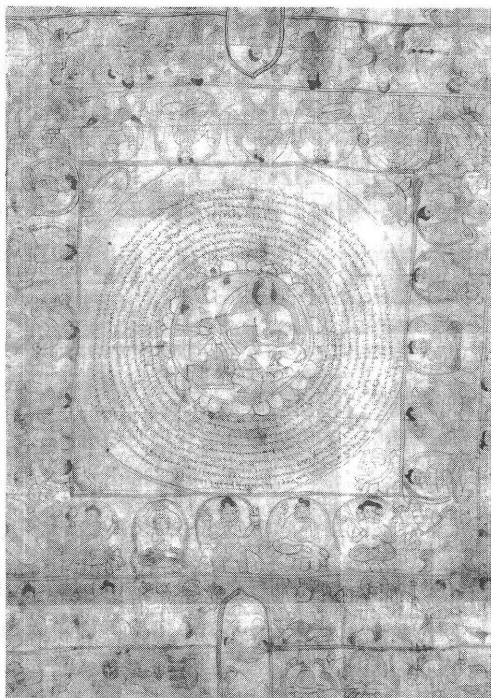


figure 1 A vajra-holding crowned deity (?) blessing the monk dGe slong bLo gros.



Bodhisattva is closely connected with the idea to regard him as a descendant of a Bodhisattva (*byang chub sems dpa'I gdung brgyud*). *Srong btsan sGam po's* bodhisattvahood is clearly stated in the *sBa'-bzhed* chronicle of Samye monastery, the "Testimony of the *dBa* [clan]", one of the earliest and most important literary sources of Tibet, dating back to around 800, but in its extant version reedited over 300 years later. In so far it remains uncertain whether a passage of this text records a contemporary reality of the early period or refers to a retrospective interpretation of the *phyi darera*: "All the people of Li [khotan] considered *bTsan po Khri srong btsan* (*Srong btsan sGam po*) to be [an emanation of] *Arya pa lo* ... The king of Tibet is "*Phags pa sPyan ras gzigs*".(25) This statement appears to be illustrated in a general context by a Tibetan painted scroll of the ca. 11th century in a New York private collection depicting in the central axis *Srong btsan sGam po* of equal size with an Eleven-headed *sPyan ras gzigs* and a seated Avalokiteshvara. (Figure 2, 3) (26)



figure 2 King Srong btsan sGam po and his two wives Khri btsun and Wen cheng Kong jo.



As a most important source for an early Tibetan concept of a “Bodhisattva-King” has been regarded the letter written by the famous Indian tantric master Buddhaguhya to King *Khri srong lDe btsan* (r.755–797) addressing him as “an emanation of the family” (*rigs kyi sprul ba*) in which he praised “*Srong btsan sGam po*, the embodiment of Avalokiteshvara” (E. Dargyay), “the dynamic body of Avalokiteshvara... The line of the descendants of this Bodhisattva has not been cut” (Karmay). (27)

While Samten Karmay has been still reluctant to accept the early historical antiquity of Buddhaguhya’s letter, will say an 8th century date, and assumes that “it had certainly gone through different recensions” (however admits in general that “the idea of some of the Tibetan kings as emanation of Bodhisattva probably goes back well beyond the eleventh century A.D.”) , and Rolf A.Stein considers an origin between ca. 850 and 1000, it represents for Eva Dargyay an “indisputable testimony that



figure 3 King Srong btsan sGam po and his two wives Khri btsan (Bhrikuti) and Wen cheng Kong jo.



Srong btsan sGam po was considered an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara already during the era of the early monarchy” and “that by the second half of the 8th century the idea of King *Srong btsan sGam po* as Avalokiteshvara existed”. According to Dargyay the text would “at least suggest that Buddhaghuya saw historical facts as the ephemeral side of an essentially sacred reality” and “interpreted an historical situation”. (28)

Although an effigy (*skudra*) of *Srong btsan sGam po* made from sandalwood and covered with silver is said to have erected in Samye *Arya pa lo gLing* around 779 (29), and a statue “from mixed mud with silk and paper”, and another “full-sized golden image” of the king were installed in his tomb at *Phyong rgyas* (30), the representation of this first historical ruler in Tibetan art and specifically in its context with the Avalokiteshvara cult does not, with the exception of some rock carvings in Eastern Tibet (Yushu, southern Qinghai Province) (Figure 4), seem to have become en vogue before the later *phyi dar* era when texts like the *Mani bKa' bum*, “the Legend of *Srong btsan sGam po*-Avalokiteshvara” (late 12th century), presented an extensive compilation of hagiographies focusing upon *Srong btsan sGam po* as a reincarnation of the “Great Compassionate Avalokiteshvara”. (31) The idea of the “Bodhisattva-king” did exist, but not the image. Not yet however with regard to individual statues and paintings depicting the Tibetan king as the principal figure, produced for a growing common “*Srong btsan sGam po* cult” as it became evident only after ca. 1300.



No serious attempt has ever been made to establish a historical date and determination for the royal statues in the Lhasa Jokhang beyond the wellknown popular attribution to the foundation period of this temple. (32) The destruction of most of these images during the “Cultural Revolution”



figure 4 King Srong btsan sGam po (?)

in 1966 and 1967 and their replacement by modern replicas as well as considerable retouches and repaintings did not encourage further investigation. At least three different groups of King *Srong btsan sGam po* with his two wives and (partly) his ministers did exist before 1966:

1. Ground-floor, South; outside the chapels: “*Chos-rgyal yab yum*” (the king with his two wives). Destroyed in 1966 and replaced in the 1980s by new clay statues of partly different iconography (king now in the characteristic *lalitasana* posture of an Avalokiteshvara instead of the former Wheel of Law (*cakra*), which characterizes the king as a *cakravartin*, a Universal Ruler, a *dharma raja* (33); different headdress). Ca.mid.-14th century (original statues). (Figure 5,6) (34)



2. Ground-floor, West;
Chos rgyal Thon mi Lha
Khang. The clay statues of
 the king with both wives and
 his two ministers *Thon mi*
Sambho ta and *mGar sTong*
btsan, the two prehistoric
 kings *Lha Tho tho ri* and
gNya' khri btsan po have
 according to local informants
 survived the "Cultural Revo-
 lution", but were reworked
 and restored in 1972–
 1975. Ca. early 15th
 century. (Figure 7–
 12) (35)



figure 5 King Srong btsan sGam po and his two
 wives Khri btsun (left) and Wen cheng Kong jo.

3. Upper. floor
 (*bar khang*), West;
Chos rgyal Srong
btsan Lha khang.

The three images of
 the king *chos-rgyal*

nga 'dra ma, The dharma king according to his likeness and his wives
 were destroyed in 1966 and replaced by new gilt copper statues in 1972–
 1975. Ca. mid-17th century (?) (original statues). (Figure 13) (36)



figure 6 King Srong sGam po and his two wives
 Khri btsun (left) and Wen cheng Kong jo.

Despite the difficulties to attribute the Jokhang statues to a

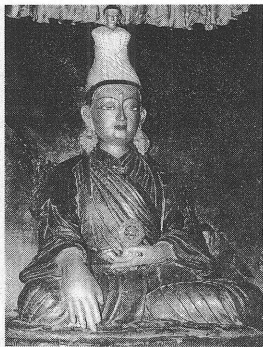


figure 7 King Srong btsan
sGam po.



figure 8 King Srong btsan
sGam po.

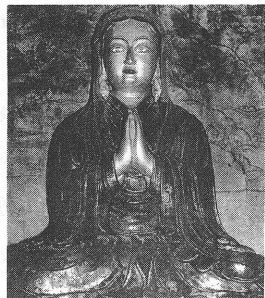


figure 9 Princess Khri btsun
(Bhrikuti) .



figure 10 Princess Khri btsun.

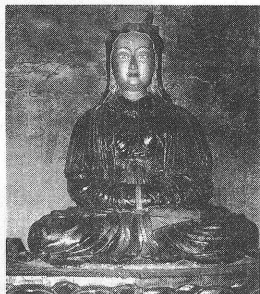


figure 11 Princess Wen cheng
Kong jo (or Mun sheng
Kong co) .



figure 12 Princess Wen
cheng Kong jo.

figure 13 King Srong btsan sGam po.



specific period on mere stylistic grounds the “first group” (ground-floor, South; pre-1966) appears to indicate a pre-15th century manufacture and compared with other Tibetan statuary a 14th century date might be appropriate. In the 1340s extensive reconstruction



work is documented for the Jokhang (37) and probably in those years according to the *Gung thang dkar chag* images of *Srong btsan sGam po* and his retinue were commissioned by the *Tshal pa Khri dpon sMon lam rDo rje* (1284–1346) and his successor *Kun dga' rDo rje* (1309–1364, r.1323–ca.1351), then the rulers of the Lhasa region and representing one of the most powerful myriarchies during the Yuan dynasty in Tibet. Under their reign “statues were made of the king and his wives (*chos rgyal yab yum*) in the *gTsug lag khang*” . (38)

There can be hardly any doubt that this text refers to the pre-1966 images in the Jokhang and very probably to the “first group” in the southern section of the ground-floor. With respect to the biographical data of these two Gung thang rulers the pre-sumably oldest royal sculptures in the Lhasa temple can thus be dated before 1346 respectively to the years between 1323 and 1346.

If we can accept at least the partial authenticity of some of the present statues in the “second group” (ground-floor, West), a date to the first half of the 15th century would be supported best by their style, which might be well compared with the elegant curvilinear design of the robes worn by the Three Religious Kings in the Great Stupa (*sKubum*) at Gyantse, datable to 1427/1439. (Figure 14,15) Maybe these Jokhang statues were installed in the course of some large-scale reconstructions at the time of Tsongkhapa around or after 1408/1409, together with the *dGe lugs pa* founder's image in one of the neighbouring chapels.



The “third group” of *Srong btsan sGam po* and his two wives (upper-floor, West; pre-1966) might be associated with those images, which according to the *dKar chag* of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1645) were donated by *bLa ma mDung dKarbrug gras* for the central (western) chapel on the first upper floor: “*bar Khang nub phyogs Kyi gtsang khang dbus ma nal sangs rgyas rab bdung chos rgyal kyi phyag nas mal bLa[ma] ii-[ma]mdung dkar'brug grags kyis bshengs pa'i chos rgyal yab yum gsum*”.(39) The identity of this donor however

remains a mystery and we can only suppose that he was a contemporary (?) of the Fifth Dalai Lama. A speculative date for this most popular royal group some time before or around 1645 exactly the years of comprehensive reconstructions under the Great Fifth, whose



figure 14 The Three Religious Kings , from left to right : Khri srong lDe btsan , Srong btsan sGam po , Khri gtsug lDe btsan (Ral pa can).

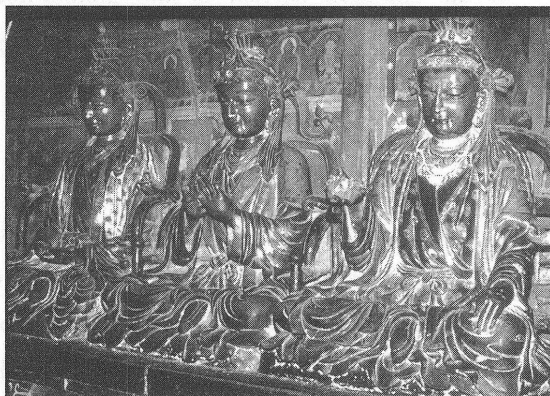


figure 15 The Three Religious Kings, from left to right : Srong btsan sGam po, Khri srong lDe btsan, Khri gtsug lDe btsan.



figure 16 King Srong btsan sGam po in lalitasana posture, flanked by his two wives.

specific appreciation for his religious-political predecessor on the Potala hill is wellknown would be possibly supported by the iconography of the *Srong btsan sGam po* figure (provided that the modern gilt copper replica corresponds to the original statue destroyed in 1966). With the exception of a quite different 15th century “proto-type” in the *Brag lha klu phug* cave sanctuary at Lhasa (*lCags po ri*) (Figure 16) the relaxing lalitasana posture of “royal ease” (Avalokiteshvara!) does not seem to have been common among the images of this king before the 17th century. (40)

While painted representations of *Srong btsan sGam po* and his retinue, be it within a narrative context of larger mural compositions, be it as smaller side-figures on a *thangka*, were apparently adorning some Tibetan temples like Samye and the Jokhang rather early (41), individual metal statues of this king and other royals may not, as seen at least from that what has been preserved, have come in use much before the 14th century, when rulers like *Byang chub rGyal mtshan* (1302–1364) were actively promoting a Tibetan renaissance of the grand *chos rgyal* period. Although metal castings had their own formal and technical conventions they can be doubtlessly very helpful “missing links” for monumental clay statuary such as the royal



images in the Jokhang and Potala Palace.

A masterful 47cm high brass statue of *Srong btsan sGam po* in the Potala Palace collection can be attributed by stylistic criteria to the 14th century. (Figure 17)

(42) The characteristic dragon roundels on the royal dress indicate a specific imperial symbolism and recall a Chinese or Mongol imperial dragon robe design of the Yuan dynasty. (Figure 18, 19) (43) A similar chronology of probably the first half of the

14th century is indicated by some related metal statues like a standing figure of the king's minister *mGar sTong btsan*, (Figure 20) whose robe is adorned by a characteristic Yuan cloud design, which can be found on the fabric borders of an embroidered thangka from the former Potala collection. Three other metal images of this

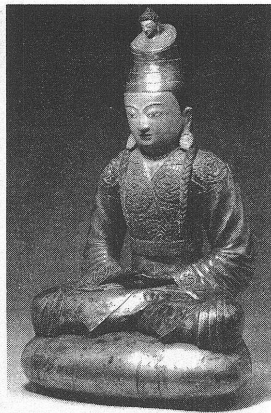


figure 17 King Srong btsan sGam po.

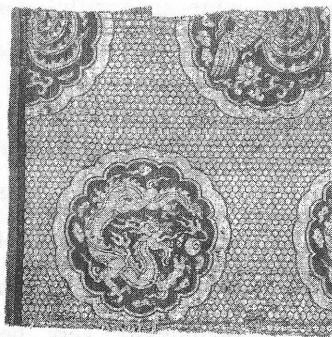


figure 18 Chinese textile fragment with phoenixes and dragons.

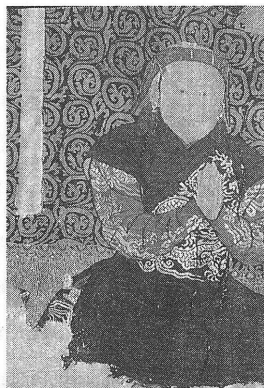


figure 19 Koshila Khan, the Mingzong emperor of the Yuan dynasty (reign: 1329), in a dragon robe. From the lower register of a Yamantaka mandala.



figure 20 An unidentifiable princely donor figure seated in a Bodhisattva posture of “royal ease”(center), and the ministers under Srong btsan sGam po, mGar sTong btsan (left) and Thon mi Sambhota.

king in the Potala Palace, Jokhang, and Drepung monastery, all with the meditational mudra of Amitabha(!), are closely related to the king in the dragon robe. They also date either to the 14th or to the

15th century and thus confirm once more the historical chronology of the “first” and “second” royal group as proposed in this paper. (44)



figure 21 King Srong btsan sGam po.

One of the most prominent mysteries in Tibetan art history have been so far the royal images in the Dharma King's Meditation Cave of the Potala Palace (*Chos rgyal sGrub phug*). (Figure 21–23) According to the Fifth Dalai Lama's regent *Sangs rgyas rGya mtsho* (1653–1705) “consecrated by *Srong btsan sGam po* himself” (45) these famous statues were not only traditionally believed to date to the 7th century since then, but also attributed to the imperial period in numerous books and even scholarly articles. —Before we



enter the difficult terrain of stylistic determination we have to raise a question which never has been discussed properly: what kind of concrete and reliable historical and archaeological evidence exists for any building structures and image shrines on the dMar po ri before the construction of the present Potala Palace in 1645? (46) We cannot discuss here the many wellknown legends and accounts on castles and residences of an apparently somehow existing “proto-Potala Palace” on the Red Hill at the time of the *sPu rgyal* dynasty, but have to realize that there is, so far we see, not a single trustworthy textual record to document the early existence of *Srong btsan sGam po*’s image on the *dMar po ri*. Remains the era of the Second Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet and of the successive establishment of the principal Buddhist schools from the 11th until the middle of the 17th century, a dark age however in the history of the Potala hill. No substantial archaeological data for the one-thousand years between the 7th and the 17th century have come so far to light.

With regard to these “unknown” centuries only three historical



figure 22 Princess Khri btsun (Bhrikuti) .



figure 23 Princess Khri btsun (Bhrikuti) .



records of modest information value are available. For the years around 1076 we are informed by the *Blue Annals* about some “residences” and “religious schools” of learned Buddhist masters “on the *Po ta ri* and *dMar po ri*”. (47) And similar building structures must have existed about 1389 when at the occasion of *Tsong khapa*’s visit according to a later biography of this distinguished guest “masters and disciples stayed at the Potala to discuss the essence of many teachings”. (48) In 1240 a “*Po ta la’i Lha Khang*”, possibly the shrine for the most sacred image of *Phags pa Lokeshvara*, is said to have been destroyed by the Mongols. (49)

According to Regent *Sangs rgyas rGya mtsho*’s account from 1697 on the reliquary stupa (*gdung rten*) and on the burial ceremonies of the Fifth Dalai Lama a cave-like sanctuary related to *Srong btsan sGam po* would have existed at the beginning of the Potala Palace construction in 1645, however no images are mentioned. (50) Similarly there seem to be no records of such royal statues on the *dMar po ri* hill in earlier texts like in the *rGyal rabs gsal ba’i me long* chronicle from 1368 (51), which does not contain any description of building structures on the *dMar po ri*. Although one may expect more than just a brief mention by the Fifth Dalai Lama in case there has been a major image shrine like the present one on the Potala hill in 1645, when building work began and the *dKar chag* was written, the Great Fifth describes in fact an already existing “assembly hall (*gtsug lag khang*) being located in the center of the [former] palace of the king of Tibet” with the images of *Srong btsan sGam po* and his two wives *Khri btsun* and *Wen cheng Kong jo*, his son *Gung ri Gung btsan*, and



his two ministers *mGar sTong btsan* and *Thon miSambho ta*. (52) With which room in the Red Palace complex this chapel can be however identified remains unclear. Reading the Fifth Dalai Lama's *dKar chag*, been the former *Phags pa Lha khang* the presumedly only existing religious shrine on the *dMar po ri* before 1645 which for the return of the its most sacred image in the same year was newly constructed exactly above its previous site, the "new" (present) "Dharma King's Meditation Cave" .

The today's *Chos rgyal sGrub phug*, doubtlessly a 17th century imitation of what was once supposed to be the ancient cave abode of Avalokiteshvara's mountain home and reerected as a meditation room for this Bodhisattva's worldly manifestation, as well as its clay statues are probably thusa reconstruction of an earlier sanctum, towchich at the time of the new appreciation and veneration of King *Srong btsan sGam po* and his dynasty under *Byang chub rGyal mtshan*, the royal statues might have been added in the 14th or 15th century. The general attribution of these images to the *sPu rgyal* dynasty period however is not more than a persistent popular legend, which over the centuries has become "history" in its own right. And the very fact that restorations (which certainly have occoured) would have changed their stylistic physiognomy does not yet turn a myth into reality.

The Fifth Dalai Lama's takeover of the Mount Potalaka-*dMar po ri* as the new residence of this sacred and secular rule, the site where *Srong btsan sGam po* and his successors were supposed to have introduced and established the concept of the Bodhisattva-king in Tibet, resulted in a sort of revival and continuity of the imperial



period. This is illustrated by several visions which the Great Fifth, the new dharma raja of Tibet, had especially in the 1640s and 1650s of Padmasambhava and *Srong btsan sGam po* in front of the miraculously created Avalokiteshvara, and in which he received prophecies to restore the temples and images founded by the Tibetan king and became even the incarnation of that king, who appears from the Bodhisattva's heart to the hierarch of the Tibetan theocracy: "I have become myself a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, transforming myself into all this [other] manifestations." (53) And during another vision in 1660 Avalokiteshvara transforms himself into King *Srong btsan sGam po*, who tells the Dalai Lama that he should make an image of the king himself in the style of Cakravartin in the Jokhang in Lhasa. (54)

Taken the above arguments it should be quite plausible that the royal images in the Potala Palace can be regarded rather as later archaistic sculptures of a somewhat "ideal" and "early monarchic style" following ancient conventions, made soon after the Dalai Lama's vision in 1660 and copied, as this contemporary 17th century text confirms additionally our previous arguments and considerations, after the statues once in the Jokhang (of the 14th century) .

Compared with their models in the Lhasa *gTsug lag khang* the Potala kings and queens-and particularly with regard to the more refined and elegant draperies of their robes-do neither correspond to any other sculptures of the ca. 14th century, nor do they have real stylistic relatives among other Tibetan clay statues such as in Gyantse dating to the first half of the 15th century. While the forms and folds



of King Songtsen's dress do not find equivalents in the pre-17th century sculptural styles if Tibet and clearly indicate a later formal vocabulary or a complete reworking at an unknown period (55), the other statues in the Dharma King's Meditation Cave give the impression to follow the ancient "ideal" style of the Jokhang images ("second group").

The 17th century origin of the present royal Potala statues can be further supported by some ancient wall paintings, which were discovered in this shrine during the grand restoration in 1989/1994 and which apparently belong to the earliest stratum of this chapel's furnishings. (Figure 24) These fragmentarily preserved murals depicting some early Tibetan kings with turbans in dharmacakra and vitarka mudra, the three consorts of probably *Srong btsan sGam po*, a female deity etc., were attributed in some recent Chinese publications (56) to the 7th or 8th century, but are in my opinion for mere stylistic reasons hardly much older than 17th century and may belong to the early construction period of the new Potala Palace. Interestingly the royal figures appear to have been painted in an archaistic "monarchic" style, different from some Buddhist deities on the same



figure 24 Wall-painting depicting one of the Three Religious Kings (Khri srong lDe btsan?) ..



walls, apparently in order to evoke and to ensure the presence of those early dharmarajas and incarnated Bodhisattvas a thousand years later at the old place of their secular and sacred rule, and at the new religious and wordly residence of Avalokiteshvara's present emanation, the Dalai Lama.

These newly found wall-paintings confirm once more that unlike a shrine for the most sacred statue of *Phags pa sPyan ras gzigs* the Dharma King's Meditation Cave and its royal statues did not, exist in its present form before 1645 (respectively before 1660), although there seems to have been already a sanctuary with some earlier royal effigies, possibly at the same site, when the construction of the today's Potala Palace had started.

figure 25 King Srong btsan sGam po holding the Buddhist symbol of the Three Jewels (dkon mchog gsum).



figure 26 King Srong btsan sGam po, detail of figure 25





A few iconographical, historical, archaeological and stylistic data and considerations as presented in this paper may have allowed a closer look beyond the vast hagiographical and mythographical tradition, which has formed and even created the popular beliefs and profiles of some of the bestknown images in Tibet. Hardly any other cultural relics of the Tibetan realm have been subject to chronological speculations over a thousand year's span, from the time when the idea of a Bodhisattva-king was about to be formed until centuries later, now revived and canonized, when "*Srong btsan sGam po-Avalokiteshvara*" had come back as an image to his sacred residence, where he can be revisited since then: king of men and son of god, universal ruler and supernatural divinity, of heavenly origin, Bodhisattva and Emperor in the sacred land of Tibet.

Notes

[1] See for a discussion of *Srong btsan sGam po*'s biographical dates Sorensen 1994, notes 449, 1046 infra; and Hazod et al. 2000, p. 174-176.

[2] The only existing pre-1966 photographs of the royal statues in the Lhasa Jokhang were published in Sis/Vanis 1958, pls.123, 146-149.

[3] See for example Xizang Budala Gong 1996, p.430-435; Rhie 1988; Rhie/Thurman 1991, p.41. An even more surprising hypothesis was forwarded only recently although without any supporting arguments by another renowned Western tibetologist, Heather Stoddard,



who “considers that the style, if not the images themselves, date back to the pre-Buddhist art of Tibet”(! Stoddard 2003, p.20). See however Namgyal 2002, p.107–110 (“made in mid-17th century”).

[4] Lo Bue 2000, p.85, apparently based on a however merely speculative suggestion in Snellgrove/Richardson 1968, p.145, and overtaken by von Schroeder 2001, p.853–859 (“ca. 14th century?”). Per Sorensen characterises *Byang chub rGyal mtshan*, the unifier of Central Tibet, by his “patriotic policy of political and national renaissance with his outspoken ambition to restore and to emulate the glorious heydays of the old dynasty”, having his “roots back to the milieu around Padmasambhava in the dynastic period”, and by his “realistic and pragmatic approach in his dealings with the Yuan court” (Sorensen 1994, p.34f.). For this Tibetan ruler see also L.van der Kuijp, On the Life and Political Career of *T'ai Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan*, in: Tibetan History and Language, Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, 26, Wien 1991, p.277–327.

[5] Roerich 1988 (1949), p.1006.
 [6] Macdonald 1971; Stein 1981, note 64: “th orie post rienne”; Kapstein 2000, p.148f. (“the cult of Avalokiteshvara, as known to a later age, is a product not of the imperial period but of the >later spread of the doctrine”); Karmay 2002, p.22; cf. also Dargyay 2003 (1994), p.365, and note.5.

[7] Kapstein 2000, p.148, 263.

[8] For the mythology, iconology and history of the early “Potala Palace” see Henss 2004, ch.I.5.

[9] Henss 2004, ch.I.5; von Schroeder 2001, p.820–823.



- [10] Sorensen 1994, p.27.
- [11] Sorensen 1994, p.382 (after the *dBa' bzhed* chronicle (ed. by R.A.Stein 1961, p.10–15,39) and *dPa' bo gTsug lagphreng ba* (1545/64) .
- [12] Cf. Stein 1986.
- [13] Richardson 1998, p.76. This text (of an edict) was originally inscribed on a stone pillar at Dunhuang.
- [14] Richardson 1985, p.39, with considerations on the disputable expression *phrul gyi lha (btsan po)* , which has been subject to various translations (cf. Stein 1981, p.250; see above!) and interpretations. The proper term “Bodhisattva” (*byang chub sems dpa'*) seems to have come in use only during the early *phyi dar* period such as for the Western Tibetan king *Ye shesod* (ca. 947–1024) in the Tabo monastery renovation inscription of 1042: “the Bodhisattva erected this temple ... This king, personification of a god, born of divine race, of the lineage of bodhisattvas” (L.Petech/C. Luczianits, *Inscriptions from the Tabo Main Temple*, Roma 1999, p. 21f.) , or as praised by his grand-nephew *Pho brang Zhi baod*: “*bLa ma byang chub sems dpa Ye shes 'od*” , in: S.Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle. Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet* (1980) , Kathmandu 1998, p.4) .
- [15] Cf. Stein 1981.
- [16] Richardson 1985, p.41.
- [17] Richardson 1985, p.47, 75. A different translation is given by Fang Kuei Li/South Coblin 1987, p.291, 325: “King of men, personified by a god.”



[18] Richardson 1985, p.109; Fang Kuei Li/South Coblin 1987, p.78.82.

[19] Fang Kuei Li/South Coblin 1987, p.82. For an extensive discussion of *phrul gyi lha (btsan po)* see Stein 1981. The different translations of this expression do well illustrate the distinctive pre-Buddhist connotations in these inscriptions, to which marge more or less in each individual case analogous allusions to the new Buddhist faith: supernatural, magical, or divine manifestation (Richardson) , divine emanation (Tucci), God incarnate (FangKuei Li/South Coblin), dieu aux capacit s magiques, grand Bodhisattva (Macdonald) , saint et divin (Stein) .

[20] Richardson 1985, p.37-39; Fang Kuei Li/South Coblin 1987, p.229, 232.

[21] Karmay 1998 (1980) , p.23 (here after an 11th century text) , 25.Compare the wellknown myth of the origin of the Tibetan race, which made all Tibetans descendants of a Bodhisattva.

[22] R.Whitfield, The Art of Central Asia. The Stein Collection in the British Museum. London 1983, vol.I, fig.50 (size: 58, 5×56cm). The iconography of the central Avalokiteshvara is identified by the inscription:*Phags pa Thugs rje chen po*. According to the inscription of the “Doulan”-mandala the kneeling figure can be identified as “the all-knowing Gelong [Lama] Lodrö ” (*dGe slong thams chad mKhyen pa bLo gros*) . These readings were generously provided by Tsenshab Rinpoche, K snacht/Switzerland.

[23]Beckwith 1987, p.24, n.71; Sorensen 1994, p.27: “could rather have contributed to pave the way for the recognition of this king



as a incarnation of Avalokiteshvara”.

[24] See for example mChod yon nyi zla zung gi Khrimis vig (Code of the Twosome of Donee and Donor, Sun and Moon), composed between ca. 1653–1655, Toyo Bunko no.4442781, I, 52b; and various gter ma texts.

[25] Wangdu/Diemberger 2000, p.32.

[26] Pal 1991, no.79 (53, 3×54cm). Like in the *sPu rgyal* dynasty rock carvings in eastern Tibet and different from two other paintings of slightly later date in two New York private collections (cf. Kossak/Casey Singer 1998, no.12; and Rhie/Thurman 1999, no.154) *Srong btsan sGam po* is represented here without Amitabha's head on top of his turban, which may illustrate a growing tendency during the *phyi dar* period to identify this king with Avalokiteshvara.

[27] Dargyay 2003 (1994), p.369, after Dietz 1984, vol.II, p. 184 and 359 (here translated from the German: “By the *spu rgyal* of Tibet, ... *Khri srong lde btsan*, ... the Bodhisattva reincarnation lineage of *Srong btsan sGam po*, the embodiment of Avalokiteshvara, is uninterrupted”) ; Karmay 1998 (1980), p.25: “The line of the descendants of this Bodhisattva has not been cut.”

[28] Dargyay, op.cit., p.366, 368, 370, 375: “the idea of *Srong btsan sgam po* as bodhisattva king originated among the Buddhist missionaries who had come from India to Tibet”. Stein 1981, n.64, dates the letter, whose full text is included into the *bsTangyur*, vol. 129, p.284 col.5, text no.5693, and in *Bu ston's gsungbum*, vol.11, Da, p.135–138 (I have to thank Dr.Amy Heller for these and some other references), to the ca. mid-9th century respectively “entre 850 et



1000 (?)” since it would allude to two sons, who were descendants of *Khri srong lDe btsan*. Sieglinde Dietz however does not see serious arguments against an earlier “authentic” date to the reign period of *Khri srong lDe btsan* (oral information 2.11.2003) . Karmay 1998 (1980) , p.25. David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, London 1987, p.455: “Probably any suggestion that this attribution [of *Srong btsan sGam po* being a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara] was already current toward the end of the eighth century will be treated with scepticism, but it is not altogether impossible.”

[29] Sorensen 1994, p.382. See for some legendary accounts of pretended “contemporary” images of *Srong btsan sGam po* Stoddard 2003, p.21.

[30] Haarh 1969, p.362f., 368.

[31] For the *Ma ni bka' bum*, which served for numerous later Tibetan authors such as *Bu ston* (1290–1364) or *Dam pa bSod nams rGyal mtshan* (1312–1375; *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long: Srong btsan sGam po*, the emanational body of Buddha, cf. Sorensen 1994, p. 295)) to ascribe the Avalokiteshvara-*Srong btsan sGam po* cult to the early *sPu rgyal* era, see Dargyay 2003 (1994) , p.370ff. and n.23; Kapstein 2000, p.33f., 144–155. See for a rock carving depicting King *Srong btsan sGam po* and his Chinese wife *Wen cheng kong jo* of ca. 800 A.D. near Yushu in eastern Tibet: Tang Huisheng, *Qinghai Yushu Diqu Tangdai Fojiao Moya Kaoshu* (Investigation and Analysis on Buddhist Carvings in Yushu in Qinghai Province, China Tibetology, no.1, 1998, P.114–124, illustration on P.119.)

[32] The difficulties to determine a date on stylistic grounds for



the royal statues in the Jokhang and Potala Palace recall here the basically similar problem of the Jo bo Shakyamuni in the Jokhang, whose “ageless” design (when undressed) makes this most sacred image of the Tibetan Buddhist world a mystery until these days. Although it cannot be ruled out that the present statue goes back to the period of extensive reconstructions of the Jokhang and its furnishings in the years around 1078, 1160/70 or 1262, it has been certainly retouched in later centuries, for example in 1673 when according to a detailed inscription on the back of the canopy architecture a comprehensive reconstruction of the throne, the throne back (*Khri rgyab*) and of the baldachin was carried out (the date of 1673 is confirmed by the main responsible person for this renovation, *bLo bzang mThu stobas* mentioned in the inscription, who was the administrator of the Ramoche temple under the Fifth Dalai Lama, cf. Henss 2004, chapter A.I.13) .

[33] *rGyal rabs gsal ba'I me long* (1368): “Dharma-rajā [= *Song btsan sGam po*], Bodhisattva, you satisfy the senses of [everyones] mind with joy and felicity” , cf. Sorensen 1994, p.295.

[34] For a colour photograph from 1956 see Sis/Vanis 1958, pl. 133, now the only existing picture of the original group and the most important historical visual document for an art historical identification of all royal statues in the Jokhang and Potala Palace. For a new photo see Liu Liuzhong 1988, fig.224; for the location in the Jokhang: Taring 1977, ground-floor, no. 95; and Richardson 1977, plan 4, no.28.

[35] For photographs from 1956 see Sis/Vanis 1958, pls.144, 147–149; for new photos Tsering 2000, pls. P.31–33. Only the old and



modern photos of the two queens allow to compare the pre- and post-1966 statues, which indeed seems to confirm their basically original condition (detailed design of the robes!) . Location in the Jokhang: Taring 1977, ground-floor, no.103; and Richardson 1977, plan 4, no.11.

[36] No photographs of the pre-1966 statues on the upper floor (West) seem to exist. For modern photos see: Michael Henss, Tibet. Die Kulturdenkmäler, Zürich 1981, pl.15; Liu Liuzhong 1988, fig.223. and of the undressed statue cf. Zhongguo Zhangchuan Fojiào Diasu Quānji, Jīngōng Fō (A collection of Tibetan Buddhist Sculptures), Vol.1, Beijing 2001, Plate 162. Von Schroeder 2001, p.855: “ of unknown age”. Location in the Jokhang: Taring 1977, first floor, no.73; Richardson 1977, first floor, no.1.

[37] For a recent and more detailed survey of the Jokhang’s architectural history see Henss 2004, ch.I.3.

[38] Cf. Everding 2000, p.127. With reference to the same text source, however using a different chronology *Chab spel rTse brtan Phun tshogs* 1982 suggests a date for the royal effigies in the Jokhang between 1280 and 1347. Also Loden Sherab Daggyab refers to “the Regent *Tshal pa Khri dpon*” as having commissioned “the statues of *Srong btsan sgam po* and his two consorts” for the Jokhang (Tibetan Religious Art, Wiesbaden 1977, p.36, without source) .

[39] Dalai Lama V. 1970, p.24; Gr nwedel 1919, p.46f.

[40] For *Srong btsan sGam po* in *lalitasana* posture compare the famous statue in the Potala Palace, datable with much probability so shortly after 1660. A basically similar 27cm high brass statue of the 14th century in the Potala Palace Collection does not represent



“*Srong btsan sgam po*” (The Potala. Holy Palace in the Snow Land, Beijing 1996, p.90) , but a princely person (von Schroeder 2001, 312A: “Tibetan nobleman depicted as Bodhisattva?”) .

[41] Wall-paintings in the Jokhang depicting King *Srong btsan sGam po* are recorded for example in the Mani bKa’bum (12th century) and in the dKar chag of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1645) , according to which the “*tshal pa Khri dpon*” (probably *sMon lam rDo rje*, 1284–1346, or *Kun dga’ rDo rje*, 1309–1364, who had commissioned also the royal statues) sponsored some murals of the king and his two wives, his son *Gung riGung btsan*, and the ministers *Thon mi* and *mGar* (Gr nwedel 1919, p.42f.) .

[42] Precious Deposits 2000, vol.I, no.114 (“Tubo period”) ; von Schroeder 2001, 312D (“circa 14th century?”) ; T.Bartholomew/P.Berger/R.W.Clark: Treasures from the Roof of the World. The Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, Santa Ana/USA, 2003, no.2 (“ca. 13th century”) .

[43] Compare the dragon and foliage design of the Potala metal statue with similar ornaments of Yuan ruler figures on a kesi mandala in the Metropolitan Museum New York, datable to 1330/32 (Watt/Wardwell 1997, no.25) . Precious Deposits 2000, vol.III, no.22.

[44] For these three royal metal statues in the Potala Palace, Jokhang, and in Drepung see von Schroeder 2001, I, fig.VIII.1 on p. 432 (without Amitabha’s head, which would not exclude an identification as *Srong btsan sGam po*!) , 253A–C (here without any positive arguments identified as “*Thon mi Sambhota* or *mGar sTong brtsan*” ; the missing Amitabha head is not an argument against *Srong*



btsan sGam po, or is it *Khri strong lDe btsan*?) , an 253D. For stylistic and iconographic prototypes of these royal images see some earlier unidentifiable “princely bodhisattva-donors” such as von Schroeder 2001, 221D/E, 312A, or among the wall-paintings at Drathang (*Grwa thang*) monastery.

[45] *Sangs rgyas rGya mtsho: mChod sdongdZam gling rGyan gchig gi dKar chag* (Guide to the Funeral Stupa of the Fifth Dalai Lama) , Lhasa 1990, p.303.

[46] A paper on “The Potala Palace in Songtsen Gampo’s Time” presented by *Mi nyag Chos kyi rGyal mtshan* at the Eighth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) in Bloomington, USA, in 1998 (in Tibetan, unpublished) , did not present any convincing detail of architectural or textual evidence for the presumed building structures on the dMar po ri during the sPu rgyal dynasty period.

[47] Roerich 1988 (1949) , p.70f.,93.

[48] R.Kaschewsky, *Das Leben des lamaistischen Heiligen Tsongkhapa Blo Bzang Grags Pa* (1357–1419) , 2 vols. Wiesbaden 1971, p.98.

[49] *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary) , Beijing ed.1993, vol.II, p.3229, however without any reference!

[50] *Sangs rgyas rGya mtsho* (cf. note 45) , p.303.

[51] See for the very thoroughful English translation of this text with the most extensive annotations and commentaries Sorensen 1994, — a fundamental reference work for Tibetan studies!



[52] Grünwedel 1919 (dates the dKar chag to 1647, while 1645 is generally accepted in modern Tibetan studies) , p.73: *da lta'i gtsug lag Khang di nyid kyi nang du / rgyal pa rang nyid sku lhyag nas ma*; and according to the *Three dKar chag* edition, p.41: “*da lta'i gtsug lag khangdi nyid du / rgyal po rang nyid kyi phyag nas ma / da lta'i gtsug lag khangdi nyid kyi nang du / rgyal po rang nyid kyi (split) phyag nas ma / desphags pa lo ki' shva ra gar bzhugs su zhal ston par mdzad pa'i byin rlabs kyi phung po ngo mtshar bakhor du rgya bza' / bal bza' sras gung ri gung btsan / blon po mgar / thon mi / ka gdong dujam dpal gtshin rje gdong drug sku sangs rgyasod srungs kyis rab gnas*” (Dalai Lama V. 1970) . According to another interpretation *gtsug lad khang* would not refer to a specific religious shrine, but to the (whole) sacred building complex (of which building structures it ever consisted) on the dMar po ri hill. For assistance in transliteration and translation I have to thank Tsenshab Rinpoche and Dr. Amy Heller.

[53] Karmay 1988, p.39, 55; Karmay 2002, p.22; Uspensky 2002, p.27; Ishihama Yumiko 2003 (1993) , p.549f.

[54] Karmay 1988, p.48. This textual record of the Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama can be regarded as the so far only quite reliable historical document for the dating of the royal statues in the Potala Palace.

[55] The so far only specific attempt to describe and identify the style of the Srong btsan sGam po statue in the Potala *Chos rgyal sGrub phug* comes as an Pan-Asian fantasy, far away both from any convincing argument and comparable images of Central Asia. Via a



generous tour d'horizon of motifs and statues between Persia and Japan (!) Prof. Marilyn Rhie “demonstrated” that the king’s image in the Potala Palace “most likely dates stylistically to ca. 820–830” (Rhie 1988, Rhie/Thurman 1991, p.41) . For an iconographic description of all statues in this sanctuary cf. Chayet/Meyer 1983, p.82–85, closing with a simple remark on their historical and stylistic identity: “only more profound studies may contribute to an answer regarding the delicate problem of their date”.—No photographs of the statues in the *Chos rgyal sGrub phug* taken before their restoration in the 1970s are known to this author.

[56] Xizang Budala Gong 1996, p.47, fig.63, 64, pl.253; The Potala 1996, ill. P.117–118; A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala 2000, ill. p.141–143.

Captions

figure 1:

A vajra–holding crowned deity (?) blessing the monk dGe slong bLo gros. Central detail of a mandala painted on silk. Provincial “Tibetan Dunhuang style” of the northeastern Tibetan–Chinese borderlands (Qinghai Province) , 8th or 9th century.

New York, private collection.

Photo: M.Henss (2000) .

figure 2:

King Srong btsan sGam po and his two wives Khri btsun and Wen cheng Kong jo. Detail from the bottom section of an



(Avalokiteshvara) painted scroll.

Silk, 53,3×34cm (total size) .

Tibet, ca. 11th century.

New York, Zimmerman Family Collection.

After Pal 1991, no.79.

figure 3:

King Srong btsan sGam po and his two wives Khri btsan (Bhrikuti) and Wen cheng Kong jo. Detail of the bottom section of an (Avalokiteshvara) painted scroll. The axial composition with the central Eleven-headed Bodhisattva illustrates – like in fig.2 – clearly the concept of the Tibetan king as an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, a general (!) and popular cult only in the phyi dar period.

Silk, 50,8×44,4cm (total size) .

Central Tibet, 12th or 13th century.

New York, Rubin Museum of Art.

After Rhie/Thurman 1999, no.154.

figure 4:

King Srong btsan sGam po (?) . Detail of a rock-engraving depicting most probably this Tibetan ruler with his two wives in front of a standing Buddha.

Leb Khog, ca. 30km east of Yushu county, Qinghai Province.
Around 800.

After C.Baumer/Th.Weber, Eastern Tibet. Bangkok 2004 (photo: C.Baumer 1999) .

figure 5:

King Srong btsan sGam po and his two wives Khri btsun (left)



and Wen cheng Kong jo.

Jokhang (Lhasa) , ground-floor South (no more extant) . Clay, between 1323-1346.

After Sis/Vanis 1958, pl.133 (photo: 1956) .

figure 6:

King Srong sGam po and his two wives Khri btsun (left) and Wen cheng Kong jo.

Jokhang, ground -floor South. Clay, ca.1980, replicas with changed iconography of the lost (in 1966/1967) original statues (cf. fig.5!) .

After Liu Liuzhong 1988, fig.224.

figure 7:

King Srong btsan sGam po.

Jokhang, ground-floor West, Chos rgyal Thon mi Lha khang.

Clay ca. early 15th century, restored in 1972/1975.

After Tsering 2000, pl. 31. (cf. fig.8) .

figure 8:

King Srong btsan sGam po.

Jokhang, ground-floor West, Chos rgyal Thon mi Lha khang.

Clay, ca. early 15th century.

After Sis/Vanis 1958, pl. 147. (photo: 1956; cf. fig.7)

figure 9:

Princess Khri btsun (Bhrikuti) .

Jokhang, ground-floor West, Chos rgyal Thon mi Lha khang.

Clay, ca. early 15th century, restored in 1972/1975.

After Tsering 2000, pl.33. (cf. fig.10) .



figure 10:

Princess Khri btsun.

Jokhang, ground-floor West, Chos rgyal Thon mi Lha khang.

Clay, ca. early 15th century.

After Sis/Vanis 1958, pl.149 (photo: 1956; cf. fig.9) .

figure 11:

Princess Wen cheng Kong jo (or Mun sheng Kong co) .

Jokhang, ground-floor West, Chos rgyal Thon mi Lha khang.

Clay, ca. early 15th century, restored in 1972/1975.

After Tsering 2000, pl.33 (cf. fig.12) .

figure 12:

Princess Wen cheng Kong jo.

Jokhang, ground-floor West, Chos rgyal thon mi Lha khang.

Clay, ca.early 15th century.

After Sis/Vanis 1958, pl.148 (cf. fig.11) .

figure 13: (large slide)

King Srong btsan sGam po.

Jokhang, upper floor West, Chos rgyal Srong btsan Lha khang.

Gilt copper, made and installed in 1972/1975 to replace the original image (of ca.1640/1645?) destroyed in 1966/1967.

Photo: M.Henss 1981.

figure 14:

The Three Religious Kings, from left to right: Khri srong lDe btsan, Srong btsan sGam po, Khri gtsug lDe btsan (Ral pa can) .

Gyantse, dPal 'khor chos sde, sKu' bum mchod rten (Great Stupa) , fourth floor North.



Clay, 1427/1439.

After Xiong Wenbing/Yang Liquan, The Kumbum of Gyantse Palcho Monastery in Tibet, Chengdu 2001, fig.203.

figure 15: (slide)

The Three Religious Kings, from left to right: Srong btsan sGam po, Khri srong lDe btsan, Khri gtsug lDe btsan.

Gyantse, dPal 'khor chos sde, gTsug lag khang, Chos rgyal lha khang.

Clay, 1423.

Photo: M.Henss (1985) .

figure 16: (slide)

King Srong btsan sGam po in lalitasana posture, flanked by his two wives.

Lhasa, lCags po ri, Brag lha klu phug cave sanctuary. Rock carving, ca. 15th century.

Photo: M.Henss (1989) .

figure 17:

King Srong btsan sGam po.

Potala Palace collection, Li ma lha khang.

Brass, height 47cm, first half of 14th century.

After Precious Deposits 2000, vol.I, no.114.

figure 18:

Chinese textile fragment with phoenixes and dragons.

Lampas weave technique, Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) .

The Cleveland Museum of Art.



After Watt/Wardwell 1997, no.42.

figure 19: (slide)

Koshila Khan, the Mingzong emperor of the Yuan dynasty (reign: 1329) , in a dragon robe. From the lower register of a Yamantaka mandala.

Silk tapestry (kesi) , ca. 1330–1332.

New York, The Metropolitan Museum.

After Watt/Wardwell 1997, p.95.

fig. 20: (text page 8)

An unidentifiable princely donor figure seated in a Bodhisattva posture of " royal ease" (center) , and the ministers under Srong btsan sGam po, mGar sTong btsan (left) and Thon mi Sambhota.

Brass, around 1300 or first half of 14th century.

Potala Palace collection. Li ma lha khang.

After The Potala 1996, p.90.

figure 21:

King Srong btsan sGam po.

Potala Palace, Chos rgyal sGrub phug, the artificial "Dharma King's Meditation Cave" .

Clay, shortly after 1660.

After Namgyal 2002, p.107.

figure 22:

Princess Khri btsun (Bhrikuti) .

Potala Palace, Chos rgyal sGrub phug.

Clay, shortly after 1660.



After Precious Deposits 2000, I, p.77.

figure 23:

Princess Wen cheng Kong jo.

Potala Palace, Chos rgyal sGrub phug.

Clay, shortly after 1660.

After Precious Deposits 2000, I, p.79.

figure 24:

Wall-painting depicting one of the Three Religious Kings (Khri srong lDe btsan?) .

Potala Palace, Chos rgyal sGrub phug. Discovered in 1989/1994.
Shortly after 1660.

After A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala, Beijing 2000, p.143.

figure 25:

King Srong btsan sGam po holding the Buddhist symbol of the Three Juwels (dkon mchog gsum) .

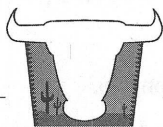
Beijing Historical Museum.

Gilt metal, height 32,5cm, ca. 16th century.

After Gems of Beijing Cultural Relics Series. Buddhist Statues I,
ed.by Han Yong, Beijing 2001, no.147.

figure 26:

King Srong btsan sGam po, detail of fig.25



拉萨布达拉宫和大昭寺松赞干布塑像的再观察： 几个历史和风格证据问题的探讨

迈克尔·汉斯

拉萨大昭寺和布达拉宫里著名的吐蕃赞普松赞干布及其随从的塑像一般被认为是属于7—9世纪的作品（约629—842年）。这种以藏文文献为依据的观点长期以来一直占据主流地位，并得到了现代一些中国和西方学者的支持，然而，基于历史学、考古学、图像学以及艺术风格等因素的分析，这种观点必须得到修正。

现代藏学研究中广为谈论的图像学和历史学问题是：是否西藏早期的统治者在7—9世纪或稍晚的11—13世纪时已被看作是观音的化身。一般来说，人们对松赞干布的怀念与崇拜主要是由于他对于佛教的贡献，尤其是指他在西藏首次引入并传播了观音信仰崇拜。

最早的松赞干布形象，如据说位于琼结藏王墓和桑耶寺的7—8世纪时的松赞干布塑像和一些11—13世纪时的唐卡中在边角处描绘的松赞干布小像，除此之外，在元代以前，没有出现过单独描绘或塑造的松赞干布形象。保存在布达拉宫、大昭寺和哲蚌寺的一些金属造像根据艺术风格分析应为14或15世纪的作品。第二组赞普塑像位于大昭寺（却坚通米拉康 *Chos rgyal Thon mi Lha Khang*,



底楼，西侧)，尚不谈其真实性存在着或多或少的疑问，将之与江孜白居寺（1418—1439年）的泥塑进行艺术风格上的对比，其年代可晚至15世纪上半叶。第三组塑像是最著名的松赞干布及其二妃像（位于却坚松赞拉康*Chos rgyal Srong btsan Lha khang*，二楼，西侧），但这只是一个现代的复制品，可能是与五世达赖喇嘛扎恰（1645年）的捐赠有关，很显然系由一身份不明的喇嘛堆扎楚车（*bLa ma mDung dKar 'brug gras*）于17世纪40年代创作。文献记载表明，当时为拉萨祖拉康（*gTsug lag Khang*）复制和重建了大量的作品。

布达拉宫达摩禅窟（却坚祖熟*Chos rgyal sGrub phug*）里最有名的赞普及其妃子、儿子和大相的形象传统上一直被认为是7世纪时的作品，但本文通过对诸多因素的分析，认为其显然是属于17世纪的作品。